



The 1867 Alaska Purchase

On October 18, 1867, the United States formally took possession of Alaska from Russia, marking a landmark territorial expansion. Negotiated by Secretary of State William H. Seward for \$7.2 million, the deal added over 586,000 square miles of land rich in natural resources and strategic potential. Initially mocked as ‘Seward’s Folly,’ the acquisition later proved invaluable with Alaska’s forests, minerals, and oil reserves. Beyond economics, the purchase strengthened U.S. influence in the Pacific and reshaped its geographic and strategic landscape, transforming a seemingly remote wilderness into a vital part of the nation’s growth and security.

#POWER

Love and Control

Enchantments of the Heart: Meat, Flowers, and Forbidden Recipes of Medieval Women



In the hidden spaces of medieval Europe, behind kitchen doors, beneath floorboards, or under the cover of moonlight, women practiced a quiet form of power. Long before modern ideas of romance and consent, love and desire were often tangled with mysticism, superstition,

and desperation. Among the more unsettling but fascinating traditions whispered through time is the practice where young women infused raw meat with flower essence, animal parts, and even pieces of themselves, all in an effort to win, keep, or control a lover’s heart.

This was not culinary art. It was enchantment.

Flesh in Flowers: A Curious Ritual

The ritual began with a strange and symbolic act: placing raw meat, beef, poultry, or sometimes the heart of a small animal, into fresh, fragrant flowers. This was no mere garnish. Roses, marigolds, and wild herbs were chosen not for taste, but for their mystical associations with love, lust, and life-force.

Women, often young and unmarried, would hide the

Ingredients of the Body: Blood, Hair, and Nails

For those seeking stronger spells, love that lasted, lust that never faded, or men who could not leave, women turned to the most intimate ingredients available: parts of themselves.

Menstrual blood, believed to carry potent life-giving energy, was secretly added to stews, sauces, or wine. It was thought to create a powerful bond, tying the man to the woman on a primal, bodily level. Fingernail clippings, hair strands, and even pubic hair were also stirred into meals or baked into breads. In sympathetic magic, these per-

The Alchemy of the Kitchen Witch

The medieval kitchen, especially in peasant or lower-class homes, was a sacred, if unspoken, space of power. Most women had no access to formal magic, religious authority, or political agency. But they had herbs. They had blood. They had knowledge passed down in whispers. A woman might cook her intended man’s favorite dish, laced with hidden symbols, scented with flower-infused meat, and

A Dangerous Game of Love and Control

These practices were considered ‘low magic,’ folk magic, and were often treated with suspicion. Discovery could lead to accusations of witchcraft, social exile, or worse. But most of these acts were never confessed or recorded. They lived in oral tradition, passed from grandmother to granddaughter, from neighbor to friend, in

kitchens scented with thyme and secrets.

And while these rituals may sound horrific by modern standards, they reflect a deeper truth about the Middle Ages: power, especially for women, had to be carved out in the margins. If the world denied them choice, they created their own forms of influence, however unsettling.

Conclusion: Stirring the Forbidden

There is a strange beauty in the idea of a woman stirring a pot, not just with ingredients, but with longing, fear, hope, and defiance. Love, after all, has always walked hand in hand with magic, especially when it’s unrequited, forbidden, or dangerous.

Today, we may recoil at the idea of menstrual blood in soup or fingernails in a stew. But for some medieval women, those were the tools they had, visceral, bodily, deeply symbolic, to enchant the man they loved and take fate into their own hands.

They Don't Celebrate Diwali!

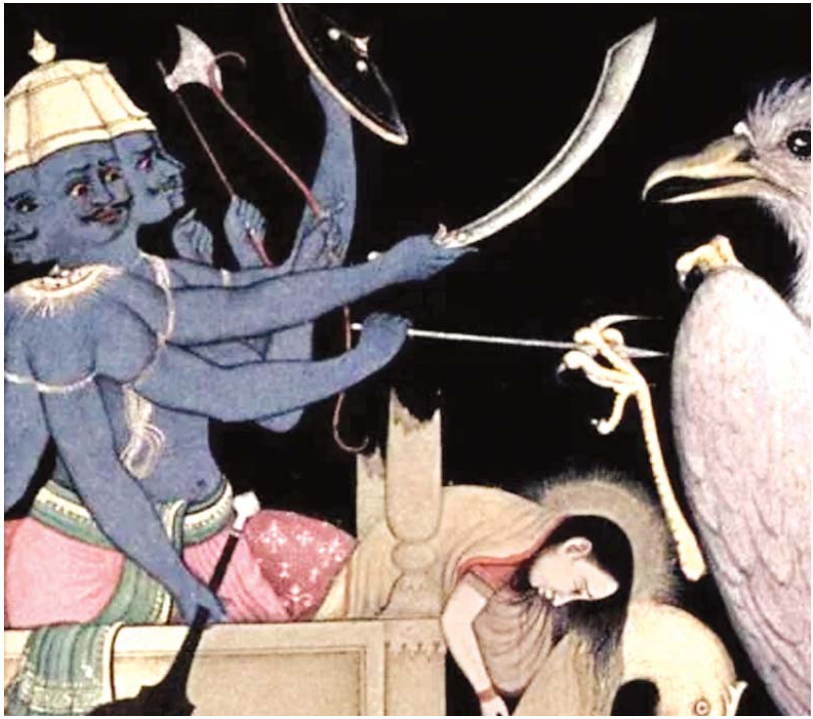


Rajendra Ghatge

Diwali, or the ‘festival of lights,’ is one of the most popular festivals in India. There are many myths and legends associated with it, and different regions in India celebrate it in different ways and for different reasons. But did you know that there are certain Hindu communities that don’t celebrate it?

If you ask an Indian to name any two festivals, it’s likely that at least one of them will be either Diwali or Dussehra. Both these festivals are widely celebrated in the country. But there are some communities that do not celebrate these festivals at all, and some even observe Diwali as a day of mourning.

In north India, Dussehra and Diwali are closely linked to the Ramayana, one of the great ancient Indian epics. Some communities in India, though, have a very different take on Ravana: they believe that his good qualities have been underplayed, and they even quote the scriptures to back that up.



Ravana fighting Jatayu

The scriptures say that Ravana was the son of the holy sage Vishrava. Ravana was an ardent devotee of Shiva. In fact, his devotion was so intense that he once chopped off his own 10 heads to obtain Shiva’s grace! And through his penance, he gained spiritual powers. So, why would they celebrate festivals that vilify him, these communities ask. The people of the village of Bishrakh, in Uttar Pradesh, believe that ‘Bishrakh’ comes from ‘Vishrava,’ Ravana’s father. They say that Vishrava installed a Shiva idol in their village, and that Ravana was actually born there. That makes Ravana a true son of the soil. How can they celebrate his fall? From the story of the son, let us move on to the story of the son-in-law. The Ramayana says Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh is the birthplace of Mandodari, Ravana’s faithful wife who stood by him through thick and thin. As far as the people of Mandsaur are concerned, Ravana is their son-in-law! How then, can they celebrate the defeat and death of Ravana? They don’t.

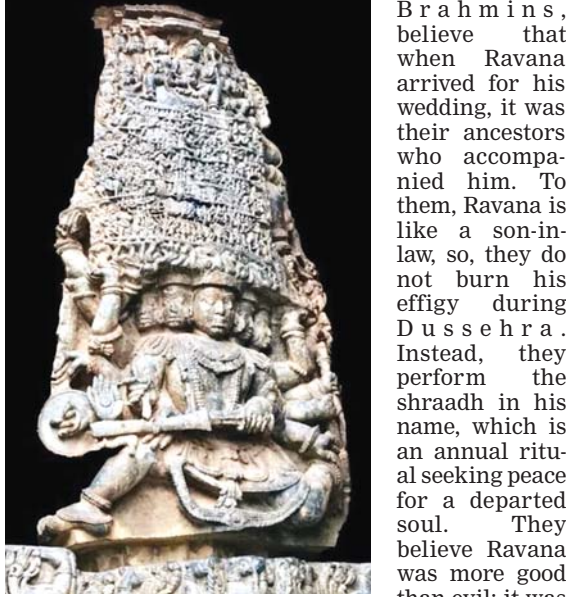
#HOWCOME



An architectural panel of scene from Ramayan.

Ravana lifting Mount Kailash - Panel at a Halebidu temple site

Mandore in Rajasthan ignores Diwali too. According to their lore, Ravana married Mandodari in Mandore. The local priests, the



just poor judgment that he kidnapped Sita, and he paid the price for it. Even today, there is a shrine for Ravana in Mandore, and the locals believe that worshipping there will give them spiritual powers.

Mandodari pacifying Ravana

Temples to Ravana are not uncommon. The Ravangram temple in Vidisha, MP is said to have been consecrated by Kanyakubja Brahmins, the subset to which Ravana belonged. There are Ravana temples in Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh) and Kanpur too.

The people of Baijnath village in Kangra, Uttarakhand do not worship Ravana, but respect him as a great devotee of Shiva. According to them, Ravana offered his 10 heads to Shiva while doing penance in their village, and that is where Shiva blessed him too. They see no evil in Ravana, and do not want to celebrate anything that celebrates his defeat and death. The markets are closed during Dussehra and Diwali and people do not buy sweets or fireworks. They are against the ritual burning of Ravana’s effigy during Dussehra, because they believe it will bring divine wrath on them. Folklore speaks of people who neglected this advice and suffered severe misfortune. The Gond tribals from Gadchiroli in Maharashtra reject the scripture version of Ravana. They call it a kind of ‘media conspiracy’ theory! They call themselves ‘Ravana-vanshis,’ meaning ‘descendants of Ravana.’ They worship Ravana and his son Meghnad as gods. Their story is that Ravana was a Gond king who was attacked by ‘Aryan invaders’ (probably a reference to Rama) and unjustly killed; and that the abduction of Sita never happened. They say that Valmiki, the author of the original Sanskrit Ramayana epic, did not consider Ravana evil; it was the later version by Tulsidas that painted him as evil. Unfortunately, say the Gonds, that interpretation has stuck in people’s minds.

An architectural panel of scenes from the Ramayana

Some communities do not celebrate Diwali for historical reasons. For example, the Mandyam Iyengars (a priestly class) of Melkote in Karnataka observe Diwali as a mourning day. In the 18th century, the Mandyam Iyengars owed allegiance to the Wodeyar kings of Mysore (now Mysuru), their long-time benefactors. They worked secretly to secure an alliance with the British to help the Wodeyars fight their expansionist neighbour, Tipu Sultan. Now, Tipu got wind of this deal. And on the day of Naraka Chaturdasi (Diwali), 1790, he attacked Melkote and killed at least 800 unarmed members of the community. After that, the entire community never had the heart to celebrate Diwali.

Then, there are communities that do not celebrate Diwali for ecological reasons. For years, the Thoppupatti and Saamett villages near Trichy in Tamil Nadu have stayed away from Diwali festivities, because the fireworks disturbed the bats living in the branches of their sacred banyan tree. They consider the banyan tree sacred because it is home to their village god, Muniyappa-Saamy. The rural folk near Vettangudi bird sanctuary never burst crackers during Diwali, as a consideration for migratory birds. And the forest conservation officials distribute sweets to them

on behalf of the birds! The residents of Sammoo village in Himachal Pradesh’s Hamirpur district do not celebrate Diwali. This is an ancient custom that people have been following for ages due to the fear of a curse from a woman who committed Sati on Diwali, according to a PTI report. Diwali is known as the festival of lights. However, this day is a usual day for Sammoo villagers, who don’t light lamps or burst crackers.

The village is located about 25 kms from Hamirpur district headquarters. They refrain from celebrating this festival as they fear that something tragic will happen. Therefore, no celebration or special food is prepared on Diwali. Even the elders have advised the younger generation to avoid celebrating this festival as it may lead to tragedies, misfortunes or even deaths.

According to the legend, ages ago, a woman had left for her parents’ home to celebrate this festival. Suddenly, she got the news of her husband’s death, who was a soldier in the king’s court, the report said. Shocked by the incident, the woman, who was pregnant, burnt herself on her husband’s pyre. She even cursed the villagers that they would never be able to celebrate the festival of lights.

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#DRAMATIC

Big Horned Bulls

Giants of Strength and Symbolism

Among the many majestic creatures of the animal kingdom, big horned bulls stand out as symbols of strength, power, and pride. Whether grazing on ranches, starring in cultural traditions, or dominating legends and myths, these bulls are not only admired for their size but also for their impressive and iconic horns. Let us explore the fascinating world of big horned bulls, their unique breeds, cultural significance, and the role they continue to play in modern society.



What Are Big Horned Bulls?

Big horned bulls are male cattle known for their large, often dramatically curved horns. While many cattle breeds have horns, some stand out for their sheer size and distinct shape. These horns serve

various biological and social purposes, from defense to temperature regulation, and from mating rituals to displays of dominance. Let’s look at some of the most well-known big horned bull breeds across the world.

Famous Breeds of Big Horned Bulls

1. Ankole-Watusi (Africa)

- Originating in East and Central Africa, Ankole-Watusi bulls are known for having the largest horns of any cattle breed.
- Their horns can span up to 8 feet from tip to tip.
- The hollow structure of the horns helps them regulate body temperature, especially in the hot African climate.
- Historically, these bulls have been symbols of wealth and royalty among African tribes.

2. Texas Longhorn (United States)

- Bred in North America, the Texas Longhorn is famous for its wide, curved horns, often extending over 7 feet.
- They are known for their resilience, able to survive in harsh environments with minimal resources.
- The Texas Longhorn is an important icon of the American Wild West and is now the official large animal of Texas.

3. Spanish Fighting Bulls (Spain)

- Bred specifically for bullfighting, these bulls are muscular and aggressive, with forward-pointing horns used in combat.
- The breed holds a strong place in Spanish culture, representing bravery, strength, and defiance.
- Spanish fighting bulls are also known for their unpredictable behaviour and fierce spirit.

Why Do Bulls Have Horns?

In bulls, horns serve several key purposes:

- Defense:** Used to protect themselves against predators or rivals.
- Mating Competition:** Bulls fight each other using their horns to establish dominance and win

mating rights.

- Thermoregulation:** In some breeds, horns help release excess body heat.
- Social Structure:** Larger horns often indicate strength, which helps bulls climb the social ladder within herds.



Cultural and Historical Significance

Big horned bulls have left a lasting impact on human culture and history:

- In mythology, the Greek Minotaur, half man, half bull, represented power and mystery.
- In Hinduism, Nandi, the sacred bull of Lord Shiva, is depicted with powerful horns and revered in temples across India.
- In Spain, bullfighting remains a controversial yet deeply embedded tradition featuring horned bulls.
- In sports and branding, teams like the Chicago Bulls and Texas Longhorns use horned bull logos to symbolize strength, endurance, and aggression.

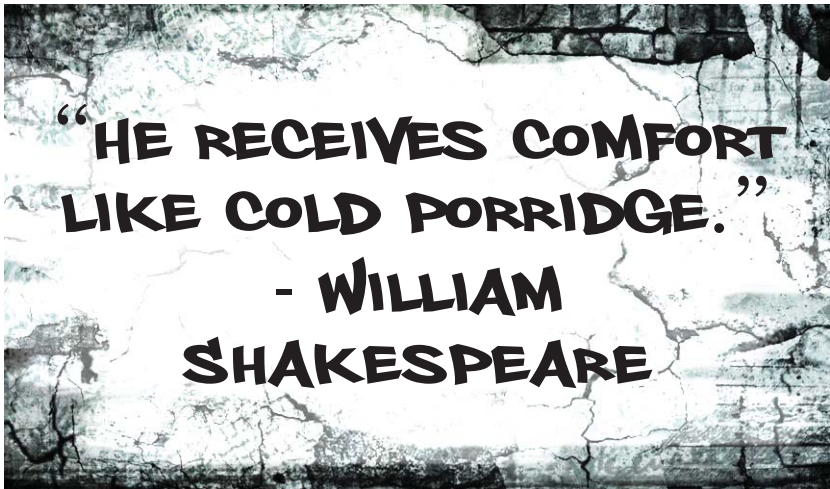
Conservation and Modern Relevance

While many horned bulls are domesticated, their wild relatives, such as the Indian Gaur and African buffalo, face threats from habitat loss and hunting. Conservation efforts focus on protecting these species and preserving their genetic diversity.

Meanwhile, selective breeding of horned cattle continues in ranches and farms for heritage preservation, cultural identity, and sometimes even tourism.

Big horned bulls are more than just large animals; they are icons of natural strength, cultural tradition, and historical power. Their horns, awe-inspiring in both form and function, tell stories that go far beyond biology. From African plains to Spanish arenas and American ranches, these majestic bulls continue to capture human imagination, reminding us of our deep connection with nature’s most powerful creatures.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS

