

## Protection Must Be Provided to Lovers on Valentine's Day; Organizations Opposing Valentine's Day Should Be Banned

### Christian preacher Jerusalem Matthiah, President, Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samithi



“Kishore Vadde Palli, Hyderabad, February 13 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of Valentine’s Day on February 14, Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samithi President Jerusalem

Matthiah urged both Central and State governments to take preventive measures to maintain law and order and strongly condemn any acts of religious hatred on Valentine’s Day. He appealed that secular constitutional values and the rights of lovers must be protected. He clarified that Christianity does not promote immorality, indiscipline, or obscenity, but supports genuine lovers, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, and socially responsible relationships. He demanded legal protection and security for such couples. He urged the Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and DGP Shivadhar Reddy to ensure strict security arrangements across the state so that no extremist groups burn effigies or pictures of Saint Valentine. He also demanded that the Telangana government increase financial incentives for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages up to 73 lakhs, provide government jobs, and sanction self-employment loans to such couples. He emphasized that efforts should be made to eradicate caste discrimination. He alleged

that certain Hindu extremist organizations such as BJP, RSS, VHP, and Bajrang Dal create a fear atmosphere by preventing couples and youth from visiting parks, forcibly conducting marriages, and restricting public movement on Valentine’s Day. He stated that such actions violate human rights, freedom of expression, and the rights of genuine lovers. He said that a press conference was conducted on Thursday at the Vishva Hindu Parishad office in Koti. He further alleged that extremist groups are openly challenging police, municipal, and revenue departments, and even influencing the Telangana government by obstructing public access to parks. He demanded that the Telangana government take strict action this year to control organizations like VHP and Bajrang Dal, which he accused of inciting religious extremism. He stated that petitions have been sent through email and WhatsApp to the Home Minister, DGP, Hyderabad Police, Cyberabad Police, and Rachakonda Police under the leadership of Christian Dharma Prachara

Parirakshana Samithi. He said that since Valentine’s Day is associated with Saint Valentine, a Christian religious figure, certain extremist Hindu organizations are displaying anti-Christian sentiments by burning his effigies. He emphasized that such actions violate the human rights and freedom of expression of Indian youth and genuine lovers. He further stated that All India Dalit Christian Associations Federation and Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samithi are committed to protecting secularism in India. He said that inter-caste and inter-religious marriages through love marriages help build a society free from caste, regional, and economic discrimination. He called upon people to celebrate February 14 as World Lovers’ Day in memory of Saint Valentine, whom he described as a pioneer of love marriages and a martyr who supported the rights of lovers. He urged the government, police, municipal authorities, public organizations, women’s groups, and media institutions to cooperate in ensuring peaceful celebrations.

## Sainadhapuram :Illegal constructions in Seize



“ “ “ K Sadanand “Malkajigiri, “February 13, Town Planning officials seized 2 illegal constructions being carried out without permission in Sainadhapuram RKH Colonies under Moulali Circle 04. “Officials said on this occasion...themselves” It is said that ground floor plus 3rd floor (partially) is being taken up against the sanctioned plan. “Officials revealed that the unauthorized construction has been seized. [8:28 PM, 2/13/2026] +91 90308 01023: End

# International conference on 'Historical Research - Global Trends' begins at Osmania University



“Indian Chronicle OU February 13: A two-day international conference on “Emerging Global Trends in Historical Research and Teaching Methods: An International Perspective” under the auspices of the Department of History, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Osmania University, began on Thursday. The conference, organized with the financial support of RUSA 2.0, brought together world-class intellectuals on history writing, research methods and innovative teaching approaches across national borders. “Osmania University Vice Chancellor Acharya Kumar Molugaram, who was the chief guest for the event, inaugurated the conference and delivered a keynote address. He said that history is not limited to just the narratives of the past, but is moving towards modern innovations in critical analysis and research methods. “In the past, the writing of history with a national perspective contributed a lot to nation-building. However, in today’s times, we need to go beyond those limitations and adopt a more comprehensive and international perspective,” Acharya Kumar Molugaram called for. Through a horizontal perspective of thinking in research, we should explore the common experiences and interconnected histories from around the world. “He suggested that the study should be conducted. Despite challenges such as language barriers and the availability of historical documents, he directed researchers to enhance the quality of research by utilizing resources such as information technology and artificial intelligence (AI). “Keynote speaker Dr. Karuna Dietrich Wielenga called for moving beyond domestic frameworks and focusing on a global history that has no borders. She stressed the need to teach students technological knowledge and analytical skills. “Nawab Najaf Ali Khan, the guest of honour, recalled the vision of Osmania University founder Mir Osman Ali Khan. “He said that modern research methods should be adopted while preserving traditional cultural heritage. Guest of honor Acharya E. Sudha Rani spoke about the changes coming in history teaching in the digital age. He encouraged young researchers to prioritize quality research, especially in the universal and distance education system, and to connect local history with an international perspective. “Acharya Indira, Head of the Department of History and Organizer of the Conference, reiterated that the Department is committed to setting the highest standards in historical research. Acharya B. Lavanya, Chairperson and Co-Organizer of the Academic Council “Council President and Co-Organizer Acharya B. Lavanya said that world-class education can be imparted through student-centered teaching. “The conference was attended by a large number of faculty, researchers and students from various national universities in the country, along with representatives from prestigious international universities like Oxford, Rwanda, Manchester, and Göttingen. The conference will continue tomorrow.

## Congress party leaders Gandikota Kumar is happy about the resounding victory in the municipality elections



“Indian Chronicle OU February 13: In the municipality elections “Rejoicing the grand victory of the Congress party, the party leaders and activists under the leadership of Manikeshwar Nagar Welfare Association President Gandikota Kumar celebrated grandly by bursting firecrackers and distributing sweets at the Manikeshwar Nagar Kaman on Friday. Senior Congress leaders Gandikota Kumar, Vemula Srinivas, Mallikarjun Konatala Narasimha Kumar, Vemula Ganesh, G Kiran, Bodas Narasimha, Bodas Anjaneyulu, GK Team Numbers and others participated in the event.

# Congress Sweeps Tandur Municipal Elections — Wins Majority Seats!



“Indian Chronicle, Babar Tandur (Feb,13)“Tandur Municipality in Vikarabad district has been captured by the Congress Party, as people overwhelmingly favored Congress in the fiercely contested polls.“Out of 36 wards, Congress won 19, BRS secured 12, BJP won 3, AIMIM got 1, and an Independent candidate won 1.“With a clear majority, Congress cadres are celebrating jubilantly. At the media center set up near the counting hall, MLA

Buyyani Manohar Reddy congratulated the newly elected 36 councilors and thanked the people.““People crowned development this victory adds more responsibility. Tandur’s development is now my mission. I won’t betray the trust people placed in Congress.”“List of Winning Candidates:“Ward Winner Party“1 Dhansiri Nagalakshmi

## 330 Special Buses to Keesaragutta for Maha Shivaratri

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), Kushtaguda Depot, will



operate special bus services to Keesaragutta Temple from February 14, 2026 (Saturday), according to Depot Manager Venugopal. A total of 330 special buses will be operated from various parts of the city to facilitate devotees visiting the temple. All buses will run up to the temple premises for the convenience of pilgrims. From ECIL Bus Stand, buses to Keesaragutta will be available at a frequency of one bus every 10 minutes. Special Bus Routes: ECIL Bus Stand – Kushtaguda – Nagaram – Rampally X Roads – Bandlaguda – Keesara – Keesaragutta, Secunderabad (Blue Sea Hotel) – Mettuguda – Tarnaka – Lalapet – Housing Board – ECIL Bus Stand – Keesaragutta, Venkatapuram – Ammuguda – Yaprak – Balaji Nagar – Dammaiguda – Nagaram – Keesaragutta, Uppal – Boduppal Kaman – Uppal Depot – Ghatkesar – Bogaram – Keesara – Keesaragutta, Afzalgunj – Koti – Nallakunta – Shankar Mutt – Tarnaka – Keesaragutta, Devotees are requested to make use of these special services to ensure a smooth and hassle-free pilgrimage during the festival.



# I am very indebted to the people of Hussainabad Colony for winning the Bhuvanagiri Town Municipal Elections with a huge majority: - Hussainabad Colony 14th Ward Councilor Tummeti Pandu Yadav

“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle.. 13):- In the Bhuvanagiri Municipal Elections, the independent candidate from the 14th ward, Tummeti Pandu Yadav, secured the highest number of votes with 954 votes and stood first in the Bhuvanagiri Municipality. Similarly, the candidate from the 11th ward, Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, secured 860 votes and stood second. In the elections held for the 35 wards of Bhuvanagiri Municipality, Congress candidates won 22 wards, BJP 4, BRS 4, and independent candidates 5 won. On this occasion, Tummeti Pandu, who won as an independent candidate in the 14th ward, said that even though he contested as a municipal councilor for three terms and failed, he still held onto Hussainabad Colony and worked towards public service and participated in public development. That is why he is very happy that the people of Hussainabad village colony made him win with the largest majority than all the wards in Bhuvanagiri town. He thanked the people, women, and youth of Hussainabad village colony who worked for his victory. No matter what problems there are in the colony, even if they call him on the phone...or come to his house...he will always be there to solve their problems, said 14th Ward Councilor Tummeti Pandu. On this occasion, he received a certificate from the Election Returning Officer, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Revenue, Additional Collector Bhaskara Rao, on his victory as the 14th Ward Councilor.



## Withdraw the False Cases Filed Against OU Student Leaders Immediately – PDSU Greater Hyderabad



“ Indian Chronicle OU February 13: The Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) Greater Hyderabad Executive Committee has demanded the immediate withdrawal of what it called false cases filed against Osmania University (OU) student leaders. The organization released a press statement in this regard. “Speaking on the occasion, PDSU Greater Hyderabad President Manda Naveen and General Secretary K. Srinivas stated that two days ago, a mother who came to Osmania University Centenary Hostel to visit her daughter was made to stand at the gate for nearly four hours from 3 PM and was not allowed inside, causing her inconvenience. “In protest against the Director Kalyani Lakshmi’s handling of the situation, women students organized a dharna in front of the Arts College. Student leaders present there extended their support and continued the peaceful protest from 10 PM to 7 AM. However, neither Director Kalyani Lakshmi nor other officials responded, they said. “Despite the protest being peaceful, the police arrested ten student leaders — including PDSU OU President Asif, Saidulu, Sridhar, Sreekanth, Sreekar, Vinod Naik, Ramakrishna, Ratna Shekhar Reddy, Sunil, and Srujan — and registered cases against them under Sections 126(2), 223, and 292. PDSU strongly condemned these actions. “They stated that while the Chief Minister claims to be providing democratic governance, filing cases against those who are peacefully protesting is undemocratic. They criticized that instead of university authorities addressing students’ concerns, the police intervened first. “They demanded the immediate removal of Director Kalyani Lakshmi for failing to perform her duties properly and called for legal action against her. They also demanded that all cases against the student leaders be withdrawn immediately, warning that otherwise, further protests would be launched.

# JSW MG Motor India Unveils the MG MAJESTOR, India's first D+ Segment SUV

## Longest, Widest, and Tallest dimensions - stands above D-segment SUVs



### Hyderabad

JSW MG Motor India today showcased the MG MAJESTOR, its all-new offering as India's First D+ SUV crafted for customers who seek a lifestyle defined by bold presence, unyielding dominance, superior capability, rock-solid reliability, and unmatched refinement. After breaking cover at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, the MAJESTOR now claims center stage as MG's most rugged, durable, and premium SUV tailored for the Indian roads and beyond. Built for peak performance and to deliver commanding road presence and all-terrain performance, premium comfort, and advanced safety, the MAJESTOR showcases cutting-edge 4x4 prowess raising the bar with segment-leading innovations, luxury features, top-tier safety, and enduring build quality. Starting today the MAJESTOR is available for pre-booking while full range pricing and market availability will be announced closer to launch.

Commenting on the occasion, Anurag Mehrotra, Managing Director, JSW MG Motor India, said, "India's pre-

mium SUV customer is evolving rapidly, looking not just for space, but for a vehicle that projects stature, inspires confidence, and integrates seamlessly into a more ambitious lifestyle. With MG MAJESTOR, we have created an SUV that is rugged in its capability, refined in its comfort, and dependable in its engineering. MAJESTOR for us represents our vision of what a true, full-size SUV should stand for, which is a commanding presence, sophisticated premium craftsmanship, intelligent in technology, and uncompromising in performance."

#### Robust Exterior:

Resting on a massive 2950 mm wheelbase, the MAJESTOR asserts dominance at the longest (5046mm), widest (2016mm), and tallest (1870mm) - unmatched in class. Its Mosaic Matrix Combination Grille, Dragon Eyes DRLs, split headlamps, connected LED tail lamps with sequential turn signals, raised hood line, and 19-inch alloy wheels amplify a bold, upright, rugged profile. Yet, it maintains a sophisticated, premium aesthetic that turns heads on city streets or highways

#### Premium Interior:

Step inside for an expansive haven in black theme with plush leather and sleek center console. Driver and co-driver seats are ventilated, offer massage function, memorize positions, and can be adjusted in multiple ways (12-way driver, 8-way passenger). A panoramic sunroof floods light, while 64-color ambient lighting sets the mood. Three-zone AC ensures personalized comfort.

Flexible in 6- or 7-seater configs, it suits families or adventurers. Dual 12.3-inch displays (instrument cluster and infotainment) support wireless Android Auto/Apple CarPlay. Immersive 12-speaker JBL sound, dual wireless chargers, 220V outlet, and 75+ iSMART connected features underline a tech-forward, luxurious drive every time.

#### Off-Road Mastery

At the heart of the MAJESTOR lies true SUV engineering, powered by a 2.0-litre twin-turbo diesel engine that churns best-in-segment power@215.5 PS and 478.5 Nm torque mated to best-

in-class 8-speed AT (Automatic Transmission) in both 2WD and advanced 4WD. The Advanced 4WD system with 10 off-road modes balances worlds – on-road ease, off-road might.

In Auto Mode, the vehicle intelligently operates in 2WD during regular driving conditions and automatically switches to 4WD the moment it detects loss of traction. This ensures better fuel efficiency during daily use while delivering enhanced off-road capability exactly when required. This intelligent mode is particularly effective in conditions such as rain, snow, and slippery surfaces which require higher speeds.

Further strengthening its rugged credentials, the MAJESTOR becomes the first in the segment to offer front, rear, and centre differential locks, enabling it to pull itself out of extreme situations even when one or more wheels lose traction or lift off the ground. Supported by Crawl Control Mode, 219 mm ground clearance, and an 810 mm water wading capability. The MAJESTOR is engineered for durability and reliability across the toughest terrains.

# ICAR-IIMR and Gourmet Popcornica Collaboration Paves the Way for an Aatmanirbhar Popcorn Maize Ecosystem

Hyderabad

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) – Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR), in collaboration with Gourmet Popcornica Private Limited, India's largest popcorn company, is witnessing the successful outcomes of a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening India's popcorn maize value chain, enhancing farmer incomes, and advancing India's ambition to become a global hub for high-quality popcorn maize production.

ICAR-IIMR Recognises Gourmet Popcornica for Stellar Contribution Towards Making India aatmanirbhar in Popcorn Maize

On ICAR-IIMR's Founder's Day on 9th February, 2026, Gourmet Popcornica received an award for its ongoing work with in the popcorn maize ecosystem. The Award recognises staff, progressive farmers and India companies for contribution in the extension and expansion of Maize in India.

The award was presented by Dr Hanuman Sahay Jat – Director of Maize, ICAR-IIMR to Mr. Y Yugandhar - CEO Crop integration, Gourmet Popcornica and Mr. K Mahiadhara Reddy - Director, Gourmet Popcornica.

Luminaries present at the Award Ceremony included the Chief Guest for the event, Vice Chancellor of PAU, Dr. Satbir Singh Gosal, Dr Sian Das (former Director of IIMR), Dr Nachiket Kotwaliwale (Director – ICAR -CIPHET), Dr Ashok Mehta (former Director of ICAR), Dr Sarabjeet Singh (progressive agri machinery entrepreneur) and Mr. O P Choudhary (Senior Soil Scientist, PAU), and other senior scientists from PAU and IIMR.

Over the last decade, India's popcorn maize market has expanded from 50,000 tonnes to over 130,000 tonnes. This growth has been largely driven by the successful development and domestication of high-expansion popcorn maize cultivation. Earlier, nearly 100 percent of the popcorn consumed in India was imported. Today, domestic production accounts for nearly 65 percent of the market, significantly reducing reliance on imports and creating a new and sustainable income stream for Indian farmers.

Over the past five years, ICAR-IIMR's scientific and agronomic expertise, combined with Gourmet Popcornica's decade-long experience in large-scale high-expansion popcorn maize cultivation, has strengthened specialised value chains such as popcorn maize. This collaboration demonstrates the importance of science-led partnerships in diversifying farmer incomes and reducing import dependence.

The partnership formally began in February 2021 with the signing of agreements for IIMR-bred popcorn hybrid's, reflecting ICAR-IIMR's commitment to translating agricultural science into tangible economic outcomes for farmers. Over the last four years, with the guidance of ICAR-IIMR scientists and its own breeding team, Gourmet Popcornica has developed new hybrids with high yield, high popping and resistance to diseases/ pests. The partnership aligns with national priorities under Atmanirbhar Bharat, promoting rural livelihoods, value-added agriculture, and export readiness.



## 20,000 cr R&D push in Budget 2026: A case for corporates tying up with private universities

In a pioneering move poised to reshape India's innovation landscape, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Union Budget 2025-26, has allocated 20,000 crore to the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to initiate a private sector-driven research and development (R&D) fund. The government has also committed funds for fostering innovation in deep tech and emerging sectors, aiming to bolster strategic autonomy in critical technological domains. On the specific point, the minister in the Budget presentation under R and D and Innovation, said "...To implement private sector driven Research, Development and Innovation initiative announced in the July Budget, I am now allocating ₹20,000 crore." This should be seen as a direct response to the private sector's historically modest engagement in R&D activities. Despite various incentives, private enterprises have been reticent in committing substantial resources to research endeavours. One innovative idea for fos-

tering R and D in private sector is strengthening its connect with high quality private universities to ensure clear outcomes for the new initiative. Let us see how:

The Economic Survey preceding the budget highlighted concerns over this reluctance, noting that while the government contributes approximately 50% of the nation's total R&D expenditure, business enterprises account for only 41%. Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran emphasized the need for the private sector to enhance its investment in research to drive innovation and economic growth. For years, India's innovation ecosystem has suffered from a disconnect between industry and academia. While private companies struggle with the high costs and risks associated with in-house R&D, universities remain underutilized despite possessing world-class faculty and research infrastructure. The newly allocated fund is designed to invigorate private sec-



tor participation by providing financial support for R&D in deep tech and sunrise industries.

By incentivizing private companies to collaborate with universities, the initiative aims to employ the strengths of both sectors. Companies will definitely be able to gain access to cutting-edge research

# When Chennai parks turn into open air art galleries

More than 500 artists across age groups will turn Senmozhi Poonga into a dazzling kaleidoscope of colours on February 2. The second edition of Chennaiyil Oar Oviya Sangamam, an art exhibition presented by Indian Art Factory, will see participants, some from other cities, take every inch of their stall under tree canopies and behind plants to present a vibrant art gallery. The event is a big stage for aspiring and upcoming artists. Many of these artists do not have the means or the qualification to present their works at art galleries. While the larger goal of taking art to public spaces is to bridge the gap between artists and audiences through creative expressions, the road to this is not so easy.

For six editions, the Art Fest at Nageshvara Rao Park in Mylapore, curated by journalist and publisher Vincent D. Souza and artist Ganapathy Subramaniam, has served as a date for public engagement. This year, however, the fest scheduled to take place during the last week of February, will see a change of venue. Since civic works are under way at Nageshvara Rao Park, the venue is not fully suitable for an art show, says a post on Facebook. It meanwhile wants people to keep their artworks ready. In 2023, Anna Nagar Tower Park got to host the Tamil Nadu Art and Craft Trust Expo 2023 but with conditions. Greater Chennai Corporation did not give permission for artworks to be sold, they could only be exhibited. "That was the condition laid down to me to use this venue and we agreed as we wanted to give many struggling artists a platform and to some extent the open air exhibition served its purpose," says the organiser Jaffer Beig who is a member of Tamil Nadu Artists Association.

Ganapathy Subramaniam of Art Fest says they too were asked not to promote the event as a "sales event". "Art requires a lot of promotion, so the least support we ask for is that Greater Chennai Corporation give us space," says Ganapathy. Like the Chitra Sante held annually on the streets of a neighbourhood in Bengaluru, such events need continuity and some support from the government or the civic body in terms of providing a venue that can draw people. Jaffer is looking for a space to host the art exhibition this year but he can only afford a minimal amount as fee. Ganapathy says not all public spaces are suited for hosting an art event. "Nageshvara Rao Park was right in every sense from location to size and the space plays host to various events including the Mylapore Fest so we did not have to promote it," he says.

Selvakannan Rathinam, founder, Indian Art Factory, says organising an event of such scale is not easy. "I have paid the Horticulture Department ₹75,000 towards rent for a day, which is fine but I have been requesting a waiver in entry fee for visitors on the D-Day or it would not draw the public," says Selvakannan. From 125 artists in the first edition, this time the event has 525 people, 70 from other states, taking part in it. "We do not have an application process to shortlist artists; we look at the Instagram profile and their artworks and charge ₹1500

per stall and they have a conformed space at the venue," says Selvakannan. As a self-taught artist he has faced many rejections from art galleries so he does not like to shortlist participants. Last year, the artist community made ₹ 4 lakh selling works. This time, our target is ₹ 25 lakh, so we want a good footfall, he says.

A majority of organisers of art events and artists will swear by Bengaluru's Chitra Santhe. Happening for the last 22 years, the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath organises this art festival around its campus and extend it to a few VIP roads on the first Sunday of January. Streets are strictly pedestrian only for the entire day, vehicular traffic is diverted for art to spread out in all forms, shapes and sizes. So big has this street art festival grown that this year the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation offered feeder services to the venue and Namma Yatri offered free autorickshaw rides. Shashidhar Rao S.N., general secretary, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, says the festival has had its own set of challenges that were ironed out gradually.

Last year, 1,800 artistes from 22 states presented their works and over six lakh people attended the day-long festival. A number of the participants are from rural areas of Karnataka who get a platform. "A number of stalls have sold more than ₹3



lakh worth of art and we don't charge any commission from them except the registration fee of ₹ 1000 that covers breakfast, lunch and accommodation for outstation artists," says Rao. From a manual process, three years ago an exclusive website was designed for participants to process their application form, know whether they are shortlisted and make the payment. Does the Karnataka government fund the event? Rao says the government has been supportive but they don't have a fixed amount being given every year. "Sometimes prom-

ises are made and sometimes we get only 20% of the amount but we have no complaints.

We are happy with the support various departments give us including by cordoning off vehicles for 12 hours which is a big challenge in a city like Bengaluru," he says. Rao says registration fee is one component through which the expenses of organising this festival is met. Given the increasing crowd that has been turning up for the event, the Parishath has been mulling about moving it to a park.

## Time for Congress to walk the talk

The Congress recently announced the launch of 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan', a campaign to commemorate the 75th year of the Constitution. Hindutva ideologues have denigrated M.K. Gandhi while their antipathy towards Dr. B.R. Ambedkar became evident through the disparaging remarks made by Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament. In this light, this campaign appears to hold promise. Since coming to power in Karnataka in 2023, the Congress government has signalled its commitment to the Constitution. It hosted an international conference titled 'Constitution and National Unity' in February 2024 and held massive celebrations in September 2024 to mark the International Day of Democracy and the Chief Minister urged people to abide by constitutional values.

Notwithstanding these, a genuine commitment to democracy must minimally ensure that everyone feels like an active participant in a consultative process. Therefore, spaces for peaceful dissent should not be curtailed. In 2021, the BJP government in Karnataka passed the Licensing and Regulation of Protests, Demonstrations and Protest Marches (Bengaluru City) Order, making public protests outside a designated area illegal. The grounds for these were that the "unauthorised manner adversely affect traffic movement, which cause huge vehicular congestion." After the order, protests in Bengaluru have been limited to a small park ambushed by a parking lot; it is ironically called Freedom Park. Protests at-

tempted to be held anywhere else have met with police crackdowns and FIRs.

The right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly is a fundamental right (Article 19). Indeed, the very idea of satyagraha or peaceful civil disobedience is one of the biggest contributions of India to the rest of the world. When tenant farmers in Bihar's Champaran district were forced by the British to cultivate indigo and were heavily penalised for any crop failures, Gandhi initiated the historic Champaran Satyagraha in 1917. He defied government orders to leave Champaran; this resistance led to the Champaran Agrarian Law providing relief to farmers. In 1923, the Bombay Legislative Council permitted people across castes to use places built and run by the government. However, Dalits were prevented by caste Hindus from drinking water from public tanks. In defiance, in 1927, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar led thousands of Dalits to walk to Chavdar tank in Maharashtra's Mahad and drank water from the tank in protest. These, among many others, have given the world a grammar of dissent.

The Congress government in Karnataka has continued the undemocratic order passed in 2021. On August 15, 2022, 72 farmers protesting against government acquisition of their land in Devanahalli were arrested and FIRs were registered against them. Numerous Palestine protesters have been detained. The police slapped FIRs against several people who gathered at the steps of Town



Hall in Bengaluru to protest against the assault of two Manipuri women. The Karnataka High Court quashed those FIRs, but the process of fighting itself became a punishment. In 2023, on Gandhi's birth anniversary, hundreds of citizens walked from the Gandhi statue to Vidhana Soudha as a satyagraha to reclaim the rights to peaceful assembly. They were detained by the police and an FIR was filed against several people. Although election rallies and religious processions cause traffic, only protest rallies are banned. Controlling traffic is a civic matter. The government's rationale that protests held at a particular spot cause traffic is unfounded. For instance, protesting at the steps of Town Hall does not cause traffic.

# 'This is the fabric of our country': As actor Vikrant Massey speaks about his inter-faith roots, we sought stories of young adults navigating dual faiths

In today's world, as barriers of religion, caste, and other divisions are increasingly fading, many are growing up in households where their parents practice different faiths. 12th Fail actor Vikrant Massey, who revealed his parents had an interfaith marriage—his father is a Christian and mother, a Sikh—recently shared his experience of growing up in such an environment. Adding to the family's pluralistic story, Massey also mentioned that his brother, Moeen, embraced Islam. "My brother does Laxmi puja on Diwali. His conversion is his personal choice. But we celebrate Diwali and Holi together here. On the occasion of Eid, we celebrate it at his place, having biryani. Today, that fulcrum is absent (in society)," Massey said. "My father has been to Vaishno Devi temple (located in Katra, Jammu and Kashmir) six times. He is a Christian and goes to church twice a week even now. But that's what India has always been like. We go to gurudwaras and many Hindus go to Ajmer Sharif Dargah (located in Rajasthan). This is our Hindustan. Why is it so surprising? There's a temple in my house. My son's name is Vardaan. This is the fabric of our country."

While most children are raised with a singular religious perspective, kids of parents who practice different faiths gain a deeper understanding of two distinct worldviews. Indianexpress.com spoke with several individuals who grew up in interfaith households to learn about their experiences—the benefits and challenges, the unique traditions, moments of inner conflict between faiths, and how these dynamics shaped their relationships with family members and peers.

Growing up with parents of different faiths Pranjal Kumar, 21, recalled her childhood with traces of two distinct spiritual traditions—her father's Hindu customs and her mother's Christian practices. "I was exposed to two distinct religious traditions, which instilled open-mindedness and curiosity in me," she told [indianexpress.com](#). This exposure gave her a balanced perspective on life, and encouraged her to explore and embrace diversity, fostering a lifelong journey of self-discovery. Similarly, Sahil Khan, 25, described his home as a "beautiful amalgamation of faiths." He grew up celebrating Christmas with Christian friends and Eid with Muslim neighbours. "Religious hatred never entered our house or mind. Living in a dual-faith household ingrains tolerance in you whereas in households with a single religion, this often seems like a matter of personal choice," he said.

"I was exposed to two distinct religious traditions, which instilled open-mindedness and curiosity in me," said 21-year-old Pranjal Kumar. "I was exposed to two distinct religious traditions, which instilled open-mindedness and curiosity in me," said 21-year-old Pranjal Kumar. (Source: Pranjal Kumar) Sonia Rodrigues, 36, said that experiencing both Hinduism and Roman Catholic traditions taught her that, at the core, "all religions share the same foundational principles: love, forgiveness, compassion, and the pursuit of truth." "I fasted on Ekadashi and during Lent, celebrated Diwali and Christmas alike. This balance taught me to embrace universal

human values," she said. "My mother was Catholic and my dad a Hindu," said Rhea Cheryl Shivan, 32. "While they had a Christian wedding, my dad wasn't obliged to convert. I was raised Catholic, as is common in many households in my family and friend circles, but my father occasionally shared aspects of his religion with us (He's a believer in a higher power but not necessarily a practicing Hindu)," she told [indianexpress.com](#). Shivan's parents raised her to be very mindful and respectful of all religions, and said that her home library was a symbol of inclusivity, with the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Quran side by side. Feeling conflicted between the two religions

"I don't believe I ever felt conflicted between two religions," Shivan said, adding that culturally and socially, people usually tend to adopt the practices of the maternal side, and this was the case for her. "Hindu festivals or religious practices became moments of exploration and learning. This continues to be true today." Khan echoed this, "Never happened." However, for Kumar it was the opposite. "There were certainly moments when I felt conflicted or torn between the two religions. During religious holidays or family gatherings, I often found myself navigating between different traditions and practices. However, my parents were always supportive and understanding, allowing me to explore both faiths without feeling pressured to choose one over the other." "My parents believed that religion should never be imposed," said Rodrigues. "I was equally fine fasting on Ekadashi or Mahashivratri as I was during Lent. Festivals like Diwali and Christmas were celebrated with the same enthusiasm and joy." Rhea Cheryl Shivan (second from right) spoke about how her parents raised her to be very mindful and respectful of all religions. Rhea Cheryl Shivan (second from right) spoke about how her parents raised her to be very mindful and respectful of all religions. (Source: Rhea Cheryl Shivan)

Relationships with extended family members or peers "Coming from a family where many of my parents' generation had interfaith marriages, relationships vary," Shivan said. She acknowledged that not all family members and friends are as open and accepting of other religions as they are. "There have been heated debates, but also unifying moments—especially during weddings—when we manage to blur the lines and celebrate love and togetherness, irrespective of religion." Rodrigues confessed that her parents had a love marriage, but not against the family's will. "As a result, our relationships with extended family members have remained warm and positive. In fact, being part of an interfaith household often adds an interesting dynamic to these relationships." Khan said, "My social life has also been enriched." He believes his openness towards other religions draws him to people from diverse backgrounds, and his peers are often curious to learn about different religions from him.

Although a few relatives were initially curious or had questions about his parents' interfaith marriage, Kumar acknowl-



edged that the majority ultimately came to welcome and embrace his family's one-of-a-kind dynamic. "My friends were also interested in my background and frequently inquired about my religious beliefs. These discussions allowed me to share my experiences and promote understanding and tolerance," she said. Psychological benefits and challenges of being raised in interfaith households Neha Parashar, senior clinical psychologist at Cadabams Hospitals, said, "Growing up with exposure to two distinct faiths fosters open-mindedness and tolerance." She cited a study in the *Journal of Intercultural Psychology* (2018), which found that children from interfaith families tend to develop a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. "Adjustment, mutual respect, and communication become foundational values in such households. Skills such as critical thinking, compassion, empathy, and the ability to hold meaningful dialogues are cultivated, strengthening interpersonal relationships," said mental health counsellor Anuckriti Garg. Sahil Khan, 25, described his home as a "beautiful amalgamation of faiths." Sahil Khan, 25, described his home as a "beautiful amalgamation of faiths." (Source: Sahil Khan)

In terms of the challenges, Smitha Kashi, consultant art psychotherapist at Spandana Health Care, stressed that children may experience internal conflicts if the beliefs of both parents are at odds or if extended families express disapproval. "Inconsistencies in how the faiths are practiced can lead to confusion or a feeling of not fully belonging to either tradition. It is crucial for parents to provide clarity and stability while encouraging exploration and dialogue about faith," she said. In families where one faith dominates, Parashar noted that children may feel pressured to favour one belief system over the other, "leading to guilt or anxiety. Development of empa-

thy, adaptability, or critical thinking skills. According to Garg, "In interfaith households, without a single theological framework, children are encouraged to explore diverse cultures, ideas, and perspectives. As a non-normative structure, interfaith families are more likely to foster an appreciation for diversity, inclusivity, and empathy. Learning to navigate the stigma associated with interfaith households equips children to adapt and cope with challenging situations." Parashar concurred, saying, "Children in interfaith families often grow up adapting to two sets of norms, celebrations, and expectations. This adaptability makes them more comfortable in multicultural environments, a key trait in today's globalised world." She is also of the opinion that reconciling differing beliefs, values, or practices pushes children to think critically about their own identities and moral frameworks. "They learn to evaluate which aspects of each faith resonate with them personally, fostering independent thought and intellectual growth," she said. Sonia Rodrigues, 36, said that experiencing both Hinduism and Roman Catholic traditions taught her that, at the core, "all religions share the same foundational principles. Sonia Rodrigues, 36, said that experiencing both Hinduism and Roman Catholic traditions taught her that, at the core, "all religions share the same foundational principles. (Source: Sonia Rodrigues) Can navigating dual religious identities help build resilience or unique coping mechanisms? Yes, navigating dual religious identities can foster resilience, according to Parashar. "Children learn to mediate between differing viewpoints, a skill transferable to social and professional situations," she said. "When supported effectively, they often develop a robust sense of identity, grounded in the ability to synthesise and embrace diverse aspects of their upbringing," Kashi said.