

in the name of God

## The biggest book club



SORABH PANT

People say that reading is dead. Which is ridiculous. Because, religion is still well and truly alive! Religion is basically the world's largest book club. The only problem is that it's about just one book. Which is weird! Imagine if you had a friend who was a voracious reader but, he only read *Harry Potter* — every Sunday or five times a day.

I'm not against religion. Religious books are a wonderful blueprint, the ultimate self-help books. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Papal*, *How to Discover the Diamond in Jew*, *Men are From Mecca*, *Women Too*, *How to Win Friends and Influence Parvati* and *You can Sin!* Great books, all! Plus, religion induces people to party once every few days and make great food. The best endorsements for religion in history have to be Bhangra and Dhansak.

Globally, educated youths are losing faith in religion: we blame it for war. That's rubbish. Religion doesn't cause war. A-holes do! Religion is just the tool for them to express their innate A-holiness. For some people it takes a fast bike or three drinks or Candy Crush requests to express their A-holiness; for others it takes the promise of salvation. Spirituality is an X-Ray for your soul: it can empower you or turn you into a harami.

Admittedly: God's Resumé sucks. Imagine you were hiring God and asked: "Hey, what's your work experience?"

"Oh, 9,000 years of miracles."

"Amazing. When?"

"8,000 B.C. - 1 B.C. Briefly in 1,600s too."

"OK, and nothing after?"

"Nope."

"So, you've been unemployed for four centuries? Any proof of your miracles?"

"Nope. A few prophets 'saw' them. But, this was before Camera Phones."

"OK. So, no recommendations either. And, what post do you want to apply for?"

"CEO of Earth."

"OK. Get out."

And, that's why we sent a mission to Mars. Because, seeing what people do in God's name on Earth, we've lost his/her/it's purpose. Maybe ISRO will find him/her/it/alien.

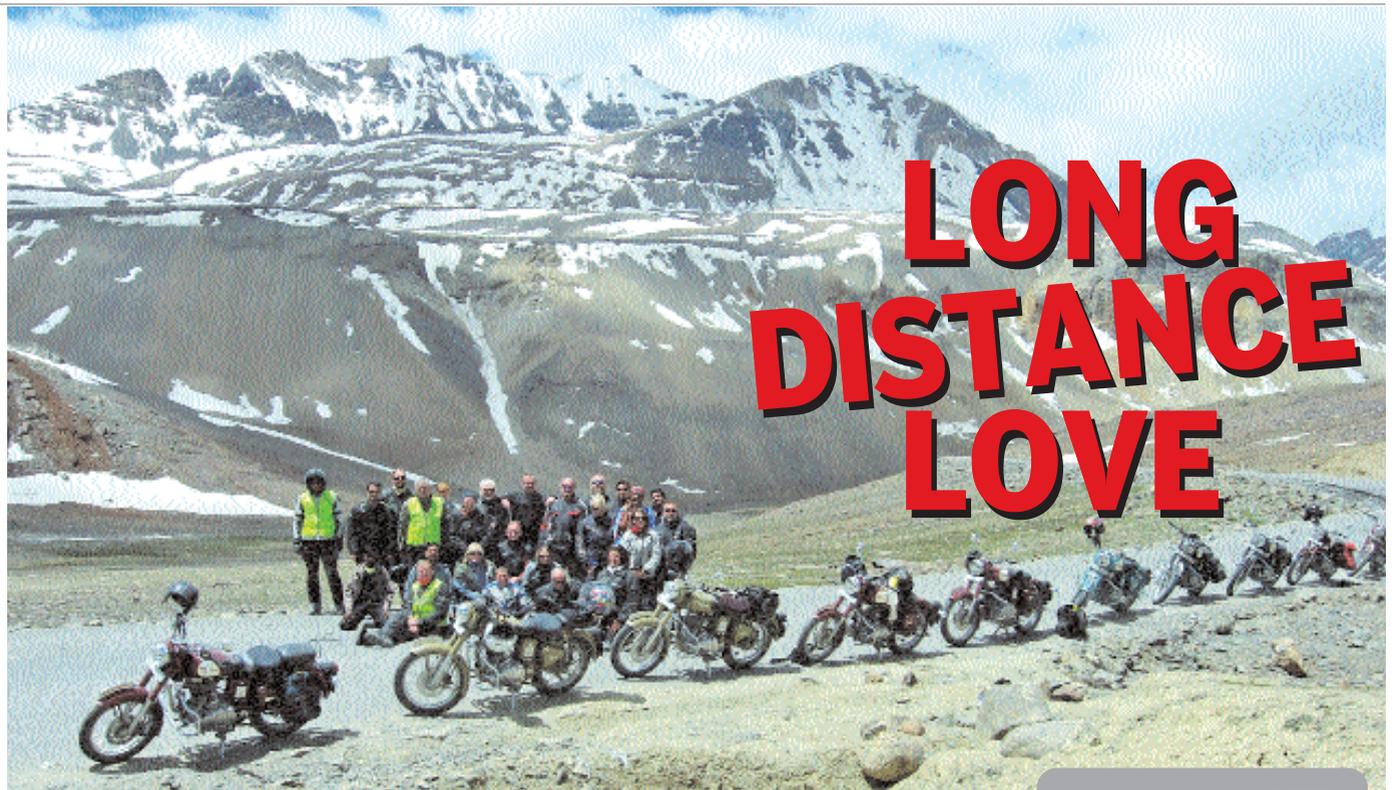
*The writer is one of India's top comedians and the founder of East India Comedy*

Dudes decoded

### CLOONEY'S CHANGEOVER

George Clooney, who recently got married to Lebanese lawyer Amal Alamuddin, has reportedly offered to be stay-at-home dad. The Hollywood actor, who had decided not have kids, seems to have changed his mind after meeting Amal and is willing to take care of babies to help his wife manage her work commitments

—www.dailystar.co.uk



# LONG DISTANCE LOVE

A lot of guys embark on long road trips on their bikes not just for the thrill of it, but also as a way of getting valuable life lessons

DC CORRESPONDENT

A lot has been written about men's passion for bikes and it's beyond doubt that almost every guy's first love would have always been a bike before a girl. However, the availability of a range of powerful bikes combined with the urge to explore the terrains has opened yet another recreational avenue for them over the past decade — motorcycle sojourns. No, we are not talking about the weekend rides to the outskirts of the city, but a lot of youngsters are travelling on bikes, either alone or in groups covering at least four states at a stretch that would normally take between two and four weeks. Now the interest has reached a stage where there are only two set of bike owners — one that has people who have gone on such long trips and other one of those raring to go.

This development is more obvious in eastern India, says Krishnendu Dey, who founded Rolling Wheels bikers' club in Kolkata with his brother almost 10 years ago. "Bike clubs and long rides were already popular in Mumbai and Bangalore back then, but people laughed at

the idea here since they were fixated with the idea that motorcycles were only meant for daily commuting. Our first long trip was in 2006 from Kolkata to Nathu La in Sikkim along the Indo-China border. We rode for 32 days and it was covered by TV channels. That set the momentum for such bike rides in this region and now there is a bike club every five km," he says.

Krishnendu, who thinks there is a big difference between a rider and motorcycle traveller, says youngsters today are serious about travelling on their bikes. "There is a lot more to it than just speed when it comes to long rides. It's about planning, road discipline and coordination."

People want to go on a long bike ride to enjoy the changing topography after every hundred kilometres, get closer to nature and different cultures, interact with people, taste a variety of food, which is not possible in any other mode of transport," he says. Krishnendu has plans to explore the entire south India with his club members next year.

It's not just regular people, celebrities too sometimes go on long rides. Indian cricket team's captain M.S. Dhoni's passion for bikes has been widely chronicled. Bollywood actors like Salman Khan, John Abraham and Shahid Kapoor have made surprise appearances with their mean machines in public. In the South, actor Ajith Kumar who has an on-and-off racing career, rode all the way from Pune to Chennai in

Actor Ajith Kumar rode all the way from Pune to Chennai in his superbike in 16 hours with another friend last year



Riding in the mountain region poses a lot of challenges and it's lot more difficult than riding on the plains



— Atul, bike trip organiser

his superbike in 16 hours with another friend last year. Later, he said it was to create awareness about safe-riding. Kannada actor Sudeep too has the habit of joining a group of bikers to go on long rides.

If there is one place that tops every bike traveller's dream destinations, it's Himachal Pradesh. "Riding in the mountain region poses a lot of challenges and it's much harder than riding on the plains. But it's the pride of riding on one of the highest-altitude roads that makes

everyone want to come here," says Atul from Shimla, who organises planned bike trips across Himachal Pradesh and to Rajasthan. A retailer and rider before, he found that there is market for such trips six years ago. "It used to be a niche market. But now many youngsters want to indulge in long bike rides, as it gives them the adrenaline rush in right dose," he says.