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Spreading Smiles on World Kindness Day

World Kindness Day, observed on November 13, invites everyone to celebrate the simple yet profound power of being kind. It's a day to pause, reflect, and extend compassion to friends, strangers, and even ourselves. Acts of kindness, whether a compliment, a helping hand, or a thoughtful gesture, can create a ripple effect, inspiring others to pay it forward. Beyond individual actions, this day highlights the importance of empathy in building stronger, more connected communities. Celebrating kindness reminds us that small, intentional acts can brighten lives, foster understanding, and make the world a gentler, more harmonious place.

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FRIDAY
13 November 2026
A-B

#ADVENTURE

"Don't Go Far, Boys!"

The Air India Flight that became a Guardian Angel for two runaway boys





In 1985, two young brothers from Dublin, Keith, 10, and Noel, 13, heard their mother's voice before they left: "Don't go far, boys." But the two brothers did exactly the opposite.

They secretly set out on an extraordinary adventure. They took a train to the coast, boarded a ferry to Wales, and then continued by train towards London, avoiding conductors along the way. By the time the sun rose, the two boys had almost no money left, only a few coins in their pockets.

Eventually, they found themselves at Heathrow Airport, surrounded by the deafening roar of aircraft. For two children who had never imagined travelling so far, the airport seemed like another world.

One of the boys reportedly asked a stranger, "Where is the plane going?"

"New York," came the answer.

That was all they needed to hear.

The brothers followed the stranger and somehow managed to get through security. They told officials that their parents were right behind them and eventually found themselves aboard an Air India flight bound for New York. What began as a runaway adventure soon became an international journey.

After landing in New York, the two boys were discovered wandering around JFK Airport. When authorities approached them, the brothers explained what they had done. Instead of simply treating them as troublesome children, the airline staff stepped in to help. Air India effectively became their unexpected guardian. The boys were taken to a five-star hotel, where they were given food and a safe place to stay. Their extraordinary adventure reportedly included burgers and chips, visits to attractions, films and sightseeing. Security guards were assigned to keep watch over them while arrangements were made for their return home. For the two young travellers, New York became a world of unforgettable experiences. They saw sights they had previously only imagined and even had the chance to encounter the excitement of American popular culture.

But eventually, the adventure had to end.

After their unexpected holiday, Air India arranged for the brothers to fly back to Dublin. Instead of ending their journey stranded thousands of kilometres from home, the airline helped make sure that they returned safely to their family. What makes the story remarkable is not simply that two children managed to travel from Dublin to New York. It is the unexpected kindness that followed.

A journey that began with two boys ignoring their mother's warning and chasing an adventure across countries could have ended very differently. Instead, strangers, and an airline, stepped forward to protect them.

For Keith and Noel, Air India was no longer simply the airline that carried them across the Atlantic. For a brief and unforgettable chapter in their childhood, it became their guardian angel in the sky. And eventually, the two runaway boys were back home, hopefully ready to listen a little more carefully the next time their mother said, "Don't go far, boys."







Before White Sugar

There was *gur*, or jaggery. There were less-refined forms of crystalline sugar, including khand, and later, khandsari traditions. These forms retained more of the colour and non-sugar components naturally present in cane juice than modern highly refined white sugar. Traditional sugar-making was therefore not simply about extracting pure sucrose. It produced a family of sweeteners with different textures, colours, flavours and uses.



● Kshema Jatuhkarna

Long before refined white sugar became a kitchen staple, Indians were sweetening food with honey, flowers, fruits, jaggery and eventually crystallised sugar. The story of Indian sweetness is also a story of forests, agriculture, technology, trade and colonial change.

What did Indians use to sweeten their food before white sugar?

The answer takes us far beyond the modern sugar bowl.

Today, sugar is so deeply embedded in Indian food culture that it is easy to imagine it as an ancient, unchanging ingredient. Tea is sweetened with it, sweets are made with it, and sugar appears in everything from biscuits to packaged drinks. But the white crystalline sugar found in a modern kitchen is only the latest chapter in a much older story.

For centuries, and in some cases for millennia, people across the Indian subcontinent found sweetness in the natural world. They collected honey from forests, used sweet fruits and plant products, gathered flowers such as mahua, boiled down sugarcane juice into jaggery and eventually developed sophisticated methods for producing crystallised sugar. India's relationship with sweetness evolved. And that evolution tells us something remarkable about the history of Indian food.

Before Sugar, There Was Madhu

The earliest sweetness available to human communities did not come from a factory or even necessarily from agriculture.

It came from nature.

Honey was one of the most obvious and valuable natural sweeteners. Bees had already solved the problem of concentrating floral sugars long before humans learned to do it themselves.

Ancient Indian texts contain a rich vocabulary surrounding sweetness. The Sanskrit word *madhu* is associated with honey and sweetness and appears repeatedly in early Indian literature.

Honey could be consumed directly and used to sweeten foods and drinks. It was also valued for its medicinal and ritual associations.

But honey was not the only source of sweetness.

India's enormous ecological diversity meant that communities living in different landscapes had access to different naturally sweet resources. And among the most

#MADHU



fascinating was a tree that still grows across large parts of the subcontinent.

The Sweetness of the Mahua Flower

The *mahua* tree (Madhuca longifolia) has a special place in the food traditions of central and eastern India.

Its small flowers contain substantial amounts of natural sugars. When they fall from the tree, they can be collected, dried and stored.

For many forest-dwelling communities, mahua was not simply a flavouring.

It was food.

The flowers could be eaten or incorporated into different preparations, while their fermentable sugars also made them valuable for traditional beverages. Mahua became deeply integrated into the seasonal economy and food culture of numerous communities.

This is important because the history of Indian sweetness cannot be reduced to the history of sugarcane.

For much of India's history, sweetness was local.

It could come from whatever the landscape provided: honey from the forest, fruit from a tree, flowers gathered during a particular season or sap and juices processed by hand.

In such a food system, the forest itself could function as a pantry.

Sweetness Becomes Technology

Sugarcane changed everything. Unlike honey or naturally sweet flowers, sugarcane contained a huge quantity of sweetness, but that sweetness was locked inside a plant and diluted in its juice. The challenge was technological: **how do you get the sweetness out, concentrate it and preserve it?**

Indian sugar producers developed increasingly sophisticated methods for crushing cane, extracting its juice and boiling it down.

The simplest result was a concentrated syrup.

Boil it further, and it became thicker. Continue the process, and you could produce jaggery, *gur*.

Jaggery represented a major transformation in the history of food. Fresh sugarcane juice spoils quickly. Jaggery is concentrated, portable and relatively durable. It could be stored and transported and became an important ingredient across India's culinary traditions. It could sweeten drinks, dals, sweets, breads and festive foods. But Indian experimentation with sugarcane did not stop at jaggery.

The Remarkable Invention of Crystallised Sugar

The truly revolutionary step was crystallisation.

At some point in ancient India, sugar producers learned to separate sugar crystals from the concentrated cane juice.

This may sound ordinary today because crystalline sugar is ubiquitous. It was anything but ordinary then.

To create crystals, producers had to control concentration, temperature and cooling. The result was a form of sweetness that was more stable, transportable and tradeable than liquid cane juice.

Ancient Indian sugar-making subsequently became famous beyond the subcontinent.

The history of words itself preserves a trace of this technological journey.

The term *khand* became associated with crystallised sugar. Through linguistic transmission and trade, related forms of the word travelled westward and contributed to the history of words such as candy. The precise linguistic journey is complex, but the larger historical point is clear: India became an important centre in the early history of sugar processing and crystallisation.

From Khand to Khandsari

Indian sugar did not exist in only one form. There were different degrees of processing.

There was *gur*, or jaggery. There were less-refined forms of crystalline sugar, including khand, and later, khandsari traditions.

These forms retained more of the colour and non-sugar components naturally present in cane juice than modern highly refined white sugar.

Traditional sugar-making was therefore not simply about extracting pure sucrose. It produced a family of sweeteners with different textures, colours, flavours and uses.

Indian culinary culture adapted to all of them.

The Colonial Transformation

Then came the industrialisation of sugar. The technology of refining transformed sugar from a varied family of cane products into the highly standardised white crystals that dominate modern markets. Industrial refining could remove much of the colour and impurities associated with traditional cane sugar. The result was a product that looked very different from jaggery or traditional khand.

White sugar had several advantages for an industrial economy.

It was uniform.

It was easy to measure.

It could be transported over long distances.

It could be stored.

And, as production expanded, it became increasingly accessible to ordinary households.

Sweetness was becoming industrial.

And What Happened to Mahua?

The story of mahua took a very different path. During colonial rule, forest communities increasingly found their access to forests and forest products constrained by new systems of administration and regulation.

Mahua became particularly entangled with colonial policies concerning intoxicating substances because its flowers were widely used to produce traditional alcoholic beverages.

Regulation varied by region and period, but the broader transformation was significant.

A plant that had long been part of local food systems, seasonal economies and community life was increasingly viewed through the categories of forest administration, taxation and alcohol control.

The contrast with industrial sugar is striking.

One source of sweetness was increasingly transformed into a commercially standardised commodity. Another remained associated with forests and indigenous communities and became subject to increasing regulation.

The Long Journey to the Sugar Bowl

The story of Indian sweetness therefore stretches across an extraordinary technological journey.

From honey to flowers.

From flowers to cane.

From cane juice to jaggery.

From jaggery to crystals.

From traditional sugar to industrially refined white sugar.

Each stage changed not only what Indians ate, but how sweetness was produced, stored, traded and consumed.

And that is perhaps the most fascinating part.

The spoonful of sugar in a modern Indian kitchen is not the beginning of the story.

It is the end product of a technological tradition that stretches deep into the history of the subcontinent.

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#WINE

"Bacchus"

Caravaggio is not only attempting to depict Bacchus, but also a boy dressed up as Bacchus. It is a sensual scene inviting the viewer to succumb to their carnal desires



● Bulbul Joshi

There's a man trapped inside this painting. In 1597, Caravaggio painted "Bacchus," the god of wine. But he hid something no one was supposed to find. Look at the wine carafe on the left. That tiny white shape isn't a reflection. It's Caravaggio himself, age 25, holding a paintbrush, sitting at his easel. Painted inside his own wine bottle. A restorer first noticed it in 1922. But later restorations covered it up again. For decades, no one believed it was real. Then in 2008, researchers used infrared technology to peer through 400 years of varnish, and there he was. Hiding. Waiting to be found. Caravaggio also painted himself as a sick god and as the severed head of Goliath. A man who killed someone in a street fight, fled across Italy, and died at 38 under mysterious circumstances. Even his hidden portraits tell a dark story.

Caravaggio is not only attempting to depict Bacchus, but also a boy dressed up as Bacchus. It is a sensual scene inviting the viewer to succumb to their carnal desires. The boy is youthful and handsome, round yet muscular. He barely makes an attempt to keep his robes on as he coaxes the viewer to join him with a suggestive look in his eye. In the basket, there is a bursting pomegranate as well as a rotting apple. Caravaggio uses these elements together to hint at the Vanitas theme. Youth and pleasure are fleeting. Everything must succumb to death and rot. It is also possible that the rotting apple simply represents fermentation, suggesting not only that fermentation is literally rot, but also that improper methods of fermentation lead to the personification of rot.

The homoeroticism felt in the painting could be Caravaggio alluding to his own romantic feelings for the young model in the painting. Many of Caravaggio's patrons and fellow artists turned a blind eye to his behaviour and continued to support his work. Art historian, Donald Posner, felt that the homoeroticism in the painting was actually alluding to Cardinal del Monte's sexuality and his relationships with the young boys that ran in his inner circle.

Bacchus was painted shortly after Caravaggio joined the household of his first important patron, Cardinal del Monte, and reflects the humanist interests of the Cardinal's educated circle. Caravaggio moved into the Palazzo Madama in 1596 and remained a guest of Cardinal for five years. Del Monte held a passion for the arts and requested multiple paintings from Caravaggio including Medusa. The Cardinal was a fan of classical Greek mythology and used allegorical images to emphasize his knowledge of art, music, and theater. Both Bacchus and Medusa were donated by the Cardinal to the Medici family and have remained in Florence ever since. Del Monte's early support and guidance brought wealth and recognition to Caravaggio, making him one of his most important patrons.



The model for Bacchus might have actually been Caravaggio's pupil, Mario Minniti, whom he had used as a model in The Musicians, Boy with a Basket of Fruit, The Fortune Teller, Lute Player, and The Calling of Saint Matthew. There was speculation that Caravaggio and Minniti's relationship was that of a sexual nature. Paintings that he modeled for could be seen as having a homoerotic quality. Especially in Bacchus, the lounging model is inviting the viewer into the scene with a glass of wine and a basket of ripe fruits while his robe slips off. Caravaggio was known for staging scenes, including the models and painting them in costume, doing away with the need to sketch the scene from his mind before applying paint to canvas.

Some critics, such as Giovanni Baglione, believed that Caravaggio used himself as the model. During 1595, he would have been twenty-four and could have played up his youthful features for this work. Bacchus is offering of the wine with his left hand, despite the obvious effort this is causing the model. This has led to speculation that Caravaggio used a mirror to assist himself while working from life, doing away with the need for drawing. It is believed that Caravaggio was unable to paint the human figure without a model in front of him.

Who was Caravaggio?

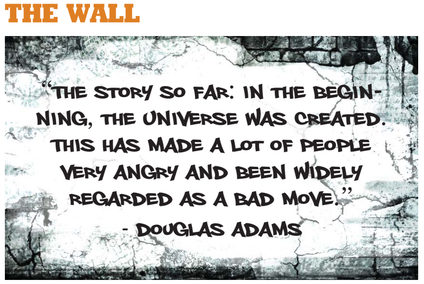
Caravaggio, also known as Michelangelo Merisi, was an Italian Baroque artist who lived from 1571 to 1610. He was known for his revolutionary use of light and shadow in his paintings, a technique called chiaroscuro.

Caravaggio's paintings often depicted religious scenes with a sense of realism and naturalism that was groundbreaking for his time. He used everyday people as models for his figures, and his work was often characterized by dramatic and intense emotions.

Despite his artistic success, Caravaggio had a tumultuous personal life and was known for his violent behaviour. He was involved in several brawls and even killed a man in a fight, which forced him to flee Rome and seek refuge in other cities.

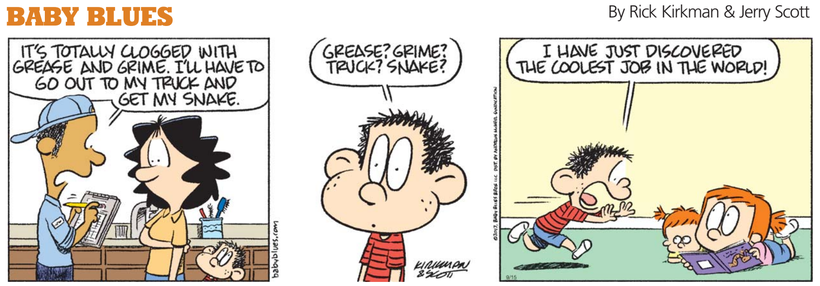
Caravaggio's legacy has endured through the centuries, with many art historians considering him one of the most influential artists in the Baroque period. His use of light and shadow has inspired many artists throughout history, and his works continue to be studied and admired today.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

