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KOJAGIRI PURNIMA: A NIGHT OF MOONLIGHT, FAITH AND TIMELESS WISDOM

When the full moon illuminates the night sky, it reminds us that true prosperity lies not merely in what we possess, but in what we appreciate, nurture and share.

There is something magical about a full-moon night. The world seems quieter, the sky appears brighter, and even the simplest moments become extraordinary. Kojagiri Purnima, celebrated on the full moon day of the Hindu month of Ashwin, captures this beautiful connection between nature, spirituality and human togetherness. Also known as Sharad Purnima, the festival holds a special place in Maharashtra, where families gather under the moonlight to enjoy traditional masala milk, exchange conversations and celebrate the blessings of life.

The name Kojagiri originates from the Sanskrit expression “Ko Jagarti?”, meaning “Who is awake?” According to Hindu tradition, Goddess Lakshmi, the deity associated with wealth and prosperity, visits the earth on this auspicious night, blessing those who remain awake in devotion. The festival is therefore associated with alertness, dedication and the hope of abundance. Kojagiri Purnima is also celebrated as Sharad Purnima in several parts of India. In Maharashtra, one of its most cherished traditions is preparing milk enriched with saffron, cardamom, almonds and other dry fruits. Families often gather on terraces, in courtyards or in community spaces, enjoying the pleasant autumn night beneath the full moon. In some regions, kheer is prepared and offered as prasad.

The festival also reflects gratitude for the changing seasons. As the monsoon gradually recedes and the autumn sky becomes clearer, the moon becomes a symbol of serenity, renewal and the beauty of the natural world. Across generations, these traditions have preserved a sense of cultural identity while bringing families and communities closer together. Beyond its religious significance, Kojagiri Purnima celebrates three enduring values: gratitude, togetherness and mindful living. In a world where people are constantly chasing their next achievement, the festival encourages us to pause and acknowledge what we already have our families, health, relationships and the opportunities that make life meaningful.

Its traditions also strengthen social bonds. Sharing a glass of masala milk may seem like a small gesture, but the conversations, laughter and memories created around it can become the foundation of lasting relationships. Festivals provide opportunities to reconnect with loved ones and build a stronger sense of community. At the same time, Kojagiri Purnima honours our relationship with nature. The moonlit sky invites us to step away from our busy routines and rediscover the calm that comes from observing the world around us. Its beauty reminds us that not everything valuable can be measured in money, productivity or material possessions.

The most meaningful lesson of Kojagiri Purnima lies in its call to remain awake not merely through the night, but in our everyday lives. To be awake is to recognise opportunities



before they disappear, to notice the struggles of people around us, and to act when our conscience asks us to do so. It means being attentive to the needs of our parents, children, neighbours and communities rather than allowing our responsibilities to become tomorrow's unfinished tasks. The festival also invites us to rethink prosperity. Wealth is important, but its true value emerges when it creates security, dignity and happiness for others. A generous heart, an honest effort and a willingness to share are forms of richness that no financial account can fully measure.

In an increasingly digital world, Kojagiri offers another valuable reminder: meaningful connection requires presence. Putting aside our screens, sitting together and listening to one another can sometimes be more rewarding than the most expensive celebration. The festival encourages us to rediscover the simple joys of life, strengthen our relationships and make time for the people who matter most.

As Kojagiri Purnima illuminates the night with its radiant full moon, let us allow its message to illuminate our lives. May we remain awake to opportunities, grateful for our blessings, sensitive to others' struggles and courageous enough to turn good intentions into meaningful action. After all, the true beauty of this festival is not limited to the moon shining above us. It lies in the kindness we offer, the relationships we strengthen and the hope we bring into someone else's life. This Kojagiri Purnima, let us celebrate not just the brilliance of the moon, but the light of humanity within every heart. For when gratitude becomes our habit, togetherness becomes our strength and compassion becomes our purpose, every night has the power to shine like a full moon.

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Durgesh K. Dubey

THE MAN WHO ASKED INDIA TO LOOK WITHIN: THE STORY OF RAJIV DIXIT

India was undergoing a change in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Foreign brands were increasingly prominent, economic liberalisation was bringing new opportunities and new terms, like globalisation, were entering common parlance. A young man started a journey from town to town in this changing India with another question: Is a nation truly independent if it gradually becomes dependent on others for what it could make for itself? The young man was Rajiv Dixit.

Rajiv was born in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, North India on 30th November 1967. The incident which had an impact on his public mind was the Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984. Thousands of people were affected when poisonous gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide plant. This tragedy called into question in Rajiv's mind, multinational corporations, accountability and the course of India's economy. In time, these questions became part of a much larger mission.

Rajiv started talking about Swadeshi but he meant more than just discard a foreign name and purchase an Indian one. For him Swadeshi is a means to build up local production, farmers, artisans, small business and Indian knowledge. Why money and jobs should needlessly leave local communities, he would ask, if soap, food, cloth and other everyday products could be produced locally. His argument was straight forward. Don't get too caught up in distant possibilities. First, identify those that are right under your nose.

Rajiv developed a close association with the Azadi Bachao Andolan, a movement which opposed the rising power of the multinational companies and the economic policies which they said could affect the strength of homelands' producers in the early nineties. He did a lot of traveling, speaking in villages, towns and cities. There was not much glitz to this work. Much of his influence was due to ordinary public meetings, audio-cassette (later CD) recordings of his speeches that carried him far beyond the places he was able to physically travel.

He used a language the people understood and they listened. Economics was not confined to textbooks. He related it to the shopkeeper, the farmer and the family. He wanted people to question where products were being made, and what people were doing to sustain their lives when they purchased something they consume on a daily basis. All the arguments underlying his economics may not have been accepted by all, but he did make many common folk think about issues that seemed far removed from their everyday experience.

That interest slowly began to shift to villages, too. His movement also advocated organic agriculture and small-scale agricultural production through the Swadeshi campaigns. The out-of-work young were urged to think about producing common goods locally, rather than waiting for a job. Such items as soap, detergent, traditional personal-care products and khadi were promoted through such initiatives. Rajiv wanted the villages to be a place of production - not just a place where labour moves to the cities.

This concept was rooted in a principle that was well known to the Indian Knowledge System – Swavalamban – self-reliance. In Indian traditions no one ever looked down on prosperity. The issue was how wealth was generated and if there was any economic activity that aided the larger community. Rajiv made this older understanding a part of Swadeshi. To him, self-reliance started with confidence, confidence in local skills, Indian agriculture, in small producers and in the capability of humans to produce useful work with their own hands.

Another influence came into his life through the writings and research of Gandhian historian Dharampal who studied records pertaining to Indian society, education and technology before and during colonial rule. Much of these were drawn on by Rajiv in his speeches on the history of India. It confirmed his faith in the necessity of Indians studying their own civilisation instead of their knowledge and progress always having to come from outside.

Rajiv's oratory was sometimes powerful and some of the assertions made in his speeches over the years have been contested or not backed up. But his significance does not mean that we have to agree with every and all of his claims. What was more enduring was the question he kept posing to his listeners: What can we do for ourselves? The question can be about farming, manufacturing, language, education or personal habits.

Thus his conception about Swadeshi had an ethical dimension. Purchase was not a private transaction. The selection of a consumer may impact on a worker somewhere, a small manufacturer, a farmer or a neighbourhood business. This is similar to the concept of Lok-Sangraha in India which stands for doing things with full awareness of the social world. Rajiv had wanted people to see that national self-reliance could not be achieved just by the government but by millions of choices which citizens make.



In his later life years, his campaign was linked to that of Bharat Swabhiman, where he was the national secretary along with Baba Ramdev (Yoga teacher). Now he was beginning to be concerned with corruption, economic inequality, Indian systems of knowledge, national self-respect. He went out on the road and preached to great crowds. He continued to write in simple style. He wanted listeners to do more than just clap at the end of a speech: to change something in their lives.

At this point, the trip came to an abrupt halt. Rajiv Dixit passed away in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh on 30 November 2010 on his 43rd birthday. Medical cause was given as cardiac arrest. He had lived a life of travelling and oratory work for Swadeshi, and at the early age of 37 had come to an end.

But with him his voice was not cut off. His lectures were recorded and continued to echo and discussions on Swadeshi, local production and economic self-reliance began to resonate with others. Years later, the overarching question of his work still holds true: Progress might be made through engagement with the world, but at what cost to forgetting the abilities one possesses?

Moral of the Story: In Rajiv Dixit's quest, we are invited to consider self-reliance on an individual basis. This is easy to say that villages have no jobs and that the small producers are disappearing, but not thinking where our money goes. He wished to bring these two together. His concept of Swadeshi was based on three factors: Swavalamban, Swabhiman and care for livelihoods. Before depending upon others, discover what you can create yourself. Know the value of something before discounting it as local.

In conclusion, his contribution and legacy remain significant. Rajiv Dixit emerged as one of the most popular contemporary voices to carry the Swadeshi message. He highlighted the concepts of local industry, farmers, organic agriculture, small production, consumer choices and economic self-reliance through the Azadi Bachao Andolan and later Bharat Swabhiman. What he left behind is a simple question for each generation: can we learn from the entire world, but as we do, are we also remembering, strengthening and creating what is our own?

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Ajab Tinwala & Ravi Singh

ONE MORE YEAR: HOW NAMAN DHIR TURNED A FATHER'S REQUEST INTO INDIA COLOURS



On the night of October 22, cricket fans across India stayed awake for a chase in Christchurch. New Zealand had piled up 225 for four at Hagley Oval. When Naman Dhir walked out to bat, India still needed 59 runs from 33 balls, and the asking rate was climbing with every dot ball. Fifteen deliveries later he was walking back unbeaten on 42, with five fours and two sixes, and India had won with two balls to spare. For many people watching, it was the first time they had properly noticed him. The story behind that innings deserves attention, because four years ago this same young man had nearly packed his bags to leave cricket, and India, behind for good.

Naman was born in Ambala on December 31, 1999, and grew up in Faridkot, a small town in Punjab that rarely features on the cricket map. His father worked at a chemist shop. The family was not well off, and cricket gear, coaching and travel to tournaments all cost money they had to stretch to find. They found it anyway. The boy repaid that faith early by becoming the first player from Faridkot to represent Punjab at the under-16 level, and later at under-25. In a town where nobody had gone that far before, it was a real achievement.

Then came a long, frustrating silence. For four years the senior selectors looked past him, and Naman felt a big part of the reason was where he came from, since Faridkot was treated as a minor district in Punjab cricket. Talent from the big centres got noticed. Talent from small towns had to wait, and keep waiting. By early 2022 he had run out of patience. He was in his twenties with no Ranji Trophy cap and no clear way forward. His sister lived in Edmonton, and a life in Canada looked steady and sensible, so he applied for permanent residency there. In his mind, the cricket chapter was closing.

Most of us know someone who reached this point. A gifted singer who took a bank job, or a student who gave up on the civil services after two attempts. Nobody would have blamed Naman for choosing security over a dream that kept slipping away. His father saw it differently. He sat his son down and asked for one more year. Play one more season with everything you have, he said, and if it still doesn't work, go to Canada with my blessing.

Naman agreed, and he played that year as if it were his last chance, because as far as he knew, it was. In December 2022 he became the first cricketer from Faridkot to play for Punjab in the Ranji Trophy. A few months later, in the 2023 Sher-e-Punjab Cup, he scored 466 runs at a strike rate above 190, with two centuries and 30 sixes. The following season brought two Ranji hundreds and a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title with Punjab.

The scouts were paying attention now. Mumbai Indians picked him at the 2024 auction for ₹20 lakh, a price usually reserved for backup players. Naman treated it as an opportunity. On debut against Gujarat Titans he hit Azmatullah Omarzai for three fours and a six in a single over, and later that season he blasted 62 not out from 28 balls against Lucknow at the Wankhede, in front of a home crowd that quickly learnt his name. At the 2025 auction four other franchises wanted him, but Mumbai held on to him with their right-to-match card at ₹5.25 crore, and he played all 16 of their matches that season.

The innings that finally forced the national selectors' hand came in September 2026. Opening for Amritsar Soormas in the Sher-e-Punjab T20 League, Naman made 173 off just 64 balls against Mohali Kings. No batter had ever scored more in an Indian domestic T20 competition. On September 27 he made his ODI debut against West Indies in Thiruvananthapuram, with his T20I debut in Lucknow a week later. In that series he picked up five wickets with his off-spin and smashed an unbeaten 24 off six balls in Bengaluru. Christchurch followed, and with it, the late-night celebrations back home.

It is tempting to read Naman's journey as luck, but a closer look shows something more useful. When the system ignored him, he kept turning up. When he finally decided to quit, he was humble enough to listen to someone who believed in him more than he believed in himself at that moment. Once he chose to stay, he committed fully, without keeping a backup plan running in his head.

Many students reading this are standing at their own crossroads. Maybe the marks haven't come, the placement didn't happen, or an exam result was disappointing. Walking away is sometimes the right call. Before you do, ask yourself whether you have truly given it one honest, focused year. For parents, the lesson may be even simpler. Naman's father had no money to buy his son success and no connections to open doors. What he gave was time and belief, and that turned out to be enough.

The boy from Faridkot is only getting started. Somewhere in Punjab tonight, a father who once worked at a chemist shop has every reason to feel proud.

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EDITOR



Prof. Dr. Smita Ravikumar Kuntay

PhD (Business Administration)
M.Phil, M.Com, B.Ed.

Veteran Academician, Researcher and Social Activitist.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Commerce Connect is a student-friendly column that turns money, markets, and management into everyday lessons. From canteen economics to digital wallets, it bridges classroom theory with real-world trends, making commerce not just a subject, but a life skill.

THE BUSINESS OF IDEAS: TURNING CREATIVITY INTO COMMERCIAL VALUE



What makes the Amul Girl more than just an advertising character? How can a song continue earning money long after its release? Behind these examples lies a powerful business idea: creativity, when legally protected and strategically managed, can generate value beyond its original purpose.

In today's economy, original characters, music, designs, brand identities and digital content are valuable commercial assets. Businesses turn creative work into revenue through licensing, royalties, partnerships and merchandise. This highlights the importance of intellectual property (IP) legal rights that protect creations of the mind and help owners control their use. For businesses, IP is more than legal protection; it can generate revenue, strengthen competitive advantage and create long-term value.

When Creativity Becomes a Commercial Asset

Intellectual property covers different forms of creative and innovative work. Copyright protects eligible literary, artistic and musical works, while trademarks protect brand identifiers such as names and logos. Patents cover qualifying inventions, and industrial designs may protect the visual appearance of products under applicable laws.

These rights allow owners to control certain uses of their creations and explore commercial opportunities. Instead of earning only from an initial sale, they may generate additional income by authorising others to use their intellectual property.

Example: From television screens to shopping shelves, JioStar's Consumer Products business turns popular entertainment brands and characters into merchandise such as toys, clothing and school supplies, creating licensing and revenue opportunities.

For entrepreneurs, the lesson is clear: a creative asset can support multiple products and markets when its rights are properly managed.

The Business of Licensing and Royalties

Licensing allows an intellectual property owner to permit another party to use a protected asset under agreed conditions. Contracts may specify duration, territory, permitted uses and payment terms. Owners may receive a fixed fee, royalties linked to sales, or both.

Example: Saregama India demonstrates how a music catalogue can become a commercial asset. Licensing music and entertainment content to digital platforms, advertisers and other users creates opportunities to earn from existing works across multiple channels.

Licensing helps businesses enter new markets without producing every product or managing every distribution channel themselves. Creators can also earn from existing work while retaining ownership, depending on the agreement. However, successful licensing requires clear contracts, verified ownership and monitoring to ensure the asset is used as authorised.

How Brand Identity Creates Value

A recognisable brand name or visual identity can influence consumer trust and purchasing decisions. When customers associate a brand with quality, familiarity or reliability, that recognition can help it stand apart from competitors.

Amul's iconic Amul Girl illustrates how a distinctive advertising character can become closely associated with a brand. Its enduring familiarity demonstrates the commercial importance of creative identity, while the company's name and logo highlight the role of trademark protection. This highlights how creative identity strengthens a brand without implying direct licensing revenue.

Businesses may also license trademarks to authorised partners producing goods in other categories, generating fees or royalties while expanding brand visibility. For commerce students, this shows how branding, IP rights and customer loyalty contribute to differentiation and business growth.

Valuing Assets That Cannot Be Touched

Unlike buildings, machinery or inventory, intellectual property is intangible. Its value may depend on market demand, legal protection, brand recognition, expected future income and the remaining period of enforceable rights.

Businesses assess IP when negotiating acquisitions, attracting investors or making strategic decisions. Popularity does not always translate into long-term revenue, making valuation difficult.

Example: Before purchasing rights to a popular digital character, a company must assess its audience, licensing potential, costs and future earnings prospects.

This creates opportunities for accountants, financial analysts, valuation specialists, lawyers and IP consultants. Their expertise helps businesses assess risks, negotiate agreements and make informed decisions about intangible assets.

The Challenges Behind the Opportunity

Owning intellectual property does not guarantee commercial success. Ownership disputes, copyright or trademark infringement, unauthorised use and costly legal proceedings can cause financial losses. Unauthorised use of copyrighted music, images or designs can result in legal action and financial penalties.

Digital platforms make creative content easier to distribute, but unauthorised copying remains difficult to control. Businesses must secure permissions, maintain clear agreements and protect their intellectual property rights.

Creativity gains lasting commercial value when businesses combine original ideas with smart planning, legal protection and effective intellectual property management.

The Take Away

Ideas are more than expressions of creativity; they are assets with the power to generate revenue, build brands and create competitive advantage. For entrepreneurs, protecting intellectual property can unlock business opportunities; for commerce students, it highlights the growing importance of intangible assets and their valuation.

Because creativity sparks the idea, but intellectual property turns it into an asset that can keep earning.

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EDITOR



Prof. Dr. Savita Kishan Pawar
Principal
Bhavan's College, Andheri (W), Mumbai

EDITORIAL NOTE

The study of language and literature is not just an academic pursuit, but a journey into the world of imagination, critical thinking, and cultural exchange. This page celebrates creativity, knowledge, and expression by bridging the classics with contemporary voices.

READING NATURE, PROTECTING NATURE

Nature writing can help us recognise that forests, rivers, animals and human communities are interconnected. Literature encourages us to look beyond the beauty of landscapes and consider the threats they face.

Students can translate this awareness into action through campus cleanliness, waste segregation, tree care and responsible use of natural resources.

Environmental responsibility begins with observation and grows through informed action.

LANGUAGE CHALLENGE

Correct the sentence: Neither of the answers are correct.

Answer: Neither of the answers is correct.

Reason: "Neither" means "not one nor the other." In formal English, it is generally treated as singular and takes the singular verb "is," rather than "are."

DID YOU KNOW?

- A Cloud Can Weigh More Than a Million Pounds! Despite floating gracefully in the sky, a large cloud can contain hundreds of thousands of kilograms of water droplets.
- Your Stomach Gets a New Lining Regularly! The stomach lining renews itself frequently, helping protect it from its own powerful digestive acid.
- Wombat Poop Is Cube-Shaped! Wombats produce cube-shaped droppings, a rare natural phenomenon linked to the varying elasticity of their intestines.
- A Flamingo's Colour Comes From Its Food! The pink colour of flamingos comes from carotenoid pigments found in the algae and small crustaceans they eat.
- The Moon Is Slowly Moving Away From Earth! The Moon drifts away from Earth by about 3.8 centimetres every year.
- Some Turtles Can Breathe Through Their Rear End! Certain freshwater turtles can absorb oxygen through specialised tissues near their cloaca while underwater.
- A Group of Flamingos Is Called a "Flamboyance"! This wonderfully fitting collective noun describes a gathering of these colourful birds.
- The World's Oldest Known Trees Can Live for Thousands of Years! Some bristlecone pine trees have survived for more than 4,000 years, witnessing enormous changes in human history.
- Your Bones Are Living Tissue! Bones constantly break down and rebuild themselves, helping maintain strength and repair everyday damage.

GRAMMAR TIP

Who vs. Whom

Who is used as the subject of a verb.

Whom is used as the object of a verb or preposition.

Examples:

Who planted these trees?

Whom did the environmental committee invite?

WRITER OF THE WEEK

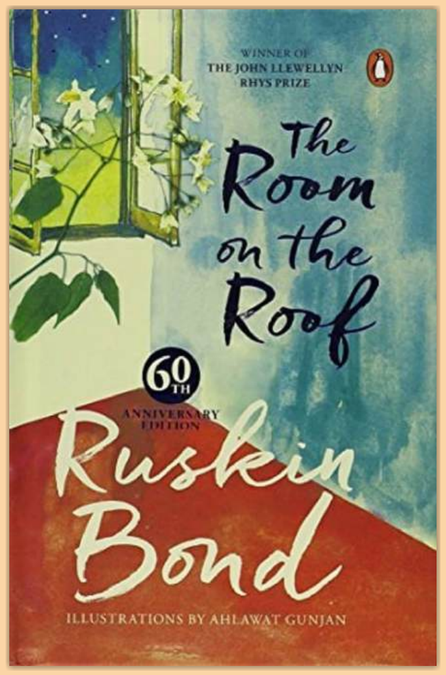
Ruskin Bond

Ruskin Bond is an Indian author celebrated for his stories, essays and novels inspired by the landscapes and people of India, especially the Himalayan region. His writing captures the beauty of forests, mountains, small towns and ordinary human relationships.

Literary significance: Bond encourages readers to observe nature closely and appreciate the relationship between people and their environment.

BOOK REVIEW

The Room on the Roof by Ruskin Bond



This novel follows Rusty, an adolescent Anglo-Indian boy searching for freedom, friendship and belonging. Although the story primarily explores identity and growing up, its vivid descriptions of place and everyday life make the setting an important part of the narrative.

Discussion question: How does a character's environment influence their identity and choices?

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness."

— John Muir

CREATIVE WRITING

A Promise to the Earth

A seed we plant, a tree we save,

A cleaner stream, a world more brave.

A bird that sings, a flower in bloom,

Can bring new hope where there was gloom.

Let every hand protect the green,

Keep rivers clear and cities clean.

The Earth we borrow, not possess,

Deserves our care and tenderness.

WORD OF THE WEEK

Biodiversity

Meaning: The variety of living organisms found in a particular habitat or across the planet.
Example: Protecting biodiversity is essential for maintaining ecological balance.

IDIOM HIGHLIGHT

Nip Something in the Bud

Meaning: To stop a problem before it develops further.

Example: We must nip the habit of littering in the bud by promoting environmental responsibility among students.

Ganesha Gundu & Ravi Singh

KARNATAKA BETS ON SATELLITES AND AI TO SHARPEN THE DROUGHT CROP CHECKS



Karnataka is preparing a satellite and AI-based crop monitoring pilot for drought-hit regions, aiming to improve damage assessment, pest detection and yield estimates.

The project, reported by Moneycontrol, will use drones, weather data and field checks across selected taluks in north Karnataka before any wider rollout is considered. Karnataka is moving to bring satellite mapping, drone feeds and artificial intelligence into the centre of crop surveillance, with a pilot designed to improve drought assessment and yield estimates in some of the state's hardest-hit agricultural belts. According to Moneycontrol, the Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre has sought bids from firms, agencies and startups to build and demonstrate the system under the CM Raitha Chaitanya Karnataka Agritech Mission 2026.

The initiative is aimed at giving the state a sharper picture of crop conditions, pest pressure and likely losses at a time when drought has become a persistent policy challenge. The pilot comes against the backdrop of severe agricultural distress across Karnataka. The state government has classified 226 of its 240 taluks as drought-hit, with estimated crop losses of more than ₹46,324 crore. That scale of damage has made traditional field-based assessment slower and less granular, especially when officials need village-level data for relief, procurement planning and compensation decisions.

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HOW THE CRYSTAL CROP TURNED MARIGOLD BREEDING INTO AN EXPORT OPPORTUNITY



Crystal Crop Protection's marigold breeding programme has created a high-value seed business and drawn overseas interest in India's flower sector. The company is now extending its horticulture push into orchids, with an eye on cheaper local alternatives to imports and a wider export opportunity.

A flower that once travelled largely as a festival staple inside India is now pulling international attention for a different reason: plant breeding. Crystal Crop Protection's work on marigold hybrids has not only created a fast-growing seed business, but also encouraged overseas firms to look at India as a production base for export-oriented flower cultivation.

The development is significant because it shows how horticulture research, when tied to farmer economics and post-harvest traits, can open a new commercial lane beyond the domestic market. The company's hybrid marigold programme has become its top seed revenue contributor, while also creating a model that could be repeated in other flowers.

Crystal Crop Protection Ltd began breeding marigold hybrids in 2012 and achieved a breakthrough two years later, said Ramamohan G, R&D Lead, Vegetable and Flowers Division. The company's work was built around developing a flower that could withstand handling, travel and storage better than conventional varieties.

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UNEVEN MONSOON MAY KEEP THE SPICE PRICES FIRM AS THE SOUTHERN CROP STRESS DEEPENS



Patchy monsoon rains and dry soil across southern India are threatening spice output, especially turmeric and red chilli. With low stocks and stronger export demand, prices may remain elevated even as some crops see higher acreage. A patchy monsoon is beginning to show up in India's spice economy, with growers, exporters and traders warning that dry soil conditions across the south could keep prices elevated well into the coming months.

The pressure is not coming from a single crop. Turmeric, red chilli, cumin, coriander, celery, ginger and garlic are all facing varying degrees of weather stress, while low carry-over stocks from the previous season are limiting the buffer that usually softens price spikes.

With export demand also expected to strengthen, the market is heading into a period where supply tightness may matter more than acreage gains. Even though farmers have expanded the area under spices in several belts, the gains may not translate into higher output if rainfall remains uneven. Sandeep Voddepalli, vice president at BigHaat India, said the crop outlook has been weakened by the effect of El Nino, particularly in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. He pointed out that the larger sowing base may still be undermined by lower yields, which would keep retail prices under pressure.

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TOMATO PRICES SINK AS THE NASHIK GROWERS ABSORB THE PAIN OF HEAT AND WEAK DEMAND



Tomato growers in Nashik are facing a sharp price collapse just as drought conditions add to their production stress. Wholesale rates at Pimpalgaon APMC have fallen nearly 65 per cent in a week, driven by heavy arrivals, heat-induced ripening and weak demand across key markets.

Retail prices are already easing in Nashik, and traders expect more correction if the supply glut continues. With major consuming states sourcing locally, farmers in the region are left with fewer buyers and thinner margins. Tomato growers in Nashik are being hit from two sides at once: the weather has weakened harvest prospects, while a flood of arrivals has pushed market prices sharply lower.

The result is a bruising week for farmers who were already dealing with drought stress and rising cultivation costs. At Pimpalgaon APMC, one of the country's biggest wholesale tomato markets, prices have fallen by nearly 65 per cent in a week.

The average wholesale rate, which stood at ₹321 per 20-kg crate on October 12, slipped to ₹111 per crate by Monday, or about ₹5.55 a kg.

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PREMIUM PADDY PRICES HIT THE RECORD HIGH AS WEATHER SHOCK TIGHTENS THE RICE SUPPLY



Premium paddy prices have surged far above the official support rate as El Nino-linked rainfall deficits hurt output in key southern states. Farmers are gaining, but millers, exporters and consumers may face tighter supplies and higher rice prices in the months ahead.

Rice markets are entering a season of unusual strain, with premium paddy varieties commanding prices far above the government's support level even before the full Kharif harvest reaches the market. The squeeze is being felt from mandis in southern India to export desks in New Delhi, and the implications may soon show up on retail shelves.

The growers of premium paddy are now getting at least ₹1,000 a quintal more than the minimum support price fixed by the Centre. The gain is welcome for farmers, but it is also a sign that weather disruption has tightened supplies of preferred rice varieties and pushed traders into a more defensive position.

Trade participants say the premium being paid for select paddy varieties is unlike anything they have seen in recent years. S Chandrasekaran, a Delhi-based trade analyst, told the publication that farmers are currently realising ₹3,600 to ₹3,700 a quintal for premium paddy, a level that stands well above the official support price and even above some state-backed procurement rates that include bonuses..

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Prof. Dr. Smita Ravikumar Kuntay

MAHARASHTRA WAIVES EXAM FEES FOR 2.4 LAKH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The Maharashtra government has waived semester examination fees for 2,40,365 students across 26 state universities, providing financial relief to learners from drought-affected areas and helping them continue higher education without additional financial pressure.

The Higher and Technical Education Department directed universities to waive examination fees for eligible students from 305 drought-affected talukas. The number of affected talukas increased from 265 following a government resolution issued by the Relief and Rehabilitation Department on September 25, 2026.

Eligible students can select the 'zero challan' option while submitting examination forms, allowing them to complete the process without paying fees. Universities have also been instructed to refund examination fees already collected from eligible students.

Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil said the government was committed to supporting students from drought-affected families and ensuring financial difficulties did not hinder their education.

The University of Mumbai has initiated refunds amounting to approximately ₹3.5 crore for eligible students who had already paid their examination fees. The government expects the total number of beneficiaries to exceed five lakh by October 30.

Director of Higher Education Shailendra Deolankar is monitoring implementation across universities to ensure eligible students receive the benefit.

Students experiencing difficulties accessing the waiver can contact their respective universities' designated nodal officers or helplines.

The initiative aims to make higher education more accessible, reduce the financial burden on drought-affected families and prevent economic hardship from disrupting students' academic progress.

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GUJARAT TIGHTENS SCHOOL ENTRY RULES TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT SAFETY

The Gujarat government has tightened school entry regulations, making prior written permission from the principal or head of the institution mandatory for outsiders entering school premises. The directive aims to strengthen campus security and protect students' safety, dignity and privacy.

According to a circular issued by the Office of the Commissioner of Schools on October 21, visitors must obtain written approval before entering school premises. Government officials performing authorised duties are exempt. Schools must also maintain registers recording visitor details.

The guidelines restrict access to classrooms, laboratories, libraries, hostels, playgrounds, toilets and other areas used for academic and extra-curricular activities. Visitors entering these locations must have prior written permission and be accompanied by the principal, a teacher or an authorised school official.

The circular also prohibits photography, videography, interviews, audio recording and live-streaming involving students, teachers or school activities without prior written permission from the principal. Unauthorised collection or circulation of children's photographs and personal information is also restricted when it could compromise their safety or privacy.

Principals can deny entry to visitors whose presence may threaten security, discipline or the academic environment. Unauthorised entry, refusal to leave, illegal recording or disruption of school activities must be reported to the police and education authorities.

The government cited constitutional protections, the right to privacy and child-protection guidelines to reinforce its responsibility towards students.

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MEITY LAUNCHES INDIAAI FELLOWSHIP 2026 WITH FUNDING FOR STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), through its IndiaAI Mission, has opened applications for the IndiaAI Fellowship 2026, offering financial assistance to students pursuing artificial intelligence (AI) research and projects.

The fellowship is open to eligible undergraduate (UG), Integrated Dual Degree (IDD) and postgraduate (PG) students. Applications can be submitted through the official portal, fellowship.indiaai.gov.in, until November 30, 2026.

Under the programme, undergraduate students can receive financial support of up to ₹1 lakh, while postgraduate students are eligible for assistance of up to ₹2 lakh, depending on their academic stage.

The initiative also provides substantial support to doctoral researchers. PhD candidates will receive a monthly fellowship of ₹70,000 during the first two years, increasing to ₹75,000 in the third year and ₹80,000 in the fourth and fifth years

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Research scholars will additionally be eligible for an annual research grant of ₹2 lakh, including institutional overheads capped at 10 per cent.

The programme also recognises research excellence at international conferences. Students whose AI research papers are accepted at conferences with an h5 rating above 100 can receive one-time financial assistance of up to ₹1 lakh towards travel and accommodation expenses.

Through these provisions, the IndiaAI Fellowship aims to support emerging AI talent, encourage research and innovation, and strengthen India's artificial intelligence ecosystem. Interested candidates should consult the official portal for eligibility requirements and application details before the deadline.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH TO INTRODUCE MORAL SCIENCE FROM CLASS 1

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has directed the Education Department to introduce moral science from Class 1 in government schools to promote ethical values, discipline and responsibility among students.



The initiative aims to nurture compassion, respect for elders, good conduct and strong character from an early age. It reflects the state government's emphasis on holistic education, ensuring that children develop essential life values alongside academic knowledge.

During a meeting with senior education officials, Sukhu also reviewed the implementation of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum in government schools. He stressed the importance of qualified teachers, adequate staffing and a supportive learning environment.

The Chief Minister directed officials to expedite recruitment for 600 Junior Basic Teacher (JBT) posts in CBSE schools. He also instructed the department to ensure teacher availability in 100 newly established schools.

Additionally, he reviewed staffing requirements for ministerial and Class-IV employees and called for timely action according to prescribed norms.

The meeting also discussed recruitment under the New Scheme Based Recruitment initiative, covering 3,900 teaching and 900 non-teaching posts.

Sukhu reiterated the government's commitment to improving educational standards, strengthening government schools and ensuring effective implementation of educational reforms.

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KERALAM PLANS SCHOOL SKILL CENTRES TO NURTURE YOUNG TALENT



Keralam plans to establish skill development centres in schools from the upper primary level to identify and nurture students' abilities at an early age, General Education Minister N Samsudheen has announced.

The minister made the announcement while inaugurating a new school building in Thazhekkode village panchayat in Malappuram district. He highlighted the government's commitment to strengthening education and preparing students for future opportunities.

The proposed centres aim to help students discover their interests and strengths alongside regular classroom learning. The initiative seeks to encourage children to explore their potential and develop practical skills from an early stage. Details regarding the centres' courses and implementation schedule are awaited.

The minister also highlighted measures under the government's 100-day action plan, including upgrading single-teacher schools into lower primary schools to improve access to education.

Additionally, 60 extra Plus One batches have been sanctioned in Malappuram district to expand opportunities for students seeking higher secondary education.

Samsudheen also referred to Digital Square, an initiative aimed at modernising school education by introducing students to artificial intelligence.

These measures reflect Keralam's efforts to make education more practical and future-oriented. By identifying students' abilities early and integrating technology into learning, the state aims to strengthen educational opportunities and help young learners prepare for future academic and career pathways.

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Durgesh K. Dubey

AI'S NEXT 20 YEARS: BILL GATES CAUTIONS, THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE MAY BE THE TRANSITION



AI may offer a future of lower costs for services, improved healthcare and increased productivity, but it could be a bit of a pain in the arse to get there. The world could experience almost two decades of economic and social turmoil, according to Bill Gates, as AI gains the ability to execute tasks traditionally held by humans. He doesn't think it's necessarily the case that the advent of AI will lead to the demise of society. That the transition might be a lot quicker than workers and governments are ready for.

White collar jobs are expected to be the first to experience the impacts. Today's AI systems can increasingly perform such knowledge-intensive tasks as coding, customer support, and data analysis. When you're trying to do the same job more quickly and less expensively, there's a strong motivation to turn to technology to do just that, especially for accounting, telesales, legal support and some routine office duties. This can be especially for entry level or mid level workers.

Job disruptions could extend beyond the office jobs. Physical work too might evolve as AI is integrated with more powerful bots. Machines will be able to do things that people currently have to do, such as construction, hospitality, agriculture and some health care activities. Gates thinks that before the end of this decade, smart robots might start to compete with people in a number of physical roles.

This renders the current technological transition unique from many that have gone before it. Much of the physical work was replaced by mechanisation and clerical/administrative work by computers. There were also some new jobs. The question for AI is more complicated since it can also increasingly perform cognitive tasks. It could be more difficult to move people out of their jobs into entirely new ones if machines can reason, communicate and analyse data and eventually undertake more complex physical tasks.

It's not all bad news. AI may also help to reduce the cost of many goods and services and increase productivity. One place where it can be huge is in healthcare. AI could speed up drug research, enhance health care provisioning and boost the spreading of expertise to areas where experts are limited. The potential benefits for agriculture, education and scientific research are also possible. What Gates is concerned about is that these benefits may not be widely distributed before some negative consequences, such as jobs being eliminated or cyber risks, come to fruition.

That's as much of an economic issue as a technological one. An increase in productivity, coupled with a decrease in demand for labor, does not necessarily translate to an increase in the well-being of displaced workers through the use of AI. Eventually societies might need to revisit working hours, retirement, taxation and income support. Certain activities may even be kept as people-driven. There are social values that can't just be quantified as to whether a machine can do it cheaper, like caring for others, or the arts or sport or other pursuits.

Security is also a worry. Strong AI can amplify cyberattacks and potentially raise the risks from biological attacks. Of course, as technology companies grow more competitive, relying on technology for the entire safeguarding becomes more difficult. Gates is thus calling for a more vigorous role and regulation of government.

The 20 year time frame should not be interpreted as a specific prediction. Technology does not always follow a standard path of development and the future impact on employment is not clear. The warning is more really a question of readiness.

AI can generate a ton of money and resolve issues that are challenging today. Productivity is just one factor that will determine the success of the transition. The impacts of the technology, on who, who loses, how fast workers can adapt and how governments act may be just as important.

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FOREIGN INVESTORS CONTINUE TO REDUCE THEIR EXPOSURE TO INDIAN STOCKS: WILL THERE BE MORE PAIN FOR THE MARKET?

Foreign investors continue to withdraw their funds from Indian stocks and the withdrawals are now about 10 weeks old. The ongoing exodus has compounded the market's woes, which include high crude oil prices, global uncertainty and interest rate worries. But there is a glimmer of hope: foreign selling was sharply reduced in the current week. Now investors have to ask themselves if this is the start of a shift or just a halt.

Foreign institutional investors divested nearly ₹2697 crore worth of Indian equities during the last week, compared to the previous week, when they divested close to ₹8991 crore. October has been quite a different story. So far this month, FIIs have sold ₹51,466 crore. The withdrawals come after September also saw heavy foreign selling. Previously, July and August had temporarily lured foreign investors into Indian stocks.

The pressure has been felt in the markets. Nifty 50 has dropped over 2% during the past week to close at 22,600. The weakness was much more pronounced from among the big companies. The Nifty Midcap 100 fell 5.6% and the Smallcap 100 index ended at a loss of over 7%. This indicates that the correction has turned from a few big weight stocks.

Why are foreign investors going on a sell? Some of the solution is found outside India. Investors on a global level compare returns from one country to the next. If there is an attractive yield available in U.S. government bonds with significantly less risk, then there is less demand for higher-yielding emerging-market stocks. Some of the North Asian markets, on which investors believe they see value opportunities connected to artificial intelligence and relatively low valuations, have also attracted money.

Another concern for India is crude oil. Brent edged up to more than $114 a barrel this week, as energy supply worries resurfaced. Almost all the crude oil consumed in India is imported. High oil prices can boost the import bill and drive up inflation and exert pressure on the rupee. These risks would make the Indian equities less cosy while the world remains uncertain.

Nevertheless, a good buffer has been built up in the domestic market. During the week, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) acquired some ₹10,942 crore worth of stocks, significantly exceeding the FIIs' sales. The domestic market has undergone a transformation due to regular inflows into mutual funds, insurance companies, and other institutions. Foreign selling thus has a less-than-impactful effect, compared to the effect it may have had when markets were more reliant on foreign capital.

That's the end of the worst, right? Evidence is inconclusive. The decline in weekly FII selling is good and in some weeks, they were even buying. However, the weakness in mid and small caps indicates that risk appetite is still fragile.

The next move could be less a function of one week's FII activity and more of oil prices, global interest rates, corporate earnings, rupee and geopolitical events. Indian equities may get some support if crude cools down and earnings continue to be encouraging. Oil may remain high and



world production may be sustained if oil persists at its present level.

The current pullback is thus not a clear sign of an imminent crash; rather, it is not a bottom indicator for investors. India's economic narrative is not in jeopardy, but markets can still be uneasy when the economy is expanding. But the coming weeks will reveal the extent to which domestic buying will be able to replace foreign selling, and whether FIIs will finally feel Indian valuation at that level is compelling enough for them to come back.

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Dr. (Mrs) Chandra Hariharan Iyer

EXPERT



Dr. (Mrs) Chandra Hariharan Iyer

Veteran Academician,
Freelance Consultant - Research and Upskilling
PhD(Management-Finance), M.Phil(Management),
MBA(Finance), M.com, M.Sc.(Psychology),
M.A. (Philosophy and Religion)
DBM, PGDBM, PGDFM,
PG Diploma in Guidance & Counselling

INSIGHTS ON IKS RESEARCH - DHARMA DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

Mail your questions on
thehulahultimes@gmail.com
or
DM your questions on our instagram handle @thehulahultimes

Q. What do you mean my dharma driven development?

Ans. Thanks for asking this question, I feel truly blessed to answer this question!
Dharma-driven development is a model of personal and societal progress in which growth is guided by Dharma (righteousness, duty, ethics, and responsibility) rather than by material success alone. It emphasizes that true development should improve not only wealth and technology but also character, justice, social harmony, and environmental sustainability. In the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), development is considered complete only when it benefits the individual, society, nature, and future generations. Key Features of Dharma-Driven Development:

1. Ethics Before Profit: Economic growth should be achieved through honesty, fairness, and integrity rather than exploitation or corruption. Wealth earned through ethical means contributes to long-term prosperity.

2. Duty Along with Rights: Dharma emphasizes that every individual has responsibilities toward family, society, the nation, and nature. When people fulfil their duties, the rights of others are naturally protected.

3. Holistic Development: Development includes physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. It seeks the well-being of the whole person rather than focusing only on income or career.

4. Welfare of All (Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah): The goal of development is the happiness and welfare of all members of society. Progress is meaningful only when it is inclusive and benefits everyone.

5. Respect for Nature: Natural resources are to be used responsibly and conserved for future generations. Dharma promotes a harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

6. Value-Based Leadership: Leaders are expected to act with honesty, compassion, accountability, and justice. Good leadership is measured by service to society rather than personal gain.

7. Sustainable and Balanced Progress: Development should balance economic growth with social justice, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Short-term gains should not come at the cost of long-term well-being

According to the teachings of the Acharyas of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Dharma-driven development means that every aspect of human progress education, family life, governance, business, science, and technology should be guided by Dharma (righteousness, duty, truth, compassion, and self-discipline). Development is considered meaningful only when it uplifts both the individual and society while preserving spiritual and cultural values.

The Acharyas consistently taught that material prosperity without Dharma cannot bring lasting peace or happiness. Wealth, knowledge, and power should therefore be used for the welfare of all.

1) Development Begins with Character: The Acharyas emphasized that the true measure of progress is not wealth but character. Education should produce individuals who are truthful, disciplined, compassionate, and responsible.

2) Dharma Should Guide Every Action: According to the Acharyas, every decision should be based on the principles of Dharma rather than personal gain. Whether in business, education, or public service, ethical conduct is the foundation of lasting success.

3) Balance Between Material and Spiritual Progress: The Kanchi Acharyas never discouraged material advancement. Instead, they taught that economic development should be accompanied by spiritual growth, humility, and devotion so that prosperity benefits society rather than leading to greed.

4) Service to Society is True Development: The Acharyas often taught that "Manava Seva is Madhava Seva" (serving humanity is serving the Divine). A developed individual is one who uses knowledge, wealth, and abilities for the welfare of others.

5) Preservation of Sanskriti: The Acharyas believed that a nation progresses when it preserves its language, traditions, temples, arts, and scriptures. Protecting Sanskriti ensures that development remains rooted in ethical and cultural values.

6) Harmony with Nature: The teachings encourage reverence for rivers, trees, animals, and the environment as manifestations of the Divine. Therefore, development should protect natural resources rather than exploit them recklessly.

7) Leadership Through Dharma: The Acharyas taught that leaders should be examples of humility, justice, and selflessness. Leadership is viewed as a sacred responsibility to serve society, not as a means of personal power.

8) Universal Welfare: The Kanchi Acharyas frequently highlighted the Vedic ideal: "Lokāḥ Samastāḥ Sukhino Bhavantu" May all beings in all the worlds be happy.

This reflects the principle that true development should benefit everyone, irrespective of caste, religion, language, or social status. Few Examples of Dharma-Driven Development

a) A student studies not merely to secure a job but to become a person of knowledge and character.

b) A businessperson earns wealth honestly and uses a portion of it for charity and social welfare.

c) A teacher imparts both academic knowledge and moral values to students.

d) A government frames policies that uphold justice, protect the weak, preserve culture, and conserve nature.

e) A family nurtures children with values such as respect, discipline, devotion, and compassion.

In the teachings of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham Acharyas, Dharma-driven development is development rooted in Dharma, guided by Sanskriti, and dedicated to the welfare of all beings. It seeks to harmonize material prosperity with moral character, spiritual wisdom, social responsibility, and environmental care. Such development does not merely create a prosperous society it creates a righteous, compassionate, and culturally vibrant civilization. Dharma-driven development means achieving progress while remaining rooted in truth, righteousness, compassion, responsibility, and sustainability. It integrates material advancement with moral and spiritual values, ensuring that development benefits the individual, society, and nature alike. In the Indian Knowledge System, it represents a balanced path where prosperity is pursued in harmony with Dharma, creating a just, peaceful, and sustainable society. Let us go back to our roots, it is never out dated! Let us live dharmic life, wish you much and more, stay blessed!

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Ajab Tinwala & Ravi Singh

THE INTEREST WE PAY ON "LATER", AND WHY THE BILL ALWAYS COMES DUE



Every household has a drawer of "later". In it you'll find the warranty card that was never registered, an address-change form for the bank, a gift voucher that expired in March, and an official-looking letter nobody opened because it seemed boring. Each of these was once a two-minute job. Each turned into a problem simply because it was put off.

"I'll do it later" may be the most common sentence in Indian homes after "khana khaya?" It sounds harmless. Later feels like a real place, a calm Sunday afternoon when we'll have the time and energy for everything. That Sunday rarely arrives. When it does, we spend it on the sofa, and the list grows a little longer.

Delay is rarely free. It just sends the bill to a later date, usually with interest.

Take the leaking tap. On day one it needs a washer worth twenty rupees. Ignore it for two months and you have a damp patch on the bedroom wall and a plumber who now charges for "extra work". Or the toothache we manage with clove oil because visiting the dentist feels like a hassle. A small filling becomes a root canal, and a root canal costs a lot more than one lost afternoon.

Students know this pattern better than anyone. The assignment given three weeks in advance gets started the night before submission. The work gets done, technically, but at two in the morning, with a headache, copying references in a panic. The marks usually show it. What hurts more is the three weeks of low-level guilt that came first, when the assignment tapped on the shoulder every time Instagram was opened.

That guilt is the hidden cost most of us never count. A pending task doesn't sit quietly in its corner. It follows us around. We enjoy the movie a little less because the tax return is due. We sleep a little worse because an important email is still unanswered. The task itself might need forty minutes, while carrying it around for a month costs far more than that.

Why do we keep doing it, then? Mostly because the task feels unpleasant or unclear, and pushing it away brings instant relief. The brain prefers comfort now over benefit later. Knowing this helps, because procrastination turns out to be an emotional reaction more than plain laziness, and emotions can be managed.

Some simple habits work for most people. If something takes less than two minutes, like paying a bill or replying to a message, do it right away. Shrink big tasks until they stop feeling frightening. "Prepare for exams" is overwhelming; "read pages 1 to 10 of chapter four" is not, and once you start, momentum often carries you further. Fix a time along with the day: "I'll call the insurance company on Saturday" tends to slide, while "Saturday, 11 am, after breakfast" tends to happen. And tell someone what you plan to finish, because a small promise to a friend is harder to break than one made to yourself.

It also helps to go easy on yourself about past delays. People who scold themselves over an unfinished task often avoid it even more, since it now carries shame on top of effort.

Try this tonight. Pick one thing from your drawer of "later", the one that has bothered you the longest, and give it fifteen minutes. You may not finish it. You will feel the weight shift, though, and you'll probably wonder why you waited so long.

Later is a lovely word. It just shouldn't become the place we live.

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HOW TWO-MINUTE CONVERSATIONS QUIETLY MAKE OUR DAYS BETTER

Most mornings in a housing society begin the same way. You step out, the Guards gets up from his plastic chair, and one of you says "Good morning". Some people stop there. Others ask whether he managed to visit his village for the festival, or how his son's exams went. The second version takes perhaps ninety seconds, and it changes both people's mornings more than we realise.

We tend to dismiss small talk as filler, something to get through before the real conversation begins. Psychologists who study happiness have found it does much more. In one experiment in Chicago, train commuters who were asked to chat with a stranger reported a more pleasant journey than those told to sit quietly, even though most of them had expected the conversation to be awkward. Another study found that people who exchanged a few friendly words with the person serving them coffee walked away feeling more connected than those who simply paid and left.

Researchers call these people our "weak ties". They aren't close friends or family. They are the vegetable vendor who keeps the fresh coriander aside for you, the auto driver who knows your building without being told, the librarian who remembers which shelf you like, the classmate you only meet in the canteen queue. On days when we speak to more of them, we tend to feel happier, and the effect seems to hold even for quieter people who don't think of themselves as social.

Why does such a small exchange matter? Part of it is simply being seen. When the bhajiwala asks "Aaj gobi nahi chahiye?", he is telling you that someone noticed your routine. In a city as crowded as Mumbai, where most of us pass hundreds of people a day without a glance, that small recognition counts for a lot. It works the other way too. A watchman who spends twelve hours at a gate gets nods from everyone and questions from almost no one. Asking about his family reminds him that he is a person with a life outside that uniform.

Small talk also builds trust without any planning. The neighbour you chat with in the lift is the one you can call when you're locked out. The kirana shopkeeper you joke with lets you pay tomorrow when you've forgotten your wallet. Nobody set out to build these relationships. They grew from hundreds of tiny conversations about the rain and the traffic.

Students lose more than they think when they skip these moments. A college canteen is full of potential friends and study partners, and half of them are sitting with earphones in, looking down at their phones. A simple "Did you follow today's lecture?" can open a door that stays open for years. Many lifelong friendships began with nothing grander than a borrowed pen.



If small talk feels uncomfortable, start small. Learn the name of one person you see every day and use it. Ask one question beyond "How are you?", something specific like "Did the water come back in your area?" Listen to the answer properly instead of waiting for your turn to speak. And keep the phone in your pocket in the lift or at the vegetable cart, because those are exactly the pockets of time where these conversations happen.

A day with five warm little exchanges feels different from a day with none, even if nothing else about it has changed. Tomorrow morning, when the watchman rises from his chair, try asking him one more question than usual and see where it goes.

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Srushti Panvalkar, Mridalini Tripathi & Afreen Mazgaonkar

BLINKIT SEEKS EXPANSION IN 5,000 STORES BY MARCH 2028



One of the companies that operates within the quick-commerce sector in India, Blinkit, has plans to expand the business to cover around 5,000 stores by March 2028 Blinkit, which is an Eternal-owned company, has been targeting small cities as Blinkit moves beyond major metropolitan cities. This is because Blinkit considers the consumers in smaller cities as having similar purchasing behavior and demands as the consumers in major cities. It is evident that there has been a growth in the demand for quick commerce in India since there has been a change in the purchasing habits of customers who order groceries and household items via the online platform and expect timely deliveries. In addition to this, Blinkit is also working towards exploring new categories of products so as to attract more customers. Though opening more stores seems to be the easy part of the expansion journey of Blinkit, there is the need to have efficient supply chains, customer demand, and profitable operations. In any case, the expansion plans of Blinkit show the increasing competition in India's quick-commerce industry. Its success will depend on whether it can serve more customers while maintaining delivery speed, affordability and profitability.

FIRST HUMAN CASE OF SHAMONDA VIRUS DISEASE UNLIKELY TO SPREAD - WHO



The World Health Organization has confirmed that there is no risk of widespread spread for the first recorded case of human illness caused by Shamonda virus disease. Shamonda virus typically infects livestock, and the health organizations are keeping an eye on this problem. As reported, this case was found in eastern France, where the virus was circulating among animals in spring and summer months. According to French authorities, the person may have been infected because of the bite from midges, a little flying insect carrying the virus. In the opinion of WHO, at this time, due to the information and experience with similar viruses, the case seems to be a one-off and it does not have any possibilities to spread further. Yet the monitoring is essential in order to know more about the virus and estimate its risks. The development shows the importance of the process of disease surveillance and monitoring of infections which can pass from animals to humans. This helps to detect unusual cases and to react to them if needed. Though now the risk of widespread infection is quite low, further investigation will help scientists better understand how the infection occurred and whether additional precautions are required. The case also reinforces the importance of cooperation between governments, scientists and international health organisations in detecting and responding to emerging infectious diseases.

ISRO TO LAUNCH NVS-03 NAVIGATION SATELLITE ON OCTOBER 30



The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is ready to launch tracking satellite NVS-03 on 30 October 2026 from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, through GSLV Mk II rocket. It is said to enhance India's homegrown navigation system called NavIC. Developed by ISRO, NavIC is India's equivalent of US Global Positioning System (GPS) and offers positioning, navigation, and timing services for civilian and military purposes. However, NavIC has been facing problems owing to the malfunctioning atomic clocks on the previous satellites. After the failure of IRNSS-1F in March 2026, just three satellites were left for providing positioning and navigation services. The launch of NVS-03, thus, becomes crucial in overcoming the problems with NavIC. A working navigation system would serve military purposes, transport sector, and disaster management. It would further assist Indian Railways in achieving their goal of real-time tracking of approximately 12,000 trains, of which about 8,700 are being tracked. With the successful launch of the EOS-05 satellite in September 2026 by ISRO, confidence has returned for the GSLV Mk II. The upcoming mission represents another important step towards India's self-reliance in space technology and satellite navigation.

QUICK HEALTH FOOD SERVICE CONVENIENCE BRINGS LONG-TERM HEALTH INCONVENIENCE



We order food almost daily from various quick food delivery apps, trusting the clean paper packaging it arrives in for our rush of convenience . What we often ignore is that the fine plastic liner inside is a secret danger contaminating our hot food, putting our health at risk, and clogging our cities with invisible waste. All these green-appearing and safe products often contain polyethylene, PFAS, and BPA, violating SDG 3 as harmful toxins leach into food and beverages, leading to hormonal disruption, cancer risks, immune suppression, and microplastics in human tissue and breast milk. Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs) and single-use composite materials are major contributors to single-use plastic pollution. The industry is responsible for producing 36% of all single-use plastic waste by blocking city drainage and triggering floods in a year. This action directly impedes global sustainability efforts under SDG 6, clutters municipal systems (SDG11), and threatens and poisons marine food webs through microplastic runoff (SDG 14). In alignment with India's Mission LiFE initiative, the path forward demands a shift toward true circularity (SDG 12). These food- delivery apps can rely less on ineffective packaging and more on certified bio-based, home-compostable packaging made from plant sources by TUV Austria, a leading certification body. Most of the plant-based substitutes easily decompose within 90 to 120 days. The adoption of fully compostable materials helps the food sector ensure compliance with evolving regulations. This way is helpful for preventing toxic pollution, and protecting ecosystems for generations to come.

'GONDHAL' SELECTED FOR THE OSCARS CREATES A HISTORIC MOMENT FOR MARATHI CINEMA



Gondhal, a Marathi-language film, was selected as India's official film for the 99th Academy awards (Oscar entry) on September 18, 2026. This movie was chosen by the Film Federation of India headed by Abhay Sinha from 33 competing films. This Oscar nominated movie was directed by Santosh Davakhar with music by Ilaiyaraaja, composer of songs like “Surmayee Ankhiyon Mein” from the film Sadma (1983). The other strong pillar of this internationally nominated movie's brilliant team is choreographer Amalendu Chaudhary. This Marathi movie cast amazing actors like Kishor Kadam, Ishitaa Deshmukh, Yogesh Sohoni, and Anuj Prabhu. Gondhal falls under a suspenseful cultural thriller genre, set amidst a raw and authentic regional story centered around traditional elements. The narrative begins against the backdrop of a night-long traditional Maharashtrian devotional folk ritual (Gondhal). It is centered around the unhappy marriage of Suman (Ishita Deshmukh) and Ananda (Yogesh Sohoni), alongside her lover Sahebrao (Anuj Prabhu), a local villager. Her marital strife starts to become deadly when her secrets come to light. This creates a contrasting plot during her goals of the culturally vibrant night. The author blends heritage and psychological suspense of domestic tensions and folk rituals as a means to begin an evil scheme.

YOUNG INDIAN INNOVATORS DEVELOP FUTURISTIC TECHNOLOGY TO BENEFIT THE WORLD



Technological innovation, particularly in deep tech, cutting-edge transport, and even space travel, has begun in India, much of which is driven by young, innovative researchers. IIT Hyderabad researchers created a Martian battery utilizing CO_2 and Swaayatt Robots, a startup in Madhya Pradesh, has created self-driving cars. These achievements showcase India's growing position as a diverse technical pioneer. The Universal Autonomous Driving System developed by Bhopal-based startup and its founder Sanjeev Sharma, is designed to integrate into any vehicle type. This program uses an array of sensors and cameras, perception and mapping engineers like Vinnohit to map complex road environments in real-time, this program allows vehicles to make accurate decisions across many driving conditions. Researchers at IIT Hyderabad developed Metal-Free Martian CO_2 Batteries, including senior researcher Dr. Ayesha Siddiqua Khan and research scholar Keerthana, are developing eco-friendly, metal-free Martian CO_2 batteries. By leveraging the abundant carbon dioxide in the Martian atmosphere, this technology reduces spacecraft payload weight and lowers reliance on imported metals. Numerous other great innovations silently are shaping the future of India which are requirements of tomorrow.

Srushti Panvalkar, Mridalini Tripathi & Afreen Mazgaonkar

PRANAV SOORMA CLINCHES GOLD BY CREATING NEW ASIAN RECORD



Para-athlete from India, Pranav Soorma secured a gold medal in the men's discus throw F51/52/53 category at the 2026 Asian Para Games held on October 20. The 32-year-old athlete created a new Asian record by throwing the discus to 11.66 metres mark in his fourth attempt. Soorma scored 932 Raza Points in the competition and bagged the gold medal ahead of the silver medallist from India, Ram Ratan Singh, whose score was 809 points in the event. Singh secured his second place in the category with a throw of 10.35 metres. The bronze medallist of the event was Alireza Hemami from Iran with a throw of 20.20 metres. Despite Hemami throwing a greater distance than Soorma, the latter emerged winner of the event since the final ranking was done by the Raza Point System. This system considers the performances of athletes as per their classification categories and thereby makes the competitions even and fair for all categories. In 2022, Pranav Soorma won the gold medal in the men's club throw F51 category at the Asian Para Games in China. His latest victory highlights his consistency, dedication and determination to excel at the international level.

INDIA WINS OVER ZIMBABWE BEHIND SHAFALI VERMA'S FORM DESPITE ICC WARNING



Haryanvi girl Shafali Verma was the player who stole the show as India swept Zimbabwe with a dominant 3-0 series result in T20I matches. The final match was played at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium on 20th October 2026. Prior to this match, India won against Zimbabwe on 18th October with 9 wickets in hand, during which Shafali smashed 55 runs off 25 balls, at a strike rate of 220, alongside a record-setting partnership of 96 runs with Mandhana. With 55 runs to go to complete 1000 runs, Shafali Verma holds the record for most T20I runs in 2026 for women. The 3rd T20I was won by 92 runs on October 20, completing a 3-0 series sweep. The former captain Harmanpreet Kaur and current vice-captain helped secure a massive victory, scoring 91 runs and 69 runs off just 37 balls respectively. India surged to score 216 runs off 7 wickets with a clean sweep, as stars like Harmanpreet, Smriti and especially Shafali contributed their best for this hat-trick win.

SACHIN KHILARI MAKES HISTORY FOR INDIA WITH PODIUM SWEEP AT ASIAN PARA GAMES



Para-athlete Sachin Sarjerao Khilari from India bagged the gold medal in the men's shot put F46 event at the 2026 Asian Para Games held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan on October 21. The victory of Khilari contributed in helping India clinch an impressive sweep of all the three medals in the competition. Gold was won by Khilari through his sixth and last throw measuring 15.87 metres, beating the previous Asian Para Games record of 15.67 metres. Mohammed Yasser grabbed the silver medal by throwing 15.06 metres and Parveen took the bronze with his throw of 14.94 metres. Khilari, who belongs to Kargani village in Maharashtra's Sangli district, has had a number of obstacles that he had to overcome to emerge successful in the para-athletics category. Initially a javelin thrower and discus thrower, he shifted his focus to the shot put following a shoulder injury. However, with proper coaching he managed to succeed in the international arena. What makes Khilari's victory more special is his ability to successfully defend his gold medal win from the last Asian Para Games. He had won a silver medal at the 2024 Paris Paralympics. This achievement highlights India's growing strength in para-sports and celebrates the determination, resilience and talent of its athletes on the international stage.

INDIAN PARA-JAVELIN THROWERS CLINCH BACK-TO-BACK MEDALS AT THE AICHI-NAGOYA GAMES



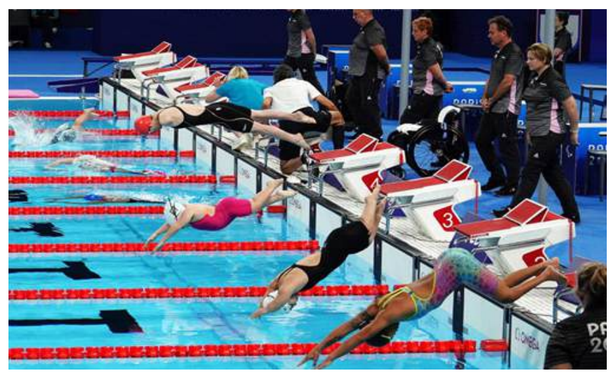
Our motherland is writing another glorious chapter of Asian Games history; India continuously secured medals to prove its mastery in the javelin throw events at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games. The venue for this sports edition is Mizuho Park Athletic Stadium in Japan. The first day of this winning list started on October 19 as India swept both gold and silver medals in the finals. Rinku Hooda and Ajeet Singh Yadav secured a 1-2 finish for India. Hooda bagged gold with a score of 65.11 and Yadav rounded out the podium with a 65.02 meters throw. Pradeep Kumar claimed silver (27.45m) and Ayush Verma earned bronze (17.88m) in the F53 and F54 categories on the next day. Another honour was added on October 21 when Manjeet secured silver (61.41m) in F12/F13, and Sukhchain won bronze (29.94m) in F55 categories. The latest proud moment emerged when Haney broke the world record with a 60.49m throw to win gold in the F37/38 event. He won gold and set a world record in the men's F37/38 javelin event on October 23, 2026. These para-athletes will continue to perform like this in the future and inspire the next generation of emerging athletes of the country.

NISHAD KUMAR BAGS GOLD IN LONG JUMP AT PARA ASIAN GAMES



Para-athlete Nishad Kumar of India won the gold medal in long jump at the Para Asian Games that took place in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, with his record-breaking jump of 7.11 metres. The Para-athlete started off impressively with a 6.95-metre jump and then performed better in his subsequent jumps. With his best jump of 7.11 metres, Nishad Kumar secured the first position on the podium. Omadbek Khasanov of Uzbekistan won the silver medal by jumping 6.99 metres while the bronze medal went to Mohammadu Safran of Sri Lanka who jumped 6.55 metres. The athlete was born in Himachal Pradesh on October 3, 1999. He lost his right hand in an unfortunate accident when he was just six years old. Even with that setback, he chose to continue with his passion and become one of India's prominent para-athletes. He has won two Paralympics medals and a gold medal at the World Para Athletics Championships in high jump. The victory of the Indian Athletes Nishad's achievement highlights his versatility, dedication and resilience. His gold medal also marked India's second gold at the ongoing Games, following Mona Agrawal's victory in the 10m rifle shooting event.

INDIAN PARA-SWIMMERS CLINCHED MEDALS WITH A HAT TRICK AT THE AICHI-NAGOYA GAMES.



India's male para-athletes have turned every adversity into an opportunity on the world stage and have proven that the human spirit transcends the physical limitations. The swimming events were held at the 2026 Asian Para Games in Nagoya, Japan (Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games). The para-swimming events are held at the Rainbow Pool, located within the Nagoya City General Gymnasium. This sports venue is situated in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. On October 21, 2026, the tally started with Ravi Karthik Budigina, who won silver in the men's 100m freestyle (S13) and silver in the 100m backstroke (S13). He reached the final round and finished behind Uzbekistan's Islam Aslanov (freestyle) and Igor Bolotov (backstroke). He also debuted at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games this year. Rohit Kumar won bronze in the men's 100m breaststroke (SB4), placing behind Malaysia's Muhammad Zulkafly (Gold) and Kazakhstan's Ali Turganbekov (Silver). Another gem, Himanshu Nandal from Rohtak, Haryana, bagged bronze in the men's 400m freestyle (S11) and 100m breaststroke (SB11). He is a 22-year-old who is completely visually impaired and transitioned from competitive judo to para-swimming in 2021.

Prof. Dr. Smita Ravikumar Kuntay

RRB NTPC GRADUATE RECRUITMENT 2026: 3,548 VACANCIES



The Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), Ministry of Railways, have announced 3,548 vacancies under CEN No. 06/2026 for graduate-level Non-Technical Popular Categories (NTPC). Eligible graduates can apply online by 6 November 2026.

Recruitment Highlights
- Posts: Chief Commercial cum Ticket Supervisor, Goods Train Manager, Junior Accounts Assistant cum Typist and Senior Clerk cum Typist.
- Qualification: Degree from a recognised university or equivalent.
- Age Limit: 18–33 years as on 1 January 2027, with applicable category-wise relaxation.
- Application Mode: Online.

Vacancy & Salary Details
- Chief Commercial cum Ticket Supervisor: 127 posts | ₹35,400 initial pay
- Goods Train Manager: 2,750 posts | ₹29,200 initial pay
- Junior Accounts Assistant cum Typist: 300 posts | ₹29,200 initial pay
- Senior Clerk cum Typist: 371 posts | ₹29,200 initial pay

Application Dates & Fees
- Applications: 8 October–6 November 2026 (11:59 PM). Fee payment deadline: 8 November 2026. The fee is ₹500 for general applicants and ₹250 for eligible concession categories, with refunds after appearing in CBT 1, subject to applicable deductions.

Selection Process
- Selection comprises CBT 1, CBT 2, document verification and medical examination. Both CBTs include General Awareness, Mathematics, and General Intelligence & Reasoning, with one-third negative marking. No typing skill test is required under this notification.

How to Apply
- Visit the official RRB application portal.
- Log in or create an account.
- Select only one RRB and enter accurate details.
- Choose eligible posts, complete live-photo capture and upload the signature in the prescribed format.
- Pay the fee, review and submit the application.
- Save the confirmation for future reference.

For more details candidates are asked to visit the official website

INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT, DELHI (SPORTS QUOTA)RECRUITMENT 2026



The Office of the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Delhi, invites online applications from eligible sportspersons for recruitment to 119 posts across three categories.

Vacancies & Salary
- Tax Assistant: 44 posts | Pay Level 4: ₹25,500–₹81,100
- Stenographer Grade-II: 9 posts | Pay Level 4: ₹25,500–₹81,100
- Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS): 66 posts | Pay Level 1: ₹18,000–₹56,900

Educational Qualifications
- Tax Assistant: Bachelor's Degree from a recognised university.
- Stenographer Grade-II: 12th Pass or equivalent.
- MTS: 10th Pass or equivalent.

Age Limit (as on 31 August 2026)
- Tax Assistant and Stenographer: 18–27 years.
- MTS: 18–25 years.
- Applicable age relaxations are available under government rules.

Sports Eligibility
- Applicants must meet the prescribed sports achievement criteria, with recognised participation or achievements during the specified period from 1 January 2020 to 15 October 2026.

Important Dates
- Online Applications Begin: 17 October 2026
- Last Date to Apply: 10 November 2026, 11:59 p.m.

How To Apply
- Visit www.incometaxdelhi.gov.in, open the Sports Recruitment section, check eligibility, complete the online form and upload the prescribed sports certificates and supporting documents.

Selection
- Application scrutiny, sports achievement assessment, document verification and applicable skill tests.

For more details candidates are asked to visit the official website

UCO BANK APPRENTICE RECRUITMENT 2026: 530 VACANCIES

Key Highlights
- Total Vacancies: 530 (provisional)
- Training Duration: 1 year
- Monthly Stipend: ₹16,650
- Qualification: Graduate degree from a recognised university, with degree certificates and mark sheets issued on or after 1 April 2022
- Age Limit: 20–28 years as on 1 October 2026, with applicable age relaxations
- Application Mode: Online
- Online Examination: 7 November 2026, at 11:00 a.m.

Application Schedule
- Registration Begins: 14 October 2026
- Last Date to Apply: 29 October 2026

Selection Process
- Candidates will be shortlisted through a 60-minute online objective examination comprising General/Financial Awareness, General English, Reasoning Ability & Computer Aptitude, and Quantitative Aptitude, followed by a local language test during document verification and a medical fitness check.

How To Apply
- Register: Visit NATS Portal and obtain your Enrolment ID.
- Apply: Log in to NATS, select the UCO Bank apprenticeship advertisement and choose one State/UT.
- Check Email: Look for instructions from BFSI SSC regarding additional details and preferred training districts.
- Complete Application: Visit BFSI SSC Portal, fill in the required information and pay the examination fee.
- Upload Documents: Submit your photograph, signature, graduation certificates and other required documents.
- Attend Examination: Take the online test scheduled for 7 November 2026 at 11:00 a.m.



Important Dates:
- Last date to apply and pay the fee: 29 October 2026
- Monthly stipend: ₹16,650
- Note: NATS registration alone is not sufficient. Complete all application steps before the deadline.

For more details candidates are asked to visit the official website

Deepika Singh



Why Do We Get Goosebumps?

Have you ever felt tiny bumps appear on your skin when you are cold, frightened, or listening to a moving piece of music? These are called goosebumps!

Goosebumps are an ancient response inherited from our animal ancestors. Tiny muscles attached to hair follicles contract, making the hairs stand upright. In furry animals, this helps trap warmth and makes them appear larger when threatened.

Humans have much less body hair, so the effect is mostly visible as little bumps on the skin. Strong emotions, such as excitement, fear, or even a beautiful song, can trigger the same reaction.

THE TAKEAWAY: Even a tiny reaction on your skin tells a fascinating story about human evolution!

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The Three Switches Challenge

You are standing outside a closed room containing one light bulb. Outside the room are three switches. Only one switch controls the bulb.

You may operate the switches however you like, but you can enter the room only once. Once inside, you cannot return to the switches.

The Challenge: How can you identify the correct switch?

****

Answer

Turn on Switch 1 and leave it on for a few minutes. Turn it off, then turn on Switch 2. Enter the room. If the bulb is glowing, Switch 2 is correct. If it is off but warm, Switch 1 is correct. If it is off and cool, Switch 3 is correct.



ROSE & PISTACHIO SHRIKHAND!

This Week, We're Discovering Rose & Pistachio Shrikhand!

Rose & Pistachio Shrikhand is a delightful Indian dessert made with thick strained yoghurt, rose syrup, cardamom, and crunchy pistachios. Creamy, refreshing, and delicately fragrant, this traditional sweet with a floral twist is perfect for festive celebrations, family gatherings, and special occasions.

Ingredients:

2 cups thick hung curd, 4 tablespoons powdered sugar, 1–2 teaspoons rose syrup, ¼ teaspoon cardamom powder, 2 tablespoons chopped pistachios, a few dried rose petals, and a few strands of saffron for garnishing.

Preparation



- Place the hung curd in a large mixing bowl and whisk gently until it becomes smooth, thick, and creamy.
- Add the powdered sugar and mix well until it dissolves completely into the yoghurt.
- Add the rose syrup and cardamom powder. Stir gently until the mixture develops a uniform pink colour and a delicate floral aroma.
- Fold in half of the chopped pistachios, mixing lightly to distribute the nuts evenly throughout the shrikhand.
- Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 30–60 minutes to allow the flavours to blend and the dessert to become pleasantly chilled.
- Transfer the chilled shrikhand into individual serving bowls or dessert glasses.
- Garnish with the remaining chopped pistachios, dried rose petals, and a few strands of saffron for an elegant finishing touch.

Serving Tip: Serve Rose & Pistachio Shrikhand chilled after a festive meal or alongside puris for a traditional Indian treat. Garnish with rose petals and crushed pistachios for a beautiful presentation. This creamy, floral dessert is also a wonderful addition to festive menus and special family celebrations.

Introducing Our New Column
ARTWORK OF THE WEEK
We invite all young artists to showcase their talent in our weekly e-newspaper, The HULAHUL Times. Submit your hand-drawn artwork to be featured!
CRITERIA
- Age Limit: Up to 24 years
- Artwork Size: A4
- Format: Hand-drawn only

SUBMISSION DETAILS
- Email your artwork to: thehulahultimes@gmail.com
- Subject Line: ARTWORK
- Include: Your Name, Age, School/College Name, and Phone Number

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