

#MEGHADOOT

The Nurturer The Bearer

The Cloud's Sacred Journey
of love and beauty!



In the celebrated Sanskrit poem Meghadoot, Kalidasa beautifully narrates the journey of a cloud entrusted with a heartfelt message from a separated Yaksha to his distant beloved. The poem not only explores themes of love and longing but also richly describes the sacred and picturesque geography the cloud traverses.

The Yaksha instructs the cloud to travel through all the beautiful and pleasant places, lush forests, flowing rivers, and the abodes of living beings, spreading life-giving rain. He urges the cloud to undertake this journey with care, as it carries the immortal (amrita) message of love, यव तवैव रम्ये जेजन्मन्तर्नि कावर्तनि च सत्त्वानामात्मानं चैव रवी प्रवेद्येक्षतम्॥

This verse highlights the cloud's sacred mission to nurture life and deliver love, emphasizing the vitality and spiritual significance of its path.

One of the most revered landmarks along the cloud's route is the Amarakantak mountain, described in vivid and poetic terms. Kalidasa portrays Amarakantak as a serene and majestic peak, likened to the moon resting on a lotus, enveloped in a blue sky-like hue and adorned with blossoming lotuses:

साम्पाय्याहङ्गुमिश्राभयः सोमश्च
द्वय नीलजम्।
अमरकान्तकं पयोधपलाङ्गुनिभम्
नीलान्वरम्॥

Further celebrating its



Hamas Starves Secret System Of Payment Dread And Death

● Kshema Jatuhkarna

Hamas has said it is open to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delivering aid to Israeli captives in Gaza after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that he requested the Geneva-based international organisation to step in. People are starving, and dying. Israeli people are now reportedly worrying about captured citizens, as they are starving along with the Gazans. Amidst all this chaos, which the world has shifted its attention from, watching the new tariff war, there are some stories left to be told from Gaza.

After nearly two years of war, Hamas's military capability is severely weakened and its political leadership under intense pressure. Yet, throughout the war, Hamas has managed to continue to use a secret cash-based payment system to pay 30,000 civil servants' salaries totalling \$7m (£5.3m).

The BBC has spoken to three civil servants who have confirmed they have received nearly \$300 each within the last week. It's believed they are among tens of thousands of employees who have continued to receive a maximum of just over 20% of their pre-war salary every 10 weeks.

Amid soaring inflation, the token salary, a fraction of the full amount, is causing rising resentment among the party faithful. Severe food shortages, which aid agencies' blame on Israeli restrictions, and rising cases of acute malnutrition continue in Gaza, where a kilogramme of flour in recent weeks has cost as much as \$80, an all-time high.

With no functioning banking system in Gaza, even receiving the salary is complex, and at times, dangerous. Israel regularly identifies and targets Hamas salary distributors, seeking to disrupt the group's ability to govern. Employees, from police officers to tax officials, often receive an encrypted message on their own phones or their spouses' instructing them to go to a specific location at a specific time to 'meet a friend for tea.'

Alaa, whose name we have changed to protect his identity, is a schoolteacher employed by the Hamas-run government and the sole provider for a family of six. "I received 1,000 shekels (about \$300) in worn-out banknotes, no trader



would accept them. Only 200 shekels were usable, the rest, I honestly don't know what to do with. After two-and-a-half months of hunger, they pay us in tattered cash."

"I'm often forced to go to aid distribution points in the hope of getting some flour to feed my children. Sometimes I succeed in bringing home a little, but most of the time I fail." In March, the Israeli military said they had killed the head of Hamas's finances, Ismail Barhoum, in a strike on Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis. They accused him of channelling funds to Hamas's military wing.

One senior Hamas employee, who served in high positions and is familiar with Hamas's financial operations, told the BBC that the group had stockpiled approximately \$700m in cash and hundreds of millions of shekels in underground tunnels prior to the group's deadly 7 October 2023 attack in southern Israel, which sparked the devastating Israeli military campaign. These were allegedly overseen directly by Hamas leader Yahya

At the meeting point, the employee is approached by a man, or occasionally a woman, who discreetly hands over a sealed envelope containing the money before vanishing without further interaction.

An employee at the Hamas Ministry of Religious Affairs, who doesn't want to give his name for safety reasons, described the dangers involved in collecting his wages. "Every time I go to pick up my salary, I say goodbye to my wife and children. I know that I may not return," he said. "On several occasions, Israeli strikes have hit the salary distribution points. I survived one that targeted a busy market in Gaza City."

Alaa, whose name we have changed to protect his identity, is a schoolteacher employed by the Hamas-run government and the sole provider for a family of six. "I received 1,000 shekels (about \$300) in worn-out banknotes, no trader



Sinwar and his brother Mohammed, both of whom have since been killed by Israeli forces.

Hamas Supporters

Hamas has historically relied on funding from heavy import duties and taxes imposed on Gaza's population, as well as receiving millions of dollars of support from Qatar. The Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing which operates through a separate financial system, is financed mainly by Iran. A senior official from the banned Egypt-based Muslim Brotherhood has said that around 10% of their budget was also directed to Hamas.

In order to generate revenue during the war, Hamas has also continued to levy taxes on traders and has sold large quantities of cigarettes at inflated prices up to 100 times their original cost. Before the war, a box of 20 cigarettes cost \$5, that has now risen to more than \$170.

In addition to cash payments,

In addition to cash payments, Hamas has distributed food parcels to its members and their families via local emergency committees whose leadership is frequently rotated due to repeated Israeli strikes. That has fuelled public anger, with many residents in Gaza accusing Hamas of distributing aid only to its supporters and excluding the wider population. Israel has accused Hamas of stealing aid that has entered Gaza during the ceasefire earlier this year, something Hamas denies. However, BBC sources in Gaza have said that significant quantities of aid were taken by Hamas during this time. Nisreen Khaled, a widow left caring for three children after her husband died of cancer five years ago, told the BBC: "When the hunger worsened, my children were crying not only from pain but also from watching our Hamas-affiliated neighbours receive food parcels and sacks of flour."

Lights, Camera, Celebrate!

logging Day celebrates the art of sharing life, stories, and passions through video. Observed on August 10, it honours the creators who turn everyday moments into engaging content, whether it's travel adventures, daily routines, beauty tutorials, or food diaries. Vlogging has transformed how we connect, learn, and entertain ourselves in the digital age. It's not just about holding a camera; it's about storytelling, creativity, and community. Whether you're a seasoned vlogger or just getting started, today is a great time to hit record, share your voice, and join a global movement of digital expression.



Hamas has historically relied on funding from heavy import duties and taxes imposed on Gaza's population, as well as receiving millions of dollars of support from Qatar. The Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing which operates through a separate financial system, is financed mainly by Iran. A senior official from the banned Egypt-based Muslim Brotherhood has said that around 10% of their budget was also directed to Hamas.

Hamas has distributed food parcels to its members and their families via local emergency committees whose leadership is frequently rotated due to repeated Israeli strikes.

That has fuelled public anger, with many residents in Gaza accusing Hamas of distributing aid only to its supporters and excluding the wider population. Israel has accused Hamas of stealing aid that has entered Gaza during the ceasefire earlier this year, something Hamas denies. However, BBC sources in Gaza have said that significant quantities of aid were taken by Hamas during this time.

Nisreen Khaled, a widow left caring for three children after her husband died of cancer five years ago, told the BBC: "When the hunger worsened, my children were crying not only from pain but also from watching our Hamas-affiliated neighbours receive food parcels and sacks of flour."

"Are they not the reason for our suffering? Why didn't they secure food, water, and medicine before

launching their 7 October adventure?" In a post on X, Netanyahu wrote in Hebrew that he told Larson that Hamas was propagating a "lie of starvation" in the enclave, but the reality was that "systematic starvation is being carried out against our hostages." Later, on Sunday, the spokesman for the Qassam Brigades, Hamas's armed wing, said in a statement that Israeli captives held in Gaza "eat what our fighters and all our people eat."

"They will not receive any special privilege amid the crime of starvation and siege," the spokesman, known as Abu Obeida, said. But, he added, the group is "ready to act positively and respond to any request from the Red Cross to deliver food and medicine to enemy prisoners." In order for requests to aid captives to be accepted, "humanitarian corridors must be opened in a normal and permanent manner



for the passage of food and medicine to all our people in all areas of the Gaza Strip," Abu Obeida said.

Israeli attacks "of all forms must cease during the receipt of packages for the prisoners," he added.

The ICRC said in a statement on Sunday that it was "appalled by the harrowing videos" of the captives held in Gaza and reiterated its call to be "granted access to the hostages. These videos are stark evidence of the life-threatening conditions in which the hostages are being held," the ICRC said in the statement shared on X.

On its website, the ICRC says that "securing access requires the cooperation of all parties involved." The ICRC also says on its website that it "has not been able to visit any Palestinian detainees held in Israeli places of detention since 7 October 2023."

Meanwhile, the families of Israeli captives held in Gaza said on Sunday that Netanyahu's continued insistence that a 'military resolution' was the only solution was "a direct danger to the lives of our sons, who live in the hell of tunnels and are threatened by starvation and immediate death."

"For 22 months, the public has been sold the illusion that military pressure will bring back the hostages, and today, even before reaching a comprehensive draft agreement, it is said that an agreement is futile," the families said in a statement.

There are about 50 captives still in Gaza. Fewer than half are believed to be still alive.

The latest developments come as the Government Media Office in Gaza said that Israeli authorities allowed just 36 aid trucks to enter the Gaza Strip on Saturday, while 22,000 aid trucks continue to sit outside the Strip waiting to bring much-needed food to Palestinians there.

At least 175 people, including 93 children, have now been confirmed dead from forced starvation, according to the territory's Ministry of Health, including 17-year-old Atef Abu Khater, whose weight had dropped to just 25 kg (55lbs) before he died on Saturday.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

#DIETS

Can We Drink Milk!

Why some Indians can digest dairy and others can't: A Genetic and Cultural Divide



A recent wave of interest has emerged around a long-standing mystery: why some Indians can gulp down a glass of milk without issue, while others suffer bloating, cramps, or worse. Scientists say the answer lies in a mix of ancient DNA, migration patterns, and centuries of culinary evolution.

A Genetic Quirk That Changed Human History

Humans are the only mammals that continue drinking milk after infancy, and even that is unusual. For most mammals, the production of lactase, the enzyme needed to digest lactose (milk sugar), shuts down after weaning. The result? Lactose intolerance in adulthood. However, around

7,500 years ago, a genetic mutation occurred in human populations living in what is now Europe. A single-letter change in the LCT gene allowed some people to keep producing lactase into adulthood. This mutation gave them a nutritional edge in dairying societies, helping the gene spread rapidly in pastoralist communities.

India's Genetic Patchwork: Who Can Drink Milk?

A large-scale genetic study tested DNA from over 2,000 individuals across 106 Indian populations, searching for this exact mutation. The results show a dramatic regional divide.

- In Punjab, Haryana, and parts of Rajasthan, 40-70% of people carry the mutation for lactase persistence, meaning they can digest milk well into adulthood.
- In Odisha, Bengal, and much of South India, the numbers plummet to just 2-4%.

The frequency map shows a northwest-to-southeast gradient: the ability to digest dairy is highest near the Pakistan border and declines sharply moving east and south.

Interestingly, herding communities maintain much higher frequencies of the gene compared to their agricultural neighbours. For instance, the Ror herders of Haryana show 49% lactase persistence, while nearby farming groups often fall below 10%.

The Role of Ancestry and Migration

Experts believe this pattern reflects ancient migrations. Northwest India has significant ancestry from Steppe pastoralists, people who herded cattle and likely brought the lactase persistence gene with them. In contrast, southern and eastern India have more Ancestral South Indian (ASI) heritage,

where the mutation is rare or absent.

"These regional genetic differences help explain why dairy plays such a central role in North Indian cuisine and culture, while in the East and South, it's often processed into forms that are easier to digest," said a geneticist involved in the study.

Culinary Workarounds and Cultural Wisdom

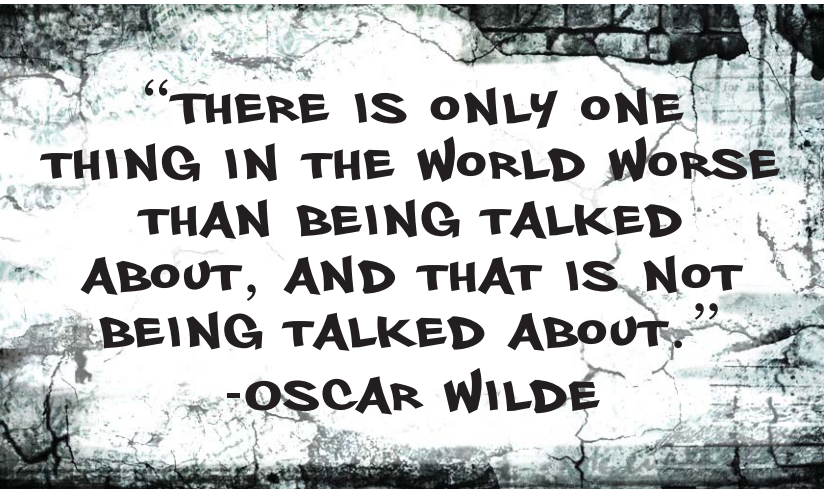
In regions where lactose intolerance is high, local cuisines evolved to adapt. A user on social media recently pointed out that in Odisha and Bengal, pure milk is less common in daily diets. Instead, people consume chenna-based sweets, curd, rabdi (sweetened condensed milk), and burnt ghee.

These are fermented or heat-treated dairy products, which break down much of the lactose, making them more digestible for lactose-intolerant populations. There's even speculation that the traditionally non-vegetarian, seafood-rich diets of eastern states reduced the community's reliance on milk as a source of protein, allowing the intolerance to persist without much consequence.

A Country Divided -By Dairy

While internet users from Haryana and Punjab proudly celebrate their region's dairy dominance ('Jaatland for a reason,' joked one), the broader takeaway is more complex. The Indian subcontinent represents a living case study of how genetics, environment, migration, and culture shape something as simple, and essential, as what we eat and how our bodies react to it.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman