



National Raisin Day: A Tiny Fruit With Big Benefits

Observed on April 30, National Raisin Day celebrates the humble dried grape that has been a staple snack for centuries. Packed with natural sugars, fibre, iron and antioxidants, raisins offer a quick energy boost and support overall health. From traditional desserts and breakfast bowls to modern salads and baked goods, this versatile ingredient adds sweetness and nutrition to countless dishes. The day also highlights the role of farmers and sustainable agriculture in bringing this simple yet powerful fruit to our tables, reminding us that even the smallest foods can have a big impact on our diets.

#BOOK REVIEW

POETRY THAT EXPLORES MEMORY, PAIN, AND THE PROCESS OF LETTING GO

Book Title: When Gods Don't Matter

Author: Jagdeep Singh

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Reetuparna Dutta

When Gods Don't Matter is a deeply reflective poetry collection that explores memory, pain, and the slow process of letting go. The poet's writing is simple and unadorned, yet emotionally powerful. The poems feel personal but familiar, as if they are speaking about experiences many of us have quietly lived through.

One of the recurring ideas in the book is that pain is not always dramatic or loud. It often becomes a part of our everyday lives. In the poem 'The Flotsam,' Singh describes pain as something that returns again and again, spread across different phases of life. The line, "by now pain is a staple," stood out to me for its honesty. It captures how hurt can stop feeling like a shock and instead become something we carry indifferently. The poem suggests that emotional residue, like flotsam, gathers over time and shapes who we are.

Another memorable poem, 'Clean Slate,' focuses on release and renewal. Singh writes about memories that have been held captive for years and are now being let go, slowly and deliberately. The poem acknowledges the importance of first experiences like first love, first heartbreak, first poem. It also accepts that they cannot stay forever. There is sadness in this realisation, but there is also relief. Letting go is shown not as weakness, but as necessary routine.

What makes the book stand out is its quiet and minimalist tone. There are no grand statements or promises of healing. The absence of gods in the poems feels intentional. The poet does not look for divine answers but instead focuses on personal effort and acceptance. Healing here comes from reflection, not faith. 'When Gods Don't Matter' is a thoughtful and moving collection for those of us who enjoy poetry that is raw, powerful, and emotionally grounded.

The Shadows

The shadows come vague, nebulous, undefined. Their voices muted. The silence brooding.

Overwhelmed- I stand and stare.

The shadows come closer!

I would have grappled with anything exact, defined, tangible...

Slowly but surely they envelop me full and thorough!

For the Wind blown

There never was a covenant laid that the wind blown can't move on.

That they have to remain overwhelmed by sensory overload by mental carnage.

Even if the colours of pain can't be whitewashed- let the hues remain as badges of courage!

Indomitable courage to rethink the narrative and live once again...

Infertility

With apologies to TS Eliot

In vain do I search for the sprouts of the planted corpses. All that I've found is a heap of broken images.

Zombie- like I walk neither dead nor alive.

Meanwhile, the sun beats and beats hard on the dry, barren earth.

I would, if I could stir the dull roots. She laughed mockingly- loud the hyacinth girl.

Frenziedly, I search for the red rock and its shade.

You said death can undo. I'd say even life does.

Clean Slate

Alcatrazed for many years I'm letting them go now. Setting them free one by one.

Reminiscences of yester-years- I'm unchaining them one by one.

The blooming of the first love. Sweet melancholy of the first heartbreak. The sheer thrill of the first poem. They will soon be gone.

Work is on for a clean slate, with nothing to give nothing to take.

When Gods Don't Matter!

After a point, even prayers don't matter.

And neither do the heap of life-saving medicines.

The heart-felt wishes of the close ones bounce off the ventilator

and lie scattered on the cold, hard phenyl-washed ICU floor.

The miffed Gods. If you're around, heal right now!

For later, even you won't matter!



Rembrandt, Large Self-Portrait, 1652, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

A Large Self-Portrait

The freely painted clothing includes a brown robe that was most likely casual working attire, secured with a sash, over a black doublet with an upturned collar. A drawing from c. 1650 shows Rembrandt in much the same pose and attire, and features an inscription, though not by the artist's hand, stating that these were the artist's studio clothes. In the drawing, Rembrandt is seen wearing a top hat, while in the painting, he wears a black beret, derivative of artists' portraits of the 16th century. The clothing is plain, the setting indistinct, and the body seems to dissolve into shadow. What remains solid is the face, illuminated by a warm, fragile light that reveals age, fatigue, and resilience.

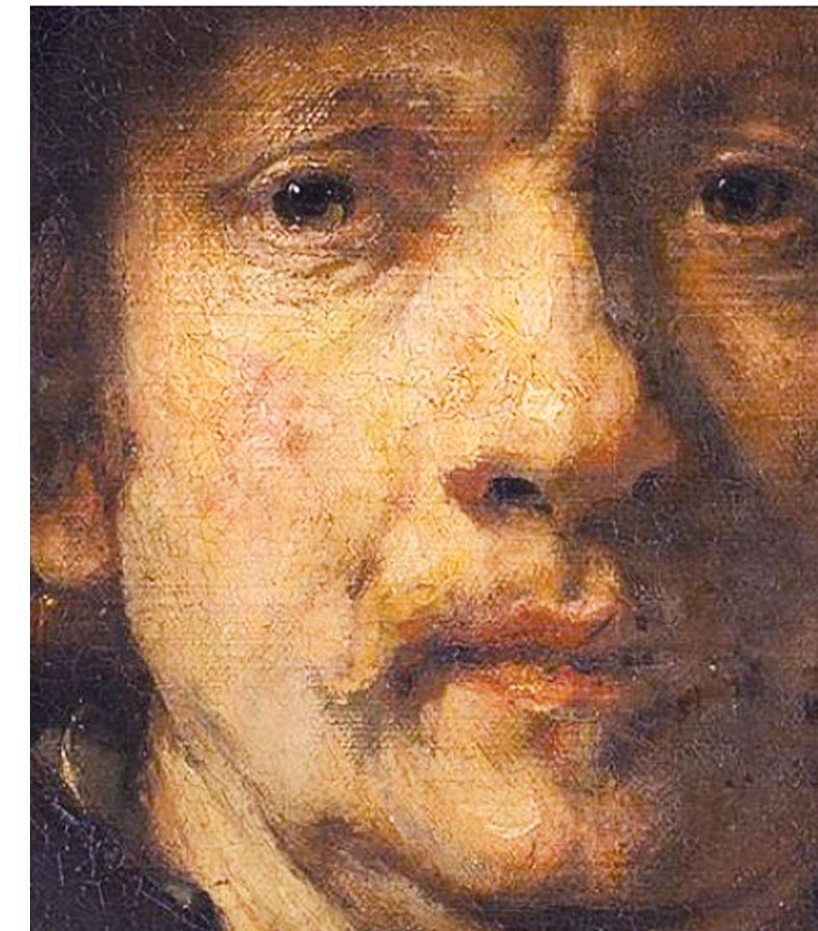
Rembrandt's Large Self-Portrait of 1652 stands among the most uncompromising images of artistic self-examination in Western art. Painted during one of the most turbulent phases of his life, this work is not merely a likeness, but a profound meditation on identity, endurance, and the dignity of the painter's craft.

By 1652, Rembrandt was approaching financial collapse, increasingly isolated from the prosperous Amsterdam society that had once celebrated him. Yet, instead of retreating into flattering illusion, he confronts the viewer with an extraordinary honesty. His expres-

#REMBRANDT

sion is steady, even severe: neither theatrical nor sentimental, but deeply human. The gaze does not invite admiration so much as it demands recognition.

The composition is monumental. Rembrandt presents himself almost as a figure of history, standing with hands on hips in a pose that recalls aristocratic portraiture. It is one of more than 40 painted self-portraits by Rembrandt, and was the first he had painted since 1645. In composition, it is different from his previous self-portraits, depicting the painter in a direct frontal pose, and with an air of self-



confidence. However, the grandeur here is paradoxical.

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Following a period of seven years, when he painted no self-portraits, focusing instead on landscapes and intimate domestic subjects, the Vienna Self Portrait inaugurated a prolific stretch in which Rembrandt painted an average of one self-portrait a year until his death in 1669.

As in other late portraits and self-portraits by Rembrandt, a painted underlayer shows through in areas of shadow, here particularly in the eye sockets and beneath the moustache. Microscopic analysis has revealed that this is not the painted ground layer, which is a similar gray color, but a separate underlayer of paint. This local imprimatura, used in preparation for specific areas of the painting, was also practiced by Vermeer, and its purpose is not fully understood.

This portrait exemplifies Rembrandt's late style: paint becomes substance, not surface.

The brushwork is thick and tactile, especially in the handling of flesh and fabric. The image feels built rather than drawn, as though Rembrandt is sculpting himself out of pigment and darkness. Chiaroscuro is no longer simply a dramatic device, but an emotional language: light emerges as a form of truth against obscurity.

What makes this self-portrait so arresting is its psychological intensity. Rembrandt does not perform the role of genius; he inhabits it. The work suggests a man who has endured loss, public judgement, and private grief, yet still asserts the authority of the artist. There is defiance here, but also vulnerability, an acceptance of time's mark on the body and soul.

In many ways, *Large Self-Portrait* is Rembrandt's declaration that painting is not about perfection, but about presence. It is an image of survival through seeing: the artist looking at himself, and asking the viewer to look back without illusion.

There is much evidence that Rembrandt's series of almost forty reliably documented self-portraits, unique in the history of painting, served as more than merely a vehicle for the Amsterdam painters self-reflection. They were also a suitable means for him to present himself to the public: a form of self-marketing. The term "self-portrait" was not yet common in 17th-century Holland; such a painting was more likely to be referred to as "a portrait of Rembrandt painted by himself." Thus, for the ambitious collector, the painting was two things: Rembrandt's image, and at the same time, an example of his art.

Rembrandt has concentrated

the meagre light on his face. His simple garment, trimmed only at the shoulders and collar, is gently illuminated and only hints at his stature. Entirely fixated on the ageing facial features, the viewer is initially distracted from the self-confident, almost challenging posture. The two thumbs hooked into a belt, that seems to have been cursorily tied at the waist, are a self-confident antipode to the melancholy, complexly painted countenance.

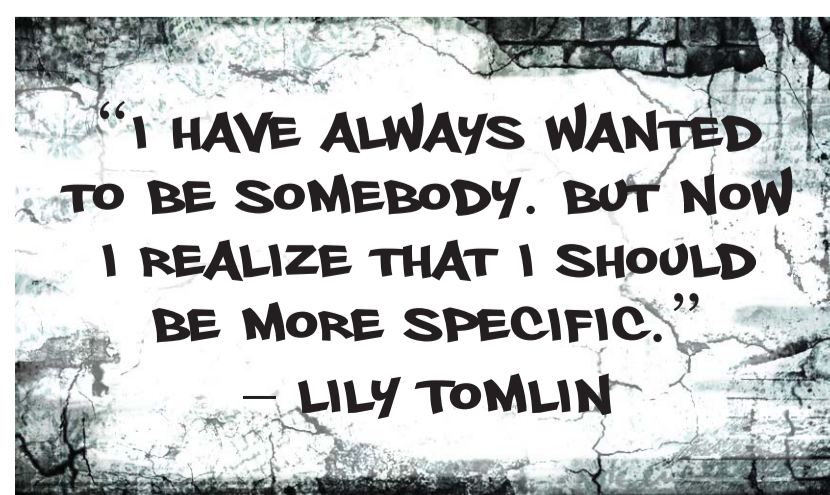
Rembrandt's face is further emphasised by its contrast to other parts of the portrait with their uniformly thick application of paint, in general, a characteristic of his late works, in contrast to earlier self-portraits in which the artist is often dressed in sumptuous fabrics.

Rembrandt was a dedicated self-portraitist all his life. In this example, painted when Rembrandt was fifty-four, the artist was unsparring in depicting the signs of aging in his own face, building up the paint in high relief to convey his furrowed brow, the heavy pouches beneath his eyes, and his double chin. The recent removal of a synthetic varnish has revealed more of Rembrandt's working method, showing, for example, how he flipped the brush to incise with its butt end the rough curls spilling out of his cap.

Large collections of Rembrandt's drawings are held in the Rijksmuseum, the Louvre, and the British Museum. The Rembrandt House Museum holds many of his drawings and almost all the etchings, a selection of which are on rotating display in the house.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman