



Amnesty International Day: Standing Up For Human Rights

Observed on May 28, Amnesty International Day honours the global movement dedicated to protecting human rights and promoting justice. Founded in 1961, Amnesty International works across countries to campaign against injustice, defend freedom of expression, and support people facing discrimination or violence. The day recognises activists, volunteers, and supporters who raise awareness and demand accountability from governments and institutions. It serves as a reminder that every voice matters and collective action can bring meaningful change to create a more fair and compassionate world.

#TRASH

A Heap Of Ancient Jugs

Monte Testaccio: Rome's Mountain of Olive Oil Jugs



In the heart of Rome, surrounded by the city's iconic ruins and bustling modern life, there's a hill that doesn't quite fit the postcard-perfect image of ancient temples and grand amphitheatres. At first glance, Monte Testaccio looks like any other hill, a gentle slope rising over the neighborhood of Testaccio, dotted with greenery and seemingly natural. But dig a little deeper (literally and historically), and you'll discover that this mound is no ordinary hill. It's made entirely out of shattered pottery, specifically, about 53 million discarded olive oil amphorae, the clay jugs used by the Romans to transport their beloved liquid gold.

Yes, you read that correctly. Monte Testaccio is essentially an ancient trash heap, albeit one of the most fascinating and well-organized garbage dumps in human history. Measuring roughly 35 meters high and with a circumference of nearly a kilometer, it's a mammoth monument to the logistical prowess, consumer habits, and sheer scale of the Roman Empire's olive oil obsession.

Why Olive Oil?
In ancient Rome, olive oil wasn't just a luxury; it was a staple of daily life. Romans used it for cooking, lighting lamps, religious rituals, bathing, and even skin care. It was imported in vast quantities from across the empire, especially from provinces like Hispania (modern-day Spain) and North Africa, where olive oil production flourished.

To transport this essential commodity, the Romans used amphorae: large, ceramic vessels with narrow necks and two handles, designed for stacking and shipping across the Mediterranean. However, these containers had one major downside: they weren't reusable for shipping, especially once the inside became contaminated with residual oil and couldn't be properly cleaned.

A Solution Only Rome Could Invent
Rather than trying to clean or recycle the amphorae, Roman administrators came up with a surprisingly organized solution:



ad taste. What is bad taste? Who decides? Who crosses it? Look no further. Take a walk through one of the many fashion pop ups or simply visit the many sale and exhibitions doing the rounds in the city. And you will know what bad taste is.

Or to turn the discussion on its head, when did bad taste become fashion? Nowadays, Jaipur hosts more pop ups than one can keep count of. Rows of cubicles, stalls sold at premium by a promoter who has little to do with fashion and least of all with quality workmanship, the sole aim is to gross over an amount bigger than what she might have dished out to the property owner on which the show is being held.

And what do these stalls exhibit: Endless mash up of garish, gaudy, loud ready to wear, mostly women's wear. You name it. It is all under one roof, dresses, suits, stoles, shawls and sarees, sometimes unstitched, but mostly with bad workmanship, perfect stuff for a brazenly bad wardrobe.

The Indo-western look is a whole new segment that fires women with aspirations to look more liberated and happening. The teen, preteen and even women well past their prime, with some loose change to spare seem to equate "western look" with empowerment and high status. No doubt, a business suit is more convenient in an office, especially if you are commuting in public transport.

My suspicion is that "convenience" has little to do with it! Take a look at the malcontented and the pencil heeled and you realise that it's more of an eyeball game. It's the nouveau rich who are taking to the lycra jackets, leopard print plunging necklines, bubble gum pink and blood red short dresses, even the classic little black dress has become shorter, butterfly motifs, bejewelled accessories, embellished, multi-colored belts and beading, sequined, gowns and suits and sometimes

When we were growing up, "tacky" was a dirty word but now, it seems to be an integral part of "fun fashion." Can I very humbly state that the bad thing about bad taste is that most people have it unknowingly. Princess Diana, the universally acclaimed style icon of our times, is reported to have once said "a little bad taste is like a nice splash of paprika." True enough, in small doses, it can be oddly riveting but to don something that is mortifying below the benchmarks of what is generally considered as sophistication is an eyesore.



Bad Taste Is Going Places

#FASHION



sarees too. As a generously endowed selfie clicking woman with skin peeping from her side slitted gown said to me, "People can beat me but not my gown." Really? Add to this the seamless opportunity that

Internet provides the glam dolls to go viral. Garish over the top dressing not only gets more eyeballs but also more comments like "gaw-gaw" or "sooooo very osum," whatever it is supposed to mean.



Take a walk through the full page advertisement in our print media and you begin to realise that bad taste is not only the fashion diktat of the day but it also creates more millionaires. So, even though,

the exhibitors at the recently held "Riwaaz," a wedding and winter shopping fest, advertised by the organisers as a "premium fashion and lifestyle exhibition" complained that the "sales were slow" on the second day or that not enough had been done to draw crowds to the show. It's an oft repeated tale.

Most of the stalls had been put up with vendors who were sourcing stuff from different parts of the country rather than their original work, a familiar script.

The "winter" collection was two, three stalls with woollens sourced from Ludhiana. Sequined and mukesh shawls too that were being quoted as "pashmina wool." So, okay, kitschy is "in." But untidy, badly finished and unruly, when did all that become fashionable? So, even if you argue that "good taste" is a very middle class or an old fashion notion held by the uppity echelons of society, good workmanship and elegance can never be out of fashion. Is everything that attracts worthy of interest?

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Unfortunately, like everything else, our pre assembly line production of street fashion has been Bollywoodised beyond measure.

It's one thing to view it on screen and quite another to have Miss Twiggy or Mrs. Voluptuous Vitals walk into one's drawing room looking like a Christmas tree out to do a skin show.

The hardcore marketers are promoting loud in the face punk, erasing boundaries of propriety or are they merely selling what is in demand? The proverbial chicken first or egg debate!

Whatever, one thing is certain, bad taste is not going anywhere anytime soon. Watch this space for more designer never before Shopping Bonanza in Jaipur.

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#INDIAN YELLOW

The Luminous Pigment That Traveled the World

From Indian soil, this extraordinary pigment began its global journey, through the bustling ports of Calcutta

There was once a color so radiant that artists believed it captured sunlight itself, warm, transparent, and glowing with a life that refused to fade even after centuries. Known as Indian Yellow, this remarkable pigment journeyed from the villages of India to the grand studios of Europe, leaving its mark on some of the most celebrated masterpieces in art history.

One of its most poetic legacies can be seen in the golden moon of The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh. That luminous celestial glow, soft yet intense, echoes the unique brilliance Indian Yellow was prized for. Artists across continents adored it for its magical quality, as if it were sunlight dissolved directly into paint.

Long before it captivated Europe, Indian Yellow flourished in India itself. By the 15th century, painters of the Mughal, Rajput, and Pahari traditions used the pigment extensively. It brought divine halos to life, enriched royal garments, illuminated flowers, and bathed landscapes in a golden warmth

that felt almost spiritual. The color was not just decorative, it was symbolic, often representing divinity, vitality, and light.

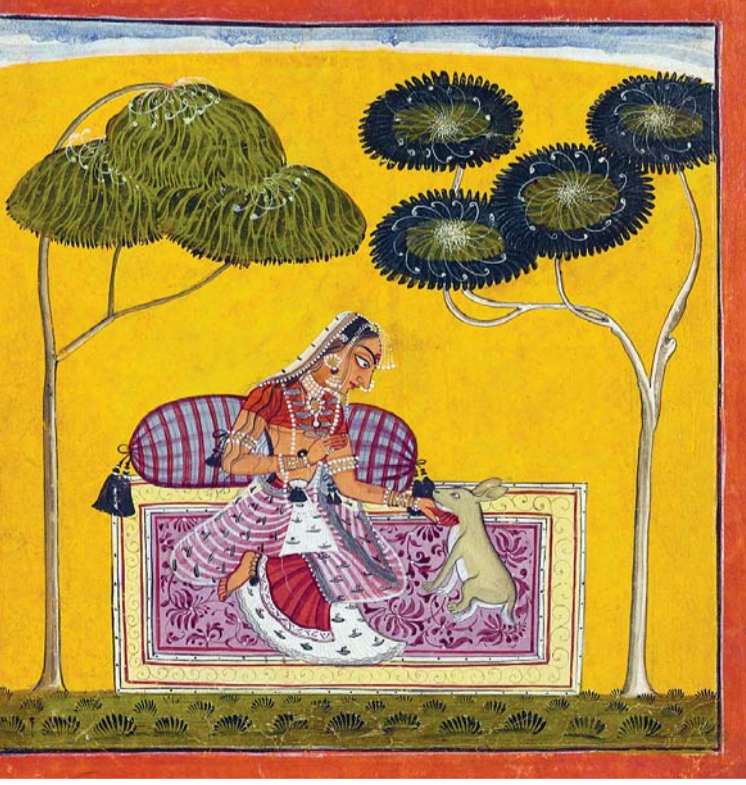
From Indian soil, this extraordinary pigment began its global journey. Through the bustling ports of Calcutta, small compact balls of the pigment were shipped overseas. European merchants and artists eagerly awaited these mysterious imports. Inside each lump was a glowing yellow core, which, after careful washing and purification, was transformed into a usable pigment. It soon found its way into the palettes of masters like J. M. W. Turner, Johannes Vermeer, and again, Vincent van Gogh. Yet, despite its popularity, Indian Yellow carried an air of mystery. Artists received it in sealed lumps with a peculiar smell, and no one quite knew its true origin. Speculation ran wild, some believed it came from plant sap, others imagined more exotic sources like camel or even snake urine. The truth,

however, was far more unusual and unsettling. In 1883, an Indian expert named T. N. Mukharji set out to uncover the origins of this enigmatic pigment. His investigation led him to villages near Mirzapur, where he discovered the surprising process behind its creation. Local cowherds fed their cows an unusual diet consisting primarily of mango leaves and water. This diet produced bright yellow urine, which was then collected, heated, filtered, and dried into small pigment balls known as piuri. These were the very lumps exported across the world.

But this brilliance came at a cost. The restricted diet left the cows malnourished and weak. As awareness grew about the cruelty involved, production of Indian Yellow declined and eventually ceased in the early 20th century.

Modern scientific analysis has since confirmed Mukharji's findings. Tests on historic samples revealed the presence of hippuric acid and compounds derived from mango leaves, clear evidence of the pigment's unusual biological origin.

Today, Indian Yellow no longer exists in its original form, but its legacy endures. It remains a symbol of artistic brilliance and cultural exchange, a color that once carried the warmth of the Indian sun across oceans, illuminating canvases and captivating imaginations around the world.



What is happiness?

Happiness is being grateful, finding comfort in what you have, seeing light despite cracks



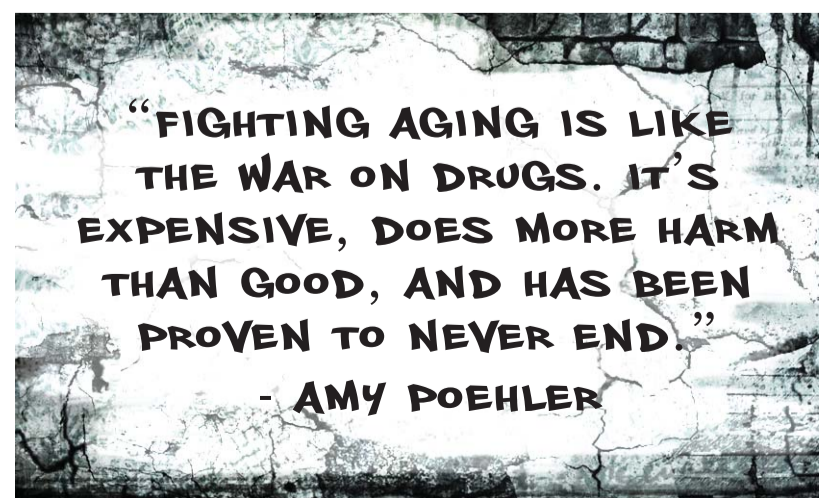
A famous Turkish poet once asked his painter friend to capture happiness on canvas. The painter chose an unexpected scene: a family sleeping peacefully on a creaking bed. One leg of the bed was broken, supported by two bricks. The roof of their modest home leaked. Even the family dog slept calmly beside them. That painting became immortal because it revealed a powerful truth: happiness is not the absence of problems. It is the ability to rest your heart even when life is imperfect. It is acceptance, gratitude, and inner peace amid uncertainty.

Happiness is being grateful, finding comfort in what you have, seeing light despite cracks, and letting go of sorrow over things beyond your control. Whenever your heart feels heavy, remember this painting. Be content.

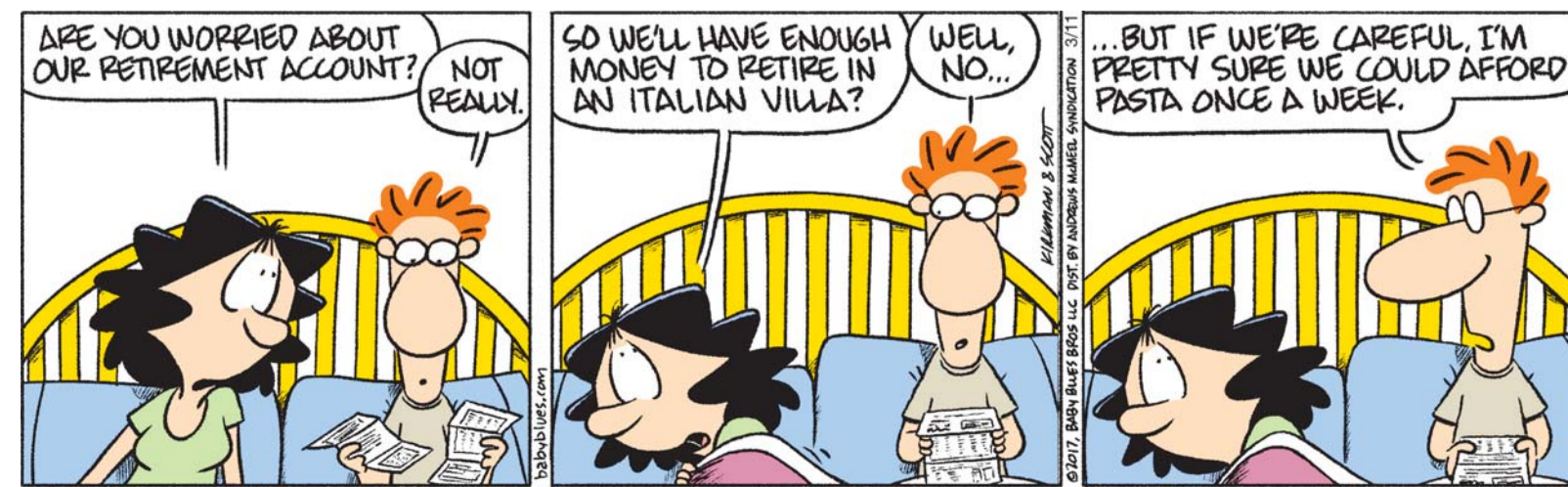


Be grateful, Sleep peacefully and stay blessed forever.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman