ARBiT
it happens here...



Electronic Greetings Day: Celebrating Digital Connections

Observed annually on November 29, Electronic Greetings Day celebrates the modern art of staying connected through technology. From e-cards and GIFs to personalized video messages, this day highlights how digital communication has transformed the way we share emotions, gratitude, and celebration. What once required postage and patience can now be sent instantly across the world with a click. The day encourages people to reconnect with loved ones through thoughtful online gestures, reminding us that even in a digital age, sincerity and warmth can transcend screens and bring smiles, no matter the distance.

राष्ट्रदूत
SUNDAY
29 November 2026
A-B

#PERHAPS...

The Letters That Went to Heaven

So, he wrote back. In careful, warm handwriting, he told the boy that everything was good in heaven



When a little boy was six years old, his father died in an accident. He was too young to understand what death truly meant. He only knew that his father was gone. When he asked where his father was, his mother told him, "He is in heaven now."

The boy believed her. So, one day, he decided to write his father a letter.

He carefully wrote his father's name on the envelope and added an unusual address: "To Dad in Heaven." He dropped the letter into a postbox, believing that it would somehow reach his father.

Instead, the letter reached a postal sorting office.

There, it was sent to the section for undeliverable mail. The employee handling such letters had a simple responsibility: letters that could not be delivered were eventually destroyed.

But he couldn't bring himself to destroy this one.

The postal worker had experienced a tragedy of his own. Many years earlier, he had lost a child. Reading the little boy's letter reopened an old wound, but it also gave him a chance to do something he wished someone had done for him. So, he wrote back.

In careful, warm handwriting, he told the boy that everything was good in heaven. He told him that his father could see him growing up and was proud of him. He reminded him to listen to his mother and continue being a good boy.

The boy believed the reply completely. And he wrote again. Over the years, his letters became a record of his childhood. He wrote about school, birthdays, friends, worries and all the small things he wished he could tell his father.

And every time, the mysterious man answered.

For eight years, the correspondence continued.

The boy grew from a six-year-old grieving his father into a fourteen-year-old teenager. Throughout those years, he believed that his letters were reaching heaven and that his father was somehow answering them.

Then came the final letter.

The boy was now fourteen. The message told him that he was grown up and didn't need to keep writing anymore. His father was watching him anyway. The boy eventually stopped writing.

Years passed.

Then, in 2024, he began wondering about his childhood letters. How had they ever reached his father? Who had been responding to him all those years?

He decided to investigate.

He traced the letters back through the postal system until he found the sorting office where they had originally arrived. Eventually, he discovered the identity of the retired postal worker who had answered them.

When they finally met, the old man showed him something unexpected.

A box. Inside were the boy's original childhood letters, carefully preserved for 18 years. The grown man was overwhelmed. After all those years, he finally asked the question that had remained unanswered since childhood:

"Why did you do it?" The retired postal worker gave a simple answer.

Perhaps, his father would have wanted someone to answer. The letters had never actually reached heaven. But they had reached someone who understood what it meant to lose someone you love.

The old man had lost a child. The little boy had lost his father. In a strange and beautiful way, their grief connected them.

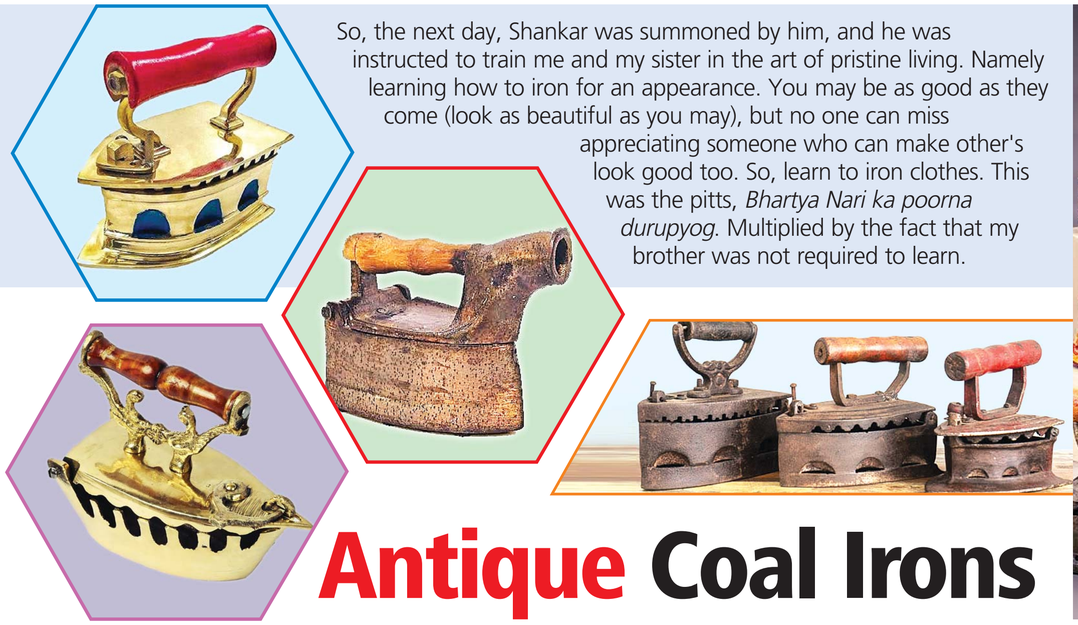
The postal worker could not bring the boy's father back. He could not change what had happened. But he could give a grieving child something precious: the feeling that his father had not completely disappeared.

And perhaps, that is what makes the story so powerful.

Sometimes, a letter does not reach the person whose name is written on the envelope. Sometimes, it reaches someone who understands why it was written.

For eight years, a little boy thought he was writing to his father in heaven. An old man, carrying his own grief, quietly answered every letter. The postal system could not deliver those messages to heaven. But somehow, they reached exactly where they needed to go. Sometimes, letters miss their destination, but still find the person they were meant to reach.





So, the next day, Shankar was summoned by him, and he was instructed to train me and my sister in the art of pristine living. Namely learning how to iron for an appearance. You may be as good as they come (look as beautiful as you may), but no one can miss appreciating someone who can make other's look good too. So, learn to iron clothes. This was the pitts, *Bhartya Nari ka poorna durupyog*. Multiplied by the fact that my brother was not required to learn.

Antique Coal Irons



Anjali Sharma
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

Remember my young days. School dress crisply and at that very moment pressed, for a completely tidy appearance. My dad was a stickler for blade sharp edges to skirt folds, especially for the march past for twenty sixth January.

We had an old family retainer, a dhobi, and he was the man responsible for half our school education. Mainly because we could not have left for school if we were not dressed properly, which means skirts with razor sharp pleat edges, and my brother's again razor sharp trouser front pleat. They were called trousers then, not pants. If you would insisted on the 'p' word, you could be permitted to call them pantaloons. So, we all compromised on trousers.

The early morning, before it is completely light, when we were getting ready for school, is a memory replete with many fragrances. Milk boiling, and being cooled down for urgent use, climber roses bursting with heady fragrance from the open window, the shakarkandi wala singing his wares for a spicier breakfast, his brazier hot to roast the lip smacking, lemon and spice sprinkled sweet potatoes, which were savoury and not sweet at all, the masala sent out a divine smell. We got that only on Sundays, a potato seller singing his basket's value, very tunefully, 'Ik Dubbar (Doubloon) Ke paua yadua, Ik dubber ke paua bhai,' a melody full of a fragrant possibility at late lunch, and Shankar, our old, very old dhobi, sliding his hot coal iron over our dresses to my father's close observation, his iron sending out hisses at every slide from right to left, the coals burning in the cavity of the iron sang out on the sprinkles of dampening water, and to add to the music, let out a particular fragrance which only an iron working on clothes does. Try as one may, charcoal, which was the type used, as hard coal was said to spit when burning, and could singe clothes, was not a preferred choice, never repeats this treat at any other time.



Shankar, our old, very old dhobi, sliding his hot coal iron over our dresses to my father's close observation, his iron sending out hisses at every slide from right to left, the coals burning in the cavity of the iron sang out on the sprinkles of dampening water, and to add to the music, let out a particular fragrance...

He had a place of veneration in our household. He did not stand out in the cold, and do his job out of sight. He commanded a largish room just adjacent to the kitchen opening on to the back porch, which extended in three directions. The first immediately attached to the kitchen, which had two doors, one into the verandah leading to the dining room, one opening onto the porch, where achar, daily grinding of masalas was done. He also opened onto this porch, with direct access to the back dining room. Where we all ate, unless it was a formal meal.

He had, at any time of the day, three irons working on rotation. One which he was using, the second left to cool off awaiting refilling, and the third working up, with coals burning bright inside it. Little flickers of fire licking with long tongues from its eyes. It was a fascinating sight. As a small child, I used to wonder, and one day, I remarked to my grandfather that Ravan's eyes must be like this. He had a huge laugh, and called Shankar inside, got the cook to give him tea, and said that this Ravan is everyday tamed by our very own Shankar.

Our dresses were pristine, razor sharp pleats. And we never had occasion to be pulled up for bad attire in school. For the delicate clothes, that is my mother and my grandmother's silk sarees, he used the almost spent iron, and that was grumbled about in soft whispers. This was *Bharat ki bechari nari ka durupyog* (Misuse of the women of India), he treats women like second class citizens, with all the hierarchy thrown in to boot. That was because grandma's saree always got done before mom's. The odious second layer to this partiality would raise its serpent head, when Bua visited. The mom took another demotion to third place.

Shankar always smiled, he would eat food, drink tea, and ironed for the first half of the day. There were no Sundays, only Amavasya holiday. That day, he would not touch his irons. *Paap ka bhagi nahi hona hai. Is janm me dhobi hu aage hari bhakt banu.* I asked him one Sunday, why he would work on this day when everybody is having fun, playing strolling chatting. He told me that one day has been set aside for him too, Amavasya, that day touching the tool of his income will earn him God's displeasure instead of Lakshmi. *Ye andhera din hai* (this is a dark day), good does not happen today.

Shankar was old. His son started to come in to help him, and I remember that I was in the seventh standard. My school started to make us aware of the hardship and expense our parents made for our education so as to sensitise niggardlies amongst us. A new pattern of life, with consideration as a byword, began with reusing skirts for the next day. It was an exercise in careful use of clothes, looking after them, and appreciating what goes into them. My grandfather was excited about this turn in our lives.

So, the next day, Shankar was summoned by him, and he was instructed to train me and my sister in the art of pristine living. Namely learning how to iron for an appearance. You may be as good as they come (look as beautiful as you may), but no one can miss appreciating someone who can make other's look good too. So, learn to iron clothes. This was the pitts, *Bhartya Nari ka poorna durupyog*. Multiplied by the fact that my brother was not required to learn.

#LOVE PRESSED



Eyes blank, no Ravana blazing from them. Forgotten by me and everyone who had used them, and could remember those razor sharp pleats. You don't get those razor sharp pleats or edges with any modern press anymore. There are no Shankars to teach girls about beauty without payment. Or a blessing full of love.

A very depressing Sunday arrived. That was the day appropriated from loitering to mindful use, women's mindful use. God is a man! Declared my visiting bua. My mom generally kept voice down, and I later learned that grand mom had told her that *beti ka byah karna hai, sasural jake naam roshan karegi kya!*

Shankar smiled. He told us both a beautiful story, and I think he just made it up for us. He said that this hot iron is angry and full of hate, but my princesses' hands cool it off. Just try. I work the whole day, and get paid. So, that is quits. But when you will cool it off, it will bless you with all its burning heart. Because no one touched it for anything but coins, but you. My sister and I were both stunned. Poor iron, no one blessed it and it never thanked anyone in return. A burst of love for the poor thing came to me. Resentment left me, and I learnt my first piece of ironing on my father's trousers. With razor sharp pleats. Till I was married, I ironed his formal trousers with love for both my father and the burning iron, who no one blessed before this.

Recently, I saw one of those old heavy irons, these were lying in an antique shop. Eyes blank, no Ravana blazing from them. Forgotten by me and everyone who had used them, and could remember those razor sharp pleats. You don't get those razor sharp pleats or edges with any modern press anymore. There are no Shankars to teach girls about beauty without payment. Or a blessing full of love.

The antique shop had a fascinating collection of antique charcoal irons, showcasing beautifully crafted metal bodies, polished wooden handles, intricate floral engravings, and decorative brass accents. Once essential household tools, these remarkable irons combine practical ingenuity with artistic craftsmanship, reflecting the elegance, durability, and distinctive charm of historical domestic life and vintage design traditions. And a memory of early morning fragrances, of roses, milk, vendors and a hot coal iron sliding over clothes.

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#VENICE BIENNALE 2026

India Wins Visitors' Lion

India's award-winning pavilion, titled *Geographies of Distance: Remembering Home*, explored the complex relationship between memory, identity, belonging and the idea of home



India has made a significant mark on the international contemporary art scene by winning the Visitors' Lion for Best National Participation at the Venice Biennale 2026. Often described as the Olympics of the art world, the Venice Biennale is among the most prestigious international exhibitions of contemporary art, bringing together nearly 100 national pavilions and showcasing artistic expressions from across the world.

India's award-winning pavilion, titled *Geographies of Distance: Remembering Home*, explored the complex relationship between memory, identity, belonging and the idea of home. Curated by Dr. Amin Jaffer, the exhibition brought together five Indian contemporary artists, each offering a distinct interpretation of what home means in a world shaped by migration, changing landscapes and shifting cultural identities.

The recognition was particularly special because India returned with a national pavilion after a seven-year gap. Its last participation was in 2019, making the 2026 edition an important moment for India's contemporary art community.

Why the Award Was Different This Year

The victory also comes against the backdrop of an unusual and politically charged edition of the Biennale. Traditionally, the Golden Lion awards are selected by an international jury. However, in 2026, all five members of the international jury resigned following disagreements over the participation of Russia and Israel, particularly in the context of the ongoing geopolitical conflicts and the controversy surrounding the countries' inclusion.

Following the resignations, the Biennale introduced the Visitors' Lions, allowing audiences to vote for their favourite artists and national pavilions. The awards were therefore decided through public voting rather than the traditional jury process. India's victory was announced on November 25, after the exhibition concluded.

Five Artists, Five Stories of Home

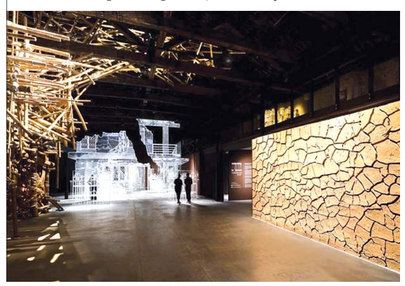
The Indian pavilion brought together five distinct artistic practices:

- **Alwar Balasubramaniam:** His work *Not Just for Us* used clay and soil from rural Tamil Nadu to explore land, memory and environmental transformation.
- **Ranjani Shettar:** Her installation *Under the Same Sky* featured suspended organic forms inspired by flowers and natural growth.
- **Sumakshi Singh:** Through *Permanent Address*, she recreated her demolished family home in New Delhi using delicate embroidered thread.
- **Skarma Sonam Tashi:** His work *Echoes of Home* used papier-mâché to explore Ladakhi architecture, ecology and cultural continuity.
- **Asim Waqif:** His bamboo installation *Chaal* drew inspiration from scaffolding and India's changing urban landscapes.

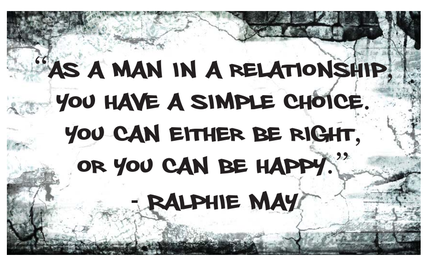
The pavilion received approximately 4.5 lakh visitors during the exhibition, making it one of the most visited national pavilions at the event.

India's achievement is significant not simply because it has won an international art award, but because it has brought contemporary Indian artistic expressions to a global audience. Its presentation demonstrated how materials such as soil, bamboo, thread and papier-mâché can communicate stories that transcend geographical boundaries.

After seven years away from Venice, India has returned with an exhibition that asks a deeply personal question: What makes a place home? Its answer, expressed through five different artistic voices, has found resonance with visitors from around the world.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

