

DECEMBER 3-9 2023

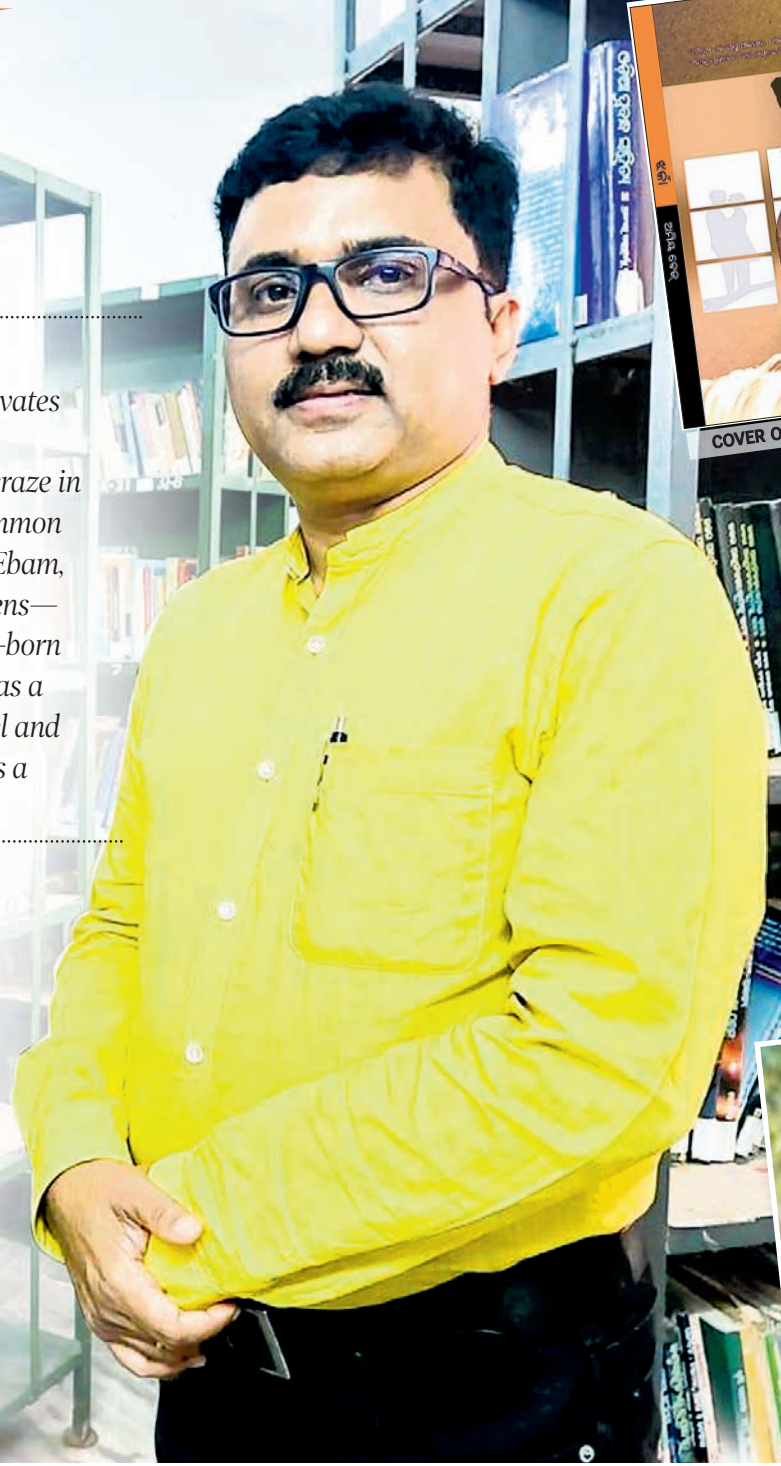
SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

INDIAN WEDDING

CHANGING LANDSCAPE





Storytelling is an intricate form of literature, and young Amiya Bej captivates readers like no other. His contemporaries say Amiya is the newest craze in the literary circle who writes with uncommon passion. All his books—Katha, Chinha, Ebam, Farda, Jharka, Tipakhata, Moha, and Lens—have enjoyed wide readership. Keonjhar-born Amiya, who now works at Kharagpur as a General Manager (Electrical) in the steel and power sectors, says Sunday for him is a time for celebration

Escape from the mundane

Sunday is not just the most anticipated day of the week; it's a day of celebration for me. Because this is that day of the week when I get much-needed relief from my week-long mechanical life.

A morning at weekly 'haat'

There is nothing like reading Sunday's literature page while sipping your bedtime tea. After that, I move to the nearby weekly market. Speaking to the vegetable vendors and discussing market prices with them are part of the Sunday morning schedule. I prefer to have my breakfast at a South Indian makeshift stall.

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

A day to unwind, no way

Being away from family, I can't afford to relax on Sundays. Things like cleaning the house, washing clothes and ironing them, organising the bookcases, and keeping the puja room tidy are part of my Sunday ritual.

My afternoon

I always give Sunday afternoons to myself. I don't watch TV. I read stories or start writing one if an idea strikes my mind.

Proud Odia

I love to spend some time at the nearest Jagannath Temple in the evening. It gives me a sense of pride, as most of the devotees here are not Odias.

Testing wife's patience

At times, before retiring to bed, I watch musical shows on my mobile. Though I don't have a singing voice, I nevertheless record them, send them to my wife, and wait for her reaction.



WITH FAMILY

WhatsApp This Week

Only on Sunday POST!

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

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- What do you call a laughing motorcycle? A Yamahahaha.
- What kind of tea do you drink with the Queen? Royal tea.
- What's a monsters favorite dessert? I-Scream!
- Where does Dracula keep his valuables? In a blood bank.



CUTTACK'S CROWN JEWEL

Sir, Baliyatra has grown into Asia's largest trade fair. So, last week's cover story 'Timeless Tradition' was a fitting tribute to the century-old tradition of Odisha. With roots dating back to 19th century, Sadhaba puas undertook maritime journeys for trade, marking Baliyatra and Boita Bandhana as integral to Khudurkuni Osha in every Odia home. As a resident of Cuttack, I see Baliyatra's potential to garner international attention. This year, new attractions like the tunnel aquarium, rides, and fairs enhance the fair's allure, but it's the diverse culinary offerings that truly enrich the experience. Amid the cultural festivities, the fair's eco-friendly initiatives highlight a dedication to sustainability, transforming Baliyatra into more than an event, becoming a cherished tradition for locals like Pramesh Singhdeo and myself.

ANANYA KHATUA, CUTTACK

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. Feel free to send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to

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INDIAN WEDDING



Earlier, temples and ancestral homes served as venues for weddings. However, lavish banquet halls, resorts, and picturesque locations gradually came as replacements. Pre-wedding shoots, cocktail, Mehndi, Sangeet, and freezing Instagrammable moments are the latest additions to nuptials

Changing LANDSCAPE

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

Customs and heritage have always been an inherent part of Indian weddings, no matter how modern we are. However, of late, Western styles have had a significant impact on several Indian traditions, and marriage is no exception. More and more young couples these days are opting for marriage practices which are anything but Indian.

Back home, Odia weddings, traditionally known for their rich cultural heritage and deeply rooted rituals, have also undergone a transformation in recent years. Things like pre-wedding shoots, cocktail, Mehndi and Sangeet have now become regular affairs.

For instance, traditional marriages were often held in temples or ancestral homes, reflecting the importance of spirituality and family in the marriage ceremony. However, these places are now being replaced with lavish banquet halls, resorts, destination weddings, and picturesque venues.

Similarly, the trend of cinematic wedding films and pre-wedding photoshoots and the emphasis on capturing the perfect Instagrammable moments sometimes overshadow the traditional significance of the rituals.

As the wedding season has already started, a bride-to-be, an event planner and others share their thoughts with **Sunday POST** on the evolving customs of nuptials.

'It's hard not to get influenced by weddings we see online'

Speaking about the vibrancy of Odia weddings, **Diptimayee Sahoo**, a bride-to-be from Cuttack says, "They have long been a treasure of traditions, rituals, and familial bonds, and witnessing the gentle change



of these customs is both intriguing and heartening. The wedding attire, for instance, continues to be a testament to our cultural roots, with brides adorned in resplendent silk sarees and intricate jewellery that narrate tales of craftsmanship." Sharing her thoughts on the evolving landscape of Odia weddings, the 32-year-old adds, "I believe that the infusion of Western influences into weddings has been shaped, in part, by the impact of daily soaps and social media. However, it's important to note that despite the modern approach, traditional rituals such as Haldi, Nirbandha, and others have not been completely abandoned; instead, there is a subtle incorporation of Western elements alongside these continuing customs. It's hard not to be influenced by the beautiful weddings we see online."

"But I am conscious of keeping the core Odia traditions alive during the main ceremony. I also want to make sure that our customs and rituals are respected and cherished," she ends.





'Couples are increasingly opting for fusion weddings'

As an experienced wedding planner, **Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo** from Bhubaneswar has witnessed the evolving preferences of couples firsthand.

He says, "As an experienced event planner, I've observed a subtle but discernible shift in Odia wedding traditions towards incorporating Western practices. While the core rituals remain intact, there's a growing influence of Western-style ceremonies, such as the exchange of vows, Varmala, and engagement. Couples often blend traditional Odia customs with modern elements like Western attire and thematic decor."



Speaking about the trend, Jyoti continues: "Couples are increasingly opting for fusion weddings, blending traditional Odia customs with modern Western elements. The challenge lies in striking the right balance to ensure that the wedding reflects the couple's unique identity while respecting the cultural roots. Couples want their weddings to stand out, and they often find inspiration in Western ceremonies. From unique decor ideas to unconventional venues, the Western

influence is palpable. However, it's crucial to infuse these elements thoughtfully, so they complement rather than overshadow the traditional aspects of the wedding."

He adds, "Certainly, blending Western and traditional Odia elements in weddings is a delightful challenge. Many couples express a desire to stick to their roots while embracing contemporary styles. It's a delicate dance of coordinating Odia rituals like the sacred 'Mangana' ceremony with Western touches in décor and attire. It's immensely rewarding to witness couples celebrating diversity, forging a unique and meaningful union that reflects their diverse backgrounds."

Signing off, Jyoti says, "I foresee Odia weddings embracing a harmonious blend of Western and traditional elements in the future. While maintaining the rich cultural tapestry of rituals and customs, there's a growing trend towards incorporating modern aesthetics, innovative decor, and Western-style ceremonies. This fusion allows for creative expression and a personalised touch, offering a unique and memorable experience for both the couple and their guests. The evolving landscape of Odia weddings is a testament to the dynamic nature of cultural celebrations in our interconnected world."

'It's essential to strike a balance between innovation and tradition'

Ranjana, a married woman from Balakati who wed traditionally, reflected on the changes she observes in contemporary ceremonies.

"There's a noticeable shift in how weddings are conducted today. While I appreciate the creativity and individuality that couples bring to their celebrations, I worry that some of the deeply rooted traditions are being overlooked or diluted," says the 32-year-old

homemaker.

Ranjana recalls the significance of rituals like the Kanyadaan and Pheras and laments that they may not hold the same importance in modern weddings. "It's essential to strike a balance between innovation and tradition. The sanctity of our cultural practices should not be compromised for the sake of trendiness," suggests Ranjana.



"I recall that in the midst of the wedding celebrations, the initial ceremony known as Nirbandha or engagement used to take place solely in a temple, excluding the presence of the

bride and groom. Only male family members attended this ritual, and the couple's first glimpse of each other was reserved for the wedding day. However, in the present day, an Engagement party has become a common practice, involving the entire family along with some family friends. It's evident that over time, various traditions are becoming more Westernised, a trend often attributed to the influence of the new generation," she says.

Citing a few reasons behind such trends, Ranjana adds, "I believe a significant factor contributing to this shift is the impact of social media and daily soap operas. These platforms often depict rituals, whether from Punjabi culture or others, influencing perceptions and encouraging the adaptation of customs."

She further says that the portrayal of events on social media and in popular television shows may be reshaping the way individuals approach and modify traditional practices, aligning them more with contemporary Western trends.

'It's painful to witness the erosion of our culture'

Sujata, an elderly woman from Berhampur is not happy with the way marriages are conducted these days.

"Our desperation to embrace non-Odia culture has left me disheartened as a woman who is deeply rooted in traditional values. The sanctity and charm of our age-old customs seem to be fading away, replaced by a growing inclination towards modernity. The extravagant display of Western-style ceremonies has killed the simplicity and grace of our traditional approach," regrets the 70-year-old.

"I find it disconcerting that our rich cultural heritage is being diluted by the glitz and glamour borrowed from others. The essence of Odia traditions, once the soul of our matrimonial ceremonies, now seems to be lost amidst the flashy lights and ostentatious decor. The sacred rituals that once defined the sanctity of our unions are now becoming mere symbolic gestures," adds a sad Sujata.

"The focus on elaborate pre-wedding photoshoots, extravagant venues, and lavish receptions is eclipsing the essence of the sacred bond between two individuals. As an elderly person, it pains me to witness the erosion of our cultural identity in the pursuit of modernity," she ends.

PIC COURTESY: GOOGLE, MANISH PHOTOGRAPHY



The Enigmatic Fissure of a Masterpiece

Guru Benudhar Mahapatra's painting on combined avatar of four Yugas not only encompasses every aspect of the tradition but also goes beyond its boundaries, exploring deeper realms

BIBHU PATNAIK

One of his paintings, which Guru Sri Benudhar Mahapatra considers his magnum opus, was executed on a wooden plaque measuring two-and-a-half by three feet. The painting, which was sent to the Asia Trade Fair in 1977, suffered damage in Calcutta during transportation resulting in a crack in the middle of the piece, as reported by Arun Uday Mahapatra, the second son of Patachitra master Benudhar Mahapatra. This incident left Benu sir completely devastated, leading him to make the decision to give up painting forever. He believed that this mishap was not accidental, but a deliberate act committed by a few of his rival artists out of envy. Despite this setback, after being persuaded by his family members and friends, Benu sir eventually resumed his work after a period of approximately two months.

Upon discovering the crack in the reproduction of this painting, my wife Manasi Patnaik was intrigued by the narratives presented in my article. She promptly expressed her belief that the painting's abundance of captivating Gods and Goddesses may have contributed to the powerful crack, as if an enigmatic energy had penetrated the very heart of the artwork.

This year, Guru Mahapatra received the prestigious *Ila-Bansidhar Panda Kala Samman* for his outstanding contributions to the field of art.

The artwork being analysed depicts the combined avatar of the four yugas or ages, wherein the narrative of each yuga is visually represented. Positioned at the focal point of the painting is a composite deity comprising four avatars or incarnations of Lord Vishnu, namely *Nrusingha*, *Rama*, *Krishna*, and *Jagannatha*, symbolising the four yugas, namely *Satya*, *Tretaya*, *Dvapara*, and *Kali*, respectively. The placement of the head of *Jagannatha* at the abdominal region of the three-headed combined deity signifies the *daru brahma* meaning the absolute divine life force in the form of wood.

The eight arms of the deity are a combination of two arms from each god. The top two arms, of deep yellow colour, belong to

Jagannatha and hold the *sudarshana chakra* (war discus) and *panchajanya sankha* (the conch shell), while the second top arms, of light blue colour, belong to Krishna and hold a flute in the right hand and a lotus in the left hand. Below them are the green-coloured arms of Rama, holding an arrow in the right hand and a bow in the left hand. The below two white-coloured arms of Nrusingha are in *barada* and *abhaya mudra*, while the entire body and legs are of the same white colour. Seated on the composite deity's right and left laps are the goddesses *Sridevi* and *Bhudevi*, respectively, both of whom are considered forms of *Lakshmi*.

The painting showcases a remarkable characteristic of the colossal temple architecture situated at the center. The structure is a *pidbhadeula*, which comprises of five roof tiers sloping down towards the earth. A *Kirtimukha* is placed at the top centre of the *Torana* or the multi-foil arch. Two *Makara* heads are placed in between the joining portion of the *Torana* and the pillars.

Bibhisana, accompanied by *Garuda* in a seated position, stands on the right side of the temple pillar beneath the *Rama-Ravana Juddha* (the battle between Rama and Ravana) medallion. Behind them, a Brahmana (priest) stands attentively. On the other side, near the left pillar, *Bharata* stands while *Hanumana* is seated beside him. Similarly, a *Brahmana* stands behind them. All of them are engaged in *darshan*, with their palms joined together in a reverential gesture, paying homage to the deity.

Below the foundation level of the temple, the *hamsasahana* (a border of swans) serves as a demarcation, distinguishing the present era of *Kali Yuga* from the preceding three yugas, effectively establishing a clear boundary between the realms of sanctity and mundanity, the celestial and the terrestrial. The observation of *Kanchi Abhijana* (the expedition to Kanchi) on the far left and *Anantasayana* (The reclining Vishnu in *yoganidra* over the serpent *Ananta*) on the far right can be witnessed in rectangular format situated just below the *hamsasahana*.

The painting revolves around the quartet theme, portraying four stories from each yuga in four circular spaces located on four sides of the painting. The *Hiranyakasyapu*



The cracked painting of combined Avatars of four Yugas by Mahapatra

PIC: BIBHU PATNAIK

Guru Benudhar Mahapatra

PIC: PRATEEK PATTANAIAK

Badha of Satya Yuga is situated at the top, above the crown of the main deity inside the temple.

The *Kamsa Badha* (the slaying of Kamsa) of *Dvapara Yuga* is placed on the west side, in front of the portrait of Krishna outside the temple pillar. The *Rama-Ravana Juddha* is depicted on the east, outside the temple pillar in front of Rama's portrait. Finally, the *Gaja Uddharana Besha* (Jagannatha rescues the elephant Gajendra in a spectacular costume) is located in the center at the bottom of the painting. The vibrant Hengula red colour is used for the *Jameen* or the background of the temple. Above the *Hiranyakasyapu Badha* medallion, the *Navagrahas* or the nine planets and *Kinnaras* or the celestial lovers and musicians are depicted in diminutive forms. Inside the temple, the flying *Bidyadhara* couples can be observed showering flowers on the main deity from above, positioned on either side behind the *Makara* heads.

The celestial realm above the pinnacle of the temple roof is adorned with exquisite paintings of the *Astadikpalas*, revered as the guardian deities of eight directions. Positioned between the sun and the moon, these paintings

are arranged in a semicircular fashion, commencing with *Surya*, *Indra*, *Agni*, *Yama*, *Vayu*, *Varuna*, *Nairuta*, *Kubera*, and *Ishana*, and concluding with *Chandra*.

Drawing one's attention in the top right corner is a nude woman with a golden yellow complexion, symbolising the *Adi Shakti* or Divine Feminine, the primordial source of all energy. On the opposite side, in the top left corner, the Aum symbol is placed within a yellow circle, representing the essence of the supreme absolute, *Brahma*, or the cosmic world. *Gandharvas* and *apsaras* can be seen dancing and performing music in the sky, between the *Astadikpala* panel and the temple roof.

This painting within the Patachitra traditions stands out as an extraordinary work of art. It not only encompasses every aspect of the tradition but also goes beyond its boundaries, exploring deeper realms. The artist skillfully portrays not only the societal perception of religion but also delves into his own personal religious understanding, achieving a perfect balance between the internal and external dimensions. This painting is as immense and enigmatic as the universe itself, containing all sizes, shapes, ages, and epochs within one space and time.

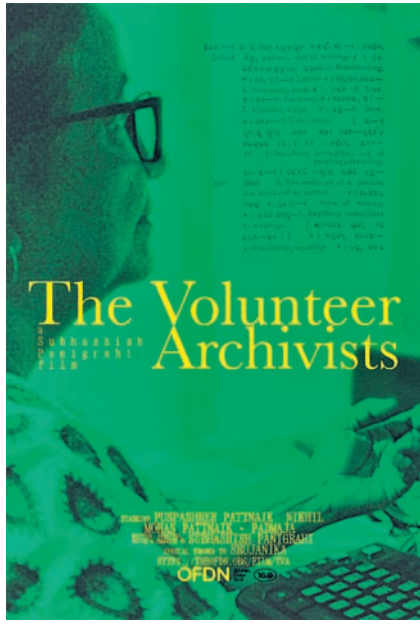
A DOCUMENT ON MAKING OF HISTORY

The 35-minute feature showcases how dedicated efforts of a handful of individuals can inspire others to become the connective bridge between the past and the future

ATRI PRASAD ROUT, OP

Before video, there was print. Before images, there were words. And before people spent 30 seconds on Insta reels, they used to spend three hours with a book in their hands.

If someone sits down today to write an informal history of media, that's probably how they will start, giving the medium of print its due space in our collective memory. Subhashish Panigrahi, with The Volunteer Archivists, makes an attempt, by documenting people working selflessly to give print its due space in the history of Odia language and the collective memory of Odia people.



TITLE: THE VOLUNTEER ARCHIVISTS
DIRECTION: SUBHASHISH PANIGRAHI
DURATION: 35 MINUTES

Srujanika, the subject of his documentary, is a volunteer-driven organisation based in Bhubaneswar that has helped archive some of the rarest printed materials published in Odisha in the last 200 years. Led by Puspashree Pattnaik and Nikhil Mohan Pattnaik, the collective has digitised hundreds of magazines, newspapers and more than 11,000 Odia books, including Gopal Chandra Praharaj's monumental Purnachandra Bhasakosha, to make them available for future generations and scholars and enthusiasts all over the world.

"One of the interests that we developed is to document what has been written relating to science in Odia language and naturally we turned to magazines. And whenever we got access to the magazines, we decided not to collect only the science articles but the whole magazine," says Nikhil describing Srujanika's initial forays into digitisation as an organisation primarily involved in promoting science.

As gradually their participation in science activities decreased, the organisation's focus shifted towards the digitisation effort. In the documentary, Subhashish captures the difficulties they have encountered and work-arounds they have developed, from figuring out a functional scanner set-up to securing copyrights of the books, all the while keeping alive the spirit of volunteerism.

By showing us the process of digitising a book, cutting between footage of this process and the people behind it, the

director brings to the film a sense of rhythm that naturally elevates this documentary about language.

In the larger context of record-keeping, of which books and magazines are a part, if The Volunteer Archivists shows anything, it is how dedicated efforts of a handful of individuals can give some justice to history and inspire others to become the connective bridge between the past and the future.



Randeep on tying knot in Manipuri tradition

Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram's wedding took place according to a traditional Meitei wedding ceremony. Spilling beans on the reason behind it, the actor said that Lin is from Manipur and it was 'respectful' to do the wedding in her tradition. He explained, "It feels very good. I felt that it's only respectful to come and marry in the bride's tradition. I wanted to experience my life partner's culture. That's why

I am here." Randeep further stated that he embraced her traditions and performed all the rituals with sincerity. "I believe, I didn't make any mistakes. And we have been talking about their culture, Manipuri culture and all that for a long time. I am praying for our happy future and lots of kids and lots of abundance. Yes, it's east meets west. It's like a traditional or cultural exchange," he added. IANS

'TV industry has gone backward'



Actress Anupama Solanki claimed that TV industry has become more backward compared to the 90's, adding that there are more than 100 serials, which is making the industry a 'disaster.'

The *Nath-Krishna Aur Gauri Ki Kahani* actress said: "It's an honour for me to be a TV actor because people are influenced by the medium and sometimes people love us and sometimes they hate us too because of the characters we play."

"I have been addicted to TV dramas since childhood so I have observed the TV industry very closely and TV serials, but honestly I feel the TV industry has become more backward compared to the 90's," she shared.

Anupama said: "I don't want to take names but there are 100 of serials that are making the TV industry a disaster. I did not belong to 90's TV shows but later I saw lots of TV shows who are outstanding."

"I am not happy with our TV industry but don't have any option so I have accepted whatever it is," she added.

IANS



KODAK LUMA 150 POCKET PROJECTOR

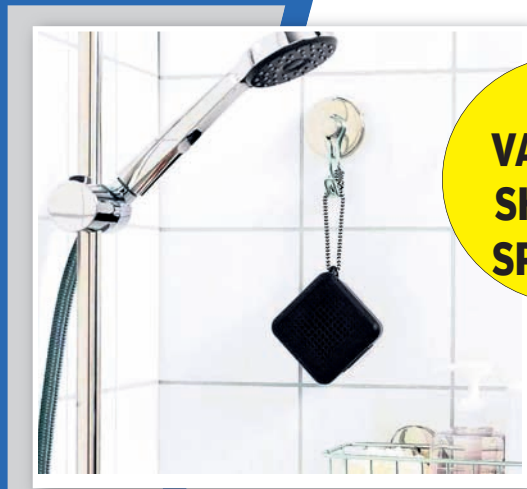
Portable enough to fit in a briefcase if you need to produce a presentation for work, or your backpack if you'd like to watch a film or enlarge your gaming experience on the go, the KODAK Luma 150 portable projector promises to expand the screen to up to 150 inches while delivering bright, vivid images. It has built-in, surround-sound speakers and a headphone jack for private viewing, with a battery run time of up to 2.5 hours, which is rechargeable via mini USB.

COOLEST GADGETS

We reside in an era marked by remarkable innovation, significant technological progress, and an array of impressive gadgets. Ranging from AI-powered smart devices to ingenious portable tools, a plethora of cutting-

edge technologies that were once unimaginable is now accessible to everyone. One can acquire an array of products, including exceptional wireless speakers, hydration biosensors, and various other innovations. While we are ex-

periencing a golden age of gadgets and technology, determining the cream of the crop can be challenging. To simplify your decision-making process, Sunday POST lists a few finest gadgets and the latest technology that one can look into:



IKEA VAPPEBY SHOWER SPEAKER

This little Bluetooth speaker is ideal for those who want to listen to some tunes in the shower. It's fully waterproof, cheap, and comes in three different colours. You can even pair two together for stereo sound. Better yet, at 50 per cent volume, the Ikea Vappeby shower speaker promises up to 80 hours of battery life on a full charge. It is worth noting that the IP67 waterproofing is only so good, soaking the speaker can affect acoustic performance temporarily, but this is one of the best cheap portable speaker that works in the shower.



XIAOMI UNIBLADE TRIMMER

Xiaomi has introduced its highly anticipated waterproof and rechargeable shaver in India, marking the brand's expansion beyond smartphones and electronics. The Xiaomi UniBlade Trimmer, designed for personal hygiene and grooming, features dry and wet shaving capabilities, a 14-length rotary dial, and a 3-way precision shaving head. With stainless-steel blades and a 2000mAh battery offering a 60-minute runtime, the device supports USB-C and potential wireless charging. Its IPX7 rating enables water immersion and a travel lock prevent accidental activation. The retail package includes extras like an Adjustable Trimming Comb, Charging Dock, Wall Mount, and Protective Cover.



NIX BIOSENSORS

The Nix Hydration Biosensor is a must for those who take running, cycling, or any other form of exercise seriously and want to get the most out of their training or workout. This biosensor will analyse sweat levels and deliver real-time hydration data in the form of personalised notifications to your smartphone or watch. You'll be told exactly when you should drink, what you should drink, and how much you should drink to help ensure peak hydration. If you're looking to break your 5km run personal best or 10k cycle time, it's definitely best to stay as hydrated as possible. Even mild dehydration can affect performance, after all.



META QUEST PRO

Ah yes, the metaverse - the supposed future of our digital world. While this new virtual land hasn't exactly begun successfully, many tech leaders are still very much of the view that we'll soon be plugged in, enjoying our own digital house, job and life. If you want to get in now and enjoy the metaverse and virtual reality, the Meta Quest Pro 2 will likely be the best way to do this. Meta, previously known as Facebook, has poured money into this to offer the latest and most impressive specs available in the world of VR. With all of its fancy new features and functions, comes a massive price tag of £1,499. It's the best VR can be right now, but the investment is only worthwhile for those who can't wait for the metaverse.

Manisha

