

BHUGGA VRAT: FAITH, TRADITION AND COMMUNITY

Bhugga Vrat is more than a ritual fast; it is a deeply rooted cultural and spiritual observance that reflects the intimate relationship between faith, nature, and community life. Practised mainly in parts of Jammu and surrounding regions, especially by women, this vrat stands as a powerful reminder of how indigenous traditions continue to shape social values even in a rapidly modernising world.

Observed with devotion and simplicity, Bhugga Vrat is traditionally performed for the well-being, longevity, and prosperity of children and family members. Women rise early, purify their homes, and prepare offerings that often include locally available grains, pulses, and seasonal produce. These offerings are not elaborate displays but humble symbols of gratitude toward nature. The vrat is usually broken only after performing the prescribed rituals, underscoring discipline, patience, and faith.

What makes Bhugga Vrat particularly significant is its strong ecological consciousness. Unlike many modern practices that rely heavily on market-bought items, this vrat encourages the use of home-grown or locally sourced food. In doing so, it promotes sustainability, respect for agricultural labour, and harmony with the natural environment. At a time when environmental degradation and excessive consumption dominate public discourse, such traditions quietly teach lessons of restraint and balance.

Equally important is the social dimension of Bhugga Vrat. The observance is often collective, with women gathering to share stories, folk songs, and experiences. These interactions strengthen community bonds and provide a platform for inter-generational knowledge transfer: Elders pass down not only the rituals but also moral values, cultural history, and a sense of identity to younger participants. In an age where nuclear families and digital distractions are becoming the norm, such collective practices foster belonging and emotional support.

However, Bhugga Vrat, like many traditional observances, faces challenges. Urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and a growing disconnect from cultural roots have led to a gradual decline in its practice, especially among younger generations. Some view such vrats as outdated or burdensome, failing to recognise their deeper social and cultural significance. This shift raises an important question: can tradition and modernity coexist?

The answer lies in reinterpretation rather than rejection. Bhugga Vrat need not be seen merely as a religious obligation but as a cultural heritage that promotes mindfulness, community solidarity, and environmental respect. By understanding its underlying values, younger generations can adapt the practice in ways that align with contemporary life while preserving its essence.

In essence, Bhugga Vrat is a quiet yet profound expression of collective wisdom. It reminds us that progress does not always mean abandoning the past. Sometimes, moving forward requires looking back—drawing strength from traditions that teach care, gratitude, and togetherness. Preserving such practices is not about resisting change, but about ensuring that cultural roots continue to nourish future generations.

The Eternal Light-Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Prakash Parav

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

The 359th Prakash Utsav of the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh was celebrated on January 5, 2025 [Monday] with great pomp, show and enthusiasm by the Sikh community in particular and others in general. Gur Gobind Singh Jayanti marks the auspicious day where Sikhs celebrate the birthday of the 10th Guru -Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti also spelled as Govind Singh is a Sikh festival that commemorates the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh jithe 10th Guru of the Sikhs. It is a religious celebration in which prayers for prosperity are offered. Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti is a public holiday. It is a day off for the general population, and schools and most businesses are closed. The day is celebrated on the month of January or December. Guru Gobind Singh's birthday was observed on 5 January 2026. There is great significance of Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti. Guru Gobind Singh is best known for rising against the Mughal rulers and safeguarding the interests of people from invaders. Hewas a benevolent man who preached justice, peace, and equality for all. He lived the life of a saint and inspired millions of Sikhs with his writings that depict the way he led his life. He had strict principles, which he and his followers followed and still follow religiously. The basic norms included not obliging to the prevalent caste system and superstitions, they believed in one God and they followed the 5K's-Kangha (comb), Kesh (uncut hair), Kacchera (undergarment), Kara (bracelet) and Karpan (sword). Before his passing, Guru asked Sikhs to consider Guru Granth as the primary text. His teachings and preaching's inspired many. His lifelong battle against the plundering Mughals ensured the survival of Sikhism. The day is celebrated all over India, predominantly within the Sikh community. On this auspicious occasion people pray for the prosperity and well-being of fellow people. Reading and listening sessions of Guru Gobind's poetry is a common practice on this day. Discussions on Guru Gobind's life also take place in Sikh communities spread all over the world. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born on saptami tithi of shukla paksha in Pausha month. It was the 359th birth anniversary of the great guru. People celebrate this day and greet each other, spread his teachings and message to all. The devotees visit Gurudwaras and all Gurudwaras are decorated with illumination of lights, candles and diyas. As per Hindu calendar Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born on Saptmi Tithi of Shkula Paksha 1723 Samvat in



the month of Pausha. According to the Julian Calendar, he was born on December 22, 1666 in Bihar Patna. The Julian Calendar is obsolete and no one uses it at the present time. Guru Gobind Singh's father was Guru Tegh Bahadur who was killed by Aurangzeb. Guru Gobind Singh's mother's name was Mata Gujri. Aurangzeb beheaded his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur for not accepting Islam in the year 1675. In 1676, Guru Gobind Singh was declared the tenth Guru of Sikhs on the day of Baisakhi when he was only nine years old. The place where Guru Gobind Singh was born is now Takhat Shri Harminder Ji Patna Sahib. In 1670, his family again moved to Punjab. In March 1672, his family moved to a place called Chak Nanaki, located in the Shivalik Hills of the Himalayas. Chak Nanaki is now called Anandpur Sahib where he took his education. He took Persian, Sanskrit lessons and learned military skills to become a warrior. Later, Guru Gobind Singh Ji founded the Khalsa Panth. Khalsa strictly followed a spiritual discipline under the supervision and guidance of Guru Gobind Singh. People fearlessly fought against Mughal rulers. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a great poet and writer who has written several literatures. He announced the Guru Granth Sahib as the permanent Sikh Guru prior to his death in the year 1708 and the

Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a holy scripture of Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti is celebrated across the world where Sikh community people lives. Not only Sikhs but everyone celebrates this day by visiting Gurudwaras and spread his teachings to everyone. People extend their greetings to each other. Distribute Langars to all. All Gurudwaras are decorated with lights and candles. Guru Nanak Vani is also narrated at some places. Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti is an auspicious day among the Sikh community and is celebrated every year with great fanfare and enthusiasm. The auspicious occasion of Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti is also known as the Prakash Parv of the tenth Guru. Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It is the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and falls every year in December or January. On this day, devotees from all over the world send best wishes to one another and vow to follow the teachings and path of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The day is observed in honor and remembrance of the great warrior, poet, philosopher, and above all a spiritual master. According to Drik Panchang, Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born on Paush Skukla Saptami. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, born as Gobind Rai, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual leader, warrior, poet and a philosopher. He formally became the leader and protector of the Sikhs at the tender age of nine after his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, was killed by Aurangzeb for refusing to convert to Islam. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a great warrior. He was known for his inclination towards poetry and his philosophies and writings he stood by. He refused to answer the Mughal invaders and fought alongside the Khalsa to protect his people. Under his guidance, his followers adhered to a strict code. His philosophies, writings and poetry inspire people to this day. To celebrate Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti, Sikhs around the world visit Gurudwaras, where prayer meetings take place in honor of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. People participate in processions organized by the Gurudwaras, hold kirtans, and also do seva—a significant part of Sikh religion, for the community. Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the Sikh warrior community called Khalsa in 1699 and introducing the five K's, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear all times. Guru Gobind Singh is credited with Dasam Granth whose hymns are a sacred part of Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals. To conclude it can be said that millions of people across the world are inspired by the life and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and his birth anniversary is celebrated with gaiety all over the world where Sikh community lives.

Sacred Shrine of Sukrala Devi

■ G.L. KHAJURIA

The Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir is beset with a land of the Gods and Goddesses in the greater part of Himalayan and sub-Himalayan region of the Indian land scape. Mal Mata Sukrala Devi occupies its unique and prominent place of devotion and revelation.

The Devi Maa Sukrala is also most reverentially addressed as Jagat Janani, Rajarajswari Mata where devotees Throng in thousands to have holy darshan, pay obeisance for blessings.

Sukrala or Sukral is a small village located in Billawar in district Kathua. The spot is located amidst dense chirpinas forest intermingled with other borad - leaved trees, bushes, shrubs and herbs. The village is located aside river Naaj where a big slab of rock of historic time exist which is having an engraving of Lord Hanuman which is regularly besmeared on every Tuesday and Sunday both by the locals as well as the outsiders who throng over this sacred spot. Sukrala Mata shrine is reachable by road around 80 Kms from Jammu and about 30 kms from district headquarter. It is situated at a height of about 4000 ft from mean sea level (MSL) and commands an idyllic view of mountains and cliffs all around of the vicinity of the Shakti shrine. Both the roads from Jammu and Kathua are well metalled and are conveniently approachable by regular buses, private or hired vehicles. The sacred shrine from other destination, Like Bani Basohli and other areas of the country are also reachable through these routes.

Through legends and historical record, the name of Sukrala is derived from Sharikalaya, the abode of Sharika which though, of course is another revered name of Mata Sharda. The his-

torical records reflect the narration as to the origin of the sacred spot of Mata Sukrala Devi. The story goes that used to live a renowned saint at Basohli who had received his education in Kashmir and Kashi there he visited many shrines including those of Shri Amarnath ji, Sharda, Hari Partvati etc. He was a strong devotee of Gods and Goddesses. During his arduous penance and devotion, the mother goddess was very pleased and so he had holy dream. When asked by Mata ji as to what he wanted. The devotee prayed that he wants that she should be at his place so that with locals can be relieved of the pains and agony and are blessed by her Shakti. Mataji granted him the boon that she will appear at the time of his grandson and so the devotee disclosed to the locals. The devoted Brahmin had number of sons amongst whom two most pious and learned were by name Amolak Ram and Mahadev Shiv Nandan. They preferred and adopted Billawar and Basohli as their residence.

Exactly in the time of Mahadev (Shiv Nandan), a shila (stone slab) miraculously started emerging out from a spring at Sukrala. The people of the area at once started realizing the prophecy of the grandfather as had earlier been disclosed. They (the inhabitants) accepted it as an emblem of the goddess and as such started worshipping it regularly. With the passage of time, a prince from Chamba by name Madho Singh exiled by his elder brother was wandering desperately and reached Sukral area. The story further goes that Sukrala village was having dense forest with abundant wild animals and birds, the prince started hunting wild animals and birds but with the passing days, the prince fell seriously ill.

Despite application of all treatments, the prince could never be recovered. Ultimately, as suggested by the locals, he approached Shiv

Nandan who had a good spiritual reputation and so he asked one of the devotee (Chila in local parlance) of the goddess by name Hira Thakur to dance (locally spoken as Chauki) and when the devotee (disciple of goddess got into trance (a Shakti dance), He was asked to let know the malady of the prince Madho Singh. As a result, the disciple stated that goddess was very annoyed as the prince had hunted many animals and birds of the forest. Further, the disciple told the prince that he would not recover unless a temple of the goddess is built with material from Chamba.

The exiled prince was perplexed as how he could manage to build the temple of Mata for he was ill and far away from Chamba, his native place. He expressed his inability to both Shiv Nandan and Hira Thakur. But the dancing devotee (disciple) replied exiled prince to proceed Chamba immediately and nothing on towardsness would come in his way by the grace of the Shakti of Mal Mata.

A few days later, the prince was well and after vowing before Mal Mata footed towards Chamba, while waying towards the desired destination, he came to know enroute, about the demise of his brother who had exiled him. Reaching Chamba, all the inhabitants of the vicinity embraced the prince and accepted him as the ruling prince. In due course of time, the prince became obsessed with the routine care taking and administration of his kingdom and in the process, he forgot the promise he had made before Sukrala Mata to build a temple there. One night, when the prince was comfortably sleeping, he fell down from the bed and remembered the promise he had made before Mal Mata and so as such he resolved to make good the promise.

On the next day, the prince started for Sukral with a large entourage carrying all short of building material. The temple was as such con-

structed and an image of Mahishurmardini was installed in the spacious temple Chamber in later stages a temple was constructed by Raja Brajraj Singh, son of Ranjit Singh Dev around 1755 AD and so such the promise made by the prince redeemed. Later on lot of springs and baolies were constructed in and around the temple complex.

Mal Mata Sukrala Devi is very benign goddess who fulfills the wishes of his true devotees. According to a popular belief, all wishes to the extent of the birth of child, securing Job for livelihood and for the curing of chronic diseases are fulfilled by the shrine Shakti of Mal Mata.

The images of Mata Jiis a Shila (Piece of rock). It is seated on a brass lion with a silver mounted head. And in its backdrop is a figure of Mahishasurmardini (Maa Durga) standing on Mahishasur. The goddess is chaturbhujia, the goddess with four arms with a sword in one of her hands. The eyes are of silver inlaid with dark vermilion.

Lord Vishnu is shown reeling under the hoods of Sheshing with Maa Lakshmi pressing lords lotus-like feel. From the navel spring a lotus, on which is seated a four headed Brahma and a five - faced Shiva and the lord Ganesh. There are two images of the lion in front of the temple complex.

Mal Mata Sukrala Devi is an important Shrine being revered and venerated by almost all over the state, particularly being a Kul Devi. The devotee across the state also visit this sacred Shrine of Shakti around the year, particularly during Navratras on both occasions. There are huge Bhandaras and langars arranged by the locals and other devotees and the social activists.

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Reels are hampering the real life of youths

■ SHYAM SUDAN

In this era of digital technology life has changed drastically in every corner. Now the entire meaning of life has changed for everyone. Our age old experience of life has taken a new turn with the advent of digital technology and artificial intelligence. Especially the youths are facing a very crucial turn of their life. Now a days almost every individual is busy in their abstract and imaginary world. We are living in this world but our brain and thinking are living in a totally different world. We are not living in the world of William Shakespeare and it's seven stages of life have no importance in present era. The bitter reality is that we are living in a different stage of our life where age has no concern for us. We are living in the reel life now a days. Everyone is busy in sharing his reels on different social platforms and gazing all the days and counting their likes and shares. Because there is a crisis of individual identity in front of us. Our identity is in great danger. This reel life culture is gradually destroying our inborn traits, qualities and human values at large. In this reel life culture there is no importance for your potential, skills, values and experience of life. Because reel life doesn't give importance to your positive traits and experience as a human. Reel life is very hungry for your stupidity and insane traits. Because there is a saying that stupidity is always original. And perhaps your originality in this sense is needed by your reel life. Basically, this reel life is destroying your real life and it's charm. Many side-effects are related with this digital fake popularity. Now a days we have seen that our youngsters are taking risk in uploading their reels all the day. And those who are busy in watching these reels have very short term memory. After watching two reels they forgot what they have seen earlier. This frequent and short doses of amusement are creating confusion in our brains and it's memory. Basically we are befouling our brain with this short term memory experimentation. This culture is creating havoc for us and for our brain. Evolution has shown that we have learnt great things from the experience of our older generation. We have reached at this stage of our life because of our memory and inheritance traits. But in this present scenario there is nothing in our brains which we can transmit to our coming generations. We have only digital technology and artificial intelligence. Without the internet facility we are merely mass of stupid creatures on this planet. However many people gain benefits from this reel making activity but largely people waste their precious time of their life.

Basically our young generation has fallen in the trap of this reel addiction and it's craving. These short doses of amusement to our brain are destroying the real nature and potential of our thinking. God has given a very powerful brain to humans with its endless possibilities. But we are using it as a trashcan and dropbox. There is an urgent need to give awareness in this direction to our youngsters, parents and the mentors of our young generation can play a very pivotal role in this direction. Only right direction and awareness can change the mindset of our young generation. Otherwise this addiction of technology and reel life can damage the life of our young generation in a single go. There is an urgent need to engage our young generation in real life activities and amusement. Also there is need to create phone free zones in our various working places where our young generation can get the chance to confront with actual life and it's vicinity. Controlling time table and limiting accessibility of internet are another plausible solution to curb this menace. There is an urgent need to give clarion call like stop watching reels etc. Only then we can change the mindset of our young generation. Spending quality time with young generation especially for parents is needed to get rid from this addiction.

Classroom Engineering and Student Self-Management

■ SHAHBAZ RASHEED BHORU

Classroom programming involves multifaceted tactics to be followed by both students and teachers in order to make the time spent in the classroom productive and valuable. Students are at the learning end of the relationship between teachers and learners; therefore, they deserve special focus in our discussion so that they may become aware of their activities and patterns of behavior within the classroom environment.

Classroom engineering, in relation to students, involves four major tasks that should be understood at the earliest stage of their academic careers:

- How to deal with oneself.
- How to deal with teachers.
- How to deal with books.
- How to deal with classmates.

Among these, dealing with one's own self forms the very foundation of effective classroom learning and thus requires deeper understanding.

Man is full of excitations, desires, emotions, and ambitions, which make him a complex being. At every stage of life, he has to confront temptations of a wide range. These temptations often act as triggers that influence his practical conduct in life. A person becomes successful or unsuccessful depending on how he responds to and controls his excitations and temptations.

In the context of classroom engineering, dealing with one's own self primarily revolves around four interrelated dimensions: thought management, emotion management, stress management, and ego management. These dimensions collectively shape a student's inner discipline and determine his level of focus, stability, and productivity in the classroom. They operate in a natural sequence, beginning with thought management and gradually extending to emotion, stress, and ego management.

Thought Management

As far as a student in the classroom is concerned, his thoughts can act as strong triggers of distraction. He may seem fully attentive in the classroom, but mentally his nervous system is engaged elsewhere. In this way, he becomes mentally hacked. This mental distraction renders him unproductive and academically unattractive. Self-management refers to clearing the mind of thoughts that constantly preoccupy it. A preoccupied mind is always unproductive. Students who fail to develop the strength to vent out thoughts that serve only as mental weight and burden remain at constant risk of loss and futility.

Thought management is an exercise of attention guided by intention. As we understand from the cognitive world, one thought has the capacity to replace another thought. Therefore, in order to attain learning stability in the classroom, a student must develop an

intentional thought oriented toward learning. An intentional thought, when developed to its full capacity, can effectively replace random and distracting thoughts. This cognitive replacement technique is deliberate and intentional in nature. To operate this technique effectively, students must develop a habit of practicing it consistently.

The more effectively students manage their thoughts, the more focused and productive they become.

Emotion Management

Once thought management is achieved, the next stage is the management of emotions. In the classroom, students experience various impulsive temptations, which are essentially outward expressions of emotions. The temptation to mock other students, to look out of the window, to observe classmates unnecessarily, or to engage in excessive clicking on mobile phone screens are common impulsive tendencies that damage classroom engineering at its very outset.

Controlling these impulsive temptations is fundamentally an act of self-control, where the operator of control lies within the self. When emotional impulses are regulated, students are able to maintain discipline, attentiveness, and respectful conduct within the classroom environment.

Stress Management

Students often feel stressed due to many pre-

assumed factors, such as pressure from certain subjects, the presence of more brilliant students in the class, or fear of the teacher. Even before getting admission to a school or enrolling in a classroom, students begin to imagine that the teacher will question them, that they may not be able to answer, and that their status or ego will be at stake.

This fear gradually turns them into victims of stress. When students compare themselves with high-achieving classmates, they begin to feel embarrassed and inferior, which further intensifies their stress. Many students condition their minds to believe that they are not intelligent enough to learn mathematics, speak English, or excel in certain subjects.

These stress-producing assumptions act like bottlenecks in the learning process, ultimately resulting in complete unproductivity on the part of students.

Ego Management

After stress management comes ego management. At times, students fall under the influence of excessive intellect, developing assumptions such as overconfidence, believing themselves to be more intelligent or more brilliant than others, even their teachers.

Such assumptions often lead to the development of psychological exclusion, which directly diminishes a student's productivity, engagement, and overall effectiveness in the classroom.