



A taste of resilience: Bengal's culinary response to famine

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The Bengal Famine of 1943 remains one of the most devastating humanitarian crises in modern Indian history, claiming an estimated 2.1 to 3 million lives.

Whilst President Roosevelt devised the concept of four freedoms, one of the most crucial in it was the "Freedom from Hunger".

Yet the burghers of the rich English crown and the richer America turned a blind eye when famine struck upon Malabar, Bijapur, Orissa and most hauntingly in the fertile soil of Bengal when women, children and men dropped dead in front of palaces of Calcutta whilst feudal landlords and colonial masters continued with their vice and depravity.

The infamous "rice denial" policy, seizure of transportation systems, forced grain exports, strategic hoarding, and wartime prioritization led the British Raj, as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his seminal work "The Discovery of India (1946)", to be steeped in denial as they stated that owing to the wartime conditions the peasantry had accumulated too much to eat. While millions were left to starve to death, the colonial establishment proclaimed itself to be a bootlicker for



Source: Chat GPT

constitutional propriety and at the same it violated and deformed the constitution to achieve its perverted and bigoted ends! The famine altered the region's culinary landscape, giving rise to recipes, habits, and values that persist to this day.

Bengali cuisine, now celebrated globally for its depth and soul, owes many of its staples to those turbulent times.

Among the most poignant culinary remnants of the famine is phena bhaat, a starchy rice-water gruel made from the leftover foam after boiling rice. As rice became scarce, families stretched every grain, drinking the water it was cooked in, lightly salted or mixed with mustard oil. Relief camps served phena bhaat routinely. Even today, the phrase "Ma, fain de" (Mother, give me starch) evokes haunting memories of hunger as poignantly depicted in IPTA playwright Bijon Bhattacharya's harrowingly evocative, "Nabanna (1944)". Once a symbol of desperation, phena bhaat now carries the

weight of memory and resilience. Scarcity birthed innovation. What was once considered waste metamorphosed into a source of nourishment.

Taro leaves (kochur shaak), water-lily stems (shapla), wild greens, and even freshwater snails (googli) once consumed in sheer desperation became normalized, later even romanticized in the region's rustic cuisine.

This shift from famine food to regional delicacy speaks volumes about Bengal's ability to transform adversity into art. Vegetable peels, stalks, and skins—such as those from bottle gourds (lau-er khosha bhaja), pumpkins (kumro phool bhaja), cauliflower stems, and radish leaves—were born from these zero-waste cooking practices, born of necessity, gradually evolved into beloved culinary traditions that remain the foundation of Bengali cooking. With sugar and spices in short supply, culinary techniques had to evolve.

Gravy bases were thickened with

lentils or rice starch. Poppy seed paste (posto), used sparingly, added texture and depth without overpowering flavor.

Rice, the staple of Bengal, became a luxury during the famine. In its absence, people turned to wheat flatbreads (ruti), puffed rice (muri), and potato-based dishes like aloor torkari.

Over time, these substitutes transformed into comfort foods, now served during celebrations. Several iconic dishes can be traced back to this period. Khichuri—a humble mixture of rice and lentils used in relief camps—has since become a ceremonial offering during religious rituals and a beloved comfort food during monsoons. Mochar ghonto, made from banana flowers, rose from the famine's push toward high-fiber, low-cost, zero-waste meals, and today graces festive Bengali spreads.

The famine not only reshaped eating habits but also embedded a cultural ethos of frugality and reverence for food.

Elders who lived through those years often emphasised about not wasting a single grain lessons that continue to echo in Bengali households. Ultimately, the Bengal Famine of 1943 carved its legacy not just in history books, but in kitchens. It transformed desperation into tradition, hunger into heritage.

From playroom to runway: How Labubu became fashion's 'unlikely' muse?

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Amidst the plot twists in 2025, a new fashion statement has emerged for Gen Z. The once mere monster dolls from a toy series 'The Monsters' articulated by Hong Kong born, Netherlands raised artist Kasing Lung in 2015 has now evolved to "Designer Toy" in 2024, when celebrities started to showcase them over social media. Labubu isn't just a toy; she is unique with her odd

"ugly-cute" aesthetic, setting her aside from the traditional cute toys, bringing equal attention worldwide. Her playful yet slightly fierce look, round, furry bodies, wide eyes, pointed ears, and nine sharp teeth that form a mischievous smile has known for its chaotic charm. Labubu and a few others, like her boyfriend Tycoco and the leader, Zimomo belong to "The Monsters" tribe. Labubu lacks a series, but Pop Mart created animations featuring new Labubus with a

theme song. Initially popular in China, Labubu gained fame as the country emerged from the pandemic in late 2022, says Ashley Dudarenok, founder of ChoZan. "It embodied that anti-perfectionism", she states. Original Labubu dolls cost 25 to 70 CAD; prices now surged. It first started when independent singer Rihanna was spotted in February, with a Labubu toy clipped to her LV bag. Labubu's popularity soared in April 2024, when K-pop star Lisa began

posting on Instagram with various Labubu dolls. Influencer Kim Kardashian shared her collection of 10 Labubu dolls with her Instagram following in April. As Labubu continues to captivate fans worldwide with her quirky charm, one wonders what's next for this unexpected fashion icon. Whether a passing trend or a lasting cultural symbol, Labubu has already made its mark on the hearts (and shelves) of a generation craving something delightfully different.



The shifting sands of sleep: How our understanding of dreams evolves?

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“Let him sleep. For in dreams, we enter a world that is entirely our own. Let him swim in the deepest ocean or glide over the highest cloud.”- Albus Dumbledore (Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban by J.K. Rowling)



Source: ScreenRant

Dreams—those ephemeral, often bizarre narratives unfolding in the theatre of our minds each night—have captivated humanity for millennia. From ancient divinations to modern neuroscience, our interpretation of dreams and nightmares has undergone a profound evolution, a journey beautifully, if darkly, echoed in Netflix’s The Sandman. Historically, dreams were seen as potent messages from the divine, ancestors, or otherworldly beings. Ancient Egyptians meticulously recorded them as prophetic guides, while Greeks and Romans consulted “incubators”—temples where seekers slept, hoping for healing or divine guidance. Nightmares were often attributed to malevolent spirits, requiring rituals. In Neil Gaiman’s universe, brought to life on Netflix’s The Sandman, Morpheus, the King of Dreams, isn’t just a metaphor but a tangible entity. He crafts and governs mortal dreams, shaping our subconscious landscapes, a fantastical concept tapping directly into this ancient understanding. The early 20th century marked a dramatic shift

with psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud famously called dreams the “royal road to the unconscious,” believing them disguised fulfilments of repressed wishes, often sexual or aggressive. He distinguished between manifest content (what we remember) and latent content (its hidden meaning). Nightmares, for Freud, indicated particularly intense or threatening repressed desires. Carl Jung, a divergent student of Freud, offered a broader perspective. He introduced the collective unconscious—a reservoir of shared human experiences and archetypes manifesting in dreams. For Jung, dreams facilitated individuation and self-discovery, not just individual repression. A Jungian nightmare might represent a confrontation with one’s shadow self or a powerful archetype demanding integration. Netflix’s The Sandman’s depiction of Morpheus and his siblings, particularly Despair and Desire, subtly aligns with these archetypal forces. The nightmares Morpheus contains can be seen as manifestations of humanity’s darker, unintegrated psychological elements. Regardless of the theoretical lens, our brains often use common “dream patterns” to process waking life, worries, hopes, and unresolved feelings. While no universal dream dictionary exists, certain themes frequently emerge: falling dreams often signal a feeling of losing control

or insecurity, while teeth falling out can point to anxiety or loss. If you’re being chased, your mind might be urging you to confront something you’re avoiding, whereas flying dreams typically symbolize freedom and overcoming obstacles. The presence of water often reflects our emotional state. Even seemingly frightening dreams about death are usually symbolic, representing transformation or new beginnings. An unprepared exam highlights performance anxieties. Discovering endless rooms hints at untapped potential. Losing your voice signifies feeling unheard, and being lost in a labyrinth suggests being overwhelmed by complex choices. These patterns offer a fascinating glimpse into our inner worlds. Today, neuroscience offers yet another lens. Modern theories often link dreams to memory consolidation, emotional regulation, and even problem-solving. Nightmares, in this scientific framework, might be the result of heightened amygdala activity or a processing of stressful waking experiences. The “nightmare creatures” that sometimes escape Morpheus’s realm could be seen as personifications of these raw anxieties. From divine messages to repressed desires to neural static, the interpretation of dreams and nightmares has journeyed through vastly different paradigms. What remains constant, however, is our enduring fascination with these nightly sojourns. The Sandman, in its masterful storytelling, reminds us that whether we view them as divine communiques, psychological roadmaps, or mere biological phenomena, dreams continue to be a potent and often unsettling reflection of our inner and outer worlds.

Climate change in India: A growing crisis



Source: Google Images

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India faces climate change’s wrath: searing heatwaves, erratic monsoons, and rising seas disrupt agriculture, water, and livelihoods, pushing millions into crisis and demanding urgent action, experts warn. In Gujarat’s Kutch, climate change threatens a centuries-old date palm legacy. Once rain-scarce, Kutch now sees rainfall surge from 340mm to 1,200mm annually, with rainy days rising from 11 to 38, per the Date Palm Research Centre in Mundra. Early monsoons since mid-June damage ripening dates, causing 30-40% crop losses yearly. Farmers like Vikramsinh Jadeja from Anjar harvest unripe dates to avoid rain, lowering quality and market demand. The Barhi variety, yielding 250kg per tree, suffers most due to its late maturation. With 20 lakh date trees across 19,000 hectares producing 1.8 lakh metric tonnes annually, Kutch’s economy reels. A recent Bhuj conference, attended by global experts, urged biotech solutions like rain-resistant or early maturing varieties to save this vital crop. Without innovation, farmers face mounting losses, threatening livelihoods in Mundra, Mandvi, and beyond. Climate change

is robbing Indian children of education, warns a UNESCO report. Extreme heat and floods cause frequent school closures, particularly in low-income areas, risking 1.5 years of lost schooling. In India, rising temperatures reduce learning outcomes, with heatwaves disrupting classes in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The report notes that 75% of extreme weather events over the past 20 years led to school closures, increasing dropout rates. Marginalized communities, lacking proper school infrastructure, are hit hardest. For example, floods in Assam damage schools, while heat in urban slums without air conditioning impairs student performance. Disaster management plans, effective in 81% of surveyed schools during crises like the 2013 Jakarta floods, are urgently needed in India to protect education. Without climate-resilient schools, India risks reversing decades of educational progress, deepening inequality. India’s climate crisis, from Kutch’s ruined harvests to disrupted classrooms, demands action. Investments in resilient crops, infrastructure, and policies are critical to protect livelihoods and secure a sustainable future.

Wimbledon 2025: A grand slam of surprises and sentiment

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Wimbledon, the planet's most established and legendary tennis competition, has always been different both for its supremacy and for its unshakeable commitment to tradition. Since 1877, the All England Club has been the hallowed platform of legend, with its perfectly manicured grass courts, stiff all-white dress code, and the eternally iconic serving of strawberries and cream.

But in 2025, Wimbledon served up something much more profound than nostalgia—it served up change.

This year's championship will not only be recalled by its champions but by the stories it told.

Wimbledon 2025 was a turning point a moment of redemption, rebirth, and most importantly, a bitter revenge.

In the men's final, Jannik Sinner's triumph over Carlos Alcaraz wasn't about winning, though it was redemption.

Only weeks before, Sinner had lost the French Open final, and he, along with his psychological mettle, was questioned.

On Centre Court, though, he made his voice heard. "Down" in the first set, Sinner fought back in precision and mastery to take the next three and claim his fourth Grand Slam title and his first Wimbledon.

This victory under the guidance of Darren Cahill displayed the maturity of a newly born player. Calm, composed, and ruthlessly clinical in execution, Sinner emerged as the first Italian man to claim Wimbledon, setting a new benchmark in his quickly developing legacy.

On the women's side, Iga Swiatek's performance was historic.

Her 6–0, 6–0 dismantling of Amanda Anisimova in 57 minutes was the most one-sided women's final since 1911.

But the real story wasn't the score it was her journey.

Had previously been viewed as a clay specialist, Swiatek had struggled on grass in previous Wimbledon and came this year on a contentious suspension after being found with a tainted supplement.

But her coach, Wim Fissette, helped her rewrite that script. With enhanced footwork, a sharpened-as-tin serve, and rediscovered mental resilience, Swiatek dominated the surface that once tormented her.

Her title completed her career Grand Slam, and marked the emergence of Swiatek 2.0 tougher, whole, and unbreakable. Wimbledon 2025 also testified to the continued shift of tennis's generation leaders.

Sinner and Alcaraz now constitute the sport's top rivalry, reminding one of the days of Federer and Nadal. Their matches seem to usher in a golden era of youth,



Source: The Tennis Gazette

In the meantime, saying goodbye too were veterans such as Petra Kvitová.

Her last appearance was given a standing ovation half tribute and half goodbye to an era.

Other stars felled by diseases, such as Stefanos Tsitsipas, sealed the era's demise.

Former great hope Amanda Anisimova showed the naysayers wrong in an inspiring charge to the final with upsets over top seeds and a reminder of what she's capable of.

While undone by Swiatek's magic, her comeback demonstrated that she is among the best.

Wimbledon 2025 was also an emotional drama and drama of taste.

There was a physical drama in a summer heatwave. Royal visits from Princess Charlotte and the Princess of Wales brought a new taste of elegance to tradition as they awarded the trophies. Henman Hill and Centre Court were filled with the buzz of

energy, respect, and passion for the game.

The prize money was a record £53.5 million, a testament to tennis's increasing worldwide popularity though Wimbledon had not lost its soul, reminding everyone that glory cannot be bought in terms of pounds and pence.

Behind each champion was a visionary.

Darren Cahill's mental tuning of Sinner and Wim Fissette's strategic renovation of Swiatek demonstrated that half of their sport is coaching strategy, and half is coaching psychology. Goran Ivanisevic's relentless ribbing of Tsitsipas and Juan Carlos Ferrero's consistent guidance of Alcaraz further demonstrated how valuable these relationships are to constructing champions. As Centre Court falls still once more, the reverberations of Wimbledon 2025 linger. It provided us with supremacy and heartbreak, transformation and resolve.

Beyond the boundary: What Gill's Nike vest says about modern sports marketing?

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Indian Test captain Shubman Gill, fresh off an extraordinary innings at Edgbaston, found himself at the center of a branding controversy—thanks to a seemingly innocuous detail. Cameras caught Gill declaring India's innings wearing a black Nike vest, drawing attention away from the scoreboard and onto the logo perched on his chest. Though it appeared to be just personal training gear, the vest clashed with Adidas' status as the official apparel sponsor of Team India, holding exclusive

rights over all visible clothing including match, training, and travel wear—under a contract valid through March 2028. Fans and brand-watchers quickly pointed to the potential breach, particularly pertaining to Gill's known personal endorsement with Nike, raising questions about overlapping brand allegiances. Furthermore, this type of conflict has occurred before. There are many instances in sports history where team loyalty and brand loyalty have clashed. Icons like Michael Jordan covering a Reebok logo during the 1992 Olympics, or Cristiano Ronaldo removing Coca-Cola bottles at a Euro 2020 press conference,

have similarly highlighted tensions between personal branding and team obligations. On the contrary, tennis superstar Roger Federer, too, has juggled separate deals with brands for shoes and clothing but always kept within the boundaries of each agreement. Back in India, Virat Kohli has navigated this carefully. Though a Puma ambassador, he never appeared in Puma gear during official appearances under Adidas' sponsorship. Brand strategists warn that moments like these even if unintentional can disrupt costly sponsorship narratives and spark concerns about "ambush marketing." Neither BCCI nor

Adidas has issued a formal response yet, but the takeaway is clear. In today's sports ecosystem, even the base layer matters. Brands pay for visibility and exclusivity. Athletes juggle personal expression and professional boundaries, and sometimes, the camera catches a quiet moment that sparks a much louder debate. This situation with Gill is a reflection of the pressures that modern athletes face not just on the field, but off of it too. The episode underscores how even an athlete's base layer can carry outsized brand consequences in modern sports, especially in a nation like India, where cricket is synonymous with religion.

PHOTO GALLERY



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