

JUNE 1-7, 2025

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Difference, not a deficit



COVER STORY

P
3,4



Bidyut Kumar Sethi, fondly known as Biddu Sir, is a luminary in the Odia film industry. Hailing from Bhubaneswar, he started off as a backup dancer in 1994, facing early rejections but eventually emerged as a leading dance figure. Motivated by his brothers, Biddu's relentless passion led him to choreograph numerous hit films and reality shows. He founded the Sizzlers Dance Group, where he has groomed over 900 students worldwide. With awards, international recognition, and ongoing projects like Debakanya and Lado, Biddu continues to inspire the nextgen dancers and choreographers



With students



With daughter

Sundays for family

Morning dance classes kick things off on Sundays, then we're out and about, exploring new places, making memories, and soaking in fresh experiences together.

Unwinding with friends

My ideal Sunday is all about quality bonding time with friends—totally essential to recharge and unwind after the chaos of a hectic week.

Music maniac

In my free time, I'm all about discovering new places and vibing to music—nothing beats the joy of singing and getting lost in the rhythm.

Kitchen creativity

I'm not exactly a foodie, but whenever I find the time, I enjoy whipping up some delicious dishes—it's a fun way to relax and get creative 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
And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- What do you call a bee that lives in America? A USB.
- It is very easy to become a superman, you just have to change the sequence of clothes while wearing.
- You're fat. It's not because it runs in the family, you're fat because nobody runs in your family.
- I can tell people are judgmental just by looking at them.



Eco-friendly fashion

Sir, I am writing to commend last week's cover story, "Dress for the Planet," which offered valuable insights into the importance of sustainable, organic clothing in addressing current environmental challenges. While the public's love for fashion is undeniable, with many eager to stay glamorous, updated, and modern through trendy outfits, it is crucial to consider the environmental impact of our clothing choices. As global warming intensifies and climate change becomes more pronounced, the need to protect our planet grows ever more urgent. In this context, choosing eco-friendly clothing is not just a preference but a necessity. Cotton fabrics, for instance, are ideal for hot summers and can significantly reduce our carbon footprint. We must also address the issue of textile waste. Old clothes should be collected from consumers and upcycled into new, innovative products. Scraps of fabric discarded by tailors, fashion designers, and the general public should be repurposed to minimise waste and keep our environment clean. It is imperative that the public rethinks their fashion choices and opts for organic, sustainable garments. By doing so, we can contribute to a healthier planet without sacrificing style.

ABHILASHA GUPTA, MOHALI

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

Features.orissapost@gmail.com
B-15, Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar - 751010, Orissa.
Phone (0674) 2549982, 2549948



Difference, not a deficit

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that shapes how individuals communicate, interact, and experience the world around them. Each person on the spectrum is unique—possessing distinct strengths, challenges, and perspectives

Being different is a superpower
— GRETA THUNBERG

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Autism is not something that needs to be ‘fixed.’ It is a beautiful and intricate way of being—a different lens through which the world is seen, felt, and understood. While this lens may be unfamiliar to many, it reveals a depth, purity, and brilliance that is truly extraordinary. For individuals on the spectrum, everyday life often involves navigating a world that can feel overwhelming—too loud, too fast, sometimes unkind. Yet within that journey lies immense courage, quiet resilience, and untapped potential.

Autism is the child who communicates through actions instead of words, the adult who finds peace in patterns and routines, the artist who expresses profound emotion through colors rather than speech. It is not a one-size-fits-all story. It is a spectrum—diverse, dynamic, and deserving of love, respect, and celebration.

World Autism Awareness Day is a powerful reminder of the need for empathy, inclusion, and understanding. It is more than just a day to raise awareness—it is a call to deepen our commitment to acceptance and to

embrace neurodiversity in all its forms. As the world observes this significant day every year, here’s what a few experts have to share with **Sunday POST** on the issue.

Gargi Bhattacharya, Chief Trustee of Zain Foundation Trust (ZFT), has seen a gradual transformation in public perception of autism. She attributes this change to a rising number of autism diagnoses globally and across India, including in Odisha.

“There has definitely been a shift. As the incidence of autism has increased—currently one in every 36 children in India and one in 28 globally—so has the demand for therapy centres, awareness campaigns, and advocacy. Films are portraying autism, and laws are evolving to support neurodiverse individuals,” shares Bhattacharya.

For families navigating autism, she underscores the power of acceptance.

“The very first thing is acceptance—and with that, unconditional love,” she explains. “While families naturally love their children, the emotional and physical challenges can be overwhelming. That’s why building a supportive community of other special families is so crucial.”

One of the most significant challenges, she says, is achieving acceptance from mainstream



society. “What’s missing is social and emotional acceptance,” she observes. “People with autism may behave differently because they process the world differently. They face enormous sensory battles daily. Just like we show compassion toward visible disabilities, we must also extend the same kindness toward cognitive differences.”

The ZFT chief believes the path to inclusion lies in sensitising society. “We need to train people to be more compassionate and understanding,” she adds. “With awareness, we can dismantle biases and create a more accepting environment for individuals on the spectrum.”

Bhattacharya notes that schools are slowly becoming more inclusive, particularly at the Montessori level, where special educators and therapists are increasingly involved. However, she feels workplaces still face challenges. “Behavioural differences make some uncomfortable, but that discomfort stems from a lack of understanding,” she says. “Some corporates have taken steps to include autistic individuals, recognising their strengths in tasks like filing or working with numbers. But large-scale inclusion will only come with sustained training and support.”

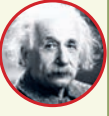
Her message to society is simple yet powerful: “Be open to difference. Accept individuals as they are. Neurodiversity is not a flaw—it’s part of the human experience. The more we embrace it, the richer and more compassionate our communities will become.”



Famous names with ASD


Albert Einstein

Though never diagnosed—autism was not recognized in his time—many experts and biographers speculate Einstein may have been on the autism spectrum. He displayed signs such as delayed speech, deep focus on specific interests, social awkwardness, and an intense inner world. Despite or perhaps because of this, Einstein revolutionized science with the theory of relativity and showed the power of unique cognitive wiring in achieving groundbreaking innovation.




Bill Gates

Bill Gates has never publicly stated he is autistic, but his mannerisms and intense focus have often been cited in discussions about Asperger’s. Gates’ extraordinary ability to concentrate deeply, his passion for knowledge, and a preference for logical, structured thinking have fueled the technological revolution. Today, he uses his wealth to transform global health and education through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.




Isaac Newton

Like Einstein, Newton lived in an era when autism was not yet understood, but his behaviors align with traits on the spectrum: intense focus, solitary habits, difficulty with social interactions, and a meticulous obsession with his work. Newton’s ability to hyper-focus led to the formulation of the laws of motion and gravity—work that laid the foundation for classical physics.




Elon Musk

Elon Musk publicly revealed he is on the autism spectrum during an appearance on Saturday Night Live, saying, “I’m actually making history tonight as the first person with Asperger’s to host SNL.” His bold innovation, unfiltered communication style, and ability to think differently have disrupted entire industries—from space exploration to electric vehicles.



Anthony Hopkins

Diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome in his 70s, Hopkins has credited autism with giving him a unique perspective and focus that enriches his performances. Known for roles that demand deep emotional range and psychological depth, he has channeled his neurodivergence into extraordinary creative expression, becoming one of the most respected actors of our time.





Pinki Das, a Lecturer of Special Education at the Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (Divyangjan), (AYJNISHD) Regional Centre, Jaanla, and the mother of a 20-year-old with autism, offers a heartfelt and informed perspective on autism awareness, inclusion, and acceptance.

Acknowledging a shift in public perception over the years, she says, “From my experience as the mother of a 20-year-old young man with autism, I can say that there has definitely been a change. Maybe because we have increased our visibility in public spaces, people are getting the opportunity to see us more. There’s also a slight rise in media awareness about autism.”

She emphasises that the foundation of empowering individuals with autism begins at home, with families embracing and understanding the condition. “First, accept your child’s condition. Understand that each individual on the spectrum is different, as autism is a spectrum condition. Educate yourself, take professional help, and expose your child to a variety of activities. Follow their interests and give them the time they need to blossom. They may take more time, but never give up on them,” she notes.

Highlighting the real challenges families face, especially in public settings where behavioral differences often attract stares or social rejection, she says, “The most common challenge is different behavior in public places and the resulting judgment from others. Some public places even deny entry. This can be addressed both ways—by slowly exposing individuals to such environments and by society becoming more accepting. Regular public outings can make these experiences easier for everyone involved.”

Speaking

about the importance of inclusive spaces in schools, workplaces, and communities, she adds, “People need to be aware of the needs of those with autism. There should be quiet corners for those experiencing sensory overload. Visuals—like pictures and words—can help with understanding. All forms of communication, including gestures, pictures, and signs, must be encouraged. Individuals should be given more time to respond.”

Urging society to move towards empathy and inclusion, she shares a heartfelt message: “People with autism are humans too. Their families are an essential part of society. They might think and act a little differently, but they are not misbehaved or unruly. With time, education, and exposure, they can learn and grow. It is their right to be here. We must embrace, accept, and include neurodiversity in all spheres of life,” she concludes.

Understanding ASD

Despite recent awareness campaigns by various organisations, misconceptions about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) still persist in society. There is a need to dispel the myths surrounding this condition. Pediatric Occupational Therapist Anil Kumar Kabisatapathy shared his perspectives with Sunday POST in a brief interview

- ASD cases seem to be on the rise. What are the key reasons?**

■ Yes, we have observed a noticeable increase in Autism cases over the past few years. One of the suspected contributing factors is the drastic shift in our lifestyle. Our food habits, daily routines, and overall environment have undergone significant changes. For instance, we now live in spaces heavily influenced by technology—Wi-Fi networks, electronic devices, and electromagnetic waves constantly surround us. While these elements are being studied for their possible impact on health, no definitive conclusion has been drawn yet. Globally, researchers are trying to understand if and how these environmental factors are influencing the increase in Autism diagnoses. These are currently hypotheses, but the correlation with lifestyle changes cannot be entirely dismissed.
- Is the condition genetic?**

■ The question of whether Autism is genetic is a common one, but the truth is that genetic transmission plays a very limited role. The chances of Autism being passed on genetically are quite low. However, if there is a family history of psychological disorders, the likelihood may increase slightly. Even then, it is not guaranteed that Autism will be inherited. So, while genetics can be a factor in some cases, it is not the predominant cause.
- Are there any ways to prevent it or reduce the risk?**

■ At present, there is no known way to prevent Autism. No scientific study has established a specific lifestyle pattern or precaution that can ensure its prevention. Additionally, Autism cannot be diagnosed at birth or during infancy. Most signs start to appear after 1.5 years of age. Only when a child begins to show certain behavioral symptoms—usually between 1.5 to 2.5 years—can a formal diagnosis be made. Until then, there are no reliable indicators or preventive measures that can be followed.
- What are some common misconceptions about people with ASD?**

■ One of the most damaging misconceptions is that autistic individuals are mentally unstable. This is absolutely incorrect. They are mentally stable, but they process and express emotions, thoughts, and communication in a different way. Their mode of interaction may not conform to conventional standards, which is often wrongly perceived as bad behavior or instability. In reality, this is simply their unique way of engaging with the world. What society views as abnormal is often just misunderstood communication.

Bhabantara: A fascinating story about love & marriage

CHANDRAHAS CHOUDHURY

Anant Mahapatra's just-released film *Bhabantara* (The Heart's Desires) is an emotionally deep and cinematically accomplished story that explores the power of human passion to create and to destroy.

Based on the story *Pabitra Papa* by the writer Ajay Mohapatra, *Bhabantara* is dominated by the sentiments and struggles of a female protagonist: the beautiful new bride Srabani, played with a compelling intensity by the young actress Suryamayee Mohapatra. In the film's opening scene, Srabani appears veiled by the pallu of her sari, being led into her bridal chamber by a female family member. But as soon as Srabani is left alone, she flings the pallu off her head – Mahapatra cuts to the flame guttering and nearly blowing out – before grudgingly putting it on again. A passionate tumult already visible in her nature has risen to the surface, observed only by the camera. When her husband Sritam (Abhishek Giri) arrives, he reaches out to raise his young bride's face towards his own. It is only now that we hear the first words of dialogue in the film, sudden and shocking.

"Don't touch me!" Srabani reveals to Sritam that shortly before their marriage was decided by their respective parents, she had met an attractive man, Milan (Saroj Nanda), at a party while visiting her older sister in Kolkata. We cut to the past. Sparks fly between the couple as, having left the rest of the company behind, they stand together gazing at the moon in the night sky, speaking to one another in riddles. Mahapatra's very artistic depiction of their affair, in a sequence last no more than a couple of minutes, is one of the highlights of the film. The sense of ecstatic connection he manages to summon between man and woman is key to persuading us of the

integrity, such as it is, of Srabani's stance not just on her wedding night but for the rest of her days.

To her husband's poignant, half-hopeful question about whether she could perhaps bring herself to forget Milan, she replies: "*Nari ra mana au hrudaya...purusa pari nuhen. Mu chanhiley bhi kebey au kahaku bhala pai paribini,*" (A woman's mind and heart are not the same as those of men. Even if I desire, I can't love anyone ever.) Her feeling for Milan is now and hereon her truth; her marriage, therefore, merely a role that she has agreed to play.

But what is the unfortunate Sritam to make of such a truth? He could reveal Srabani's affair to the world and exit a meaningless marriage. But that would be too much to bear for his ailing parents, and expose Srabani to the wrath of society. Gallantly, he suggests that they continue to play the part of husband and wife until a propitious time can be found for them to separate. In fact, he himself undertakes to search out Milan – about whom nothing is known but his name – so that Srabani, at least, may have her heart's desire.

Thus Mahapatra sets up with this opening scene the emotional tumults of his three protagonists. We see Srabani learning how to play the role of a wife in a marriage that will dissolve the day that her husband tracks down her lover; Sritam searching for his own successor and watching his wife's face fall every time he comes home with no news; and Milan, now seen having given up his life in Kolkata and vainly roaming the streets of Bhubaneswar in search of

Srabani.

And alongside these quests of the heart, there is the reality of two people living together in some kind of mutual accommodation, even affection, under one roof. Both husband and wife are hostages to time, then, waiting for a future that will release them from the burdens of the present. The complexity of the couple's predicament is further exacerbated when Srabani discovers she is pregnant. "You must hate me," she says to her husband – but he does not. In a strange way, his quiet love is just as provocative as his wife's passion.

The conversations between Srabani and Sritam are very pointed, and punctuated by pauses much more interesting than any words could be. (It is not very difficult to make a superficially "dramatic" cinema of speech; much harder to make a dramatic cinema of silence.) But visually, Mahapatra reserves most of his close-ups – and therefore the emotional core of the story – for Srabani, whose turbulent inner world is majestically rendered by director and actress in some memorable long takes.

One scene, in which Srabani is seen first removing a picture of herself and Sritam from the dressing table and putting it away in a cupboard – it is a truth that she cannot quite face up to – and then replacing it with a

photograph of her doting in-laws (making them happy is something that genuinely does give her fulfilment and is a way of expressing her gratitude to Sritam), expresses all her conflicts only by tracking her face in a mirror.

Although years go by, Srabani never quite gives up the memory of Milan. Finally, there comes a day when she and Milan do chance on one another again. But

can she, in the light of her new experience of life, find the will to follow through on her heart's desire and leave her marital home? Or must Srabani and Milan also make a sacrifice that mirrors Sritam's?

There is very little clarity here, but what is clear is that each of the characters discovers depths they did not know they possessed. Much though society tries to box us into convention and conformity, Mahapatra seems to be telling us, life is really about trying to find an honest response to the unique challenges and dilemmas visited on us by the fates – or indeed by our own passions. Love and desire have an enormous creative and transcendent power – a point made by the lovely title song written by Devdas Chhotray – and are a source of self-knowledge and growth. If we are to know what it means to have lived, we must embrace – and risk being

singed by – their fire. This is the core of the message voiced by Sritam at the end of the film, as, after one final unexpected twist in the tale, he sits with Srabani mulling over the meaning of their lives, long years after they first came together under one roof. "Sabu pabitra," he muses – everything they have done and felt is sacred.

And it reveals Mahapatra, too, to be a very wise, compassionate humanist – a creator with a heart as big as his characters and the ability to get a large cast of actors and technicians to commit to his unusual aesthetic vision. The work of an artist whose flame still burns brightly at the age of 90, *Bhabantara* deserves a very wide viewership.

The work of thespian Anant Mahapatra – a creator with a heart as big as his characters and the ability to get a large cast of actors and technicians to commit to his unusual aesthetic vision – *Bhabantara* deserves a very wide viewership



The writer is a novelist based in Bhubaneswar. His books include 'Clouds' (2018) and 'My Country Is Literature' (2021).

Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan took to social media to share what she does when that 'romantic feeling awakens' during the monsoon.

Taking to Instagram, the *Simmba* actress shared a couple of her stunning selfies alongside a poetic note. Unleashing her poetic side, Sara wrote, "Monsoon mein bharo mugge Aur cozy hokar suno Zamaana Lage Romance wali feeling jab jage Think of aapke pyaare sage." In the images, the actress is seen wearing a stylish, sleek, body-hugging silhouette crafted from bonded crepe. In the candid shots, Sara could be seen striking different poses for the camera.

May 28, the *Kedarnath* actress was spotted at the launch of the song Zamaana Lage from the upcoming film *Metrono...* In Dino. The film's first song from the aromatic drama was released in a star-studded event attended by the cast, including Aditya Roy Kapur, Sara, Konkona Sen Sharma, Ali Fazal, and Fatima Sana Shaikh. The music director Pritam, along with singers like Papon and Shashwat Singh, were also present to celebrate the launch.

Directed by Anurag Basu, the film delves into the complexities of bittersweet relationships set against a modern backdrop, showcasing the different shades and emotions of love.

IAN S

Sara on monsoon romance



Asha opens up about quitting projects

Popular television actress Asha Negi opened up about her decision to step away from several projects where she felt intimate and bold scenes were added unnecessarily.

Speaking candidly, she highlighted the importance of comfort and consent in portraying such moments on screen, shedding light on the challenges actors face in navigating creative choices within the industry. When asked if she has ever walked away from a project due to the script or conflicts with her values, Asha confirmed that she has indeed made such decisions.

She emphasised the importance of staying true to herself and only taking on roles that align with her personal beliefs and comfort level.

The *Pavitra Rishta* actress told this news agency, "Yes, I've left projects many times. Sometimes, when I feel the story lacks sub-bold scenes are added unnecessarily, I just don't enjoy being part of it. When that happens, I prefer to let it go."

Speaking about her career, the *Baarish* actress revealed that she never really felt typecast on television. After her success in iconic shows, she took a step back from TV, appearing only in a few reality and fictional shows that didn't quite take off.

Asha recently featured in *Criminal Justice 4*, which saw Pankaj Tripathi once again stepping into the role of advocate Madhav Mishra.

IAN S



First Love to hit screens June 6

Bhubaneswar: A new romantic movie, *First Love*, presented by Range Royal Cine Lab in association with Zee Sarthak, will be released in theaters June 6. Produced by Sridhar Martha and Kishore Nayak, the film is directed by Abhishek Mitra. Shailendra Samantaray and Divya Mohanty are playing the leads while the supporting cast includes Chaudhary Jay Prakash Das, Usha-si Mishra, Subhranshu Nayak, Mili Mohanty, and Bulu Panda, among others. Designed to appeal to the tastes of Odia youth, *First Love* aims to capture viewers' hearts during the Raja festival. PNN



Madhu Babu biopic on cards

Bhubaneswar: Madhusudan Das, a central figure in Odisha's modern history, played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for the formation of the Orissa Province April 1, 1936. Though long overdue, a movie on the life and times of this iconic freedom fighter, known as Utkal Gourab to Odias, was announced last week by producer Ramesh Barik. The screenplay of *Madhu Barister* is penned by Priyabrata Panda, with Mrutyunjay Sahu directing the project. The makers promise a powerful and emotionally resonant cinematic journey that will bring to life the legacy of a man whose tireless efforts uplifted generations and shaped Odisha's identity. Barik emphasised that the film is not just a historical retelling but a tribute to an icon whose values and vision remain deeply relevant today. More details about the cast, production, and release date will be revealed soon.

PNN



Bhubaneswar Film Festival offers a rainbow of language cinema

Film festivals are a journey into cultural history. More so when it is multilingual. Bhubaneswar Film Festival (BFF) that started as an exclusive Odia film festival last year has expanded its linguistic outreach by offering a bouquet of classics and award-winning films from 9 different languages. A total of 19 films will be screened in its 2nd edition from 6th to 9th June at Jayadev Bhawan. This would include a range of language films like; Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi, Tiwa, Hindi, Odia, Kannada, Bengali and Chhattisgarhi.

Supporting the effort of BFF in preserving country's cultural diversity, eminent filmmaker Prakash Jha who is coming with his national award-winning film *Damul* (1984) says, "it is the need of the hour to preserve our rich linguistic culture and social diversity and I believe BFF is doing a commendable job to revive popular interest in regional cinema". While the two stalwarts, Ketan Mehta and Girish Kasaravali will come with their award-winning films *Bhavni Bhavai* and *Ghatashradha*; Bobby Sarma Baruah comes with her award-winning Tiwa film *Sikaisal*. Tiwa

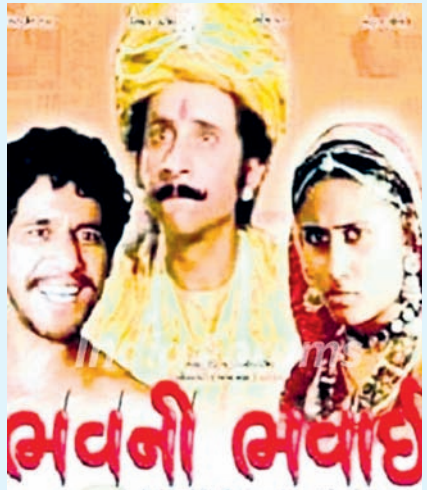


is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by people in Assam and Meghalay.

The most striking aspects of this year's BFF includes among other things; the presence of all the directors whose films are being shown for discussion and interaction, celebration of birth centenaries of Guru Dutt and Ritwik Ghatak with the screening of their films and memorial lectures by celebrated speakers like Sathya Saran and Shoma Chatterji respectively, and, the remembrance also includes a scholarly compilation of reflections on the lives and work of cinematic icons in

the form of a book.

One of the USPs of BFF has been the holding up of Master classes on different aspects of filmmaking by Bollywood experts. This year two master classes on Screenplay writing and Acting will be organized by Charudutt Acharya and Abhimanyu Ray respectively. Besides,



BFF provides informal opportunities and spaces for interactions and exchanges between filmmakers and writers with public and students. The festival also makes provisions for film scholars and writers to showcase their books and make it available to buyers at a discounted price.

OP DESK



■ According to local legend, the Mahantas of Bharati Matha, an 11th Century shrine, were highly respected, often regarded as divine figures who had the ability to predict their own ends. Upon their death, they were buried on the spot, and within 15 days, a small Shiva temple would be constructed in their honour

Temple City's ancient gem

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Nestled in Bhubaneswar's Old Town, the Bharati Matha Temple is a timeless testament to the city's rich spiritual and cultural heritage. Built in the 11th century during the reign of Yajati Kesari, the same ruler who constructed the iconic Lingaraja Temple, the three-storey shrine remains a revered site despite its current dilapidated state.

A glimpse into history

The temple was originally established to house the artisans who helped construct the grand Lingaraja Temple. Over time, it evolved into a prominent Hindu pilgrimage center and later a residential Matha (monastery). Located at Badheibanka Chowk, just 400 meters northwest of Lingaraja Temple, it offers a glimpse into the architectural and spiritual traditions of ancient Odisha.

The temple complex is surrounded by significant roads and landmarks, including Ratha Road to the east and Jamesvara Patna Road to the south. It faces west, providing a peaceful retreat for visitors.



The monastery's structure is built from coarse grey sandstone and features intricate carvings, though many have eroded over time. The structure is a square-shaped building, with a 26-meter square plan, elevated 1.5 meters above the ground. It stands 11.5 meters tall and is enclosed by a compound wall, measuring 53.6 square meters.

Spiritual significance

This mutt is not just a place of worship; it is a living monastery. The Mahanta, the head of the Matha, still resides here, continuing a tradition that dates back centuries. Several key Hindu rituals and festivals, such as Kartika Purnima, Prathamastami, and Durga Puja, are celebrated here. A unique tradition during Prathamastami involves Lord Lingaraja visiting the Matha to meet his uncle, further deepening the temple's connection to Bhubaneswar's most significant deity.

The Matha is also renowned for the cluster of nine small Shiva temples found in its southern precincts. These temples, dedicated to previous Matha Mahantas, are constructed upon the burial sites of the revered leaders. According to local legend, the Mahantas of Bharati Matha were highly respected, often regarded as divine figures who had the ability to predict their own ends. Upon their death, they were buried on the spot, and within 15 days, a small Shiva temple

would be constructed in their honor. These shrines are known as the "Bharati Matha Burial Temples," numbered I to IX, and serve as a lasting tribute to the spiritual leaders' contributions to the Matha and the Hindu religion.

Architectural splendor

The Bharati Matha Temple is built on a high platform with seven distinct mouldings. The three stories of the building form a central courtyard, with three living rooms on each side. However, the building has suffered considerable damage over time. The walls, particularly in the east and north sections, have collapsed, and wild vegetation has overtaken parts of the structure. The western wing of the temple is in ruins, with only the outer wall standing, and the southern wing, though still in use, is also in a deteriorated state. Despite repairs undertaken by the current Mahanta, the structure is in urgent need of restoration.

Expert speaks:

Emphasizing the importance of the temple, heritage researcher Deepak Kumar Nayak says, "For centuries, Bharati Matha has functioned as a center of spiritual learning, religious practices, and monastic life, rooted in Shaivite traditions. The Matha preserves age-old rituals and teachings, while the small burial temples honor the contributions of the monastery's spiritual leaders. The shrine remains an integral part of Bhubaneswar's sacred landscape, contributing to the city's identity as a timeless hub of Hindu devotion and temple culture."

The temple complex is home to Pipal and Asoka trees that add to the tranquility of the surroundings. The combination of nature and history creates an atmosphere of reverence, inviting visitors to reflect on the temple's rich legacy.

A call for preservation

Though the shrine stands as a symbol of both the vibrant religious life of Bhubaneswar, the building's current state requires immediate conservation efforts to maintain its unique architectural style and historical value. As the city moves forward, the restoration of Bharati Matha Temple is not just an architectural necessity but a cultural imperative. The temple's past, its spiritual role, and its association with the Lingaraja Temple make it an invaluable piece of Odisha's religious and cultural fabric, and it deserves to be preserved for future generations.





Himani

WANT TO BECOME A MODEL?
Send us your photographs at
features.orissapost@gmail.com