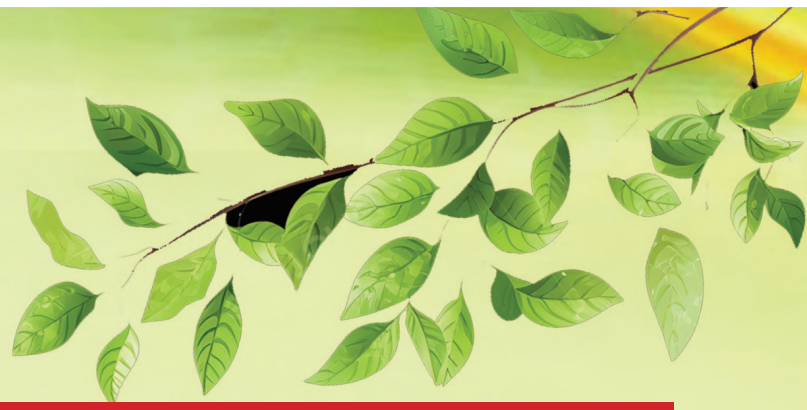


APRIL 19-25, 2026

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



World Earth Day – April 22

# Every small step counts



COVER STORY

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# MY SUNDAY

*Diby Samal is a rising star in dance choreography in the Odia film industry. Born in Kolkata and raised in Jajpur, his love for dance blossomed into a full-fledged career driven by dedication and creative ambition. After starting out as a background dancer and later working as an assistant choreographer, he got his big break with 'Dhitang Dhitang' in 'Karma'. From then on, there was no looking back. His upcoming films include 'Mantra Muugdha,' 'Kangula,' 'Mangalpur Diaries,' and 'Nayaka.' When he gets a break from work, Dibya rushes back to his home town to be with the family*

## No pause, just work

We hardly have the luxury of holidays as there's no fixed Sunday in our profession. Literally, every day is a working day for us.

## Finding joy in cricket

Whenever I get some time off, I enjoy playing cricket with friends, it's my favourite way to unwind and recharge.



With actor Harihar Dash



With Mantra Muugdha cast

## Dancing in dream locales

My ideal Sunday would be spent shooting a romantic dance number in scenic locales like Kerala, Goa's beaches, Manali, or picturesque hill stations, where work and happiness blend beautifully.

## Homebound for loved ones

Whenever I find leisure time, I make it a point to visit my hometown, Jajpur, and cherish quality moments with my mother and old school friends.

## Mom's food, happy soul

A true foodie, I love desi cuisine, especially my mother's cooking, and enjoy preparing Odia favourites like rice, dalma, and soriso macha for friends at gatherings.

ANISHA KHATUN, OP



## WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

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THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- The last thing on earth you want to do will be the last thing you do.
- There's no 'I' in 'team' but there are 5 in 'individual brilliance'.
- People tend to make rules for others and exceptions for themselves.
- Someone donates one kidney and is hailed as a hero. I donate five, and get arrested?



## Living art traditions

Sir, This refers to last week's cover story 'Before the colours fade', an insightful article on Odisha's traditional art forms and the urgent need to preserve them. The piece beautifully captures how crafts like Pattachitra, palm-leaf engraving, and terracotta are not merely decorative, but living knowledge systems that carry generations of cultural memory, spirituality, and community wisdom. The perspectives shared by artists such as Jagannath Panda, Dwijabar Das, and Priyabrata Sahoo highlight a critical reality: these traditions are at risk, not due to lack of demand, but because of declining interest among younger generations and insufficient institutional and financial support. The growing dominance of mass-produced goods and digital alternatives further threatens their survival. At the same time, the write-up offers a hopeful path forward. The emphasis on innovation, education, and blending traditional techniques with contemporary aesthetics is particularly significant. Integrating these art forms into modern markets and academic spaces can restore both their relevance and dignity. Preserving these crafts is not simply about protecting the past; it is about safeguarding cultural identity and shaping a more meaningful, sustainable future.

DEBADUTTA SAMANTA, KENDRAPARA

## 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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To stay silent now is not ignorance; it is negligence. Every act of indifference, every refusal to change and every shrug at environmental destruction is an endorsement of the catastrophe unfolding around us



# Every small step counts

energy-efficient lifestyles, supporting clean technologies, and aligning daily habits with environmental consciousness can amplify impact. Transitioning to electric vehicles must go hand-in-hand with adopting renewable energy sources like rooftop solar. Schools, colleges, and even stadiums going green demonstrate how collective effort can redefine norms. Saving our planet is not a singular act but a shared journey. When governments, industries, and individuals act in unison, small steps converge into transformative change. Our power, truly, is our planet, and protecting it is the responsibility we all share."

### 'Grassroots participation is key to environmental protection'

Wildlife biologist Dr. Biswajit Panda believes Earth Day must serve as more than a symbolic observance, it should become a catalyst for collective environmental action. In his view, the annual occasion presents a powerful opportunity to transform awareness into neighbourhood-driven initiatives that reflect the global call for sustainable living and ecological restoration.



"At a time when humanity must shift from being the destroyer of nature to its saviour, Earth Day offers communities a chance to come together and create projects that



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At a time when humanity must shift from being the destroyer of nature to its saviour, Earth Day offers communities a chance to come together and create projects that

directly address local environmental challenges while contributing to the broader fight for planetary preservation," he says.

tion that confronted its own excesses and chose redemption. The time for spectators has passed. We must become the saviours of the Earth, or perish as its destroyers.

With Earth Day around the corner, Sunday POST spoke to a few experts to get their valuable insights on safeguarding our only home - the Earth.

### 'Saving the planet is a shared journey'

**Rumit Walia**, Founder of Tears of the Earth and Manager, Youth Affairs, EARTHDAY.ORG Asia, is a creative environmentalist. The youngest participant in the prestigious State Department International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) on the theme of Environmental Engagement and Economy for the Indo-Pacific says, "No act is too small, every action counts. Earth Day reminds us that the power to protect our only home lies with each one of us, and with the systems we shape."



contributors to environmental degradation. Yet today, many of these so-called "destructors" are steadily transforming into unlikely saviours. Across sectors, companies are investing in solar and wind energy, rethinking supply chains, and committing to net-zero goals. Governments are creating policies that incentivize renewable adoption and sustainable practices. These shifts may be gradual, but they signal a critical transition, one where responsibility meets opportunity. In India, this transformation is particularly visible. Initiatives like Mission LiFE emphasise behavioral change as a cornerstone of climate action. It is not only about generating cleaner energy but also about reducing consumption and distributing resources more equitably. India's rise as one of the world's leading producers of renewable energy reflects both policy direction and entrepreneurial innovation, from electric vehicles to advanced battery technologies."

He goes on to add, "However, systemic change alone is not enough. Citizens play an equally vital role. Choosing en-

vironmental challenges while contributing to the broader fight for planetary preservation," he says.

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Humanity's war against the Earth has long been disguised as progress. Forests have been razed for profit, rivers turned into sewers of industrial greed, mountains gutted for minerals, and the atmosphere poisoned in the name of convenience and consumption. We have plundered the planet with the arrogance of a species convinced that nature exists solely to serve it. But the bill for that arrogance has arrived. Climate disasters are no longer rare tragedies, they are annual certainties. Heatwaves scorch cities, floods swallow homes, droughts devastate harvests, and entire ecosystems collapse before our eyes. To stay silent now is not ignorance; it is negligence. Every act of indifference, every refusal to change and every shrug at environmental destruction is an endorsement of the catastrophe unfolding around us. The era of performative concern and symbolic activism is over. The planet does not need more hashtags or token gestures, it needs action and accountability. This is the defining moral challenge of our age. Humanity must decide whether it wishes to be remembered as the civilisation that consumed its only home for comfort and profit, or the genera-



future where human progress no longer comes at the cost of the planet.

et, because there is no Planet B for us."

change.

"The planet does not need a handful of perfect environmentalists," he says. "It needs millions of people making mindful choices every day." He points out that even habits as simple as walking short distances instead of driving or supporting local and sustainable products can collectively reduce environmental

**'Young people must reconnect with sustainable practices'**

For Satyabrata Samal, Founder and Director of the Sattvic Soul Foundation in Bhubaneswar, environmentalism begins not in grand declarations but in the quiet discipline of everyday choices. Through cleanliness drives, awareness campaigns and grassroots initiatives across multiple districts of Odisha, Samal has helped shape one of Eastern India's most remarkable sustainability movements, transforming communities into what is now recognised as the region's largest plastic-free collective. His work, rooted in action rather than rhetoric, reflects a simple but urgent philosophy: saving the planet is not the responsibility of a select few, but of every individual willing to alter their habits.



Samal believes the journey from environmental destruction to ecological stewardship begins with small, conscious acts repeated consistently. Carrying a reusable bottle, refusing single-use plastic, planting and nurturing trees, conserving water and electricity, segregating waste at home, and keeping public spaces

strain. For Samal, sustainability is not an abstract ideology, it is a lifestyle shaped by daily discipline and personal accountability.

Yet beyond individual action, Samal places his greatest faith in the transformative power of youth. He argues that the younger generation must become the torchbearers of environmental responsibility by blending modern awareness with traditional ecological wisdom passed down through generations. "Young people must reconnect with indigenous knowledge and sustainable practices if they are to lead meaningful change," he says.

But awareness alone, he insists, is not enough. What the climate movement truly requires is visionary leadership, a shift in youth mindset, and long-term consistency in grassroots action. Environmental progress, he believes, will not come from fleeting campaigns or symbolic gestures, but from sustained commitment that turns concern into culture. In Samal's vision, the path to saving the Earth lies in empowering ordinary people, especially the young, to understand that every conscious choice is a vote for the future of the planet.

**'Earth Day is a reminder of hope for a better future'**

Prof. Jayakrushna Panigrahi,

Working President, Orissa Environmental Society, says, "Earth, the only planet holding a dynamic living system, sustains all organisms in countless ways, from the air we breathe to the water we drink, from the food we grow to the ecosystems that support all life forms. Thus, the moral responsibility of each one of us is to protect and preserve the life supporting systems of our planet. On this Earth Day 2026, let us pause and reflect on the changing environmental scenario of the only home we have ever known - our Earth."



Panigrahi further highlights, "This year's Earth Day is not just a celebration, but a call to global action. Climate change, pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity continue to challenge the balance of our natural world. But a perceptible change is possible in the form of a movement and it begins with awareness, intention, and consistent effort. Every small step matters - supporting clean energy initiatives, reducing waste, conserving water and other resources, choosing sustainable products, and planting trees - all these add to the sustainability of our ecosystems. The choices we make today shape the world future generations will inherit. We need to realise our connectedness with the Earth, and we have to move beyond temporary gestures and commit to long-term habits that nurture and protect our environment."

He further says, "Earth Day is also a reminder of hope for a better future. Around the world, communities are coming together to restore ecosystems, protect wildlife, combat pollution, use renewable energy sources and innovate solutions for a greener future. When individuals unite with purpose, the impact can be powerful and lasting. Let today inspire all to reconnect with nature - walk among trees, listen to birds, feel the soil beneath our feet - and remember what we are working to protect. Let it also inspire courage - the courage to change, to advocate, and to act. Together, we can build a future where humanity lives in harmony with nature. Not just today, but every day. Let's protect our plan-



clean may appear modest in isolation, but together they form the foundation of lasting

According to Dr. Panda, this transformation can only occur through collaborative action involving local communities, educational institutions, government agencies and civil society organisations.

He stresses that environmental rehabilitation cannot remain the burden of a few activists or policymakers; it must become a shared civic responsibility. Joint initiatives such as plantation drives, water conservation programmes, waste management campaigns, awareness rallies and sustainable livelihood projects can collectively build climate resilience and restore ecological balance.

"When different stakeholders unite under a common purpose, they create a platform for learning, innovation and action that benefits both the environment and society," he notes.

Educational institutions, in particular, have a critical role to play by integrating environmental awareness into practical, field-based learning and cultivating ecological responsibility among students from an early age.

Dr. Panda further emphasises that no environmental movement can succeed without grassroots participation. He advocates for actively involving rural communities and indigenous groups, whose traditional knowledge and sustainable practices offer invaluable lessons in harmonious co-existence with nature. Local governance bodies, he adds, can accelerate impact through supportive infrastructure and policy implementation, but true success lies in public ownership of the cause.

"The future of environmental protection depends on whether ordinary people recognise that safeguarding the Earth is not the duty of governments alone, but of every citizen," he says.

For Dr. Panda, Earth Day symbolises the possibility of that awakening, a moment when disparate groups unite behind a singular mission: to repair the damage of the past and build a



# Jaga Gharas: Guardians of temple and tradition

*Historical accounts suggest that the Jagannath Temple faced repeated invasions over centuries, particularly during periods of non-Hindu rule. In response to such threats, rulers established Jaga Gharas to protect the temple, its devotees, and the sacred Holy Triad. Deeply rooted in history, they serve as 'warrior academies' linked to the ancient, 800-year-old tradition of Sahi Jata, where locals train to perform in the Ramayana street plays*

DEBA PRASAD NAYAK

Puri has long been regarded as one of the foremost pilgrimage centers of Hinduism. Historical accounts suggest that the Jagannath Temple faced repeated invasions over centuries, particularly during periods of non-Hindu rule. In response to such threats, rulers established Jaga Gharas to protect the temple, its devotees, and the sacred Holy Triad.

These institutions were not limited to security functions alone. During times of peace, members also assisted in civic administration, functioning in ways similar to local policing systems within the temple ecosystem. Over time, a network of seven Sahis developed around the temple, each hosting its own Akhada. Within these Akhadas, units known as Jaga, Kota, and Gada operated, all collectively forming the broader system of Jaga Gharas.

## Cultural life, festivals & physical discipline

With time, the role of the Jaga Gharas expanded beyond protection into the heart of cultural life. Members became deeply engaged in festivals and performance traditions, especially Sahijata and the Chandan Yatra, both of which remain closely associated with these institutions.

Training in these spaces often involved rigorous physical discipline alongside ar-

tistic practice. Wrestling, acrobatics, rope climbing, and traditional exercises using Mudgara and Mallakhamb were commonly taught under respected gurus. These gurus also guided learners in classical art forms such as Odissi and Gotipua, blending physical strength with cultural refinement.

Locals often describe the Jaga Gharas as complete cultural ecosystems where

physical training (Janga), friendship (Sanga), ritual practices (Bhanga), communal feasting (Pangata), and music (Sangeeta) coexist. These spaces were not just training centers, they were vibrant social institutions that shaped identity, discipline, and community bonds.

## Endangered traditions in a changing world

Today, the Jaga Ghara system faces a critical phase of decline. The disappearance of its original defensive purpose, combined with limited economic sustainability, has weakened its traditional foundation. As modern career opportunities expand, many young people are moving away from these cultural institutions.

Additionally, the rise of modern gyms and popular sports such as cricket has reduced participation in traditional physical practices. Membership in many Jaga Gharas has declined significantly, raising concerns about the survival of this heritage system.

In response, some institutions have begun adapting by developing community halls and renting out spaces for social and cultural events, attempting to create new sources of income while preserving tradition.

## Reviving the legacy

There is growing recognition that government and institutional support is essential for the revival of the Jaga Ghara tradition. Cultural promotion through modern media, films, and storytelling—similar to how regional cinema has popularized local traditions elsewhere—could help bring wider attention and economic support.

Given their large physical spaces, many Jaga Gharas also have the potential to become community hubs for social events such as weddings and festivals. Some are already moving in this direction to ensure finan-

cial sustainability.

Another important step forward could be inclusivity. Allowing greater participation of women in these spaces could help challenge outdated perceptions and open the tradition to a broader community base.

## Building a future through sport and heritage

Historically, Jaga Gharas produced skilled wrestlers and athletes who contributed to regional and national sports. This legacy can be revived by integrating modern sports infrastructure while preserving traditional practices.

With structured support—professional coaching, training mats, and modern gym facilities—these spaces could once again become centers of excellence for wrestling, much like regions such as Haryana that have successfully institutionalized the sport.

Organizing formal competitions, providing government recognition, and linking these institutions with sports development programs could help restore their relevance. In doing so, the Jaga Gharas of Puri could evolve into a powerful blend of heritage and modern athletic training.

*The writer is Mukherjee Fellow and Research & Policy Associate at the office of a Member of Parliament.*



# Namita Gokhale: We need a true literary renaissance

Namita Gokhale needs no introduction. The noted Indian writer, editor, publisher, and co-founder of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) is widely acclaimed for her novels, essays, and contributions to contemporary Indian literature. In an engaging conversation with **Sunday POST**, she reflects on her deep appreciation of Odisha's literary ethos and her vision of creating a global platform like the JLF. Gokhale also shares thoughtful insights on translation, feminism, mythology, and storytelling. This apart, she goes on to address the contemporary challenges facing Indian writing, making this interaction a rich exploration of the ideas shaping modern Indian literature.

◆ **You have visited Odisha earlier. How do you perceive the state of its literary environment?**

◆ I have always appreciated the beauty and deep aesthetic culture present in all aspects of Odia life. There is also a very sincere and thoughtful attitude that I have encountered in my Odia friends.

◆ **The JLF has become a global pilgrimage for literary enthusiasts. How did you conceive the idea for such an event?**

◆ I was driven by the need to bridge the artificial divides that had built up between English, Hindi and the other Indian languages. The JLF was a first step in trying to build up a multilingual literary community, and to give Indian literature a genuine platform and international visibility.

◆ **Your works have been translated into Odia as well as several Indian and international languages. How do you assess the current state of translation of regional literature in India?**

◆ There has been a surge in publishing interest for translations into English from Indian languages. However the literary exchange between different national languages is still woefully inadequate. I do appreciate the good work done by the Sahitya Akademi but we need much more than that for a true literary renaissance to come about.

◆ **Critics often compare your works with that of celebrated Urdu**

**writer Ismat Chughtai, particularly in the context of feminism and women's struggles, even though your contexts differ. How do you view this comparison?**

◆ Ismat Chughtai was an extraordinarily brilliant writer so it's a flattering comparison. Her women characters were very strong, as mine are, but I think the comparison stops there. Pahadi women and the lives they live, the stories they inhabit, are very different in culture and context from Chughtai's characters.

◆ **You are perhaps among the first novelists in India to set a work against the backdrop of a literature festival. Did the JLF inspire you to write this novel?**

◆ My novel *Jaipur Journals* was inspired by the stories that lurk beneath the surface in what has been called 'the Greatest Literary Show On Earth'. The novel is packed with colliding narratives and attempts to present a portrait of the JLF in its many dimensions. The central character, Rudrani Rana, is a failed novelist who finds success - but a success that comes too late.

◆ **You often draw on Indian mythology in your novels. How do you weave together different strands of ancient tales to create new variants and contemporary aesthetic forms that reshape the fictional landscape?**

◆ As Indians, we inhabit the landscape of myth and legend in our everyday lives. We are immersed in the foundational epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, they are a part of the texture of daily lives. We are always revisiting these texts, sometimes questioning them, sometimes reinterpreting them.

◆ **Your novels are often set against the backdrop of history and the Himalayas. Is there a specific reason for this recurring choice of setting?**

◆ I am a Pahadi, from the lake town of Nainital in Uttarakhand. I return to the hills in imagination in my writing, and many of my books, including the one I am working on, are set there.



PIC: BANDEEP SINGH

OP DESK

## Sreeleela's balancing act

South film star Sreeleela continues to strike a rare balance between the demanding worlds of cinema and medicine,

pur-suing her MBBS degree while managing a packed film schedule. Despite back-to-back projects, the young actor remains committed to her academic journey, often moving from long shooting hours straight into study sessions. Her ability to divide equal attention between acting and academics reflects remarkable discipline and determination.

Speaking about how she manages her hectic routine, Sreeleela shared that success in balancing both requires immense willpower and patience. She admitted there were moments when the pressure felt overwhelming and even chaotic, but noted that she genuinely enjoyed pursuing both passions. Her deep interest in medicine, she said, keeps her motivated, adding that she loves the subject and spends much of her time studying it.

Reflecting on her professional journey, Sreeleela described her rise in the film industry not as a sudden breakthrough but as a gradual process of "small, quiet steps" that slowly became visible. She emphasised that growth is a constant cycle of learning, unlearning and relearning, and said staying centred and maintaining a sense of normalcy has been key to navigating fame while remembering why she began in the first place.

AGENCIES



## OLLYWOOD ROUNDUP

# Aafa Telugu remake on cards

Bhubaneswar: The Odia film *Aafa* (Life After Life) has quickly won hearts with its emotional story and relatable characters. Just days after its release, the film has opened doors for a Telugu remake. A meeting was recently held in Hyderabad to discuss the remake. It was attended by director and producer of the movie Pritiraj Satapathy, Prasad



Kalinga Film Laboratories Ltd director Sai Prasad, Telangana Film Development Corporation chairman and noted producer Dil Raju and Former MP Prabhas Kumar Singh. Satapathy shared his vision and plans for adapting the story for Telugu audiences. Released April 3, *Aafa* tells the heartfelt story of a close-knit family—father, mother, grandfather, and daughter—whose lives are transformed by an unexpected tragedy. The film marks the acting debut of Anmol Pati, daughter of renowned director Ashok Pati. Apart from Pritiraj, the cast includes Kuna Tripathy, Naina Das, Hara Rath, Dharitri Khandual, Siddharth Tiwari, and child artist Mivaan. Co-produced by Naina Das, the film is now set to reach an even wider audience beyond Odisha with its Telugu remake.

# New *Suna Chadhei* first look out

Bhubaneswar: Celebrating a milestone in Odia cinema, leading production house Shree Pictures marked its 40th anniversary with the grand unveiling of the first look of its upcoming film *Suna Chadhei*. The film revisits the iconic classic *Suna Chadhei*, aiming to blend nostalgia with a fresh contemporary narrative. Released in 1988, the movie starred Uttam Mohanty and Archana Joglekar. The first look of the latest version introduces Sivani Sangita as Bini, the beloved character originally portrayed by Archana in the original film. The 1988 version, directed by Rabi Kinagi and produced by Keshab Rout, Sunil Rout and Mina Rout, also featured stalwarts like Bijay Mohanty, Debu Bose and Anita Das in key roles. The remake is penned and produced by Smruti Ranjan Rout and directed by Ramesh Rout, co-writing the screenplay. It is jointly produced by Chiranjeeb Sahoo and Shubham Mohanty, with dialogues by Sudipta Sundar Swain and music by Baidyanath Dash.



World Creativity and Innovation Day – April 21

# Celebrating the power of ideas

In an age when the world constantly seeks new solutions to rapidly evolving challenges, innovation has become not just important but absolutely essential for driving progress, adaptability, and long-term global sustainability



ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Every great invention, masterpiece and movement begins with a single spark of imagination. World Creativity and Innovation Day celebrates that spark, the fearless curiosity and inventive spirit that propel humanity forward. Observed globally, the day honours the minds that dare to think beyond the obvious and challenge the boundaries of possibility. From technological breakthroughs to artistic expression and social reform, creativity remains at the heart of every meaningful advancement. In an age where the world seeks fresh solutions to evolving challenges, innovation is no longer optional but essential. The occasion stands as both a celebration and a call to action: to nurture imagination, embrace originality and empower ideas capable of shaping a brighter tomorrow.

Ahead of World Creativity and Innovation Day, Sunday POST caught up with a couple of sharp souls and here's what they have to share.

The inspiration came from his father, a school teacher with a deep love for science, who constantly encouraged him to explore, experiment, and participate in scientific activities, says **Sakyasingha Mahapatra**, Founder and Managing Director of SakRobotix Lab Pvt Ltd. "Helping him with tools and small projects during childhood gradually sparked my interest in innovation," adds Sakya.



What began as youthful curiosity evolved into a mission when he realised that access to robotics and technology education remained limited for students in small towns and rural areas. "That is where my real journey began, with the simple goal of making robotics affordable and accessible to all. SakRobotix Lab started from a very small setup, but with a big vision to take technology education beyond big cities," he shares.

For Sakya, creativity has been central

to overcoming limitations and building practical solutions. "I did not have access to big labs or funding, so creativity became my biggest strength.

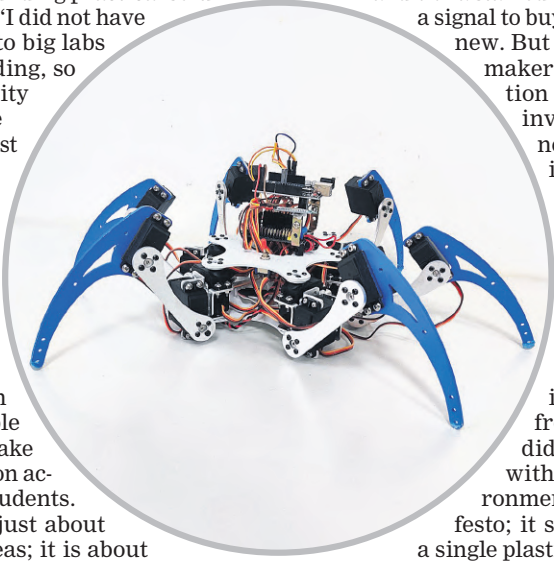
When resources are limited, innovation demands that we think differently," he says. This philosophy shaped SakRobotix Lab's focus on designing affordable robotics kits that make technology education accessible to more students.

"Creativity is not just about generating new ideas; it is about making solutions simple, useful, and reachable for people who need them," he adds.

Reflecting on the challenges innovators face, Mahapatra points to limited funding, infrastructure, and ecosystem support; especially in smaller towns, along with societal pressure to pursue conventional careers. "Entrepreneurship and innovation are often discouraged in favour of safer paths, which can make the journey harder for aspiring innovators," he notes. Yet he believes perseverance remains the key. "Patience, self-belief, and consistency matter more than perfect conditions. Innovation is not one giant breakthrough, it is a continuous process of learning, experimenting, and improving," he says.

His advice to young innovators is simple yet powerful: "Start with what you have, focus on solving real problems around you, and never be afraid to begin small. Meaningful innovation grows step by step."

**Tapaswini Nayak** says, "People often joke that my balcony looks like a scrapyard, but to me, it's a library of possibilities. I've realised that we live in a world designed to make us forget how to



fix things. We are trained to see a broken handle or a stained tablecloth as a signal to buy something new. But for a homemaker, innovation isn't about inventing a new gadget; it's about reclaiming the value that others have already given up on. My journey into 'best from waste' didn't start with an environmental manifesto; it started with a single plastic detergent bottle. Instead of tossing it, I cut it, smoothed the edges and realised it made a better organizer for my husband's tools than any-

thing I could find at the store. That small victory changed my vision. Now, when I see a pile of old newspapers, I don't see trash,

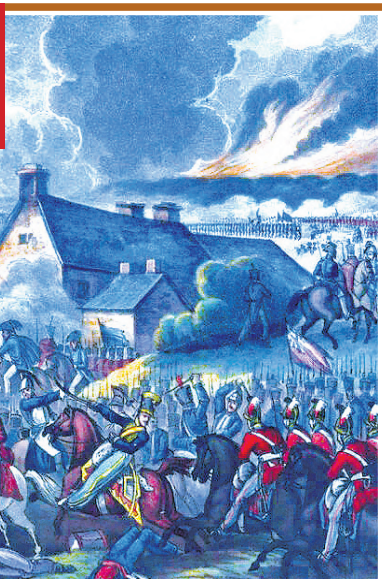


I see the raw material for hand-woven, sturdy storage bins. When a pair of jeans wears out, it becomes a durable apron or a patchwork cushion cover."

Nayak goes on to add, "Innovation is a muscle that grows every time you solve a problem without spending money. We should acknowledge that the most impactful ideas are often the ones that reduce our footprint. Upcycling is a form of domestic engineering. It requires you to look at the chemical properties of a material, is it waterproof? Is it flexible? Is it heat-resistant? and find a new destiny for it. I'm not just making crafts; I'm defying the 'throwaway culture.' I am teaching my children that creativity is our greatest currency. When we turn a delivery box into a dollhouse or citrus peels into household cleaners, we are choosing to be producers rather than just consumers. My trash bin is my most honest resource center; it challenges me to think, to tinker and to prove that nothing is truly 'waste' until we lose the imagination to use it."



The Battle of Waterloo left the battlefield strewn with the bodies of tens of thousands of soldiers. Yet even before the dead could be buried, another kind of scavenger arrived. Alongside looters searching for weapons, uniforms and valuables were men hunting for a stranger commodity, healthy teeth



# Teeth of Waterloo

In the early 19th century, long before dentistry became a science of implants, anaesthesia, and sterile clinics, a missing tooth was more than a medical inconvenience. It was a visible mark of decay, poverty, and aging in a society obsessed with appearance. For the wealthy elite of Europe, maintaining a complete set of teeth was a matter of social survival.

### Battle of Waterloo

Fought in present-day Belgium, the battle marked the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. It left behind a landscape of devastation, with tens of thousands of dead and dying soldiers scattered across muddy fields. But as the smoke of cannon fire faded, another, quieter activity reportedly began. Before the dead were even buried, scavengers and opportunists arrived—not just to loot weapons or uniforms, but to harvest something far more personal: teeth.

### The rush for “Waterloo Teeth”

The aftermath of Waterloo created what some historians have described as a macabre supply chain. Soldiers who had died young often still had healthy, intact teeth—precisely the kind valued by dentists of the time. According to accounts from the era, individuals moved quickly across the battlefield extracting teeth using pliers and crude tools.

These teeth were then collected, sorted, and sold to dental practitioners or middlemen traders. In London and other European cities, they became known—sometimes euphemistically, sometimes openly—as “Waterloo teeth.”

The scale of the battlefield made the practice especially notorious. With so many bodies in one place, the opportunity for acquiring large quantities of usable human teeth was unprecedented. In effect, war had created a grim but profitable raw material.

### Why human teeth were so valuable

To modern readers, the idea of human teeth being re-



used in someone else’s mouth may seem horrifying. But in the Georgian and early Victorian eras, the logic was largely practical.

Dental disease was widespread, particularly among the wealthy. Diets high in sugar and refined foods led to early tooth loss, and dental care was primitive at best. A full set of teeth was essential for speaking clearly, chewing properly, and maintaining a respectable appearance in high society.

Alternative denture materials existed—carved ivory, animal bone, and early porcelain—but they were often uncomfortable, discolored, and visibly artificial. Human teeth, by contrast, were considered the most lifelike option available. They blended more naturally into the mouth and were seen as the pinnacle of denture craftsmanship, despite their unsettling origins.

### From battlefield to workshop

Once acquired, the teeth underwent a transformation in dental workshops. They were cleaned, trimmed, and

carefully sorted according to size and shape. Dentists would then mount them onto denture bases made of ivory, typically sourced from walrus or elephant tusks.

The process was meticulous but far from modern hygienic standards. Metal pins, springs, and wires were used to hold the dentures together, creating devices that were functional but often uncomfortable. Some designs even relied on spring-loaded mechanisms that forced the jaws into position, making speaking and eating an awkward effort.

The result was a paradox of the era: prosthetics that were highly valued for their realism but deeply flawed in everyday use.

### A hidden economy of the dead

Although Waterloo gave its name to the phenomenon, it was not the only source of human teeth. Grave robbers, prison executions, and even impoverished individuals selling their own teeth contributed to a broader trade in human dental material.

The system reflected the stark inequalities of the time. The poor and the dead provided raw materials, while wealthy clients purchased the finished products to preserve their social image. In this way, the human body became part of an early and unsettling medical economy—one where survival, beauty, and death were closely intertwined.

Dentistry, still in its infancy as a profession, operated in a gray zone between science, craftsmanship, and commerce.

### The end of an unthinkable practice

By the mid-to-late 19th century, the trade in human teeth began to disappear. Advances in dental science introduced better alternatives. Porcelain teeth became more realistic and durable, while vulcanite rubber revolutionized denture bases by making them lighter, cheaper, and more comfortable.

At the same time, growing medical regulation and shifting moral attitudes made the use of human remains increasingly unacceptable. What had once been a respected solution gradually became a taboo.

The phrase “Waterloo teeth” remained as a historical curiosity, but the practice itself faded into obscurity.

### A grim reflection on medical history

Today, the story of Waterloo teeth survives as one of the more unsettling footnotes in the history of medicine. It reveals a world where necessity often outweighed ethics, and where the boundaries between life and death were more porous than we might imagine.

Modern dentistry offers implants, whitening treatments, and routine check-ups that can restore or maintain a smile without disturbing the dead. Yet the legacy of that earlier era lingers as a reminder: medical progress is not only measured in technology, but also in the shifting limits of what society is willing to accept.

What once passed for practical dental care now reads like gothic history. And perhaps that contrast is what makes the story of Waterloo teeth endure—not just as curiosity, but as a reflection of how far human medicine has come.

OP DESK

