

MAY 2-8, 2021

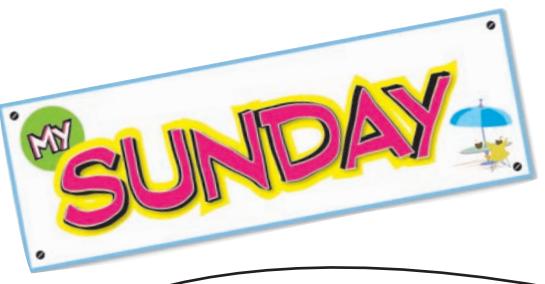
SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



MATCHLESS MANOJ

P
3,4 COVER STORY



Delhi-based Odisha-born painter and fine art photographer Suchistmita Sahoo, who has more than 100 group and eight solo exhibitions to her credit, loves to be with her son on Sundays.



Art aficionado

I get up by 5am to see sunrise because I believe that every sunrise gives me a new beginning. I love to create something new especially on Sundays. It may be artwork or layout plan of next photography or writing something new.

Bibliophile

I love listening to audio books rather than reading them. American novelist Nicholas Sparks is my favorite author and I have read almost all his novels. Sunday is meant for listening to his books.

With son

My son is my world to me. On Sundays, we go for a walk with our pet, watch cartoons and go out for dinner.

Noodle party

I hardly cook on Sundays. Having noodles for breakfast is a must. I take a break from cooking leaving my hubby to perform the task.



Her artworks



Exploring creativity

I used to go to theatre to watch films but not now due to Covid. Instead, I keep myself busy in writing scripts in leisure hours.



With her family

RASHMI REKHA DAS, 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

- Politicians and diapers have one thing in common. They should both be changed regularly, and for the same reason.
- Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
- We live in a society where pizza gets to your house before the police.
- Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

MOVING TALES

Sir, The cover story 'Reclaiming Bastion' highlighting the male dancers' struggle to carve a place in Odissi dance dominated by female dancers made for a good read. They have achieved it by their sheer grit and determination without which they could have been nowhere where they are today. These qualities have not only made them survive, but lead a dignified life.

NIYATI DAS, PITHA

FAMILY SUPPORT

Sir, The love and unequivocal support the family members share with each other make a person what he or she is in life. This has been aptly reflected in case of music director and tabla player Bibhu Prasad Nanda who has imbibed all the qualities of his late father late Radhakanta Nanda. I wish Bibhu to scale greater heights in life.

DR LOPAMUDRA KUANR, NALCO NAGAR, ANGUL

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

Matchless Manoj

Manoj Das was probably a best loved author in Odia and a writer of repute in English. His works will linger on beyond our times, for they give the ultimate solace we seek in life.

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

Even as it has been nearly a week to the demise of Manoj Das, considered the tallest man of modern Odia literature, condolences haven't stopped pouring in.

While young litterateurs continue to grieve on being 'orphaned' after losing their guiding light, his contemporaries say the state's literary scene will never be the same again after this colossal loss.

What was the significance of being Manoj Das? One can connect this query with the epic quote of late MV Kamath, journalist and former chairman of Prasar Bharati which is doing the rounds across media after Manoj's demise.

Kamath said – "What is Manoj Das? A social commentator? A psychiatrist? A sly peeper into people's hearts? Or just a plain story-

teller? Manoj Das is all these, and an incorrigible Indian besides".

Echoing the same sentiment, English writer and journalist Graham Greene once said, "I have read the stories of Manoj Das with great pleasure. He will certainly take a place on my shelves beside the stories of RK Narayan. I imagine Odisha is far from Malgudi, but there is the same quality in his stories with perhaps an added mystery."

Leading playwright and literary essayist Vijay Tendulkar was of the view that Manoj Das, like Graham Greene and RK Narayan, is a deft spinner of yarns. Narrating an Indian experience in a language which is alien or not Indian, without losing the original Indian charm and ethos is a difficult task. Das succeeds in this like Narayan, added Tendulkar.

Known as a 'Saint' of modern Odia literature, Manoj Das was indisputably one of the foremost bilingual fiction writers to have ever graced the country's literary scene. But what made him different from others was his sobriety and humility.

Will you please write your autobiography? His fans had asked

him time and again. But he believed that there were far more worthy and eventful lives than his and he would not like to burden the catalogue with his. A bilingual scholar Manoj had been honoured with Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan and myriad other awards including the Saraswati Samman and Sahitya Akademi Award fellowship, to name only a few.

He started writing at the age of 14 and didn't leave his pen till he was 87. In between he has written several volumes of novels, short stories, fictions, non-fictions, travelogues, poems and essays on Indian history and culture.

His fate brought up through a paradox of experiences in his childhood - sending him into an affluent family with ideal parents and in the most charming milieu imaginable - and at the same time exposing him to the unexpected in life when his house was plundered twice before his eyes; also giving him the experience of witnessing the horrors of an unprecedented famine around him.

Here is a man who in his youth was a fascinating revolutionary leader courting jail and escaping an assassination attempt in a faraway resort in Indonesia. Here is the author who never knew that writing was an activity that was special. For him it was as natural as speaking or humming a tune.

His earliest quest was to trace the cause of human sufferings - a quest that led him to Marxism and finally revealed to him the profundity that was Sri Aurobindo's vision of human destiny.

He didn't win a Nobel or a Jnanpitha but his popularity and readership were beyond national boundaries. He could touch the souls of readers by the sheer richness of his language, style, and narration.

Sunday POST lists a few fascinating events from the life of the most adorable Oriya author for our generation





Flanked by two friends in London in 1971



With former Odisha CM Biju Patnaik in New Delhi

BORN MUSICIAN

Not many Manoj fans know that he used to play harmonium and give lyrics to the songs written by him. Besides, he was an excellent singer. Once, nationally acclaimed musician Banwarilal along with harmonium player Chhotelal came to Fakir Mohan College for an event. They left the town after the show the same night. Next day, some students were surprised to hear the harmonium sound coming from a classroom. They thought that Chhotelal stayed back and was doing a riyaz. Shyamsundar Mahapatra, who later became a Lok Sabha MP, got the shock of his life to discover that it was Manoj who was playing the harmonium which was at par with Chhotelal. 'You can make a career in music,' Mahapatra then told Manoj.

RAISING TIGER CUB

He had a unique experience of keeping a tiger cub as a pet. Young Manoj once visited his elder sister Snehalata's in-law's place. A village hunter shot a tigress dead leaving her cub orphaned. The cub was brought to Snehalata's house. She, however, presented the cub to Manoj and asked him to rear it. An excited Manoj developed a friendship with the cub and started hand-raising it. However, the animal once attacked Manoj when he was putting it inside a cage and fled to the nearby forest. Despite injuries, Manoj badly missed the cub. The next day, the villagers spotted the cub's carcass. The animal died due to a snakebite. It took a long time for Manoj to overcome the grief of losing his friend.

FED BY COP'S WIFE

While studying in Cuttack, Manoj was supposed to lead a students' demonstration. He left out for his destination on a bicycle. However, police managed to arrest him on the way. Many students and the general public started demonstrating before the police station. Fearing a backlash, police planned to send him to jail. After a few



hours, Manoj was taken to the verandah of that building. He was surprised to find that delicious food was served for his lunch. He asked the officer whether police treat all the prisoners the same way. 'My wife is a regular reader of your short stories. She was worried about the arrest. It was she who has arranged the lunch for the pleasure she draws from reading your stories,' answered the officer in-charge.

'SPOOKY' FM'S BUILDING

Manoj Das, on his first visit to Balasore, once mentioned that after arriving at Balasore railway station, he came to know that he would be staying at the old building of Fakir Mohan Senapati which his elder brother Manmath Nath Das had made his home after joining the FM College as a lecturer. One night, he found the cook shivering in fear complaining of a weird sound heard on the terrace. However, Manoj found that the noise was generated by a couple of goats. They were playing on the terrace and enjoying a moon-lit night. During his stay in that building, his articles were published in Prajatantra, Kunkum, Dagar and Sahakar. His first poetry anthology also got released when he stayed there.

Fear of rebirth

Once asked about fear of death, Manoj said, he was not afraid of death in a conscious state. But he was not sure about when he would lose his consciousness. But he was afraid of rebirth and the whole process of human life - from mother's womb to crawling, to becoming minor to adult, and the time and energy required to grow up. However, he admitted that such thoughts were only the reflection of his ignorance as there is a cosmic power that controls his life and death.



With friend Devan Nair, former President of Republic of Singapore



Receiving Srujanee Samman from Sunanda Patnaik in Kolkata

LOSS APPRAISAL

Manoj Das was not just a writer, he was a messenger of divine consciousness. I was connected with him from my college days. Even as he is no more with us physically, his works are all set to make him immortal and he will remain an inspiration for many generations.



RAMAKANTA RATH | EMINENT POET

He was the real successor of Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan. Even as he had stopped writing for many years, his literary works are immortal and no one can replace him.



PRATIBHA ROY | JNANPITH AWARD WINNING NOVELIST

His demise is an irreparable personal loss to me. I had deep-rooted connection with him for over 50 years. He was not only an international writer, but a bright flash of spiritual consciousness.



BIBHUTI PATNAIK | EMINENT AUTHOR

It is really difficult to express in a sentence what he was. He was the best narrator of modern Odia literature. His works are soaked with spiritualism, human sufferings and surprising elements. Such traits are seen in a very few literary scholars.



HARAPRASAD DAS | EMINENT POET

His demise has created a huge void in the literary firmament of the nation. His works have opened quite a few new chapters in the history of Indian literature.



BIJAYANAND SINGH | ODISHA CONVENER, KENDRA SAHITYA AKADEMI

My interaction with Manoj Babu started with *Abu Purusha* and concluded with *Ratna Varsa*. He was a litterateur with rare perception and finest interpretation of life. Creative arena would miss such a genius for ever.



DOLGOVIND RATH | THEATRE PERSONALITY

Ancient rituals help sustain a healthy life



In ancient India, both the king and his subjects ate food using their hands. It does not just increase the 'Prana' or life energy within oneself, but also satiates one's hunger— brings forth humility and respect for the food served.

Established about 4,500 years ago, the Indian culture is among the world's oldest cultures in the world. Several Indian scriptures describe India as 'Sa Prathama Sanskrati Vishvavara' or, the first and the supreme culture of the world.

Traditional Indian practices and ways of living have been found to prolong one's life span, help sustain a healthy life, and live a disease-free happy life. These traditions that have been passed down generations, from our great grandmothers to us, have their own significance and importance. While the lives we live today is far from what life was like 50 years ago, a lot of what was needs to be preserved. Listed below are a few ancient rituals that help one lead a healthy lifestyle, and also help develop a deep meaningful relationship with nature:

DRINKING WATER FROM EARTHEN OR COPPER POTS: Microplastics that have now found their way into our bloodstream causing more harm than we could ever imagine! Drinking water from earthen pots and copper utensils boosts your immune system, facilitates digestion, strengthens joints and muscles, and helps improve blood circulation in the body.

WALKING BAREFOOT: Fancy footwear and shoes all the time? We'd advise you otherwise. Back in the day, there was this rule wherein no one

wore footwear inside the house. With changing times, diabetes, and other ailments, this is not a viable option for many. That being said, you should try walking barefoot while there's still dew that is, the first thing after you wake up. It helps alleviate joint pain, decreases muscle tension, and even lowers stress levels. All you need is a break from your regular footwear— just once a day, and you'll see this boost of energy almost immediately.

WEARING GOLD AND SILVER JEWELLERY: Piercing a new born child's ears shortly after its birth is a tradition all Indians abide by. Wearing gold and silver jewellery has been known to regulate body temperature, reduce anxiety and stress, and also help ameliorate one's mood. We recommend wearing metal jewellery and ditch plastic that does nothing but add to all that toxic waste.

EATING WITH HANDS: In trying to mimic the west, we have equated using cutlery to be more civil. This, however, is not the case. In ancient India, both the king and his subjects ate food using their hands. It does



not just increase the 'Prana' or life energy within oneself, but also satiates one's hunger— brings forth humility and respect for the food served.

INCULCATING HABIT OF EATING EARLY: Ayurveda and its theories suggest eating food as early as 8 pm, a couple of hours before going to sleep by 10 or 11 pm. This discipline to eat early and sleep at least 3 hours after the last meal can help one stay aloof of all gastrointestinal and digestion problems.

PRACTICING 'SHAUCH' : Reiterating the importance of clean living now more than ever, we should understand the relevance of taking a bath every day, keeping our shoes outside the house, and practicing sanitisation.

FASTING: The holy month of Ramzan and the sobriety one has during the Navratras. Do you think there's no science here? Indian traditions include fasts every once in a while. Not only do they cleanse one's system of all the toxins, but also give the digestive system a much-needed break. Fasting can help speed up metabolism, aid in weight

loss, and even improve longevity.

PRACTISING YOGA: There's no underestimating the power of Yoga and meditation! 30 minutes dedicated to Yoga each day— 4 rounds of Kapalbhathi and Surya Namaskar in addition to deep meditation and healthy eating. This is all you need to keep most diseases at bay and lead a healthy life.



'Everyone please come forward, we need more helping hands'



Actor Sonu Sood took to Instagram to urge more people to come forward and help those who are suffering due to Covid.

He posted a screen recording of his phone that shows the actor has been getting messages from people asking for help continuously. He says he is trying to help as many people as possible.

"Trying my best to reach out to everyone. Everyone...Please come forward. We need more helping

hands. Do your best to the best of your capabilities," he wrote.

The actor tested Covid positive a while back, but was back to helping people as soon as he recovered from the virus.

Sonu was appointed brand ambassador of Punjab's Covid vaccination programme by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh earlier this month. Last year, during lockdown, he helped thousands of migrants reach home safely. He also provided e-rickshaws to the unemployed.

IAN S

Disha's looks in Seeti maar out

Disha Patani has recently shared a video montage of her various looks in the song *Seeti maar* of the upcoming film *Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai* starring Salman Khan.

The video has Disha sports two different looks. In the first, she sports fishnets, loose black cargo pants and a crop top. The second look has her sporting a cut-out white leotard with embellishments, paired with loose blue pants.

For the caption, she dropped a pink flower emoji and wrote "#SeetiMaar".

Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai is scheduled to open theatrically May 13, on the occasion of Eid, across all Indian states where theatres are operational as per Covid protocols. The film simultaneously drop on the premium pay-per-view service platform Zeeplex.

The film co-stars Randeep Hooda and Jackie Shroff, and is directed by Prabhu Deva.

Radhe is also scheduled to release in the Middle East, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Europe, and will be the first Bollywood film to release theatrically in the UK since lockdown last year.

IAN S

Saiee on signing Telugu films

Actress Saiee M. Manjrekar had a Bollywood debut in the 2019 Salman Khan biggie *Dabangg 3*. She is now looking southward, with two Telugu films lined up — *Major* and *Ghani*.

While *Major* is a bilingual biographical drama, *Ghani* is a sports adventure film. Actor-film-maker Mahesh Manjrekar's daughter Saiee opened up on her move to enter the Telugu industry.

"For me language will never be a barrier because I want to let my performance speak more. This is a lesson I learnt from my dad that for an actor, language should never be a barrier. It's the actor's performance that should do

the work," she says.

Major starring Adivi Sesh is a bilingual based on life of 26/11 martyr Sandeep Unnikrishnan. Saiee plays the role of Neha, wife of Sesh's character.

"It wasn't an informed decision (to sign Telugu films) but the more I

thought about it the more it made sense.

When I read my character in *Major*, I fell in love with it.

Some movies you read and you can

imagine yourself doing this. The language was secondary. Then *Ghani*

also happened. My parents told me that there

is so much happening with pan-India films

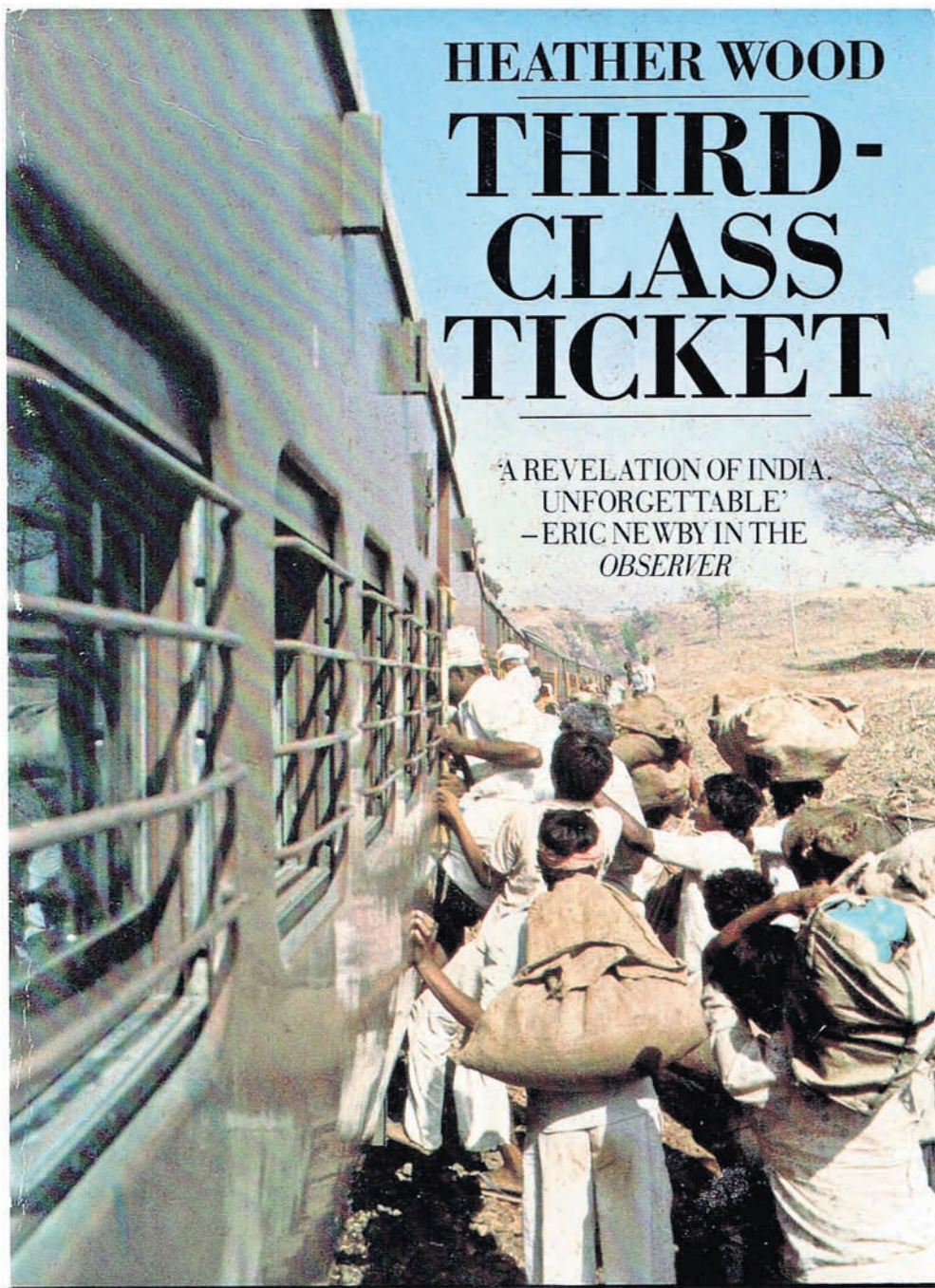
and wherever good work is happening, I should go,"

she says.

IAN S



AN EPIC JOURNEY



PENGUIN TRAVEL LIBRARY

Third Class Ticket, by Heather Wood, a Canadian writer, published in 1980, details the epic journey of a group of villagers from a poor village in Bengal, across the length and breadth of India in a special third class carriage. The book is sadly out of print though it is available on free reading websites. It is on one of these that I had the good fortune of stumbling on this strange journey of revelation identity and self discovery of old men and women at the far end of their lives who have

nothing much to look forward to in their ordinary, humdrum existence. The journey has its genesis in the generosity and "will" of a wealthy land owner of the village, Uma Sen who is in the last stages of her life. A childless widow, she wants to finance tours all over the country for her people so they may see and learn about the temples, ruins, beaches, plains, hills, deserts, in short the vast heritage of their country and pass on this learning to their children. She travels to Delhi to Baroda House, the

headquarters of the Indian Railways and explains her proposed bequest to the astounded Railway official, shortly before her death. The official is weeping by the time Uma Sen finishes, touched with wonder, at the greatness of her heart. Thus begins this odyssey with the first lot of villagers, with their steel trunks and their bundles, with their cook and a teacher to guide them.

Heather Wood in her Author's Note says she travelled with the villagers 15,000 kilometres of their journey, unobtrusively watching their experiences, perceptions and responses. She says, "For me this was the confirmation and culmination of studies in Indian history made possible by the generosity of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Danforth foundation and the Canadian Council". The villagers encounter a variety of people, go through various mishaps and adventures. At some point the cook leaves, their gentle guide Ashin dies of pneumonia and the strongest and most spirited of them all Amiya commits suicide. But undeterred the group carries on faithful to the vision of their benefactress and participate in the panorama of India. In this strange travelogue we meet many characters – the devout Deepaka who worships at many places and accepts all gods, Reena who tells spellbinding stories from her repertoire of folklore, buys books and reads them, silly Arundhati who talks of only saris and her miserly husband Babla, stoic Surendra who learns to read on this journey and the turbulent Amiya with healing skills, Mittu the potter with magic in his fingers and Rhunu with her art capturing all the scenes in colour and pencil.

The villagers learn through their travels to Calcutta, Benaras, Ajanta, Ellora caves of Aurangabad and Bombay, the mighty Himalayas, the deserts of Rajasthan and South of India and Odisha, the diversity of our country. They ask questions of democracy and the electorate and how it affects their village. They are treated to dance and music concerts and they meet foreigners who have come to India to live in Ashrams and learn its history and spirituality. They show love and tenderness to a young sick foreigner till they hand her over to the doctor, they befriend another young girl from the west and discover the strange ways of the west and are hospitable to her whenever they saw her on their pilgrimage. The villagers encountered so much of love and affection and hospitality in their sojourn which they in turn passed on. Yet there were those who shooed them away as beggars and ridiculed them to which they retaliated with spirit. And finally they return to their village full of reminiscences. Some of them return for a second trip and others carry with them reminiscences that brought a breath of fresh air to their rural surroundings, Each has gained something unique each has been transformed in some small way in this long trip in a third class carriage. A country seen and a journey lived.

Mittu's pots find their way into the museum, so does Rhunu's art, Reena rediscovers her love for books, Narend and Rhunu decide to educate Amiya's granddaughter and Deepaka adopts a girl from the streets.

This travelogue of simple villagers across the country is told by the writer purely from their perspective and the expression sometimes smacks of the vernacular translated into quaint English. The narrative too tends to be tedious with its many stopovers but is lightened by the conversation of men and women who have stepped out for the first time. The writer takes over and there is a lyrical element when she talks about the reflected sunset on the Himalayas that changes colours and the Konark Temple, the play of the gods, of life, of love, of death, of remembering and forgetting. The book is at once a meditation, a lament, and an awakening.



SUDHA DEVI NAYAK
BHUBANESWAR

Dipti

