

Vidyamandira Times

VIDYAMANDIRA EVENTS

RKMV CELEBRATES VANI VANDANA, 2024

Anish Chakrabarty

Saraswati Puja, the 'Vani Vandana', was gloriously celebrated in the prestigious college Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math, Howrah, on February 14 and February 15, 2024 in the Vimuktananda Hall that was mostly arranged by the students of the college with guidance of revered monks or 'Maharajas'. As a tradition of the college continuing for long years, every students were assigned with particular duties that suits their area of interests. The duties included invitation of guests; decoration that had in it painting of different forms or 'avatars' of Maa Saraswati that were decorated on the main platform where idol was laid and decoration of the entire college campus with 'Alpona' or paintings; arrangement of benches both before and after the puja from the hall; cleaning of the vessels used for puja; bringing the idol; reception and enquiry; 'Puja Bhandar' that had the preparation of the 'Naibedya' or the main



Puja arati being performed by a student of Ramkrishna Mission Vidyamandira

plates of fruits, sweets and other items that were offered to divine goddess both the days, and helping a senior and revered 'Swami Umapadananda' who performed the puja with their necessities at every moment; distribution of 'Prasada' and serving at Vidyamandira Dining Halls; photography; singing devotional songs; arrangement of lights and mikes; and immersion. A cultural programme was also held on February 14, 2024 evening that was also performed and by the students. The overall festival of two consecutive days were strictly celebrated under the supervision of monks and the students happily performed their duties as per their directions.



Prasad distribution

The preparation of the festival was started enthusiastically long days ago. By February 13, 2024 the entire college and the hall was richly and beautifully decorated by the students. The idol of Maa Saraswati was bought from 'Kumartuli' nearby. The students of 'Puja Bhandar' scrutinized the heaps of Bilva leaves and separated the best 300 among them for puja and 'Homa' the sacred fire, prepared bowls of sandalwood pastes, and other necessary items to avoid rush on the day of puja. By the night, everything was properly arranged. The main day or first day of puja began from 4'o clock. The students gathered near the hall and started their duties as per the instructions of Swami Shanteshananda. Preparation of 'Naibedya' and other necessary items for puja were basically the main tasks. Most of the students were really expert in the art of cutting fruits into proper shapes. Some of the beginners learned that eagerly. The sun rose and the melodious Saraswati Vandana by the student singers laid the beginning of the puja. The puja was performed throughout the day that included 'Prana Pratishtha', 'Arati', 'Pushpanjali', 'Haate Khori', 'Homa' and most importantly the 'Prasad distribution'.

Many devotees gathered at the college campus. Everyone seemed enjoying the day to the fullest with intervals of photo sessions. A short and crisp cultural programme was held on the evening that included a few songs, recitations and a closet drama. The recitations by revered Principal 'Swami Mahaprajnanada' especially gathered huge audiences. The next and the ultimate day was filled with both joy and sorrow because Maa Saraswati again returned to her home being immersed at the Ganges flowing along the sacred Belur Math. 'Dhunochi Naach' and dance by the students on the rhythm of 'Kasor' were the main areas of attraction. The festival came to an end by sprinkling 'Shanti jol' or holy water to the students followed by a song hoping for the prosperity of them. What separates the 'Vani Vandana' of RKMV from other institutions is the heartfelt participation of the students and their enthusiasm that helps in taking the festival to the zenith of success and attracts huge devotees from near and far. The prayer of most of the students, monks and other members were "Vidyang Dehi". May the divine mother bless everyone with knowledge, purity, wisdom and prosperity!



Students during Vidyarthi-Vrata Homa

BHRATRI VARAN: AN ODE TO HARMONY

Himadri Mukhopadhyay

Fresher's Party, a very common celebration organized by most of the colleges across the country, stands not only as an escape from the monotonous college life but also as a platform for the induction of the new batch to the campus life and building a healthy relationship with their seniors. Although the students seem to enjoy these celebrations, most colleges arrange the parties in the most chaotic and uncultured way possible making it very ordinary and regular. On 21st September 2023, Belur Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira celebrated their own Fresher's Party which they named "Bhratri Varan". Although celebrated with great splendour, the Bhratri Varan was rich in Indian tapestry of heritage and culture. The day began at 5 o'clock in the morning followed by the morning prayer. At 9 o'clock in the morning, the freshers batch gathered in a room dressed in the classic Bengali attire, white dhuti-punjab, where their seniors guided them to their seats.

The room was thoroughly decorated with flowers and the smell of joss-stick was lingering in the air. Swami Umapadananda maharaj was busy with the puja for the Bhratri Varan. Soon after the completion of puja, the students were provided with Bael leaves dipped in Chandan by their seniors. This was followed by a set of chanting through which the freshers took an oath. The day of Bhratri Varan was the only day when the guardians of the students were allowed to enter the hostel buildings. So, as the day passed, the excited parents of most of the fresher batch visited their son's room and the environment was soon filled with a murmur of pleasure and happiness. Midday marked the lunchtime. First the students, then their guardians were provided with a mouthwatering delicacy. The evening was scheduled for a cultural programme. The students and their guardians were instructed to reach the college auditorium, the Vivekananda Sabhagriha, at 4 p.m. The function began with Vedic chanting followed by speeches of the monastic members and invited guests. The following event was a cultural programme which comprised of a series of classical songs and some recitations. The storm of claps after completion of the event spoke about its success. The concluding event amazed everyone and left them spellbound. It was the play of shadows by a shadow-grapher. The day ended with a concluding and heartwarming speech by the principal of the institution, Swami Mahaprajnananda and the students returned to their hostel and their guardians to their home with happy hearts.

The entire day was spectacular and rich in Indian culture and heritage. But the most outstanding and striking feature was the harmony and sense of coordination among the students. When the students of other colleges face the severe problem of ragging, the new batch here receive a warm welcome from their seniors and also get a lot of help from them. The students here strictly abide by discipline and carry out this celebration to welcome the new batch every year. For generations, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira has been maintaining their cultural heritage and performing their "Bhratri Varan" with grandeur and success.

SPECIAL STUDENTS' DAY

Saurav Das

Students' Day is celebrated all over India on October 15, on the birth anniversary of "Missile Man of India", Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. But there are still some extraordinary cases in this ordinary world. In our college, Ramkrishna Mission Vidyamandira student's day is celebrated on 23rd January in a manner of a day organized by students. In Vidyamandira, we the students in 23rd January celebrates the day like a festival where we control the college's hostel and mess by giving a rest to our dear and strict Maharajs and other supporting staffs who with their daily work makes this college a residential college of Ramkrishna Mission. From ringing the morning bell to the serving of launch, students replace the usual people who are there to do those works all over the year.



Students cleaning the hostel building

The day started with the worst and noisy bell which was ranked by our friend Atanu at 5am. Though in other dawns every students use to go to prayer hall in a unconscious mind and find their selves infront of Maharaj at the time of attendance, this day was special for every students as they came to the prayer hall with their full energy and enthusiasm. Like every year, a funny incident occur in the prayer hall as at the time of blowing "Shankh" [couch] any students were unable to blew it up and at last it was blown after a series of trying. After the prayer, we went to dining hall for taking special breakfast and obviously "special tea". Then we went to attend "Netaji Jayanti" in front of the main building of Vidyamandira. After this, we went to our respective hostels for the main purpose of the day. We started cleaning our rooms and our whole hostel "Binoy Vhaban" from prayer hall to bathroom. Every floors including stairs, doors, window, veranda was cleaned for winning the competition of "Best Bhavan" and "Best Room" of Vidyamandira 2024 which is a ritual of our college that takes place every year in this special day. After cleaning, examiner came and checked our Bhavan and every rooms. Then at 11am, it was the time for special lunch. Even in the dining hall, from serving lemon to Hajmola, every food items were served by students. It took us around 30 minutes for completing the lunch because of the numbers of food items and exchanging food items among us which is as common as nothing.

After finishing the lunch, we went to home as there was some holidays for 3 to 4 days. It was an extraordinary and special experience of our college life till now and this text can finally ensure the reader that it wasn't an ordinary students' day, it was a "Special Students' Day."

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYAMANDIRA'S SPORTS DAY: A DAY OF FUN AND UNITY



On the sunny morning of February 24, 2024, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira was abuzz with excitement and energy as students, teachers, and guests gathered for the much-anticipated sports event. This special day brought together people from all walks of life to celebrate the joy of sports and camaraderie. The event kicked off with a lively opening ceremony filled with colourful decorations and spirited music. Everyone cheered as the flags were hoisted, signalling the official start of the sports day. The atmosphere was electrifying, with smiles and laughter filling the air. Students eagerly participated in a variety of sports and games, showcasing their athletic abilities and team spirit. From traditional track and field events like running races and long jumps to popular team sports such as football, cricket and volleyball, there was something for everyone to enjoy. The games were not only about competition but also about having fun and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

One of the highlights of the day was the relay races, where teams of students worked together to pass the baton and race to the finish line. The crowd erupted into cheers as they watched the runners give their all, pushing themselves to the limit in pursuit of victory. It was a true testament to the power of teamwork and determination. In addition to the physical activities, there were also cultural performances and artistic displays that added to the festive atmosphere. Students showcased their talents in music captivating the audience with their creativity and passion. It was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to appreciate the diversity and richness of our college community. Throughout the day, there was a sense of unity and camaraderie among the participants, regardless of their background or abilities.



Students cheered each other on, offering words of encouragement and support. It was heart-warming to see friendships being forged and bonds being strengthened through the shared experience of sports. As the sun began to set and the day drew to a close, awards were presented to the winners in recognition of their outstanding performances. But more importantly, everyone felt like a winner, having enjoyed a day filled with laughter, friendship, and unforgettable memories. The sports event at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira was not just about competition; it was about coming together as a community to celebrate our shared values of teamwork, respect, and sportsmanship. It was a reminder that through sports, we can build bridges, break down barriers, and create a more inclusive and harmonious society. As we bid farewell to another successful sports day, we look forward to the memories we've made and the lessons we've learned. And we eagerly anticipate the next opportunity to come together and celebrate the joy of sports at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira.

This article is written by Parthib Palai

KALEIDOSCOPE

FILM REVIEW

Tasnim Ali

“Life is better than death, I believe, if only because it is less boring, and because it has fresh peaches in it”

-Alice Walker

‘Summer Ghost’ is a Japanese animated short film produced by Flat Studio and directed by Loundraw. It was theatrically released on November 12, 2021. The film is about a legend which started circulating during summer that a ghost is said to appear to those who burn fireworks at the abandoned airfield. Curiosity surrounding this legend brings together Tomoya Sugisaki (who is academically brilliant but yearns to be an artist), Aoi Harukawa (who is bullied by classmates) and Ryo Kobayashi (who is suffering

from a terminal illness and is forced to give up on his passion for basketball). One evening, the three gather at the airfield’s runway and light fireworks together and as said in the legend the ghost, whose name they will later learn as Ayane, appears in front of them and revealed that she can only be seen by those who are near death.



At the core of the film lies in the question ‘What does it mean to live?’. At the film’s beginning, Tomoya, Aoi and Ryo are united by, in Ayane’s words, their closeness to death and a desire to understand it further. This is especially apparent with Tomoya, who’s fallen into a depression because of the disconnect between his dreams and his mother’s expectations for him. Feeling as though he is backed into a corner, Tomoya begins to wonder if death might be a means of gaining the freedom he yearns for. This drives his curiosity in the summer ghost, and while Tomoya himself believes that Ayane’s existence is one of unrestricted liberty, Ayane herself conveys that, despite whatever the afterlife may appear to be, it’s a lonely place. Ayane was untimely torn from the world of the living, and as such, never had the chance to experience romance or even travel. Conversely, she notes that, so long as Tomoya is alive, he will have

a chance to turn things around in his life. This ultimately ends up being the main message in Summer Ghost: it’s a poignant reminder that while it may seem appropriate to take this way as a means of escape, the finality of death means one is permanently unable to affect any other decisions in their life. This is why Ayane is insistent on pushing Tomoya to live on and pursue his own goals, as opposed to helping her locate her body. Although Tomoya is not explicitly suicidal, one can spot that he’s feeling trapped, and in this moment, while he’s not seeking death per se, he’s certainly curious about it. Upon learning about Ayane’s story, however, his desire to help her overrides any wish to understand death. By treating Ayane’s spirit as he would anyone who’s flesh-and-blood, Tomoya begins to understand what standing firm for his own principles means; he feels strongly about becoming an artist, but previously lacks the courage to express his thoughts to his mother. Pursuing his heart and helping Ayane thus gives Tomoya a stronger sense of what being true to oneself means, and with his newfound friends’ help, Tomoya ends up locating Ayane’s body, allowing her spirit to move on, and giving her mother closure. As a result of these experiences, Tomoya can be truthful to his mother, and pursues a career path in the visual arts. Similarly, these experiences also give Aoi a newfound resilience: she stands up to her bullies by the film’s conclusion.

However, the film’s short runtime precludes exploring things in more detail leaving some elements to the viewer’s interpretation impacting a broad range of viewers in accordance with their own experiences and thoughts. Altogether, after watching ‘Summer Ghost’, I found my experience to be quite enjoyable and meaningful.

GAME REVIEW

Aranya Roy

As the sun dips below the horizon casting an orange glow, I find myself engrossed in the captivating world of the **Modern Warfare** franchise. With every battle and confrontation, the series unravels, like a thrilling novel drawing players into its narrative and heart pounding action. From the streets of the Middle East to the jungles of Eastern Europe Modern Warfare captures the chaotic essence of warfare like no other. The series immerses players in combat scenarios where split-second decisions determine survival. The designed landscapes in the game ranging from bustling cities to desolate landscapes add to the intensity of battle. Whether navigating corners in close quarters combat or coordinating long range attacks across terrains



players must adapt to ever changing battlefield dynamics. Modern Warfare's gameplay combines paced action, with depth. With an arsenal and equipment options each offering advantages players engage in intense firefights that require skill and strategy. Whether competing in matches or delving into single player missions the series offers an adrenaline-fueled gaming experience that keeps players engaged.



In the middle of this chaos, there is Captain Price who epitomizes military expertise and adaptability. His speech sounds severe and he has a hard look on his face which gets respect from both supporters and enemies alike. He's more than just a dogface; he embodies an unwavering loyalty and immolation. One of the most remarkable traits of Captain Price is his unchanging sense of duty as well as trustworthiness. Price remains true to his thing throughout the series regardless of the cost involved. Irrespective of attacking adversary fortresses or leading into war, Price is steadfast in his resolution. Inculcating his followers with a sense of purposefulness and resolve, he provokes them through sticking to the course always. Nonetheless beneath that severe image lies a complex individual with a complicated personality. While at heartless stages war, price still shows some form of

compassion that distinguishes him from other militaries' numbers in pieces places. His conscience is hardened to various ethical conundrums raised by war time events simply floating down river life after cheque collection dates are over for him because such checks take quite sometimes to mature hence it would probably be years before they were cashed by anyone else but himself.

One thing that defines Captain Price's personality is his willingness to challenge authority for what he believes to be right. While many other military commanders only follow orders, Price does not hesitate to voice his opinions or act when required. This rebellious nature often sets him apart from the rest of the unit but it also makes him endearing and respected among people under his leadership. In "Modern Warfare," the most recent episode in the series, Captain Price experiences a transformation which brings new depth to his character. On the brink of global war, Price faces the hardest task that he has ever experienced in his life. Price is trapped between death and its scaring memories of war while forced into an environment where friends turn foes in an instant. What mainly separates Captain Price's character during Modern Warfare from others in duty is trying to correspond military obligations with moral obligations. He has to decide wisely in the course of play, which makes him to question his principles and ignore hard truths of war. Price grapples with ethical complexity of his choices; it is like choosing between sacrificing the lives of innocent people and achieving success in terms of command or trusting those who were enemies before. Captain Price is portrayed as having a much larger personality than what a typical military figure can have because these internal struggles are actually capable of reflecting human nature. As players progress further into the game, they get a better understanding about Price's thinking and experience the aftermaths of his actions emotionally. That is why Captain price's naked weakness attracts, and he remains an appealing character for many long after the credits roll.

Ultimately, the Modern Warfare series demonstrates how deceit could be used in video games. Its entangled story and captivating personalities expose onlookers to gruesome actualities of contemporary warfare and simultaneously address themes like loyalty, self-sacrifice, and ethicality. In the middle of all this is Captain Price whose nonchalance blended with his compassion has made him a guiding beacon during the worst of battles.

Tasnim Ali



Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice is a challenging action-adventure game by FromSoftware set in a dark, wartorn Sengoku-era Japan. Unlike other FromSoftware titles like *Dark Souls* or *Bloodborne*, Sekiro throws out the traditional RPG stat system and embraces a more focused, deflection-based combat system. The world of Sekiro is a dark and atmospheric feudal Japan, filled with detailed landscapes, dynamic lighting, and intricate character designs creating a sense of authenticity and depth that enhances the overall gaming experience. The narrative of Sekiro is gripping, weaving a tale of revenge and loyalty. Players assume the role of Wolf, a skilled shinobi with a prosthetic arm equipped with a grappling hook and various tools. The story kicks off with the kidnapping of the young lord Wolf is sworn to protect, setting the stage for an epic quest filled with twists and turns. The narrative is delivered through well-acted voiceovers and subtle environmental storytelling.

Within the first minutes of *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*, there's no missing the fact that FromSoftware has built its Shinobi-focused adventure from the DNA of the *Souls* and *Bloodborne* series. But this new mutated strain is as much its own stealth-action experience, one that's more focused, cohesive, and in some ways forgiving, despite retaining its predecessors' trademark difficulty. As I rolled credits after 50 hours of pressurized-blood-geyser executions, fantastical monster fights, split-second swordsmanship, and sprawling, secret-filled areas, I'm left with a deep appreciation for this amazing journey and the skills it demands to master it. To any *Souls* veteran, Sekiro's timing-based lock-on

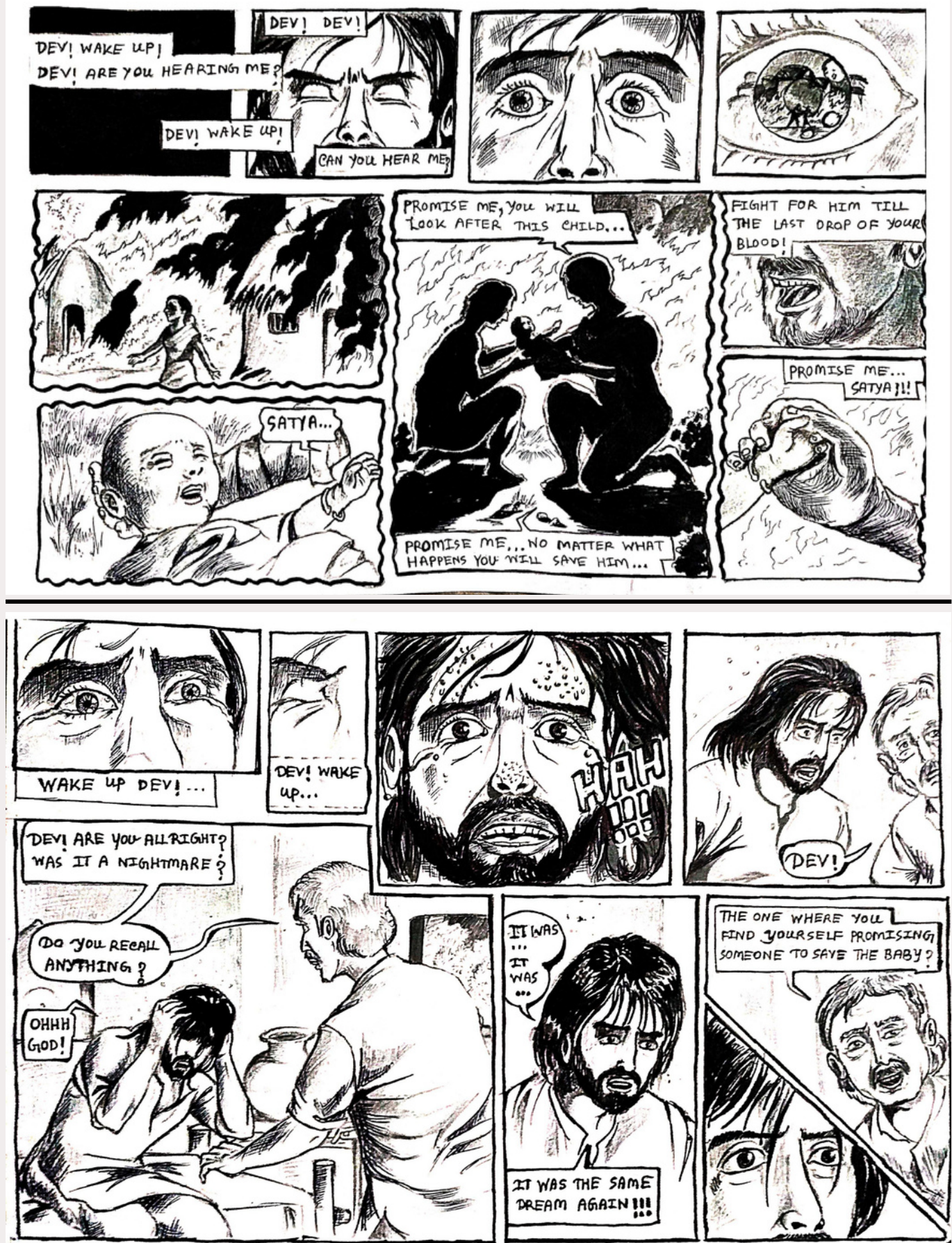
combat of strikes and slashes is familiar, as is the way you weave through the same excellently designed levels that snake, interconnect, and double back on themselves to reveal new shortcuts between little bastions of safety to resupply. Functionally equivalent to bonfires from *Dark Souls*, or Lanterns in *Bloodborne*, the Sculptor's Idols are where you'll rest, recover your healing draughts, reset slain enemies, access your character progression, and of course, teleport between them for a snappy fast travel. While I certainly enjoy punishing games that test me and my skills, there's a sense of empowerment that comes from Sekiro's generally more forgiving nature. For example, due to the seemingly smaller, more linear paths relative to the sprawling hellscape of other FromSoftware games, I never felt like I had to go too far to find the next Idol and bank my progress. That regular cadence relieves a lot of the oppressive anxiety in wondering if all your work will be taken from you



before you can make it to the next checkpoint, and once or twice I simply sprinted through an area, assuming an Idol was just on the other side. It usually was. That relieving sense of safety in Sekiro allowed me to appreciate the mechanical complexities of it in a way I couldn't if I was terrified of taking any chances. It's not something I'd wish for every game of this genre to embrace, but it's refreshing and new. While there's no shortage of rich Japanese atmosphere in the background, Sekiro's story is where I connected with it the least. On the one hand, it's a much more straightforward tale than FromSoftware usually deals in, as your undying, one-armed Shinobi dutifully serves, protects, and endlessly murders at the behest of your master, a child Divine Heir blessed with immortality. On the other, because Sekiro is much more linear in its tasks, because the characters actually speak to you in coherent sentences and give you direction, and because there are ample clues and hints throughout the world that let you draw correct conclusions, it's easy to blow through the journey without ever needing to stop and ponder, as I've come to expect in a FromSoftware game.

Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice is a masterpiece for those seeking a challenging and rewarding action-adventure experience. Its unique combat system, captivating atmosphere, and rich world-building make it an unforgettable journey. However, its limited build variety, repetitive enemy types, and steep learning curve might not appeal to everyone. If you're up for the challenge and appreciate tight, skill-based combat, Sekiro is an absolute must-play.

COMICS



Story and illustration by Chandradip Raha

To be continued in the next issue.....

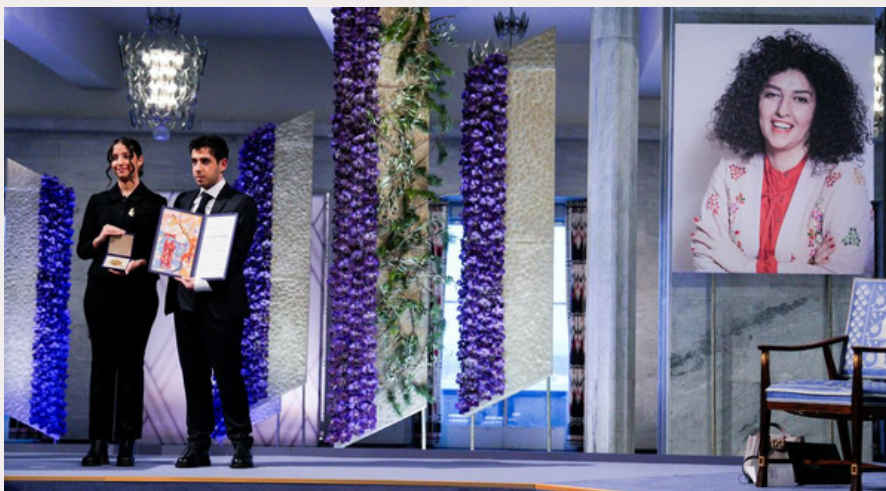
NARGES: A CAGED PHOENIX

Priyam Das

Let me tell you a story. The story of a Nobel laureate middle-aged mother who thinks of her children every day while staring at the Alborz mountain range visible from her cell in the women's ward of Teheran's Evin prison. Two kids who have not been able to see their mother for once since last eight long years. Yes, I am talking about Narges Mohammadi. A woman who grew up watching her mother sit next to the television to hear the names of the prisoners executed each day. Her fear was dead long ago with the deaths of those prisoners. She stood up for oppressed women against the dogmatic dictatorship. Her unwavering fight for human rights, particularly those of women, under Iran's religious government serves as a stark reminder of the struggles faced by countless individuals around the world.



Mohammadi's journey began in the 1990s, when she actively challenged the systematic discrimination against women in Iranian society. She campaigned for the abolition of the death penalty, advocated for the rights of political prisoners, and tirelessly fought against the mandatory hijab, a symbol of state control over women's bodies and choices. Her activism came at a heavy cost. Repeated arrests, imprisonment, and even threats of execution became a grim reality for Mohammadi. Yet her spirit remained unbroken. Through her writings and pronouncements, even from behind bars, she continued to amplify the voices of the silenced, highlighting the pervasive oppression faced by women under a regime that dictates their dress, restricts their movement, and limits their access to education and opportunities.



Teenage children of jailed Narges Mohammadi accept her Nobel Peace Prize

determination of Iranian women to challenge the intolerable discrimination of status and demand a future where their voices are heard and their rights are respected. Narges Mohammadi's story is one of courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to justice. Her fight serves as a powerful reminder that no tyranny can ever kill the voice of truth for long. It is indeed a brilliant move by the international community to recognize the spirit by felicitating Narges with the highest prize in the world, but it also questions the ethics behind the intention of awarding Narges at such a time when it may lead to more persecution behind bars. We must think about it in this way. But the battle must go on because it is a fight that must continue until all individuals, regardless of gender, religion, or nationality, are free to live their lives with dignity and equality.

Mohammadi's fight transcends geographical boundaries. Her story resonates with women in countless countries where despot governments or patriarchal traditions curtail their freedom and deny them basic human rights. She serves as a powerful symbol of resistance, urging the world to acknowledge the injustices faced by women and advocate for their fundamental rights to equality, freedom, and self-determination. The recent protests in Iran, sparked by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police, are a testament to the enduring spirit of women like Mohammadi. These protests, echoing the rallying cry "Woman, Life, Freedom," demonstrate the unwavering

INDIA'S INTERIM BUDGET 2024: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

The Interim Union Budget for the financial year 2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, marks a pivotal milestone as it sets the stage for the nation's economic trajectory. With a total budget allocation of Rs 47.66 trillion, up by 6.1% from the previous fiscal year, the budget outlines a strategic roadmap for inclusive growth, infrastructure focus, and fiscal prudence.

Fiscal Discipline and Economic Growth

The budget demonstrates a commitment to fiscal discipline by addressing the fiscal deficit, pegged at a lower-than-expected 5.1% of the GDP. The reduction in the fiscal deficit is a significant achievement, positively impacting the cost of borrowing for the private sector. Additionally, the government's plan to borrow Rs 14.13 lakh crore from the market through bond issuances reflects a cautious approach towards managing the fiscal deficit.

Sectoral Impact and Priorities

Healthcare and Education

The budget places a strong emphasis on people-centric inclusive development, with a keen focus on sectors that directly impact the common citizen. It reflects a deep commitment to addressing the diverse needs of the population and fostering an environment where every citizen can actively participate in and contribute to the country's advancement. The allocation for healthcare and education is expected to benefit from this inclusive approach, ensuring improved accessibility and quality of services.

Infrastructure

India has been building public infrastructure such as roads, metros, and ports at a record pace, driving economic growth. The increased capital expenditure allocation to INR 11.11 lakh crore, comprising about 3.4% of the GDP, underscores the government's commitment to boosting infrastructure development. This strategic focus on infrastructure is poised to stimulate employment opportunities and bolster economic productivity.

Agriculture and Rural Economy

The budget also addresses the distress among the country's poorest by announcing schemes aimed at shoring up the rural economy, such as building rural housing, free food for the poor, and boosting aquaculture. The move away from agriculture towards manufacturing is evident from the reduced food subsidy and the government's aim to bring the benefits of urban growth to boost the rural economy.

Environmental Resilience and Clean Energy

Acknowledging India's vulnerability to climate change, the budget subtly addresses environmental concerns by increasing targets in solar power and the National Green Hydrogen Mission. The commitment to achieve 'Net Zero' by 2070 is a bold stride towards environmental sustainability, with allocations for clean and renewable energy sources. Additionally, the budget introduces measures to encourage a shift towards cleaner fuel alternatives, reinforcing the government's dedication to fostering a greener, more sustainable future.

Expert Opinions and Challenges

Corporate leaders commend the budget for outlining a roadmap for inclusive growth, infrastructure focus, and fiscal prudence. However, concerns arise with the capex target not being met, raising questions about its impact on overall economic growth. Critics also highlight the challenges faced by the country's poor and small businesses due to the implementation of GST, emphasizing the need for the government to address these issues.

As India navigates through economic challenges, the 2024-25 interim budget lays a foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategic allocations and commitments made in the budget reflect a vision for an India where prosperity is shared, and environmental sustainability is prioritized. While the budget presents a robust framework for economic development, addressing the challenges and criticisms will be crucial for ensuring equitable growth and resilience across all sectors of the economy.

By adhering to fiscal discipline and prioritizing inclusive development, the budget aims to position India on the path towards sustainable and resilient economic growth.

This article is written by Tasnim Ali



RAM MANDIR: A SYMBOL OF FAITH AND CONTROVERSY

Iman Kalyan Mukherjee

The Ram Mandir, dedicated to Lord Ram, holds immense significance in the hearts of millions of Hindus worldwide. Situated in Ayodhya, India, its construction has been a point of both religious intensity and controversial disputes for decades.

At the core of the controversy lies the disputed site's history. Hindus believe it to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, while some historians argue over its actual origins. The Babri Masjid, built in the 16th century, stood on this site until its demolition in 1992 by Hindu nationalists, sparking one of India's most disputable religious disputes.

According to Hindu belief, Ayodhya is where Lord Ram was born, making it sacred in Hinduism. The Ram Mandir, thought to be built on this very spot, is deeply revered by devotees. It's not just a place of worship; it embodies their faith and cultural identity. The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case made its way through the Indian legal system for years, with judgments swinging between Hindu and Muslim claims. Finally, in 2019, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favour of the Hindu parties, granting them permission to construct a temple at the site while also allocating an alternative plot for the Muslim community to build a mosque in Ayodhya.

However, the Supreme Court's decision did not resolve all controversies. Critics argue that the judgment favoured one religious' community over another and raised concerns about the implications for India's secularism. Additionally, questions were raised about the timing of the verdict, coinciding with significant political events which mainly concerned the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

Furthermore, the construction process itself has faced challenges and criticisms. The involvement of various Hindutva groups and their aggressive tactics have led to tensions within Indian society. Additionally, the sourcing of funds for the temple's construction, primarily through donations, has raised transparency concerns.

The Ram Mandir's symbolism extends beyond religious boundaries. For Hindu nationalists, its construction represents a confirmation of India's Hindu identity and historical pride. Conversely, for minority communities and secularists, it raises concerns about the marginalization of non-Hindu voices and the erosion of India's secular spirit.



Internationally, the Ram Mandir's construction has gathered attention, with some expressing apprehension about its implications for communal harmony in India. Others view it through the eyes of religious freedom, arguing for the rights of Hindus to worship at a site of immense religious significance.

Despite the controversies, the Ram Mandir stands as a testament to the enduring power of faith and the complexities of religious identity in India. The temple's building shows how history, politics, and religion come together, shaping the country's future.

In summary, the Ram Mandir symbolizes both devotion and conflict. Its construction, while fulfilling the hopes of many Hindus, has faced controversy. This raises important questions about secularism, religious diversity, and law in India. As the temple is built, it highlights the challenges of managing religious differences in a diverse society.

A VISION FROM THE FUTURE: APPLE VISION PRO

Tech giant, Apple recently released its first generation of their VR headsets known as the 'Apple Vision Pro', which Apple previewed about 8 months ago. In these 8 months the tech giant indeed has produced its most perfect 1st gen device. Even if it costs a whopping \$3499 in US, it is still not perfect but can easily surpass most of the VR headsets in the market. Both the pros and cons of the Apple Vision Pro are covered in this article.

To start, the unboxing experience of this Apple product is as same as any other product out there. Just tear the two pull tabs and done! You are good to go. First up is the Vision Pro (Includes Light Seal, Light Seal Cushion, and Solo Knit Band) with a soft cover on the glass visor of the Vision pro. Under the raised platform, it hides the dual loop band, a thicker light seal cushion, a battery pack, a 30-watt charging brick and a charging cable. Apart from these, we get loads of paperwork and a microfiber cloth with 'Vision Pro' mentioned on it. Moreover, people who've got prescription lenses can order the Zeiss optical lenses for the Vision Pro, which attaches to the screens magnetically.

Setting up the device is quite easy. It begins with attaching the battery pack to the device. The next step is to align the eyeballs with screen by holding down the crown on the top right corner of the device. Next, the device needs to be connected with an Apple device with an Apple ID specific to the US region (as of now). And you are done! Now you can browse through over a million apps on the app store on the device.

The Apple Vision Pro has two chipsets in order to get the best results. The M2 being the first chip handles the headset's operating system and the applications running on it. The R1 chip on the other hand, handles the real-time processing of the data captured from the various sensors



fitted into the device. The sensors include 12 cameras, 5 sensors and 6 microphones. The sensors fitted include Two high-resolution main cameras, six world-facing tracking cameras, four eye-tracking cameras, TrueDepth camera, LiDAR Scanner, Four inertial measurement units (IMUs), Flicker sensor and Ambient light sensor.

The Vision Pro boasts a Micro-OLED display with 23 million pixels with a pixel density of 3386 PPI (pixels per inch). The Micro-OLED display has a 92% DCI-P3 colour gamut. With all its glory, the Apple Vision pro is one of the best headsets out to the consumer world. One just needs to wear it around his/her head and you are good to go! More and more apps are being introduced to the device's Appstore in order to get the most out of it. With the headset on, one gets into the digital world while still being in touch with their surroundings. The screen fitted into it is easily the best, with almost no latency. This is where the R1 comes in, the processing of the whole gets done and is displayed through the window within 12 milliseconds. The screen's stock refresh rate is 90 Hertz and could get up to 100 Hertz in certain situations according to Apple. The higher refresh rate helps in reducing the nauseating effects and could get the real-world things get done without any problems. The feature that makes the Vision Pro apart from the crowd is the feature of eye tracking and hand gestures for controlling the device. The sensors inside do the most important job of tracking down the eye balls and focusing on the objects and getting the screen sharper only at those spots both for creating a life like experience and to save some resources.

This is certainly a device for multimedia consumption but it is also focused towards productivity. Things like video editing, photo editing, taking notes as well as browsing can be done with various apps. One can also watch content on it without any problem, the built in speakers also help in enhancing the media watching experience. Not only it does support its own built-in apps but through the help of the whole ecosystem of Apple it could also be used as a virtual display for Mac. This feature needs the user to connect the headset with their mac and use it for various things while using the Mac's resources.

But even the best things have some trade-offs. In the Vision Pro's case, the trade-offs come in as its heavy weight, limited number of optimized apps, the lack of overall optimization within the VisionOS and definitely the premium price tag. The weight of the device is on the higher side and can't be used in long sessions with the solo knit bands on. Even if the Appstore has over a million supported apps, but the number of well optimized apps is still lower than 700. Within 14 days of the product being launched to the public, the number of returns of the product has hiked mainly due to the reports of headaches, eye irritation and discomfort while wearing it. Thus, Apple's experiment with VR is real and is useful in most of the cases but may not be for everyone.

This article is written by **Shubhajyoti Biswas**

THE JOVIOUS TRADITION OF KERALA'S SNAKE BOAT RACE: A COLOURFUL CELEBRATION OF UNITY AND HERITAGE



Kerala, the southernmost state of India, is known for its stunning backwaters, lush greenery, and rich culture. Amongst the many fascinating traditions and festivals, one event stands out for its grandeur and uniqueness - the Snake Boat Race. This annual event, also known as *Vallam Kali*, is a spectacle that attracts visitors from all over the world. It is a reflection of the spirit and unity of the people of Kerala, and its significance goes beyond just a mere sporting event.

The Snake Boat Race is a traditional sport that originated in the backwaters of Kerala, where boats were the primary mode of transportation. These boats, known as *Chundan Vallams* in the local language, are long and sleek, measuring up to 100 feet in length. They are made from a single tree trunk, mainly *anjili*, and can accommodate up to 100 rowers. The boats are meticulously designed and decorated, with a snake-like hood at the front, which gives them their name.

The origins of this race can be traced back to the 14th century, during the reign of the kings of Travancore. According to legend, the kings used to hold these races to find the fastest boats for their naval fleet. Over time, the race evolved into a popular sporting event, with different communities competing against each other. Today, the Snake Boat Race is a major part of the annual 'Onam' festival, which is celebrated with great fervour in Kerala.

The race takes place in the backwaters of Alappuzha, also known as the 'Venice of the East.' The tranquil waters of the *Punnamada Lake* come alive with the sound of drums, cheers, and the rhythmic rowing of the boats. The race is divided into different categories based on the size of the boat, with the *Chundan Vallam* being the most prestigious and sought after. Each boat is manned by a team of skilled oarsmen, who row to the beat of traditional songs and chants. The entire atmosphere is electric, with the crowd cheering on their favourite teams and the boats gliding gracefully on the water.

Apart from the adrenaline rush and the thrill of the competition, the Snake Boat Race holds a deeper meaning for the people of Kerala. It is a symbol of unity and harmony, as the boat crew consists of people from different castes and backgrounds. They come together with a shared passion for the race, leaving behind any differences or discrimination. The race also serves as a reminder of the state's rich cultural heritage and its strong bond with nature.

In recent years, the Snake Boat Race has gained international recognition, with teams from other states and even countries participating in the event. This has helped in promoting tourism and showcasing Kerala's vibrant culture to the world. However, there has been a growing concern about the commercialization of the race and the exploitation of the traditional boat builders and rowers. The government and local authorities have taken steps to address these issues and ensure the preservation of this centuries-old tradition.

In conclusion, the Snake Boat Race is not just a sporting event, but a celebration of the spirit and identity of Kerala. It is a sight to behold, with its colourful boats, enthusiastic crowds, and the spirit of camaraderie. It is an experience that one must witness in person to truly understand its beauty and significance. As a new writer, I hope to bring this unique and captivating event to the attention of more people, and help preserve this cultural gem for generations to come.

This article is written by **Parthib Palai**