

JULY 13-19, 2025

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



World Youth Skills Day – July 15

P 3,4
COVER
STORY

Blueprints of tomorrow



With family

Lazy leisurely love

My perfect Sunday unfolds in slow motion: no alarms, no schedules, just shared silence and laughter with family. These unhurried hours mend the weekday rush, letting us recharge in each other's comforting presence.

Roots and reunions

Every Sunday, we drive to Kendrapara, trading city noise for village calm. At my in-laws' doorsteps, generations mingle over dhalma and stories, stitching family bonds tighter with each shared laugh and lingering embrace.

A day to recharge

Sundays belong to family—gatherings echo with laughter, shared meals, and quiet moments, recharging hearts and minds for the week's adventures ahead.

Cheat days with a healthy twist

Sundays are our guilt-free indulgence—cheat days with a healthy twist. We satisfy our sweet tooth with fresh fruit ice cream or fluffy pancakes, blending flavour and nutrition in every bite.



From music album to the big screen, Bhubaneswar-born Aanisha Sharma's journey is a tale of passion and perseverance. Starting 12 years ago with the music video 'Baje Bainsi Nache Ghungoora', she briefly explored the corporate world in Bangalore before returning to Odisha for the TV serial 'Swabhimaan'—a role that changed her life both professionally and personally. It was on the set of this show that she met her husband, Subhasis Sharma. Since then, Aanisha has become a familiar face in state's entertainment scene, most recently winning hearts in the blockbuster 'Bou Butt Bhuta'. Balancing stardom and family, she continues to shine with effortless grace

Weekend wanderlust

Short, sweet weekend escapes to nearby spots let our family bond grow without tiring travel. At the same time we ensure to return home early keeping our daughter's bedtime stays blissfully on track.

With co-actor Babushaan Mohanty



ANISHA KHATUN, 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

- What is the difference between Mechanical Engineers and Civil Engineers? Mechanical Engineers build weapons, Civil Engineers build targets.
- I work to buy a car to go to work.
- If you don't like the news, go out and make some.
- What do you call a priest that becomes a lawyer? A father in law.



Addressing red flags

Sir, I found the cover story in last week's Sunday POST timely. Recognizing red flags in a relationship is vital for protecting one's emotional, mental, and even physical well-being. Early warning signs often indicate deeper issues that can escalate into toxic or abusive dynamics if ignored. Identifying behaviors like manipulation, control, disrespect, or lack of accountability helps prevent long-term harm, such as diminished self-esteem, anxiety, or trauma. Red flags also signal incompatibility or unhealthy patterns that hinder mutual growth and trust. By acknowledging these signs early, individuals can make informed decisions about whether to address concerns, seek support, or leave the relationship. This awareness fosters healthier boundaries and promotes self-respect. Ultimately, understanding red flags empowers people to prioritize safety, emotional security, and genuine connection, ensuring relationships are built on mutual respect and care rather than fear or imbalance. Ignoring these signs may lead to prolonged suffering, whereas addressing them early can prevent heartbreak and pave the way for healthier, more fulfilling partnerships.

SUBHRANSHU SARANGI, ANGUL

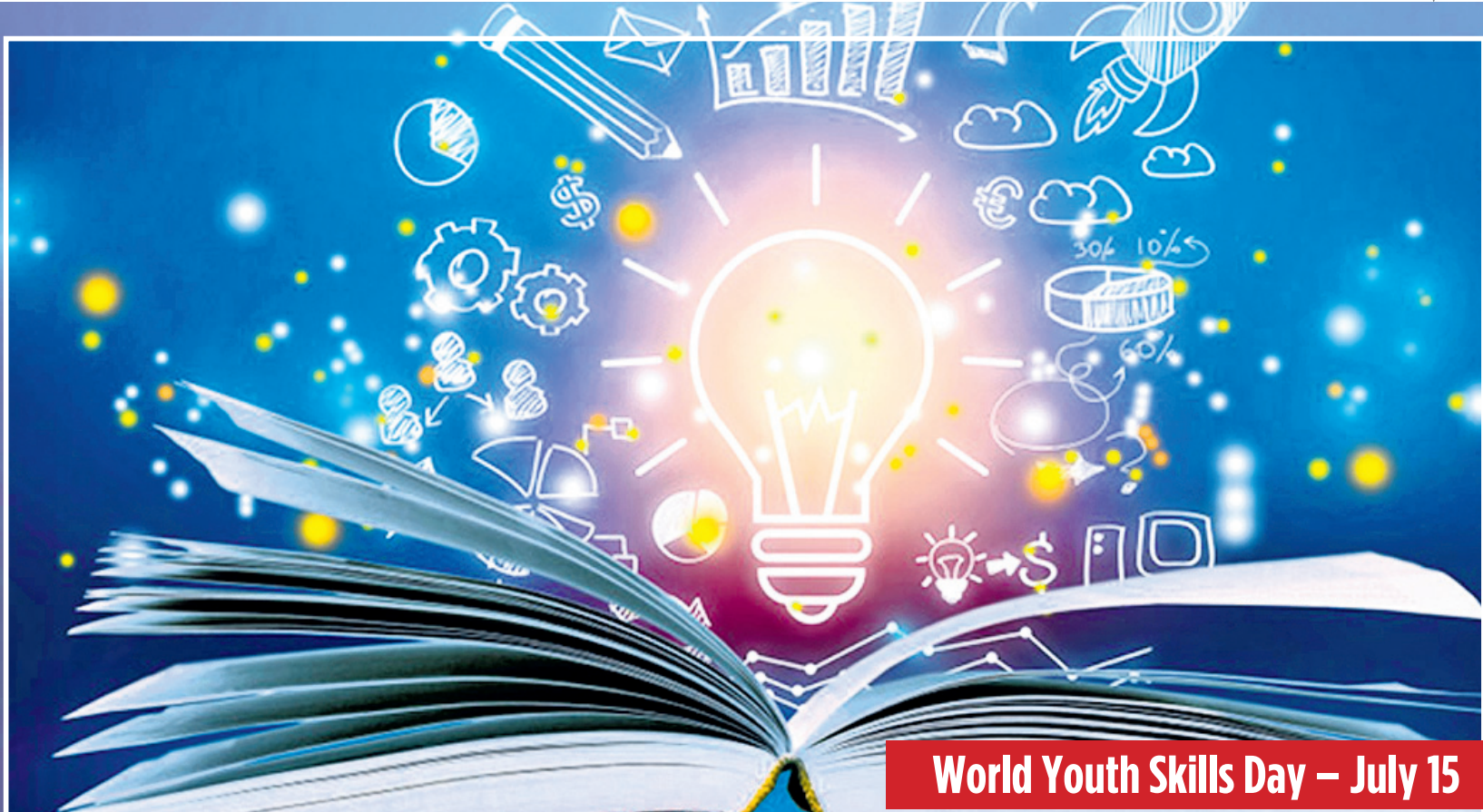
LETTERS



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

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World Youth Skills Day – July 15

Blueprints of tomorrow

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

In every corner of the globe, a new generation of young people is redefining what it means to build a career. These young dreamers, creators, and innovators are transforming their passions into meaningful pursuits, shaping industries that will drive the future. Whether it's innovative architectural projects in growing cities or sustainable agriculture initiatives in remote villages, young people are fearlessly upskilling to meet the demands of an ever-changing world.

As traditional education evolves and the gig economy expands, today's youth are forging their own unique paths in skilled trades, technology, green jobs, and creative fields. Their journeys reflect extraordinary resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability. They are not content to wait for opportunities—they are creating them.

From launching startups to leading climate action, these youth are challenging outdated notions of what success looks like. They are innovating in ways previous generations could hardly have imagined, proving that they are not simply inheriting the future but actively shaping it with their own hands and minds. In doing so, they are sending a powerful message: the future does not just unfold around them, it is built by them. Their stories stand as a testament to the transformative power of courage, skill and vision in this new era.

With World Youth Skills Day approaching, Sunday POST spoke to a few young achievers who have overcome the odds to reach their goals.

'Empathy & Adaptability have been crucial throughout my journey'

Rishikesh Amit Nayak, 22, the young founder of DAIRA Ed-Tech, is reimagining education through innovation rooted in empathy, resilience, and real-world experience. His company, DAIRA — India's first dedicated EdTech browser and



R&D lab — is breaking new ground by tackling deep-rooted learning challenges through research, inclusive design, and cutting-edge technology.

His journey into innovation began not in a lab, but on a farm. Growing up in a farming family in Odisha, Rishikesh witnessed the harsh realities of the 2017 agrarian crisis as a Class 9 student. "The devastation caused by crop failures due to pests and microbial diseases wasn't just economic — it was emotional. I saw families collapse under the weight of uncertainty. That's when I realised that technology could be a powerful tool for change," he says.

That realisation led to his first innovation — an AI-driven crop protection platform that used satellite data and farmer-reported inputs to predict pest outbreaks. "What started as a simple idea grew into a system that delivers vital crop health information

directly to farmers' phones, helping them act before damage occurs," he recalls. That solution became the foundation of his purpose-driven approach to building tools that matter.

Rishikesh attributes his success not only to technical skills like AI, programming, and data analytics, but also to emotional intelligence.

"Empathy and adaptability have been crucial throughout my journey. Understanding people's challenges from their perspective allowed me to build solutions that genuinely serve their needs," he shares. "But perhaps most importantly, perseverance — staying committed even when the odds were against me — has been my greatest asset."

Trust, he says, was the biggest hurdle. Introducing unfamiliar technology to skeptical rural users required deep cultural understanding and sim-

licity in execution. "We used local languages, familiar tools like WhatsApp, and made sure everything was affordable. Over time, transparency and word-of-mouth helped us build credibility," he explains.

Today, through DAIRA, he continues to develop inclusive, accessible educational tools — from assistive tech for students with learning disabilities to AI-driven career navigation tools. For Rishikesh, youth-led innovation is not a trend but a transformative force. "It's no longer about waiting for change — it's about being the change. Young minds today are agile, empathetic, and purpose-led. We are not afraid to tackle the toughest problems and build a future that works for everyone."

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

'Don't chase trends — chase purpose'

Priyabrata Sahoo, 24, a young terracotta artist from Odisha, is not just shaping clay — he's shaping futures. What began as a childhood curiosity has grown into a mission that blends tradition, innovation and mentorship.





can shine anywhere.”

After completing her internship and gaining valuable experience through various jobs, Pratyasha received an international offer and a scholarship for her Master’s in Australia. “That opportunity boosted my confidence. Despite the stereotypes, I was determined to prove myself. The journey wasn’t easy—I faced doubts and challenges—but over time, I proved the naysayers wrong.”

One of her most challenging projects is currently underway in Konark, an international assignment involving the construction of a four-storey, 9,000-square-foot building on sand. “It pushed us creatively and technically. We had to revise our drawings multiple times to stay within budget while dealing with complex conditions like saltwater, sand, and weather. It was tough, but with sheer resilience, we made it work. Now, things are progressing smoothly.”

Sustainability is central to her architectural philosophy. “Most of our projects are designed with a focus on green building concepts. However, in Odisha, there’s still limited awareness about sustainable architecture. Green projects often involve higher initial costs—for solar panels, green roofs, and other eco-friendly elements. The investment is one-time, but people often misunderstand it as unnecessary. Many prefer gradual spending, without realising the long-term benefits.”

To young architects just starting out, she offers heartfelt advice: “Today, everyone wants to earn quickly, but few focus on truly learning the craft. Don’t rush. Take your journey step by step. Before starting your own firm, make sure you’ve gathered enough practical knowledge—because that will reflect in your work. Keep learning, keep growing.”

shares.

Today, he runs his own line of eco-friendly terracotta products and mentors schoolchildren in his village every weekend. “Some of them have already started selling their creations. That’s the kind of impact I hoped for.” He believes terracotta holds even greater relevance today. “In a world full of plastic and mass production, handmade art stands out. It’s natural, sustainable, and soulful,” he says. “There’s so much potential when heritage meets innovation.”

His message for young people: “Don’t chase trends — chase purpose. Let your skill speak for you. And when you can, teach others. Sharing knowledge is how real change begins. I never imagined this path would bring me so much — but it has. And this is just the beginning.”

“I grew up watching my mother craft beautiful figures out of clay in our backyard,” he says. “At first, it felt like play — helping her mix the clay, smooth the surface — but over time, I began to see the magic in it. The stories, the symbols, the connection to the earth... it fascinated me. That’s what inspired me to learn terracotta. I didn’t just want to replicate her work — I wanted to explore, innovate, and take this art form forward in my own way.”

As his passion grew, so did the challenges. “There was a time when people didn’t take this craft seriously,” Priyabrata recalls. “Friends were preparing for engineering and government jobs, while I was working with clay. Some thought it was a waste of time. Selling handmade products wasn’t easy either. Competing with cheap, factory-made items meant I had to prove the value of every piece I made. There were days I felt invisible,” said Sahoo.

Convincing others of terracotta’s worth took time, patience, and persistence. “Even when I started teaching students, parents questioned how useful it was. But slowly, they saw the difference — in creativity, confidence, and even small incomes from selling artwork.”

Despite the hurdles, Priyabrata remained committed. “Learning this skill has shaped me — not just as an artist, but as a person. It gave me direction, independence, and confidence,” he

‘Keep learning, keep growing’

Pratyasha Patra, principal architect of Paridhi Archi-techno, from Balasore, has made a mark in the world of architecture—an industry traditionally seen as male-dominated. With several prestigious government and international projects under her belt, she exemplifies how passion, resilience and creativity can pave the way for success, regardless of gender.

Her journey began with inspiration drawn from the legendary architect Zaha Hadid. “In a male-dominated world, her work, her skills, and her unique architectural style were so powerful that they could challenge engineering itself,” says Pratyasha. “She silenced the world with her brilliance and inspired me deeply. She proved that there’s no such thing as a male-dominated field. If you have creativity, a spark, and trust your instincts, you



Every creature deserves its moment in the sun and snakes, one of nature's most misunderstood creatures, are no exceptions. So, it's time to appreciate these remarkable reptiles and recognise their importance in the world. By fostering understanding and respect, we can ensure that snakes continue to thrive in their natural habitats, contributing to the health of our planet



Every year on July 16, World Snake Day slithers into the calendar, aiming to shed light on one of nature's most misunderstood creatures. With over 3,900 known species, snakes inhabit every continent except Antarctica, thriving in diverse environments from dense forests to arid deserts. Despite their ecological importance, snakes often evoke fear and misconceptions, making this day crucial for education and conservation.

Ecological role
Snakes play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. As middle-order predators, they control populations of rodents, insects, and other small animals, which helps prevent the spread of diseases and protects crops. For instance, a single snake can consume hundreds of rodents annually, reducing the risk of diseases like Lyme disease and hantavirus. Additionally, snakes serve as prey for birds of prey, hedgehogs, and other predators, supporting entire food webs.

Cultural significance
In many cultures, snakes hold sacred significance. In Hinduism, snakes (nāgas) are sacred beings linked to divinity and cosmic balance. Lord Shiva wears a

World Snake Day – July 16

Slithering into spotlight

cobra, Vishnu rests on Shesha Nāga. Nag Panchami honors them, symbolizing fertility, protection, and water. Revered yet feared, snakes embody both danger and divine power, reflecting nature's duality in Hindu belief. Similarly, in African and Australian Aboriginal folklore, snakes are linked to rain and fertility, with the Rainbow Serpent believed to bring life to the land.

Conservation challenges
Snakes face numerous threats, includ-

ing habitat destruction, climate change, and human persecution. Deforestation and urbanization reduce their natural habitats, while climate change affects their prey availability. Additionally, snakes are hunted for their skin, used in fashion, and killed out of fear or misunderstanding. According to the IUCN Red List, 12% of assessed snake species are threatened, with some, like the Roatan Coral Snake and the Golden Lancehead Snake, critically endangered.

Experts' thoughts

'Respect snakes, follow protocol, and rescue responsibly'

There was a time when people would kill snakes out of fear, but with awareness, that mindset has gradually changed. However, a new problem has emerged—self-proclaimed 'snake saviours' who are more focused on likes and views than actual rescue work. Most of them lack basic education, proper training, and any understanding of snake behavior. They handle snakes carelessly, prolong interactions for content, and often spread misinformation. This reckless approach not only endangers the snake but also puts their own lives and those of onlookers at serious risk. These individuals can be called modern-day snake charmers, calling for stricter regulation. If traditional snake charmers are banned, why isn't action taken against these social media performers? Respect the snake, follow protocol, and rescue responsibly.

Subhendu Mallik |
General Secy, Snake Helpline, Bhubaneswar



Fascinating snake facts

Size extremes: The Barbados Threadsneak is the smallest, measuring just 10.4 cm, while the Reticulated Python can reach up to 30 feet, and the Green Anaconda can weigh up to 500 lbs.

Unique adaptations: Desert snakes like the sidewinder move diagonally to navigate hot sand, while the hognose snake plays dead when threatened, emitting a foul odor to deter predators.

Sensory abilities: Snakes use their forked tongues and Jacobson's organ to "smell in stereo," detecting chemical cues in their environment.

Reproduction: While most snakes lay eggs, some, like sea snakes, give birth to live young.

How to celebrate World Snake Day

Educate yourself and others: Learn about local snake species and share facts to dispel myths. Understanding their role in ecosystems can reduce fear.

Support conservation efforts: Donate to organizations working to protect snake habitats and promote coexistence.

Advocate for policy change: Support legislation that protects snakes and their habitats, and opposes the illegal wildlife trade.

MISLEADING MYTHS

Here are five of the most widespread myths about snakes, along with the facts that put them to rest. Dispelling these myths not only keeps people safer; it also reduces the pointless killing of snakes that follows fear and misunderstanding—an essential step toward healthier ecosystems and genuine coexistence.

Love for milk
Across South Asia the sight of a cobra sipping from a bowl of milk is almost synonymous with Nag Panchami, yet the idea is biologically impossible. Snakes are strictly carnivorous and, like most reptiles, lactose-intolerant; milk can cause severe digestive problems or even death. When a snake appears to "drink" during rituals it is usually dehydrated and starving, lapping at any liquid in desperation.

Dancing to music
The swaying cobra of the snake-charmer's basket seems to follow the flute, but snakes have no external ears and cannot hear airborne melodies. What looks like dancing is actually a defensive reaction to the movement of the pipe and to ground-borne vibrations from the charmer's tapping foot.

Snakes are out for revenge
Folklore in many cultures claims that an injured snake—or its mate—will track down and punish the person who harmed it. In reality snakes lack the brain structures needed for complex emotions such as vengeance. Their "memory" is geared to immediate survival, not multi-day revenge quests.

Venomous snakes can be spotted by head shape or colour
A triangular head, bright bands, or a red-on-yellow rhyme are handy field clues—until they aren't. Numerous harmless species flatten their heads into a "dangerous" triangle, while some deadly vipers have rounded heads. Colour patterns vary so much within species that looks alone are unreliable. The only safe rule is to learn the venomous species that actually live in your region.

Traditional first-aid cures beat modern medicine
Cutting the wound, sucking out venom, tying on a tourniquet, or applying ice have all been popularized by movies and village lore, yet none of these methods neutralize venom and most make injuries worse. The single proven treatment is rapid transport to a medical facility for assessment and, when needed, antivenom therapy.

'Snakes are not our enemies, ignorance is'

Every year on World Snake Day, we honour creatures that are vital yet deeply misunderstood. As a snake rescuer in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar since 2006, I've seen the beauty of these reptiles—and the tragedy of our fear-driven response. Snakes are not villains; they are natural pest controllers that help maintain ecological balance and protect crops. Unfortunately, ignorance leads to unnecessary killing and preventable snakebite deaths. In Odisha, awareness is seasonal and lacks institutional support. The Forest Department and Government must go beyond symbolic events. We need year-round awareness campaigns in schools, hospitals, and rural areas. Snake rescuers should be trained, registered, and supported with safety gear. Medical professionals must be equipped to handle snakebite cases. Most snakes here are protected under the Wildlife Act, yet they receive no structured conservation attention. Snakes are not our enemies—ignorance is. Real change requires real action, not just words once a year.

Subhendu Swain | Snake rescuer, Cuttack



Shanaya views debut delay as blessing

Shanaya Kapoor, daughter of Maheep and Sanjay Kapoor, is all set to make her much-anticipated Bollywood debut with *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan*, releasing July 11. While this romantic drama marks her official entry into cinema, it wasn't her original launch vehicle. Shanaya was initially set to debut with *Bedhadak*, a film backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. However, after initial buzz and casting announcements, the project was eventually shelved due to reported delays and possible recasting.

Looking back, Shanaya views the delay as a blessing in disguise. "The environment I've been brought up in has taught me a lot. I'm very happy with the way things turned out. Waiting these few years has made me better prepared as an actor," she shared. She believes that understanding the industry's unpredictability helped her grow both personally and professionally. "It made me more responsible for the opportunities I get and made me value my work more."

Acknowledging her privilege, Shanaya added, "I know I have it easier than many others, but I'm grateful for this journey. It shaped me and hopefully made me a better artist." With *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan*, Shanaya steps into the spotlight, ready for her big cinematic moment.

AGENCIES



Huma recalls days of struggles

Bollywood actress Huma Qureshi, who is all set to unveil the first look of her production house, 'Saleem Siblings,' took a heartfelt trip down memory lane as she recalled the early days of struggle in Mumbai. From cramped auditions and shared rickshaws to finding strength in her bond with brother Saqib, Qureshi opened up about the journey that led to the birth of their dream venture. Thursday, the Double X actress took to her Instagram handle and posted a heartwarming video of her childhood memories with Saqib. The clip features a nostalgic montage of childhood moments, showcasing adorable pictures of Huma Qureshi and Saqib Saleem as babies and toddlers.

Alongside the clip, the *Gangs of Wassey-pur* ac-

tress wrote, "We came to Mumbai with a suitcase full of dreams and a heart full of madness. No roadmap, no guarantees... Just this wild, stubborn belief that one day we will also get a chance to tell the kind of stories we grew up watching. Stories meant for the big screen. And somehow, between shared rickshaws, cramped auditions, and nights where all we had was each other's faith we found our voice. One that was loud, messy, loving, and full of fight. Today, that voice becomes a reality. Tomorrow, it becomes a glimpse."

IAN S



Giorgia on portrayal of women in cinema

Giorgia Andriani has recently ignited a vital conversation about the portrayal of women in cinema, particularly in the context of special dance numbers that have long been a fixture in Indian films. Known for her thoughtful approach to her work, the actress emphasized the need to distinguish between celebrating femininity and objectifying women on screen. Her reflections add depth to the ongoing discourse around how the industry can balance entertainment with respectful and meaningful representation.

Speaking candidly, Giorgia shared her belief that the intent behind a scene matters deeply. "The way a scene is conceptualized and brought to life makes all the difference. When done right, dance sequences can be incredibly empowering and celebrate the grace and power of women," she explained. She expressed a strong preference for roles that showcase a woman's confidence and inner strength rather than focusing solely on physicality.

Giorgia also underscored her commitment to projects rooted in artistic integrity. "Entertainment and respect can coexist beautifully when there's genuine intent behind the storytelling," she noted. For her, cinema is a powerful tool to shape perceptions, and she's determined to be part of that positive shift. With her clear vision and purpose, the *Guest in London* actress could very well become a driving force for change in the industry.

AGENCIES



The untold saga of Vyjayanthimala, Dilip Kumar

Although their sizzling on-screen chemistry sparked widespread rumours of a real-life romance, Vyjayanthimala later dismissed the speculation as media exaggeration. Yet, many industry insiders believed her bond with Dilip Kumar went beyond the professional—particularly during the filming of *Gunga Jumna*. The film, deeply personal to Dilip Kumar who played a key role in shaping its narrative, saw him insist that Vyjayanthimala be cast as Dhanno. He believed only she possessed the strength and emotional depth to do justice to the role.

Their pairing was among the most iconic of the 1950s



and '60s, with seven films together—more than any other actress opposite Dilip Kumar.

Audiences and critics alike praised their performances, cementing their status as one

of the era's most bankable screen couples.

However, the speculation surrounding their off-screen relationship intensified, especially after Dilip Kumar's marriage to Saira Banu. This reportedly played a role in Vyjayanthimala's sudden retreat from the film industry. She chose to focus on her passion for classical dance and public service, distancing herself from the cinematic spotlight.

Despite several offers to reunite with Dilip Kumar on screen, she consistently declined. Determined to preserve the dignity of their cinematic legacy, she moved on—gracefully and resolutely.

AGENCIES

A fascinating account of 'rebirth' & transformation



PROF TAPAN K PANDA

Gotie Jibana Dui Janama- Odia translation of autobiography of Ileana Citaristi- reflects the shadows deeper than the tree- Hiranmayee's acute and accurate reflection of the dancer's memoir in Odia. The original English version *MY JOURNEY: a Tale of Two Births* is not just a dancer's memoir but a moving narrative about the courage of leaving everything familiar and embracing unusual in an entirely different territory. This is all about exploring a culture and surrendering to a new, challenging life. The translation of beautifully reflective, honest and takes the reader to the world of surrender, devotion and spiritualism. The collection is definitely a valuable and motivational reading for dancers, cultural anthropologists and anyone who loves stories on migration transformation, dedication and devotion.

I had the chance of reading both the English and Odia translated version of the book and can fairly say that the translation sounds lucid and contextual as the life story largely revolves around Odisha and Odissi dance. So in the process of learning a classical dance, the book transforms into a memoir of cultural and social integration to reflect on the symbiotic existence of a resilient foreigner and all-embracing Odia culture of universal brotherhood. The book is a testimony to a life led with passion, dedication and unwavering search for cultural and spiritual meaning. The book chronicles artistic achievements which are natural to a memoir but the translator has exceptionally contextualized the experiences by using the backbone of the cultural context- Odia language.

She was born in Italy to a family who had no idea to the rhythm of Indian classical dance and that to Odissi dance. This journey is a miracle where she identifies herself in an awestruck manner how diverse are the beliefs, rites and larger cultural contexts between where she was born and where she found meaning to her life. 'Dui Janama' (Two births) her physical birth in Italy and her spiritual rebirth in Odisha. Hiranmayee has been able to run this theme powerfully throughout the book in Odia language under-

lining her transformation from a normal human being to a classical dancer par excellence.

When an Italian theatre artist decides to leave her comfortable European life behind to immerse herself in the classical dance traditions of Odisha, India, it might sound like the plot of a novel. But for Ileana Citaristi, this was real life — and translation of her autobiography, *MY JOURNEY: a Tale of Two Births*, beautifully captures this extraordinary transformation. Born in Italy, Ileana grew up surrounded by Western art and theatre. Yet, from an early age, she felt a quiet restlessness. Her search for something deeper

form of Odisha — that captured her heart completely. Under the rigorous guidance of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Ileana began a new chapter of her life, which she calls her "second birth."

In her book, she vividly describes her struggles: learning a new language, adapting to the climate, facing skepticism as a foreigner, and embracing the demanding discipline of Indian classical dance. Yet through every obstacle, her love for Odissi only deepened. She learned to embody not just the movements, but the spirit of Indian mythology and philosophy that flow through the dance. Ileana's journey didn't stop at Odissi. She ventured into Chhau,

tion. Her descriptions are vivid and honest, capturing the beauty and the challenges of adapting to an entirely new culture. The translator being a successful storyteller herself, captures the dancer's responses, reaction and embrace of Odia culture in a language that can spellbound an Odia reader.

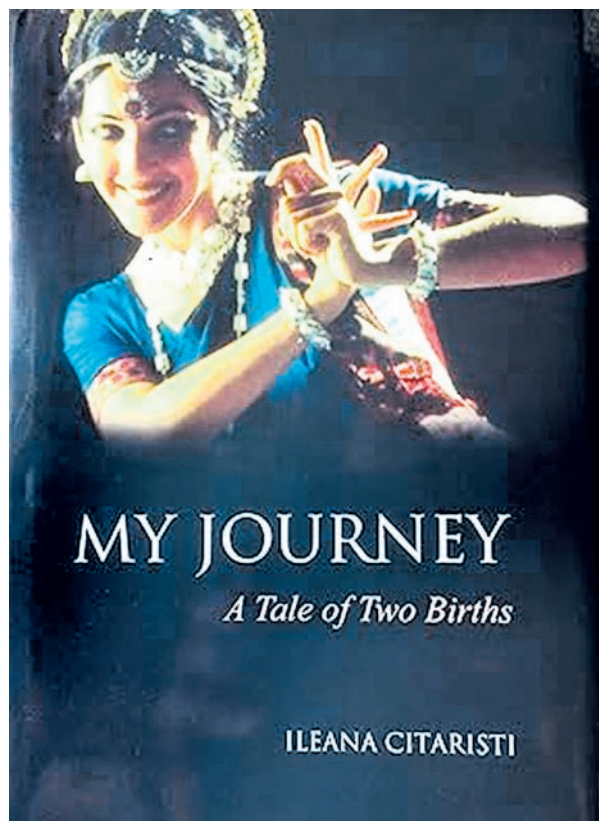
One of the most compelling aspects of the book is how it documents Ileana's evolving relationship with her art. She does not merely adopt Odissi as a dance form; she fully immerses herself in the cultural, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions of Indian classical dance. Her experiences show her growth from a foreign student to a deeply respected exponent and scholar of Odissi. The narratives stand as testimony of the greater Indian Philosophy 'Vasudeva Kutumbakam' (The whole world is a family).

Across chapters, the translator has nicely captured Ileana's personal issues and challenges and reading them seems as if they are everyday Odia girl's struggle and challenge to succeed in life. Ileana does not shy away from discussing the struggles — from cultural misunderstandings

to personal loneliness, physical injuries, and the initial skepticism she faced as a foreigner practicing an Indian classical art form. Her honesty about moments of doubt makes the narrative more authentic and relatable.

The Odia language used in the translation is simple yet evocative. Hiranmayee translates with a warmth and clarity that makes the story accessible even to readers unfamiliar with Indian classical dance. Photographs included in the book add a rich visual layer, capturing both her performances and her life moments, making the reading experience more immersive. Let me end with a beautiful line - Dance is not something I do; it is what I am.

The reviewer is a well known bilingual poet, translator and author. He has taught management and Creativity in many overseas universities and in all the leading IIMs in India.



- **Title – My Journey: A Tale of Two Births**
(Autobiography of Padma Shri Ileana Citaristi)
- **Odia version – Gotie Jibana Dui Janama**
- **Translation: Dr Hiranmayee Mishra**
- **Print length – 300 pages**
- **Price in INR – 599**

led her to experimental theatre, political activism, and ultimately to India — a land she felt drawn to even before she set foot there. Her first steps in India were marked by a fascination with Kathakali, the highly stylized dance-drama of Kerala. But it was Odissi — the lyrical, sculptural dance

the martial dance form of eastern India, adding yet another layer to her artistic identity. She also began fusing Western and Indian themes in her performances, showing her openness to innovation while honoring tradition. Beyond performing, Ileana founded Art Vision in Bhubaneswar, where she has nurtured countless students and promoted cultural exchange. What makes Ileana's story truly inspiring is not just her artistic achievement but her spiritual evolution. Dance, for her, is more than performance — it is a path to self-discovery and a form of meditation. As she writes, "Dance is not something I do; it is what I am." Her work has taken her across the world, earning her accolades including the prestigious Padma Shri.

Through her detailed recollections, the reader is transported into the vibrant world of Odisha — its festivals, temple rituals, and the rigorous discipline of the guru-shishya tradi-

Sergei Torop's journey from a traffic cop to a self-proclaimed messiah reflects the deep-seated human quest for meaning and transcendence. Besides, his story is also a reminder of the enduring allure of spiritual promises and the challenges of navigating the thin line between faith and manipulation



Jesus of Siberia: Rise and fall

In the heart of Siberia's vast wilderness, a man who claims to be the reincarnation of Jesus Christ has built a following that spans decades and has recently garnered international attention. Sergei Anatolyevitch Torop, better known as Vissarion, has been a figure of both fascination and controversy. His story is a complex tapestry of spiritual awakening, communal living, and legal battles, all set against the backdrop of post-Soviet Russia.

Early life and awakening

Born January 14, 1961, in Krasnodar, southern Russia, Torop's early life was typical for a young man in the Soviet Union. He served in the Red Army and later worked as a metalworker in Minusinsk, Siberia. In 1989, he lost his job as a traffic officer, a turning point that would set the stage for his future. Torop claimed that in 1990, at the age of 29, he experienced a profound spiritual revelation. He believed he was reborn as Vissarion, meaning 'he who gives new life,' and began to preach his message.

Church of the Last Testament

In 1991, Torop founded the Church of the Last Testament in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. The church, also known as the Community of Unified Faith, quickly gained followers who were drawn to his teachings of reincarnation, environmentalism, and a strict moral code. The community established itself in the Siberian Taiga, creating a self-sufficient settlement known as the Abode of Dawn or Sun City. Here, followers lived according to Torop's principles, which included vegetarianism, celibacy, and the rejection of material wealth.

Teachings and beliefs

Torop's teachings are a blend of Christianity, Buddhism, and other spiritual philosophies. He emphasizes the importance of spiritual enlightenment over material success and warns of an impending apocalypse. His followers adhere to a strict code of conduct, abstaining from meat, alcohol, and tobacco. The church's doctrine is documented in a multi-volume text called the Last Testament, which outlines principles for self-improvement and communal living.

The community and its practices

The community of Vissarionites has grown to include thousands of followers worldwide, with around 4,000 living in the Siberian settlements. Life in these communities is marked by a deep commitment to Torop's teachings. Followers engage in communal farming, prayer, and meditation, striving to create a harmonious balance between humanity, nature, and spirituality. The community's practices have drawn both admiration and criticism, with some viewing it as a utopian vision and others as a dangerous cult.

Legal troubles

In September 2020, two of his close associates were arrested in a he-raid conducted by Russia's Investigative Committee. The authorities accused them of creating a religious group that im-

posed violence on its members. The charges included allegations of psychological manipulation, financial exploitation, and causing harm to the health of followers. In June 2025, Torop was sentenced to 12 years in prison for these offenses. The court also awarded significant damages to the victims and state prosecutors.

Legacy and impact

Sergei Torop's story is a testament to the enduring power of religious belief and the complexities of spiritual leadership. His teachings have inspired thousands to seek a more meaningful and connected way of life. However, his methods and the nature of his community have raised serious concerns about the boundaries of religious freedom and the potential for abuse within spiritual movements.

As Vissarion, Torop has left an indelible mark on the landscape of modern spirituality. His journey from a traffic officer to a self-proclaimed messiah reflects the deep-seated human quest for meaning and transcendence. Whether viewed as a visionary or a charlatan, Sergei Torop's impact on the lives of his followers and the broader conversation about religion and authority cannot be denied.

In the end, the story of the Jesus of Siberia is a reminder of the enduring allure of spiritual promises and the challenges of navigating the thin line between faith and manipulation.

OP DESK



Torop among his followers