

#MARINE LIFE

The Jellyfish That Cheats Death

Meet the tiny sea creature that rewinds its biological clock and may hold the key to human immortality.



Imagine if ageing were optional. If growing old didn't mean wrinkles, grey hair, or aching joints, but just another loop in the circle of life. Sounds like a sci-fi fantasy, right? Well, meet *Turritopsis Dohrnii*, the unassuming jellyfish that seems to have hacked the code of immortality.

Nicknamed the 'immortal jellyfish,' *Turritopsis Dohrnii* is smaller than your pinky nail and looks like a delicate drop of translucent water. Native to the Mediterranean Sea, but now found in oceans around the world, this jellyfish has a unique party trick: when injured, starving, or simply stressed, it doesn't die, it resets.

Here's how it works. Most jellyfish follow a life cycle: egg to larva (planula), then to a polyp (which anchors to a surface), and finally to the free-swimming adult medusa that we recognize as a jellyfish. But when *Turritopsis* reaches adulthood and things go awry, it does something mind-blowing, it reverts back to its polyp stage. Think of it as a butterfly turning back into a caterpillar. Over and over again. Theoretically, this cycle can continue indefinitely, which is why scientists have dubbed it biologically immortal.

Now, let's clear something up: immortal doesn't mean invincible. The jellyfish can still be eaten, poisoned, or wiped out by environmental changes. But when it comes to natural ageing, *Turritopsis* gives Father Time a polite 'no, thank you.'

This discovery, first observed in the 1990s, has fascinated researchers across fields, marine biology, genetics, even anti-ageing medicine. How does it pull off this age-defying trick? Scientists are still piecing the puzzle together. What's known so far is that the process, called transdifferentiation, allows the jellyfish's cells to transform from one type to



another. It's like asking your skin cells to become nerve cells, and they go, 'Sure, why not?' In the lab, this ability holds massive promise. If we could understand how *Turritopsis* rewires its biology, we might one day slow down or even reverse ageing in humans, or at least learn how to heal damaged tissues in a whole new way.

Of course, the road from jellyfish to human applications is long and winding. But the mere existence of this creature challenges how we think about life and ageing. It reminds us that nature still holds secrets far beyond our current imagination, and that sometimes, the biggest wonders come in the tiniest, most jelly-like packages.

So, the next time you're swimming in the ocean, keep an eye out for a tiny, floating time traveller. It just might be a jellyfish older (and younger!) than time itself.



The Cracks In The Marble

The Rajput Sangh convened that night in silence. No grand declarations. No vengeance. But from that day forward, no member sat unguarded. Every minor noble was given voice in weekly forums. Every soldier's letter home was read, archived, remembered. Even the servants of the palace were honoured with coded tokens, to remind them: you are seen.



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Victory, when stretched too long, begins to feel like a question. Months had passed since the Accord of Malwa. Trade flourished. Southern and northern engineers built together. Children from Malwa had arrived in Hampi and Chittorgarh, learning two tongues and two ways of pride.

But in the Rajput Sangh, restlessness stirred. Rao Balwant of Bundi grumbled that Vijayanagar's presence in the northern war council was growing too strong. Raja Prithviraj of Amber, now bolstered by his role in the Malwa negotiations, wanted greater control over troop rotations. In Bikaner, smaller kingdoms began asking, when would they get more than garrison duty and grain? The unity, once forged by fear, was now strained by ambition. At the center of it all stood Maharani Sangha. He had become more than a leader. He

was a myth still breathing. His wounds were legends, his silences policy. Even the Deccan allies deferred to him. And perhaps that was the problem. The Sabha did not fear each other. They feared losing him.

And far away, in Agra, Babur knew it.

He no longer attempted to breach borders. He now studied hearts. And every empire has one heart that holds it together. So, he sent not armies, but whispers. To a mercenary from Kabul, he gave a dagger made of Persian steel. To a court musician travelling to Mewar, he gave a scroll hidden in a sitar's hollow. To a disillusioned Rajput noble with debts and rage, he gave gold, and the illusion of purpose.

Someone, somewhere, would betray. And in Chittorgarh, the protectors around Sangha tightened. Rao Maldeo placed his own men at Sangha's side. The women of the zenana, queens, sisters, daughters, began carrying coded messages between regions, their palanquins now bearing the weight of strategy. It was Rani Karnavati of Mewar who noticed the falcon. Karnavati had long sensed that the empire's enemies would not come with banners, but with gifts and glances. A hunting bird sent from Delhi, bearing a golden tag and a ring unfamiliar to the royal stables. She intercepted it.

Hidden inside the bird's feather wrappings was a map of Sangha's chambers, marked with a crescent moon.

"The night he prays," the note read. "That is when the blade must fall." She did not scream. She simply walked into the war council and placed the ring before them. "Kings can be targeted," she said. "But no one sees a queen coming."

Legend holds that the women of the zenana, often underestimated, became key players in silent resistance. Assassins were hunted. Traitors exposed. The zenana turned into a command post that no man dared underestimate again. One evening, in the moonlit palace courtyard, Sangha stood beside Rani Karnavati. "You saved my life," he said. "I protected a future," she replied. "A life is only part of it." He looked at her, not as ruler to queen, but as warrior to equal.

You've become the blade I never saw coming." "And you," she said softly, "have become the cause I'll never let fall." In the palace gardens, where once poetry echoed, Sangha now walked with shadows trailing him, not with soldiers, but warriors in his sleeves. Unity was not perfect. But it was now protected by something deeper than fear. It was protected by love. It was everyone's war.



PART:4

#WHISPERS

The First Betrayal

It did not come with thunder. It came with a smile. A minor noble from Marwar, Kunwar Raghuvar Singh, had long felt invisible. He had fought at Khanwa. He had bled beside Rao Maldeo. But at court, he was offered no post, no title, no land. Only thanks.

And thanks, he believed, was the coin of fools. He had debts. Enemies. A wife who would not speak to him, and a father who had once called him 'excess baggage.' So, when the silver came, stacked in a caravan chest under false sandalwood, he took it. Not out of greed. Out of hunger. He slipped into the corridors of Chittorgarh with a message from Agra. A small thing: maps of supply routes, false alarms planted in war council scrolls. But the damage was quiet and deep. A Mewar garrison moved too late. A Deccan supply chain was ambushed near Khandwa. Four commanders died. And for a moment, the Sabha turned on itself. Rao Balwant blamed Vijayanagar intelligence. Prithviraj of Amber accused Maldeo of withholding men. Voices rose. The Sabha fractured into words sharper than steel. But then came the letter.

The Silence

It began not with a sword, but with silence. In the border town of Kumbharia, where the Aravallis dip into the salt plains of Gujarat, a patrol caravan vanished. No signs of blood. No cries. Just the echo of hoofprints ending in sand. Three days later, a trader loyal to Bikaner was found outside a garrison, tongue cut, hands bound in silk.

A message. In Chittorgarh, the Rajput Sangh convened in urgency. Maps were unfurled. Messengers dispatched. Rao Maldeo believed it was a Mughal test. But Prithviraj disagreed. "No imperial coin was found.

No Mughal pattern in the binding. This wasn't Babur. This was one of us." Sangha said nothing at first. He knew. The whisper had become a wound. The first betrayal had come not from a sword across the border, but from a soul within the Sabha. That night, under the flickering oil lamps of his private chamber, Sangha stood beside Karnavati. Her presence was quiet, but constant. "It begins," he said. "Then so shall we," she replied. By dawn, ten emissaries were riding. Not to the enemy, but to allies. Not to command, but to listen. And in the shadows, the hunt for the traitor had begun.

A Celebration of Hope and Renewal

Easter, celebrated by Christians worldwide, marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ and symbolizes hope, rebirth, and new beginnings. Falling on a Sunday between March and April, Easter follows Good Friday and is the highlight of Holy Week. The day is celebrated with joyful church services, vibrant processions, and family feasts. Colourful eggs, a symbol of new life, are exchanged and hunted by children in playful traditions. In India, Easter brings communities together with candlelit prayers and festive meals. More than a religious event, Easter is a universal reminder that light always follows darkness, and spring always follows winter.



They began with the Fringe

Bikaner, Jaisalmer, and the desert outposts were watched closely. Letters were read in mirror ink, alliances tested over ceremonial wine. The Deccan lords were interrogated not with questions, but with absence. Invitations stopped arriving. Silence spoke volumes.

It was not long before suspicion fell on Raja Udaykaran of Dungarpur. He had long been bitter about his seat in the Sabha, a minor vote among giants. His coffers had been strained from months of unpaid troop upkeep. And two months earlier, his second son had vanished under mysterious circumstances. Some said the boy was taken to Agra. Rao Balwant wanted immediate action. "Strip him of command," he said. "Let one betrayal be punished in full sight."

But Sangha raised his hand. "If we punish a brother without proof, we sow more fear than unity." It was Karnavati who proposed a different path. "Invite him to Chittorgarh," she said. "Honour him. Let him taste the power he thinks he's denied. And then, let him speak." A royal invitation was sent. When the scroll arrived from Chittorgarh, he near-



ly burned it. But men who have crossed a line rarely stop walking, unless someone offers a way back. And so, under banners of peace, Raja Udaykaran arrived in Chittorgarh. The fort welcomed him with garlands and music, but its walls watched with sharpened silence. On the third day, as the Sabha gathered in the Hall of Mirrors, Sangha turned to him and asked only one question. "Why has your silence grown louder than your voice?" Udaykaran trembled. It was not the question. It was the fact that he had no lie ready. He had not meant to betray them, only to be seen. But somewhere between silence and ambition, he had wandered too far from his own voice.

Shifting Shadows

Betrayal does not echo like thunder. It seeps like damp into stone. The Rajput Sangh did not fall apart. Not yet. But something unspoken settled between its members, a hesitation, a second glance, the quiet weighing of every word.

In the weeks that followed Udaykaran's unmasking, no ruler resigned. No kingdoms withdrew. Yet in the corridors of Chittorgarh, the old laughter dulled. Scribes began keeping two ledgers, one official, one private. Meetings grew shorter. Eyes met less. Sangha watched it all. He did not rage. He did not command. He simply began walking the fort each night, pausing by the barracks, the kitchens, the outer ramparts. Listening. Karnavati walked

with him on most nights. On others, she remained in the zenana, coordinating quiet inquiries of her own.

One evening, she found Sangha staring at the moonlit tiles of the Sabha Hall. "The wound isn't the betrayal," he said. "It's that I look at old friends and wonder who else is waiting to be seen."

Karnavati sat beside him, unwrapping a parcel. Inside were handwoven anklets from a Rajputani widow in Kumbharia, the same village where the patrol disappeared. "No one noticed her," Karnavati said. "But she noticed everything." They pored over the beads and knots, finding coded threads. It was not treason, but it was warning. The whispers had not stopped. They had simply shifted.

In the Shadows, Babur waited

He had learned what he needed. That the Sabha was strong, but not uncrackable. He changed tactics. No more assassins. No more messages. Now, he sent envoys to smaller courts with promises of autonomy. He promised poets land, general glory, and exiles forgiveness. He played on longing. "Tell them," he said, "the road back to Delhi is paved not

with war, but with forgotten songs." And in Bikaner, in Jalore, even in parts of Bundi, the seeds took root. Not all would bloom. But Babur knew this: sometimes, shadows move before the storm. And in Rajputana, the winds had begun to shift.

To be continued...

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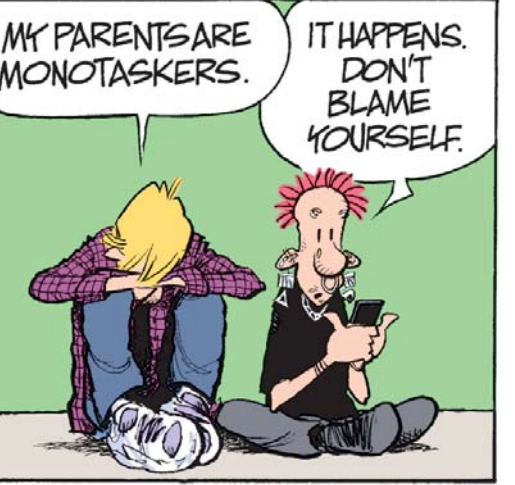


By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES

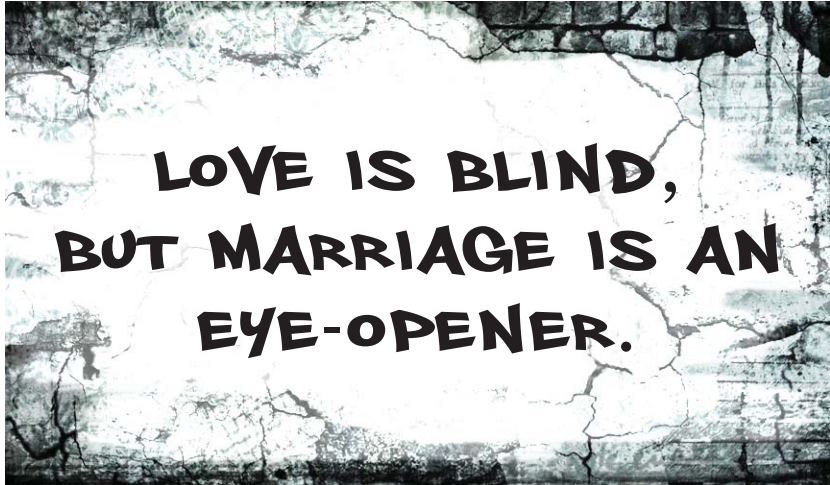


ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



#KETTLE TALES

From Persia to Parle-G: The Enduring Legacy of Irani Chai

How a Persian brew found its forever home in Indian hearts, one creamy cup at a time!



Walk into any Irani café in India, and you're instantly transported. Not just to another place, but to another era. One where marble-topped tables, sepia-toned walls, and the smell of strong, sweet chai conspire to whisper tales of migration, adaptation, and a love affair that began in Persia and bloomed in India.

But how did Irani chai become such a beloved brew in Indian hearts? Let's rewind.



A Sip of History

Irani chai first simmered into Indian culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Zoroastrians and Iranians fled persecution and economic hardships in Persia (modern-day Iran). They arrived mostly in the port cities of Bombay and the princely state of Hyderabad. With them, they brought not just their dreams, but also a unique tea tradition that would

soon warm the country's soul. Unlike the milky masala chai popular across India, Irani chai came with its own drama, boiled separately as thick milk and a strong tea decoction, then brought together in perfect harmony in a cup. No spices, no ginger, no fuss. Just rich, velvety tea, often served in petite white cups with saucers, and always with a side of nostalgia.



Chai with Character (and Bun Maska)

Now, you can't talk Irani chai without its partners-in-crime: bun maska, khari biscuits, and Osmania biscuits. It's practically illegal (okay, not really, but emotionally, yes) to sip that creamy chai without dunking something into it. Walk into Hyderabad's legendary Café Niloufer, or Mumbai's Yazdani Bakery, and

you'll spot the old-school charm, metal kettles, handwritten menus, and regulars who've been sipping from the same table for decades. Each café has its own recipe, closely guarded like a family heirloom. What they all have in common, though, is the experience: chai that doesn't just wake you up, it hugs you from the inside.

What Makes It 'Irani?'

Good question. It's not just about ingredients, it's about attitude. Irani chai is made by slow-brewing premium tea leaves into a decoction that's thick and potent. Simultaneously, whole milk is boiled down until it's rich, some-

times nearly creamy. Only then are they mixed, with just the right amount of sugar, to create that signature bold-yet-silky finish. Unlike the masala-filled punch of regular chai, Irani chai offers a gentler but deeper flavour. It's less spice, more soul.



The Café Culture That Came With It

Irani chai isn't just a beverage, it's the beating heart of an entire café culture. These cafes, often modest, always charming, were among the first public places in cities like Mumbai and Hyderabad where people of all classes, castes, and religions could sit together.

Writers found inspiration there. Filmmakers found characters. Couples found a quiet corner in the midst of chaos. For many, it was less about the tea, and more about the freedom to linger. Today, while some Irani cafes have shuttered under the pressure of real estate and modern coffee chains, many still stand proudly, like stubborn, sweet-scented time machines.

A Global Hug in a Cup

As the diaspora spreads, Irani chai has travelled too, now served in trendy tearooms in London, food festivals in Dubai, and Instagrammable cafes in Bengaluru. But the essence remains the same: slow-steeped, quietly bold, and always served with a sense of belonging.

Final Sip

In an age of quick fixes and faster coffee machines, Irani chai reminds us to slow down. To savour. To sit. To chat. Maybe even to read a newspaper without swiping. From Persia's deserts to India's bustling streets, this chai has not just survived, it has thrived. So, the next time you sip on an Irani chai, know this, you're not just drinking tea, you're drinking history!