

INDIA: Religion is a large element in India’s politics

Continued from 1C

leading a yoked team of oxen, women with stacks of firewood balanced on their heads. There is an unspoken agreement — among car and truck drivers, pedestrians and animals on highways — that would elude an American. Oh-My-God traffic moments come quickly and persistently on major city thoroughfares as well as narrow rural roads. Religion is never far from sight during Indian travels. Hindu temples and mosques are a common sight everywhere. Janist temples are in more remote places.



These shrouded women were on a Jodhpur street.

Christian churches and cathedrals are more common in certain states such as Kerala and Goa. In the Delhi airport I discovered a useful book: “The Religions of India,” by Roshen Dalal (Penguin). It is a compendium of the nine major faiths of India: Hinduism, Janism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Judaism, Bahais and Zoroastrianism. The author also includes tribal religions. The mystic is a distinctly Indian phenomenon. Oregonians remember the story of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a mystic who came from Pune, India, to Antelope, Oregon, in the 1980s. Over dinner with the Ranases, my



Women carrying firewood are a common sight at the edge of highways.

eyes widened when Nooruddin’s brother Shamsu described how, as a youngster, he saw the much younger Rajneesh speak at his Pune ashram. “He was hypnotic,” remembered Shamsu. Religion is a large element in India’s politics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi plays his Hindu card with sometimes a morbid, tragic outcome. At the same time, on a more intimate level, the visitor’s heart is warmed by multiple daily greetings. With head bowed and hands together, a person addresses you with “Namaste.” Loosely translated, that woman or man is saying: The light in my soul recognizes the light in your soul. The visitor returns the greeting. After weeks of exchanging that greeting, it is jarring to reenter the western world where it can be difficult to coax a “Hello” out of a passerby.

Animal tracks India is one of those nations, like Japan, that reads newspapers avidly. I read the *Times of India* and the *Hindu Times* daily. The sports page is full of cricket, soccer and badminton. The day’s garish crime news is fully on display, along with politics and a glimpse at the wider world. Part of the global news was America’s latest gun massacre. Our country often looks strange from the vantage point of a nation that is not swimming in firearms. The *Times of India* carried this metric: “Five Days: the longest America has gone without a mass shooting where four or more people, not including the shooter, were shot or killed in the same location this year.” Rajasthan is the fabled land of maharajas, their immense fortifications, armies, wives and

concubines. We saw three of those forts. Kumbalgarh was the most impressive, with a 37-kilometer wall — the second longest in the world, behind the Great Wall of China. As we entered Jaisalmer, we noticed another kind of fortification: the Indian army and air force’s heavy presence. We were less than 15 miles from the Pakistan border. On our last day in Kumbalgarh, we hiked a trail below the fort that was the corridor to the king’s hunting ground, in which he hunted resident tigers to extinction. As we walked out of this arid jungle, for miles we observed the tracks of panthers, bears and Indian wildcats. *Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Daily Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.*

Wine, meat, garlic combine for a stick-to-your ribs stew

By ELIZABETH KARMEL
Associated Press

During the recent bomb cyclone snowstorm, I couldn’t go to the store for several days as I waited to get plowed out of my driveway. I had plenty of food, but a lot of it was that first of January “diet” food and I was craving a warm stick-to-your ribs stew. It became a challenge to see what I had on hand that I could assemble into a dish that would warm my bones and satisfy my appetite. I had a hanger steak in the freezer and carrots, mushrooms, shallots and garlic on hand. I had half a bottle of burgundy (pinot noir) left over from the last supper before the storm and so a beef burgundy stew immediately came to mind. Because I had never made a beef burgundy stew before, and was short on time, I decided to use my handy electric pressure cooker. I am a new fan of these one-pot meals and amazed at the flavor that you can coax out of a pressure cooker. I decided to cook the hanger steak whole and still partially frozen, and cut it into chunks once it was done. I like the texture of the meat better this way even though almost every stew recipe out there tells you to chunk it up first. If you don’t want to use hanger steak, there are other cuts of beef that you can use. I cleaned and sliced the carrots into round slices, cut the white mushrooms in half so that they would retain their shape during the pressure cooking, peeled the skins from the garlic cloves and the shallots but left them whole so that they would peel apart once they were cooked and add chunkiness to the stew. To peel the garlic, I tried a new tip that will change your garlic-peeling life. I know it changed mine. A friend who does not cook, but microwaves, told me that you could microwave garlic and the peel will slide off. Like most people, I find peeling the skin off garlic cloves to be tedious. To that end, I have tried everything including the silicone tube that promises to peel garlic but only works a fraction of the time. Having nothing to lose, I took half a bulb of garlic and placed it in the microwave for 10 seconds. I removed it, and it broke into individual cloves immediately. I then rubbed the cloves between my fingers and the peel slipped right off. New year, new kitchen tip! But back to the stew. Once I made it, I realized that it would be even better the next day, so I poured the stew into a Dutch oven and let it sit in the fridge overnight. Besides letting all the flavors marry, I love doing this because you can skim the fat in one fell swoop by picking the solidified fat off the top. Below is all the flavor but none of the fat. This is an excellent trick for chicken soup and many other one pot soups and stews that start with raw meat. If you want to eat the stew immediately, you can skim the fat off the top the old-fashioned way, or just eat it. I thickened my stew with an old-fashioned roux of browned butter and flour, but you could also thicken it with corn starch. Serve the stew over egg noodles, mashed potatoes or gnocchi for a very satisfying cold-weather meal.



Burgundy beef stew.

AP Photo/Elizabeth Karmel

BURGUNDY BEEF STEW

Servings: 6-8
Start to finish: 75 minutes

- 1 hanger steak brisket or boneless short ribs, 1 1/2 (backslash)2-2 pounds
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt or kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/8teaspoon dried sage
- 2 large carrots, cleaned and sliced into rounds
- 1/2 bulb of garlic, 6-9 individual cloves peeled
- 6-8shallots peeled and trimmed
- 1 package (8-ounces) of white mushrooms, cleaned and cut in half
- 1 quart beef broth or stock
- 2 cups red burgundy (pinot noir)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Set whole hanger steak or other meat on a plate. Mix together the salt, pepper, rosemary and sage. If you like a more “seasoned” stew, double the spice mixture and save half of it for seasoning at the end. Season the meat with the spice rub and place in the pressure cooker or a Dutch Oven. Pour the sliced carrots, garlic cloves, shallots and mushrooms on top of the meat. Pour the beef broth and wine over the meat and vegetables. Seal your pressure cooker or “Instant Pot” according

to manufacturer directions. Set on high pressure for 23 minutes. Once it is cooked, release pressure and keep it warm. Remove the meat and discard any connective tissue. Cut into chunks and place back into the hot pot and stir. Keep the stew on warm. In a small skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and add the flour. Let it cook until brown and thickened. Add a little of the cooking liquid, about 1/2 cup total and let it cook until thickened, stirring frequently. Add thickened sauce to the hot liquid and let simmer uncovered for about 10 minutes. At this point, you can taste the stew and correct any seasonings by adding salt and pepper if needed. You can also season the stew with the spice rub that you seasoned the meat with it you doubled the recipe. Serve the stew at this point, or do as I do and pour the stew into a Dutch Oven and let it sit in the refrigerator overnight. When ready to serve, remove fat cap and simmer for 20 minutes or until hot and bubbling. *Nutrition information per serving: 364 calories; 139 calories from fat; 16 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 77 mg cholesterol; 42 mg sodium; 17 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 25 g protein.*

U.S. travel industry launches plan to reverse tourism decline

NEW YORK (AP) — Travel industry representatives sounded an alarm Tuesday over a long-term decline in international tourism to the U.S. and said they want to work with the Trump administration to reverse the trend. Organizers of the new Visit U.S. Coalition said the decline started in 2015 and repeatedly said they are not blaming President Donald Trump, who has been criticized by some in the travel industry for spurring a “Trump slump” with anti-foreigner rhetoric and policies. Instead, the new coalition blamed the tourism downturn on factors like the strong U.S. dollar, complex visa requirements and low-cost air travel that boosts travel elsewhere. Coalition representatives were short on specific proposals to reverse the decline but mentioned making it easier for foreigners to get visas and the need for more welcoming messages to balance out stronger border security. “People misinterpreted a lot of our security protocols to be an unwelcoming message,” said Geoff Freeman, CEO of the American Gaming Association, a member of the coalition. Freeman added that the U.S. can be a “welcoming and secure destination simultaneously.” Statistics cited by the coalition showed America’s share of global travel fell from 13.6 percent to 11.9 percent between 2015 and 2017. The U.S. was one of only two destinations in the top dozen global markets to see a decline in long-haul inbound travel since 2015. The other country that lost market share was Turkey, where tourism dropped after repeated terror attacks. “We’re falling behind,” said Roger Dow, CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, the nonprofit organization that spearheaded a conference call Tuesday announcing the Visit U.S. Coalition. He said the drop represents 7.4 million fewer visitors from around the world, which translates to “100,000 American jobs not created.” “Travel and tourism is our country’s second largest export,” said Katherine Lugar, CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging Association. “We can’t afford to lose ground to other countries.” She said the average overseas traveler spends \$4,400 visiting the U.S., adding that “fewer visitors mean fewer hotel stays, fewer meals, fewer goods purchased in our retail stores and fewer visits to our national attractions.” Travel is a top 10 employer in 49 states and Washington, D.C., and international travel is the country’s No. 1 service export and No. 2 export overall, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Other organizations in the Visit U.S. Coalition include the International Association of Exhibitions and Events, National Restaurant Association and the National Retail Federation. Dow said he’d like to see more personnel at visa offices and customs so that people who want to come here “don’t stand in line for two to three hours.” He said coalition representatives have been meeting with government agencies including the U.S. State Department, the Commerce Department and the Transportation Department. Dow noted, as an example of how travel trends are not solely determined by politics, that visitors from Canada have increased even though President Donald Trump “isn’t particularly popular” in Canada. The uptick in tourists from north of the border is likely due to the strengthening of Canadian currency against the U.S. dollar.