

JULY 23-29, 2023

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



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COVER STORY

Blue Tick Blues

MY SUNDAY

Though a graphic designer by profession, he has made a name for himself in several other industries including fashion, education and entertainment. Golakendra Dash aka Gol Chitra also has collaborated with top filmmaker Sushant Mani and at the same time played key roles in promotion of Odia plays on social media. When he's not working, he enjoys doing doodles



As a lensman

• Creative break

I don't typically do anything work-related on Sundays. I enjoy pursuing my other passions, such as sketching, reading, and producing content for social media.

• Weakness for Odia cuisine

My go-to meals have always been genuine Odia cuisine. To get them on my plate, I can get down on my knees. This apart, I also adore dishes made with soy chunks. I can prepare delicious Biryani for special events.

• Music addict

In addition to my other interests, I have a strong enthusiasm for music. I therefore spend some time singing and listening to music on Sundays and other holidays.

• Mother-son bonding

Lending a helping hand to mom in gardening is my way of cementing the bond between us. I also don't let go any opportunity to spend quality time with the family.



With mother



MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

• A day for the stray

Sunday is that day of the week when I take care of the stray animals in my neighbourhood. At the same time, I ask others to foster greater empathy for animals those live on the streets

WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

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

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- If I ever need a heart transplant, I'd want my ex's. It's never been used.
- No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationary.
- My love is like communism; everyone gets a share, and it's only good in theory.
- Living on earth may be expensive, but it includes an annual free trip around the sun.

LEGACY OF GENGHIS KHAN

Sir, I always knew that Mongol ruler Genghis Khan is a tyrant who was responsible for the death of millions of people comprising 10 per cent population of the world during his time, oblivious of the fact that such image is the modus operandi of the western authors. The fact that Khan occupied more territory in 20 years than Roman monarchs did in 300 years is interesting. Like the well-known YouTuber Chavda, I see no reason why Europeans couldn't accept the idea that a person from the east is superior to Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Alexander the Great. The article in last week's **Sunday POST** made for an intriguing read as it focused on facts which most readers may not know instead of demonising Khan. It's also interesting to know that one in 200 men globally carries genetic traces from the famed Mongolian Emperor. I'm eager to discover more about these great figures.

TAPAN PANDA, JAGATSINGHPUR

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
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Blue Tick Blues



USERS OF SEVERAL VERIFIED SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ALLEGE THAT FREE ACCESSIBILITY TO BLUE TICKS HAS RESULTED IN AN INCREASE IN CYBERCRIME AS SCAMMERS ARE USING FAKE VALIDATION TO IMPERSONATE CELEBS AND INFLUENCERS

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

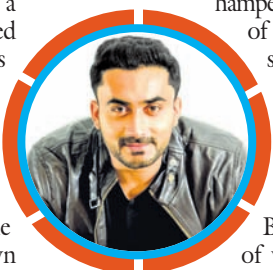
Sneha, a well-known artist in Bhubaneswar, was looking through Instagram when she discovered her neighbour's account had a Blue Tick, which surprised her because her neighbour was simply an 18-year-old student, not an actor or famous with a large fan base. As a result, she grew inquisitive and continued scrolling, uncovering additional profiles similar to her neighbour's. She then looked up current events on Google and realised that "now users can buy Blue Tick for social media at a low price," which she found quite irritating. It saddened her since, while being an artist with genuine fans, she is not verified, whereas her lesser-known neighbour is.

For the past two months, people on Instagram and Twitter have been purchasing Blue Tick by paying a monthly subscription fee. A number of celebrities, including Virat Kohli, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Chrissy Teigen, and Kim Kardashian, were not in favour of this arrangement as there were concerns about misinformation and impersonation. The Blue Tick is not only for celebrities; it also assists users in identifying other high-profile accounts, such as news organisations and journalists, and influencers. Previously, a person had to go through a complete authentication process to obtain a 'verified' account on social

media, but today anyone can have it. With possessing a Blue Tick account quickly becoming a status symbol, some famous Bhubaneswar residents shared their views on the matter with **Sunday POST**.

'Scores of bogus Blue Ticks floating about'

"The credibility of social media has been hampered by the availability of Blue Ticks at will," says actor **Partha Sarathi Ray**, who is basking in the success of his most recent film, *Phalguna Chaitra*. Blue Ticks are a type of verification symbol that is given to accounts



that are thought to be genuine. However, websites now allow people to purchase Blue Ticks even if

they are not famous or prominent. As a result, there are a lot of bogus Blue Ticks floating about, which has damaged the public's trust in social media."

He continues: "I have never been concerned with social media validation. However, I feel that the opportunity to purchase Blue Ticks has made it more diffi-

cult for consumers to tell the difference between actual and phoney accounts. I also doubt the value of influencers, who are people with a large social media following and are frequently paid to endorse businesses or services. "I believe that many influencers lack credibility, and that their followers are frequently more interested in the number of views and likes that their posts garner than in the content of the posts."

Partha believes that a Blue Tick should need a certain level of qualification, such as being interviewed by a prominent media outlet.

He ends by stating that organic followers and post engagements should be the ideal requirement for a Blue Tick.

'It becomes tough to detect the phoney accounts'

"The sale of Blue Ticks on social media has had a negative impact on the perception of influencers," says **Pritam Nayak**, a fashion designer. "Because of the low cost of a Blue Tick, anyone can purchase one, regardless of their validity or reach. As a result, the number of counterfeit accounts has in-

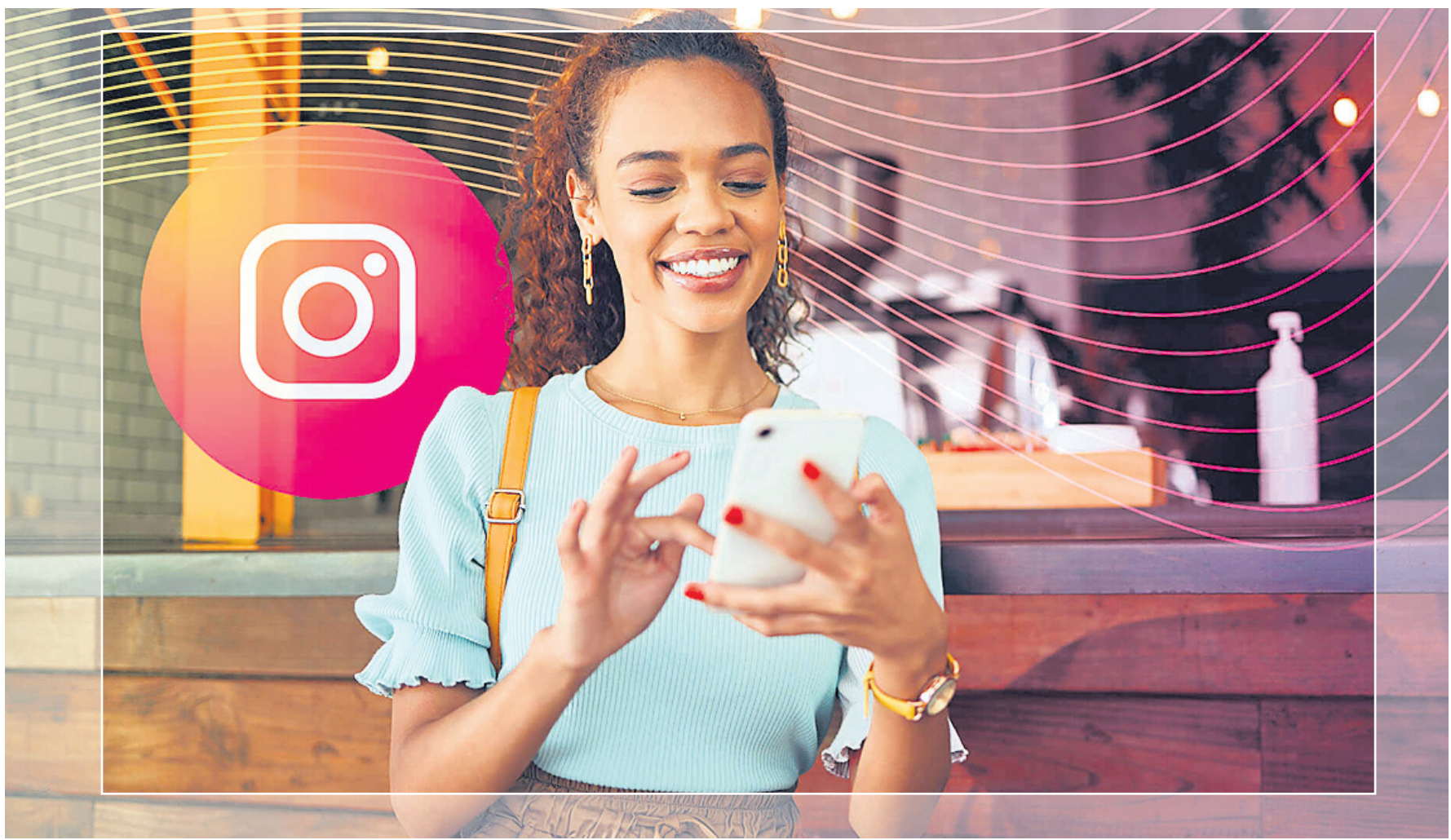
creased, making it harder for consumers to discern between actual and false influencers."

"Previously, Blue Ticks were exclusively granted to verified accounts on social media. This verification procedure included determining the authenticity of the account, the type of content it was producing, and if it had been referenced in the media. The sale of Blue Ticks, however, has rendered this verification procedure obsolete. Now, any Tom-Dick-Harry can enjoy the Blue Tick facility," Nayak says.

Speaking about the repercussions, he adds, "First, it has made it more difficult for users to find true influencers. Second, it has resulted in a rise in bogus followers and engagement. Third, it has diminished the significance of the Blue Tick, which was once regarded as a mark of validity. Social media platforms should immediately stop selling Blue Ticks. The old verification mechanism worked well in guaranteeing that only genuine accounts received Blue Ticks. This procedure should be resumed, and no more Blue Ticks should be sold."

On other drawbacks, he continues: "Free accessibility to Blue Ticks has resulted in an increase in cybercrime, as scammers are using fake Blue Ticks to impersonate celebs and influencers. It has also weakened trust in social media platforms, as users have become skeptical of Blue Ticks' genuineness."



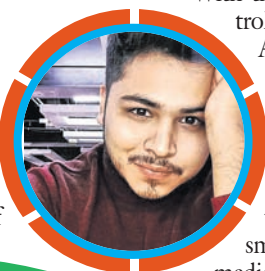


For all of the aforementioned reasons, social media sites should stop selling Blue Ticks immediately, argues Pritam, adding that the previous verification method was effective in guaranteeing that only real accounts received Blue Ticks, which should be preserved.

'The issue has been blown out of proportion'

However, journalist Anirbaan Hritiq feels the Blue Tick epidemic is a bit overblown.

He says, "I believe that having a Blue Tick or any form of verifica-



tion does not necessarily make your social media account more important, but it does amplify its presence. It draws attention, both positive and negative, especially if you can afford the monthly charges. As the phrase goes, 'with great power comes great responsibility,' and having a Blue Tick is no exception.

With the recognition comes a surge in trolling and increase in engagement.

As a result, many people will regard you as important and subject you to multiple instances of shame."

"In comparison to platforms such as Instagram and Facebook under META, the process of obtaining a Blue Tick on Twitter is smoother and simpler. It is vital for media professionals since it improves public perception and credibility. Blue Ticks were once reserved for celebrities and prominent people, but they are now available to everyone who can afford them. Twitter recently changed its policy, claiming that verified accounts have a larger word count and a wider reach than non-verified accounts. Non-verified users have limited views and access to other people's tweets and alerts, but the subscription model provides limitless access, HD video uploads, an expanded word count, and better reach," he adds.

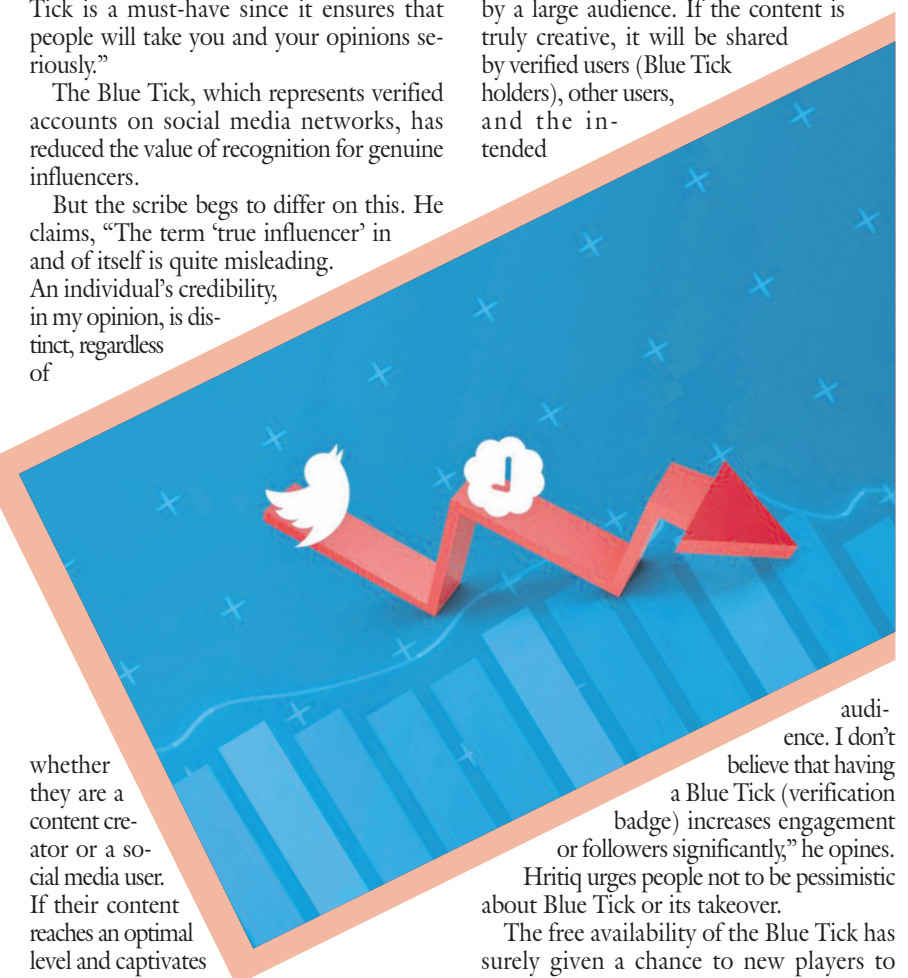
Hritiq further says, "I don't think what people think or portray on social media matters to me. It's critical to achieve pro-

fessional goals, to make my comments heard, and to make my tweets visible to appropriate authorities. As a journalist, I believe Blue Tick is a must-have since it ensures that people will take you and your opinions seriously."

The Blue Tick, which represents verified accounts on social media networks, has reduced the value of recognition for genuine influencers.

But the scribe begs to differ on this. He claims, "The term 'true influencer' in and of itself is quite misleading. An individual's credibility, in my opinion, is distinct, regardless of

ideas does not need to be recognised or given special attention in order for their voice to be heard or their content to be seen by a large audience. If the content is truly creative, it will be shared by verified users (Blue Tick holders), other users, and the intended



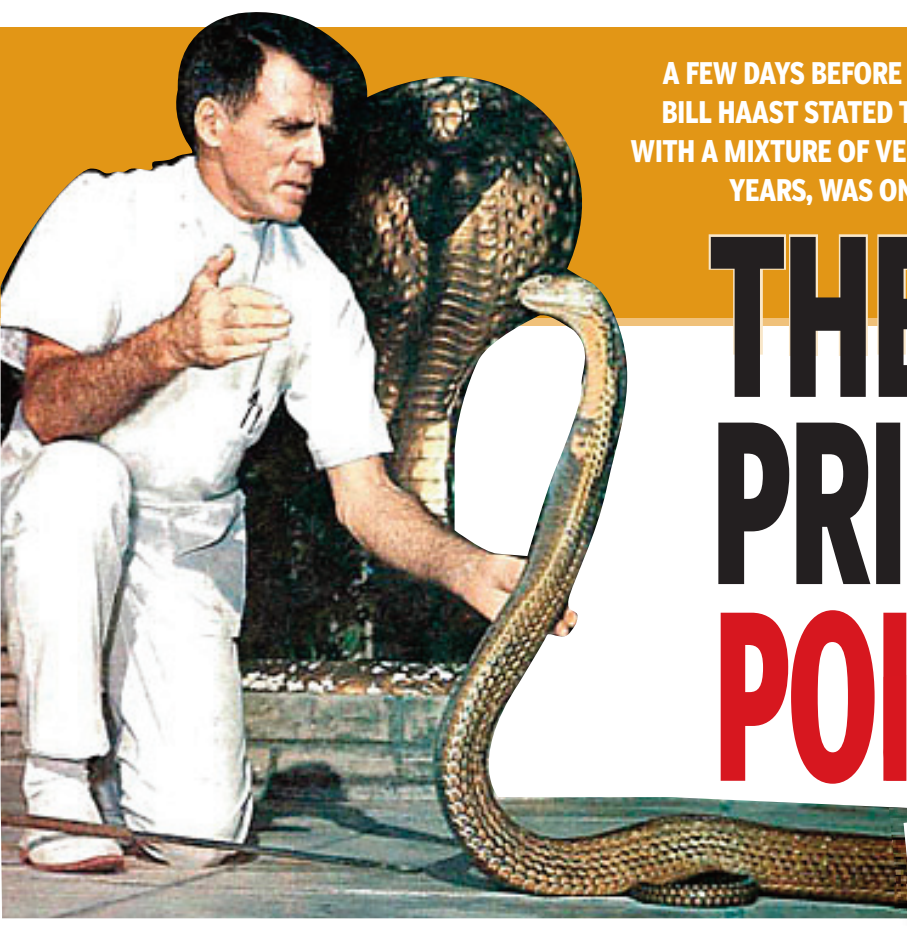
whether they are a content creator or a social media user. If their content reaches an optimal level and captivates the interest of people, their reputation and followers cannot be easily influenced or diminished by others.

"A true influencer or someone with creative

audience. I don't believe that having a Blue Tick (verification badge) increases engagement or followers significantly," he opines.

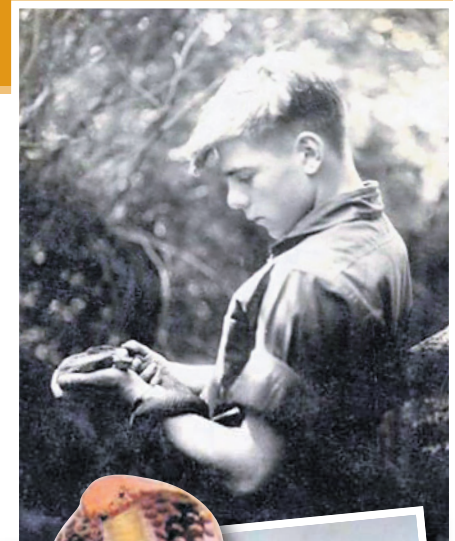
Hritiq urges people not to be pessimistic about Blue Tick or its takeover.

The free availability of the Blue Tick has surely given a chance to new players to enter the market and the emerging users, emerging professionals to have access to the excellent facilities offered by the Blue Tick, he signs off.



A FEW DAYS BEFORE HIS DEATH AT THE AGE OF 100, LEGENDARY AMERICAN SNAKE HANDLER BILL HAAST STATED THAT HIS IMMUNITY, WHICH HE HAD DEVELOPED BY INJECTING HIMSELF WITH A MIXTURE OF VENOMS FROM 32 DIFFERENT SNAKE SPECIES EVERY DAY FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS, WAS ONE OF THE SECRETS TO HIS SURVIVAL FROM OVER 170 SNAKEBITES

THE PRIEST OF POISON



Miami Serpentarium (File photo)

Love, laughter, happiness and regret. All with death are necessarily met. So live, laugh, be happy and gay. For tomorrow, you may be one of a yesterday.
 BILL HAAST

OP DESK

Retired Tata Steel engineer NK Singh, the famed snake-milker from Jamshedpur, earned lakhs of rupees a month by selling snake venom to Christian Medical College of Vellore in 2008.

According to a report, he produced 30-32 ounces of venom every year from over 35,000 snakes of his facility and used to get Rs 11 lakh each ounce.

But long before snake-milking became a startup in India, American innovator and humanitarian Bill Haast established the Miami Serpentarium (in the US) in 1947, where he amused visitors by performing live venom extraction from snakes. Later, in Florida, he established the Miami Serpentarium Laboratories, which produced snake venom for medical and research purposes.

The centenarian, who died in 2011, had reportedly handled over three million venomous snakes throughout his life and survived 173 snakebites, 20 of which were almost deadly. Haast said in one of his interviews that injecting venom concoctions into his body for years is possibly the secret to his survival and longevity.

Sunday POST shares some amazing facts about the most famous 'Snakeman' ever lived, as Haast is now part of folklore.

The first encounter

New Jersey-born Haast took interest in snakes at a Boy Scout summer camp when he was 11. He was bitten at the camp when he tried to capture a small timber rat-

lesnake. Though, Haast was rushed to see a doctor, he recovered without treatment. His next bite, the same year, came from a four-foot copperhead. It hospitalised him for a week and the journey took off.

When it all began

By the age of 19, Haast had mastered the art of handling all types of snakes. As a result, he expanded his family's existing resort business by adding a snake exhibit. He met Ann there and eloped to Florida to pursue his goal of owning a snake farm. He did, however, study aviation mechanics for a living and later joined Pan American World Airways. Haast worked as a flight engineer after the United States entered World War II. The work required him to go to South America, Africa, and India, where he purchased snakes to bring back to America.

Realisation of dream

In 1946 Haast decided he had enough money saved to start his snake farm. He bought a plot in Miami, then sold his house and started construction on the Serpentarium. By 1965 the Serpentarium housed more than 500 snakes in 400 cages and three

pits in the courtyard. Haast extracted venom 70 to 100 times a day from some 60 species of venomous snakes, usually in front of an audience of paying customers. He would free the snakes on a table in front of him, then catch the snakes bare-handed, and force them to eject their venom into glass vials with a rubber membrane stretched across the top. The substance is an essential ingredient in making a serum to treat snakebite victims. It has also shown promise as a medicinal ingredient.

The Miracle Man

Soon after opening the Serpentarium, Haast began experimenting with mithridatism, a practice to build up an acquired immunity to the venom of King, Indian and Cape cobras by injecting himself with gradually increasing quantities of venom he had extracted from his snakes. In 1954 Haast was bitten by a common krait. He ini-

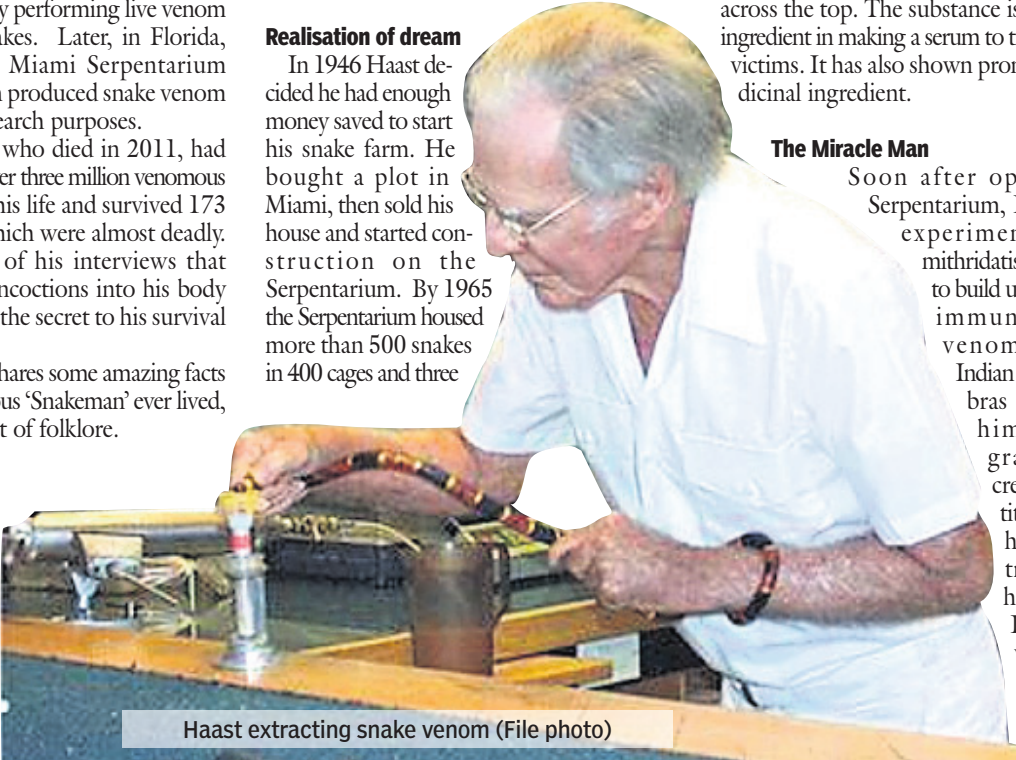
tially felt his immunisation to cobra venom would protect him from the krait bite. However, the venom ultimately did affect him, and he was taken to a hospital. A krait antivenom was shipped from India, but he refused to accept it and eventually healed. As a result of handling these snakes, Haast had been bitten 173 times in his life making it to the Guinness Book of World Records for surviving the most deadly snakebites.

Rescue act

Haast and a Miami doctor administered a snake-venom serum to over 6,000 people, claiming that it was successful against multiple sclerosis and arthritis. Interest in the serum increased after a story on the subject aired on CBS News' *60 Minutes* in December 1979. Researchers have continued to work on venom-derived medications with the intention of employing them to treat cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and other disorders. Haast unquestionably saved lives. He travelled around the world to give his antibody-rich blood to 21 snakebite sufferers.

Unaccomplished dream

Haast grew up during a distinct time period. There had been no real research into antivenom and its medical applications, but he saw past this dearth of knowledge. Haast had a fantasy to cure Polio with cobra venom after comparing its nerve effects to that of a snakebite. Progress was being made, but with the release of the vaccine, research was put on hold.



Haast extracting snake venom (File photo)



Naseer got ₹7.50 as his first salary

Naseeruddin Shah, who turned 73 last week, began his acting career with the 1975 Hindi film, *Nishant*. Over the next few decades, he acted in films such as *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983), *Masoom* (1983) and *Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa* (1994). In an old interview, Naseer had recalled how he began acting, and also revealed what was his first salary.

Known as one of the best actors in Hindi films, he often also shares his views on politics, history and society. He had earlier recalled that his first role was that of an extra in the 1967 film *Aman*. He had earned ₹7.50 for it.

Naseeruddin told Rediff in 2012, "As an extra when I was 16 in *Aman* made by Mohan Kumar. In the last scene where Rajendra Kumar is being taken for his funeral I am standing just behind him, looking very earnest. I got ₹7.50 and it lasted me two weeks."

AGENCIES



When Aishwarya teased an interviewer

Actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan is one of the most acclaimed actresses in the Indian film industry and has also been a global ambassador for Indian cinema, playfully teased a journalist in a resurfaced Reddit video.

In the viral video, a journalist is heard asking Aishwarya, "Are men intimidated by you?" to which the actress asked him, "Are you?". The journalist was seen nodding his head, denying being intimidated by her. However, the actress replied, "Oh, You're blushing, I love it."

As the video goes viral on Reddit, several netizens agreed that beauty can be intimidating sometimes. A user commented, "Rajkumar Rao mentioned being smitten/intimidated by her while filming *Fanny Khan* because of her beauty. And we all know how smitten Akshaye Khanna was with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan."

A third user wrote, "Dear lord, what a beauty. Genuinely gobsmacked looking at this through my phone, imagine the impact in person." "She's so beautiful, although the word 'Beautiful' doesn't do her justice. What must it feel like to be so gorgeous, to have that kind of power over the person in front of you!" another wrote.

Meanwhile, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was last seen in Mani Ratnam's *Ponniyin Selvan: II*, which was released earlier this year.

AGENCIES



Genelia opens up on her hiatus from films

Actress Genelia Deshmukh who is popularly known for her film *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na* has said that leaving films for a few years was her own decision, and actor-husband Riteish Deshmukh had no role in it.

Genelia told media, when asked if people still claim Riteish was the one, who made her quit films, "I am sure. People say what they want to say but the truth of the matter is that I decided. Till date...like people say 'Why don't you do so much more work?' I don't feel I can do so much work but I feel I still enjoy that whole part of being with my kids."

She added, "I want to do that. I want to do this.. I'll choose when I want to do what. And the good part is that I no more look for validation like I have to be part of this banner. I have to be part of a story that impressed me the day I read it."

Genelia and Riteish were first seen in their debut *Tujhe Meri Kasam* and later in *Tere Naal Love Ho Gaya*, *Masti* and *Mister Mummy*, and recently in *Ved*.

Genelia is currently gearing up for the release of film *Trial Period*. It had a digital premiere on Jio Cinema July 21.

AGENCIES



Sunny reveals story behind her stage name

Actress Sunny Leone was born in Canada to an Indian Sikh family and moved to India some years ago. In a recent interview, she revealed how she picked Sunny as her name, and told a magazine to pick her last name, Leone.

"I was in the US doing an interview for a magazine and they said, 'What do you want your name to be?' I couldn't think of anything at that moment. I was working at a tax and retirement firm and I worked for the HR department, accounting department, and another agent. I helped with all these things, and then I was also a receptionist. So, I was doing the interview in this place and I knew I had to get off the phone soon and get back to work, because I would get caught. And they were like 'what would you like your name to be' and I said, 'Use Sunny as my first name, and then you can pick the last name'," recalled the *Jism 2* actress.

Further speaking about her choice, she said, "Sunny is my brother's nickname. His name is Sandeep Singh, we call him Sunny. My mom hated that I named myself Sunny. She said, 'Out of all the names, that's the one you pick?' I was like, yeah, it's just what came to my mind... And then the magazine picked the last name and I just kept it."

On the workfront, Sunny recently attended Cannes Film Festival 2023 for the world premiere of her Anurag Kashyap film *Kennedy*.

AGENCIES

An American tribute to India's first PM

Shuffling through a pack of old books I had received recently, I chanced on a longish book with a fading cover and breaking spine - Profiles of Nehru. It is a slim book put together and edited by Norman Cousins the acclaimed journalist, a project conceived by the United States Information Agency, with a line on the flyleaf "AMERICA REMEMBERS A WORLD LEADER." It is an American tribute to the first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, with a foreword by his daughter Indira Gandhi where she says "I welcome this book as an attempt at understanding of Jawaharlal Nehru and his India by representatives of the land of Jefferson, Lincoln and Kennedy."

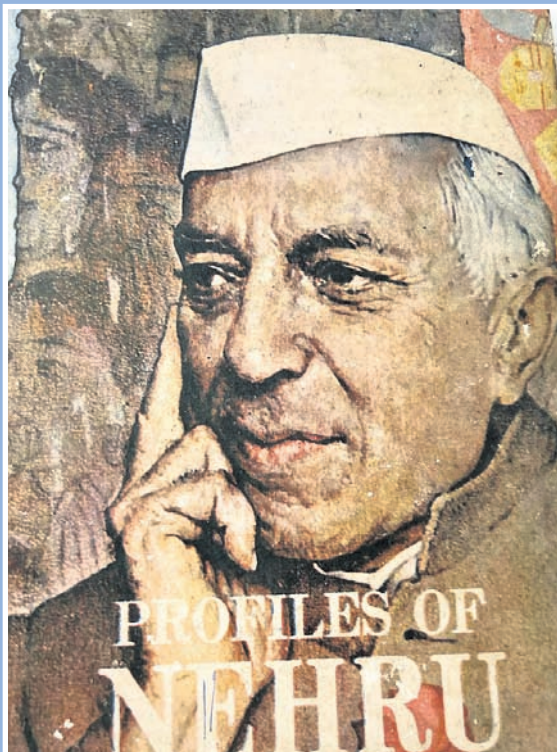
This book must have been in limited circulation or out of print because I have not found it on any popular online book store. His favourite lines from the American poet Robert Frost are reproduced on the first page, in his handwriting "The woods are lovely dark and deep/But I have promises to keep,/and miles to go before I sleep/and miles to go before I sleep". The book is a reflection of the American estimate of Pandit Nehru both during his lifetime and after. It is confined to published essays and short pieces written by citizens of United States and divided into two sections, of pieces written before and after May 27th 1964. As the editor says the material has been selected for its comprehensiveness, originality and human interest. The writers are indeed a stellar cast like John Gunther journalist and historian, James Michener, the Pulitzer winning novelist, Presidents ambassadors senators, visiting dignitaries and journalists. They talk of his affable, personal qualities, his love of English poetry, his western education, his love of children, his charisma and leadership qualities as one of the makers of modern India, together with his inordinate love for his country and his people. Nehru was primarily interested in the scientific and industrial development of his country. A man of the masses, he was more accessible to his people than the leader of any other nation of his time.

Winthrop Sargeant, the renowned journalist, says he is not only India's prime minister but the world's prominent figure in a stirring and awakening Asia and a statesman of world calibre. Nehru draws the affection and devotion of the masses he addresses and mingles with and there is a mystical connect between him and the teeming crowds. Nehru is an agnostic who did not believe in the rituals of religion but was influenced by the philosophy of great Indian thinkers through the ages. Nehru believed in the values of civilisation-education, science, justice art and liberty. He did not subscribe to any particular ecclesiastical system nor did he believe in the hereafter. He was of this world. He had no commitment to any culture or nationality, his morality stems from the wide stream of Buddhism and hinges on the notion of duty and the idea of humanity and he is severely critical of tyranny and cruelty of all forms.

Nehru views economic and social problems in-

cluding world peace and freedom from a global angle. His voice is that of new-old Asia but the aspirations are uttered with the accents of mankind.

Nehru believed in socialism and a socialist pattern of society. His socialism stresses on economic and social equality, a classless, casteless society with large scale economic planning by the Government. But he was essentially a democrat committed to the idea that the people should be consulted. He has constantly exhorted Indians to work for the unity of India against all divisive interests. Another main principle has been that of non-



alignment in foreign affairs and he urged that international decisions should be considered on a higher moral plane than only national self interest or expediency.

During his time even though there was still poverty in Indian cities economic advances were evident with a rapidly growing middle class of businessmen, white collar workers and public officials, living in more comfort with modern amenities. He turned the country into the world's largest laboratory for democracy. He had spent several years in jail enthusing the masses to fight a nonviolent revolution for freedom from British rule. Having won he fought a battle for "transforming his backward, emotional, religion drenched, diversified people into a modern, workable independent state." He embodied the spirit of renunciation and sacrifice preached by his great teacher, Mahatma Gandhi.

Following his death, tributes came pouring in from Presidents, senators, governors, representatives, journalists from all over America and they voiced the grief for a man who was a great political figure and statesman. Starry eyed advocates of global governments on several continents have mentioned him as a candidate for world leadership. "The great men of history come few and far between. Jawaharlal Nehru was one of them."

The editorials from the newspapers of America handed their handsome

tributes to Nehru. The New York Times said "Jawaharlal Nehru and India bore great love for each other; and it was India's love for this man who could be so demanding, so tender, so impatient, so involved, so aloof, so brooding that gave him the greatest of all powers- the power to rule through the heart of a nation". The Washington Post said "India has lost a great leader whose name will be inscribed in history alongside those of the mightiest figures in the history of the subcontinent. Many will dispute his philosophy, his policy, his politics, and his day to day decisions but few will dispute his rightful claim to a place alongside such giants as Akbar among the rulers who struggled to bring order and unity and a common culture to the assorted people of India."

Not all the opinions on Nehru were adulatory, there was criticism which said that some intellectuals in the country accused him of selling the Indian revolution to reactionary forces, of preaching socialism and practising capitalism. He was an egotist, with dictatorial tendencies, he was indecisive, impatient with a fiery temper. There can never be a full evaluation or appreciation of the man who gave his country a sense of direction and forged a unity in its people.

Nehru as an agitator for India's freedom spent several years in jail and during his years of imprisonment he wrote several books - his autobiography Towards Freedom came out of prison, his historical work, Discovery of India and the most remarkable of them all his collection of letters to his daughter Indira, later published as Glimpses of world history. The letters running to almost 1000 pages in the book, constituted something of a liberal university education, ranging as it did over the whole of the human historical record. It took in not just the development of national and continental civilisation but the creative thrust and splendour of mankind. The book is unique in the history of literature because the prison was bereft of historical materials. He had no reference books or notes of any kind and as a demonstration of human intellectual capacity the book stands by itself."

Norman Cousins in his final essay Nehru, Man and Symbol, rounding off the book says, "He was not one man but a procession of men. In him you witnessed a national hero, statesman, philosopher, historian, author, and educator. He was also a triumphant assortment of paradoxes. He was a supreme rationalist who presided over a nation with the most pervasive and complex religious make up in the world. He believed the highest function of the state was to help develop the individuality of the individual but no nation in the world contained as many natural obstacles to the emergence of that individuality, as the nation he governed for seventeen years."

It was a matter of serendipity that I chanced on this book at a time when there are vilification campaigns against Nehru and there is a dismissiveness about his role in the freedom and governance of his country. But history has its own redemptive character and in the light of overwhelming evidence he left behind, he will stand out as one of the makers of modern India with Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhai Patel.



SUDHA DEVI NAYAK

Juli



Juli



Juli



Juli

