

#HERITAGE

A Rolling Legacy

The Antique Pandaan of Nawabi Lucknow



In the heart of Lucknow, a city renowned for its refined culture and artistic heritage, lies a treasure that tells a story far beyond its ornate exterior. Sheikh Aamir Raza, a proud descendant of Sheikh Abdur Raheem, the first Governor of Awadh appointed by Emperor Akbar, shares the tale of a remarkable family heirloom: a centuries-old antique pandaan. But this is no ordinary betel box.

A Glimpse into the Nawabi Era

Dating back to the Nawabi era, during the time when India was still under British rule, this pandaan is a fine example of the luxury and innovation that defined Lucknow's aristocratic households. It was more than a container for paan; it was a symbol of sophistication and a reflection of the evolving lifestyle of the time. What makes this artifact so unique is not just its age, but its unparalleled craftsmanship and inventive design. Shaped like a miniature truck, the pandaan is equipped with wheels, allowing it to be rolled back and forth on the floor; an elegant method of passing it around during mehfilis or social gatherings.

Ingenious Design Features
Beyond its charming exterior or lies a thoughtfully organized interior. The pandaan contains separate compartments for:

- **Sirautha**- the traditional spatula used to spread lime on betel leaves.
- **Paan**- fresh betel leaves, area nuts, and other condiments. What truly sets this piece

apart, however, is its colonial-era innovations. It includes a:
 • **Dedicated matchbox slot**
 • **Built-in cigarette box** with a push-button mechanism that automatically dispenses a cigarette
 Such features point to a time of cultural blending, where traditional Indian rituals coexisted with the modern influences brought by the British.

A Priceless Heritage

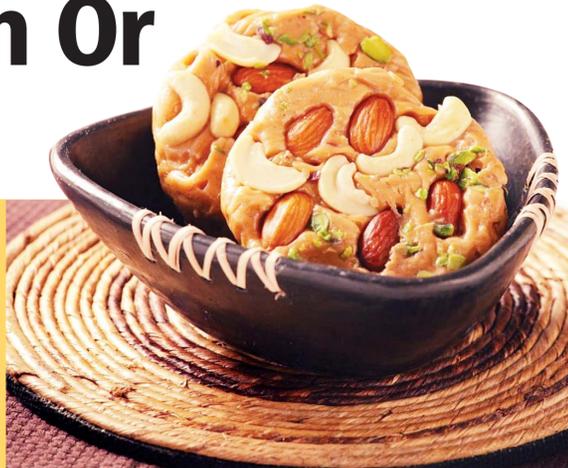
Today, this pandaan stands as a rare, priceless artifact, not only for its historical value but for the glimpse it offers into a bygone world, where tradition met technology, and luxury met functionality. Preserved lovingly by the descendants of a once-prominent noble family, it serves as a living connection to the grandeur and grace of Lucknow's Nawabi past.

As Sheikh Aamir Raza narrates the story, it's clear that this pandaan is more than just an object; it is a legacy on wheels, carrying with it the echoes of an era where art, culture, and ingenuity thrived in elegant harmony.



Halwa-i Suhan Or Sohan Halwa

Imagine my amazement, when in 2014, I found this piece of her family's lived and consumed history staring at me from cookbooks that revealed Mughal food practices. Persian language Mughal cookbooks extant from the Shah Jahan's reign onwards and those composed at the 18th and 19th century courts of Awadh, Bengal, Rampur and other regional kingdoms record multiple recipes for this brittle and crisp sweetmeat, rendered as halwa-i suhan and at times as halwa-i suhan.



• Kshema Jatuhkarna

My friend's maternal and paternal families migrated to Delhi from Multan during the Partition of India and Pakistan. Growing up, she was surrounded by living witnesses to that rupture: her grandfather's maternal grandmother, who passed away in 1995; her paternal great-grandfather; her maternal great-grandmother; and their acquaintances and friends.

They often recalled their journey on overcrowded trains to refugee colonies in Delhi and Haryana, including the loss of a sibling, a story my father's maternal aunt mentioned in passing several times, without wanting to delve into further details.

Though physically displaced, fragments and memories of Multan travelled with them. One being the language, Multani, or Sariki, as it is more commonly called today, which was actively spoken at home until her paternal great-grandfather, Lala Ji, passed away in 2007. And the other, a sweetmeat called *sohan halwa*, the spelling more commonly used today. However, I will refer to it as halwa-i suhan or suhan halwa for the reason that will become apparent shortly.

A quick Google search will tell you that Multani, alongside Sufi and pottery, remains synonymous with suhan halwa. Members of the Multani community displaced during Partition established many sweet shops across North India, including in Faridabad, where her grandparents eventually settled; in Gurgaon, now Gurugram, the city her parents moved to for work and where I grew up; and in Delhi.

My family often frequented these shops, especially the then-conjure the halwa's gritty fine-grained texture, its glimmering appearance, and the crackling, raspy crunch that shatters in the mouth, releasing a symphony of sweetness laced with hints of aromatics, nuts, and spices.

Today, simpler brittle (*kadak*) and flaky (*papadi*) variants, often made without expensive aromatics and spices, are sold across India, alongside its cousin, a softer, fudge-like version known as *dodha*. While using similar ingredients, *dodha* employs a slightly different technique...

This delicacy is a sensorial journey, with its very name imbued with tactile, visual and aural resonance. The term suhan, meaning a whetstone or file used to smooth wood,

modest OM Sweets in Gurgaon, to procure our fix of suhan halwa. Some of these establishments made little else, as if preserving, in sugar, ghee, and wheat, memories and a sense of loss.

A discovery

Imagine my amazement, when in 2014, I found this piece of her family's lived and consumed history staring at me from cookbooks that revealed Mughal food practices. Persian language Mughal cookbooks extant from the Shah Jahan's reign onwards and those composed at the 18th and 19th century courts of Awadh, Bengal, Rampur and other regional kingdoms record multiple recipes for this brittle and crisp sweetmeat, rendered as halwa-i suhan and at times as halwa-i suhan.

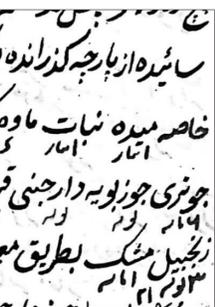
This delicacy is a sensorial journey, with its very name imbued with tactile, visual and aural resonance. The term suhan, meaning a whetstone or file used to smooth wood,

##

Today, simpler brittle (*kadak*) and flaky (*papadi*) variants, often made without expensive aromatics and spices, are sold across India, alongside its cousin, a softer, fudge-like version known as *dodha*. While using similar ingredients, *dodha* employs a slightly different technique...

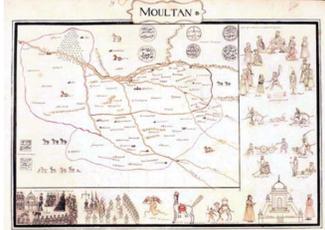
the halwa's gritty fine-grained texture, its glimmering appearance, and the crackling, raspy crunch that shatters in the mouth, releasing a symphony of sweetness laced with hints of aromatics, nuts, and spices.

Today, simpler brittle (*kadak*) and flaky (*papadi*) variants, often made without expensive aromatics and spices, are sold across India, alongside its cousin, a softer, fudge-like version known as *dodha*. While using similar ingredients, *dodha* employs a slightly different technique...



List of ingredients for making Halwa i-Suhan Khasma from a cookbook composed for Mughal emperor Alamgir Aurangzeb's kitchen.

#MITHAI



Suba of Multan, from the Album Illustrating the Provinces of the Mughal Empire, commissioned from local artists at Faizabad by Jean-Baptiste Joseph Gentil in 1770.



Sohan Halwa being sold near Deva Sharif Dargah in Barabanki.

##

Borrowing from historian Finbar Barry Flood's approach to art and material history, a more nuanced way of investigating culinary history lies in tracing routes rather than roots. It is not always possible to pinpoint a single place or moment of invention for a food dish; recipes continually evolve as they pass through different hands and adapt to new ecological and regional contexts.

The story of suhan halwa is enmeshed in the broader processes, networks of exchange, and histories of mobile communities that shaped early modern Asia. This period, stretching from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, was marked by intensified and sustained movement of people and ideas across South, West, and Central Asia, giving rise to a shared culinary heritage. Many dishes, including early forms of biryani and certain varieties of pulao and kebabs, travelled to Hindustan from the Iranian plateau during this period via different circuits and with different agents.

From Akbar's reign onwards, Multan was one of the largest Mughal subas (provinces), encompassing much of pre-Partition southern Punjab as well as parts of the Balochistan region. It bordered several other Mughal subas: Lahore and Kabul to the north, Thatta to the south, and Ajmer and Delhi to the east. To its west lay Gandahar, a region that remained a persistent point of contention between the Mughals and the Safavids, with the latter largely exercising effective control over this area and, beyond it, the remaining territories of the Safavid Iranian Empire.

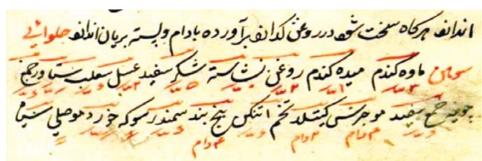
Halwa was an important edible commodity for both these groups. For the Sufis, the ritual of offering halwa marked a new disciple's initiation into their silsilah or brotherhood. Physicians regarded halwa as nourishing aliment because sweetness was the most balanced flavour

Savor the Slice: Celebrating Khachapuri Day

Khachapuri Day, celebrated on February 27, is a delicious tribute to Georgia's iconic cheese-filled bread. This day invites food lovers to indulge in the warm, golden pastry, whether baked traditionally in a wood-fired oven or recreated at home. Beyond its cheesy goodness, Khachapuri represents culture, comfort, and culinary craftsmanship passed through generations. Celebrating this day is about more than just tasting; it's about sharing, experimenting with flavors, and appreciating the art of baking. From classic Imeruli to Adjarian boats with gooey eggs, Khachapuri Day is a perfect reason to treat yourself to a slice of Georgia's culinary heritage.



Sohan Halwa being sold at a sweet shop near Deva Sharif Dargah in Barabanki.



List of ingredients for making Halwa i-Suhan from a cookbook composed for Mughal emperor Alamgir Aurangzeb's kitchen.

profile according to the Yunani medical system, a detail I have explored in an academic journal article on Mughal culinary knowledge. These spiritual and medical reasons, combined with the firm consistency of suhan halwa that made it well suited for carrying over long distances, explain how and why this sweetmeat travelled from the Iranian plateau, found a home in Multan, and entered Mughal cookbooks and elite kitchens.

Texts produced in India attest to the belief in suhan halwa's curative properties. A 17th-century Mughal recipe for the suhan halwa follows up with the advice that eating a pau (about 250 grams) of suhan halwa every day was beneficial for health, as it alleviated 'wind', one of the natural element that according to the Yunani and Ayurveda make up the human body. These medical systems link excess of wind in the body to flatulence, indigestion, lethargy and an imbalanced temperament.

##

A 17th-century Mughal recipe for the suhan halwa follows up with the advice that eating a pau (about 250 grams) of suhan halwa every day was beneficial for health, as it alleviated 'wind', one of the natural element that according to the Yunani and Ayurveda make up the human body.

In addition to being a major Sufi centre and province for the minting of Mughal coins, Multan was an important hub of agricultural production, textile manufacture, and tile-making, as noted by the historian Scott C Levi. Inhabited by both Muslim and Hindu merchants, Multan functioned as a significant entrepôt and transregional trade centre, occupying a crucial position along the overland caravan routes linking South Asia with Western, Northern, and Central Asia.

Early modern merchants, Sufi saints, and physicians from the Iranian plateau travelled through and spent considerable time in Multan on their journey to find suitable patrons in Mughal emperors and other courtly elite, imprinting their food habits and culinary techniques on the region's inhabitants. The networks of knowledge and material exchanges mediated by these mobile communities, especially the Hinduistan-bound Iranian Sufis and physicians who passed via Multan, can be credited with suhan halwa becoming a part of the South Asian culinary repertoire.

Halwa was an important edible commodity for both these groups. For the Sufis, the ritual of offering halwa marked a new disciple's initiation into their silsilah or brotherhood. Physicians regarded halwa as nourishing aliment because sweetness was the most balanced flavour

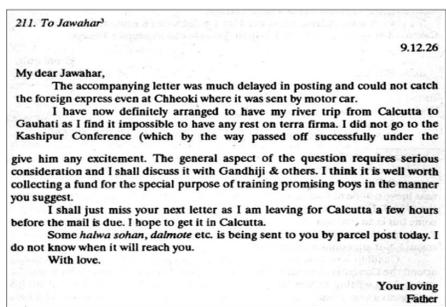
Dervishes, a work often incorrectly attributed to the celebrated 13th-14th-century Sufi poet Amir Khusrau but actually written in 1801 by Mir Amman Dehvi. It is also mentioned in the 19th-century Urdu and English translations, produced in India, of the 10th-century Arabic work on metaphysics, *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity) composed in Iraq. In the 1801 Urdu translation, which served as the source for the 1869 English version, suhan halwa replaces the generic mention of halwa in the original text as a delicacy available to those who live a refined life, in contrast to animals that devour rinds and stones. While these legacies of Suhan halwa faded away with time, it continued to garner popularity and patrons. Among its famous patrons were the first prime minister of India and his father. In 1926, Motilal Nehru sent suhan halwa to his son Jawaharlal Nehru in Delhi from Cheokhi, near Allahabad (now Prayagrah).

I have often contemplated putting together these archival traces that tell the story of suhan halwa, a sweet that binds early modern exchange networks, the Mughal culinary legacy, Partition, and the resilience of the displaced Multani community. Yet, I hesitated. Suhan halwa evokes not only delight but also absence; it carries the quiet weight of loss. It brings back memories of a bygone time when my great-grandfather, a playful prankster, would scare a young me with his dentures. What finally nudged me to confront grief and put these words to paper were old family photographs my father recently shared, images that, like the halwa itself, collapse distance and time, letting the past and present meet in a single, bittersweet moment.

##

My dear Jawahar,
The accompanying letter was much delayed in posting and could not catch the foreign express even at Cheokhi where it was sent by motor car.
I have now definitely arranged to have my river trip from Calcutta to Gauhati as I find it impossible to have any rest on terra firma. I did not go to the Kashipur Conference (which by the way passed off successfully under the give him any excitement. The general aspect of the question requires serious consideration and I shall discuss it with Gandhiji & others. I think it is well worth collecting a fund for the special purpose of training promising boys in the manner you suggest.
I shall just miss your next letter as I am leaving for Calcutta a few hours before the mail is due. I hope to get it in Calcutta.
Some halwa sohan, dalnate etc. is being sent to you by parcel post today. I do not know when it will reach you.
With love,
Your loving Father

9.12.26
rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



Excerpt from a letter written to Jawaharlal Nehru by his father Motilal Nehru.

#STRANGE BEGINNINGS

'Bring Home The Bacon' But 'Boycott' The 'Hair Of The Dog'

The Curious Origins of Common English Phrases

We often use phrases like 'bring home the bacon' or 'hair of the dog' without a second thought. They roll off the tongue in everyday conversation, but their origins are anything but ordinary. Some come from history, others from folklore or odd traditions. Let's explore the intriguing stories behind these such expressions: bring home the bacon, boycott, and hair of the dog.

Bring Home the Bacon

Today, 'bring home the bacon' simply means to earn a living or support a household financially. But where did bacon come into this?

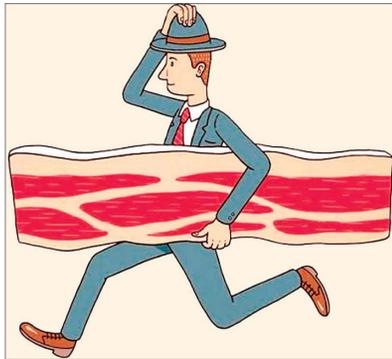
One of the oldest theories links this phrase to 12th-century England, where churches in the town of Dunmow, Essex awarded a side of bacon (a 'fitch') to any married man who could swear he had not quarreled with his wife for a year and a day. If he succeeded, he literally brought home the bacon as a reward for domestic harmony.

Another more modern theory comes from early 20th-century boxing. In 1906, after a fight, American boxer Joe Gans received a telegram from his mother encouraging him to 'bring home the bacon.' He won the match and the phrase gained popularity in sports reporting, and later, in general use. Regardless of its exact root, the phrase became a symbol of success, achievement, and financial provision.

Boycott

Unlike most idioms, 'boycott' has a very specific and traceable origin, and it comes from a man's name.

In 1880s Ireland, during a land dispute, Captain Charles Boycott, an English land agent, tried to evict Irish tenant farmers who demanded lower rents. In response, the community united against him. They refused to work for him, do



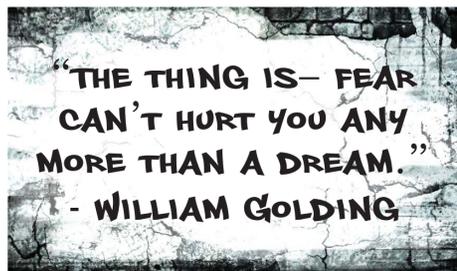
Hair of the Dog

This odd-sounding phrase, short for 'hair of the dog that bit you,' is commonly used to refer to the practice of drinking a small amount of alcohol to ease a hangover. But the origin is more literal and quite old.

In medieval times, people believed that if you were bitten by a rabid dog, the best cure was to apply a potion made from the hair of that same dog to the wound. The idea was that a bit of what harmed you could also heal you, a crude form of homeopathy. Though the medical theory doesn't hold up today, the metaphor endured. Over time, it came to refer not to dog bites, but to hangovers, suggesting that a bit of the same alcohol that 'bit' you might help ease the pain the next day. Whether that actually works is still debated, but the phrase has stuck. These three phrases, bring home the bacon, boycott, and hair of the dog, show how language evolves from unexpected places: village traditions, political resistance, and folk remedies. They remind us that even everyday expressions carry stories from the past, waiting to be uncovered in the words we speak today.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman