

JULY 7-13, 2024

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Rath Yatra today

Beyond belief

COVER STORY

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Palak Mohapatra from Bhubaneswar is a household name in Odisha, especially among small-screen viewers. After beginning her career in television at the age of five with 'Raja Queen', Palak went on to take part in many reality shows, like 'DID Lil Masters', 'Super Dancer', and national stage shows. After her impressive performance in the drama show 'Tu Kahibu Na Mu', she is now winning hearts with 'Ama Jhansi Apa'. Palak enjoys watching her favourite show, 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah', during her breaks



With co-star Sushree

Savouring taste buds

I love Indian and Chinese cuisine. Street food, particularly available in Bhubaneswar, is also among my favourites. When not working, I enjoy gorging on stuff like KFC momos, tandoori momos, pani puri, mojitos, and chicken tandoori.

My family, my world

Family means the world to me, and I treasure the moments I spend with my mom, dad, sister, and little brother. Although I don't adhere to a strict routine, I keep myself free on Sundays to be with them. We go out and have fun every Sunday.



Self-care commitment

I prioritise getting enough sleep first, as my sleep schedule during the week isn't ideal. Once rested, I go ahead with my planned activities for the day. Self-care is essential to me. I do some good exercise and take care of my skin and hair.

Focus on studies

I work on catching up on my class work that I fail to finish during the week because of shoots. So on Sundays, I remain as busy as I am shooting on other days.



With father and sister

MADHUMSITA SAHU, 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

- If breaks are meant to be slow... then why do they call it "breakfast"?
- Why did the coach go back to the bank? To get his quarterback!
- What dog can't bark? A hot dog.
- What kind of candy is never on time? ChocoLATE!



LET'S NOT GIVE UP

Sir, In last week's Wellness page of Sunday POST, Dr Rachna Rath's highly engrossing narrative on her mom's fightback tale made for an inspiring read. Rath deserves compliments for sharing her family's struggle with the awful illness with the readers. While the family members of cancer victims are often seen accepting the inevitable without much resistance, the Raths have demonstrated that the Big C is not necessarily a death sentence always. Moreover, with the support of loved ones, a cancer survivor can improve his or her quality of life significantly. Actually, the disease itself doesn't cause as much harm as the innate fear. With the kind of healthcare facilities accessible in states like Odisha, it's time to educate people on ways to deal with cancer instead of giving up.

GITARANI MAJHI, KHURDA

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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More than its religious and cultural significance, the annual Rath Yatra is rich with fascinating lores and legends that add to the festival's mystique and allure. From divine interventions to heart-warming acts of devotion, these tales celebrate the enduring spirit of life

Rath Yatra today

Beyond belief

OP DESK

It's that time of year again when Lord Jagannath, along with his elder brother Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra, embarks on their annual journey from Srimandir to their aunt's home at the Gundicha temple. Preparations are grand, as always, with new chariots being built and special clothing prepared for the deities.

Beyond its religious and cultural significance, Rath Yatra is rich with fascinating stories and legends that add to the festival's mystique and allure. From divine interventions to heart-warming acts of devotion, these tales not only highlight the spiritual fervour of Rath Yatra but also celebrate the enduring spirit of the people of Odisha.

With the entire state soaked in devotion today, **Sunday POST** delves into a collection of a few intriguing tales and traditions associated with Rath Yatra, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of folklore, miracles, and extraordinary events that make this festival an enduring marvel.

The unscripted halt

Every year, the chariots roll down about 200 metres on Grand Road, and in the midst of the Hindu festivities, they make a symbolic stop in front of a Mazar (tomb) in Balagandi area. While this ritual may seem like a routine stop to many, the truth is far more fascinating, going back to the Mughal era, Lord Jagannath, and his famed Muslim devotee, Bhakta Salabega.

The story dates back to the 17th century

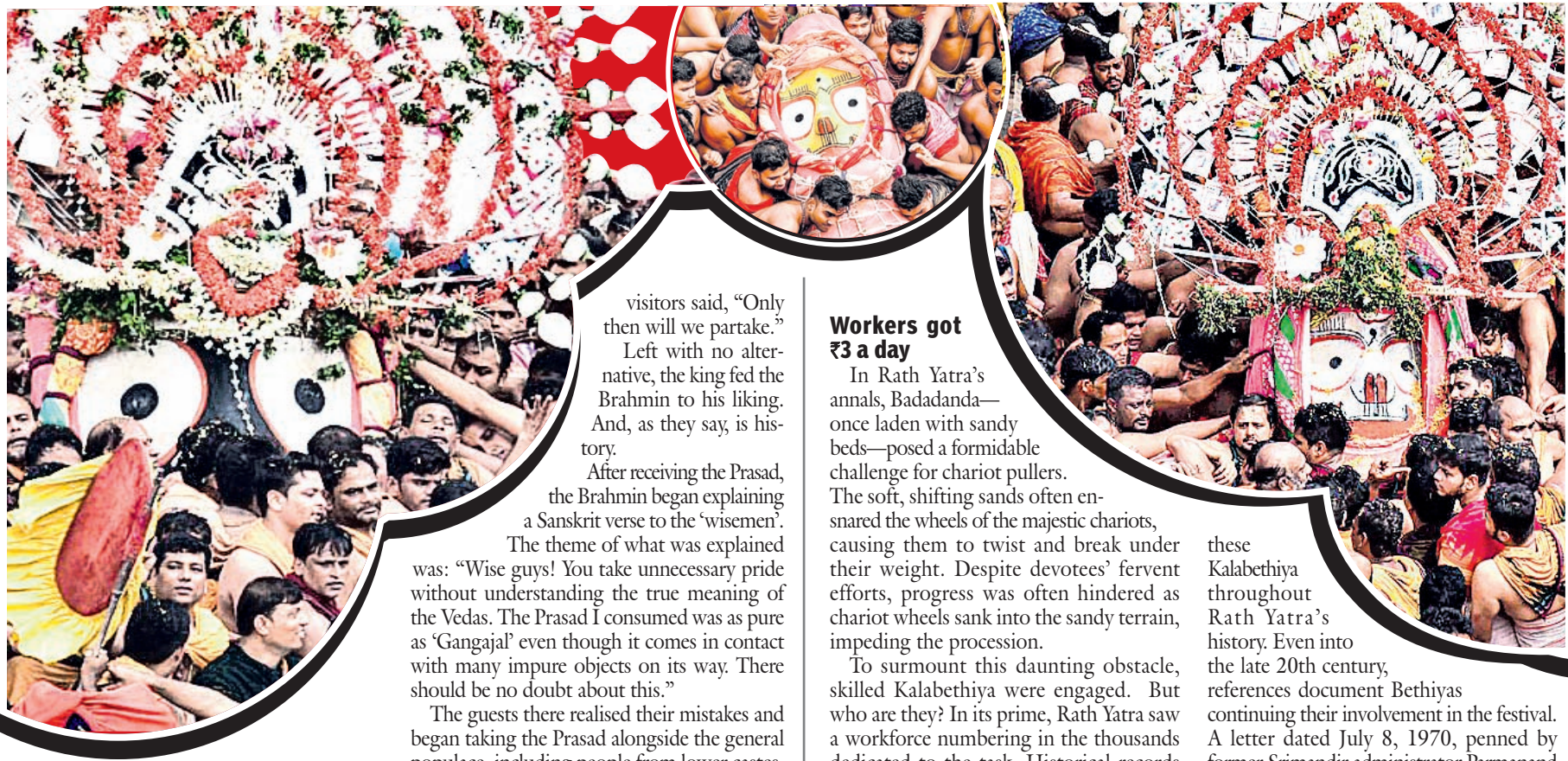
when Jahangir Quli Khan, also known as Lalbeg, was the Subedar of Bengal (1607–1608) during the reign of Mughal emperor Jahangir. During a military excursion in Odisha, Lalbeg stumbles upon a beautiful widow Lalita at a place called Dandamukundapur near Puri while he was on the way to his regiment at Pipili. Bowled over by her charm, he abducts the woman and marries her at his residential quarter in Cuttack. Being a liberal Muslim, he allows his wife to practice her religion and son Salabega to grow in Hindu culture. Meanwhile, he gets a promotion and leaves for Delhi. Before leaving, he appoints one of his trusted

lieutenants to make Salabega a fierce warrior. Returning from Delhi after a few years, he finds Salabega to have surpassed his expectations in terms of warfare and intellect. So, he asks his son to join him in his expedition to suppress the Afghan revolution in the north. Unfortunately, Lalbeg gets killed in the battle field and Salabega survives with critical injuries. Salabega's condition gradually aggravates and his days start numbering. Here, Lalita asks her son to chant Lord Jagannath's name to get relief. This works and one day he finds himself completely cured and witnesses Lord Vishnu before him. Born as a soldier, Salabega transforms himself to a Jagannath

devotee and spends his time composing devotional poems. Though his poems make him popular in the state, his desire to have a darshan of Trinity inside the temple remains unfulfilled. The Gajapati king, a great follower of Salabega's songs, also expresses his inability to fulfill his wish as he was a non-Hindu and asks him to wait till Rath Yatra to have a darshan of the deity. Meanwhile, Salabega has to travel to Vrindavan to fulfil the wish of his ailing mother but she dies there. After that, he embarks upon a return journey barefoot to reach Puri before the Car Festival. But he realises that he can't reach before time as Vrindaban is 750 kos (1 kos = 1.91 miles) from Puri and pleads Jagannath not to return to the temple until he reaches Puri. The Lord obliges to the request of his ardent devotee and the chariot stops near Salabega's cottage near Balagandi. All the efforts of the servitors and Gajapati to move the chariot yielded no result. It moves only after Salabega comes back to Balagandi and touches its wheel. All Srimandir servitors bow before the single-minded devotion of Salabega and it is again established that the Lord doesn't discriminate between caste, creed and religion.

After Salabega's death, his mortal body said to have merged with his Lord. Today, Salabega is remembered as one of the greatest Odia religious poets of the early 17th century. Though he was a Muslim by birth, his devotion to Lord Jagannath and the bhajans he wrote made him immortal in the canon of devotional music for a Hindu deity.





visitors said, "Only then will we partake." Left with no alternative, the king fed the Brahmin to his liking. And, as they say, is history.

After receiving the Prasad, the Brahmin began explaining a Sanskrit verse to the 'wisemen'. The theme of what was explained was: "Wise guys! You take unnecessary pride without understanding the true meaning of the Vedas. The Prasad I consumed was as pure as 'Gangajal' even though it comes in contact with many impure objects on its way. There should be no doubt about this."

The guests there realised their mistakes and began taking the Prasad alongside the general populace, including people from lower castes. The custom is still alive at Anandabazar.

Workers got ₹3 a day

In Rath Yatra's annals, Badadanda—once laden with sandy beds—posed a formidable challenge for chariot pullers. The soft, shifting sands often ensnared the wheels of the majestic chariots, causing them to twist and break under their weight. Despite devotees' fervent efforts, progress was often hindered as chariot wheels sank into the sandy terrain, impeding the procession.

To surmount this daunting obstacle, skilled Kalabethiya were engaged. But who are they? In its prime, Rath Yatra saw a workforce numbering in the thousands dedicated to the task. Historical records from 1902 detail approximately 1,000 individuals engaged in pulling Lord Jagannath's chariot, with 1,200 each assigned to those of Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra. These workers, referred to as 'Bethiya,' were compensated with 500 bethi at a rate of rupees 3 per day for their strenuous efforts. The term 'Bethiya,' speculated to stem from their distinctive skin color, symbolised their role as labourers in this ancient ritual.

Dr. Siddeshwar Mahapatra's research underscored the pivotal role played by

these Kalabethiya throughout Rath Yatra's history. Even into the late 20th century, references document Bethiyas continuing their involvement in the festival. A letter dated July 8, 1970, penned by former Srimandir administrator Parmanand Tripathi to Bhoimula Prafulla Chandra Patnaik, attests to their enduring presence in Rath Yatra affairs.

However, with the passage of time, the reliance on Kalabethiya waned. The responsibility gradually shifted away from Bethiyas to the police force, marking a significant evolution in the management of Rath Yatra's chariots. Today, the once-vital role of these skilled craftsmen has all but disappeared, marking the end of an era in the vibrant tapestry of Rath Yatra's traditions.

When a dumb recited Sanskrit verses

This intriguing story is reported to have taken place under the reign of Jajatikeshari. He was the king who, on the recommendation of Jagadguru Shankaracharya, took the deities' idols from Sonepur (where they had been stored underground for nearly a century) and consecrated them in a makeshift temple. Jajati also resumed the Mahaprasad service, which had been discontinued during the Trinity's absence at Srimandir.

The king invited a large number of saints, Brahmins, and spiritual gurus to see the idols and get Mahaprasad. Despite the fact that they had come to Puri to honour the king's invitation, they all declined to partake in the Prasad, which upset the king. Jajati himself stayed starving and fell asleep after performing prayers.

In his dream, he received a divine order to prepare Anna Mahaprasad again the next day. Following the instructions, the king made the necessary arrangements and served the Prasad to the invited guests. But they declined again, raising concerns about the sanctity of the Prasad.

Meanwhile, a poor Brahmin came to the temple to see the Trinity after hearing about it. The invited guests saw an opportunity and presented a condition to the king.

"If the dumb Brahmin begins to speak after consuming Lord Jagannath's Prasad, the Prasad will be confirmed as pure and genuine. The



Vaishnavas' age-old tradition

The 500-year-old tradition of sweeping the Gundicha temple by Gaudiya Vaishnavas, a day before Rath Yatra, continues to this day. Originating from Nabadwip, West Bengal, the Vaishnavas find joy in this practice. According to cultural researcher Surendra Kumar Mishra, "Gundicha Yatra is viewed in Vaishnava belief as a journey from Neelachal Dham to Sundaranchal Dham."

Before the lords' arrival at Sundaranchal, devotees sweep the temple premises while singing "Kali Asibe Mo Pranabandhu, Aji Kunja Sajao Go (My soul mate will arrive tomorrow, let us decorate the garden)." This ritual concludes at Aai Tota, near Sundaranchal. Afterward, as per tradition, Vaishnavas proceed to the mutt where Chaitanya Mahaprabhu rested, bathe in Indradyumna Teertha,



and return to Aai Tota for Mahaprasad.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu initiated the practice of cleaning Gundicha temple before Rath Yatra during his 1520 stay in Puri, a tradition religiously followed by his followers since then. Legend associates neglect of the

Gundicha temple after the nine-day sojourn, transforming it into a haunted place known as 'Babana Bhuta'. Hence, the sweeping ritual a day before the deities' arrival aims to cleanse the temple of spirits.





Hooked to social media?

While social media is literally designed to be addictive, a recent study reveals that teens who use social media more than three hours per day may be at heightened risk for mental health problems

sign is when people spend the time before bed relentlessly scrolling and refreshing rather than swapping out screens for more analogue pursuits, such as reading. Not everyone will have a problem, though; the experts are quick to point out that social media can be a positive tool for those who have a healthy attitude towards it. So how can you tell if your penchant for scrolling has tipped over from harmless pastime to harmful addiction?

Experts advise people to think about their behaviour when they're not on social media; are they happy to take a break from it? Or do they have thoughts and impulses to get back online as soon as possible? Are they able to socialise in real life instead of simply online? Are they able to continue with their 'normal' everyday life, i.e. going to work, seeing family/friends, or do they now spend their time on social media instead? Do they experience any physical withdrawal to being online – like nausea, headaches, sweating?

If people can't ever put their smartphone away and it's always in their hand – when they go to the toilet, go to dinner, go to bed, when they're travelling – that's also a sign of addiction to watch out for, warns experts.

What could be the reasons?

Why do we get addicted to social media? That's because social media is quite literally designed to be addictive, both physically and psychologically. According to psychologists, social validation lights up the same brain reward pathway as drugs and alcohol. One study by Harvard University made this tangible connection, finding that self-disclosure on social networking sites lit up the same part of the brain that ignites when taking an addictive substance. 'Likes' and 'follows' gamer a hit of 'feelgood' hormone dopamine, and

dopamine creates a positive association with whatever behaviours prompted its release, training a person to repeat them, it explained.

Though given the name 'social' media, these digital platforms often encourage people to become more insular, and less able to communicate and connect with people in the real world. Social skills are actually being eroded, not enhanced, by the apps, believe experts.

Youths worst hit

Generation Z are possibly more in touch with their own weakness in this area than the rest of the population. Three in five in developed nations claim they're addicted to social media, according to a survey of 2,000 young people conducted by an education company. One in seven said they had even gone as far as seeking professional help to tackle their addiction, it was revealed.

Adolescence is the second biggest period of brain development and growth and, because of that, social media can have a big impact on the adolescent brain.

A recent study revealed that teens who use social media more than three hours per day may be at heightened risk for mental health problems. Since the pandemic, there has been an uptick in depression and anxiety among teens, specifically low self-esteem, disordered eating, body image issues and suicidal thoughts.

The way forward

There are some straightforward measures that can be put in place to limit social media use. A digital detox, where people significantly reduce the amount of time spent using electronic devices, could be a wise precaution. This can include simple steps, such as turning off sound

notifications and only checking social media sites once an hour. Besides, one can

create boundaries where certain areas of life are smartphone-free – such as the bedroom and the toilet – is a good start, as

is being strict about only doing one screen at a time, experts suggest. Besides, it is recommended to take intentional breaks, starting with an hour and

building up, using digital tools that physically limit the time people can spend on apps. One can also try to do some-

thing where he or she can't have a phone in hand: dance, dive, climb.

OP DESK

There is no denying that social media has captivated the minds and attention of a sizeable population in the world. This has become even more pronounced during the pandemic when the social lives became mostly digital.

No wonder, when eminent author Subhashree Swain (name changed), 60, tried going on a digital detox by swapping her android set with a feature phone, she failed miserably.

"I tried my best but soon realised how pathetically dependent I am on my device. Three days was the most I could manage – and one of the main reasons was social media," admitted Swain.

With social media addiction on rise like never before, **Sunday POST** takes a look at its intensity, signs, potential victims and the possible ways to overcome the menace.

Scale of addiction

The uncomfortable truth is - People scroll on social media as soon as they wake up; as soon as they feel bored or frustrated at work; as soon as they have 30 seconds of downtime. There are many who do it while watching a film on Netflix, mid-conversation with friends and, yes, even on the loo.

According to mental health experts, gross use of social media is a type of behavioural

addiction – the umbrella term under which gambling, eating disorders, gaming, porn, shopping and sex addictions also fall.

Such addiction could express itself in two main ways: either the person becomes addicted to creating content in order to get 'likes'; or they use social media as a form of escapism from

their real life, incessantly scrolling and living vicariously through the online world of others, they say.

Signs

Sleeping habits are frequently disturbed by overuse of social media. Another



Richa on breaking stereotypes

Actors are often judged by their on-screen appearance and can be typecast. Actress Richa Chadha, known for strong roles in *Gangs of Wasseypur* and *Heeramandi*, believes breaking these perceptions requires significant effort and directors like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, who see actors uniquely.

"I am happy I worked with Sanjay Leela Bhansali in *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* and now in *Heeramandi*. He is an interesting creator. He values people who have talent. I have never heard him say things like 'Iska kaam accha nahi hai, ya yeh sundar nahi hai' about anyone. He has so much confidence in his abilities to present someone in the way that he wants to," Richa explained.

Looking back at her journey, she recalled, "After *Gangs of Wasseypur*, I faced prejudice like being deemed older and unable to speak English. Some spoke to me in broken Hindi, assuming I couldn't understand English, belittling me due to ignorance about my education and background. It's not about language but treating someone less for choosing a deglam role." AGEN- CIES



Disha's thank you note for Kalki team

As Nag Ashwin's dystopian sci-fi epic *Kalki 2898 AD* continues its dominance at the box office, actress Disha Patani, who is seen in the role of Roxie, has penned a gratitude note for the team, thanking the director for leading the legendary cast to success.

She took to her Instagram to share a heart-warming note for the whole team of the film. Disha wrote, "Thank you @nag_ashwin for creating this crazy sci-fi world in the most beautiful way, integrating Indian history and science, you're truly a creative genius sharing conversations with you about anime was my highlight of being on your set. Thank you bhairava @actorprabhas for being the sweetest co-star ever and taking care of everyone. Shout out to the women in charge

@priyankadutt @swapnaduttchhalasani for bringing it to life, you guys are inspirational @djordjevla you're a magician."

Concluding the note, she shared, "Honoured to be a part of such a legendary cast, hats off to the whole team who worked sleepless nights to create this spectacle. And lastly, thanks to my team D who worked so hard to bring Roxie to life I'm grateful to be a part of this beautiful journey. Let's gooo #kalki2898ad."

AGENCIES



SHABANA CREDITS BIG B FOR SENIOR ACTORS' COME BACK

Actress Shabana Azmi, who will be next seen in the Netflix India crime drama *Dabba Cartel*, shared that she's enjoying her second innings as an actor, but she must credit her *Amar Akbar Anthony* co-star Amitabh Bachchan for paving the way.

"I really think it's got a lot to do with Amitabh Bachchan. Because he has cleared the field for senior actors. The women's movement all over the world has also definitely influenced films somewhere or the other. (It's just me) being in the right place at the right time," Shabana said.

"I will die in my working boots. Whether someone gives me work or not, I don't know, but I will be an actor till I pass away. Because also what's happened is in the process, when the second wing happened, I got such different parts. The thing I love doing the most is acting. It's created a different kind of energy. I've never had a problem with my age. I've embraced my age. I never thought of looking like someone less than my age because the graceful thing is to age. Everyone does," Shabana added.

Shabana and Amitabh worked together in a couple of films in 1977 - Hrishikesh Mukherjee's blockbuster comedy *Amar Akbar Anthony* and Manmohan Desai's crime drama *Parrvarish*. AGENCIES



Actor Chunky Panday, who is receiving a lot of praise for his streaming series *Industry*, has said that the film industry is very resilient and knows how to reinvent itself.

The actor quoted examples from a bygone era when the film industry was written off in the time of VHS and television but then it made a terrific comeback with film earning Rs 100 crore and

one would switch to watching video cassettes. But, in turn, the industry only grew bigger. Then came television, and they said no one would go to theatres anymore, that people would just watch TV channels at home. But, to everyone's surprise, our film industry expanded even further. Then came OTT platforms, and they said it was

Film industry highly resilient: Chunky

eventually now eyeing Rs 1000 crore, case in point is the recently released *Kalki 2898 AD*.

Chunky, who essays the role of Rakesh Raman in *Industry*, said: "In 1987, when VHS became a sensation, a lot of people predicted the film industry was going to shut down because every-

over." He further mentioned: "However, *Baahubali*, *Pathaan*, *Jawaan*, *War*, and many other blockbusters proved them wrong, and how. The industry has expanded, improved, and evolved significantly. One of the greatest strengths of our industry is that we continue to reinvent ourselves to resonate with the audience, whose preferences keep shifting with time."

Industry is available to stream on Prime Video. IANS

A masterful period piece



ney together. About looking through the camera, the characters are comfortable in their nudity in the intimate scene between Heloise and Marianne, the frame is stationary without any cutting, and the camera observes both lovers in their moments of tenderness and of being together. There is an exquisite shot of the lovers' getting high together and experiencing the dilation of time together.

The paintings used in the film are by a contemporary female painter, Helene Delmaire. The history of Western oil painting, as we know, was patronised by wealthy men who could commission the works of female nudes and take them home to look at them, an act of possession. The woman who was painted was looked at. Western art was about men buying paintings of naked women; most of the paintings were done by men. Women artists were not allowed by the academy to paint, nor could they paint models,

the images that we have internalized. The film is made without the typical inevitables: men, musical score, and conflict.

"We see how art history reduces the collaboration between artists and their companions: before, a muse was this fetishized, silent, beautiful woman sitting in the room, whereas we now know that Dora Maar, the "muse" of Picasso, was this great Surrealist photographer. And Gabrièle Buffet-Picabia, the companion of Francis Picabia, was intensely involved in his evolution. I wanted to portray the reality of that in the process of actually making a film in strong collaboration with my actresses."

"I wanted a story relevant to today. There was no book to adapt, no painting out there. This is our imaginary, and a tribute to the other imaginaries out there that don't exist. There's nothing worse than realising your imaginaries don't exist—you can go your whole life without seeing things. We're activists for cinema today. We hope you experience something and that we give you the urge to go to the cinema or make some cinema."

Language: French

Duration: 122 minutes

Year of release: 19 May 2019 (Cannes); 18 September 2019 (France)

Direction: Celine Sciamma (1978), France

Cast: Noemie Merlant, Adele Haenel, Luana Bajrami, and Valeria Golino

Written by: Céline Sciamma

Produced by: Remi Burah, Veronique Cayla, Benedicte Couvreur, and Olivier Pere

DoP: Claire Mathon

Editing: Julien Lacheray

Music: Jean-Baptiste de Laubier and Arthur Simonini

so they painted themselves. There is a part in the film where Marianne is asked if she was showing her father's painting at the Art Academy exhibition. One of the striking images is the scene of Sophie's abortion on the obstetrician's bed with infants; it's a top shot where we see Sophie holding the finger of an infant on the bed. We see Marianne painting a scene of abortion. Western painting tradition does not have an image of a willing abortion; here, Celine Sciamma is pushing us to imagine a painting, an image that pushes the boundaries of painting, of the bodies of women. The rules, conventions, and ideas of western painting are being challenged, and we are being invited to examine the way we look and

About the Director

Celine Sciamma was raised in Cergy-Pontoise, north-west of Paris; she grew up in classic Hollywood. As a teen, she discovered arthouse cinema at Utopia, an arthouse cinema at Cergy. After college, she worked with an internet start-up, and after its failure, she went to film school at La Femis, Paris. She made her first film, *Water Lilies* (2007), about a teen girl's unrequited love; her second film, *Tomboy* (2011), was about a gender-nonconfirming tween; and *Girlhood* (2014) was about a black girl living in a banlieue. The three films form a loose trilogy. *Portrait* won the Best Screenplay Award and the Queer Palm Award at the Cannes Film Festival, and the and the Cinematography Award at the Cesar Awards.



SUBRAT BEURA

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We see Marianne on a boat, on a choppy sea, among a group of men. Her canvas falls into the sea, and she dives in to retrieve her cargo. Later, one of the sailors drops her on an island. Marianne starts her trek to a chateau; she has been hired by a countess to paint her daughter Heloise (a betrothal gift without her knowledge). The painting begins in secrecy; we see Heloise's reluctance, but to complete the painting, Marianne and Heloise, along with her maid (Sophie), are left to themselves in the chateau. At first, the difficult relationship between Marianne and Heloise develops into a tender, passionate relationship.

tween Heloise, Marianne, and Sophie. Heloise is getting married; we are unaware of neither the groom nor the consent of the bride-to-be. Coming from three different strata of society: the working artist, the housemaid, and the aristocratic bride-to-be, they develop a relationship that teases the sensibilities—the class lines—discussing art, music, and Greek mythology. The film works with female characters without any male presence in the frames, barring a few moments in the beginning and towards the end. The women can only be themselves in a private place, without the presence of men. The film is a memory of love, a memory that is fresh and alive.

The film challenges the idea of the muse: the artist and the muse work together to create something new, from a dominating relationship of the artist to becoming co-creators, sharing their creative jour-

a friendship be-

Tribeni



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

PHOTO: KUMAR SHARAT, OP