

AUGUST 10-16, 2025

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



P 3,4  
COVER  
STORY

WORLD ELEPHANT DAY – AUGUST 12

# Engineers of Ecosystems





With composer Asad Nizam



With sister

### Recharging through music

There's rarely a Sunday in an artist's life, but when free, I rest, recharge, and immerse myself in all kinds of new music.

### Family first

I love spending Sundays with my family, as work keeps me occupied on other days, leaving little time to connect and unwind with them.

Abinash Dash, the vibrant voice from Salepur, Cuttack, turned childhood dreams into symphonies after dazzling a 2018 reality-show stage. From All India Radio studios to silver screens, his breakout single 'Tu Mo Premare Achu' ignited a meteoric rise. With 150+ chart-topping music videos, tracks like Urvasi, Lajabati Lajabarna, Swapna Sundari, and Premare Padile Emti Hue echo across millions of hearts. Despite his busy schedule, Abinash celebrates his Sundays, spending quality time with his family and loved ones

### Exploring new avenues

In my leisure time, I enjoy playing cricket and exploring new things that add value to my life. I'm also deeply devoted to music and its creative journey.

### Kitchen assistant

I love home-cooked meals, especially those made by my mother and sister. Whenever I'm home, they prepare delicious dishes for me, and I enjoy helping them in the kitchen.



ANISHA KHATUN, OP



### WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes at: [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- The first computer dates back to Adam and Eve. It was an Apple with limited memory, just one byte. And then everything crashed.
- The Miss Universe pageant is fixed. All the winners are from Earth.
- If time is money are ATM's time machines?
- My dad used to say "Always fight fire with fire." Probably explains why he was thrown out of the Fire Service.



### NCERT's controversial move

Sir, Last week's cover story 1817- The Unsung Uprising is a reminder how many significant events of Indian freedom struggle are gradually fading into oblivion due to apathetic attitude of authorities concern. The 1817 Paika Rebellion— Odisha's armed uprising against the East India Company— remains unsung because colonial records dismissed it as a "local riot," and post-Independence historians privileged the 1857 revolt as the "first war." Led by Bakshi Jagabandhu and Paika peasant-soldiers, it fused guerrilla tactics with mass support, predating 1857 by four decades. Its memory survived only in folk songs and village shrines; English archives barely noted it, and Odia voices were marginalised in nationalist narratives. Thus, the spark that nearly ousted the British from coastal Odisha still waits for its rightful chapter in mainstream history. But the most unfortunate part is the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the autonomous body that shapes India's school curricula, has now removed the event from the new Class VIII social-science textbook.

ELINA SAHOO, JHARSUGUDA

### LETTERS

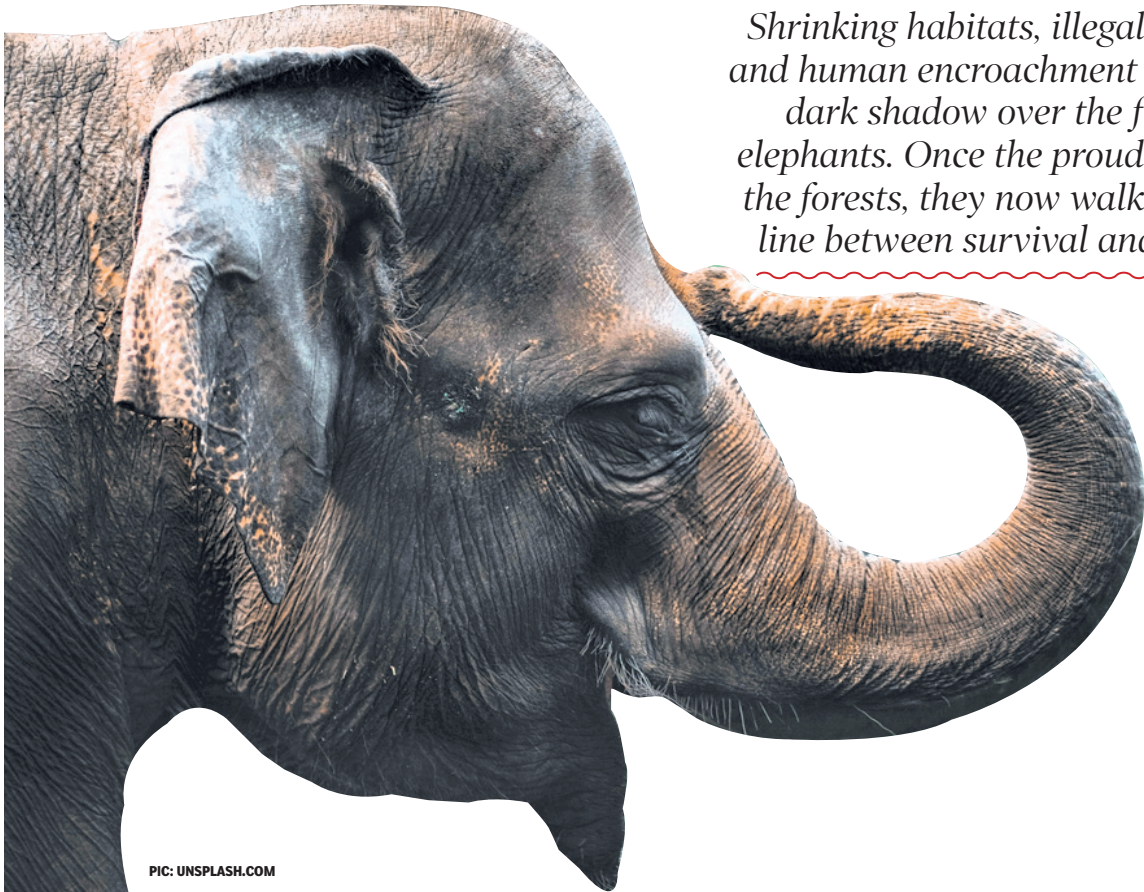


#### A word for readers

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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PIC: UNSPLASH.COM

Shrinking habitats, illegal poaching, and human encroachment have cast a dark shadow over the future of elephants. Once the proud sentinel of the forests, they now walk a perilous line between survival and oblivion



and elephants. The initiative engages local communities through dialogue, awareness, and participatory planning, with the goal of building an elephant-friendly environment rooted in understanding and mutual respect.

According to him, the primary objective of Hati Sabha is to gather public perception, promote awareness, and encourage behavioural change by deepening the understanding of elephant movement and ecology. "By involving the community directly, we are not just protecting elephants—we are creating a shared sense of responsibility," he says.

Panda emphasises the urgent need to connect the younger generation to the cause of elephant conservation. "Raising awareness among the younger generation is crucial because they are the future custodians of our natural heritage. Elephants, often referred to as the keystone species, play an irreplaceable role in maintaining forest ecosystems. They are the natural gardeners of the wild, helping in forest regeneration by dispersing seeds and clearing pathways that benefit other species."

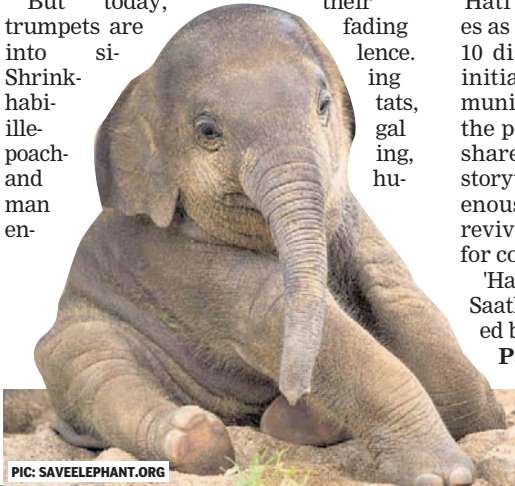
He believes cultivating empathy among youth today is essential to shaping a more sustainable tomorrow. "As musketeers of natural resources, it is our collective duty to ensure that the younger generation understands the ecological, cultural, and environmental significance of these majestic creatures. Their active involvement and empathy today can shape a more sustainable and harmonious future for both humans and wildlife."

# Engineers of Ecosystems

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Majestic and mysterious, elephants have long captured the human imagination—towering symbols of wisdom, memory, and grace. In the cultural tapestries of India and beyond, they are venerated as sacred beings, protectors of forests, and embodiments of divine strength. Yet their significance stretches far beyond myth and metaphor. Elephants are the silent architects of the wild—"gardeners of the earth"—whose every step nurtures the natural world. As they roam ancient pathways, they clear forests, spread seeds, and create vital waterholes, quietly shaping the ecosystems that sustain life itself.

But today, their trumpets are fading into silence. Shrinking habitats, illegal poaching, and human encroachment have cast a dark shadow over their future. The Asian elephant, once a proud sentinel of the subcontinent's jungles, now walks a perilous line between survival and oblivion.



PIC: SAVEELEPHANT.ORG

To save the elephant is to preserve the soul of the wild. It is to defend a lineage that predates us by millennia and to honour a creature whose very existence nourishes the earth. As the forests whisper their age-old secrets, may we listen—and act.

Ahead of World Elephants Day, here's what the experts have to say on the issue.

### Rebuilding bonds

While not many of us are much concern about the these engineers of ecosystems, 'Hati Sabha,' a unique initiative, emerges as a beacon of hope. Organised across 10 districts of Odisha, this grassroots initiative fosters dialogue between communities and conservationists—between the people and the elephants who have shared the land for centuries. Through storytelling, shared memories, and indigenous wisdom, these gatherings seek to revive old bonds and build new pathways for coexistence.

'Hati Sabha', an initiative under Bikash Saathi—a non-profit organisation founded by Wildlife Biologist **Dr. Biswajeet Panda**—is being organised in collaboration with **OrissaPOST** and **Dharitri**. Working at the intersection of conservation and community empowerment,

the initiative brings together the power of journalism, local engagement, and environmental action. By reawakening empathy, deepening local understanding, and integrating traditional knowledge into modern conservation practices, Hati Sabha reminds us that the answers to coexistence may already lie within the hearts of those who have long lived in harmony with the wild.

Panda describes Hati Sabha as a grassroots platform dedicated to fostering peaceful coexistence between humans



Launching of 'Hati Sabha' last week in Balasore district



By protecting elephants, we protect ourselves



**Sangita Iyer**, an Indian-born Canadian author, award-winning broadcast journalist, wildlife biologist, and documentary filmmaker, is widely recognised for her tireless advocacy for elephant conservation. Known for exposing the cruelty faced by Asian elephants, she has become a global voice for wildlife protection. Drawing attention to the significance of elephant conservation, she passionately explains why it's crucial for the younger generation to understand their role in safeguarding nature.

"Elephants are a keystone species," says Iyer. "The survival of many wild animals in forest ecosystems—and indeed our own survival—depends on them." She explains that elephants roam for 16 to 18 hours a day, dispersing nearly 200 kilograms of dung daily. This dung is filled with seeds, as elephants digest only about 40% of what they eat. "These seeds are whole and nutritious, and as elephants wander, they naturally plant trees across vast landscapes. Those trees provide oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas," she adds. "In this way, elephants are climate mitigators. If we protect elephants, we protect ourselves. If we harm them, we ultimately harm ourselves."

She also sheds light on the major threats elephants face today across Asia and Africa. "Poaching remains a severe problem," she warns. "Illegal wildlife criminals kill elephants for their tusks, which are sold to fund the purchase of ammunition used in terrorist activities. Wildlife crime is not just an environmental concern—it's a national security threat."

In Odisha, she points out that electrocution has become a leading cause of elephant deaths. "Power companies must take responsibility. Their negligence allows poachers to easily access live wires and use them as deadly traps. These companies need to upgrade their technology and prioritise safety," she says.

Elaborating on the role of elephants in maintaining the balance of forest and grassland ecosystems, Iyer says, "Elephants pull down tree canopies, allowing sunlight and rain to nourish the forest floor. This encourages the growth of hardwood trees, which store more carbon than softwood trees. Elephants also fertilise the soil and improve forest density—making them critical to combating climate change."

Say lays stress on the importance of education and awareness. "Educate yourself through short films and credible resources. If you witness harassment of elephants with compassion and respect. Organise or participate in school art contests, essays,

and awareness drives. Teachers must take children into nature to help them form real connections. The more people understand that elephants are essential to our survival, the better our chances of protecting them."

**'Climate change is disrupting wildlife lifestyles'**

**Sanjukta Basa**, former honorary Wildlife Warden of Mayurbhanj, underscores the crucial role of youth in shaping the future of conservation. With climate change affecting both human and animal behaviour, she believes the younger generation must be empowered to lead environmental efforts. "The role of youth groups in building a healthy society is extremely crucial," she says. "Climate change is not only altering human behaviour but also disrupting wildlife patterns and lifestyles. These shifts pose serious threats



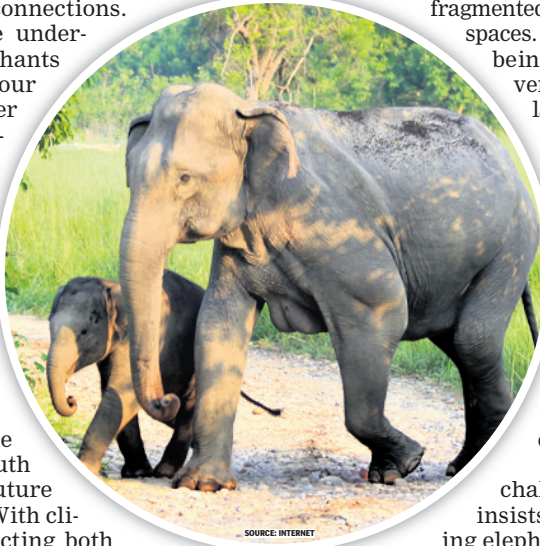
to society, and it is the youth who will inherit and have to address these challenges. Their enthusiasm and drive to create positive change can be channelled into impactful conservation work."

Reflecting on the current threats to elephants, particularly in Odisha, Basa offers a grounded perspective on the escalating human-elephant conflict. "For nearly a decade, Odisha has witnessed frequent elephant attacks and rising conflict. But it's unfair to place the blame solely on the animals," she says. "The truth is that rapid deforestation and habitat

encroachment—through mining, agriculture, and development—have fragmented their natural spaces. Elephants are being forced to venture into villages in search of food and shelter. In the process, they damage crops, destroy homes, and sometimes, tragically, cause human casualties." Despite these challenges, Basa insists on recognising elephants as allies in forest conservation. "Elephants play a vital role in maintaining the health of forests and grasslands," she says. "They create pathways by breaking branches and uprooting trees, allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor and helping smaller animals navigate dense vegetation. These gaps promote biodiversity and healthy forest growth."

Moreover, elephants act as natural seed dispersers—consuming fruits and depositing seeds, often with nutrient-rich dung, thus supporting regeneration. "They are the silent architects of the wild, shaping ecosystems in ways no other species can."

On the role individuals can play, Basa advocates for proactive, grassroots engagement. "We each have a role to play in elephant conservation," she says. "Raising awareness about their ecological and cultural importance is key. Educating communities about the consequences of poaching, legal frameworks, and available compensation mechanisms can build empathy and support. Collaborating with locals to resolve conflict and integrating conservation into educational and community programs will ensure that future generations grow up as protectors, not adversaries, of the wild."



SOURCE: INTERNET

**5 INCREDIBLE JUMBO FACTS**

**Elephants communicate with vibrations through their feet**

One of the most unique communication methods elephants use is through seismic signals, where they create vibrations in the ground, allowing other elephants to detect and absorb them through their feet and bones.

**Family units are matriarchal**

The matriarch of an elephant unit is typically the oldest and largest adult female member of the family, and they are the ones leading the herd when travelling long distances for food and water. The matriarch is also responsible for providing stability and conflict resolutions.



**Trunks function as hands**

An elephant's trunk is more than just a nose for smelling and breathing, and it also functions very much like a long arm to grab food and items, dig through soil and tree trunks, and even play. There are around 100,000 different muscles in the trunk alone, with the "finger" or spikes located at the end to help pick up small objects.

**Highly intelligent creatures**

Elephants are regarded as one of the world's most intelligent animals, comparable to great apes and dolphins.

**Incredible thick skin**

Elephants' thick hides do not mean they don't get upset easily, but rather that the animal physically has very thick skin that protects them from the brutal heat and sun.

SOURCE: EARTH.ORG



PIC: WIKIPEDIA





*For today's youth, Independence Day transcends parades and tricolours; it is a call to secure safety, equality, creative freedom, and to fulfil the nation's unfinished promise*

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

As India prepares to celebrate its 79th Independence Day, the nation stands united in pride, reflecting on decades of progress, resilience, and sacrifice. This day marks not only our liberation from colonial rule but also serves as a moment to reassess the evolving meaning of freedom in contemporary times. Independence today goes beyond political sovereignty—it resonates with personal choices, equality, justice, and the right to live with dignity. To delve deeper into these perspectives, Sunday POST spoke to a few dynamic young individuals from varied fields ahead of Independence Day. Their voices reflect the hopes, challenges, and evolving spirit of a nation that continues to grow and inspire.

**'We need to use our freedom wisely'**



Damayanti Sahoo, a student from Bhubaneswar, says, "For me, Independence Day is not just about hoisting the flag or watching parades on television. It's a reminder of the strength and courage of those who gave their lives so I could go to college, speak freely, and dream big. As a young girl in India, I feel fortunate to have the right to education and the freedom to choose my career. But true freedom would be when every girl, no matter where she is from, feels safe walking alone, doesn't face judgment for her choices, and gets equal opportunities. I still see girls being forced to drop out of school or being judged for wearing what they like. That's not freedom."

She goes on to add, "As we celebrate 79 years of independence, I hope our generation works to erase such inequalities. We are the future, and we need to use our freedom wisely—not just to grow ourselves, but to raise others too. Independence Day inspires me to be confident, courageous, and responsible. It reminds me that freedom is not a gift—it's a duty to protect, value, and share."

INDEPENDENCE DAY – AUGUST 15

# Freedom reimagined

**'Will celebrate dreams that freedom makes possible'**

Barsha Das, who works as an executive officer with a private company, Bangalore, says, "As a woman in the tech industry, Independence Day is a powerful reminder of how far we've come and how far we still need to go. I'm grateful that I have the freedom to work in a field I'm passionate about, to speak up in meetings, and to lead projects—but I'm also aware that many women still struggle for equal opportunities and fair treatment."



For Barsha, freedom means being respected for her skills, not judged for her gender. It means being able to walk into a room and be heard, not overlooked.

"I believe true independence is not just about what we've achieved as a nation but about what we choose to do with that freedom—how we use our voices, vote wisely, support each other, and make workplaces safer and more inclusive. I want to live in an India where my niece doesn't have to think twice before taking up coding or leading a startup. On this 79th Independence Day, I celebrate the dreams that freedom makes possible—but I also remind myself that freedom is a responsibility. We must build a world where every person, regardless of background or gender, has the opportunity to thrive," she adds.

**'Freedom should be holistic'**

Ipsita Nayak, a social worker from Cuttack, says, "Growing up in an upper-middle-class family, I had access to good education, a secure job, and every comfort one could ask for. But even within this privilege, I saw a silent struggle among urban youth—pressure to perform, lack of mental health awareness, and a constant race to 'succeed'. That's when I decided to leave my job and dedicate myself to youth empowerment and mental health advocacy. For me, true freedom lies in breaking the stigma—when young people feel free to talk about their fears, failures, and emotions without shame. Independence Day, for me, is not just about our political history; it's about psychological and emotional liberation too. I work with students across schools and colleges, helping them build emotional resilience and self-worth. Because what use is external freedom if we're internally trapped by fear, anxiety, or silence? My work is driven by the belief that mental well-being is a right, not a luxury. Each Independence Day reminds me that freedom should be holistic—it must reach minds, not just maps. It's time we recognise that empowering the youth mentally is just as important as empowering them economically."



**'I think of freedom as creative empowerment'**

Tapan Kumar Sutar, an entrepreneur from Bhubaneswar, says, "As an entrepreneur in the art space, I see freedom in creativity—the liberty to express, to disrupt norms, to challenge perspectives, and to build something meaningful from passion. Independence Day reminds me how vital that freedom is. My journey began with a sketchbook and a small digital platform to promote local artists. It would've been impossible without the creative freedom and digital access we enjoy today. Yet, I'm deeply aware that many talented artists—especially from smaller towns—don't get the same visibility or support. For me, freedom isn't just about doing what I love—it's about enabling others to thrive too. True independence must include economic freedom for artists—through grants, mentorship, fair pricing, and platforms that value original voices. I dream of an India where every young painter, sculptor, or digital artist has access to tools, training, and an audience beyond borders. Where the arts are seen not as hobbies, but as powerful, viable careers. This Independence Day, I think of freedom as creative empowerment. We honour our nation not just by remembering its past, but by nurturing a future where art, culture, and innovation flourish."





# ‘Literature offers a solid base for cinematic storytelling’

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Pushkara’s National Award for Best Odia Film of 2023 has catapulted Subhansu Das—cinematographer turned debut director—into the spotlight. The alumnus of Biju Patnaik Film & Television Institute, whose camera has painted stories in Hindi movies such as *Filmistan*, *Ram Singh Charlie*, and *The Last Color*, shares with **Sunday POST** the spark behind his first film and the thrill of seeing his vision rewarded.**

## Excerpts:

**Your first reaction when Pushkara was declared Best Odia Film?**

Winning a National Award for your first film is a big honour. Honestly, we had only hoped that *Pushkara* would perform well at the box office. The award is a huge bonus.

**Why did *Pushkara* feel like the right story for your directorial launch?**

Since 2018, I had been planning to direct. During that time, many people suggested I make a typical formula-based Odia film. But I was looking for a meaningful story—something with depth and cultural rele-

vance. I had heard about the *Pushkara* tradition but wasn’t familiar with the book *Nadabindu* by Sankar Tripathy. Later, the team at Tarang Productions approached me with the idea and handed me the book. Once I read it, everything clicked, and we decided to take it forward.

**Direction versus cinematography: where do the lens end and the vision begin?**

As a cinematographer, my focus is on capturing the visual essence of a scene. But as a director, I have to oversee everything—from performances and script continuity to technical aspects and the emotional rhythm of the film. It’s a much broader challenge. As a director, I believe that if I can clearly communicate my vision to the cinematographer, the end result will be much more impactful.

**How daunting is the leap from page to screen when adapting literature?**

The first step is to assess whether a book can be adapted into a film. Once we determine that, the process becomes easier. Books already have well-developed characters and a structured narrative, which

provides a solid foundation for cinematic storytelling. That helps streamline the adaptation process, though visualising and translating it to the screen still requires creativity and care.

**What’s your take on the pulse of contemporary cinema?**

Odia cinema has made great progress in recent times. From a storytelling perspective, many Odia films are now surpassing mainstream Hindi films. Earlier, when I showed Odia films to people, they often couldn’t connect with them—largely due to the heavy influence of remakes that lacked authentic Odia roots. But now, that cultural connection is coming back.

**What’s next on your slate?**

There are quite a few things in the pipeline. I’m also planning to direct my first Hindi film. Right now, we’re in the story selection phase. Once things are finalised, I’ll be able to share more.



Pushkara director Subhansu Das

## Jacqueline champions mental wellness

Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez has opened up about the growing importance of mental health and self-care in today’s fast-paced world.

Emphasising the need to prioritize mental well-being, the actress highlighted how small practices like meditation and mindfulness can make a big difference in managing daily stress. Speaking on the sidelines of an event in Bhopal, the *Kick* actress pointed out that modern life comes with constant pressure.

Jacqueline said, “Today’s world is very stressful. In such a situation, mindfulness and meditation are very important. Whether you get 5 minutes, 10 minutes or half an hour - you should give it to yourself. This keeps the mind calm and the body healthy.”

She also spoke about the deeper connection she shares with her body and mind. “Both my body and soul are fit and strong. I am very spiritual.”

Meanwhile, the 39-year-old actress recently made headlines after reliving a true fangirl moment at the Cannes Film Festival. The actress couldn’t contain her excitement as she posed with global icons like Jessica Alba, French star Juliette Binoche, and Saudi filmmaker Mohammed Al Turki. Left speechless by the experience, Jacqueline later took to Instagram to share a series of photos from the special encounters, capturing her joy and admiration for the celebrated personalities.



Rashmika Mandanna has once again set the internet abuzz, but this time it’s not for her radiant smile or glamorous red carpet appearances. A photo of the Pan-India star, dressed in a traditional handloom saree, has gone viral—showing her in a powerful, legislator-inspired avatar that’s unlike anything fans have seen before. With minimal makeup, an assertive stance, and an air of elegance, Rashmika exudes a sense of authority and grace that has left fans intrigued.

The look marks a striking departure from her usual style, sparking widespread speculation. Is it a first glimpse from an upcoming political drama or biopic? Or perhaps a bold new campaign that unveils a different side of the versatile actress? While Rashmika has stayed silent, a close source hinted, “This isn’t just a new look—it’s a statement. There’s something powerful and purposeful in the way she’s presenting herself.”

Adding to the excitement is her busy line-up, including *The Girl*-friend, the mul-

tilingual *Mysaa*, and *Thama* alongside Ayushmann Khurrana. Whether it’s a transformative role or a campaign with a message, Rashmika is clearly preparing for something impactful. For now, fans can only wait and watch as the mystery continues to build.

AGENCIES



Rashmika’s new look sparks buzz



As technology-driven generations, our education and research fields are getting skill-centric, ignoring red flags raised by human value-based learning system

# Code & Conscience



DR SAKTI MOHANTY

Materials have always been the silent witnesses and active architects of human civilization. From the flint of the Stone Age to the bronze of empires, from the iron that forged industrial revolutions to the composites and nanostructures that now shape the digital cosmos, our story is etched in the very atoms we manipulate. Each era—Stone, Bronze, Iron, Silicon—has been not just a technological milestone but a cultural epoch, accelerating at an exponential cadence that mirrors our collective ambition.

Yet, in this relentless pursuit of mastery over matter, have we become enslaved by it? As we sculpt smarter alloys and craft sentient polymers, have we misplaced our trust—revering circuits more than consciousness, algorithms more than empathy? The irony is exquisite: in a world where materials can think, we risk forgetting how to feel. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Nobel lament—

“We fly like birds, swim like fish, yet stumble in walking as humans”—echoes now with sharper prescience. The question lingers: Have we engineered marvels at the cost of our own humanity?

As technology driven generations, our education and research fields are undoubtedly getting skill centric, ignoring red flags from human value-based education system. We best know that competence in a value system enables us to decide “What to do?”, whereas modern skill-sets and high-end gadgets address the “How to do?” part. There are enough reasons to enrich both of these competence levels without compromising with anyone of them as both “What” and “How” sustain us to evolve.

In a war-struck society, how can we justify the use of a drone which instead of showering flowers in a children festival is dropping bombs in war zones! Why the video games our developers design for kids have mostly guns, tanks and fighter jets, leaving blood streaks on the phone screens! Who will teach the school kids that science is our new religion- a bridge to human connection, joy, and dreams that let kites of freedom soar beyond borders! We’ve learned to speak machine fluently, but falter at the language of pain, longing, and love.

Human values never change with time and space, culture and religion, tradition and technology, guiding our collective ascent toward purposeful living. Structured like a four-tier pyramid—self, family, society, and nature—they foster mutual fulfillment and coexistence. As most of us spend almost one-third or one-fourth of our lifetime going through classroom education, we have, at the

end of the tunnel, a search for a life fulfilling in all aspects. We trust education to unlock lasting happiness and prosperity for every individual. From there we expect it to broaden—first into rich, respectful relationships with parents, siblings, spouses, children, teachers, and strangers who briefly share our path. Next comes weaving harmony in society which intertwines religions, cultures, traditions, isms and beliefs dissolving discriminations. Society, in turn, nurtures families as its steadfast building blocks. Finally, nature—the encompassing whole—embraces every layer, aligning human aspirations into a single, coherent symphony of coexistence.

After decades of observation and research, policymakers, educators, ministries, and universities—both public and private—have institutionalised value-based learning by introducing “Universal Human Values (UHV)” as a dedicated subject.

In last couple of years, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) mandated UHV in its model curriculum, and embedded it as the core of student-induction programmes.

Echoing this momentum, the National Education Policy 2020 spotlights UHV for holistic higher-education de-

velopment. Today, nearly 50 universities nationwide offer the course as a foundational requirement, while several SAARC nations are actively exploring its adoption to infuse human values into their own education policies.

We are not islands, we are there to reflect with our genetic designs of care, compassion, empathy, honesty, gratitude, love and as many feelings which can never be the instincts of the past. With sustained investment and intent, value-based education can transmute these inborn qualities into harmonious living and coexistence. If we succeed, this epoch may yet be remembered as a new golden age of humanity.

*The writer, an Associate Professor of Physics at GITA, Bhubaneswar, is a resource person of ‘Universal Human Values’. He can be reached at: saqti.m@gmail.com*







# WW-II SPY SAGAS THAT DEFY BELIEF

*The secret agents of Second World War remind us that espionage is not merely the art of stealing secrets, it is the art of persuading the enemy to steal lies*

World War II was fought with bullets, but it was also decided by shadows. Beneath the blitzkrieg headlines, a parallel war of whispers unfolded: forged documents that rerouted armies, singers who carried invisible ink in their corsets, concentration-camp inmates who swapped identities with the dead. The five episodes that follow are not Hollywood screenplays; they are documented realities so outlandish that Allied and Axis intelligence chiefs themselves refused to believe them at first glance.

## The White Rabbit who hopped out of Buchenwald

Forest Yeo-Thomas, codenamed “White Rabbit,” looked like a mild-mannered RAF liaison officer. In truth he was Britain’s most wanted man inside occupied Europe. On his third mission to France, Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie finally cornered him in Paris. Over four days Barbie beat him until his teeth splintered, yet Yeo-Thomas insisted he was simply a downed pilot. Sent to Buchenwald, he arranged his own execution—on paper—by bribing an SS clerk to list him as “deceased.” Swapping dog tags with a dead French prisoner, he slipped into the typhus ward, then crawled under



the wire during an Allied bombing raid. Back in London, intelligence officers refused to debrief him until he produced personal letters addressed to “Shelley,” one of his underground aliases. The scars on his back were finally accepted as the real signature. Yeo-Thomas’s testimony later helped convict Barbie at Nuremberg, but even the judges paused when he described escaping by strangling a guard with his own rosary chain.

## Josephine Baker’s underwear of secrets

The most glamorous spy of the war never carried a gun—only sheet music and silk lingerie. Josephine Baker, the highest-paid entertainer in Europe, turned her chateau in the Dordogne into a clandestine post office. Nazi officers who crowded her dressing room in Paris never suspected that the “Bronze Venus” was pinning micro-photographs of coastal defenses to her bra.



Using invisible ink concocted from lemon juice and urine, she scribbled troop movements on the reverse side of her scores. When German patrols stopped her train, she seductively invited them to search her luggage—knowing the real intelligence was literally next to her skin. Charles de Gaulle later awarded her the Croix de Guerre, but for decades the French public thought her only wartime role had been to sing “J’ai Deux Amours” to the troops.

## Admiral Canaris: The spy at the head of the Abwehr

Imagine the head of the CIA secretly plotting to overthrow the President while briefing him every morning. That was

Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Hitler’s own intelligence chief. Inside the marble halls of the Abwehr, Canaris built a resistance cell so well hidden that even his deputy did not know every member. He leaked German invasion plans to the Vatican, smuggled Jews out of Berlin disguised as Abwehr agents, and timed sabotage missions so that Allied convoys could dodge U-boat wolf-packs.



The July 20 bomb plot failed, and the Gestapo found Canaris’s diaries—written in shorthand on scraps of music paper—listing every betrayal. Hitler personally ordered that he be hanged with piano wire so the death would be slow. Allied interrogators initially dismissed the diaries as Gestapo forgeries; only after the war did they realize the spy master had been fighting them and helping them at the same time.

## Agent Garbo and the invasion that wasn’t

Juan Pujol García, a failed Barcelona chicken farmer, became history’s greatest double agent because both sides thought he worked for them alone. Code-named “Garbo” by the British—he was considered “the greatest actor in the world”—he invented twenty-seven sub-agents, each with distinct handwriting and expense accounts. Between January and June 1944 he sent 500 radio messages to Berlin describing the First United States Army Group (FUSAG) massing in Kent under General Patton.

The catch: FUSAG existed only on paper. Its tanks were rubber inflatables, its troop convoys looped endlessly past German reconnaissance planes, and its radio traffic was scripted by scriptwriters borrowed from the BBC. On D-Day, Garbo radioed

that Normandy was a feint and the real assault would still hit Calais. Hitler kept two Panzer divisions idle for seven critical weeks, waiting for an invasion that the



“dead” Royal Marine courier floating off Spain had also promised.

## Operation Mincemeat—The corpse who saved Sicily

In a London basement, intelligence officer Ewen Montagu and his team spent weeks forging the life of Major William Martin, a man who had never existed. They chose a cadaver from a morgue, dressed it in a Royal Marines uniform, chained a briefcase of “top secret” letters to its wrist, and dropped it from submarine HMS Seraph off the Spanish coast. The letters hinted that the Allies would invade Sardinia and Greece, not Sicily.

Spanish doctors certified the body as genuine; German spies photographed every page; Hitler transferred the 1st Panzer Division to Sardinia just as Allied troops stormed Sicilian beaches. Years later, when Montagu published *The Man Who Never Was*, readers assumed it was fiction—until the British government released the corpse’s real identity: Glyndwr Michael, a homeless Welsh laborer who had died from rat poison. In 1998, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission added his name to a headstone in Spain, making him the only civilian deliberately buried under a false rank for services rendered in WWII.

## When truth outruns fiction

The war ended, but the files stayed locked for decades because these tales sounded less like history than hallucination. Yet pay-books, diaries, and declassified intercepts confirm every improbable detail: the singer who smuggled maps in her lingerie, the admiral who sabotaged his own fleet, the chicken farmer who convinced Berlin that rubber tanks were real. They remind us that espionage is not merely the art of stealing secrets; it is the art of persuading the enemy to steal lies.

OP DESK