

ODE TO GODDESS DURGA IN KOLKATA

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



performed by men. This is a high-energy dance that is seen at most venues in Ahmedabad. Many lawns and clubs in the city host Dandiya Raas which sees people from all walks of life dance away through the night. It was amazing to see both men and women dance away, decked in colourful costumes. Women wear ghaghra cholis – a three-piece dress decorated with beads, shells, mirrors, stars, and embroidery work and paired with a choli. The choli is teamed with a ghaghra – a flared, skirt-like bottom and dupatta, which is usually worn in a traditional Gujarati manner. The men were wearing a short round kurta, pyjamas above the knees and pagadis made of bandhini dupatta. The women adorned themselves with jhumkas (earrings), necklaces, bindi, kamarbandh, payal and mojiris. It was a colourful sight to behold. ■

(Navratri will be celebrated between September 21 and 29, 2017)

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Come September, and the whole of India is swept up in a surge of festive fervour. Leading the festivities is the nine day long Navratri celebrations – dedicated to Mother Durga, an embodiment of strength and the divine cosmic form. Legend has it that Durga emerged from the collective energies of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma to kill demon Mahishasura. As such she is a form of Shakti or power and the nine days are a celebration of nine forms of Durga and the final day celebrates her emerging victorious over the demon. While the entire country celebrates Navratri with much gaiety, the celebrations in West Bengal are certainly unlike any other

and Kolkata in particular morphs into a party zone over the last four days of Durga Puja. Well this is easily the largest outdoor art festival that sees music, dance and art congregate on a single platform. I have been to city at various times of the year but the city dons a completely new avatar during Durga Puja. The main attraction is centred around the pandals (temporary structures) that house large idols of Durga.

In fact in nearby Kumartuli, the area of the potters who sculpt and paint the idols of the Goddess, work begins several months in advance. Interestingly the most popular idol is unique. It was amazing to see the depiction of the Goddess stabbing Mahishasura's torso

ALAMY