

#ENTERPRISING

Going The Natural Way

Combining a skill he happened to pick up by chance in the US along with the age-old natural mantras of his great grandmother and his entrepreneurial prowess, Jai Varrdhan Singh set out on a journey to create handcrafted natural soaps and cosmetics during the Covid-19 pandemic. What's interesting is that in the age of websites, apps, and micro targeting through the internet, Jai Varrdhan lays more emphasis on making customers through one-on-one interactions and relationship building.



Tusharika Singh
Freelancer
writer and
city blogger

hey say life is what happens to us while we are busy making other plans. This stands cent percent true for Jai Varrdhan Singh. A graduate in English, who wanted to become a lawyer but eventually went on to set up an export house and a backpackers' hostel, and thanks to the pandemic, is now handcrafting soaps and cosmetics.

Skilled by Chance

When Jai Varrdhan went to Harvard in 2014 for a conference at the Harvard Project of International and Asian relations to speak on Security and Diplomacy in South East Asia, little did he know it would eventually inspire him to venture into making natural soaps and cosmetics. "The family that I stayed with on my trip to Harvard had a lady who quit her job at Ernst & Young and got into making natural soaps and cosmetics, and she was doing quite well for herself. During the three weeks that I was there, I used to work with her and tried to learn as much as I could. However, I did not put that into use anytime soon," shares Jai Varrdhan.

Entrepreneur at heart

While at Harvard, Jai Varrdhan ran out of his money and went to the Times Square in New York and sold paintings that had taken from Jaipur as gifts. "Selling those paintings at Times Square made me enough money to fund my trip and that gave me the idea of a starting an export house." In 2017, he along with his father, started a backpackers' hostel in C Scheme called 'The Big Mocha' (For those of you who have met him, this name would not come as a surprise!). Catering to travellers from across the globe, he and his father managed all the chores on their own. From check-ins and housekeeping to finding missing guests at odd hours, it all came as a great learning experience for them. Come 2020 and just like all other travel and hospitality businesses landed in the soup, their hostel



Sir Thomas Roe

Anjali Sharma
Senior journalist &
wildlife enthusiast

By the early seventeenth century, Europeans had become used to easy military victories over the other people of the world. In the 1520s the Spanish had swept away the vast armies of the mighty Aztec Empire in a matter of months. In the Spice Islands of the Moluccas, the Dutch had recently begun to turn their cannons on the same rulers they had earlier traded with slaughtering those islanders who rode out in canoes to greet them, burning down their cities and seizing their ports.

But as Captain Hawkins soon realised there was no question of any European nation attempting to do this with the Great Mughals, not the least because the Mughals kept a staggering 4 million men under arms.

When in 1632, the [Mughal] Emperor discovered that the Portuguese had been building unauthorised fortifications and 'dwellings of the utmost splendour and strength' in Hughli in Bengal, as well as flouting Mughal rules by making forced conversions to Christianity, he commanded that the Portuguese settlement should be attacked and the Portuguese expelled. The city fell to the Mughal armies within days and the attempts of the inhabitants to escape down the Ganges were thwarted by a boom ingeniously thrown across the river. Four hundred of the captured Portuguese prisoners along with the idols of those erroneous infidels' were then sent off to Agra to beg for mercy. Those who refused were 'divided [as slaves] among the amirs', according to the Padshahnama, or held in prison and tortured. Most of them perished. There was nothing the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa could do about this.

With this in mind, the [East India] Company realised that if it was to trade successfully with the Mughals, it would need both partners and permissions, which meant establishing a relationship with the Mughal Emperor himself. It took Hawkins a year to reach Agra, which he managed to do dressed as an Afghan nobleman. Here he was briefly enter-

#HISTORY

tained by the Emperor, with whom he conversed in Turkish, before Jahangir lost interest in the semi-educated sea dog and sent him back home with the gift of an Armenian Christian wife. The mission achieved little, and soon afterwards another EIC fleet, captained by Sir Henry Middleton, was driven away from the Surat anchorage of Suvali - or 'Swally Hole' as the English mangled it - by local officials who ordered him to leave after threats from the Portuguese residents in the port.

A Proud Inheritor

A new, more impressive mission was called for and this time the Company persuaded King James to send a royal envoy. The man chosen was a courtier, MP diplomat, Amazon explorer and an Ambassador to the Sublime Porte as well as a self-described 'man of quality', Sir Thomas Roe. In 1615 Roe finally arrived in Ajmer, bringing presents of 'hunting dogges' - English mastiffs and Irish greyhounds - an English

Roe found that Jahangir 'expects great presents and jewels and regards no trade, but what feeds his insatiable appetite after stones, riches and rare pieces of art'. 'He asked me what Present we would bring him,' Roe noted: "I answered the league [between England and Mughal India] was yet new, and very weak: that many curiosities were to be found in our Countrey of rare price and estimation, which the king would send, and the merchants seeke out in all parts of the world, if they were once made secure of a quiet trade and protection on honourable Conditions. He asked what those curiosities were I mentioned, whether I meant jewels and rich stones. I answered No: that we did not thinke them fit Presents to send backe, which were first brought from these parts, whereof he was the Chiefe Lord ... but that we sought to find things for his Majestie, as were rare here, and unseene. He said it was very well: but that he desired an English horse ... So with many passages of jests, mirth, and braggies concerning the Arts of his Countrey, he fell to ask me questions, how often I drank a day, and how much, and what? What in England? What beere was? How made? And whether I could make it here. In all which I satisfied his great demands of State ..."

Jahangir was more interested in beer than East India Company

A proud inheritor of the Indo-Mughal tradition of aesthetics and knowledge, as well as maintaining the Empire and commissioning great works of art, he took an active interest in goat and cheetah breeding, medicine and astronomy, and had an insatiable appetite for animal husbandry, like some Enlightened landowner of a later generation.



A miniature presented to Jahangir by Roe.

several months of conversations with the two men talking at cross purposes. Roe would try to steer the talk towards commerce and diplomacy and the firms (imperial orders); he wanted confirming 'his favour for an English factory' at Surat and 'to establish a firm and secure Trade and residence for my countrymen' in constant love and peace. But Jahangir would assure him such workaday matters could wait and instead countered him with questions about the distant, foggy island Roe came from, the strange things that went on there and the art which it produced.

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A Dutch account of Sir Thomas Roe's travel to Jahangir's court.

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Dismissively Critical

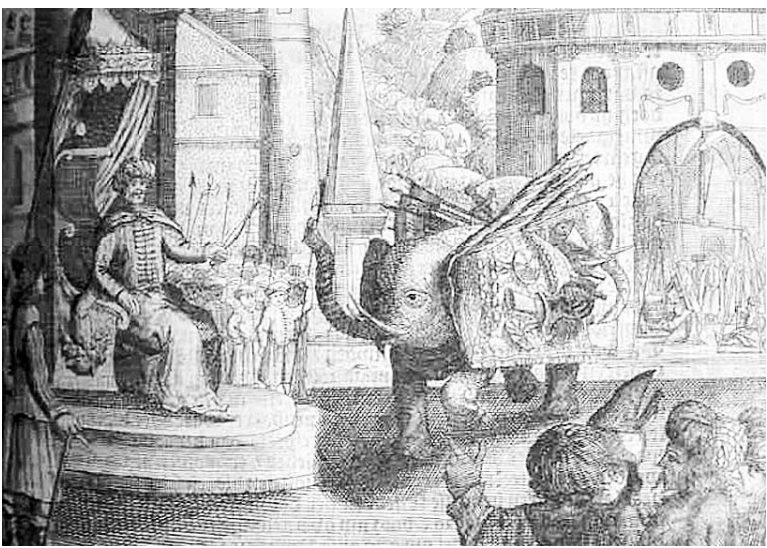
Roe could on occasions be dismissively critical of Mughal rule 'religions infinite, laws none' - but he was, despite himself, thoroughly dazzled. In a letter describing the Emperor's birthday celebrations in 1616, written from the beautiful, half-ruined hilltop fortress of Mandu in central India to the future King Charles I in Whitehall, Roe reported that he had entered a world of almost unimaginable splendor. The Mughals, in return, were certainly curious about the English, but hardly overwhelmed. Jahangir greatly admired an English miniature of one of Roe's girlfriends - maybe the Lady

lastic pollution is a global catastrophe and sadly it is man-made. The marine ecosystem in particular is suffering immensely as a result of plastic pollution. 31 species of marine mammals have ingested marine plastic, over 250 species have become entangled in plastic, approximately eight percent of it have been discovered in some sealion and seal species. International Plastic Bag Free Day is dedicated to heightening awareness about real and pressing issues brought about by this most popular disposable carrying device.

England that were of the greatest value. His diary is well known, but its value consists in its record of court life at the Mughal capital, and not in its meagre account of the country in general. An event of great importance for English history was the meeting of Sir Thomas, as a royal envoy with the Great Mughal. Roe had been seriously ill at Ajmir, but the emperor was so desirous of seeing him that he sent a special messenger to inquire whether his condition would not allow him to come to court. The emperor gave strict orders to his messenger and as Roe says, "charged him to see mee, so that I was forced to admitt him into my Chamber, wher he saw my weakness and gave satisfaction to the king."

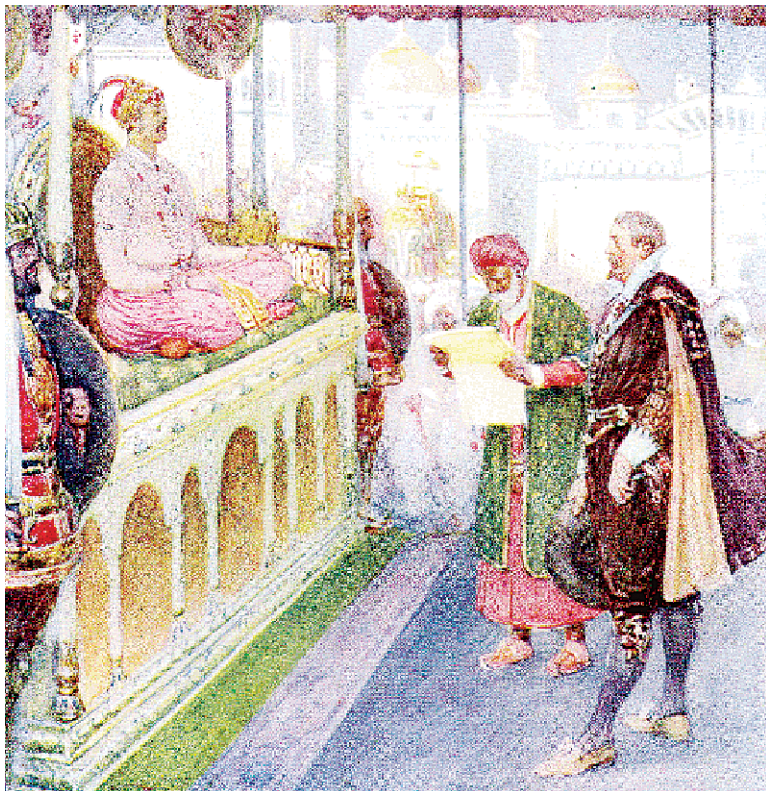
Roe's Memoir

This was on December 31, 1615, and on the following day, New Year's, Sir Thomas opens his diary as follows: "January 1-4, 1616 - I began to recover and sitt vp. January 5 - Master Edwardes departed for Surat. January 6-9 - I prepared to see the king. January 10 - I went to Court at 4 in the evening to the Durbar, which is the Place wher the Mogull sits out daylie, to entertayne strangers, to receive petitions and presents, to give Commendances, to see, and to be seene. To digresse a little from my reception, and declare the Customes of the Court, will enlighten the future discourse. The king hath no man but Eunuchs that Comes within the lodgings or retiring rooms of his house: His women watch within, and guard him with manly weapons. They doe Justice on vpon another for offences. He comes every Morning to a window called the Jarruco looking into a playne before his gate, and shows him selfe to the Common People. At noone hee returns thither and sits some howers to see the fight of Elephants and wild beasts: vnder him within a rayle attend the men of rancke; from whence hee retiers to sleepe among his women. At afternoone



he returns to the Durbar before mentioned. At 8 after supper he Comes downe to the Gazecan, a faire Court, wher in the middlest is a Throne erected of free stone wherein hee sits, but some times below in a Chayre; to which are none admittid but of great qualitey, and few of these without leave; wher hee discourses of all matters with much Affability. Ther is noe busines done with him Concerning the state, gouernment, disposition of warr or peace, but at one of these two last Places, wher it is publickly propounded, and resolved, and see registred, which if it were worth the Curiosity might be seene for two shillings, but the Common basse people knew as much as the Councell, and the Neves euery day is the kings new resolutions tossed and censured by euery resall."

This Course is unchangeable, except sicknes or drinck preuent yt; which must be known, for as all his Subjects are slaues, so is he in a kynd of reciprocal bondage, for he is tyed to observe these howres and Customes so precisely that if hee were vnsene one day and noe sufficient reason rendred the people would mutinie; two dayes noe reason can excuse, but that he must consent to open his doores and be seene by some to satisfye others. On Tuesday at the Jarruco hee sits in Judgment,



Sir Thomas Roe stood before the Mughal.

neuer refusing the poorest mans Complaynt, where hee heares with Patience both parts: and some times sees with too much delight in blood the execution done by his Eliphants."

11 meruere; sed quid to vt adesses? Durbar I was led right before him, at the entrance of an outward rayle, wher mett mee two Principall Noble slaues to conduct mee nearer. I had required before my going leave to vse the Customes of my Countrey, which was freely granted, soe that I would performe them Punctually. When I entered within the first rayle I made a reuerence; entering in the inward rayle a Nother; and when I came vnder the king a theird. The Place is a great Court, whither resort all sorts of people. The king sits in a little Gallery ouer his head: Ambassadors, the great men and strangers of qualty within the inmost rayle vnder him, raysed from the ground, Couered with Canopies of veluet and silke, vnder foote layd with good Carpets; the Meane men representing gentry within the first rayle, the people without in a base Court, but soe that all may see the king. This sitting out hath soe much affinitie with a Theatre - the manner of the king in his gallery; The great men lifted on a stage as actors; the vulgar below gazing on - that an easy description will informe of the place and fashion. The king presented my crull enterpreter bidding me welcome as to the brother of my Master. I deliuered his Majesties lettre translated; and after my Commission, wheron hee looked Curiously; after, my presents, which hee well receiued.

He asked some questions, and with a seeming Care of my health, offering me his Phisitions, and advising mee to keepe my house till I had recovered strength; and if in the interim I needed anything I should freely send to him, and obteyne my desires. He dismissed me with more fauour and outward grace (if by the Christians I were not flattered) then euer was showed to any Ambassador, eyther of the Turke or Persian, or other whatsoever."

Sir Thomas Roe spent almost four years as ambassador at the Mughal court. His mission immediately encountered difficulties due to the low quality of the gifts he had brought for an emperor, only the finest and rarest offerings. The most successful gift he presented to Jahangir was from his own collection. | I | ■

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#DERMATOLOGY

Re-pigmentation In Vitiligo



New research reveals the unique cell-to-cell communication networks that can perpetuate inflammation and prevent repigmentation in people with vitiligo disease. The study appears in the journal JCI Insight.

"In this study, we couple advanced imaging with transcriptomics and bioinformatics to discover the cell-to-cell communication networks between keratinocytes, immune cells and melanocytes that drive inflammation and prevent repigmentation caused by vitiligo," says Anand K. Ganesan, professor of dermatology and vice chair for dermatology research at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine.

"This discovery will enable us to determine why white patches continue to persist in stable vitiligo disease, which could lead to new therapeutics to treat this disease."

Vitiligo is an autoimmune skin disease that is characterized by the progressive destruction of melanocytes, which are mature melanin-forming cells in the skin, by immune cells called autoreactive CD8+ T cells that result in patches of white depigmented skin. This disease has shown to cause significant psychological distress among patients. Melanocyte destruction in active vitiligo is mediated by CD8+ T cells, but until now, why the white patches in stable disease persist was poorly understood.

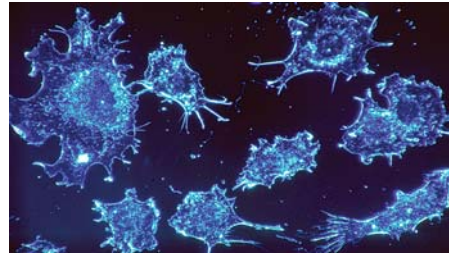
"Until now, the interaction between immune cells, melanocytes and keratinocytes in situ in human skin has been difficult to study due to the lack of proper tools," says Jessica Shiu, assistant professor of dermatology and one of the first authors of the study.

"By combining non-invasive multiphoton microscopy (MPM) imaging and single-cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq), we identified distinct subpopulations of keratinocytes in lesional skin of stable vitiligo patients along with the changes in cellular compositions in stable vitiligo skin that drive disease persistence. In patients that responded to punch grafting treatment, these changes were reversed highlighting their role in disease persistence."

MPM is a non-invasive imaging technique capable of providing images with sub-micron resolution and label-free molecular contrast which can be used to characterize keratinocyte metabolism in human skin. Keratinocytes are epidermal cells which produce keratin.

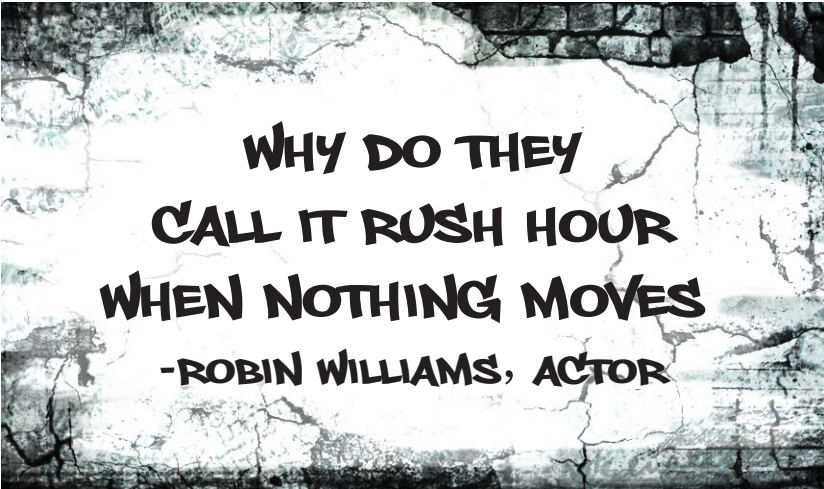
Most studies on vitiligo have focused on active disease while stable vitiligo remains somewhat of a mystery. Studies are currently underway to investigate when metabolically altered keratinocytes first appear and how they may affect the repigmentation process in patients undergoing treatment.

The findings of this study raise the possibility of targeting keratinocyte metabolism in vitiligo treatment. Further studies are needed to improve the understanding of how keratinocyte states affect the tissue microenvironment and contribute to disease pathogenesis.

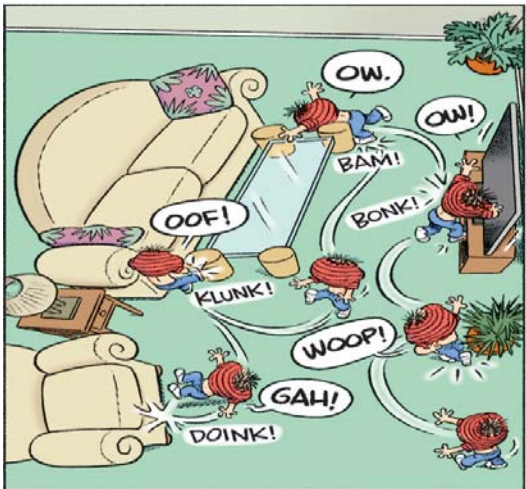


By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

