

Experiencing Chau





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Sanskriti Parichay - 1





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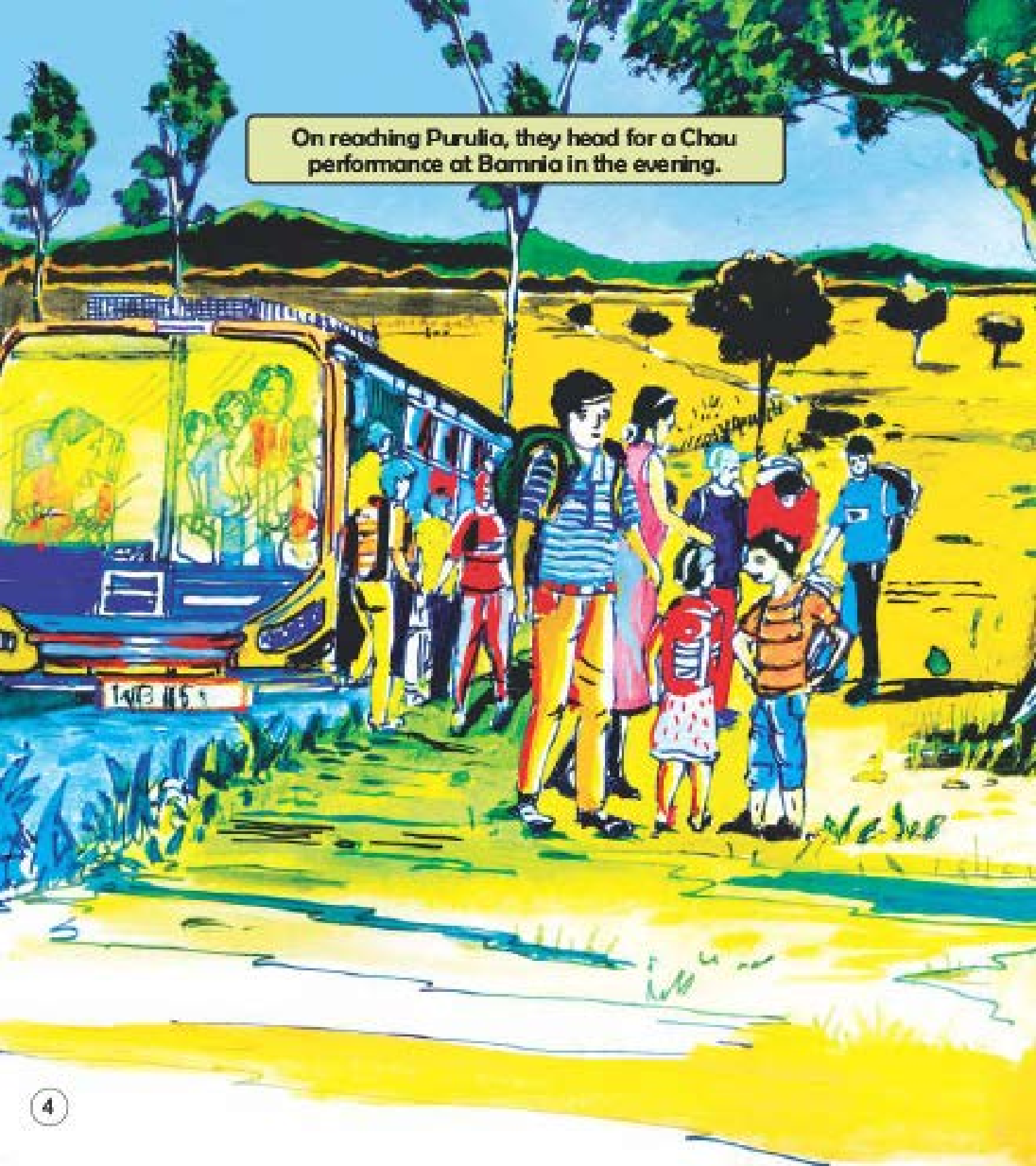
Tito is excited after hearing about Chau dance of Purulia from his school friends.



He coaxes his father to take them to a Chau show. His father is interested too. Tito's sister Tiyaash and their mother join the bandwagon.



On reaching Purulia, they head for a Chau performance at Barnia in the evening.





Yes, nearby.

Will they perform here Dad?

Wow!

BAMNIA CHAU DANCE



haha!

haha!

Awesome!!

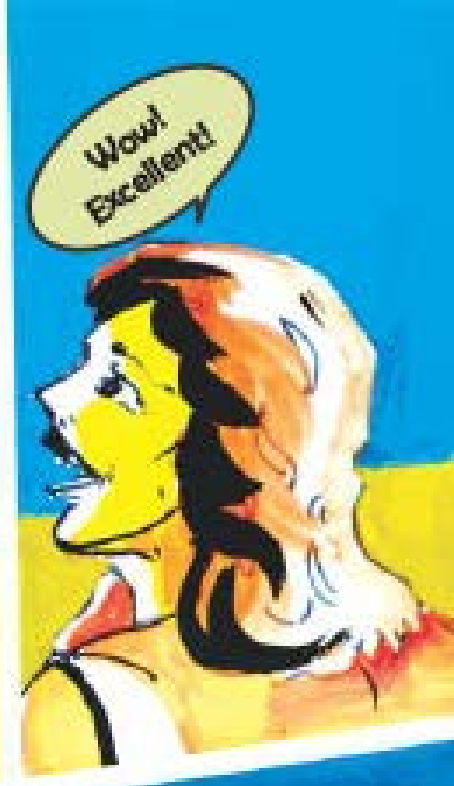
Brilliant!!



It's so colourfull

What a jump!

Wow! Excellent!

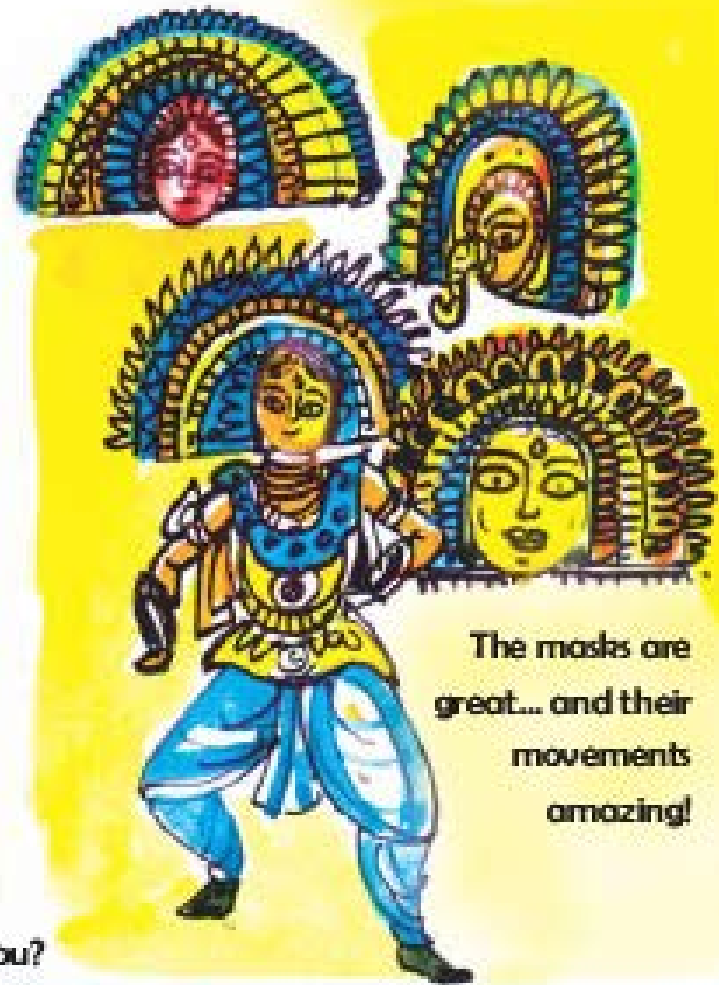


WhatsApp

Oh my God!

Facebook





The masks are
great... and their
movements
amazing!

I liked the Kartik-Ashur battle the most. And you?



Local tour guide Shankar Babu briefed the audience about Chau after the performance.

Chau is now also becoming popular overseas. The performance begins with a Jhumur song, and then we hear Shehnai. Other instruments played with Chau are Dhol, Madal and Maracas. UNESCO listed Chau as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010.

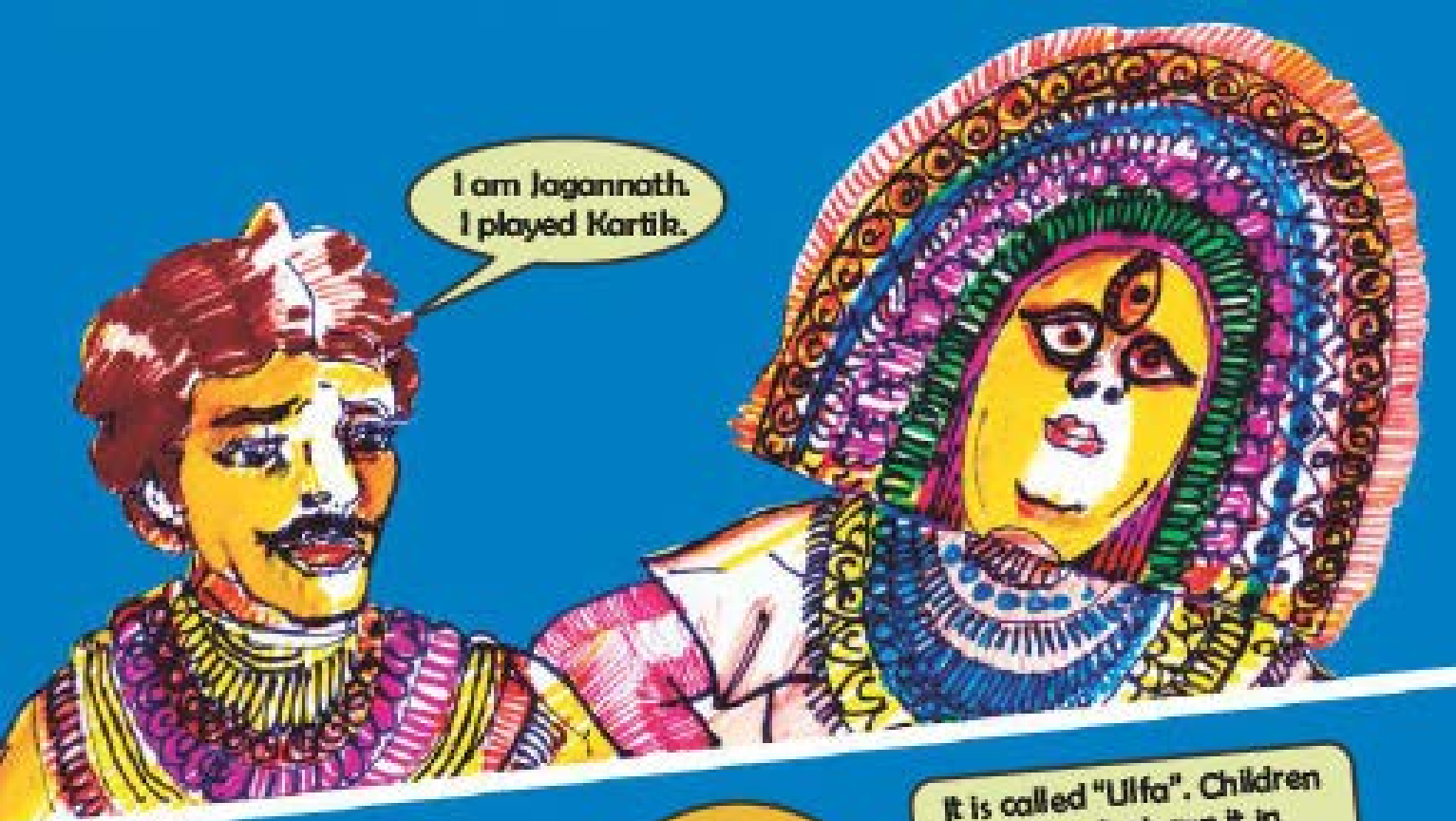
Wow!
This is a matter
of national pride!



Hey, look! Once they take off the masks... they are real people!!

They are like Magic Masks! Wear them... and you change instantly!!



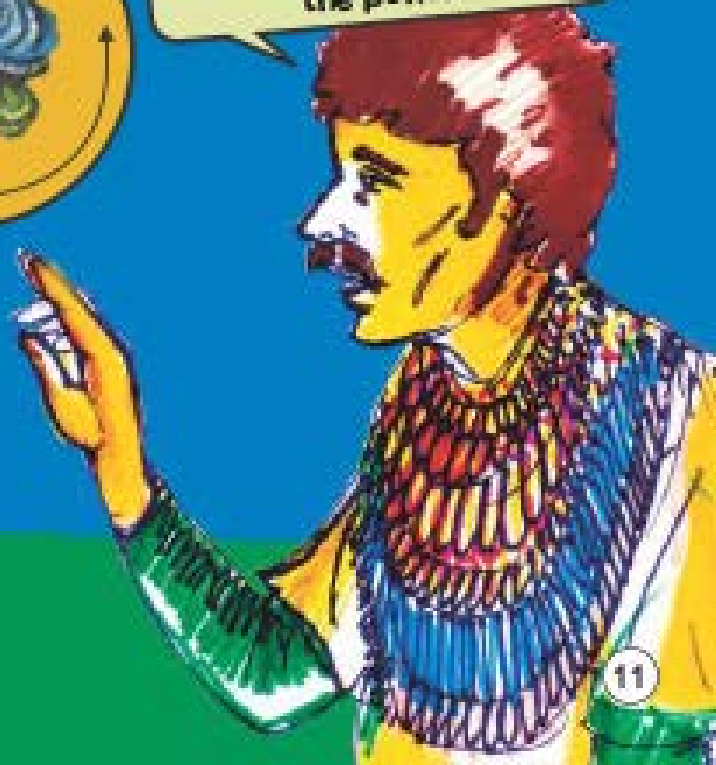


I am Jagannath.
I played Kartik.

How do you manage
to do the vaults
wearing such heavy
masks?



It is called "Ulfa". Children
of Purulia learn it in
childhood while diving into
the ponds.





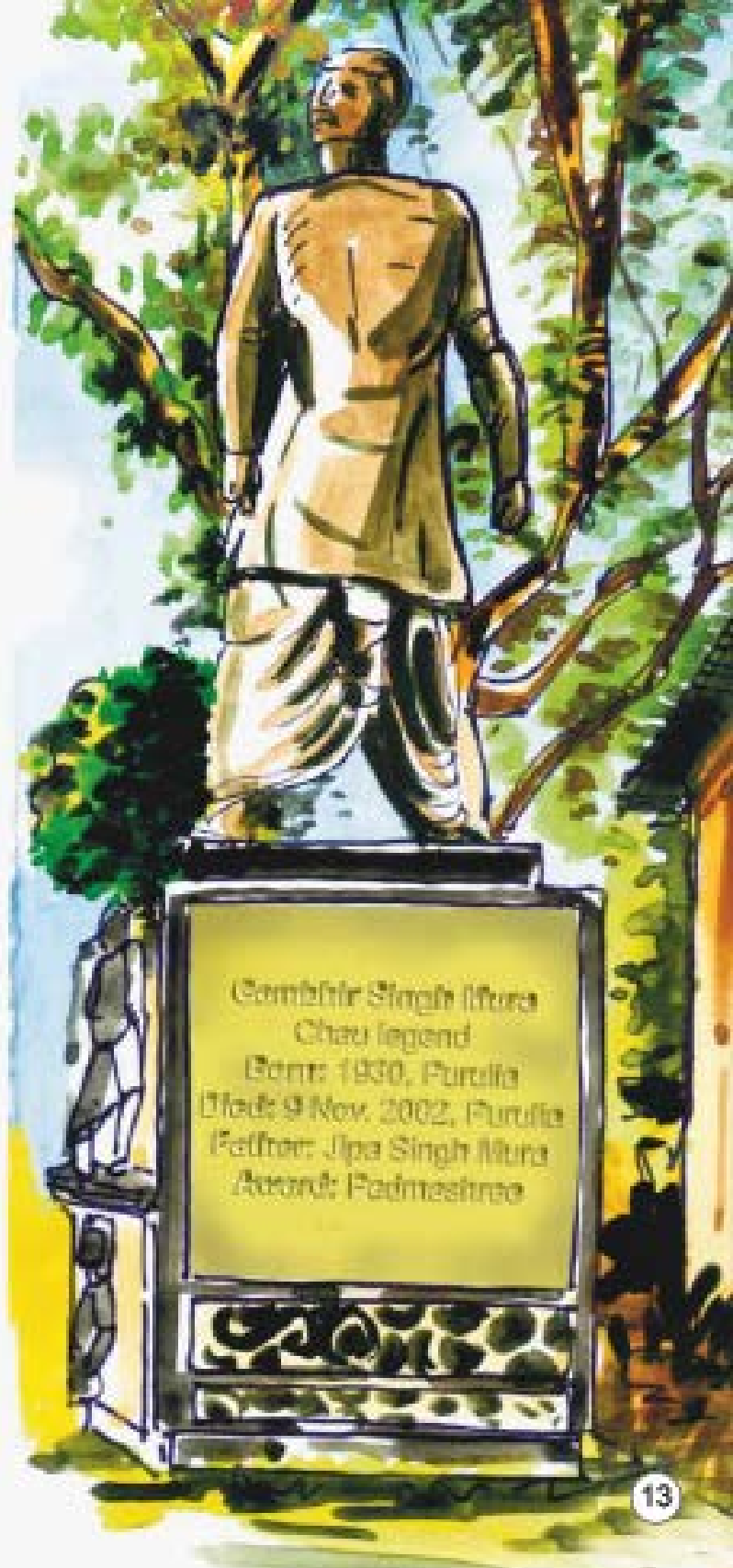
Do you make the masks yourselves?

They are quite heavy!

No, no!... The masks are made at Charida village near Ayodhya Hills.



The great Chau legend, late Gambhir Singh Mura, was from Charida. He played a major role in popularizing Chau across the world. His son Kartik Singh Mura is also a renowned Chau artist.

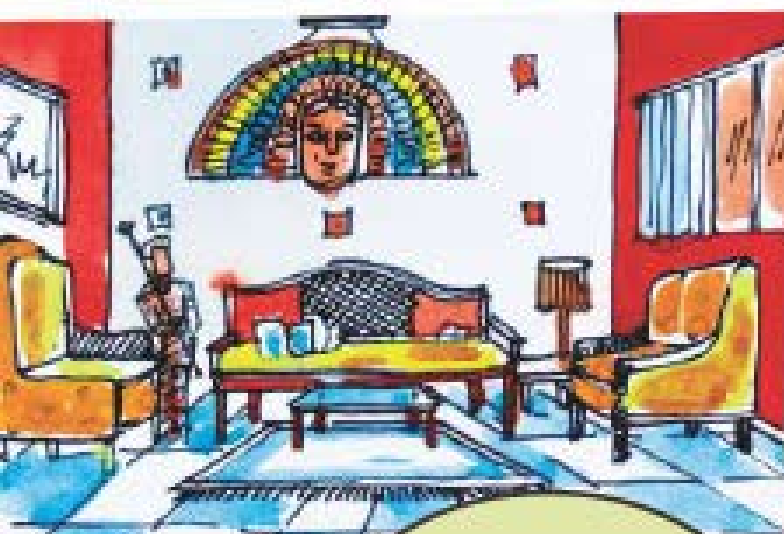
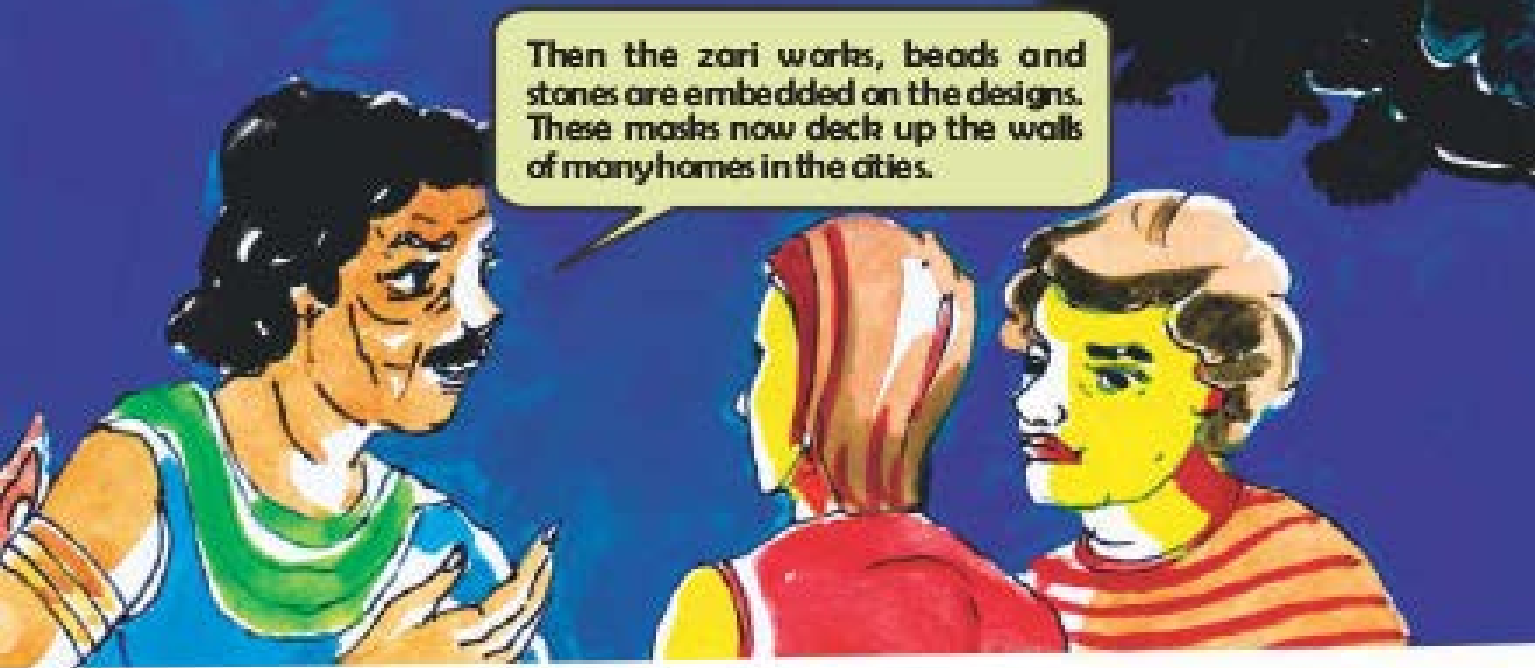




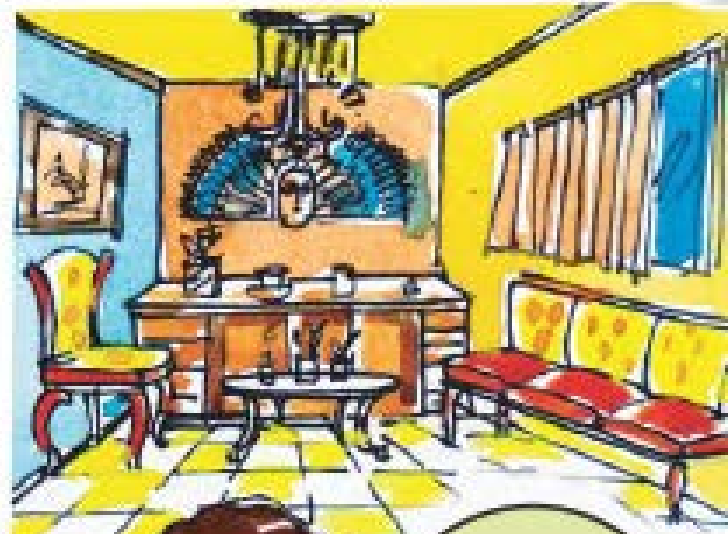
Oh! What a feeling!

Ha, ha, ha!
You are
looking
wonderful!

The masks are made
of paper pulp, rags
and clay.



Hmm, saw one at Tapashi aunt's home...



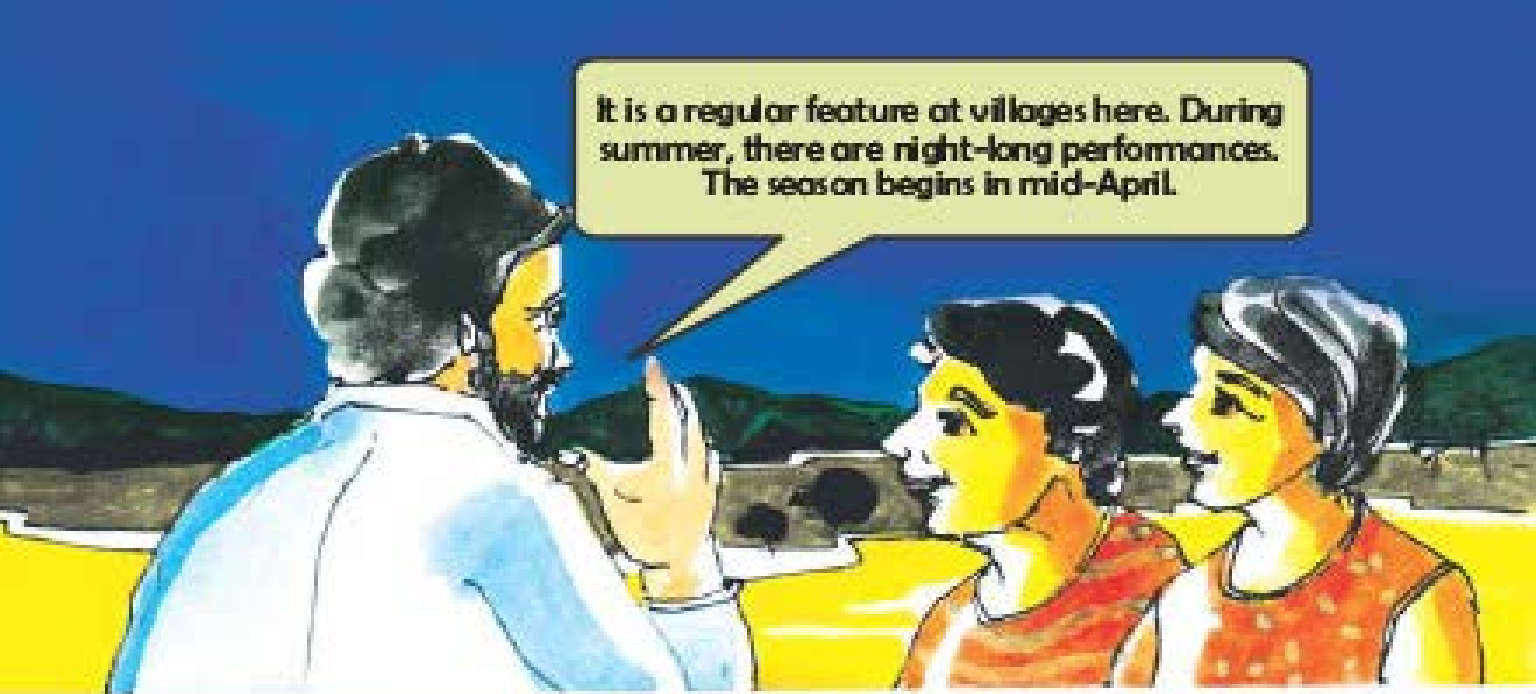
Right. Saw one at Sounak's flat too.

Sadhucharan Mahato joins the conversation.

How was it?

Great!!



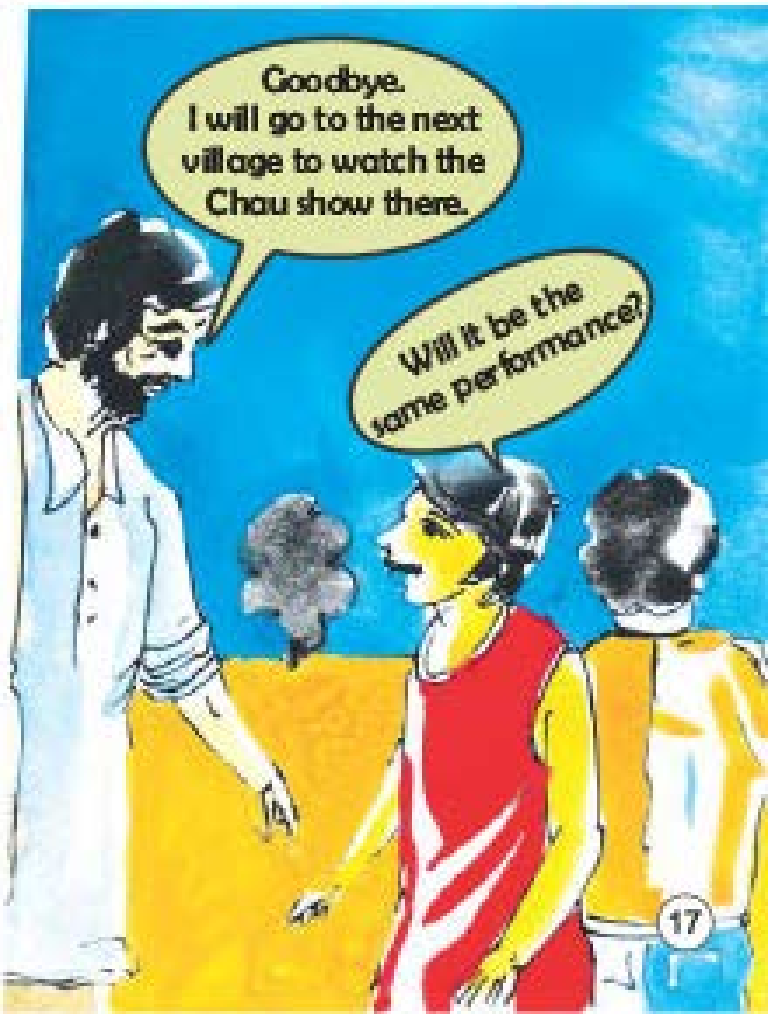


It is a regular feature at villages here. During summer, there are night-long performances. The season begins in mid-April.



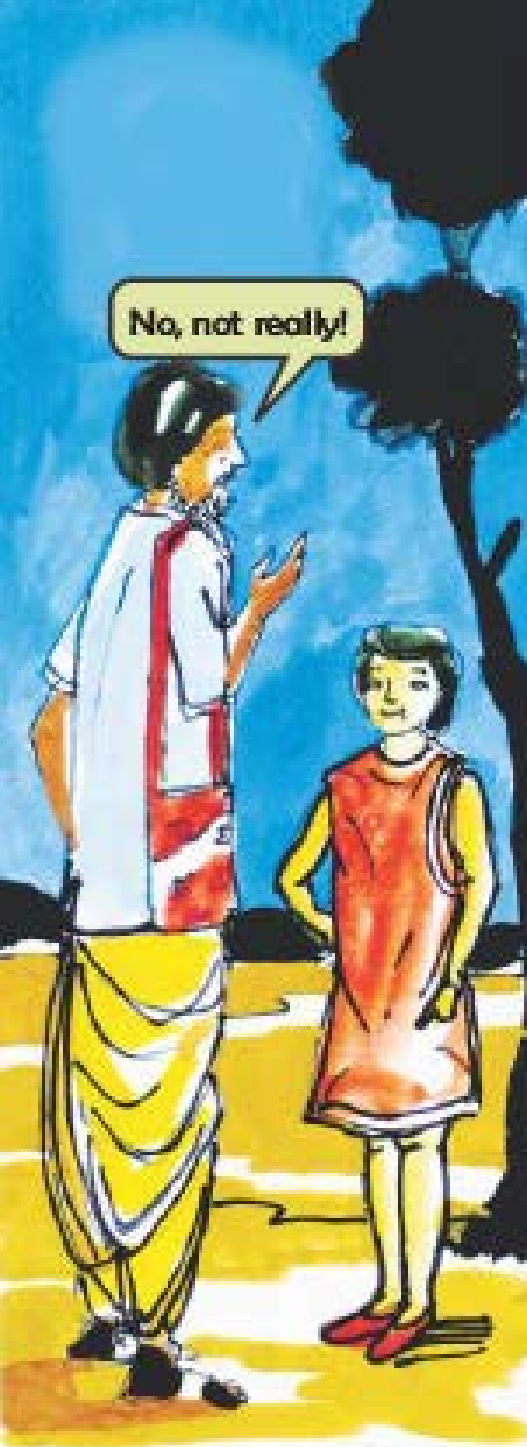
Jaga, better hurry, the bus will leave now.

Yes, let's go.

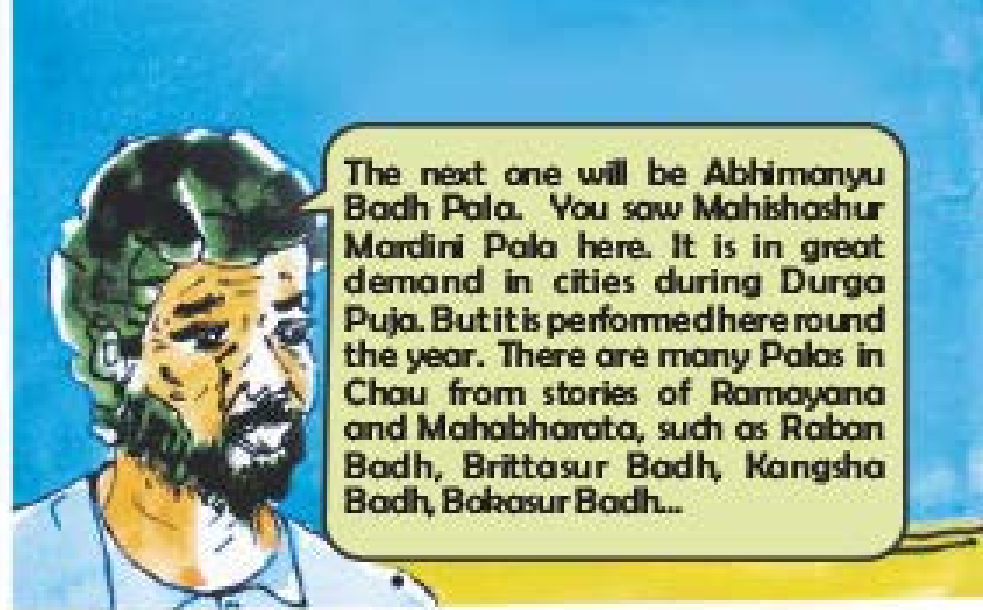


Goodbye. I will go to the next village to watch the Chau show there.

Will it be the same performance?



No, not really!



The next one will be Abhimanyu Badh Pala. You saw Mahishashur Mardini Pala here. It is in great demand in cities during Durga Puja. But it is performed here round the year. There are many Pallas in Chau from stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, such as Raban Badh, Brittasur Badh, Kangsha Badh, Bokasur Badh...



Do you know what a Pala is?

No, not at all!



Pala is traditional theatre that we also call folk drama.



In the past, the Palas used to be very long. Now they are much shorter.

Oh, really!?



The bus leaves.

See you again.

Bye bye.

They were back at the hotel
but the excitement lingered..

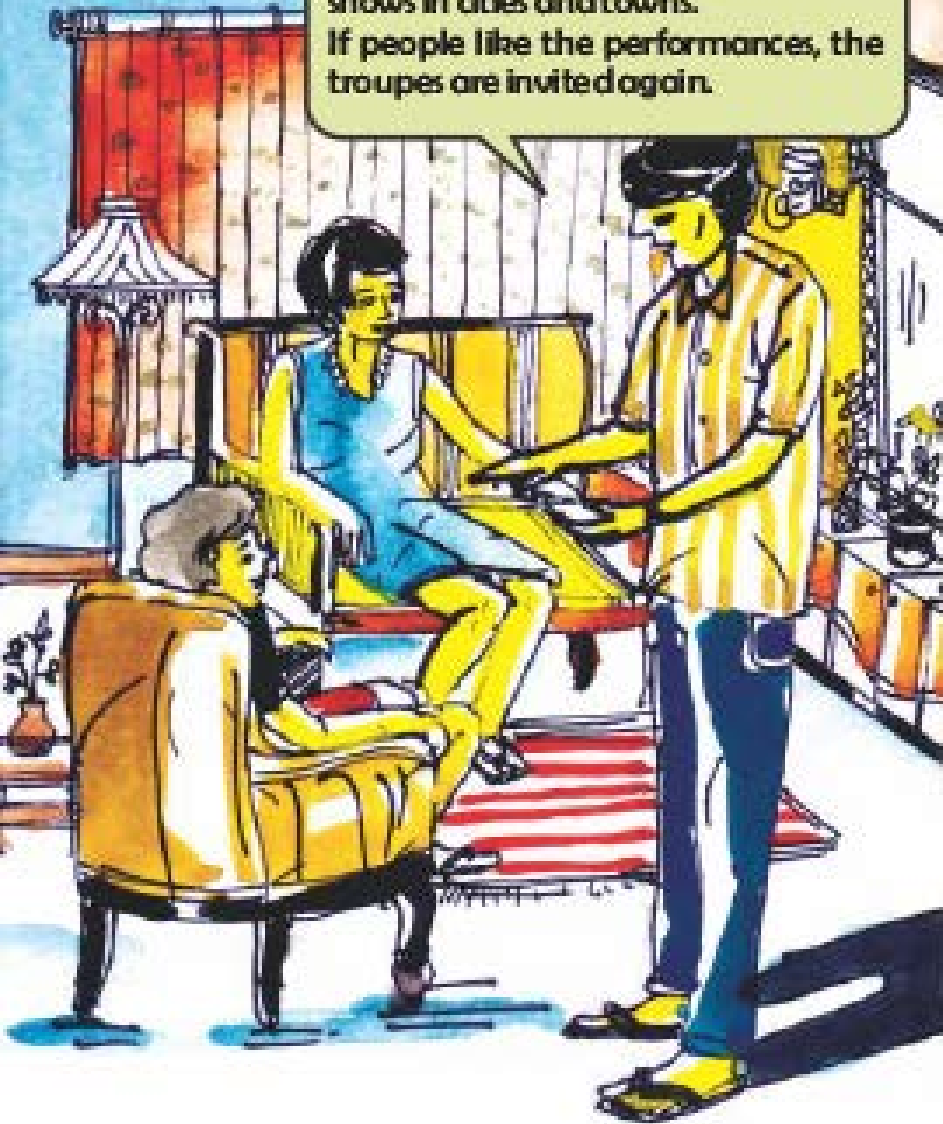
Would have missed
it all had we not
come here. There
must be more such
shows in the cities!

Right. If we have liked it
so much, so shall others!

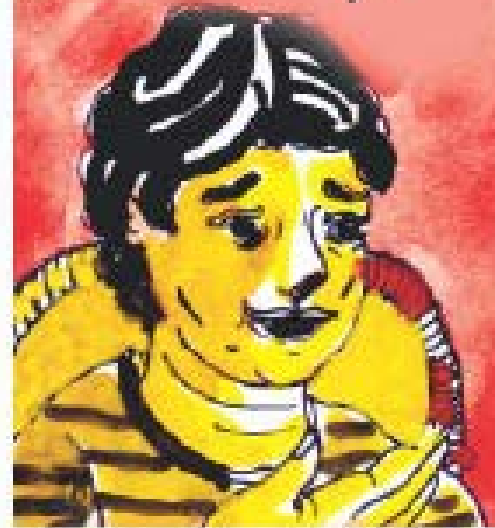


Their father joins in...

Right you are. Shankar Babu was saying... that there are Chau artists in every block of Purulia district. Apart from the shows here, there are call shows in cities and towns. If people like the performances, the troupes are invited again.



Of course! They are invited again because people like their performance!



Yes, indeed! They are getting many offers now.





Heard from the crowd that there are 450 Chau teams in Purulia now!

Hmm.



Chau is an ancient traditional martial dance form of Bengal which must be conserved.

Can you explain it?

Hello!

Kring
Kring
Kring



Yes, as I was saying, this dance too needs proper training. Master artists or group leaders teach the youngsters. That is how this tradition has been sustained. There were periods of crisis but now Chau is on a revival mode.



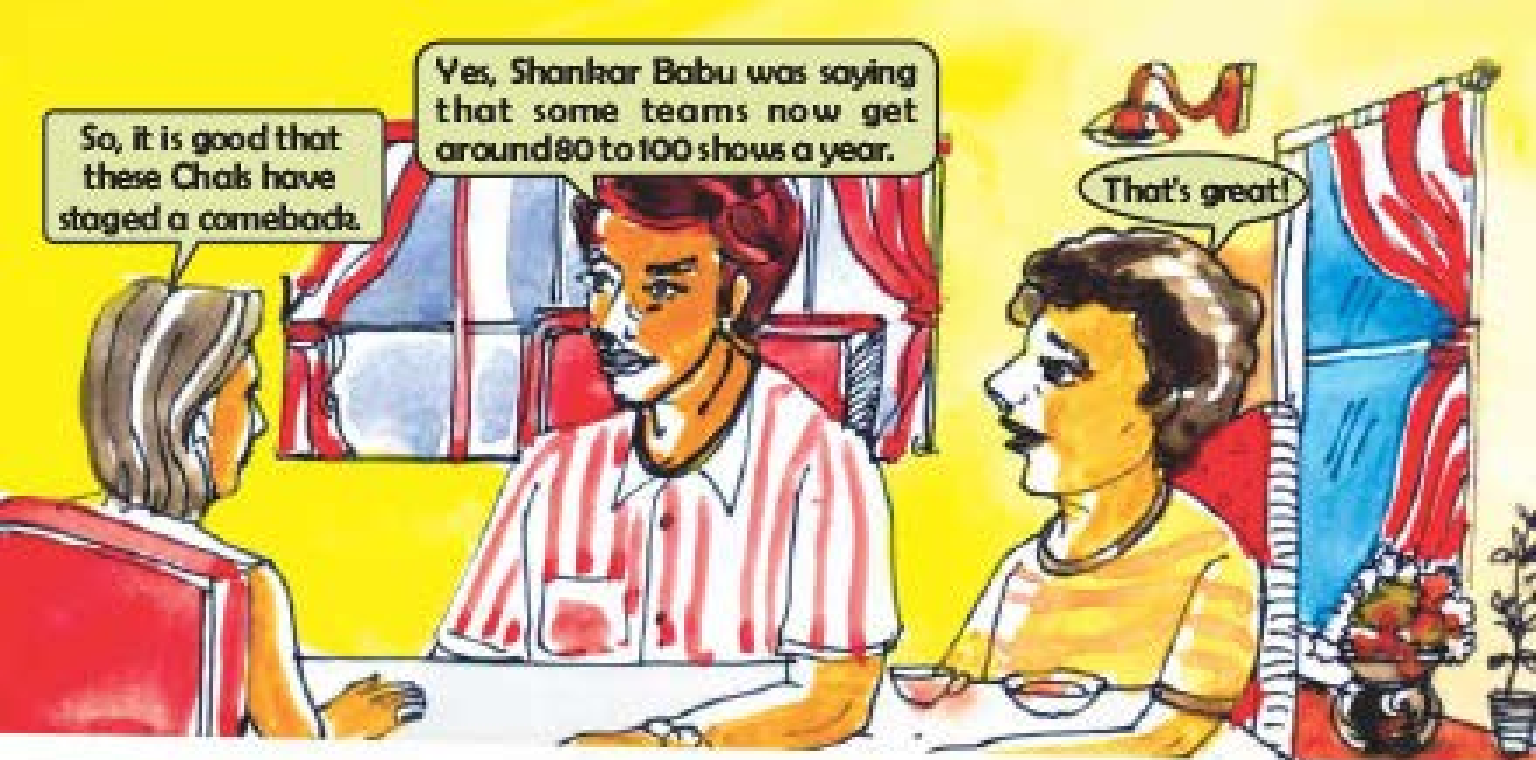


The thrust is now on mythological Palas. There are new Palas also. The old Chals have come back too.

What is Chal?



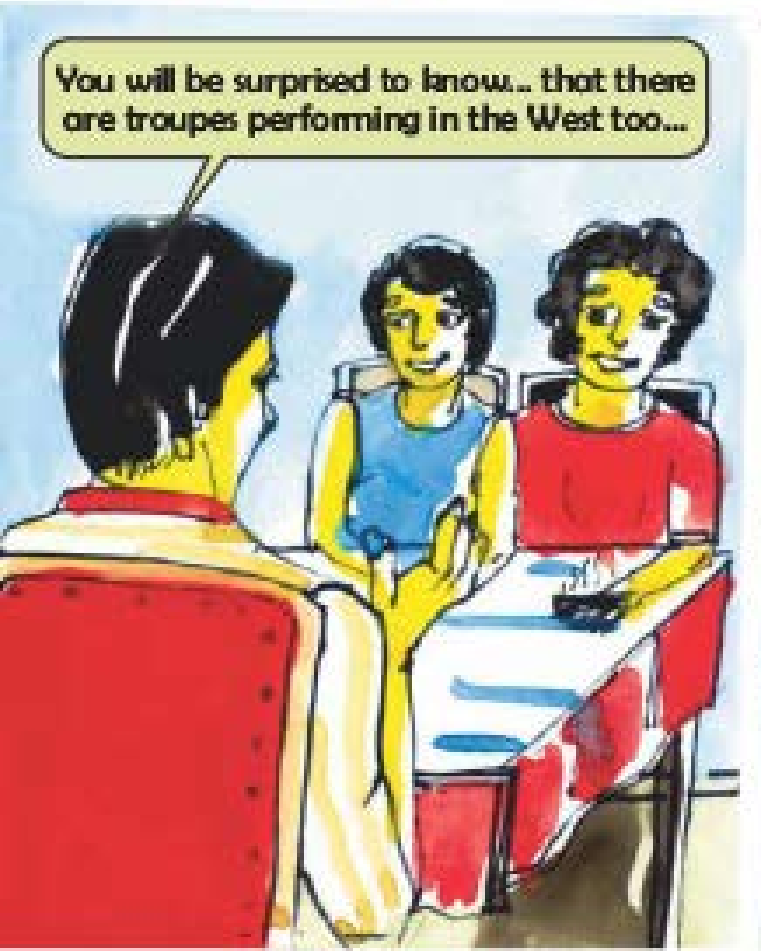
In primitive times, people used to observe the movements, looks and gestures of birds and other animals in the forests.



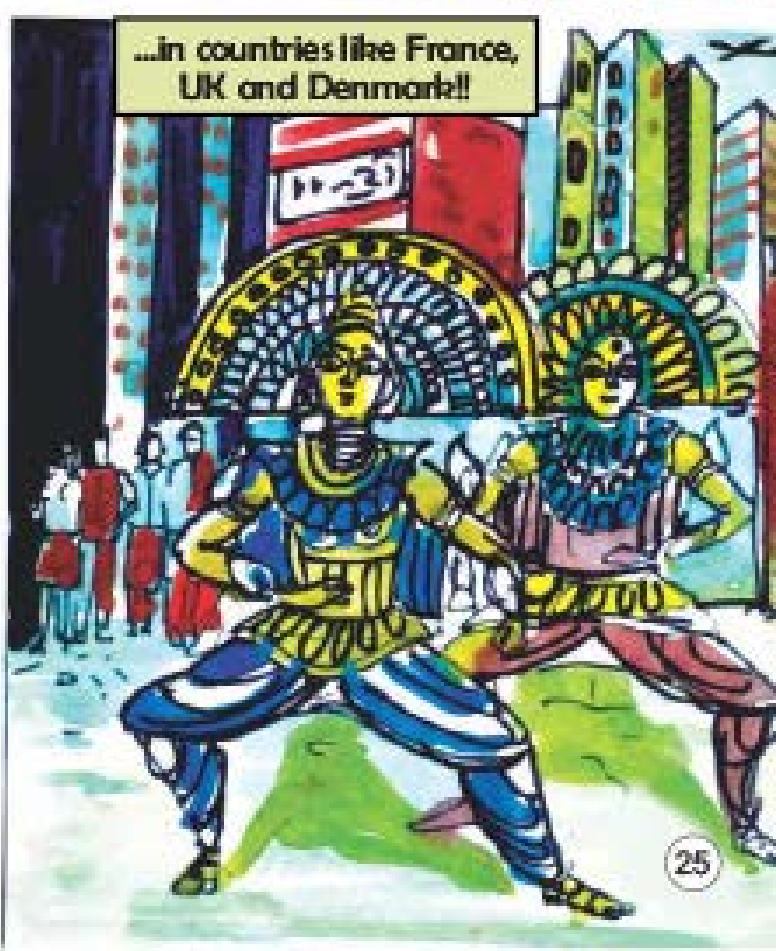
So, it is good that these Chahs have staged a comeback.

Yes, Shankar Babu was saying that some teams now get around 80 to 100 shows a year.

That's great!



You will be surprised to know... that there are troupes performing in the West too...



...in countries like France, UK and Denmark!!



There are two masks on the wall and a portrait in the middle...

Yes, the one on the right is from Purulia, the left one is from Odisha's Seraikela and the middle one from Mayurbhanj where they don't use masks!

It is good that young generations are getting interested in Chau now.

That's great indeed!



Can youths from cities also learn Chau?

Yes they can, but for that they have to come to the teachers in Bamnia.



OK! I will learn Chau and scare you with an Ulfa sometime



Ha ha ha!

Ha ha ha!





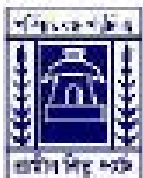
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Being aware about the cultural traditions, practices and heritage of our own country as well as other civilizations around the world is part of a wholesome educational upbringing.

It sensitizes our minds about the diversity and pluralism of societies and people and inculcates in us a deep sense of respect for the other. This

series has been conceived to familiarize and attract young generations to Bengal's rich folk culture and heritage.



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs
of West Bengal

