Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association

Durga Puja 2026

The Autumn Festival

Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association HPCA

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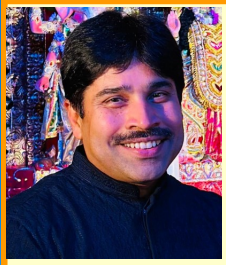


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Foreword

"*To the Goddess who dwells in all beings in the form of Shakti, we bow to her, we bow to her, we bow to her, again and again.*"

Yā Devī Sarva-Bhūteṣu Śakti-Rūpeṇa Saṁsthitā | Namastasyai Namastasyai Namastasyai Namo Namaḥ ||

Once again, the rhythm of the *Dhak* is all set to vibrate in our joy-permeated hearts, as *Siuli* falls in fragrant silence, and *Kaash* flowers (scientific name: *Saccharum spontaneum***)** caress our souls – a reminiscence that swells in glory as we celebrate Maa's Divinity. She is coming home! This feeling – that Maa will be home again – reveals the evolution of layered emotions for most of us (those who are living outside Bengal for a long time). These are often tinged with shades of happiness, the bounds of which are increasingly defined by our expectations in a proliferating, uncertain world. For a long time, I have forgotten the fragrance of *Shiuli* as evening set in a remote Bengal village and the chewing of *kaash er danta* (stems of kaash) while aimlessly walking by the riverside with friends. We still carry the imprint of those memories as we embrace a new horizon of joy amid all the chaos and uncertainty around us. The Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association (HPCA) has been doing its bit over the past eighteen years, helping us connect, re-connect, and celebrate Maa's Home Coming.

On behalf of the Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association (HPCA), it is my great joy to welcome you to the 2026 celebration of Durga Puja and the Autumn Festival.

This gathering, one of the most celebratory events, stands as a testament to the vision and dedication of a community bound not only by shared heritage but by a deep commitment to nurturing that heritage far from our ancestral homes. Over the past decade, the HPCA has inevitably blossomed into a vibrant and multifaceted family. As I mention 'family', the HPCA lives by its true essence; we are together and work as one in both trying and happy times.

As a charity, our growth cannot be measured in numbers alone. We have built qualitative bonds of trust, warmth, and belonging, guided by the belief that growth means growth for all – a powerful message that is grounded in community feeling, inclusivity, and empowerment of all – small and big. Year after year, this spirit has made our Puja not only a celebration of the sacred but a living expression of cultural unity across regions and generations. I strongly believe that Durga Puja is not merely a ritual, but it is our life's essence of devotion and

divinity that we all wish to celebrate with all as the sound of the conch purifies the air, the fragrance of *Dhoop* and *Dhunuchi* sanctifies our inner self, and the offering of Anjali reminds us once again that submitting to the Divinity is the true way in our attempt to realise one, if and so it happens at a point of time in our life.

Behind every one of these moments are people who have given their time and energy selflessly, often through structural, financial, and managerial challenges, guided by passion and a shared purpose. This celebration would not shine as brightly without you, and I offer you my deepest gratitude. The cultural programme remains the beating heart of our festival. This year, our talented homegrown artists, both children and adults, will present, in various renditions, the versatility and cultural diversity of our tradition. It is a joy to see our youngest ambassadors take the stage once more. In their innocence and exuberance, they are the torchbearers of our traditions and a reminder of why we must nurture the cultural awareness of the next generation.

I extend sincere thanks to our patrons and sponsors, whose generosity and trust sustain this festival. Your support keeps alive a living tradition and the enduring values of community, culture, and devotion. With your continued partnership, HPCA wishes you every blessing of growth and prosperity.

Welcome, one and all, to this sacred and joyous celebration.

With warmest autumn greeting!

Shuvo Sharadiyo Shuvechchha!

Tapas Mishra (General Secretary, HPCA)


The HPCA presents
Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association
HPCA
Durga Puja
2026
16 OCT-18 OCT
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CHANDLER'S FORD
EASTLEIGH, SO53 5NP
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804th Mayor and 5th Lord Mayor of Southampton
Councillor Pat Evemy

MESSAGE

On behalf of the City of Southampton I would like to send best wishes for the Durga Puja (The Autumn Festival) and hope it will be a great event.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those that have been involved in putting on this event; I would also like to wish all the Members of the Hampshire Puja and Cultural association success in delivering its aim and objective during the Festival.



Pat Evemy

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Southampton,
Councillor Pat Evemy

City of
WINCHESTER



A message from the Mayor of Winchester

As Mayor of Winchester, I am fortunate to spend a lot of time out and about in the local community, meeting many people in many groups and organisations, as well as individuals.

It is wonderful to hear so much about all of the good work which is being carried out across our district and the wider county, and I make the most of opportunities to learn more about the community service and dedication of Hampshire residents.

A belief in community service is certainly in evidence at Hampshire Puja & Cultural Association (HPCA), a local charity which, in its own words, is working to "transcend boundaries and unite people from diverse cultures, faiths, and walks of life".

I applaud the association for bringing people together to work towards a brighter future for everyone, and for their commitment to such community-minded goals.

I take this opportunity to send my very best wishes to you all for the Durga Puja. I hope that it will be a wonderful celebration. Wishing you a joyous and blessed Durga Puja filled with strength, peace and harmony!

Warm regards,

Cllr Jamie Scott
827th Mayor of Winchester

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary

Chief Constable Alexis Boon QPM

Strategic Headquarters
Leigh Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9SJ

As Chief Constable of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary, I am delighted to send my warmest wishes to everyone celebrating Durga Puja and the Autumn Festival 2026.

Festivals such as these provide a valuable opportunity for people from different backgrounds and communities to come together, celebrate their culture and faith, and strengthen the connections that make our communities so vibrant. We are fortunate across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to benefit from strong relationships with our diverse communities, and it is a privilege to recognise and support events such as this.

Durga Puja is a celebration of hope, resilience and the triumph of good over evil. These are values that resonate strongly with policing, as we remain committed to protecting our communities, preventing harm and helping people feel safe.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has worked so hard behind the scenes to organise this year's celebrations. Your dedication and commitment make these events possible and help create a memorable and enjoyable experience for all. I hope that everyone attending has a wonderful and successful festival as you honour Goddess Durga and celebrate with family, friends and the wider community.

Yours faithfully,



Alexis Boon QPM
Chief Constable



www.hampshire.police.uk

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MAYOR OF EASTLEIGH

It is my great pleasure to extend my warmest greetings to everyone attending the HPCA Durga Puja celebrations this year.

Durga Puja is one of the most significant and vibrant festivals in the Hindu calendar, bringing together families and friends, and strengthening the bonds in our communities. It is a time to honour the triumph of good over evil, and to share culture, tradition, and hospitality with others.

Eastleigh is proud to be home to people from many different backgrounds and traditions. Events such as Durga Puja enrich our Borough's cultural life and so I am grateful for the opportunity to share in them with you.

I know that these celebrations will also provide an opportunity for younger generations to connect with their heritage and for the wider community to learn more about the traditions and values that make our Borough such a welcoming and diverse place.

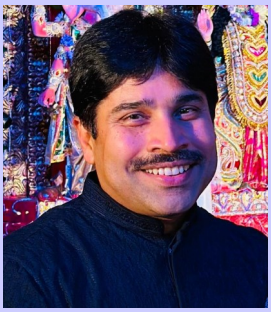
I would like to thank all the organisers, volunteers, performers, and supporters whose hard work has made these celebrations possible. I wish everyone attending a joyful and successful Durga Puja, and I hope that the festivities bring happiness, prosperity, and peace to all.

Subho Durga Puja

Richard

Councillor Dr Richard Gomer
Mayor of Eastleigh

HPCA Committee 2025-27



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General Secretary



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THE HPCA PRESENTS

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SCAN TO FOLLOW US!



DURGA PUJA 2026

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16 OCT
MAHA SAPTAMI

17.00
BODHAN, PUJA & SANDHYA ARATI

19.00
PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

19.30
NOSTALGIC MELODIES BY DIPANJAN & DIYASHA

20.30
BHOG

17 OCT
MAHA ASHTAMI

11.00
PUJA, ARATI, PUSHPANJALI

12.00
CHILDREN'S ART & CRAFT WORKSHOP

13.00
BHOG

17.00
PUJA & SANDHYA ARATI

19.00
SOUL OF MELODY- A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME, IN RAGA, RHYTHM & EXPRESSION

20.30
BHOG

18 OCT
MAHA NABAMI & DASHAMI

11.00
PUJA, ARATI, PUSHPANJALI

13.00
BHOG

14.30
LITTLE HEARTS – CHILDREN'S CHORUS/ MUSICAL BAND PRESENTATION

15.30
SPIRIT OF BENGAL: WHERE STORIES WALK THE RAMP

17.00
SINDUR KHELA

18.00
BISORJON

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Who Is Our Bhagavān? Three Questions Every Human Life Should Ask

Dr Sumanta Kumer Saha

Durga Puja is a season of homecoming. Families gather, lamps are lit, children watch rituals that their parents once watched, and for a few precious days our hurried lives slow down enough to remember that we belong to something greater than ourselves. Yet a festival can also invite a deeper question: whom are we ultimately worshipping, and what is the purpose of this rare human life?

Sanātana Dharma is wonderfully rich in names and forms. One family may be devoted to Durgā, another to Kālī, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Sūrya, Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. These traditions should not become reasons for disrespect or argument. But they naturally lead to a philosophical question: behind the many devas and devis, is there an ultimate source?

The Bhagavad-gītā gives a remarkably direct answer. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that there is no truth superior to Him (7.7) and that He is the source from whom everything emanates (10.8). Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam expresses the same conclusion in one celebrated line: kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam - Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself (1.3.28). From the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava understanding followed by ISKCON, therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Parama Puruṣottama Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

But this conclusion becomes meaningful only when we first ask three questions about ourselves.

Where was I before this birth?

Most of us begin our identity with a name, family, profession, nationality or passport. The Gītā begins much deeper. It teaches that the self, the ātmā, is not born when the body is born and does not die when the body dies (2.20). As the body changes from childhood to youth and old age, the same conscious self remains; at death, the embodied soul passes onward (2.13). Kṛṣṇa further describes the living being as His eternal part (15.7).

So the first spiritual discovery is simple but revolutionary: I am not merely this temporary body. I am an eternal conscious being.

Why have I received this human life?

Eating, sleeping, protecting ourselves and reproduction are necessary features of bodily existence. Animals also eat, sleep, defend and reproduce. Human intelligence, however, gives us a unique capacity: we can ask why we exist, what consciousness is, whether there is an Absolute Truth, and how our actions shape our future.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam says that human life is meant for tattva-jijñāsā - inquiry into the Absolute Truth (1.2.10). It also describes the human form as rare and temporary, yet capable of giving the highest spiritual benefit (11.9.29). In other words, our education, career, family responsibilities and material achievements have value, but they should not make us forget the deeper purpose of consciousness itself.

Where am I going after death?

If the soul is eternal, death cannot be the end of the story. The Gītā describes repeated birth and death within the material world, but also speaks of a destination beyond that cycle. Kṛṣṇa says that one who attains Him does not return again to temporary material existence (8.15-16). The final direction of the Gītā is therefore not merely to believe in God, but to establish a living relationship with Him through surrender and devotion (18.66).

This brings us back to the original question: who is Bhagavān?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam offers a subtle answer to the familiar debate about whether the Divine is personal or impersonal. It says that the one nondual Absolute Truth is realized as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān (1.2.11). These are not three competing ultimate realities. Within the Vaiṣṇava understanding, Bhagavān - the personal Supreme - is the fullest realization of that same Absolute Truth.

What, then, of the devas and devis whom Hindu families love and worship? The Gītā does not deny their existence or their cosmic functions. Rather, it explains that even the faith by which a person worships a particular deva is ultimately sanctioned by the Supreme (7.21-22). The Vaiṣṇava tradition therefore honors great devas and devis while understanding their powers in relation to the supreme source.

This is especially meaningful during Durgā Puja. The Brahma-saṁhitā (5.44) glorifies Durgā as the mighty divine potency associated with the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the material world, acting according to Govinda's will. Thus, respecting Durgā Devī and recognizing Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme source need not be contradictory within this theological vision.

For families living far from India - in Britain, America, Australia or anywhere else - perhaps this is one of the most important gifts we can pass to our children. Culture is precious, but spiritual understanding must go deeper than food, dress, festivals and inherited labels. Our children should know not only how we celebrate, but why we seek the Divine.

The three questions remain for every one of us: Who was I before this birth? Why have I received this human life? Where am I going after death?

And behind all three stands one final question: Who is my Bhagavān?

The Bhagavad-gītā answers in Kṛṣṇa's own teaching: He is the source, the eternal shelter and the ultimate destination. To know Him, remember Him and develop devotion to Him is not an escape from life. It is, in the Vaiṣṇava understanding, the deepest purpose of human life.

Scriptural references

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is: 2.13, 2.20, 7.7, 7.21-22, 8.15-16, 10.8, 15.7, 18.66; Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: 1.2.10-11, 1.3.28, 11.9.29; Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.44.



Durga Puja 2025











Durga Puja 2025







Sujashree Saha

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School,
Isle of Wight, Year 1



My First Experience of DofE (Duke of Edinburgh)

Arihaan Sahu
Kings' School, Winchester, Year 10

Setting Out and the First Test

At 7:00 in the morning, our group of seven set off with heavy rucksacks and high spirits as we were ready to face our challenge: the Duke of Edinburgh expedition started from Chawton Wood Car Park 55.



The morning air was crisp as we navigated the initial flat terrain, but the landscape quickly changed as the path transitioned into a steep hill. For two and a half hours, we hiked up a relentless incline. Every step felt heavier than the last, our boots crunching against the forest's trail while we puffed out in the cooling air.

We kept our morale up by sharing jokes and encouraging each other through the steep sections. Finally, after reaching the ridge, we were rewarded by a sweeping view of the countryside, which made the hard shift feel worth it.

Navigating the Farmland and Checkpoints



After we descended from the heights, our route took us past a chain of local farms. We waded through the quiet countryside lanes flanked by electric fences, grazing sheep and a passing by snake. We joined them as we needed to have our home packed lunch. Whilst we ate, we all talked about how much more we had left of our route as we already half was there. Getting this far meant we had to keep a steady, disciplined pace to

try get there first without losing our way on the map. Passing through the farm gates, the smells of hay and earth accompanied our march. We constantly checked our compasses and maps, coordinating as a team to make sure we stayed enroute and didn't miss any of our checkpoints before the daylight began to fade.

Setting Camp and Cooking on the Mini Stove



As evening settled in, we reached our campsite, unfortunately not first. We pitched our tents and turned our attention to dinner, eager for some warmth and energy. Cooking in the field proved to be a modest gathering, as people from other groups (24 to be exact) lined up to make their dinner as well. We boiled water for plain pasta, while our sausages were cooked in a tiny frying pan, roughly the size of an open palm, both being balanced cautiously on our compact mini stoves. It required careful manoeuvring to cook our minimal rations evenly in such confined equipment, but sitting in a tight circle around the tiny blue flame of the stove gave us a wonderful sense of camaraderie as the smell of camp food filled the chilly air.

The Night in the Crammed Tent

Nighttime brought a measurable drop in temperature. 3 of the seven of us squeezed into a cramped tent, sharing body heat and tangled in sleeping bags in an arrangement that left almost zero spare floor space. Sleep came in fragments amidst the rustling of the tent and the distant sounds of the countryside

Day 2: the final and the final stretch

The morning sun barely broke through the heavy, grey clouds, leaving the grass slick with morning dew as we laced up our boots and picked up our rucksacks once more. Having just hot chocolate for breakfast, we packed up our gear for the second leg of the trek. Our route took us past long windy country lanes, tracing the edges of quiet fields where sheep

grazed undisturbed. We checked our compasses frequently, making sure every checkpoint on our map aligned with the path ahead and keeping a steady, focused pace, the same as we did the day before.

Navigating the Midday Checkpoints

Stopping at a park to have lunch and take a long break as we skipped a few opportunities to take one. We collapsed onto a few wooden benches and tore into our rations. A simple chicken wrap that was made by my mum felt like a feast after the numerous miles we had completed. We laughed about jokes we had made the day before and shared around a few sweets, our initial fatigue melting away as we got ready to trek one last time. Walking to 2 more check points, our spirits lifted with every step, knowing the hardest sections were behind us and the finish line was finally within touching distance.



Reaching the End and Reflection

Reaching the end (Winchester SO21 3SP) at 3:40, a wave of immense relief and pride washed over all of us as we all fell into our parents. Dropping our heavy rucksacks onto the grass, we stood together and looked back down the long trail we had navigated over the past two days. It was a quiet moment of reflection, realizing how much we had grown—not just in navigation and outdoor survival skills, but in our trust and reliance on each other as a team. We had faced the unpredictable weather, sore muscles, and the weight of our own backs, and we crossed that final boundary, feeling stronger than when we first set out.

After the initial setback, which took me three days to recover from, I found a quiet moment to reflect not only on what I had achieved, but also on what our group had overcome together as we became a team capable of adapting, persevering, and surviving.





The Festival of Colours

Mitanshu Basu
Thornden School, Year 10

Holi, a festival of colour and joy,
Holi, a celebration where people come together

And spread happiness,

Holi, a remarkable 5 days that people look toward to all year,
It is as exciting as Christmas, but for me, even more dear!

Streets covered in colours, a beautiful sight,
Shades ranging from blue to red so bright,
Smiles shining brightly on everyone's face,
Nothing can compare to this colourful place.

Laughter and colour fill every street,
Families gather for traditional sweets to eat,
Abeer hues make the celebration complete,
Making Holi a festival that cannot be beat!

Holi is the best time of the year,
A rainbow of memories that returns every spring,
Nothing can be better as it feels like homecoming!



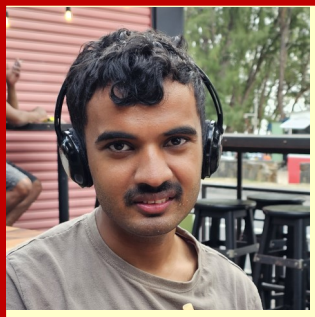

Durga Puja 2025




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My Recent Drawing Portfolio

Novojeet Acharyya (Koushik)



I drew these two pictures to showcase my recent drawing portfolio. The first picture is **Paddington Bear**, and the second is **Super Mario**. They are characters from movies and stories that I enjoy.



In the first picture, I drew Paddington Bear. In the first *Paddington* movie, Paddington travels to London and becomes lost at Paddington Station. He is wearing his famous blue duffle coat and red hat when he meets the Brown family. I watched this movie at my secondary school in March 2015, and it has remained a memorable film for me.



The second picture is **Super Mario**. I enjoy drawing Mario because he is a very energetic character who goes on lots of adventures. I also enjoy superhero movies, especially **Superman**. There are many Superman movies available to watch on YouTube and other platforms. One of my favourites is *Superman Returns* (2006), starring Brandon Routh as Superman. The film pays homage to the earlier Superman movies directed by Richard Donner.

These two drawings show some of the characters and movies that I have enjoyed over the years, as well as my interest in drawing characters in my own style.






TAMA
Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association








The Warrior Princess











মিল্কি

কবিতা মজুমদার

পাড়ার দুষ্টু মিষ্টি বছর বারোর লগ্নজিৎ ওরফে ঘন্টা, প্রায় সারাদিনই খালি পায়ে টোটো করে সারা পাড়া ঘুরে বেড়ায় । প্রতিটা বাড়ির আনাচে-কানাচে পোকামাকড় ফুল ফল খুঁজে বেড়ায়। ঝোপঝাড়েও তার অবাধ বিচরণ| ভয়ডর বলতে কিছু নেই । আমি আদর করে নাম রেখেছি অরণ্যদেব। পড়াশুনায় লব ডঙ্কা। রোজ স্কুলে যায় আসে এই পর্যন্তই। এছাড়া বইয়ের সাথে ওর কোন যোগাযোগ আছে বলে, মনে হয় না। বাবা মা বলে বলে হয়রান হয়ে হাল ছেড়ে দিয়েছে। আমার বাগানের গোলাপ গুলো কখন যে চুরি করে আজ অবধি হাতে নাতে ধরতে পারিনি। জিজ্ঞেস করলে, মা কালীর দিব্যি কেটে কত যে নাটক করে, হাসিও পায় আবার রাগও হয়।

বেশ কিছুদিন শিলিগুড়িতে কাটিয়ে কর্তা গিন্নি গ্রামের বাড়িতে ফিরে এসেছি। আমাদের দেখে খুশিতে ডগো মগো ঘন্টা হন্ত দন্ত হয়ে ছুটে এসে হাপাতে হাঁপাতে জানালো ও আমার জন্য আমার মনের মত একটা কুকুর ছানা এনেছে। কথাটা শোনা মাত্র নাকচ করে দিলাম। এখন মাঝে মাঝেই আমাকে এদিক সেদিক যেতে হয়। ওসব নিয়ে আমি কি করবো? উত্তর শুনে হতাশ হয়ে মন খারাপ করে সেদিনের মতো চলে গেল সে।

পরদিন চায়ের পর্ব শেষ হতেই অরণ্যদেব এসে হাজির। এবার সে সরাসরি আমাকে দোষারোপ করল।

আমি নাকি অনেক দিন আগে ওর কাছে কুকুরছানা চেয়েছিলাম ।সে কারণেই সবার বাড়ি বাড়ি খুঁজে খুঁজে একটা বাড়ি থেকে আমার কথা বলে চেয়ে চিনতে নিয়ে এসেছে । এখন ফেরত দিলে ওর যেমন মান সম্মান খোয়া যাবে। তেমনি আমিও অপরাধী হয়ে যাব।

এদিকে গতকালই ঘন্টার বন্ধুদের কাছ থেকে এ ব্যাপারে সবকিছু শোনা হয়ে গেছে। ঘন্টা আমাকে মিথ্যে কথা বলছে। আমাদের পাড়ার দত্ত বাড়িতে একটা রাস্তার কুকুর আটটা বাচ্চা দিয়েছে। তাই যারাই চাইছে খুশি হয়ে দিয়ে দিচ্ছে। ঘন্টার বন্ধুরা আরো জানিয়েছে, নিজে পুষবে বলেই বাচ্চাটা এনেছিল ঘন্টা । কিন্তু ঘন্টা দের একটা মাত্র বড় ঘর সেখানে ঠাকুরের আসন পাতা। তাই

কুকুরছানাটি ঘরে রাখতে মায়ের বেজায় আপত্তি । তার মধ্যে ছানাটি মাংস ভাত, দই ভাত, ছাড়া কিছুটি মুখে তোলে না। ঘন্টা দের বাড়ির পাশেই আমাদের বাড়ি। বারবার করে একটা কথাই বলছে,তুমি শুধু একবার দেখো ও খুব সুন্দর তোমার ঠিক পছন্দ হবে। আমি রেগে ওর দিকে তেড়ে গেলাম। যা ভাগ। তখন থেকে একটা কথা ঘ্যানর, ঘ্যানর করছিস। আমি নেব না বলেছি তো। ঘন্টা আমার দিকে করুন চোখে চেয়ে বলল, নাও না ঠাম্মা। তোমার পায়ে পরি।

পরদিন প্রাতঃ ভ্রমণ সেরে দোকানে চা খেয়ে আমরা বাড়ি ফিরলাম । কর্তা মশাই গেটের কাছে দাঁড়িয়ে কার সাথে যেন কথা বলছে। ফিরে এসে বললেন তোমার অরণ্য দেব, কুকুর ছানাটা নিয়ে ভীষণ বিপদে পড়েছে। বুঝলাম আমার সাথে না পেরে ঘন্টা এবার দাদুকে পাকড়াও করেছে।



একটু পরেই ঘন্টার ডাক শুনে ঘর থেকে বেরোতেই ও আমার সামনে মেলে ধরল ওর সুন্দর উপহার। ছোট্ট , সাদা ধবধবে কুকুর ছানা কোমর আর পিছনের পায়ে উপরের দিক টা চকলেট রং, ভেলভেট এর মত চকচক করছে। সামনের পা দুটো অত্যন্ত বলিষ্ঠ। কান দুটো চকলেট রঙের । আমার দিকে চেয়ে আছে। আমিও এক দৃষ্টে চেয়ে আছি এই অনাথ শিশু সারমেয় টির দিকে। এই প্রথমই আমি কোন কুকুর ছানার চোখে ভাষা খুঁজে পেলাম। ঘন্টা বলল কি ঠাম্মা, বলেছিলাম না?

হুম কিন্তু আমি যখন বাড়ি থাকবো না, তখন কি হবে? সাথে সাথে ঘন্টার জবাব । সে তুমি ভেবোনা। যাদের বাড়ি থেকে এনেছি তাদের বাড়ি রেখে আসবো।

ঘন্টা বলল ওর নাম মিল্কি ।ওকে মিল্কি বলেই ডাকবে। ওর সম্বন্ধে যাবতীয় তথ্য দিয়ে নিশ্চিন্তে খুশি মনে বাড়ি ফিরে গেল অরণ্যদেব ।

আমরা দুজন মিল্কি কে নিয়ে ব্যস্ত হয়ে পড়লাম। মিল্কির জন্য আমাদের কাজের শেষ নেই । ওকে স্নান করানো, খাওয়ানো, নানা রকম আদব কায়দা শেখানো। দিনগুলো খুশি , আনন্দে, কাটতে লাগলো । এরই মধ্যে মিল্কি ছোটখাটো অনেক কিছুই শিখেছে। কেউ এলে নমস্কার দেওয়া, করমর্দন করা, যাবার সময় টাটা, বাই বাই, এরকম আরো অনেক কিছু। এতে করে বাড়িতে

যারা আসে তারাও মিল্কিকে দেখে খুব খুশি হয়। কোন ঝামেলা নেই প্রাণীটির। আমাদের ঘরে ঘুমায়। আমাদের সাথেই জেগে ওঠে। সারাক্ষণ আমার ছায়া সঙ্গী হয়ে থাকে। আমি ফুল তুলতে গেলে সে আমার পিছনে চুপটি করে বসে থাকে।

একদিন দুপুর থেকে মিল্কি কিছুই খাচ্ছে না। মরার মত শুয়ে আছে। আমাদেরও নাওয়া খাওয়া বন্ধ। আমার অরণ্যদেব সবান্ধবে এসে বারে বারে দেখে যাচ্ছে। ওর মুখে একটাই প্রশ্ন ঠাম্মা মিল্কি বাঁচবে না? ইতিমধ্যে পাড়ার অনেকে এসে মিল্কিকে দেখে গেছে। একদিনেই ওর পেটে, পিঠে লেগে গেছে। মনে হচ্ছে আমরা আর ওকে বাঁচাতে পারলাম না। মুখ থেকে লালা ঝরছে। মাথা তুলতে পারছে না। খুব খারাপ অবস্থা।

এক সময় স্বামী আমায় ডেকে বললেন দেখতো পাড়ার কারো জানাশোনা পশু ডাক্তার আছে কিনা। । কথাটা লুফে নিয়ে বললাম ঠিক

বলেছ। আমাদের রাতুল দের বাড়িতে একজন ডাক্তার আসেন । ওরা একটা ভাল জাতের কুকুর ছানা এনেছে। ওর নাকি অসুখ-বিসুখ লেগেই থাকে। কর্তা , ব্যস্ত হয়ে বললেন, দেখ, যদি পাওয়া যায়। ওর কষ্ট আর দেখতে পাচ্ছি না। রাতুল দের ডাক্তার কে ডাকা হলো। ডাক্তার এসেই চিকিৎসা শুরু করে দিলেন|

কদিন এক নাগাড়ে স্যালাইন ইনজেকশন চলল। চা খেতে খেতে ডাক্তার বললেন ,একটা রাস্তার কুকুরের জন্য আপনারা এত করলেন! উত্তরে স্বামী বললেন, পোষ্য তো পোষ্য ই হয়। রাস্তার কুকুর হলেও মায়া তো একই থাকে। তফাৎ একটাই ওটা টাকা দিয়ে কেনা। এই তো? খুশি হলেন ডাক্তার। এ যাত্রায় বেঁচে গেল মিল্কি। ডাক্তারের কথা মতো মিল্কির সেবা যত্ন চললো।

কদিনের মধ্যেই সুস্থ সবল চনমনে হয়ে উঠল। ওর জন্য দোতলার সিঁড়ির নিচে পরিপাটি করে বিছানা পেতে দেওয়া হলো । যখন খুশি ঘুমায় ,ওঠে। দোতালায় উঠে সবকিছু তছনছ করে। আমার ভালো ভালো শাড়ি জুতো ওর কামড়ে ক্ষতবিক্ষত। বকাঝকা করলে চুপ করে অপরাধীর মতো চেয়ে থাকে । দেখে বড্ড মায়া হয়।

এদিকে একটা বিশেষ কারণে মিল্কি কে নিয়ে শহরের বাড়িতে চলে আস্তে বাধ্য হয়েছি। এখানে ওর বন্দী জীবন। বাইরে বেরোলেই পথ কুকুররা সদল বলে আক্রমণ করে। ওর নিঃসঙ্গ জীবন । দিনের পর দিন বিষম প্রজাতির সঙ্গে কাটাতে হয়। এসব কথাই এক মনে ভাবছিলাম। তক্ষুনি একটা ফোন এলো| প্রণাম নেবেন দিদিমণি। ভালো আছেন? আমি আপনার ছাত্রী রুমকি। আপনার সাথে আমার বিশেষ দরকার, বাড়ি আছেন? যাব? এক নিঃশ্বাসে কথাগুলো বলে উত্তরের অপেক্ষায় থামল রুমকি।

আমি খুশি হয়ে বললাম হ্যাঁ হ্যাঁ অবশ্যই এসো, খুব খুশি হব। কখন

আসবে? আমি প্রায় চলেই এসেছি।

রুমকি আমাদের গ্রামের মেয়ে। আমি চটপট কিছু গুছিয়ে নিলাম।

রুমকি আমায় প্রণাম করে পায়ের কাছে বসে পড়ল। কোন কথা শুনল না। আমার জন্য অনেক কিছু নিয়ে এসেছে। খাওয়ার পর্ব শেষ করে রুমকি বলল দিদিমণি? আমি আজ একটা জিনিস চাইতে এসেছি। দয়া করে না বলবেন না ।কথা দিন। অবাক হয়ে বললাম কি জিনিস?

রুমকি আমার পায়ে হাত রেখে বলল দিদিমণি মিল্কি কে আমায় দিন। আমি তড়াক করে উঠে দাঁড়ালাম ।কি বলছো তুমি! এরপর রুমকি যা বলল শুনে খুব দুঃখ হলো|

মিল্কির জন্মের পর সারাদিন বোতলের দুধ খাইয়ে, অনেক কষ্টে ওকে বাঁচিয়েছে সে। বড্ড মায়া পড়ে গেছিল। তারপরই চাকরির ট্রেনিং এর জন্য ওকে চলে যেতে হয় দূরে। আর তখনই ওর মা ওকে না জানিয়ে মিল্কি কে দিয়ে দিয়েছে। ফিরে এসে জানতে পেরে ছুটে এসেছে। দেবেন দিদিমণি? মিনতি ঝরে পড়ছে রুমকির গলায়। তখনই মিল্কি ঘরে ঢুকে, রুমকির কোলে বসে, এমন করতে লাগলো , যেন কত দিনের চেনা। রুমকি ও ওর গালে চুমু খেয়ে আদরে সোহাগে ভরিয়ে দিল ।

মিল্কি কে কোলে নিয়ে রুমকি বললো দিদিমণি, মিল্কি কে ছেড়ে আপনার খুব কষ্ট হবে জানি। আমার ও হবে| আমরা কেউ কাউকে কষ্ট দিতে পারবো না, কিন্তু একজনকে তো কষ্ট পেতেই হবে। তাই লটারি হোক। যার ভাগ্যে হবে, সেই পাবে মিল্কি কে। আমার কাজের মেয়ে, এতক্ষণ দাঁড়িয়ে সব শুনছিল,। রুমকি ওকে লটারির দায়িত্ব বুঝিয়ে দিল।

লটারি জিতে মিল্কি কে পেয়ে গেল রুমকি। আমি একটা দীর্ঘশ্বাস গোপন করে, চোখের জল লুকিয়ে, মিল্কি কে রুমকির হাতে তুলে দিলাম। ওরা চলে গেল। আমি দরজা ভেজিয়ে বিছানায় শুয়ে বাচ্চাদের মত ফুঁপিয়ে কাঁদতে লাগ লাম। কতক্ষণ জানিনা হঠাৎ দরজার শব্দে উঠে বসলাম। দেখি মিল্কি পায়ের কাছে শুয়ে আছে।

দরজায় দাঁড়িয়ে রুমকি বললো, দিদিমণি আপনি জিতে গেলেন। মিল্কি আপনার কাছেই ভালো থাকবে।

সমাপ্ত




Durga Puja 2025








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Corruption in Healthcare

Ayushna Mishra, Swansea University

Healthcare corruption is spreading aggressively lately, becoming almost an open-book practice in developing countries, whereas its passive but definite persistence in developed countries takes multitudinous forms, affecting all strata of life – both with monetary costs (billions of dollars) and loss of lives (what one may call – a death of human capital). Coincidental it may appear, but economists and health scientists can explain that these corrupt practices run in tandem with the per capita income growth, but the seriousness of this cointegration is acute in highly unequal societies than in the equitable ones. Each year, funds earmarked for hospitals, medicines, and life-saving treatments vanish into fraudulent schemes. The World Health Organization estimates that about 25 percent of global public health spending is wasted through fraud and unethical practices, yet the actual cost cannot be measured in pounds alone—it is measured in delayed diagnoses, inflated bills, and shattered trust in the very institutions meant to protect us.

Corruption in healthcare wears many masks. Pharmaceutical companies may bribe doctors and hospital administrators to prescribe specific drugs, inflating corporate profits at the expense of patient welfare. Fraudulent billing schemes see hospitals charging insurers for treatments never performed or overcharging government programs. Embezzlement, the most blatant form of theft, diverts money intended for medical equipment and supplies, leaving wards under-resourced and vulnerable patients at risk.

Global examples illustrate the human toll. In the United States, Purdue Pharma downplayed the addictive potential of its opioids while paying physicians to overprescribe, fuelling an epidemic that claims more than 100,000 lives each year. In India, corrupt officials set up "ghost" hospitals on paper to siphon government funds, depriving rural communities of even the most basic care. As per some reports, even in Wales UK, budgets allocated for new medical wards were quietly redirected to pay for road signage—an

act of misallocation that highlights how public money can slip through every level of oversight.

The ripple effects of such corruption reach into every corner of the system. Patients face dangerous treatment delays, families grapple with soaring out-of-pocket costs, and public confidence in health authorities erodes—undermining everything from vaccination campaigns to emergency responses. Low-income countries, already struggling with scarce resources, lose vital funding and fall further behind, widening global health disparities. One remarkable study even concluded that corruption contributes to more deaths worldwide than malaria or tuberculosis.



Tackling this problem demands coordinated action. Governments must tighten regulations, enforce transparent procurement processes, and conduct regular, public audits of healthcare spending. Citizens need clear channels for reporting suspicious activity and broad public-awareness campaigns that empower patients to know and defend their rights. Healthcare professionals, meanwhile, should receive rigorous ethics training that underscores patient welfare over profit, with firm guidelines governing interactions with pharmaceutical and medical-supply companies.

Healthcare corruption is not merely a matter of stolen money—it is a violation of fundamental human rights. Bribery, fraud, and embezzlement warp priorities and destroy trust, harming the very people the system is meant to serve. Yet this crisis is not beyond remedy. With stringent oversight, informed and vigilant communities, and an unwavering commitment to ethical medical practice, we can reclaim healthcare's true purpose: to heal and protect every life, rather than enrich a privileged few.



Kumari Pujo



Sindur Khela

Bengali Food Festival 2026



Bengali Food Festival 2026











Flight to the middle of nowhere

Mitanshu Basu
Thornden School, Year 10

In a land covered of snow, in a place where everything is frozen. A place where you can hear a pin drop from a mile away and a location thousands of miles far away from any type of civilization. Meet me, I am Denis, I am an immature 25-year-old that loves taking life to the extreme and doing things people have never done before. You might be questioning to yourself where am I? Well, this a place called Siberia, a place where humanity has left unexplored. Inside of it is situated thousands of miles of desolate Tundra and is a hotspot for large grizzly polar bears and vicious wolves. You might be asking yourself how I got into a situation like this?

5 years ago, I the silly 20-year-old wanted to take a challenge. I wanted to do something that people always said was impossible. Every single one of my teachers and every relative I knew told me never to go there as death would be my outcome. But I was determined towards one goal, to prove everyone wrong. Weeks and months went by, piles of passport forms and millions of papers being signed to show it is my responsibility of me being in danger.

So, day and night, hours upon hours in flight school learning every single thing about how to fly a plane. No one believed in me, especially about the fact that I was going to fly over a place where no one goes. But I eventually proved everyone wrong as I stepped into a cockpit of my own. Although, it was just a Cessna, everything was blowing my mind. The throttle, the gears, the flaps, and all of the fancy screens! I was living in a dream!

As I sit down, my hands shaking and realising that I am actually going to fly a plane. Steadily as I push up the throttle have a chat with the ATC tower and request for take-off. I closed my eyes and increased the throttle to 75 percent and once I reached full speed, I lifted the yoke. Dreams had been accomplished, tears started streaming down my eyes, I had finally done it. I had just taken off! Now, what awaited me was a 5-hour flight from An5-houre to a remote location in Siberia.

As I slowly ascend to 30,000 feet and reach 450 knots, my mind was replaying every single conversation I had with people saying this was impossible and someone like me could never achieve. However, the tables had turned, and I had just proved everyone wrong.

As I wake up after 5 hours after putting the plane in autopilot, I was just 30 miles away from my destination. I swiftly decrease my throttle to 25 percent as I line up

towards the runway and start descending to 500 feet. It felt like I was about to land in a winter wonderland, everything reminded me of Narnia. The snow, the frozen lakes, everything. Gently I had descended to 400 feet then to 200. Cautiously, I dip my wheels and touch down in this unknown place. No one could be seen for miles except for some people in thick winter jackets helping planes go where they want. Steadily as I park my plane in the small shelter, I realised there is no way back now. I step out of my plane with 4 layers of clothing, and I was still shivering like an icicle in a blizzard. I took out all my luggage from my storage and I rent a car. As I pick up my car and start driving, I realise everywhere is so desolate and so grey. Towering Siberian larches stood like silent sentinels across the frozen landscape.



Driving after what feels like forever, I finally reach my destination. Forests hugged around a small cottage, which I was now going to call my humble abode. When I take my phone out of pocket to see the time I realise I have no service. All that was there to accompany me were colossus polar bears and wild deer. I was officially experiencing pure isolation. The bright sun gleamed orange as it was about to set, as I go inside, I bring in all my bags and stop for the day.

Beep! Beep! Beep! My alarm screamed at me telling it was a new day, so I pack my bags and decide to drive looking for a local town. I put my location in my phone and realise the closest town is 100 miles away. So, I start driving towards my location not expecting anything to happen but 70 miles in my car broke down. Therefore, I come to a halt and open the front, I can't seem to find a problem. My mind was racing to find a solution but however everyone that told me I will be in danger was right.

There I am, all alone, no one to save me.



Sanvi Singha Roy

Greentrees Primary School, Year 2



Southampton Mela 2026











From Vedic Origins to Modern Life: The Living Continuity of an Ancient Tradition

Madhu Acharyya

Religion in South Asia is not a static inheritance but a dynamic continuum. It has flowed across millennia, absorbing new ideas, reshaping old practices, and adapting to changing social realities. Among the world's ancient cultural systems, the Vedic tradition stands out for its extraordinary longevity and capacity for transformation. What began as a ritual-centred worldview in the Indo-Gangetic plains more than three thousand years ago has evolved into one of the most diverse and vibrant religious landscapes in contemporary society.

Understanding this journey is not merely an exploration of the past. It reveals how cultural memory influences identity, how inherited values guide behaviour, and how communities sustain meaning across generations.

The Vedic Foundations: Order, Ritual, and Sacred Ecology

The Vedic religion, also known as Vedism, emerged around 1500 BCE among Indo-European-speaking peoples who entered India from present-day Iran. This period marks the earliest stratum of religious activity in India for which written materials exist.

The Vedas: The Oldest Indo-European Literary Corpus

The Vedic tradition is named after its foundational texts, the Vedas, composed orally between roughly 1500–500 BCE. These include:

- **Rig Veda**: The oldest, containing 1,028 hymns arranged in ten books.
- **Yajur Veda**: Prose formulas for sacrificial rites.
- **Sama Veda**: Verses with musical notation for sacred chants.
- **Atharva Veda**: Incantations, healing rites, and domestic rituals.

The Rig Veda is the oldest surviving Indo-European literary text. Scholars such as Michael Witzel date its core books (mandalas 2–7) to 1500–1200 BCE, with later books composed around 1200–1000 BCE.

The Vedas were transmitted orally for nearly 3,000 years using highly sophisticated mnemonic techniques (padapatha, kramapatha, jaṭāpāṭha), making them one of the most accurately preserved ancient textual traditions.

Ritual Culture and Cosmic Order

Vedic religion centred on sacrificial rites (yajña), often involving communal meals shared between humans and deities. These rituals were believed essential for maintaining ṛta (ঋত), the cosmic order. Key deities included:

- **Indra**: God of storms and war.
- **Agni**: Fire god and divine messenger.
- **Soma**: Associated with a sacred ritual plant.

These deities reflect a worldview deeply connected to natural forces and moral principles.

Social Structure and Early Institutions

The Vedic period also saw the emergence of the varna social stratification system. Painted Grey Ware archaeological findings (c. 1200–600 BCE) correspond to late Vedic settlements, supporting the historical timeline.

Origins and Migrations: What Modern Evidence Shows

The origins of Vedic culture were long debated. However, ancient DNA research has provided decisive evidence for the Indo-Aryan migration model.

A landmark study by Vagheesh Narasimhan et al. (Science, 2019) analysed 523 ancient genomes and demonstrated that steppe pastoralist ancestry (from Yamnaya/Sintashta cultures) entered South Asia between 2000–1500 BCE, aligning with the early Vedic period.

This genetic evidence supports the view that Indo-European speakers migrated into the subcontinent, bringing early Vedic language and ritual culture.

The Upanishadic Turn: From Ritual to Introspection

Around 800–300 BCE, the Upanishads introduced a profound philosophical shift. While the Brahmanas (c. 800–600 BCE) elaborated ritual meaning, the Upanishads moved the focus inward. Key concepts included:

Ātman: The inner self.

Brahman: Ultimate reality.

Moksha: Liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

This introspective turn laid the foundation for later schools such as Vedānta (বেদান্ত), Yoga (যোগ), and Sāṃkhya (সাংখ্য). The shift did not reject ritualism; rather, it reinterpreted it, adding philosophical depth to the tradition. Epic and Puranic Expansion: Religion for the People

Between 500 BCE and 500 CE, the tradition expanded dramatically.

The Epics: The Ramayana and Mahabharata introduced ethical dilemmas, social duties, and heroic narratives. These texts helped translate Vedic values into accessible moral frameworks.

The Puranas: The Puranas absorbed regional deities, folk traditions, local myths, and seasonal rituals. This process created a more inclusive religious landscape. The rise of temple culture replaced fire altars with icons, rituals, and devotional practices.

Continuity of Orthodox Ritual

Despite these changes, orthodox Vedic rituals continued in certain Brahmin communities. The Mimamsa school defended ritualism, while Vedānta emphasised philosophical interpretation.

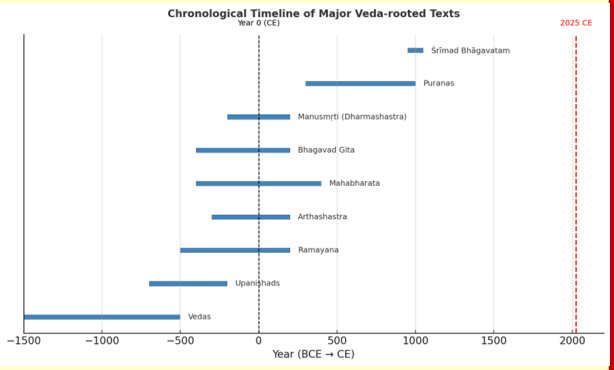
Regional Diversity and Cultural Absorption

As Vedic culture spread across the subcontinent, it interacted with non-Vedic Indo-Aryan groups in regions such as Greater Magadha, which had distinct religious traditions. This interaction produced syncretic rituals, regional festivals, localised pantheons, and diverse

temple architectures. The tradition's ability to absorb and reinterpret ensured its survival across varied cultural landscapes.

Medieval Transformations: Devotion and Reform

Between the 9th and 17th centuries, devotional (Bhakti) movements reshaped religious life. Saints such as Kabir, Mirabai, and Tulsidas emphasised personal devotion, emotional connection, and social inclusivity. This period also saw philosophical consolidation. Vedānta schools such as Advaita, Dvaita, and Vishishtadvaita offered systematic interpretations of Upanishadic ideas.



As Hindu and Vedic-derived traditions met Islamic culture, the exchange of ideas produced blended practices and shared artistic forms, seen in the fusion of Bhakti and Sufi poetry, the development of Hindustani classical music, and Indo-Islamic architectural styles such as those found in Delhi and the Deccan.

Early Modern Period: Reform and Reinterpretation

Colonial scholarship introduced new frameworks for interpreting Vedic culture. Some theories, such as the steppe-migration hypothesis, later received support from genetic evidence. Reform movements (e.g., Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj) sought to reinterpret ancient ideas in modern terms, emphasising monotheism, rationality, and social reform.

The Modern Echo: How Vedic Culture Shapes Today's Society

Although elaborate fire sacrifices are no longer central to everyday life, Vedic values remain deeply woven into modern society.

1. Social Ethics and Family Life

The concept of **dharma** continues to influence:

personal behaviour; family responsibilities; community expectations.

Respect for elders, emphasis on duty, and collective decision-making reflect ancient moral frameworks.

2. Festivals and Rituals

Modern festivals preserve seasonal rhythms rooted in agrarian Vedic society:

Diwali: Linked to domestic fire rituals.

Holi: Seasonal renewal.

Durga Puja, **Pongal**, **Navaratri**: Regional adaptations of ancient cycles.

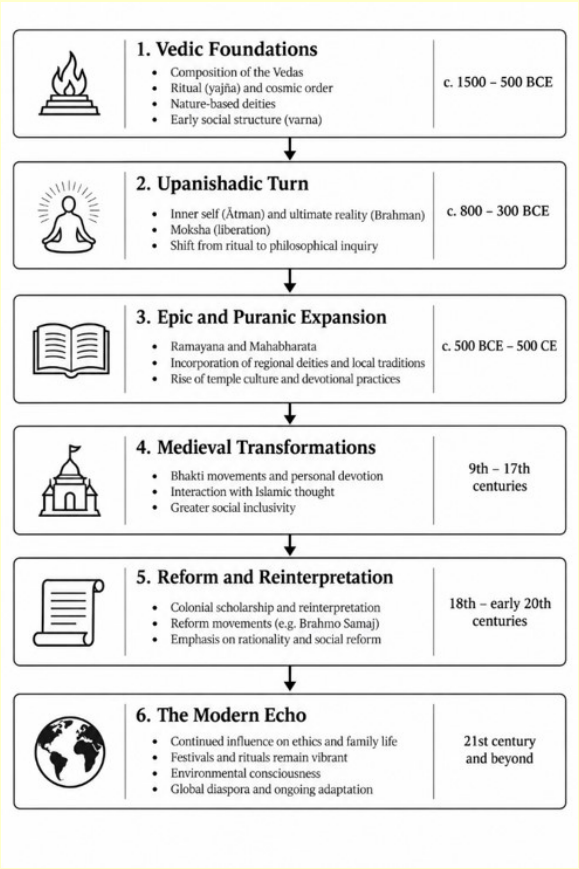
Household worship maintains the intimacy of early domestic rites.

3. Environmental Consciousness

The Vedic reverence for nature aligns closely with today's climate-change awareness, where environmental degradation threatens business continuity, social stability, and human survival. Practices such as protecting sacred groves, safeguarding rivers, and adopting plant-based diets echo modern sustainability efforts and directly support global priorities reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 6 (Clean Water), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

4. Identity in the Global Diaspora

For global communities, Vedic-derived traditions offer cultural continuity. Rituals, language, and festivals become identity anchors, connecting individuals to ancestral memory.



Why This Journey Matters

The evolution of Vedic religion demonstrates a powerful truth: traditions endure not by remaining rigid, but by adapting intelligently. The modern religious landscape is not a fossil of the past; it is a living continuum shaped by centuries of reinterpretation.

Ancient ideas still influence how people understand duty, community, nature, and the meaning of life. In a rapidly changing world, this continuity provides stability and reminds us that cultural identity is built not only on modern experiences but on inherited wisdom.

The journey from Vedic fire altars to modern festivals is not merely a historical narrative. It testifies to the resilience of cultural memory, the creativity of communities, and the enduring relevance of ancient values. It shows how religion can evolve without losing its identity, how culture can adapt without abandoning its roots, and how societies can find meaning in both tradition and change.


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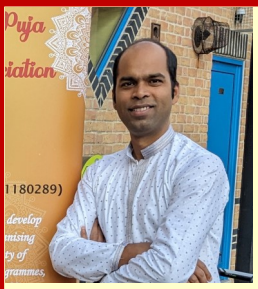












নাম বিভ্রাট ও ‘অ’-এর বিড়ম্বনা

সৌম্য সিংহ রায়

বাঙালি ও ভারতীয় সমাজে নামেরও একটা আলাদা ইতিহাস আছে। একসময় সন্তান জন্মালেই বাবা-মা ভাবতেন, এ তো আমাদের নয়, এ ঈশ্বরের দান। তাই নাম দেওয়া হতো শিবপ্রসাদ, রামপদ, কেউ কৃষ্ণদাস, কেউ কালীচরণ, কেউ শ্যামসুন্দর। মহিলাদের নামের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যাপারটা আরও সাধারণ ছিল। সীতা, গীতা, উমা, পার্বতী, লক্ষ্মী এইসব নামের প্রভূত প্রচলন ছিল।

বিংশ শতাব্দীর শেষের দিকে ক্রমে যখন বাঙালিরা আধুনিক হতে থাকল, নামগুলোও বদলাতে থাকল - অজিত, সুজিত, উত্তম, অরুণ, তরুণ, প্রশান্ত, সুশান্ত, হেমন্ত, বসন্ত, অরূপ, স্বরূপ, দেবাশীষ ইত্যাদি। আর মহিলাদের ক্ষেত্রে সুলোচনা, নমিতা, সুপ্রিয়া, অঞ্জনা, কল্পনা, আশা, লতা ইত্যাদি।

সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বিবর্তন হলো ডাকনামেরও। বুড়ো, কালো, পচা, পাঁচু, ভোলা, টেঁপি, বুড়ি থেকে হলো বাবু, বাবলু, বুবাই, বাবাই, সোনা, মোনা, রিংকু, ঝিঙ্কু, টিঙ্কু, মামনি, পাপাই, বান্টি, বাবুন, বুবলি, বুবু ও আরও যত রকম ‘ব’ দিয়ে যত রকম আদুরে নাম হতে পারে।

পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের নামে এলো এক কোয়ান্টাম জাম্প, অনেকটা তথ্যপ্রযুক্তির হাত ধরে।

বাঙালিরা ইতিমধ্যে ভারতবর্ষের ও বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন কোণায় ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে। আর হবু বাবা-মায়েরা ভাবছে, তাদের ছেলে-পুলেকেও পোড়া বাংলায় থাকার সম্ভাবনা সিপিএমের পুনরায় ক্ষমতায় আসার থেকেও কম। অতএব নাম হতে হবে আধুনিক এবং গ্লোবাল।

ডাকনাম হয়ে উঠল রকি, সানি, ববি, রনি, বনি, রিক, রিকো, ঝিকো, জো, রো, সোনু, মনু ইত্যাদি। ভালো নাম হলো আরিয়ানা, অভিক, সুহানা, সানভী, তানভী, সোহম, জিৎ, রোহান ইত্যাদি।

সঙ্গে জ্যোতিষ ব্যাপার-স্যাপার তো আছেই। আরও যুক্ত হলো ইংরেজি আলফাবেটিক্যাল অর্ডার নিয়ে চিন্তাভাবনা। নাম ‘অ’ দিয়ে শুরু হলে লাইনে আগে জায়গা পাওয়া যেতে পারে।

আবার নন-বাঙালি বা সাহেবরা ওই নামটা উচ্চারণ করতে গিয়ে অন্য কোনও গালাগালিতে পরিণত করবে না তো?

এত কিছু মাথায় রেখে তবে নাম ঠিক করা—চাট্টিখানি কথা নাকি?

আদ্যিকালের মতো ঠাকুরমা আর ঠাকুরদা আগের যুগে স্বপ্নে কোনও নাম ভেবে বলে দিলেন আর সেটাই থেকে গেল—এইসব আর চলে না, বুঝলেন! এখন তো আবার হাইটেক মা-বাবারা AI দিয়ে নাম চেক করে নেয়—কোনও গোলমাল হবে না তো!

আমার এক বন্ধুর নাম ছিল অনল। যার মানে আগুন। পুষ্পার ভাষায় *ফায়ার*।

কি সুন্দর মানে, বলুন তো!

কিন্তু হায়রে গ্লোবাল বাঙালি! যেই সে ট্রেন একবার খড়্গপুর বা দুর্গাপুর পেরোল, অমনি নামের যে কী দফারফা হলো, তা বোধকরি সবাই বুঝতে পারছেন।

সমস্যাটা শুরু হলো ওই শেষ অক্ষরের 'অ' ধ্বনিটিকে নিয়ে।

ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় বর্ণপরিচয় তৈরি করার সময় বোধহয় ভাবেননি যে, একুশ শতকে এসে উপমহাদেশীয় অবাঙালি বা পৃথিবীর কোনও অ্যাংলো-স্যাক্সন জিভ এই খাসখাঁটি বাঙালি 'অ'-এর উচ্চারণটি করতে পারবে না।

তাই তো রসগোল্লা হয়ে গেল রাসগুল্লা।

আরে ভাই, ওটা 'আ' নয়, 'অ'!

এটা বললে আবার বলবে, 'রসোগুল্লা'।

বোঝো ঠেলা - ওটা 'ও' নয়।

এবার তো সে আরও বিভ্রান্ত!

'আ' নয়, 'ও' নয় - what are you trying to say?

অরে ধুর ছাতার মাথা - ওটা 'অ'! কী করে যে বোঝাই!

'aw'—মানে যেটা ক্লিনিক্ অল ক্লিয়ার-ওয়ালা 'aw'।

এই 'অ'-এর চক্করে বাঙালি এখন পারলেই নামের শেষে 'অ' নৈব নৈব চ! এই যেমন ধরুন সুদীপ্ত, সুকান্ত, প্রশান্ত, দিগন্ত বা আমার নিজের নাম, সৌম্য। এইরকম নাম থাকলে নির্ঘাত আপনাকে মহিলা ধরা হবেই!

ভারতের অন্যান্য রাজ্যে 'সৌম্য' নামটি সাধারণত মেয়েদের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যবহৃত হয়। ফলে ই-মেল চালাচালিতে আমার লিঙ্গ নির্ধারণ নিয়েও এক অদ্ভুত প্রহসন তৈরি হলো। পুনেতে ছাত্রাবস্থায় কতবার যে আমার প্রফেসরকে এই নিয়ে বিড়ম্বনায় পড়তে হয়েছে!

"She has written a beautiful piece of work!"

বাংলা ব্যাকরণের অমোঘ নিয়মে আমার নামের উচ্চারণ 'শৌম্মো'। যা শুনলে মনে হয় কোনও ধীরস্থির, গাম্ভীর্যপূর্ণ পুরুষসিংহ হেঁটে আসছেন।

কিন্তু আমার সেই নামটি যখনই কলকাতা বিমানবন্দরের ইমিগ্রেশনের দেওয়াল পার হলো, তখনই তার অকালমৃত্যু ঘটল।

লন্ডনের হিথ্রোয় যেদিন আমি প্রথম পা রাখলাম, সেদিন বর্ডার ফোর্সের মেমসাহেব আমার পাসপোর্টের বানান S-O-U-M-Y-A দেখে এক গাল হেসে আপ্যায়ন করলেন—

"ওয়েলকাম টু দ্য গ্রেট ব্রিটেন, সুমিয়া!"

আমি থমকে দাঁড়ালাম।

'শৌম্মো' থেকে এক ঝটকায় আমি হয়ে গেলাম 'সুমিয়া'!

আমি মরিয়া হয়ে শ্বেতাঙ্গ সহকর্মীদের বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করলাম, "Look, it's not Sumia, it's Shaummo."

কিন্তু ওই যে - গ্লোবাল জিভের সাধ্য কী যে বাঙালির সেই আলতো 'অ'-এর গাম্ভীর্য ছুঁয়ে যায়!

তারা যতই চেষ্টা করে, মুখ দিয়ে নির্গত হয় এক অদ্ভুত হিসহিসে শব্দ—'সোমিয়া' বা 'সুমা'।

সাহেবরা যদি 'শেক্সপিয়ার' বা 'আর্নল্ড' উচ্চারণ করতে পারে, তবে আপনি বা আমি কেন বিশ্বমঞ্চে দাঁড়িয়ে বুক ফুলিয়ে বলতে পারব না—

"My name is Shaummo, not Sumia."

তারপর একটু থেমে, নিজের নামটা নিজেই মনে মনে উচ্চারণ করি—শৌম্মো।

বাঙালির সেই ছোট্ট 'অ'-টা।

কতটুকুই বা জায়গা তার! না 'আ', না 'ও', মাঝখানে কোথাও একটুখানি অস্তিত্ব নিয়ে পড়ে আছে। অথচ সেই সামান্য 'অ'-এর জন্যই কলকাতা থেকে লন্ডন, বর্ণপরিচয় থেকে বর্ডার ফোর্স, আমার নামের এত লম্বা ভ্রমণ।

শেষ পর্যন্ত বুঝলাম, নামেরও ভাগ্য থাকে। কারও নাম বিদেশে গিয়ে আরও সুন্দর হয়ে যায়, কারও নামের উচ্চারণ বদলে যায়, আর কারও নাম এমনভাবে বদলায় যে নিজের মাকেই পরিচয়পত্র দেখাতে হয়।

তবু নামটা আমি বদলাইনি। কারণ 'সুমিয়া' যতই আন্তর্জাতিক হোক, সে আমার নয়।

আমি সেই পুরোনো, একটু জেদি, খানিকটা অচল, উচ্চারণে বিপজ্জনক বাঙালি 'অ'-টাকেই আঁকড়ে আছি।

আমি সৌম্য।

মানে—শৌম্মো।

আপনি না পারলে থাক।

AI-কে জিজ্ঞেস করব!

Mohalaya 2026











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Durga Puja 2026

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Ananya Magazine Editor: ***Soumya Singha Roy***

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27th September 25

Prof Sujit Sahu, Prof Tapas Mishra and Dr Rishika Mukhopadhyay
White Lodge
Julian Close
Chilworth
Southampton SO16 7HR

Dear Rishika, Tapas, and Sujit,

I would like to thank you most warmly for inviting me to the Durga Puja Cultural Festival at The Hilt in Chandler's Ford. It was a real pleasure to join you for such a special occasion and to witness first-hand the wonderful work of the Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association.

It is remarkable to see how the association, which began in 2008 with just a handful of volunteers, has grown into such a large and vibrant organisation. Laxmi's narration of its journey was truly inspiring and a testament to the commitment of the community.

The cultural programme was a highlight of the evening. The transformation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Chandalika* and *Chitrangada* into dance productions was captivating, beautifully performed, and supported by magical music and singing. The colourful costumes, graceful performances, and the clear dedication of the participants made the event unforgettable. It was evident that many hours of rehearsal and hard work went into creating such a polished performance.

I was also struck by the warmth and hospitality of the occasion, from the welcoming atmosphere to the delicious food provided to all. Prof. Sujit Sahu's guidance and introduction made me feel very much at home, and I am grateful for his kind support throughout the evening.

Please accept my heartfelt congratulations to you, the entire HPCA committee, and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to deliver such a successful three-day celebration. I wish HPCA every success in its future endeavours and look forward to seeing the association continue to flourish in the years to come.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Sudhakar

Cllr Sudhakar Achwal
Mayor of Winchester

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