

AARATRIKA

MOSCOW DURGA PUJA CELEBRATIONS
1990-2008



MTM-GROUP

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Тел.: +7 495 339-18-00, +7 495 330-16-44

E-mail: info@mmk-luch.ru; plate@infomtm.ru

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From the editor...



**Debasmita
Moulick Nair**

This year Moscow's signature golden autumn is probably brighter with the gold, which we just bagged in the Olympics. We are swelling with pride. Has the gold rush just begun?

In our changing world, our puja has been changing too. Now from booking purohits online, you can also organise a puja, a dedication and even goat sacrifice sitting just about anywhere in the world. Dhaak, Dhaaki and Dhuno still abound alongwith dance contests for children and popular rock being belted at all hours. Thanks to Sansui Boogie Woogie, the hottest growth area in cultural activities seems to be dancing. Everybody dances on dashami, yes yes even some deedimas and mashimas.

I happened to be in India during Saraswati puja this year, expecting loud music blaring from speakers and the usual cultural programme in the evening. There was music but it was softer in a conscious effort against sound pollution. My friend in Salt Lake had organized a concert with all the children of her neighbourhood – yes all, those from slums and children of dhobis, domestic helpers, milkmen and newspaperwallah.

Our children with their wondrous innocence motivate us the most. This year they came up with the irresistible idea of 'Curious Hobbies'. Enjoy!

Aaratrika is happy to have two new sections this year. 'Travel' as we just left our summer holidays behind and also because we at Aaratrika believe that good travel in a way, keeps the doctors away! This inspiration also came from wanting to make our holidays more meaningful,

wherein earlier this year, while holidaying in the Whitsunday Islands, I met a teen group of students who were aiming to visit our City of Joy for a month and work with a local NGO participating in a school construction and other community development projects. They believed in being useful even while travelling where one gets involved in the life of the local people, their activities and environment along with usual sightseeing. One of them had already been to the cattle fair in Sonapur participating in similar activities. I was struggling to remember where Sonapur is! The attempt is to bring the world closer and we welcome fun travel photos and thoughts. As they say while visiting, take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but foot prints.

The second section is a tribute to the 21st century, 'From friends of Aaratrika' wherein all of us being global villagers would like you to meet people you might not have heard about, as well as those you have - those who are striving for a better world, influencing and inspiring the way we live and the way we will leave this world when we are gone.

Hoping Aaratrika brings a feel of that fresh lime squeeze and a smile.

We wish you a greener and safer world.

Antorik Sharod Suveccha!



VEDIC GROUND FOR THE WORSHIP OF MOTHER DURGA



Swami Jyotirupananda

Swami Jyotirupananda has been in Moscow since 1991 and has been with us since the second Durga puja. Our very first puja was inaugurated by Swami Lokeswarananda of the Ramakrishna Order, Belur Math, India. Swami Jyotirupananda is the founder of the Ramakrishna Math centre in Moscow affiliated by its Headquarters Belur Math. What he likes most about Russia? Russian people.

In vedic time sages of Taittiriya Upanishad engaged themselves in relentless austerities to reach the deepest layer of their mind in search of that mystery which lies behind them and the universe. Their pure mind, free from all other thoughts got the light of the ultimate Reality. They were able to reach even beyond mind and came face to face with Supreme Reality. They taught their disciples: Seek to know that from which all beings here are born; having been born, by which they remain alive; and into which, on departing, they enter. That is Brahman.

They termed Brahman, the Supreme Reality thus: Bliss is Brahman, for certainly all beings here are, indeed, born from Bliss; having been born they remain alive by Bliss; and on departing, they enter into Bliss.

As this realm of Brahman is beyond mind it is formless, infinite and without any attribute. It is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss absolute. Instead of calling the Reality as One, it is better to call it as Non-dual. Reaching the state beyond mind and merging into the Reality the sages experienced this Non-dual identity.

For us who have not reached that state this infinite Brahman is our final goal of life. Actually, we are every moment moving towards that goal whether we know it or not. In the Bhagavad Gita, chapter fourth, eleventh sloka Sri Krishna said, "O Partha, men walk in my path in all ways." Human life is nothing but this movement towards the same goal through various experiences of life after life seek-

ing happiness. This happiness for which we are running for life after life is only the shadow, so to say, of the eternal Bliss which is Brahman.

We worship divine Mother Durga. She is another aspect of Brahman to us. Brahman being formless and without attribute we with our mind and senses can not make any kind of relation with It. We need form and attribute with the help of which we can reach that goal. As Brahman by the power of Its Maya could appear as the universe with all beings so also It has the power to appear as Durga in the form of divine Mother for the devotees. In Taittiriya Aranyaka a prayer goes like this: I take refuge to Goddess Durga, fire-complexioned, giver of the result of Karma and Scorcher of enemies. I salute you, the saviour leading us across the ocean of world.

Goddess Durga is the Universal Energy, all pervading but can appear before the devotees in the form of Mother. Her image with ten hands holding various weapons signifies various types of energy working in all directions of this universe. This universal energy being material it is considered as her body and She Herself is the spirit which can be compared as soul in the body. Sri Ramakrishna truly said, Brahman and Shakti (Energy) are identical, when active we call Her Shakti and when inactive we call it Brahman.

It is natural for every living being seeking happiness all the time. But this happiness cannot remain constant when we are gravitating on external objects

or body, senses and mind. All these are undergoing change every moment. We, therefore, need something constant to hold on which can help us withstand these changes and remain poised, so that our real nature Bliss that is God in us can manifest in its pristine glory. Our worship of Mother Durga is exactly to hold on to that constant Bliss in us in order to cross the strife and struggle in life.



Prabhat P. Shukla
Ambassador of India



भारत का राजदूतावास, मास्को
EMBASSY OF INDIA
MOSCOW
ПОСОЛЬСТВО ИНДИИ
МОСКВА

12 September 2008

MESSAGE

My heartiest congratulations to the Indian Community in Moscow on the occasion of the Durga Puja festival. This festival symbolizes victory of Truth, Light and Divine Forces over Falsehood and Darkness.

The Durga Puja Committee has been doing a commendable job for the last 19 years by using this occasion as a great binding force not only among Indians in Moscow but also reaching out to those Russians, including academics, who are interested in Indian cultural activities.

May the spirit of this festival bring joy, peace and prosperity in your life.

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



**Sri Sri Durga Mahapuja
from 5 to 9 October 2008**



Mahasashti 5 October Sunday	Puja starts at 18:00
Mahasaptami 6 October Monday	Puja starts at 9:20 Pushpanjali at 11:30 Bhog & Arati at 11:50 Evening Arati 18:00
Mahaastami 7 October Tuesday	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 8 October Wednesday	Puja starts at 9:20 Pushpanjali at 11:30 Bhog & Arati at 11:50 Evening Arati at 18:30
Vijaya Dashami 9 October Thursday	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 Lakshmi puja October	Puja starts at 19:00





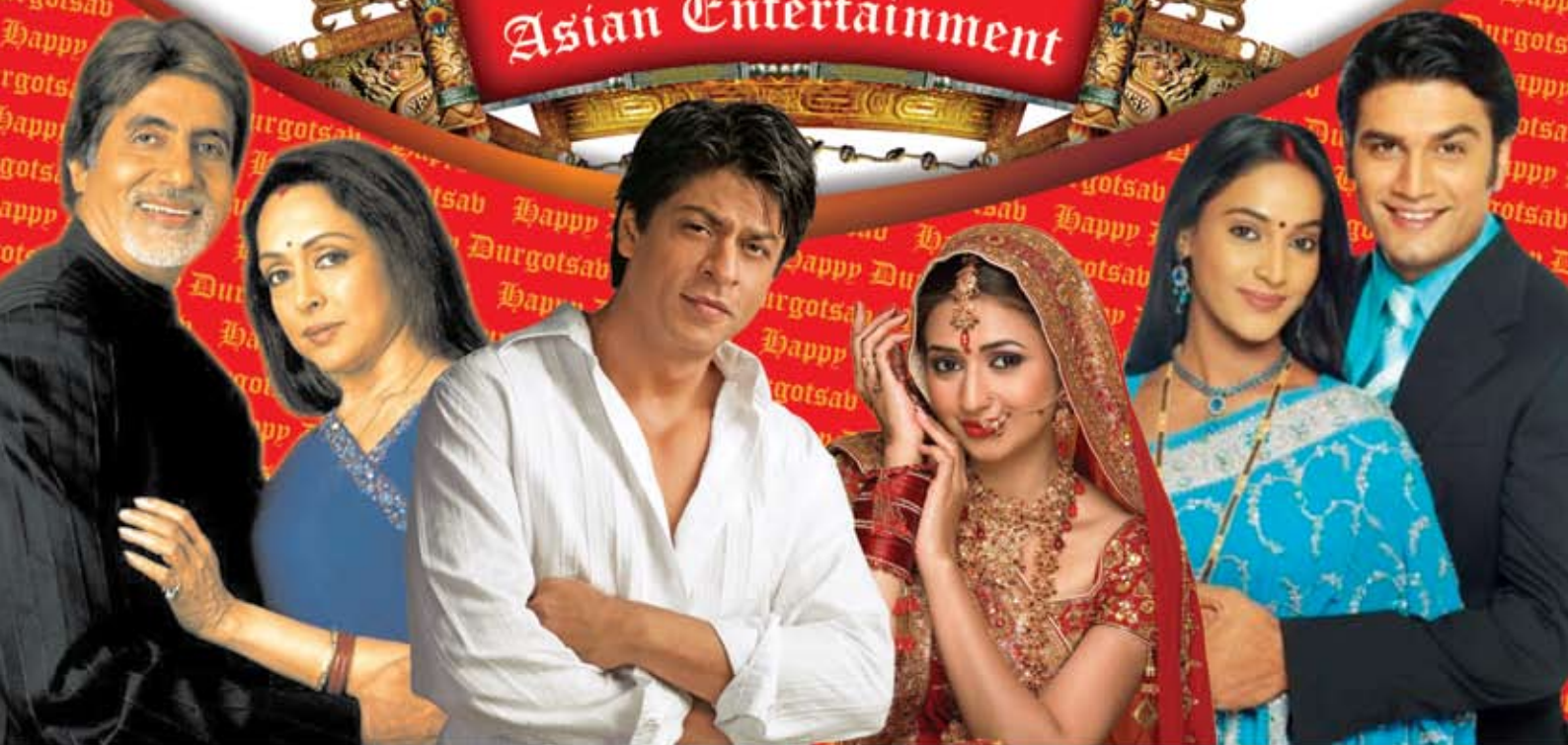
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From Friends of Aaratrika...



Ustad Amjad Ali Khan with Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan (right)
Photo Courtesy: Suvo Das

The following is an excerpt from
Ustadji's postulation in Indian Express
7 September, 2008

Some power, some force has guided my whole life and actions. I have seen it over and over again. There was never a moment of doubt about it as for us God plays the most important role. This was always the way in our family. My father was quite religious, he had such faith in God. He always said, just practice and surrender to God and one day you will achieve your goal in life. So in our family, two plus two never was necessarily four. Two plus two was a big question mark. It could be zero, it could be the infinite. It was therefore never about planning things and life, but about trying to obey God.

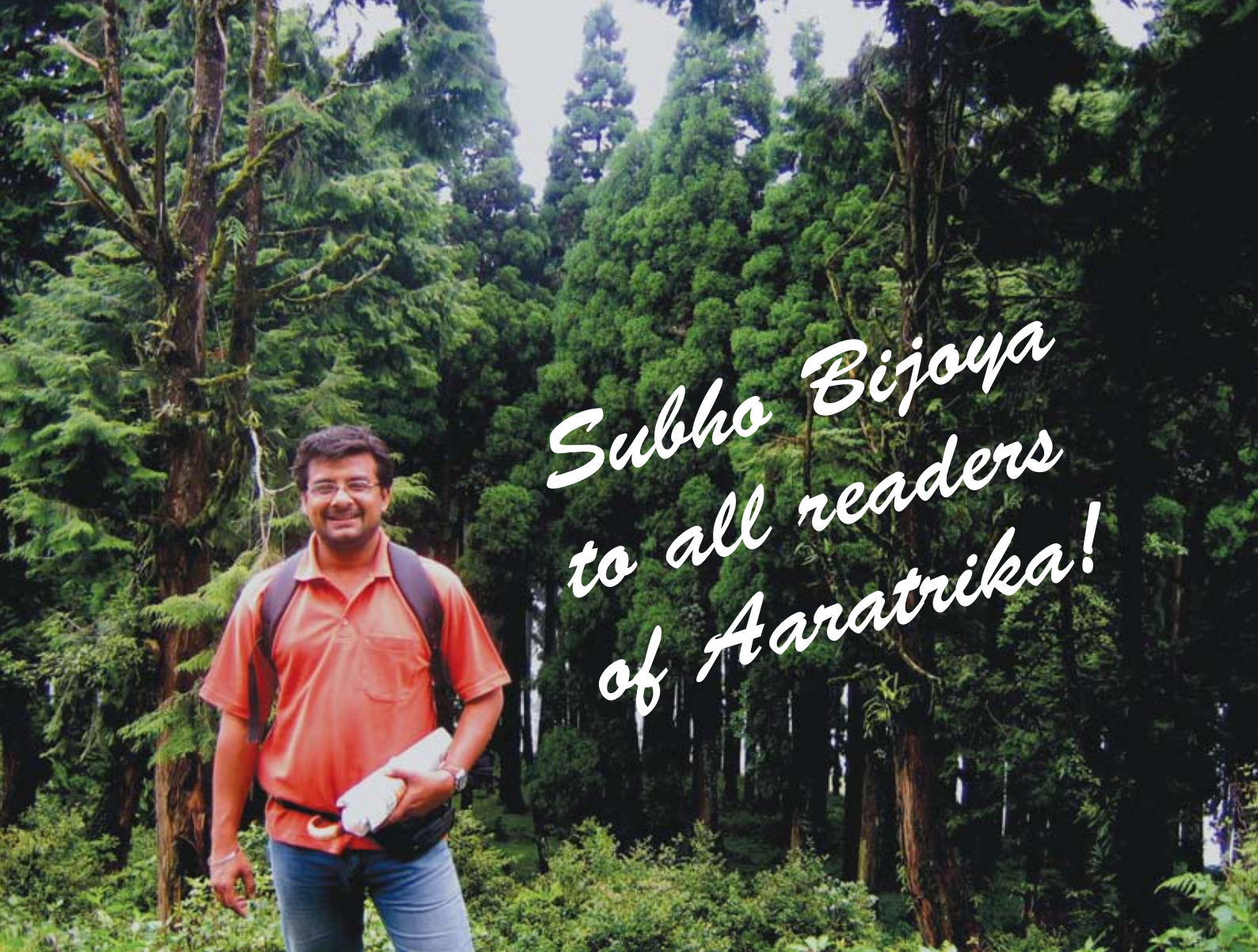
And while trying to feel that superpower, that divine force, it is important not to be led by priests of any kind. Priests are not necessarily the wisest people in the world. They get a salary, they are paid by religious institutions. We should rather always be free to think on our own and figure out what is right and what is wrong. And this process should not happen through the intellect exclusively. In fact I believe that where the logic ends, the connection with God begins.

'Durga Puja is the season
of joy and good cheer.
We wish you all in Moscow
a very happy puja and pray
for worldwide peace and
prosperity. May God bless
you and your family always!'

Amjad Ali Khan



Third Eye: The Proust Questionnaire
'Where logic ends, the link with the divine begins' by Nadine Kreisberger



*Subho Bijoya
to all readers
of Aaratrika!*



THE puppeteer sits far away from the rising seas and orchestrate the disaster that climate change brings in its wake. The politicians say that buying, consuming and spewing global warming gasses will increase our GDP and accelerate our development. Seems like a fair game right? Wrong!

Who bears the brunt? We do, because climate change does not discriminate between its environmental refugees. Climate change is an unwelcome guest and we should show it the door.

Greenpeace has been fighting climate change across the world. We have been urging governments to enforce laws; to make a paradigm shift in the way we use energy; to stop smoking carbon dioxide

at the rate we are and to stop flattening our forests.

While it might not be possible to reduce the cars on the road overnight, it is possible to reduce the amount of petrol these cars guzzle.

While it might not be possible to enjoy candle light conversations all the time, it is possible to replace all the bulbs (that waste 90%) with CFLs or LEDs.

So in some ways climate change is an opportunity to change; for a new beginning; for a clean beginning.

What time better than Pujo to make this beginning!

Samit Aich
Executive Director,
Greenpeace India





Vimlendu Jha

Founder & Executive Director
Swechha- We for Change Foundation
www.swfc.org.in
www.cnn.com/bethechange

Durga Puja 'worship of Divine Mother' the festival of pomp and power is the greatest socio-religious extravaganza of the Bengali Hindus and by now it has become a global celebration witnessed in almost all the major cities of the world.

Durga Puja is a celebration of life and it is this spirit of all beings that we salute. Durga is an incarnation of power that resides in every element of universe, and once this power is unleashed for doing good to the humanity, it'll bring positive changes in every community and this calls for the younger generation, with the energy and enthusiasm of their youth, to participate in the community, and not just be fence sitters.. Thus, it is imperative that all belonging to the humankind must make sincere efforts to remove all kinds of inequality, hatred, irrationality and aim towards achieving lasting peace and progress for the mankind, starting today.

SWECHHA - We for Change Foundation, is a movement - a consensus among people about the nature of society, its problems and possible ways to work towards a positive change. It was launched in the year 2000 as the 'We for Yamuna' campaign. The campaign eventually transformed into a full-fledged NGO in 2001. Today, it comprises of professionals, consultants and students from various fields such as social work, management, media and science.



Jumbo from Africa!

Lisa was working in a remote town in the draught stricken deserts of Ethiopia when Aaratrika contacted her. She wishes happiness and sunshine for all and conveys warm puja greetings to the readers of Aaratrika.

Lisa Parrott

Africa Advisor, Livelihoods, Save the Children



Save the Children

The history of Save the Children is a story of positive change and people - millions of people in thousands of communities around the globe - working together to create opportunities for the world's children to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.
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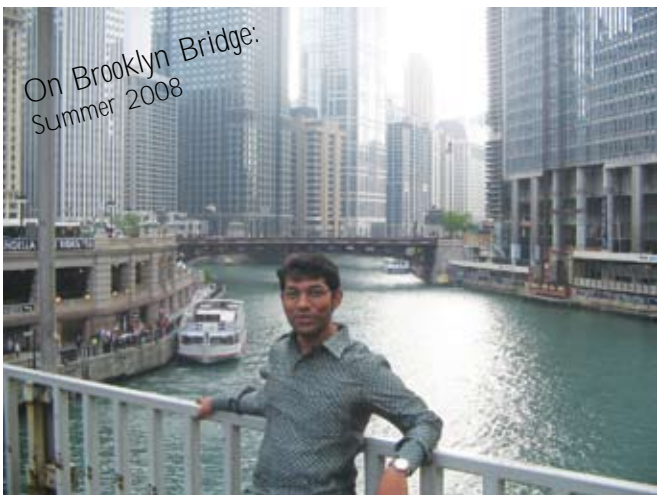
*Wishing all a
Very Happy
Durga Puja and
Dushera!*

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Durga Puja: The Festive Fever

Dinesh Chakraborty

During last year's puja Dinesh overheard a child ask his father, while pointing to the puja idol, "Who are they?" Dad replies, "Well that's the superwoman with ten hands and the bad guy is the one below, half out of the buffalo." Dinesh as our knowledgeable assistant cleric decided to tell the readers of Aaratika a bit more than that. Dinesh likes rava dosa with black coffee with sugar for breakfast.

THE azure sky with fleecy white clouds and a nip in the air marks the advent of autumn – the season for Bengal's most popular festival, Durga Puja. Durga Puja is celebrated with customary pomp and fanfare twice a year – once in the month of March or April (Basant) and again in September or October (Ashwin), during the moonlit fortnight. The Mother Goddess is venerated in one form or the other all over India.

Goddess Durga, durgatinashini – the remover of all troubles, has been worshipped from time immemorial. Her literary references are chiefly the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the epics and Puranic texts, and she is mentioned by name in Vedic literature. In general, Durga is regarded in northern India as the gentle bride epitomizing family unity while in southern India her warrior aspect is more revered. But her popularity is greatest in Bengal and its adjoining states where she is regarded in the form of a daughter with the festivities worshipping her extending for five days in a distinctive style.

Close to the heart of almost every Bengali is the image of Durga as the daughter who visits her parents annually. Her children Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth), Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge), Ganesha (God of Prosperity) and Kartikeya (The Divine Army General) accompany her on this visit. Each year, there is great rejoicing at the time of her homecom-

ing, but the air is tinged with sadness the day the deity is bid adieu. Perhaps this is because people identify more intimately with the human side of the omnipotent Goddess.

The worship of Devi Durga in the month of Ashwin is called Akalbodhan - an uncustomary time for commencement of the worship. It is so-called because the period of this worship differs from the conventional period (during spring-Basanta). According to the Ramayana, in his dire plight, Lord Rama evoked the Goddess to worship her and secure her blessings to defeat the demon king Ravana, thereby worshipping Durga untimely (in Akal). Hence this puja is called Akalbodhan.

The main ritual of Durga Puja spans a period of four days. However, in the case of traditional and household Pujas, the festivities last ten days. Debi-Paksha is the name given to the fortnight from the new moon till the next full moon. This is the most propitious time for performing holy rites.

According to tradition, the images of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha are also separately worshipped along with that of Durga. The image of Durga is framed at the centre, and the background behind the whole group is called the chaal-chitra. It is a circular canvas of mat containing paintings of heavenly scenes and drawings of other important gods and goddesses. Reverence is paid to Durga's husband Shiva,

Mahisasura and to the Lion, Swan, Peacock, Owl and Mouse, which the divinities ride on along with all the celestial beings like Dakinis, Joginis, and Chandalis that accompany Durga.

The ritual of drawing the eyes on the image of the goddess is called chakshudaan, symbolizing the process of infusing the image with the power of vision; this is done on Mahalaya, the day of the new moon.

Durga Puja is celebrated on a mass scale with puja pandals (marquees) dotting nearly every nook and corner of West Bengal. Thanks to a migrant Bengali population, the past few years have seen a rise in the number of Durga Pujas in other parts of India and abroad as well. Preparations for the Puja begin long before the actual day arrives. If you are looking for bargains, you won't find a better time. Publishing houses come out with puja editions of magazines, just like the Moscow Durga Puja Committee came up with 'Aaratika', and craftsmen and artisans do brisk business at this time of the year.

Dhunuchi Naach



During the four days of Durga Puja, Bengalis really let their hair down. Beside the actual Puja, most pandals organize different kinds of competitions to regale the local people. It's party time for both children and adults alike as they participate wholeheartedly in the fun and frolic. Local talent gets a chance to share the stage (a makeshift one more often than not) with more well-known artists. And the local romances get a chance to try their luck with the frolicky bevy of illustrious damsels.

The following days of Maha Saptami and Maha Ashtami are spent with ritual worship of the Deities by Anjali when a devotee offers prayers and flowers, amidst the chanting of mantras to the Goddess. Only then can one make a beeline for the prasad (sweetmeat offered to the Deity). The Bhog, lunchtime meal is a welcome break for those who gather in the pandals and is provided to all and sundry after the Goddess has partaken of it.

But come evening, and the pandal becomes a dazzling array of new clothes, shiny-faced children running helter-skelter and a spectacular display of lights. The rhythmic beat of the dhak (drums) adds to the mood of Bengal's most popular festival. The Puja Pandals transform into a Bengali version of a New York Night club with dhunuchi naach (a form of traditional dance with burning coconut coir) and beautiful ladies in elegant sarees and gentlemen in traditional dresses catching up with the recent para or neighbourhood goings-on.

The Maha Ashtami (eighth day) is a significant day, and especially the Sandhipuja held during the forty minutes of transi-

Kumari Puja



tion from Ashtami to Navami. It is at this time that Chandi, the form of the goddess who slayed the demon Mahisasura, is worshipped with a special offering of lotuses and a spectacular offering of a hundred and eight oil lamps.

Maha Navami (ninth day) follows with a special fire-offering or Yajna. Kumari puja (worship of young girls) is an old custom still carried out in certain temples. It is a cute sight to watch the saree clad girls being elevated to the state of divinity. All these special ceremonies are interspersed with the usual rounds of anjali, prasad and bhog, much to the delight of the indulgent babu-bibis. Navami signifies the end of Navratri. Sometimes meat is served in many pandals as part of the bhog, but never in the temples. Many people actually look forward to it as it marks the end of the ritual vegetarian period. This being the penultimate day of the Puja, one can feel a touch of sadness that the festivities are soon going to be over.

Dasami marks the end of the festival, when the soul of the Goddess is bidden farewell and she returns to her abode along with her family. It is marked by Bhashan or immersion of the idol in water, chanting of the Shanti Mantra and blessing all devotees with sacred water. The Sindoor khela (vermillion game) brings some gaiety back with playful activities amidst the heavy feelings.

Bijoya is a special ritual when peace and good relations are reaffirmed. Families exchange sweets and people embrace each other (kolakuli), tightening social bonds. Bijoya continues till the next new moon, when Kali Puja is held.

Inevitably, the glamorous and grand Durga puja is followed by Lakshmi puja on the next full moon. The goddess of wealth and prosperity is welcomed along with a fresh harvest of paddy. The Panchali paths and conch-shell shrills fill the moonlit nights with a mystic feeling. Traditional home-made sweets like narkel nadu and moyas and the aroma of the bhogs is an absolute delight to the fasting multitude.



Sandhi Puja

Kali Puja and Bhoot chaturdasi is next on the list. Bhoot Chaturdasi or Choti Diwali, as it is referred to as in the rest of northern India, is observed with the making of a special dish with fourteen varieties of saak or leafy vegetables. The evenings are spent decorating the houses and terraces with oil lamps. It is said that Kali puja signifies the beginning of the Pitri paksha, when the departed souls of the ancestors descend into the mortal world to bless their families. The burning lamps are a mark of respectful welcome for the departed souls of the revered ancestors. Goddess Kali is worshipped at the dead end of the night with grandiosity. The goddess of death and liberation is worshipped along with her company of spirits and other celestial beings in a mostly Tantric way with the sacrifice of live animals. Some traditional families observe Dipanwita Lakshmi Puja on this day with no less devotion and extravaganza and children enjoy the night with ceremonial fireworks.

The autumn festivities not only bring a sense of brotherhood and unity for all, irrespective of caste, creed, colour and religion in India but also abroad. The worshipping of the three forms of Universal energy in the form of the protector, prosperity and destruction is a symbolic representation of the cycle of life itself; the basis of all philosophies. It is also a sweet reminiscent nostalgia of our rich traditions and heritage. These are the festivals that glorify the presence of life itself.

Om Shanti !





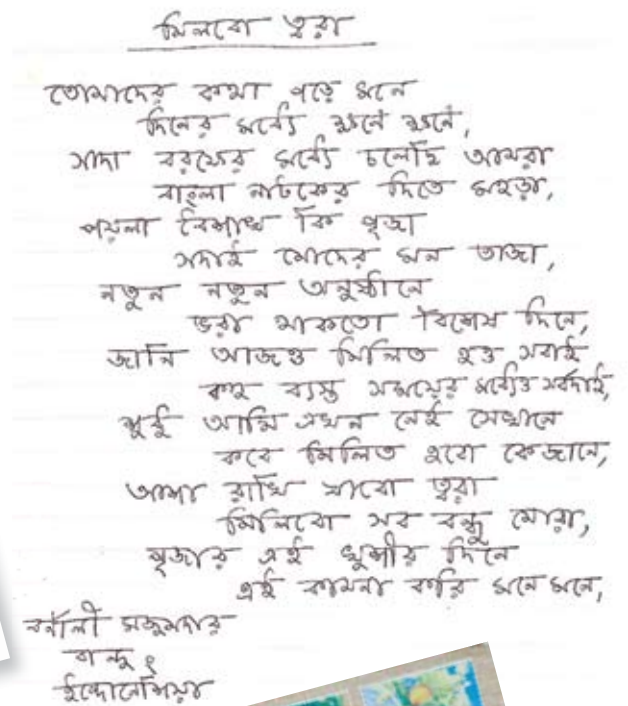
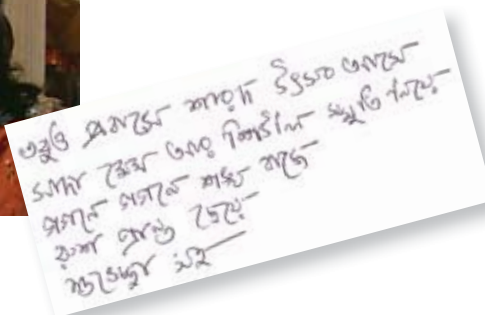
Bornali Majumdar with son Arko

Sharodiya Privet From Bandung...

From New Delhi...



Dr. Ranjana Banerjee
Associate Professor
Centre of Russian Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi



From Mussoorie...

Adarsh & Tanu Tripathi



Hello my Moscow friends,
Happy Puja to you all
from me and mom! I miss
you all. I miss snow too. I
am studying in Wynberg-
Allen School in Mussoorie.
I like it and have many
friends.

Adarsh Tripathi



From Aaratrika's new friends in Calgary...



Srabani Bose with son Avik

[illegible][illegible]

Avik greets his Moscow friends with this delightful machranga (kingfisher) who also seems to like fish!





Down the Memory Lane

Who says memories are short! Never, when the happenings are lively (notwithstanding the dull & cold weather), people are friendly (despite the heavy overcoats), and social gatherings are refreshing (bypassing militia checks). This possibly explains why the memories of our stay in Moscow remain so vivid and lively, inspite of the passage of time and signs of age. We, myself and my wife, who became popular as Babydi or Boudi (Bodi, to some Southern friends) commenced our adventure in Moscow in sub-zero temperatures in November 97 and 10 years later, everything remains fresh and vibrant. We marvelled at the natural and man-made creations of the city, the contrast of the 'debushkas' and 'babushkas' and so many specialities. But, the celebration of Durga Puja that we took part in, was simply unmatched. On the advent of the ensuing Durga Puja celebration, the mind hovers around the happenings there and conveys heartiest greetings to all for the occasion.

Our first participation in the Puja was in 1998, when my wife, Baby was given the task of preparing some Bhog on a

specified day and I, (being associated with Embassy) was on Protocol job. The peers, like Manojda (Bhattacharya) and Mastermoshai (KV School) gave encouragement. It was both nervousness and excitement for Baby and the task started very early morning. Transporting over 25km on snowy roads was also not in my previous driving experience. But, with the grace of Mother Divine, it all went smoothly. The Maharaj, Swami Jyotirupanda ji seemed favourably disposed and we became permanent parties for Bhog and Protocol. Subsequent Pujas saw the emergence and disappearance (dissensions!) of some key workers and volunteers. It was interesting to see many with great organising skills, while some lost their cool on flimsy grounds. But the scale of the celebration grew in size and participation. The Prasad and food supply was available to everyone and my tea friend, the Baskaran family, ensured hot tea supply throughout the period (though I became known as the Cha da). The young groups arranged the cultural events during Puja and Dinner-dance celebration post-Puja. The pre-Puja meetings and follow up timeless tele-talks, with new ideas and dissen-

sions could never be forgotten even by the amnesiaites.

Having visited or participated in many Puja celebrations in and outside India, the experience of Moscow Durga Puja is unique and unparalleled. The strict observance of puja rituals, under the supervision of Maharaj would convert even an atheist. It's like a 'barir pujo' expanded into a community one, without digressing even one bit from the main task of worshipping the Mother Durga. Personally, both of us became more motivated and to my wife, Baby, her involvement in the Moscow Durga Puja celebration and association with saintly persons like Swami Jyotirupanda ji, was surely her best possession of Moscow stay. Sadly, she left us untimely this January, but she always had the happy memories of Moscow Durga Puja along with her.

Let the memories live forever.

Tapan Chakraborty from Kolkata



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РАДИАТОРЫ, МЕТАЛЛОКОНСТРУКЦИИ, АНГАРЫ, КРОВЛЯ

ОПТОМ И В РОЗНИЦУ СО СКЛАДОВ В МОСКВЕ

ЛИПЕЦКЕ, ЧЕЛЯБИНСКЕ, ПЯТИГОРСКЕ, АСТАНЕ, АЛМАТЫ



From left - Nastiya, Sergei, Masha, Irina Tengizovna, Denis & Lena

Most of you are already well acquainted with Dr. Irina Prokofieva, the adored Bengali language lecturer of MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Affairs). This year Aaratrika decided to quiz her second year Bengali language students with the following questions:

Your most challenging moment while learning Bengali?

Your much-loved Bengali word would be...

Your favourite chayer songe ta (chai-shai/ tea with snacks) would be...

The students have sent us wonderful hand-written answers.

লেনা
১। যখন আমি প্রথম বাংলা গান শুনার তখন বুঝে পারিনি। বাংলা ভাষা
কি মনোরম। এই মনোরম ভাষায় লেনাও কথা বলে।
২। বিভিন্ন শব্দ আমার ভাল লাগে কিন্তু শব্দ মনোরম বেশী কারণ আমি
এই গল্প শুনবামি।
৩। গা খেয়ে বন্ধুদের সাথে কথা বলতে আমার সবচেয়ে ভাল লাগে। আমার ভাল
হয় 'চু-চু-চু' গা গান।



মাসিয়া

১। আমার সবচেয়ে চ্যালেঞ্জিং মুহূর্ত ছিল যখন আমি
প্রথমবার বাংলা শব্দ দেখলাম। হু না পাওয়া
সবচেয়ে কঠিন ছিল।
২। 'সত্যমিথ্যায়' আমার সবচেয়ে ভাল লাগে। 'সোনার
বোলা' গা আমার বুকে গায়ে নি যে গা
হাঁটুটি শব্দ।
৩। গায়ের সঙ্গে ইন্টারেক্টিং মানুষ আমার সবচেয়ে
ভাল লাগে। কিন্তু আমি মানুষ - খেবড়া নই।



১। পৃথিবী মেগেথুর অন্ধ অন্ধার রূপে দেখা দেয় অন্ধ
বড়ের ওপর দুটি শব্দ দেখলাম: 'নন্দিতা', 'ধন্যবাদ'। এটি
অন্ধার সবচেয়ে চ্যালেঞ্জিং (আমার দুটি শব্দ অন্ধারে
ভাল লাগে, এটি বেশ কঠিন ও ভাল লাগে।
৩। চার্লসের সঙ্গে আমি সত্যমিথ্যায় গায়ে।

দিলিগ



Wishes for the alumni

We wish Pavel Bronnikov a very exciting and successful tenure with the embassy of Russian Federation in Dhaka.

We also welcome Arthur Gherbst to our City of Joy. He will be joining the Russian Consulate in Kolkata in autumn this year.



১। কোন কোনটা আমি সবচেয়ে চ্যালেঞ্জিং বলতে
পারি আমি জানি না। তবু আমি ছোট গল্প
বলব। গত বছর দুটি পুস্তক আমার এই ছোট
বইটা গায়ে ওয়ায়। আমার দুটি গায়ে ওয়ায়
বাংলা ভাষা। এনে বাথ আমার নাম রাখা
বিন্দু এই বদলে আমি 'গায়ে ওয়ায়
ভালবাসা। এনে বাথ আমার নাম রাখা
বদলে।
২। সংস্কৃত শিল্পরোগ।
৩। আমি ছাত্রাবাসে থাকি চাই আমার গায়ের
সঙ্গে যা কিছুই চলবে।

সাল্লা



১। সবচেয়ে 'চ্যালেঞ্জিং' মোমেন্ট ছিল যখন আমি প্রথমবার বাংলা
অর্থবিশ্বকোষ দেখেছি। এটি একটি অর্থবিশ্বকোষ আমি খুব ভাল লাগে।
২। আমার সবচেয়ে প্রিয় শব্দগুলো: 'সত্যমিথ্যায়', 'হু না পাওয়া'
মুদ্রাঙ্কন।
৩। চার্লসের সঙ্গে আমি সত্যমিথ্যায় গায়ে সত্যমিথ্যায় কিন্তু এটি
আমি অন্য গল্প মনেতে দেখি।

Capri - সার্গেই



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- СЕРТИФИКАТ СООТВЕТСТВИЯ
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Curious

Hello friends, I am **Andrews Saju**.

I study in Class 2. I have a few hobbies but yoga I like the most. I can do following asanas: Shirshasana, Mayurasana, Chakrasana, Baddhapadmaasana, Dhanushasana, Gokarshasana, Padmasana, Vajrasana.



you know he asked me to sing along with him?



Slava with parents Nadezhda & Dmitri in Ustadji's Moscow Conservatory workshop in summer 2006

SOM SHEKHAR HOTA

Class 4

Choreography - I started dancing when I was 6 years old by watching dances in movies. I myself choreograph my dances. My parents encouraged me too. I like dancing as it is a good exercise and looks graceful.



SLAVA POZNYAKOV

Class 4

Now that I am ten years old I am learning to play the oboe. I go to my musical school thrice a week. I also learn the theory of music. Before this I used to play the recorder (a kind of fipple flute) and piano. Along with my parents, I often listen to sarod, shehnai and vocal Indian Classical music. My most memorable day - when I attended the music class with Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. Do

JOJO

(Sanjay Tauvy,(JoJo) is 12 and studies in the French school in Singapore). Glideboard is a sport that I discovered this summer on the Italian coast. Similar to a surfboard, the difference is that one needs only a thin film of water to ride the board as opposed to high waves that the surfboard requires.



SWATI DASH

Class 6

You know what? I was learning Kathak and Hip-Hop together even though they are very different. Some steps of Hip-Hop are like Punjabi Dance. Unfortunately I gave up learning Hip-Hop but I continue to learn Kathak.



KARTHIK P. NAIR

Class 6

Once, while I was flipping over the TV channels, I saw 2 guys playing some sort of game. My mother told me that the game is called Lawn Tennis. I got so excited that my father bought me a small racket and I started playing when I was 5 years old. My parents encouraged me a lot. Last year I worked hard



Hobbies

Shlok Dharmendra Raval
Wearing a dhoti, I look cute na?



Ayanna Chatterjee
I like to walk!



Aanisha Violeta Garzon Dasgupta
Sailing in my boat!



Adarsh Mishra
Hmmm, let me think...



Vladik Zaitsev
I like to look at the rising sun and play with Markiz, my cat.

and got promoted to the senior group. The world famous Andrei Cherkasov is our coach. This year during summer I went to Spain for an intensive coaching. There were around 50 players from all over the world including 10 children from India. I got a chance to meet David Ferrer who is world's No.5 in Tennis! Do you know he was playing on the court next to me? The intensive training helped me improve my tennis skills. In August this year I scored 5th ranking in A.L.T. (Association of Tennis Lovers) tournament and 9th ranking in Moscow summer tournament. Thanks to my classmates, my schoolwork never suffers.

I also collect metallic medals from a Russian journal 'Shrek'. I hope someday I will have real medals from tennis! I really don't just like Tennis, I love it. Nadal and Federer are my favourite players.

KARTHIK WITH LITTLE SISTER KAMYA

Kamya is my lovely sister who is four and half years old. Her main hobby is accompanying me to my Tennis coaching classes and cheering me during tournaments.

ARYA ARUNIKA HOTA

Class 7

I decided to learn gymnastics as my body is flexible. Also I think gymnastics looks very graceful and beautiful. I started gymnastics since I was 8. I go to gymnastic school where we use many instruments. I have learnt 4 of them till now. My parents and friends have always encouraged me in this.



SWARAJ DASH & SATYARTH MISHRA

Pyrotechnics is a rather controversial topic on the net. We got attracted to pyrotechnics after watching it on TV and surfing about it on the internet. We mainly do experiments where extreme heat is involved. Safety is our top priority. We keep a huge distance between us and the experiment. For some experiments we set up special fuses to maximize safety. We also always do a small-scale test before the actual experiment to be sure that it is something which we can handle. The closest to the experiment is our camera which we use to record everything. All our experiments are usually carried out in a remote area, sometimes in the forests. We find a good, usually wet piece of land to conduct our pyrotechnics research. Currently we are working on creating thermite. It can easily melt steel and is quite hard to make.



Curious Hobbies

AMIT SINGH

Extreme tourism

I like adrenaline rush, so in summer you will find me sailing over 100 kms in the dangerous currents of Volga. We choose a different route every year and sail in boats similar to that of Peter the Great! In winter you will find me climbing the Cheterdak hills in Crimea. The peak is 4000 m high, the path is very slippery at times and the strong winds make our climbing even more challenging! It takes almost whole day to get to the peak and return to the base.



Magpie Robin or *doyelpakhi*.

SMITA SENGUPTA

Collectioner

I would say my photo speaks for itself. I could only add that my collection includes over 125 owls.



SUMIT SANYAL

Birder

I am a keen birdwatcher. During my student days I would often travel to bird sanctuaries and areas like Sunderban which have numerous interesting species. Did you know that certain birds are easier to identify by ear than by eye? I like all birds, however my probable favourite would be the lovely Oriental



ALPANA DASH

Gorodetskaya Rospis is a kind of Russian art of painting on wood. We, a group of 5 have been learning and practicing it since 4 years with our talented teacher Mrs. Tatyana Kisilyova. We paint things such as wooden figures like cutting boards, jewellery boxes, photo frames, plates, vases which are typical for this art. We use temper colours mostly. This painting work involves some basic traditions and theories. We also do some fusion theme, like painting Lord Ganesha on wooden plates which has become the most popular painting of our group. Other preferred themes are the seasons, different types of birds, flowers and churches.



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*Best Wishes
for Durga Puja!*



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Sagarika Sanyal Class 4

My Summer Holidays

With a passion for kangaroos she even won the first prize in a painting competition drawing a mother kangaroo with her baby. Sagarika likes mashed potato with butter and all types of Russian salads especially vinaigrette.

My summer holidays have started. It will run for full 1 month that is from 21st June to 20th July. The whole 1 month sitting at home! Oh no! So we decided to visit the Black sea resort "Sochi". Wow! I was so excited! Though I was born in Odessa, the Black Sea city, we left Odessa when I was one year old. Again Black sea! So I was eagerly waiting for the day when we will fly to Sochi. At last the day came, it was 29th June. In Moscow it was raining, + 15C. We reached Sochi by two and a half hour flight. It was a shiny day with temp + 27C. We reached our hotel, took some rest and left for the sea beach. Sea beach was very nearby, 7 minutes walk. Though I was excited I was afraid of going inside the water. So I decided to walk along the sea shore and collect shells and beautiful stones.

Evening I saw the beautiful sunset at the Black sea and came back to the hotel, had dinner and went for a deep sleep. Next morning, I had breakfast and went to the sea beach. This time my mother bought a life vest for me to go a bit deep in the sea. Though it was a shiny day, it was storming in the sea. Big big waves were coming from the sea and pushing me heavily at the sea shore. I was enjoying it. This way me and my father took bath for 3 hours. In the afternoon we took an excursion to Dendrary - a super big botanical garden. There we saw different types of trees from different countries like palm, bamboo, magnolia with flowers, banana,



date palm, pomegranate etc. Actually the whole Sochi is surrounded by magnolia and banana trees. Though Dendrary is a botanical garden we saw ostrich, peacock, kakatua and parrot moving openly. After enjoying for 4 hours we came back. Next morning again in the beach and in the afternoon we visited the Aquarium. It was also interesting with different types of fish, crocodile, penguin, hippo, seal, snakes like cobra and python, etc. Next morning we went for a ship trip on the black sea. The trip was for 1 hour 30 minutes. We saw Dolphins jumping here and there on the Black sea. It was really amazing! I enjoyed the trip a lot. Same day we also went to the park "Rebero"- sparkling evening Sochi. Spending every morning 3 hours and evening 2 hours in the beach was our daily routine in Sochi.

I really enjoyed a lot in Sochi. After spending 2 weeks in Sochi whenever I go to bed I feel that waves are still pushing me and I am floating with my life vest. I felt very sad when we were leaving Sochi. I bought many big shells and souvenirs from Sochi.

Hope I will go there again.



Alfred Saju Class 7

It happened to me

He loves to sing and dance, read Enid Blyton and play chess. He thinks rabbit is the cutest animal. The Russian crab salad is his all time favourite.

This happened to me when I was in the 4th class. This is a bit embarrassing for me still I would like to share my experience with you.

Once, after school I saw my friends playing on the road near my school and I too wanted to play with them. So, I kept my school-bag on the pavement and started to participate with my heart and soul in the game. We were in our own world till that shocking part came. While winding up the session we all said goodbye to each other and I went to take my bag to return home. But alas! I couldn't find my school-bag. I felt like the earth was revolving around me and I was loosing land under my feet! After searching desperately, I found my books in an abandoned way near the pavement! Now, I realized some scavengers had taken away my school-bag and left my books as they were of no use to them! Thank God for that! I got my books back but lost my beautiful school-bag which I got as a birthday gift. Infact I had used it only for 3 days.

I came back home with great disappointment. My parents pointed out my carelessness. This incident opened my eyes and I learnt that I should be extra vigilant while multitasking.



Best wishes from **Di** 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.



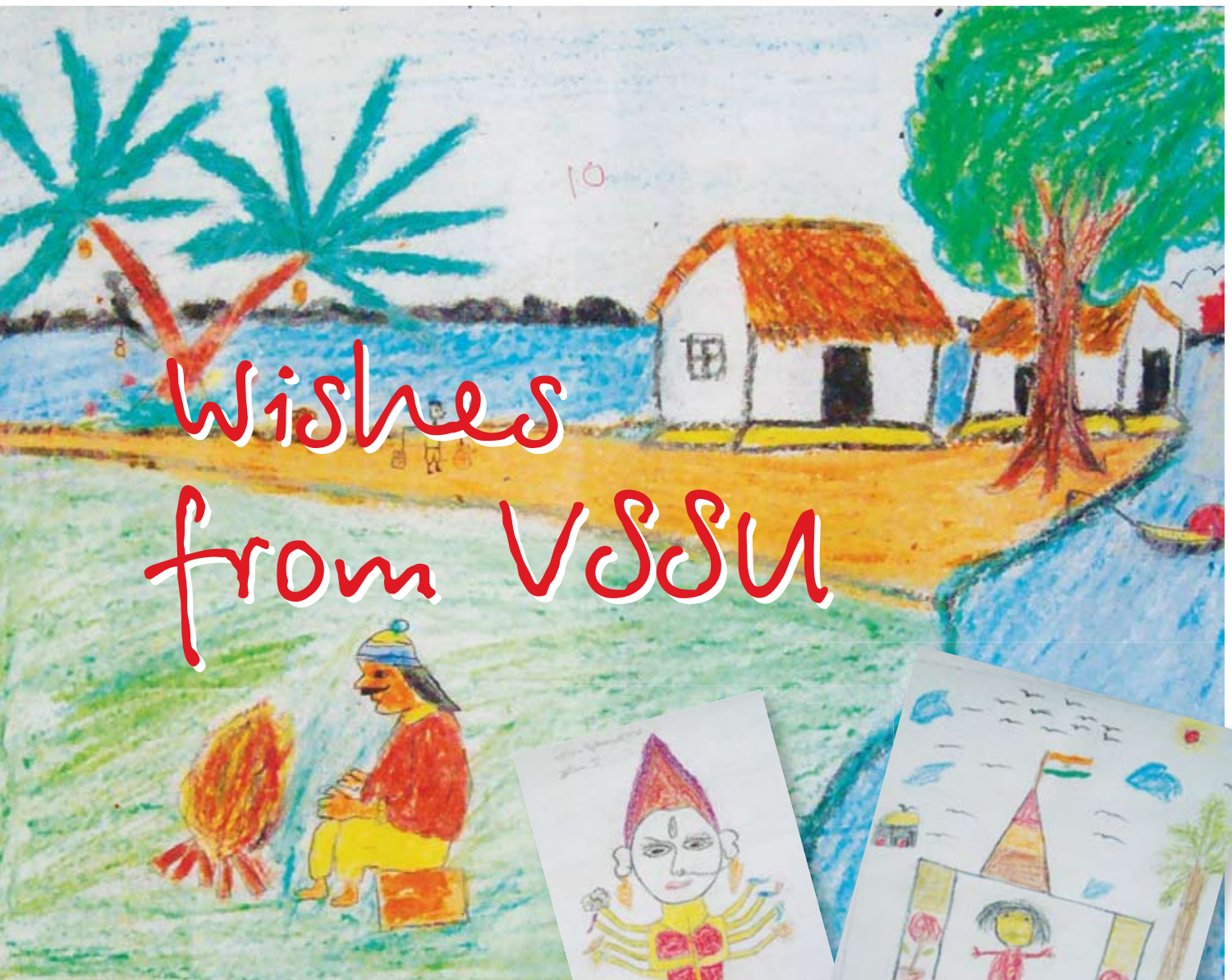
They are also provided Catnap with individual beds during day time. KP functions between 9A.M. & 5P.M. in three groups.

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



Vivekananda Sevakendra-O-Sishu Uddyan (VSSU) aims at poverty eradication through Microfinance and believes that it is possible to accomplish community development utilizing only community resources.

The children of VSSU's Ashok Niloy (Community Development Centre located in Lokkhikan-topur, West Bengal) wishes us a very happy puja with their colourful sketches.





सुंदर-सुंदर पेड़

सुंदर-सुंदर पेड़ 

हर भर पेड़

रासी-बरसात से बचाते

सुंदर- सुंदर पेड़




हरी-हरी पत्तियाँ से भरे

रंग-बिरंगी चिड़ियाँ से लदे

धूप-रासी से भले

ठंडी छाँव देते हमें

सुंदर-सुंदर पेड़ 

हमें जीवन देते पेड़

निर्मल वायु देते ये पेड़

इन्हीं तौड़ना हैं पाप

सुंदर-सुंदर पेड़ 





Richik Sengupta Class 11

Richik's favourite quote is that
of Mao Tse-Tung
"To read too many books is harmful".
He loves deepfried sausages in batter
and smoked Riga sprats.

Life

Life's like a car,
A planted bomb in its bonnet
On a countdown,
It shows up in different models,
The ride's assured as it holds gas within
the exhaust bottle.

Grab the throttle and pull through or waddle,
Own choice,
There's so much to rejoice,
It's worthless to move the foot off the pedal.

Cars speed in their game,
Though they finish with no medal,
And hence no winners at all,
From those gone and who claim.

Yet everybody's a winner,
For their own sake,
In their own frame.

The bomb stays the same.
Shifting digits till they end,
The car changes looks,
From what it used to represent.

The car completes the race, in its own time,
Spraying its own scent,
So many check points covered,
Thus there's nothing to resent.



Yash Dasgupta Class 1



Melson's Group

we build brands



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Tetley



Cadbury



Carambas



Burton's



Hershey's



Weetabix



Lorenz



Pringles



Ambassador



Twinnings



Viz



Purederm



Doctor Nature



Dep



Mipa



Schwarzkopf



Australian Body Care



BOARD EXAMS

Shombuddha Majumdar Class 11

I am Shombuddha Majumdar, a.k.a. Arko, to the Bengali mafia community in Russia. And I am 15 years old. His recent encounter with the ICSE has left a deep mark in my soul. I am now in rehab in Gandhi Memorial International School in Jakarta, where I am near my parents. I miss selling drinks during Anandamela and eating food from Devi cafe. My favourite in Russian cuisine is shashlik.

In any school you go to in India, during the months of March and April, you will always find small pockets of disturbed souls revising notes, debating or simply smashing things or people out of sheer frustration. And they are always aged between 15 and 16. Yes these are the people or better said mindless drones doing the Grade 10 Board exams. A series of grueling examinations which go on for a month and drain you out of all your reserves of strength, calmness and sanity.

All of this actually starts two years before the exam, and all the destroyed students you now see were happy carefree teens. Then the teachers start by telling them how important the exam is and how it will affect their future. To prove their point they give everything extra that is possible in a student's life. Extra classes, extra homework and everything else except extra time! Soon relatives, senior students and parents follow by giving their own lectures and restrictions. Within six months even unknown people start lecturing the moment they come to know you are in the 9th grade. I know people would say this is relevant for the student's future. But if there was any way to check the mental pressure of these students, it would go off the charts. Even with all this stress many students keep calm. But there is also another threat that creeps like some silent killer. Their own classmates! I say creeping because what they do does not affect you directly. It stays on the victim's mind slowly eating it up like a disease. It starts

harmlessly like students remarking how many months are left till the exams or saying formulas and dates unintentionally. But it soon evolves into a full fledged monster. Students reciting the qualities of rice, where it is grown and what are its geographical requirements during breakfast. Students scribbling notes on their hands. Red eyed boys wearing their shirts back to front with messy hair



and their zips open. The last five or six months are hell. It is at this time that you start getting the tips which are usually along the lines of how much coffee will keep you awake for the whole night and chocolates make you sharp. I agree this helps the Indian economy by triggering mass sales of useless guide books, tonics which make you smarter and coffee. It also has huge impacts on smaller economies like in the boarding school I was in. Many students became paupers trying to pay off the debts they took for buying coffee and chocolates and many others had to pay an hourly rent for iPods and other music players based on the fact that listening to music is good while doing math. All this and students reciting exactly how many months, days, hours and minutes left till the exams.

Finally the exam day, this actually means the first day of the exam. Most stu-

dents superstitiously study surprisingly hard for this exam believing that their fate wholly depends on this one. In my school there were the usual pep talks from teachers and friends. The hurried way the invigilators usher the students into the hall some thought were a bad omen. A prayer was said by all students, even some stubborn teenagers who refused to believe in God and miracles. And then the exam sheets were handed out and there was a somber spooky silence. Kind of like the one you get in a graveyard.

The time that I hated the most was after the exam. It was the time when the headmaster, the teachers, my classmates, my friends and everybody I virtually knew asked me how the exam went. It made me very depressed, with the fact that most people want to know where they went wrong. I mean why would they want to know that? It's not as if they are going to give the exam again. The worst part was that it happened again and again for eleven times! And I have learnt the worst type of swear words in various languages during that time. Well it's over now but I still have nightmares and I don't think I will ever get rid of the post-exam trauma. Though the parting shot came from one of my teachers, "Don't worry guys, it's going to happen all over again later".



***Best wishes -
Durga Puja
Moscow!***



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BEACH MYSTERY

Jeeth Reteesh

My name is Jeeth Reteesh. I study in 8th standard in KV Moscow. My hobbies are to draw, watch TV and read books of my interest. My favorite subjects are sciences and mathematics. I take this opportunity to wish all the readers a very happy Durga Puja. My favorite Russian food is blini (pan cakes), mushroom sauce and sausages.

ONE fine evening, I and my four friends went out to the seashore. We played a water game and finally ended up fully wet. We were hungry and decided to have one chocolate ice-cream each. It was simply delicious due to our hunger. Before leaving for our homes, we decided to stand in the beach for five minutes. Suddenly I felt something rubbing against my feet underwater. I called my friends to the area where I was standing. Everyone gathered up around me. As that wave went back, a mysterious box came on my sight. It had a small hole on top. We all grabbed it and brought it ashore. It was extremely heavy. Everyone helped me to bring the box to my house, and left for their homes, saying "see you tomorrow". I was really excited. But unfortunately I could not open the box. I asked my mom to help me open the box. She advised me to take a bath first. After a quick bath, I asked her to open it. But she too could not...now I had only one option...to wait for dad to come from office. When he came, I asked him to open the box. He opened it with great difficulty. I peeped into the box and saw something covered up with a towel. It was moving too. I brought it with me to my room. As I checked the box, it was written "I.T.S" [Indian tiger sanctuary]. It must have fallen from a ship carrying endangered species from dangerous forests in one place to a safe sanctuary in other place. I was terrified when I read the word "tiger". I carefully removed the towel. Suddenly, a male tiger cub jumped out. It was a cute cub with a black spot on the forehead. I remained silent and went pale. Suddenly my parents entered the room. My

mom jumped out of fright. My dad said that it wasn't a good thing to open the box. He advised me to put the cub in a cage that belonged to my pet dog who died two years back. I cleaned the cage that lied untouched on the terrace, and brought it to the garden. I put the cub in the cage and locked its door. He was in perfect health. I felt sorry for the cub that has been separated from his mother. I couldn't believe standing in front of an animal that could tear me in seconds. But this one was so cute that even a hunter would feel like keeping him and never leaving him. By then it was time for me to have dinner and then sleep. I gave the cub, a piece of raw meat and some milk. I saw him devouring. I wished that the cub would have been with me for a few more days...I wanted the next day to arrive as fast as possible so that I can show the tiger cub to my friends, as it is a rare opportunity to touch and see a tiger. The next morning, after breakfast, I went to check on the tiger cub. He was awake and waiting for someone to unlock the cage. I unlock the cage and opened the door. The cub ran around the house, jumped, climbed and finally returned back to the cage as soon as my friends came. They were really surprised to see the cub. But I told them that, this wonder of nature would be with us only till the next morning. Like me, they too wished to have the cub for a few more days. We decided that each kid gets to play with the tiger for an hour. I had a small headache and decided to sleep for a short while. As soon as I closed my eyes I began to dream. It was a terrible dream. In my dream I was in a box with a small hole for a long time, floating on the sea water, then I was finally

brought to land and carried by someone for a short while. Suddenly the box was opened, and to my surprise I saw a tiger!!! He locked me in the cage and left. Then he sent me to his friends and they began to play with me. I had been a tiger cub in my dreams. Suddenly I woke up. Then I came to know how the tiger's feelings are when they're locked up in the cage. That dream made me think twice and made me agree to the fact that the cub must be sent at the earliest. By then it was six o'clock in the evening. I waited for my friends to return. When they returned each one was having a smile on their face. They thanked me for the wonderful experience they had with the tiger cub and left. The cub was looking tired and sleepy. I put him in the cage and went back home for dinner. And finally next morning, the emotional moment came. I felt so sad that, it was time for me to say goodbye to the cub. I had to control my sorrow. The officials came and thanked us for saving the tiger cub. They took him and left. As soon as the cub left, I could say that I am happy, because I've done a great thing today by returning the cub in the safer hands and thus, may be in future, to its own loving mother!





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Sanskrit in Moscow?



Yes, it is possible to learn Sanskrit in Moscow! The Vedanta Centre of Ramkrishna Mission in Moscow has been running Sanskrit classes for Russians since its inception more than sixteen years ago. Swami Jyotirupananda first held his weekly classes at the Moscow State University for a few months. The classes were then shifted to the Prazhskaya residence and are now being held at the above address. Usually in December an announcement is placed on the Notice Board of the JNCC library at the Indian Embassy with information regarding the date of new classes which generally commence in mid January most years. Classes are free of charge and at present there are four

groups of students attending their weekly classes.

For more information, visit www.rkm-vedanta.ru

Aaratrika was curious to know more about the Sanskrit students of Moscow. We asked them:

- 1) What is the first thing that people tell you when they hear you learn Sanskrit?
- 2) Why did you decide to learn Sanskrit?
- 3) What is the most challenging factor in learning this language?
- 4) What do you think are some of the creative ways in which Sanskrit can be used in different fields of life?
- 5) According to you which is the most meaningful/beautiful word in Sanskrit that you have learnt so far?

These comments are from Group 1, which has been studying Sanskrit text and grammar for over a year:

Ekaterina Fedina

Web-editor

- 2) I made up my mind to study the Sanskrit language for studying Sanskrit slokas. Also, I have a feeling that this language will be useful for me in the future.
- 3) Very difficult structure of the language. But the most difficult thing is to find a time for studying!
- 4) I would use my knowledge:
 - To sing songs and make records as ethnic music will be popular forever
 - If I have a possibility to draw I would use the Sanskrit script in Art
 - It is easier to learn other languages based on Devangari, such as is Hindi
 - It is possible to teach Sanskrit in Universities for those students who are studying foreign languages, and would be useful in comparative grammar
 - To make texts for beautiful ceremonies like yajna, to organize festivals like "Days of Indian Culture" which would include puja, yajna and we would invite people
 - There are a lot of religious and philosophical schools and movements in Russia where Sanskrit could be used for

preaching and studying scriptures

- 5) Most beautiful word - Krishna

Anna Metelitsa

Historian, takes keen interest in psycho-therapeutics

- 1) Practically I don't discuss my life and my interest with others who are not close to me. My friends don't get amazed about me.
- 2) Main thing – I wanted very much to be a Swamiji's student. Also I am interested in ancient languages and Indian spiritual culture.
- 3) It was very difficult for me to get used to the script of Sanskrit (Devnagri) and may be this is the reason of my difficulty to learn new words by heart
- 4) When I do homework, my brain becomes calmer and also studying Sanskrit develops assiduity and helps to be more diligent. Working even with stray words you understand deeper the tradition and also some holy texts, mantras and bhajanas. Perhaps in the future, Sanskrit will help my scientific interests too. Now I am researching the ancient



history and penetration of Christians in the Malabar Coast.

- 5) Prema, Sadhana

Yuri Chizyn

Healer

- 2) Sanskrit is beautiful and interesting. It will also help me in understanding the depths of poetry and in Hermeneutics – to interpret poetic texts.
- 5) Mahatma is the most meaningful word to me

Oksana Kolesnikova

Designer, Clothing

- 1) Always I had a desire to study this an-



*Best wishes -
Durga Puja
Moscow*



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cient language, but why I got this desire I don't know.
3) Verbs and cases are very difficult.
5) My favourite words are Atman and Prakriti.

Anna Zagarscikh

Art-designer

1) People say – 'What is this Sanskrit? Language? Why? It is already out-of-use!'
2) So that I could study the ancient Hindu scriptures and poetry in original, understand the meaning of mantras and to study Indian culture deeper
3) The lack of literature and methodical enchiridions. It is necessary to read a lot of books in original to understand language better.



4) To learn other languages based on Devnagri such as is Hindi, to use the Sanskrit script in Art and it may help in preaching the spiritual path of life.
5) Prema Parama prayojanam

Group 2 comprises of students who have been attending Text and grammar classes for over two years:

Mikhail Baklanov

Businessman



Well, here are my answers...

- 1) I don't tell about my studying Sanskrit to people
- 2) I want to read Shruti
- 3) Verbs
- 4) It helps me in spiritual practice
- 5) Sangeetam

Group 3 has been studying Sanskrit for over four years. Other than the language, the students have finished studying the Bhagavad Gita and are currently learning the Vedantasara - essence of Advaita Vedanta:

Alexandr Kosenkov

Video-engineer

My answers to Aaratrika would be:

- 1) People are telling me that I am crazy
- 2) I like it
- 3) Holistic view of the world
- 4) The laws of life's logic are comprised in Sanskrit
- 5) Krishna

Ludmila Nikiforova

Geologist-engineer

My answers are:

- 1) People often exclaim 'What is it?' when they hear I study Sanskrit
- 2) For understanding mantras and bhajanas
- 3) Desire to reach the Highest Knowledge
- 4) In conversation with people, to recognize inner state of man
- 5) Madhuram

Valeri Baranov

Managerial system-engineer



- 1) What is Sanskrit?
- 2) To know the highest knowledge about man's life in the world
- 3) Ancient Sanskrit texts
- 4) To use Sanskrit as pivot on genuine knowledge
- 5) Jnanam

Group 4 is now studying Vedantasara after learning the Bhagavad Gita and the Vivekachudamani of Shankaracharya. This is the senior-most group which has been studying the language for more than five years:

Euphrosynia Sibileva

Dancer



- 2) I was brought to Sanskrit by the natural flow of my life.
- 3) The biggest challenge for me is the necessity to be busy with something else besides Sanskrit!
- 5) My favourite word in Sanskrit is Om.

Mikhael Katrovski

Engineer

- 2) The time and the desire came.
- 3) The grammar and the absence of many adequate concepts in Russian language
- 5) Tattvamasi Om

Elena Ovsyannikova

Art historian

- 2) I would like to work with Eastern museum exhibits for which Eastern languages are necessary.
- 3) We have to learn a lot of grammar.
- 5) Vandana





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HAPPY TIDINGS...



RASHMI MISHRA
Principal
Embassy of India School

She joined the Embassy of India School in March when Moscow still had some snow and spring was in the air. With the onset of summer, the greenery and the lovely flowers absolutely charmed her. She began exploring Moscow by visiting the museums, parks and attending cultural shows. The Park Pobedi or the Victory Park museum left a deep impression on her. She in particular likes the interior of Ploshad Revolutsii metro and appreciates Moscow's infrastructure. Her favourite in Russian cuisine - the salads.

She is partial to the children's section of Aaratrika and says that puja is an ideal time to do something meaningful for the under privileged children.

She wishes Subho Bijoya to all!



MANISH PRABHAT
First Secretary HOC, Embassy of India,
Director JNCC

He joined the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre (JNCC) in May this year. What he likes best about Russia is the warmth and friendly feeling with which Russians relate to Indians. Though severe, he loves the snowy winter in Russia as it is so very different from winter back home. To lift his mood he would at times listen to Alla Pugacheva's '*privet privet poka poka*'. His favourite Russian movie - the classic soviet film *Ironia Sudbi ili s lehkim parom*. He feels there is nothing better than a bowl of piping hot *borsh* in a freezing winter afternoon.

He conveys heartiest Puja Greetings from JNCC!



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**СТАЛЕПРОМЫШЛЕННАЯ
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Tea at 8??

Shanti Bhattacharya Tauvy

After having lived in Moscow for the last 12 years, she plans to move back to her hometown of Singapore this autumn. She is excited about being with her family there but mostly, she sees herself in the market stalls every morning having her favourite dish of coconut flavoured rice with pungent prawn sauce.

India is truly a land filled with surprises and I don't know whether to exasperate or laugh or even cry sometimes. Perhaps there have been occasions when I have done all three at one go even. If I had to pick one analogy to describe it, I'd say it is a jhal-mishti-tok chanachur where you get to flavour everything in one mouthful!

Many years ago, my brother, father and I, travel to New Delhi and stay with a cousin. The first evening, we all go walking in the market place and buy all kinds of sweets (yes, and I refuse to call them "sweet meats" for there is nothing animal about a shondesh!) to be taken home to eat. We are served this with tea at 8 pm. A little surprised at this offering (for tea time was long over and so we took this to be our evening meal) but eat heartily. Afterwards, the three of us, in fresh pyjamas and teeth all brushed, slip into bed when in walks a baffled cousin asking what we were doing! Well, what did it look like we were doing?!! Sleeping at the end of a long day was not unheard of, even in industrious India surely. "B-b-but dinner??" he stammers pointing to the dining table all laden with goodies enough to feed a small village for a week!

You can take an Indian out of India but you can't take India out of an Indian. A similar incident happened to my aunt when she had visiting friends from the subcontinent in her hometown in California once. She worked all day and had a young son then. Not wanting to bother with cooking and washing up afterwards, she took the visitors out to a pasta dinner. After the meal, and upon arriving home, the guests calmly asked what they could do to help with cooking bhat. Apparently the pasta was only "jal khabar".

When my brother and I were little and went to visit the grandparents in the village, I would over hear Dadu explaining to my cousin how this family (meaning us) would dress up and powder their faces to go to bed. Apparently our colourful clean pyjamas were good enough to go festive partying in.

Asking for directions is a delicate process. I have learnt never to ask a bus conductor the said question. He will get off the crowded vehicle, for he is the last one in anyway, and ponder and then begin his narration on how to get to my destination. Of course there will be passengers who will overhear this and vehemently disagree with the conductor and get off the bus to be able to voice out their own opinions on the best route to take. This process will take many, many minutes and I would be standing there wishing this was all a bad dream and feel totally responsible for holding up 200 people hanging from the bus railings from getting on with their own journeys. Nobody seems to mind it really – patiently waiting for the bus conductor and the fellow travellers, who by now are joined by other passers by on a heated debate. I wonder if anyone would miss me if I just slipped away from here...

I had bought some glassware during a last minute shopping trip and was frantically trying to pack it safely for it was late and I was leaving the next morning. Surprisingly, nobody keeps bubble wrap handy at home. Dear cousin takes me to out to the stores to get cotton wool but by this time, it was already dark and everyone had gone in. Not discouraged by the locked doors, he calls out and when that was not loud enough, neighbours started to come out and bang on the chosen door until they drag a very apprehensive shop keeper out to make

him sell me his ware.

Car honking seems to be a national pastime here. How does blaring your horn on a standstill traffic going to miraculously create a passage way for you to guide your car through is still a mystery to me. I once even sat in a taxi cab which had a switch for a horn – flick it down and it screams continuously until you flick it off. Anywhere else in the world, it is very shameful indeed to have someone have to resort to honking at you for that would mean you were uncouth enough to warrant it.

How does one gesticulate "yes"? By nodding, of course, I would say. Well, that apparently is not the way it works in India. Somehow, shaking your head from left to right is "yes" and well...what is "no" then?

Hospitality is a huge deal in India. You arrive at someone's home unannounced to see them and spend time with them yet, a few of them will disappear to the market as soon as you arrive and when they come back, the rest of them would disappear into the kitchen to prepare the ingredients the first lot had brought home. By the time "nashta" is ready, you hurriedly eat and leave for it is already nightfall. So much for bonding...

Trying to call a relative on the telephone long distance is no short feat. You want to make it quick for long equals expensive but everyone from immediate family to their neighbours and their neighbours' relatives want to have a word with you. Whatever does one say to the 2-year old grandson of the people living two doors away from your aunt?

Road expansion is very commendable especially since it is to elevate nasty traffic congestion. However, not wanting to uproot a 300-year tree that stood in the way of progress is just as honourable so



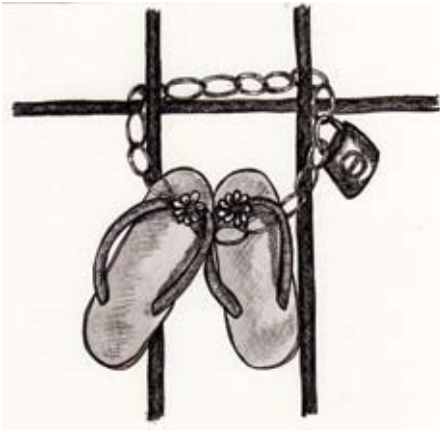
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how does one get around it?? Exactly by doing that – leave the tree there and pave the road on the other side of it so now we have a bigger road but unfortunately, the part on the other side of the tree is not large enough to let a car pass so we are back to square one. Although, it would be a squeeze but I suppose grandpa's bike might just be able to go through it.

In the 70s, growing up in Singapore, we would be treated to Shivaji Ganesan dressed up as Lord Bhrama and doing all kinds of feats adorned in gold. All very well except that calendars were then produced following the success of such movies and handed out free with the purchase of, oh let's say, a pressure

cooker. These calendars would grace many a alter table and prayers would be offered to the likes of Mr Ganesan, in the guise of the Devine Creator.

I witnessed a very interesting incident some years ago as I sat in front of a temple gate waiting. A young lady arrives, takes one slipper off and places it haphazardly on one end of a pile of slippers already there from other visitors to the temple. What surprised me was her next move which was that she puts the remaining slipper not immediately next to the other half of the pair but completely at the other extreme of the temple gate. I have finally figured out how to be able to wear my favourite pair of shoes to a temple now instead of having to resort to putting on only footwear which I can afford to lose.

I was returning a spool of white thread to a neighbour which my aunt had earlier borrowed from. She was a modest woman, working away mixing what, to the untrained eye, looked like mud and cement with her right hand in her yard when I arrive. When I make my intentions known, she smilingly stretches out the mudcaked (umm....actually, my olfactory senses told me this was actually a less exciting concoction she had in her hands and of course, why ever would anyone use their bare hands to mix ce-

ment with!??) right hand and expected me to put the article there. Needless to say, I was taken aback for this would mean that the white thread (or any thread for that matter) was as good as ruined. Naturally I said this was silly and asked for her other, clean hand and she reluctantly gave me that and the matter was closed. Shaking my head at her short sightedness I walk home and recount the episode to my aunt who explains that because the neighbour respected me, she could only offer me her right hand, even though she knew that was the last she would see of her property which was better than offending me by offering me her left hand.

There is probably enough material to cover an entire trilogy-worth of books when talking about language spoken in India so instead of embarking on such an ambitious expedition here in Aaratrika (yes, I am told that I cannot, must not, monopolise), I shall just touch on one peculiar example of English as spoken by citizens from the sub-continent. They constantly say "You are looking pretty" or some other adjective following the word looking. I find that almost half a compliment as if they are telling me that I am not really beautiful but that I merely, on a superficial level, exude a deceptive glow. For me, one is either pretty or not. Another example so often used is that of hunger, as in "I am feeling hungry". Why not just, "I am hungry"?? Perhaps this is because of a literal translation from "amar khidhe peyeche".

So whether you are feeling hungry at 8 for a hot dinner or trying to make out if you are headed in the right direction for you can never make out the yeses from the noes, whether you go to the temples and risk having to walk home barefoot or choose instead to do the thanksgiving at home in front of the colourful poster of some 70s movie star, you know that when in India, you will never come away from it indifferent. My relationship with it in my handful of visits has been one of the most potent experiences of my life.





Почему?

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Oh! Calcutta!



Kaveri Sen Menon

Kaveri is an "original" Calcuttan from Sutanoti (where Fort William currently is located), has not lived in Calcutta since 1995. Perhaps that is why she still refers to Kolkata as Calcutta ! A housewife who has lived in various cities in India and abroad, depending on her husband's postings, she is now living in the hill city of Bandung in Indonesia. Her all time favourite breakfast is of course *maida'r luchi and alur makha-makha tarkari*. With age she has become health conscious and is very happy and sated with hot toast with melting butter, fried eggs and milk - health conscious indeed!

I am not a writer by any means, but yes, I do like to put my feelings into words. Last week I was asked to write a piece/article/story - well anything which makes good reading, by my recently acquired friend, Bornali, a Bengali too, who has come from Russia where her husband Sudip had been working. And the best part is that we both hail from Calcutta. Calcutta, a city that never lets you forget its existence no matter where you are. It has a way of welcoming you into its fold with its warmth and hospitality which overpowers the stench, the filth lying around even in the important streets, its by now famous 'bandhs', its traffic jams, its suffocating pollutions.. A dialogue in a Bengali film by Rahul Bose aptly describes what a Probas - an expat - feels about the City of Joy - you hate it and you love it. Oh yes, it's so true.

The life of an expat - specially in the South Eastern part of the world, can be wonderful. Its the El Dorado of the East. Some people would give up much to be in my place. But for me, its a different story. I don't seem to get the pull of Calcutta out of my system! The town I am living in at present - a small quaint, picturesque place up in the hills, providing the best of both a city and a town - is truly beautiful. I wake up in the morning to the sound of birds chirping, open my eyes to see the fresh green grass in the lawn, the mango laden tree, a variety of colours in the recently bloomed flowers - oh so peaceful and refreshing. But then, once the novelty wears off - I am pining for waking up in a cramped

flat, with the sound of the harsh cawing of the crows, the sound of the horn of the milk vans, the tinkling bells of the rickshaws, the clangs of the trams, the wailing of hawkers selling their morning fruits and vegetables. Amazing how the city has taken over me completely. I can understand why I feel like this, as I was born and brought up in the city. But my husband, who lived all his young life in Malaysia and came to Calcutta for his college - he too cannot think of living anywhere else but Calcutta !! He is just waiting for the day when he can put his feet up and retire and return to Calcutta. As they say, the converts are more of a fanatic than the originals! Calcutta just grows on anyone who accepts it for what it is.

The other day, my before mentioned friend Bornali, and her husband Sudip, and a Tamilian couple, Ram and Leela, also from Calcutta, came over for lunch. As is common among Bengalis, wherever we meet, we start chatting in Bong, not bothering if the others understand the language or not. But thankfully, that particular day, everyone present knew the language. After a typical Bengali lunch of luchi, begun-posto bhaja, cholar daal, phul kpoir dalna, channar dalna, alur dum, tomator chatney and gurer payesh, one was bound to feel nostalgic. And for what?! For the different sounds made by the hawkers on the streets of Calcutta ! My Tamilian friend mimicked brilliantly the sounds with its quaint intonations of the sil-nora wallas, the knife sharpener and the paper/kabadi walls - it was amazing. As the husband of my

new friend said - for a few hours, we brought Calcutta to us - oh so true.

For me Calcutta is a place where I can live life on my own terms. I can relate to the people and find my own comfort zone. As an expat, I have to follow the norms and rules of a foreign place which does not give me a sense of belonging. Just the thought of walking down Free School Street, browsing in the second hand book shops, going to Southern Avenue and having the yummiest of puchkas, eating chicken rolls in Nizams, biriyani in Shiraz, lal misti doi from Ganguram - makes me go crazy with yearning and miss the city as much as I miss my children who are away from me, living their own lives.

Yes, Calcutta can give one ulcers too - the feeling of frustration when travelling from Point A to Point B, for movement in the city takes forever with its mismanaged traffic and roads with pot holes, the humidity level which can be a killer and makes you feel you are soaked in the juice of the city's famous sweet - rasogolla, the laid back attitude of the people - assigned tasks are never completed on time, and the unprofessionalism of the Calcuttans. And yet, when I weigh all these points on a scale along with how I feel for the City and the connection I feel with it, it is way, way up on the scale. Surprises me too.

Its sad to see the old Calcuttans having to give up their ancestral homes to builders and promoters as the joint family syndrome is vanishing and they cannot maintain these houses on their own. In its place multistoried flats are coming





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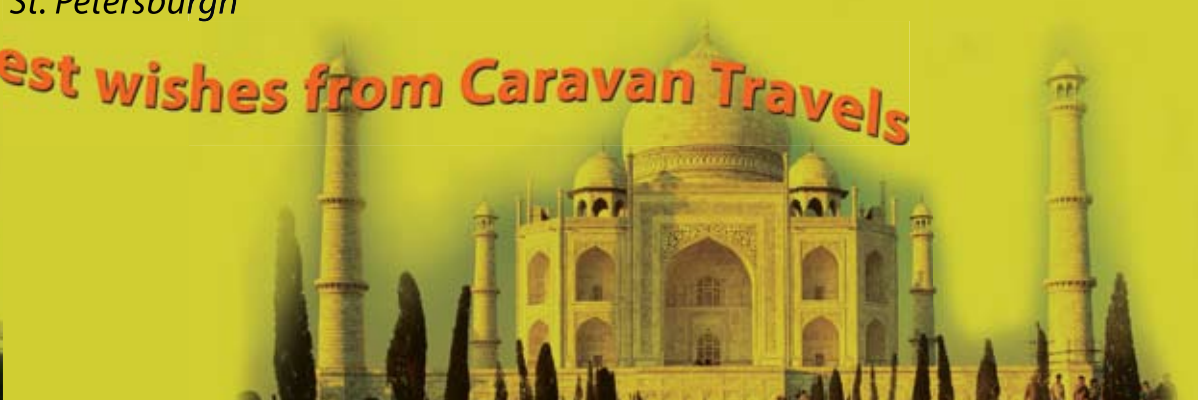
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up affordable to the rich only. If today you stand at the Howrah or Sealdah railway stations, you will see most of the original Calcuttans commuting by local trains and coming to the City to work. They have been ousted.

But for Calcuttans, who still have a place to go back to - its great. Even if people return to the City after a decade, one can still pick up life where one had left!! It is that comforting. Life doesn't change much here. Maybe visually yes, but look around the 'golies' and paras - you may still find the same man, a little older now maybe, but in the same type of outfit of dhoti and gamcha on his shoulder, selling the same lozenges, from the same glass jars!! The only consession he has made maybe the Cadbury chocolates and Fruty juices added in the patchy, dotted glass counters.

The hold the City has for me is something that cannot be described - one has to feel it. My love for Calcutta has made me immune even to the exotic charm of the East!! That is Calcutta for you!





Rajashree Jena

Travel is our middle name!



It was only an eight hour journey but the difference was a world apart. On one September day in the mid eighties, when it was sunny and hot in Delhi, we arrived in a cold and gloomy Moscow. Temperature might have been +10 or so. Everything seemed so alien, so distant and very unknown. Food had no smell, no taste, people hardly smiled, and it was very cold. I had been mentally prepared for the cold, but the grey skies compounded my gloom! Imagine yourself in the not jet set world of the 80's where International travel was mostly limited to the rich, famous and a handful of bureaucrats. Budget airlines were yet to appear, at least in our part of the world and international travel for holidaying or leisure was considered a luxury. A letter from Moscow to India usually took 2 weeks to reach its destination and that too through the diplomatic post. Yes guys, there was no possibility to send sms or have a quick chat on the Internet. Anyone remember life without Internet or cable TV? Then came the revolution in technology and especially the Internet, which brought a revolution to the way people, communicate. Today's Generation Y (especially in India) got massive exposure to the outside world through Internet and cable TV. The reason for all this blah-blah is purely to distinguish between the cultural shock for us and for the younger generation being rather different.

Do people experience culture shock when travelling from place to place? How about traveling through time? Imagine a man slipping into coma in the eighties to awaken 2006. Show him the song "Dhoom Machale"! Will he experience a culture shock? Do I need to answer?

The first shock for me and our group of students fresh off the boat (and there were plenty to follow), was the smell of a gloomy autumn Stolovaya (canteen) that still lingers in my mind, and

for some strange reason always comes back in the autumn. After the first few days of hunger, we mainly survived on bread, butter and eggs for the next few weeks, but gradually we tried many other Russian eatables which are now part of our daily diet, for example black bread. Then we noticed the drinking habits, at the same time when Mr. Gorbachev had started his "perestroika" and for some years "Sukhoi Zakon" (prohibition) was in force. Even then, once in a while one stumbled upon drunks in the road or near metro stations. And the unbelievably long queue for Vodka! In India an alcoholic is either a Diwana, as in Devdas (Dilip Kumar in Bimal Roy's Devdas) or the devil in Never mind! Then came the shock to see liberal world's public display of love in the streets of Moscow! Wasn't it supposed to happen only behind the bush, as per Bollywood movies of course? (I am still talking about those days)

As it happens in life, from Russia I moved further westward and landed in the Queens Land-Great Britain. My first impression was as if I have been around for a long time thanks to the historical connection, the BBC and a good dose of English literature. The first thing I loved about Britain was that I didn't need to carry my passport, visa, or any other identity proof with me everywhere. What a relief!

It was also very impressive to see the tolerance of the British people towards other cultures and traditions in real life. At least there was an attempt to make people feel human and officially (!) there was no discrimination against race or colour. I remember then British Conservative MP had to resign for some joke she cracked about

Asians at a private party. There was a huge uproar in society as the British Government wanted to project Britain as a multicultural society.

I was also impressed by the lovely roads all over the country (I mean all over, even in small isolated places in Scotland). And like most tourists, I was also mesmerized by the idyllic countryside of Britain. There were also the ex-industrial towns like Manchester and Birmingham, which are now transformed to modern housing and business and cultural centers. And the transformation is absolutely fantastic.

Still there were some surprises along the way; here are some of the funniest ones in my view

1. Here was my first shock on the bus:
Me – Can I have a ticket to City Centre, please.

Driver – Yes my love!

Me – Beg your pardon!

Of course he did not pay any attention, and continued in the same indifferent tone and cold eye with the next passenger. You heard this expression "love" everywhere. For many of us that was expressing familiarity, when there wasn't any!

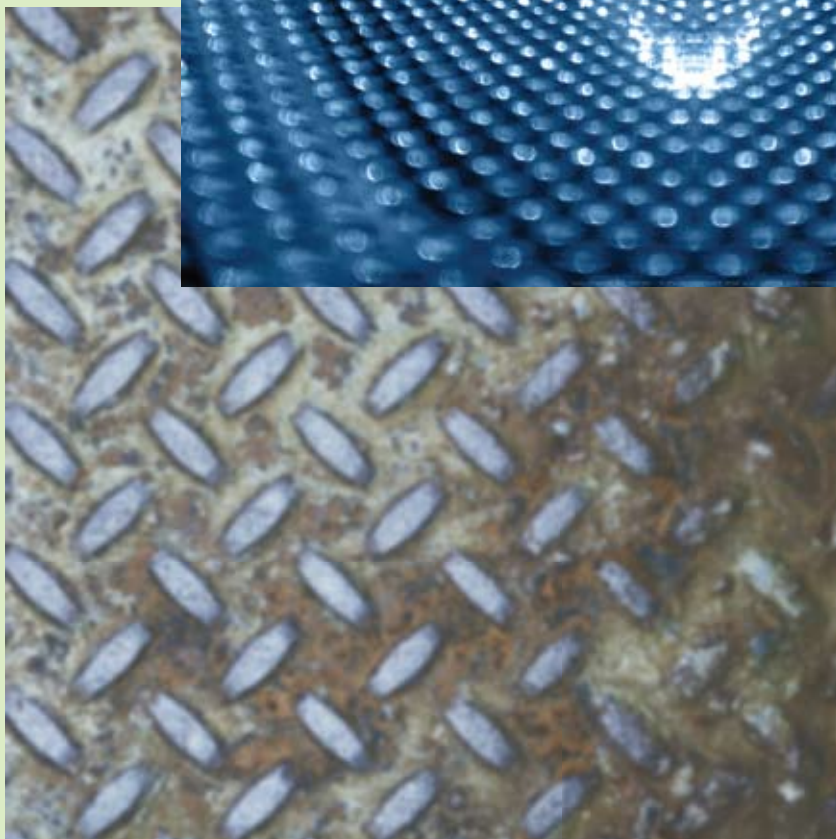
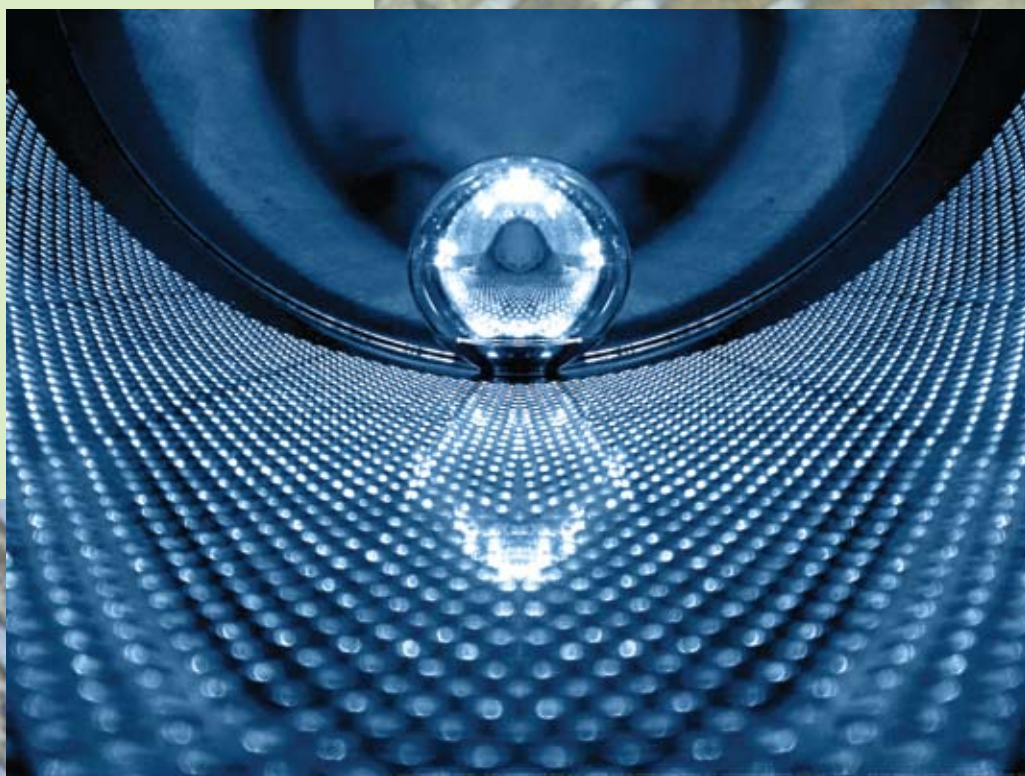
2. The bus drivers and sales men in re-



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tail stores wear white shirts and a tie. But the professor comes in jeans and T-shirt. (Perhaps I could not get over my soviet day professors in grey suits) And no, you don't call your professor "sir" but by their first name.

3. It is not always "ladies first". Many times gentlemen wonder if to let the ladies first or not. That hesitation was obviously thanks to the feminists!

4. Due to heavy rains in Manchester, the joke was that Manchester has two seasons, rainy season and very rainy season. You immediately identify a Mancunian (natives of Manchester) from an outsider. The ones carrying an umbrella when it is raining is obviously a non-Mancunian. You can easily find girls in mini skirts and strapless tops, and boys without a winter jacket in freezing temperatures. Wrapping up like cabbage is indeed not their style!

5. Washing my face in the morning was a pain really. Many sinks in the bathroom all over the UK, still have two separate taps, one for cold and the other for hot water. The first time I burnt my hand.

6. And finally it is not true that you don't make real friends there. I enjoyed two wonderful years in the UK and made many life-long friends. I will always remember the two lovely Christmases I spent among my British friends. They did not let me be alone during Christmas.

My two pages are complete now, so let me have my dinner. Wonder what am I having for dinner? Answer- Burglar or Grechko as many of us know - is that shocking?!

Here are some of our friends who share their experience of a different culture and unforgettable memories of a foreign land.



Manjulika Dhar, Educator

A passionate traveller, Switzerland is her favourite destination

Living in Russia, she misses the colorful festivals of India - as our saying goes 'there are 13 festivals in 12 months!' Al-

though there are many orthodox Christian festivals, they are not celebrated with much vigor among the people here. All the celebrations are limited to church and home, and don't spill out onto the streets as in India. Specifics of Indian festivals are that people wear colourful new dresses, which was strikingly opposite to the clothes here. Another important part of our festivals is the community feeling when people come together for the celebration.



Dr. Durga Nand Mishra

Administrative Officer

An enthusiastic explorer, an excellent organizer – our hassle-manager

My trip to the US a few years ago was a memorable one. What amazed me the most in the US were the fantastic roads, which I experienced while traveling on the budget, yet excellent greyhound buses. I landed at San Francisco airport that almost seemed to be located in the sea! In my journey of over 650 kms from Phoenix to LA, I noticed small planes flying very low spraying pesticide over the fields. They were so close to the ground that it seemed they would crash! As an agronomist this was indeed interesting for me as in India I have never seen anything of this sort. I visited a friend in Arizona who was studying at the Thunderbird International School of Management. The wonderful huge garden of the school had an amazing network of pipes which would automatically start watering the plants at 4 pm everyday! Each & every plant had a pipe to water it! I also saw astoundingly tall cacti of different types which had cute bird nests inside. Arizona being a desert, these nests are somewhat air-conditioned being located inside those huge cacti hiding from the strong Arizona sun.

Medha Mozumder

5th year medical student, Sechenov Moscow Medical Academy

Enthusiastic about culture and loves making friends from different backgrounds

When I reached Japan straight from Gangtok, because of my dad's transfer, the first thing that really surprised



me was that the people in Japan actually clean even the drains outside their houses like their room floors. I had never seen anyone do it in India apart from the jamadars. When I came to Russia, the very first thing that caught my attention was that the most popular place for couples to exhibit their mutual affection for each other was the metro elevators and compartments. I have rarely noticed such displays in some other public place elsewhere!



Debasish Sengupta

Entrepreneur

Travels a lot within Russia, from Valdivostok to Pskov. Both these cities are strikingly opposite in character, but he loves them.

During one of my trips to Ufa, I met a taxi driver who was a Tajik and married to a Russian and had been living in Ufa for last 15 years or so. Unlike other cities in Russia, where there are plenty of taxi services, there are not many taxi service companies in Ufa. The reason? The soviet system is still valid. It is actually



very difficult to get taxi driver's license. I found out that a few years back the guy had owned a company supplying packaged dry fruits and nuts to the "Py-teorchka" chain of shops. How he ended up as a taxi driver was the obvious question. Here is a typical story in post Soviet Russia, but not so typical for many of us. The taxi driver, a Tajik, was sent to jail because he had a fight with an immigration official and was sent to jail on some false allegations. After spending two years in prison, he was set free. He managed to get a taxi driver's license. It is obvious that his company is now owned by someone else. Still he has not lost hope to set up another company but he needs some investment. He offered to sell his passenger 15 hectares of land in Ufa. I was taken aback by the taxi driver's entrepreneurship and fighter's attitude; after all he had gone through, he had not given up hope of achieving his aim.

Dr. Eliza Anam

*Sechenov Moscow Medical Academy
A gifted dancer, her favourite being Indian traditional folk dances*

There are many places in the world which would be lovely places to make a living or settle down with ones family. But for tourists they don't seem to be



very interesting.

I was in Toronto this summer. There was nothing really exciting or surprising about the place, just another multinational and multicultural city. So for a new-fangled impression I would rather choose Innsbruck. This charming and peaceful (but not boring) city of western Austria has a rich heritage and the gorgeous Swarovski Crystal World.

Nitin Aurangabadkar

Businessman

Our cheerful and methodical puja organizer loves anecdotes and travelling
Switzerland - I remember seeing the

rather large family of an Arab sheikh with four wives and their pet dogs holidaying in Switzerland. The summer temperature shoots as high as 48 degree in UAE. After all it is hot for the animals as well!

France - In Paris we once dined at an Indian restaurant run by a Bangladeshi gentlemen (owner cum waiter) who had an African cook and the 3 visitors - Angshu, Sudeshna and myself! Globalization?

Switzerland - We were buying water for all 9 days of our 10 days stay and only in the last day we came to know that it is safe to drink the tap water all over Switzerland!



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Nadya Singh, our publisher

My Bulgarian Experience

Aaratrika's best buddy, a great photographer, she loves festive Indian meals served on a banana leaf



I love to travel, exploring new places for myself, new traditions and legends...

This year I went to Balchik and cape of Kaliakra in Bulgaria. The evening program included dinner in a restaurant on the Black sea coast and dancing on fire. It is an impressive sight in absolute darkness; you can see the Nestinars, who walk on burning coal barefoot to the tune of Bulgarian bagpipes and drums. At first, a girl holds before her icons of St Konstantin and St Elena, walks around the fire and perhaps falls into a trance and performs a ritual dance barefoot on the burning coal.

This tradition of Nestinars was adapted from Greeks living in Asia Minor (west of Turkey), who borrowed it from the early Middle Ages. There are a lot of legends about Nestinars. Here is one as described by the Guide.

During the Osman's rule, there was a cave, currently located in the village of Bylgary. There, lived ten Inok, Christian boys from Asia Minor. A cross made of burnt wood was erected at the entrance of the cave. Once, when the Turks were chasing the nuns to Constantinople, one of the nuns collapsed. When she came back to her senses, she found the Turks were about to burn the Cross. The nun decided to jump into the fire. She was not scared of the burning coals and the fire did not burn her feet. This happened

on the 3rd of June and to this day is celebrated as St Konstantin and St Elena's day.

Even now no one knows the secret of these phenomena. Not only tourists, but researchers – biologists, physiologists and psychologists – come to this Bulgarian village to try to understand what hidden force helps people win over fire with a calm face, and manage to walk on fire over and over again.

We loved the small Bulgarian town of Gabrovo, famous for the Humor and Satire Museum. Bulgarians are by nature generous, lively and jovial. They don't take any offence to jokes rather they make anecdotes about themselves. The main subject of their anecdotes – the thriftiness of the Grabovtsa (a native of Gabrovo). Economy is not a sin, but the magnitude of economy is definitely widening the humorists' imagination. Some examples:

A Grabovets fell down while climbing the stairs of his home, and collapsed. When he recovered consciousness, the first thing he asked: - Is the staircase intact?

A young couple has agreed to meet at the girl's house after her parents go out. When they leave the house, the girl throws a coin. Hours pass by, but her boy-friend does not turn up so she decides to go down to look for him. While climbing down she notices her young man looking for something in the bushes.

*The girl - What are you looking for there?
The boy-friend - The coin, which you threw down.*

The girl - Well I tied it to a rope and got back it immediately.

Grabovets visited his sister along with his son.

- Show me your hand boy, I will give you some nuts – says the happy hostess

- Give it papa

- Why? You don't like nuts

- Yes I love them, but dad has a larger palm.

They know the value of money!

- Gancho, here are two lev (Bulgarian money) for you. Buy two buns, one for you and one for me.

- After a while, little Gancho returns chewing the bun on the run.

- Here is your lev, I bought the last bun.



Очень люблю
путешествовать...
открывать для себя новые
места...
Старинные традиции,
легенды...

Robert
Louis Stevenson

There are no foreign lands. It is
the traveler only who is foreign

В этом году ездили с дочкой в Болгарию, заказали экскурсию в город Балчик и на мыс Калиакра, а вечером была программа в ресторане на болгарском побережье Черного моря, которая включает в себя танец на углях. Это впечатляющее зрелище, под покровом темноты, можно наблюдать так называемых нестинаров, которые босыми ногами под звуки болгарской волынки (гайды) и барабана ходят по горячим углям. Сначала девушка, держа перед собой икону святых Константина и Елены, ходила вокруг огня, потом, возможно, впад в экстаз совершила ритуальный танец босиком на горячих углях...

Обычай нестинары позаимствовали у греков Малой Азии, к которым он пришел из восточных культов раннего Средневековья. Существует много легенд о появлении на болгарской земле нестинарства, об одной из них нам рассказал гид.

Во времена османского владычества на том месте, где сегодня находится село Былгари, была пещера, в которой жили девять иноков – мальчиков-христиан из Малой Азии. У входа в каменную обитель стоял крест из обожженного дерева. Как-то раз турки гнали в Константинополь монахинь. Недалеко от пещеры одна из них потеряла сознание. Придя в себя, она увидела, что турки собираются сжечь крест. Монахиня, чтобы не допустить осквернения святыни, сама решила взойти на костер. Но оказалось, что огонь ей не страшен, а угли даже не обжигают ноги. И было это 3 июня, в день святых Константина и Елены.

Разгадки этого удивительного явления пока не найдено. И сегодня не только туристы, но и исследователи-биологи, физиологи, психологи – приезжают в болгарские села, чтобы попытаться понять, какая сила помогает людям победить огонь и, сохраняя безмятежное выражение лица, раз за разом входить в огненный круг...

А еще нам очень понравился небольшой болгарский городок Габрово, здесь находится знаменитый Музей юмора и сатиры. Болгары от природы наделены щедростью души, живым, веселым характером: они не только не обижаются на веселую шутку, но и сами о себе сочиняют анекдоты. Главный сюжет этих анекдотов – бережливость габровца, которая сама по себе не порок, но

ее размеры определенно развивают воображение у шутников.

Габровец поднимался по лестнице у себя дома, упал, потерял сознание. А когда пришел в себя, первым делом спросил: - Лестница не сломалась?

Договорились молодой человек с девушкой встретится у нее дома, когда уйдут родители. Когда они ушли, девушка бросила монетку. Ждет его час, два, три.

Спускается вниз – видит он что-то в кустах ищет.

- Что ты ищешь?

- Монетку, которую ты выбросила.

- Так я ж давно ее на веревочке вытаскивала.

Габровец с сыном приехал погостить к сестре.

- Дай мне ладошку, я насыплю тебе орехов, - сказала радушная хозяйка мальчику.

- Насыпьте их лучше папе.

- Ты не любишь орехи?

- Люблю. Но у папы ладонь больше.

ЗНАЕТ СЧЕТ ДЕНЬГАМ...

- Ганчо, вот тебе два лева.

Купи булочки: одну себе, а другую мне.

Немного погодя маленький Ганчо вернулся и, дожевывая на ходу, сказал:

- Вот тебе лев. Я купил последнюю булочку.





Theater - the Rus Bong Connection



An extremely gifted actor, aspiring to be a film director and also makes excellent chochori. Late autumn this year the 2nd channel of Russia television (PTP) will launch 'The Mermaid', a teleserial where he plays the role of an Indian doctor. We are delighted and proud. Wish him many more exciting roles to come!



Valeri Achadov
Director, Mostelefilm
(a leading Russian production house)

Most of us Bengalis are theater passionate people. We take great pride in our theaters in the Academy or in the "Theater pada" in the north. Most of the big theater group names like Nandikar, Sundorom, Bohurupi, PLT form and formed a part of our life. But it has a lot of the Russian flavor in it.

It is a historic fact that the first Bengali Theater was established on 21st March 1796 by a Russian intellectual in Calcutta named Lebedyev Gerasim Stepanovich at 25 Domtollah (present day Ezra Street). Before that only two British theaters were there in Calcutta which staged only English plays.

The leftist or the socialist influence started in the Theatrical moment of Bengal and that of India when IPTA was formed in 1942. Although formed in Mumbai the group comprised mostly Bengali cultural stalwarts. Nobanna (harvest) was one of the most successful social dramas of the time which was directed by the legendary Shombhu Mitra. Another founding member of the IPTA was Utpal Dutta. He was a leftist and many of his plays depicted the Marxist theories.

Apart from these facts the most adored foreign author in the Bengali Theater is undoubtedly Chekhov. Anton Chekhov's works were depicted by yesteryears' legends like Agitesh Bondopadhyay and present day icons like Monoj Mitra and Bibhash Chakroborty. In the words of Monoj Mitra the veteran actor, director and play writer "Russian Authors are closer to us than the Western because our societies have a lot of similarities

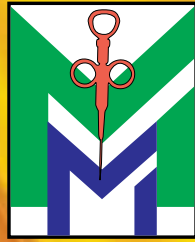
and their social problems are common to us". (Quote Darshoker Dorbare published 23rd April 2004))

The future: Today the Russian Theater is a very strong institution of culture in the country. Moscow apart from its famous theaters houses also has one of the best theater schools of the world. The teaching manual created by Konstantin Stanislavsky in the early twentieth century is still followed by most institutes across the world. Theater here is a professional organized institution with most main stream artists being part of the theater and is constantly catered by young talented graduates from these institutes. In Calcutta despite our rich history and a vibrant present day group theater movement most of it is still not professional. We had Girish Chandra Gosh staging Shakespearean "Macbeth" in 1893 in Minerva Theaters at a time when theater both in Bengal and India was associated with songs and dances resembling the folk theater. Both Girish Ghosh and Sishir Bhaduri were path breakers in bringing modern theater in Bengal about a hundred or more years ago which had mega success. They were also known as good teachers. If we had such a big history I cannot see why we are still limited to amateur (mostly) group theaters and cannot have theaters with stages of their own in the likes of MXAT, LENKOM, Satire, Taganka etc. May be with time the Russian influence will reach us. It is not only a financial challenge but also requires a lot of dedication. In the words of my Guru Valeri Achadov "It requires a life long full time dedication". I only hope this will sometime happen in Calcutta.

Dr. Pradyumna Chatterjee
aka our Papu



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Sports and more: In conversation with Hitangshu Kumar Dasgupta



Hitangshu Kumar Dasgupta

Sports Journalist, Khelaar Ashor Kolkata
Staunch supporter of East Bengal
football club & Dinamo, his favourite
football player - Lev Yashin

Aaratrika in conversation with him:

So what are your impressions about India's performance and the general situation of sports in the country? Indeed I am delighted about India's spectacular performance in summer Olympics 2008. I consider this a matter of pride for individuals and in a way an embarrassment for a country like India with over one billion population to win only three medals. India still has a long way to go in developing its infrastructure in sports and our government should play a pivotal role in that. I would attribute the Olympic victory to our traditional strength in fields like wrestling and not to the improvement in our sports related infrastructure. In 1986 during the Moscow Goodwill Games, I was interviewing our great swimmer Bula Chowdhury. She was speaking about the poor condition of our sport facilities. She also pointed out that our sportsmen should compete more often with other countries to be able to know where we stand in the international arena. I hope after this encouraging Olympic results our government together with our business community will join hands in building a better, stronger base for our sportsman, encourage them and am sure we can bag many more gold.

Has the media been able to successfully engage with these victories?

I sincerely hope our media has been able to reach the euphoria of our Olympics victory to the rural areas as well. The media should play a vital role in boosting the spirits of our sportspeople. It is in the villages that we have some of our finest sportsman.

Poshakashak:

Almost always you will find Bishuda in a neat, crisp suit with well matched shirt and tie. Back home we often refer to the saying "simply living high thinking". However, Moscow over the last decade has developed into an extremely fashion conscious city. So how important is poshak-ashak or attire after all? Haha! Are you saying *ami shob somoy shejegu je thaki*? Your dressing sense often reflects your inner world. It is important. Style is knowing who you are and what you want to say. Fashion is a way of self-expression. The first impression is often guided by the garb!

Khanapina:

He is an excellent cook, his area of expertise being biriyani, tandoori and mutton curry. We asked him why is Indian food not so popular in Russia as in most countries of Europe? Of course, I would want Indian food to be more popular in Russia especially in Moscow. Indian restaurants in Europe have professional cooks and offer wider varieties. From Kashmir to Kerela we have such a wide variety of cuisine, yet what we get in most Indian restaurants of Moscow is food from the North, probably Punjabi. I love Punjabi khana but feel we should be able to offer a wider range. Also comparatively Indian food is expensive here.



*I wish you all a very
happy puja filled with
scrumptious festive meals!*



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The good, the bad, the tasty and the almost unpalatable...

Aaratrika asked some of our friends to submit recipe ideas prepared with these five ingredients (**Coconut, spinach, sweet-potato, pumpkin, rice**), taking into consideration that a kitchen always has the basic spices and things like milk and sugar. The results are, to say the least, varied.



MITALI SARKAR

Our orderly librarian - responsible and reliable like a true Virgo

My menu would be:

- Kalo jire diye palong shak or spinach cooked with black onion seeds, little onion and four to five tablespoons of water can also be added to this bhaji or curry
- Misti bhat or sweet rice with nuts and raisins with coconut as a garnish
- Kumro bhaja which is fried pumpkin
- Srilankan style payesh or kheer which is cooked with rice, coconut, milk and sugar

Can I avoid the sweet potato please?



YULIA SNEGIREVA

A passionate indoor gardener, Yulia's gulab jamuns are lip smacking.

For pervoe or to begin with I would serve spinach-sweet potato soup (some chicken can be added), which would be followed up rice-pumpkin porridge boiled in milk. I would wrap up with coconut stuffed blinis or pancakes sweetened with fruit syrup.



PADMALOCHNA MAHADEVAN

CEO Anandamela, ever smiling, ever active, she says the source of her vigour is the children of her school

Pumpkin is available in plenty in autumn and is full with the goodness of vitamins. Grown-ups and specially children are not partial to this vegetable. So here is my recipe to make Mr. Pumpkin attractive. In one teaspoonful oil fry one teaspoonful dhania, pinch of red chilly, two teaspoonfuls each of urat and chana dal and some grated coconut. This mixture after grinding becomes the masala for this dish. Diced pumpkin should be separately fried in oil. The spinach needs to be blended into a smooth paste for the gravy. Add the masala, cooked pumpkin and little tamarind paste to the spinach gravy in a pan with little oil and your 'pumpkin-in-a-spinachpool' is ready! I would serve this dish with steamed rice and boiled sweet potato.



MOISES GARZON

Anandamela food contest ex-judge, an excellent chef and an ardent dacha enthusiast

I feel sweet-potato is pretty much similar to ordinary potatoe. So I would simply fry them and add to gravy of onions & coconut. My meal would also include:

- palak-paneer with plain steamed rice
- pumpkin pie or 'torta'



ANJALI NAYAK

Creative, vibrant and loves experimenting with different cuisines.

With pumpkin I could bake cake, biscuit, pie, muffin or even bread. With it I would also prepare chips, pakoras or typical Bengali chochori - a vegetable dish with pumpkin, sweet potato and spinach.

Sourcream-spinach dip is excellent with chips. Spinach can be utilized for Spanish quesadilla, French quiche, pie and of course pakoras.

Kerela palappam (milk, rice, coconut, sugar and yeast) and fried rice with also be included in my meal.

Sweets from coconut would include barfi, laddoo and payesh/kheer.

Ranga alur pantua is a mouth-watering Bengali sweet made from sweet potato with coconut filling. Sweet potato pie and casserole turns out delectable. Also first-rate chat can be made with roasted or boiled sweet potato.

As you can see the list is endless!



JOY DASGUPTA

Do you what happens when you stir together Mikhail Zadornov, Kesto Mukherjee and an unknown mysterious component?

I would blend all the five ingredients endlessly till they turn into a Bengali Halloween Pie. Try it!





ZAFEERA HANIF

She has been in Moscow only for a year but name it and she has been there - Yasnaya Polyana, Vladimir, Tsaritsino, Kolomenskaya. A keen voyager indeed!

With sweet-potato it has to be a pudding, in which the potatoe needs to be grated with milk and sugar added to it.

I would try making a salad using pumpkin and boiled rice. The dressing could be either mayonnaise or curd with salt and pepper added to it. Other ingredients can be used to make the salad more interesting. Pumpkin can also be cooked with coconut and spinach as a vegetable dish which I would rather serve with hot rotis.



JEWEL GHOSH

4th Year medical student, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia who wordlessly helps in puja chores
I do not really cook much. A good rice pulao with diced fried pumpkin and coconut is what comes to my mind. The spinach can be finely chopped and fried to be served as a side dish along with some of the fried coconut and pumpkin.

Sweet potato! Wondering what do I do with them? Probably just boil and use for garnishing of the pulao.



DEBASISH DHAR

Although admitting that all that glitters is not steel, he believes that steel is not dull. It's eco- friendly and after all Porsche is made of steel! A superbly accomplished cordon bleu, biriyani is his true area of expertise.

Spinach Diet Cutlet: Boil the pumpkin and sweet potato. Mash both and add corn flour to make dough. Boil rice and fry lightly in oil. Chop spinach and fry lightly as well. Mix the fried rice with the spinach. Take small portions of the spinach-rice mix as a filling in the pumpkin-sweet potato dough and make shapes like cutlets using the dough. Roll the cutlets in desiccated coconut and deep fry. Drain oil and serve hot with sauce or chutney.





A DOSAI LOVE AFFAIR

Monique Fuller

Monique has lived on four continents and currently resides in Madrid. She makes jewellery and does free-lance illustrations. Her interest in food led her to write a cookery book with a friend which will be published in English next summer. Other interests range from most cultural activities to reading and travel. Her favourite breakfast is dosai masala when available; if not, good toast with olive oil and dukkah.

Of Italian and English descent I grew up in London. My mother (the Italian part) is an excellent cook and although Italian ingredients are now ubiquitous in London, in the sixties and seventies even buying olive oil entailed a trek to specialised shops in central London's Soho. As Indians in a foreign country this is perhaps something you can identify with and agree that food is one of the best ways in which to recreate a corner of your homeland when living overseas. But although we enjoy these treats that bind us inextricably to our roots, living abroad opens our minds and palates to other foods and dishes and often changes our personal culinary landscape forever.

My first contact with Indian food (Chinese and Malay of course, too) was while living in Singapore. For a few years in the early eighties I had an Indian boyfriend who introduced me to dosai in general, and to dosai masala in particular, at the Komala Vilas restaurant on Serangoon Road in Singapore's Little India. I was hooked. The slightly acidic taste of the crispy soft dosai and the silky, spicy potato filling scooped up and dipped in either coconut chutney or tangy sambar was a revelation...can breakfast get any more seductive? On most occasions I was the only non-Indian in the place and drew gazes and stares while I ate my dosai, somewhat messily, but not altogether disastrously.

And then I met Shanti and her welcoming family and my taste buds were in for yet another culinary adventure. I was

overjoyed when I was invited to their home for dinner one evening but my heart sank as soon as I saw the table. No cutlery. Dosai is one thing for the uninitiated to eat with one's hands, but curry quite another. A dazzling array of dishes arrived at the table. I tried my best to emulate my fellow diners as they delicately took a little rice and some curry, formed a perfect mouthful and with one deft movement it was gone. My efforts were in vain. As hard as I would try not only would my entire hand become a spicy mess, but the curry gravy inevitably dribbled inelegantly almost down to my elbow. Thankfully Shanti's mother kindly offered me a fork and spoon. My favourite dish of all and the one that has stayed in my taste buds' memory as the Number One prawn curry of all time was Shanti's mother's chingrir masala. Visually it was glorious in all its golds and pinks, a riot of jewel-like colours. But it was the taste that mesmerised me with the smoothness of the coconut, the slight crunch of the prawns and the aromas of the various spices. Perfection on a plate.

With Shanti I discovered fish head curry too and our favourite place for this dish was at the improbable Civil Service Club housing Samy's Curry on Dempsey Road. Other Indian delights I have discovered over the years both in Singapore and India herself. Such is my enthusiasm for her food that on my last trip there, which lasted about a month, I of course had dosai masala most days for breakfast. I gained 5kg.

In Madrid where I currently reside, I have

yet to find a restaurant or coffee shop that prepares this delectable morning treat. Yes, we have coffee or hot chocolate and churros but give me a dosai any day....

Shubo bijoya to you all!

Here are two recipes from Spain that are easy to prepare and can be adapted to your personal taste. Pan tumaca (its name in Catalan) is a simple peasant dish; a good way to use up leftover bread with traditional ingredients such as garlic and olive oil and brightened with the presence of tomatoes. It is eaten in Spain at breakfast and as an appetiser also. If eaten as an appetiser it's good with a glass of chilled beer, a good wine or a dry sherry.

PAN TUMACA

Good quality white bread, of a rustic type if possible but make sure it's of wheat (not rye etc)

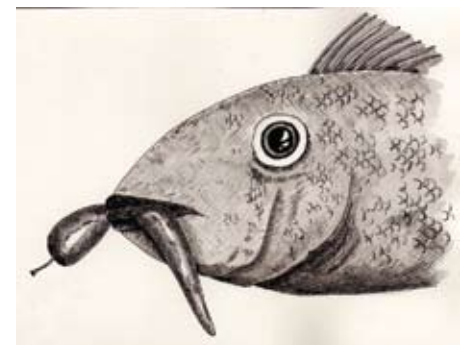
Ripe tomatoes

A clove or two of garlic (optional)

Virgin olive oil (preferably one with lots of taste) Salt

Slice the bread into medium thick slices.

You can toast them lightly if you like as





*Wishing all a Very Happy
Durga Puja and Dushera
from Sanjay Yadav!*

this will make it easier. If using the garlic, cut a piece off to reveal the inside and rub one side of the bread with the cut side. A little for a hint of garlic, more if you like a stronger garlicky presence.

Cut the tomato in half and with the cut side, rub the bread until you have a generous amount on the bread but not too much. Pour a little olive oil over the bread and season with salt. Eat immediately accompanied with a glass of wine or sherry!

The second recipe is a comfort dish as those made with potatoes tend to be. Spanish food is not, in general, hot, but there are a few recipes that use chilli or pimentón and this is one of them. Given that both potatoes and chillies (tomatoes, chocolate, maize etc) originate from the American continent this is not an ancient dish, but it is immensely popular and one of the Canary Islands most emblematic dishes. I hope that you enjoy them both!

Wrinkly Potatoes with mojo picón

Serves 4

1 kg new potatoes, about the size of small eggs
6 tbsp coarse salt

Wash potatoes well but do not peel. Put in a saucepan and just cover with cold water. Add the salt and boil until tender.

Drain, leaving about 1cm of water in the pan, and leave the saucepan over a low heat to allow the skin of the potatoes to dry and become wrinkled. Keep an eye on them so they do not burn!

Serve with the skin on with mojo colorado or mojo verde.

Red Peppery Sauce

Mojo colorado

250ml water

2 hot dried red chillies

4 cloves of garlic, unpeeled (more if you adore garlic!)

1 bay leaf

½ tbsp cumin seeds

4 cloves of garlic, peeled

½ teaspoon coarse salt

1-2 tbsp good quality sweet pimentón or paprika

75-100ml olive oil

1 tbsp white wine vinegar

Put the water, the dried chilli peppers, the unpeeled garlic cloves and the bay leaves in a saucepan. Bring to the boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 30mins

or until 4/5 of the liquid have evaporated. Do not discard the remaining liquid. Pound the cumin seeds in a mortar with one of the drained chillies (both if you like your food hot) and pound until paste-like. Add the peeled garlic and the salt and when the mixture is well pounded add the pimentón or paprika. Add the olive oil little by little so that it emulsifies. You may not need all of it. Lastly add the vinegar to taste and if necessary some of the cooking water to achieve the right density of sauce. It should be fairly thick.

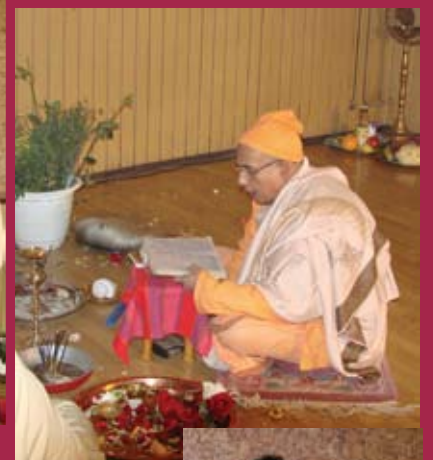
This is a typical dish from the Canary Islands and is eaten both at home and out. You can also make a mojo verde if you prefer. Use 2 fresh green chillies or to taste, the same amount of cumin, vinegar and olive oil as above and pound with a generous handful of fresh coriander and parsley.





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Late Prof. Aleksander Petrovich Gnachuk-Danielchuk

Professor of Bengali language and translator.

He has translated works of Rabindranath Tagore into Russian. In India he is well known in Kolkata and Dakha. Vishwa Bharati awarded him a Doctorate in 1986. In 2004 he received 'Rabindra Bisheshagga' from Rabindra Research Institute, Kolkata.



Late Mrs. Baby Chakraborty

I still remember the cold shivering winters of 1998 in Moscow. I was amazed to see snow everywhere. It was my first time away from home and I was a little depressed. She could read my mind and tried to cheer me up with stories of summer in Moscow. She said winter will soon be over, the snow will eventually melt and it would be jol jol (water) everywhere. My knowledge of Bengali is rather limited so I just tried guessing. She also said that in summer Aalok arrives as early as 4 O'clock in the morning. I misunderstood Aalok as some newspaper boy, only to understand later that she was indeed referring to the early sunrise. Days passed by and the summer did arrive with the very early rays of sunshine. I was getting used to Moscow largely thanks to her. She was always there for me whenever I needed her. Well, that was my Baby Aunty with a face so kind and gentle. I miss her and will always remember her.

Contributed by Tanu Tripathi

ত মৌদি তে মাঝে মজাচুজা
ছাড়া ও আমি এতা কাজ মোক লোখি
যে মুখি আমায় প্রকাশ করা সম্ভব
না। আমা মাঝে খি। এতা দুই
দেখা ওখিমা বাক ও আমায় আমায় পালন
হাও ও আমায় ত মৌদির ওতা বিনামি
ত মাঝে তে মাঝে এখিমা লেন।
আমি মাঝে এই তো মৌদির
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মিতালী সর্কার
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Contributed by Irina Prokofieva

Contributed by Mitali Sarkar

**We remember you fondly miss you and pray for your peace.
Moscow Durga Puja Committee**





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Third Prize for Biryani - **Neha**

*Aaratrika thanks
Monique Fuller
for the lovely sketches
especially the Sheuli.*



Joyotee Ray Chaudhury

Art was a part of Joyotee's DNA from the beginning. Growing up, she watched her late father, Ajit Kumar Banerjee, sketch and paint. His work as an Art Director in the Bombay film industry inspired Joy to look upon construction on colours as a mode of expression. After meeting her husband, she moved from Mumbai to Singapore and embraced a new life while sharing her journey through her paintings. Her paintings have a vibrancy and energy that stem from her frequent choice of vivid colours and depiction of strong, powerful figures. Her work has been displayed in various exhibitions in Singapore and USA.

*Aaratrika thanks
Joyotee Ray Chaudhury
for the painting that she
specially sent for our cover
this year.*





OUR SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Smita Sengupta & Monique Fuller for editing

We thank you for your support.

Wish you a very happy puja!

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Design & layout:

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"IDEA" +7 495 232 5552 ext.137

+7 901 512 8734

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e-mail: mail@ideasonline.ru

www.ideasonline.ru

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Cover picture: Joyotee Ray Chaudhury





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