

# Sarbojonin Durga Puja 2023



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Editor

*Anindita Sarkar & Susanta Sarkar*



Design & Graphics

*Shantanu Nath & Ovirup Das*



Cover page artwork

*Anindita Banerjee*



*Arindam Thakur*

Marketing Lead

# Durga Pujo 2023 Timings



**SHOSHTI, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023**



**10am to 1pm** - Shoshti Pujo followed by Arati and Anjali  
**6pm to 7:30pm** - Sandhya Arati and Anjali

**SHOPTOMI, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023**



**11:30am to 2:30pm** - Shoptomi Pujo followed by Arati and Anjali  
**6pm to 7:30pm** - Sandhya Arati and Anjali

**ASHTOMI, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**



**8am to 11am** - Ashtomi Pujo followed by Arati and Anjali  
**12:24pm to 1:12pm** - Shondhi Pujo, Arati and Anjali  
**6pm to 7:30pm** - Sandhya Arati and Anjali

**NOBOMI, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023**



**8am to 11am** - Nobomi Pujo followed by Arati and Anjali  
**6pm to 7:30pm** - Sandhya Arati and Anjali

**DOSHOMI, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**8am to 9:30am**: Doshomi Pujo  
**11:30am to 2pm**: Shindoor khela



**Venue: Stoke Green Cricket Club, Slough**  
**Post Code: SL2 4HT**



Schedule is subject to changes

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you with your family and friends to RBBA's 15th Sarbojonin Durga Puja from 20 - 24 October 2023 at Stoke Green Cricket Club, Slough.

The idea that brought us together for the first time in 2009 was to host desher pujo bideshe, where people could come to feel at home – never compromising on the tradition and rituals, with dates and times followed strictly as per our religious calendar. Fifteen years on, we are humbled by the love that brings back familiar faces and welcomes new ones every time we put up the stunning pandal.

At RBBA pujo pandal, the blowing of conch shells, beats of the dhak, daily aartis and the thousands of devotees offering their prayers create the perfect ambience to celebrate Ma Durga's arrival and mark the victory of good over evil. We look forward to this year's event revolving around similar moments of togetherness, renewing old ties and forming new bonds of friendship crossing generations, nostalgic dives into the past, mouth-watering food from the famous in house "RBBA kitchen" and varied line of cultural performances that will fill the evenings with music and dance. The warmth and community you create here is truly what forms the DNA of #teamrbba, so I thank you, our patrons, and our sponsors, for keeping this joy alive for us. This makes it a very humbling experience for us.

An event of this proportion would not be possible without the most amazing team members of RBBA and the countless people who volunteer. The ability to deliver this event year after year is testament to their commitment, energy, determination and dedication. This event is possible only with the support and contribution from all of you and I would like to thank everyone for your unflinching support over the years. Your support gives immense satisfaction where all our hard work pales into insignificance. We would also like to offer sincere and heartfelt thanks for the support provided by our sponsors this year; Hexaware, ICICI, TATA, Zee5, LIC, Manyavar, The Reading Pharmacy, UDS, Numen Financials, HDFC, Hoichoi, Haven, HK Asset Management, Myosutra, Langley Fresh and DX Partners. Last but not the least, we extend our gratitude to those who prefer to remain anonymous but have generously supported us every year to make this event happen.

As our platform has grown, so has our responsibility to give back to the communities we come from. This year, we are working to open a pathology lab in association with Srijan, an NGO in West Bengal, to give access to quick and affordable tests that people from disadvantaged backgrounds otherwise wouldn't have. During COVID, it was your significant contribution that helped us buy an ambulance in partnership with Srijan that today serves thousands of people each year, putting them within reach of hospital care that they deserved but didn't have. We have been the pioneers of the Double-Dot movement and the promotion of biodegradable products and would like to continue promoting the various social causes. We know we will have you beside us every time we need you.

Wishing all of you a lovely festive season and hope you make RBBA your home for these 5 days.

With love and gratitude  
**Arindam Thakur**

**President RBBA**



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# পায়ে পায়ে পনেরো

By KRISHNENDU RAKSHIT

পায়ে পায়ে পনেরো

ঢ্যাম কুর কুর বাদি বাজে  
কাশের ফুল হাওয়ায় নাচে ।  
দেখে যা সবাই মিলে  
মা এসেছে আজ দুয়ারে ॥

ঠিকানা টা বদলে গেছে  
ষ্টোক পোজে ক্রিকেট ক্লাব এ ।  
মা র দেখা মিলবে হেথায়  
প্যাভেলে সপরিবারে ॥

সময় ধরে পুজোর নিয়ম  
সঙ্গে থাকে স্বাদের ভোজন ।  
আসলে সবার মনে ধরে  
আদর ও আশ্রয়ন ॥

পায়ে পায়ে হলো পনেরো  
অনেক সাজ আর অনেক আলো ।  
ক্রসউইল্ডজ এর গানের সুরে  
ভাসাও গা নাচের তালে ॥



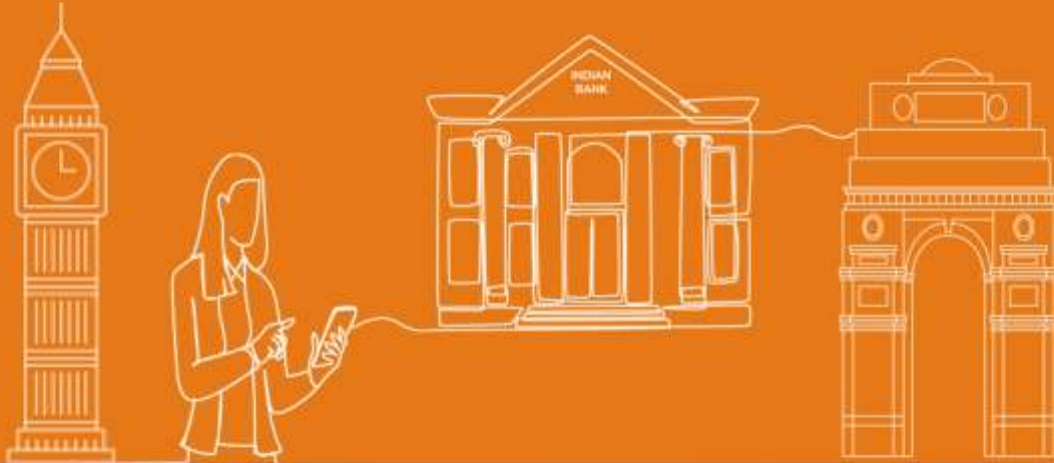
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## RBBA kitchen - a memorable journey so far and continuing....

By **SHANTANU NATH**

"*Ki dada, Pujo'r menu decide holo*"? This question sends alarm bells ringing in my ears to wake me up from slumber to prepare for Ma or rather a daughter's natal home coming.

Let me take you on a trip down memory lane to a Saturday afternoon 15+ years ago. On that Saturday afternoon adda at Willows – Atanuda's house, me and a few friends decided to start a new Durga Puja. None of us had the slightest idea that we were embarking on a journey that will test our boundaries time and time again. Everyone contributed ideas from their memories of childhood Pujo, and one common thread emerged - how we used to enjoy Bhog at our Parar or Barir Pujo. And from there it followed that everybody got hooked to the idea of serving home cooked Bhog. Me, being the self proclaimed amateur cook decided to take on the responsibility without realising what an enormous task it was going to be. There was a reason behind my confidence, and that was the active support & encouragement of Hashi Mashu, the cooking maestro. By the time we formed RBBA, Babai (Nilabza) volunteered to be with us in the cooking team, his never ending enthusiasm accompanied with scientific explanations added more spice to the cooking but well that's another story.

The first night of our first Pujo started like a horror show when we realised that food was not sufficient for 250 people and first khichuri & mixed vegetables from the RBBA kitchen looked like hospital food rather than Pujo'r Bhog! We realised the learning curve was going to be a steep one however, Debojit da arrived like professor Shanku and for the next 4 days we were just ardent students trying to pass the exam somehow. Personally, for me those first 5 days of learning experience was the corner stone of the RBBA kitchen and one I still hold dear to my heart and fondly treasure. We were in the kitchen from 9am till 10pm and I never saw Babai changing his t-shirt & tracksuit. And neither can I forget those times when Atanuda folded his cuffs & came to help me with utensils cleaning on gloomy rainy afternoons when he realised no one was there to help. So after the 1st Pujo we took stock and decided to streamline the cooking activities into a process so that we can finish cooking by afternoon and enjoy the Pujo in the evening. That process formed the basis of backroom activities that continued over the years with many refinements.

One of the difficult tasks that we faced in the early part of this journey was estimating the raw materials. We would get it wrong to such an extent that Probal da took it for granted that every time I went to him meant I needed something, and he used to start with "*abar ki chai?*" I don't even remember how many trips Atanuda, Amitavada, Arindam & others made to grocery stores to fulfil our last minute requests without showing the slightest annoyance. Today we do fairly good guesstimate but only difference is that Krishnendu arrived and took that SOS responsibility away with his charming smile. I remember those days when we had to visit Western market on Sasthi at 4am for buying vegetables. Arindam's face lighting up at the vast array of options in front of us which resulted in many a last minute change to the menu. It is a joy to accompany him to our shopping ....it is just like visiting ToysrUs with our kids. Now on these trips Krishnendu plays the role of our guardian.

Special mention must go to the backbone of the RBBA kitchen... our vegetable cutting team ably led by RBBA ladies who always encourage and welcome visiting, willing guests to play a part in the vegetable cutting team. They are a sight to behold, decked in colourful festive wear. To their credit they willingly wear clinical apron and gloves even though it takes away the gloss from their 'shaaj'. With sharp knives at their disposal they truly represent the legacy of Maa Durga ready to do battle with whatever comes their way. Though it is hard to say what is wagging faster tongues or knives. If you come closer to the long trestle tables which are commandeered by the vegetable cutting team you will wonder what is cutting faster - gossip, jokes or vegetables. Over the years a few things have changed but some things remain as it was from the early days. One of the hot discussion topic every year is cutting size of vegetables and I think it would not be improper to say that although uniformity does matter for cooking, we will probably live with the imperfect sizes just for the fun of it. Sometimes, in life, imperfect things make perfect sense.

RBBA kitchen for us is the most happening place during those 5 days with impromptu worldly discussions from Babai's scientific explanations of why tomato increases the cooking time to Chandradip's AI taking over the world to Susanta's intellectual discussions. Time to time we also have the privilege of visiting experts like Arindam & Atanuda to add phoron to these discussions & I have to steer them away for the sake of my cooking. With four high pressure burners running at the same time at 40+ degree and Nirjhar suddenly breaking into "Ami sei bhojohori manna" and "Ami kon pothe je choli" it surely gives us goose bumps sometimes. . We don't follow any recipe as we are constantly improvising with whatever means we have at our disposal & with Ma Durga's blessing it has always come out good or at least that is the feedback we receive from everyone.

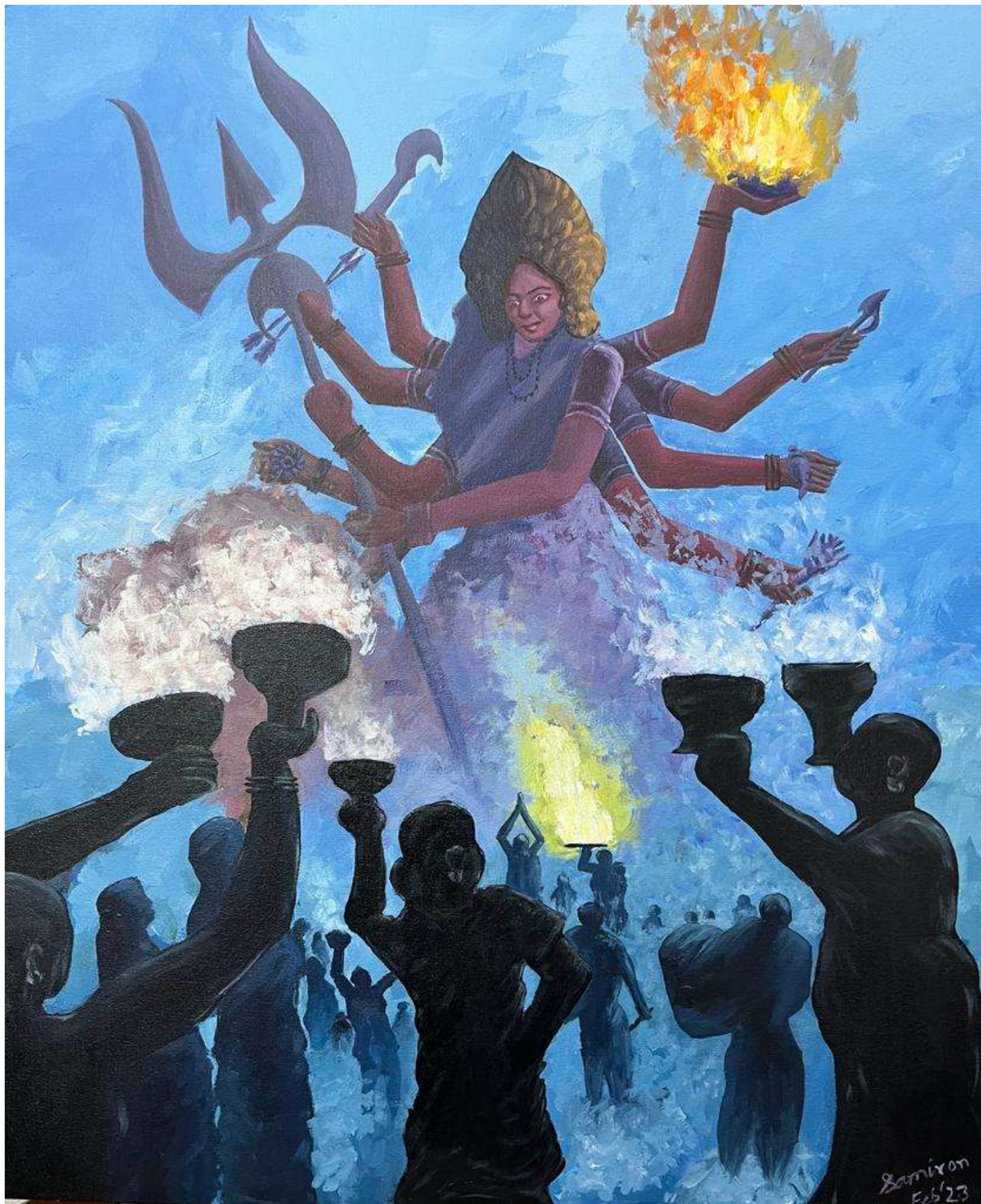
The journey journal of yesteryears will be incomplete without mentioning our lovely Mashis, Meshos, Uncle & Aunties. Some visited from India & some are from UK including my parents. Their love, blessings and valuable feedback & tips are so precious that it has become a treasure in my heart.

There are so many experiences that it is impractical to write it all within couple of pages, however, it would have been impossible to carry on year after year without the help & support from each & every past & present member of RBBA, volunteers & the guests. The kitchen team is out of sight for most of the morning but never out of mind for the rest of the RBBA family -- holding the Anjali till all the kitchen team is present, bringing the Aarti Diya all the way to the kitchen, ladies (especially Hashi Mashi) bringing us prasaad hidden in their sarees. RBBA family guides us, bears with us when sometimes we run out of food for the members and be content with "*Ghee bhaat*". This demonstrates the ethos of RBBA family "*Atithi Devo Bhava*" and priority is always given to guests rather than members. For us we are doing "*sewa*" and in return we get their blessings, love & support.

As I said earlier I do consider it is a daughter's home coming so I would still be doing it despite having to live in a trance state and on paracetamol for few days . It is an adventure and an absolute pleasure that I would not miss for any fortune and I know I speak for my team mates when I say this.

Happy Puja to you all.

# Drawing and Crafts



Samiron



Aaroosh



Kiara



Anika



Anika



Myra





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## \*\*\*শব্দকল্পদ্রুম\*\*\*

By JOYDEEP MITRA

প্রকৃত ভালোবাসা এমনই একটা অনুভূতি যেটা ভেবে চিনতে করা যায় না। তাই হাজার বারণ সত্ত্বেও প্রথম প্রেমের চরম অনুভূতি সেদিন আটকাতে পারেনি মদনপুরের অচিন্ত্য দাস।

আপনারা হয়তো ভাবছেন আজকের দিনে মনের মানুষ খুঁজে পাওয়াতে সমস্যা কোথায়, তাও আবার প্রকৃত ভালোবাসা! আমি সেই প্রসঙ্গে পরে আসছি। তার আগে অচিন্ত্যর ব্যাপারে একটু বলে নি।

অচিন্ত্যর বাবা তুলসী দাস মদনপুর হাই স্কুলের করণিক ছিলেন। মদনপুর চিনতে পারছেন তো? ওই যে শিয়ালদা লাইনে – বোধয় কল্যাণীর পরের স্টপ। আমি অনেক ছোটবেলায় গেছিলাম আমার ছোটোকাকা আর কাকিমার সাথে - ওদের বৌভাতের পরেরদিন। তখনকার দিনে ওটাই মধুচন্দ্রিমা ছিলো! বর বউ বৌভাতের পরের দিনেই একা বেরোলে যদি দৃষ্টিকটু লাগে, তাই আমাকেও বগলদা বা করে নিয়ে গেছিলো। আমার তখন সাত- আট বছর বয়েস। গেছিলাম ছোটো কাকারই আরেক বন্ধু পলাশ কাকুর বাড়ি। চমৎকার জায়গা এই মদনপুর! মধ্য কলকাতার এঁদো গলিতে বসবাস করা আমার মতো শহুরে ছেলে মদনপুরের প্রাকৃতিক সৌন্দর্য দেখে বিহ্বল হয়ে গেছিলাম। গাছের আম পেড়ে, না কেটে, না ধুয়ে চুষে খাওয়ার যে কি আনন্দ সেইটা সেদিন টের পেয়েছিলম।

এমনই একটি পাড়াগায়ের ছেলে অচিন্ত্য দাস। খুব কৃতি ছাত্র - মাধ্যমিক, উচ্চমাধ্যমিক দুটোতেই নব্বই শতাংশ নম্বর - প্রেসি ডেন্সি কলেজে পদার্থবিদ্যা নিয়ে পড়েছিল। তুলসী বাবুর আয় যৎসামান্য হলেও, ছেলের পড়াশোনা নিয়ে আপস করেননি। ওনার শুধু একটাই শর্ত ছিলো - প্রেমবিবাহ চলবে না! এর পেছনে পারিবারিক একটি কারণ ছিলো - ওনার বড় কন্যা কাজল, অচিন্ত্যর থেকে প্রায় ১০ বছর বড়ো, অন্য সম্প্রদায়ের লোককে সবার অমতে বিয়ে করেছিলো। তুলসী বাবু আর কোনোদিন মেয়ের মুখদর্শন করেননি। আর যতো রাগ গিয়ে পরলো প্রেম আর প্রেম ঘটিত বিবাহের ওপর - হ্যাঁ ঠিকই ভাবছেন - একদম সেই হিন্দি সিনেমার অমরীশ পুরীর মতো!

"যাই করো না কেনো, আমাদের পছন্দের মেয়ে বিয়ে করতে হবে!"

এই ব্যাপারটা খুব পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছিলেন প্রথম থেকেই! বাবার কথা অঙ্করে অঙ্করে পালন করছিলো অচিন্ত্য। নিজে সুদর্শন ছিলো – কিন্তু ইচ্ছা করলেও কোনো মেয়ের দিকে চোখ তুলে তাকাতো না।

সব কিছু ঠিক চলছিল। কাল হলো ইংল্যান্ডে গবেষণা করতে এসে। ওই যে বললাম না প্রকৃত ভালোবাসা! বুলগেরিয়ান মহিলা ড্যানিয়েলা, অচিন্ত্যর সাথেই কাজ করে - চোখ ধাঁধানো সুন্দরী না হলেও একটা চটক আছে - আর আছে সোনার মতো মন আর চাঁদের মতো হাসি - অচিন্ত্যর দুনিয়া ওলোট পালট হয়ে গেলো। কিছু মাস যেতে না যেতেই যখন ড্যানিয়েলা নিজেই ওকে প্রপোজ করলো তখন সংযমের সব বাঁধ ভেঙে গেলো – বিয়ে করলে একেই করবো নাহলে করবই না! ওই যেরকম বোকামি গুলো আমরা অনেকেই করেছি আর কি – যাকগে সেই সব কথা!

বিয়ের কথা ভেবেই বাবার মুখটা মনে পড়লো আর অচিন্ত্যর বুক কেপে উঠলো। প্রেম বিবাহ তো

বটেই – তার ওপর অন্য দেশ, সম্প্রদায়, কালচার - মা কে তাও বোঝানো যাবে, কিন্তু বাবার  
তো হাট অ্যাটাক হয়ে যাবে!! একবার ভাবলো আত্মহত্যা করলে কেমন হয় - ছি! ছি! আত্মহত্যা  
মহা পাপ! বাবা তো তাহলে এমনিতেই শেষ হয়ে যাবে!  
বড়দিনের ছুটিতে মদনপুর বেড়াতে এসে অচিন্ত্য ঠিক করলো বাবা কে বলেই দেবে। যা হবে দেখা যাবে।  
রাত্রে খেতে বসে অচিন্ত্য বললো,

"বাবা, আমি বিয়ে করতে চাই"

মুচকি হেসে তুলসীবাবু বললেন,

"কাউকে পছন্দ হয়েছে বুঝি? বেশ বেশ!

দেখো আমাদের বয়স হয়েছে, কদিন বাঁচবো

ঠিক নেই। তুমি সুখী থাকো এইটাই আমার কাম্য"

অচিন্ত্য আকাশ থেকে পড়লো! বাবার এ কি হলো?! ড্যানিয়েলাকে এখুনি ফোন করতে হবে!

"শুধু একটাই অনুরোধ বাবু - তোর বউ যেনো তোর মায়ের একটু সেবা যত্ন করে - কোথায় বাড়ি বৌমার?"

ভয়ের চোটে অচিন্ত্যর চোখ বুঝে আসলো - "বুলগেরিয়া বাবা"!

তুলসীবাবুর বত্রিশ পাটি দাঁত বেরিয়ে গেলো।

"দারুন ব্যাপার!! বেলঘরিয়া তো একদম কাছেই!"

~ জয়দীপ (Inspired by true incidents)



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# Woven with Love - A peep into four unique weaves from India

By **SONALINA CHOUDHURY**

Most of us who grew up in the Indian subcontinent are familiar with the rich tapestry of colours, textures and motifs which dominate our attires- from loungewear, formal wear, festive wear and even winter clothing. It is not often that we sit and wonder about how varied and rich our handloom heritage is. India has been home to more than 136 unique weaves, much before powerloom came in and revolutionised the fashion circuit and gave us artificial fibres as well as blends, polysilks, and slubs.

India's traditional textiles are a reflection of its skilled artisan talent and regional cultural heritage. In the delicate and rich sarees such as Kanjeevarams, Ilkals, Mysore Silks, Venkatagiris, Uppadas, Kasavus and Pochampallys in the South to the colourful Chanderi, Paithani, Maaheshwari, and Patolas of the west, you can visualize an array of colours, motifs and patterns each with a story behind its existence. As you travel eastwards, you are greeted with Bomkais, Khandua Pata, a variety of tussars, Jamdanis, Tangails and Taants, Balucharis and Swarnacharis, soft Murshidabad silks, Paat silks, Eri silks, Garidias, Puans, Naga, and Moirangphee drapes. As you travel northwards, you see another set of amazing drapes- traditional Banarasis with Alfi, Shikargah and Ghaas patti and Jaal work, the Leheriyas and the Bandhnis with their vibrant tie and dye hues, and the very unique and colourful Phulkari and the Kinnauri fabrics.

Then, there are base fabrics like cotton, slubs and silks, on which the artisans use brushes, nibs and needles to create precious fabrics, - Chikankaari, Kantha, Parsi Gara, Cross stitch, Aari work, shadow work are few of the many handcrafted needlework fabrics, while Madhubani, Pattachitra, Worli tribal designs are created with brushes and colours. In fact, if one examines closely, every corner of India offers a unique style of art in textiles.

While most of us know about the popular weaves, there are a few which are not so known, not because they are not beautiful and intricate but because they haven't been showcased often by fashionistas or even discovered. Let's take a peep into four such traditional weaves - one from each part of India. These drapes like all the others are intricately and lovingly handwoven by the artisans using delicate, vibrant threads.

## **Puan (Mizoram) - Eastern Splendour**

Traditionally, the Puan is a handwoven piece of fabric worn by both men and women as a lower garment in Mizoram in normal life as well as festive occasions. However the colours, patterns and motifs can vary on these garments by occasion. The more dense the motifs, the pricier the garment. A recent addition to the concept drapes arena, the meticulous Puan weaving features a variety of geometric designs, florals, and other flora and fauna-inspired motifs, such as stars, roses, ginger flowers and tiger skin etc. The Puan saree is highlighted by a multi coloured horizontal border. Puans are classified into different types, such as Puanchei, Puandum, Ngotheker and Kwappuizikzial. Black, white, pink, yellow and red are the primary hues used in Puan weaving giving it an elegant vibrant look.



## **Tangaliya (Gujarat) - Western Elegance**

Did you know that Jamdani weaves are practised in many parts of India? While the Jamdanis from Bengal are famous in the fashion circuit, there are a few other drapes that use the Jamdani style of handloom weaving, such as the Venkatagiris from Andhra Pradesh and Tangaliya from Gujarat. This type of weaving requires immense attention to detail and eye for accuracy. What is very interesting is that the creation of geometric patterns on a Tangaliya saree are usually based on precise mathematical calculations. The designs are handwoven in a pit loom using an extra weft technique to create intricate and raised woven knots on the plain weave. Threads of contrasting colors are added to the base warp and twisted on a set of four to five warp threads leading to the creation of a knot also known as a "daana". The designs created using this technique give the effect of raised dots on the plain weave which appear to be embroidered but are actually woven into the fabric. The motifs are nature inspired again and you would see a Naughara (pitchers), Jhaad (Plant) or Mor (peacock) on a Tangaliya weave. This 700 year old craft is limited to a community and is unfortunately almost facing extinction. It is only recently that a revival of the art was undertaken by a few lovers of this art of weaving.



### **Kunbi (Goa) - Southern Grace**

The simple yet very beautiful chequered Kunbi saree is named after one of the oldest tribes of Goa. All Kunbi sarees are chequered and dyed in red, purple and green and their variants. This saree has been part of the lifestyle of the Kunbi women who work in the paddy fields. To ensure easy movement, the women wore their sarees in a drape such that the garment reached just below the knees. More recent adaptations of the Kunbi sarees are created in handlooms using cotton threads and cotton silk blends. It is said that the creation of each Kunbi saree is often a community affair!

### **Phulkari (Punjab) - Northern Vibrance**

It is believed that the Phulkari has its origin in Iran, where it was called Gulkari meaning floral work. However, this needlework intensive very vibrant saree is created on various fabric bases using multicoloured threads embroidered in geometric patterns. The prominent colours used are gold, red, pink, offwhite, blues and purples. From births, to weddings and all auspicious functions, Phulkari drapes find a place in a typical Punjabi household. There are many types of Phulkari that you might notice on a Phulkari saree. Senchi Phulkari, is a rare form characterised by jewellery or bird motifs. The Chhamas form combines mirror work and embroidery. The Neelak pairs metal or copper coloured borders with traditional motifs. Some of the Phulkari styles are Chope, subhar, Bagh, Thirma, Surajmukhi, Pachranga, Satranga and Kundi.

As we dig deeper into the realm of Unique new and old forms of weaving, textures and patterns, we discover many new and very interesting revival stories emerging from the rich heritage of garment creation practised over the years in the Indian subcontinent, To read and discuss more you are welcome to contact the author of this article.



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## A unique Easter experience in Spain

By **ARYAN GUHA**

Easter holidays always come with a lot of expectations, the seasons finally starts to change, the grey skies start becoming a little less grey, the trees start showing a gentle hue of green, the frosty winter mornings make way for the cheery sunshine and the daffodils start spreading their colours. In the midst of this change, we take a breather from our mundane daily life and try to rejuvenate ourselves.

For me, this rejuvenation came in the form of enjoying a little break in the beautiful Spanish city of Valencia. I was transported to an enchanting realm, where centuries old tradition mixed with modern adaptations gave a whole new meaning to Easter for me. The festival of Semana Santa Marinera is a unique and deeply rooted religious celebration, for the coastal city of Valencia in Spain. Not only does this festival showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Spanish city, it unites the locals by creating a sense of pride for their old traditions and attracts numerous visitors to witness this kaleidoscope of colours and vibrancy.

I set foot in Valencia on a balmy Saturday, during the easter holidays. It was humid, I was tired and exhausted after navigating through overcrowded airports and flight delays. On Sunday morning, I was greeted by the radiant Spanish sun, the brilliant blue skies and a gentle breeze from the azure Mediterranean. As I came out on the streets, it looked like the whole place was in a celebratory mood, there was music, people were dressed in traditional outfits, with rich hues and intricate embroideries., the streets were adorned with flowers. As I started walking I realised that a procession was marching towards me, holding statues and floats elaborately decorated with religious symbols, flowers and candles. The participants were dressed in colourful embroidered robes, dresses, head pieces; there were participants aged from little kids to elderly. As they marched through the streets, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of brass drums, floating through a sea of flower petals, I realised it's a sensory overload of colour and sound, the best that I have experienced ever in my life.

Later on in the day, when the procession has passed and I settled down in the piazza with a triple scoop of gelato, soaking in the Spanish sun, I looked up the history of the Semana Santa Marinera which means the Maritime Holy Week. This tradition dates back to the 15th century when Valencia was a thriving port; these processions were organised to seek blessings and protections for sea voyages from Virgin Mary who was considered to be the patroness of sailors. Over centuries, these traditions have evolved and incorporated elements from Christianity and Valencian folklore.

In the evening, as people started to wind down after the celebrations, there were festive meals, it was a culmination of the end of the Holy week. I was lucky enough to join some locals for their celebratory meal; just like their exuberant taste in colours and attire, the traditional Spanish food speaks volumes for gastronomy, it was the best paella I have ever tasted.

In essence, the Spanish Easter highlights the diversity in unity; it reminds us that the same religious festival can be celebrated in so many different ways, expressions and expectations vary, it brings joy to both the participants and observers, it gives us all different perspectives to appreciate and enjoy.



---

*Wishing all our Bengali brothers and sisters  
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## Birmingham

By AUDRIC

I'm on the pavement, tying up the bins and handing them to Mudit for us to carry together.

'Did I tell you?' he asks me. 'Nadini got married.'

'That's his sister. I drop my bin and hug him. He stops me there, shaking his head.

Who? The boy from Birmingham?'

'Hm.'

We are silent for a while. Then he says, 'Mum is fine. Dad is angry. Come, pick these ones up with me. Both hands, Audric. Good, let's walk.'

'Not even a little happy?'

He laughs, a lot, but doesn't look at me. 'He's trying to pray the marriage away. Imagine that.'

I frown. 'I didn't know your dad was so religious.'

'He's not. That's the funny part.'

Quiet again. The bins have old clothes in them; our friends were collecting for months to donate them before we leave for university. The charity shop's down the high street, a long walk from his house where we started. A couple times we stop to adjust our grip. I think about his dad praying.

'It's probably complicated, I say unhelpfully.'

Mudit clicks his tongue. 'He thinks he's losing a daughter. In his head everyone from their side is devout and everyone from his side is relaxed. He can't tell his friends either, it's a social thing too!

'I told you. Complicated.'

'No!' he exclaims, and then says what will begin to change my mind. The very thing that scares him is what makes him a hypocrite. Do you see?"

I'm starting to. The walk grows thicker, and after a while a new argument starts; some drama over mutual friends, then music, some celebrity gossip he hadn't heard yet, and soon we're at the charity shop. We pause to set down the bins and I thank him for the help. He waves the thanks away, saying he feels more religious now than his parents have in months.



# The Lady of Shallot

By **AANYA SHOME**

Many a day pass by,  
Reaping early, reaping nigh,  
Long fields of barley and rye,  
Clothe the world and reach the sky,  
Hear a voice echo clearly,  
Thro the river to the uplands airy,  
Rumours fly as fast as a canary,  
They say 'tis the fairy,  
The Lady of Shallot."

Lords and Ladies came out two by two,  
By the river, a vast blue,  
A bustle of people of halls thro,  
Oh, there where many more due,  
Into the castle of Camelot,  
A commotion starts to arouse,  
Thro the chatter, there is a raise of  
eyebrows,  
I believe the Lady was the cause,  
The Lady of Shallot.

I saw a white steed plodding free,  
As it's star-studded bridle glitter'd free,  
A red cross knight forever kneels,  
Came bold Sir Lancelot.  
"Tirralirra" I can here,  
His merry voice ringing clear,  
As he trotted on the river near,  
I see a proud smile, ear to ear,  
Came bold Sir Lancelot.

I saw the Lady by the window side,  
I saw her mirror cracked side to side,  
She floated out, the riverside,  
The Lady of Shallot.  
I saw her fly I saw her go,  
I saw her pass to and thro,  
I saw her lay in the boat,  
Her cry piercing thro the land,  
The Lady of Shallot.

I left the barley I left the rye,  
I ran to the riverside,  
I informed the farmers, ran by the tide,  
To inform Camelot.  
I ran to the palace, everybody glad,  
I told them not, the coward I am,  
A page boy, in crimson clad,  
Opened his mouth and signalled his hands,  
The Lady of Shallot.

She chanted loudly, she chanted lowly,  
She sung a carol, mournful, holy,  
Till her eyes were darkened wholly,  
The Lady of Shalott.  
A flow of tears started to come,  
As she lay, robed in snowy white,  
Some in shock, frozen like ice,  
Few ran, I look not twice,  
In silent Camelot.



## **Be bold, be brave**

**By AARMAN GUHA**

Life is a tapestry woven from threads of dreams and failures,  
Of trials and tribulations,  
Of journeys through meandering pathways,  
Of doubts and fears,  
Of hopes and successes.

Each step you take, to navigate this intricate medley,  
Tells a story of courage and challenge,  
Of a heart ablaze with determination,  
Of a mind set on conquering the unfathomable,  
Of a path, paved with dreams.

Each step you take, you are one step closer to your destiny,  
A destiny you have carved for yourself,  
Through arduous work and toil,  
Painted with hues of passion and grit  
Banishing the negatives and embracing the positives.

Embrace the journey, move forward, your head held high,  
Reach for the stars, touch the limitless sky  
Let the rugged road be your travelling companion  
Let the thought of success be your beacon of light,  
Let the sweet essence of victory be your guiding spirit.

The horizon awaits you  
With each step you take, you are inching closer  
Let your mind be imbued with unwavering determination  
One step closer, one step nearer  
Be brave, be bold.

## Is She like a Superhero? A Tale Retold

**Inspired by AARYAV DAS; Penned by OVIRUP DAS**

In a corner of the world, young and old convene,  
A tale of two hearts - one vast, one keen,  
Two worlds colliding, a story foreseen.

"Dad, what's Durga Pujo?" the little boy inquired,  
Innocence sparkling, curiosity fired,  
Father smiled gently, gathering thoughts,  
How to explain what tradition brought.

"Durga Pujo, my son, is a happy affair,  
Celebrating Durga Mumma, beyond compare.  
She's a symbol of strength, a beacon of light,  
Guiding us through darkness, in day and night.

"But why do we celebrate, Papa dear?"  
The little one pressed, eyes clear,  
"To honour her bravery and grace,  
To seek her blessings in life's fast-paced race."

"And why does Durga Mumma fight, tell me more?"  
The father thought, his heart an open door,  
"To vanquish evil, to protect what's good,  
She battles the badies in the mystic wood."

The boy's young mind starts to take flight,  
Imagining the Goddess, shining so bright,  
He asks, "Is Durga Mumma a superhero, Dad?"  
His father nods, "Yes, both strong and glad."

For the father, it's a link to his roots so old,  
A cherished tradition, a tale retold,  
A crossroad of heritage and modern sway,  
A sweet fusion of beliefs finding her own way....

In that dialogue bridging generations apart,  
The essence of Durga Pujo found its start,  
In the love and bond that forever grew,  
A rich tapestry of past and present, old and new.

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EMAIL: [ARJJIT@HKASSETMANAGEMENT.COM](mailto:ARJJIT@HKASSETMANAGEMENT.COM)

# Individual Social Responsibility

By **SANGITA CHOUDHURY**

As a parent, I often ponder, have I done my bit, my role as a parent, which is, less around providing and more about conscious connecting and laying the foundation to be resilient. As thoughts rolled on, I stumbled upon a much wider aspect of my responsibility realm, the Individual Social Responsibility, and decided to pen my thoughts as a culture catalyst – the impact we have on the people around us and our environment by the way we live our life.

Our Roots:

Social Responsibility is an integral part of Vedic philosophy. Vedic philosophy advocates measured material accumulation and focusing on “Prosperity for all”.

Atmano Mokshartham Jagat Hitayacha... This dictum from Rig Veda beautifully joins the two divergent yet obvious aspects of 'atman' (soul) and 'jagat hitaya' (service to humanity) which are to be achieved by one's own efforts. This requires consistent continuous effort for one's own salvation and in equal measure also for providing service to the humanity at large, which dovetails into our topic, Individual Social Responsibility.

Living a responsible life brings a sense of purpose to our existence, beyond the realms of oneself and one's immediate family. Self-love and building a strong family unit is equally important. Radiating the same values and making a positive difference in the societal fabric is our responsibility. So, what is social responsibility and how do we go about it.

Let's name this as the Circle of Hope,



Simple nuances to help us in this journey,

People:

Use inclusive language ....

Be an Ally, Allyship makes underrepresented people feel comfortable and confident.

Self-educate to increase our knowledge so we are aware of the societal makeup, the present, the future challenges, build skills to cope, adapt, and transform to build resilience within... in equal measure share the knowledge.

Avoid gossips ... bring empathy in our conversation.

Amplify marginalized voices.

Lean into discomfort, have the hard conversations, showing up for others and not tuning out the realities of the world we're all living in.

While we enjoy the comforts of our home, there are millions without a home ... let's donate.

Planet:

Foster a culture of recycling, upcycling, freecycling in our community.

Keep learning, how to go about the new energy and environmental challenges facing us, share and build a resilient community.

Conserve our wild and sea life.

Reduce carbon emission by making sustainable choices.

Nurture a green space.

History and COVID has taught us the importance of societal resilience. The world came together, learned from one another, and gave each other in abundance. We saw how positive social contribution led to a healthy social integration, forming a robust and resilient foundation which offered opportunities for advancement.

Individually we may be a small cog in a giant wheel, but we know when everyone does their bit together in unison, the combined effort can achieve the unthinkable!



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## How does your garden grow?

By **ANINDITA BANERJEE**

Where do I even begin!

To say it's an addiction is perhaps an understatement, for those that don't know me I am an ardent nature lover, passionate about gardening and find my own little paradise amongst my buds and blooms.

It is a way of life for some of us and also the reason why I thought to share a few useful hints and tips that I've learnt along my gardening journey which has only just begun.

I discovered very early that patience is key as nothing grows in a hurry, nature doesn't care about our timelines, so learn to relax and wait while it roots and grows, teases and torments you, blooms will follow, and you would learn to function at nature's pace - that's a win-win in today's world.

A weed is a plant in an unwanted location and usually looks charming in meadows and in the wild. Weeding is a gardening discipline and little and often goes a long way. Try to pull the weed out along with the roots without disturbing too much of the surrounding soil as you only bring dormant weeds to life by exposing them to sunlight. Mulch to block light and retain moisture in the ground.



It's so easy to look at beautiful gardens and give in to the temptation of buying everything either on offer or what you think looks beautiful in another garden, I often have to school myself into not buying more, train yourself to not be too influenced by other people's gardens, your garden is an extension of your own personality and has a different soil composition, lay out, structure and environment, hence take your time to learn about the bio diversity of your own garden before attempting to make drastic changes. Watch your garden carefully as the seasons play out to determine where the light lives and where the shade is, this will allow you to plan your planting scheme, plant your hostas, astilbes etc in shade, avoid the morning sun on the camellias, while roses, lupins, peonies etc. usually need full sun. A good tip is to always have an idea of the final size of the plant you are trying to grow and space it appropriately, so you have a good structure, blend but plants not necessarily lost in borders, struggling for space, or not getting enough light. I have discovered that location is almost always everything, unbelievably if it likes it's home in your garden, it will settle and grow, sometimes even with neglect.



Maintaining a neat lawn edge gives a certain sharp definition to your borders, invest in edging for your borders for a tidy look.

Some plants set their buds in Autumn and only bloom in the next spring, so it's a good idea to feed and fertilise these plants like rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas with an ericaceous feed, top up acidic compost and mulch for large showy blooms in spring.

Liquid Seaweed is a great all-purpose feed for most garden plants including seasonal blooms and perennials, do give it a go.

For your hanging baskets consider using water retaining gel which can be worked into the compost at planting stage, helps during dry spells or when you are away as baskets will need watering almost every day.

Coffee grounds are great for acid loving plants and can be added at the base of the plants and lightly raked in. You can collect coffee grounds from work, your own coffee machine or even from a friend and enhance the acidity of your soil around your hydrangeas, camellias, and rhododendrons, just remember, everything in moderation including feeding and fertilising.

I have always been a great advocator for encouraging natural predators in the garden to take care of some pesky little critters, snails, slugs, aphids etc. which can become a bit of a nightmare at times. Garden birds feed off the grubs and aphids, the worms till your soil for free and enhancing the soil with good quality compost, topsoil and mulch will enrich the garden and allow the plants to start fending for themselves without the need of chemical interventions, we all need a bit of help sometimes but perhaps don't need to rush for the chemicals at the first sign of a problem. Try using garlic sprays, copper tapes etc. to deter slugs and snails and for the really daring and driven, a nightly trip round your garden with your flashlight to pick off the offenders will yield great results. If all else fails, sing to them and I promise you they will pick up 😊

At Rbba, sustainability and environment have become a key focus and 'go-green' initiatives



have included palm leaf plates, no single use plastic, fabric aprons etc. and while we can't all make colossal changes to reverse global warming, planting a garden while reusing, repurposing and recycling available items, organic homegrown feeds, composting kitchen scraps and rain water harvesting are thoughtful ways of thwarting climate change and is a more financially viable way of keeping your patch and fingers green.

Using a homemade feed of banana peels in water is a good way of boosting nutrients in the soil.

Last but not the least, gardening is a great stress buster, the stresses and strains seep out you and are absorbed by nature as you breathe in a lungful of oxygen (and some pollen for which I do apologise on behalf of my beloved plants 😊), it has taught me to be mindful as you can't tie a plant to a support while thinking of your tea or prune your roses while worrying about something someone said, you will have to be in the moment, fully present and disengaged from everything else for this to really work its magic. You will feel calmer, rejuvenated, and ready to face the outside world and that's not a mean feat.

Put your gardening gloves on and go create magic in your own backyard.

# Fun Corner

## WORD SEARCH

The Cricket World Cup, 2023 is currently being held in India. Can you find the names of the 10 cities where the matches are being played?

1. Ahmedabad
2. Hyderabad
3. Dharamsala
4. Delhi
5. Chennai
6. Lucknow
7. Pune
8. Bengaluru
9. Mumbai
10. Kolkata

Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	A	S	I	D	F	E
K	L	D	H	A	R	A	M	S	A	L	A	G	H	J	D
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C	Q	M	U	M	B	A	I	Q	A	W	R	T	Y	E	S
K	W	Y	P	F	A	B	N	M	Z	S	A	S	G	D	H
N	E	U	A	G	D	C	V	P	X	M	A	D	R	A	S
O	R	I	S	H	K	U	R	U	L	A	G	N	E	B	J
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W	A	N	K	H	E	D	E	E	D	S	R	W	L	D	K

## CHALLENGE

Find the hidden names of two of the famous stadiums.

## QUIZ

**This year in August, India made history when it became the first country to land a lunar mission near the Moon's south pole. This was the latest achievement by India's space agency ISRO.**

Here are few questions related to ISRO and moon landing:

1. What is the full form of ISRO?
2. Who is considered the founder figure of Indian Space Programme?
3. The name of India's President who also worked for ISRO?
4. When was ISRO formed?
5. What is the name of India's first satellite?
6. What is the name of the ISRO's lunar spacecraft which landed a lunar mission on Moon's south pole?
7. What is the name of the lunar Lander?
8. What is the name of the lunar Rover?
9. Where was the lunar mission launched from?
10. What is the name of ISRO's Mars orbiter spacecraft?

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# RBBA Charity work



RBBA takes its charity work seriously in keeping with our ethos of serving the community. To this end we have a charity partner in India – Srijan.



Srijan is a charity endeavour by young professionals based in Mednipur district of



West Bengal, India. They are a group that helps people in all walks of life, from catering in schools, providing food to underprivileged students, to helping old age homes. They are ready to answer any SOS calls in the vicinity 24 hrs every day. RBBA has helped them obtain Ambulance that they provide at no cost other than cost of petrol to hospitals in



Kolkata. RBBA is working with them to launch a pathology lab so that they can run diagnostics at minimum cost. RBBA has also contributed to Srijan's initiatives such as distributing blankets, food, run sewing classes and during Covid helped them to obtain oxygen concentrators for Covid patients.

In addition through our yearly fund raising activities we have regularly raised funds for charities in UK and abroad. We endeavour to help where there is the most need. We hope our contribution goes some way in elevating misery around the world. In the past we have helped CRY, MS Society, Kankhal, Calcutta rescue, Home-Start Slough, Rupantran, Age UK, Habitat, Save the Children, Earthquake relief in Turkey, The Ukraine war

Note: All logos are copyright of respective organisations



# RBBA Cultural events

## Celebrity Artists Across the Global Bengali Diaspora

The Anupam Roy Band



2013

Surojit Chatterjee & Friends



2014

Anjan Dutt & The Electric Band



2015



Chandrabindoo

2015



Bhoomi

2018



Nachiketa

2019

2021



Durnibar & Anwessha Live

2023



Arko Mukhaerjee & Friends

# RBBA 15 years of pujo



# RBBA Next Gen





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### Answers for Fun Corner:

Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	A	S	I	D	F	E
K	L	D	H	A	R	A	M	S	A	L	A	G	H	J	D
Z	X	C	E	V	B	N	M	Q	W	N	E	R	T	Y	E
U	I	O	P	L	A	S	D	F	N	G	H	J	K	K	N
Z	X	C	V	B	H	N	M	E	Q	A	Z	X	O	L	G
E	D	C	V	F	Y	I	H	R	T	G	B	L	S	W	A
U	J	M	K	I	D	C	O	L	P	Q	K	N	H	Y	R
L	W	E	A	S	E	D	Z	X	C	A	R	T	Y	A	D
L	F	G	H	J	R	V	B	N	T	M	J	K	L	H	E
U	U	I	O	P	A	K	L	A	C	V	B	N	M	M	N
C	Q	M	U	M	B	A	I	Q	A	W	R	T	Y	E	S
K	W	Y	P	F	A	B	N	M	Z	S	A	S	G	D	H
N	E	U	A	G	D	C	V	P	X	M	A	D	R	A	S
O	R	I	S	H	K	U	R	U	L	A	G	N	E	B	J
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W	A	N	K	H	E	D	E	E	D	S	R	W	L	D	K

### Quiz Answers:

- ISRO Stands for Indian Space Research Organisation
- Dr Vikram A Sarabhai
- Dr APJ Abdul Kalam
- August 15, 1969
- Aryabhata
- Chandryaan-3
- Vikram
- Pragyan
- Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh
- Mangalyaan

# Dream of delight

By JUI BHATTACHARYA

There is despair and painful hurt  
From bottom of my heart  
I pray and beg to the god  
Save your wonder creation, our world  
Please help to stop the whimper cry  
Besides you and me  
Let us try, let us try, let us try.

Open the window to spread the love  
Like a soft feather of a white turtle dove  
In the beautiful place children can grow  
To bring the peace and harmony for tomorrow  
Dazzling sunshine will sparkle on the sky  
Besides you and me  
Let us try, let us try, let us try.

Strong willpower stops the destruction  
Ray of new dawn will appear on the horizon  
Day will pass with your noble sacrifice  
Open your eyes to welcome the paradise  
Do not let the hope to die  
Besides you and me  
Let us try, let us try, let us try.

Let the flowers bloom with colour to glow  
Roll out the happiness with shining of snow  
Contagious smile are reasons for cheer,  
Say yes, of your kind tenderness my dear,  
And a warm thank you ---- not goodbye,  
Besides you and me  
Let us try, let us try, let us try.

# আসললক্ষ্মী

## জুইভট্টাচার্য

হোকনা তার নাকটা ভীষণ বোচা  
হলোই বা তার নামটা বাজে, পেঁচা --  
তবুও আজকে সবাই পূজবে তারে  
আসছে সে আজ সবার ঘরে ঘরে  
মা লক্ষ্মী আসছেন তাকেই সঙ্গে করে |

সৌভাগ্যের স্থায়ীত্ব পেতে ধনদায়নির আরাধনা  
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উল্লুধ্বনি শঙ্খ ধ্বনি করি বন্দনা  
পূর্ণিমার কিরণে আলোকিত চাঁদের জ্যেৎম্না  
সদা থেকে মোর ঘরে করি এই প্রার্থনা |

ওদিকে লক্ষ্মীছাড়া লক্ষ্মীরা ঘুরে মরে  
ছুটে চলে ট্রেনএ বাসএ রাজপথে  
ক্ষিদের আগুনে জ্বলা পেটের গহ্বরে  
ছুড়ে দিতে এক মুঠো খাবারের দলা  
সরসব্যঞ্জন শব্দটা যেন বরো অচেনা |

আজ লক্ষ্মীর দেহ নিয়ে দর কষা কোষী  
হোকনা সে ছোটো শিশু কিংবা পূর্ণ নারী  
কুসুমিত হয়েনি কত যে মঞ্জুরী  
মাতৃত্বের অপমানে সামাজিকতার শিকল  
প্রতিমার সম্মানে থাকেনা বাহানা |

ধর্ষিতা লক্ষ্মী অন্ধকারে লুকিয়ে বেড়ায়  
সমাজের বিকৃত বিশ প্রশ্নবানে  
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রক্তমাংসের লক্ষ্মীর পূজো --  
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অলক্ষ্মীর তকমা কেনো যে লাগে গায়ে ?  
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সিংহাসনে বসা অচলা তুমি তো অন্তর্যামী  
করো আলোকিত জ্ঞানের পূর্ণিমায়  
আসল লক্ষ্মীর পূজো হোক বা নাহোক  
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