

Every year, we mark a special day focused on improving how we work and live. World Productivity Day highlights ways to do tasks better and achieve more in less time. This day is not just about working harder but smarter. It encourages everyone to look at how they manage their tasks and find ways to enhance their efficiency. It also reminds us that by adopting smarter work strategies, we can improve our performance and overall well-being. It promotes innovation and sharing success stories that motivate others to aim higher in their daily activities. Ultimately, it asks us to reflect on our work habits and strive for continuous improvement.

#MANGO SEASON

When the King of Fruits Arrives

When the mango enters the court, the contest is over. The other fruits may still be admired, but the crown belongs to one alone



Summer in India is synonymous with one thing above all else, the arrival of the mango. Markets overflow with golden and saffron-hued varieties, homes fill with their fragrance, and conversations inevitably turn to favourite cultivars and cherished childhood memories. Yet, long before mangoes became the stars of fruit stalls and social media posts, Sanskrit poets had already crowned them as the undisputed king of fruits.

Classical Sanskrit literature is filled with playful descriptions of nature, and poets often approached even the simplest subjects with remarkable wit and imagination. Rather than merely praising the sweetness of the mango, they imagined an entire kingdom of fruits thrown into turmoil by the arrival of their royal rival.

One delightful verse declares: **अप्राप्यमानं जम्बू स्फुटितद्वयं दक्षिणकल्मषम् । ससूतं सस्यते हृदयमभिमानेन पतन्मसु ? अश्रुदन्तस्यैव तर्कशिरसिजं लक्ष्मिकम् । रामायते तृते जाति फलराजे रसमये ?**

A free rendering of the verse captures its playful spirit: "When the juicy mango, the king of fruits, arrives upon the earth, the entire fruit kingdom is thrown into disarray. The jamun blushes with embarrassment and turns dark purple. The pomegranate's heart bursts open in astonishment. The proud jackfruit, unable to bear the mango's glory, feels as though thorns have pierced its heart. Even the coconut, known for its hard exterior, melts within and becomes filled with liquid. Before the mango's sweetness, all other fruits quietly accept defeat."

The genius of the poet lies in personification. Every fruit is transformed into a character with emotions, pride, jealousy, and vulnerability.

The jamun, with its deep purple colour, is imagined as blushing in embarrassment. Unable to compete with the mango's fame, it lowers its gaze and darkens with shame. The pomegranate appears shocked beyond measure. Its tightly packed seeds are poetically described as a heart bursting open in amazement at the mango's arrival.

The jackfruit, large and imposing, is often regarded as



one of the most substantial fruits of the Indian summer. Yet, even this giant cannot conceal its envy. The poet humorously suggests that thorns have pierced its heart, a clever reference to the fruit's rough, spiky exterior.

Perhaps, the most amusing image is that of the coconut. Revered for its tough shell and resilience, it seems outwardly fearless. But the poet reveals its secret: beneath that hard exterior lies water. In the presence of the mango, even the coconut loses its courage and melts within.

Such verses reveal the playful side of Sanskrit poetry. The poets were not merely scholars composing lofty philosophical treatises. They were keen observers of life, capable of finding humour and delight in everyday experiences. A basket of summer fruits becomes a royal court. A mango becomes a conquering emperor. The other fruits become rivals humbled by its supremacy.

The mango's exalted status in Indian culture is not difficult to understand. Its sweetness, fragrance, variety, and versatility have made it a beloved fruit for centuries. From ancient royal gardens to modern orchards, from devotional poetry to culinary traditions, the mango occupies a place unlike any other fruit.

Yet, what makes this Sanskrit verse memorable is not simply its praise of the mango. It is the poet's imaginative vision. Rather than declaring the mango superior, he stages a miniature drama in which every fruit reacts to the mango's arrival according to its own personality.

The result is a portrait of summer that remains fresh even today. As mango season returns each year, one can almost imagine the scene described by the poet: the jamun blushing, the pomegranate gasping, the jackfruit sulking, and the coconut quietly melting within, all acknowledging the inevitable truth that the king of fruits has arrived.

Decolonising the Ranks Bandi Jackets For Men No Bindi But Sindoor in For The Women



● Kshema Jatuhkarna

The Indian Army has revamped its dress regulations to shed colonial-era traditions, authorising closed-neck bandi jackets in formal settings, removing ceremonial pouch belts, and making it optional for reviewing officers to carry swords on parade.

The rationale behind the changes is explicitly outlined in a chapter titled "Indigenisation and Alignment with National Ethos." The manual states, "In keeping with the nation's sentiments and evolving sovereign identity, a number of deliberate refinements have been incorporated in this edition of Army Uniforms Pamphlet."

The changes are outlined in a newly issued 174-page manual titled "Army Uniforms-2026." Officials aware of the matter stated that such a manual was last issued eight years ago. "In keeping with the nation's sentiments and evolving sovereign identity, a number of deliberate refinements have been incorporated. Collectively, these refinements represent a progressive review of

residual colonial-era vestiges while preserving the dignity, functionality and enduring traditions of the Indian Army," the document stated in a section titled "Indigenisation and Alignment with National Ethos."

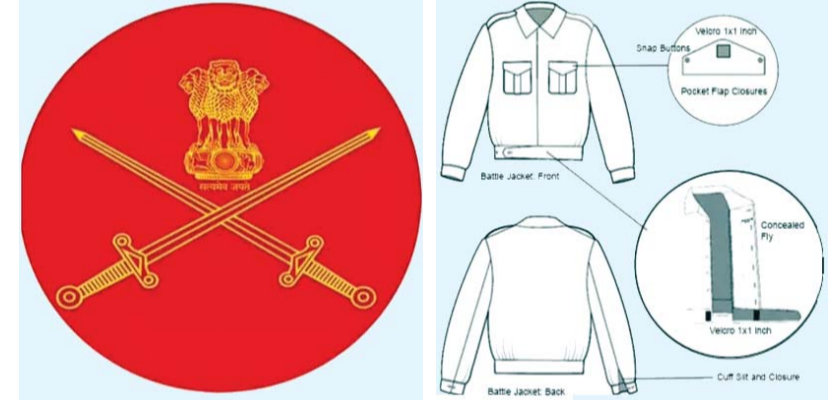
As part of the overhaul, the army has introduced a new winter dress called 3B for all ranks. It consists of an anglo shirt with a battle jacket and beret.

Apart from uniforms, the regulations cover a wide range of appearance and grooming standards for personnel, from tattoos and body piercings to haircuts, moustaches, and the use of cosmetics.

Bandi Jacket Code
For the first time, the regulations authorise officers to wear bandi jackets as part of the formal dress code. This is in addition to the bandhgala, lounge suit, combination dress, or a full-sleeve shirt with a tie and formal trousers.

"A closed neck coat (bandi jacket) may be worn over a full sleeved shirt. The bandi jacket may be with or without the neck hook fastening (both patterns are authorised) and will be of solid, sober colour only. Matching formal trousers of sober

#UNIFORM CODE



design and formal closed footwear will be worn," the manual stated.

Women Dress Code
The regulations permit women officers to wear sober-coloured sarees, or kurta-salwar and ankle-length straight pants with a dupatta. They expressly bar sleeveless kurtas and casual lowers such as palazzo and cigarette pants.

The pouch belt has been removed from Mess Dress No. 5 and No. 6. Unique dress numbers are assigned to each uniform in the military for convenience and ease of reference. Such belts remain authorised for officers up to the rank of colonel in the armoured corps, mechanised infantry, regiment of artillery, rifle regiments, Maratha Light Infantry, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, and Corps of Signals.

"Pouch belt will not be worn with Dress No. 5 and 6. However, it may be worn with ceremonial dress-during regimental/corps functions," the manual stated. Occasions for wearing Dress No. 5 and No. 6 include state functions at Rashtrapati Bhavan or Raj Bhavan, and when dining-in or attending formal receptions at the residences of the Prime Minister, the three serv-

ing the nation's gallantry awardees, war heroes and distinguished military leaders. According to Indian Army officials, the exercise covered 124 roads, 77 colonies, 27 buildings and other military facilities, and 18 miscellaneous facilities, including parks, training grounds, gates and helipads.

Officials said that the initiative also reflects an enduring national commitment to commemorate valour and sacrifice. Recent national efforts to honour the legacy of the nation's bravest include dedicated commemorations of Param Vir Chakra awardees, reinforcing the centrality of India's heroes in public and institutional memory. In various cantonments and military stations, the renaming of roads, facilities and colonies is being undertaken to honour Indian soldiers and commanders, including gallantry award recipients and eminent military personalities, officials said. As part of this process, several British-era road and locality names are being replaced with names that reflect Indian valour, sacrifice and leadership.

In Delhi Cantonment, Kirby Place (officers' accommodation) has been renamed Kenguruse Vihar, while Mall Road has been renamed Arun Khetrapal Marg. In Ambala Cantonment, Patterson Road Quarters is now known as Dhan Singh Thapa Enclave, and in Mathura Cantonment, New Horn Line has been renamed Abdul Hamid Lines. Similar changes have been implemented elsewhere, with Queen's Line Road in Jaipur Cantonment becoming Sundar Singh Marg, New Birdwood Line in Bareilly Cantonment being renamed Thimayya Colony, and Malcolm Lines in Mhow Cantonment renamed Piru Singh Lines. At the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun, Colins Block and Kingsway Block have been renamed Nubra Block and Kargil Block, respectively.



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leadership, according to the Indian Army. The military's indigenisation drive accelerated five years ago when Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Combined Commanders' Conference at Kevadia, Gujarat. He directed the armed forces to erase colonial customs and adopt Indian ways in doctrines, procedures, and customs.

The Army Uniforms-2026 manual reminds soldiers that tattoos and body piercings are prohibited. Personnel cannot wear any type of bracelet in uniform, except for a single sacred thread on the wrist on the day of a pooja. No religious markings or symbols are allowed, with exceptions for Sikh soldiers.

Moustaches must not exceed 12 cm. All personnel are barred from using deodorants and perfumes while in uniform, though aftershave lotions are allowed.

Women personnel face strict cosmetic regulations. Lipstick, coloured nail polish, bindis, and nose pins are prohibited. Sindoor (vermillion) may be applied so that it is not visible when the beret or peak cap is worn.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



#MEGHADOOTA

Ashadha's First Day

"On the first day of Ashadha, he beheld a cloud embracing a mountain peak, beautiful as an elephant sporting against an embankment."



The first day of Ashadha marks one of the most evocative moments in the Indian calendar. It signals the arrival of the monsoon, the season that transforms parched landscapes into realms of abundance and beauty. For generations of Indians, however, the day is remembered not merely as a meteorological event but as a literary and emotional landmark, immortalized by the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa in his masterpiece, *Meghadoota* (The Cloud Messenger).

The poem opens with the celebrated phrase: **अषाढस्य प्रथमदिने मेघमारिच्छदानं कर्कशानुरितानजाम्बवीयं दर्शम् ।**

"On the first day of Ashadha, he beheld a cloud embracing a mountain peak, beautiful as an elephant sporting against an embankment."

With these words, Kalidasa ushers us into a world where nature and human emotion become inseparable. The protagonist of *Meghadoota* is a Yaksha, a celestial being often described as a nature spirit and an attendant of Kubera, the lord of wealth. The Yaksha has been cursed by his master and banished from his celestial city for one year. The opening verse introduces him with remarkable tenderness:

करिचत् कान्ता विरलज्ज्वा स्वाधिकारत् प्रमत्तः । यक्षच्छक्रे जनकजनान्पुण्योदयं निपद्यच्छायतन्तुं वसति रामनिर्याश्रमम् ?
"A certain Yaksha, rendered careless in his duties by the heavy sorrow of separation from his beloved, was deprived of his glory by a curse from his lord. Condemned to a year's exile, he dwelt in the hermitages of Ramagiri, amid sacred waters associated with Sita, daughter of Janaka, and beneath the cool shade of trees."

Kalidasa locates the Yaksha at Ramagiri, generally identified with modern-day Rantek in Maharashtra. The setting is serene: sacred pools, hermitages, and shady groves. Yet, the beauty of nature offers little



King looking at a cloud in a night sky. Meghadoota illustration. Guler School of Pahari painting.

solace. The Yaksha is consumed by longing for his wife, who remains far away in Alaka, the celestial city near Mount Kailasa. Months pass in loneliness. Then comes the first day of Ashadha.

Looking up, the Yaksha sees a rain cloud resting upon a mountain peak. Kalidasa compares the cloud to a playful elephant pressing against a hillside. To most people, it would be an ordinary sign of the monsoon. To the Yaksha, it is something much more. After months of isolation, the cloud appears like a visitor, a companion arriving from afar. The Yaksha knows, of course, that a cloud is merely a combination of smoke, lightning, water, and wind. Yet, intense longing changes the way human beings experience the world. A lover burdened by separation begins to converse with rivers, trees, birds, mountains, and clouds. The distinction between the living and the non-living becomes blurred by emotion.

This insight remains timeless. In the film *Cast Away*, a shipwrecked man stranded alone on an island for years begins talking to a volleyball, imagining it to be his friend. Solitude creates companionship where none exists. In much the same way, the Yaksha of *Meghadoota*, isolated in the forests of Ramagiri, imagines the cloud to be a conscious being capable of understanding human sorrow. He greets the cloud with affection and rever-

ence. Then, he makes an extraordinary request: carry a message to my beloved.

This simple act of imagination becomes the foundation of one of the world's greatest poems. The cloud is transformed into a messenger, entrusted with conveying the Yaksha's words from Ramagiri in central India to the distant Himalayan abode of his wife near Mount Kailasa.

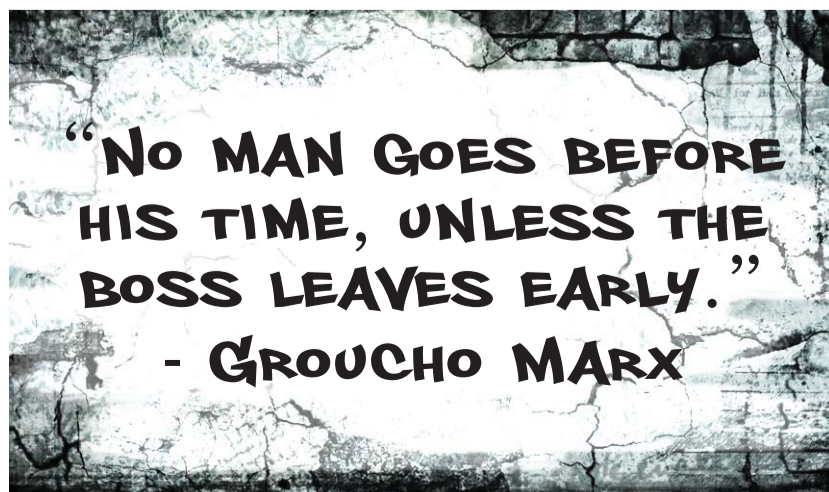
The journey that follows is far more than a geographical itinerary. As the cloud travels northward, Kalidasa unfolds a magnificent panorama of the Indian landscape. Rivers, mountains, forests, villages, cities, temples, and fertile plains pass before the reader's eyes. The poem becomes a literary map of India, painted with extraordinary sensitivity and detail. The cloud crosses rivers swollen by rain, glides over mountain ranges, pauses above prosperous cities, and brings relief to farmers awaiting the monsoon. Every landscape is animated by emotion. Nature is not merely scenery; it participates in the drama of longing. The swelling rivers mirror overflowing feelings, while the life-giving rains symbolize hope, renewal, and eventual reunion.

At its heart, *Meghadoota* is a poem about separation. Yet, it is equally a poem about imagination. The Yaksha's loneliness transforms a passing cloud into a friend, a traveler, and a messenger. Through this act of poetic vision, Kalidasa reveals a profound truth about human experience: when separated from those we love, we seek companionship everywhere, in the wind, in the rain, in the mountains, and in the clouds.

That is why the first day of Ashadha continues to resonate across centuries. The arrival of the monsoon is not only a climatic event; it is also a cultural memory. Each year, when dark rain clouds gather on the horizon, they evoke the image of the lonely Yaksha at Ramagiri gazing skyward. In that cloud, he saw not merely water and vapor, but a bearer of hope, capable of carrying the burden of his heart across the vast expanse of India.



THE WALL

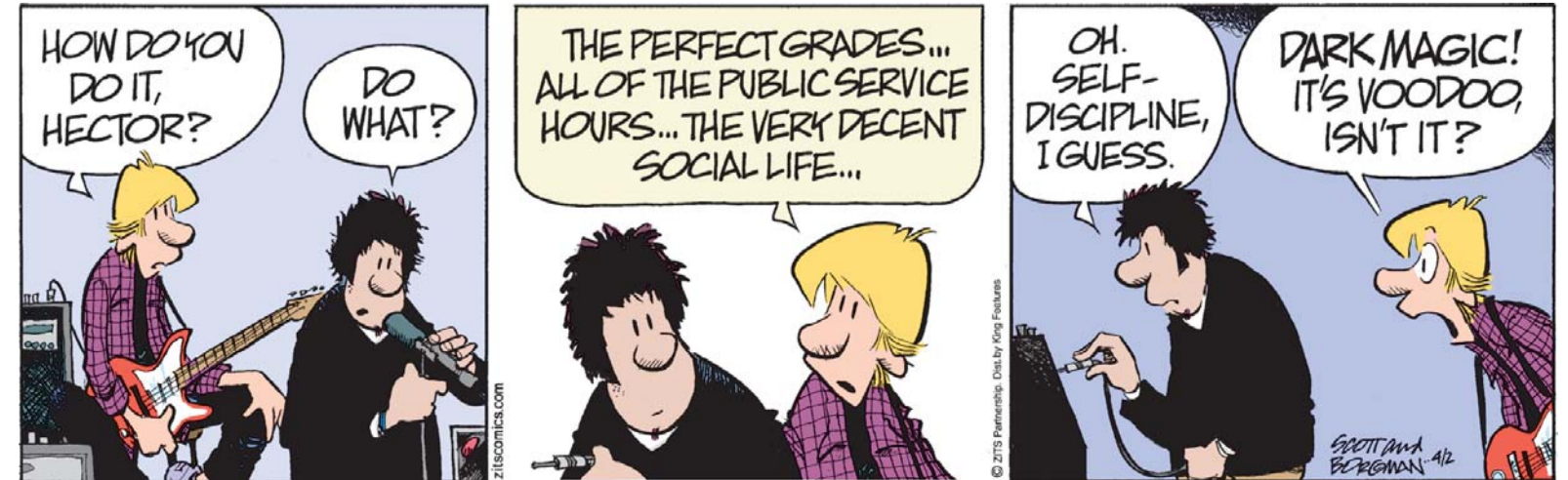


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

