

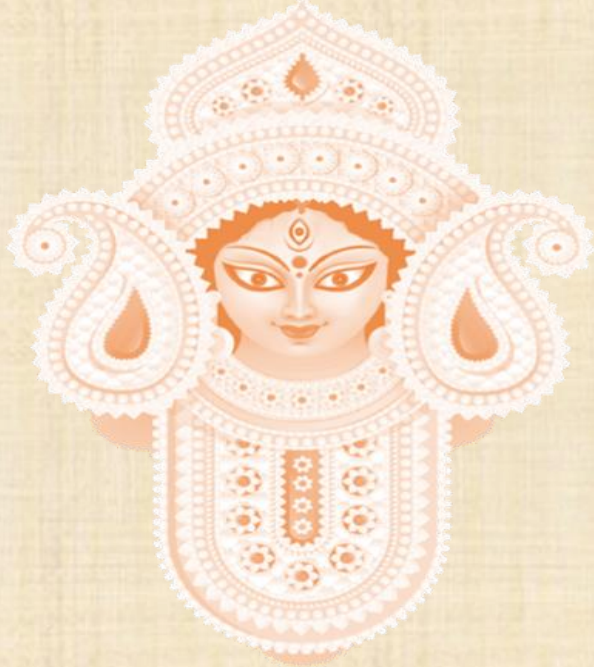
THE WALES PUJA COMMITTEE OMNIBUS 2023



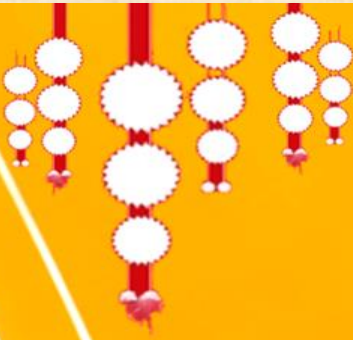
সুবর্ণ জয়ন্তী | JIWBILĀ AUR | GOLDEN JUBILEE

Wales Puja Committee
www.walespujacommittee.com
Registered Charity No 1050138

তোমাদের মাঝেই আমি আছি,
নিরাকার থেকে সাকার হই তিয়াত্তরে
তিন বৈদ্যের আবাহনে,



ঘটক মশাইয়ের হাতে আমার মৃন্ময়ী
রূপের প্রকাশ তোমাদের কার্ডিফেই,
আজ হল অর্ধশত বর্ষ আমার চিন্ময়ী
রূপে, তোমাদের ভালবাসার অঙ্গনে।



সুবর্ণ জয়ন্তী | JIWBILĪ AUR | GOLDEN JUBILEE
WELCOMES ALL TO



2023

DURGA PUJA

WALES PUJA COMMITTEE

GOLDEN JUBILEE DURGA PUJA

22ND - 26TH OCT

DURGA PUJA

TEMPLE OF PEACE

**KING EDWARD VII AVENUE
CARDIFF CF10 3AP**

27TH OCT

BIJOYA SAMMELANI

WITH KROSSWINDZ

PENYRHEOL COMMUNITY CENTRE

**HEOL ANEURIN CAERPHILLY
CF83 2PG**

**AMGUEDDFA
CYMRU**



Haveli



**Casgliad y Werin Cymru
People's Collection Wales**





10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.gov.uk/number10

Head of the Direct Communications Unit

5 October 2023

Dear Mr Saha

Thank you for your email of 13 September, inviting the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Wales Puja Committee, to the Golden Jubilee Durga Puja festival taking place at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff between 22 and 26 October.

I would like to congratulate the Wales Puja Committee as you celebrate your 50th anniversary this year. This is an incredible milestone, and everyone connected with the Committee should be rightly proud of what you have achieved over the past half a century. I wish you continued success for the next 50 years.

The Prime Minister greatly appreciates your thoughtful invitation and request for a message to include in your souvenir book. Unfortunately, due to pressures on his schedule, he is unable to attend or provide a message on this occasion. However, on his behalf, I am delighted to send my very best wishes to everyone at the Wales Puja Committee and the wider Bengali Hindu Community as you come together to celebrate Durga Puja.

To everyone visiting the Temple of Peace to celebrate Durga Puja, I send my warmest greetings. Thank you, once again, for writing.

Yours sincerely

MANDY GODRIDGE

From the Prime Minister's Office



उच्चायुक्त
High Commissioner



भारत का उच्चायोग
लंदन
The High Commission of India
India House, Aldwych
London WC2B 4NA
Tel: 020 7836 2556
Fax: 020 7240 4688
E-mail: hcoffice.london@mea.gov.in

11 October 2023

MESSAGE

I congratulate the Wales Puja Committee on completing fifty years of its foundation. In particular, I applaud the current and past Committee members for their past contributions, and for successfully organising Durga Puja this year from 22nd to 26th October in Cardiff.

2. The work of diaspora organisations such as Wales Puja Committee, and initiatives to celebrate and sustain aspects of our heritage, is critical in promoting a sense of identity and knowledge of heritage among future generations. I wish the team at the Wales Puja Committee success in their future endeavours.

3. I join you in praying for peace, prosperity and happiness for all humanity, on this festive occasion.


(Vikram Doraiswami)



From the Indian High Commissioner





Happy Durga Puja 2023!

Congratulations, Wales Puja Committee on reaching this amazing 50th milestone!

Your hard work, dedication, and contributions over the years to the Welsh diaspora have been invaluable and impactful.

May the grace of Goddess Maa Durga bless this superb organisation to continue to give happiness, strength, and protection to all.

Best wishes for the 50th anniversary celebrations and every success.

Raj Aggarwal

Hon Captain Raj K Aggarwal FRPharms OBE DL RNR

Is-gennad Anrhydeddus India
Cymru



Honorary Consulate of India
Wales

From the Honorary Consulate of India in Wales



Message from People's Collection Wales / Casgliad y Werin Cymru

Annwyl Wales Puja Committee,

We at the People's collection Wales (PCW) are thrilled to extend our support to the Wales Puja Committee (WPC) as they celebrate their 50th anniversary. We eagerly anticipate the *'Durga Puja Golden Jubilee- Nurturing the Heritage'* project and to support the work to document, archive and share materials that captures the various commemorative events and its history through oral history recordings, images, videos, and publications.

This is an extension of our prior partnership with WPC, wherein contributed materials from the *'Making of Goddess Durga – From Papier Mache'* (2009) project and recorded oral histories with members (2016), are now part of the collection and accessible to a global audience.

Established in 2010 and Welsh Government funded, PCW is a national digital collection that captures, protects and celebrates the diverse histories of Wales and its people, through participation from and collaboration with heritage partners and communities across Wales. The three leading partner organisations are National Museum Wales, the National Library of Wales and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

Our objective is to empower individuals to compile, curate, and present their own histories. It remains a dynamic archive, resonating with a wide array of people, allowing diverse perspectives to be shared and an array of narratives to be woven. PCW actively encourages voices to determine what holds relevance and significance, thus embodying the people's history of Wales.

The PCW team expresses gratitude for the continued partnership and valuable contributions by the Wales Puja Committee. Each addition is a treasured asset, digitally preserved to ensure continued access, aiming to educate, inspire, and engage broader audiences with the richness of the people's history of Wales.

On behalf of the People's Collection Wales team,

Berian Elias,

Filed Officer / Swyddog Maes
People's Collection Wales / Casgliad y Werin Cymru

www.casgliadywerin.cymru
www.peoplescollection.wales



AMGUEODFA
CYMRU



Casgliad y Werin Cymru
People's Collection Wales



Amgueddfa Cymru
Parc Cathays
Caerdydd
CF10 3NP
Ffôn: 0300 111 2 333

Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NP
Tel: 0300 111 2 333

We would like to express our gratitude and delight for the cherished collaboration forged between Amgueddfa Cymru and the Wales Puja Committee (WPC) over the last 14 years.

The makeup of the relationship between WPC and Amgueddfa Cymru has consistently provided a rich and enlightening cultural exchange. This collaboration has infused our museum with an unparalleled vibrancy, introducing both our visitors and our dedicated staff to the depths and nuances of Hindu culture. Thanks to this partnership, visitors have been given the privilege to engage with and appreciate a world that might have otherwise remained elusive to them.

We would like to take the opportunity to extend our deepest thanks to the members of the Wales Puja Committee. Your efforts were instrumental in the successful delivery of the "Restoration Clay Project." This venture has been a significant contribution to our shared mission, and we are genuinely grateful for your spirit and dedication.

We would like to reserve special praise for Purnendu Dey and Chitralkha, whose meticulous attention to detail and craftsmanship brought about the impeccable restoration of the Idol set. Their passion and precision have ensured that these objects will continue to inspire and educate for generations to come.

Our collaboration with the Wales Puja Committee remains one of our most cherished alliances. As we reflect on our past achievements and anticipate many more to come, we remain ever grateful for the shared vision, commitment, and camaraderie that have been the hallmarks of this partnership.

Aaron Schoburgh

Swyddog Digwyddiadau Cymunedol
Community Events Officer

Mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni yn Gymraeg, byddwn yn eich ateb yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd yn arwain at oedi.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and we will answer you in Welsh. This will not lead to any delay.





"Mae jiwbilî aur gŵyl Durga Puja yn Ne Cymru yn gyfle gwych i fyfyrion ac edrych i'r dyfodol. Bydd y dathliad a'r gwaith gyda ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches, myfyrwyr ac aelodau'r gymuned yn dod â'r Durga Puja i gynulleidfaedd newydd ac mae'n anrhydedd i ni gefnogi'r Pwyllgor i gyflawni'r prosiect hwn.

"Rwy'n teimlo'n gyffrous y bydd lluniau, fideos ac atgofion o'r ŵyl a'r dathliad yn cael eu cyflwyno i gasgliad Casgliad y Werin Cymru o straeon unigryw gan bobl bob dydd i gynnwys a dathlu hanes cyfoethog Cymru.

"Mae Cronfa Treftadaeth y Loteri Genedlaethol wedi ymrwmo i gefnogi mwy o gynhwysiant, amrywiaeth a mynediad at dreftadaeth a byddwn yn parhau i gefnogi sefydliadau i sicrhau bod pawb yn cael cyfleoedd i ddsygu, datblygu sgiliau newydd ac archwilio eu treftadaeth."

Andrew White – Cyfarwyddwr Cymru Cronfa Treftadaeth y Loteri Genedlaethol



"The golden jubilee of the Durga Puja festival in South Wales is a great opportunity to reflect and to look to the future. The celebration and work with refugees and asylum seekers, students and community members will bring the Durga Puja to new audiences and it's our honour to support the Committee to deliver this project.

"It's exciting that photos, videos and memories of the festival and celebration will be submitted to the People's Collection Wales's collection of unique stories from everyday people to capture and celebrate the rich history of Wales.

"The National Lottery Heritage Fund is committed to supporting greater inclusion, diversity and access to heritage and we will continue to support organisations to ensure everyone has | opportunities to learn, develop new skills and explore their heritage."

Andrew White – Wales Director of The National Lottery Heritage Fund





Norman Gettings
Communications & Outreach Lead
Oasis Cardiff
69B Splott Road Cardiff CF24 2BW
Reg. Charity No: 1131306

Oasis is an independent charity supporting asylum seekers and refugees to integrate in their new communities. We do this by providing:

- Food – serving a free hot lunch every weekday
- Educational, arts and cultural workshops and activities
- Casework advice
- Health advice sessions
- English lessons at a range of levels
- Children's & family sessions
- Mind Spring – mental health & wellbeing workshops in 10 languages
- Women only sessions
- Cross-cultural integration activities

In September this year Oasis will mark our 15th year of providing support to people seeking sanctuary in our city and the Durga Puja celebrates its Golden Jubilee.

Wales Puja Committee volunteers and Oasis staff/volunteers will be working shoulder to shoulder in our kitchen to prepare food for the festival in October and for our clients. They will be preparing healthy, low-cost meals during a cost-of-living crisis which will obviously benefit Oasis and, of course, our clients. Our volunteers are also volunteering at the festival venue in the Temple of Peace to support the festival which will help them integrate better and learn useful skills for life.

We will continue our discussions with staff to define options for cultural exchange and the potential for Oasis clients to contribute during the festival and beyond, promoting cultural awareness and community cohesion. There are also opportunities for involvement with the oral history project with Oasis clients talking about their lived experience and journeys to Wales which will be archived with Museum of Cardiff and People's Collection Wales.

Yours faithfully – Norman Gettings



Trustees, WPC Executive Committee Members Honorary Members & Office Bearers 2022-23

Trustees

Dr Ashok Mukherjee Dr Sandip Raha Dr Sakti Guha-Niyogi
Dr Kanti Nath Dr S K Sharma Dr Ravi Narayan
Dr Sankar Das

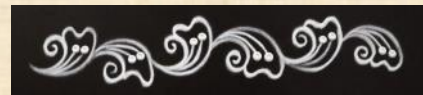
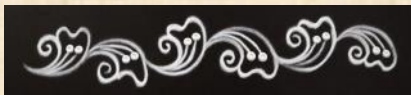
Elected Office Bearers

Chairperson Mr Neeleem Saha
Vice Chairperson Dr Shiladitya Sinha
Secretary Mr Sayantan Das
Treasurer Mr Pankaj Sarkar
Catering Officer Dr Amlan Bhattacharya
Cultural Officers Mrs Raktima Bhadra Sarkar and Mrs Sudipta Das
Nominated Office Bearers

Puja Coordinators Dr Madhuparna Mitra and Mrs Anamika Chatterjee

Committee Members

Dr Sandip Raha	Dr Chandana Banerjee	Mrs Shikha Nath
Dr Raja Biswas	Mrs Banani Sinha Ray	Mrs Raktima Bhadra Sarkar
Dr Ashok Mukherjee	Dr Sakti Guha-Niyogi	Mr Niladri Chakraborty
Dr Liza Mukhopadhyay	Mrs J Majumdar (Hon)	Mrs Mahua Mukherjee
Dr Kanti Nath	Mr Dipak Kundu (Hon)	Dr S K Sharma (Hon)
Dr Sankar Das	Dr M L Nath (Hon)	Mrs Sharada Sharma
Dr Ravi Narayan (Hon)	Mrs Abha Narayan	Dr Husmukh Shah
Mrs Amrita Banerjee	Dr Kausik Mukherjee	Mr Krishnendu Banerjee
Mrs Christina Roy	Mrs Sinjini Chakraborty	Mrs Padma Das
Dr Sudiptomohan Mukhopadhyay		



From the Chairperson's Desk

Dear Friends, Well-wishers, and Patrons of the Wales Puja Committee
My warmest greetings to you all. I hope you are keeping well.

Writing the Chairperson's missive in WPC's golden jubilee year of the WPC is a matter of great honour for me. I feel rather overcome by emotions as I start to pen this. My journey with the WPC started in 2002. Then a young software engineer, I had moved to Pembrokeshire from London. Instinctively Bengali, I was looking at visiting and being part of a Durga Puja. This began my and in due course, my family's very intimate association with the WPC. I can only look back with love and nostalgia at my 21 year association with WPC's incredible fifty-year journey, an involvement that has enriched my family's life in many more ways than I can list. The big gifts from WPC for us have been the touch of home we have always felt, the sense of community, the friendships and camaraderie we have developed and very importantly, my teenage son has grown up with an understanding of Indian culture which has given him confidence in his identity which relates to both Britain and India. My wife and son have had the privilege of performing on the WPC stage year after year. I know there are very many of you who would relate to this just as much as I do.

Over these years, I have seen the WPC grow in every sense of the word, be it in the size and scale of our events, their quality and organisation, the level of engagement with the community, the partnerships we have developed and nurtured, our charity campaigns and how we have reached out to children and young people. It has been an absolute pleasure to be part of that journey. It is obvious that there have been challenging times, but the support that the WPC receives from the community of South Wales and beyond helps things move forward. These challenging times have also given me some perspective of how difficult it must have been for our venerable seniors who started WPC and steered the ship through the early years. My deepest respects for them.

This last year has been exciting to say the least. As the second official year of operations post covid, we have gathered pace and done so much with great support from you all. We celebrated our regular festivals of Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Diwali, and Saraswati Puja but we also ambitiously organised a few other events and projects. The events we had were a grand Poila Boisakh celebration at the Temple of Peace and Rabindra Nazrul Jayanti at Cardiff Central Library. The Poila Boisakh evening was a unique experience for all attendees, a quintessentially Bengali celebration with great Bengali food and culture. The Rabindra Nazrul Jayanti was an event conducted at the Cardiff Central Library in collaboration with the Bangladeshi Women's Association to celebrate the birthdays of the two great poets of Bengal. It was a wonderful afternoon of music, poetry, and dance. My heartfelt thanks go out to the Bangladeshi Women's Association and Cardiff Central Library for partnering with us. Our charitable endeavours in the last year have included donations to Thakurpukur Cancer Centre (Kolkata) and the Syria/ Turkey earthquake appeal.

Outside of these, one of our unique projects, the Maa Durga Idol restoration project at the St Fagan's National Museum of History took shape. Our current set of idols built in 2016 were ageing and instead of getting a new set, we took the sustainable route of restoration. The restoration work was conducted at the museum by eminent artists



Neeleem

Saha



Mr Purnendu Dey and his wife Mrs Chitralekha Dey from West Bengal with help from many of our own members. Maa Durga and her children look stunningly beautiful and new. I am very much looking forward to seeing them adorn our stage, resplendent in all their glory. I am deeply thankful to the artists and to the St Fagan's National Museum of History for supporting us in this project.

This year, as we celebrate our golden jubilee, we are fortunately supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund who are nurturing our Durga Puja Heritage. The aims of the project are to grow the Durga Puja by reaching out more widely, establishing relationships, documenting, and publishing all our artefacts and preserving them for posterity. It fills me with pride that the Heritage Fund truly see our Durga Puja as a valuable heritage and have supported us initially in 2016 and now again in 2023. Our partners in this project are the Museum of Cardiff, People's Collection Wales and Oasis. The Museum of Cardiff is a long-standing partner and this year we have worked together on a pre-Puja cultural event which was open to the public, which coincidentally took place on the day of Mahalaya. All our artefacts from the Durga Puja period will be made available to the wider world via People's Collection Wales alongside our own channels. This will include oral histories collected over the Puja days and all photographs, videos, and publications. Finally, we have a partnership with Oasis centre in Cardiff who support asylum seekers and refugees. Our volunteers will be working with Oasis in a joint effort to prepare food for Oasis clients and our attendees. It promises to be a great cultural exchange experience for many. I offer my deepest thanks to our partners for joining us in the journey. Can I take this opportunity also to thank the wonderful team at the Temple of Peace for partnering with us to celebrate Pujo in such a grand venue.

This year's Puja is going to be another first for WPC as we have a priestess (a lady purohit) conducting Durga Puja. The scholarly Dr Sumitra Mitra Ghosh from Kolkata has kindly and enthusiastically taken on the role of our Purohit for both Durga Puja and Kali Puja. I cannot thank her enough for taking on this most significant role. The 5 days of Puja are going to be exciting for all, filled with worship and with cultural events every evening, delicious food served twice everyday to all and the chance to bond with friends and family.

The following weeks after Durga Puja are going to be extremely exciting too. On the heels of the 5 days of Durga Puja, we have a grand Bijoya Sammelani with Krosswindz, a popular Kolkata band live in concert on the 27th, October at the Penyrheol Community Centre. Kali Puja will be celebrated on the 12th, November at the Temple of Peace. Our Diwali Bash will be on the 18th of November at the Mercure Cardiff North Hotel. So, please do join in and enjoy to your heart's content.

With all of what we do, comes a significant requirement of funding and our primary source of funding is the kind donations from every one of you. With everything costing more than ever before, I request you all to continue contributing generously to the WPC to allow us to carry on doing more and better. My heartfelt thanks to all donors, which includes those who pay additionally through monthly standing orders and many who have sponsored full meals and sweets over the Puja days.

I cannot finish without thanking the very many people who make the WPC work. With utmost humility, I would like to thank our priests, volunteers, committee members and office bearers who work extremely hard to make things happen. But at the end of the day, the WPC is what it is because of everyone who comes together to be part of it, which is every one of you. So, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

WPC is a heritage and an emotion – let us all celebrate it. Shubho Sharodiya to you all!



From the Secretary's Desk

Dear All,

I write this letter with immense pride and joy. Wales Puja Committee (WPC) is celebrating its Golden Jubilee this year and I could not have asked for any better opportunity to share my feelings, thoughts, and gratitude towards WPC and to you all. In 1973, some like-minded Bengali families settled in South Wales arranged the first festival in one of their own houses in Nelson, Mid Glamorgan. This was the first recorded community Hindu festival in Wales. Since then, WPC has scaled several new heights ranging from the making of the idols by inviting artists from Kolkata to immersing older idols in the Bristol Channel. With growing awareness of our socio-environmental responsibilities, we have now restored idols to their full glory rather than get anything new made.

I came to Cardiff in 2006 just before Durga Puja and was missing the festivities back home. This was the first time I got to know about WPC and witnessed the celebration. Back then, I had no idea that one day this wonderful charity organisation would become my extended family! I am thankful to all the committee members for making me and my family warmly accepted within the WPC clan.

Earlier in the year the committee appointed a new set of office bearers. All the new office bearers, (including myself as Secretary) and the committee members started early planning and preparations to celebrate the 50th year with pomp and grandeur. WPC teamed up with Amgueddfa Cymru (St Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff) for the Clay Restoration Project. Artists from Kolkata, supported by the museum staff and members of WPC, restored our old idols to their pristine magnificence. Our newly appointed Chairperson, Mr Neeleem Saha has always been passionately raising funds to support WPC's charitable activities. Supported by our beloved trustee Dr. Sandip Raha, Neeleem has put tremendous efforts to succeed in the Heritage Fund grant application. Our Vice Chair, Dr Shiladitya Sinha, alongside his other responsibilities, is instrumental in creating the wonderful omnibus in your hands with the support of a team of resolute members. We are all eagerly waiting to get a copy of our Golden Jubilee souvenir. Our new Cultural Officers, Mrs. Sudipta Das and Mrs. Raktima Bhadra Sarkar has been tirelessly working since taking up the role during Saraswati Puja earlier this year. They have been staging programs to celebrate Bengali New Year, representing WPC in the United Kingdom Bengali Convention (UKBC), supporting other charity functions like Rabindra-Nazrul event hosted by Cardiff Central Library, Idol completion event in Saint Fagans Museum, Mahalaya event in Museum of Cardiff amongst others. Our Catering Officer Dr. Amlan Bhattacharya along with Mrs. Christina Roy and other committee members catered for over 130 people in the "Poila Baisakh" event. I would like to thank our Treasurer Mr. Pankaj Sarkar for his meticulous bookkeeping of WPC's accounts.

Spectacular cultural activities and events have always been part of the WPC's Durga Puja. And this year is no different. Our dedicated cultural team has been busy organising a variety of programmes which includes a Tagore's dance drama, theatre and songs and dances by all age groups. While the catering committee has been innovative in finding solutions for off-site cooking, transportation of food to venue and most importantly planning for the scrumptious menu following the tradition and true spirit of Durga Puja, at the same time being diligent towards safety and hygiene.

I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our fantastic Puja Coordinators Dr. Madhuparna Mitra and Mrs Anamika Chatterjee for taking charge of managing the Puja



Sayantan
Das

related activities. Lastly and most importantly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Priest Dr. Sumitra Mitra Ghosh for agreeing to do our Durga Puja this year, also setting the milestone for being the first female priest to conduct WPC's Durga Puja.

A small charity organisation dependent on donations from its own members, WPC has always contributed towards worthy causes. This year we supported Lions Club in the UK for helping Syria earthquake victims and the Children's Cancer Hospital in Kolkata, India.

This is my first year as the secretary of Wales Puja Committee and it is an honour to serve you all. I thank my seniors and friends for all their support. Once again, I cordially invite you all to join us in the celebration to welcome Ma Durga and her family on earth, here in Cardiff and enjoy the five days of festivities. We strive to make things better every year. So, I would like to request you to come forward with your innovative ideas, suggestions, and feedback.

May Ma Durga bless us all!

শুভ শারদীয়া প্রীতি ও শুভেচ্ছা (Subho Sharodiya)!

The Treasurer's Report

Dear All,

I am pleased to present the Wales Puja Committee accounts for 2022-23.

In our last accounting year, we have organised Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Diwali Party, Saraswati Puja, celebrated Poila Baishak and the Durga Pratima Restoration Project.

I am thankful to all who have donated generously throughout the year during different events and via monthly direct debit to boost our WPC savings account. A significant amount was also raised during the Diwali Party raffle, which has been spent in various charitable contributions.

I am grateful to WPC executive members for their initiative and hard work which helped us secure the community event grant.

I would like to extend my thanks to those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes including our young volunteer Ashmit Saha to carefully go through months of data and sort out the Gift-Aid work to claim tax from HMRC. This significant amount will be for use in 2023-24 events.

As ever the WPC extended its help for Disaster Relief and other Charities and I thank those who led these efforts and all of you who contributed selflessly.

I hope for your ever increasing patronage and end with all my warmest and most sincere Sharadiya Wishes and Regards.



Pankaj
Sarkar

Durga Puja:-**Expenses (in £)****Earnings (in £)**

WCIA Hall hire	4000
Stage Building/ Lighting/ Decorations	2509.09
Protima Transportation	600
K.K.Solutions for Souvenirs	557
Fruits and Flowers	425.5
Puja Samagree/ Provision/sweets/others	475.74
Wishing for Puja Utensils(8Hrs@£10)	80
Catering:-	
Riverside/Oasis kitchen hire/ Food-Hygiene course	534
Enterprise van hire/Parking/Fuel/Taxi fare	584.4
Bio-degradable Consumable Cutlery	584.72
Groceries/ Spices/Ingredients/Fresh Vegetables	857.68
Dashami Evening Food/ Meat/ Spices	253.84
Food From Madhav and Sweets	600.5
Kitchen Assistants Fees/ Fuel	1020
Cultural Programmes:-	
Hall hire for Rehearsals(24Hrs@ £10)	240
Gift for Performers(Kids)	153.78
Total	13476.25

Online Donation	6149.02
Cash Collections	1882.5
Cheques	452
Raffles	159
Lapel Microphones	134.1
Mixer Cable Sets	84.48
Sweets Donation	42
Total	8903.1

Deficit 4575.15**Kali Puja:-**

Fruits and Flowers	95.31
Puja Samagree/ Provision/sweets	101.91
Decorations /others	9.6
Catering:-	
Oasis kitchen hire (5 hrs@ £30)	150
Vegetables Meat/ Groceries/ Spices/ others	197.48
Sweets and Kitchen helpers	210
Total	764.3

Online Donation	1217.27
Cash Collections	135
Sweets Donation	50
Food Donations	201
Total	1603.27

Surplus 813.97**Diwali:-**

MERCURE hotel Venue/ Food	2195
Tea Light/ Napkin/ Glow stick party/ Sweets	88
Raffle tickets/ Raffle gift hamper	110.34
Raffle gift decorations/ Basket	51.96
Total	2445.3

Online Tickets Sale	2528
Cash Collections	255
Rifle Online- Collections	551
Total	3334

Surplus 888.7**Saraswati Puja:-**

Lisvane Hall hire (8hrs@£32)	256
Priest Fee	250
Puja Samagree/ Provision/sweets/fruits/flowers	131.28
Groceries/ Spices/ sweets/ snacks for volunteers	184.31
Kitchen assistant and Travel	127
Cultural program (gift for Kids)	91.85
Total	1040.44

Online Donations	922
Cash Collections	166
Total	1088

Poila Baishak:

Oasis & HCA kitchen hire	375
Cultural hall hire/ lighting/Antakshari gifts	260.31
Groceries/ Spices/Lamb/ snacks for volunteers	1114.36
Sweets/starter/Helpers/ others	991.27
Kitchen assistant and Travel	127
TOP hall hire	450
Table cloths/ Banquet Roll	182.07
Bio-degradable Plates/ Cutlery/others	288.2
Total	3788.21

No.of Adults (114x £22)	2508
No.of Kids (13 x £12)	156
Sharee Stall	25
Total	2689

Deficit 1099.21**Restoration:-**

Artist Remuneration	1600
Restoration materials/ Canvas materials/ Paintings	677.36
UK visa and Flight for Artist	1130
Taxi fare/ fuel/ train tickets/foods/ Gifts/others	527.18
Accommodation	1241.77
Farewell party in the office/ food/snacks	378.24
Total	5554.55

Payment from- Leeds	250
Online Donation for Food	410
Total	660

Deficit 4894.55*(Actual deficit is £4322.96, National Museum contribution £571.59 is not included this accounting year)***Charity Activity:-**

Turkey -Syria Earthquake Donation	200
Cancer Hospital, Kolkata, India	300
Total	500

Total	0

General Expenses-

Zoom subscriptions/ website Maintenance	498.09
Event insurance and WPC logo & Banner	348
Intercity Protima Storage	1170
HCW membership/UKBC/ individual examiner	350
Bio-degradable cutlery/ Rice Cooker/water can etc	803.89
Lapel Microphones/ stand/ cables	333.39
HCA office-chair/parking cones/ Bin	193.13
Tagor& Najrul event in Cardiff Library	127.96
Total	3824.46

National Museum	100
Golden Anniversary Monthly Payments	3565
Tagor & Najrul event snacks sale	56
Savings A/C interest	169.83
Total	3890.83

Grand Total

31393.51

Grand Total

22118

Overall Deficit during 2022-23 £9,225.31

Total in WPC bank accounts on 31/08/2022 £30929.26

Current a/c balance 1370.18

Savings a/c balance 20148.86

Charity a/c balance 184.91

TOTAL IN BANK 21703.95**TOTAL IN BANK** 21703.95

Origin Stories: Tales from our First Puja in 1974

Ma Durga ashchen. Yes – Ma Durga is coming. She's coming such a long way to see us. She's been coming to Cardiff for 50 years. This is our Golden Jubilee year. We are getting ready to welcome her. For us who are away from home, if we go back to India now, especially Kolkata, you will see as they say in Bengali -

'akashe batashey ma'r ashar agomi batat cholechey'. Everyone is excited and getting ready to welcome Ma Durga.

You can see all the shops full of saris and sweets, with ladies waiting in queues. Children are excited to wear the new clothes. Parents and grandparents are eagerly waiting to see their children from abroad. Why? Because it's Durga puja, the festival we look forward to all year round. Not just in Kolkata, but all over India. To welcome Ma we say –

*Sarva-mangala-mangalye Shive sarvartha-sadhike;
Sharanye Tryambake Gauri Narayani namostute.*

I'm very lucky to be a member of the WPC family. I'm the oldest member, and the lucky one who was there at the beginning - on the first day of puja, 50 years ago back in Cardiff, when we started for the first time. When asked if I remember the first day of that puja, it's something I haven't forgotten. Infact, it's like a golden star in my mind. How can I possible forget and event that we started - something that we created, and worked very hard for. It was one of the best days of not just my life, but I'm sure of the others who were part of that day as well. Sadly, we have lost some of the people since then, who we miss very much.

So how did it all start? It had been about 5-6 years since we had moved to Cardiff. There were very few Bengalis at the time, and we'd get our Indian vegetables and other things from a shop called Lakhani. There was also a fish shop nearby as well that everyone would frequent, which was a good place to meet people. We met and got acquainted with some other doctors and Indians, and an informal group developed.

At that time, quite a few of us would visit the Durga puja at Belsize Park London. We would all often think it would be nice to celebrate Durga puja locally, but because it is such a big puja, we were doubts about anyone having the courage, time or energy to start it.

It was a phase when everyone was busy with their job, starting a family, looking after young children. I was also pregnant with my younger son. However, a gentleman called Mr Ghatak was very keen, and encouraged the group to try to organise a puja in Cardiff. He made us believe that if we tried, we would be able to do it together. He took charge of things, and was like the director of our group who guided us along. We divided the work amongst ourselves equally.

We were lucky to have Ma Durga's oil painting, which was donated by a doctor in Nelson. We then had to do was look for a priest. My husband and a friend went over to request Dr. Acharya. He was in Pontypridd at that time. At the beginning, Acharya da was not very keen to do the puja but when we requested him and said everyone would help, he finally agreed.

Everybody shared the workload - Dr Animesh Das went to Southhall to buy some our thakurs clothes, ornaments, utensils and other things for the puja. I had a few things in my house like a shankh (conch) and other puja things like kosha kushi. Mr Ghatak



Mrs Tharna
Majumdar





requested me to take charge of work related to the puja side. So I had to do the puja shopping and arrange for other things like asking for help to cut the fruits and vegetables. Some of the people helping out were Dr. Bashak, Mr Kar, Mr Mishra, Mr Palit, Shikha and Aru Ghosh , Rama di (Pal Chowdury) and Dr Pal Chowdhury, Dr and Mrs Ganguly etc; perhaps there were others that I haven't recalled. We all worked together. We contributed the money we needed between us.



We did indeed work very hard to arrange the Puja. Word spread slowly but surely and people got to hear of the puja, there were visitors from Indian families in Cardiff, Porthcrawl, Swansea, and Newport. Well before the days of computers and mobiles and we had to inform people by telephone, word of mouth and through friends. I also made a little invitation leaflet explaining puja and the details of the puja in Cardiff, for doctors at a medical society my husband was a member of. Some of them also decided to visit.

We also arranged for prashad in the morning – fruits, sweets, some suji etc; Acharya bowdi used to make some for the thakur. Some people would also bring along samosas and kachoris. We didn't have too many people for lunch then, so some of the people would make khichuri at home and bring it over. The evening meal was ordered from Lakhani.

On the fifth day, we had a little function in evening , comprising out very own homegrown artists. Shamali Basak and Acharya da sang songs, Mr Banerjee who had come down for the event from Bristol, played the sitar and a few other performances.

Our feelings towards that puja are hard to explain – excitement and enjoyment perhaps. We were all so thrilled. We felt like we were home, watching our home Durga puja. Specially while doing Anjali with friends. There were people of all age groups, including small children who'd be crying, asking for food etc; in the middle of the hustle bustle. The overall atmosphere was electrifying. I played the shankh, and my younger son who I was pregnant with then, also went onto play it in later years. He loved it, is really good at it.

We worked hard, but we enjoyed the pujo days immensely – it almost felt like we had conquered something. That was the first year. After that of course the committee was formed, and we booked parade for puja. Then a lot more people started coming in for the puja day by day. A lot more people who were interested, got involved as well. We were happy that more people were coming in. It also meant our workload was lesser.

Now our committee is a lot bigger, with a lot of things going on. I feel very proud and privileged to still alive and a member to see pujo as it is now. This year is in particular, is a special year.

The puja is very close to my heart. I feel like my home puja, and ma Durga is coming to see us and give her blessings. I think she doesn't mind what we offer her. Whether it's sweets or fruits, she needs very little. She mainly needs our bhakti, devotion, and that we should sincerely ask her to come. We will continue to work together, and look forward to next year as well.

I wish everyone, our puja committee, my sincere best wishes. Hope everything will go well, everybody will enjoy, and we'll all together welcome Ma Durga.

Ya devi sarvabhuteshu vishnu-mayeti sadbita.

Namas tasyai, namas tasyai, namas tasyai namo namah.



Passing the Torch down the Decades

Two of our Stallworths take the trip down Memory Lane



*Dr Ravi
Narayan*

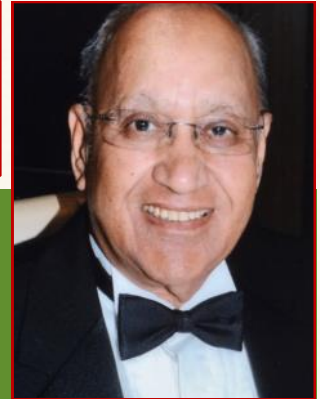
After working as a junior doctor in different parts of the country, I came to Rhondda Valley with my family in 1978 and joined the practice in Porth as a GP. I came to know about the group celebrating puja in Cardiff, which we joined. At that time the group comprised mostly a small group of doctors. WPC was to grow out of this group.

In the early years, we did not have a fixed place of our own. Different Pujas were celebrated at different places - The Parade, St David's Hospital, Empire Swimming Pool, Kutchi Leva Samaj temple, the Church Hall in Rhiwbina, the Sikh Gurudwara at Ninian Pak Road and Atlantic Wharf. In 1995, we were able to arrange to have puja celebrations at the Penyrheol Community Centre, where we continued until 2019. 2020 in the year of the pandemic found the Puja celebrated virtually with the worship being carried out in a rented property and transmitted online. Since 2021, we have been celebrating puja at the Temple of Peace (TOP).

Over the years, we have carried out the puja on a painting on canvas, then until 1990 with a Pratima made by Mr Kamal Ghatak, and then our first Pratima from Kumartoli, Calcutta.

Our pujari Mr. Chakraborty from London and Banerjee da used to stay at our place at times. Dr Acharya took over in 1994 when Banerjeeda fell ill.

*Dr SK
Sharma*



I heard about Puja for the first time when I was in primary/middle school in Churi/Chatarpura in Rajasthan, India where my father was the medical officer.

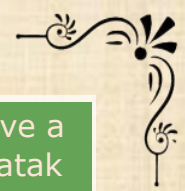
My elder brothers used to come home from Kolkata during puja holidays. They were graduating from Carmichael/R. G. Kar Medical College and National Medical College, Kolkata.

However, I came to know about the real meaning of puja after we attended the Durga Puja event in Cardiff in 1978.

It was always the responsibility of chairperson to find a venue for Durga puja /Diwali. To find a proper venue was always a challenge for WPC. Every year we used to celebrate puja at different places - Chapter Theatre, 28 The Parade, Sanatam Dharm Mandir, Taff's Well Community Hall and the Empire Pool. When I was the chairman, we even celebrated puja at St. David Hospital's Hall.

One year I attended a birthday party at the Penyrheol Community Centre (PCC) and it came to my mind that this is the ideal place to for puja and other celebrations. Members of WPC met the management committee and late Mr. Ken Harris and late Mrs. Smith, who then helped the WPC celebrate all our functions at PCC.

Mr. Banerjee was very kind to perform the puja as a priest along with Mr. Chakrabarti and later Dr. Acharya.



When I joined the Puja committee, it was a very small group like a close family. Everyone used to contribute, and we did everything on our own-shopping, cooking, decorations etc.

I used to buy disposable plates and cutlery from London or Birmingham to save money and fruits and flowers from Bessemer market at 5-6 in the morning.

I then introduced others as well to Bessemer market. The ladies of the group would cook our food sometimes at their own homes. We also brought in Bina Ben to help with our Puja group, and she has been helping us since. We also used to write invitations for puja and post them, sharing the responsibilities.

For the Diwali function, I would get a D J from Birmingham or Leicester. At times, I would meet the group at the services at junction 30 of M4 and take them to the Penrhyeol centre. A few times, I would borrow the music system (PA) from the Cardiff Gurudwara on Pearl Street as we did not have our own.

We used to collect chanda during Durga Puja which included the Diwali function as well. We didn't make collections for Diwali separately, though we had contributions from some who didn't attend the Durga puja. As the expenses for the Diwali functions gradually grew, we decided to start collections from Diwali as well since 1992.

Previously, we celebrated only three functions a year - Durga Puja, Diwali and Saraswati puja. Later the idea of celebrating Kali Puja came up as well, which was celebrated as "Friends of WPC". In 1999 Kali Puja was integrated under the WPC.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving WPC on different posts - as secretary, treasurer, catering officer, entertainment, vice chair and chairman. Our Puja committee became a Charity in 1995.

During that period, I was the chairman of WPC. I also had the privilege of editing our souvenir for the period 1996-1999. I am grateful to the committee for this opportunity.

When we first started, we did not have a proper Durga pratima. Mr Kamal Ghatak dreamt of Ma Durga. When Mrs. Ghatak was blessed with a son, he decided to make a pratima of Ma Durga and her family in his garage. We worshiped that pratima for a few years. Later we got a Pratima from Kolkata. The Committee decided to hire a boat and have a proper Visharjan of the old pratima in the Bristol Channel.

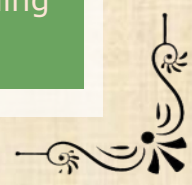
On the recommendation of Dr. Rupen Majumdar and Dr. Shantanu Sengupta I became a member of the committee and served as treasurer, vice chair and chairperson of WPC. As a treasurer, I typed audited accounts and put them on the notice board. Previously, we used to go door to door in Merthyr and Rhondda to collect chanda for Durga puja and Diwali in the evenings after finishing our hospital work. When we moved to Penyrheol Community Centre we decided to collect Chanda at the event.

WPC used to celebrate Diwali and have a DJ. The Committee felt it was expensive to include Diwali event with Durga puja and it was decided to celebrate Diwali as a separate and ticketed event. In due course, Kali puja was started as a new event. Saraswati puja was always celebrated in Jan/Feb. Young members especially take part in it.

Dr. Rupen Majumdar and I visited the solicitor a few times to register WPC as a charitable organisation. There were originally three trustees to start with and later the number of trustees was increased to eight. .

For publicity front . WPC members used to have one good evening session to post programs for Durga Puja , Diwali and Saraswati by Royal Mail.

The ladies, including Jharna, Sikha, Monika, Anamika among others, were a great help to the priest during the puja. They helped our priests with everything and knew what was required.



We celebrated WPC's Silver Jubilee in 1998. The front cover of the 1998 souvenir is the painting of Ma Durga on canvas which was used for the first Durga puja celebration in 1973, in Nelson at Dr Santosh K Sen's house. Dr Sen had moved to California by the silver jubilee year, but he sent his good wishes, which were shared in the souvenir.

Now our Puja group has grown big. We are armed with a very talented group of people and equipped with modern technology. WPC has grown from strength to strength and is getting bigger and better.

With the blessing of Ma Durga we are now celebrating its Golden Jubilee this year. May Ma Durga bless us all with peace,



Organisation of Durga Pujas in the past was a big community affair. Providing prasad to devotees was a major task. There were times when the committee used to order food from outside but as the number of devotees grew this became too expensive. The committee then appointed a catering officer to organise bhog and prasad. The Chairman's wife used to take an active part. A few of the ladies such as Sharada, Ranjana, Usha, Sikha, Mahua, Chandana, Abha, Padma, Rita and others would get together and organise to do shopping and prepare bhog and prasad including sweets for 200+ in their kitchens.

After moving to PCC Bessemer market shopping was responsibility of Deepak, Ashok, Indian grocery by Shankar and Probal +, Puja Samagry by Shikha and Padma. Stage decorations used to be done by Roma Paul and later on by Sandip, Ashok and Ravi used to bring disposables from Birmingham.

There was no match for Kanti's Bengan Bhaja after shopping!!

Members wanted their own place of worship and a new sub committee was made which met at The Parade every fortnightly and this led to the creation of the Hindu Cultural Association (HCA) with WPC as its mother organization. With great difficulty funds were raised to build a place with a temple, a priest and a hall. Founding members hailed from all across India. Life members collected £40K. Two of the generous members contributed £40K as a loan to HCA which helped to buy the land. Later, HCA applied for a grant and was lucky to get £300K from the National Lottery which helped us build the India Centre.

Unfortunately, however the organizations under this umbrella parted ways and it is wonderful to see WPC continue to flourish. My congratulations to WPC for celebrating its golden anniversary and I wish that it continues to grow further.



Some Milestones

1986

First souvenir produced

Clay Pratima of ma Durga made by Mr Kamal Ghatak.

Our constitution was drawn and approved by the committee

1987

We started charity donation

1989

Bought our first sound system.

1990

WPC had our Pratima from Kumatoli,

1992

Pratima bisharjan was done in the Bristol Channel.

1994

Our constitution was amended

1998

WPC celebrated Silver Jubilee.

The canvas painting of Ma Durga that was used for the first puja celebration in 1973 features as the cover page of the puja souvenir along with a message from Dr. Santosh K Sen, who's home the first puja was held

1999

Kali Puja started under WPC banner.

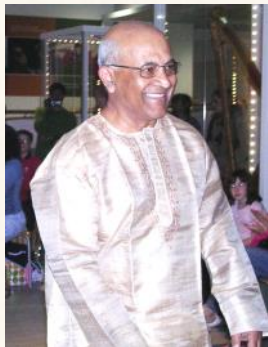
2002

Durga Ma's idol was made in Cardiff

2002

The Indian Mela was celebrated

WPC had own website "www.pujainwales.com"



Memories



Our Durga Puja Priests since 1973

Durga Puja in South Wales started in a humble way in 1973 after the concept was discussed amongst 4-6 Bengalis following a Saraswati Puja in the house of Mr Sen in Merthyr. In India Durga Puja is unthinkable without a professional priest. Here however, we have encourage, prepare and train members of the Indian diaspora who can ideally understand and speak some Sanskrit. Whilst traditionally these were from amongst the Brahmins, Pujas have now progressed beyond the issues of gender and caste. Unlike in the 1970's, 80's and 90's, several bigger cities in the UK do now have professional priests.

Back in 1973 at Mr Sen's residence, Mr Kamal Ghatak presided as the priest.

The first community Durga Puja was in The Parade, Cardiff in 1974 was a modest effort amongst 6-10 families and the famous Chalachitra of Durga from Kolkata. The priests that year was Dr Acharjya and in 1975, it was Mr. Chakraborty from London and the Late Mr Banerjee.



Dr Acharjya did Puja in the Parade from 1976-1984 and again from 1993-2009. In spite of being a full time General medical practitioner he took time off from his busy practice for days of Durga Puja. His wife always supervised all Puja related issues during five days.

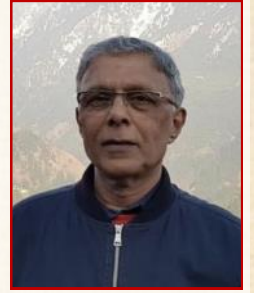
Mr Banerjee performed our Durga Puja between in years 1985-1991 and his voice and ritualistic offerings were very much remembered. His method of doing Durga Puja was very strict as per scriptures and we even got told off for any deviations. He came from Cambridge to do Puja



and stayed in Dr Majumdar or Dr Narayan's houses. As his health failed, Dr Chaturvedi, a retired lecturer and Sanskrit scholar from Newport, stepped in and performed our Durga Puja in 1992. After this, as afore mentioned, Dr Acharjya returned as our priest.

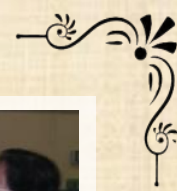
Durga Puja with our first Kumartuli image in Empire Swimming Pool Cardiff City Centre (built during Commonwealth Games in 1950's, now the site of the Principality Stadium) in 1992-93.

Dr Acharjya & Mr Misra doing Durga Puja in Penyrheol Community Centre in 1994.



Dr Sandip

Raha



Dr Acharjya mentored Mr Kanai Chatterjee, a retired engineer, into Durga Puja priesthood over 6-7 years in early 2000. Mr Chatterjee took over as our main priest in 2009 and sadly, Dr Acharjya sadly passed away in 2011. Anamika, his wife ably supported him during the Pujas and continues to guide us.



Mr Ananda Misra, a retired Civil Engineer had also helped Dr Acharjya and later took over the Kali Puja duties. Since 2011, Anirban Mukherjee, a solicitor and with a priestly lineage started helping Mr Chatterjee in our Durga Puja.



Mr Kanai Chatterjee and Mr Anirban Mukherjee in Durga Puja



As Mr Chatterjee became more frail and with the Pandemic approaching Mr Mukherjee very ably became our main priest and developed the role explaining rituals to devotees which was much appreciated.



Pandit Pathak, a well known Sanskrit scholar and a TV host on religious and astrological matters stepped in 2021 when Anirban was unable to preside over our Pujas after a bereavement.



After a very successful puja in 2022, unfortunately, this year Mr Mukherjee is stepping away. We are honoured and fortunate to have the renowned Sanskrit and religious scholar Dr Sumitra Mitra Ghosh as our first priestess. She has presided over our Kali and Saraswati Puja and we have been touched by her inspirational nature.



Edited, adapted and updated by Dr Shiladitya Sinha



A reflection on the History of Durga Puja in Wales

Around the early 1970's, Kamal Ghatak, together with Late Sambhu Das, floated the idea of celebrating Durga Puja in Cardiff, Wales while Saraswati Puja being held in Dr Santosh Sen's house. It was a major challenge at that time to organise such a big event with limited active members, particularly to collect donations by visiting the fellow Indians living in Cardiff / Newport / Swansea before the festival and make all the Bengalees in south Wales to be aware of the event. At that time the clay images were not even thought of; instead a canvas painting called CHALCHITRA was procured from Kolkata to organise the Durga Puja festival. After few searches for a potential Puja venue, 28 The Parade was selected with some help from Mr Mooniram, who was the manager of the Parade Community centre. Durga Puja was held there from 1974 to 1990 except a few years, when being not available, the Puja was held in various locations in Cardiff.



Mr Kanai
Chatterjee

In 1974 when I first moved to Porthcawl, I heard about Durga Puja in Cardiff by word of mouth, though my personal involvement was limited at that time. Dr T K Basu, Mr Kamal Ghatak, Mr Shambhu Das were the main organisers. I took part in door to door collections of donations and my newly married wife Anamika had the opportunity to meet other families at the Puja venue namely Roma Choudhury, Dr Bishnu Pal, Gopa & Santosh Guha Roy, Dr & Mrs Acharjya, Dr Rupen & Mrs Jharna Majumdar, Kamal & Sikta Ghatak, Dr Ravi & Abha Narayan, Aro & Sikha Ghosh and few others. During those early years other important Puja matters were arranged and executed by a few enthusiastic ladies (Mrs Sikha Dutta, Mrs Roma Choudhury, Mrs Abha Narayan, Mrs Sharada Sharma, Mrs Gopa Guha Roy, Mrs Anamika Chatterjee, Mrs Jharna Majumdar, Mrs Tara Acharjya and a few others) like cooking for visitors, Puja Bhog, making sweets, arranging the puja materials, flowers etc.

Over the years many more families, young and old, joined in to celebrate this festival. The priests in those early years were Kamal Ghatak, Dr Acharjya and Mr Banerjee from Cambridge in the 1980's. In the early 1990's one Mr Chakraborty from London did perform the Puja for a couple of times. Mr (Dr) Chaturvedi performed the Puja one year, perhaps in 1992, and Mr Banerjee in 1993-94. Dr Acharjya came back in 1995, to be the main priest again, when Puja moved to Penyrheol community Centre, Caerphilly. Other priests have been Mr Ananda Misra and Mr Anirban Mukhopadhyay.

In recent years there have been significant changes in the organisation and execution of the complex Puja related matters. The committee has grown from strength to strength; designated responsibilities are given to willing members; rotas are created for activities around stage / cooking / shopping / actual puja matters / Souvenir publication / cultural programme etc. Penyrheol has been the steady venue for the Durga Puja festival in Wales since 1995. I have also have noticed the smooth change of postal communication to e-communication (Whatsapp / e-mail / facebook etc) over the last 10 years by the committee, for improved circulation, discussions, suggestions, contributions etc. The Cultural events during the Durga Puja festivals by Wales Puja Committee go back over 35 years and in the last 10 years or so it has grown into almost professional standards. Parents and their children go through weeks of intensive training and rehearsals for stage performances of music / dance / drama / recitals to present high quality cultural, colourful & entertaining programmes, by both children & adults, during the five days of Durga Puja, all voluntarily.

During the last 15 years, accomplished clay artists (sculptors) have been brought from Kolkata / Bengal to create the clay images of Durga and her Children in Cardiff three times. In 2016 the committee started this project of 'Preserving the heritage of Durga Puja and clay image making in Wales', which is an unique initiative in the UK and have involved local schools, university arts department, other local groups like People's Collection of Wales, Butetown History and Arts Centre etc. This is a great example of organisation and management skills of Wales Puja committee in the modern era.

My role as a Priest at present goes back to 1999 when I started assisting Dr Acharjya in the Durga Puja. In 2000, he contacted me to pass on the knowledge & the workings of a priest on very strict terms & conditions. Initially I was apprehensive and took some time to agree finally after a lot of encouragement from him and his wife. I had to abide by his methods and rituals (like non Brahmins are not allowed to do any Puja related tasks). After his sad demise in 2011, I had to take the helm of conducting the Puja in my own style and I opened the door for all to be involved in the Puja related matters. Thankfully with the help from my wife Anamika and other dedicated individuals, my confidence has grown in the last 17 years and I have managed to perform successful Durga Pujas; showing a steady increase in the number of visitors every year.



ওয়েলসের প্রবাসী দুর্গাপূজা

বাঙালীর একাধিক ধর্মীয় উৎসবের মধ্যে দুর্গাপূজা হল শ্রেষ্ঠ উৎসব। বাঙালীর জীবন একাধিক উৎসবের কিরণে মুখরিত হয়। দুর্গাপূজা উৎসবের আগমনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে প্রত্যেকটি বাঙালীর বুকে আনন্দের ঝর্ণা বয়।

মহালয়ার শুভ বন্দনার দ্বারা আমাদের দীর্ঘ একবছরের অপেক্ষার অবসান ঘটে। প্রাচীন কাল থেকে আমাদের হিন্দু শাস্ত্র অনুযায়ী মাতৃশক্তিকে পূজা করা হয়, আর মাতৃশক্তির প্রধান উৎস হলেন মা দুর্গা। বছরের প্রায় প্রত্যেকটি মাসে একাধিক উৎসবের তালিকার মধ্যে আমরা বাঙালীরা যে উৎসবের জন্য বেশী উৎসুক হয়ে থাকি তা হল দুর্গাপূজা।



মনিকা সেনগুপ্ত

আমি সাউথ ওয়েলস -এ আসি ১৯৭৮ সালে। এখানে এসে দেখলাম মা দুর্গার পূজা হচ্ছে কাপড়ের উপরে আঁকা মায়ের ছবিতে, যেটি আনানো হয়েছিল কলকাতা থেকে। আমরা যে কটি পরিবার ছিলাম, পূজার এই পাঁচ দিন মহা আনন্দে মেতে উঠলাম। পূজার আয়োজন আমরা সকলে মিলে ভাগ করে নিয়েছিলাম। পূজার জন্য যা যা সামগ্রী প্রয়োজন, ফল ফুল ইত্যাদি সমস্ত আমরা জোগাড় করেছিলাম। এ যেন এক অদ্বিত অনুপ্রেরণা। সকলের একাধিক প্রচেষ্টায় এই দুর্গাপূজা খুবই সফল হয়েছিল।

আশির দশকের মাঝামাঝি স্বর্গীয় কমল ঘটক মহাশয় তাঁর গ্যারাজে পাঁচটি মূর্তি মাটি দিয়ে বানিয়েছিলেন। তিনি ওই মূর্তিগুলি আমাদের পূজা কমিটিকে দান করেছিলেন। মায়ের এই মূর্তি তখনকার Bengali Cultural Association দ্বারা পূজিত হয়েছিল বেশ কিছু বছর পর্যন্ত। এই মূর্তিটিকে পূজা করা হয় পরবর্তী বেশ কিছু বছর।

তারপর ১৯৯১ সালে প্রথম কলকাতার কুমারটুলি থেকে দুর্গামায়ের মূর্তি আসে কার্ডিফে, পূজা হয়েছিল St David's Hospital Community Hall এ। আগের মূর্তিটির বিসর্জন হয় ১৯৯২ সালে, Bristol Channel, Penarth Pier, কার্ডিফে। এমন ঠাকুর বিসর্জন এই দেশে এই প্রথম।

দ্বিতীয়বার কলকাতা থেকে মূর্তি আনানো হয় ১৯৯৬ সালে। ২০০২ সালে এই দেশে প্রথমবার দেশ থেকে নিয়ে আসা মাটি এবং অন্যান্য সামগ্রী দিয়ে মায়ের মূর্তি বানানো হয়, কলকাতা থেকে দুই শিল্পী নিমাই পাল ও বিশ্বজিৎ চক্রবর্তী এসেছিলেন। এরপর ২০০৯ ও ২০১৬ সালে আবারও তৈরী হয় দেবীপ্রতিমা কার্ডিফে; এই বছর ২০২৩ সালে নতুন মূর্তি তৈরির বদলে আগের মূর্তিগুলির পুনরুদ্ধার করা হয়।



বাঙালীর কাছে পূজার এই পাঁচটি দিন খুবই আনন্দের। এই কটি দিনে ঢাক, কাঁসর, ঘন্টা, ধূপ, ধুনো, মন্ত্রপাঠ, চন্দনের সুগন্ধ ও গান বাজনার সাথে সাথে সকলে মেতে ওঠে আনন্দে। আমরা এই পূজা নিয়ে এত ব্যস্ত থাকি যে এইদেশের অন্যান্য জায়গায় যে সমস্ত দুর্গাপূজা হয় সেগুলিতে যাবার কথা চিন্তাই করতে পারিনা।

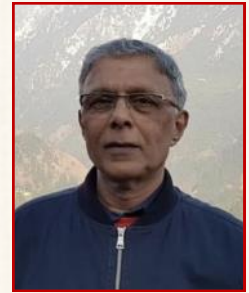
আমাদের এই পূজা দেশের পূজার সময় ও তারিখ দেখে করার চেষ্টা করি। এই পূজাতে আমরা সন্ধিপূজা, চন্দীপাঠ এবং অন্যান্য সমস্ত ক্রিয়াকর্ম পালন করার চেষ্টা করি। এছাড়া দুপুরে ও রাতে সকলের জন্য ভোগপ্রসাদের ব্যবস্থাও আমরা করে থাকি।

দশমীর আগমন আমাদের সকলের মনথারাপের কারণ। দশমীর দিন পূজা মন্ডপে সিঁদুর খেলা হয়। সাথে হয় গান বাজনার সঙ্গে দেবী দুর্গার ঘট বিসর্জন। আবার একটি বছর অপেক্ষা, তার মাঝে শুভ বিজয়ার প্রণাম, কোলাকুলি। সকলের মিলন, একে অপরকে আনন্দের সঙ্গে জড়িত রাখার বন্ধন হল বাঙালীর শ্রেষ্ঠ উৎসব দুর্গোৎসব।

Passing the Baton over half a century

The Beginning

The year was 1973. A few Bengalis living in the valleys of South Wales decided to organise a gharoa (homely) Durga Puja. An acquaintance in Kolkata got Durga and her children artistically drawn onto a rolled-up canvas or chal chitra. This was brought over to Cardiff and the first ever Durga Puja in Wales took place in the Rhondda valley in the bedroom of Dr & Mrs Santosh Sen at Nelson. The priest was Dr Kamal Ghatak. Amongst us even today are many senior members of who had



Dr Sandip

Raha

attended that very first Pujo - Dr &

Mrs Mohan Nath, Mrs Jharna Majumdar, Mrs Shikta Ghatak (wife of Late Mr Kamal Ghatak; she currently lives in Birmingham), Mrs Roma (Anuradha) Chowdhury (currently lives near Lincoln), Dr & Mrs Asit Haldar and Ila Halder.



The First Puja in Cardiff with the wonderful canvas paintings of Goddess Durga and her family

The first baroyari (community) Durga Pujo was performed the following year in 1974 at 28 The Parade, Cardiff by Dr Acharjya. Mr. Chakraborty and Late Banerjee Da were our next priests. Late Dr H K Acharya returned and then stepped back because of work pressures only to return when Bannerjeeda's health declined. Funding came from donations collected from members of the Indian diaspora settled in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport.

Our chal chitra Durga continued to be worshiped until 1986 when Late Mr Kamal Ghatak, an engineer based in Cardiff, made a small five-piece clay image of Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Kartik and Ganesh in his garage. He donated them to what was then known as the Bengali society, for purposes of Durga Pujo.

Over subsequent years, Durga Puja brought together Indian families who were new to Wales, promoting an opportunity to socialise, create friendships and celebrate their shared culture. This group grew in size and in 1983-84, that small group renamed itself as the Wales Puja Committee. Our constitution and terms of reference were developed in 1994 and in the year 1996, Wales Puja Committee was registered as a charity with the Charity Commission.

Kumartuli to Cardiff

Our first Durga clay images travelled all the way from Kumartuli in 1991. Many of us who were there to receive those very first Kumartuli images at Old St. David's Hospital Community Hall in Cardiff are still around. Opening the packing of ekchala Durga on a Shashthi afternoon was a real celebration for the first time in Wales





The second image from Kumartuli arrived in 1997. Between the years 1990 – 1994, we moved our Durga Puja venues from the first floor of the Old Empire Swimming Pool (currently the site of the Millenium Stadium) to the Parade Hall and then finally in 1995, to Penyrheol Community centre, Caerphilly. This Community Centre was the venue for our Durga Puja for several decades all the way until 2019.



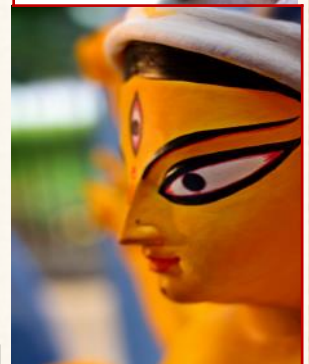
The Making of the Goddess



The first clay- image making of Durga in the United Kingdom took place in 2002 at the Old Library- currently known as the Museum of Cardiff. Artists Mr Nemai Pal from Kumartuli and Mr Biswajit Mukherjee made five idols from scratch using hay, clay and other raw materials over a period of three weeks. This unique project was called 'Making of Durga' and was supported brilliantly by Late Christine McKay, the curator of the National Museum of Wales and Mrs Rubi Pal Chowdhury from Arts and Crafts Council of West Bengal, India.



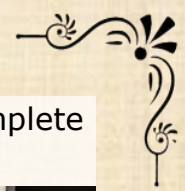
Clay images were made again in 2009 using clay, hay and papier mache at the St Fagan's Museum, and in 2016 at the Bute-town History and Arts Centre. Artists in residence were brought from Kolkata, the brothers Purnendu and Dibyendu Dey in 2009 and Dibyendu Dey and Sunil Pal in 2016. Both projects received funding support from the Arts Council of Wales and the Lottery Fund. The old set of images were donated to St Fagan's Museum for purposes of permanent display. Workshops were conducted with local school children and two booklets were produced- 'Preserving Heritage of Durga Puja Festival and Clay Image Making in Wales' and 'The Heritage of Durga Puja Festival



and Clay Images in Wales'. A DVD was produced to capture the experience for our future generations.

This year in 2023, Wales Puja Committee undertook





Purnendu and his wife Chitralkesha were in residence for a period of ten days to complete the work. This was once again a unique project in the UK and workshops were

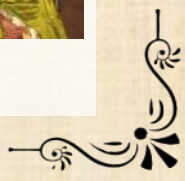


conducted which were open to anyone from the community.

Wales Puja Committee - Pujo and beyond

Our Durga Puja and other religious events such as Kali Puja, Diwali and Saraswati Puja had been taking place at the Penyrheol Community Centre in Caerphilly for several years. A range of other cultural events such as Nabo Borsho, Bong Connection were organised too. This vibrant period of the Wales Puja Committee was driven by many dozens of committed members under the guidance of seniors / trustees / artistic members – Mrs Gopa Guharoy, Mrs Banani Sinha Ray to name a few. The members of the WPC bonded during their range of shared responsibilities – be it the communal cooking at the Penyrheol Community centre, be it the cultural activities such as music, dance and theatre performances, fashion shows. These cultural activities filled the evenings; programmes were also organised in Penyrheol and Rhiwbina Community Centres. Indian Melas have been organised to bring together Indian diaspora from all across South Wales in recent years.

The torch bearers of today, bright, committed, technologically savvy and artistically gifted gives me great hope for the future and beyond.



The Envious 50 Years of Wales Puja Committee, Cardiff South Wales, UK

With fondness and a burning glow in my eyes I chose to recapture the semicentennial sentiments that mark the unfettered growth of our very own Wales Puja Committee. In a universal time zone 50 years may seem miniscule to us but it has been a long and arduous trek. The journey has not always been smooth. But those who took on the journey made sure there would be no hiccups. From a very humble beginning in the early seventies and with a handful of devotees, we have snowballed into a sizable community in 2023.

Loves labour they say is never lost.

"You work you toil, you never let your inners boil."



Dr Ashok
Mukherjee

VISION

The vision of our pioneers was intricately woven into the fabric of our emotional make up. September- October, with the gentle shivers of an early winter, Kans grass (Kash Phool) billowing 3 metres in the air in an intoxicating snowy dance truly heralds the coming of Ma Durga.

It is Puja. Bengal is agog in anticipation. Kumartuli is bustling with activity. Ceremonial 'Pandals' are coming up to house the revered deity. A chaotic but happy madness settles over Bengal like tiny sparkles of joy.

For those that left the shores of Bengal over 50 years ago there was alas a void in their existence, a deep dark void that needed to be filled with the light of joy, as it only be natural for those from the 'City of Joy'.

The mighty pioneers met and within their resources and financial constraints, laid down the founding stones of an epic journey. 50 years on, we live to celebrate in style. And maybe, some celebrating will live on to see another quinquagenarium.

PARTNERSHIP

Over the years we have partnered with many little and large organisations to boost our viability whilst nurturing and blending into the society we live in. Our story is one of success.

As we have grown in poise and posture, from an awkward cygnet to a beautiful swan. We have spread our wings, capturing other events and festivities to enrich the cause and purpose of Wales Puja Committee. Though Durga Puja remains our 'piece de resistance', the real showstopper, we celebrate equally significant events such as Saraswati Puja, Kali Puja, Poila Boishak, Diwali and Holi. Dance, dramas, recitations, vocal renditions, and various other forms of art dot our annual calendar. I cannot but emphasise the importance of our culinary bias and creation of love drenched recipes from back yonder during these festivities. We have a vibrant bunch of members with extra ordinary skills who look after our religious, cultural, and culinary extravaganzas.



PUJA AND PRATIMA

Puja is a salutation from within and Pratima unifies the religious, cultural, and social bond. Both are important. The union of the two culminates into a confluence of 'Hindu karmic evangelism'.

From a mere portrait on canvas 50 years ago to a home crafted image thereafter, the game had just begun. Through donations we collected enough funds to import our first Pratima from India in 1990. Subsequently over the years at regular intervals we brought in craftsmen from India who sculpted our images here in the heartland of Wales. Our last Pratima was made seven years ago.

CREATION OF DURGA

Over a decade after our very first Pratima import, we challenged ourselves to creating and making history. On three separate occasions, September 2002, July 2009, and June 2016 we invited artists from the very 'Sanctum Sanctorum' of India's Pratima making hub of Kumartuli to create the magical images here in Cardiff.

Project, 'Creation of Durga' was indeed a challenge but executed to perfection keeping in mind all traditional and emotional aspects of Pratima making.

All three events were characterised by massive popular support with inclusivity and communal participation. Very strangely, the gap between each of the image making events has been seven years.

RESTORATION OF GODDESS DURGA

Our will last Pratima was sculpted in Cardiff in 2016. Exactly 7 years to coincide with our Golden Jubilee year. For various logistic reasons we were unable to generate a new image this year and thus project 'Restoration' was undertaken.

PROJECT

In collaboration with St Fagans National Museum of History we took on the unique project to restore in totality, the magnificence of Durga, the Goddess of primordial strength.

St Fagans has been our natural ally, guiding us relentlessly through the two fruitful decades of our association.

This unique project unfolded seamlessly within the crypts of the museum, sanctified by the very able artists from India. This week long project was upgraded to an Arts Festival where students of creative arts and passers by were encouraged to participate and be part of our endeavour.

IN CONCLUSION

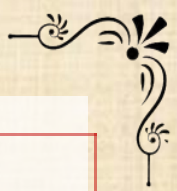
With dedication and unfettered indulgence our predecessors laid the foundation stone 50 years ago. With enormous strength they but stood the tides of time and created, what is today, Wales Puja Committee. We owe it to them with reverence and a promise to continue their legacy to the next milestone.

Today we have more than three hundred members dedicated to the cause of the WPC. It is a charitable organisation creating its funds through donations. Our aim is multiculturalism through the spread and reach of Art and Culture. We dream of a united community sharing and receiving from each others trove of artistic and cultural riches.



List of Chairpersons & Secretaries 1986—2023

YEAR	Chairperson	Secretary
1986	Dr S Parab	Mr DK Kundu
1987	Dr S Parab	Dr SK Sharma, Dr P Banerjee
1988	Dr S Sengupta	Dr RD Narayan
1989	Dr S Sengupta	Dr RD Narayan
1990	Dr Kanti Nath	Mr DK Kundu
1991	Dr SK Sharma	Mr DK Kundu
1992	Mr DK Kundu	Dr SK Sharma, Dr S Raha
1993	Mr DK Kundu	Dr S Raha
1994	Dr. RD Narayan	Dr SK Sharma
1995	Dr. RD Narayan	Dr S Raha
1996	Dr RK Majumdar	Dr S Das, Dr A Mukherjee
1997	Dr RK Majumdar	Dr A Mukherjee, Dr R Sinha Roy
1998	Mr SK Palit	Dr R Sinha Roy, Dr A Haldar
1999	Mr SK Palit	Mr DK Kundu, Dr R Sinha Roy
2000	Dr S Raha	Mr DK Kundu, Dr C Banerjee
2001	Dr S Raha	Dr A Mukherjee
2002	Dr S Das	Dr R Sinha Roy
2003	Dr S Das	Dr A Mukherjee
2004	Dr A Mukherjee	Dr S Guha Niyogi



YEAR	Chairperson	Secretary
2005	Dr Ashok Mukherjee	Dr Sakti Guha Niyogi
2006	Dr Sakti Guha Niyogi	Mr Kingshuk Nath
2007	Dr Sakti Guha Niyogi	Mr Kingshuk Nath
2008	Dr Ranjit Sinha Roy	Dr Subhas Das
2009	Dr Ranjit Sinha Roy	Dr Subhas Das
2010	Dr Sankar Das	Mr Neeleem Saha
2011	Dr Sankar Das	Mr Neeleem Saha
2012	Dr Subhas Das	Mr Neeleem Saha
2013	Dr Sakti Guha - Niyogi	Dr. Raja Biswas
2014	Dr Sakti Guha - Niyogi	Dr. Raja Biswas
2015	Dr Sakti Guha - Niyogi	Dr Kausik Mukherjee
2016	Dr Sandip Raha	Dr Kausik Mukherjee
2017	Dr Sandip Raha	Mr Niladri Chakraborti
2018	Dr Ashok Mukherjee	Mr Niladri Chakraborti
2019	Dr Ashok Mukherjee	Dr Shiladitya Sinha
2020	Dr Kausik Mukherjee	Dr Shiladitya Sinha
2021	Dr Kausik Mukherjee	Dr Shiladitya Sinha
2022	Dr Kausik Mukherjee	Dr Shiladitya Sinha
2023	Mr Neeleem Saha	Mr Sayantan Das



Past & Present Chairpersons 1984—2023



Ved Prakash Bali 1984-86



Suresh B Parab 1986-1988



Santanu Sengupta 1988-90



Kanti Nath 1990-91



Satya Kishore Shrama 1991-92



Dipak Kundu 1992-94



Ravi Narayan 1994-96



Rupen Majumdar 1996-1998



Sidhanshu Palit 1998-2000



Sandip Raha 2000-02 & 2016-18



Sankar Das 2002-04 & 2010-12



Ashok Mukherjee 2004-6



Subash Das 2012



Ranjit Sinha Ray 2008-10



Sakti Guha Niyogi 2006-08 & 2013-15



Kausik Mukherjee 2020-22



Neeleem Saha 2023



My memories of Durga Pujo in Wales



Nupur
Mukherjee
Ganguli

Every year when I would buy my annual diary, the first dates I would enter were not birthdays, exams or even the holidays- they were the dates for Durga Pujo. The most awaited five days for so many of us. Five days when you could block out the usual rigmarole of life and devote yourself to your faith, community and service.

I recall how all responsibilities at Pujo were taken on with eagerness and joy – decorating the hall, making mala s, cutting fruits or serving food. We all worked hard over those five days, but I don't even remember feeling tired! On the contrary, Pujo always managed to energise our spirit. Seeing the community working together gave me a deep sense of comfort, belonging and purpose. A feeling that has stayed with me ever since.

The Wales Puja Committee has been family and I am delighted to see that it continues to be one for so many people even today. My heartfelt congratulations on 50 years of service and friendship.

This photograph of Nupur is from a fancy dress organised by Mrs Jharna Majumdar during Durga Puja.

My experience of Wales Puja Committee

I feel very privileged to have grown up with such a wonderful and nurturing community that as the WPC. As a child, Puja and event days were awaited with excitement - it meant that I would be dressing up in the beautiful outfits I had been saving since my previous trip to India. I would be having a blast with my friends, while our parents were busy having fun with theirs!

One of my fondest memories as a WPC child is of the dance rehearsals that would commence in the weeks leading up to Durga Puja. Every year, Rashmi, Rama, Riya and our choreographer Shoma Didi would rehearse in any space available, ranging from a hired hall to someone's living room. Regardless of where we were, it was always a time for fun and creativity. I can say with conviction that it did not matter how much skill or how many errors we brought to our rendition of 'Mehendi laga ke rakhna', the smiles on our families' and friends' faces and the applause at the end were always there regardless. I am sure my love of dancing started here.



Tanusree
Gorhil



Along with dancing on stage, I took part in drama productions and fashion shows. From a young age, I truly felt like I was an important part of the WPC family, as the children of the committee members were always given responsibilities, such as serving the water and food, and helping on stage. Serving the mishti or the meat on Navami was an especially big responsibility! Not everyone enjoyed being in the position of having to politely say "No" to the Mashu or Meshu who was coming back for their third helping! As we got older, we saw these responsibilities pass down to the next generation.

The day of the annual WPC Diwali party would be a particularly hectic one. My friends and myself would spend the day decorating the hall. We would then race home for a quick change of clothes and head back for an evening of dancing and socialising. The various events that I was able to help organise and take part in over the years are countless, and have definitely helped shape me as an adult.



WPC has been an influential and important part of my life while growing up and even now when I am married and a mother to three children, going to the WPC Puja immediately transports me back to those joyful days. The friends I have made are lifelong, the sense of community that has been instilled in me is as strong and the endless memories I have made will be treasured forever.

Growing Up with the Pujas

Anoushka:

Celebrating Durga Puja with Wales Puja Committee for the greater part of my life has been an experience I have cherished and valued. Growing up as a first-generation immigrant, it can be hard to explore and embrace your culture. Whilst diversity is a lot more openly celebrated now, I know a lot of people in my shoes can struggle to feel secure and confident in their identity. However, never once have I felt anything but at peace when with my community. Wales Puja Committee has always welcomed people from all different walks of life with open arms.



Ishani:



Unlike Anoushka my first experience of puja was actually as a visitor attending the Penyrheol puja with our close family friends who now live back in Kolkata. I remember being so surprised to find such a vibrant community in the middle of Wales and little did I know that I would soon become a part of it. The Durga puja I attend today looks quite different from back then. The Temple of

Peace is a wonderful new backdrop for our celebrations. However I think there will always be a place in our hearts for what all the kids call 'the blue room' in Penyrheol.

My roles in puja have varied greatly - from dancing in the cultural program to holding up a tree during a natok and now more so as a spectator. Regardless of my involvement, I have always loved my time.

I have always felt very lucky to have a reason to rejoice over the seasons turning cold and dark - to most this means winter is approaching, but to us Pujoi!

Anoushka:

Since going to university, I haven't been able to attend Durga Puja and I miss it dearly. It has always been a time for us to come together as a community and celebrate one of the most awaited festivals of the year. A highlight for me has always been our cultural programmes. From dancing to 'Aye Re Chhute Aye' back in 2011 with friends that are more like family, to seeing kids I have seen grow up now perform, it's a very special time. It's so important to



Anoushka &
Ishani Sinha

enrich our lives with all the elements our culture has to offer. Whilst helping me learn more about Hinduism and Bengali culture, Wales Puja Committee has also deepened my appreciation of the arts and the talent and creativity that goes behind these performances and events. I have been introduced to a wide variety of dance styles, poetry, music and plays. Our culture is vibrant and vast, and the cultural programme has always showcased this. Having grown up around people who are willing to try new things and share their talents in this way, I in turn am a lot more confident when stepping outside my comfort zone and trying out new things.



Both:

The love and effort from everyone involved in organising Durga Puja cannot be stressed enough. It has been amazing to see how the organisation has grown and we feel very grateful to have grown up alongside it.

Lenses and Perspectives



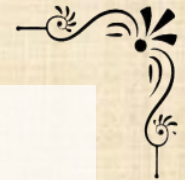
Ashmit now a strapping young man of 15 shared this story of Ma Durga and what Durga Pujas in Cardiff means to him. This is from an interview taken in 2016 after his involvement in the heritage project.

The story

Once upon a time there was a wicked demon called Mahishashur. He wanted to be immortal and very powerful, so he did penance to please Lord Brahma who is the creator of the universe. Lord Brahma appeared in front of Mahishasur and offered him a boon. Mahishasur asked if he could be immortal and very powerful. Lord Brahma disagreed to this and said that he could not make anybody immortal. Then Mahishasur asked if it would be possible if only a woman would be able to kill him and not any male person. Lord Brahma agreed to this and gave him the boon.



After this Mahishasur got really happy and thought that he would be invincible now and



started destroying everything and being very cruel. He started chasing all the gods away and challenged them to all bad things. The gods escaped to Lord Shiva in the mountains of the Himalayas. Lord Shiva heard about all this and got very angry at Mahishasur. So Lord Shiva made a woman figure with his powers. All the gods gave her all their powers and lots of weapons. This woman was named Durga and after this, Durga went into battle with Mahishasur.

During the battle Mahishasur changed his form into lots of other animals. First he changed his form into an elephant. Last of all he changed himself into a buffalo, and Ma Durga stabbed her trident into the buffalo's chest and killed him.

After this earth was a very happy place to live on.

Ashmit's Durga Pujo

We celebrate the victory of good over evil during Durga pujo. When I was one or two years old, for the first Durga pujo I went to, I went to the Kolkata Durga pujo, and the other seven years I have seen Durga pujo in the Wales Durga Pujo Committee.

I love it. I love meeting everyone, I like playing with my friends, I love the food and I think Durga pujo is a very happy time to meet everyone and celebrate together because it's a very happy festival for us. We do singing, dancing and sometimes the grown-ups do funny plays in Hindi or Bengali. I enjoy performing on stage with my friends.

I wear new clothes almost everyday. We wear our Indian traditional clothes which is good a pajama and panjabi and we have traditional shoes called nagra, which normally kings and princes wear. I used to wear nagras when I was small, but now they've become quite small, so I need to buy a few new ones.

The images of goddess Durga and her children are very beautiful. First they are sculpted with clay, then they are



decorated and painted with lots of different colours and nice patterns, and sometimes the gold jewellery is put on them. I would really love to learn how to make the images out of clay from the artists.



The Professors Reflect on their 25 years of Durga Puja Memories

Prof Sashin Ahuja

Having moved to Wales in the mid 90's like every other Indian who moves overseas they try to look for the roots and culture around. Having found the option of some exposure to the Gujarati community with the Navaratri and dandia. We hail from Bombay as I still call it and we were looking for some other opportunities and in 1999 when I was working in Newport with Dr Ashok Mukherjee who introduced us to Durga Puja in Caerphilly where it used to be held previously and both Alka and I used to go there every year and then our kids were born and the kids used to go there as well. We have seen the Durga Puja flourish. We have seen how children were involved in the celebration in the cultural events and at one point when you saw the generation of children who went past their teens and went off to university as to who else would take this on and you can see over the years how the mantle has been passed on so that the tradition the culture continues so that we and our children are exposed to our traditions our culture which have been our foundation throughout our lives and it has been great to be part of this journey with Wales Puja committee and long it may last and hope it flourishes more and more.



Prof Alka Ahuja

We first started going to Wales Puja committee in 1999, thanks to Dr Mukherjee. Sashin and I since then I have always made it part of our Navaratri ritual to attend the puja. It was always a very emotional experience because as a child I always made it a point to attend Durga Puja at our local Ramakrishna mission in Mumbai and when I first saw the murti I almost had an instant connection. When our daughter Saiba was born, Saraswati puja was the first event she went as a baby and since then we have made it a point to encourage our children to be part of this ritual. The detailed conduction of the ceremony and the in-house cooking for large and variable numbers never ceases to amaze me. They were never short of food the buses used to keep coming from Bristol West Wales but the wonderful volunteers in the kitchen keep churning out delicious food miraculously.

Over the years it is obvious that the new generation has taken it on to greater heights with astounding cultural programmes that are always a joy to experience and we look forward to this event every year. Both of us would like to send our wishes good luck and may this continue to prosper.



Ganesh Puja at The Ahujas with WPC's 2009 image refurbished by Purnendu





Down the Memory Lane



Preparations for Puja Ceremonies



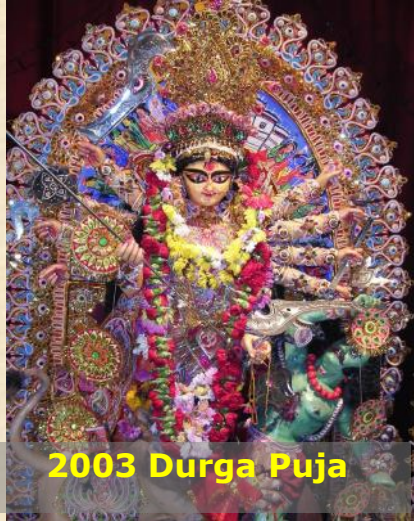
2002 Durga Puja



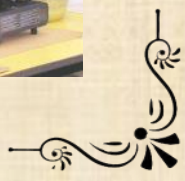
1997 Durga Pujas



1993 Durga Pujas in Empire Swimming



2003 Durga Puja







Magic memories



The Essence of a Festival



Bhaswati

Rakshit

“Live interaction with a crowd is a cathartic, a spiritual kind of exchange and it is intensified at a festival”.

A festival is held to highlight the culture and heritage of a country. It has a profound impact on society. A festival means a union of souls, a harmony of spirits and we can derive an aesthetic pleasure from a festival. Such inner delight elevates our mind, and we feel a oneness that makes our relation stronger.

Holding a festival is an art which is nothing but the reaction of the soul to the beautiful objects of life and nature. When emotions and feelings of the soul take a tangible form at the sight of beauty, they assume the form of art. Art is nothing but the expression of the exuberance in our personality and in this sense, celebrating a festival is an art which is always a source of pleasure. A festival is an escape from the boredom of routine life into a world of joy. The essence of a festival is union of minds, it is guided by elementary passion. It is a mode of extending our contact with our fellowmen beyond the limit of our personal circles.

This year the Wales Puja Committee is celebrating its golden jubilee year. WPC is an integrated whole that has been rendering social services for 50 years. The purpose of WPC is to make people aware of the cultural and traditional values of our country, India. I have the privilege of knowing the Wales Puja Committee through my daughter Atreyee, my son-in-law Neeleem and my grandson, Ashmit who are part of this committee. I know how this Durga Puja celebration of WPC has won a distinctive place in the realm of art and culture in Wales. This is the 50th year of celebration and this long journey of WPC has been possible due to the dedication and cooperation of all its members. WPC is a family which has a strong bonding of love and trust among all its members. When a feeling of fraternity governs a whole, it is bound to flourish. It is our pride that nowadays the Durga Puja festival is celebrated not only in India but also abroad with much pomp and grandeur. Thus, this famous festival of Bengal transcends the barrier of caste, creed and religion and brings a feeling of universal oneness.

In 2021, the Durga Puja festival was declared as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by the UNESCO. The Bengalees as well as the Indians who have emigrated to foreign countries are trying to uphold our culture and heritage to the people of those countries and such noble efforts at home and abroad have crowned the Durga Puja festival with the glory of UNESCO – ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’.

A festival widens our experience of life by revealing those aspects which are commonly hidden from our view. We see only a small fraction of life which exists around us and understand it imperfectly. Our vision is limited, and power is small. But when we are together with a same spirit to achieve a goal, we have a broad-spectrum view of life and such a vision casts a feeling of harmony and oneness among all.

I feel the Wales Puja Committee has fulfilled all the objectives of a festival and has embraced the essence of a festival which is universal oneness.

Wishing all the members of WPC a grand celebration of the golden jubilee year!

Happy puja to all!!

Mrs Bhaswati Rakshit, Atreyee's mother is a retired english teacher and lives in Kolkata.

Wales Puja Committee and its Fifty Years: My Feelings

Wales Puja Committee, popularly known as WPC, is going to celebrate its fifty years shortly. It's a welcome event for all of us who are well-wishers and have been connected to it in some form. WPC is a very vibrant organisation. It's title may create the image that it is confined to organising Puja in Wales, which may have been true at the time of its inception. However, I know WPC for more than last thirteen years - in my eyes, WPC associates itself with many events which have direct impact on the social life of Bengali diaspora in South Wales.



Jagannath
Bhadra

WPC performs Puja - not only Durga Puja, but also Kali Puja and Saraswati Puja. Even During COVID, WPC performed all pujas in a restriction-compliant manner, with the same dedication. Various other cultural events were organised remotely respecting Covid restrictions. I remember a very lively online quiz competition for couples. This is truly praiseworthy. During those lockdown months, many other cultural programmes were successfully organised online. It was amazing and astonishing for all of us.

WPC has become a powerful social and cultural platform. It plays an important role to unite and enrich the Bengali-speaking people of Indian origin. Most of them are reputed doctors who save the nation- despite being affected by COVID multiple times, these doctors never compromised on their service and finally achieved victory over the pandemic. Despite living more than five thousand miles away, as they say in Bangla- 'beyond seven seas and thirteen rivers', WPC is upholding its own culture, hand in hand with similar organisations countrywide.

Alongside, WPC has successfully networked and created partnerships and engagement opportunities with various other communities through the cultural performances. It has linked up with the Museum of Cardiff Museum to present a glimpse of its own culture to the wider communities in the region. WPC with its inclusive spirit invites all including locals and those of all generations and involves them in their events. This includes their very well conducted making or restoration of Durga projects which are run as educative arts projects from which all can learn. In doing so they are very closely linked with the local schools, museums and universities. This creates a huge bank of support and goodwill that the organisation can draw upon.

WPC is now managed largely by its second generation of leadership with able guidance from dedicated members from its first generation. At the same time, slowly, the third generation is also being trained.

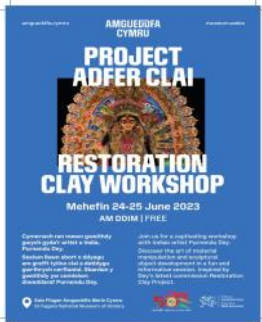
On its GOLDEN JUBILEE of WPC needs to continue to be considerate, prudent and united and prioritise the organisation before personal agenda, if any. I think, many of us are confidently hopeful that WPC will surpass its century also with all glory of ever increasing excellence.

Mr Jagannath Bhadra, Raktima's father spends his retired life roaming every corner of our planet and he has over the years interwoven himself into all our WPC activities. He follows us closely and during his visits to the UK participates in our programmes, our plays and is a regular contributor to our magazine. Both Mr Bhadra and Mrs Rakshit are examples of how the WPC reaches across the shores and influences and involves our family members. My recall my mother was actively involved in helping Raktima with an early Riturongo performance all those years ago. We feel blessed that they do get involved in our activities and are enriched by it.

The 2023 Pratima Restoration Project

Spring

Discussions with St Fagan's Museum of History about the project, logistics and partnership



Late Spring

Purnendu acquired all materials that needed to be brought from Kolkata for the work. Shopping of local materials by the museum

Late Spring

Purnendu and Chitrlekha applied for visas with support letters from WPC and the museum





June—Week 4 & 5

Restoration work by
Purnendu and Chitralekha Dey



The Process

All idols stripped down to clay and remodelled, painted and adorned with new decorations and shaaj

The Process

2 workshops, and a completion day event at the WPC office



The Results

A completion ceremony in the first weekend of July

Idol on display at the Museum









DAY 8 was a day of great progress when suddenly we could start to visualise the beautiful final restored images







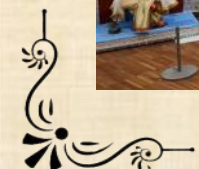
A highlight of the project was the keen community involvement







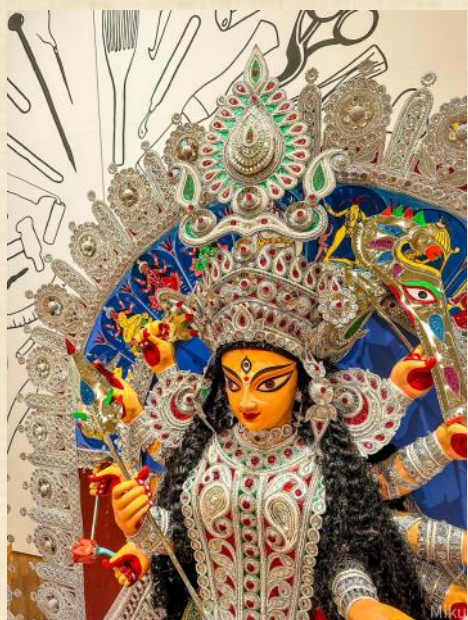
The Project Completion Ceremony







Our Newly Restored Images





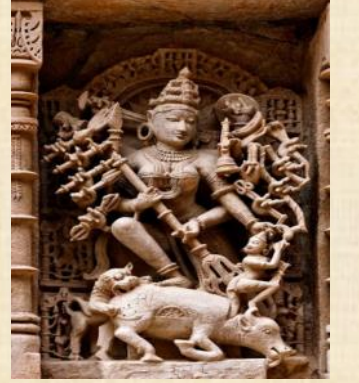
দুর্গাদেবীদের বাহন

নমস্তে শরণ্যে শিবে সানুকম্পে
নমস্তে জগদ্ব্যাপিকে বিশ্বরূপে।
নমস্তে জগদ্বন্দ্যপাদারবিন্দে
নমস্তে জগত্তারিণি ত্রাহি দুর্গে ॥

শরতের আকাশে আলোর বেণু বেজে উঠেছে। নরম রোদে গাছের পাতায় যেন মায়ের ছোঁয়া। সেই আদরে শিউলি ঝরল, পদ্মপাপড়ি খুলল। নদীতীরে কাশের ঝাড় চামর দোলাল। শিশির মায়ের চরণ ধুইয়ে দিল। অমর্ত্যলোক থেকে সপরিবারে মা মর্ত্যে এলেন। যাঁরা বহন করে আনলেন সেই বাহকরা আজ আলোচনার নায়ক।

প্রথমেই আসব মা-র বাহক সিংহের কথায়। গিরিরাজ হিমালয় মাকে এই বাহন উপহার দেন। দেবী হলেন নিখিল চরাচরের রাজ্ঞী আর, সিংহ হলেন পশুদের রাজা। দেবী দশপ্রহরণধারিণী, দন্ত ও নখ হল সিংহের অস্ত্র। দেবী জটাজুটসমায়ুক্তা, সিংহ কেশর-যুক্ত। দেবী মহিষাসুরমর্দিনী, সিংহ মহিষের যম যাঁর থাবার ঘায়ে তাঁর মস্তক চূর্ণ হয়। সত্ত্বগুণী দেবী আজ্জাবহ রজোগুণী সিংহের উপর বসে তমোগুণী অসুরনাশিনীতে পরিণতা হয়েছেন। সর্বলোককল্যাণরত সিংহ তাই প্রণম্য।

দুর্গাপূজাকালে সিংহপূজার মন্ত্র হল ---
সিংহস্তং হরিরূপোসি বিষ্ণুদেবঃ ন সংশয়।
পার্বত্যাবাহন সিংহঃ
অতঃ পূজামি দেব অহম্।।
॥ হ্রীং হ্রীং মহাবলায় সিংহায় হ্রীং হ্রীং ॥



এবার গণেশবাহন মূষিকের (ইঁদুর) কথায় আসব। কোনো গুপ্ত কাজে নামলে সেই কর্ম সিদ্ধির মন্ত্রটি শুধুমাত্র নিজের অন্তরে রাখতে হয় আর কাজটিও খুব গোপনে করতে হয়। তাই মন্ত্রগুপ্তি, আত্মগুপ্তি তাঁর অস্ত্র। বনে কোণে তাঁর গুপ্ত সাধনা। কখন কোন্ ফাঁকে যে তিনি সন্ধানপনে কার্যসিদ্ধি করবেন তা কেউ জানে না। মূষিকের ধৈর্য ও অধ্যবসায় প্রবল যা সিদ্ধিলাভ করায়। কাম-ক্রোধ-লোভ-মোহ-মদমাৎসর্যের মধ্যে ডুবে থাকা মানুষের দোষগুলি তাকে পাশবদ্ধ করে মুক্তি পেতে দেয় না। ঐ মুক্তি-কামীর পাশের জাল মূষিক ছেদন করেন। বিবেক-বৈরাগ্য হল তাঁর তীক্ষণ দুই ছেদনদন্ত। গণেশের জন্মের পর ভূদেবী নবজাতককে দেখতে এসে মূষিক উপহার দেন। মূষিকের বাস মাটির মধ্যে, গর্তে, ভূমির গন্ধ তাঁর গায়ে মাখা। পৃথিবীর প্রাকৃতিক সৌগন্ধ বা গন্ধতন্মাত্র মনোরম ও আনন্দ - দায়ক। তাই মহানন্দে শিশু গণেশ তাঁকে বাহন করেছেন।
দুর্গাপূজায় মূষিকের পূজামন্ত্র হল---
বৃষাকার মহাভাগ বৃষরূপ মহাবল।
ধর্মরূপ বৃষঃতংহি গণেশস্য চ বাহন।।
॥ হ্রীং হ্রীং মুষিকায় হ্রীং ॥

ধর্মরূপ বৃষঃতংহি গণেশস্য চ বাহন।।

॥ হ্রীং হ্রীং মুষিকায় হ্রীং ॥



এবার ময়ূরের কথায় আসব। কার্তিকের বীর্য, ক্ষত্রতেজ, সৌন্দর্য তাঁর বাহন ময়ূরের প্রতি প্রযোজ্য। শক্রজয় ঐর ধর্ম। ময়ূর সদলে থাকতে ও সমভাবে খাদ্য গ্রহণ করে প্রভুর আজ্ঞাবাহী সৈন্যের মত নিয়ম-অনুবর্তী হতে পছন্দ করেন। তিনি ক্ষত্রিয়সুলভ দর্পে দর্পী।
 দুর্গাপূজাকালে ময়ূর -পূজার মন্ত্র হল---
 নানা চিত্রবিচিত্রাঙ্গ গরুড়ঃ জনকং তব।
 অনন্ত শক্তিসংযুক্তং অতঃ প্রণমাম্যহম্।।
 ॥ হ্রীং এং ময়ূরায় ক্রীং।।

মাতা বাগ্‌দেবীর বাহন হংস। শুক্লামাতার মত ইনি নিত্যধারণ ও অনিত্যবর্জন করেন। জল মেশানো দুধ থেকে তিনি কেবলমাত্র দুধ গ্রহণ করেন যা বিবেক-বিচার। তাঁর পালক ঝাড়লে অনিত্য জল চলে যায় - যা নিবত্তি। হংস অজপা মন্ত্রসিদ্ধ, সর্বশাস্ত্রে পারদর্শী। হংসের কৃপায় গায়ত্রীমন্ত্রে যে সাধক সিদ্ধ তিনি পরমহংস। জ্ঞান জল-স্থল-অন্তরীক্ষ সর্বত্র সঞ্চারী আর হংসের-ও তেমনই বিচরণ। তাই জ্ঞানদায়িনী তাঁকে বাহন নির্বাচন করেছেন।
 হংসের মন্ত্র----

॥ ॐ শ্রী হংস দেবতায় নমঃ।।



মাতা কমলা দেবীর বাহন পেচক। ইনি ধানের শত্রু বিনাশ করে ধনরক্ষা করেন। পেচক দিনে অন্ধ তাই জাগতিক বস্তু দেখেন না, পরের ধনের প্রতি তাঁর কোনো লালসা নেই। ইনি রাতে জেগে বনের কোণে কোটরে বসে নির্জনে তপস্যা করেন। ধনরক্ষক পেচককে ধনদেবী তাঁর বাহন নির্বাচন করেছেন।
 পেচকের মন্ত্র----

॥ ॐ শ্রীপেচকায় নমঃ।।



বাহনরা দেব-দেবীদের বিশিষ্ট ভাবের ভাবী। দেবতারা আপন সত্তায় একাত্ম পশুপাখিদেরই বাহন রূপে বেছে নিয়েছেন। মহাষষ্ঠীর বোধনভূমিতে আসন গ্রহণ করেছেন যে মহাসংবাহকের দল, যাঁরা শারদীয়া মহাপূজায় আমাদের আনন্দে মগ্ন করতে দেব-দেবীদের বহন করে এনে ধন্য করেছেন, সেই পূজনীয় বাহকবৃন্দের চরণে প্রণাম নিবেদন করছি।

॥ ॐ নমশ্চন্ডিকায়ৈ ॥

ডঃ সুমিত্রা মিত্র ঘোষ



শেকড় আর্যতীর্থ

‘পৃথিবীটা নাকি ছোটো হতে হতে..’ গানটা কি শোনে কেউ আজকাল?

মহীনের ঘোড়াগুলি কোথায় তাড়িয়ে নিলো কালের রাখাল,
কে জানে..

আমরা প্রবাসী যারা তারা খুঁজি শেকড়ের মানে,
জীবিকার কাঁটাতারে ঘিরেছি জীবন,
কৈশোর ও ছোটবেলা ক্রমেই আবছা করে স্মৃতিদর্পণ,
আমাদের নেত্রজেন শোনেনি শ্রেয়া ঘোষাল কিংবা অনুপম রায়,
Coldplay চললে তারা জীবনের সঙ্গে মিল বেশি পায়,
তাতে তো দোষের নেই কিছু,
মানুষকে নিতে হয় আগামীর পিছু,
শুধু মাঝে মাঝে ঠিকানা ঝালিয়ে নিতে ফেরে তারা নিজের শেকড়ে,
বাঙালি যেমন করে দুর্গাপূজোতে তার পরিচিতি ধরে,
দীপাবলি হয়ে ওঠে প্রবাসের ভারতীয়-মিলনোৎসব,
আকাশপ্রদীপ হয়ে ভিনদেশবুকে জ্বলা দেশগৌরব।

আমাদের কাশ নেই, কার্ডিফ আছে।
শরতে বাঙালি সব পূজো ঘিরে বাঁচে,
গড়ে ওঠে প্রতি সাল বাপের ঘরেতে ফেরা উমার প্রতিমা,
সাথে তাঁর ছেলেমেয়ের দল, লক্ষ্মী সরস্বতী কার্তিক গণেশ,
কথা বলে ওঠে বুকুে সুপ্ত স্বদেশ,
অভয় ও আশীষ নিয়ে ত্রিনয়নী মেলে দিলে তাঁর দশহাত,
উঠোনে দাঁড়ান এসে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ,
ডাক দেন আপন পথের থেকে বাইরে দাঁড়াতে,
শেকড়েরা জেগে ওঠে বাংলায় লেখা সব গান কবিতাতে,
বীরেন ভদ্র থেকে অষ্টমী অঞ্জলি, সকলের সাথে বসে পংক্তিভোজন,

সুখে উষ্ণিয়ে দেয় ফেলে আসা পাবনের সে মন-কেমন,
জেগে ওঠে কলকাতা, বর্ধমান, উত্তরপাড়া, শিলিগুড়ি, চন্দননগর..
জন্মের শহরের অমলিন স্মৃতি আঁকা কৈশোর-ঘর,
নেত্রাজেন চিনে নেয় ভিনদেশে বসে থেকে,
আদতে রয়েছে তার কোথায় শেকড়।

পৃথিবীটা নাকি ছোটো হতে হতে.. মহীনের ঘোড়াগুলি আজও চলেছে করে সময়-সফর।



Aditya Maiti 3 years of age with a little help from mum Aditi Basu

Our WPC Family Aditi Basu

Once new to this association, little did I know you all,
Amazing ten years for me it is, from what I can recall.

A cordial welcome right away, made my heart melt,

A home far away from home is what I dearly felt.

Friends in no time became a beautiful family over here,
Love and blessings kept growing with each passing year.

A big shout out and applause to all the members there,
Your hard work and efforts are indeed a priceless affair.

'Thank You' isn't enough for everything that you all do,
Our 50th year will surely be a 'gala event", with all of you.

As we step into our Golden Jubilee celebration fever,
My heartiest wishes to Wales Puja Committee, now and forever.

Poila Boisakh



Dr Sridhar
Kamath

'Surprised' was my emotion when I was asked to write a few words about 'Poila Boisakh' as an 'external' attendee. For one, Wales Puja Committee (the official name for what we endearingly call our Bong community) is as inclusive as it gets. Never have they made anyone feel 'external' in any of their celebrations, festivals, or dinners. I guess it was the proverbial slip of the tongue!

Tongue was of course slippery (and I am not figuratively speaking here) for every attendee on the day of Poila Boisakh this year, our salivary glands were truly working overtime.

Scene 1: Shock and Awe

Let's roll back a few years when it all started. The year was 2011 and as any proud Bengalis (for that matter, any Indian) would instantly know, it was the 150th Birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Bongs decided to celebrate this great occasion with a feast that would be fitting for the Royalty. It was one of the best meals (from here on, would simply be called 'The Bhojan') I have had in my life, and believe me, I have had quite a few over half a century. Every dish was a culinary masterpiece, especially considering that it was catered for the hundreds and by friends whose daytime jobs were to be doctors, engineers etc. It seismically moved the dial on the culinary scene in South Wales. No meal ever since was good enough!



Scene 2: Victim of one's own success

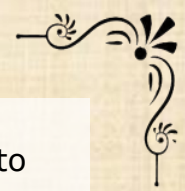
Tiger had tasted blood. The Bong and non-bong communities had all tasted the Bhojan. Stories of the meal were told in numerous soirees, reminiscing the evening got everyone's taste buds going, the evening simply became the talk of the town. No one looked at prestigious Indian restaurants in Cardiff with the same admiration anymore. As time passed, both bong

and non-bong friends were scouring Tagore's timeline for any occasion that they could present to WPC as deserving of another Bhojan like the one on his 150th! Numerous such potential opportunities for another feast were presented to WPC but sadly with no luck. The clamour reached a crescendo.

Scene 3: Good things come to those who wait

If there ever was a 'referendum' on whether 'Bhojan' should happen again, the vote split would have been 100:0. Then the unimaginable happened. Sorry, Tagore wasn't born again, but Covid 19 was here! Difficult times made us appreciate the best things we had: no, not the Tesla but the friendship and our support network. As Covid retreated, Bongs' zeal to celebrate life, friendship and survival gave way to this year's 'Poila Boisakh'. What could be a better way to celebrate the Bengali New Year than with a feast to match 'the Bhojan'! An entire new wave of excitement was in the Spring, a date was fixed.





Previously made appointments were cancelled with utter disdain. Diaries were cleared for the occasion. Friends rang folks in India to proclaim that it was happening. Good things indeed come to those who wait!

Scene 4: 'Poila Boisakh'

The Bengali New Year had arrived earlier than the much-awaited British spring. I was the first 'non-bong' to arrive on the scene and no Bong was surprised. It was as if what they always



knew. I was told that we must get through the 'Ritu Rango' in the first round to get to the Bhojan.

Ritu Rango refers to the programme showcasing the Bengali culture, comprising of traditional dances, music, and the recitations to depict the various seasons or 'ritu's. Ritu Rango was so captivating that momentarily (and can you believe it), I forgot about the Bhojan. Such talent on show!



The recitation from the likes of Mitra and Mukherjee (or maybe I should say, Rekha and the Amitabh) took me back to the days of 'Kabhi khushi kabhi gam'; the depth in their voices that both Tagore and Bachchan would be proud of!



Now for the Bhojan, take 2! Time to whet the appetite. The scene was set. Ritu Rango satiated all senses except that of 'taste'. Air was thick with rich, tantalising scents of cooked meat and fragrant herbs. My patience was wearing thin.

Aloo posto, daal, fish kalia, prawn malaikari, mutton kosha, mishti doi. Each dish was a work of culinary art and seemed to dance between tradition and innovation. Our Chefs' culinary prowess was on full display.

The biggest challenge for me was how to apportion my plate, dilemma between what I should savour first and how to devour the rest. As I was reassured by my serving friends with a 'wink and a nod' that I could come back for more, I commenced my indulgence with the fish and the prawns. Perfectly spread sauce on every morsel was a celebration of senses and as good as I could remember from 12 years ago! Tender chunks of succulent lamb were slow (mark Drakeford would be proud of) cooked to perfection; it not only fell off the bone but melted in my mouth.

Aloo posto- that signature dish that binds the simplicity of potatoes with nutty lusciousness of poppy seeds. No bong can do aloo posto wrong but when it gets your tongue tingling and gives you the high as opium, you know you are having a great version. I was transported to the vibrant streets of Kolkata.

Mishti doi was the perfect final act; it settled down all the symphony of flavours in my mouth with its soothing velvety texture and precise sweetness. It was not just a dessert but a true embodiment of our bongs' rich culture, affection, and friendship.

Poila Boisakh whetted our appetite for culture, food, friendship, and life.



This Colourful World

My skin is brown,
Like earth divine.
My curls are tight,
Furls of cotton candy,
That I wear with pride.
Black are my eyes,
Dark as the star-decked night.
Are we strangers?
Yet the dusty road you travelled,
Is the same as mine.

Yes, I am a man.
But I feel attracted
To the 'same'.
Is that so strange?
Is that my shame?
When my heart breaks,
The heavens move
And darkness descends...

My story? Or was that yours, my friend?
In worship, I fold my hands;
In awe, do I raise;
My fingers touch my cross,
To kiss it in praise.
Tell me why o lord,
They judge my faith,
When in your eyes, we are all believers!
We are just the same.



Dr Sonali Dasgupta

Listened, but unheard,
Obvious, but unseen,
Some less equal than others,
Your voice rings hollow,
When you cry out loud
'My sisters and my brothers'!
Yet as the pen draws blood,
And music wings its joyful flight;
Embers of hope
Kindle our senses alight!
A kinder world,
Where wisdom marks the race,
Let be it the gift to our children-
United, and in embrace.



কদিন আগে, কিছু চিন্তা করতে গিয়ে,
 দূর দিগন্তের, এক ছায়ার পাল্লায় পড়েছি;
 তাড়াতে পারছিলা, আঁকড়ে ধরে আছে;
 একটা আবেশে মোহময় করে রেখেছে
 আমার দুর্বল মনটাকে, খানিকটা অবশ;
 মন দিতে পারছিলা কিছুতে, হাতড়ে বেড়াছি;
 ঠিক কোনখানে কি খুঁজব, কেন্দ্রীভূত করবো
 আমার চিন্তাকে, ঠাहर করতে পারছিলা;
 টুকরো টুকরো ছবি মানসপটে ঘুরছে, ছুয়ে
 যাচ্ছে দু একটা ইন্দ্রিয়কে, আলাগা ভাবে,
 স্থিতি পাচ্ছেনা, গহনে তলিয়ে যাচ্ছে;
 তোমাকে ঘিরেই বোধহয়, কারণ
 নানা সময়ের নানা ভঙ্গীর তোমার
 মুখের কোলাজ একটা কিন্তু খমকে আছে;
 শুধু মুখগুলো তাদের জায়গা বদল করছে,
 অবিরত, আমার চিন্তাকে ছলছারা করে;
 মন বসাতে পারছিলা কিছুতেই।

চল্লিশ বছরে

তৃতীয় বার-এর জন্য তোমাকে চাই
 এ সমস্যার সুরাহা করতে, আমায়
 আমার চিন্তা থেকে দূরে সরিয়ে দিতে;
 একমাত্র তুমিই পারো সেটা; দশ বছর
 আগে হলে, ওকেও বলতে পারতাম; কিন্তু
 কি করি, তোমাকেই সে ভার নিতে হবে।

কাল আমি অপেক্ষা করবো;
 একই সময়ে, পুরানো সেই পাঁচিলে,
 রেড রোডের চেনা সে সন্ধিতে,
 আশায় উষ্ণীত হয়ে।

ঋনিকের জন্য হলেও, এসো।।

Autumn, ২০০৯



Shiladitya Sinha
 Autumnale

Chitrangada



Dr Madhuparna
Mitra

In 2013, my debut year as the Cultural Officer, stepping into the realm of the WPC, I brimmed with fresh ideas and an appetite for adventure. It was during the Durga Puja festivities that the concept of a full-fledged dance drama, "Chitrangada," came to my mind.



It started with a casual conversation with Kausik, Ella & some of my fellow WPC enthusiasts. The journey to bring "Chitrangada" to life commenced in the summer of 2013. Yet, it was my Ma who fortified my resolve to undertake this ambitious venture. A devout Tagorian, she immersed herself in his works, igniting in me a shared passion nurtured over the years watching Tagore's dance dramas at Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata.

Once we decided to launch "Chitrangada" there was no looking back. The following months proved to be a blend of exhilarating challenges and profound satisfaction on a creative front. I found myself surrounded by equal-minded and super talented dancers including Sudipta (Arjun),



Raktima (Kurupa Chitrangada) Sinjini (Madan) and Ishani (Sakhi). Together, we delved into Tagore's warrior princess, exchanging ideas, choreographing and refining every detail meticulously including the handcrafted props courtesy of Miku and Ishani.

Ella, Anoushka, Rysha, Sohini, Siya, Nia, Sanjana & Avni (all around 10 years old at that time) filled us with their infectious exuberance and innocent sense of fun & comedy - a much needed distraction to otherwise intense sessions of rehearsals. The children beautifully amalgamated their Bharatnatyam skills with Tagore's melodious sensitivity, donning the characters of Sakhis and villagers with unparalleled finesse.

My Co-cultural officer Abhijit (Bill da) and I worked late every night editing the music tracks of Chitrangada - which were then expertly blended and executed on the night by our technical team comprising Neeleem Bill da and Kausik.

The stage bloomed into a riot of colours adorned with gorgeous costumes and stage lights expertly manned by my partner in crime, Kausik. The divine presence of Ma Durga and her family's Protimas



in the backdrop added an ethereal touch to the spectacle.

The evening unfolded seamlessly, with the eloquent introduction by Samita di and Josh, and the charming compering by Kausik. Thanks to Pankaj and Miku, this beautiful event was meticulously captured and preserved for our heritage archive.

Drawing a crowd of nearly 350 attendees, a milestone in WPC's history, the success of the musical was complemented by the diligent efforts of the catering team, who delivered a delectable vegetarian dinner in their characteristic Annapurna style.





Reflecting upon this extraordinary night, "Chitrangada" has etched its place as WPC's inaugural musical extravaganza, a testament to our collective dedication and passion. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to all the artists, dancers, and technicians for their unwavering commitment, to Kausik, Ella and Ma for their unyielding support, and to WPC for providing an incredible platform to showcase the timeless essence of Tagore's "Chitrangada." It was truly an honor to be part of such a beautiful evening.



Paintings by our talented artists



*Shikha Nath The Flamenco Dancer
and other studies*

Anamika Chatterjee

The African Lady and Shri Krishna



Indira

Mukherjee

*The Rainy Street
and Seascapes*



Indira

Rare recipes from my kitchen



Mahua
Mukherjee

Pui -Mangsho

Malabar spinach with lamb or goat meat

Ingredients:

2 bunches of pui saag or Malabar spinach chopped; the stems should be an inch long.

500 grams of boneless meat chopped into small chunks

1 medium onion chopped

5 to 6 cloves of garlics crushed

2 potatoes diced into 1-inch cubes

1 tsp turmeric, 1 tsp chili powder (more if you want)

Method:

Fry potatoes and put aside.

Fry onions till translucent, add the crushed garlic and continue frying.

Add meat and fry, add turmeric and chilli powder.

Keep cooking till the meat is half done.

Now add the pui saag.

Add salt; simmer till the meat is nearly cooked.

Now add the fried potatoes.

Cook till the pui-mangsho is 'kosha' (oil starts to separate).

Serve with plain rice.

Bandhakopir Payesh

Cabbage Kheer

Ingredients:

½ of a cabbage

1 litre of milk boiled and reduced to ½ a litre

50 grams of ghee

Sugar to taste

2 table spoons of dry full fat milk powder

Raisins, cashew nuts, pistachios

4 crushed cardamoms

Method:

Boil the diced cabbage till soft and drain.

Fry the cabbage in ghee.

Add reduced milk to the cabbage and boil.

Add 2 table spoons of dried milk to the cabbage, continue boiling.

Add the dry fruits, cardamom, sugar to taste.

Boil for a further 10 minutes.

Garnish with nuts and serve hot or cold.

Bon appetite!

Kids Corner



Kiara Mukherjee,
6 years



Sharanya Das,
5 years



Tanisha Bandopadhyay,
11 years



Oreet Sen
4 years



Akshi Banerjee,
8 years



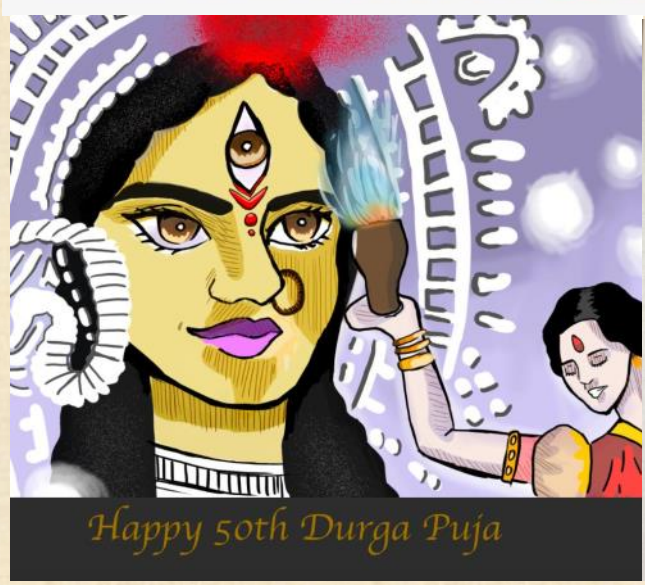
Aarjo Mukhopadhyay,
11 years



Shivangi Das,
13 years



Aayush Mukhopadhyay



KUMARTULI @ CARDIFF
An illustrated story
By Soumil Saha

KUMARTULI IS WHERE IDOLS TRANSFORM INTO GODS AND GODDESSES AND DIVINITY COMES ALIVE.

IN 2016 I WITNESSED GODPUSHS Durga BEING MADE FROM PAPER MACHE AT ST FAGANS NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM.

THEY TIED HAY INTO A WIRE FRAME TO MAKE THE SKELETAL FRAME OF THE IDOL.

WHILEY FROM CALIA IS THE IDOL. THIS SANDY CLAY AND PAPER MACHE TO THE HAIR WERE MADE.

THE STATUES OF GODPUSHS BEAUTIFUL, CLAY AND PAPER MACHE TO THE HAIR WERE MADE.

THE STATUES OF GODPUSHS BEAUTIFUL, CLAY AND PAPER MACHE TO THE HAIR WERE MADE.

THE BEAUTIFUL DECORATED MAGICAL 'GODPUSHS' WERE READY TO BE WORSHIP.

THE BEAUTIFUL DECORATED MAGICAL 'GODPUSHS' WERE READY TO BE WORSHIP.

Soumil Saha
13 years



The Poets in the Kids Corner

Autumn Is Here

Look down at the leaves,
look up at the trees.
Autumn is here!
Autumn is here!

Come on, lets play!
all through the day.
The holly is growing,
and the grass needs mowing.
Yay, Autumn is here!

Let's go to the farm,
and we shall see all the animals in the barn.
The owls are hooting at night,
in the daylight, I shall fly my kite.
Yes, Autumn is here!

I was up with the lark,
so I ran to the park.
To collect all the conkers,
luckily, I didn't go bonkers.
At last, Autumn is here!

by Joyita Banerjee
Age 8

Durga Puja

Roop Bhadra-Sarkar, 5 years

"Durga Puja is a big celebration. We have Durga Puja every year. Durga Thakur has 4 children - Ganesh, Kartik, Saraswati and Lakshmi.

Durga Thakur rides on a lion, Ganesh rides on a mouse, Kartik rides on his peacock, Saraswati rides on a swan and Lakshmi rides on an owl.

Durga Thakur is very good at balancing because she is standing on her lion with one leg and killing the naughty Demon, with the other leg.

I meet my friends in Durga Puja. I play with them and I dance with them on the stage. There is lot of food in Durga Puja.

I love Durga puja."

Durga Pujo for Me

Jishnu Bhattacharjee, 9 years

This is what Durga Pujo means to me
It's celebrating with friends and family

Where kindness and joy are felt by all
Where many people come, big and small

Some people meet after many years
Warm embraces, joyful tears

The drumbeats, the prayers and bell,
The blowing of the white conch shell

Together we all worship the Goddess
And pray for peace, health and happiness

We stage drama, dance and sing,
With friends together, all chattering

Over these five days we kids have fun,
Hide-and-seek, laugh and run

We all enjoy delicious food
Which always uplift people's mood

Visitors come from far and near
For this wonderful time of the year!

Durga Maa

Ananmay Banerjee, 13 years

D ating back to the 16th century
U ndeniably a popular goddess
R elentless, her skills are complimentary
G oddess representing strength
A lso known for defeating Mahishashura

M iraculously, with a trident of large length

A fter all, it was given by Shiva the destroyer

Durga Ma carries some significant weapon,
Each one with a unique symbolism and representation.

Her sword portrays wisdom for destruction
which was given by Lord Ganesh

While her conch represents happiness
Gifted from Varuna, to destroy all the negative energy

And her chakra depicts the life's sphere
Given by the preserver, to symbolize the center of creation

Representing auspiciousness is her spear
Given by Agni to represent how we decide what's wrong or right

The axe is used for defeating evil in a fight
This axe was Vishwakarma's and signifies courage

Energy is portrayed by her bow and arrow
Which was given by Vayu

The arrow represents how people's aim should be narrow

And focus on one thing to achieve it

Her determination is shown by her thunderbolt

Which was Lord Indra's gift

It symbolizes that praying to Mother Durga will help shatter problems with full confidence

Her trident shows the 3 gunas on each head

Tamas, rajas and sattva

As well as past present and future

Gifted by Shiva the destroyer

Ma Durga also carries the lotus flower

Which was a present from the creator

Who also gave her holy water and wisdom later

Thus, in the gods' and goddesses' tower,
Durga Ma is the supreme power.

Durga Puja in my eyes

Maharshi Ray, 10 years

Durga Puja is the most festive time for Bengalis. It brings me happiness and joy at the very thought that I will get to spend so much time with my friends. While living in Cardiff, Durga Puja brings to us the same essence as it does to the people in Kolkata.

From delicious food to exciting cultural programmes, 'Pujo' is a time like no other. It brings excitement and joy to my soul.

Cultural programmes are the most important part of Durga Puja. This is because of all intense preparations that happen in the days leading up to Pujo. Since it is the Golden Jubilee year of the Wales Puja Committee (WPC), we have witnessed a clay image restoration project of Ma Durga. This is the first time I have ever seen a clay image restoration - I am really looking forward to the 50th year of Durga Puja in Cardiff.



The Storm Aaruni Bhattacharjee, 12 years

23rd October, 2123

I woke up without knowing why, and drifted towards the window like a silhouette in my own dream. Outside my window, the moon sat in the middle of the sky, like a peaceful, pearl-white orb. The night was calm; the night was still. But as I watched the starry sky, I saw something more.

For weeks, a terrible storm had been wreaking havoc, leaving behind little more than fragments of huge settlements. Nowhere was safe. Wars were stopped, crime was a thing of the past, and the only evil in the world was the storm. Sometimes I wondered why it took something so terrible to bring us all together, to stop the acts of the past from influencing us. But it was too late, and we were like tiny ants cowering helplessly as we watched our destiny unfold.

What had started this terrible calamity? It was no feat of nature, but the carelessness of the generations before us, injecting the world with more and more carbon dioxide before the land under the Stonehenge burst in a desperate cry of nature. And out from that crater came methane, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide and mixing quickly with the cold air to create the storm that has been raging for over five years. Five years filled with panic and fear, uniting and tearing everyone apart. Since it started, the storm has wiped out over 8 billion people. That's 80% of our world population. We only have two billion people left in the entire world.

But now, finally, inevitably, it had arrived here. As the wind began to roar and the sky darkened to a threatening grey, I started to run as fast as I ever have.

As if my life depended on it. Which it did.

I could almost feel the storm trying to grasp me. I darted through the village, joining many others fleeing for their lives. And then something hit me, and everything around went black.

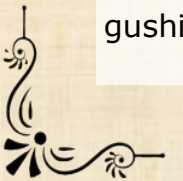
When I woke up, I found myself in a pure white, yet eerily dim lab. There was a large bank of computers, with blinking and flashing lights on every row of neat black PCs in the centre. Suddenly, I became aware of a man standing in front of me. I had so many questions to ask, but I was filled with memories I wasn't aware of. Flashes of a lab, exactly like this one, but with a huge invention instead of computers as the centrepiece, started whirling around my brain. And I realised what I was remembering.

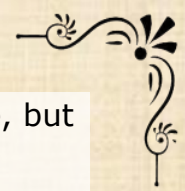
Long ago, before the storm, I had theorised exactly what had happened. I knew that the climate change situation wasn't good, and that however much the world leaders argued that they were taking action, it wasn't going to happen fast enough. I had theorised that a storm would begin, destroying everything and everyone in its wake, and had built a strategy to stop it.

Something had wiped my memory of all of my work and only now, sitting in this lab with a complete stranger, did I feel as though my memories were being transferred back, rushing through my head like a flooding river. I turned to speak to the stranger who had been watching me all this time, to thank him, to ask him questions, but as my mouth opened, he held his hand up for silence.

"I know you have a million questions for me, but now is not the time." He spoke low and urgently, in a voice filled with hope. "I need you to tell me what you just remembered."

I wanted to tell him, but my mouth didn't obey me. And then suddenly the words came gushing out.





- "I saw a lab, with an invention in the middle. I can't remember what it looked like, but I know that it can help me stop the storm!"

The man looked at me with hope and wonder shining in his eyes.

"Follow me," he said

We progressed through many dimly lit corridors. The entire place somehow looked brand new and forgotten all at once. None of us spoke, and yet from rooms near us we could hear the occasional murmur of voices. And suddenly we turned off the corridor and into a clean, brightly lit lab exactly like the one I had seen in my memories. At this point my curiosity was overflowing, and I had to ask the stranger some questions.

"Who are you? What is this place? How did you find me?"

- "Calm down. You are in a forgotten lab where you once used to work in secret. We have gathered up survivors of the storm here. It's the only place in the world that's safe from the storm. And this is your invention. But only you know how to work it."

He carefully avoided my question to his identity.

I was shocked and surprised. I had never thought of myself as anything special, so why was I suddenly so important?

As if he had read my mind, the stranger replied, "I know you probably think of yourself as someone ordinary, but just go over to the computers and give it a try."

I went over to the invention, where a spotlight dramatically shone on the sleek surface of the machine. Next to it was a small table where a laptop and mouse stood. I went over and powered the machine on. There must have been a fingerprint sensor, because it started up seamlessly and didn't check for verification. An application was on the screen. Instinctively, I started typing. I didn't know what was happening, but I let my memory take control, and began pressing keys, flicking switches, pulling levers and pushing buttons.

Suddenly the platform I was on began to rise, taking me and the invention towards the roof, which in itself had began to open. We climbed slowly upwards, away from the underground lab, and towards the ground, just me and the invention I had made. And suddenly, the machine started whirring and rattling, and a large shockwave pulsated through the air. There was a moment where everything was silent and still. And then the wind started to roar in my ears - a familiar, recognisable roar.

The storm had arrived, and I was right in the middle of it.

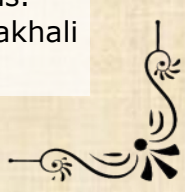
The invention sent out another shockwave, stronger than before, and the roaring lessened. Another shockwave, bigger than every shockwave combined, throbbed through the air, throwing me backwards. And then there was silence.

We had won. Finally.

A trip to our ancestral Bangladesh Ethan Dutta, 9 years

This summer I travelled to Dhaka with my Didi (maternal grandma), my mum, aunty and cousin brothers. My mother's side of the family, the Sen family, were originally from the Noakhali district which is now a part of Bangladesh. My mum told me many of her childhood stories about this place and how special those days were, so I was super excited to see this part of our family history!

We travelled from Dhaka to Noakhali, it was a day trip; it was very special to my mum as she was visiting her ancestral home after 20 years. We visited the ashram of Sree Ram Thakur - this is where his last remains have been kept and it is an auspicious place for many Hindus. We then went to a place called "Sen er pole" which is part of the Begumganj Thana in Noakhali



district. It is a small bridge named after my mum's family name, where the Sen family lived before the Partition of India.



As we walked through the village, I saw beautiful trees and several ponds on both sides. I saw the ruins of our family's Kali temple there. Didi showed me where my great grandfather late Kunjalal Sen's tomb was built to preserve the ashes after his cremation. There were tombs of other late Sen family members there and even after so many years, these have not been destroyed. The tombs were all surrounded by very old trees and bushes and it looks as if the trees have been protecting them.



Didi also told me a little bit about the history of Noakhali. In 1946 there was riots in the area and Mahatma Gandhi visited the place to restore peace between Hindus and Muslims. There was also a mosque after 'Sen er pole' or the Sen's bridge, and the land for the prayer area of the mosque was originally donated by the Sen family to maintain religious harmony in the village.

tory of our family. I will

I felt very happy to see that even after so many years, people recognised anyone from the family and welcomed us. I saw houses with wooden walls and tin on roofs, there were ducks in the pond and cows on the fields and lots of coconut trees. We were offered fresh coconut water by the local people. I feel very lucky to go and see this part of his- always



Ma Durga Painted by Ellora Mukherjee, then aged 11 for the 2015 WPC Souvenir Cover

cherish the



Ma Durga drawn by Aayush Mukhopadhyay, then aged 11 for the 2019 WPC Souvenir Cover



Magic Moments from the 2022 Durga Puja



pc- Krishnendu Banerjee





As a Bengali, Durga Pujo means a lot. Apart from the religious significance, the culture, the cuisine and the **camaraderie** are quintessential in any Bengali household. The opportunity to celebrate that in Wales, in the very city I live in, is astounding. Importantly, the event takes us and our kids **back to our cultural roots**.

There is just one word for the WPC - **WARMTH**
 This is what I felt, the first day I attended this Puja and this is what I try to impart to others who attend.

One of my favorite puja memories is doing the lights and sound for the first ever dance drama performed on stage in Cardiff, in 2013, with 18 dancers, including children synchronizing in perfection. **Kausik Mukherjee, Cardiff**

PUJO BITES

PUJO BITES

Durga Puja is not only a religious occasion, rather it's a **festival among community**. Being at Durga Puja in Wales brings back my nostalgic feelings that I used to feel miles away back home during puja. For a period, I can **taste the traditional experience** of excitement and joy among all ages.

The colourful gatherings, the arrangement and the ambience of events at the Wales Durga Puja by WPC in their capacity keeps bringing me back here to experience the complete feeling of the **greatest festival** of Durga pujo.

Being at Wales pujo is always a sweet memory in my canvas. Meeting known faces as well as new faces, praying to Durga Ma all together, enjoying cultural events, eating together with family and friends and capturing different colourful moments on my mobile camera fulfils me emotionally miles away from home.
Debajit Acharyya, Port Talbot

PUJO BITES

PUJO BITES

PUJO BITES

The pujo experience that gave me **goosebumps** was when I was up on the stage last year with my camera - very **close to the idols** while **taking pics** of the WPC ladies offering sweets etc.; to Durga Maa & her family. The **atmosphere was very electric** and would be hard to forget - **Krishnendu, Cardiff**

My favourite pujo memory is **cooking for 5 days** at a stretch as part of catering team just before having my daughter. She was born in between Durga pujo and Kali pujo - **Christina Roy, Cardiff**



Wales Puja committee gifted my family in UK the essence of **homeland Durga Puja** abroad. We first visited the puja at Caerphilly in 2006 when destiny had landed us in Bristol.

WPC's **warm welcome , friendly** approach, revered worship following all traditional rituals and customs, wonderful **cultural programme** and the tasty community bhog makes Durga Puja special and makes you feel festive just like back home. The puja experience here has always given me the **homely para pujo feel** which has not been invaded by the commercialism of pujo.

Wales Puja also gifted my Bristol born son his **first glimpse of the Pujo** grandeur, the prime festival that is close to our hearts. He got the opportunity to **witness and delve** into our age old traditional festival in this adopted country where we have come to make our new homes.

The **idol making workshop** in 2016 was a wonderful experience in Cardiff museum where the clay and paper mâché magic aroused divinity in the deities.
Sagarika Saha, Bristol

The WPC pujo is a great initiative to **bring all communities together** and celebrate Indian style. It is a good initiative for young generations to **learn** all about our festivals and their significance. I enjoy meeting all old friends during puja, following the puja rituals and aarti and the **excellent cultural programs**, specially the dhunuchi dance and children's dances, guitar and singing. I love the **nataks** by adults and enjoy the delicious food every day during puja time - mouth watering chutneys and baigan bhajas. There are so many sweet memories to look forward to for puja.
Sharada, Cardiff

My favourite pujo memories have been every time **my son**, who is now a teenager has been on stage **performing**. Two that stick to mind are his singing an Arijit Singh medley at age 8 and then one time he played Hanuman in Ram Leela with a proper pro made costume!
Neelam Saha, Cardiff

PUJO BITES

To me, celebrating puja in Wales means having a **wonderful time together** with many who share the same cultural underpinnings as I do, I am not religious but love the ambience and feel of pujo.

Funnily enough my **favourite WPC memory** is from Saraswati Pujo - holding on desperately to a rather elaborate hut that I had made as a **stage prop**, only to find that I had to remove the supports to get it into the stage.

Somehow we hid behind and held on to the hut desperately whilst the play unfolded before us.

Whilst we never got to see it, the sacrifice and overcoming of an unexpected hurdle unknown to the many watchers brought with it great satisfaction.

Shiladitya Sinha, Cardiff

The WPC Pujo Milestones

Compiled by
Ishani Sen

1973 1st Pujo in Cardiff using a wonderful canvas painting of Ma during and her family	1974 1st community Durga puja at Parade, Cardiff	1983-84 Organization named Wales Puja Committee	1984 1st chair—Dr. Bali
1986 Mr. Kamal Ghatak built a set of clay images of Ma Durga and her family for pujo	1994 The WPC drew its first constitution	1996 WPC was registered as a charity with the Charity Commissioner of UK	1991 Wales' 1st imported idol arrived from Kumartoli Kolkata. The puja was in St.
1992 The idol made by Mr. Ghatak was immersed in the Bristol Channel from the Penarth Pier	1992 The idol made by Mr. Ghatak was immersed in the Bristol Channel from the Penarth Pier	1992 The idol made by Mr. Ghatak was immersed in the Bristol Channel from the Penarth Pier	1995 Durga puja moved to Penyrheol Community Centre, Caerphilly
1997 1997 WPC had its second Durga Pratima or image from Kumartuli, Kolkata	2002 the first Durga idol was made in Cardiff—sculptors from Krishnagar, Bengal came to Cardiff through Crafts Council of Bengal sponsorship	2009 St Fagans's clay Durga making workshop	2016 WPC's biggest venture to commission a project "Heritage of Durga Puja and Clay image making in Wales" supported by funding from Heritage Lottery



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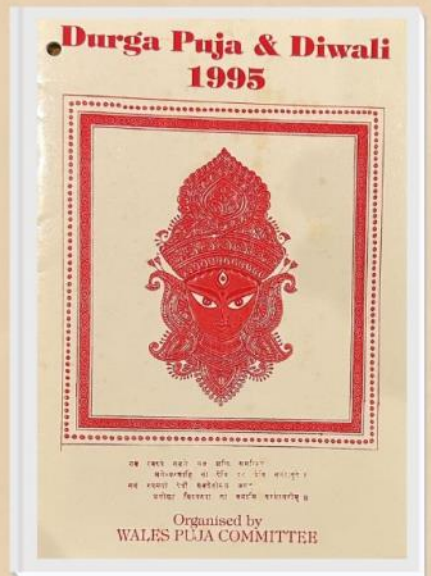
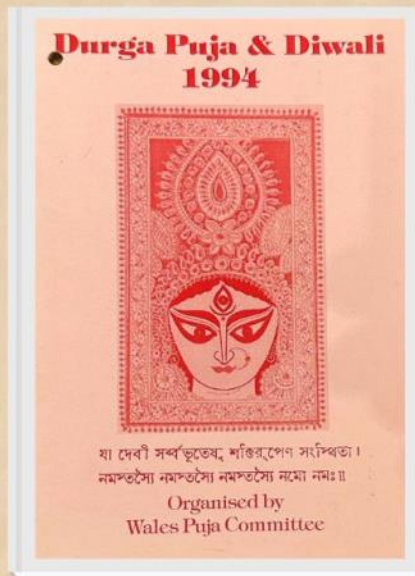
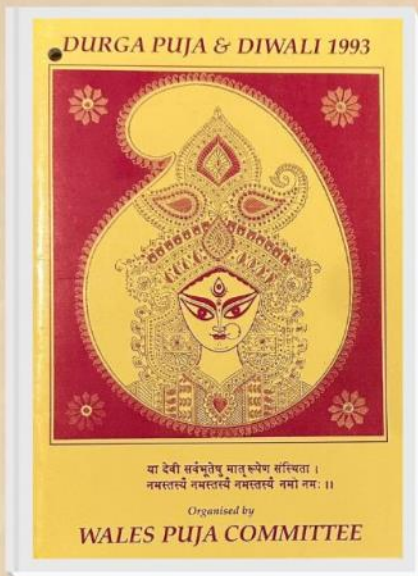
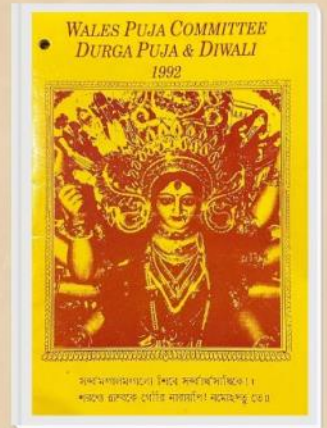
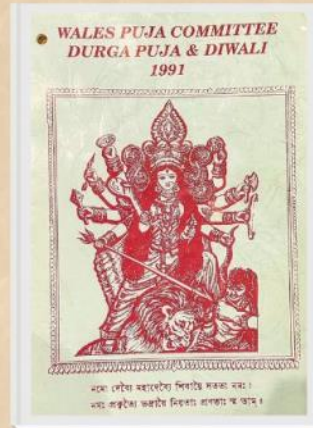
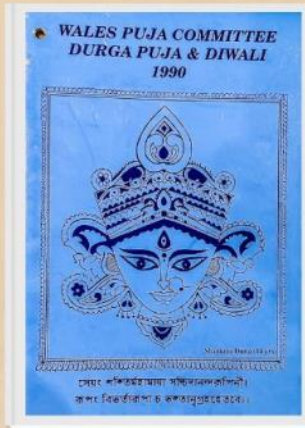
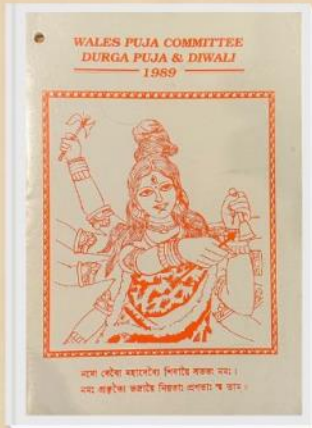
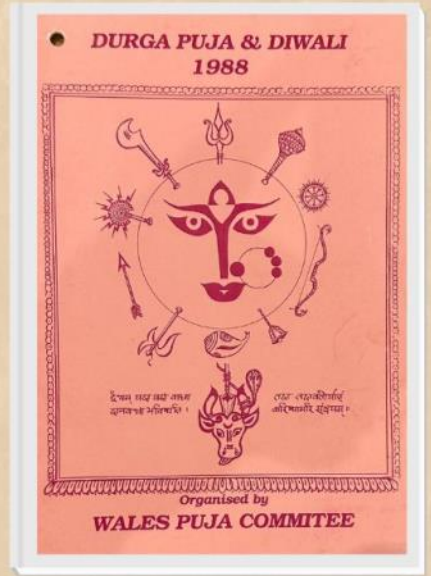
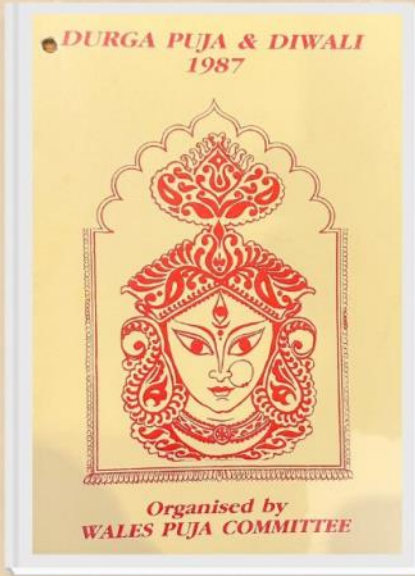
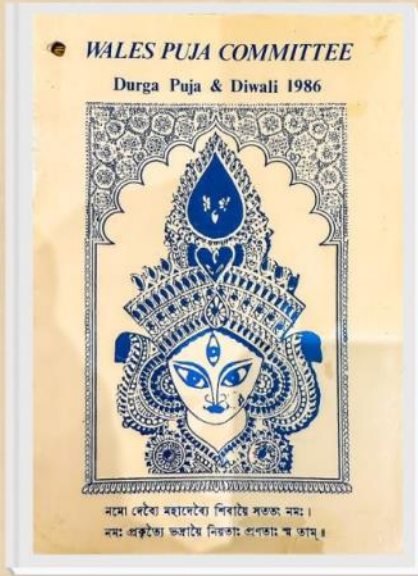
Open 7 days a week.

All sorts of Indian vegetarian and vegan products available in our restaurant and grocery.



pc- Krishnendu Banerjee





COVER STORIES: 1986-1995



DURGA PUJA

The advent of autumn sets the scene for the grand occasion of DURGA PUJA. It is the most important religious festival of the Hindus.

Durga is the Mother who protects Her devotees with Her divine power and the devotees worship (puja) Her with devotion and gratitude.

In the beginning Durga was worshipped in the spring (Vasanti Puja). Rama the legendary hero of the Ramayana, worshipped Durga in autumn to win Her favour in his battle against Ravana, the demon king. This was 'Akala-Bodhana', the out of season invocation. Since then Durga Puja has become an autumn festival. It is held from the sixth to the tenth day after the new-moon in autumn. In various parts of India the same festival is known by different names such as 'Navaratri' (nine nights of Puja) and 'Dassera' (the tenth day festival). On Dassera, an effigy of Ravana is burnt ceremonially.

This is the occasion for family reunions and exchanging greetings and gifts.

The significance of Durga Puja lies in the triumph of collective good over evil as Durga was created with the united power of all the deities. She is also known as 'Chandi', the symbol of the ultimate Energy (Shakti) prevailing over the negative forces of the universe.

A. Roma Choudhury.



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A. Roma Choudhury



The term 'DURGA-PUJA' instantly brings a rush of sentiments to a Hindu. Durga is the Mother who protects men with Her divine power and the Hindus worship (PUJA) Her with joy and devotion. She is also welcome as a daughter visiting her parents once a year with her children - Kartik, Ganesh, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The parental affection towards Her makes Durga Puja such an intimate occasion.

At the beginning Durga Puja was a Spring festival (Vasanti Puja). When Rama, the legendary hero of the Ramayana, prayed to Durga in Autumn for Her blessing to win the battle against the demon King Ravana; it was an untimely invocation ('Akala-Bodhan') of the Mother. Since then Durga Puja is held from the sixth to the tenth day after the new moon in Autumn. In different parts of India it is known by different names such as 'Navaratri' (nine nights of Puja) and 'Dassera' (the tenth day festival). On Dassera, an effigy of Ravana is burnt ceremonially.

The moral significance of Durga Puja is the triumph of collective good over evil since Durga was created with the united power of all the 'gods'. Thus Durga became the symbol of the ultimate energy ('Shakti') prevailing over the negative forces of the universe.

The Fever of Diwali

Oh to be in India for Diwali!

When the whole world
seems to be set on fire . . .
Aflame with liquid light,
A pool of luminescence
Seeping through the window cracks,
Under the doors
Into the rooms,
Into the people,
Into their hearts.

Today is the day of Lakshmi Puja
The kids are so tense,
Sitting in an unutterable silence of
Suppressed excitement,
They cannot sit still
The effervescent elation
Fermenting inside
Each child's heart
Like the bubbles
In a champagne bottle
About to pop.
They sit and watch
The candles in the thali
Tiny pinpricks of light
Dripping hot wax
Onto the shining steel
As they sin "Om Jai
Jagdish . . ."
And on
And suddenly it is over
And the cork of the
Bottle of champagne
Is let loose with a pop.
And the kids are
Running, jumping, dancing
In a flurry of commotion.
Their hearts aflame
With an unearthly exhilaration
For today is an immortal day
The day of Ram and Sita
The day to love and to laugh.

Laughing, the children
Snatch up the doughy deepaks
From the kitchen,
Tiny bowls sheltering
Fingers of flame - trembling
And they put one
In each room.
The inflourescence of the Gods
Lighting up the room.

Then the shouts increase
The vibrations of voices come alive
Waves of noise rippling on the air
As the kids run out
Scampering down the avenue of light
That is their street,
Where the flourescent windows of houses
Form a long entwined
Necklace of illumination.

And it is time to explode
The sky into pops, bangs, whizzes
Rockets shoot bullets of flame
That scorch through
The thick black woollen blanket
of night.
Squeals of joy pierce the quiet
As phosphorescent bombs
Melt into globules of flame
That flood the ground
with a sea of effulgence.
Streaming rivulets of light
Flicker down the black mountains
Of the sky - through the stars,
And the hands clutch at the hearts
Of everyone present
Pulling them up . . .
Up . . . higher into the realms
Of immortality.
And the people feel so strong
Yet weightless - with the strength
Of God lifting them up.
Even the kids are filled
With a glow of exuberant ecstasy
They cannot understand.
The blood rushing
To their heated pink soft cheeks,
Moist with sweat
They are held with a fever.

The Fever of Diwali.

by Nikita Lalwani
(16 years)

A Roma Choudhury wrote a lot of evocative articles in the first 3 souvenirs

First poem published in 1990 by Nikita Lalwani, 16 years

A Poem

COLOUR

Red is a Dragon breathing fire.
 Red is a fire going higher.
 Orange is a sunset blazing hot.
 Orange are carrots cooking in a pot.
 Yellow is sand, sea shells too.
 Yellow is a lemon squeezed hard.
 Green is a slimy frog used for a spell.
 Green is grass, weeds as well.
 Blue is my favourite colour for the ocean.
 Blue is good for a potion.
 Indigo is cloudy at nighttime.
 Indigo comes out when you write with a pen.
 Violet is a flower growing fast.
 Violet is a cushion not very hard.



by Animesh Raha (Age 8)

1992 Souvenir

কলকাতা

কোলাহল কোলাহল আর কোলাহল
 শব্দ যন্ত্র আর মানুষের,
 বিরামহীন আনাগোনা
 ব্যস্ততায় ভরা নগর জীবন।
 জব চার্নকের শহর
 ঘোড়ায় টানা ট্রামের শহর,
 দূর দূরান্ত থেকে ছুটে আসা
 পথিকের শহর।

মিছিল মিটিং এর শহর
 ট্রাফিক জ্যামের শহর
 জাত পাত নির্বিশেষে
 একত্রে বসবাসের শহর।
 চিংকার চাঁচামেচী
 ফুটবল ক্রিকেট
 ব্যক্তি স্বাধীনতায়
 বেঁচে থাকার শহর।

৩০০ বছরের পুরানো
 প্রাণস্পন্দনে ভরা
 তিলোত্তমা কলকাতা
 আমাদের কলকাতা।

1995 Souvenir

- Amrita Dutta (12 years)

Gyda dymuniadau gorau
 oddi wrth Durga Puja

CREU DURGA
 Celfyddyd Creu
 Delwedd Hindŵaidd

Mae Amgueddfeydd ar Oriellu Cenedlaethol Cymru yn falch o fodru cefnogi'r digwyddiad cynhyrfus yma sy'n digwydd yn yr Hen Lyfrgell. Yn ystod mis Tachwedd, bydd pum portreadd Kalgit o Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Ganesh a Kartik yn cael eu harddangos yn yr Amgueddfa Iel Ardangosfa'r Mis yn Oriell 5. Bydd cyfle hefyd i weld mwy o'r cwyg gwyth yma o Gelfyddyd o Bengal yn ystod ymweliad arbennig i'r Ystafell Brindadau ar 27 Tachwedd am 1pm (a wneud chi archebu'ch lle ar gyfer y digwyddiad yma). Wedi cwblhau y delweddau diai. Byddant yn cael eu cludo i'r Amgueddfa i'w harddangos o 26 Tachwedd hyd 8 Rhagfyr. Yn y cyfamser, bydd dangosiad bychan hefyd yn y Brif Neuadd hyd yn iadw gŵyl dyddau y Durga Puja sef 12 - 15 Hydref. Dewch draw i weld yr holl ddangosiadau yma. Mae mynedad am ddim a chroeso i bawb.



With best wishes for
 Durga Puja

CREATING DURGA
 Art of Hindu
 Image Making

The National Museums & Galleries of Wales is delighted to be supporting this exciting event taking place at the Old Library. During November, the five Kalgit portraits of Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Ganesh and Kartik will be on display in the Museum as Exhibit of the Month in Gallery 5. There will also an opportunity to see more of the outstanding collection of Bengali Art during a special Print Room visit on 27 November at 1pm (please book places for this event). After the completion of the clay images, they will be transported to the Museum to be displayed in the Front Hall from 26 November to 8 December. Meanwhile, a small display also in the Front Hall will observe the days of Durga Puja 12-15 October. Please come and see all these different displays. Entry free and everyone is welcome.

The Museum is looking forward to displaying the completed clay images in the Front Hall from 26 November to 8 December.

Please come and see all these exhibitions. Entry free. Tuesday - Sunday 10am - 5pm

Mae'r Amgueddfau'n edrych ymlaen at ardangos y delweddau diai gorffenedig yn y Brif Neuadd o 26 Tachwedd hyd 8 Rhagfyr.

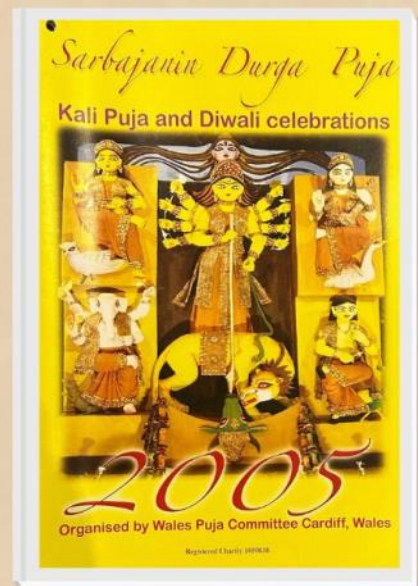
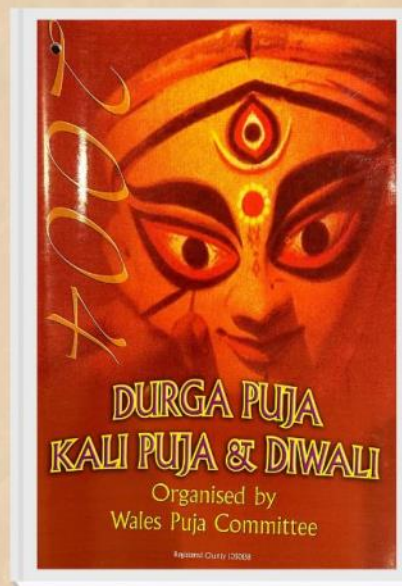
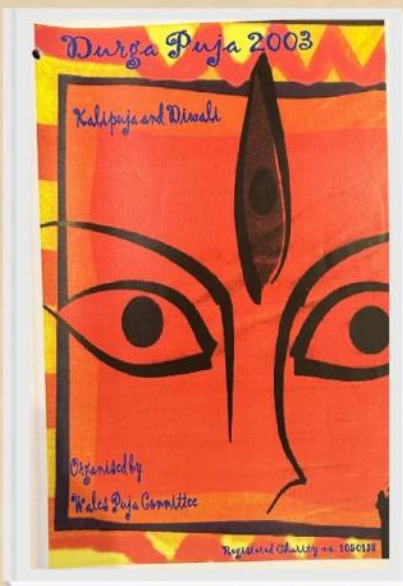
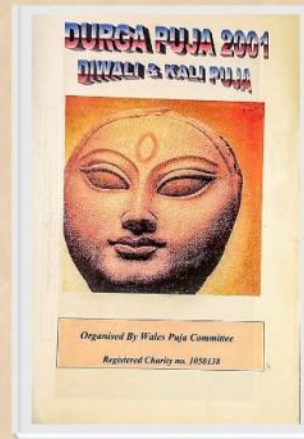
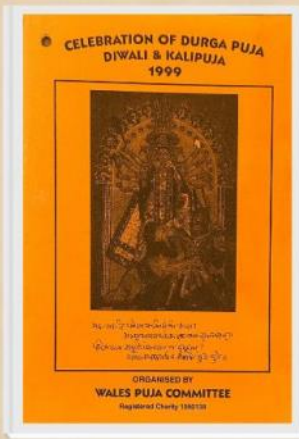
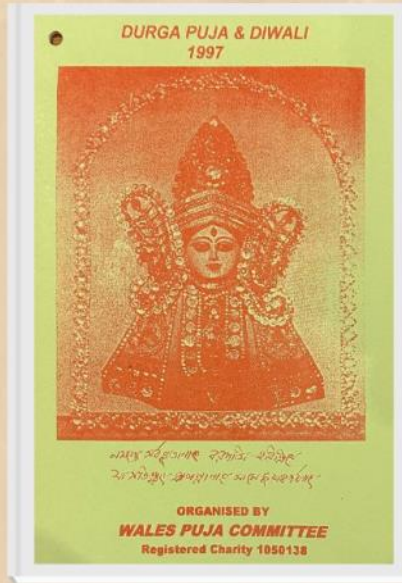
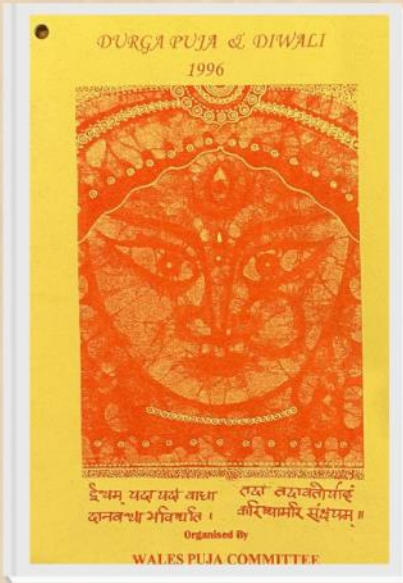
Dewch draw i weld yr holl ardangosfeydd. Mynedad am ddim. Dydd Mawrth - Dydd Sul 10am - 5pm



PRIEST & HIS WIFE (SANDHI PUJA 2005)

Dr Acharya and his wife in one of the later souvenirs

The First Creating Durga in Partnership with the National Museum of Wales appears in the 2002 Souvenir back inner cover



COVER STORIES: 1996-2005

ORIGIN OF DURGA PUJA IN SOUTH WALES

In 1973 few like-minded Bengalis in South Wales arranged Saraswati Puja which was celebrated in the house of Dr Santosh Sen of Nelson, Mid Glamorgan. This was the first Saraswati Puja in Wales and idea of Durga Puja was conceived at the same evening amongst the principal organisers Dr Santosh Sen, Dr Kamal Chatterjee, Dr Asit Haldar and their wives. Image of Goddess Durga was a canvas painting by Dr Chatterjee's nephew in Calcutta and sent to us by air. Venue of first Durga Puja in South Wales in 1973 was in the bedroom of Dr and Mrs Santosh Sen and Dr Kamal Chatterjee was the priest.

My memories of Durga Puja in Cardiff, primarily goes back to remember two persons who were Major Chatterjee and Major Bhattacharjee whose inspirations and active part played a key roll to initiate Durga Puja celebrations in the community of Indians in Cardiff and South Wales for the first time in 1974 at 28 The Parade with the help of Mr Mooniram, Community Education Officer. He was instrumental in arranging the venue for the Durga Puja. Major Chatterjee and Bhattacharjee both of whom came from India for their research studies at the University Hospital, Cardiff. During the short period of their stay they inspired many people to initiate community Durga Puja in Cardiff.

To mention a few words about Major Bhattacharjee he was a brilliant scholar of Calcutta Medical College and a successful surgeon, achieving his FRCS from London and Edinburgh within one year. Major Chatterjee was based at Poona in India and I got to know him closely due to the fact that his boss Major Basu in India, (Director of Medical Services, Southern Command of Indian medical Core) was a personal acquaintance of mine, and I was family physician of his parents (Major Basu) at Santiniketan, India

Two other persons who contributed a great deal during the first few years of Durga Puja in Cardiff, were Mr Kamal Ghatak and late Sambhu Das. I love them both like my younger brother. Mr Kamal Ghatak needs no introduction in Cardiff and South Wales. We lost Mr Sambhu Das few years ago with heart attack. Both these people worked together as close friends and with great sincerity.

About a week before 1974 Durga Puja, Major Chatterjee, Major Bhattacharjee, Kamal Ghatak, Sambhu Das and Dr & Mrs Majumdar came to my house and requested me to perform Durga Puja in Cardiff. I was really delighted and with my previous knowledge, I performed the Durga Puja in Cardiff for the first time on a community basis.

This year in 1998 we are celebrating the twenty-five years of Durja Puja in South Wales since it's inception in 1973 at the house of Dr Santosh Sen. I am sure that we will continue to perform Durga Puja for years to come with co-operation of everyone under the banner Of Wales Puja Committee and blessings of Goddess Durga.

Dr H K Acharya

KUMARTULI AND ITS IMAGE MAKERS

Bishnu P. Choudhury

In 1785 the East India Company organized its territories in and around Calcutta into thirty one administrative thanas of which Kumartuli was one - a settlement of the kumars or potters. That at least proves that the kumars were in the area by 1785 and most probably much earlier. It is not certain whether the original potters progressed to become the image makers or the image makers were a separate breed. Nor is clear who fashioned the first image of Durga in Calcutta. Though the family puja of the Sabarna Choudhuris of Barisha dates back to 1610 - the earliest pictorial evidence (from a painting by Alexis Soltikoff) of a Durga puja is that at Raja Nabakrishna Deb's (1733 - 1797) house, attended by Europeans and Indians alike. The image comprised of a stela (*chal-chitra* with Durga on her lion mount battling the *asura* at the centre and of her supposed children Saraswati at a higher level) and Kartikaya on her left and Lakshmi (at a higher level and Ganesha on her right. Till probably the end of the second world war that was the standard image of Durga, wherever the Bengali worshipped her. Traditionally, prominent feature in Durga's face was her hugely elongated dazzling, piercing eyes and her adornment in sola-pith and tinsel - *dakei-saj*. Over the years her features are made mellow and *daker-saj* is replaced by silk and jari. Post independence artistic revolution also affected Durga's image making. Her 'children' were first to move out the stela or the slae disappeared totally and all five of them were set in a picturesque setting with bills, forests and what not. Her face, hair-do and clothes swung between styles conventional and daring. Image making in itself is a protracted process involving wood, bamboo, rice-straw, jute fibre and of course specially treated clay. The headless *kathamo* or limbs and torso are fashioned in rice-straw put together and tied in jute-fibre strings, then a layer of silt-clay of the *ganga* (brought to Kumartuli-ghat in barges - elsewhere, whatever clay deemed suitable treated with husk and finely chopped rice-straw is applied thickly on it. The image thus formed is allowed to dry and crack in the sun. Later the fissures are painstakingly sealed over and over again with treated clay and finally a very runny clay soaked bandage is wound around the image. Wrinkles and hair line cracks are evened out by the clay soaked fingers of the image maker. Faces are fashioned by pressing clay in moulds and when dry are joined to the figures with clay. Dried and smoothed images are given one or two lime washes followed by several coats of appropriate skin colours. Finally *dristi-dan* or eye-painting is performed. After the eyes are painted the image is supposed to come to life and becomes a manifestation of the divine. Though image making in Kumartuli is a round the year affair due to *baro-mase-tero-parban* (thirteen festivities in twelve months) of the Bengalis, the autumn festival of Durga-puja is the high water mark in the kumar's calendar. This is the time when the job of image making spills over into the streets of Kumartuli. The successful kumars are inundated with commissions from Calcutta to Cardiff to California while the others just about eke out a living. Rich or poor the whole area throbs with excitement and activity. Business and pleasure mixes well for a few months. The images are taken to the place of worship, revered for the prescribed period and finally the clay that came out of the river is given back to the river in its immersion.

Articles by Dr Acharya and Bishnu Choudhury in the 1998 souvenir

Letter from Mrs Sen, wife of DR Sen, founder member in 1998 Souvenir published to celebrate 25 years of pujas in South Wales

Bengali No. 1

It's good to belong, don't you think? We spend our entire lives falling in and out of clubs, groups, organisations, etc but every once in a rare while we find something that belongs to us as much as we belong to it. The Wales Puja Committee, I am told, has been around a lot longer than I have. The seeds were planted some twenty-seven years ago. What we have today is a healthy and vibrant community of people who understand the significance of *desh* within *pardeish*.

Every year we gather together, not only to celebrate our religion but also to celebrate our unique heritage. My parents come to meet friends, they participate in the rituals and reflect on the Puja's of days gone by, when they were young. They talk amongst themselves of a place I can only imagine, an era I can only hope for. I come to embrace an entire culture and frantically absorb every ounce of the environment. I am aware of the hardships faced by my parents and elders when they came to this country. They laboriously created a niche for themselves. Today their children face a different reality, *na ghar ka na ghat ka*, as they say.

These five days of Puja give us a chance to reflect on the past year and provides us with hope for the future. It is a rare opportunity for me to truly test the limits of my Bengali, to catch up with friends, to polish up on my catering skills, and to discuss with Mashi's and Mesho's my plans for the future. To list all that I have gained from these Puja's would take up the entirety of this souvenir and I doubt whether you would have the patience to read it. What are most important however, are the stories I have acquired, which one-day I shall pass on. The Wales Puja Committee is more than just an organisation, to me it is a home, a school, and a family.

Angshuman Mukherjee
NRI, SBM, GSOH, RSVP

Angshuman Mukherjee with a sense of humour in the 2001 Souvenir

আব্দীপ নিবেদন।

একটি নিঃশব্দ ক্ষেত্র, আত্মতর্কিত নিঃশব্দে পূর্ণ
যে গাভীর দাঁত গলে গিয়েছে। এখন এক আনন্দ মূলক
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স্বাভাবিকতা
সন্তোষজনক
পূর্ণতা

Message from
Mrs Namita Sen, California
Founder Member

'SAHIB-LOG' AND THE DURGA PUJA

By
Dr. Bishnu P. Choudhury

In the past, Durga Puja used to be performed privately by a few of the landed gentry of Bengal. Legend has it that (Lord) Robert Clive instigated his favourite Nubkissen (Maharaj Nabakrishna Deb, 1733-1797) to perform the first ever public (barwari) Durga Puja in Calcutta – as a celebration of the British victory of the battle of Plassey (Palashi) in 1757. This was not the first time Clive showed his partiality for the Mother Goddess. He was known to have presented the Mother, in an obscure temple in Arni in Tamilnadu, with a gift of a handful of rubies as a mark of gratitude for his victory in the messy battle of Arcot (in the second Carnatic war, 1751 – 1754). Since the introduction of the first barwari-puja in Calcutta, 'Saheb-logs' were as much as interested in Durga-Puja as the Bengalis of the city. The Sahibs organised gun salute from the Fort William during the Puja and the soldiers of the Company were required to present a military salute in front of the image of the Mother Goddess. Sahib-logs also kept a watchful eye on the correct observance of the Puja rituals. The custom of barwari Durga-Puja quickly spread to the other neo-noble houses of Calcutta and various neo-rajahs/maharajas started to vie with each other on pomp and grandeur of the Puja. From the very start, attending the Puja was very popular with the Sahib-logs, from the Lord and Lady William Bentinck down to the youngest 'writer' (English clerk) of the Honourable Company. They ate (specially cooked food) heartily, drank till they were blind and watched the performance of the 'nautch'-girls (*bajjis*) through a drunken haze. Some young 'writers' were even caught composing poems on the Durga-Puja! But no one could surpass the doings of one John Chips Esq., an eminent merchant of the city. One year his business took a down turn and the Sahib was advised by his 'banyan' friend to perform Durga-Puja to appease the Mother Goddess – which the Sahib did (that year and for the rest of his stay in Calcutta), and he never looked back. However, all good things come to an end. As more and more 'Mem-logs' appeared on the scene and the missionaries became active in doing down all pagga celebrations and were rampant in showing the 'true' faith of Christianity, Sahib-logs' enthusiasm for the heathen 'do' waned very quickly.

2001

17

WHENCE ART THOU – MOTHER?

Dr. Bishnu P. Choudhury

Of all the deities of the Hindu pantheon, Durga possibly is much Indianized and most adored by the Bengalees. In the Bengalee vision, her short seasonal appearance conjures the image of visitation of a happily married, marginally impoverished daughter to her parents for a few days. The parents makes the most of her visit knowing full well that the time for saying tearful farewell is not too far off. She is fondly called 'Ma', more often in the sense of 'little mother', the Bengali way of addressing a favourite daughter, and also as all-powerful, all-fulfilling, life-giving Mother.

The question of whether this intimate 'Ma' is the reminiscent of veneration for *Tara*, the *prajna* in Tantric Buddhism, which prevailed in eastern India for centuries and replaced later by Brahmanical Hinduism is academic.

But the more pressing question is - where from did we get this lion-riding, demon-killing 'Ma'? Though her appearance in the Hindu scripture (Markandeya Purana - c. 900 CE/AD, of which Durga Mahatmya / Devi Mahatmya section was compiled around 700 CE/AD) is fairly recent, she was not unknown to the people of Rajasthan in the 1st century BCE/BC, who engraved a lion-riding female (goddess?) in a few clay tablets.

If we are to cross the boundary of India in the north-west and get beyond the Hindukush range of mountains, we find her in a wider area and in existence from an earlier time too! In Sumer (4000 - 2500 BCE/BC) in lower Iraq of today, she appears as the lion-riding battle-winning goddess *Ishtar*, in Minoan Crete (2500 - 1100 BCE/BC) in the eastern Mediterranean, she is the *Magna Mater* or 'Great Mother' with her lion and all, in the Hittite empire (1800 - 1200 BCE/BC), in the eastern Turkey of today, she is the lion-riding *Hebat*. Hittites possibly were the first of the Aryans to recognise her as a goddess. She is also seen in Phrygia (100 - 700 BCE/BC) in central Turkey of today, as *Cybele* the lion-riding. The Phrygians passed her on to the ancient Greeks who split her image into two: Rhea, mother of the gods, and Athena the war goddess, with a lion by her side.

Her appearance in the Indian scene is more interesting. It could be asked if Alexander the Great's invasion of the Indus Valley (326 - 324 BCE) had anything to do with it; or was it the Persian king Cyrus the Great's (559 - 530 BCE) initiation of Indian invasion and grandson Darius I's (521 - 486 BCE) annexation of the north-western India was the time when 'Ma' slipped into the evolving Hindu pantheon? Well, whenever and wherever had she come from she is of course ours now and will possibly remain so for ever.



2002

CARDIFF, KOLKATA, KALIGHAT AND KUMARS

I flew into Dum Dum for the first time on the 1st January 1994, never having been to India, it was an exciting start to the year. I was going to work for the Calcutta Tricentenary Trust, an Anglo-Indian charity set up to help preserve the art collections in the Victoria Memorial Hall by financing groups of conservators and restorers experienced in Western Art to work with the in-house staff looking after the legacy of the Raj years.

Having since returned on six occasions to work at the VMH or to give general training in the care of museum collections, I now regard Kolkata as my second city.

I only recently discovered my own great by several times grandmother was buried in Park Street Cemetery in 1782. She was well over 60 when she accompanied one of her sons on the long voyage upon his appointment as a Chief Justice in 1774, another son, my direct ancestor, soon joined them. He became a friend of Sir William Jones, the founder of the Asiatic Society, and was a scholar of renown as well as 'fluent in the many dialects of Hindoostan', a talent which sadly has not been passed down the generations, however his desire to work and mingle among the people of Calcutta evidently has. Although his mother's tomb still stands in the cemetery, his does not.

It took me several days on my first visit to dare to cross any road let alone Chowringhee by myself, now I feel instantly at home and always look forward to returning to see my friends and familiar places. I love the peace of Jorasanko, the bustle of the Chitpur Road, the beauty of the view from the first floor studio in the VMH across the Maiden to Esplanade, the colours of the flower market by the Armenian Ghat, the noise of Howrah Station, the sound of the jackals at night at Tollygunge, the taste of *mishti doi* during the jaggery season.

Above all I am grateful to the *patuas* of Kalighat whose work of 150 years ago still gives us so much pleasure, especially here in Cardiff with our outstanding collection at the National Museum & Gallery. It was through organising the Kalighat Icons exhibition of 1998 that I first came into contact with the Bengali community in Cardiff and it is very exciting for me to be working with the Wales Puja Committee again.

We hope the event at the Old Library, **Creating Durga**, will have lots of visitors and they will get an understanding at firsthand of the crafts and traditions which are such a fundamental part of the way of life in Bengal.

Christine Mackay
Senior Paper Conservator
National Museums & Galleries of Wales



2002



Asian Mozart

It has been happening for some time. 'Asian underground', rather a derogatory term used to depict contemporary popular Indian(ish) music in UK, has been slowly taking roots. Likes of *Talvin Singh* and *Nitin Swahani* have been awfully successful in introducing complex rhythms to a western audience in a way that are accessible and totally couched in the sounds of today.

Parallel to this one has seen the phenomenal success of the Indian film music in recent times, popularly known as *Bollywood music* in the west to most Indian film makers' indignation. *Bollywood music* has been given a new turn by a man-genius *Mr A R Rahman*, otherwise known as 'Asian Mozart'. The producer of London musical *Bombay Dreams* Sir Andrew Lloyd Weber was entranced by *Rahman's* raw talent. *Rahman's* music in the Hindi movies always evinced a melody of pure gorgeousness. His level of musical invention on a single 'drone' note and his rhythm so complex, helped to revitalise popular melody from somewhere far removed from western Europe and America. Sir Weber thought *Rahman's* melodies take an unexpected twist that no western composer would dream of. No doubt, he thought *Rahman* would be the man to write the scores in the musical *Bombay Dreams* and we already know what followed. *Bombay Dreams* is going to be the 'next cool' among the London musicals which will break new ground, it is hoped.

With sales of more than 100 million, *Rahman's* albums have sold more than Britney Spears and Madonna combined. Such a prolific talent was born in 1966. His father was a Hindu and a musician. *Rahman* himself converted to Islam as a result of a family tragedy. *Meera Syal* (writer of *Bombay Dreams*) believes that his music has both freshness and lack of cynicism. He has this quote on his website - "If a music artiste wants to blossom into a fully-fledged person, it's not enough if he's well versed only in ragas and techniques. He should be interested in life and philosophy. In his personal life there should be, at least in some corner of his heart, a tinge of lingering sorrow."

True to this ethos, *Rahman* does what he truly believes he should do with his music.

2002

By Dr Ranjit Sinha Ray

Our New Pratima

Anuradha Nona Choudhury

2002 had been a memorable year for the Wales Puja Committee as it saw the materialisation of a dream it nurtured for a long time. The dream was to organise a project that would bring the age-old art of Hindu image making to Wales. Christine Mackay of the National Museums & Galleries of Wales brought the good news to WPC that two visiting sculptors sent by the Crafts Council of West Bengal through the agency of Srimati Ruby Palchoudhuri had come from Kolkata to Edinburgh Museum to take part in just such a project. WPC saw the opportunity and acted promptly on it.

Our project in Cardiff was called "Creating Durga : Art of Hindu Image Making". This was a unique opportunity to show local people and the Asian population in South Wales the intricate art of Hindu image making from the beginning to the end. Through the gradual process, starting with the wooden framework and straw cladding, followed by multiple layers of clay, the drying process, then the painting and the finishing touches with costumes and decorations, the visitors could see for themselves how the clay images become representations of the Hindu deities to be worshipped.

With the assistance of the Arts Council of Wales and Cardiff 2008 'Creating Durga' art project was held in the Old Library, Cardiff during 4-21 November, 2002. The senior sculptor was Sri Nimal Chandra Pal from Krishnanagar which has a very strong tradition of clay sculpting and image making. His associate Sri Bishwajit Chakraborty was a freelance worker with the Crafts Council and a keen promoter of rural crafts of Bengal. Between themselves they had participated in image making projects and National Craft Conference in USA in 1995 and 1997 apart from various projects in India nationally.

Within three weeks the sculptors created five separate images of deities : Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, Ganesh and of course the Mother Goddess Durga with her lion mount and Mahishasura, the demon. The project itself was very successful and generated immense interest among the local people and the media. There were over 500 visitors and approximately 10 schools with over 300 children participated in the workshops with the sculptors. The project was covered in 'In the Picture' arts programme by BBC 2W and BBC Wales TV, as well as in Radio Wales morning programme and in 'A Voice for All'. South Wales Echo (9 November) printed pictures of the sculptors at work with school children and Old Library projected the whole art activities on TV screen outside the building continuously for the passers by. Ms Jenny Randerson, the then Arts Minister of Welsh Assembly visited the project. We had a public thanksgiving ceremony on the completion day on 21 November. Many local artists and art organisations (CADMAT, The Pioneers) supported the project and students from Art College (Howard Gardens) participated in the workshops.

After the completion the images were moved to the National Museums & Galleries of Wales and were displayed there from 25 November to 8 December, 2002.

This year (2003) the Pratimas we are worshipping are home-grown and made with Welsh clay mixed with the clay from Ganga (brought by the sculptors) - a truly Welsh-Indian venture.



2003

Alpina design by the author

A Bengali poetry

॥ কবিতা ॥

অন্নদাশঙ্কর রায়ের বিখ্যাত কবিতার ('তেলের শিশি ভাঙ্গল বলে ...!') অনুকরণে রচিত
সামন্তকমণি চট্টোপাধ্যায় ও অতিনিবেশ চট্টোপাধ্যায়

কিল মারোনি, তিল মেয়েছে ?

তাতেই তোমরা কুঁচ হলে ?

তোমরা যখন হুকুম দিয়ে -

চালাও গুলি ছুঁট বলে ?

- তার বেলা ?

হলুে ছাঁটাই, বাড়ছে ঘেরাও

বলছ, ওরা ভোবায় নেশন,

তোমরা যখন বেকার দেখেও

আনছ টেনে অটোমেশন ?

- তার বেলা ?

তোমরা কেবল শৃঙ্খলা চাও

আইন কসো, চাও বিচার -

বলছ নাতো বার্থ শাসন

অক্ষমতার দাও বিচার

- তার বেলা ?

বলছ মুখে বড়াই করে

বাফি স্বাধীনতার বুদি

আইন করে নিছ কেন

অধিকারের প্রয়োগগুলি ?

কিল মারোনি তিল মেয়েছে ?

তাতেই তোমরা কুঁচ হলে ?

তোমরা কি চাও বজ্রাতিতেও

পৃথ্বে জাতি শুদ্ধ বলে ?

2003

Some interesting facts about our festivities

Over the years you have attended and participated in Wales Puja committee's functions and festivals and in fact we all have done so for over 30 years now!! Have you given any thought about some interesting facts, which may make you feel that you are a part of a huge commitment? Please continue to read:

1. Over last 30 years Wales Puja committee have fed over 15000 people during 4 days of Durga Puja and cooked for 14000 people!!!
2. We have cooked over 1.5 metric tons of rice!!
3. Over 450 litres of oil = 100 gallons to do cooking just during Durga Puja days!
4. We have prepared 250 kg of lentils and cooked over 700 kg of potatoes and 500 kg of Cabbages with another 400 kg of Cauliflower - what a lot of stuff!!
5. Our cooking team!! Has spent over 5000 man hours in the kitchen in last 30 years.
6. We have spent £12000 over food cooked over the 20 years while buying food from outside between 1987-1996 cost us additional £15000.
7. We posted 10,000 plus invitation letters and bought postage stamps for over £2000!
8. We have printed 3500 copies of Souvenir over last 17 years (1986-2003)
9. We have over 450 families on our mailing list at present and 34 executive committee Members.
10. Over the years Kanti Nath has developed himself as an accomplished deep and shallow fry Specialist and has fried varieties for over 100 hours in last 8 years!
11. Over 270 hours of meeting time has been spent by executive committee members in last 25 years, although initial meetings were based at members home with lots of goodies to eat!!

Life

Life is what you make of it.
Togetherness is what you get out of it.

Love is as what it may churn out.
Commitment is what you are supposed to do.

The truth is,
life is a commitment to love and togetherness.

2004



2004



Cooking, and a lot of it!!

VISARJANA - the gran-finale



The autumnal *Durga Puja* is an event resurrected by the Bengalis (with a dash of help from one Robert Clive) for the Bengalis. The autumnal puja is an integral part of a Bengali's way of life which has been inspiring others who come close to him. The puja, truly speaking, is merry making galore under the guise of religion that goes on for three days (and there is no knowing for how long in Calcutta these days) ending on the fourth with a *VISARJANA*. In no way is the Visarjana end of merriments, as a trail of minor festivities follow hard on its heels. It is the last movement, so to speak - the finale, in the puja-orchestra !.

Autumn is a respite from the days of dark monsoon clouds and rains. Now the muddy foot-paths in and around villages begin to surface from under the flood waters. A time for a married Bengali woman to contemplate visiting her parents with her children. The prospect of such a cherished visit and the vision of it are the sentiments epitomised in creating a *pratima*, an image, of the *Devi* - the mother-divine and her family (Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha). She is the visual representation of a tender idea in the Bengali mind.

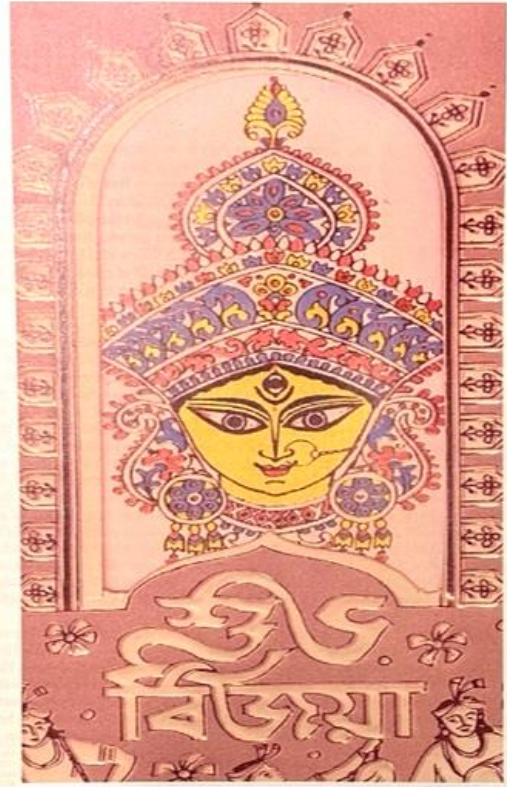
In these four days she probably is more adored than revered. However, a visiting married daughter is unable to prolong her stay with her parents because of her commitments to her in-laws and the husband who is left behind, nor can the *Devi*. For three days the *Devi*, the source of Bengali national joy, is feted and spoiled. On the fourth *Vijaya*-day she, and her parental devotees accept the *VISARJANA*, her departure for the year. The dictionary meaning of the Sanskrit word *VISARJANA* is to abandon, to give up, to forsake - not so for a Bengali. To him it is more like 'see you soon'. He prolongs the moment of his 'goodbye' saying as long as he can with all possible home grown rituals. Eventually, with a heavy heart, he carries the river clay-made image of the *Devi*, back, preferably, to a river and immerse it.

In *Visarjana*, he possibly accepts the Hindu concept of cyclic rotation of joy and sadness. The other point this immersion makes is that, contrary to the popular notion in the west and elsewhere, a Hindu is not idolatrous. Had he been so, he would have stored the image and not immersed it into water. He bears all the attachment for the Divine but none for the image. For him, next year is a new beginning with a freshly made image. In *Visarjana*, he hopes that the running river water would wash the minutest particle of his ephemeral creation, to the sea, to find final release in the vastness of its water volume. As he hopes, at the end of his mortal days, he would find release in the immensity of a Supreme Being, he has conceived as the *Brahman* - the endless, the ultimate.

Dr. Bishnu P. Choudhury



2004 Souvenir had lots more interesting articles



We are going to do proper Visarjan of our old Pratima from Kolkata, in Bristol Channel, off Cardiff Bay on Sunday 24 October 2004. Further details are available during the Puja. Please make every effort to attend the Ceremony, a very rare occasion in UK. Pratima will be carried on a Tug Boat into the Sea after proper ceremony by Our Priests. Regretfully, only limited space in boat available.

RECIPE FROM WPC STALWARTS!

Healthy Recipe Papaya-Coconut (From Mahua)

Ingredients:

Medium sized papaya peeled & grated
Fresh grated coconut 2 tab.sp
Oil 1 Tab. Sp
Curry leaf 8 - 10
Mustard seeds ½ Tsp
Green chilly 2 crushed
Salt to taste
Sugar to taste
Lemon juice 1 Tab Sp
Ginger 1 tab.sp. Finely chopped

Procedure:

Heat oil in a pan. When very hot add mustard seeds & curry leaves.
Enjoy the crackling, but don't let it burn
Add grated papaya + 2 Tab Sp water + Salt + Sugar. Cover & allow to Cook on a low flame till soft.
Turn flame to high; add coconut, ginger, green chilly & lemon juice. Fry for 2 mn. or till dry.
Serve with hot rice or roti

(Optional: use 1 Tab.sp desiccated coconut soaked in milk for 10 min.)

Naughty Recipe Cheese-Paratha (from Mahua)

Ingredients:

Plain flour 1 cup
Luke warm water
Oil 1tsp. for dough & oil for frying
Salt to taste
Green chilly 2 chopped
Ajwain ½ tsp.
Cheddar cheese 2 cups, grated

Procedure:

Dough: add oil and salt to flour & make a dough. Stand for 10 mn.
Stuffing: add chilly & ajwain to grated cheese
Preparation of Paratha: divide dough into 4 equal parts (balls). Convert the balls into bowl shapes & fill with stuffing (generously). Roll flat.
Shallow fry.
Serve hot.

Lemon rice (From Ila Haldar)

Ingredients:

Rice- 1 cup
Cashew nut-75gm
Oil-1 table spoon
Curry leaves-1 table spoon
Chopped green chillies-1 tea spoon
Mustard seed-1 tea spoon
Turmeric powder-pinch
Salt & lemon juice to taste.
Cook rice. Let it cool. Fry cashew nuts, set aside.

Heat oil. Put mustard seeds, curry leaves, green chillies, turmeric powder in hot oil. When mustard seeds pop add rice and cashew nuts. Add salt and lemon juice to taste.
Mix well.

It is best served in hot summer day and BBQ parties

Malai Kofta

KOFTA

Mince Meat 250gm
Garlic paste 1 Teaspoon (tsf)
Chilli Paste 1 tsf
Salt ½ tsf
Oil 1 tsf
Corn Flour 1 tsf

GRAVY

Garlic Paste 1 teaspoon
Ginger paste 1 tsf
Turmeric Powder ½ tsf
Garam masala powder ½ tsf
Roasted Cumin powder ½ tsf
Oil 2 tsf
Cashew Nuts
Double cream 1 ½ cup
Green Chillies
Coriander Leaves
Tomato 1
Onions 2

Instructions:

To make the kofta, mix all the ingredients into the mince meat and then make small balls. Shallow fry these until they are brown. Simple as that!

Before you make the gravy, boil the two onions to make a paste and chop and fry the cashews. For the gravy, heat oil or ghee in a frying pan and add the onion, chilli, and garlic paste to it. Fry until the oil separates. Now chop and add the tomatoes, fry these until they're soft. Next add the double cream (don't worry the calories are worth it) and salt to taste. Now sit back and simmer gently... enjoy the aroma!

When off the stove, sprinkle with garam masala, roasted cumin, coriander, chopped green chillies, and the cashew nuts.

The next step is probably the most difficult; now that it's made you'll have to decide whether you want to share.

From the kitchen of :

Mahua Mukherjee
Cook extraordinaire
Quality assured





Nostalgia

The first Durga Puja started, with a picture of Durga, in Cardiff in a bedroom 32 years ago with 9 people around the whole house.

The first Durga Pratima was arranged to be delivered, from Southampton dock, on the Shashthi day afternoon at St. David's Hospital, our Puja venue that year.

First day of Sandip (Dr Raha) in this Country - he arrived at Heathrow but could not find Ruma (his wife) there, rang home without a reply, came to Cardiff Central Station, no one there to receive him, arrived at the house, no one there to open the door, dog-tired by then, decided to get in through the window, by breaking it! Lucky, no one informed the police. Ruma, without finding him at Heathrow, came home and found him sleeping on the settee! She was gobsmacked!!

Tapas (Dr. Saha), one afternoon during the Puja, entered in the kitchen and tasted a vegetable curry, prepared by the ladies earlier, found it not tasty enough, emptied the remaining of the green chilly bag (contained at least 300 gms of them). We had several complaints the following day!!

Preparing lamb curry, during our functions, is usually a male affair, Ladies did keep them away, for the first year, from the kitchen because their sarees will smell. Samir (Bhowmick) is the usual cook. He always makes few lovely kebabs, for the helping boys, with minced lamb. The delicate smell of grilled kebabs, though late, penetrated to the main hall. During the following meat cooking session, the ladies were at the kitchen door at right time and the boys hardly got a share of the kebab-loom. We all share it now, because we can not resist the smell going out of the kitchen!

These days we have a licensed bar to serve us only in the Diwali nights. Alcohol is always prohibited from our puja venue except on Diwali nights. During the earlier years, usually in the evenings, we used to go outside, 3 or 4 at a time, to our cars, avoiding people & lights, to have some drink, telling others that a particular car needs some water. We were caught immediately by the wives' gang.

During the late 80's, a caterer, supplying our foods for the first time, refused to hand over the foods before the cheque was handed over at the gate of 28 The Parade. We had to oblige but were all just stunned.

In another Puja evening, another caterer provided the foods for about 40 when we ordered for 150. Some misunderstanding somewhere, but sleeves were up and we cooked, within the next 1½ hours flat, enough foods for all of us.

Any snip-shots or reminiscence from the past by anyone will be highly appreciated.

2004 Souvenir

The Scroll Painters of West Bengal

Two years ago, I visited the village of Naya in the Medinipur district of West Bengal. This village is one of the few centres where the scroll-painters - patuas or chitrakars - still live and work.

They paint stories on rectangular sheets of paper, which are stitched together to form a vertical scroll. They take these scrolls from village to village, and especially to the markets and fairs, where, squatting on the earth, they unroll the sequential frames while reciting the narrative of the story in a high pitched chant. They entertain in exchange for uncooked rice, lentils or vegetables and, sometimes, money. Their designs and songs are commonly owned, once a song is memorised, it may be sung by anyone. The great epics such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Chandimangal remain as popular as ever but modern themes are increasingly used. I saw a scroll of the Sinking of the Titanic, the information gleaned from the film and some vivid depictions of 9/11 with the aeroplanes hitting the Twin Towers. Some years ago, the Government recognised their usefulness and commissioned scrolls about birth control for public education purposes, the current topic is AIDS and HIV prevention.

Picture-showmen such as the scroll-painters have an ancient ancestry in the history of Indian arts, being an important part of the culture for over 2500 years. A text of the thirteenth century, the Brahmapurana, indicates that the chitrakar caste had been one of the nine 'pure' craftsmen castes, but had been expelled for deviation from canons in their religious imagery. They have interesting religious affiliations, almost all having two names, one Hindu and one Muslim. They perform Muslim birth and death rites, but also worship the local Hindu village deities and make images of Hindu gods and goddesses. It is likely that the patuas originally became Muslims, like many other lower castes, to avoid paying taxes levied on non-Muslims by the Islamic rulers. But whereas other groups have become wholly absorbed into Islam, the patuas remain betwixt and between as they continue to ply their 'idolatrous' craft.

In Naya today, they still use many of the traditional pigments, black comes from burnt rice or the ground burnt roots of the Gaab tree, yellow from powdered turmeric, extract of bean leaves (dolichos lablab or hinche) for greens, the hibiscus flower for red, while purple is the result of mixing mud from the Ganga with the ground seeds of pui saag, a member of the spinach family, flowers from this plant providing a very delicate pink. Colours are made opaque by adding ground conch shell and the mixture has to be bound in a gum in order to stick to the paper - this is either gum from the tree Acacia Catechu or they use the strained juice of the pressed fruits of the Bael tree.

The painting of the scroll is a family affair; the male patua designs the main part, while women and children fill in the colours and the borders. Increasingly, women are being encouraged to design and paint their own scrolls. In the past, scrolls were never painted with the intention of sale; they were made to be used again and again, often backed with worn-out saris to prevent them from falling to bits. Today, the patuas are more than pleased to part with them - at a fair price!

Christine Mackay

সে, আমার বন্ধু

স্মৃতির হাত ধরে শেখন পানে চেয়ে ঠাণ্ডা হলে না প্রথম তাকে কবে সেবি। বাড়ির কাছাকাছি আনামী সেই স্থলে সে ছিল আমার ক্লাসে, বোধ হয় একেবারে শুরু থেকেই। স্থলে আমি খিলাম বেজার চঞ্চল ও অনেকরই মত দুই। আর সে ছিল একটু আলাপ। শুভিয়ে কথা বলত। কিন্তু কথাবার্তার মাপই ছিল তার আনন্দরকম। অনেক সময়ে বুঝতামই না কি কলছে। তাই আমাদের মধ্যে বানিকটা ফারাক ছিল। স্থলে শেষের নিকে গর থেকে নিম্নে বানিক দুইই রাখতাম। একই আদর্শের পড়তে যেতাম। রোমই দেখা হত, কথাও হত। কিন্তু দুরত্ব যেন কোথাও একটা তৈরি হয়ে গিয়েছিল।

স্থল শেষে কলেজে চুকলে তেনা মানার মগতটা কিছু ব্যাভতে বানিকটা হুড়াহুড়ি হয়েছিল ঠিকই, তবে বোধ্যবোধ বিজ্ঞির হয়ে যায়নি। পাড়তে দেখা হতই। নানা কথা বা গল্প হত এখানে সেখানে। সঙ্গে কখনো কখনো প্রত্যঙ্গও থাকত। তখনও তার কথার ধরন বদলায়নি। পর্পিটা তাই টানই থাকতো।

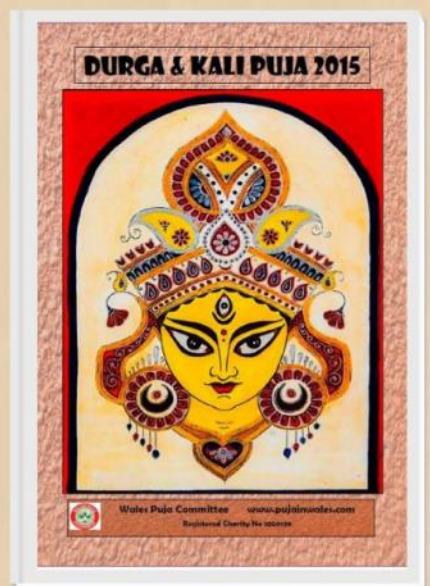
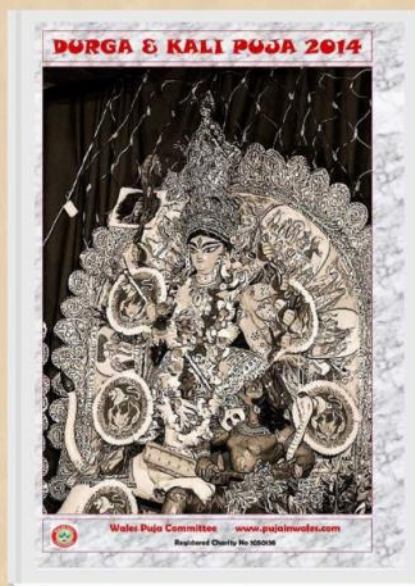
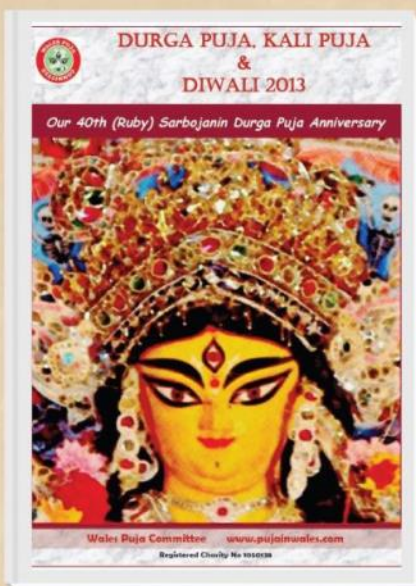
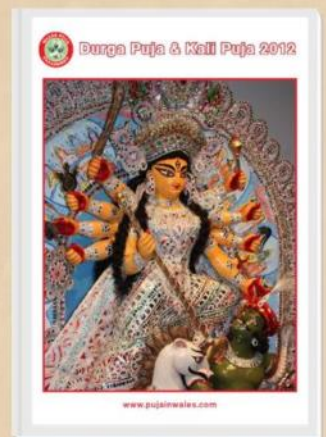
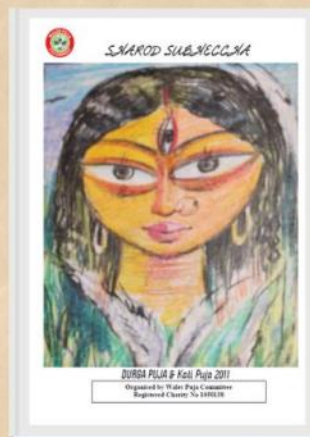
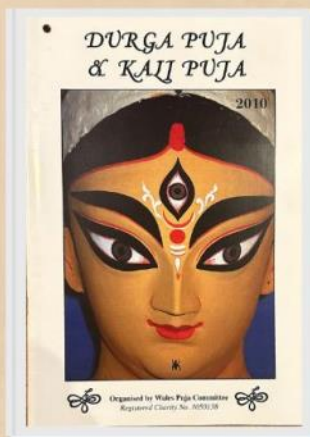
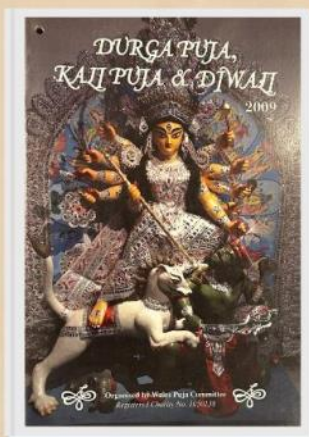
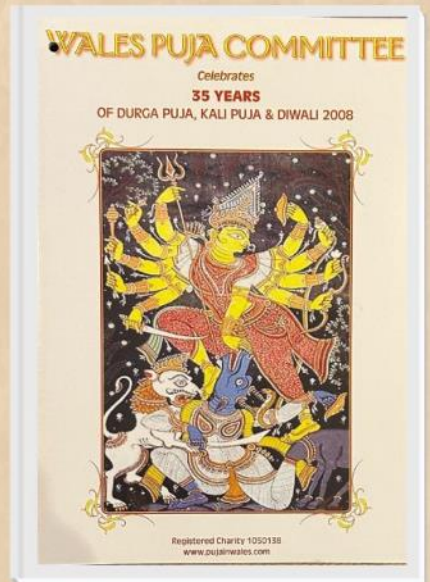
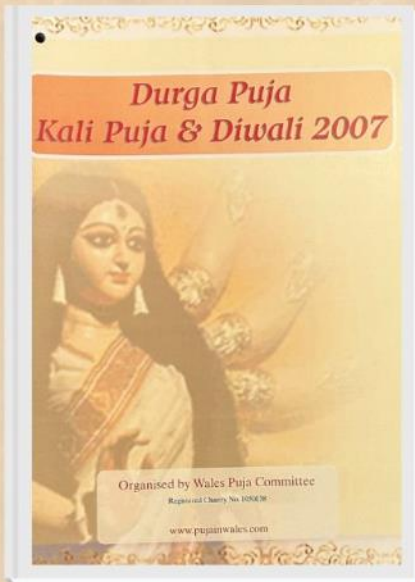
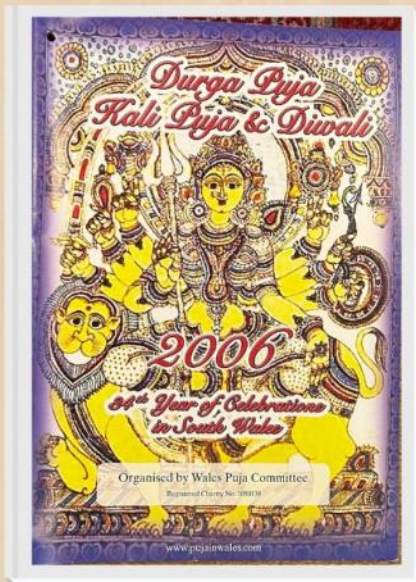
পড়াপোনার পাঠ চুকিয়ে ক্লাসে চুকলে শাফা হুড়িনি বলে বোধ্যবোধ ছিল তখনও। দেখা হয়েছে - বর্তমান, ভবিষ্যত ইত্যাদি নিয়ে এবং আরো নানা বিষয়ে কথা হয়েছে। ও তখনও বদলায়নি। আশাটা ধারণ করেই। দুইবন্ধুটাও শিউ হুড়েনি আমাদের।

পরম্বাসে এসে বাড়ি নিয়ে পড়া চক্র বিড়ে ফেলেছে, কখনো কখনো দেখা হয়েছে। মূলমূল আশ্রয় প্রদান করেছে, বন্ধু বাস্তবের প্রশ্ন উঠেছে, নিম্নের মতো গল্প হয়েছে। পর কেঁপিয়ে বলে কয়েক মাস চারের শেরালা হয়েছে চলে ছাত্রীজনের সময়কাল মত তর্কও উপচে পড়েছে। নানা গল্প বা কথার প্রশ্নে গর মাতুলতার অস্থির কারটা দেখতে শেরে দুইবন্ধুও সম্মতরাই।

তার পর, পাড়া থেকে চলে বাবার অনুই, বেশ কিছু বছর বোধ্যবোধ সেই। ক্লাস দুইতে আসে বাড়ি নিয়ে প্রশ্নের মুখে তনি সে চোখের দৃষ্টি হারিয়েছে। শুনে, মনটা পুরনো নানা স্মৃতির সঙ্গে কানামাছি কেলা করতে লাগল। প্রশ্নের নিচে পরের দিন বিকেলেই কসবতে দুই দুই গর বাড়ি গেলাম। গর সৌ মনটা স্থলে আমাদের, তেনা অচেনা মূহুরকে কসলো। প্রশ্নের সঙ্গে আলাপ তার অচেনা ছিল। আমার সঙ্গে আলাপ হবার পরে, পুনি হয়ে আরম্ভের তপনকে ভেতর থেকে হাত ধরে নিয়ে এসে আমারই পাশে বসিয়ে নিল। চা করতে রান্নাঘরে বাবার আসে অনেক দিন পরে দেখা দুই পুরনো বন্ধুর আলাপের শুরুতে অপেক্ষার সে আমাদের সামনে এসে দাঁড়িয়ে রইল। প্রশ্ন কিছু নিয়ে শুরু করল। তারপর আমি তাকে জিজ্ঞেস করি 'বলতো আমি কে?' সে কসলো 'আমি তো দেখতে পাইনা। কিছু মনে না করলে, হাত দুপিয়ে চেষ্টা করতে পারি। সেবি তিনতে পারি কিনা। তবে তোমার গলাটা বেশ বেন তেনা তেনা লাগছে'। আমার বুকটা কেমন যেন করে উঠল। দুইবন্ধুটা বোধ হয় বোধ্যবোধের জন্য মড়ে চড়ে উঠলো। গর দু হাত প্রথমে আমার দুই বাহুয়ল, তারপর কাঁধ হয়ে, উঠল দু গালে, চোখে মুখে একটু খোরাকেরা করে সব শেষে আমার মাথার উপরে উঠে এসে ধামলো। দুইবন্ধুটা হাঁপাচ্ছে। আমার মাথার চুল এখন অল্পই, তাড়াতাড়ি বলে উঠলাম 'আমার মাথার তীব্র কৌকড়ানে চুল ছিল, তিরুপি চালাতে পারতুম না, তেমে যেত'। মাথার উপরে আঙ্গুল গুলো একটু নড়ে চড়ে উঠে একেবারে খেঁমে গেল। তারপর হাতের ঘেঁয়া মাথার আর নেই। ও শুধু ষিধাযীন নিরুতাপে গথালো 'তুই দীপক না? আমাকে হতবাক করে দিয়ে দুইবন্ধুটার স্বভাটা শুঁড়িয়ে গেল, একেবারে দুইমুখ হয়ে। গলাটা ধরে এল। কয়েক ফোঁটা জলকে অনেক চেষ্টা করেও কিছুতেই চোখের মধ্যে আটকে রাখতে পারলাম না। বাকি তিন জনও না। তপন, আমার বন্ধু !!

ডিকে
আগস্ট, ২০০৬

2005 Souvenir



COVER STORIES: 2006-2015



WPC celebrates with Welsh National Museum, St. Fagan, Cardiff

Wales Puja Committee has weathered the test of time and built its credentials in not just catering to the religious hunger of the local Indian community, but also by involving itself with the affairs of the host community.

Over the past several years we have by invitation participated in and celebrated various national and local events. I am happy to state that our involvement has been appreciated greatly.

More recently we were invited by St. Fagan's National History Museum and the National Museum of Wales to participate in their centenary celebrations.

On 1st and 2nd September 2007 Wales Puja Committee celebrated Hindu Culture through the medium of art, dance and music.

Early on the 1st of September the members of Wales Puja Committee congregated at St. Fagan's National History Museum in preparation for the events that were to unfold over the weekend. The atmosphere was electric and the bustle of activity crept to a crescendo with the flooding in of guests and visitors.

Various events were shaping up at various venues attracting crowds that seemed distinctly moved with the colours and sounds of India.

The day started off with a beautiful presentation on the history of India going back to the days Chandra Gupta and Ashoka. It also covered the colourful Mogul period and highlighted the kingdoms and states that were integral to the very existence of the country. Natural history, tourism, religious functions and festivities were aptly described.

This then followed into a different world, the world of Music. A report was presented touching the realm of ragas, string instruments and classical Indian Music. Breathtakingly refreshing and pure, the presentation was excellent.

A thought provoking talk on Hinduism was delivered by the members of the Swami Narayan Temple and a senior member of the Wales Puja Committee.

Other than the lectures and power point presentations there were hands on work shop demonstrating Henna hand painting, Rangoli and traditional floor painting.

Whilst these programmes were coming to the boil, a lavishly engaging fashion parade was unfolding within the bowel of the museum. The rich and colourful bridal costumes, party wear and the men in their best were pleasantly palatable.

The buzz was now heading to a different site! "Indian" food demonstration, cookery and food tasting. Easily the most attractive and well attended event.

The wind up began on Sunday evening after the cookery classes, but the conclusion was a melody rich event which included vocal renditions, musical instruments and classical dance. An appropriate end to what began as a beautiful Indian week end.

Ashok Mukherjee

Stuffed Courgette with Aubergine Sauce

Ingredients:

6 courgettes, 1 medium size aubergine, 1/2 cup phool makhane, 2 tbl. spoons of poppyseeds, 1 tbl. spoon mustard seeds, 1 tomato, 1/2 tea spoon heeng, 1/2 tea spoon haldi, 2 tea spoons grated aubergine, 2 tea spoons chopped green chillies, 3 tbl spoons plain flour, oil for shallow fry and for making sauce, salt to taste.

Roast aubergine, rub to outer skin. Wash courgettes, top and tail and cut into lengthways, scoop out the pulp and save them for stuffing. Grind poppy and mustard seeds..

Stuff courgette shells with mixture of phool makhane, poppy and mustard, half of ginger, chillies, salt and courgette pulp.

Dip stuffed courgettes in batter made with flour, salt and water. Shallow fry. Arrange them in oven proof dish. Put 3tbl spoons oil in the pan, when hot temper with heeng, add mashed roasted aubergine, chopped tomato, grated ginger, chopped chillies, haldi and salt. Keep stirring over low heat until oil start to separate. Add cup of water, bring to boil and pour over arranged courgettes. Cook in oven for 25 min in medium heat.

Serve with rice or nun.

Ila Haldar



2007 Souvenir

Cardiff then (2002), London now (2006)

An 18-ft high and 24-ft-wide ekchala idol of Durga with her children has slowly taken shape in England this autumn. On August 10, Ruby Palchoudhury of Crafts Council of West Bengal arrived at London with a group of artisans for a "unique" demonstration cum workshop of traditional crafts, entitled Voices of Bengal, scheduled to start from August 12 and continue till September 25 at the British Museum.

The giant idol will be made on the spot by national award-winning craftsman Nemai Chandra Pal of Krishnagar. "We have supplied many such traditional idols to museums in Boston and Scotland. But those were below eight ft, so this one will be quite special," said Palchoudhury.

The workshop will cover every aspect of the idol-making. It will include the traditional rituals performed by artisans before starting on the bamboo armature or drawing the eyes of the goddess. "Making of Durga idols is quite a unique process. You won't find any other deity being made out of biodegradable material. So, Pal will be demonstrating the entire process. The goddess will wear the gorgeous daker saaj crown and traditional jewellery made out of foil and beads," explained Palchoudhury.

In tandem with the idol-making will be traditional crafts workshops for children from more than 100 schools. "I have heard that scores of them have already registered," said Palchoudhury. Modhu Pal will teach students to make pith flowers and birds.

They will also learn to make tal patar shepais (palm-leaf stick puppets) and draw patachitras. Patua Gurupada Chitrakar will guide them and sing agononi songs. Gurupada will also draw the chalcitra of the goddess. Dhakis will drum up the sharadiya mood from September 3. After September 25, the idol will be handed over to the local Bengali association for the puja rituals and immersion in Thames.

From The Telegraph, Kolkata



First Durga Puja in Wales 1972

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MAKING OF GODDESS DURGA FROM PAPIER MACHE

We are venturing again to make Protima from scratch in National museum of Wales, St. Fagan next year. This will be our second venture in making Protima in Cardiff, first one is our present Protima made in 2002 by visiting sculptors Nimal Pal from Krishnanagar, West Bengal. Last time project lasted for 3 weeks and completed Protima was displayed in National Museum of Wales, Cardiff for 3 months afterwards.

Next year our Protima is going to be made of papier mache and is supported by The Arts Council of Wales and National Museum of Wales, St. Fagan. Visiting sculptor will be Mr Amar Sarkar from Kolkata and supported by Naba Kumar Pal. Mr Sarkar is very accomplished artist and have won numerous awards in Kolkata during Durga Pujo in various categories of Durga Protima competitions.

"Amar Sarkar", this name is very common in the circuit of Durga Puja celebration. He is the artist who possesses the brightest and most impressive track record for Durga Puja. He is the only artist to have won the Highest Award for the Pujas (Asian Paints - Sarad Samman), for consecutive seven years. Also known as the "Father of Thematic Durgapujas" he has changed the concept of Saradotsav in the recent past. His themes attract a lot of people during the pujas.

The project will be based in National Welsh Museum in St. Fagan from Monday 16th. March to Sunday 5th. April 2009. There will be live demonstration, workshops, talks, discussion group and some hands on experience for local artists from Art College of Cardiff and Hanovar Hall.

This is unique project and never before Papier mache Goddess Durga has been made in UK.

We will need volunteer and help from local Indian community during the project as well as in Chakkhu Daan and Completion ceremony. After the completion of the project, finished Protima will be displayed in Museum till next year's Pujo.

We also plan to arrange proper immersion of present Protima in Bristol Channel off the coast of Cardiff Bay after Durga Pujo next year in 2009.

So watch out for the space on our website and join us in this unique project.

Sandip Raha
Events Officer

Comments from 2002 Creating Durga Project:

"It has been a fascinating experience watching such talented artists at work and understanding the technique & culture they represent". Jenny Randerson AM, Minister for Culture



2008 Souvenir

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2008 Souvenir was the last to be published on paper only and from 2009 our souvenirs became available online.

Western Canada on a Motorhome Atreyee and Neeleem Saha

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The intention of this article is to introduce anyone new to motorhomes (like ourselves) to the wonderful world of motorhome holidays. Ever dreamt of that holiday where you could explore a very beautiful part of the world at your leisure without any constraints like adhering to hotel bookings or a fixed itinerary from a travel brochure? If you have, read on...

During May this year we (us both and our son Ashmit - 15 months old then) visited Western Canada for 3 weeks. We started by flying into Vancouver. We stayed in a downtown hotel for 3 days and visited all the usual sights in and around Vancouver. After that we embarked on the part of our holiday that we had dreamt of for a long time.

We rented a motorhome from Vancouver and headed to explore the wilderness of British Columbia and the Canadian Rockies in Alberta over 17 days. This fulfilled our dream of exploring a spectacular part of the world at our own pace, without being rushed to do or see certain things on certain days. We also had the advantage of carrying our home around! For anyone who is not sure what a motorhome is, it is a vehicle equipped with living space and amenities found in a home. In North America the term Recreational Vehicle is more commonly used to refer to motorhomes, and its acronym is RV. A recreational vehicle normally includes a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom and a living room. They are different from Caravans which are towed by a car or 4x4.

We didn't book anything in advance at all except the motorhome itself. We took each day as it came. Each evening when we thought we wanted to call it a day we just checked into a nearby fully serviced campsite

or RV Park (we carried a directory of such parks with us). In most RV parks, each site was a large naturally landscaped area placed well away from other sites thus giving you the feel of space around you.

The parks provided amenities including direct electric, water and sani connections called hook-ups, static barbecues and picnic benches for each site. Almost all parks also had a convenience store, children's play area, coin operated laundrettes and garbage disposal points. Some even have swimming pools.

The motorhome itself was 26 ft long (they range from 20 ft to 35 ft in length), 8 feet wide and had all the amenities you can want. It had 2 real comfy beds enough for 4 adults, toilet and shower room, dining/ sitting area and a fully equipped kitchen with fridge/ freezer, microwave, oven and grill. The entire vehicle was air-conditioned and heated. The vehicle was powered by a massive silky smooth 6.8lt v8 engine and had most toys that any modern car has. Some of them have a TV too though ours didn't (not that we missed the TV for even one second!). It was quite unnerving initially when we were planning this trip, particularly as we were going off for the first time on such a long holiday with our 15 month old son. Inexperience of driving anything as big as a motorhome before and the lack of knowledge of the ins and outs of what was involved added to the worry. We were led by a dream and reassured each other that all would be fine. It really did turn out that way.

Over those 17 days we drove through and enjoyed some of the most spectacular scenery we have ever seen. We also saw lots of wildlife including lots of black bear,

caribou, deer, wolves, whales and one grizzly bear. And to top it all up we stayed in some beautiful locations, each with a character of its own.



(A stop on the Icefields Parkway between Lake Louise and Jasper)

RV parks are located in very interesting locations like in the middle of a forest or overlooking a snow capped peak or on the bank of a river. It was like staying in a little detached bungalow amidst such stunning locations. It is the exact opposite to staying in a pigeon-hole hotel room in a building. Wildlife do walk into the campsites and we saw caribou walk past us several times. Some of the advantages of having a motorhome were that we didn't have to do the unpack/pack routine each time we got to a new location (like you would if you stayed in hotels), we got to eat nacher jhol bhath, kasha mangsho or bhate bhath on certain days (you know that feeling when nothing else will do), hot food/drinks anytime anywhere and the freedom to not stick to a timetable.

But most of all our dear son got to eat home cooked food rather than junk kids meals for 17 days. Also he could have his daytime nap on a bed (rather than curled up uncomfortably in his infant seat if we had a hire car) while we relaxed and enjoyed some stunning scenery over lunch.

We remember the evening we were driving towards Lake Louise and it was time for our son to have his dinner. So we pulled up on a lay-by right on the banks of a completely frozen lake and he had his meal in such surrounds without a single person around. We had the lake to ourselves. We then saw a black bear beside the road as we made our way to Lake Louise. Conveniences apart, the fun element of the motorhome really made our holiday - we had an absolutely amazing time.

To anyone who intends doing something like this but feels apprehensive about it all, we can only say - Go for it! You will learn as you go. It isn't as difficult as it can often be made out to be. Be adventurous and have an open mind. Your standard driving licence is sufficient to permit you to drive a motorhome in North America and Western Europe. You need to be aware of the length behind you when you turn at junctions.

Also always have someone guide the driver when reversing. To enforce this most rental companies have opted against having reversing sensors on the backs of their motorhomes. If you have never driven on the other side of the road, it may help to get experience of driving a car on the other side before embarking on a motorhome. Be warned though - if like us you are hooked, you will probably never want to stay in a hotel during your future holidays.



(Alfresco breakfast in an RV park)

আমার কাছে দুর্গাপূজা তখন ও এখন

2009 Souvenir

দুর্গাপূজা মানে হল যে যে চিত্রটা সবার আগে ভেঙ্গে ওঠে সেটা যেহেতু 'ভাগি আনন্দের পাঁচটা দিন' যখন ঘেটো পিলাস, দুর্গাপূজা মানেই এক মাস দুটি, ফুল বন্ধ, সেই তেমন মড়াশোনা, অনেকখানি মজা। মহালয়া নিয়ে শুরু। অশুভের পরাজয়, শুভের আগমন। জোর চারটে শাপান মেটিওতে বীরেন্দ্র কুমার জড়ার দেবী পদ্মের সোক শুরুস্বরার আছেই চলাচুর সব মাথের হাত দিয়ে চা হাঙ্গির যেতো। বছরে এই একবারই আমার চায়ের আনন্দোদন ছিলো। এরপরে এল কলকাতা দুর্গপূজার মহালয়া। তখন সপ্তে থাকতো দাদু। কখনো কখনো আমাদের চারপাশে সবসময় রাখাও খোস খিঁতো। মা দুর্গার অসুর লিখনের সে উত্তরেকনা বা নারদ মুনির পলায় 'নরায়ন নরায়ন' পোনার মজাটা এখনও মনে পড়ে। মহালয়ার অনুষ্ঠানের শেষে মুখ ধুয়ে মাথের সঙ্গে পিটলি ফুল ছুতোতে বাওয়া ছিল আরেক মজা। পূজা মানেই নতুন জামাকাপড় আর ফুলের বন্ধনের সঙ্গে বেনে একটা সুর প্রতিবেদে পঙ্কাজি কার কাটা যেতো, কারটা বেশী ভালো ইত্যাদি ইত্যাদি। এভাবেই একটা মজার আবেগ আর উচ্চাসে কটকটো পূজার আয়ের কটকটো। জবে, পঙ্কাজি আমাদের গ্রাম দেশে থাকারই হয়ে উঠত না। প্রতি বছরে এই সময়ে সেজো মামাকে নিয়ে আমরা তিন জনে বেড়াতে বেরিয়ে পড়তাম। কখনো হরিদ্বার, কখনো হসিলে ন্যা কেন্দ্র বাড়ি। কখনো বা মনিমেশ বা লাগাক বা কাপিলি বা হেমকুন্ড সাহিব বা অন্য কোল জায়গায়। আমার ভ্রমণ মল মালাপ মজা পূজা ন দেশের জন্য ঠিকই, তবে বাবা অষ্টমীর পিল কেল না কেল ভাবে অগণিত ব্যাবশ্য ঠিকই কোরে ফেলতো। একটা করে পূজা তো সব জায়গায়ই গ্রাম হয়ে থাকে।

হান, কাল, পাত্র সবই বদলায়। শুধু আমাদের ঐতিহ্যের কোল পরিবর্তন তেমন হয়না। তাই বিবাহিতা রিকমা কার্ডিফে থাকলেও তার চেলা দুর্গাপূজার কোল পরিবর্তন হয়নি। জবে এখানকার পূজাটা তার কাছে অন্য এক রুপ নিতে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

এখন পূজা এলেই মনে আসে একটা নাম। ওয়েলস পূজাকমিটি। এদেশে আসার পর কাছ থেকে দুর্গাপূজা দেখার সৌভাগ্য এদেশেই পেয়েছি। দেশের ভোরবেলার মহালয়ার অনুষ্ঠানটা মনে পড়ে ঠিকই ভবে এখানকার পাঁচ দিনের গির্জালাল আনন্দ আর মজা আমরা যেন সব ভুলিয়ে দেয়। পূজার কাটা ছিল সকালে উঠে হাল বেয়ে, বাড়ি গলে বেড়িয়ে গড়ি কর্কিলি 'র পূজা মজলের দিকে। বায় কাশীমাদের কাছ থেকে দেখাশুনা নিয়ে পূজার বা অন্য কাজে সাহায্য করার চেষ্টা করি, দারুন খুশিতে, আনন্দে, মিঙের মনে করে। তারপরে আছে অতিথিদের প্রদান দেয়া বা খাবার পরিবেশন করা। সারাদিনের নানা গল্প গুজব বা আড্ডা তো আছেই। গতি পারদপঙ্খ্যর আছে আরো আড্ডা, আরো উচ্চাস উরা আনন্দ। একঘণ্টে কর্ম জীবনে এই কাটা দিন আমাকে এল দেয় নতুন প্রেরনা, উদ্দীপনা, যেন সত্যিকারের এক গানের ঘোঁষা নিয়ে।

সৌভাগ্যবশত কার্ডিফের কাকুন্ডের স্ট্রে ও ভালবাসার দুবন্দে এখনও হান পেয়েছি পূজা কমিটিতে। সুযোগ হয়েছে পূজা বা আরো অন্যান্য অনুষ্ঠানের আহ্বানের বাপারে অনেক কিছু জানার। আমাদের দুর্গা মাও এসেছেন নতুন রুপে এখন। এ বছরের পূজাটা তাই আমার কাছে আরো নতুন ভাবে ধরা দিয়েছে। আরো কাছের মনে হচ্ছে বেন, বিশিষ্টতা পেয়েছে। আমার কর্তার ইচ্ছে ছিল এবারের পূজাতে দেশে যাবার। কিন্তু আমি এমন ভাবে এগুয়ে জড়িয়ে পড়েছি যে এখানকার পূজার এই নতুন পরিবার ছেড়ে এমতবে কোথাও গিয়ে আমার মোটেই ভাল লাগবে না। এ নিয়ে অনেক বানানুবাদ হয়েছে এর সঙ্গে। তারপরে সমরোভার মাধ্যমে এখন পূজা কাটালের পিছাতে গেমেরি আমরাও।

কিন্তু দুর্গাপূজার অর্থ কি শুধু এটুকুই। কখনই নয়। হান, কাল, পাত্র নির্বিশেষে পূজার অর্থ, গভীরতা ও ঐতিহ্য অপরিসীম বা বর্ণনা করা আমাদের গুণে সম্বন নয়। বানিকটা অনুভব হয়তো বা করতে পারা যায়। দুর্গাপূজা মানে নতুনের শুভারম্, শিষ্টা ও সংস্কৃতির অঙ্গগতি। সাহিত্যিকরা আর পিলীরা তাদের সেরা লেখা বা কলকটপঙ্খর দেন এমতবে। বিশেষ বসেও আমরা তার হান পাই বালা কোন পূজাসময়তে বা নতুন বেরলে কোন এলবাসের দৌতো। এবারে তাই আমাদের আনন্দ মিটে আমছে কলকাতার রুপম ইলমের বালা বাডে FOSSILS) পূজা আমাদের ভুলিয়ে দেয় ধর্ম, ভাষা বা বর্ণের বিতেন্দ; প্রেম, শ্রীতি ও শুভম্মা বিস্ময়ের মাধ্যমে। পূজা নিয়ে আসে নতুন জামাকাপড় সব সুখাদু, রানার পাঁচটা দিন, মনে করিয়ে দেয় কাশ ফুল আর পিটলি ফুলের চেলা ঘণ্টাঘণ্টা। পূজার আঙ্গিক হিসেবে আসে অষ্টমীর অঙ্গলি, সঙ্খিপূজা। দশমীর সিঁদুরলণ্ণা ও বিজয়ার কোলাকুদির মাধ্যমে প্রভেচ্ছা দিতে শেষ হয় আমাদের দুর্গাপূজার এ মজা সমারোহ। আমরা যে বার দিকে রওনা হই, নতুন আশা ও উৎসে সঙ্গয় করে। অসম্মা কমতে শাকি আল্লাহি বছরের দুর্গাপূজার আশা।

রফিকা জুড সরকার
আগস্ট ২০০৯

Durga Puja

The main festival of Bengal
Brings great joy to one and all

Mahishasura Stronger than any known man and god then
He conquered all of earth and heaven, when

Brahma, Vishnu and Lord Shiva, from their energies merged
Conceived a powerful Shakti, a mother goddess emerged

They created Ma Durga a collection of all their powers
Her strength, beauty, and charm over all else towers

The gods' mightiest weapons in her ten arms she bore
Dazzling jewels, magical armour, her lion mount, and more

Oceans swelled, and the planets shivered,
As hell's army trembled and quivered

After a tremendous fight the demon lord was slayed
Evil had lost yet again and the demons fled dismayed.

The sages offered their prayers to the Goddess Ma Durga
Leading to the long tradition of celebrating her Puja.

Whenever evil raised its horrible head
Durga or Kali was always ahead

To this day, Durga is worshipped by India and more
Leaving every single Hindu heart beginning to soar!

The mother goddess of all humanity
With great blessing's of strength defending us from calamity

Uniting in autumn all Hindu's as one,
From a wise old mother to a new born son,

In this period a unique bond strikes our heart,
And no living soul could ever tear it apart,

This connection with Ma Durga is sacred and compelling,
Enriching us with happiness which more than worth telling.

Looking at the clear blue autumn sky,
Ma Durga awakens us with her radiance without a sigh,

This period of friendship and the Bengali spirit
This is an experience the whole world can inherit!

So then we can only rid the people of their plights
Then we can reach for greater heights!

By Miss Ishani Sinha (Aged 12 years)

Creating a Goddess: Making a Durga image

Oriel 1 St Fagans: National History Museum
16 March – 4 April 2009

2009 Souvenir

দুর্গা প্রতিমা তৈরীর দিনগুলি
পূর্ণেশ্ব দে

Sioned Hughes & Sian Williams

Following a successful community curated display of traditional objects at the new Oriel 1 Gallery at St Fagans and a 2 day festival celebrating the Hindu culture in Wales in 2007, the Museum was pleased to accept an invitation from the Wales Puja Committee (WPC) to work in partnership on a project to create an image of the Goddess Durga and her companions. The Oriel 1 gallery focuses on Welsh identities and explores who we are by examining language, beliefs, family ties and a sense of place. It was therefore the perfect backdrop for this project that was partly funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

Two award winning artists from Kolkata – Purnendu and Dubyendu Dey - were invited by the WPC and the Museum to take part. Over three weeks, with the help of Artworks, followers of the project were amazed as their skill, craftsmanship and dedication created a flash of colour in Oriel 1. The interpretation of the project by long standing WPC member Roma Chaudhary brought it alive. Over the three weeks, school groups, students and families alike were fascinated by the creative process and by the stories about Durga.

A total of 1316 visitors took part in the project and experienced the different layers of interpretation. Purnendu and Dubyendu shared their skills with museum staff members and artists from Wales such as Luned Rhys Parry. Papier maché workshops for students and family activities were organised alongside the project focusing on the processes involved. Some visitors liked to sit and watch the process unfold. Two religious ceremonies were held as part of the Creating a Goddess project. The eye painting and the closing ceremonies were important parts of the process and both were well attended by the Hindu community, staff and visitors.

During the project a blog was maintained detailing the process. This enabled more visitors to access the project and enabled the Hindu community and members of the WPC who could not attend the venue on a regular basis to keep up to date with its developments. Additionally images were uploaded to flickr in order that they might be easily accessed. The project also aimed to create material that could be added to the Museum's collections as there was nothing representing the Hindu community in Wales prior to this. A short film was

created detailing the project from start to finish. It has now been archived as part of the permanent Museum collection. As a result of the ongoing good relationship with the WPC, the old images used as part of their annual Durga ceremony will be donated to the Museum.

Throughout the project a comments book was available to all members of the public attending the event to leave feedback on the artists work and the interpretation.

Here are some of the comments:

'Wonderful to see the art work by these artists – feel privileged to be able to see this.'

'Wonderful to see Hindus in a Welsh setting. The museum is to be congratulated'

'An eye-opener! Specially the way it has been created. Amazing ambience.'

'A great experience – my grandchildren thoroughly enjoyed it.'

'We were impressed by the way they are taking pains to protect Indian tradition in making deities.'

'Amazing display of skill and dedication, and lovely lady to explain the work and concept!'

Working with the WPC on such an important project has brought both organisations closer. It has helped to create an understanding between our communities that has continued after completion of the project. Through this partnership we have succeeded in adding important representation of the Hindu community in Wales to the national collections.

The work undertaken as part of this project has helped to challenge ideas of what the Museum is. In the past, the Museum has been seen as a showcase for traditional Welsh heritage and has not reflected the diverse cultures that make Wales the modern country it is. Through community projects such as this the traditional image of the Museum is being challenged and visitors are able to see that we aim to reflect all of the cultures that now make Wales their home.

পরিচিত কষ্ট থেকে কোন ভূমি কি UK যাবে প্যাপিয়ার ম্যাশের দুর্গা প্রতিমা তৈরী করতে? ডিসেম্বর ২০০৮-এর শেষ সপ্তাহে যোগাযোগ, মার্চের ১৩ তারিখে আমাদের রুডনা। ইতিমধ্যে মীপাকদার - সশীপদার বার কয়েক কোন, শঙ্করদা কলকাতা এসে আমাদের ও অমৃতেন্দুর সঙ্গে সশরীরে Wales Puja Committee ও Welsh National Heritage Museum-এর project নিয়ে আলোচনা। ১৫ই মার্চ আমি ও জই দিব্যেকুর বিবেশা যাত্রা শুরু কাজের জন্য।



তিতুরা এয়ারপোর্টে সশীপদা এসেছিলেন আমাদের জন্য। ভারতীয় সময় রাত ৩টা নাগাদ কার্ডিক-এ পৌছানাম, মেন সিপিগ্যা কাবারে ফেলা ছবির মত শহর। আমাদের ডিকানা কর্নওয়ালিস স্ট্রিটের মোটর বাড়িতে। থাকার সুন্দর ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে। কয়েক ঘণ্টা পরেই ক্লাভি কাড়িয়ে, সকাল সকাল সুয়ার্টের আলোয় শহরটাতে কিছুক্ষণ হেঁটে চুরনাম টাফ নদীর ধারে, সুন্দর আধুনিক স্থাপত্য শিল্পে সজ্জিত মিলেনিয়াম চেভিয়ারের আমেপায়ে।



The "NY" Syndrome.

By Dr Raja Biswas

If you are thinking here's another overpaid self-deluded doctor writing about an obscure medical syndrome-relax. Its not so. You are unlikely (although its possible) that you are going to come across NY Syndrome in a medical textbook. Even the veritable Google does not come near to suggesting any matches. However it's a term that most NRI Doctors, especially working in United Kingdom, are familiar with. It's often discussed with gusto when old friends meet - especially when a few few glasses of Glenfiddich is having its effect. It is simply called the Next Year Syndrome.

Usually the conversation goes like this

Frustrated Doc 1 – So what's new boss?
Frustrated Doc 2 – Oh I have decided to go back to India, Aar akhana bhalo lagchay na.
Frustrated Doc 1- that's great. When are you going back?
Frustrated Doc 2 – NEXT YEAR

This conversation has a pause, as Frustrated Doc 1 starts reminiscing about life in Kolkata when the sweaty ride in 42B public bus seems more comfortable than the air-conditioned comfort he has got used to. However another year goes by and when the two meet again in another friend's house, and after a few pegs have been downed, the conversation starts;

Doc 1; Ki boss, I thought you are going back to India?
Doc 2; Yes, But got a Registrar post now so will definitely go back NEXT YEAR. After all who wants to bring up children in this country.

This is how the conversation goes on for a few years till (Not so frustrated) doc1 & (Still frustrated) doc 2) find topics like Mamata Banerjee's Industrial policy more fruitful!!!!!!

The NY syndrome usually starts 2-3 years after coming to a foreign country when there is uncertainty regarding getting the next job, the initial glamour has worn off, the lonely life in a foreign country has started taking its bite. Life in India suddenly seems more exciting and rewarding. It is compounded by poor job prospects and the xenophobia that greets immigrants in a new country. However the decision about returning to India never happens because there is always that additional year's training which is needed to prepare for life in India or that particular procedure which is a must learn to survive in minefields of private practice in India. Friends in India are consulted about the decision and they throw up their hands in horror, "Why do you want to come back? Life is cutthroat here, colleagues stab you and patients always ask for a second or third opinion" By the time all the procedures are learnt, roots have gone deep in the new country when NY Syndrome starts meaning Not (in a Million) years.

But does the yearning about returning ever disappear. Probably not. However after spending quite a few years, life in the new country takes a different meaning. Every person who decides to stay in a foreign country has his or her own reason. The kids are growing up and the easy option is to settle into the luxury in a first world country and yearn for the family and other comforts of India. But I suspect the biggest reason for not returning and always having a plan to do so that most, if not all, never want to believe they are never going to go back to their motherland. It gives a sense of comfort and reassurance knowing that one can go back and hope is still there. People make plans, buy houses in India, and even get their children admitted in school in India but that NY never does come for most.

Conflict of interest; the author used to suffer from NY Syndrome however has recovered now.

The poem is written by Dipakda (Dipak Kundu), who is in Kolkata, after 30 years during pujo. We do miss his energy, dedication and devotion.

সি ছুটি

পূজা আমার প্রাণবিরহীন শেষ হা।
সি ছুটি।

হবে হু,
জীবনীতে হুে বুঝি অদর কই,
অদর করে বেশী, গোপনিত করে রাই,
এই তার সে প্রাপ।

জবি,
কালকাল থেকে অদর কুড়িয়ে নিয়ে অসি,
স্বামিয়ে সি তাকে, স্বাক্ষরকণ দিয়ে,
উপহার দি তাকে,
অদর অদরের হা তও উপার,
না দিয়ে বরষা জাগরণ সিবি,
অদর পুরনো কুন্দর টিকনর, অর
জোপার করা অদর বেশন অদর,
অদর কত কি।

কিহ, পৌ হা হু উপার না।

অহ, স্ত্রী দিয়ে এল
জবিহাও কাজের এক বিপদ স্বর্ন,
'জোপার হো অদর সনা, অর
কাজেই শরীর জাগরণ হাও',
এই স্বান দিয়ে।

বাঁড়ির পানবদী হু করতে হা,
কালকাল থেকে উপার গোপন করতে হা,
পৌরীহাওকে সন বরষা,
হাঁড়ি করতে হা, এক থেকে,
শরীরকে সনু রূপাও,
রূপার শিবে দিয়ে হা,
কিহু অদর সনা বরীহাও;
পাউ হুটা বিবেশ হাও হাও,
কিহু স্বপ্নের অদর;
নেট হাও রূপাও হা,
শেষ মুহুর্তের ডিকার্টে
কোমল ছিল কুহাও,
এক অদর সে কিহু।

এক,
অদর জবনকালের কি হাও?
কটন হাও তার কালকের
কবি কি করে?
সবকিছু করিত হাও,
তার সন মনি কি করে?

নদুনে কত চাভে কইহি।
অদর অদর তার পদনের
সনু কেহাও হাও।
জ্বালার দুই জ্বালার
এক জ্বালার হাও নিয়ে
হুটা এক সে জ্বালার
হাও না কি?
অদর প্রাণবিরহীনে কি
সম্বোধের এক পদিয়ে
কিহে হাও হাও না?
জ্বালার অদরকাল কালকের
হাও বরীহাও হাও
কিহুনে পদনের হাও না?

কি হে হাও
টিক হাও করতে পদনিন।

পৌ হাওহিহি।
অদর কিহু হে জবনই হাও।
কু হাওহিহি অদর,
কিহু হাওহিহি হাওহি।
কামাখ্যই এপৌ কিহু
'কাজ বিবেশ হাওহি।'
এই পদনিন, হাওহি হাওহি।

কিহিহাও, কেট
পাশা হাওহি, ২০১০

2010 Souvenir

The Himalayas and the Pangong Lake

Ellora Mukherjee

The Himalayan Mountains

When you look at my picture of the Himalayas arising resplendent before a majestic sunset, just waiting to rise up again in the morning, you get transported to a Himalayan paradise, with thousands of dusty, tall mountains going beyond the horizon. Now, if you look closely you will see the wonderful detail of the sparkling rivers, lakes, and streams that flow on and on without stopping. They mumble to their surroundings as if they are whispering mystic secrets.

When you glance at the mountains in Himalayas, all you see are many, dusty, regular, mountains. However, if you take a minute to focus on them, you will see that each one is different, and has a unique feature. Such as the middle mountain, its surface is smooth like a computer screen. The mountain to the left is the tallest mountain I've ever seen and it has beautiful rocks like branches on a tree. The mountain to the right had a soft sheet of snow placed gently on its point, with multi-coloured pebbles surrounding the bottom.

So remember, don't just see the Himalayas and go away, LOOK AT THEM! COMPARE THEM! LIKE & FEEL THEM!!!



A Journey to the Pangong Tso

I'm traveling through the bumpy Himalayan paths, surrounded by stunning and cryptic mountains which make us gasp with pleasure. The car winds along the curvy roads, rough and beautiful at the same time. On my left the road ends in a steep cliff, one look takes my breath away! The car goes on and on for four hours, bumping along gently. In some places, a mountain stream is the road itself! Sometimes for miles there are no other cars or humans, just nature and us.

I have now reached the stunning Pangong Lake. This place is as peaceful as a meadow, as stunning as diamonds and gold and, as big as love.

Ahead of me and in the distance, the vast mountains are as fiercely ablaze in the dazzling sunset. In front of it lies the famous Pangong Lake. My eyes melt when I see her shimmering blue waters. I have not seen anything quite like this in my whole life!

Right now I am looking in the opposite direction, at the minuscule pools made by the dreaded, gushing wind which lift her sapphire waters on to the land. If I dare to gaze at my sides I see the lake has no end. The guide tells me that more than half of the lake is in another country, China! We can't go there and that makes the lake even more mysterious. The lake is very high, 14000 feet above sea level, and yet, the water is salty.

We played by the lake, touched the clear water and I have got a small rock from the lake. It is in my study, something for me to touch and for me to remember the beautiful Pangong Lake.

I MADE A PROMISE: I WILL GO BACK, SOME DAY.



Lake Tso Moriri, So Dear

Jagannath Bhadra

Ladakh truly crowns India. The northern most tip of India, it borders China and Pakistan. Whilst Kashmir may be called paradise on Earth, the many splendours of Ladakh surpass the beauties of Kashmir on many counts. Ladakh lies beyond the Kashmir valley and stretches between Banihal and Zojila Pass.

Tso Moriri, Thadsangkaru, Tsokar, Pangong, Althak and many more are fascinating highland lakes situated at an altitude of around 14,000 feet. Set amidst the snow-capped Himalayas, rugged mountains with transformed desert-like sand dunes, hot springs, the lunar surfaces of Moonland, the huge and timeless Indus, Suru, Zaskar, and Drass Rivers gurgling through lush green and narrow valleys and limitless highlands, these lakes have created an enchanting environment. These lakes are the jewels of Ladakh, the crown of India.

Amongst them, Tso Moriri, a pearl shaped lake surrounded by snow-clad mountains and with a circumference of 80 km, is at the highest altitude of 15,200 feet and is 150 feet higher than and easily comparable to the world renowned 'Manas Sarovar' in nearby Tibet. Its grandeur can't be spelt but can only be felt by nature lovers. Nearing it, I felt as if I was attempting to touch the sea. Strong winds ceaselessly created wave after wave which chased us up the shore, the only turbulence in her crystal clear waters, the only ripples amongst the multi coloured pebbles visible through several feet of transparent water.

Only 240 km from the city of Leh in the south eastern sector of Ladakh, Lake Tso Moriri lies in a desolate area known as Rupshu. Traditionally nomad Changpa herdsmen wander here in search of pastures for their goats, sheep, cattle and horses. Few hundred Changpas live in Korzok on the banks of the lake. Tourists can stay with these residents of Korzok in their humble houses or in a lone costly guest house. Different tour operators also erect big tents.

It was a moonlit night, nearing full moon. We, the refreshed couple, stayed in the superbly arranged guest house right near the snow capped peaks. From our bed, the vast expanse of Tso Moriri's moonlit glittering dark waters and the rugged snow-capped mountain wall on the opposite bank were clearly visible and seemed to be as close as the neighbouring bungalow. Sleep was hard to find stolen perhaps by the unparalleled beauty of Tso Moriri!

The Tso Moriri lake-land is rich in mineral deposits. It is a breeding hub for many rare migratory birds such as Bar Headed Geese and we also spotted plenty of Brahmani Ducks, Brown Headed Gulls, Black Necked Cranes and other camera shy birds. Marmots are cute hare-like animals that burrow and live underground. These funny curious animals are a big attraction in this neighbourhood. Kiang (wild Tibetan ass), Himalayan Ibex with ornamental strong horns, red fox also roam these heights and can be seen by the fortunate travellers.

During the hours of sun shine, the deep blue waters of Tso Moriri compete with the clear blue of the sky, mirroring the neighbouring snow peaks. There are fascinating interplays between the colours of the lake with changes in light and cloud cover.

Tourists who have braved these distant heights are fortunate to find the colourful local Changpas and on these blessed shores, make coveted friends with fellow tourists, locals and foreigners. Fellow banker Satyabrata's family and a French lady, Françoise Blits with two teenage son and daughter, were my precious collections from Tso Moriri.

Tso Moriri so dear no fear; I will remember you forever.



2013 Souvenir with Dr Shiladitya Sinha starts to improve content and design

The Grand Canyon, a reflection

Scripted by Ishani Sinha

Photography by Anoushka Sinha

The Grand Canyon is quite possibly one of the most unique and inspiring landscapes our world has to offer. As a geographical icon, I'm sure most of you will have seen pictures of it, but experiencing it first hand was something else entirely. As with most tourist sites that are heavily saturated by the media, you do begin to wonder if the places are worth the hype. I can assure you, the Grand Canyon most definitely is!

Even the intense heat from the Arizona sun couldn't distract our attention from the marvellous views.

We visited the Southern Rim first, beginning our trip with a one mile walk to Yavapai Point and it's Geology museum. To reach the trail we had to walk through a small portion of woodland area where, to our surprise, we saw a majestic elk eying us through the trees.

Suddenly, the woodland area came to an end and we were graced with the jaw-dropping sight of the Grand Canyon.

The sheer majesty of this amazing wonder was truly breath taking. We spent much of the day marvelling the inspiring heights, the jaw dropping depths, the tremendous bands of colour and the immense scale. The Grand Canyons were not just spectacular, they were indeed truly majestic in their grandeur.

Although we are a rather physically limited family, the walk along the 'Trail of Time' didn't bother us at all as it's hard to complain when you are walking alongside such sensational views. The Geology Museum contained a vast amount of information about how each layer of rock was cut by the Colorado River resulting in the Grand Canyon's multi-coloured layers. In addition there was a scale model of the spectacle that allowed us to appreciate the size of the Canyon which is a colossal 270 miles long!

From here we could see a triangular shape of a muddy brown colour. Upon a second glance we realised it was the Colorado River, the very thing that created this natural wonder!

We spent the rest of the day either taking shuttle busses or walking along the various paths and sites that the Southern Rim had to offer.

Finally we settled at Mohave Point for around an hour to watch the sunset. I spent that time ogling over the landscape as the sunlight cascaded over the layers of multi-colour rock formations. The sun set fairly quickly leaving the sky a streaky blue and pink. It really put into perspective how marvellous the sheer power of nature is and how little we as humans are in contrast.



মহালয়া ও দেবীপঙ্ক

কল্পিতকা-চন্দন লেপনায়ো অশ্রানতন্ত্রাস বিলেপনায়ো
মৎস্কুলনায়ো কবিভুক্তনায়ো নমঃ শিবায়ো চ নমঃ শিবায়ো।

পার্বতপ্রান্তে সূৰ্য নিগর রাস্তা হলে, যানে শিগিরে শৰ্ম, মাটিতে হবে পড়তে পিটলি মূৰ। কাপেরে ওষু মাথা বাড়িয়ে হাওয়ায় মূল বলাস, শ্রী অসুন্দে। শৌর্যকি কালে দেবতাদের জেগে থাকার সময়ে উভয়ানে বাসিনী দুর্গামায়ে পূজা হয়। ত্রোতা মূল দেব-দেবীর মুখে সময়ে দক্ষিণাময়ে বিদ্যুৎপ্রভ স্রীহামচন্দ্র রামস্বয়ং রাবককে বধ করে সীতা উজ্জ্বলে অম্বা পিতামহ ব্রহ্মাকে অকালে বোম্ব কবতে অসুন্দে কবলে ব্রহ্মার বোধনে মহামায়ে দুর্গার মূৰ ভেঙে যায়। জেগে উঠে চান্দ মায়ের কৃষ্ণা বরমীরে থেকে অগ্রহায়ে অম্বাবন্যা বর্ষে তিরি ধরায় বিবাহে কবলে।

কালঃ ভাদ্রপদমাসম্ আরভা নৃচিকাৰথি।
মহালয়ায় কথিতঃ মুনিভিঃ ততর্পতিঃ।।

ভাদ্র মাসের অম্বাবন্যা তিথিতে চোখদিলের পিতৃপুত্রের শেষ বা লয়া। ঐ মহালয়া দেবীপঙ্কর পূজনা আর তিথিটি মহালয়া নামে পরিচিত। সৈনিক অল এবং যাবার পাবার অম্বা বিদেবী পিতৃপুত্রেরা পবনতী প্রজ্ঞেয়ে কামে আদেবা। পিতৃলোক থেকে বাসুদেবীর অল এবং কামহয়ে দেওয়া ত্রিপ-জলের তর্পণ করে ঐরা অম্বার পিতৃলোক থেকে যাবে। তর্পণের অম্বা মহালয়ার সকালে মণীতে ব্রাহ্ম করে পুঁচুয়ে হয়ে প্রণমে আচমন, বিষ্ণুস্বপ্ন আর সূর্য্যো-দান করতে হয়। এম্বার কুণ্ডিতে যক্ষুণী, বধ, জল, ত্রিভুপ আর তুলসী শিখে ব্রহ্মা-বিষ্ণু-মহেশ্বরে তর্পণ করে দেয়। পরে যক্ষ, মাগ, গর্ভব, ঋষি এবং মৃত মানুষদের কুণ্ডিতে করে বধ আর জল দেওয়া হয়। এম্বার পিতৃলোকের থেকে দক্ষিণমূখী হয়ে যাবে শিবা ও পিতৃপুত্রের অলনা। গরুড়পুত্রের আদে ভগবান বিষ্ণুকে বাসন গরুড় তর্পণবা কি জারে পিতৃপুত্রের কায়ে কোমল্য মায় জিন্মনা কবলে ধারায় উভার গরুড়কে বধে,

গুচ্ছাতি বরণঃ দানঃ নমঃ হরে প্রথমভি।
অম্ব চ ভাদ্রম্বেরে দেবে ভাদ্রম্বঃ সঃ অম্বুতে সূন্দম।

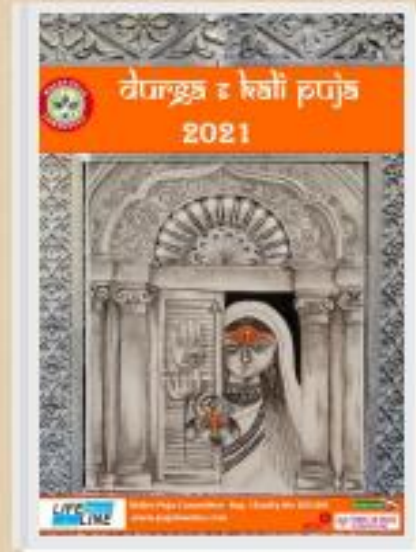
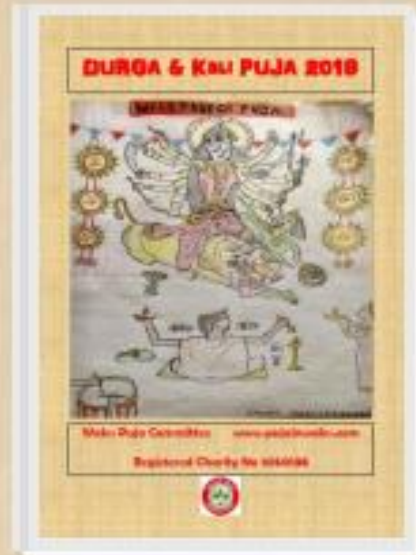
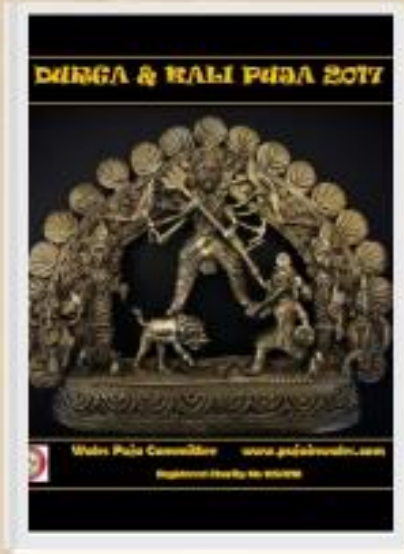
অর্থাৎ পিতৃপুত্রের উৎসেগে শিবাচিত দান সামগ্রী বরণ শিখে অম্বার যানে দিলে অম্বি তা সূর্যকে দেয়। সূর্য এম্বার পিতৃপুত্রকে দেয়। ত্রিপতর্পণের জল বরণের, ভাম্বার কোণাশুপি সূর্যের আর কুচ্ছিত বিষ্ণু মাসের প্রতীক। তর্পণকালে পিতৃদের বসু, পিতামহদের রুদ্র আর পিতৃলোকদের আদিত্য বলা হয়। মহালয়ায় মণীতে যেতে না পারলে মিজের কাশতটী জলে ত্রিগিয়ে মাটির উপর শিঙে দিলেও জন্মালের কাজ চলে। তর্পণের শেষে পিতৃপুত্রদের উৎসেগে প্রণাম করে তবেই জন্মনরী দুর্গাদেবীর অম্বাবনা ত্রু করা যায়। স্রীহামচন্দ্র তাই পিতৃতর্পণ এই মহালয়া তিথিতে সাস করে দুর্গাপূজায় বদেবা।

যেবে মহালয়ার জোরে মীলেন্দে কুচ্ছ ভদ্র-রচিত মীতি-অলেশা মহিষাসুরমর্দিনী জোরে, গীতে-কথায় অকাণবাপী থেকে প্রচারিত হয়ে প্রাণ-মহে ভবিয়ে যে, ভুবন মাড়িয়ে জোলে। কাহিনীটি স্রীচীতীর থেকে বেওয়া হয়েছে। দেবতাদের রজা কবতে না মণী কিভাবে মহিষাসুরকে বধ করেদিলে ভ্রা চীতীর থেকেই জানা যায়। মহালয়ার পুর্ণিমা পিতৃপুত্রের মহাবীর পূজার ত্রুতা। প্রথমায় সৈন্দ্রী, ত্রিতীয়ায় ব্রহ্মাচিনী, ত্রুতীয়ায় চন্দ্রকটা, চতুর্থীতে কুম্ভাভা, পঞ্চমীতে ভ্রশমাভা, মণীতে কাভাদেবী, সপ্তমীতে কালদেবী, মহাতীতে মহাগৌরীরাণ দুর্গামায়েকে স্রীরাম পূজা কবলে। মহাতীতে ও মণীতে তিথির পদ্ধিতে রামচন্দ্র এক অটীচী মীল দিয়ে পূজা করা কবলে দেবী ভক্তের পরীক্ষা শিঙে একটি পশু সূকিয়ে রেখেদিলেবা। পশু বা পাওয়ার রম্বুয়ের তাঁর পম্বের মত ময়ন উপড়ে মহামায়ে স্রীচরণে দান কবতে যেনে পরিভূতা মহাদেবী রামকে বর্ষণ দেবে। তাই মণীতে সিদ্ধিগা-রাস মাতে পূজা করা হয়। মণীতে সূর্য্যদেবী রামেরে সূত্রাবাণে প্রবেশ কবলে দশমীর তির ঐ বাণ দিয়ে রামচন্দ্র রাম বধ কবলে। ত্রু হয় বিজয়োৎসব এবং দেবতা। এই মন্তন মাসের উৎসেগে মর্ষিত হয় পুন্ডরায়নামায়।

তক্ষণ কায়ে এদেবে। সন্ধ্যার প্রার্থনায় সঙ্কটা হয়ে এম্বা দেওাবে। এম্বার শিগির-ভোজা মাসের উপর মাসের অলপ রাস্তা চরণকি পড়বে। অকাণে-বাতাসে ঐ শোনা মায় অলপ-মীণার মূর্ছনা। মাতৃপুত্রের অলনাম্বন্ধে সবর মধুর অম্বাবনা চুল, পুন্ডরায়ন মায়, মহামায়ে পাদপদ্মে অল্পদিলে জীবন সার্থক কবি।

ও সূর্য দেবী সমাশঙ্ক সাগিধ্যামি বস্তুয়।
বজ্রভাণঃ গুণঃ স্বঃ অষ্টাভিঃ শক্তিভিঃ মহা।

ডঃ স্মিত্রা মিত্র ঘোষ
The author has also kindly donated proceeds from her book to WPC for charitable use.



COVER STORIES: 2016-2022

These are all available on line and have not been covered here.





FLAWLESS BEAUTY SALOON

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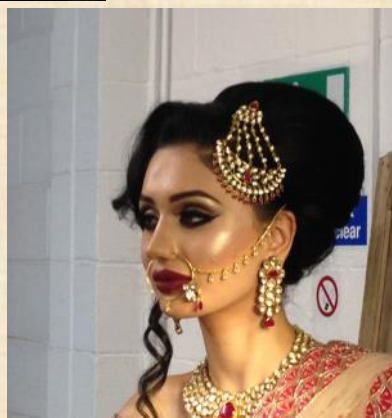
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UKBC Awardees

WPC once again proud to have a number of UKBC Sera Samman Awardees.

CHRISTINA ROY: Community Shaper Award

Christina has been working in the field of education since the last 21 years. She had been passionate about teaching Bengali as a modern foreign language in schools and has become a senior examiner with AQA exam board for Bengali GCSE in A level. She has also contributed to empower, educate and employ women from BAME communities within Wales through her family learning project. She has tried to carry on the Bengali culture and tradition through various projects within the community.

Christina is a dedicated educationist who wants to bring in change in Wales through her family learning programme. She provides the housewives a new vision to qualify and identify their skills and make a mark. Once the ladies are into employment they boom with confidence and they become role model parent to their children to support them better. She is currently working on a framework for family learning with the Welsh government to roll it out to all schools in Wales. Simultaneously, she encourages young children to stay connected to their roots. She leads a after school club where the parents take turn in teaching their children the language and the culture. As a senior examiner for Bengali as a modern foreign language she wants to promote the language among all Bengali families who are away from their home country. Among her many roles she is also involved in projects like foodshare which provides food for homeless or needy families. Her role with Wales PUJA committee shows another angle to life where she is a voluntary catering officer and leads the catering team to cook meals every day during the Durga puja. She cooks from her heart and would never want a single person to be without food. Similarly, she has been part of Bangladeshi women association too. Many times women come up to her with domestic violence support as they believe that she can solve any problem. She is always helpful and can guide people to find their way in life. She is a Bengali by heart with roots in both India and Bangladesh.



MONIKA SENGUPTA: Community Shaper Award

Monika Sengupta was engaged in voluntary work with both Bangladeshi and Asian communities. She worked in Mental Health team in Cardiff as a research worker. She is a qualified Social Worker in Elderly and Physical-Disability group. Monika has helped the communities in areas such as Housing, Childcare, aiding the Police and the Court System.

Monikas' father once told her to always try and help those who can't help themselves but not to expect anyone to help in return. He told her to form her own identity. She arrived in the UK post her marriage and started engaging herself in voluntary work with Bangladeshi, Asian communities. She was promoted as a research worker in the Mental Health Team specifically engaging with communities of her ethnic background. There was a stigma attached within the members of ethnic minorities to seek help for mental health. They were afraid to see their doctors. Being charitable, compassionate and multilingual provided her with the appropriate skills and knowledge and impetus to overcome such impediments for all concerned and to help promote a healthier, more forward thinking and happier society



for people within ethnic minorities. At the beginning, it was not easy. She had no clients to start off. So she created her own marketing materials and promoted herself in multiple languages on questionnaires and leaflets and distributed them in grocery stores, GP surgeries and various clinics. Gradually more and more people contacted Monika, and she was able to build up her own personal client list of vulnerable people within minority groups. She began to receive multiple communiques from the authorities such as Housing, Childcare, Police and the Court requesting her help to support them in helping vulnerable people from ethnic backgrounds. She started travelling all the way to Plymouth, once a week, for two years to help out with the Childcare sector in that city, simultaneously working in Cardiff. In 1987 she qualified as a Social Worker (DIPSAW in Social Care) and worked in the Elderly and Physical + Disability Group until she retired in 2014. During this time her husband passed away in 1993, when she became a single parent with three young children, whom she managed to raise all by herself whilst managing to keep a roof over their heads, pay the bills and maintain her employment. Monika has been engaged with the Wales Puja Committee since 1978 and has supported various events like Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Swaraswati Puja. She helped with different sorts of activities such as the cooking for the guests, food and flower arrangements, etc. She is still actively involved with the Puja committee and continuing her support through donations and various activities.

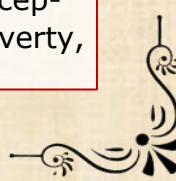


RIA CHATTERJEE: Sera Bengali Award

Ria Chatterjee is a reporter for Channel 4 News. She aims to take people on a journey of deeper understanding regarding youth violence. Ria believes that capturing both the darkness and light within people’s experiences is a journalistic imperative. She feels solution-focused reporting is vital – that there must always be room for hope. The most important values in Ria’s life are communication and connection. She strives to ensure that her daily interactions with people are meaningful, whether that be in personal or professional settings. Ria tries to lead with compassion and empathy. Any pastime that involves reading, writing and listening to Beyonce is a draw for Ria. But, she loves her family and friends more.

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As a journalist, Ria seeks to put a rich cross-section of humanity at the heart of her reporting, with a strong and relentless focus on the communities that are vastly underrepresented in the media. Authenticity and empathy play an important role in her approach to journalism. She believes that impactful journalism thrives on connections with people on the frontline of life. Ria has worked as a journalist for fifteen years, across multiple broadcasters including the BBC, Sky News, ITV News and currently as a correspondent at Channel 4 News. Her journalistic axis spins on original stories and exclusives. This is a natural consequence of being led by a desire to do things differently, engage viewers but also challenge their preconceptions. She has reported extensively on UK social affairs, including police corruption, poverty,



youth violence, inequalities within the education system, the coronavirus pandemic, the impact of Brexit and much more. She has also reported from the USA and India on social and political issues impacting each country. For her reporting, Ria has won a British Journalism Award, Asian Media Award and Criminal Justice Alliance Award, as well as being shortlisted for the prestigious Orwell Prize for Exposing Social Evils. Ria's father, Kanai Chatterjee, undertook priestly duties for the Wales Puja Committee for many years. Ria enjoys exploring her Bengali heritage through various cultural mediums, but she is most connected to her roots through a commitment to spiritual activities.

KRISHNENDU MAJUMDAR: Sera Bengali Award

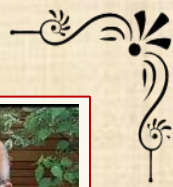
Krish is currently the Chair of Bafta, the first person of colour to occupy the prestigious post. He is an award-winning producer and director. He won the John Brabourne Big Five film award and a Mental Health in Media Award in 2008. His work has been nominated for a British Comedy Award, a Royal Television Society Award, a National Television Award, a Broadcast Award as well as a BAFTA. Krish's direction was also shortlisted for a Grierson Award and nominated for a BAFTA.

Krishnendu (Krish) Majumdar's parents Dr. Rupen Majumdar and Mrs. Jharna Majumdar arrived in South Wales in 1966 from Kolkata. Krish grew up with his brother Saumendra (Sam) in South Wales. Krish is currently the Chair of Bafta, the first person of colour to occupy the prestigious post. He is an award-winning producer and director. He won the John Brabourne Big Five film award and a Mental Health in Media Award in 2008. His work has been nominated for a British Comedy Award, a Royal Television Society Award, a National Television Award, a Broadcast Award as well as a BAFTA. Krish's direction was also shortlisted for a Grierson Award and nominated for a BAFTA. He has been described by Screen International as one of "the brightest new hopes of the British film industry" in their 2006 'Stars of Tomorrow' list and "the maker of uncompromising documentaries" by The Independent. Krish was Series Director of the hugely successful *An Idiot Abroad*, with executive producers Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant and starring Karl Pilkington, the show broke viewing records for Sky1 HD. The series has been broadcast in 140 territories around the world including being the highest rated show on the Science Channel in the US. The DVDs have gone on to sell over 1.3 million copies. Krish was Executive Producer and directed 2 episodes of the second series, which returned to Sky1 HD in September 2011 which has gone on to be shown in 210 territories around the world. He was Executive Producer on *An Idiot Abroad 3* – a 3 part special for Sky1 HD. He has also just set up an independent production company - Me & You productions with Richard Yee. Their first production was to co-produce *An Idiot Abroad 3*. They have also made the award-winning *Hoff The Record* and the critically acclaimed *I AM*, an drama anthology series starring Vicky McClure, Samantha Morton and Gemma Chan, created by film maker Dominic Savage and broadcast on Channel 4. Krish is on the Board of Directors UK and is an elected member of the BAFTA Television Committee. He became chair of the committee in 2015, then deputy chair of BAFTA and now chair.



DR ASHOK MUKHERJEE: Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Ashok Mukherjee was born in India where he completed his medical training in Orthopaedics from Central Institute of Orthopaedics Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi. In 1981, after his post-graduation, Ashok left for the U.K. Since then he has trained over a 100 surgeons who now work as Consultants in different parts of Wales and England. Dr. Mukherjee has been involved in both, under and postgraduate training and has been a part of various research



programmes. Dr. Mukherjee is now retired, lives in Cardiff with his wife. Both Dr, and Mrs Mukherjee are integral part of Wales Puja Committee and were front runners in leading the committee to its glorious 50 years in 2023. In his spare time, he enjoys writing poems and short essays.



It was the 40s, the 2nd World War was over, but the fall outs had crippled the world. It was time to rejoice, India's Independence from the colonial powers. But at the same time, it was time to mourn. Pakistan was born after a bleeding strife. It was at this epic time that Dr. Ashok Mukherjee was born, as he fondly narrates this story in friendly gatherings. His parents called him Ashok, as they wanted to keep him away from sorrow. In his own words, Dr. Mukherjee mentions "I was like a turtle, enclosed in a tough shell, repelling all evil forces". He grew up in a rural backdrop. Being the son of a locally renowned Doctor, he thrived and flourished till one day, the rural wind blew too hard. He was five years old then and was shipped away to a boarding school. He spent the next 10 years in the boarding school which he considers to be the best days of his life.

He became a medic, trained in Orthopaedics in Delhi. In 1981, after his post-graduation, Ashok left for the U.K, just in time for Prince Charles and Diana's wedding. Post completion of training, he climbed up the ladders from a trainee to a trainer. He has trained over 100 surgeons who now work as Consultants in different parts of Wales and England. Dr. Mukherjee has been involved in both, under and postgraduate training and has been a part of various research programmes.

In December 1988, he set himself to a new challenge and took off to write a new chapter in his life. A 5-year stint in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia which according to Ashok was a great experience, spiced with the vagaries of a new culture.

He is now retired, spending life involved in various social and personal activities. His children are married and settled, living their lives in London. They are Dr. and Mrs Mukherjee's support along with a vast number of people who have been with them in Cardiff for the 40 years. Both Dr, and Mrs Mukherjee are integral part of Wales Puja Committee and were front runners in leading the committee to its glorious 50th year celebrations in 2023. Dr. Mukherjee is one of the trustees to Wales Puja Committee and is actively involved in its various charity activities.

In his spare time, Ashok enjoys writing. He pens down short essays and poems and is currently working on two books.

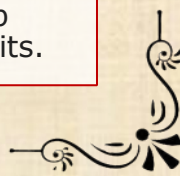
According to Dr Mukherjee.. "we all seek fulfilment, but I believe it is within us".

DR KANTIMOY NATH: Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr Kantimoy Nath was born in Dibrugarh, Assam, India and grew up in Silchar, India. He completed his degree in Medicine from Gauhati Medical College and then went to All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi to complete his Postgraduate degree in Surgery. In AIIMS, in those days, young doctors were leaving India for further studies and training to countries such as USA, UK, Australia Canada etc. Dr Kantimoy Nath followed them and came to UK in 1973 to seek his fortune. Migrating from one country to another country and to be successful required lot of discipline and hard work.



In the sunny summer of 1973, Dr Nath arrived in UK. After training in Hospitals for few years, he became a Senior General Practitioner in the beautiful Rhondda Valleys of South Wales. Years later he would say that the Sanjeev Bhaskar's series "The Indian Doctor" was very similar to his life and experiences and that it could have been based on his and his other Indian fellow Doctors lives who made South Wales Valleys their home. Though picturesque, his practice area was in a very highly deprived area. The socio-economic status and deprivation are associated with poor health, multiple co-morbidities, premature mortality, increased incidence of psychosis and mental health problems. The lack of job opportunities and high number of unemployment caused many people to rely on benefits.



The crime rate and addiction to different substances were a huge problems in the practice area. He had to deal with huge addiction problems and tried to help them which was an enormous challenge and partly became successful. It was a hard job with very long hours and very demanding patient needs. He had to face racism too as other Indian doctors in those days but took it in his strides to carry on offering his medical services to the practice for long 34 years and retired in 2014.

Beyond medicine, Dr Kantimoy Nath is very passionate and involved in promoting and integrating Indian especially Bengali Culture in Wales. From 1981, when he arrived in South Wales, he has been actively involved with the Wales Puja Committee. WPC is a registered South Wales based charity which celebrates festivals, particularly those from east of India. Its aim is always to promote cultural exchange and integration with the local Welsh Community. He served as its Secretary, Treasurer, Chairperson and now he is the Chair of the Trustees Committee of WPC. Dr Nath is highly enthusiastic about travelling , a movie buff and likes to indulge in these after his retirement with his wife, Shikha Nath. He is also very proud of his two children, Mr Kinshuk Nath and Mrs Tanusree Gohil and is blessed with three grandchildren.

From the Editors Desk

Dear Friends of the WPC Family and Readers,

To be able to do this Puja Omnibus to celebrate WPC's Golden Jubilee is a very proud feeling indeed. And one that comes with trepidation, thoughts of a great responsibility. This year we have tried to blend the old with the new, looking back at our past and looking forwards at the same time. We have dug up old histories and old magazines and tried to present some of the best articles from the predigital souvenirs which are not available on our website. Actually the word souvenir rankles, this really has transformed itself into a magazine since I took it over back in 2013.

This time I had a fantastic team working with me. My co editors **Debanjali Bhattacharjee** always full of wonderful insights, great taste and terrific editing skills. This time I had the pleasure of also working with **Ishani Sen** who volunteered herself and was a fantastic source of design and lay out ideas and a great help with editing. Together we have been working late nights over a very short time frame to bring you this. There will soon also be a digital version of this which will have even more material. We started of with a fantastic team and I am ever so grateful to Dr Ashok and Mrs Mahua Mukherjee who were wonderful hosts when over the best biriani, we went through all the older issues and decided what we want. Also in our core team were Mrs Shikha and Dr Kanti Nath. We were also helped greatly by Dr Sandip Raha who is a fount of knowledge and Mrs Jharna Majumdar who is perhaps our seniormost member and whose enthusiasm is the stuff of legends. Eshita, Krishna, Neeleem and Bonnydi also helped and Saktida linked up with Shoma and passed on some old photographs. **Krishnendu Banerjee** is our wonderful man behind the camera and his photographs feature on these pages more often than they are acknowledged. I wore that badge once and it has been a pleasure to have him on board.

There will always unfortunately be oversights and errors but we have worked arduously to keep these at a minimum. It is a hefty tome but needed to be and a more exhaustive online version will follow. Just a few nights back after Mahalaya, I felt this to be an impossible task as articles and contributions trickled in ever so slowly but with my fantastic team I was confident that I would deliver somehow. My revenge perhaps to all is the size of this tome. We have worked through nights after long days at work, somehow also managing to attend myriad rehearsals and other duties. I wrote

Sleep shalt be rare In the designers lair
Upon our brows, furrowed By the challenges of words and the pressures of time, pressured
Until before us on those pages WPC, our story rages

I do hope you all feel that our story rages on these pages. I leave you with the best of festive wishes, SHUBHO SHARADIA,

Dr SHILADITYA SINHA



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Committee on your
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