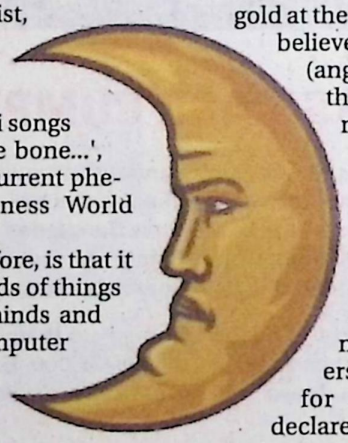
The Miracle of the Moon

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No matter what logic tells us we still believe in miracles. Perhaps when things get so bad that nothing makes sense anymore (think present time Bangladesh) we want to believe the impossible will happen.

After the sighting of a convicted war criminal on the moon, people who would rather not use their brains if they can help it, decided that this was a sign that he was holy and therefore those who want his punishment must be punished.

Rumour has it that certain songs with the word 'moon' or with references to this otherwise neglected natural satellite, have become viral. Boney M's 'One Way Ticket to the Moon' has become number one on the hit list, sorry list of hits followed by Sting's 'Walking on the Moon' and Savage Garden's 'From the Moon and Back'. The popularity of Bengali songs like: 'Ey jostna raate shobai gechhe bone...', 'Aye Aye Chand Mama...' is also a current phenomenon that may reach Guinness World Record proportions.



The flip side of technology, therefore, is that it has made it possible to make all kinds of things seem real, playing with people's minds and emotions. Photoshop and other computer programmes, have, for instance, served to make many celebrities look slimmer and prettier than they are. The BBC once complained that a French magazine had actually touched up a photograph of former president Nicholas Sarkozy which erased those terrible 'love handles, pimples and warts'. They even released a statement saying: "Paris Match is filtering the truth that the rest of the world must see. Akin to propaganda, it has been beautifying the ugly president since his rise to power. Let the world see the representative of the real France, unshaven, ugly, drunk and homeless." This may seem rather mean but it does make you feel better to think that maybe Aishwarya is just not *that* perfect.

But the moon fiasco has certainly given rise to all sorts of notions. Some people have said that if the war criminal in question was in fact sighted on the moon it is possible that all this time what we had thought was the proverbial 'Chander Buri' (the old woman in the moon) who spun hypothetical handloom material on her spindle was in fact this crimson - bearded gem of a man. Others have said that sending war criminals to the moon may not be such a bad idea. After all that would accomplish the ultimate goal - their permanent departure (assuming the oxygen would soon run out).

The things that people believe in this day and age hint at the persistent craving for the supernatural. People from the Subcontinent are particularly attracted to holy men with special powers and special heavenly connections. A self proclaimed *pir* once claimed that he had Djinns who would, at his command, bring precious jewels and gold at the *pir's* bidding. He even got people to believe that he could produce a *hur pori* (angel) from the heavens. The only thing he wanted in exchange was to marry the young daughter or wife of the person who had come to seek help which suddenly explains his motives quite clearly. Within a few years he had a following of hundreds of people. He was able to convince them that he could perform miracles. It was after a dozen or so marriages (many of them to teenagers) and zero results in terms of riches for his disciples that the *pir* was declared a fraud and arrested. His ingenuity, however, could not be denied. He would put stones covered in golden foil along with coloured glass beads that looked like real jewels in an earthen bowl and place a magnifying glass over them so they would appear huge to the village people. He managed the 'fairy sighting' by asking one of his younger and prettier wives to cover her head and sit on a raft on a nearby pond and he would take his disciples to see this 'heavenly sight', floating on the water at dawn to add to the mystery.

All this points to the fact that it is about time that we realised that the days of walking on water and parting the ocean are over. Now if these things happen we should just blame it on climate change or Photoshop.

The only miracle we can hope for now is for two powerful enchantresses to sit together and talk without tearing each other's hair out.