

రాజకీయ పార్టీల,  
 నాయకుల వార్తలనూ  
 ఎప్పుడూ...  
 ము కిషోం, ము గులింబి  
 వార్తలు ఇచ్చే ఛానల్  
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Better  
 half or  
 Bitter  
 half?



**BEWARE OF KNOTTY SWINDLING**  
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**IN  
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Sanya is on an 'acceptance journey' in her personal life

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**HNIS SEEKING  
 HIGH-END HOMES IN INDIA**

## PERSON

## MARCELINO ABAD

Peru's Andean mountains may hold the secret to longevity and the world's oldest person if a new claim by state officials about a 124-year-old man born in 1900 is proven to be true. The country's government has claimed that local resident Marcelino Abad from the central Peruvian region of Huanuco is 124, which would make him, by a distance, the oldest living person and even the oldest ever independently verified human.



## VIDEO

## CHENNAI SCUBA DIVERS' UNIQUE UNDERWATER VOTER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

A novel voter awareness campaign has been conducted by a group of scuba divers in Chennai ahead of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. In Chennai's Neelankarai, six scuba divers acted out the voting procedure sixty feet below the surface to raise awareness of voting. The Election Commission of India (ECI) banners and a replica EVM machine were carried by the divers as they dove into the water.



## SONG

## COWBOY CARTER

Beyoncé has had a massive week on Billboard's charts, thanks to her latest LP, *Cowboy Carter*. Along with charting 23 songs from the album on the Billboard Hot 100, she ups her career total from 85 entries to 106. As such, she becomes the 17th artist, and only the third woman, to have logged 100 or more titles since the chart began in 1958. *Cowboy Carter* debuts at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 (and the Top Country Albums and Americana/Folk Albums charts) with 407,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the March 29–April 4 tracking week, according to Luminate, the biggest one-week total of 2024. She also becomes the first black woman to lead top country albums!



## MOVIE

## HEERAMANDI

The trailer for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's upcoming Netflix period drama *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar* was dropped by the makers recently. The three-minute, 11-second-long trailer is set to a haunting score reminiscent of Bhansali's previous works. It introduces us to Manisha Koirala's Mallikajaan, who runs the brothel with her "diamonds," played by Aditi Rao Hydari, Sonakshi Sinha, Richa Chadha, Sharmin Segal, and Sanjeeda Shaikh, all clad in yellow attire and traditional ornaments!



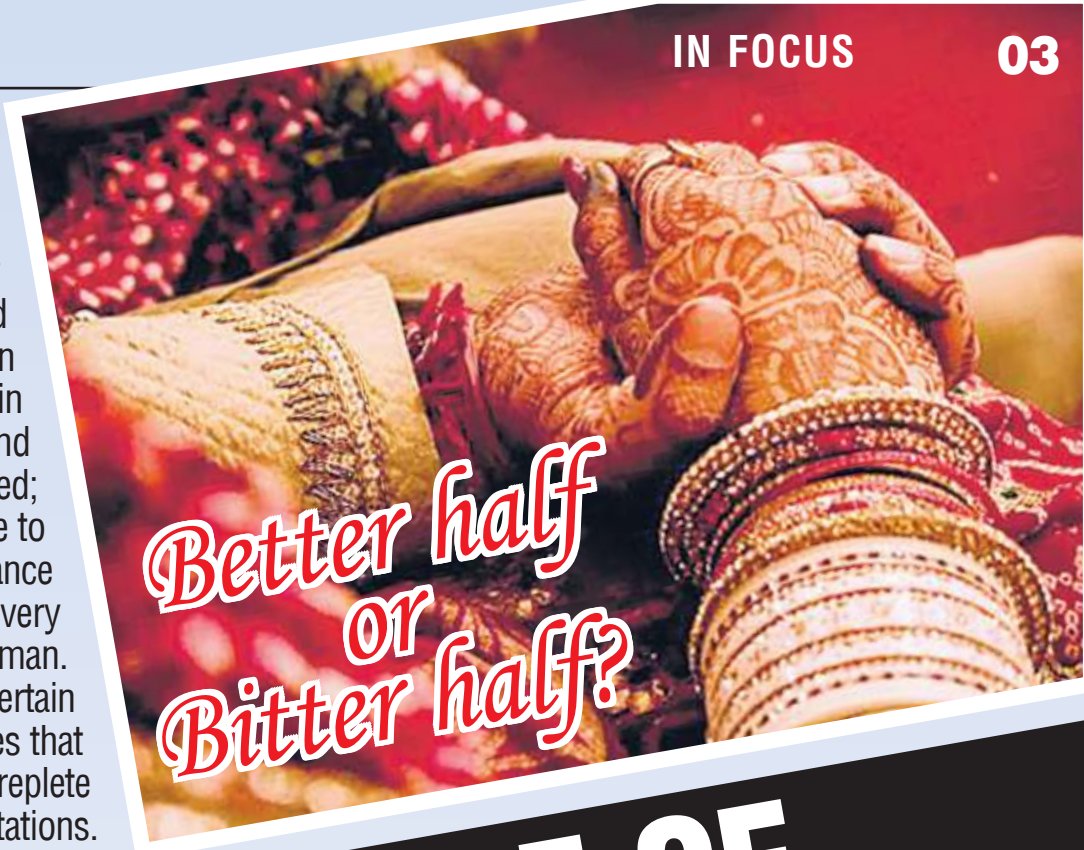
## PICTURE

## EID UL-FITR CELEBRATIONS

Kids gathered at the Jama Masjid to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr festival. Police officers distribute roses to Muslim children during the festival. The police made sure that Eid celebration in the towns runs smoothly but their one tiny gesture won hearts online. The police officers stationed outside mosques distributed roses wishing people 'Eid Mubarak'. Photos of smiling cops giving flowers to people after Eid namaz were widely shared on Twitter and many took notice and thanked the cops for their sweet gesture.



A marriage -- arranged, love, or the in thing 'arranged love' -- ought to mirror a beautiful relationship, considering it derives from an institution that, as per best available evidence, is at least about 4,350 years old. The first recorded evidence of marriage ceremonies uniting one woman and one man dates from about 2350 BC, in Mesopotamia. In India, familial bonds are strong and marriage, as a social institution, continues to be sacred; though many aberrations have crept in due to disintegration of the joint family system, preponderance of unstable nuclear families, and modification of the very concept of marriage as a union of a man and a woman. **The Pioneer's Tejal Sinha** takes a close look at certain aberrations that have crept in present-day marriages that do not have traditional checks and balances, but are replete with pitfalls attributable to online misrepresentations.



Better half  
OR  
Bitter half?

# BEWARE OF KNOTTY SWINDLING



Going by reports of downright cheating, swindling, deceptive matchmaking, and the like; it looks like marriage is no longer the start of life happily ever after; rather, it has become the herald to a life unhappily ever after! While there have been many sorts of scams, marriage scams are not far behind when it comes to the stakes involved.

A marriage scam is a fraud that is done by one party who gets married for their own benefits, including financial ones, but does not share any sort of romantic bond or relationship with their partner. Initially, there was a time when men were the ones who turned themselves into scamsters to dupe women and extract money. We have come across many such cases, right? But now it seems like things have taken a drastic turn; for, these days, it is not women but men who have turned out to be victims.

### Marriage scams not gender-centric

Marriage scams are not gender-centric; both genders are equally capable of pulling off a scam on the other party. In one such case, Sanjay (name changed), a Hyderabad-based techie, got married through a community WhatsApp group. Within just two days of the marriage, his wife began creating chaos at his home and showed no intention to maintain any sort of relationship with him. While she was travelling back to her hometown in Chhattisgarh for a ritual, Sanjay and his family found that his wife had stolen all the gold ornaments given to her by Sanjay and his family. When confronted, she started arguing with them. Later, when the family picked her up from her home-

town and was returning by train, his wife deboarded the train and boarded another Delhi-bound train. After a few days, she went back to her hometown. She and her family then filed a false dowry and mental harassment case against Sanjay.

"I have known from my experience that there are women who go through a series of marriages to extract money and properties. There have been cases in which I have come to know where the brides have taken off all the gold immediately after the wedding. Though these cases are not pretty common, I have met people who have been through scams," shares Shonee Kapoor, a men's rights activist. He highlights that all the laws with benevolent provisions for certain groups such as Scheduled Castes, women, children, transgender, etc. are prone to misuse. Thus, it is very necessary that whenever a benevolent provision of law is made, there is mechanism also to prevent its misuse so that only genuine victims can come forward and get relief.

### NRI marriage scam is on the rise

Recently, in one of the cases, within a week of getting married, Suresh (name changed), an electronics engineer from Toronto, was told by his spouse that she had married him only for a visa and had no plans of terminating the relationship she had with her paramour. After he refused to process the immigration formalities for his wife, she filed a false dowry case. Unable to bear the harassment, he had to pay Rs 15 lakh to settle the case.

According to Shonee, there is a new phenomenon in states like Punjab, Haryana, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and especially Gujarat. A lot of people from these states are living in western countries.

Until a few years ago, good old family connections played an important role in arranged marriages, in which the families of the prospective bride and the prospective groom were brought together for matchmaking. Even though the suggestions and recommendations came from family members, the onus was on parents to verify the antecedents of the bride and bridegroom. While most parents preferred unobtrusive enquiries, there were others who hired private investigators to conduct background checks. Such traditional checks and balances have made way to newer means of matchmaking and background checks over the last few decades. The overall marital process has undergone significant changes, virtually moving online entirely.

Commercially speaking, one of the largest sectors in India is the wedding industry; yet, it also contributes significantly to mounting cases of fraud now. Before the advent of the internet, word-of-mouth was the primary method employed for wedding searches. Thanks to the pervasive influence of the internet today across the world, looking for a 'good' husband or a 'good' wife is also being done online these days.



Continued from Page 4

These men generally come back to their roots to get married to an Indian, but when these women get married and go to a foreign land, they immediately abandon the guy and seek asylum. "I have come across people who have gone through such kinds of scams, and we are trying to help them out because this is a new scam that has come out. There have been multiple such cases in Telangana and Andhra. The Government of India does not have any data regarding this, but on average, I get 7-10 calls that are about the misuse of the law."

#### Scams and false cases

In another such case that took place in one of the Telugu states, a girl named Sushri (name changed) married 12 men just for the money.

Ramesh Pittala Mudiraj, a Telangana High Court advocate, had come across this. He shares that even women, through some dating apps, search for men with rich backgrounds to get married and do not get physical with them but rather ask them only for money. With no emotional, mental, or physical bond, the boy seeks divorce, and they finish the marriage without cooperating in any physical relationship or taking care of the family. In this way, they are earning money. "False cases of dowries or forceful physical relations have also been routinely filed by these women," states Shonee, adding, "The misuse has been prevalent for long, and even the Supreme Court long back in one of the judgments said that the misuse of law is equivalent to 'legal terrorism', that is the word that it has used. It has time and again asked the government to make it liable so that some of the misuse could be prevented. But unfortunately, such instances of misuse are still very prevalent, and nothing has been done to prevent that." On paper, he shares that there is a law, but "it is a very toothless law called forgery or malicious prosecution. However, the court or police, if they find the complaint to be false, can take action, which is under IPC 182 for police and IPC 211 for court, but for a private citizen to go and make a complaint against misuse, it is a very difficult task."

Along with other marriage scams, matrimonial scams are also on the rise, especially during the wedding season. Advocate Ramesh highlights that there has been an increase in the number of

cases in the past couple of months. "These scams are happening with both parties, but society shows mercy on the girls but doesn't have the same kind of empathy for the men. Women are given empathy since they cry and try to victimise themselves. Men, on the other hand, don't primarily share their problems; thus, men are blamed. As per the Indian Constitution, Article 14, all are equal before the law, and there should be no gender bias or partiality between men and women. The victim is a victim, be it a male or a female."

In case the police are not ready to file an FIR, he also explains, "Police or people first laugh and defame these men in society. When the local police are not responding, you are free to move to the higher authorities, even to the SP level, and make a written complaint to them. Along with them, the police station falls under this jurisdiction, and they are supposed to give one more written complaint to the district collector as well. He will be issuing a notice to the district police department about not going with legal proceedings. They will not only file a complaint and take action but also provide an acknowledgment to the victim." On average, he shares that while 70 per cent of the cases are when men dupe women, the rest of the 30 per cent of cases are of women cheating.

Meanwhile, ET Manjusha, a senior High Court advocate, shares that she has personally received over seven such cases in the past six months. In these cases, she explains, "These women get married and later say to their spouse that they are not interested in the marriage or have been forcefully pushed

into the marriage. There are also cases where they body shame the guy and try to force themselves sometimes on people who are quite mild and innocent for them to get the financial benefits. Unable to get the emotional support and compatibility, apart from the physical bond, the guy and his family go up with an annulment of marriage."

According to the Hindu Marriage Act, they have void, valid, and invalid marriages. Any marriage that is performed with the consent of both parties is a marriage. However, if the marriage is performed without the consent of either of the spouses, then that cannot be considered a marriage, which becomes an invalid marriage. Meanwhile, the annulment of marriage needs to be filed within one year of marriage. When you find out that the other person is already married, pregnant, married fraudulently, impotent, bisexual, or has a contagious disease, that can be immediately brought to the notice of the court to cancel the marriage. Why one year—because mostly they try to understand each other within that period, and if things do not go well still, then the parties start complaining, then they go with the same complaint.

"They (the men or groom) are financially bullied. In these cases, women emotionally abuse the partner and financially manipulate the partner, trying to find out about his salary. They just try to get down all the details, like who all are earning members in the family, their property details, they consider everything, and then they start. Information is given to the family members, and they all plot a plan. Whoever

commits these marriage frauds faces severe penalties, which could include deportation, being sent to jail, etc. All such cases need to be assessed," explains the senior advocate.

#### Are men always to blame?

Men's mental health is always ignored, and there are various reasons for this. The first is the conditioning that begins at home, be it with caregivers, biological parents, adopted parents, or even grandparents. When it comes to raising boys, they are conditioned to be strong and be able to withstand a lot of hardships and emotional difficulties; they do not ask for help or break down easily. Due to this, boys resort to coping mechanisms from a very young age. Men do not have a resource person, unlike girls, to go and talk to.

Kavita Panyam, a counseling psychologist specialising in co-dependency recovery from Secunderabad, shares, "India definitely follows patriarchal society, especially major parts of India, except for Kerala. In a patriarchal society, it is the man who leads society, and when it is a man who heads or leads a family, at that point, he is responsible for whatever is happening. When it comes to violence and being abused, more women are being abused as compared to men. Men may not be able to record due to many reasons, including how many men are being abused. We do not have many stories of men coming out. However, after the pandemic, we have seen a change where men have come forward talking about how they are being abused, manipulated, and used by their better halves or wives. By and large, it is the man who is asked because society is conditioning men to abuse women. But women also abuse men."

#### #MenToo

Initially, when #MeToo was launched, a lot of people spoke up about how they were abused, but at that time, Pooja Bedi came up with #MenToo. When the #MenToo movement was launched, it was able to save very many men. Many men had applauded Pooja Bedi for #MenToo. They were not only able to speak up about how they were being abused but also get divorced and sort out their problems without being slapped with false cases.

"Since we don't hear such stories coming out of men, that is why it is presumed that in a patriarchal society where men are dominant and very vio-

lent, though we have taken evidence from the past and ongoing, I would now say that somewhere we are now reaching an equivalent point where both of them kind of even out," highlights counseling psychologist.

There have also been cases where women have withheld a lot of things from men before marriage and have not told them. For example, they are taking psychiatrist medication, have had abortions, surgeries, or PCOD, whether they are fertile or infertile, or even by their gender. She further adds, "Earlier, it was men who used to do it, and now even women are doing it. They do it to get married or get into relationships. These days, a lot of women are also doing things like 'My body, my wish' kind of thing and not wanting to have a baby. Men get to know about it post-marriage, and this takes a toll on men because the moment they start saying I want this or I want that, they are labelled as insensitive and cruel. We cannot generalise that all men are in a certain way."

#### Toll on men's health

In such incidents, Kavita shares that it begins with overthinking, anger, depression, and anxiety. All this happens because of the injustice that happened to one and the fear of not having sufficient help or the right amount of help because you might be labelled and judged.

"Gender equality is very important. *Beti bachao, beti dhan hai, meri ek beti sau ke barabar hai*. There has been a lot of male bashing that has been happening on social media. It is like Mahila Morcha, Mahila Mukti Samelan; all of these are in every nook and cranny. But what do you have for a man? If a group of women are sitting at a kitty party and discussing something and a woman says, 'My husband slapped me last night or raped me brutally', then these women support her, and they go take it out on their husbands. There is no equality when it comes to the system providing equal justice to everybody," she shares, adding, "I do think that men are emotional. Now it depends on the caregiver, who is a mother, because the first 5 years are crucial for a child's emotional health to develop. If a boy falls down and screams for help, the mother says it is nothing; just get up, go and play, and don't be weak. Men are not supposed to cry; men are warriors, and on the other hand, women are goddesses, princesses, *papa ki pari*, and all. Society has conditioned everybody that men are the providers and hunters, and men are basically the people one goes to for support. Which also means that men have little room to feel emotional or unpack their pain with family members right from childhood. Society can stigmatise elderly people, women, and other genders. But men also need to rest financially, socially, and mentally, and be humans too, so just relax."

On the whole, it is time for parties to a marriage, be it the families or the bride/bridegroom themselves, to take all precautions before the wedding bells rings so that no one falls prey to scamsters coming in the guise of matchmakers, prospective bride or prospective bridegrooms. Thorough background check should be the mantra. It is as important as, if not more important than, marriage rites.



# Sanya is on an 'acceptance journey' in her personal life

Actress Sanya Malhotra, who has proven versatility going by her work in the industry, revealed in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer's* Tejal Sinha that she was recently diagnosed with endometriosis. As we discuss her films, she also opens up about being confident about herself and her body.

TEJAL SINHA

**W**e all know Sanya Malhotra to be jovial and vivacious, at least based on her Instagram posts. But hey, do you know? That's also how she really is in real life, which is what we discovered during our recent, exclusive conversation with her when we spoke with her for our *Celeb Talk* column.

She is someone who, when you least expect it, surprises you with an unexpected sense of humour. However, one thing you may have observed as a viewer is that she has always accepted roles that present challenges for her acting career. "I've always looked for unique characters since my character needs to capture the audience. This has allowed me to do new things with my craft. Staying in my comfort zone irks me. If I stay in my comfort zone, *usme kya hi mazaa hai* (What's the fun then?)" says the popularly known *Dangal* actress! Be it playing a wrestler in her debut film, a character like 'Chutki' in *Pataakha*, a young bride in *Meenakshi Sundareswarar*, or Manekshaw's wife in *Sam Bhadur*, this versatile performer is quickly making a name for herself in a field that hasn't always been welcoming to outsiders!

Having not learned acting, our star guest feels grateful for where she has reached on the professional front. As an actor, "All I know is that you have to immerse yourself in the character's shoes—both physically and emotionally, and that's exactly what makes a difference for me. I don't approach characters by using a formula. I make an effort to distance myself from the role after filming to maintain the distinction between real and filmed life. It's not always easy. One such character was 'Chhutki' in (Vishal Bharadwaj's) *Pataakha*. I'm not that resentful, and I don't talk like that." Apart from her creativity, Sanya also keeps her fashion game on point. And going with her fashion statement, she recently walked the ramp for the extremely talented Nachiket Barve at Blenders Pride Glassware Fashion NXT. She wore a beautiful black and white easy-to-wear saree, which she says is the perfect outfit for a cocktail party!

Going ahead, as she describes her outfit more in detail, she gleefully enthuses, "It was very breezy, beautiful, perfect, and it was in my favourite colours which are black and white. It was a saree, and I've never worn something this comfy and sexy. I think it was brilliant, and I did a run-through with the designer, and I was feeling my best self in that saree walking the ramp. I love fashion too, but I think my person-

al style is always being comfortable, and I do like to push my boundaries at times, but I always go for comfort over anything else. Though it was a very beautifully designed saree, it looked like there were too many beautiful layers in the outfit, but when you wear it, it's very simple to wear. Those are the key points that are always there in my head, and I think this actually ticks all those boxes for me."

The *Badhaai Ho* star is not someone who is fashion-conscious, but she's quite fashionable in her own way. Well, this is what she says she'd like to believe. "Fashion for me is a way of expressing myself, and I'm quite moody with my fashion because it changes with how I'm feeling. If I have to pick myself up, I put in a lot of effort to plan my outfit, my makeup, and my hair, and that helps me change my mood and makes me feel very excited."

Over the years, she feels that she has started experimenting a lot. She says she's now reinventing herself and has been thinking a lot about fashion these days. "My fashion icons are all fashion bloggers, and my fashion inspiration is Pinterest," shares the talented star. Basically, whenever she sees a look, she pins it. "Sometimes I feel like, What do I wear? And then I go and scroll through my Pinterest, and I'm like, I have something like this, and I can combine them together and maybe make an outfit out of it. It is so weird that I got this opportunity, and I jumped on it because, for the past so many months, I have been on a path of finding my own fashion. I was very fashionable when I was in Delhi, and then in Mumbai, I was a bit laid back because people in Mumbai are very chill. If I'm dressing myself up, it's sort of therapy for me. I used to do that a lot in Delhi, and I saw that whenever I'm in Delhi, I plan my looks beforehand! I do proper hair and makeup, even if I'm stepping out for a walk with my dog. People don't do that in Mumbai. I'm always in casual clothes when I'm in Mumbai. But I'm trying to change that now. If I have a meeting, I really plan my looks beforehand, and I think it's a way of expressing yourself. Fashion for me now is therapeutic, and that's the reason I also take a lot of inspiration from Pinterest and fashion bloggers."

Well, we do feel relatable to you, Sanya! In fact, being an actor, she feels that she has now become very confident with her body. "As I'm growing older, I'm getting to know myself and my body in a very beautiful manner," shares the *Jawan* star, who further shares that now she's aware of what suits her body and what doesn't. "I love working out. I love staying active, but I also don't restrict myself from eating anything that I feel like eating. People assume that I'm an actor, so I must be on a strict diet, but that's not true. I love eating everything. My body keeps fluctuating throughout the month. When I was in my 20s, I was like, What's happening with my body? Am I okay? Am I bloated all of a sudden? Then you realise that you are going to get your period the next morning."

However, it's now that she found out why her body fluctuates so much, as she reveals exclusively, "I was diagnosed with endometriosis a month ago, so I know now I have a solid answer why my body used to fluctuate this much. I'm on a journey to be okay with however my body is looking, because that shouldn't stop me from living my life, and that shouldn't stop anyone from living their lives! My mind is much more interesting, and there's so much to me, like that my body is important to me, but it also shouldn't stop me from enjoying my life." But again, there are days when she's not feeling confident.

So, "I let myself be underconfident on those days. That's the thing—you need to accept yourself, all your moods, and everything that you're going through—acceptance." On the work front, she has a couple of shoots, one of which *Mrs.* is going to release soon, about this girl who finds freedom through her domestic life and challenges post-marriage and later kind of discovers herself.





With the onset of intense heat wave, many people are experiencing gastrointestinal problems. This week for the **Health Talk**, we connect with health experts, and it seems like probiotics are timely and quite advantageous for your digestive system. To know more, read ahead.

# This summer, swap your soda with probiotic drinks and foods!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The likelihood of heat-related health issues has increased along with the likelihood of more heat waves, one of which is now affecting a large portion of Hyderabad. Heat exhaustion, a frequent reaction to extreme heat, can cause symptoms like headaches, dizziness, and fainting. Rest, a cold atmosphere, and hydration—including replenishing electrolytes, which are essential for maintaining muscular and other bodily functions—are typically effective treatments for it. *The Pioneer* shares with you another aspect of this intense heat wave: many people are experiencing gastrointestinal problems as a result of the heat, which can lead to nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, and stomach aches. Probiotics seem to be quite advantageous for your digestive system since they maintain a balance of good bacteria! We were interested in learning more about this.

Functional medicine and health specialist Shivani Bajwa emphasises that probiotics are good bacteria and yeasts that are vital to our digestive systems. “Although bacteria are frequently thought of as harmful, some are actually helpful. Our eating patterns change in the summer, and we consume more cold, sweet foods and drinks that can upset our gut flora. Probiotics are a popular option in the summertime because they aid in reestablishing this equilibrium.”

Food is broken down for our bodies to use when it moves through our digestive tract during consumption. Probiotics help our bodies absorb nutrients from the food we eat by aiding in this breakdown process. This is especially true

for complex substances like proteins that take longer to digest. Probiotics have the ability to change the pH of our colon, making it less conducive to the growth of dangerous bacteria. “Additionally, probiotics can help with IBS symptoms and diarrhea brought on by antibiotics. Probiotic supplements are widely accessible on the market. Align Probiotic Supplement, Garden of Life RAW Probiotics, and Culturelle Digestive Health Probiotic are a few of the top-rated products. A healthcare professional should always be consulted before beginning any supplement regimen. The effects of probiotics under different situations have been the subject of numerous investigations. Probiotics, for example, have been shown in a study that helps lower body weight and BMI. Probiotics have been shown in another study to alleviate the symptoms of mental health conditions like anxiety and sadness,” shared the health specialist Shivani.

Strong drugs called antibiotics fight bacterial infections by either eradicating or stopping the growth of bacteria. Antibiotics, however, are unable to distinguish between beneficial and harmful bacteria. This implies that they end up getting rid of good

bacteria in your stomach as well as the bad bacteria that are causing the ailment! The natural balance of bacteria in your gut is disrupted, which can cause side effects like bloating, upset stomach, and diarrhea. Probiotics can help in this situation. They can aid in reestablishing the normal balance of germs in your stomach when taken with antibiotics. They achieve this by replenishing the stomach with beneficial bacteria, which may aid in halting the spread of dangerous germs. This may lessen the incidence of adverse effects from antibiotics, such as diarrhea.

Nutritionist Nuupur Patil shared a few simple strategies you may do to take good care of your stomach and incorporate probiotics. Before that, she clarifies, “Since warmer weather frequently causes an increase in digestive issues like bloating and indigestion, probiotics are a trendy topic in the summer. In contrast to a placebo group, probiotic treatment dramatically decreased symptoms like gas, bloating, and abdominal discomfort in one case study of people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).” Increase your water intake and mix with buttermilk and coconut water. Cool watermelon salads, ginger and celery juice, bael sherbet, and these other foods are excellent choices for managing inflammation and providing some relief from the summer heat. Increase your intake of fresh seasonal fruits

and lots of green veggies. Avoid eating heavy and spicy foods. Essential nutrients and fiber are necessary to support the better functioning of your gut flora. Consume natural probiotics like yogurt and fermented food. It is better to opt for strain-specific supplements that have high CFUs and good encapsulation technology that improves bacteria survival rate in the gut.

Lastly, Dr. Nihar Parekh recommended, “It is important to choose probiotic supplements for kids, adults, and teenagers that include strains that have been particularly researched for how well they work to address certain health issues. Reputable probiotic supplements for kids might contain strains like *Bifidobacterium lactis* BB-12 and *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG, while adult probiotic supplements might be better for a wider variety of strains like *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*. Generally speaking, taking probiotics with antibiotics is safe. By restocking beneficial bacteria that may have been diminished after antibiotic therapy, probiotics can aid in the restoration of this equilibrium. To minimise any potential impact with antibiotic absorption, probiotic and antibiotic doses must be spaced out.” Probiotics have been shown in numerous case studies and clinical trials to be effective in enhancing gut health and general well-being. In the *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*, for example, a study found that supplementing newborns with probiotics decreased their risk of respiratory infections and diarrhea. Furthermore, a review that was published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* discovered that prebiotics might benefit teenage metabolic health and weight management. These studies demonstrate how probiotics can be an effective strategy for enhancing health in a variety of age groups.



SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Have you ever considered the potential for transformation that comes from letting go of the familiar and venturing into the unknown? The Year of 'Destination Dupes', according to Expedia Group, is 2024! The emergence of 'destination dupes' is a fascinating development that is gaining center-stage among the maelstrom of 2024 travel trends. Travellers are fascinated by a world of reasonably priced reproductions, where the essence of well-known sites is skillfully recreated instead of being restricted to the expense of expensive travel. The regret over costly trips fades in this age of invention, giving rise instead to the attraction of these painstakingly made replicas.

**Growth of 'destination dupes':** The tourist industry has seen a surge in destination dupes in recent years, which range from miniature versions of the famous Eiffel Tower to theme parks with fairytale themes. Travellers' tastes are changing, and this trend shows that they want engaging experiences without the high cost. A tantalising look into the essence of iconic places is provided by destination dupes, which range from expansive theme parks reproducing the ambience of far-flung destinations to more—all within the budget-conscious adventurer's reach.

**Accessibility and affordability:** Studies show that although Indians are travelling more frequently, they are choosing to travel domestically rather than abroad. Approximately 1.7 billion leisure trips were taken by Indians in the past few years; most of them were domestic travel excursions. Only approximately 1% of Indian tourists travelled overseas, according to reports from Booking.com and McKinsey. For this reason, accessibility and cost are the main draws of destination dupes! Budgetary restrictions are a primary deterrent to travel. In the past, many travellers may have found it financially unfeasible to explore new places, as it involves substantial costs for lodging, transportation, and sightseeing. On the other hand, 'destination dupes' provide travellers an affordable substitute for enchanted locations, enabling them to see new places without going beyond budget.

**Without hustle:** According to recent data from Schengen Visa Info, visa rejections cost Indians around INR 90 crore in lost revenue in 2022. There appears to be a notable upsurge in the quantity of individuals applying for Schengen visas, which is causing a rise in the number of visa refusals. The hassle of travelling overseas includes organising lodging, making travel plans, and obtaining a visa. A first-time traveller may find the entire process intimidating. The procedure is difficult, time-consuming, and complicated all at once. However, destination dupes locally remove the requirement for visa applications. Travellers may plan and start their vacations more spontaneously and with fewer bureaucratic obstacles to overcome when they don't have to deal with the inconvenience of getting visas.

**Linguistic barrier:** Communication difficulties

# The dilemma of 'destination dupes'



are one of the most obvious effects of the language barrier. When one does not comprehend the language, simple tasks like placing an order for meals, asking for directions, or requesting assistance might become difficult. People find it challenging to communicate with locals in a number of non-English speaking nations, such as France, Indonesia, Malaysia, and others. An interesting trend among Indian travellers is shown by a recent Booking.com survey where many people are anxious and fear language obstacles, which makes them reluctant to embrace new places and activities even when they would like to. The poll revealed an unexpected finding that indicated a significant discrepancy between their expectations for travel and the difficulties they actually face. Travellers find it simple to communicate while visiting destinations in India, a linguistically varied nation with the ideal balance of native language and English, thanks to 'destination dupes.'

**Overpopulation:** The main cause of the congestion is the high tourist season, which is particularly intense around New Year's Eve. Popular tourist destinations frequently experience a surge of tourists, which makes passage through crowded areas difficult and causes lengthy lines. The quality of travel experiences and the general allure of a site can be impacted by the presence of crowds. "While some tourist destinations struggle to attract visitors, others, like Ayodhya, Tirupathi, Jerusalem, Vatican City, and Mecca, face the challenge of overcrowding," says D. Ramachandran, Co-Chairman of the FTCCI Tourism Committee. "While Vatican City receives close to 8 million people annually, Ayodhya is expected to get over 5 crore visitors in the upcoming year. Furthermore, in 2023, over 13.5 million Muslims made the Umrah trip. Even if tourism

contributes to economic prosperity, there are drawbacks. Problems with overtourism include gridlock in the streets, strain on the infrastructure, pollution, littering, destruction of historical buildings, deterioration of the environment, and disrespect for regional traditions and customs. The preservation of these beloved locations and the growth of sustainable tourism depend on addressing these issues." Travellers are increasingly using "destination dupes" to escape the busiest travel seasons and discover new areas in an effort to allay worries about crowding when traveling. This may lead to shorter lines, better photo ops, and an overall more laid-back and joyful experience.

Travel enthusiast Prem has visited seven nations such as Slovakia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, and Switzerland. He discusses the difficulties he encountered travelling and his opinion on 'destination dupes.' "A lot of paperwork and documentation require extra money; the process is time-consuming, and people who initially started travelling take time to get their hands on the process," he says in explaining his experience with visa requirements. "The only times when the crowd is not there are early mornings to enjoy the beauty of it, and the peak seasons are always overcrowded, and I had to wait for two to three hours," he says in response to questions about the crowding. He talks about Kashmir as a potential replacement for Switzerland. Kashmir is dubbed the 'Switzerland of India' for good reason—its gorgeous valleys and affordable prices contribute to its allure. In expressing his opinions on this newest travel craze, he claims that while travelling overseas offers a distinct atmosphere and experience, 'destination dupes' in India are starting to gain popularity as hassle-free, inexpensive options for exploring unusual locations.

Destination duping is a growing practice that travel writer Manjulika strongly opposes, saying, "I am not in favour of 'destination duping' because somewhere down the line it will kill the enthusiasm for offbeat gems as well." She does, however, concur that while it undoubtedly helps people find similar experiences and save money, there will always be negatives. She asserts, "Until now, these places were supposed to be for curious travellers only, but now they may have to bear the brunt of over-tourism." When we questioned whether destination duping is authentic, she responded, "When we say duping, it is definitely distanced from authenticity." She says, "A destination should be known for its own allure rather than as a dupe for another place. Even when you are travelling to popular countries, look for smaller cities and towns instead of just checking the box of the well-known attractions," is one of the alternatives she offers. "Experiencing new things and saving money can also be achieved by travelling to less well-known locations. Thus, travellers should prioritise going to unusual locations and seeing the area in all of its true glory rather than only visiting the dupes."

**Options for 'destination dupes':** According to internet travel company Skyscanner, the following are the destination dupes in India.

**Kalpa Village, Himachal Pradesh:** Go to Kalpa Village in the Kinnaur district to get away from the bustle of Shimla. Savour the foggy mountains, hike the Kinner Kailash Parikrama, and take in the stunning architecture of Tibetan pagodas. For a peaceful experience, visit the Narayan-Nagini temple, the Hu-Bu-Lan-Kar monastery, and Chakka Peak.

**Gokarna, Karnataka:** Get away from the bustle of Goa and enjoy a tranquil beach vacation. Unwind on Kudle Beach, pick up a surfboard at Om Beach, and take in the peaceful shoreline. For an unforgettable trip, visit revered locations like the Mahabaleshwar Temple and look for dolphins.

**Khimsar, Rajasthan:** For a taste of a secluded village, head away from Jaipur's throng of tourists and explore Khimsar instead. Savour a ride on a camel. Experience a true cultural immersion by exploring a man-made oasis, riding a camel to Khimsar Fort, and staying in Rajasthani 'Dhani' huts.

**Lachen, Sikkim:** Explore the gastronomic and ecological treasures of Northern Sikkim's Lachen. See animals at Kanchenjunga National Park, hike to high-altitude lakes such as Guru Dongmar Lake, and visit Rhododendron Sanctuary in the spring.

**Kerala's Vagamon:** Discover the allure of tea estates in this tranquil neighbour of Ooty. For a tranquil hill station getaway, take a boat ride on Vagamon Lake, walk the Barren Hills, and visit Vagamon Falls.

**Statue of Emptiness:** A sculpture by Romanian artist Albert György, it was originally displayed in Geneva, Switzerland. Recreated by Kapil Kapoor, this interesting artwork is located on the outskirts of Hyderabad, close to Khajaguda Lake. The sculpture shows a guy with a hollowed-out torso and his head down low.

**Bali swings:** Guests can soar across verdant tropical landscapes with breath-taking views of Indonesia's thrilling and gorgeous Bali swings. Visitors can enjoy a thrilling copy of the Bali swing at Varkala, Kerala, now.

Traditional Kuchipudi dance runs in her genes and so Chavali Bala Tripura Sundari, illustrious daughter of Padma Bhushan Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam -- legendary dancer, choreographer and guru of Kuchipudi dance form -- did not let her father's 'no' keep her from becoming an instructor par excellence in the ancient genre in her own right. Her father may have had reasons to keep her away from dance as back then Kuchipudi dancers used to travel far and wide, but left their womenfolk back at home. But Bala, against odds, picked up the nuances of the art form, mostly on the sly by peeping through the crevices of the bamboo cottage in which her father used to conduct dance classes for others. He used to teach Vyjayantimala, Hema Malini, Shobha Naidu, and Manju Bhargavi, who have since made a niche for themselves. It was through assiduity and keen observation that she mastered the Kuchipudi dance form, which her father had popularized on global platforms. Thus began the dancing career of Bala, who has established herself as a renowned teacher and choreographer, nurturing young dancers over the past three decades. Speaking to *The Pioneer's Subodhini Purohit*, Bala narrates how she had kept the spark of Kuchipudi alive in her heart and fostered her love for dance through the years.



# IN HER FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS TO KEEP A GREAT TRADITION ALIVE



## FAMILY & DANCE INTERTWINED IN MY LIFE

Evenings are dedicated to teaching dance classes, while mornings find me in the role of a devoted housewife, packing lunchboxes for my children and serving meals to my husband. At five o'clock in the evening, I transform into a dance teacher, immersing myself in the rhythm and movement for three blissful hours. Then, just as swiftly, I step out of that role and return to being a wife and mother. This delicate balancing act continues to this day.

## SENSITIVE AND EXCITED 'BALLI AKKA'

It was a mix of sensitivity and excitement. I discovered that my father's academy provided cottages for students from all over the country and abroad. Despite being the eldest in the family, I was surrounded by younger learners who used to affectionately refer to me as 'Balli Akka' and sought my assistance. Among my siblings, I stood out for being outspoken, bold, and candid; never the one to hesitate while expressing my thoughts.

## DAD FORBADE ME FOR PURSUING DANCE

Growing up in the vibrant ambience of dance, its steps flowed through my existence like breath, sustenance, and elixir. Born into a lineage of dancers, I yearned to learn formally, but my father's watchful eyes kept me from pursuing a structured path. Growing up in an orthodox Brahmin family, my father held strong convictions shaped by his own experiences as a dancer. Having witnessed the challenges in the world of dance, he was determined to shield his children from similar struggles. Consequently, he forbade me from pursuing dance.

## SILENT HELPER FOR DAD

My father, affectionately known as 'Master Garu', was a renowned exponent of the Kuchipudi dance form. Although I didn't directly learn dance from him, his influence remains to this day. As he taught his students, I absorbed the nitty-gritty of the dance form and found inspiration in his teaching. During ballet performances-those enchanting moments when the stage transformed into a realm of dreams-I found my purpose. While my father and his students twirled and leaped, I played a different role. Behind the scenes, I became the silent helper-the one who adjusted costumes, dabbed rouge on

flushed cheeks, and handed out props. It was a labour of love, an unspoken bond between me and the art form that had woven itself into the fabric of our lives.

## FATHERS' LEGACY: 'DANCES ALONGSIDE'

My father's philosophy extended beyond dance steps. He believed in resourcefulness and in creating something beautiful from the simplest of materials. "What can we fashion from what we have?" he would muse, his eyes alight with possibility. Inspired by his ethos, I now craft my own props-ingenious creations crafted from discarded ribbons, cardboard and the like with imagination. Together with my students, we breathe life into these humble objects, infusing them with the spirit of dance. And so even today, in the early morning hours, as the sun stretches its golden fingers across the studio floor, I feel my father's presence. His legacy dances alongside us, whispering encouragement and urging us to find magic in the ordinary. For in those quiet moments, when the world still slumbers, we honour not only the steps but also the spirit that binds us-a legacy that transcends time.



## DANCE IS NOT MERELY A MOVEMENT BUT THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSION

Dance became my language, my canvas, and my passion. So, when I danced, I danced for the joy and passion of it and for the legacy of those who came before me. Starting with little steps, I finally got to the stage where I truly belonged. Now, as I reflect upon those formative years, I honour the lineage of artistes-their passion, their resilience, and their unwavering commitment. Sobha Naidu, Manju Bhargavi, and countless others-they ignited the fire that burns within me. And so, I continue to dance, rewriting my story with every step, every leap, and every beat of the music. As for me, dance is not merely a movement but the celebration of the passion that I harvested as a child, and also the legacy passed down through generations that fueled my passion for dance.

## MAINTAINING BALANCE BETWEEN WORK COMMITMENTS & HOME

I always strive to maintain a balance, but there have been instances when upcoming work commitments took precedence over household matters. Since everyone in the family has their own responsibilities-my husband and children go to work-I would give my 100% during classes. However, if something important cropped up at home, someone else would step in to manage the class. Balancing can be challenging due to the natural ups and downs of daily life, but I make every effort to maintain equilibrium. Regardless of the challenges, whether at home or during classes, I put my heart into everything I do.



## WHEN SHE REALISED THAT DANCING IS HER DESTINY

When I was a child, I would watch my father's students-Sobha Naidu and Manju Bhargavi-sit in the hall, their faces transformed by skilled makeup artistes. Their costumes, adorned with intricate designs, held a magical allure. As I observed their graceful movements during performances, a spark ignited within me. At the tender age of nine, after returning from school, I witnessed their artistry on stage. The rhythm of their feet, the expressions that conveyed stories, and the sheer joy of dance enveloped the room. It was then that I realised my destiny: "I, too, should dance." Not merely as an observer, but as a participant-a vessel for expression, a conduit for emotions. In that moment, the desire to wear those beautiful costumes, to feel the brush of makeup against my skin, and to step onto the stage consumed me.



## WOMEN INVOLVED IN DANCE WERE CONSIDERED NOT SUITABLE FOR MARRIAGE

When Kuchipudi was becoming popular, during that bygone era, Indian society clung to regressive beliefs, particularly when it came to women and their involvement in dance. The prevailing notion was that women who indulged in this art form were somehow unsuitable for marriage. Those outdated stereotypes weighed heavily on my aspirations; yet, I remained steadfast in my desire to express myself through dance.

## KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF ART ALIVE

When donations flow in, we channel them toward empowering underprivileged artistes and providing them with opportunities to perform. Additionally, our trust seeks to revive my father's ballets, preserving his artistic legacy. We extend invitations to my father's students, inviting them to participate in these ballets, and allowing them to relive cherished moments on stage. Through our efforts, we strive to keep the spirit of art alive and honour the artistic heritage passed down to us.

## CHALLENGES ARISE WHEN IN-LAWS VISIT

Challenges arise, especially when my in-laws visit. There have been performances I've missed, and the sting of regret lingers. But these obstacles never break my spirit. Instead, they fuel my determination. I tell myself, "The next show will be my best yet," and I eagerly prepare for upcoming classes. Life's dance continues, and I move through its challenges with grace and resilience.

## ESTABLISHING ABHINAYA VANI NRITYA NIKETAN

In 2002, my family and I embarked on a journey to Muscat, where we spent seven enriching years. It was there that I delved into the art of Kuchipudi, weaving its elegance into our lives. Encouraged by fellow artistes, I found a community of kindred spirits who shared my passion. Upon returning to India, I found resonance at the Kirtana Institute, where I shared the melodic wisdom of the veena for four transformative years. In 2009, I embarked on a journey by establishing Abhinaya Vani Nritya Niketan. This school has celebrated 15 years of existence, and its vibrant shows continue to captivate audiences. My husband and I jointly founded a charitable trust, deeply influenced by my father's belief that art transcends monetary symbols. Our trust is dedicated to supporting artistes and art forms that are fading away, ensuring they have a platform to showcase their talents. Driven by passion, I embarked on establishing a dance school. Initially, chaos reigned-there was no structure, no organisation. However, necessity spurred innovation. I grappled with financial management, student attendance, and batch organisation. Through trial and error, I gradually shaped an orderly system. Each problem that arose became an opportunity for improvement. I adopted the mindset: "Where we fall short, let's incorporate it into our system." This process led to a more refined dance school. In the world of ballet, costumes play a crucial role, and ensuring they fit perfectly is essential. As a dance school, I've learned to manage this intricate process. Alterations must be precise, and each student's costume assignment requires careful attention. Over time, logistics fell into place, thanks to my children's assistance. But beyond the practical aspects, my students hold a special place in my heart-they are like my own children. I spend more time with them than I do with my own kids. This close bond fosters a sense of unity and trust.



## BEYOND PRACTICAL SKILLS...

My unwavering goal has always been to help my students truly understand dance, including the intricate lyrics often found in Sanskrit songs. To achieve this, I introduced Sanskrit language classes, enabling students to grasp the essence of the lyrics. Additionally, I initiated music classes to enhance their understanding of lip movements, a vital aspect of dance expression. Beyond practical skills, I delve into dance theory, ensuring my students have a holistic understanding of the art form. And to validate their years of learning, I actively encourage them to pursue diploma and certificate courses in dance. These assessments allow them to put their accumulated knowledge to the test, reinforcing their growth and passion.

## COOPERATION OVER RIVALRY

While healthy competition can be beneficial, I've always emphasised cooperation over rivalry. My students support one another, lifting each other up when they stumble. There's no room for an "I'm better than you" mentality. Witnessing this camaraderie among my students warms my heart. And here's the magic: When I'm away for a few days, my students seamlessly run the show. They assist each other with makeup, hair, and costumes, embodying the core value of sisterhood. It's a testament to their dedication and the strong community we've built together.

## DANCE PROGRAMS

"Just learning dance is not enough." Students come to learn dance and enjoy the art, but there's another powerful way to fuel their passion: dance programmes. These programmes provide an opportunity for students to showcase their skills in front of family and friends. The anticipation builds as they prepare their perfect characters, costumes, and routines, eager to perform alongside their peers. Our dance school has been fortunate-the cooperation of both parents and students is unwavering. Their unwavering support ensures that our performances are well-attended and filled with enthusiasm. Together, we create magical moments on stage, celebrating the joy of dance.

## REVIVING FATHER'S BALLETS

We performed the two ballets, *Rukmini Kalyanam* and *Ksheerasagara*, in a two-day Kuchipudi dance festival, namely Vampathi Natyamegha, honouring the legacy of my father, Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam. In order to revive my father's ballets, I organised these festivals.

## RAPID FIRE:

**Describe yourself in three words:** Determined, passionate, and fun  
**Spiritual or Religious Person:** Spiritual person  
**Guilty Pleasure:** Facebook and Instagram



# FROM INERTIA TO INNOVATION:



## ONLINE EDUCATION'S RESONANCE IN TIER 2 AND TIER 3 CITIES

In an era dominated by digital advancements, online courses have emerged as the new normal, revolutionising the traditional paradigms of education. This digital disruption has been particularly pronounced in Tier 2 & Tier 3 cities, where accessibility to quality education has historically been a challenge. As we delve into the ground reality, it becomes evident that inertia (both in terms of mindset and infrastructure) plays a significant role in shaping the trajectory of online education in these regions.

### EXPLORING THE INERTIA FACTOR

The emergence of digital tools for education has disrupted traditional methods, presenting both opportunities and challenges. In Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities (where resources are often limited), accessing quality education through unconventional means like online mode is a significant challenge. A survey revealed that 70% of students and 45% of working professionals expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of face-to-face interaction in online education. Additionally, concerns about the lack of practical exposure, doubts about the legitimacy of online degrees, and questions regarding their equivalence to traditional degrees further highlight the inertia towards online learning.

### BRIDGING THE ACCESSIBILITY GAP

Despite these challenges, online courses have proven instrumental in overcoming geographical barriers and expanding access to education in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Leveraging the power of technology, online platforms have democratised learning, making educational resources readily available to students irrespective of their location. Success stories abound, showcasing how platforms like Khan Academy have reached out to underserved communities, offering a lifeline to eager learners. These platforms not only provide access to a diverse range of courses but also foster a sense of inclusivity and empowerment among students.

### CUSTOMISED LEARNING FOR DIVERSE NEEDS

One of the key advantages of online courses lies in their ability to cater to the diverse educational needs of learners. In Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where traditional educational institutions often follow a one-size-fits-all approach, online courses offer personalised learning experiences tailored to individual requirements. Whether it's upskilling for employment opportunities or pursuing niche interests, online platforms offer a plethora of options to cater to diverse aspirations.

### COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND AFFORDABILITY

Cost has always been a significant barrier to education, particularly in resource-constrained regions. Online courses have emerged as a cost-effective alternative to traditional education, significantly reducing the financial burden on students. With lower fees and the elimination of additional expenses such as travel and accommodation, online education presents a viable pathway to academic and professional advancement for individuals in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

### EMPOWERING ASPIRING PROFESSIONALS

Beyond academic pursuits, online courses have empowered individuals in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to acquire new skills and enhance their career prospects. By bridging the gap between education and employment, these courses equip learners with the practical knowledge and expertise needed to thrive in today's competitive job market. From digital marketing to data analytics, online education offers a gateway to a world of opportunities, enabling aspiring professionals to realise their full potential.

### ADDRESSING INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

The widespread adoption of online courses in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities is contingent upon overcoming infrastructure challenges. Poor

internet connectivity and limited access to digital devices remain formidable obstacles to online education initiatives. Recognising the importance of addressing these barriers, educational institutions and governments have launched various initiatives to improve connectivity and provide access to essential resources. Projects like Digital India and BharatNet aim to bridge the digital divide, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable education system.

### CONCLUSION

The rise of online courses in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities represents a paradigm shift in the educational landscape, driven by the imperative to overcome inertia and embrace digital transformation. While challenges persist, the transformative potential of online education cannot be overstated. By bridging the accessibility gap, catering to diverse needs, and empowering individuals, online courses are poised to revolutionise education and empower millions in underserved communities. As we look to the future, it is imperative to harness the momentum gained and chart a course towards a more inclusive and equitable educational ecosystem. In doing so, we can unlock the full potential of online courses and pave the way for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

*(The author, Rohit Gupta, is the co-founder and COO of Vidya College.)*



SUBODHINI PUROHIT

# CELEBRATING THE CULINARY DIVERSITY OF YANGON IN HYD

The Thingyan festival, also called the Burmese New Year Water Festival, ushers in the traditional Burmese calendar with a colourful and exuberant celebration that led us to pay Burma Burma a call again. This spring, it brought this energy to life with a specially-prepared festive buffet that captured the essence of the joyous celebration and the diversity of Yangon's cuisine. The distinctive dine-in menu consisted of a range of little appetizers packed with authentic Burmese spices and a selection of rich sweets that will make you want more. Every piece of their festive feast was a taste and tradition harmoniously blended together!

Step into the enchanting world of Burma Burma, located in Satva Knowledge City, Hyderabad, where culinary magic unfolds like a captivating story. Picture this: a cozy place adorned with a vibrant atmosphere, whispering tales of distant lands. As you settle in, the air tingles with anticipation—your taste buds are about to embark on a flavour-filled cuisine. The dishes presented are available in gluten-free and vegan-friendly formats, catering to a diverse range of dietary preferences. From April 11th onward to May 19, 2024, the restaurant celebrates the Thingyan festival. The restaurant brings you a festive menu that consists of a perfect balance of savoury and sweet dishes!

The vibrant ambience was comple-



mented by a melodic background score. The delightful atmosphere ensured that every guest felt welcomed and appreciated by our ever-attentive staff. The village set was designed for two diners and featured a delightful array of dishes.

Beat the heat with refreshing coolers like Twilight, El Dragon, Plum Sour, and Musk Coolers, offering a cool escape with every sip. The main course included Sweet lime and shallot, a salad that brought a burst of citrusy flavour to the dish. The crunchy Assorted Fries Platter consisted of mock-mince samusas, reminiscent of traditional samosas. Sweet Potato Tempura, a crisp golden coating with the tenderness of sweet potato, and Rice Cracker, which added crunch to the platter! Together, this assortment created a harmonious blend of flavours and

textures. Crispy, and subtly sweet and peppery, tofu and onion stir-fry was the star dish! Tofu cubes were seared to perfection—crispy on the outside and creamy within. Palata, a delicacy of shallow-fried, soft, and layered goodness, met its aromatic counterpart in Coconut Jasmine Rice and experienced a tantalising dish of Roselle and Mushroom Stir Fry, where the tangy notes of sour roselle leaves met the earthy richness of mushrooms—all enveloped in a flavourful blend of garlic, chilli, and turmeric. A mouth-watering curry of pumpkin and broad bean was light and delicious with radish slaw, where radish takes center stage, offering sweetness and spice.

Every great meal deserves a sweet ending, and dessert is the perfect exclamation mark for a memorable culinary journey. They introduced the Banana Sanwin Makin called 'sooji halwa' in our country, which is a traditional Burmese dessert that featured ripe bananas wrapped in delicate layers of thin pastry, creating a heavenly combination of sweetness and crispiness. And don't miss out on Mont Lone Yay Paw, a classic Thingyan delicacy crafted from rice flour, which encases a sweet filling of jaggery and is delicately adorned with shredded coconut. Conclude the meal with lemon poppy seed ice cream!

**Average meal for two:** ₹1850

**Thingyan Menu:** Small Plates ₹250-

300/ Village Set (for 2 persons) ₹1,850

**Dine-in: Weekdays:** 12:00 pm- 3:00 pm & 6:30 pm- 10:30 pm **Weekends:** 12:00PM - 3:30PM & 6:30 pm- 10:30 pm



The Pioneer recently explored Sambarpot, where south tradition and innovation harmonise to create a culinary journey worth savouring, offering a delectable review for discerning food enthusiasts.

## STEP INTO SAMBARPOT: Where every bite gives flavorful fun!

TANISHA SAXENA

Nestled in the bustling streets of Lajpat Nagar, Sambarpot stands out as a beacon of authentic South Indian cuisine, offering a refreshing blend of traditional flavours and innovative twists. From the moment you step inside, you are enveloped in an ambience that transports you straight to the southern shores, with soothing South Indian music, tasteful decor, and warm hospitality.

The serene atmosphere sets the perfect stage for a culinary journey through the diverse flavours of South India.

The menu boasts an array of classic South Indian dishes, expertly crafted with authentic ingredients and traditional techniques. However, it's the innovative offerings that truly steal the show. One standout innovation is their whimsical Unicorn Dosas, specially crafted for teenagers seeking an Instagram-worthy dining experience. These vibrant dosas feature a kaleidoscope of beetroot colors, adding a playful twist to the traditional dish while captivating the imaginations of young diners. But innovation doesn't stop there. They annually host a dynamic dosa festival too, captivating gastronomes with its inventive flair! This culinary celebration transforms the humble dosa into a canvas of boundless creativity, featuring fusion flavours that dazzle the senses. From the zesty punch of Scheszwan to the sizzling allure of sizzlers and the decadent fusion of cheese with exotic vegetables, the festival showcases a tantalising array of dosa variations tailored to diverse palates.

Elevating the festival to new heights is the Matki Dosa, a star creation that commands attention and adoration. Crowned with a lavish layer of cheese, sprinkled with aromatic gunpowder, and adorned with a drizzle of creamy goodness, this culinary masterpiece tantalises taste buds with its symphony of flavours. What truly sets it apart is its presentation: delicately perched atop a small pot filled with bhaji, it offers a whimsical twist on tradition, inviting diners to embark on a culinary journey filled with anticipation and delight.



At Sambarpot, diners are also treated to a delightful surprise in the form of their unique Chettinad

Maggie—a flavourful twist on the classic dish that elevates plain Maggie noodles to new heights. Infused with aromatic Chettinad powder, this innovative creation offers a taste sensation like no other, adding a burst of unique flavours to every bite.

And, for the Vishu season, they are transported us on a gastronomic journey through the flavours of Kerala. From the vibrant beetroot pachadi to the tantalising burst of flavours in their Thoran and Avial, each dish is a masterpiece in itself, celebrating the spirit of Vishu. The Sambhar and Rasam harmonise beautifully on the palate, while the creamy Parippu adds a touch of nostalgia. Finally, their decadent Payasam is the perfect finale to this culinary symphony!

**What's good:** unicorn dosas  
**Insider tip:** Try their Paniyaram; the ambience is inviting and amidst the lively atmosphere, every bite feels like a culinary hug from the heart of South India.  
**Treat for two at:** 1000/- approximately

## Fingerprint redefines NIGHTLIFE SCENE

PNS | HYDERABAD



Fingerprint - Kitchen & Bar, nestled in the lively locale of Malad, is fast emerging as the premier spot for an unforgettable escapade. With a menu that features mouth-watering multi-cuisine delights, it ensures that every guest's culinary cravings are satisfied. The Greek-themed interior design added to the allure, creating a rich ambience that sets the stage for a memorable

dining and partying experience. With the sole purpose to create a space that not only serves exceptional food and drinks but also offers a vibrant ambience where people can unwind and create unforgettable memories where the name 'Fingerprint' reflects their belief that each guest leaves a unique mark on the establishment, making it truly special!

The menu is a culinary journey of delight, showcasing a tantalising array of signature dishes and expertly crafted cocktails. For those craving bold flavours, the Sizzled Chilli Chicken offers a fiery kick, while the Fire Juicy Chicken Tikka is a succulent



treat for the taste buds. The Turkish Pizza is a fusion of flavours, blending traditional spices with a modern twist. For those seeking a taste of nostalgia, the Bhatti Da Murg Pindiwala is a dish that pays homage to traditional Indian flavours, cooked to perfection in a clay oven. For a refreshing start or a delightful snack, the Avocado Bruschetta is a must-try, combining creamy avocado with crisp bread for a satisfying bite.

Complementing these culinary delights are the bar's commendable cocktails, each a masterpiece in its own right. The Lagerita offers a refreshing take on the classic margarita, while the Caribbean Gossip is a tropical escape in a glass. The Scotch Tea is a smoky and sophisticated blend, perfect for those seeking a unique flavour profile. Finally, the Sky High cocktail is a delightful mix of spirits and flavours, promising a soaring experience with every sip. For those seeking a unique and unforgettable nightlife experience Fingerprint - Kitchen & Bar stands out as a beacon of excellence, offering a perfect blend of food, drinks, and entertainment. So, what are you waiting for? Here's your cue to binge on some multi cuisine delicacies that will leave you satisfied beyond measure!

**RELIANCE JEWELS UNVEILS MAJESTIC COLLECTION**

The new collection is a celebration of tradition, heritage, and timeless elegance, with stunning jewellery items that express the spirit of new beginnings. This collection features a remarkable combination of traditional workmanship and contemporary designs that exude unrivalled beauty and charm. From dazzling necklaces to exquisitely designed earrings, each piece captures the celebration's spirit.



**KATRINA KAIF LAUNCHES NEW BEAUTY PRODUCT**

Actress-entrepreneur Katrina Kaif's much-loved beauty brand Kay Beauty, co-created by Nykaa, has announced the launch of its latest product- the Hyper Gloss Liquid Luminizing



Highlighter. The highlighter promises a luminous complexion that lasts all day without fading or creasing, and layers seamlessly over makeup. It is a blend of sophistication and science, containing micro, light-reflecting pearls, meticulously crafted to capture and refract light for an unparalleled radiant effect. This liquid brilliance comes in a metallic finish making it ultra-pigmented and the weightless formula glides onto the skin like silk, providing a highlighted effect without the inclusion of visible glitters.



**CELEBRATE LOVE WITH KOTTANZ'S SITA KALYANAM COLLECTION**

Let's ditch the boring, predictable gifts and celebrate with something truly special. Forget the generic guest book and predictable picture frames! Dive into the enchanting world of Kottanz's Sita Kalyanam collection. Inspired by the timeless love story of Rama and Sita, this collection offers more than just gifts; it's a cultural treasure trove whispering tales of devotion, strength, and vibrant tradition for your happily ever after.



**L'ORÉAL PARIS INFALLIBLE 32H MATTE COVER LIQUID FOUNDATION**

Enhance your look with the liquid foundation that not only complements your skin but also helps you create a perfect base for your glam look. This foundation not only gives a flawless matte finish but also ensures that your skin glows from dawn to dusk. With its innovative micro-sponge technology, the foundation helps you achieve an even skin tone while keeping excess oil at bay. Ideal for all festive occasions, it is available at INR 899.

**PARKSONS CARTAMUNDI AND MUMBAI INDIANS UNVEIL NEW RANGE OF PLAYING CARDS**

Parksons Cartamundi, a leading player in the evolving world of playing cards worldwide, is thrilled to announce a unique and inspiring association with leading cricket team Mumbai Indians. This exciting partnership brings forth a limited-edition season 2024 collection of playing cards, providing MI Paltan, cricket fans, and enthusiasts with new and innovative ways to interact with their favourite league's stars. This exclusive playing card collection features three unique SKUs, each meticulously crafted to capture the essence of the Mumbai Indians and their players with elements of cricket.



**MODERN ACCESSORIES FOR MAXIMUM GLAM BY FOSSIL**

Elevate your outfit with accessories that have the right amount of bling. From statement necklaces to dazzling earrings or clutches, there's no shortage of ways to add glamour to your look. And speaking of contemporary bling, why not check out the latest ring watch collection by Fossil? With a gorgeous crystal topping, it's the perfect blend of glam and functionality. So, go ahead and make a statement on your special day.



**RE'EQUIL EXPANDS ITS RETINOL CREAM RANGE**

Re'equil announces the expansion of its Retinol Cream range with advanced formulations featuring 0.3% and 0.5% Retinol concentrations. The Retinol 0.3% Cream offers a higher concentration of Retinol than the 0.1% formulation to address skin issues and promote greater skin cell recovery. The second product in this line-up is the Retinol 0.5% Cream. The potent formulation is designed to combat fine lines, wrinkles, blemishes, and dullness, delivering visible results with consistent use.



**WHITEMUDS UNVEILS HAND-PAINTED FORMAL SHOE COLLECTION**

Whitemuds launches its latest 'Artwork Collection' that elevates the concept of self-expression in men's formal and semi-formal shoes. Departing from conventional norms, the brand introduces a tapestry of artistic designs, allowing customers to infuse their personalities into every step they take. Central to the collection is the innovative patina artwork technique, a masterful process of transferring textures onto leather surfaces.

**A COLLECTION INSPIRED BY THE HUNTER 350**

Marking an exciting fusion between the worlds of motorcycling culture and high street fashion, creative powerhouse Huemn has inked a unique collaboration with Royal Enfield to introduce 'A Shot of Mumbai'—a vibrant collection of apparel and helmets inspired by the Royal Enfield Hunter 350. The Hunter DNA is evident across a collection of avant-garde designs synonymous with the Huemn aesthetic. From electric blues and fiery reds to an array of peppy hues, each design echoes the soul of Mumbai and the kaleidoscope of art and energy that it is.

Lavie Luxe unveils its latest monogram collection, setting new standards for elegance in the world of fashion accessories.

Encompassing wallets, slings, satchels, and tote bags, this captivating collection aims to redefine elegance. This satchel bag is designed to revolutionise your laptop-carrying experience. It ensures safety and organisation with a dedicated compartment and multiple pockets. Made from high-quality material with monogram detailing, it combines functionality with trendiness, perfect for your daily needs. **MRP:6999/-**

**LAVIE LUXE UNVEILS MONOGRAM COLLECTION**





## HNI's seeking high-end homes in India

India's booming tech landscape has given rise to a new generation of highly sophisticated, well-traveled high-net-worth individuals (HNIs), including startup founders, CXOs, and venture capitalists. As globetrotters who have explored far corners of the world and developed discerning tastes from various cultures, these HNIs are seeking high-end homes in India that align with their modern and global design tastes while still keeping traditional Indian essence and customs at their core.

Accustomed to personalised experiences, these HNIs also value privacy and tranquility, preferring homes that offer sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of urban life. This demand reveals a significant gap in India's luxury real estate market, where developers have traditionally focused on grandeur rather than understated elegance.

In response to this unmet demand, a new

breed of young property developers is emerging, driven by a mission to redefine luxury living for discerning individuals. These developers are seeking to bridge the inherent trust deficit in the real estate industry by leveraging their expertise in building bespoke homes that are rich in architecture and design, have strong, outstanding track records, successful project completions, reputations for delivering projects on time, and a strong team that boasts exceptional academic pedigrees.

These innovative property developers are embracing a design philosophy that celebrates simplicity, sophistication, and quiet elegance. They are committed to creating living spaces that go beyond traditional notions of housing as mere brick-and-mortar artifacts. Instead, they focus on conscious designs and experiential aesthetics that are rooted in harmony to transform the daily routines of their clients into medita-

tive explorations, fostering a sense of well-being and connection with nature.

At the core of this approach is the novel concept of 'Personal Sanctuaries'—bespoke luxury homes designed to cater to specific needs and preferences. New-age developers believe in fostering like-minded communities that share common values, principles, and belief systems, creating a sense of belonging and camaraderie among residents, which is the need of the hour.

Sustainability is also a key priority, with developers adopting technology-driven measures such as zero ground damage, responsible water resource management, recycled raw materials, and green living principles to minimise the environmental impact of their projects. They are committed to ensuring that their developments leave a minimal footprint on the surrounding ecosystem.

Furthermore, these developers are leveraging

technology as a key enabler, to solve for transparency in the ecosystem by revolutionising their end-to-end experience by offering seamless integrated systems across touchpoints. Their goal is to transform the way projects are designed, developed, delivered, and maintained, providing an end-to-end solution for their clients.

While India is the epicenter of this conscious luxury living movement, with its thriving tech ecosystem and the influx of HNIs, other emerging innovation hubs across India are expected to witness similar trends as their startup scenes mature. As India's next generation of elite talent continues to fuel demand for personalised, sustainable, and design-centric living spaces, these innovative developers are poised to shape the future of luxury real estate in the country.

*(Mr. Pavan Kumar is the CEO of White Lotus Group.)*

## Analysing the investment potential of industrial spaces

Economic development and progress in India are no longer exclusive to big metros. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are now accounting for a significant share of growth. The uptrend has further risen during the times of the pandemic, which led many enterprises in India to diversify their supply chain and tap into new corridors of growth.

Apart from metros, numerous other non-metros are now sharply raising their growth curve and playing a pivotal role in the economic progress of the country.

Retail, automobile, auto ancillary, textile, e-commerce, 3rd party logistics, textile, etc. are now moving towards smaller cities as well. Interestingly, reports suggest 60% of the startups operate from Tier 2 cities.

There are multiple factors that are fostering growth beyond large metros in India. GOI is investing heavily in infrastructure in smaller cities as well, in the form of airports, railway corridors, large networks of roadways, inland river transport systems, flyovers, bridges, suburban transit systems, industrial and business parks, and much more. This has not just led to the development of robust physical infrastructure but also improved the overall livability index.

In addition to the spurt in physical infrastructure, other factors such as cheaper land prices, a lower cost of labour, seamless access to ports, etc. are also drawing the attention of major manufacturers towards smaller cities in India. It is noteworthy to highlight the role of technology as well, as it helps in reducing entry barriers and enabling the development of world-class industrial parks and warehousing facilities even in non-metropolitan corridors of India.

**Some of the non-metros to watch out for could be the following:**

**Chandigarh Tricity:** The tricity, which comprises Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali, is located at the confluence of Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. The city is known for its magnificent infrastructure, orderliness, and well planned neighborhoods. While Chandigarh offers a lifestyle that is on par with big metros, it is also blessed with tranquil weather and scenic beauties, further fueling growth for IT parks, business parks, high streets, plotted developments, etc. The region is a thriving hub for a wide range of industries, such as light engineering, machine tools, tractors, plastics, wooden furniture, electronic appliances, etc.

**Lucknow:** The capital of UP was once called the Constantinople of the East due to its rich culture and history. Modern Lucknow, however, is set to play a larger role in the industrial growth of northern India. The city might be behind other established industrial clusters such as Noida and Gurgaon, but it is growing at a staggering pace.

In the UP investment summit last year, more than 56,000 crores of investments were pledged for Lucknow. The city's 90,000-crore economy contributes to around 4% of UP's GDP. It is connected to Delhi, NCR, via the Yamuna Expressway and the Lucknow Expressway. It is linked to the eastern part of UP through the Purvanchal Expressway. Recently, an MOU was signed between Russia

and India to develop Brahmos missiles in Lucknow. The manufacturing facility will be spread across a sprawling campus of 200 acres and produce 80–100 missiles a year.

**Guwahati:** The city and its adjacent areas have been known for their verdant landscape, rich cultural appeal, and appetising cuisine. Nevertheless, strategically located at the crossroads of India, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, Guwahati can be instrumental in playing a larger role in trade with ASEAN economies. The region is rich in natural resources and cash crops, which further makes it a potent ground for numerous industries such as agribusiness, mining, renewable energy, etc. Government machinery is investing heavily in and around Guwahati to build a world-class infrastructure. This comprises railway corridors, warehouses, cold storage, truck and railway yards, multi-modal logistic hubs, etc.

**Vizag:** Its 120,000-crore economy is counted among the most prosperous cities in the country. The city enjoys a high concentration of PSUs, shipyards, naval bases, logistic companies, and heavy industries. There is an increased spotlight on Vizag since it has become the capital of Andhra Pradesh (AP). Soon, the city will have a new airport spread across 5300 acres of land. Work has begun on a 6-lane expressway corridor connecting Vizag with Raipur. The \$3750 crore project will give a big boost to agribusiness, SMBs, and other related businesses in the wider region.

*(The author, LC Mittal, is the director of Motia Group.)*

## Chaitra Navratri rituals and their significance in harnessing cosmic energies

Chaitra Navratri, celebrated in honour of Devi Shakti and in her manifold expressions, is not just a festival but a profound spiritual journey for devotees of Maa Durga and Bhagwan Ram. According to the Sanatan Hindu calendar, this auspicious nine-day period heralds the start of the new year, culminating in the joyous celebration of Ram Navami on April 17th, which commemorates the birth of Bhagwan Ram.

The significance of Chaitra Navratri extends beyond traditional festivities; it is a time of spiritual renewal and introspection. As the Sun transitions back into Aries, the first zodiac sign, after its annual cycle through the twelve signs, this festival symbolises a cosmic reset, offering fresh beginnings and new possibilities to all, regardless of one's zodiac sign.

This period is particularly conducive to strengthening your spiritual connections and deepening your devotional practices. Engaging with the divine feminine energy during Navratri is believed to be immensely powerful, providing devotees with the strength to dispel negativity and enhance positive energies in their lives. For those looking to embrace the spiritual essence of Chaitra Navratri, consider incorporating a simple yet profound ritual into your daily practice. This can serve as a beacon of peace and prosperity, guiding you towards personal growth and divine connection.

Whether you pray daily or are seeking to start a new spiritual practice, Chaitra Navratri offers a unique opportunity to align with cosmic rhythms and celebrate the divine within.

Before starting the puja, sit in a quiet place where you can focus and feel peaceful.

To begin, hold a small amount of water in the palm of your right hand, keeping it flat. Close your eyes to help concentrate on the upcoming ritual.

Then, it's time to set the 'Sankalp' of this puja. That is the intention: think of the person you are doing this puja for, or if it is for yourself, then focus on your own name. Whisper quietly, "May the blessings of this prayer reach [name]." This sets the spiritual purpose of the puja.

After stating your intention, respectfully release the water after mentioning the name, symbolising the purification and readiness to start the sacred rituals.


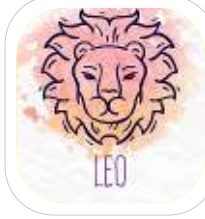








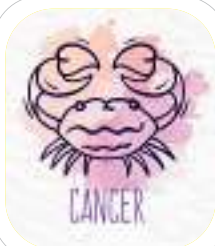
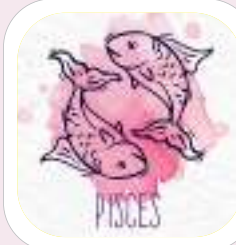
Proceed with the core elements of the puja, which could include prayers, havan (fire ritual), or japa (chanting mantras with prayer beads). These acts are performed to consecrate the space and invoke divine blessings.

After finishing your prayers or chants, take some more water in your palm. Release the water slowly while still sitting, then lightly touch the ground. This gesture shows respect for Mother Earth, acknowledging her support in life and spiritual practices.

Before you stand up from the aasana, recite the mantras "Om Shankaray Namah" and "Om Indrayah Namah." These phrases help seal the spiritual work you've done, ensuring the blessings are directed correctly, to you or to the person for whom you have prayed while setting up the intention.

Stand up, marking the formal conclusion of your puja. Omitting the final mantras may redirect the spiritual benefits to Lord Indra, as mentioned in our shastras, thus emphasising the importance of these concluding steps in a puja.



 <p><b>ARIES</b></p> <p>You may face workplace challenges. Stay calm amidst family tensions. Take time for loved ones, as they rely on you. Focus on relationships and stay optimistic.</p>	<p>Utilise talents for task completion; gain recognition. Balance work and rest for success. Stay calm in tense situations. Combine logic, and imagination for results.</p>  <p><b>LEO</b></p>	<p>Embrace hard work for benefits. Utilise patience and commitment. Seek emotional intensity. Harness energy for success. Combine logic and imagination for results.</p>  <p><b>SAGITTARIUS</b></p>	<p>Utilise experimentation for recognition. Embrace your peculiarities to gain an advantage. Innovate at work and home for enjoyment. Commitment brings loyalty.</p>  <p><b>CAPRICORN</b></p>	 <p><b>VIRGO</b></p> <p>Embrace harmony in all relationships. Seek therapy for self-expression. Nurture your softer side. Revive stalled projects, and define goals. Prioritise family over career.</p>
<p>Feelings of anger and hurt may arise. Seek solace in writing. Embrace joy through introspection. Family bonds strengthen. Display care to attract new friends.</p>  <p><b>TAURUS</b></p>	<p><b>YOUR WEEK AHEAD</b></p>		 <p><b>LIBRA</b></p>	<p>Generate project ideas, and relax as efforts bear fruit. Utilise tenacity for success. Embrace romance and novelty. You will benefit from supportive coworkers.</p>
<p>Efforts will yield benefits, relax before reaping rewards. Mind clashes with siblings, reign in emotional intensity. Reflect on parenting, and focus on positive thinking.</p>  <p><b>GEMINI</b></p>	 <p><b>AQUARIUS</b></p> <p>Retrace in critical situations, and remain calm. Follow your dreams despite delays. Prioritise paternal care. Explore virtues in new relationships. Seek guidance.</p>	 <p><b>SCORPIO</b></p> <p>Deepen relationships cautiously. Navigate workplace tensions calmly. Loosen up for personal growth. Balance home and career. Receive love through trust.</p>	 <p><b>CANCER</b></p> <p>Time is optimal for a job change or going solo. Embrace joy through introspection. Show sensitivity in relationships. Overcome illusions through meditation.</p>	<p>Retain humour and enthusiasm. Seek counselling for eccentricities. Manage conflicting views in projects. Cultivate love and trust. Maintain hope amidst worries.</p>  <p><b>PISCES</b></p>



This simple ritual, practiced throughout the nine days of Navratri, can help you harness cosmic energies and improve your fortunes. Each day of Chaitra Navratri is dedicated to worshipping a specific manifestation of the goddess.

- April 9, 2024 (Pratipada Tithi, Ghatasthapana):** Worship of Maa Shailputri
- April 10, 2024 (Dwitiya Tithi):** Worship of Maa Brahmacharini
- April 11, 2024 (Tritiya Tithi):** Worship of Maa Chandraghanta

- April 12, 2024 (Chaturthi Tithi):** Worship of Maa Kushmanda
- April 13, 2024 (Panchami Tithi):** Worship of Maa Skandamata
- April 14, 2024 (Shashthi Tithi):** Worship of Maa Katyayani
- April 15, 2024 (Saptami Tithi):** Worship of Maa Kalratri
- April 16, 2024 (Ashtami Tithi):** Worship of Maa Mahagauri
- April 17, 2024 (Navami Tithi):** Worship of Maa Siddhidatri (coincides with Ram Navami)

This schedule above provides a structured guide for devotees to follow for each day of Chaitra Navratri, ensuring a focused and dedicated worship of each form of Maa Durga.

As mentioned earlier, the ninth day (April 17) of Chaitra Navratri is Ram Navami. Hence, the worship of Maa Siddhidatri will coincide with that of Bhagwan Ram. Also, remember to follow these "vidhis" to optimise this blissful period when Maa Durga showers us all with her infinite love and kindness.

- Deep clean your home, especially the puja area, to create a serene and pure environment for worship.
  - Dress the idol of Maa Durga in new attire, and embellish it with a bindi and sindoor to honour and invoke her presence.
  - If fasting, consume only 'Satvik' foods like kuttu ka atta, potatoes, fruits, and curd. Avoid garlic and onions.
  - Chant Navratri mantras, read Navratri-related stories, and devote yourself to worshipping Maa Durga.
  - Break your fast on the ninth day only after performing havan and kanya pujan (worshipping young girls).
- Shubh Navratri!**

## GLOBE TROT

### A Texas woman undergoes chemotherapy just to find out she is not diagnosed with cancer

After going through a terrifying experience, a mother of two from Texas is on the mend. Early in 2023, Lisa Monk, 39, received a diagnosis of a rare kind of blood vessel cancer. According to The New York Post, Ms. Monk endured difficult chemotherapy treatments after learning the heartbreaking news. But a startling discovery emerged only a few weeks into Ms. Monk's treatment: she had never had cancer.



Monk's suffering started with stomach aches. A series of tests were ordered when a scan detected a tumor on her spleen. Doctors gave the diagnosis of angiosarco-

ma, which changed people's lives. According to the news article, Ms. Monk prepared for a future she worried she wouldn't see by writing letters to her loved ones in the face of a limited future.

## SIERRA LEONE'S DRUG ADDICTS TURN GRAVE DIGGERS

In Sierra Leone, a country in West Africa, addicts to a psychoactive narcotic made from human bones are excavating graves to satisfy their needs. Sierra Leone has been compelled to declare a national emergency because of this unsettling threat, as reported by the BBC. In order to stop the unsettling prac-

tice of excavating corpses for "Zombie" drug manufacture, police personnel are stationed at cemeteries in Freetown. Notably, the "kush" medicine contains ground-up human bone as one of its primary constituents, along with a number of other poisonous chemicals.

It was approximately six years ago when the drug first appeared in the West African nation. The outlet claims that it creates a dreamy high that can linger for several hours. Due to the drug's growing problem, sellers are said to have turned into grave robbers, breaking into thousands of tombs to take corpses in order to meet demand.



## Virat Kohli's pricey haircut

Celebrity hairstylist Aalim Hakim gave Kohli a new hairstyle ahead of the 2024 Indian Premier League, which caused quite a stir. Hakim not only styles MS Dhoni's hair but also that of Kohli. The well-known stylist recently revealed his rates. Hakim provided an idea, but he refrained from disclosing the exact amount he spent on Virat

Kohli's hairdo. "My fee is extremely straightforward, and everyone is aware of it. So, it begins with Rs 1 lakh." On Brut India, he stated, "That's the minimum." "Mahi sir and Virat are very old friends, and they have been coming to me for haircuts for a long time. And since the IPL was coming now, we decided to do something cool and different. And Virat always has references that 'we need to try this; we will try that next time,'" Hakim said.



## EXPLORING STRESS OF MENSTRUAL ISSUES IN WOMEN

The groundbreaking Aditya Birla Education Trust programs, Mpower and Ujaas, recently shared the results of their survey titled "Mindful Menstruation: A Survey on the link between Menstrual Health and Mental Wellbeing." Sixty percent of Indian women who participated in the poll admitted to experiencing higher levels of stress, anxiety, and mood swings either before or during their menstrual cycle.

In an effort to shed light on the relationship between menstruation health and mental wellness, more than 2,400 women nationwide participated in the study. It was also discovered that 55% of the women reported experiencing difficulties concentrating or finishing daily duties, including work, throughout their menstrual cycle. Furthermore, 58% of women reported that using relaxation techniques or self-care techniques before or during their periods improved their ability to operate on a daily basis. These results highlight the need for customised support and accommodations in various contexts, as well as the need to recognise and address the various effects of menstrual cycles on everyday functioning and productivity.

Sharing her thoughts on these numbers, Advaitesha Birla, Founder, of Ujaas, said "Menstrual health isn't just a biological phenomenon but a crucial determinant of overall well-being. With a significant number of women reporting increasing stress, anxiety, and mood swings, and difficulty in grappling with focus and daily task completion, the impact is undeniable. The survey highlights the pressing need to acknowledge

and address menstrual health-related challenges. These findings reinforce our commitment to supporting women's holistic well-being, reminding us the importance of developing a culture that recognizes menstrual health as an integral facet of overall wellness."

Meanwhile, Parveen Shaikh, echoed her views regarding the seriousness of mental health problems among women, as she remarked, "The survey results have been incredibly enlightening, highlighting the complex relationship between menstrual health and overall well-being for women. These realisations enable us to advocate for a cause that is near and dear to our hearts: dispelling the stigma associated with mental health awareness. I would like to take this moment to encourage everyone to start a journey of comprehension, empathy, and support as well as to establish a space where women may freely talk about and work through the difficulties they encounter. We build a stronger, more capable society by promoting a culture that values mental health."

Recently, the team also gave out about 400 specially made packs of sanitary pads to women commuters, reaffirming their commitment to eradicating the stigma associated with menstruation and mental health. Together with a QR code that allowed participants to complete a quick test to find out their mental health score, the packets also included a poem written as an expression of thanks to all women. The Sophia College NSS team, which helped with the kits' distribution to women, was involved in this project.