

# ODISHA UNRAVELLED



**ODISHA**  
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

JULY 2021 | ISSUE 8

*A Newsletter by Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha*



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ROAD TO MAHENDRAGIRI

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## ODISHA UNRAVELLED

*A Newsletter by Department of Tourism,  
Government of Odisha*



**ODISHA**  
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# FOREWORD



**JYOTI PRAKASH PANIGRAHI**

*Minister of State (IC) for Tourism and  
Odia Language, Literature & Culture*

**T**he travel and tourism industry had started recuperating from the first wave of the pandemic when the lockdown during the summers and Cyclone Yaas brought a major setback.

After the unexpected challenges posed by the second wave of Covid-19, it's a given that everyone is hoping for a quick revival of the sector. This crisis is a call to action for us to build a stronger and a more resilient tourism

economy for the future.

With the daily case load declining steadily, there is a reason to be optimistic. Foreseeing an ease in Covid-19 restrictions, thanks to the mass vaccination drive being efficiently conducted by the Government, Odisha Tourism has initiated a phase wise strategic inoculation drive for the travel and tourism stakeholders of the State to ensure Odisha is ready to receive guests and tourists.



# EDITOR'S NOTE



VISHAL DEV, IAS

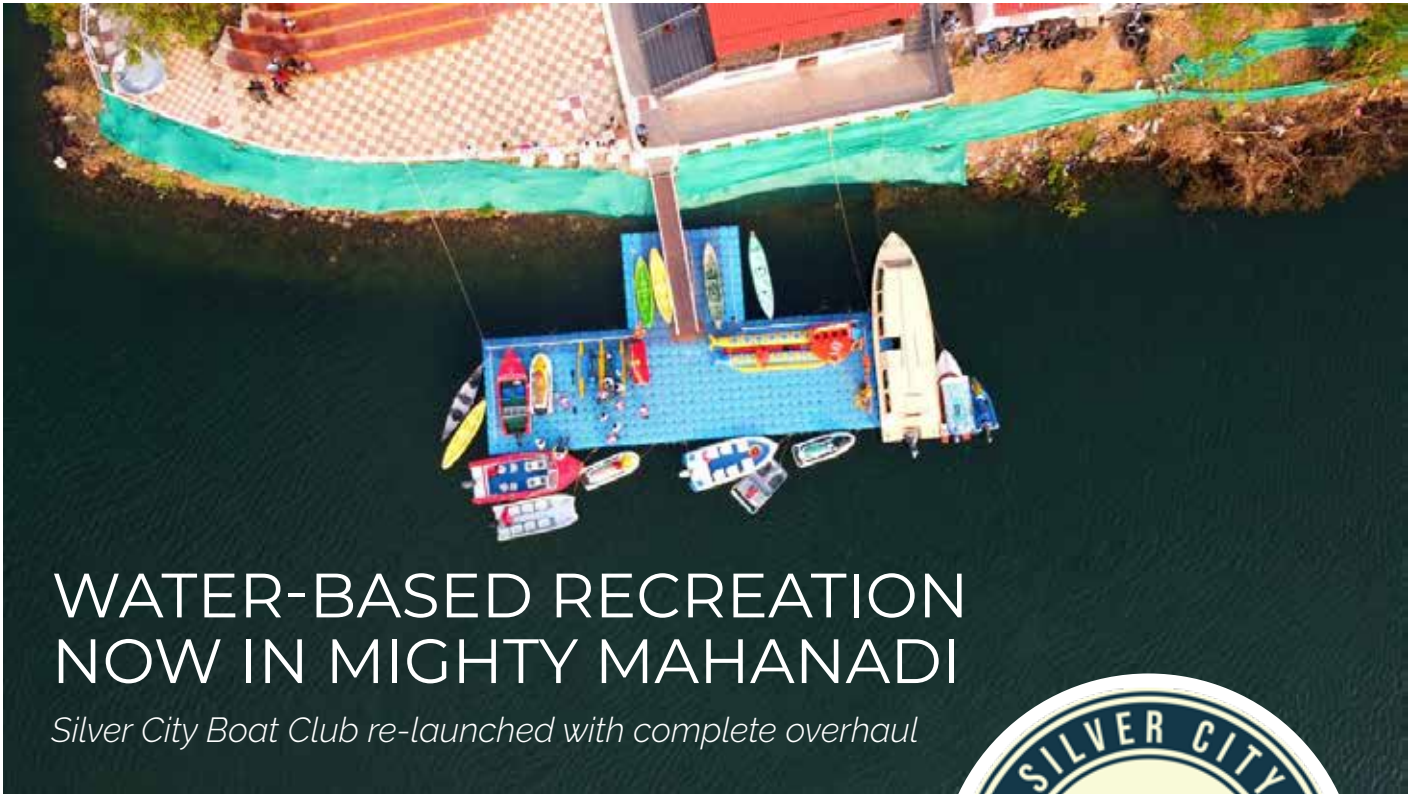
*Principal Secretary, Tourism,  
Sports & Youth Services*

As the pandemic continues to evolve, we are drawing insights from the setbacks to formulate our strategy for the new normal. It has highlighted the need for an integrated development of the State's tourism sector that's self-sustainable and supports wider economic recovery.

Driven by Chief Minister's vision of establishing Odisha as a tourism hub of global standards, we are actively working on infrastructure development through integrated master planning of 17 identified priority destinations. Simultaneously, survey of investible tourism landbank is being carried out to develop both existing and unexplored tourism destinations. To en-

able creation of new tourism products like river cruise, Department of Tourism is working towards refurbishing the existing catamarans and operate it as cruise vessels in Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary through a renowned operator.

We have also introduced the Odisha Homestay Establishment Scheme 2021 to enable creation of immersive tourism experiences through operationalisation of homestays at unexplored bio-diverse destinations with rich culture while boosting local entrepreneurship and augmenting rural livelihoods. Anticipating the ease of travel restrictions, we are taking focused strides to ensure Odisha presents a safe and experientially rich tourism ecosystem to welcome you!



# WATER-BASED RECREATION NOW IN MIGHTY MAHANADI

*Silver City Boat Club re-launched with complete overhaul*



**A**nature's treasure trove, Odisha is home to some of the unexploited water bodies on earth. Prime among them is river Mahanadi - the lifeline of our State. Apart from fuelling Odisha's economy and agriculture, it also presents a vast potential to offer tourists some of the best water-based recreation and sporting activities.

In a bid to develop water-based tourism in Odisha, Department of Tourism through OTDC overhauled the Silver City Boat Club at Cuttack with an investment of approx. Rs 2 crore and relaunched it on 14 April 2021.

Inaugurating the Boat Club, Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik in his virtual address emphasised on the need to establish Odisha as a tourism hub of global standards driven by sustainable livelihood strategies. He said, "To tap into the State's tourism potential incorporating water bodies, we are rapidly developing tourism and hospitality infrastructure in identified areas. This recreational offering in the mighty Mahanadi

river will help in establishing Odisha as a sought-after tourism destination."

The infrastructure at this Boat Club, adversely impacted by Cyclone Fani, has been upgraded to include a floating jetty, booking counter and complex for lifeguards, toilet facilities, a restaurant, adequate parking space and a park with children's play area. The infrastructure will be further augmented in phases.

Tourism Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi in his inaugural address said, "This project comes with basic infrastructure to support multiple Water Sports operators and promote water-based tourism offerings in Cuttack and nearby districts."

The activities to be operationalised in the Boat Club include Jet Skis, Speed Boats, Day Cruise, Banana Boat, Inflatable Boat, Water Scooters, Floating café, Kayaking, Canoeing, Pedal Boats, Scuba Diving, etc. OTDC will operate and manage the boat club, where operators will be allowed to use the common infrastructure and

facilities on a user fee model. Currently, two operators have started operations and steps are being taken for engagement of additional operators over next few months.

The efforts made by Odisha Tourism and OTDC for bringing in a new wave of water-based recreation was recognised and appreciated by dignitaries like Hon'ble MP (Lok Sabha) Shri Bhatruhari Mohatab, Hon'ble MP (Rajya Sabha) Shri Subas Singh, Hon'ble MLA Shri Souvik Biswal and former MLA Shri Debasis Samantaray during the inaugural event.

Principal Secretary Tourism Shri Vishal Kumar Dev, Chairperson OTDC Smt. Shreemayee Mishra, Director Tourism Shri Sachin Ramachandra Jadhav and Collector, Cuttack Shri Bhabani Shankar Chayani were also present during the event.

# JAB TO REVIVE TOURISM

*Vaccination drive for the Hospitality Sector*



It is well-known that Odisha has a stellar record in managing disruptive events and this has only been possible due to the strength and resilience shown by the stakeholders working in travel and tourism industry. The sector was on road to recovery when the second wave of Covid-19 hit the State.

To revive the severely impacted industry, Government of Odisha is taking proactive measures to get the stakeholders of the sector inoculated. In the first phase, Odisha Tourism

*"Odisha Government is taking active steps towards making the industry future-proof by initiating a mass vaccination drive. It involves inoculating the tourism stakeholders, employees in restaurant, hotels, food delivery services, etc. The hospitality industry is working on the frontline with many hotels having turned into quarantine centres and restaurants providing doorstep food delivery services. Through this initiative, we not only aim to get these frontline workers vaccinated but also make the hospitality sector ready for arrival of guests once the Covid-19 restrictions are eased"*

*- Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi,  
Minister of State (IC), Tourism.*

in association with Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) organised a vaccination drive for hotel workers and other stakeholders of Hospitality Sector on 9 May 2021 at OSAP 7th Battalion High School in Bhubaneswar.

The initiative was launched in coordination with Hotels and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO). Around 1,000 persons took the jab during this two-day vaccination drive.

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# COVID-19: IMPACT ON THE STATE TOURISM SECTOR

*Virtual Roundtable by FICCI for tourism and hospitality stakeholders of the State*

The pandemic took a turn for the worse within a span of few months in the first half of 2021. The travel & tourism industry had just started recuperating when the second wave of Covid-19 hit, and it not only hit the sector hard, but also brought forth immense tragedy. To deliberate on the impact Covid-19 has had on the State's tourism sector, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Odisha Council held a virtual roundtable on 'COVID-19: Impact on the State Tourism Sector' with the officials of Odisha Tourism and other tourism stakeholders of the State on 12 June 2021.

In her welcome address, Chairperson of FICCI Odisha State Council and MD of Sambad Group Smt. Monica Nayyar Patnaik lauded the efforts of Odisha Government for risk mitigation initiatives taken during cyclone Yaas which recently hit the State.

During the online discussion, Tourism Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi shed light on the work being undertaken towards developing sustainable tourism with efficient risk management mechanism. Echoing the Chief Minister's vision of putting Odisha in the global tourism map he said, "The budget for tourism sector has been increased from 300 crore to 1500 crore for this year. Let us collectively reaffirm our commitment to preserve, power and promote all aspects of tourism and hospitality and make it socially and economically sustainable".

Principal Secretary Tourism Shri Vishal deliberated on both the short-term and long-term plan to revive the State's tourism sector. He said, "We are actively working towards promoting road trips with itineraries that help travellers explore beaches, forests, wildlife, and other unseen destinations of high tourism potential in our State. Plans are afoot to scale up Eco-retreat Odisha to cover more destinations for swift revival of tourism sector. For the long term, we are developing infrastructure in a very planned and integrated way which includes preparing a master plan for 17 priority destinations. Our infrastructure development budget for this year has been doubled."

Shri Dev also recognised FICCI Odisha State Council's constructive partnership with the government on various issues including the supply of oxygen.

Appreciating the proactive measures taken by Odisha Government during times of adversity Co-Chair, FICCI Tourism National Committee and CMD, Swosti Group Shri JK Mohanty said "The Odisha government has always swung into action. Most of our (the industry's) demands have been considered and taken up at the highest level."

The roundtable discussion saw active participation from tourism and hospitality industry stakeholders like Shri SK Dash, Director, Trip Process Pvt Ltd, Shri Vishal Kamat, CEO, Kamat Group of Hotels, Shri Sanjib Kumar Rout, FICCI Member and Founder President, CV Raman Global University, among others.



Satkosia Gorge

# PITHA HITS THE ROAD AMID RAJA RESTRICTIONS

*OTDC launches 'Pitha-on-Wheels' to keep the Raja spirit alive during lockdown*



Despite the second wave of Covid-19 putting a dampener on an otherwise extensive 3-day celebration of Odia festival Raja, OTDC's initiative 'Pitha-on-Wheels' kept the festive spirit alive.

The Raja Utsav 2021 saw mobile Pitha delivery vehicles stationed at Master Canteen Square, Khandagiri, CRP, Patia, Chandrasekharapur and Rupali Square in Bhubaneswar. An assortment of the season's staple sweetmeats like poda pitha, manda, kakara, arisa, chakuli and chandrakala were available for takeaway between 7 am to 11 pm from June 14 to 16.

Launching the innovative initiative OTDC Chairperson Smt. Shreemayee Mishra said, "Every year OTDC makes special arrangements with all varieties of pithas and swings. However, this year it will be a bit different. OTDC has made all the arrangements for people to celebrate Raja amid Covid-19 guidelines".

Takeaway services were also made available at OTDC counters in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Sambalpur during the three-day festival.



# RAGHURAJPUR GEARS UP ARTISTICALLY TO WELCOME TOURISTS POST LOCKDOWN

*A unique competition leads to complete makeover of Odisha's craft village*

The quaint heritage art village, nestled about 10 km way from the pilgrim city Puri, underwent an artistic makeover as part of a unique competition. Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi, in collaboration with the State Culture Department organised a traditional Mural Camp incorporating Pattachitra at Raghurajpur from June 9 to June 13, 2021.

The pandemic induced lockdown had drawn curtains on the artists' livelihood opportunities. As many as 150 artisans participated in this 5-day competition turning the walls and façade of their homes into canvases for murals, making the competition a successful attempt to revive the arts village and artistically ready to welcome tourists once travel restrictions are eased.



PADMASHRI  
SUDARSAN PATTNAIK  
*Lalit Kala Akademi*

“A remuneration of INR 10,000 was provided by the Akademi to each family that participated in the competition and five best artworks would be selected for special awards”



# UNLOCKING NICHE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

*Pinning hopes on Covid-19 vaccine, Odisha's travel and tourism industry is gearing up to welcome tourists. With sustainability becoming the buzz word, Department of Tourism is taking strategic steps to diversify niche tourism experiences in locations rich in culture, heritage and biodiversity.*



Tampara Lake

## Water-based Recreation:

Blessed with some of the most picturesque lakes, wetlands and rivers, Odisha presents tremendous potential in providing water-based recreation and adventure activities. Apart from the Tampara Lakefront Project that was launched early this year, the Silver City Boat Club in river Mahanadi in Cuttack was upgraded and relaunched. Both the projects have been developed to provide recreation facilities and include water sports like kayaks, jet skis, banana boats, etc. Cruise Tourism is another niche water-based recreation project Odisha is working on. An agency has been finalised to refurbish the existing catamarans and operate as cruise vessels in the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. Besides, to provide safe options for water-based transportation for tourists and general populace in Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, Chilika, Department of Tourism is working on introducing a scheme to upgrade the existing traditional/wooden tourist carrying boats operating at the Lake to IR Class compliant FRP boats.

## Immersive Homestay Experience:

With the corporate work culture undergoing a paradigm shift enabling people to work remotely, tourists are now opting to stay longer and explore a single destination rather than scramble to visit multiple locations within the travel period. Understanding that sustainability is the main phenomenon of such slow travel with respect to local communities and environment preser-



Chitrakonda Nature Camp, Malkangiri

vation, Odisha Tourism recently introduced the Odisha Homestay Establishment Scheme 2021. Through this scheme, homestays are envisaged to be established near biodiverse and heritage rich destinations untouched by the hotel networks through which travellers can get unique cultural experiences in hospitality, cuisine and other local ways of life while staying in local family homes.



Habalikhati Nature Camp, Bhitarkanika





Road to Dhauli



Tikarpada Nature Camp

### Road Trips to Hinterlands:

At a time when air travel and public transport are taking the backseat, going on road trips has become a preferred choice to travel and explore tourism destinations. Odisha Tourism's campaign 'Odisha by Road', which was launched last year, offers exciting itineraries that makes use of the State's excellent road networks connecting neighbouring States to Odisha's hinterlands. After the successful first run that enabled road trippers to discover State's treasures by road, the department is currently working on introducing new road trip itineraries that'll take travellers off the beaten track to explore unseen tourism destinations in the State. If you're planning to embark on a road trip, visit [odishatourism.gov.in](http://odishatourism.gov.in) and browse through exciting road trip itineraries to help you make your decision.

### Boosting Ecotourism:

With the pandemic evoking people's consciousness towards conservation of environment and wildlife, ecotourism has started gaining ground amongst avid travellers. Home to one National Park, one Biosphere reserve, India's 2nd largest mangrove ecosystem and several wildlife sanctuaries, Odisha boasts of places where nature has not been rearranged by human hands. With travellers exploring off-beat experiences like birding, wildlife safari, trekking, etc., the State Government has undertaken works to double the room capacity of the existing 47 Eco tour nature camps. To further augment accommodation facility, eco-friendly structures like eco-cottages in protected areas are also being developed.

### Sustainable development of priority destinations:

With a plan to introduce new, innovative and more niche tourism experiences, infrastructure development guided by integrated master planning of 17 identified priority destinations in the state has begun. Department of Tourism recently floated RFPs inviting suitable architecture firms for sustainable development of destinations like Chilika, Satkosia and Hirakud among others. Besides, to establish Odisha as a sought-after beach destination in India, five beach stretches including Pir Jahania, Niladri and Muhan in Puri and Ganjam's Haripur and Pati Sonapur are to be developed to match international standards and aim for the coveted Blue Flag certification by FEE Denmark.

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“Armed with vaccine certificates, people would be itching to travel after months of leading a sedentary lifestyle. But unlike the pre-covid tourism scene, the post-pandemic era will see people gravitating towards nature-driven niche and immersive travel experiences. Niche tourism will trump mass tourism in the post-pandemic world”

**SHRI VISHAL DEV, IAS**

*Principal Secretary, Tourism*

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# THROTTLE UP FOR A MONSOON ESCAPADE

*Embark on a refreshing road trip across the  
Eastern Ghats in Koraput*



Mountain Peak - Deomali



Mountain Peak - Deomali



Duduma Waterfall



Mountain Peak - Deomali



Deomali Hills

Upper Kolab Dam



Bonda Tribe

It is said that monsoons in the valleys are incredibly beautiful. For an avid road tripper, witnessing the misty clouds pour magic over nature is like watching dreams come true. With the hills covered in lush greenery, downpour making a soft sound and abundant freshness all around, a drive to Koraput makes for an ultimate monsoon getaway from the cities. You can start from Bhubaneswar or from Visakhapatnam via the Araku Valley.

Koraput is a nature's paradise adorned with thick forests, magnificent mountains and steep waterfalls. Reaching for Deomali, Odisha's highest mountain range in the Eastern Ghats, is like taking a walk among the clouds. Further, you can trek to numerous picturesque waterfalls like Gulmi,

Duduma and Rani Duduma. You can even visit Gupteswar – a temple nestled on a lush green hill that enshrines a huge 'lingam'. Located just 80 km from Koraput, it is believed that Lord Rama passed through this heavily wooded valley on his way to Panchabati in Dandakaranya. For those looking for a slice of ethnic life, head for a visit to the villages of the Dhuruba and Gadaba tribes. One of the indigenous tribes are the Bondas who are famous for their jewellery, ornaments and their body stature. Visit the weekly market Onukadelli to interact with them if you're nearby on a Thursday. You can also meet the Didayi tribes in this market. If you plan to embark on this road trip, visit [odishatourism.gov.in](http://odishatourism.gov.in) for a detailed itinerary curated to explore Odisha By Road.



*Explore beaches, forests, wildlife, waterbodies, hill stations and much more in Odisha by road.*

*Visit [odishatourism.gov.in](http://odishatourism.gov.in) for detailed road-trip itineraries.*

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# NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK

*A pioneer in breeding many endangered  
wildlife species*



SHRI SHASHI PAUL, IFS

*Addl. PCCF(WL) & CWLW, Odisha*



## HISTORY OF NANDANKANAN

Nandankanan Biological Park has a very interesting beginning. Few wild animals from different parts of the state were sent for the World Agricultural Fair organized in New Delhi in 1960. After the end of the fair, the animals were brought back to the State the same year, which were housed near Khandagiri hills and exhibited to the people. To mitigate the water scarcity and associated management issues there, the then Chief Minister Dr. Hare Krushna Mahatab and the Minister for Development Dr. Radhanath Rath along with senior Forest officials decided to establish a Zoo on the bank of Kanjia lake. On 29th December, 1960, Sri S.K. Patil, the then Minister of Food and Agriculture, Govt. of India inaugurated the

new Biological Park named "Nandankanan" which literally means the heavenly 'Garden of God'. Subsequently in the year 1963, a Botanical Garden came up adjoining the park on the other side of Kanjia lake. The Nandankanan Zoological Park together with the Kanjia lake and State Botanical Garden spread over an area of 4.37 sq.km was declared as Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuary and notified on 3rd August, 1979. Gradually many facilities like Toy train, Aquarium, Electronic entry gate, Battery operated vehicles, Boating, RO drinking water kiosk, Interpretation centre, Zoo museum, Safaris, live feed rearing centre etc. were added and/or renovated for better animal and visitor management in due course.



## NANDANKANAN – THE ZOO

Over the years, Nandankanan has emerged as a prominent and vibrant centre for biodiversity conservation and environmental education. It has spearheaded many significant improvements to provide highest standards in housing, husbandry and health care to the animals and contributed inter-alia towards enriching everyone's knowledge on the biology of endangered species. It gradually evolved in to a large and premier zoo and became the first zoo of the country to be a member of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in 2009. Nandankanan epitomizes the unique integration of in-situ and ex-situ conservation initiatives, which can be seen only in a few places of our country. The sprawling zoo houses 160 species of animals including amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. The natural areas adjoining the enclosure, is home to rich flora and fauna and free-living biodiversity. Kanjia lake, a perennial water body with area coverage of 66 ha is the main water source for the Zoo and Botanical Garden that has been listed as a Wetland of National

importance by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India in the year 2006 for its rich bio-diversity and its role in wetland education. Moreover, Nandankanan Sanctuary acts as lungs of the State's capital city Bhubaneswar.

Nandankanan has been very popular among the tourists and local people and attracts more than 3 million visitors every year. Many visitors, especially school students find it fascinating to watch some of the enigmatic animals like White tigers, Lions, Giraffe, Chimpanzee, Hippopotamus, Capuchin, Bears, Elephant, etc. A mission of conservation and education is carefully woven into curating exciting visitor experience that also serves as enjoyable recreational opportunity for families, school groups, residents and tourists.

Nandankanan is pioneer in breeding many endangered species viz. gharial, Indian pangolin, ratel to name a few. More than 850 gharials have been released in the Mahanadi river system to repopulate the nature since the first captive breeding of gharial in 1980. From 2019, Nandankanan is

monitoring movement and survival of 13 gharial released in river Mahanadi through biotelemetry. It has the distinction in captive breeding of all three crocodilian species found in the country. The zoo is coordinating for conservation and breeding of Indian pangolin and is a participating zoo for mouse deer, tiger and long billed vulture. Besides the conservation breeding programme, the zoo has been breeding a variety of endangered animal every year. In addition to conservation breeding, these programmes help to better understand the biology, captive management and health care practices of endangered species. Research at Nandankanan Biological Park has contributed to publication of more than 500 research papers and 9 books on in-situ and ex-situ wildlife management. Moreover, Nandankanan Biological Park is not only a Zoo but it is a centre of excellence in the field of conservation breeding of endangered species and its rehabilitation in nature under species recovery programme. Apart from this, it acts as a magnificent hub for motivation and awareness to conserve nature and wildlife.



# DO YOU KNOW WHAT MAKES NANDANKANAN UNIQUE!

- First zoo in the country to become an Institutional member of the World Association of Zoos & Aquarium (WAZA), the global alliance of regional associations, national federations, zoos and aquariums, dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world.
- The first white tiger safari of the country was established at Nandankanan on 1st October, 1991. Presently the zoo has four safaris. Other three are Lion Safari, Bear Safari and Herbivore Safari.
- Kanjia Lake as a main water source is the lifeline for both Nandankanan Zoological Park and State Botanical Garden. It was declared a wetland of National Importance in 2006.
- The zoo is a coordinating zoo for conservation breeding programme of Indian Pangolin and participating zoo for conservation breeding of Long-billed vultures, Tiger and mouse deer.
- First Zoo in the country where endangered Gharials (1980) and Ratel (2012) were born in captivity.
- It is the first zoo in the world where melanistic tigers were born (2014) and displayed to the visitors.
- Nandankanan has the largest enclosure to house Gharials and Hippopotamus in the country.
- It is the host zoo for white tigers. White tigers were born from normal coloured parents in 1980, a unique event in the world.
- First zoo in the country after which an express train 12815/12816 Puri-New Delhi Express has been named - "Nandankanan Express".
- The wilderness area is a breeding ground for Asian Openbill Stork, making it the second largest heronry of the State.
- The zoo has its own Fodder Farm, Live Feed Rearing Centre and Slaughterhouse to become self-sustaining in catering to the dietary needs of animals housed in the Zoological Park.
- The zoo is a wonderful site for wildlife conservation and education where one can experience integration of ex-situ and in-situ conservation of wild fauna and flora.







KHUSBOO KR SINGH

## 8 YEARS INTO EXPLORING ODISHA: INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET

*No matter how stressful we might be, we can just walk into nature to get ourselves healed.*

At the age of 5 when I accompanied my grandmothers to offer Puja at Lord Jagannath's temple in Puri, little did I know that after 16 years I will get an opportunity to come back again to Odisha for my higher studies. As a native from Bihar raised in Kolkata, it was for the first time when I got a chance to experience the culture, people and vibe of a state well known as India's best kept secret. My journey started from Dhenkanal, a princely state in Odisha where my alma mater, Indian Institute of Mass Communication is located. Meeting the simple, god loving, honest and religious people was a heart-warming experience. I loved every corner of this quaint town nestled in a natural landscape. Visiting the nearby temples and tourist attraction spots every weekend after a grilling week of studying was a religious affair. Needless to say, it became a meditative experience.



It seemed 10 months passed in a blink and I was posted in TOI Jaipur as an intern, but somehow, destiny again brought me back to Odisha as I got my first job as a Reporter in Odisha's fortnightly magazine My Citylinks in the capital city Bhubaneswar. From 2012 to 2019 I worked as an executive reporter, blogger, visiting faculty at NIFT, voice over artist, senior copy writer and an author. It was during this period, I was blessed with friends like family, a rewarding career and an opportunity to work with top notch multinational organizations.

I travelled as it gave me respite from the monotonous work routine. The majestic waterfall of Koilighughar in Jharsuguda, Saptasajya in Dhenkanal and Khandadhar in Sundargarh helped me in connecting with my inner self and reminding the fact that no matter how stressful we might be, we can just walk into nature to get ourselves healed. More than my Odia friends, the gupchupwala bhaina, the paribawala as well as the autowala bhaina ensured that I pick up the classical language pretty fast. And every time I spoke to them in my non-Odia accent, a beaming smile spread across their face and it was a rewarding feeling. Over the years I witnessed the devastating cyclones like Phailin, Hudhud, Titli and Fani that directly affected the state and I was amazed to learn from the resilience of common people and the disaster management preparedness of the State.

Today, not only India but even the United Nations has lauded the mettle of Odisha for effective management of disaster. Despite facing such natural calamities, I have witnessed the state standing tall, becoming stronger and resilient and carrying on with their daily lives. I can proudly say that my 8 years of stay in Odisha has transformed me into a strong-willed woman with infinite faith in almighty and an indomitable spirit to face any adversities in life. Today, while working for a slow & sustainable Australian fashion brand Ecoloom Pty Ltd, I am still connected to Odisha as I work with Odia artisans who weave natural fabrics and make handmade utility items.

As I look back, I feel I can go on writing about several anecdotes that will not be enough to elaborate my gratitude to the state and its people. I feel every place I have visited here has given me a family to whom I can return to at any point in my life. I plan to come once a year to visit the Lord of Lords at his abode in Puri and pray to be able to give back to the state with the best of my capacities in the days to come. Till then Jai Jagannath!

**Khusboo Kr. Singh is co founder of Ecoloom Pty Ltd., an Australian sustainable fashion brand. She has stayed in Odisha for 8 years during the initial phase of her career**





JITU MISHRA

# FROM GOLDEN TRIANGLE TO DIAMOND TRIANGLE

*Buddhist Odisha – An Architectural Odyssey*

The golden triangle of Odisha is widely known for its majestic Kalinga temples. The temples of Odisha are amongst the finest specimens of religious art and architecture in India. However, very few know that Odisha is blessed with yet another heritage triangle, the diamond triangle, an incredible Buddhist cluster from the time of the Mauryas in the 3rd century BCE. The Buddhist civilisation of Odisha continued to flourish even after Buddhism had declined in the rest of India.

It may be mentioned here that Buddha Purnima, a festival commemorating the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama, is popular at weaving clusters of Maniabandha and Nuapattana villages in the Cuttack District as these weavers here are the only traditional Buddhists left in India. This year Buddha Purnima was celebrated on



26th May.

The diamond triangle of Odisha consists of three clusters of hills in Jajpur and Kendrapada Districts, namely Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Udayagiri. They are located at a distance of 90 km from Bhubaneswar.

Until the 1950s, not much was known about the Buddhist

heritage of these hills. However, 4 years of intense archaeological excavations in the 1950s opened up an incredible treasure of Buddhist stupas, deities and monasteries at Ratnagiri, followed by similar discoveries through excavations at Lalitgiri and Udayagiri by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Ratnagiri, a Mahayana Buddhist site was a celebrated centre for learning philosophy and theology. The monasteries at Ratnagiri is the biggest among all historical monasteries of India (in the 1st millennium CE) filled with double storied monastic cells, a central shrine, numerous deities of Mahayana and Vajrayana pantheons and a chlorite schist gateway, an architectural splendour. Carved with minute details depicting various human characters the gateway is a visual treat to the eyes. Ratnagiri is also the site where found a staggering





number of votive stupas, which were offered to dead theras and the resident monks after their death. The large concentration of votive stupas at Ratnagiri rank next to Bodhgaya, the holiest Buddhist site in the world.

Ratnagiri also has a site museum exhibiting the archaeological remains of the hill.

Udayagiri is the largest Buddhist site in the triangle overlooking a river of Brahmani – Chitrotpala river delta in coastal Odisha. Excavations at the foothill of the Assia range have unearthed a treasure of Vajrayana deities, two large monasteries, an apsidal temple and the only of its kind Vajrayana stupa. The location of Udayagiri is dramatic set against the backdrop of a honeycombed mountain. The

entire area is filled with isolated remains of Buddhist relics in the form of monastic ruin, sculptures and caves.

Lalitgiri is the oldest site in the triangle and has flourished for the longest duration. On the top of Lalitgiri Hill is located the excavated remains of the maha stupa. From here one can have a sweeping view of the countryside and transported back to an era of intense Buddhist civilisation. The maha stupa of Lalitgiri has a prized distinction in the entire Buddhist world. In the late 1980s when excavation was carried out here, archaeologists discovered a relic casket of Lord Buddha, the only of its kind in Odisha and the eastern coast of India. It is now being displayed at the site museum. Another attraction of Lalitgiri is the apsidal chaitagriha made

of red bricks, the Buddhist temple from the Hinayana Period.

The Buddhist trail in Odisha is incomplete without visiting the rock-cut elephant at Dhauli, close to Bhubaneswar and the famous battle site of Kalinga. Located on the bank of River Daya, the forepart of the elephant is carved out of a living rock above the edicts of Emperor Ashoka. It is one of the earliest specimens of Buddhist art symbolizing Lord Buddha's birth from the womb of his mother.

Of late the excavations at Langudi Hill near the diamond triangle have unfolded various mysteries. Panels of stupas and rock-cut Buddhist deities from the Mahayana and Vajrayana Period and a stupa from the period of Emperor Ashoka are the major attraction at Langudi Hill. An inscription found at Langudi suggests that the site was an important established at the time of Ashoka. Archaeologists working on Buddhist sites of Odisha have speculated that the Langudi along with Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri once constituted a major university in the lines of Taxila and Nalanda. The university was known as Puspagiri and it was referred to by the Chinese monk pilgrim, Huen Tsang in the 7th century CE.

The Buddhist heritage of Odisha is unparalleled in entire India mainly because of its architectural diversity. One also finds here all branches of Buddhism, the Hinayana, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. It is believed that Vajrayana Buddhism was founded here by King Indrabhuti, which later spread to Tibet.

For a traveller having an interest in heritage, Odisha undoubtedly forms a kaleidoscope of Buddhist architectural odyssey.

**Jitu Mishra is an Archeologist and Co-Founder of Sarna Educational and Cultural Services LLP**





## GANGESWARI TEMPLE: AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL THAT RESEMBLES THE SUN TEMPLE

*Built around 13th century, the temple is a fine specimen of Odishan architecture and culture*



Sourav Ku. Dash

**G**angeswari Temple, located at an old scenic village of Bayalish Baati near Gop (Puri district) is a temple rich for its old Kalinga architecture style, built around 13th century during the reign of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. To encourage tourism & let people know about its physical existence, measures have been taken by ASI to conserve and protect and make people aware of its rich culture and architectural value for the temple's architectural style holds an uncanny resemblance to the present standing remains of the UNESCO World Heritage Site – the majestic Sun Temple, KONARK.

The temple is a fine representation of 'Pancharatha' style of Kalingan architecture. The deity being worshipped in the sanctum is Goddess Gangeswari, the Ista Devi (family deity) of the rulers. The temple is constructed of sandstone, built in Khakra style, consisting of a Jagamohan, (Entrance porch) and having a foundation of Laterite stone.

Tantra was being practised there, the charismatic idol of Maa Gangeswari at the sanctum and "Barahi Devi"

– female form of Baraha- one of the "Saptmatrika" sucking blood from a bowl signifies it.

Konark's chief architect, Sibi Samantaray Mahapatra, belonged to this village and it is here that the 1,200 craftsmen, engineers and supervisors of Konark stayed whilst making their plans for constructing the Sun Temple. It is also said that much of the masonry for Konark was transported via log rafts on the nearby Patharabuha river. Adjacent to Gangeswari Temple is a large pond. It is what now remains of the silted up and blocked Patharabuha river that perhaps acted as a major artery once for the construction of the great Konark Sun Temple. The temple is a small one, but its association with Odisha's rich cultural heritage depicted architecturally, indeed attracts eyes. People visiting the temple and its surrounding can feel the construction era of Odishan architects and their symbolic significance that gave birth to one of the architectural masterpieces – KONARK. The ruins of the carvings are still able to tell stories of bygone eras. The ancient monument still holds its head high as a symbol of pride of Odishan architecture & Culture.









CHEF MICHAEL

# CHHENAPODA

*This lip-smacking sweet with a distinct smoky flavour is Lord Jagannath's favourite.*

Chhenapoda originated in the Odia town of Nayagarh in the first half of the twentieth century. The owner of a sweet shop, Sudarshana Sahoo decided to add sugar and seasonings to leftover cottage cheese (chhena) one night and left it in an oven that was still warm from earlier use. The next day he was surprised to find out what a scrumptious dessert he had created. Its "CHHENAPODA" called the Taste of Odisha. Today's Chhena poda has become Odisha's staple dessert. Chhena means cottage cheese and Poda means charred. It is not only the best dessert of Odisha but an emotion of all Odias. This lip-smacking sweet with a distinct smoky flavour is lord Jagannath's favourite and is among

the "Chappan Bhog" offered at the Puri Jagannath temple. Demand and sale of Chhenapoda is huge in Odisha with every sweet shop preparing its own flavour either from sugar or gud (jaggery). It attracts huge number visitors who grab a bite and take it home.

As a chef whenever I got a chance to create something different with this legendary dessert in modern take, I did. During 'fest', an event that celebrate all things Odia, when all the best hotels & restaurants got a chance to do something with our Odia cuisine, the best pick by all was Chocolate Chennapoda. This dish was also the only one picked by Highway on My Plate - The Indian Guide by food connoisseurs Rocky & Mayur.

## Here's how to give a try to the legendary dessert of odisha – Chhenapoda.

### Chocolate Chhenapoda Recipe

#### Ingredients:

- 1 kg paneer (fresh cottage cheese)
- 350grms Sugar
- 1-1/2 tablespoons Ghee
- 4 tablespoons Milk
- 150 gm Semolina (Sooji / Rava)
- 60 gm Drinking Chocolate Powder
- 50 gm Cashew nuts few broken
- 100 gm milk dark compound chocolate

Desi ghee for brushing the baking bowl - 8 to 10 diameter round shape baking mould.



### How to make Chenna Poda

- To begin making chocolate Chhenapoda, first take fresh paneer or homemade chhena and mash it well with your hands.
- Add sugar, chocolate powder and milk dark chocolate compound and mix all together properly.
- Add sooji/rawa, ghee and milk and mix it properly till everything incorporates well.
- In a separate pan, fry the broken pieces of cashews and add it to the chhena mix as well.
- Transfer the chhena mix in the baking pan.
- Tap the pan to settle the mix well and bake the chhena in a pre-heated oven at 180 degree C for 40-45 mins. To check if it's done or not, insert a toothpick and see if it comes out clean.
- Take out the baked chocolate chhenapoda and cool it for 2 hours approximately.
- Hold the pan upside down on a serving tray and remove the Chocolate Chhenapoda carefully. Dust it with sugar powder & serve with chocolate sauce.

***Chef Michael has more than 20 years of experience in the Food Industry and is owner of Michael's Kitchen, a restaurant in Bhubaneswar, Odisha where he keeps reinventing Odia Cuisine***



RITIKA MANDAL

## SPREADING ODISHA'S ART IN THE 'LAND OF SMILES'

*Imparting, propagating and promoting Odissi  
dance in Thailand*

After gaining 25 years of experience in Odissi, with over 700 stage performances and numerous accolades to my name, the beautiful classical dance form from the land of Lord Jagannath took me from the Silver city of Cuttack in Odisha to 'the Land of Smiles' – the Kingdom of Thailand. It is in the beautiful city of Bangkok where I currently impart knowledge and training on classical dance Odissi, under the Indian Embassy in Thailand's cultural organisation 'Thai Bharat Cultural Ashram'.

India & Thailand are two of many countries who share a common platform in the field of language, religion, culture, tradition & beliefs. Even the dance forms here are of two types – Classical & Folk, sub divided depending on the region it originates from. In India, almost all dance concepts derive their themes from Ramayana & Mahabharata. Similarly, in Thailand it is also Ramayana



and Mahabharata. Ramayana is known as "Ramakein" in Thai which literally means 'Glory of Rama'. The dance forms might differ by name, culture and presentation but their theme remains the same.

In my personal view, I have seen a greater number of Thai students (both young & old) getting attracted to Indian classical dance forms. My love for Odissi took me to dif-

ferent places in Thailand and organise workshops. It was during this period that I found many people getting attracted to this classical dance form. Though many students are already trained in other Indian classical dance forms like Bharatnatyam, Kathak and Kuchipudi and perform at various events, I found many that were fascinated by the costume, make up, jewellery, dance form and of course my presentation. Many people met me and enquired more about Odissi and asked me how their kids can learn this beautiful art. Seeing their eagerness to learn about my land's art and culture made the decision for me to stay and start imparting, propagating and promoting Odissi dance in Thailand.



**Ritika Mandal from Cuttack, Odisha  
is Faculty Head of Department of  
Yoga and Indian Classical Dance  
at Thailand Bharat Cultural  
Organisation in Bangkok, Thailand**





MAHINA KHANUM

## TRAVELLING FURTHER INTO ODISHA, FROM A DISTANCE

*I knew that Odisha's art had the ability to transform me, but little did I know about its universal power to heal so many wounded hearts from afar.*

From Paris to Bhubaneswar, we have dealt with unpredictable circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic for over a year. Never did I expect that this lockdown will bring forth an opportunity to share my love for Odisha with the audience of France, Europe and beyond!

As an Odissi dancer, my Gurus have taught me the power of imagination, creativity and determination – qualities that saved me and my husband Avishai Leger- Tanger who is also my artistic partner and a digital artist. Being used to exploring digital territories, we sought for space and hope, as the world had suddenly shrunk to our lock downed Parisian apartment.

During the pandemic, in line with our previous work 'LightsofOdisha' and 'Raas Leela' - a



dance choreography shot in virtual reality with dancers of Lasyakala Dance Vision at Mukteswar Temple in 2017, we created a short video using traditional hand gestures (mudras) and expression (abhinaya). The amazing intricacies of Odissi helped us gracefully convey a powerful and universal safety message. The tremendous appreciation of this video from all around the world left us astounded!

Our online Odissi dance classes widened the frontiers of our imagination. We collaborated with Smrutiranjana Ojha, a Patanchitra artist from Bhubaneswar, to design virtual backgrounds to help students immerse themselves into the luxuriant natural beauty and art of Odisha. My students were extremely moved by the opportunity to discover

Odisha.

Our landmark online event this year was a virtual tour of Mukteswar Temple in collaboration with Detour Odisha. The tour, designed by Sophia Simon and Sabyasachi Jana, focused on the history of architecture, dance and rituals. Many European participants set their first virtual step in to Odisha and were left amazed. Many of them pledged to visit the temple as soon as international travel resumes.

Never did I expect to share my love for Odisha with so many people. Never did I think I would be able to invite them all to the land that is the centre of my world. I knew that Odisha's art had the ability to transform me, but little did I know about its universal power to heal so many wounded hearts from afar.

**Mahina Khanum is Odissi classical and Bollywood dancer, teacher and choreographer based in France**



# SCENIC ROUTES OF ODISHA -MALKANGIRI TO CHITRAKONDA

(BALIMELA RESERVOIR)



DEBARPITA MOHAPATRA



The unforeseen circumstances of Covid brought me back to Odisha and gave a chance to explore our beautiful state, which was due since long. Being a photographer, it has always been a priority for me to see the unseen.

Someone has rightly said that the journey is always more beautiful than the destination. The scenic route we are talking about is a mere 50 kilometre stretch from Malkangiri town to Chitrakonda or Balimela Reservoir. But real beauty starts from Nakamamudi, 25 kilometres before Chitrakonda, where the ghat section begins.

This point is also the junction of SH 47 and Malkangiri-Balimela road. If you are coming from Koraput or Jeypore, then take the left on SH 25, just after Govinpali.

Dense green forest, wide roads, nice tarmac and minimal human presence – what else does an explorer need! Unhindered flow of the stream, snaky roads playing hide and seek with dense forests and cool fresh breeze all around adds to the experience of a lifetime. At many places, natural tunnel formed by trees creates paradise for photographers. If you are a rider or driver who en-

joys twisties, this is the stretch for you.

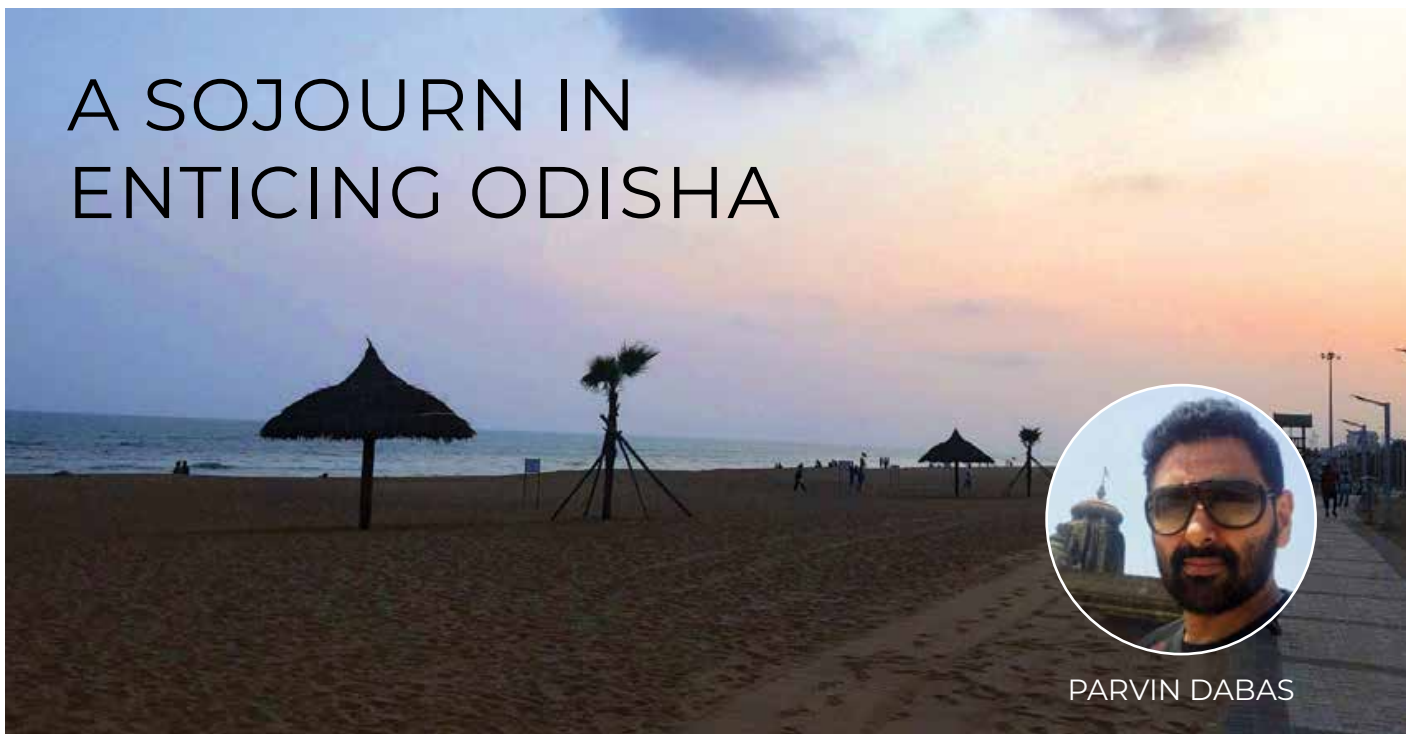
*Balimela Dam was built on Sileru river in 1977 with a purpose of irrigation and power generation jointly by Odisha and Andhra Pradesh government. Some 20 odd kilometers after Balimela, Odisha state border ends.*

So, when are you planning to explore this amazing piece of #OdishaByRoad

**Debarpita Mohapatra is a professional Architect and a passionate Photographer**



# A SOJOURN IN ENTICING ODISHA



PARVIN DABAS

His benevolence precedes his popularity, and my wife Preeti and I were drawn towards the call of the Lord Jagannath. Apart from the Jagannath Dham in Puri that draws devotees from far corners of the world, the pristine beaches beckon the tired souls for a much-needed respite from the daily grind. Having heard so much about it from our friends and family, we longed for a visit to Puri.

After launching the Pro Panja League in February last year, we wanted to seek the Lord's blessings and it seemed our prayers were answered through veteran filmmaker and dear friend Padmashri Nila Madhab Panda. He was in Bhubaneswar during that time for a film shoot and very graciously organised a wonderful

trip to Puri.

The visit to the beach was simply breath-taking. The turquoise waters and clear blue sky were a sight to behold. We were lucky to meet Padmashri Sudarsan Pattnaik who was engrossed in sculpting a sand art on the beach. Taking a stroll, we found that the beach had been amazingly transformed to resemble a complex incorporating a walkway and an amphitheatre. This sparked my imaginations to hold future Pro Panja League matches here – a dream location for sure. Losing track of time, I honestly felt glued to the place, chilling by the beach.

I wanted to stay a bit longer, but every temptation was secondary when compared to a visit to the Lord's abode. When we arrived at the Jagannath Temple, a sense of peace and tranquillity embalmed

us. The temple architecture is simply ethereal that speaks of the land's rich heritage and the faithful rightly flock here. We returned after offering our thanks to the holy trinity. It felt like the darshan had rid my mind of all troubles and I truly had a good night's sleep.

We started for Bhubaneswar the next day where we met with our trip organiser friend. After having a good lunch on his shooting set, we paid a visit to the Lingaraj Temple. The splendid architecture and mesmerising beauty left us spellbound. It would not be a rhetoric to add that God must have ascended to sculpt the temple himself. No wonder Bhubaneswar is aptly known as the City of Temples.

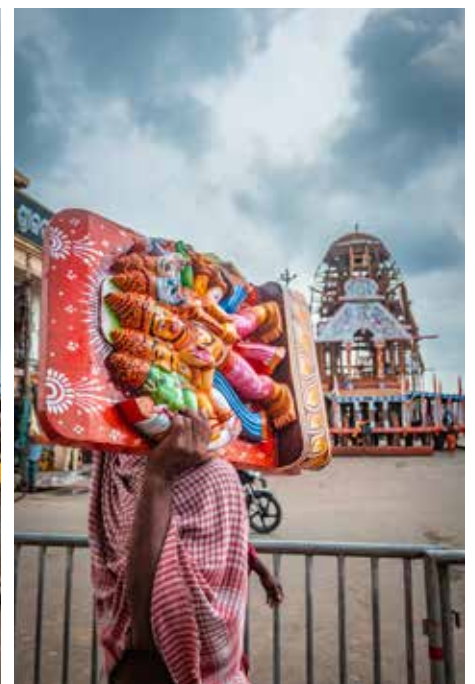
**Parvin Dabas is a Bollywood Actor, Model and Film Director**







Preparations before the annual Ratha Jatra is on full swing. The chariot making process this year began on 13th May with Akshaya Tritiya rituals. This was followed by major ceremonies like Devasnana Purnima (bathing rituals) and Chandan Yatra. The elaborate preparations and celebrations held prior to the Chariot Festival is truly a sight to behold.





# SAY YES TO NEW **ADVENTURES**



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