



Celebrating Responsible Travel

World Tourism Day, celebrated on September 27 each year, emphasizes the role of tourism in fostering cultural exchange, economic growth, and global unity. Established by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the day highlights the importance of making travel responsible, sustainable, and accessible to all. Tourism connects people, supports livelihoods, and promotes understanding across diverse communities. However, it must also safeguard the environment and respect local cultures. On this day, governments, industry leaders, and travelers are reminded to work together in creating a tourism model that balances exploration with conservation, ensuring its benefits for generations to come.

#MAHABHARATA

Dambhodhbhava and the Birth of Karna

Surya appeared before him and told him that everything that is born must eventually die. Dambhodhbhava then asked for another form of protection...



In the great assembly of King Dhritrashtra in Hastinapura, the story of Dambhodhbhava and Parashurama reveals a profound truth about power, pride, penance, and destiny. Dambhodhbhava was a mighty king, but his greatest weakness was his ignorance. He believed that his strength made him invincible, and he desperately wanted to find an enemy powerful enough to defeat him. Driven by pride, he traveled to Badrikashrama, where two great sages, Nara and Narayana, were deep in meditation. Instead of respecting the sages, Dambhodhbhava attacked them with his army. The sages did not respond with an army of their own. One of them simply picked up a blade of grass. Through the power of his penance, that single blade transformed into thousands of weapons and destroyed Dambhodhbhava's entire army. Dambhodhbhava finally understood that true power does not always come from weapons or armies. It can arise from discipline, knowledge, and years of penance. He then turned to Surya, the Sun God, and performed severe penance, seeking immortality. Surya appeared before him and told him that everything that is born must eventually die. Dambhodhbhava then asked for another form of

protection. He received a remarkable boon: a thousand protective armours, known as *Sahasra Kavacha*. Only one armour could be broken at a time. However, the person who broke an armour would die after doing so, and only someone who had performed penance for a thousand years would possess the strength to attempt it. Dambhodhbhava became known as *Sahasrakavacha* and returned to challenge Nara and Narayana. The two sages fought him in turns. While one sage fought for a thousand years, the other remained in meditation. When the fighting sage died after breaking one armour, the meditating sage revived him, and they continued the battle. One by one, 999 armours were destroyed. Realising that only one armour remained, Dambhodhbhava fled to Surya for protection. The conflict came to an end, but the story did not. According to this traditional narrative, Dambhodhbhava was later reborn as Karna, the son of Surya. Nara and Narayana were likewise reborn in the Mahabharata tradition as Arjuna and Krishna. Thus, the ancient story connects the events of the Mahabharata with an older cycle of penance, divine protection, and rebirth. It reminds us that physical power may create fear, but spiritual strength, knowledge, and destiny can shape the course of history.



In emerging conflicts, disrupting critical logistics infrastructure is often more strategically effective than conducting a conventional military invasion. Modern economies depend on uninterrupted trade and energy flows, making maritime chokepoints particularly attractive targets in hybrid warfare.

BAB AL-MANDAB THE NEW CARD IN THE WAR



Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (RETD)

The Houthis current offensive has its focus on the Bab Al-Mandab Strait that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Even though an Iranian spokesperson has said that the Houthis are independent and do not take orders from anyone, but most analysts are aware that they remain an Iranian proxy. There is no doubt that the Memorandum of Misunderstanding and the recent rise in tensions in the Gulf have led to the Iranians to apply pressure elsewhere. The centre of gravity identified being Bab Al-Mandab, the narrow channel connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, which is a crucial route for global shipping and energy supplies. Also known as the Gate of Tears, it is barely 30 kms at its narrowest and sees roughly 12 percent of global maritime trade pass through every day, while at least 90 percent of Europe-Asia internet capacity runs through cables laid along the same route. Iran's proxies, be it the Hamas, Hezbollah or Houthis have always offered Iran the advantage of plausible deniability. Iran can claim that they act on their own. However, it has been reported that senior leaders from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps traveled to Sanaa to support the group. The capture of Mokka and the closing in on Bab Al-

The renewed fighting comes at a particularly volatile moment in the region. As the Houthis and Saudi Arabia directly exchange blows once again, they do so amid an intensifying Iran-US confrontation. On 11 September, the Houthis captured Perim, a strategic island in the Bab Al-Mandab, and have also captured Dhubab, a Red Sea coastal town facing Perim and Greater and Lesser Hanish. This has opened the possibility of them capturing territory overlooking the chokepoint. This would not only strengthen their position in Yemen...

Mandab is part of a pattern of Iran's escalation against Washington, while targeting Saudi Arabia.

Yemen

In 2022, however, the Ansarullah movement, also known as the Houthis war in Yemen, remained largely frozen since a UN-brokered truce halted major fighting and has now launched a major offensive on the country's Western coast. The UN has estimated that more than 80,000 people have been displaced in the past two weeks, including over 2,000 people who fled by boat to Djibouti. The fighting has reignited a war that, for more than a decade, brought disaster to Yemen, killing more than 150,000 people and driving the country to the brink of famine. Since 2014, the Houthis have controlled the North, including the capital, Sanaa, and much of the Western heartland of the country where most of the population is

#WAR GAMES



Houthi attacks in the Bab Al-Mandab.

located. The internationally recognized government, backed by an array of disparate militias, controls the South and East, including the key port of Aden. Meanwhile, the Houthis used the period of relative calm following the 2022 truce to retrain, rearm, recruit, improve domestic weapons production and expand their missile and drone capabilities. As a result, the Houthis now have more advanced capabilities than government forces in several areas. The Ansarullah movement already possesses the ability to threaten commercial vessels using missiles and drones, but gaining control of territory and coastline near the Strait would give it additional and potentially more effective options. A direct fallout will be Iran gaining greater leverage in the wider regional crisis. Djibouti is approximately 20 kilometres from Perim Island. This places the Houthis with their drone, missile and maritime capabilities extremely close to a country that hosts US, Chinese, French, Italian and Japanese military bases. The Houthis benefited from surprise and military preparation. But the offensive also exposed the fragmentation of the anti-Houthi forces which include a variety of autonomous armed groups, who were previously supported by different regional patrons and had com-

peting political ambitions even as Saudi Arabia has tried to bring them under a more coherent command structure since early 2026. Meanwhile, the Houthis used the period of relative calm following the 2022 truce to retrain, rearm, recruit, improve domestic weapons production and expand their missile and drone capabilities. As a result, the Houthis now have more advanced capabilities than government forces in several areas. The Ansarullah movement already possesses the ability to threaten commercial vessels using missiles and drones, but gaining control of territory and coastline near the Strait would give it additional and potentially more effective options. A direct fallout will be Iran gaining greater leverage in the wider regional crisis. Djibouti is approximately 20 kilometres from Perim Island. This places the Houthis with their drone, missile and maritime capabilities extremely close to a country that hosts US, Chinese, French, Italian and Japanese military bases. The Houthis benefited from surprise and military preparation. But the offensive also exposed the fragmentation of the anti-Houthi forces which include a variety of autonomous armed groups, who were previously supported by different regional patrons and had com-

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Modern economies depend on uninterrupted trade and energy flows, making maritime chokepoints particularly attractive targets in hybrid warfare. Iran played the Strait of Hormuz card early in the war and saw the advantages. Has it now decided to play yet another of its Trump Cards? Iran and its proxies now have the capacity to exert pressure on two of the world's most strategically important maritime chokepoints. These have now become part of the same strategic equation rather than separate security challenges.

Salman, and the US retains a fundamental interest in Saudi security. At the same time, Washington has strong incentives to avoid reopening a direct war with the Houthis. The Houthis equally do not want a repeat of the US airstrikes which caused serious damage. This creates a peculiar situation: Washington and the Houthis both have reasons to avoid attacking one another, even while the Houthis increase pressure on one of the US's closest regional partners. However, this equilibrium may not hold if the Houthis escalate attacks on Saudi territory and Washington could find itself pulled towards confrontation. Further, Iran is wanting to put pressure on President Donald Trump, before the midterm elections. Tension in crucial global arteries will push up the price of crude, which will negatively affect the popularity of Trump and the Republicans. If the Republicans lose both the House of Representatives

and the Senate, the entire war could be brought into question. It could also lead to investigations into the war by Congress. Though, President Trump could exercise his executive powers to continue operations against Iran. But navigating a hostile political ecosystem to bring the conflict to a close will be challenging. In emerging conflicts, disrupting critical logistics infrastructure is often more strategically effective than conducting a conventional military invasion. Modern economies depend on uninterrupted trade and energy flows, making maritime chokepoints particularly attractive targets in hybrid warfare. Iran played the Strait of Hormuz card early in the war and saw the advantages. Has it now decided to play yet another of its Trump Cards? Iran and its proxies now have the capacity to exert pressure on two of the world's most strategically important maritime chokepoints. These have now become part of the same strategic equation rather than separate security challenges. For now, the Houthis are converting military momentum into political and economic leverage without provoking an international response large enough to reverse their gains. But can Yemen be treated as a distant theatre? The battle for Bab Al-Mandab is therefore a test of whether the conflict will enter another cycle of regional military escalation or whether the parties can use existing diplomatic frameworks to prevent a return to another open-ended conflict. The crisis in Yemen therefore needs to be contained as the stakes reach far beyond its borders.

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Iran reportedly signals Houthis to block Bab Al-Mandab.

#BAWAN BUTI

The Saree Named After 52 Motifs

When people think of Bihar's artistic traditions, they may immediately think of Bhagalpuri silk or Madhubani. But Bawan Buti deserves a place in that conversation

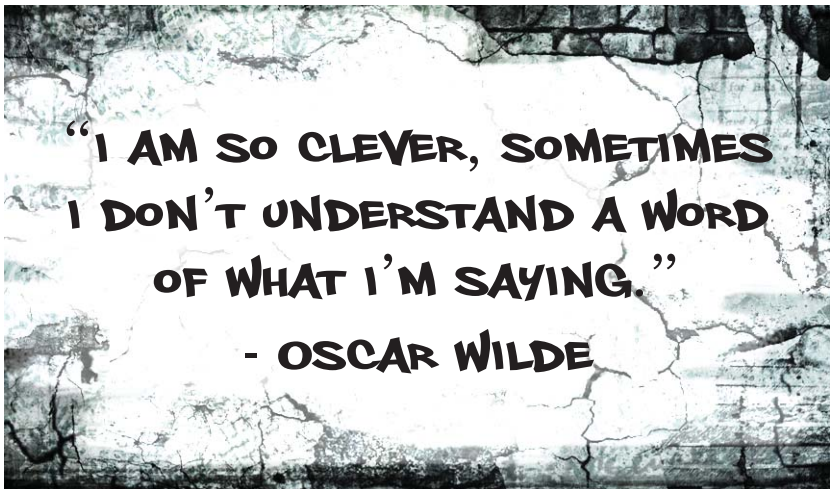


India has a saree tradition whose very name is connected to a number: 52. It is called *Bawan Buti*, a distinctive weaving tradition from Nalanda, Bihar, becomes more than a piece of clothing. Its small repeated motifs carry fragments of the landscape, religious traditions and artistic heritage of the place where it was made. The craft almost disappeared For generations, Bawan Buti was an important part of Bihar's textile heritage. But changing tastes, industrially produced textiles and declining demand put enormous pressure on the traditional craft. By the middle of the 20th century, the weaving tradition was in serious danger of disappearing. Then came an important figure in its revival: Upendra Maharathi, an artist, designer and cultural figure who worked extensively to promote traditional Indian crafts. Maharathi

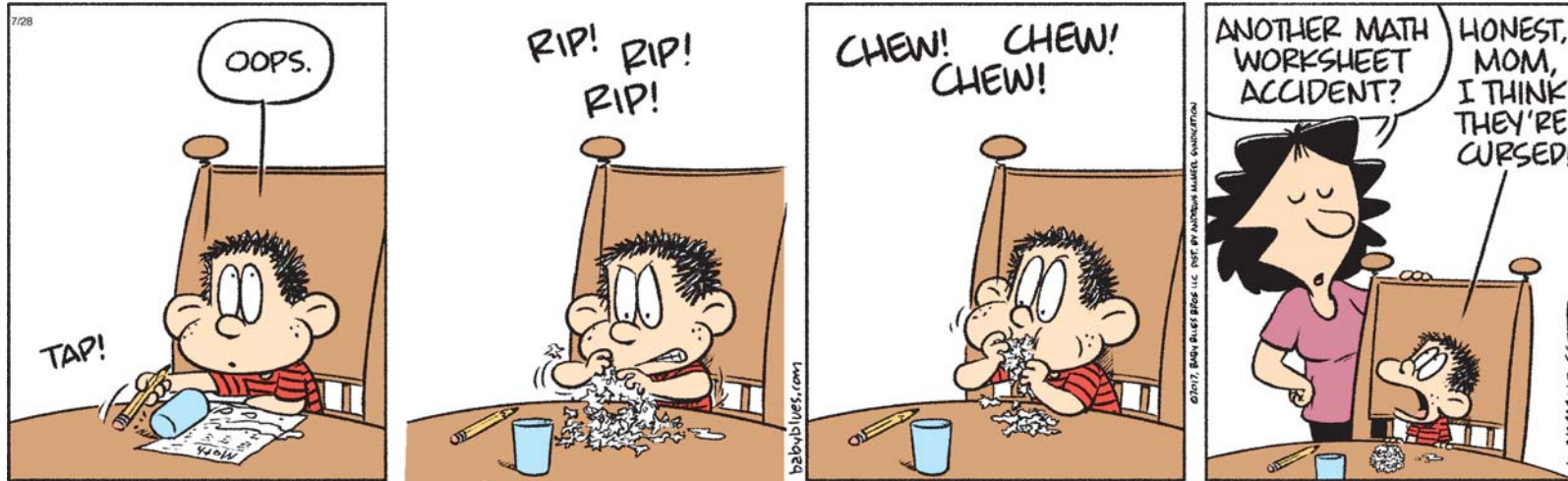
played a significant role in encouraging the revival and development of Bawan Buti. He helped bring new attention to the tradition and encouraged experimentation with its motifs and designs. The idea was not simply to preserve the saree exactly as it had existed in the past, but to help the craft adapt and remain relevant. New motifs were introduced, designs evolved and efforts were made to reconnect the tradition with contemporary audiences. A second revival By the early 21st century, Bawan Buti was receiving renewed attention. Weavers, designers, cultural organizations and craft enthusiasts began working to bring the tradition back into wider public consciousness. The revival was important because traditional weaving does not survive simply by keeping an old design in a museum. It survives when people continue to wear it, buy it, teach it and create it. Today, Bawan Buti remains a relatively lesser-known part of India's enormous textile heritage. When people think of Bihar's artistic traditions, they may immediately think of Bhagalpuri silk or Madhubani painting. But Bawan Buti deserves a place in that conversation. Because hidden within its delicate motifs is a story about Bihar itself, its rivers, nature, religious traditions, symbols and memories. And perhaps, that is what makes this saree so special. It doesn't just carry a pattern. It carries a place.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman