

Raja: Then and now









# **Sunday serendipity**

On Sundays, I indulge in my passion, love cooking Odia-style mutton curry, socialise with friends, and go for movies and shopping

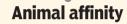
## Marvel fanatic

Being an ardent admirer of the Marvel un verse, I enjoy revisiting Marvel movies and immerse myself in their intriguing narrati and iconic characters.



# **Adventure pursuit**

I enjoy trying new things. Exploring exhilarating experiences such as parasailing, ziplining, deep-sea diving, and cliff leaping are among my favourite pastimes.



Animals have always been a part of my life because I grew up in a village with dogs, ducks, swans, pigeons, cattle, and goats as companions.

Unsurprisingly, I spend as much time as I can with my Beagle, Duggu.



### **Mom dearest**

She is not just my mother, but my best buddy too. We share countless precious moments such as enjoying movies, cooking together, and evening tea sessions.



# **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

- Transitional age is when during a hot day you don't know what you want - ice cream or beer.
- Is your name Wi-Fi? Because I'm feeling a connection.
- Yesterday, I fell down from a 10 meter ladder. Thank God I was on the third step.
- My wife and I always compromise. I admit I'm wrong and she agrees with me.



# DIVINITY IN THE AIR

Sir, Reading this week's cover story, Lord on Leave, on the Trinity's 15-day holiday, was both interesting and educational. The amazing abilities of Lord Jagannath, which entice followers to Srimandir, are widely known. The virtues that devotees gain by witnessing Lord Jagannath at Srimandir are thought to be no less than having a darshan of Lord Alarnath at his shrine in Brahmagiri. This knowledge intrigued me, so I brought my kids to Brahmagiri to show them this holy site and educate them on its historical significance. I was intrigued when some locals explained the history of this revered location because there are so many competing stories that it's difficult for me to determine which one is true. However, I discovered that as soon as we step foot on temple grounds, holiness begins to permeate the air. The location is enveloped in the celestial atmosphere of Lord Jagannath, giving the impression that he is literally present.

KAMALA DAS. CUTTACK



### 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



MADHUSMITA SAHU,OP

rimarily observed by girls and young women, Raja holds great cultural significance for Odisha. They take a break from chores, put on new clothes, and engage in activities like swinging on decorated rope swings, playing traditional games, and relishing delicious treats. However, that appears to be a thing of the past now.

The celebration, which was once a cause for great fervour, is gradually losing appeal and vitality. The cause has been attributed to a number of factors, including the influx of villagers into cities, the influence of modern lives, and the lack of interest among the younger generation in traditional festivals.

With just a few days to go before Raja, Sunday POST discusses the decline of a pompous festival with women of various age groups.

### 'The true fun lies in celebrating it at home and with friends and cousins'

With age come wisdom and a desire to pass down the values of culture to future generations. In her 90s, Pramoda Sahu re-

members, "Raja has always been a time of togetherness and cohesion. As I get older, I realise the importance of passing on our cultural heritage to the younger generation. So, I taught my only



daughter and granddaughter the significance of Raja, urging them to appreciate the values it represents and uphold them in the future.

> She stated, "During our time, every girl in my neighbourhood was excited for Raja before a month. We used to go to the nearby markets with our mother and aunts and buy sarees for ourselves. On the day of Raja, we get up before sunrise, and as per

**GENERATION IN TRADITIONAL** apply **FESTIVITIES** turmeric paste and oil, bathe, and wear our new clothes. Then we apply mehendi, and kumkums to our forehead. Now I also see kids in our neighbourhood and even my granddaughter doing these, but in western



clothes. Applying 'alata' is out of fashion, they assert.

Pramoda finds it quite amusing the way the traditional festival is celebrated in cities. "I see many foundations and social groups organising events at different places, asking girls and women to take part. But the true fun of Raja lies in celebrating it at home and with friends and cousins," she points out.

### 'Raja today is a fusion of traditional and contemporary elements'

Homemaker Mamata Sahu, in contrast to Pramoda, is content with how the celebration has

changed over time. "In my younger days, Raja placed a greater emphasis on agriculture. Our activities revolved around paying homage

to the gods, engaging in lively folk music, and playing age-old games. Although the core customs are still followed, the present

adopted both traditional and contemporary features. While celebrating the festival, they now incorporate aspects of Western fashion and global influences," claims the 50-year-old.

"Watching how seamlessly they combine the old and new is simply remarkable. It is amazing to see how they have adapted to the times. Raja currently exhibits an effortless integration of tradition and modernity, where elements from the past and present coexist. This transformation adds a vibrant and dynamic flavour to the festivities, breathing new life into the age-old customs," adds

### 'Raja takes on a new form, being flexible with the times'

Another Bhubaneswar homemaker, Sumitra

Mohanty, also discusses the variations in Raja celebration

"Compared to our times, which was deeply



"The time when making pithas, kheeri, and other Raja delicacies needed a

lot of work is long past. These delicious delights are now readily available at our fingertips, making it more convenient to take part in the festivities. Numerous events are being held by various organisations to celebrate the festival. The ardour surrounding Raja is still present, but it has changed as a result of the times," she continues.

She concludes by saying, "Despite the

changing social dynamics and the modernisation

of customs, the importance of Raja has not diminished. This indicates the festival's lasting cultural significance and adaptability. The current situation emphasises on the introduction of new traditions connected to Raja. It represents the capacity of people and communities to change with the times while holding on to the core of their cultural heritage. The fact that Raja is celebrated in a different way shows how dynamic our culture is and how open people are to adapt while still upholding their treasured customs.



highlights Odia culture. "Over the pitha,' dress up, decorate past few years, I have noticed tremendous changes in the their feet with 'alata,' way Raja is celebrated. or just hang out with other girls these days. There used to be swings hanging She adds, recalling her Raja recollections, from tree "I have been celebrating branches in every temple and in almost all villages, but that is

Raja at Banki for years, and it has become an annual tradition. This peaceful town in Odisha, home to Goddess Charchika, holds a special place in my heart as my favourite Raja destination. I first became aware of the significance of the Raja celebration, which openly celebrates women and the normal menstrual cycle, when I was studying in Standard VII. The celebration also represents

"The vibrant spirit that used to accompany the festival is now rarely seen," she says in reference to Raja's lost shine.

Mother Earth's three-day menstruation cycle.

"Even more drastic changes than we have seen have been witnessed by our elders. They try to instill excitement in the younger generation, but it frequently disappears in the daily grind. It is painful to see girls skip creating different kinds of pitha (cakes) and going to each other's houses during Raja. However, Raja continues to be a festival that unites and offers happiness to everyone, irrespective of their background," Tanistha concludes.

younger generations

use more creative methods," says Upasana.

She goes on to add, "I don't think that the popularity of the Raja festival is waning. Rather, it is being celebrated in a more ostentatious manner. Star-rated hotels are presenting creative events, and many government agencies have been organising shows to inform the younger generation about their significance. Yes, the way it is celebrated now is completely different from the way it was before. But the



# In quest of The lost blood

Nearly three centuries after Siraj ud-Daulah, the last Nawab of Bengal, lost the famed Battle of Plassey, historian Amalendu De explains how a branch of Siraj's successors took to Hinduism and how one of them even had a family tie with former Odisha Chief Minister

Biju Pattnaik

POST NEWS NETWORK

e was the last independent Nawab of Bengal, but a plot hatched by his close confidantes not only led to his death but also compelled his descendants to hide their identities for survival. So much so, they had to live as practising Hindus. The Lala Deys, the descendants of Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah, still live in Shillong of Meghalaya, according to historian Amalendu De. What's more, former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Pattnaik was the brother-in-law of one of Siraj's descendants, as De revealed in his book Sirajer Putra O' Banshadharder Sandhane (In Search of Siraj's Son & Descendants). Isn't that interesting and mystifying?

After his coronation in 1756, Siraj ud-Daulah's animosity towards the East India Company increased significantly. On June 23, 1757, at the historic Battle of Plassey, Siraj's army of 50,000 soldiers was defeated by Robert Clive's 3,000 troupes due to the treachery of Siraj's "trusted lieutenant" Mir Jafar. He was executed after a week. However, few people are aware of what happened to his descendants after that.

**Sunday POST** 

briefly examines how Siraj's ancestors managed to endure the upheaval following the Plassev defeat.

### The great escape

The outcome of the Battle of Plassey was a foregone conclusion after Siraj's close allies, Mir Jafar, Roy Durllay, Jagat Seth, and a few others, joined hands with the East India Company. Siraj's six-year-old son would have perished in the same way as his father if it weren't for Mohanlal, his dependable lieutenant and the brother of Siraj's Hindu wife Heera alias Alava Begum. Sensing that the war was on the verge of being lost and that the child's life was in danger, Mohanlal rushed him to Mymensingh's (a city of present-day Bangladesh) Bokainagar fort. Knowing about Jafar and Clive's intelligence sources, he once again moved the child to his friend's home in Amhati. Later, he spoke with the youngest son of the Mymensingh Zamindar, Krishna Gopal, who had taken in the orphan. When Gopal adopted the infant, he had no idea that the child was actually the son of Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah. The kid began life afresh as Jugal Kishore Choudhury, and he eventually rose to prominence as a successful Hindu Zamindar.

**Concealing identity** 

Jugal acquired control of Zamindari after the deaths of Krishna Gopal and his elder brother, and it prospered under his reign. However, disagreements over property ownership with his aunts—two of his father's elder brother's wives—occurred. They threatened to disclose who he was in front of Mir Jafar and the East India Company. This forced him to flee with his second wife, Jamuna Debi, and son, Pranakrishna Nath Choudhury, to a sparsely populated, wet countryside known as Kajal Sahar or Kajal Shah (Sylhet in modern-day Bangladesh). He established his Zamindari there after purchasing huge tracts of land, which led to the prosperity of the area.

### Company's trusted ally

Siraj ud-Daulah had lost his life by opposing the East India Company's policies and practices. But when Jugal Kishore, his son, took over as Zamindar, he proved to be one of the company's most trustworthy partners. By contributing to Company's effort to put down The Monk's Rebellion (1770–1777), which is frequently described as an early war of Independence, he managed to keep the government on his side. Jugal Kishore's intimate ties to the government later assisted him in obtaining a clean chit in an alleged crime of arson and looting in Mohammad Khan's neighbouring Zamandari.

> Muslim origin, he built Bokai Nagar's Rajrajeswari Kali Temple and 12 Shiv Lings. Additionally, he constructed numerous Shiv Lings and Kali temples and excavated many ponds for the public welfare. Shocking disclosure

Nevertheless, despite having

Jugal Kishore passed away in 1811, but not before telling his son who he was and how he and his family had adopted a Hindu lifestyle in order to survive. He

also asked his son to bury his body rather than have it cremated. He also advised his son to conceal his identity in order to avoid the British East India Company's surveillance. In addition, he urged Pranakrishna to relocate to Shillong and change the surnames of his successors for their protection.

### **Coming full circle**

As per the suggestion of his grandfather, Jugal Kishore, Pranakrishna's son, Sourindrakishore Roy Choudhury, changed his name to Prasanna Kumar De. It was essential to hide his identity as he joined the Independence Movement, following in the footsteps of his great grandfather Siraj. Prasanna was a poet and used to compose English poems singing the glories of great Indians like Swami Vivekananda and Ishwar Chandra Bidyasagar. Jubilee School and Jubilee Press in present-day Bangladesh were established by him. In the meantime, Prasanna also lost his Zamindari, as he couldn't look after the affairs due to his involvement in the national movement. Following Jugal's advice, one of Prasanna's sons, Lala Bijay Kumar De, a lawyer, moved to Shillong, while another son, Sharadindu, joined Mahatma Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement. Later, Sharadindu became the leader of Tarun Sangh, a group of youth who believed in an armed movement to get freedom. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was also part of this group. Post-Independence, he settled in Tripura. Similarly, Prasanta Kumar Dev, another son of Prasanna, also joined the freedom struggle and later settled in Assam.

Meanwhile, most of the descendants of Bengal's last Nawab have managed to establish themselves in society.

It's interesting to note that former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Pattnaik was the brother-in-law of Íla Dey, one of the grand daughters of Prasanna Kumar Dey, the great grandson of Siraj ud-Daulah.

> Book reference: Sirajer Putra O'Banshadharder Sandhane by Amalendu De





SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

igitisation has been both a boon and a bane for human society. On one side, we have the benefits of huge networking, connectivity, and instant knowledge transfer. On the darker side, we are facing some of the most unprecedented issues, like concern for privacy, social media addiction and most importantly, cyber crimes. Cybercrimes are one of the issues for which human civilization was unprepared. Hence, we have to acknowledge its existence and also adapt ourselves for protection against it. Innumerable cybercrime portals, helplines, activists and awareness campaigns have been launched to safeguard the cyberhealth of every individual. Despite multiple measures, we come across many such cases of fraudsters phishing through emails for important information, bank robbery, illegal downloading, industrial espionage, child pornography, sextortion frauds, webcam blackmail and the list never ends. These are crimes where the culprit does not need to be present physically at the scene of the crime and can operate the business remotely.

Sunday POST spoke with individuals and professionals who have seen such crimes with close proximity to hear their thoughts on the issue

### **KBC** trap

Bhubaneswar-based Gouri Prasad Dash shared his experience of falling victim to phishing and successfully dealing with it. Gouri said that it was back in 2020, when he



was preparing for competitive examinations. He registered in the KBC Play Along Contest with a few of his friends. "All of us used to participate in the contest for practice and to try our luck. I was astonished to receive a text one day, which read that I had won 25 lakhs rupees for answering a question, and in order to withdraw the amount, I was required to submit my bank credentials. When I refrained to do so, they continuously bugged me to send the scanned copies of my Aadhar card, passport, and voter ID,"

He further narrated, "As I denied sharing any of the above, they hacked into my social media han-



of my family and started troubling them by sending anti-national videos of burning national flags and abusive voice messages. Internet equally helps spread your story to the masses, which is why I tweeted about this to the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and National Investigation Agency (NIA). Sources and reports confirmed that the hackers and fraudsters belong to Pakistan.'

With India witnessing more than 500 sextortion cases on a daily basis, only 0.5 of these cases result in registered FIRs. Sextortion frauds and webcam blackmails have been around the corner for some time now.

### Blackmail over nude video call

Akash Pandit, who has been a victim of webcam blackmail over nude video calls, said that he was shattered and confused about what happened over one business-related video call. The Cuttack-based entrepreneur recalled, "It was a call with the marketing team scheduled for daily updates. I am still confused if the link was broken because nobody from the team joined except a girl. She was a known face from the past and she was not wearing clothes. She was engaged in inappropriate activity during the call. In no time, I realised something was not right and hung up. But to my dismay, she had screen recorded the call for a few seconds, which had both our faces recognisable. Before I could access my social media, all of the handles were hacked and I could not log in to any."

He added, "Calls from my friends and relatives poured in minutes after my social media handles were inaccessible to me they asked me about the recent upload of a few seconds of video on all my social media channels. I was dumbfounded and out of words to explain anything to anybody. The damage was done in just an hour before I got back access to the handles."

### The way out

Inspector I C Rashmita Jena, who has

been seeing rampant growth in cyber crimes opined on the same. Expressing her grief, she said that it is extremely awful to see the youth of this country falling victims to financial fraud. She pinpointed the rea-



son behind it as being greed for money. A lot of fraud is happening because people are unaware about not sharing their OTPs and account details and keeping their information private. The youth getting allured towards instant money needs to stop to curb such financial fraud. "If you don't click on the links shared and don't share the OTPs, no wrong

### **FACT SHEET**

- India witnessed 13.9 lakh cybersecurity incidents in 2022, reports the Ministry of State for Electronics and Information and Technology
- Number of cybercrime cases from the state saw a huge spike from 385 in 2015 to 2037 in 2021, a whopping increase of 492%, reports Odisha Police
- Cyber criminals cheated several people from the state of about Rs 2 Crore in the vear 2021



can be done to you hence, don't get lured into this", says Jena.

Speaking about the webcam blackmailing and nude video calling, the inspector said, "If at all you have been a victim of this, never get frightened and don't give in by trying to transfer the amount the person asks for. Always remember that it was not you who was engaging in inappropriate activity, and the first thing you have to do after this is to file a report with the cyber section. And the only way to avoid this is by not receiving video calls from unknown numbers. What they usually do is play porn on the video call and record it".

"Another fraud that is trending now is happening mostly over text messages and telegrams. Messages offering work from home, part-time jobs and salary details have a link attached to them, which, when clicked, redirects you to Telegram, which instantly doesn't display the contact information of the fraudster", adds Rashmita.

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**♦** GLAM SLAM

