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SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



RAJA FESTIVAL SPECIAL

Welcoming Womanhood

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COVER STORY



Credited with a series of corporate and awards show, popular anchor, emcee and VJ Jyotsna Priyadarshini love to spend quality time with friends on sea beach at Puri on her non-working days



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Working day

Sunday is not a holiday for me as most of my corporate and awards shows are scheduled on this day. So, I try to enjoy the day to the fullest no matter whichever day of the week I get an off.

Beach lover

We love the fresh sea air and white sand. Needless to say there can't be a better destination than Puri to enjoy a holiday. I also enjoy hanging out with my friends at Khao Gali near KIIT as we enjoy street food.

Decluttering living room

I believe that messy homes and work spaces make us feel anxious and often helpless. So, I always keep a to-do-list ready and love to organise my living room on my non-working days.

Food connoisseur

Though I have a weakness for street food items, I don't take them too often. I am basically a lover of desi food. On my days-off, I cook signature Odia food like 'Bhendi rai', 'Odia badi chura', 'Methi baigan bharta' and relish them with Pakhala.

Honing musical skills

Music is not just a hobby for me, it is part and parcel of my existence. So, I attend music classes of Anurag Patra and Riktarag Patra in Cuttack to hone my skills.



With friends

Social obligation

Volunteerism is something which I get involved in regularly and whenever I get an opportunity. My friends and I organise blood donation camps regularly and motivate others to follow suit.



With Sidhant Mohapatra

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

- The last thing I want to do is to hurt you. But it's still on the list.
- Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
- If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of payments.

SHUN SYMBOLISM

Dear Sir, Your cover story 'Let's save our greenery' and 'Ways to protect the planet' (June 5) were timely reminders of the dire need for protecting our environment. The symbolic gestures of distribution of saplings, plantation drives and organising awareness sessions on a one-time basis should be dispensed with. To begin with, the celebration of 'World Environment Day' should not be confined to June 5 alone. Every day of the year should be accorded prime importance to make a real difference in our environment preservation efforts on a regular on-going basis. The pioneering initiative of Philippines, where every student in undergraduate courses has to adopt and nurture 10 trees in order to graduate, should be replicated in our country with immediate effect.

AMIT BANERJEE, NEW DELHI

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 B-15, Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar - 751010, Orissa. Phone (0674) 2549982, 2549948

RAJA FESTIVAL SPECIAL

Welcoming Womanhood

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

Long before the United Nations started observing International Women's Day March 8 from 1975, Odisha had been celebrating the womanhood that too for three days in a row in the middle of June.

Yes, Raja or Raja Parba, an integral part of Odisha's culture, is our way of celebrating, glorifying and welcoming womanhood.

This is a festival which also celebrates the menstruation of the mother Earth. All agricultural activities are suspended in these three days as it is believed that the Earth has her annual menstrual cycle during this period and she is treated with all care and respect. No wonder, Raja is one of the most important festivals in the culture calendar of Odisha.

While the period of Earth is celebrated with much fanfare, the same cannot be said about the women in Odisha and elsewhere when they have their periods. Though menstruation is like any other bodily function, a lot of stigmas are always attached to it and it is still considered a taboo topic in many societies. Earth is worshipped during her menstruation period, but the women are hardly treated with the same dignity.

With a couple of days to go before the swing festival, some people who are known for creating awareness on menstrual hygiene told Sunday POST how it is time we broke the taboo and celebrate Raja festival in its true spirit.

Raja - Mother Earth's period days

Kacha Kandhei, a music video on menstrual hygiene, was released last World Menstrual Hygiene Day, May 27. The film, directed by Snehasis Das, showcased how a boy, shedding all his inhibitions, comes forward to help his friend during her menstrual days.

Snehasis says, "As a society we have been practising menstrual hygiene for ages, but of late it has become a taboo subject. In Odisha, we celebrate Raja, a festival observed exclusively by women



and young girls since time immemorial, where we celebrate mother Earth's annual period days. Our age-old customs were basically the practices which were meant to maintain hygiene with available resources and knowledge. Like menstruating girls and women were given a separate room to stay, they ate by themselves and used old cotton sarees as pads when they attained puberty. But with changing times, society started associating it with something negative, shameful and even dirty practices.



"However, the time is changing again, so is our mindset. Recently, I watched a series of beautifully made short films on menstrual hygiene. Awareness campaign like this would definitely yield results in the coming days."

It is high time the taboos were broken and the stigma surrounding menstruation ended. The real challenge is access to menstrual products and period-friendly sanitation facilities. So, it's all about sensitising people with proper knowledge to practice menstrual hygiene. It's very simple and what we require is to bring changes in our thought process, adds Snehasis.

Mother Earth is worshipped and taken care of during Raja, a festival that signifies her menstruation, but the women are hardly treated with the same dignity during this difficult period, exclaim a few experts



Earth & Woman

Social organisation Aaina, over the years, has been working for an inclusive society. Its secretary Sneha Mishra, who has been instrumental in creating awareness on women's issues including menstrual hygiene, says "In every Odia household, Raja is celebrated as a great festival. These three days are considered as the mother Earth's menstruation period and hence all the agro activities are prohibited to give rest to the mother Earth. Symbolically girls and women are also pampered with poda pitha – a signature Odia delicacy, they play in swings and are not asked to do any household chores."



At the time of explaining the correlation between a woman and Earth, Mishra rues over how average people view the menstruation period of a woman.

"While the period days of Earth are celebrated with pomp, a lot of restrictions are imposed on the girls and women when they go through their menstrual cycle. They are considered untouchables and impure during these five days to such an extent that they withdraw themselves back from participating in daily chores. During Raja celebrations, they are pampered. But during period days, they are pushed to a corner. Many girls don't even have access to maintain hygiene practices," adds Mishra.

It's quite necessary to do away with the period stigma to end discrimination related to the issue, she says.

A woman's Raja story

Apart from being a physician, Dr Priyanka Mohanty is also a dedicated social activist having a life membership of Red Cross and Unicef.

The WHO representative in Kalahandi district says, "Just as we love our bodies regardless of their shape, we should love our menstrual cycle no matter its frequency, flow and pain."



It's believed that Earth celebrates menstruation every year through poetry, painting, festival and period love. As they say, Raja isn't an ordinary day. It's a day when you let go of your old self and skin. You welcome new energy. Poda Pitha, the signature baked cake of Odisha and "Banaste Dakila Gaja" always offer a remarkable feeling to the women, she adds.

"But you know there's a 'but' in every chapter of our life we write. The 'but' here in Raja story is why there's one day of celebration and the other day that's a demarcation? Why there are trumpets to welcome the goddess Earth and the other day a girl is made to suffer in some other room with no allowance to her own home or dining table or any religious practice," asks Priyanka.

She feels every girl has her own period stories. "We live it. My only point is why live according to others.

Why not live like you want to create and write your own period story? Why choose to whisper "Mumma I am bleeding" where you can happily yell saying "Mumma, see I am bleeding and that's what makes me a woman in true sense," argues Priyanka, adding, "Raja is a sense of togetherness and an essence of individuality to celebrate blood with honour and grace. It's time to celebrate. It's time to neutralise menstruation because this is the only thing that gives us our indentation and should be worth rejoicing for."

12 Raja festivals in a year

Priyadarshani Biswal is a health counselor at the district headquarters hospital in Deogarh.

She says, "The word Raja is derived from Odia word Rajaswala or a menstruating woman. The mother Earth has her menstrual cycle for three days a year which is celebrated as Raja Parba in Odisha. The Earth turns greener after this festival. Same is the case with a woman. While the Earth menstruates once a year, a woman experiences it every month. So, we need to celebrate Raja on 12 occasions a year. A family rejoices when a girl attains puberty. In many communities, people also celebrate the occasion with feast."



But after that, things take an ugly turn, says Biswal. "While we continue to worship the mother Earth, a lot of restrictions are imposed on women during their period. Besides, we also follow a series of superstitions regarding menstruation. Despite massive awareness campaigns all over the place, an adolescent girl, after getting menstruated, is still kept in an isolated room when she undergoes a major physical and mental change. Didn't we witness how people ended their lives when they were kept at isolation facilities during Covid phase? If menstruation is considered impure in our society, then what about ejaculation, how it is pure," asked Priyadarshani.

"I wonder even the learned and educated women don't protest the non-entry of women into the Sabarimala temple in Kerala during their menstruation," she laments. It is also quite distressing to learn that many women in our society delay their period by taking pills if there is a religious event at home, she further says.

Therefore, it is time the male members of the society dealt sincerely with the issue with due sensitivity.



PIC- BIJAY MANDAL, OP

A Letter from Cupid

'YOU AND DAD BECAME THE CENTRE OF MY LIFE AS I SLOWED DOWN. I KEPT WELL, NO ILLNESS, NO FEVER NOTHING. BUT ARTHRITIS GNAWED AT MY CARTILAGE SLOWLY. DON'T CRY BECAUSE I HAVE GONE. YOU SAY, I AM THE SOUL OF THE HOUSE, AND SOUL DOESN'T HAVE AN EXPIRY DATE'

Dear mom and dad,

I am gone and yet both of you haven't stopped crying. I came by last night and licked your cheek wet with tears till you slept. I visited you in your dreams mommy, remember, on Sunday night? I was running towards you in a sandy beach. I am fine on the other side of the rainbow. It's what they call doggie heaven. I can run, swim and play as much as I want. And sometimes when both of you miss me too much, I can fly with my angel wings to you too.

I have lots of friends here, Maggie, Zora, Charlie, Bear, Emma, Goldie and so many others. And they love me, perhaps not like you and dad, but in a doggie in heaven kind of way.

I have started telling them about my life with you back home. They love to listen to my tales, and say I have the best mom and dad ever. I told them how I came in a little basket with two army men to you, and when you opened the door and I looked up from the basket, sleepy and tired after the long bus ride in May, I saw you. My heart burst with love when he placed me on your palms. You looked at me with so much love, I knew I was in the best human home possible.

From then on, life was beautiful. Both of you were busy, yet, you loved me as if I was your whole life. For me, you are my life. I didn't know the world any other way. And I love you both for that. Mom, remember, when we had both gone to Nehru Park, and suddenly a helicopter flew overhead? I was terrified because it flew really low and made a very loud noise. You lifted me up and hugged me till I was calm. You told me Scooby's mom who is the Prime Minister's daughter lives just opposite to us and the Prime Minister's house is here too. That is why, they do aerial security surveys. After that, I was never afraid.

And Mumbai was some place. I loved it. The walks along Marine drive, the mornings in the park and of course, dad's office. We were one big human family. Mom, remember the policeman who dropped by to see me when the POTUS visited our lane? He said I am the best lab in the world.

When dad went to Pune, I would go with you during the weekends by car. I loved the drive. And Pune was special. Remember, one day I went off exploring the Cantonment on my own? How worried you were when I came back with those three little boys, who followed me home? I had a lot of fun, though I took a risk and could have been run over, stolen...anything. But I loved the trees, the bungalows, the dogs in those homes and I knew my stay there was temporary because all our things were packed. And I saw the first buffalo and donkey there. I was scared when the donkey called out to me. I didn't know they bray like that... And the horses in the race course nearby. But I became friends with them. They only came on Sundays I think.

My journey to Bhubaneswar, our hometown was eventful too. At first, I was not too happy. After that, I settled down. I didn't really have doggie friends but everyone loved me and the strays here looked up to me as their special guy. They call me Master, and I love it because it sounds important and responsible. You and dad became the centre of my life as I slowed down. I kept well here though. No illness, no fever nothing. But the arthritis gnawed at my cartilage slowly. Mom did what she could and I tried very hard. We shifted to our own house and I loved it. Maybe, I lived this long because both of you had built this home with so much love. I remember the day when two huge langurs entered the den upstairs while dad was having breakfast and I was sitting at his feet.

You were in School then mommy. I ran into the bathroom and hid till they were gone and you and dad had a good laugh. Then you had grills fixed in the balcony so there was no monkey menace. I saw them later while I was going for a walk with you. You showed me that the langurs were running away when the stray dogs, pups were barking at them. So next time when I went with daddy for a walk and saw them, I barked and chased them and they never came back to spoil the plants in our terrace garden. That beautiful terrace garden will still be my favourite place when I fly down.

Don't cry because I have gone. I am there watching over

you both. I am happy mommy and daddy. I will meet you when you come here. You say, I am the soul of the house, and soul doesn't have an expiry date. Mom, don't feel guilty that you didn't give me enough time. I know you wanted to quit last year because grandpa left us and I was also slowing down. It didn't happen, but you know that what is meant to be will be. My heart kept working till you were finally there at home, and closing my eyes in your lap again was like my first day with both of you. Full of love and warmth in my world as I bid

goodbye. I never felt left out or lonely. So smile, and enjoy your well earned rest. Write your pieces for the newspaper and paint. I know you love doing all that. Decorate our house in your own inimitable style. That is your favourite thing. Cook those special meals. I will be there for Diwali and Christmas with all of you. Dad and you can travel now. Take those vacations and I will join you with my angel wings as I am beyond all permissions. Look out of your balcony when you miss me. I am there in the sky smiling.

Grinning happily at both of you. And dad, go for your walk. When you walk, I will join you. You will feel my presence next to you. And mom, start dancing again. I love it when you dance.

I will do my doggie dance when you play AajaNachle here with Caramel. Till then, good bye and love you...your precious sunshine boy forever...Cupid Mishra (Cupid passed away three years back) Nandita Mishra Director in English, Kiit International School



NANDITA MISHRA

Shilpa fulfils dream of reality show contestant

Actress Shilpa Shetty will be seen gracing the show *DID Lil Masters* along with her Nikamma co-stars Abhimanyu Dassani and Shirley Setia.

The diva fulfilled the dream of a contestant named Sagar, who wanted to buy a brand-new saree for his mother as she had never worn a fresh saree in her life.

In a bid to help the contestant achieve his lifelong dream, she brought a wonderful saree for his mom. That's not it, she also praised Sonali Bendre for taking full responsibility for Sagar and for taking care of him just like her own child.

Shilpa said: "The way Sonali has taken care of this child, I think it is very beautiful. It is not very easy to take full responsibility for a person and to follow it with your whole heart. I would

like to applaud Sonali for this. I have been following the show closely and I know that Sagar has always

wanted to buy a new saree for his mom and today I would like to help him fulfil this wish."

After this special gesture by Shilpa, Sagar went on to mention how his mom has always worn a second-hand saree given to her by other people. He happily exclaimed that this will be the first new saree that his mom will be wearing.



Sonam carving her own space

New age Odia film actor Sonam Dash, who began her career two years ago, is ready with her new movie opposite Amlan Das. Titled *Love Reaction*, the movie will be released during Rath Yatra. The actress had earlier appeared in web series *Club 69* and Odia film *Mitali Apa*. Comedian Braja Singh is making his directorial debut in the movie produced under Maa Mangala Cine Production Banner.

Talking to Sunday POST about the plot, Sonam said it to be a love triangle. "My character is in a live-in relationship when her old flame, played by Amlan, returns to her life making things complex."

She appreci

ated Amlan for his cooperation during the shoot and making her feel at home on the set.

Though Sonam was good at dancing and acting from her childhood, she had no plan to enter the film industry at the beginning. It was only after participating in a beauty pageant during her engineering days at KIIT, that she came to limelight and eventually made her debut in *Mitali Apa*.

She reads a lot of books from Odia literature to improve her modulation as she is not comfortable at speaking the language, admitted Sonam who now looks forward to the release of web series *Gangs of Puri*. PNN



Bhokabags honour in London film fest

Odia movie *Bhoka*, based on the plights of migrant communities during the infamous pandemic-triggered lockdown, has now bagged an award at the 23rd Rainbow Film festival in London. The week-long event concluded June 5, 2022.

The Rajeeb Mohanty directorial showcases the plight of an Odia family after their return from Surat during the pandemic.

"The lockdown and shut down left many without a livelihood and

several others lost lives to the virus. Such real life situations have been portrayed in the reel," said Mohanty.

Shot at different locations of Odisha and some parts of West Bengal, the film has its story, screenplay and dialogues by Ranjan Das while Ankit Kumar, Kavya Kiran, Kuna Tripathy, Pushpa Panda, Prativa Panda and Chiranjeevi comprise the ensemble cast of the movie. Bikash Das has scored the music. PNN

Radhika returns to screen after a hiatus

The trailer of the psychological thriller *Forensic*, which stars Vikrant Massey as Johnny Khanna, a forensic specialist and Radhika Apte as Megha Sharma, a police officer, was unveiled last week.

Sharing her excitement on the film's trailer launch, Radhika Apte, who has commanded a huge fan following courtesy her successful OTT projects like *Sacred Games* and *Ghoul*, said, "I am returning to the screens after more than a year and I am super thrilled about it. Even though *Forensic* is an adaptation of a south film, I can guarantee that the viewers are

new evidence comes forward with the help of advanced forensic technologies, the suspect keeps changing and the mystery keeps rising.

However, when the best possible duo - Johnny and Megha come together to crack open the case, they make good headway but at the cost of their personal and professional lives which turn upside down.

Commenting on the occasion, actor Vikrant Massey, who has had successful OTT releases in the past like *Haaseen Dillruba* and *Love Hostel*, said in a statement, "Forensic experts are so under-

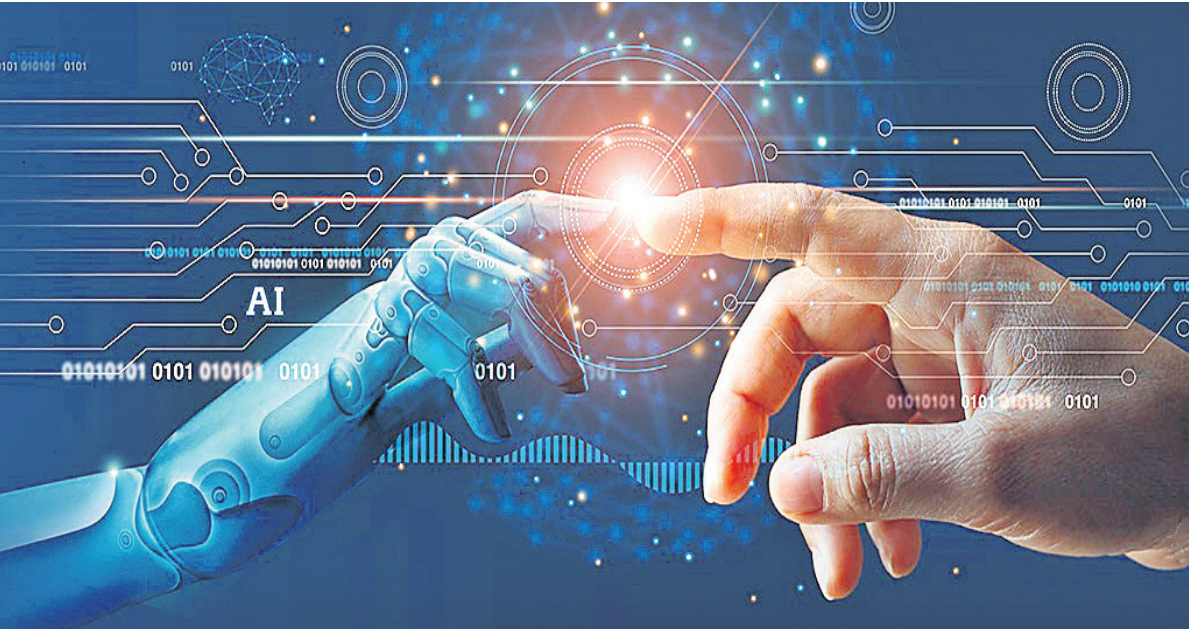


rated, and I am glad that for the first time in Bollywood, we have a movie with a forensic expert in the lead."

in for a surprising shock as this is not just another murder mystery." As seen in the trailer, *Forensic* is an edge-of-the-seat thriller where young girls are murdered on their birthdays in shocking ways. As

Skills that AI can't replace

WHILE IT IS APPARENT THAT AI WILL DOMINATE THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD ON MANY LEVELS, THERE CAN BE NO DENIAL THAT AS ADVANCED AS IT MAY BE, AI CAN AND NEVER WILL BE ABLE TO REPLICATE HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS



capable of performing. There are jobs that require creation, conceptualization, complex strategic planning, and dealing with unknown spaces and feelings or emotional interactions that are way beyond the expertise of an AI as of now. Let's now talk about certain skills that are irreplaceable till the human race exist.

Empathy: Some may argue that animals show empathy as well, but they are not the ones taking over the jobs. Humans, unlike programmed software designed to produce a specific result, are capable of feeling emotions. It may seem contradictory, but the personal affinity between a person and an organisation is the foundation of a professional relationship. Humans need a personal connection that extends beyond the professional realm to develop trust and human connection, something that bot technology completely lacks.

Emotional Intelligence: Though accurate, the AI is not intuitive, or culturally sensitive because that's a human trait. No matter how accurately it is programmed to carry out a task, it cannot possess the human ability to adjust to the algorithm of human intellect. For instance, reading into the situation or the face of another human. It lacks emotional intellect which makes humans capable of understanding and handling an interaction that needs emotional communication. Exactly during your customer care service, one would always prefer a human interaction to read and understand the situation than an automated machine that cannot work or help beyond the programming.

Creativity: AI can improve productivity and efficiency by reducing errors and repetition and replacing manual jobs with intelligent automated solutions, but it cannot comprehend human psychology. Furthermore, as the world becomes more AI-enabled, humans will be able to take on increasingly innovative tasks.

Problem-solving outside a code: Humans can deal with unexpected uncertainty by analysing the situation; like critical thinking during complex scenarios, and adopting creative tactics. Unlike humans, who may function under a variety of obstacles and settings, AI-powered devices cannot perform beyond their function, may be far in the future but not in the foreseeable one.

There is not even the slightest doubt that AI will not drive the future. To make AI work, humans need to be creative, insightful, and contextually aware. The reason for this is straightforward: humans will continue to provide value that machines cannot duplicate.

restricted. While it is apparent that AI will dominate the professional world on many levels. However, there can be no denial that as advanced as AI may be, it can and never will be able to replicate human consciousness that reinforces the human beings' position at the top of the food chain.

Until now, we are talking about the jobs that can be snatched as technology advances but then, the human aspects of work cannot be replaced. Let's focus on something that they cannot do. There are some jobs that only humans are



You've probably heard for years that the workforce would be supplanted by robots. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed several roles, such as using self-checkouts, ATMs, and customer support chatbots. The goal is not to scare people, but to highlight the fact that AI is constantly altering lives and executing activities to replace the human workforce. At the same time, technological advancements are producing new career prospects. AI is predicted to increase the demand for professionals, particularly in robotics and software engineering. As a result, AI has the potential to eliminate millions of current occupations while also creating millions of new ones.

Among the many concerns that AI raises is the possibility of wiping out a large portion of the human workforce by eliminating the need for manual labour. But it will simultaneously liberate humans from having to perform tedious, repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on more complex and rewarding projects, or simply take some much-needed time off.

According to a McKinsey report, depending on the adoption scenario, automation will displace between 400 and 800 million jobs by 2030, requiring up to 375 million people to change job categories entirely.

These figures can make people feel uneasy and anxious about the future. However, history suggests that this may not be the case; there is no question that some industries will be transformed to the point where they no longer require human labour, leading toward job redefinition and business process reform. For eg, the diagnosis of many health issues could be effectively automated, making doctors focus on other major issues that need their attention. In terms of replacing humans completely, human labour is and will continue to be necessary for the foreseeable future.

Though the potential of AI is unimaginable it is also



Elima



PHOTO : KUMAR SHARAT, OP