

### Durga Puja in Bangkok .....

Durga Puja is the most important festival of Bengalis. The familiar sound of Dhak, Dhunuchi nachh, the mild fragrance of Shiuli, gives a familiar tug at every Bengali heart. Bharati, the Bengali association of Thailand has been celebrating this auspicious occasion since 1991 with a vision to bring together the feelings, emotions and culture of Bengalis staying abroad, for which they lament.

Clusters of Bengalis associated way back in 1982 with an idea of sharing views and sitting for an "Adda". Though we get traces of bengalis coming to Bangkok even before that, but the whole concept of "association" with a noble cause of "celebration" came into limelight only after 1982. The acitivities and existance of "Bharati" was limited to some extent with a handful of members at that time. But finally in the nineties, with more number of Bengalis joining in, the association flourished.

In a continued effort to bring back the happiness of cultural and traditional festival, Bharati has been conducting Durga Pujas in this land of smiles since then and this year is no exception. Amongst many cultural activities of Bharati, Durga Puja is celebrated with equal pomp and grandeur in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand as well. Although it is primarily a festival of the Bengalis only, `the considerable Bengali community of Thailand celebrates the festival these four days with great enthusiasm, in which other communities also do participate. Durga Puja in Bangkok is marked by various cultural programmes and social gatherings, apart from the rituals performed in the Puja.



Unlike previous years, the venue of the Durga Puja was changed from Thai Bharat Cultural Lodge to the more centralized and convenient location of India Thai Chamber of Commerce. There were several meetings before the association took over the idea of having it in the new venue which was unanimously decided. We are thankful to the Committee members of India Thai Chamber of Commerce and RASOI in making this puja a successful occassion.



This year most of the active members participated in much enthusiasm and soon everything was organized in no time. Spontaneous involvement by selected members in contributing contents and Advertisements for this souvenir needs special mention. We are thankful to all the advertisers for their encouragement and support. We are also thankful to all those who have shared their cultural abilities through this magazine by contributing contents.

Our apologies to the members whom we have missed out by name in the "Bengali Member List" or

Acknowledging their efforts and contributions and request to be pardoned for this uninetentional error of omission.

We all pray to Devi Durga to shower her blessings to all our members and their families for happiness and prosperity.



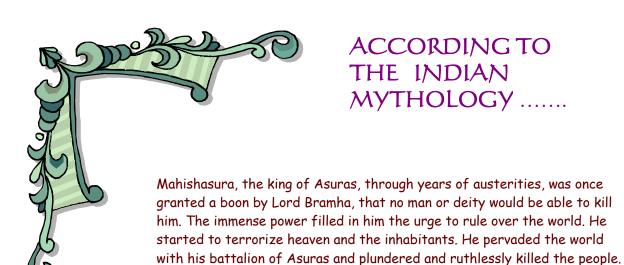
# MYTHS OF DEVI DURGA

Durga Puja, the festival of Bengalis is the worship of 'Shakti' or the divine power. Most of the religious celebrations in the world have legends surrounding them. The fables are generally the fight between the evil and the good, the dark forces eventually succumbing to the divine. Worship of Goddess Durga is based on myths where Durga symbolizes the divine power.



### What the epics say - 'Akalbodhan'

In the 'Ramayana', as it goes, Rama went to 'Lanka' to rescue his abducted wife, Sita, from the grip of Ravana, the king of the Demons in Lanka. Before starting for his battle with Ravana, Rama wanted the blessings of Devi Durga. He came to know that the Goddess would be pleased only if she is worshipped with one hundred 'NeelKamal' or blue lotuses. Rama, after travelling the whole world, could gather only ninety nine of them. He finally decided to offer one of his eyes, which resembled blue lotuses. Durga, being pleased with the devotion of Rama, appeared before him and blessed him. The battle started on the 'Saptami' and Ravana was finally killed on the 'Sandhikshan' i.e. the crossover period between Ashtami (the next day) and Navami (the day after). Ravana was cremated on Dashami. Since the period of this worship was different from the conventional period (during the spring - 'Basanta'), this puja is also known as 'Akal-Bodhan' or a worship (Bodhan) in an unconventional time (A-Kaal).

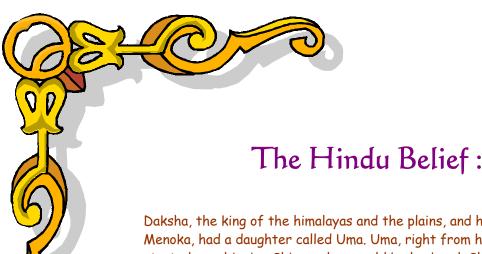


usurped the throne.

The Gods scared and unable to combat him, requested Lord Shiva, Lord Bramha, Lord Vishnu to stop Mahishasura's tyranny. In answer, the three Gods combined their divine energy and summoned up a feminine form so brilliantly glaring that it illuminated the heavens. From the glow emerged Devi Durga, a beautiful yellow woman with ten arms riding a lion. Despite her grace she bore a menacing expression, for Durga was born to kill. Fully grown and beautiful Durga was immediately armed by the gods and sent forth against Mahishasura bearing in each of hands. of their her ten symbols divine power. Vishnu's discus; Shiva's trident; Varuna's conchshell; Agni's flaming dart; Vayu's bow; Surya's quiver and arrow; Yama's iron rod; Indra's thunderbolt; Kubera's club and a garland of snakes from Shesha and a lion as a charger from Himalayas. A fierce battle took place. Finally when Mahishasura in the guise of a buffalo charged against Durga, the Devi beheaded the buffalo and from it emerge Mahishasura in his original form. Durga pierced his chest with the trident and relieved the world from the evil power. That is why she is 'Durgatinashini Durga', our mother goddess who destroys the evil, protects her devotees and establishes peace and prosperity on earth.

Chaos and anarchy reigned. Gods were driven from heaven and Mahishasura





Daksha, the king of the himalayas and the plains, and his wife, Menoka, had a daughter called Uma. Uma, right from her childhood, started worshipping Shiva as her would be husband. Shiva, being pleased with the worship of Uma, came to marry her. Daksha did not like this tiger-skin clad groom with ash & dirt spread over all of his body. Uma got married to Shiva but was prevented by her father from moving to Kailash, the abode of Shiva.

Daksha, later on, arranged for a 'yagna' where everyone except Shiva was invited. Uma, feeling ashamed of the behaviour of her father and shocked by the attitude metted towards her husband, went on fast and finally died. Shiva came to know about this and went to Daksha's house. He lifted the body of Uma on his shoulders and started dancing madly. With the supreme power dancing, the World was on the verge of destruction. Narayana, another SuperGod, came forward as a saviour and used his 'Chakra' to cut the Body of Uma into pieces. Those pieces started falling off from the shoulder of the dancing Shiva into different parts of the World. Shiva was finally pacified when the last piece fell off from his shoulder. Narayana revived Uma for a new life. Daksha, who was extremely sorry about his misdeeds, prayed for mercy and was finally forgiven. The places where the pieces had fallen are known as the 'Shakti Piths' or energy pits, few of these places being Kalighat in Calcutta, Kamakshya near Guwahati among others. Ever since peace was restored, Uma, with her four children, Ganesh, Kartick, Saraswati and Laxmi and with her

two 'sakhis' - Jaya and Bijaya, comes to visit her parent's home each year during the season of 'Sharat' or autumn when Durga Puja is celebrated.



### Undefiable Devine Powers .....



We worship Durga as the mother goddess, the epitome of 'Shakti' (divine power), to deliver us from the evil and bring peace and prosperity in our lives. But the most interesting part of Durga Puja is that, instead of placing Durga on a high alter and worshipping her from a distance the Bengalis embrace her in their hearts and make her an inseparable member of the family. We welcome Durga to the earth as our daughter who comes at her parents' home for her annual visits. Durga stays for four days-Shashti, Saptami, Ashtami and Nabami along with her children, Ganesha, Laxmi, Kartik and Saraswati and sets for her husband's abode on Vijaya Dashami.

Durga's mode of journey to the earth is detailed in scriptures. The modes, an elephant, a horse, palanguin, boat all signify luck or omen which influence the life on earth. The elephant signifies prosperity and good harvest while journey on a horse back indicates drought, a palanguin spells wide spread epidemic and the boat suggests flood and misery. The worship of Devi Durga however owes its origin to Sree Rama. He hastily worships Durga, the goddess of 'Shakti', just before he sets for Lanka to rescue Sita from Ravana. According to Puranas, King Suratha, used to worship the goddess Durga in spring. Thus Durga Puja was also known as Basanti Puja. But Rama prepones the Puja and worships the Devi in autumn and that is why it is known as 'Akal Bodhon' or untimely worship. Over the years, this Akal Bodhon has become the tradition among Bengalis (Bengalis) and in Bengal.



#### Look out the window stranger

Look out the window stranger, What do you see? A violet screen A row of keys

> You say you are connected To the world far beyond, You say you can be Anywhere with anyone.

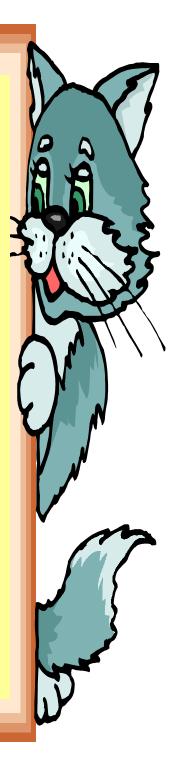
Look out the window stranger And you will see, A robin at the sidewalk Flying free.

> Look out the window stranger And you might see, The tree swayed a little By yesterday's storms.

You say you know this But have you ever seen, The green shoot pushing away To life and enternity.

> Look out the window stranger And you will see. Your eyes are prisoners From the world that is left to see.

BY: SRISTI ROY





#### Wisdom speaks ....

The worshipper addresses his songs to man the ideal, and says: "Temple and mosques obstruct thy path, and I fail to hear thy call or to move, when the teachers and priests angrily crowd around me." According to a worshipper, Love is the magic stone that transmutes by it's touch, greed into sacrifice. He goes on to say: "For the sake of this Love, Heaven longs to become Earth and Gods to become Man."

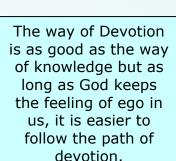
- Rabindranath Tagore

The mind is an object of perception like the external world, the atman the real seer, remain unknown.

- Pantanjali

That which we call the Hindu Religion, is really the eternal religion because it embraces all others.

- Shri Aurobindo



- Sri Ramakrishna

Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find fulfillment. This is the promise of the creator.

\_ The Bhagwad Gita

Do not judge others, for when another is judge, vou yourself is



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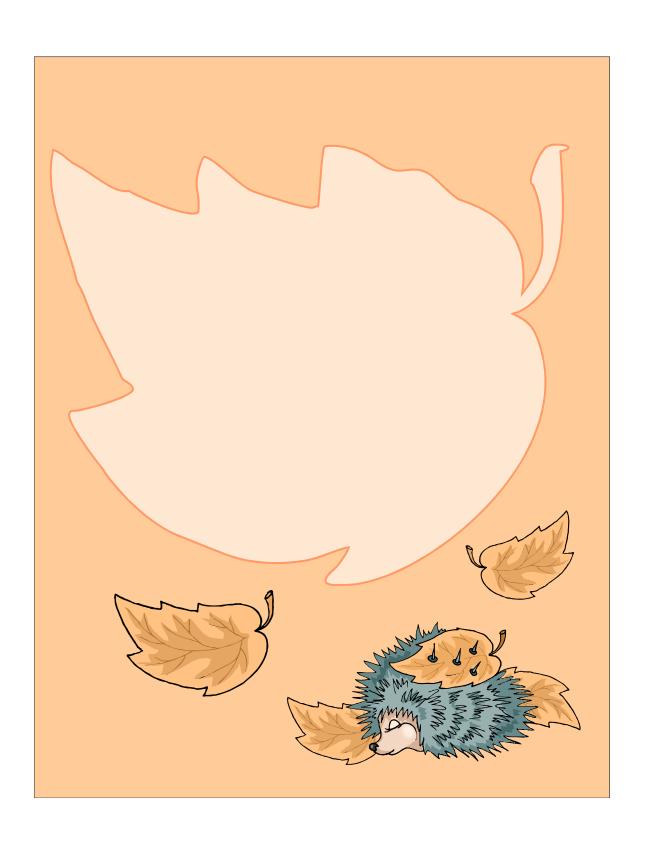
#### GIVE PEACE A CHANCE ......

The world today is heading for a WAR. But majority of the people today, are crying for peace, tolerance and well-being. The two wars before have brought us only destruction and sadness. I am only a small person in the big world but I can pray and hope that this Durga Puja – MA DURGA will hear my prayer.

I pray for PEACE and LOVE. May goodness prevail among people and the World stands united as one BIG FAMILY.

MA DURGA, Please hear my prayer.

Rhea Roy Choudhury 8 years old



#### IT CALLS FOR CELEBRATION

It was just a passing fantasy. Or so I thought.
In the melee of thousands, I found delight
Spread across the countenance of all,
As they glided through the streets in blissful
togetherness,
Merging with the spirit of Saptami.



Reason could not possibly fathom this union of disparity,

Inherent differences forgotten, the soul embracing the surface,

The searching for an identity supplanted with purity of the moment,

The day tangled in the vortex of troubled differences Goes along hand in hand with only the exposed "ananda" of soul.

Contradictory. Yes, that is what first comes to mind,

This apparent mirth all but a sham 
Will give away to daily strifes of class existence.

The question of making a living, reasoning out job
requirements,

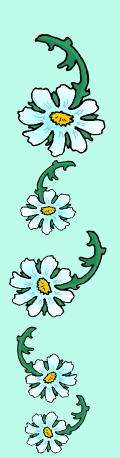
Questioning the meaning of life, of death, of humanity.

The gratification of the occasion takes over all.

Standing alone in the midst of commotion, I feel it.

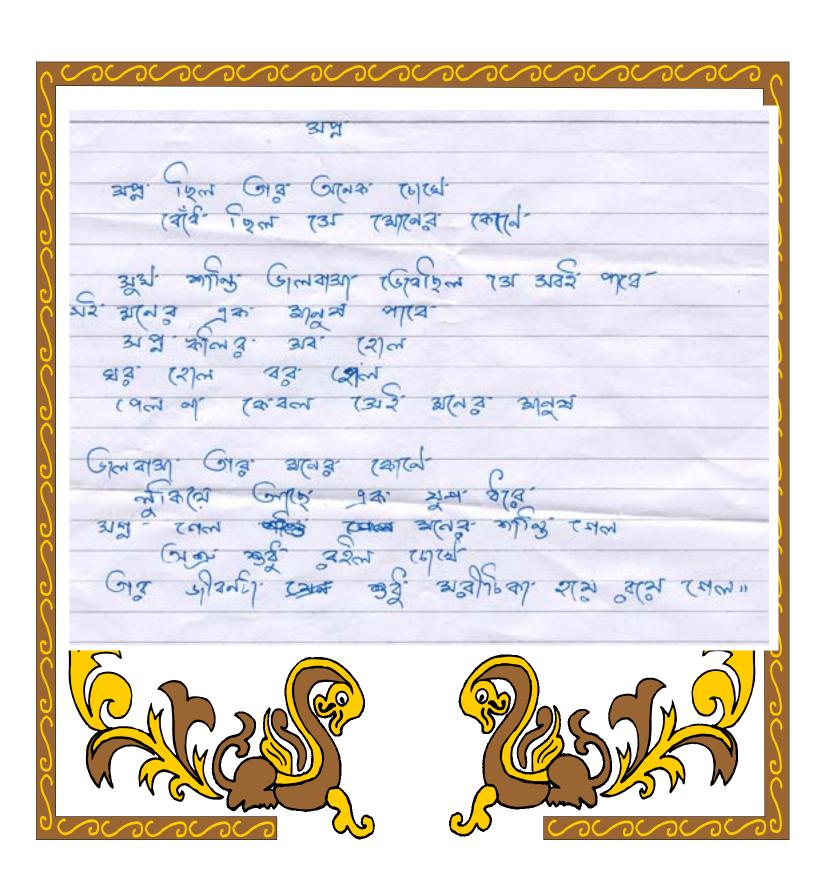
Attaining peace in this moment,
I could exchange a lifetimes glory for this instant of eternity - This moment, for the next four days

This moment, for the next four days.





4 years old



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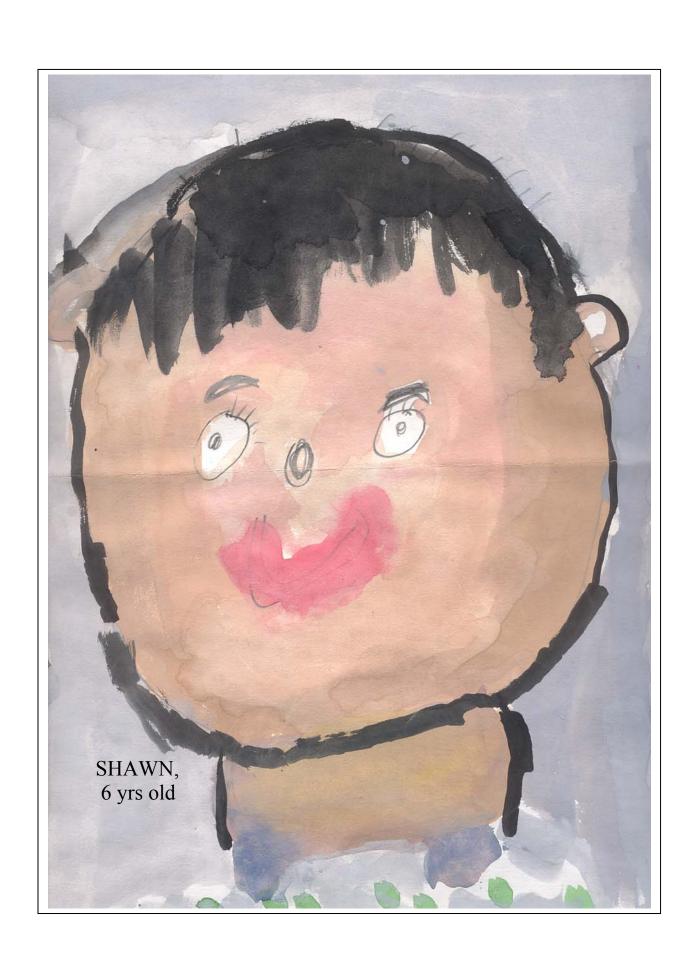
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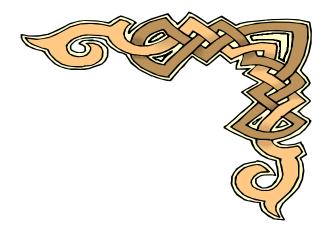
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The autumn clouds go floating by-The sun shines down in all his glory... The air is crisp and filled with rhythm As the Dhaak spins out the story.. Of a daughter coming home today To stay awhile among her folks at home To show her children the paths she walked as a child The fields she used to roam... But she is no ordinary village belle Looking at her face you'd never guess Beneath the indulgent smile of motherhood Hides a warrior of unparalleled prowess! But for the four days she will be here She'll be the daughter -nothing more than that We'll make her feel at home and feed her delicacies So she'll take back fond memories of when on her mother's lap she sat. But the four days go away too fast And leave us with a sense of loss And tears in our eyes we stand along the road Where we know the family will cross! The sadness and the tears that flow remind us all the while There will be another year

- RITU



-A beacon at the end of a long mile.



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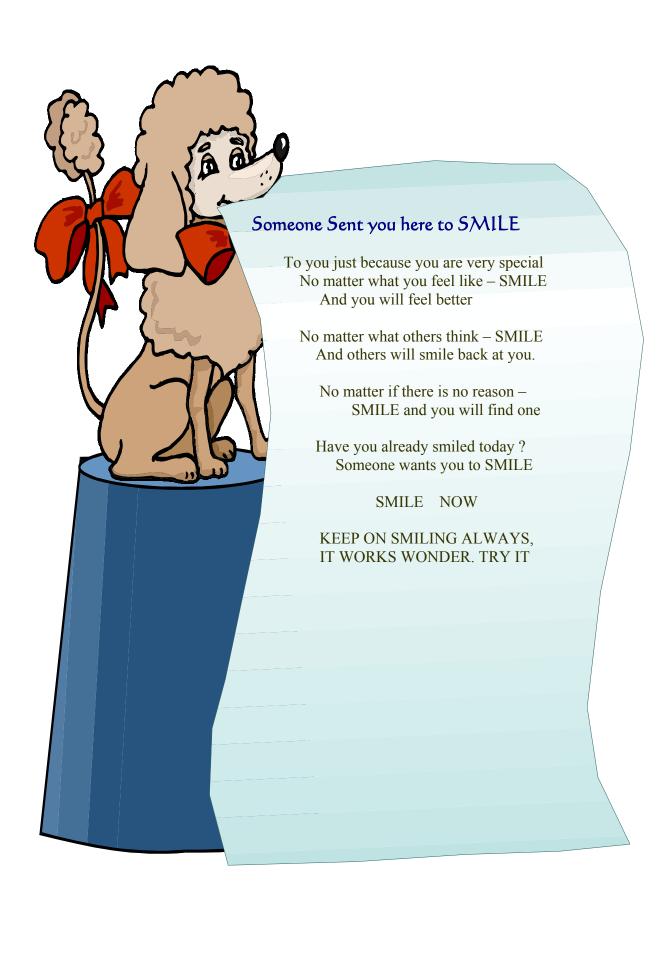
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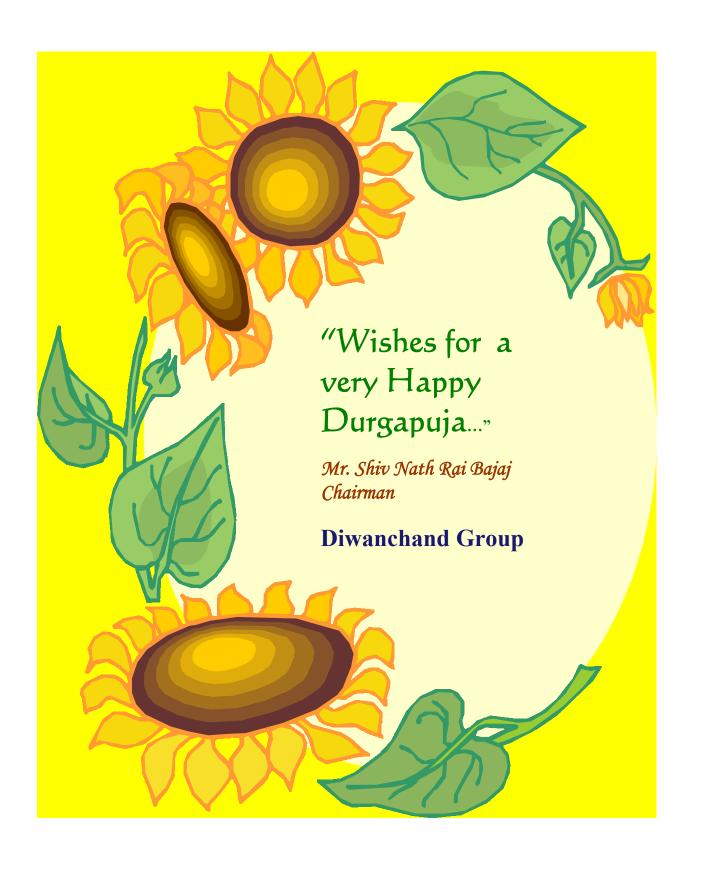


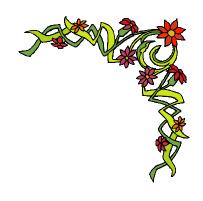
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