

Yaksha Prashna

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1st Cricket Match in India

You have seen stadiums full of cheering fans. You have heard the loud shout of "Howzzat!" You may even have played with a plastic bat in your street. But have you ever wondered where cricket really began? Many people think cricket is an Indian game. The truth is different, and the journey is fascinating.

Where Did Cricket Begin?

Cricket began in England hundreds of years ago. Some historians believe it may have grown from an old game like bowls, where players rolled a ball towards a target. Later, someone tried to stop the ball with a stick. Slowly, this simple idea turned into cricket.

In the beginning, the ball may have been made from sheep's wool or wood. The bat was like a farm stick, and the wicket could have been a tree stump. The earliest written record of cricket comes from a court case in 1598 in England. A man said he had played "creckett" as a schoolboy many years earlier on a disputed land. At first, cricket was mainly a children's game. Over time, adults began to play it seriously, and it became popular across England.

How Did Cricket Reach India?

Cricket came to India with the British rulers. The first recorded cricket match in India was played in 1721 on the coast of Gujarat by sailors of the British East India Company. They played the game to pass time while their ship was anchored.

In 1792, the Calcutta Cricket Club was formed. It was the first cricket club outside Britain. For many years, cricket in India was played mostly by British officers in their own clubs, and Indians were not allowed to join easily.

Who Was the 'Feknee Waller'?

In those early days, one Indian was connected to cricket in a small way in Calcutta Cricket Club. He was called the "Feknee Waller," which means "the thrower." His job was to throw the ball at the wickets during practice. For every wicket he hit, he was paid six annas. He bowled only to earn money and was not allowed to bat or play as an equal. His name is not recorded in history, but he remains an important part of India's cricket story.

When Did Indians Start Playing...

The story of Cricket and especially the Cricket in India cannot be told in few lines. This is just the beginning. In the coming editions of Yaksha Prashna, we will bring you many more exciting stories from the world of cricket. Keep reading, keep learning, and keep playing.

How a Rise in the Price of Pepper Changed World History



We just read that the first cricket match in India was played by the sailors of the East India Company. But what was the East India Company? Why was it created? Was there only one East India Company? Let's explore.

The First Europeans Arrive

You know that In 1498, Vasco da Gama was first European to reach India by sea. He came searching for spices which were very valuable in Europe. To control this trade, the Portuguese built forts and used powerful ships to guard the sea routes..

Soon other European countries also entered the spice trade. The Dutch(Netherlands) became very powerful in the spice trade and gained strong control over pepper markets in Europe. In those days pepper was extremely valuable and was called "black gold."

The Price That Shocked Traders

Around 1599, Dutch traders suddenly increased the price of pepper in Europe. The price of one pound of pepper, about 454 grams, rose from 3 to 8 shillings. In today's value this would roughly be like raising the price from about ₹1,270 to ₹3,390.

This sudden rise shocked English traders. A group of merchants in London decided that instead of buying expensive pepper from others, they should sail to Asia themselves. They asked Elizabeth I for permission to trade. On 31 December 1600 she granted them a royal charter, and the British East India Company was born. At first it was only meant to trade spices, not to rule land.

Not Just One Company

The English were not the only ones who formed such companies. The Dutch created the powerful Dutch East India Company in 1602, which later became one of the richest companies in the world. Other countries followed too. France started the French East India Company in 1664, Denmark formed one in 1616, Portugal created one in 1628, and Sweden started its company in 1731.

Many of these companies tried to control trade in Asia. Over time, the British, French, and Dutch became very powerful in different parts of the world. Among them, the British East India Company grew the strongest and eventually ruled large parts of India.

A small spice, a sudden price rise, and a group of determined traders... sometimes even the tiniest things can change the course of history, like....>



A Creature That Crumbled Empires

In the previous edition, we read why the mosquito makes Kuyyy sound in your ear. Now we will read how this tiny creature once defeated armies, ruined colonies, and helped change the map of the world? It does not roar like a lion or march like a soldier. It simply buzzes, bites, and flies away.

A Traveller From Africa

The mosquito called *Aedes aegypti* did not originally live in the America. Before 1492, it lived in West Africa. It crossed the Atlantic Ocean on ships during the time of the transatlantic (across Atlantic Ocean) slave trade. Once it reached the Americas, it spread wherever people lived and stored water. This mosquito prefers to bite humans only. It lays eggs in water kept in pots, barrels, wells, and tanks. Because it lives so close to people, it spreads diseases like yellow fever, dengue, and Zika very easily.

When Empires Fell Sick

Mosquito-borne diseases destroyed the plans of powerful nations. In 1600s Scotland tried to start a colony in Panama called New Caledonia. About 2,500 people travelled there, but within two years nearly 70 percent died from diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. The heavy financial loss later pushed Scotland to unite with England in 1707.

In 1700s, France sent about 11,000 settlers to French Guiana in South America. Within 18 months, almost 85 to 90 percent died, mainly from yellow fever. Even strong British armies in the Caribbean lost many soldiers because of disease.

A Hidden Fighter in a Revolution

During the American War of Independence, malaria became a silent enemy. In 1781, many British soldiers fighting in the southern colonies of America became very sick. At Yorktown, about half of General Cornwallis's army was too ill to fight. This weakness helped American and French forces win the battle, leading to American independence.

Learning To Fight Back

In the late 1800s, scientists discovered that mosquitoes spread diseases. After that, people began covering water containers and removing standing water. Later, chemicals like DDT reduced mosquito numbers, though its harmful effects on nature led to restrictions. Even today, mosquitoes continue to spread in warm climates.

This story reminds us that even the smallest creature can quietly change the course of history.



The Hero of Chips Tells its Story

One day, as you tear open a shiny packet of chips, you may notice something surprising. The bag looks big, but the chips inside seem less. Before you feel disappointed, listen carefully. I am the one filling that extra space, and I have an important job to do!

I Am Not Ordinary Air

I am not just normal air. I am a special gas called nitrogen. Nitrogen is safe and already makes up about 78 percent of the air we breathe. Normal air also contains oxygen. Oxygen reacts with the oil in chips and makes them stale and bad tasting. This reaction is called oxidation.

So before the packet is sealed, the oxygen inside is removed and replaced with me. This process is called nitrogen flushing. I do not react easily, so I help keep your chips fresh, crispy, and tasty for a longer time.

I Protect Your Crunch

Chips are thin and break very easily. Think about their long journey from the factory to the shop. The packets are packed in boxes, loaded onto trucks, and carried to many places. Without me inside, the chips would turn into crumbs.

I act like a soft cushion. When the packet is shaken or pressed, I protect the chips from breaking. Because of me, you enjoy whole, crunchy chips instead of crushed pieces.

Why Is the Packet so Big?

Fast machines fill and seal chips packets quickly. Some extra space, called slack fill, is needed to add nitrogen and protect the chips properly. Food laws say chips must be sold by weight, not by the size of the packet. The exact weight is clearly written on the cover.

So next time you open a chips packet, smile at me. I may look like empty space, but I am working hard to keep your snack fresh and safe.

QUIZ CORNER

1. Where is the head quarters of International Cricket Council?
2. Who came to India first - Portuguese by sea or Mughals by land?
3. Pepsi patented a potato variety called FL-2027 to produce which brand of chips?

The Date of India

Let us see if you can guess the name of a sour fruit from this clue - It looked like a date to Arabians, hence they called it with a word which means 'Indian Date', this word was adopted into English as well. No guess? Read on...

A Traveller From Far Away

We are talking about *Tamarindus indica*. From the scientific name you must be thinking tamarind came from India. But scientists say the tree indigenously grew in tropical East Africa. Over time, it spread to India and grew well here for thousands of years.



The Name

Now comes the interesting part. In Arabic, Tamar means 'Date', and Hind means 'India'. For them tamarind looked similar to their favourite date and hence called it 'Tamar-i-Hind', which means 'the date of India'. This word was adopted into English as Tamarind.

A Tree With Many Gifts

The tamarind tree has soft, feather-like leaves that spread wide and give thick shade. It can survive dry weather and live for many generations. Its fruit grows in brown pods with a hard shell and a sticky, sour-sweet pulp inside. The pods do not burst open on their own, and the pulp can be dried and stored for many months without a fridge.

More Than Just a Sour Taste

Tamarind is not only tasty but also healthy. Its pulp contains minerals like magnesium and potassium, along with B vitamins and calcium. It has fibre that helps digestion and works as a gentle natural laxative.

In some rural and tribal communities, people respect and even worship the tamarind tree as a symbol of abundance and long life. From root to leaf, this tree quietly serves us every day.

The next time you taste tamarind, remember the amazing tree that gives so much without asking for anything in return.

QUIZ CORNER

4. Quinine is used to treat which disease caused by a parasite called *Plasmodium falciparum*?
5. Which country has a date palm tree in their national emblem?





Camel Has a Passport Too!

What if someone told you that camels now carry passports, just like people? It may sound funny at first, but this new idea is very serious and important. In a country where camels are loved and respected, something big has changed. Let us find out why these desert animals now have official documents.

A Special Plan for Camels

Saudi Arabia has started giving official passports to camels. This program was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture under the National Livestock and Fisheries Development Program. It is also connected to Vision 2030, a plan to modernise the country's economy. The aim is to clearly record camel ownership, improve trade, and carefully monitor animal health using digital technology.

Why Camels Matter So Much

Camels have been important in Saudi Arabia for hundreds of years. Long before oil was discovered, camels helped people travel across deserts and provided milk and meat. They were a sign of wealth and strength. Even today, Saudi Arabia has about 2.2 million camels. Camel racing and camel beauty contests are very popular, and some prize camels are worth huge amounts of money. In such a valuable industry, proper records are necessary.

What Is Inside a Camel Passport?

Each camel passport is an official identification document. It includes the camel's microchip number, passport number, name, breed, sex, colour, date and place of birth, and photos from both sides. It also records the owner's details and vaccination history. All this information is stored in a digital database to prevent fraud and track health and ownership.

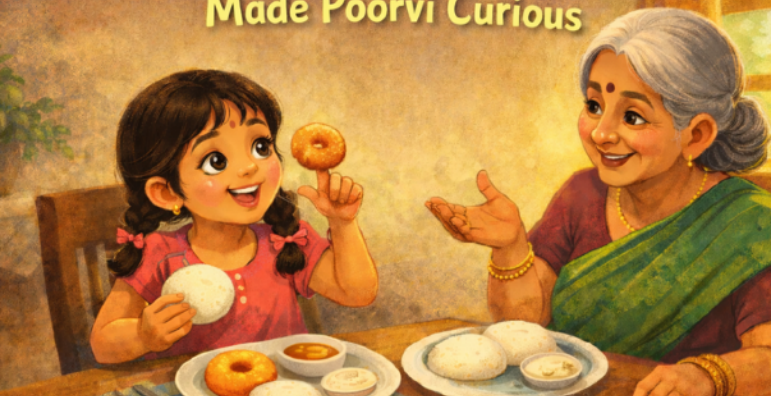
Tradition Meets Technology

This new system protects owners, reduces disputes, and helps control diseases quickly. It also supports better breeding practices. By giving camels passports, Saudi Arabia is combining its proud desert traditions with modern technology. Even in the sands of history, progress continues to walk forward.

Did you know? All the Gaint Pandas in the world are owned by China. They are only leased to other countries at a certain cost.



The Little Hole That Made Poorvi Curious



On a bright Sunday morning, little Poorvi sat at the kitchen table while her mother served hot, golden brown vadas and soft white idlis. The smell of sambar filled the house. Poorvi slipped a vada onto her finger like a tiny wheel and laughed. "It looks like a Vishnu chakra!" she said happily.

Then she looked at her idli and frowned. "Amma, why does only vada have a hole? Can you make an idli with a hole too?" she asked. Her mother smiled, but before she could answer, Grandma chuckled softly. "Ah, that small hole has a big reason," she said.

Cooking Perfectly on all Sides

Grandma explained that vada is made from soaked and ground urad dal batter. The batter is thick and soft. If it were shaped like a round ball and dropped into hot oil, the outside would cook quickly but the inside might stay uncooked.

"The hole in the centre lets the hot oil flow around the vada," Grandma said. "This helps it cook evenly from all sides. That is why it becomes crispy outside and soft inside."

Crispy and Light

Grandma continued, "Because of its ring shape, more batter touches the hot oil. This makes the outside nice and crunchy. At the same time, steam from inside can escape easily through the hole. That keeps the vada light and fluffy, not heavy."

Poorvi's eyes grew wide. "So the hole helps it taste better too?"

A Smart Traditional Design

Grandma nodded. "When we shape vada on our wet palm and make a hole with our thumb, it also becomes easier to fry and turn in the oil. It cooks faster and absorbs less oil."

Poorvi smiled as she dipped her vada into sambar. "So the hole is not just for fun!" she said. Grandma winked. "Even simple food carries the wisdom of our elders." And Poorvi learned that sometimes, the smallest questions lead to the tastiest answers.

QUIZ CORNER

6. Which south Indian steamed breakfast item is prepared by fermenting the batter that contains the good bacteria named *Leuconostoc mesenteroides*?



When Cows Were Riches: the Story of Living Money

In the previous edition of Yaksha Prashna, we saw how the barter system was first used for trade. People exchanged goods directly, like rice for cloth. In this edition, we move to the next level of value transactions. Long ago, wealth did not jingle in pockets. It grazed in fields. In many societies, cows were a sign of wealth, respect, and social position. Let us travel to early Ireland and southern Africa to see how cattle once played an important role in the world of money.

Cows in Early Ireland

In early medieval Ireland, there was a set of laws called the Brehon Laws. Under these laws, cattle were the main way to measure wealth. If someone had to pay a fine or give compensation for an injury, the value was often decided in cows. A person's honour and social rank were closely linked to how many cattle they owned.

Cattle acted as a store of wealth and a way to measure value. They were used in marriages, to settle disputes, and to show status. A family with many cattle was seen as strong and respected.

Cattle Among the Southern Tswana

In the 1800s, the Southern Tswana people of southern Africa also valued cattle deeply. Cows were their most important property. They were given as bridewealth during marriages and helped build friendships and alliances between families.

Chiefs were respected not only for leading people but also for owning large herds. Sharing cattle built trust and strengthened community bonds.

From Cows to Words

The word "pecuniary," meaning "related to money matters," comes from the Latin word pecu, which once meant "wealth in cattle/animals". Even the word "capital" comes from caput, meaning "head," because wealth was counted by the number of cattle heads a person owned. We already read about Gopuchika in the November 2025 edition of the magazine.

In the next edition, we will discover how money evolved further, from animals to coins, notes, and beyond.

QUIZ CORNER

7. The latin word 'pecu' mentioned in the above story has a root word in Sanskrit which also means an animal. Which word is it?



Is Greenland Larger Than India?

Look at a world map and tell me, which looks bigger, Greenland or India? Greenland seems huge, right? It even looks almost as big as Africa on some maps! From the map, things look very clear. But here is the surprise, what we see on many maps is not fully correct.

In an earlier edition of Yaksha Prashna, we read about how Greenland got its name. Now it is time to discover why Greenland looks so large on maps.

The Map That Changed Everything

In the 16th century, a map maker named Gerardus Mercator created a special world map. Sailors needed a flat map to travel across oceans. Globes were round and not easy to use on ships. So Mercator made a flat map that helped navigators find directions using a compass.

His map was very useful, but it had a problem. Places far away from the equator looked much bigger than they really are. Countries like Russia, Canada, and Greenland appear larger than their true size.

Why Sailors Loved This Map

The special feature of the Mercator map is that it keeps angles correct. If a sailor wanted to travel from Mumbai to Dubai, they could draw a straight line on the map and follow that compass direction. These straight paths, called rhumb lines, made sea travel easier and safer. Even without GPS, sailors could reach their destination by following one steady direction.

How Was This Map Made?

Imagine the Earth as a balloon inside a big cylinder. When the balloon touches the cylinder, its surface sticks to it. Then the cylinder is cut and opened into a flat sheet. That is how this map was imagined. But when the round Earth is flattened, shapes and sizes near the poles get stretched.

So, is Greenland really larger than India? No. India is actually much bigger. Sometimes, maps can trick our eyes. That is why asking questions makes learning exciting.



Day = Night

Twice every year, something quiet but amazing happens in the sky. The Sun shines in a special way, and the whole Earth shares light almost equally. It is not magic, but it feels magical. This special time is called an equinox.

What Is an Equinox?

An equinox happens when the Sun is directly above the Earth's equator. The Earth is always tilted at about 23.5 degrees, but during the equinox, this tilt is not leaning toward or away from the Sun. Because of this position, both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres receive nearly equal sunlight.

The word "equinox" means "equal night." On these days, day and night are almost the same length everywhere in the world. They are not perfectly equal because Earth's atmosphere bends sunlight a little. This makes sunrise appear slightly earlier and sunset slightly later. The equinox happens around March 20 or 21 and September 22 or 23.

How Equinox Changes the Seasons?

In March, the Sun begins to shine more on the Northern Hemisphere. Spring starts in countries like India, and days slowly become longer and warmer. At the same time, autumn begins in the Southern Hemisphere.

In September, the Sun shines more on the Southern Hemisphere. Autumn begins in the north, and spring starts in the south. After this, days in the Northern Hemisphere slowly become shorter.

Festivals and Seasonal Change

Many Indian festivals happen around these seasonal changes. Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, and Chaitra Navratri welcome the new year and spring. More about this in the next story.

In Japan, people observe Higan during this time. In Mexico, people gather at Chichen Itza to watch a special shadow appear on an ancient pyramid during the equinox.

The equinox reminds us that nature works in balance, and every season brings a fresh start.

QUIZ CORNER

8. The ancient monument Stonehenge in England was carefully built to align with sunlight on 2 special days. What are those dates?





An Independence Day From 2000 Years Ago!

When we hear the words “Independence Day,” we usually think of August 15. But did you know that in some parts of India, people celebrate another kind of independence day that goes back nearly 2000 years? It is connected to a festival called Ugadi. This story takes us into ancient India, when brave native kings fought against foreign rulers and began a new era. Let us travel back in time and discover how a New Year festival became a symbol of victory and hope.

What Does Ugadi Mean?

The word Ugadi comes from two Sanskrit words, “Yuga” meaning age and “Adi” meaning beginning. So Ugadi means “the beginning of a new age.” It is celebrated as the New Year in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka. In Maharashtra, it is called Gudi Padwa, and in many northern states, the same time of year marks the start of Chaitra Navratri.

Ugadi aligns with the Indian national calendar, which is based on the Saka era. It usually falls in March or April, near the spring equinox, when day and night are almost equal. It is based on the traditional Hindu lunar calendar, where the New Year begins on the first day of the month of Chaitra. But who started this calendar, and why?

The Story of the Saka Era

India’s national calendar is based on the Saka Era, which began in 78 CE. This calendar is sometimes linked with a ruler named Shalivahana. Many historians believe this name is connected to the Satavahana dynasty, especially the great king Gautamiputra Satakarni.

During ancient times, groups called the Sakas, who came from regions near Iran, ruled parts of western and northern India. The Satavahana rulers fought against them. Some historians say that after defeating the Western Kshatrapas, a new era began, which later became known as the Saka Era. Although historians still debate the exact details, the Saka calendar officially starts from 78 CE and is used even today as India’s national calendar.

The Satavahanas ruled over the deccan plateau that comprises of modern day Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and karnataka. All these states grandly celebrate the Ugaadi or Gudi Padwa.

The Special Ugadi Pickle

One of the most important Ugadi traditions among telugu people is making Ugadi Pachadi (Pickle). This special dish is prepared with jaggery, tamarind, neem flowers, raw mango, chilli, and salt. Each ingredient has a different taste: sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, and salty.

These different tastes remind us that life also has many feelings: happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, and challenges. Ugadi teaches us to accept every emotion with courage and balance.

A Festival of Fresh Beginnings

Ugadi also marks the change of season from winter to spring, called Vasantha Ritu. People decorate their homes with fresh mango leaves, wear new clothes, visit temples, and listen to predictions for the coming year.

Just like trees grow new leaves in spring, Ugadi reminds us that every year is a new chance to learn, grow, and dream bigger.

So the next time someone says Ugadi is just a New Year festival, remember, it carries history, hope, and the spirit of a new beginning.



Here's a fun reel contest for you! Create a short video about a new year festival in your region and share it on Instagram, tagging @yakshaprashnamag and get featured on Yaksha Prashna's video wall.



- Cheti Chand is the new year festival celebrated by Sindhis.
- Navreh is Kashmiri new year.
- Losar is new year celebrated in Ladhak

- Vishu in Kerala, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu, Vaisakhi in Punjab, Pohela Boishakhi in Bengal are celebrated as new year festivals during mid April.

QUIZ CORNER

9. On Ugadi, Telugu families listen to a reading of the almanac for the coming year. What is this traditional almanac called?
10. Which Indian state celebrates Lathmar Holi, remembering the legend of Radha and her friends playfully driving away Krishna by hitting with sticks?

Stories of Holi

Your annual exams are approaching fast, so is the festival of colours in India. Excited to go out and play? But your exams are binding you to books? This year, let's celebrate by reading some stories of Holi.

Holi is one of India's most famous festivals. It is celebrated on the full moon day in March to welcome the season of spring. There are many stories associated with it.

Hiranyakashipu And Prahlad

You must have watched the recent blockbuster movie - Mahavatar Narasimha. The movie is related to an important story of Holi. The king Hiranyakashipu wanted everyone to worship him, but Prahlad prayed only to Lord Vishnu. The angry king asked his sister Holika, who had a special power that protected her from fire, to sit in a burning fire with Prahlad. However, the son's strong faith saved him, and Holika was burned in ashes. This event is remembered as Holika Dahan on the night before Holi and teaches us that good always wins over evil.

Radha - Krishna

Another beautiful story is about Lord Krishna and Radha. Krishna once felt insecure about his dark complexion. His mother suggested that he playfully apply colour on Radha's face. This loving and playful act is believed to be the beginning of the tradition of applying colours during Holi.

How Holi Is Celebrated and What It Means

Holi celebrations begin with Holika Dahan, when people gather at night to light a bonfire. Families pray around the fire, sing songs, and sometimes offer grains or wood into the flames. This act shows that they are leaving behind negative thoughts and welcoming new beginnings. The next day, children and adults throw coloured powders called gulal and splash coloured water on each other. Streets become bright and lively. Each colour also has a meaning. Red stands for love and strength, yellow shows happiness and prosperity, blue reminds us of Lord Krishna, and green represents new life and the arrival of spring.

Harvest Festival

Holi also comes from old farming traditions. It celebrates the end of winter and the hope for a good harvest. Most importantly, Holi brings people together.

Holi teaches us that when we remove darkness and fill our lives with colour, kindness, and love, the world becomes a brighter place.





The “Floating Gold” From the Sea

Did you know, there is something called “whale vomit” that is worth more than gold? It sounds funny and a little yucky, but this strange thing has amazed people for hundreds of years. Let us uncover the story behind this rare treasure of the ocean.

What Is Ambergris?

Ambergris is a rare, waxy substance made inside the body of the Sperm Whale. These whales eat a lot of squid. Squid have hard beaks that cannot be digested easily. Scientists believe that sometimes the whale’s body covers these sharp beaks with a special substance to protect its stomach. Slowly, this forms a lump called ambergris. Experts think this lump is passed out through the whale’s waste through its intestine. Once it enters the sea, it floats on water because it is light.

How Does It Change in the Ocean?

When ambergris first comes out, it smells very bad and feels soft. But after floating in the sea for months or even years, sunlight and air changes it. It becomes harder and develops a sweet, musky smell. This pleasant smell is what makes it so valuable. Inside ambergris is a chemical called ambrein. Ambrein itself does not smell much, but when it reacts with air, it forms sweet-smelling compounds. These help perfumes last longer on the skin.

Why Is It So Rare and Valuable?

Only a very small number of sperm whales ever produce ambergris. Finding it floating in the sea or washed up on a beach is extremely rare. Because of this, it can sell for tens of thousands of dollars per kilogram. That is why people call it “floating gold.”

In many countries, selling ambergris is restricted because whales are protected animals. Today, most perfume companies use safe, artificial substitutes instead of natural ambergris.

From a smelly lump in the sea to a precious treasure in perfumes, ambergris shows us how nature can turn the strangest things into something truly amazing. Next time when you are on the beach, be mindful you might just step on a lifetime treasure.



Why Is Vighnu Chewing Fingers? Sumedha Finds the Answer

One evening, Sumedha was doing her homework when she noticed something. Her baby brother Vighnu was happily chewing his own fingers. Sometimes, he even grabbed Sumedha's finger and tried to chew that too!

"Amma, why is he always putting fingers in his mouth?" Sumedha asked. No one gave her a clear answer. So Sumedha decided to find out herself.

Next door lived Dr. Anu, a kind dentist. Sumedha rang the bell and asked her big question. Dr. Anu smiled. "That is actually a good sign," she said.

The Secret of the Sucking Reflex

Dr. Anu explained that babies are born with something called a sucking reflex. It helps them drink milk and stay healthy. But sucking also makes them feel calm and safe.

"When Vighnu is tired or excited, he sucks his fingers to comfort himself. It is called self soothing," the dentist said.

Sumedha felt surprised. It was not a bad habit after all!

Discovering Tiny Hands

Dr. Anu then told Sumedha that around three to four months of age, babies start discovering their hands. They slowly learn to move their arms and bring their hands to their mouths.

"Babies explore the world through their mouths," she explained. "By chewing his fingers, Vighnu is learning about touch and texture."

Is It Teething?

Sumedha had one more doubt. "But what if he is chewing because of teeth?"

"That is possible too," said Dr. Anu. Even before a tooth appears, the gums may feel sore. Chewing puts gentle pressure on the gums and makes them feel better. Drooling and slight crankiness are common during this time.

When Should We Worry?

Dr. Anu assured Sumedha that finger sucking is normal in babies and usually reduces as they grow. But if strong thumb sucking continues after four or five years, it may affect the way teeth grow.

That evening, Sumedha watched Vighnu chew his tiny fingers again. This time she did not worry. She smiled, knowing her little brother was simply growing, learning, and feeling safe.



Story of Aviator Glasses

When you hear the words “aviator sunglasses,” you might think of your favourite movie heroes wearing shiny glasses and looking super confident. Maybe you remember Tom Cruise from an action movie or Superstar Rajni. Aviator sunglasses look stylish and bold but did you know they were not first made for movie stars and common people?

Solving a Problem in the Sky

In the 1930s, military pilots flew aircraft very high above the clouds. At such heights, the sunlight was extremely strong and the glare made it hard to see clearly. Pilots struggled to read their instruments and spot other airplanes. This bright light could affect their performance and even cause danger during long flights. To solve this serious problem, the United States Army Air Corps worked with an American company called Bausch & Lomb. They designed special sunglasses that would protect pilots’ eyes from intense sunlight and harmful rays. They are called aviators because they were first made for aviators, which means pilots who fly airplanes.

A Smart and Protective Design

The new sunglasses had large lenses and thin metal frames. The wide lenses covered the entire eye area and blocked sunlight from different angles. The metal frames were lightweight, so pilots could wear them comfortably under their helmets without feeling heavy or disturbed. The lenses also filtered harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. By reducing glare, eye strain and headaches, these sunglasses helped pilots stay focused and alert during long and demanding missions in the sky.

From Military Gear to World Fashion

In 1937, the sunglasses were introduced to the public under the brand name Ray-Ban. The name means “to ban the sun’s rays.” Large numbers were first produced for the armed forces, and after World War II, extra pairs became available to civilians. Soon, people outside the military began wearing them because they were practical and stylish.

What started as protective equipment for fighter pilots has become one of the most iconic sunglasses styles in the world.

QUIZ CORNER

11. The word “aviator” comes from the Latin word “avis.” What does “avis” mean in Latin?
12. Which animal has the largest brain among the living beings on earth?



Story of the Dumbbell

Did you lift a dumbbell in a gym and wondered why it has such a funny name? It does not talk, so why call it “dumb”? This small weight may look simple, but its story travels back hundreds of years. From tall church towers in Europe to ancient playgrounds in Greece and India, the dumbbell has an exciting past.

From Church Bells to Silent Bells

Today, we check the time by looking at a clock or a mobile phone. But many centuries ago, people in Europe did not have these things. They listened to large church bells that rang every hour. If it was two o'clock, the bell rang two times. These bells were also used for prayers, celebrations, and warnings.

Ringling such heavy bells was not easy. Specially trained people worked as bell ringers. To practice safely without making loud noise, they used heavy bell-shaped devices that did not produce any sound. Since they were silent, they were called “dumb bells.” In old English, the word “dumb” meant “silent,” not foolish. In 1711, a writer named Joseph Addison even mentioned “dumb bells” in his magazine *The Spectator*. Over time, these silent practice tools slowly changed into the hand weights we use today, but the name remained.

Strength Training in Greece and India

Long before modern gyms, people in ancient Greece used weights called halteres. These were made of stone or metal and had handles. Athletes held them while doing long jumps to improve their performance. They also used them to build muscle strength.

In India, wrestlers trained with heavy wooden clubs called *nal* or *mudgar*. These helped them build strength and stamina. Later, the British saw these clubs and called them “Indian Clubs,” spreading the idea to other countries.

The Modern Dumbbell

By the 1800s, gyms became popular in schools, military centres, and health clubs. Dumbbells became common because they were simple, easy to carry, and very useful for exercise.

From ancient stones to modern metal weights, hand-held weights have helped people grow stronger for thousands of years. A small tool, but a story full of strength.



What Is “Caught Red-Handed”?

Did you ever see someone get caught while doing something wrong? Maybe a child secretly eating sweets or a student copying homework in class? We often say they were “caught red-handed.” These words sound funny, but they have a very serious and interesting history.

When Hands Were Truly Red

Long ago in Scotland, the words “red hand” or “redhand” were used in real crime cases. If a person killed someone or secretly killed another person’s animal, they might be caught with blood still on their hands. The blood was clear proof that they had done something wrong. In those days, animals like cows and sheep were very important because they were a family’s main source of money and food. So killing someone else’s animal, which was called poaching, was a serious crime.

Scottish law records from the 15th century mention this idea. A legal book explained that a person accused of poaching had to be caught with blood on his hands to prove he was guilty. If there was no blood, there was no strong proof. That is how the phrase began.

How Books Made It Famous

In the early 1800s, a famous Scottish writer named Sir Walter Scott used the word “red-handed” in his novel *Ivanhoe*. His book became very popular, and soon people everywhere started using the phrase. Slowly, its meaning changed.

Today, we use “caught red-handed” when someone is caught in the act of doing something wrong, even if there is no real blood involved. It could be anything from cheating in a test to taking something without permission. The idea is simple: the person was caught with clear proof.

The Modern “Red-Handed” Trap

Even today, the idea of being caught with proof is important. In India, anti-corruption agencies like the ACB use something called a “red-handed trap” to catch officers who take bribes. They use currency notes covered with a special colourless powder called phenolphthalein. When the suspect touches the money and their hands are washed in a special solution, the liquid turns pink. This shows they accepted the bribe. That’s again called ‘catching red handed.’

Isn’t it amazing how a phrase from old Scotland still lives in our everyday speech, reminding us that truth always finds a way to show itself?



The Friendly Bacteria That Help You Stay Healthy

When you walk into a medical shop, you may see many bottles that say “probiotics.” Even packets of curd proudly say they are full of them. But what are probiotics? Are they really important? The answer might surprise you. Inside your body, there is a tiny world of living things working day and night to keep you healthy.

What Are Probiotics?

Our body is home to trillions of tiny living organisms called microbes. Many of them are bacteria. Some bacteria can make us sick, but many are good and helpful. Probiotics are the good bacteria that we get from certain foods and sometimes from medicines. These helpful bacteria support the “microbiome,” which is the community of microbes living in our body.

A healthy microbiome keeps the body in balance and prevents harmful bacteria from growing too much. Most people think probiotics are only for the stomach. It is true that good bacteria in the intestines help digestion and keep our bowels regular. But good bacteria also live on our skin, in our mouth, and in other parts of the body. They may help reduce problems like acne, tooth decay, and certain infections.

You can get probiotics from foods like curd, buttermilk, idli, dosa, appam, and some naturally fermented pickles. However, probiotic supplements should be taken only after talking to a doctor.

What Are Prebiotics?

Good bacteria are living things, and like all living things, they need food. Prebiotics are special types of fibre that feed these helpful bacteria. When good bacteria get enough food, they grow stronger and help keep your body healthy.

You can find prebiotics in foods like garlic, onions, millets, oats, bananas, apples, guavas, jackfruit, and flaxseeds. Eating fibre-rich food is one of the best ways to care for your microbiome.

What Are Synbiotics?

When probiotics and prebiotics are taken together, they are called synbiotics. The prebiotic acts as food for the probiotic, helping it survive and work better inside the gut.

Scientists say synbiotics may improve digestion and support gut balance. However, the right type and amount are important, and research is still continuing. Still, caring for your tiny gut helpers is a smart step toward a healthier and happier you.



A Fibre That Changed the World

Have you ever worn a raincoat, sports jersey, or even used a toothbrush? What if one special fibre helped create all these things? This is the story of nylon, a man-made fibre that began in a science lab and soon became famous around the world.

A Smart Idea in a Science Lab

Nylon is not found in nature like cotton or wool. It is a fully synthetic fibre, meaning it is made by scientists using chemicals. In the 1930s, an American scientist named Wallace Hume Carothers worked with his team at DuPont in the United States. They wanted to create a strong artificial fibre that could replace silk.

On February 28, 1935, a chemist named Gerard Berchet successfully produced the first useful nylon fibre, called nylon 6,6. It was strong, stretchy, smooth, and very useful. This was an important scientific breakthrough.

The First Use: Toothbrushes

Before nylon became popular in clothing, it was first used in toothbrushes. In 1938, toothbrushes with nylon bristles were sold. They were better than animal hair bristles because they lasted longer and dried faster. People quickly realised that nylon was strong and dependable, and companies began finding many new uses for it.

From Fashion to War

In 1939, nylon was shown to the public at the New York World's Fair as the world's first fully synthetic fibre. In 1940, nylon stockings went on sale and became extremely popular because they were smoother and stronger than silk. Millions of pairs were sold.

During World War II, nylon was used to make parachutes, ropes, and tents for soldiers. Because of this, stockings disappeared from shops. After 1945, they returned, and people stood in long queues to buy them.

Nylon Today

Today, nylon is used in carpets, fishing lines, luggage, car parts, sportswear, and many household items. However, it is made from petroleum and does not break down easily in nature. Scientists are working to recycle nylon and reduce its impact on the environment.

From a small lab experiment to everyday life, nylon shows how science can truly change the world.

QUIZ CORNER

13. DuPont, the same company that invented nylon, also invented another extremely famous material that is used to coat non-stick cookware. What is it called?



A Tiny Tool That Changed the World

When you hear the word “mouse,” do you think of a small animal? Or maybe a cartoon character? But this story is about a different mouse, the one you use with a computer. It looks simple, but it has a powerful story behind it. This tiny device helped people control computers in a new and easy way. Let us find out how it all began.

Why Was It Called a “Mouse”?

In the early days, computers were very big and difficult to use. Scientists wanted a better way to move around on the screen and select things. In the 1960s, a scientist named Douglas Engelbart at the Stanford Research Institute created the first computer mouse. It was made of wood and had two small wheels inside to detect movement.

A wire came out from the back of the device. It looked like a tail, so people started calling it a “mouse.” In 1968, Engelbart gave a famous public demonstration where he showed how the mouse worked along with other new computer ideas. Many people were amazed because it made computers easier to use.

Xerox, Apple, and a Big Change

Later, researchers at a company called Xerox improved the mouse and developed new ideas for computers. However, the company focused mainly on making photocopy machines and ignored the innovative of their researchers. Apple engineers visited Xerox, saw these new ideas, and decided to use them. Apple bought the rights and made the mouse simpler and cheaper.

When Apple released the Macintosh computer in 1984, it came with a single-button mouse. This helped beginners use computers more easily. Soon, many people around the world started using computers with a mouse. This shows that good ideas become powerful when someone acts on them.

The Mouse Today

Over time, the mouse changed a lot. The rolling ball inside was replaced by optical sensors that use light to track movement. Wireless mice and scroll wheels were added. Even today, even with touchscreens, the mouse is widely used for studying, designing, and office work.

From a small wooden box to a smart tool on our desks, the mouse proves that even the smallest invention can change the world.



Wine Boxes to Petrol Rates

You must have heard about petrol prices going up on the news of war between US-Israel and Iran. But did you ever wondered how those prices are written? Next time you see a newspaper, check the crude oil price, it probably says something like "\$67/bbl." Let's find out what that actually means!

What Does It Mean?

When you see "\$67/bbl," it means that 158.99 litres of crude oil, the raw material used to make petrol, costs 67 US dollars. Now you might ask: why such a strange number like 158.99 litres? And what is "bbl"? The answer takes us back in time!

Why 158.99 Litres?

Back in 15th century England, a company made wooden boxes called barrels to carry goods like wine and fish on ships. They chose a size of 158.99 litres, or 42 gallons, simply because two workers could easily lift and carry it while loading ships. This size was so useful that King Richard III made it the official standard, and slowly the whole world started using it.

The Petrol Connection

When oil was first discovered in 1859 in the USA, traders needed a quick way to transport it. They simply used the same 42-gallon barrels that already existed. A powerful company called Standard Oil painted their oil barrels blue, and soon all oil barrels were blue. That is why oil is measured in "bbl", short for Blue Barrel even today, when oil travels through giant pipes and tankers!

Next time someone mentions oil prices, you'll know there's a 500-year-old wooden barrel hiding behind those numbers!

QUIZ CORNER

14. In which Indian state can you find the first oil well in India - Digboi?
15. In a gym, dumbbells are short and held in one hand. What is the name of the longer bar with weights on both ends, held with both hands?
16. When someone commits a crime in India, the police register a written complaint. What is this complaint called in short?
17. Good bacteria mostly live in which part of our digestive system?



Not all Oranges Are Orange

You have eaten the sweet orange mithai from your local shop and sipped freshly squeezed orange juice on a hot summer afternoon. But did you know that the orange you love has many surprising cousins, some red, some sour, some perfect for juice, and each one has its own delicious secret waiting to be discovered?

Where Did the Orange Come From?

The orange did not come from Europe. It first grew in the region between northeastern India and southern China, making it a fruit with roots close to home! Sanskrit speakers called it "naranga." Arab traders then carried the fruit westward, calling it "naranj." By the time it travelled to Italy and then England, the name slowly changed until it became the word we use today, "orange."

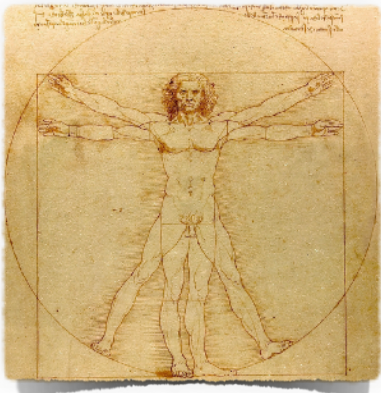
Not all Oranges Are the Same

All oranges may look round and bright on the outside, but on the inside they can be very different. Navel oranges are sweet, seedless, and easy to peel, perfect for eating fresh. Valencia oranges are thin-skinned and very juicy, which is why they are used to make the orange juice you drink. Blood oranges have deep red flesh and taste slightly sweet with a hint of berry, almost like a fruit from a fairy tale! Mandarins, including clementines and tangerines, are smaller, sweeter, and easiest to peel. Seville oranges are very sour and are mostly used to make marmalade, not for eating directly! Now its time for you to explore each of these fruits and more like Grapefruit, Satsuma, Clementine, Kumquat etc.,

Just like every student in your class has a different talent, every orange has its own special taste and purpose and that is what makes each one wonderful.



Create a video about any story in this month's Yaksha Prashna magazine and tag @yakshaprashnamag on Instagram. The video with the most likes will be the face of Yaksha Prashna in March 2026!



The Man Inside a Circle

Did you noticed the logo of the gym Cult.fit? It shows a person standing straight, but also with arms and legs stretched out wide, almost like they are doing jumping jacks. That pose may look modern, but its idea comes from a drawing made more than 500 years ago by a brilliant artist named Leonardo da Vinci. Let us discover the story behind this famous picture.

The Roman Idea

The word "Vitruvian" comes from Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect who lived in the 1st century BC. In his book *De Architectura*, he wrote that the human body has balanced proportions. He explained that when a man stretches his arms wide, the distance from one hand to the other is equal to his height. He believed buildings should follow the same balance and harmony found in the human body.

Leonardo's Curious Experiment

Around 1490, Leonardo da Vinci drew the famous Vitruvian Man. The drawing shows a man inside a circle and a square. Many thinkers of that time believed the circle represented the universe and the square represented the earth. Leonardo wanted to see if Vitruvius was correct, so he carefully measured real human bodies. The drawing illustrates Leonardo's study of ideal human proportions.

In his drawing, the man's navel becomes the center of the circle when his arms and legs are stretched out. But the center of the square is slightly lower, near the groin. This shows that Leonardo made small changes based on his own observations.

Why Is It Special?

The Vitruvian Man is special because it brings together art, mathematics and science in one simple drawing. Leonardo believed that by studying the human body, we can understand the world better.

Even today, this drawing reminds us that learning and curiosity can turn simple ideas into timeless masterpieces.

**DID
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KNOW**

Leonardo da Vinci's unique writing style involved writing letters backwards, making the text readable only in a mirror. This technique, known as mirror writing or reverse writing, was likely used to keep his ideas

private or simply because he was left-handed.



Have you ever held a balloon and wondered where it came from? It looks simple, colourful and fun. But the story of balloons is full of science, experiments and surprising ideas. Long before balloons reached birthday parties and school celebrations, they were part of exciting discoveries.

When Balloons Were Used for Experiments

Nearly two hundred years ago, a scientist named Michael Faraday was studying gases. In 1824, he joined two thin pieces of rubber and filled them with hydrogen gas. This became the first rubber balloon. Faraday was not trying to make toys for children. He was trying to understand how gases behaved. His small invention later inspired many others to improve balloons.

The Balloon That Touched the Sky

Around the same time, two French brothers named Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Étienne Montgolfier built a giant hot air balloon made of paper and cloth. When hot air filled the balloon, it slowly lifted into the sky. People watched in amazement as it floated like a huge bird. For the first time, humans realised that balloons could carry things high above the ground.

From Science to Celebrations

As rubber became easier to produce, balloons slowly moved out of laboratories and into everyday life. At first they were filled with hydrogen gas, but because hydrogen can catch fire easily, people later used helium which is much safer. In 1931, an inventor named Neil Tillotson created modern latex balloons that were colourful, stretchy and easy to make in large numbers. Soon balloons became common at fairs, festivals and birthday parties.

The Funny Story of Balloon Animals

Long before modern balloons, people even used dried animal intestines to make balloon shapes. The Aztecs twisted them into animal figures for religious ceremonies. After rubber balloons were invented, the idea continued. After World War Two, long skinny balloons were made in Japan. These balloons could twist into dogs, giraffes and many other animals.

Today, balloon artists can turn a simple balloon into almost anything. So the next time you see a balloon floating happily in the air, remember its long journey from science experiments to joyful celebrations.



Types of Salutes

Do you salute the India flag on republic day or independence day? It may look simple, but that small action carries a big meaning. Let us find out more about salutes and how salutes are done in the armed forces.

How Did Saluting Begin?

Many years ago in medieval Europe, knights wore heavy metal armour. When they met someone important, they lifted their helmet visors to show their faces. This showed they came in peace. Some warriors also raised their right hand to show they were not holding a weapon. Slowly, this action became a formal way of showing respect in armies. In India, the salute came from British military customs during colonial times. After Independence, our country kept the salute but shaped it to reflect our own pride, discipline, and love for the nation.

The Indian Army's Salute

In the Indian Army, a soldier raises the right hand with fingers straight and together. The middle finger almost touches the hat or eyebrow. The palm faces outward. This shows the soldier's hand is empty and holds no weapon. It is a sign of honesty and trust. Soldiers salute during parades, flag ceremonies, roll calls, and when meeting senior officers. If they are holding a weapon, they use a special method called "Salami Shastra" to salute properly.

The Indian Navy's Salute

The Indian Navy has a different style. Sailors raise their right hand, but their palm faces downward. Long ago, sailors worked with ropes and engines that made their hands dirty with grease and oil. Showing a dirty palm would have been disrespectful, so they turned it downward. This tradition continues even today.

The Indian Air Force's Salute

In March 2006, the Indian Air Force created its own unique salute. Airmen raise their right hand at a 45-degree angle with fingers straight. This upward angle represents the sky, where they serve and protect. It matches their proud motto, "Touch the Sky with Glory."

Though the styles are different, the meaning is the same. A salute is not just for a person, but for the uniform, the rank, and the nation.



The Officers Behind the Scenes

Every day, many important decisions are taken in a district, but most of us never see who is working behind them. When relief reaches a village during floods, when elections are conducted peacefully, or when land records are updated, careful planning and responsibility are involved. Two important officers help manage all this work. Let us understand who they are and what their titles mean.

The Meaning Behind “Collector”

The word Collector comes from the Latin word colligere, which means to gather together. Over time, it became the English word collector, meaning a person who gathers things, especially money like taxes.

In 1772, during British rule under Warren Hastings, districts were organised for better administration. The officer who gathered land revenue for the government was called the Collector. Even though the duties later became much wider, the historic title remained.

The Role of a District Collector

Today, the District Collector, also known as District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner in some states, is usually an officer of the Indian Administrative Service. This officer handles the overall administration of the district.

The Collector works to maintain law and order along with the police, manages land revenue and records, conducts elections as District Election Officer, and ensures government schemes in health, education, housing, and employment reach people properly. During natural disasters like floods or droughts, the Collector arranges relief and support.

The Meaning Behind “Commissioner”

The word Commissioner comes from the Latin word committere, meaning to entrust a duty. From this came the word commission, which means an official task given with authority. A commissioner is a person trusted to carry out such responsibility.

The Role of a Commissioner

In India, commissioners are appointed for specific areas of work. A Police Commissioner manages policing in certain cities. A Municipal Commissioner looks after city administration. A Divisional Commissioner supervises a group of districts and guides District Collectors.

Though we may not always notice them, these responsible officers help our district function smoothly and serve the people every day.

DID U KNOW



The moment you think about Kerosene, a blue colour flammable liquid might come to your mind. But the original kerosene is colourless. A blue coloured dye is added to it in India while being distributed to public at subsidised prices. This is done to prevent the misuse by mixing it with petrol or diesel or to be resold for higher price.

The subsidies on the kerosene are now removed in India as the government is moving towards kerosene free cooking.

The high quality kerosene is majorly used as the fuel for aeroplanes.



There is a tamarind tree near the tomb of Tansen, the legendary singer and musician in the court of Akbar. It is believed that chewing the leaves of this tamarind tree near the tomb at Gwalior gives a sweet voice to the budding singers.

QUIZ CORNER

- Alexander Fleming discovered a medicine that kills harmful bacteria inside our body. What is this medicine called?
- Which city in India is called the "Orange City" and is famous for its sweet oranges?
- The colour "orange" is actually named after the fruit. Before oranges arrived in England, what did people call the colour orange?

Quiz

CONTEST

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- 2 Only readers with an **annual subscription** can join
- 3 The **top 3 lucky participants** with all correct answers will win
- 4 Send the answers by end of this month



Scan the QR to answer

Questions



1. Which enterprising community, who owns some of the major companies in India, was the first to adopt cricket in the country in the 1830s?



2. This is the flag of which powerful East India Company?

3. What is it called when second full moon appears in a single calendar month? Hint: Despite the name, these moons do not actually appear in that colour

Answers

1. Dubai
2. Portuguese came in 1498 and Mughals came in 1526
3. Lay's
4. Malaria
5. Saudi Arabia
6. Idly (Same bacteria can be found in Dosa batter also)
7. Pasu
8. Summer Solstice (June 21) and Winter Solstice (22 December)
9. Panchanga
10. Uttar Pradesh
11. Bird
12. Sperm Whale
13. Teflon
14. Assam
15. Barbell
16. FIR - First Information Report
17. Large Intestine
18. Penicillin
19. Nagpur
20. Yellow Red

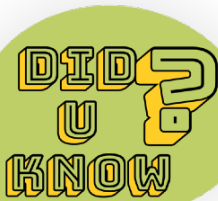
Answers of Quiz Contest from previous edition

1. Humans
2. Indigo And Orange
3. Srinivasa Ramanujan

For questions, read the December edition.

Winners of December quiz contest

No one got all the 3 answers correct in the Quiz Contest in January 2026 edition of Yaksha Prashna.



DID
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KNOW



An exclave is a portion of a country geographically separated from the main part by the territory of one or more surrounding foreign countries. One such important exclave is Musandam exclave of Oman in the Persian Gulf, near strait of Hormuz which is news to to the conflict between US-Israel and Iran. Explore the internet to find out where exactly is this place

Editor's Note

Bodhanapu Vishnu, CEO, TackOn Knowledge Solutions

Dear Readers,

February brings the colours of Holi, the freshness of Ugadi, and the joyful energy of spring. This edition of Yaksha Prashna is packed with stories that remind us how deeply curiosity connects everything around us.

Did you know that a rise in the price of pepper once changed world history? Or that a tiny mosquito helped bring down mighty empires? From the very first cricket match played on Indian soil to the surprising science behind your favourite chips packet — this edition travels across time, cultures, and continents.

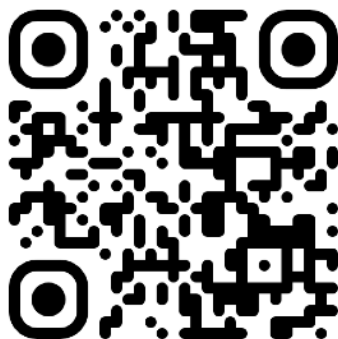
We explore the wisdom hidden in everyday things — why vada has a hole, how the word "dumbbell" was born from church bells, and what whale vomit has to do with expensive perfume!

As your annual exams approach, remember: every question you ask is the beginning of a great story.

Happy reading!



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