

And here I am, hating what meets me in the hospital. Two helpings of chai, some customary rounds in the wards, some more chats with the nursing staff, a couple of echocardiograms and it's time to go back. Thank fully tomorrow is 26th January. It's a holiday. I am still cuddling into the all-seeing, all-forgiving razai. Razai which not banish cold, it simply dissolves it. Once ensconced in it, warmth takes the very places that the cold had seeped into and the world becomes a womb where one loses oneself. Where one's body ends and where warmth begins is difficult to discern. It's late in the morning and stirring up all my courage, I step out on the icy cold floor. The winter reclaims my bones with unbelievable speed.

## I Am At Least Around!



**#WAYS OF THE LORD**

Dr Rajeev Bagarhatta  
Cardiologist

Carrying my breakfast in a hamper and clutching a copy of Reader's Digest, I rush towards the II class compartment of the Ajmer-bound train. The announcements of the departures and arrivals of the trains are interrupted by the noisy tinkles on the public address system at the platform. Meandering my way through the hold-alls strewn across the platform, unmindful of the routine shouts of "chai Wala chai" blurted out with an overbearing nasal twang, and 'seeing my own breath' in the chilly morning, I climb the steps of the compartment. Its dark inside as the sun is still a few minutes away and the cheap raxine berths are bone-chilling. I put my hamper and try to warm myself up by walking down the aisle.

**Travel Diaries**

There are labourers cramming the compartment traveling to nearby suburbs. Most of them can afford just an extra vest along with full-sleeved shirts to scare away the cool winds of January. A few lucky ones don sweaters with most lurid colours and most improbable patterns. Shrouded in thick blankets, some of them seat themselves near my hamper. The compartment is soon filled with smoke from the bidis which they consume so heavily. I have got used to these people by now. So have they. They have been watching me each morning board-



heart patients by the most effective and latest interventional cardiology procedures which places me in the elite group of young cardiologists in the country. But now I feel my expertise is going unused. The days have passed by as also have the weeks and the months. I try to find solace from inspirational stories and quotes in Reader's Digest. There are real time stories of teachers, doctors and business entrepreneurs who have moved to uncharted lands and tasted success. Is it time for me to do the same? Should I leave the job and plunge into private practice? Should I? Should I not?

I look outside the foggy window as the train slows down. A temple atop a hill appears at the last stretch of my view. Jobner arrives. The fields are verdant green covered with a cloak of yellow mustard waving in the early morning shades of golden shine. The temperatures appear to be lower than in Jaipur. The labourers disgorge from this cold morning.

As the train takes a turn round a bend, the first wedge of sun rays make a fleeting effort to illumine the coupe. It won't be long. A slew of peddlers make a beeline inside the train. People go for newspaper copies and start devouring them.

"Cha!" the foreign lady calls for the vendor passing by with a cheap aluminium kettle, blackened by soot and grime.

"This is the only word I have learnt in the last two days I have been in India," she says as her eyes sparkle in the fresh morning sun. I also order for one for me and settle down with my salted parantha with sweetened tea.

"No thanks," the boy says as I offer them the parantha.

"So you are a doctor, a cardiologist? Do you do procedures too? In our country they have started saving lives by way of miraculous operations done within minutes," the couple is now engaged in intent

conversation.

I have a sigh of disappointment. Alas! my thoughts travel back to Melbourne, to Epworth hospital, to the shouts of the residents in the Cath lab there, to Ron Dick, the Director of Cardiology and to the late night calls I used to get on the weekends.

**Epworth Hospital, Melbourne, 1996**

The intensive training and the trying schedules had been so much different from the laid back life of Ajmer where I am afraid I may be soon out of touch with modern cardiology. The days are a continuously long drudgery of travelling to a primitive heart care centre in Ajmer, which does not have an angiography lab. How long is this going to continue? I don't know.

"So the authorities don't realise that you could be more useful in Jaipur," the boy contends.

"They could care less," I conclude.

Though it's a daily routine, I always get moved by these lines. The futility of our ambitions and wish-list immediately stare at me.

A few of the travellers take out a rupee or two to give to the singing duo, but most are nonchalant. In a last ditch effort, the girl performs an amazing acrobatic act by wriggling out of a small metallic ring and is at her begging spree soon after. Her roll on the filthy aisle can't further soil her already blackened skirt. A weak smile through her chafed lips lay bare her stained teeth.

The two odd hours seem to have swept by as the train rolls into the

city of the Khawaja. Thrown back into the stark reality of the lethargic routine of department of cardiology at the local medical college, I walk grudgingly towards the hospital. The excited and the expectant spirits of the foreign couple contrast with my damp and down moods.

They would be reaching their destination by the evening and then indulge themselves in the revelry of artistry laid across the land of Kutch. It was their dream come true, having travelled from far off Netherlands to another far off Rann of Kutch just to delve into what they like best- arts and artists.

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Suddenly, the bed starts shaking, the fans start trembling, and chairs jitter. Before my sleepy mind is jolted into alert mode, everything settles down. The room gets quiet.

**The Quirk of Fate**

Two hours later: The TV channels are through with their commentaries of the Republic Day Parade. What had started as a subtitle running across the TV screens is now the news of the new year. A massive earthquake has hit the nation with



The greens outside have given way to parched fields and miles and miles of dry arid land sweeps by as the train gathers speed.

The sleek figure bends across the boy as she tries to figure out a sudden gush of activity at the far end of the coupe. A wisp of hair escapes the tight tassels profiling her beautiful face.

Soon the noise turns into a disorderly music. A small boy and a girl, probably his sister, come up the aisle singing "Sukh ke sab saathi, dookh me na ko!" Most of the people ignore them but I get carried away by the range and modulation of their singing. To add to the tone, the girl is also carrying a dholak which she conveniently places over her lap and pitches in with the beats of the song. The song peaks at "raja Ho ya runk sabhi ka aant ek sa hoi..."

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its epicentre in Gujarat. Soon the gut wrenching pictures of the cataclysmic event are aired on the screens. The rubble of high rise buildings, the heaps of cement and bricks, the ghostly silence of the towns and the occasional movement of a few lucky ones who escaped the fury of nature are pictures which will stick with my memories years after the event.

And then a special correspondent takes over from the ground zero. "This is Vishal from Bhuj..." where once a market, a park, a society building, a school or a hospital. All these places have been levelled and so has been the life in Bhuj.

I am shaken up by this quirk of fate by which God has designed to bring a dotting couple from thousands of miles away to a remote corner of India just to meet their end. I am speechless.

I think Him to let me and my family live peacefully even though I have to go to Ajmer each morning, even though I see my years slip away with no addition to my practice of cardiology, even though I am not able to practice angioplasty in Ajmer, even though there is a fear of being left out.

I am around to enjoy the winter sunshine on the luxuriant greens at the Central Park, to hear the Sound of Music from the restless birds hopping amongst the huge trees lining the silent walkways, to relish the whack of the cricket bat when I steer the ball to an effortless square cut and to enjoy the soulful "maai ri, main ka se kahu peer apne jiya ki" by Lata.

"Sometimes blessings come wrapped in ugly wrapping paper," I ponder.

writeoarbit@rashttradoot.com



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### #NUTRITION

#### Starting Your Day

Drink cumin seeds water first thing in the morning. This promotes healthy digestion, keeps bloating at bay, and aids in weight loss.

Spices and herbs not only add flavour to dishes, they also come loaded with innumerable health benefits. From aiding weight loss to keeping digestive issues at bay, many kitchen condiments can help maintain overall health. So instead of taking supplements and medicines, why not make use of these wonderful kitchen spices to stay healthy?



If you like the idea of doing so, we've got you a super simple remedy that will prove to be extremely beneficial. There are multiple benefits of cumin seeds water.

- Low in calories
- Aids digestion
- Increases metabolism
- Detoxifies the body
- Offers anti-inflammatory benefits
- Builds immunity

Here's how you can prepare it

**Ingredients**

- Few cumin seeds
- Water

**Method:** In a cup, add water and soak the seeds.

**How to have?** Filter the water and add hot water to the seeds.

**How it helps?** After being soaked for that long, cumin seeds swell up and release bioactive compounds into the water.

Cumin in your diet You can also choose simply to consume cumin in your diet. Chili powder, cumin seeds, and ground cumin all contain the antioxidant and metabolism-boosting capabilities of cumin. Seasoning rice, lentils, and roasted vegetables with cumin is a delicious way to experience its benefits.



### #EVENT

Back to the Pink City in a unique hybrid avatar, the 15th edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival is all set to take place between March 5 to March 14 this year. The on-ground edition of the festival, scheduled from March 10 to March 14, will be held at Jaipur's first 5-star hotel, Clarks Amer.



## Jaipur Cultural Extravaganza @ JLF

Jaipur Music Stage Schedule	
Aniruddh Varma Collective (10th March 2022, 7:30- 8:30 pm)	Kutle Khan Project (11th March 2022, 8:45-9:45 pm)
Advaita (10th March 2022, 8:45-9:45 pm)	Ali Saffudin (12th March 2022, 7:30-8:15 pm)
Mooralala Marwada (11th March 2022, 7:30-8:30 pm)	Ankur & The Ghalat Family (12th March 2022, 8:45-9:45 pm)



Mooralala Marwada



Tusharika Singh  
Freelancer writer and city blogger

In addition to being a literary treat, the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) is also well known for the music, dance and cultural extravaganza it unfolds each year. Keeping the tradition alive, there will be a power-packed line up of performers with diverse group of artists from all over the Indian subcontinent for the 15th edition of JLF. What's noteworthy is that after many years, both the literary sessions as well as the popular evening musical programme, Jaipur Music Stage, will be held at the same venue - Hotel Clarks Amer.

Here are the highlights of JLF's cultural offerings this year:

#### Musical Mornings

During the on-ground edition of the festival, from March 10 to March 14, the programme for each day will begin with the calming strains of Morning Music. On the first day of the on-ground festival, the stage will be graced by Ujwal Nagar, a promising Hindustani Classical vocalist from Delhi. The following day will showcase Aasha Goswami, an Indian classical singer and composer adept at singing in 17 different Indian languages. The Aahvaan Project will perform on the third day of the festival, presenting the philosophy of love, humanity and kindness and creating a space for harmony with their unique ability of storytelling through music.

The fourth day of the Festival will see a breathtaking performance by Hindustani Classical

vocalist from the Dagar Gharana, Sombala Kumar. On the concluding day, academic and musician Priya Kanungo will serenade audiences with Indian Classical music, bringing out mindfulness to celebrate the essence of India's diverse musical heritage.

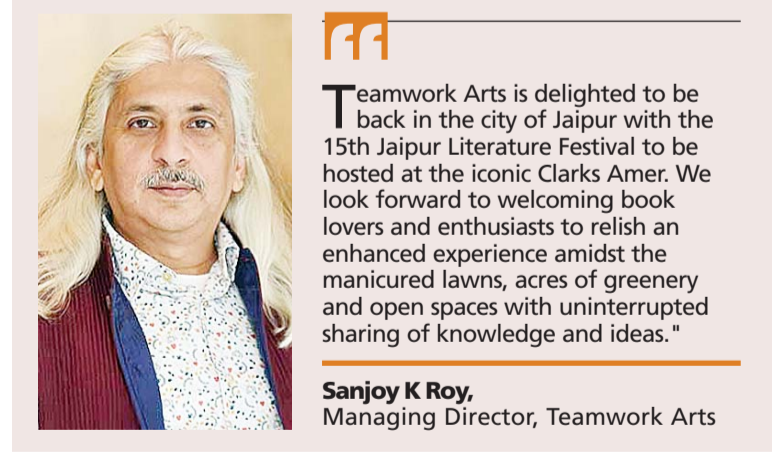
#### Jaipur Music Stage

Scheduled from March 10 - March 12, the Jaipur Music Stage will be held parallel to the 15th edition of the JLF. It will feature experienced musicians such as Aniruddh Varma collective, a contemporary Indian classical ensemble led by New Delhi based pianist, composer and producer, Aniruddh Varma; Advaita, a leading Indian fusion band; Moorlala Marwada, a Sufi folk singer hailing from Janana village of Kutch district in Gujarat.

Also adding to the stellar performances will be Kutle Khan Project, a unique collective of Rajasthan folk musicians; Ali Saffudin, a gifted singer-songwriter from Srinagar, Kashmir and Ankur & The Ghalat Family, a Hindi rock project led by singer-songwriter Ankur Tewari.

#### Heritage Evening

Apart from musical mornings and Jaipur Music Stage performances, a mesmerizing Heritage Evening will also be organized on March 13 at Ganesh Pol, Amer Fort. The special event will feature Kalapini Komkali, a well-trained and widely recognised classical vocalist of the younger generation, and daughter and disciple of the legendary Pandit Kumar Gandharva.



Sanjoy K Roy,  
Managing Director, Teamwork Arts

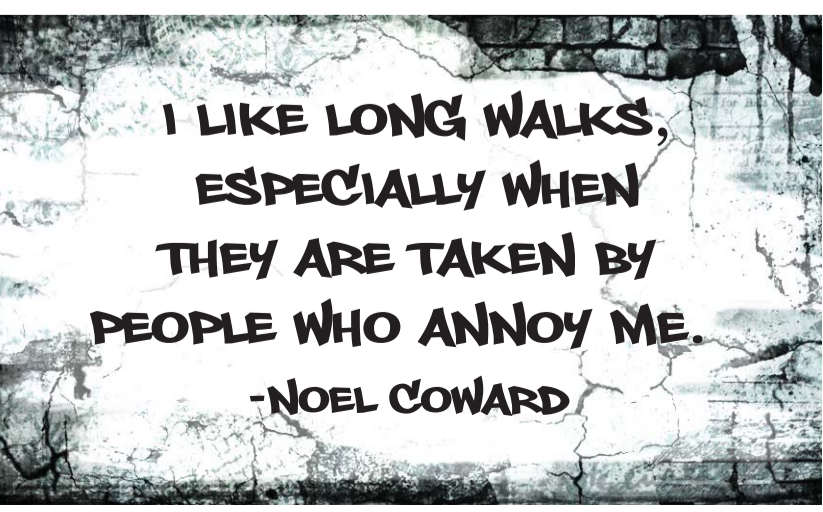


Kutle Khan

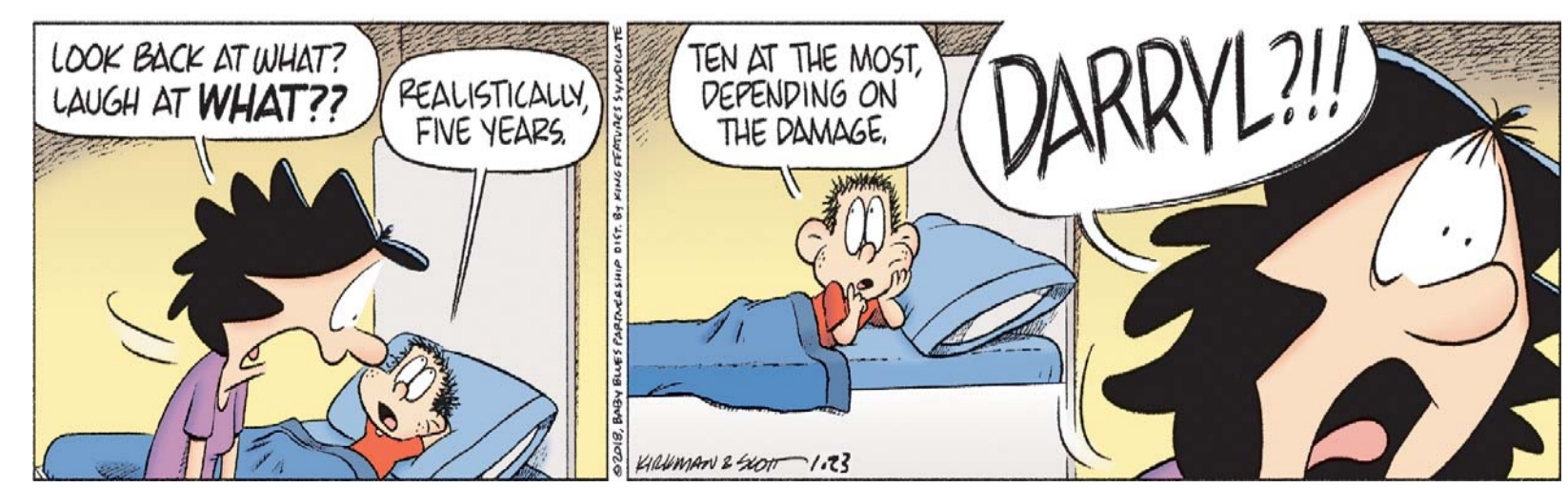


Ali Saffudin

### THE WALL



### BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

### ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman