

#TRADITION

Why Devotees circumambulate Clockwise?

In most ancient cultures, the clockwise direction is closely linked with the natural order of the universe



In many religious traditions, the act of circumambulating sacred places or objects, known as pradakshina in Hinduism, is an important form of worship. One distinctive feature of this ritual is that devotees usually take rounds in a clockwise direction. While this may seem like a simple physical action, it holds deep spiritual and cultural significance across various faiths.

1. Alignment with the Cosmos

In most ancient cultures, the clockwise direction is closely linked with the natural order of the universe. The sun, which is regarded as a powerful symbol of life and divine energy, moves in a clockwise direction across the sky, especially in the Northern Hemisphere. By walking in a clockwise motion, devotees align themselves with the cosmic order and natural rhythms of life. This alignment is thought to bring positive energy and spiritual harmony.

In Hinduism, the clockwise direction also reflects the movement of the wheel of time (Kala Chakra). It symbolizes a positive, orderly flow of time and life, indicating spiritual progression and alignment with divine will.

2. Spiritual Significance of the Right Side

The clockwise direction also has a physiological and symbolic association with the human body. The right side of the body is traditionally seen as stronger and more powerful.

In many cultures, the right hand is considered the active or dominant hand. Therefore, by moving in a clockwise direction, devotees engage the body's active side while seeking to draw strength and guidance from the divine.

Moreover, the act of circumambulation symbolizes the devotee's life revolving around the divine, with the deity or sacred object at the center. The clockwise movement is considered a form of showing reverence and drawing closer to the divine, embodying the idea of continuous spiritual growth.

3. Sacred Geometry and Energetic Flow

In the practice of pradakshina, particularly within Hindu temples, the architecture and design are often aligned with sacred geometry. Temples are built in such a way that they channel cosmic energy towards the sanctum sanctorum, the innermost chamber where the deity resides.

The clockwise movement helps to enhance the flow of positive energy or prana within the temple space. By following this path, devotees are thought to be in sync with the divine energy, gaining spiritual benefits like purification, mental clarity and peace.

The act of taking rounds in a clockwise direction is a deeply symbolic and spiritually significant practice in many religious traditions. It reflects alignment with the natural, cosmic order, enhances the flow of positive energy, and symbolizes the devotee's continuous journey towards spiritual growth.

TESTOSTERONE - THE STORY OF YOUTH

The original complaint from the lady instructor said, 'Cadet gives bad looks and strange knowing loaded smiles.' The Dept Head had added, 'Bad behaviour with sexual connotation.' The Dep Com had scribbled, 'Lack of Officer Like Qualities.' I had no idea what all of that meant, except that HKM could as well start walking backwards towards Khondwa gate, on his way home.



Late Wg Cdr Unni Kartha (Retd) aka Cyclic is a retired IAF pilot with a penchant for storytelling

In 1979, ten years after leaving NDA as a cadet, I was posted back there as a Divisional Officer. Despite an appeal to put me in Foxrot Sqn, where I spent time as a cadet, I was given the 'Warder' type job in 'Bravo,' much like a convict denied 'A' class privilege in Tihar Jail. Once I overcame the initial reluctance, more of a mind-set and dislike of Bravo Sqn formed as a cadet, I found that the convicts from 57 - 62nd in my charge in No 5 Div were not so bad, they were almost likable monkeys!!

The other Warders and the Chief Warden (Squadron Commander) were my old friends and peer group, including VPPS Gusan, my course-mate, were all newly married, and hence, I settled into a peaceful and enjoyable tenure, except when the convicts acted wonky and cranky once in a while. I then simply set the clock 10 yrs backwards and behaved like a 5th term Sgt Cdt and gave it back to them front roll by front roll, and sometimes hunching up the central staircase, tricks that I had mastered as cadet. To be honest with you, the only qualification that I had for the job was that I was a juvenile delinquent and a master criminal in my days in Foxrot Sqn ten years earlier. And ten years had changed nothing. I perceived life as though I had not left the academy even for a day.

The most boring part of my job was to fill the 'Dossier,' to write daily reports about what the cadets in 5 Div did, or did not do. They actually did or did not do much, just the usual stuff. So, I had to invent things that they did, or did not do, so that



No 5 Div dossiers read like Frederick Forsythe novels, where you cannot make out where the facts end and fiction begins. The best part of my job was to march up guys and kick ass.

'March him up,' I would order the Cadet Sergeant Major (CSM).

'Get rolling,' I would say to the cadets before I took their statement or read the charge. I never took statements, because it reminded me of a stupid Punjabi joke about a lady complaining to a 'Thanedar' that her 'Statement' was swollen and bleeding from repeated statements taken by the Constables. The charge sheets were frivolous and not worth reading. Front rolling was more fun any way.

Life sailed past clam water for a while, till my ward Cdt HKM got marched in for a very serious charge that was likely to get him withdrawn.

'I say, this bugger is going to give Bravo a bad name,' my Sqn Cdr, the Chief Warden, told me before lunch break. 'How can he do a thing like that?' He moaned and passed me the chargesheet to deal with. It was a complaint from a young lady instructor in the Geography Dept, hired by NDA on temporary basis. The charge was forwarded by the Department Head, to the Dep Com via the Principal, who in turn had sent it to the Battalion Commander and then to the Chief Warden in Bravo Sqn. All of them had scribbled in 70 mm technical ink, all of them baying for HKM's blood. HKM was as good as dead even before the bugle was blown.

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I never felt so sad and unhappy

#TRAINING



as of that moment, HKM was one of the best behaved of my convicts, one of the best sportsmen in my team, a very handsome muscular kind, a younger sibling whom I had learnt to love and be proud of, someone in whom I had great confidence that he will one day make a very fine officer in the Air Force.

'March him in,' I said sadly to the Sqn Subedar that afternoon, a special sessions court in my office at 3 o'clock. I did not go home for lunch.

'Sit down,' I told HKM. 'Have a glass of water,' I offered.

'Now tell me what did you go and do to that lady geography teacher?' I asked with a forced smile.

'What teacher, which lady... I did not do anything Sir,' he said in utter consternation.

'HKM, you are in shit, you better tell me the whole story.' He told me his story I believed him. We sat for a long time talking, this and that, life and times of a cadet in geography class of a lady teacher.

'Sir, give me a couple of days to investigate this matter,' I told the Sqn Cdr later that afternoon.

'You got yourself one day, after that we march him up to the Bat Com,' he said with finality.

I sat brooding and thinking gloomy thoughts in my office till around 'Study Period.' I went down to the CSM's cabin and asked him to find me a PT Kit (OG socks, Jersey and Shorts) that fit me. I also borrowed a cycle, a satchel and some books. I then checked on the

timetable for a course that had Drill followed by PT and Geography class before breakfast.

That night, I got drunk and shaved off my moustache that I had painstakingly irrigated and cultivated to look different from a cadet, a more grown up sort.

'Ayyeyeeeee, you look such a Bacha,' my wife complained that night and refused to kiss me. Either it was the rum smell on my breath or lack of moustache, I didn't ask her.

Next morning, after drill, when the course came for PT at the gym grounds, I joined them and did everything that they did, sweating copiously like them. I asked them with a wink and a smile not to identify me as an officer, just to treat me as one of them. I then cycled with them to the Geography class. By then, the cadets knew that there was a conspiracy at work and that I was up to mischief. They ignored me completely.

I sat myself in the front row, just in front of the 'Instructor's Desk' with my Khaki satchel and books. 'Class Sav Dhan,' the senior cadet announced very loudly when the lady teacher walked in. She got so scared that she almost stumbled. I saw that she was very good looking, fashionably dressed, and very young, about 20 or 21, only a few years older than the cadets. As the class went on, I noticed that she was an excellent teacher, very knowledgeable and intelligent. However, she looked miserably, very intimidated. She would often preen her



Celebrating Creation and Renewal

Observed on March 18, Goddess of Fertility Day celebrates the divine feminine energy associated with creation, growth and new beginnings. Across cultures and mythologies, fertility goddesses symbolize abundance, prosperity and the nurturing power of life itself. From ancient traditions that honoured earth deities to modern spiritual practices, the day reflects gratitude for nature's cycles and the miracle of birth. Many people mark the occasion by offering prayers, planting seeds, or simply embracing themes of renewal and hope. Goddess of Fertility Day is a reminder of life's regenerative force and the enduring strength found in creation and care.



down, doodling in my notebook. After a while she noticed that all cadets were looking down and smiling surreptitiously. She got more intimidated and unreasonably agitated.

'Stop smiling, all of you look up, don't look down,.....what is so funny?' She asked, stamping her foot.

I smiled. 'That really got her goat. 'I will put you on charge,' she said.

The siren sounded. She ran off from the class.

I went to see the Bat Com later that morning with my Chief Warden in tow.

I told them the story. 'Sir, wait till this afternoon, if a chargesheet comes against 7271, Cdt Cyclic from Bravo Sqn, you will then know what is the problem.'

'What is the problem?' asked my very jovial, affable and highly energetic Naval Bat Com.

'Sir, the problem is very simple, it is to do with nature,' I offered an explanation. 'It is to do with Testosterone. It is very intimidating for a very young women, in close proximity in the midst of thirty odd very healthy sweaty Alpha males, especially if she is closeted in confined space along with them. The woman begins to perceive that she is getting unwanted attention, even if the males are all behaving themselves. Cdt HKM was simply feeling

sleepy and he was desperately trying to keep his eyes open and the lady perceived that he was making eyes at her, just as she thought I was doing.'

There was nail biting suspense till 3 o'clock that afternoon.

The charge finally came, 'Cdt 7271 Cyclic of Bravo Sqn gives bad looks and strange knowing loaded smiles.' It had the same annotations in techni colour from HoD, Principal and Dy Cmt.

The Bat Com called at 4 o'clock.

It seems Bravo Sqn has had discipline and OIQ, on epidemic proportions, at least that is what the

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By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

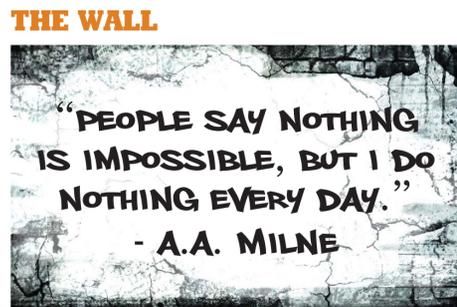
BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



#HISTORY

We Continue to Lose Heritage

Despite its ancient legacy, India struggles to preserve its cultural treasures. Is the Archaeological Survey of India doing enough?

India, often referred to as the cradle of civilization, is home to over 3,600 centrally protected monuments, thousands of ancient sites, and countless intangible traditions. From the ruins of Nalanda and Hampi to the intricate carvings of Ajanta and Ellora, the country's historical wealth is unmatched in scale and diversity. Yet, despite this richness, India continues to suffer a steady and silent erosion of its heritage.

Recent years have seen numerous instances of encroachments, illegal constructions, heritage vandalism, and neglect, all pointing to a disturbing trend. Even the monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the apex body tasked with heritage preservation, are not immune.

The Scale of the Problem

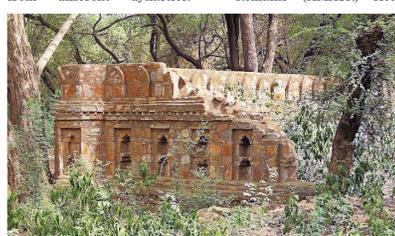
In a 2022 report tabled in Parliament, the ASI admitted that over 170 centrally protected monuments are 'missing', lost due to urban development, encroachments, or natural degradation. These include ancient temples, mosques, colonial-era structures, and fortifications.

What's more, the condition of many 'protected' sites leaves much to be desired. Visitors to historic places like the Tughlaqabad Fort in Delhi, Vijayanagara in Karnataka, or even the Qutub Minar complex often find poorly maintained pathways, fading signboards, minimal security, and garbage strewn across these invaluable landmarks.

Encroachments and Apathy

Encroachment remains one of the biggest threats. In fast-growing cities, historic sites are increasingly being surrounded and often engulfed by illegal settlements and modern constructions.

Take the case of Mehrauli Archaeological Park in Delhi, home to over 100 monuments from different dynasties.



Mehrauli Archaeological Park.



Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Delhi. Picture by Sahil Ahuja.

Despite its significance, the park has witnessed years of encroachment, with shops and homes inching dangerously close to protected structures.

Local apathy compounds the problem. Many heritage sites are not integrated into the community's sense of pride or identity. When history becomes invisible to its own people, preservation becomes harder to justify.

The Role, and Limitations, of ASI

Established in 1861, the Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of India's centrally protected monuments. While the ASI has some of the country's top conservatians and archaeologists, critics argue that the organization is chronically understaffed, underfunded, and overburdened.

According to recent reports

- ASI has fewer than 3,000 field staff for the entire country.
- Many regional offices manage hundreds of monuments with limited technical and logistical support.
- Bureaucratic red tape and delays in approvals hamper restoration and conservation efforts.
- Additionally, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act,

which governs heritage protection, often lacks teeth when it comes to penalizing encroachers or enforcing buffer zones around monuments.

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What Needs to Change

To reverse the decline, India needs a multi-pronged approach:

- Revamp the ASI with more funding, autonomy, and accountability.
- Introduce heritage education in schools to foster awareness from a young age.
- Leverage technology, including 3D scanning, digital archives, and drone surveillance, for monitoring and documentation.
- Incentivize private-public partnerships for conservation.
- Protect unlisted monuments, many of which fall outside ASI's official purview but are equally valuable.

India's heritage is not just a matter of pride; it is a shared legacy of humanity. As bulldozers edge closer to ancient ruins and shopping complexes rise over sacred ground, the question remains: how much more of our past are we willing to lose before we act?

If India wishes to stand tall as a modern nation with deep roots, it must not forget the foundations it was built upon.