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#FAITH

The Quiet Power of Good Friday

Reflecting on sacrifice, sorrow, and the enduring strength of the human spirit!





as the Christian world pauses to observe Good Friday, we are reminded of the quiet gravity this lay holds. Unlike the celebratory tones of many

religious festivals. Good Friday is solemn. It doesn't glitter with festivity, it stirs with reflection

On the surface, the name itself feels contradictory. What could possibly be good about a day marked by betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion? For Christians, however, the 'good' in Good Friday speaks not to the agony of the moment, but to the hope it ultimately heralded. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the central event of this day, is seen not just as an ending, but as the beginning of salvation. of grace, and of forgiveness.

In churches around the globe, the observance is intentionally austere. Altars are stripped, bells remain silent, and hymns are sung in low, contemplative tones. In many parts of the world, the day is marked by long hours of prayer and scripture, including the Three Hours' Agony service between noon and 3 P. M., reflecting the final hours Jesus hung on the cross.

But this day isn't confined to the Christian experience alone. Good Friday offers something universal: a rare, collective moment to confront human suffering and mortality, not with fear, but with introspection. It prompts us to pause amid our relentless modern rhvthms, to reflect on themes that often feel inconvenient in our curated, fastforward lives, sacrifice, injustice, mercy, and endurance.

Across continents, the expression of this day varies. from torchlit processions in Spain to re-enacted crucifixions in the Philippines to



packed churches across Îndia's southern states. Yet, in all its forms, the heart of Good Friday remains the same: to remember a sacrifice made in love, and the resilience that often grows in the shadow of despair

In an age where suffering is either sanitized or sensationalized. Good Friday stands as an unflinching counterpoint. It does not offer quick comfort. Instead, it offers a mirror. And perhaps, that's what makes it relevant beyond its religious context, it invites a broader reflection on empathy community and the quiet strength found in confronting uncomfortable truths.

As Easter Sunday approaches, with its promise of resurrection and renewal, Good Friday is a necessary precursor. It reminds us that light, when it returns, is most powerful after darkness.

So today, let us acknowledge the sorrow. Not to dwell in despair, but to emerge from it a little more aware, a little more humble, and perhaps, a little more human.







Before Babur could redraw the map of Hindustan, the Rajputs did something no historian had predicted, they united. Not as heirs of pride, but as architects of resistance. This is not the story of a single battle. It is the moment strategy replaced chaos, and silence learned to speak in formation.



he spring of 1526 bloomed with blood. As Babur advanced into Puniab with his matchlocks, field artillerv. and Ottoman tactics. he expected to face fragmented resist-

ance. But instead of complacent sultanates and bickering thakurs, his scouts returned with unsettling news that the Rajputs had gathered. And they were not as he had known them. At the fortified plains of Sirhind, the first test of the

Raiput Sangh's resolve began. The army was unlike anything seen before in Rajputana. Spearmen from Amber stood alongside cavalry from Marwar. Bikaner's camel corps patrolled the edges while archers from Dungarpur coordinated with musketeers, men trained by Deccan artisans and renegade Afghan gunners, including one Abdul Qasim, a fictional but plausible defector once trained under Babur's Ottoman gunners, who had turned against him for reasons of vengeance and coin. At the center of it all. beneath a golden banner bearing the sun and twin swords,

ed the right. Babur's vanguard arrived swiftly assuming it would be a matter of hours

THE WALL

IF

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IT'S FREE, YOU

ARE THE

PRODUCT

what he found was a wall of discipline. Artillery pits had been dug. Rajput engineers, guided by Deccani masters, had contructed fire-retardant shield arts of wet jute and mudpacked timber to absorb cannon fire. Cavalry used the 'crescent retreat,' an Ottoman maneuver dapted by Viram Singh, luring Mughal riders into ambush zones where spiked barricades and camouflaged trenches awaited. The Rajputs had not only watched, they had learned. The Battle of Sirhind raged for two days. On the third, Babur attempted a feigned retreat to draw the Rajputs forward. But Bhim Singh held the line. No chase. No impulse. Only calculation

before the Rajput force collapsed in familiar chaos. But

By dusk, Babur's rear lines had crumbled. His soldiers, unfamiliar with such resistance, began to fall back. Sirhind held. Babur withdrew, stunned.

It was not a rout. But it was enough to shatter the myth, that India's warriors would never adapt. That valour could not learn strategy. Back in Chittorgarh, a torn Mughal banner was laid at Sanga's feet. He did not smile. He only said, "Now they will know, we are no longer fighting for kingdoms. We are fighting for time itself." The news travelled like mon-

soon wind. In temples, priests lit lamps of ghee for the fallen. In bazaars, women wept and sang songs not of defeat, but of awak ening. A bard in Udaipur composed the first lines of Veeram Sutra, a poem that would outlive even the kings:

"Where swords failed, minds rose. Where pride faltered, unity stood. And on the plains of Sirhind, fire learned to fight fire." Khanwa, in another time, would have been the grave of Rajputana. But in this one, it was the battle that never was, erased not by forgetting, but by rewriting fate at Sirhind.

W hile the smoke of Sirhind still curled into the skies of history, another wind stirred, south of the Vindhyas. Word of the Rajput victory had reached the Vijayanagar, courts of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golkonda. In the carved granite halls of Hampi and the marbled durbars of the Deccan Sultanates curiosity turned to calculation. A ripple of unease spread, for if the North had united under sword and banner, the fragile equilibrium of peninsular India could no longer

Krishnadevaraya, Emperor of Vijayanagar and the mightiest monarch south of the Krishna River, received the missive from Chittorgarh in the spring of 1526. Known for his brilliant campaigns against the Bahmani remnants and his literary court of eight famed poets, the Ashtadiggajas, he read the scroll twice, then sum-

stand detached.

moned his council. The letter bore the seal of the newly formed Rajput Sangh. It was not a plea, it was a proposition. The Rajputs proposed a Southern Accord. Not a political annexation, but a defensive confederationm, a loose military pact to share intelligence, trade in weaponry, and mutually resist Turkic and Persian expansionism. Such a pact was unprecedented. Rajput tradition, for centuries, had valued personal valour and lineage over federation. Each clan guarded its sovereignty like a jewel. The Sangh was not just a military arrangement it was a reimagining of Rajput identity.

The emissaries arrived weeks later, led by Rao Hariram of Bundi, flanked by Brahmin scholars from Mewar and Bikaner. They carried not gold. but maps, blueprints of artillery designs adopted at Sirhind, and scrolls detailing Babur's formation tactics

At Golconda, Sultan Quli Qutbul-Mulk, founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, received the news with interest. He had recently broken from the Bahmani Sultanate to establish his own state, and his court, rich in Persianate culture, viewed the Raiputs with caution. But when he learned that the Raiputs had repelled Babur's artillery using Ottoman-inspired tactics, he remarked:

"The swords of the past have forged minds of the future. Perhaps, unity is not just for the ulema.'

Ahmadnagar's ruler, Burhan Nizam Shah I, whose mother was Persian and court multilingual velcomed the idea cautiously. The city had a long-standing rivalry with Bijapur, but the spectre of a pan-Islamic Mughal invasion looming over the North compelled him to listen. He agreed to send artillery master Muhammad ibn Yusuf, a seasoned gunner formerly employed by the Ottomans, to Rajputana for training exchange. In

#SIRHIND

Krishnadevaraya, though deep in campaigns against the Gajapatis of Odisha, paused to respond with his own hand. His response came in the early months of 1526, before the weight of war and declining health drew him back to the southern front. He sent his chief minister. Timmarusu, with a ceremonia cavalry escort to signal goodwill and symbolic support. He also penned a Sanskri

verse in his own script: "Those who do not bend to fear rise through fire. Let us build not just walls, but wisdom between us. Let Deccan and Dilli rise not in conquest, but in clarity."

The Southern Accord was thus born, not as a signed doctrine but as a shared awakening. Rajput cavalry patrolled the borders of Berar. Deccan gunners set up forge sta tions outside Aimer. Vijavanagar's scribes documented Raiput battle formations for southern training manuals. This wasn't just diplomacy

was preparation for a united resistance. Seated in the fort of Agra, recently won through blood and diplomacy, Babur stood and watched the reports flow in "So, they have finally learned

to speak as one," he whispered 'Then I must find a way to divide the silence. He began with the old art of

empire-gold. Babur sent envoys in secret to smaller Raiput chieftains, those who had not been invited into the core of the Raiput Sangh. Offers of land, mansabdari positions, and Persian silk flowed quietly into courts at Nagod, Orchha, and Bundelkhand. Some listened. In Gwalior, where the legacy of Man Singh Tomar still echoed in crumbling palaces, Babur promised the return of ancestral lands. In exchange, intelligence, sabotage, betraval

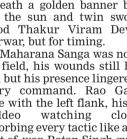
But the Sabha had anticipated

Maharana Sanga's spies intercepted messages. Rao Ganga sent envoys under Maldeo's quiet supervision, grooming his son in the subtle arts of diplomacy and trust-building. "Do not sell your soil for silk," he told them. "For gold can only buy silence, not hon-

The Sabha offered them some

BABY BLUES





stood Thakur Viram Dev of Marwar, but for timing. Maharana Sanga was not on the field, his wounds still healing, but his presence lingered in every command. Rao Ganga rode with the left flank, his son Maldeo watching closely. absorbing every tactic like a student of war. Ratan Singh guard-



Celebrating Global Communication

very year on April 18, International Amateur Radio Day honors the birth of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) in 1925. This day celebrates the power of amateur radio in fostering global friendships and emergency communication. Often called 'ham radio,' this hobby connects people across borders without the internet or cell phones. From supporting disaster relief to encouraging STEM learning, amateur radio plays a vital role in society. Enthusiasts worldwide commemorate this day by hosting radio events, sharing stories, and tuning into frequencies that unite voices from every corner of the globe.

The Battle that **Never Was**

PART:2

The Southern Accord - Allies Beyond the Vindhyas

thing Babur never could, respect, recognition, and a future written in Rajput ink. In a gesture symbolic and bold, the Rajput Sangh offered a permanent seat to the Thakur of Orchha, who had once considered Babur's proposal. At the induction, Ratan Singh declared "Unity is not made of blood-Vijayanagar,

lines, but of choices. Today, you have chosen your land." Babur's gold was met with loyalty. His whispers dissolved in a land now echoing with one sound, the silence of division resisted. Babur traded in coin. The Sabha countered with conviction.

Frustrated but far from defeated. Babur shifted tactics. He returned to Delhi under the pretext of consolidating his hold over the recently acquired northern territories. But behind palace doors in Agra, his frustration boiled. "This is not how it was supposed to unfold," he muttered, pacing before a map carved with bloodlines and borders. "They were supposed to fight each other, not stand together." He hurled a goblet against the wall, shattering silver across sandstone. "If they have forged unity, I must forge

encirclement He opened new lines of diplo macy with the rulers of Kabul and Balkh and invited reinforcements from Central Asia under the guise pilgrimage protection. of ltaneously, he began fortify Simu ing Punjab, Babur expanded artillery stockpiles in Lahore, call ing in more Ottoman gunsmiths from Herat and Kabul, and strengthening outposts along the Yamuna to block any further southern expansion by the Raiput Sangh. These moves, while never escalating into full-scale camnaigns due to his early death in 1530, laid the groundwork for deep-

er Mughal entrenchment He also began fostering rebellion in Malwa, hoping the Sultanate there, long wary of Rajput influence, could be manipulated into becoming a proxy front Even within the Rajput Sangh, debates ran long. Amber wanted greater influence over southern garrisons. Bundi hesitated at Vijavanagar's expanding role. But none dared risk undoing what unity had begun to weave. Babur's war was no longer just on the bat tlefield, it became a war of containment, attrition, and indirect destabilization

The Rajput Sangh, sensing the shift, began preparing accordingly. But a storm was building, one that would soon test not just swords and strategy, but patience, perseverance, and vision.



Historical Interlude: The Road Not Taken

n truth, history did unfold this way. The Rajputs did not unite in time. Babur's victory at Panipat in 1526 was followed by another at Khanwa in 1527, where a fragmented Rajput confederacy, led by the valiant Maharana Sanga, was defeated. The Mughals, armed with superior artillery and matchlock firearms, cemented their power in north ern India. The Deccan Sultanates remained preoccupied with their own rivalries, Vijayanagar, under Krishnadevaraya, never entered the northern theatre. The idea of a Rajput Sangh or a Southern

Accord never materialized

Historically, Krishnadevaraya

died in 1529. His support here is imagined as brief but crucial. occurring in 1526-27 before he refocused on Odisha and internal court challenges. But this story dares to imag

What if the wounds of pride had been soothed by foresight? What if diplomacy had arrived before desperation? What if the Raiput swords had been sharpened by unity not ego? This tale is not a denial of

the past, but a tribute to the

To be continued.

path untaken. A whisper from a parallel history, born not of fantasy, but of possibility.

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The images for the article have been sourced from the internet. "All images are for representational purposes only and do not depict actual historical events or individuals.



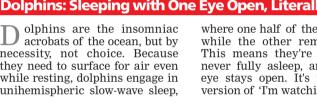
Nature's Odd Sleepers: Animals with Truly Bizarre **Bedtime Habits**

#ANIMAL KINGDOM

From sea otters holding hands in slumber to dolphins sleeping with half their brain awake, the animal kingdom redefines the meaning of 'beauty sleep.'

n the ever-intriguing theatre of the wild, sleep is not a one-size-fits-all affair. For us humans, it's simple: lie down, shut eyes, drift away. But for many animals, sleep is a strategic, evolutionary mar

vel, shaped by survival needs, environmental quirks, and sometimes, downright weirdness. Let's dive into the strangest slumber strategies in the animal kingdom that would leave even the sleepiest panda wide-eyed.



Sea Otters: Holding Paws While They Nap tters may just be the most O romantic nappers in nature. To prevent drifting away while

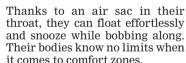
surface. Some even wrap themselves in kelp to anchor down. they sleep, sea otters often hold Sleep, for them, is equal parts snooze and safety net. hands in their floating rafts, form-

hink you're good at power naps? The alpine swift, a bird that migrates from Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, takes multitasking to the skies, literally. These birds are known to sleep while flying, gliding

Giraffes: Blink and You'll Miss It D espite their size and stately demeanor, giraffes are surprisingly light sleepers. In the wild, they average just 30 min-

utes of sleep a day, often taken in brief bursts. They doze standing Walruses: Sleep While Floating, Sitting or Even Hanging

XX7 alruses are the couch pota **VV** toes of the sea, but adaptable ones. They can sleep in water. on land, or even while hanging by their tusks from ice ledges.



Meerkats: Communal Cuddlers

or meerkats, sleep is a cozy, collective ritual. These desert dwellers pile together in underground burrows. often sleeping in tangled heaps for warmth and security. Their strict hierarchy also shows in their slumber: dominant individuals get the comfiest spots, usually right in the center. Nap politics





MANBE I'LL JUST GIVE THEM A RINSE ... USE SOAP! OT DECO

ZITS SCHOOL "NOTHING IS TOO WORTH DOING HARD. IS EVEREASY. -THEODORE ROOSEVELT







while the other remains alert.

through the air for up to 200

days without landing. How do

they do it? Similar to dolphins

they rest one brain hemisphere

at a time, allowing them to stay

airborne without crashing, talk

up to avoid predators, but occa-

sionally, they'll curl their neck

like a swan and rest their head on

their rump for a quick REM nap.

It's a rare but delightful sight,

nature's own yoga pose.

about jet lag

This means they're technically never fully asleep, and yes, one eye stays open. It's the aquatic version of 'I'm watching you.

ing fuzzy clusters on the water's

Always Half-Awake

rigatebirds, much like their alpine cousins, can sleep mid air during long oceanic flights. What's unique is that they manage to nap in ten-second bursts, totaling about 45 minutes of sleep a day, less than any land animal of their size. Despite this sleep deprivation, they remain sharp hunters. Insomniacs of the skies, take note.

in the Wild

leep, in the natural world, is not **)** just about rest. it's a balance of biology behaviour and badass sur vival skills. Whether it's avoiding predators, managing migration, or adapting to extreme habitats, animals have evolved sleep strategies that challenge our understanding of what it means to truly 'switch off.' So, the next time you groan about not getting eight hours, spare a thought for the sleepless swift or the wary dolphin. In nature, even sleep is wild.





Parrotfish: Built-In **Bubble Blankets**

○ ome parrotfish take bedtime to ○ another level, secreting a mucous cocoon before sleep. This bubble surrounds them and masks their scent from nocturnal predators like morav eels. Think of it as a nat ural mosquito net meets invisibility cloak. Scientists believe this mucous layer may also protect them from parasites. Sleep tight, slime-style.

Sharks: Always in Motion,

ontrary to cartoon myths, some ✓ sharks can't stop moving, even when they sleep. Certain species like the great white rely on ram ventila tion, needing constant movement to breathe. So, they enter a trance-like state while swimming, resting parts of their brain but never fully switching off. It's the ultimate paradox: asleep but in motion.

Frigatebirds: Sleeping

on the Wing

The Takeaway: No Rules

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman