

APRIL 9-15, 2023

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Breathing life into art



P 3,4
COVER
STORY



He is an animation filmmaker but he doesn't make movies for entertainment purposes only. Shorts made by Ritwik Das of Bhubaneswar always carry positive messages for the society. Expectedly, they garner rave reviews at national and international festivals. Ritwik bagged a trophy at the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards-2022 for his Magunira Sagada and recently he also won the first prize at Dhvani Film Festival in Bhubaneswar for his movie Vision for Inclusion. His objective is to create an environment for the growth of animation films in Odisha, says the prolific filmmaker who has more than 20 movies to his credit



Love for art & craft

I have been in love with art and craft since childhood. So, I try to attend the drawing and painting competitions in my city if they are held on Sundays.

Part-time lensman

Since I did a course in Photography from FX School of Mumbai, I love clicking pictures apart from direction and animation, after all that's what made me passionate about my present profession.

No-work Sundays

I love to spend my Sundays at home with family, cousins or friends as I get swamped with work on weekdays.

Exploring multiple avenues

Travelling to new places, exploring crazy things, watching animated movies, and listening to music are the things that consume most of my leisure times.



with family

Love for board game

Had I not been a filmmaker, I would certainly have a flourishing career in Chess. No wonder, I go for a round or two of the board game with friends on Sundays to elevate my creativity and boost planning skills.

Pet parenting

I have immense love for furry creatures, dogs and cats in particular. I love to parent my two cats Amyra and Murthi as they mean a lot to me since I don't have many friends.

SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

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

- Wife: I hate that beggar
Husband: why?
Wife: yesterday I gave him food and today he gave me a book 'How To Cook'!
- Teacher: complete the sentence 'Early to bed early to rise..'
Student: This man has neither WiFi nor WIFE
- Boss: Are you on drugs?
Employee: you and I both know that you don't pay me enough to have a drug problem!



BEYOND BELIEF

Sir, The **Sunday POST's** cover story from last week, "Blurring Class Boundaries," on April 2, describes the lavish celebration of Maa Budhi Thakurani's festival from the silk city of Odisha. The piece of information is all about how the Barber community worships the deity and not the Brahmins. The month long festival emphasises on the traditions and customs followed by the people who wait for two years just to celebrate it. History behind yatra and 'd-day' of yatra is when all rituals begin, it is amazing to see the involvement of devotees in the yatra. It resembles like the father and the mother relationship with the deity, the street neighbors, and manshikadharies. Box was equally informative; it showed how a mother got back her daughter because of her faith on the Goddess.

SATABDI SINHA, 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. 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

WORLD ART DAY: APRIL 15

Breathing life into art



THE BIRTHDAY OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, ONE OF THE GREATEST PAINTERS WHO MASTERED MOST ASPECTS OF ART, IS OBSERVED AS WORLD ART DAY TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ART, ARTISTS, AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN MAKING SOCIETY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE IN

SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

Art is nothing but a reflection of the collective consciousness of a society. Artists provide creative, intellectual and emotional insights into society at large, impacting the masses and challenging the status quo. Art helps cultures unite and boosts economic growth, helping the world become a prettier, better and happier place to live in. It would be foolish to deny the importance of art in a progressive society. When it comes to Odisha, whose previous name was Utkala or the Land of Utkrasta Kala (the epitome of art), the state itself is a witness to this unique correlation between art and societal advancement. While the state has been seeing a decline in patronage of the arts, few artists are striving hard to change the narrative.

Ahead of World Art Day, **Sunday POST** sat down with a few of those artists across the domains to understand the introspection that goes into creating the art and how they have contributed towards the welfare of society:

‘Live in the art you create’

Firdausi Tabassum, a practicing visual artist and a painter of distinction, expresses her art in multiple dimensions. She is currently working as an art education instructor in the School and Mass Education Department, Government of Odisha. As a winner of WAO (Women Achievers of Odisha) award recently for Visual Art by SOA, Firdausi’s work has been collected by many art galleries, organisations and institutions. Although she is engaged as a painter, she still considers academic pursuit and creative excellence to be a never-ending quest as an artist.

Narrating her motivation behind painting, she says, “I have always wanted to be literally in the painting; to live it. I believe



Firdausi Tabassum

each of your paintings must express your ability to articulate your genuine ‘inner voice’ and tell an original story about your personal experience, feelings, thoughts, memories, beliefs, backgrounds and ideas so that you feel like you are part of the painting.”

She feels that human emotions and creative art are interconnected and affect one another. She says, “Every aspect of humanity can be expressed through art. As humans, we have a natural tendency to respond to things that move us, force us to create. My style and genre have evolved over the years. There is a shift towards philosophical questions; there are psychological aspects that I wish to consider. The object remains the common link. The search and the result, the depth and the dimensions keep changing and they draw inspiration from everyday life, from colloquial sayings, cultures, dreams and discussions. All of these impulses make up my private philosophy, which gets translated into my works.”

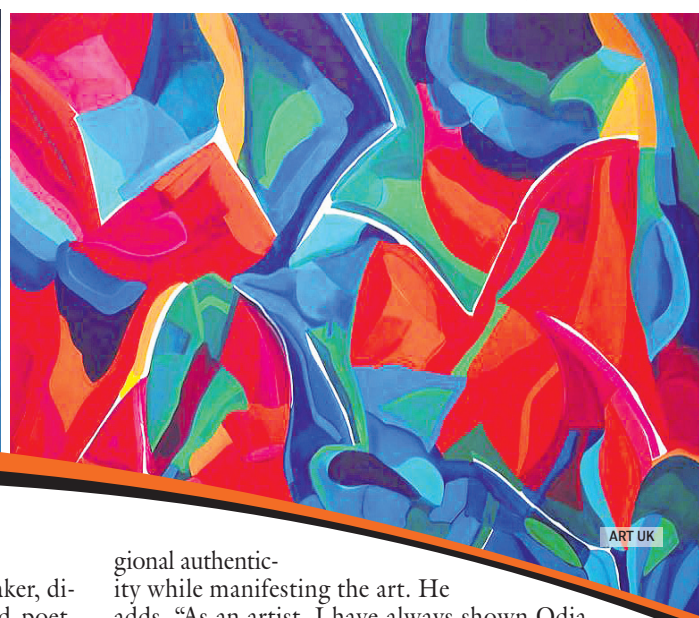
The painter says that cinemas have played a great motivational role in her artistic endeavours. She believes that it urges you to dare, to dream and to carve your own dignity. She adds, “I think movies have the capacity to evoke many kinds of emotions within us, like love, perseverance, determination and redemption. This concept has inspired me to do some series of paintings in an experimental way on the Indian continent with the theme, ‘Inspiring India.’”

Firdausi believes in raising voice through her art to tackle gender and sexuality politics. She has a soft corner for mother earth and shows concerns towards the rising global issues such as climate change, flash floods, extreme heat waves, a global pandemic, etc. In 2012, when Nirbhaya was attacked, India recorded 24,923 rape cases and these numbers raised questions about the poor implementation of law in the country. Firdausi felt sensitive towards such societal issues and worked on a series of paintings themed ‘Don’t Touch My Clothes’. She wanted to shed light on crimes of sexual assault and wished to encourage women to exercise their choice. She finds conversations and work about changing the culture of sexual harassment and discrimination to be in dire need.

Being a nature lover and an artist, there are definite opinions about specific issues, passions and beliefs that are imprinted in her heart and naturally flow out as she paints. Through these works, she tries to convey the message that people have forgotten their



A work by Firdausi



'Touching the chords of sensibility'

With over 500 live performances across the globe to her credit, eminent singer **Susmita Das**' versatility spans poetry, literature, devotional and contemporary themes. The Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee believes that the art of music is a medium for finding relevancy in addressing societal issues. Through her music, she was able to raise awareness

on the myriad of contemporary community-based issues such as conservation of the environment, women's empowerment, cleanliness, the promotion of tribal and folk tunes and Odia pride. With her musical ventures, she has successfully staked Odisha's claim to get the GI tag for Rasagola.



Susmita Das

She describes herself as quite selective when it comes to the lyrics and quality of her songs because of the lasting impression her art makes on the audience. She says, "My desire has been to touch the chords of sensibility in my listeners and leave an impact. That is why I am so particular about the lyrics."

Her composition, *Naari*, celebrates womanhood by delving into the three crucial stages of a woman's life: the maiden, the mother, and the elder. Defined as a 'creative fusion', based on the themes of climate change and natural calamities, *Prithvi Manthan* is a very forceful, packed with mantras, and rhythmic composition.

Speaking on her future ventures, the singer of *Aigiri Nandini*, an album that celebrates womanhood, says, "I have plans for making songs about Odia culture, pride, and history."

'Exuding regional authenticity'

Rajesh Ranjan Mohanty is an Indian filmmaker, director, producer, screenwriter, visual artist and poet. Rajesh has used the medium of cinema to cast the spotlight on social and developmental issues. Within a decade, Rajesh produced and directed more than 40 documentaries, two feature films and more than 100 musicals in several languages. His films are based on social issues such as disability, women, tribal communities, sanitation, education and other developmental issues. His latest feature film, *Khyudha*, was adapted from Indian author Padma Bhusan Manoj Das's short story, *Eka Chorira Bruttanta*, written in 1943.

Expressing his thoughts on art, he says, "For me, the best way to get inspiration for art is to look at another, because art is an inner feeling and imagination. If I need to get into gear, I will look at Sanjay Leela Bhansali's artistic touch and music in his cinema."

The filmmaker strongly affirms the conveyance of social messages and awareness through the medium of visual storytelling. He says, "Among all my works and creations, my directorial debut, *The Compassionate Crusader* (2012), is a non-feature docudrama that spreads out most messages towards societal issues. It is the story of a person who is blind by birth but has never

let his disability pull him down. Rather, he used the disadvantage to rise above others

in the service of the physically challenged, which was screened at the YES! i am the CHANGE social filmmaking challenge in Mumbai organised by the Yes Foundation.

Rajesh believes in exuding re-

gional authenticity while manifesting the art. He adds, "As an artist, I have always shown Odia



Rajesh Ranjan Mohanty

culture in its most authentic form, whether it be our very own handloom fabrics that I've used on my actors or subjects or the beautiful landscapes our state is blessed with. I've travelled most of Odisha and tried to capture its essence, as you can see

in our content photography." He banks on the revival of Odia literature and believes that this is the right time for it.

He further adds, "I want to produce my dream project, a movie titled *Mohini*, based on a true event. It is a story about an innocent girl who ends up as a kotha dancer and subsequently becomes a prostitute. You will be able to experience literature-based lyrics with an acoustic-flavoured raga-based number."





‘Saving jumbos is saving our own species’

There are approximately 1975 elephants in Odisha whereas the human population is nearly 43 million. Therefore, people shouldn't project their problems on the elephants, suggests nature and wildlife filmmaker Sangita Iyer

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Author, broadcast journalist and most importantly a filmmaker on nature and wildlife, Sangita Iyer has been vocal on how elephants are being exploited for profit behind the veil of culture and religion. Her globally acclaimed documentary film *God in Shackles*, on the plight of captive elephants, was not only appreciated at the United Nations General Assembly, it has already accumulated 13 awards at various international film festivals. The prestigious Nari Shakthi Puraskar award winner and executive director of Voice For Asian Elephants Society (VFAES) was recently in Odisha to collaborate with State Forest and Environment Department for the protection of the species and restoration of their habitats. On the sidelines of the meeting with the officials, the India-born Canadian had an extensive chat with **Sunday POST** on the issue during her Odisha visit.

Here go the excerpts:

■ **To begin with, could you tell us where your interest in wildlife conservation stemmed from?**

■ I was born and raised in Kerala and my grandparents used to take me to this amazing temple where I would spend a lot of time with a bull elephant. Elephants have always been close to my heart and I consider them my soul animals. I don't know if this has something to do with me being born on Ganesh Chaturthi. Besides, I feel as though I am part of the wilderness. Listening to the sweet melodies of the birds, and the rippling waters, feeling the breeze on my skin, and the earth beneath my naked feet, I feel a profound sense of belonging when I'm in the wilderness. So, given my own deep connection and the benefits that I experienced when surrounded by butterflies and bees and all of the creatures of the earth, I wanted to find a way to share with others that can also experience the bliss that I am able to enjoy. Elephants have

been linked with mitigating climate change. By saving them and other animals we actually end up saving our own species. Elephants in particular are indispensable. This is why I wanted to awaken and enlighten people. And so I started producing films to educate people, because sounds and images have a profound influence on the public perception of any issue.

■ **What do you think about the creation of elephant corridors in India?**

■ It's quite necessary because elephants are migratory species. And what is happening though is there is a significant habitat loss, with mining decimating core elephant habitats. Some people argue that only 1% of Odisha has been used for mining but that 1% is a core elephant habitat – their home. Not only do they mine the elephant habitats, but also, they never really re-wild or restore the mined areas. Worse, not a single corridor has been notified even as the government was asked to notify 14 corridors that were identified August 1, 2021. It points to the apathy, complacency, negligence and dereliction of their duty. For the elephants to move between forest patches, they need to have a safe passage, otherwise they're going to get electrocuted, killed in train accidents or hunted by poachers.

■ **Human-elephant conflicts are common in many areas of the country including Odisha, how can we address it?**

■ Let me clarify that the intense human-elephant conflict that we see

in Odisha is like nowhere else. The reason here is habitat loss and they are left with no choice, but to enter the villages causing conflicts with human beings. So, we need to provide food to elephants inside the forests. This is what VFAES is doing right now. We are creating corridors, planting saplings and using technology to prevent road traffic deaths of elephants. We are planting around 20,000 elephant friendly saplings near the Kuldiha forest reserve, in Balasore range and creating 10 waterholes. You see, elephants don't have food and water inside the forests. As soon as they step outside, they have this rich farmland with all kinds of delicious food like rice and corn. They don't realise that this is a cropland, because it is actually a forestland that earlier belonged to them. We all know elephants never forget. There are approximately 19,500 Asian Elephants, whereas there are more than 43 million people in Odisha. So whose population is more? We should not be projecting our problems on the elephants, or blame the elephants for the human population.

■ **Are the tribal communities needed for the safety of elephants?**

■ Well, the tribal people have so much indigenous knowledge. They know exactly where the water bodies are and where elephants come from. So, their knowledge is invaluable and they can be our close allies. It is necessary for the forest department to collaborate with the tribal people.

■ **As a filmmaker what do you think of *The Elephant Whisperers* which recently bagged an Oscar?**

■ I would appreciate the cinematography which is breathtaking. The majestic waterfalls, and the lush greenery inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, and the rare species we never get to see, like the elusive tiger and leopard, are all truly out of this world. Besides, the entire story revolves around this indigenous couple who takes care of a baby elephant after his mother was electrocuted. This is a very very rare story, because in real life the babies never survive.

■ **What is the future you see for the elephants if situations continue like this?**

■ The insatiable lust for money and material wealth is driving reckless actions that will return to haunt humanity. It has been proven that elephants are climate mitigators. A study suggests that one African forest elephant sequesters some 500 metric tons of carbon per sqkm. They have a massive body and an enormous biomass, and in that body each elephant sequesters 2.5 metric tons of carbon. So, as we can see these elephants help us absorb the carbon dioxide because they promote the growth of hardwood trees that absorb a lot more carbon. My fear is, if we don't do something urgently now, we will lose elephants within 10 years.

■ **You had a meeting with the forest department in Odisha. What discussion did you have with them?**

■ I presented the work we are doing in Odisha and explained why it is important to take this crisis seriously and act urgently. If there is no sense of urgency, we will lose all these elephants. I had a very productive discussion, and our team has been in touch with some of the officers that we are collaborating with. We are really grateful to have the opportunity to support conservation efforts of the forest department and of course to help elephants.



MALAIKA ON MAKING A FAMILY

Actress Malaika Arora recently opened up about her plans to marry Arjun Kapoor and settle down with him. She has often proved that age is just a number. Career spanning over two decades, she maintains a strong fitness game and is known to make headlines for her stylish and bold outfit choice. The model-turned-actress always makes brave choices and follows her heart. After ending her 19 years

long marriage with actor Arbaaz Khan, Malaika Arora is currently with actor Arjun Kapoor. Opening about her plans to tie the knot with the actor, she said, "I think I am in my most productive and successful stage right now and wish to work this way for the next 30 years. I don't want to become less active and wanna do so many things right now, I want to travel, and it would be lovely to make a family, my home with Arjun as I think both of us are ready."

AGENCIES



Dia lends her voice to UN documentary

Actress Dia Mirza, who was recently seen in the pandemic movie *Bheed*, has narrated documentary *Big Ocean States*. The documentary focuses on conservation of marine ecosystems and is part of series 'Restore: Films From the Frontiers of Hope' by the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP). The project is an attempt to amplify stories from ten places around the globe where people have made a positive impact

on the environmental crisis. Earlier, *Fight Club* star Edward Norton too lent his voice to similar UN initiatives. Talking about the documentary, Dia, who is the Goodwill Ambassador for UNEP and UN Secretary General's Advocate for SDG, said, "It was an absolute honour to be a part of this global project and tell the story of St. Lucia, Comoros, and Vanuatu that are showing by example how marine ecosystems can be protected for the benefit of all stakeholders and the creation of a blue economy."

IAN'S



Kareena holds audience responsible for the act

Actor Kareena Kapoor recently answered a few fan questions on the YouTube channel behind her chat show *What Women Want*. Kareena Kapoor, who is currently seen hosting *What Women Want* season 4, was asked why she mostly invites her friends and family to her chat show, when she said the audience was responsible for it.

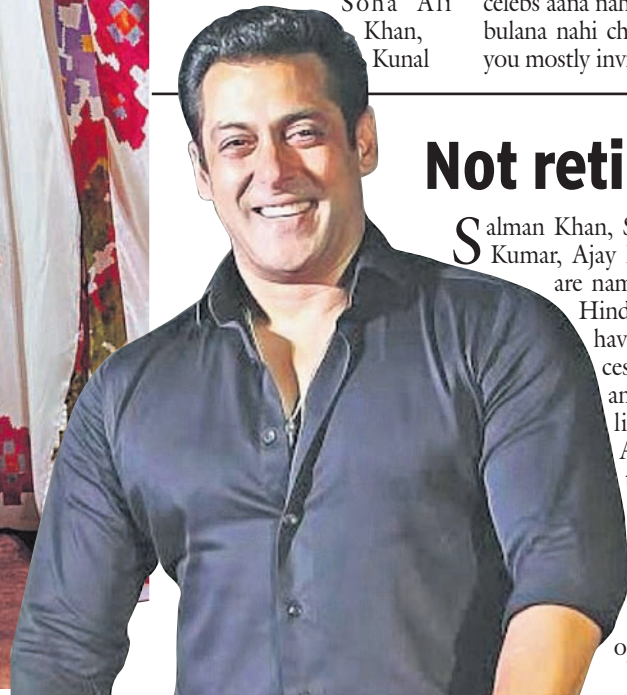
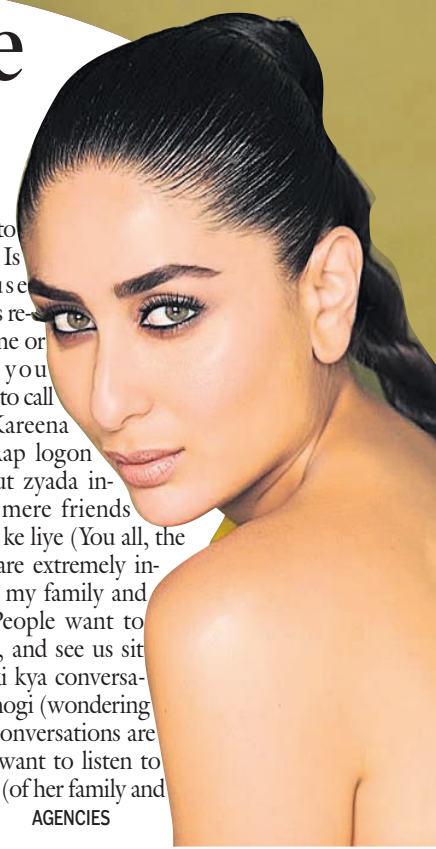
In the latest season, Kareena's cousin, actor Ranbir Kapoor, was seen chatting with her. In older episodes, Kareena's friends and family – including Saif Ali Khan, Sharmila Tagore, Sara Ali Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Soha Ali Khan, Kunal



Kemmu, Malaika Arora, Amrita Arora and Rhea Kapoor – were seen. Answering a fan when asked, "Kareena, aap aapke friends and family ko zyada bulate ho. Dusre celebs aana nahi chahte ya aap bulana nahi chahte (Kareena, you mostly invite your friends

and family to your show. Is it because other celebs refuse to come or because you don't want to call them?)" Kareena replied, "Aap logon mein bohot zyada interest hai mere friends and family ke liye (You all, the audience, are extremely interested in my family and friends). People want to see us talk, and see us sit together, ki kya conversations hoti hogi (wondering what our conversations are like). You want to listen to their views (of her family and friends)".

AGENCIES



Not retiring anytime soon: Salman

Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn, and Aamir Khan are names to reckon with in the Hindi film industry. The actors have an overwhelmingly successful career to look back to and are still stealing all limelight with their releases. Although they are not spotted bonding regularly, time and again, these stars have proved their friendship and stood in support of each other.

When asked about his opinion on the young actors

of industry, Salman gave a witty reply and the actor assured that he, Ajay Devgn, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar are not giving up that easily. Upon being asked if any of the new actors have impressed him, he replied, "All of them are hard-working. All (are) much focused. But the five of us are not going to give it up so easily".

The actor also shared that he and his contemporaries can make the young lot of actors take a back seat and said, "We will make them run for their money. We are not retiring anytime soon. Our films also work and so we hike our fees. Seeing that, they also increase their fee even when their films are not working."

AGENCIES

PANA SANKRANTI

Braving summer fury

'Pana', the main attraction of the festival, not only has religious significance; it also protects people from dehydration in hot weather. This perhaps is a reason the drink was given a religious bent by our predecessors, it is believed.



called Pana. It is made by mixing different fruits, milk, water, curd, bela (wood apple) and sugar pulp. Another tradition is to eat a mixture of chhatua (horse gram flour) with curd and banana.

In many places, a water-filled earthen pot with a small hole in it is placed just above the holy basil plant so that water keeps dripping on the plant through the hole. This tradition is known as 'Basundhara Theki' and after that, the pana is consumed by the members of the family, according to **Manisha Dhir**, a local.

Adding further, Dhir said, "We organise homa/Yajna at our home, and all of our family members come together under one roof for the same. We also offer prasad to eight brahmins there. Our family hosts a big feast for the neighbours in the nearby Durga temple. Pana distribution is also done on the streets by my father and uncles for the street people."

Reflecting on the celebration of Sankranti, **Rabisankar Sahu**, a resident of Bhubaneswar, says, "Sankranti used to be celebrated in a lavish way with large crowds on the street and feasts. However, following COVID, fewer individuals now celebrate and that too in their own homes. I usually go to the Lord Hanuman temple on this day for darshan, and then my sister, father, and I consume large glasses of Bael Pana

(wood apple drink) throughout the day. This beverage is not only for special occasions; it also helps you stay nourished and cool in the heat."

Many places and temples are known for their Maha Vishuva Sankranti celebrations. Below are a few of the places that devotees visit to offer their prayers:

■ **Berhampur:** The Taratarini temple near Brahmapur is popular for its Maha Vishuva Sankranti celebrations and its Shakti Pitha shrine. A fair is organised near the temple, which the devotees enjoy after the worship.

■ **Sarala:** Sarala Temple is known for the fire walk done by the priests of the temple. It's called the Jhamu Yatra.

■ **Cuttack:** People from the city visit temples, offer prayers, and feast with their families. Jhamu Yatra is organised in the Devi Temple as well, where many people from across Odisha come to see the procession. Poetry and other literary events are also organised in the city that day.

■ **Chhatrapada, Bhadrak:** Maa Patana Mangala Temple hosts an annual Patau Yatra festival. Several devotees gather to seek blessings from the goddess and witness this festival.

■ **Chandaneswar, Balasore:** Devotees offer their prayers to the Shiva temple here. An annual fair is held inside the premises. Many pilgrims from outside Odisha also visit to seek blessings.

and enthusiasm throughout Odisha. People visit pilgrimage places and temples, take a bath in rivers and make special offerings to their deities. Many places hold fairs or melas, where people get to enjoy themselves with their families and see dance and singing performances. These fairs arrange stalls of food, traditional crafts and other products. On the streets, local artistes perform street dances and acrobatic shows. Main attraction of the day is a traditional ritual where people walk or sprint on burning coal. Known as the Jhamu Yatra, the festival is celebrated in many parts of Odisha including south and coastal regions. The general public gathers around this event to cheer on the participating devotees.

As customary as it sounds, in Odisha, festivals and its cultural cuisine go hand in hand.

The name Pana Sankranti comes from a sweet dish or concoction prepared by Odias



Pana distribution



A devotee performing on Jhamu Yatra

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

William Shakespeare said, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet." The same is true for Maha Vishuv Sankranti, which might have numerous names but is revered with the equal significance throughout the cultures of India. Earlier advancements in astronomy led Indians to celebrate their new year in a quite different fashion than that of the rest of the world, which follows the Julian or Gregorian calendar. Throughout the country, people observe their traditional new year on a specific day, whose nomenclature varies along with the religions and cultures. While in north India it is called Vaisakhi, in south India it's called Ugadi. Western parts of India, like Maharashtra and Gujarat, celebrate the day as Gudi Padwa and Assamese people observe it as Bihu. Odias name the day Maha Vishuv Sankranti or Pana Sankranti or Vishuv Sankranti and celebrate the day with customs and merriment.

Sunday POST held an interactive conversation with a few devotees and pundits, to learn more about the festival:

Tikina Panda, one of the priests of Lingaraj Temple, says that Maha Vishuv Sankranti, also known as Pana Sankranti or Vishuv Sankranti, is the traditional New Year for the Odias.

"It marks the day from which the fresh Odia panji (almanac) is effective. On this day, people around the state visit temples, especially those of Lord Hanuman, as it's his birthday. Devotees also drop by the temples of Lord Shiva and Surya (the Sun God) to seek blessings," he adds.

There is diversity in the commemoration amongst the Odias as well. In northern Odisha, the day is observed as Chadak Parva. In the southern part, it's called Danda Nata, which is a month-long celebration that ends with the final ceremony called Meru Yatra.

The day is also known as Mesha Sankranti, as it marks the changing of the year with the sun moving from Meena (Pieces) to Mesha (Aries) months of the Hindu lunisolar calendar.

The festival is celebrated with great reverence

Sasmita



PHOTO: KAMAL PHOTOGRAPHY