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Durga Puja

Durga Puja (Worship of Durga), also known as Durgotsab (Festival of Durga) has been an annual Bengali festival that marks the worship of Hindu Goddess Durga.

Durga Puja includes the worships of Shiva, Lakshmi, Ganesha, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Mahishasura as well. Modern tradition has come to include the display of decorated mandaps and artistically depicted idols of Durga, exchange of Bijoya greetings etc.

It is also a festivity of Goddess-mother Durga winning over the evil Maheshasura- the demon. It symbolizes the worship of power of Good, which always wins over the evil.

Durga Puja includes six-day celebrations of Mahalaya, Shashthi, Maha Saptami, Maha Ashtami, Maha Nabami and Bijoya Dashami. The dates of celebrations are set according to traditional Bengali Calendar and the fortnight is called Debi Pokkho- fortnight of the Goddess.

Durga Puja is widely celebrated in Bangladesh and in the States of West Bengal and Tripura in India. Not only it is the biggest Hindu festival celebrated,

but also the most significant socio-cultural event in Bengali society. In India, Durga Puja is also celebrated in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and in some other parts, including Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Kashmir, Karnataka and Kerala. Durga Puja is a major festival in Nepal. Nowadays, many non-residential Bengali cultural organisations arrange Durgotsab in the countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, France, Kuwait etc.

According to the Krittibas Ramayana, Rama invokes the Goddess Durga in his battle against Ravana. Although she was traditionally worshipped in the spring, due to contingencies of battle, Rama had to invoke her in the autumn, which is known as akaal bodhan. Today it is this Rama's date for the Puja that has gained ascendancy, although the spring puja, known as Basanti Puja is also present in the Hindu almanac.

The prominence of Durga Puja increased during the British Raj in the then Bengal. After the Hindu reformists compared Durga with India, she had become an icon for the Indian inde-

pendence movement. On the first quarter of the 20th century, the tradition of Baroari or Community Puja was popularised due to this. Today's Puja goes far beyond religion.

This year, I had the opportunity to celebrate Durga Puja at my village home at Boali under Modhupur Police Station in Tangail District. It was a great festival participated by all walks of people irrespective of religion, age and gender. Both the Hindu and Muslims participated in the festivity, which signifies the harmony among religions.

Like all over Bangladesh, Puja celebration at Modhupur is also marked by a degree of peace and harmony that is expected indeed. The authorities were alert enough to maintain law and order and prevent any untoward incidents during the festival.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the authorities concerned and the government for acting appropriately in this regard.

Dr. Uttam Kumar Das
Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Shyamoli, Dhaka

Pakistan betrayed?

Needless to say that Mr. Kabir has unnecessarily brought India into the recent US-Pak problems and cautioned India what to expect from the US if it fails to honour the nuclear agreement. I see the Pakistan analogy is wrong and illogical. Even if we assume that Mr. Kabir's analogy is right, I highly doubt that the US would start bombing some random part of India for violating the nuclear deal. But, if suddenly, Indians start harbouring anti US terrorists in their territory and keep thinking that territorial integrity and sovereignty would save them from US fury, they should think again. Well, who knows, what would happen to that kind of India? I am sure the US will be furious.

Bluntly put, Pakistan hardly needs to be betrayed! The country Pakistan has tried to play a double game with the US and has made Americans very frustrated. The real elephant in the room is Osama and his surrogates in the mountains of Waziristan. Afghanistan is a weak country and needs peace and stability for its survival. And, it is not getting that from its eastern neighbour. If Taliban and al-Qaida want to fight in Afghanistan, they should stay there and fight. No need to retreat to Pakistani areas for good night sleep! The problem for Pakistan is that it claims to own the areas but it would not or could not control the areas. You can play that game against a weaker country but not with the US. If you own the area, please control your area! I am sure that very similar message is being conveyed to Islamabad. If people coming from those Pakistani areas kill Afghans, NATO and American soldiers, the US will take them out unless Pakistan shows some sincerity in dealing with the residents of these mountainous areas.

There is no excuse to check who are residing in those areas. I do not think this hard line policy is Bush specific. Both Obama and McCain can come down even harder on Pakistan in regard to the cross-border terrorism. It needs to be stopped!

Shamol Saha
Boston University
USA

Government to put pressure on the OIC as suggested by Ambassador Zamir, to hold discussions in setting up an Islamic Calendar which will not require the moon sighting or consultation with sun/moon conjunction tables and will be applicable throughout the whole globe. As a scientific day and date of the Gregorian Calendar is applicable throughout the whole globe for a solar calendar, similarly we must have a lunar calendar and an Islamic day and date applicable all over the whole globe, as is easily shown in my book.

Lastly, I would like to point out humbly that following Makkah timings is only a solution if we know beforehand (days, months, years etc like the Gregorian Calendar) what this Makkah timing is. If we do not know, but have to rely on proclamation from Makkah at a very short notice of couple of hours and without assigning any reasons for arriving at such proclamations, we would forever remain in darkness and controversy. Unless we have a calendar to scientifically forecast Islamic events thousands of years into the future, we have to wait for impromptu proclamations from Makkah.

I have also sent my book to well known Islamic scholars and universities and many heads of Islamic States with a similar request as made to OIC and hope scientific debates and discussions will take place on the topic soon.

Anyone wishing to have more information may contact me at my website:
www.oaktownpublications.com
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Doctor or bully?

"You won't live long", said the doctor to my aunt.

My first question to all the people reading this article is: Are doctors the arbiters of our destiny?

It is not that I am getting emotional, nor am I trying to draw anyone's attention, but I have been asking this question to myself for the past 1.5 years and haven't yet been able to come up with a suitable answer.

One of my aunts is suffering from pulmonary hypertension. This is an incurable disease. They say you can fight serious diseases like AIDS and cancer, but you are dead once you have pulmonary hypertension. Unlucky for my aunt, she is suffering from this disease and only God knows what's at the end of the line for her.

Regarding this matter, I have to make a comment about the doctors of Bangladesh. Is it written anywhere in medical ethics that the doctor goes up to the patients and say, "Sir/ Madam, you won't live that long. Start counting your days". I just want to know, does this make sense?

I have not travelled to several countries, nor have I seen variances in different cultures, but I am sick and fed up with mine. Here the doctors tell their patients directly, "You won't live long".

Many of us watch different kinds of movies, documentaries over the TV and the Internet. According to my knowledge, I have seen, the doctors normally call up other members of the family and explain them if the patient is in critical condition. They never say, "Oh God! It's all over for you".

The doctors of Bangladesh are good. Some of their treatments do change lives, but do they have to keep on continuing this bad habit? Or will I call it a malpractice?

My aunt went to by far the best hospitals in Dhaka city and everywhere the doctors were saying the same thing. "You won't live long". But when we took her to India, the situation was totally different. The doctors there never said anything

Good cricket

After the miserable series against the Aussies the Bangladesh cricket team has bounced back gracefully. They comprehensively defeated the Kiwis by seven wickets in the first ODI. More importantly, it was their first win against the black caps.

It was the bowlers who did a great job by restricting the Kiwis to the modest total of 201. As usual, the pace attack was spearheaded by Mashrafe who bowled with aggression and grabbed four wickets. He was ably supported by the other bowlers and the fielders. Following the good work of the bowlers the men with the willow played sensibly. Here I would like to mention the innings played by Zunaed Siddique whose innings was a mixture of caution and aggression. For the most part of Bangladesh innings he played the role of sheet-anchor even though he missed a well-deserved century.

Ashraf played in his trademark belligerent fashion and pulverized the Kiwi bowlers. Most importantly, he stayed at the crease till the very moment of victory.

Finally, the credit goes to the whole team --including the coach and management--who needed this victory so badly. It will certainly boost their morale.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong



PHOTO: AFP

Palin, a liability?

To understand why Alaska Governor Sarah Palin will be of little help, a look at what a prominent Alaskan woman thinks about her will be in order. In a column published in The Anchorage Daily News on Sept 16, Alaskan writer Elise Patkotak wrote: "There was a time when I thought John McCain really was a different kind of politician, one who would put the country above his personal desire for grandeur. I stopped thinking that the day he announced Sarah Palin as his running mate. ... Sarah Palin is untested and untried. There were dozens of other people much more qualified to be McCain's running mate who would not have caused people to question how ready they'd be to take over if something happened to McCain. To my mind it is fairly clear that the only reason McCain chose Palin was because she brought in something he desperately needed as the right-wing, conservative Christian base of the Republican voters who view McCain with distrust and distaste."

"I looked at the people speaking at the Republican Convention, from Mitt Romney to John (I-don't know-how-many-houses-I-own) McCain and wondered how they could keep a straight face while claiming that Barack Obama is some sort of elitist. ... I looked at the young man standing on the stage with the Palins accepting applause and wondered what he was being applauded for -- dropping out of school or getting a 17-year-old pregnant?"

Instead of Palin bringing in Hillary Clinton's disgruntled female supporters, more women now support Barack Obama. In this election, the issue is economy as it will be for a long time to come. The economy will dominate as most Americans fear that their most cherished American dreams -- a well-paying job, a house and a car -- disappear in the wake of economic mismanagement. As a result, the influence of Christian right will wane and influence of economic and social reformers will grow. This is likely to intensify in the 2012 race as the Americans will face growing economic pains. There will be little time for any moose-hunting/hockey mom.

As new industrial giants like China and India make their presence felt, the issue will be how to regain America's industrial competitiveness. Like the United States, both China and India are dependent on foreign oil. But

unlike the sagging U.S. economy, both the Chinese and the Indian economies are growing exponentially.

When you mess up with your finances, you cannot compete. Like the current election, three issues will dominate the next election: the economy, the economy and the economy.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Global crisis and lending institutions

The ongoing financial crisis in the US which constrained the US government to move a \$700 billion bailout is not an internal matter of the US alone.

The US ought to realize that the practice of money lending is as old as human civilization itself. Here it is in context to add that though the housing bubble, which busted and culminated in the present financial crisis, is projected to be the result of so called pious motive of providing houses to all including sub-prime borrowers and even NINJAs but the real force behind this housing bubble is the greed of the interest seeking lending institutions.

The inadequacy and inefficiency of the regulators like Federal / Central Banks all over the world has been thoroughly exposed, during this financial crisis, in avoiding NPAs (bad debts) and free flow of risky instruments (born out of risky lending) amongst various lending institutions of the world.

Therefore the on going financial crisis should be utilised to rectify the defects of lending business. In this mission, the US should take the lead as a leader of economic globalisation so that the world not only can be assured of a smooth financial ride in future but can also adopt globalisation with renewed vigour. For this, the US ought to keep the following in view-

(1)- First and foremost, the banks should be bifurcated in two institutions. (a)- Banks as lending institution that will give loan on interest and (b)- "Safe Vaults" (or any other suitable name) that will operate saving accounts and will keep valuables (gold, ornaments, important documents etc) in lockers.

(2)- These "Safe Vaults" should not be allowed to lend money on interest to public. Only in case where funds are excessive with these "Safe Vaults", then they

should be allowed to give it only to the government to take care of its operational expenses.

Therefore, all the fixed deposits in banks for (say) above one year should be converted into shares of the banks. Fixed deposits for different durations should be allotted different index numbers.

At annual general meetings of the banks and the lending institutions (with loan-able funds as shares) the share holders will cast votes whose value will be equal to share value multiplied by said index number.

Similarly, the promoter's capital can be converted into shares with suitable index number. These banks and other lending institutions can function like any other limited company.

Once the USA amends its bank and lending institution ownership laws as mentioned above, then other countries will also fall in line which will be good for the stability of financial markets all over the world.

Hem Raj Jain
Near Pari Chowk
Greater Nodia (UP), India

Dead telephones

I would like to bring to the kind notice of the authorities concerned that 200 telephone lines have been out of order only in Gulshan area for the last 7-8 days. When I tried to contact BTCL to lodge a complaint, I was informed that 1200

other lines were affected around Dhaka city in a similar way, which was caused by theft of telephone cables. I was also informed that the lines could not be restored because there was no availability of cables and funds were not allocated for new replacements either.

This seems to have become a common practice; I would like to request the decision makers to look into this matter seriously, as telephone is the most important means of communication in today's fast paced world.

We, as honest citizens and tax payers, do have the right to demand that prompt and effective steps be taken by the authorities to resolve this problem immediately.

Azra Azad
Gulshan, Dhaka

Poor train service

We must improve the service of our government owned railways, the cheaper and safer way to long distance travelling all over the world. The matter of regret is that the authorities make little effort to improve the railway service in our country. There may be a luxury train side by side the luxury buses.

All our heads and policy makers should keep it in mind for the sake of our national development.

Imtiaz Alam
Narayanganj

Law enforcers

The main job of the police is to protect the public. This includes protection against crime, maintenance of civil order, enforcement of traffic and other regulations, prevention of alcohol and drug abuse, prevention of neighbourhood disorders, firearms and weapons control, law enforcement and investigations as mandated by the law and requested by the relevant national or local authorities.

However, the law enforcers are exposed to different kinds of hazards while performing their duties.

This is an issue that the decision makers should address in right earnest.

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