



AARATRIKA

**MOSCOW DURGA PUJA CELEBRATIONS
1990-2007**



MTM – GROUP

осуществляет поставки белой консервной жести самого широкого ассортимента для удовлетворения потребностей предприятий жестетарной и консервной промышленности. Потребителям предлагаются различные варианты взаимодействия:

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- Поставка жести с повышенными требованиями к геометрическим размерам листов, порезанной из рулонов шириной 686, 704, 712, 724, 765 и 820 мм. Длина листов – любая в диапазоне 500-1200 мм. При этом отклонение по длине листов и косина реза не превышает 0,18 мм, что позволяет исключить последующую калибровку листов.



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В 2005 году начаты поставки потребителям жести электролитического лужения однократной и двойной прокатки толщиной от 0,15 мм по европейскому стандарту EN 10202:2001. (Производители рулонной жести: U.S. Steel Košice и Rasselstein GmbH. Резка на листы производится на Экспериментальном Производственном Комплексе (ЭПК) в г. Подольске.

Потребителям предлагается также скролл-лист (лист с фигурным резом) для изготовления концов к банкам диаметром 72,8 мм и 83,4 мм. За счет применения этого листа удастся дополнительно снизить затраты на жечь не менее, чем на 6-7% по сравнению с прямоугольным



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From the editor...



My little friend who when quizzed by Aaratrika to define Durga puja few years ago had said it means happy times and happy minds. He has now grown up into a sensitive teenager. He goes bowling, treats me to Moscow's best shaurma in Fili Park and guides me to the store with the best bargain in Gorbushka. Our Moscow puja turns 18 this year! At 18 you can start questioning the pujo and all the commercialism attached to it. At 18 you also start appreciating more annual events which bring bonhomie and camaraderie. Makes one feel not that far away from home.

As days gets colder and we no longer run across the street in our shorts and flip-flops to grab a fresh loaf of bread or a water melon, we enter into the festive frame of mind – its puja around the corner. While in Moscow we fervently hope for the snowfall to begin only after *Dashami*, in Kumartuli where idols are created the *karigars* pray for a rainless sky. The *karigars*, the *pandal* constructors, the electricians who form those amazing *designs*, the *dhakis* and the *rickshawallahs* who toil even during the festive days remain behind the panorama and sadly almost always remain unnoticed.

Apparently *probashi* pujas are getting bigger and better. In the US during the puja days, *purohits* with briefcases can be seen shuttling back and forth between cities to keep the pious NRIs happy. Denim-clad celebrant in motorbike is a common sight in Kolkata. The desperado of the year from the socio-political angle is often reflected in *pobrecito asura*. Remember the demon resembling Greg Chappel last year? Zidane and even Bin Laden have been in the asura visage before that!

Do you know that this year Beijing has a puja gift for the City of Joy? A direct flight to Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan province is being launched soon. Tourists from Kolkata to China will no longer need to travel via Delhi courtesy Eastern China Airlines. This also makes me believe that promoting India as a country of festivals can aid our tourism significantly like it has for Pushkar, Kumbh and Mysore Dasara.

India recently celebrated its 60th Independence Day along with the first woman president of our country. We witnessed Dada's comeback and raised a toast to India's victory in the finals of World Twenty20. Shimit Amin's *Chak De India* and Mira Nair's *Namesake* entertained us. We also had to exit from Bangalore to enter Bengaluru, Mysore to Mysuru et al.

In Moscow, we saw *gostinitsya* Rossiya flattened while Ritz-Carlton replaced the legendary Intourist in Tverskaya. Russia has a new prime minister and Moscow recently inaugurated Trubnaya, a metro station inside the Garden Ring designed in the elaborate styles of the fifties. Nikita Mikhalkov's 72 got selected by the Russian Oscar committee for 2008. Andrey Konchalovsky celebrated his 70th birthday with the release of *Gloss* or *Glyanets* and Pavel Lungin's film *Ostrov* aka 'The Island' is truly awe-inspiring.

The gala city day celebration in the first weekend of September reminds us that puja is little more than a month away. This year it has been a sheer pleasure for Aaratrika to work with its young readers who have most willingly contributed their paintings, poems, thoughts and ideas making the children section bright and appealing.

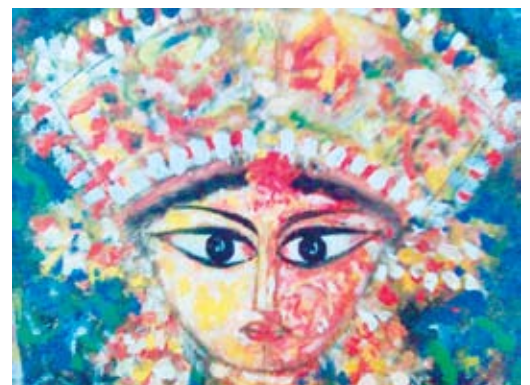
We want Aaratrika to be interesting, inspiring and 'become a person' to visit annually. Do you know the feeling when a stranger holds the tight metro door for you, when your unknown neighbour's Labrador licks your hand in the lift, you see a *babushka* sharing her small portion of *kolbasa* with a stray dog and a *gaishnik* excuses your *narusheniye* with an ohh-you-foreigners-smile? Aaratrika will be happy if it succeeds in bringing along even an iota of such warmth.

It will be *Bijoya Dashami* sooner than we want it, when the Goddess departs for her abode in the heavens leaving us with this typical feeling of emptiness and often unknown to anyone, a drop of tear rolls down our cheek as we mutter – *ashe bochor abar hobe!*

We wish you a very happy puja, a happier world and environment!

Debasmitta Moulick Nair

Photography by Darpan Mondal





Swami Jyotirupananda

The Worship of Goddess Durga in Belur Monastery

Its Beginning

Rituals are not meant for Sannyasis as they are beyond that state. But such event occurred in Belur Monastery near Kolkata in 1901 when Swami Vivekananda purchased the plot of land over the West bank of Ganga. The land was still uneven. Swami Brahmananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was the in-charge of the monastery. Just 4/5 days before Durga puja period which was from 18th October to 22nd October 1901 Swami Brahmananda saw a vision that Mother Durga was coming from Dakshineswar side across the Ganga and entering the plot stopped near the Bilva tree of the monastery. Just then Swami Vivekananda came by boat from Kolkata and told Swami Brahmananda – “This time make all arrangements for Durga puja by bringing the Pratima (image) to the Math.” But at that short time it needed to be seen whether a Pratima was available. Then Swami Vivekananda told him of the vision that he had. He had seen that Durga puja being celebrated at the Math and Mother being worshipped in a Pratima. The news of these visions caused a great sensation at the Math. Luckily, one Pratima was available, since the customer who had placed an order for it had not come to collect it on the day arranged. Swami Vivekananda with Swami Premananda, his brother disciple went to Kolkata to ask the Holy Mother Sarada Devi permission about certain observances connected with the puja. After getting her approval the Swami at once ordered the image to be brought. The news that the puja was to be done in the image spread all over the city, and the householder disciples gladly joined with Sannyasis to make the celebration a success.

As a rule, Hindu Sannyasis do not conduct this kind of ritualistic worship. Why then did Swamiji start the new tradition? There were a number of reasons behind it. One reason was to gain the acceptance of the local community for the new way of life that Swamiji and his monastic brothers were leading. The Hindu society in Kolkata had not fully accepted Sannyasis going

to the West, the unconventional way of life at Belur Math which included disregard for caste rules and mixing with Western people. The celebration of Durga puja helped remove some misconceptions about the new monastic institution.

Another reason was Swamiji wanted to institutionalize respect for Divinity of motherhood and sanctity of womanhood. Swamiji saw that one of the main reasons for the advancement of Western people was the elevation of women in the West, and one of the main reasons for backwardness of India was the neglect of women in this country. Worship of Divine Mother, especially the Kumari puja (worship of the virgin) would create the awareness of the potential divinity of women and a respectful attitude towards them.

A third reason was supernatural. The visions of the two Swamis as stated earlier. The first Durga puja at Belur Math was conducted in a huge pandal (decorated shed) on the open ground to the north of the old shrine. Sitting under the Bilva tree which now stands (not the same tree) in front of his temple Swamiji sang Agamani songs welcoming the Divine Mother.

The householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and orthodox Brahmins of nearby area had been specially invited, and thousands of people irrespective of distinction of caste or religion, attended the three day festival. The worship of the Goddess was performed in strict accordance with scriptural injunctions. The sacrifice of animals was dropped at the Holy Mother's wish.

When Swamiji decided to celebrate Durga puja at Belur Math, one of the first things he did was to seek approval of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. Since Sannyasis cannot undertake this kind of ritualistic worship, Swamiji decreed that the puja should be done in the name of Holy Mother. This became a tradition which continues to this day. Swamiji looked upon Sri Sarada Devi as the divine counterpart of Sri Ramakrishna, born for the awakening of womankind in the modern world. Holy Mother was present all these days from the invocatory worship on Sashti day (6th lunar day) to the boundless joy and satisfaction to Swamiji and the other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna as they considered her as Living Durga (Jyanta Durga).





Sri Sri Durga Mahapuja from 17th to 21st October 2007

Mahasashti 17th October Wednesday

Puja starts at 18:00

Mahasaptami 18th October Thursday

Puja starts at 9:20
Pushpanjali at 11:30
Bhog & Arati at 11:50
Evening Arati 18:00

Mahaastami 19th October Friday

Puja starts at 9:20
Pushpanjali at 11:30
Bhog & Arati at 11:50
Evening Arati at 18:30
Sandhi puja at 22:00

Mahanavami 20th October Saturday

Puja starts at 9:20
Pushpanjali at 11:30
Bhog & Arati at 11:50
Evening Arati at 18:30

Vijaya Dashami 21st October Sunday

Puja from 10:00 to 11:00
Shindur Khela 11:00 to 12:00
Immersion 12:00 to 12:30
Shanti jal 12:30

Sri Sri Lakshmipuja 25th October Thursday

Puja starts at 19:00





Prabhat P. Shukla
Ambassador of India



भारत का राजदूतावास, मास्को
**EMBASSY OF INDIA
MOSCOW**

October 2, 2007

MESSAGE

I am happy to extend my warm congratulations to the members of the Indian community in Russia on the occasion of Durga Puja festivities in Moscow. This festival is a great occasion for members of the Indian community to get together in a spirit of friendship.

The Durga Puja Committee has been putting in a lot of hard work in organizing this festival for the last 17 years and their dedication is commendable. It is also heartening to note that many Russian nationals, including academics interested in West Bengal, as well as those interested in Indian cultural festivities, are actively participating in these celebrations.

I wish the festival all success.

P.P. Shukla
(P.P. Shukla)



and craftsmanship. Needless to mention the great food stalls as well. A replica of the Victoria Memorial in form of a Pandal was only a glimpse of the creativity.

In spite of being familiar with the Puja festival in India, it was a few years ago, (1995) that we got a chance to be in Kolkatta during Puja. This was something very difficult to pen down. The whole city looked like a bride dressed up for her wedding. The Pandal, Lighting, Fireworks were just super. Apart from visual pleasure, we also sensed a feel of happiness and warmth in the hearts of people. It felt as though this was a time when good takes over evil and differences and misunderstandings take a back seat.

The families we know in Kolkatta always send us overwhelming gifts and good wishes. However, gifts are only a part of it. This is also a time when we should do good for other people. The underprivileged people, who are unable to enjoy this moment, orphans, who have no one to go to. Not just in terms of Financial help but just do things like lending a helping hand to people or even just praying for the peace of the world. We both have always tried to help such people by giving them money or by giving them clothes.

The Puja is one thing that has not diluted even with changing times. We hope and pray that even Indian Classical Music never dilutes and the traditions and cultures of this historic land stay forever and ever. We both dream that the whole of India celebrates such festivals with more joy and togetherness as this feeling of love and brotherhood is disappearing from our country. We hope that there are more festivals of this kind all through the year.

Russia holds a very special place in our hearts. We have been very fortunate to have interacted with artists like Igor Frolov, Victoria Mullova and Giovanni Mikhailov. The mutual love between India and Russia has always been beautiful and we hope and pray that this relationship grows and blossoms more and more in the years to come.

Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan in an interview with Debasmitta Moulick Nair on 30th September 2007

Puja in Retrospect



Warmest puja wishes from Ustad Amjad Ali Khan to all the readers of Aaratrika.



Ever since our childhood, this time of the year has been always very special. Due to our close bonding with Kolkatta and our closest family friends also being from the city of joy, made the Puja period really memorable. As we practice the religion of love and humanity in our house, not only the Puja celebrations, but all festivals and rituals are a part and parcel of our family. Be it Diwali, Id or Christmas, everything is celebrated. Our mother is from the Assam and our father is from the North of India. Therefore we got a very balanced mix of both the cultures. We remember as children we would go to the Puja Pandal and be fascinated by the amazing works

What makes

From those who are going to school...



Yash Dasgupta, Play school

Obviously when people act funny!

Aishwarya Deengar, Class VI

Jokes make me laugh. My favourite one is: Two morons meet by a roadside. The first one carries a bag of hens. The second moron asks "If I tell you the number of hens in your bag, will you give them to me?" The first moron says "If you tell me the number of hens I have in my bag, I will give you both of them. The second moron replies ok! Five!



Uditangshu Aurangabadkar, Class III

Seeing someone slipping on a banana peel! A jumping mad monkey is also funny...hehe!



Vyoma Raval, Class V

I think jokers are funny. I was once in a circus and there were these two funny jokers each holding a monkey. One monkey climbed up the stick and the other monkey went after him and took off his pants! So funny! The pantless monkey then jumped on the other one.



Swati Dash, Class V

Munnabhai MBBS makes me laugh. Remember the angry professor laughing? He was angry & laughing!

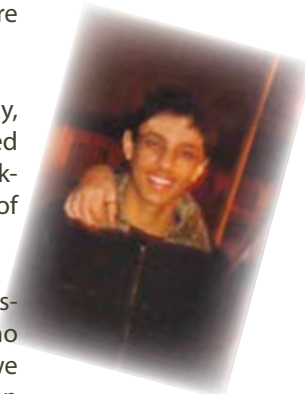


Rohan Singh Jamwal, Class X

Irony and wit. Most of the jokes children of my age make are usually on judging people.

While playing video games we laugh at a glitch. The other day, we were playing a video game where the enemy got kicked in the face at a 90° angle. The enemy, instead of flying backwards, goes vertically up, about 2 meters. This is an example of a glitch and poor digital graphics!

The tone in which a situation is related. Once Richik my classmate, in a very quiet voice told us that there was a child who fell down the stairs and broke his neck. The thing that we found funny was how calm and contained Richik seemed even though he was talking about someone who nearly kicked the bucket!



Siddhart Mishra, Class XI

The laughter of others at my feigned ineptitude makes me laugh, though I keep it to myself. Life is actually full of humour. Though growing up makes most people uptight and self-conscious about being silly. Kids know how to laugh, how to be happy and giggle and offer an excellent example. Random acts and those which seem totally out of character give me a side splitter.

"You don't stop laughing because you get old ...you get old because you stop laughing"

you laugh

No comments...

*From those
who no longer go to school...*

Sanchari



Aanisha



Dev



Mitali Sarkar, librarian

I just cannot control laughter
when I see others laughing, it's contagious you know!

Sudip Majumdar, bon vivant

- Eating *muri-ghonto* or fish head preparation with fork and knife
- Stressed parents reducing eating and talking as their children's examination approaches
- When one forgets own root and apes others like trying to eat *phoren* food even if they don't like it! Anybody wants to join me for *panta-bhat* and *muri-narkol*?

Joy Dasgupta, humorist

- Stupid questions
 - Population of India
 - Trying a shortcut in traffic jam and spending extra 30 mins
- By the way, did you hear that Beer Contains Female Hormones?



Sudeshna Aurangabadkar, educator

- Matrimonial columns
- Writings on autos and trucks in India...

*"Dekchis aar jolchis
Luchir moto fulchis"*

Rati Singh, student RUDN

As for me, looking at babies and animals makes me smile. And when they are acting it makes me laugh, because they are so funny and cute. That's why I like going to the zoo and circus.

Also some funny photos, comedy films can make me laugh. Laughter makes your life longer!
So, smile and laugh more often it will cheer you up.



A Neelkanth in the Himalayas



Dinesh Chakraborty

100% Bangali with obvious *luchi* - *kosha mansho* as his favourite though loves to experiment with new recipes cooking being his passion. He is also a classically trained singer, loves opera & animals and has a flare for traveling and talking.

"Badrinath, you heard me correct", my *ma* said wiping her hands with a piece of cloth.

"Wow!" I thought, placing the empty bowl of *jhaal-muri* over the tabletop and preparing myself for the skinhead tutor with stern look who spends the entire evening to pave my grand entry to the world of magical numbers. We called it 'Math'. It wasn't that I was too fond of the subject but high scores would be a ticket to buy me an expensive gift. That kept the interest burning.

It's already been September and Kolkatans had flocked to the markets like busy-bees indulging in last minute shopping. The secret code 'discount' written over anywhere get the lily-livered Bengali *baboo-bibi* to brave the deluge of muck, crowd and splashing rain. I already had a mental list prepared after having carefully reviewed the numbers and types of gizmos my friends already had.

Phew! The mighty Himalayan retreat is nonetheless a Glücksfall.

I was having a feeling of relief.

The Devi stotras chanted in a deep voice of Birendra Krishna Bhadra woke up the Bengalis all over, mesmerizing them and inducing a festive feeling in the wee hours of *Mahalaya* morning. The tickets for our trip arrived on the same day.

It wasn't the first time I was visiting the Himalayas but the idea was quite thrilling. In fact, the stunning close-up view of snow-capped mountainous terrain has a magical-mystic influence on me which I have never gotten away with. My heart waited in eager anticipation ...

At last the long awaited 'Sasthi' arrived heralded by loud rhythmic drum beats (*Dhaak*) that filled the azure sky with fleecy white clouds and spirited enthusiasm. Morning was a busy day as *ma* spends preparing *luchi* and *alur-dom* while *baba* finished the last minute chores. My heart was filled with an unknown but pleasing anticipation.

Next 30 hours, we crossed 1536 kilometers through changing

pastures, river beds underneath the iron bridge lined with tufts of *kash-phool* in the superfast Upasana Express. The rigorous melodic drum beats and the smell of *Shiuli* flower still lingered over my consciousness. Haridwar! The journey begins now. From the foothills of the Himalayas, where the Holy Ganges kissed the earth, we move along the busy streets dodging the herds of 'Holy' cows squatting on roads and chewing the cud's innocently throwing the traffic out of gear.

Journey through Indian mainland is never an easy task and the Himalayas is strenuous indeed. After an overnight pulsating train journey we took a bus ride to Chamoli, Garhwal's capital city before heading to JoshiMath. Thankfully, the green matchbox-sized unsophisticated government vehicle was not as nauseating or miserable as it is alleged to be. The somberly colourfully painted saffron claden sadhus and a group of merry-making Gujrati co-passengers made the journey an interesting one.

JoshiMath is the historical seat to Sankaracharyas, the seers and

claimed guardians to Sanatan Dharma and ancient Vedic practices. Located at a height of about 6,000 ft, was one of the four great 'mutt' or monasteries, the heart of religiosity even today. My overtly spiritual parents made good use of the time, while I ventured through the streets watching the young vicars lined with thick deodar forests enroute.

"Badrinath!" the word struck me as the conductor made a lousy announcement and we tucked into the campy green matchbox that slid through the meandering mountainous path overlooking the limestone mountains, laid barren and prostrated. On the other side, a deep gorge opened up through which the Heavenly Mandakini ushered down thousands of miles below. Landslides are frequent from the loose-boulder limestone uprising and accidents are regular. Either way, life was at stake!

Nature has been generous in endowing the Himalayan terrain with all the treasures it had in its possession. The breathtaking natural beauty and the resplendent silvery springlets of Mandakini and Alakananda rivers are worthy to die for. Either way, life is always at stake....!! Pine forests, the prairies of colourful flowers carpeting the valleys in between, the songs of unknown birds hiding under the foliage, the humming bees and the cool wind and the fragrance of the wild mountain flowers washes away our selfish attachments and give us a sense of serenity. Perhaps that was the reason the ancient philosophers and sages of India had chosen the reclusion of the Mighty Himalayas for their search of the eternal truth.

Forty five more minutes passed when we reached Badrinath. The majestic and colorful temple block situated on the bank of the undulating Alakananda, guarded on both sides by the snow-capped pyramidal Nar (19,210 ft) and Narayan (19,750 ft) cliff heads. A refreshing bath in the hot spring, amidst a pleasant but chilled

autumn weather in the valley was nowhere close to the warm sunny Kolkata. But, the difference was more exciting to explore...The decorative interior of the temple enthroned the invaluable puranic idol of Lord Vishnu in the sanctum sanctorum, where the devotees from all over came to worship; the silent serene made one realize the presence of spirituality within. The charming simple locals greeted the tired travelers with broad smile and invited them over for a cup of smoking tea and fried pakodas in their small shops. A touch of simplicity and genuineness characterized the innocent Garhwalis.

The rugged short but steep peaks with pine trees and resplendent sunrays on one side overlooking to the breathtakingly gorgeous and unimaginable snowy peaks of Neelkanth (21,640 ft), adding charm to the splendid settings. The peak owes its name from the bluish haze that transcends over it like a moonlit crescent when the morning rays of the rising sun sets the white peak on a golden blaze. Just above the base of the mountain was the shrine of 'Charan-paduka', where the foot prints of Lord Vishnu got imprinted on a rock. Historical anecdotes refer to the imprint as the mark of Vishnu while he was battling against Kavachasur.

A serene divinity lies outstretched across as we bathed the autumnal sun underneath.

Under the influence of spiritual composure we decided to a short trip to Managaon, the last bordering Tibetan village in India line, the following day. Enroute was the holy cave where the revered Vyasdev is said to have composed the Mahabharata as Lord Ganesha penned it. We crossed by the Holy riverlet of Saraswati and drank till the soul quenched and proceeded towards Bhim Pole on a short excursion towards Vasudhara, a beautiful mountain waterfall. As we moved through the path, a group of trekkers passed us with Brahmakamal in their hands back on their way from Satopanth. I stood there

in silence recalling the epical journey of the Pandavas while on their journey to Heaven. It was only Yudhishtira who is claimed to have completed the journey, I am not Him. (Phew!!!) I returned home.

A sudden surge of emotion engulfed me years back now when I recall. Standing aloft the sturdy Himalayan peak to whom 'Durga' was the daughter. Some thousands miles away, a spirit of euphoria sets the streets of Kolkata in gleeful welcoming of their daughter-like Durga for a ceremonious homecoming. The energy and strength of the Goddess inherited from the mighty Himalayas and an enigmatic Kolkata lies unfolded in the reminiscent mind of a young traveler. The nostalgia remains untouched.

"Aschey bochor abaar hobey"....
[I shall see it again, the next year], I thought to myself..

Neelkanth\$- Indian roller (bird)
- It is ceremoniously released during the Visarjan on Dashami to signify Durga's return to Kailash after the Pujas.



**Nicolas Tauvy (Jojo); 6^{eme} A,
Lycee Francaise de Moscou**

Jojo regularly plays hockey & tennis, enjoys staying in hotels and loves ***mach-bhaat***/fish & rice which is obvious from his artwork.



Alisha R. Behera Class I



Boredom

*A false feeling,
Of having nothing to do,
Makes us look at the ceiling,
And our helplessness comes true.*

*Fact of life,
Is our lethargy,
Till summer we have to strive,
But we lost the energy.*

*We miss things,
Which we never would have known,
Revolt for things,
That we don't deserve to own.*

*Nothing turns us on,
We refuse to think,
But the time flows on,
Every time we wink.*

*Concentration is flickering,
We appear to be lost,
But we are still not noticing,
The actual cost.*

*Same routine everyday,
Same roles that we took,
Degradation on its way,
But we are too tired to look.*

*Nothing appeals to us,
Even to whom we're speaking,
Apathy feeds into us,
And makes us feel like sleeping.*

*No one to entertain us,
We are bored with ones present,
There are people, who always blame us,
And make us feel unpleasant.*

*I penned this poem,
After a lot of exploring,
The reality so solemn,
And far too boring.*

*Only one thing can help,
For boredom fighting,
We have to find for ourselves,
Something exciting!*



Anushka Dhar, Class III

Did you ever see this

*Did you ever see the flowers dance
Or hear winds making music in the trees
And see the sun smile and wave
This world has something to say
Do not just sit and be bored
You should look out
And understand what you see
It is a beautiful world
And you have one life only.*

He passionately loves comedies, collects jokes and enjoys watching people. He is a connoisseur with skepticism for fusion *khana* and has a strong liking for the regular home cooked *dal-bhaat-torkari-mansher jhol*. He however welcomes juicy burgers with crisp french fries occasionally. His hobby – cell phones!

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Richik Sengupta, Class X



Neha

MOSCOW

NEHA SHAKIL, Class III

AYSHA SHAKIL, Class I



Aysha.

I was waiting for the day, for us to reach
Moscow,
As I was told it's a cold and cozy place,
down the
I came, flight, thought it would be white,
felt a little bad, when I found the place
bright.
But that gave a chance, to see Moscow's might
Seven sisters and churches, all great height
Now I'm waiting for the day when Moscow
turns white
'cos that's the picture, I have in my mind.



class I



Best wishes from KINDER PLANET



Kinder Planet (Pre-school) - Moscow was established in March'2004 for Children age groups 2½ years and above. Kinder Planet (KP) lays the foundation for early learning of children.

The school has a very good infrastructure for all round development of students. Variety of Toys, Charts, Models, Books with attractive pictures, activity games, furniture & other things are there keeping in mind the safety- comfort of children & to create educational fun loving atmosphere.



They are also provided Catnap with individual beds during day time. KP functions between 9A.M. & 5P.M. in three groups.

Kinder Planet keeps little ones engaged in Art & Craft, Sketch-Painting, Gym- Aerobics, Marshal-art and Dance classes as extra activities through native professionals.

KP can arrange Pick up and Drop facility for the students.

For more details please contact:

Bajaj Sonu : +7 903 108 20 95, +7 495 974 56 74



The above is a Christmas greeting I made for my friends. I copied the heads from other pictures and pasted them onto cartoon bodies



Mechanical Me
The result of some image overlays.

Photoediting by Satyarth Mishra, Class VIII

He mostly uses Adobe photoshop C S3 and Sony Vegas 7.0. Satyarth loves Matthew Reilly's thrillers. His preferred cuisine is Chinese and the megamall is his favourite hangout in the city.



Loves arithmetic and is a regular participant of Moscow mathematical contests. He adores chocolates and *blinis* dipped in condensed milk. He paints and plays flute. Recently he has begun learning to play the synthesizer.

**Andrei
Garson
Dasgupta,**
Class IV





After spending her childhood in Lucknow her love for *biriyani* and *kebas* are obvious. Her favourite movies are 'High School Musical' and 'Pirates of the Caribbean'. She adores Mr. Bean and loves to sketch portraits. Aishanya likes living in Moscow.

Aishanya Deengar, Class VIII



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Sumana Ganguly

Sumana Ganguly - 4th year medical student from MMA. She misses Kolkata, loves food, adda and sports. She enjoys dancing and actively participates in various University Cultural events. Sumana takes keen interest in old Bengali movies and songs.



মুন্ডলু

ছোলেবেলায় কত সব সুখের মাঝে হারিয়ে গিয়েছিল যে,
সিন্দুর তবু যেন কখনো জ্বলিয়েছিল গোখর
প্রবাসে কোন গোপন কুইন্সীতে,

যে - গোখর মা,

সুখের চাকরই জীবনযাত্রা; বড় লাল টিপ

পড়তে যে বড় ভালবাসত।

গোখর তিন বছরের ছদ্মবেশে গোখর মাঝে ফিরে

বসিবে পাশে হাঁড়িয়ে মায়া - গোখর মা,

ছবির স্রোতে বন্দী হয়ে গেছে গোখর মনের ছেঁড়া জোড়,

তবু হাসি হাসি মুখ মাঝে দিবে তবিরে অনেক ভেবেছি

যে কি ভাগ্য কত? ভাগ্যে কোন ভাগ্য গোখর?

কিন্তু একটু কষ্ট বলা "তুমি চিৎ গোখর মনের মাঝে"

হ্যাঁ, তুমি চিৎ গোখর মনের মাঝে

গোখর যে গোখর ছায়া; তবুই নেই

গোখর সব কষ্ট তবু মাঝে, তবু ছবির মাঝে

কিন্তু তবু তে ছবি, যে তে নয় -

বছরের পাঁচটে দিন মাঝের দেখা পাই

দুর্গা প্রতিবার মুখে মাঝের মুখ মুক্তি তুমি,

যেও যে মা - সবল মা

বিশ্বের পর মাঝের ছবির মাঝে বলেছিলাম

"গোখর ছেড়ে মাঝে মা, গোখর মিলিয়ে জানব বলেছি;

নিজের সেঁকুর দিবে গোখর গোখর সড়ক মা

মিলিয়ে জানব গোখরো"

গোখর গোখর মুখের গোখর; গোখর মাঝে কখনো গোখর

গোখরনে মাঝে ছিলছিল করে,

প্রথম কষ্ট বলল যে; মুখি একটি কষ্ট "মা",

গোখর বল যেন জ্বলিয়ে গেল

শব্দে এতল জ্বল মাঝে,

গোখর সুসন্ধ্যা এই তে গো, গোখর মাঝে ছায়া; মাঝে নেই

গোখর মা - হ্যাঁ এই তে গোখর মা,

সুমনা গাঙ্গুলী



আশ্চর্য !

নিরীহ কলম, নিরীহ কালি,
নিরীহ কাগজে লিখিল প্রাণি-
"বান্দর বেকব আজব হাঁদা
বকাট ফাজিল অকাট গাথা।"
আবার লিখিল কলম ধরি
বচন মিষ্টি, যতন করি-
"শান্ত মানিক শিষ্ট সাধু
বাছারে, ধনরে, লক্ষী যাদু।"
মনের কথাটি ছিল যে মনে,
রটিয়া উঠিল খাতার কোণে,
আঁচড়ে আঁকিতে আখর কটি
কেহ খুশী, কেহ উঠিল চটি !
রকম রকম কালির টানে
কারো হাসি কারো অশ্রু আনে,
মারে না, ধরে না, হাঁকে না বুলি
লোকে হাসে কাঁদে কি দেখি ছুলি ?
শাদায় কালোয় কি খেলা জানে ?
ভাবিয়া ভাবিয়া না পাই মানে।

Sur-Prize!

Innocent pen, innocent ink [and Muse]
On an innocent page scribbles abuse
"Monkey, stupid, queer and dud,
Donkey, silly, diffuse, absurd,"
Again, writes the pen with equal care
Seemly, sweet words proper and fair
"Soft, precious, sober, wise
Sweetie, cutie", goodness surprise!
Words concealed within the mind
On paper do their expression find
Under twist and turn of alphabet's bulk
Some cheer, the others sulk
Regular sequence of same old ink
Makes some laugh, takes others on tears' brink
Scripts do not strike, neither confine nor yell
Why then do men laugh or cry, just tell?
Black and white patterns, what magic do they know?
I rack my brains, but really am unable to follow!

Sukummar Ray's poem translated from the Bengali
by Zinia Mitra
Courtesy www.parabaas.com

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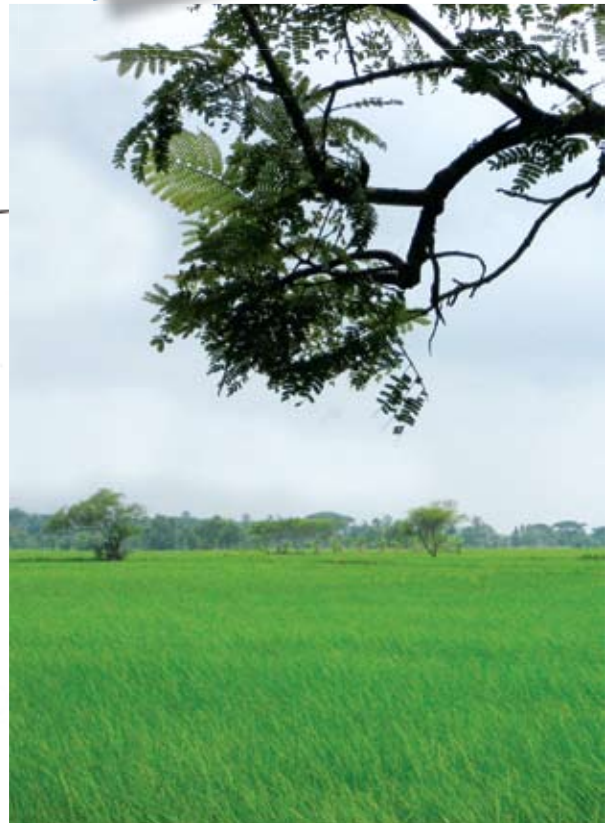
प्रार्थना

1. *(The text in this block is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a list or a series of notes, possibly related to the 'Bhagavad Gita' or a similar philosophical text, given the context of the other blocks. The text is written in Devanagari script.)*

३५५

Krishna Roy

Roy who has been living in Moscow for very long has been a regular contributor to Aaratrika. Her passions include reading and writing. While working with the Embassy of India School, she was extremely popular with the children. The parents always knew that their angels are in caring and efficient hands of Krishnadi.



Photography by Darpan Mondal



Почему?

ГЛИКОДИН

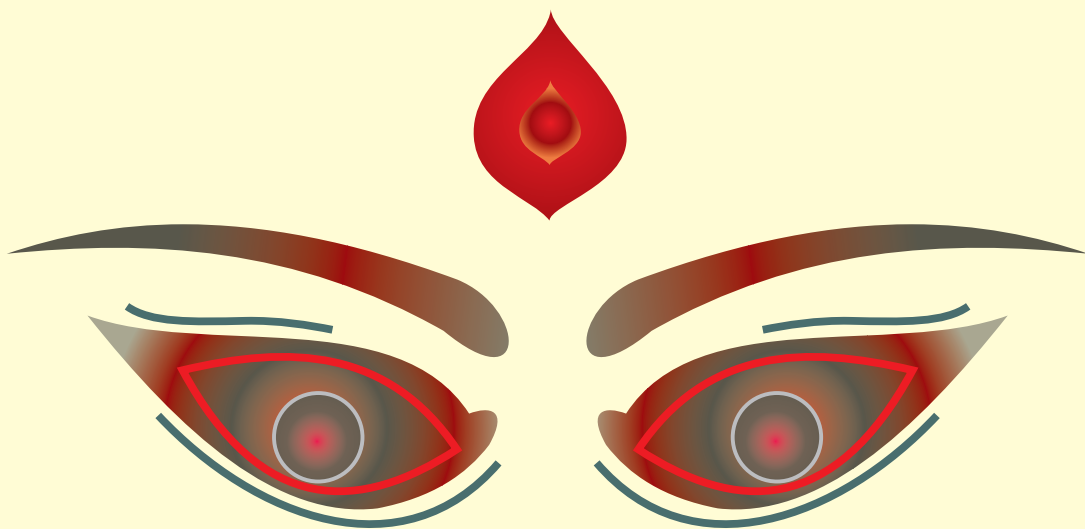
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shivaayey satatam namaha!*

*Namaha prakruthyey bhad raayey
niyathaaha pranathaha sma thaam!!*

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Dr. Umesh K. Singh

...it's Pooja time in Banaras

Dr. Umesh K. Singh is a senior lecturer in Kanpur University. He is a sociologist and takes keen interest in hidden aspects of human behaviour and works in areas of aging and dying. An avid reader and lover of transcendental music and has a passion for photography.

THE best thing about the Indian culture is that it offers variety that spice up the life. Banaras (officially known as Varanasi) is one such place that reflects the spirituality of Indian culture and diversities of the country. For devout Hindus, Banaras is Kashi – the city of light. Being the oldest living city in the world and because of its antiquity and religious meanings attached to it, life in Banaras is multi-facet one and there are numous aspects of the city that can be spoken of. All religious roads in India lead to Varanasi. Hindus, Buddhists, Jains have throughout the centuries been visiting it, to offer worship or in search of learning. Varanasi's prominence as a religious city is unrivalled in India. Besides being a pilgrim centre, it is also a centre of learning, fine arts, music, crafts and culinary styles which have perhaps no comparison else where. Varanasi offers a kind of mystical ambience, an amalgam of past and present and mix of myth and reality that is hard to forget. Varanasi is also known world over for certain special items. These are Banarasi sarees, Banarasi paan and Banarasi sweets. In addition, the style of leaving of Banarasi is so distinctive as to put him in a class apart.

Banarasis, by nature, are known to be relaxed and laid back, dwelling complacently and joyfully. At

a first glance a Banarasi may seem to be wild, eccentric, untraditional and unaccountable. However they believe in a philosophy of pleasure moulded to the truth of social life that gives them a sense of freedom and contentment. Swaying lazily around the ghats, temples, and other older parts of Banaras, this older attitude still seems to prevail. Even the breeze from the Ganga slows down as it descends upon the holy city and its wake bequeaths a



calm over its residents. A Banarasi is always in the mood of Masti, and so are the bulls in the city. Both of them seem to walk alike with care-less unhurried steps, unbothered of anything or anyone. Though the city suffers from the chaos and ills of a mismanaged and unplanned urban area, one can still feel its vibrations and the sacred essence that keeps it lively and charming. Walking around main Ghat area, the richness of this variety is presented in its fullest. There is a whole universe here, living in a bubble that thrives in its unique

identity. A fusion of cows, beggars, devotees, Internet cafes, firangs, cow dung, religious texts, sadhus, and stray dogs blends together harmoniously.

Life and culture in Banaras has developed all along the banks of the holy river Ganga. The crescent shaped Ganga looks beautiful and dramatic, and so does the riverfront. The Ghats at the riverfront have their own story and their own architecture. Picturesqueness of

these Ghats is breathtaking. The very heterogeneousness of buildings, temples and trees make the canvass complete and filled with indescribable charm of colour in forms of people devoutly taking holy dip in the river, magical melody of bells coming out of temples and Pandas squatting under the leafy umbrellas

officiating rituals. People access the Ghat and the river through lanes, called as galis, which is one of the intriguing aspects of the city. The web of lanes and sub-lanes running in almost parallel layers across the city make Banaras more distinct by making its antiquity apparent. Not only these winding lanes change their mood and aura along with the time of day but sight and smell of one lane vary from the other. The lanes have a lively festive feel and brisk business takes place in lanes narrow as these be. Away from the mundane chaos

of day to day life, there are lots to relish and celebrate – in the variety of foods and cuisines available in these. One can start the morning with hot kachori-sabji along with fresh and juicy jalebis. Many sweets and chat shops can further keep one busy during the day. Evening can be relished with Lassi or Thandai with an intoxicating option of Bhang. The life vibrating inside these mystical lanes takes one back to the yester years of past. Lanes, though



narrow, are all accommodating. Along with passer bys, gossipers, people eating out or busy in buying and selling, there is also space for bulls and dogs having siesta or even for a death procession. Banaras can be termed as the city of festivals as they are celebrated all over the year. Some of them have distinctive charms and unique features of their own. Among all the festivals celebrated in the city, Durga Pooja is one that is celebrated on a grand scale and full zest. However Durga Pooja in Banaras is not the only happening of the season. Along with it, goes the celebration of Navaratri and Ram Lila. These are the greatest attraction of Banaras and are celebrated with highest amount of religious fervent, dedication and zeal. Coinciding with the Durga Pooja celebration, Ram Lila of Banaras is yet another charming and significant celebration which too is organized in different parts of the city and presented by the local citizens in a purely local fashion. Though the Ram Lila is celebrated all over the city, the most famous one is Ram Lila of Ram Nagar which attracts

a large number of audience. Two most significant events of Ram Lila are Nakkataiya (when Laxman cuts the nose of Ravana's sister) and Bharat Milap (the union of the four brothers after the victory over Lanka). Among the Nakkataiyas in Banaras, the most prominent one is the Chetganj Nakkataiya which has a mile long procession of Lags (tableau based on tricky mechanical devices) and persons wearing highly decorated masks of Kali and Durga presenting sword fights. Bharat Milap staged in Nati Imli is a rare occasion to visit. Thousands of people gather to witness this grand festival of Banaras. Such wonderful shows are definitely the pride of Banaras.

Pooja in Banaras is celebrated with strong fervor with Ma Durga's idols in hundreds of Pandals. Though for ten days, the city seems to standstill because of traffic chaos and crowd moving to visit these Pandals, yet people accept it very cheerfully and enjoy their time from morning to late night. Pandals are illuminated not only with excellent decoration but also with fine work of craftsmanship. Many times there are artisans from West Bengal who help in decorating the Pandals in unique traditional way. Most of the Pandals follow a theme. Apart from the traditional idols made from mud, there are idols which are made of pearls, cardamom, Rudrakshas, jewels, dry fruits or even matcsticks.

A special mention has to be made of Bengali community in the city who not only with Pooja Celebration but also with other cultural activities make their presence felt. As a matter of fact, the community has merged so well with the local people and culture that at a first glance it is hard to single them out as a different entity. Pandals of Bengali community have more cultural touch and religious serenity followed by elaborated rituals of their own way. The city has numbers of organizations, clubs and associations formed by the Bengali community. Out of these, two social organizations (Bharat Sewa Sangh



and Ramakrishna Mission) follow Vedic rituals whereas all other follow Baroyaari Pujo. The ritual starts on the evening of Mahasashti with Kolabou Pujo followed by Nabopatrika Pujo and Devi Sthapan on Mahasaptami. Kumari Pujo is done on the day of Mahaastami. On Mahadashmi, Visarjan of Ma Durga is performed ritualistically which is followed by Sindoordaan. When the immersion of idol of Ma Durga is finally done, it is time to visit relatives and friends to wish them Shubho Bijoya and to take the blessings of the elders. Each day, Pooshpanjali is offered to Ma Durga in morning time. There is daily Bhog in all these Pandals which well attended. During the days of Pooja, one can see Bengali people in colourful new clothings and with a zestful gleam in their eyes visiting Pandals from morning to night. Some Pooja Pandal also arrange cultural activities, like Jatra, drawing competition, etc. After Dashmi many Bengali clubs organize Bijoya Sammelan, an occasion of get together and cultural programmes. Even after the culmination of Pooja celebration, the people of the city would still be intoxicated with festivity that takes few days to cool down to give space to yet other coming festivals.



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Rajashree Jena

Rajashree Jena: She loves to live in wonderland, adores nature and regularly goes for long walks in Moscow parks. Loves good food, light wine and Italian movies. Her current favourite movie – Cinema Paradiso.

Kumar Purnima – Women's day in Orissa

Puja or Dussera always brings back memories of lengthy periods of festivities, clear sky and see through water beds on the river and ponds and of course, variety of good food.

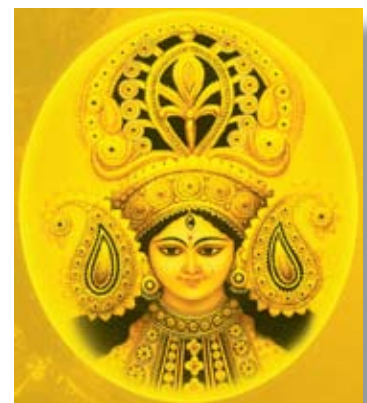
Though in my native state Puja is celebrated with lot of pump and ceremony (the pump part used to be lesser scale 20 years before). During the month long Puja holidays, there is one special that which is my favourite. This comes exactly five days after "Dashami" which is Aswin Purnima. In Orissa, the Aswin Purnima is called "Kumar Purnima" which is celebrated by the young girls. This is the full moon day in the month of Aswin as per the lunar calendar and usually falls during September - October as per the Julian calendar. Aswin Purnima (full moon day) is called Kumar Purnima as on this day Lord Shiva and Parvati's son Kumar (Kartikey) was born. He is considered as the most handsome God. Young girls wish for a husband as handsome as Kartikey and celebrate this day. Oddly enough they do not worship Lord Kartikey on this day rather there are rituals for Sun & Moon.

In the early morning girls wear new dresses after purification bath and worship sun with morning offerings. The main ingredient of this offering is liya/ Khai which is fried rice grains along with fruits. Though out the day they play cards without fear as they know there will be no reprimand for playing cards. Prior to this day, girls in villages make clay statues of Sun, Moon and Lord Kartikey and carry them from door to door in the evening singing folk songs showing off their statues and having animated discussion about whose one is the best.

In the evening, girls get together near the pond or river side just when the full moon is still on the horizon. This time they make offering to the Moon and wish for a husband as handsome as Moon. What happened to Kartikey/ Kumar I wonder! They search for snails

and oysters in the river banks. The collected treasure is later thrown to the roofs and they sing and wish for the well bring of their brother (mind you not husband). The specific for any Indian festival is the particular type of food served only on that day. Kumar Purnima is famous for Ukhuda (rice muesli with fruit pieces – for the generation next's understanding) and Manda Pitha (which is rice pastries with coconut, cottage cheese and sweet stuffing). Then the whole evening passes away singing and dancing and also praying.

Many a times people in this part of the world ask us do you have women's day in India? No...but wait! Do we not have women's day? Of course we do not have one but many. Kumar Purnima is just one of the few "women's days" in Indian festival calendar. More about the other women's days later may be in the next Aaratrika. Well, Dussera is all about singing the Glory of a Woman - don't you think so?





A Trip Down Memory Lane

Prita Banerjee

A 3rd year medical student in the University of Liverpool, UK. Having spent her childhood in Moscow Prita has fond memories of this city where she was known as 'choti si asha' and a Kuchipudi dancer. She continues to be passionate about dancing, singing & works out regularly. Favourite food includes anything and everything my mummy and dad's biriyani.

As I sit here tapping on my keyboard on a yet another rainy October afternoon in England, wondering what thoughts I can conjure on the title of Durga Puja, I try to reflect on what these words actually mean to me. Going back a few years to a city just a plane ride away from where I'm sitting, members of the grown up world had often explained to me the religious and historic implications of this celebration, but somehow my pre pubertal mind had made its own interpretation of this festivity. Dancing, singing, acting; that was my Durga Puja and at the time no one could change that. Although the celebration lasted 5 days for the rest of the world, to me it could last a lifetime.

With preparation beginning a few months beforehand, it meant we had plenty of excuse to drift our minds away from any sort of academic or potentially academic work. 'So this year what are we all doing?' The question which was always followed by a list of cultural activities; from Bengali dance dramas, to group songs, to solo classical performances, frankly I had put my hand up for everything. However enthusiasm wasn't enough, it was followed by months of hard work and the very important 'rehearsals'! 'After school' rehearsals where a great joy for all us little ones and it always meant that that silly homework could wait a few more hours, while we danced, acted in absolute merriment. Time flew by though

and before we knew it, those much awaited five days were here. As much as we wanted to, the mornings had to be spent at school where the academic atmosphere was a sharp contrast to where all our Mums were, where I was going to be in a few hours giving the performance of a lifetime, but to my disgust no one here at school seem to care. As the hours slowly drift by and we finally landed ourselves at the puja mandap, the excitement of not just myself, but all my fellow participants/friends was almost tangible. A quick bite to eat and then a last prayer to Durga ma, for making sure that all goes well tonight; that I don't fall off the stage or forget that crucial step that I had practiced extensively in the bathroom, when everyone thought I was merely having one of those long girly showers, or do anything that would cause me to curl up in embarrassment never to be able to face the world again! But Ma Durga knew not to let our honest little selves down.

After an intensive make up and dress routine, where our mummies tucked us into those ever so grown up saris making sure that the ten inch safety pin, which was the fine line between perfection and shame was a secret kept quiet between us. Then a quick pat on the bum and off we went onto the stage that promised us all a fountain of applause and appreciation from people far and wide. As we danced our tiny little feet off we made sure

that the effort put in by everyone, starting from our parents who were a constant source of encouragement, to the teachers who taught us perfection, to the enthusiasm that we had stirred up within, were all paid an honest tribute.

In return the stage solemnly kept its promise. A promise which I hope continues to encourage many young talents in Moscow to come forward and perform. So that one day when they're bored on a rainy afternoon in some corner of the world, they too can have similar fond memories to look back on.





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Coffee with...

Igor Labunets

Igor Labunets, director of Madhura Theatre Group was born in Ukraine. He took keen interest in Vedic spirituality hence the idea to form a theatre focusing on oriental themes was created with his wife Yulia & daughter Ksusha. In 2000, he was given the name Jagatpati by Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj.

His favourite programme from his theatre list, Shiva & Sati, was the first play that Madhura did using mime, dance and "*plastika*". Shiva was depicted by his wife and Sati by daughter.

When he was younger, he loved watching Indian movies and listening to music and song and there

started his fondness for all things Indian.

He enjoys *gajar-ka-halwa*, *koftas* and *sabjis*.

Although never having visited India, he dreams of seeing Jagannathpur & Mayapur and later in life to buy a small home there and lead a spiritual life.

His greatest hope is that Madhura, which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary next year, will continue to thrive and expand and that one day he will see his group receive international recognition.



JAI MATA DI



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to bless all of you with health,
happiness, harmony, love & affection

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Corrine Godat

On her recent trip to India, we asked her a few questions and these are some of her heart warming answers:

Of Indian cities - Jaipur and Jaisalmer in the Thar desert. The pulsating beauty in everything the locals did was what touched her most. She would spend long hours just watching the elegant way they walked as if they were floating on air with their bejeweled skirts just skimming the ground.

Of her Indian food – Nothing like sweet, ginger tea to appease after a spicy Indian fare. Her motto – never eat hot curries just before a concert otherwise the person next to you will be listening to the symphonic music coming from your tummy instead of the stage!

Of Indian Music – Corrine understands why Indians start their day with the Gayatri Mantra. The energy it brings at dawn sees a person through until he goes to rest at night.

Of Indian Painting – 18th Century Marwar artists like Shihab ud-Din, Bhatti natha and Manno top her list - the strikingly individualistic style of the region of Rajasthan that go back centuries, specifically that of the Rathor clan, is what attracted her most.

As for arts in Russia, the Old Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, which house Corrine's favourites like Serov, Levitan, Golovin, and Repin are amongst her most preferred artists.

You must have already noticed that this year's edition of Aaratrika is peppered with pictures of vibrant paintings thanks to the talents of the very whimsical and accomplished Corrine Godat. Corrine is born on French soil but is as international as they come with her love of travel to the far corners of the globe and her fondness for its people.

Corrine studied at the Martenot School of Arts in Paris and founded and ran an art school in the south of France for 15 years. A choice to be next to her family made her move to Bois d'Arcy although she loved the Mediterranean region with all its lush landscapes and riot of colours that fed her personal vision with the help of a palette knife. Corrine currently runs a school and an atelier in a gorgeous manor house which speaks of old world charm with open fire places, crimson coloured rugs and treasures she and her family picked up during their voyages. She has exhibited extensively in group and solo vernisages in Paris and in the United States. In 2001, she was awarded the prestigious Paul Helleu prize.





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Coffee with...



Dr. Irina Prokofieva

She has been teaching Bengali language and songs in Moscow for long! Yes it is none other than Dr. Irina Prokofieva from MGIMO – The Moscow State Institute of International Affairs where the future diplomats of Russia are born.

Dr. Prokofieva is fluent in Bengali, Hindi, English and French.

This year is the 30th anniversary of Bangla Basha teaching for Dr. Prokofieva. Hence Aaratrika decided to ask a few questions to know a bit more about her.

As a student:

She graduated from Moscow State University in 1975. She fondly remembers Dr. Alekseeva - her very first teacher of Bengali. Her favourite is however Prof. Purobi Roy and Irina is nostalgic about the time that she spent with her. Prof. Roy visits Moscow from time to time to coach Irina's current students.

City of Joy:

Dr. Prokofieva refers to India as the love of her life and says she experienced no culture shock on her first visit to Kolkata in 1974. In fact she feels more at home in Kolkata than in Moscow!

She never gets tired of wandering in College Street and says that in no

other street of the world has she seen such a variety and quantity of books and perpetually regrets being limited to the 20 kg luggage allowance.

Dr. Prokofieva's evenings in the *City of Joy* usually means meeting friends who are mostly people involved in arts. She fondly remembers the time that she spent with Goutam Ghose, Sandeep Ray, Buddhadev Dasgupta and Mrinal Sen.

Passions:

Bangla Bhasha, Bangla Cinema and opera

Food:

She is extremely fond of *biryani* and chicken curry. She remembers having amazing fish curries, *lichi* and *jam* in Kolkata.

Bangla Cinema:

Dr. Prokofieva has a great collection of Bengali movies and she shares them all the time with her students. Her favourites are Ritik Ghatak's *Meghe Daka Tara* and *Nagorik*. She is an ardent fan of Ray and can repeatedly watch *Apu's Trilogy*, *Charulata*, *Aranyer Din Ratri*. Dr. Prokofieva always makes it a point to show her students Mrinal Sen's *Akaler Sandhane* which she mentions as a remarkable film. *Uttora* by Buddhadev Dasgupta touched her heart as well.

Music:

If Irina is working at home, it's inevitable that Ravi Shankar's music would be playing on her music system. She is fond of Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Hemanta Mukhopadhyay. She can endlessly listen to Hemanta's *Runner Runner*. Anjan Dutta's *244139* is a favourite with her students probably because the young minds can relate to the lyrics and music easily. The first song however taught to the Bengali class in MGIMO is always Salil Chowdhury's *dhitang dhitang bole*.

Dr. Irina Prokofieva wishes you all a very happy puja!

Legends \ Facts Durga Puja

- 1606 - first recorded puja in West Bengal. Celebrated by Bhabananda, the ancestor of Maharaja Krishnachandra of Nadia

- 1610- the oldest Puja in the city of Calcutta was supposed to be arranged by the family of Sabarana Chaudhury of Barisha.

- 1761 - first Barowari puja in Gup-tipara, Hoogli.

- 1829 - Lord Bentinck was present in a Durga Puja in the house of Gopimohan Dev in north Calcutta. Inviting British rulers in Durga Puja started from the time of Raja Nabakrishna Dev.

- "Barowari" puja started in the city from 1860. In 1924 the name changed to "sarbojonin". Even today some organizers use the term "barowari".

- 1939 - Simla Bayam Samiti Puja. Subhaschandra Bose unveiled a 21-foot Durga.

- In the late 60's Durga images were flown overseas and Puja was celebrated.



Mythological facts:

*Which God gave what weapon to Devi Durga to destroy Ravana:

- Vishnu - *chakra* (discus)
- Siva - *trishul* (trident)
- Varun - *shankha* (conchshell)
- Agni - flaming dart
- Vayu - *dhanuk* (bow)
- Surya - *tunir ebong teer*

(quiver and arrow)

- Yama - iron rod
- Indra - *bajro* (thunderbolt)
- Himalayas - Lion

* Durga has ten hands and Ravana has ten heads

* Carrier:

- Durga - Lion
- Kartick - Peacock
- Ganesh - Mouse
- Swaraswati - Duck
- Lakshmi - Owl
- Mahisasur - Buffalo

ANSWERS :

Across :

- 1.BUDDHAPURNIMA
7.TIL 8.LOHRI 9.RAKHI 11.HAJ
12.EIDEE 14.ONAM 16.XMAS
19.SANTA 21.MODAK 22.RANGOLI
23.MAGHREB

Down :

- 1.BETHLEHEM 2.DIWALI 3.RATH
YATRA 4.IFTAR 5.RAMLILA
6.DURGA 10.KOLAM 13.EASTER
15.NAVROZE 17.ONAM 18.GAYA
20.HOLI

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My PEE Steff

*She loves animals and is an active member of WSPA. She takes keen interest in cinema and tries to get hold of the latest movies as soon as possible. Her favourite Bengali food is **jhinge-posto**.*

Steff was the most wonderful dog I ever had. He was a Dalmatian, with perfectly printed black spots. His gait was majestic and he leaped like a Cheetah. Being a hunting dog by breed, he was always alert and spirited.

After watching "101 Dalmatians" my sons wanted to have one as a pet. They had already selected a name for him. They named him, "Steff"; after their favorite hotdog counter, in front of 'Moscvu Univermag'.

I still remember the day we brought him home. He was just a few weeks old. The very first night I made him sleep with me so that, he feels secured and cozy. Very soon he became the darling of our house. Everybody loved him.

On our first visit to the veterinary doctor, we were cautioned that, while Steff would be very friendly, he is also likely to be very hyperactive, as all Dalmatians are. We said we will manage that.

When little Steff was teething we gave him some wooden blocks and teethers to chew. Soon we found that he was more interested in the bed and sofa stands. Steff was very fond of food. Birthdays at our place meant a spe-

cial piece of cake and a cup of vanilla ice-cream for him. He was crazy for chocolates and Sandesh. In spite of all this, with regular 3 Km. walk every day, he stayed trim and agile.

When Steff was five months old, our vet advised us to get him trained by a professional dog trainer. Our neighbor's Labrador had one. We engaged the same trainer, the next day. This decision was not a very favorable one for my sons; however, we decided to give it a try. Next day the trainer handed me a leaflet consisting of all the commands and said that, by the end of the month Steff would be able to relate to all of them with ease. First two days Steff, like an obedient boy, followed the trainer to the adjoining park; but the third day onwards, the moment the doorbell rang, he ran under the low cot. All our coaxing and bribing to get him out were in vain. After a few more repeated visits the trainer gave up. We just could not fathom why Steff rejected the trainer. We contained ourselves with the thought that probably the training was too harsh for him. At home we taught him a few simple tricks like "fetch" and "jump" but he pretended not to understand the words "Stop" and "No".

Around this time my mother came to us in Pune. An animal lover herself, she expected our dog to be of reasonable discipline. She got a shock of her life when the 35Kg. dog greeted her with a clean leap on her frail shoulders. Anyway by the time she was rescued from his gleeful clutch, he had calmed down and settled on the floor. Steff loved people. This was his way of expressing joy to us. As dinnertime approached, I started becoming a bit apprehensive about his begging habits. In the beginning he was quietly sitting under the table but the moment the packet of Sandesh arrived, he lost all his restraints and he got up and started pawing my son Sujoy. Sujoy pretended not to see him. To draw attention further, Steff stood with his paws on the table eyeing the Bengali Sandesh packet from Delhi. As luck would have it my mother understood his intentions. She got disturbed and scolded him mildly for being greedy. Steff was very hurt. He quietly sat down on the floor. Rest of the evening he spent sitting on the floor with his chin tucked between his paws looking vaguely at the wall. Later at night I and my sons hugged and praised him for being a good boy.

Next day, early morning, we heard a scream coming from mother's room. Fearing some kind of an accident we all rushed to her room. We shall never forget what we saw. We found Steff standing next to mother's bed and his half chewed soggy dog bone nicely placed on mother's palm. Steff was happily wagging his tail. He probably wanted to say "I don't mind sharing my bone with you". It was a hilarious sight and we could not suppress our laugh longer. We all, including my mother burst out laughing.

Next two months that my mother stayed with us, she accepted all his mischief and high spirit with great affection.

We lost Steff this February 17th; he was ten. He was a great companion and a free soul. He is difficult to forget. I remember him every day. This is only one of the many incidents of the ten years of Steff with us.

I want you little readers to know that, animal can be one of your best friends. You love them a little and they will love you many times more for ever.

Nupur Mukherjee





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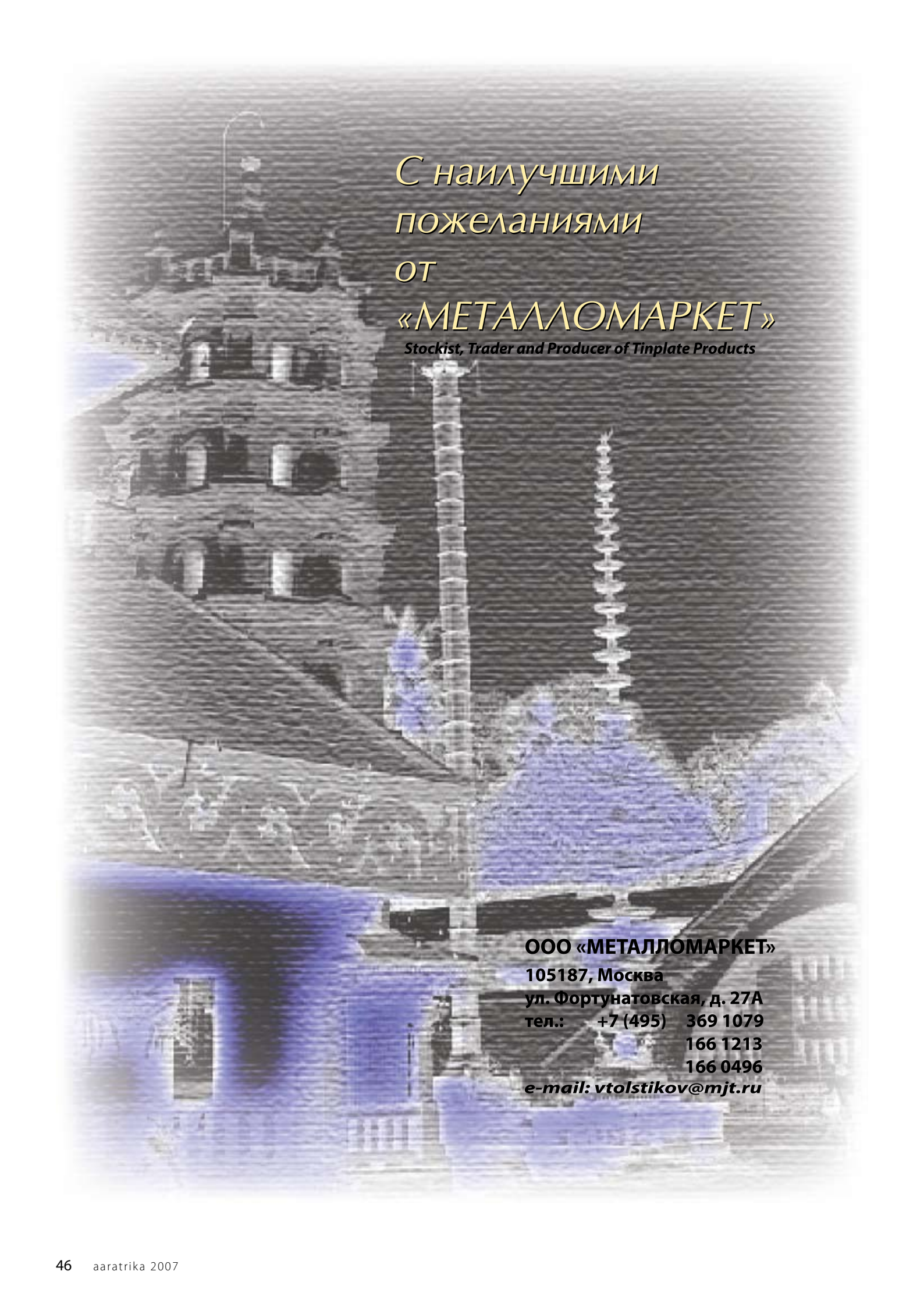
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Shanti Bhattacharya Tauvy

Culture Surprise

(the fore runner to shock!)

These little observations and anecdotes speak for themselves

Shanti is a Singaporean married to a Frenchman and is bringing up a son in a multicultural environment. She loves the fine arts scene and will go to anything from a one-man photography exhibition to a full blown Bolshoi production. She is a huge fan of all Asian cuisine but top of the list has to be *Kochu shak* and *ilish mach bhaza*!

How do I count thee – let me count the ways ...

When I was growing up in Singapore, every time we had to count out numbers on our fingers, we'd start with the index finger to signify 1. 2 is the middle finger and so on until you reached four. At five, instead of holding all fingers and thumb out, we join all our finger tips together somewhat making the hand look like a little bird.

When I arrived in France, I had to learn all over again how to count with my fingers for here, they start with their thumb for 1 and index for 2 and so on until the whole hand is opened out. All very well except that just try holding out three fingers and the thumb and leaving the little pinkie down. Quite a feat I assure you if you haven't tried it already.

Now the Russian have yet another way of counting. Instead of starting out with a clenched fist, they actually start with an open hand with all fingers stretched out. Then, with the index finger of the other hand, they start closing the pinkie for 1, ring finger for 2 and so on and so forth until all the fingers are closed and you have a fist for 5!

In India, you have your own peculiar way of counting too. Each phalange represents a number so you get to pack in 20 into just one hand! Talk about efficiency!

Time

When requesting for a moment of waiting time, back home in Singapore, we would just say "Give

me a minute". Somehow, my Indian friends need a baffling 2 minutes!

And Russians – Well when I first arrived here and heard them ask me for "shas" I immediately mistook it to mean "chas" – an hour!

Fashion

a) Upon arriving in Moscow - many years ago - it always amazed me to see Russian ladies in the park and zoo in the afternoons had packed in so much into their Saturday schedule that they would have had no time to go home and change before a gala dinner, hence their afternoon walks would be in what the rest of the world would call evening finery. I soon learnt that their next port of call was indeed home and that this desire to be over dressed was just their way of being desirable.

b) Picture this – Your anorexic, 6-footer neighbour, clad in the tightest jeans and bosom-heaving-barely-there top, struts out in her 6 inch stilettos and wearing night time make up to kill. She grabs her black designer sling bag which is too small to carry her huge book that she'd have to read in the metro so what does she do? Stuff the book, along with pair of home slippers and a clothes hanger (for the lady in the cloak room to hang up her gorgeous black fur coat in) into a well battered plastic bag that has seen better days! This is probably the one image of Russians that I will never understand. - to be dressed to perfection and to upset the harmony by carrying the most unbecoming plastic bag. Can someone tell them the tote has been invented?



Food, Drink and Cigarette

Ice cream eating in the midst of freezing sub zero degree temperatures. Newly arriving in Moscow, I see ice cream devushkas set up stand in the middle of winter along the sidewalks and a queue forming in front of it. I gathered they did this because overheads were minimal and customers feel they're already so cold outside, why not just even it out.

Buying water in this city means facing more options than where to send your son to college! You need fizzy water or still water? If fizzy, how many bubbles per cubic ml do you need? A little, a lot or j-u-s-t right?!

I've never seen a population more needing to quench a thirst than the average Moscovite as they walk the streets. And its not just alcohol – anything from Mors to Russikii Standard in cans will do. And since the tiny packs of apple juice need only two chugs of the straw before its finished and the 1 liter ones are way too much to finish – they've come up with a medium sized box! Once again – not too big, not too small, j-u-s-t right.

Another common scene limited to just Russia are the cigarette puffing group of co workers huddled against the winter chill as if hurrying to meet a dead line – to get to the end of the filter.

Cries of surprise

Back home, when hurt, we'd cry out "ow"
When I arrived in France, I had to tell my reflexes to cry "Aie"
Now in Russia, I've had to retrain them to scream "Oiy"

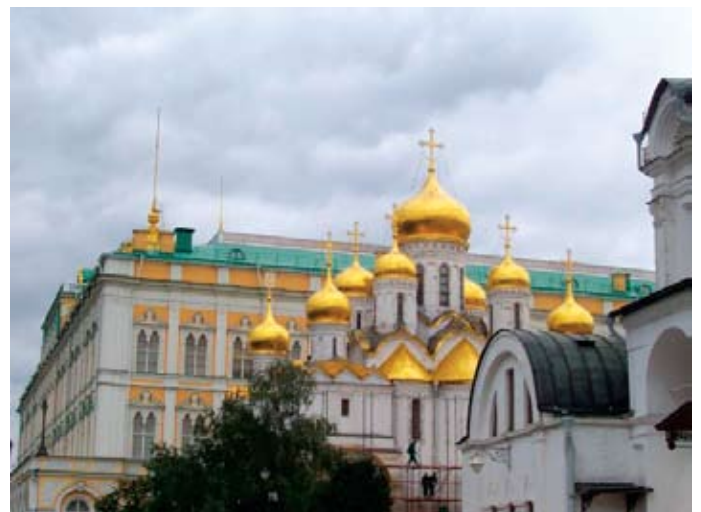
Greetings

Have you ever noticed how a Russian never replies "I am well" to your polite query of "How are you?"? It's always an understated "I am normal" as if anything happier than normal would mean attracting the evil eye!

When I first arrived in France, I had to put aside my fear of proximity and let myself be kissed on both cheeks by sometimes, total strangers. Arriving in Russia, I have to subject myself to be kissed on only one cheek. But what about a Russian who is familiar with French protocol? How should we establish how many kisses is required because the Russian would feel he should make the French comfortable by kissing twice and the French would feel he has to accommodate the Russian since he is on Russian soil!

Applause

Never have I seen more applause and praise singing as I have seen at the end of any concert – good or not-so-good – with the whole theatre resonating 'BRAVO' and 100 dollar bouquets handed out to the artists. And what about when the plane finally lands at the destination city of arrival? OK, granted there are no flowers being offered to the pilot but I assure you, I've heard the odd BRAVO shouted out in the cabins. Russians take very little for granted and are ready to give boisterous credit where it's due.





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Indians overseas



Partha Sarathy Banerjee

Dr Partha Sarathy Banerjee is a joint neurosurgical research fellow at University of Leicester Medical School and Christchurch College, University of Oxford. He is also an assistant lecturer in Neuroscience & Neurology at these institutions. He actively works with charity organisations focusing on children's healthcare & welfare. His favourites in reading include Wilde, Orwell & Solzhenitsyn. Partha is passionate about dramatics & fondly remembers the parts he got to play in various Moscow Durga Puja plays. He enjoys traditional Bengali food and likes to have a go at cooking whenever he can.

Having spent a substantial part of my life exploring this world due to my Father's expatriate status, it has almost given me an opportunity to sample a variety of cultures across the globe through out my life. Beautiful languages, a plethora of cultures, social dynamics within races have almost been a way of life for me. During many such deliciously memorable encounters, the one sub-culture that has been in prominence and of great influence to me personally has been my fellow Indians that live abroad.

With a great efflux of the Indian population to almost all corners of the globe due to a multitude of reasons such as skilled migrants to an expatriate community, we have succeeded in building a home away from home. The beauty of our people to bring a great sense of national pride, heritage and a wealth of cultural diversity to almost anywhere on the planet is both admirable and a quality that has turned us into very likeable individuals. Most of all, we have almost restored the world's faith in keeping up with traditions that pre-date many of the other contemporary civilisations. Our presence on the world stage is now immensely prominent. Examples of these lie in an increased global recognition of Indian arts and cinema right on to traditional Indian cuisine being awarded exclusive gastronomic accolades such as Michelin stars. Much of the credit for such achievements lie with those who have ventured outside of our boundaries to pastures new and helped spread the word, that we are a bit more than a nation of software engineers and call centre workers.

The recipe of what makes us truly a great race lies deep within a soulful

mix of unquestionable faith, elaborate customs, a gifted mind and a whole lot of spices in our cooking. Keeping traditions and customs alive immaterial of where you are, is almost a lifestyle for us. Even for those who are deeply sceptic of religious traditionalism in a modern world, it somehow has felt right to keep with it. The ostentatious methods of holding on to our spiritual identity are perhaps what unite us in a land where difference is one of the few things people have in common. With an increased global interest and public support, we have managed to showcase some of the vibrancy of our race in our current somewhat lacklustre and chronically melancholic surroundings. Big Indian festivals such as Durga Puja, Diwali and Holi have become familiar words in foreign languages. Growing overseas communities of Indians from Moscow to Los Angeles are now working harder than ever to promote a true sense of India outside India.

Just like most great things about life that are genuinely infectious, our culture has started to rub off even on those who were born and bred on foreign soils. Let us not forget what Robert Owen famously quoted that "man is the creature of circumstances" and for some of us who have not had the fortune of truly experiencing what we are all about, the efforts of our fellow countrymen abroad has at least given them some food for thought that extends far beyond the intricacies of an ipod. Finding our identities in today's existence can sometimes be a touch more tricky than one cares to admit, especially with such great chunks of populations inhabiting so far and wide. Our unflagging resolve to help everyone fathom the depths of what makes us "us", can only be described as

a selfless noble act, a quality that scholars have incessantly praised us through centuries for.

The Mexican writer and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz once pondered that "every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility of life", but thankfully, due to the efforts of our fellow Indians overseas, we are continuing to thrive and learn, more about ourselves as a culture and a race.



Wishing all the indians
a happy dushera & Diwali

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Chris Samuel

is the lead guitarist for Moksha, the Indian Rock Band (besides being the guitarist in A.R Rehman's group).

Moksha is the only Asian band to be featured on an Iron Maiden tribute album, which was released by Energie Records, a UK based recording company.

Moksha also featured on a Tribute album to the Metal Gods 'Metallica'.

Rock in India... or Music in India...

Rock music in India never really surfaced before it sank again. The reason for this was that bands were not able to establish their own identities by playing originals. It started plummeting further when Hindi pop music took the stage with women baring themselves. Indian record companies created hype pro-moting them.

Moksha, my band has always concentrated on the International scene rather than on the national level. This unconsciously helped the band create a huge fan following in India. Bands like Orange Street, Thermal and a Quarter have played only originals and have also made it quite big on the national and international level and gig often.

The prime music channels in India, like MTV, Channel V, Zee music and B4U

play film music and Hindi pop music mostly. These channels do not support local rock bands in any way and hardly play western music. Of course, now with the advent of the international music channel VH1, listeners are able to get a good dose of different music styles of the west.

Since television and radio are very effective media, people mostly listen to the music that's being fed to them. Hindi pop and film music is easily digestible to a majority of the public compared to rock, jazz, country or any other form of western music.

So very rarely does one get to hear a rock band on television or radio in India and if it is a local band... forget it.

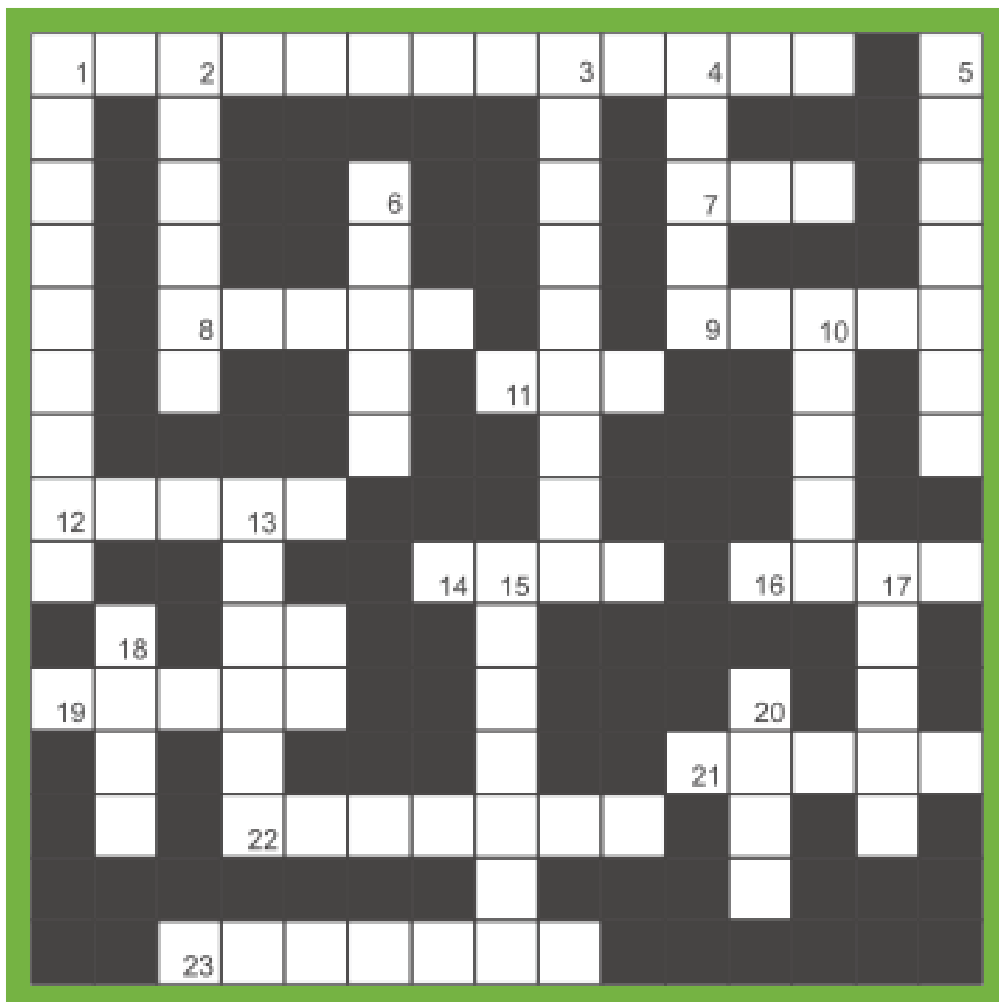
Across :

1. Most sacred day in Buddhist calendar
7. Sesame seeds
8. Festival of Punjab marking the end of winter
9. Sister ties it to the brother's wrist
11. Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca
12. Money given to children on Eid to buy toys and sweets
14. Harvest festival of Kerala
16. 25th December
19. Bearded old men in red dress bearing gifts
21. Special sweets made during Ganesh Chathurthi
22. Designs made on the floor with colored powder
23. The evening prayers of Muslims

Down :

1. The place where Jesus was born
2. The festival of lights and crackers
3. The car festival of lord Jagannath at Puri
4. The evening meal during Ramzaan
5. Episodes of Ramayana during Dusshera in North India
6. Goddess with 10 hands on a lion, worshipped in Bengal
10. Designs drawn on the floor for Pongal with rice paste
13. 3 days after Good Friday
15. Parsi festival – to celebrate the beginning of the year
17. Bihu is the festival of
18. Place where Gautama became the enlightened one-Buddha
20. Festival of colours

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Bollywood, Tollywood, Mosfilm and some Hollywood... films



Rathin Chatterjee

Russian movies? There are so many that I am fond of like *The Cranes are Flying* where Batalov was simply wonderful. My favourite actress is Faina Ranetskaya and actor Mikhail Zharov. In Bollywood I like some of Amitabh movies like *Sholay* and appreciate acting of Meena Kumari and Waheeda Rehman. I did see quite a lot of old Bengali movies and I love the ones like *Deep Jele Jai* and *Nayak*. My favourites include Uttam Kumar, Suchitra Sen, Modhobi Mukherjee and Sharmila Tagore.



Sumana Mukherjee

Well, Uttam-Suchitra and Amitabh movies are my all-time favourite. I like Rekha, she was fabulous in *Khoon Bhari Mang*. I am fond of Aishwarya Rai. I liked the movie *Titanic* and along with my daughter I do watch Harry Potter. I have not watched any Russian movies.

Pradyot Mukherjee

I like Shekhar Kapoor and Maniratnam films. I enjoyed *Roza* and *Masoom*. My favourite actress would be Sridevi. Oh yes, indeed I am fond of Big B. How can I say which is my favourite Amitabh film? There are so many. Probably *Agnipath* was one of his best. No, have not watched any Russian movies. I am fond of comedies and romantic movies. Remember Uttam Kumar's *Harano Sur*?



Shankar Mukherjee

I along with Nupur watch quite a lot of BBC Prime. We enjoy *As Life Goes By*, *Family* and *Keeping Up Appearance*. I also enjoy movies of Tom Hanks, Nicolas Cage and Michael Douglas. Did you watch Douglas's recent *The Sentinel*? It's pretty decent. I love thrillers. Indeed I do watch Bengali and Hindi movies as often as possible.



Nupur Mukherjee

I like almost all of Tapan Sinha's movies and some of Satyajit Ray's work. I enjoyed *Sonar Kella*, *Apanjan* and *Jana Aranya*. Infact *Abar Arannye* of Gautam Ghose was also a pleasure to watch. I am fond of Aparna Sen both as a director like in *36, Chowringhee Lane* and *Mr & Mrs Iyer* and as an actress. Her daughter Konkona is a talented actress as well. I enjoy some of Rituporno movies like *Bariwali* and *Utsav*. Did you watch the rather recent *Life in a Metro* and *Corporate*? Good movies! I like Preity Zinta, Kajal and Shabana Azmi. Amir Khan, Akshay Khanna, Boman Irani and Nasiruddin Shah are also my favourites. I feel Amitabh with age has matured and is doing a good job in films like *Nishabd*, *Black* and *Cheeni-Kum*. I am fond of Julia Roberts and Meryl Streep. In that old movie 'Out of Africa' she and Red Redford were charming. I would want to watch Russian movies but isn't it difficult to get translated ones?



Anup Banerjee

I quite appreciate movies by Anurag Basu. *Gangster* is a fine work of direction where a rather daring subject has been well handled. His movies have great music as well. I am also fond of Vidhu Vinod Chopra movies. I simply love *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* and think it has a message for all. Sanjay Dutt and Rani Mukherjee act well. I like almost all works of Satyajit Ray. Soumitra Chatterjee is a talented actor. *Chiriyakhana* and *Nayak* are my favourites. I don't quite watch Russian movies.



Elena Chatterjee

My favourite Bollywood actress? It has to be Rekha though I am extremely fond of Smita Patil. I enjoyed watching Rekha's *Umrao Jaan*. I do like Satyajit Ray's work, indeed *Pathar Pachali* is wonderful. I also love Banderchuk directed movies.



Purnima Banerjee

My favourite director is Hrishikesh Mukherjee. I like absolutely all his movies. I watch more of Bengali films. Appreciate Soumitra Chatterjee and Suchitra Sen's acting. In Bollywood among the young stars I think Preity Zinta is good. I am very fond of Utpal Dutt. I have not watched any Russian films.



Russiwood? Films

Dr Pradyumna Chatterjee

is extremely passionate about cinema, theatre, arts and music. A doctor by profession he is also an amateur actor and aspires to become a film director. Pradyumna is an excellent cook and apparently makes the best rabri in Moscow.



Pradyumna as Othello in VGIL

Most of us Indians living here like to watch films from India in Hindi or in South Indian languages with our favorite actors. It's a must for us to see the latest film of Shah Rukh Khan, Rajnikanth, Chiranjeevi or Mamutty to keep ourselves very updated with India. So if we get time we ask our friends in India to bring or ask for DVDs of *Chak De India*, *Shivaji* and other latest hits from India. Somehow most Russian films go out of our radars or from our plate of tastes. But recently especially in the last two years some Russian films have caused a stir in the world of Cinema which again and has lured people back to the kinosals. One of them is the film "12" or "Dvenadsat" directed by one of Russia's most internationally acclaimed directors Nikita Mikhalkov. The film won the special jury award of the "Golden Lion" in the recently concluded Venice Film Festival.

The Film bears similarity to the 60's Hollywood Classic "12 angry men" made by Sydney Lumet. It revolves around the 12 characters who as members of the jury had to decide on the fate of a checheneonok or Chechen young boy accused of killing his step father. With a very strong caste involving some of the best actors of Russian Film and Theatre playing the characters of a former scientist turned businessman (Sergei Makovetski), an old Jewish gentleman (Valentin Gaft), a stage performer (Michael Efremov), a surgeon (Sergei Gazarov) a media magnate (Yuri

Stoyanov) and Nikita Mikhalkov himself playing the role of a retired army officer and painter.

The film depicts some of the most intricate details of the human character and highlights conflicts typically associated with the Russian society. By all standards the film sets an example of excellence. Although the film revolves on the developments in a single place in the interiors of a sports classroom of a school, with very little outdoor shoots, the best technical know how were used like the synchronized filming of all the actors simultaneously. It breaks the common traditions of film making where episodes are filmed separately, rather its like theater on screen where all characters are present and involved simultaneously in the same time like on stage, and the best technologies of camera work and editing are used to depict the intensity as in theater. This is also helped by a perfect sound track, mixing the sounds of school bells, and fusions of Classical and folk Caucasian music. This again is one of Nikita Mikhalkov's unique way of film making where like in theater the actors remain present for the entire part of the film which, he had initiated way back in the year 1976 with the film "Unfinished composition for the mechanical piano".

Talking of success of a Russian film both nationally and internationally another film which made news this year is the film "Ostrov" or the "Island" directed by Pavel Lungin. The film was screened at the closing ceremony of the Venice Film festival last year and won



six awards in the National Film awards or the Golden Eagle.

The film revolves round the character of Father Anatoly played by Peter Momonov. Anatoly's transformation of a sailor serving in the float during World War II to a hermit in a monastery is the main essence of the film. Spirituality is definitely the theme of the film but it has little to do with religion. Rather its about salvation of a person looking to amend his previous grieves, serving people in a monastery in a far off island surrounded by sea in the north of Russia. Despite its very serious theme of spiritualism the film generated very good revenues and probably for the first time in its history the Russian Orthodox church came to support a film! Apart from the theme, Andrey Zegalov the operator has captured beautifully the barren natural beauty of the Northern Russia and the monastery.



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Elki-Palki

Valya can never understand the concept of *chapati* and *alu-ki-sabzi* saying *alu* can only be *garnir k bvtoromy* literally meaning second in the list to be served after soup along with meat. Our favourite *dal-chawal* is equally bizarre for her.

Most of our pickles are hot and some indeed fiery. Valya defines our mouthwatering *achars* as 'chilly with more chilies'. Over the years I have thought of a fitting reply to that and I think I have at last found it in the ultra salty Russian herring.

I never really understood why in Aeroflot that slice of black bread is nicely wrapped in a plastic pack while the white one is step-motherly left to dry!

I however do understand that a tin of *rasgullas* or *gulabjamun* can be confused by Valya for *kampot* or fruits in light syrup. After

MY friend Valya was coming over for dinner. She has a sweet tooth and I had decided to treat her to *kheer*. When served Valya peeped into the bowl asking curiously "a sto tam?" When I explained all about our milk and rice *kheer*, Valya exclaimed with an I-know-it-all-look "ahhh *kasha* sto li?" My two hour struggle which included thickening of the milk, then adding rice, nuts, raisins, sugar, cardamom and bay leaves was brutally diminished into dull breakfast porridge. I angrily denied *kheer* being analogous to *ricovaya* or rice *kasha* and reiterated to Valya the complexities involved in the preparation. But Valya shrugged and said "*kasha i v Afrike kasha*"!

A friend of mine once told me how she wanted to punch her colleague who after biting into a *kaju barfi* had expressed profound

surprise. Why bring *barfi* all the way from India when it's almost the same as the Russian *kartoshka*. My friend, an ardent *barfi* fan would rather die than accept it as the twin of *kartoshka*. What can be common between the royal *kaju barfi* and the very regular *kartoshka* made from flour, cocoa, butter and sugar?

My Valya insists in categorizing *chana*, *rajma*, *sambhar*, *dal makhani* or the delightful Bengali style *bhaja muger dal* (roasted yellow lentils) under a common umbrella *gorokh*. *Gorokh* or split lentils as Valya agrees reminds us of inexpensive soup and budget canteens. And *dal makhani* is supposed to be in the meal of maharajas!



opening a can of *rasgullas* Valya had called to clarify if the *rasgullah* is a creeper or similar to an apple tree!

I have heard hilarious stories of how my vegetarian friends with their rather impressive knowledge of botany have mistaken red caviar for a tiny red berry jam. The Russian pungent mustard often gets confused with the harmless bread spread.

Having said this, I do happily confess that hot pan-fried *blinis* with *smitana* tastes divine, I can never forget babushka Varya's lip smack-ing quince-walnut *vareniye* and would give my life to sink my teeth in an oven fresh cabbage-egg or potatoe-mushroom *pirashki* of Valya's cuisine. And indeed the list is much longer.

By Debasmitta Moulick Nair





Здесь осталось моё сердце.....

Однажды, когда мне было 10 лет, я посмотрел индийский фильм. Посмотрел и пропал. С тех самых пор я влюбился в эту страну. В этот сказочный, красочный мир! Мир индийского кино, в саму Индию. И с того самого момента меня не покидала мечта, посетить эту страну. Индия поселилась в моём сердце, завладела моей душой. Индия звала меня к себе....

И вот почти четверть века спустя моя мечта осуществилась. Я купил билет для путешествия в этот мир полный для меня загадок и тайн. Ступив на землю Индии, я почувствовал себя в совершенно другом измерении. Это было как путешествие в другую галактику, на другую планету.

С первого момента я влюбился в Дели. Шум большого города, его суета, его жизнь, мне казались таким родным и знакомым. Как будто я всю жизнь жил в этом городе. Я смотрел по сторонам и не мог насмотреться. Мне до сих пор не верилось, что я нахожусь в стране, о которой так долго мечтал.

Понравились люди. Очень добрые, мягкие и приветливые. Всюду я встречал их светлые улыбки. Многие подходили и просили сфотографироваться на память. Разве мог я отказать? Это были мои люди, это была моя страна. А вечером, когда на город опускалось покрывало ночи, я сидел на террасе и вдыхал запахи цветущих деревьев и ароматических палочек. И мне казалось, что я нахожусь в раю.

Несколько дней проведя в Дели и немного адаптировавшись к новой жизни, мы с друзьями собрались в путешествие по древней Индии. Времени было не много. А посмотреть хотелось как можно больше.

Индия - древняя страна. Мир полный загадок и тайн. И как приятно прикоснуться самому к этим тайнам, к этой древней культуре. По пути на юг страны, мы заехали в Майсур. В Майсуре меня поразила своей красотой княжеский дворец. Впервые в жизни я видел это великолепие не с экрана, и не на фотографии. Я видел это своими глазами. Прикасался к колоннам, стенам, хранившим королевские тайны. Моя разгорячённая фантазия представляла мне разнообразные яркие картинки из жизни князей. Всё это трудно передать просто словами. Это нужно пережить.

Прикасясь к древним скульптурам и фрескам, изображающим танцовщиц, душу переполняла какая-то неведомая сила. Наблюдая всю эту красоту, ты неожиданно чувствуешь, что твоё, не умеющее танцевать тело, наполняется какой-то особой пластикой, которую тебе тут же хочется выразить в движении танца. Затем мы посетили Ути, поднявшись на высоту более 2000 метров над уровнем моря. Свежий горный воздух придавал бодрости, а низко висящие облака просто обнимали. Когда мы смотрели со скалы вниз, то казалось, что весь мир лежит у твоих ног.

Путешествие по Индии подарило мне массу впечатлений. Но самое неизгладимое впечатление на меня произвёл Тадж Махал. Великолепное строение из белого мрамора. Жемчужное украшение в ожерелье достопримечательностей Индии. Я много слышал об этом удивительном чуде света. Видел массу фотографий. Но поездка в Индию будет не полной, если не увидеть своими глазами этот памятник вечной любви. Каждый, кто приехал в Индию, просто обязан увидеть Тадж Махал. Каждый камень этого белоснежного строения рассказывает историю любви великого князя к своей жене. Эта легенда будет жить вечно.

Не обошлось моё путешествие и без маленьких приключений. Однажды, находясь на промежуточной станции Виджая Вада в ожидании поезда, я решил прогуляться по окрестностям. Разглядывая витрины магазинчиков и лавочек я не заметил, как далеко ушёл от вокзала. И лишь когда на город опустились вечерние сумерки, я опомнился и понял, что не могу найти дорогу назад. Вот тут я испугался. Было немного страшно остаться без денег и документов в незнакомой стране практически не зная языка. На ломаном английском спросил у торговца сувенирами как пройти к железнодорожному вокзалу. Он жестами указал мне направление. По пути следования я попал в цыганский квартал. Люди провожали меня любопытным взглядом. Ребятишки подбегали, чтобы протянуть руку и просто сказать Hello. Было конечно очень приятно. Но страх отстать от поезда мешал думать о чём-то другом. И вот впереди неожиданно засверкали

огни железнодорожного вокзала, и я радостно устремился ему навстречу.

Мы не снимали аппараты и не жили в номерах "люкс". Мы останавливались в гостиницах среднего класса. Путешествовали в поездах не в люкс-купе. Отсутствие комфорта не пугало нас. Это доставляло остроту ощущений к всеобщим впечатлениям.

С детства увлечённый Индией, я прочитал массу книг и статей об этой удивительной стране. Меня интересовало буквально всё, что хоть косвенно касалось предмета моего увлечения. Я знал, что Индия это единственная страна в мире, где наибольшее количество миллионеров и самое большое число бедного населения. И всё же я испытал лёгкий шок, когда своими глазами увидел, как граничат богатство и нищета. Роскошный особняк соседствует с нищей хижинкой. А многие люди просто не имеют крыши на голове и вынуждены жить на улице.



Поразило большое количество нищих и попрошаек на рынках и вокзалах. Но когда мне рассказали, что многие родители сознательно калечат своих детей, тем самым, обрекая их на нищенское существование, готовя из них профессиональных попрошаек, я испытал настоящий шок. Но все эти негативы не изменили моего отношения к стране, которую я полюбил с детства.

Время, проведённое в Индии пролетело быстро. Перед поездкой я наивно думал, что вот съезжу, и душа моя успокоится. Но, как я был не прав. И уже в аэропорту города Дели, перед посадкой в самолёт, я оглянулся назад и понял. Я ЕЩЁ СЮДА ВЕРНУСЬ. Здесь осталось моя душа. Здесь осталось моё сердце....

Юрий Ласс (Германия)

Yuri Lass lives in Germany though he grew up in Russia. His loves to travel and sketches women figures from ancient Indian sculptures. He is extremely fond of Bollywood and adores Hema Malini.



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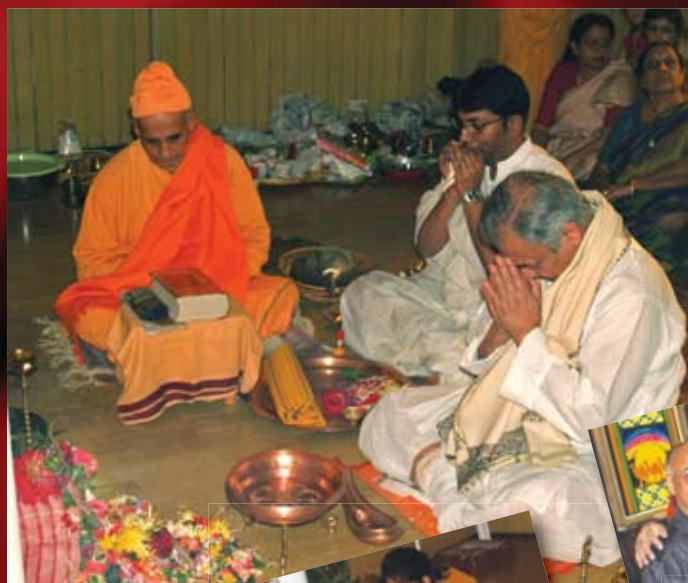


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The Moscow Durga Puja Committee would like to thank all of you for your participation and support. We look forward to seeing active new members in our team.

Warmest Sharodiya wishes to you all!

Aaratrika thanks Ayaan Ali Khan for the painting that he specially sent for our cover this year.

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Ascot International

Mrs. Padma Lochana Mahadevan – Kids club

Irina Kirilovna Smirnova – Interclub RPFU

Interclub RPFU

Mr. Naresh – Devi cafe

Restaurant Khajuraho

Restaurant Talk of the Town

Restaurant Maharaja

Restaurant Golden Buddha

Restaurant Tandoor

Serum institute of India

Shanti Bhattacharya Tauvy

ZAO Veins

Sharan Pharma

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