

Shia community in Hyderabad gears up for Muharram

Hyderabad: The Shia community in the city is gearing up for the month of Muharram set to begin from the first week of July. Muharram is the first month of the Hijri calendar and holds significance in the history of Islam. The battle of Karbala took place on 10 day of Muharram in 61 AH (9/10 October 680 CE) at Karbala, now located in Iraq. This battle took place between a small group of supporters consisting of the family and companions of Hussain ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) against the military troops sent by Yazid ibn Muawiyah, the Umayyad Caliph. Hussain was martyred along with his relatives and companions in the battle.

The Shia community in the city comprising about 4 lakh people hold special majlis (prayer gatherings) at the Ashurkhana (a specific premises for mourning) during the Muharram month. The city has several 'Aashurkhanas' dating back to the period of Qutb Shahi era and situated mostly in Golconda and old city of Hyderabad and a few in Secunderabad, Rajendranagar, Moula Ali and Hayathnagar. "Big gatherings are organized at the Ashurkhana in the old city during the month. The majlis (gatherings) are held in accordance to the timings convenient for participants," said Hamed Hussain Jaffery, president, Shia Youth Conference. People from across the globe come and participate in the events organized during the Muharram month in the city.

However, the Shia community is unhappy with the arrangements and financial assistance provided by the government



for the Muharram. "The financial grants to Aashurkhana for maintenance and renovation are handed over two to three days before the 10th of Muharram as a political gesture. Actually, it should be handed over before the start of the month so that some work can be taken up," suggested Syed Ali

Jaffery, advocate and a Shia community youth leader. Mujtaba, another community member, said for the last two years, the Muharram month is coinciding with the rainy season and the civic authorities were not making proper arrangements. "On several routes leading to important places such

as Bibi ka Alawa, Alawa-e-Sartooq etc, the roads were not restored nor arrangements made for discharge of rain water. Devotees faced a lot of problems in reaching places of religious significance. The situation is the same this year too," complained Mujtaba.

Raja Singh threatens yet another comedian, demands cancellation of his show in Hyd



Hyderabad: BJP Goshamahala MLA T Raja Singh has ignited controversy once again, this time targeting comedian Daniel Fernandes and demanding the cancellation of his upcoming show scheduled for June 29 at Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. The MLA's call for cancellation stems from Fernandes' comedic commentary on a recent incident where members of the Jain community dress as Muslims to protest the sale of goats for Bakrid sacrifice. In a video statement that is going viral on social media platforms, Singh issued a stern warning to Fernandes, stating, "I want to tell Daniel to cancel his show at Banjara Hills which is scheduled for today. If not, remember, our karyakartas will throw so many chappals at you that you will have to think 50 times to visit Telangana or Hyderabad again. I would also request the police commissioner to cancel his show. Otherwise, he will get beaten up badly by our mem-

bers." In any decent democracy, T Raja Singh, with 85 cases against him and a serial hate-monger, should be behind bars. Meanwhile, in response to the backlash from certain communities, Fernandes issued an apology via Instagram to members of the Jain community who may have been offended by his jokes. Expressing regret for any hurt caused, Fernandes emphasized his intent to entertain and expressed hope for reconciliation and mutual understanding. "Forgiveness is one of the many beautiful traits your community espouses, so I hope that we can put this behind us and move on in peace and enlightenment", Daniel's statement said on Instagram. In August 2022, Raja Singh was taken into preventive custody by the Hyderabad police while heading towards Shilpakala Vedika to where stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui was set to perform the following day.

Calcutta HC rule providing 1% reservation to transgender persons is a move in the right direction

The recent judgement of the single judge of the Calcutta high court in *Mrinal Barik v State of West Bengal* case is significant. Following the Supreme Court's judgement of 2014 in the *NALSA v Union of India*, the single judge directed the state government to provide one per cent reservation to transgender persons in State public employment jobs. In addition to the *NALSA* judgment, the high court also relied upon the notification of 2022 issued by the government of West Bengal prescribing any discrimination on the basis of transgender identity. This victory may turn out to be a short-term one. The petitioner, in the case, did not pray for any mandamus (judicial writ) asking for reservation for transgender persons in public employment. The petitioner only asked for her application to be considered for appointment as a teacher. The judgment does not indicate whether the government of West Bengal was put to notice, or an issue was framed on reservation in public employment.

The doctrine of judicial review and separation of powers limits the power by which the high courts can issue sweeping mandamus, to provide for reservation. All this forms a very propitious ground for the judgment to be overturned on these reasons by the appellate court on technical grounds, without entering into the controversial thicket of reservations in public employment. The issue of reservations is multifaceted and complex but is usually centred on legislation by the state or central government. The legislation will usually identify a class of persons or caste, which is entitled to reservations. The data on backwardness is very critical. The identification of persons who are entitled is dependent on many factors such as social and educational backwardness.

The executive government by rules, or by circulars, implements the reservation by employment through a norm-based and transparent process. The constitutional courts when dealing with the validity of the legislation, will usually test the legislation on well-defined factors such as accuracy of data, absence of creamy layer and other factors to test if the goal of substantive equality has been met by the particular legislation. The legislation is also preceded by a commission, usually headed by a retired judge and with subject experts, which invites representation, checks the data, examines historical injustices and ultimately recommends the narrow class, which will be entitled to the reservation, and the exclusions such as creamy layer and by income criterion.

The recent parliamentary enactment, *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019* provides for certain rights for transgenders such as non-discrimination in employment, housing, etc. Yet, the enactment is silent about reservation. The *NALSA* judgement's sweeping remark that all transgenders must be categorised as socially and educationally backwards is also questionable. The High Court could have issued directions to the state government to consider setting up a commission to recommend transgender reservations. Some classes of transgenders

arguably may meet the test of social and educational backwardness, and yet that is determined by the government through an elaborate process, and not by diktats of constitutional courts. On April 16, 2004, the government notified a committee headed by cabinet secretary with the secretary of home, law, women and child development to address issues related to the queer community. The terms of reference do not empower the committee to issue any opinion about reservations in public employment. This committee was set up on the directions of the Supreme Court in the same-sex marriage case. The other point is shrinking public employment, and this has received scant attention. In the last few decades, state/Central governments, commissions, government bodies and public sector undertakings have reduced intake, abolished posts and appointed people on a short-term contractual basis. In a nation that aims for equality of status and opportunities, public employment is not the panacea. In the years ahead, the state may have a diminished role in fields like agriculture, healthcare, railways, mining and natural resources and other areas in which it currently employs people in large numbers. PSUs with monopolies in crucial sectors like banking, insurance, electricity, coal, natural gas and petroleum may dis-



appear after disinvestment. For example, the Supreme Court recently held that after disinvestment, the labour disputes of Air India will not come before the high court. Even after disinvestment, all PSUs continue to enjoy large capital, land banks and monopolies in government orders, and yet they won't provide reservations in public employment. The disinvestment process can lead to a large section of the Indian population having no recourse to public

employment. Being one of the most marginalised, the impact on transgenders will be most severe. The judgment in the *Mrinal Barik* case, even if it is upheld by the appellate courts and is implemented in earnest, may not provide social and educational empowerment to transgenders. Vasuman Khandelwal is an advocate practising before the Supreme Court and has been involved in litigation against Section 377. The views expressed are personal.

Hey Siri! Help me get Apple out of an AI-shaped hole

Tim Cook has an air of bashful reverence. In his 13 years at the helm of Apple he has created more value than just about any CEO in history, as the tech behemoth's market capitalisation has climbed from less than \$400bn to around \$3trn. But he still acts as if he were there thanks to the grace of Steve Jobs, or the skill of his colleagues, or divine providence. It was in character, then, that when he took to the stage at the iPhone maker's annual developers' gathering on June 10th, he first greeted the cheering throng by clasping his hands together, as if in prayer. He probably would not admit this, but there was plenty to pray for.

Apple was suffering one of its periodic bouts of investor angst. Call it the curse of the missing mojo. In the previous 18 months, Wall Street convinced itself—as it had a few times since Jobs died in 2011—that the creative spark bequeathed by Apple's Promethean co-founder had finally sputtered out. Behind that is a real problem: sales of the iPhone, which account for half of Apple's revenues, are slowing. But there is a perception problem, too. Apple's aloof response to the euphoria over generative artificial intelligence (AI) cost it its crown as the world's most valuable company, which it lost to its one-time nemesis, Microsoft. To make matters worse, the market value of Nvidia, maker of chips that power generative AI tools, this month briefly overtook that of Apple. Its boss, Jensen Huang, is treated like the second coming

of Jobs.

Two questions thus hung over Apple in the run-up to the developers' conference. Would it come up with a generative AI strategy convincing enough to win over the sceptics? And could this be sufficiently compelling to reboot iPhone sales? It is just a hunch, but on both counts, Mr Cook earns the benefit of the doubt. Apple's market value is up by 10% since its communion moment and, at \$3.3trn, within a whisker of Microsoft's. For the time being, the iPhone looks likely to survive and thrive in the generative AI era. The smartphone is an intimate thing. It goes wherever you go, contains your most precious memories, chronicles your love life, keeps your health and financial records, follows you around the web and, via its camera and microphone, can see and hear whatever you do. Part of Apple's bargain with users is that they pay a lot of money to keep that information private and secure. Since the arrival of OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022, Mr Cook and Apple have faced the conundrum of how to maintain that privacy while training generative AI models to behave like a personalised concierge. The response is "Apple Intelligence", an attempt to make generative AI consumer-friendly in a way uniquely suited to users of the iPhone and other Apple devices. Siri, Apple's perennially clunky voice assistant, gets a makeover; if all goes well (there were no live demos), it will now act like a cross between your PA, who can handle a series of tasks on

your behalf, and your ten-year-old kid, who can tell you how to make use of the iPhone's latest features. To enable that, its operating systems will allow Siri to range across your apps (where it is enabled), your photos, your calendar and other contextual parts of your digital life to find information uniquely useful to you. Crucially, that information will remain, Apple promises, mostly in its own domain. Instead of spending a fortune reproducing the all-knowing large language models (LLMs) and vast AI infrastructure of its peers, Apple is taking a more tailored approach. Its models will run on its own devices or, if more computing muscle is needed, its own data centres. They will use Apple-designed semiconductors. That gives the firm control not just of safety but of quality; the larger the model, the greater the danger of embarrassing mistakes. For users who want more souped-up capabilities, such as advice on how to plant a garden, or a personalised bedtime story, it has struck a deal with OpenAI to provide free access to the latest version of ChatGPT. It did not disclose the financial arrangements. It will not be an exclusive relationship; Apple may in the future use other LLMs, such as Alphabet's Gemini. In a nod to privacy, users will have to consent to each query—a process that could become mind-numbingly boring (think ChatGDPR). Apple's hope is that for their everyday needs, its customers will mostly get by with its own AI.

Govt. of Haryana and NFSU signed an MoU



Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), June 29: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Haryana and the National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Gandhinagar was signed in Panchkula, Haryana Saturday in the presence of the union home minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah. Several dignitaries, including Union Minister, Manohar Lal and. Chief Minister of Haryana, Nayab Singh, were present on the occasion.

In his address, Amit Shah said that in association with NFSU, work has been done to give a scientific base to the criminal justice system of Haryana today. He said that 3 laws of the British era were governing the Indian judicial system, they have been changed with the concept of speedy justice and justice to all. He said that as a part of these changes, forensic team visits have now been made mandatory for offences carrying a sentence of 7 years or more. This will increase the demand for forensic experts across the country, which

the NFSU will cater to. Mr. Shah said that human resources have to be created to implement these new criminal laws. It was with this approach that the National Forensic Science University was taken forward and at the same time the framing of these new laws were also underway. Shah added that so far, campuses of this university have been opened in 9 states and work will be done to take this university to about 16 states of the country.

This, he said, would create trained manpower and help in speeding up the pace of solving crimes and improving the conviction rate. He said that this will not only result in trained human resources but will also be of great benefit in getting the new laws implemented at the grassroots level.

The union home minister said that having a laboratory, university and training institute in same campus itself will greatly simplify both the instructor and the trainee. He said that if a training institute is

planned to be opened here, then the Government of India will provide good arrangements for training in forensic science at its own expense. He said that the Forensic Science University not only works to educate children and prepare trained manpower but also helps in strengthening the forensic infrastructure. Mr. Shah said this will help Police Sub Inspectors (PSIs), Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSPs) and Superintendent of Police (SPs) level officers and judges of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. He expressed confidence that this initiative taken today will bring changes in the criminal justice system of Haryana in the coming days.

Union Home Minister proposed the establishment of a training institute at the Center of Excellence for training and laboratory testing facilities in forensic science, which will be set up on approximately 50 acres in Haryana. He said that the central government will make all arrangements for its establishment. Speaking on this occa-

sion, Union Minister of Power, Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar said that the conception of this center was envisioned in Surajkund in 2022, and today, through this MoU, this vision is being realized. He said that previously, there was only one forensic science lab in the state, but now four more are operational. With the establishment of the National Forensic Science University campus here, victims will be able to get justice swiftly, said Khattar. The Haryana Chief Minister, Nayab Singh said that the establishment of this center will greatly benefit the criminal justice system.

Often, due to the lack of resources, justice is delayed, but with the new technology, we will be able to provide swift justice to the victims. During the Chintan Shivir in Surajkund, the union home minister envisioned the establishment of this campus, which is now becoming a reality. With the establishment of the National Forensic Science University, Haryana is taking the lead, and it will benefit the state, said

Continental Hospitals Hosts National GI Conference with Mayo Clinic and Oxford Experts



Continental Hospitals successfully hosted a National Gastrointestinal (GI) Conference 2024 in collaboration with experts from Mayo Clinic and the University of Oxford. The conference, themed "From Bench to Bedside," aimed to bridge the gap between research and practical application in GI care.

The three-day event, held from June 28 to 30, 2024, at the Sheraton Hotel in Hyderabad's Financial District, brought together renowned global experts from Mayo Clinic in the USA, Oxford, London, and India. They delivered insightful presentations on advanced diagnostics, innovative therapies, and personalized treatment strategies, equipping healthcare professionals with the latest tools and knowledge to elevate patient care standards nationwide.

Highlighting the significance of the collaboration, Dr. Guru N. Reddy, Founder and Chairman of Continental Hospitals and Program Chairman for the National GI Conference 2024, said, "This partnership reflects our commitment to advancing healthcare through innovation and international collaboration for patient care. Precision healthcare is rapidly shifting from yesterday's prospects to today's reality, and the future of medicine lies in a multi-faceted approach to diagnose and treat patients. Improper diagnosis and treatment

will increase the burden of care in our country." Prof. John B. Kisiel, Professor of Medicine and Consultant in Gastrointestinal Neoplasia and Inflammatory Bowel Disease clinics at the Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, Mayo Clinic in Rochester, emphasized the importance of the conference, stating, "This national conference is a valuable platform to discuss new discoveries that will impact future medical practices. By bringing together experts from diverse backgrounds, we can help clinicians understand these changes and implement them in their clinics, ultimately delivering personalized, broad, and preventive care to patients."

Other distinguished speakers at the conference included Dr. Jagannath P, Director of the Continental Cancer Centre and former President of the International Hepato-Pancreato Biliary Association, USA; Prof. Prasad Iyer, Professor of Medicine, Chair of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, and Medical Director of the Mayo Hub Trial Innovation Network; Prof. Anna Schuh, Professor of Molecular Diagnostics at the Department of Oncology, University of Oxford, UK, and Founder and Clinical Director of the Oxford Molecular Diagnostic Centre; and Prof. P. Shravan Kumar, Professor and Head of the Department of Gastroenterology at

Gandhi Medical College, Hyderabad. The conference aimed to empower physicians, share knowledge, and lower healthcare costs, particularly in gastrointestinal, liver,

and noncommunicable disorders. It focused on the impact of the genetic revolution on medicine, from research to clinical applications.

Fish farming is profitable occupation says Asifabad Collector

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Collector Venkatesh Dothre asserted that high profits could be earned through fish farming. He was addressing fishermen at a day-long awareness programme held here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, Venkatesh said that by using the government subsidies and taking up fish farming, great profits can be made. He stated that there should be 2 acres of land and borewell facility for fish cultivation. He opined that thanks to modern technology, it was possible to cultivate fish by setting up special tanks on terraces and in tiny farm fields. The Collector stated that a farmer could earn income of Rs 2 lakh per annum by fish farming in four pits and registering harvestings for three times by investing just Rs 5 lakh. He said that this would be formulated as 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Farm-

ers and women of self-help groups should utilize this opportunity, he urged. He further said that the government would provide many concessions and subsidies for fish farmers. He noted that by taking up fish farming at home, profits can be obtained at low cost. He informed that fish farming offers a wide range of opportunities. He opined that marketing could also be done easily. The Collector also said that the water used for fish farming can be used as organic fertilizer for plants, and it was sufficient if urea was provided in small doses. District Rural Development Officer Surender, Additional DRDO Ramakrishna, Scheduled Castes Development Officer Sajeevan, In-charge District Fisheries Officer Sambasiva Rao, District Federation President Triveni and Consultant Uday Kishore participated in the programme.

Who gains if TikTok is banned in the US? Explained

In April, the Biden administration passed a law - Protecting Americans From Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act - that forces TikTok's Chinese parent ByteDance to divest ownership of the app in 9-12 months, or see it banned in the U.S. If that divestment does not happen, there is a chance that users in the U.S. could lose access to TikTok, similar to how Indian users lost the service four years ago. TikTok and ByteDance sued the U.S. government in response, claiming that the law violates Americans' right to free speech and that Congress is singling out one platform, "with one set of rules for one named platform, and another set of rules for everyone else," according to the companies' legal petition dated May 7.

But, if TikTok is booted out of the U.S., which platforms stand to gain from the ban?

TikTok was banned in India in June 2020 after deadly clashes between Chinese and Indian soldiers near a contested border region. However, rival tech platforms didn't waste any time in trying to fill up the void. In September, YouTube introduced an early beta of YouTube Shorts in India. While the exact India-centric data points are not available, the average daily views of YouTube Shorts grew by over 120% in India year-on-year (as of July 2023), while the average daily logged-in viewers of YouTube Shorts grew by over 30% year-on-year in India (as of July 2023), the company shared with The Hindu. Meanwhile, Meta announced in July 2020 that Instagram Reels would be coming to India. The social media giant has periodically hailed India's community of content creators and brands earning their revenue through Reels. However, Meta declined to provide India-related statistics showing the adoption of Reels in India.

What effect does TikTok have on American politics?

TikTok is used by around 170 million Americans, who reach out to a global audience of more than 1 billion. But for years, the viral video app has been under the microscope due to fears of its entanglement with China's regime. In 2023, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the U.S. Senate that TikTok was in China's control and that it "screams out with national security concerns." Apart from this, U.S. politicians believe TikTok could be used to influence the way Americans think about larger geopolitical conflicts and issues. For example, since Hamas's October 7 rampage and Israel's retaliatory bombing of Palestinians, TikTok has faced accusations of promoting pro-Palestinian viewpoints and hashtags. The accusations were so strong that the company shared statistics and published a statement on November 13 last year, stressing its neutrality and pointing out similar occurrences across other social media platforms. TikTok put out a statement defending itself against accusations of promoting pro-Palestinian viewpoints.

How does AI make TikTok tick?

According to TikTok and ByteDance's legal filing on May 7, a large part of the



app's success is thanks to its video recommendation engine and the source code powering it. This was developed by China-based ByteDance engineers and then customised for use in different markets, explained TikTok in its filing. Sanket Shah, co-founder and CEO at Invideo AI, told The Hindu that AI played a crucial role in shaping a user's experience on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. "Through sophisticated algorithms analysing user interactions, content attributes, and demographic data, these platforms deliver tailored content experiences, fostering increased user engagement and prolonged platform usage," said Shah. The rise of Generative AI technology could take social media algorithms and targeted advertising to entirely new heights. "Generative AI introduces a new dimension, empowering users with personalized content creation capabilities and tackling issues such as content overload and algorithmic biases. This convergence of AI technologies not only enhances the social media experience but also drives significant revenue growth within the social media advertising market. These platforms share a common goal for AI: keeping users engaged on their platform," explained Shah. TikTok rivals have not missed out on these technologies either. In April, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg pointed to the integration of AI across the social media company's platforms, including Reels. One significant result of this was a rise in user engagement that was powered by shorter videos. "On Instagram, Reels and video continue to drive engagement, with Reels alone now making up 50% of the time that's spent within the app," he said. Zuckerberg further noted in the call that Gen AI image expansion tools had been earlier rolled out across Facebook and Instagram Reels, with small busi-

nesses adopting them.

YouTube Shorts uses AI in its algorithm as well, measuring metrics such as clicks, watch-time, survey responses, sharing, likes, and dislikes. The system learns from over 80 billion signals every day to match videos and users, YouTube told The Hindu. The company also said that Gen AI-powered features were coming to Shorts, in order to encourage more creators. These include AI-generated image or video backgrounds based on text prompts, and the ability to edit/remix existing videos by typing in ideas. Meanwhile, during the Google I/O developers' conference in May, the YouTube-parent announced Veo - its "most capable video generation model yet." "We'll also bring some of Veo's capabilities to YouTube Shorts and other products in the future," noted Google in a blog post.

Will ByteDance give up on TikTok?

For now, the answer seems to be a firm no. "The 'qualified divestiture' demanded by the Act to allow TikTok to continue operating in the United States is simply not possible: not commercially, not technologically, not legally," said TikTok and ByteDance in their legal filing. Numerous legal proceedings and extensions could also delay the 2025 divestment deadline. Like TikTok, both YouTube-parent Google and Instagram-parent Meta have attracted the U.S. government's ire due to their approach to user privacy and their potentially addictive video offerings. But because they are American companies, founders and top executives face far fewer questions about their national loyalties and their citizenship status.

Instagram faces major global outage, including India

New Delhi: Meta-owned Instagram on Saturday suffered a major outage globally, including in India, as thousands of users were unable to load Reels and access other options.

As per website outage tracking website Downtetector, over 6,500 users reported issues with accessing the platform in India at the peak of an outage at around 12.02 p.m. About 58 per cent reported problems with the feed, 32 per cent with the app, and 10 per cent with server connection. Users from Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata,

Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, and others faced issues with the app. Users took to X to vent their frustration as they were unable to log in to the app, load Reels, and others. "Everyone going towards Twitter to check if Instagram is down," a user wrote.

"I thought my Instagram got hacked cuz there's no way my fyp looks like this. It's all brain rot usually #instagramdown," another user said.

One more user stated, "Me going to Twitter to check if it's only my Instagram that's down, or we all are suffering #instagramdown".

Meet teachers from fictional schools who are top of their class

Well, that's fiction. In the real world, almost everyone has had at least one memorable teacher who changed them for the better. It is an experience so universal that it has inspired advertisements (among the most evocative of these, a Raymond ad, featuring a gift of fabric in a large box, left in a vintage car, on a teacher's last day). It's an experience that has inspired poems, songs (plenty, from Abba to Bollywood, through the years), and of course films and series. Every child wants a Miss Honey, the natural-born guardian who protects the neglected little Matilda with the red bow in her hair. Harry Potter's Hogwarts is a veritable feast of remarkable faculty. Further back, there's Goodbye, Mr Chips (1939; based on the 1934 novel by James Hilton), in which the titular character sees his students through World War 1.

One such character is Paul Hunham in *The Holdovers* (2023; now streaming in India). Among its five Oscar nominations was one for Best Actor, for Paul Giamatti. He lost to Cillian Murphy (*Oppenheimer*), but that's only what Hunham would have expected. The film is an evocative look at loss, regret, fear (that dreadfully entwined kind, of success and failure). It's a moving tale about the different ways in which a torch may be lit, and passed. And how, no matter how old one is, it will eventually be time to leave the safety of campus. Here, then, is a look at teachers in recent films who may have failed some of life's tests, but whose lessons are perhaps more memorable for it.

Fall guy: Hunham is, let's be honest, a bit of a loser. He is both mopey and strict, he seems out of date. He tosses obscure facts from ancient history into conversation. He's a bit of a laughing stock among students and faculty at Barton Academy in New England. But perhaps that's because this is a world in which ethics seem like an absurd way to make a choice. Enter Angus Tully, an overgrown, angry problem child with nowhere to go during the Christmas holiday. Hunham is tasked with keeping an eye on him. They spend the two weeks in the company of cafeteria manager Mary Lamb (played by Da'Vine Joy Randolph, who did win her Oscar, for Best Supporting Actress). Bit by bit, in quiet conversations, revelations seep out about shattered dreams, lost loves, the pain of living in a world that moves on, unseeing and indifferent. There is the sharp ache, all around, of unfulfilled promise. And then suddenly, a chance for a fresh start. As with all things, it isn't a stroke of luck for Hunham, but it is one that he can extend to someone else. Will he still do the right thing, if he has nothing to gain? Of course he will. What if he has everything to lose? As it turns out, the answer is still yes.

By heart: In *The Whale* (2022), Brendan Fraser plays Charlie, a talented, reclusive and severely obese English teacher on a self-destructive mission, driven by unprocessed grief and guilt. He

holds classes online, keeping himself largely hidden. He offers valuable lessons on harmony and clarity of thought, while battling to find these himself.

He manages to reach out to his estranged teenage daughter, not as the father who left and has now returned, but as a professional recognising her talent for the written word, a talent he did little to exploit in himself. It's a dark but compelling tale: Sometimes the greatest gift a teacher can give, is lessons in what not to do. Say the word: Based in real life, the German film *Mr Bachmann and his Class* (2021) is about a school teacher whose class of 12- and 14-year-olds in Stadtallendorf in central Germany is now a rainbow of mixed cultures.

Dieter Bachmann, who teaches music, math and languages and is well-loved, must find ways to show the youngsters from Germany and from Turkey, Bulgaria and Russia how to navigate each other's identities. Added challenges come from sexist bullying, homophobia and violence between students; he must navigate these in a way that will neither condone nor alienate the young offender. "That's a focus in this film because Herr Bachmann basically turns his classroom into a kind of living room where — and I think this is extremely important — the kids feel at home. It's a place of trust, of safety, where they are seen and where they can show who they are as individuals, as people. That's what the film is about," director Maria Speth said in an interview with *Hollywood Reporter* in 2021. The 217-minute documentary earned Speth the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. *Soul train*: A pre-fame Ryan Gosling (he would make it big five years later, in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*) plays Dan Dunne, a Brooklyn middle-school history teacher, in the 2006 film *Half Nelson*. He is engaging and innovative in class, sparks dialogue and debate.

By night, he battles a cocaine addiction. Can a student who has recently begun peddling drugs for the local dealer help him out? The rest of his students don't see the teacher struggle; few students ever do. The classroom, then, becomes a place where he must be his best self. What emerges is a passionate and intelligent man with the humility and empathy to use a dialectic method and an amended curriculum to greater effect. The role earned Gosling an Oscar nomination. *Altitude adjustment*: Ugyen Dorji (played by Sherab Dorji) is an aspiring singer in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, and he is a teacher in training, because his career in music just won't seem to take off. When the government postings arrive, he finds that he has been assigned to a remote shack of a school in Lunana, a tiny village in the mountains, several hours' hike from the nearest road. Ugyen arrives angry, treks uphill. There, he is given the gift of a yak, so he can use its dung to make a fire. He begins to care for the yak, and then the people. He learns their ways, becomes a fixture in village life. He hears a woman sing to no au-



dience but the mountains she loves. He completes his stint and leaves, rejoins the world, ends up with a job performing at a bar in Australia. No one's listening, so he starts to sing the song the woman sang to the mountains. Directed by Pawo Choyning Dorji, *Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom*

(2019) became the first Bhutanese film ever nominated for an Oscar.

In its delicate tale is the reminder that we are always learning, or unlearning. And that, perhaps more important than the dream, is the idea that we can change it.

iPhone sales dip 10% in March quarter; Apple stock surges post \$110 billion buyback

Apple exceeded Wall Street's expectations, resulting in its stock rising over 6% after hours on Thursday. The company achieved an all-time high in Services revenue, reaching \$23.9 billion, marking a 14% increase year-over-year. New Delhi: Apple has reported a 10 per cent decline in iPhone sales for its March quarter, from \$51.33 billion to \$45.96 billion (year-over-year), primarily driven by a slowdown in China market. However, Apple managed to beat the Wall Street expectations and its stock went up more than 6 per cent after hours on Thursday, as the company set an all-time revenue record in Services with \$23.9 billion, up 14 per cent (on-year).

Apple also announced a massive \$110 billion stock buyback from last year's \$90 billion.

"Keep in mind, as we described on the last call in the March quarter a year ago, we were able to replenish iPhone channel inventory and fulfill significant pent up demand from the December quarter COVID-related supply disruptions on the iPhone 14 pro and 14 Pro Max," said Apple CEO Tim Cook. This one-time impact added close to \$5 billion to the March quarter revenue last year. "If we removed this from last year's results, our March quarter total company revenue this year would have grown," Cook told analysts during the earnings call. The revenue for Mac devices was \$7.5 billion, up 4 per cent from a year ago.

In iPad, revenue for the March quarter was \$5.6 billion, 17 per cent lower year-



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over-year due to a difficult compare with the momentum following the launch of M2 iPad Pro and the 10th generation iPad last fiscal year. "iPad continues to stand apart for its versatility, power, and performance. For video editors, music makers, and creatives of all kinds, iPad is empowering users to do more than they ever could with a tablet," said Cook. Apple is set to launch new iPads next week. The company has not refreshed its tablet line-up since 2022. The company is also reportedly exploring potential partnerships with Google and OpenAI for AI features in its device line-up. "Given our confidence in Apple's future and the value we see in our stock, our Board has authorised an additional \$110 billion for share repurchases. We are also raising our quarterly dividend for the twelfth year in a row," said Apple CFO Luca Maestri.

Read an excerpt from Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species

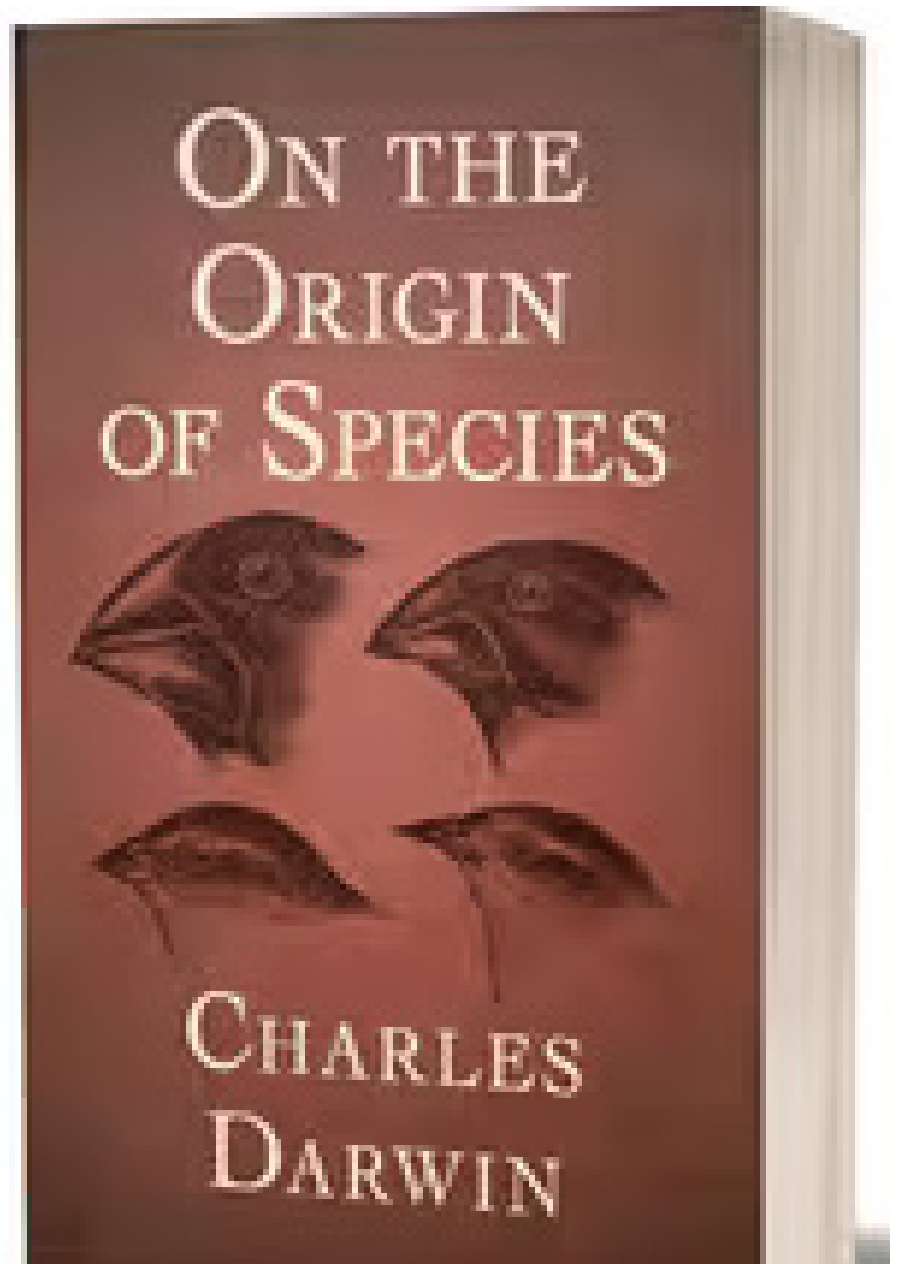
That many and grave objections may be advanced against the theory of descent with modification through natural selection, I do not deny. I have endeavoured to give to them their full force. Nothing at first can appear more difficult to believe than that the more complex organs and instincts should have been perfected, not by means superior to, though analogous with, human reason, but by the accumulation of innumerable slight variations, each good for the individual possessor. Nevertheless, this difficulty, though appearing to our imagination insuperably great, cannot be considered real if we admit the following propositions, namely,—that gradations in the perfection of any organ or instinct, which we may consider, either do now exist or could have existed, each good of its kind,—that all organs and instincts are, in ever so slight a degree, variable,—and, lastly, that there is a struggle for existence leading to the preservation of each profitable deviation of structure or instinct. The truth of these propositions cannot, I think, be disputed...When we can feel assured that all the individuals of the same species, and all the closely allied species of most genera, have within a not very remote period descended from one parent, and have migrated from some one birthplace; and when we better know the many means of migration, then, by the light which geology now throws, and will continue to throw, on former changes of climate and of the level of the land, we shall surely be enabled to trace in an admirable manner the former migrations of the inhabitants of the whole world. Even at present, by comparing the differences of the inhabitants of the sea on the opposite sides of a continent, and the nature of the various inhabitants of that continent in relation to their apparent means of immigration, some light can be thrown on ancient geography.

The noble science of Geology loses glory from the extreme imperfection of the record. The crust of the earth with its embedded remains must not be looked at as a well-filled museum, but as a poor collection made at hazard and at rare intervals. The accumulation of each great fossiliferous formation will be recognised as having depended on an unusual concurrence of circumstances, and the blank intervals between the successive stages as having been of vast duration. But we shall be able to gauge with some security the duration of these intervals by a comparison of the preceding and succeeding organic forms. We must be cautious in attempting to correlate as strictly contemporaneous two formations, which include few identical species, by the general succession of their forms of life. As species are produced and exterminated by slowly acting and still existing causes, and not by miraculous acts of creation and by catastrophes; and as the most important of all causes of organic change is one which is almost independent of altered and perhaps suddenly altered physical conditions, namely, the mu-

tual relation of organism to organism,—the improvement of one being entailing the improvement or the extermination of others; it follows, that the amount of organic change in the fossils of consecutive formations probably serves as a fair measure of the lapse of actual time. A number of species, however, keeping in a body might remain for a long period unchanged, whilst within this same period, several of these species, by migrating into new countries and coming into competition with foreign associates, might become modified; so that we must not overrate the accuracy of organic change as a measure of time. During early periods of the earth's history, when the forms of life were probably fewer and simpler, the rate of change was probably slower; and at the first dawn of life, when very few forms of the simplest structure existed, the rate of change may have been slow in an extreme degree. The whole history of the world, as at present known, although of a length quite incomprehensible by us, will hereafter be recognised as a mere fragment of time, compared with the ages which have elapsed since the first creature, the progenitor of innumerable extinct and living descendants, was created.

In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history.

Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual. When I view all beings not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system was deposited, they seem to me to become ennobled. Judging from the past, we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity. And of the species now living very few will transmit progeny of any kind to a far distant futurity; for the manner in which all organic beings are grouped, shows that the greater number of species of each genus, and all the species of many genera, have left no descendants, but have become utterly extinct. We can so far take a prophetic glance into futurity as to foretell that it will be the common and widely-spread species, belonging to the larger and dominant groups, which will ultimately prevail and procreate new and dominant species. As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once



His seminal work, published in 1859, changed the course of science and society. An excerpt from the concluding chapter, on the “grandeur in this view of life”.

been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection. It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.

These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inherit-

ance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows.

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

What was the world's first 'animal tag'? How did it prove birds don't hibernate?

What changed this prevailing theory was the world's first tracker: a spear that struck a white stork, did little damage, and stayed there. That wooden missile, let loose in the 1820s, would alter science in a range of ways.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE) believed that robins and redstarts in Greece were perhaps the same species, miraculously transforming into each other as seasons changed. Robins in winter would become redstarts in summer, he theorised (although robins did migrate to Europe at the beginning of summer, coinciding with when redstarts started flying in from Africa, this was of course an inaccurate guess on his part).

He also assumed that certain birds, such as swallows, possibly hibernated, perhaps at the bottom of ponds, in colder months. What changed this prevailing theory was the world's first tracker: a spear

that struck a white stork, did little damage, and stayed there. That wooden missile, let loose in the 1820s, would alter science in a range of ways. The iron-tipped spear made of African wood was instantly identifiable when the bird returned to Germany. It earned the bird the name pfeilstorch, or "arrow stork" in German. Commonly spotted in summers in Germany, it headed to Central Africa when winter set in, as did all its feathered friends, experts began to realise, as they began research into bird migrations. The pfeilstorch was eventually preserved and is on display at University of Rostock in Germany, the tell-tale arrow still embedded in its neck.



Meet teachers from fictional schools who are top of their class



Think of the titular Bad Teacher (Cameron Diaz), in the raunchy 2011 comedy, who works incredibly hard to get her class scores up, so she can win a special bonus and get breast implants. Well, that's fiction. In the real world, almost everyone has had at least one memorable teacher who changed them for the better. It is an experience so universal that it has inspired advertisements (among the most evocative of these, a Raymond ad, featuring a gift of fabric in a large box, left in a vintage car, on a teacher's last day). It's an experience that has inspired poems, songs (plenty, from Abba to Bollywood, through the years), and of course films and series. Every child wants a Miss Honey, the natural-born guardian who protects the neglected little Matilda with the red bow in her hair. Harry Potter's Hogwarts is a veritable feast of remarkable faculty. Further back, there's Goodbye, Mr Chips (1939; based on the 1934 novel by James Hilton),

in which the titular character sees his students through World War 1.

One such character is Paul Hunham in *The Holdovers* (2023; now streaming in India). Among its five Oscar nominations was one for Best Actor, for Paul Giamatti. He lost to Cillian Murphy (*Oppenheimer*), but that's only what Hunham would have expected. The film is an evocative look at loss, regret, fear (that dreadfully entwined kind, of success and failure). It's a moving tale about the different ways in which a torch may be lit, and passed. And how, no matter how old one is, it will eventually be time to leave the safety of campus. Here, then, is a look at teachers in recent films who may have failed some of life's tests, but whose lessons are perhaps more memorable for it. Fall guy: Hunham is, let's be honest, a bit of a loser. He is both mopey and strict, he seems out of date. He tosses obscure facts from ancient history into conversation. He's a bit of a laughing stock

among students and faculty at Barton Academy in New England. But perhaps that's because this is a world in which ethics seem like an absurd way to make a choice. Enter Angus Tully, an overgrown, angry problem child with nowhere to go during the Christmas holiday. Hunham is tasked with keeping an eye on him. They spend the two weeks in the company of cafeteria manager Mary Lamb (played by Da'Vine Joy Randolph, who did win her Oscar, for Best Supporting Actress). Bit by bit, in quiet conversations, revelations seep out about shattered dreams, lost loves, the pain of living in a world that moves on, unseeing and indifferent. There is the sharp ache, all around, of unfulfilled promise. And then suddenly, a chance for a fresh start. As with all things, it isn't a stroke of luck for Hunham, but it is one that he can extend to someone else.

Will he still do the right thing, if he has nothing to gain? Of course he will. What if he has everything to lose? As it turns out, the answer is still yes. By heart: In *The Whale* (2022), Brendan Fraser plays Charlie, a talented, reclusive and severely obese English teacher on a self-destructive mission, driven by unprocessed grief and guilt. He holds classes online, keeping himself largely hidden. He offers valuable lessons on harmony and clarity of thought, while battling to find these himself.

He manages to reach out to his estranged teenage daughter, not as the father who left and has now returned, but as a professional recognising her talent for the written word, a talent he did little to exploit in himself. It's a dark but compelling tale: Sometimes the greatest gift a teacher can give, is lessons in what not to

do. Say the word: Based in real life, the German film *Mr Bachmann and his Class* (2021) is about a school teacher whose class of 12- and 14-year-olds in Stadtallendorf in central Germany is now a rainbow of mixed cultures.

Dieter Bachmann, who teaches music, math and languages and is well-loved, must find ways to show the youngsters from Germany and from Turkey, Bulgaria and Russia how to navigate each other's identities. Added challenges come from sexist bullying, homophobia and violence between students; he must navigate these in a way that will neither condone nor alienate the young offender. That's a focus in this film because Herr Bachmann basically turns his classroom into a kind of living room where — and I think this is extremely important — the kids feel at home. It's a place of trust, of safety, where they are seen and where they can show who they are as individuals, as people.

That's what the film is about," director Maria Speth said in an interview with *Hollywood Reporter* in 2021. The 217-minute documentary earned Speth the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. Soul train: A pre-fame Ryan Gosling (he would make it big five years later, in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*) plays Dan Dunne, a Brooklyn middle-school history teacher, in the 2006 film *Half Nelson*. He is engaging and innovative in class, sparks dialogue and debate.

By night, he battles a cocaine addiction. Can a student who has recently begun peddling drugs for the local dealer help him out? The rest of his students don't see the teacher struggle; few students ever do. The classroom, then, becomes a place where he must be his best self.