

## PEOPLE FACE EXTREME WINTER BLUES IN FEB TOO!

THE UNUSUAL HEAVY RAINS IN SOME PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, ACTED AS A CHERRY ON THE CAKE. | P

## KITCHEN GARDENING: AN AFFINITY WITH MOTHER NATURE

FRUITFUL WAYS OF GARDENING, WHICH PROMOTES HEALTHY EATING AND LIVING. | P8

## A VOID IN THE WORLD OF KATHAK

IT IS SAID THAT ONE CANNOT EXCEL IN ALL FORMS OF ART, BUT PANDIT BIRJU MAHARAJ PROVED THIS WRONG. | P12

AMITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

# Expressions



Volume: III, Issue: II

February 2022

## Parties go all out to WOO VOTERS

Drishti Vanaik

Electioneering has reached a crescendo with battlelines clearly drawn with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) & Samajwadi Party (SP) and their alliance partners clearly locked in direct fight in Uttar Pradesh, the most crucial one among the five states.

Though in UP, five phase of polling is already over and remaining to be completed in first week of March, a feverish pitch can be seen among political parties whose candidates and supporters are going all out for 'Digital' and 'Door to Door' campaign along with street corner meetings following certain relaxations by the Election Commission with Omicron threat waning out gradually. With polling percentage has hovered around 60-70 percent so far, it could be anybody's guess who wins the elections.

Besides, door-to-door initiatives, election campaigning with the help of advertisements on news portals has also gained momentum. One can spot various taglines and slogans used by the party as one of its manifestos, in the form of an ad on news portals.

For campaigning, these ads in the form of, "Short Videos", can also be seen on platforms like YouTube and recurrent and steady mention of the parties and their manifestos on Radio as well. The Print quoting prelim-

Photo: Deep Chand & Dharam Chand



inary data claims an amount of Rs 8 crores is stated to have been spent just in 3 months by political parties on digital media using social media platforms.

The fate of candidates has already been sealed in EVMs in the much-hyped Punjab, Goa and Uttarakhand states while for UP remaining 111 assembly seats will see the polling in sixth and seventh phase of polling on March 3 & 7. Manipur will also witness polling during this period before counting of votes begin on March 10, 2022.

Continued on P3

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Printed & Published by Prof (Dr.) Sanjay M Johri for Amity School of Communication, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus  
(Internal Circulation Only)

# Editor's Desk

## Students in 'mute mode' a put off

**S**taring at blank, uncomprehending faces waiting anxiously for the class to get over is a dampener for any teacher.

Sadly, this seems to be a general scene & behaviour among students in physical mode of classes in the secondary & higher education. This poses a serious concern as majority of the students do not seem worried about their professional future.

Pandemic certainly hit them hard with prolonged lockdown and shift from offline to online with three waves at regular intervals since March 2020. However, this has completely taken the edge off these youngsters who have literally become 'mute' with hardly any interest in enriching their knowledge.

Shyamal, who belongs to the 2020 Graduation batch, was a bright student till class 12 but slipped into depression after Covid hit him in the first wave and he has already lost his first year of graduation. Parents are more worried about his mental health & he continues to be under medical care. Similarly, Akriti a meritorious student says she has not been able to cope up with online classes and even flunked the online examination. "I stand defeated and the future looks bleak," she said. Akriti's clinical psychologist says it has been very difficult to counsel her.

Meanwhile, Anamika (batch 2019), who was on scholarship, has found it very difficult to maintain her grades as two years went in Online-Offline mode and today she finds little chances of earning good placement in the industry.

Young adults across different disciplines in the universities are facing difficult time with weaker job market and lower returns on their education than expected.

Many companies during the pandemic have evolved a new business model downsizing their set-up and are exploiting interns either with no stipend or a nominal one much to the disgrace of meritorious students, the future seems to be bleak specially for the 'mute, uninterested' students who prefer looking at their phone and not responding in the class.

Companies in sectors such as Edtech, Fintech, Health-tech, Consulting, Cybersecurity, Gaming, Analytics, Cloud computing are mushrooming and do have job offers but this may not be the area of interest for mediocre.

Embracing digitalisation seems the immediate future for young aspirants but it could be rough in terms of the adapting job market.

Focus on new skills & adaptability to the new environment is the key to survival in any phase of life. The current circumstances have set a similar precedence, where those who have adapted and adopted new skills in-line with changing times have unlocked the door leading to great opportunities while others who prefer to be mute spectators face a bleak future.



Prof (Dr) Sanjay M Johri

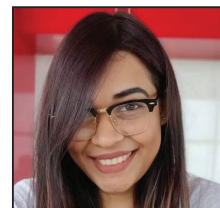
## 'A serendipitous tryst with ASCO changed my life'

A journey of a lifetime does, indeed, begin with a single step. Mine just happened to begin when I least expected it.

It was almost a decade ago when my peers were choosing career paths that would usher them into a world full of possibilities. Somehow, I never fit in when it came to 'serious' careers.

I was always good at public speaking, debating, writing, negotiating everyday rules with my parents with complete conviction but I never knew it could eventually translate into one of the biggest decisions of my life. After I realized I made a bad fit for being a science student, I had no idea what my career options would look like.

Clueless and confused, I heard someone say all the cool kids did 'Mass-Comm'. Truth be told, I was



### ALUMNI CORNER

only certain of ONE thing- I wanted to do an MBA. And I wanted to enjoy

whatever I studied in my under-grad. And at the cusp of that life decision, I found Amity.

What initially started off as a back-up option (my other choices were St. Xavier's, Mumbai and Christ College, Bangalore- both of which I cracked and declined), Amity soon became a place where I could not just learn the basics of what a world in media, advertising, communications looks like but also, being closer to home, it would allow me to devote my left over time to my MBA prep- which was the only clarity I had.

However, it wasn't until my first few classes in Fundamentals of Advertising in the first Sem that I stumbled upon what would eventually end up being my dream college- MICA, Ahmedabad. Creatively aligned and not that easy to get into, that's where everything I did during my stint at ASCO came into play.

While step-1 was obviously earning Johri's sir's trust into allowing me to have a flexible schedule so I could also focus on my MBA prep, he was kind enough to go the extra mile and not just encourage me to pursue my dreams but also act as a mentor, guide, and the sounding board I never knew I'd needed whenever he saw me losing sight of my goals.

I shall always be grateful for the faith people have shown in me during my time spent in ASCO. The experience shall always be reminisced fondly.

-Shiraley C, Senior Manager | Brand Solutions & Content Marketing Times Network, BCCL Group

# People face extreme winter blues in Feb too!

Aishwarya Chandra

Winter this year had laid a siege in the northern part of the country with almost three weeks of sun god taking to 'WFH' (work from home) mode in January thus leaving mortals quivering under intense cold. Chilly winds accompanied by thunderstorms, rain and fog made it unbearable all courtesy western disturbance 'La Nina'.

Moreover, the unusual heavy rains in some parts of the country, acted as a cherry on the cake. Ananya Singh, a college-going student, mentioned, "The deadly combination of frigid wind along with unexpected rains certainly took a toll on my health. I came back from college coughing vigorously".

While coughing has always been a comer with the winters, driving at night was a major challenge for many, this time, in particular. The surroundings covered with dense fog and haze, intercepted with the driving abilities, because nothing and anything was prominently visible. Recounts Shreya, a 20-year-old: "I usually return home at 7 pm from college. I drive a scooty and it has been a painstaking experience due to fog, rain and on top of it all...I wear spectacles." The piercing winter this year had broken most if not all records. Uttar Pradesh witnessed bone chilling cold and even hailstorm in January. Ironically, not even after Makar Sankranti and Basant Panchami, the colder breeze ceased to stop.

Not only, these winters hindered with the life of normal people, but even political figures had to cancel their virtual rallies due to inclement weather. "Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's virtual rally got cancelled because of the tempestuous weather conditions, which was scheduled on Feb 4, in Uttarakhand", as mentioned in an article by the Economic Times.

While we did experience the harsh winter this year, it was kind of anticipated by a 'Bloomberg report', which stated that January and February will notably be cold in some northern states. Over and above that, in an article by the First Post, it was mentioned, that, "The winter this time seems to be squally and will stay for a long period of time. North India is witnessing the chilliest winter due to the La Nina effect emerging in Pacific Ocean, causing a frigid winter pattern".

Though the winters were chilling but it gave a good experience to the people in Northern India. Taking long drives, having steaming, hot soups, enjoying pleasurable warm afternoons, cozying under blankets was the favourite recreation for everyone. Besides, the cold chilling winds, which directly hit the cheeks and make it look red and pink, at the same time, gave a cute look to everybody. As we now wait for Holi, we hope to have a warm sunny breeze with sunny days.

## Parties go all out to woo voters

Continued from P1

While social media platforms are extensively used by political parties, with the BJP having a good presence on social media platforms, door-to-door campaign and virtual rallies have also been in the spotlight. The BJP, SP, Congress & AAP have gone in big way with digital campaigning. BSP, however, has been low-key on paper, but the party says its cadre has been taking care of the campaigning.

Yosshmi Nair, a 12th grader from Lucknow Central constituency said, "BJP candidate and his supporters visited the residents in a door-to-door campaign. Alok, who stays in Cantonment, said they had visitors from Congress, SP and BJP as well seeking vote in their favour."

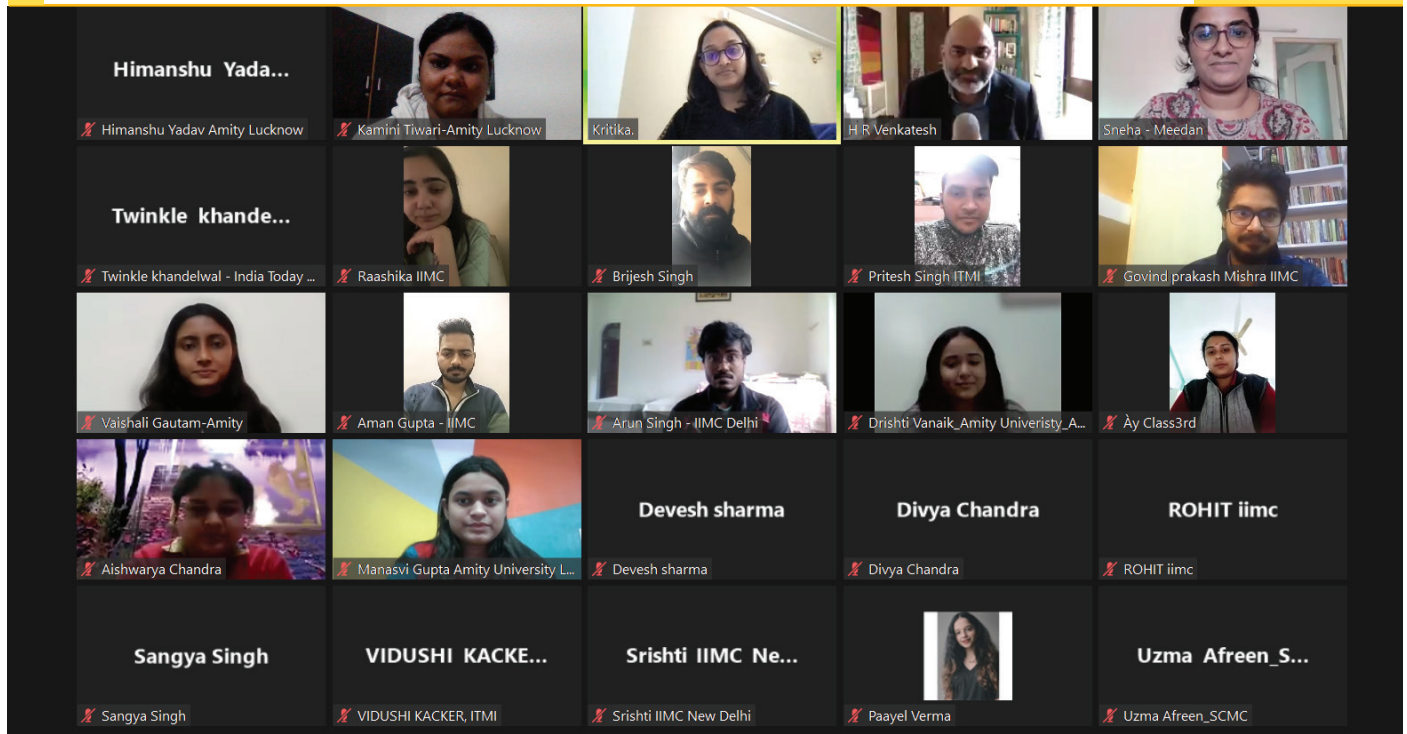
On many occasions specially during weekend, it looked like festive occasion with party supporters making a visit on regular basis with bit of fanfare around, they said. Street corner meetings were practically held in major locations of the Lucknow city. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah from the BJP and Akhilesh Yadav, the SP supremo have been the star attractions in their digital and on-ground rallies.

While the election campaigning process continues for remaining phases, the first-time voters exercised their rights like in every election and could be seen very excited during polling in Lucknow.

When asked about their expectations from the winning party, Mayuri said: "It does not matter which party comes in power but whosoever does, we want the government to address the issues of unemployment, good governance." Similarly, another voter Aman said, "We don't want government to favour just one caste or creed but should work impartially, treat everyone equal and work for the upliftment of the marginalised communities."

The wait may not be too long now to know who wins and who loses but its everyone wish that we get a government that works for the welfare and upliftment of the society.





# Fact-checking is backbone of journalism: Balkrishna

*Two-day workshop teaches tools and techniques to verify the authenticity of news & information*

Bhargavi Singh

The age of digitalization brought with it the problem of information overload, which has subsequently made distinguishing fake news from real news very tricky. Not just naive citizens, even reputed news organizations, at times, fall prey to the scam of fake news.

Acknowledging this grave issue, Ekta, a consortium of top fact checking organisations which includes India Today, The Quint and Boom Live among others, organised a two-day fact-checking online workshop for young budding journalists from across the nation. 15 shortlist-

ed students from Amity School of Communication (ASCO) got the opportunity to attend this engrossing training session as well.

The students attended the workshop in different batches. The workshop was conducted by an illustrious expert panel of Balkrishna (Editor – Fact Check, India Today), Jyoti Dwivedi, (Principal Correspondent – Fact Check, India Today), Divya Chandra (Fact-checker, Boom Live), Kritika Goel (Associate Editor – Fact Checking team, The Quint) and H.R. Venkatesh, (Director- training and research, Boom Live). Addressing the students Balkrishna said, “Fact-checking is the backbone of journalism.”

A Q&A session was held after every topic and exercises were given along the way, which allowed students to put their recently acquired knowledge to test. Kushagra Nigam, an ASCO student, said: “The workshop was very interesting. The exercises helped me understand the topics better and practice them, which cleared all doubts on the spot.”

Through the workshop the students learnt how to verify the au-

thenticity of any news or image through various tools such as geolocation, advanced search and image search among others. The process of archiving and saving the archived posts was taught to help tackle the issue of deleted posts.

Students also got to learn about the various sites and apps that are used by professionals in the industry. The art of writing a fact check report was taught to the participants who also learnt the importance of context and ethics in the field of fact checking. Towards the end, students were informed about the challenges they may face as fact checkers and how to curb them. Drishti Vanaik, an ASCO student, said: “I am an aspiring journalist and this workshop really helped me learn valuable information and explore an aspect of journalism that I wasn’t very well versed with. I’m sure this training session will help me substantially in my career.”

An extremely insightful and engaging workshop, each student who participated learnt new skills and moved one step closer to becoming an able journalist.



# Unicorns & India: A startup story

Vaishali Gautam

One are the days when every young mind in the nation wanted a government job with a decent salary, fixed holidays and a settled life. The new India is all set to hustle with the youth all wanting to be their own bosses. They are passionate to explore every possibility of innovation, which has led to the concept of startups. The number of startups have been growing exponentially in the recent years, especially with shows like 'Shark Tank' being introduced in India, people across nation are getting attracted and influenced by the concept.

The popularity of the show can be justified by the fact that Union Minister Piyush Goyal used a Shark Tank meme in a recent tweet targeting the opposition. The tweet was in praise of India adding 8 new unicorns in just 40 days of 2022. But Isn't Unicorn a mythical concept? It still is because, the Unicorn being talked about here, is a terminology used in the business world for startups with a valuation between \$1 billion - \$10 billion.

It was December 2021, when India, with 54 unicorns, beat the UK to be 3rd in terms of having the largest number of unicorns in the world. It is preceded by USA at the first and China at 2nd place. With the present count of unicorns already up to 83 in the new year, the rapid increase in the sector is clear to all.

Prof. Dr. Manoj Joshi, director, center for VUCA studies, Amity University and author of 'VUCA in Startups', talks about future of startups in India. "Around 800 unicorns in the world and approx 90 in the country, making a stride in all sectors are guaranteed

**A study showed that 90 founders among 500 US unicorns were India born**

Vishal Kumar who's working in a real estate company in Noida informed, "The initiatives like Startup India can be majorly credited as a revolutionary step in bringing about such results. There are various schemes that help you kick start



Piyush Goyal

@PiyushGoyal

Question: What did India do once every five days in 2022?

Answer: It created a 'Unicorn'!

**India already added  
8 new Unicorns in just  
40 days of 2022**

**Opposition Parties :**



to create newer business opportunities in the next 10-15 years. The journey is going to be Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA), which each entrepreneur will have to mitigate with their foresight."

as an entrepreneur. If your company is registered, you can get loans from the government. Additionally, the startups registered under the Startup India scheme are exempted from tax for the initial three years. One can get a lot of information and help from the Startup India portal."

With an estimation to shelter 100 unicorns by 2023 and 150 by 2025, India will potentially generate 3.2 to 3.3 million employment opportunities. What's even better? The constant growth in the sector has led to revisions in estimated no. of unicorns from 150 to 200 by 2025 in the country.



# 'Election Mood' heats up in poll space

Photos: Trilochan S Kalra









# Kitchen gardening: An affinity with mother nature

Ankita Bhatt

*'The garden suggests there might be a place where we can meet nature halfway' - Michael Pollan*

In today's fast paced world, the greed for earning money and metropolitan lifestyle has hampered our connection with nature. Gardening, which is one of the best ways to mingle with nature isn't feasible for most nowadays due to overcrowded cities, small living spaces and lack of time and inter-

Photo courtesy: Ankita Bhatt



**Karnataka's state horticulture department is promoting kitchen gardening in urban areas. The statistics reflect around 50,000 households have been benefitted by the project in last 2 years.**

est. However, Covid-19 and the lockdown impositions helped many realize the importance of greenery around them. The trend of kitchen gardening caught on during the pandemic where people started growing their own fruits and vegetables for household consumption.

Kitchen gardening is one of the most productive ways of gardening, which promotes healthy eating and living. People are preferring to grow their own produce as it can be cultivated organically without

the use of harmful chemicals and doesn't require huge costly infrastructure. Vartika, a graduate, said: "In the mad race of accumulating huge money vegetables are grown using excessive fertilizers without taking care of its harmful impacts. But kitchen gardening is the best option to benefit us with organic vegetables that will result in salubrious health."

Along with being healthy and nature friendly, this activity also serves the purpose of reducing stress and energizing the mind of an individual. Bahadur Gurung, a government employee who is an avid lover of gardening, said: "Mental health issues such as anxiety, tension and depression have increased because of unhealthy lifestyle and people's absence of alliance with nature. That's why it is suggested to opt for a hobby like gardening which will aid in relieving our mental traumas and turmoil."

Another merit of kitchen gardening is that it is cost-effective and saves money. Chetna Yadav, a housewife, said: "Due to inflation the cost of vegetables and basic food is aug-



menting with each passing day that is resulting in financial constraints to fulfill basic requirements. The plants grown in our own garden help save money along with providing fresh, healthy and organic vegetables for us".

Increasing pollution, depleting natural resources and emerging pandemics are some of the biggest indicators that show our lack of regard for nature. Kitchen gardening is a practice that can help develop and deepen one's relationship with nature while keeping us hale & hearty.

# Street vendors near schools, colleges limp back to normalcy

Garima Dobhal

Omicron ushered in 2022 on a somber note. Though by god's grace the new variant (Omicron) didn't prove much fatal but spread rapidly. As a result, some sectors including educational institutions had to be shut down thus spelling doom for street vendors as well as many other workers in the city's enormous informal sector.

Many street vendors who rely on income from school/college students have experienced hunger and suffering. After a few days of the shut down, several fruit and vegetable vendors, as well as fast food outlets, began operating on a small scale with the hope of bringing their business back on track. However, this risk taking didn't pay well. With no students coming to the campus and the one's living in the hostels stuck inside, the sellers got no buyers. They would come, set up their stalls but had to go back with barely any earnings.

## Closing of schools and colleges were announced on 17th January in Uttar Pradesh, which continued till 6th of February

"I was completely shattered when I came to know that a new (Covid) variant is coming. I was praying to god not to show the same scenarios as the last two years. I suffered massively last year. That was the worst phase of my life and I wasn't ready to witness worse than the worst," said Karan Kumar, a 40-year-old fast food vendor who suffered great loss when schools and universities shut down. The one's selling perishable items

Photo courtesy: Garima Dobhal



like fruits and vegetables saw the worst times. Aman Verma, a 49-year-old vegetable vendor said, "I worked day in and day out to recover from the crisis I suffered last year. Last year was full of sufferings and learnings. I am the only earning member in a family of six people and my family literally went through an economic crisis last year but still supported me in helping others. My business majorly relies on parents coming to pick up their children from the schools. They are my regular customers. Shutting down of schools meant shutting down of my business. Going through such a phase again could have put a lot of things including my children's education at stake."

Such minor businesses that run on daily earnings and have no scope of savings had really left their owners anxious. The losses they have suffered as a result of the pandemic are unbearable. They're still trying to cope up with them but certainly not in a state to go through such loss once again. Not only in Lucknow, but across India, many people are experiencing similar problems. The year started as a threat to them, made them suffer, hopeless and disappointed, but gratefully the struggle didn't last long and things have started getting back on track and so have these small businesses.

## OMICRON FALLOUT

## 'Gender discrimination still persists in my family'

Muskan Bakshi

What comes to your mind when you hear the term gender inequality?

Gender inequality is a social phenomenon in which men and women are not treated equally. The treatment may arise from distinction regarding biological, psychological, or cultural norms prevalent in the society.

In our daily life we get to observe many such discrimination between men and women and it's no surprise that the practice continues till date.

"I have always felt discriminated in the name of gender in comparison to my brother or a boy in my family as they are given more opportunities, resources and support", said Vedika a student pursuing her bachelors and she further adds, "Sometimes I feel inferior to my brother or male members in the family as I notice that they are always prioritized."

Kanika, another girl from Amity University, shared that she started to notice this discrimination from a tender age, saying "Women are always considered weak and defenseless. Most of them are not allowed to go out alone as if there is someone always waiting to pounce— it is all because of the belief that women are weak." ▶



► “I was always held responsible for household chores and had to somehow manage my studies and household duties. Those who didn't have to face any such discrimination, should consider themselves lucky”, said Ankita, a college-goer. “Most of the girls are told to play with their friends and only female friends as they are not allowed to have male friends or to play with them. This gets imprinted in the mind of young children that being with the opposite gender is not considered social and in villages this can be still seen”, she added.

Another student Shivani too has faced similar discrimination. “If a girl is wearing modern clothes, she will be looked down upon as someone who does not follow tradition and culture. Sometimes, people on roadside even pass comments on what I am wearing and trust me this is very unsettling.”

While Akansha, another college-goer, mentioned how boys are told ‘not to cry like girls’ thus taking this discrimination whole another level. “Most of us must have heard someone saying that ‘don't cry like girls’, well what does that means? Does it mean that only girls cry? A person cries when he/she is hurt physically or emotionally. So, does it mean that only women have feelings and can feel pain while men feel no such thing? This is absolutely ridiculous.”

Its 21st century but still there are majority of families that don't allow their daughters to pursue higher education and marry them off. “Families still consider their daughters not as a boon but as a burden. All these things should end because the world cannot grow on a such a skewed parameter,” said Abhay, a student.

All things said and done, it is high time that people change their mentality towards women and adopt a more progressive approach if they want a balanced growth both in their family and society.

# Is Gen-Z the least religious generation?

Kashika Nigam

Atheism is an emerging trend amongst Gen-Z and a lot of individuals have started to question the concept of religion and a higher power. A joint study by Impact 360 Institute and Barona found that 13% of Gen-Z identify as atheist while 37% believe that it is not possible to know for sure if God is real.

This generation prefers to find a logical and scientific explanation for everything happening around them rather than blindly believing in it. On top of that, as the first generation to grow up in the digital era, Gen-Z had the internet to answer all their questions and doubts and expose them to different types of belief systems. These factors can be credited for the increasing popularity of spiritual leaders such as Sadhguru and Gaur Gopal Das among Gen-Z.

Naina Rawat, a 20-year-old atheist, said: “My thought process completely changed with time and now I believe in science more. I like to know the rational explanation behind all the incidents. How can I believe in any super-power,

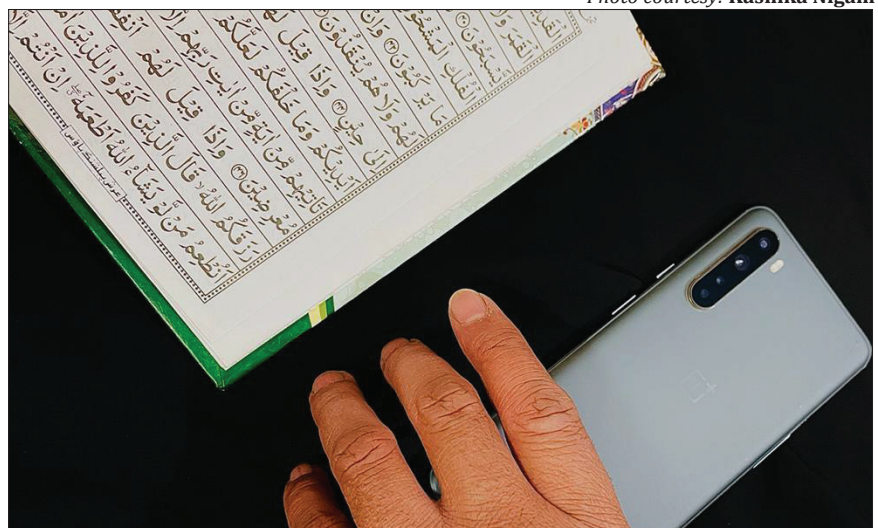
**Generation Z, popularly known as Gen-Z refers to the people born between 1997 and 2012**

which I have never seen and don't even know if it exists or not?”

Like Naina, many young adults are less likely to visit places of worship once they move out and become independent. Abhay Singh, a college student studying in a different city, said: “Faith comes from within and no one can force it. I think once you move away from your family, the pressure to believe goes away and there's more free will.”

While most do it due lack of proof and clash of opinions, some people call themselves as atheists just to fit in the crowd and look cool. Keeping these exceptions aside, one thing that can be said for Gen-Z for sure is that it isn't afraid to choose the unconventional road and definitely is more opinionated and open to different views than their preceding generations.

Photo courtesy: Kashika Nigam





# A tale of sisters from two states-Litti, Baati

Kavya Rangan

Photo courtesy: Kavya Rangan

India, the land where language and cuisine changes every 50 kms is home to an abundance of delicacies, each a bit different from the other and yet similar. Litti and Baati are one such example.

While both are baked in the sand filled pits heated with coals or cow dung cakes, and are often confused, there is one major difference, Litti is filled with a mixture of sattu, herbs and spices while baati is simply dough balls made of wheat. What sets them further apart are their pairing. Where the Rajasthani baati is paired with daal, the litti originating in Bihar is paired with chokha.

The journey these humble dishes have made from the local kitchens to become a country wide phenomenon has been very interesting. Originating in the kitchens of the kingdom of Mewar and Magadha, baati and litti have evolved tremendously from the olden days. From being preferred by soldiers and travelers for their long-lasting shelf life to becoming favourites in the royal courts after being experimented with pairing like daal, churma and chokha, shorbas and a lot more, these dishes have emerged as culinary cousins.

Today, they are an ever-growing favourite of food lovers and bloggers and can be found everywhere, from rooftop restaurants to street food stalls. The reason? Their rustic flavour and texture which attracts food connoisseurs and their high nutritional content which makes them popular amidst health enthusiasts.

Despite the arduous process involved in their preparation and cooking, these homely dishes are being adopted by street food ven-



dors and experimented with. While some serve them the O.G. style, fried and baked are the much-loved modern versions.

Ramesh Kumar, a street food vendor who has been part of his family business for more than two decades says, "The littis take more than 6 hours of preparation time and the process of cooking them in the traditional fire pit is a challenge."

Lucknow, the city of nawabs, has also got a taste for these rustic delicacies, which can be found at street food kiosks and even in food trucks, which sell out by the dozen. Jeetendra, the owner of the famed 'Jeetendra bhaiya's baati chokha', one of the city's oldest says, "Our chokha is special. It has got the taste of Bihar with the spicy twist of U.P." The 'special twist' is the addition of tomatoes to their baingan chokha.

**Both Litti and Baati were evolved in the Mughal court. Baati was introduced when Rani Jodha bought the dish to Badshah Akbar's court**

Local favourites aside, the city is rife with baati chokha and litti chokha vendors, all clubbed around public places like river front, 1090 churaha and many more. With a constant rise in demand for these local dishes, the experimentation in their prep is also increasing. Many restaurants serve the littis with mutton or chicken gravies while other innovate with the types of fillings that go in these dishes. But so far, the traditional recipes have been a major hit among food lovers.

Cooked, deep within the earth's belly in smoking fires and dipped in pots of ghee, litti and baati are evidence that simplicity can be scrumptious. The concept of these dishes is simple, they fulfill, your hunger, taste buds and search for that piece of India that is undoubtedly desi.

# Pt. Birju Maharaj's demise leaves a void in the world of Kathak

Ridhima Srivastava

It is said that one cannot excel in all forms of art, but Pandit Birju Maharaj proved this wrong. Pandit Birju Maharaj was not only a magnificent Kathak dancer but also an excellent singer, musician, and painter. His renditions of thumris and dadras were appreciated by many. Maharaj ji used to play various instruments like violin, sarod, tabla and sitar. The veteran artiste breathed his last on January 16, 2022 at 84 years.

Born on 4th February 1938 in Handia, Allahabad, Brijmohan Nath Mishra later known as Pt. Birju Maharaj belonged to the well-known family of

► Pt. Birju Maharaj was awarded with India's second highest civilian honour, Padma Vibhushan in 1986

► He was also the composer and singer for two songs in Satyajit Ray's popular film, Shatranj Ke Khiladi

Kalka-Bindadin Gharana. He started performing alongside his father Pt. Acchan Maharaj at the age of 6. After his father's demise, Maharaj ji started training under his uncles, Pt. Lacchu Maharaj and Pt. Shambhu Maharaj. He became a dance teacher at the age of 13, and by the time he was 28 his mastery of the dance form had won him the coveted Sangeet Natak Akademy Award and the title of Maharaj

Ji. He has received the Andhra Ratna, Kalidas Samman, Nrity Vilas, Nritya Choormani, Soviet Land Nehru, Adarshila Shikhar Samman, Rajiv Gandhi Peace Award and Shiromani Samman along with an honorary doctorate from Banaras Hindu University.

Pt. Birju Maharaj's dance was a rare combination of virtuosity, expression, grace and control. Maharaj ji's oeuvre was not just about dazzling performances, choreographies, and that delicate glance of the eye; it was also about his undismayed idea that dance could convey everything. His art form was influenced by nature, be it a painting or different tukdas and tihais in various taals. Maharaj ji was a keen observer of scenarios happening around him. He had composed several tihais on the pace of movements of animals like cow, deer and lion. He also innovatively used the dance form to express himself on various non-mythological and social issues and is also known for popularizing the culture of Dance Dramas.

Maharaj ji has taught over a thousand students in these years, not only in India but also in foreign countries. "I don't want students to stay away from their parents just to learn kathak from me. That's why I keep visiting different places to conduct lectures so that the students can stay in their hometown and learn from me at the same time" he used to say.

Maharaj ji also contributed from time to time to Hindi film choreographies. Be it the piece he choreographed for his student Saswati Sen in Shatranj ke Khiladi or for actors and actresses like Madhuri Dixit in Dil Toh Paagal Hai and Devdas, for Deepika Padukone in Bajirao Mastani and for Kamal Haasan in Vishwaroopam, these intricate performances showcased his sense of precision and fine choreography.

"Guru Maharaj ji has inspired generations to pursue kathak. His ginti

ki tihais are studied rigorously by students of Kathak," said Shruti Sharma, an eminent kathak dancer currently working as a Kathakacharya at Kathak Kendra, Lucknow who has received training from Maharaj ji.

One of his most memorable performances was at a concert in Delhi, where Girija Devi was singing hori: Rang Daarungi and Maharaj ji was doing abhinaya alongside her. She had often said that "I cannot think of any lady dancer who can portray Radha better than him".

"Pt. Birju Maharaj was one of the few dancers who blurred gender norms in his era by representing the art form. He fearlessly owned his art form", said Dr. Poonam Srivastava, an eminent classical singer currently working as Director at Sangeet Kala Sansthan, Lucknow.

On 16th January 2022 we lost this priceless gem of the music industry. Pt. Birju Maharaj left us and an era ended. 'न भूतो न भविष्यति' is the perfect phrase representing this loss.

