

SANSKRITI

SHARADIYA MAGAZINE

2023



SAMHITA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA



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From The Editor's Pen



DUS KA DUM

Dus or 10 is a very important number in all aspects. Dus means Power, Supremacy...authority, completeness of order, and responsibility. In its original meaning, some believe 10 indicates "union" or "collection."

"10" is one of the most emblematic squad numbers in football, the best player wears the number 10 jersey.

Most importantly, the Goddess is also known as Dashabhujā because of her ten hands, the festival represents female power as 'Shakti' in the Universe.

As per Hindu scriptures, the festival marks the victory of goddess Durga in her battle against the shape-shifting asura, Mahishasura. Thus, the festival epitomizes the victory of good over evil, though is it also part of the harvest festival celebrating the goddess as the motherly power behind all of life and creation.

At the same time, it happens to be the Grand 10 Years of Durga Puja Celebration for our beloved Cultural Association "SAMHITA". It takes enormous amount of dedication, love & hard work to carry out this mammoth task year on year. Kudos to the entire team, all the members & volunteers for putting their heart & soul into creating & joining all the arrangements like a big jigsaw puzzle leading to this seamless great celebration of DURGA PUJA...When 10 people works together for a common mission, there is no failure.

***"Aao Hum Sab Haath Milayen
Dil Se Dil Tak Rah Banaye"***

Come, join us at Samhita to celebrate this auspicious occasion of Durga Puja together!

And Thanking everyone for their soulful contribution to make this Magazine so beautiful, diverse & satisfying! Happy Reading :)

-Sarmistha Bhattacharya Gupta

Executive Committee

AZSamhita is celebrating its '10th year of DURGA puja, with great devotion , pomp and ceremony. Durga Puja 2023 is special in many aspects for many people. It seems, finally, there is no gloom going around the world and we are ready to celebrate whole heartedly, the 3 days of Durga Puja at AZSamhita.

I would like to welcome back all our old members with wide open arms and extend warm welcome to our new members. We are blessed by our Maa Durga, who makes us capable and gives us the strength to make all arrangements to welcome her every year. By her grace, all our obstacles vanish and members of AZSamhita gather to worship Maa every year.

Ours' is a multicultural organization. Our members are from different parts of India, who all are part of this beautiful Arizona and beyond, in USA. We respect each other's thoughts and approaches while collectively working towards fulfilling AZSamhita goals, core value and spirit.

We have always tried and actively contributed in our community. This year, we have various new donation options open which any visitors can partake in. These will directly reach the causes. Our organization is ready to showcase various sides of our culture, through this year's magazine, stage performances and authentic ceremonial worship of Maa Durga. Along with that we have artists flying from India to mesmerize our senses with their singing.

As we chant Madhu – Kaittabha – Vidhvamsi – Vidhaatr – Varade – Namah and welcome her, may she shower all with good health, happiness, opulence, and success. See you all at the pujo.

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From our Executive Committee

Glimpses of Cultural events for 2022



History of Basketball/NBA

Written by **Rishit Maiti**, Sports Enthusiast and Blogger,

<https://elitesportwave.com/>



Basketball is one of the most popular and prominent sports today. It is the second most popular sport, only behind soccer. It has over 2.4 billion fans and is played almost everywhere globally. The NBA was created in 1946, but the origins of basketball go back to over 100 years ago.

It is one of the most recent sports created compared to others, such as soccer, that dates back to 2000 years ago. Ever since the NBA was formed in 1946, basketball slowly started to gain attraction, leading to its immense worldwide popularity.

Basketball is now one of the most accessible sports, as most neighborhoods today have basketball courts. Basketball has created many popular and well-known athletes worldwide, such as Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, and LeBron James. Ultimately, Basketball is an entertaining game that promotes social skills and teamwork while providing physical activity and fun.

In this article, I would like to take you through the evolution of the game and highlight the most significant events that have shaped basketball as a sport.

The origin of the game and formation of the NBA

Basketball has evolved a lot throughout time since it was first created. The game of Basketball was invented in December of 1891 by a Canadian YMCA gym teacher, Dr. James Naismith, in Springfield, Massachusetts. Naismith wanted to develop a new game that students could play indoors during the brisk and cold winter of Massachusetts.



Dr. Naismith holding a soccer ball / peach basket

However, the game was initially played way differently than you would expect it to be played. Players used to play with soccer balls instead of actual basketballs and would use the peached hoops without an opening instead of nets. Dribbling was not an official thing when basketball was initially created. Players just passed it to each other and aimed to put the ball in the basket. However, the game quickly evolved, and new changes were made.



Basketball being played in the late 1900s

By the early 1900s, metal rims were added to the baskets, and dribbling was legal. Soon later, the NBL (National Basketball League), the first-ever professional basketball league, was created. About 12 years later, the BAA (Basketball Association of America) was formed. The BAA consisted of the early version of well-known teams today, such as the Boston Celtics, Minneapolis (now Los Angeles) Lakers, New York Knickerbockers (now Knicks), and the Philadelphia (now Golden State) Warriors. Due to the sport's increasing popularity, the BAA and the NBL agreed to merge, thus creating the NBA (National Basketball Association) as it is known today.

The first superstars of basketball: Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain

In 1956, Bill Russell, one of the greatest players ever, debuted for the Boston Celtics. Russell and the Celtics dominated the late 1950s and most of the 1960s. They won championships in 11 out of the 13 years Russell played in the NBA. In 1959, Wilt Chamberlain, one of the freakiest athletes of all time and an eventual rival of Russell, joined the league with the Philadelphia Warriors.



Russell (#6) and Chamberlain (#13)

Chamberlain could lift 500 pounds and was an insane track and field athlete as well! That was not even the craziest thing he did. The man dropped 100 points in an NBA game. Yes! 100! The record is still held to this day. However, there is a conspiracy that this never happened, as there is no actual footage of the game. The current NBA Finals Most Valuable Player Award is named after Bill Russell to celebrate his profound legacy.

A few years later, in 1967, the ABA (American Basketball Association) was formed, and it quickly became rivals with the NBA. These leagues were filled with good players on many teams, creating a rift among fans. This led to a dramatic decrease in the popularity of the NBA. By the end of the 1970s, the fan following of the NBA was at an all-time low.

Journey of Magic Johnson and Larry Bird: Lakers vs. Celtics Rivalry

The NBA's two saviors at the time – Magic Johnson and Larry Bird helped revive its popularity. In the late 1970s, Magic and Bird were the best college basketball players. They had an intense rivalry that ended up being one of the greatest in the entire history of sports, not just basketball. By the 1980s, Magic was drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers, and the Boston Celtics drafted Bird.

This was just the beginning of the intense rivalry between these two franchises for decades. More things happened during the late 1970s that led to the boom of the NBA. Finally, the NBA absorbed the four remaining ABA teams and became the sole professional basketball league in the world.



Bird (33) and Magic (32)

A three-point line was added after a few years in 1979, which would eventually revolutionize the game in just a few decades. The NBA at this time was the biggest it could have ever been, and the jerseys of players and teams were beginning to sell, led by the jerseys of Magic and Bird.

The iconic Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls



Jordan (23) - North Carolina

Then came the player who would change the landscape of the NBA and the history of the game of basketball itself. The one and only Michael Jordan. In 1982, Jordan made a name for himself by leading his college team, North Carolina, to the championship game. In the final seconds of the game, Jordan clutched up and hit the game-winning shot, leading North

Carolina to win the NCAA National Championship. He was drafted as the 3rd overall pick by the Chicago Bulls. Jordan immediately became a star in the rookie season and earned the Rookie of the Year honors. Just when everyone believed he could become the face of the league, Jordan got injured. After Jordan returned a few months later, he transformed into a completely different player. He got MVPs (Most Valuable Players), DPOY (Defensive Player of the Year), and All-NBA honors.

Led by all-time great coach Phil Jackson and a great team of players including Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, Horace Grant, Ron Harper, and the rest of the Chicago Bulls, the Bulls would three-peat and win back-to-back-to-back championships in a row from 1991 to 1993. Air Jordan shoes boomed in popularity during this time as well. This was when basketball became a global sport since many wanted to “be like Mike.”

Soon after the Bulls’ three-peat in 1993, tragedy would strike for Michael Jordan. His father, James Jordan, would get shot and killed. This left Jordan devastated and led him to retire in 1993 to pursue a baseball career because his father had always wanted him to play baseball. During Jordan’s absence, Hakeem Olajuwon and the Houston Rockets won



Jordan emotional after championship win on Father’s Day

back-to-back championships from 1994-1995. After two years, Jordan returned from retirement and said two of the most iconic words in NBA History: “I’m back.” This was followed by the Bulls’ second three-peat in 1996-1998. The 1996 Bulls had one of the greatest seasons ever, as they won 72 regular season games and only had 10 losses. This team was considered one of the greatest, if not the greatest, teams of all time. The Bulls won the 1996 NBA Championship on Father’s Day, and Jordan dedicated this win to his father.



Michael Jordan’s (#23) “Last shot”

The Bulls would then win the championships again in 1997 and 1998 against the talented Utah Jazz team led by the duo of Karl Malone and John Stockton. In game 6 of the 1998 NBA Finals, Jordan would hit the game-winning shot that propelled the Bulls to victory. “The Last Shot,” as it was called, went down as one of the most iconic moments.

Jordan secured his 6th ring, cementing himself as the greatest basketball player in the history of the NBA. After their victory, the entire Bulls team broke up as their owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, didn’t want to pay the money to keep all the players on the team roster. This led to Reinsdorf being portrayed as the villain.

As dominant as the Bulls were during the 1990s, there was a chance they could've been even more powerful. They could have potentially won 8 championships in a row if Jordan had not retired for the first time in 1993 and the Bulls had not broken up in 1998.

Basketball / NBA getting international popularity

By 1992, the NBA started playing games internationally in countries like China, Germany, and Russia. During the 1992 Olympics, Jordan, Magic, and Bird teamed up to play for the U.S. Olympic team. The team would include prominent players like Charles Barkley, John Stockton, Karl Malone, Patrick Ewing, Clyde Drexler, and David Robinson.



1992 US Olympic Basketball "Dream Team"

The Team went undefeated in all six of their games and won their games on average by a margin of 51 points! Yes – 51 points! To this day, there is a debate that this is the most outstanding sports team, not just the basketball team ever assembled. At this time, basketball was at its peak, leading to the NBA adding 2 teams in Canada (the Toronto Raptors and the Vancouver (later Memphis) Grizzlies).

Shaq and Kobe Era



Dominance of Kobe and Shaq

At this time, another iconic player in NBA history joined the league, and it was no one other than the Black Mamba, Kobe Bryant. After the breakup of the Bulls, young players such as Shaquille "Shaq" O'Neal, Kobe Bryant, and Allen "AI" Iverson were set to take over the league. These three were unique and brought something to the league in their own ways.

Shaq was one of the most dominant and unstoppable players due to his size; Kobe was a freakish athlete and had the well-known "Mamba Mentality," which was what made him different than other players; AI redefined playmaking, handles, and dribbling for all players. AI was one of the players who had the most significant impact on the hip-hop culture in sports due to his braided cornrow hairstyle, stylistic tattoos, and baggy clothing.

In the late 1990s, Shaq joined Kobe and the Los Angeles Lakers, immediately forming one of the greatest duos in not just the NBA but in sports history. They won three championships in a row from 2000 to 2002. Unfortunately, the duo ran into issues with each other, leading to their relationship's decline.

Kobe labeled Shaq as “unserious” and “lazy,” in which Shaq got offended and labeled Kobe as “mean” and “rude.” The two would get into fights often, propelling the Lakers to trade Shaq to the Miami Heat in the summer of 2004. NBA history would be changed as Kobe and Shaq wouldn’t have a three-peat and also have one, maybe more, or fewer rings than they have today.



2002 Western Conference Finals Controversy

During the early 2000s, referee Tim Donaghy was caught in a gambling scandal where he was caught betting on and rigging games. One of these series was the 2002 Western Conference Finals between the Los Angeles Lakers and Sacramento Kings. The refs were clearly in favor of the Los Angeles Lakers. It was self-evident in game 6 of the series, where the Lakers shot 27 free throws in the fourth quarter alone. The Lakers barely escaped elimination and forced a game 7, where they would win and advance to the NBA Finals. Tim Donaghy was also caught betting against the Houston Rockets in their playoff series against the Dallas Mavericks in 2005. Eventually, a 2-year investigation was held by the FBI, and Donaghy was sentenced to jail for 15 months in 2007.

Rise of the King: LeBron James



Lebron James - The King

During this time, a kid from Akron, Ohio played in St. Vincent – St. Mary High School and took the NBA world by storm. It was no other than the King himself, LeBron James. He was considered the hybrid of Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson and is one of the greatest basketball prospects ever.

In the 2003 NBA Draft, LeBron was drafted 1st overall to his hometown team, the Cleveland Cavaliers. He would exceed his pre-draft expectations and quickly become one of the best players in the league. LeBron went on to win the league MVP in the 2009 and 2010 seasons with Cleveland.

However, due to a lack of support from the rest of the Cavs roster, LeBron eventually took his talents to South Beach and joined forces with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh on the Miami Heat.

In Miami, LeBron James and the Heat went to four straight NBA Finals from 2011 – 2014. They won back-to-back titles in 2012 and 2013, defeating the Oklahoma City Thunder and the San Antonio Spurs. During the 2012 and 2013 NBA Seasons, LeBron got back-to-back MVP awards for the second time. In the 2012-2013 NBA season, LeBron would have one of the greatest seasons by an individual in NBA history.



Lebron with his 4 MVP awards

Miami would win 27 straight games, and LeBron was almost the first player to win the MVP award by a unanimous vote (he would fall one vote short). After getting his championships in Miami and transforming himself into one of the greatest players in NBA history, LeBron returned home to the Cleveland Cavaliers to fulfill his promise of bringing a title to his hometown team. More on this later.

Super teams and NBA lockout



2011 Heat – 2008 Celtics Super Trios

Even though there were early examples of superteams in the NBA, such as the Lakers and Celtics in the 1960s – 1980s, Bulls in the 1990s, and Lakers in the early 2000s, it was more noticeable when the Celtics added MVP – Kevin Garnett, and sharp-shooting star - Ray Allen alongside the All-Star Paul Pierce in the offseason of 2007. For the first time in NBA history, it was evident that a team had three superstars.

With the Big Three and other great players such as Rajon Rondo, Kendrick Perkins, Glen Davis, and Jeff Green, the Celtics won the championship in the following year in 2008. Soon after that, LeBron James and Chris Bosh joined the Miami Heat alongside Dwyane Wade to form the big three in Miami, popularizing the super team concept even more and potentially decreasing the competition in the league.

At the start of the 2011-2012 NBA Season, a lockout occurred because the owners wanted to establish a bigger luxury tax to increase competition among teams and pay less to the players. This led to disagreements between the players and the owners, leading the NBA to postpone all its games. During this period, teams could not trade or sign players or coaches. Star players such as LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant, Chris Paul, and Derrick Rose played in local leagues.

In contrast, other players like J.R. Smith played in international leagues. Some, like Javale Mcgee, got regular jobs as nobody, including the players and coaches, got paid. During this time, the NBA lost nearly a fifth of its revenue (\$800 million). After everyone agreed, the season resumed on Christmas day. One long-term effect of the NBA lockout was the increase in the contract value of average players.



NBA Stars playing in local leagues during Lockout

Golden State Warriors: The birth of a new dynasty

Lebron and the NBA didn't anticipate a player's rise and the birth of a dynasty that would leave a mark, change the NBA, and revolutionize the game of basketball forever. It was none other than Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors. Curry was a lights-out shooter from beyond the 3-point line and made shots from anywhere.



2016 Golden State Warriors

The Warriors emphasized shooting the 3-point shot and making threes at a historical rate in a way never seen before. The Warriors were the first team in NBA History to make 1,000 threes in an NBA Season when they achieved that feat in the 2015-16 season. In that season, Curry hit more threes than any player in NBA history and shattered the three-point record, becoming the first-ever player to hit 300 and eventually 400

threes in a season. Shooting three-pointers went from a regular play to becoming the most popular way basketball is played today. The Warriors were the best team in the NBA during that time. They won the finals in 2015, and the following season, they had the best record by a team in NBA history with a 73-9 win-loss ratio. Curry won back-to-back MVPs during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 NBA Seasons. When Curry got his 2nd career MVP award in 2016, he was the first-ever unanimous award winner.

The Warriors' style of play motivated other players and teams to shoot threes at a historic rate. One of those was James Harden and the Houston Rockets. In the 2018 - 19 season, James Harden hit 378 threes, the second most by any player in NBA History. Many teams shattered the three-point record in the following seasons up until now.

The rivalry between the Cleveland Cavaliers, led by LeBron James, and the Golden State Warriors, led by Stephen Curry, was highly intense during the mid to late 2010s. They played an iconic series in the 2016 NBA Finals. The Warriors dominated three of the four games to begin the series and took a commanding three-games-to-one lead. Surprisingly, LeBron James and Kyrie Irving led their team to a historic comeback and became the first team ever to come back from down three games to one in the finals to win the championship. 2 of those 3 games were in Oracle Arena, where the Warriors had one of the best home-court advantages ever. They recorded the most wins at home during those 2 years in the history of the NBA.

During the final moments of game 7, LeBron's impressive chase-down block on Iguodala and Kyrie's clutch three-pointer over Curry led the Cavs to win game 7 and become NBA Champions for the first time in franchise history. LeBron James delivered on his promise. This was also the first time that the city of Cleveland won a championship in



Luka (Slovenia); Giannis (Greece); Embiid (Cameroon); Jokić (Serbia)

any major sports leagues (NBA, NFL, MLB, and NHL). In the following years, we were robbed of this great rivalry as Kevin Durant decided to join the Warriors in the 2016 free agency. The Warriors ended up winning the 2017 and 2018 NBA championships easily. They finally succumbed to the Canadian Toronto Raptors led by Kawhi Leonard in 2019. This was the first time the NBA champion team was from outside the United States.

International players shine in the NBA



One of the best blocks in NBA History



Kyrie Irving's clutch three-pointer

During the late 2010s, international players took over the NBA. Players like Giannis Antetokounmpo (Milwaukee Bucks), Joel Embiid (Philadelphia 76ers), and Nikola Jokić (Denver Nuggets) have won the last five NBA MVP (Most Valuable Players) awards from 2019 - 2023. Luka Dončić (Dallas Mavericks) has already established himself as a top-five NBA player at such a young age as well. These are arguably the four of the top five players in the NBA as it stands today. A huge factor in the emergence of these international players is globalization and the popularity of the sport of basketball around the world.

NBA continues during the COVID-19 pandemic



2020 NBA Bubble - Walt Disney World Resort, FL; Lakers after winning the 2020 Championship

Things took a severe turn for the world when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020. It became more impactful for the NBA when they had to entirely shut down and suspend the entire 2019-2020 NBA season in March 2020. This happened right after Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert tested positive for COVID-19. NBA was suspended and shut down for four entire months. . Throughout all the deadly and tragic events in the world in 2020, the NBA decided to resume the season.

The NBA created a bubble in Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida, where 22 teams returned and continued their season. For three months, players and coaches couldn't leave their rooms, see their family members, order outside food, or even meet other people. Teams played in empty arenas with virtual fans shown on the wall. However, due to this move of the NBA, fans worldwide could enjoy some live sports on television during the lockdowns and distract themselves from the negativity of these tumultuous times.

The NBA accomplished an impressive feat as no one tested positive for COVID-19 during the three months. The Bubble concluded when LeBron James, Anthony Davis, and the Los Angeles Lakers lifted the franchise's 17th NBA Championship, tying with the Boston Celtics for the most all-time championships for a franchise. LeBron would get his 4th ring.

The following season (2020-21) resumed 2 months later. It was weird for the first half of the season when there were no fans in the stadiums; however, limited fans could eventually come to games during the second half. The 2021 Playoffs were a memorable and unusual one. LeBron got eliminated in the first round for the first time in his career. New teams, such as the Phoenix Suns (my favorite team!), led by Devin Booker and Chris Paul, and the Atlanta Hawks, led by Trae Young, made deep runs in the playoffs.

Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks won the NBA Championship (their first in 50 years), defeating my Phoenix Suns in the 2021 NBA Finals (from which I still need to recover!!). The following year, in 2022, Stephen Curry and the new-look Golden State Warriors established themselves as all-time greats again, securing their 4th NBA Championship in the Steve Kerr era by defeating the Boston Celtics in 6 games.



Nikola Jokic and the Denver Nuggets won their first-ever NBA championship in 2023. An interesting, fun fact about the last three NBA champions is that their best players are homegrown, meaning that they won a title with the team that drafted them. Curry, Giannis, and Jokic never escaped the grind, remained loyal, and won with their respective teams.

The new face of the NBA



Next Gen NBA Stars Morant, Zion, Booker, Luka, Tatum, Young

As the NBA progresses after 76 successful seasons, we are witnessing the end of an era. Players such as LeBron, Curry, KD, CP3, Harden, Westbrook, and D-Rose are all 34 years or older. It's shocking to believe the players of the previous generation I watched

growing up will all retire after just a couple more seasons. The league will look different by the end of the decade and will have completely different stars. These players include Luka Dončić, Zion Williamson, Lamelo Ball, Trae Young, Jayson Tatum, Devin Booker, Anthony Edwards, and Ja Morant. Basketball and the complexity of the NBA might also change in the upcoming decades.

New technology, such as airless basketballs, Artificial Intelligence, and robots, might be brought to the league. The NBA plans to expand to 32 teams, with potential sites in Seattle and Las Vegas. Even though the NBA and basketball have changed a lot throughout the years, there will be more unexpected and dramatic changes and additions to the game in the foreseeable future.

Basketball is significant for numerous reasons, making it more than just a sport—it's a global cultural phenomenon that transcends boundaries and unites people. Its fast-paced nature, teamwork requirements, and emphasis on strategy make it thrilling to watch and exhilarating to play.

Beyond the court, basketball fosters discipline, leadership, and perseverance, teaching valuable life skills to players of all ages. Moreover, it promotes inclusivity, brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and fosters a sense of community and understanding.

Additionally, basketball is a powerful platform for social change, addressing issues such as inequality and racism. Its influence extends beyond the game, making it a vital part of our society, inspiring generations, and leaving an indelible mark on the world. It doesn't matter where you're from or who you are; anyone can enjoy and play basketball.

It's not just about scoring points; it's about making friends, learning important life lessons, and even standing up for what's right. Basketball isn't just played on the court as its impact is felt across communities, uniting people and making the world a better place. We hope that basketball continues to grow.



EVEREST BASE CAMP TREK – A Journey beyond limits

Written by **Satadru Das**

Lukla Airport, also known as Tenzing-Hillary Airport, is situated at an elevation of (2900m/9500 feet) above sea level and serves as the gateway to the Everest region. It is renowned as 'the world's most dangerous airport' due to its challenging location amidst mountainous terrain. The airport features a relatively short airstrip, with a cliff on one side and a dead-end on the other.



Once a pilot has commenced their approach to land, they are committed to completing the landing. Our journey to Everest Base Camp began on the first day in Kathmandu, where we took the first flight of the day, flying from Kathmandu to Lukla aboard a 14-seater Tara Airlines plane. Hillary Suspension Bridge: On our way to Namche Bazaar from Phkading.

The bridge is located between Monjo and Namche Bazaar in the Everest region of Sagarmatha National Park. We came across a gutsy wind while crossing the bridge and had some nerve wrecking moment while crossing. Namche Bazaar (3450m /11286 ft): A gateway to the high Himalayas and known for offering wonderful views of the snow-capped peaks.



We reached Namche bazar after a steep climb from Monjo on our second day. We spent one day for acclimatization around Namche bazaar. On our way to Everest View hotel as part of acclimatization day,

soaking our senses with astonishing panoramic view of Himalayan giants. From left Cholatse, Taboche, Mount Everest(middle), Nuptse, Ama Dablam (right).



The Tengboche Monastery, situated at an altitude of 3,867 meters (12,687 feet), is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery located in the Khumbu region of Nepal. It is set amidst a stunning landscape with breathtaking views of majestic mountains, including renowned peaks like Ama Dablam,

often referred to as 'Mother's Necklace.' We arrived in Tengboche in the afternoon and had the privilege of attending the evening prayer ceremony at the monastery, seeking blessings for our safe journey ahead. While enroute to Gorakshep, we were treated to a mesmerizing view of Pumori, which means 'Unmarried Daughter' in the Sherpa language. The trail undulated, taking us through the lateral moraine of the Khumbu Glacier



Gorakshep (5,164 meters - 16,942 feet): We arrived at Gorakshep after trekking through some of the most awe-inspiring and intimidating landscapes. We took an hour for a lunch break before continuing to Everest Base Camp.

After trekking for 7 hours from Lobuche (6,119 meters / 20,075 feet), we finally reached Everest Base Camp. Being in the presence of such natural beauty and experiencing the culture of the Sherpa people instilled a profound sense of gratitude within us. The breathtaking vistas and the immense scale of the mountains left us in awe.

Kalapathar Summit (5545m / 18192 ft): A 360-degree view of all Himalayan giants. After returning from EBC, the next morning, we woke up around 3:30 AM to embark on our most challenging trek to witness the sunrise from the top of Kalapathar.

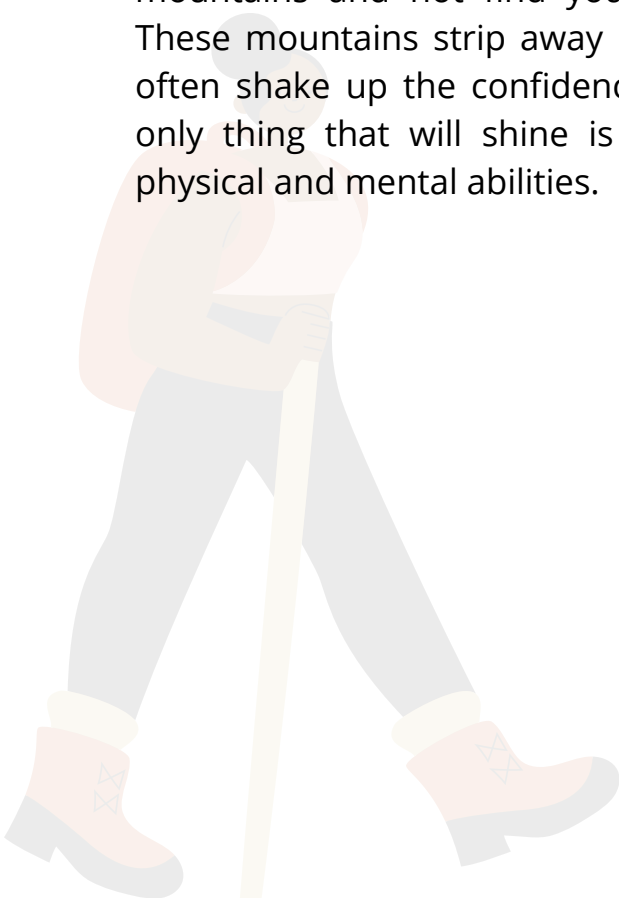
This 3-mile trek was memorable as it offered a majestic view of the snow-capped mountains in the moonlit night, along with an incredible sight of the Milky Way. After navigating through a challenging terrain for 2.5 hours, once we reached to the top of Kalapathar,



the view of the first rays of light hitting the highest peak of the world was surreal. We were treated to a panoramic view of Ama Dablam, one of the most majestic mountains of all, from the summit of Dughla Pass. The view was stunning.

At the apex of the pass, there is a graveyard adorned with a tangle of prayer flags. The Dughla Pass serves as a memorial for those who tragically lost their lives after summiting Everest. It's a solemn and mysterious place, serving as a stark reminder of just how deadly and perilous this mountain can be.

The Pasang Lhamu memorial gate – After finishing our 10 days long trek we safely reached back to Lukla with our Guide Jayram. It's impossible to go to the mountains and not find your passion. These mountains strip away prejudices, often shake up the confidence and the only thing that will shine is your true physical and mental abilities.



Matia Kali of Aminpur village

Written by **Sarbari Chowdhury**

Goddess Kali is one of the deities of the Shakti pantheon of Hindu goddesses. The dark beautiful goddess with flowing hair, red tinted eyes, tongue out, dressed in a skirt of human hands and a garland of human heads. She is the destroyer of all evil. She is considered the ferocious form of Adi Shakti.

All over Bengal devotees of Ma Kali abound. And around Ma Kali, devotion and faith abound. Hundreds of myths and superstitions surround the deity. Each tiny village has one or more shrines of Ma Kali as their own and each Kali may have their own names. In these areas Ma Kali is often transformed from a fierce Tantric deity to a beloved mother of the lay people. She is the protector and elder of the villages, cognizant of everyone's sorrows and joys. She can be angry if crossed but overall, the protector.

Ma Matia Kali of Aminpur village is one such deity. A more than 500year old deity, resident of the village of Aminpur, in South Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

A peaceful open area with a huge peepal tree houses the 'bedi' or mud/clay base of the deity. A double rectangle heap, out in the open. She is worshipped every day.

The path to 'bedi' is through the lush rice fields of the village, past an ancient Shiva temple, with Pala era five faced Shiv linga. Passed a pond where cane bushes grow, and a mass of Kewra flower trees that still blooms. A smattering of abandoned Shiv linga (a form representing the God Shiv) lie at one end of the deity's area. Earlier, there were almost a hundred or more ruins of shiv lingams and small and medium sized statues of various Gods and Goddesses strewn around the area.



Ma Matia Kali

She is worshipped before every auspicious occasion of the villagers. Actually, believers come from far and wide to worship her.

Aminpur, the name comes from the fact that several Amins or land-measurers lived in the village. In undivided Bengal, Aminpur was part of the Haripur estate. The RoyChowdhury family ruled this area. During the 17th century, the younger scion of the ruling RayChowdhury family came and settled in Maldah and was declared the Zamindar of this area. Even today, the RoyChowdhurys of Malda own a significant amount of land in the Aminpur area, including the land on which Ma Matia Kali sits and where the Shiv temple stands.

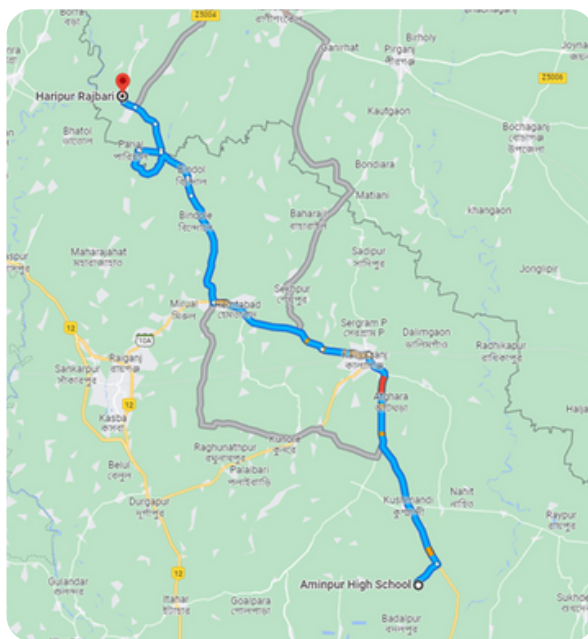


Map of undivided Bengal from the 18th century. Source: Internet

Currently Haripur Upazila is in the Rangpur district of Bangladesh and approximately 64 kilometers from Aminpur. Because of the International border, traffic between the two places has almost disappeared, but once upon a time, people travelled for multiple days from Haripur to Aminpur for work, by foot, by bullock cart and on elephants.

The story goes that many years ago, Raja Jogendra Narayan Roychowdhury,(1830 – 1890) wife Anandamayi, the king of the then Haripur estate and his mother both dreamt that Goddess Kali says to them in their dream that 'I live in your kingdom, but no one takes care of me. Find me and take care of me.'

This dream affected the king, especially when his mother also related the same dream to him. He then sent out troops of his soldiers, armed with stout sticks (called lathi, thus the wielders of these were called lathials) and other arms to different corners of his kingdom to search for Kali.



Current road connecting Aminpur and the Haripur Rajbari. Source: Google maps

His army primarily consisted of Kshatriyas, or Rajput, who were a warrior caste and had minimal relationship with Bengal. The last names of this group were Singh. The king had brought these warriors all the way from Rajasthan as his army and for saving his territories from dacoits and other miscreants.

Lathials were a social group in rural Bengal during pre-British and the British period. They were adept at wielding a stout bamboo stick, often bound at intervals with iron rings. A lathial was a mercenary, who sold his skills to landowners for kind or cash. The Zamindars frequently used the lathials as their local army, for settling disputes with other Zamindars or punishing recalcitrant tenants.

On the first searches, the troops returned empty handed. The king was disappointed but decided to stop the difficult search. Most of his territory was covered in dense jungle where lived ferocious wild animals, tigers, bears and so on. Also, dangerous dacoits (roving band of criminals who steal and murder) roamed this forest.

After a while Goddess Kali again appeared in the king's dream and demanded that he look for her and take care of her. She said 'Onadore pore aachi Nodir tote' (I am lying next to a river in disrespect), 'Phul jol pacchi na' (I am not getting flowers or water). She also gave him a couple of clues – she was in a place a banyan tree – and there were five trees in proximity. Her abode was 'pancha munda' (a tantric marker) seat and it was near a river. Armed with these new clues, the king consulted his court to determine how to conduct a better search. What clues could the troops use.



Haripur Rajbari 2022 Source: Internet

'Pancha munda' means five skulls. The skulls at Ma Matia Kali's seat are dog, jackal, snake, toad, human. Some 'pancha munda' have five human skulls.

Well, let's see, if Goddess Kali resided somewhere then at the place there would have been a priest or sadhu who took care of her. Probably there would have been a village nearby and the Goddess was a public installation.

The area was covered in dense jungle, only a few forest tribals lived here. The forests were full of dangerous wild animals – including ferocious tigers.

Using these clues, the troops found an ancient place with Shiv lingas and a few smaller sculptures of Gods and Goddesses and nearby was a pond in the dense jungle in the current Aminpur area. On further enquiry locally, the troops found that there existed an ancient open air prayer place where once Goddess Kali was worshipped and that a small river flowed next to the spot. This discovery was made almost 400 years ago. This rivulet no longer exists.

Using these clues, the troops found a stream (khari called Bhur Bhuriya which was probably a branch of the Chhiramati river) in the dense jungle in the current Aminpur area. On further enquiry locally, the troops discovered that there existed an ancient open air prayer place where once Goddess Kali was worshipped and that a small river -Bhur Bhuria - flowed next to the spot. And this was under a 'panch vati' tree. This discovery was made almost 400 years ago.

On reporting this find to the Haripur king, the king immediately asked the soldiers to stay put in place and create a settlement so that Goddess Kali could be taken care of.

This is why even today there are a huge number of 'Singh' families in Aminpur. With this new settlement – slowly others were needed to support the village, barbers, laundry folks, priests, farmers, carpenters etc. Thus, the village of Aminpur was formed and ever since Devi Matia Kali, Ma Matia Kali our mother has been the mother Goddess of Aminpur.

In time, a Zamindar was appointed for Aminpur, a scion of the royal family, who would collect taxes and manage the farmland.

In time, other trees grew around the original banyan tree, a Shiv temple housing a beautiful black stone 'pancha mukhi' (five faces) Shiv linga was built nearby in the year 1804, by Gauriprasad Roy Chowdhury the then Zamindar of Haripur. Currently the five trees that grow around the seat of the goddess are – Ashathya (PEEPAL OR Ficus religiosa), Neem (Azadirachta indica), Bel (Bengal quince), Shyora (Scoparia dulcis) and Dal Mochra. The original 'pancha-vaati' is no more.

We are also told that Matia Kali has six other sisters – Ma Dighi Banshihari Kali, Ma Boira Kali, Ma Chamar Kali, Ma Rakhsha Kali, Ma Basanta Kali, Ma Dakhina Kali. All the seven Kali sisters' dwell within the Aminpur Zamindar's area.

A statue of the deity is sculpted, the straw for the statue comes from a Muslim family – the Haq family, for generations, the sculptor is from the Das family, currently Dulal Das.

Stories of miracles and blessings of Goddess Matia Kali abound in and around Aminpur. Devotees appease and thank the Goddess with gifts of gold and silver jewelry, land and goats. This continues even today.

Another story goes that once during the British rule, the Zamindar Late Shri Raghavendra Narayan Roychowdhury got into trouble with the British and had to fight them. The quarrel turned serious, and guns and cannons were brought out. Of course, the Englishman was successful. This disappointed the Zamindar and he turned to Ma Matia Kali. In the meantime, his wife Rani ShyamMohini Roychowdhury filed a court case against the Englishman. After 12 long years, the case was won by the Zamindars.

In thankfulness Rani ShyamMohini RayChowdhury had a grand puja for Ma Matia Kali out of cycle – during the Ratanti Kali puja day. It is believed that only with the blessing of Ma Matia Kali, the Zamindar was successful in this case against the ruling British. Even today a puja for Ma Matia Kali is held in spring, during Ratanti Kali Puja.

Women come from far and wide to ask Ma Matia Kali's boon to have children. They promise to present Ma Kali with things once their prayer is granted – money, jewelry, goats etc. And such gifts keep streaming in even today.

One Brahmin family resides in the village, but since they are of the Vaishnav sampradaya – they are not the priests of Matia Kali. Designated priest of Goddess Matia Kali comes daily from a neighboring village – Jordighi, to worship. Four generations of this Brahmin family, the Bagchi family have been the official priests of Ma Matia Kali as appointed by the Zamindar.

Today, Ma Matia Kali sits in a peaceful pen area currently surrounded by paddy fields. A few mud houses stand about 100 meters away. The shade of the large peepal tree and the other five trees provide a play of light and shade. One feels so peaceful sitting with her. The ancient river changed its path and now has disappeared.

During the day, the priest comes to perform puja. In the twilight hours, a village maiden in a simple sari comes to light the evening lamp for her.

All day goats and local dogs and big black ants are her companion. A picture of benign peace. But if crossed, she can be fierce.

There is no enclosed, suffocating temple for her, she is for everyone. No statue of her, just a rectangle shaped heap of mud and clay – with a pattern drawn with red vermilion in the shape of an anchor.

Every year, this heap or bedi, which undergoes erosion due to the wind and rains of the year – is rebuilt according to specifications during Kali puja in the fall. A blue hued statue is sculpted, right foot forward stepping on Shiva who lies straight in front of her. Sculpting starts a couple of days before the puja, with the sculptor and everyone involved with the puja following satvik lifestyle. The painting of the statue is done on the day of the puja and then moved to her platform, dressed in all her jewelry and clothes.

Puja is performed all through the night and submerged in Zamindar's pond, all within 24 hours. Placement of the statue is on top of the mud 'bedi' and has to be done precisely. Elders of the Nayeab family typically oversaw the placement or 'paate otha'. Village boys and men do the transfer of the statue to the accompaniment of the village Shanai and dhak and kanshor ghanta. Traditionally this work was reserved for the youth from the 'Koch Para' but now everyone participates. The puja traditionally took place during the night in with the light of Mashaals; even today, though electric lights are used for most of the illumination, a symbolic Mashaal remains lit all through the puja night.

All night the puja continues with the beating of the dhak and playing of the shenai, recital of deep resonating powerful mantras under the trees with darkness of the new moon night all enveloping. Puja finishes at dawn and the last goodbyes are said to the deity as the statue goes for immersion. For immersion, the village boys carry the Goddess's statue on their shoulder and run – with just a couple of stops – in front of the Shiv temple, in front of the arena where the village 'baroari' Durga Puja happens and in front of another important village deity – Bhagawati of Ghosh bari – in each of these stops – the statues has to turned three times as a sign of mutual respect and camaraderie. The custom originated almost 300 years ago when the Ghosh family being the 'NAYEB' or the representative of the Zamindar in the village elicited this respect.

Even today, the Zamindar family who live in Malda – Late Vijayendra Narayan Roychowdhury and his wife Sutapa Roychowdhury bear all responsibilities, administrative and partially monetary, for Ma Matia Kali. One of the eminent families residing in Aminpur is the Ghosh family. They have remained the only Kuleen Kayastha family in the village for more than 7 generations now. Currently they, along with other eminent villagers, oversee taking care Ma Matia Kali's affairs. Since the year 2014 – the eldest son of the Ghosh family was charged by the then Zamindar Sri Bijoyendra Narayan RoyChowdhury to manage the assets of the deity.

There also exists a 'Kachary' house near Ma Matia Kali's bedi. This house still has a huge strong box, half buried in the ground, where all of Ma Maia Kali's worldly wealth was stored. However, after an attempted robbery, her wealth is now in banks. This house also has a few wooden masks, attributed to Matia Kali. These are called Mukha masks used during Gomira dance festivals. It is believed that whoever wears the Matia Kali mask to dance, actually gets the spirit of Ma Matia Kali within him. And to absorb Matia Kali's spirit needs a very spiritually strong person. So these days no one uses these masks for dancing. My father used to say that he had seen this dance in his childhood. Aminpur today is a village in the Dakhin (South) Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

With a population of 1199 with 301 households, it is a primarily agricultural village with some fisheries due to the large number of ponds. Buniadpur is the nearest town. Aminpur can be accessed by train (stop at Buniadpur) or by road. It houses one High school and a middle school and a college. Some of the oldest families still residing at Aminpur are the Ghosh family, Das family and Seal family.

Accessing Aminpur is no longer as complicated as it once was. My mother, a city girl, remembers her first trip to Aminpur village, riding a bullock cart over a bumpy mud road in 1960. A blacktop road (locally called high road) passed by about 2 kilometers away, one travelled by bus (there was no train connection nearby) to the Joining Road bus stop and the house bullock cart waited there. She recalls that as she travelled, a young 20 year old, new bride, during dusk she saw the vivid green rice fields fading into the blue horizon. Tiny huts – where women peeped with curiosity through tiny windows, curious to see the new bride.

I too remember this journey, a sweet childhood memory, a time of joy, going to meet my cousins and aunts who would all come to our ancestral home during Durga Puja. Haripur is now in Bangladesh, a small town, the Rajbari or the King's palace still stands, though not in very good repair. Local Aminpur residents, who have lived there for a long time, say they have heard stories of their forefathers traveling all the way to Haripur to the palace to submit the collected taxes to the treasury. They walked or used bullock carts for the trip, protected by armed. 'lathials' and the journey of 64 kms took days to complete. The common rest stops on the way were Bindol and Dhankhola villages.

They talk of attacks on the village by tigers, and how on one occasion, a frenzied and ferocious was ultimately by a member of the Ghosh family, who owned a rifle. Other stories of dacoits attacking the village and local heroes saving the day. Hope you enjoyed the history of Aminpur and it's close tie to Ma Matia Kali. Joy Ma.

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A journey to the roof of Africa – Kilimanjaro trek

Written by **Abhirupa Layek**, Pictures by **Satadru Das**

From the time we finished the Everest Base Camp trek in April 2022, our brains had started ticking about “What’s next?” Kilimanjaro, being one of the more accessible and trekkable “Seven summits”, became our obvious next destination. For 6 months we dreamed, planned, prepped, booked, and rebooked tickets – the thought of “Africa” itself giving us goosebumps.



Day 1 Our Kilimanjaro journey had started on 26th of December from the small dusty town of Moshi in Tanzania. The day before, we had met Lazaro, the head guide of Monkey Adventures, the tour group that was guiding us through the Lemosho route. A bus from Monkey Adventures picked up us and our co-travelers from our lodges. The entire crew of 30 people consisted of 20 porters who would be carrying our tents, food supplies, luggage, and toilets, 3 guides and 7 guests – us and 5 young men from Greece.

It was raining heavily when we arrived at Londorossi gate – our starting point. We waited for our guides to complete the registration and then put on our raincoats and rain pants and started walking on the muddy trail. The dense rain forest formed a thick canopy over us. The guides told us to go “pole pole” or slowly and always go on sipping water “maji maji sippy sippy”. The slow walk over 8 days, 8-10 kms every day, from 8000 ft altitude to 19600 ft altitude was designed to help our bodies to acclimatize.

After trekking for 3 hours, we arrived at the Mti Mkubwa camp. The porters had already reached and pitched tents and prepared dinner for us. The campsite was sloshy with mud but looked like a fair with multicolored tents from all the different tour groups. After a sumptuous dinner – which majorly consisted of soup, some chicken or fish dish and rice or pasta – we went into our tents.

Day 2 & Day 3 – The next two days we hiked from Mti Mkubwa camp up the Shira Plateau camping at Shira 1 (3500m 11483 ft) on day 2 and Shira 2 (3900 ft, 12795 ft) on day 3. The thick rain forest gave way to shrubs as we went up. The mornings would begin with clear skies, and it would start drizzling during the day, soaking us through our raincoats, only for the rain to stop at sunset.

Many days I would wake up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet and be startled to see Uhuru peak lit up in the moonlight.

Day 4 – Day 4 was the long excruciating walk from Shira 2 camp up to the Lava Tower (4602 m 15102ft) and then down to the Barranco camp (3962 m 12992 ft).



Lava Tower is so named after a huge cone of lava created by volcanic activity more than a 100,000 years ago. We had hot lunch on our tents but just as we got ready to start the journey towards Barranco, the rain started to come down more heavily almost freezing our fingers.

The path went very steeply down and through slippery rocks, before climbing up gently and then going down again. It was so misty around us that we could barely see within 20 ft. But as we neared the Barranco, the mist lifted, and we got a view of the infamous Barranco wall to the left which we were going to climb the next day.

The trek down to Barranco had been quite a lot of descent and for the first time I began to feel altitude sickness. I was exhausted with a dull headache hammering away. It seemed that the others too had begun to feel the altitude. The campsite we could feel the tent sloping on one side. All our clothing seemed wet, even the down feather sleeping bag seemed damp.

Day 5 - After good dinner and a good night's sleep everyone was fresh and ready to climb the infamous Barranco wall the following morning. The trail up the wall was over boulders and very narrow and a few steep drops in places and because the sunlight never reached that face of the cliff, the rocks would be icy and slippery. We were also sharing the trail with porters with cargo on their heads, so we had to stand and let them pass. Quite a few places required us to scramble and lift ourselves with the weight of our arms assisted by the guides. There was a section where we had to cling to the wall to stay on the path – appropriately name “kiss the wall” section.

I was out of breath by the time we reached the first ledge and had to wait for a couple of minutes before starting again. About 1.5 hours of toiling through the rocks, we were finally at the top of the wall with a stunning vista of the summit in the bright sunshine. We rested at the top of the wall before starting towards Karanga Camp at 4035 m (13238 ft. It was mostly a downward walk until right at the bottom of a hill the path wound up sharply to the Karanga Camp. As evening came the clouds cleared and we could see Moshi town glitter down below. Suddenly I felt very homesick and yearned for the comfort of a warm bed in Moshi, so near yet so far away.



Day 6 - The walk next day from Karanga to Barafu was a short one, just 4 kms. Barafu, at 4640 m (15223 ft) was the base camp from which the summit push started. The plan was to reach Barafu before noon so that we could have an early lunch, dinner by 5 and then a long rest before the start of summit night at 11pm.

Our tents were pitched on an extremely slanting slope on a mass of loose stones albeit with a fantastic view of the Mawenzi peak rising above the clouds. The wind was howling by afternoon, the sun was burning down with all it's might. Inside the tents it felt like a sauna. I had begun to feel out of breath even with the smallest of movements.

Our guides gave us a briefing after lunch - it was going to be much colder than anything we had experienced ever. We had to wear at least 6-7 layers of clothing on top and 4-5 layers in the bottom, ear buffs, thick woolen caps, 2 socks inside our snow boots, 2 layers of gloves. Our water bladders would freeze by 3 am so we also had to carry a water bottle inside a sock turned upside down. With a chant of "Hakuna Matata" or don't worry, you will be fine and a final chant of "One dream, one team, all the way , to the top!" we went back to our tents.

We barely got any sleep that evening. By 10 pm, we started getting into our layers of clothing. After swallowing some porridge and biscuits we started on our final hike. Evance, our assistant guide walked just ahead of me, carrying my backpack, ready to assist me whenever I needed. It was pitch dark outside, some tour groups had already started ahead of us and we could see headlights making way up the trail. After about walking a mile, it struck midnight and everyone on trail started wishing each other Happy New Year.

As we gained altitude, the wind started picking up even more and things got more and more blurry for me. Every step seemed to take a lot of effort and I started getting nauseous. Throughout Evance and the summit porters kept opening my bottle to make me drink water or force some hot tea down my throat or just patting my back to tell me that I would be able to make it. I felt extremely grateful by their small acts of kindness. We could see a lot of other hikers sitting on the side of the trail unable to go on.



New Year's Day 2023. The eastern sky had begun to lighten up – in the diffused light I could see end of the ledge, still about 100 feet above us. Every step that I took on the large boulders seemed to take my breath away.

“I can see Stella Point from here Abhi, if you give up now I will cry. We will do it pole pole ...” – said Evance in his soft reassuring voice. Satadru was going a few steps ahead, the chill nearly freezing his fingers and toes. Pushing myself for the next few steps we finally reached Stella Point at 5756m (18,885 ft). From Stella Point we got a 360 view of the top. After some fist bumps and group hugs, we got our pictures in front of the Stella Point signs. The view was surreal – everywhere there was white snow. We were at the rim of the crater and from Stella Point the trail went gently up along the rim to the summit “Uhuru Peak” still about ½ km away. The sun had lifted my spirits and I was feeling much better. We could see the Rebman and Furtwangler glaciers glowing in the distance.

I can't express the gratitude and relief that I felt when we finally reached Uhuru Peak. Had it not been for the patience and encouragement of Satadru and the support crew, I would surely not have made it. I felt so drained that I could not even cry. There were a lot of people at the summit, and we had to wait for our turn to take pictures at the Uhuru Peak sign.

We started realizing how steep the trail had been only when we started going down. We had to be extremely careful to not hurt the knees or ankles. By the time we reached our tents in Barafu camp we were operating like zombies. After thanking everyone heartily we collapsed into a fitful sleep.

We had a light lunch and then started off for the lower Millenium camp 5 kms away. Even though we were extremely exhausted, it was the most advisable to head to the lower camp to prevent any further effects of the altitude.

Day 8 – the last day of the hike was a 12 km hike from Millenium camp all the way down to Mweka gate – the endpoint of our journey. Satadru, I and Evance almost sped down the trail which went through the moorland first and rainforest later. When I got the first sight of Mweka gate through the dense foliage, I let out a whoop of delight! Kilimanjaro was done! Ticked off, achieved! What relief! We dumped our bags in the rest area to go to the restrooms and clean ourselves with running water for the first time in 8 days!

We got ourselves some celebratory beer and chips and exchanged contacts. I was most relieved to get cell coverage and inform our parents that we were alive and safe. We first headed to the tour company's office where we handed over the collective tip to Lazaro and return all the rentals.

My eyes welled up like a kid, as the bus made it's way back to our lodge. 6 months anticipation, 8 days of living in the wild, meeting all the delightful people on the way – everything seemed to have gotten over too soon. I was eager to get to the comfort of my own bed at home but also to let the last few hours linger a little longer. At the end of our 12-day trip to Tanzania, my heart was full of gratitude at everything that I had experienced. Climbing Kilimanjaro shall always be one of the high points of Satadru and my life. I can say from the bottom of my heart "Asante Sana Tanzania!"

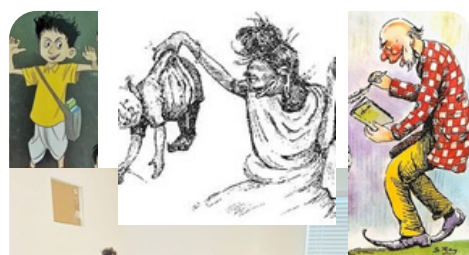
KIDS DRAMA "SUKUMAR ER JAGOTE" BY SAMHITA KIDS

Written by **Debalina Banerjee**

Samhita has always believed in the concept of harmony through cultural exchange and understanding. As a part of this harmony the team members had always indulged in various cultural events including music, dance, skit, drama that involves one and all. This year the Samhita kids worked together to present a drama based on the characters depicted by the well-known child novelist Sukumar Roy. This not only gave them the opportunity to know about these stories, verses and poems depicted by the author, but also helped them develop team building and working together

The kid's drama had been conceptualized by the organizers who has suitably played the role of architects of these memorable experiences. The original script is by Debojit Mukherjee. The planning has been effectively executed by young talents, performers and actors and also supported by the creative minds in the form of prop making and stage preparation. The kids thoroughly enjoyed their role play of different characters like Pagla Dashu, Hijbajibij, Katukutuburo, Ramgorur-er-chana, Pantobhooter Jyanto chana, Udo, Budho, Bombagorer Raja and Kumropotash.

The entire endeavor has been immensely supported by all the parent team members and mentors in the form of prompting, organizing, managing and supporting the kids with their effort. Looking forward to the future, it is apparent that these efforts would continue to be pivotal in developing the bridges of understanding, acceptance, and unity across the world.



Puja Maane

Written by **Tanushree Maiti**



Durga puja is the celebration of the divine shakti of Mother Durga. It symbolizes that good will always prevail over evil. We eagerly wait for these few days of the year to seek blessings from the goddess and enjoy the grand festivities with family, friends, and community. The celebration of Durga Puja is incomplete without dressing up in new clothes, eating good food, and enjoying cultural programs. While living abroad, Durga Puja celebrations provide an opportunity to promote our rich culture and meaningful traditions in the foreign land and also encourage our future generations to remain connected with their heritage.

Puja Maane

Written by **Swati Ghosh**

Pujo mane

Ei bideshe, pujo maan e, sei choto belakar pujor din gulo mone kora;
Pujo mane akash e halka halka shada megh khoja;
Pujo mane batashe halka halka thanda hawar chowa laga;
Pujo mane charidike shiuli phool-er mishti gondho pawa;
Pujo mane Ma er ashar anonde misthi hashi te din gona;
Pujo mane dhaker awaz aar agomoni gaan er sur e shob kichu bhore jai;
Pujo mane notun jama aar notun juto porar anondo;
Pujo mane uposh kore astami r Anjali dewa aar kumari pujo te boshe
misti khawa;
Pujo mane bhog-er prasad aar dhunuchi naach;
Pujo mane sindur khela, kolakuli aar narkel naru diye misti mukh;
Pujo mane sobar ekshathe asha, Ma er ashirbaad e ei choto belar barir
sparsho pawa

- Swati Ghosh

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পুজো মানে

এই বিদেশে পুজো মানে, সেই ছোটবেলার পুজোর দিন গুলো মনে করা;
পুজো মানে আকাশে হাল্কা হাল্কা সাদা মেঘ খোজা;
পুজো মানে বাতাসে হাল্কা হাল্কা ঠাণ্ডা হাওয়ার ছোঁওয়া;
পুজো মানে চারিদিকে শিউলি ফুলের মিষ্টি গন্ধ পাওয়া;
পুজো মানে মা এর আসার আনন্দে মিষ্টি হাসিতে দিন গোনা;
পুজো মানে ঢাকের আওয়াজ আর আগমনী গানের সুরে সব কিছু ভরে জাওয়া;
পুজো মানে নতুন জামা আর নতুন জুতো পরার আনন্দ;
পুজো মানে উপোষ করে অষ্টমীর অঞ্জলি দেওয়া আর কুমারি পুজোতে বসে মিষ্টি খাওয়া;
পুজো মানে ভোগের প্রসাদ আর ধুনি নাচ;
পুজো মানে সিঁদুর খেলা, কোলাকুলি আর নারকেল নাড়ু দিয়ে মিষ্টি মুখ;
পুজো মানে সবার একসাথে আশা, মা এর আশীর্বাদে সেই ছোট বেলায় বাড়ির স্পর্শ
পাওয়া।

- স্বাতী ঘোষ

Puja Maane

Written by Babu KR

Agomoni; Celebration of the return of the Goddess to the house of her parents.

What goes through ones mind during these special days of Pujo is pure ecstasy. Everyone wants to celebrate the Mothers visit. Festivities for which one waits for the whole year. The sadness that Durga went back after the festivities last year is totally wiped off ones mind. Fresh excitement, planning, organizing, rehearsing, arranging a whole lot of things, uff... it's a crazy few days. Hope we don't miss anything. Hey have we confirmed the pujari moshai, did we finalize the list of all the 'samogri' for the pujo.

Kids are excited, they have so much to do. New clothes, nice delicacies to eat, how to dress for each occasion, follow mom all around, match with her clothes etc etc. Oh yes they have to perform in the cultural program. But before that they have to meet all their friends to rehearse.

Organizers are too busy planning different areas, some one has to be in charge of food, oh have we set up a team for the decoration of the 'pandal'. What about the cultural programs, are we doing a drama this year, have our stars started practicing the play.. how does " Shrimati Bhoyonkori " sound.

The pujo committee is in full gear, where do we find dubo, belapatra. And yes we need rice vegeables and hey some one has to prepare 'prosad' for each day of pujo. Man a lot of things have to be done in the prescribed way, otherwise we will not feel good.

Definitely there needs to be wide broadcasting of our pujo so that we can invite a lot of people to come and celebrate with us. They can get the blessings of 'Maa' and celebrate this auspicious king of Festivals.

We have no time, oh did I mention, there will be Sonkho competition, Sindur Khela, Kumari Pujo, I still feel like I am forgetting a lot of things... Its ok, with your presence, we will get everything done, we have such a dedicated group of stars in our team.

Oh now I remember, I did notice that a huge choice of delicacies was being ordered. Food is such an integral part of any festival we do. Uff..., I cannot wait to taste those mouthwatering delicacies. Lets go, lets go.

Trivia ;can you tell which song this is :

"As your flute of lights plays on, the entire world becomes ecstatic. In this autumn day, we are soaking in the melody with all our heart. And in this happy carnival, in this euphoria, we are inviting one and all. "

Puja Maane

আমার কাছে দুর্গাপূজা শুরু হয় মহালয়াতে শ্রী বীরেন্দ্রকৃষ্ণ ভদ্রের কণ্ঠে মহিষাসুরমর্দিনী দিয়ে। পূজো মানেই তো বন্ধুদের সাথে আড্ডা, প্যান্ডেলে প্যান্ডেলে ঘুরে বেড়ানো আর প্রচুর খাওয়া দাওয়া। আমার কাছে পূজো মানে অষ্টমী তে অঞ্জলি আর নবমী তে খাসির মাংস। দশমী তে ঢাকের তালে উদ্দাম নৃত্য আর মা এর বিসর্জন।

- **Mithun Thakur**

Pujo means “pushpanjali, shankho dhoni, kichuri-bhog!”

- **Mrittika Ganguli**

Durga Puja

Written by **Rasna Sarkar**



What does Durga Puja mean to me?

Durga Puja is an essence of living life to the fullest. There is a vibrance all over the Universe to echo the triumph of good over evil.

Durga Puja reminds me of my childhood memories, the spirit of celebration & most importantly, counting the number of new dresses my father used to buy.

Durga Puja means patiently waiting for Ma Durga & her family. She is omnipresent but during this time, Ma Durga descends on Mother Earth in a totally different avatar.

Durga Puja means embellishing the spirit of life which testifies that we cannot give up in any circumstances. Durga Puja embarks the spirit of creation & most importantly reinvents our inner souls to be better.

human beings.

Jai Ma Durga!

Rasna Sarkar

Shrimoti Bhoyonkori

Written by **Devika Choudhury**



This year AZ samhita cultural association is proud to present drama "Shrimoti Bhoyonkori" adapted from Shri Gautam Roy's original writing.

We will take you to Mr. Naradurlabh Halder's house in Kolkata where he stays with his elder daughter Dolon, younger daughter Jhulan, and their househelp Alo. Both Dolon and Jhulan have reached marriageable age, and Mr. Naradurlabh like any father, is looking for suitable grooms for them.

However he soon realizes that getting a good groom is turning out to be quite challenging! Why, you ask? Please come and watch in drama "Shrimoti Bhoyonkori" and see if Dolon and Jhulon find their husbands.

Front Yard Rose

Written by **Sanchalita Chatterjee**

I had the pleasure of planting a rose from a local nursery in the front yard where I had gone to look for black rose. However, I could only find a rose plant with the darkest red color.

It took a year for the rose plant to give flowers and had beautiful fragrance. Neighbors and passerby stopped by to smell the roses with beautiful smile. Hummingbirds visited for the nectar. I decorated my office room with the beautiful roses.

During late fall, I would hand over rose stems to others so that they could also grow the beautiful roses in their yard.

The rose plant reminds me of a famous quote.



"As delicate as flower, as tender as rose petals, choosing to be tender and kind in a harsh environment is not weakness, it's courage." — **Luffina Lourduraj**

Here are some interesting fact about roses from bhg.com

1. Roses Are One of the Oldest Flowers
2. You Can Eat Roses
3. Their Fragrance is Used in Perfum
4. Each Rose Color Has a Different Meaning
5. The Rose is the U.S. National Flower

Bookworm ..that's your Babu da

Written by **Babu KR**

He has an addiction. It's an obsessive-compulsive disorder commonly referred to as OCD. His obsession is 'Reading'. It manifests in everything he does. Sometimes a hot cup of coffee in his hand is a precursor.

His physical properties are:

- He wears very powerful glasses, as reading for extended periods has strained his eyes.
- He is quiet and introspective, often talking less and listening more, and who loves to spend time with a book.
- He often buys clothes after learning about them being worn by characters in the books he reads.
- He often carries an e-reader & also a paperback in his backpack, which often gets heavy.
- He likes to buy bookmarks, but also converts anything and everything to a bookmark.
- He sometimes looks hunched on things, comes from the habit of focusing on his books.



His Chemical properties are:

There are no such characteristics of his, that would be termed as chemical properties... LOL. However, bookworm is a metaphorical expression used to describe him, he who is passionate about reading and spends a considerable amount of time immersed in his books.

It's worth noting his neurological and biological aspects of reading. It's a cognitive process of his which is involved in comprehending written stuff which is associated with brain activity.

His reading habit involves complex neural processes, including visual processing, language comprehension, memory retrieval etc. This process of his is supported by various neurotransmitters, such as acetylcholine, dopamine and serotonin.

By the way do you know what the hobby of reading books called? Its called 'Bibliophilia'.

And hold on, he thinks you are one too, because you are reading this right. 😊

After reading so far, even if you don't want his advice about reading, he will give it to you anyway.

- Set a goal, number of pages, number of books.
- Create a routine. A certain time of the day, amount of time.
- Read books of your interest, things which stimulate your mind.
- Find a book buddy, if you read together, you will fare better.
- Be patient, the habit builds up over a period.

You will love your Babu da for giving you this advice in the longer run of life.
CAIO until next time.

A rainy winter night

Written by **Sharmistha Bhattacharyya**

It was a cool winter day .The clouds were all accumulating on the top of the mountain from this morning.

The entire sky was wrapped in a grayish blanket. The wind was hauling all through the day. The leaves of the trees were fighting with the wind in tooth and nail for their survival. The dense clouds were looking down on the mountains and asking them " Do you want me to shower on you ? "The mountains must have been said to wait till the evening ,that's why the rain didn't started till it got dark outside.



The entire evening it rained heavily. The wet neighborhood and the slow passing car that's all I could see looking out from my window. The street lights were casting their own reflection on the puddles next to it . The wet road, wet trees and the wet drive ways all we're getting soaked by the winter rain. There was a silence all around except the pitter patter of the raindrops on the rooftop.A sudden lighting and the electricity went out.

The entire neighborhood got immersed in darkness. I lit up a candle and sat by the window, watching the rain drops making horizontal lines on the glass window.The rain had made the temperature to go down. There was a chill in the air. The nature and it's landscape all were waiting through the cold and soaked night to be over soon and waiting for dawn to warm them up with the first few rays of the rising sun. In the meantime, we all could curl up by the fireplace with a cup of hot cocoa, a blanket, and a good book to hold us over till the morning sun wakes us up the next day.

"I prefer drawing to talking. Drawing is faster, and leaves less room for lies"

-Le Corbusier



Name: Hiya Thakur **Age:** 12 years 🙌

**"The purpose of my incarnation is to awaken
humanity to their true divine nature."**

-Kalki Avatar Quote

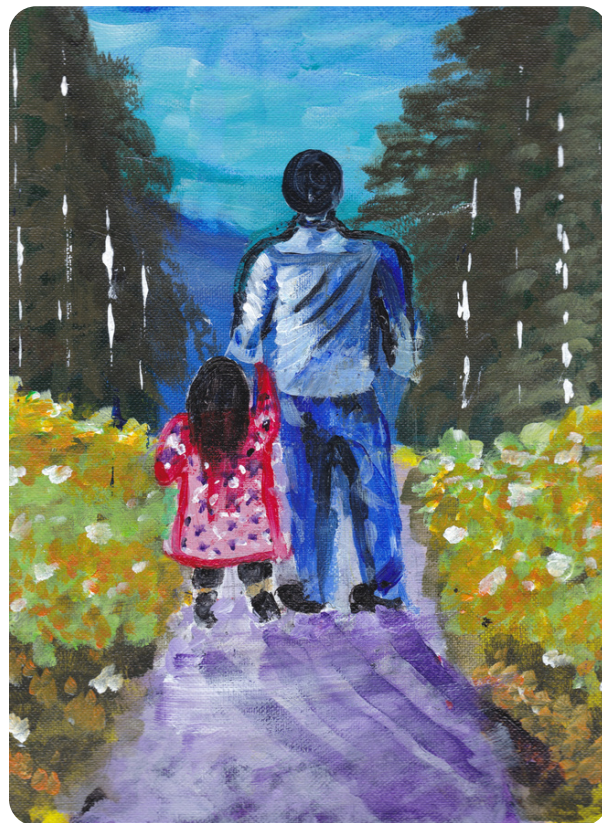


Name: Adwik Datta Age: 8 years



"Painting is an illusion, a piece of magic, so what you see is not what you see"

-Philip Guston



Name: Srinika Das

Age: 9 years



**"A good painting to me has always been like a friend.
It keeps me company, comforts and inspires"
-Hedy Lamarr**



Name: Mohanraj **Age:** 7 years 🙌

**"Painting, sculpture and architecture are finished,
but the art habit continues."**

-Robert Smithson



Name: Swastika Sarkar Age: 11 years 🙌

**"A good painting to me has always been like a friend.
It keeps me company, comforts and inspires"**

-Hedy Lamarr



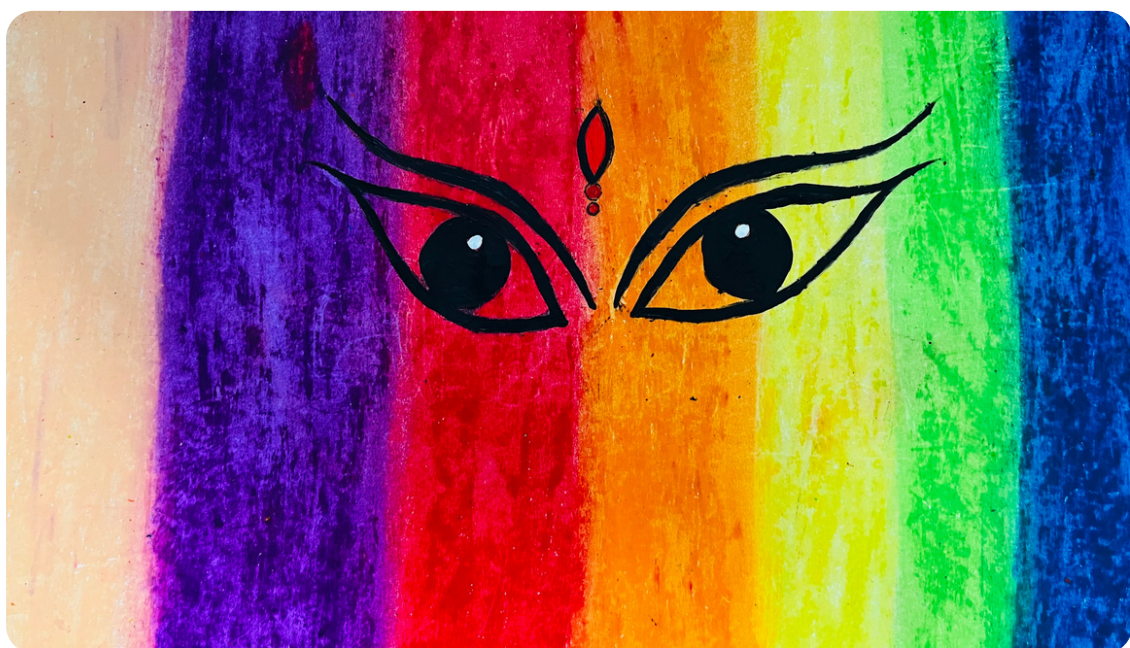
- Smita

“Sculpture is something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting.”

-Ad Reinhardt



Name: Swastika Sarkar Age: 11 years 🙌



Name: Adhrit Age: 8 years 🙌

"Painting from nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one's sensations"

-Hedy Lamarr



Name: Mohanraj

Age: 7 years 🙌

**"Painting, sculpture and architecture are finished,
but the art habit continues."**

-Robert Smithson

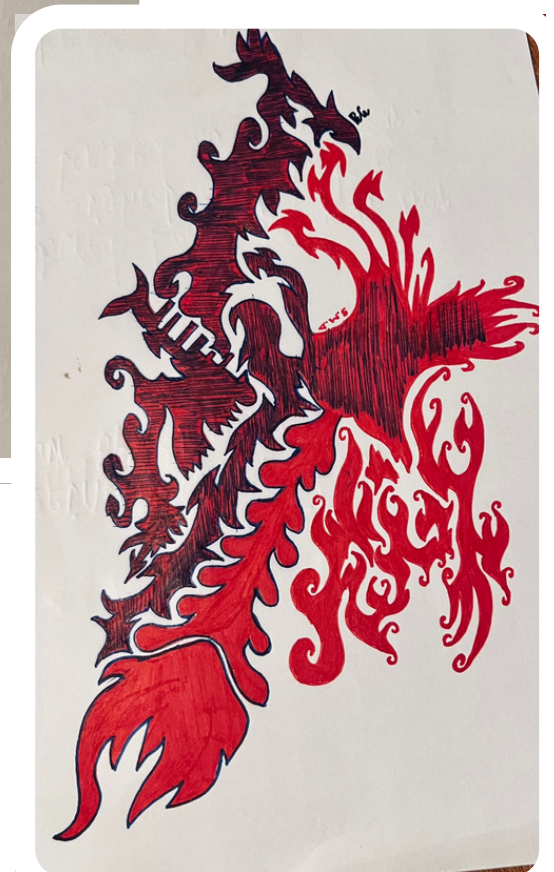


Name: Anaya Bhattacharya (Tua) **Age:** 9 years



“Painting seems like some kind of peculiar miracle that I need to have again and again.”

— Philip Guston



- Rishabh Ganguli

“We must have design in a picture even at the expense of truth. You are using nature for your artistic needs.”

— John F. Carlsons



Every candle deserves great respect because they light us by burning their bodies and destroying themselves!

- Sharmistha Bhattacharya

Charaiveti Charaiveti !

।চরৈবেতিচরৈবেতি
রঞ্জনামুখার্জী

চরৈবেতিচরৈবেতি চরৈবেতি নিরন্তরম,
আসুকনাকো যতই বাধা, করবোসবই অতিক্রম।
চলারপথে আসবে বাধা, উঠবেতুফান ঝড়,
নির্ভয়েএগিয়ে যাব প্রতিজ্ঞায় অনড়।

দেখবোনাকো পিছু ফিরে,চলবোসত্যের পথে,
স্বনির্ভরতায়এগিয়ে যাব আত্মবিশ্বাসের সাথে।
আয়নারমত রশ্মি করবো প্রতিফলিত,
আঁধারেজ্বালিয়ে দীপ দূর করবোতমসা অবিরত।

নিজেরলক্ষ্যে থাকবো স্থির,রেখে আত্মবিশ্বাস,
সাফল্যেরসিড়ি চড়বো আমি করবো বিঘ্ন নাশ।
জীবনহবে চক্র সম, চলবোঅন্তবিহীন পথে,
সাফল্যেরসাঁকো পেরিয়ে পরবো জয়ের তিলকমাথে।

পাহাড়ীঝর্ণা হয়ে পড়বো ঝরেনদী গাত্রে,
উন্মুক্তমোহনায় মিশবো এগিয়ে পবিত্রতম ধরা-পাত্রে।
সার্থকহবে জীবন জনম ,ধন্যহবে সম্মুখ পথ চলা,
উপনিষদেরমহান বাণী স্মরণ করেহই যেন প্রাণ চঞ্চলা।।

- Ranjana Mukherjee

Events

AZ Samhita Durga Puja Celebration



Biggest Durga Puja Celebration in the Valley
happening over 3 days

20th, 21st and 22nd Oct 2023

Bollywood Night

Bhog & Arati

**Multi-Day Pujo
with Pushpanjali**

**Cultural
Performances**

**Sonkho
Competition**



**For Details on pricing & schedule
Please follow the QR code**

**Venue: Mesquite Junior High School
130 W Mesquite St. Gilbert, AZ 85233**

AZ Samhita Durga Puja Celebration



Friday Dinner: Food Menu

Veg: Veg Chop, Pulao, Shahi Paneer, Sweets

Non-Veg: Tuna Chop, Pulao, Chicken Kosha, Sweets

Kids: Veg Noodles, Juice

Saturday Lunch:

Adults: Khichudi, Beguni, Mixed Veg., Sweet, Misti Doi

Kids: Mac & Cheese, French Fries, Veggies, Juice

Saturday Dinner:

**Veg: Fried Rice, Malai Kofta, Paneer with mixed-veg.,
Rasmalai**

**Non-Veg: Fried Rice, Mutton Kosha, Paneer with mixed-veg.,
Rasmalai**

Kids: Pizza, Juice

Sunday Lunch:

All: Pulao, Paneer Tikka Masala, Mixed Veg., Sweets

Evening snacks - Samosa / Jalebi

**Venue: Mesquite Junior High School
130 W Mesquite St. Gilbert, AZ 85233**



Friday, Oct 20th
2023

BOLLYWOOD Night

**This year we are not only bringing one but two Singers
for a Dhamakedar night, from INDIAN IDOL and
SAREGAMAPA**

For tickets: <https://azsamhita.org/wp>



Mesquite Junior High School
130 W Mesquite St,
Gilbert, AZ 85233



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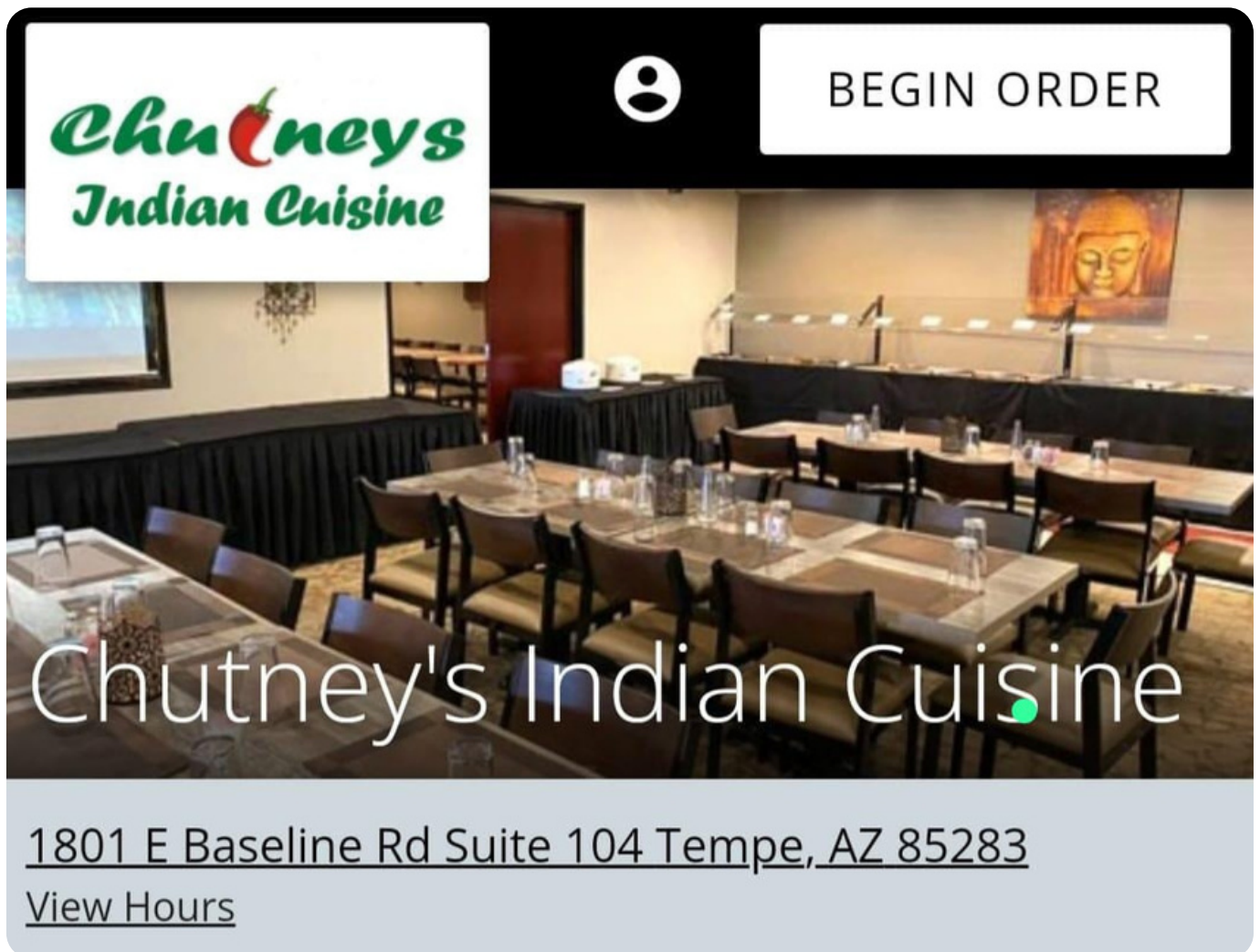


Food Needs No Translation.



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Chutney's Indian Cuisine



Chutney's
Indian Cuisine

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Chutney's Indian Cuisine

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THANK YOU!!