Puja invokes a lot of memories in us — distant beats of the dhak, low hum of the conch shell, ringing of the mandap bells, hibiscus and the marigolds; autumn sky with white clouds floating by; and us swaying through the white kash phool fields in a dreamy trance. It is the picture-perfect setting for puja romance.

DURGA PUJA
romancing
the Bengali beauty

But what we are most mesmerised with is how the ladies slip into their puja mode; casual yet highly stylised. With that red big *tika* or *teep* smeared by the thumb on the forehead, the vermillion dust on her hair parting, the milk white *shakha* and the red *pola* in her hands, mixed and matched with the *golap balas* or heavy gold bangles designed like a rosehip. These are paired perfectly with the white sari with red border. The traditional gold *jhumka* or danglers in intricate design, the long strands of *mop chain* in *motor dana* design shaped like peas; everything has an exact place on making her glow with the love she has for her goddess Durga.

Fashion is something that anyone can buy, but style has to come from within, it's how you fit into your skin.

Come Durga puja, even the simplest lady glows in her own style, even with a tucked red hibiscus on the *khopa* or casual hair bun. And as if reciprocating with her joy, nature also decks up in her own style. Because with puja, the fire-dance and the *alponas* — the merry courting of the *sharat* clouds and the *kash phool* or Kans grass as it is called in English, ushers the goddess Durga. The goddess has chosen this romantic season to come down to earth from her heavenly abode, filling our hearts with hope, romance, and magic.

We put our best attire on during the festival of Durga Puja. This year, maybe the traditional Manipuri saris in bright bold colours can be our choice for puja wear.

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