

DECEMBER 14-20, 2025

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



**NATIONAL ENERGY
CONSERVATION DAY TODAY**

**DO IT
YOURSELF**

COVER STORY

**P
3,4**



Born and raised in Cuttack, Nikita Mishra began her acting journey at just five. She has grown up on screen, one can say. As a child artiste, she featured in several bhajan videos, TV shows and films like ‘Samaya Hatare Dori’, ‘Nei Jare Megha Mote’, ‘Prem Weds Priya’ and ‘Target’. Later, she went on to make her big-screen debut as lead in ‘Jogi’ (2018). She has also appeared in popular daily soaps, telefilms and music videos including widely popular ‘Bohu’ series making her popular in every Odia household



Family first

I love spending Sundays with my family since the rest of my week is packed with shoots, promotions, and a hectic work schedule.



With family

Reset button

I love traveling, listening to music, and binge-watching movies and series, as they help me relax, unwind, and make the most of my free time.



With Elina Samantray

Date with dad

Whenever I get some free time, I love going on a movie date with my dad, cherishing moments and enjoying stories together at the cinema.

Cooking adventure

I am passionate about cooking, though I don't get enough time for it; I take pleasure in experimenting with new recipes and serving those to others.

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 just asked my husband if he remembers what today is... Scaring men is easy.
- What is the tallest building in the world? A library- it has the most stories!
- I've only been wrong once, and that's when I thought I was wrong.
- I tried to get back to the drawing board but I can't draw.



Digital illusion

Sir, This refers to Digital Solace, the cover story of last week's cover story in **Sunday POST**. Connection with a chatbot feels safe at first: a soft glow under the blanket, a feed that knows your mood better than your mother, a playlist that cries with you. Scroll, tap, repeat—pain shrinks to pixels. But the comfort is a copied loop. Each swipe releases a micro-dose of relief, teaching the brain to hurt a little more next time so the reward can feel just as sweet. Soon real silence turns itchy; a sunset without a filter looks dull. Meanwhile, data miners log every tremor of your heart, packaging your secret griefs into ads that will knock tomorrow. Anxiety sold back as calm, loneliness as subscription self-care. One day you reach for the phone before you know why you are sad, and the device answers before the tear is formed. The hazard is not in the screen but in the borrowed pulse: a solace that finally replaces the thing it promised to soothe.

SAMBHABANA SENAPATI, JAGATSINGHPUR

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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NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION DAY TODAY

DO IT YOURSELF

In a world shimmering with digital brilliance and industrial ambition, a quiet crisis is tightening its grip, one that demands immediate global attention. As cities tower higher and technology accelerates forward, experts warn that our planet's energy reserves are being drained at a pace far faster than they can be replenished. Analysts describe this moment as "the most urgent energy crossroads in modern history," a turning point that will determine the stability of generations to come.

Once considered a polite environmental courtesy, energy conservation has now surged to the forefront as the single most decisive tool humanity still holds in its hands. The glow of neon skylines and the ceaseless hum of machines may symbolise progress, but they also cast long shadows of overconsumption, depletion and irreversible damage.

The glow of neon skylines and the ceaseless noise of machines may symbolise progress, but they also cast long shadows of overconsumption, depletion and irreversible damage. Beneath the surface of our advancing civilisation, the earth grows increasingly weary, burdened by the weight of our unchecked appetite for power

sumption, depletion and irreversible damage. Beneath the surface of our advancing civilisation, the earth grows increasingly weary, burdened by the weight of our unchecked appetite for power. The urgency is unmistakable. Every watt saved today becomes a silent victory against a future defined by scarcity. Every responsible switch, every efficient choice, becomes a shield protecting ecosystems, economies, and communities from further collapse. The call to conserve energy is no longer a soft appeal murmured in environmental discussions, it is a resounding, undeniable battle cry. If we fail to act now, the crisis will grow louder than

any headline. But if we choose wisely, we can still rewrite the story. As India observes National Energy Conservation Day, here's what the experts have to share with **Sunday POST** on the issue.

'Energy conservation is highly effective against climate change'
Dr. Jayakrushna Panigrahi, Working President of Orissa Environmental Society, Bhubaneswar,



emphasises the critical role of energy conservation in combating climate change. He explains, "Energy conservation is highly effective against climate change because it reduces overall energy demand, cutting greenhouse gas emissions at the source. Using less energy means fewer fossil fuels are burned, lowering pollution and easing pressure on energy systems while buying time for renewable technologies to scale. It's also fast, cost-effective, and accessible to individuals and communities. Misconceptions persist, such as believing small personal actions don't matter, that conservation requires major lifestyle sacrifices, or that efficiency alone solves the problem. In reality, combined individual, corporate, and systemic conservation efforts significantly reduce emissions and complement broader climate solutions."

Dr. Panigrahi highlights practical steps individuals and businesses can take to make a meaningful impact. "Individuals and businesses can cut energy use through small, consistent actions. We need to switch to LED light-

ing, unplug devices or use smart power strips, and enable energy-saving modes on electronics. Improve insulation, seal leaks, and adjust thermostats slightly, just 1-2°C saves significant power. We have to choose efficient appliances and maintain HVAC systems regularly. Shifting energy-intensive tasks to off-peak hours and using natural light, when possible, also save energy. Remote work or efficient commuting need to be encouraged. For businesses, one can adopt energy audits, optimise machinery schedules, and install sensors for lighting and climate control. Supporting renewable energy plans, even partially, further reduces consumption while promoting long-term sustainability."

On the importance of coordinated action, he notes, "Governments, industries, and communities can accelerate large-scale energy efficiency by aligning incentives, standards and shared goals. Governments should create stable policies, finance mechanisms and strict efficiency codes. Industries can innovate cleaner technologies, adopt transparent reporting and participate in public-private partnerships that scale solutions. Communities drive acceptance by engaging in local planning, adopting conservation behaviours and providing feedback on policy impact. Collaboration platforms, such as regional energy councils and data-sharing hubs ensure all stakeholders coordinate investments, identify barriers and measure progress. Together, these actions create a reinforcing system that lowers emissions, reduces costs, and supports resilient, sustainable development."

Through his insights, Dr. Panigrahi underscores that energy conservation is both an individual responsibility and a systemic necessity, demonstrating that coordinated efforts across all levels can significantly reduce emissions and promote sustainable development.



'Energy conservation is a lifestyle choice'

Satyabrata Samal, Founder and Director of Sattvic Soul Foundation in Bhubaneswar, is transforming the way communities in Odisha think about sustainability. Leading cleanliness drives and awareness initiatives across multiple districts, his organisation has earned recognition as the largest plastic-free community in Eastern India. Reflecting on

his motivation to volunteer in energy conservation, Samal shares, "I saw the electric bill increasing day by day, and my motivation came from seeing how much energy we waste without even realising it. Simple things like lights left on, chargers plugged in, unnecessary AC use showed me how our habits directly affect the environment. Volunteering in energy conservation opened my eyes to the power of small actions. I've learned that conserving energy is not about sacrifice; it's about responsibility and smart choices that protect our resources for a sustainable future."

Samal believes that community-focused initiatives are the most effective in promoting energy-saving habits. "Community-based campaigns work best when they are practical and relatable. School awareness programs, LED distribution drives, workshops and public demonstrations on reducing electricity bills make a big impact. People respond strongly when they see real savings in their monthly expenses. We are also doing solar energy awareness through rallies and skits." By demonstrating tangible benefits, the foundation ensures that energy conservation becomes both accessible and achievable for people of all ages.

Addressing the challenges volunteers face, Samal explains, "Many people think energy conservation is complicated or

time-consuming. To address this, we keep our messages simple and demonstrate easy steps like switching to LED bulbs, reducing AC usage and unplugging devices. Another challenge is lack of awareness. Consistency is the key: repeated communication helps break resistance and encourages lasting behaviour change."

Through his work, Samal emphasises that energy conservation is not merely a technical issue but a lifestyle choice rooted in responsibility, education and practical action. His initiatives highlight how small, consistent efforts can lead to significant reductions in energy consumption, tangible cost savings, and a healthier environment. By inspiring communities to adopt these habits, Sattvic Soul Foundation demonstrates that every individual action matters in creating a sustainable future.

'Importing things from outside adds carbon footprint'

Pradipta Kumar Panigrahi, Founder Director of CarbonOUT; an organisation that provides tailored renewable energy solutions and Founder-cum-CEO of G-ON Energy Controls, known for its work in renewable energy, energy efficiency and green building solutions, stresses the urgent need for decisive action toward energy conservation. He highlights that the nation's climate commitment is a shared responsibility. "India's climate target to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2070 and in achieving this target, we all are equally responsible to counter carbonisation through de-carbonisation or energy conservation," he says.

Panigrahi explains the direct connection between everyday electricity use and environmental impact. "If we work it out, approximately 1.4 kg of coal is burnt for every one kilowatt of energy.

Transportation and distribution account for nearly 40-50 percent of the losses on the system," he notes. To address this, he advocates for micro-level power generation through renewable sources and improved efficiency of components. He stresses that efficiency must be the top priority. "If we focus on efficiency, we get maximum benefit. For example, a normal fan requires 70 watts of power, while a smart energy-efficient fan uses only 28 watts, around 2.5 times less energy for the same work. Our objective should be efficiency only. If we save through efficient means, then there will be no wastage."

He believes innovation must begin early. "Youth have to get involved from school time for innovation. Any idea that is generated is an idea of efficiency," he emphasises. Panigrahi also advocates for empowering local entrepreneurs and innovators. "Local entrepreneurs should be given priority. Importing things from outside adds carbon footprint; if local products are used instead, the footprint will be less and it will be called a green product."

Sharing his own contributions, he says, "We introduced LED in Odisha. Now we have developed another innovative product named Smart Paver Block, which is energy-efficient and uses recycled plastic. We have installed solar panels inside it so that it can illuminate roads, houses, and pathways."

For Panigrahi, the message is clear: "Energy conservation is the need of this hour, and we need to focus on it, bring new innovations, and contribute to the betterment of nature."

'Energy is as critical an input as our food'

Dr. Manish Kumar, Senior Principal Scientist at CSIR-IMMT, Bhubaneswar, underscores the urgent need to rethink how we use and conserve energy in an era defined by environmental strain. He emphasises that energy is "as critical an input as our food," reminding that even food itself is a form of energy.

He explains that the world primarily relies on two categories of energy sources:

conventional and non-conventional. Conventional sources, largely derived from fossil fuels, remain the backbone of global energy consumption, but they also bring severe consequences. "They create pollution and create problems for the environment," he says, citing global warming as a major concern stemming from CO emissions produced by coal-based thermal power plants. With rising environmental risks, he notes that the world is steadily shifting its focus toward non-conventional or renewable sources of energy.

Renewable energy, he points out, draws from solar, wind, hydro, and even nuclear power. Yet Dr. Kumar stresses that the most crucial action right now is energy conservation.

The scientist says awareness and education must begin early. "We have to inculcate this in our primary education," he asserts, so that children grow up understanding the value of energy conservation. Industries, too, must evolve by adopting more energy-efficient systems and technologies to reduce unnecessary wastage and enhance sustainability.

He acknowledges that transitioning from non-renewable to renewable energy sources is not without challenges. The primary barriers, he says, are cost, technological limitations, and maintenance issues. However, ongoing scientific efforts aim to make renewable options "cheaper and easily available" for widespread adoption.

Dr. Kumar urges individuals to make small but meaningful lifestyle changes to curb overconsumption, participate in government-led initiatives promoting renewable energy, and support awareness campaigns. For him, energy conservation is a collective responsibility; "from the individual to the policymaker to the society to the civic body."

ANISHA KHATUN, OP



Kwaidan: Kobayashi's tribute to Aizu Yaichi

SUBRAT BEURA

The film is structured around four stories – “The Black Hair” follows a warrior who leaves his first wife for a second marriage to gain status, only to find his “desired life” devoid of any love. He manages to leave his trapped marriage and his cold wife, to come back to his first wife, to find her having barely aged. He seeks her forgiveness and spends the night with her to realise the next morning, he was interacting with her corpse. The only thing that remains is the wife’s lustrous hair, that comes alive and embraces him.

The second story “The woman of the snow” is a woodcutter’s encounter with a mysterious woman, during a snowy blizzard night in a remote forest, he witnesses her blowing away his companion’s life with her breath. The woodcutter is spared on the condition that he cannot speak about the incident to anyone. Eventually the woodcutter finds a beautiful woman, marries her and has three beautiful children, the woman remains beautiful and does not seem to age, even after raising three children. One night the woodcutter shares the story of the forest to his wife and realises the warning of the forest woman coming true.

The third story “Hoichi the Earless” is presented as a story within a story, it opens with a song recounting a 12th century naval battle (the tale of the Heike), the dead from the battle haunt a beach. Nearby a temple, a blind musician, plays the biwa, performing for the elites, lives at the temple. The ghosts befriend him and get him to perform the tale of the Heike. To free the musician from the ghosts, the head priest covers the biwa player’s body with mantras. The story of the musician grows and his fame helps the temple and the priests.

The last story is set during the Meiji Era but goes back to a previous time where a samurai keeps seeing a man’s face in cup of water. He sees the man in his master’s house and tries to challenge him to a sword-fight but ends with three more spirits visiting him.

The word *Kwaidan* or *Kaidan* refers to stories of strange happenings, all the stories in *Kaidan* is based on Lafcadio Hearn’s (1850-1904) collections, an American who chose to live in Japan, became a writer of Japanese folk stories. Many of the stories were translated into the wider Anglophone work through his efforts. Hearn’s stories became very popular in Japan, Aizu Yaichi introduced the stories to Kobayashi. The film was made in honour of Aizu Yaichi.

The approach to music in the film is to challenge the monotony. Examine the sequence in “black hair” when the



FILM REVIEW

husband discovers his wife has become a ghost, he stumbles upon furniture in the house, there is no music, only sound of wood fracturing, the sound returns when the wife’s hair embraces him along with the man’s screams. In the film traditional instruments were used to create the soundscape – percussion, flutes, biwa – during the snow woman episode we hear

the use of flutes during the blizzard. The treatment of sound leaves the viewer with an anticipation.

The entire film was built in an aircraft hangar with hand painted cycloramas, lighting the sets was a challenge. The cost of the production was one of the most expensive films made in Japan till then. This was the first film in colour for Kobayashi, the challenge was to achieve a visual consistency and hence the decision to create these massive sets. Visually the images traverse from Japanese scroll paintings, biwa performance, to Noh theatre – the massive eyes on the horizon show the unreality of the settings while the characters live out their lives. The production was bankrupt and finally the film was made by personal loans and the sale proceeds of Kobayashi’s house.

The film holds our attention today

with its pacing, use of traditional sounds, working with folkloric stories presenting a world where limits remain unknown, the realities have many openings where we cannot explain the incidents. The spirits have their world where they cope with despair, loneliness and uncertainty. The use of Kaidan folklore does not impart moralized lessons but evokes a sensation that there might be something beyond our accepted forms of reality. The film despite all the risks taken to make it, went on to win the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1965, it also was nominated to the Academy Foreign film category.

Director's profile

Born in northern island of Hokkaido, Kobayashi spent his childhood near the mountains; he studied ancient oriental arts and philosophy in Waseda University, Tokyo. After Graduating in 1941, he was drafted into the Army and sent to Manchuria. He was a prisoner of war during the last phase of the war and was released in 1946. His experience in the Army, marked him for life. We see that experience in his “Human Condition” a testament to the degradation of war. Kobayashi made 22 films in his career spanning four decades. Prolific in the 50s and 60s he made 15 films in this period.

The reviewer, president of Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB), can be contacted at subrat.beura@gmail.com

Title – Kwaidan (Colour)
Year of release – 1965
Language – Japanese
Duration – 183 minutes

DIRECTOR: Masaki Kobayashi (1916-96) **Producer:** Shigeru Wakatsuki **Stories:** Lafcadio Hearn **DoP:** Yoshio Miyajima **Editing:** Hisashi Sagara **Music:** Toru Takemitsu **Sound:** Hideo Nishizaki **Screenplay:** Yoko Mizuki **Art:** Shigemasa **Toda Lighting:** Akira Aomatsu

MAIN CAST: Rentaro Mikuni (Samurai), Michiyo Aratama (First wife), Misako Watanabe (Second wife), Tatsuya Nakadai (Minokichi), Keiko Kishi (Woman of the Snow/Yuki), Jun Hamamura (Mosaku), Yuko Mochizuki (Minokichi’s mother), Katsuo Nakamura (Hoichi), Tetsuro Tanba (Samurai), Takashi Shimura (Priest), Kunie Tanaka (Yasaku), Kanemon Nakamura (Kannai), Noboru Nakaya (Heinai), Osamu Takizawa (The writer), Haruko Sugimura (The writer’s wife), Ganjiro Nakamura (Publisher)

Priyanka's skincare tip

Actress Priyanka Chopra recently gave a quick peek into her travel routine as she shared a candid moment from her long-haul flight. The global star offered a simple yet essential skin-care tip, emphasising that the only way to keep skin healthy during long journeys is to stay hydrated in every possible way. Taking to her Instagram Stories, the *Baywatch* actress shared a photo of herself applying a sheet mask mid-flight, giving a glimpse of her in-flight skincare ritual. In the candid image, the desi girl is seen looking straight into the camera.

Alongside the click, Priyanka wrote, "Only way for your skin to survive, long haul flights. Hydrate in every way possible. Ok now...g'night!."

Priyanka, who had recently returned from Mumbai, also shared glimpses from her whirlwind visit. The post featured a video of the actress getting ready for a show, meeting Kapil Sharma in his vanity van, and posing for the paparazzi. Priyanka also clicked selfies with fans before heading to her car. The clip wrapped up with Priyanka admitting that she didn't want to leave, joking about how long the flight back to New York would be.

"Mumbai always raises the bar. I raise it right back. Jald phir Mulaquat hogi...See you in 2026 #whirlwind," she wrote as the caption.



Isha on power of nutrition

Actress Isha Koppikar, on Wednesday, took to social media to give a peek into her fitness routine, explaining that strong, defined abs are made in the kitchen—not in the gym.

Taking to her Instagram handle, she posted a video in which she is seen relishing a balanced protein-rich meal after her workout session. In the clip, Isha can be seen explaining to her daughter the significance of a proper nutritious diet. She said, "your abs are not made in the gym, they are made in the kitchen. So, once you finish your workout, what is more important is your nutrition."

Her daughter then asks, "What does it mean?" The actress explains, "It means that for your muscles, for your growth, and for your good health, the most important thing is your nutrition. See my plate — it is a balanced diet of carbs, fat, this is avocado, and this is protein. So, the protein-carbohydrate ratio has to be right. Understood? This is my recharge moment. Time to say thank you to the body. Nourishing yourself — that's real self-care. If you want to be strong and healthy, it's not just the gym; you need healthy nutrition too. Thank you."



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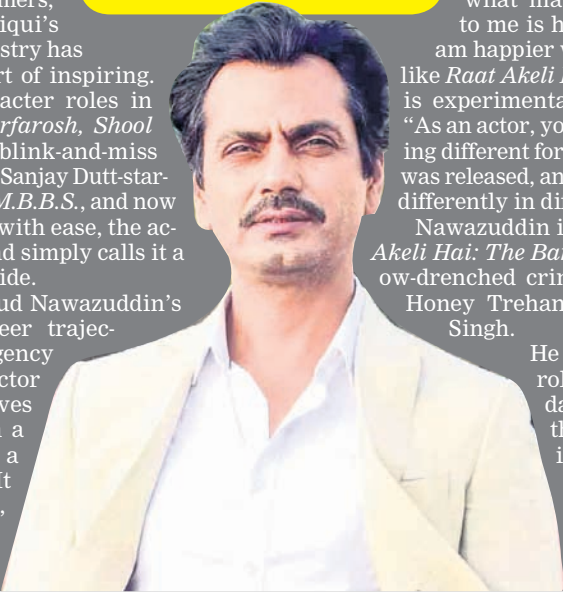
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Nawazuddin talks about his evolution

Hindi cinema's most compelling performers, Nawazuddin Siddiqui's journey in the industry has been nothing short of inspiring. From early character roles in films such as *Sarfarosh*, *Shool* and *Jungle* to a blink-and-miss appearance in the Sanjay Dutt-starrer *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.*, and now leading projects with ease, the actor looks back and simply calls it a "good and fun" ride.

As fans applaud Nawazuddin's remarkable career trajectory, this news agency questioned the actor on how he perceives his evolution - from a tiny role to becoming a widely respected talent. "It has been a good journey, and a fun one too," said Nawazuddin.



OLLYWOOD ROUNDUP

Linewala: A tribute to unsung heroes



BHUBANESWAR: The highly anticipated Odia film *Linewala*, produced by Srihari Motion Pictures and Sushant Mahanti, is nearing completion and set for a January 2026 release. The film, which promises to deliver a touching, realistic narrative, is inspired by true events and sheds light on the often-overlooked lives of public servants—particularly those working in the energy sector.

With a unique storyline that captures the everyday struggles and sacrifices of these unsung heroes, *Linewala* brings together an impressive team both on and off-screen. While producer Sushant Mahanti has penned the story, seasoned filmmaker Niranjan Behera is taking care of screenplay and dialogues, and direction.

The film stars Sambeet Acharya, Swapna Priyadarshini, Ashrumochan Mahanti, Debu Brahma, and Pratibha Panda in key roles.

Motorcycle to hit theatres Dec 19



BHUBANESWAR: Odia cinema is gearing up for a fresh, exciting ride as filmmaker Aswin Tripathy officially unveiled the teaser for his latest directorial venture, *Motorcycle*. Known for his movies like *Delivery Boy 2* and *Shanti Apartment*, Tripathy's new film promises to deliver the perfect blend of comedy, emotion, and family values that have made his work resonate with audiences across the region.

The teaser immediately caught the attention of viewers with its unique premise. In a refreshing twist, the motorcycle takes center stage as a central character, shaping the film's narrative in unexpected and hilarious ways. The film brings together a talented ensemble cast led by Jyoti Ranganayak, Prite Biswal, Abhishek Panda, Kuna Tripathy, Bhaswati Basu and other noted actors, all under the production banner of Biswal Films, headed by Jhuni Lata Biswal.

Early reactions to the teaser have been overwhelmingly positive, and there's growing excitement for the full film.

Given Tripathy's proven track record and the fun, engaging premise of *Motorcycle*, the film is expected to strike a deep chord with audiences of all age groups and become a holiday hit in Odia cinema.

COMBAT COUGH & COLD

As the weather has suddenly changed and winter has arrived, bringing a noticeable drop in temperature, catching a cold becomes a common issue. The seasonal shift makes our immune systems vulnerable, and many people find themselves struggling with the telltale signs of cough and cold. Whether it's the stuffy nose, sore throat, or persistent cough, these symptoms can be highly uncomfortable. Fortunately, there are several simple and effective home remedies that can help alleviate these symptoms and speed up recovery. Here are five tried-and-true home remedies that have been used for centuries in various cultures



HONEY AND LEMON TEA

Honey has long been a staple in natural medicine due to its soothing and antimicrobial properties. It helps coat the throat, providing relief from irritation, while lemon, rich in Vitamin C, boosts the immune system. Together, they form a powerful duo that helps combat colds and coughs.

HOW TO USE: Mix one tablespoon of honey with the juice of half a lemon in a cup of warm water. Stir well and sip this mixture several times a day. It helps soothe a sore throat, reduce coughing, and strengthen the immune system, helping to fight off infections.

GINGER TEA

Ginger is another well-known remedy for respiratory issues, valued for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It helps reduce inflammation in the throat and nasal passages, making it easier to breathe, while also boosting the immune system.

HOW TO USE: Boil a few slices of fresh ginger in water for 5-10 minutes, then strain and drink the tea. You can add honey or lemon for added flavor and benefits. Drinking ginger tea 2-3 times a day can help alleviate symptoms like a sore throat and coughing while clearing up congestion.



STEAM INHALATION

Steam inhalation is a simple but highly effective way to relieve nasal congestion and ease breathing. The warm moisture helps loosen mucus, making it easier to expel, and it also soothes the throat.

HOW TO USE: Boil water in a pot, then carefully place your face over the pot (keeping a safe distance to avoid burns). Drape a towel over your head to trap the steam and inhale deeply for 10-15 minutes. Adding a few drops of eucalyptus oil can further enhance the decongestant effect and help clear blocked nasal passages.



TURMERIC MILK

Turmeric has been used in traditional medicine for centuries due to its powerful anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial properties. It can help soothe a sore throat, reduce coughing, and boost the immune system during a cold.

HOW TO USE: Add half a teaspoon of turmeric to a glass of warm milk. Stir well and drink before bedtime. Turmeric milk is known to promote better sleep, which is essential for healing, and it provides relief from cold symptoms while enhancing the body's natural defenses.



WARM BROTH OR SOUP

A warm bowl of chicken soup or vegetable broth is not only comforting but also provides several health benefits when you're sick. It helps keep you hydrated, loosens mucus, and soothes a sore throat.

HOW TO USE: Prepare a simple vegetable or chicken broth and sip it throughout the day. You can add garlic, ginger, and turmeric to the broth for additional healing benefits. This soothing remedy helps relieve congestion and provides essential nutrients that support the immune system.

Deadly Dancing Plague: A mysterious episode in history

In the summer of 1518, a bizarre and unsettling phenomenon took hold of the people of Strasbourg, then part of the Holy Roman Empire (modern-day France). Known as the “Dancing Plague” or “Dance Mania,” hundreds of individuals were overtaken by an uncontrollable dance, often for days on end. The episode remains one of the weirdest incidents in European history, with some dancers even dying of exhaustion or heart failure. The cause behind this mysterious event has remained a subject of debate for centuries, with theories ranging from mass hysteria to ergot poisoning.

The fungus contains chemicals similar to LSD, which could have led to vivid hallucinations and convulsive movements. In the case of the Dancing Plague, it’s hypothesised that the bread consumed by the citizens of Strasbourg was contaminated with ergot, inadvertently leading to a mass poisoning event.

Another explanation is the influence of religious fervour. During the Middle Ages, superstition and religious zeal often drove people to acts of extreme devotion. Some historians believe the “dance mania” was a form of religious ecstasy. The dancers may have believed they were possessed or spiritually compelled to dance as a form of penance or to ward off demonic influences. The presence of local clergy, who encouraged the ritual dancing, could have contributed to the frenzy.

A lone woman stepped into the street of Strasbourg in 1518 and danced uncontrollably; within days, dozens joined, jerking and leaping until hearts burst and bodies collapsed due to exhaustion. No one knew why. Music and fear filled the streets

The aftermath The dancing eventually began to subside in early August 1518, but not without a significant toll. Many of the dancers reportedly died due to exhaustion, heart failure, or strokes. In fact, some accounts suggest that between 30 and 40 people died during the event. The authorities intervened by bringing in musicians to accompany the dancers, hoping that the rhythm would help calm them down. But it is unclear whether this actually had any positive effect.

The incident was so shocking that it caught the attention of historians and medical professionals for centuries. While the Dancing Plague may have been a bizarre and isolated event, it remains a haunting reminder of the dark and unpredictable side of human psychology.

Modern interpretations Today, the Dancing Plague is viewed through the lens of both psychological and medical inquiry. Modern scholars suggest that it may have been a case of mass psychogenic illness, a condition where groups of people, often under stress, begin to exhibit similar symptoms of physical or psychological distress. Ergot poisoning remains another possible explanation, given the role of contaminated food in previous poisoning events in history.

Despite the theories, the Dancing Plague of 1518 still stands as one of history’s most mysterious and bizarre occurrences. Whether a result of psychological stress, toxic mold, or religious fervour, the event serves as a powerful reminder of how little we sometimes understand about the human mind and the forces that drive human behaviour.

OP DESK

The start of the plague It all began in July 1518, when a woman named Frau Troffea stepped into the streets of Strasbourg and began to dance. It was not an ordinary dance, but one driven by some compulsive force. She danced without pause, ignoring hunger, exhaustion, or injury. Within a week, more people joined in. By the end of the month, the number of dancers had grown to around 400. The contagion spread rapidly, and soon entire groups of people were convulsing in the streets, unable to stop.

The authorities of Strasbourg were initially confused. Local leaders, including the town’s mayor and the church, were at a loss for explanations. Some speculated that the dancers had been possessed by evil spirits, while others believed it to be a punishment from God. A popular remedy at the time was to encourage more dancing, hoping it would “release” the possessed individuals from the grip of the plague. This only led to more people joining the frenzied dance, a tragic attempt at curing a phenomenon that defied understanding.

Theories behind the phenomenon Several theories have been proposed to explain the events of the Dancing Plague. The first and most widely accepted explanation is that of mass hysteria or collective psychological behaviour. Some researchers suggest that the conditions in Strasbourg at the time; tension, stress and religious fervour could have led to a mass psychological breakdown, resulting in an uncontrollable desire to dance. The stress from famine, disease and the recent loss of life might have triggered such a collective emotional response. The dancers were not simply moving to music but were overtaken by a form of psychological disorder, where the urge to keep dancing was too overpowering to resist.

A more scientific explanation points to ergot poisoning. Ergot is a toxic mold that grows on rye and other grains, particularly in wet conditions. When ingested, ergot can cause hallucinations, convulsions and spasms, symptoms that align with the dancers’



PHOTOS FOR REPRESENTATION ONLY