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CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

Revelling in Oneness

The World Spirituality Mahotsav held last week is being seen as an epochal moment in spiritual history.

It brought together spiritual and religious organisations to work for peace and well-being in a spirit of oneness

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The camaraderie and bonding between faiths were a sight to behold during the three-day global confluence, with about 300 spiritual organisations in attendance at Kanha Shanti Vanam, the global headquarters of Heartfulness. Hundreds of spiritual leaders, Buddhist and Jain monks and nuns, Christian fathers, Imams of the Islam faith, Sikh gurus, Zoroastrian leaders, Swamis from several organisations, and scientists shared their wisdom with an enthusiastic audience as they deliberated on the path to personal and universal peace.

ONENESS IN ACTION

China Jeeyar Swami said right at the outset, "While respecting each other's differences, we will find common ground." In his speech, he highlighted the eventual purpose of this gathering: "This is not just a gathering of religious paths of the world, it's a humble beginning to build a heartfelt world with peace, a heaven on earth."

Leaders as diverse as Rev Cardinal Anthony Poola, Archbishop of Hyderabad, Abhijeet Halder of the International Buddhist Federation,

Pir Zia Inayat Khan of the Inayati Order, and Tony Nader, Maharsi Foundation spoke about the essence of their faiths and shared values.

The President of India, Draupadi Murmu, reminded us all in her inaugural speech that human beings design their own fate. "Our cravings and aversions influence us. To rise above them, we need the aid of a *sadhana*, a meditative practice." Praising the work done by India's saints across history, she applauded their impact on the world. Similarly, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar, in his valedictory speech, said, "Don't be impeded by the thought that spirituality is an abstract idea; it's an absolutely practical idea. And to achieve realisation, one has to only look within." He reminded people that spirituality has been deeply ingrained in the fabric of our nation, our ethics, literature, art, dance, music, and even polity, social, and economic spectrums are moulded by spirituality. "That is what sets us apart," he said.

THE ROAD TO PEACE

Swamini Suvidhyamrita Prana of the Mata Amritanandamayi Math talked of how faiths naturally align, stating, "Amm's nature itself is love and compassion for all," the values



One cannot wave a magic wand and suddenly get all people of the world to become peaceful. Only one heart at a time, can humanity be changed. This calls for high level of commitment from all. But, if not now, then when? If not us, then who?

—Daaji

tam Buddha was the founder of spiritual thought based on oneness of all beings, away from religion. Buddhism is really about humanism. "BK Usha of the Brahma Kumaris spoke highly of the manner in which the event was put together with its lofty aims.

Every leader spoke of looking within oneself first to move ahead and lead a more peaceful life. Swami Mukundananda, JK Yog, said, "If we wish to attain peace, we have to declare war against the demons of anger, greed, desire, hatred, and envy within ourselves." The celebrated spiritual speaker and swami, Gaur Gopal Das, reminded one and all that problems of all kinds will always besiege us, and one can't wait for them to be solved to have peace. "Peace is to be established first in the heart, and then problems can be managed," he said.

Swami Atmapriyananda of the Ramkrishna Mission eloquently spoke of how peace was always invoked by our *rishis* and *munis*, not just in us individuals but on earth, in inter-stellar space, and so on. "The goal is to manifest divinity within us," he said. He reminded people of the famous speech by

Swami Vivekananda, who had said, "I am proud to belong to a religion in which the language (Sanskrit) does not have a word for 'exclusion', as there is only acceptance." Acceptance and celebration between faiths became the cornerstones of the summit.

MINISTRY WINS PRAISE

Conceptualised with tremendous respect for every aspect of the Indian spiritual ethos by the Ministry of Culture and Heartfulness, the plenary sessions and breakout panels threw light on the rich spiritual heritage of India, bringing back to focus the practicality of its essence when practiced. It highlighted its impact on health, education, the environment, and so much more. Swami Chidanand Saraswati praised the ministry in his speech for conducting a summit that showcases "The (spiritual) entire tapestry of India."

Absolutely captivating and inspired cultural evenings at the end of each day held the audience riveted to their chairs, singing and clapping in unison, revelling in the extravaganza steeped in classical music and dance.

For instance, Oscar awardee and musician par excellence, Shankar Mahadevan, sang his tribute to each faith the very first evening to thunderous applause. Backstage, he shared, "The bond of music to the divine is like that of the breath to the body, it's inseparable."

SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORLD

Daaji, the Global Guide of Heartfulness, shared in one of his speeches that the UN SDGs could all be easily implemented if humanity addressed thought and mental pollution such as greed and hatred first via a meditative practice. India's spiritual core had the answers and the methods to resolve them. He spoke about *pranahuti*, the energetic transmission of Heartfulness, its profound history, and the spiritual legacy of the chain of masters. He stated that practical projects, for instance, impacting the environment, education, and several other matters of social relevance, would be taken up together with

all participating organisations. All spiritual masters had words of praise for his leadership and the love with which the Heartfulness volunteers took care of the entire audience. As they shared the wisdom of their path to an appreciative audience, it became apparent that the event achieved what it set out to do.

Dr Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasi, AIO, just before leaving, is reported to have said, "My children will practice meditation, and the Brighter Minds programme will be taught to lakhs of students." Sadhvi Atmaprit Vidhi of the Srimad Rajchandra Mission said the love that pervaded the environment inspired one and all.

On a more serious note, former CBI director DR Karthikeyan said, "The world is already at the edge of self-destruction. This congregation of all faiths will work towards building peace across nations. It's already late, but if we do not do anything in unison now, it will become too late to save the planet."



CELEBRATING GLOBAL IMPACT

The one-lakh-seater Kanha auditorium reverberated with thunderous applause as Daaji received the 'Global Ambassador of Peacebuilding and Faith in the Commonwealth' award from Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland. In her speech, she said, "Heartfulness has become a global force for inner transformation transcending continents and cultures, sowing seeds of spiritual wellbeing. Daaji's unwavering commitment to service, coupled with a profound understanding of the human heart, creates a legacy of grace, humility, inspiration, and boundless compassion." Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar, who was also present, said, "It was a well-earned, well-deserved recognition from the right quarters. Millions of people are inspired in the most pristine and authentic manner by the thought processes that emanate from here. He went on to say, "Kamlesh Patel received the Padma Bhushan from the government of India, but the greatest honour conferred on him is by the people of India, who affectionately address him as 'Daaji' (father's brother)."



Dealing with dehydration in Hyderabad's hot summers

Almost all of us have experienced dehydration in Hyderabad summers. It takes a bit of timely care to ensure one stays hydrated through the scorching summer days

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Hyderabad is known for its scorching summers. With temperatures soaring above 40°C (104°F) and humidity levels reaching stifling heights, dehydration becomes a significant concern for residents and visitors alike. Dehydration not only impacts physical health but can also have detrimental effects on cognitive function and overall well-being.

IMPACT ON THE BRAIN

Research has shown that even mild dehydration can impair cognitive performance. A study published in the British Journal of Nutrition found that fluid loss equivalent to 1.5 per cent of body weight can lead to impaired mood, increased perception of task difficulty, and reduced concentration and alertness.

Dr Rajesh Kumar, a neurologist at a leading hospital, explains, "The brain requires a constant supply of water to function optimally. Dehydration can disrupt the delicate balance of neurotransmitters responsible for cognitive processes, mood regulation, and energy levels."

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

Recognising the signs of dehydration is crucial to prevent further complications. The most common indicators include:

- Thirst and dry mouth: A persistent feeling of thirst and a dry, sticky mouth can be early signs of dehydration.
- Dark-coloured urine: Well-hydrated individuals typically have pale or light-yellow urine, while dehydration can cause it to become darker in colour.
- Fatigue and weakness: As the body loses fluids, it can lead to muscle weakness, lethargy, and a general feeling of tiredness.
- Headaches and dizziness: Dehydration can cause headaches and dizziness, especially when standing up quickly due to a drop in blood pressure.
- Muscle cramps: An imbalance of electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium, can lead to muscle cramps.

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

Ravi, a software engineer, recalls a harrowing experience: "I was out running errands in the midday heat, and before I knew it, I started feeling lightheaded and nauseous. It wasn't until I got home and drank several glasses of water that I realised I was severely dehydrated."

If dehydration does occur, it's essential to rehydrate gradually by sipping water or electrolyte-rich beverages.

In severe cases, seeking medical attention may be necessary, as dehydration can lead to complications like heat stroke or organ failure.

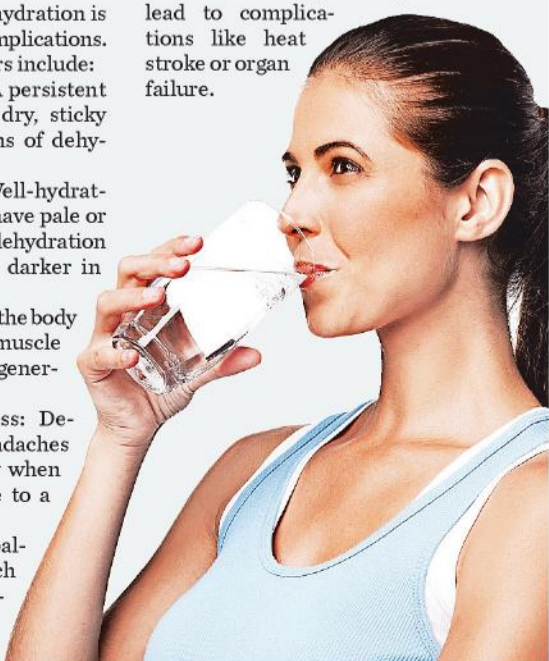
lost minerals."

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Sanjana, a college student, shares, "During a picnic at the Hussain Sagar Lake, I spent hours in the sun without drinking enough water. By the time we were ready to leave, I had a splitting headache, and my legs were cramping up."

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Dr Rama Rao, a general physician in Hyderabad, recommends, "Aim to drink at least 2-3 liters of water per day during the summer months, and consider beverages with electrolytes, such as coconut water or sports drinks, to replenish



It's Haleem season!

With the arrival of the sacred month of Ramadan, the aroma of Hyderabad haleem fills the air, weaving together centuries of tradition, economic vitality, and culinary excellence. Read on

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Hyderabad haleem has become a well-known brand over the last two decades, attracting MBA students to research its economic dynamics. The haleem business is reported to be worth above Rs 800 crore in Hyderabad alone. Every year, around one lakh people find temporary jobs in haleem preparation, including over 1,000 management and professional students who work part-time not only to learn marketing tactics but also to fund their studies or home needs.

While manual workers often earn more than Rs 1000 every day during Ramzan, individuals or a few management trainees manning improvised haleem shops for recognised companies can earn up to Rs 3000 - Rs 6000 per day, depending on the location of their temporary setups.

TRACING THE ROOTS

History says that during Aurangzeb's campaign in the Deccan, amidst the conquests and subjugation of the Qutb Shahis, a custom Arab dish emerged from the cantonments, capturing the hearts of Hyderabadis and enduring as a cherished tradition. "Comprising wheat, lentils, or cereals, sometimes sweetened with jaggery, the dish simmered for hours, fostering communal dining experiences and evolving over time with additions like dry fruits and *ghee*, reflecting today's rendition. The dish gained immense popularity for its nutritional value and filling nature, especially after a day of fasting," shares

Sous chef Jahangir Khan from Firdaus, an Indian specialty restaurant at Taj Krishna, Hyderabad. Jahangir received training from Nawab Mehboob Alam Khan, a renowned expert in Hyderabad cuisine, who revitalised many lost Hyderabad recipes. This was followed by further training from various experts in authentic Hyderabad cuisine.

STICKING TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS

Ali Reza Jowkar, the proprietor of Café 555 at Masab Tank, highlights the stringent standards defining Hyderabad haleem. "There are presently over 7,500 haleem manufacturers in Hyderabad alone. However, not all haleem manufacturers fulfil the standard requirements," he adds. Ali Reza emphasised an unwavering commitment to quality. He ensures that every ingredient, from spices like *shah jeera*, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves to pulses like *toor dal* and *chana dal*, meets the highest standards. Notably, the inclusion of Irani Zafaran, valued at almost 1 lakh 60 thousand per kg, demonstrates their commitment to quality. "Available from 3:30 pm until late into the night, our haleem sales commence 17 days before Ramadan and extend for 7 days after, ensuring a cherished

tradition for our patrons year after year," informs Ali Reza.

PACKAGING IT RIGHT

As Hyderabad expanded and attracted individuals from other Indian states, haleem became popular among people of different origins. Regardless of faith or place of origin, Hyderabadis look forward to the approaching haleem season during the holy month of Ramadan.

Haleem's popularity surged following the acquisition of a geographical indication (GI) tag and the adoption of modern packaging techniques, ensuring prolonged freshness and creating employment opportunities for thousands of underprivileged families from Hyderabad and beyond for about a month. "Various pack options are available, including couple, party, family, and jumbo packs, with bucket-style packs featuring a lock system ideal

for international travel. This year, a supreme pack designed for 18 people has been introduced, all with an 18-hour shelf life. When initially submerged in water at normal temperature and then placed in a deep freezer, these packs can last for at least 2 months. Our special haleem variations include options like those with boiled eggs, chicken 65, pure *ghee*, *kaju*, Nalli gosht ke haleem, and Nalli platters," informs Ali Reza.

LOADED WITH NUTRITION

Nutritionists highlight its complex carbohydrates and high protein content, promoting slow digestion and enhanced nutritional value. "Haleem is traditionally cooked for more than eight hours using protein-rich components such as minced beef, multigrains, lentils, spices, dried fruits, and *ghee*. It isn't deep-fried and is high in nutrients that boost energy levels. Its dietary fibre content aids in developing muscle," shares city nutritionist Madhuri Alakuchi.

TRANSCENDING CULTURAL BORDERS

As Hyderabad expanded and attracted individuals from other Indian states, haleem became popular among people of different origins. Regardless of faith or place of origin, Hyderabadis look forward to the approaching haleem season during the holy month of Ramadan. Ali Reza informs, "Despite being a Ramadan staple, a significant portion (65 to 75 percent) of daily customers are non-Muslims, opting for haleem for dinner instead of dining at home due to the belief that it's a seasonal delicacy with limited availability post-Ramadan."

"Haleem is a year-round staple at our restaurant, attracting guests and travellers from across the globe, drawn to Hyderabad's cultural icons like pearls, Charminar, biryani, and haleem. Visitors often take haleem parcels home, while others, including celebrities and cricketers, make it a point to try it during their visit," quips Jahangir Khan.

