

MARCH 19-25, 2023

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

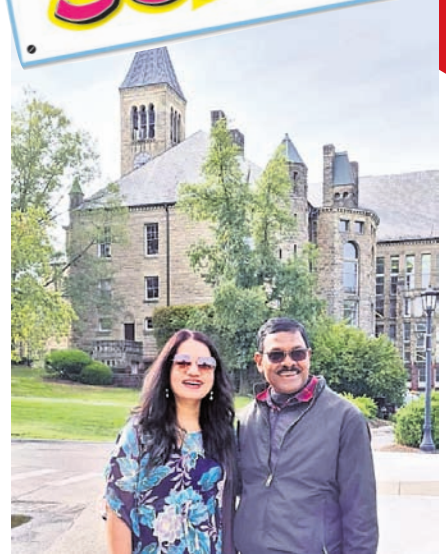


# THE BURNING FOREST

P 3,4  
COVER  
STORY

# MY SUNDAY

**THOUGH KNOWN TO ALL AS THE DAUGHTER OF JNANPITH AWARD WINNING NOVELIST PRATIBHA RAY, AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TOURISM & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT ADYASHA DAS HAS HER DISTINCT IDENTITY. THE ACCLAIMED SUFI SINGER AND CREATIVE WRITER SAYS SHE GOES EXPLORING UNUSUAL DESTINATIONS FROM THE WILD FORESTS OF ODISHA TO TRYING OUT LOCAL FLAVOURS IN CAMBODIA**



SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

### Holidaying with fam

For me, holidaying alternates between company and solitude. At times I travel to relatively unknown destinations, ancient temples on my own or spend lots of relaxing moments with family and friends. I do the things I love when I have time off. I think, that is the best way to relax.

### Reviving heritage

I am a creative writer, apart from my research oriented non-fiction books. I am also a heritage and culture enthusiast who is passionate about exploring and reviving both of our lost intangible and tangible heritage.

### Love for books

Reading books of course is my favourite pass time! From history to romance, culture to poetry, I can read any book. For me, a book is an entire world, a boundless universe to be explored.

### Wanderlust

Adventure for me is not always about climbing mountains. I do go exploring unusual destinations- from the wild forests of Odisha to trying out local flavours in Cambodia, once-in-a-lifetime experiences in Europe to snorkeling in Andaman.

## WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes received to: [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- Wife: "I look fat. Can you give me a compliment?" Husband: "You have perfect eyesight."
- Why is the day that you do laundry, cook, clean, iron and so on, called a day off?
- You're not fat, you're just... easier to see.
- Everything always ends well. If not - it's probably not the end.



## A WAKE-UP CALL

Sir, 'Love thy Rivers'(March 14) emphasising the International Day of Action for Rivers, was indeed a wake-up call for the common man to embrace the importance of rivers for sustenance. The astute observation of Odisha's Waterman Ranjan Panda about a lack of empathy for the conservation of rivers was an eye-opener. If the ecosystem is the human body, then the rivers are the blood vessels. It is of the utmost importance for everyone to protect their sanctity. It was delightful to see the active participation of youth in this direction. As Sasmita Mohapatra put it, "We don't decide water's fate, it decides ours." Along with active participation and awareness about the issue, the administration should also create policies to prevent the pollution of rivers and adhere to them. It would be unwise to say that if the life line fails, the demise of the ecosystem is inevitable.

UMASHANKAR SWAIN, RAGHUNATHPUR

## LETTERS



### A WORD FOR READERS

Sunday POST is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Please send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) B-15, Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar - 751010, Orissa. Phone (0674) 2549982, 2549948

WORLD FORESTRY DAY - MARCH 21

# The burning forest



MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

**A**t a time when activists across the globe are gearing up to celebrate World Forestry Day to raise awareness about the importance of woodlands and their role in sustaining life on earth, back home new records on the number of forest fire cases are set with each passing day. A study suggests that Odisha now holds the undesirable record of having most number of forest fire cases in the country for the second year in a row. Things have come to such a pass that for last few sessions in state Assembly no business has been conducted in the House due to increasing number of forest fire cases putting the credibility of the government at stake.

Ahead of International Day of Forests, a few activists and conservationists shared with **Sunday POST** their opinions on the issue and the ways forward. Here're the excerpts:

**'Involve stakeholders'**

**Biswajeet Mohanty**, a wildlife conservationist, has been working for wildlife conservation in Odisha since 1996.

He says, "Forest fires have caused a devastating loss of biodiversity. They burn away the seeds and seedlings, which can regenerate into large trees, destroy the food of wildlife species, and destroy the ground-dwelling fauna like reptiles, mongooses, snakes, and frogs. They also evict some bird species."

Addressing the inefficiency for prevention of forest fires, he said, "The primary issue is lack of stakeholder involvement by the forest department. They do not consult with people who have prior expertise operating in wildlife and forests. Hence, they are unaware of field inputs, which can help them significantly battle forest fires. There is also mistrust from the local communities towards the department,



**ODISHA, A STATE KNOWN FOR COMBATING NATURAL CALAMITIES QUITE SUCCESSFULLY, NOW HOLDS THE UNDESIRABLE RECORD OF HAVING MOST NUMBER OF FOREST FIRE CASES IN THE COUNTRY FOR TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS**

which results in no active participation from them as well. Earlier, the department promised financial rewards to locals if they stopped the forest fire, but they did not keep their word."

There are NGOs, wildlife activists, and forest conservationists who can lend a helping hand but are unable to do so unless the forest department views them as stakeholders and values their input. Hence, the conservationist believes that when it comes to the participation of stakeholders in decision-making and execution, the department must be the one to make the first move, added Mohanty.

Lamenting the lackadaisical attitude of the authorities, he continues: "In 2021, the government completed a thorough report after scrutinising forest fires. It also established a task group to investigate and tackle forest fires. Neither the report nor the information about the task group was publicly available. With this kind of attitude, I think it is nearly impossible to combat the issue together."

Mohanty firmly believes that the entire approach needs to be changed in order to reduce harm to people who live near forests and their health.

"The action plan should be to involve the locals with a reward system and strengthen trust. They are the ones on the ground with the ability to react quickly and put out the fire. Locals have frequently stepped forward to put out

fires in the past", he concludes.

**'Make forest protection a mass movement'**

**Jayakrushna Panigrahi**, Secretary of the Orissa Environmental Society (OEC), was a member of the Task Force on Forest Fire constituted by the Government of Odisha. On forest fire prevention, he said, "It should be our top concern because forests are a state's natural wealth. They provide a variety of goods and services to the populace and regulate our climate. Since most forest fires are caused by people, the answer is to raise awareness among the villagers who live in and around the forests. They must comprehend the value of trees in their lives as a source of sustenance. The Forest Department must set up a network and host a number of awareness gatherings with participation from students, local NGOs, self-help groups, voluntary sustainability standards' members, and villagers. The people must receive some rewards for serving as forest guardians."



He adds that the responsibility of the government is to make forest protection a mass movement. The more stakeholders get involved in it, the more success it will bring to the initiative. "Since human health depends on the environment in which we live and the resources that are at our disposal, and as the forest ecosystem crumbles, those who live close to forests suffer the most," concludes Panigrahi.

**'Don't blame government all the time'**

**Y. Giri Rao** is the Executive Director of Vasundhara, an organization working on forests and its dwellers. Although he has a mixed opinion when it comes to the impact forest fires have on environmental health, he still believes that large-scale forest fires are hazardous to the health of the planet and it can be prevented with active measures taken by the government and participation of the natives.



Stressing a few points to prevent forest fire, he opines, "We need the assistance of the locals and the forest management to control the forest fire; make sure no one gathers any dry refuse near the forest. To stop the fire from spreading, the patrolling team should check that the forest has been cleaned up and that it is free of obstructions."



People or visitors should be reminded not to light any matches close to the dry leaves. Mahua and kendu leaf workers should be fined by the department for not carefully reading the rules and regulations.”

“The organisation and the individuals were not the only ones at fault. There is no awareness or activism on the topic of fire prevention. We ought to join and have a discussion about how to stop forest fires. The department cannot take all the responsibility. The locals, gram panchayats, and towns are equally responsible for being a part of the government’s action plan to put out the fire,” he said.

‘Controlled fire good for ecosystem’

According to researcher and eminent environment activist Ranjan Panda, wildfires and other threats to natural forest are a serious worry.



Sharing his thoughts on the issue, he said, “One of the main reasons of forest fires is the combination of rising temperatures and declining annual rainfall. Another factor that contributes to the spread of fire is degraded woodlands, which also have the added benefit of accelerating the effects of heat. Therefore, a multi-layered, multi-sectoral intervention strategy is required to prevent forest fires. Making sound policies for prevention is just as important as putting out fires. This can be achieved with the help of traditional knowledge and practices from the local communities, the forest department, and other people’s support. Long-term forest fire prevention should be aided by urgent global and national climate action, sufficient state support, and local action at the district and panchayat levels.”

Even as forest fires cause more harm than good, Panda spots a silver-lining in them. “Controlled fire’ has always been beneficial for the ecosystem. Indigenous and local groups have used ‘controlled fire’ in many locations to improve the

soil’s nutrients and the growth of some fruit- and flower-bearing plants that give them food and other supports. However, things worsen and the forest’s biodiversity suffers when fires get out of control for a variety of reasons and reach the crown level,” he explains.

Wildfires not only make widespread destruction inside the forest, it pose threat to the communities reliant on forest resources, says Panda.

“As the wellbeing of local and indigenous communities is closely correlated with the health of the regional ecosystems, including forests, it is crucial to safeguard their lives, livelihoods, and health. Therefore, every attempt should be made to safeguard these communities from forest fires. In reality, providing them with more assistance, resources, technology, and control over the forest’s resources would help to both prevent forest fires and shield them from the effects of this on-going issue,” he suggests.



IN NEWS FOR ALL WRONG REASONS

- On a day Odisha recorded 147 large forest fires - the highest for any state on March 7.
- The Forest Survey of India data showed forests burning in 22 of the 30 districts of Odisha.
- The state has witnessed the most 625 such large fires last week.
- Ten of the large fires in Odisha are active for more than three days continuously, which is highest in the country.
- A past report from Forest Survey of India says that the country witnessed 3,45,989 incidents of forest fire in between November 2020 to June 2021, in which Odisha topped the list with 51,968 cases alone.



Major causes of forest fire in Odisha

- By mahua flowers and kendu leaves pluckers
- By poachers during their hunting of wild animals
- Age-old tradition of shifting cultivation
- Setting forests on fire due to personal grudges of some people against forest department officials
- Bidi and cigarette butts are often thrown on dry leaves
- Stubble burning in farmlands near forests
- Burning forest by locals to regenerate grass on the forest floor for grazing of cattle
- Fire not extinguished by picnic parties



World Sparrow Day, March 20

Though the debate about whether the digital revolution has jammed the air passages is inconclusive, it is widely believed that the house sparrows started disappearing in the mid 1990s when mobile phone service started in India



IMAGE COURTESY: TOBIAS ROTH VIA UNSPLASH

# Help them build a home

SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

Known as the Bird of Love, house sparrows, which were once an integral part of our environment, have almost disappeared two decades ago. This 'common bird' that lived in the small holes and pipes of our houses, which used to finish off our leftover food, today lists itself amongst the endangered species, states The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Environmental conservationists blame the decline in the population of house sparrows to the unfriendly architecture of our homes, trimming of trees, chemical fertilisers in our crops, noise pollution that disturbs acoustic ecology and exhaust from vehicles and industries.

The debate about whether the digital revolution has jammed the air passages is inconclusive, but it certainly is no coincidence that the house sparrows started disappearing in the mid 1990s, when mobile phone service started in India.

Ahead of World Sparrow Day, an occasion to raise awareness on the protection of the winged species, a couple of bird lovers spoke about the reasons behind the gradual disappearance of the sparrows and the measures to be undertaken to arrest their dwindling number.



Known as the 'Birdman of Odisha', UN award winning environmentalist **Subhransu Satpathy** says he has been conducting workshops to save thirsty birds in summer since 2008. So far, he has distributed more than 35,000 earthen pots to give respite to the feathered species.

It is his way of giving back to nature, he

says. "The sparrow's ecological significance is related to the vegetative cover of an area because it reflects the native and historical vegetative range of the region. This bird needs various native species of vegetation, including numerous wildflowers, shrubs, and trees for sustenance. Loss of habitat due to rapid urbanisation, diminishing ecological resources for sustenance, high levels of pollution and emissions from microwave towers are a few of the many reasons behind the decline



SUBHRANSU PLACING EARTHEN WATER POTS FOR BIRDS

of sparrow population", points out Subhransu. "Ventilators in homes have been replaced by air-conditioners and trees by ornamental plants and decorative flower shrubs in parks which have made it impossible for the birds to make nests", he further adds.

He goes on to add that sparrows are known to be sensitive to magnetic radiation and mobile tower airwaves that interfere with their sensor and misguide them while flying.

"From a case study I came to know that in Chennai at least four of the 200 odd species of birds are disappearing very fast. So I thought the excessive number of mobile towers would definitely affect birds. Earlier, most house sparrows used to live in crevices of buildings, but in the new era glasshouses don't have space for them. Polluted areas are never a

chosen place for birds nesting. Nowadays, trees are vanishing in cities so birds are found perching on power cables instead of tree branches leading to their death in large numbers. By addressing these issues, we can check the declining number of sparrows," says the alumnus of Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

First thing towards creating awareness on sparrow conservation is to not add to the deteriorating situation.

"So, we are creating an eco-friendly space for house sparrows where they can build nests. We can make that area completely devoid of air and noise pollution and cracker-free as well. Besides, doable and affordable practices like putting nesting boxes and water/grain bowls in balconies are a few activities that we ask people to do," concludes the bird lover.

**Bijendra Majhi**, Secretary of Anchalik Vikash Parishad, an NGO based out of Ganjam district, says that the conservation of sparrows began in 2010 when an NGO Nature for Society took up a few initiatives.

"My only concern is availability of food and shelter for the birds. Technology is growing day by day but it affects the environment. Earlier sparrows were found in greener, eco-friendly and quite common residential areas. But currently due to the concrete architectural design, noise and air pollution house sparrows are gradually disappearing. So lifestyle of humans has definitely led to extinction of the species," shares Majhi.

Asked on practices that can attract the sparrows again, he suggests, "People should place artificial nests, feeder bottles and water pots in areas where sparrows still exist, so

that it can help them breed. Planting trees and avoiding trimming of branches also will help to a great extent. Scaling up this initiative, raising awareness about frequent scientific monitoring of sparrows by studying their social behaviour, population status and conservation needs are also crucial."

## Incredible sparrow facts

- Sparrows in the city use cigarette butts to protect their nest. The nicotine helps drive away parasitic mites.
- A female sparrow knocked down 23,000 dominoes which were set up for a big event in the Netherlands. The display was almost complete. However, after the tiny house sparrow bumped it, everything fell.
- Scientists used to believe that wing waving was a friendly way for sparrows to say hello or goodbye to friends. But that's not the case. The opposite is true; wing waving is all about displaying anger.
- White-crowned sparrows can stay fully alert throughout long periods of sleep deprivation. The ability helps them when it's time to migrate.
- Sparrows have contributed to science in a significant way. Approximately 5,000 research papers have been published with these little birds as study species.

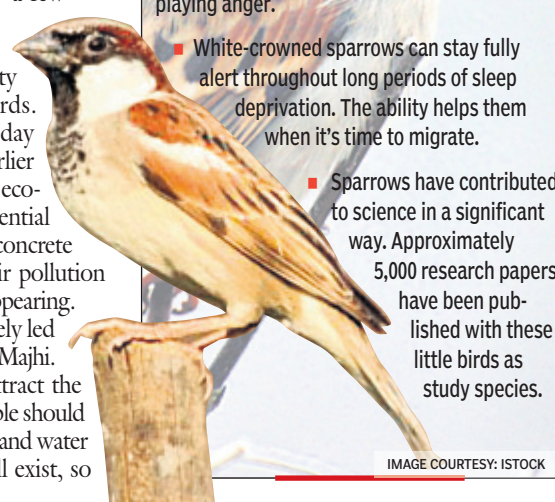


IMAGE COURTESY: ISTOCK

**Want to play roles that challenge me: Aditi**

**Mumbai:** TV actor and model Aditi Shetty has been a part of the show *Bhagyalaxmi* and is currently seen in *Dharampatni*. The actress says that she loves exploring different roles on TV.

“As an actor, I just aim to play different roles. I want to play roles that challenge me as an actor and help me grow and learn every single day. Kavya’s character in

*Dharampatni* has been such an amazing journey for me; I have learned so much as an artiste, and it’s been a rewarding experience for me. I am nothing like Kavya in real life. I am getting to live an entirely different life when I play that character. I feel so lucky to get this role, and doing it justice is my aim. Having said that, I am looking forward to stronger positive roles as well in the main lead space, as I feel ready and confident as an actor to take it up and do justice to it,” she says.

Talking about the kind of reality shows she wants to be part of, she adds, “I started my career with modeling, and at that time, I was very interested in doing a show related to that. That’s why I was a part of India’s Next Top Model. I feel that a show where I get to showcase my personality will be exciting. Maybe *Bigg Boss* will be nice to test me on how I react to certain situations.”

IAN S



**Sidhant’s Guddu Gangster set for a Raja release**

**Bhubaneswar:**

After the success of his last movie *Bapa Superman*, actor Sidhant Mohapatra is gearing up for his next titled *Guddu Gangster*. The film also stars Sailendra Samantaray and Namrata Thappa and is set to be released in Raja this year. The Ashok Pati-directed movie is presented by Anasmish Production and Prakash Films.

Speaking to **Sunday POST**, the director said that the movie is a typical ‘Ashok Pati’ movie with fantasy drama and a mixture of comedy, thriller, action, and romance. Sidhant plays a gangster while Sailendra is a student. The core of the story is how their lives get entangled due to certain events. The director assures that it has a lot of twists and turns. Sivani Sangita, Elli Padhi, Krishna Kar, Bobby Mishra, Rakhee Dash, Choudhary Jayprakash Das, and Jiban Panda play other key roles in the movie.

Asad Nizam, Kuldeep Pattanaik, Humane Sagar, Swayam Padhi, Assema Panda, Antara Chakraborty, and Navya Jaiti have lent their voice to the songs while the story, screenplay and dialogues have been penned down by Bharadwaj Panda. Pritam Sahu is the producer of the movie. PNN



**Chitrangda finds *Gaslight* co-actors ‘exceptional’**

**Mumbai:** Actress Chitrangda Singh, who will be seen playing the role of Rukmini in the upcoming suspense thriller *Gaslight*, shared her experience working with Sara Ali Khan and Vikrant Massey.

The actress is playing the lead character Misha’s (Sara Ali Khan’s) stepmother. Misha is a physically challenged girl, while Rukmini is a mysterious mother.

Sharing her working experience with lead actors, Chitrangada said, “It was absolutely lovely working with Sara and Vikram. The two have done an abundance of work in Hindi films, and the casting of this film sets you up for interesting scenes.”

The actress further shared that as a person, she, Sara, and Vikrant are completely different, but their on-screen chemistry looks perfect and makes the plot intriguing.

“The three of us are very distinct from one another as people and actors, but together, the chemistry and suspense we were able to build and create in regard to the plot are honestly exceptional. You can only expect that we have had a great time on set,” she added.

IAN S



**Taapsee recollects awful Miss India experience**

**Mumbai:** Actress Taapsee Pannu recalls the time at the Miss India beauty pageant in 2008, when she made it to the top 28. She said that there was a lot of favouritism going on in the selection process.

The *Pink* actress tried modeling for a few years before settling on the profession of actor. Sharing the experience in an interview, she said, “I realised during the ‘grooming period’ that this wasn’t something I could do. They’d make us walk; they taught us how to smile. Hemant Trivedi (designer) used to be the expert teacher at the time, and he humiliated me. He said, ‘If it was in my hand, you would have never been in the top 28.’”

She continued, “There was a lot of favouritism happening there. They were making people sign contracts that strictly stipulated that contestants would have to give 30 per cent of all their earnings for three years to the pageant. When it was over, we went to an after party. A national director was there, and he wished me good luck for the future very courteously. I don’t know what took over me, but I told him, ‘Sir, take it from me in writing, you’re not getting the crown back.’”

During her time at the pageant, Taapsee picked up two titles: Miss Fresh Face and Miss Beautiful Skin.

AGENCIES





# From *Mother India* to *RRR* Podium finish at last !

Though 'Gandhi' and 'Slumdog Millionaire' had India-based themes and bagged Academy honours for the Best Film, the fact remains that these movies were made by non-Indian directors keeping the overseas audience in mind

- 1961: Ismail Merchant's *The Creation of Woman* was nominated for Best Short Subject (Live Action).
- 1969: Fali Bilimoria's *The House That Ananda Built* was nominated for Best Documentary (Short Subject).
- 1978: Ishu Patel's *Bead Games* was nominated for Best Animated Short Film.
- 1979: KK Kapil's *An Encounter with Faces* bagged a nomination for Best Documentary (Short Subject).
- 1983: Pandit Ravi Shankar was nominated for Best Original Score for *Gandhi*.
- 1987: Ismail Merchant's *A Room With a View* was nominated for Best Picture.
- 1989: Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* was nominated for Best Foreign Film.
- 1993: Ismail Merchant's *Howards End* was nominated for Best Picture.
- 1994: Ismail Merchant's *The Remains of the Day* was nominated for Best Picture.
- 2002: Aamir Khan-starrer *Lagaan* was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film.
- 2005: Ashvin Kumar's *Little Terrorist* was nominated for Best Short Subject (Live Action).
- 2009: AR Rahman's *O... Saya* from the film *Slumdog Millionaire* was nominated for Best Original Song.
- 2011: AR Rahman's *If I Rise* from the film *127 Hours* was nominated for Best Original Song.
- 2013: Bombay Jayashri' *Pi's Lullaby* from the film *Life of Pi* was nominated for Best Original Song.
- 2022: Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh's *Writing with Fire* was nominated for Best Documentary Feature

Every year in the month of February, much before the Academy award presentation ceremony, millions of Indian movie enthusiasts scout around in the shortlist for any Indian names vying for top slots. But except for a couple of occasions in last several decades, their dream often get shattered as hardly any Indian movies make it to the final short list if we keep the individual Academy glories like Satyajit Ray, Resul Pookutty, AR Rahman and Gulzar aside.

It may be argued that two movies *Gandhi* (directed by Richard Attenborough) and *Slumdog Millionaire* (directed by Danny Boyle) had won Oscars for Best Film. But can they be called Indian movies? Both certainly have India-based themes with a few Indian actors featuring in them but they were not made by Indian directors. The fact remains that these movies were made by non-Indian directors keeping the overseas audience in mind. So, the Oscar dream for an Indian movie remained unfulfilled till the 95th Academy Awards were announced in the wee hours (Indian time) of 12th March.

After all, it is not every day that not one but two original Indian movies bag Academy awards busting the myth that the country doesn't produce quality films even as it is the largest producers of films in the world. Of the three movies shortlisted in different categories, SS Rajamouli's *RRR* (for Best Song - *Naatu Naatu*) and Guneet Monga &

Kartiki Gonsalves's *The Elephant Whispers* (for Best Documentary Short Film) brought home the Oscars.

With the euphoria over the Academy glory refusing to die down, here's a look at how Indians have so far fared at the biggest stage of entertainment.

**Notable performances**  
Bhanu Athaiya was the first Indian to win an Academy Award in 1983



for Best Costume Design for Richard Attenborough's 1982 film *Gandhi*.

Subsequently, in 1992, iconic filmmaker Satyajit Ray was conferred with an honorary Academy Award.

Presenting the award to Ray, who received it on his hospital bed in Kolkata, legendary actress Audrey Hepburn had described his work as a "rare mastery of the art of motion pictures and his profound humanism which has had an indelible influence on filmmakers and audiences throughout the world".

Ray remains the only Indian till date to win an honorary Academy Award.

The year 2009 saw the 'Mozart of Madras', AR Rahman, bag an Oscar for Best Original Score for the Danny Boyle directorial *Slumdog Millionaire*, which won eight Academy Awards.

The movie also got Resul Pookutti the Oscar for Best Sound Mixing, while lyricist Gulzar and AR Rahman jointly won the award for the Best Original Song (*Jai Ho*), taking India's count for the movie to three.

However, India's association with the Academy Awards goes as far back as 1958, when Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* became the first ever Indian film to be nominated for the Academy Awards in its 30th edition, under the Best Foreign Language Film category.

The iconic film is a depiction of crushing poverty braved by a widow while she struggles to raise her sons respectfully. It features Nargis, Sunil Dutt, Rajendra Kumar, and Raaj Kumar in lead roles. Since then, India has had a handful of nominations (in box) for the prestigious laurel. PNN/AGENCIES



# Sasmita

PHOTO: KAMAL PHOTOGRAPHY