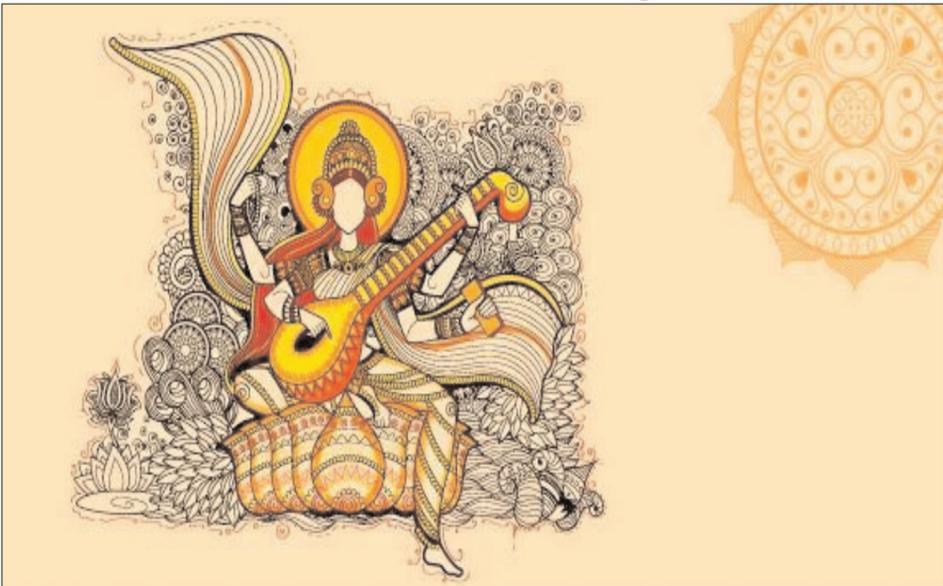


Vasant Panchami: Amazing Facts & Stories about the Significance of This Festival



Vasant Panchami or Basant Panchami marks the beginning of the transition period from winter to spring. After Makar Sankranti (January 14-15) on 23rd January 2026, the sun gradually starts its northward journey from the tropic of Capricorn as winter gradually fades away, leading to warmer days. A pleasant change in season heralds the arrival of spring, as the subcontinent heaves a sigh of relief from the severe winter. After this transition period of around 30 days, starting from Vasant Panchami, spring comes into full bloom around the time of Holi.

Vasant Panchami is of great significance in this land. In ancient times, Vasant Panchami was also the festival of the river Saraswati. In many parts of India, this festival is known as Saraswati puja, a day to propitiate Goddess Saraswati. Saraswati pujas are conducted in houses while the Saraswati temples are decorated and thronged by devotees. In south India, it is celebrated as Sri Panchami, Sri being one of the names of Goddess Lakshmi. Vasant Panchami is also the day when Goddess Parvati sent Kama Deva to disturb Lord Shiva's penance. This festival of Vasant Panchami is thus associated with all the three goddesses in the Hindu trinity. In other words, it is

a day that celebrates knowledge, prosperity, and creative energy. Saraswati Connect The Saraswati river was an ancient river in northwest India which dried up in the course of time. In those days, with the advent of spring, the Himalayan glaciers would melt, increasing the flow of the river Saraswati. The mustard plants that grew on the banks of the river used to go into full bloom, with the yellow color of mustard flowers decorating the banks of the river for many miles, making for a wonderful sight. It is interesting to note that the color yellow represents knowledge in the Indian tradition. It is the color of spring. A day that Celebrates Knowledge In ancient times, the rishis had their ashrams on the banks of the river Saraswati. Sage Veda

Vyasa too had his dwelling here. It was on the banks of the Saraswati river that the Vedas, Upanishads, and other scriptures were composed and compiled. The river thus became associated with Goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge and wisdom. On Vasant Panchami, Goddess Saraswati is draped in yellow, making her association with the festival and the river complete. People also dress in yellow and share yellow colored food items on this day. And, Vasant Panchami which is an occasion to worship Goddess Saraswati is a day to celebrate knowledge as in some traditions, children are initiated into education on this day. February - a Short and Sweet Month

Saraswati is also the goddess who represents creativity. In ancient times, Vasant Panchami was the beginning of a month-long festival - Vasant Utsav which culminated in Holi. As we have seen, Vasant Panchami comes in February. This month February was considered apt for marriage. As per the legends, even the gods got married during this month. Shiva and Parvati had their wedding during this period.

The Legend of Vasant Panchami

Now let us briefly look at the popular legend associated with Vasant Panchami. The story goes that Lord Shiva was once in deep penance. Tarakasura had attained a boon that only Shiva's son would be able to put an end to his life. He began wreaking havoc all across the world emboldened by the fact that Shiva had become an ascetic immersed in meditation for a long period and it was unlikely that he would ever marry again after the self-immola-

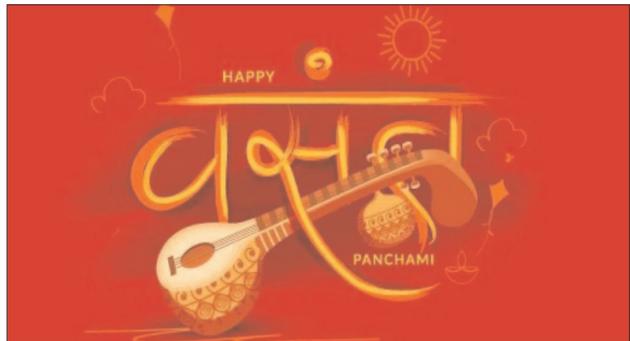
tion of Sati (Shiva's first wife). Meanwhile, Sati had reincarnated as Parvati. Parvati had undertaken a severe penance to attain Lord Shiva. However, Shiva was unmoved. Parvati then sent Kama Deva (god of love) to rouse Shiva from his meditation. It was on Vasant Panchami day that Kama Deva approached Shiva and created an illusionary spring in Kailash to attract the Lord and bring him out of his penance. Shiva does eventually awaken but reduced Kama Deva to ashes. He then accepted Parvati as his spouse. The son born to Shiva and Parvati, Lord Kartikeya went on to annihilate Tarakasura.

Celebrations in different Regions

Apart from being a day that is observed as Saraswati Puja, Vas-

ant Panchami is celebrated in different ways in different regions of India. In Punjab, Vasant Ritu is celebrated as the festival of kites. People are dressed in yellow attire and eat yellow rice. Sikhs wear yellow turbans. In Maharashtra, married couples visit temples wearing yellow clothes on the first Vasant Panchami after their wedding. In Rajasthan, people wear jasmine garlands on

this day. In Bihar, the ancient statue of the Deo sun deity was installed on Vasant Panchami. This statue of the Sun god is washed and decorated with celebrations that continue through the day. Significance for Sufi Muslims Vasant Panchami is also of great significance to the Sufi Muslims. As per some Sufi traditions, the revered Sufi poet Amir Khusrau of Delhi from the 13th century CE observed Hindu women carrying yellow flowers on Vasant Panchami. He then introduced this practice among the Sufis, which is practiced to this day by the Sufi Muslims of the Chishti order. Vasant Panchami is also the day when some Sufi Muslims mark the grave of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Aulia in



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Delhi. Like this, the festival of Vasant Panchami is observed in different ways in different parts of India, for different reasons. A day to celebrate love and wisdom. Isn't our cultural heritage fascinating? Equally intriguing is our tradition of healing and health. Thousands of years ago, our ancient sages unlocked techniques and wisdom to maintain holistic health.

"Across the Miles" Sending you smiles across the miles to wish you a happy day!

You ask me If I'm okay I wish I could say yes! But in a constant state of unrest.. My heart feels miles away. Everyday it stings.. He's out there! in a world apart. While the silence softly rings, To wear this armour on my heart. The hardest words to tell to me are "I don't know how you feel, you see. Unless you've walked this road in deep despair, You'll never feel this ache that lingers there. This weight I carry deep For every moment we don't share, For every night I can't sleep.. I love my sailor, always strong, Though the distance keeps me in. I hold on for him, I keep him near, Even when my strength runs thin. Written by Mrs Shubhalika Tiwari, (An Army Wife)

Five years left to #endAIDS by ensuring zero new infections and all people with HIV live healthy

SHOBHA SHUKLA - CNS A collage of people with different colors AI-generated content may be incorrect. The year 2026 marks an important milestone with only 5 years left for world leaders to deliver on the promise of ending AIDS by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal 3). With zero new HIV infections and ensuring all people living with HIV are healthy (virally suppressed) and supported we can end AIDS now! We can #endAIDSnow! Thanks to communities of people living with and affected by HIV, a lot of scientifically proven tools and approaches have made it possible to offer HIV combination prevention to those who are HIV negative - as well as ensure that all people living with HIV remain healthy and lead fulfilling lives. If people with HIV are on lifesaving antiretroviral therapy with sustained viral suppression, then people with HIV live normal and healthy lives (comparable to those without the virus). In addition, there is zero risk of any further HIV transmission as per the WHO - this is commonly referred to as undetectable equals untransmittable or #UequalsU. According to UNAIDS, in 2024, around 40.8 million people were living with HIV globally but not everyone was on lifesaving treatment - 31.6 million people were receiving the treatment by 2024. We need to bridge this gap. 1.3 million people became newly infected with HIV in 2024 - each of which could have been prevented if we had ensured that HIV combination prevention is accessible to everyone and all people with HIV have #UequalsU a reality in their lives.

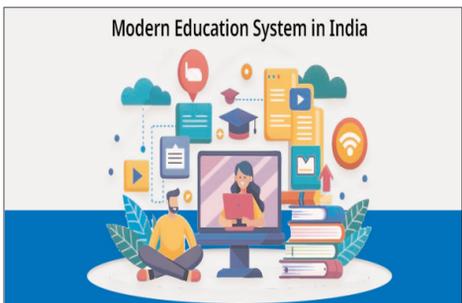


Sadly, 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2024 too. With proven science- and evidence-based tools, how can we be complacent or accept this figure? No one should be dying of AIDS-related illnesses because we have the tools to avert such untimely deaths. Before 2025 ended, Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General had said in a UN-AIDS meeting that "ending AIDS remains achievable... but only if resources match our ambition." Amina also warned of growing financial pressures on countries and donors, highlighting the strain on domestic resources in low- and middle-income countries, driven by debt and the cost of debt servicing. "Governments, even if they wanted to prioritise HIV as a budget spend, quite frankly are taking away from education, taking away from health, because they cannot meet that cost." Amina's remarks are on spot as they underpin the critical importance of addressing HIV risk factors

as well as social, cultural, and economic vulnerabilities of diverse peoples as well as health and social welfare systems - and how multilateralism has worked (or not). We need to ensure that governments are making strong robust and not-fragile progress on all SDG goals and targets - ending AIDS is one of them. 26 years ago... "ESSENCE: Insights and Impact from 25 years of HIV and AIDS Initiatives of Humana People to People India (2001-2025)" report was launched during the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence and ahead of Human Rights Day and Universal Health Coverage Day 2025. Reading this report, we at CNS felt as if we are going back in time because like many others perhaps, we may be taking current services for granted. There are hard fought gains made in HIV responses, thanks to community leadership and government's response to #Put-PeopleFirst.

Dr Vinay Mishra's corner... Question-I stay in a joint family with my In-laws and husband. I find my In-laws scolding my children over small matters and also beating them. I don't know how to explain that this is not required. How do I deal with this situation? Answer- Addressing in-law discipline conflicts in a joint Indian family requires patience and tact. Try the following: 1. Align with Husband Discuss your concerns privately with your husband first, emphasizing child safety and shared parenting values. Use "I" statements like "I feel worried when the children are hit over small things, as it affects their emotional growth." His support is crucial to present a united front, reducing family tensions common in joint setups. 2. Communicate Boundaries Approach in-laws respectfully during a neutral time, explaining modern child-rearing focuses on positive methods over scolding or beating. Suggest alternatives like timeouts or praise for good behavior, drawing from positive parenting resources. In Indian cultural contexts, frame it as "preserving family harmony while ensuring the children's future well-being." 3. Promote Positive Discipline Model non-violent techniques yourself: redirect misbehavior, use active listening, and reward efforts to build skills. Share educational materials on child rights and effects of corporal punishment to gently educate elders. 4. Seek External Support If issues persist, consider family counseling through counsellors. Prioritize your children's safety over family pressure.

How International Curricula are shaping India's next generation of leaders



India's education landscape is quietly shifting from a focus on rote learning and exam scores to one that fosters judgment, adaptability, and global awareness. International curricula, such as the Cambridge and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, are at the forefront, shaping how students learn, think, and

prepare for leadership in a globalised world. The sector's growth is significant: projected to reach \$14.67 billion by 2030 from \$9.09 billion in 2021, international schools in India have seen a 14% rise in numbers, 40% growth in student enrolments, and substantial increases in staff and fee income. International education is now a strategic investment across cities, not just elite metros. From academic output to intellectual capability International curricula redefine learning itself. Traditional models emphasise content mastery and accuracy. Cambridge and IB focus on inquiry, analysis, and application. Students are encouraged to question assumptions, connect ideas, and apply knowledge to real-world contexts. Through discussions, projects, and re-



flective assessments, they develop intellectual independence. Why global curricula resonate with Indian parents Parental expectations have evolved. Modern careers demand critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and adaptability. International curricula align with how universities and workplaces function today, offering skills that endure across disciplines. Adoption is driven less by overseas ambitions and more by the desire for transferable, future-ready skills. Expansion beyond metros marks the inflexion point The spread of international schools reflects this shift. Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities have seen a staggering 99.14% jump in search interest, signalling strong demand beyond traditional education hubs. Middle-class families increasingly

view global-standard education as a pathway to opportunity rather than privilege. Cities such as Bhopal and Nagpur are emerging as new centres of this movement. Institutions like VIBGYOR World Academy show that international curricula can remain globally benchmarked while staying rooted in local culture, balancing academic rigour with contextual relevance. Taken together, these shifts point to a broader recalibration of what education in India is meant to achieve. Success is no longer measured only by grades or admissions, but by the ability to think independently, adapt confidently, and engage responsibly with the world. As international curricula continue to expand deeper into India, they are shaping a generation prepared not just to succeed, but to lead with clarity, confidence, and global perspective. By Kavita Kerawalla, Vice Chairperson - VIBGYOR Group of Schools