

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

In recent years, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has witnessed significant initiatives aimed at empowering its youth, particularly in the wake of social and economic challenges. Among these, the "Mission Youth" initiative stands out as a comprehensive framework designed to harness the potential of young individuals in the region, addressing their aspirations, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing their overall well-being. The roots of Mission Youth can be traced to the need for sustainable development and social upliftment in J&K, particularly after its reorganization in 2019. The region has faced various challenges, including high unemployment rates, a lack of educational and vocational opportunities, and socio-political unrest. Recognizing that the youth demographic is both a challenge and an opportunity, the government of J&K launched Mission Youth to create a conducive environment for youth engagement and empowerment. Mission Youth is built on several key objectives. One of the foremost goals is to create job opportunities for the youth of J&K, addressing the high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Skill Development initiative aims to enhance the skills of young people through vocational training and skill development programs, equipping them for various industries. By fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, Mission Youth seeks to encourage young individuals to start their businesses, contributing to economic growth. Recognizing the importance of mental health, the initiative includes programs that promote mental well-being and provide support services. Mission Youth emphasizes the importance of civic engagement and community service, encouraging youth to actively participate in societal development. To achieve these objectives, Mission Youth encompasses several targeted schemes. Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (YEDP) provides financial assistance, mentorship, and training to aspiring entrepreneurs. It helps youth develop business plans and access funding, facilitating the establishment of new enterprises. Under Skill Development Initiatives, various skill development courses are offered, focusing on sectors such as IT, hospitality, agriculture, and handicrafts. Collaborations with industries and training institutes ensure that programs align with market needs. To enhance educational access, scholarships and financial aid are provided to deserving students, particularly those from marginalized communities. This includes initiatives aimed at promoting higher education and vocational training. Mental Health Awareness Programs address the pressing issue of mental health among youth. Workshops, counseling services, and awareness campaigns aim to reduce stigma and provide support. Community Service Projects encouraging youth to engage in community service fosters a sense of responsibility and civic pride. Projects may include environmental conservation, health camps, and awareness drives on social issues. The implementation of Mission Youth involves collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and educational institutions. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms help to refine the programs and ensure they meet the evolving needs of the youth. Thousands of young people have benefited from job placement initiatives, reducing unemployment rates in various sectors. The YEDP has resulted in numerous successful startups, showcasing the potential of youth-led enterprises in driving economic growth. Many participants in skill development programs have secured employment or improved their employability, demonstrating the effectiveness of vocational training. The mental health initiatives have raised awareness and provided necessary support, contributing to a more holistic approach to youth well-being. Despite its successes, Mission Youth faces challenges, including the need for sustainable funding, ensuring equitable access to programs across different regions, and addressing the specific needs of marginalized youth.

COMPONENT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Vigilance awareness plays a vital role in promoting integrity, transparency, and accountability within public institutions and society at large. It serves as a mechanism to combat corruption and malpractice, ensuring that systems operate efficiently and justly. In a world increasingly beset by challenges related to ethical governance, the need for vigilance awareness has never been more pressing. Vigilance awareness refers to the proactive measures taken to educate individuals and communities about the importance of vigilance in preventing corruption and promoting ethical conduct. It encompasses a wide array of activities aimed at fostering an environment where integrity is valued and corrupt practices are actively discouraged. While the concept is often associated with government agencies-where vigilance bodies monitor, investigate, and address corruption-its significance extends beyond governmental functions to include the private sector, civil society, and individual citizens. One of the primary goals of vigilance awareness is to combat corruption in both public and private sectors. Corruption undermines development, erodes trust, and perpetuates inequality. By promoting vigilance, individuals and organizations are empowered to report and address corrupt practices. Additionally, vigilance awareness initiatives foster a culture of transparency. When individuals understand the processes involved in decision-making, procurement, and resource allocation, they are more likely to question irregularities and demand accountability. An informed citizenry is crucial for a functioning democracy. Vigilance awareness programs educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities, encouraging them to participate in governance and hold leaders accountable. Furthermore, awareness campaigns instill values of integrity and ethics in individuals, particularly within organizations. By establishing codes of conduct and encouraging ethical behavior, organizations can reduce instances of misconduct. This contributes to building stronger institutions, as transparent and accountable agencies gain public trust and credibility, leading to more effective governance. To promote vigilance awareness, several strategies can be employed. Educational campaigns, such as workshops and training programs, can help educate employees and citizens about vigilance and the importance of ethical practices. Additionally, leveraging technology can enhance awareness; online platforms and mobile applications can provide information and facilitate complaints. Social media campaigns are also effective in reaching younger audiences and raising awareness. Collaboration with civil society is another key strategy. Engaging NGOs and community organizations in vigilance awareness initiatives can amplify their reach and impact, creating a more extensive network of support for ethical practices and corruption reporting. Moreover, establishing protective measures and incentives for whistleblowers can encourage individuals to report corruption without fear of retaliation. This can include legal protections, monetary rewards, or public recognition for those who come forward. Government bodies play a crucial role in promoting vigilance awareness by leading by example. Establishing independent vigilance commissions responsible for investigating corruption and promoting integrity within public services is essential. These bodies should have the authority to impose penalties and recommend actions against corrupt practices. Additionally, governments must implement policies that promote accountability and transparency in public administration, including procurement regulations and conflict of interest guidelines. Despite the importance of vigilance awareness, several challenges persist. Many individuals remain unaware of the mechanisms available for reporting corruption or the implications of corrupt practices. Cultural barriers may also discourage reporting, as coming forward might be viewed negatively in some societies. Furthermore, many vigilance bodies face constraints in funding and manpower, hindering their effectiveness. Vigilance awareness is an essential pillar of good governance that empowers citizens, strengthens institutions, and promotes ethical conduct. By fostering a culture of transparency and accountability, societies can combat corruption and build a more just and equitable future. As individuals, organizations, and governments work together to enhance vigilance awareness, the prospects for a corruption-free society become increasingly attainable.

Bhai Dooj is a festival of brother-sister love, bonding, and togetherness

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

Bhai Dooj or Yam Dwitiya is celebrated two days after Diwali. Sisters participate in the tika ceremony to pray for the long life of their brothers, while brothers give gifts to their sisters that honor the bond between siblings. Some other names for Bhai Dooj are Bhau Beej, Bhatri Dwitiya, Bhai Dwitiya, or Bhatru Dwitiya. This day is also called Yama Dwitiya, which falls here on the second day of Kartik month. On Yama Dwitiya, Yamaraja, the god of death, is worshipped along with Chitragupt and Yam-doot, followers of Lord Yamaraj. Bhai Dooj is a Hindu event. It is made up of two words: 'bhai,' which means 'brother;' along with 'dooj,' which refers to the second day after the new moon, which is also a day of celebration. This day is especially meaningful in the life of a brother and sister. It is a joyous event to honor the intense relationship between siblings. Sisters invite their brothers to visit their home and cook their favorite dishes. Sisters also pray to God for their brothers' health, quality of life, and protection from all illnesses and misfortunes. In return, the brothers fulfill their obligations to care for and adore their sisters.

Bhai Dooj is an important festival celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm throughout India. The ceremony begins with inviting the brothers to a sumptuous feast of their favorite food or sweets. The whole event represents a brother's promise to protect his sister, while a sister prays to God and wishes for her brother's well-being. To conclude the ritual traditionally, sisters make a seat for their brothers with rice flour. Here, on the brother's forehead, a holy Tilak made of Sindoor, curd, and rice is applied. The sister then places pump-



kin flowers, betel leaves, betel nuts, or cash in her brother's palms and slowly chants Shlokas while pouring water. She then also performs the Aarti. A lamp facing the south direction is lit, and seeing a kite flying in the sky is a good omen of wish fulfillment. While savoring the treats, the brothers are given their favorite sweets and water to drink.

The event also involves the exchange of Bhai Dooj gifts between brothers and sisters and seeking blessings from elders. According to Hindu scriptures, Goddess Yamuna was quite close to her brother, Lord Yama, the God of Death. She had a strong desire to see her brother, as they had not seen each other for a long time. When Lord Yama arrived to greet

his sister two days after Diwali, Goddess Yamuna, overwhelmed with emotion, placed a Tikka on his forehead while cooking delicious food for him. Lord Yama was impressed by his sister's act and instructed her to ask for a boon. Goddess Yamuna laughingly invited him to visit her once a year, saying that the one whose sister would place a Tilak on his forehead would not fear his brother Lord Yama as his sister's love would protect him. Lord Yama fulfilled this favor; and the festival of Bhai Dooj, which has become a tradition of Hinduism and an important component of the five-day Diwali celebrations, began. Bhai Dooj is a festival that honors the love, bonding, and togetherness of a brother and sister.

BHAI DOOJ (TIKKA) - Sacred relationship of brother & sister

■ RAVI ROHMETRA

Bhai Dooj or Bhaiya Dooj is observed on the second day after Diwali celebrations. Bhai Dooj is also known as Bhai Phota, Bhau Beej, Bhai Bij, Bhai Beej, Bhatru Dwitiya, Bhav Bij, Bhatri Ditya, Bhai Fota and Bhai Tikka. This day commemorates the sacred relationship shared between a brother and sister. Sisters apply tilak on the foreheads of their brothers and pray for their prosperity and longevity. According to the Vikram Samvat calendar, Bhai Dooj 2024 is observed on the second lunar day of Shukla Paksha. In 2024, Bhai Dooj will be celebrated on 3 November (Sunday).

Here you can learn about Bhai Dooj/Bhai Phota 2024 date, significance and background, celebrations, places to observe, culture, rituals and year-wise observations

Although, there are no texts stating the official tale related to the origin of Bhai Dooj. However, it is believed that after killing the demon Narakasura on the day which is now celebrated as Diwali, Lord Krishna visited his sister Subhadra who welcomed him by applying a tilak on his forehead. Since then, this day is celebrated as Bhai Dooj.

Another folklore states that on this day the lord of death, Yamaraja visited his sister, Yami who welcomed him with flowers, and sweets and applied tilak on his forehead. In return, the lord of death presented her with a gift which reflected his affection for her.

Bhai Phota or Bhai Dooj has a literal meaning that is derived from the two words Bhai and Dooj. 'Bhai' means brother and 'Dooj' is the second day after the emergence of the new moon. Hence, Bhai Dooj is celebrated on the second day after the festival of



Diwali.

Bhai Dooj is called Yama Dwitiya in the southern part of India. This name has been derived from the legend of Yama, who is the God of death and his sister Yami or Yamuna. According to this folklore, Yama met his sister on Dwitheyra, which is the second day after the new moon. This particular incident started to be celebrated as "Yamadvitiya" or "Yamadwitheya" throughout the country. From that day onwards, some people in the country celebrate Bhai Dooj as Yama Dwitiya.

There are many rituals and traditions that revolve around the festival of Bhai Dooj.

Devotees take a bath early in the morning and worship Yama, Lord Ganesha, Chitragupta, Yamuna and the many messengers of Yama. There are numerous mantras that are chanted along with wor-

shipping the idols.

Giving dry coconut to brothers is considered a symbol of auspiciousness during Bhai Dooj. It is believed that when Lord Krishna visited his sister Subhadra after prevailing over demon King Narakasura, she embraced him with a warm welcome, flowers and sweets. She then applied tilak on Krishna's forehead and gave him the dry coconut.

The thali from which the brother is worshipped is beautifully decorated. The thali has fruits, sandalwood, vermilion, flowers, betel nuts and sweets.

According to traditions, sisters usually make a seat of rice flour for their brothers. The brothers sit on these seats for the sisters to perform their rituals.

Sisters pour water on their brother's palms while reciting the holy mantra

AN EMAIL FROM HEAVEN @



■ MOHANJI

Now, if you are determined, fully determined to reach the highest level of subtlety, you should and you can reach there definitely, wherever you are. Even if you have a Guru, a path, a destination, or anything you defined, no problem, they will all come to you at the right time.

Another experience I'll tell you in the same context.

I was working in the company, and one day I got an email from a woman whom I did not even know, her name was Linda. She wrote to me from California, and I had no connection with America at that time. This was the early 2000s and this also was well before the time of WhatsApp and Facebook. She contacted me and said, "Are you Mr. Mohan? An elevated Master wants to speak to you. Please call this number at this time." I did-

n't even reply, because there are so many fake mails, hoax mails coming your way. Even now it comes, that you won a lottery or you got an award and things like that, which I don't pay attention to. I just discard them, I remove them as spam. And I did that, and again in a week's time after that date, she sent another message. "I'm very serious, a Master is asking me to contact you, he wants to speak to you. He does not exist on Earth, he's from another realm, but he wants to use me as a medium to talk to you." I became curious: what is this Master talking about? Even if I lose some money for this experience, it's okay. So I contacted her; and the first question I asked was, "What's the price, what's the cost?" Because everything is connected to money, so I asked how much I should pay. She said, "I never asked you for money. This is serious. This Master wants to speak to you. Please call on Sunday at 10 am" and a date was given, so I said, "I will call you."

On Sunday, I prepared myself and called this

number. She picked up the call, and she sounded very old. I asked her, "What's your age?" She said, "I'm 82." I said, "How did you reach me?" She said, "This Master gave me your contact email." I asked her, "Do you know me?" She said, "No, I don't know you, I don't even know who you are, nor am I interested to know you." So that was very clear and clear. Then she asked, "Do you have sufficient money in your phone if the conversation prolongs?" I said, "No problem, I pay every month." She wanted to know whether it is prepaid so that the charge will not go after a while. So everything was set, and she said, "Are you ready?" I said, "Yes, I'm ready."

Then she started speaking to me. Slowly, slowly her voice changed to a very deep male voice; a totally different voice from this feeble old woman voice to a very strong male voice. And that man, just to convince me, told me all the major incidents of my life, which nobody will know. Not just the death of my daughter, but various things con-

This event is similar to Raksha Bandhan and has the same goal. The day is marked by the exchange of sweets or gifts between siblings. As a symbol of their devotion and to protect their brothers, sisters put tikka on their brothers' foreheads.

Bhai Dooj is a national holiday celebrated all over India. However, it is known by different names in different country sections. In Maharashtra and Goa, it is considered 'Bhau Beej', but in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, it is considered 'Bhau Tika'. It is called 'Bhai Phota' in West Bengal. In Nepal, this dish is known as 'Bhai Tihar'. Every woman in our country celebrates Bhai Dooj to show her support and compassion for her brother. On this day, all sisters pray to God for the happiness of their brother's life. It is widely believed that because Yamuna got a promise from her brother Yamraj that only by celebrating Bhai Dooj can one get rid of the fear of Yamraj and even increase the love or feeling between brother and sister.

In return, brothers shower their sisters with gifts and happiness. Like Raksha Bandhan, Bhai Dooj strengthens the bond between brothers and sisters. Tying a rakhi represents a brother's commitment to protect and guard his sister from evil forces.

By applying a tika on her brother's forehead during Bhai Dooj, the sister promises to protect her brother in every way. Sisters perform Aarti for their brother and then apply a red Tika on his forehead. Bhai Dooj is compared to the Indian festival of Raksha Bandhan in that it commemorates the everlasting relationship that exists between a brother and a sister. In this special event, brothers visit their sisters to check on them and share gifts or sweets.

and tie kalava on their hands. Then, tilak is applied to the forehead.

After the tilak is applied, flowers of betel nut, Kaddu, betel leaves and coins are placed on the brother's palms.

The sisters then perform the Aarti. Seeing a flying kite in the sky is often considered a good omen.

After the Aarti and Tilak are completed, the brother gives his sister a gift and pledges to protect her life.

Brothers meet their sisters on Bhai Dooj and complete the custom of 'Bhagni Hasti Bhojanam'. In this custom, the brothers have to eat the food sisters prepare for them. It is said that this tradition was started by the God of death, Lord Yama.

Bhai Dooj (Northern India), Bhau Beej (in Maharashtra & Gujarat) or Bhai Phonta (Bengal) is similar to Raksha Bandhan. On this day, Indian women pray for the long life and happiness of their brothers. Sisters apply tilak on the forehead of their brothers while praying for their well-being. In return, men give gifts to their sisters and take a vow to protect them Bhai Dooj is a part of the 5-day Diwali celebration that includes Govardhan Puja as well. The festivities begin with Dhanteras and Naraka Chaturdasi on the first two days respectively. The people of Goa and Maharashtra celebrate the festival of Bhai Dooj as Bhav Bij. Brothers have to sit in a square on the floor after they consume a bitter fruit called Karith.

This festival is also celebrated as Bhau Bij or Bhai Bij in Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana and Maharashtra. In Gujarat, sisters celebrate Bhai Bij by applying traditional Tikal and performing prayers or special Aarti.

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needed to it, and also various details. That convinced me because nobody will know those details unless they are connected deeply. I think even my family do not know those details. So all those things were told and I was convinced that this is genuine. Then there was so much of guidance and so many things were going on, I don't want to go into micro details. It was about a forty-five minutes call, and finally, he asked, "I'm done. Is there anything you want to ask me?" I said, "No. I'm happy that I could speak to you, and I realize that you are from a very high realm." Then he said, "I am not from Earth, I'm from a different realm, where we guide people at random, as per the instructions from above," So they also have a hierarchy. Then he asked me, "Is there anything you want from me?" I said, "I would like to continue to talk to Masters of your realm." He said, "I'll arrange that." Then the call was disconnected. When I wrote to this lady once again, thanking her; she never replied.

The benefits and reality of organic food choices

■ VIJAY GARG

Freshly harvested crops to packaged foods, the organic label now commands a premium price; is it for real or just a sales gimmick? In recent years, a remarkable trend has emerged, with organic products now prominently displayed on supermarket shelves and featured on packaging across the board. It encompasses everything from freshly harvested crops to essential packaged goods. And, given that the organic brand will cost significantly more, people are questioning if it is worth it.

Organic foods offer health, aetiology, and environmental benefits. This type of food is promoted as a more wholesome and righteous option. The concept is straightforward: reduce pesticide use, eliminate synthetic fertilisers, and avoid genetically modified organisms. For numerous individuals, opting for cleaner and more organically cultivated produce justifies the expense. And yet, aren't we, in our way, being chipped away at our true worth as customers?

Years ago, before the rise of industrial farming, vegetables like ladyfingers (okra) were a lot less predictable. We often found worms inside, an unpleasant but natural reminder of the envi-

ronment in which they grew. These "flaws" assured us that the produce was authentic, untouched by synthetic chemicals. Fast forward to today, and the produce is picture-perfect, but the trade-off has been significant. Our vegetables, once vibrant and full of flavour, are now coated in pesticides that strip them of their natural essence. We've all noticed it: the tomatoes don't taste like they used to, and a bell pepper is just... bland. With the essence of fresh vegetables fading from our experience, many sought refuge in the convenience of pre-packaged meals.

The appeal and taste of fast food or packaged snacks overshadow the presence of vegetables offered alongside them. It's hardly unexpected that many individuals find themselves torn between the less appealing, time-consuming superfoods and the quicker, more delicious meal alternatives. Yet, what is the price to pay? Here's the point: it's not about flavour or ease-it's about well-being. Even minimal exposure to pesticides has been linked to a variety of health issues, including hormone disruption and neurological complications.

As time passes, these substances may build up within the human body, and despite increasingly stringent regulations, the long-term consequences remain largely unclear.

This justifies the higher price tag, reinforcing the value of organic foods. Is "organic" always synonymous with better quality? Not exactly. Organic does not guarantee perfection. Certification processes have gaps, meaning that pesticide-free does not necessarily equate to "organic." It promises a reduction in synthetic chemicals and the adoption of more sustainable farming practices. Additionally, organic farming enhances biodiversity and soil health-both essential for the future of our planet. Is this a worthwhile investment?

It hinges on what you value most. Choosing organic is a positive move towards minimising chemical exposure and fostering sustainable practices. However, to truly enhance the flavour of your meals, seeking out local farmers and fresh produce that hasn't undergone excessive processing or long-distance transport could be a more effective solution to that issue.

Embracing organic choices transcends mere financial considerations; it represents a commitment to your well-being, an enhancement of your culinary experience, and a forward-thinking approach to the future of our food systems.

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