

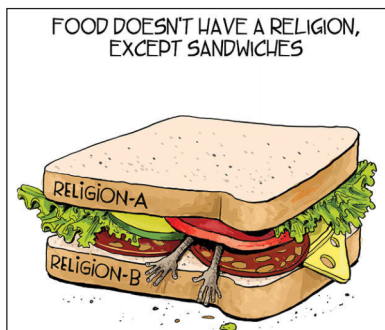


3/2019

CityMatters

CUTS[®]
International

Does Food have a Religion?



www.google.com



This month was special to all of us in India when we celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary across the world on 2nd October 2019. There were many things about Bapu which one can draw lessons from. For example, his maxim that whenever one has to take a decision, imagine the face of the poorest person and ask if what you will do will be of benefit to him/her.

His consistent non-violent struggle for India's independence from the British was unparalleled in world history. It inspired Martin Luther King in the US and Nelson Mandela in South Africa to lead a similar struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed classes whose colour was not pale but dark. No wonder, the noted scientist Albert Einstein said: "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth."

Considering the general scenario in the country, which has been exemplified by hate killings of one community by another, whether majority or minority, it would be worth revisiting what Bapu spoke about on communal harmony. "If not during my lifetime, if I know that after my death both Hindus and Mussalmans will bear witness that I had never ceased to yearn after communal peace". So much about the socio-religious schisms which existed during the early part of the last century, which lead to the unfortunate partition of India when we gained freedom in 1947.

Be that as it may, what shocked me the other day, when I read about a customer in Jabalpur refusing to accept a food parcel from a Muslim delivery man of Zomato. Asked the company's head rather stoically, "does food have a religion"? We go to restaurants and hotels and are often served by untouchables also, but do we ask about their castes or religion? We don't see why did the Jabalpur man make a fuss about the delivery man being a Muslim. Just imagine the reverse that a Muslim man would have refused to take delivery if the courier was a Hindu: ludicrous.

Something which I have often wondered is that whenever we eat goat's meat outside or even at home, it comes from a Muslim butcher, who sells what is called *halal* meat (pure, when the animal is cut slowly to let the blood ooze out). Many eating joints proudly display that their meat is *halal*. Orthodox Hindus would only eat *jhatka* (cut with one stroke) meat which is sold by Hindu butchers, but they are few and rare. What I wanted to say is that eating *halal* meat has never hurt my sentiments, so why the big fuss.

Another Gandhism that the government has put into practice vigorously is sanitation — the *Swachh Bharat* Campaign. Questions are raised on the government's claim, but does it matter because the government has to convince a large number of fence-sitters to sit on the WC built for them. Indeed, only building toilets will not help. Getting water and people to use them is the challenge that many of us are addressing. Jai Hind!

INSIDE

- ◆ Gandhi's goat
- ◆ Magsaysay to Indian journalist
- ◆ Plastic Touch!
- ◆ Payal wins change maker award
- ◆ Reduce the weight of school bags

Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

P.S. Our gratitude to esteemed subscribers.

Greenland is 'not for sale'

Greenland dismissed US President Trump's reported intentions of purchasing the world's biggest island, saying it was 'open for business, not for sale.'

Trump asked his advisers about acquiring the island during 'meetings, dinners, and passing conversations' because of Greenland's "abundant resources and geopolitical importance."

Kim Kielsen, Greenland's premier said that Greenland is not for sale and cannot be sold, but it is open for trade and cooperation with other countries, including the US. (FT, 18.08.19)

Kenyan lawmaker ousted from Parliament

Some Kenyan lawmakers are protesting a decision by the temporary speaker of Parliament's lower house to



eject their colleague who was holding her young child during a session of the legislature.

Zuleikha Hassan was ejected from the floor of the National Assembly with her 5-month-old baby. Hassan had to bring the baby to Parliament because she was not able to make other arrangements and did not want to miss work.

Several legislators walked out of parliament to protest her ouster, which, coincidentally, happened during World Breastfeeding Week. (ET, 08.08.19)

Change is coming

A youth-led movement has called on the countries of the United Nations



to take climate change seriously, but can the world's elite meet their expectations?

Swedish teenager and climate activist Greta Thunberg, who has become the face of the climate change movement, addressed the masses by the Hudson River. "Why should we study for a future that is being taken away from us, that is being stolen for profit?", Thunberg said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has made climate change his priority for this year's General Assembly, demanding countries to show up with 'concrete plans'. (Tol, 22.09.19)

Death during sex on a business trip

A French company has been found liable for the death of an employee who had a cardiac arrest while having sex with a stranger on a business trip. A Paris court ruled that his death was an industrial accident and that the family was entitled to compensation.

The firm had argued the man was not carrying out professional duties when he joined a guest in her hotel room. But under French law an employer is responsible for any accident occurring during a business trip, judges said. (BBC, 11.09.19)

Live together, die together

A Georgia couple who were married for 71 years has died just hours apart. Marilyn DeLaigle, 88, and her husband, Herbert DeLaigle, 94, both died on July 12, 2019.

According to a post on the DeLoach-McKerley-Prescott Funeral Home's website, DeLaigle was married to Herbert DeLaigle for 71 years who entered into the rest 12 hours before her.

The couple had six children who said that she was a very devoted mother when their father had to be gone for months at a time. (Tol, 18.07.19)

Whistling villages

According to Rigveda Deshpandey, the art of whistling has been practiced since 3000 BC. There are unique villages across the world where people communicate through whistling.

There is Kuskoy, located high above Turkey's Black Sea coast, where people whistle as a means of non-verbal communication. There is another such village in the Canary Islands. India has its whistling village, Kongthong, in the



East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. Each mother composes a unique tune that she uses to call her child until he or she grows up.

Recently, Member of Parliament Rajya Sabha Rakesh Sinha urged the government to get Kongthong included on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. (Mint, 10.08.19)

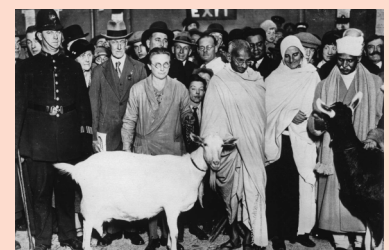
Clerical Errors

The Health Ministry notified the National Medical Commission Act in the gazette on August 08, 2019. But much to the embarrassment of the Ministry, the three key amendments by the Parliament, especially the one on increasing the numbers nominated by states to the National Medical Commission, were left out in the final notification. The Ministry had to issue a corrigendum to correct what is termed as 'clerical errors'. (ET, 23.08.19)



Gandhi's goat

Gandhi had taken a vow not to consume cow and buffalo milk, to protest against animal cruelty. But he was finally persuaded by his wife and his doctor to make a concession for goat's milk. Ever since, his disciples and family had to ensure a steady supply of goat's milk, even if it meant taking two goats with him when he had to go to England. On this, Sarojini Naidu once quipped: "It is becoming a costly affair to keep Gandhiji in poor conditions." (ET, 29.09.19)



Diary of Anne finally out

Three years before she was executed by Nazi soldiers in a Jewish ghetto in Poland, 14-year-old Renia Spiegel began to keep a diary. Over the next 700 pages, Renia records not only her teenage preoccupations but also the terrors of the Holocaust.



She spent the last days of her life hiding in an attic with Zygmunt's parents and recorded her final diary entry on July 28: "Hear O Israel, save us, help us! You have kept me safe... help me to survive, help us!"

Finding it distressing to read, the family kept it locked away for 70 years in a vault before it was resurrected by Renia's sister. The book is now being published in English for the first time.

(Tol, 14.09.19)

Vegetarian meat burgers

Plant-based meat, or 'alt-meat', is making its presence felt in the land of steak. While lab-grown meat is still not commercially viable, Silicon Valley startups like Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods have perfected their alt-meat offerings in the past 18 months, reports Outside Online.



"By 2018, Beyond Burger and Impossible Burger (trademarks of their respective companies) were selling briskly and many restaurant chains were including them."

But alt-meat became mainstream in 2019 when Burger King, the world's second-largest fast-food chain, "decided to sell the Impossible Whopper in all 7,200 restaurants."

(Tol, 18.08.19)

Scientists find a forbidden planet

Scientists are expressing surprise after discovering a solar system 30 light-years away from Earth that defies current understanding about planet formation, with a large Jupiter-like planet

orbiting a diminutive star known as a red dwarf.

Stars generally are much bigger than even the largest planets that orbit them. But in this case, the star and the planet are not much different in size, the researchers said.

The star, called GJ 3512, is about 12 percent the size of our sun, while the planet that orbits it has a mass of at least about half of Jupiter, our solar system's largest planet. The planet, composed mainly of gas, travels around its star in a very elliptical orbit lasting 204 days.

(Tol, 28.09.19)

Magsaysay to Indian journalist

Senior Indian Journalist Ravish Kumar was awarded this year's Ramon



Magsaysay Award for Ravish Kumar!

Magsaysay Award, regarded as the Asian version of the Nobel Prize.

Kumar, 44, who is NDTV India's Senior Executive Editor is one of India's most influential TV journalists.

He is among five individuals who were declared winners of the award, which is Asia's premier prize and highest honour and celebrates the greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia.

(BL, 02.08.19)

The skies are emptying out

The number of birds in the US and Canada has fallen by 29 percent since 1970. There are 2.9 billion fewer birds taking wing now than there were 50 years ago.

The analysis is the most exhaustive and ambitious attempt yet to learn what is happening to avian populations. The results have shocked researchers and conservation organisations.

Experts have long known that some bird species have become vulnerable to extinction. But the new study reveals steep losses even among such traditionally abundant birds like robins and sparrows.

(ET, 21.09.19)

Yashwant Sinha 'relentless'

At the launch of his book, 'Relentless' former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said he learned two things from the Germans: one, punctuality, and the other, regard for protocol. It was not clear if his remarks were innocuous or aimed at Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who had arrived late. Tharoor, as one of the panelists, had an embarrassed smile on his face.



(ET, 19.07.19)

More surgeries for weight loss

India has seen a 100-fold increase in weight loss surgeries in the past 15 years, rising from barely 200-odd in 2004 to more than 20,000 in 2019, according to the Obesity Surgery Society of India.

Weight-loss, or bariatric, surgery involves bypassing or stapling a part of the stomach to reduce appetite.

While the rise in bariatric surgeries indicates the rapidly growing obesity problem in the country, the number of such procedures performed in India is still way below the US, where 2.5 lakh people went under the knife to reduce weight in 2018.

(Tol, 22.08.19)

Plastic Touch!

Bengaluru Mayor Gangambike Mallikarjun, a Congress member, had to pay a fine to the civic body she heads. Her offence? She gave fruits to the Karnataka Chief Minister BS



Yediyurappa in a bowl that was wrapped in plastic. Sadly, the plastic received more attention than her gesture in a city where she herself introduced a fine on its use.

(ET, 05.08.19)

Payal wins change maker award

17-year-old Payal Jangid from Alwar district became the first Indian to receive the 'Changemaker Award' at the Goalkeepers Global Goals Awards 2019 in New York for her contribution in abolishing the practice of child marriage in her native Hinsla and other neighbouring villages.

A tireless crusader since childhood, Payal herself refused to get married at the age of 11 and eventually managed to convince everyone in the village about the evils of the social practice rampant in Rajasthan.

She is also the *sarpanch* (president) of the *Bal Panchayat* (children's parliament) in Hinsla, which is a *Bal Mitra Gram* (child-friendly village), a concept founded by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi. (BS, 25.09.19)



PAN-Aadhaar link deadline extended

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) extended the deadline for linking the Permanent Account Number (PAN) with Aadhaar by three months, bringing much-needed relief for those who have not linked the two, so far.

Under the new rules if the PAN is not linked with Aadhaar, it would become inoperative. Tax experts said more clarity was needed on how an inoperative PAN can be reactivated again. (Tol, 29.09.19)

Roads face street vendor menace

Roads and footpaths in the city remain encroached from morning till late night by the street vendors selling food, fruits and vegetables, among other items. This has become a major nuisance for the commuters and is a major cause of traffic congestion in the city.

Commuting in the evening in residential areas like Raja Park, Mansarovar, Mahesh Nagar, Vaishali Nagar, Chitrakoot, Jhotwara and several other colonies has become



difficult because of the vendors encroaching both sides of the roads.

Residents and commuters have filed complaints with the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) in this regard many times but the authorities have failed to act against the encroachers. (Tol, 28.09.19)

Railways ban single-use plastic

Railways will be the first major government organisation to ban single-use plastic material. The action plan includes Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)



ensuring that pantry staff takes back the empty drinking water bottles from passengers and coaches for their safe disposal.

The IRCTC will collect used bottles as a part of 'extended producer responsibility'. All zones have been directed to strictly enforce the ban on single-use plastic and encourage all vendors to avoid the use of plastic carry bags. (Tol, 26.09.19)

More parking space for aircraft

Jaipur International Airport will soon get 19 new parking bays for aircraft. The bays, which were constructed recently, are waiting for approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The work for an additional apron with a capacity of 32 aircraft was inaugurated in February and 19 have been completed. The other apron has a capacity for parking 14 aircraft. The apron will be equipped with CAT-III lighting to help aircraft land in poor visibility.

The number of parking bays will eventually increase to 46 with an approximate construction cost of ₹110 crore. (Tol, 22.07.19)

New rule to curb population

BJP MLA from Ramganj Mandi Madan Dilawar advocated that the state government, in order to control the rising population, must draft a new rule and extend its benefits to those who abide by that rule.

Dilawar, who had raised the issue during Zero Hour, spoke about the effects of a growing population on food, resources and environment, claimed that a certain section in the name of religion was increasing its population. (Tol, 18.07.19)

No more 'My Lord' in courts

The Rajasthan High Court has asked the lawyers and litigants to do away with the colonial era practice of addressing judges as 'My Lord' or 'Your Lordship'.

The resolution to abandon the practice was passed during the first full High Court meeting chaired by new Chief Justice S Ravindra Bhatt. The judges have made a request to lawyers and litigants to address them simply as 'sir' or 'srimanji'.

(FE, 16.07.19)

Beggar-free 'Pink City'

Unlike previous occasions, this time the Rajasthan government will ensure making Jaipur a 'beggar-free capital' by introducing a scheme, which will involve complete facilitation and rehabilitation package for the beggars. This will ensure skill development and alternative job opportunities for them.



The JMC, district administration and civil society groups will be engaged in conducting a survey to identify the beggars and their rehabilitation measures. The Rajasthan Rehabilitation of Beggars or Indigents Act was passed in 2012 and the Act came into effect in September 2014.

(Tol, 03.08.19)

Playgrounds in residential colonies

The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has directed private and government land developers to reserve spaces for playgrounds in residential colonies, the move coming



in the wake of acute shortage of open spaces for kids to play.

As per the Township Policy 2010, a developer has to reserve 10 percent land for park or playground in a colony spread over 10 hectares or more. Similarly, reserving 5 percent land is mandatory in schemes that are less than 10 hectares. But this was not being followed. The JDA has now ordered strict compliance with the policy provisions. (Tol, 12.08.19)

2 films get National Award

It is a proud moment for the Rajasthan as two films based on the state have won National Award. In the Best Environmental Film category 'Machli', the world's famous tiger was declared as a winner.

Another movie 'Turtle' based on the water crisis in Rajasthan won an award. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

congratulated the winners of the National Award and hoped that this will give a push to the Rajasthani cinema. (Tol, 10.08.19)

Reduce the weight of school bags

Rajasthan Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara launched a state-wide pilot project aimed at reducing the weight of children's school bags. He said the textbooks' weight has been reduced by two-thirds.



Students will now have to carry one book instead of several ones of the same subject, he added. He said Rajasthan is the first state in the country, where an initiative to reduce the school children's burden has been taken. The minister also distributed new books to children of classes one to five. (IT, 04.09.19)

No tiger in three reserves

India's tiger population has jumped to an estimated 2,967, a rise by 33 percent over 2,226 reported in 2014. This is also an incredible 210 percent rise from 1,411

recorded in 2006, according to the all-India estimation – 'Status of Tigers, Co-predators, Prey and their Habitat, 2018' – released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Behind the big headline, hidden in fine print is a discrepancy in methodology: In 2014, tigers aged 1.5 years or older were counted. The current report has the cut-off age as one year. (IE, 19.08.19)

Boosting fisheries

The government plans to give a big boost to fisheries in the state. Rajasthan has not been able to exploit its potential in fisheries. The government plans to bring about one lakh more hectares of water bodies under fisheries by 2022.

Training would be imparted to interested youth in rural areas and allot water bodies that had water for more than six months for fisheries.



The water bodies which had only water for two to four months could be used for growing fish seeds.

(Tol, 12.08.19)



Metro Updates

Phase-2 to run on elevated tracks

To reduce project cost, the Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) is mulling a proposal to keep the major portion of the 24-km Jaipur Metro Phase II (Ambabari to Sitapura) above the ground (elevated) and not below. If the proposal gets the nod, the cost of the ₹10,500 crore project will be reduced by a whopping 40 percent. While the construction cost of an elevated corridor is ₹200 crore per km, it goes up ₹550 crore per km underground. (Tol, 22.09.19)

No funds for phase 1B corridor

The JMRC may not receive financial support from the Union government for the Metro phase 1B corridor from Mansarovar to Badi Chaupar. While the previous government was not willing to give Centre a stake in the project, after coming to power, Congress again made a move

to seek financial assistance. However, it appears the attempt might turn futile as the Centre is not willing to fund the operational and under-constructed project.

(Tol, 07.08.19)

Ramganj Chaupar corridor on hold

The extension of Jaipur Metro Phase (I) B underground tunnel up to Ramganj Chaupar in the Walled City area might have to be stopped as it could otherwise delay the operation of the corridor between Chandpole and Badi Chaupar after completion. In March, a high-powered committee chaired by chief secretary D B Gupta decided to extend Jaipur Metro Phase (I) B underground corridor up to Ramganj



Chaupar by increasing its total length by nearly 600 metres.

(Tol, 26.08.19)

Gehlot to Launch Health Scheme by combining Ayushman Bharat, Bhamashah Schemes

– Dev Ankur Wadhawan*

The Ashok Gehlot-led government has decided to name the new venture as Ayushman Bharat Mahatma Gandhi Rajasthan Health Insurance scheme.



Ashok Gehlot also stressed that the state government was committed to ensuring the right to health for the common man.

The Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government in Rajasthan has decided to launch a new Health Insurance Scheme in the state by combining the Ayushman Bharat scheme of the Modi dispensation and the Bhamashah scheme brought during former CM Vasundhara Raje's term.

The government has decided to name the new venture as Ayushman Bharat Mahatma Gandhi Rajasthan Health Insurance scheme. The Ashok Gehlot-led government has decided to implement the scheme in Rajasthan from September 01, 2019.

"The Chief Minister took the decision that the two schemes will be combined and implemented in the state from September 01, 2019. The people will begin to get its benefits," Raghu Sharma, Health Minister of Rajasthan said.

"This work will be implemented in Rajasthan under this name from September 01, 2019. Around 1,10,00,000 families will benefit and I believe that full preparations for the same have been made. This is a very big decision for the common people and the population of Rajasthan which honourable Chief Minister has taken and its implementation will begin from September 01, 2019," Raghu Sharma said.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister said with the implementation of this scheme, the number of beneficiaries would increase from 1 crore to 1.10 crore with the coverage of more ailments.

Ashok Gehlot also stressed that the state government was committed to ensure the right to health for the common man and the decision was a step in this direction.

The Chief Minister said complaints of irregularities with regard to the state scheme would be addressed in the plan.

For this, along with better use of technology, provisions for stringent action will be proposed against the guilty persons, including those working at hospitals and with the insurance company.

**Senior Correspondent with Aaj Tak. The news item appeared in India Today, on August 29, 2019*

Sources: BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation; BL: The Hindu Business Line; BS: Business Standard; ET: The Economic Times; FE: The Financial Express; FT: The Financial Times; IE: The Indian Express; IT: India Today; Tol: Times of India

The news/articles in this Newsletter are compressed from several newspapers. The sources given are to be used as a reference for further information, and do not indicate the literal transcript of a particular news/story. CUTS International is a not-for-profit organisation and the listing of paid news/articles is for informative and educative purposes only.