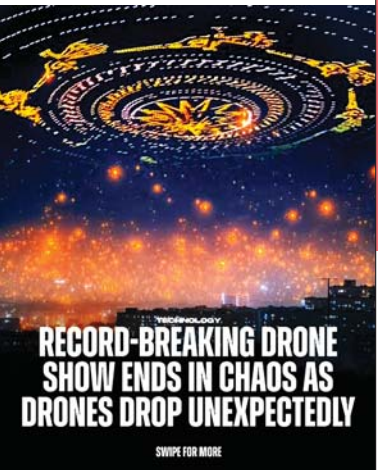


#HO CHI MINH CITY

World Record Ends in Chaos

“When you're aiming for the stars, cutting corners can bring you crashing back to Earth-literally.”



The performance was certified by Guinness World Records as the 'largest drone light show by number of drones flying simultaneously.'

What was meant to be a historic evening of technological marvels and national pride turned into a cautionary tale on Saturday night, as a record-breaking drone show in Ho Chi Minh City ended in a chaotic failure just moments after achieving its goal.

Organized by Chinese tech company DAMODA, the event was billed as a world-first: a synchronized performance featuring 10,000 drones lighting up the night sky over the city's skyline. Thousands of spectators gathered to witness the ambitious attempt, which initially appeared to succeed.

Drones formed intricate shapes, animations, and messages, drawing gasps and applause from the crowd.

But the celebration was short-lived. Just minutes after the record was declared broken, the display began to unravel. Dozens of drones started malfunctioning mid-air. Their lights flickered and dimmed. Some lost control and veered off course. Spectators watched in disbelief as parts of the sky turned from dazzling spectacle to descending chaos.

Witnesses reported drones plummeting towards the ground, narrowly missing buildings and onlookers. Emergency services were quickly dispatched to the area, though no injuries have been reported as of press time.

Authorities are currently assessing property damage and potential safety violations. Initial reports suggest that the failure may have stemmed from system overloads or insufficient quality control in the synchronization technology. DAMODA, the company behind the show, has not released an official statement, but sources close to the production say that the team was under intense pressure to deliver a groundbreaking performance with limited time and resources.

The incident has sparked a wave of criticism on social media, with users questioning whether safety was sacrificed in the pursuit of a headline-making stunt. Experts are also weighing in, warning of the dangers of attempting large-scale tech events without rigorous testing and regulation.

"What should've been a triumph of modern innovation became a stark reminder," said one industry analyst. "When you're aiming for the stars, cutting corners can bring you crashing back to Earth-literally." As investigations continue, the failed drone show will likely serve as a case study in both the potential and the pitfalls of emerging event technology.



One of the most notorious cases was the Affair of the Poisons in France (1677-1682), in which a network of fortune tellers, alchemists, and poisoners was accused of supplying toxic potions to members of the aristocracy, including some linked to King Louis XIV's court. The scandal led to arrests, executions, and lingering paranoia about clandestine poisoners operating in elite circles. Similarly, the infamous Marquise de Brinvilliers, executed in 1676, was said to have tested poisons on the poor before using them to eliminate her own family members.

The 17th Century Husband Killer



'Death Comes to the Banquet Table' by Giovanni Martinelli, circa 1635.

KAUSHIK PATOWARY

Sometime in the summer of 1791, or perhaps even earlier, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart fell ill. His biographer, Franz Niemetschek, described him as pale and melancholy. Despite his declining health, Mozart remained dedicated to his work, focusing on completing his Requiem. He even conducted the premiere of *The Magic Flute* on 30 September. However, by late November, his condition worsened dramatically. He became bedridden, suffering from swelling, pain, and persistent vomiting. Around two weeks later, on 5 December, he died at his home in Vienna.

The cause of Mozart's death has been the subject of much speculation and debate. With few eyewitness accounts and no thorough medical examination, researchers have proposed various possibilities, including strep-



Aqua Tofana.

tococcal infection, rheumatic fever, kidney failure, and even poisoning. Mozart himself was deeply troubled by his deteriorating health and feared he was being poisoned. "I feel definitely," he confided to his wife, Constanze, "that I will not last much longer. I am sure I have been poisoned. I cannot rid myself of this idea."



Jeanne III of Navarre buying Poisoned Gloves from Catherine de Medici's Parfumeur, René, by Pierre-Charles Corne, 1858.

#AQUA TOFANA

The Killer

Constanze later told the musician Vincent Novello and his wife, Mary, that Mozart believed the poison was Aqua Tofana, a colourless, tasteless, and odourless liquid that could be mixed with the victim's food without detection. When administered gradually, it mimicked symptoms of common illnesses such as cholera or influenza, slowly debilitating the victim until the final, fatal dose was given.

This poison, whose principal active ingredient was arsenic, is believed to have been invented by an Italian woman named Tofania d'Adamo in the 17th century. According to contemporary accounts, Aqua Tofana was

first formulated around 1630 and quickly gained notoriety in southern Italy, particularly among women seeking to rid themselves of their husbands and claim their inheritances.

Tofania d'Adamo and her assistant, Francesca la Sarda, who initially produced and distributed the poison, were soon caught and executed for their crimes in 1633. Di Adamo was reportedly hanged, drawn, and quartered, though another account claims she was closed and bound, alive, in a canvas sack... and thrown from the roofs of the bishop's palace into the street in the presence of the populace.

While d'Adamo and la Sarda met their fate, several

other women involved in the operation fled to Rome, where they continued manufacturing and selling Aqua Tofana. This group was led by Giulia Tofana, who may have been d'Adamo's daughter. In Rome, Tofana expanded the operation, recruiting more women and establishing a clandestine poisoning ring that catered to desperate and scheming clients alike. The group reportedly obtained arsenic through a priest, whose brother was an apothecary. They combined it with lead and possibly belladonna, creating a colourless, tasteless liquid that could be easily mixed with water or wine and discreetly administered during meals.

Undercover Sales

To conceal its true purpose, the poison was often sold in glass jars labelled as Manna of St. Nicholas, a popular healing oil supposedly collected from the bones of the saint in a church in Bari. It was also marketed as a cosmetic product, purportedly used to remove facial blemishes, allowing it to be discreetly kept in a household without arousing suspicion. The poison's greatest asset was its undetectability. "Administered in wine or tea or some other liquid by the flattering traitress, it produced but a scarcely noticeable effect; the husband became a little out of sorts, felt weak and languid, so little indisposed that he would scarcely call in a medical man," wrote Chamber's Journal.

The key to its effectiveness lay in careful, controlled dosing. When given gradually, Aqua Tofana mimicked the progression of a natural illness, making the victim's decline appear as the onset of a lingering disease rather than deliberate poisoning. "After the second dose of poison, this weakness and languor became more pronounced," continued the Chamber's Journal. "The beautiful Medea, who expressed so much anxiety for her husband's indisposition, would scarcely be an object of suspicion, and perhaps would prepare her husband's food, as prescribed by the doctor, with her own fair hands. In this way, the third drop would be administered, and would prostrate even the

most vigorous man. The doctor would be completely puzzled to see that the apparently simple ailment did not surrender to his drugs, and while he would be still in the dark as to its nature, other doses would be given, until at length death would claim the victim for its own..." Giulia Tofana died in 1651, but her network continued to operate under the leadership of Girolama Spara until authorities caught the group in 1658. Aqua Tofana is believed to have claimed at least 600 victims. Spara herself reportedly boasted, "I've given this liquid to more people than I've got hairs on my head."

In July 1659, five members of the gang were hanged before an unusually large crowd. One of their clients was also executed, while more than forty others, women who had purchased the poison, were sentenced to life in prison. But there is evidence confirming the existence and executions of both Tefania di Adamo in 1633 and Girolama Spara in 1659 for crimes of poisoning. Information about Giulia Tofana, however, is sparse, though she is believed to have been active in the 1650s.

Dash argues that while arsenic-based poisons were widely used in Italy during the 17th and 18th centuries, Aqua

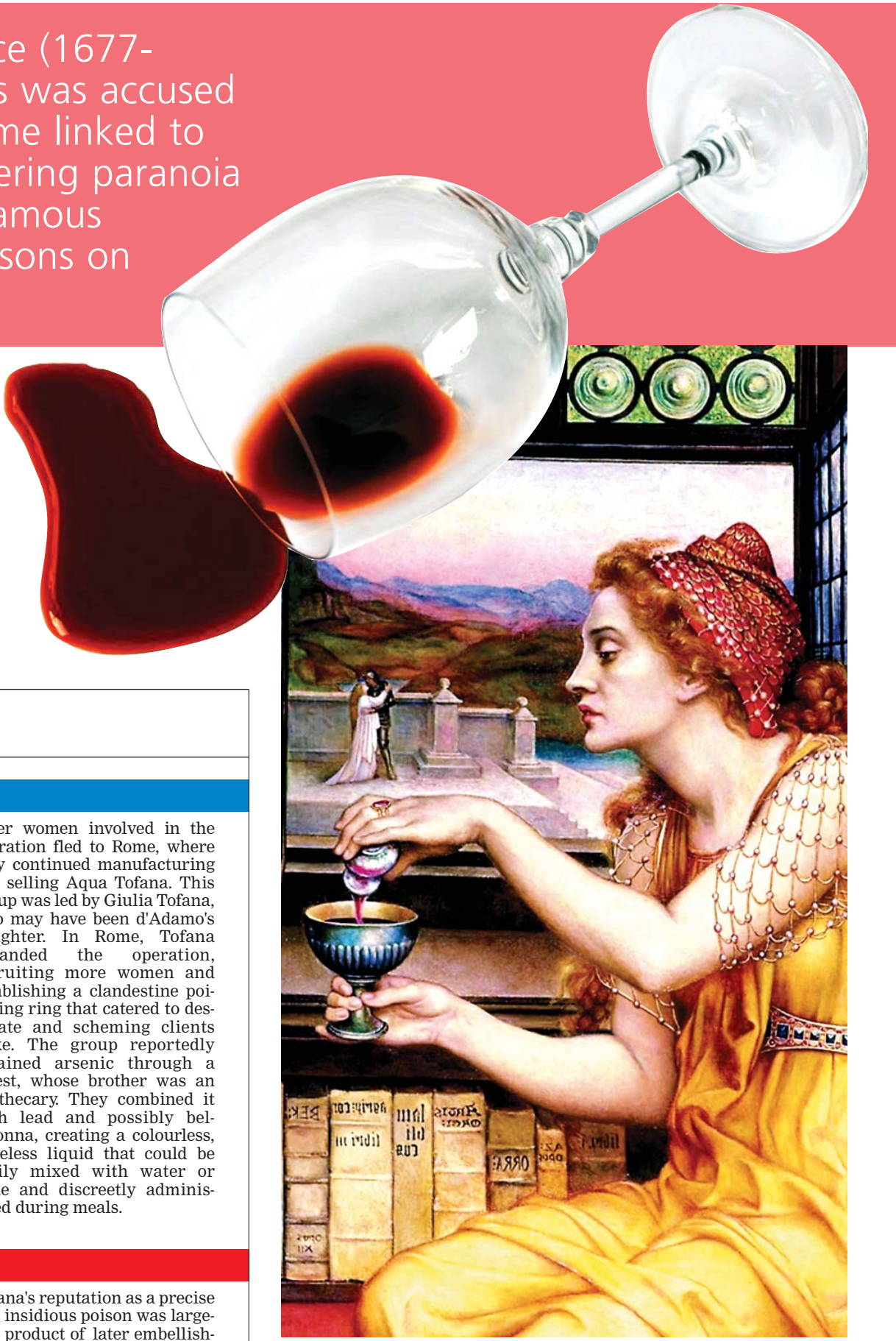
Tofana's reputation as a precise and insidious poison was largely a product of later embellishments. In 1709, the French traveller Jean-Baptiste Labat described the capture and execution of an elderly woman in Naples who sold bottles of clear poison disguised as saint's manna. Around the same time, Pius Nikolaus von Garelli, physician to Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, claimed to have seen legal documents attributing 800 deaths to the use of Aqua Tofana. In 1730, Johann Keyser, a Fellow of the Royal Society, wrote of an aged female poisoner known as "Tophana" who had allegedly murdered hundreds and was imprisoned in Naples. "This elaboration of claims resulted in belief in a poison that was very widely feared, but never actually existed," Dash wrote. He further suggests that many deaths attributed to Aqua Tofana were likely due to natural causes and that its notorious reputation was largely the result of a moral panic.

Whether Aqua Tofana was truly the perfect undetectable poison or merely the product of myth and exaggeration, its legend endured. The fear of secret poisoning, often associated with women, became deeply ingrained in European society. The 17th and 18th centuries saw a series of high-profile poisoning scandals, reinforcing the idea that deadly substances could be wielded with cunningness and discretion.



International Plastic Bag Free Day

Most of us use them every day, the thin plastic bags are used by almost every retailer we visit. Whether we're shopping for groceries or the newest Prada, you can almost guarantee that you'll be leaving the store with a plastic bag stuffed full of your new goodies. Have you ever stopped to consider what happens to those plastic bags? If not, then here is the day to make you think that. There are many ways you can celebrate International Plastic Bag Free Day. And the easiest requires a simple resolution on your part! Start by choosing paper over plastic or, even better, bring your own bags to the retailers to pick up your goods!



Notorious Cases

One of the most notorious cases was the Affair of the Poisons in France (1677-1682), in which a network of fortune tellers, alchemists, and poisoners was accused of supplying toxic potions to members of the aristocracy, including some linked to King Louis XIV's court. The scandal led to arrests, executions, and lingering paranoia about clandestine poisoners operating in elite circles. Similarly, the infamous Marquise de Brinvilliers, executed in 1676, was said to have tested poisons on the poor before

using them to eliminate her own family members.

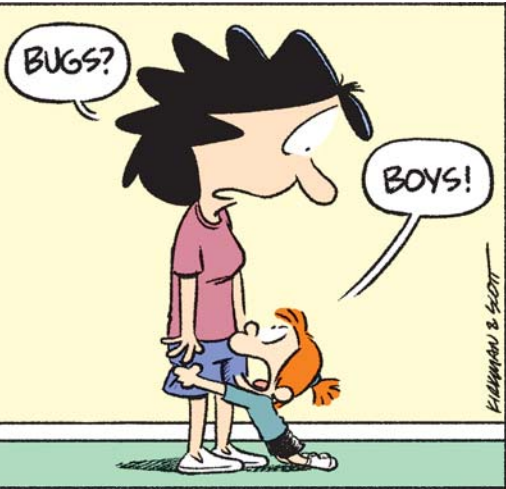
These cases, like Aqua Tofana, fed into the broader fear that poison was the weapon of choice for those who sought to kill without detection. Whether real or exaggerated, such stories shaped perceptions of crime, justice, and treachery in early modern Europe. Even today, the name Aqua Tofana lingers in popular culture as a symbol of subtle, insidious murder: a whisper of death hidden in a glass of wine.

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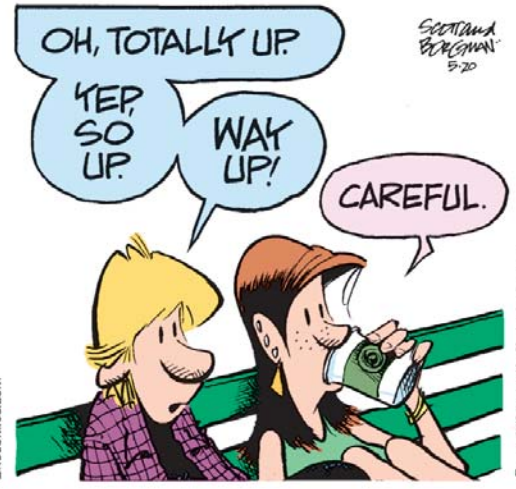
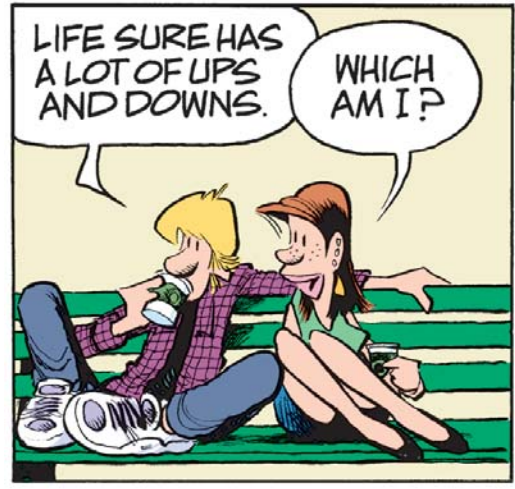


By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES

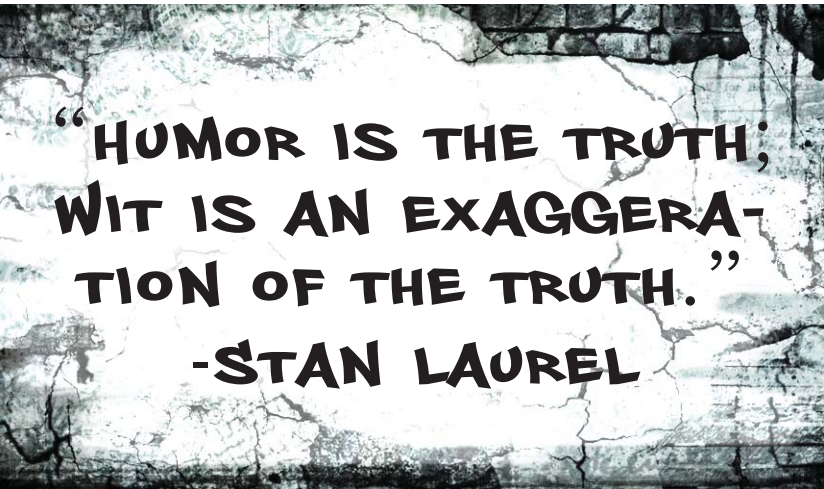


ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



#ENVIRONMENT

Save the Forests And Yourself

Substituting 50% of meat and milk would substantially reduce the impacts of food systems on environment.



One of the great misconceptions about leading a more sustainable lifestyle is that it's all or nothing. Advocates for the planet often act with urgency, which makes sense given that we are witnessing the collapse of nature and such. But sometimes, that urgency can come across as 'never fly again, go zero waste now, stop eating meat yesterday.' And while some people may be compelled to do just that, others need baby steps.

And we're here to tell you this: Baby steps work! It doesn't have to be all or nothing; just reducing certain behaviours can be enough to move the needle.

The researchers, hailing from the University of Vermont (UVM), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the Alliance of Bioversity International, and CIAT, employed a global economic land use model to assess the food system-wide impacts of a global dietary shift towards these alternatives. "While beef replacement provides the largest impacts," the study notes, "substituting multiple products is synergistic."

Let's Talk About Meat Reduction, Instead of Elimination

They say that additional climate and biodiversity benefits could accrue from reforesting land no longer needed for livestock when meat and dairy are swapped for plant-based alternatives. "We'll need much more than 'Meatless Mondays' to reduce the global GHG emissions driving climate change, and this study shows us a path forward," said study co-author Eva Wollenberg from UVM. The findings reveal that substituting 50% of meat and milk would substantially reduce the mounting impacts of food systems on the natural environment. By 2050, compared to 2020, the positive effects would include: Global agricultural area declines by 12% instead of expanding. The decline in areas of forest and other natural land is almost completely halted. Nitrogen inputs to cropland are nearly half of the projections. Water use declines by 10% instead of increasing. Without accounting for any carbon sequestration on spared land, GHG emissions could decline by 2.1 Gt CO2eq year-1 (31%) in 2050 (1.6 Gt CO2eq year-1 on average in 2020-2050). Undernourishment globally declines to 3.6%, as compared to 3.8% in the reference scenario (reducing the number of undernourished people by 31 million).

For the work, the authors developed scenarios of dietary changes based on plant-based recipes for beef, pork, chicken, and milk. The recipes they used were nutritionally comparable to animal-based foods and realistic for the existing food manufacturing capabilities and globally available production ingredients. "Despite accounting for less than 20% of the global food energy supply, animal source foods (ASFs) are responsible for the majority of negative impacts on land use, water use, biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions in global food systems," the study notes. "It is becoming clear that encouraging the adoption of low-ASF diets will be an important component in meeting climate change mitigation targets, achieving health and food security objectives worldwide, and keeping natural resource use within planetary boundaries."

So, let's go! If you need to start with small steps, add some mushrooms to your hamburger patty, use half oat milk/half cow milk in your coffee, and read more about how to become a reducer-tarian. The forests (and animals) will thank you.

#THE UPI CRISIS

We No More Mind Spending More!

The ease of UPI gives you a false sense of affordability. You don't see money leave. You don't feel regret.

Everywhere you go, there's a QR code waiting to empty your bank account. Vegetable vendors, rickshaw pullers, paan shops, luxury boutiques, everyone's one scan away from your wallet. There is no hesitation or awareness. Just two taps and it's done. It wasn't always the case.

Money used to have weight. You felt it. The texture of a ten-rupee note. The nervousness of parting with a crisp 500. The act of opening your wallet and thinking twice. That friction was wisdom. It slowed you down just enough to ask, "Do I really need this?"

UPI removed that friction. And with it, a fundamental emotional circuit in the brain. Behavioural scientists call it the pain of paying: the small psychological discomfort that helps regulate spending. Cash had it. UPI removed it.

I realised this when I was tracking my monthly expenses last week. I almost faintly looking at it. My



food delivery costs had doubled. Random transactions, forgotten subscriptions, unplanned expenses, all logged quietly while I stayed blissfully unaware. Convenience had numbed me. I was spending like I was sleepwalking.

My father, as always, had warned me. He still carries notes. Withdraws cash once a month. Keeps it with my mom. He says it

keeps him in touch with reality. At first, I dismissed it as old-school. But now, I see the wisdom. There's discipline in limitation. There's clarity in tactile money.

The ease of UPI gives you a false sense of affordability. You don't see money leave. You don't feel regret. But regret isn't the enemy but a feedback. It's memory. Without it, spending becomes detached from consequence. And detached money leads to unanchored living.

Comfort comes at a cost. The cost is mindfulness. Cashless isn't always conscious. And awareness, once lost, is expensive to rebuild. This isn't about demonising technology. It's about remembering that the speed of transaction shouldn't outrun the pace of thought. UPI is here to stay. But so should pause. So should caution. So should that small voice in your head that used to whisper: Think again.

Because the real crisis isn't in the wallet but in the silence between spending and realising.