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# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

DURGA PUJA IN ABODE OF JAGANNATH

Rooted **in**  
**tradition**

P 3,4  
COVER  
STORY





Growing up in Steel City Rourkela, Mira Dehury aspired to be an architect. But life had something else in store. Her inclination towards modelling and acting led to her appearance in popular music videos like 'Bhala Paye Tate Re' and 'Kebe Asi Tu'. Mira now looks forward to making her Odia film debut with 'Dasam'



With brother



### Finding tranquillity

My interests include embarking on adventures, discovering new places, and embracing the serenity of the unknown. Though vacations to Manali, Pondicherry, and South Goa are memorable, Puri and Putsil (Koraput) are my favourite hideaways.

### Movie buff

I enjoy watching films and online series. If I have the time, I can easily immerse myself in viewing 3 to 4 films in a day without interruption. F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is my favourite TV show, and I never get tired of binge-watching it.

### Heart at home

I make it a point to spend quality time with family whenever I visit Rourkela. My little brother motivates me to strive to be a better version of myself. My family is incredibly religious and spiritual, and they make sure I never forget my roots

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

### Hectic workdays

In my profession, Sundays don't go like typical holidays; instead, weekends are busy workdays. So, whenever I get a day off, I take a long nap to restore my batteries.

## WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

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

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- If the sun is so hot how come it's single.
- What do you call it when worms take over the world? Global Worming!
- If breaks are meant to be slow... then why do they call it "breakfast"?
- What kind of candy is never on time? ChocoLATE!

## DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Sir, Last week's cover story on the contrasting perspectives on the legendary characters Mahisasura and Ravana in Hindu mythology, particularly during the Navaratri festival, symbolised the victory of good over evil. While Hindu scriptures traditionally portray Mahisasura and Ravana as antagonists, various regions in India challenge this narrative. For instance, Ravana is revered by certain tribal communities, with a statue on Chamundi Hills near Mysore emphasising his benevolent rule. The Gond tribe in central India worships Ravana as a 'dharmaguru' and ancestor-king. In Maharashtra and Bistrakh village near Noida, Dussehra is observed with remorse and yagnas, associating them with Ravana's birth-place. Critics argue that these counter-myths are politically motivated, stressing that Hindu puranas mention Mahisasura and Ravana as Brahmin sage offspring with no tribal connections. This complex narrative highlights the diverse interpretations and regional variations in Hindu mythology.

LATIKA SINHA, VISHAKAPATNAM

## 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 [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com)  
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Sharadotsav or autumnal invocation is an occasion when Goddess Durga is worshiped along with her children – Ganesha, Kartikeya, Lakshmi and Saraswati - across the country but in Holy City Puri the festival is celebrated in a unique manner

DURGA PUJA IN ABODE OF JAGANNATH

# Rooted in tradition

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

It is popularly believed that this is the time of year when Goddess Durga travels from her bridal abode in Mount Kailash to her parental home on Earth. She is accompanied by her children, Ganesha, Kartikeya, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. She is venerated in her demon-slaying position flanked by her children. This is the image that is seen around the country during Durga Puja.

However, Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, celebrates Dussehra in a unique manner which is deeply rooted in tradition.

Here the goddess is worshipped alone and Durga is known as Gosani. Her event is appropriately named Gosani Jatra. This Dussehra, [Sunday POST](#) takes a close look at the myriad hues of Durga Puja in Holy City Puri.

**Origin**

Gosani Jatra is one of Puri's oldest traditions of Durga Puja celebration. According to experts, 'Gosani' is considered to be derived from

'Gosamani', a name used for a woman with respect along the lines of 'Jemamani'. The term can also be found in ancient Odia literature, ranging from the Madala Panji to Adikabi Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata from the 15th century.

**Distinct features**

One of the distinguishing qualities of goddess Gosani is the intricate sola-jari work of Puri, a craft practically lost in other regions of Odisha. Furthermore, the goddess makes direct eye contact with the demon Mahisasura rather than the devotees. The weapon arrangement and pose are evocative of stone statues of Durga from Bhaumakara period temples. The asura is represented as a buffalo-headed human in the earliest stone sculptures discovered in Odisha, as seen at Gosani Jatra. Their faces are spherical, as in the traditional Odia art form of Pattachitra.

**Celebration of woman dignity**

The majority of Gosani images depict Durga defeating Mahisasura, however others do not,

such as the Kantakadhi Gosani. According to a legend, goddess Durga takes a walk in the forest with her pet peacock, but the bird flees. She is chasing her peacock through the woods when a thorn pierces her foot. Vishnu, her brother, appears promptly and kneels down, carefully resting her foot on his knee and plucking the thorn out. A few centuries ago, the thought of a man holding a woman's foot would have been considered submissive and degrading; however, the picture of Kantakadhi traditionally communicates a message against such thinking and that treating a woman with respect does not make you any less of a man.

**Dussehra and Naga worship**

During the Durga Puja celebration, stunning Naga images are made and worshipped alongside the Gosanis. These male images represent the Shaiva religion, which practises Siva worship and wrestling, and they represent heroism and valour. They played an important part in repelling Muslim invasions in mediaeval Puri and symbolise the region's Jaga-Akhada culture.





A Naga idol in Puri

# PUJA TRAIL IN HOLY CITY

**KAKUDIKHAI** She is regarded as the chief among the Gosanis of Puri and is worshipped at Balisahi. As the name suggests, a cucumber is sacrificed in front of Devi and offered to her, which is now extinct. Devi Kakudikhai is regarded as the representative of Goddess Vimala outside Srimandira. Here Devi is ten-handed and holds a shield, conch, bow, snake, and the hairs of Mahisasura in her left hands, while she holds a trident, sword, wheel, arrow, and goad.

**SHUNYA** The peculiar image of Sunya Gosani displays the war between the goddess Durga and Mahisasura in the sky. Here, Devi is eight-handed. It is said that, in the old days, the height of this Gosani was equal to the height of 'Aruna Stambha'. On the lower portion of this Gosani image, hills, forests, and wild animals can be seen, which presents the bird's eye view of the earth's surface from the sky.



**BARABATI** The second biggest clay Mahisamardini figure made during the Durga Puja festival in Puri. The height of this colossal Gosani is about 20 feet. She has eight arms and displays a snake, conch, dagger, bow, arrow, sword, and trident. The demon Mahisasura is depicted in a beast-like form. Barabati Gosani is older than Kakudikhai Gosani, who is ten-armed, and the demon is depicted in a human-like form.

**BHOGAJAGA** The name of the Gosani of this Jaga is also known as 'Bhoga jaga Gosani'. In Puri, she is regarded as the third Gosani. The height of this image is 10 feet. The goddess has eight hands, in which she holds several attributes. Like Barabati Gosani, here the demon is depicted in a beast-like form.



**JANHIKHA** The image of 'Janhimundia' is the second biggest in Puri after Barabati Gosani. The height of her image is 16 feet, 16 inches. Here, the goddess has ten hands and displays her usual attributes. The demon here is depicted in complete human form. Interestingly, she is worshipped in the 'Bhubanesvari mantra'.

**KANTAKADHI** The image of Kantakadhi Gosani is a peculiar one, as she is standing by one of her legs. The other one is bent, and Lord Vishnu is depicted removing the pin from the bent foot of the Devi. On the other side, Lord Siva is seen standing. She is well known in the texts as 'Vanadurga' (Durga of the Forests). Here, Mahisasura is absent.



**Experts speak**  
Noted historian **Surendra Mishra** says "The Gosani yatra is a time-honoured tradition in Puri, having survived for many generations within the city's outskirts. According to mythology, it was founded by Choda Ganga Deva, the first Ganga king, who began the practice of Shakti Puja or Ishana Puja, guided by the tantric guru Nitei Dhobini's teachings," he said.

"Initially, individuals began their devotions to various gourd representations as goddesses in a symbolic act of reverence, mimicking tantric ceremonies. These divine beings took on human characteristics over time, each assuming distinct poses, and their names were assigned based on their connections to specific gourd plants," Mishra explained about goddesses being called after vegetables.

Sharing his insights on Naga worship, he quips, "It was established with the purpose of safeguarding Hindu monasteries, temples, and their supporters. These Nagas were the initial defenders of Buddhism in India, protecting it from various threats, including attacks from Muslims and Mughals. Consequently, shrines were constructed at prominent locations, designating them as Naga Sadhu sanctuaries."

While the exact origins of Naga worship at these shrines remain uncertain, it is believed to have started after 1647 AD.

"A significant moment in its history occurred when Amir Nawab Fateh Khan launched an attack on the Balisahi shrine in Puri and killed Narsingh Dev. Naga Sadhus valiantly resisted this assault, preventing Fateh Khan from entering the temple through the Singhadwara gate. He eventually gained access through the southern entrance, plundering the temple's treasures, but the Nagas pursued and killed the intruders on the Badadanda," shared the culture scholar.

Naga Puja has a connection with Punjab, according to another legend.

**Jitendra Muduli**, the founder of Hinjala Yaga Akhada of Puri, says, "The Naga tradition in Puri has its origins in Punjab,

where Basant Rai, a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, came to Puri during the Golden Temple attacks. During his visit, he crossed paths with a man named Deula Charan, who introduced him to Akhada for the

purpose of learning kushti (wrestling) and self-defense.

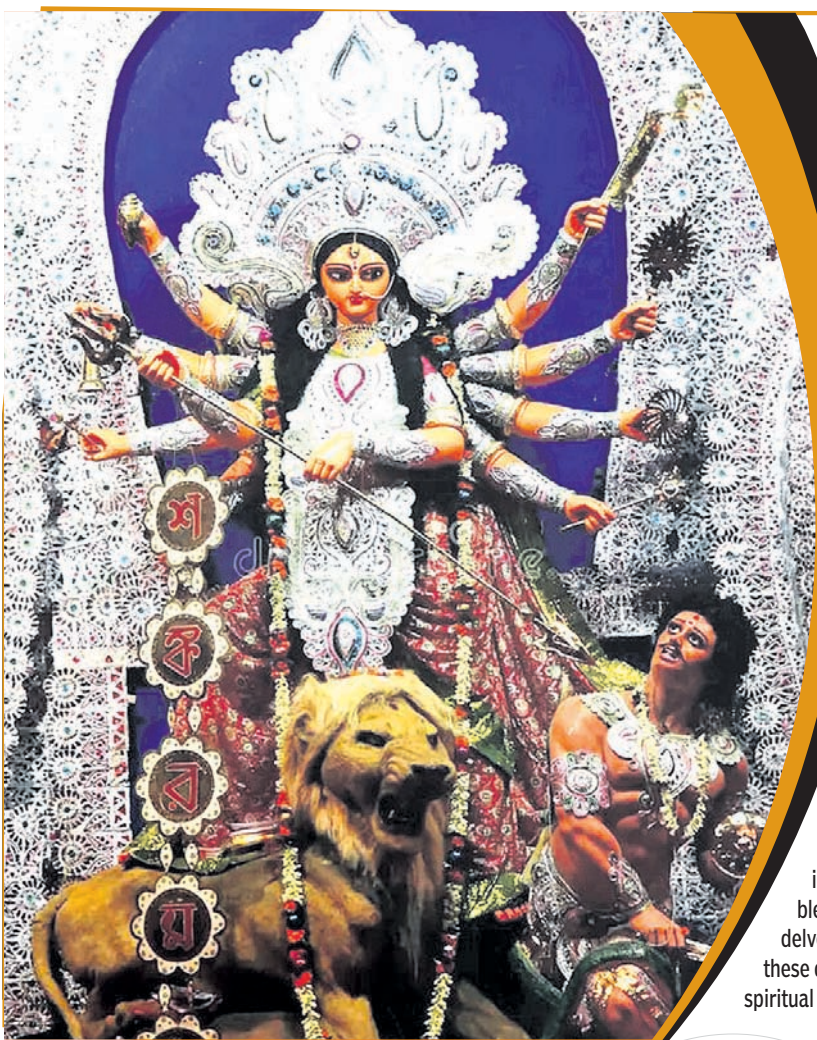
Inspired by the warriors in Punjab who attached 16 weapons to their bodies during battles, they decided to create a Naga figure with 16 arms, mirroring the concept of the 16 weapons of a veer. Among the 16 types of weapons carried by the Naga are guns, shields, knives, and gunpowder pouches. It's noteworthy that Nagas, as brahmacharis, abstain from consuming cooked food and instead prefer cold items such as fruits and sweets."

**Manoj Mohanty**, cashier of Balgundi Majana Jega, says, "The veneration of the Naga along with the goddess Gosani has been a cherished tradition that we continue to honour. Each year, the Naga idol has grown in size, and this year it stands at an impressive height of 25 feet. The Naga worship ritual spans four days, commencing with Saptami and culminating with Dasami, after which the idols are ritually immersed in a pond."

He ends, "Besides Gosanis and Nagas other clay figures such as the bird Sampati with monkeys, Panchamukhi Hanuman, Ravana lifting Kailasa mountain, ghosts, figures of old man and woman are also made during the Durga Puja festival every year which reflects strong folk culture in its full glory."







# Power and Protection

The ongoing Navratri festival, dedicated to the veneration of Goddess Durga, is celebrated with great fervour and devotion across India. Beginning October 15, the nine-day festivity celebrates nine spectacular forms of the deity. Central to this celebration are the ten powerful weapons held in her ten arms, each of which symbolises specific attributes, powers, and blessings. **Sunday POST** delves into the significance of these divine weapons and their spiritual symbolism:

**Trishul (Trident):** Gifted by Lord Shiva, the trishul has three sharp edges, representing the qualities of Tamas, Rajas, and Satva.

**Sword:** Bestowed by Lord Ganesh, the sword symbolises knowledge and wisdom, with its shine representing intellect and learning.

**Spear:** A gift from Lord Agni, the spear signifies auspiciousness and fierce power. It discerns between right and wrong and acts accordingly.

**Vajra:** Presented by Indradev, the vajra embodies the strength of the soul and indomitable willpower. It empowers devotees with unwavering confidence.

**Axe:** Lord Vishwakarma gifted the goddess with an axe and armour, symbolising the fearlessness in the face of evil.

**Sudarshan Chakra:** Given by Lord

Krishna, the Sudarshan Chakra is an infallible weapon symbolising the control of the universe by Shakti, who is the center of creation.

**Bow and Arrow:** Gifts from the Wind God and Sun God, the bow and arrow represent energy. The bow signifies potential energy, while the arrow embodies kinetic energy, signifying Goddess Durga's control over all energy sources.

**Mace:** A symbol of knowledge and religion, the mace serves to protect the truth.

**Dagger:** Representing positive power, the dagger lends support in the struggle against enemies.

**Conch:** A symbol of sound, the conch shell of the goddess represents universality and prosperity.

It is that time of the year again when the triumph of good over evil is celebrated with a lot of zeal and gusto. Durga Puja is also about friends, family, fun, music, rituals, and, of course, good food. The aroma of delicacies prepared from desi ghee fills the air. With the festival at its zenith, **Sunday POST** dishes out a couple of signature cuisines that complete the festive platter

## Spicy to Sweet



PRITISHA DAS



### STEAMED HILSA

Fish is an essential aspect of the Bengali way of life. A simple fish curry with rice and you're set for the day. It is not only a necessary food in a Bong family, but it is also considered auspicious on any occasion, including Durga Puja. Steamed hilsa is a traditional Bengali dish known as Bhapa Ilish or Shorshe Ilish Bhapa, in which fresh hilsa is marinated in a particular mustard-coconut-yogurt paste and steamed in a traditional tiffin box. The use of pungent mustard oil and green chilli on top of freshly cooked Bhapa Ilish adds a whole new depth to the dish.



### CHHANAR PAYESH

The delicacy is made by cooking soft cottage cheese in thick milk with sugar or condensed milk. It's a simple sweet dish that you'll like as an after-meal dessert. To make Chhanar Payesh, milk is reduced to about half its original volume in a heavy bottom pan. When the milk is reduced, it thickens and turns creamy. To make the milk sweeter, sugar or condensed milk is added. Finally, Chhena is mixed into the thick milk and cooked for a few minutes before being removed from the heat. It's best served cold. So, one hour before eating, place it in the refrigerator.

The author is a popular food blogger of Odisha



# Shweta sets Instagram on fire

Age is only a milestone in the journey of life and Shweta Tiwari has proved the statement several times! From maintaining the hour-glass figure in her 40s to dishing out major fashion ideas, Shweta has been unstoppable and is an inspiration for many! The 43-year-old actress' social media posts often go viral within a second owing to her fashionable looks and mind-blowing outfits.

No wonder, the *Kasautii Zindagi Kay* Shweta Tiwari did it again! The actress, known for her bold fashion choices, set Instagram on fire as she shared fiery snippets from her new photoshoot.

The diva looked sensational in a strapless red bralette and slit fusion skirt. The skirt she

wore featured traditional golden threadwork and boasted of a risqué slit as well. The actress accentuated the low-waist skirt with a pearl-embellished kamar-bandh.

Shweta gave her bold outfit an ethnic touch as she teamed it with a traditional neckpiece.

Since being posted, Shweta's photos have garnered over 3 lakh likes. Her fans flooded the comments section saying that they loved her red-hot avatar. "You are so beautiful," an Instagram user commented. "She's setting up new fitness standards," wrote another fan while lauding the actress' enviable frame.

AGENCIES



## Movie to celebrate Khoka Bhai's legacy

**Bhubaneswar:** Popular as Khoka Bhai in Odisha's music circle, the great singer, lyricist, and composer Akshaya Mohanty's contribution to the music world is second to none.

Kuhu Cine Flicks, in collaboration with Bhadra Motion Studio, announced *Khoka Bhai Tama Pain* as a tribute to the icon.

It's an attempt to celebrate the legacy of one and only Akshaya Mohanty, who still dominates millions of hearts, claimed the makers. Written by the famed musician's son, Mitrabhanu

Mohanty, and Bharadwaj Panda, the film will be directed by Girish Mohanty.

The plot revolves around a man who is heavily influenced by Akshaya Mohanty's music and incorporates it into every aspect of his life, including his romance.

Khoka Bhai not only sang classic Odisha songs like Ja Ja Re Bhasi Bhasi Ja and Kalankita Nayak, but he also lent voice and composed many folk, filmy and non-filmy, modern light songs on contemporary subjects and ballads based on popular Odisha stories. PNN

## TIGER JOINS ROHIT'S COP UNIVERSE

Actor Tiger Shroff is the latest addition to Rohit Shetty's cop universe. Last week, the actor shared his first glimpse as ACP Satya from *Singham Again*. He received a warm welcome from Akshay Kumar and Ranveer Singh.

Tiger took to his social media handle and dropped multiple photos of himself in the uniform. Flaunting his ripped physique in all, Tiger is seen posing with a gun in the first picture. The next one has him shirtless while the last one is a closer look at his new avatar.

Sharing the posters, Tiger wrote,

"ACP Satya reporting on duty Singham sir #SinghamAgain." Ranveer Singh wrote, "He is the truth. He is immortal. Special Task Force Officer ACP Satya, reporting for duty! Welcome to the squad.... The special one, Tiger 'The Phenom' Shroff!"

"Welcoming my brother from another mother, @tigerjackieshroff as ACP Satya to the squad," said Akshay Kumar. Reacting to Tiger's look, a fan wrote in the comment section, "Omg what It's a surprise Tiggy love you. So excited to meet Satya soon."

AGENCIES



## Ashi's mantra to beat stress

Actress Ashi Singh, who is currently seen in the show *Meet*, has recently taken a liking for working out every morning to stay healthy and fit, before getting into her jam-packed day.

Certainly, looking all glam is part of the job but it is tough to stay fit and healthy amidst work commitments, travel, and much more. But Ashi ensure taking out time from her busy schedule to balance everything out.

Ashi said: "I start my day at 6 a.m. with my workout which pumps me up with a rush of energy. I have been learning various techniques at the gym, which is adding to my overall strength training."

"Moreover, it has become a major stress buster for me, when I am at the gym, all my stress and tiredness take the back-seat. It is my new-found love, and I am looking forward to achieving my fitness goal. Working out helps me look fit and remain healthy throughout the day even when there are long hours of shoot," she added.

AGENCIES







**AFTER STUDYING IN HINDI & ENGLISH AND INTEGRATING INTO THE MAINLAND, A SMALL GROUP OF GREAT ANDAMANESE, AN ABORIGINAL TRIBE LEFT IN THE ISLANDS, HAVE NOT ONLY FORGOTTEN THEIR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE JERO, BUT THEIR CULTURE AND TRADITION TOO**

# The Last of the Mohicans

OP DESK

The Great Andamanese are one of six indigenous tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. However, just three members of the village can presently communicate in Jero, their original language. Not only their language, but also their culture and identity, are on the edge of extinction. This weekend, Sunday POST looks at the succession of events that have threatened to wipe off the islands' native people.

**Brush with mainlanders**  
The earliest recorded engagement between the tribes and mainlanders occurred in 1789, when the British sought to establish a naval station and prison colony in the Andamans but were blocked by malarial outbreaks and native resistance. According to Anvita Abbi, a linguist based in New Delhi who spent months with the community, approximately 8,000 Great Andamanese people lived in the islands with

no contact with the outside world until 1858 - the year Britain established a penal colony in Port Blair, now the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

**Colonisers, bane of Andamanese**  
According to British academic Clare Anderson, the colonial rulers established the Andaman Home, where they imprisoned indigenous islanders who were shackled, beaten, and coerced into productive employment by making them dependent on tobacco and rum.

Women were sexually molested, and many of them bore children fathered by settlers, despite the fact that "archives are silent on whether the tormentors were convicts, naval personnel, or British officials," said Anderson's write-up. Colonisers also introduced a number of infections to which the hunter-gatherers had no immunity. Syphilis and other diseases had reduced the number of Great Andamanese to 19 by the 1960s, adds Abbi.

**No change post-Independence**  
The Indian government attempted to resettle the tribe to Bluff Island in the North and Middle Andaman area soon after India gained independence in 1947. The first attempt

in 1949 failed, but the tribe was relocated to Strait Island in the archipelago two decades later. Many intermarried with non-tribal people over the years, and their children were admitted to school, where they learned Hindi and English.

The Andamanese gradually adopted a more sedentary lifestyle and embraced Indian staples like rice, lentils, and samosas. Official figures show that

25 Great Andamanese are employed by the authorities. All Great Andamanese, like other Indians, receive government assistance in the form of food rations, clothing, housing, power, and water. They also receive Rs. 5,000 in cash for each kid born and for performing last rites on a death.

**An attempt at revival**  
When Abbi initially arrived on the islands in 2001, she discovered that the Great Andamanese community was speaking Hindi rather than their own language. According to the linguist, its members worked hard to recall words and phrases from memory, but years of interaction with Indian mainlanders had diminished their understanding of their own language and traditions. Despite this, Abbi managed to compile the lexicon and grammatical guide, as well as more than 150 Great Andamanese names for various fish species and 109 for birds. She began learning about their language, a blend of Jero, Sare, Bo, and Khora, a decade ago, and was able to create the world's first visual interactive dictionary of it, utilising Roman and Devanagari letters and phonetic transcription of 6,000 words. Abbi also de-coded the grammar of the language in 2013.

"No other language has a grammar based on the human body or shares cognates with the Great Andamanese language family - words that are similar in meaning and pronunciation, indicating a genealogical connection," said the 74-year-old. She goes on to say that the last persons who could speak Bo, Khora, and Sare fluently died within the last 13 years, and Jero could be next. "Jero may go extinct soon because its three speakers are above 50, and they suffer from several ailments," Abbi fears. However, she expressed optimism that the next generation in the village will learn to preserve their traditions, rituals, and language. Abbi has urged the Indian government to seek assistance from the three last Jero speakers in order to teach the language in schools and increase youth enthusiasm in preserving the tribe's language and culture. "This is the only way the government can change the mindset of the locals who think they speak a janglee language," she said.

**Ray of hope**  
Shivappa Awaradi, a former director of tribal welfare in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, said tribal children studying in schools on Strait Island in North and Middle Andaman were given introductory material to acquaint them with the various indigenous languages. "This was one of the primary steps to retain the tribal language, but the preservation of ethnic language is the next step that involves a multidisciplinary approach," he went on to explain. Awaradi submitted a proposal to the government in 2018 to conserve endangered tribal languages, proposing, among other things, the use of tribal language in school textbooks and enlisting linguists to assist with preservation efforts. However, he stated that no action has been made on his proposal so far.



PHOTO COURTESY: GOOGLE



# Lipika



PHOTO: KAMAL PHOTOGRAPHY