

FROM CENTRE

One prop after another. Flowers came next. Maa loves red flowers. So the priest offered some, along with 'bael' leaves. Durga's consort is Shiva, who is believed to admire bael leaves. And Durga is not alone in the audience. She is accompanied by her family. Therefore, the performer tries to please them as well.

Chamor, a fur, was next. And then came the last item on the list: pankha. The priest waved his hand around the idol with the peacock fan.

Arati seems to use all the elements that are to be found, that the world is composed of, be it fire, air, water, earth, etc.

The performance was reaching an end. The dhakis put all their remaining energy into their instruments. The deafening noise reached its climax. And then, with several last slaps on the drum, the music came to a halt. The bell, too, was put to rest.

The priest then brought the conch to his mouth and blew. The mighty and heavenly sound of the shell trumpet brought the arati to an end.

The sound that had lasted for a long time had numbed the ears. But that is a small and temporary price to pay, given the excitement and more importantly, the blessings, bestowed by the deities.

The priest again assumed his position: cross-legged on the floor. He had maintained his composure all throughout. And, as if nothing happened, or having no recollection of the breathtaking and taxing performance he just delivered, continued to mind his own business. This time, it was attending to the people - chitchats, blessings, etc.

Such is the experience of this theatre. While it has similar notions of a regular theatre, it is an extraordinary one. For it is the theatre dedicated to gods and goddesses. It is where the theatrics are of the divine, for the divine.

By M H Haider

Special thanks to Jyatish Chakrabaty, who has been a priest for about 25 years in different temples.

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Model: Meghla, Hridi and Sudeshna

Swayamprabha

Make-up: Farzana Shakil

Wardrobe Meghla and Hridi : Aarong

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Check out Lifestyle's facebook page for the video shoot!

