

#PERSPECTIVE

Tracing the rituals and celebrations of DURGA PUJA



Just when the Bengal sky starts wearing a calm shade of blue after a rainy monsoon and a lovely breeze sweeps around dawn, I know in my heart that Durga Puja is around the corner. The Bengali Hindus wait for their biggest festival of joy and devotion every autumn. In most families, it is a preparation for a couple of months counting down to the Puja week.

It all starts with Kathamo Puja or Khuti Puja, a customary ritual to celebrate the day when the idol artisan starts off the sculpting process. It formally initiates the festivities as well as the preparation for the 5-day carnival. Also, it is a season for exchanging gifts with families and friends. The shopping and wrapping of gifts add to the joy of preparation.

Mahalaya signifies the beginning of Devi Paksha and the arrival of Maa Durga,

thus ushering in the festive season. I grew up with the most common routine for the Bengali families on this day. Since the '30s, Bengalis tuned in to a magnificent audio presentation, 'Mahishasuramardini' at a serene hour before sunrise. It is a splendid recitation of the scriptural verses from 'Chandi Kavya' along with various devotional songs — a poignant production immortalised by Birendra Krishna Bhadra's timeless voice that narrates the story of Goddess Durga's descent on earth. Nowadays, some puja mandaps in Dhaka celebrate the occasion with a similar live presentation at the crack of dawn.

We attend the event wearing white, get excited by the eloquent recital and rhythm of dhaak and end the morning with a luchi-labra breakfast together.

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◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Prioritise travel and creative pursuits. Engage with foreigners for enlightening experiences. Family projects are beneficial. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Resist persuasion for unwanted outings by your partner. Steer clear of controversial topics. Seek out financial advice. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Participate in group activities. Reconnect with intellectually stimulating acquaintances. Expect some challenges. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Exercise caution with machinery. Be careful on who you help. Expect trouble in travel and communications. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Colleagues might try sabotaging you. Things are better than they seem. Avoid ego conflicts for harmonious relationships. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Enjoy fulfilling social activities. Reflect on organisational matters. Consider changing up your appearance. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Some friendships might end this week. Invite colleagues for a night out. Handle disappointments with love and affection. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Evaluate your goals with depth. Balance details with the bigger picture. Communicate openly with your partner. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Navigate emotions with care. Romantic connections may be fleeting. Be supportive without overextending. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Travel will be exciting. Think twice before signing for any venture. Balance determination with empathy. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Expect changes at home. Focus on personal goals and quality time. Attend trade shows for any hobby you are interested in. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Avoid major purchases. Resist arguments and focus on self-improvement. Voice opinions within supportive groups. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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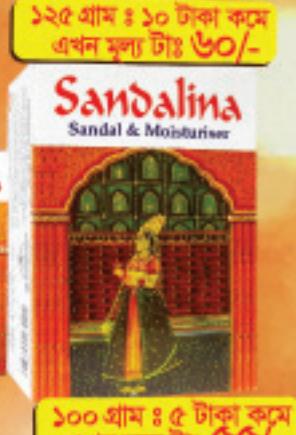
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