

JANUARY 28-3 FEBRUARY, 2024

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



# CURBING COACHING CULTURE

COVER STORY

P 3,4





**RAJ BEHERA, AKA COACH RAJ, A QUALIFIED AND LICENCED FITNESS COACH FROM BHUBANESWAR, CLAIMS THAT HIS TRAINING MODULES HAVE CHANGED THE LIVES OF OVER 2,000 PEOPLE. THE CREATOR OF 'FIT AND FINE ALWAYS' (FFA.IN) ENJOYS SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHEN HE GETS A BREAK**



With wife Simran

**Culinary choice**

As a fitness coach, my health has always been a top priority. In addition to a well-balanced diet, I love Srimandir's Abadha and Poori-Dalma.

**Uncompromising fitness regime**

After my gym workouts, I give myself about an hour of 'me-time' to allow me to make sound decisions. Running is also a daily ritual for me. I don't skimp on my fitness routines.

**Sundays for others**

As a fitness coach, I rarely have personal time on Sunday mornings. I tend to put others' fitness over self-care. So my Sundays are dedicated to others.

**Nurturing bonds**

This is the day of the week where I try to connect with my father and have meaningful conversations about life. I also spend time with my wife watching movies in theatres, travelling, and trying out diverse cuisines in city restaurants.



With friends

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

**WhatsApp This Week**

**Only on Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes at: [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- What do you have to do to have a party in space? You have to Planet.
- What do you call a dictionary on drugs? HIGH-Definition.
- Why couldn't the bike stand up on it's own? It was two tired.
- Why do seagulls fly over the sea? Because if they flew over the bay they'd be bagels!



**HARMFUL TRADITION**

Sir, Despite the observance of National Girl Child Day since 2008, which focuses on the empowerment and protection of girls, the fate of girl children in remote areas remains bleak. Issues such as dumping newborns and child marriages persist, affecting the well-being and future of countless young girls. I do agree with the views of experts like Namrata Chadha and Sneha Mishra when they put emphasis on changing societal mindsets rather than relying solely on legal measures. It's also important to involve healthcare professionals in counselling parents and raising awareness about the implications of early marriages on physical and mental health. The persistence of child marriage as a form of exploitation is still evident, calling for comprehensive initiatives to break free from this harmful tradition for the advancement of the nation.

MILAN NAYAK, JEYPORE

**LETTERS**



**A WORD FOR READERS**

Sunday POST is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Feel free to send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to

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# Curbing Coaching Culture

THE PRACTICE OF SENDING STUDENTS TO TUITION CLASSES HAS BEEN IN INDIA SINCE LONG. BUT IN THE PAST, ONLY ACADEMICALLY WEAKER STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY IN HIGHER SECONDARY STANDARD, USED TO TAKE HELP OF COACHING CLASSES, AND SENDING KIDS TO SUCH CENTRES WAS NOT A STATUS SYMBOL THEN

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

India has long grappled with the high-pressure environment of its education system, where students often face overwhelming expectations and intense competition from an early age. In a bid to offer supplementary support to students preparing for competitive examinations, coaching centres were established. But of late, they faced criticism for contributing to the stress and burnout experienced by young learners.

With little choice left, the Ministry of Education recently came up with guidelines restricting coaching centres from enrolling students aged 16 or younger. The rationale behind this decision is grounded in the recognition that children in this age group necessitate a nurturing environment that prioritises their overall development, encompassing both academic and emotional aspects.

Emphasising that student enrolment should occur only after the secondary school examination, the guidelines also instruct coaching centres not to

make misleading promises or guarantee rankings or high marks to parents and students. They further advocate for fair and reasonable fees, a robust grievance redressal system, and compliance with infrastructure requirements as essential rules for coaching centres.

Furthermore, the guidelines propose a model framework for coaching centres and define procedures for the registration, renewal, and cancellation of coaching centre certificates, including an appeal process. The centres are also prohibited from engaging tutors who do not possess qualifications equivalent to or higher than a graduation level.

With an environment of uncertainties prevailing, a few coaching institutes, students, and concerned parents shared with **Sunday POST** their views on the issue.

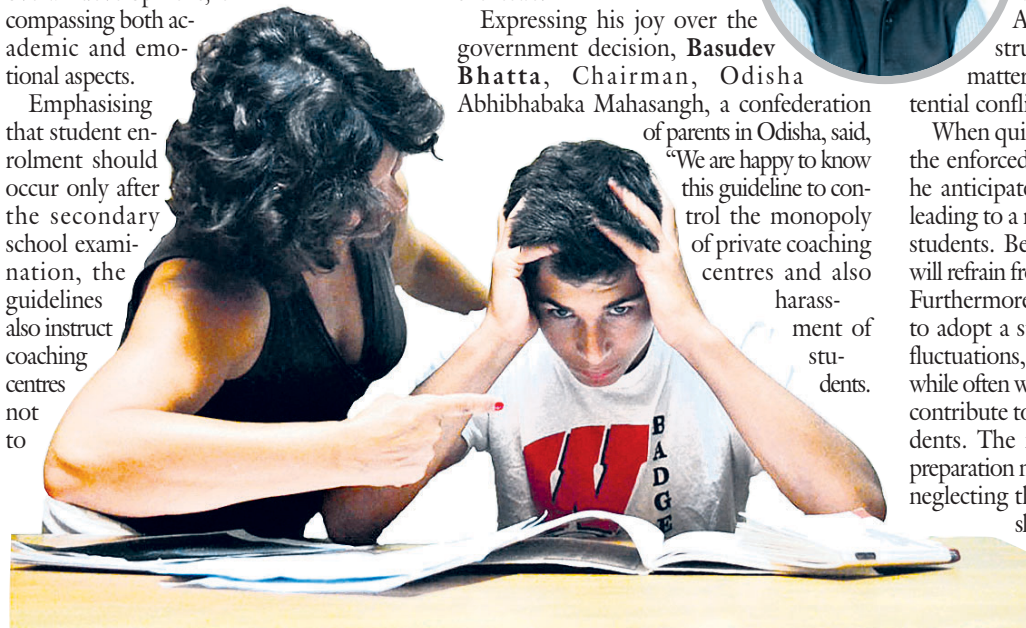
Expressing his joy over the government decision, **Basudev Bhatta**, Chairman, Odisha Abhibhabaka Mahasangh, a confederation of parents in Odisha, said, "We are happy to know this guideline to control the monopoly of private coaching centres and also harassment of students."



It's wonderful to see the Education Ministry taking a proactive stance by implementing guidelines that restrict coaching for students less than 16 years of age. This decision reflects a thoughtful consideration of the overall well-being and development of young minds."

He went on to add, "Due to the emergence of Bhubaneswar as an educational hub in recent years, numerous coaching centres have sprouted, offering students opportunities to receive quality education for exams such as JEE, NEET, and other preparatory exams. However, these institutes lack a regulatory mechanism to manage and oversee them, including the absence of a proper registration system. Additionally, there is a lack of structured processes for financial matters and scheduling, leading to potential conflicts with college timings."

When quizzed about the consequences of the enforced regulations, he expressed that he anticipates a shift in parental attitudes, leading to a reduced emphasis on pressuring students. Besides, from now on, institutes will refrain from making misleading promises. Furthermore, coaching centres are expected to adopt a stable fee structure without any fluctuations, he added. "Coaching institutes, while often well-intentioned, can inadvertently contribute to stress and burnout among students. The intense focus on exam-centric preparation may lead to a myopic perspective, neglecting the development of essential life skills. Students may find themselves trapped in a cycle of constant assessments, leaving little room for self-discovery and personal



## WHEN IT ALL STARTED

It all probably began in the 1980s with Bansal Classes. Vinod Kumar Bansal, a former engineer left his job at a nylon-making company after a health issue struck him. And he decided to put his engineering skills to use and help students prepare for exams. He began taking private classes in his dining room. Soon, his students began to clear the competitive exams and head to greener pastures. His fame spread far and wide. And by 2012, Bansal Classes had become an 8-storied behemoth that raked in over 100 crores annually.

growth. Moreover, the pressure on parents to enrol their children in coaching institutes can be overwhelming. The new guidelines signal a shift towards empowering parents to be active partners in their child's education, emphasising the importance of a supportive home environment," said Bhatta.

He concluded by saying, "Schools can now focus on creating engaging and inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs and talents of students. Collaborative efforts between teachers, parents, and students can pave the way for a more enriching educational experience." The response from students, on the other hand, has been varied, reflecting the diverse perspectives on the impact of coaching centres on their lives. Some students view the new guidelines as a welcome relief, believing that they will now have more time for extracurricular activities, hobbies, and a healthier social life.



**Ritika Priyadarshini** (name changed), an 18-year-old from Bhubaneswar who is studying at a city-based coaching institute, said, "Personally, I find them beneficial as they can help create a more focused learning environment by grouping students based on their age and academic levels. This approach may enhance the effectiveness of teaching methods tailored to specific age groups. However, it's crucial to ensure that these guidelines don't inadvertently limit opportunities for students who may excel or benefit from instruction outside their designated age range. Striking a balance between structure and flexibility is essential for fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment in coaching centres."

She adds, "The students may find themselves with more time to explore other interests, hobbies, and extracurricular activities. This could contribute to more well-rounded and holistic development, fostering skills beyond academics. Reduced academic pressure may also lead to a healthier and less stressful learning environment, allowing students to focus on understanding concepts rather than just rote memorization."

Talking about the other side, she pointed out, "Some students may have relied on coaching centres for additional support and guidance in understanding complex subjects. Without these resources, they might need to adapt to different learning methods or seek alternative forms of academic assistance. The challenge for students could lie in maintaining discipline and motivation in self-study, as they may no longer have the structured guidance provided by coaching centres."

On a parting note, she said, "Ultimately, the impact of these guidelines will depend on various factors, including the individual learning styles of students, the quality of school education, and the availability of alternative support systems. It's essential for students, parents, and educators to adapt to these changes collaboratively, ensuring that the academic well-being of students is not compromised while striving for a more balanced and less stressful educational experience."

While Ritika gave mixed reactions, there are students who see the coaching centres as essential for their academic success.

**Akash**, a 14-year-old aspiring engineer

from Puri, lamented, "I acknowledge the concern, yet coaching centres often serve as a crucial source for gaining an additional advantage in our studies. I sincerely hope there is reconsideration or the provision of alternative support for students like myself. These centres play a pivotal role in enhancing our academic performance, and finding a viable solution would greatly benefit students who rely on such supplementary assistance."

The announcement also evoked mixed reactions from parents across the city. While some applaud the government's initiative to prioritise the well-being of students, others express concerns about the potential impact on academic performance and future opportunities.

Sharing her perspective, **Kalyani Mishra**, a concerned parent, emphasised the importance of striking a balance between academic excellence and a child's overall development.

"While I understand the intention behind



these guidelines, it is crucial to consider that some students thrive in competitive environments and benefit from additional coaching. Restricting access to coaching centres might inadvertently hinder their academic growth," she remarked.

She further stressed the need for a nuanced approach, advocating for a system that recognises and supports the diverse needs and learning styles of individual students.

"Every child is different, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the solution. Instead of a blanket ban, the government

### THE TRIGGERS

- In 2023, 26 students committed suicide in the coaching capital of India—Kota. That's one death every two weeks.
- In 2019, a coaching centre in Surat burnt down killing 20 of its students—the structure had an illegal construction on the terrace, wooden staircases, no fire extinguishers, nothing.
- Coaching institute Allen has this weird system for its hostels. If you do well and rank better than your peers, you get to stay. Otherwise, you get booted out, affecting the psyche of the students miserably.
- In Bihar, where coaching centres need to be registered since 2010, it still doesn't seem to be happening.

should consider implementing measures to ensure the quality and well-being of students within coaching centres," suggested Mishra.

Supporters of the guidelines, on the other hand, argue that the move is a step in the right direction to address the rising academic stress and mental health concerns among students. They believe that lim-

iting exposure to intense coaching at a young age will allow children to develop a more well-rounded skill set and enhance their creativity and critical thinking abilities.

Parent **Ananya Sahu** has come forward to express her wholehearted support for the ministry's initiative.

The mother of a 14-year-old daughter, believes that the new guidelines are a step in the right direction. She asserts that young minds need time to explore various interests, engage in extracurricular activities, and develop essential life skills.

"Education is not just about scoring high marks; it's about nurturing a child's curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking skills. The decision by the Education Ministry to restrict coaching centres for students under 16 is commendable. It allows children to enjoy their childhood, explore different subjects, and develop a more well-rounded personality," she states.

She believes that the pressure to excel in coaching centres often leads to burnout and anxiety among young students, compromising their emotional resilience. Ananya advocates for a balanced approach to education, where academics are complemented by a range of experiences that contribute to the overall growth and development of a child.



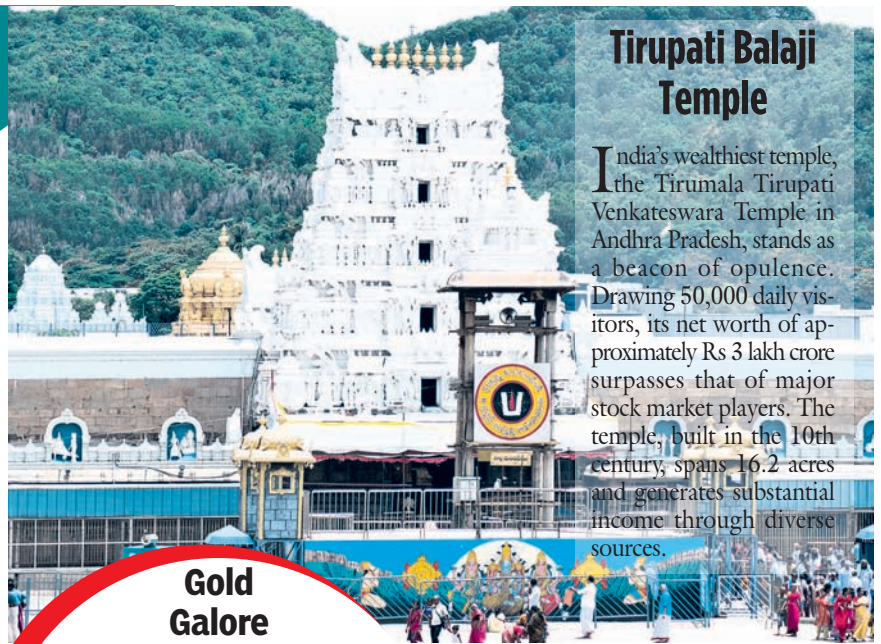
# SUPERRICH SHRINES

Temples receiving gifts and donations is not a new phenomenon. They grew affluent over time thanks to largesse and patronage by royals and private persons. No wonder, temple authorities are often seen having considerable influences on local govts

A Surat-based industrialist gifted a Rs 11-crore golden crown for the Lord Ram idol of the recently consecrated temple at Ayodhya. The shrine also received a whopping Rs 3.17 crore in the form of donations on the day it was opened. The way donations, in the form of cash and in kind, are pouring in, it is speculated that the shrine in Ayodhya is likely to become the richest temple in India in a few years. With the excitement over the newly-built temple not going to be over anytime soon, **Sunday POST** takes a look at some of the other richest Indian shrines and their net-worth.

## SRIMANDIR

Located in Puri, Odisha, the Jagannath Temple, also known as Srimandir, is dedicated to Lord Jagannath, a form of Lord Vishnu. 30,000 acres of land are registered under the name of Lord Jagannath, making him the richest landlord. Although there is no actual estimate of its gold treasure, it is known that the deities are adorned with 209 kg of gold during the Suna Beshha ceremony itself. As per a 2010 report, the bank deposit of Lord Jagannath Temple was more than Rs 150 crore. The temple gets huge donations that go six times higher during the festive season. Around 30,000 devotees come to this shrine every day, and around 70,000 per day in the festive season.



## Tirupati Balaji Temple

India's wealthiest temple, the Tirumala Tirupati Venkateswara Temple in Andhra Pradesh, stands as a beacon of opulence. Drawing 50,000 daily visitors, its net worth of approximately Rs 3 lakh crore surpasses that of major stock market players. The temple, built in the 10th century, spans 16.2 acres and generates substantial income through diverse sources.

## Gold Galore

India is home to some of the world's wealthiest temples, with some receiving more donations each year than a thriving business organisation. According to a 2015 assessment by the World Gold Council, India's temples have about 2,000 metric tonnes of gold, worth about \$100 billion, whereas the country's central bank valued them at 557.7 metric tonnes of gold based on its 2013 estimate.

## Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Nestled in Thiruvananthapuram, the Padmanabhaswamy Temple has assets valued at Rs 1,20,000 crore. Housing treasures ranging from gold idols to diamonds, its hidden chambers and legendary protectors add an air of mystique. Only accessible to Hindus, this temple's riches include a vast array of precious items.



## Siddhivinayak Temple

Siddhivinayak Temple, dedicated to Lord Ganesha and built by Balasaheb Sawant, is a marvel of architecture with spires, marble, and gold-painted domes. Adorned with colourful domes, the temple's main deity, Lord Shri Ganesha, rests under a mesmerising dome. Ranked as the third richest temple in India, it receives substantial donations from devotees and houses a 4kg pure gold idol, making its estimated worth around 125 crore rupees, with potential variations.



## Vaishnodevi Temple

Perched at an altitude of 5,200 feet, the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu ranks among India's wealthiest. As one of the 108 Shakti Peethas, it received monumental donations, including 1,800 kg of gold and Rs 2,000 crore in cash over the last two decades.



## Golden Temple

Situated in the heart of Amritsar, the Golden Temple, constructed with Guru Arjan's guidance, is an iconic Sikh religious center. Using 400 kg of gold on its upper floors, the temple is aptly named. With an annual income of Rs 500 crore, it continues to be a symbol of Sikh heritage and devotion.



# Vaani has her hands full

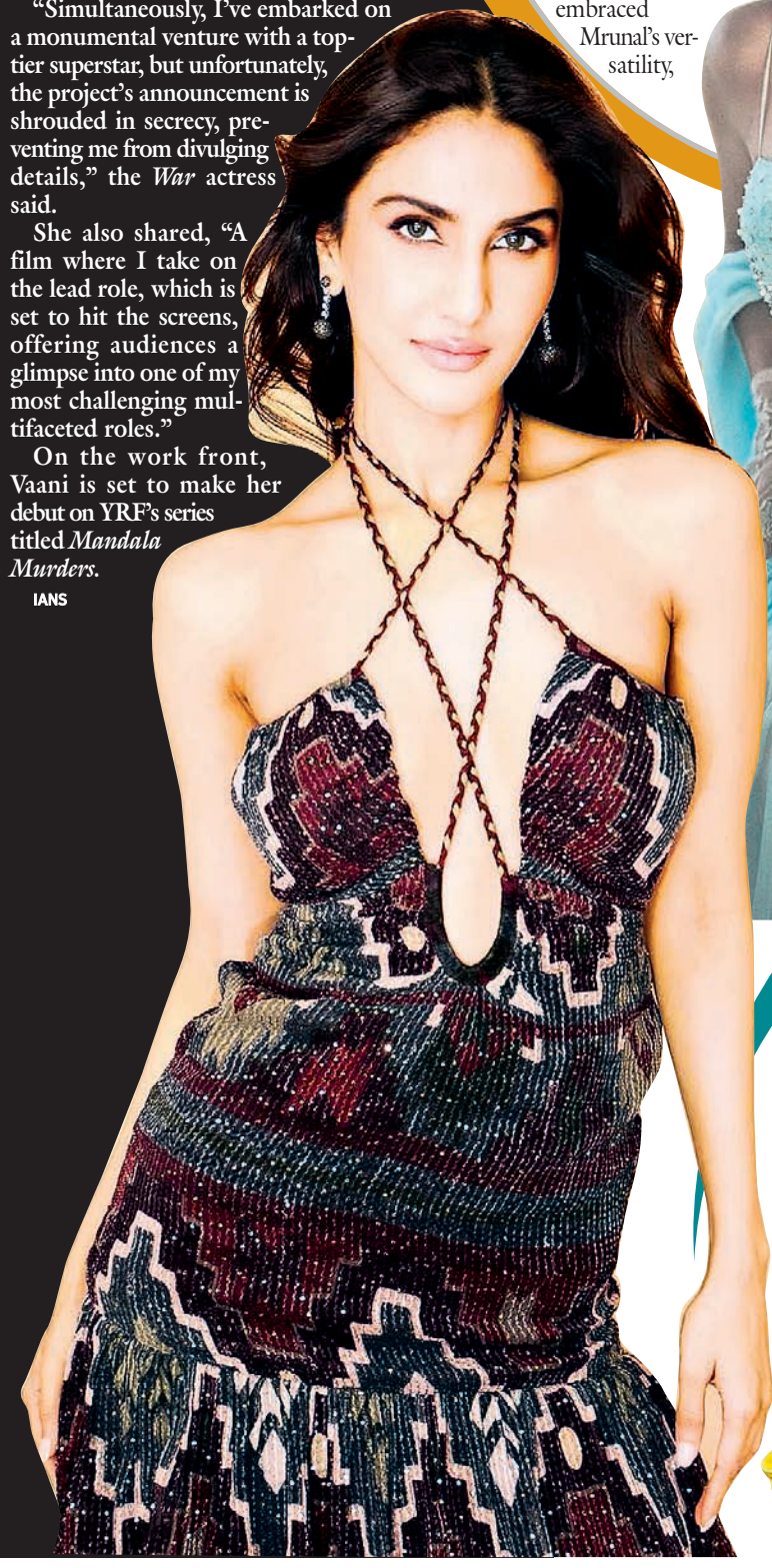
Actress Vaani Kapoor is set to have her most prolific year in cinema in 2024 as she has four distinct yet unique projects among which there is a film with a 'top-tier' superstar, but details are under wraps currently. Vaani said: "I'm absolutely thrilled about the upcoming cinematic year in 2024, where I'm fortunate to be involved in four diverse projects! One of the highlights is *Raid 2*, a project alongside the legendary Ajay Devgn, promising to be a tremendous learning experience that will undoubtedly enrich my journey as an actor."

"Simultaneously, I've embarked on a monumental venture with a top-tier superstar, but unfortunately, the project's announcement is shrouded in secrecy, preventing me from divulging details," the *War* actress said.

She also shared, "A film where I take on the lead role, which is set to hit the screens, offering audiences a glimpse into one of my most challenging multifaceted roles."

On the work front, Vaani is set to make her debut on YRF's series titled *Mandala Murders*.

AIANS



## Mrunal overwhelmed with 'Queen of Romance' title

Actress Mrunal Thakur is making waves in the film industry and earning accolades for her romantic portrayals in *Sita Ramam* and *Hi Nanna*, shares love and admiration from audiences across industries.

When asked about the best compliment she received for the film, Mrunal shared a touching message from a fan. The fan expressed that when he/she saw *Hi Nanna*, he/she saw Yashna on the screen, not Sita Mahalakshmi from *Sita Ramam*.

The Telugu audiences embraced Mrunal's versatility,

adding to the film's success.

Further, Mrunal has also been called the 'Queen of Romance' by her fans, and acknowledging the title she reflected on the overwhelming compliment. With sincerity, she expressed that she feels very overwhelmed as according to her, there is only one 'King of Romance' who is none other than Shah Rukh Khan.

Therefore, when titled as the 'Queen of Romance,' the compliment made a special place in her heart.

On the work front, Mrunal Thakur will be seen next in *Pooja Meri Jaan* and *Family Star*.

AGENCIES



# Pranutan shares story behind her name

Actress Pranutan, who made her acting debut with *Notebook* revealed the story behind her name and its connection with her grandmother, legendary actress Nutan.

Pranutan appeared on the special episode of singing reality show *Indian Idol 14, Celebrating Nutan Ji*. Ace actor Mohnish Bahl, was accompanied by his wife, Ekta Sohini, and daughters, Pranutan and Krishaa.

During the episode, Pranutan shared how her grandfather Rajnish Bahl wanted to name her after the *Nagina* star Nutan.

She said: "My grandfather named me; he wanted to name me after his late wife, Nutan. However, at the request of my dad, who couldn't bring himself to call me Nutan out of respect for his mom, I was named Pranutan, which means a new life."

The episode saw Nagpur's Utkarsh Wankhede's marvelous performance of the songs *Dil Ka Bhanwar Kare Pukar* and the title track from the film *Tere Ghar Ke Saamne*.

On the work front, Pranutan has *Coco & Nut* in the pipeline.

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## Parineeti announces her musical debut

Actress Parineeti Chopra has embarked on a whole new chapter as she announced her singing debut, saying that this journey gives her the opportunity to have two careers at once.

Taking to social media last week, she shared a video wherein she shared clips of behind-the-scenes footage of her singing in a studio.

Sharing the video, the actress penned a heartfelt note: "Music, to me, has always been my happy place... I've watched countless musicians all over the world performing on the stage and now it's finally my time to be a part of that world. I feel so lucky, blessed and stressed about starting off a whole new chapter in my life and I honestly can't describe how excited I am to embark on this musical journey."

"A journey that gives me the opportunity to have two careers at once! How fun (and chaotic) so here's to embracing the unknown and facing all my fears and kicking off my singing debut! I'm joining hands with the best@entertainmentconsultant and we've got some amazing things in store for you all this year," she shared. The *Ishaqzaade* actress added, "I hope you're as excited for this as I am!"

Meanwhile, on the work front, she was last seen in *Mission Raniganj* and has *Amar Singh Chamkila* in the pipeline.

AIANS





*Solitude is something most people have to deal with at certain times. Since it can have an impact on both physical and emotional wellbeing, there are things one can do to combat loneliness and isolation*

# Coping with Loneliness

Humans are social creatures. While it is normal to feel lonely at times, we flourish in interpersonal interactions and groups. When you feel isolated and cut off from others, it can have a negative impact on both your mental and physical health, raising your stress levels, causing anxiety and sadness.

Here're a few tips from **Sunday POST** for what to do when you feel lonely.

## Volunteerism

Volunteering is an excellent approach to overcome loneliness. It's a good opportunity to meet new, local individuals who share your values and interests. Even if your romantic and social lives are entirely blocked, your volunteer position provides an excuse to wake up, shower, dress, and leave the house.

## Collaborate with strangers

Connecting with others is not restricted to intimate friends, family, or coworkers. Taking yourself out to dinner in an urban location and conversing with others around you, including strangers, is an excellent method to combat loneliness. In reality, chatting with strangers can help alleviate loneliness and the detrimental impacts of social isolation.

## Idle chat with friends

When you relocate to a new place and don't know many people, you are more likely to feel lonely. Long, casual conversations

Dog walkers frequently pause to chat while their canines play together.

makes you happy.

## Long trek

If everyone else is busy and you have nothing to do, take a long, lingering walk. No workout gear, no strategy; simply choose a place you enjoy and explore. Put on some music or anything enjoyable to take your mind off your feelings. It might give you a new viewpoint. If that doesn't work, you can have a long phone call with someone you would normally text.

## Spend time with books

When you feel lonely, go to a reputable bookshop in the area and browse every aisle of books. Flipping through a few specific magazines can sometimes help overcome loneliness because bookstores serve a purpose and are based primarily on vibes. Furthermore, these are areas where you don't necessarily have to spend money.

## Meditation

When you feel isolated or caught in your own thoughts, practise a 15-

minute meditation. It will undoubtedly help you reconnect with your breath and the five senses. The

The

relaxing impact will make you believe that you are never truly alone. When it's finished, you'll feel more grounded and in sync with your surroundings.

## Shake a leg

Dancing helps you feel relieved, calm, and even satisfied. So, when loneliness sets in, engage in wildly energetic dancing until it empties your heart and quiets your thoughts. Music also has a unique ability to assist people cope with loneliness. Listen to a collection of upbeat songs and dance your loneliness away.

OP DESK



with long-distance friends are one of the most effective coping techniques for loneliness. Nothing makes you feel more connected to friends thousands of miles apart than hearing about their idle conversations. It's as if we were all hanging together in person.

## Go shopping

Shopping is one of the most effective solo hobbies for overcoming loneliness. Going in and out of stores, conversing with salespeople, and purchasing items like candles, supersoft pyjamas, and a fancy food all help. Making financial decisions feels empowering.

## Distract yourself

Focusing on a pastime or passion might help you feel less alone while also strengthening your feeling of purpose and meaning. Do something creative, such as writing your memoirs, drawing, crafting, or learning to cook. Pet adoption and care provide fantastic companionship. Even if you aren't ready to get a cat or a dog, offer to care for a neighbour's pet or walk a shelter dog.

## Self-care

According to beauty experts, self-care is an effective strategy to avoid loneliness. When you are alone, practise self-care at night. Light your favourite candle and apply a face and eye mask; skin care always makes people happy. You can counter negative beliefs by speaking to yourself in a gentler, more realistic tone—like a caring friend. You can also watch a movie that



# Sanvi



PHOTO: KUMAR SHARAT, OP