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Celebrating Lancashire Day: Honouring Heritage and Community Spirit

Lancashire Day, celebrated annually on November 27, honours the historic county of Lancashire in England and its rich cultural heritage. The date marks the moment in 1295 when Lancashire first sent representatives to the Model Parliament of King Edward I, symbolizing the county's enduring civic pride. On this day, locals celebrate with traditional events, readings of the Lancashire Day proclamation, and displays of the red rose emblem, the county's historic symbol. It's also a time to celebrate Lancashire's unique dialect, cuisine, and community spirit, reaffirming a deep sense of identity and belonging among its people.

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FRIDAY
27 November 2026
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#FABRIC

Why Water Is the Number One Enemy of Dhakai Jamdani

Even conventional dry cleaning may not be suitable for particularly delicate or traditionally woven pieces. The reason is the structure of the fabric itself





Dhakai Jamdani is one of the most delicate handwoven textiles in the world. Its beauty lies not only in its intricate motifs but also in the extraordinary skill and patience required to create them. Yet, there is one surprising enemy that can damage this delicate fabric: water.

Unlike ordinary cotton sarees, a traditional Dhakai Jamdani should not simply be soaked in water and washed. Regular hand washing and machine washing are not recommended for fine Jamdani. Even conventional dry cleaning may not be suitable for particularly delicate or traditionally woven pieces. The reason is the structure of the fabric itself.

Jamdani is woven on a handloom using extremely fine yarns, with decorative motifs inserted into the base fabric by hand. These supplementary threads create the characteristic raised patterns that make Jamdani so distinctive. The finer and more intricate the weaving, the more carefully the saree needs to be handled.

Water can affect the yarn, cause uneven shrinkage or distortion, and put stress on the delicate supplementary-weft motifs. Vigorous rubbing or twisting can be even more damaging. A saree that took months of painstaking work to weave can therefore lose its shape, texture, or finish through ordinary washing.

So, how is a traditional Dhakai Jamdani cleaned?

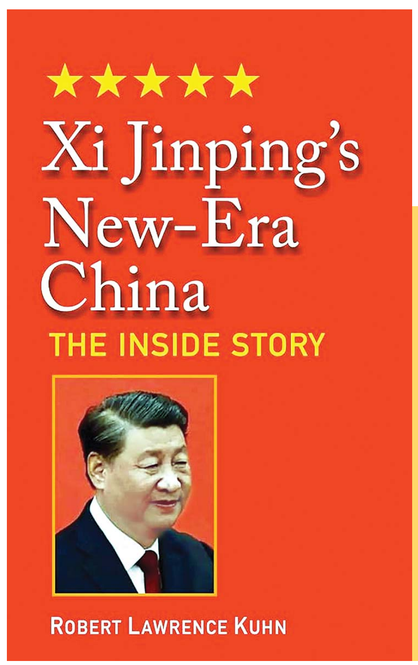
One traditional method associated with specialist weavers is known as "kaata wash." It is not an ordinary household washing technique. It is a specialised process in which the textile is handled with great care, using methods known to experienced Jamdani weavers and textile specialists. The objective is to clean the fabric while minimising the stretching, friction, and stress that ordinary washing can cause.

This is why an authentic, delicate Dhakai Jamdani should not be treated like an everyday cotton saree. Before attempting any cleaning, it is safest to consult the weaver, specialist seller, or textile conservator who understands that particular piece.

The paradox of Jamdani is beautiful: a fabric associated with cotton and everyday clothing can require extraordinarily delicate care. Its threads may look simple, but behind every motif is hours of human craftsmanship.

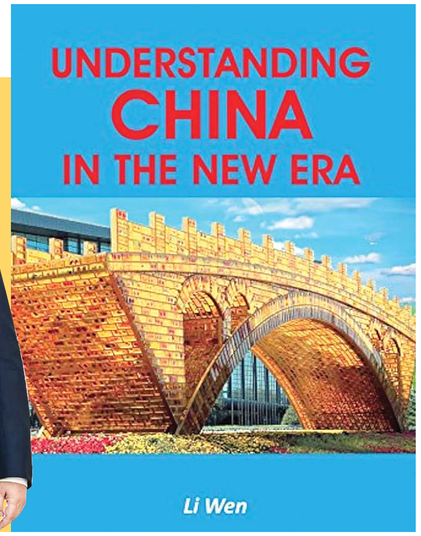
For a precious Dhakai Jamdani, therefore, cleaning is not simply a matter of putting a saree into water. It is a specialised part of preserving the weave itself.





Understanding Xi Jingping's New Era China

Kuhn sees Xi's worldview founded on three philosophical pillars. The first, a grand vision for China as an exemplary country with common prosperity for all and a leading world power respected globally for its wisdom and interests. Next is Marxism adapted for China, and finally, Chinese ancient civilisation, its wisdom and traditions, political structure, ethics and morality. He sees himself as a 'Philosopher King.' The seniormost political leader and thinker.





Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (RETD)

#BOOK REVIEW

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Xi Jinping declared his rule to be a 'New Era' in The Party's Third Historical Resolution of 2021, which cemented his place in history and declared his leadership 'the key to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.' The Party distinguishes the New Era from the two previous eras in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the first, the Mao Zedong era (1940-78) and second, the Deng Xiaoping era (1979-2012).

Xi Jingping's *New Era China*, written by Robert Lawrence Kuhn and published in India by Pentagon Press, covers the extraordinary period of Xi Jinping's leadership from 2012 to now as the Chinese President emerged as the country's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. This book explores his vision and the strategy and the context behind them.

Kuhn is a western Sinologist who has stayed and worked in China since 1988, interacted with thousands of Chinese across the spectrum, written many books and articles on the country's politics, society and economy including the biography of Jiang Zemin. Considered an insider, but while he does not see China as a ruthless authoritarian state, he is also not an uncritical admirer. With a doctorate in brain research, he analyses Xi's speeches through the 'eye of a scientist.' The book is thus a balance between objectivity and context and an insider's perspective.

The Book

In the "Overview," Kuhn states that "India needs to learn more about China, especially about Xi Jinping himself: how he thinks; his philosophies, policies and plans, domestic and international."

China impacts every aspect of global economics and geopolitics and President Xi wields unprecedented power over the country while laying down its vision and overseeing its functioning. The book's purpose 'is to tell the inside story.' The book, laid out in fifteen chapters, is basically a compilation of 190 essays from 2012 to 2025 on contemporary events. This was the "extraordinary period of Xi's leadership from around 2012, before the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China." This also covers the later period since 2017 when Xi became China's senior leader, following the 19th CPC National Congress, "when Xi became China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong."

Xi Jingping's political philosophies and ideas, encompassed by the word 'thought,' began immediately after becoming the General Secretary in November 2012. In October 2016, Xi was designated the 'Core' of the CPC Central Committee and of the entire Party. According to the Party line, 'not only does he have responsibility for China's transformation, but he is also accountable for it.' The author states that in the Chinese political system, the Party has absolute control of the country, while the Party is controlled by its ideology. Xi therefore, absolutely and perennially, controls both the Party and country. Understanding China's political system requires understanding how the Party implements its leadership through its hierarchical system. Xi and the Party, 'which is the ruling organisation and not a competing political party,' have both been explored in depth in the book and this helps in understanding China.

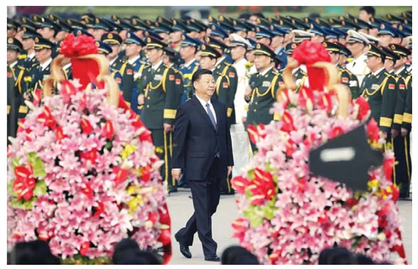
Kuhn sees Xi's worldview founded on three philosophical pillars. The first, a grand vision for China as an exemplary country with common prosperity for all and a leading world power respected globally for its wisdom and interests. Next is Marxism adapted for China, and finally, Chinese ancient civilisation, its wisdom and traditions, political structure, ethics and morality. He sees himself as a 'Philosopher King.' The seniormost political leader and thinker.

To know China is also to know the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) members. These seven men are the ones who wield the power in the country. But while its importance remains, one cannot overstate the consequences of Xi's name 'written in the Party's Constitution, thus ensuring his pre-eminence in the country's political life.'

The goals of China are also important from 2020 to 2035, it will realise 'socialist modernisation' and from 2035 to 2050 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will be achieved.' China is no longer 'hiding capacities and bidding time' but moving to 'the centre stage.'

On security, he states that 'security is the prerequisite for development and development is the guarantee of security.' The aim is to build a 'world-class military that ensures national security, guarantees national sovereignty, protects territorial integrity and provides strategic support to realise China's dream. The principle being 'maintaining peace through strength' with the Party maintaining absolute control over the military and the military absolute loyalty to the party.' His domestic tours and policies have been analysed in detail. Each visit sends out a message while his focus remains on poverty alleviation. For example, Xi visit to Tibet in 2021 focused on ethnic harmony, ecological conservation, high quality economic development, people's happiness and cultural appreciation.

While military expansion and economic domination are the hallmarks of China, the book brings out that Xi considers poverty reduction to be his most important task. While the author states that programmes to alleviate poverty cannot be taken from one country and imposed on another without adaptation but he feels that both India and China need to share their experiences to fight poverty.





The biggest challenge for India is to get a proper understanding of China and its operating system. Geography and history have decreed that India and China playing increasing roles in global affairs abut each other. In the New World Order, the relationship between the two countries will become the most pivotal.

Conclusion

It is said that the Mao made China stand up while Deng made China rich. Xi is now making China strong. India shares a long, disputed border with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The border dispute casts a shadow on relations between both nations as issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity stir patriotic feelings. Hence, it is imperative to understand how China thinks and what drives it so as to be able to handle strategic issues between the two countries.

The biggest challenge for India is to get a proper understanding of China and its operating system. Geography and history have decreed that India and China playing increasing roles in global affairs about each other. In the New World Order, the relationship between the two countries will become the most pivotal.

As Kuhn writes 'like it or not, China is highly relevant for India's long term international and economic strategy.' It is therefore books like this that give a ringside view for those dealing with China as well as scholars and students to understand China and President Xi better.

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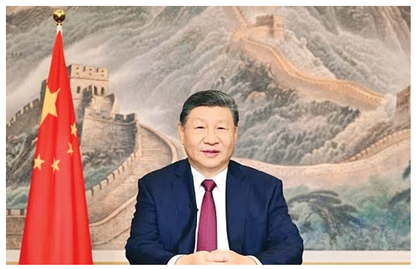


#RESHAPING

From Purple Carrots To Seedless Bananas

A popular story claims that they developed orange carrots in honour of the Dutch Royal House of Orange, turning the vegetable into a symbol of national pride

The fruits and vegetables that fill our grocery baskets today look very different from their wild ancestors. Bright orange carrots, sweet seedless bananas, juicy red watermelons and crisp apples may seem like gifts of nature, but centuries of selective breeding, cultivation and agricultural experimentation have transformed them into the foods we recognise today.

What many people do not realise is that humans have been reshaping plants for thousands of years. Farmers selected plants with desirable colours, flavours, sizes and textures, gradually changing their appearance and nutritional characteristics. Some of the most familiar foods on our plates are products of this long relationship between humans and nature.

Carrots Were Not Always Orange

Carrots were originally available in several colours, including purple, yellow and white. Historical evidence suggests that purple and yellow carrots were cultivated in Central Asia before orange varieties became widely popular in Europe.

The orange carrot is often associated with Dutch farmers during the 16th and 17th centuries. A popular story claims that they developed orange carrots in honour of the Dutch Royal House of Orange, turning the vegetable into a symbol of national pride.

Although this patriotic explanation is widely repeated, historians have not established it as the definitive reason for the orange carrot's popularity. What is clearer is that Dutch growers played an important role in developing and popularising orange varieties through selective breeding. Over generations, farmers favoured carrots with brighter colours, sweeter flavours and better storage qualities. The orange carrot eventually became the familiar variety found in supermarkets across the world.



Bananas Once Had Large, Hard Seeds

The banana we eat today is almost unrecognisable compared with its wild ancestors. Wild bananas contained numerous large, hard seeds that occupied much of the fruit's interior, leaving relatively little edible flesh. Their thick skins and seed-filled interiors made them very different from the soft, sweet bananas available in markets today.

Over thousands of years, farmers selected banana plants that produced more edible flesh and fewer hard seeds. Some wild banana plants naturally developed fruits without fully formed seeds through a process called parthenocarpy. Farmers propagated these desirable plants using suckers and other vegetative methods.

Modern cultivated bananas, including the popular Cavendish variety, are largely sterile hybrids. They reproduce through human-assisted propagation rather than ordinary seed production.

However, there is an important distinction: these bananas are not necessarily genetically modified in the laboratory. Their characteristics largely emerged through natural mutations, hybridisation and generations of human selection.

Watermelons Were Not Always Red And Sweet

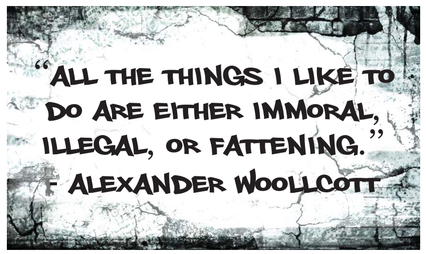
Today's watermelon is a summer favourite, known for its bright red flesh, sweetness and refreshing juice. But its ancestors looked and tasted quite different.

The history of watermelon cultivation goes back thousands of years to Africa. Early varieties were not necessarily the large, sweet, red-fleshed fruits that we recognise today. Some had pale or yellowish flesh, while certain wild relatives were bitter and less suitable for eating. Over generations, farmers selected fruits that were sweeter, juicier and had more appealing flesh. The colour also changed through selective breeding. The development of red flesh is closely linked to the genes involved in sugar accumulation, making the modern watermelon a result of a long process of agricultural improvement.

Historical illustrations from medieval Europe already show red-fleshed watermelons, demonstrating that the transformation began centuries ago. The fruit continued to evolve through cultivation and breeding into the varieties grown today.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

