



LAAL KACH

MUSHFIQUL ALAM TANVIN



Chaitra Shongkranti—those hours between the setting of the last sun of the year, and the first dawn of the next, has captivated the psyche of this land for ages. Hope is at its strongest, forgiveness its most benevolent self, and thoughts of the past turn into bittersweet remembrance.

Praying to the omnipotent ones goes hand-in-hand with this overwrought twilight. The Laal Kach (Red Glass) Festival is celebrated every year a day prior to the celebration of Pahela Baishakh, marking the end Chaitra. Historically this has been practiced by the local Hindu communities residing in Munshiganj who beseech Lord Shiva for a better tomorrow.

The festival starts on the morning of April 13 with boys going around the neighbourhood collecting voluntary donations often in the form of rice and money. A young boy and girl, dressed as Lord Shiva and his wife, Gauri, go from home to home, accompanied by a group of boys painted in red, wearing garlands of flowers.

Tenderly carrying delicate red flowers in their mouths, the boys twist to the beat of drums, swords in hand. Gauri waters Shiva's dancing feet, washing away his anger each time. As the temperature rises, she stalls Lord Shiva again and again from destroying the universe with the dance of Rudra Tandava.

As the sun passes the highest point in the sky, the boys in red gather in rooms thick with fragrant clouds of smoke. With every breath they inhale spirituality.

The local community comes together to perform "Horogori Puja" as the last sun sets. This time, they pledge their allegiance to Ardhanarishvara, the deity that is both Lord Shiva and Parvati. Together they make up the origins of the world, and so the new year begins. ■

SHUTTERSTORIES

