ARBiT
it happens here...



Celebrating Tangy Traditions

National Pickle Day is a fun celebration of one of the world's most beloved tangy treats. Observed annually, this day honours the art of pickling, a culinary tradition that spans cultures and centuries. From crisp cucumbers to spicy mangoes and zesty mixed vegetables, pickles add flavour, character, and a bit of nostalgia to meals. Beyond taste, pickles reflect cultural heritage and homegrown ingenuity in preserving foods. On this day, enthusiasts celebrate by tasting, sharing, and even making their own pickles, reminding us that small bites of flavour can bring big joy and connect us to tradition.

राष्ट्रदूत
SATURDAY
14 November 2026
A-B

#THINKING OF YOU

The Pigeon That Brought a Pebble Every Morning

"Sophie, if you're reading this, it means I've been gone a long time. But if he's still flying, then he kept his promise."



Every morning for eleven years, Sophie opened her front door to find the same quiet surprise waiting on her doormat, a small, smooth pebble. Without fail, a white pigeon with a single grey wing would land nearby, drop the pebble, and fly away. Sophie would smile, pick it up, and place it carefully into a large glass jar on the windowsill. The ritual never changed.

At first, she couldn't understand why the bird kept returning. Her husband, Edward, had raised pigeons for more than forty years. He knew every bird by name, understood their habits, and treated them like family. When Edward passed away eleven years earlier, the loft fell silent. One by one, the pigeons disappeared into the sky never to return.

Except one.

A white pigeon with a grey wing.

Every morning since Edward's death, it arrived with a pebble in its beak.

Sophie never questioned it. She simply accepted the little gifts, believing that some mysteries didn't need explaining. The growing jar of pebbles became a quiet reminder that even after loss, something beautiful could remain.

Every Sunday, her granddaughter Lily visited.

"It's just a bird, Grandma," she would laugh. "Probably, a habit. Nothing more."

Sophie would only smile and gently place another pebble into the jar.

"I think some promises are too important to be forgotten," she would reply.

Years passed.

The seasons changed.

The pigeon grew older.

Then, one crisp autumn morning, something was different. The pebble lying on the doormat wasn't smooth like all the others. It was rough and slightly larger. Tied around it with a faded piece of string was a tiny brass ring.

Attached to the ring was a tightly folded note.

Sophie's heart began to race. With trembling hands, she unfolded the fragile paper.

The handwriting stopped her breath.

It was Edward's.

"Sophie, if you're reading this, it means I've been gone a long time. But if he's still flying, then he kept his promise."

Tears blurred the words as she continued.

"I trained him while I was still here. One pebble every day. Not because the pebbles matter, but because I never wanted a single morning to pass without you knowing someone was thinking of you."

Sophie pressed the note against her heart.

The pigeon watched quietly from the garden fence.

Edward's letter continued.

"When the day comes that he can no longer fly, he'll bring you this note instead. That will be his final journey. By then, I hope you've collected enough pebbles to remember that love isn't counted in grand moments. It's built one small act at a time."

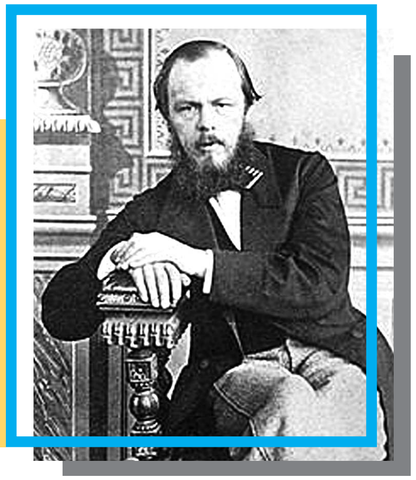
Sophie looked towards the glass jar. Inside were thousands of smooth stones, each one marking a day she had never truly spent alone. She stepped outside slowly. The old pigeon remained where it was, its feathers worn with age, its eyes gentle and familiar. For a long moment, they simply looked at one another. Then, the bird spread its tired wings.





The Woman Who Saved Dostoevsky

She was the first solo female publisher in Russian history, founded one of Russia's first successful book distribution businesses, and created the F. M. Dostoevsky Memorial Museum, the first of its kind in Russia. Anna produced one of the most extensive bibliographies ever created of works written by and about Dostoevsky. After the writer's death, she published seven editions of Dostoevsky's Complete Collected Works, an enterprise that became so well-known and respected that it attracted the attention of Leo Tolstoy's wife, who approached Anna for advice on how she could set up a similar operation for her husband.



Verna Mohon

On October 4, 1866, a 20-year-old woman in a simple black cotton dress paused outside a shop in St. Petersburg to buy a few extra pencils. She wanted to appear professional. She was on her way to meet a client, a meeting she believed would be just another assignment. Instead, it would change the course of literary history and consume the rest of her life.

Her name was Anna Grigorievna Snitkina.

The man waiting for her was Fyodor Dostoevsky.

He was 44 years old, twice her age. A former convict who had survived a Siberian prison camp, a widower haunted by grief, an epileptic plagued by seizures, and a literary genius standing on the edge of financial ruin.

Dostoevsky had signed a disastrous contract with a predatory publisher. If he failed to deliver a new novel by November 1, he would lose the rights to everything he had written, and everything he would write, for the next nine years. It was a sentence almost as cruel as the one that had once sent him to Siberia.

There were only 26 days left.

He had not written a single page.

Anna climbed the stairs to his apartment and rang the bell.

Years later, she recalled the moment vividly:

"A terribly tormented, broken man opened the door."

She saw someone carrying immeasurable sorrow, someone who looked as though he had already lost everything worth living for.

The first meeting was uncomfortable. The atmosphere was heavy. She later admitted that she did not like him at first. He seemed gloomy, exhausted, and emotionally crushed. He, in turn, made her feel deeply depressed.

Yet, work began immediately.

Day after day, Dostoevsky paced the room, dictating while Anna captured every word in shorthand with astonishing speed. Each evening, she transcribed the pages into clean manuscripts and returned the next day ready for more.

Together, they raced against the impossible deadline.

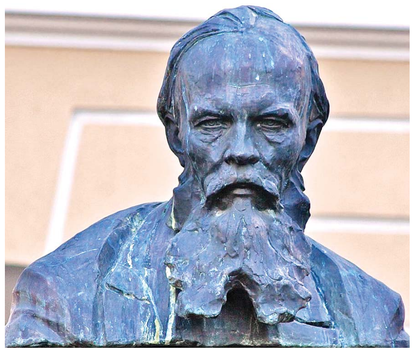
With only two days to spare, they completed the novel *The Gambler*, saving Dostoevsky's literary future.

What began as professional collaboration gradually became something neither expected.

Only four months later, Dostoevsky proposed.

Anna accepted.

Marriage, however, did not rescue her into comfort. It invited her into hardship. Her husband suffered violent epileptic seizures. During each attack, Anna would cradle his head in her hands, placing her own body between him and the floor so that he would not strike it and injure himself. She became nurse as much as wife.



He also carried crushing debts and an uncontrollable gambling addiction.

During their honeymoon abroad, his compulsive gambling became so severe that they lacked enough money to return home. Again and again, he lost everything at the roulette table.

They pawned possessions to survive.

First went Anna's wedding ring. It was redeemed, only to be pawned once more.

Eventually, they were so impoverished that Anna had to pawn her own underwear.

Still, she remained beside him.

Then, tragedy struck.

Their first daughter died in Geneva before reaching her first birthday. Dostoevsky was devastated. Anna became his strength, comforting him through grief that seemed impossible to endure.

Even in poverty, she preserved her dignity. She wrote lighthearted verses mocking their financial misery, insisting that wealth was never their greatest possession. "The only thing we have," she believed, "is our conscience."

Amid debt, illness, exile, bereavement, and constant uncertainty, Dostoevsky created the masterpieces that would define world literature.

- The Idiot.
- Demons.
- The Brothers Karamazov.

Behind every page stood Anna, not as a silent shadow, but as secretary, editor, financial manager, protector, and unwavering companion. She shielded him from creditors, organized his manuscripts, managed contracts, and created the stability that allowed his genius to flourish.

When Fyodor Dostoevsky died in 1881, Anna was only 34 years old.

She never remarried.

When people asked why, her answer was simple in spirit, if not always in words:

"Whom should I marry after Dostoevsky?"

Instead of seeking another life, she dedicated herself to preserving his.

She became one of Russia's first successful female publishers, taking complete control of her husband's literary legacy. She published seven complete editions of Dostoevsky's works, proving herself an exceptional businesswoman at a time when few women occupied such roles.

She helped establish Russia's first literary memorial museum dedicated to him.

She founded hospitals and schools in his name.

She built a village school that educated generations of peasant children, especially girls, offering opportunities many had never imagined possible.

Outside of Slavic scholarly circles, the story of their turbulent and fascinating marriage is unfamiliar to most. Even among many scholars, the complexity of their relationship and extent of Anna's extraordinary accomplishments are only vaguely understood. To name just a few: she was the first solo female publisher in Russian history, founded one of Russia's first successful book distribution businesses, and created the F. M. Dostoevsky Memorial Museum, the first of its kind in Russia. Anna produced one of the most extensive bibliographies ever created of works written by and about Dostoevsky. After the writer's death, she published seven editions of Dostoevsky's Complete Collected Works, an enterprise that became so well-known and respected that it attracted the attention of Leo Tolstoy's wife, who approached Anna for advice on how she could set up a similar operation for her husband.

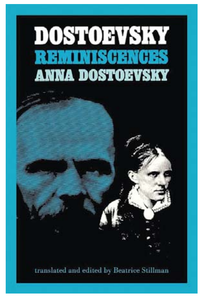
Anna's venture was a commercial success, as well, netting five million dollars in today's money. Anna lent her personal and financial support to charities, libraries, schools, and museums. She founded and funded one of the first provincial parish schools for peasant children that had graduated a thousand peasant girls who might otherwise never have had access to a good education. Anna was the author of *Reminiscences*, a memoir about her life with the writer that, when it appeared seven years after her death, was immediately recognized as an important literary event and still remains a bedrock of Dostoevsky studies.

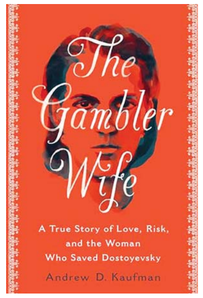
Anna, for her part, was personally and professionally ambitious; like the man she married, she was also a kind of gambler, but, as it turned out, far shrewder and more strategic one than he. As a teenager, she'd fallen in love with Dostoevsky's visionary and humane prose; *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *The Insulted and Injured* were among her two favourite works. The job she took with Dostoevsky was also her path to financial independence, which was important to this proud, self-described emancipated "girl of the sixties." History remembers Fyodor Dostoevsky as one of humanity's greatest novelists.

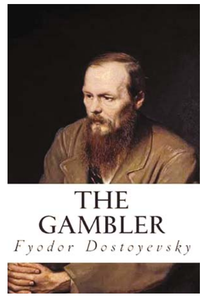
It should also remember Anna Grigorievna Snitkina. Without the young woman who stopped to buy extra pencils on an October morning in 1866, there might have been no The Gambler, no The Idiot, no Demons, and perhaps, no The Brothers Karamazov. Sometimes, history is changed not only by those who write great books, but by those who quietly make it possible for those books to be written.

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#ANNA SNITKINA







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#DRY CLEANING

What Every Saree Owner Should Know

Dry clean a silk saree only when it is genuinely soiled or stained. If the saree has only been worn briefly, simply airing it before storing it may be sufficient

Silk is one of the most luxurious and delicate natural fibres, prized for its lustrous sheen, smooth texture, and elegant drape. Whether it is a treasured Kanjeevaram, Paithani, Banarasi, or Mysore silk, proper care is essential to preserve its beauty for generations. Among silk owners, one common belief is that dry cleaning is the safest and gentlest method of cleaning. While dry cleaning certainly has its advantages, it is important to understand how it actually works and how repeated dry cleaning can affect silk over time.

Dry Cleaning Doesn't Mean "Dry"

One of the biggest misconceptions is that dry cleaning involves no liquid. In reality, the process uses liquid chemical solvents instead of water.

The most commonly used solvents are perchloroethylene (commonly called "perc") or hydrocarbon-based cleaning solutions. During the process, the garment is immersed in the solvent and placed inside a specialised cleaning drum. As the drum rotates, the solvent dissolves oils, perspiration, body residues, and dirt trapped within the fabric.

Once the cleaning cycle is complete, the solvent is filtered and recovered, while the remaining traces are evaporated from the garment, leaving it clean and dry.

Why Dry Cleaning Works Well for Silk

Dry cleaning offers several advantages, especially for delicate fabrics like silk.

Since water is not used, there is a lower risk of colour bleeding or dye migration. This is particularly beneficial for richly coloured silk sarees with contrasting borders and pallus.

The chemical solvent is highly effective at removing oily stains, perspiration, dust, and accumulated grime without subjecting the fabric to excessive moisture. This helps maintain the saree's overall appearance and prevents many of the problems associated with improper washing.



The Hidden Drawbacks

Although dry cleaning cleans silk effectively, it is not completely without consequences.

Silk is a protein-based natural fibre, composed primarily of fibroin. Like all natural protein fibres, silk responds differently to chemical exposure than synthetic fabrics. Repeated exposure to dry-cleaning solvents can gradually strip away some of silk's natural softness and sheen. Over time, a silk saree may begin to feel less supple, becoming slightly rougher and stiffer than when it was new.

With frequent dry cleaning over many years, the fibres may also become more brittle. As the silk loses some of its natural flexibility, it becomes more susceptible to wear, especially along folds, pleats, and areas subjected to repeated stress. This does not mean that dry cleaning damages silk immediately. Rather, the effects are cumulative and become noticeable after repeated cleaning cycles.

How to Care for Silk More Wisely

The key to preserving silk is not to avoid dry cleaning altogether, but to use it judiciously.

Dry clean a silk saree only when it is genuinely soiled or stained. If the saree has only been worn briefly, simply airing it in the shade before storing it may be sufficient. Avoid dry cleaning after every single use unless absolutely necessary. Limiting the number of cleaning cycles helps preserve the silk's natural lustre, softness, and strength. Proper storage also plays an important role. Fold the saree carefully, refold it periodically to avoid permanent creases, store it in a breathable cotton or muslin cloth rather than plastic, and keep it away from direct sunlight and excessive humidity.



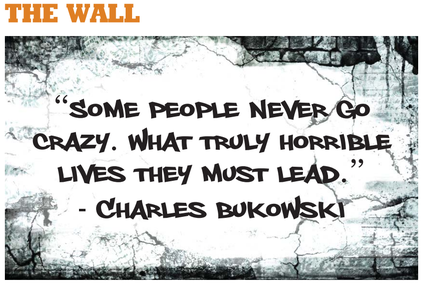
The Bottom Line

Dry cleaning remains one of the safest cleaning methods for valuable silk garments because it effectively removes oils and dirt while minimizing the risk of colour bleeding. However, it should not be viewed as a completely harmless process. Since silk is a delicate protein-based fibre, repeated exposure to chemical solvents can gradually reduce its natural shine, softness, and flexibility, eventually making the fabric feel rougher and more brittle.

The best approach is moderation. Reserve dry cleaning for occasions when it is truly needed, and rely on proper airing and careful storage between wears. By limiting unnecessary cleaning, you can help ensure that your cherished silk sarees retain their beauty, elegance, and longevity for decades to come.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

