

AARATRIKA

20th MOSCOW DURGA PUJA CELEBRATIONS
2009



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Debasmitta Moulick Nair

FROM THE EDITOR...

With all the talk of global slowdown and an uncertain future, I decided to check with Maharaj, the mode of Ma Durga's celestial transport this year, which forecasts the fate of the coming year. She arrives in a palanquin which symbolises pestilence and leaves on an elephant that brings abundant harvest. Which leads us to the eternal cycle of *agaman* and *visarjan*, high and low tides, booms and bursts to bearish and bullish blips.

The four days of puja however would remain the same – bright and exciting, infuse us as usual with all the zing and verve which we tend to lose in the course of our everyday chores.

2009 has been eventful, to say the least. The highlight indeed has been the festival of India in Russia. The year long sequence of delightful concerts by our maestros have kept us close to good music, which in a way transforms our inner selves making us peacefully pause for few hours in an evening forgetting our usual hustle and bustle. It is said that music is the silence between the notes. I remember dragging a friend, an investment banker to a dance recital. He was grumpy but as the concert continued he sank into it and unknowingly even trying to imitate the *mudras* of the dancers. Next morning he called to say that he had overslept from the mystic aura and didn't regret at all getting late on a weekday!

We proudly watch the awe and admiration of our Russian friends after a delightful concert. They exclaim '*prosto prelest!*' '*A kakda budit sledushi konsert?*' (Simply wonderful! When's the next concert?) Their curiosity about us is tickled, they stifle us with questions about India and some just declare '*Vseo, ya rishila, na sledushi otpusk poiedy v Indiu*' (Decided! My next holiday will be to India!) What can be a more heart-warming upshot of a festival than this?

We hope you will read cover to cover and soak in the festive mood.

2009 marks the second decade of Moscow Durga Puja. In our pursuit to mark this event we are upgrading our site and the PDF format of the new 2009 issue of Aaratrika will be uploaded in it. We also mark this special anniversary issue with the launch of two new sections – **fashion** and **music**. Wading through the responses generated from earlier issues we continue our focus on our second homeland in **Passage to India** which includes amazing paintings of India by Russian children who probably have never been to our country and about Russians who love, live and dream India.

So cheers to the coming year, more green and less wasteful. The water we think is available is running out on us including the electricity and the forests. Spend less, enjoy more!

**We say farewell to the teens!
We are adult now twenty!**

Sharodiya Abhinandan!





Moscow Puja 2008

We proclaim with great joy and satisfaction that we have reached the 20th year of the worship of our Divine Mother Sri Sri Durga, which has been possible only by the grace and blessings of the Divine Mother. In this connection we gratefully remember the earnest cooperation of all the people concerned irrespective of race, religion and nationality without which our Puja Committee would not have been successful in continuing with such love and cordial relationship amongst ourselves centring this holy festival. May Divine Mother bless us all.

*Swami Jyotirupananda
President, Moscow Durga Puja Committee*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S SHAKTI* SADHANA

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who was born in a Brahmin family in Kamarpukur village of West Bengal, India came to Dakshineswar Kali temple at the age of 19 (1855) to help his elder brother who was the first priest of that temple. In a year or two he himself became the priest of the temple after his brother's death.

He learnt the worship of the Divine Mother. But he asked himself—did the Mother accept his worship? An image of stone, how could it turn into a living mother? He began to seek answer from her by passing most of the time, day and night, in meditation. He implored Divine Mother that if She could come to Ramprasad, to Kamalakanta why could she not come to him? He remembered that, freed from all ties one should practice meditation. Man from his birth labours under the eight bondages of hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egoism, vanity, pride of noble descent, and obsession with formal good conduct. (Ghrina, lajja, kula, shila, bhaya, mana, jati, and abhimana). By intense practice for months his mind

was freed from all these limitations, still he was not blessed by her vision. Mental agony reached its climax and being fiercely desperate he took out from the wall the sword of the Mother and wanted to kill himself with it. Suddenly he had the wonderful vision of the Mother and fell down unconscious. He did not know how that day and the next slipped away. But in his heart of hearts, there was flowing a current of intense bliss, never experienced before. To quote his words: "It is as if the houses, doors, temples and all other things vanished altogether, as if there was nothing anywhere. And what I saw was a boundless infinite Conscious Sea of Light! However far and in whatever direction I looked, I found a continuous succession of Effulgent Waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with great speed. Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the Abysmal Depths of Infinity. I panted and struggled, as it were, and lost all sense of external consciousness." Did the master then have the vision of the form also in that sea of Light. Swami

Saradananda, his biographer thought that he had. After his first vision he uttered repeatedly the word "Mother" in a voice choked with emotion. From that time on Mother in living form appeared before him frequently.

Sri Ramakrishna felt himself as a mere child of the Divine Mother and could not brook even a short absence of the Mother. Mother had to be with him all the time as his only guide and he remained as her instrument to fulfill whatever she wanted through him to do good for the world. Kali, the Mother of the universe, engaged him to tread through all different paths of Hinduism ending in the realization of the Supreme Reality. This he achieved also through the paths of Islam and Christianity and finally declared, by the will of the Mother, that all paths lead to the same God (Jata mat tata path). This is the needed teaching for the whole world infested with fatal strife between religion and religion.

Swami Jyotirupananda



Ramakrishna Mission Moscow



* Shakti, the Universal Energy though formless appears as Durga, Kali or other gods and goddesses whenever She wills.



SRI SRI DURGA MAHAPUJA FROM 24TH TO 28TH SEPTEMBER 2009

Mahasashti 24th September Thursday	Puja starts at 18:00
Mahasaptami 25th September Friday	Puja starts at 9:20 Pushpanjali at 11:30 Bhog & Arati at 11:50 Evening Arati 18:00
Mahaastami 26th September Saturday	Puja starts at 9:20 Pushpanjali at 11:30 Bhog & Arati at 11:50 Evening Arati at 18:30 Sandhi puja at 22:00
Mahanavami 27th September Sunday	Puja starts at 9:20 Pushpanjali at 11:30 Bhog & Arati at 11:50 Evening Arati at 18:30
Vijaya Dashami 28th September Monday	Puja from 10:00 to 11:00 Shindur Khela 11:00 to 12:00 Immersion 12:00 to 12:30 Shanti jal 12:30
Sri Sri Lakshmi puja 3rd October	Puja starts at 19:00



From Friends of Aaratrika...

Greetings from the Maestro... USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN

I feel happy to hear from Aaratrika on the occasion of Durga Puja. It is a warm feeling to be connected to Russia. Amaan, my elder son gave his first public performance in Moscow during the Indian festival in 1987. I remember we stayed at Rossia hotel at that time. In 2006 I visited Moscow with my younger son Ayaan. We performed in the presence of Moscow's Mayor Yuri Luzkov and our Mayor Sheila Dikshit.

I eagerly look forward to my visit to Russia in December this year to play for you all.

It is truly wonderful to be part of the 20th celebration of your puja, in some way. I wish you all peace and harmony.

Amjad Ali Khan

Portrait by Bikash Bhattacharya



Poster - Festival of India 1987

Photo Courtesy: Abba, God's Greatest Gift to Us, The world of Amjad Ali Khan by Raghava R. Menon

Memorable memories ...

'Thrilling times for us as kids when Abba would play our nursery rhymes on his sarod. This was his master stroke in connecting us with the sarod & music.'



Royal memories...

'At a dinner held in the Prime Minister's house in New Delhi in 1992, Abba got a message on his table that Lady Diana was feeling cold. He went over immediately and put his shawl around her. She wore it the entire evening. When she wanted to return the antique jamewar shawl, Abba asked her to accept it as a small gift from India.'



Moscow memories...

In a jugalbandi with Russian violinist Igor Frolov in Moscow 1987



With Ayaan at inauguration of 'Three days of Delhi in Moscow' 2006



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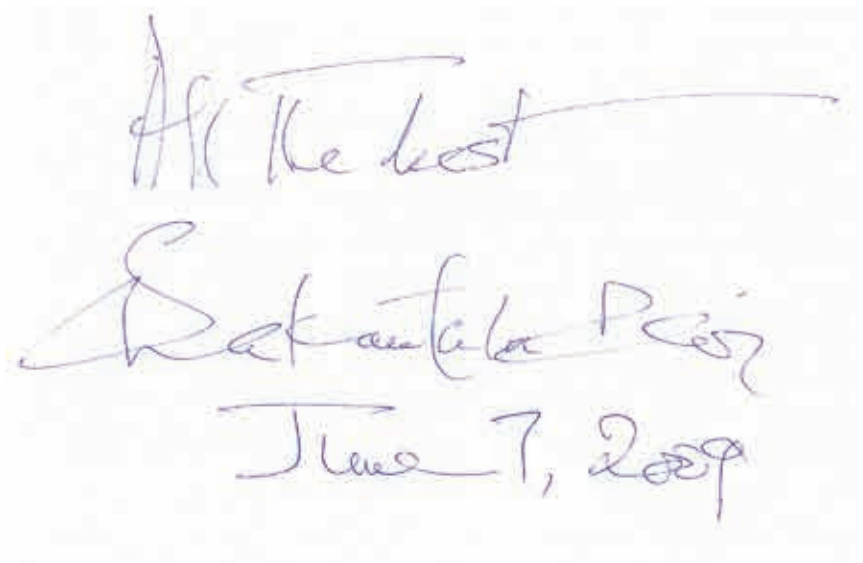
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SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE



I was pleasantly surprised to know that the Indian community in Moscow celebrate Durga Puja every year. This must be a wonderful opportunity to remember our roots. Durga Puja is not merely a religious ritual, but happens to be the greatest social festival where all Indians feel the warmth of unitedness against the evil forces and a celebration of our power to be victorious over it. I extend my love and best wishes on this occasion to everybody participating in this festival in Moscow.

SHAKUNTALADEVI



E. SREEDHARAN

MANAGING DIRECTOR DELHI METRO RAIL CORPORATION (DMRC)



Metro Man of India

I have very fond memories of my travel to Russia. I had been to Moscow and St. Petersburg to research and exchange views with the technocrats who are involved in the construction of metro in Russia. I am indeed pleased to hear about celebration of Durga Puja in Moscow.

Heartiest congratulations on your 20th celebrations!



Under his leadership Konkan Railway & Delhi Metro got completed before schedule



Panacea Biotec



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*Wishing all a Very Happy
Durga Puja and Dusshera!*

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Memories to cherish from

Aaratrika has been speaking with the musicians, artists and poets who visited Russia during this year - 'Year of India in Russia 2009'. They were happy to know about our 20th year of Puja celebrations and carried back with them among memories of Moscow, last year's copy of Aaratrika. Sharing with you all their warm messages and good wishes...

DR. LAKSHMINARAYANA SUBRAMANIAM & KAVITA KRISHNAMURTI SUBRAMANIAM



With daughter Seetaa and wife Kavita Subramaniam during an interview with Aaratrika in summer 2009, Hotel Savoy

Our roots, our culture & our traditions are backbone for all of us. Respect to parents + elders are other important factors one shouldn't forget. Happy Durga Puja
L Subram

Kavitaji was happy to get introduced to Aaratrika

A Very Happy Durga Puja to all the Indians in Moscow and Russia. This is a great country with wonderful traditions of music and culture. We hope this friendship between the two countries continues forever and forever.
Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam



"Year of India in Russia 2009"

LALGUDI G. J. R. KRISHNAN
LALGUDI VIJAYALAKSHMI



Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi & Lalgudi Krishnan
speaking to Aaratrika

Being away from India and living
in a foreign country is a sacrifice.
Blending with the land where one
lives but yet remembering +
inculcating the rich values Music +
Arts will be the best thing one must
practise. Wishing all of you in Moscow
a joyous Pujya + a life of plenty, peace
and Harmony with love, Lalgudi GJR Krishnan
21/11/09

Durga Pujya is the season that usher in
peace, prosperity, harmony and all that
can be associated with positive things.
Let us pray that all these fill our lives
in abundance. Wish you all in
Moscow a very happy Durga Pujya.
lots of love Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi

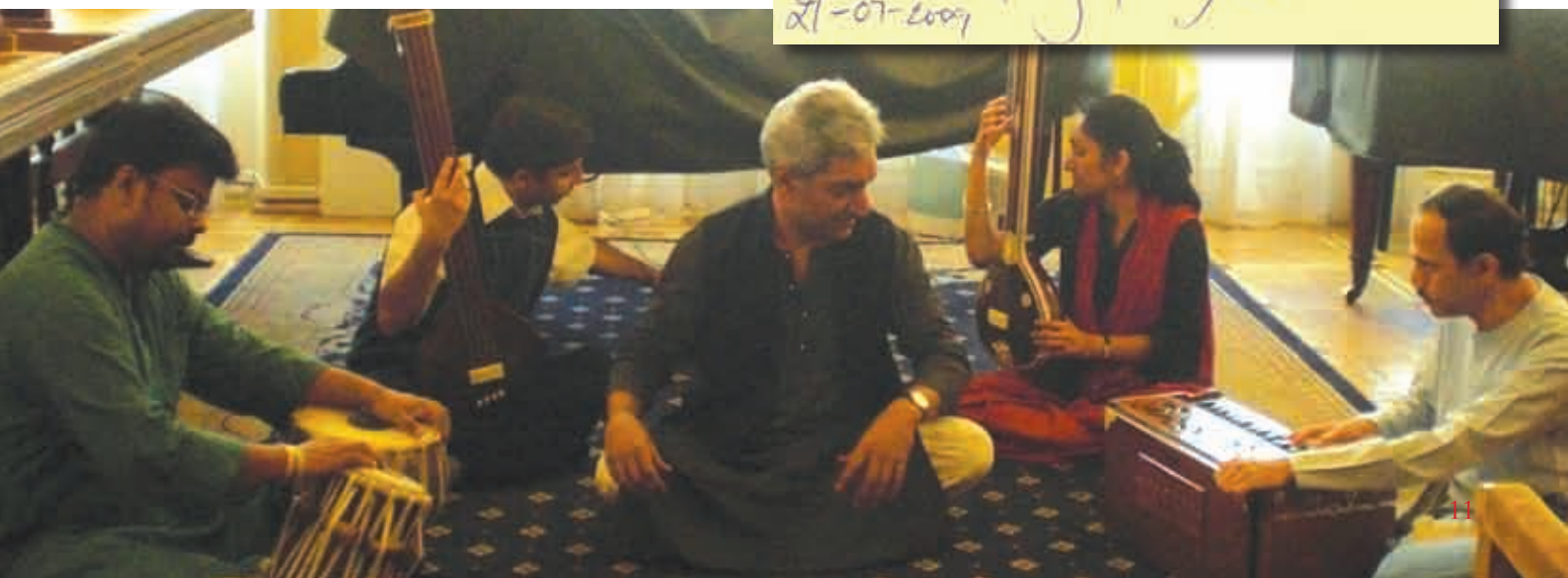
The Lalgudis have visited Moscow before
and were happy to re-visit. They were touched by
the warmth of the Russian people.

MADHUP MUDGAL

*Lots of good wishes to
Moscow's children!*

Madhup Mudgal & his group at a lekdem at Moscow Conservatory

मास्को के बच्चों के लिए
शुभ-सामनाओं सहित।
मधुप मधुगल
21-07-2009



DEBOJYOTI BOSE



In front of Chaikovsky Concert Hall, favourite place in Moscow

Debojyoti Bose wishes with a poem that he specially wrote for Aaratrika during his stay in Moscow, 25th July 2009.

১

দেশ থেকে দেশ ঘুরে ঘুরে
শোনাই সরোদ নানান সুরে
তারই ফাঁকে এই কবিতা
মনের কথা উজাড় ক'রে।

৩

শুনলে পরে ঢাকের ধ্বনি
শারদীয়ার আগমনি,
মনের মাঝে উঠবে জেগে
সেই চেনা মুখ ব্রিনয়নী।

৫

মা দুর্গাতো সকলের মা
থাকেন তিনি আকাশ পাড়ায়,
মস্কো থেকে দিল্লী লাহোর
তাই তো পূজোর গন্ধ ছড়ায়

৬

পার যদি নতুন ক'রে
জীবনটাকে তোল ভ'রে,
স্বামীজির সেই ভাবনা নিয়ে
বিশ্বকবির সুরে সুরে।

২

সংস্কার আর সংস্কৃতি
বাঙ্গালীদের এই তো রীতি
হোক না সে দেশ বিলেত রুশি
পূজোর সময় সবাই খুশী।

৪

মাটির পরে টানল সবাই
ভৌগলিক যে সীমারেখা,
আকাশপানে চেয়ে দেখ
সে সব কিছুই যায় না দেখা।

৬

করছ পূজো মায়ের যারা
অনন্দেতে পাগল পারা,
হারিও না বাঙ্গালীয়া
দুর্গা পূজা হলে সারা।

৮

থেকো ভাল, রেখো ভাল
ঘুচিয়ে দিয়ে সকল কাল,
যাওয়ার বেলায় দিলাম শেষে
শুভেচ্ছা ভাই ভালোবেসে।

Debojyoti Bose
মস্কো ২৫/০৭/০৯



Subodh Sarkar

ভালো জায়গাটা কোথায় ?

সুবোধ সরকার

দুপুরে ঘুম থেকে উঠে আমার তিন বছরের ছেলে বলল
বাবা, আমাকে একটা ভালো জায়গায় নিয়ে যাবি ?

আমি চমকে তাকালাম তিন বছরের দিকে
তিন বছরের চোখের দিকে, তিন বছরের ঠোঁটের দিকে
ফুটে ওঠা বিন্দু বিন্দু ঘামের দিকে
আমি বললাম, যা তো চিড়িয়াখানাটা নিয়ে আয়
সিংহটার খুব খিদে পেয়েছে, বাঘটা তাড়া করেছে হরিণকে
সে বলল, না, আমাকে একটা ভালো জায়গায় নিয়ে চল।

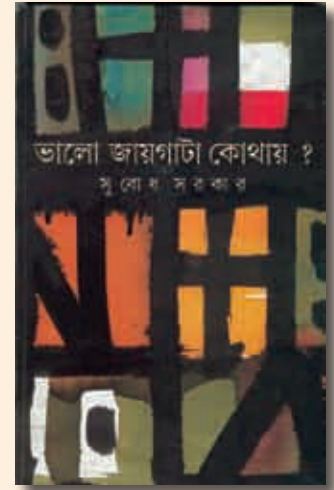
পাশের ঘরে গিয়ে একটু কাঁদল, বন্দুক চালাল, তারপর
কোথা থেকে কার্ল মার্কসের একটা ছেঁড়া ক্যালেন্ডার এনে বলল
এই দাদুটাকেও নিয়ে যাব, ট্রেনে করে, নৌকা করে
এই বাবা, বাবা, একটা ভালো জায়গায় যাবি ?

ভিক্টোরিয়ায় নিয়ে এলাম, সে বলল, না এটা ভালো না
গঙ্গার ঘাটে নিয়ে এলাম, সে বলল, এটা তো একটা নদী
আইসক্রিম খরিয়ে দিলাম, সে ঘ্যানঘ্যান করেই চলল
বিরক্ত হয়ে আটটা নাগাদ বাড়ি ফিরে দেখি, তখনও
মেঝেতে গড়াগড়ি খাচ্ছেন কার্ল মার্কস
ছেলেকে বললাম, শোন, এই দাদুটাও
আমাদের একটা ভালো জায়গায় নিয়ে যাবে বলেছিল
সেই রবিবারে কোনও ট্রেন ছিল না, নৌকা ছিল না।

মিনিট দুয়েক চুপ, কী ভাবল কে জানে, তারপর আবার ঘ্যানঘ্যান
বল দিলাম, রোবট দিলাম, জাহাজ দিলাম
চড় বসাব কি না ভাবছি, তখনই, পৃথিবীর সবচেয়ে কঠিন প্রশ্নটা
সে করল :
এই বাবা, কাল একটা ভালো জায়গায় নিয়ে যাবি তো, কাল ?

SUBODH SARKAR

Subodh Sarkar (born 1958) has published 20 books of poems, one travelogue on America, two books of translations of world poetry. Recipient of Bangla Akademi Award, 2000. Has traveled to the U.S., U.K., Germany, France, Greece, Czech Republic and recently to Russia to read his poems. Editor of Bhashanagar, a magazine of Indian poetry. Teaches English in City College, Kolkata.



Где то хорошее место?

Проснувшись от полуденного сна мой трехлетний ребёнок спросил: папа, отвезёшь ли меня в одно хорошее место?

С удивлением Я посмотрел на того трёхлетнего
На трехлетние глаза, на трёхлетние губы
На проявившие капельки пота
Я сказал, пойдя принеси ко мне тот зоопарк
Тот лев очень голодный, тот тигр гоняется за той оленью
Он сказал, нет, отвези меня в одно хорошее место.

Отошёл он в другую комнату и немножко поплакал,
пострелял наган, потом от куда-то принёс порванный
календарь с изображением Маркса и сказал
Возьмём этого деда со собой, на поезде, на лодке
Эй папа, папа поедешь в одно хорошее место?

Привёз его в парк королевы Виктории,
он сказал, нет это не хорошее
Привёз на набережную Ганги,
он сказал: это всего лишь река.
Дал ему в руку мороженое, он продолжал нить
С раздражением вернувшись домой около восьми увидел,
до тех пор на полу валяется Карл Маркс
Сказал сыну: слышь, этот дед тоже
Обещал, что отвезёт нас в одно хорошее место
В тот воскресный день не было ни одного поезда,
не было лодок.

Пару минут он молчал, о чём думал кто знает,
потом снова начал нить
Дал ему мяч, дал робота, дал корабль
Пока думал стоит ли теперь дать пощёчину, именно тогда,
самый трудный вопрос на свете он задал:
Эй папа, завтра точно отвезёшь в одно хорошее место,
завтра?

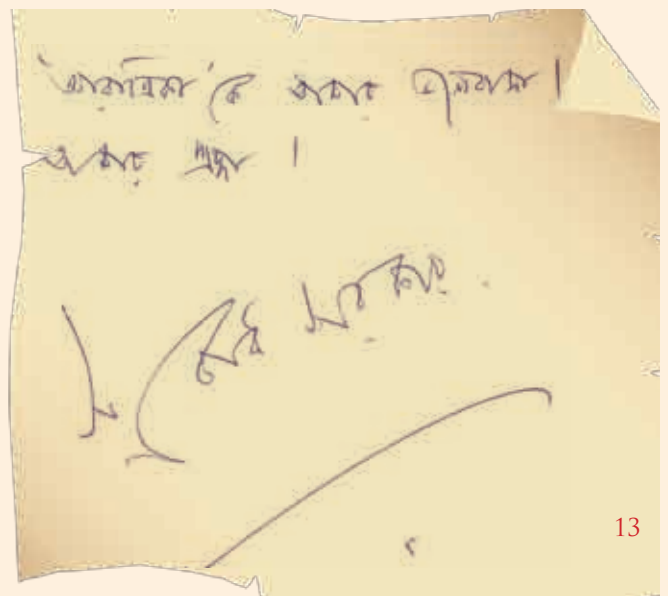
Translated by Sumit Sengupta
Перевод Шумит Сенгупта

Sumit Sengupta is one of those lucky few who has woven his dreams into reality. The hobbies he pursued since long have now become a part of his daily chores, only to have brought him a step closer to reality from that dreamworld of his.

Where's The Good Place?

When he got up from his nap, my three-year-old son said:
Papa, will you take me to a good place?
Surprised, I looked at the three year old ---
at three-year-old eyes, three-year-old lips,
at trickling drops of sweat.
I said: Go and get the zoo.
The lion's gotten very hungry, the tiger's chased the deer.
He said: No, take me to a good place.
He went to the next room, cried a bit,
Came back with a tattered Karl Marx calendar, and said:
We'll take this grandpa too, by train, by boat.
Hey, Papa, Papa, won't we go to a good place?
When I took him to Victoria, he said: No, this is no good.
When I took him to the Ganges, he said, It's only a river.
When I gave him ice cream, he walked along whining.
Disgusted, I took him home around eight and saw
tattered Karl Marx lying abandoned on the floor.
I told my son: Listen, this grandpa said
He would take us to a good place too.
That Sunday, there was no train, no boat.
Quiet for a moment, thinking who knows what,
he began whining again.
I gave him a ball, I gave him a robot, I gave him a ship.
Right when I was wondering whether to give him a
spanking,
He asked all-time big question:
Hey, Papa, tomorrow, will you take me to a good place
tomorrow?

Translated by Carolyn Brown, Sanjukta Dasgupta
and Ashesh K. Chatterjee





INDIAN OCEAN

An Indian Rock concert in Moscow for the first time at Park Kulturi !



Agarwal
15/09/09
MOSCOW
Rahul
Sumitran
Chintan

ଆମେରିକା
ଏକ ଆମେରିକା
ସୁଧରୁ ସମ୍ପର୍କ
ଆମେରିକା
କିଏ !
Indian Ocean
Aug 15/09

THE OCEAN AND US...

Valentina, Alena & Rituparna at Indian Ocean concert at Park Kulturi summer 2009



Alena Vatbolskaya

India for me is not merely a geographical or a political border. It's much more significant. And it's not important that I have a white skin, a red hair and was born in Russia. I have a bonding with this country since my childhood. I'm a part of India. Each contact with her is a deep spiritual travel for me, taking me all together to a higher altitude. It feels as if I have returned home after a very long travel.

Alena works with TV Channel ROSSIA, the Russian State Television and Broadcasting Company.

Valentina Gorodnischeva

Fond of Asian culture and traditions. "The Indian Ocean concert was absolutely great as the music made me think about important things. It transferred me to a state of meditation in which I could find answers to my questions. Also thanks to that music I have understood at least a bit of India, which is far away from my home. I have never been there. I realize that through music people can understand each other even without knowing the language". Valentina is employed with Raiffeisenbank Moscow.

Rituparna Roy

This was my first exposure to Indian Ocean and I loved it. This will also be my first puja in Moscow and I can't wait! Rituparna has recently moved to Moscow with HSBC.

Lisa takes autograph from Rahul Ram



Lisa Moriya

The Indian Ocean experience is unforgettable. I am so happy that I managed to speak with the musicians and buy the CD, now I listen to their unique music often. Lisa is from the University of Tokyo, aspiring to be a composer; she is currently a research scholar with the Moscow Conservatory.

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Purano Shei Diner Kotha

Wandering in nostalgia lane...



Shankarda's 60th birthday celebration!



Nabarun Majumdar

The Moscow Durga Puja has been the axis of my years spent in Moscow. It's our puja that made Moscow a home away from home. I often tell my juniors that puja is the best medicine for homesickness. I miss you all and our puja so very much.

Wish you all a very HAPPY PUJO!

GREETINGS FROM DUBAI



Писать не умею, поэтому просто говорю:

Happy 20th pujo to you all!

Dev, Shrabani & Abhijit Roy Chowdhury



DOWN THE MEMORY LANE: MOSCOW'S FIRST DURGA PUJA

We are celebrating Durga Puja in India this year but our heart is in Moscow. Moscow Durga Puja is where we belong- a puja where our children first performed on stage, a puja where we were allowed to prepare Bhog, a puja where we were never bystanders. For us the excitement of Durga Puja always started, not with Shashti, but with the call for the first meeting. The Puja in Moscow, that began two decades ago, will always remain in our memories. In May 1990, when we shifted to Moscow after 14 years of stay at Chittaranjan Park, Delhi (also known as Bengali Colony), we missed all the excitement of Durga Puja. I contacted Dr. Ganguly, Councilor Education at the Indian Embassy and with his and his wife Shapna Boudi's encouragement, we set the ball rolling. Manoj and Indrani Mazumdar who were vacationing in Calcutta that time not only brought the Panjika & Puja books, but had also finalized the Murthy from the Malakar, the Purohit and even a dhaki (drum beater)!!

The first Puja was held at Donskaya Ulitsa number 7, with two Purohitis (Pujaris), and a Dhaki. Air India brought in the Protima free of cost along with Puja Shamagri and a small banana tree (kala bou), of course with lot of help from the Indian Embassy. Most of us emptied our precious reserve of rice, daal and cooking oil for the bhog. Indrani organized the cultural programs, Kaushik, arranged the sound and lighting with only some spots and table lamps. Durga puja has always been a cultural treat and community event. People may come and people may go, but Durga Puja at Moscow continues as an annual event of the Indian Community. Ma's ashirwad, the guidance of Maharaj ji of Ramakrishna Mission, painstaking effort of the present Committee and the participation of the entire Indian community at Moscow, the Durga Puja at Moscow has become a land mark annual event and we are very privileged to be apart of it, always.

Nupur Mukherji

GREETINGS FROM MUMBAI

Dear Moscow Durga Puja Committee,

I landed up in my mail-box with the surprise mail from you. It took me out literally of the "mundane affairs" of the office work b'coz of the theme - DURGA PUJA - 20th CELEBRATION in MOSCOW. All credits goes to your sincere and selfless efforts for bringing alive aura of DURGA PUJA in Moscow each year for 20 years.

Probably, the best part, to my mind, is the cultural events organised during the DURGA PUJA period. I still vividly remember one number by a Russian artist a long with her two little co-artists (I would rather say 'little angels' dancing with their mother goddess) literally descending from the heaven and performing an Indian classical dance in total harmony and sync with host of Indian classical instruments on the stage during the DURGA PUJA Celebration in 2002 (most likely).

We sincerely wish every success on this auspicious CELEBRATION.

We too will be celebrating this DURGA PUJA in Mumabi/Navi Mumbai with our little Ananyo.

Dr. Subrata Saha / Dr. Sumita Saha / Ananyo

04.09.09

GREETINGS FROM MUMBAI

Mahabaleshwar December 2008



It was just a week before the 15th Moscow Durga Puja that I stepped into the coldest part of the world that I had ever been to! Sudipda suggested that Ma Durga's blessing would help me in my upcoming professional challenges.

Well! Never thought/imagined /dreamed that visit would get me the opportunity to be in the committee for organising the 16th, 17th & 18th Durga Pooja celebrations in Moscow - which transformed to a major cultural event to Indian community from there on. (I am honored to be a part)

It was an amazing experience for me & my family - & even my parents had the chance to see when they came to Moscow in 2006. Especially when our (NITIN & BABA) show time came (Lottery & the final prizes distribution). Believe me- till the last 7 days of the celebrations - like our typical sales activities - had only 10-15% strike rate . But then everything takes off after . Prizes/ vouchers/tickets/ electronics - what not.... Come in...

From our hearts - We completely miss this & now it is 2 years thinking & will keep thinking for the rest of my life & narrate to people whom I meet .

My Self , Sivranjani & Kaushik wish each one of you "A HAPPY 20TH Moscow Durga Pooja Celebrations!"

V. Pundari Baba

FROM COCHIN WITH LOVE!

Hello everybody! I'm Jeeth Reteesh. I'm a ninth grader in Rajagiri Public School, Cochin, Kerala. I've spent the first 13 years of my life in Moscow and have developed a great bond with it. From the day I joined E.O.I School Moscow, I was well aware about Durga Puja and the Aaratika magazine! From the year 2002, I have always written essays for this magazine. The thing I like most about Durga Puja celebrations is that it feels like a great get together, where we can take part in competitions, have delicious food and most of all, spend time with our friends.

My new school is an eco-friendly school with a huge beautiful campus. The teachers and children are very friendly. This school is famous for its excellent results in board exams,

co-curricular activities and sports. It imparts quality education and enriches the learning environment in order to optimize each child's overall development and help realize its full potential. The focus is on bringing up caring, confident youngsters who will uphold moral and spiritual values and eventually take their place as productive, responsible members of society. The school has a huge swimming pool and the equipments which are used at the pool are of international standard. It's a new but enjoyable environment!

Whatever said and done, I miss Moscow, all my friends out there and the blini, kalbasa and of course... kvass (KBAC)!!
WISHING ALL READERS A VERY HAPPY 20th PUJA CELEBRATION !

Jeeth at his Cochin home



GREETINGS FROM KOLKATA

আরাত্রিকার চিঠি পেয়ে খুব খুশী হয়েছি। নামটা দারুণ! ফেলে আসা মস্কো প্রায়ই পিছু ডাকে, অন্যমনস্কভাবে পথ চলতে গিয়ে এখনও যেন পায়ের তলায় বরফ গুঁড়িয়ে যাওয়ার অনুভূতি হয়। এগুলো বড় বিচিত্র অনুভব। দীর্ঘকালের বন্ধন যা নাড়ির টানের মতো কাছে টানে নিজের রুটের দিকে। মস্কোর আসন্ন শীত ও বিদায়ী হেমন্তের হলুদ ঝরাপাতার পোষাক পড়ার মাঝে, কেমন করে যেন পূজো এসে পড়ত। কোনদিন ভুলব না মস্কোর শেরেমেতোভা এয়ারপোর্টে মস্কোর প্রথম পূজোর খবরটা পাই। মস্কোর সবাইকে জানালাম আমাদের বিশেষ অভিনন্দন আর শুভেচ্ছা।

— লিলি ও দেবজিৎ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

GREETINGS FROM NEW DELHI

*Fond greetings from New Delhi to probashis in my erstwhile home,
"A Very Happy and Blessed 20th Durga Puja".*

Lipika Sen



Lipika Sen born in India with a second home in New Zealand. Not the usual traveller, she often makes her destinations her home - Moscow, Novosibirsk, Hamilton, Auckland, Chafi, becoming one with the overwhelming landscapes that inspire her. Presently based in New Delhi, she works with her partner at Hichki Studios (www.hichki.com), besides freelancing as a travel writer with the Outlook Group.



"Siberian Trance" is a fond reverie of the slo-mo Siberian snowfall from her window, when reality felt more surreal than dreams.



The first woman president of India Smt. Pratibha Patil & the first woman principal of EOI school Smt. Rashmi Mishra with teachers & students

IN CONVERSATION WITH RASHMI MISHRA, PRINCIPAL EMBASSY OF INDIA SCHOOL MOSCOW

Principle questions to the principal by students on the eve of puja

You are in Moscow for over a year now, what has been your most fascinating experience yet? (*Shashwat Bajaj - Class 4*)

The most fascinating experience so far has been the Gala concert on the 3rd of September 2009 at the Bolshoi theatre Moscow. I was proud to be part of a dazzling occasion in which the two Presidents Mr. Dimitry Medvedev and Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil shared the same platform.

How did you feel meeting the President of India in Moscow? (*Aryan Nair - Class 4*)

It was the rarest of rare experiences to meet the first woman President of India - myself, being the first woman Principal of EOI school Moscow, I was of course elated! I was proud to greet her to the special function presented in her honour on the 4th of September 2009. She has a quiet aura of pleasantness around her that is in fact, overwhelming.

What places in Russia would you like to visit? (*Prarthana Mukherjee - Class 2*)

Russia is so vast and so much to see in a short time. Given a choice, I'd visit Volgograd, Ekaterinburgand maybe the Golden ring.

One single principle in life that you always follow? (*Anushka Dhar - Class 5*)

Keep working honestly and always keep smiling!

What would you say, has been the most difficult thing in your life in Moscow? (*Kabeer Mahipal - Class 5*)

Language is the major barrier. Initially, I must admit, it was quite frustrating. But now I've made some headway. At least, I don't use shampoos for cleaning my utensils any more!

What in your opinion, is the difference between Indian children in India and those in Moscow? (*Mohamed Mbarouk - Class 6*)

I see no difference basically. Both have Indian values inculcated in them. Here in Moscow, these children start life at a higher platform and thus have a higher level of expectation. Probably, by the same token, they are more savvy and confident than their Indian counterparts.

Anything in your life you'd like to change if you had the option? (*Devyash Dutt Singh - Class 6*)

I am really happy with life the way it is, couldn't have been better! God is great!

What would you say about Aaratrika? What are your wishes for the readers of Aaratrika? (*Srikant Srinivasan - Class 6*)

Aaratrika is a very good platform for exchanging views and ideas for all age groups of Indians in Moscow. I wish "Aaratrika" happy 20th Anniversary and wish for its golden and Platinum jubilees as well!

Ritz Carlton Moscow, September 2009



Children only

KENDRIYA VIDHYALAYA MOSCOW - NOW AND FOREVER



M.Sahana Class-10 EOI

IT is quite easy to pick the place that has highlighted my life in the last 10 years of my life. Describing the atmosphere of this place, however is hard. One needs to be climbing up those blue-covered staircases and be facing the gate that announces with air of finality: "You have reached your destination". Feeling it's essence if truly a perennial challenge. It occupies the whole of my emotions, beating around within me the most memorable feelings I have ever experienced.

Now it is "Embassy of India School, Moscow". But bearing in mind my context: It will always be K.V.M. to me. My school – The place I've known forever. It has always taken a special place in my heart. Though small, it is very compact and comfortable in its very own, unique way. The one and only Indian syllabus based school in Moscow, Russia.

Walking down the narrow corridor, staring at the infamous 'red carpet' that lay there for as long as I can remember; I can't resist a cheeky grin uncurling the whole of my mouth, wide and content. The grey cupboards glare at me imperially as I politely look out through the well-grilled windows.

Of course, 10 years; some people say is an awfully long time to be in this unimaginably small and crowded building. But I don't think I've the heart to complain. It's perfect, not too big as most schools but obviously closer to small infrastructure wise. I often remember myself cursing the small classrooms and other stuff, but I can never imagine what another school can be

like for I've always been in this one, all my life. Maybe I'm better off that way. I've always wondered what it is like to have assembly in a playground and how a canteen works, but fortunately or unfortunately opportunity for such an experience is yet to arrive. What's to say today has been such a quiet day. All the more to give me time to think.

Now I'm looking through the paintings, I've known each and every artist whose picture has been put up. I wonder what has their life become of, where they reside and whether they possibly remember me. I see 2 of the pictures painted by me, one in fourth class and the other in sixth. I laugh about how immature my pictures are and conclude with the resolution to go and see my art teacher immediately, for that fourth class picture proves to be hideous. I've drawn the boy's pants stretching for kilometres together. And the woman lacks eyebrows.

With that, I continue my silent stroll. I climb to go and see the classrooms, each and every one I've sat in. I know what pain and suffering each kid goes through who sits there. Sitting near the window hurts the back? The desks have chewing gums well-pressed against? Tell me about it! I smile, happy to know that someone experiences something I had experienced not long before. Of course, I've lost track of which places I've occupied and when the wall hangings were put up. Looking straight ahead, I see the former class-12 which was conveniently converted into the geography lab, further modified as the French room and presently holds the position as the name 'Staff Room'.

Grinning from ear to ear, I continue my short journey. The school is exceptionally empty for it has been long past the bell rang. Perhaps, Anatoli and office members were all that were left, excluding me.

Going through the hall, felt long. I clear my throat once and it boomerangs all through, sending shivers down my spine. Then I stop, right in the middle of the so-called big hall and assure myself. I've been here for so long. This can't scare me, I tell myself. The sun is pouring in through the curtains, making it look lost but bright. I walk up to the window and peep. Dull snow everywhere, depressed I draw the curtain again.

I start re-doing the usual ritual, done every day and year, running fast down the hall and climbing the stage as fast as possible. I have never grown tired of it; I've done it only a million times.

Glancing at the podium as well as the disturbingly green notice board I can't help wondering how long it has rested there. That brings back to me the memory of when I was doing my 5th, as a new comer had arrived that day and asked a familiar question, my best friend replied spontaneously "We don't know. But it's fit to be put in a museum."

Maybe I should explain the best friend part. See, I have trouble remembering my best friends who change EVERY year. It is very sad, but believe me, I've learnt a lot. People come and go; it's all in the game. Perhaps that's why today I'm stuck with all these 'what ifs' about the future, I wonder. This 'people come and go' formula is not very easy to digest. I'm feeling sad and confused. My future is so unpredictable, who knows how many friends I will be left with in the end? Though this is pure drama, I know it is well possible and totally not a rhetorical question. The broadly written "Infirmary" catches my attention.

Whatever happens, may it be 2 years or 20 years, I'll never forget this place. The number of people it has received and said 'do-svidanya' to, that I may lose count but I'll always remember this school for all it has given to me. It always has been and will be in my top-ten lists.

2 more years to go through, I tell myself, just 2 more. Then it's a casual ta-ta and to go face the world. True, it scares me but I can't do anything about it. And this year is almost over, which means less than 2 years. Yes, I'll be ready by then. I'm going to miss this place so much. But I'll be back to see it if I ever come back to Moscow.



Farewell 2008 Class 10

LOLLIPOPS & PLAYGROUND



Parth Shah

I love driving cars
(sometimes driving mom crazy)



**Jeetesh, Ishita, Irisha
& Amandeep**

We always love playing



Pranav Vijayakumar

I love Fridays because it means
no more studies for the next 2 days!



Looking at the world through coloured
glasses



Circle of fun



Batool, the Great



**Sanchari & Prathana Mukherjee –
FASHION FOR EVERY SEASON**



Uditangshu Aurangabadkar Class 5 EOI

He was not only nice, but a man with extraordinary capabilities and talent, with enthusiasm for life and love for nature.

Life was simple for him, waking up at 5.00 am, hardly any day he was late and by 7.30 – 8.00 am he would go the market to buy fresh vegetables and fish and whenever I visited Kolkata, all those sweets, which I and my mother likes a lot.

He loved nature that's why, Agronomy- Agriculture was his favorite subject. My Grandfather was extremely good in his studies and he got his Gold medal from Kolkata University and then went to USA for Ph.D.

He was full of love for me and other kids and would never get annoyed with us or shout at us. The only thing I noticed - he was very disciplined and wanted us also to be disciplined and respect elders.

He never wanted to live in any country other than India, in Kolkata

MY GRANDFATHER - DR A.K. SARKAR

and that's why even after being offered a job by the Washington University after completing his studies in the USA, he never agreed to stay there. He returned to his motherland to serve the country and educate as many students as he could.

He was a great fan of cricket and other sports, but specially cricket and loved to speak about cricket and cricketers for hours and once even showed me the house of great cricketer Saurav Ganguly, as former Indian captain is still living in the same area, where I live in Kolkata.

He always traveled to his college by tram and took me often for a tram ride, during which he told me a lot about his young age and hard time. He with his elder brothers shifted to India from Bangladesh during 1947 and then they had a very tough time in Kolkata as they were new to this city and nobody was there to help them.

His simplicity was liked and admired by all of his students and colleagues in the University and they often talked about it. After he passed away, when I with my mother and other relatives attended the condolence meeting organized by the Kolkata University, everybody had tears in their eyes and they were not even able to speak. I visited his room also, where he used to sit and work. I saw the room, I was very sad. He always had an answer

to the question I asked him. But now, I cannot ask him any more.

He always encouraged the young people and gave them chance to show their talent. He wanted them to help the poor, serve the motherland and live a simple life. During his young days he visited a lot of villages in India and helped farmers with agriculture and new methods of farming and developments in agronomy. His dream was to work more with farmers and villagers.

His favorite hobby was Astronomy. He knew a lot about planets and stars, and we used to watch together the sky during late evening in Kolkata.

He often said that each student can't be the first in the class, but at least everyone can be a good human being. I shall remember his words to be a good person, to help others and serve my country. I miss him everyday and he will always remain in my heart.



Uditangshu with grandparents & cousin Sulagna

THOSE WERE THE DAYS...



Rick Das

In 2nd year of Tourism & Hotel management in Peoples Friendship University. Fondly remembers selling juices and sodas from Anandamela stalls and acting in plays during puja cultural programmes.

Durga Puja - праздник который погружает нас словно в другой мир. С детства этот праздник остается одним из моих любимых! На несколько дней он переносит меня словно за пределы Москвы погружает в необыкновенную атмосферу. Праздник, который подарил мне много друзей! Ведь с самого детства мы, будучи совсем детьми, принимали участие в спектаклях и других мероприятиях связанных с Durga Puja. В моей памяти навсегда останутся воспоминания о тех не забываемых минутах на сцене во время спектаклей, в которых мы принимали активное участие. С каждым годом праздник менялся, и менялись люди, принимающие

в нем участия и, к сожалению многие уже уехали из Москвы. Но даже это не изменит великолепную атмосферу наполненную торжеством и весельем. Durga Puja словно возвращает меня в детство, захлестывая теми светлыми и чистыми эмоциями. Этот праздник этот праздник моя ностальгия по уходящему детству, часть меня самого.



Hada-Bhoda

THE GOOD GUIDE TO LIFE AHEAD ...



Richik Sengupta Class 12 EOI

What a day it has been! At present I have witnessed 12 celebrations of teacher's day in the school but today I have realized a few things which I would like to share with you.

Firstly, when I was in class I, I always used to wonder why the teacher's seemed so angry. Today after attending classes as a teacher I found out the reason behind their anger and sympathized with them.

After attending a Russian kindergarten I did not know English or Hindi when I joined the school so I

felt alienated. It was my teachers, who made me feel at home in the hostile environment. And guess what? They were the only ones, who judged me to help me and helped me without judging me.

So I realized that if we really owe it to someone then we owe it to our teachers.

Many of us may be crediting ourselves for liking a particular subject but I realized that it is the impact that some teacher at some point of time must have made on us whose sweat helped to grow our taste and develop our skills at whatsoever field.

After leaving the school, we may possibly reminisce over the times we had in school and while talking to our old friends undoubtedly the topic of teachers will come up. And this underlines the major role they play in our life.

Finally, I realized alas we are not the likes of Ekalavya from Mahabharata and thus we may not be able to repay our teachers for all the good deeds that have done for us but at least we can express our gratitude by celebrating the teacher's day for years to come.



Yash Dasgupta

Class 2

School No1637

Люблю праздник Дурга Пуджу потому, что там весело и красиво. Мы долго гуляем и мне можно поздно ложиться спать и папа меньше ругает за хулиганство. А еще, призы выигрывать люблю!



NORD STEEL

127474, Moscow, Dmitrovskoye shosse, 60

Wishes you all a very happy Dushera and Deewali!

Passage to India

PAINTINGS BY CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL NO 1239 AND 1279
EXHIBITED AT D.P. DHAR HALL, EMBASSY OF INDIA 2008



"Взгляд"
Андрияка Елизавета 13 лет ГОУ СОШ 1279
Руководитель: Курбатова Н.В.



"Индия глазами детей" Спирс Бабеттэ 9 лет
Преподаватель: Лепарская И.О.
Студия "Эскиз" при ЦО 1239



"Гармония" Раххал Дина 11 лет
ГОУ СОШ 1279
Руководитель: Курбатова Н.В.



"Очарование" Соколова Анна 11 лет
ГОУ СОШ 1279
Руководитель: Курбатова Н.В.



"На слоне"
Ускова Валентина 7 лет



In Conversation with Metaxa

TATIANA METAXA, first deputy general director State Museum of Oriental Art

Why India and when did your involvement with our motherland begin?

I was a teenager in Moscow and the school that I went to had a carnival in 1958. I had to pick something original and different to wear, so randomly chose to drape myself in a sari. A feat indeed as my father had to scour the capital during those Soviet times to acquire it. Being a perfectionist and to complete the look, I drew a bindi for myself. This adolescent fascination with the dress and the country remained with me becoming a passion which 11 years later, sees me working with the State Museum of Oriental Art.

What were the other events that strengthened your affection?

There were many experiences that deepened my partiality to all things Indian.

Festivals: *Over the years, I have always been eager to participate in the numerous Indian festivals. One of the most memorable events was Ravi Shankar's concert at Moscow's Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in 1987.*

Movies: *Influence also came in the form of black and white movies which were broadcast over state television and Baiju Bawra is my favourite for its captivating classical music. While on the subject of movies, I would add that I hold in high esteem the Indian-Soviet production Journey Beyond Three Seas (Hindi: Pardesi; Russian: Khozhdenie za tri morya) which recounts the travel adventures of Afanasy Nikitin. Nikitin was a Russian merchant and one of the first Europeans to travel and document his visit to India.*

Shops: *In the later year Moscow saw a shop selling Indian souvenirs, clothes and handicrafts aptly called Ganga. I started buying ethnic dresses and would wear them at every occasion possible.*

Drinks: *For a chai-drinking nation, the best beverage that money could buy was the Indian 3 Elephant Brand Tea.*

Food: *Being the essence of any being, how can I not mention Jaltarang, probably Moscow's first Indian restaurant of Soviet period located at Chisti Prudi that served masala chai, samosa and gajar-ka-halwa that I have sometimes had. A far cry from what I am accustomed to these days for now my husband cooks daal, chawal, parathas and raita in the comfort of my own kitchen. Nikolay Kostromitin has lived and travelled extensively in India and it is his art work on Aaratrika's cover this year.*

How did your career evolve?

I began reading and studying India extensively. After graduating from the Moscow Krupskaya Pedagogical Institute in 1969 I chose to teach history. The fondness for this immense country made me want to share my passion with others, hence I began a lecture series for children called 'Travel around India' in schools of Moscow and its suburbs. Soon afterwards, I joined the State Museum of Oriental Art. There was no turning back; being smitten for life! I had fallen in love with the colourful, bright and vibrant India! And the best word to describe it is diversity.

Being an art expert, do tell us about your favourite exhibit at your museum?

Our museum was founded in 1918 and houses art exhibits from Korea, China, Japan, South-East Asian countries, Caucasus,



Apsara India XV-XVI



Tatiana at home





State Museum of Oriental Art



With the Indian Ministry of Culture



Central Asia Iran and India. The Indian division alone has over 3000 exhibits. And in answer to your query, I am very close to the bronze statues of Nataraj and stone Apsaras. I also adore art of Nicholas Roerich and have met his younger son Svetoslav several times when he delivered lectures at the museum. The younger Roerich would visit us with his wife Devika Rani, the famous Indian movie star of yesteryear.

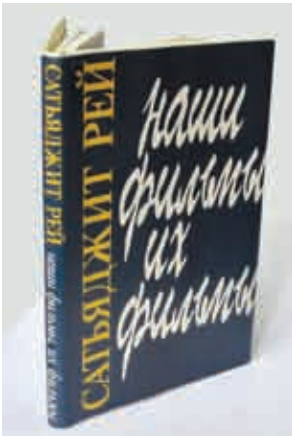
Wrapping up, would you like to share with us any incident in particular?

One simple yet profound incident that happened many years ago when I was reading a lecture to a small town in the Moscow suburbs to 10 year olds. Listening intently, wide-eyed and gaping at the India stories, one boy asked, "Tatiana Christoforovna, when was the last time you were in India?" In order not to disappoint him, I lied and said "Not that long ago" for I have never set foot on the land which has bewitched me. Yes, never set foot but in my heart and mind I have travelled and savoured India's enormous riches and been under its magic spell since my childhood.

Would like to share with readers of Aaratrika that from 30th Sept 2009 onwards exhibition 'From Himalayas to Ocean' will be launched at the Museum as integral part of 'Year of India in Russia'.

Bibliophile

OUR FILMS THEIR FILMS



Satyajit Ray with Aida Sofyan in Madras 1973 during an interview

Our films Their films by Satyajit Ray has been translated into Russian in 1978 by Aida Sofyan. She is a film journalist who passionately continues to research Ray and his works.

She has met Ray several times at Kolkata, has interviewed him and says that the bunch of 20 letters that she received from Ray mainly during 1973 to 1979 is her treasure chest! She currently resides in the U.S.

CHAK LE INDIA!

Maria Arbatova's book Degustatsia Indii (we would translate it as Chak le India!) published in 2007 is a delightful read. "Tour agencies and films lie about India. It is impossible to retell India as you see it. In this sense, I'm also lying, because I can only lay bare my own emotions about India. Your perception will anyway be different. India didn't just stun me, it completely overwhelmed me".





Michail Taratuta

MY TRYST WITH INDIA

Michail Taratuta - popular TV journalist, documentary film maker focussed on US where he has lived & worked for long, his TV show 'America with Taratuta' is legendary.

IT was early in my childhood that like most Russians of my generation, I first realized that besides commonly known countries there is also a huge fascinating and mysterious land on the globe named India. It was the time when Raj Kapoor and his movies "Awara" and "Mister 420" reigned in Russian movie theaters and Russian hearts. I was too young to understand what those movies were all about but even till this day I remember the sound track from "Awara".

Little later I got fascinated by Jungle Stories and other books by Joseph Rudyard Kipling and could read and re-read those books indefinitely.

I also remember from my childhood shots of newscasts with Nikita Khrushchev, the then Russian Leader, being warmly greeted in India. I hardly cared of and could understand anything in the world politics but those news clips sent me a clear message that is still alive – and that message is that India is our friend.

When a teen, I came across paintings of Nikolai Roerich who's colorful images of India struck my imagination.

However it was the time when Russian people were not free to travel and one could not even dream to get to your country. It was exactly eagerness for travel that brought me to the then famous Foreign Languages School that could open the doors to outer world. Well, after graduation I was drafted and assigned as a translator to the Russian Salvage Team that demined the waters and salvaged sunken ships in the Harbor of Chittagong after the war. Although Bangladesh was not exactly the India that intrigued my imagination, especially right after the war, I still got some impressions of the culture of that region.

Over thirty five years have passed since my military service. My journalistic work brought me to various countries, sometimes for pretty long assignments like 12 years in the US. And it was only a couple of years ago that I finally happened to get to India.

I spent a few days in Delhi and a week in Goa. Those happened to be absolutely different experiences and both were great. My only regret is that my attempt to visit Taj Mahal got a complete failure as a local travel agency I turned to did not advise me that Taj Mahal is closed for tourists or non-muslims on Friday. Can you imagine my disappointment when after six hours of not so easy drive to Agra I was only able to see the great historical complex from a huge distance? It was like gazing at the Kremlin from the Belorussian Railway square. When I called the agency to reprimand them for their poor work I got an answer that knocked me down: Why such a rush when eternity is ahead of you! And its then I realized that I do not understand a dime about the country and the people of India and need to come back for a more profound stay. I'll tell you more – I even considered going over there for a few months and shooting a documentary about your land. That did not happen. But I know I shall come back. I made a point, however, when next time in India among other interesting places I shall definitely revisit Agra - on any other week day except Friday though, and, yes, only by air, even in view of eternity that awaits me ahead.

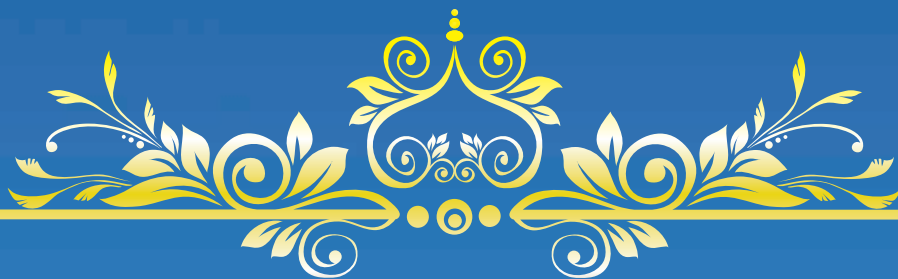
And that brings me to a thought that I want to share with kids who aspire to be journalists. What first and foremost distinguishes a good journalist from a bad one? The answer is: longing for the unknown – to see it, understand it and explain it to others. Please never be afraid or lazy to explore new things even if at first they may look insurmountable. And always remember most of the barriers exist only in people's minds.

*Best regards on the great occasion of Durga Puja,
Michail Taratuta*

Dear Friends,

Let me wholeheartedly send my warmest greetings and my best wishes to the Indian community of Moscow on the occasion of Durga Puja and share my reflections of your wonderful country.





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сердечно поздравляет всех
с праздником*

ДУРГА-ПУДЖА

*Силы, крепости, знаний, достатка и процветания
Вам и Вашим близким*



Swirls, Twirls... Magic

Rainbow came down to play with Marina, Lena, Irina, Natasha, Valentina and Igor from the Oriental Centre, Russian State Library.

Rainbow designer - Smita Sengupta

Some of you may not be knowing that our old Durga Thakur is carefully kept at the Centre.



Colour me RIOT

From left: Inna, Rati & Nadejda



Khardung La 18380 feet,
highest motorable road in the world

LOVELY LADAKH BY RATI SINGH

Rati speaks about her exhilarating experience...

Удивительный Лех-Ладакх

В этом году мы совершили захватывающую поездку на самый север Индии, в Гималаи. Горы нас потрясли. Мы проехали через множество красивых городов, долин и перевалов. Никакие прилагательные в превосходной степени не в силах хотя бы приблизительно описать состояние при подъеме на гималайские перевалы. Гималаи бесконечно разнообразны. Мы посетили такие места как Дхармшала, Кулу-Манали, Кейлонг, наконец, проехав перевалы от 4000 до 5600 метров и переночевав в палаточном лагере в Сарчу на 4300 м над уровнем моря, мы попали в столицу Ладакх – Лех, который находится на высоте 3500 метров. Нашим гидом был дружелюбный, молодой лама Пандей, учитель в местной школе Леха. Он нас познакомил местными достопримечательностями, рассказывал про буддизм, про жизнь лам и их обычаи. Ладакх занимает второе место в мире после Тибета по количеству буддийских монастырей и ступ. В некоторых районах на одном квадратном километре можно встретить одновременно до 100 ступ. Среди наиболее знаменитых монастырей (гомпа), которые мы посетили, можно выделить Алчи,

построенный приблизительно 990 лет тому назад Тиксе, Спитук, Хемис, Шей и др. Познакомились с ламами, пожали руку настоятелю монастыря Спитук. Им оказался пожилой дедушка, с лучезарной улыбкой – он с каждым поздоровался и богославил. Люди в Ладакхе доброжелательные, всегда рады помочь, ведут очень спокойную и размеренную жизнь.

Исследовав окрестности Леха мы направились в долину Нубра. Попасть в нее можно, преодолев перевал Кхардонг Ла (5600 м), самый высокогорный перевал в мире, через который проложена автомобильная дорога. По пути осуществили мою мечту – поиграли в снежки в Гималаях. Долина Нубра известна своими двугорбыми верблюдами, мы создали караван и отправились покорять пустыню. Захватывающее зрелище, сидишь на верблюде, идешь по пустыне, а вдалеке видишь заснеженные горы.

Вернувшись назад в Лех, мы отправились на северо-восток – на озеро Пангонг. Чтобы попасть туда нам пришлось пересечь ещё один перевал Чанг ла (5486 м). По дороге видели редких птиц, зверей, из них черный журавль, сурки. Сурки – очень смешные и

толстые, поедающие все что им дают: рис, печения, шоколадки и даже бутерброды. Пангонг - крупнейшее высокогорное озеро в Ладакхе имеет ширину 5-6 км, но вытянулось на 144 км и две трети его находятся уже в Тибете. Окружающие горы имеют разные формы и цвета. На закате игра голубых, оранжевых, отблесков солнечных лучей на воде завораживает взгляд, уводит мысли далеко от мирской суеты.

Покинув долину Ладакх мы отправились в столицу Кашмира – Шринагар. Кашмир — это прекрасная долина — чаша, наполненная чистой водой горных ледников. Большую часть Шринагара занимает озеро Дал. Здесь есть прекрасные дома-дворцы, магазины, музеи и все это — дома-лодки находящиеся на воде. В одном из таких домиков мы провели две ночи. По вечерам совершали прогулки по улицам озера в лодках — шикарах, любовались лотосами и плавающими садами.

Это была самая сказочная и завораживающая поездка по Индии!!!

*My best wishes to you all
on the eve of our 20th Durga
Puja!*



Nubra Valley

Fairly Tales

KALI



A.V. RAJAGOPAL (PEN NAME: RAJ)
(26.10.1938 - 14.07.2002):
was a practicing chartered accountant, published 14 books with over 340 short stories, has won Central Government and State Government and other literary awards for several best short stories, Secretary of Federation of Film Societies of India (Southern Region), was member of The Censor Board of India.

That's the way Kali Vardhan has always been – a happy-go-lucky man. He made good money as a broker, but worked for only about a week. The rest of the month was spent loitering around with his friends. Kali (for short) went with them almost anywhere. He sometimes went to political meetings – it didn't matter to him what the party was, or what the slogan was, as long as he was with his friends. His wife tried to dissuade him from spending wasteful time with his friends. She believed they could be financially much better off if he worked through the month. But Kali did not heed.

And now, there he was with his friends on the train bound for Delhi. With money in his pocket, a free ticket and the company of his friends, Kali couldn't ask for more. Velu their team-leader was absorbed in a game of cards. "Guys, do you know where we are headed? We are going to demolish the mosque in Ayodhya!" he declared jubilantly as he dropped his trump card. "Game over guys! Count out all your money." This made Kali very queasy. Kali had been to several political meetings

before, but he'd always kept away from religion or anything to do with it.

But no sooner did they set foot in Ayodhya, than Kali's perception of the whole thing changed. There were so many men clad in saffron-coloured clothes, all chanting 'Ram, Ram' in unison. The atmosphere was simply electric! They seemed such pious people, that Kali believed that what they were perpetrating could not be wrong after all! As Kali was lost in thoughts, he was lost in the crowd as well.

As he was groping in the crowd looking for his friends, he felt somebody touch his shoulder. Turning around, he faced a well-built man of about 6 ft height. With long matted hair and beard, he looked like a Sadhu right out of a movie. Kali couldn't make out what the Sadhu was asking, but assumed he wanted to know where he was from. He replied "Madras se" in the little hindi that he could muster up. "Madras se? Ram Ram" said the Sadhu closing his eyes in bliss "Sukhi Raho beta".



Kali felt elated by the Sadhu's blessings. He pushed his way through in the crowd. There were several people atop a building, trying to demolish it. Kali felt he had to justify the confidence reposed in him. He took a crowbar from a man near by and rammed it into the wall nearest to him. The wall being old, gave away quite easily. Kali felt a great sense of achievement. He was suddenly reminded of the fall of the Berlin Wall, he had witnessed on the Television. He thought, 'maybe I should take a brick of this wall home with me as souvenir'. People back home would be thrilled to see this and it would be a reminder of my achievement. He picked up a brick to take home.

When Kali returned home after 7 days, the house was locked. His house was near the slums of Chintadripet. "Where could Valli have gone at this time of the day?" He was wondering when the old lady from the neighbouring house stepped out. "Is it Kali there?

Where have you been all these days? Do you know that your child had taken seriously ill? Poor Valli went through hell trying to cope all by herself". The lady's head was shaky from old age.

"Oh no!" Kali exclaimed. "Where are Valli and the child now?"

"They've gone to the Durgha" said the old lady.

"Durgha? What for?" asked Kali apparently confused and anxious at the same time.

"You ask what for? The poor child had such high temperature, she got fits. Valli rushed her to the hospital and they gave the child a couple of injections. But the fever still did not subside. Desperate for help, Valli took her to the Durgha and it's only the Fakir who revived your daughter for you. If not for him..... It's probably somebody's good deeds that have saved the child". Kali froze like a statue as the old lady's voice trailed off in the background. "It's definitely not my deeds" thought Kali.

It's only when Kali went to bed after bonding with his daughter that he remembered what he had brought from Ayodhya. "What's happened?" His wife was startled by the speed he got off the bed. He groped in the bag and found what he was looking for at the bottom. "Hey, what are you doing putting an old brick to your forehead and into the puja shelf?" she was bewildered.

"Sssh!" said Kali Vardhan putting a finger to his lips to quiet her. Then he told her deliberately, "This is also God".



Translated by Sujatha Rajagopal: Chartered & Cost Accountant, loves music (in fact any form of art) and good literature. Adores short stories that take few minutes to read, but get you thinking for days. Her favourite festivals are Navratri and Ganesh Chaturthi - both encourage creativity and team-work. Festive food - way too many to enlist, but to name one, unniappam.



Dinesh Chakraborty

Dinesh is a doctor in the making in his final year at MMA. He is an authority on animals and birds. His prized pet was a snake which he kept in a bottle and fed with a variety of insects and lizards. He also has a particular fondness for peacocks and dreams of organizing a preservation programme for them. As he has green fingers, he also enjoys growing green chillies in his hostel room. His favourite pujo menu is khichuri, labda, begun bhaja with payesh as dessert!

The most intriguing subject that has tickled the curiosity of the human race and imbibed a fear of the unknown is the unforeseen, ever mysterious future. Since ancient times scholars have been trying to find out a way to explain present happenings and predict the future and also find the remedies to avoid bad luck or to get past inexplicable trouble. The subject that tries to link the happenings of the human life with the environmental changes (changes in positions of celestial bodies, to be more specific), is – Astrology

There are many things one should consider before condemning astrology as make-believe. As for e.g., the moon controls the tides. If the moon is able to control such large bodies of water, wouldn't it mean that it is also able to control the 75% of our bodies that is water? Our body synthesizes Vitamin D from the sun, is it not possible that other, undiscovered elements are also passing into our bodies from the cosmos? And when we throw a ball in the air, it will fall back down, as it is affected by the Earth's gravity. We, however, cannot see gravity. How can we deny that other forces from other planets and stars are not affecting our lives? This is the basis of astrology.

It could be said that astrology is a science, a natural science. It is not a religion, nor is it philosophy as a whole, but as my father used to explain – A modern science with a garnishing of philosophy as where science fails to explain, philosophy takes the lead. To use astrology is not to be superstitious, fatalistic or weak. It is simply using another science to benefit our lives. Astrology is like a torchlight guiding in the dark, giving important information that is potentially beneficial to our life.

The placement of the planets when we were born makes up our own unique personalities and characteristics. Each planet has an influence over us and affects the way we think, respond, react and behave. Not only does each planet play a role in our personality but as they continue to go through changes, we continue to go through our lives feeling their effects. The positions they were in during birth and the current positions combined, helps us understand certain feelings and reactions they would have on us. The relationships between them and their interactions are

based on mathematics, and Astrology is the study of these mathematical cycles. In some ways, the forces between the planets involved in Astrology can be simplified into one word: gravity. The Sun has the greatest gravity and the strongest effect in Astrology, followed by the Moon, the Earth's satellite. The Sun controls the Earth's motion and the Moon controls its tides, but the other Planets have their own effects on the Earth and people living on it.

Since each planets position can have positive or negative influences over us, we hopefully can control and utilize the positive effects and not the negative ones. Just how much of an effect each of these planets has over us on a day to day basis depends on our Natal Chart or horoscopes and our convictions.

Well, some of us fail to see any analogy there! Perhaps at this point we should try to analyze the contributing factors in the widespread following astrology has today. It is estimated that 1200 out of the 1750 daily newspapers carry an astrological column (1975 statistics). We may safely assume that the percentage is higher today, for astrology is a multi-million dollar industry. Hundreds of bookstores specialize in astrological and cultist reading material. Thousands upon thousands of college and university students seek astrological guidance in matters of career, marriage and politics. Many parents plan the birth of their children so they will be born under a "favorable" astrological sign, despite the fact that the respected journal "Psychology Today" noted not long ago that "It is simply a mistake to imagine that the forces exerted by stars and planets at the moment of birth can in any way shape our futures." St. Augustine, who lived 1,600 years ago, gave up astrology when he learned that a wealthy landowner and a slave on his estate had been born exactly at the same time!

Scholars, enlightened in the subject, strongly believe that the forces of nature influences human physiology, which in turn controls the state of the mind; and they also have been able to co-relate sequences of happenings in our lives in accordance to a mathematical se-

quential cycle. With the knowledge of a probable future, the human instinct gets to work on enhancing the benefits of a situation or avoiding a predicted disaster. According to the Bhrigu samhita, what is pre-destined cannot be avoided totally, but its impact could be altered. As such a number of ways-Gems, roots of certain trees and certain talismans are often sold at high prices as cures and some so called astrologers perform tantric rituals trying to cater to specific requirements of their clients. Yoga, meditation, chanting of special mantras and havans (fire worshipping) to invoke the special energies for our wellbeing have been mentioned as well to keep us in harmony with the cosmic forces. They also, supposedly, bring in positive energies which in turn affect and change the outside world.

The Hindu Almanac (Panjika) is based on the calculations of astrology to determine the most auspicious or forbidden time for performing rites like marriages, funerals, thread ceremonies etc. With time a lot of revision of the Almanac has been brought about based on astronomical observation of minute changes in planetary positions, as for e.g. that brought about by N.C.Lahiri, based on the observations of Dr.Meghnad Saha.

One of the most auspicious religious events of India, Durga Puja is also based on the astrological positions of planets. In the Indian month of Ashwin, 6 days after the new moon, the invocation of the Goddess is performed. The time and moments of each and every act is followed in accordance to the almanac. Even the 45 mins of Sandhi Puja, the most auspicious moment of the puja, is performed perfectly in the same planetary position as it was done by the legendary Lord Sri Ram centuries ago.

The special moments of tranquility and festive feeling felt during this time is, perhaps, the influence of astrology and the season in general on the mass.

Hope the reader's of Aratrika imbibe the true essence of this ancient science and follow a knowledgeable and enriched life for the betterment of humanity as a whole.

JYOTISH - THE ENLIGHTENMENT

*"May you be cursed to live in interesting times"
(Not an old Chinese proverb)*
THE FIRST...

Sanjay loves to listen to ghazals and old Hindi songs. Never says no to books, tea and barfis.



Sanjay Shirali (left) with friend



Every pioneering human being has to venture out for the first time. Our great ancestors the cave-men risked it, it brought us here...I hear its called progress. Each one of us has done everything for the first time. Either first love of a teenager or a pre-school-going kid in some cases, the first time you graduate - from school (the first time you fail your exams for some), the first time you step into an esteemed educational institution, the first job, the first salary, the first time you meet your life-partner, your kids first words, their first walk, the first... You also remember with awe and with fear your first bicycle ride and...fall, your much-cherished first car ride and of course your first plane trip!

It was after a long and overdue wait, that a few of us lucky individuals got selected for higher studies in the erst-while USSR. To top it, we were granted free flight tickets and confirmed seats. The route was long winded but no one complained-the sheer thrill of going abroad was fascinating (Delhi-Amritsar-Moscow-London-Birmingham). The excitement started fading when I boarded the plane, when with great trouble I got to my seat which was in the rear end narrowly situated between two already seated gentlemen – a ruddy tall Sardarji with a long white beard, a long white robe, a white turban and a long scabbard and a stout bearded spectacled European young man in deep slumber. As I squeezed myself into my seat more than half occupied by Sardarji, I managed a half-hearted smile and turned my attention to the limited view the window offered and began wondering if all my friends managed to board on time. These thoughts were accompanied by the heat (A/C being switched off prior to take off), and rushing thoughts in my head not helped by Sardarji who in my humble answer to his question of my destination (Moscow) replied with an aggression that he was definitely going to London wherever I might choose to go! Having traveled only in inter-city and intra-city trains and buses till date, and the over-powering look of S stunned me into a natural illusion of having boarded the wrong plane! I made a feeble attempt to rise from the seat and look for friends to disperse such ill-thoughts; but all I could see was a sea of turbans and some disgruntled passengers trying to squeeze their large hand-bags into ill-fitted over-

head baggage compartments. Suddenly the intercom barked in an heavily-accented female voice speaking what sounded like English throwing me back to my seat which in turn startled my neighbour on the window seat who awoke gradually and introduced himself in an equally heavily-accented English as an Hungarian who used to study Microbiology, but had taken a break to visit "incredible" India which naturally made me proud! By then the voice on the intercom had stopped talking, making me more unsettled as regards to my destination and the stewardess started making rounds to check if all were seated and belted. Finding no belt on my seat made S rise only to find it concealed there. Steadily the plane taxied for take-off, the loud banging noise of metallic boxes being dropped or thrown (we were seated in the last row) gradually subsiding - the captain(an Indian one- I could guess) blabbered some technical information and wished us a nice flight. My Hungarian microbiologist drop-out co-passenger immediately retrieved a video-camera and stared shooting the take-off. I felt that I had acquired a friend finally and I started to imagine him shooting my video- taking in the sights and sounds of me in London riding on the open double-decker buses if we were to land there by mistake! But very soon he went back to sleep, which he faithfully accomplished most of the flight duration and I was robbed of the little conversation we could have had.

It was not long before we made a not so smooth landing at Amritsar only to be joined by more Sikhs and their families all traveling to England. Before that I was joined by my friend M also from Bombay, whose co-passengers also kept on insisting that this plane was flying to England and not to Moscow. So I imagined that three of us could not be wrong about that!

As we landed in Amritsar and during and after take-off the captain got more animated and almost started live commentary akin to cricket. There seemed to be definitely some sort of attachment he had with Amritsar as he with the confidence of a guide and love of a patriot gave us a short brief about the city announcing during take off that "on your left you can see the Golden Temple" which made us rush to the left side of the plane and then he reported that "we are leaving the religious site on

***Best wishes -
Durga Puja
Moscow!***



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the right" we rushed to the opposite windows – how the plane's center of gravity was controlled was anybody's guess. Soon he too went on a silent mode as my would-be microbiologist Hungarian neighbour, which made me realize we were on auto-pilot mode.

But S refused to get me to admit that my final destination was London, he changed tactics, started to enquire from time to time if I had relatives there (in London) , about my parent's occupation and finally back to who would come to receive me at Heathrow! Soon food was served and even my neighbour interrupted his siesta only to film the Hindu Kush Mountain range and insisted on my enjoying these marvels through the camera lenses! Now people were beginning to settle, some were pulling out blankets and making themselves comfortable even in the gangways, so I could only but

marvel the cabin –crew particularly the stewardesses who with great agility and dexterity were catering to the passenger needs. I supposed that to get a job like theirs they would have to compulsorily engage in sports like hurdle-racing or steeple-chasing.

Thus time and we flew to finally land in Moscow, I briskly left my seat and flanked others queuing up to leave the aircraft before it took off for London or wherever the remaining seated passengers wished to head to . Everything here seemed large – the people, the counters, the cars, the buses, and the doors even the law-abiding cows grazing lazily in the lush fields near the airport highway. This was my first time in Moscow and from now on everything one did here was for the first time in Moscow, but then that is a totally different story!

HAPPY TIDINGS...



Marble bust of Nikolai Roerich 3, 5 m high at Biruzovaya Katun

The Indo-Russian Cultural Parade organized by Mir Traditsii (World of Tradition) inaugurated a statue of Nikolai Roerich on the 13th of September at Biruzovaya Katun, which is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Altai Region. The site is situated along river Katun around 400 kms from Barnaul in a spectacular area opposite to the Tavdin Caves.

In October this year a photography exhibition called 'Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy' will be organized at Tula, Yasnaya Polyana.

In December the photo exhibition shifts to Tolstoy Museum, Moscow.

These events are an integral part of the festival of India in Russia.

For further details contact: mirtrad@mail.ru

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 20TH CELEBRATION!

From Centre of Russian Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

B.A 2nd Year students



Aaratrika asks them a few questions:

What fascinates you the most about Russian lang?'

Vidushi -The rich vocabulary and literary heritage of Russian. This makes it a must learn language.

What is your favourite Russian work?

Reeta - Ivan Turgenev's "Fathers and sons".

Could you recall some funny incident related to translation?

Shitanshu - As once I said "Вчера я бросала вечер"»! (Yesterday I threw a party)

What would you say about the Russian verbs of motion?

Ashish- The several prefixes and suffixes with different meanings complicates the language and our life as well.

Is there anything that you don't like about Russian?

Arvind- It's too rich, thus too difficult.



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Pujor gaan...Pujor bajna... I like to face this music...

RUSHIL KAPOOR AGE 3



I've made my own rap song that goes like this.

Yoma! Yoma! house is clean.
Yoma! Yoma! I love icecream
with chocolate chip.
Yoma! Yoma! Bubbles I love
with sausage and ketchup.
Yoma! yoma! Yo Yo ma!

VISHWAS MISHRA

Class 3 EOI School



I love the flute and the drums. I enjoy rock music, exception being Michael Jackson. I like his album Black or white.

I'm learning to play the piano.

KALIKA IYER AGE 5



When it comes to festive music, I like listening to the Nadaswaram. I also like the Guitar. I'm currently learning to play the Piano. My favourite songs are Nannare Nannare from Guru, Masakali from Delhi 6 and Mukunda Mukunda from Dashavathar.

SRIKANT

Class 6 EOI School



Playing on the keyboard is my favorite pastime. Mastering the Guitar is what's in line. I love summer because I enjoy skating & cycling.

Studies? - That's what I do all day under my mother's psyching!

SAHITYA PARVATH

Class 7 EOI School



I like Dholi tharo when it comes to festive music. I also like the songs Khudaya khair, Stay beautiful and Twist (remix). My favourite singers are Taylor swift, Shreya goshal and Sunidhi chauhan. From the recent concerts in Moscow, I loved the violin duet of the Lalgudi brother and sister.

**ANDREI KUMAR
GARZON DASGUPTA**

Class 6 B School No 1317



A talented painter, he has contributed to Aaratrika many times his lovely painting.

I enjoy playing the flute and the synthesizer. I love watching my little sister Aanisha trying to sing karaoke. I mostly listen to Spanish music these days, my favourite being Noche De Paz (Night of Peace).



We asked people of their musical preferences, with specific reference to Pujo and of any interesting musical experience they may have had in Moscow. This is what they had to say:

RATHIN CHATTERJEE



Our 'Rathinda' having lived in Russia for long, has many interesting stories in his basket and has indeed been an integral part of our puja right from day 1.

Pujo music for me means dhaker yer bajna (durga puja festive drums). I also love to listen to adhunik gan by Shyamal Mitra, Hemanata Mukhopadhyay, RabindraSangeet by Debobroto Biswas and Suchitra Mitra.

Would like to share with you a memorable experience. Do you know that in 1974 Suchitra Mitra visited Moscow during the Peace Committee Conference? She stayed at Rossia hotel and I remember meeting her. She sang many songs in her lovely voice. Can you imagine our Bishuda (Hitangshu Kumar Dasgupta) accompanied her on tabla? To me she is one of the best voices in Rabindrasangeet, I adore her style and strong voice.

PUSHPLATA MISHRA



A great cook, her paneer bondas are super. Having learnt Russian, she looks forward to exploring Moscow further.

I love listening to bhajans during puja. When it comes to music otherwise, its got to be the romantic sad songs of Mukesh and Lata.

I love music from the movie Chak de India especially the song Chak de India, Main yahan tu wahan song from Baghban, Kaise Muje from Ghajini and Maa from Taare Zameen par, which can bring tears to anybody's eyes.

I was mesmerized by the performance of Sahasra Patra at the concert at Bolshoi during the recent visit of the president. Last year was my first puja year in Moscow. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, especially the pushpanjali and the evening Aarti

ATREYEE CHATTERJEE



She is a quite person, but her involvement in the puja speak louder than words. She has been playing a vital role in the puja arrangement since long.

Pujo Porjay RabindraSangeets are my all time favourites. The songs I like being Ei korchero bhalo nithuro hey, Nibiro ghono aadhare. I enjoy listening to Indranil Sen, Dijen Banerjee and Suchitra Mitra. When it comes to Hindi, its got to be Kishore Kumar. I like his Rabindrasangeet too.

PRADYOT MUKHERJEE



He brightens our gatherings once he arrives. None of our parties are complete without him singing Manna Dey songs, and his singing isn't complete without Manna Dey songs.

You know the answer. Of course songs of Manna Dey! He means the world to me! His velvety voice has always charmed me.

I am also partial to Sandhya Mukhopadhyay and Hemanata Mukhopadhyay

Pujor gaan? Remember the special pujo audio cassettes that would be released before pujo?

I get nostalgic recollecting our neighbourhood puja at Garden Reach in Kolkata where during puja days different types of songs and music would play non-stop. But now puja in Moscow attracts me more, there is a feeling of belonging to our group here. I eagerly look forward to the 4 days of puja in Moscow.



AVIK DEY BHOWMIK



Student of the Moscow Medical Academy, his first Durga puja with us was during last year. He blended into the celebration providing great volunteer service during all puja days.

You can always tell that Durga Puja is very near when you hear the Mahalaya songs. I remember the time when I was a kid - me and my family used to sleep early so that we could listen to Mahalaya early next morning. For me whenever I hear 'Pujor gaan/ Pujor bajna' it reminds me of Mahalaya songs. I still remember the time when people used to hike up the volume on their radios to maximum so that everyone could hear the music. I also remember that during the Puja apart from new clothes, food and Pujo-sankha, Anandamela, myself and my brother used to wait for some new songs to be played. My brother and I have always had the same taste for music. We like slow beat music during the Puja, unlike today's blaring loud music. We used to wait for new and old songs from Hemanta Mukherjee, Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, Haimanti Shukla, Antara Chowdhury, Snadhya Mukherji, Nirmala Mishra, Banashree Sengupta and the list goes on. I also like the beat of Dhak (Drums) at Puja Mandaps when it comes to 'Pujor bajna'. At Dashami when Dhaks played 'Thakur thakbe kotokhon, Thakur jabe bish-orjon' (Ma Durga will be here for not long, she'll go for immersion), though it saddened us it also gave us new hope that she'll be back again next year. So I guess that's what 'Pujor gaan/Pujor bajna' means to me.

My favourite songs:

O kola bang by Antara Chowdhury
Teer bhanga dheu by Manna Dey
Jibon khatar by Shyama Mitra
Ei path jodi na sesh hoi by Hemanta Mukherjee

One memorable moment in my life was when I used to learn violin from my Guru Jyoti Sankar Roy of Violin Brothers, I met their Guru Ustad Amjad Ali Khan Sahib during puja festival when he was in Kolkata.

YAN DASGUPTA



With neice Aanisha

Our handsome advocate who adores Indian Philosophy, Buddhism and Bengali culture, loves to speak in his fathertongue Bengali.

I love Indian music, especially instrumental like sitar of Ravi Shankar, flute and tabla. I also love ghazals. Favourite include Ghulam Ali & Jagjit Singh.



IRINA KRILOVNA SMIRNOVA



Our strong support during any cultural programme, she has been with us from the very beginning, since the very first puja.

My favourite in Indian music? RabindraSangeet of course! Hridoy amar nachire ajike.....Poush toder dak diyeche.....these songs never get old.

I love to listen to morning and evening ragas. Fondly remember the puja when we staged Tasher Deshe with Indrani, must have been in the 90ties. Some meera bhajans are very charming.

MITALI SARKAR



Misses Kolkata puja however now Moscow puja is what she looks forward to. Loves to read puja sonkha & looks forward to wearing sari at puja.

In Moscow am reminded of puja with Nitinda's email. In Kolkata it would be listening to the hawkers shouting 'puja sale'!

I would definitely listen to Mahalaya songs and slokas from old recordings.

Also I am reminded in particular of a poem which goes as...

Ashiner majamajhi uthilo bajna baji
Pukor shomoy elo kache...

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Travel is our middle name

Disneyland-where I lived my dream

Neha Shakil Class 3 EOI

Amongst all the places I visited, Disneyland in Paris is my favourite destination. I will never forget that great Wonderland. I felt the story book world was coming alive in front of my eyes.

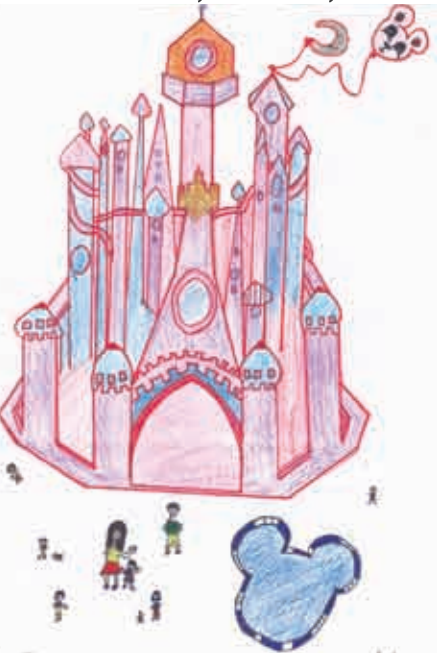
All the characters and setting were just as I remember them in fairytales and Disney stories. Even if you read the stories you like it because of the pictures. But, seeing them in real if of course more fun. Some of the things I enjoyed most was meeting Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty in their castles, flying with Dumbo – the flying elephant, a rocket journey into the moon, an adventure sail with the pirates of the Caribbean, an amazing show of collection of dolls from around the world called 'It's a small world' etc. Above all, there was one more excitement waiting for us. Once upon a dream parade in which all our favourite Disney characters came alive and paraded together – Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Winnie and all the fairytale princes and princesses.

Meeting and greeting many of my story characters was an unforgettable experience for me!

— Neha Shakil
class III



Neha with sister Aysha in Disneyland Paris



Aysha Shakil Class 5 EOI

Cyprus surprise

Sagarika Sanyal Class 5 EOI

Hi Friends! I am 10 years old now, whenever I see the world's political map, I feel like visiting an island. Oh! you just think how I felt when my parents informed me that in my summer holidays we will visit to an island. It was a big surprise for me and so I named it as "CYPRUS SURPRISE"! I was so happy and excited, it is inexpressible. At last the day came. It was 26th June 2009. We left Moscow at 11-35 AM. It was raining (tip-tip) and temperature was +14 C. You know how Moscow summer is! This year it was a rainy summer! Anyway we flew for 3.5 hours before landing. I just saw Cyprus in the Mediterranean sea from aeroplane, you won't believe, it is exactly the same as I saw in the book. All around the island is the Mediterranean sea and in the middle is the island CYPRUS! It was a real island view from the top, really amazing! Our flight landed at Larnaca airport at 2-00 pm (Cyprus time) Oh! What a bright sunny day with a temperature +32 C! Our tour company bus took us to Limassol (45 minutes). On our journey to Limassol we saw sea on one side and small hills on the other.

We reached our hotel at Limassol. Our room was sea facing. I was eagerly waiting to swim in the sea. After taking some food, we left for the beach. It was just one minute! WOW! Water temperature was so good, +25 C.. A big cool splash and Sagarika was in the Mediterranean sea. Everyday 7 am to 9 am and 6 pm to 8 pm was my daily routine for swimming. The seawater is so crystal clear with sandy beaches around. I had never seen this before! But it was the toughest job for me and my father to take my mom a little deep in the sea.

I saw many beautiful places in Cyprus. We saw the ancient city of Kourion, a beautiful unspoiled spot perched high on the cliff top. The Crusader Castle of KOLOS-SI, APHRODITE rock. Aphrodite is the Greek Goddess of love and beauty. According to the legend the Goddess was born from the foam of the sea at this spot. I also saw the natural sponge factory.

Do you know that the first sign of civilization in Cyprus goes back to the 9th millennium BC? It became an independent republic on 16th August 1960. I enjoyed the trip very much. I bought souvenirs as usual. Leaving Cyprus was the sad part. I hope I will go there again.



Amphitheatre in Kourion



Aphrodite Rock

At the Strokkur geysir



At the Gulfoss Waterfalls



I see Iceland

Aniruddh R.Iyer Class 5 EOI

I love travelling to different countries – they are all so different and interesting. I'd like to share with you my experience from my summer trip to Iceland couple of years back. I was surprised that there was no ice - it was so green and full of waterfalls and geysers. I told my mom it should actually be named Greenland or Waterland instead of Iceland. Iceland is full of interesting natural phenomena - The Geysers, The Gulfoss waterfalls and the Thingvellir valley. And of course, there was the Blue lagoon which was the biggest spa I've ever seen.

The Gulfoss waterfalls is huge. We could hear the gushing sound even as we approached it. Water sprayed on us from a good distance and also formed a beautiful rainbow against the sun. It flows along a few steps and suddenly flows into a deep gap in the earth. It is awesome to look at.

The Thingvellir valley is very green and beautiful. The museum there says that the world's first parliament was held there. People assembled there to discuss things relating to the island. We got a really good view of the island from the top.

Now this is the best part of my trip- The Strokkur Geysir. This geyser is a huge pit of water that keeps gurgling and boiling, and then when it is ready, shoots up a huge jet of boiling water in the air – much like a volcano, I guess. This one we saw keeps erupting about every half an hour.

We got our cameras ready to catch the geyser in action. There were a lot of tourists there and everybody was silent as we waited, as though talking would distract the geysir! Then – lo and behold! The huge geyser erupted really high. It was an awesome sight – something I've never seen anywhere before. My mom says it shot up more than 15 metres high!

I waited for the next eruption, which disappointingly was not so big. It was more of a halfhearted effort on the part of the geyser. Confident that the next eruption was not going to be for sometime to come, I casually moved closer to the geysir along with my father, to take a look at the pit where all the gurgling action was taking place. And suddenly, without warning, the geyser threw up a jet of boiling water – obviously left overs from the half-hearted attempt. I started running away, but before I could run to safety, me and a few others (mostly kids) standing close by were drenched in water. It was so much fun! Thankfully for us, since the weather outside was cold, by the time the water went up and fell down, the temperature was just about warm – otherwise, our skins could have been scalded!

I also remember the little geyser nearby called 'Litli geysir' which only gurgled all the time like a child but never erupted!

To India with love

Vsevolod Buchnev

It's hard to say when my love affair with India started. But I do remember when my dream came true. It was in 1996 that I visited India with my friend Gopal. People usually visit the Taj Mahal or Goa. But I'm a little different you see. I went straight to South India to the city of Madurai and then to Kodaikanal.

- Saw several communist flags and posters and were surprised that communism still existed in India
- Amused to see "Mocking of Ladies is Punishable" notice board at Kodaikanal
- The thing that appealed most was the people in India are very cheerful
- Wanted to rent an autorickshaw like rent-a-car, but was disappointed when my friend said you can't drive it around like a car. You had to rent it with a driver.
- Loved all of the food I was fed with. In fact, I felt my body was a lot more flexible with the kind of food I ate. Made my yoga practice of years easier!
- Since I returned from India, I'd been trying to be a vegetarian for a year. But then gave up for fear of destroying Russia's vegetation (I was perpetually hungry!)
- Still love Indian food. I never refuse when my Indian friends offers to feed me when I visit him. I learn Indian recipes from friends and cook chapathis at home.
- Was drinking tea at a road side tea stall. Lot of people came upto me to speak with me – probably half the village. I really enjoyed that experience.
- Had to stay in kodaikanal hotel room which was not heated and felt really cold. I was asked why being a Russian, I was feeling cold.
- I was taken such good care of in India. Somehow I felt that we could never reciprocate the hospitality in Russia. Either due to want of time or ?!



Machu Pichhu - been there, done that... Whats next?

Have you ever wanted to do something for the longest time and finally you just set out and did it? For me, one of the dreams was to see Machu Picchu and this put me on a path I will never forget. This August, I crossed the South American continent, from Sao Paulo to Lima by road, after a brief stint in Istanbul, all on the path to Machu Picchu. It's a little longer than the Inca trail, eh?

The cheapest flight I could get from Moscow was to Sao Paulo and since it was Turkish Airlines, there was a transit in Istanbul that I easily extended to three days. I spent the rest of the month making my way through (and visiting, since the journey is just as fascinating as the destination) Brazil,

Bolivia and Peru. Machu Pichhu (and Wayna Picchu, for which I woke up at 2 am and hiked two hours to the gates and stood in line- only the first 400 people get to enter) was fantastic, but the highlights of my trip were in Brazil and Bolivia. I saw incredible fauna, including alligators, vultures, hundreds of birds and even piranhas in the lakes and swamps that are the Brazilian Pantanals. In Bolivia, I visited the Salar de Uyuni, a desert of hundreds of miles of salt. There is even a hotel made entirely of salt- walls, furniture and all!

I was mostly travelling alone, although there were ample opportunities to make new friends, locals as well as other backpackers. This is not nearly as daunting as it might sound

and while I was warned in particular about the lack of safety in cities such as Lima and Rio de Janeiro, all my experiences were overwhelmingly positive. You have to be a bit smart about how you travel- I carried my cash in multiple locations, including the sole of a shoe and an inside pocket in my pants, and was always prepared that I might get pickpocketed or robbed. I had my share of visa woes and was incapacitated by an upset stomach twice, wasting a day each time. However, by and large, it was all fine. I hiked alone as well as in small groups, sometimes at night, travelled by night buses and lodged at cheap hostels throughout my trip. It was an excellent vacation and while it certainly wasn't relaxing, I recommend backpacking, anywhere, to anyone who would like to encounter adventure as they see a bit of this fantastic world we live in. As for me, I'm trying to figure out how I can get myself to Argentina for the winter holidays.

Tista Nayak



Machu Picchu with fog, Peru



Christo Blanco, Cuzco, Peru

Me at Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia



Isle Pescado, Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia





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Dipti Rekha Pal

।। পারিজাতের খোঁজে ।।

She came to Moscow 2 years ago and has been smitten by Moscow's charm ever since. While an ardent fan of the city's cultural delights, museums and architecture; she is scared of being "swept off her feet" by the slippery snow in winter. Passionate about painting and cooking, she looks forward to having bhog and sweet tomato chutney with dry fruits during pujo.

কৈলাশ নামের সাথে জড়িয়ে আছে মন বিহ্বল করা এক অতীন্দ্রিয় ভাব। হিন্দুদের বিশ্বাস কৈলাশ হল মহাদেব আর পার্বতীর আবাসস্থল। ছেলেবেলায় গল্পের বই-এ পড়েছিলাম অপার্থিব পারিজাত পুষ্প পাওয়া যায় কৈলাশে। সেই সময় কি ভেবেছিলাম কোনদিন ডাক আসবে কৈলাশ যাওয়ার -

ভ্রমণ পথ বন্ধুর। কোনদিন পাহাড়ে চড়িনি, সেই আমাকে করতে হবে চোদ্দদিন ট্রেকিং, ছাব্বিশ দিনের যাত্রাসূচীর মধ্যে। নির্দিষ্ট তালিকা অনুসারে জিনিসপত্র ব্যাগে ভরে ভোরবেলায় বেড়িয়ে পড়লাম পুরানো দিল্লীর গুজরাটী সমাজের উদ্দেশ্যে। সেখান থেকেই ছাড়বে আমাদের বাস। যাত্রা হল শুরু।

আলমোড়া, চকোরী হয়ে খারচুলা পৌঁছাতে আমাদের একদিন দেরী হয়ে গেল রাস্তায় ধ্বসের কারণে। ট্রেকিং শুরু হবে পরদিন তাই সেই রাতেই ঠিক করা হল পোর্টার ও পনী। হিমালয়ের অসাধারণ রূপ দেখতে দেখতে মাত্র দু'ঘন্টায় পৌঁছে গেলাম মাংতীতে। শুরু হল পদযাত্রা। একদিন পিছিয়ে পড়ায় আজ আমাদের যেতে হবে ২১ কিঃমিঃ পথ। সবার হাতে লাঠি, পায়ে বল আর বুকে উৎসাহ। পাহাড়ী সরু অসমান পথের ডানদিকে ভয়ংকর খরস্রোতা কালী নদী। বাঁদিকে জঙ্গল। কত নাম না জানা গাছ, ফুল, জলপ্রপাত - মুগ্ধ হয়ে চলেছি।

আমার পোর্টার নায়েব সিং মিতভাষী তরুন যুবক। পনীর নাম সজন আর চালক শের সিং-ও বেশ ভাল মানুষ। সে আমাকে শেখালো পনীর পিঠে পাহাড়ি পথে কিভাবে শরীরের ভারসাম্য রাখতে হয়। বুধি ক্যাম্পে পৌঁছাতে সন্ধ্যা হল। পরদিনের গন্তব্য গুঞ্জী, যা বুধি থেকে ১৭ কিঃমিঃ। পথে পড়ল ছিয়ালেঘ ভ্যালি। সমুদ্রপৃষ্ঠ থেকে ১১,০৫০ ফুট উঁচু। অপরূপ ফুলের শোভা এখানে। দেখলাম নাগ পুষ্প। আগামীকাল গুঞ্জীতেই হবে চূড়ান্ত মেডিক্যাল টেস্ট। সব যাত্রীই মেডিক্যাল টেস্টে উত্তীর্ণ, তাই সবাই খুশী।

পরবর্তী গন্তব্য কালীনদীর উৎসস্থল কালাপানি। এই উৎসস্থলের উপরে আছে একটি মন্দির। দেখলাম ব্যাসদেবের গুহা - উঁচু পাহাড়ের গায়ে।

পরবর্তী ক্যাম্প হল ভারতের মাটিতে শেষ ক্যাম্প নাবিধাং-এ। ১৪,২২০ ফুট উচ্চতায়। পাহাড়ের গায়ের সবুজ ক্রমশঃ কমে আসছে। দুপুরের মধ্যে চলে এলাম নাবিধাং-এ। চোখে পড়ল ওম পর্বত। পাহাড়ের চূড়ায় বরফের তুলি দিয়ে কেউ যেন লিখে রেখেছে “ওম”। ওম পর্বতের বাঁদিকের পাহাড়কে ভগবান বিষ্ণুর নাভির সাথে কল্পনা করা হয় বলে এই জায়গার নাম হয়েছে নাবিধাং। ইগলু হাটে রাত্রি যাপনের ব্যবস্থা। রাত্রি আড়াইটায় রওনা দিতে হবে তিব্বত বর্ডারের দিকে তাই ডিনার সেরে তাড়াতাড়ি শুয়ে পড়ার কথা - রাত্রি সাড়ে বারোটো আজকের ‘বেড টি’-র সময়।

অমাবস্যার আগের দিনের রাত। বেশীর ভাগ যাত্রীই পনীর পিঠে। বেশ জোরে বৃষ্টি হচ্ছে। ঘুটঘুটে অন্ধকার, জোর করে সজাগ থাকতে হচ্ছে। হঠাৎ শুনি শের সিং বলছে - “ম্যাডাম ঘুমিও না। পড়ে যাবে।” আবছা ভোরে, ১৭,৬০০ ফুট উচ্চতায় লিপুলেখ পৌঁছলাম। লিপুলেখ পাস দিয়ে প্রবেশ করলাম তিব্বতে। জনবসতিহীন সীমান্ত অঞ্চল। পাথুরে রাস্তা আর জলের ভিতর দিয়ে দু'ঘন্টা চলার পর এল পাকা রাস্তা। বাস থামল তাকলাকোটের পুরং গেস্টহাউসে। এখানে আলো থাকে রাত্রি ন'টা অবধি। চারিদিকে পাহাড়ে ঘেরা ছোট শহর তাকলাকোট।

আগামীকাল যাওয়া হবে কৈলাশ-মানস সরোবর। বুধবার ৩০শে জুলাই, যাত্রীরা উত্তেজিত। সবাই বসে পড়লাম বাসে। প্রায় ঘন্টা তিনেক চলার পর বাঁদিকে দেখি অপূর্ব দিগন্ত বিস্তৃত এক সরোবর। এই হল রাক্ষসতাল বা রাবণ সরোবর। তিব্বতী ভাষায় একে বলে ল্যাঙ্গাকসো (Langak Tso) যার মানে পাঁচটি পাহাড়ে ঘেরা সরোবর। দশ মিনিটের বিরতি। সবাই নেমে পড়লাম। লেকের দিকে এগোতেই এক অপার্থিব সুগন্ধ নাকে এল। সাদা সুগন্ধী ফুলে ভরে আছে সরোবরের পাহাড়ি ঢাল।

প্রাণভরে দেখতে দেখতে চলেছি। একটু পরে আরেক মনোমুগ্ধকর দৃশ্য। বাঁদিকে গগণচুম্বী শৈলশ্রেণী। তারই মধ্যে হীরের মত আবির্ভূত হয়েছেন স্বয়ং শ্রী কৈলাশপতি। রবির কিরণে ঝকঝক করছে তার ললাট। সার্থক মনে হল পথশ্রম। সামনে এগোতেই চোখে পড়ল ঈঙ্গিত মানস সরোবর। নীল জলের তরঙ্গে তরঙ্গে সূর্যের আলো পড়ে নক্ষত্রাকারে বেরিয়ে

আসছে যেন। এসে গেলাম চিপুতে (Qihu)। মানস পরিক্রমার প্রথম ক্যাম্প। মানস সরোবরের ধারে ক্যাম্প থেকে পাহাড় ও কৈলাশের দৃশ্য বেশ উপভোগ্য।

ব্রহ্মার মানস অর্থাৎ মন থেকে উৎপন্ন অপরূপ এই সরোবরটির পরিধি ১১০ কিঃমঃ এবং গভীরতা ৩০০ ফুট। কৈলাশ পর্বতের ৩০ কিঃমঃ দক্ষিণ পূর্বে এর অবস্থান। স্বচ্ছ নীল জলে দিনের বেলা পাহাড় মেঘের প্রতিফলন যেমন সুন্দর, রাতে আকাশের তারাদের প্রতিফলন তেমনি মায়ারী। তিব্বতী ভাষায় পরিক্রমাকে বলে কোরা। সরোবরের জল এদের কাছে অমৃততুল্য তাই প্রসাদ হিসাবে সঙ্গে নিয়ে যায়। তীরের নুড়ি পাথর ও শিবতুল্য তাই সংগ্রহের তালিকায় এও থাকে।

বিকেলের মধ্যে এসে গেলাম দ্বিতীয় ক্যাম্প কুগুতে (Qugu) পরদিন স্নান করে পূজো দেওয়া হবে। মেঘলা আকাশ। ঠিক হল এক ডুব দিয়ে এসে পিতৃতর্পণ করা হবে। অসম্ভব ঠান্ডা জল। পিতৃপুরুষদের নিবেদন করা হল শ্রদ্ধা। বৃষ্টি পড়ছে। তাড়াতাড়ি ক্যাম্পে ফিরে এলাম। একটু বেলায় দেখা গেল গুম্ফার (লামাদের মন্দির) চূড়াটি। পূজা আর হোমের আয়োজন হল। বিকেলে লেকের জলে দেখলাম এক জোড়া সোনালী ওম্ হাঁস। এই হাঁসের ডাক অনেকটা ওম্ শব্দের মত - তাই এই নাম।

মানস পরিক্রমা সমাপ্ত হল চিপুতে ফিরে গিয়ে। হট স্প্রিং-এ স্নান করে তৈরী হয়ে নিলাম। এরপর দারচেন, তিনঘন্টার পথ - কৈলাশ পরিক্রমার বেস ক্যাম্প উচ্চতা ১৫,৩০০ ফুট। ব্যাক প্যাক আর ক্যামেরা নিয়ে পরদিন সকালে বেড়িয়ে পড়লাম কৈলাশ পরিক্রমায়। একটি ট্রাক আমাদের পৌঁছে দিল 'যমদ্বার'-এ। লাল, সাদা, নীল রং-এর কাপড়ের টুকরোয় সজ্জিত 'যমদ্বার'। কোন কোনকাপড়ের টুকরোয় প্রার্থনা লেখা আছে - তিব্বতীদের বিশ্বাস হাওয়ায় উড়ে প্রার্থনাগুলো ছড়িয়ে দেয় শান্তি ও সদভাবনার বার্তা। এই জায়গাটি একটি উপত্যকা। তিব্বতী ভাষায় এর নাম 'লাহ-চু' (Lha-Chu) অর্থাৎ "V Valley of the river of Gods" হঠাৎ দেখি এক ঝরণা - এটা শিবগঙ্গা। পোর্টার ও ইয়াক নেওয়া হল। পরবর্তী গন্তব্য ডেরাপুক।

ডেরাপুক শব্দের অর্থ 'Cave of the female yaks horns' শিং-এর মত দেখতে দুটো পাহাড়ের মাঝখানে দৃশ্যমান মাউন্ট কৈলাশ। ২২,০২৮ ফুট উঁচু কৈলাশ পর্বত পৃথিবীর অন্যতম ধর্মস্থল। চারটি প্রধান নদী সংলুজ, কারনালী, ব্রহ্মপুত্র এবং সিন্ধুর উৎপত্তিস্থল কৈলাশ ও সংলগ্ন পর্বতশ্রেণী। ঘরের মেঝেতে মহাদেবের পূজোর আয়োজন করা হল।

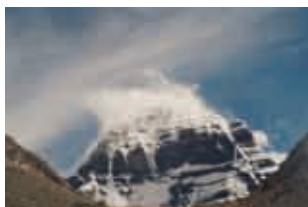
ডেরাপুক থেকে বেড়িয়ে পড়েছি সকালেই। দুপুরের আগে পৌঁছাতে হবে ডোলমা পাস। দুর্গম রাস্তা। ইয়াকের চওড়া পিঠে বসেও সহজ নয়। ধীরপায়ে উঠতে হল ১৯,৫০০ ফুট উঁচু ডোলমা পাসে। এটাই সর্বাধিক উচ্চতা। ডানদিকে নীচে গ্লেশিয়ারে ঘেরা নীল গৌরীকুন্ড। বাঁদিকে রঙ্গীন কাপড়ের টুকরোয় সাজানো ডোলমা। কাছেই শিবস্থল। ডোলমা পাস বজ্রপাতপ্রবণ স্থান, বাতাসে অস্ত্রিভেদন কম। তাড়াতাড়ি নামতে হবে।

বড় বড় পাথরের চাঁই-এর উপর দিয়ে হেঁটে নামছি। সামনে গ্লেশিয়ারের জল জমে নিয়েছে বড় বড় স্ফটিকের আকার। পেরিয়ে গেলাম গ্লেশিয়ার পূর্ববর্তী যাত্রীদের পদাঙ্ক অনুসরণ করে। বেশ অনেকটা নামার পর এল একটা নদী। বাকী পথ ইয়াকে চেপে শেষ বিকেলে পৌঁছে গেলাম 'জংজের বু' ক্যাম্প। জংজের বু থেকে দারচেন ১২ কিঃমঃ। ৮ কিঃমঃ ট্রেকিং আর শেষের ৪ কিঃমঃ ট্রাকে চড়ে শেষ হল আমাদের কৈলাশ পরিক্রমা। এবার ফেরার পালা।

আজ ১২ আগস্ট। দিল্লী যাচ্ছি। ঘরে ফেরার আনন্দ সবার মনে, তবু এই আনন্দের সাথে মিশে রয়েছে বিষাদ, সহযাত্রীদের বিচ্ছেদ ভাবনায়। খুঁজতে বেড়িয়েছিলাম পারিজাত। দেখেছি কি কোথাও কল্পনার পারিজাতকে? প্রকৃতির নির্জনতা আর সহযাত্রী ভাইবোনদের অন্তরের সৌন্দর্যের সমন্বয়ই বোধকরি পারিজাত ফুল। হয়তো বাইরে না, প্রস্তুতি পারিজাতের রূপ সৌরভ খুঁজতে হয় অন্তরের অন্তঃস্থলে।



Sights of the Himalayas



Trekking along



OUR FIRST PUJA IN MOSCOW

Vaishali Varshney



For a non-Bengali also, Puja is an occasion for great joy. For most part of my early life, I had of course missed it but since we moved to Delhi NCR, we had continuously been participating in Puja over the years.

When we moved to Moscow last year, one thing I was most skeptical, was about my visits to Temple and

opportunities of like minded people for Puja. Though Moscow does not boast of many temples or other Hindu religious places, but I was surprised by the efforts made by the Durga Puja Committee at Peoples Friendship University. Puja was held with fully gaiety and decor. It could not compare with the size of Delhi ones, but absolutely there was no match to it as far as people's participation or their devotion. With full respect, Puja was offered to Maa Durga in full tradition. I must admire the efforts made by all groups, including publication of annual magazine "Aaratika". Puja provides a good opportunity to bring together religious minded people of Moscow who jointly offer Puja in the most traditional way outside their own country and share the same Prasad, despite having lack of time otherwise in a big city like Moscow. This all makes us feel that we are not far from home, our culture and we are carrying it with us.

Vidisha with Siddharth & Sanjana



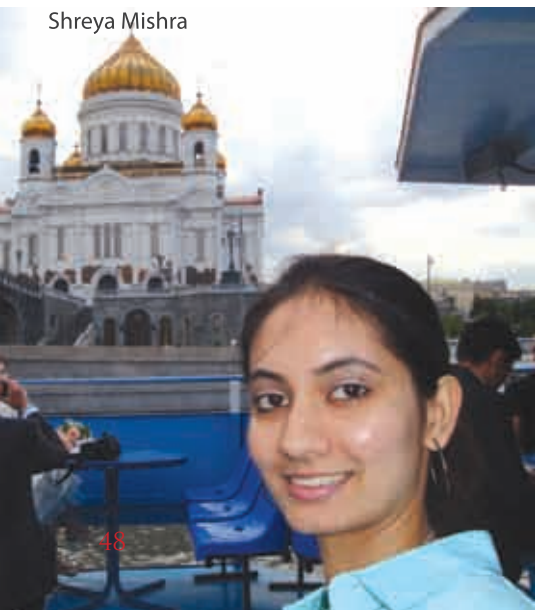
It was only last year that we came to Moscow, though my husband has been travelling here often. If it was a surprise that Durga Puja and Saraswati puja are celebrated in Moscow, it was a bigger surprise that it is celebrated not only by the Bengalis but by the Indian Community as a whole and with such grandeur!

Anjali, prasad, bhog, the environment inside the hall, is no different from any other puja that we have attended in India. Kudos to everyone involved in organizing it. If I'll remember Moscow for anything, it will be Durga puja and the friendly 'Babushkas'.

MOSKVA YA TEBIYA LUBLOO

She enjoys boat ride on Moscow River, loves dancing, swimming and reading. Her favourite place in Moscow is the Red Square and during festivals she would choose to have pav bhaji, chaat and gajar ka halwa.

Shreya Mishra



My experience in Moscow has been marvellous so far. The city now glitters with vibrant colours, after decades of grey Communist rule. Although I was thrilled to see the historic beauty of the city, it was a bit difficult to break the language barrier. Especially the time when I was forced to play dumb charades with the opposite side just shrugging their shoulders in ignorance. And if this was not about my vegetarianism I would have lived in bliss. But then again how to explain to someone that I didn't eat meat- by doing hand gestures of animals and a cross in end, right?

Hiring cabs has been another ludicrous experience. As I would just know my address, I would stop a cab on the road and speak the address. When it came to fixing the amount, using fingers to portray the digits would make it easier. It often brought a smile to the driver's face as well. Infact, few of drivers after coming to know that I was Indian, were extremely welcoming to say certain sentences or words like "Jimmy Jimmy", "Taj Mahal" and try to ask if we were from New Delhi.

Keeping aside the language difficulty, the weather of Moscow is



unforgettable, the first snow flurry, the walk in the snow leaving my imprints and the many layers of clothing. This part of the experience has been truly unique.



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Fashion

*Greeting to the Indian
community in Moscow!*



*We would like to wish each one of you
a fabulous Durga Puja! Let your
hair down and enjoy to the maximum,
play safe, stay cool, stay stylish!*

*Love,
Mona & Pali*



BIPS BLOSSOMS IN BEN-
GALI UP-TO-THE-MINUTE
MONAPALI CREATION AT
KFW SPRING 2009
AS THE SHOWSTOPPER

Puja MUST DO's from
Monapali...

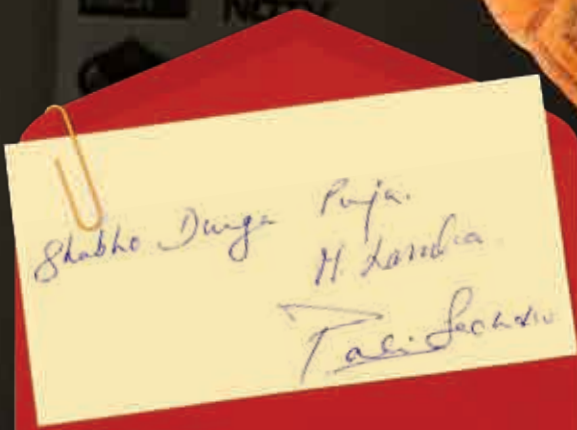
One of the most difficult things is to be stylish & fashionable while remaining simple & elegant. Too much of ANYTHING good could spoil the aesthetic sense. Think before following trends and fads blindly. What might suit X might not be ideal for Y. Select wisely. Remember, comfort is the key word here!

What we love
about Russia?

We love the bright colours used in Russian embroidery! The exquisite folk motifs have always been a favourite with us! Not to forget the intricate designs that dominates and forms a major chunk of Russian architecture!

For fashionista's
in the making

Human brain is THE most creative tool! Use it to the maximum! Do not always seek inspiration from what others have been doing. Instead try to create something new and feel free to express yourself!





Avik, a Fashion Technologist currently works with Raymond Limited. He is an ardent fan of clean cuts, knots and also fond of draping. Having worked with Indian design pioneers like Mona Lamba & Pali Sachdev of the famous MonaPali brand, Avik owes a lot of what he is today to both Mona & Pali and swears by their creativity! He loves designs by Slava Zaitsev where the sheer burst of colors charms him.

Today, being fashionable is no more about being 'rich'. The mantra today is 'if you feel good, you shall look good'. I have always felt that Indian men are more casual towards the concept of 'planning' what to wear in comparison to their western counterparts. The usual answer to why they are so is that 'fashion' is women's territory. Fashion is NOT for women alone.

When wearing a suit, one needs to keep a few things in mind.

- If you are tall and slim, it would be a great idea to go for an Italian Suit. It's trendy and upscale with wider shoulders and tapered waist to provide a triangular effect.

- You could also try the Double

Breasted 2 Button Suit which is more contemporary and best suited for colder climates.

- If you are short and well built and a little wide opt for a Single Breasted 2 Button Suit. It is safe yet stylish. You could also try pinstripe because vertical stripes would make you appear taller.

- If your style is more casual, you might wish to try a more conventional American Style Suit which is more casual than the rest. It is wider at the shoulders and straighter along the sides.

Happy Puja wishes to all of you. Have fun & play safe!

Avik Roy



*Wishing all a Very Happy
Durga Puja and Dusshera
from Sanjay Yadav!*



Bhavika & Sammy Kotwani with daughters Preema, Lara, Dasha (from left to right)

6 Questions for Sammy Kotwani

Moved to Moscow in 1990, since then has had an impressive client list that includes Moscow's Mayor, President of Kazakhstan, Russia's ex-Prime Minister and many other ministers, musicians, celebrities. Taking up to 36 measurements for a suit, meticulously noting details like how the client moves, his posture and characteristic gestures, he always makes it a point to serve each and every client personally. He feels happiest watching people become successful, helping them look and feel confident about his appearance.

Which politician/celebrity do you admire for his style?

- Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister
- Iosif Kabzon, well-known singer

Would you like to name any Russian designer who has inspired you?

Vyacheslav Zaitsev

Can one distinguish a tailor made suit from pret-a-porter?

Definitely. A prêt-a-porter can never fit you like a custom made suit that is made exclusively to fit your body shape. No two bodies are similar, then how can one suit fit different people perfectly?

Your wife Bhavika grew up in the Philippines and you grew up in India. How did you meet?

Our marriage was a typical Indian arranged marriage. It was the decision of our grandparents to get us together and since we liked each other, we went by their decision.

Do you only wear an Imperial suit?

Absolutely. Only Imperial!

What is the current fashion trend?

- While pinstripes are still extremely popular and acceptable, a return to classical patterns and colours will be obvious in many collections.
- With regards to colours, expect a great deal of softer pastels in collections for men. Vibrant neons and sizzling colours of earlier years will have lost some of their impact, though youngsters will still find them attractive.

Any fashion tips to readers of Aaratrika?

Tips only for the menfolk

- Always pay attention to the colour and cut of the garment rather than to superfluous aesthetic components.
- A two-button suit is simply a must have – it is easily the most flattering cut for large men. In fact it flatters any figure with a more tapered silhouette. And as a bonus, it displays a great deal more of your shirt and necktie!

Our food their food

Our friends speak about their culinary secrets and share their unique recipes where they utilize local ingredients for desi khana.

ANA ISABEL GARZON GORDO



With daughter Natalie

You probably must have tasted her food at the Columbian stall of Anandamela. Always happy to feed a hungry soul, Columbians in Moscow swear by her Tamal.

Tamal (meat or fish wrapped in banana leaf- similar to Bengali paturi), Sankocho (heavy soup with country chicken and eggs, green banana, potatoes - served with rice), Ahiako (chicken breasts, 3 types of different potatoes cultivated in Colombia- white, yellow and red, and sweet corns). For Columbians these 3 dishes are treated as main courses served with rice, salads and arepas.

Isabel loves to cook and makes different interesting dishes. After her exposure to Indian food in Moscow, she had no choice but to fall in love with our cuisine. Her favourite being Bengali items like kumro chingri, chingri macher pulav and pathar mangsho. (pumpkin shrimp, prawn pulav & mutton in thick gravy)

Now she often cooks with a Indian twist just adding little onion, garlic, Colombian orange colour (saffron like haldi) as well as little cumin and coriander available everywhere in the world. It gives a real Indian taste to her chicken dishes as well as pumpkin curry.



DHRUBO CHATTERJEE



Prefers home-cooked food, while eating out would always include a green salad in his meal.

I am not really fond of cooking but can manage to prepare the basics. Culinary ideas to share? Easiest method to make dal - boil masur dal (my favourite) for 25 mins in the microwave, parallelly dice onions and tomatoes for the dals phoron to be added once the dal gets boiled.

SHANTHI SRINIVASAN



Believes in experimenting. Here is her recipe with a difference - an Indo-Russian fusion! Try it out!

FUSION DESSERT

For 3 persons:
Egg yolks - 12, Sugar - 12 Table spoons
Ghee - 4 Table spoons, Desiccated coconut - 3 Table spoons

Cardamom powder - 1 pinch
Heat the ghee in a nonstick frying pan and fry the cardamom powder followed by the desiccated coconut. Be careful, the coconut should not turn brown. Beat the egg yolks with a fork and add it finally. Mix everything on lowest flame for just few seconds and remove the pan from the fire. Serve hot with tea. The best part of this dessert is - you can prepare it while water for the tea boils in the "Chainik".

DEBASHISH SENGUPTA



His passions - travel, food and theatre.

My observations...

Puli-pithe, dosa-idli, chicken tandoori, pomfret tandoori, roti-aloochachari, patoler dorma, mistidoi - these are popular with Russians.

Pyaesh, ilishmach, pathar mansho, sandesh, amsatto usually do not delight them as much.

Bangla ranna with local ingredients:

- use lady fish to prepare pabda macher jhal
- kambala for chitol macher jhol (with eggplant)
- and finally blini to make egg roll





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* по оценке газеты «The Moscow Times»



DEBASMITA BERA

Final Year Student of MMA



Excellent cook and loves experimenting with food. She is partial to Mughlai cuisines, but also does justice to Continental and Chinese dishes.

Living in an international student's hostel and making friends from different countries is quite an experience. It opens up a wide variety of cultural and culinary extravaganza when it comes to a student's pot-luck party. Being an Indian, we are expected to cook something typical of our country and that is a big problem in Russia as most of the essential ingredients are not available in the local market or supermarkets. And improvisation is the only face-saver. Debasmitta makes excellent 'Sondesh'. She has improvised the locally available tvorog (a substitute for chena), Varennya Gushonka (substitute for khova), desiccated coconut and mannaya muka (suji), with a touch of cardamom dust to shape up the mouth-watering Bengali dessert. Dining with her is a pleasurable experience indeed.

RAMESHWAR SINGH



Now-a-days rarely cooks but if the need be can cook almost everything, even fluffy rotis!

Just in case you are stuck in a place where there is no atta available and you have a strong desire for hot chapattis here is a quickfix. Soak oats flakes for 30 to 40 minutes in hot water till it gets soft, then keep adding flour till you get proper dough. Roll chapattis as usual! You are sure to get them fluffy.

In case you want bhaturas, instead of water use dahi/ kfir.

Not to forget that oats lowers cholesterol and is rich in fibre.



TRISHA BANERJEE

Final Year Student of MMA.



She is gifted with a sweet voice and is a good cook. Loves eating and considers anything that comes from her mom's kitchen as the best thing in the world. A good improviser when it comes to food.

Trisha avoids cooking as much as she can. Final year exam preparations keep her busy most of the time. But when she decides to cook, it's worth having a go. Trisha makes the Calcutta recipe of chicken roll within a short time much to our amazement with all local ingredients. To those still wondering, it's a Bengali version of the shaurma sold around the corner. A bit of sauté-ing of grilled chicken with onions, garlic and ginger paste, a dab of garchitsa (mustard sauce – doesn't taste like the original kasundi though!) and lemon. Roll in with chopped Dag-estan chillies, onions a bit of ketchup inside a lavash.....and there you go.

LOCHANA MAHADEVAN



ANANDAMELA 2008:

Anandamela is our puja food festival of home-cooked food. Our ladies with excellent culinary skills feed the hungry devotees with their original recipes. But strangely this year ladies took a backseat. Some of them were occupied with ghar-ka-pooja while others were travelling to India. I was certain that I would fail miserably in organizing Anandamela. At the very last moment, everything took a sudden turn. We decided to include the Moscow Indian restaurants.

Darbar participated with chaat and jalebis, Taste of Asia came with idlies and samosas and Curry King with dahivada and a variety of other snacks. Abhijit and his friends prepared a special chilli-cheese-chat, a student's survival recipe! The Columbian stall offered special raw banana fries, pies and fried baby potatoes. Then there was also a stall with a touch of Madagascar selling special pizza. The festival was a success!

I would like to thank all participants of Anandamela 2008. I realized that Ma Durga knows how to feed her devotees, who am I to plan? Wish you all a very puja!

MANASH



M E D

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AND DUSHERA TO
ALL INDIAN
COMMUNITY IN MOSCOW

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*We wish you all
Indian community Happy Dusshera!*

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*Aaratrika thanks
Nikolay Kostromitin
for his delightful art
work on our cover and
his other illustrations.*



Nikolay Kostromitin

I fell in love with India at first sight. The country embraced my soul deeply, I hope that its for my entire life. My first travel to India which happened 1999-2000 was unforgettable and interesting. During my 6 months stay I travelled from Himachal to Kerela, covering around 30 cities: Manali - Chandigarh - Delhi - Agra - Rishikesh - Ajanta & Ellora - Belur and Halebid - Udagamandalam - Pondyicherry - Panaji - Kochin - Maysor - Trivandrum - Kanyakumari and others. Which of these places I liked the most, difficult to say, as each place has something special about them. How does one compare the breathtaking views of Himalaya & Nilgiris with lets say that of the beauty of old temples of Ajanta or with the majestic Behubali in Sravanabelagola? And India's nature! Story-like beautiful! In 2004 my exhibition 'Winter Flowers of South India' took place during which, part of my painting which I drew during one of my trips to India was exhibited. India with its history, traditions, folklore, religion, philosophy, nature always attracted different kinds of people. If oneday she says 'Welcome'

to you, that's forever.

When I was offered to paint for Aaratrika, I agreed readily without thinking even for a moment. I can probably say that India has arrived at my doorsteps, in the facade of Mother Durga and this is indeed a good sign.





OUR SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Moscow Durga Puja Committee wishes you
a very happy puja and thanks you for your
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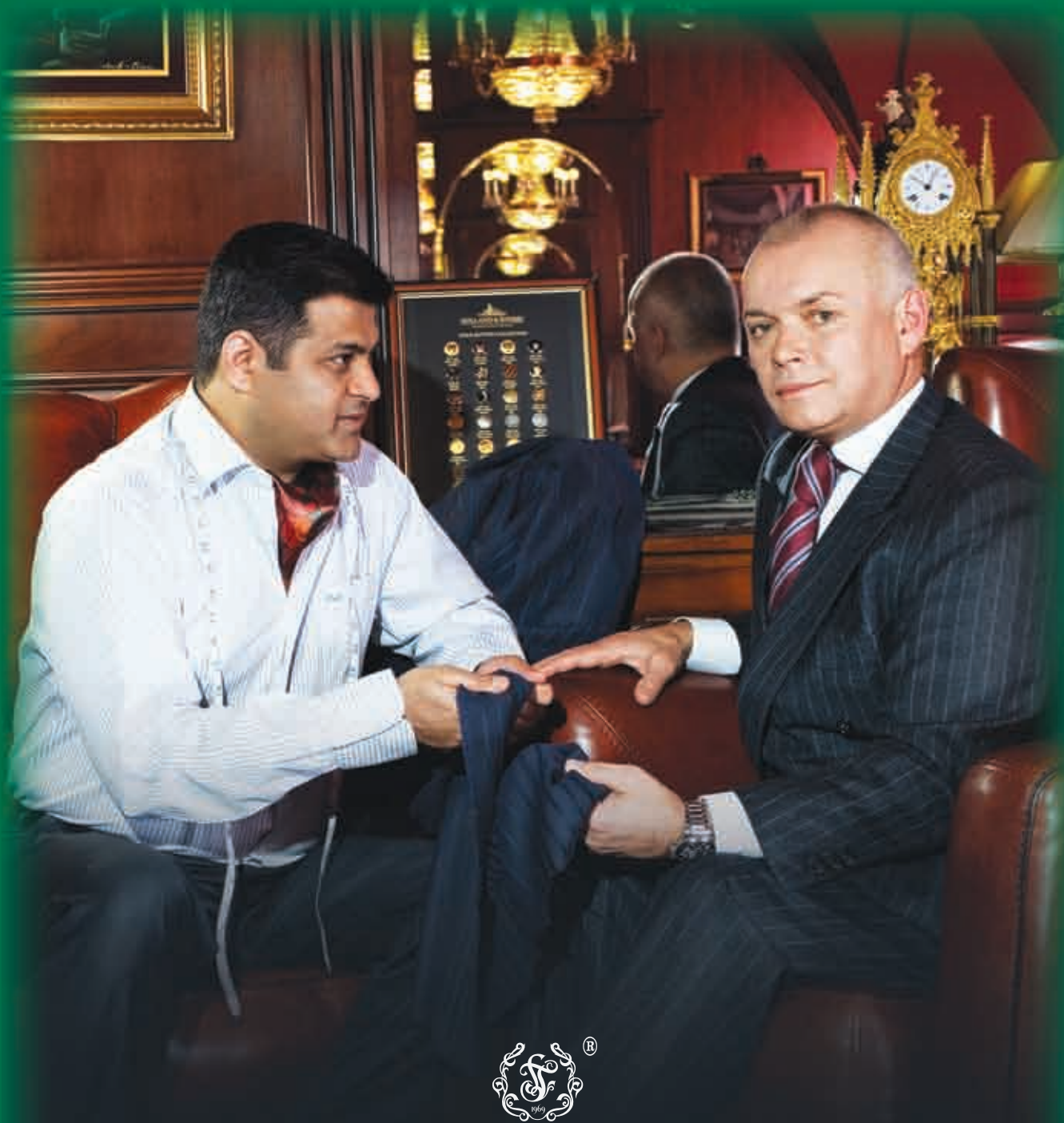
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