

A photograph of actor Raghuvaran in a red and yellow costume with a black cap, looking directly at the camera. The background is a mix of blue and brown.

October, 2020 Espresso

Magazine

Grub Hub

Navratri Special

Celeb Talk

Celebrating Durga
Puja @The New Normal

Raghuvaran
Juyal

*On The Big
Move*



 RIZHAAR®

EDITOR'S LETTER



With the sound of dhak, the aroma of shiuli flowers, and the fragrance of the dhunuchi, we can aura the festivities in the air. The City of Joy is decking up to welcome Maa Durga, and have not let the pandemic restrain the essence of these festivities. Last three months of this year, we will witness an entire festive season including Navratri, Durga Puja, Dussehra, Diwali, and finally Christmas. Keeping all these things in mind, in October, we have curated a special segment of Durga Puja.

Our celeb talk section comprises of Durga Puja special interviews with some of the eminent celebrities who share their childhood memories regarding this auspicious festival. On the other hand, you will also get to know the behind-the-scenes story of 'The King of Slow Motion Dance' Raghav Juyal, as our Cover Boy. Also, celebrity drape artist Dolly Jain shares her journey from an ordinary homemaker to an infamous drape artist.

The fashion world welcomes a new avatar by spreading its wings into the digital transition. In this month, we featured first-ever phygital, Lotus Makeup India Fashion Week Spring Summer 2021. Over 40 designer presented their innovative collection in a different way.

This month we will celebrate a mix of culture, scrumptious and delicious recipes, and dosage of vibrant chaos that will surely leave you happy and cheerful throughout the festivities.

Rituparna Sengupta Basu
Editor
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THE
CHANAKYA

As everyone gradually has got a grasp how to live with this pandemic, the fashion world too accepting a new avatar by spreading its wings with the idea of digital transition after the successful and victorious virtual edition of India Couture Week 2020, Fashion Design Council Of India kick started their first ever phygital, Lotus Makeup India Fashion Week Spring Summer 2021, with DLF Emporio/The Chanakya as the luxury partner.



'The Declaration 2034' Shantanu & Nikhil

2020 has been a year of ardent emotions for us, more so as **Maison Shantanu & Nikhil** celebrates 20 years of its brand existence, while the world recoils to a new definition of normal.

For the first ever digital runway at the LMIFW, S&N by Shantanu and Nikhil presents a glimpse of their new world through 'The Declaration 2034'. The collection transports you to an almost utopian world where gender fluidity, equality, right to privacy and evolved consciousness become the basic fundamental rights. In a harmonious narrative of science and conscience, the collection is a futuristic spin on the new scaffolds of society and the referendum of neo-governance.

The Declaration 2034 reinstates signature Shantanu & Nikhil attributes through renewed military influences & empowering sartorial layering, hued in a classic palette of decadence and power of navy's, off whites, olives & blacks. A congregation of insignias, authoritarian silhouettes with patriotic-chic styling immediately transcends you to a tranquil world where heritage embraces spunk.



Bloom in Love- Geisha Designs by Paras & Shalini

We're often so lost in living life through other's eyes that we forget the bliss of being ourselves. Through this collection, we wish to unfurl the very basics of life, that is, 'enjoying it'.

Gentle lightness of these dresses reverberate the essence of blithe while the merry floral prints are in fact a reflection of freedom.

Like a flower grows best with sunshine, we desire to bloom the same way with love. Also, inspired from this concept of self-love, we kept the garments breezy and flowy. And just to top it off with a Geisha element, we supported the celebration of life.

It is all about loving yourself!





Ode Samant Chauhan

Samant Chauhan presents his collection "Ode" at the first-ever phygital edition of Lotus Make-up India Fashion Week, Spring Summer '21, luxury partner DLF Emporio/The Chanakya.

This is an ode to the colours . Colours of reimagining a world in memory. It is an attempt to redefine those old structure silhouette with cold shoulder and low necklines in silk fabric. Most of it is a homage to changing moods and absence, which endure despite love and other fleeting happiness. This collection speaks everything we are going through, a perspective beyond those whites and neutral. Using a signature fabric with silver and metal work embroidery and trying to experiment with what they can do with what is out there.



Vintage Glamour Gauri & Nainika

Fresh, free-spirited and as always, utterly feminine, the *Gauri & Nainika* Spring-Summer 2021 collection takes you on a journey that is uplifting where beauty and nature set the mood for a sunlit summer romance.

From Victorian inspired florals to a soft Dutch inspired delft print in leaf-green, a variety of prints have been used in the collection. The line includes a range of wartime inspired demure pencil dresses, wrap dresses and shirt dresses that have been made in a vintage colour palette of scarlet red, bottle green and classic black.

One also sees some easy to wear, flowy crepe dresses in the line which stand out because of the stark colours that have been used.

A particular story that stands out in the collection is a trio of dresses in a berry coloured hand painted polka dot and striped

print that are for those who are looking to make a strong statement.

Adding a touch of vintage glamour, the line has been dotted with highlights of small black velvet roses that give a romantic and luxurious feel to the garments.

True to the brands design sensibility, volume, drama and signature soft sculpted flowers find their way in classic full skirted tea length dresses. Statement making dreamy diaphanous floral printed tulle has been used in floor length gowns with sweeping cape sleeves for those looking to add a dash red carpet glamour to their wardrobe.

The collection is also an ode to their clients, the Gauri & Nainika woman, who have identified with a brand over the years and keeping what they have loved in mind, they have tried to create and reimagine styles that been their favourites.



The Age Of Innocence

Tarun Tahiliani

Bright lights, big rooms and thousands of people. That was the pre-pandemic wedding. Marigolds strewn across the grass, soft hues, the faint smell of its and the warmth of your closest comrades— welcome to the weddings of the present, that take us back in time. Tarun Tahiliani studio takes a moment to think about the bride of today and what her heart would want.

The primary inspirations for this collection was the hidden minakari work one normally sees in fine Indian jewellery. That design and those details are only for the wearer. The studio to develop the new collection in minakari colours – aquas, shell pinks, pale jades and tea roses. It was the juxtaposition of this inspiration with that of Jaamevars that gave birth to our new vision for the 'India Modern' bride.

The studio in its 25th year has recreated its earlier renditions of the Jaamevaar. Only this time they are exquisite pieces that have prints that have been originally hand painted and then heavily hand-embroidered. The result was distinctive yet modern pieces that are weightless and yet extremely rich. They are mixed with textiles of brocade.

The new Jaamevaar couture collection is not just for The Tarun Tahiliani bride, it is also one that transcends gender. The studio has reimaged the same Jaamevar techniques for the groom and done another rendition for the bride. It is an age-old weave, a piece of art once worn by royalty that has come alive in our own signature way. Modern fits and silhouettes, lehengas with pockets that weigh almost nothing. This our celebration of freedom, lightness and love.

It's the same kind of lightness that you find within you, on your big day. The belief that you're celebrating something truly special, a once in a lifetime kind of moment. The calm that only comes when you're surrounded by those who truly love you. This is the year of special moments, of simpler times, of going back to our roots to celebrate all that we were and more. It is after all, a return to the age of innocence.



Lyana- Celebrate The Light Within You

This festive season, usher with positivity celebrating deeply rooted traditions and the festivities your own way. Adding to the festive fervor Lyana to celebrate the light within you.

This new collection brings together traditional designs weaved with glamour of gold in ultra-modern silhouettes. Lyana has a range of 14 Karat light-weight pure gold and diamond jewellery designs in earrings, pendants, bracelets and rings. The collection is inspired by the rich heritage of Indian classics but infused with the Japanese minimalism philosophy.

'Lyana' from Mia is an ode to this unfaltering light which leads the way for

everyone around her and makes this world a little bit more wonderful. The latest collection is a unique blend of dainty and contemporary designs with a subtle touch of traditional aesthetics.

The Mia woman loves to dress- up and add just the right amount of bling to her festive avatar lending a multifaceted look that expresses her personality. The new collection is full of panache, elegance, traditional fusion and is synonymous to festive vibes.

Celebrate the spirit of festivity with Mia's Lyana festive collection. The collection will be available across all Mia stores in India



FASHION Celebrate Festivities With Your Loved Ones

Tasvi

Taneira presents Tasvi, an exquisite collection of sarees inspired by the cultural and design elements of the three Goddesses – Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati. Boasting of a diverse range of pure and handcrafted silks from Chanderi, Maheshwari to Banaras and Kanchipuram, the collection brings alive the spirit of auspiciousness and festivity with vibrant tones, rich embroidery, intricately carved motifs and traditional craft techniques of the age-old weaves. From the luxurious silks to the perfect translucence of silk cottons, this collection has something for everyone. Starting at a price of INR 5,000 for silk cotton sarees and going up to INR 35,000 for the heavier silks. The stitched & unstitched salwaar kameez ensembles range between INR 5,000 and INR 16,000.



Deccan Treasures

Nebula presents Deccan Treasures that boasts of exquisitely crafted timepieces showcasing the royal heritage of the Deccan. The collection comprising of four women's watches and four men's watches entails delicate shapes and fine craftsmanship inspired by the bygone era. These handcrafted works of art flourished with Jadai, Moti Piroi and stone carving techniques are perfect for the upcoming festive season! The collection is available in the price range of ₹ 95,000 to ₹ 3,50,000.

Fastrack Ruffles Collection

The Fastrack Ruffles collection is power packed with elegance and glamour. Inspired by pleats in pastel shades, a popular choice for the chic young girls of today and a rising fashion trend.

The new bags and watches incorporate the classic apparel design style of pleats and folds which sets the Ruffles collection an edge apart. The watches integrate patterns such as creases, wet folds, and pleats on dials and give them a detailed depth. The dial designs, subtle pastel straps, and other contrasting elements of the watches make this collection bold, sophisticated and eye-catching.

The Ruffles bags range from distinctly modern and hip fanny packs to the ever useful sling and satchel bags which are designed to add style to any and all outfits. These stylish bags in pastels & patterns from the collection are perfect for the girls because no matter what people say, a diva has to slay



DIWALI SPECIAL

Don't Let Quarantine Mess Up the Celebrations

The pandemic of COVID 19 and the lockdown have had adverse effects on the whole world. But the festive season has started all across the country and now people are looking forward to better spirits and celebrating Diwali in the coming month.

For Hindus, Diwali is the biggest festival of the year. Gone are the days when people would send only traditional gifts. Izhaar, your One Stop Shop for Luxury Gifting, their trending gift category includes quirky and innovative items such as Ebony Manka Collection, Peshkari Silver collection, Gingham Cappuccino Collection, Gifting Hamper, Golden Manka Collection to name a few.

Izhaar specialises in Bespoke & Sustainable Gifting. Due to this pandemic, it has launched its latest collection online! Celebrate the auspicious occasion of Diwali by gifting your dear ones with something truly special.

Izhaar believes that gifting for any occasion is an experience & expression of joy and the products are curated with love keeping in mind that very emotion!

Izhaar offers a wide range of gifting options to celebrate this day. Innovative designs and intricacy is the USP!

Curated specially for this day, all the products in this collection are bound to make this occasion extra special!

Let's be real – who doesn't love receiving beautifully wrapped gifts that hint of exotic treats, exquisite

bling or something mysterious and exciting... Be it Durga Puja, Eid, Diwali, Christmas, farewells, baby showers, birthdays – there's always an occasion to delight a loved one with the perfect gift. . Izhaar allows you to give a personal touch to each gift so that it becomes unique.

Price- Starting from Rs. 1,000 onwards



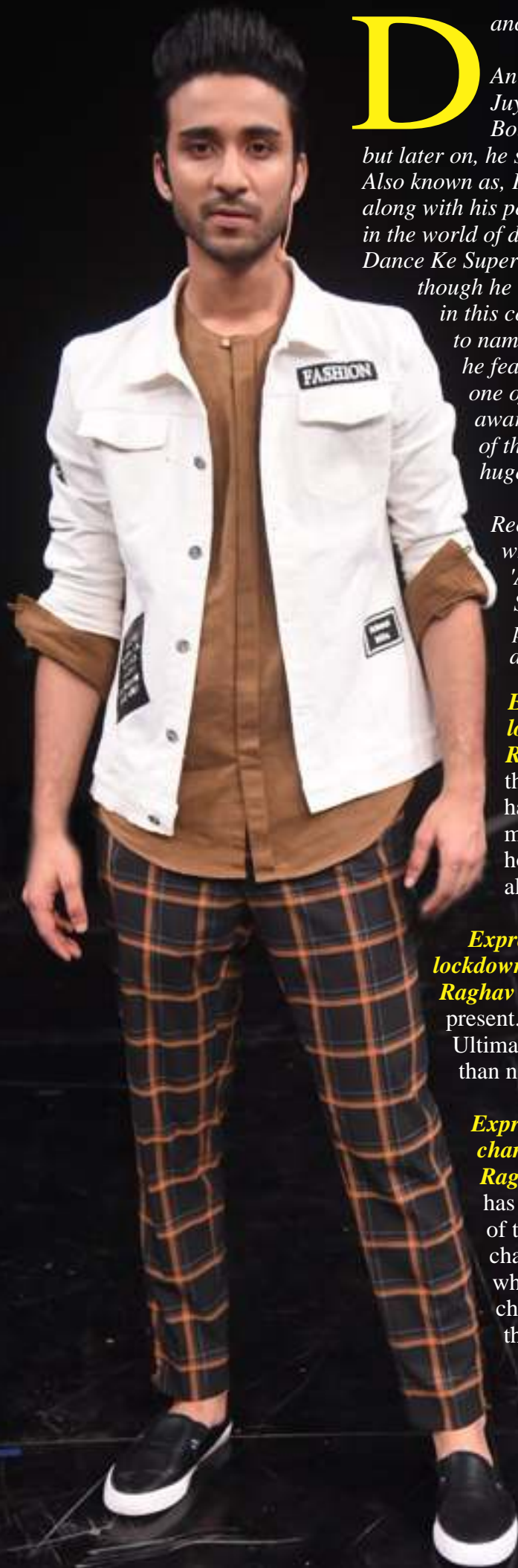
COVER STORY

Raghu Jugal

On The Bigger Screen

Photographer - Amit Verma
Makeup - Suhas Kondvilkar
PR Agency - Communication Heights

Rituparna Sengupta Basu



Dance is the hidden language of the soul” – Martha Graham. An inspirational dancer and a polished actor, Raghav Juyal is one of the most talented personalities in Bollywood. Although his beginning was not that smooth, but later on, he stood out of the crowd with his outstanding qualities. Also known as, King of Slow Motion in India, his sensuous dance moves along with his percussive 'Slow Motion Walk' made him an eminent face in the world of dance. He gained limelight from Dance India Dance, Dance Ke Superkids, and other popular dance reality shows. Even though he is not a trained dancer, but he made a successful place in this competitive industry. Raghav has acted in many films and to name a few would be Sonali Cable, ABCD 2, and recently he featured in Street Dancer 3D. Remo D'Souza found him as one of the best and energized dancers from India. He is even awarded with Umed Puraskar. Overall, he has become one of the eminent faces from the dance industry and achieved a huge name and fame within a short span.

Recently, Raghav was seen in the never before dark shade, which is unusual from his personality, thriller drama 'Abhay 2' directed by Ken Ghosh. His recent released Satirical Comedy movie 'Bahut Hua Samman' which is a political satire gathered appraisal from the audience and critics.

Expresso: How do you spend most of the time in the lockdown?

Raghav Juyal: Work has started and shooting too. So now the attention is on that. But at the start of the lockdown, I had gone to Uttarakhand, Dehradun. I spent time with my mom, dad, and younger brother. I'm privileged to have a house, good food, parents, shelter. There was also nature all around, so social distancing was not a problem.

Expresso: What new things did you learn during the lockdown?

Raghav Juyal: I learned a lot like how to be in the being and present. I learned acceptance, no matter whatever comes. Ultimately, I realized there's nothing more significant or vaster than nature.

Expresso: In Abhay 2, you're coming never before seen character. Tell us about it?

Raghav Juyal: It is a dark character with a lot of layers. He has a traumatized past, and one loses mental balance because of that. His history informs his present. When it comes to the character, I focused on body language, thought process, what affects me, so it shows on camera. It was a challenging role since I'm a jolly person in life, contrary to the dark character.

Expresso: How did you prepare for it?

Raghav Juyal: I prepared for it through a physicality and body language change, not to mention mental space. The process included tapping into past, life experiences, and

parallel imagination. I also read the script a lot to empathize with the character to play it. I asked myself why he is like this. It helped me realize this is his world, and the world misunderstands him. The director was very happy with what I brought to the table, and I learned a lot from him.

Expresso: Any scene that is close to your heart?

Raghav Juyal: The climax is very close to my heart.

Expresso: What was the best moment of shooting?

Raghav Juyal: Shooting with Ken Ghosh sir, is amazing. He's always there. When he used to come, and you could connect with him on one page, it was positively encouraging. With the director and actor on the same page, the work is automatically elevated.

Expresso: What do you have to say about the drastic character change from comedy to dark? Were you looking to make the change?

Raghav Juyal: It is not so easy to get roles in Mumbai, so I didn't put a lot of thought into it. You can't always get the roles you want. I just want to do whatever parts come my way. I want to do different characters to show versatility. Here, the audition went well, so I got cast in it. But saying that, I always want to explore different things as an actor, while keeping morals and all in mind.

Expresso: Tell us about your journey to becoming the slow-motion king?

Raghav Juyal: I started as a dancer, and it was a fun time. Unity among dancers in the community is a very positive feeling. Terence sir, let me stay in the studio. My time at Dance India Dance, when I was in Veera Desai, was a fun time. Then I came as an anchor; now, as an actor, I'm getting different roles and love from the people. I'm constantly learning and working on the craft after acting training. I've worked with talented people and want to improve acting.

Expresso: What is the importance of Dance India Dance in your career?

Raghav Juyal: It has been crucial for me. 'Dance India Dance' has been a turning point and the start of my journey in Mumbai. I gained recognition, and my dance style became known for being unique. Since then,

I started earning good money and began to find my footing in the industry.

Expresso: As a young boy in Dehradun, you learned from YouTube videos. How important is YouTube for performers?

Raghav Juyal: It is very important since hip hop wasn't so famous back then. Workshops from other artists through youtube and dance move of Michael Jackson helped me. One can learn everything on YouTube, from cooking to horse riding.

Expresso: What were the challenges of entering Bollywood, being from Dehradun?

Raghav Juyal : It all started with the dance auditions where I wasn't selected. But, the people liked me, and I came back on public demand. In Bollywood, people get lost despite reality shows. One has to work hard, maintain oneself and keep working on their craft. If someone does good work, you can make it in Bollywood. You may gain fame quickly, but it is temporary. Art and craft are forever. I don't need big productions and can work on small talented projects - short films or plays anything that is good.

Expresso: How do you deal with failures?

Raghav Juyal: Mistakes are miracles for me. There are so many auditions from which one gets a positive callback. There's a struggle. Through failures, you get to learn, and every audition teaches something. I think of myself as a student, and so I take failure as part of life. But I try not to get too affected by it. My motto is to live and learn and keep working.

Expresso: What is the one thing you miss about Dehradun?

Raghav Juyal: I miss the nature and the time people give to each other. Hills, rivers, times with friends, how time stands still, the value of survival - it all comes back to me now and then. In Dehradun, there is snow; one has to gather wood to light a fire. There is a fight for survival, which is lacking to some extent in city life. I understand and respect the value of nature, so I keep going back home.

Expresso: Among dancing, acting, hosting, what's best for you?

Raghav Juyal: Whichever gives the most fun. The vision of an artist should remain



open. For now, acting is fun; plays are fun, scripts are fun. I can show dance movements in acting. I try mixing my talents - looking for individuality. It makes me feel like a kid who's learning something new.

Expresso: Being a dancer, who was your inspiration?

Raghav Juyal: A lot of people, including my father. He doesn't drink or smoke but dances so openly that he seems intoxicated. Michael Jackson was, of course, a major influence too.

Expresso: What are three things no one knows about you?

Raghav Juyal : Sometimes, I get serious, wear two different socks - not matching pairs. The rest, everyone knows.

Expresso: What is one dream you constantly saw as a child or growing up?

Raghav Juyal: I always dreamt of being a performer to entertain people. Now also, I want to be a good performer. I dream and then work very hard to achieve it. Once I get it, I get a new dream. I've tried my hand at dance and hosting. After doing well in both, I want to be the best performer by acting. My aim is to ensure that individuality is upheld. That is why I tried to bring a different hosting style. Now, I'm working hard to make it as an actor.

Expresso: What is the last thing you Googled?

Raghav Juyal: Raghu Rai, the photographer. He's India's best photographer, and I was looking up his book, A God in Exile. It is about the fourteenth Dalai Lama, and I was looking for photos of that.

“

A lot of people, including my father. He doesn't drink or smoke but dances so openly that he seems intoxicated. Michael Jackson was, of course, a major influence too

”



A full-body photograph of actor Raghav Juyal standing with his hands on his hips. He is wearing a vibrant red blazer over a white shirt with a pink and red floral pattern, paired with matching red trousers and white sneakers. He is positioned on the left side of the frame against a dark, textured background that appears to be a stage or studio setting with some equipment visible.

Expresso: What is the book you're recently reading?

Raghav Juyal: I'm reading Court Martial, a play by Swadesh Deepak. I'm also reading the script for a new film.

Expresso: Is there any relationship rule you always follow?

Raghav Juyal: I don't have any relationships now. But when I do, I follow the rules that are made at that time.

Expresso: What was the last trekking spot?

Raghav Juyal: I think Uttarkashi. No, I think it was Chopta. It was at Chandrashila Uttarakhand, at 14000 ft. But I can't trek for a year, play football, or dance due to a ligament tear.

Expresso: What was the last show you watched?

Raghav Juyal: I think it was Sex Education on Netflix. But I also loved Peaky Blinders on the same platform, and remember watching it.

Expresso: What is your favorite outfit?

Raghav Juyal: Boxers!

Expresso: What is your style statement?

Raghav Juyal: I don't have a particular style statement as such, but kurta jeans very comfy. I wear whatever I feel like.

Expresso: What is the sexiest thing about you?

Raghav Juyal: My legs!

Expresso: If you had to, describe these in 1 word - Remo, Dharmesh, Shakti Mohan, Dance Plus Five, Dance India Dance?

Raghav Juyal: Remo D Souza - big brother, Dharmesh - my friend, Shakti Mohan - "ooff," Dance Plus 5 - home, Dance India Dance - beginning.

Expresso: Describe yourself in 3 words...

Raghav Juyal: I am growing.

Expresso: What childhood memory is close to your heart?

Raghav Juyal: It is at my grandma and grandpa's house. All brothers there would take me for a walk in the evenings. Whatever I'd ask, they'd answer imaginatively. It created new worlds for me.

Expresso: What is an important life lesson you learned with time?

Raghav Juyal: Everything is temporary - feelings, mood, corona, body, yourself. If I'm in a bad mood one day, I know the mood will change the next day.

RUNWAY

Chokho Churu

A sleepy yet quaint, dusty yet intriguing town, the gateway to the Great Indian desert, Churu, situated amidst the shifting golden sand dunes, lies 280 km to the west of New Delhi, in the historic Shekhawati region, in northern Rajasthan. A number of India's richest families, including the steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, have their roots here.



By Sangita Marda Agarwal
Sunrise watcher & Story teller
Co Founder - Thirty Three and Third
Consultants

I flew from Mumbai to the Jaipur International Airport at Sanganer. Madho Singh, a tall burly rajput with a thick moustache, met us at the arrival gate. He drove us North West, on the National Highway 65, in his green pajero, for four hours, to reach Churu.

Enroute, we stopped for 'darshan' at the famous Salasar Balaji temple in Salasar town.

I am glad we agreed to Madho Singh's recommendation and halted at a road side dhaba outside Salasar. While we lounged on the coir charpoys, we were served a sumptuous thali of dal bati choorma, which we washed down with a big copper glass filled with 'chaas'.

It was a little before sunset when our vehicle entered Churu.

This is the town to which my Dadaji belonged. The town where my father grew up, back in the 30s and 40s, with his siblings. As I stood in the narrow lane, in front of my Dadaji's haveli - nothing seemed to have changed, since my last visit here.

Churu stands still. Ensconsed in a time wrap. The sand from the hour glass seems to slowly sift down. Very slowly.

I stood staring at the big iron lock on the haveli gate, thinking about the innumerable stories running amok in my mind, that I had heard from my father, about his childhood days here in the desert.

I have my own stories to remember too. Of scorching summer afternoons and chilly winter nights, spent here during my school holidays.

Yes, everyone who follows the weather report knows, that Churu is in the news every year, as the town with the highest temperature in summer and the lowest during the winters.

I woke up early next day, to a beautiful desert morning . I was lucky to see a peacock and a peahen playing together in the neighbouring surrounds. The chiming bells tied around a camel's neck, made music, while the animal pulled a wooden cart. Its reigns and bridle gently controlled by a man wearing a multicoloured turban (Paag or Safa) on his head and a simple dhoti-kurta to go with it.

I saw a few women wearing Ghaghra (Long skirt) and Kanchli (top) with a lot of silver jewellery, walking by, doing their morning chores.

It was as though the legendary lovers Dhola and Maru were somewhere around.

Churu has narrow lanes where carts drawn by donkeys and mules are often seen too. Otherwise most of the old town is quiet and deserted.

The grand havelis of Churu are famous for their marvellous fresco paintings and beautiful murals on outer walls. But the frescos and murals on the havelis in our lane are all fading due to lack of care. The imposing

iron gates of each home, were permanently shut, with huge iron locks. Their residents had moved to larger towns and cities to make a living.

We decided to go on a haveli trail, beyond our lane. On our itinerary, were the colourfully painted, twin havelis of Surana brothers, built in 1871. The Hawa Mahal has 1,111 doors and windows !! Next was the Bagla haveli.

Outer decor elements in these havelis include fluted and round columns, carved stone brackets, and cusped arches. Latticed windows with coloured glass decor, and sun-shades, are not just for ventilation, they enhance aesthetics too.

We now moved to the famous haveli of Mal ji Kothari and Mal ji ka kamra. There's a sharp difference in the architecture of the two Kothari buildings. While the haveli has traditional frescoes, the rangmahal, (kamra) built in 1920, has Italian influences like columns and stucco decorations.

Twenty minutes to the north west of Churu is the Sethani ka Johra. A pond whose construction was funded in 1870 by the widow of a marwari millionaire, Bhagwan Das Bagla. It was built to generate jobs for the local population during the famine. It's a perfect backdrop to enjoy a cup of tea and watch the sunset over the chhatris around the Johra. The local shepherds, herd their goats and cows back home, while the dry sand blows around the setting sun. This was a sight to behold !

Back home, a few local musicians and folk singers came to perform in our nohra. Their lilting sound reverberated in the night sky.



Our third day in Churu began with a hearty breakfast of bajra roti, curd and garlic chutney.

We boarded a local ride, an auto rickshaw and headed to the Jain temple with incredible mural art and glass paintings on its walls and ceiling. This was near the Jatthi ji ka Paasra.

Unlike the old town, which is deserted and quiet, Churu market is bustling with sights, sounds and smells of all kinds.

The dried red chillies, which are fiery like the desert sun, are an absolute must buy from here. So is Ker, a sour green berry which grows on thorny bushes. One can buy it like a pickle or raw. It's the perfect ingredient to make the famous local dish - ker sangri ! Next on my list was the kachri powder.

The bell tower or Ghantaghar, red doorway of the Churu fort and the museum Nagar Sri are all close by.

Late afternoon, it was time to relish some pyaaz ki kachori and masala chai from a local tea stall. There was so much more to see and experience, but Madho Singh informed in his burlesque voice, that it was time for us to head back to Jaipur.

Already ? I mused aloud. Because there was still so much to see and so much to do. I knew, this visit was not enough and I would be back soon, to spend some more time soaking and exploring my 'Chokho' Churu !!



Celebrating Durga Puja Amidst

"#The New Normal"

Nabanita Dutta



With the scent of 'shiuli phool' and cotton-like clouds, 'Devi Aradhana' finally begins with Durga Puja. The essence of happiness with new outfits and meeting closed ones no doubt gives heart-filled enjoyment for five days. Late-night pandal hopping, fast foods, and authentic Bengali cuisine, Durga Puja is something every Bengali lives for. However, unlike every year, this year is different as the pandemic hit took everything for a toss. Therefore, Durga Puja would be different too. The happiness would be the same, keeping in mind the safety protocols because Durga Puja is an emotion for every Bengali. With social distancing and masked faces, the celebration has begun, and not just for the common people, but for the eminent Tollywood celebs too. Let us see what our dear celebs have to say about their idea of celebrating Durga Puja and how they would celebrate it this year.

Rituparna Sengupta

Expresso: *We wait for almost a year for this auspicious Durga Puja, so how have you planned to spend the Durga Puja 2020? How have Durga Puja celebrations changed over the years?*

Rituparna : A lot of things have changed this year, especially when it comes to Durga Puja. Situations have become difficult to plan for things or moments. I feel that everybody has to accept the puja keeping in mind the new normal context. For me, it is very different since I am in Singapore and all the associations have been told that there would be no puja this time. The government has made a bar to it only to avoid obvious situations. It is impossible to stop our hearts and therefore we planned for arranging puja at our respective homes. Cheerful Saptami, blissful Ashtami mornings, going out with friends. In Singapore, gatherings can only be limited to five people. The most important thing that I would miss is going to puja pandals and pushpanjali wearing a new saree. Then, eating 'bhog' and 'sindoor khela' at my mother's house. Durga puja has definitely changed over the years. In childhood, we use to go out with friends, and we had a division of friends. It was a beautiful time and I miss every bit of it.

Expresso: *What is your best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja?*

Rituparna: My best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja is going to the pandals wearing a new dress. In my childhood, I used to count dresses and compared them with my cousins. How many dresses my mother would get me. My relatives also used to give us dresses. I remember we used to count and differentiate on why I got fewer dresses than my cousins did and all. So, this comparison was always there and my mother used to tell me that this is what I can afford. Therefore, try to be happy with this. As kids, we were innocent and it was a great time.

Expresso: *"Pujo-r-Prem" is a very common term with us, Bengalis. Would you like to share any such memories with us?*

Rituparna: Pujo prem is something very exciting yet a lovable thing and I feel most of us have experienced that thing. Going out in groups, having a liking for someone, feeling a bit of pulse, visiting restaurants with special someone is always interesting. I feel that these things are the innocent and beautiful moments during the teenage phase or adulthood is something called Pujo prem for me.

Expresso: *Pujo means "pet pujo" to us in many ways so, any special food you have planned to try in this puja.*

Rituparna: This year puja would be completely different for me since I am in Singapore. Last year, I was in the US during puja, and in 2018, half of the puja I spent in Kolkata and half in Singapore. However, when it comes to pet pujo, the experience would always be the same for Bengalese, whether they are in Kolkata or any other place in the world. It is compulsory to have all the signature dish. I have some friends, who are a good cook and can make signature Bengali Durga pujo special dishes. Also, I would try my best to find pujo bhog from some of my close friends here and cook few dishes too.

Expresso: *Durga Puja is a major fashion fiesta for us, so whom are you going to wear in these four days of puja?*

Rituparna : I am not sure what I am going to wear for Puja this year. However, I have many beautiful traditional sarees, and Durga Puja is all about saree and traditional looks. Durga puja always makes me nostalgic. If I want to look beautiful, I would go for traditional sarees. I have some beautiful sarees from Bibi Russell's collection, some of my friends have also gifted me some amazing sarees. Apart from that, I am also looking forward to trying some new designers as well. I would advise everyone to keep a distance. Try to protect yourself and others and enjoy this puja.



Rudranil Ghosh

Expresso: *We wait for almost a year this auspicious Durga Pujo, so how have you planned to spend the Durga Puja 2020? How have Durga Puja celebrations changed over the years?*

Rudranil Ghosh: I would say that there are no such plans since this year's pujo would be completely different. Normally, we cannot go out for pandal hopping amidst the crowd, only due to our profession since many people come to meet us. Therefore, we have to manage the early hours for pandal hopping so that we can avoid the crowd. Therefore, this year I might go out for one or two days. Also, I have to visit the pandals for judgment; however, I am relieved that judgments are mostly done during the early morning hours. Apart from that, I would visit some of my close friends' houses like Jishu Sengupta, Parambrata Chatterjee, Abir Chatterjee, Srijit Mukherjee, and others.

Expresso: *What's your best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja?*

Rudranil Ghosh: I used to stay in Howrah, and during childhood, my friends and me, used to go out for collecting donations for pujo since it was quite adventurous. I remember that we used to request everyone to increase the donations every year. However, things are not the same anymore. The donation amount has increased now. So, I miss this memory a lot since people visit the pandals but are not aware of the people who did the hard work. The pujo committee who does the tiring job and the legwork of arranging remain behind the pandals. We used to do all these things in our childhood, but now these are not possible.

Expresso: *"Pujo-r-Prem" is a very common term with us, Bengalis; would you like to share any such memory with us?*

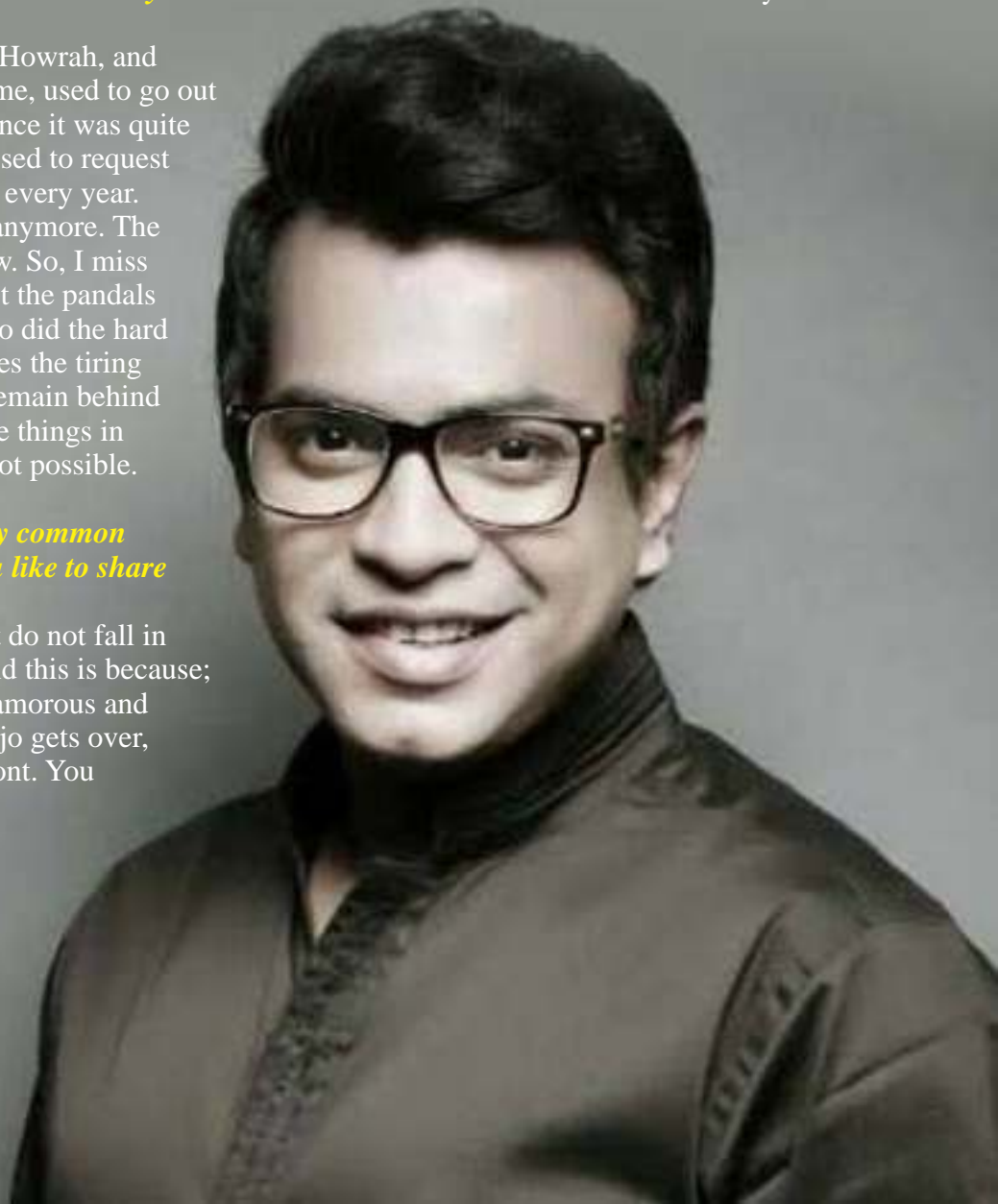
Rudranil Ghosh : I would say that do not fall in love during pujo. The reason behind this is because; everyone and everything seems glamorous and glittering during pujo. Once the pujo gets over, the real face of people comes in front. You might have noticed that after the festivals are over, the real side of human beings becomes visible. I have faced this once; therefore, I would say that it is better to avoid falling in love during pujo.

Expresso: *Durga Pujo brings along the term 'pet pujo,' so have you planned to try any special dish this year?*

Rudranil Ghosh : I always enjoy eating Indian traditional food, which has become rare these days. I still remember my mother used to cook some authentic Bengali dishes. Many restaurants are still there that makes such popular dishes, and I am planning to order it from there.

Expresso : *Durga Pujo is a major fashion fiesta for us, so whom are you going to wear in these four days of Puja?*

Rudranil Ghosh : "Panjabi" is a must for me, and fashion for me is something that matches my personality. I always feel free to be casual not only in my behavior but also in my outfits. I do not like wearing designer outfits. For me, the brand should not define me apart from my personality; otherwise, it would become difficult for me to carry.



Ram Kamal Mukherjee

Expresso: *We wait for almost a year this auspicious Durga Pujo, so how have you planned to spend the Durga Puja 2020?*

Ram Kamal Mukherjee : No plan this year. Just trying to stay safe. And I don't think Mumbai will have a lavish festival this year, so pandal hopping and puja addas won't be possible. As far as puja and anjali is concerned we will do it at home this year.

Expresso: *What's your best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja?*

Ram Kamal Mukherjee : That's never ending. It's been almost 20 years since I have not visited Kolkata during puja, due to my work commitment. I do miss the madness and energy of the city during those days. I remember how my parents would take me and my brother for pandal hopping, and we would divide the zone between the four days of puja. Of, course we would eat out and have street foods! Park Circus, Mudiali, Srêevumi, Md Ali Park, Santosh Mitra Square and College Square were are regular spots, apart from Kumortuli, Chalta Bagan and Kashibose Lane.

Expresso: *"Pujo-r-Prem" is a very common term with us, Bengalis; would you like to share any such memory with us?*

Ram Kamal Mukherjee : Sorry! Never had that experience. I was in love with the pandals and art work that they would install for four days. That was my Puja prem.

Expresso: *Pujo means "pet-pujo" to us in many ways, so, any special food you have planned to try in this puja?*

Ram Kamal Mukherjee: Like Kolkata, Mumbai also serves thaali and Bengali spread for lunch and dinner. We used to have one meal at Bhojohori Manna, Oh Calcutta,

Calcutta Club and Rajbari Rasoi. Not sure what would be the status this year. And of course we have street food joints like Jamai Shashti, Hangla, Kolkata Konnection and Bong Bong.

Expresso: *Durga Pujo is a major fashion fiesta for us, so whom are you going to wear in these four days of Puja?*

Ram Kamal Mukherjee : I prefer to wear pure cotton, as it is extremely humid in Mumbai. Ashtami is mandatory traditional kurta, otherwise I am mostly comfortable in my jeans and tees! This year I didn't shop and I don't think I will.



Shaheb Bhattacharya

Expresso: *We wait for almost a year this auspicious Durga Pujo, so how have you planned to spend the Durga Puja 2020? How have Durga Puja celebrations changed over the years?*

Shaheb Bhattacharya : Honestly, I am still not sure how I am going to spend this year Durga Pujo, especially due to the pandemic hit. Every year I have plans with my friends and family; however, this year things are becoming difficult for me to plan since I am not ready to go out with my family particularly. Apart from that, I am not supporting massively celebrating Durga Pujo this year in this COVID situation.

I have many shows during pujo and following the safety methods, the shows would be arranged. The only difference is, unlike in other years, this year the number of shows has been reduced.

Expresso: *What's your best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja?*

Shaheb Bhattacharya: The best memory of Durga Pujo that I miss these days is when my sister and I were small, used to feel extremely sad during the last day of pujo. The reason behind this is because the holidays are coming to end, we would not be able to wear new outfits. On Dashami, my father used to board us on the truck and he used to follow us. After a certain distance, we used to come down and dance in front of the truck. These are some of the memories that are dear to me, and I miss these memories a lot.

Expresso: *“Pujo-r-Prem” is a very common term with us, Bengalis; would you like to share any such memory with us?*

Shaheb Bhattacharya : I feel that there is nothing very fancy when it comes to “pujo r prem”. However, I cherish those innocent feelings when you like someone whom you saw in the pandal. Offering that special,

someone ice cream, or a bottle of cold drinks, etc. these are some of the things that I feel defines the term “pujo r prem” perfectly.

Expresso: *Pujo means “pet-pujo” to us in many ways, so, any special food you have planned to try in this puja?*

Shaheb Bhattacharya : Not only this pujo but also every year I plan to try a particular food, which is egg chicken roll. You would get this in the stalls behind Deshopriyo Park and I love that immensely. Although it is impossible to visit the stalls during normal times, so I with my friends, visit the stalls quite late at night around 3 am. I park my car away, take my friends, and do pandal hopping, and when I return, I have that famous egg-chicken roll. Apart from that, I also like to have those oil-drenched noodles from those fast-food stalls.

Expresso: *Durga Pujo is a major fashion fiesta for us, so whom are you going to wear in these four days of Puja?*

Shaheb Bhattacharya : It is something, which I would say I used to enjoy when I was small. I remember we used to decide about having ten dresses for five-day pujo. Even I demanded an extra one to two outfits for emergencies in case any outfit is damaged. However, things have changed now since I have to attend many parties and events, make appearances, so I have given the entire responsibility in the hands of the designers. They decide which outfit I should wear to events, parties, functions, etc.

The only thing, which I still love to maintain, is wearing maintaining Bengali traditions. I still wear Punjabi on Ashtami morning and meet my parents, have lunch with them. One of the traditions, which I still love to follow, is gifting traditional outfits to my parents and friends so that they can wear it on Ashtami morning. If I talk about any designer outfits, then I choose Pranay Vaidya, Debarun Mukherjee, and others.



Priyanka Bhattacharjee

Expresso : *We wait for almost a year for this auspicious Durga Puja, so how have you planned to spend the Durga Puja 2020? How have Durga Puja celebrations changed over the years?*

Priyanka : I still remember, during childhood, I always used to remain excited about new clothes and accessories. But, with age, I am more into going out with friends because I am not much into pandal hopping. This year, things would be completely different since I would strictly avoid pandal hopping as it would be too dangerous for me and my family. Therefore, this year too I would go out for long drives with my closed ones and of course, trying out new food.

Expresso : *What is your best childhood memory when it comes to Durga Puja?*

Priyanka : In my childhood Durga pujo was all about shopping. The feeling that we all used to get while going out for shopping was the most memorable one for me. Apart from that, having seven to ten outfits, pandal hopping with parents, and enjoying various street food like phuchka, are some of the best childhood memories, which I still love to cherish.

Expresso : *“Pujo-r-Prem” is a very common term with us, Bengalis. Would you like to share any such memories with us?*

Priyanka : Pujor prem is something quite special for girls and boys, even today. However, honestly, I did not have that experience earlier, and I am looking forward to experiencing it.

Expresso: *Pujo means “pet pujo” to us in many ways so, any special food you have planned to try in this puja.*

Priyanka : Durga pujo is all about enjoying different types of foods and dishes. Just like every other Bengali, I am also an extreme food lover; however, during this pujo, I would be on diet. Therefore, I would try some good continental dishes instead of other foods.

Besides, I love having street foods. I would miss eating street foods and other dishes at this pujo for sure.

Expresso: *Durga Pujo is a major fashion fiesta for us, so whom are you going to wear in these four days of puja?*

Priyanka : When it comes to Durga Puja, I prefer choosing ethnic. So I would be wearing either sarees or salwar suits. This year I have chosen unique and colourful sarees and one salwar suit.



Jewellery - Souravindro Creations
Hair - Anup Das
Photography - Rahul Basu
Brand - Suta Bombay

Paradise For Gastronome

**Baked Honey Glazed
Chilean Sea Bass**



The countdown has begun – and the city is decking up to warmly welcome the most awaited festival – Durga Puja. For every Calcuttan, Durga Puja is more than just a religious festival. The few days of celebrations are synonymous to a mix of culture, scrumptious meals, love & togetherness and a dosage of vibrant chaos.

Indian festivals are incomplete without indulging in good food. Kolkata, the 'City Of Joy' is a paradise for food lovers and notable eateries leave no stone unturned to offer patrons irresistible delights.

The culinary team of Royal China, Kolkata has thoughtfully introduced an array of all new appetizing dishes on their menu to celebrate Pujos.

This menu will be available from 13th October'20 onwards at Royal China and Lounge & Bar, by Royal China, Kolkata for guests to savor at the outlet.

The menu is an ode to the majestic world of Cantonese cuisine. Patrons can dig into exquisite dishes like, '*Panfried Pomfret in Black Bean Sauce*', '*Baked Chilean Sea Bass (Honey Glazed)*', '*Baked Salmon Garlic (Honey Glazed)*',

'Steamed Truffle and Pork Dumpling' and *'Steamed Shrimp and Pork Sui Mai'* to name a few.

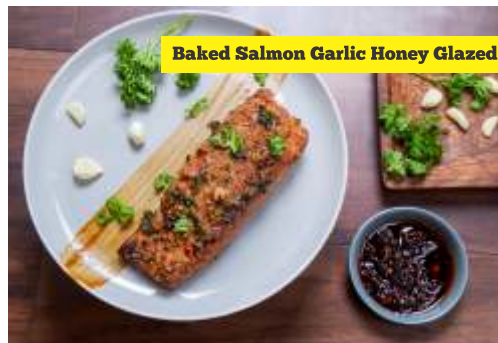
As no meal is complete without desserts, the Chef has introduced a selection of drool-worthy desserts, like, *'Tiramisu'*, *'Apple Pie'*, *'Toffee Walnut with Vanilla Icecream'* and *'Creme Brulee'* amongst a few others for a sinful ending.

There are several small aspects that give Durga Puja its identity. Keeping this in mind, both the outlet and the lounge will adorn a festive decor and will be lit up to welcome guests.

Additionally, all hygiene and safety measures are being adhered to. So, enjoy the essence of the festival with some delectable cuisine infused with love and served with warmth.



Tiramisu



Baked Salmon Garlic Honey Glazed



Steamed Truffle & Pork Dumpling



Apple Pie

Essence of the festival with delectable cuisine



Durga Puja is around the corner, and we cannot keep calm. The most celebrated festival in Bengal is knocking on our door, and no matter what the situation is, we are finding it extremely difficult to contain our excitement. However, this year's festivities will have a different flavour owing to the unforeseen circumstances that have currently plagued us. Still, Bengal is gearing up to celebrate the occasion in full swing, maintaining all the safety standards as well as adopting the necessary precautionary measures.

Durga Puja means "Adda," "Bhuribhoj," and "Pandal Hopping." These eateries are bringing you their Puja-special curation to satiate your palate.

The Lords And Barons ———

Located in the heart of Kolkata, this gastro lounge will give you a Victorian-era feel even during the puja days. The Lords and Barons have prepared a special puja menu to make you feel like a “Lord,” and their Durga puja special thalis are a must-try. Mojadar Pratrash, a special Bengali thali, comes with a plethora of options from which you can choose any one dish to your liking. These are - Dhakai Porota with cholar dal, Phulko luchi with Narkel diye Chholar Dal, Korai shutir Kochuri and Aloor Dom, and Bengali Porota with Aalu Fulkopir Torkari & Begun Bhaja. The prices range from INR 145 – INR 199.

Their Shwade-Aallade thalis could be the perfect fit for your lunch or dinner, with all the quintessential Bengali dishes on offer throughout the three courses - the starter, main course, and dessert. They are also offering Golpe Swade Tuktak, in case you want to pair the starter with a drink. Dimer Devil, Kabiraji Fish fry with cheese and Curry Patar Chutney, and Done Patar Chicken are some of the fascinating highlights of their menu.



Ekdalia Cocina ———

Tucked in the by-lanes of South Kolkata, Ekdalia Cocina is a cosy food joint serving global cuisine. They are doing something special this Durga Puja that underlines our uniqueness as a forward-thinking casual dining restaurant in this city. Ekdalia Cocina is coming up with a Continental Buffet - “EbarBangalirPujoySahebiKhawa,” which would be available for lunch and dinner. Starting with Soup, Veg/Non-Veg Starters to Pizzas, Pasta, Rice, Mains, and Desserts, their menu consists of 21 items, catering to your wide-ranging taste buds where you can find almost anything of your choice.

The pocket pinch for the buffet would be 599/- AI, special price available for children below 12 years!



Retro in Metro



Traffic Gastro-Pub —

Situated in Rajarhat, this gastro-pub is ruling our hearts with its amazing happy hour menu. This Durga Puja, it is introducing some exciting platters to get you stuck in traffic.

Apart from Alcoholic Concocts and Hookah menu, this pub has some exciting grubs like RETRO IN METRO - chicken & american corn pizza takes you back to 80s, LUNGI DANCE - spicy mutton masala cooked in south indian style served along with garlic paw, KHANDANI BABUMOSAI beer-battered fish served with french fries along with tartar sauce to name a few.

Lungi Dance



Ministry Of Booze

This Ministry always wins the polls and makes its voters happy. If you are looking for a calm and cosy place away from the hustle and bustle of busy streets, this restopub is perfect for you. This Puja, they are offering few specially curated dishes like Persia Chicken Tikka Kebab, Penne Alfredo, Korean Fried Chicken, and Chicken 65.

Korean Fried Chicken

Chicken 65



Aminia

Famous for its signature Mughlai dishes like Mutton Biryani, Pasinda Kebab, Chicken Chaap, etc., Aminia has been luring foodies from 1947 onwards when it first established its most popular outlet at Futnani Chambers. It has recently added new exciting combos to their menu, which won't make your pocket feel light. Family Chicken Meal, Chicken Biryani Meal, Budget Kebab Combo and many more Veg and Non Veg combo meals are there to sort your lunch/dinner during the Puja days.



Chicken Biryani Meal

Family Chicken Meal



Spice Up The Festive Season With A Match Made In Heaven!

Coco-Dulce Ladoos



October marks the beginning of a series of festivities across the country. From Navratri, Durga Puja to Dussehra and Diwali, this month heralds the arrival of one happy occasion after another. Try these recipes from **Chef Suvir Saran**, Chef and Owner at THC - The House of Celeste and make your celebrations extra special and memorable.

Who doesn't like the toasty taste of coconut? Hard to find anyone that would not get hungry around that scent and flavor. Add to that the comforting taste, texture and sweetness of dulce de leche and you are taken to places of comfort beyond even the moon.

Add shavings of dark chocolate into the condensed milk and cook it in a non-stick pan with some melted butter for a minute or two and you will literally gild the lily, or as they say it becomes "sone pe suhaaga".

In this recipe I have you tossing the sticky-wet ladoos in crushed Marie biscuits that have some cardamom powder tossed into them. You can also grind a nut of your choice, toasted of course, and use that as the cover for your ladoos. Want to make the ladoos dirtier and tastier still, do a mix of ground toasted nuts and biscuits. For absolutely and ridiculously decadent ladoos toss them in the best cocoa powder you can find. They become truffled ladoos.

If you want to be more decadent still, use gold dust and make these shine both in taste and looks. Use these as your perfect holiday gift and taste to offer as people visit.

Ingredients

- 2 cups coconut, fresh or dessicated
- 1 tin Amul Mithai Mate condensed milk
- 2-3 Marie Biscuits
- 3 cardamom pods, crushed into a fine powder

Preparation

- Boil the Mithai Mate tin in a saucepan, covered with water, for 3.5 to 4 hours, simmering all along and topping up with water as needed. Cool completely before opening the can.
- In a wide frying pan, toast the fresh or desiccated coconut until golden brown in color and set aside to cool.
- In a medium sized bowl add 3/4 cup of the golden brown colored caramelized Mithai Mate with 2 cups of the toasted coconut. Mix it well. With your hands or a scoop, shape this into ladoos. Place them onto a platter.
- When the ladoos have been formed, crush the Marie biscuits into a coarse powder and add the ground cardamom powder into this. Now drop the ladoos into the mix and coat them evenly. Do the same with the remaining ladoos.
- Chill in the refrigerator. Keep at room temperature for 5 minutes before serving. You can spray or toss the ladoos in 24 K gold or silver leaf for more dramatic effect if you do desire.





Mushroom Biryani

Serves 6 to 8

This is a vegetarian biriyani purely of my own invention. It is unusual that there are no onions or tomatoes in it; its flavor is based solely on mushrooms and a south Indian palate of spices. For a more substantial meal, add one can of drained chickpeas to the mushroom mixture. Serve this as a main course with raita, or as a sidedish. In India, we leave whole spices in the final dish, but if you prefer, you can pick out the whole spices before layering the rice into the casserole dish.

That it is without any onion and garlic, makes it totally a holiday recipe. But, rest assured, this is a dish that packs tons of flavor and hits all the right spots. Make this and add pinches of delicious masala to your festive entertaining

For the rice

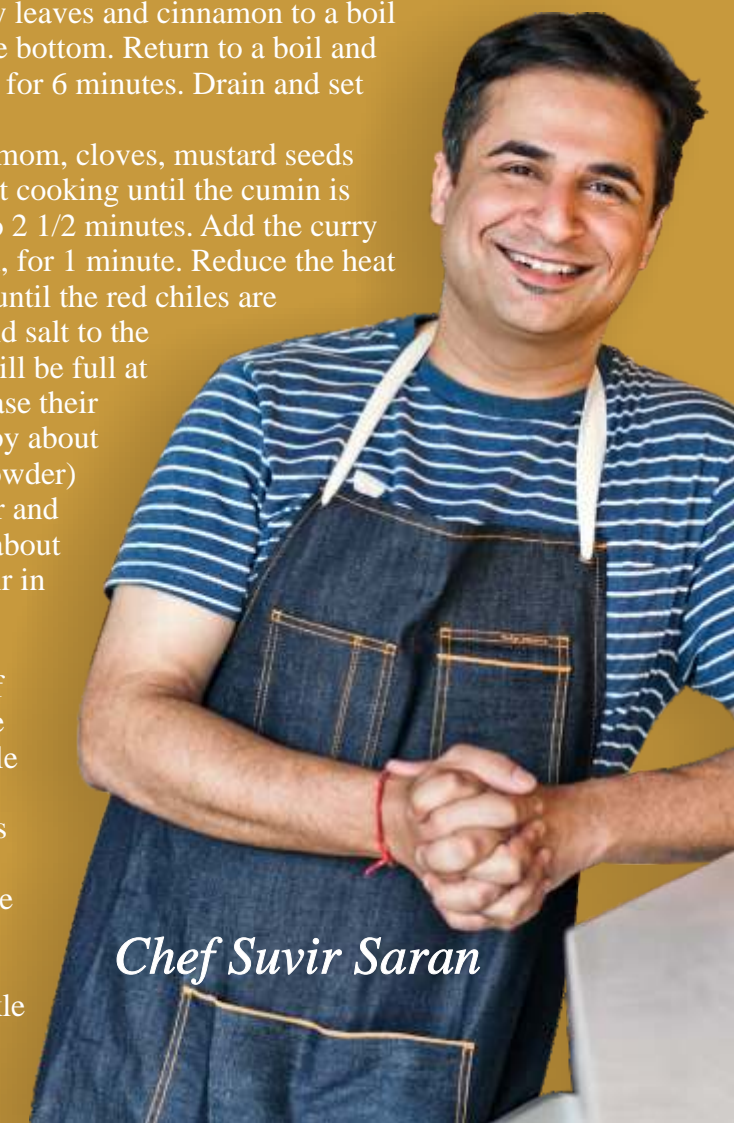
- 10 cups water
- 6 black peppercorns
- 4 whole cloves
- 4 green cardamom pods
- 2 bay leaves
- 1-inch piece cinnamon stick
- 2 cups aged basmati rice

For the biryani

- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 6 black peppercorns
- 6 green cardamom pods
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 36 curry leaves, roughly torn
- 2 to 6 dried red chiles
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 pounds white button mushrooms, trimmed and thickly sliced
- 1 tablespoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon sambhar powder
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly cracked peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter at room temperature
- 3/4 cup chopped coriander leaves and tender green stems
- 1/2 cup water

Preparation

- Bring the water, peppercorns, cloves, cardamom pods, bay leaves and cinnamon to a boil in a large pot. Add the rice and stir so it doesn't stick to the bottom. Return to a boil and reduce heat to a vigorous simmer. Cook, partially covered for 6 minutes. Drain and set aside (you can pick out the whole spices if you like).
- Heat your oven to 350°F. Heat the oil, peppercorns, cardamom, cloves, mustard seeds and cumin in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat cooking until the cumin is browned and the mustard seeds start to pop, about 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 minutes. Add the curry leaves, red chiles and the turmeric and cook, stirring often, for 1 minute. Reduce the heat to low, add the ground coriander and cook while stirring, until the red chiles are starting to darken, about 1 minute. Add the mushrooms and salt to the skillet and increase the heat to medium-high (the skillet will be full at this point). Cook, stirring often, until the mushrooms release their liquid and the total volume of the mushrooms is reduced by about 1/2, about 4 to 5 minutes. Mix in the sambhar (or curry powder) and then stir in the buttermilk. Bring to a vigorous simmer and cook until the liquid is reduced by 1/2 and slightly thick, about 8 to 12 minutes (there will still be quite a bit of sauce). Stir in the cracked pepper and turn off the heat.
- Grease a large 10-cup oven-safe casserole dish or Dutch oven (preferably one with a lid) with butter. Add 2 cups of the cooked rice, spreading it evenly over the bottom of the dish. Cover with 1/2 of the mushroom mixture and sprinkle with 1/3 of the cilantro. Evenly spread 1 1/2 cups of rice over the cilantro and cover with the remaining mushrooms and 1/2 of the remaining cilantro. Evenly spread the remaining rice on top and pour 1/2 cup of water around the edges of the dish. Cover tightly with aluminum foil, seal with a lid and bake for 35 minutes. Remove the casserole from the oven and let it stand 10 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle with the remaining cilantro and serve.



Chef Suvir Saran

RIISING STAR

Sridevi's Powerful Words Make Me Today's

Dolly Jain

Nabanita Dutta

From a homemaker to a professional saree and dupatta draper, Dolly Jain is one of the prominent names in the fashion industry.

Who said a woman could not be multi-talented? Dolly Jain, a Kolkata based professional draper tore down all the myths. She worked with some of the notable industrialists and celebrities like Sonam Kapoor to Isha Ambani. With her impeccable work, she has set example for all the women that saree is not something they should be scared of. In a recent talk with her, she opened up about her journey in saree draping.



Expresso: *From an ordinary woman to an eminent drape artist, how was the journey.*

Dolly: I got married when I was 21 years old. I never allowed to wear anything else apart from a saree. It is tough for me to shift from jeans and top to saree. I used to feel that wearing a saree is time taking since I was not accustomed to it, and why my family did not allow me to wear a kurta. However, later on, it became my habit. When I was pregnant, people used to compliment me on the way I used to carry a saree. Earlier, I never thought that I would make saree draping as a profession. Never in my imagination had I thought that I would turn out to be a professional draping artist and work with so many eminent people and celebrities.

Expresso: *Who inspired you to be an eminent drape artist?*

Dolly : My mother has been the biggest inspiration behind my name and fame today. I have always seen her wearing a saree and honestly, I have never seen her wearing anything else apart from that. I used to tell my mother why do not you wear jeans or kurta, and she used to tell me that she is comfortable in a saree. By the time I came into this profession, I understood that saree is a comfortable attire to wear. If you set your mind that a saree is not a comfortable garment, then even if I teach you everything about draping a saree, your perception would not change.

Expresso: *In how many ways you can drape sarees?*

Dolly : I can drape a saree in more than three hundred different ways. I have come up with a coffee table book so that none of the girls or women feel that whenever they open their wardrobe, they are running out of clothes. Even if you have a skirt or a crop top, can simply use a saree and drape it to turn into a new garment.

Expresso: *You have draped sarees in plethora of ways so which style is your favourite?*

Dolly : It is difficult for me to say which draping style is my favorite. All are my babies and everything has been recreated and remodeled by me. But, a drape style that is comfortable both for plus size, as well as a normal lady, is the mermaid style. Mermaid drape style covers your skin perfectly and keeps the saree in place.

Expresso: *Did you face any risks in your journey until now?*

Dolly : I do not think that I have ever taken a risk in my entire journey. However, I still remember that when my daughter was just eight months old, I had to leave her to my house cleaners, and that is the biggest risk I ever took. I used to travel throughout the world for work and she had to stay with the house cleaners. I used to stay worried that whether the house cleaners are taking care of her, whether she is getting proper nutrition, etc. This is the only biggest risk I have taken in my entire journey.



Expresso: After making the Limca Records, how did it bring a change your profession?

Dolly : When I made the first Limca Records, I felt that this profession has a lot of potentials, and I should research more on it. Therefore, I just stepped out although I was not sure what to do and how. However, I was sure about my target and went into the remote areas and villages of India. I used to interrogate about everything on sarees, their drapes, and their culture. They also used to show me how they wear saree comfortably since no men were allowed there. I experienced different cultures in different states and the unique way of draping a saree. I feel that the previous generation has seen a lot like, initially, they did not wear blouses and petticoats, but now they are wearing it. When I went to Coorg, I tried blending the Coorg draping style with Rajasthan style; I blended Bengali style with Rajasthan style and Rajasthani style with Gujarati style. So, I learned a lot of different things from different states and felt that every state has a unique style of draping. For me, no matter from which state you belong, you can always mix and match things to come with a new style.

Expresso: Was it exciting working with Sridevi, Isha Ambani, and Deepika Padukone?

Dolly : I have always been a huge fan of Sridevi and have literally grown up seeing her. When I was in front of her, I was shaking out of excitement and tension. I was confused that what I should do, should I talk to her, drape the saree, or just look at her. It was a fan moment for me. Altogether it was an unforgettable memory for me since I still remember when I was draping her saree, she said that "Dolly, aapki ungliyon main jadu hai, aapko iss profession ko aage leke jana chahiye." I feel that these were very powerful words for me. When I worked with Isha Ambani, she said, "Aapko pins ke upar kahani likhni chahiye, aap to pins ke encyclopedia ho." Apart from that, she said, "Dolly Ji mujhe lagta hai saree



aapke haath mai aane se thik se behave karne lagte hai." Whenever such popular industrialists give me such compliments on my work, it makes me feel confident. I worked with Deepika Padukone during her marriage and it was a beautiful moment. The whole event was organized in Lake Como, Italy. I did not see the sarees, which Deepika wore and had to do the draping on spot. However, I knew that what Deepika likes, so things became easy for me. She even said, "Dolly aap to aise drape karte ho ki mujhe aapki adaat hogayi hai, saree ho ya dupatta, kuch bhi mai khud se drape nahi kar paungi." When I sit and think about all these things, it feels like years before, when I started this profession, no one valued it. However, I was serious about my work, and more than anything, I feel that hard work pays back.

Expresso: Some important tips that you want to share to drape a saree.

Dolly : It would be a petticoat. If there is any problem with your petticoat, then the saree will not stay in place. Recently, I launched my brand, D'Coat. We make the petticoats with cotton so that even if you sit, the petticoat would stretch. I always tell women no to wear body-hugging petticoats. Next comes the safety pins. It is always good to use pure steel safety pins; otherwise, your saree might damage. Blouses are expensive these days too; therefore, it is better to use underarm pads to protect it from sweat marks and discoloration. Hence, apart from draping, these are some of the basic things everyone should be aware of.

Expresso: One celebrity with whom you want to work with?

Dolly : I have not worked with Rekha Ji and I am looking forward to draping her.

Expresso: What did time teach you?

Dolly : I have learned that being a woman and a daughter-in-law of a Marwari family, society expects many things from you. I used to make sure that no matter what I do, there should be a particular time where I can be myself and focus on my hobbies. Similarly, I do the same thing with my profession too. So, not only it is important to give time to your family but also you should give time to yourself. I believe that it is important to be flexible and not be rigid.

Expresso: One quality you have recently discovered about yourself during lockdown?

Dolly : I recently found out during the lockdown that apart from being a good cook, I could also bake delicious cakes. Apart from that, I was always passionate about singing. Therefore, I also took online singing classes during the lockdown and polished my passion. I feel that, if you have a hobby, you can always make out time for it.

Expresso: What is your next target you want to achieve?

Dolly : I am already coming up with a coffee table book. I want

now is for our government to look at my work. Weaving saree is not enough, it should reach people. Not just the elder and middle-aged women, but the young ones should too. Hence, I am looking forward to our government to recognize my work since I believe that everyone should wear a saree.

Another thing that I have noticed, whenever I have been to Malaysia or other foreign states, they mostly wear their traditional outfits. Nevertheless, in India, the sarees are limited only to a certain extent, like the festivals. It is important to promote sarees for almost every occasion and daily wear too. I feel that this is a topic, which is important to discuss and talk about.

Expresso: Any message that you want to give to all the women.

Dolly : If you can have dreams, then you also have the capacity to execute it. So, every housewife needs to be aware of their potential and take out at least an hour from the busy schedule. They should give that one hour solely to themselves because they never know that their passion might turn out to be their profession. Other than taking care of the family and other necessary things, she should focus on self too. God has given something special to everyone, and all they have to do is recognize the potentiality and the specialty.





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