When I first sent an email to Arvind Thyagarajan, who was shuttling between Bengaluru, San Francisco, and New York, I was greeted with an empty response and a lengthy signature that began with ‘alias: studmuffin’. Then followed some Indian colloquialisms, starting with ‘What is your good name? Why are you weeping?’ that cracked me up.

A day later, Mr Studmuffin, realising that the mail was empty, wrote again, ‘Excuse the finger flop that sent the empty email, I guess I’m a slippery character’, followed by some more uniquely South Asian allusions.

This time, I didn’t just laugh but marvelled at the man’s brand of irreverent humour, one that eschewed the elitism of ‘fluent’ English to take pride in local and cultural references.

But that was to be expected from the co-founder of Samosapedia(.com), a website that purports to be ‘the biggest and most definitive guide to South Asian lingo in the world’, as co-founder Vik Bhaskaran put it, in another email.

I think all South Asians, at some level, love their language. That understated love is apparent in the nuances of usage and the joy that people take in its creative manipulations to suit their locale, community and even family. We are a people that love inside jokes and language plays a huge role!

Vik Bhaskaran, co-founder, Samosapedia (.com)