

JUNE 26-JULY 2, 2022

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Lord's own children

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COVER STORY



A recipient of the prestigious Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, Madhulita Mohapatra has carved a space as one of the leading Odissi exponents in south India. She loves to watch musical shows and concerts when she doesn't have her own events



Evening for dance

I schedule my dance performances on Sunday evenings and go to watch dance shows of others or concerts when I don't perform. I prefer to go for practice sessions after returning from the shows late in the evening.

Health conscious

I try to avoid carbohydrates and prefer protein. Salads, sprouts, dal, veggies, chicken & fish are part of my Sunday meals. I don't cut down on sugar much as it gives me energy. My favourite meal is Odia style mutton curry and rice.



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Early morning Yoga

I wake up early in the morning and do Yoga and regular dance practice on a regular basis. Sundays are no exception.

Busy weekend

My life on weekends is relatively busier compared to weekdays since most of my students at my dance institute Nriyantar prefer not to miss their classes on Sundays.

Family time

While I have to take my breakfast with my students, I try not to miss lunch with Imran (hubby) and Mihika (17-month-old daughter). After lunch I put her to a short nap and play with her at a nearby park after she wakes up.



With students

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

- I love my six packs so much; I protect it with a layer of fat.
When someone hates you for no reason, give them a reason.
Teamwork is important; it helps to put the blame on someone else.
I will marry the girl, who looks pretty in her Adhaar card.



CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Dear Sir, The write-up 'The healing touch' (June 19) on the numerous therapeutic effects of music on the occasion of the International Music Day was an enjoyable read. Having originated in France in 1982 and now being celebrated worldwide in 120 countries, including India, this day is essentially an annual celebration of the importance of music in our day-to-day lives. Our country, being a veritable melting pot of diverse musical cultures and traditions, this day should be accorded due importance by the general public and the different administrations. At a time when the world is driven by fissiparous tendencies, music can definitely provide the much-needed soothing balm for our frayed nerves and help restore sanity in our stressful lives. As rightly observed by the celebrated writer-poet Kahlil Gibran - Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life, bringing peace, abolishing strife.

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



When carrying the age-old ancestral profession forward has gone out of fashion, the practice of offering service to Lord Jagannath and His siblings, has, however, remained unaffected over the centuries

Lord's own children

SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

In ancient times, Indian society was divided into four categories – Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The Brahmins were entrusted with the responsibility of worshipping the Gods at temples or educating the society that includes arms training also while the Khatriyas tasked with the protection of territory and maintenance of law and order. Similarly, the Vaishyas were of productive class who regenerated wealth and the Shudras were supposed to offer all kinds of services to the members of these above three categories. Gradually, the successors of these classes took up the family professions to eke out their living. This is called the Varnashrama system which came into being in the post Vedic period. The system existed even during the 20th century until people started migrating to urban areas in search of greener pastures.

But now, neither a son of a Brahmin is involved only in priesthood at the temples nor are the positions in Indian Army reserved for the Khatriyas. Moreover, carrying forward the ancestral practice has become a bit old fashioned as all are free to take up a profession of their choice.

Amid all the social changes, one practice, however, has remained unchanged over the centuries and that is offering service to Lord Jagannath and His siblings. The servitors, earlier engaged in various services of Lords Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, still pass on their knowledge and expertise to their successors to carry the legacy forward. Though many from the new generation of these servitors' families have switched to other professions and shifted to other

cities due to their professional obligations, when it comes to Rath Yatra, the world famous chariot festival, it is almost impossible for them not to be a part of it.

With just a couple of days to go before Rath Yatra, **Sunday POST** takes a look at the beginning of Sevayat system and what the sevayats from the younger generation have to say about this age-old practice.

How it all began

According to legends, long before the mysterious emergence of the wooden Idols on Srimandir's Ratna Simhasana, they were secretly worshipped by Shabar king Biswabasu at the top of Nilachal Hill in the name of Nila Madhab. Impressed by King Indradyumna's ardent prayer and pure devotion, Nila Madhab took the shape of Chaturdha Murty or four wooden idols – Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan. On being directed by the idols, the king made extensive arrangements for their daily rituals and round-the-year festivals.

Expansion of services

Niladri-Mahodaya, an old religious scripture written in 1922 on various leelas of Lord

Jagannath, says, there were only four sevayats – Acharya, Brahma, Charuhota and Patrihota – at the service of the Trinity during Satya Yuga. Then it was increased to 30 under eight categories during the rule of Jajati of Soma dynasty. Most of the servitors were local Brahmins while a few of them were brought from Kanyakubja or Kanauj. The categories of these services included – Panda, Garabadu, Patribadu, Suar, Mahasuar, Akhand Mekap, Pratihari, Bhandar Mekap, Deulakaran and Chunara.

But these eight categories were again divided into 36 parts during the reign of Ananga Bhima Dev –III and since then it is called Chhatisha Niyog which still exists. However, the number of servitors and types of services jumped to more than one hundred in due course.

Rath Yatra rituals

Though so many services have been introduced to the Srimandir traditions from time to time, the most important activities are undertaken during the construction of chariots ahead of the world famous Rath Yatra. Though, the servitors engaged during the chariot construction render their services for just about two months, they are the most important part of Srimandir tradition.



Important categories among the sevayats who are engaged in the chariot construction are – Biswakarma Maharana (Carpenter), Bhoi (transporter), Chitrakar (painter), Darji (tailor) and Kamara (blacksmith). About 60 Maharanas, 75 Bhois, 15 Kamaras, 20 Chitrakars and 7/8 Darjis are engaged at Ratha Yard (workshop) during the construction of chariots.

New age servitors speak

Sharing his experience, Jasobant Maharana, son of senior servitor Jagannath Maharana, says, "It all began in 2008 when I started accompanying my father to the Rath Khala as an eight year-old. My father brought me in with him to learn the skills of chariot making. I would observe not only the expertise of other Maharanas, but also their dedication towards the deities. Needless to say, their sincerity and devotion rubbed off on me and I could develop some of their qualities and habits once I turned 18."

Though carpentry is not his main profession, the commerce graduate takes time off from his studies to be part of chariot construction.



"Currently I am working in a Chartered Account firm as an intern to learn Articleship. But I have taken permission from the authorities to contribute to the divine cause while continuing with my internship. I work at Rath Yard all day and join my job in the evening during these two months. I have so far managed both the works but am not sure if I will be allowed to work at Rath Yard once I join a corporate house after the end of my internship," apprehends Jasobant.

However, the ardent devotee has surrendered himself to the Lord and he believes that the caretaker of the universe will certainly give him opportunities to serve him for the rest of his life.

Rabi, a Bhoi servitor from Puri Ratha Khala, says, "My family's association with chariot construction goes back to the 18th Century when our ancestors were roped in to offer the service. Such is Lord's grace that we never feel the energy level diminishing even after working continuously for nearly 12 hours a day. We don't work for any financial gain; our sole motive is to serve the creator of this universe."

The



Bhoi servitors are assigned to pile up the logs of wood and supply them to the Maharanas.

What old guards say

Bijaya Mahapatra, the chief Maharana of Nandighosa says, "I have been working in the Ratha Khala since 1972 and it is a stunning spectacle and a complete showcase of cultural extravaganza where devotees brimming with enthusiasm pour in from around the world."

Bijaya adds, "With the grace of Lord, The Festival of Wheels comes around when the schools are on a vacation. Being a music teacher and an approved vocalist of All India Radio, Cuttack, doing justice to my work remains a daunting task. At the same time, service to the Lord is a top priority which is why I lock my every other chore after Akshaya Tritiya and join the team."

Jagannath Maharana, who is mostly involved with iron works like moulding the axles of Rath wheels at the Ratha Khala, shares, "I get to work for only a couple of months in a year during the Rath Yatra. In other times I work as a sculptor and an artisan. We have been rendering our service for the last 27 generations and will continue to do so in the future. For us this is not a profession but an honour which has become a way of life."

It is not just about a Jasobanta, a Rabi or a Bijay, there are scores of other highly qualified profession-

als who love to re-configure their work schedule to carry forward the legacy of their ancestors and become part of this early carnival called Rath Yatra, come what may.

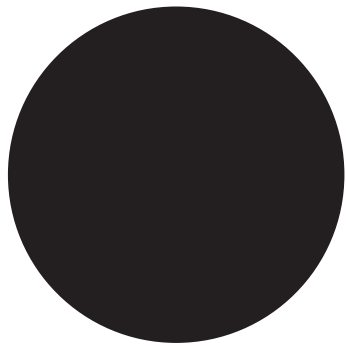


Chitrakar servitors at work



Maharana servitors carving timber pieces





Lord's Fav

Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, is also known for his big appetite and weakness for sumptuous delicacies.

No wonder, he is offered 'Chhapan Bhog' or 56 types of distinguished cuisines of various flavours as his daily diet round the year. Ahead of Rath Yatra,

Sunday POST lists some of Lord Jagannath's favourite dishes that are quite popular in every Odia household



Rasagola- The sweet meat which is often claimed by West Bengal as their invention is one of the favourite delicacies of Lord Jagannath. In fact, he managed to pacify goddess Laxmi by offering a pot of Rasagolas when she was in deep anguish over his nine-day trip to Gundicha temple during Rath Yatra. Mashed cheese is first made into small balls and then dipped in hot sugary syrup to make spongy Rasagolas.



Pheni or Khaja- This is made with refined wheat flour and sugar. This layered crunchy delight is deep fried in oil and is made an offering to Lord Jagannath. One can find over a hundred Khaja shops in the Holy city to buy this sweet desert. It is one of the most sought after dry foods in Odisha.



Poda Pitha - Lord Jagannath has a sweet tooth and Poda Pitha is one of his favourites, it is believed. It is a pancake-like baked dish made out of rice flour, jiggery, cardamom and garnished with coconut. Its crust is slightly burnt, while the inside is soft and white.



Malpua- A pancake served as a dessert or a snack to the Lord of the Universe. The batter for Malpua is prepared by crushing ripe bananas, coconut and adding flour and milk or water. Malpua fritters are dipped in syrup after they are fried.



Rasabali- It is a deep fried flattened reddish brown patty of chhena that is soaked in thickened and sweetened milk which is lightly seasoned with crushed cardamoms.



Chhena Poda- It means baked cheese in Odia, made of well-kneaded homemade fresh cheese, sugar and is baked for several hours until it browns. Its flavour is predominantly derived from caramelization of sugar.



Ukhuda- A sweet dish made by frying puffed rice sweetened with sugar that is later served as bhog at Srimandir.

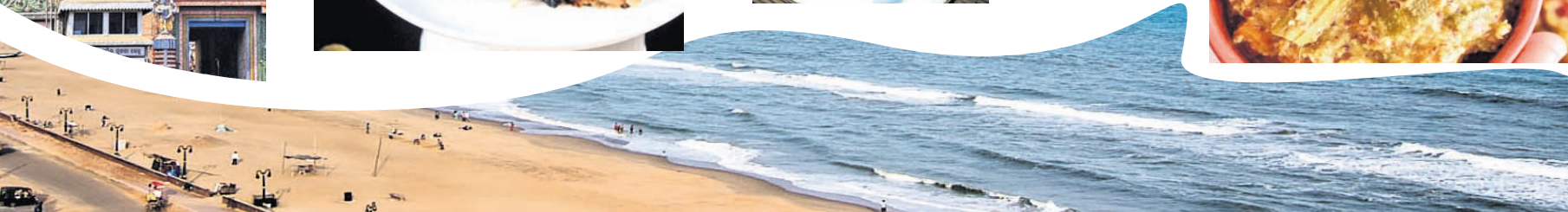
Kheeri- It's a kind of wet pudding popular in all parts of the Indian subcontinent, usually made by boiling milk, sugar or jiggery and rice. It is flavoured with desiccated coconut, cardamom, raisins, saffron, cashews, pistachios, almonds and other dry fruits and nuts.



Dalma- It is a medley of lentils and vegetables cooked together. Tempering and seasoning incorporate each other's taste and the spicy seasonings bring out the colour of this Odisha's favorite dish. Dried red chillies, bay leaf and a dollop of ghee add glamour to it.



Besara -Puri temple style Besara is a customary Odia dish where mixed vegetables are cooked in Odisha's trademark mustard paste. The ingredients of this authentic Odia food include raw banana, sweet potato, pointed gourd and other common vegetables available in Indian kitchen. Besara is one of the most delectable curries offered to Lord Jagannath



Movies to watch this

Rath Yatra

Lord Jagannath and his annual sojourn Rath Yatra are part and parcel of Odia culture and tradition. No wonder, so many films have been made in the past with the love and devotion of Odias towards the God of Universe being beautifully woven in the narrative. **Sunday POST** takes a look at some of these gems that took the box office by storm



JAI JAGANNATH

The mythological film directed by Sabyasachi Mohapatra, released in 15 languages. Besides Odia and Hindi, it's dubbed versions were released in English, Bengali, Assamese, Chhattisgarhi, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Nepali languages. The plot of the movie is based on the ancient scripture Laxmi Puran. The ensemble cast of the movie includes Sritam Das, Pintu Nanda, Jyoti Mishra, Shilalipi, Sadhu Meher and Sharat Pujari.

BHAKTA SALABEGA

An immensely popular Odia movie based on the life of the Muslim poet who was an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath was released in 1983. Produced by the Jai Jagannath Films Private Limited by Surya Narayan Mohanty and directed by Radha, the film features popular actors Sarat Pujari, Uttam Mohanty (as Salabega), Dukhiram Swain, Biren Routray, Byomakesh Tripathy, Anita Das, Aparajita Mohanty, Jayee and Radha Panda, among others. The film assumes significance for its association with a number of artistes from Mumbai. While Gulzar had penned lyrics for it, Manna De lent his voice, the screenplay was by Prayag Raj, who worked with popular Hindi films like *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Coolie* and *Mard*. Even its fight master Azim Bhai had worked for the iconic film *Sholay*.



PUA MORA KALA THAKURA

Written and directed by veteran filmmaker Raju Mishra, the multi-starrer was a revenge drama and one of the most successful films of the late 1980s. Lord Jagannath was an integral of the plot. Legendary musician Akhaya Mohanty scored the music of this Eastern Media Limited productions while Miss Quily from Mumbai appeared in an item song. The cast included Uttam Mohanty, Bijay Mohanty, Aparajita Mohanty, Tandra Ray, Dukhiram Swain, Hara Patnaik, Anita Das and Isha Bebarta.



BAHUDIBE MO JAGA BALIA

Loosely based on the superhit Hindi film *Karan Arjun*, the movie released in 2003 was directed by Sabyasachi Mohapatra. The plot revolves around Jaga and Balia, set out to avenge their father's death, only to get themselves killed by their enemies. Years later, the two are reincarnated to bring justice. Sritam Das and Sidhant Mohapatra played the main protagonists while Hindi film actor Shakti Kapoor made his debut in Odia film industry with this film



SAKHI RAHILA E SINGHADUARA

With a title having reference to Puri Srimandir, this is yet another multi-starrer which did magic at the box office in 2007. The action-packed family drama, directed by Sanjay Nayak, had Bijoy Mohanty, Uttam Mohanty, Tandra Roy, Aparajita Mohanty, Mihir Das, Siddhanta Mahapatra, Mama Mishra, Kuna Tripathy, Papi Santuka, Gungun, Biju Badajena playing important roles.

JAGA HATARE PAGHA



Written and directed by Mohd. Mohsin, the film made in 1985 was a runaway hit after its release. It has a long cast that included Bijay Mohanty, Uttam Mohanty, Aparajita Mohanty, Baisali Parida, Sujata Anand and Hemant Das. The family drama is one of the memorable movies of which late Bijay Mohanty was part of. Rupa Shagadire Suna Kania was a superhit number which is sung in music shows even today.

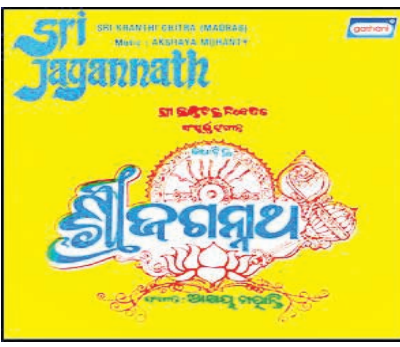
CHAKA AKHI SABU DEKHUCHI



Hindi film actress Sriprada made her debut in Odia film industry with this film which was a blockbuster of its time. Written and directed by Raju Mishra, the revenge drama had an ensemble cast that included Uttam Mohanty, Sritam Panda, Ashrumochan Mohanty, Raimohan Parida, Asit Pati and Hara Patnaik. The film was released in 1989.

SHREE JAGANNATH

Made in 1979 by Do Kaliyaan fame Kranthi Kumar of Mumbai and based on how Lord Jagannath emerged on Nilachal Hill, this mythological film had Chakrapani, Jharana Das, Dhiren Das, Pira Mishra, Shyamalendu, Nityananda Mishra, Mamina played stellar roles. The dialogue was written by Bijay Mishra and one of the most popular films produced in Odisha with theme based on Jagannath.

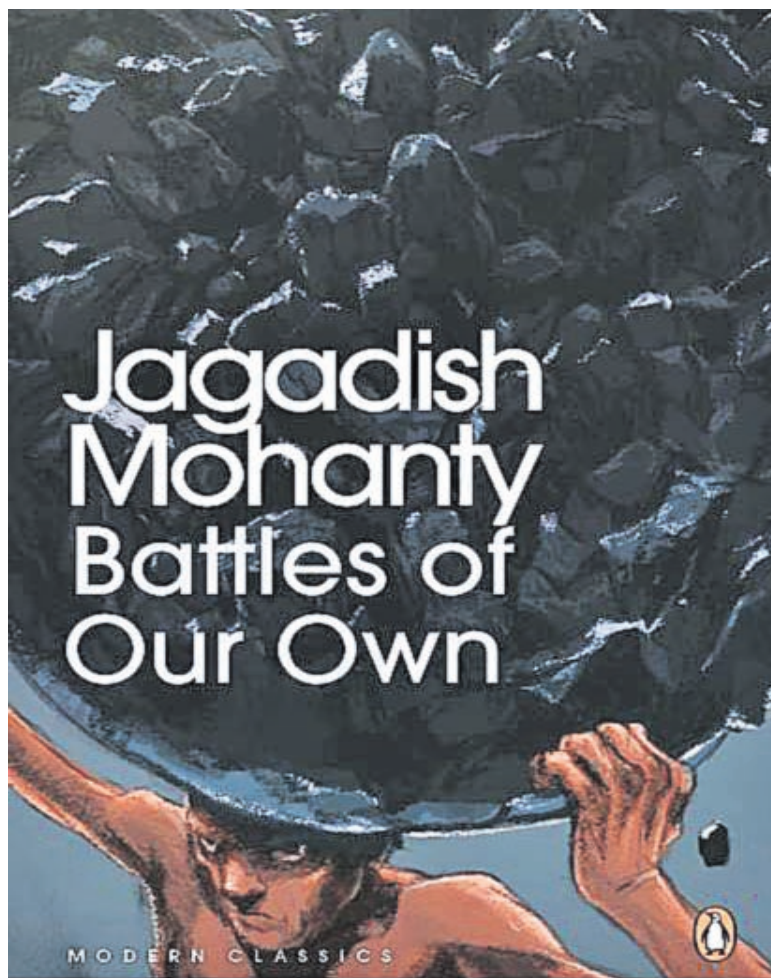


Battles Without and Within

THE NOVEL IS A TEXT WITHOUT A SHRED OF SUPERFLUOUS MATERIAL, DESPITE DELVING INTO THE PSYCHE OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS WITH STRIKING FIDELITY



BY SATABHISA NAYAK



Apart from the three protagonists, the novel is populated by memorable secondary characters who are not mere satellites but fully realised as persons. There is, for example, the immoral Dhruva Khatua, his name an ironic twist on his unethical dealings, and the pragmatic opportunist Agani Hota, whose glib tongue and changing colours provide a stark contrast to the inarticulate yet morally firm Harishankar. The women characters in the novel function as haunting symbols of emotional failures on the part of the protagonists, be it Harishankar's wife who has been left mentally distraught thanks to her husband's neglect of home and family, or Pradyumna's intrusive thoughts

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Mohapatra and Paul St-Pierre

about the woman of his dreams. Even Deshmukh suffers from a loveless marriage, torn between the proprietary claims of his widowed mother and the conjugal expectations of his wife Anita.

The novel offers a very realistic picture of trade union politics and the moral vacuum at its centre. While the reader gets a bleak view of the moral bankruptcy of both trade unionists and the establishment, she is never bogged down with too much detail. The pace never flags for a moment – action and psychological portraiture are tightly meshed together till they culminate in what feels to be an inexorable conclusion. It is a credit to the author's dexterity that every single incident feels as an inextricable element of the fabric of the story. The stylistic features of the novel impress upon the reader, starting from the oscillating character perspectives, a variety of narrative styles including a memorable offering of stream-of-consciousness narration, to the controlled yet not arid linguistic palette. One can state without any exaggeration that this is a text without a shred of superfluous material, despite delving into the psyche of the main characters with striking fidelity.

The translators have done a commendable job in facilitating the Odia text in its reincarnation in English. Theirs is not a literal, word-for-word translation, but one that successfully preserves the tenor and texture of the original text with nuance. The novel doesn't read like a translation at all, which is surely the best result any translation can aspire for.

The reviewer is a research scholar at the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, ITER, Bhubaneswar.

Finally, the character of Harishankar, with his belated conviction in the moral force of Gandhian values, forms the ethical centre of the novel. Transcending all egoistic considerations of power and prestige, he transforms into a true satyagrahi after a lifetime of questionable motivations and compromise. His fast unto death in the final pages of the novel, a solitary venture untainted by any ulterior consideration, becomes the piece-de-resistance in a novelistic world where morality has become obsolete. What lends such potency to this climactic event is that although Harishankar is not completely sure about his underlying desires for prolonging the fast single-handedly, he does know he has finally set forth in the right direction. The psychological realism at display here is masterly, to say the least:

What would Harishankar do if he did not end the hunger strike? Was the strike for his own benefit? What did he want? Harishankar did not know. Yes, that certainly was true, and during the strike he would think about his motives. He would discover the purpose of the fast while it was still underway. Maybe the reason was to purify himself, to express grief and remorse for all that he had to do in the name of the union. Maybe it was to awaken the people, to change their way of thinking... Was he confused? He did not know. Perhaps, but maybe not. Perhaps he was still a novice. (225-226)

Set in the claustrophobic environs of a colliery town in Odisha, Jagadish Mohanty's *Battles of Our Own*, masterfully dramatizes battles both within and without. It is rare to find such a harmonious fusion of external events and the psychic landscapes of the protagonists.

A brisk, fast-paced novel at 236 pages, *Battles* revolves around three protagonists --- Pradyumna, a youth of nineteen fighting a crippling existential crisis; Deshmukh, an upwardly mobile officer who nonetheless wrestles with demons of his own; and finally, Harishankar, a former trade union leader well past his prime who finds himself entering the political fray again. The writer weaves these three dramatis personae into an intricate tapestry, their respective characters thrown into sharp relief with the narrative strategy of alternating points of view. Such a juxtaposition not only helps propel the story but also brings out the ideological differences motivating the central trio's thoughts and actions.

Pradyumna is an educated Brahmin boy impersonating a tribal for the sake of a job in the coal mine, a decision that wreaks havoc with his sense of identity. Spending his days in an alienated haze, out-of-place both in the stygian gloom of the coal mines as well as at the home of his benefactor, Pradyumna is the very embodiment of existential malaise:

He was bound to remain in exile in this coal mine for the rest of his life. He was very soon going to become, like everyone else here, a man preoccupied with his own immediate surroundings. He would forget his own identity, the days of his childhood, adolescence, and youth. (111)

While Pradyumna has to deal with a staggering sense of self-doubt and futility, the apparently well-adjusted Deshmukh has to put up a constant fight against feelings of social inferiority and impotence. A transplant from the state of Maharashtra with a tragic familial past, Deshmukh remains discontented despite rising from his humble origins to become an officer. Worldly success fails to pave the road to happiness for him; what he has to contend with, instead, is seemingly endless workplace strife and a fraught relationship with his wife, not to mention his crippling sense of guilt at having betrayed his long-suffering mother. In a telling instance, the novel conveys his ambivalence after achieving a promotion much sought-after:

Deshmukh was now safely ensconced on his cherished throne, but nothing seemed to have changed. Was all this really a sign his life had turned around? When? How? Yet what about the slights, the stress, and the struggles he had endured for so many years? Had he simply been deluding himself? Surely, they had really existed. And yet it seemed to him the old chair, the old office, and the hassle-free earlier phase of his life had been better, as if it was more desirable to live as a man without qualities, as just one officer among many. (143-144)

Sidhishree



PHOTO : KUMAR SHARAT, OP