

HUMOUR TIMES

JEST FOR FUN!

From Nose Digging to Road Digging

India's Obsession with Digging



"CONTENT UNDER PRESSURE - READ AT YOUR OWN RISK"

FROM NOSE DIGGING TO ROAD DIGGING: INDIA'S PASSION FOR DIGGING

From traffic lights to tarred roads, unearthing India's favourite national pastime.

STRAYS TO STATESMEN

How barking on the streets can land you barking in Parliament

SNORE NO MORE

Latest research claims blowing a conch shell can cure snoring. Sweet dreams for you, sleepless nights for your neighbours.

INSTAGRAM: THE NEW SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION

When reels replace textbooks and hashtags become homework.

TIRED GIRL MAKEUP

Dark circles are the new contour – Gen Z beauty meets Indian reality.

WHAT IF INDIANS PACKED THEIR BAGS AND LEFT THE US?

A nightmare scenario for Silicon Valley, Wall Street, and every WiFi router in New Jersey.

HASYA SE GST HATAO

A comic campaign to replace Goods & Services Tax with Giggles & Satire Tax.

KURRUPTISTAN EMPEROR LORD KRUMPH'S TREMENDOUS SPEECH TO THE SNOOZE-FEST

When hot air meets history in the grand circus of politics.

AGRA KI GAALI PARAMPARA

A cultural deep dive into the Taj city's most colorful export – creative insults.

HUMARE KHUDAI DEEWANE

India's eternal passion for digging, celebrated through satire and soil.

FROM BIHAR TO CALIFORNIA

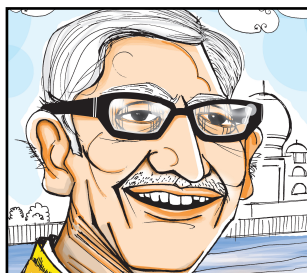
When local scandals get a global broadcast – cable TV with desi tadka.

THE TEENAGE OUTSMARTER

Because every Indian household has that one teen who knows it all (and reminds you hourly).

From the Lemon Squeezer's Desk

"In Filth We Dig Gold"



Dear Readers,

Another month, another juicy squeeze of satire! In this issue, we dig deep—literally. From noses to roads, India's unmatched passion for

digging has left us wondering: is this our true national hobby? Meanwhile, the animals are getting restless. Yes, the underfed, overworked, and utterly ignored creatures of the nation are planning a revolution—don't be surprised if your pet parrot starts chanting "Azadi!"

On the lifestyle front, Gen Z's "tired makeup" trend has us baffled—spending an hour to look like you just woke up? Truly revolutionary! And speaking of revolutions, Instagram has taken over our schools, where love stories are unfolding faster than exam results.

Across the seas, we ask a bold question: what if Indians left the US en masse? Spoiler alert: Silicon Valley would collapse faster than a sugar-free rasgulla in hot chai. Back home, Agra's contribution this month isn't the Taj Mahal but its unique, lyrical brand of foul language—a true heritage that deserves UNESCO recognition.

And of course, in the spirit of true rebellion, we dare to ask: why tax humour with GST? Laughter should always be free, unless, of course, you're a stand-up comic charging ₹999 per ticket.

So sit back, sip your nimbu-paani, and enjoy the tangy twist of this month's Humour Times. After all, when life gives us lemons, we don't just make lemonade—we write about it.

Sourly yours,

The Lemon Squeezer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I received a copy of Humour Times...cursory, t looks and reads great, I am taking it home...will go through it at length later,

*Many thanks!
Ketan Tanna
Free Press Journal
Mumbai*

In love with this magazine. Please accept my compliments for amazing creativity and layout.

*Thanks!
Shalini Ruth, Mysore*

Great humour product!! I will need a week to go through it all and digest all the fun!!

*Very delighted
Nina P Nayak, Bangalore*

*Hoping this is only just the beginning. Please don't stop! The look is 'grin worthy'...need of the hour. My dil maange more!!
It's gone viral...Cleveland, Sydney, and Auckland, friends and family crave for the content of Humour Times!*

Pepe, Mysore

*Hurrah!!
Humour Times is BACK!
Congratulations dear Mukta and Mr Brij Khandelwal.*

Dr Latha, Mysore

JUST BRILLIANT!!

Anand Venkatraman, St Miguel

Excellent! This looks stunning and the dig on world leaders is biting! Congrats! God speed

Asha G Kumar, New Delhi

Thank you for the 'Smart City, Dumb Drain' piece. Finally, someone said it: our cities aren't smart; they're just sarcastic.

Arjun Nair, Kochi

From Nose Digging to Road Digging: India's Obsession with Digging

By Mukta K Gupta

If there's one national pastime that unites us more than cricket, it is digging. We Indians dig with such passion, commitment, and frequency that if the Olympic Games ever introduced "competitive digging," we'd sweep gold, silver, and bronze without breaking a sweat (but definitely while breaking the road).

Let's start small—literally. The humble nose. From traffic lights to office meetings, from metro stations to weddings, Indians indulge in the ancient art of nose excavation. Archeologists spend years searching for fossils; we, on the other hand, uncover treasures within seconds—often while the car behind us is honking mercilessly. Truly, a DIY exploration zone.

But our obsession doesn't stop at the nose. It graduates to roads. No street in India can stay intact for more than a few weeks. If one department lays fresh tar, another digs it up for water pipes, and a third digs deeper for internet cables. The cycle is so relentless that children grow up thinking "under construction" is a permanent traffic sign.

And then, of course, the political kind of digging—digging up past scandals, ancient tweets, or family histories. If someone once borrowed a pencil in Class 3 and never returned it, rest assured it will resurface on prime-time television during election season.

From nose to roads to reputations, digging is not just an activity here—it's a national character trait. We don't just live on the surface. We dig deep.

So the next time someone asks you what India is best at, don't say cricket or IT services. Say proudly: Digging. After all, whether it's a nostril, a road, or a rival's past—we always find something worth unearthing.

INDIAN ORGANISATION FOR DIGGERS DEMANDS DIGGING TO BE INCLUDED IN OLYMPICS

THE COUNTRY EXPECTS A PODIUM FINISH WITH THE
NATION'S CRAZY OBSESSION WITH DIGGERS



Archaeologists worldwide are stunned. While they spend decades dusting off dinosaur bones with toothbrushes, Indians have mastered the fine art of digging—from nostrils to national highways—in record time.

Dr. Shovel Kumar, Head of the All-India Institute of Digging Studies, explains:

"For Indians, digging is not just a hobby—it's in our DNA. The average Indian spends 12 minutes a day digging his nose and 45 minutes stuck in traffic because someone else is digging the road. It's a balanced ecosystem."

The passion begins early. Children practice stealth nose-digs during math class, while parents master the road-dig during monsoon season, preferably on freshly laid tar. Sociologists call this "The Cycle of Digging": lay, dig, curse, repeat.

A government spokesperson defended the obsession:

"Road digging creates employment. One department digs, another fills, and then the first one digs again. It's the most sustainable job creation model after election rallies."

Political digging is, of course, the elite sport. Opposition leaders dig up scandals from 1984, while ruling parties prefer digging into each other's WhatsApp forwards. Citizens, meanwhile, dig into their wallets to pay for 'development charges.' Global experts have taken note. The International Olympic Committee is reportedly considering adding Competitive Digging as a 2032 Olympic sport. India

Nationwide Digging Survey (by the Institute of Pointless Research, 2025)

- 98% of Indians admit to nose-digging at traffic lights (the other 2% lied).
- 87% of freshly laid roads are dug up within the first 10 days.
- 76% of politicians believe digging up old scandals is their "constitutional duty."
- 64% of citizens say they've "dug deep" into their wallets for development charges... and are still searching for the development.
- 42% of aunties confessed to digging into family gossip "just for research purposes."

is already training its nose-diggers in a high-altitude camp in Shimla.

As Dr. Shovel concludes wisely:

"In other countries, people aim to reach for the stars. In India, we prefer digging downwards. After all, why look up when the real treasures are buried just beneath the surface—be it a road, a nose, or a politician's past?"



Until then, dear citizens, keep your tissues, traffic patience, and shovels ready. Because in India, digging never stops.

BREAKING NEWS

Breaking Digging News

- "Brand New Highway Dug Up Within 24 Hours – Officials Call It a 'World Record'"
- "Local Man Finds Gold Ring While Nose Digging at Traffic Signal, Declares Himself Archaeologist"
- "Government Announces National Digging Festival: Roads, Reputations, and Noses to be Excavated"
- "Politician Promises to Stop Digging Old Scandals, Immediately Digs Up Rival's Kindergarten Report Card"
- "Scientists Discover Indians Have Special Gene: Shovelius Maximus"
- "Metro Construction Team Accidentally Digs Into China, Starts Diplomatic Tension"
- "Aunty at Kitty Party Digs So Much Gossip, Neighbours Apply for Archaeological Survey Status"

Special Feature: "Digging Deeper" – An Interview with India's Finest Diggers

Reporter: Sir, you've been spotted at a red light indulging in... nose excavation. Care to explain?

Mr. Sharma (Traffic Light Nose-Digger): It's stress relief. Some people smoke, some meditate. I dig. Plus, it's free and eco-friendly.

Reporter: What's the biggest discovery you've made so far?

Mr. Sharma: A peanut from last Diwali. Still crunchy.

Reporter: Fascinating. Moving on—hello, sir. You're part of the road-digging crew?

Mr. Singh (Municipal Road Worker): Yes, proud of it. Ours is the only profession where we get applauded by honking cars every day.

Reporter: But why dig the same road again and again?

Mr. Singh: Sir, India doesn't believe in "One Time Use." Why should roads be any different?

Reporter: Lastly, we have a politician with us. Sir, your thoughts?

Politician: Look, I don't dig roads or noses. I dig scandals. My rival's Class 5 report card shows "Needs Improvement in Honesty." That's my election campaign.

Reporter: Incredible. Thank you, gentlemen. Truly, India digs where no one has dug before.

Strays to Statesmen: Donkey Leads New Animal Party for Equality



New Delhi: “Every dog has its day,” they say. And indeed, in India, that day has arrived. Thanks to the Supreme Court’s verdict ensuring shelters for stray dogs, canines across the country are wagging their tails in triumph. But this judicial belly rub has left other species fuming with jealousy.

Feeling neglected, goats, snakes, sheep, buffalos, and even the eternally misunderstood donkeys have now come together to form the All-Animals Equality Party (AAEP). Their manifesto? Simple: “If dogs get dignity, so should we.”

Election Symbol released - Carrot and Stick

“Vote for the Carrot, Chase a better Tomorrow”



This Symbol represents hope, hunger, and the eternal chase for better grass. It unites donkeys, goats, and even politicians, who have been chasing carrots for decades.

In a historic move, the animals unanimously elected the donkey as their party president. Political analysts call it “a masterstroke,” citing the donkey’s long-standing symbolic association with politicians. One expert noted, “Frankly, voters won’t even notice the difference.”

The party has already released its charter of demands

The donkey, now officially titled His Braying Excellency, addressed a cheering herd of supporters:

“For too long, dogs have been pampered while we’ve been mocked. We will fight until the last blade of grass for true animal democracy!”

“My fellow creatures,

For centuries, we have carried loads, pulled carts, grazed quietly, and endured insults like ‘donkey-brained.’ No more!

We demand equality, dignity, and unlimited grass subsidies. We call for:

- **A ban on the phrase ‘beast of burden.’ From today, it shall be replaced with ‘Employment Hero.’**
- **Special lanes on highways exclusively for buffalo processions, with toll-free passage.**
- **Goat-friendly ladders in government offices, so our four-legged comrades can climb the system—literally.**
- **A ministry of Snake Affairs, where every debate will end with a hiss and a handshake.**

This is not just a movement; it is a moo-vement, a bray-volution, and a baa-lot revolution. Together, we shall bray, graze, and chew our cud towards a brighter, greener tomorrow.

Yours in equality,

His Braying Excellency

Meanwhile, dogs have responded with a press release, clarifying: “We support animal unity, but please don’t compare us to snakes. Also, buffalos need to stop blocking traffic.”

The government, caught in the crossfire, has announced plans to set up a Ministry of Animal Welfare and Political Aspirations (MAWPA) to negotiate peace between the species.

As one bemused Delhi resident put it: “First potholes, then stray cows, now animal parties... India doesn’t need a new parliament, it needs a zoo license.”

Snore No More: India Blows Away the World with Conch Therapy

Move over yoga, chai, and cow selfies. India has unleashed its latest wellness export to the world — conch blowing clubs. According to groundbreaking research (conducted somewhere between a wedding procession and a temple bell ceremony), blowing a conch shell for 15 minutes daily is the ultimate cure for snoring.

Snoring, once a dreaded urban epidemic that destroyed marriages, peace of mind, and neighbourly relations, has finally met its match. Scientists say the daily ritual strengthens the lungs, clears sinuses, and more importantly, gives neighbours a louder reason to complain than the snoring ever did.

What began as a small experiment has now ballooned into a national obsession. From Mumbai chawls to Delhi parks, lakhs of Indians can be heard any time of day, standing in unison with puffed cheeks, blasting their conches with devotional determination.

And just like that, India has given the world another lifestyle trend. Foreigners are now flocking to the subcontinent to witness this “Symphony of Shells”, describing it as “the most spiritually chaotic sound since bagpipes met EDM.”

Tour operators have jumped in on the craze, offering “Conch Tours” with special packages:

- Sunrise conch blowing at the ghats of Varanasi.
- Midnight conch raves in Goa.
- “Snore-to-Shore” packages where tourists record themselves snoring before and after the therapy to win certificates of silence.

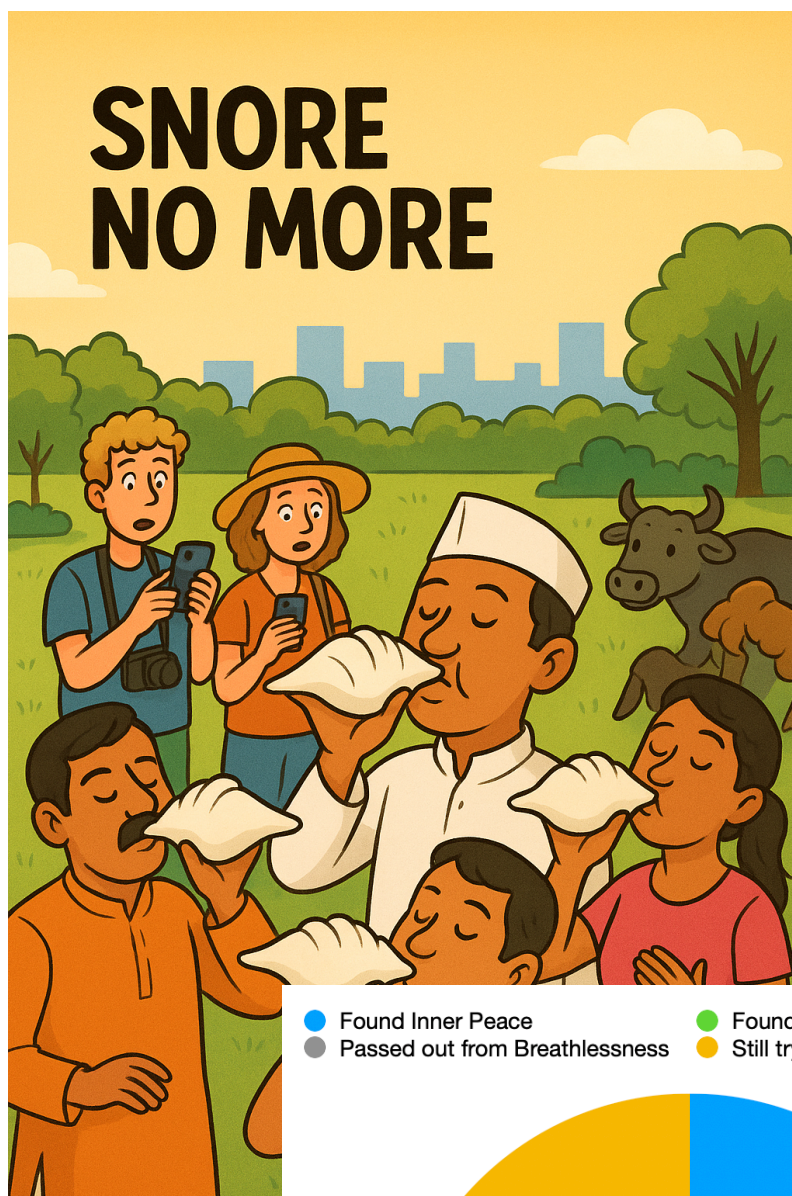
One foreign tourist gushed, “I came to India to find inner peace, but instead I found outer noise. Still, my husband has stopped snoring — mostly because he can’t breathe after 15 minutes of conch blowing.”

Meanwhile, Indian officials are already preparing to file for a UNESCO Cultural Heritage tag for the practice.

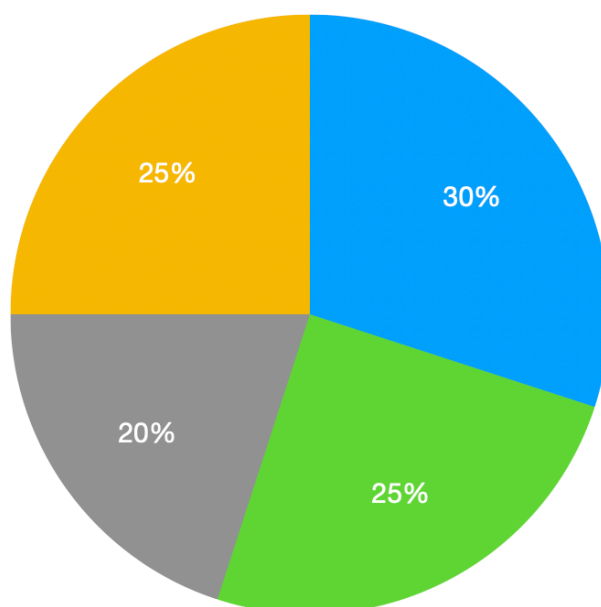
A senior politician announced: “The West blew trumpets, but we blew conches. It’s time the world recognised India as the true wind instrument superpower.”

Snoring may never be the same again — but thanks to conch shells, neither will peace and quiet.

TOURIST REACTION TO INDIA’S CONCH THERAPY



● Found Inner Peace ● Found Outer Noise
● Passed out from Breathlessness ● Still trying to blow since last night



Instagram: The New School Board of Education

By Mukta K Gupta

In yet another example of how social media is rewriting the rules of school life, a local high school recently found itself less occupied with algebra and more entangled in algebra-of-the-heart.

It all began with a photograph — not of a science project or a winning football match, but of young Rohan spotted hanging out with his ex-girlfriend at a café. The image, innocently posted by a fellow classmate on Instagram, reached the eyes of his current girlfriend studying at another school. Within minutes, hearts shattered, emojis flew, and the “In a Relationship” status collapsed like a badly built Jenga tower.

A devastated Rohan did what any 21st-century teenager would not: he went straight to the school principal. Between sobs, he declared that Instagram had “ruined his life” and begged for justice.

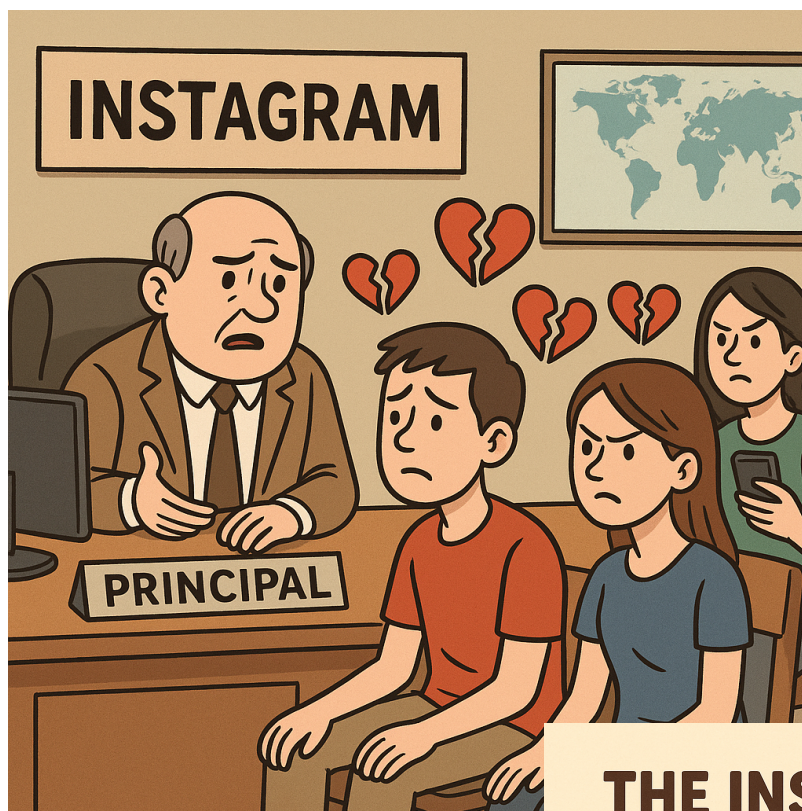
To everyone’s surprise, the principal — who hasn’t finished reading a syllabus in years but has mastered hashtags — decided to treat this like a major disciplinary issue. He summoned the boy’s classmates, the ex-girlfriend, the current girlfriend (via Zoom), and eventually the parents, who now had to answer uncomfortable questions such as, “Why was your daughter double-tapping this boy’s selfies even after the breakup?”

One teacher observed, “We’ve had parent-teacher meetings for grades, but now it’s about relationship status updates. At this rate, we’ll be offering electives in Breakup Management and Conflict Resolution via Instagram Reels.”

Indeed, the entire school has shifted focus. Instead of worrying about board exam results, administrators are busy tracking who unfollowed whom, who liked whose posts, and which emoji constitutes “serious flirting.”

Experts say this is part of a wider trend where schools are no longer institutions of learning but crisis centers for adolescent heartbreak amplified by Wi-Fi. A senior educator lamented, “Once upon a time, students came to school to learn ABC. Now, they come to learn DMs, IG captions, and how to block people without causing drama.”

Meanwhile, Rohan has declared he may never trust Instagram again. His ex has declared she will never trust him again. His current girlfriend has already moved on to Snapchat. And the school principal is still investigating the real question: “Who exactly pressed upload on that fateful post?”



THE INSTAGRAM EPIDEMIC



Homework is now submitted as Instagram stories — with the excuse, “Ma’am, it expired in 24 hours!”

Math problems no longer have X and Y. They have “Why did she like his photo?”



Physical education class has been replaced by finger workouts: double taps and endless scrolling.



Kids don’t pass notes in class anymore — they pass screenshots.

One thing is clear: while textbooks gather dust, Instagram continues to grade us all — in likes, comments, and heartbreaks.

After “Tired Girl” Makeup, What’s Next? The Future of Beauty Trends No One Asked For

L’ROLEIL THE EXHAUSTED EDITION

Because who has time for 8 hours of sleep when you have 800 unread emails?

Mascara of Despair™

Smudges instantly, so you don’t have to fake the breakdown.

Foundation Fatigue™

Available in three shades: Pale, Paler, and “Are you an extra from Twilight?”

Lipstick of Lies

Stays on for 24 hours, just like the smile you fake in meetings.

Dark Circle Enhancer™

Forget concealer. We emphasize your emotional baggage.

Because You're Worth... Whatever Energy You Have Left.

Image AI-generated for parody purposes

Gen Z has recently embraced the “Tired Girl” makeup trend—a carefully curated look designed to say, “Yes, I slept for 11 hours, but somehow still resemble a raccoon who lost custody of the trash bin.”

Naturally, this begs the question: what’s next in the evolution of fashionably exhausted faces? Well, Humour Times’ beauty trend forecasters (a group of underpaid interns with Wi-Fi) have peered into the crystal eyeliner pot, and here’s what they found:

1. The “Just Woke Up From a Nap During a Zoom Meeting” Look

Think: half-smearing lipstick, one eyelid with eyeliner, and the faint imprint of your laptop keyboard across your cheek. It’s not laziness—it’s work-life balance chic.

2. The “Crying in the Office Bathroom” Aesthetic

Mascara intentionally smudged like modern art, blush placed only on one cheek (to mimic uneven tear-streaks), and lips hydrated exclusively with your own salty tears.

3. The “Hangover But Still at Brunch” Glow

Foundation two shades lighter than your skin to highlight dehydration, paired with under-eye concealer you forgot to blend. The pièce de résistance: sunglasses... indoors.

4. The “Wi-Fi Went Out During Netflix” Catastrophe Look

Bold red eye shadow to replicate frustration, pale powder for screen glare, and smudges of Dorito dust strategically brushed on the cheeks. A raw, authentic nod to modern suffering.

5. The “AI Did My Makeup” Experiment

Random streaks of neon green and purple applied at machine-learning angles. Inspired by that time your face filter thought your nose was a second chin. Futuristic and terrifying.

6. The “I’m Fine, Really” Ensemble

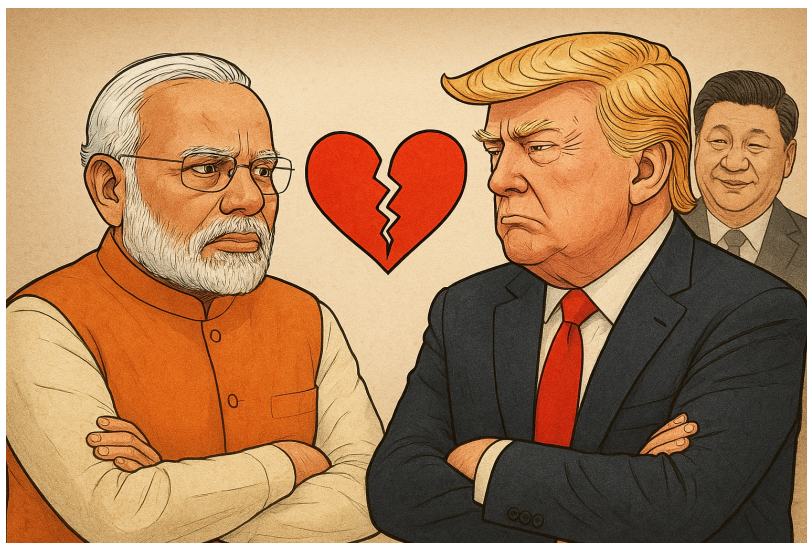
A neutral palette perfected to scream “I’m totally okay” while your eyeliner wing says “I fought with my mother.” Best paired with a forced smile and an

empty iced latte.

Closing Thought

Makeup trends have always been about self-expression—but Gen Z has flipped the game by expressing burnout, anxiety, and emotional damage with nothing more than a Sephora gift card. Who knows? In 2030, we might all be proudly rocking the “Midlife Crisis Contour” or the “Climate Anxiety Glow.”

What If Indians Packed Their Bags and Left the U.S.?



Imagine waking up one fine morning in America to find that every Indian had suddenly packed up their suitcases, stuffed some mango pickle jars inside, and flown back home. Sounds dramatic? Well, brace yourself, because the U.S. would go into full-blown Techpocalypse.

Silicon Valley in ICU:

Within hours, Google searches would take 10 minutes to load, Microsoft would start spelling “Windows” as “Windos,” and Apple would begin outsourcing Siri’s voice to a confused Australian parrot. With half the engineers gone, the remaining ones would be last seen Googling “How to code?” – but sadly, Google itself wouldn’t work.

Hospitals on Life Support:

Indian doctors are the backbone of U.S. healthcare. Without them, waiting times for a simple flu shot would stretch until the year 2050. Emergency rooms would be run by YouTube tutorials, and hospitals would start prescribing “Vicks VapoRub and Netflix” as universal treatment.

Spelling Bees Go Extinct:

American parents would weep as spelling bees disappeared overnight. The word onomatopoeia would suddenly become the final boss no child could defeat. The nation would have to settle with simpler contests like “Name That Fast Food Logo.”

Wall Street in Curry Crisis:

Without Indian analysts, Wall Street would collapse into chaos. Traders would mistake the Sensex for a new yoga pose and try downward-dogging their way out of bankruptcy.

Cultural Blackout:

Goodbye Bollywood dance nights, Diwali fireworks, and samosas at office potlucks. America would have to fall back on boiled hot dogs and awkward small talk. Yoga studios would close down, leaving stressed Americans with only CrossFit to destroy their knees.

THE DAILY EXAGGERATOR

NEWS SLIGHTLY MORE RELIABLE THAN YOUR WHATSAPP UNCLE

INDIANS EXIT AMERICA – CHAOS ENSUES

Silicon Valley crashes, hospitals collapse, spelling bees vanish, and Wall Street goes gluten-free as Indians pack up and fly home

FAKE BREAKING NEWS

C-N-NN	Google halts operations. Official statement: ‘We forgot the Wipassword.’
FawksNooz	Indian exodus linked to decline in spelling bees. Nation’s literacy level
Broomberg	Wall Street tanks as traders confuse ‘naan’ with ‘none.’ Dow drops
NewYerkTymes	Hospitals replace doctors with ChatGPT. Patients report being diagnosed
BBCee	American CEO seen sobbing into curry box: ‘Bring back the biryani,

Conclusion:

In short, if Indians left the U.S., the country would experience a catastrophic meltdown in tech, healthcare, finance, and—most importantly—cuisine. The only people celebrating would be cows, finally free from the pressure of becoming “beef curry.”

So, dear America, hold on tight to your Indians. They might just be the duct tape keeping your superpower status from falling apart.

AUR BATAAO....“Family drama + Aunt’s sass = Guaranteed laughter!”

“Aunty Answers” – Mother-in-Law & Daughter-in-Law Edition

Q1: Aunty, what’s the secret to surviving a mother-in-law who treats your kitchen like her personal lab?

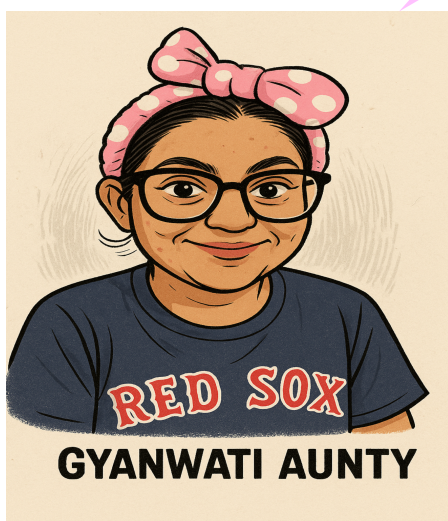
Aunty says:

“Simple, beta! Pretend you’re part of a cooking reality show. Let her experiment, take notes like a scientist, and at the end say, ‘Auntyji, you’ve outdone the Food Network today!’ Meanwhile, secretly hide the fire extinguisher and extra salt.”

Q2: How do you diplomatically tell a mother-in-law that her special chutney recipe is... well... not edible?

Aunty says:

“Oh, beta! Put on your sweetest smile: ‘Auntyji, your chutney is so... unique! I think my stomach isn’t ready for this adventure yet.’ If she insists on the recipe, warn her, ‘I’ll try making it, but I might need a fire extinguisher!’ Everyone feels like a winner.”



Q3: Aunty, how do you survive a family function where both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law compete over who looks more traditional?

Aunty says:

“Ah, beta, become the judge! Give both of them golden stars for ‘Best Saree Drama’ and ‘Most Authentic Jewellery Overload.’ Praise loudly, laugh quietly, and enjoy your popcorn from a safe distance.”

Q4: My daughter-in-law keeps giving advice to my son that I disagree with. Should I: argue, ignore, or start my own advice column?

Aunty says:

“Always start your advice column, beta! Call it ‘Aunty’s Rules of Life’—subtly referenced in family WhatsApp messages. That way, your wisdom spreads without starting a loud argument. Genius and peaceful.”

Q5: How do you tell your mother-in-law that her stories from the 1980s are not as interesting as she thinks... without starting a soap opera at home?

Aunty says:

“Ah, sweetie! Nod along like an attentive student: ‘Auntyji, fascinating! Can you repeat that in the next family function too?’ Then quietly text your friends: ‘Story replay in 3...2...1...’ Patience, humor, and survival.”

“Beta, gather around! Gyanwati Aunty is back – so grab your chai, sit back, and let’s turn your family drama into laughter—because in my world, surviving relatives should always come with a side of comedy!”

India’s Happiness Index 2025 – “Desi Style”

- At Home: “Kuch khaas nahi, bas theek hai...”
- At Office: “Dhandha thoda manda chal raha hai...”
- At Weddings: “Bhai, gold ke rate bahut badh gaye...”
- On Instagram: “Life is amazing #Grateful #LuxuryLife”
- At Mercedes Showroom (while signing cheque): “Bas test drive ke liye aaya tha...”

The true Indian Happiness Index is measured not in GDP or inflation, but in how casually you complain while secretly buying luxury cars.



हास्य से GST हटाओ न हास्य, न व्यंग, न खिंचाई, न टोक टुकाई! हास्य बिना सुकून कहाँ रे !!

बृज खंडेलवाल द्वारा

सोचिए ज़रा, जब आखिरी बार आपने किसी कार्टून को देखकर ठहाका लगाया था? या किसी अखबार के व्यंग्य कॉलम ने आपको इतना हँसाया कि चाय नाक से बाहर आ गई हो? याद नहीं आ रहा? यही तो मसला है—हमारी हँसी चोरी हो रही है, और हमें पता भी नहीं चला।

आज का डिजिटल ज़माना तो शोर-शराबे का मेला है। सोशल मीडिया की भीड़ में हर कोई चिल्ला रहा है—“मेरे मीम देखो! मेरी रील लाइक करो!”—लेकिन हँसी कहीं गुम हो गई है। जो हँसी कभी नुकीले तीर की तरह नेताओं, बाबुओं और समाज के ढोंग को भेदती थी, वो अब सतही ठिठोली में बदल गई है।

आज़ादी के बाद का हिंदुस्तान याद कीजिए। अखबार के पहले पन्ने पर आर.के. लक्ष्मण का कॉमन मैन खड़ा होता था—धोती, चश्मा और आँखों में बेबसी। एक छोटी-सी लाइन ड्राइंग में इतना दम होता था कि पूरा समाज आईना देख ले। शंकर, सुधीर धर, अबू—ये सब सिर्फ़ कार्टूनिस्ट नहीं थे, बल्कि उस दौर के सबसे बड़े संपादक थे।

अब देखिए—लैपटॉप पर बना रंग-बिरंगा कार्टून, चमकदार ग्राफिक्स, लेकिन बात में दम नहीं। जैसे शादी में पचास तरह के पकवान हों, पर नमक भूल गए हों।

आजकल ह्यूमर का मतलब है मीम—नेता जी की फ़ोटो पर मज़ाकिया कैप्शन चिपका दिया और समझ लो दुनिया बदल दी। एक-दो घंटे में वायरल, फिर कूड़े में। सोशल मीडिया की एल्गोरिदम की दौड़ में कलाकार सोच नहीं रहे, बस क्लिक गिन रहे हैं।

ह्यूमर टाइम्स की संपादक मुक्ता गुप्ता कहती हैं—“आज के कार्टूनिस्ट या तो धर्म से डरते हैं या राजनीति से। बाक़ी बचा आम आदमी, उसी पर मज़ाक चलता है।” सही भी है, नेताओं पर तंज़ कसो तो मुक़दमा, धर्म पर करो तो जान का खतरा, तो बचा क्या? आलू-प्याज़ पर जोक्स?

2015 का चार्ली हेब्डो हमला याद है? दुनिया भर में कार्टूनिस्ट सहम गए। भारत में 2021 में एक कॉमेडियन को जेल जाना पड़ा क्योंकि उसने देवताओं पर टिप्पणी कर दी। अब हालत यह है कि कलाकार पहले सोचते हैं—“यह मज़ाक करूँ या FIR आ जाएगी?”

डॉ मनोज सिंह, आगरा यूनिवर्सिटी के कला शिक्षक कहते हैं—“हम अपने बच्चों को बताते हैं कि ह्यूमर गहराई से पैदा होता है, लेकिन सोशल मीडिया की पीढ़ी को सिर्फ़ शोर चाहिए।” यही वजह है कि आज का कॉमेडी शो ज़्यादा हँसाता नहीं, बस ध्यान बँटाता है। एक तरफ़ लक्ष्मण का अखबार वाला कार्टून—जिससे नेताओं की नींद उड़ जाए। दूसरी तरफ़ आज का यूट्यूब स्केच—जिसमें पाँच दोस्त एक ही मज़ाक को दस बार दोहराते हैं। पहला कला था, दूसरा ‘कंटेंट’। फर्क समझना मुश्किल नहीं।

पश्चिम में भी यही हाल। द डेली शो कभी समाज की सबसे तीखी आलोचना करता था, अब ज़्यादा सियासी झुकाव लिए मज़ाक करता है। ट्विटर (अब X) पर तो हँसी का मतलब है किसी को कैसल कर देना। साहित्य से ह्यूमर और सटायर लिखने वाले गायब हो गए। सतही हास्य वॉट्सएप चुटकुलों से शेयर हो रहा है। बॉडी शेमिंग गैर कानूनी है। महिलाओं की सिर्फ़ तारीफ़ की जा सकती है।

इंडियन टीवी चैनल्स, शुरुआत में रेगुलर कॉमेडी सोप्स प्रसारित करते थे। मुसद्दी लाल फेमस हुआ, जसपाल भट्टी ने खूब आईना दिखाया। फिल्मों से कॉमेडियंस गायब हो गए। महमूद, जॉनी वॉकर, जौहर, असरानी, जगदीप, तमाम हास्य आर्टिस्ट्स होते थे। अब आता है एक बेहूदा टोटली कमर्शियल “कोई शर्मा शो” जो फिल्मों का प्रमोशन करता है।

हास्य में गिरावट, मतलब बीमार समाज। राजनीति से पीलू मोदी, राज नारायण टाइप नेता लुप्त हो गए। अब मंच से हास्य रचनाएं नहीं, प्राइम मिनिस्टर की मदर को गाली फेंकी जाती हैं। राहुल गांधी हंसने हंसाने से परहेज करते हुए खुद हास्य के पात्र बन जाते हैं। शीर्ष नेता हंसने के मामले में Shylock से ज़्यादा कंजूस हैं।

लेकिन सबकुछ अंधेरा नहीं है। आज भी पॉडकास्ट, इंडी कॉमिक्स और छोटे प्लेटफ़ॉर्म पर नए कलाकार असली हँसी की तलाश में जुटे हैं। भारत में स्टैंड-अप कॉमेडी का बूम यही बताता है कि लोग हँसना चाहते हैं, बस माहौल डरावना न हो। जिनको हँसी नहीं आती है उनके लिए गुदगुदी करने के लिए उंगलीबाजों की सेवा उपलब्ध है।

व्यंग्यकार पांडे कहते हैं—“आज़ाद समाज वही है जहाँ आलोचक ज़िंदा रह सके।” यानी जहाँ ह्यूमर मरे, समझ लो आज़ादी भी बीमार है।

ह्यूमर इंडस्ट्री का पतन सिर्फ़ कलाकारों का संकट नहीं, यह समाज की सेहत का आईना है। अगर हँसी गायब है तो समझिए डर बढ़ रहा है।

Kurruptistan Emperor Lord Krumpf Senior's Tremendous Speech to the Snooze-Fest

By Brij Khandelwal

Lord Krumpf Senior struts to the podium like a peacock who just discovered hair gel, grappling with a red tie so massive it could double as a circus tent. He glares at the crowd like they're a knockoff buffet at a sketchy roadside diner.

"Ladies, gentlemen, zombies, bureaucrats, and the four poor souls who wandered in chasing 'free donuts' signs—welcome to the greatest, most spectacular display of hot air since the Hindenburg took its final bow!

Nobody's seen a show like this, folks. Nobody's been dumb enough to even try! Tremendous, just tremendous. I look out at this SCO jamboree — what a name, SCO, sounds like a rejected Star Wars droid—and I see the finest collection of paper-pushers, coffee-break connoisseurs, and professional stapler-misplacers since Socrates invented the paperweight.

I've got a dream, folks. Well, more like a nightmare—yuge nightmare, the best nightmare. First, a shout-out to my pal Abe Linkan—great guy, tremendous beard, freed the people, unlike this crowd, who'd free a paper jam and call it a revolution. But let's be honest, Kurruptistan is rigged—yuge rigged, the riggiest. We've got deals so bad they make your aunt's meatloaf look like an owl feather. Chains of bureaucracy so heavy they'd sink a battleship. And this SCO? It's like a convention for people who get a thrill from alphabetizing their complaints. Sad!

I'm a nonviolent human bean, folks, inspired by that old guy who freed the brown folks with soul force—tremendous soul, the best soul. Nobody cuts through nonsense like me. I'm like a machete in a jungle of red tape, hacking away while you lot are still looking for the 'on' button on your shredder.

Let's talk about those beautiful documents—the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence. Gorgeous papers, the best. Written by wig-wearing geniuses who stored their brainpower in those fluffy headpieces. They promised life, liberty, and a yuge check of freedom. But what did we get? A bounced check, folks! Marked 'insufficient funds' by crooked politicians, fake news peddlers, and those weirdos who clap when the plane lands—you know who you are! You're the bounced-check brigade, hoarding red tape like it's vintage Beanie Babies. Pathetic!

We're making Kurruptistan—and Kenada, don't forget our neighbour—great again, rising from the woke swamp of pronoun manuals and diversity flowcharts! We're talking wins—yuge wins, the best wins, not this SCO nonsense where your biggest victory is finding a parking spot before lunch. Inflation's through the roof, crime's a circus, and our borders? Folks, it's like the SCO threw a potluck, invited the world, and forgot to lock the door—or the windows, or the chimney!

Krumpf points at a random audience member. Look at this guy! Low-energy! Probably spent all morning color-coding his Post-its and crying over a jammed copier. Don't be like him, folks. Stay tough, meet their force with soul force. My people, you're the best crowds—nobody does crowds like me, not even that time the SCO tried a 'team-building fun run' and half of you got lost in the vending machine aisle. Rescued by a janitor on a golf cart—sad!

My dream—yuge dream, the best dream—is a nation that lives up to 'all men are created equal.' No quotas, no nonsense, just merit—like picking the juiciest steak at the state fair. My grandchildren—gorgeous kids, perfect genes, hair so tremendous it deserves its own zip code—will be judged by their achievements, not some woke checklist scribbled on recycled hemp napkins.

And the enemies? Vicious globalists, the climate hoax crowd—folks, I saw a snowflake last week, case closed!—and don't get me started on Crooked Hillarious or Sleepy Negotious, who's probably napping through this speech right now.

Thank God Almighty—and the greatest emperor, me, obviously—we're free at last! This is the biggest crowd ever—bigger than Woodstock, and that time the SCO tried a 'motivational seminar' that ended in a fistfight over the last bagel. Nobody does speeches like me. Tremendous. Now go home, fire your paper-shufflers, and let's make Kurruptistan great again!"

आगरा की गाली-परंपरा: जहाँ जुबान बहती है, और सामने वाला डूब जाता है!

खुशकैट गालियानी द्वारा

शाहजहाँ ने प्यार का इज़हार संगमरमर में तराश दिया, पर आज़ादी के बाद से यहाँ लोग गुस्से का इज़हार संगमरमर नहीं, बल्कि गालियों की फुलझड़ी छोड़कर करते हैं। और विश्वास मानिए, यह फुलझड़ी दिवाली की पटाखों जैसी नहीं, बल्कि रॉकेट लांचर जैसी होती है।

यहाँ की गलियों का नज़ारा देखिए। आपको लगेगा कि हर नुककड़ पर कोई शायर बैठा है, लेकिन गज़ल की जगह वो गाली सुना रहा है। और श्रोता भी क्या मज़े से सुनते हैं! जैसे शेर-शायरी का मुशायरा हो रहा हो—बस फर्क इतना है कि तालियाँ कम और “तेरी माँ!” ज़्यादा सुनाई देता है।

लेकिन, दुख की बात यह है कि आगरा की गालियाँ भी अब 4G से 2G हो गई हैं। जो गालियाँ कभी सुनकर पड़ोसी का पंखा बंद हो जाता था, अब उनका असर उतना नहीं रहा। आजकल की गालियाँ इतनी घिस चुकी हैं कि लगता है जैसे वॉट्सऐप यूनिवर्सिटी का फॉरवर्ड मैसेज हो—कोई सीरियसली नहीं लेता। और भई, सबसे बड़ी समस्या है जेंडर जस्टिस की। हर दूसरी गाली में माँ, बहन, बुआ! अरे भाई, कभी फूफा, चाचा, मामा को भी तो शामिल करो! अगर “सबका साथ, सबका विकास” सच में चाहिए तो गालियों में भी आरक्षण होना चाहिए। LGBTQ+ कम्युनिटी का तो नाम तक नहीं आता। अब समय है कि हमारी गालियाँ भी “समावेशी” बनें।

गालियों के अग्रज विद्वान डॉ. पारसनाथ चौधरी का कहना है: “गोलियों से नहीं, गालियों से क्रांति लानी है।” उनके मुताबिक गाली समाज को जोड़ने का अहिंसक हथियार है। भूख हड़ताल की जगह अगर गाली यात्रा निकाली होती, तो अंग्रेज़ खुद बोरिया-बिस्तर समेटकर भाग जाते। वैसे चौधरी साहब विदेशियों को हिंदी सिखाने में भी गालियों से शुरुआत करते हैं। उनका पहला लेक्चर ही होता है: “Repeat after me: अबे ओ खट्टा पराठा!” छात्र सोचते हैं कि ये योगा का नया मंत्र है।

इतिहासकार बताते हैं कि गाली का आविष्कार 7694 साल पहले हुआ। एक दिव्यांग राजकुमार, जो तलवार नहीं चला सकता था, उसने गालियों का ऐसा शस्त्र ईजाद किया कि उसके दुश्मन खुद सन्यास लेने लगे। कल्पना कीजिए, अगर उस समय नेटफ्लिक्स होता, तो सबसे हिट सीरीज़ होती—“Game of Gaalis”। 1857 की क्रांति में भी आगरा कमांडर साहब ने ऐसी अंग्रेज़ी-उर्दू गालियाँ दीं कि गूँज लंदन तक गई। हाउस ऑफ़ कॉमन्स की बहस वहीं रुक गई और सांसद एक-दूसरे से पूछने लगे—“Bloody Hell! ये कौन-सा dictionary edition है?”

आगरा की शादी का नज़ारा तो और भी निराला है। दूल्हे का स्वागत शहनाई से नहीं, बल्कि गाली-गज़ल से होता है। महिलाएँ सुर और ताल में ऐसी-ऐसी गालियाँ गाती हैं कि सुनकर लगता है कपिल शर्मा शो का लाइव टेलीकास्ट हो रहा हो।

“आ गए ओ नकली बादशाह, दुल्हन के नाम पे आलू के छिलके!” “ओ ऐ नकली शायर, गाना मत गा, वरना मिठाई भी खट्टी हो जाएगी!”

बेचारा दूल्हा सोचता रह जाता है, “ये बारात है या रोस्ट सेशन?” पुलिस के लिए भी गालियाँ लाइसेंस की तरह हैं। यहाँ भर्ती की पहली शर्त है—गाली में एम.फिल.। बिना उसके दारोगा जी की नौकरी पक्की नहीं। थाने में पूछताछ कुछ यूँ होती है: “अबे ओ सूफी समोसा! तू सच बोलेगा या बस परत दिखाकर आलू छिपाएगा?” “ओ वफ़ादार मच्छर! तेरे राज हमने चूस लिए तो याद आएगा।” कैदी सोचते हैं, जेल से निकलते ही हमें शायद सम्मान-पत्र मिल जाए।

आज का युवा अंग्रेज़ी में सिमट गया है—“Oh Shit”। अरे बेटा, ये क्या गाली हुई? इसमें न तीखा स्वाद है, न देसी तड़का। गाली का असली हीरो तो वही है जिसकी गाली में हिंदी, उर्दू और ब्रजभाषा सबका मिश्रण हो—ठेठ बिरयानी वाला फ्यूजन फ्लेवर!

पंडित ऊधम जी दुखी होकर कहते हैं: “पश्चिमी हवा ने हमारी गाली-संस्कृति को मुरझा दिया है।” सही कहते हैं। गाली अब वो चटनी नहीं रही, जो हर भोजन में स्वाद बढ़ा दे। अब तो वक्ता आ गया है कि भाषाविद गालियों का नया शब्दकोश तैयार करें—

“OxCam Dictionary of Agra Gaalis – HD Edition”। ऐतिहासिक गाली-युद्ध

इतिहास के पन्नों में लिखा है कि 1390 में अंग्रेज़ और चीनी अफ़ीमचियों के बीच गाली-युद्ध हुआ था। हार के बाद अंग्रेज़ कप्तान बोला—“अबे किस्मत के कबाब!” और वो गूँजते-गूँजते लंदन संसद तक पहुँच गई। हाउस ऑफ़ कॉमन्स में स्पीकर ने कहा: “Gentlemen, this is truly WhatsApp University standard!”

गालियों का भविष्य

अब वक्त है कि आगरा अपनी गालियों को पॉलिश करे, ताकि वो ताजमहल की तरह चमकें। गालियाँ ऐसी हों जो HD क्वालिटी में, Dolby Surround Sound इफ़ेक्ट के साथ आएँ। क्योंकि याद रखिए—

“गाली वही जो तवा पर रोटी की तरह फूले, वरना जापानी बिस्किट भी ज़्यादा आवाज़ करता है!”

तो ऐ आगरा वासियों, उठो!

अपनी जुबान की तलवार पैनी करो। सूफी समोसे, वफ़ादार मच्छर, और झाड़ू-ए-तरकी की नई डिक्शनरी छापो।

ताकि जब दुनिया हमें ताजमहल के लिए याद करे, तो कहे—“ये वो शहर है जहाँ गाली भी शेर-शायरी की तरह अदबी है... बस उसका अंदाज़ ज़रा तलख़ है!”

हमारे खुदाई दीवाने: बाबा के गड़े खजाने से लेकर धर्मस्थल के धूल-धूसरित नाटकों तक!

बृज खंडेलवाल द्वारा



अब चलते हैं कर्नाटक के धर्मस्थल, जहाँ कुछ लोगों को लगा कि वहाँ प्राचीन कंकाल मिलेंगे—जैसे कोई इंडियाना जोन्स वाली फिल्म चल रही हो। कुछ लोगों ने कहा कि हाँ, यहाँ हड्डियाँ हैं, तो कुछ ने आँखें घुमा कर कहा, "यह तो बस गम्पों का खजाना है।"

कई दिन की मेहनत के बाद क्या मिला? बस टूटी हुई कमर और एक नया मुहावरा: "हड्डी नहीं मिली, बस हमारी कमर टूट गई!" लेकिन हिम्मत हारी? बिल्कुल नहीं! बेकार की खुदाई करना तो हमारी आदत सी बन गई है—चाहे वो सोना ढूँढना हो, हड्डियाँ या फिर इंस्टाग्राम पर वायरल होने के लिए एक अच्छी वीडियो!

हमारे बड़े शहर तो खुदाई में माहिर हैं।

जहाँ आज नहीं खुदा है, तो वहाँ कल खुदेगा, हड़प्पा नहीं तो लिलिपुट निकलेगा।

सच कहूँ तो, भारत का असली राष्ट्रीय खेल क्रिकेट नहीं, बल्कि खुदाई है!

हम बस खोदते नहीं, पूरा जुनून लगा देते हैं—जैसे कोई बॉलीवुड हीरो सरसों के खेत में हीरोइन के पीछे भाग रहा हो।

मिट्टी ही तो है। कोई न कोई राज मिलेगा। मंदिर के आँगन हो या सड़क के किनारे, जहाँ भी थोड़ी सी ज़मीन दिखी, हम वहीं कुदाल चला देते हैं, मानो कोई बड़ा फिल्मी मंजर हो।

याद आया उन्नाव का किस्सा, जहाँ एक बाबा के "सोने के सपने" ने पुरातत्व विभाग (ASI) को पूरी तरह उलझा दिया था। सोचिए उस मंजर को: पसीने में लथपथ अधिकारी, मुस्कराते हुए चायवाले, और बाबा जी मुगलों के ज़माने के खजाने के ख्वाब देख रहे हैं। आखिर में क्या मिला? सिर्फ धूल और कीचड़! बस, बाबा की TRP बढ़ गई और एक शरारती स्थानीय ने कहा, "सपना तो टूट गया, पर एक नया गड्ढा जरूर बन गया!" हमने सबक सीखा? नहीं, हम तो अगले गड़े खजाने के सपने देखने में ही मस्त हैं।

दिल्ली मेट्रो की खुदाई इतनी लंबी चल रही है कि लोग मजाक करते हैं, "लगता है ये लाइन सीधी धरती के बीचों-बीच जाएगी!" और गाँवों में तो कुँए खोदना भी एक पारिवारिक नाटा बन जाता है: "पिछली बार पानी नहीं मिला, पर इस बार तो गंगा ही निकल आएगी यहाँ से!" असल में होता क्या है? बस एक और सूखा गड्ढा और एक नई कहानी।

और हमारे नेताओं की बात ही अलग है। उनके 'कंकाल' तो रोज news शो पर निकलते रहते हैं, और व्हाट्सएप यूनिवर्सिटी वाले कहते हैं कि ताजमहल के नीचे एलियन का UFO दफन है! तो फिर सवाल है, हम खोदते क्यों हैं?

क्योंकि मिट्टी हमारी कल्पना है, हमारा रहस्य है, हमारा मनोरंजन है! भारत की धरती एक बड़े पिटारे जैसी है—जहाँ चोट मारो, कुछ न कुछ तो निकलता ही है: खजाना, गड्ढा या फिर एक नया विवाद! खोदते रहो, हमारे प्यारे दीवानों !!

“From Bihar to California: When Politicians and CEOs Forget Wives Have Cable TV”

By Mukta K Gupta

Bihar's dusty politics took a glamorous turn this week when a local bahubali politician decided to add “cultural appreciation” to his already colourful resume. At a public rally, instead of addressing roads, jobs, or electricity, the honourable leader was

spotted appreciating something far more electrifying — Pushpa, the undisputed Nautch Queen of the district. With hips swaying and politicians praying, the performance was sizzling enough to make the loudspeakers blush. Local cable TV channel, Lalten TV, broadcasted the event live, giving every household front-row seats to what was essentially Bihar's own version of Bigg Boss.

Unfortunately for our fearless leader, one particular viewer tuned in with extra attention: his wife. She had been waiting patiently to watch her husband give a rousing speech about development. Instead, she found him giving rousing encouragement to Pushpa, with claps, whistles, and perhaps a little too much eye contact for marital comfort.

The drama peaked when the politician returned home. Standing at the gate was his wife, not with an aarti thali, but with a belan in one hand and a rolling pin in the other — the true weapons of mass destruction. Neighbours report hearing shouts of “Jai Bihar!” followed by the unmistakable thwack of a belan making contact with a guilty forehead.

Pushpa, meanwhile, has become an overnight star. Sources say she's been invited to perform at five more political rallies and two weddings. “Politics is boring, but dance adds spice,” commented one

enthusiastic villager. “At least this way we know our leaders are awake during speeches.”

As for the bahubali, he has reportedly promised his wife that from now on he will only attend “male kirtans and serious political functions.” But villagers aren't convinced. “We'll believe it,” one man said,

“when we see him clapping for the harmonium instead of Pushpa.”

And if you think this is only a rural comedy, think again. Recently, a high-profile CEO was caught on camera at a Coldplay concert getting too cozy with his girlfriend, only to have the footage go viral



Tips for Politicians and CEOs: How Not to Get Caught by the Wife

1. **Blame the Cameraman:** If caught on video, immediately say, “Deep fake technology has gone too far.”
2. **Wear Sunglasses at Night:** So she can't tell where your eyes are really looking. Downside: You may trip on stage.
3. **Code Words:** Before leaving home, agree on code words. Example: “I was appreciating democracy” = “Yes, I was clapping for the dancer.”
4. **Zoom into the Crowd:** If cameras catch you smiling, claim you were just happy to see the villagers awake after lunch.
5. **Emergency Excuse:** Always carry a fake manifesto in your pocket. If your wife questions you, say, “I was reading policy notes, not watching the Nautch girl.”

and his wife play front-row referee later at home.

Whether it's a village rally in Bihar or a rock concert in California, the moral remains universal: cameras never lie, wives never forgive, and the belan is mightier than both.

THE TEENAGE OUT SMARTER

Inspired by true lives, told with heart, humour and hope.

By Nina P Nayak

It's been less than a month. That's all. Barely a blink since our grandson turned thirteen—and already I find myself gasping in disbelief, clutching my heart like a heroine in an old Bollywood movie.

Gone is the child who once leapt at the idea of a family outing. In his place stands a freshly-minted teenager with limbs growing faster than bamboo shoots—and an attitude to match.

So here we are. His mother, grandfather, and I—all hopeful, eager for one meal together. Any restaurant! I even dangled the bait of choosing the place. KFC? Pizza Hut? Surely his bottomless teenage stomach would answer the call.

But no.

"No thanks," he said, eyes fixed to a glowing screen where some gun-toting, demon-hunting crouched hero was leaping through digital jungle. "I'm chilling today."

"Chilling?" I echoed, stunned. "But you've *just* turned thirteen!"

"Let's pretend, just for today," I said, hopeful. "Turn back the clock. Be twelve again! Come with us. For our sake?"

He looked up briefly—and delivered the blow.

"Twelve again? How? It's on the iCloud. Can't change it now."

Ah. The **iCloud Era**. Even the gods—let alone grandparents—can't rewrite its decree.

Undeterred, I reminded him of a promise made on our arrival: "You owe me a couple of badminton games. How about trading that for the outing?"

With a smirk and eyes still glued to the screen, he said, "I'll make it *unlimited* badminton time."

"Unlimited". He knew exactly what he was doing - more than a friendly gesture.

It was a clever ploy knowing full well that my seventy-plus-old knees would collapse like a pack of cards in a max. of 20 minutes!!

So, I turned to my backup plan: emotional blackmailing using grandfather. Surely a professor and management guru could persuade the boy using his best management skills?

"Rahul," he began, using his lecturing tone—the one that made MBA students sweat. "You know, we need to maintain strong bonds with each other. It's family values, keeping relationships going and an intergenerational investment—" The boy yawned.

So I stepped in. "Yawning? This is not done," I said feigning anger. Letting down even your grandfather!"

"I'm not letting him down," he said coolly, "I'm just enjoying my birthday gift given by Papa and Mama which has turned up late."

Checkmate.

Desperate, I reached for my last weapon: public exposure!

"You know what? I'll maul you with words. I'll put this whole incident in writing," I said using a veiled threat. "I'll send it to the newspaper. The middle page. With your name on it. Let the world see how a teenager turned his back on his visiting grandparents."

He didn't even flinch. Just raised an eyebrow. "You told me yourself—children's names can't be published. Child rights, remember? I can take you to court."

"You can't," I retorted. "You're still a minor."

"I'll tell Mama to take you to court."

"She won't."

"Then I'll ignore you for the rest of your visit and cancel the unlimited badminton time offer."

Checkmate again.

Defeated, deflated, and mentally drafting a column titled “Teen Lawyers Up Against Grandparents ” I slumped into a chair while the new teen—headphones on to shut me out, demon game resumed—grinned quietly.

With one foot still in childhood and the other planted firmly in teenage defiance, he’d outsmarted two doting grandparents. He had won. His mother, grandfather and I went out on our own.

Later that evening, back home after a traffic jam stretched our sans-grandson outing longer than planned, I was coming to making peace with my defeat.

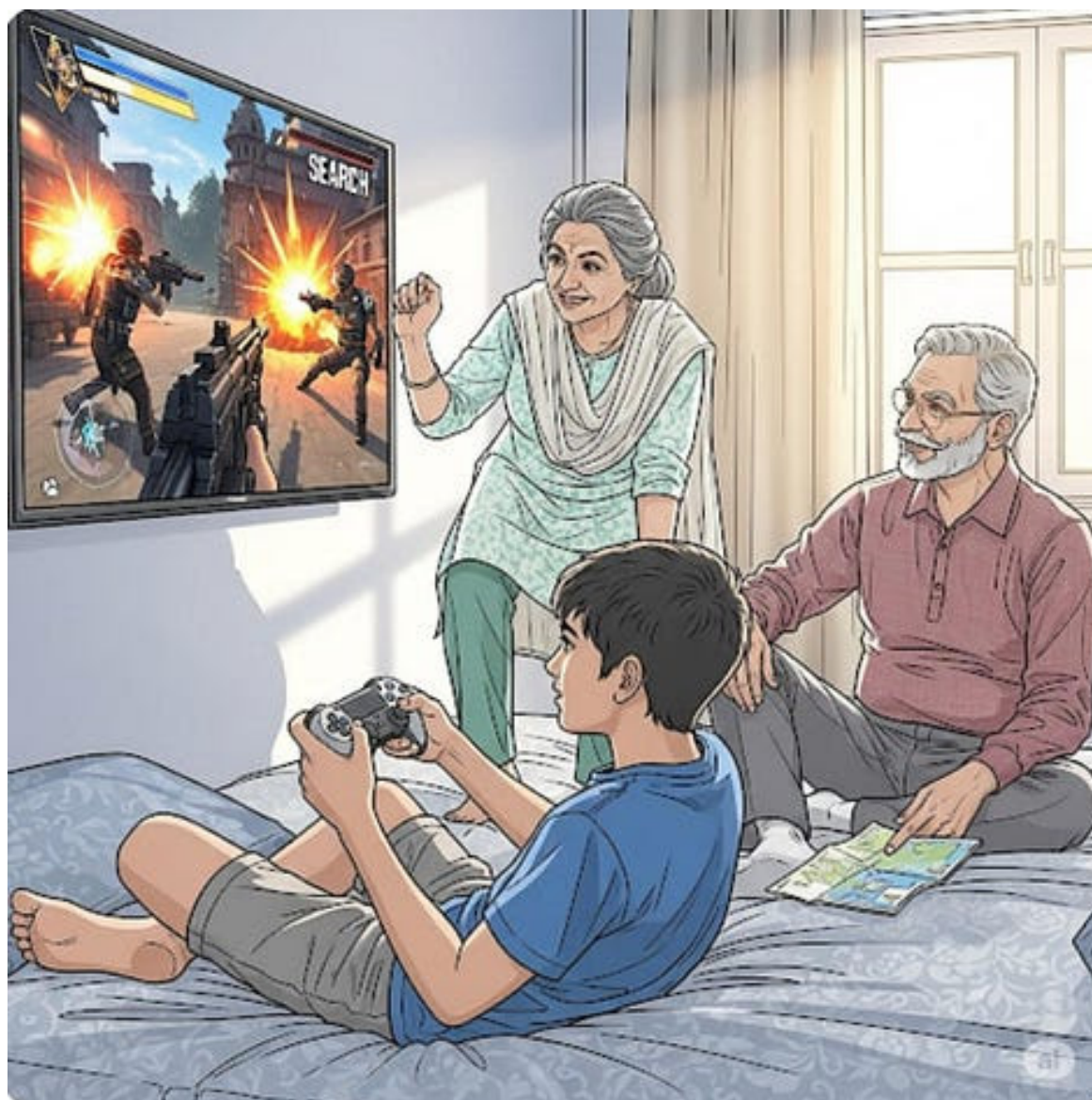
Just then, like a well-timed plot twist, he came home beaming, his football game stats replayed with more animation than the morning deliberations had sparked. Rahul scored. Not just one, but a hat trick of triumphs—his first goal, an assist, and a penalty kick, all in the same soggy, rain-soaked match. And just like that, all was forgiven.

Reminding us of something important: There’s more than one way to show up.

He may have skipped the restaurant and dodged the badminton, but he’d shown up where it mattered—to him. And maybe that’s what growing up is.

Checkmate—again.
Game on, Rahul. You didn’t just win the day—

You rewrote the rules.





SEPTEMBER HORROR-SCOPE



When the Stars Troll You Back

Aries (Mar 21–Apr 19): Your energy is unmatched this month... unfortunately, it's only directed toward arguing with customer service bots. Expect refunds to take longer than your last relationship.

Taurus (Apr 20–May 20): You'll try to stick to a diet, but every time Mercury retrogrades, samosas mysteriously appear. Don't fight destiny. Fight cholesterol.

Gemini (May 21–Jun 20): Your dual personality finally shows up in public – one half orders kale salad, the other half steals fries from strangers. Expect lawsuits.

Cancer (Jun 21–Jul 22): You'll binge-watch a "feel-good" show but end up sobbing harder than your bank account on rent day. Pro tip: tissues > therapy.

Leo (Jul 23–Aug 22): Spotlight's on you, Leo! Sadly, it's the CCTV footage of you tripping over a banana peel. Viral fame guaranteed.

Virgo (Aug 23–Sep 22): You'll spend all month cleaning, organizing, and making to-do lists... then misplace them. Cosmic irony strikes again.

Libra (Sep 23–Oct 22): Your attempt at "balance" means eating pizza in one hand while holding green juice in the other. The stars applaud your multitasking – your stomach does not.

Scorpio (Oct 23–Nov 21): Passion runs high this month... mostly for arguing on WhatsApp family groups. Warning: your aunt is about to unleash 74 forwarded conspiracy theories.

Sagittarius (Nov 22–Dec 21): Adventure calls! Sadly, it's just your boss asking you to "explore" unpaid overtime.

Capricorn (Dec 22–Jan 19): This month, your career finally takes off! Sadly, it's in the opposite direction of your salary.

Aquarius (Jan 20–Feb 18): You'll invent a new life hack that solves absolutely nothing but goes viral anyway. Congratulations, you're the new TikTok guru of nonsense.

Pisces (Feb 19–Mar 20): Romance is in the air! Sadly, so is pollution. Your soulmate cancels the date because their AQI app screamed "STAY INDOORS."

A cartoon illustration depicting a man cooking in a large pot labeled 'GST'. The man, who has a mustache and is wearing a white shirt, has a '40%' label on his chest. He is using a large spoon to stir the pot. To his left, a small wooden table holds a box labeled 'PANEER' with a '5%' label above it, and a bottle labeled 'BOOK' with a '40%' label next to it. In front of the pot is a tray containing a bottle labeled 'SODA' with a '40%' label next to it, and a glass of soda. The pot is sitting on a fire made of sticks. The background is a plain light brown color.

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