

Cuttack True essence of Orissa

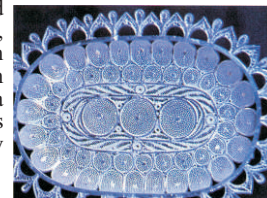


Stone bridge on Kathajodi

Every year people throng the Gadagadia Ghat in Orissa on Kartik Purnima (that falls in November) with boats made of banana stem or paper to set adrift before the dawn break. The gentle cold of November is never a deterrent for them. The full moon still bright in the sky, thousands of tiny boats decorated with flowers and lamps slowly embark on their journey into the unknown. Standing along the shore, with a prayer on their lips, people keep a vigil over boats till the last flicker of light is swallowed by the darkness. This curious ritual of the city and nearby areas is nothing but perseverance in itself, the history of a glorious past.

In the hoary past, traders of this land set sail on this day for distant lands in boats, laden with spices, perfume, silk, salt and oil seeds to bring back wealth to their land. This magnificent ritual is followed in the city known as Abhinaba Baranasi in the olden times. With a distinct identity, the city is the hub of Orissa, its commercial capital, the land of antiquities, monuments and handicrafts. This city is 'Cuttack', located on the banks of most revered river Mahanadi. As Ganga is to Varanasi, which made the city flourish materially and spiritually, Mahanadi is to Cuttack. Hence the name "Abhinaba Baranasi" (or new Varanasi).

This city was known to travellers as early as 7th century AD. Situated between river Mahanadi in the north and Kathajodi delta in south, Cuttack served as an important port and enjoyed flourishing trade with the far eastern states like Bali, Java, Sumatra, Borneo and with Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). This helped make Kalinga - the ancient Orissa, a wealthy kingdom. As a result, Kalinga was repeatedly attacked by kings from northern and southern India. The ruins in Cuttack city and nearby areas are mute witnesses of such attacks.



Cuttack filigree work

During the 10th century, Cuttack was turned into a military camp by King Keshari. A granite stone revetment was built in the 11th Century along the Kathajodi, a tributary of the Mahanadi river, to protect the military camps as well as the city. This is an engineering marvel which one can see even today while entering the city from Bhubaneswar. Though 900 years old, the stone bridge is still saving the city from floods.

During the reign of Akbar, Orissa was ruled as part of the Bengal province. For the first time in 1607, Orissa became a separate province by the orders of Jahangir and Cuttack became its capital. Since then, it remained Orissa's capital until 1956.



Bomkai saree, Sambalpur

Cuttack has preserved a host of ancient monuments of different faiths testifying to her glorious past. If the city has famous temples like Katakchandi and Paramhansa, it also has mosques like Jami Masjid at Balubazar, Diwan Bazar mosque and Qadam-i-Rasool. Aurangzeb's piety and devotion to Islam resulted in his ordering the provincial governors to construct mosques in their territories. The city has thus also remained a cultural and architectural metropolis in Orissa. The 18th century Qadam-i-Rasool shrine was constructed with the specific purpose of sheltering the sacred relics of the prophet. The footprint of the Prophet engraved in a circular stone is placed in the centre of the monument. The sacred relic, the Qadam-i-Rasool (Footprint of the Prophet) was brought from Najaf in Arabia with the signature of the then Sherif of Mecca to prove that it was genuine. Today this shrine is dear to both the Hindus and the Muslims alike. The Jami Masjid at Balubazar may be regarded as the magnum opus of Muslim monuments in Orissa. It easily surpasses all others in matters of beauty and grandeur.

Contd.

Cultural Calendar for November 2007

November 7

Film: Kabuliwala (with English subtitles)
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Hemen Gupta
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

November 17

Painting, Drawing and Essay Competition for children to commemorate the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
Venue & Time: ICC 9.30 a.m.

November 20

Hindustani Vocal Music Recital
by Sangeet Shasthrapathi Thilini Priyankari
Rodrigo
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

November 23

"Call of vally" - Santoor Recital
by Sangeet Praveen Dr. Karunaratne
Kiriwattuduwe
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

November 27

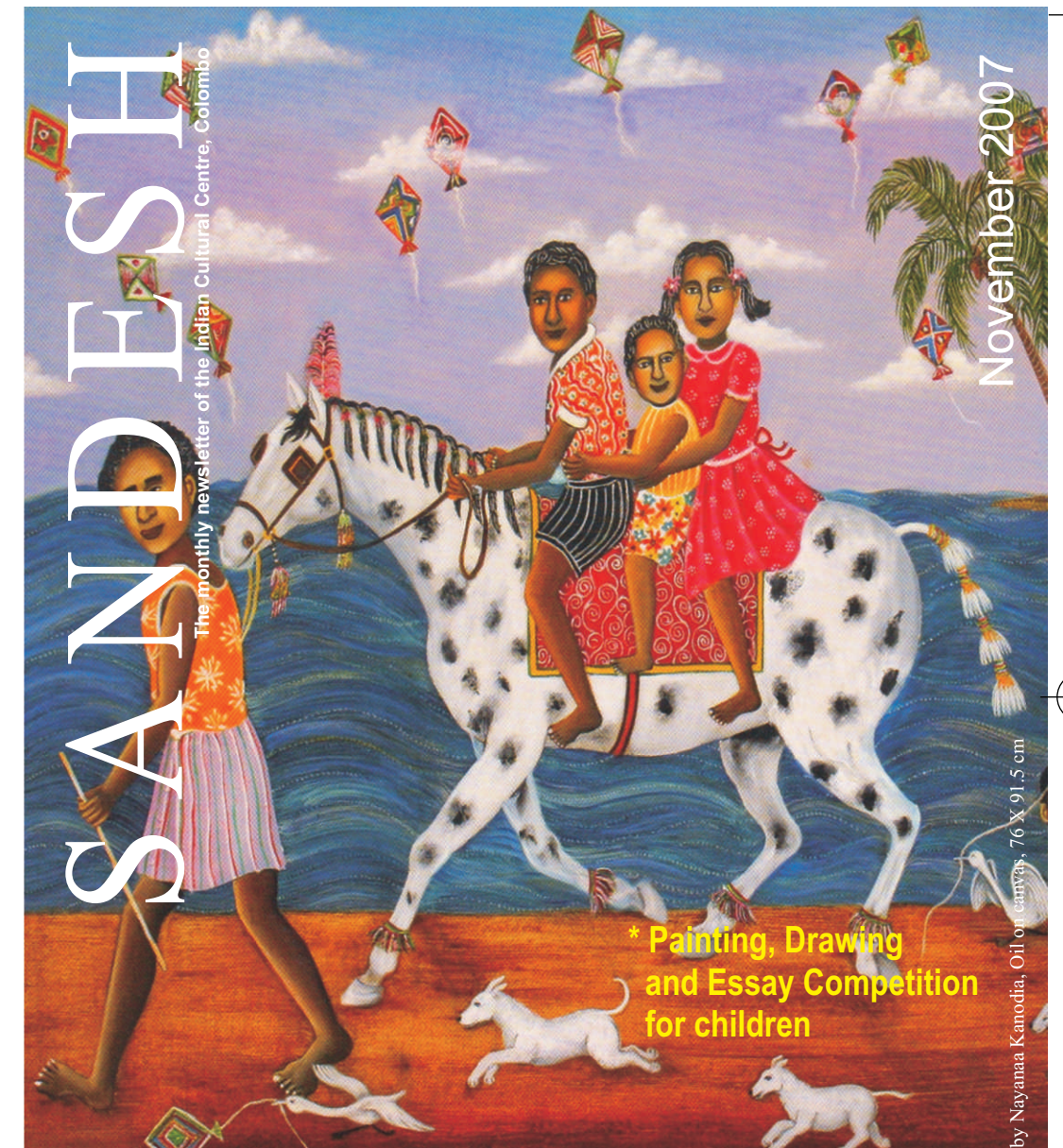
Film: Do Bigha Zamin (with English subtitles)
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Bimal Roy
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

SHANKAR'S INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S COMPETITION 2008



The Shankar's International Children's Competition 2008, in the categories of writing, painting and drawing, is open to children all over the world born on or after January 1, 1992. The competition was started in 1949 by late Shri Keshav Shankar Pillai, a celebrated cartoonist and recipient of several awards including "Padma Shri" and "Padma Vibhushan". The International Participation in the competition has increased greatly over the years with children from over 130 countries participating and winning prizes.

The last date of receipt of entries in New Delhi for the Shankar's competition is 31st December 2007. Results will be announced in August 2008 and the prize winners will be informed individually by post. For rules and further details, please call the Indian Cultural centre at telephone number 2500014.



* Painting, Drawing
and Essay Competition
for children



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Past Events

September 2-5
Mahatma Gandhi Photographic Exhibition



A photographic exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi was organized by the High Commission of India at the National Art Gallery, Colombo, from 2-5th September 2007, to commemorate the 100 years of the Satyagraha Movement. A number of religious leaders and eminent persons from various walks of life participated in the inauguration ceremony on 2nd September. Besides the traditional lamp lighting, “bhajans” that Gandhiji liked were also sung at the inauguration.

The exhibition received wide media coverage and publicity. In all, over 10,000 persons including students of many of the leading schools and educational institutions, visited the exhibition and got a glimpse of Gandhiji’s life and work, and the ideals that he stood and fought for all through his life, by viewing the over 300 photographs and replicas of his personal belongings on exhibit. A number of films on Mahatma Gandhi were also screened during the exhibition.

This year the United Nations Organization has unanimously adopted a resolution that Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, 2nd October, would be commemorated as the “International Day of Non-Violence”. As part of the commemoration in Sri Lanka, the High Commissions of India also organised a photographic exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi at the Queen’s Hotel, Kandy from 2nd to 4th October.

September 11
Launch of “Bridging Connections” A collection of short stories edited by Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha



Prof.Rajiva Wijesinha, launched his book entitled “Bridging Connections” at the Centre. The book launch commenced with the speech by the Chief Guest His Excellency Shri Alok Prasad. Ms. Jean Arasanayagam one of the well known writers of Sri Lanka shared her thoughts on the book. The book launch concluded with a reception.

September 21
Bharatha Natyam Recital by the students of Indian Cultural Centre trained by Ms. Subashini Pathmanathan



The students of the Indian Cultural Centre, trained by Ms. Subashini Pathmanathan presented a classical Bharatha Natyam recital on 21st September at the Cultural Centre's auditorium amidst a large gathering.

Different groups of students proved their mastery and ability. In all items the students showed their excellent skill in pure “Nirtha”, “Nirthya”, “Thala” and “Laya”. The evening was a memorable event for the art lovers.

Contd.

Past Events.. contd.



September 28
Bharatha Natyam recital by Ms. Sakitha Kugamoorthy

Ms. Sakitha Kugamoorthy, Diploma & Post graduate diploma holder of Rukmini Devi College of Fine Arts, India captivated the audience with her brilliant Bharatha Natyam performance. Among the items she performed was a scintillating Varnam in raagam Shri Ranjani.



Films in November



Kabuliwala (with English subtitles)



Children known him as Kabuliwala. But they were afraid of him; he had such an imposing figure! Like all good men, however, Kabuliwala was very fond of children. Often he would distribute his bagful of 'Pista Badam' among them. Kabuliwala had come to Calcutta to earn his living, leaving behind his little daughter in Afghanistan. Her memory haunted him all the time. And he came across little Mini – the city child in whom he saw the image of his little daughter. Thus it was that Kabuliwala took to little Mini like an affectionate father. In time a charming relationship developed between the two. At the call of Kabuliwala, the child would run down to him , the little mischievous Mini and the giant Pathan could be hear talking, laughing & playing – forgetting the world around them Fate, however, intervened and an unfortunate incident soon separated the two. They met again. Tagore's story Kabuliwala is so well known

that perhaps you have read it. Here is a film based on that great classic. A brilliant adaptation by the legendary Bimal Roy!
Language: Hindi Directed by: Hemen Gupta

Do Bigha Zamin (with English subtitles)



Shambhu(Balraj Sahni) celebrates the arrival of rains, after two years of drought with his son Kanhaiya and wife Parvati (Nirupa Roy) . His joy is short lived, as the zamindar wants Shambhu's land for putting up a factory. The zamindar manipulates and bribes the local officials into declaring Shambhu a defaulter, for not having repaid loans taken from the zamindar. The film poignantly details the efforts of Shambhu to reign his land. A film by Bimal Roy which won the 1953 Fimfare award for the Best Film & Best Director.
Language: Hindi Starring: Balraj Sahni, Nirupa Roy, Ratan Kumar, Murad, Nana Palsikar & Nazir Husein Directed by: Bimal Roy

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Cuttack True essence of Orissa ... Contd.

Those who are fascinated by history are also drawn to the towering gateway of Barabati Fort. The fort was built by the Ganga dynasty on the banks of river Mahanadi in the 14th century. Once said to contain a nine-storied palace, the fort is mostly in ruins. The moat, the gate and the earthen mound around the palace can be seen even today. Nearby is the shrine of Katakchandi, the presiding deity of the city. Speaking of modern times, the huge Barabati stadium adjacent to the Fort stands out in sharp contrast to the ancient monuments.

The Paramahansa temple of Lord Siva on the outskirts of the town is famous for its Ananta Garva (water hole), which floods the sanctum sanctorum on holy occasions. It is named after its presiding deity Paramhansa Nath, a form of Lord Siva. The peculiar feature of the shrine is that the lingam (phallus) is seen without Shakti and the level of water always remains beneath the lingam in a hole locally called Ananta Garva. But on holy occasions, the water overflows from the Ananta Garva and floods the sanctum sanctorum.

Cuttack is also famous for its minute, elaborate, gracefully twisted and bended art work of silver wire known as Tarakashi. The art is a distillation of the fine architectural ornamentation commonly seen across Orissa. Requiring tremendous patience and skill, Tarakashi involves the art of making fine spider web-thin silver strands by drawing them through increasingly smaller holes and then fusing them to make dainty artefacts. The intricacy of design, the minute details and a fine finish are the benchmarks of the craft. Each handcrafted item is the embodiment of an aspiration, a prodigious effort. Some of the popular filigree ornaments are bracelets, bangles, finger rings, earrings and necklaces. Purses, room decoration items, candle-stands and cigar boxes are usually given as gifts.

Cuttack is a paradise for shoppers as merchants from all over Orissa sell their products here. It offers filigree and silverware of the city itself, horn and brass work of Batiamunda, silk and cotton textiles woven with the technique of the tie and dye from ManiabandaNuapatna and Sambalpur, applique art work of Pipli, stone carvings of Lalitgiri and pattachitra paintings of Puri.

Over a thousand years old, what makes Cuttack special is that it is a perfect blend of the past and the present. Its rich heritage and an ageless charm symbolise the true essence of Orissa.

Source: Adapted from India Perspectives