



Fur-Free Friday: Championing Compassion Over Fashion

Fur-Free Friday, observed on the day after Thanksgiving, is a global movement dedicated to raising awareness about animal cruelty in the fur industry. On this day, activists and animal lovers unite to advocate for ethical, cruelty-free fashion choices. Through peaceful protests, social media campaigns, and educational drives, the event urges brands and consumers alike to reject real fur and embrace sustainable, humane alternatives. More than a campaign, Fur-Free Friday is a call for compassion, reminding the world that true style never comes at the cost of another creature's suffering.

#SCULPTURE

The Story of an Ancient Roman Goat

The work exemplifies the Roman fascination with both realism and ideal beauty



In the quiet poise of marble, one of the most unexpected stars of ancient Roman sculpture takes shape, a resting goat, captured in stone with both tenderness and vitality. This remarkable piece, on view at the Kimbell Art Museum in the exhibition ‘Myth and Marble: Ancient Roman Sculpture from the Torlonia Collection’, offers an intimate look at how Roman artists, and later, their Baroque admirers, infused even humble creatures with grace and grandeur.

An Ancient Work Re-imagined

Titled ‘Statue of a Resting Goat,’ the sculpture dates to the Imperial Period, Trajanic Era (late 1st century CE). The work exemplifies the Roman fascination with both realism and ideal beauty. Romans often copied and adapted Greek originals, but this piece goes further, blending naturalistic anatomy with serene composure that makes the animal feel almost human in its stillness.

What makes this goat especially intriguing is its dual authorship across time. The body of the statue is ancient Roman, but the head was later reworked and attributed to none other than Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1698-1680), the Baroque master sculptor who brought marble to life with an unmatched sense of motion and emotion. Bernini’s addition bridges two worlds: the classical past and the exuberant Baroque era, showing how Rome’s artistic legacy was never static, but constantly reinterpreted.

The Torlonia Collection

The piece belongs to the Torlonia Collection, one of the most important private collections of ancient sculpture in the world. Assembled by the wealthy Torlonia family in the 18th and 19th centuries, the collection preserves hundreds of Roman masterpieces that have rarely been seen outside Italy, making this exhibition a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for museumgoers.



The Goat as Symbol

In Roman art, animals were far more than decorative motifs. The goat, in particular, carried symbolic resonance, linked to rustic life, fertility, and the wild god Pan, whose half-goat form embodied the untamed forces of nature. In this sculpture, though, the goat rests, its wildness subdued, its pose calm and contemplative, as if it has found harmony between nature and civilization.

Curatorial Insight

Jennifer Casler Price, senior curator of Asian, African, and Ancient American Art at the Kimbell, notes how such works reveal the deep dialogue between past and present that defines Roman sculpture. “Even something as modest as a resting goat,” she explains, “can show us the Romans’ extraordinary ability to observe, reinterpret, and elevate the natural world.”

Visit ‘Myth and Marble’

“Myth and Marble: Ancient Roman Sculpture from the Torlonia Collection” is on view at the Kimbell Art Museum through January 25. The exhibition gathers over 90 masterpieces, from emperors and gods to animals like this remarkable goat, each one testifying to the enduring power of classical art to speak across millennia.

Ni'mat Khan's garden of triangles



Traditionally, medieval gardens have been viewed as spaces for elite enjoyment, social gatherings, relaxation and exchange of ideas. And this ideology is not only restricted to those enjoying the floral ecstasies of mother nature, but even in the landscape planning. Garden design in the period often employed trends such as astrology, geomancy, magic and numerology to enhance the experience and impact of such sensory spaces. So seriously were these factors regarded that, according to a 16th century text, a massive garden in the kingdom of Ahmednagar (present-day Maharashtra) was redone just because of triangles.

Ni'mat Khan, a courtier under Murtaza Nizam Shah I in the Indian subcontinent's Deccan region, was ordered to construct a garden and a subterranean canal. The noble immediately occupied himself with the task at hand and, according to Tabatabai, a Nizam Shahi historian who wrote about the incident in AD 1576, ‘after a few days, such a garden and edifices were built that the highest paradise melted in the fire of envy.’ The garden was named Farah Bakhsh (Joy Bestowing), adjacent to the Farah Bakhsh Palace.

Farah Bakhsh, however, failed to please the Shah. Historian Firishta writes, “When Murtaza Nizam Shah went to that garden for amusement, it did not appeal to him...he dismissed Ni'mat Khan from the post of superintendent of that garden, and instructed Salabat Khan to pull down the building on which immense sums of money had been spent, and constructed another in its place.” Tabatabai's account adds to this information a small but significant detail, that the structure comprised numerous triangles. But why would the Shia king have such

a violent reaction against a seemingly splendid garden? To understand this, two things are important, first, the knowledge that buildings were as essential to the garden as plants, in both Indic and Persianate cultures, and second requires us to take a small detour to the court of Bijapur ruled by Murtaza's brother-in-law, Ali Adil Shah I.

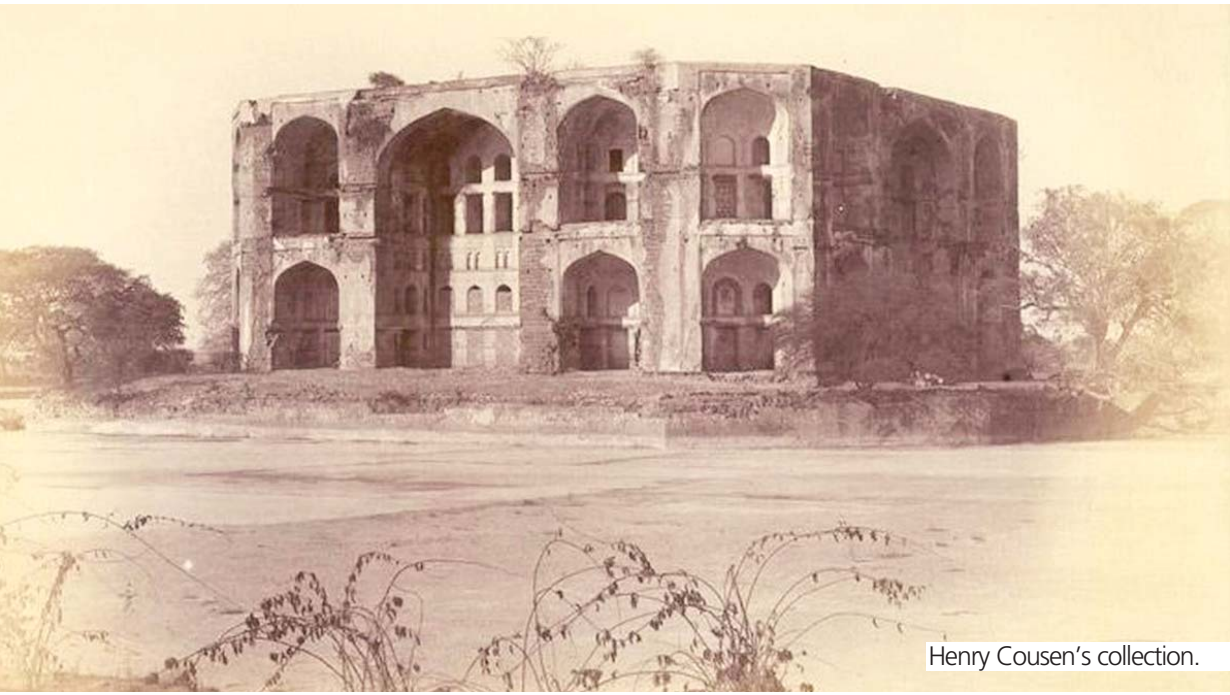
The Bijapuri ruler had written a significant treatise called Nujum al-'Ulum (The Stars of the Sciences). This text had a particular description for Mirrikh (Mars/Mangal), that ‘his buildings are triangular (musallas).’ Anyone worth his salt in medieval India would know that the planet Mirrikh was considered inauspicious in the Indic, Persianate and Hellenistic traditions. So, it's no surprise that Nizam Shah ordered the demolition of a stunning garden upon seeing triangular structures. Interestingly, such astronomical connections weren't restricted to shapes. The 6th century text Brihat Samhita prescribes specific nakshatras (constellations) for planting trees. Dr. S Natesh, who has worked extensively on plants and environment conservation, says, “Some Puranas also prescribe each person born under a specific star to plant a particular tree.”

Turning the globe

Astrology has played a perennial role in medieval gardens, starting from the cycles of planting to pruning and fertilising. Ahmednagar and Bijapur are not the only places where one finds a reference to astrology intersecting with aesthetics in the medieval world. The 17th century masnawi (collection of poems) *Falak al-Buruj* by Ruh al-Amin is also arranged around the two intersecting themes. Turning the globe further, one finds an interplay between iconography and astronomy in examining the sundials decorating the early modern Roman gardens of Villa Aldobrandini of Frascati (Italy). Aside from astrology, the discourse of gardens also pervaded other discourses, such as that of geomancy that informed the elite culture of the Ming dynasty in China, showing its manifestations in both garden design and landscape painting.



The humble administrator's garden (Suzhou) reveals the propensity for geomancy and mathematics in architecture and landscape design.



Henry Cousen's collection.



Meister des Nujūm-al 'Ulūm Manuscripts.



Palatine Chapel cathedral Aachen Gre portion structure.



Astronomical symbolism in the Carolingian period.

#GARDEN



Basilica of San Pietro in Vaticano.

Humble Administrator's Garden (Suzhou), the garden of Wen Zhengming's poems and paintings (15th-16th centuries) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, reveals the propensity for geomancy and mathematics in architecture and landscape design. Returning to Farah Bakhsh, the site of our contestations, Deccan sultanates' scholar Emma J Flatt argues that a garden could often become the space where the competency of nobles in courtly skills, like garden design and astrology, could be tested or demonstrated. She adds that “Ni'mat Khan's lack of education and low origins is dramatically revealed in the exemplary ethical and didactic space of a garden when he builds a garden ‘made of triangles,’ a garden that by its shape is drawing the influence of the inauspicious planet Mirrikh upon the kingdom of Ahmednagar.” His garden, despite its obvious beauty, was, therefore, unacceptable and, while lacking these qualities, he couldn't be a ‘real’ noble.

Gardens have been significant institutions for the elites of South Asia since the Mauryan times (322-185 BCE). Popular imaginations of medieval gardens, however, constantly conjure up images of symmetrically planned, quadripartite, walled gardens with water channels, the Mughal Charbagh. Early garden sites lacking these features have been overlooked and are poorly preserved as compared to their Mughal or Timurid peers. This has, therefore, necessitated the need to find sources, other than monumental, to study the question of garden traditions of the Deccani kingdoms.

Roots of society and culture Scholars such as Craig Clunas and Dixon Hunt have lit a path away from the rather restricted focus on gardens as physical objects of enquiry. This makes it possible for us to interrogate literary and sculptural sources, aside from archaeological sources, which reveal the history of the garden as a cultural institution that represented the attitudes and practices of the people who patronised, constructed, took care of and experienced these gardens.

According to French historian and critic Hippolyte Taine, a lot can be revealed about the motive and psychology of people through their

literature. Gardens, like literature and paintings, are most indicative of the moment and milieu in which they are borne. The story of Ni'mat Khan's garden of triangles is only one analysis of how the discourses of astrology and magic prevalent in medieval Deccan influenced garden design and practices. Studies into the actual practices of gardens can help rediscover many such sites that contribute significantly to our understanding of the cultural, social, and religious currents of South Asia.

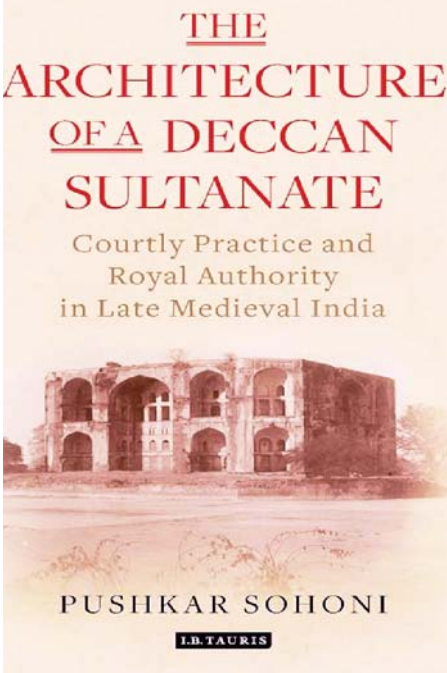
From a few sporadic pieces of news contained in studies of historical nature, we know that, with all probability, the apprentice architect in the field of Byzantine culture had to face the study of the quadrivium, i.e., arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music. Even if it is not possible to know the degree of depth of knowledge of the various disciplines involved in the training, it is likely that notions of general knowledge were given, useful for dealing with the basic needs already identified by Vitruvius in his study.

Manuela Incerti's Astronomical Knowledge in the Sacred Architecture is the fields of

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Farah Bagh as it stands today in Ahmednagar.



the heavens with the earth. This essay argues that the horoscope published in 1552 is not the original horoscope but, rather, a ‘rectified’ chart made after the church construction has been stalled for nearly forty years; that the date had been chosen according to religious and political dictates, and so, the astrologer(s) had to work with the planetary positions that pertained on 18 April 1506; that the astrologer(s) chose the time of day, a time correctly noted not in the published horoscope but in the diary of Julius's personal secretary, because it coordinated the founding of the basilica with the important horoscopes of its patron and its region; that the primary patron of the basilica was not Julius but, rather, Christ, whose geniture was discussed in astrological texts of this era; that the coordination of the basilica's horoscope with that of Christ simultaneously coordinated the great structure with the thema mundi, the horoscope for the birth of the world; and that several putative horoscopes for Julius II seem related to those of the basilica and of Christ.

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Faria Bagh, Ahmednagar.

#REMEMBERING

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 1955 BBC Interview on Caste and Gandhi

Gandhi advocated for the abolition of untouchability but maintained support for the broader varna system

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, whose ideas and activism laid the foundation for a more just and inclusive India, is remembered always.

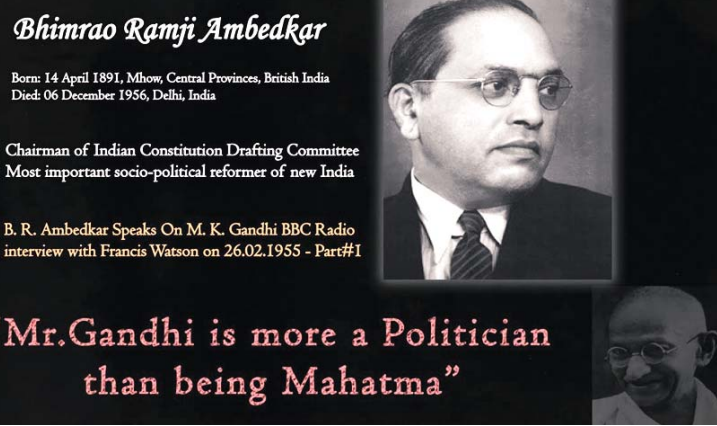
Dr. Ambedkar, born in 1891 into a Dalit family, in what is now Madhya Pradesh, rose from the most marginalized strata of Indian society to become a global voice against oppression and inequality. Ambedkar's life and ideas continue to resonate deeply with millions across the country and beyond. A fierce opponent of the caste system, he dedicated his life to fighting the social, political, and economic exclusion of Dalits, then referred to as ‘untouchables.’ One of the most important records of his thoughts in his own voice is a rare and remarkably candid interview he gave to the BBC in 1955, just one year before he converted to Buddhism and a year before his death.

In this historic interview, Dr. Ambedkar speaks plainly and passionately about the deep injustices of the caste system, his ideological rift with Mahatma Gandhi, and his critical view of the Indian independence movement, which, in his opinion, did not represent the interests of the oppressed classes.

On the Caste System

Ambedkar's critique of the caste system was uncompromising. “Caste is not just a division of labour, it is a division of labourers,” he asserted in various writings, a sentiment echoed in his interview. He denounced caste as a system rooted in graded inequality and hereditary status, which denied basic human rights and dignity to vast sections of Indian society.

He rejected the notion that caste could be reformed from within the Hindu social order. According to him, caste was a rigid, inhuman hierarchy sustained by religious and cultural norms that needed complete dismantling, not just cosmetic reform.



On Mahatma Gandhi

The interview also touched upon his complex and often adversarial relationship with Mahatma Gandhi. While both leaders sought upliftment for the oppressed, their methods and ideologies starkly diverged. Gandhi advocated for the abolition of untouchability but maintained support for the broader varna system, which Ambedkar believed perpetuated inequality.

Gandhi was never against caste. In fact, he believed in varna, and his idea was that each person should do the job they are born into,” Ambedkar said. This fundamental disagreement came to a head during the Poona Pact of 1932, when Ambedkar was forced to give up his demand for a separate electorate for Dalits under immense pressure, including a hunger strike by Gandhi.

Ambedkar later wrote that

the Pact was a compromise made under duress, and that Gandhi's actions, while politically effective, ultimately delayed the full political empowerment of Dalits.

On the Freedom Struggle

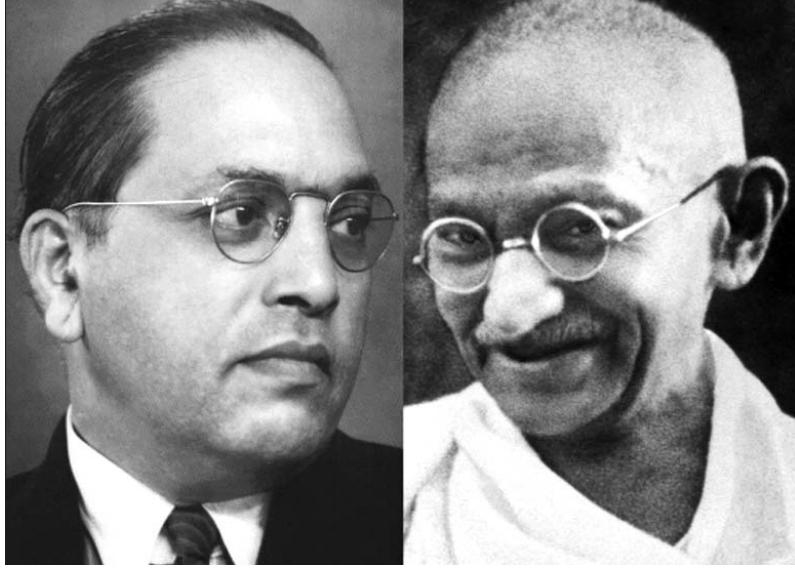
While Ambedkar welcomed the end of British colonial rule, he did not romanticize the nationalist movement. He believed that the struggle for freedom had largely been led by upper-caste elites who failed to include Dalit voices or address their suffering. “What use is political freedom if the social structure remains oppressive?” he questioned in various speeches.

This point is clearly echoed in the BBC interview, where he stresses that independence did not automatically translate into social justice. The challenges of caste, landlessness, and poverty persisted, especially for India's most vulnerable communities.

Legacy and Relevance Today

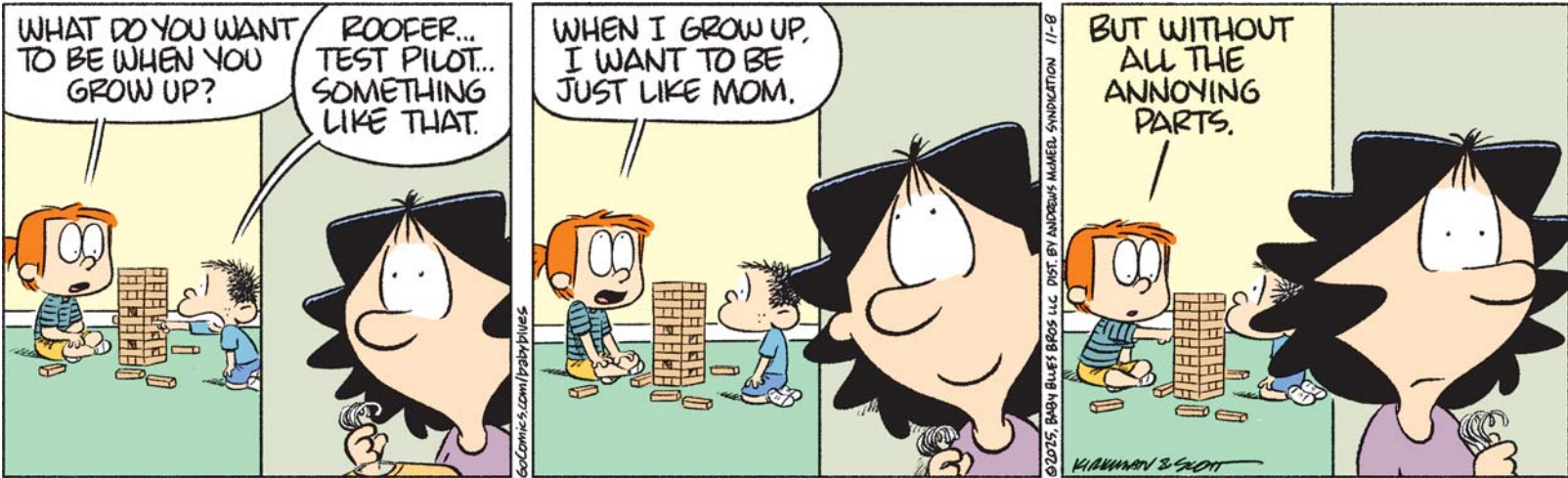
Dr. Ambedkar's 1955 interview remains deeply relevant in today's India. In an age where caste discrimination still surfaces in both overt and subtle forms, from manual scavenging and honour killings to unequal access to education and employment, his words continue to serve as a call to action.

His legacy extends beyond his role in framing the Constitution. By choosing to convert to Buddhism in 1956 along with hundreds of thousands of followers, he sent a powerful message of spiritual and social emancipation. His vision of an India built on liberty, equality, and fraternity still defines the aspirations of a democratic nation.



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman