

#KARNAVEDHA

Vedas And Ayurveda Recommend Karnavedha

The Ancient Tradition of Ear Piercing in Hindu Culture



Ear piercing, known in Sanskrit as *Karnavedha*, is one of the oldest and most revered rituals in Hindu culture, with roots tracing back thousands of years. Far beyond being a mere cosmetic practice, it has been considered a sacred rite of passage, intertwined with health, spirituality, and cultural identity. Ancient Hindu scriptures, including the Vedas and Ayurvedic texts, mention ear piercing as a vital ceremony that influences both physical well-being and the spiritual growth of an individual. Traditionally performed on infants and young children, Karnavedha is viewed as a way to harmonize the body, mind, and soul.



ment worn during and after the piercing could indicate family heritage, social status, and adherence to cultural traditions. The ritual was equally significant for both boys and girls, though the styles and ornaments differed according to gender and regional customs.

Over centuries, Karnavedha has retained its significance, blending ancient wisdom with contemporary practice. While modern parents may approach ear piercing primarily as an aesthetic choice, the traditional understanding emphasizes its holistic benefits. By aligning the ceremony with auspicious timings, mantras, and blessings, Hindu families continue to honour the ancient belief that ear piercing nurtures physical health, spiritual growth, and social belonging.

In essence, ear piercing in Hindu tradition is not merely an act of adorning the ears; it is a profound expression of cultural continuity, spiritual mindfulness, and respect for the body as a sacred vessel. The practice endures as a testament to the wisdom of ancient Indian thought, where even seemingly simple rituals carry layers of meaning, linking the individual to both community and cosmos.



As a child, Asrani would dream of becoming an actor. While cycling around Man Prakash and Prem Prakash cinemas, he would look at the large film posters and tell his friends that one day, they would see him in such posters and hoardings. His dream came true. On the same wall of the same theatre hung the poster of his debut film *Hare Kaanch Ki Chudiyen*. His face appeared in the large hoarding with stars like Vishwajeet, Naina Sahu, Helen, and Rajendra Nath. It was the first sparkle that gave him joy and confidence.

Jaipur Ka Ladka Tuihe Alvida



he lights were a little dim for Jaipur this time, as on Diwali, it lost one of its sunniest sons, Govardhan Asrani.

He left Jaipur in 1962 to join the newly set-up Film & Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune and enrolled in the acting course. The good-looking Jaipur lad, who graduated in Arts from Rajasthan College, aspired to be a hero in films. But in tinsel town, Mumbai, barring two films, Govardhan Asrani found a career as a comedian.

He made a mark for himself at a time when the late Mehmoood was the comedy king of Bollywood. Mehmoood was no doubt a very talented actor, but in the eighties and early nineties, he became known for delivering double-meaning dialogues, which were nothing but vulgarity and earned cheap applause from the audience, something that escaped the eyes of the censor.

Asrani did not go down the Shakti Kapoor-Kader Khan route. Instead, he made people laugh with his own inimitable sense and style of humour. Asrani was versatile enough to play roles that showed his inner talent as an actor, something visible right from his early performances in films like *Satyakam* (1969) and *Mere Apne* (1971), among many others.

Asrani was very enthusiastic about appearing in a play titled *Baz Ka Baaz*, a comedy drama scheduled to be staged at the Rajasthan International Centre (RIC). He was teamed up with Padmini Kolhapure in the play directed by Naveen Bawa. Padmini's husband, Tutu Sharma, son of the late Jagga Sharma, who produced the film *Chaar Diwari*, starring Shashi Kapoor and Nanda and directed by Krishna Chopra, wanted the play to be staged in Jaipur because of his and Asrani's connection with the Pink City.

I organised a meeting of Tutu Sharma with the RIC Director N. C. Goyal, but due to date issues, the show could not be held. It was sug-



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I interviewed him at Khasa Kotli as he sipped his beer (second bottle). The interview revealed a lot about him as he talked about his journey from Jaipur to Mumbai via the Film & Television Institute in Pune.

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gested to be staged on November 9, but the RIC auditorium was already booked, and soon after, Asrani took ill and could never recover. His ambition to appear in a comedy play in his hometown remained unfulfilled.

In the year 2000, Asrani came to Jaipur when he was honoured by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. The idea of honouring him came from the then Chairman of the Academy, Ramesh Borana of Jodhpur. During this award ceremony, where the then Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot was the Guest of Honour, Asrani became emotional after receiving the award from Gehlot. Teary-eyed, he asked Borana if he could bring his old mother, who had come to witness the programme, onto the stage. Borana had barely agreed when Asrani stepped down from the podium, located his mother, lifted her, brought her to the stage, and placed the award at her feet.

Asrani grabbed the microphone and, with a heavy voice, said he was doubly honoured to receive the award in his hometown. He said that although he had received numerous awards, including the Filmfare Award, this was one he would cherish all his life. He dedicated the award to his mother amidst thunderous applause.

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#OBITUARY



taking up multiple jobs before finally running a small saree business near Panch Batti. The store was known as Laxmi Saree Store.

Asrani studied at the Sindhi Panchayat School and later joined St. Xavier's School. He once attended a programme of the St. Xavier's alumni and talked about his younger days and his elder brother Hariram's association with the school, where he worked as a librarian. Asrani graduated from Rajasthan College in Arts.

While presenting a programme for Vividh Bharti, Asrani talked about his passion for acting and how he would mimic people and depict scenes through narration, talking about his experiences buying cinema tickets in crowded lines. The hilarious narrations were in typical Jaipuri language.

Asrani had to struggle, but gifted with a good voice, he worked as a casual artist at All India Radio, Jaipur, and also did radio plays under Nand Lal Sharma. He worked as an announcer for Rs. 15 per day.

In 1962, when the first batch of



Asrani performed the rituals of Jaya's brother. In 1973, Asrani teamed up with Amitabh and Jaya in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Abhimaan*, where he acted as Amitabh's secretary-cum-friend. In this film, he excelled in his cameo role.

During the interview, Asrani remembered the late Rajendra Golcha, who helped him join FTII and also supported him financially. Golcha was his schoolmate.

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He talked at length about his role as the jailor in Sholay. The

film, currently celebrating its 50th year, is remembered not just for its leads, Dharmendra, Amitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini, Jaya Bhaduri, Sanjeev Kumar, but also for its villain, played gloriously by Amjad Khan, and the *Angrezon-ke-zamaane-ke-Jailor*, played by Asrani.

With his Hitler-like moustache, barking orders at the prisoners, "aadhe idhar jao, aadhe udhar jao, aur baaki hamare saath aao," it was the kind of line that became instantly iconic. It has taken its place among the great one-liners written by Salim-Javed for this all-time classic. Asrani revealed that for this role, he had watched old footage of both Charlie Chaplin and Hitler and learned the dialogue delivery by minutely observing Hitler's war speeches, particularly his 'Ha' accent. He was paid Rs. 5,000 for his jailor's role by Ramesh Sippy.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee was Asrani's most favourite director, and he gave him several good roles where Asrani displayed his immense talent as an actor. Mukherjee always praised Asrani for his strong histrionic ability.

Asrani was married to Manju Bansal of Delhi, an actress active in the 1970s and 1980s. Both fell in love while working in *Aaj Ki Taaza Khabar* and *Namak Haraam*. Manju acted in a dozen films and later became a producer and director.

Asrani even tried his hand at playing a villain, in Gulzar's *Koshish* (1972), he played Jaya Bhaduri's evil brother who was responsible for her child's death, but it didn't work out. He tried to break away from the constant comic roles by becoming a hero in *Chala Murari Hero Banne* (1977), but the film didn't do well despite sincere performances and starry cameos. Some say his short height became a hindrance to becoming a hero. He was highly successful in producing Gujarati films



and, for many years, remained an icon of Gujarati cinema. His jodi with Rajesh Khanna, they did more than 20 films together, including *Bawarchi* (1972), *Namak Haraam* (1973), and *Aap Ki Kasam* (1974), was among the most beloved. In November 2024, during an event in Ajmer, Asrani spoke words that captured the grit of his Sindhi heritage and the humility of his upbringing. Standing before a cheering crowd, he said with a proud smile:

"Have you ever seen a Sindhi beggar in any country? No, right? Because Sindhis never beg. We sold marbles, traded clothes, sold pakodas, but never begged. That's our biggest identity."

The audience applauded when he added, "You won't find a Sindhi bandit or terrorist anywhere in the world, but you'll surely find a businessman."

He had almost retired from films but made a comeback after a long gap in a web series *The Trial*, where he played the role of a canny Parsi lawyer.



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#HIGHLIFE

Shinrin-yoku, The New De-stress

Forest bathing or taking in the forest, embracing nature for health and well-being



Forest bathing, also known as forest therapy or shinrin-yoku, is a therapeutic practice that involves immersing oneself in natural forest environments to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Originating in Japan during the 1980s, the term shinrin-yoku literally translates to 'taking in the forest atmosphere' or 'forest bathing.'

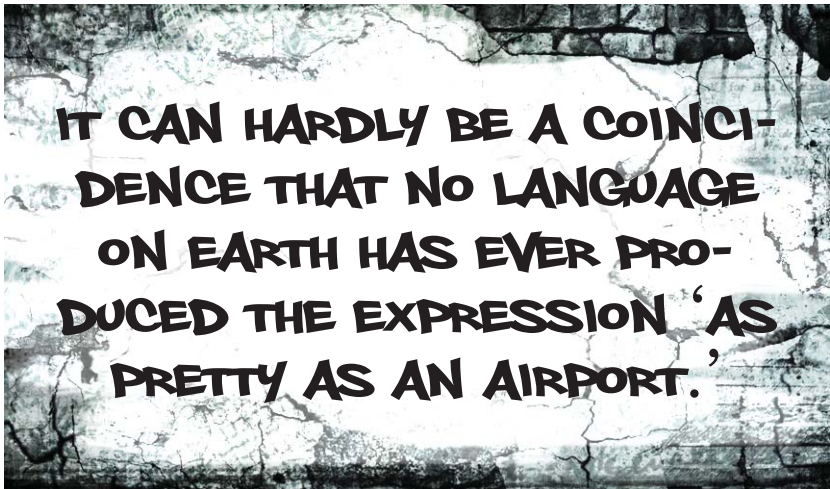


This concept was developed as a way to counterbalance the rising stress and health problems associated with urbanization by encouraging people to reconnect with nature. Unlike a simple walk or hike in the woods, forest bathing is a mindful practice that invites participants to engage all their senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, and sometimes even taste, while slowly and intentionally moving through a forest environment. The goal is to deepen the connection with the natural world, creating a restorative experience that fosters relaxation, reduces stress, and boosts overall health.

One of the key aspects of forest bathing is the use of the forest's natural elements, such as the scent of pine trees, the sound of rustling leaves, and the texture of bark and moss. Scientific studies have shown that exposure to these natural stimuli can lower cortisol levels (the body's primary stress hormone), reduce blood pressure, and enhance immune function. Certain compounds released by trees, known as phytoncides, have antibacterial properties and may improve immune responses when inhaled during forest bathing sessions. Forest therapy has also been linked to improvements in mood and mental clarity. Spending time in green spaces is known to reduce anxiety and depression, enhance focus, and increase feelings of happiness. For people living in busy cities or stressful environments, forest bathing offers a chance to unplug from technology and daily worries, encouraging mindfulness and presence in the moment. Certified forest therapy guides often lead sessions to help individuals fully experience and benefit from forest bathing. These guides design activities that encourage slow walking, sensory awareness, and quiet contemplation, helping participants to reconnect with nature in a meaningful way. This structured approach distinguishes forest bathing from ordinary outdoor recreation by emphasizing healing and mindfulness.

With growing awareness of the health benefits of nature immersion, forest bathing is gaining popularity worldwide. Many parks and natural reserves now offer guided forest therapy programs, and the practice is being integrated into wellness routines and even clinical treatments. In a world where stress and disconnection from nature are common, forest bathing provides a simple yet powerful way to restore balance and well-being. By stepping into the forest and truly experiencing it with all the senses, individuals can find peace, vitality, and a renewed appreciation for the natural world.

THE WALL

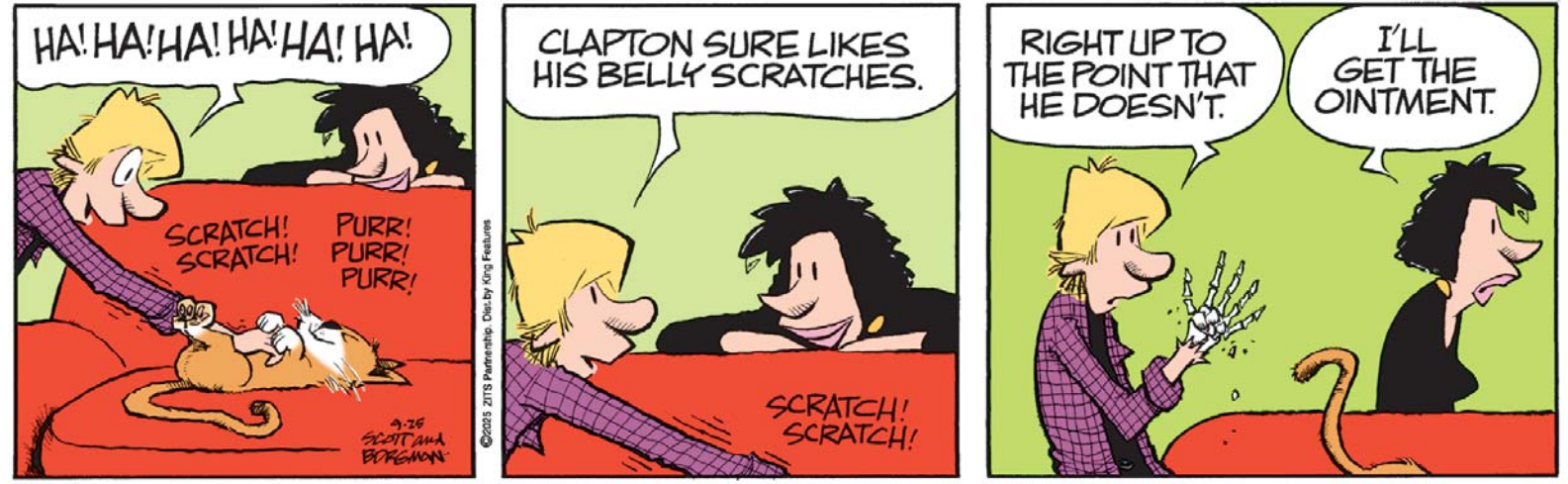


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman