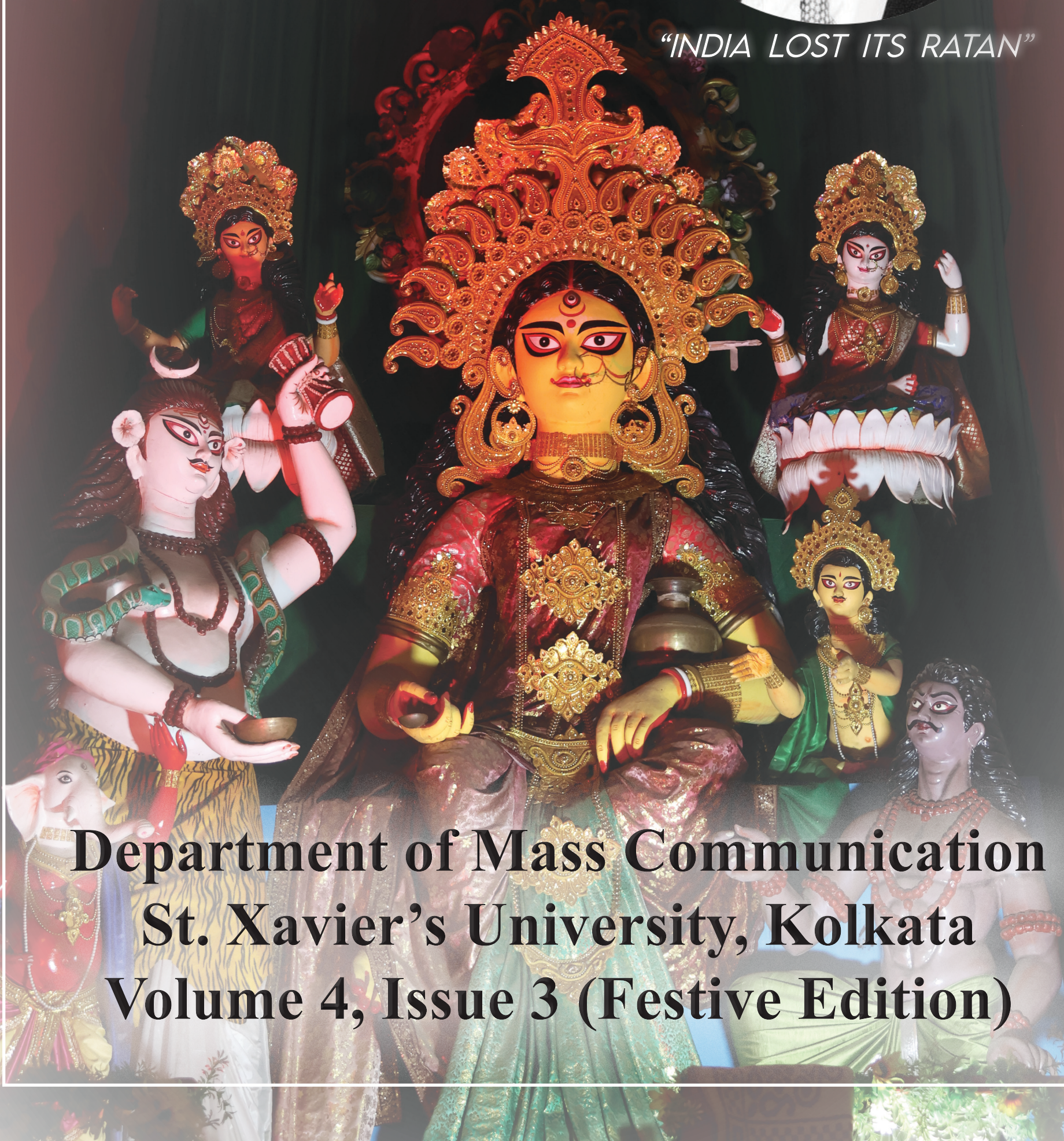


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"INDIA LOST ITS RATAN"



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Ratan Tata: A legacy remembered

Garima Bhawalka
MA Sem 1

The business world is mourning the loss of Ratan Tata, the legendary industrialist who passed away at the age of 86. Tata, who transformed the Tata Group into India's largest and most influential conglomerate, breathed his last at Breach Candy Hospital in South Mumbai on October 9, 2024. His final rites were performed with full state honours at Worli crematorium, attended by dignitaries, business leaders, and thousands of admirers.

Ratan Tata was more than just a business tycoon; he was a visionary leader known for his humility, philanthropy, and unwavering commitment to the growth of the Indian economy. Under his leadership, the Tata Group expanded its global footprint, acquiring iconic brands like Jaguar Land Rover and Corus Steel. His contributions to the fields of education, healthcare, and rural development have left an indelible mark on society.

Despite his immense success, Tata remained grounded and approachable, earning him the respect and admiration of people from all walks of life. His passing has left a void in the corporate world, and many are reflecting on the legacy he leaves behind.

Transformative Leadership
Ratan Tata's leadership was characterized by bold, transformative decisions that not only elevated the Tata Group to new heights but also set new standards in the business world. He was instrumental in steering the conglomerate through challenging times, including economic downturns and industry disruptions. His strategic vision and ability to foresee market trends allowed the Tata Group to diversify and innovate, ensuring its relevance and competitiveness on a global scale.

One of his most notable achievements was the acquisition of Jaguar Land Rover in 2008. At a time when the global automotive industry was reeling from the financial crisis, Tata's decision to invest in these iconic British brands was seen as audacious. However, under his leadership, Jaguar Land Rover not only survived but thrived, becoming a profitable and prestigious part of the Tata portfolio. Similarly, the acquisition of Corus Steel in 2007 showcased Tata's ambition to expand

the company's reach and influence in the global market.

Philanthropic Contributions

Beyond the boardroom, Ratan Tata was a dedicated philanthropist. He believed in using the power of business to drive social change and improve the lives of those less fortunate. His philanthropic efforts were extensive, covering a wide



Source: Getty Images

range of areas including education, healthcare, and rural development. The Tata Trusts, under his guidance, funded numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for communities across India.

In the field of education, Tata's contributions were particularly significant. He supported various educational institutions and scholarships, enabling countless students to pursue their academic dreams. His commitment to healthcare was equally impactful, with the establishment of hospitals and healthcare programs that provided essential services to underserved populations. Ratan Tata's dedication to rural development led to the implementation of numerous programs designed to uplift and empower rural communities, addressing issues such as poverty, sanitation, and access to clean water. Tata's philanthropic philosophy was grounded in the belief that the success of a business should translate into benefits for society. His efforts were not just about providing financial support but about creating sustainable solutions that would have a lasting impact. This approach has set a standard for corporate social responsibility in India and has inspired many other business leaders to follow suit.

Humility and Approachability

Despite his immense success and influence, Ratan Tata remained remarkably humble and approachable. He was known for his down-to-earth nature and his genuine concern for the well-being of his employees and fellow citizens. This humility endeared him to many and earned him the respect and admiration of people from all walks of life. His leadership style was inclusive and empathetic, fostering a culture of respect and collaboration within the Tata Group.

Tata's approachability extended beyond his professional life. He was often seen engaging with people on social media, offering advice, sharing his experiences, and even responding to personal messages from strangers. This willingness to connect with people on a personal level made him a beloved figure not just within his organization but across the world.

Legacy and Reflections

As we reflect on Ratan Tata's remarkable life and career, it is clear that his legacy extends far beyond his business achievements. He exemplified the values of integrity, resilience, and compassion, setting a benchmark for future generations of leaders. His passing marks the end of an era for India and the global business community, leaving a profound sense of loss.

In the days and weeks following his passing, tributes have poured in from around the world. Leaders, colleagues, and admirers have shared their memories and expressed their gratitude for Tata's contributions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described him as a "towering figure" who "inspired millions with his vision and generosity." Business leaders have lauded his strategic acumen and his ability to lead with both heart and mind.

A Lasting Impact

Ratan Tata's visionary leadership, unwavering integrity, and profound generosity have touched countless lives. Through his contributions to industry, philanthropy, and society, he has shaped a better future for many. His impact is not only seen in the towering skyscrapers and global brands but also in the lives of the millions he helped uplift through his charitable efforts.

As we bid farewell to this monumental figure, we reflect on the values he championed: resilience, empathy, and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Although he is no longer

with us, his legacy will continue to inspire and guide generations to come. The void he leaves is vast, but the impact of his work and the light he cast will forever illuminate our path forward.

Ratan Tata's life serves as a powerful reminder of the difference one person can make. His story is a testament to the power of vision, integrity, and commitment to the greater good. As we remember and honour his legacy, we are reminded of the importance of leadership that is both visionary and compassionate, capable of driving not just economic success but also meaningful social change.

Inspirational Anecdotes

Ratan Tata's life was filled with instances that showcased his character and approach to leadership. One such story is of his interaction with the employees of Tata Motors during a crisis. When the company's truck division was facing significant losses, Tata personally visited the manufacturing plant and spent time understanding the workers' concerns. His hands-on approach and empathetic leadership not only motivated the employees but also led to innovative solutions that turned the division around.

Another inspiring anecdote involves his response to the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Tata's swift and compassionate response to the tragedy, particularly his efforts to support the victims and rebuild the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, won widespread admiration. His actions during this crisis highlighted his commitment to his employees and his deep sense of responsibility towards the community.

Global Recognition

Ratan Tata's contributions have been recognized globally, earning him numerous awards and honors. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor, in 2008. His leadership and philanthropic efforts have also been acknowledged by international organizations, cementing his status as a global business icon.

As we look back on Ratan Tata's incredible journey, we are reminded of the profound impact one individual can have on the world. His legacy is a beacon of hope and inspiration, guiding future generations of leaders to strive for excellence, integrity, and compassion in all their endeavors. Ratan Tata's story will continue to inspire and uplift, ensuring that his contributions to business, philanthropy, and society are remembered and celebrated for years to come.

Chakshu Daan - A ritual turned into fight against stigma

Ishita Ghosh
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The remarkable initiative undertaken by Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club in Behala Chowrasta shines a spotlight on the transformative power of inclusivity in cultural and religious practices. By organizing Chakshu Daan on Mahalaya with 45 visually impaired children and acid attack survivors, these clubs have redefined the traditional ritual with a touch of compassion and equality.

Chakshu Daan, a deeply symbolic and revered ritual, involves painting the eyes of the Goddess Durga's idol. This act signifies the connection between the goddess and the artist, bringing the goddess's divine spirit to life. Traditionally performed on Mahalaya, Chakshu Daan marks the beginning of Devi Paksha, the goddess's journey to her paternal home. This ritual has been carried out for generations, embodying the rich cultural heritage and spiritual ethos of the festival.

By involving visually impaired children and acid attack survivors in this revered ritual, Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club have made a powerful statement about inclusivity. They have demonstrated that cultural and religious practices can be a platform for promoting social equality and justice. This initiative is a testament to the idea that everyone, regardless of their physical abilities or past traumas, can contribute to and be a part of these important traditions.

Sunita Dutta, a 29-year-old acid attack survivor from Ichhapur, epitomizes the transformative power of such inclusive initiatives. Having lost vision in her right eye due to an acid attack in May 2010, Sunita described the invitation from Nabalia Para United Club in Behala Chowrasta as a life-changing experience. Her involvement in the Chakshu Daan ritual not only offered her a sense of belonging but also a renewed sense of purpose and dignity.

The joint secretary of the club, Souhitya Ghosh, emphasized the significance of promoting inclusivity through such initiatives. By integrating individuals who are often marginalized into the core of cultural festivities, the clubs are fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society. This thoughtful approach was further enhanced by Kashi Bose Lane's introduction of Braille facilities. These facilities enabled 45

visually impaired children to fully grasp the process and significance of Chakshu Daan, demonstrating a commitment to accessibility and education.

The initiative was supported by the West Bengal government, with Industries and Commerce Minister and Women and Child Welfare Minister Shashi Panja providing essential materials like paint, cotton, and more. The central theme of the puja was 'Ratna Garbha,' meaning

cultural and religious practices can—and should—be adapted to include everyone, fostering a society where every individual feels valued and respected.

The initiative's broader impact goes beyond the ritual itself. It has created a ripple effect, encouraging other puja committees and community organizations to think inclusively and adapt their practices. By embracing and empowering those who are often overlooked, the clubs

how cultural rituals can evolve to meet contemporary societal needs. They have taken a proactive role in ensuring that all members of the community, including those who have faced significant challenges, are not only welcomed but actively encouraged to participate in cultural traditions. This approach helps break down barriers and fosters a sense of belonging and community spirit among all participants.

Furthermore, the media coverage and public response to this initiative have been overwhelmingly positive, further cementing the importance and impact of such inclusive practices. It sends a strong message that traditional cultural practices can be adapted to promote modern values of equality and inclusivity without losing their essence. This innovative approach could serve as a model for other cultural and religious organizations across the country.

As we look to the future, initiatives like these will likely inspire more communities to rethink and reshape their cultural practices to be more inclusive. This will help build a society where every individual, regardless of their physical abilities or personal history, feels valued and included. The success of this year's Chakshu Daan by Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club stands as a testament to the power of inclusivity and the positive change it can bring to our communities. It is a beautiful reminder that when we come together in celebration and respect for all individuals, we truly honor the spirit of our traditions and the values we hold dear.

In conclusion, the initiative by Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club in Behala Chowrasta for this year's Chakshu Daan has set a remarkable example of how inclusivity can be woven into the fabric of cultural traditions. It highlights the transformative power of inclusive practices and the importance of ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can participate and find a place in our cultural and religious celebrations. This thoughtful and compassionate approach has not only enriched the lives of the participants but has also set a powerful precedent for the future, showing that true devotion and respect for tradition come from embracing and uplifting every member of our community.



Chakshu Daan at Newtown photo by Garima Bhuiwarka

'Mother of Gems,' a title that resonates with the inner strength and resilience of the participants. State cabinet minister Shashi Panja actively participated in the painting ritual alongside the children, highlighting the event's importance and validating the inclusive approach.

To ensure that visually impaired individuals could fully enjoy and participate in the festivities, QR code Braille Scanner VIP passes were distributed. This innovative provision ensured that not just during the Chakshu Daan event but throughout the entire puja festival, those who are visually impaired could navigate and engage with ease. This attention to accessibility underscored a genuine effort to make the celebrations inclusive for all special individuals.

This year's Chakshu Daan, therefore, is not just about honoring tradition but also about evolving it to be more inclusive and compassionate. By enabling visually impaired children and acid attack survivors to participate in the ritual, Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club have set a commendable precedent for other communities. Their initiative serves as a powerful reminder that

have truly honored the goddess in the most profound way possible. Their efforts showcase how festivals, while deeply rooted in history and tradition, can also be platforms for promoting social equality and justice.

This year's Chakshu Daan was not just a ritual; it was a celebration of resilience, hope, and the unwavering human spirit. The involvement of visually impaired children and acid attack survivors brought a new dimension to the festival, highlighting the power of community and the importance of inclusivity. The initiative has set a powerful example, demonstrating that true devotion lies not only in adhering to rituals but also in embracing and uplifting every member of the community.

In essence, this year's Chakshu Daan embodied the true spirit of Durga Puja—a celebration of strength, compassion, and inclusivity. The remarkable efforts of Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club in Behala Chowrasta have added a beautiful new chapter to the festival's rich history, one that will inspire and uplift for generations to come.

By extending this spirit of inclusivity, Kashi Bose Lane and Nabalia Para United Club have also shown

A feast for the eyes and soul: The most stunning Durga Puja pandals this year

Kaushani Bhattacharya, Sanjana Chowdhury
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Durga Puja in Kolkata is a vibrant display of creativity, blending tradition with modernity through elaborate pandals that reflect cultural heritage and contemporary themes. Bengalis, and especially Kolkata citizens, wait for an entire year for the biggest festivity in their calendar year. This year, the designs range from eco-friendly structures promoting sustainability to intricate replicas of world-famous landmarks, combining traditional and modern artistic styles. Illuminated by dazzling LED lights and crafted from innovative materials, these pandals add a fresh and modern touch to the age-old festival, thanks to the exceptional craftsmanship of local artisans and artists. These pandals not only serve as spaces for worship but also as hubs for cultural exchange, uniting people from diverse communities in a shared celebration of art, devotion, and social bonding.

Several notable pandals stand out this year. Sreebhumi Sporting Club is creating a detailed replica of the Tirupati Balaji Temple from Andhra Pradesh, known for its rich religious symbolism. Santosh Mitra Square, famous for its large-scale

themes, is building a Las Vegas Sphere featuring 3D shows and LED screens, offering an immersive, tech-driven experience. Kumartuli Sarbojonin Durgotsav focuses on social issues with its theme "Khidha" (Hunger), highlighting the struggles

of farmers. College Square will showcase a stunning replica of the Swiss Parliament House, with mesmerizing light effects reflecting on the nearby lake. Telenga Bagan's pandal addresses the problem of food wastage, continuing its tradition of spotlighting contemporary social concerns. Agarpara Tara Pukur, inspired by Thailand's Blue Temple, will feature a large Buddha statue, creating a serene and majestic atmosphere. Ekdalia Evergreen Club is replicating the Puri Jagannath Temple. In addition, just like the daily flag change ritual in Puri Temple,

the tradition will be followed at the pandal. Excitingly for visitors, the famous Puri temple prasad, Gaja, will also be available at the pandal. These standout pandals are just a few examples of the creativity and cultural significance on display

during Durga Puja 2024. Each pandal blends artistic, social, and spiritual elements, making the festival a dynamic celebration that resonates with visitors on multiple levels. As people flock to these pandals, they embark on a memorable journey through art, culture, and devotion. The pandals also encourage people to reflect on various social issues, promoting awareness and empathy within the community.

Amid the festive celebrations, Kolkata is also witnessing significant social changes, with ongoing

protests following the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College. These protests, led by medical associations, demand improved safety in healthcare and justice for victims, drawing sizeable crowds and attention as they continue at various junctures and small societies throughout the city. The juxtaposition of festive joy and social activism highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Kolkata, where cultural celebrations and social movements intersect. This intersection emphasizes the city's vibrant spirit and resilience in facing its challenges.

As Durga Puja progresses, the city remains a vibrant tapestry of traditions, modernity, and collective action, showcasing the resilience and unity of its people. The festival not only honors the goddess Durga but also serves as a platform for artistic expression, social commentary, and community solidarity. In this way, Durga Puja becomes more than just a religious event; it transforms into a holistic experience that captures the essence of Kolkata's spirit and cultural diversity, celebrating both its rich heritage and its contemporary challenges, and highlighting the strength and adaptability of the community.



Sreebhumi Sporting Club (Source: internet)



Telenga Bagan (Source: internet)



College Square (Source: Internet)

From passion to pain: The silent struggle of women athletes in India

SADHVI PAUL
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Many female athletes in India experience abuse and harassment, especially from coaches and other powerful individuals. The careers and mental health of these sportsmen have suffered greatly due to this problem, which has afflicted the sports world. Women who aspire to be athletes frequently find themselves in the face of inappropriate behavior, harassment, or even molestation, which makes it challenging for them to pursue their ambitions. There is a risky power imbalance in Indian sports because of the hierarchical system, where coaches have a big say in how athletes develop. Numerous coaches have been fired for allegedly abusing their power to put athletes in awkward circumstances. Athletes often keep quiet because they fear reprisals, losing their jobs, or ruining their reputations. Even when complaints are filed, the trauma is exacerbated by victim-blaming, social shame, and a delay in taking appropriate action. Many gifted female

athletes are consequently forced to give up on their athletic careers. This lessens India's potential in international sporting events and prevents people from pursuing their aspirations. Many young girls who want to play sports are discouraged by their fear of abuse, which affects the nation's sports culture. Much more work has to be done to address this issue, even though steps like creating grievance cells and enforcing stronger restrictions have been taken. The implementation of cultural transformation, education, improved safety protocols, and accountability are crucial in transforming sports into a secure environment for women in India. It is imperative to enable athletes to voice their opinions without fear of retaliation to preserve young talent and foster an atmosphere in which women are free to follow their passions.

In India, sports are still not widely considered a viable career option, especially for women. Many female athletes face societal expectations that prioritize traditional roles over athletic aspirations. Young girls who dream of competing often must fight not only against opponents on the field but also against ingrained cultural norms. Pressures to marry, conform to societal expectations, or prioritize academics over sports add to many athletes' internal conflict. Beyond the

sports arena, female athletes in India face the added burden of societal expectations. Traditional gender roles often clash with the demands of a sports career, forcing women to make difficult choices. In many families, sports are not seen as a viable career option for women. The pressure to conform to societal norms—such as marrying young, prioritizing family responsibilities, or excelling academically—often leads talented athletes to abandon their dreams. This pressure is particularly acute



Indian female athletes (Source Getty Images)

in rural areas, where conservative values dominate and opportunities for women are limited. Families in these regions may view sports as an indulgence rather than a legitimate pursuit, fearing it will compromise their daughters' reputations or prospects. As a result, many young girls are discouraged from participating in sports, depriving the nation of their potential.

One of the most distressing challenges for women athletes in India is the pervasive harassment and exploitation they face, often at the hands of those meant to guide and mentor them. The hierarchical structure of Indian sports creates a dangerous power imbalance, giving coaches and officials significant control over athletes' careers. This dynamic has led to numerous instances of abuse, including inappropriate behavior, harassment, and even molestation.

For every incident reported, many others go unspoken due to the fear of retaliation or damage to the athlete's reputation. Women who raise their voices against harassment are often stigmatized or labeled as troublemakers, further discouraging others from speaking out. The lack of effective grievance mechanisms exacerbates the issue, leaving victims without support and emboldening perpetrators. Institutional failures, such as delayed investigations and

inadequate punishments for offenders, perpetuate this toxic environment. Access to sports infrastructure in India remains limited, especially for women. Often, quality facilities are concentrated in urban areas, and rural athletes lack basic resources like training grounds and equipment. Female athletes also report that their teams receive fewer funds, and they experience neglect in sports where their male counterparts receive ample support. This underfunding affects everything from nutrition to injury

recovery, making their journey even more challenging.

One of the most disturbing struggles women athletes face is safety. Reports of harassment and exploitation, sometimes by coaches or officials, have come to light in recent years, creating a hostile environment for many women. This not only affects their mental health but also leads to high dropout rates as women prefer to leave sports rather than endure unsafe conditions.

The silent struggles of women athletes in India reflect deeper societal and systemic issues, but they also present an opportunity for transformation. By addressing harassment, discrimination, and infrastructural disparities, India can create a sports ecosystem that values and nurtures female talent. Empowering women in sports is not just about producing more champions; it is about fostering a society that values equality, resilience, and the pursuit of excellence.

India stands at a crossroads. The nation has the potential to become a global sporting powerhouse, but this can only be achieved by supporting and celebrating the contributions of women athletes. By transforming their struggles into stories of triumph, India can ensure that future generations of women are free to follow their passions, unencumbered by fear or prejudice.



Mary Kom, Boxer

"We still fight for recognition and support. Women athletes in India have to prove themselves time and again. The support system needs to be as robust as it is for male athletes."



Sakshi Malik, Wrestler

"We face numerous challenges, from financial constraints to societal expectations. Negative body image and the lack of proper training facilities are ongoing issues. Achieving financial independence is crucial for us."



Abhinav Bindra, Shooter

"Gender equality in sports is essential. Female athletes deserve the same opportunities and support as their male counterparts. It's time we address these disparities"



Priyanka Chopra, Actor

"Supporting women in sports is vital. They overcome immense obstacles to succeed, and their achievements should be celebrated and supported by all."

X user - Ruhan Kapoor

"Women athletes work incredibly hard, yet they often go unnoticed. It's high time we recognize their efforts and provide them with the same respect and resources that male athletes receive."

Kolkata's Durga Puja blues: Sales drop 30%

Garima Bhuwalka
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The vibrant and bustling Durga Puja season, which usually brings a significant economic boost to Kolkata, has seen a noticeable decline this year. Several factors have contributed to this downturn, including recent social unrest and the absence of international shoppers. The festival usually generates around Rs 10,000 crore in revenue for Kolkata. A 20-30% decline translates to a loss of Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 crore, affecting various sectors, including retail and hospitality. The business community in Kolkata, especially those reliant on the Durga Puja season, are facing significant challenges this year.

Many shop owners in Kolkata's prime commercial areas, such as New Market and Gariahat, have seen a drastic drop in sales. The owner of a prominent saree shop in New Market shared, "Sales are down by 50% year-on-year. We used to see throngs of shoppers, but this year, the footfall just isn't the same." Smaller vendors and hawkers, who usually thrive during Durga Puja, are also feeling

the pinch. According to a street vendor selling traditional sweets in the bustling Esplanade area, "Our earnings have dipped significantly. The usual crowd from neighbouring towns and cities hasn't shown up.

jobs have been created. "I usually hire four extra helpers during Durga Puja, but this year, I could only afford one," said a shop owner in Gariahat. Despite these challenges, many business owners are demonstrating

started offering discounts on our website and through social media. It's helping a bit, but it's still not enough to make up for the losses." The hospitality industry, including hotels and restaurants, typically sees a surge in bookings during Durga Puja. With fewer tourists and reduced local patronage, these establishments face lower occupancy rates and reduced revenue from food and beverage sales. This decline impacts not only the businesses themselves but also their employees and suppliers, leading to broader economic challenges. The downturn in Durga Puja's economic impact is a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of festive celebrations, commerce, and community well-being in Kolkata.

The hope remains that the next season will see a resurgence, bringing back the vibrancy and prosperity that the festival typically brings. The community's resilience and adaptability will be crucial in overcoming this challenging period and ensuring future festive celebrations are just as prosperous and joyous for everyone involved together, as they have always been.



Source: Getty images

It's been tough." With businesses struggling, there's a ripple effect on employment. Many shops and stalls typically hire additional staff for the festive season to manage the rush. This year, however, fewer temporary

resilience and are trying to adapt to the new circumstances. Some are turning to online sales and promotions to attract customers.

An electronics store owner on College Street mentioned, "We've

Durga Puja: Where spaces breathe life, culture, and community

Rashi Bhandari
MA Sem 1

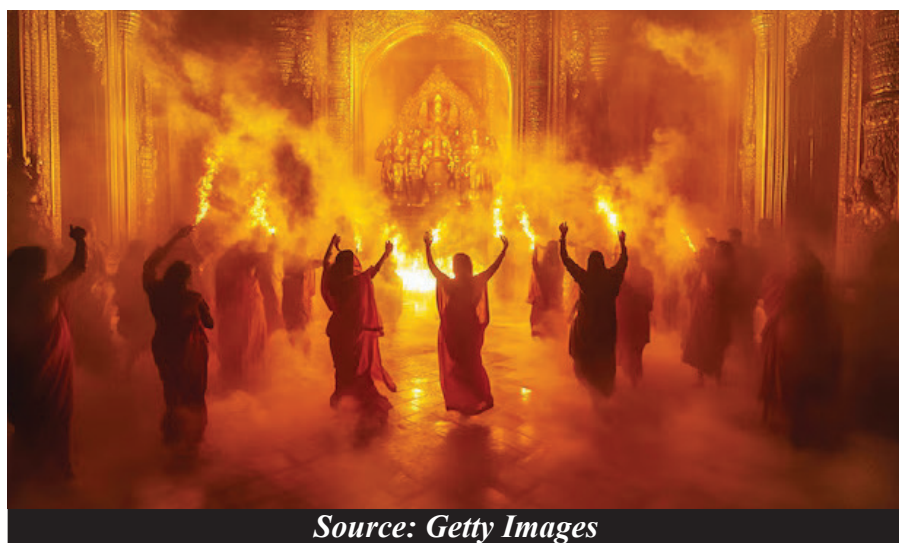
Envision a city where the pulse of daily life beats with the dhak, streets ablaze with radiant hues, and the air perfumed by blossoming Chhatim trees. Familiar places where children played cricket are now transformed into sacred spaces of worship and community. These transformed spaces vividly reflect the dynamic interplay of culture, ethnicity, and belief. During Durga Puja, this annual celebration reshapes people's interactions with their surroundings, bringing them together. Parks, streets, and vacant areas turn into temporary sacred spots for social interaction, cultural expression, and heartfelt devotion for a few days.

Durga Puja shows us how space can be reshaped through art, culture, and community, making ordinary streets and parks feel sacred and festive, even if only for a short time.

To begin with, we look closely at how space is actively shaped by social interactions, daily practices, and vibrant cultural events. Henri Lefebvre explained space in three different ways: *Conceived Space*,

where pandals are thoughtfully imagined and designed; *Perceived Space*, where pandals transform ordinary streets into sacred spaces; and *Lived Space*, where the community actively participates

celebration and worship. These areas create a truly special, almost magical ambiance by pausing the normal flow of urban activity and replacing it with unique rituals, devotion, and celebratory gatherings.



Source: Getty Images

in rituals and celebrations, giving the area rich cultural and spiritual significance.

Michel Foucault's concept of *Heterotopia* illustrates how pandals offer a sacred, alternative reality, for a little time. These temporary pandals combine religion and cultural elements by acting as both public art pieces and dynamic sites of

Edward Soja's *Thirdspace* refers to a unique blending of physical, mental, and lived experiences. These structures are both physical and imagined, as they work to recreate cultural myths, historical narratives, or modern stories. They exist in a fascinating state of liminality, sitting subtly between the ordinary and the sacred.

Space is dynamically shaped by various Durga Puja rituals like processions, worship, music, and dramatic performances. People actively travel between their homes, pandals, streets, and community centers, giving the city an added performative dimension, turning public squares into sacred areas.

Durga Puja highlights how society and culture jointly construct and define space, with pandals becoming vital places for community gathering, artistic expression, and religious significance. These vibrant, transient buildings serve as heterotopias and thirdspaces, rewriting the city's meaning and offering a distinctive perspective on the nuances of urban life.

Those who took part in the change still remember the remnants when the festival ends and the pandals are taken down. It reminds us vividly of how space shapes how we navigate cities and relate to each other, our traditions, and our culture. The fleeting changes of Durga Puja show how our surroundings are never static but rather constantly reflect the communal, spiritual, and cultural energy that unites us all as a society.

Dean Speaks

You have been appointed as the Dean this year. It must be a very big responsibility, but now that you have taken up this challenge, what do you think is the vision forward for the faculty of Arts and Social Studies, especially keeping the Mass Communication department in mind?



Dr. Susmita Halder, Dean, Arts and Social Studies

"I have taken the responsibility as Dean since July 2024. Before that, I was the head of the Department of Psychology.

But when I took the responsibility, I realized that I should not restrict myself to the psychology department because I have a broader spectrum to look after. So see, my general approach is similar to what was for the psychology department and for Arts and Social Studies. Only bigger. My general approach is that because it is primarily an academic institution, the focus should be academic.

Along with that, there should be practical implications of whatever we are studying so that we can relate to the real world, be it Mass Communication, Economics, or Psychology. So I think in that way... so if I were to sum up my vision in one line, my priorities are Academic Excellence, Wonderful teaching, and a good student-teacher interaction, which should be healthy. I would say rather than being friendly, it should be healthy so that you can

come comfortably, you can talk about anything. And you should not hesitate, and I can share with you so that both of us understand each other, so that I call it a healthy relationship, and focusing on the research part. Also, even if the students are undergraduates, I would like to inculcate, treat them in a way so that they have that research-oriented mind. When we say research, it is not only paper writing but also facing the real world."

Facing the real world?

"Exactly. It is the approach. I always say that research is an

approach. It is not something like how many papers I'm writing or presenting. That is one way of doing it. So again, where the common thing is academic excellence, practical implications, and focusing on that research part also. Now, if I come to the Mass Communication Department, I have a very rough idea of what they do and what the Mass Communication department is. So before understanding the actual about the department, um..."

She said she attended a workshop arranged by the department of Mass Comm, which discussed the psychology of films. This workshop greatly intrigued her and piqued her interest in how psychology intertwines with media studies and film, providing new insights into both fields and demonstrating the interdisciplinary potential of these areas. She envisions fostering more such interdisciplinary collaborations to enrich the academic environment.

Head of the Department Speaks

Since you are the HOD of the Mass Communication department, what would you say is the vision for the department for its future activities and academic purposes?

"Actually, we want to make it one of the best departments in India and create a center of excellence. In media schools, there is often a gap between industry and academia, and our goal is to bridge that gap. To achieve this, we have initiated several activities. For instance, we have started our own broadcasting channel and a YouTube channel. Additionally, students are creating their own newsletters. Apart from this, students also have opportunities to build their own portfolios and collaborate with peers on innovative projects. We aim to prepare them for a competitive industry with both skills and creativity."

You mentioned the podcast and YouTube channel. Do you have any views on how to gain more exposure through these platforms to reach wider audiences and the masses in general?

"We have around 5,000 students in the university, most of whom are connected in some way. This network serves as one way to gain exposure. Since, we offer subjects related to social media marketing, promotions, and branding, it helps a lot. Many of our students already have significant followings on social media, which creates a chain effect. The key to reaching wider audiences lies in creating good, engaging content. Content is extremely important for us. We need to ensure that what we create is not only unique but also interesting and engaging. It shouldn't just be about producing something for the sake of it; it has to matter to the audience. Collaboration with influencers and consistent promotion strategies will also help enhance

visibility."

For the future, does the department have any specific workshops or practical activities planned?

"Every semester, we organize a variety of activities. These include



Dr. Harish Kumar, HOD, Mass Communication

workshops, expert lectures, film visits, and industry visits. For example, we have conducted workshops on storytelling and photography. We also introduce practical and value-based courses like mobile filmmaking. Additionally, students will soon be organizing 'Xavcom,' an event from our department. This will provide outside exposure as students from other institutions will participate. It will be a great platform for exchanging ideas and learning from one another. Such initiatives not only provide real-world experience but also foster teamwork, creativity, and professional networking."

How does the department balance academics and practical applications?

"Yes, balancing academics and practical applications is a priority for us. We ensure that students get both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience through workshops, projects, and real-world exposure."

U.S. Citizen of St. Xavier's University, Kolkata Speaks

As an U.S. Citizen and a first-time voter, Neha Chatterjee of MA Mass Comm Department has clear views on the significance of participating in the upcoming November 2024 U.S. elections. "Voting feels crucial for me, especially since I plan to move to the United States soon. Ensuring my voice is part of this election is more than symbolic—it's a foundational part of my new responsibilities as a citizen," she shared.

Currently completing a Master's degree at St. Xavier's University in Kolkata, Neha envisions a

professional future in the United States. "My passion for gaining specialized knowledge in my field has driven me to explore opportunities abroad for some time now. While India offers an excellent education system, I believe immersing myself in the U.S. will provide an unparalleled depth in my areas of interest," she explained.

For Neha, voting is not only a step in fulfilling civic duty but also in affirming their role as a future U.S. professional. They expressed a preference for supporting the right

political party in the upcoming election, adding, "Every vote matter, and I want to ensure that my voice is part of shaping the future policies that could impact my life and career in the United States."

Voting in this election, they feel, not only reaffirms their U.S. citizenship but also strengthens their connection to their future life in the country. "This election will impact me in many ways," they concluded, noting the importance of each citizen's contribution to the democratic process.



Neha Chatterjee; MA Sem 1

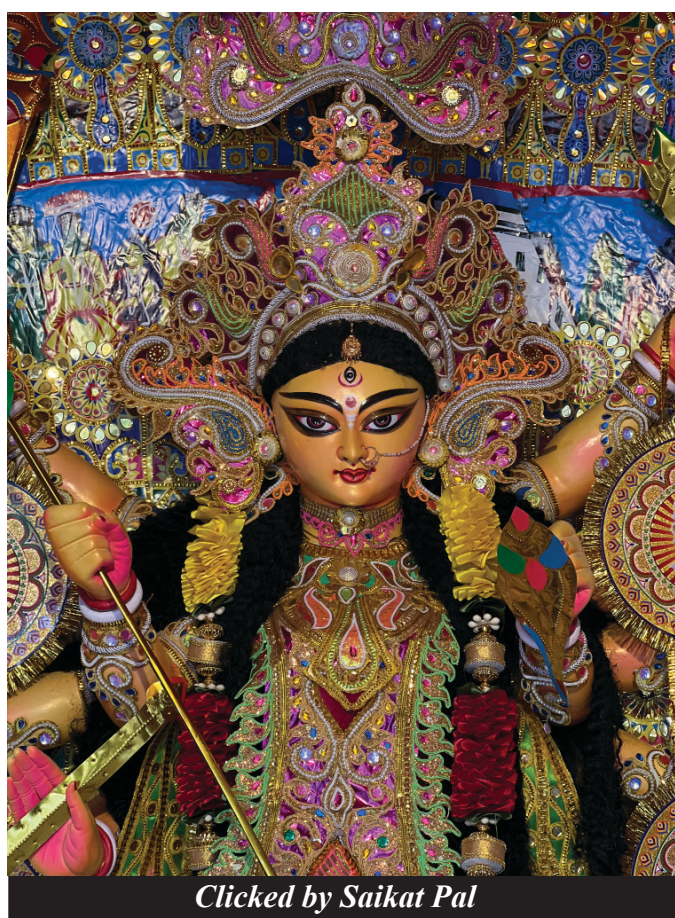
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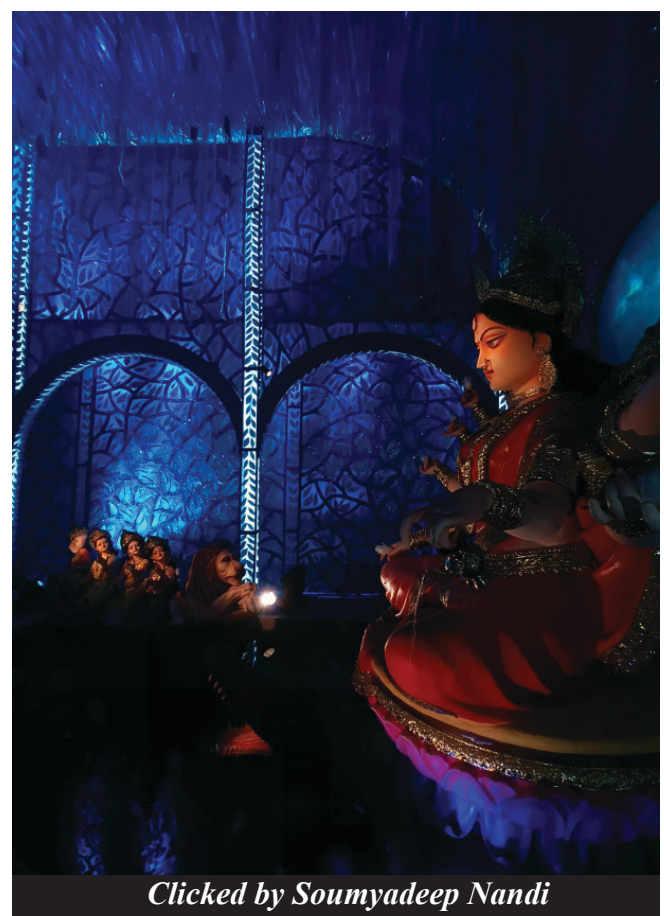
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