



RI District 3291

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PRESIDENT □ DR SUDHA CHAUDHARY

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Spectrum

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SECRETARY □ KUSUM CHAMARIA

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Rotaract club celebrates Durgotsav with aged persons



RCSLMK members are in front of the Durga idol being worshipped at the Home

Rotaract club of Salt Lake Metropolitan, in association with, among others, Rotaract clubs of Calcutta and Calcutta Metropolitan, with support of RCSLMK, held and celebrated Durga Puja with the boarders of 'Santiner' meaning abode of peace, also known as 'Apanjan' meaning own inhabitants, a Government Home for old political sufferers and destitute at South Garia in a quiet and relatively clean environment.

Whereas the Home has sanctioned capacity to accommodate 96 boarders in a well spread out campus that has two four-storied buildings of equal size respectively for men and women, presently the home has only 31 female and 22 male residents, some of them are physically handicapped and almost all of them have no link with their families. Such people tend to feel at home with other boarders and find the soul of lost family through intermittent intimate trips and celebrations with them by Rotaract members.

Since recent retirement of the allotted Medical Practitioner, the ailing boarders need to visit local Health Center and thereafter referred Hospitals in Calcutta, about 30 KM away, with attendant allotted by Government. Coordination to effect such services cause significant delay in treatment.

The Durgotsav celebration included, among others, offering breakfast, lunch and dinner to each boarder and their guests and holding recreational events for the boarders over and above regular worshipping of Durga idol without compromising rituals. Rotaractors, having limited resources work hard for hours to optimize the celebration and happiness of residents.

Shuvanil, president Rotaract club of Salt Lake Metropolitan invited RCSLMK members on the 8th day (Astami) of celebration. A team of five lead by President Dr Sudha comprising of club Secretary Kusum, members Dr Saktirupa and Umadas and Ann Tanima reached the place through Salt Lake, Kasba, BP Township, Narendrapur, Harinavi and Subhasgram.

The place in front of idol of Durga with accompanied gods and goddesses was ready with 108 lamps laid out in form of 'ॐ', an auspicious word that sounds as 'OM' and 108 lotus for upcoming Sandhi puja, scheduled at 2.30 PM. It is said that lord Ram before war against mighty king Ravan worshipped Durga with lotuses and lamps 108 each at this 'Sandhi' (meaning changeover) moment from Astami to Nabami, i.e., from the 8th lunar to 9th ..



President Dr. Sudha serves Polao among the section of residents of the home whereas Rotaractor Sushmita, member of Rotaract club of Calcutta, a Delhi University PG student, helps Ann Tanima serve Paneer. Far: Rotaractor Jyothi of Rotaract club of Salt Lake Metropolitan, a BEd student explains PP Umadas the past and upcoming events being / to be hosted at the premises as a part of celebration

The team met and talked to boarders to learn their quality of lives and constraints and served sumptuous vegetarian food prepared and offered to Gods and Goddesses.



Past President and current Zonal and club Secretary Kusum serves Polao among the section of residents of the home

The team, thereafter, had lunch with some of the boarders while the rotaractors served.

The team met Rotaractors present and felt overwhelmed by their dedication and hard work without compromising emotions and sentiments.

In spite of emotional attachment evolved, the team felt necessity to leave, as it was felt that the pending activities of the celebration was getting compromised because of the presence of the team.

A carton full of cookies and wafers was offered by the team for use during upcoming days of celebration.

The team commends club Secretary Kusum for effective coordination that ensured an emotional journey with great memoirs.

The Celestial Contradictions in Durgapuja

The story of transformation of celebration of pleasing the mightiers to celebration of harmony within community



Divinity and Devotion of highest order in Durgapuja of 2019

The Indian texts with mentions of Durga puja, the most celebrated festival irrespective of caste, creed and religion, marked by scripture recitations, performance arts, revelry, gift giving, family visits, feasting, and public processions, are inconsistent. A legend found in some versions of the Puranas to be a spring festival, while the Devi-Bhagavata Purana and two other Shakta Puranas mention it to be an autumn festival.

The Ramayana manuscripts are also inconsistent. Versions of Ramayana found in north, west, and south of the Indian subcontinent describe Rama to be remembering Surya (the Hindu sun god) before his battle against Ravana, but the Bengali manuscripts of Ramayana, such as the 15th-century manuscript by Krttivasa, mention Rama to be worshipping Durga. According to some scholars, the worship of the fierce warrior goddess Durga, and her darker and more violent manifestation Kali, became popular in the Bengal region during and after the medieval era.

Here are some more visible contradictions:

Durga, aka Uma is daughter, coming home, with her kids, on her annual visit to mother Menaka. Simultaneously, she is also locked in fierce combat with a asura king,

Her 4 grown-up children coolly stand while she alone fights the buffalo-asura.

Mahishashuramardini, whom the gods conjure up to kill mahishasura, is a soroshi (16 year old girl). Obviously, she cannot be the 40-something mother-warrior with four 20+ children depicted in the pandals and yet, she is!

These 'observations' are not new.

As per Jawahar Sircar, ex-bureaucrat and noted columnist:

"...The irony of how Durga dragged the carcass of the buffalo-demon to her mother's home is, however, not missed out by a 19th century poet like Dasharathi Ray (1806-57) whose Menaka screams at her husband Himalaya aka Giri:

'কে হে গিরি, কে সে আমার প্রাণের উমা নন্দিনী
সঙ্গে তো আসলে কে এলো রণরঙ্গিনী?'

("Oh Giri! Where is my daughter, Uma?

Who have you brought into my courtyard?

Who is this ferocious female warrior?")

Rashikchandra Ray, another 19th century poet, also echoes Menaka's sentiment:

'গিরি, কার কন্ঠহার আনিলে গিরিপুরে?

এ তো সে উমা নয় - ভয়ঙ্করী হে, দশভুজা মেয়ে'

"Giri! Who is this woman in my house?

She cannot be my darling Uma,

This terrifying ten-armed woman!



Kumaripuja of 2019 by RK Mission monks at Belur Matth

The Kumari Puja (literally 'worship of a young virgin / pre-marriage girl'), an integral part of the modern Durga Puja and usually done on the 8th day of the autumn festival, lie in the medieval tantrik texts such as Yogini-tantra and Kularnava-tantra, and the mythologies described in Devipurana.

However, its modern popularity rests on Swami Vivekananda who, in 1898, while on a trip to Kashmir, was overwhelmed to see the divinity inherent in the 4-year old daughter of a poor Muslim boatman and requested the father to allow him to worship her.

It was a perfect blend of the ancient Shakti ideas and the inclusive ideals of his guru that 'yatra jeeva tatra Shiva' i.e. 'wherever there is life, there is god' and, in one symbolic stroke based on love and respect, it broke past the barriers of religion / class / caste / gender / language and provinces.

Over the past century, the Belur matth has kept this tradition alive, and now it has become increasingly popular (with perhaps a bit of show-off too) across several pujas of Bengal..

Durgapuja, a socio-religious cum political event

The origin of the community puja can be credited to the twelve friends of Guptipara in Hoogly, West Bengal, who collaborated and collected contributions from local residents to conduct the first community puja called the '**baro-yaari puja, or the 'twelve-pal' puja**, in 1790. The baro-yaari puja was brought to Kolkata in 1832 by Raja Harinath of Cossimbazar, who performed the Durga Puja at his ancestral home in Murshidabad from 1824 to 1831, notes **Somendra Chandra Nandy in 'Durga Puja: A Rational Approach'** published in The Statesman Festival, 1991.

"The baro-yaari puja gave way to the sarbajanan or community puja in 1910, when the **Sanatan Dharmotsahini Sabha** organized the first truly community puja in Baghbazar in Kolkata with full public contribution, public control, and public participation. Now the dominant mode of Bengali Durga Puja is the 'public' version,"

British Involvement in Durga Puja

The research paper further indicates "high level British officials regularly attend Durga Pujas organized by influential Bengalis and British soldiers actually participate in the pujas, have praised, and even salute the deity, but 'the most amazing act of worship was performed by the East India Company itself: in 1765 it offered a thanksgiving Puja, no doubt as a politic act to appease its Hindu subjects, on obtaining the Diwani of Bengal.' (**Sukanta Chaudhuri, ed. Calcutta: the Living City, Vol. 1: The Past**) And it is reported that even the Company auditor-general John Chips organized Durga Puja at his Birbhum office. In fact, the full official participation of the British in the Durga Puja continued till 1840, when a law was promulgated by the government banning such participation."

Beyond being an art festival and a socio-religious event, Durga puja has also been a political event with regional and national political parties having sponsored Durga puja celebrations.

We meet 2nd and 4th Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

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In 2019, West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee announced a grant of ₹25,000 to all community organized Durga pujas in the state.

In 2019, Kolkata's Durga puja was nominated by the Indian government for the 2020 UNESCO Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Durga puja also stands to be politically and economically significant. The committees organizing Durga puja in Kolkata have close links to politicians. Politicians patronize the festival by making donations or helping raise money for funding of community pujas, or by marking their presence at puja events and inaugurations. The grant of ₹25,000 to puja organizing committees in West Bengal by a debt-ridden state government was reported to cost a budget a ₹70 crores. The state government also announced an additional grant of ₹5,000 to puja organizing committees fully managed by women alone, while also announcing a twenty-five per-cent concession on total electricity bills for puja pandal. The government had made a grant of ₹10,000 each to more than 20,000 puja organizing committees in the state, in 2018.

A 2013 report by ASSOCHAM states West Bengal's Durga puja to be a ₹25,000 crores worth economy, expected to grow at the compound annual growth rate of about 35 per-cent. Economic slowdowns in India, such as in 2019, have hence affected corporate sponsorships and puja budgets for public celebrations.



RK Mission monks worship a little girl at Belur Matth, 2018

Source: Subhamoy Das, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Somendra Chandra Nandy, Jawahar Sircar, Anirban Mitra

Rotarian Code of Conduct

Here is the updated Rotarian Code of Conduct; the last aspect has been a welcomed and long awaited addition in Jan 2019:

As a Rotarian, I will:

- Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
- Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
- Use my professional skills through Rotary to: mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
- Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians.

Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities, report any suspected harassment, and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment

Building homes with Habitat for Humanity

Posted on October 9, 2019 by Tim Schilds, member of the Rotary Club of Dawson Creek Sunrise, Canada



Of all the adventures my wife Sally and I have been lucky enough to experience in our 31-year Rotary career, I think our time in Sri Lanka building homes with local families and a team from Canada has to rank as the most humbling and satisfying. We were invited to join the team by our friend, fellow Rotarian and team leader Darryll White from the Rotary Club of Edmonton West.



The team was part of a Habitat for Humanity Global Village trip to Baticcaloa, Sri Lanka. Sally and I are not very handy when it comes to construction; in fact I would not recommend either of us for your next home renovation project! We do, however, come with a great deal of enthusiasm and a strong desire to serve others. Darryll assured us that our limited skills would be welcome and would not be a hindrance to getting the job done. As it turned out we were in charge of mixing and hauling cement for floors which, although hard work in a hot and humid climate, fell within our skill set.



Meeting and working with the homeowners was quite simply beyond words. Every one of them was hardworking and in a situation that made it difficult for them to provide adequate housing for their family. Without exception, every family was appreciative of our help and did their best to show that

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appreciation. It was very humbling to have them serve mid-morning tea in their best cups or bring us a bottle of pop that we knew they could not afford, as a show of appreciation. It was very gratifying to know we were helping these families move towards a better future. The homes we worked on were very small by North American standards (about 600 square feet), but they were much larger than the one room shack most families were living in and would provide a healthier and comfortable home life.



On our first day we were welcomed by the elders of the village at an opening ceremony and blessed with flowers. Throughout our time, we always had a group of children following us and wanting to play and dance with us.



The villagers were very eager to share their culture. We were invited into homes to learn how meals were prepared and when one homeowner found out a member of our team had never tasted fresh coconut, he jumped on his bike and came back with five fresh coconuts off the tree and chopped them open with a machete for us to taste.



Meeting, working with and getting to know a team of fellow Canadians was a great part of our experience. There is a lot of bonding that takes place as you sweat throughout the day! Our team was from all across Canada and had quite different backgrounds and life experiences. An important part of the build was getting to know and adjust to how everyone worked.

I believe we have made some long term friends and many of them we will continue to keep in contact with.



An important part of every adventure is to travel around the host country a bit and get to know the people and the culture. It is also a great way to help support the local economy. We did this as part of the trip and then added some locations of our own. The people in Sri Lanka are friendly and eager to make sure you enjoy their country and the food is simply to die for!

Birthdays of Rotary members in October

Sudip Mukherjee Governor Elect, on October 1, 2019
Sanjay Agarwal on October 5, 2019
Ansul Agrawal on October 7, 2019
Ravindraprakash Sehgal, past Governor on October 14, 2019
Sekhar Mehta, 2021-22 RI President on October 14, 2019
PP Dr Chitra Ray on October 15, 2019
Kamal Seth, past Governor on October 30, 2019

Anniversary of Rotary members in October

Spouse Mamta & Governor Ajay Agarwal on October 9, 2019

October is Economic and Community Development month

UNWIND

Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.

~Doug Larson (English middle-distance runner who won gold medals at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, 1902-1981)

TAILPIECE

- Truth no 1: Nobody is real in this world except Mother.
- Truth no 2: A poor person has no friends.
- Truth no 3: People do not like good thoughts; they like good looks
- Truth no 4: People respect the money not the person
- Truth no 5: The person you like the most, will hurt you the most
- Truth no 6: Truth is simple, but, the moment you try to explain it, it becomes difficult
- Truth no 7: When you are happy you enjoy the music, but when you are sad, you understand the lyrics.
- Truth no 8: In life two things define you: "Your patience" when you have nothing and "Your attitude" when you have everything.