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Durgotsav 2012



20th - 22nd October 2012, Ashiana Banqueting Hall
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Welcome

Welcome to the first ever Durga Puja
in Hounslow, London.

This Durga Puja has been organised
by Prabashi, a charitable
organisation based in Hounslow.

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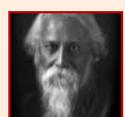
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About Prabashi

Prabashi (UK charity reg. no. 1148232) is a social and cultural organisation based in Hounslow, London. Prabashi aspires to bring the east to west and to harness the best of both worlds.

We at Prabashi dream of a better society not only for ourselves but also for those who live around us. Though most of our members hail from India, we have made Britain our home. Over the years we have seen how Indian art and culture can bring benefits in certain aspects of the British society. Similarly, at the heart of West, where modernity blossomed arguably before anywhere else in the world. This gives us the edge to take back from Britain what can bring about significant changes in India. This desire to connect India and Britain for mutual benefit lies at the very heart of Prabashi.

We organise a number of social and cultural events in and around Hounslow. The details of these events will be published on our website. Durga Puja 2012 is our flagship event.



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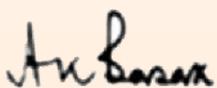
Autumn is a festive season for all Indians. Taking place during this period is Durga Puja, the most enlightening and warming festival in the Bengali calendar. The worshipping of Maa Durga, the feminine representation of power and strength, acquired from all the gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology, is centred not only in West Bengal but across India. In fact, She is now worshipped and revered by countless communities worldwide.

At Prabashi, our aim is to propagate Indian culture in the United Kingdom, and we endeavour to begin our special journey this year by celebrating Durga Puja for the first time in Hounslow, London. Prabashi's journey will not be confined to Durga Puja alone, and, in future, we will showcase a number of social and cultural events.

On behalf of everyone in our organisation, it is my pleasure to invite you all to attend and participate in the Durga Puja festivities, and help us make our first event a grand success.

Finally, I, along with everyone else in Prabashi, wish you a very happy Durga Puja.

With best regards



Dr. Ajit Basak
President of Prabashi

Prabashi Team

Abhijit Mukhopadhyay
Abhijit Tah
Dr. Ajit Basak
Amit Singh
Anupam Sinha
Arijit Bhattacharya
Arindam Roy
Aveek Dasgupta
Avishek Dutt
Biraja Ghoshal
Chetan Kashyap
Chhaya Mitra
Debabrota Das
Debojyoti Banerjee
Dhananjay Sinha
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Durga Puja Details

20th - 22nd October 2012

Venue

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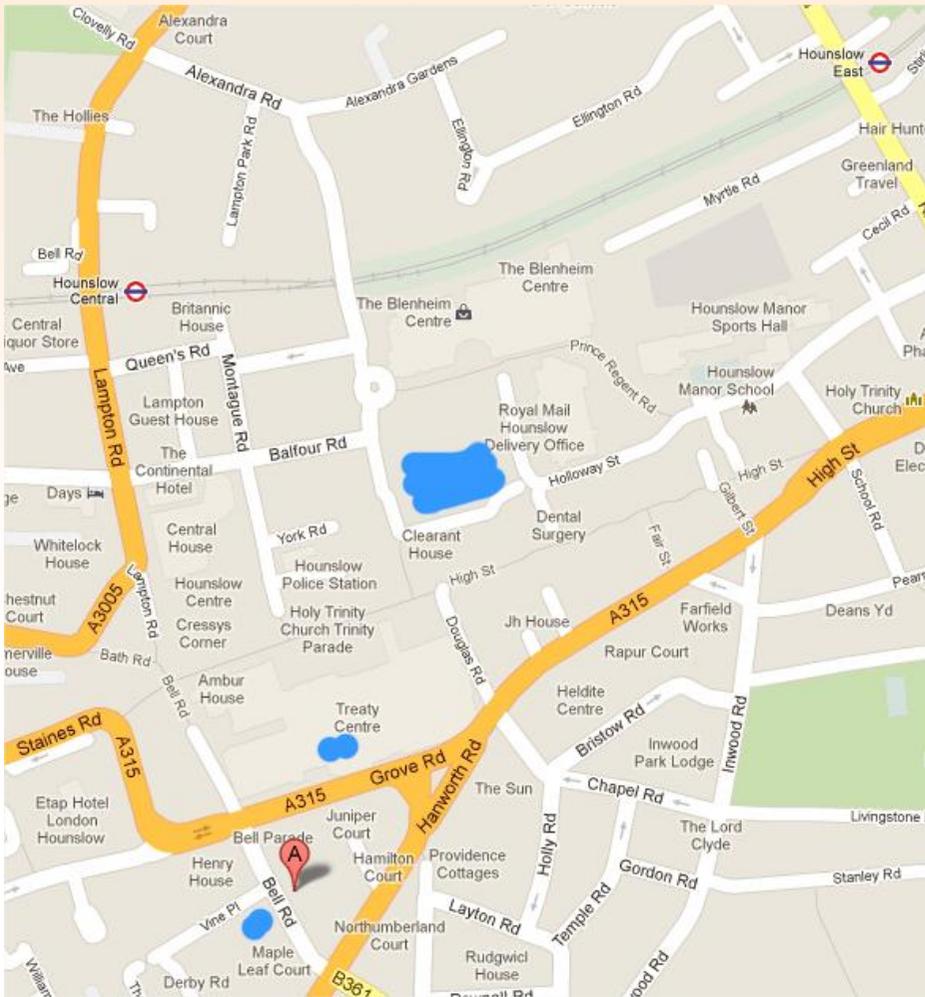
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	Saturday 20th October	Sunday 21st October	Monday 22nd October
09:30 am	-	Ashtami Puja	-
10:30 am	-	-	Dashami Puja
11:30 am	Shasti Puja	-	-
03:00 pm	-	Sandhi Puja	-
03:30 pm	Saptami Puja	-	-
04:30 pm	-	Navami Puja	-
05:30 pm	Cultural Programme	-	-
06:00 pm	-	Cultural Programme	-

Please Note: Aarti & Anjali will follow after each puja session.

Timings may change due to unavoidable circumstances, please see website for latest updates



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Durga Puja: Then & Now

Arijit Bhattacharya

The Legend

The story of Durga Puja speaks of the increasing cruelty by demon king Mahishasura against the gods. Unable to tolerate his tyranny the gods pleaded with Vishnu to annihilate the demon. The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara (Shiva) came together to create a powerful female form with ten arms - Goddess Durga or 'Mahamaya', Mother of the Universe, who embodies the primeval source of all power.

The gods then bestowed upon this supreme creation their individual blessings and weapons. Armed like a warrior, the goddess rode a lion to battle with the Mahishasura. After a fierce combat the 'Durgatinashini' slays the 'Asura' king with her trident. Heaven and earth rejoice at her victory.

*Ya devi sarvabhuteshu,
shakti rupena samsthita,
Namasteshwai Namestesyai Namestesyai
namoh namaha*

The Origin

Durga Puja has been celebrated since the medieval period. It has evolved and adapted to the world as time has passed. Considerable literature exists in the Bengali language about Goddess Durga and Her early forms, including in the Avnirnaya (11th century) and the Durgabhaktitarangini by Vidyapati (14th century); but Goddess Durga was not fully integrated into the Hindu pantheon, primarily in Bengal, till the 16th century.

Early forms of Durgostavs (Durga festivals) were primarily private worships in personal residences with the use of various musical instruments such as the mridanga, mandira, and smakhya.

It was during the 18th century, that the worship of Durga became popular among the landed aristocracy of Bengal, the Zamindars. Prominent Pujas were conducted by the zamindars and jagirdars, being enriched by emerging British rule, including Raja Nabakrishna Deb, of Shobhabajar, who initiated an elaborate Puja at his residence in 1757 for Lord Clive.



These celebrations brought the Durgostavs out of individual homes, into the public sphere. Festivities were celebrated as a community, where royalty and peasantry were welcomed into the home of the zamindar or bania (merchant) to feast together. The festivities became heavily centred around entertainment and music as well as lavish feasts that continued for the entire month.

Many of these old Pujas exist to this day. Interestingly the oldest such Puja to be conducted at the same venue is located in Rameswarpur, Orissa, where it has been continuing for the last four centuries since the Ghosh Mahashays from Kotarang near Howrah migrated as part of Todarmal's contingent during Akbar's rule. Today, the culture of Durga Puja has shifted from the princely houses to Sarbojanin (literally, "involving all") forms. The first such Puja was held at Guptipara — it was called barowari (baro meaning twelve and yar meaning friends).

The Present

The barowari culture has prevailed and





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has grown with leaps and bounds. It has brought people from all walks of life together for those most important five days of the Bengali Calendar. This has been helped with the migration of people from Bengal to all parts of the world. They have continued the protha (ritual) and started Durga Puja globally, bringing more and more people from the community and beyond together. If we reflect back at the origins today and start of the Guptipara Barowari Puja, we can see how well the meaning of Barowari fits with people from multiple countries participating, whether it is in Africa, USA, Canada or UK.

Puja rituals, bhog bitoron, cultural programmes, committee meetings, 'chanda tola (collecting donations), souvenir er advertisement tola, sponsor jogar kora', chitter chatter of children running around, 'bhashan er nach' are now integral and have become part and parcel of the modern day Durga Puja.

Today, media attention, competition between the para (locality) pujas, whole night 'thakur dekha (visiting mandaps), fuchka o roll khawa (eating street food) has become a custom followed by all. A new trend has evolved "theme Puja" highlighting some fantastic artistic creations from around the world.

Not to forget films like Joi Baba Felunath by Satyajit Ray, Antarmahal by Rituporno Ghosh, and more recently the Hindi film Kahaani, which have showcased Durga Puja to the world audience.

Popular songs such as "dhaker tale" showcased on our website demonstrates the true spirit of Durga Puja, The evergreen Mahalaya of Birendra Krishna Bhadra which filled our hearts with the feeling of Puja.

Prabashi has taken on the challenging task of bringing Durga Puja to Hounslow for the very

first time integrating the origins and present form of Durga Puja.

We hope that all of you have a wonderful time during the Puja and continue to have a wonderful time in the years to come. Many of us who have started the ball rolling may not be there but Prabashi and the celebration of Durga Puja will remain for years to come.

Lastly

*Ya Devi sarva bhuteshu
Matri rupena samsthita
Ya Devi sarva bhuteshu
Shakti rupena samsthita
Ya Devi sarva bhutesu
Shanti rupena samsthita
Namestasyai Namestasyai
Namestasyai Namoh Namaha*

Translation

The goddess who is omnipresent as the personification of universal mother

The goddess who is omnipresent as the embodiment of power

The goddess who is omnipresent as the symbol of peace

I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her



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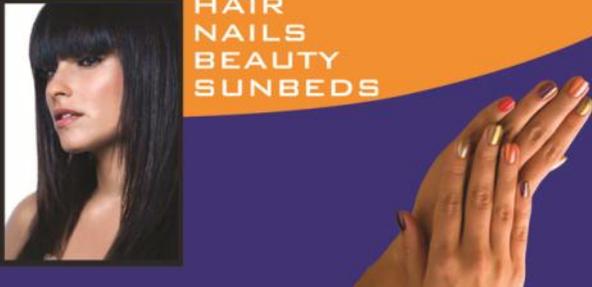



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Tirthankar Bandyopadhyay



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মনে আছে যেদিন প্রবাসী নামটা চূড়ান্ত হল সেদিন IPL ফাইনালের উত্তেজনা পেছনে ফেলে যুক্তি, পাল্টা-যুক্তি তুলে ধরা অব্যাহত। আবার পূজো কোথায় হবে তা নিয়েও একইরকম লড়াই। একে একে এমন অনেক বাধাই দূর হয়েছে আবার দেখা দিয়েছে নতুন কোনো প্রতিবন্ধকতা।

প্রতিমার বায়না করা, মূর্তি পছন্দ করা, কিভাবে প্রতিমা আনা হবে, কোথায় রাখা হবে - সবকিছু নিয়েই যাকে বলে ফাটাফাটি লড়াই। সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার পথে হাজার শব্দ খরচ অথচ সব বিপত্তি দূর করে মা দুর্গতিনাশিনী আজ হুন্সলা-বাসিনী হয়েছেন।

এর মধ্যেই তৈরী হল পরিচালন কমিটি। অজিত-দা সহজাত গান্ধীর্ষ নিয়ে সভাপতি, সুরেশ কোষাধ্যক্ষ, পাটিগণিত আর হিসেবশাস্ত্রের মিশেল ঘটানো মলয়-এর দায়িত্ব চিত্রগুপ্তর অডিট খাতা যাতে সবসময় ঠিক থাকে। শান্তনু পোদ্দার সম্পাদক হয়েই সম্পর্কে শ্যালক ধুব-কে নিয়ে চাঁদা তুলতে নেমে পড়লেন টি২০-র দ্রুততায়। প্রযুক্তি ও ভক্তিরসের মেলবন্ধন ঘটিয়ে রজত হাজির অত্যাধুনিক website নিয়ে। আর জয়জিত রীতিমত পেশাদার কায়দায় spreadsheet-এ পরিকল্পনা এবং দায়িত্ব ভাগের কাজ শুরু করেছেন।

সুরত সরকার যখন সুভেনির-এ দুর্গা পূজার মহাত্ম্য বিশ্লেষণ করে একটা লেখা নিয়ে ভাবছেন তখনই মঞ্চে অবতীর্ণ হলেন অরিজিত-দা, একেবারে Rambo style-এ। সামরিক অবভূত্থান-এর দ্রুততায় সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ এবং সভা পরিচালনায় যার দক্ষতা এখন সুবিদিত।

লন্ডনে সার্বজনীন পূজো করার অভিজ্ঞতা সদস্যদের মধ্যে বেশিরভাগেরই নেই। হাতেগোনা যাদের আছে তাদের মধ্যে অভীক দাসগুপ্ত অন্যতম। অভীক সদস্য হতেই তার উদ্দেশ্যে হাজার প্রশ্ন -- এটা কি করে হয়, ওটা কিভাবে ইত্যাদি। HMRC-কে সামলে কিভাবে

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খরচ বাচানো যায় তা নিয়ে অভিজিত-এর ঘুম নেই,
ঘোষ দম্পতি -- রত্না এবং বিশ্বনাথ ব্যস্ত door-to-
door চাঁদা তোলা এবং নানাবিধ বীমা নিয়ে ।

কল্লোলের সৌজন্যে এরমধ্যেই শুরু হয়ে গেল ই-মেইলের
বন্যা, প্রতিমুহুর্তে ফোনে টুং-টাং আওয়াজ জানান দেয়
আমরা এগোচ্ছি । তা সত্যেও সীমাহীন উদ্বিগ্ন আর
অন্তহীন উত্কণ্ঠা নিয়ে গোমড়া মুখে ঘুরছেন দেবরত,
মাস্টারি কায়দায় মিটিং পরিচালনা করছেন শান্তনু পাল,
রাত জেগে প্রবাসীকে স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থা হিসেবে
নথিভুক্ত করার জন্য মুসাবিদায় ব্যস্ত শংকর । আর
ছায়া গৃহিনীদের নিয়ে সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানের পরিকল্পনায়
ব্যস্ত ।

ইতিমধ্যে সদস্য সংখ্যা বাড়ছে, তৈরী হচ্ছে নতুন পরিচয়
- প্রবীর, তুহিন, বিরজা, চেতন, দেবজ্যোতি, পুষ্পল,
নীলাঞ্জন, সন্দীপন, তাপস, তপন, উত্তম-দা, অনুপম,
সুচন্দ্রা, সমিত, অভিষেক-দা, ধনঞ্জয়, সুপ্রতিম, সৌভিক,
জয়ন্ত, সোমনাথ, তপন-দা (বক্সী), সুদীপ, পারুল,
পবন, অমিত এবং আরো অনেকে । অরিন্দম রায় মাঝে
মাঝে মিটিঙে হাজির ।

এভাবেই প্রবাসী ক্রমশ দানা বেধেছে, সমস্যা যে হয়নি
তা নয়, তবে সমস্যার সাথেসাথে তার সমাধানও
হয়েছে দ্রুত । চারজনের আলোচনায় যার সূত্রপাত
আজ সেই প্রবাসী এক সন্ধিক্ষণে দাড়িয়ে । দুর্গা পূজা
দিয়ে যে পথচলার শুরু তা যে ক্রমশ আরো
প্রসারিত হবে তা নিয়ে অন্তত প্রবাসীর সদস্যদের
মনে কোনো সংশয় নেই ।

চরৈবেতি ! চরৈবেতি !

(যান্ত্রিক এবং প্রযুক্তিগত কারণে চিরাচরিত বাংলা বানানবিধি অনুসরণ
করা সম্ভব হয়নি)

তোমার ছেলেরা

Dr. Tanmoy Datta

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স্নিগ্ধ ফুলের মালা,
তোমার নামেতে এখনো সাজায়
পূজা অঞ্জলি ডালা ।

সময়ের দাম দিতে হবে তাই
ব্যস্ত যে যার কাজে,
নবমী নিশির বিষাদের সুর
তবুও গভীরে বাজে ।

তোমার ছেলেরা গিরি হিমালয়
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Maa Aaschen

Shreeja Basak



Durga illustration
Arshia Ray

Translations:

Maa Aaschen – Mother Durga is coming
Para – local (residential) area
Goli – lane
Pandel – large temporary marquee that houses Mother
Durga's idol during the Durga Puja period

'Maa aaschen!',
Excited whispers ripple across the city:
Each para, each goli, each home;

The monsoon and mud have dried out,
The dust and dirt is swept away,
Homes and shops are painted afresh;

Plain wood rods are taking shape,
The frames to walls and roofs of cloth,
Fortresses to welcome all;

Big, small, wide or tall,
The pandels stand guard in each para,
An array of homecoming hosts;

Colour and light flood the heart,
Seeping through to the suburbs:
The city bathes in vibrant anticipation;

Families come together,
Friends plan their adventures,
For the endless days and nights to come;

Luscious saris draped,
Salwars and churidars chosen,
Each outfit prepared to the 't';

Joy and festivity mingle in the air,
Dancing through the maze of streets,
Where every person walks in step;

A city is getting ready,
To welcome Maa Durga.





The Time Traveller

Jiniah Tah, 9 Years

“Go to sleep! How many times do I have to shout?” Miley’s mum shouted. “OK mum!” Miley replied. It was Miley’s bedtime. She could not go to sleep. So that’s why she lay in her bed. Soon she dozed off.

“What are you talking about?” Miley asked.” Having our own club called the two time travellers! I love time travelling! It is so fun!” Replied Maria. Miley and Maria were going to school when they saw a flash. A portal! Where did it lead to? “As our club name is The Two Time Travellers, it is our duty to have adventures. So let’s go!”. And Maria crept into the portal. “Hey, wait for me!” Shouted Miley and she rushed into the portal.

“Am I dreaming? No I can’t be. This is Egypt!” cried Miley. Suddenly, a mysterious man approached them. “You must be Miley and Maria! The pharaoh expects you. We better rush or the auspicious time will run out!” the man sang and he pushed them into the palace. The pharaoh bowed. “Welcome to Egypt! You are the heir to the throne.” The pharaoh proclaimed. Then a familiar voice could be heard. “Miley!” the voice shouted. “Get up for school!” It was mum! She was dreaming. So she got up and got ready for school.

Tree

*Seemontini Bandyopadhyay,
8 Years*

I am a tree,
As tall as (one) can be.

My leaves are green.
I am slim.

My branches are brown.
I live in town.

Cars go past me,
As fast as can be.

I sway in wind.
I smell like mint.

My leaves are slender.
I am tender.

I suck water.
I have a daughter.

I am made of wood
I give people food.

I can't smile
But I stand in style.

I am awake in sunlight
I am asleep in moonlight

I make the air fresh
How, can you guess?

Durga Puja

Shounak Pal, 9 Years

Durga puja, Durga puja,
A famous Hindu festival.
We come together at a place
To make this occasion special.

Durga puja, Durga puja,
You may think it's just a festival.
But you're wrong!
We also have programme cultural.

You may not have noticed,
But the goddess we love,
Single-handedly fights demons,
And protects us!

That is why we pray each day,
For the years to come,
Make the Puja days
A happy one!

दुर्गा पूजा

Mallika Kashyap,

11 Years

हमारी ऐसी मान्यता है की विश्व को प्रकट करने वाली आदि शक्ति दुर्गा ही है। इस कारण ही उन्हें 'जगदम्बा' नाम से जाना जाता है। अनादि काल से, जब से मानव जाति अस्तित्व में आया, तभी से अच्छाई और बुराई भी साथ-साथ चले। अच्छाई हमें देवत्व की ओर लेकर चले तथा बुराई को हमने असुरी शक्ति माना।

हर एक युग में देवता और असुरों के बीच वर्चस्व की लड़ाई होती रही है, जिन्हें देवासुर संग्राम कहा गया। देवासुर संग्राम में जब जब देवता असुरों से भयाक्रांत हो कर माँ जगदम्बा की शरण में आये, तब तब माँ जगदम्बा अवतरित होकर असुरों का विनाश कर धर्म की स्थापना करती रही हैं।

धूम्र लोचन, शुम्भा निशुम्भा, महिसासुर, मधु कैटभ, रक्त बीज आदि दैत्यों का संहार माँ दुर्गा के अवतारों से ही संभव हो सका। उसी आदिशक्ति की देवताओं द्वारा स्तुति सुनकर माँ ने देवताओंको सांत्वना में "एथम यदा यदा बाधा दनावोथा भविष्यति तदा तदा अत्तार्यहम करिश्यम्य रिशंशायाम" कहा।

उन माँ के चरणों में अपनी श्रद्धा सुमन भेंट करते हुए, माँ से निवेदन है ;

"या देवी सर्व भूतेशु,शक्ति रूपेण संस्थिता
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि ॥
विद्यावानतम यशाश्वनतम लक्ष्मिवानतम जन्म कुरु
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि ॥"



Hello !

Araiya Bhattacharjee, 9 Years



I am Araiya Bhattacharjee. My family and I moved from Kolkata to UK last year. We lived in Kolkata for 6 years, before that we were in UK. I used to study at Calcutta International School.

I had lots of friends there, we used to visit each other's houses, our mom's were friends too. We had lots of fun during the holidays and our teachers were very friendly. We used to have a big school concert, a big sports day. I used to win all the swimming championships there.

In UK, I go to Smallberry Green Primary School. I have made new friends here too. We learn and have fun here at school also. I take swimming lessons and dance lessons here.

Colour the Ganesh



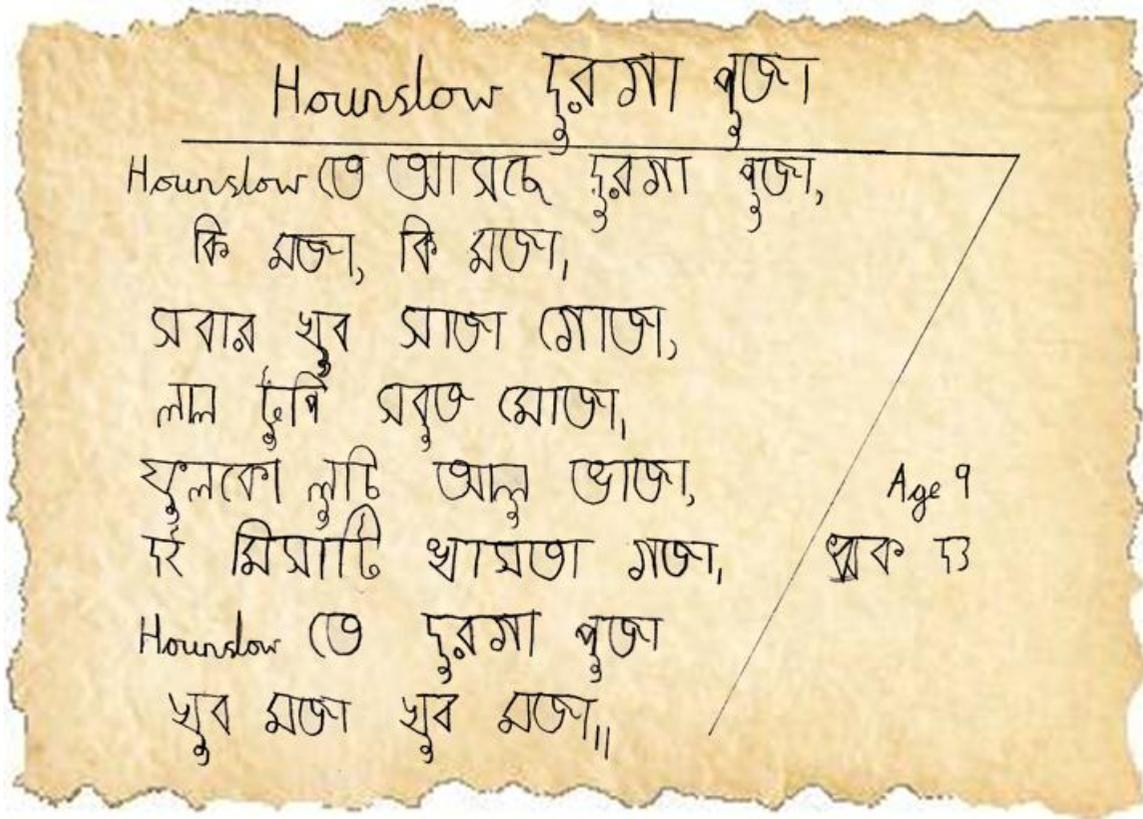
I miss my grandparents who are in Kolkata and also my friends. But I will go for a holiday and see them all sometime.

I really like it here in London because it is more green and lively. I also like the people here in London because they are kind. Also I am really looking forward to the Durga Pujo to do my dance and have fun with my new friends I made while my dance. My plans for the Durga Pujo are my dance and my choir performance, which I am really excited about.



Hounslow Durgā Puja

Hrik Datta, 9 Years



Clouds

Ivy Dey, 8 Years

Clouds, clouds they always change
some look funny some very strange.

Black, white and grey the colours we know
A bit of magic and out comes a rainbow.

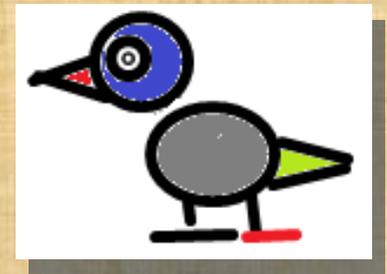
Clouds, clouds they have so many friends
Sometimes they breakup then they mend.

Clouds, clouds teach me how to fly
Then I can see the world from the sky.

Little Artists



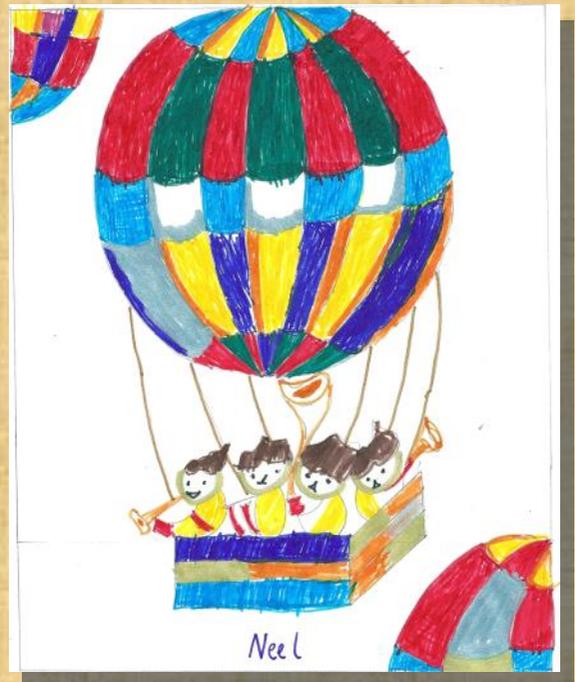
Oishik Mandal, 4 Years



Rishabh Ghosh
5 Years



Ishaan Das, 7 Years



Neel Podder, 6 Years



Arshia Ray, 11 Years



Seemontini
Bandyopadhyay,
8 Years



Arush Choudhury, 4 Years



Ivy Dey, 8 Years





A Holiday to Remember

Ishaan Das, 7 years

We went to Kolkata during the Easter holidays to visit my grandparents like every year, but this year's trip was very special.

A few days after we reached Kolkata, one evening in April we went to the Eden Gardens to watch the IPL cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Daredevils. It was a long drive to the stadium and when we got there we were given Vodafone blow-up balloons, DD caps and KKR banners, and I was very excited. But even before the match began it started raining with lightning and thunder, so they covered the field with big waterproof covers. When the boring rain stopped they pumped out the water and soaked the field dry using a machine called the 'super sopper'. Finally the match started, KKR hit just a few sixes but mainly 4's and 2's. We came back home before DD came down to bat as it was getting late and we had a flight to catch the following day to Jaipur. When we reached back home I saw on tv that DD had won that match and I felt a bit sad. (But the good part is, KKR played well later and won the IPL the next month, and I waved my KKR banner, which I brought back from Kolkata, all around the house.)

The next day we were flying to Jaipur and guess what - to my surprise, the KKR team were on the same Indigo plane as us. They were going to Jaipur to play the Rajasthan Royals. I managed to take some pictures with them.

When we reached Jaipur we checked into a hotel and I could see the Aravalli hills from our window. The next day we went to Agra by car and it took us 4 whole hours. On the

way we stopped at Fatehpur Sikri to pray at the Darga. After reaching Agra we checked into a very nice hotel where I could see the Taj Mahal from the balcony. The next morning we visited the Taj Mahal. It was very beautiful and it was made of white marble which is a very hard stone, and our guide said it took a long time to build. The grave inside was only a pretend one, and the real one was down below where nobody was allowed to go, and it was kind of spooky!

On the way back to Jaipur I bought a small model of the Taj Mahal from a shop which sold loads of beautiful things made of marble. The next morning we flew back to Kolkata, and the next weekend we flew back to London as my school was opening after the holidays.

In India it was boiling hot and tiring. There were power cuts and big mosquitoes and pot holes on the road. But I still enjoyed my holiday a lot and would love to go back again next year.



The Day the House Vanished

Sayon Choudhuri,
8 Years

I woke up with a strange sensation of not being where I ought to be in the morning. Instead of my snuggly duvet, I was covered with a blanket of leaves. Instead of the furniture in my bedroom, I could see the trees of a dense green forest. Instead of the dull hum of the central heating, I could hear the wind blowing and the sounds of strange birds squawking.

Where was my bed and my pillows? Where was the roof and the windows through which the sunlight enters every morning and kisses my forehead? Where was my house? How can it disappear? Did a witch cast a magic spell?

Lots of questions came to my head. "Where had my home gone? Where shall I live? Where was my family? Where is my pet cat?" Suddenly! A rabbit appeared. She was wearing a petticoat and spectacles. The rabbit was reading a book as well.

"Please can you follow me if you want to get your house back," the rabbit uttered. I was really excited as it is not every day you get to see a talking rabbit wearing human clothes.

I followed the rabbit and took me to chocolate world. I knew it was chocolate world be-

cause everything was made out of chocolate there. At the chocolate world I saw a singing bird and I heard her sing "Go to the fairy world, the pink fairy will be your friend". "How shall I go there?" I asked. Put on these shoes and clap" the bird answered. I did what she said and found myself in fairy world.

The black fairy found me and turned me into a statue with only my eyes working so the statue was crying. Soon the pink fairy came along and saw the statue crying. She knew no statues could cry so she came and freed me. Fairy world was really beautiful. It had silver mountains and golden fountains.

The pink fairy took me to her house and gave me lots of fruits and lots of magic juice. This was to make me stronger for the land of hurdles and hardships. The pink fairy took me to that land on her back.

The first hardship I had was staying only on water. It was not that bad but I became really hungry. I had to stay like that for a week. The second hardship was walking barefoot through burning hot sand without any water. I thought I saw water far away and ran to it.



Unfortunately it was a mirage. This hardship was really tricky because I had to stay without water. I was totally exhausted. I looked up to the sky and prayed "Oh God....give some rain and save my life." A voice from above boomed "You have got enough training now to face Terrific Terror".

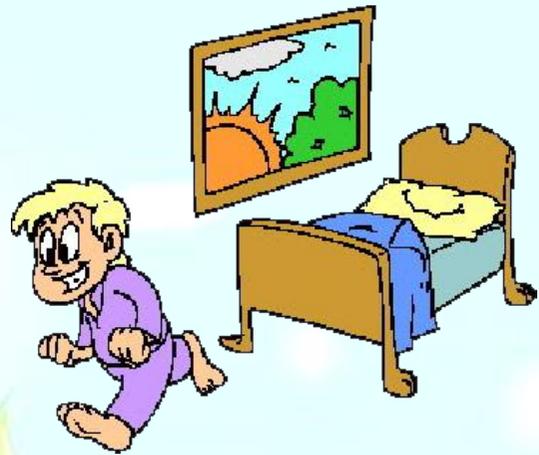
Suddenly I felt as if my muscle power had grown and I was ready to face the demon. I made my way to the cave and saw that there was a king cobra guarding the cave with a diamond on his head. I got out my fife and began to play a soothing song and the king cobra started to dance. As quick as a flash I took the diamond and rubbed it over the cross and the wall in front of me started to crumble. A boulder fell and I quickly jumped over it.

I could not believe my eyes. Terrific Terror was as big as a giant, as strong as a rock and had one eye which looked really scary. There were spikes all over his body and chains to drag his enemy to his death bed. I was feeling really scared and my heart was beating superfast.

After a minute or so a spirit whispered inside my head "Be strong, be strong..... you are not here to play, to dream, to drift." Hearing that I got some more power and I was ready to fight while there was still blood in my veins. I quickly got a twig and sharpened it on a rock. I quickly stabbed it into his eye. The Terrific Terror made a slash in my hand. I quickly got the sword and shouted "I HAVE THE POWER". The monster burned to ashes.

I opened my eyes and saw I was in my room. Had I been dreaming? I looked at my arm and saw the slash. How come I am lying in my cosy bed and my mum calling me, "Wake up! Otherwise you will be late for school".

So did I really manage to save my family from the evil hands?



Durga Puja

Ananya Sinha, 7 Years

The priest has rung his bell,
Flowers and incense so good to smell,

The diyas are ever so bright,
Filling me with complete delight,

So let's cheer today,
Hip Hip! Hurrah! Hurray!

Delicious sweets are handed to her,
Enough to fill her up for breakfast, lunch
and dinner,

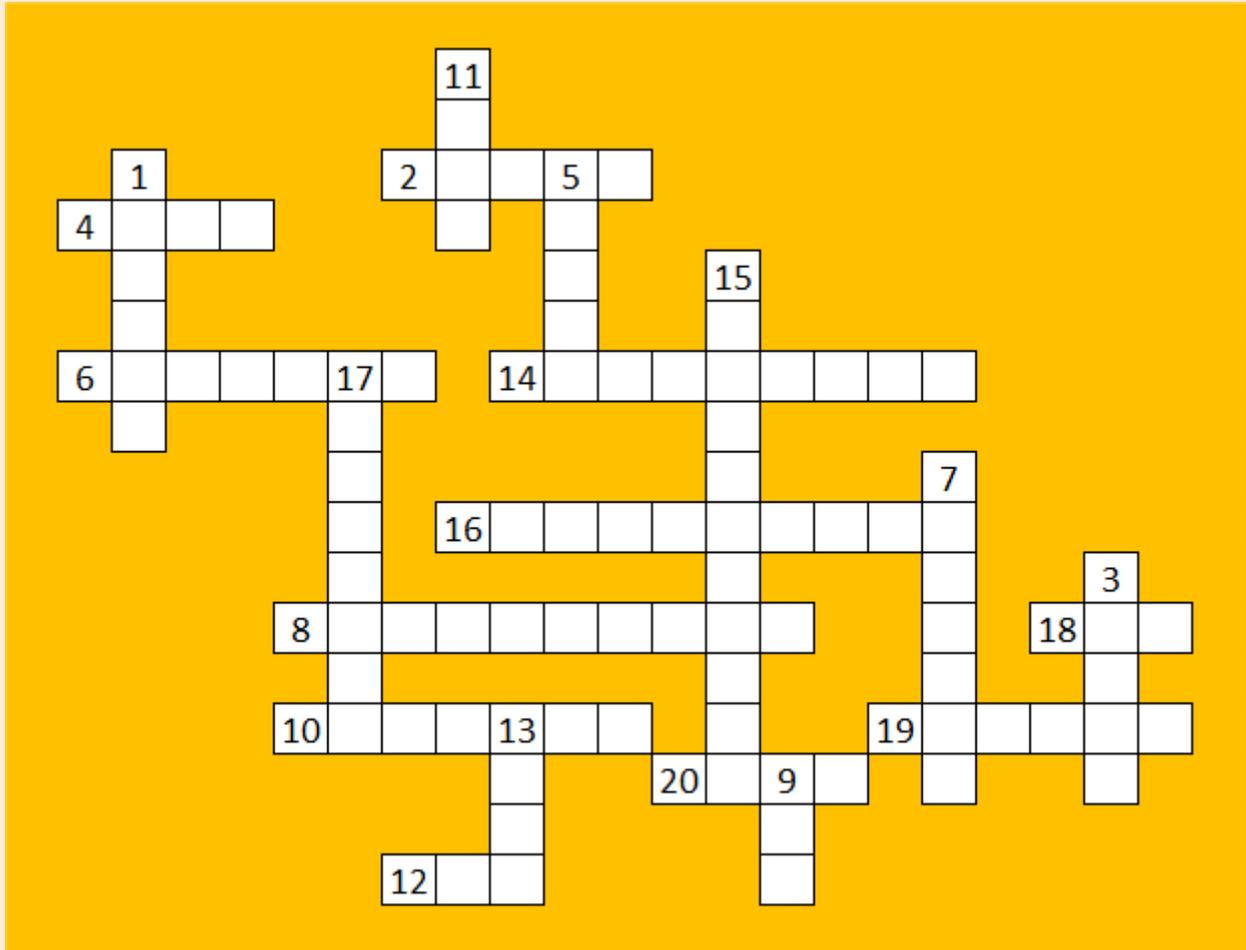
Happy smiles on everyone,
The joy that she brings has just begun.



Puja Crossword

Test your knowledge of Durga Puja by solving the crossword below.

(You may take a clue or two from your mum or dad)



Across

2. Ganesha rides on this animal
4. Drum played during Durga Puja
6. Goddess of wealth
8. Special puja that joins Ashtami and Navami
10. Also known as the Elephant God
12. Number of hands Ma Durga has
14. Goddess of knowledge
16. Wicked Asura (demon) killed by Maa Durga
18. Number of days Durga Puja festival is celebrated
19. God who gifted Goddess Durga the disc (chakra)
20. Goddess Durga rides on this animal

Down

1. Hindu season when Durga Puja is celebrated
3. Goddess Saraswati plays this instrument
5. Goddess Durga's husband
7. This god rides a peacock
9. Stays awake at night and Goddess Lakshmi rides this bird
11. Traditional name of *prasad* (containing rice, vegetables etc.) which is offered to the Goddess and distributed among devotees
13. Goddess Saraswati needs this to go places
15. A prayer (*Anjali*) using flowers
17. This ritual announces the start of the puja



Spot the Difference

Can you spot

10

differences between the two pictures of Ma Durga ?



Given up ?



answers on last page



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My Two Cents on a Supernatural Being

Aditi Sinha

Years on end, we will hear the same debate being raised on the topic, "What is God?". I feel this question lacks density and meaning. This three worded question has endless history, and it's impossible to state all the facts without missing out the key details that provide endless stories.

When we think of God, our mind simply trails back to religion. Monotheistic or polytheistic, religion is religion and provides its own cultural meaning on what God is. Major world religions that easily spring to mind include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism. All have different decisions and thoughts on God, all different in their own way, but still interlinked and similar.

Life in the 21st century teaches us to respect one another regardless of race, colour, gender or religion. This is considered admirable as, we humble human beings are essentially carrying on an amazing message to our future generations.

Devotion to God has definitely been no less evident in the past, one example being The Black Death . After plague struck Britain, people had no idea on what to do or what to think of the epidemic. A group well known then were The Flagellants, who believed that this was a punishment by God, and wanted salvation. Their idea of salvation was slightly far-fetched. In fact, they believed that whipping their bare backs under the scorching Sun, would bring them forgiveness. Many followed this event, and embraced God and religion together. These Flagellants prove how weak and humble we

can be. When we truly desire a specific thing we rely on the God to help us.

As a young child, I have also relied on my prayers to help me just that extra bit before exams or performances. If it did go well, I would truly relish the fact and thank God. Romans also believed in that philosophy . With many gods, providing for possibly every medium ever thought of, they knew exactly whom to go to when seeking something. Before the great emperors or warriors, would set out for wars, they would go to the temple of Mars, and seek blessings. Romans were very religious and definitely known for their manner. They believed that every cause and every matter was due to these individual gods.

We have also seen how science has evolved itself with the passage of time. When Charles Darwin laid the foundation of the Theory of Evolution people were not ready to believe it. When evidence was provided against every argument, the people started to comprehend and acknowledge. Fresh scientific thinking has evolved with the passage of time and people started decoding the mystery of universe and life. Even then the importance of the concept of God can't be ignored.

A survey taken in 2010 tells us that 76% of Americans believe in God. This proves that even though we understand the scientific meaning of life, the hope and happiness God brings is too overwhelming for some of us to overlook. As the famous quote says: "To each to his own."





Desi Foods

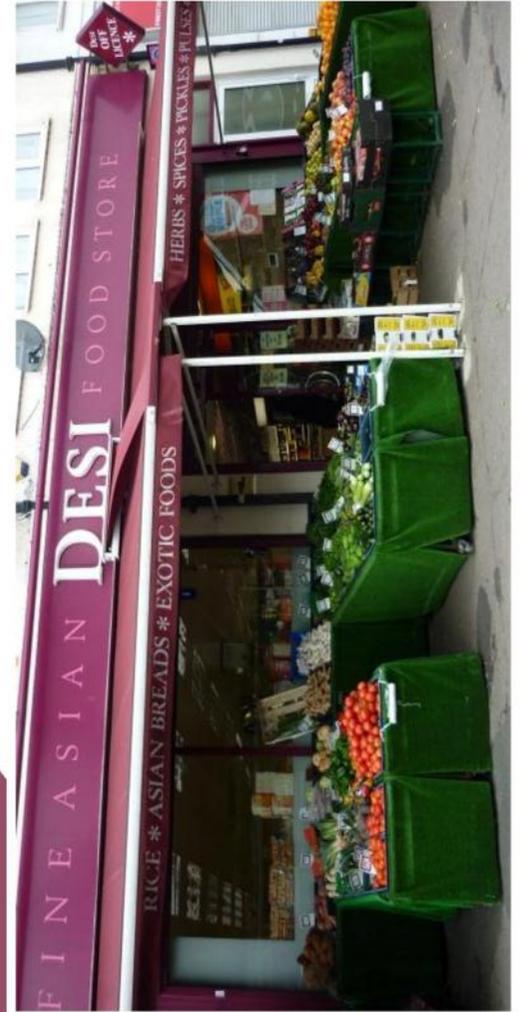
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ভক্তিপূর্ণ মনে সবে কাব্য শুনিবে ,
কথাশেষে প্রবাসীর জয়ধ্বনি দিবে ।

বৈশাখ মাসে এক পুন্যতিথিতে,
কতিপয় মেতেছিল চড়ুইভাতিতে ।
হেন কালে আমোদলগ্নে তারা আদেশ পাইল,
মাতৃ আরাধনার ইচ্ছা প্রকট হইল ।

সকলের উত্সাহে বাড়িল মনোবল,
সফল করিতে স্বপ্ন এই সম্বল ।
কেমনে হইবে এই অসাধ্য সাধন,
সাত মাসের পরিকল্পনার আজ হইল রূপায়ন ।

ক্রমে ক্রমে এই বার্তা হইল প্রচারিত,
মিলিত হইল বঙ্গসন্তান আর ছিল যত ।
ধীরে ধীরে সভ্যসংখ্যা বাড়িতে লাগিল,
যাহারা ছিল দূরে দূরে, নিকটে আসিল ।

দিনক্ষণ পাঁজি পুঁথি, অনেক আলোচনা,
তিন দিবসেই হইবে মোদের প্রথম আরাধনা ।
আশিয়ানা অনুষ্ঠান গৃহে উত্সব হইবে,
আনন্দ উত্সবে বিলেতবাসিরা মাতিবে ।

কুমোরটুলির রমেশ পাল, কে না তাকে চেনে
মাতৃমূর্তি তারই সৃষ্টি, রেখো এটা জেনে ।
পরিকল্পনা আছে অনেক, করিতে সেসব পূর্ণ,
যখন সবার টনক নড়িল, তখন কোমাগার
শূন্য ।

বাজেট যে বেড়েই চলেছে, কেমনে আটকাবে,
গ্রাহি গ্রাহি রব উঠলো, কেমনে সামলাবে ।

পূজা হোক যেমন তেমন, খাওয়াতে হইবে
চারিবেলা,
সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানেও না হয় যেন অবহেলা ।

কেউ বলে সব বন্ধ, শুধুই পূজা কর,
আগামী বর্ষে যাইবে দেখা, এবার সবুর কর ।
জয় মা বলে সবাই মিলে হইল শুরু প্রচার,
বিজ্ঞাপন এবং স্টল জুটিল সঙ্গে কিছু ব্যানার ।

কোমাগার উঠিছে ভরে, মা এসেছেন বিলেতে,
নীলাকাশ কাশফুলে, ঢাক বাজে শরতে ।
পূজা নির্ঘন্ট তোমরা সবে মনে রাখিবে,
ukprabashi.org যেন আঁখি শুধু থাকিবে ।

সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানও ঝলমলে হইবে,
আরতির আগে পরে শিশুরা মাতাইবে ।
বাঙালি ভোজনরসিক কে না সেটা জানে,
অনেকেই আসে শুধু রসনার টানে ।

প্রবাসীতে প্রতিবেলায় ভিন্ন স্বাদের ভোগ,
আমন্ত্রণ রইলো সবার ছেড়োনা সুযোগ ।
প্রবাসীতে দুর্গতসবে আমন্ত্রণ সবার,
আশীর্বাদ প্রার্থনীয় সেটাই উপহার ।

ক্রটি বিচ্যুতি হইলে কিছু ক্ষমা প্রার্থনীয়,
প্রবাসীর শুভকর্মে জয়ধ্বনি দিও ।
সাধু সাধু বলিয়া সম্মান করিও জ্ঞাপন,
প্রবাসীর গুনকীর্তন তথা হইল সমাপন ॥



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Biswanath Ghose

I remember the first time I recited “one-zero-zero – one hundred” as a child. I was overwhelmed – with the applause and “sabashis” (congratulations) I received. It felt as if I had achieved a great deal, I was on the moon. Only later I began to realise the magnificence of number ‘100’.

The power of 100 dawned upon me in school. It was a delight to score a perfect 100 in any subject - Mathematics being the most pleasing. It would make one proud to become a favourite of the teachers, some special friends and cynosure to the envious eyes of fellow classmates. A perfect 100 gave me greater satisfaction than being first in class.

The magic of 100 has touched almost all walks of life. Science for example, 100 scientists debated to adopt the metric system of measurement. Only the British are holding on to their imperial system.

Time is the only measurement that has withstood the spell of 100 as one year is equal to

365 days one day equals 24 hours and one hour equals 60 minutes. However, the turn of century is still celebrated every 100 years.

Ease of 100 has touched economic matters as well. Every major currency is divided into 100 units like, a Dollar is equal to 100 cents; a Pound equals 100 pence; and so on. It was not surprising when the Indian leaders renounced the complicated traditional concept of One Rupee being equivalent to 16 annas (one anna is equal to six paise but four annas is equal to 25 paise) to adopt the international policy of one Rupee equivalent to 100 paise.

Sport is also not far behind, specially cricket. A batsman’s dream is realised when he scores a century (which is 100 runs). Sachin Tendulkar has made us proud by scoring a century of centuries. Bowlers and fielders are remembered if they have at least 100 scalps against their names. In athletics too, the greatest athlete is one who wins 100 meters sprint. The success of Usain ‘The Lightning’ Bolt in Olympics being the most recent testimony.

Tinsel town is also allured by 100. With the diminishing rate of silver and golden jubilees hits, cinemas are now taking pride to celebrate 100 days in box-office glory. One aspect of life probably untouched by 100 is matrimony and related ceremonies.

Now that's some food for thought.



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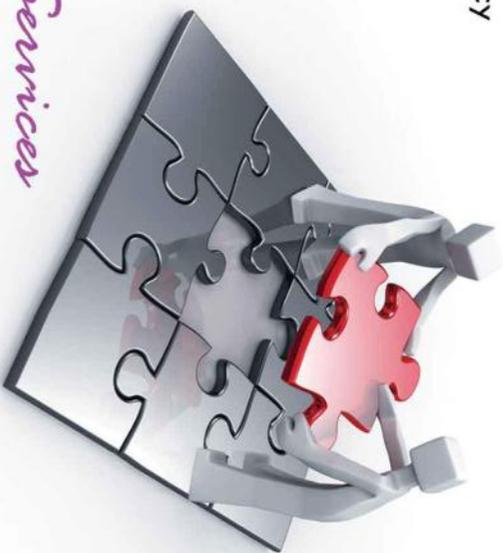


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Amader Durga Puja

Subrata Sarkar

London has a special place in the history and evolution of the world. Following the industrial revolution, the explorers conquered new grounds. They brought home riches from all over the world. . The vanquished glory, forgotten and lost knowledge got a fresh lease of life, when scholars dedicated themselves to the study of humanities - arts, language and music.

Today, new immigrants find it comforting to discover home in this tiny island. Perhaps as a tribute to the world's cultural heritage the treasure trove liberally flourishes with those brought in by the travellers and immigrants themselves – a bit of their own! London is hosting a Durga Puja, often called Sharadutsav as it takes place during the autumn, in the western edge of the city.

Bengalis celebrate Durga Puja in unique ways

Since the dawn of civilisation, spirituality has challenged the landscape of our humble existence. Each generation has carefully planted the seed of past, instilled courage to explore the future, which is mysterious and deep.

Our ancestors constantly moved to fresh pastures, to find resources as their 'gotras' (or clan) grew. In Bharatvarsha, civilisation moved along the rivers. When finally the Mongols, Negroids & Austrics descended on the fertile land of *Baunga* (later called Bangla) aborigines had developed an intricate and distinct lifestyle. In Bengal the racial mix defined the contours of a distinct Bengali culture -maternalistic and Tantric. Hence, the

surge of joy to worship the divine Mother Devi Durga for a full week!

History of Durga puja

The worship follows Puranic shastras, reciting hymns penned by *Mrkandeya*. The monstrous *Mahishasura*, master of sorcery and dark art (*avidya maya*), could only be defeated by a young lady vested with powers of the pantheon of Hindu Gods. *Mahishasura* tried all tricks up his sleeves to distraught Durga Devi in the fight but Devi Maa called his bluff off by beheading the buffalo from which emerged the evasive devil. Valiantly, she then struck the heart of *Mahishasura* to reinstate dharma (orderly lifestyle) on arth.



The victory cheers and thanksgiving that followed are observed reverentially to this day. The style has changed to reflect the 'will' of society but has never dampened the spirit. Devi Durga's worship in 'Ashwin' is called 'Akalbodhan'. It differs from the conventional time 'Basanta' (spring) as prescribed in the Puranas. Ram's Akalbo-

dhan started during 1600s and has since become the widely accepted practice. (Lord Rama initiated the Akalbodhan to reign in Ravana and since then it has been a widely accepted practice among the devotees.)

The 108 names of Devi Durga originated in Tantric, Buddhist and Puranic literatures which are thousands of years old. . Maa has crossed oceans (against the taboo of kala pani) to be worshipped in many major cities on the planet. The five-day puja has been squeezed into two day's rush (Saturday, Sunday). The priest has adapted to the challenges of the West remarkably well. The puja is now held on a licensed place - a school hall or community hall (often an erstwhile church or





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chapel) instead of holy temples. Overseas, instead of 'visarjan', the deity of the almighty is confined in a secured, pest free storage space where temperature is carefully controlled to protect the structure and décor for reincarnation in the following years!

Organising Durga puja overseas

Beyond wildest imagination the challenges are tough and only the 'cast of nerves' should take this task. Not only does this involve big money, it also requires precision planning, scheduling, securing permits and luck. In the West, in spite of apparent lawfulness and ignoring the flare of tempers on streets, to start from scratch requires hidden knowhow to negotiate the rules. These are often befuddled and hostile, so the privilege comes at a premium.

Many hands are involved to raise funds and share responsibility. Folks come with their onerous expectations, most stay off having made the contributions early on; some linger on to provide support to the core band of 'men' who have long lost their sleep. In the great Bard's land, it becomes 'to be or not to be', a 'comedy of errors' or 'much ado about nothing' in every meeting and expectations soar sky high. So to establish the correct chain of events in a smooth way is for those living in the 'paradise lost'.

In the end, the joy of fulfilment and unbound glory of success come for which many fearless hearts risk their youthful soul.

Technology & Sharadutsav

Technology intermingles with everything today. It gives things an order, ease and faster access to resources. Puja websites demonstrate creativity in a new medium of expression for the enthusiastic folks. Social media caters to generate a vibrant buzz and is a vital tool to notify about sudden changes in plans.

Pushed to the limits of technology soon the boundaries would be broken, which could well be debatable, as remote offering of puja!

Puja in future

Tantra Shastra, the backbone of spiritual cult of Bengal, lays emphasis on meditating on Nirakar Bramha (one formless infinite supreme consciousness) alike most religions in the world. But in India, both Vedic (idol worship) and Tantra have cohabited. Today Tantra is practically confined to the mountains of Himalayas, Tibet, Assam and Kashmir. Due to the intellectual influences in Bengal, Durga Puja is now observed mainly as a cultural highlight and less as an opportunity for serious spiritual uplift.

For Bengalis, Maa is a tangible reality who can be welcomed, touched, charmed with songs and dance. Then sent off on dashami with heavy hearts, smearing ruddy 'sindur' between her parted hairs and with tearful eyes thrusting darbesh (sweets) into her mouth in spite of her sober reluctance. Such charm will always remain as part of phenomenal Bengali life, the holy land where lofty heart has ruled over the brilliant mind.

Freshness of Autumn, azure sky with flotilla of puffy clouds, rhythmic beats of 'dhaki's' drum, cloister of children in new cloths & polished shoes, feverish buying of special sweets, profuse pouring out of friends and family, seductive exchanges of maidens glance at the sight of handsome boys with bouncing hairs is indomitable in spirit and spectacle – reputedly the longest festival celebrated on the Earth.

Without a doubt Sarodhutsav will survive for many centuries to come and will inspire the travelling and globetrotting Bengalis to unite their heart and mind to celebrate Maa in a faraway land.



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DISTRESS

Anahita Ghosh

Thinking of home and family and friends
 Thinking of how my journey here will end,
 Thinking of how my family is coping
 Thinking of those who are desperately hoping,
 Hoping I'm not dead or injured in any way
 In my dreams, I can hear them say,
 "God, protect my son, guide him through his life
 There are dangers out there and we need him to survive."
 These words clearly echo in my ear
 Getting louder and louder, so that I can hear.

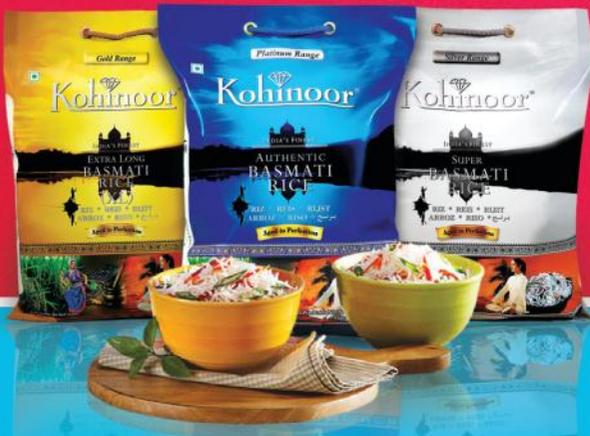
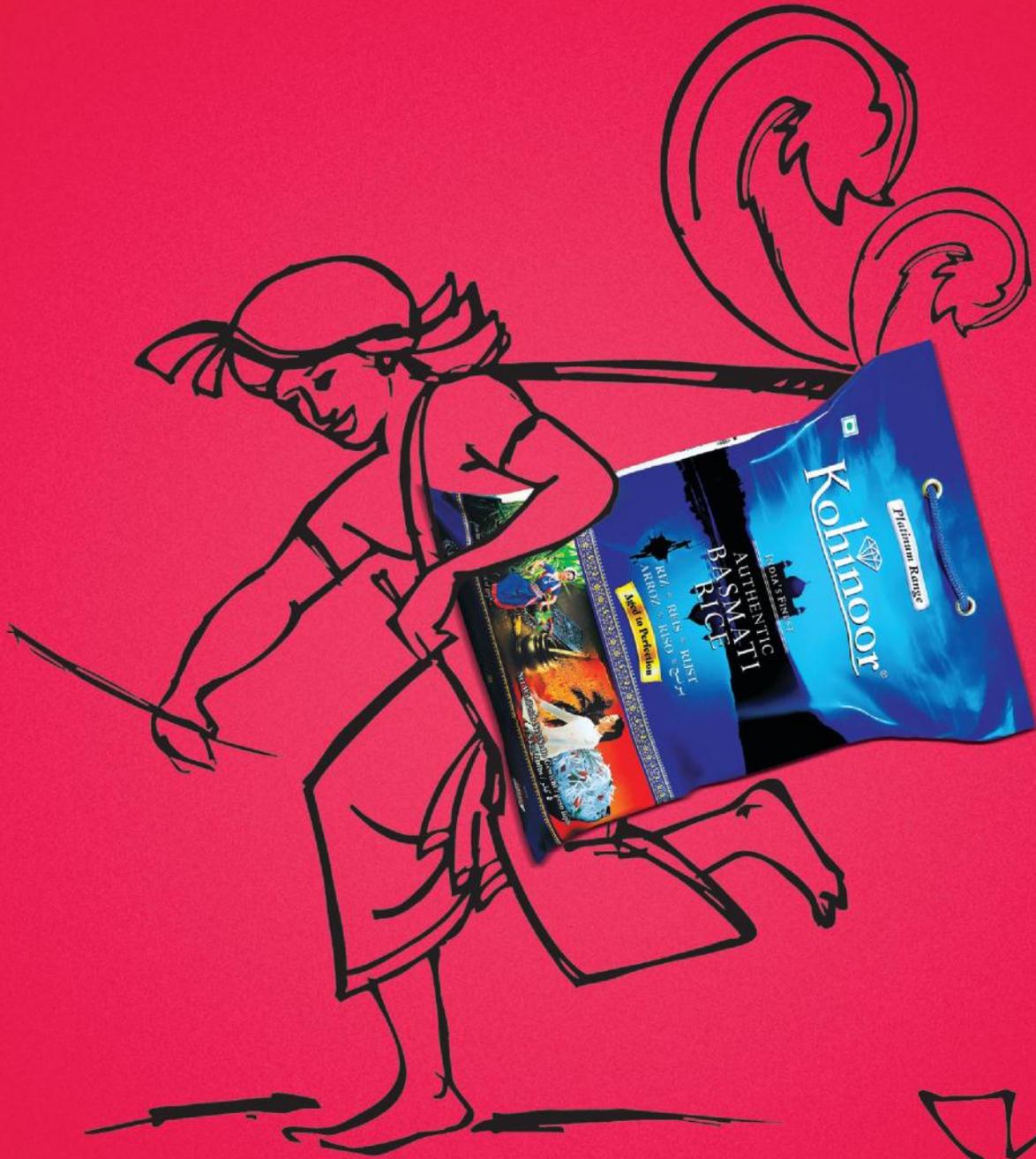
Each day passes and ten more are dead
 Worrying about the future, I can't get to bed,
 Throughout the night, fear creeps up on me
 Maybe this is how my life is meant to be,
 Screams and yelps haunt me so bad
 Why do people have to suffer and be sad?
 I hear more noises and my tummy churns
 Suddenly anger inside me rises and burns,
 I can't do this anymore, see people die
 For political reasons or religious, why do people have to die, why?

I wake up dreading the thought that I am part of this mess
 Still roaring in my mind is my relatives and Bess,
 Bess, I have known for years and years
 Thinking about her makes me shed tears,
 All this worrying makes me feel really sick
 But I know that I can't be a coward, I have to be strong like a brick,
 Getting ready to go out there to fight with my all
 Shooting and shouting until I hear someone call:
 "We surrender, we surrender, please don't harm us"
 I assured them and we all settled in a small army bus.

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Happy Durga Puja



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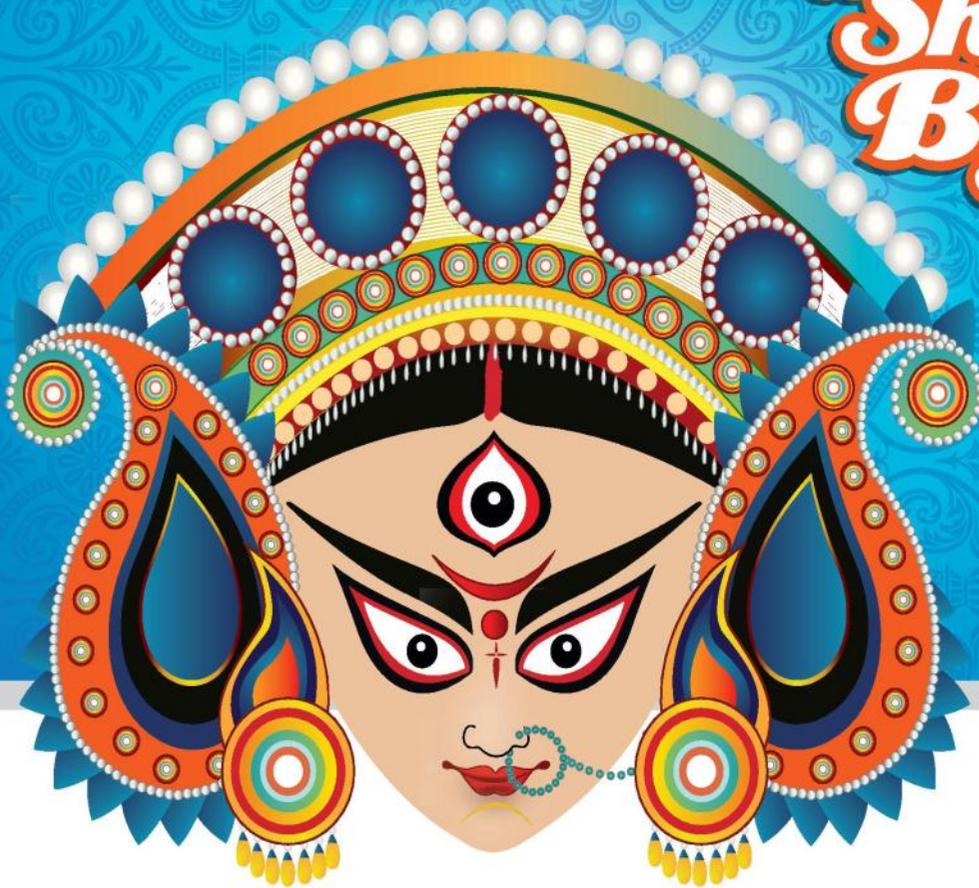
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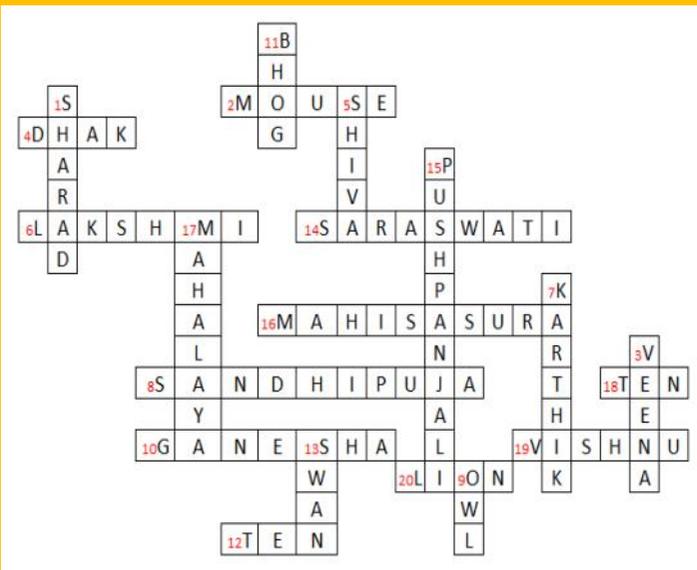
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Answers & Acknowledgement

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Spot the Difference

1. Goddess Durga's Bow does not have its string.
2. One hand of Goddess Durga is missing.
3. Mahisasur has a beard.
4. Lion's tooth are missing.
5. Lion's necklace pendant is missing.
6. Goddess Durga has a different ornament in one hand.
7. Goddess Durga's bindi is missing.
8. Goddess Durga's sword's eye is missing.
9. Goddess Durga's spear is different.
10. Goddess Durga's blouse is different.

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