

## Bending mores, setting trends

A gender-bender of a celebration and another defying caste bias will remain as benchmarks for this year's Durga Puja that will be remembered for rampant pandal hopping in face of another Covid-19 wave. Nandini Bhowmik's life had already been fictionalised in the movie 'Brahma Janen Gopon Kommoti'. This year she along with three other priestesses -- Ruma Roy, Seymanti Banerjee and Paulomi Chakraborty—conducted the five days' puja and aarti breaking into the domain of male priests. The 66 Pally Puja committee had decided to bring this change after the death of its veteran male priest. The four women are all scholars and have complete command on scriptures. Professors in their respective fields, they fitted the bill of a worshiper of the Goddess in every possible way. They had aptly themed the Puja as Maayer Haate Maayer Abahon. While one committee was celebrating woman empowerment of a different kind, Makhla Maniktala Sarvajaneen Durgatsav Committee, Serampore, felicitated the local garbage cleaners who had regularly cleaned and sanitized the locality during the first and second wave of Covid. Not only did they inaugurate the puja maintaining all protocols, the eight cleaners were received with mementos, sweets, along with an honorarium for their continued service. These two pujas spread the word of inclusivity in their own ways and set the ball rolling for the society to be more generous, open minded and committed to the Goddess.

---Snehal Chowdhury

## Top Five : From renaissance to pure art

Durga Puja is awaited with baited breath here in Bengal. Various pandals with different themes pops-up across the city. Team SNU Post picked the top five pujas in Kolkata based on two criteria: Covid protocols and Theme.

**Babu Bagan:** They come up with unique themes exhibiting Bengal's diversity. To mark 200 years of Bengal Renaissance, the club designed its pandal like a library showcasing prominent figures and books of Bengal. The pandal showcased the whole spectrum of Bengal's cultural identity over the years with a traditional idol adorning the premises.

**Barisha Sporting Club:** Barisha Sporting Club is known for its activism-based themes. This year they chose the theme "Bhager Ma" or "Division of mother", highlighting the alleged negative bias attached with the proposed NRC. In a rather unique concept, the idol of Goddess Durga here was of a mother with her four children, being taken to a detention camp in a cage. Many of the props used, were collected from the partition era.

**Badamtala Ashar Sangha:** Its a must see for revelers on the Gariahat-Rashbehari stretch. This time their theme was "Asha" or "Hope". It depicted how mothers are the actual Durga, bringing hope to our grim lives amidst the pandemic. It showed a mother holding a Diya with her children with a painting of Goddess Durga in the background completing the sentimental creation that touched hearts.

**Tala Prattay:** Tala Prattay has been able to catch the imagination of the pandal hoppers with their unique theme. This year



Four priestesses conducting puja at 66 pally Pic - Internet

the theme of Unrestricted 2021 talks about breaking free from the chains self-imposed lockdowns and social isolation induced by Covid 19 raging through the world. It talks of renewed freedom through an open all-encompassing structure with deity in its cusp.

**Arjunpur Amra Sobai Club :** This puja caught the eyes of pandal hoppers with its

theme "Somorpon". Renowned instalation artist Bhabatosh Sutar was the maker. The theme acted as a message of respect from the Gods to humans, for our resilience and valor against all odds. Various mini clay idols depicting 33 crore Hindu Gods and Goddesses adorned the pandal compound making it a spacious visual spectacle.

--Sayan Guin

## New normal norms in times of pandemic

Even with Covid-19 on the loose, Kolkatans engaged in the puja revelry casting a blind eye towards the virus that has held the world to ransom for over a year and half.

This despite the West Bengal government extending the Covid-19 restrictions till 30th October, albeit with certain relaxations relating to the movement of people and vehicles between 11pm and 5am till October 20. Emboldened, the people thronged the streets like swarming populace of ants, pouring out of every nook and cranny, cramming pandals throwing caution to the wind.

The Calcutta High Court gave a set of directives which were mostly a repeat of last year, making it mandatory for the organisers to stop people from entering the pandals and keeping a generous supply of masks and sanitizers handy. With vaccination drive on, the court though permitted Pushpanjali and Sindoor-Khela only for the fully inoculated. However, it underlined that only 45-60 people would be allowed for the rituals in the big pandals and 10-15 for the smaller ones.

The court also made it mandatory to put up barricades outside the marquees and also asked the committee members to keep out gathering. But the roads of Kolkata were a frightening sight of lakhs of people walking shoulder to shoulder,



Revellers at Sreebhum Pic - Internet

jostling and merry-making in an apparent game of self-destruction.

So much so, that Sreebhum that had created a replica of the Burj Khalifa had to close doors to the visitors, while many others saw a never-ending beeline even in the dead of the night. The Union Health Ministry had already warned of the Covid third wave threats, if protocols were

not properly followed during the festive season. However, the general public was in no mood to show any restrain. The virus responsible for the disease had been mutating and the third wave of the pandemic could come any moment, the health department warned.

"It's advisable for the elderly people, children and pregnant women to stay indoors and celebrate the puja online. If anyone has cold and fever, the person should go on isolation," the department advisory had said. It also advised puja organisers to engage people, preferably fully vaccinated ones, as volunteers. But if anything the week-long festivity showed utter disregard for the rules and a strange apathy towards masks and anything remotely associated with social distancing.

The Met department's forecast of rains from Maha Ashtami was the only hope to keep the people indoors. But that too snuffed out in the autumn sun and clear skies.

Bengal was torn in a war between caution and celebration. And in most cases the latter won.

-- Alex Arghya Adhikari

## The nine ragas of Maa Dashabhuja

For those who carry a tune in their hearts, they would for sure carry raga Durga this festive season.

It has been made immortal by a series of iconic composers from Ustad Baba Allauddin Khan and Pandit Bhimsen Joshi to Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

Mother Goddess is also synonymous with raga Bhairavi remembered for its mellifluous acceptance all year. Even today most classical concerts end with a Bhairavi as if it's a musical homage to the divine mother. Think of this raga and you just can't forget Rabindranath Tagore's songs "Amar raat pohalo sharodo prate" or "Tomar naam jaani ne sur jaani" or "Tomar mohon rupe".

It is believed that Goddess Durga appeared in nine avatars while defeating demon king Mahisashur. During Navratri Maa Durga is revered in all nine forms. Interestingly, each form has an accompanying raga.

On day one of Navaratri, she is worshiped as Sailaputri associated with raga Todi. On Dwitiya, when the goddess is worshiped as Brahmcharini, in her Sati form, it's raga Kalyani; on Tritiya she is Chandraghanta, a name derived from the crescent of the moon on Parvati's forehead, and aligned with raga Khambhoji.

On Chaturthi, her Kushmanda incarnation is associated with raga Bhairavi. Skandamata, on Panchami, is related to Raga Panthavarali or Pratap Varali.

On Shasthi, she is the Katyayani embodiment of Maa Durga and is in sync with raga Neelambari. Raga Bilahari is dedicated to her fiercest personification—Kalratri-- on Saptami. On Astami, Durga becomes Maha Gauri. Raga Gauri and its various variants are associated with this avatar.

Finally on Maha Navami, she is worshipped as Devi Siddhidatri to the sad yet celebratory tune of raga Basant. Durga Puja was originally performed during the spring as "Basanti Puja" and hence the association with this raga.

It was only after Lord Rama worshipped her for her blessings to defeat Ravana that it became an Autumnal festival.

---Joydeep Mukherjee

## Campus News



Sister Nivedita University celebrated the arrival of Maa Durga with a cultural afternoon "Durga Durgatinashini".

On this occasion three books—Bangaranga Bidhayani Durga, Banger Nayanabhirami and Agamoni Gaaner Kromodhara--- the first two of which were co-authored by HOD English Department SNU Prabal Roy Chowdhury and Joydeep Saha and the third penned by the latter, were ceremonially inaugurated by respected Chancellor of SNU Satyam Roychowdhury and Chobbis Ghonta Deputy Editor Moupia Nandy. The books have been published by Sabarna Sangrahashala, a museum about the Sabarna Roy Choudhury family developed by the Sabarna Roy Choudhury Paribar Parishad. The next presentation was the highlight of the day. Durga Durgatinashini—a cultural mesh of readings, recitations, chanting, songs and dance—was presented by the teachers and students of SNU. What made the performance even more special were readings by our Honourable Chancellor Satyam Roychowdhury and Vice-Chancellor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay.

Bengal's leading heroine Rituparna Sengupta, who graced the occasion, later sang a couple of lines of the new song she sung to the tune of renowned music director Bappi Lahiri.

The programme concluded with Dhunuchi dance to signal the arrival of the Goddess.



# Beautiful New Town



Balaka Abason Pic-Swapnil Haldar

This year most of the Durga Puja around Newtown were a low-key affair, but there were no cutting corners when it came to worshipping the goddess. Three blocks stood out when it came to making the Puja special. ALAKAI and CE Blocks and Balaka Abasan stood out among the rest. Balaka Abasan’s Durga puja has a soft spot in the hearts of local people in Newtown. In this pandemic, all covid guidelines were followed and maintained by the organizers of Balaka Abasan starting from the installation of a sanitization channel and supplying of masks. The theme was a replica of Mount Kailash and a massive sculpture of Lord Shiva. An in the sanctum sanctorum stood the idol of Devi Durga amid rhythmic chanting “Om Namah Shivay”. The idol looked blissful with the designed foliage behind it.

The pandal was spacious and decorated with idols of bulls and tridents, giving it the feel of a Shivalay. The New Town AE Block Puja was traditional with an Ek Chala Maa Durga adorning the marquee. While community lunch was a strict no-no this year, bhog was parcelled off to the members’ houses. The other blocks like New Town ALAKAI Block Association (comprising AL, AK and AI blocks) and CC Block engaged in a host of social welfare activities bringing smile to a lot of faces. Elita Garden Vista Cultural Association organised Chau Dance on the day of Mahalaya. The depiction of slaying of Mahisashur by Maa Durga brought out the collective hurrah and set off the tone for the forth coming pujas which was indeed a traditional affair.

--Swapnil Haldar



## Ranchi

Air has the essence of Shiuli in it. The delicate blossom of white and orange flower wafts through the autumn breeze. But so was the presence of the virus. This year also, empty Pandals and virtual celebrations happened during Durga Puja in Ranchi. For Bengalis, Durga puja is an emotion. They wait all year just for these 10 days. Nevertheless, this year’s pandemic and its resultant lockdown meant a muted Durga puja. The huge Pandals got canceled, major formations of Durga Maa were not allowed. The puja happened with a moderate budget, but there was no dearth in enjoyment. Committee members created websites for slot bookings—each 20-minute slot allowing 50 devotees in each slot in presence of volunteers, security and sanitization. The pujas went live on Facebook and Instagram, maintaining all the rules and regulations of COVID-19 making the puja safe, clean and shielded from Corona Virus. Durga Puja went off very well and left so many memories and emotions for everyone until next year!

--Devanshi Priya

## Mumbai

With the Covid virus still rampant, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) issued guidelines for Durga Puja and Navratri celebrations in Mumbai. The height of Durga idols

--Prayash Goswami

## Durga Puja across Bengal in its various forms



## Bardhaman

With the commencement of Autumn season, the sky becomes clear, Kash sways in wanton abundance. Bardhaman welcomed the Goddess with open arms, while keeping the pandemic protocols in mind. People were allowed to enter the pandals only with their masks on and it was made sure that devotees were properly sanitized. The reason we call Durga Puja, the biggest festival of India, is because along with worshipping the divine Goddess, we put special effort in showcasing our rich culture and creativity through beautiful pandals resplendent in myriad themes showcasing various issues. Marquees in Bardhaman were also set up in an open manner having colourful lights as their main attraction, so that people could see the pandals from outside and without gathering at one spot. Overall the Druga Puja in Bardhaman was celebrated in a grand manner after the frustrations of staying indoors last year. This time we all prayed to Maa Durga that may we clear all the negativity around and next time when she comes, she comes in a clear world free from all the pandemic.

---Akash Sarkar

## Hooghly

Durga Puja is a special time for every Bengali. From the pomp and show of big pandals to the simplicity of the home pujas, the excitement is unfathomable.

This year though the story has been quite different. Due to lack of funds and sponsors, the small pujas in Hooghly have suffered a lot. The Puja in my locality was one such puja. Our puja set in a quaint lane of Serampore faced tough time. Due to covid, neither sponsors were ready to splurge nor workers ready to put up the pandals or make the idols for a smaller budget. And this spread an atmosphere of gloom amongst the neighbours. The puja had to be organized and so we did it, but with a bare minimum budget and minimal decorations. A priest could not be hired due to lack of funds and thus a brahmin from the neighbourhood had to take up the responsibility of all the rituals. The organisers used tarp and pandal cloth for decoration. Bhog was cancelled as well. But we made sure that the rituals were completed with all sanctity as we prayed for better days next year.

---Dipita Saha



## Purulia

Autumn had come already. Scattered catkins informed us about the arrival of ‘Uma’. Purulia, a district of rough soil, had turned white in this season. Durga puja had a long tradition in the village Hutmura in this red soil district. This puja, which had been going on for 150 years, still has the touches of old-days rituals. This puja was started by the Ojhas and since then it had

become the only puja in the village. The puja was performed in the name of the King of Kashipur to settle their own rural disputes. At present, it was performed in the name of Maheswari, the only daughter of that dynasty. According to the rituals, the 5-day long puja is performed by Ojha family only. Every morning, Maa Durga was awakened to the lilting tunes of ‘Provati’. On Saptami morning, ‘Kolabou’ was bathed and the puja began with Maa Durga’s ‘Chokkhudan’. Aarti was performed every evening and different types of ‘Bhog’ were served there twice a day. ‘Sandhipujo’ in Astami and ‘Balidan’ in Navami were performed. ‘Doi-Chire’ is served after ‘Shantijal’ on Dashami morning. Durga puja culminated in the Ojha family puja with traditional ‘Sindoor Khela’ followed by ‘Bisarjan’ in the evening. This puja is one of the oldest festivals in the district and people here were more comfortable with the old run of things than modernization.

--Sayani Ojha

## Durgapur

Durga Puja has always been an emotion and never a festival for me. It is one of the biggest and largest festival known of India, adorned with the blue autumnal skies with freckles of white clouds and sweet smell of Shiuli. Originally called Gopinathpur, this land between rivers Ajoy and Damodar was named Durgapur after the landlord of the area Durgacharan Chattopadhyay. But it was under the supervision of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, that Durgapur truly started to flourish. He wanted it to be the Ruhr of India, with a series of industries flanked by rivers on either side. Dr. Roy established a Steel plant in Durgapur in 1954. As time went other industries sprang up, including a PSU, named Durgapur Project Limited and it constructed the Durgapur Barrage. Built around industries, it is a town of original settlers and fly-by workers for whom this town

is a bread earner. And for both, this town is a wonderful place during Durga Puja. Durgapur celebrates Durga Puja with themes and traditional fervour going hand in hand. People comes from various places and they love to see such unique pandals at favourite spots like Marconi, Agrani, Cement Park, Urvashi, Fuljhore and Chaturanga. On these days, Bengal is a riot of colours, sound and fragrance and Durgapur is no exception. Only Covid played spoil sport this year with new normal protocols keeping some of the festivities at bay.

---Nisha Majhi



## Darjeeling

North Bengal have a lot more to offer than just beautiful sceneries and the majestic Kanchenjunga during this festive month of the year. During this festive season, the residents of Darjeeling celebrated Durga puja and Navaratri in all its glory. Just opposite Chalet Hotel, the Chowrasta Durga Puja is one of the most popular Durga puja celebrations in this hilly hamlet. This year their theme was “Healthy Hills; Drug-free Hills”. They also set up booths for free counselling and check-ups. The Chowrasta Durga puja was inaugurated virtually by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The Chowrasta Durga puja saw a giant congregation of Bengalis, like every year, but maintaining all protocols of ew normal.

---Parnita Kundu







# Flim Reviews



**No Time to Die:** All said and done, you're in no way missing this Hollywood super sleuth released this festive season, if you're a Daniel Craig fan. Even if you aren't, watch it, it's worth the time. Starting with Madeleine Swan's flashback

sequence portraying the villain's existence and jumping back to retired bond chilling in Jamaica with an epic task awaiting him. The battlefield is all set with Safin's avenge for his childhood scars creating a bioweapon, and Bond's requite to get back at him. The story to salute Bond builds a monumental trap for the audiences with a maniac plot and intriguing performances. A fine finale for Craig, before the new 007 takes over. Performances to remember from Rami Malek, Christoph Ralph, Ralph Fiennes and Naomie Harris makes the rocking journey even more memorable. Director Cary Joji Fukunaga carried the proverbial albatross of having to direct the finale of this Daniel Craig-Bond series. And he passes with flying colours one must admit. If you are looking for some thrills top gasp over, this is your poison.



**Thalaivi:** The multilingual biopic on Tamil Nadu's most charismatic politician, Jayalalitha Jayaram starring Kangana Ranaut comes with an engaging plot and commendable performances. The story

begins with the days of Jaya being an actress and focusses on her relationship with MGR.

The second half proceeds with focus on her political steps. The cinematic journey with the conspiring plot, the portrayal of the character of a film actress transforming into a powerful political leader rising through the ruthless masculinity which tried to suppress, humiliate and obliterate her by all means, is nearly hair raising at times and thoroughly entertaining. If for a few hours you indulge in forgetting her tweets, then Kangana is one of the finest actors. And with Arvind Swami, Madhoo, Nasser M and Bhagyasree, who makes a comeback after ages, setting her up, the movie is a treat. While Vijayendra Prasad's story is layered, its been aptly presented by director A L Vijay.



**Golondaaj:** Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikari is often hailed as the father of Indian football. But even in this football crazy city, his life and time is largely unknown. This is where director Dhrubo Banerjee and lead Dev clinches the act. Sarbadhikari hailed from a reformist family

and dreamt of beating the British in their own game – football. This at a time and age when merely touching the ball called for generous whipping. The biopic shows his grit, anguishes and revivification. And this journey is, more often than not, thrilling and engaging. Indrasis Roy, Agnijit Sen, Ujan Chatterjee and Alexx-o-Neil put up commendable performances and aptly supported Dev, who perhaps portrayed his best act ever. Anirban Bhattacharya as comical villain is brilliant. Dhrubo Banerjee after giving us two editions Indian Jones-esque Abir Chatterjee starrers, has done a creditable job with this biopic.

--- Snigdha Chakraborty

# Campus Beat

Journalism and Mass Communication Department had organized a cultural afternoon 'Esho Maa Durga' to signal the arrival of the autumnal festival. The



Chancellor SNU Satyam Roychowdhury posing with guests, teachers and students. Pic-- JMC Dept

programme began with a teacher-student duet from Performing Arts faculty Anubha Sen and her ward Soham Roy Chowdhury. Next renowned artist Subhaprassana ceremonially inaugurated the programme along with Vice-Chancellor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay and Registrar Suman Chatterjee. This was followed by a dance recital—Mahishasurmardini-- by Shreya Poddar and Hridita Chatterjee. Recitation by Shounak Sarkar, who was also the emcee for

the programme, and fusion dance by Oindrilla Chatterjee and Shreya Poddar lighted up the environs. This was followed by an audio-drama—Bodhon—written and enacted by Journalism Department faculty Saikat Majumdar and her student Oindrilla. What followed was the

star attraction. A dance performance by the celebrated dance-duo Deeptangshu-Gargi. They mesmerized the audience with their craft. As the programme drew to a close with a gameshow between the teachers and students, Chancellor SNU Satyam Roychowdhury arrived and wished everyone a very happy festive season. He clicked pictures with the students in the selfie-booth and froze the moment in a happy frame of teachers and students to the beats of the dhaks in the background.

# Three-way treat for sport lovers

This festive season just got bigger with three back to back mega sporting events beginning with the ICC T20 Cricket World Cup. The ICC event is hosted by BCCI in the Middle East. India are favourites though England, Australia or Pakistan could turn the tables any day. Back home, Indian Super League will get going from November 19 with the regular suspects eying for the top spot. The current fixtures are for 11 rounds of league matches. ATK Mohun Bagan, SC East Bengal, Bengaluru

FC and Mumbai City FC will be major draws this season. The 2021 FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup will begin on November 24 at Kalinga Stadium in Odisha. It looks set to be a humdinger of a tournament with hosts and the defending champions India, along with South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa, Egypt, Belgium, England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, USA, Canada, Chile and Argentina fighting for the honours. ---Sreemoye Paul

## Picture Story by Souparna Basak



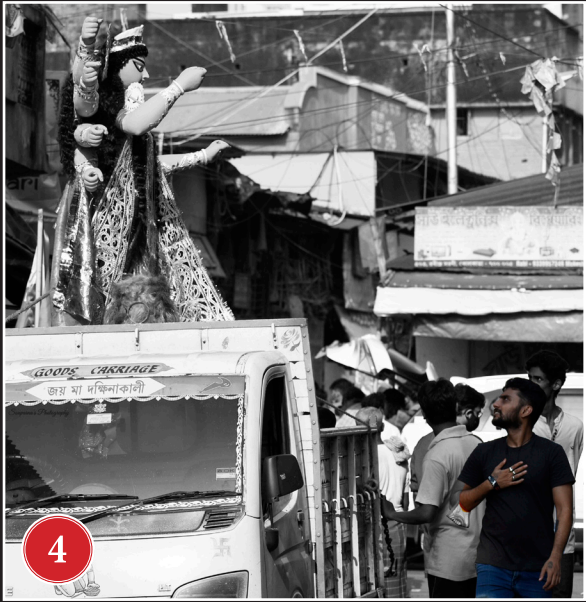
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The idol factory

Goddess in the making

First sight

The ride home

Deity and the devotee

Stay blessed

The onward journey

Ending is a new beginning



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