

SEPTEMBER 7-13, 2025

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

WORLD SUICIDE  
PREVENTION DAY - SEPTEMBER 10

# Call for hope

COVER STORY

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With wife

From Nayagarh's dusty streets to Kolkata's dance studios, Sambhav Mansingh conquered salsa, hip-hop and celluloid alike. He also managed to transform his childhood passion of becoming an actor into reality there headlining a short film 'The Blind World' which was screened at several festivals. But his career defining moment was the record-shattering 15M+ views for his music video 'E Mana Mo Mana'. After appearing in several such videos like 'Phaguna', 'Love You Ayesha', 'Sakhi', and 'Baadshah', the Biotechnology graduate went on to showcase his acting skills in films 'One Way Traffic', 'Mitha Mitha', and 'Ashiq Surrender Hela'. Currently essaying a major character in TV show 'Suna Jhia', Sambhav loves to cook for his family and friends

### Connecting with pals

Sundays are also for catching up with friends—whether over brunch or a cozy get-together—filled with laughter, conversations, and moments that make the day truly special.

### A day to recharge

My ideal holiday is about peace, presence, and gentle joy—a day to recharge, unhurried and content, leaving me rested and ready for the week ahead.

### Homework for profession

In my leisure time, I enjoy films, series, or theatre—not only for entertainment, but to study performances, storytelling and direction, staying creatively sharp while feeling completely relaxed.

### Biryani & bliss

I love cooking in my free time, especially chicken and mutton biryani. With my basic culinary skills, I can whip up dishes good enough to impress friends and family.

### Dissolved schedules

My Sundays are about balance—no alarms, just waking naturally. If no shoot, I savour a late morning with coffee on the balcony to enjoy the break.



With Suna Jhia team



## WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

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

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- Playing with a toddler is half play and half self-defence.
- It takes patience to listen.. it takes skill to pretend you're listening.
- What's the best part about Valentine's Day? The day after when all the chocolate goes on sale.
- Your future depends on your dreams. Don't waste any time, go to bed now.



## Algorithms and teachers

Sir, This refers to last week's cover story on Teacher's Day. Algorithms can grade a quiz in milliseconds, but only a teacher sees the tremor in the hand that holds the pencil. While chatbots harvest facts, humans still harvest wonder: the widening eyes when a poem lands, the hush before a butterfly hatches. AI tailors lessons to data; teachers tailor them to heartbeat—knowing when to push, when to pause, when to whisper "try again." Machines deliver answers; teachers deliver courage, modeling confusion, curiosity, apology, joy. They are the living glue between knowledge and conscience, soldering fractions to fairness, history to empathy, code to kindness. In an era of deepfakes and shallow attention, the teacher's body in the room is a truth-detector, a moral compass that blinks when a student asks, "But should we?" The future will be built by those who can frame the right question, not merely retrieve the right reply; that lesson is still caught, not taught, in the reflected gleam of a human smile.

SHARMISTHA SAHA, JAMSHEDPUR

## 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 SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY – SEPTEMBER 10

Rising cases of suicide underline a sobering truth: life, despite its struggles, remains precious beyond measure. What we urgently need today is stronger mental health support, empathetic systems and accountability—so that no one feels driven to such despair

# Call for hope

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

**O**n July 12, a second-year student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College in Balasore set herself on fire, accusing an assistant professor, who headed the education department, of sexual harassment. Despite receiving treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bhubaneswar, she succumbed to her injuries two days later.

Then, August 6, tragedy struck again when a 19-year-old final-year undergraduate student from Kendrapara district died by self-immolation. Her desperate act came amid allegations of police inaction after she lodged a complaint of blackmail against a male friend.

Shockingly, a World Health Organization report released last week suggests that 7.27 lakh people end their lives every year and of this 53 percent are women.

Such cases of self-immolation and several other forms of suicide are not mere headlines splashed across newspapers—they are cries from souls consumed by despair, flames that burn not only bodies but also the fragile fabric of hope. Behind every such tragedy lies a story of silent suffering, of pain so overwhelming that fire seemed kinder than life. It is not weakness that drives such acts, but the unbearable weight of loneliness, rejection and unheard pleas for help.

These devastating incidents underline a sobering truth: life, despite its struggles, remains precious beyond measure. What we urgently need today is stronger mental health support, empathetic systems and accountability—so that no one feels driven to such despair. Such steps do not merely end a life; they extinguish futures, silence stories, and erase countless possibilities. The greater battle is not in escaping struggle, but in nurturing hope and reminding every individual that even in darkness, light can be found.

Ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day, people from different walks of life shared with Sunday POST their thoughts on preventing such tragedies.

## 'Hope grows when people feel understood'

Expressing concern on the growing number of self-immolation cases in Odisha, **Prof. Dr. Samrat Kar**, Consultant Psychiatrist and Managing Trustee of The Brain Foundation, Cuttack, says, "Suicide is about a person who wants to die, and self-immolation is one of the ways an individual translates their thoughts and emotions into action. It is essentially a form of self-harm—just like hanging or consuming poison. Suicide can be impulsive or planned. When someone is impulsive, they often act with whatever means are immediately available, and self-immolation becomes one such tragic outlet."



Behind every such act lies unbearable psychological distress. "Committing suicide stems from negative thoughts and feelings about the world. Self-immolation inflicts both physical and emotional pain. Though people know it will cause intense suffering, their mental agony feels so overwhelming that they attempt to ease it through physical pain," he says. Women, he notes, tend to attempt suicide more often than men, but men are more likely to succeed as they choose more lethal methods.

Reflecting on Odisha's recent cases, Dr. Kar highlights the role of imitation and social influence. "We learn from others. When people are determined to commit suicide, they search for methods or adopt whatever is prevalent or

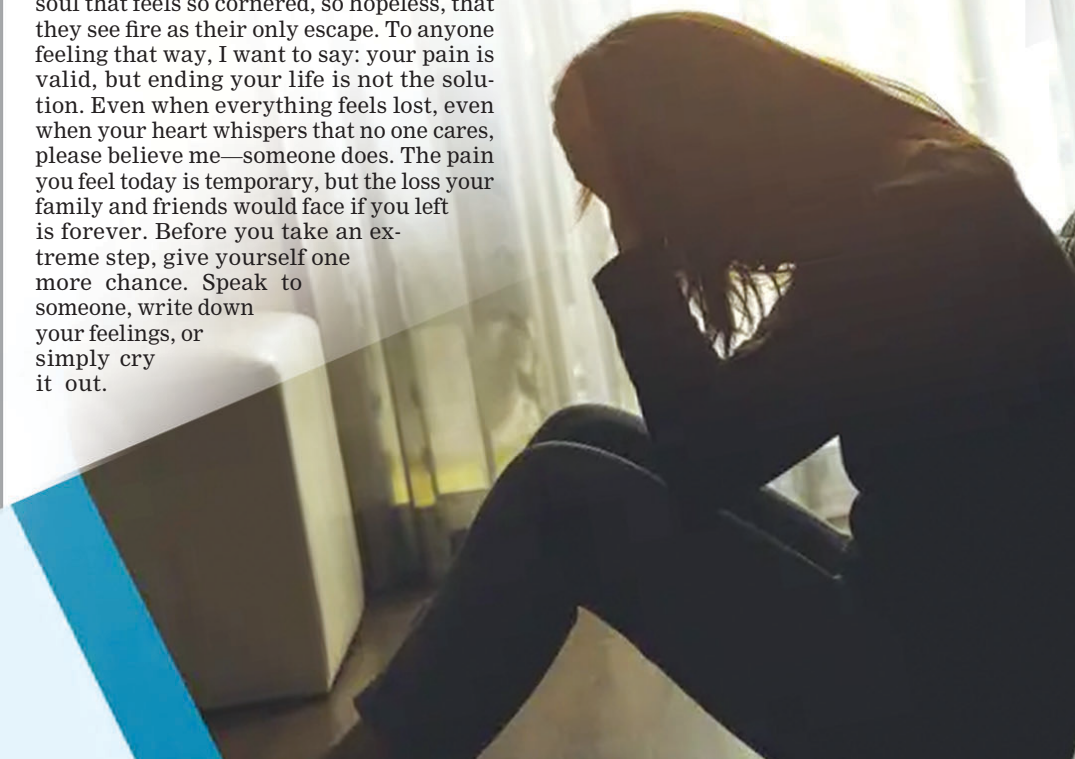
trending in their community. Sometimes, the intent is also to inflict pain on loved ones by harming themselves. In severe depression, individuals desperately seek release, and they choose whatever seems most available. That is why self-immolation has become more visible," he explains.

Yet, what troubles him most is the stigma surrounding mental health. This silence, he believes, often prevents families and communities from recognising early signs of distress. Drawing on this year's theme for World Suicide Prevention Day, "Changing the Narrative of Suicide," Dr. Kar emphasises the need for compassion and dialogue. "Changing the narrative means shifting our perspective—seeing the world through another person's eyes, walking in their shoes. We must show empathy, love, and compassion towards survivors and towards families who have lost loved ones in these tragedies. Above all, we need to talk about it openly, so that anyone going through difficult times feels safe enough to share rather than suffer in silence."





soul that feels so cornered, so hopeless, that they see fire as their only escape. To anyone feeling that way, I want to say: your pain is valid, but ending your life is not the solution. Even when everything feels lost, even when your heart whispers that no one cares, please believe me—someone does. The pain you feel today is temporary, but the loss your family and friends would face if you left is forever. Before you take an extreme step, give yourself one more chance. Speak to someone, write down your feelings, or simply cry it out.

A person with long hair is sitting on the floor, hunched over with their head buried in their hands, suggesting a state of despair or grief. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source coming from a window in the background, creating a silhouette effect. A large, bright blue diagonal shape is overlaid on the bottom left corner of the image.



# Little Kar: A song that outlived silence

**Filmmaker Sridhar Martha unveils plans for a stirring biopic on the late actor-singer on her first death anniversary**

**Bhubaneswar:** Little Kar—singer, actor, dancer—was only three months old when doctors diagnosed her with a life-threatening blood disorder. From that moment on, she carried the knowledge that any sunrise might be her last. Yet she refused to surrender. Instead, she chose to fight, to sing, to dance, and to flood every stage she stepped on with light.

On a World Blood Donor Day, a few years before her passing, she stood before a packed Jaydev Bhawan in Bhubaneswar and pleaded, “Give me blood, and I will keep giving you melodies as long as I live.” The hall fell silent; eyes brimmed with tears.

Her father, the multi-talented Chandrabhanu Kar—actor, director, script-writer, and painter—moved heaven and earth to save her. But destiny would not be swayed. In 2024, at just twenty-six, Little took her final bow.

Last week, the very auditorium where she once begged for donors to help thalassemia patients became a cathedral of remembrance. To mark her first death anniversary, the Little Kar Foundation transformed Gitagovind Sadan into a garden of tributes: playback singers, music lovers, filmmakers, artists, lawmakers, and editors arrived bearing memories instead of flowers. They spoke of a girl who turned pain into poetry and illness into inspiration.

Among the dignitaries who gathered were MLA Babu Singh, sr. journalist Pradyumna Satpathy, eminent actor Ashrumochan Mohan, retired IAS Rabi Nanda, Sambad founder Soumya Ranjan Pattanaik and film producer Sridhar Martha. Together, they unveiled not a statue but a living legacy. Producer Martha announced to make Little’s biopic to inspire people with disability.

Little Kar’s voice may have fallen silent, yet every note sung in her honour proves that melodies, like love, outrun mortality.

BIJAY MANDAL, OP



# Malaika busts glamour myths



**B**ollywood diva Malaika Arora feels it is time to break away from outdated notions that glamour and desirability are tied to a certain age.

Talking about what’s her take on breaking stereotypes around age and glamour in the entertain-

ment industry, Malaika shared her perspective with this news agency.

She said: “I think it’s high time we let go of outdated notions that beauty belongs only to a certain age. Women can be glamorous, desirable, and powerful at every stage of life.”

Malaika hopes to inspire women to embrace their authentic selves and break age-related stereotypes.

She added: “By continuing to live authentically and embrace who I am, I hope I can inspire more women to shatter those stereotypes and own their authentic self.”

Earlier, Malaika said that for her age is not a limit but an evolution. She adds that beauty is not about holding on to youth but about embracing every phase of life with confidence.

Malaika, 51, who is the brand ambassador for HYUE, told: “To me, age is not a limit but an evolution. Every year brings wisdom, resilience, and a deeper understanding of yourself—and that, to me, is the most beautiful transformation of all.”

AINS

# Jhilik moved by Babushaan gesture

**Bhubaneswar:** Actress-turned-producer Jhilik Bhattacharjee recently expressed her gratitude to her former co-actor Babushaan Mohanty for appearing in her upcoming film *Lahari* without accepting any remuneration.

“Babu, who is a very close friend of mine, did not take a penny for his appearance in the movie. He holds a very special place in my life,” Jhilik shared.

Both had shared screens in several Odia hits like Akhire Akhire, Super Michua, *Lekhu Lekhu Lekhi Deli*, and *Jabar-dast Premika*.

*Lahari*, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Amartya Bhattacharyya, has already garnered international acclaim at the Kolkata International Film Festival and the Melbourne Film Festival. It is set for theatrical release September 12.

The film explores deep emotional themes of staying connected to one’s roots and features a touching father-son relationship. Produced under Jhilik Motion Pictures, the film stars Choudhury Jayaprakash Das, Choudhury Bikash Das and Smrut Mahala in key roles.

Amartya has donned multiple hats for the movie including story, direction, editing, choreography, and lyrics—while music is composed by Kishalay Roy, with vocals by Gaurav Anand and Navya Jayati, and sound design by Adip Singh Manik.

PNN



# Swaraj, Jagadish team up for Swag Raja

**Bhubaneswar:** *Bou Buttu Bhuta* director Jagdish Mishra and *Khoka Bhai Tama Pain* actor Swaraj Barik joined hands for the first time for upcoming *Swag Raja*. Apart from these two, female lead Swapna Priyadarsini and KK attended the launching ceremony recently.

Produced under the banners of Gurvvi Production and Sidharth Music, the film is backed by Sargam Tripathy and Sai Sanatan. The screenplay is co-written by Amit Kumar Dash and Pranab Prasanna Rath, with music composed by Gaurav Anand, who is expected to deliver chart-topping tracks. The movie is slated to hit screens in December 2025.

Sharing his excitement, Swaraj said, “It’s an honour to work with Jagdish Mishra Sir and an amazing team. This is the script I’ve been waiting for! A new genre of Swaraj is coming to the big screen. 2025 will be bigger, better, and full of Entertainment!”

Packed with drama, music, and high-octane entertainment, *Swag Raja* promises to be a landmark project in Swaraj’s career.

PNN





Mizoram capital Aizawl shatters every urban cliché—no honks, no chaos, only civility. A hill town where silence is culture, courtesy is law, and community trumps self—inviting a loud nation to listen

# Aizawl

## THE SILENT CITY THAT SPEAKS VOLUMES

PRATYUSH KUMAR DASH, OP

In a country where urban chaos is a default setting, where honking is a reflex and shouting a habit, there lies a hill town that quietly rewrites what it means to be a city in India. Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, doesn't just defy the Indian urban stereotype—the city dismantles it, with patience, civility, and an audible absence of noise.

Aizawl unfolds like a dream painted in shades of green and blue, where rolling hills rise and fall like waves frozen in time. The city clings to steep ridges, its houses cascading down slopes in quiet harmony with the landscape, as if nature herself cradles each one. Mist drifts lazily through the valleys at dawn, veiling the town in a soft, silvery hush, while the sun breaks through in golden shards, setting the hills ablaze with light. Endless stretches of emerald forests embrace the horizon, alive with the scent of rustling bamboo leaves and the distant calls of birds unseen. A place untouched by the rush of time, Aizawl is where silence tells stories more profound than words ever could.

### Culture shock in reverse

To truly understand Aizawl, forget everything you think you know about Indian cities.

Imagine roads—narrow, winding, and often defying gravity as they snake across hills like headphone cords pulled from a pocket. But the traffic moves like a murmur—fluid, quiet, and in sync. It gave me a culture shock of a different kind. A people so quiet, so polite, they can give the Japanese a run for their decency.

Accustomed as I was to the high-decibel streets of average India cities, I kept waiting for the chaos to arrive. But it never did. There are no impatient honks, no furious overtakes, no yelling matches at intersections. Drive through this town and you feel like you've entered a different country altogether.

I watched drivers slowing down to let others pass, waiting their turn at steep bends, and offering gentle double-honks—not of annoyance, but of gratitude. It's not the weaponised noise of impatience. It's acknowledgment. A soft sonic handshake between strangers.

"That little 'honk honk' is how we say thank you," my cab driver I-Sa told me with a smile.

### The code you can't see

As I spent more time here, I slowly began to discover the Mizo way of life. It's so unique that the Mizos have a word for it: Tlawmngaihna.

"Tlawmngaihna is a code of conduct," explained Lalhmimgawia, a local school teacher. "At the very basic level, it means to be helpful, honest, kind, and not be a burden on others. But on a larger level, it's about being selfless. You are putting community over self."



Tlawmngaihna is neither legislated, nor enforced. But everyone follows it. It's as invisible as air, and just as essential. He laughed softly as he added, "If you overtake someone on a narrow road, others might ask you, 'Are you even Mizo?'"

In Aizawl, shame is a social tool. Not the cruel kind, but the kind that holds people accountable. It's not about rules. It's about respect. To behave badly is to lose face. And no one wants to be remembered as the one who broke the unspoken code. Aizawl doesn't issue warnings such as "Obey traffic signals" or "Use the bin" on signboards—it offers examples.

### Clean without campaigns

Aizawl could be the poster city for Swachh Bharat—sans posters and slogans for the 'Abhiyan' that failed to teach India cleanliness. While other Indian cities roll out celebrity-endorsed sanitation drives with politicians posing with brooms, Aizawl simply remains spotless.

Walk through the city, and you'll be stunned. No wrappers in the drains. No red paan stains defacing walls. No plastic bottles bobbing in roadside puddles. During my brief stay there, I saw more flowers than litter.

This is a city where chewing tuibur (a local tobacco water) and betelnut with lime is common.

"Where does it all go?" I asked a local college student, Rini. She smiled. "At home. In bins. Where it belongs." There is no great mystery to it—just a sense of shared space and civility.

### Women at helm

In most Indian cities, women's safety is often a policy challenge. In Aizawl, it's a cultural guarantee.

Walk its streets late at night, and you'll see women alone, relaxed, unbothered. There are no leering glances, no catcalls, no predators lurking in shadows. What you see instead are women everywhere—running shops, driving scooters, managing banks, selling vegetables, walking home after work with their heads held high. And no one stares. They ride scooters with toddlers strapped to their backs.

"It's a pride thing," a shopkeeper told me. "Here, we don't tolerate disrespect. To a woman, or anyone."





Unlike matrilineal Meghalaya next door, Mizo society is patriarchal. However, the visible agency of women in everyday life is striking. A recent report placed Aizawl alongside Bhubaneswar as among the top cities in terms of women's safety.

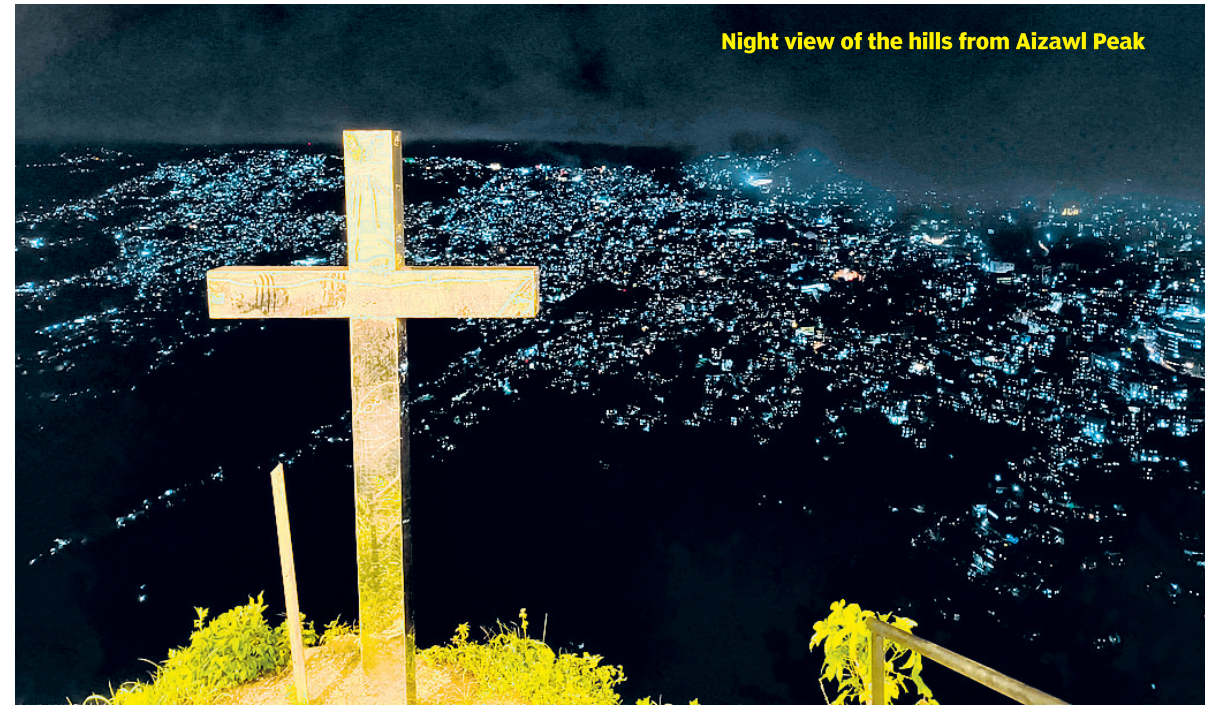
A city sans beggars

One of the most telling silences in Aizawl is the absence of public begging. It's not that poverty doesn't exist in Mizoram. But public begging is considered undignified. The laying of a rail track, connecting Aizawl via Sairang to the rest of India, has been met with excitement and apprehension in equal parts. There is openness to change, but not at the cost of community character. With rising migration into the state, concerns over this changing have grown. In response, Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed the Mizoram Prohibition of Beggary Bill August 27, 2025—not to punish the poor, but to preserve the city's hard-won sense of order and dignity. "We are not against people," a legislator explained. "We are against the decay of what we've built."

Order in the midst of adversity

Aizawl sits like a ribbon tied across the Mizo hills—buildings stacked like books along cliff edges, stairways snaking between homes, roads that seem to defy physics. Yet everything moves. The city isn't perfect. Its streets can be steep and dizzying. Landslides are frequent, and the skyline is tangled with faded power cables. But even in adversity, the city remains composed. On the way to Lengpui Airport, a truck had slid off-road, taking part of the hillside with it. In most Indian cities, a broken-down truck means apocalypse. In Aizawl, it becomes a spontaneous exercise in grace. Locals stepped out of their vehicles, moved rocks, directed traffic, and got things flowing again—without a single raised voice or honk.

**The language of identity**  
Hindi, in Mizoram, is barely spoken. The official language



Night view of the hills from Aizawl Peak

es are English and Mizo. And no, it's not a political statement. It's just a reflection of identity. Mizoram is proudly Indian, but not blindly assimilated. The cultural confidence is quiet but firm. The people are fluent in English, steeped in Mizo tradition, and comfortable in their own rhythm. They are not resisting India—they are enriching it. And speaking of enrichment, Mizoram recently became India's first fully literate state, with a stunning 98.2 per cent literacy rate under the Centre's ULLAS programme—edging past even Kerala. That statistics is not just impressive. It's transformative. Mizoram consistently ranks among India's happiest states, and it's not hard to see why.

**Redefining 'Indian'**  
Perhaps the most radical thing Aizawl does is force you to recon-

sider what it means to be "Indian." If your idea of India is loud, impatient, and messy, this city offers a quiet counterpoint. Aizawl is not a utopia. But it is a functioning, modern Indian city that has chosen courtesy over chaos, respect over regulation and humility over hubris. **A quiet lesson for a loud nation** But the Silent City is also a critique. A quiet protest. A working model of what Indian cities could be—only if they stopped hurrying and honking long enough to listen to the wisdom of the Mizo hills and the people. Most of India celebrates resilience in the face of dysfunction. Aizawl simply chose not to be dysfunctional in the first place. It doesn't need to shout to be heard. It doesn't need to be loud to be alive. And in a nation addicted to volume, that silence speaks volumes.





The South China Sea, 1808. A typhoon-season dawn breaks over the jade water, and 400 war-junks heel in perfect formation. Their crimson banners snap like dragon tongues; bronze cannon muzzles bristle from lacquered rails. On the quarter-deck of the largest vessel stands a woman in silk armor, hair pinned with ivory combs, eyes cold as salt steel. She lifts one hand, and 80,000 pirates—farmers turned gunners, fishermen turned marines, ex-convicts turned admirals—await her next word.

Her name is Ching Shih, Widow of Zheng, and she is the most successful pirate in history.

From floating brothel to flagship

Born Shi Yang in 1775 to a Tan-ka boat-people family, she grew up knee-deep in bilge water and commerce. Guangdong's "flower boats"—floating brothels—were her first office. While European schoolgirls stitched samplers, Shi Yang learned to haggle, to read tides, to memorize the secrets of mandarins and merchants who moored alongside. By twenty-six she had saved enough to buy her own gambling barge; by twenty-six she had also caught the eye of Zheng Yi, commander of the fearsome Red Flag Fleet.

Marriage in 1801 was less romance than merger: Shi Yang's brains plus Zheng Yi's guns. Together they welded six warring pirate clans—Red, Black, Blue, White, Yellow, Purple—into a single confederation. When Zheng died in a typhoon (or was assassinated—records differ) in 1807, the widowed Shi Yang did not retreat into mourning weeds. She stepped onto the quarter-deck, married her adopted son Cheung Po Tsai to cement legitimacy, and announced that the Red Flag Fleet now answered to one voice alone—hers.

A navy before nations

At its peak her armada numbered 1,800 junks—the largest weighing 600 tons, carrying 30 cannon and 400 fighters. That is more ships than Spain's entire Armada of 1588. She commanded 80,000 sailors, larger than the combined navies of Qing China, Britain, and Portugal in the region.

But numbers only begin the story. Ching Shih created the first floating bureaucracy: supply squadrons, reconnaissance wings, hostage-insurance offices, even

floating courts. She issued a twelve-article pirate code that would make a Geneva lawyer blush:

- No attack without written orders—beheading for freelancers.
- All loot inventoried and redistributed—skimming meant flogging, then decapitation.
- Rape punishable by death; consensual sex required marriage license—also purchasable for forty silver dollars.
- Desertion earned slit ears; repeat of fence earned a slit throat.

The code was enforced by her personal guard of 300 axe-women, former prostitutes who had swapped fans for battle-axes and patrolled decks with the authority of a Roman centurion.

The empire that paid taxes to her

By 1808 Ching Shih had inverted the world order. Coastal villages hoisted her red flag instead of the dragon flag of the emperor. Fish-

# Ching Shih: The Pirate Empress

*The world's most successful pirate in history was Ching Shih, a woman. She was a prostitute in China until the Commander of the Red Flag Fleet bought and married her. But her husband considered her his equal, and she became an active pirate commander in the fleet*

defected to the Qing, taking 200 ships. Sensing fatigue, Ching Shih did what no Atlantic pirate ever managed: she dictated her own surrender.

On 20 April 1810 she sailed up the Pearl River unarmed, dressed in crimson silk, and negotiated full amnesty for 17,318 followers. The Qing court, desperate to end the hemorrhaging of its navy, agreed to:

- Retain 20 junks and 4,000 men as a private coast-guard, effectively legalizing her muscle.
- Award her a minor noble title and a cash pension.
- Allow her marriage to Cheung Po Tsai—a public slap to Confucian widows' law that forbade remarriage.

She walked out of Government House in Canton rich, titled, and alive—three things Blackbeard, Bartholomew Roberts, and Calico Jack never achieved.

Retirement, Macau style

Cheung Po died in 1822. Ching Shih, now forty-seven, opened a gambling house and salt-trading firm in Macau. She drank pu-erh tea on her veranda, bankrolled smuggling ventures, and occasionally loaned money to the same Portuguese governors who once hunted her. When she died in bed at sixty-nine, her eulogy praised her as a respected businesswoman; no mention was made of the 400 sunken Qing junks or the estimated one billion modern dollars her fleets had siphoned from global trade.

Legacy on the tides

Today the South China Sea is patrolled by aircraft carriers, but local fishermen still whisper the name Zheng Yi Sao when fog curls like dragon smoke. Cruise guides point to limestone caves on Lantau Island where her cannon once nested. In world-history textbooks her paragraph is short; in maritime archives she occupies more pages than Drake and Morgan combined.

Ching Shih's genius lay not in brutality—though she could be brutal—but in understanding that piracy is governance without a flag. She built courts, taxes, supply chains, and diplomacy. She weaponized information gleaned in brothels, turned gossip into charts, turned sex work into statecraft. She fought empires to a draw, then forced them to recognize her sovereignty with seals, treaties, and titles.

Long after European pirates swung in gibbets, the Widow of Zheng died a grand mother counting coins beneath Portuguese chandeliers. History rarely grants outlaws such elegant punctuation. In the ledger of the sea, Ching Shih remains the only pirate who ever won—and lived to spend the treasure.

ing boats bought safe-passage certificates stamped with her seal; refusal meant immediate sinking. European captains learned to tack wide around the Pearl River delta, then quietly paid protection money through Hong Kong intermediaries.

Imperial China tried everything. Admiral Lin Guoliang cornered her with 35 war-junks—she captured half and burned the rest. A 100-ship Portuguese flotilla blockaded Tung Chung Bay for three months; she slipped the noose under cover of moonless fog, leaving Portuguese frigates peppered with cannon holes. When the British East India Company sent envoys, she negotiated a non-aggression pact that let Company tea clippers sail unmolested—for a fee, naturally.

The battle she could not win—and the deal she could

In 1809 internal dissent cracked the confederation: the Black Flag commander

