

SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 4, 2025

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Weaving harmony

COVER STORY

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MY SUNDAY

Not many can dare to quit a flourishing career abroad to produce cinema in Odisha. But a passion to make quality movies brought Koraput-born Pritam Sahu back home after working in a managerial position for 14 years in Japan. His debut production 'Sesha Raati' (2022) marked the beginning of a promising journey, followed by notable projects like 'Guddu Gangster', 'Katak—Sesha ru Arambha', 'Chandrabanshi', 'Durga', and 'Mastoor'. His upcoming venture 'Ram Rajya', a sequel to the blockbuster 'Katak...', will be the first Odia film released in both Odia and Hindi



With family



With actors Sidhant Mohapatra & Sritam Das

ANISHA KHATUN.OP



No to day off

I rarely take holidays because I'm a workaholic who truly enjoys being productive, and even Sundays become fulfilling workdays that keep me energised and motivated.

Sun salutation

My Sundays begin early, as I rise with the morning sun to practice Surya Namaskar, setting a positive tone for the day.

Weakness for food & movie

When I'm not working, my Sunday is dedicated to relishing simple food, enjoying a good movie or binge-watching a series, and completing my much-needed, peaceful sleep.

With family and friends

At times, I love spending quality moments with family and friends, engaging in lighthearted conversations filled with healthy humour, laughter and cheerful gossips.

Skilled chef

I'm an absolute foodie who loves cooking, and I'm quite skilled at it—just name any dish, and I'll happily prepare it with passion and perfection.



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

- Most people are shocked when they find out how bad I am as an electrician.
- Never trust atoms; they make up everything.
- I used to think I was indecisive. But now I'm not so sure.
- Just burned 2,000 calories. That's the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap.



Pros & cons of AI

Sir, This refers to the cover story of last week about the pros and cons of AI in editing images or video clips. Talking about the positives, AI-driven tools democratize polished prose, letting cash-strapped students, rushed reporters, and dyslexic storytellers publish with confidence. They shoulder tedious consistency checks, freeing human editors to chase bigger game—structure, voice, moral clarity. However, there is a need to keep a vigil to thwart its adverse impacts. To keep the gift from becoming a trap, treat the robot as an intern, not an author. We need to verify every suggestion against living style guides; flag gendered or colonial phrasing the corpus quietly preserves. We should also feed drafts through local, encrypted versions when confidentiality matters. There is also a need to rotate writing exercises without assistance so muscles of metaphor and rhythm stay toned. Finally, disclose machine participation in acknowledgements, preserving the reader's right to know who—or what—shaped the sentences they trust.

Debadutta Sahoo, SONEPUR

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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Weaving harmony

Though Dussehra is a major Hindu festival symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, in Odisha, Muslims actively participate in the celebrations—not only by crafting puja materials but also by upholding centuries-old traditions in several places. Their involvement reflects a profound spirit of communal harmony that transcends religious boundaries

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

In the narrow lanes of Cuttack, the scent of fresh bamboo mingles with the tang of solder as a Muslim artisan gently bends a sheet of beaten silver into the fierce eye of a lion. Around him, a dozen others—third-generation medha makers—coax zari wire into lotus halos for the same goddess their grandmothers once helped dress. Come Mahalaya, these glittering frames will crown Durga under saffron canopies, while next-door neighbours fast for Ramadan. No one sees contradiction; only continuity.

Cut to Bharak: About 40 % of subscriptions arrive from names that read like Eid guest-lists—Ibrahim, Fatima, Qasim—who insist their receipts be stamped with “Jai Maa” alongside “Khuda Hafiz”. Volunteers in skullcaps guard pandals at 2 a.m.; biryani cooks set up stalls beside khichdi prasad. Children trade wristbands: green thread for Islam, red for Shakti. By Dashami, when the idols sink and the fireworks fade, the only colour left is the indigo of an Odia sky—shared, borderless, beloved.

In a time when the world is often clouded by stories of communal discord and unrest, there are several such places in Odisha that shine as gentle lamps of harmony—offering heartwarming examples of unity, trust, and coexistence. Here, the grand celebration of Durga Puja transforms into something much larger than a religious festival; it becomes a celebration of togetherness, where devotion is interwoven with harmony and faith blossoms into friendship.

Here Durga Puja carries with it a centuries-old tradition that beautifully dissolves religious boundaries. The most touching aspect is the wholehearted participation of Muslims, who have, for generations, taken pride in being an integral part of one of the most significant Hindu festivals. Their involvement is not a mere gesture but a treasured legacy—an inheritance of mutual respect and shared culture that continues to inspire generation after generation.

As the puja pandals glow with vibrant colors, as the sound of conch shells and rhythmic beats of the drums fill the air, and as crowds gather in devotion, what also comes alive is a silent yet powerful message—that peaceful coexistence is not just an aspiration, but a lived reality. In Odisha, Durga Puja stands as a radiant reminder that unity can always be stronger than division. Here’s a look at a few cases.

Manikagoda Durga Puja (Khurda), a symbol of communal harmony

The village of Manikagoda in Khurda district stands out for the way it celebrates Durga Puja, not just as a religious festival but as a living example of communal harmony. For generations, the responsibility of leading the rituals has been held by a Muslim family, with the Dalabehera—a Muslim chieftain—playing a

central role in the proceedings. “You will not find celebrations like this anywhere else,” says **Sheikh Azizur Rahman**, the current Dalabehera. After the passing of his father, he has taken on the responsibility of continuing this legacy, a duty he carries with devotion and pride. “Our family has been organising this Puja for generations, and after my father’s passing, the responsibility has come to me. Whatever is needed for Maa Durga’s worship, we provide with sincerity. Beyond the rituals, what makes this festival truly special is the harmony it represents. Hindus and Muslims here not only live peacefully but also celebrate each other’s festivals

with the same enthusiasm.” One of Azizur’s most important duties is performing the Aparajita Puja on Vijaya Dashami. This ritual honours Goddess Aparajita, the “invincible one,” and is considered a symbol of victory and resilience. In Manikagoda, its significance is even deeper, as it is led by a Muslim, embodying the spirit of brotherhood and unity.

The festival itself has a remarkable history. It dates back to the 18th century when Birabar Dev, the younger brother of the Puri Gajapati king, fled to Ranpur after an assassination attempt. The Ranpur king granted him Manibandha, where Birabar married an Adivasi Kandha woman named Manika, giving the village its name. A devotee of Goddess Bhuyan—later worshipped as Goddess Manika Bhuyan—Birabar entrusted his Muslim lieutenant, Sheikh Manuar, with conducting the Dussehra rituals. Since then, the tradition has been carried forward by Manuar’s descendants.

The celebrations include the worship of Maa Belbayani on Panchami, Chandidevi on Shashti, and Maa Mahishamardi on Saptami, before culminating in a spectacular midnight procession where idols and sacred objects from both Hindu and Muslim households gather at Maa Bhagwati’s mandap.

“Since my childhood, the atmosphere of my village and its festivals has been very friendly and full of positive vibes,” says **Soubhagya Ranjan Tripathy**, 27, a journalist from Manikagoda. “Manikagoda Dussehra, as much as it explains its supernatural legend, also testifies to the Hindu-Muslim brotherhood here. When Dussehra comes, my village comes alive. Hindus and Muslims come together to celebrate this festival.” Tripathy further underscores the wider significance of Odisha’s traditions: “In Odisha, the proof of brotherhood is given by our culture, our traditions and our festivals. Our state is a shining example of peace and unity.”



Sheikh Azizur Rahman performing Aparajita Puja

'We should respect religious sentiments'

MD Maqsood Azizi, 52, from Masjidpada, Sundargarh, has been creating tableaux for Hindu deities for over 25 years and harbors a deep passion for singing Odia bhajans. Reflecting on his participation in Hindu festivals as a Muslim, he says, "It feels very contained and I really like being part of this festival, and not only Durga Puja but other Pujas also. I have never faced any discrimination by anyone. Everyone adores me and respects me. They never treat me as an outsider. I take part in the distribution of Prasad and other cultural events."

Azizi's journey began with his grandfather, BK Rahman, who became his first teacher and inspiration. "He used to make tazia every year on the occasion of Muharram. I also started making tazia with him from a tender age. My works were not only liked by Muslims, but Hindus also started appreciating it and started giving orders for tableaux," Azizi recalls. Over the years, his expertise expanded beyond Durga Puja to include Saraswati Puja, Ganesh Puja, and even Lord Jagannath during Ratha Yatra. His tableaux have become a cherished part of these celebrations, admired by people of all communities.



Alongside his talent in crafting tableaux, Azizi is a gifted singer. He inherited his musical skills from his grandfather, who wrote beautiful ghazals in Urdu and often sang at family and religious events. Following in his footsteps, Azizi began performing at religious occasions and later joined the Kalamandir Musical Association, a group where he is now both the organizer and the main attraction. "When we announce that a Muslim singer is going to

Syed Aslam Ali doing tableaux work

present a Hindu bhajan, it spreads a very positive vibe among people," he notes, highlighting the unifying power of music across communities.

Through his life and work, Azizi continues to bridge cultural and religious divides, demonstrating the strength of harmony and mutual respect. Emphasising the importance of coexistence, he shares a message for today's generation: "We should spread the message of brotherhood and should encourage people to live peacefully and respect everyone's religious sentiments."

'Making tableaux for Hindu festivals is my way of relaxing'

Syed Aslam Ali, 53, from Banka Bazar, Cuttack, is a tableaux maker whose craft has been a family tradition for generations. Reflecting on his work in Hindu festivals as a Muslim, he says, "Since my childhood I have been in this work and I really love this feeling. I feel before any religion we are human beings and we should always remember this. This is our family business which has been passed down through generations, and I feel happy and satisfied making these tableaux. I have never felt any discrimination, nor have I discriminated against anyone. Bhagwan, Allah is one for me, and I do my work with full dedication."

Ali's journey began with his grandfather, who started the family business of making tableaux. His father continued the tradition, and Ali has been carrying it forward for the past 35 years. He proudly shares that his workers will continue the legacy, ensuring the craft endures. "My children often ask why, at this age, I am taking so much stress, but for me this is not stress—

it is my way to relax myself," he explains.

His dedication is evident in the variety and quality of his work. From Zari Medha, cloth Medha, to velvet Medha, Ali and his team create a wide range of tableaux.

Each year, his work begins from Rath Yatra, continuing with orders until Kali Puja. Over the decades, he has created tableaux for numerous pandals across Odisha, as well as for cities outside the state, including Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. His artistry is widely admired and appreciated. Beyond tableaux, Ali also makes intricately designed 'mukuts' for brides and grooms, supplying them to various dealers throughout Cuttack. "My mukuts are available in almost every shop," he notes with pride.

Through his work, Ali emphasises values of equality and communal harmony. He urges the younger generation to embrace kindness and mutual respect: "We should not think anyone different from us. We should treat everyone equally and spread happiness, joy, and brotherhood, and keep ourselves away from hatred."



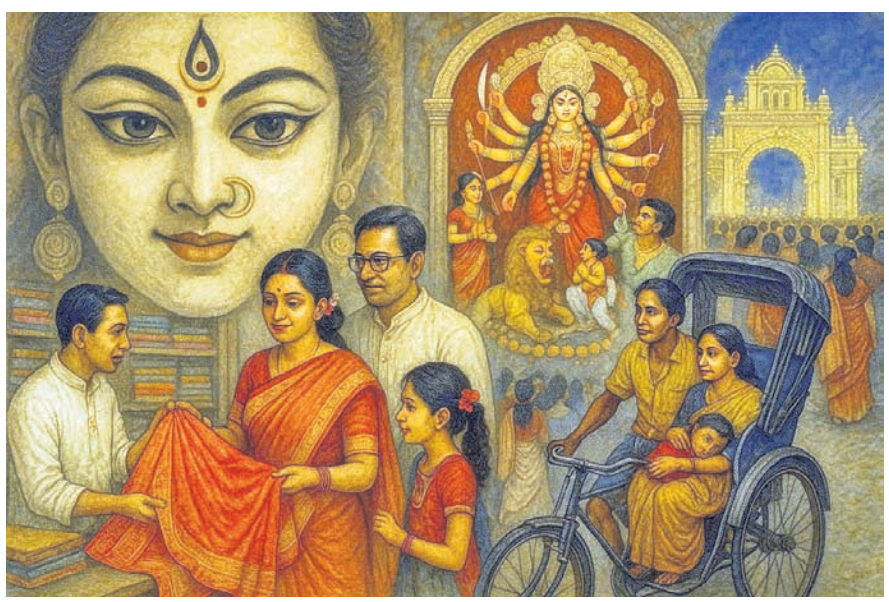
Revisiting Puja of yore

Today we have the smartphone, YouTube, FM radio for listening to choicest music, but during those days we only had the Phillips or Murphy radio for music, tape recorders had just arrived for the rich and the privileged

RUP NARAYAN DAS

Now that the Durga Puja has already begun, I am somewhat over taken by the déjà vu with striking differences. The festive mood used to set in much before the five-day celebration begun. The extended Puja holiday spread over a week was always eagerly awaited. Relatives from far and near would start arriving by train or bus; no, not by air as these days. Feast and festivity would be palpable permeating the environs - home, family and streets.

The leading literary magazines would invite contributions from eminent literary figures well in advance for the special Puja volume which will be bigger in content with beautiful cover pages of Goddess Durga. Films were scheduled for release coinciding with Puja. Much before previews would be shown in cinema halls, posters would be there in most vantage points in the town. In between, the an-



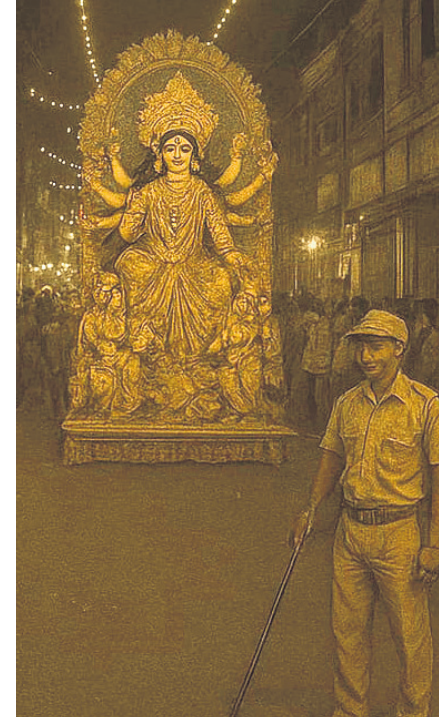
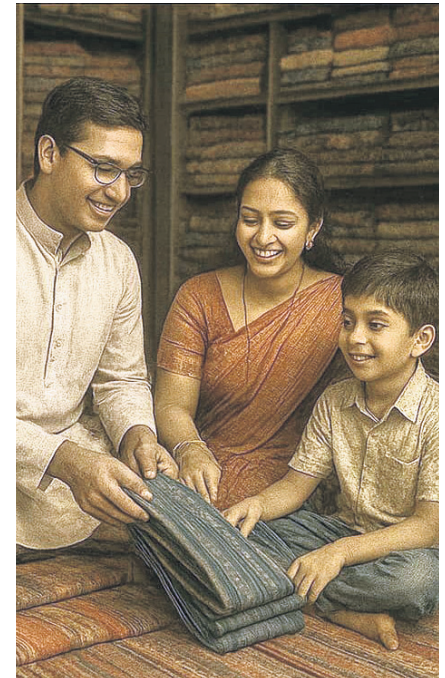
nouncer sitting in a cycle rickshaw and going to different streets would announce the coming of the movies in local cinema theatres in a dramatized voice with all theatrics. He would play the snippets of a song or dialogue of the film. Schoolchildren would come out of classes if it were during the recess of the lunch hour. Today we have the smartphone, YouTube, FM radio for listening to choicest music, but during those days we only had the Phillips or Murphy radio for music, tape recorders had just arrived for the rich and the privileged. We had, however the gramophones and of course, the record players; remember the battery operated Fiesta of HMV. Thus the much famed HMV (His Master Voice) would come out with long playing records on the eve of the festival with songs of leading playback singers.

Showrooms of cloth houses would be given a facelift and there would be offers of discount on branded fabrics. I remember my father would take us to the family

cloth shop owned by the Gujarati businessman in the town. During those days when malls and big stores were non-existent, we would sit on the dari or vinyl floor. As Bapa, my father, was a revenue official, the shop owner would treat him respectfully and display rolls of cloths for pants and shirts. Invariably my father would not be paying in cash then and there; nor had the credit cards arrived then. The cloth shop owner would write down the details of the cost of the clothes in his red colour cloth bound ledger and Bapa would pay when he got his salary, may be within a month or two. One only bemoans such genial simplicity and bonhomie which are now facing extinction. Bapa would take us to the tailor asking him to get the clothes stitched well in time.

The Puja committees of different areas in the town would get activated erecting Pujamandaps. Artisans would first prepare the bare structure of the idol of Goddess Durga with bamboo frame and

straw, and then earthen clay would be applied followed by white coating and finally different sheds of colour would be applied and the idol would be ready. The streets would wear a festive look with rows of electric bulbs illuminating. Music would be played side by side with drummers beating drums. Streets and roads would soon get congested with the movement of people and cycle-rickshaws, there would



be one or two vehicles. The home guards wearing khaki pants and holding a lathi could be seen controlling the crowd.

As the Puja day commenced, the house would resonate with the uplifting chanting of the Mahalaya in All India Radio. The crescendo of the chanting of the mantra and the blowing of the conch, and the beating of drums would create perfect atmospherics impacting an uplifting demeanour. Within days the gaiety would be over and guests would start leaving. Today we miss much of the old world charm of the Puja of yesteryears.

The writer is Delhi-based.



Aroma of auspiciousness



PRITYSHA DAS

Mutton Curry Majesty

Rich, hearty, and deeply spiced, Mutton Curry is comfort served in a bowl. Slow-cooked until tender, the meat absorbs a tapestry of flavours — smoky, earthy, and robust. A true festive indulgence, it pairs beautifully with rice or hot parathas.

How to make

- Marinate mutton with yogurt, turmeric, salt, and ginger-garlic paste.
- Cook on low flame until meat softens and flavors blend.
- Fry onions until golden brown; add tomatoes and cook into a thick masala.
- Add water for desired gravy consistency and simmer until tender.
- Add marinated mutton, chili powder, coriander, cumin, and garam masala.
- Garnish with coriander leaves; serve hot with rice or bread.



Step into a world of rich aromas, bold spices, and timeless traditions with this trio of festive classics. Whether it's the coastal charm of Prawn Biryani, the royal indulgence of Mutton Curry, or the creamy comfort of Phirni, each dish brings its own story to the table — one of heritage, warmth, and celebration. Perfect for special occasions or simply savoring the joy of good food, this spread is a true reflection of India's vibrant culinary soul

Prawn Biryani Bliss

A regal dish with coastal charm, Prawn Biryani marries fragrant basmati rice, succulent prawns, and a symphony of spices. Each bite is a celebration of flavours — smoky, aromatic, and soul-satisfying. Best enjoyed with raita or salad, it's the perfect centerpiece for a festive feast.

How to make

- Marinate prawns with yogurt, turmeric, chili powder, ginger-garlic paste, and a squeeze of lemon.
- Sprinkle saffron milk, fried onions, and fresh coriander-mint leaves.
- Fry onions until golden crisp; set aside for garnish.
- Seal and cook on dum (slow steam) until rice and prawns are fully tender.
- Layer half-cooked basmati rice over spiced prawn masala in a heavy-bottomed pot.
- Serve hot with cooling raita.

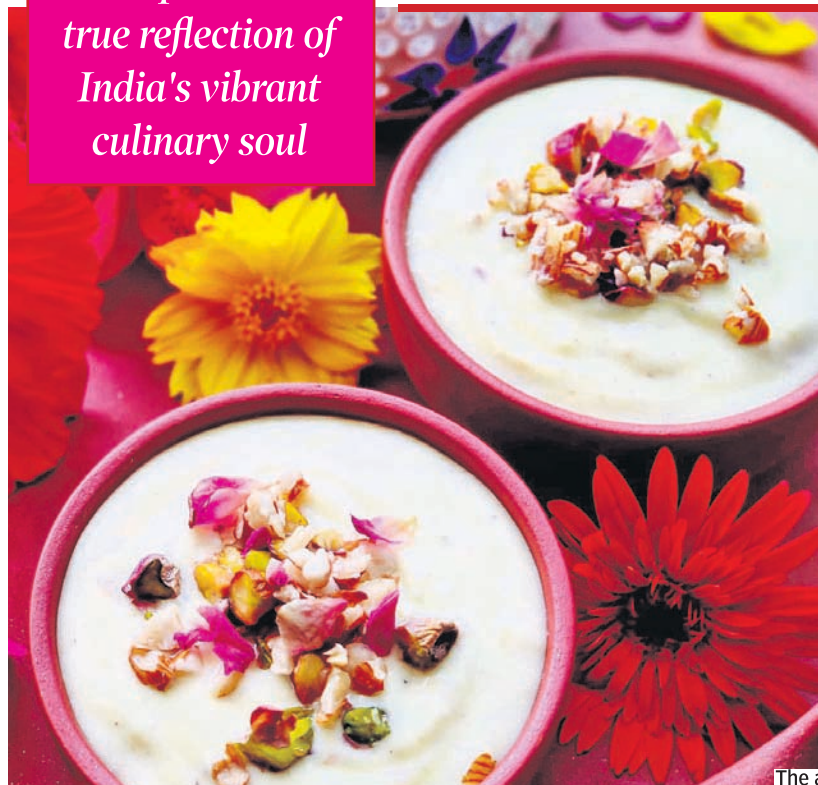


Phirni Elegance

Silky, creamy, and subtly perfumed, Phirni is the sweet essence of celebration. Served in earthen bowls and infused with cardamom and saffron, this delicacy feels both luxurious and comforting — a dessert that lingers in memory long after the festival ends.

How to make

- Soak basmati rice, grind into a coarse paste.
- Pour into small clay pots or bowls; let it set.
- Cook the paste slowly in boiling milk, stirring until thick.
- Garnish with slivers of almonds, pistachios, and a touch of rose petals.
- Add sugar, cardamom powder, and saffron strands for flavor.
- Chill before serving for best taste.



DAUGHTER'S DAY - TODAY

Dads: Their silent wings

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

As the nation is celebrating the Daughter's Day today, the spotlight is on the daughters—their dreams, their achievements, and their journeys. But behind many of these inspiring stories stands a figure of silent strength, unwavering belief, and unconditional love—a father. In a world that often clips dreams, they lift daughters higher, not with loud praise, but steady support. Their silent strength turns fear into flight, shaping tomorrow's women with love that doesn't limit—it liberates.

On this day, women from different walks of life share with Sunday POST how the fathers shaped their life and career.

Reflecting on her journey, actress **Sonalli Sharmishta Mohanty**, known for her roles in Odia and several other languages movies such as Kalira Atita, Jababara 2, Swaha and Tribhanga, said "My father is my biggest inspiration, my true hero. Whatever I am today is because of his constant support. From a small village to Mumbai, the journey was never easy—especially in a society where daughters are rarely allowed to leave home to chase their dreams. But he always stood by me."

Sonalli credits her father for not only treating her as an equal but giving her the rarest gift a daughter can ask for—trust and freedom. "He treated me like his son, trusted me, and gave me the freedom to make my own decisions. Even when I made mistakes, he never shouted at me; instead, he consoled me with love and patience."

In a society often burdened with patriar-

Father steadies the bicycle, daughter pedals, wind catching their shared laughter. Later, he braids her hair, calloused fingers learning tenderness. In quiet moments, they whisper secrets—two hearts, different beats, same rhythm—teaching each other strength and softness, creating a forever bond stitched with love, patience, and time



chal norms, fathers like hers are rewriting the script—offering daughters wings instead of cages, she said.

For **Anandita Mishra**, a college student, the connection with her father is deeply spiritual.

"Instinctually daughters are close to fathers, but in my case, I am not just close... I am a piece of his body in a living sense," she



says. Raised in a household that encouraged debate, curiosity, and independent thinking, Anandita's father—a lawyer by profession—made sure she had a voice. "He never forced me to live by

his definitions. He always gave me a free hand to experiment and find things out on my own," adds Anandita.

Her words echo the essence of what modern fatherhood can look like—a balance of discipline and dialogue, structure and space.

Entrepreneur **Joyeeta Roy** credits her father not just for her values, but for her fearlessness. "He has never been the strict or distant kind of father—he has always been my friend first and then my dad."

Joyeeta fondly recalls how her father would do her literature homework so she wouldn't be scolded at school, and how he never let failure define her. "Whether it was my career choices or personal decisions, he backed me unconditionally and gave me the confidence to fly higher."

Even after the personal loss of her mother in 2021, her father became her pillar. "He became both mom and dad for me. His strength, love, and resilience continue to inspire me every single day," Joyeeta concluded.

Actress **Bhoomika Dash**, who had started her career as a child artist said "My father has made countless sacrifices for me and my career. During the early stages of my journey, there were many times when he put his own ambitions on hold just to support mine. His belief in me never wavered—he stood by me, encouraged me, and gave me the strength to move forward. Even today, whenever I face an important career decision, I turn to him for advice. His wisdom, patience, and unwavering support make him not just my guide, but my greatest inspiration," she said.

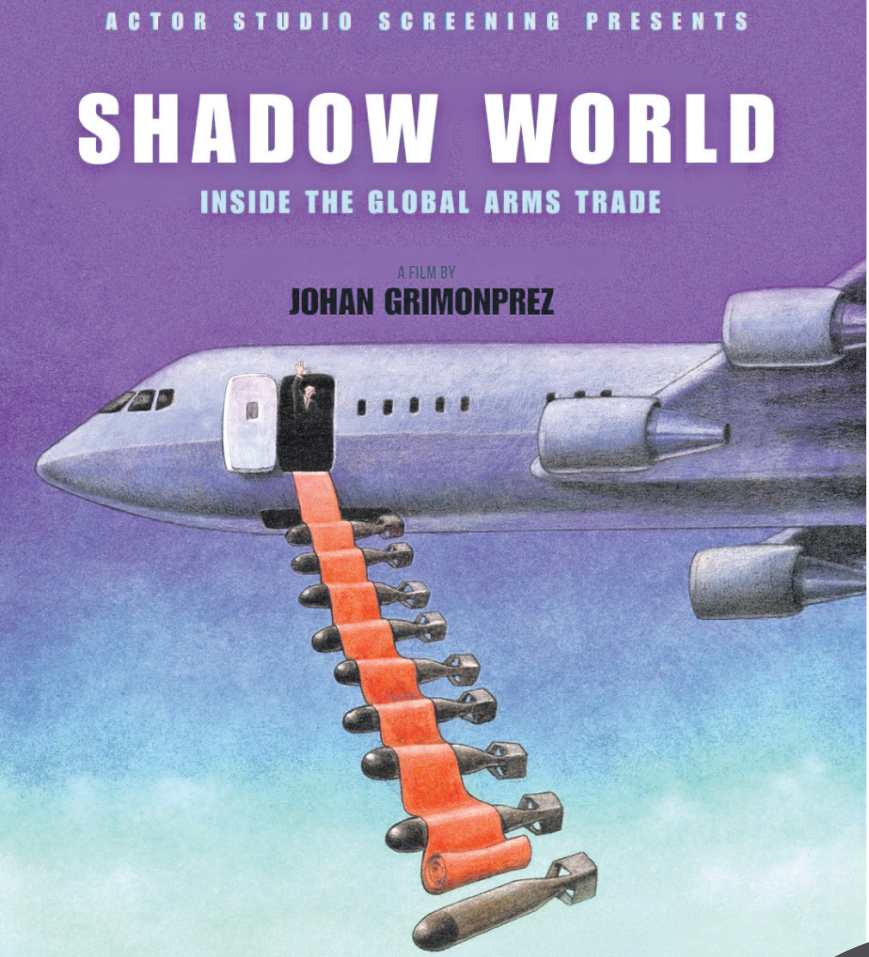
These stories are more than emotional tributes—they are powerful narratives of change. In a world that often limits daughters with rules, fears, and expectations, these fathers chose to empower, educate, and elevate.

They believed in their daughters when society doubted them. They stood behind them, not in control but in support. They offered unconditional love, space to fail, and the encouragement to rise again.

As we celebrate Daughter's Day, perhaps the greatest gift we can give future daughters is more fathers like these—who are not just protectors, but partners in their daughters' dreams.



Rage against the machine



Sunday, 17th August, 1:30 PM Onwards
Bocca Cafe, Master Canteen

AASHEE

“Little Boy” and “Fat Man”, atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on August 6th, and Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945. Immediate deaths numbered between 2,10,000 to 2,80,000, mainly civilians, with many suffering from radiation sickness, chronic illnesses, and trauma for decades. The hibakusha (survivors) carried scars that were both physical and psychological. Nuclear Radiation contaminated soil and water, lingering in unmeasurable ways in the atmosphere. For decades, the impact of nuclear radiation on human health was not revealed. Eighty years later, the shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lingers on.

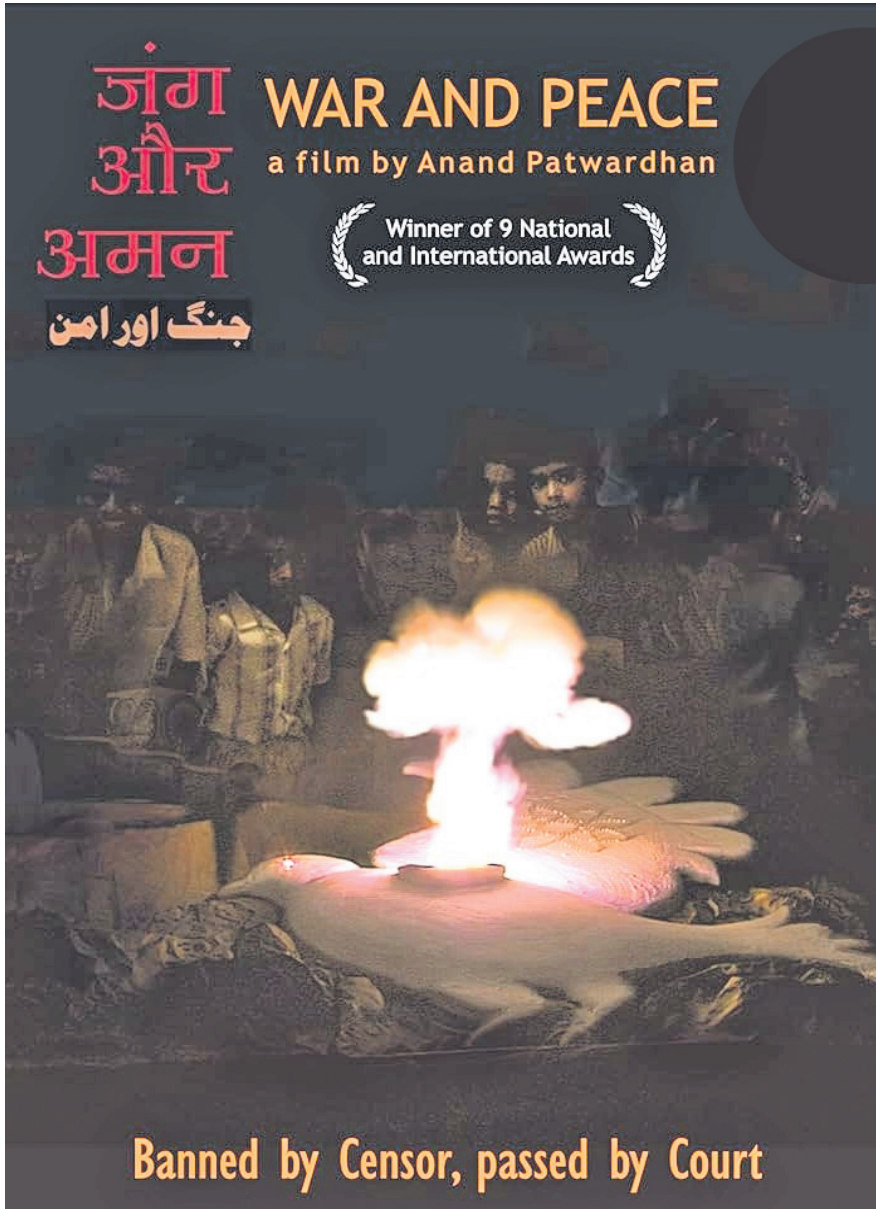
At a film society screening, Anand Patwardhan’s *War and Peace* (2002) on the 10th of August, made the film, feel, all the more urgent. The film covers the nuclear tests conducted in 1998 by both India and Pakistan, it shows the accompanying nationalist rhetoric in both countries. Anand opens up conversations by exposing uncomfortable truths; such as how nationalism is frequently disguised as patriotism – particularly in the scene with young girls in a Lahore school.

A week later, watching *Shadow World* (2016) by Johan Grimonprez, the film based on the eponymous book by Andrew Feinstein, certain connections became apparent.

Anand’s method of making a claim and then contradicting it was evident from the beginning. Rather than treating events in isolation, the pattern of cause and effect emerged almost like Newton’s third law. Although the film was made 23 years ago, it is still topical. Whether it is the amplification of war in mass media, or manufacturing of hate against minorities, these issues fester. What resonated, however, was the idea of non-separation of humans from machines, a mechanistic mode of thinking.

Our school education lacks an interdisciplinary approach, inculcating a rigid, individualistic, binary way of thinking. Curiosity is stifled leading to rigidity in thought. Creating what can be tagged as “war machines” – a mindset that perpetuates growth for the sake of growth, a scalar quantity bereft of ethics. Lives are reduced to numbers, enemies de-humanised into statistics. What stayed from the film

Anand Patwardhan’s *War and Peace* and Johan Grimonprez’s *Shadow World* leave us with a reminder that peace does not fail because people do not want it; it fails because powerful interests extract their profit from war



was the detachment of scientists from the human cost of their bombs, witnessed in the interviews, post the nuclear tests. Their distance from ethical consequences mirrored the apathy of development. One striking moment in “*War and Peace*” was the “*Tehelka*” sting operation montage, politicians accepting bribes for defense deals – the sting revealed a system where war serves private interests.

Seen together with “*Shadow World*” (2016), Johan Grimonprez’s exposé on the global arms trade, Anand’s message takes on an even acute meaning. Anand presents how nationalism and nuclear pride in India and Pakistan are manufactured to sustain militarism, Johan shows the next step: war as an international business where profits are reaped by keeping conflicts alive. We witness private military companies, DynCorp, operating with governments, profiting from warfare while escaping public scrutiny.

Both films delineate the business of war and the spectacle of violence – the military

industrial complex. Johan demonstrates how Western ‘wars on terror’ are framed, as moral crusades, to mask the business interests behind them. One film showed how people are taught to accept destructive ideologies; the other showed the system that operates it, showing how profit ensures militarism remains current.

The phrase “precise attacks,” emphasized in “*Shadow World*”, resonated strongly with “*Operation Sindoor*”. We witnessed a surgical strike against militants, independent verification was lacking, as evident during the recent parliament debates. Civilian casualties on both sides were barely acknowledged. This amplification of “precision” demonstrates how media and governments frame violence within nationalist narratives, often obscuring the human cost.

If “*War and Peace*” unsettled by exposing how empathy is blocked in our society; “*Shadow World*” showed – the realities of powerful governments that speak of democracy – complicit in monetising death. Together, both films demonstrate, war is not an isolated tragedy but a Mobius Strip; it is manufactured, packaged, and sold, using national pride or corporate contracts.

In conclusion, both films leave us with a reminder. Peace does not fail because people do not want it; it fails because powerful interests extract their profit from war.

The writer is a member of Film Society Bhubaneswar writing program – Summer 2025