

#SUBLIME

Idli Is A Cloud...

It's a sublime creation, a delicate, weightless morsel of rice and lentil, steamed to an ethereal fluffiness that melts on the tongue

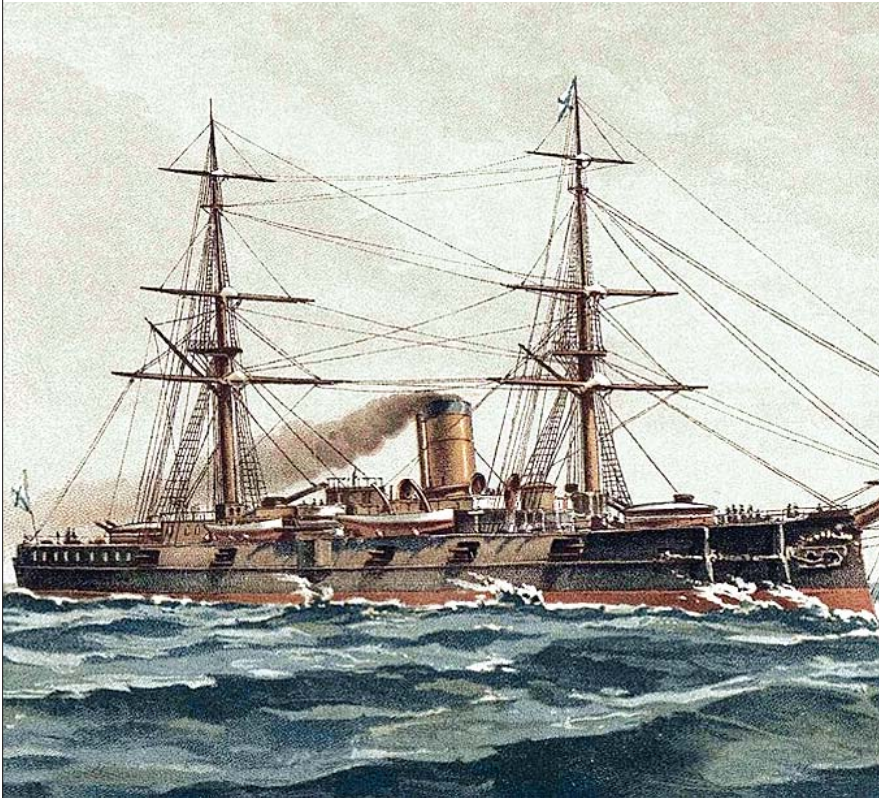


Someone on Twitter referred to the idli as 'steamed regret'....which prompted a quick response from Shashi Tharoor, which was quoted in a news article immediately.

"Poor soul has clearly never had a good one. A truly great idli is a cloud, a whisper, a perfect dream of the perfectibility of human civilisation," he wrote. He went on to add: "It's a sublime creation, a delicate, weightless



Suspicion Didn't Stop Trade Even Then



Russian Fleet (1892).



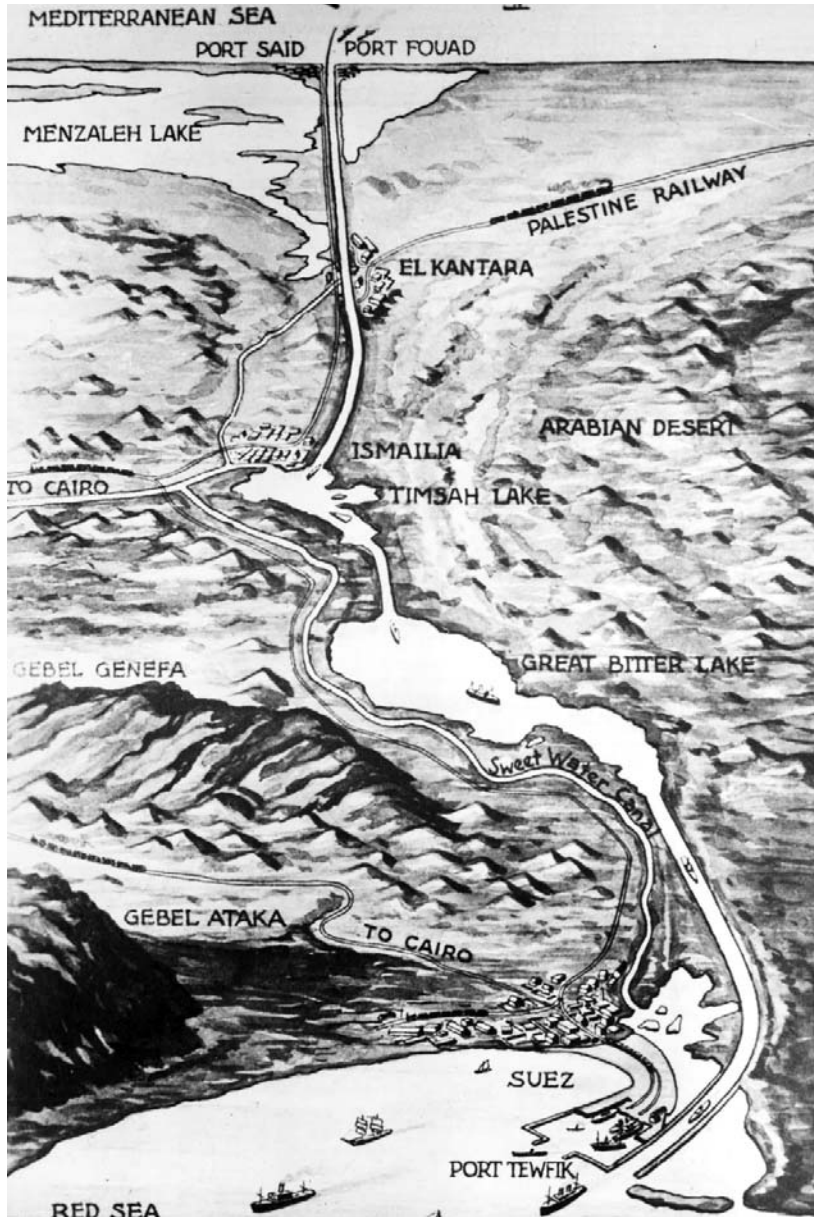
Rue Richelieu, Odessa.

W.L. Halsey, India's Commissioner of Customs, argued against Keith Abbott, Britain's consul-general in Odessa, who was disdainful of any tea trading from India, that it was the Chinese tea sold in Russia that was overpriced and attributed this to the high import duties imposed by the Tsarist government as well as the trade practices of Russian merchants. "They exported high-priced articles by a very expensive route, and could only dispose of them in barter, by allowing the Chinese to put on a correspondingly high value on their tea," he wrote.



Apple Tree Day: Celebrate Health, Heritage, and Delicious Apples

Apple Tree Day highlights the health benefits of this beloved fruit. Originally celebrating a nearly two-century-old apple tree, the day now honours apples in all their glory. Participation is simple: Join local Apple Tree Day events featuring homemade apple treats like pies and cider, or host your own apple-themed gathering at home. Even without events nearby, you can celebrate by enjoying apples, sipping apple cider, or exploring apple-themed books. It's a fun, tasty way to connect with nature, community, and wellness.



Suez Canal drawing, 1881.

#HISTORY



L'inauguration du Canal de Suez, 17 November 1869.

would be suitable as cargoes for the Indian Seas," he wrote, "so...the difficulty at the very outset of the enterprise, appears to be, for the present, insurmountable."

Abbott felt that while the return cargo on the Nakhimoff was promising, the outward voyage from Odessa, carrying coal primarily sourced from England, was commercially unviable, resulting in a 'dead loss.' The Russians disagreed with his analysis, it would appear. Pleased with the maiden voyage of the Nakhimoff, they continued dispatching it to Bombay, bringing back coconut oil, ginger, cloves, gum, among other goods, on subsequent trips.

An unconvinced Abbott tried to assess the profitability of the route but was thwarted, noting that the Russians were 'jealous of any inquiry into their affairs.' He suggested that profits might be improved if Russian ships carried British products to India after delivering grain to England, though he conceded that 'in the trial made this year, the result was not satisfactory, owing to freights in England being low.'

Familiar Disdain

In the 1850s, Russia's textile industry was booming, employing around a million people in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Vladimir. The mills relied heavily on American cotton, but the American Civil War disrupted supplies, pushing Russia to look towards India. Abbott wrote that most Indian cotton imports to Odessa served a single Moscow firm but expected the trade to grow as the route gained attention.

"An opening for the trade through this place having been found, I doubt not the advantage this route possesses will gradually attract general attention," Abbott wrote, "and...in time, the country will be largely supplied with the productions of India through Odessa."

Abbott's correspondence often revealed a familiar British disdain for Russian inefficiency. He described Russia's commerce as 'slow' and its entrepreneurs as lacking drive, noting that most manufacturers imported only what they needed for internal use. "In commerce, as in everything else, progress in Russia is very slow and

commercial enterprise at a very low figure," he wrote.

He saw promise in cotton exports but was disappointed that another Indian product, which had made some Indians and Britons exceedingly rich, did not find a ready market in Russia. "Opium consumption in Russia is quite insignificant and only for medicinal purposes," he observed.

He was also oddly sceptical about the prospects of Indian tea. "The tea produced in India, and of which samples have been brought to this country, have not been liked," Abbott wrote. "Its strength is not appreciated in absence of a better flavour, and the cost is considered too high."

W.L. Halsey, India's Commissioner of Customs, took a different view. In a memorandum replying to Abbott's remarks, he contended that Indian tea was competitively priced. If it were indeed expensive, he observed wryly, "the tea planters of India would have great reason to rejoice."

Halsey argued that it was the Chinese tea sold in Russia that was overpriced and attributed this to the

high import duties imposed by the Tsarist government as well as the trade practices of Russian merchants. "They exported high-priced articles by a very expensive route, and could only dispose of them in barter, by allowing the Chinese to put on a correspondingly high value on their tea," he wrote.

He believed Indian tea could compete easily with the Chinese variety noting that Chinese tea took nearly 14 months to reach Central Russia. He did, however, agree that Russia lacked viable exports to make the Odessa-Bombay line sustainable. Without profitable cargoes, he wrote, "Odessa can only trade with India and China via England."

He suggested channelling more Indian goods to Russia through Germany instead, which he described as a more 'natural outlet.'

New opportunities

On the whole, Abbott expressed disappointment with the limited success of trade between the great ports on the Black and Arabian seas. "The direct trade which has been opened with India by Russian vessels cannot be termed a success, but it is understood to be partly supported by a subsidy or mileage which the Government grants as an encouragement to or means of forcing a trade forward under the Russian flag," he wrote. Without such support, he predicted, "the trade may come to naught."

If Russia were to abandon the route, he observed, English cargo ships might gain new opportunities, particularly following the Black Sea harvests. At the same time, he acknowledged one potential reason for Russians to continue with the sea trade: the 'development of coal fields in the country of the Don...may become an export of considerable consequence to countries in the circuit of the Mediterranean, and possibly even to the Indian seas.'

In a postscript, Abbott mused that "Odessa would be a very favourable point at which to develop a depot of Indian produce, particularly of cotton, indigo and Ceylon coffee, but no English house of commerce has existed here since the Crimean War."

Through the turn of the century, Bombay and Odessa remained linked by shipping lines. Russian bacteriologist Waldemar Haffkine, who was born in Odessa and famed for his cholera and plague vaccines, became a symbolic connection between the two cities. Their links deepened after Indian independence through naval, cultural and trade exchanges. India maintained a consulate in Odessa throughout the Soviet era but closed it following the USSR's collapse, when the city became part of independent Ukraine.

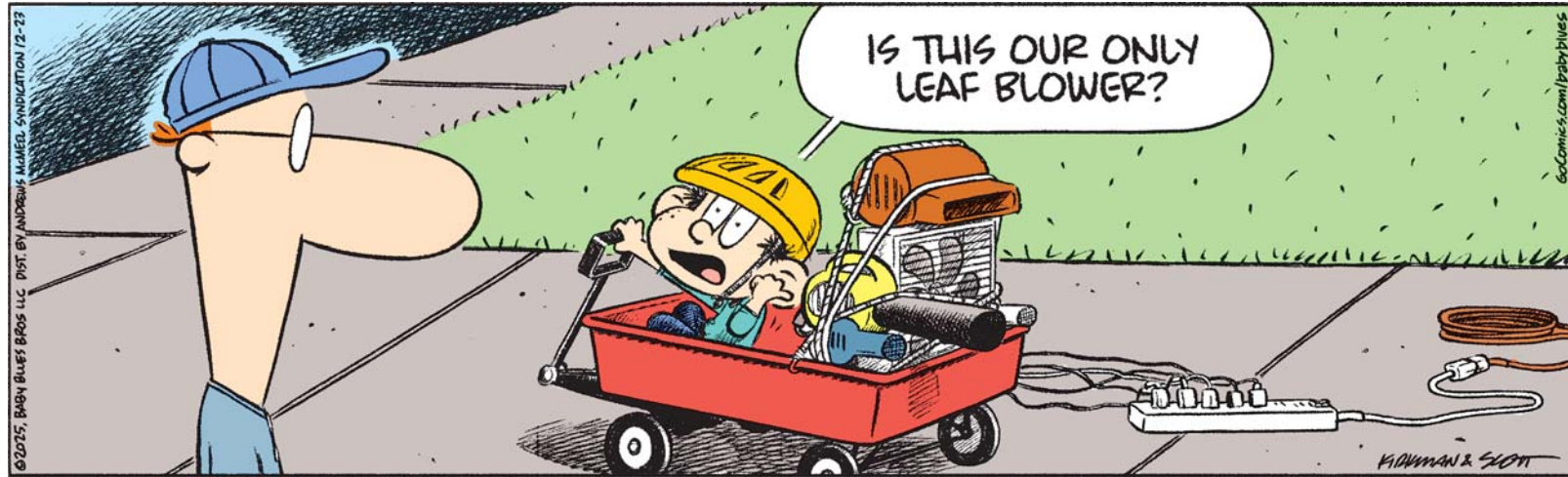
rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



Symbolic historical illustration showing the transformation of the British East India Company from spice traders to rulers of India.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

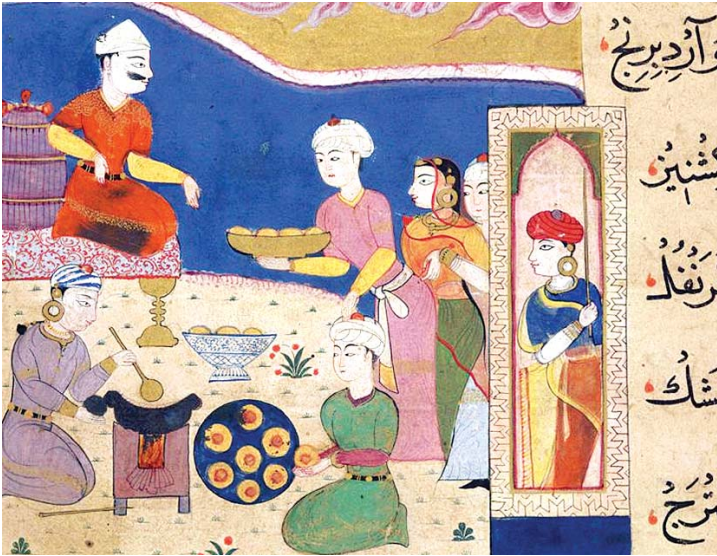
#SNACK

The History of Samosa

A Global Snack with Ancient Roots in Persia (Iran)



The samosa, a deep-fried pastry filled with a variety of ingredients such as spiced potatoes, peas, meat, and lentils, has become a beloved snack around the world. Whether served as a street food in South Asia, enjoyed at dinner parties in the Middle East, or found in supermarkets across the globe, the samosa's crispy exterior and flavorful fillings have earned it a spot in the hearts of food lovers everywhere. Behind its universal popularity lies a rich and complex history, one that stretches back centuries and spans continents.



Origins in the Middle East

The story of the samosa can be traced to ancient Persia (modern-day Iran), where it was originally known as 'sanbosag' or 'sambusa.' It is believed that the dish was first created during the Sassanian Empire (224-651 AD). The Persian version of the samosa was likely a stuffed pastry filled with ground meat, such as lamb or beef, and spices, which was then deep-fried or baked. The name 'sambusa' is thought to derive from the Arabic word 'sambusaj,' which refers to the triangular-shaped pastry.

The samosa spread westward into the Arabian Peninsula and became a common dish in many Arab cultures, especially during festive times like Ramadan, when fried foods are consumed after fasting.

The Spread to South Asia

The samosa made its way to India during the Medieval period with the arrival of Central Asian and Persian traders and Mughal invaders. The Mughals, who ruled much of the Indian subcontinent from the 16th to the 19th centuries, are often credited with popularizing the samosa in South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan.

In India, the samosa underwent a transformation. The tra-

ditional Persian filling of ground meat was adapted to suit local tastes and dietary restrictions. As vegetarianism is prevalent in India, the filling was often changed to a mix of potatoes, peas, and lentils, spiced with ingredients like cumin, coriander, garam masala, and chili powder. This vegetarian version became the popular samosa many are familiar with today.

However, the samosa's meat-filled versions, often with spiced lamb, chicken, or beef, remain common in regions like Pakistan, and in South Asian communities across the globe. The addition of meat and potatoes into the samosa filling reflects the dish's versatility and ability to adapt to different culinary traditions. The triangular shape of the samosa, often symbolizing the Mountains of the Himalayas, became more refined in South Asia, and the snack became a favorite of street vendors, especially in India, where small, bite-sized samosas are commonly sold as quick snacks.

The Samosa in Africa and Central Asia

As trade routes connected the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, the

samosa spread to various other regions, including East Africa. The Swahili coast, which includes parts of Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique, became a key area where the samosa adapted to local tastes. In East Africa, the samosa is often filled with spiced meat such as beef, chicken, or lamb, and sometimes with potatoes, creating a delicious combination of meat and starch. It is a popular snack in street markets and at social gatherings.

In Central Asia, countries like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan adopted the samosa, and it is known as 'samsa.' The Central Asian samsa is traditionally filled with ground meat, such as lamb or beef, and sometimes includes potatoes or onions. The pastry is often baked in a tandoor oven, giving it a distinct smoky flavor.

Globalization and the Samosa Today

The samosa's spread continued during the British colonial era in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when Indian laborers, traders, and immigrants carried the samosa with them to Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. The samosa became an integral part of the cuisine in many parts of the Indian diaspora, from Mauritius to South Africa, and from Trinidad to Fiji.

In the United Kingdom, the samosa became popular with the Indian and Pakistani communities during the late 20th century. Today, samosas are a common snack at Indian restaurants, street food markets, and even in supermarkets, where they are sold frozen or pre-made.

In the United States and Canada, samosas have also found their place in the multi-cultural food scene, where they are often served as appetizers or snacks at parties, and filled with a wide range of ingredients from cheese to beans, spinach, and chicken.

