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# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



# FADING FESTIVAL

COVER STORY

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Nivy with co-actor Pabitra Mohanty on stage

### Morning gardening

What began as a hobby has grown into a small gardening business that brings me much-needed joy in life. There is no better way to begin the day than to embrace the tranquilly of the garden.

### Cuisine connoisseur

On holidays, I enjoy treating my loved ones to delicious meals, as cooking is my second passion after acting. My favourite foods are mudhi (puffed rice) and pakhala (watered rice).

### With the significant other

Though acting is a rewarding career, it also has its share of challenges. Often, it becomes difficult to make time with my husband. So, I never miss out on any opportunity to be with him when I get a break. We connect with each other through casual conversations and, at times, by sharing movie nights.

### Theatrical pursuits

On my days off, if time permits, I immerse myself in the world of theatre. I watch a drama in the nearest auditorium or do research to hone my acting skills.

*After a successful stint in theatre and radio, actress Nivy made her film debut in Anupam Patnaik's 'Trikanya'. Her portrayal as robot in the movie earned her loads of appreciations. The Jaleswar-born RJ-turned-actress, who has a Master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication, finds solace in growing plants*



With husband

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP



## WhatsApp This Week

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THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- Where does the Easter Bunny go when he needs a new tail? To a re-tail store!
- Where can you buy chicken broth in bulk? The stock market.
- What did the boy bird say to the girl bird on Valentine's Day? Let me call you Tweet Heart!
- What's a horse's favourite sport? Stable Tennis.



## MIND MATTERS

Sir, In today's fast-paced world the significance of mental well-being often takes a backseat. While the adage 'prevention is better than cure' is commonly applied to physical ailments, it's high time we extended its application to mental health as well. Neglecting mental well-being leads to consequences like fatigue, burnout, and mood disturbances. The insights from Dr. Amitav Rath underscore the importance of addressing mental health proactively. He highlights the efficacy of meditation in maintaining mental equilibrium. Furthermore, Venerable Bhante's discourse on Buddhist meditation techniques offers valuable perspectives on fostering inner peace. Overall, I think it's time we recognised that mental health is as crucial as physical health and embarked on a journey of self-care and resilience.

SUMIT NAYAK, SUNDARGARH

## 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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# Fading Festival

Ten-day-long Sahi Jata not only fosters community spirit, but the festival also celebrates the rich heritage of the neighbourhoods in the Pilgrim City of Puri promoting unity and solidarity among residents

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

Since ages, Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath, has remained a hub of education, moral principles, culture, and artistic brilliance. The lives of all Odias are deeply entwined with the temple's culture, making it nearly impossible for them to separate their identity from their deity. Festivities surrounding the Trinity are celebrated across the state.

However, several lesser-known yet significant festivals that are intrinsic to Holy City Puri, are also observed with much fanfare here, and Sahi Jata tops the list.

The festival, which begins from the day of Rama Navami, grabbed media attention after a documentary film titled Srikhetra Ru Sahi Jata, made by Ashutosh Patnaik bagged the National Award in 2021.

In the local dialect, 'Sahi' denotes a specific locality, with their antiquity in Puri dating back to 1230 AD.

Beyond entertainment, Sahi Jata, spanning 10 days, epitomises community spirit, celebrating the rich



heritage of the Sahis and nurturing unity and solidarity among their inhabitants. Within its embrace, peace and harmony thrive organically, negating the need for stringent law enforcement.

Ahead of Rama Navami, Sunday POST caught up with people involved in the festival to delve deep into the age-old tradition.

"Sahi Jata, an ancient tradition dating back 800 years, has deep roots connected to the Jagannath Temple. Participants in Sahi Jata include members of various akhadas, which were established by Gajapati Ananga Bhima Deb of the Ganga dynasty.

These akhadas were created with the purpose of training warriors who would safeguard the shrine from external threats," according to Dr Naresh Chandra Das, an expert on Jagannath culture.

He says, "Puri eagerly anticipates the celebration of Sahi Jata, to be celebrated this year from April 17. Traditionally, seven neighbourhoods—Kalikadebi Sahi, Goudabada Sahi, Harachandi Sahi, Markandeswar Sahi, Dolamandap Sahi, Bali Sahi, and Kundeibeta Sahi—sought permission from Jagannath Temple to

celebrate the festival." Elaborating more, he continues: "The Sahi Jata festivities commence on Sri Ram Navami, taking place during the nights of the Chaitra. Following the Sandhyadupa ritual at Srimandir, symbolic idols of Lord Ram and Laxman are ceremoniously carried in a lavish palanquin to the Jagannathvallabh Mutt. Street performances, organised by Sata Sahi Akhadas, showcase various characters from the Ramayana. Notably, characters like Parsurama and Ravana are accompanied by intricate decorative structures known as medhas, which parade through the seven oldest streets of the sacred city, gracefully dancing despite their big size."

He further says, "Each sahi is identified by its unique flag, and tasked with portraying different events such as the birth of Lord Rama, the slaying of demons by goddess Durga, Ravana lifting the Kailash mountain, the capture of Sita by Ravana, the battle between Parasuram and Lord Rama, and the war between Rama and Ravana. Actors in each sahi don elaborate masks depicting various deities and demons, including a ten-headed Ravana, a five-faced Ganesh, Nursingha, and others."



Das concluded by saying, "Among the procession's most striking figures is the 'Naga', an actor clad in a loin-cloth and tiger skin across his chest. He carries a torch and a gun in his right and left hands, respectively, while weapons like shields, daggers, and knives adorn his waist. A rosary hangs around his neck, and a bamboo mat is tied to his back. His face features large, round eyes, a sharp nose, a curly moustache, and a beard, all crowned by ornate headgear. This distinctive Naga attire is unique to Puri and not found elsewhere."

Bhimsen Palankdara, a committee member of the Barabati Akhada, says, "As is the tradition each year, we are once again preparing for the upcoming event. Sahi Jata, a truly underappreciated festival, unfortunately appears to be fading with time. Leave alone the outsiders, many locals are even unaware of its existence as it takes place late at night. While Sahi Jata still occurs during Ram Navami, it typically commences late into the night. Over the years, dwindling support has disheartened the performers, resulting in fragmented enactments. In an effort to preserve this cherished tradition, we are now staging the performance during the evenings, allowing both tourists and residents of Puri to be part of the festival."



He adds, "Sahi Jata symbolises a traditional folk celebration, highlighted by a magnificent procession originating from the narrow lanes of each neighbourhood (sahi) and concluding on Puri's Bada Danda. This procession showcases adorned elephants, horses, standard bearers, torchbearers, and musical bands playing drums, trumpets, and conch shells. Prominent neighbourhoods like Harachandi Sahi, Baseli Sahi, Markandeswara Sahi, Dolomandapa Sahi, Matimandapa Sahi, Bali Sahi, and Gaudabada Sahi are entrusted with organising these grand festivities."

Palankdari further says, "This year, our young performers have diligently practiced for a month to ensure flawless execution, taking great care to avoid errors. In our Akhada, we will feature various groups of children presenting Flower Medha, Veera Karna Medha, Naga Medha, Kali Medha, and more. The goal is to exhibit the martial arts expertise honed by our boys over the years in an engaging and enjoyable manner. Our boys will also visit neighbouring sahis like Bandhu Sahi and Bali Sahi, where they will showcase their talents in traditional games like Badi khela and Natti khela. Moreover, Veera Karna and Naga Medha performers will also demonstrate their dance and martial arts skills during this event."

Looking forward to this year's performance, **Madhusudan Padhi**, who plays Kali Maa, says, "I've been diligently preparing for this significant occasion for the last one year. My training regimen has involved getting training from experienced artistes, rigorous exercise routines, and dedicated practice of dance sequences. Portraying Kali Maa is particularly challenging, requiring me to embody her essence and convey her personality seamlessly throughout the performance. Without proper core conditioning and training, executing the Kali Medha would be nearly impossible."

Padhi carries on, "Our Akhada is set to display our martial arts prowess at Bali Sahi during the event. Under the guidance of Bhimsen Bhai, our dedicated trainer, we have diligently practiced and perfected our skills, ensuring flawless performances blessed by Lord Jagannath. For the past month, we have been devoting two hours daily to rigorous training. Upholding the principle of great power accompanying great responsibility, we've maintained our dignity by abstaining from consuming any non-vegetarian

products for months, all in preparation for this performance," he said.

Concluding, he says, "Throughout the festival days, the members of each locality play their part as assigned to them. The major attraction of the festival is the exploits of the demon king Ravana. Whoever plays the part is put on a strict regime for months before the festival, not just rehearsals, but diet and fitness too play a role, as Ravana's clothes and the 10-headed mask can be quite heavy. And the actor has to wear it while dancing like warriors for more than an hour."

**Pupun Panda** of Harachandi has been actively engaged in Sahi Jata from the age of nine portraying diverse characters. This year, he is portraying the role of Parashuram for the first time.

Detailing his character, Pupun says, "Parashurama is the most handsome character of the Sahi Jata festival. He is basically a warrior rishi dressed in bright yellow and is seen brandishing his weapon - parashu (axe) on his shoulder, bow and arrow in his hands. And, when he hears the sound of the breaking of Lord Shiba's bow by Rama, his tapasya (meditation) is disturbed. He gets angered and starts searching of the 'culprit'. With an attire of a kshatriya and excellent warfare strategies, he steps into Srikhetra as a brave warrior. He confronts Rama asking for the reason, which is depicted during the Parashuram Leela episode of Sahi Jata. He often chants his bachanika in an impressive style - "Ek chhatri Parashuram. Jannu Ghanta Parashuram. Birabara Parashuram."

Pupun is thrilled to portray the formidable warrior, as it allows him to showcase his skills and dedication.



Pupun during a rehearsal session



# The granny serial killer

*By killing people with her 'love potion', Yugoslav herbalist Baba Anujka was helping to address a very real problem that many women faced: marriages that were often arranged and from which they had no recourse to escape*

OP DESK

She appeared to be a kind old lady, more than eager to assist the neighbours. But underneath her kindness is a soul who killed people in cold blood. Baba Anujka, the world's oldest serial killer from Yugoslavia, reportedly took nearly 150 lives in a period over 40 years. Her true identity was revealed at the age of 90.

She used her understanding of herbology to assist dozens of village women in murdering their husbands.

**How it all began**

Though there is not much information available about Anujka, also known as Ana di Pištonja or the Witch of Vladimirovac, a glance at her early life reveals some intriguing insights into why she moved from herbalist to assassin.

Ana was born in Romania in 1838 to a wealthy cattleman and later relocated to Vladimirovac, a village in modern-day Serbia. According to information, she lived a relatively comfortable existence but her personal life was dreadful.

Ana, at the age of 20, fell in love with a young Austrian military man who afflicted her with syphilis and abandoned her shortly after.

Later, she married an older man and had eleven children with him. Ten of her children perished during the course of her marriage, which lasted until her husband's death 20 years later.

**World's oldest serial killer**

After her husband's death, Ana went on to become Baba Anujka, the killer. She set up a lab at her home and made her own concoctions, which she marketed to her neighbours.

Ana, who was extremely intelligent, studied five languages and obtained considerable firsthand understanding of

chemistry, earning her a reputation as a gifted herbalist.

She became famous for selling medicines to suffering locals. Her notoriety as a killer, however, overshadowed her reputation.

Her initial poisonings included military guys who wanted to avoid service. She sold these men a potion that was specifically meant to make them sick enough to evade conscription without killing them.

Her most valuable service, at least to those who bought her mixes, was her so-called 'love potions.' These remedies were actually poisons, and she sold them to women with violent spouses who were anxious to escape marital torment.

When one of these women came into Ana's laboratory, she would ask, "How heavy is that problem?" This functioned as both a type of code and a literal enquiry. What she truly meant was: how heavy was the man who would be her victim?

From there, it was up to the customer to administer the poison in the way she best saw fit. Containing arsenic

and deadly plants, the individual in question would die within one week of taking the 'love potion'.

**... and the arrest**

It turns out that many women in Vladimirovac wanted their husbands to die. One woman, Stana Momirov, visited Anujka at least three times to buy her famed 'love potions.' The first time was for her first husband. She returned after remarrying, satisfied with the outcome, to purchase medicines for her new husband's uncle and father-in-law.

The three murders prompted suspicions, and the authorities detained Momirov, who eventually disclosed who was behind the poisons.

This occurred in 1929, when Baba was already 90 years old. She denied that she had ever supplied poisons to women, but her customers, including Momirov, claimed that they had no knowledge that what they were buying was poison.

After the trial, Anujka was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment for her crimes.

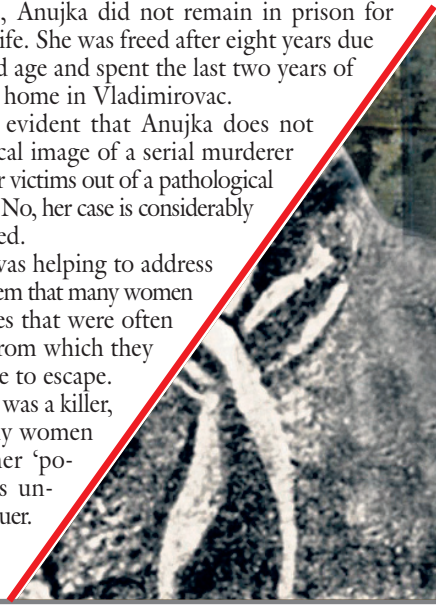
But what does that entail for a 90-year-old?

Furthermore, Anujka did not remain in prison for the rest of her life. She was freed after eight years due to her advanced age and spent the last two years of her life back at home in Vladimirovac.

Finally, it is evident that Anujka does not match the typical image of a serial murderer who selects their victims out of a pathological thirst for blood. No, her case is considerably more convoluted.

In fact, she was helping to address a very real problem that many women faced: marriages that were often arranged and from which they had no recourse to escape.

Baba Anujka was a killer, but to the many women who bought her 'potions,' she was undoubtedly a rescuer.



## Kartik ready for love now

Actor Kartik Aaryan, who will be soon seen in *Chandu Champion* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, recently appeared on the chat show *No Filter Neha*. During the finale episode, he revealed that, after years of hustle in the industry, he finally has time for love. He even asked the show host, Neha Dhupia, to find someone for him.

In a fun segment on *No Filter Neha Season 6*, when asked by Neha if Kartik is single and ready for a relationship, he said, "Right now I am fully single. It's been a while that I have been away from any kind of relationship. Matlab, it's thoda sa cliché answer, but actually, I have been really focusing on my film *Chandu Champion* aur ussmein bohot sara focus ki zaroorat thi."

"Jis tarikh se ussmein chizein thi jo maine pehle kabhi ki nahi thi. And I gave two years of prep, so 2 saal se dedh saal se yahi film dimag mai chal rahi hai toh woh time hi nahi mila, woh regime, routine, har chiz bohot monotonous ek robotic lifestyle mein mai ja raha tha, which actually helped me a lot also. Now let's see, and let's wait and watch. Now I have time for love. Find someone for me, Neha," he added.

IAN S



## Nora takes a dig at glamour couples

Actress Nora Fatehi subtly criticised celebrities who enter relationships solely for publicity, suggesting that this pursuit of limelight is leading to their unhappiness and depression.

In an interview with Ranveer Allahbadia on his podcast, she highlighted how some use marriages or partnerships as strategic moves for networking, financial

gain, or to maintain relevance in the industry. She expressed disdain for such calculated actions, labeling them as predatory behavior.

The actress expressed concern over the pursuit of money, fame, and power in the entertainment industry, leading some individuals to sacrifice their personal lives and mental well-being. She lamented how many are willing to enter loveless marriages or relationships solely for career advancement, emphasising the importance of separating work and personal life for true happiness.

On the work front, Nora was recently seen in *Madgaon Express*.

AGENCIES



## SONAKSHI CALLS HERSELF A GOOD PERFORMER

Actress Sonakshi Sinha hopes that with her latest work in *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, filmmakers will see her in a different light, as she says she has been trying to prove that she is a good actor.

Sonakshi was in New Delhi for the trailer launch of Bhansali's debut series, where she talked about how she has been presented in a different light.

Asked if she feels that casting directors and filmmakers will now see you in a different light and maybe take her even more seriously, she said, "Sure as hell, I hope so! what more a girl has to do? I have been trying to prove time and again that 'main achi actor hun bhai'."

"I have been given some wonderful opportunities. I can't entirely put a pin on one thing, it could be the choice of films or the makers I have worked with. But I truly believe that I have learned something from every experience I have had professionally, which has made me the actor I am today," she said.

IAN S



## 'India is the best place right now for an actor'

Actress Rasika Dugal, known for the web series *Mirzapur*, said that she feels the Indian film industry is vibrant, celebratory and versatile and that she does not feel that she has to be anywhere else as an actor than in India right now.

She believes that Indian cinema currently is a dream place for an actor. "Our industry is so vibrant, celebratory and versatile. When I travel to European film fests, I realise this fact. I don't have to be anywhere else as an actor than in India right now," she said.

Following a lineup of projects strong in storytelling- *Qissa*, *Manto*, *Delhi Crime* among others, Rasika now craves comedy to diversify her repertoire.

"Contrary to what it seems from my body of work, I don't feel the need to subscribe to a genre or gravitas. In fact, as a viewer, I am fascinated by comedy. Light-hearted roles are written less for women, hence I didn't get offers.

People don't associate women with comedy, which is not fair because humour comes naturally to women who have sailed through lives and survived thankless situations using humour," added the actress.

AGENCIES

WORLD HERITAGE DAY

# Preserving a legacy



**THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SRI LAKSHMI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE IN GANJAM, SET TO UNDERGO A MASSIVE TRANSFORMATION, IS A TESTAMENT TO THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF ITS BUILDERS**

OP DESK

Every April 18, World Heritage Day is celebrated globally to raise awareness about the importance of preserving and safeguarding cultural heritage. In the rich tapestry of India's cultural landscape, one finds a myriad of sacred sites, each with its own story to tell. Among these treasures is the revered temple of Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, a place steeped in history and spirituality.

The ancient temple stands on Chandinia Hill, Sukunda, a small village near Berhampur in the Ganjam District of Odisha. Lord Lakshmi Narasimha is worshipped by the people of Sukunda and adjacent villages in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. This ancient shrine, being the only temple in the region is thronged by the nearby villagers to 'share' their woes with the deity. The very location of the temple, its antiquity, and the divinity of the magnificent Sandalwood idol of the Lord create a memorable feeling of devotion and piety.

The history of this sacred site traces back centuries, shrouded in myth and legend. It is said that the Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy appeared in the dream of one of the ancestors, who was told that the Lord was present in the form of Salagram on this hill where they earlier used to come for meditation. Later, they found the Salagram in the hill, and since the hill was filled with Sandalwood (Chandan) trees, which automatically grow, it was named Chandinia Hill.

The architecture of the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple is a testament to the craftsmanship of its builders. Its vibrant sanctums evoke a sense of awe and reverence, drawing visitors into a realm of divine splendour.

"According to historical accounts, one of my ancestors had seen Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy residing within a Salagram on this hill in his dream. After that a temple was constructed here about 300 years ago and has been diligently cared for by my forebears. I am the seventh generation of my family entrusted with its stewardship, following the path laid by my great-grandfather, the late Anem Basanna, my grandparents, the late Padmavati and the late Bachu Narasimha Murty, and my father, the late Anem Basanna Jr," said the current temple trustee, **Anem Padma**.

"Having stood for centuries bearing the onslaught of time and series of cyclones, the ancient structures of the temple were in completely dilapidated condition and showed signs of disintegration, calling for their urgent renovation. In these circumstances, it was decided to urgently renovate and reconstruct this temple as a 'Shilamaya Structure',

without deviating from the traditional style of temple architecture, vastu, and culture. Apart from the Sanctum Sanctorum, the entire premises will be reconstructed. The whole construction project is based on Agama Shastra under the guidance of renowned architects from Tanjavaram (Tamil Nadu) and Vastu Shastra from Karnataka," she added. "Our aim is to establish Lakshmi Narasimha Swami Temple as a prominent pilgrimage site in South Odisha, akin to Puri. It will soon find its place on the tourism map, inviting pilgrims and tourists alike to experience its sacred aura," concluded an optimistic Padma.

Delving into the heritage of the temple, local historian **Hrushikesh Kumar** says, "Perched majestically atop the Sandalwood Hill lies a testament to centuries of spiritual devotion and architectural brilliance. This sacred site, shrouded in the mists of time, has been a beacon of religious fervour and cultural significance for generations.

"Today, the temple heritage stands not only as a place of worship but also as a cultural treasure, attracting pilgrims and tourists from far and wide. Its preservation and continued reverence serve as a reminder of the profound connection between humanity and the divine, echoing through the ages on the sacred slopes of Sandalwood Hill."

Highlighting the cultural significance, he said, "The most important and special festival is the preparations for the Chandan festival, which commences nearly a month in advance.



Anem Padma

Following this, the vital task of creating sandalwood paste commences. A dedicated group of individuals is entrusted with the responsibility of making the paste, a process spanning approximately 20 to 25 days. The sandalwood paste is meticulously gathered and stored in earthen pots, awaiting application on the auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya. On this significant day, the previous layer of sandalwood paste is removed, and a fresh layer is applied. Devotees are granted the rare opportunity of witnessing the deity

(Salagram) in its original form, devoid of the sandalwood covering, during the Nijarupa darshan ceremony, held once a year during the early hours from 4:45 a.m. to 6 a.m. Thousands of devotees throng the temple premises on this auspicious occasion to seek darshan of Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy."

Signing off, he says, "Like many other worshippers, I eagerly anticipate to witness the newly erected temple and experience the spiritual ambiance it will attract from fellow devotees."



Preparation of sandalwood paste

**ASHIMA**



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