

MARCH 01-07 2026

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

HOLI
SPECIAL

Beyond colours

COVER STORY

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Sumit Panda is a dynamic IT professional and a prominent young Odia lyricist, poet and writer, celebrated for his soulful contributions to films, modern music, and literature. With lyrics penned for over 25 movies, he has carved a distinct identity in the industry through his expressive and emotionally rich writing. His body of works in movies includes 'Karma', 'Rangashoor', 'Phalguna Chaitra', 'Pratikshya', 'Gangs of Puri,' and many more. His bestselling book 'Mati Khoje Pakshi' and 'Achinha Janha' reflects Sumit's literary brilliance. He continues to inspire audiences with his latest projects like 'Bara Badhu' and 'Rakta Golapa'



With eminent author Devdas Chhotray



With family

Pages first, purpose next

My Sundays begin with literature and quiet moments with books, followed by completing pending tasks and work commitments in the first half of the day.

Moments that matter most

In the second half of my day, I enjoy spending quality time with my family, friends, and my five-month-old son, cherishing every joyful moment together.

Music for mind and heart

In my leisure time, I enjoy reading books and immersing myself in shayari, ghazals, and soulful music that refreshes my mind and heart.

Balance between work & warmth

My ideal Sunday is a peaceful blend of work and personal time, where I manage responsibilities while still enjoying moments of rest, reflection, and togetherness.

Preserving words through tech

I aim to promote Odia literature by designing innovative apps that raise awareness among the younger generation and help preserve our literary heritage.



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 the type of person who tries to fall back asleep in the morning, just to finish a dream.
- Alzheimer's can't be that bad. You get to meet new people everyday.
- A girl in a restaurant asked me "Are you single?". I happily replied "Yes". She took away the extra chair in front of me.
- I just let my mind wander, and it didn't come back.

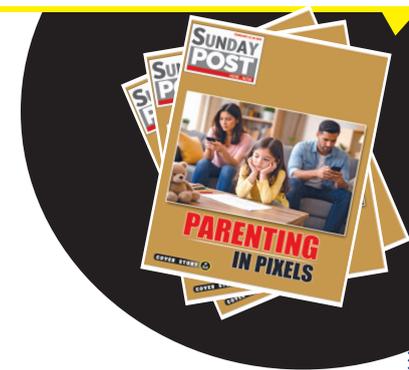


Tough times for parents

Sir, Social media has a significant influence on children, shaping their behavior, emotions, and social interactions. On the positive side, it offers access to educational content, creative expression, and opportunities to connect with peers across the world. It can enhance digital literacy, encourage learning beyond classrooms, and help children explore their interests and talents. However, uncontrolled use of social media can negatively affect children's mental and emotional well-being. Excessive screen time may lead to reduced physical activity, disturbed sleep, and shorter attention spans. Constant comparison with curated online lives can harm self-esteem, causing stress, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy. Children are also vulnerable to cyberbullying, online predators, and exposure to inappropriate or misleading content. Parents play a crucial role in guiding children toward healthy social media habits. They should set clear boundaries on screen time, monitor online activity without invading privacy, and encourage open conversations about online experiences. Teaching children critical thinking, empathy, and digital responsibility is essential. Most importantly, parents should model balanced technology use and promote real-life interactions, hobbies, and family time to ensure children grow up emotionally secure and socially confident.

AMARENDRA DAS, 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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Beyond colours

HOLI
SPECIAL

The festival of colours, Holi, is not just about gual and water balloons. It invites us to colour our lives with love, hope, courage, and joy, celebrating the vibrant spirit that brings hearts together in shared festivity

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Holi is spring's most exuberant metaphor, a reminder that life, however muted it may seem, can always be reimagined in brighter shades. The red we smear becomes compassion in action; the yellow we scatter turns into optimism we carry forward; the green that dusts our palms whispers of renewal and second chances. Even the boldest blue speaks of calm courage, the strength to begin again.

Yet the festival's deepest artistry lies not in the spectacle of colour, but in its quiet invitation. It asks us to step beyond ritual and become creators of warmth in a world that often feels hurried and grey. To forgive before we are asked. To celebrate without measure. To offer joy without hesitation. In doing so, Holi transforms from a day on the calendar into a living canvas, one where every gesture becomes a brushstroke of belonging.

To explore the deeper meaning of this vibrant festival, Sunday POST reached out to individuals from diverse walks of life to share how they bring colour, hope and positivity into the lives of others through their work.

'The festival becomes a reminder of victory, resilience and unity'

Umesh Kumar Chaini, General Secretary of the All Odisha Veteran Soldiers Association, reflects on Holi as a festival rooted in mythology, symbolising the triumph of good over evil through the legend of Prahlad and Holika. For him, that message naturally extends into the life of a soldier. "Soldiers are fighting war for the peace of citizens," he says, adding that even at border posts and insurgency-hit regions like Jammu and Kashmir and the North East, Holi becomes a reminder of victory, resilience and unity. Celebrating together in units, soldiers paint positivity by strengthening brotherhood and living the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the belief that the world is one family.

Celebrating Holi away from loved ones, he notes, teaches profound lessons in courage and sacrifice. A soldier often builds a new family within the regiment,

forming bonds that replace distance with belonging. In regiments such as the Sikh Regiment, Rajputana Rifles and Garhwal Rifles, where relatives sometimes serve together, the celebration carries a special charm with regional traditions and food. Yet even in mixed units, shared colours dissolve loneliness. "It needs bravery to celebrate in difficult conditions," he says, emphasising that choosing joy despite separation reflects true strength.

Holi significantly boosts morale among soldiers. The shared laughter, colours and camaraderie offer a brief escape from operational stress and renew emotional resilience. It breaks social barriers within units and fosters unity beyond caste, creed or region.

To families celebrating without their loved ones in uniform, Chaini offers reassurance: distance is temporary, but love and unity are permanent. "Stay strong and celebrate in spirit," he says, adding that the joy of reunion will be the brightest colour of all.

'Painting young lives with hope is a lived responsibility'

Lizarani Das, PGT English at Buxi Jagabandhu English Medium School, believes Holi is far more than a burst of seasonal colour; it is an ethos that naturally flows into her classroom. "Holi just

brews happiness in a day, and that sets the tone for a vibrant, colourful dawn filled with hope and positivity," she says. For her, the festival's exuberance reflects the environment she consciously nurtures, one where young minds feel safe to express, explore and evolve. "Every canvas tells a story, of existence and perseverance," she adds, seeing each child as a living artwork shaped by experience and possibility.

To Lizarani, "painting young lives with hope" is not metaphorical flourish but lived responsibility. "It is the gardener's duty to prepare the environment for the flower to bloom," she says, describing her role as one of patient cultivation. She believes that the right nutrients; love, affection, generosity, sensitivity and compassion,

are essential in shaping a child's emotional and intellectual growth. Through stories of mythology, spirituality and leadership, she gradually builds foundations that extend far beyond textbooks. "The psyche of a child is framed, cultivated and nourished by the educator," she reflects, emphasising that hope is instilled through steady presence and unwavering belief.

Holi, she notes, also becomes a powerful social equaliser within the school community. "Holi acts as a social bridge in curbing differences and cultural divides," she says. The festival dissolves hesitation, fosters transparency and encourages respect for diversity across backgrounds and beliefs. "It teaches us to collaborate, not compete," she observes, pointing to the effortless laughter and shared celebration that unite students. For Das, Holi ultimately transcends ritual. "It just teaches us to be humane, breathing humanity," she concludes, calling it a living lesson in harmony, empathy and sustainable togetherness that lingers long after the colours fade.



'Holi treats colours not as surface, but as experience'

Contemporary visual artist Jagannath Panda sees Holi as far more than a seasonal celebration. "Holi, for me, is not just a festival of colours. It is a lived emotion for all of us, a shared memory and our cultural rhythm that many of us carry within ourselves," he says.



To him, the moment colours touch the body, the street, the home and the courtyard, everything transforms into one extended space of collective joy. The memories of playing with colours hold mischief, forgiveness, friendship and warmth all at once. "Holi reminds me of childhood mornings, of hands and faces stained beyond recognition, rhythmic music playing somewhere nearby, laughter mingling with the smell of festive food and joyful hours spent with friends," he recalls.



As an artist, Panda finds deep resonance between Holi and his creative practice. "Holi speaks to me because it treats colours not as surface, but as experience. Colour spills and yet creates its own harmony," he says. That spontaneity and freedom naturally enter his work. "When the echoes of Holi unfold, it reminds me that creation does not always need precision; sometimes it needs trust, play and the courage to let things collide." For him, the festival also carries the weight of collective memory, conversations, shared meals and songs that become invisible pigments shaping his understanding of time, community and belonging.

He believes festivals like Holi play a subtle yet powerful role in nurturing social harmony. "Festivals open us up. They offer a space where people can feel together without having to agree on ev-



everything," he says. Standing side by side, colour becomes a reminder that culture is not something observed from a distance but lived through touch, sound, food, laughter and shared presence. "In that sense, Holi is not only a celebration. It is a lesson, one that shows how colour, creativity and community can restore the togetherness we often forget we need."

'Colours within us are what allow us to paint the world beautifully'

Swगतिका Acharya, cancer survivor and Chairperson of Awaaken Cancer Care Trust, believes Holi is far more than a festival of colours, it is a celebration of survival, spirit and shared resilience. Having faced a life-threatening illness herself, she now sees the festival as a powerful re-

minder of hope reborn after hardship. "As a cancer survivor, Holi holds a special place in my heart. It's not just about playing with colours; it's about spreading joy, hope and positivity to those around us," she says. Every year, she and her team celebrate Holi with fellow cancer fighters who are undergoing treatment or have emerged stronger from it. The celebration becomes more than ritual; it transforms into affirmation. "We share smiles, stories, hope, empathy and of course dance together to symbolise that nothing can pause us," she adds, underscoring how collective courage can dissolve fear. For those battling illness, Swगतिका believes this festival carries a deeper emotional resonance. "Holi is a reminder that there's beauty in the colours we carry within. It's about embracing the present, spending quality time with loved ones and letting our inner colours shine to brighten others' worlds," she reflects.

To her, the festival is a lesson in perspective. "Festivals like Holi teach us that life is precious and beautiful when celebrated through moments. We can colour the world with our unique hues and enlighten those around us. Let's celebrate Holi with kindness, compassion and hope. Colours outside are temporary, they fade after Holi, but the colours within us are what allow us to paint the world beautifully throughout life."



Holi skin & hair care tips



SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Holi Hai!! The vibrant festival of colours is just around the corner. Barely a few days are left before you head to play joyfully and get soaked in colour game. The Holi fever has set in and it is the time of the year when you are excited about looking like a multi-coloured canvas. The festival brings with itself, a whiff of mishmash of dry gulal and buckets of water.

When you decide to indulge in a burst of colours, what bothers people most is how to deal with skin and hair issues caused by the rampant use of harmful toxin colours that can make your skin, hair dry and frizzy. While you've zeroed in on where you're going to celebrate Holi with splashes of harmful toxins, make sure to follow these Holi skin care tips to give your hair and skin that extra protection from chemical laden harsh colours to counter ill effects on colour stained faces, parched hair and irritated skin.

Holi is celebrated at a time when Nature renews and refreshes herself. With a little care, we can do the same and also sustain our youth and beauty. The dry "Gulal" and the wet colours of today are not derived from natural sources. They contain chemicals, shiny particles of mica and even lead, which not only irritate the skin, but collect on the scalp. Since Holi is played out of doors, sun-exposure can also have a detrimental effect on the skin. Apart from harmful UV radiation, sun-exposure makes the skin dry by causing depletion of moisture and also tans the skin. The skin can become dry and dull after playing holi.

Remember to apply a sunscreen 20 minutes before going out in the sun. Use a sunscreen of SPF 20 and above. If your skin is prone to pigmented patches, select one with a higher SPF. Most sunscreens have built-in moisturizers. If your skin is very dry, first apply the sunscreen, wait for a few minutes and then apply a moisturizer. Light daytime make-up may be used. Touch up your eyes with eye pencil or kaajal and use a lip gloss.

The real problem is removal of colours after playing holi.

Do not wash your face

with soap immediately, because soap is alkaline and causes further dryness. Instead, use a cleansing cream, or lotion. Apply and massage it on the face. Then wipe off with moist cotton wool. Remember to cleanse the area around the eyes too, using a light touch. A cleansing gel helps to dissolve the colours and facilitates their removal.

To make your own cleanser, take half a cup of cold milk and add one teaspoon of any vegetable oil, like sesame, olive or sunflower oil. Mix well. Dip cotton wool into this mixture and use it to cleanse the skin.

Sesame oil can be used to remove colours from the body, massaging it on the skin. This not only helps to remove the colours, but gives added protection to the skin. Sesame oil helps to counteract sun-damage. While bathing, scrub the body gently with a loofah or washed cloth. Immediately after your bath, apply a moisturizer on the face and body, while the skin is still damp. This helps to seal in moisture.

The day after holi, you may have to deal with the effects of sun-exposure, like dryness or tanned skin. Mix two tablespoons of honey with half a cup of curd. Add a pinch of turmeric. Apply this on the face, neck and arms. Leave it on for 20 minutes

and wash off with water. Honey is a powerful natural moisturizer and helps to soften the skin, while curd will nourish and restore the normal acid-alkaline balance. It also removes tan.

Hair care

Apply a protective leave-on conditioner or hair serum before playing Holi. They coat the hair and protect it from chemical colours, pollutants and sun-exposure. They also add shine to the hair.

While washing the hair, first rinse with plenty of plain water to wash away the dry colours and tiny particles of mica. Then apply a mild herbal shampoo, working it into the hair with the fingers. Massage the scalp gently and rinse thoroughly with water again. Add lemon juice to a mug of water and use it as a last rinse. This helps to restore the acid-alkaline balance of the scalp.

Beer can also be used as a last rinse. In fact, it will soften and condition the hair. Add lemon juice to the beer. Pour over the hair after shampoo. Leave on for a few minutes and rinse off with plain water.

If there is itching, add two tablespoons of vinegar to a mug of water and use it as a last rinse. This helps in reducing itching. However, if the itching continues, and there are rashes and redness, there may be

an allergy to the colour. Consult a doctor as soon as possible.

Within the next few days give your hair a nourishing treatment. Mix egg yolk with almond oil or olive oil and massage it lightly into the hair and scalp. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for 5 minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3 or 4 times. This helps the hair and scalp absorb the oil better. Wash your hair after an hour. You can also mix one tablespoon of pure coconut oil with one teaspoon castor oil. Heat and apply on the hair and repeat the above process.

Conditioning with henna would help to restore damage to the hair, adding shine and body. To the henna powder, add four teaspoons each of lemon juice and coffee, two eggs, two teaspoons oil and enough curd to mix into a paste. Apply on the hair and wash your hair after an hour.

Make your own natural colours for Holi

Simmer Tesu flowers in water. Leave overnight. Strain and use the water to play Holi. Tesu flowers leave a yellow colour. The botanical name of Tesu is *Butea monosperma*.

Henna powder can be mixed with gram flour (besan) or maize flour (makki) and used as dry green colour.

Turmeric (haldi) can be used both as dry and wet colour. Turmeric can be mixed with gram flour for dry colour. Or, it can be added to water and boiled. Leave overnight and then use.

Boil beetroot in water. This leaves a bright magenta colour. Cool and use the water. Or extract beetroot juice, add a little water and then use it.

The author is an internationally famous beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India



Sandeepa on seeking validation

Actress Sandeepa Dhar opened up about how validation has become an issue in today's social media-driven world.

During an exclusive interaction with this news agency, Sandeepa said that people are now constantly seeking validation from others, instead of accepting themselves as they are.

She further pointed out that the pressure is more on women as they are constantly judged for how they look and are expected to maintain a certain appearance at all times.

Sandeepa called this unnecessary pressure on women unfair.

She was asked, "The film (*Do Deewane Seher Mein*) also touches upon validation and self-acceptance. In today's social media-driven world, do you think validation pressure has become a major issue?"

Sandeepa reacted to this by saying, "I think that is one of the central themes of the film. We are constantly seeking validation instead of accepting ourselves. We often believe that who we want to become is better than who we

currently are."

"This pressure is especially intense for women. There are endless expectations about appearance—diet trends, skincare routines, cosmetic treatments, and anti-aging procedures. Women are constantly judged for how they look. At social gatherings, if a

woman is not dressed up, people immediately question her. The pressure to look a certain way is far greater for women, and it is unfair", she added.



Trailer release of *Kanda Mastre*

Bhubaneswar: The official trailer of the upcoming Odia film *Kanda Mastre* has been unveiled, offering an emotionally stirring glimpse into a fading cultural tradition of Odisha and generating buzz among cinema enthusiasts.

Directed and produced by Biswajit Panda, the film is rooted in the traditional "Kandana" ritual—a poignant wedding custom where brides expressed their deepest emotions through poetic wailing during the bidayi ceremony. Through *Kanda Mastre*, the filmmaker attempts to preserve and reintroduce this vanishing

cultural expression to a new generation.

The trailer presents an emotionally charged narrative layered with nostalgia and subtle social commentary.

The film stars Bibhu Prasad, Lipsa Mishra, Pruthvi Raj Nayak, Swetashree Padhy, Dhriti Khandual and Saraswati Devi in key roles. Lipsa also takes on the responsibility of associate producer.

The story and dialogues have been written by Zakir Khan, who has co-written the screenplay with Panda. The film is produced under the banner of Biswajit Itishree Cinema. PNN

Kantarati back on track

Bhubaneswar: After months of delay, the Odia thriller *Kantarati* (The Contractor) is finally back on track. The makers recently unveiled the first look of actress Suryamayee Mohapatra from the film, signalling that the project is steadily moving towards its much-anticipated release.

Produced under the banners of SM Entertainment and Amara Studios, the film marks the first collaboration between the two production houses. The thriller revolves around the gripping story of a serial killer, promising a dark and intense cinematic experience for Odia audiences.

The film is directed by Ramesh Rout and jointly produced by Shrabani Patnaik and Suvam Mohanty. The screenplay has been co-written by Rout and Nishant Majhiita.

The movie also features Devesh Ranjan, and Tapas Sargh-



aria in pivotal roles. Music for the film has been composed by Abhijit Majumdar.

Expressing confidence in the film, producer Shrabani Patnaik said the movie is "very different from the regular films watched by audiences in the state" and expressed hope that its unique thriller storyline will captivate viewers. PNN

Taapsee questions casting choices

Taapsee Pannu's latest film *Assi*, directed by Anubhav Sinha, hit theatres February 20, 2026. While the courtroom drama has earned her praise for a powerful performance, the film has witnessed a lukewarm response at the box office. Amid the mixed commercial outcome, Taapsee has candidly addressed casting patterns within the industry.

In a recent interview, the actress

questioned why directors often choose the same actors for similar roles. She noted that the challenge lies not in actors' abilities but in the industry's "comfort zone of imagination," where filmmakers hesitate to think beyond established stereotypes. Taapsee revealed that in her conversations with leading directors, she first tries to break the perception that she only wants to headline issue-based films. She clarified that she is open to roles where she may not be the central character and is keen to explore lighter narratives as well.

Calling repetitive casting "unfair," she argued that it limits both audiences and performers who wish to experiment. According to her, bringing in fresh casting choices can also bring new interpretations to familiar roles. *Assi* also features Revathi, Manoj Pahwa, Seema Pahwa, Kumud Mishra, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Kani Kusruti, with a special appearance by Naseeruddin Shah.



Allu's desire

Tollywood sensation Allu Arjun has expressed his desire to join forces with actress Mrunal Thakur for a project in the future.

As AA bagged the 'Best Actor' award for his powerful performance in

the blockbuster hit *Pushpa 2: The Rule* at the 70th Filmfare Awards South, actress Mrunal Thakur sent a special congratulatory note for him, along with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Mrunal's sweet message for Allu Arjun read, "SIR, heartiest congratulations on winning the Best Actor at Filmfare. This honor is so well deserved. The dedication, intensity and sheer brilliance you bring to every performance is truly inspiring."

Uploading a photo of the bouquet and the note on his official Instagram handle, AA revealed that he would like to

work with Mrunal in the future.

"Thank you so much @mrunalthakur. So sweet of you. Hope to work with you someday," wrote AA.

It must be noted that Allu Arjun and Mrunal have not shared screen space till now.

Expressing his gratitude after receiving his 7th black Lady, AA shared on social media, "Thank you, Filmfare, for this wonderful honour. It's my absolute pleasure to receive it in a land where I am loved in such a unique way. I'm humbled by everyone's blessings, and I dedicate this award to all my fans for their infinite love." IANS



Challenging cliché of modern life



Subrat Beura

The film opens with a family gathering of the *Jian*'s. We slowly meet the neighbours of *Jian*'s - the *Jiang*'s. Mrs *Jiang* is a single mother, a working professional with a teenage daughter *Lili*. The *Jian*'s are a unit of five - PJ a middle-aged businessman, *Min Min* the wife, *Ting Ting* a thirteen-year old school-girl interested in the Piano, *Yang Yang* a eight year old quiet boy and grandma. The setting is upper class, the family lives in a well-appointed apartment with security cameras and granite floors. We see a wedding, *PJ*'s brother-in-law *A-Di* is getting married and we meet the extended family and here *PJ* meets his first love *Sherry* who has reappeared after thirty years in town. *PJ* is facing problems with his company trying out a buy-out with a Japanese company. *Ting Ting* is experiencing her first love, with *Fatty*, who has been intimate with *Lili*. *Yang Yang* is getting bullied by girls in his class at school. *PJ*'s brother-in-law *A-Di* is going through financial problems and seems to be over the top. The film stays over a year with these characters, through the lives of these characters we witness a spectrum of life - desire, ambition, reflection - marriage, child birth, murder and a funeral.

Title - Yi Yi
(A one and a two)- Colour
Year of release - 2000
Language - Taiwanese
Duration - 173 mins

The film uses clues cleverly to draw the viewer in: examine the pregnant bride at *A-di*'s wedding, the upside-down photo-frame that *NJ* holds at the wedding, the garbage bag left at the balcony by *Ting Ting*. The shot composition is painterly, observe the sequence in Tokyo as *PJ* travels into the city, early evening, the cityscape is framed off the reflective surfaces of the skyscrapers - evoking a modern Hiroshige and his evening-light wash in block paintings. When *Ting Ting* explores her desire with *Fatty* at the underpass cross-roads, the traffic lights blinking in the background, first red then green and then red again, evoke a painterly depiction of a tentative mood. The budding of *Ting Ting*'s potted plant and the passing of Grandma, the use of dream, to come back to reality. The editing is masterly, witness the sequence of thunder formation in *Yang Yang*'s audio-visual class to the rains splattering the roads while *Ting Ting* walks to give a letter to *Fatty*. The Japan sequence with *PJ* walking with *Sherry* on a busy road intercutting with *Ting Ting* and *Fatty* walking, use of long shot and long take, brings out the different



stages of life of these characters.

The character arcs are a set of intersecting triangles - [*NJ*, *Sherry*, *Min Min*], [*A-di*, his wife, lover], [*Lili*, *Fatty*, *Ting Ting*], [*Lili*, *Fatty*, Mrs *Jiang*] at business [*NJ*, his college friend, Mr. *Ota*] - all these characters challenge the cliché of modern life. At business Mr. *Ota* and *NJ* stand apart from all the wheeling and dealing, that is conventional depiction of corporate deal making. *NJ* stands apart as he navigates his old love, *Sherry* appears after thirty years, he lives right next door to a tempestuous mother-daughter couple. *A-di*'s unconventional marriage life is explored with the presence of his lover who is sympathetic to *A-di*. The lines that the characters speak are memorable - *Yang Yang* (I can't see what you see, you can't see what I see, how can I know what you see?) figures how to use the camera to make images, frames the back of the head, as people can't see the back of their heads, a very useful indication, to look at people and ourselves - invoking the question what do we know? The classic position of an observer, *NJ*, fits the bill, as he takes in the situation and time to think about it - his relationship with his friends at work, at home, with *Sherry* and his relatives (*A-Di* and his family).

Music by *Kaili Peng* adds to the film,

with the opening sequence use of Cello, percussion and bluesy guitar. The passages during the Cello recital where *Fatty* and *Ting Ting* realise something, holds attention and adds to the mood. The ensemble cast is well used - *Wu Nien-Jen* (a script-writer, director, TV show host) as *PJ* is a symbol of restraint has added to the film "was the only choice in my mind to play the central role of *NJ*. If I hadn't had him, I wouldn't even have started writing it." *Yang Yang* and *Ting Ting* are superb, *Sherry* and *Min-Min* and all other characters come together to bring a sense of poise, balance and understanding. The film subtly evokes a premonition of the new century, pregnant with surveillance cameras, mobile phones, violent video games, the cut-throat deal making and the all-prevalent confusion. The film won the Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival.

A little familiarity of contemporary Taiwan history helps access the Taiwan New Wave. Taiwan was under Japanese control from 1895-1945, a period of 50 years, ending after Japan's defeat in the World War II. KMT (Kuo-min-Tang) took control after the war and a government was installed, it imposed a Martial law that endured over four decades, ending finally during the mid 80s leading to elec-

Main Cast: Wu Nien-Jen (*NJ Jian*), Elaine Jin (*Min-Min*), Issey Ogata (*Mr.Ota*), Kelly Lee (*Ting-Ting*), Jonathan Chang (*Yang-Yang*), Chen His-Hseng (*A-Di*), Ke Su-yun (*Sherry Chang-Breitner*)

Crew: **Cinematography-** Yang Wei-han; **Editing-** Chen Po-wen; **Music-** Kaili Peng; **Sound-** Tu Duu-Chih; **Art direction-** Wang Cheng-kai; **Production design-** Kaili Peng; **Producers-** Shinya Kawai, Naoko Tsukeda; **Lighting-** Lee Lung-yue

tions during the mid 90s. There was no film industry in Taiwan during 1950s, the KMT government started using cinema as a propaganda tool and supported films that propagated Chinese values, promoting the Mandarin language and extolling the virtues of the KMT regime. Taiwan lost its UN seat in 1973 and China was recognized by President Carter in 1979, these political developments led to a crisis (the ruling Taiwan government lost legitimacy without US support) in the Taiwan film industry and the search to find a new way of film making - led to the Taiwan New Wave. New waves across the world looked at the future, but in Taiwan, the new wave was looking back, at its history critically and trying to represent history without propaganda, working with local Taiwanese dialect, use of sync sound, the use of long takes and long shots (particularly in the work of Hou Hsiao Hsien) were distinctive features.

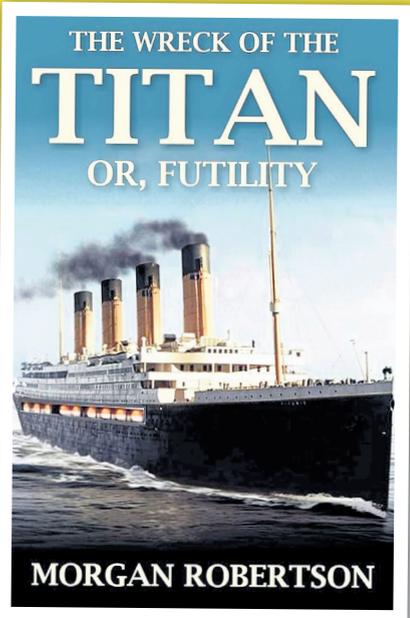
Director's note

Well, curiously you could say the 70s and 80s were in some ways a better time than the 90s, when formally Taiwan became a democracy. Today the situation looks democratic on the outside, but you soon find that one can hide a lot of things under democracy. Some time ago I wrote a comedy for a friend in Hong Kong, during the year of the handover to the PRC, whose theme was that if the Chinese leadership understood how democracy works in Taiwan, it would convert to democracy the next day! The two keys to our system are the media and the justice system. If you don't have an independent judiciary, you will be punished if you don't conform to the guidelines of certain special interests. Once that happens, it's very difficult to have media that are neutral; and once you don't have neutral media, then there's no real freedom of speech. For even though you can say what you want, your voice won't be heard. Diversity doesn't count for much when tagging along is so rewarded. Most of our politicians are very empty and short-sighted. You listen to them talking hot air, but there's nothing you can do about it. Under authoritarian rule, you can go underground with a feeling of purpose. But now everything looks fair, yet there's no real participation in the system.

The reviewer is president of Film Society of Bhubaneswar and he can be reached at: subrat.beura@gmail.com

A TALE BEFORE TRAGEDY

AN EERIE LITERARY COINCIDENCE LINKS THE TITANIC TRAGEDY WITH *FUTILITY* BY MORGAN ROBERTSON, WHICH DESCRIBED A FICTIONAL OCEAN LINER'S CATASTROPHIC SINKING YEARS BEFORE HISTORY MIRRORED THE TALE WITH CHILLING ACCURACY



In 1898, American author Morgan Robertson published a maritime novella titled *Futility*, a story that would later become woven into one of the most haunting coincidences in nautical history. Fourteen years before the RMS Titanic embarked on her tragic maiden voyage and sank in the North Atlantic, *Futility* told the fictional tale of an ocean liner called the Titan that also collided with an iceberg and met a disastrous end. The striking resemblances between the imagined tragedy and the real one have intrigued readers, historians and Titanic-enthusiasts for more than a century.

Robertson's tale was originally published simply as *Futility* in 1898. After the Titanic disaster in 1912, which claimed over 1,500 lives, the book was retitled *Futility, or The Wreck of the Titan* and reissued. In this second edition, some technical details of the fictional ship were altered, perhaps to more closely align with the real-world event after the fact.

At first glance, *Futility* seems like yet another sea adventure, but a deeper look reveals extensive parallels between Robertson's fictional vessel and the ill-fated Titanic.

Uncanny parallels between Titan and Titanic

One of the most sensational similarities is the name itself. The fictional vessel Titan bears an almost identical name to the Titanic, differing by only two letters. Both ships were described as the largest and most advanced of their time, widely regarded as practically "unsinkable." In Robertson's words, Titan was "the largest craft afloat and the greatest of the works of men."

Physically, the two ships were not so far apart either. Titan measured around 800 feet in length, while the Titanic was 882 feet 9 inches long, a difference of only about 80 feet. Both ships were capable of high speeds (Titan alleged at 25 knots; Titanic at around 22.5 knots) and carried thousands of passengers on transatlantic voyages.

Perhaps the most haunting resemblance is the sequence of events:

- North Atlantic Iceberg: Both Titan and Titanic met their fate in the cold waters of the North Atlantic after striking icebergs on an April night, roughly in the same region about 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland.

- Lack of Lifeboats: In both accounts, the liner carried only the minimum number of lifeboats required by law, far below what was necessary for all passengers and crew. Titan had 24 boats for about 3,000 people; Titanic technically carried a few more, but still not enough for everyone aboard. The inadequate lifeboat provision was a real factor in the Titanic tragedy itself.

Another similarity is that in both

stories, the collision occurred on the starboard side of the ship. Although the exact nautical mechanics differ, the overarching story, collision in cold April waters followed by a deadly sinking, is eerily consistent.

Differences that matter

Despite the impressive parallels, the Titan and Titanic narratives are not carbon copies. In Robertson's fiction, the Titan did not sink on its maiden voyage but was on at least one prior trip. Furthermore, the Titan's sinking in the story was almost instantaneous, giving passengers minimal chance to launch boats, unlike the Titanic, which took about two and a half hours to go down. In the fictional account, only a handful of people survived, whereas the real Titanic saw around 700 survivors.

There are also contextual differences: the Titanic's iceberg collision happened in clear conditions, whereas the Titan's occurred in adverse weather. Robertson's ship had more watertight compartments and different engineering details. These differences show that the story, while remarkably parallel, was not a literal blueprint for the tragedy that unfolded in 1912.



Prophecy or maritime expertise?

After the Titanic sank, many were quick to suggest that Robertson had "predicted" the disaster, even ascribing clairvoyant powers to him. Contemporary reports noted the resemblance as almost prophetic, describing how *Futility* eerily mirrored events that would later take place. Robertson himself denied super-

natural foresight, insisting that his story was grounded in his understanding of maritime trends, shipbuilding developments, and the logical extremes of engineering practices of the day.

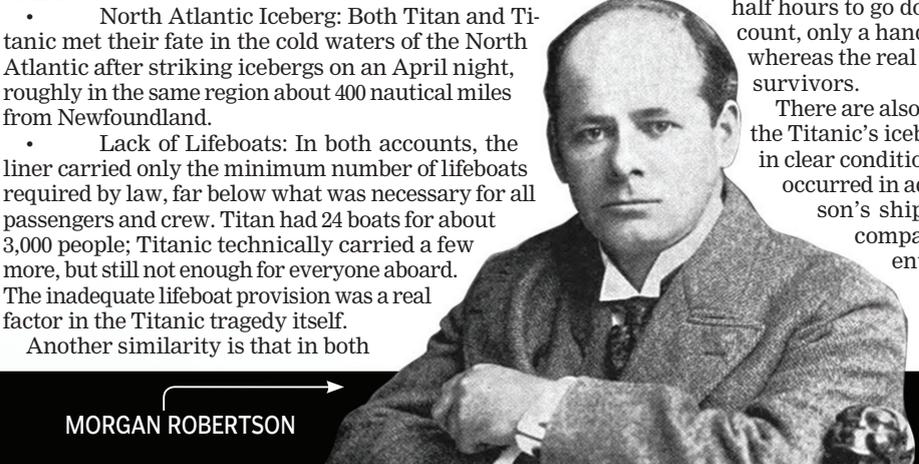
Indeed, Robertson's background may offer a reasonable explanation. He was the son of a ship captain and spent years writing about naval subjects and sea travel, giving him insights into the trajectory of ship design in the late 19th century, a period when ever-larger and faster ocean liners were being dreamed up and built. Many of the "predicted" features in *Futility* were simply extrapolations of trends already underway in shipbuilding, rather than clairvoyant insight into a specific future event.

Legacy of an eerie tale

Regardless of whether *Futility* was prophetic, coincidental, or merely well-informed fiction, its legacy remains fascinating. The parallels continue to spark debate among historians, literary scholars and Titanic enthusiasts. The novella itself, largely forgotten before 1912, became a footnote in the larger story of one of history's most infamous peacetime maritime disasters.

Whether viewed as an eerie coincidence or a cautionary tale highlighting the hubris of technological optimism, *Futility* endures as a curious and unsettling companion to the real tragedy of the Titanic, a reminder that sometimes fiction and history intersect in the most unexpected ways.

OP DESK



MORGAN ROBERTSON