



FESTIVAL OF UNIVERSALITY

As the month of Chaitra, the last in the Bangla year, draws to an end, the Hindu community in Abdullahpur, Munshiganj, comes together in a festival dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva and Parvati.

It is all part of a very long tradition going back hundreds of years. Hindus, especially the young in different paras or neighbourhoods, paint themselves in red abir, take up swords in their hands and bring out processions given over to joyous dancing. And it comes with melody forged on the Dhak-Dhol. A man personifying Shiva is at the head of each group. The programme is locally known as 'Lal Kach'. The central idea behind this programme is for a group of soldiers led by Shiva to appear on earth with a mission: ward off the forces of evil. These soldiers, glowing in the divine light of Shiva, march through different streets as they make their way to the nearby temples.

The celebrations have acquired a very significant degree of universality, with followers of all religious denominations partaking of the festival. Good cheer and laughter define the familiar festive mood.

Thus it is that festivities reinforce thoughts of the times we have missed. Thus it is that Hindus prepare to ring in the Bengali New Year, through a celebration of a cultural tradition we are proud to say we have preserved well.

Photo: ANISUR RAHMAN

