

FEBRUARY 25 - 2 MARCH 2024

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



ODIA OPERA

Back in Business

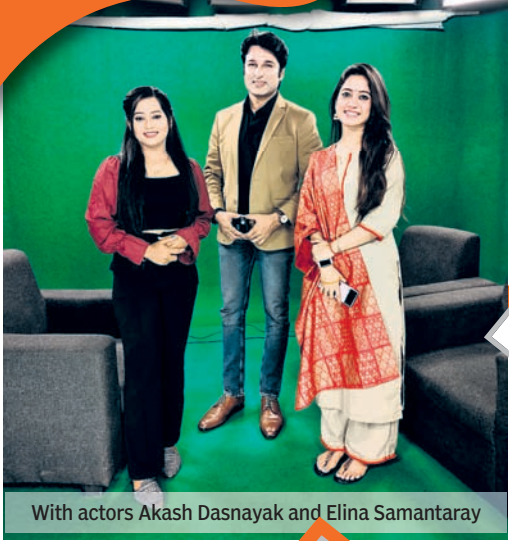
COVER STORY

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Popular actress-anchor Sangeeta Priyadarshini Dash is no stranger to fame. After appearing in Hara Patnaik's TV show 'Shree Jagannath' as a child actor, the girl from Cuttack shone in hit serials 'Ama Ghara Laxmi' and 'Tupur Tapur'. Sangeeta aspires to become a civil servant



With actors Akash Dasnayak and Elina Samantaray



Clearing backlogs

The first thing I do on a holiday is to finish the pending tasks from the previous week. Since I mostly take up government projects, more often than not, Sundays turn out to be my holiday.

Satisfying creative urge

On a weekly off, I spend time singing, dancing, reading, and watching reality shows on TV to sharpen my skills and recharge to face forthcoming challenges. I also indulge in self-care on this day.

Spiritual retreat

I find solace by visiting Khan Nagar's Kali temple to offer prayers on Sundays. It helps me calm my nerves and remain focused.

Family time

Spending time with family makes my day. Hence, on holidays, I drop all other plans and enjoy the company of my loved ones. We explore various destinations, engage in conversations, and indulge in a variety of culinary delights.



With mother

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

WhatsApp This Week

Only on Sunday POST!

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

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- You know Bruce Lee was fast, but he had an even faster brother... Sudden Lee.
What do ghosts serve for dessert? I Scream.
Teacher: "Which book has helped you the most in your life?" Student: "My father's cheque book!"
What do you call a cow during an earthquake? A milkshake.



GOOD NEWS FOR FILMMAKERS

Sir, The opening of a studio in Bhubaneswar that offers facilities like shooting of movies, TV and reality shows is good news for the filmmakers of Odisha. Now, they will no longer have to travel to other Indian cities like Hyderabad and Chennai to shoot their movies. However, I'm a little disappointed to know the size of the facility. Accommodating sets like a police station, hospital, jail, doctor's chamber, operation theatre, ICU, bar, restaurant, hospital corridor, corporate office, and courtroom in a space measuring only 90 ft x 120 ft will be challenging. In this context, I would like to recall how Kalinga Studio, one of the biggest shooting facilities in eastern India, and the adjoining Prasad Lab used to attract filmmakers from other states to shoot their projects. It is now being given a new look, but I'm not too optimistic if it can match up with Hyderabad's Ramoji Rao Film City.

SREEJA SAHU, 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. Feel free to send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to

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ODIA OPERA

Back in Business



After a period of relative stagnation in recent years, opera productions are currently on a roll. The growing number of spectators at Khandagiri foothills, where at least a dozen Jatra troupes have set up tents to showcase their skills, drives home the message that the industry is making a comeback

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

From its origin as a folk art form in the 16th century to attracting a crowd of over 30,000 a day at the ongoing Khandagiri Mela, on the outskirts of Odisha's capital city Bhubaneswar, traditional Jatra opera has traversed a long journey.

Though ridiculed by the so-called class audience for its loud expressions and ham acting, the largest form of entertainment in Odisha is well ahead of other mediums like films and television in terms of generating revenue.

It's no surprise that at least a dozen Jatra troupes have set up camp on Khandagiri's foothills, with events beginning February 18 and continuing until February 29.

According to the estimate, the whole business volume could top Rs 10 million this year.

With the number of viewers increasing each passing night

at Khandagiri, **Sunday POST** takes a look at Odia Jatra's chequered past and key factors behind the steady growth of the industry.

A roller coaster ride

Much before the advent of films and television, Jatra was the only source of entertainment in Odisha. Evolved and diversified through centuries, it reigned supreme until the first half of the 20th century. At that time, the plots of most of the shows were adapted from epics such as the Mahabharat and the Ramayana. However, after the 1950s, plays based on fiction and contemporary issues were included to compete with films. Despite that, the popularity of opera shows was on the decline as viewers started taking more interest in movies and proscaenium theatres. It was that period of the 20th century when popular theatre houses like Annapurna Theatre, Janata Rangamanch, and Ekamra Theatre in cities like Cuttack, Puri, and Bhubaneswar were ruling



the entertainment scene.

Threat from celluloid: Despite the onslaught of movies, theatres, and later television, Jatra remained very popular in the rural setting of Odisha. However, the rising popularity of movies, both Hindi and regional, and the mushrooming of cinema halls across the state dealt a crushing blow to the Jatra business. Works by cinematic legends like Gour Ghosh, Nitai Palit, Parbati Ghose, Prashanta Nanda, Basant Nayak, Amiya Patnaik, Sabyasachi Mohapatra, Sisir Mishra, and many others gained more traction with the audience. It can be concluded that the period between 1970 and 2000 was the most challenging for the industry.

Period of resurgence: Towards the later part of the 1990s, viewers started losing interest in movies and television as the content was blatantly copied from south Indian or Hindi movies. Because of the Internet's widespread reach, the origins of Odia films or series were no longer hidden from the viewer. With viewers seeking original content, opera shows found favour again.

In fact, the introduction of new technologies in presentation and the addition of grandeur to the sets, coupled with aggressive promotion, saw phenomenal growth in the Jatra sector. According to *Jatra Jeevan*, *Jeevan Yatra*, a national award-winning documentary film by Kapilas Bhuyan, by the mid-2000s, there were 120 graded Jatra parties performing in Odisha and other states. The number would be around 400 if smaller parties were added to the list, it said. The popularity was such that film stars like Hara Patnaik, Ashrumochan, Raimohan, Minaketan and Ushashi Mishra turned to Jatra acting and direction. Top stars like Bijoy Mohanty, Sidhant Mohapatra, Mihir Das, Jina, and Papu Pom Pom are often seen doing cameos in Odia operas. So much so that top Bollywood villain Shakti Kapoor and actress Padmini Kolhapure also appeared in Odia Jstras.

Corporatisation and aftermath: Jatra's thriving business prompted a major media organisation in Bhubaneswar to join the bandwagon. It developed Jatra troupes and dominated the stage for a few years, following a corporate model of operation. However, the house couldn't carry it for long, and the groups were disbanded after only a few years of existence, causing significant damage to the business. According to industry insiders, the house was able to lure many top Jatra performers from established groups by offering them extravagant salaries. Ethics was thrown to wind.



ODIA OPERA'S SPARKLING STARS



Bebina



Aju



Monalisa



Bapi Panda



Anjana



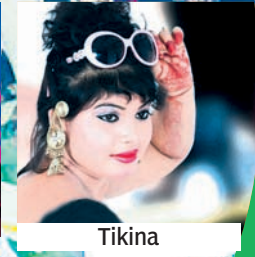
Rudra



Julie



Kanha



Tikina



Lawrence



Tikili



Radha



Mituna



Nalini

This not only hit hard the traditional parties, but it also left many artists unemployed because their pay structure had risen many notches and no one was willing to hire. Moreover, failing to meet the demand of the artistes (varying from Rs 7-8 lakhs to Rs 40 lakhs), the Jatra Troupe Owners' Association (JTOA) unanimously decided to shut down the industry, which sent shockwaves across the state.

Covid blow: The pandemic didn't leave any sector untouched; Jatra was no exception.

With the shutting down of the industry, many artistes switched to other professions, like selling vegetables and opening eateries for a living. Some even migrated to other states and got engaged as daily workers.

Once again in a flourishing phase: Had the JTOA's decision to stop shows in 2018, the opera shows in Odisha would have become history by now. But, fortunately, that didn't happen. Following the pandemic peril, the industry has bounced back like never before. Not just in Khandagiri Kumbh Mela, the biggest platform to showcase the art form, the shows are now doing big business across the state, marking a resurgence of the industry.

A director's take

With over three decades of experience in Jatra direction, Kishore Khandual, an alumnus of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalay, is a prominent name in the circuit. Listing a few reasons behind

the exponential growth of opera, he said, "There are several reasons why Jatra is growing in popularity. The first and primary reason is the waning reputation of other mediums of entertainment, television, and films in particular."

Elaborating more, he continued: "Before the golden years of movies in the 1970s and 1980s, Jatra was the principal source of entertainment in Odisha. But the advent of television, coupled with some really good movies, made viewers shun Jatras. However, thanks to the deterioration in the quality of films and TV shows, people started returning to Jatra shows in the 2000s. Despite a few hiccups, the form is on an upward trend."

Unlike TV series and Odia films, it continues to provide viewers with original content, which is one of the reasons people flock to the shows, Khandual noted.

"This apart, the owners of the troupes left nothing to chance to entice opera lovers. The appearance and style have evolved significantly over time. Hanging microphones were replaced with cordless speakers, while lasers and enhanced lighting systems added zing. Similarly, advanced props and stage designs only enhance the viewing experience," stated the Kala Odhani director



Khandual, however, rued the fact that the form is yet to be accorded industry status despite being the biggest medium of entertainment in Odisha.

The artistes and technicians should also be provided with facilities like provident funds and pensions to bring them under the social security net, concluded the director.

Viewers' View

Once the only source of entertainment for rural folks, opera shows are now accepted in cities like Bhubaneswar, a hub of people from various socio-economic backgrounds, blurring the line between class and mass.

Award-winning short filmmaker and photographer Tapas Rout is an ardent fan of Odia Jatra. He hardly misses out on any shows at Khandagiri.

Asked, while Jatra is dubbed by many as loud and crass, what draws a class audience like him to Jatra, Tapas says, "Jatra has been my go-to place to unwind since I was a child. It connects me to the soil. Because I was born and raised in a rural area, Jatra was the main source of recreation during my formative years, as I did not have access to television or theatres. The

allure of attending a Jatra show with friends and family cannot be described in words."

He also watches films in multiplexes and web series, but they are nothing compared to the excitement that Jatra offers, he claims.

Aside from soul-stirring performances, the magic created by light and sound on stage is incomparable to other forms of entertainment, says the author of the novel *Bidaya Belara Surya*.

"Another reason I enjoy Jatra is that it transports you to a rural setting, even if you reside in an urban location. Jatra's magnificent performances inspire us to reflect on our disappearing traditions and cultures. I've watched television shows, movies, and binge-watched online series. However, Jatra stands out in its ability to connect rural and urban Odisha," observes Tapas.

Despite living in a city like Bhubaneswar, which has plenty of entertainment options, what draws her to opera performances? To this

end, beautician Gitarani Majhi of the Ayurvedic Hospital area said, "Yes, I have plenty of opportunity to watch recent theatrical releases, stand-up comedians, music concerts, and other shows. But Jatra is larger than life which appeals to me the most. Furthermore, the emotions portrayed by the artistes appear to be quite real."

She goes on to add, "The content is also original, unlike films and television shows. We often identify with the plot, as if we were a part of the narration. I agree that Jatra is melodramatic, but when you see it, you can sense the tremendous connection it has with its viewers. At times, it teaches social and family values too. Not just me; you can spot many school and college goers at the shows."

Despite the higher ticket price and long duration, she would always prefer opera over other sources of entertainment, says Gita.



Odisha's notable Jatra troupes and their popular productions

Name	Play
Tulasi Ganapatya	Dinaka Pain Mu Droupadi Hebi
Dhaulti Ganapatya	Kichhi Luha Pi Jae Otha
Swarna Mahal	Prema Sabarire Priti Nayeeka
Baghajatin Ganapatya	Minu Apari Nua Kahani
Jatrashri Biswa Darabara	Chauthi Ratira Chauda Katha
Ranga Mahal	Adhe Tora Adhe Mora
Kalinga Ganapatya	Thikana Hajichi Jaga Bhaira
Surya Mandira	Puja Jiba Sashughara



Exploring darker side of human nature

Central Anatolia, early winter, at night. Yasar, Kenan and Kenan’s slow-witted younger brother Ramazan are sharing drinks and a meal. On an evening some time later, at dusk, a train of three packed cars – containing Doctor Cemal, Prosecutor Nusret, local police commissioner Naci, driver Arap Ali, Kenan (who has confessed to Yasar’s murder and burial), Ramazan and various gendarmes, grave diggers and helpers – pulls up on a lonely mountain roadside to carry out the first in a series of searches for Yasar’s burial place. The official party later spend the early hours as guests of the local village’s mayor, where Kenan – moved by the beauty of the mayor’s daughter – breaks down. Kenan then leads the party to the burial place of Yasar. Later, outside the town’s courthouse, Kenan spies among an angry crowd Yasar’s son and widow, the boy hits Kenan with a rock. We are heading towards a discovery about the victim and a decision needs to be made about how much to reveal.

In scenes that break across satire and tragedy, farce and naturalism, Ceylan pokes serious fun at police and army department methods, protocols and procedures. As the investigation proceeds, Ceylan uses it as the framework for a richly quizzical meditation on a range of themes: the mores of provincial life, the way we are shaped by where we live, the tussle of ethics and pragmatism, our responsibilities to our loved ones, our need to hold on to banalities of life when faced with misfortune, absurdity and death. The grasp of subtle rhythms of human interaction makes the film allusive and resonant. The cinematography by GokhanTiryaki is elegantly composed and strikingly atmospheric – pay attention to the low light images of the night, in the mayor’s house and the immense steppe lit up during the search sequences.



Anatolia also known as Asia Minor, is the westernmost protrusion of Asia, making of the majority of modernday Turkey. Geographers have variously used the terms East Anatolian plateau and Armenian plateau to refer to the region. Following the Armenian genocide, during and after the World War I, orchestrated by the Ottoman government, a systematic extermination of 1.5 million Armenians, Armenia was renamed “Eastern Anatolia” by the newly established Turkish government under Kemal Ataturk.

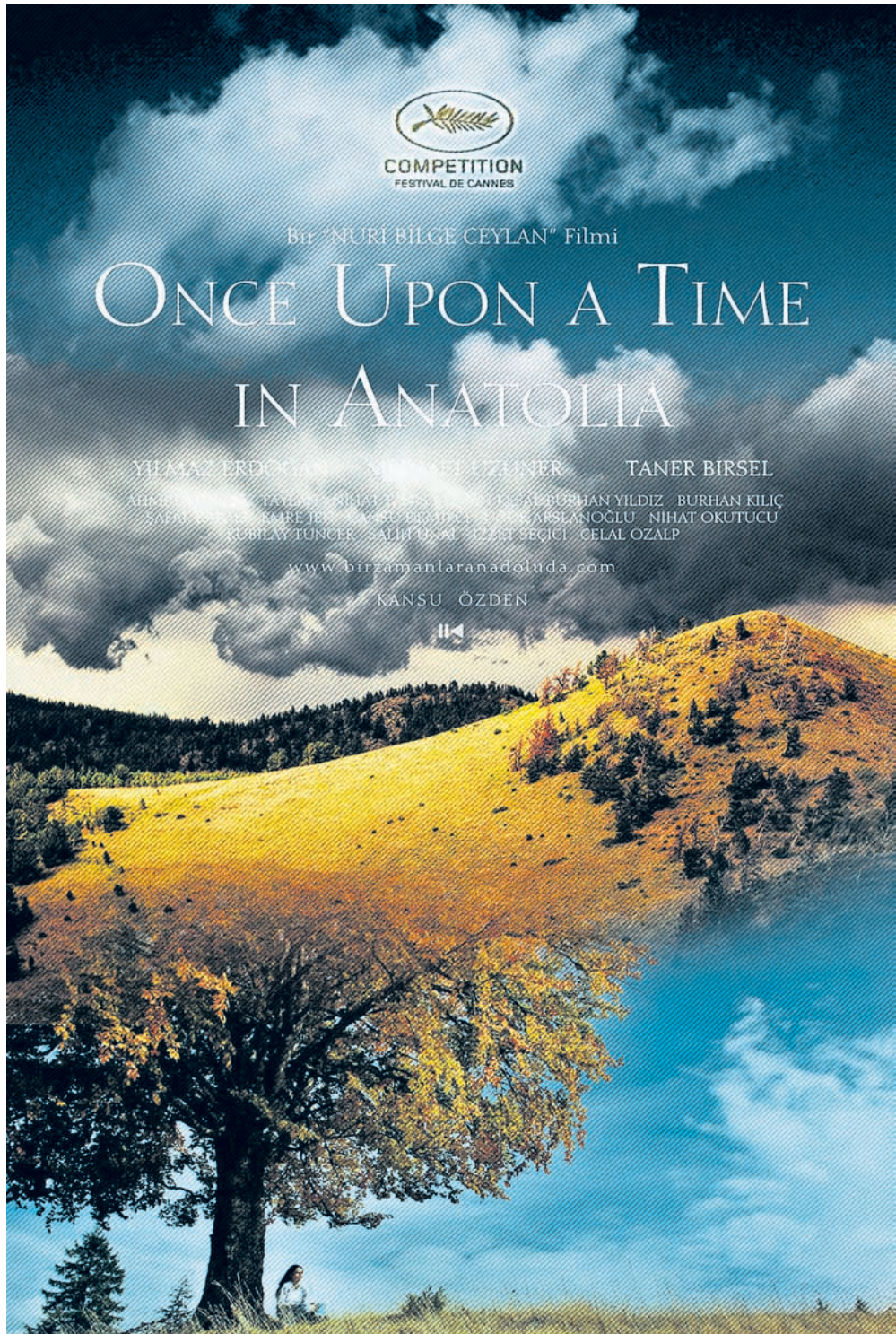
The idea of the film came from a real story. One of Ceylan’s friends, ErcanKesal, a doctor who lived through something like this. In Turkey, doctors have to spend two years in Anatolia as part of their training, Ercan spent five years in the town where the film was shot. During his tenure, he had to accompany a police search party in search of a body, spending the entire night. During the search, the search party became very friendly with the culprit. But once the body was found – all of them felt anger towards the culprit. This story moved Ceylan, such a story, had the possibility, to explore the darker side of human nature.

“Compared to literature, where you’ve a lot of freedom in what you write, cinema seems bound by strict ‘rules’. The market pushes you to make films that last 90 minutes or so, or at least feel like that. But I wanted to break with that – I wanted audiences to feel at least some of the frustration the search party feel... With regard to ambiguity, literature has an advantage over cinema because it uses the reader’s imagination so much more. In the cinema, if you don’t ensure that the audience’s imaginations are activated, you can’t go very deep. So I try to include lots of ambiguous details, so that everyone has to try to create their own ‘reality’ for the film.”

-- Nuri Bilge Ceylan

About the director:

Nuri Bilge Ceylan was born in Istanbul, spent his childhood in Anatolia, graduated in electrical engineering from Istanbul University, took up commercial photography to make a living. His short film *Koza(Cocoon)* was shown at Cannes in 1995, was the first Turkish short film in competition. *Once upon a time in Anatolia* won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 2011. Ceylan is known for working on low budgets, casting non actors (his parents) till *Climates*, use of still images of landscapes, silences and play of sound engages the audience to imagine and fill up the narrative.



Director : Nuri Bilge Ceylan	Cast: MuhammetUzuner(Dr.Cemal), Yilmaz Erdogan(Commissioner Naci), TanerBirsele(Prosecutor Nusret), Firat Tanis(Kenan, Suspect), Ahmet Mumtaz Taylan(Arap Ali, driver)
Producer: Zeynep OzbaturAtakan	Language – Turkish
DoP: GokhanTiryaki,	Duration - 157 mins
Sound Editor: Thomas Robert	
Story: Bora Goksingol, Nuri Bilge Ceylan	



Subrat Beura

'I learnt nothing in LA acting school'

Actress Janhvi Kapoor has made a name for herself in the Hindi industry in a very short span of time. The daughter of late Sridevi and Boney Kapoor, attended the Lee Strasberg Institute in Los Angeles to learn acting. However, in a recent interview, the *Good Luck Jerry* actress revealed that she did not learn anything there.

Janhvi said, "I learnt nothing there. The thrill of moving to California was in the anonymity it gave me. I was not someone's daughter for once, and that was so refreshing. But the school's format was so rooted in Hollywood. I actually realized I am not a method actor."

She also said: "I regret not investing more time in understanding my people, culture, and language. As a storyteller, I aspire to authentically portray my community's narratives. Working on *Dhadak* awakened my desire to immerse myself in my country's stories, connect with its people, and comprehend their perspectives."

Merely indulging in leisure activities in LA distances her from this essential connection, leaving her feeling disconnected and disillusioned, she further said.



AGENCIES



Shivangi to make her OTT debut

Choti *Sarrdaarni* fame actress Shivangi Verma is all set to make her OTT debut with a musical love story, saying it will take the audience on an emotional ride.

Shivangi, who will play a prominent role in the yet-to-be-titled show, said: "There are so many goosebump moments which will take the audience on an emotional trip. I am also an emotional person and that is why I connect with the story."

The *Bhutu* actress added: "I couldn't be happier. I think every actor gets what they deserve in some way or other, and it's such a great feeling. I chose this web show because of Nivedita Basu (Senior VP at Atrangi Group), as she has always been on my mind and I always wanted to work with her. And of course, I loved the musical love story."

The project revolves around couples and their love affairs and heartbreaks.

Shivangi added: "I don't know if it's a happy or a sad ending, but tears will definitely roll down your eyes. And there won't be a single scene where you can blink your eyes."

The show will stream on Atrangi.

IAN S



A cinema hall is the place where the mind should be completely free of any baggage or ideology, that's what actress Yami Gautam Dhar believes in.

The actress, who is currently awaiting the release of her upcoming film *Article 370*, has shared that for actors and the audience it's imperative to look at films with a clean slate and not be affected by any preconceived notion.

Yami on viewers' polarising reactions

The past few months have seen polarising reactions from the audiences to films like *Animal* and *Dunki*, and the trend seems to continue with *Article 370* given the narrative of the film touches upon a subject that left the country divided in terms of opinions.

Talking about the trend, Yami said: "If you're working in a film or watching a film with a preconceived notion, you will never be able to enjoy the film or your working process. You won't be able to have a fair opinion on it if your judgement is already clouded."

The actress further mentioned, "You like it or you don't like it, that's absolutely your personal choice and your prerogative, and you must stand by it. But watching a film with an already set mindset is not the correct way to do it."

IAN S

Shamita slams hate-monger

Actress Shamita Shetty is not someone who lets hate-mongers escape without treatment. The actress knows how to deal with trolls while being graceful. Recently, on being trolled for her single relationship status, Shamita gave it back to the troll in a strong yet classy way.

Shetty recently took to Instagram Stories and responded to a troll who insulted her for being single. "I want to take time out to respond to this very kind lady trying to put another woman down for not being married. Kudos to you. Mission successful, FYI getting married is not my only purpose in life. Being happy and content and independent in life with gratitude in my heart always is," she wrote.

"Wishing you a lot of positivity in your life. I hope you never try to pull another woman down again. If you have nothing nice to say to people, best be quiet," she wrote along with the screenshot of the negative comment.

On the work front, Shamita was last seen in the film *The Tenant*.

AGENCIES





World NGO Day- February 27

Bridging Gap

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS CAN CREATE A MORE JUST, EQUITABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD BY FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND EMBRACING INNOVATION, SAYS Y GIRI RAO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF VASUNDHARA ODISHA WHICH WORKS FOR TRIBAL RIGHTS

MADHUSMITA SAHU,OP

World NGO Day, observed annually February 27, celebrates the contributions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) towards social progress and development worldwide. This year's theme, 'Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),' underscores the crucial role NGOs play in advancing global sustainability efforts. As the world faces unprecedented challenges, from climate change to poverty alleviation, NGOs stand at the forefront of driving positive change and fostering sustainable development.

The SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive framework for addressing pressing global issues and achieving a more sustainable future by 2030. NGOs play a pivotal role in advancing each of the 17 SDGs, which encompass areas such as poverty eradication, gender equality, climate action, and quality education.

NGOs contribute to the SDGs through a myriad of initiatives, including community development projects, advocacy campaigns, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building efforts. By working closely with local communities, governments, and other stakeholders, NGOs leverage their expertise, networks, and resources to address complex challenges and drive meaningful progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Ahead of World NGO Day, a couple of volunteers shared with **Sunday POST** the roles voluntary organisations play in achieving SDGs.

Bhubaneswar based Bakul Foundation is an organisation which attempts to pool together the small individual energies for the cause of social development. It believes that substantial change is possible when thousands get together.

Sharing his views, Bakul's founder **Sujit Mahapatra** said, "NGOs distinguish

themselves by their non-governmental status, especially prominent in socialist nations where government was traditionally tasked with people's welfare. However, where governmental systems falter or leave gaps in service delivery, NGOs intervene. Prioritising social welfare over profit, they play leading roles in pursuing SDGs. Their involvement underscores a collective effort to fill voids in social services, augmenting state endeavours. By bridging gaps and extending assistance where needed, NGOs contribute significantly to societal well-being. This dynamic role illustrates a symbiotic relationship between NGOs and

and acting as the vital link between authorities and communities. Often, NGOs serve as vigilant watchdogs, highlighting governmental shortcomings in the pursuit of SDGs. Their people-oriented ethos, diverging from profit-driven motives, underscores a steadfast commitment to sustainability concerns. This emphasis positions NGOs uniquely to address societal needs with a holistic perspective, fostering long-term solutions over immediate gains. Through fostering partnerships and advocating for accountability, NGOs contribute substantially to advancing societal welfare and progress towards achieving overarching

building a sustainable future by promoting environmental conservation, social equity, and economic development. NGOs also raise awareness, advocate for policy changes, and foster community involvement, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world. The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the world's most pressing challenges, from poverty and inequality to climate change and environmental degradation."

According to Rao, "First and foremost, NGOs have a unique ability to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. While governments set the agenda and establish targets for the SDGs, NGOs are on the front lines, translating these goals into tangible action on the ground. Through community-based projects, advocacy campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives, NGOs bring the SDGs to life, empowering individuals and communities to take ownership of their development and drive positive change from within. By leveraging their expertise, networks, and resources, NGOs amplify the impact of their interventions and unlock new pathways to sustainable development."

Asked about the hurdles NGOs face, he carried on, "Despite the invaluable contributions of NGOs, their role in achieving the SDGs is not without challenges. Limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and political constraints often impede the work of NGOs, hampering their ability to scale up projects and sustain long-term impact."

Rao, however, was optimistic about the future of NGOs in advancing the SDGs.

He concluded that by fostering collaboration, embracing innovation, and advocating for meaningful change, NGOs can drive transformative progress and create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world for generations to come.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



17 world development goals created by the United Nations for SDGs

governments, emphasising the complementary nature of their functions in addressing social needs and advancing toward shared objectives such as the SDGs."

He went to add, "Currently, NGOs also play a significant role as collaborative partners with governments, particularly in the execution of welfare programmes

developmental objectives."

Vasundhara Odisha, an another city based foundation envisions creating more sustainable world by ensuring rights of tribals and forest dwelling communities, enhancing sustainable livelihoods, adopting indigenous practices to mitigate impacts of climate change.

Its Executive Director **Y Giri Rao**, said, "NGOs play a crucial role in





Sriyanshi

WANT TO BECOME A MODEL?
Send us your photographs at
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PHOTO: KUMAR SHARAT, OP