



They say that eyes are the window to one's soul. Does the saying only refer to men and women? Or can it be extended to include gods and goddesses as well?

I don't know. But whenever I stand in front of Mother Durga, I stare into her eyes, because I believe that they give me a glimpse of her world and her glories.

Her large eyes are the most beautiful I have ever seen. She is a goddess after all. She is fiery. She is compassionate. She is powerful. And her eyes reflect all that. Along with long eyebrows and the large nose-ring she often wears, Durga is mesmerising to look at.

She has three eyes. The additional eye is often referred to as the inner eye. It is a reflection of her immense might and knowledge and enlightenment.

*"I bow to Thee Gouri Narayani,
Who art the cause of the welfare of the world.*

*Who art good, who grants every wish, in whom one takes refuge,
Who art three-eyed."*

My priest tells me that I also have an inner eye. Of course, being a mere mortal, my one is in no comparison to hers.

Priests perform the ritual that is often referred to as 'chokkhu daan', the ceremony where the eyes of a deity are ceremoniously 'founded' or 'inaugurated'. Only priests are allowed during this practice. The place where the event is undertaken is curtained by cloth. There can be no audience. My priest has told me much about the



ritual. He takes three 'bel patas' and greases them with ghee. Then, he holds it above the pradeep (lamp), just on top of the flame. The 'kajol' that is produced from this process is picked up by beel pata's stem and applied to the deity's eyes. Different mantras are recited for different eyes.

"There is also a particular sequence we follow," the priest explains. "If it is a male

deity, we will start off with the inner eye, and then move to right eye and finally to the left. In the case of a goddess, the inner eye still comes first, but then we move to the left eye and only after that comes the right eye."

The artist gives shape to the gods and goddesses, adorns them and gives them an aura of majesty and magnificence. But

ceremoniously 'giving' the status of divinity in those statues - which involves special rituals - is reserved for priests.

The artist is about the artistry: shape, form, beauty. The priest is about piety: eyes and soul.

Without these rituals, the idols are mere sculptures. So, once the priest 'inaugurates' the beautifully drawn eyes - and 'brings' life to the Durga sculpture (which is yet another practice) - the status of that statue elevates to become Goddess Durga.

I shall now bow down to her and seek solace.

And I shall now look into the eyes of my goddess and admire her beauty, might and kindness.

By M H Haider

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Model: Shrabosti, Doyel, Risila

Wardrobe: Tangail Sharee Kutir

Make-up: Farzana Shakil's Makeover Salon

Jewellery: Khubsurat

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