



Expression of devotion

Magura jives with the beat of Katyani Puja



If you think that Durga Puja is the greatest religious festival of Bangla-speaking Hindus in Bangladesh, you are in for a big surprise. Strange it may sound, but the Katyani Puja has over time become the main religious festival of Hundus of the Magura district, where it is celebrated with more enthusiasm than anywhere else on the subcontinent.

And it even draws thousands of devotees every year from as far away as India.

According to the Hindu shastra (scripture), during the 'Dapor Era' Sree Krishna sent his parents and other family members to the world of mortals before appearing on Earth. During the 'Dapor Era', milk maids (Gopbalas) of Brindaban first started observing the monthlong Katyani Puja at the beginning of the Deway season (the Kartik and Agrahayan months of the Bangla year) on the banks of the river Jamuna, where they made idols similar to the 'Devi Durga'.

It was Satish Chandra, a wealthy man from the Parnandualy village in Magura

sadar upazila, who first observed Katyani Puja approximately 52 years ago. Since then, and especially in the last 17 years, Katyani Puja has become increasingly popular among the Hindus here.

Kazal Bhaduri, a resident of Kolkata who came to Magura to celebrate the 'Katyani festival', says, "Every year I wait for this festival."

"This festival is a pride and tradition of the people of Magura regardless of their religion," Advocate Pradyut Kumar Singh says.

A common attraction of the festival is the tastefully decorated gates and arches erected at different mandaps and important points of the town. A fair is also arranged every year on the occasion and runs for approximately one month.

"We are proud and satisfied as the Muslims here sincerely cooperate with us to arrange and observe the occasion peacefully," Chittaranjan Shikder, one of the organisers of the festival, says.

Story & Photo: HOSSAIN SERAJ

