

#RECREATION

Love Letters to Lost Hobbies

In a world obsessed with productivity, here's a reminder that doing something just for joy is reason enough.



● "When was the last time you did something just because it made you happy?"

Not to upload it. Not to make money out of it. Just for you. If you had to pause and think, chances are you've shelved a hobby that once made your eyes light up. Remember doodling in your notebooks? Scribbling song lyrics? Sketching, dancing, journaling, building things with your hands? Where did all that go to?

● **The Disappearing Act**
Somewhere along the way, hobbies became "time-wasters." We got busier. More serious. We swapped curiosity for calendars and creativity for KPIs.

And yet those old hobbies never really left. They're tucked away in a dusty box, a half-filled journal, an unopened app, a tune you still hum under your breath.

● **What If You Just... Started Again?**

No pressure. No goal. No "I must be good at this." Just the act of beginning. Try this: Sketch a silly face. Hum a tune you used to love. Pick up that half-finished crochet project.

Write a haiku on a napkin. You're not rusty-you're just out of practice. And no one's judging. Hobbies are about presence, not perfection.

● **Why It Matters**
When you do something just for fun:
● You slow down.
● Your mind stops spiraling.

● **Just Start**
Your hobby didn't leave you behind. It's been waiting. Quietly. Patiently. For you to show up again.
● **Just Start**
This is your love letter to a forgotten joy.
And it's time you wrote back.



The author in Tumkur, opposite the University, before a spot of masala ginger chai.



Mohan Sundar Rajan

A close friend once told me an interesting anecdote. He visited an acquaintance in a one-horse town. Pleasantries over, he confessed there was only boredom. His acquaintance had a katha (cathu) factory, a key ingredient in paan, a healthy Indian mouth-freshener.

My recent trip to Tumkur was intellectually stimulating, religiously, culturally and gastronomically revealing. Thankfully, Tumkur was far ahead of the non-descript town that my poor friend visited.

Ananth Panth, with a Doctorate from JNU, informed me of a ten-day ICSSR Research Methodology Course being conducted by the Department of Studies and Research in Economics, Tumkur, in March. A serious student of Sociology, I was keen to be selected among the 30 Scholars by the prestigious University. So, I applied pronto.

When Dr. Jayaseela, Senior Professor in the Department, informed me that I was among the selected candidates, I was in seventh heaven. But first, some facts about myself. I am 70 years old, completed my Masters in Sociology in 1985 securing 1st rank in Bombay University. Unfortunately, I could not translate this academic success into a teaching job as I already had a position as a PRO in Tatas who graciously permitted me to fur-

ther educate myself while working.

The allure of a good career and salary in the corporate world was too attractive to let go of. My wife Girija, whom I met during my Masters, supported me in this decision. Anirudh was already born and Janhavi was on her way. Filthy lucre was an important consideration in the scheme of things then.

Till the age of 70, I did well, setting myself up as an Independent Communications Media Relations Consultant running my own boutique firm, Paradigm Shift. A Division Of Ulyssys Promotions Pvt Ltd. After moving to Mysore en famille, I was bitten again by the academic bug. While working from home, servicing select PR clients, I started the process of acquiring a PhD in Sociology from Mysore University.

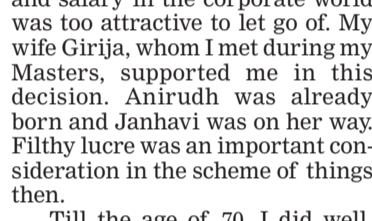
That is how a nice guy like me landed in good old Tumkur. For me, the trip was the best of times. From the word go, our creative juices started to flow, thanks to the superlative Faculty from different corners of the South including Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh and other Universities. Research Scholars travelled all the way from faraway Jharkhand, Lucknow, there were some from Tumkur and quite a few Southern locations.

Every minute of our workday, we were taught gems of wisdom by the Faculty whose message was "It is difficult to be simple, but simple to be difficult." The value in research of clarity of thought, willingness to learn with humility and genuineness were qualities instilled into us as Research Scholars.

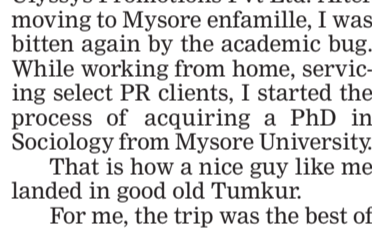
Interesting nuggets of information were shared with us. For example, there was a Sunday Church which was not being attended by enough faithfuls and hence a theological enquiry began. The Priest applied his thinking cap and, lo and behold, he had a brainwave. The Church then relocated to a Mall. The footfalls increased geometrically. The reason? Sunday shoppers, after trolley fulls of goodies for self and family, felt a twinge of guilt and this guilt led the holy to the Pulpit for a much-needed Sermon. As a subset in this line of reasoning, even before entering the Church,

TUMKUR : THEORY, THEOLOGY AND TATTLE

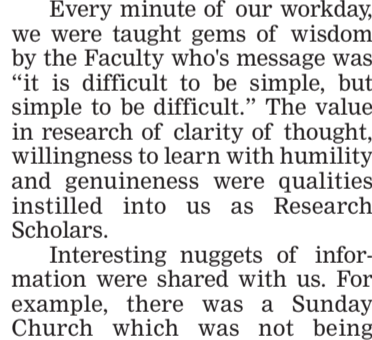
#VLOGS



Cauldrons of steaming rice evoking a sense of abundance ... a bustling kitchen for the pious and hungry.



The Research Scholars partake of the holy offering along with the devotees.



The author photographs his peers at the Sri Siddalingeshwara Swami Temple, Yedyuru, installed and blessed post the Anna Dasoha.



Witness the first in first out method of storage of ingredients and the hyper clean environment, maintained rodent-free.



The Research Scholars say cheese.



Prof Jayaseela and his colleagues, all part of the intellectually stimulating Faculty.

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male shoppers, after choosing a costly iPhone for themselves, went through the reparative process of selecting a box of candy for their daughters. More research gyaan came our way. Did we know an important result that could follow a divorce? The number of households doubles and electricity consumption increases as the separated individuals need to find new homes and hearths. These are universal, unspoken, and deeply personal aspects of family relationships and dynamics that a Research Scholar could study.

Yours truly also chipped in with a research topic that was liked by the Professor and peers. The idea I propagated was the differing effects on child rearing by maternal and paternal grandparents. I elaborated that infrequent rearing by the mother's parents might end up pampering the grandchildren while constant proximity to the grandchildren

hungry, regardless of caste, creed, or social status. Our study threw up interesting facts. The devout visited monthly, every 6 months or even annually. For the quality and quantity of food, satisfaction levels of 5 (the highest) were reported. On the subject of hygiene, respondents indicated room for improvement. Most devotees expressed a strong willingness to volunteer their services for Anna Dasoha. At the ground level, devotees were required to return drinking water glasses even before the completion of their meals. Instead, they wanted to retain their drinking water glasses till the end of the meal. The turn around time after one hall of diners was fed, some person said, needed to be shortened for convenience of those waiting.

Overall, this was viewed as a positive experience, both spiritually and gastronomically. At the end of the Research Methodology Program, we were each given a Certificate signed by Prof. M Venkateshwarlu, Vice Chancellor, Smt. Nahida Zam Zam, Registrar, Dr. Jayaseela, Professor and Course Director and Dr. Muniraju M. Co-Director. When I boarded 16535 Golgumbaz Express from Mysore to Tumkur, for most part of the 208 kilometre stretch, I was full of questions, doubts, anxiety as to what lay in store for a seeker of truth and travel experience, like me. When I sat in the 17325 Vishwamanava Express, which halted for only a brief 3 minutes on platform 2, with the help of the friendly catering staff just before it zipped away, I was reminded of lines 'From a Railway Carriage' by Robert Louis Stevenson. But I have taken the liberty of rewriting it to suit my Tumkur experience, with due apologies to the Scottish novelist, poet and travel writer.

"Faster than fairies, faster than witches. The Vishwamanava crosses hedges and ditches. Here is a Scholar who first clambers and scrambles, Gathering knowledge as he ambles, Which turns to wisdom, some call it gyan. Pleased as punch is Mohan our Scholarly man."

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The placid lake by the side of the Jain temple.

Water Isn't Always Wet

Contrary to what we've always believed, water itself isn't technically "wet." Wetness is a description of how a liquid interacts with a surface—it's a sensation or condition, not a property of the liquid. Water molecules cling to other surfaces, making them feel wet, but the molecules themselves don't experience wetness. In fact, in a pure form or in zero gravity, water beads up and doesn't coat anything—no wetness involved! So the next time someone says "water is wet," you can wow them with some cool chemistry—and maybe start a fun debate in the process. Science for the win!



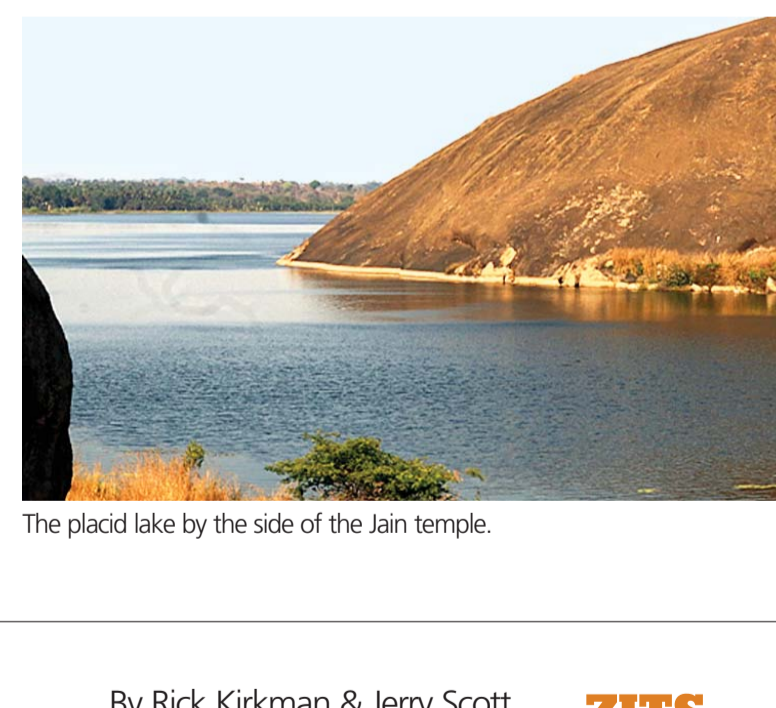
Shivakumara Swami, the famed spiritual leader of the Siddaganga Matha.

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#INSIGHT

Mughal Fashion as a Political Language

Beyond Power Dressing - The Cultural Alchemy of a Dynasty

When Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire, marched into Hindustan in 1526, he brought with him not just armies and artillery but also a wardrobe stitched in the threads of Central Asian tradition. Robes lined with fur, tall Astrakhan hats, and heavy cloaks suited for the chill winds of Ferghana were hardly made for the searing plains of the Indian subcontinent. But over generations, something curious happened—both on the throne and in the closet. The Mughal emperors, often remembered for their conquests and colossal architecture, were also astute weavers of cultural identity. Their gradual adoption of Indic garb—jamas, dhotis, angarkhas, and turbans—was not just sartorial adaptation but a sophisticated, symbolic act of political and cultural assimilation. What began as a royal fashion experiment evolved into a visual declaration of belonging, a conscious refashioning of power.



Clothes Make the Emperor

For Akbar, the third emperor and arguably the most politically savvy of them all, fashion was diplomacy woven in silk. A great proponent of *salah-e-kul* (universal peace), Akbar didn't just marry Rajput princesses—he wore their culture. He frequently donned Hindu-style turbans, participated in Hindu festivals, and even took to wearing the tilak during court ceremonies. His wardrobe mirrored his ideology: inure their culture, commissioning weavers from across India.

those from Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, describe in detail how Akbar blended Persian, Turkic, and Indian aesthetics. The fusion wasn't just skin-deep; it extended to fabric choice, tailoring, and even court etiquette. The court's garments often combined Central Asian layering with the elegance and lightness of Indian cottons and muslins. Akbar even set up royal *karkhanas* (workshops) to create unique textiles, commissioning weavers from across India.

The Politics of a Pajama

Was this just clever politics? Certainly. But it was also something subtler—a sign that the Mughals were not simply ruling over India, they were slowly becoming Indian.

Jahangir, Akbar's son, took the Indo-Persian aesthetic to new heights, luxuriating in rich brocades and embracing more Indian silhouettes. His fondness for Indian flora, fauna, and attire is evident in his memoirs and the miniature paintings of his court. He wore jamas with tight bodies and flared skirts, often paired with Rajasthani turbans and pearl-embroidered slippers. These weren't costumes of a foreigner—they were the garb of a hybrid elite, culturally at home in Hindustan.



Shah Jahan and the Sartorial Golden Age

Under Shah Jahan, Mughal fashion reached peak opulence. Known for his architectural vision (think: the Taj Mahal), he also had a flair for clothing as theatre. His court became a visual spectacle of power and refinement. Portraits from this era show garments encrusted with jewels, robes dyed in rare hues, and intricately patterned *jamana*

weaves from Bengal. Significantly, the emperor's attire often set trends across the subcontinent. Royal fashion filtered down to the nobility and then to the merchant class, creating a ripple effect. Tailors adapted imperial styles for the masses, leading to a complex fashion ecosystem where cultural exchange played out in hems, cuffs, and collars.

Dressing for a New Identity

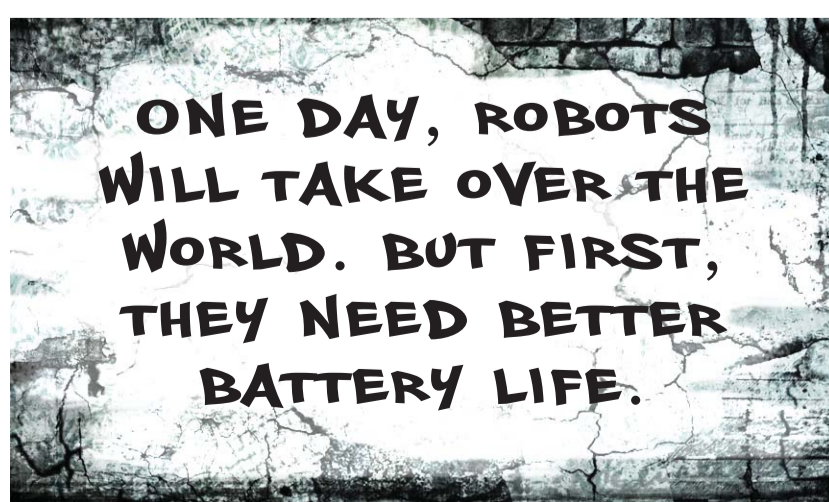
The Mughal adoption of Indian dress was not a shallow pageant of inclusion, but part of a deeper cultural negotiation. Over generations, the emperors' identities transformed—from conquerors in exile to emperors with roots in the land they ruled. Their clothing reflected this evolution: it softened the lines between "us" and "them", presenting an image of authority that was both foreign and familiar.

This hybrid visual identity also influenced art, language, cuisine, and court rituals. Persian might have remained the language of administration, but the idioms were increasingly Indian. Likewise, the garments were stitched in Delhi and Lahore, dyed in Ahmedabad, and embroidered in Kashmir.

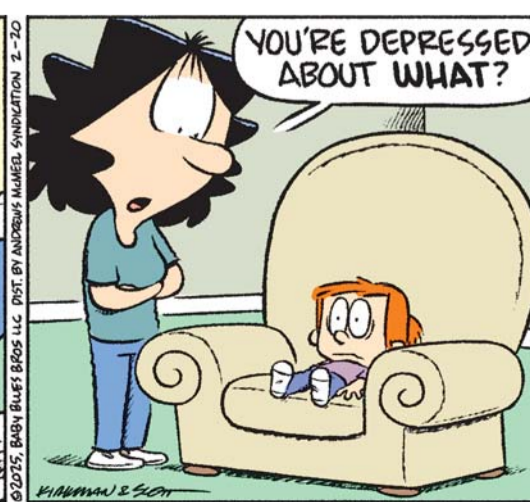
More Than Just Fabric

The story of Mughal fashion is more than a tale of changing trends. It's a mirror to the empire's soul. In every pleat and pattern, there's a record of cultural negotiation, of power reimagined through silk and symbolism. Today, the Mughal aesthetic survives not just in museums and history books, but in bridal couture, handloom revivals, and even Bollywood costume design. Each time a designer invokes the "Mughal look," they're not just evoking luxury—they're re-creating a centuries-old story of identity, diplomacy, and transformation. Because sometimes, the clothes really do make the emperor.

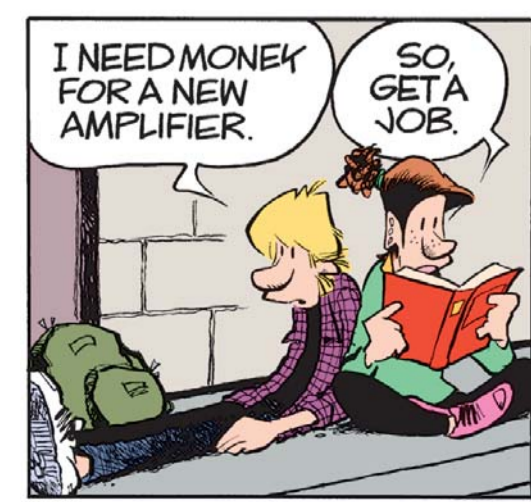
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman