

DURGA PUJA SPECIAL

Sanatan Dharma and Mother Durga Peace on Earth when the Mother Comes Down

by Prem Ranjan Dev

SANATAN Dharma is the most ancient and insightful among the dharmas of the world: It is generally called Hinduism. The Vedas, Sastras, the Puranas and the Gita have dealt with it extensively. In fact Vedic Hinduism is an eternal and unfathomable ocean. Hidden beneath its surface are the pearls of wisdom and essence of life. Many sages and great men have travelled on the path to this goal of finding the truth and experiencing total enlightenment. They left behind their legacy to inspire and help mankind. At a time when the interest in Hindu thought and spirituality is increasing globally, scholars from many disciplines are discovering parallels between Hindu thinking and scientific thoughts. True spirit of Hinduism is very relevant to present times. It has answers to problems of relationship between man and man, and man and God; it brings man closer to man and creates love for all creations. Sanatan Dharma explains the way for attaining liberation at each individual stage in life. However, there are a number of concepts there which are rarely understood in their true depth of spirituality. But now man's superior intellect, wisdom and inventions have apparently failed to bring a real solution to the world's problems. An aggravation of all that is experienced on the other hand, and confusions rather help lead to a vicious circle.

Man has created such an environment that it reacts unwhol-

somely upon him. Mankind is terribly heading as if towards committing licentious suicide. Heart-rending cry for peace, happiness and tranquillity is heard from all corners of this bewildered world. The state of affairs resembles that of the Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons), the former being defeated, the latter reigning supreme in the heaven inflicting intolerable sufferings to the Devas. The helpless Devas came to Brahma, the creator of their domain. Brahma, afflicted with the sorrows and sufferings of the Devas, led the commission of the gods to Vishnu and Shiva for appraisal of the grave situation and its redress. The tales of intolerable atrocities of Mahisasura raged vehement anger in Vishnu and Shiva and in a feat of this their vital energies in the form of burning flashes came out from them. This created similar reaction among the gods whose vital energies too came out in like manner. These energies took the form of an unmatchable, sublime but superbly powerful woman. She is Divine Durga. This divine embodiment of multiple spiritual energies had decoration of numerous weapons offered by the Gods.

Thus descends the Divine Mother, the Supreme Being, energy-incarnate who embodies in herself the multifarious modes of life. She happens to be too affectionate to her children, the

devotees, and becomes simply fierce to those who tend to harm them. Durga is tranquil and serene and fierce, *sourya* and *rudra* at the same time. This is because her all-embracing motherliness makes her intolerant of those that are inimically disposed towards her human and divine children. The Mother Durga in a feat of destruction raised such a tumultuous uproar that the frightened Asuras came out in large numbers equipped with armours and weapons and the severe war that followed between her and them brought the ruin of Mahisasura. The heaven was recovered and the Devas cheered the victory with an elegant hymn addressed to the mother: *jayang dehi disho jahi*.

Durga is perceived the progenitor of the universal process in its entirety. She is the presiding principle of the cosmic manifestation and the source of ultimate goal of all perfection and attainment of all existence. She is essentially Unique and One. She is the fountainhead of the highest good both spiritual attainment and material prosperity. The worship of the Mother Durga would ensure the devotees' communion with her. The constant communion with her would promote the development of friendly relations and universal fraternity. We pray to the Divine Mother for succour, to save us from the tyranny and turmoil of life in a confused world order.

Man is the maker of his destiny and he can exercise his free will,

but at the same time he has taken upon himself the responsibility to ensure communion between man and God, man and nature, man and other living beings and finally, between man and man. Let the festival of Durga Puja regenerate the spirit of fraternity among all of us.

The writer is President, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Parishad.



DURGA Puja is a five-day Hindu festival in the month of Ashvin which celebrates the victory of goddess Durga over the demon Mahisasura after a long battle, representing the victory of good over evil.

Durga Puja is the most important and most eagerly-awaited festival in Bengal. It is a festival that is celebrated in the best of

the Bengal seasons. Sharat (autumn). The festival assumed its popular status due to the efforts of King Balal Sen.

According to Markendeya Purana and Devi Purana, Mahisasura was a buffalo demon. After doing penance for many years, he obtained a boon from Brahma granting that he would not be slain by gods, men, spirits or any form of nature. Believing that he was invincible, he began tyrannizing the whole world, getting rid of the gods and ruling in their place.

The gods turned to Shiva for help and he in turn suggested that he, Brahma and Vishnu should combine their power to create an extraordinary woman who would be strong enough to get rid of the demon. The demon had foolishly forgotten to name woman when asking for the vital boon. Durga, a combination of powers of the three gods had eyes that shone like the rays of the sun and a smile that was as cool as the moon. Each god gave her a special weapon and she had a lion, the near invincible king of the beasts, as her vehicle.

When Mahisasura learnt of Durga's beauty, he sent her a proposal of marriage and Durga in turn replied that she would marry him if only he could defeat her in battle. A fierce battle ensued with the demon firing a barrage of deadly arrows at Durga, and changing himself into the shapes of different animals to attack. Durga overcame every attempt of the monster and finally with the trident that Shiva had given her, she pierced his chest. Flowers fell on the goddess and the gods rejoiced. Shiva decided

that the tenth day of Ashvin would be celebrated as the day of victory over evil—Vijayadashami.

According to the local belief, Durga came to earth, her parental home, and returned to heaven on the 10th day. For the four days that she is here she is welcomed and honoured. Preparations for this day begin many days in advance. Traditionally images were carved out of clay and white cork which is a difficult technique. Today, the cork is used only to make her ornaments and crown while a red sari, worn traditionally by Hindu married women adorns her.

At places, the celebrations spread over 10 days. Artisans use their talents and techniques to decorate the venue—the Mandap. Hymns are recited on the first day to invoke the goddess. This special recital is known as Mahalaya. The next five days are spent preparing for the grand yearly visit of "mother" Durga. On the sixth day the icon of the goddess is put on a raised platform in an enclosure. Durga is supposed to arrive with her children Ganesh, Kartikeya, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The priest claims life in the clay image and from now on till the tenth day the image is treated as goddess herself. It is necessary for the worshippers to clean their house and take purification baths and offer prayers in new clothes. Some believers fast on this day and break their fast at the evening "arati".

For the next three days, thousands of believers come for "darshan" of the goddess and to offer her prayers. Every morning on these four days, flowers are

offered to the goddess. Between the eighth and the ninth day, "Sandhi Puja" is performed in which animals are sacrificed in honour of the goddess at many places. The ninth day is considered doubly auspicious as the goddess is believed to have been conceived and sent to earth on this day. "Vijayadashmi" (the victorious tenth day) is a day of both joy and sorrow, as this is the day the goddess slew the demon, got rid of evil from earth, but it is also the day that she returns home. On this day the idol is immersed in the water.

Before taking the icon to be actually immersed, the priest captures its reflection in a bowl of water. Married women take their last "darshan" of the goddess, and use a large amount of specially consecrated "sindoor" lying around the goddess to anoint their head and that of their married friends and relatives, as this is believed to grant long life to their husbands.

Durga's idol is then accompanied by singers, dancers and musicians, lifted to the edge of the river and immersed with shouts of "Durga Mata Ki Jai" (Hail mother Durga) and "Aaschhey bachhar aabar esho" (come again next year).

The yearly visit of the goddess is thought to bring wellbeing and happiness among the people. Due to her auspicious presence, better variety of food is consumed during this time. On the tenth day people visit each other's houses, the young touching the elder's feet as mark of respect and enjoying sweets. The festival brings in a feeling of harmony and peace.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

For Productive and Meaningful Education

by Professor Quazi Faruque Ahmed

WORLD Teacher' Day is being observed today by the teachers in Bangladesh along with their counterparts in other countries. The community is 50-million strong across the world. October 5 is a day of celebration for them in view of the adoption by the ILO and UNESCO of the recommendations concerning the status of teachers on this day in 1966 in Paris at a special inter-governmental conference. The 'recommendation' is immensely important and vital due to its wide ranging significance and implications in regard to educators in particular and education in general. For the teachers of Bangladesh, this year's World Teachers' Day has a special connotation. It has come in the aftermath of the 45-day long strike and other agitational programmes by the non-government teachers and employees for enhancement of the government portion of their salary and for recruitment of teachers through a national recruiting authority, preferably through the Public Service Commission, and for acceptance of the provisions of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation on the status of teachers which include, among others, "since education is a service of fundamental importance, it should be recognised as a responsibility of the state."

The Recommendation is still one of the most important international tools for bringing about improvements in the teaching profession, as well as development of education. The 145-paragraph document states, among other things, (a) "Since education is an essential factor in economic growth, educational planning should form an integral part of total economic and social planning undertaken to improve living conditions"; (b) "As the achievement of the aims and objectives of education largely depends on the financial means

made available to it, high priority should be given in all countries to setting aside within the national budget an adequate proportion of the national income for the development of education"; (c) "In order that teachers may discharge their responsibilities, authorities should establish and regularly use recognised means of consultation with teachers' organisations on such matters as educational policy, school organisation and new developments in education service"; (d) "Authorities and teachers should recognise the importance of participation of teachers through their organisations and in other ways, in steps designed to improve the quality of education service in educational research and in the development and dissemination of new improved methods"; (e) "Teachers should be paid on the basis of salary scales in agreement with the teachers' organisations"; (f) "Teachers should be protected by social security measures in respect of all the contingencies included in the International Labour Organisation Social Security Convention 1952"; (g) "All aspects of preparation and employment of teachers should be free from any form of discrimination"; (h) "Authorities should recognise that improvement in the social and economic status of teachers, their living and working conditions, their terms of employment and their career prospects are the best means of overcoming any existing shortage of competent and experienced teachers and of attracting to and retaining in the teaching profession substantial number of fully qualified persons".

In America, President Bill Clinton had vowed to make education the priority of his second term. In his State of the Union address to Congress, the American President pledged \$75 billion to make US schools the best in the world. He called on Congress to increase federal spending on education by one-fifth. Clinton

urged Americans to put aside politics when it comes to children. "Education is a critical national security issue for our future, and politics must stop at the school house door," he said. International Commission on Education for the 21st Century headed by Jacques Delors has stressed in its report to UNESCO: "Improving the quality of education depends on first improving the recruitment, training, social status and conditions of work of teachers; they need the appropriate knowledge and skills, personal characteristics, professional prospects and motivation if they are to meet the expectations placed upon them."

In the Bangladesh context, it is needless to point out that our words and deeds vary so much that we all are virtually faced with the crisis of both conscience and credibility. Authorities on the one hand are blaming wrong recruitments of teachers in the institutions, on the other hand even influential people like Members of the Parliament (both the treasury bench and the opposition) were found involved in the recruitment process. While formation of a National Teachers' Recruiting Authority in the non-government sector or new Public Service Commission (PSC) for non-government teachers is the need of the hour, step-motherly attitude is being meted out there depriving 90 per cent of the pupils of poor Bangladesh in the consequence. This is high time that all concerned with education teachers, guardians, educational planners and national leaders should come forward and make a heart-searching. And to make education productive and meaningful, all our resources and endeavours should be utilised for and engaged in the greatest good of the greatest number.

The statistic provided by BANBEIS, an umbrella of the Education Ministry of Bangladesh, published in 2000, reveal

glaring disparity and discrimination:

Per student (capita) recurring cost by type of institution : 1999	
Type of Institution	Per student cost (Taka)
Govt Secondary School	3,356.00
Non-Govt Secondary School	972.00
Govt Madrasah	6,254.00
Non-Govt Madrasah	1,183.00
Government College	14,933.00
Non-Govt College	1,689.00
Cadet College	56,537.00
Teachers' Training College	6,046.00
University	37,201.00

In the backdrop of all these existing anomalies, teachers recently resorted to strike for more than a month for both removal of disparity between government and non-government students as well as achievement of their rightful demands including enhancement of salaries. Bangladesh Federation of Teachers' Associations, representing both the school and college teachers, not only put forward demand for enhancement of pay and long due promotion to both government and non-government teachers, it has also initiated a campaign and mass awareness programme to eradicate the rampant unfair means in public examinations and for reforming the existing examination system. The Federation also asked the government to arrange proper subject-wise training for teachers, especially before bringing any change in the syllabus in any subject or discipline.

Half a million teachers in Bangladesh observe the World Teachers' Day today with the expectation and conviction that teachers would be duly consulted in the educational matters, and their creativity and innovative ideas as well as their skill and experience fully utilised by authorities in the greater interest of human development.

The writer is Secretary General, Bangladesh Federation of Teachers' Associations (BFTA) and Secretary General, Bangladesh College Teachers' Association (BCTA).

Expanding Horizons: Be a Good Teacher, Build a Good Nation

by M A Bari

THE United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has designated 5th October as the World Teachers' Day in recognition to men and women who devote their lives to educating children. The 5th October was chosen because of the fact that in 1966 a special inter-governmental conference organised jointly by UNESCO and International Labour Organisation (ILO) was held on the day, which adopted some revolutionary recommendations concerning the status of teachers.

Since its establishment in 1946, the UNESCO with ILO made an overall survey in 120 member states about the rights, professional freedom, social security and employment problems of teachers. On 5th Oct. 1966 UNESCO adopted about 146 recommendations concerning the status of teachers. In the changing conditions the UNESCO and ILO formed a joint committee of experts in order to monitor application of recommendations in the member states. Accordingly in 1979 and 1982 the committee picked up some points of 1966 recommendations that needed updating. The UNESCO and ILO sought opinions of governments and teachers' associations. The committee submitted its latest reports in 1985 and expressed its view that simple recommendations would not bring any result rather suggested to use new instrument of "convention", that would become legally binding on all countries ratifying it.

On the 5th October 1996 Education Ministers from all around the world met at Geneva at a ceremony to commemorate World Teachers' Day at the close of International Conference on Education organised by International Bureau of Education of UNESCO. In that Conference ILO reported that the status of teaching profession has reached an intolerably low points and salaries of teachers have fallen in many places, especially in comparison with other professions. ILO and UNESCO recommended five concrete measures for governments to take:

- Give teachers moral and material recognition they need and deserve, appropriate to their qualifications.
- Ensure that they have adequate working conditions including basic tools for their task.
- Pay them a salary comparable with other professions.
- Involve teachers and their professional organisations in the formation of educational policies.
- Provide good initial teacher education as well as training on the job.

On the 5th October 1998 a joint message was adopted during Paris Conference on Higher Education. In that Conference Prof M Akhtaruzzaman, President of Bangladesh College-University Teachers' Associations and myself attended as official delegates. The signatories to the message were Federico Mayor,

Michel Hesenne, James Gustave Speth and Carol Bellamy on behalf of the UNESCO, ILO, UNDP and UNICEF respectively. They gave emphasis on the Day and tried to ventilate the news that true peace cannot be achieved without the sincere contribution of the world's 50 million teachers. They paid tribute to the efforts of teachers who work without reference materials, counseling and specific training. They said that it was unacceptable that those who play one of the most crucial and central roles in the society do not receive greater support. They appealed to the world community, to governments, parliamentarians, business communities, municipalities, the media, parents and community leaders to give teachers the support they need and acknowledge the essential role they play.

Morris, a teacher leader said, "Teaching today in a changing world is more demanding and challenging than ever before. Teachers today, as perhaps never before in our history, are providing a calm, stable learning environment in a world characterised by rapidly shifting social values, major technological advances, a constant never-ending barrage of educational reforms, and a family environment too often marred by a climate of stress, poverty, and violence." She also said, "The vision of future where people live together in harmony, tolerance and mutual understanding is not something teachers dream about. It is something they work and struggle for." Another teacher leader Mary Hat Wood Futrel said, "When the uncapped potential of a student meets the liberating art of a teacher, a miracle unfolds."

The World Teachers' Day was proclaimed to recognise the contributions of teachers to the society. Because day after day and year after year teachers build the future generations. They transmit skills, aptitude, knowledge, values and behaviour. They sacrifice themselves for the betterment of the new society. Teachers make the politicians, intellectuals and other most necessary vital organs of the society and governments, but the beneficiaries do not feel to seek suggestions of teachers when they take steps to draw up any policy even in education sector. Sometimes government forgets to understand that no sustainable development and social cohesion or peace can be achieved without their full cooperation.

In our country we have about 0.75 million people in the teaching profession. Their fate partially or fully depend on the will of the government. Their employment and career, security of tenure, advancement and promotion, professional freedom, rights and salaries, social securities, medical care, injury benefit, old age benefit, invalidity benefit and survivors' benefit are not properly taken care of, rather neglected. And a big difference is prevailing in all respects between the teachers of government and private institutions, though they teach pupils from the same syllabus.

the highest possible standards in their professional work and maintain it throughout their life. Teachers shall have to be modest in nature with strong personality and ideal thinking. On this World Teachers' Day there should be a slogan "be a good teacher and build a good nation".

To commemorate the World Teachers' Day 2000 Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO; Juan Somavia, Director General of ILO; Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP and Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF have sent a joint message paying tribute for the role of teachers in expanding the learner's horizons. The theme of this year is "Expanding Horizons." World Teachers' Day reminds governments and others the role of teachers and the need to improve their status and working conditions. It is an opportunity to show appreciations for their work in preparing the next generation.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
Census and Enumeration of Houses 2001 Project
Parishangkhyan Bhaban

E-27/A, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka
No BBS/Cens/2001/Publicity-574 Date: 27-9-2000

Re-Tender Notice

Tenders in two-envelope system (technical and financial) in the pads of the respective advertisement firms and printing establishments with previous experiences for preparing designs and printing poster, sticker, banner, brochure etc. for conducting the publicity in order to gather information accurately for census under the 'Census and Enumeration of Houses 2001 Project.'

Schedule can be procured till 10-10-2000 from the date of publishing the notice in newspapers from the office of the undersigned on all working days from 2-00 PM to 4-30 PM on payment of Taka 750/= (seven hundred and fifty) only (non-refundable). Schedule can be procured by submitting an application before procuring schedule by producing original documents as for example: trade licence, income tax certificate, VAT registration certificate, bank solvency certificate and certificate regarding previous experience. Tenders will have to be dropped latest on 15/10/2000 till 3-00 PM in the tender box kept at the office chamber of this Project Director/Director General. Only the technical offers will be opened the same day at 3-30 PM before the tenderers present (if anyone remains present). The technical offers of the tenderers which will be considered to be acceptable by the technical committee, their financial offers only will be opened later.

DFP-23856-1/10/00
G-1741

Md Hamidur Rahman
Project Director

TOM & JERRY

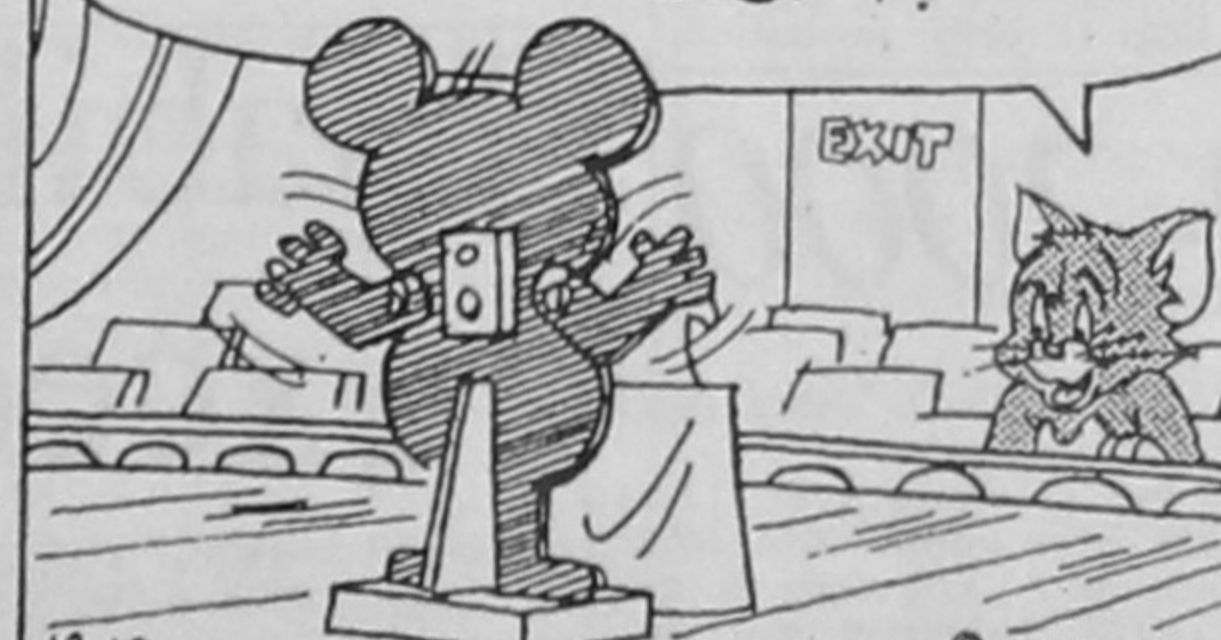
AND FOR MY NEXT TRICK, I'LL STEAL ALL THE CHEESE A CERTAIN CAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE GUARDING...



WITHOUT LEAVING THE STAGE.



HE'LL NEVER GET ANY CHEESE. I WON'T LET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT!



James Bond

BY VAN TILLEM
DRAWING BY HORAK



AT THIS HOUR OF THE EVENING... THE RED DEFECTOR, CHAO-HO-SHI, LIES RAPT IN VISIONS... FROM HIS CUSTOMARY MIND-BLOWING PIPES OF DRUM.



BUT HE ROUSES FROM HIS PLOTTING AS A STRANGE FIGURE PRESENTS ITSELF AT THE WINDOW!



WHILE ON THE FLOOR BELOW—



THE WINDOW ALARM! SOMEONE'S TRYING TO GET INTO CHAO'S ROOM!

