

OCTOBER 12-18, 2025

SUNDAY POST

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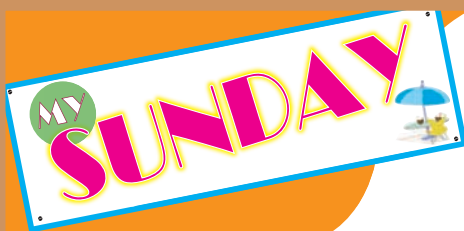
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER
RISK REDUCTION – OCTOBER 13

Rebuilding tomorrow

COVER STORY

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Sarthak Bharadwaj from Bhawanipatna is a writer, poet, singer, actor, and voice artist all rolled into one. Known for his versatility and expressive range, Sarthak began his on-screen journey in 2022 with TV show 'Shanti' and there was no looking back after that. His captivating voice and impeccable dialogue delivery breathe life into every character he portrays, whether on stage, screen, or behind the mic. The versatile performer now looks forward to the release of his upcoming project 'Mantra Muugdha'



With Mantra Muugdha team

Love affair with books
Films have always been my greatest passion. Lately, I'm trying to build a reading habit—I adore the smell and look of books, though I've honestly finished only a few.



With family



Sunday jam & recharge

For actors, Sundays are often working days. When I get a break, I catch up on sleep, watch movies from my list, meet up friends, and jam with musicians—I just love being around guitars and melodies.

One-day escape

An ideal Sunday for me would be waking up refreshed and going on a one-day trip—exploring new places, soaking in new vibes and experiences, though it rarely happens.

Decorating Mumbai nest

I recently moved into a new place in Mumbai, and decorating it has become a new hobby. I keep rearranging and changing the interiors based on my mood.

Virtual hugs

I mostly spend time with my family, even though they live far away. We stay connected through long video calls and endless chats.

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

- I'm not lazy... I'm just on my energy saving mode.
- I work in a library. Literally, all we do is judge books by their covers.
- I don't understand why people don't like lazy people. They didn't do anything.
- I can cut down a tree only using my vision. It's true! I saw it with my own eyes!



Accept reality

Sir, Last week's cover story Blending tradition with trend portrays the young generation's urge to enjoy bachelorhood on the pretext of fake marriage. Fake weddings come with a freedom to dance, enjoy dining and company of strangers without being judged by relatives, as seen in real weddings. But the point is that aren't such extravagant fake wedding parties leaving a negative impact on those who couldn't afford grandeur functions and are still waiting to get married? Doesn't it lead to deteriorating mental health and highlight scars of some broken/abusive marriages? Attending such fake marriages and then sharing pictures on social media will encourage showoffs and may lead to broken relationships as well. The question persists as to why they are trying to find happiness and enjoyment in a fake world rather than in real existence. Accepting reality, enjoying pocket-friendly functions with family, real friends, and social circles is the need of the hour to keep mental and emotional health good and healthy.

ABHILASHA GUPTA, MOHALI

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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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION – OCTOBER 13

Climate change is no longer a distant spectre that is set to haunt future generations, it is an uninvited guest rewriting the script of the present. Amid this growing turbulence, there exists a group of visionaries who work tirelessly to heal the earth, to mend what reckless progress has torn apart

Rebuilding tomorrow

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

The world stands at a crossroads where the gentle hum of nature has turned into a cry for attention. Rivers swell beyond their banks, forests vanish into ash, and once-predictable skies now burst with tempestuous moods. Climate change is no longer a distant specter haunting future generations—it is an uninvited guest rewriting the script of the present. From melting glaciers to parched farmlands, from urban heat waves to coastal submergence, every corner of the earth bears the imprint of an unraveling balance. Yet amid this growing turbulence, there exists a group of visionaries—who work tirelessly to heal the earth, to mend what reckless progress has torn. Their mission is not merely to restore, but to reawaken humanity’s lost harmony with nature.

Amid this deepening turmoil, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) stands as humanity’s shield of foresight and resilience. It is a discipline born from empathy and reason—one that transforms vulnerability into vigilance. DRR goes beyond emergency response; it envisions a world where communities anticipate, adapt, and thrive despite adversity. Strengthened infrastructure, empowered citizens, and eco-conscious governance together form the pillars of survival in this unpredictable century. The urgency has never been greater—to prepare not out of fear, but out of wisdom.

As the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction approaches,

Sunday POST speaks to a few remarkable individuals who work tirelessly, day and night, to heal the Earth.

‘We all must contribute at an individual level’

Soumya Ranjan Biswal, Managing Trustee of the Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan Trust, paints a sobering picture of Odisha’s changing coastline and its growing impact on people and nature. “The coastlines of Odisha are increasing day by day,” he explains. “What was once 480 kilometres has now stretched to 574. This expansion may appear as growth, but in reality, it reflects a loss—our coastal areas are steadily submerging under the encroaching sea.”

Citing reports, Biswal warns that nearly 74 villages in Odisha are at risk of submergence in the near future. “Almost half of our coastline is in a vulnerable condition and the pressure is mounting every day,” adds a concerned Biswal. Odisha’s coasts, he says, are home to rich biodiversity—mangroves, seagrass beds, Olive Ridley turtles, dolphins, and countless other marine species. “The government is doing its best to protect them,” Biswal acknowledges, “but the responsibility lies with all of us. We must protect the natural habitats of these species if



we wish to preserve our coastal diversity.”

Emphasising the vital role of mangroves, Biswal describes them as “the living defence between land and water.” “Many believe mangroves only protect us from strong winds during cyclones, but their importance runs far deeper,” he says.

According to Biswal, the ocean’s health depends on an intricate balance of interconnected ecosystems—mangrove, coral, riverine, and estuarine. “Mangroves rank second only to coral reefs in biological diversity and a recent survey found that nearly 3,985 species directly depend on mangroves. If they vanish, countless forms of life will vanish with them,” Biswal points out.

Elaborating further on mangrove’s ecological significance, he says, “Mangroves have deep roots that anchor soil and prevent erosion—they act as natural earthing. During cyclones, regions with strong mangrove cover witness reduced damage. Mangroves absorb wind pressure, floodwaters, and filter pollutants, while capturing five to six times more carbon dioxide than other trees.”

Calling for united action, Biswal urges people to rise beyond awareness and take tangible steps.

“We all must contribute at an individual level,” he stresses. “People need to understand the importance of ocean health and the devastating consequences of disrupting its balance. Planting more trees, reducing pollution, and safeguarding our seas are not mere choices—they are obligations. Only through shared responsibility can we ensure that Odisha’s coastal treasures endure, resilient and thriving, for generations to come,” signs off the climate crusader.



Soumya Ranjan during a mangrove plantation drive



Sustainable solutions do not always require sophisticated technology

Bijay Kumar Bhatta, a Sanskrit teacher at Belabhu-mi High School in Astaranga, Puri, stands as a shining example of how individual initiative can make a lasting difference. Since the devast-ating 1999 Super Cyclone, Bhatta has been on a relent-less mission to plant palm trees and raise awareness about their extraordinary ability to mitigate the effects of lightning strikes. His tire-less efforts over the past two decades reflect the power of nature-based solutions in safeguarding both people and the environment.

Explaining his work, Bhatta says, “I have been planting palm trees to re-duce the impact of lightning. Palm trees, which grow up to about 30 metres in height, act like natural conductors. They absorb lightning and transfer the energy deep into the ground—just like an earthing system—preventing loss of life and damage to property.” What began as a personal effort has now evolved into a community move-ment, with many villagers and students joining hands with him to continue this life-saving initiative.

Over the years, Bhatta has planted more than 30,000 palm trees across coastal Odisha. But for him, the significance of these trees extends far beyond their protective role.

“Palm trees not only help in reducing lightning im-pacts but also provide livelihood opportunities to vil-lagers,” he says. “They offer wood, leaves, and fruits that people use in daily life, and they serve as shelter to countless birds. They are an essential part of our rural ecosystem.”

Bhatta credits his environmental awareness to his family. “My father and grandfather were my biggest inspirations,” he recalls. “My grandfather used to tell me about the positive impacts of palm trees and their role



in nature. Those lessons stayed with me.”

Every year, Odisha loses many lives to lightning strikes, particularly in open rural ar-eas. For Bhatta, the solution is clear and achievable. “Palm trees are easy to plant; they need no special care,” he says. “If we plant more of them, we can minimize lightning’s deadly impact and save countless lives. It’s a small step with a powerful outcome.”

Bhatta’s innovation, however, goes beyond planta-tions. Using simple and locally available materials, he has devised a low-cost lightning protection system to shield rural areas from strikes. “I use a cycle rim tied to a bamboo pole and connect it to a copper wire that runs into the ground,” he explains. “This acts as an earthing system. When placed in open fields, it can absorb light-ning within a radius of two kilometres, saving people and animals from thunderbolt.” His method has been appreciated by locals for its simplicity and effectiveness.

Sustainable solutions do not always require large-scale technology, just knowledge and determination do work, concludes Bhatta.

‘There is an urgent need for robust resilience measures’

Dibyakanta Nayak, Lead DRR & Response, Reliance Foundation, says, “Disasters continue to have a profound impact globally, causing enormous human suffer-ing and economic loss. The rising frequency and intensity of disasters un-der-score the urgent need for stronger early warning systems, improved climate resilience measures, and closer coordination among government agencies, local communities, and international or-ganizations.”

He goes on to add, “India, due to its geographical and climatic vulnera-bilities, faces significant challenges from climate change-induced hazards such as cy-



clones, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events. Coastal regions are par-ticularly at risk, with sea levels along the Indian coast-line expanding at an average of 1.7 mm per year. By 2050, an estimated 40 million people could be affected by sea-level rise, threatening livelihoods and forcing large-scale displacement.”

Talking about the state, he says, “Odisha, histor-ically the most cyclone-prone state of the country, has experienced nearly a third of all cyclones in the last century, emphasizing the urgent need for robust resilience measures. Yet, disaster risk re-duction efforts often remain largely response-driv-en, with limited focus on proactive preparedness. Addressing these challenges requires active com-munity participation, multi-sectoral collabora-tion, and investment in risk assessments and ca-pacity-building initiatives. Collaboration between government agencies, private sector partners, and local institutions can help scale up effective prac-tices, while inclusive participation—especially of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities—ensures relevance and sustainabil-ity. Technology, such as GIS mapping, real-time monitoring, and early warning systems, enhances timely decision-making and action.”

Shedding light over the intuitive his organisation has undertaken, Nayak shares, “At Reliance Foun-dation, our Disaster Management programme focuses on Disaster Risk Reduction, Preparedness, and Re-sponse. We have identified 3,000 climate-vulnerable geographies across 20 districts in eight states, includ-ing Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, and Ganjam, for targeted interventions.”

“By strengthening local capacities, equipping communities with technical expertise, and fostering community-driven initiatives, we aim to build resili-ent communities capable of effectively responding to disasters. Through innovation, collaboration, and inclusive engagement, we are working to create a safer, sustainable, and resilient future for vulner-able populations,” Nayak further says.



Literature not only helps one better understand lives and the world, it is also an excellent way for students to learn how to think critically. Yet, under the Council of Higher Secondary Education of Odisha, Plus-II students rarely taste that power, rues **Alankruta Mohanty**, Guest Lecturer in English at Indira Gandhi Women's College, Cuttack. When she vented on LinkedIn about a syllabus "trapped in a 1990s time warp," the post garnered massive attention.

Here's what the independent researcher has to share with **Sunday POST** on the issue.

Q: Most teachers stay quiet when the syllabus lets them down. But you didn't. How was it viewed at your workplace and by your colleagues after you spoke up about the gap between deep reading and classroom realities?

A: Speaking up about the mismatch between the syllabus and real classroom needs was not easy, but it was necessary. Many teachers silently adapt to the system even when they know it's not serving the students well. When I raised the issue, the reactions were quite mixed. Some colleagues appreciated the honesty and felt it was time someone voiced what everyone was thinking, while others were a little hesitant—perhaps fearing administrative backlash or seeing it as too idealistic. However, I believe that being a teacher means being a learner first. If we see our students struggling to connect with texts because the syllabus hasn't evolved, we owe it to them to speak up. Eventually, that conversation opened small but meaningful discussions among my peers. We began exchanging resources beyond the textbook, encouraging interpretive reading rather than just memorization. It showed me that change begins with dialogue, even if it starts with discomfort. Now, we discuss our syllabus a lot and explore how to make it easier for our students to interpret texts critically, understand them in real-life contexts, and connect with them better.

Q: What role can teachers play in cultivating appreciation for literature, even when they are constrained by a rigid syllabus and limited class time?

A: I believe teachers have immense power to shape how students feel about literature, even within constraints. The key lies in teaching attitude rather than just content. I often use storytelling techniques—short anecdotes about authors or connections between a poem's theme and current issues—so students see literature as something living, not historical. For example, when teaching a text from the syllabus, I sometimes begin with a short real-life parallel: maybe a song lyric, a movie scene, a news article, or even a story from my own life or a friend's. Anything that sparks curiosity works. Once that emotional connection is made, students treat the text very differently. Even limited time can be used effectively if we focus on why a text matters rather than just what it says. Encouraging brief reflective writing, peer discussions, or reading a few lines aloud with feeling can cultivate appreciation far more than completing every line with an explanation. A teacher's enthusiasm—even in a rigid system—can ignite a student's love for literature.



Q: The CHSE Plus-II syllabus hasn't changed in years. If you had a magic red pen, what would you slash, scribble, or substitute?

A: If I had a magic red pen, I would begin by transforming the syllabus into something that truly reflects the world our students live in today. I would include more diverse voices—regional writers and translations, Dalit and women authors, and post-independence Indian English works that mirror students' own experiences and realities. I wouldn't just stick to mainstream writers we've heard of for years or the well-known Odia authors. There are many underrated voices that deserve attention. Literature should not feel like a distant relic of the past—it should speak to students about identity, society, and the emotions they encounter every day. Next, I would ensure that the textbook questions encourage critical thinking rather than rote memorization. Students should be guided to interpret, analyze, and respond personally to what they read, instead of

A: For me, the most important thing is helping students build confidence. Many Odia-medium students hesitate to express themselves in English—not because they lack understanding, but because they fear making mistakes. So, in my class, I begin by simplifying the text to make it more approachable. I also allow bilingual discussions, encouraging them to first express their ideas in Odia if needed, but I always make sure they eventually try to form their own answers in English so that they gradually become comfortable with the language. They often discuss those answers together—students read them aloud, and we reframe them collectively, finding better words and clearer ways to express the same thought. This process not only improves their writing but also teaches collaboration and confidence in speaking. Most importantly, I ensure they don't see the lessons as mere stories from a textbook. I encourage them to connect the text to real life, to read between the lines, and to explore deeper meanings. I often suggest similar texts or poems for them to read on their own. Once the syllabus is over, I hold informal discussions during free periods to talk about those works more freely. I also use creative writing exercises to develop both their language and imagination. Over time, these activities—whether writing short paragraphs, reflections, or even something as simple as composing social media captions—help them find their voice in English. Every small act of expression builds their confidence a little more, and that, to me, is the true balance between teaching language and nurturing a love for literature.

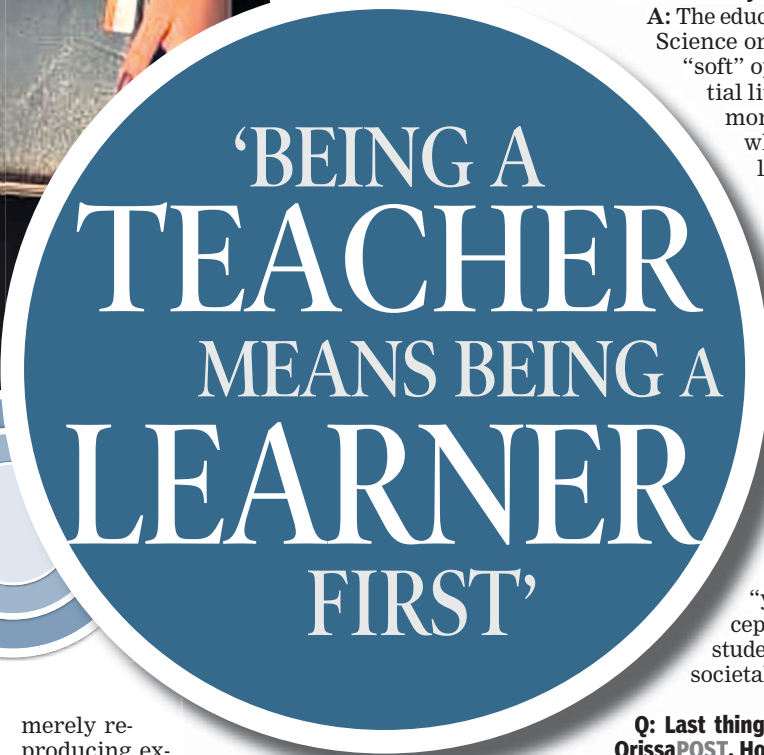
Q: Plus-II is the career crossroads. How can we spot the future literary scholars early—and keep them from being steamrolled by engineering coaching ads?

A: The education system often equates success with Science or Commerce, sidelining literature as a "soft" option. But I believe we can spot potential literary scholars by observing curiosity more than grades. The students who ask why rather than what, who linger on a line of poetry, who jot thoughts in the margins—those are the signs of a literary mind. To keep them from being lost to the coaching culture, mentorship is key. Teachers should share stories of people who built meaningful careers through literature—writers, editors, professors, content creators, journalists, or even teachers themselves—to show that this path is not only noble but also viable. Inviting alumnae or organizing literature circles where students freely discuss books can also help. Above all, encouragement matters. Even a single word of validation—like "you have a writer's eye" or "that's a perceptive observation"—can anchor a young student's faith in their passion at a time when societal pressure is strongest.

Q: Last thing—you once interned as a copy editor at OrissaPOST. How was the experience?

A: My internship at **OrissaPOST** was truly a defining experience. It taught me the discipline and precision that literary work often lacks in academia. As a copy-editing intern, I learned how every word carries weight, and how clarity and conciseness can make writing powerful. I also gained a deeper understanding of how language shapes perception—something that translates beautifully into teaching literature. The newsroom atmosphere was fast-paced, but it sharpened my critical eye. Editing stories for accuracy and tone made me more attentive to the nuances of grammar, coherence, and reader engagement. It was also inspiring to work with so many brilliant journalists who balanced creativity with responsibility. That experience grounded my love for language in practical skills. The internship didn't just refine my editing abilities—it strengthened my belief that good writing, whether in journalism or literature, begins with empathy and ends with precision.

OP DESK



merely re-producing expected answers. A well-designed question can make them see literature as a conversation, not just a chore.

Another area that desperately needs revision is the creative writing section. The current exercises are outdated and disconnected from real-world writing needs. I would replace them with more relevant and engaging forms of writing—emails, reports, blogs, reviews, content summaries, or even short reflective pieces. Writing is not just a literary skill; it's a life skill. Whether a student studies engineering, medicine, business, or any other field, the ability to express ideas clearly and effectively is essential.

In short, my red pen would not just cut—it would create. I would aim for a syllabus that empowers students to think, question, and communicate in ways that prepare them not only for exams but for the world beyond the classroom.

Q: How can we balance the need to teach foundational language skills (for Odia-medium students) with the goal of engaging all students in the deeper aspects of literature?



Diana's fashion philosophy

Actress Diana Penty believes her fashion journey has evolved alongside her, yet remains grounded in authenticity and simplicity. "I've evolved as a person, and my fashion choices have evolved too. But they've always stayed true to who I am. I've always been a classic dresser with an understated, effortless style. I'm not someone who spends hours dressing up or doing anything extra—that's just not me," she shared in a latest interview.

A model before becoming an actress, Diana describes herself as a "fashion girl" who enjoys experimenting when the moment calls for it. "I love having fun with fashion and trying new looks, especially on the red carpet. But my personal style will always be understated and chic," she added.

On the work front, Diana recently explored the long-format space with *Do You Wanna Partner*, marking her first web series appearance. Reflecting on the experience, she said, "In longer formats, you get to explore your character deeply. Films often have limited scope for improvisation, but web series allow you to truly sink your teeth into a role. It's creatively satisfying to live with a character and experiment."

From fashion to films, Diana continues to blend elegance with authenticity—both on and off screen.

AGENCIES

Kareena redefines wealth

Kareena Kapoor Khan, one of India's most influential and bankable actresses, continues to inspire generations of women through her career and personal choices. Known for her determination and grace, Kareena recently attended an insightful session in Delhi as the face of HSBC Premier, where she reflected on how her perception of wealth has evolved over the

years. "Working for the last 26 years has completely changed how I view wealth," she shared, adding that it goes beyond money in the bank. Kareena emphasised that financial independence and equality are essential, noting that actors today are vocal about being paid equally to their male counterparts—a change that, she believes, adds strength and dignity to women's identities. She also spoke about maintaining her independence despite societal expectations after marriage. "Even after marrying Saif, I was clear about having my own independence as an actor," she said, highlighting the importance of balancing personal

happiness with professional autonomy. As a mother now, Kareena believes true wealth lies in cherishing everyday moments while planning wisely for the future. On the work front, she has begun shooting for Meghna Gulzar's upcoming film *Daayra*, alongside Prithviraj Sukumaran, marking another exciting chapter in her illustrious journey.

AGENCIES



Sonali on changing dynamics in showbiz

Sonali Bendre has witnessed the entertainment industry undergo a remarkable transformation, from the single-screen era to the OTT boom. Today, she remains actively engaged in diverse creative pursuits, including web projects, writing, and podcasts, emphasising that creative satisfaction is what drives her. Reflecting on industry changes, Sonali notes, "When multiplexes came in, things changed. You could tell smaller, more nuanced stories. That's when the boom began. Now, with multiple platforms available, storytelling has expanded even further." She highlights the evolving dynamics on sets as particularly inspiring. "Earlier, the only other woman on set was the hairdresser. Now, my team is all-women. Women are directing, writing, handling cameras and

sets, and choosing this as a career. That's amazing," she says. Despite being diagnosed with metastatic cancer in 2018, Sonali emphasises that health has not limited her work. "I am absolutely fine. The only filter now is joy and creative satisfaction," she shares. This year has been especially busy for her. "I launched a book at the beginning of the year, completed shooting an OTT show, started a podcast, and have been hosting a TV show. It's like fireworks—so much is happening, and I am enjoying every bit of it," Sonali adds, reflecting her unwavering passion and commitment to exploring multiple creative avenues while inspiring others with her resilience.

AGENCIES



Ranbir's take on nepotism

Terming himself a 'product of nepotism', Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor Thursday said he was always aware of the perks of being born into a film family but lineage never guarantees success. Ranbir, part of the fourth generation of the illustrious Kapoor family, said he had to develop an individualistic approach and prove his talent independently to sustain in the industry. "I'm a product of nepotism and I got it very easy in my life but I always had to work hard

because I realised that I come from a family like this and if I don't have an individualistic approach and if I don't make a name for myself, I'll not succeed in the film industry. You guys celebrate a lot of success of my family but there are a lot of failures also, and as much as you learn from the success, you learn from the failure also," the 43-year-old actor said. Ranbir, son of actors Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor, was speaking at a session, titled Tribute to legendary

filmmaker Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt, during the Celebrate Cinema 2025 festival at filmmaker Subhash Ghai's film institute Whistling Woods. At the event, Ghai announced two scholarships in the name of Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt for the students of his institute.

PTI

Nataraja and the poetry of thermodynamics



SATYABRATA PANIGRAHY

From the dawn of civilization, the human mind has sought tools to express thought and emotion, long before structured language came into being. Even today, we continue to rely on metaphors, allegories, and similes as powerful modes of communication. In India, the use of symbols and metaphors can be traced back to the Sindhu-Saraswati civilization and the Vedic period, when ancient seers often conveyed profound philosophical ideas in a symbolic or coded language.

One of the most enduring symbols of this tradition is the bronze sculpture of the Dancing Shiva, or Nataraja, crafted during the reign of the Chola dynasty in southern India. This iconic image has captivated scholars, philosophers, scientists, and poets across the world. Among them was Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine, whose groundbreaking work in the field of thermodynamics found a striking resonance in the Nataraja. In the rhythm of Shiva's cosmic dance, he perceived the eternal cycle of creation and dissolution—the very rhythm of existence itself. Ilya Prigogine used the image of Nataraja in his book *Thermodynamic Theory of Structure, Stability and Fluctuations* (published in 1978) to symbolize the principles of non-equilibrium thermodynamics.

A poet of thermodynamics:

Belgian scientist Ilya Prigogine, often referred to as a poet of thermodynamics, discovered that irreversible time and far-from-equilibrium chaos are essential properties of a highly ordered and complex universe. He stated that far-from-equilibrium processes generate new forms of order. Prigogine's research focused on how complex systems behave when far from equilibrium, introducing concepts such as self-organization, dissipative structures, and the idea that order emerges from chaos. For his groundbreaking contributions, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977. Prigogine emphasized that the order we observe throughout the universe is generated by irreversible and non-equilibrium processes. Natural processes around us are inherently irre-

Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine, a Belgian physical chemist, used the image of Nataraja in his book *Thermodynamic Theory of Structure, Stability and Fluctuations* (published in 1978) to symbolise the principles of non-equilibrium thermodynamics

versible, but they are not merely meant to increase the entropy of the universe and destroy order. They can also create highly ordered and complex structures, including life itself. In a similar spirit, the image of the dancing Shiva symbolizes the perfect balance between creation and annihilation, order and chaos—both originating from the same cosmic source.

Dissipative self-organization, a concept introduced by Ilya Prigogine, allows a system to import energy from the external environment to sustain its internal organization, while at the same time exporting unstable energy or entropy back into the environment. The Great Red Spot of Jupiter, whirlpools, cyclones, hurricanes, plant and animal life, planetary ecosystems, and even the social phenomena of human society are examples of dissipative structures.

Many of these processes appear chaotic or random at one scale, yet they are in fact highly ordered and complex, leading to the continuous emergence of new structures. Dissipative structures can resist unfavorable fluctuations through negative feedback, while amplifying favorable ones through positive feedback, thereby creating new forms of order. The image of Nataraja thus represents the eternal cosmic dance—an ongoing rhythm of the universe, where the dancing Shiva creates and dissolves worlds in a perpetual cycle of renewal.

The cosmic dance:

Shiva's cosmic dance represents the ceaseless interplay of creation and destruction—a metaphor for the dynamic and evolving processes of nature, where order continually emerges from chaos. The upper right hand of Nataraj holds the vibrating drum, symbolising the primordial sound of creation, from which all physical existence emerges. The upper left hand holding the eternal fire represents the destruction, which is the precursor and inevitable counterpart of creation.

An excerpt from the popular essay 'The Dance of Shiva' by the eminent philosopher and art historian Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: "Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive, not of any mere superstition or dogma, but of evident facts. No artist of today, however, great, could more exactly or wisely create an image of that energy which science must postulate behind all phenomena. If we would reconcile Time with Eternity, we scarcely do so otherwise than by the conception of alterations of phase extending over vast regions of space and great tracts of time. Especially significant, then, is the phase alteration implied by the drum, and the fire which 'changes', not destroys. These are but visual symbols of the theory of the day and night of Brahma. In the night of Brahma, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it: He rises from His rapture, and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo! the matter also dances appearing as a glory round about Him. Dancing, He sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all forms and names by fire and gives new rest. This is poetry; but none the less, science." Thus, the dance of Shiva is not merely a piece of art, but the very grammar of the universe, where the end is a beginning, where each creation carries within it the seed of its destruction. In this endless rhythm, the cosmos renews itself, and in its movement, we glimpse the poetry of thermodynamics.

The author writes primarily on science, philosophy and heritage. Views are personal



Mao's disastrous war on sparrows



There have been many times throughout history when humanity did not heed the basic principle of life and faced dire consequences. China found this out the hard way when they went to battle with the eurasian sparrow, and by winning the battles, they lost the war

Planet Earth is a complicated, fragile stage where billions of species perform an intricate, synchronized dance. Every dancer—every plant, animal, fungus, and microbe—must stay perfectly in step.

If even one partner falters, the entire choreography can collapse. The same is true within all the many ecosystems found in nature.

If a single plant or animal is removed from an ecosystem, the entire balance of the natural cycle could fall apart. Even removing a seemingly insignificant animal like a sparrow could have dire ecological consequences.

China found this out the hard way when they went to battle with the eurasian sparrow, and by winning the battles, they lost the war. This is China vs Sparrows.

It happened during the reign of China's revolutionary leader Mao Zedong that cost millions of lives.

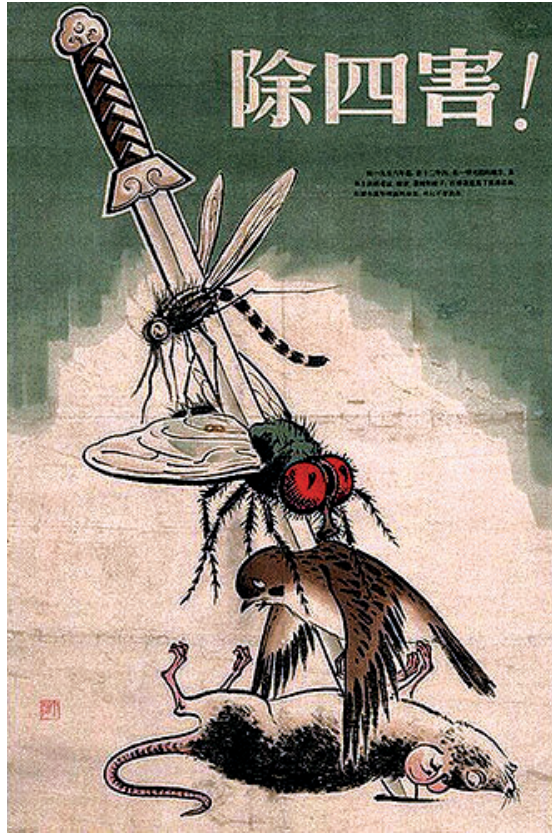
The Four Pests Campaign: A war on nature

In 1958, Mao declared war on four perceived enemies of progress: mosquitoes, flies, rats—and sparrows. The Eurasian tree sparrow was accused of stealing grain from the fields, and thus threatening China's ambitious agricultural targets. Across the country, citizens were mobilized in a mass campaign. Children banged pots and pans to keep sparrows from landing, until the birds collapsed mid-air from exhaustion. Nests were destroyed, eggs smashed, and millions of sparrows shot or poisoned. Within two years, the sparrow was driven to near extinction in China.

But what was celebrated as a patriotic victory would soon reveal itself as a catastrophic miscalculation. The sparrow, it turned out, didn't just eat grain—it also fed its young vast quantities of insects, including locusts. With their natural predator gone, pest populations exploded. The delicate balance of the ecosystem had been shattered by human hands.

The locust plague: Nature's revenge

By 1959, the consequences were undeniable. Swarms of locusts—now unchecked—descended upon rice and wheat fields across China. These insects devoured crops with a voracity that far exceeded anything the sparrows had ever done. Rice yields dropped by 5% in sparrow-rich counties, and wheat by 8%. Sweet potatoes, grown underground



and less vulnerable to airborne pests, thrived—but they were not enough to feed the nation.

The government, still clinging to the belief that sparrow eradication had boosted productivity, continued to demand high grain quotas from farmers. In reality, the land was hemorrhaging food. The locust plague was not a natural disaster—it was a man-made one, born of

ignorance and ideological rigidity.

Famine and silence: When policy trumps science

As crops failed, the state doubled down. Farmers in the hardest-hit regions were forced to surrender even more grain to the state, leaving nothing for local consumption. The famine that followed was unlike anything the world had seen. Between 1959 and 1961, an estimated 15 to 45 million people died of starvation. In counties most affected by the sparrow killings, death rates soared and birth rates plummeted.

Scientists who had warned against the campaign were silenced or ignored. The government refused to acknowledge the link between ecological collapse and famine. Instead, it blamed the weather or "counter-revolutionaries." By 1960, the truth could no longer be denied. The sparrow was quietly removed from the "Four Pests" list and replaced with bedbugs. China even imported 250,000 sparrows from the Soviet Union in a desperate attempt to restore the lost balance.

A lesson written in starvation

The Great Chinese Famine was not just a tragedy of policy—it was a tragedy of hubris. It revealed how easily science can be sacrificed on the altar of ideology, and how fragile the web of life truly is. The sparrow, once a humble bird, became a symbol of unintended consequences. Its disappearance triggered a chain reaction that cost millions of lives.

Today, as biodiversity declines and ecosystems strain under human pressure, the story of the sparrow serves as a stark reminder: we are not separate from nature—we are part of it. And when we forget that, we do so at our peril.