Dark Patterns:

Web of lies

MY SUNDAY

Jyoti Mohanty's journey from childhood to stardom is a tale of dedication and balance. The Bhubaneswar-born actress and voice artist started young, debuting in Class III on Doordarshan. An alumnus of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Jyoti made her Ollywood debut in the 2007 film 'Dreamgirl' and later starred in documentaries and telefilms. However, Jyoti took a break from acting to focus on her studies. Later, she appeared in TV drama shows like 'To Aganara Tulasi Mu' and 'Mo Sindurara Adhikara'. When not on set, Jyoti unwinds with family, self-care, and good food, finding peace in the simple joys of life

● ● ● ANISHA KHATUN, OP

With co-actor

With husband

Me time

Sundays are my 'me time.' When there's no work, I focus on self-care — taking care of my nails, hair, and skin, and practicing meditation for inner peace.

Day of rejuvenation

Non-shoot days are precious for me. I use the day to catch up on my sleep and recharge, especially after the irregular and often hectic shooting schedules we follow.

Fam jam

I love spending time with family and relatives, as on other days, I hardly get the time to sit with them or have proper conversations due to work.

Donning chef's apron

I love experimenting with cooking by watching different recipes on YouTube. As a vegetarian, I enjoy making veg biryani, and I take pride in cooking it really well.

Music therapy

In my leisure time, I love singing, as I once aspired to make a career out of it. Music is therapeutic for me, and I also enjoy creating content for my YouTube channel.

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

- Will glass coffins be a success? Remains to be seen.

- STRESSED is just DESSERTS spelled backward.

- If you're going to be two faced at least make one of them pretty.

- I think men who have a pierced ear are better prepared for marriage. They've experienced pain and bought jewelry.

Blend of tradition & innovation

Sir, This refers to the last week's cover story 'Exploring new frontiers' on the occasion of International Dance Day. Odisha has embraced contemporary dance with a unique blend of tradition and innovation. The state's rich cultural heritage, particularly its classical Odissi dance, has provided a foundation for contemporary expressions. Choreographers like Aditi Mangaldas and Madhavi Mudgal have been at the forefront of this movement, incorporating elements of fusion, abstraction, and interdisciplinary collaboration into their works. This has not only revitalized traditional forms but also attracted a new generation of dancers and audiences. Additionally, Odisha's vibrant folk dances, such as Sambalpuri and Ghumura, have inspired contemporary choreographers, leading to the creation of modern interpretations that reflect the state's diverse cultural tapestry. The inclusion of contemporary themes and techniques in traditional dance forms has helped Odisha maintain its cultural identity while embracing modernity.

Samarpita Sahoo, SAMBALPUR

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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Dark Patterns: Web of lies

Dark patterns are illusory design tactics that manipulate users into making unintended choices, such as subscribing to unwanted services, sharing excessive personal data, or making unplanned purchases, often through confusing interfaces and psychological tricks

> Technology is not neutral. It's always shaping our attention, our choices, and our lives—often without us realizing it
> — Tristan Harris

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Have you ever found yourself clicking 'accept' on a website's terms without really knowing what you agreed to? Or struggled to cancel a subscription that seemed easy to sign up for but almost impossible to get out of? If so, you've likely encountered a dark pattern—a design tactic that tricks users into making choices they might not otherwise make.

Dark patterns are deceptive design elements used in websites and apps to nudge, pressure, or manipulate users into actions that benefit the company, often at the user's expense. These can include tactics like hiding opt-out options, making "decline" buttons nearly invisible, or using guilt-inducing language to steer decisions. They're not just annoying—they can compromise your privacy, cost you money, and erode your trust in digital platforms.

From e-commerce sites sneaking extra items into your cart, to social media apps that make deleting your account a maze, dark patterns are becoming more widespread— and more subtle.

To get the inside scoop on these digital tricks, Sunday POST spoke to a few experts about the most common dark patterns users fall for—and uncovered smart, easy ways to avoid them.

'Safety from Dark Patterns starts with awareness'

Deepak Kumar Nath, CEO & MD of Threatsys Technologies Pvt. Ltd., explains, "Dark patterns are user interface elements that intentionally mislead or coerce users into taking actions they might not otherwise choose—like purchasing an unwanted product, subscribing to marketing emails, or sharing more personal data than necessary."

These strategies are designed to benefit businesses—boosting conversions, increasing subscriptions, or harvesting user data—often at the expense of user trust. Nath says, "These are not accidental design flaws; they are deliberate strategies meant to benefit businesses at the cost of user trust." Among the most common examples, he lists 'pre-checked boxes that automatically enroll users in newsletters or paid services,' 'trick questions with confusing language,' and 'bait-and-switch tactics, where the action you intended leads to a different outcome.' He also warns about 'hidden unsubscribe links or complex cancellation processes' and 'false urgency, such as 'only 2 items left' or countdown timers that reset upon refresh.'

Such tactics are not just unethical— they can have serious implications. Users may find themselves sharing more personal information than they wanted to, paying for services they didn't mean to subscribe to, or struggling to cancel unwanted memberships. Nath says, "While these tactics may improve short-term metrics, they erode trust, compromise privacy, and lead to financial loss for users."

Recognizing these deceptive techniques is the first step toward avoiding them. "Dark patterns are subtle tricks built into user interfaces to steer people into actions they didn't intend," he explains. Some signs to look out for include 'pre-selected checkboxes,' 'misleading buttons where the 'Cancel' option is hidden or hard to find,' and messages designed to create panic or guilt. Nath highlights 'confirmshaming' as a common method, where declining an offer is phrased to make the user feel bad— for instance, 'No thanks, I don't like saving money.'

He advises, "You can recognize dark patterns by watching for designs that confuse, rush, or guilt-trip you into decisions. If something feels manipulative, it probably is."

Why do companies use dark patterns? "Companies often use dark patterns to increase sales, grow their email lists, or collect more user data," says Nath, adding, "These tactics may boost short-term profits, but they come at a cost to users." He outlines the consequences: "Privacy risks: You might share more personal information than you intended. Financial consequences: Users may be tricked into subscriptions, hidden fees, or unnecessary purchases. Loss of control: Your choices are manipulated, making it difficult to act in your best interest."

To protect oneself, Nath recommends increased caution and awareness. "Slow down: Take your time while reading terms, checking boxes, and making payments," he advises. "Review carefully what's in your cart or what permissions you're granting," Nath further says.

He also encourages the use of privacy tools and supporting ethical platforms. "One can report deceptive designs to consumer protection agencies or regulatory bodies. However, staying safe from dark patterns starts with awareness," he signs off.
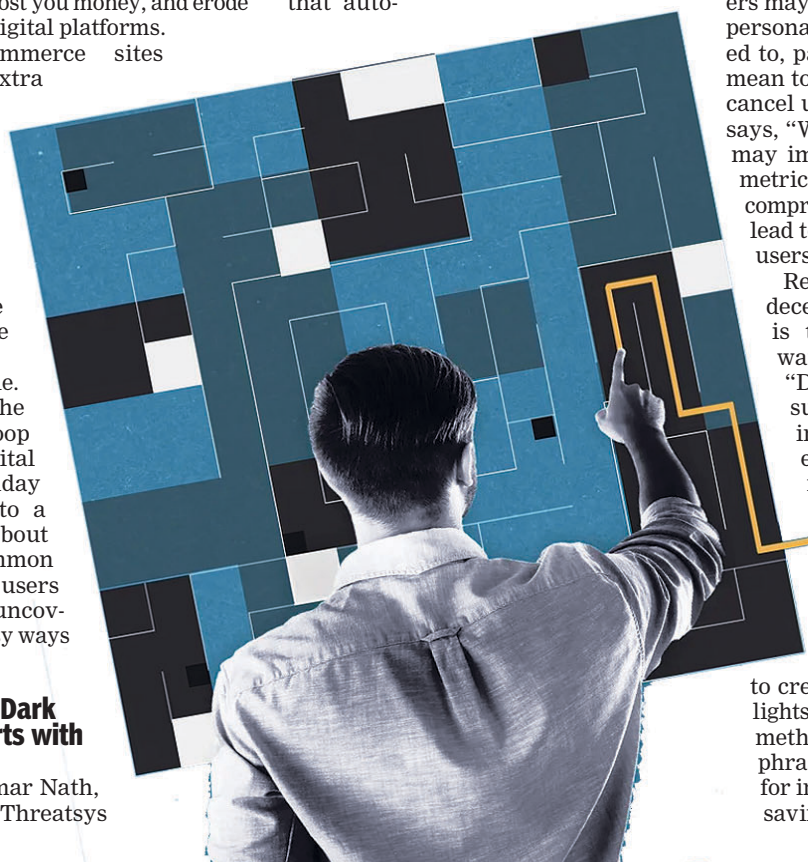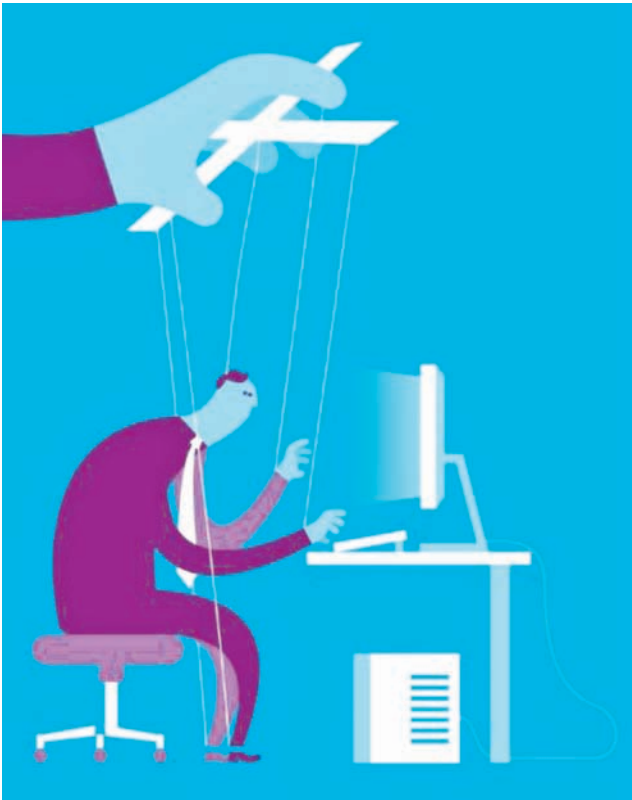
'Manipulation invites regulatory risks'

Chandra Sekhar Biswal, Director of Defigo Solutions 4u Pvt Ltd, a leading name in IT and cyber security, highlights the growing concern over deceptive design practices in the digital space—commonly referred to as dark patterns. These are interface strategies deliberately designed to mislead or manipulate users into taking actions they may not intend.

According to Biswal, "Dark patterns are deceptive design elements embedded within websites or mobile/web applications, intentionally created to mislead users. These tactics often manipulate user behaviour through unethical means—such as collecting personal data without proper cookie consent, forcing users to sign up to access seemingly valuable information that turns out to be fake, or even selling user data without clear permission."

He further explains that these manipulations often serve business interests—whether through increased signups, more data acquisition, or forced purchases—while undermining user trust and autonomy. "The objective behind these practices is to benefit the platform… often at the expense of user trust and informed choice. These patterns exploit behavioural psychology to ben-

efit businesses, often without the user's clear consent," he notes. From a technical perspective, Biswal adds, "Dark patterns are manipulative UI/UX strategies embedded in digital interfaces that exploit cognitive biases and decision-making heuristics. By using misleading visuals, language, or flow structures, they guide users toward choices that favour business goals—such as data harvesting or monetisation—often bypassing informed consent."

He outlines several of the most common types of dark patterns that frequently appear on websites and apps. These include 'Bait and Switch,' where a user attempts one action but ends up with a different, unwanted outcome; and 'Hidden Costs,' where extra charges are disclosed only at the final step of a transaction. 'Roach Motel' is another tactic, where it's easy to sign up or subscribe, but intentionally difficult to cancel. 'Forced Continuity' involves charging users after a free trial ends, often without clear reminders or an easy way to cancel.

Biswal also draws attention to 'Confirmshaming,' where guilt-tripping language is used to manipulate users into agreeing to offers or subscriptions, and 'Sneak into Basket,' in which additional items are added to a user's shopping cart without clear consent. Perhaps the most insidious, he says, is 'Privacy Zuckering'—a term for misleading users into sharing more personal data than intended, often through confusing or deceptive privacy settings.

He makes a critical distinction between ethical persuasive design and dark patterns. "Persuasive design aims to guide users toward decisions through clear and honest communication. Dark patterns, however, intentionally obscure information or exploit psychological biases to manipulate user behaviour for business benefit. The ethical line is crossed when design strategies prioritise company profits over user consent and informed choice," Biswal asserts.

In the long term, these tactics can erode consumer trust and tarnish brand reputation. "Dark patterns may deliver short-term business wins but at the cost of long-term trust and brand equity. Users who feel manipulated are unlikely to stay loyal and often become vocal critics," Biswal warns.

He emphasises that "transparency builds competitive advantage, while manipulation invites reputational and regulatory risks," especially as laws like GDPR, CCPA, and the EU Digital Services Act increasingly crack down on such practices.

'UX designers should focus on transparent, ethical approaches'

Pravas Ranjan Mohanty, a software engineer and owner of a Software as a Service (SaaS) product, raises a critical concern about the increasing use of dark patterns in digital platforms. These manipulative design strategies are often disguised within websites and apps, subtly influencing users into taking actions they may not have intended. Putting it plainly, he says: "Dark patterns are those shady tactics you see on some websites or apps that provoke their user into doing stuff they did not mean to, like accidentally signing up for a newsletter or buying something extra or showing fake download buttons. As a result, users may end up with malware and adware injected into the system."

These deceptive elements work by exploiting the way people process information and make snap decisions online. Mohanty notes that they "mess with the user's head, playing on how we make quick decisions, and push you to act against what you really want." Whether it's clicking a disguised 'close' button or falling into a subscription trap, users are frequently guided away from informed choices and into decisions that serve the platform's interests.

He highlights several common examples that many users unknowingly encounter every day. "You've probably seen these tricks before. Like when you think you are clicking to close a pop-up, but it signs you up for something. Or when you are checking out and they have quietly added extra stuff to your cart you didn't ask for. Another one is when you try a free trial, but then they start charging you and make it a nightmare to cancel," he says. These tactics prey on a lack of attention and are designed to confuse rather than clarify, often resulting in unintentional commitments or expenses.

As a software engineer, Mohanty feels a strong ethical obligation when it comes to user interface design. "Dark patterns are unethical practices used to fool users, tricking them into actions that only benefit the company. Unlike regular persuasive design, which helps users with clear and honest cues like well-placed buttons, dark patterns deceive and confuse," he explains. "The ethical line is drawn when design manipulates or misleads, undermining user trust. Instead of these tactics, product designers and UX designers should focus on transparent, ethical approaches to guide users toward proper calls-to-action."

In an era dominated by digital products and SaaS platforms, trust is a fragile but crucial asset. Mohanty warns that while dark patterns might yield short-term conversions or profits, the long-term consequences are often disastrous. "In today's digital era, where everything is SaaS-based and digital products are flooding the market, using dark patterns will definitely hurt the trust that consumers and end users have in digital products," he asserts. "When people realise they've been tricked, they feel cheated, and that damages a brand's reputation big time. Nobody wants to stick with a company that plays those kinds of games, so in the long run, brands that rely on sneaky tactics lose customers to ones that keep things honest and respectful," he concludes.

Pic: odinstreasures.com
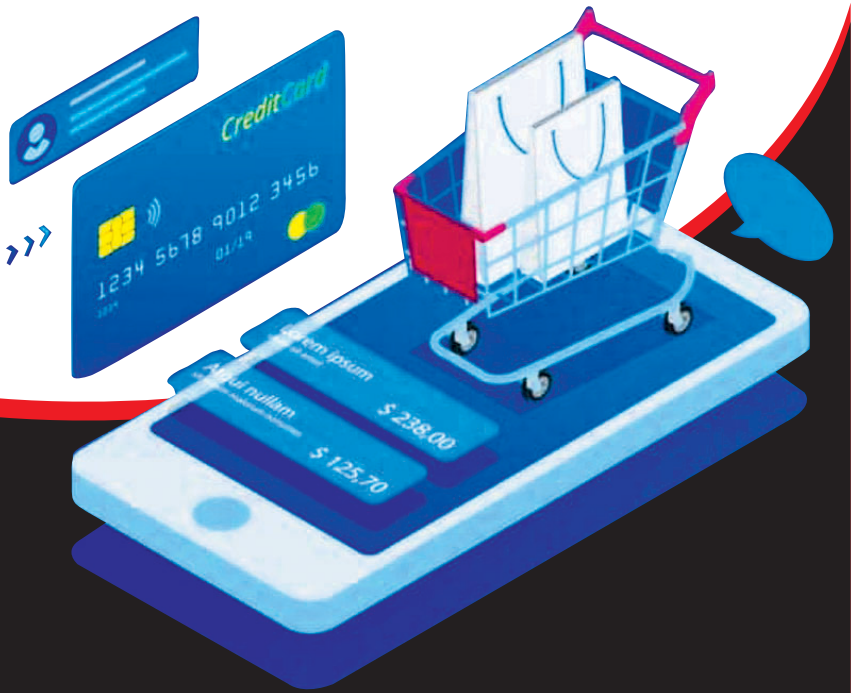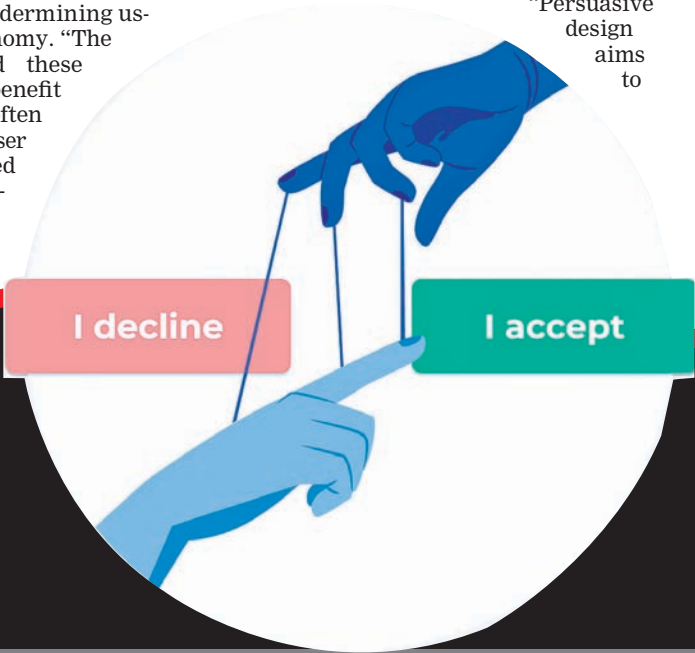
Enigma of Viking Berserkers

In Old Norse sources, Viking Berserkers were warriors who fought in a trans-like fury, that later gave rise to the English word 'berserk'. They appear prominently in many Norse sagas and poems, either as champions, heroes, elite soldiers or bodyguards

In the annals of history, few warriors evoke the same level of awe and terror as the Viking Berserkers. The mere mention of their name conjures images of wild, frenzied fighters, clad in animal skins, charging into battle with uncontrollable ferocity. These elite warriors were the epitome of Norse martial prowess, their legend etched into the very fabric of Viking culture.

The origin

The origins of the Berserkers are shrouded in the mists of Norse literature and tradition. The term 'berserker' itself is derived from the Old Norse word 'berserkr,' which could mean 'bear shirt' or 'bare shirt.' This duality hints at the warriors' nature—either fighting bare-chested or wearing the skins of wild animals. Early Norse sagas and skaldic poetry paint a vivid picture of these warriors, highlighting their extraordinary strength and courage.

Elite warriors

The concept of elite warriors driven by bloodlust is not unique to Viking culture. Throughout history, various societies have had their own versions of these superhuman fighters. In ancient Greece, the Myrmidons, led by Achilles during the Trojan War, were legendary for their invincibility. In ancient India, the Kshatriya warrior caste, particularly during the Vedic period, was renowned for its ferocity and dedication to martial prowess. These warriors, filled with 'Veer Rasa' or the essence of bravery, entered a state of heightened battle frenzy, driven by duty and the desire for honor.

Similarly, in Celtic culture, the Fianna were elite warrior bands who fought for kings and defended territories. Indo-European warrior traditions often included young men undergoing initiation rites, forming bands known as 'Koryos,' which engaged in raiding and warfare with berserk-like intensity. In Japanese culture, the Samurai were known for their fierce loyalty and willingness to fight to the death.

Culture and characteristics

The defining aspect of the Berserkers was the 'Berserkergang,' a trance-like state of intense rage or bloodlust they entered before combat. During this state, Berserkers were said to possess superhuman strength, becoming nearly invulnerable to injury. The psychological and physical state of the Berserkers during this ritual has been the subject of much speculation. Some theories suggest the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms, while others propose an intense meditative state. Regardless of the cause, their behavior in battle was marked by frenzied and uncontrollable aggression.

Berserkers were both feared and respected in Viking society. They often served as shock troops or personal bodyguards for kings. However, their unpredictable behavior also made them dangerous and difficult to control. Their loyalty and ferocity made them valuable allies, but their uncontrollable rage also made them a double-edged sword.

Mythological context

The Viking Berserkers held a significant place in Norse mythology and religious practices. Closely associated with Odin, the patron of elite warriors, the Berserkers were believed to channel his divine power. Odin, known for his wisdom and warrior prowess, could inspire warriors through divine possession, a state known as 'óðr.' This state, characterized by rage, inspiration, and divine power, elevated the warriors' combat abilities, allowing them to fight without fear or hesitation.

In Norse mythology

Berserkers appear in several Norse myths and legends, often as formidable warriors or protectors. In the 'Saga of the Ynglings,' they are described as Odin's warriors, fighting with the strength of bears or bulls. This depiction aligns with the idea of Berserkers as Odin's chosen warriors, embodying his divine power in battle.

In other stories, Berserkers are depicted as royal bodyguards or elite warriors who protect kings and chieftains. Their loyalty and ferocity made them valuable allies, but their uncontrollable rage also made them dangerous and unpredictable. This duality highlights the complex nature of the Berserkers, who were both revered and feared in Norse society.

Spiritual significance

The Berserkers' connection to Odin and animal totems underscores their spiritual significance in Norse culture. They were seen as warriors who could channel divine power and embody the spirit of nature, aligning with the broader Norse belief in the interconnectedness of the divine and the natural world. Their trance-like state and shapeshifting abilities also align with shamanic traditions, where warriors or shamans could enter altered states of consciousness to gain power or commune with spirits.

Historical interpretations

Our understanding of the Berserkers comes primarily from Norse sagas, which blend historical events with myth and legend. However, their accuracy is often debated, as these stories were passed down orally and written down long after the events they describe.

Legacy and influence

The legacy of the Viking Berserkers endures in Western culture, captivating the modern imagination. Their stories continue to inspire books, movies, and even the language we use today. Whether as symbols of unbridled fury or as embodiments of divine power, the Berserkers remain a testament to the warrior traditions and beliefs of the Viking Age. Their legend, a blend of history and myth, continues to fascinate and inspire, reminding us of the enduring allure of the warrior's path.

OP DESK

Pic: heritagedaily.com

Now a temple for Samantha

Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently celebrated her 38th birthday, and her devoted fan, Tenali Sandeep from Alapadu village in Andhra Pradesh's Bapatla district, is making headlines. Pictures and videos of Sandeep's heartfelt tribute are going viral, as he commemorated the actress's special day in front of a temple he built in her honour.

In the viral video, Sandeep is seen cutting cakes surrounded by a group of cheering children. The temple entrance was adorned with wooden boards, green floral arrangements, and vibrant streamers. At its centre stand two busts of Samantha—one in a golden hue and the other portraying her in a traditional green and red saree.

Speaking to the media, Sandeep shared, "I'm from Alapadu gramam in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, and I'm a huge admirer of Samantha garu. I built this temple three years ago and have been celebrating her birthday ever since. Her philanthropy inspires me. Every year, I feed children and cut a cake on her birthday."

The temple initially featured only one bust, but Sandeep recently added a second. His devotion mirrors similar fan tributes in India, where celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan and Sonu Sood also have temples named after them. **AGENCIES**

Jyoti's next titled *Mehermunda*

Bhubaneswar: Popular actor Jyoti Ranjan Nayak's next film, titled *Mehermunda,* was recently launched at a special event in the city.

Arlin Ankita will take on the female lead role. The film aims to highlight the struggles of Odisha's traditional handloom saree weavers, who, despite their dedication and artistry, often remain unrecognized and undercompensated.

Rakesh Padhi, Susanta Dasmohapatra, and Santu Nije are also set to play key roles in the movie. Produced by Rakesh Kumar Padhi and Gyanranjan Behera, *Mehermunda* is being directed by Nikunj Hota.

The music for the film will be composed by Amit Yuvraaj and Chandraniv Saha.

Jyoti was last seen in Rangashoor, while Arlin last performed in the Odia film Sanatani opposite Sambeet Acharya. **PNN**

A LIFE LARGER THAN LITERATURE

Badri Nath Mishra, a distinguished playwright, novelist, lyricist, and columnist, is not only earning accolades for his literary craft but also securing a lasting place in people's hearts through his lifelong dedication to humanity and nature. His remarkable achievements include transforming barren lands into verdant sanctuaries by planting over 1,00,000 trees across Odisha and carrying and cremating over 1,200 bodies

Ajira Rebati, the recent cinematic gem made in both Odia and Bengali, is winning hearts. Apart from the onscreen performances, much of the movie's success is credited to the story writer. Behind this moving narrative stands a man whose impact reaches far beyond the silver screen. Badri Nath Mishra — accomplished playwright, novelist, lyricist, and columnist — is not just earning awards for his craft; he is etching a permanent place in the hearts of people through a lifetime of unparalleled service to humanity.

Mishra's artistic journey began early — stepping onto the stage at the tender age of eight. From lyrical plays to celebrated performances like *Nila Madhaba* and *Ei Akhi Ama Sakhi*, he steadily built a towering legacy in literature and drama. Yet, his true greatness lies beyond applause and accolades, rooted deeply in service, sacrifice, and an unwavering spirit to uplift others.

Born in the sacred city of Puri, Mishra's life took a defining turn at just 19. After witnessing a close friend lose his life due to a shortage of blood, he pledged to promote and practice voluntary blood donation. Since then, he has donated blood an astonishing 112 times — a commitment that earned him the prestigious *Raktveer Samman* from the Governor of Odisha in 2016.

But his compassion didn't stop there. In moments when others hesitated — amid the quiet despair of the night or the devastation of disasters — Mishra emerged as a silent saviour. He carried and cremated over 1,200 bodies, from Padmashree awardees to nameless victims of earthquakes in Gujarat and Nepal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when fear kept even families away from their dead, Mishra, clad simply like a labourer, stepped forward to perform final rites with dignity and love.

Armed with degrees in MA, LLB, and PGJMC, Mishra could have easily preferred a path of comfort. Instead, he chose one of relentless service. He planted over 1,00,000 trees across Odisha, turning barren lands into lush sanctuaries, earning him the affectionate title of "Tree-Friend" from local communities — a passion encouraged by stalwarts like Dr. Bhagwan Prakash and Padmashree Radhamohan.

Through his organisations, Prayas and Orissa Yuva Chetana Sangathan, he empowered numerous underprivileged students with free education, opening doors to brighter futures. For Mishra, success was never measured in wealth, but in the number of lives touched, the number of smiles kindled.

Perhaps the most profound testament to his selflessness is his decision to donate his body to Shri Ramachandra Bhanja Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack. "Why let my body turn to ashes when it can help another see, breathe, and live?" he once said, embodying a rare humility that defines his life.

Today, at 67, Badri Mishra remains a force of nature — working with the enthusiasm of youth, the wisdom of the Himalayas, and the tenderness of the ocean. No government support, no health insurance, and no craving for fame have ever defined his path. His life stands as a quiet rebellion against apathy and a blazing example of what one individual, driven by compassion and conviction, can achieve.

As Odisha honours his literary brilliance and humanitarian spirit, Badri stands tall — not just as a master storyteller, but as a living testament to the transformative power of service. In an age obsessed with fame and fortune, he reminds us that true greatness lies not in what we earn, but in what we give — a lesson his life whispers louder than any play, poem, or novel ever could. **OP DESK**

Summer glow-up

As temperature soars and humidity level rises, summer brings a fresh set of challenges for maintaining healthy, glowing skin. From dealing with sunburns to excessive oiliness and dehydration, this season can take a toll on your beauty routine if you're not well-prepared. However, with a few mindful changes and the right tips, you can maintain a fresh, vibrant look throughout the summer. Here are five essential beauty tips to help you beat the heat and stay stunning all season long

Prioritise sunscreen

■ The number one rule for summer skincare is never to skip sunscreen. The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause long-term damage, leading to premature aging, sunburns, pigmentation, and even skin cancer. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and apply it generously to all exposed areas—face, neck, arms, and feet—30 minutes before stepping out. Reapply every two hours if you're outdoors or sweating profusely. Opt for a lightweight, non-comedogenic formula that won't clog your pores. For oily or acne-prone skin, gel-based sunscreens are ideal, while dry skin types may benefit from cream-based ones with added moisturisers.

Stay hydrated inside and out

■ Hydration is crucial during the summer months. Your skin can easily become dehydrated due to excessive heat, sun exposure, and sweat. Drinking at least 8–10 glasses of water a day keeps your skin supple, flushes out toxins, and prevents breakouts. In addition to internal hydration, invest in a hydrating facial mist or toner to refresh your skin throughout the day. Use lightweight moisturisers with ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin, or aloe vera they provide hydration without making your skin greasy.

Eat skin-loving foods

■ Your diet plays a significant role in how your skin looks and feels. Load up on seasonal fruits like watermelon, oranges and berries that are rich in antioxidants and have high water content. Include leafy greens, cucumbers, and tomatoes to boost skin hydration and improve your complexion. Avoid excessive sugar, fried foods and dairy products that can trigger breakouts or dullness. Adding omega-3 fatty acids through nuts, seeds, or fish can also help maintain skin elasticity and reduce inflammation.

Lighten up your makeup

■ Heavy makeup can melt, cake, or clog your pores in hot weather. Embrace a minimalist approach during summer with breathable, lightweight products. Instead of full-coverage foundations, switch to tinted moisturisers or BB creams with SPF. Use waterproof mascara, smudge-proof eyeliners, and cream-based blushes or highlighters for a fresh, dewy look. Matte lipsticks can feel drying in the summer, so opt for tinted lip balms or lip stains that keep your lips hydrated and naturally tinted.

Cleanse gently but thoroughly

■ Sweat, oil and environmental pollutants can clog your pores more rapidly in summer. Cleanse your face twice a day with a gentle, sulfate-free cleanser to remove dirt and excess oil. Avoid overwashing or using harsh scrubs as they can strip the skin of natural oils and trigger increased oil production. If you wear makeup, consider double cleansing at night. Start with a micellar water or cleansing balm to dissolve makeup, followed by a water-based cleanser to ensure all impurities are removed.

OP DESK

MADHUSMITA