



THE TIMES OF INDIA

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TODAY'S EDITION

► What is the significance of World Sanskrit Day? Students talk on why we need to be rooted to our language and revive it
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STUDENT EDITION

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021



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Quote unquote

The most important thing right now is that our country needs to host big events where star athletes like Vetter come and play, so that our people get to know more about athletics. Our people should know what athletics is in reality, and what it takes for these athletes to perform. People should understand why athletics is so different to sports like cricket. I intend to work on this. I want the media to help in this

Neeraj Chopra, Javelin throw gold medalist at the Tokyo Olympics



HAS COVID-19 IN INDIA BECOME AN ENDEMIC?

WHO claims...

Covid-19 in India may be entering some kind of stage of endemicity where there is a low or moderate level of transmission going on, chief

scientist of the World Health Organisation Soumya Swaminathan has said. "We may be entering some kind of stage of endemicity where there is low-level transmission or

moderate level transmission going on, we are not seeing the kinds of exponential growth and peaks that we saw a few months ago," Swaminathan said.



Soumya Swaminathan, scientist, WHO

WHAT IS AN ENDEMIC AND HOW IT AFFECTS US



WHAT IS ENDEMIC?

According to WHO, endemic is the stage when a population learns to live with a virus. Some examples of endemics include chicken pox and malaria, where there are predictable number of cases every year in certain parts of the world

ENDEMIC VS PANDEMIC

The International Epidemiology Association's Dictionary of Epidemiology says that a pandemic is "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people." In March 2020, the WHO declared Covid-19 to be a global pandemic. Although there is no universally agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a pandemic, the WHO had previously called a pandemic the "worldwide spread of a new disease"

SO, IS COVID-19 AN ENDEMIC?

Well, medical experts are convinced that the Covid-19 pandemic could become the next "endemic". Interestingly, experts have previously said that in countries like the US, it would be impossible to reach "true herd immunity" with Covid-19, courtesy the new strains of the virus, which will continue to develop in the years ahead

CAN WE GET RID OF COVID?

Opinions are divided. Countries like China hope that Covid will die in years ahead. In fact, Beijing is pursuing a "zero tolerance" approach to the virus, with strict lockdowns, contact tracing, testings, and quarantines. Similarly, Australia has sought to shut out the virus with closed borders, lockdowns, and widespread testing. However, the increasing cases of delta variant has raised question mark over the long-term viability of a zero-Covid strategy.

WHAT ABOUT JABS?

Experts are of the view that while vaccines will still be effective, there is no clarity on the need for booster shots. Doctors feel higher vaccination rates may lead to a decrease in Covid cases in some areas, depending on various factors such as how long they last, and how effective they are at reducing transmission over time

IN OTHER NEWS



'India among aspiring hosts for Olympics in 2036 and beyond'

India is among the aspirants for hosting the Olympics in 2036 and beyond, Thomas Bach, the President of International Olympic Committee (IOC), has said. After Brisbane (Australia) was chosen last month to host the 2032 Summer Games, the IOC enjoys a queue of suitors to host the Olympics in 2036, 2040 and even beyond, Bach said. The aspiring hosts include India, Indonesia, Germany and Qatar, Bach said. Others who have publicly expressed interest in hosting the Games include Russia, whose athletes have spent the past three Olympics with their country under partial or full ban for doping.



Air rescue efforts from Af named 'Op Devi Shakti'

The air rescue efforts from war-torn Afghanistan have been given a name by the government, Op Devi Shakti. The government has so far evacuated 800 persons from Afghanistan since the Taliban took over the country recently. Indian officials are making all efforts to evacuate not only Indians, but also Afghan nationals, from Kabul as well as neighbouring countries like Qatar, Doha and Tajikistan.

Martian snow is dusty, can potentially melt: Study

A team of US scientists has developed a new approach to determine how dusty Mars ice really is, and whether it could melt. The team from the Universities of Arizona State and Washington combined data from NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander and Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter with computer simulations to successfully match the brightness of Martian ice and determine its dust content. Based on their simulations, the team predicted that the ice dug up by the Phoenix Mars Lander formed by dusty snowfall, sometime over the last million years, similar to other ice deposits found previously across the mid-latitudes of Mars.

Mars is a dusty planet, so much of its ice is also dusty and much darker than fresh snow we might see on Earth. The dustier the ice is, the darker and thus warmer the ice gets, which can affect both its stability and evolution through time. Under certain conditions, this might also mean that the ice could melt on Mars



SPACE

FACTOID

100 TRILLION

That's the number of interstellar objects lurking at the edge of our solar system, claims a new study. One of them is the comet 2I/Borisov, which was discovered by astronomer Gennady Borisov in 2019. According to scientists, approximately one per cent of carbon and oxygen in the Milky Way could be locked in interstellar objects, with many of them located in the Oort cloud.

According to NASA, the Oort cloud is a theoretical concept of icy objects at the farthest reaches of the solar system

Instagram switches off its swipe-up gesture

Facebook-owned Instagram is all set to ditch the 'swipe-up' link in Instagram Stories starting August 30. The popular feature has historically allowed businesses and high-profile creators a way to direct their Story's viewers to a website where they could learn more about a product, read an article, sign up for a service or do anything else the creator wanted to promote, reports TechCrunch.

■ In place of the 'swipe-up' call to action, Instagram users who previously had access to the feature will instead be able to use the new Link Sticker, the company said

■ This sticker had been in testing starting in June with a small handful of users, the company said. But on August 30, it will begin to roll out more broadly

■ Instagram says, it will begin to convert those who currently have access to the swipe-up link to the Link Sticker starting on August 30

■ This will include businesses and creators who are either verified or who have met the threshold for follower count

Will Afghanistan's heritage marvels survive a resurgent Taliban?

The world witnessed the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban recently. While the crisis continues, the UNESCO is worried about the safety of Afghanistan's cultural heritage. The UN cultural organisation has called for the preservation of the country's cultural heritage in its diversity and asked to protect the historic assets. The UNESCO fears "damage and looting" of the crucial heritage of the country since the Taliban takeover. In a statement, the organisation also reminded the world of the time when the iconic Bamiyan Buddhas, a world heritage site in Bamiyan Valley, was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

WHAT ARE THE HERITAGE SITES OF AFGHANISTAN?

■ **THE OLD CITY OF HERAT:** The 65m-tall Minaret of Jam is a graceful, soaring structure, dating back to the 12th century. It is a UNESCO site

■ **BAMIYAN VALLEY:** The archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley is where the UNESCO has been working for several years now

■ **THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN KABUL:** This is another significant attraction that preserves the history of the country



TIMES NIE EDITORIAL POWERED BY STUDENTS

Language of the Gods and of FUTURE SCIENTISTS

This year the World Sanskrit day also coincided with Rakshabandhan and the final days of Onam. Amid all the celebrations, the Neelakurinji flowers that bloom once in 12 years have bloomed on the mountains of Nilgiri in the south-western ghats of the Indian peninsula. The week in August that sees a full-moon (Shravan Purnima) is Sanskrit week, which is being celebrated now from August 19 to 25. Yatee Jaiswal writes in her views and Garvit Sood tells us what he learnt from his parents



Illustration re-drawn / reproduced by Garvit Sood

ing of its semantics.

Once the initial understanding of Sanskrit is established, students realise that most of the world languages are derived from Sanskrit. It would be a great idea to research how Sanskrit learners pick up other languages with ease.

Akshara

Sanskrit has 52 akshara (alphabets) in total, 16 vowels and 36 consonants. These 52 alphabets have never been tweaked or altered and are believed to have been constant since the beginning. They are perfect for word formation and pronunciation. Sanskrit has been taught in Indian schools since the Vedic ages. Some private schools today have it in their curriculum as the benefits of studying this language are more relevant in today's time. The chanting of Sanskrit verses makes all the senses of the human body reach an elevated state of activity that are optimal for its functioning.

The alphabets have been created by observing the natural progression of sounds created in the human mouth, thus making phonetics as an important element of language formation.

Sanskrit is the language of the Gods. Why is this belief in India so prevalent? A little deeper study in the Sanskrit language makes it apparent that the essence of each creation in our universe, including the methodology is expressed in the language. Also called the mother of all languages, Sanskrit incorporates the root words of almost all the world's languages.



Old languages like Latin, Greek and Hebrew too have a mention of Sanskrit in their texts. Sanskrit seems very tough at first, but the logical way in which it is structured provides a very clear understand-

are known to us have most of history recorded in Sanskrit. An inquisitive mind who wants to explore would fall back on it.

It is said that it takes perseverance to master this language and that in itself is the testimony to the fact that the language teaches so much about life to the learner.

I opted for Sanskrit as my father had studied the subject in his school days and my maternal grandmother studied the subject till post-graduation. They motivated me to pick up Sanskrit at school and I find that when I am learning German on my own, there are similarities to Sanskrit.

All the ancient Indian scriptures are written in Sanskrit. The reciting of verses in Sanskrit have been known to bring many benefits. Many Western schools have adopted Sanskrit prayers in the school curriculum to expose students to the benefits of the language. Children from different cultures have adapted to the language and there are many videos of them from Western schools reciting shlokas and explaining their meaning.

I believe Sanskrit provides the path to every learning for us humans and explains all the phenomena that we may experience in a lifetime. Let's learn this rich language.

It is assumed to have been written down after being continued for centuries through oral tradition and preservation of verbal knowledge.

Logic

The uniqueness of Sanskrit lies in the understanding of the logic in the language. Educators in the West realise that to imbibe the real power of logic through language, it is best to teach Sanskrit to the young.

Sanskrit is the single thread that is binding the different ages through time. The 'Yugas' as they



Garvit Sood and Yatee Jaiswal are class V students at Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai. Yatee has authored a book of poetry titled 'Lazy Laddoo' and Garvit has created 'Brihti App' that helps screen and detect eye disorders

From treating illness to space exploration

Sanskrit texts hold massive knowledge about the universe and human society. It's easy to learn and has a relaxing effect on the human mind. Also, it's the mother of all languages. Need I say more?

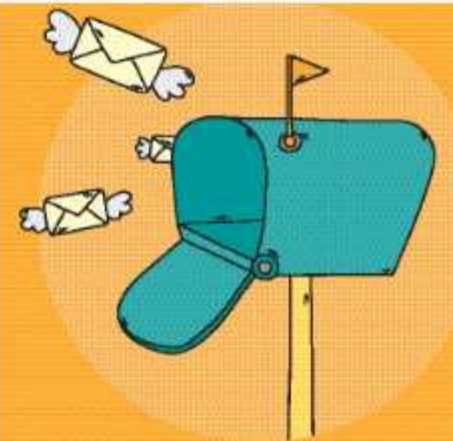


In India, most of us believe that Sanskrit was the language of the Gods. If you know Sanskrit, other languages

are incredibly easy to learn. There are probably hundreds of schools out of India that wish to teach Sanskrit to their children. I think Sanskrit should be taught to Indian children – if not the first or second language in schools, it could be the mandatory third language.

Sanskrit is more than a language; it is a lifestyle. I realised this when I started learning this language. It creates a shift inside. I am yet to know what that shift is. The feeling becomes different. There are so many stories of how just Sanskrit has served humanity – from treating illness to space exploration. I am realising more and more what an amazing language Sanskrit is, and I am happy there is so much more to explore and appreciate in this language.

Yatee Jaiswal



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WE ARE WAITING

Big Q

WHY ONAM IS CELEBRATED ONLY IN KERALA?

Onam is a 10-day harvest festival celebrated only in Kerala, immortalising the legend of the golden era under Raja Mahabali.

Legend has it that he reigned in the area that is today's Kerala, which was formed when Parashurama threw an axe. During Mahabali's time, his subjects enjoyed equality and lived a happy life without any corruption, theft or dishonesty.

The Devas besought Lord Mahavishnu's help to control Mahabali's growing prestige and power. To test him, Lord Mahavishnu took avatar in Kerala as Vamana, a diminutive Brahmin, seeking three-feet of land.



The generous Mahabali granted his wish, and the dwarf grew in size, covering the entire sky with his first step and the netherworld with the second. When Lord Vishnu was about to take his third, King Mahabali offered his own head to the God. Lord Vishnu then granted Mahabali the right to visit his people once every year. Onam is the yearly celebration of the benevolent ruler who sacrificed himself.

The tenth day, Thiruvonam, is believed to be the day Mahabali arrives. The people of Kerala offer him nothing less than the grandest welcome with majestic celebrations including Pookalam, Onam Sadhya (special food), Vallam Kali (boat races), Pulikali (tiger dances), Tug of War, Kummattikali (Mask dance), Onathallu (martial arts) and folk songs among other traditional customs.

Onam is celebrated by every Keralite irrespective of his/her creed or caste. This legacy is seen in the way Keralites come together in times of need, when disasters strike, for instance, when there was a terrible flood in the state – Keralites across the world contributed, just as they did during the plane accident in Karipur, despite the ongoing pandemic.

GI Gouri Theertha, class XII, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram

RARE NEELAKURINJI BLOOMS: NILGIRI HILLS TURN BLUE-PURPLE

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE



A rare blue bloom has occurred in the Nilgiri mountain range, which is located in the southern ghats of the Indian peninsula.

The glorious Neelakurinji flowers gave the mountains its name – this beautiful blue flower blooms only once in 12 years. The blooms were seen this year August onwards in the Nilgiris (western Tamil Nadu), Karnataka and also in Kerala.

The blooms were first spotted a few days ago. Soon, the entire region was covered with blue and purple flowers. Despite the pandemic, tourists are all set to visit this place and watch the rare sight at the rare Neelakurinji flowers.

Why it blooms so rarely is a mystery. The fact that Neelakurinji flower blossoms once in 12 years truly makes it worth all the attention. Let's enjoy the sight while it lasts!

Siddharth Kothari, class X, St. Joseph's Boys High School, Bengaluru

'Neither obscure nor difficult'

NOT DIFFICULT, IT'S BEAUTIFUL

Our society has adopted the thinking that English is the most important language. This needs to change. Sanskrit is not very difficult to learn, though the general understanding is that it is a tough language. It is a beautiful language, rich in vocabulary, literature, thoughts, ideas, meanings and values. The language has a wonderful structure, more perfect than any other language used in the world.



Sanskrit literature offers an expansive view of human nature. Schools, even in Europe, have started teaching Sanskrit as an important subject. Unfortunately in India, few people today have any understanding of Sanskrit and only a few schools teach it.

Hriday Roy, class X, St Anselm Pink City Senior Secondary School, Malviya Nagar, Jaipur

NOT WIDELY SPOKEN

Sanskrit is the ancient language of India and is the mother of all Indian languages. On whether I am against or in favour of learning Sanskrit, then I would have to say that I understand both sides.

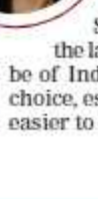


As Sanskrit is not widely used for everyday conversations, I find that it would not be useful for many of us. Learning ancient languages are time consuming and being very proficient in the language will not help us much. But it can be beneficial for students – as it will improve their learning as well as language skills.

Elaine Mary Cherian, class IX, Believers Residential school, Tiruvalla, Kerala

CAN HELP BRIDGE THE GAP

We don't have a national language. We badly need a national language to achieve pan India unity. Else, how can a person from north India and a person from south India interact? Let's say both of them know English and so the language gap has been filled in, but that is rather shameful since it implies that we are still tied down to a colonial language. Who are we to celebrate Independence day if we cannot keep the colonial influence out of India?



So, I say, we need a national language to bridge the language gap and that national language should be of Indian origin. Sanskrit in my view is the best choice, especially because studying Sanskrit makes it easier to learn other languages.

Kartika Nischal, class XII, KV Army, Jodhpur

Learners say, Sanskrit has an exact, logical and scientifically perfected alphabet system – a crystal-clear clarity leaves no ambiguity in the user's mind. Students from across India tell us more

NEP RECOGNISES NEED FOR SANSKRIT

The word Sanskrit means "what is done well, complete." It is a highly developed, powerful and sacred language. Many European countries have recognised its importance and have been teaching it as an important subject. Among Indian students, languages like French, German and Spanish are preferred over Sanskrit due to lack of exposure to anything better. Now, the new education policy 2020 recognises Sanskrit as an important and enriching language. It is being said that Sanskrit is most suitable even for developing AI.



Khushraj Rathore, class VII, Ryan International, Jaipur

REPOSITORY OF ALL KNOWLEDGE

Barely one percent Indians today speak Sanskrit. This needs to change. Sanskrit texts are a storehouse of knowledge in every imaginable field – be it the sciences, architecture, medical science, astronomy, mathematics, metallurgy, physics, aviation or quantum physics. It is often said that Sanskrit is the most scientific language for programming. The rules of Sanskrit grammar are useful for Artificial Intelligence. Sanskrit should be taught at a young age to children to preserve and promote a truly scientific culture.



Amrutha M, class X, Anandatheertha Vidyalaya, Udipi

EUROPEANS ARE TEACHING IT!

Sanskrit, the language of the world's oldest book (*Rig Veda*), is well-structured with a clear, scientific alphabet system. Students studying Sanskrit do better in mathematics, science and other languages. Speaking or chanting Sanskrit words charge our nervous system with a positive energy. Online video channels showing European students chanting Sanskrit shlokas at school reveal how schools in Europe are teaching Sanskrit to young students.



Nandini Chauhan, class VIII, BCM school, Ludhiana

NEITHER OBSCURE NOR DIFFICULT

As a student learning Sanskrit at school, I truly appreciate its sophisticated and ornate writing. The elegance, the grammar, the verses and the logic of the language makes it wonderful.

Among the things I am intrigued by – how we can say a lot using few words. Sanskrit would cover in a word, that in English would require four to six words.

This shloka tells us much: *Surasa subodhaa vishva manodnya, Lalita hridya ramaniya! Amrutavani sanskrita bhasha naiva klisha nacha kathina!*

It means "Lovely, easy to understand, universally agreeable to the mind; Elegant, beloved, enjoyable, the sweet speech of Sanskrit is neither obscure nor difficult."

Shrestha Sharma, class VII, The Orbis School, Keshav Nagar, Pune

COUNTLESS LESSONS FOR SCHOLARS

Sanskrit is simple and easy to learn. It teaches us logical thinking. The root of many words of countless languages originate from Sanskrit, including English, French and Spanish and all the Indian languages. Cambridge University has a Sanskrit course and St James School in London has even made Sanskrit a compulsory subject for its junior section.

Learning other languages becomes much simpler once we know Sanskrit. For instance, the English word 'shampoo' comes from the Sanskrit word 'champo', which means 'to massage the muscles'. The linguistic and scientific possibilities of Sanskrit are endless.

Jaidev Dhoot, class V, The Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai

FOR CLARITY OF THOUGHT & SPEECH

The world has recently begun to rediscover ancient Sanskrit texts and its rich, vibrant treasure trove of knowledge. Sanskrit helps improve clarity of thought and speech, improves memory while also increasing our brain power. No wonder, it is readily being incorporated into the school curriculum of many schools in Europe.

It has risen beyond the materialistic growth of today's world and brings about a close communion between humanity and nature. India, being the roots of the language, it is thus imperative to incorporate Sanskrit into the Indian education system.



Shaurya Gupta, class X, The Kalyani School, Pune