ARBIT it happens here...
राष्ट्रदूत
MONDAY
31 August 2026
A-B

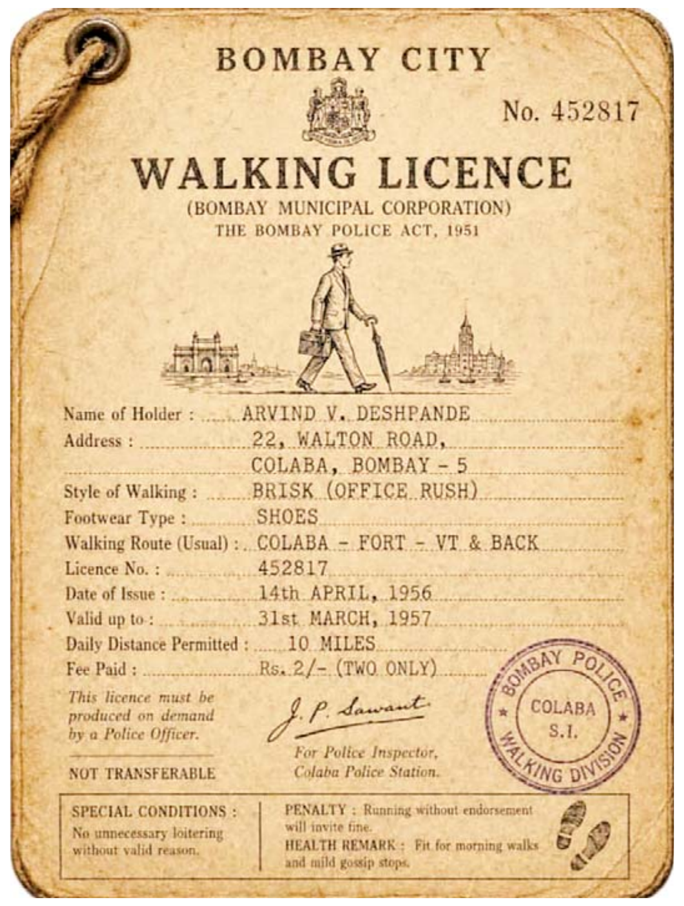
Exploring the Wild Side Responsibly

Observed annually on August 31, National Zoo Awareness Day highlights the vital role zoos play in wildlife conservation, education, and animal welfare. It's a day to reflect on how modern zoos are evolving beyond entertainment to become sanctuaries for endangered species and centers for scientific research. The occasion encourages people to visit their local zoos, learn about animal habitats, and support ethical practices that prioritize the well-being of animals. By raising awareness, the day aims to foster a deeper connection between humans and wildlife, ensuring a more compassionate and sustainable future for all species.

#LICENSE

The Walker's License

"Walking license" existed, which documented a "brisk" pace, fixed routes, and permitted distances for individuals, acting as a "paper trail" for everyday life



While the notion of a formal, legally mandatory "Walker's License" for every citizen in pre-independence Bombay is largely a blend of official, tongue-in-cheek regulation and historical irony, the city did have stringent regulations on public spaces and specific licenses for commercial walking (hawking).

The "Walking License" Legend

Vintage accounts from the 1950s, shortly post-independence, reflecting earlier colonial attitudes, report that a satirical or highly localized "walking license" existed, which documented a "brisk" pace, fixed routes, and permitted distances for individuals, acting as a "paper trail" for everyday life.

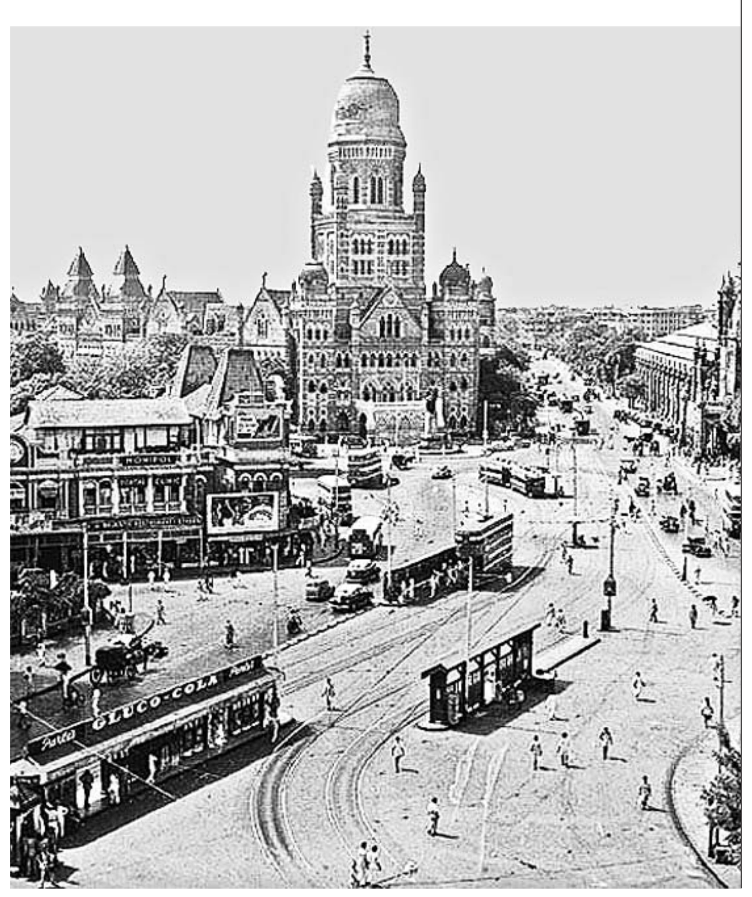
Municipal authorities did manage street traffic and could regulate hawkers or vendors who might impede walking, particularly under colonial-era regulations, according to legal research on hawkers' rights.

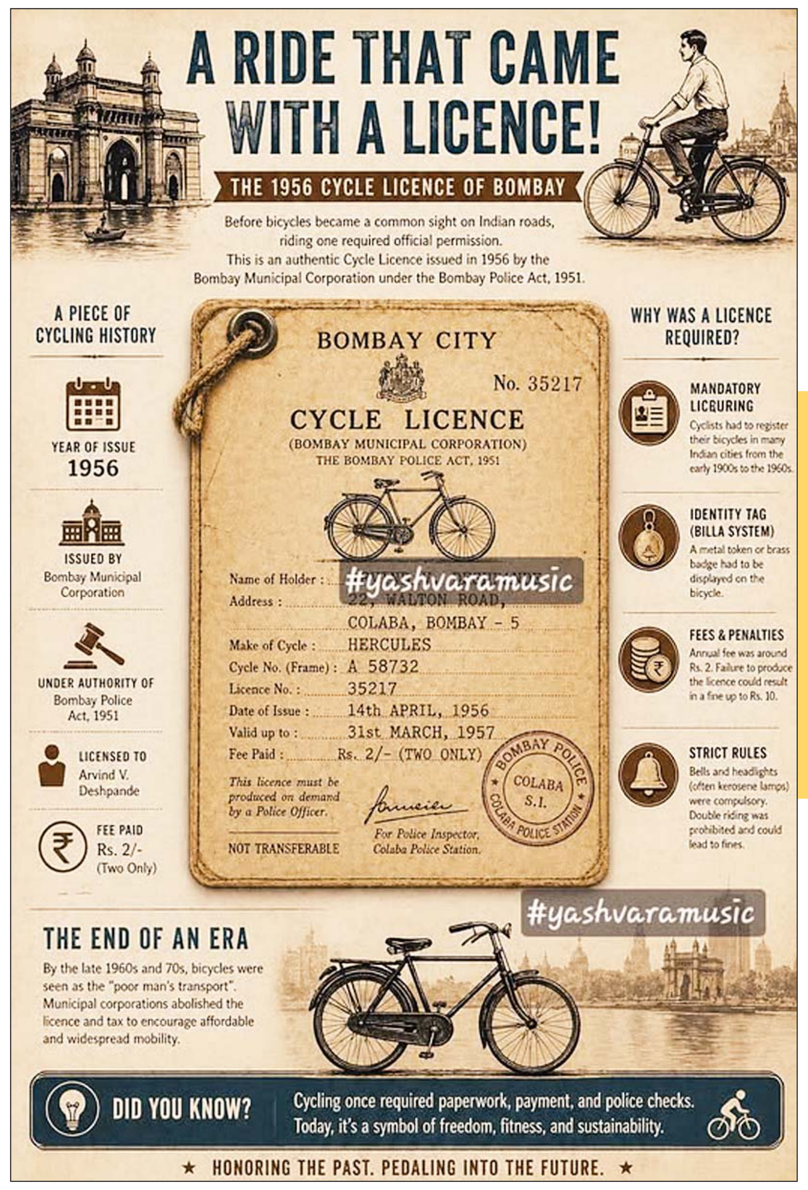
For decades, the citizens of Mumbai have complained that street vendors are a menace to the city, blocking roads and pavements. Yet, at the same time, hawkers have flourished, largely because of a well-oiled system of haftas (weekly bribes) paid to the police, municipal officials and illegal rent collectors. After almost three years of planning, last month, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation took its first step to regularise street vending through licensing and creating designated hawking zones. In July, after surveying street vending practices for several months, the municipality began to distribute application forms for hawker licenses. By the end of the month, they had distributed 1.3 lakh forms.

The Mumbai municipality stopped issuing formal licenses to street vendors 40 years ago, leaving a pool of roughly 18,000 authorised hawkers. But Mumbai also has an estimated two lakh or three lakh unofficial hawkers.

The municipality's initiatives were prompted by two important pieces of legislation. The Street Vendors Act, which came into force in May, recognised the rights of hawkers and the need to regulate the informal industry. The National Hawker Policy of 2009 mandated that a city should have at least as many licensed hawkers as 2.5% of its total population. For Mumbai, this works out to three lakh vendors.

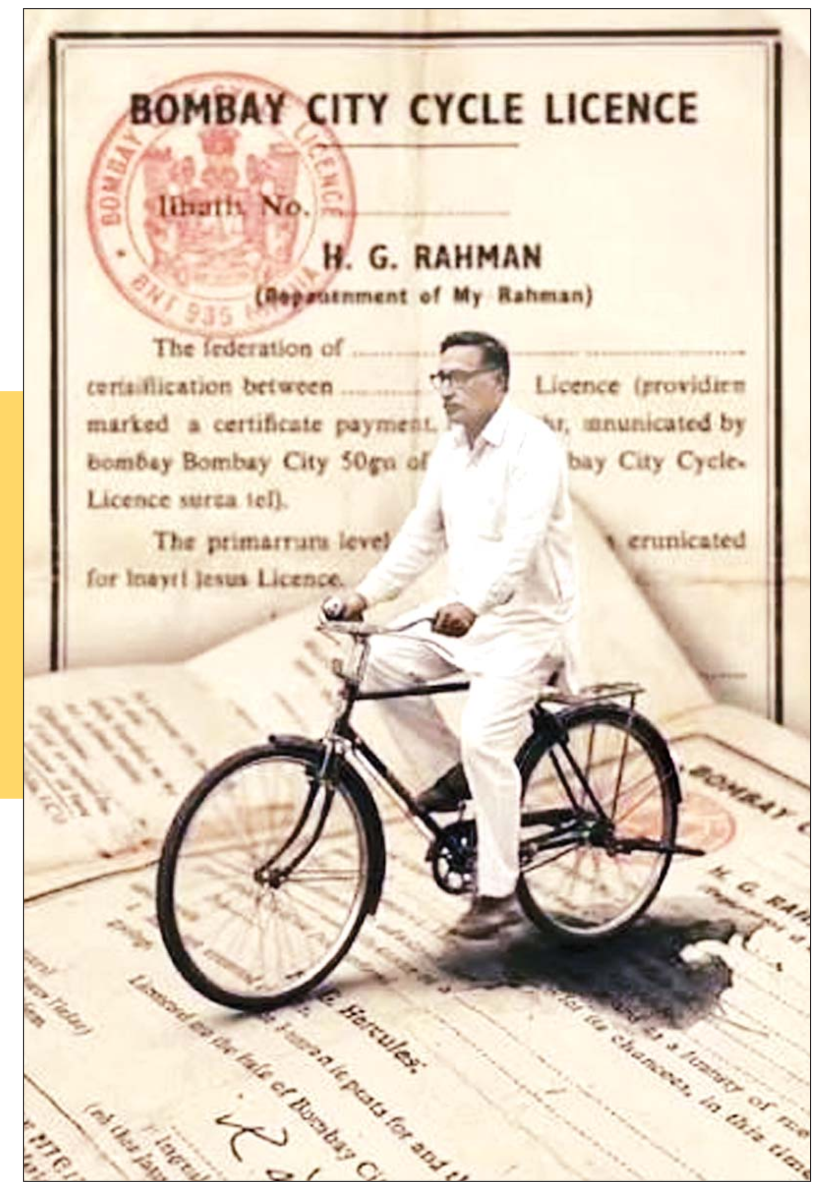
So far, the lack of a formal policy on hawkers, both in Mumbai as well as other cities in India, has resulted in a proliferation of street vendors.





When one needed permit to cycle!

'Halt' boards stared at riders on the major roads in an age when there were no traffic lights. The board was a sign notifying the drivers to come to a complete stop and then proceed, if the way ahead is clear of vehicles and pedestrians. The police would lurk around corners to check if the riders were halting. Many errant bikers paid for their follies with a fine or were marched off to the nearest police station.



Anjali Sharma
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

It wasn't a police license, it was a municipal "Wheel Tax." Under Section 180 and Schedule G of the Bombay Municipal Corporation Act, 1888, every bicycle was taxed as a vehicle. Instead of a paper license, cyclists got a brass billa (token) fixed to the cycle. No billa, bell, or lamp? You could be stopped, even have your cycle impounded. Failure to produce a license could result in fines up to rupee 10. Even carrying a passenger ("double riding") could lead to penalties.

By the 1970s, the BMC scrapped it. The irony? They were spending more on making brass tokens than earning from the rupee 2 tax.

Moral: The real history is far more interesting than anything viral.

In the old days dominated by the License Raj, it was an offence to wheel down the roads on a bicycle without a valid permit. Though traffic was sparse, one had to apply to the municipal offices for a license to enable one to hit the road. It came in the form of a small tin plate with a number inscribed and a hole punched in the middle. Once this adorned the 'chariot,' you were ready to go! This was the story in the metropolises.

While there is today an outcry over the steep increase in of fines for traffic violations, in the erstwhile princely state of Gondal, there was a time when even bicycle owners needed a license to ride their bicycles.

Interestingly, bicycle owners continued to renew their licenses, for more than a decade after the princely state acceded to the Indian Union in February 1948.

Riding with the headlamp on was compulsory between sunset and sunrise. A bell fitted on the bicycle was compulsory, and riders were required to stay on the left side of the road. Other rules were also listed. Persons intending to turn right had to extend their right arm outwards horizontally before turning. If a person committed a crime using a rented bicycle, the person who rented out the bicycle was mandated to provide all details to the police.

Issued in the name of Bhagvat Singh Ji, Maharaja Thakor Saheb of Gondal, the license was to be renewed every year by paying a fee of 50 paise. If a court found bicyclists guilty of violating any of the 13 rules, a fine of five rupees was to be paid.

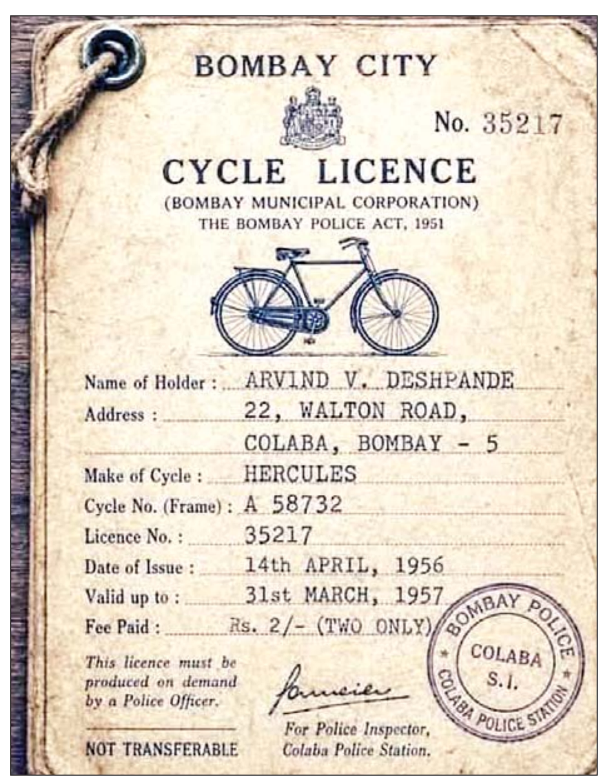
'Halt' boards stared at riders on the major roads in an age when there were no traffic lights. The board was a sign notifying the drivers to come to a complete stop and then proceed, if the way ahead is clear of vehicles and pedestrians. The police would lurk around corners to check if the riders were halting. Many errant bikers paid for their follies with a fine or were marched off to the nearest police station.

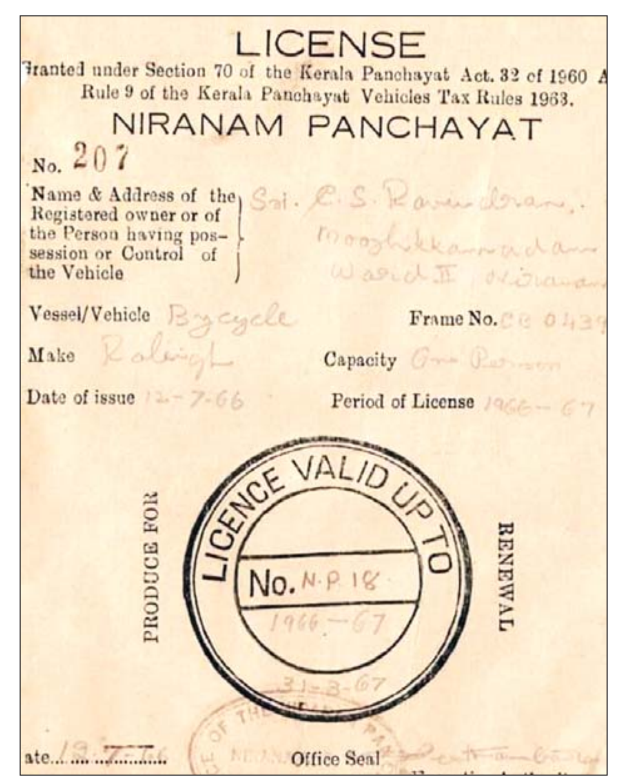
In the pre-dynamo age, the classic lamp with a wick and kerosene adorned bicycles, as riding without light after dusk was an offence. It had an adjustable wick. One could turn the flame down or up. The lamp was detachable and kept indoors during the day. Some vintage bike lights had a convex lens on the front to improve visibility. They also had a small red rectangular glass on the left and a green one on the right. Periodical cleaning of the lens and the glasses made the flame appear bright. One had to be cautious not to ride over a bump as this caused the oil to spill, and result in an inferno. If the policeman caught you when the light died midway, he would often accept your explanation that the wind put it off, provided the lamp felt warm to his touch!

The inventive among the junta manufactured paper or cardboard cone lamps. These were half-filled with sand and a lighted candle was placed in the middle. Holding the light in one hand, they navigated the cycle with the other.

A maternal granduncle, who possessed a rickety old cycle, always carried a matchbox in his pocket. Whenever gusty wind or pouring rain blew out the kerosene fuelled-lamp, he stopped, struck a match and reignited the wick before proceeding on his way. He would repeat the exercise countless times during the ride if windy conditions persisted. Dynamo-fitted bikes spawned a new breed of thieves who plucked out the small electrical generators and made a minor fortune by selling them in the scrap yard.

#BY LICENSE





> Just as many people now take pride in owning luxury cars, there was a time when even having a bicycle was considered a status symbol. An antique items collector, Jagroop Singh (35) of Ram Nagar, a businessman dealing in machine tools, has collected 20 registration certificates of bicycles, of a time when there was an annual fee for owning bicycles and riding them.

In the 1950s, owning a cycle was a luxury few could afford, and therefore considered a status symbol. Factories in Bengaluru ferried their employees in buses, easing the need to possess a bike. In most middle or lower middle class families, the bride's family gave away bicycles as prime objects in dowry. My neighbour's late father received a Raleigh bicycle as a wedding gift from his in-laws. The bike cost an unbelievable Rs. 200 then, and he considered it priceless, taking care of it as if it was his child. Those were the days!

Just as many people now take pride in owning luxury cars, there was a time when even having a bicycle was considered a status symbol. An antique items collector, Jagroop Singh (35) of Ram Nagar, a businessman dealing in machine tools, has collected 20 registration certificates of bicycles, of a time when there was an annual fee for owning bicycles and riding them.

"Around 1947, owning a bicycle was considered a big thing in the villages, towns, and cities.

At that time, not many people possessed such means of travel. The panchayat samitis or municipal bodies would issue such licenses (registration certificates) for bicycles, with the fee ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 2.75 per year. As there was no traffic police at that time, staff of the local bodies would check the licenses and penalize those who did not have them," said Jagroop.

He added: "Licenses were renewed as well after paying an annual fee. The owner would also have to install a light in front of the bicycle at night time. My grandfather, late Lakshman Singh of Bhutta village, owned a bicycle that time, and he had left the license of a bicycle at home while repairing it. After his death in 2006, as I came to know that such licenses, which were made of gun metal, were needed for bicycles around the time of Independence, I started collecting them."

The antique collector said that he had collected 20 such licenses from different sources, of which 12 were of Punjab, including those from Samrala, Mehal Kalan, Phillaur, Rampura, Sudhar, Noormahal, Kharar, Pakhowal, Dhuri, and Bassi Pathana. He added that other licenses he collected were from other towns and cities of different states, including Ambala, Bikaner, Jawra, Doha Damini, Air Dol, Deolali, and Bhanpura.

By the late 1960s and 70s, authorities began recognizing bicycles as an affordable, essential mode of transport. Licensing systems were gradually abolished to promote mobility for the masses.

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#VALUE

Money Money Money

The Birth of Paper Money: From Ancient Innovation to Global Currency

For much of human history, trade was conducted through barter or the exchange of metal coins. But a transformative innovation, the creation of paper money, revolutionized commerce, economies, and the very concept of value. The story of paper currency begins over a thousand years ago in ancient China and spans continents and centuries.

The Origins: China, 7th Century CE

The earliest known use of paper money occurred during the Tang Dynasty in China (618-907 CE), although it was not widely adopted until the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE). Initially, merchants used "jiaozi," a form of promissory note, to avoid carrying heavy metal coins over long distances. These notes represented a certain value and were backed by deposits of coins held by trustworthy agents or banks.

By the early 11th century, the Song government took notice of this practice and began officially issuing paper currency, marking the world's first government-backed paper money. These notes were called "jiaochao" and were printed using woodblocks. They were regulated and distributed by the state, offering a more secure and convenient alternative to copper coins.

Expansion and Innovation

China's paper money system evolved over time. The Yuan Dynasty (founded by the Mongols in the 13th century) standardized paper currency across the empire. Under Kublai Khan, paper money became the only legal tender, a radical idea at the time. The famed traveler Marco Polo, who visited China in the 13th century, was astounded by this system and described it in his writings, helping introduce the concept to Europe.

However, over-issuance and lack of backing eventually led to inflation and a loss of public trust. Despite this, the idea of paper currency had taken root.

Arrival in Europe

Paper money didn't appear in Europe until several centuries later. In Sweden, the Stockholm Banco issued the first European banknotes in 1661. These were receipts for deposits and could be exchanged for precious metals. The idea slowly spread across the continent, with banks and governments experimenting with issuing notes to represent value.

By the 18th century, major colonial powers like Britain and France began issuing paper money in their overseas territories. In North America, the Massachusetts Bay Colony issued paper money in 1690 to fund military expeditions, one of the earliest examples of government-issued currency in the Western world.

Modern Paper Money and Fiat Currency

The 20th century saw a major transformation in the concept of money. Most nations abandoned the gold standard, which meant that paper money no longer had to be backed by physical gold or silver. Instead, currency became fiat money, its value was derived from government decree and public trust.

This system allows governments to control money supply and respond to economic needs more flexibly, but also introduces risks like inflation or currency devaluation if mismanaged.

Impact and Legacy

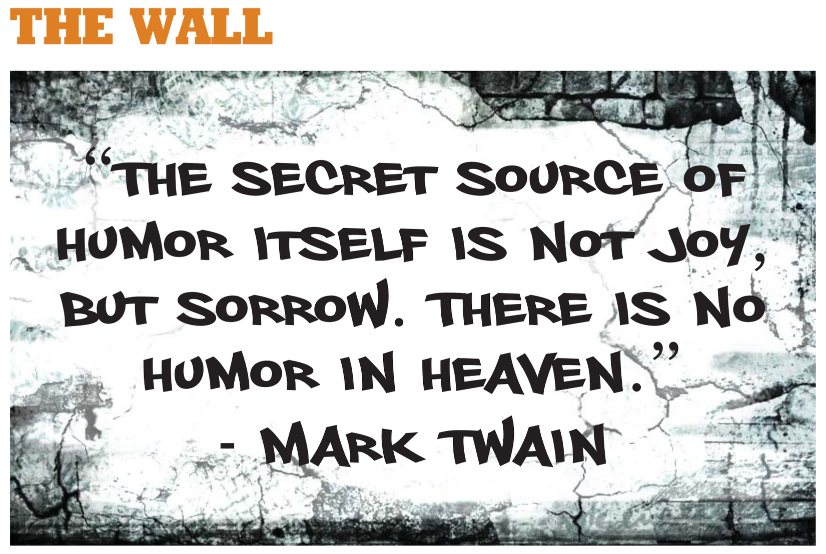
The birth of paper money changed the world.

- Facilitated trade over vast distances.
- Enabled complex financial systems, including banking and credit.
- Reduced reliance on heavy, finite metal resources.
- Paved the way for today's digital currencies and cashless economies.

From the silk routes of ancient China to the global markets of the 21st century, paper money has evolved into a cornerstone of modern civilization.

The invention of paper money was more than a financial innovation, it was a cultural and economic revolution. What began as a simple convenience for Chinese merchants eventually reshaped the world's economies. Today, even as we move towards digital transactions and cryptocurrencies, the legacy of paper money remains foundational in how we understand and use money.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman