

A a r a t r i k a

Moscow Durga Puja 2024





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Editorial

It is the 35th Anniversary of the Moscow Durga Puja. It is remarkable to say the least! One might feel it paradoxical indeed, that our Puja began during the Soviet Union days. Some jokingly say that McDonald's and the Durga Puja started in the same year in Moscow — a year before the August Putsch or Coup of 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Those were days when to procure some basic grocery was difficult, and the hope to receive permission to carry out a religious festival was almost inconceivable. Yet, it was made possible thanks to the efforts of a few enthusiasts.

Today the Moscow Durgotsav, with its cultural, linguistic and regional heterogeneity, has become a grand celebration hailed both by locals and our South Asian community alike.

Despite hurdles and obstacles, the celebrations have continued due to the remarkable synergy of the entire spectrum of the Indian community- Ramakrishna Mission, Indian Embassy, business community, students, friends from neighbouring countries especially Bangladesh, and certainly our Russian well-wishers.

Puja continued to be organized each and every year despite the roller coaster ride which Russia went through in the wild nineties and later, even during the greatest challenge of our time, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. For two consecutive years Durga Puja had to be conducted without visitors. It was difficult for all of us, but the continuity was maintained.

Aaratrika has always strived to be a platform for artists, both from Russia and India. We had works of eminent artists before, and this year we are grateful to have the work of two artists, both graduates of the Kala Bhavana in Shantiniketan, who have created their art works specially for this occasion. Tatyana Petrova from St. Petersburg created Durga as a Baul Singer ruminating her days spent in Shantiniketan.

Sonali Bose, presently residing in Delhi created her painting depicting the people raising their voices for justice and social changes in these tumultuous times.

Aaratrika this year also features veteran artist Dhiren Shasmal, distinguished for his work depicting Goddess Durga in different forms. We are honoured to have him as our featured artist on this anniversary.

Children's art this year is represented by Janvi Gupta, a student of class 10 at Kendriya Vidyalaya. She has done the illustrations for the Hindi section, portraying Goddess as the source of power against oppression.

A special note of thanks to our cover artist Abhinaba Dasgupta.

And lastly we remember those who have left us in this course of our journey. They will always be a part of our celebrations.

The autumn sun and the golden brown trees (our Russian version of the "Kaash phool" or the Kans grass) serve as the signal of the advent of Sharad Utsav or the Autumn Festival.

Shubh Durgotsav — SHARAD SHUBHECCHA from all of us.

*Durga Puja in Kolkata
has been inscribed as*



Shri Shri Durga Puja Schedule – 2024

The 35th year of Durga Puja in Moscow
being celebrated by the Moscow Durga Puja Committee



October 09, 2024 (Wednesday) Sashti

17:30 hrs Puja Starts (Kalparambha, Bodhon, Aamantran and Adhivas)
20:00 hrs Pushpanjali / Aarti
20:30 hrs Fruit Prasad distribution



October 10, 2024 (Thursday) Saptami

08:00 hrs Puja Preparations begins
09:30 hrs Puja Starts
11:30 hrs Pushpanjali / **Bhog & Aarti**
11:50 hrs Fruit Prasad distribution
18:00-19:00 hrs Evening Aarti & Fruit Prasad distribution



October 11, 2024 (Friday) Maha Ashtami

08:00 hrs Puja Preparations begins
09:30 hrs Puja Starts
Sandhi puja
11:43 hrs Sandhi Puja starts
12:31 hrs Sandhi Puja ends
12:45 hrs Pushpanjali / Aarti and Fruit Prasad distribution
18:00-19:00 hrs Evening Aarti and Fruit Prasad distribution



October 12, 2024 (Saturday) Maha Navami

08:00 hrs Puja Preparations begins
09:30 hrs Puja Starts
11:30 hrs Pushpanjali / **Bhog & Aarti**
11:50 hrs Fruit Prasad distribution
18:00-19:00 hrs Evening Aarti and Fruit Prasad distribution



October 13, 2024 (Sunday) Dashami

09:00 hrs Puja Preparations begins
10:00 hrs Puja Starts
11:30 hrs Visarjan
12:15 hrs Sindur Khela
12:45 hrs Shantijal
13.30 hrs Fruit Prasad Distribution

Puja rituals ends with Visarjan



October 16, 2024 (Wednesday) Laxmi Puja

Puja Starts 18:00 hrs onwards

**PUJA VENUE: MOSCOW , STREET KUUSINENA 19 A
(Metro Polezhaevskaya OR ZORGE)**

Who is Mahāmāyā?

Swami Jyotirupanand

सा विद्या परमा मुक्तेर्हेतुभूता सनातनी॥ १.५७
संसारबन्धहेतुश्च सैव सर्वेश्वरेश्वरी॥ १.५८

*SHE is the supreme knowledge (Brahma-Vidya), the cause of final liberation, the eternal.
She again is also the cause of bondage as transmigration (of the people).
It is She Who is the Controller of the controllers, such as Brahma,
Vishnu and other gods and goddesses.*

The above *sloka* is taken from the 1st Chapter of *Sri Sri Devi Māhātmyā* where the Talks of the great sage *Mārkaṇḍeya* in his hermitage situated in the forest, when the king *Suratha* approached him along with a merchant named *Samādhi*.

The king *Suratha* was driven out of the throne by his family members with the help of ministers and others. With great difficulty he fled away from the kingdom to save his life. On the other hand, a merchant named *Samādhi*, also got trouble from his son and wife associated by some wicked people.

By the divine providence both the afflicted persons — the king and the merchant — assembled in that forest where the sage *Mārkaṇḍeya* lived. The king and the merchant, both were in the same afflicted state of mind, did not know why their minds were so much tormented and met with a feelings of intense affection for the families and friends who miserably driven them out, depriving them everything they earned so painfully!

The king, knowing from the merchant *Samādhi* about his pitiable condition, just like his own, both of them approached the sage *Mārkaṇḍeya* to ask about the cause of their sufferings. The sage invited them in his hermitage, received them very kindly and wanted to know the reason of their coming.

The king *Suratha* said: Oh! Venerable sage! I was a king and made my kingdom prosperous and affectionately loved all my family members and used to look upon the subjects as my own. Even then, taking the advantage of my love and trust on them, my wife and children, conspiring with ministers, betrayed and dethroned me and drove me out of my kingdom. To save my life, I fled into the forest. And this merchant, *Samādhi* by name, also had faced similar situation like me and fled to the forest to save his own life.

At present, our minds are so pitiable that in spite of being betrayed, still our minds are running after the same people, our families, children including our properties and remembering them with great affection like ignorant men. Why our minds are being so much attracted towards those kith and kin, feeling so much affection for them even after such bitter experience caused by their betrayal?

Rishi said: Every being has the knowledge of the objects perceived by the senses. Even so, men are hurled in whirlpool of attachment. This is because of the influence of great power of *Mahāmāyā* (The Great Illusion), creating delusion and makes the existence of the world possible. Marvel not at this.

The king said: Venerable Sir, who is that Devi whom you call *Mahāmāyā*?

The sage said: She is the Supreme knowledge. When propitious, becomes a boon-giver to the human beings for their final liberation. She also is the cause of bondage of transmigration and sovereign over all lords, gods and goddesses.

We also find in another *sloka* (1.55): Verily She is the Bhagavati, *Mahāmāyā* forcibly drawing their minds of even the wise, throws them into delusion. She created this universe both moving and the nonmoving.

We get the opportunity every year to worship Her in the form of Sri Durga. May she be compassionate enough to bring us success, welfare and devotion to the whole world. With this we bow down to Her feet again and again.





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



The festival is not just a religious observance, but it also symbolizes the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and hope over despair. It also brings people from all walks of life together, transcending differences, and reinforcing the values of peace and harmony. It is therefore a matter of great happiness that the festival has been inscribed as the intangible heritage by UNESCO.

I commend members of the Durga Puja Committee for their consistent endeavours in organizing the festival with great dedication and enthusiasm in Moscow over the past many decades.

May Maa Durga, the embodiment of strength, courage and compassion, bless us all with health, happiness and prosperity.

Subho Durga Puja!

Vinay Kumar
(Vinay Kumar)

Ambassador of India to
the Russian Federation
September 30, 2024

SIGNIFICANCE OF DURGA PUJA

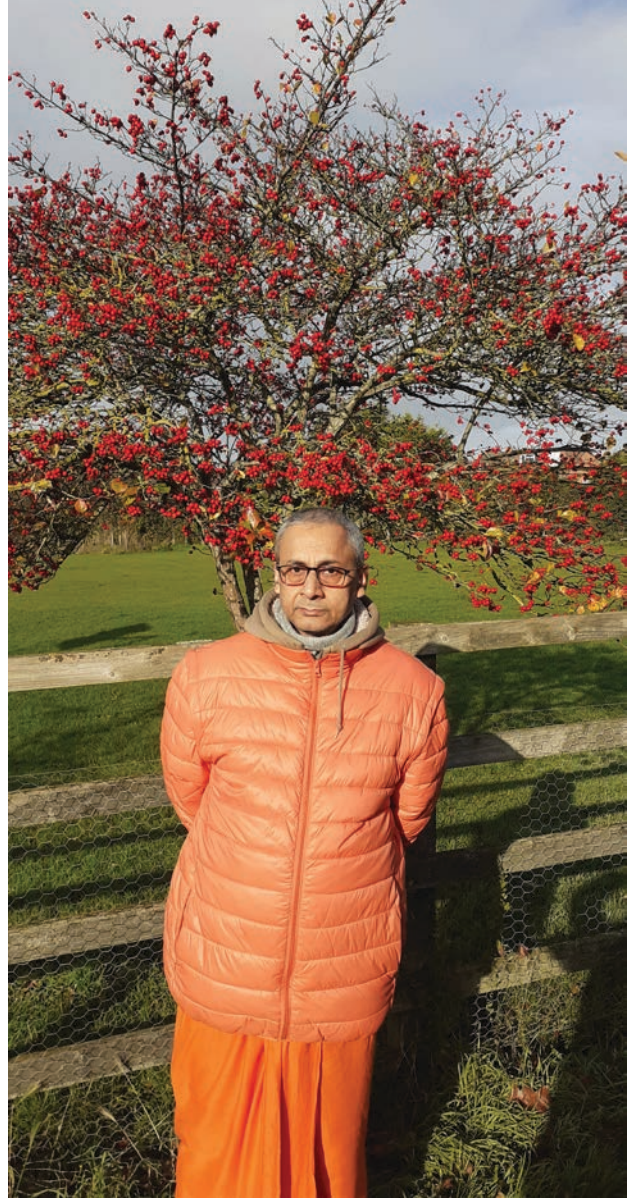
Swami Atmalokananda

President, Ramakrishna Society-Vedanta Centre, Moscow

Vice-President, Moscow Durga Puja Committee

According to Swami Vivekananda, *“This universe is a symbol, in and through which we are trying to grasp the thing signified, which is beyond and behind. The spirit is the goal, and not matter. Forms, images, bells, candles, books, churches, temples, and all holy symbols are very good, very helpful to the growing plant of spirituality, but thus far and no farther. In the vast majority of cases, we find that the plant does not grow. It is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die in a church. It is very good to be born within the limits of certain forms that help the little plant of spirituality, but if a man dies within the bounds of these forms, it shows that he has not grown, that there has been no development of the soul.*

If, therefore, any one says that symbols, rituals, and forms are to be kept forever, he is wrong; but if he says, that these symbols and rituals are a help to the growth of the soul, in its low and undeveloped state, he is right. But, you must not mistake this development of the soul as meaning anything intellectual. A man can be of gigantic intellect, yet spiritually he may be a baby. You can verify it this minute. All of you have been taught to believe in an Omnipresent God. Try to think of it. How few of you can have any idea of what omnipresence means! If you struggle hard, you will get something like the idea of the ocean, or of the sky, or of a vast stretch of green earth, or of a desert. All these are material images, and so long as you cannot conceive of the abstract as abstract, of the ideal as the ideal, you will have to resort to these forms, these material images. It does not make much difference whether these images are inside or outside the mind. We are all born idolaters, and idolatry is good, because it is in the nature of man. Who can get beyond it? Only the perfect man, the God-man. The rest are all idolaters. So long as we see this universe before us, with its forms and shapes, we are all idolaters. This is a gigantic symbol we are worshipping. He who says he is the body is a born idolater. We are spirit, spirit that has no form or shape, spirit that is infinite, and not matter. Therefore, anyone who cannot grasp the abstract, who cannot think of himself as he is, except in and through matter, as the body, is an idolater. ... We should get beyond all these and look at humanity as one vast organism, slowly coming towards light – a wonderful plant, slowly unfolding itself to that wonderful truth which is called God--and the first gyrations, the first motions, towards this are always through matter and through ritual.”¹



Being inspired by the similar state of mood, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore composed one of his insightful song which corroborates also with the scripture : *“Roop sāgore doob diyechhi aroop ratan*

¹ C.W. Vol.2, pg.39 [Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda]

āshā kori...” — *desiring to get the invaluable formless jewel, I have taken a dip into the ocean of forms.* The Scripture also says:

चिन्मयस्याप्रमेयस्य निर्गुणस्याशरीरिणः । साधकानां हितार्थाय ब्रह्मणो रूपकल्पना ॥ ७२ ॥ Kulārṇava Tantra 6.72

Although bodyless, consisting of pure intelligence, immeasurable and attributeless, yet the form of Brahman has been imagined for the benefit of the spiritual aspirants (sādhakas).

Swami Vivekananda reminded us of the main purpose of possessing a human body which was in essence ‘the awakening the divinity within’. He said: “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these - and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.”²

And Durgā Puja falls under the category of ‘worship’ where the spiritual aspirant (sādhaka) is expected to identify his own personality with the chosen deity (here it is the Divine Mother) and thus he acquires the eligibility to worship the particular form of divine manifestation. The scripture also advises, ‘देवो भूत्वा देवं यजेत्’ (devo bhutvā devam yayjet); *by becoming one with the chosen deity one should worship the adorable chosen devatā or deity!!* Following the necessary steps of ritualistic purification and nyāsa (न्यासः = *installation of the chosen deity replacing sādhaka’s own identification with the physical body*) the worshipper is supposed to awaken the divinity within. These steps are common and are most important and inevitable injunctions in performing any Puja or ritualistic worship.

Durga Puja is said to be the greatest among all the symbolic-worships prevalent in India. In *Devī Purāṇa* this *Mahā-Pujā* is considered equivalent to the *Aśvamedha Yajna* (a Vedic sacrifice named ‘Aśvamedha’), if it is done in a proper way.

Swami Vivekananda says, “This world of ours is on the plan of the division of labour.”³ In a letter under the post script he says, addressing his brother disciples, “The term organization means division of labour. Each does his own part, and all the parts taken together express an ideal of harmony.”⁴

The conglomeration of different images under one canvas, centering round the image of the Universal Mother Durgā, is generally chosen for the worship of Mother Durgā followed by Bengal tradition. This symbolic expression of Durgā image signifies a unique ideal of harmonious social fabric.

Let us analyze a few verses from the *Bhagavad Gītā* in order to understand the above statement. In the 14th chapter, Sri Bhagavān pointed out the signs to identify the three qualities – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and their respective preponderance of one *guna* over the other two: रजस्तमस्श्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति । रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा । (14.10)

O scion of Bharata dynasty (Arjuna), सत्त्वं increases by subduing रजस् and तमस्, रजस् (increases) by overpowering सत्त्वं and तमस्, and तमस् increases by dominating over सत्त्वं and रजस्.

Continues Sri Bhagavan:

1) when the illumination (प्रकाशः), i.e. knowledge radiates in the body through all the doors of the senses, then one should know that सत्त्वं quality has increased greatly (14.11)

2) when avarice, movement, undertaking of actions, unrest and hankering come into being, then understand that the रजस् becomes predominant (14.12).

3) when non-discrimination and inactivity, inadvertence and delusion come into being without exception, then it is to be understood that तमस् predominates (14.15).

Swami Vivekananda says: “According to the Sāṅkhya philosophy, nature is composed of three forces called, in Sanskrit, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. These, as manifested in the physical world are what we may call equilibrium, activity, and inertness. *Tamas* is typified as darkness or inactivity; *Rajas* is activity, expressed as attraction or repulsion; and *Sattva* is the equilibrium of the two.”⁵

Now, let us look at the portrait of Mother Durga with Her all companions.

The divine Mother represents the symbol of the quality of equilibrium i.e. *sattva*, over the two other

² C.W. Vol.1, pg 124

³ C.W. Vol.1, pg 124

⁴ C.W. Vol.4, pg.154

⁵ C.W. Vol.1, pg.36

qualities or powers – *rajas* and *tamas*. The lion symbolizes the quality of *rajas* and the demon (*asura*) stands for the quality of *tamas*.

Here, the lion (*rajas*) is under perfect control of the right lotus feet of the Divine Mother (*sattva*) and the demon (*tamas*) is being dominated by Her left lotus feet which is placed on the shoulder of the demon (named *Mahisāsura*). Thus, the Divine Mother, the Eternal Empress of the universe symbolizes an ideal force of equilibrium (*sattvika*) which represents the character of ideal Governance.

The *Rgveda* also says: अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानाम् ।

तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरुता भूरिस्थानां भूर्यावेशयन्तीम् ॥ [*Rgveda* - 10.125.3]

I'm the supreme Empress and the bestower of prosperity to the devotees. I'm the Omniscient Goddess and the first among the adorable deities. Gods have borne me in many forms, Me who has entered in many creatures and has existed in many places.

Further says Swami Vivekananda: “According to the prevalence, in greater or lesser degree, of the three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* in man, the four castes, the *Brāhmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, and *Shudra*, are everywhere present at all times, in all civilized societies.”⁶

Here in the portrait of Mother Durga, the image of goddess *Saraswati*, standing with Her *Veenā* on the left side of the Divine Mother represents the *Brahmin* caste, responsible for the propagation of knowledge – both the material knowledge as well as the transcendental.

Just below to that, situated the image of *Kārtika*, the commander-in-chief, who represents the *Kshatriya* caste, say, the ministry of defence which is responsible for ensuring peace, protection and justice to all the classes of people.

And the goddess *Lakshmi* on the right hand of Mother *Durgā* represents the *Vaisya* caste, responsible for distribution of food and wealth.

Just below the goddess of wealth situated the image of *Ganesha* who represents the *Shudra* caste, responsible for supplying the fundamental strength to maintain social fabric.

An insightful comment of Swami Vivekananda is worth mentioning here for our deep understanding on the system of caste prevalent in Aryan culture: “As there are *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*--one or other of these *Gunas* more or less--in every man, so the qualities which make a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, or *Shudra* are inherent in every man, more or less. But at times one or other of these qualities predominates in him in varying degrees, and it is manifested accordingly. Take a man in his different pursuits, for example: when he is engaged in serving another for pay, he is in *Shudra*hood; when he is busy transacting some piece of business for profit, on his own account, he is a *Vaishya*; when he fights to right wrongs, then the qualities of a *Kshatriya* come out in him; and when he meditates on God or passes his time in conversation about Him, then he is a *Brāhmin*. Naturally, it is quite possible for one to be changed from one caste into another. Otherwise, how did *Vishvāmitra* become a *Brāhmin* and *Parashurāma* a *Kshatriya*?⁷

Now the question is, how could we know whether the *sattva* quality preponderates or the *tamas*? Swami Vivekananda answers in his own unique expression: “*Brightness in the face, undaunted enthusiasm in the heart, and tremendous activity--these result from Sattva; whereas idleness, lethargy, inordinate attachment, and sleep are the signs of Tamas.*”⁸

From the discussion above, we may derive the fact that in order to maintain excellence on the path of righteousness, in order to ensure social justice, peace and harmony among the four inevitable levels of executives classified in accordance with the division of labour, viz. *Brāhmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*; nay, to ensure true type of human civilization, the reigning power should always be with the force of equilibrium i.e. under the power of *Sattva*. And that very *Sāttvik* power of Governance or Sovereignty is depicted in this greatest image worship which we call *DURGA PUJA*.

⁶ C.W. Vol.4, pg.449

⁷ C.W. Vol.5, pg.377

⁸ C.W. Vol.5, pg.402



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IN QUEST OF CREATIONS WITH GODDESS DURGA

Dhiren Shasmal, a gifted artist from West Bengal's Medinipur district, demonstrated artistic talent from a young age. Despite early challenges, including the loss of his father, he pursued formal education at the Government Art College, Kolkata, graduating with top honours in applied art in 1975.

Dhiren's career began in advertising with renowned agencies, where his expertise in hand-drawn illustrations earned him widespread acclaim. His detailed pen and ink work, combined with creative vision, made him a sought-after illustrator for major publishers and authors, with over 300 book illustrations to his credit.

Diversifying into event design, he has also crafted pavilions for book fairs, designed award-winning Durga Puja pandals and collaborated with Mayfair Hotels & Resorts, applying his artistic touch to multiple high-end projects. Throughout his career, he explored diverse themes, with a particular focus on mythology, nature, and adolescence, especially drawing inspiration from Goddess Durga.

With a career spanning over four decades, his works have been showcased in 400+ exhibitions globally, cementing his legacy as a versatile and visionary artist. His art is cherished by collectors, celebrities, and international clientele, continuing to inspire with its creativity, detail, and spiritual depth.

Dhiren's legacy continued to grow with the formation of The Indian Art Cottage (indianartcottage.com), a gallery-cum-workshop founded by his son and daughter-in-law. Both left their animation careers to join him on this journey, establishing the brand as a hub for exploring various art forms.



Dhiren Shasmal

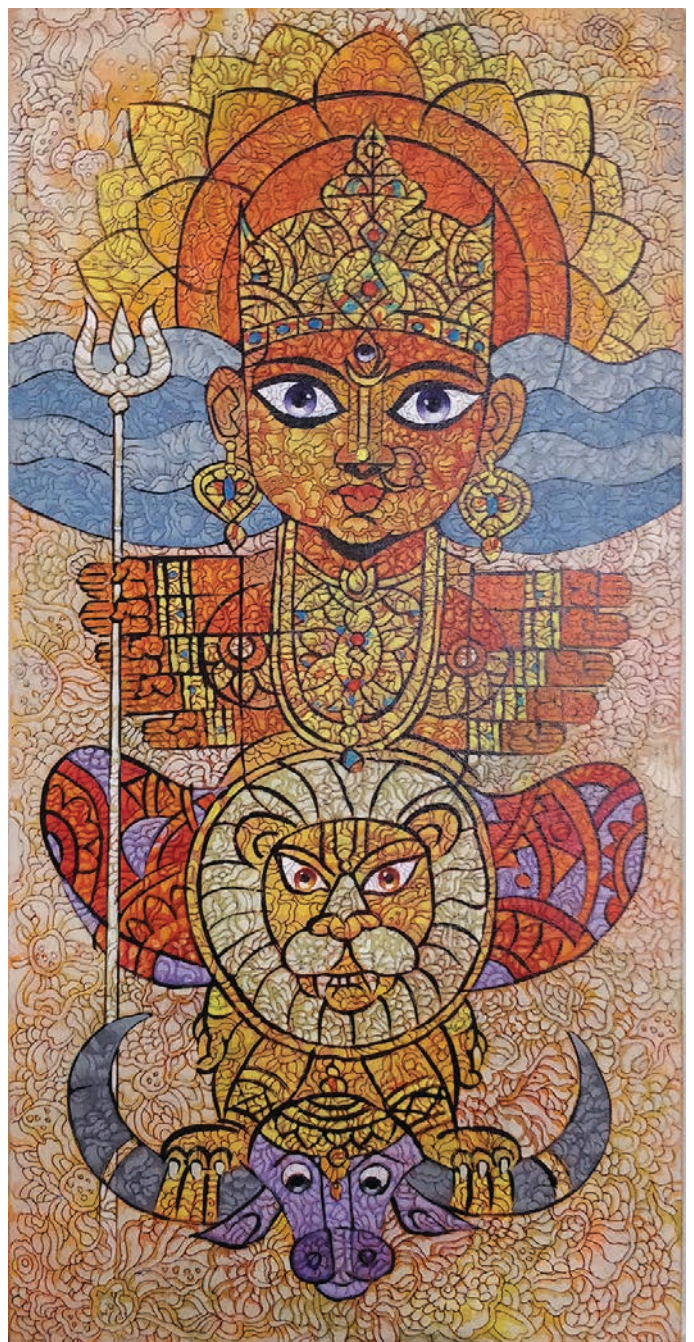
DEVI DURGA:

Dhiren Shasmal's artistic journey revolves around the vibrant themes of mythology, nature, animals, and adolescence. Among these, his portrayal of Goddess Durga holds a special place in his heart. The power, joy, and vibrancy Durga embodies captivate him, and he finds deep inspiration in the festive spirit associated with her worship. For Dhiren, Durga is not just a deity, but a symbol of colour, strength, and celebration—elements he loves to bring to life on his canvas. Throughout his career, he has explored various concepts and styles, each time bringing something new and refreshing to his depiction of Durga. His endless fascination with this subject reflects his deep connection to colour, creativity, and the spiritual energy that the festival of Durga Puja represents.

On the auspicious occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Moscow Durga Puja celebrations in Moscow, the Artist extends his wishes to the Indian community of Russia.

Aaratrika also wishes to thank here Mr. Aakshat Sinha from the "Urban Fringe Studio" New Delhi, who helped us in contacting the artist and getting us his works.







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TATYANA PETROVA – BIRTH OF AN ARTIST

I was born in St. Petersburg in the large family of my grandfather, who was an army man. We lived in the old part of the city in the midst of its beautiful architecture and green courtyards. As far as I can remember, from an early age I have always been drawn to animals and nature. My grandfather, who grew up in a Novgorod village, encouraged my interests and taught me first how to draw a horse, a cow, and a dog. If not for the military, he probably would have become an artist himself. His career notwithstanding, he supported his family's pursuit of culture and science. My mother, a PhD in physics, worked at a research institute and at the same time studied classical ballet under the guidance of the famous Leonid Jacobson. She was a good singer, knew classical and modern music, and loved to paint flowers. Noticing my love for animals she took me to the Leningrad Zoo, where at that time it was still possible to see an elephant. This, perhaps determined my fate!



Tatyana Petrova

After graduating from high school, I chose the Faculty of Biology of the St. Petersburg State University, because there were not enough art schools for admission. But I wanted to work with animals and draw them. Therefore, like my family, I somehow found ways to combine things together.

Opportunities were limited, but during field expeditions, it was possible not only to draw animals in nature, but also to get acquainted with the works of famous Russian artists drawing animals, and to communicate with some personally.

Also, I discovered a new hobby for myself: I began to study the classical dance Kuchipudi. Dancing helped me connect with the history and art of a distant country giving me strength and new colors of life.

Together with my colleagues during this time I undertook expeditions to various natural reserves in India - in the west, south, north, as well as in Nepal. Each trip brought an incredible variety of impressions, begging for paper and canvas to express. However, it seemed as if not enough power was there to express everything.

In 2013, I accepted an ICCR program to study in Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan, in the faculty of Art of Kala Bhavana, a famous place throughout India, where the Bengal School of Art



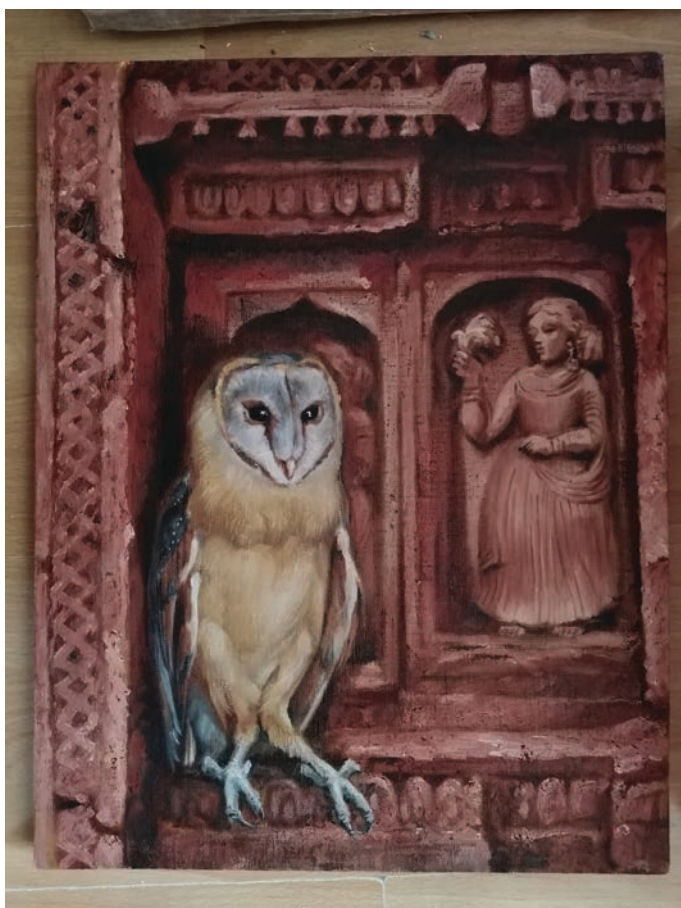
once flourished, and about which I didn't know anything at that time. Despite my experience of traveling in India, for me Kolkata was an unfamiliar city in an unfamiliar land, almost like being in another planet. Shantiniketan was an unusual place - green, decorated with gardens, with small houses among the trees, it carried the spirit of love for deep culture, sciences and arts, and here for the first time I felt that no one was pressing me, that I could create the way I see things myself. I took advantage of this joyfully, devoting two years to observe the



surrounding nature and the images of everything that struck my imagination. However, the professors were not too pleased with this, since the main stream of art was still connected with the study of human perception through various semi-abstract forms and experimental techniques – most people were uninterested in realism. Nevertheless, I completed my diploma with a high score, and had exhibitions and master classes in Kolkata and Bangalore. In Russia I was also invited to do exhibitions in St. Petersburg, including at the Roerich House Museum.

My depiction of Mother Durga as a Baul singer comes from my thoughts and days of schooling in Shantiniketan wherein I see the mother as the manifestation of Nature and Art.

I extend my best wishes on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Durga Puja celebrations in Moscow.



Кадила Фармасьютикалз Лимитед



Природный защитник печени с двойным действием

Натуральный растительный гепатопротектор с двойным механизмом действия. Способствует очищению печени, улучшению регенерации ее клеток. Приводит в норму печеночные ферменты, обладает прекрасным желчегонным действием. Улучшает желчевыделение, мягко очищает желчные протоки. Одной упаковки Гепасейв достаточно для полного курса.



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VOICES



সমস্ত দেশ উথাল পাতাল
লড়াই হবে ভীষণ রাগে

Tumultuous in waves
The country fights with fierce outrage



Sonali Bose

Sonali Bose, creator of the art work, is a native of Kolkata. She pursued her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the esteemed Kala Bhavana in Shantiniketan. With a specialization in watercolors, acrylic on canvas and printmaking, she has honed her craft to reflect her unique artistic vision. Her dedication and talent were recognized early on as she was awarded the UGC Scholarship and

garnered accolades from the West Bengal State Academy Awards and the Camel Art Exhibition Award.

Throughout her career, Sonali has actively participated in prestigious national and international exhibitions,

earning widespread recognition for her captivating works. She was member of Jury for Tagore art and literature fest, Bhopal 2023.

Her art has found its place in private collections both in India and abroad, which is a testament to its universal appeal.

She currently resides and works in New Delhi, and continues to captivate audiences with her evocative and vibrant creations.

Bengal today is witnessing unprecedented levels of protests of the common people, who resisted partisanship while raising their voices for justice and to eradicate corrupt practices. Aaratrika expresses gratitude to the artist who created this work of art specially for the journal.

Sonali sends her warmest wishes to the people of Moscow on the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Durga Puja Celebrations.



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Happy Durga Puja

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शक्ति का सार

नारी, तुम जीवन का आधार,
सृजन, शक्ति तुम्हारी अपरम्पार !
दुर्गा, काली रूप अनेक,
तुम करती जीवन का उदगार,
पर अफसोस ! बार- बार निरलज तुमको क्यों करता संसार ?
जबकि, तेरी दस भुजायें, शक्ति का हैं प्रतीक,
हाथों में शस्त्र, सिंह पर बैठी निर्भीक !
तेरा रूप अलैकिक, अद्भुत और निराला,
परन्तु पुरुष ने मानवता को तार- तार कर डाला !!

माँ, तुम हो अन्नत शक्ति का अवतार,
धरती पर हर संकट का करती हो निवार !
भक्ति का आधार, दुष्टों का संहार,
विलाप करता हृदय, देख नारी की रक्तधार !!

तुम ही ब्रम्हा, सृष्टि का वरदान,
सप्तशती के मंत्रों में बसी उर्जावान !
आत्मबल की ताकत, तुम्हारी हर कहानी,
पर, क्यों चीर-चीर लहलुहान होती तेरी मर्दानी ?

अनुपम शक्ति से भरी हर नारी,
सरस्वती, अन्नपूर्णा, चड़ी और कुमारी,
क्रोध की देवी से ही अंहकार का अंत,
पर धरती पर मचल रहा पुरुष का अन्तर्मन,
बढ़ रहा अन्याय, अत्याचार,
हे देवी, कर दो अब तुम उद्धार !!
हे देवी, कर दो अब तुम उद्धार !!



Illustration: Janvi Gupta Class 10,
Embassy of India School.

Translation



सुप्रिया गुप्ता
हिंदी अध्यापिका (एच. एस. सी. विश्वविद्यालय)
सांस्कृतिक सचिव (हिन्दुस्तानी समाज)

The poem explores the powerful representation of the divine feminine through goddesses like Durga and Kali, symbolizing strength, creativity, and resilience. It highlights the tragic irony that, despite embodying such power, women often face oppression and violence in society.

The imagery of Durga with her ten arms serves as a reminder of the innate strength within every woman, while the lamentation over women's suffering calls for urgent societal change. The poem emphasizes that every woman possesses qualities akin to revered figures like Saraswati and Annapurna, yet these are often overlooked.

Ultimately, the poem acts as a call to action, urging humanity to awaken its conscience and foster respect, equality, and empowerment for women. It challenges us to honor the divine feminine and strive for a world where every woman's potential is recognized and celebrated. Through awareness and action, we can nurture a society that embraces the essence of Shakti.



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ресторанов

गुजराती

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नारीत्व



Illustration: Bukhtoyarova Loretta, Fine Arts Teacher,
Embassy of India School

नारी और पुरुष मानवरूपी सिक्के के दो पहलू हैं, अगर किसी भी पहलू में विकृति आ जाए, वह दुर्बल पड़ जाए या उसका अधिकाधिक शोषण होने लगे, तो सिक्का कुरूप हो जाएगा, खोटा कहलाएगा, अपना अस्तित्व खोने लगेगा। आदि-मनुष्य से लेकर सभ्यता के पहले कगार यानी कृषियुग तक पहुँचने तक नारी और पुरुष लगभग सभी कार्यों, कर्तव्यों और दायित्वों का वहन बराबरी से करते थे। मनुष्य जबतक प्राकृतिक घटनाओं से अबोध था, वह उनसे डरता था। उसके लिए वे आपदाएँ थीं, लेकिन उसने उनके आगे हथियार कभी नहीं डाले। उसने शायद घटनाओं की प्रत्येक पुनरावृत्ति पर उनमें पाई जाने वाली समानताओं को अपने लिए निर्धारित किया होगा और उनके आधार पर उसने उन घटनाओं को समझा होगा, उनकी स्पष्ट व्याख्या अपने मस्तिष्क में तैयार करके अपने संगी-साथियों के साथ साझा की होगी। इस प्रकार वह ज्ञान और रहस्योद्घाटन के पथ पर चल पड़ा होगा। किताबें-पोथियाँ बाँचने के बहुत पहले भी चीजों को समझना-बुझना उसकी नैसर्गिक आवश्यकताएँ रही होंगी, जिनकी पूर्ति के लिए वह सतत सजग एवं सक्रिय होता गया होगा। इसी पथ पर उसने एक के बाद एक सभ्यता की कई सीढ़ियाँ पार की होंगी, अपने जीवन को सुगम बनाने के पथ पर वह अग्रसर हुआ होगा। उसकी समझ, जिजीविषा और पराक्रम की कहानियाँ उसकी कामयाबियों ने लिखी होंगी। अगर आँकड़ों और जीवन के सुलभ हो जाने के आधार पर मनुष्य-जीवन का आकलन किया जाए तो वह धरती पर पाए जाने वाले किसी भी जीव से कई प्रकाश-वर्ष आगे है, जबकि अपनी यात्रा मनुष्य ने भी दूसरे जीवों की तरह ही शुरू की थी। इस दृष्टि से मनुष्य की विकास यात्रा में शायद हम सब अपने छोटे-बड़े योगदानों के कारण बधाई के पात्र हैं।

लेकिन क्या हमारा जीवन, हमारे समाज की परिपाटी, प्रकृति के प्रति हमारा व्यवहार आदि हमें आत्ममुग्धता में डूबने की अनुमति देते हैं? कतई नहीं! हमारे समाज की असंगतियाँ - शोषण, युद्ध, बलात्कार, प्रकृति-दोहन आदि हमें फ़ौरन ही विकास की सीढ़ी के उच्चतम सोपान से उतारकर कीड़े-मकोड़ों से भी नीचे के सोपान पर खड़ा कर देते हैं। अपनी इस तरह की करतूतों से हम न केवल अपनी जाति को शर्मिंदा कर रहे हैं बल्कि प्राणी-जगत के दूसरे उम्मीदवारों के लिए परिस्थितियाँ विषम कर रहे हैं।

हमारे देश में कुछ चुनौतियाँ दूसरी जगहों की तुलना में कहीं अधिक हैं, जिनमें सबसे अधिक शर्मसार करने वाली है - नारी के प्रति कुछ लोगों की पाशविक एवं हीन धारणा, उसे माल भोग की वस्तु समझना। एक तरफ़ तो हम नारी को देवी का स्वरूप मानते हैं, पूज्य बताते हैं, वहीं दूसरी तरफ़ उसके साथ अमानवीय व्यवहार करते हैं। दिल्ली की निर्भया हो, या मणिपुर की कुकी समुदाय की महिलाएँ, या फिर कोलकाता की होनहार ट्रेनी डॉक्टर - इनके साथ हुई जघन्य वारदातें पाशविकता की सब सीमाओं के परे हैं। और ये तो माल वे घटनाएँ हैं जो सुर्खियों में आ गयीं और पूरा देश उनके बारे में जान गया, आक्रोश से भर गया और स्थिति में बदलाव की माँग करने लगा। आज के त्वरित मीडिया युग में भी प्रशासन की ताकत मणिपुर और संदेशखाली की घटनाओं को लम्बे समय तक पर्दापोश रखने में सक्षम रही। किसी सार्वजनिक घटना को इतने अरसे तक दबाकर रख पाना इस बात की ओर संकेत करता है कि छोटे पैमाने पर हमारे देश में ऐसी घटनाएँ रोज़ सैकड़ों में घटती होंगी। लेकिन वे गुमनामी के अंधेरों में दबी रह जाती हैं। उनका यों दबा रह जाना, नृशंसता के खिलाफ़ आवाज़ का न उठना, शोषक के बजाय सबका शोषित को बदनामी का डर दिखाना - निश्चित रूप से इन वारदातों को अंजाम देने वालों को शह देता है। इससे उनकी बर्बरता में बढ़ावा होता है। ऐसा नहीं है कि देह-शोषण हमारे देश या कुछ देशों तक ही सीमित है।

सवाल यह उठता है कि सभ्यता के किस सोपान पर आकर नारी-पुरुष के दायित्व और कर्तव्य यों बँट गए कि समाज में दोनों के बीच एक खाई बन गयी और जो समय के साथ चौड़ी ही होती जा रही है। कृषि के आविर्भाव से भोजन के लिए आखेट की आवश्यकता कम हो गयी। फ़सलें जब तैयार होने लगीं तो कृषि उत्पादों को भोज्य बनाने के लिए घरों में भी उनपर काम करने की ज़रूरत थी। ज़िदगी अब खानाबदोश से क़बीलाई होने लगी। खेतों के पास खेतों में परिवार रहने लगे। पुरुष काम करने खेतों पर जाते और महिलाएँ घर के कामकाज और बच्चों का पालन-पोषण देखने लगीं। यहीं से हुई काम के बँटवारे की शुरुआत जो हर गुज़रते दिन के साथ बढ़ता ही गया। महिलाएँ अधिकाधिक दायरों में बँधती गयीं और पुरुषों के दायरे फैलते गए। पुरुषों के मन के हौसले भी ज़रूर बढ़ते गए होंगे। इन्हीं बढ़ते हौसलों ने पितृसत्ता को जन्म दिया होगा और महिलाओं के लिए जीवन को और मुश्किल बनाया होगा। माना ऐसा हुआ, लेकिन उसकी सुधार-राह पर हम काफ़ी आगे आ गए हैं। क़ानूनन औरतों को शिक्षा, मतदान, काम के अधिकार प्राप्त हैं, महिलाएँ संपत्ति खरीद सकती हैं, पुश्तैनी जायदादों में बराबरी की हज़रदार हैं, शादी में पति-पत्नी के समान अधिकार और दायित्व हैं। शारीरिक सम्बन्ध स्थापित करने के समय भी महिलाओं के पास क़ानूनन यह अधिकार है कि वे उससे इंकार कर दें। क़ानून बनाना एक बात होती है

और उसका पालन करना दूसरी। लेकिन उपरोक्त कानूनों का होना अपने आप में एक बड़ी उपलब्धि है। अब यह सुनिश्चित करने की आवश्यकता है कि लोग उन्हें जानें, मानें और समाज में उनके मुताबिक बर्ताव करें। लेकिन क्या यह कानूनन सुनिश्चित किया जा सकता है? सिर्फ किसी हद तक, वह भी उस स्थिति में जब न्याय-प्रणाली बहुत सशक्त होगी। लेकिन जिस बात की सबसे ज़्यादा ज़रूरत है वह है सदियों से सुढ़ड़ हुई इस भावना के उन्मूलन की कि पुरुष नारी से ऊपर है, अधिक शक्तिशाली है, अधिक सक्षम है - अतः पूज्य है।

पुरुष और नारी को दो अलग-अलग प्रजातियाँ समझना ही शायद समस्या की जड़ है। दोनों मनुष्य हैं, दोनों के सहयोग माल से ही मानवजाति बनी रह सकती है और यह माल प्रजनन के सन्दर्भ में नहीं है। क्या ये जीवन की साइकिल के दो पहिये नहीं हैं? अगर हाँ, तो यह ज़रूरी है कि दोनों अपनी स्थिति समझें, यह जानें कि साइकिल के आगे बढ़ते रहने के लिए उनसे क्या अपेक्षित है और तदनुसार ही कार्यवाही करें। आपसी सामंजस्य और तालमेल बना रहना बहुत ही ज़रूरी है नहीं तो जीवन की गाड़ी टस से मस नहीं होगी। प्रत्येक पहिया कुछ गुण-विशेषों का प्रतिनिधित्व

करता है। वात्सल्य, ममत्व, क्षमा, दया, पालन-पोषण, माधुर्य, कोमलता आदि गुण नारी के माने जाते हैं जबकि धनोपार्जन, नेतृत्व, संरक्षण, परिवार-सुरक्षा, राष्ट्र-सुरक्षा, बल-प्रयोग आदि गुणों को पुरुषसुलभ माना गया है। वहीं अपनापन, सहानुभूति, दयालुता, क्रूरता, प्रतिशोध आदि सामान्य विशेषताएँ मानी जाती हैं। सभी गुणों का कुछ अंश हम सभी में पाया जाता है। लेकिन जब माधुर्य, कोमलता, सौंदर्य आदि पर बर्बरता आक्रमण करती है तो जीवन की साइकिल डगमगा जाती है, एक वर्ग के आत्मविश्वास के डिगने से समाज की नींवें चरमराने लगती हैं। इन स्थितियों में संतुलन बनाए रखने के लिए ही माँ दुर्गा को कालिका वाला वीभत्स रूप धरना पड़ता है। सौंदर्य की प्रतीक आदिशक्ति दुर्गा को काला, भयप्रद और विकराल रूप समाज की कुरीतियों के उन्मूलन और तथाकथित असुरों के दमन के लिए धारण करना पड़ता है, जिस पहिये को माधुर्य और कोमलता से आगे बढ़ना था, वह रौद्र हो जाता है। चुनांचा क्रोध, रोष, प्रतिकार की भावनाएँ प्रबल हो जाती हैं। समाज का अगर एक बड़ा भाग इन भावों तले दबता जाएगा तो शायद देवी-देवताओं की शक्तियाँ भी उसे पतन के गर्त से उबारने में असमर्थ हो जाएँगी।

Femininity



प्रगति टिपनिस

सम्पादक- अन्नय रूस, हिन्दी- रूसी
मुहावरा कोश, हिन्दी मुहावरा कोश
महासचिव- हिन्दुस्तानी समाज

Men and women are two sides of a coin. If one side gets tainted, distorted, or is exploited badly, the coin will start losing its value, relevance and soon become a counterfeit one. For existence co-existence is important, life on the earth thrives thanks to symbiosis. How come, despite being the most advanced creature on our planet, the Human race is still divided in two camps - men and women? The situation in our country is even more gruesome. Abominable incidents like Nirbhaya, Manipur and Sandeshkhali women and the Kolkata trainee doctor's, just to name a few, are becoming more and more common and making our society weak and its tapestry torn.

Traits such as affection, motherly love, forgiveness, kindness, nurturing, tenderness etc. are considered feminine, while earning for life, leadership, protection, family security, national security, use of force etc. are considered to be male qualities. Whereas sympathy, kindness, cruelty, revenge etc. are considered to be common characteristics. When the imbalance in these qualities occurs in our society in either of the directions, some members become demons and life becomes impossible. These are the situations when deities like Durga have to forgo their amiable ways and become Ma Kali to eradicate social evils and suppress the so-called demons. But if the society will be predominantly tilted towards aggression, rape, use of force and power, none of the deities would want and be able to come to our rescue.



**Wishes happy Durga Puja
and Dushera to all Indian
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AWARD FROM THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

On the 20th of July 2024, the Moscow Durga Puja Committee was felicitated by the organization "The Greatest Show on Earth" at their office in Kolkata. The award was given in recognition for their efforts in organizing and promoting Durga Puja in Russia for the last 35 years.

On this occasion we congratulate all the members, the Indian diaspora in Russia, and all the people who have contributed to the festival especially the women our "Nari Shakti", without whom this would not have been possible.



ANNUAL GALA-CONCERT «UNITY IN DIVERSITY»

Hindustani Samaj has been working in Moscow since 1957 and it has thrived in bringing the Indians together and act as a bridge between the cultures of India and Russia. Veteran literary figures like Bhishma Sahni and Madan Lal 'Madhu' were its founder members. 'Madhu Ji' took its reins in his hands and managed it efficiently for about thirty years. Today, to maintain the cultural relationship between Indians and Russians, it strives to

organize events – including "Unity in Diversity" and a program for the students of Russian higher education institutions.

On 15th 2024 the grand annual gala-concert (unity in diversity) was organized by Hindustani Samaj in Vdokhnovenie concert hall in Moscow. Many

Indian and Russian cultural organizations took part in it.



ADDRESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE INDIAN DIASPORA

From the 8th to 9th of July 2024, the honorable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji came to Moscow on an official visit to Russia after being re-elected for the record third term. Apart from the official meetings, the Prime Minister interacted and addressed the Indian diaspora in a gala event organized in the Ritz Carlton Hotel Moscow.



SUMMER CHARITY BAZAAR 2024

Indian Women Association (IWA), Russia under the auspices of Embassy of India, Moscow in partnership with Rosneft organized the Summer Charity Bazaar 2024 on

August 10, 2024. A significant cultural event organized every year, it showcased the diverse and traditional dance forms, music, and cuisines from India.



THE FOLK MUSIC OF BENGAL BY DOHAR GROUP

The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Center, Embassy of India Moscow arranged the concert "The Folk Music of Bengal", conceptualized and performed by the famous "Dohar Group" from Kolkata lead by Mr. Rajib Das. The ICCR sponsored group performed on June 20th 2024 at the hall of the Moscow International Performing Arts Center.



MOHINIYATTAM & KATHAKALI ON BHARAT WEEK

On August 15, 2024, a concert of Indian dance was organized by the Embassy of India on the occasion of the 78th anniversary of the Indian independence movement at the Moscow International Performing Arts Center, marking the beginning of Bharat Week. Led by Ms. Priyadarshini Ghosh Shome and her students in Mohiniyattam and Mr. Prahlad Sarkar in Kathakali, the dancers presented a captivating recital.



RUSSIAN PREMIÈRE OF THE FILM «ТО ТЫ ЕСИ»



On the evening of the 23rd of May 2024, the Russian premiere of the film "To Ty Esi" or "Thou Art That" was held in the hall of the Centre for Eastern Studies, Russian State Library as part of their program of cinema screenings. The makers of the film namely the director, the producer and the writer, answered questions and interacted with the audience comprising of cinema critics, journalists and film viewers. The Film derives its name in Old Slavic from the quoting of the Upanishads – "Tat Tvam Asi"- about the relationship of the Human to the



Absolute. It had its premiere on the 21st of December 2021 in the Rabindranath Tagore Center, ICCR, Kolkata India as part of the "Kalpanirjhar festival". Despite being a Russian film shot in Russia, with leading Russian actors, the film had its acceptance with the Indian audience having won five awards across different festivals in India and two honourable mentions including that in the International Film Festival Dhaka. We hope these efforts strengthens the cultural exchanges between the two countries, and further explores options for joint productions.

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Azadi Thodi Ab Bhi Baaki Hai

Did seven decades of independence make Indians truly independent? Are we not still in the quest of true freedom and liberty?

Presenting "Azadi Thodi Ab Bhi Baaki Hai" a play created and directed by Vishal Jethalia, to be performed by the students of the Embassy of India school on Ashtami this year. The team of Aaratrika visited the school to watch the rehearsals and interact with some of the children like Parth Bhojwani, Neetigya Sahu, Ismat Akter, Suryansh Sachdeva, Ishan Khatri who are enacting the roles of different freedom fighters and are all excited to be a part of the play.

Aaratrika expresses its gratitude to the teachers Ms. Khalisa Ashraf, Mr. Ajay Sahu and Ms. Tanu Khurana for their help in organizing and making this happen.

Wishing all the participants
the very best.





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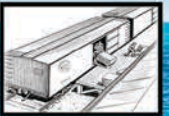
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Friends we lost along the way



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সৰ্ব মৰীচিকা।
নিবে যাক চিৰদিন
পৰিশ্রান্ত পৰিক্ষীণ
মৰ্তজন্মশিখা।

Let all grief terminate,
they are all but mirage.
Let lights go off the tired
and frugal
Flame of earthly life.

Ramanunni Nair
Suresh Tripathy
Kaushik Das
Hitangshu Dasgupta
Baby Chakraborty
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