



bserved on September 5, the International Day of Charity promotes compassion, solidarity, and generosity across the globe. Established to honour the memory of Mother Teresa, it serves as a reminder that even small acts of kindness can make a big difference. The day encourages individuals, communities, and organisations to support causes that address poverty, hunger, education, and healthcare. From volunteering time to donating resources, it's an opportunity to foster a culture of empathy and shared responsibility. In an increasingly divided world, the International Day of Charity unites people through the universal language of giving and the hope it inspires.

#HEALING TRADITIONS
Aboriginal
Australian Bone
Care and Medicine

Traditional healing was based on detailed knowledge of the environment, observation of symptoms, and generations of accumulated experience



For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal Australian communities have developed deep knowledge of the natural world, including the healing properties of plants, the management of injuries, and methods of caring for the body. Their medical traditions reflect careful observation, practical experience, and a profound understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment. Among these traditions, the treatment of injuries such as fractures and wounds was an important part of community health knowledge. Skilled healers used techniques passed down through generations, including immobilization methods, splinting with natural materials, massage, and the application of plant-based remedies. Their understanding of anatomy and recovery developed through long-term observation rather than written medical texts. Eucalyptus trees held a significant place in Aboriginal cultures. Different species were used in various ways, including for cleansing, treating respiratory problems, soothing skin conditions, and supporting general wellbeing. The leaves, oils, and bark contained compounds that modern science has studied for their antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. However, the use of eucalyptus in traditional practices varied widely between Aboriginal nations, and it should not be assumed that all communities used the same methods. The ability of traditional healers to recognize injuries, care for fractures, and support recovery demonstrates a sophisticated form of practical medicine. Archaeological studies of Aboriginal remains have shown evidence of serious injuries that healed successfully, suggesting that communities possessed effective ways of caring for people who suffered trauma. Traditional healing was not based on machines, hospitals, or modern pharmaceuticals, but on detailed knowledge of the environment, observation of symptoms, and generations of accumulated experience. These practices remind modern medicine that valuable knowledge can exist outside formal scientific institutions. Today, researchers continue to study indigenous medical knowledge with respect, exploring how traditional plant use, ecological understanding, and community-based healthcare may contribute to modern approaches. The goal is not to replace contemporary medicine, but to recognize and learn from the wisdom developed by Aboriginal people over thousands of years. The history of Aboriginal Australian healing is a story of resilience, intelligence, and a deep connection between culture and nature. It represents one of the world's oldest continuing traditions of health knowledge.



Two Traditions One Ancient Chemistry

The journey of both Ajrakh and Kalamkari begins not with colour, but with preparing the fabric. Cotton cloth is first soaked in a solution made from myrobalan, the fruit of Terminalia chebula. Known locally as Harad or Haritaki, this nutrient-rich fruit has been valued for centuries in Ayurveda for its medicinal properties. In textile dyeing, however, it plays an equally remarkable role. Rich in natural tannins, myrobalan acts as a mordant, enabling natural dyes to bind firmly to the fibres.

● Kshema Jatuhkarna

India's textile heritage is as diverse as its landscapes. Among its most celebrated traditions are Ajrakh, the intricate hand-block printed textile of Kutch in Gujarat, and Kalamkari, the exquisite textile art of Andhra Pradesh. Separated by nearly 1,500 kilometres, these two crafts appear strikingly different at first glance. Ajrakh is known for its bold geometric patterns, symmetrical designs, and rich combinations of indigo, red, black, and white. Kalamkari, on the other hand, is famous for its flowing narratives, floral motifs, temple art, and depictions of mythological stories.

Despite their visual differences, these two textile traditions are united by an extraordinary foundation, their reliance on the same ancient knowledge of natural dyes and textile chemistry. Long before the advent of synthetic colours, Indian artisans mastered sophisticated methods of preparing fabric and extracting colours from plants and minerals, creating textiles that remain vibrant for generations.

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In both Ajrakh and Kalamkari, the first stage is creating the outlines using black dye. This deep, permanent black is produced through an ingenious natural process. Iron particles are soaked in a solution of jagged and water, where fermentation gradually converts the mixture into iron acetate. When applied to the tannin-rich fabric, it reacts chemically to produce a rich, durable black colour.

to achieve their characteristic brilliance or permanence. Once the fabric has been prepared, the printing process begins. In both Ajrakh and Kalamkari, the first stage is creating the outlines using black dye. This deep, permanent black is produced through an ingenious natural process. Iron particles are soaked in a solution of jagged and water, where fermentation gradually converts the mixture into iron acetate. When applied to the tannin-rich fabric, it reacts chemically to produce a rich, durable black colour. This elegant use of chemistry has been perfected over centuries and remains one of the defining features of both traditions.

The term 'Kalamkari' literally translates to pen craft. It is a 3,000-year-old craft that is based in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Using a bamboo pen and natural dyes, artisans create mythological stories on fabric. With themes from epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata and other local folklore, these artisans painstakingly create scenes in a step-by-step process.

The vibrant red shades found in

#AJRAKH AND KALAMKARI



both crafts are obtained from the roots of the madder plant (Rubia cordifolia), known locally as Majith or Manjistha. These roots contain alizarin, a natural pigment responsible for producing a range of colours from rust and brick red to deep maroon. Depending on the concentration of the dye and the mordants used, artisans can create subtle variations in tone while maintaining the richness associated with natural dyes.

The iconic blue found in Ajrakh, and used selectively in Kalamkari, is derived from indigo (Indigofera tinctoria). Indigo is one of the oldest natural dyes known to humanity. The leaves are soaked and fermented to produce a dye solution. When the dyed fabric is removed from the vat and exposed to air, oxidation transforms the invisible dye into the brilliant deep blue that has become synonymous with Indian textiles. This transformation, where colour emerges only after contact with oxygen, continues to fascinate both scientists and artisans.

Ajrakh is more than just a print; it is a tradition rooted in nature and geometry. Ajrakh originated in Sindh (now in Pakistan) and eventually flourished in Kutch, Gujarat. The process consists of multiple rounds of dyeing and printing, and often consists of two primary dyes: indigo and madder. The designs are



geometric, repetitive, and balanced, representing the idea of living in harmony with nature and centuries of cultural symbolism.

Neither Ajrakh nor Kalamkari is produced in a single step. Each colour is applied separately, and after every stage of printing or dyeing, the fabric is carefully washed and dried before the next layer is added. This repeated sequence of printing, washing, drying, and dyeing ensures that every colour develops correctly without contaminating the others. Depending on the complexity of the design, the entire process may take several weeks to complete.

These painstaking techniques illustrate that India's traditional textile arts are not merely decorative crafts, they are repositories of

scientific knowledge passed down through generations. Every stage reflects a deep understanding of botany, chemistry, fermentation, mineral reactions, and environmental conditions, all achieved without synthetic chemicals.

Ajrakh and Kalamkari may have evolved in different regions, speak different artistic languages, and employ different motifs, yet, they are connected by a shared scientific heritage. Their colours are drawn from the same plants, their fabrics are prepared using the same natural mordants, and their artisans rely on the same principles of chemistry that have sustained these traditions for centuries.

Together, these two remarkable crafts demonstrate that India's textile heritage is not simply an expression of artistic creativity, it is also a testament to the country's profound understanding of natural materials, sustainable practices, and indigenous science, knowledge that remains as relevant today as it was hundreds of years ago.

To identify authentic Ajrakh, look for a double-sided print, an earthy color palette of deep indigo and madder red, tiny hand-block imperfections, and a soft texture with a mild, organic smell. Machine or digital fakes feature blank or faded backsides, neon synthetic colours, and rigid chemical-treated fabrics.

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Key Signs of Real Ajrakh

- **Double-Sided Visibility:** Flip the fabric over. Real hand-block printed and natural-dyed Ajrakh shows the pattern clearly on the reverse side because the dye soaks deep into the fibres.
- **Earthy Colour Palette:** Expect deep indigo blues, rich madder reds, black, and subtle mustard or green. Colours are never bright, neon, or shiny.
- **Handmade Imperfections:** Look for tiny overlaps, slight misalignments where wooden blocks meet, and minor spacing breaks. Perfect mathematical uniformity points to a machine or screen print.
- **The Smell and Feel:** Authentic pieces are washed in natural ingredients like soap nut and mud during the lengthy process. They carry a faint earthy scent and feel breathable rather than starchy or stiff.
- **Geometric Symmetry:** The core visual language relies on complex, grid-like geometric patterns and star or floral motifs inspired by nature.

To identify an authentic, hand-

printed or block-printed Kalamkari saree, look for organic and earthy colour tones, minor human imperfections in the line work, colour bleed on the reverse side of the fabric, and a faint, distinct earthy or dairy-like scent. Machine-made or digital fake prints look far too pixel-perfect and clean.

Key Signs of Authenticity of Kalamkari

- **Look for Imperfections:** Real hand-painted Kalamkari uses a bamboo or tamarind pen (kalam) or hand-carved blocks. Expect slight asymmetry, minor line variations, and tiny color smudges rather than computer-perfect symmetry.
- **Check the Reverse Side:** Turn the saree inside out. Authentic hand-painted fabrics show soft color seepage and dye penetration on the back, whereas digital or screen prints often look faint or completely clean on the reverse.
- **Examine the Colours:** Traditional dyes come from natural elements like roots, plants, and crushed minerals (such as indigo, turmeric, and madder). The palette remains deep, muted, and earthy, never neon or artificially brilliant.
- **The Earthy Smell Test:** The traditional preparation process involves treating and washing the cloth multiple times in milk and myrobalan. Fresh, genuine pieces often retain a faint, distinct earthy or fermented-dairy aroma.
- **Inspect the Motifs:** True Kalamkari often depicts traditional folklore, peacocks, flowing vines, and intricate mythological storytelling rather than repetitive, pixelated patterns.

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#THE MUSICAL MIRACLE
When K. Asif Brought
Ustad Bade Ghulam
Ali Khan to Cinema

Naushad then asked how he was supposed to take this no to Asif? The Ustad replied that he would quote such a high fee that the filmmaker would walk away

In the year 1950, visionary filmmaker K. Asif embarked on creating what would become one of the greatest cinematic epics in Indian history, *Mughal-e-Azam*. A grand portrayal of love, sacrifice, and royal conflict, the film brought together some of the most celebrated artists of Indian cinema, including Prithviraj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Madhubala, and Durga Khote.

While the film's magnificent sets, powerful performances, and unforgettable dialogues became legendary, its music created a separate legacy. For the soundtrack, K. Asif entrusted the responsibility to the great composer Naushad, who crafted a musical world deeply rooted in Hindustani classical traditions and the grandeur of the Mughal court.

Among the many challenges before Naushad was finding the perfect voice for the legendary character of Tansen. The filmmaker wanted a voice that carried the authority, purity, and spiritual depth associated with India's greatest classical musicians. There was only one name that seemed worthy, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan.

K. Asif, who was observing the maestro was not easy. Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan had always maintained a distance from films and had avoided associating himself with commercial music. He believed that classical music belonged to a higher artistic space and was not meant to be shaped by the demands of cinema.

Yet, K. Asif was determined. He requested Naushad to meet the great Ustad and convince him to lend his voice to Mughal-e-Azam. Naushad was



Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Lata Mangeshkar and Meera Banargee.

hesitant, knowing the musician's principles, but he respected the director's vision and reached out to the maestro.

At first, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan refused. Naushad then asked how he was supposed to take this no to Asif? The Ustad replied that he would quote such a high fee that the filmmaker would walk away.

K. Asif, who was observing the conversation while smoking his cigar, responded calmly. The maestro finally said that he would sing, but his fee would be Rs. 25,000. At a time when many playback singers earned around Rs. 500 per song, the amount was extraordinary.

Everyone expected the demand to end the discussion. Instead, K. Asif immediately agreed.

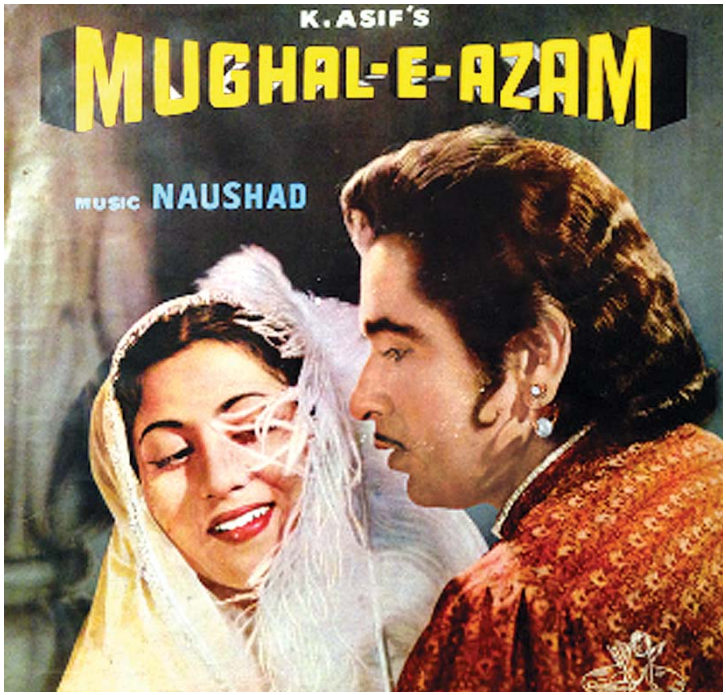
Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan was surprised and told him to reconsider. K. Asif said

that his voice is priceless. The filmmaker's determination convinced the maestro, and history was created. The result was the unforgettable classical masterpiece "Prem Jogan Ban Ke," a song portraying a deeply emotional moment between Salim and Anarkali. Sung by Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan in the majestic Raga Sohini, the composition captured the delicate emotions of love, longing, and separation.

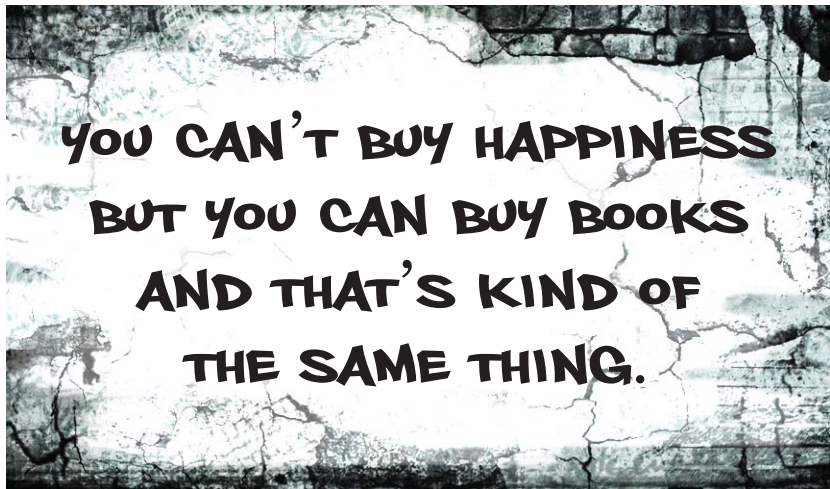
The song represented the transition between night and dawn, the quiet hours between 3 and 6 in the morning, when darkness slowly gives way to the first light of day. During the recording, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan suggested the use of *Shuddha Madhyam* in the latter part of the composition. Naushad initially explained that this movement went beyond the traditional structure of Raga Sohini.

However, the composer had a deeper musical vision. He explained that the subtle appearance of *Shuddha Madhyam* hinted towards the mood of Raga Lalit, a raga associated with the early hours before sunrise. It was not merely a musical change; it was a poetic expression. The shift suggested that dawn was approaching, gently reminding the lovers that the night was ending and their moment together would soon have to come to a close.

This artistic understanding between Naushad and Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan transformed a song into an immortal piece of musical storytelling. Mughal-e-Azam was not just a film; it became a meeting point of cinema, classical music, and cultural heritage, a timeless example of how great artists can create magic when tradition and imagination come together.



THE WALL

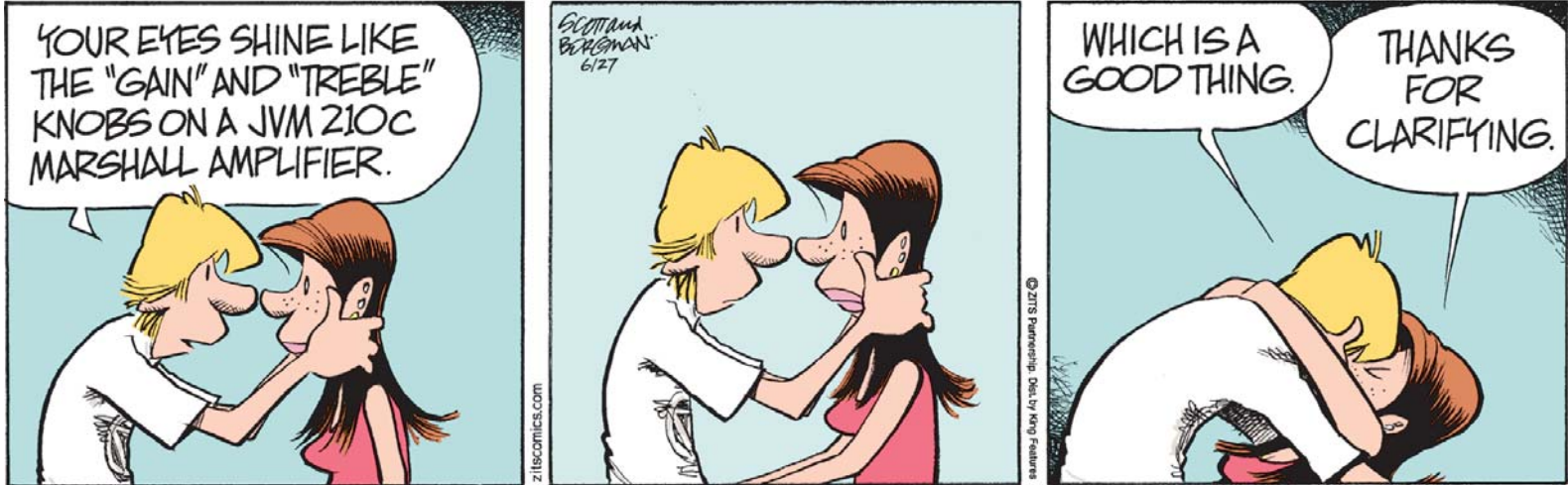


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman