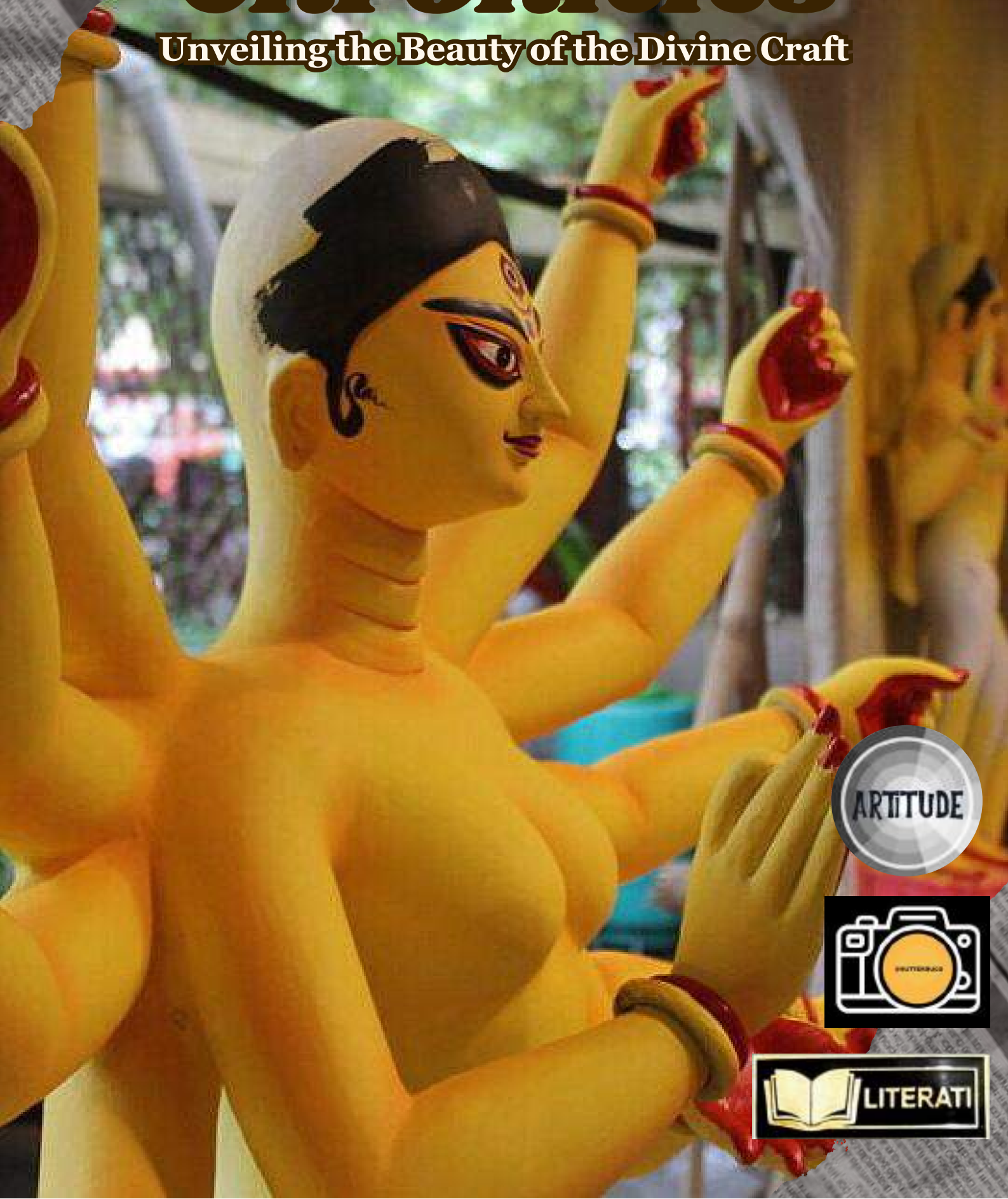




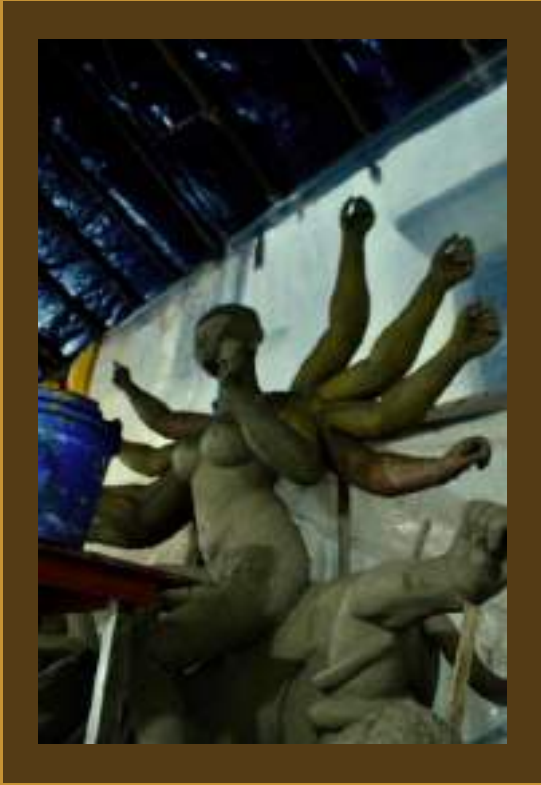
Pujjo Chronicles

Unveiling the Beauty of the Divine Craft





Captured in Clay





Captured in Clay

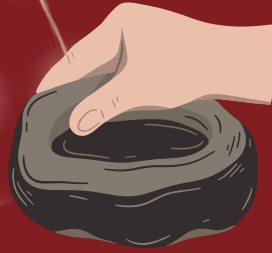


Experimenting with Clay in School

ARTITUDE

We learnt about clay relief methods in school where we broke a clay lump into smaller pieces and made them into tabloids. Then we kneaded them for a uniform texture. This lengthy process was a stress reliever for us as the smoothening and carving calmed us down. After making the basic structure of the tabloid, we rolled it to ensure that it was even. We used water to soften and smoothen it further.

Next, we decided on the composition. Some made Maa Durga while others created small mandalas to capture the beauty of the pujo. Soon, all of us attached small clay pieces to the tabloid to form the shapes we required for our chosen designs. We learnt how to form the shapes and the necessity to blend the edges of the additional clay pieces to maintain rigidity. We made our very own relief work following these tips and tricks!



Clay Workshop at Studio Shadow



It was a fascinating and educational experience touring Studio Shadow, on October 3rd, 2023, where elaborate statues of the goddess are created. It is owned by Mr. Joyraj De. He had an informal training at Ichapur's Pal family. He has degrees in Psychology and Law but he runs Studio Shadow, a charitable organization that was founded by his father. The studio finds talented children, trains them in clay sculpture and educates them academically.



Artists toil assiduously to bring the divine to life in their clay sculptures in the studio, buzzing with creativity and devotion. We had the privilege of watching expert craftsmen meticulously and accurately carve the idols. We learned from the artists how to make clay ornaments that are frequently used during Durga Pujo celebrations as they carefully walked us through the procedure.



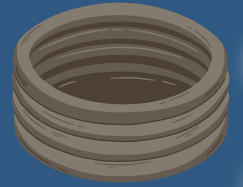
They used moulds to create ornaments and small decorations. Making the moulds is a time-consuming process. It takes years of practice to get the delicate touch and shrewd eye for detail that this creation required.

Along with our clay swans and other artwork, we left the clay workshop with a greater admiration for the artists who dedicate their lives to maintaining this antiquated craft. Owing to this experience, we now have a profound understanding of Durga Pujo's cultural legacy and spiritual significance in art.





The Generational Art of Idol Making



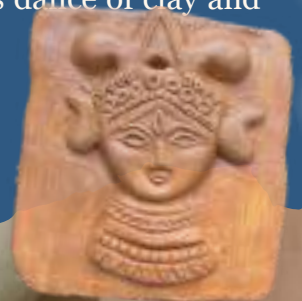
Amid the kaleidoscopic festivities of Durga Pujo in Kolkata, the idols stand tall, embodying faith and devotion, but behind these magnificent creations are the unsung heroes: the artisans. We had the privilege of stepping into the world of these skilled craftsmen.

One teenage craftsman shared the meticulous process behind each idol. It takes 8-10 days to form the basic structure followed by the application of clay, which is then coloured to breathe life into the deity. In his short career, he has already completed 30 such idols, a testament to his unwavering commitment to the craft.

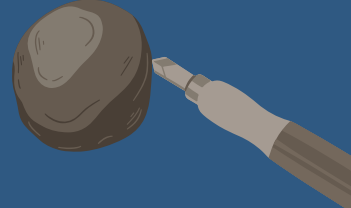
His evident dedication and connection to the craft is passed from generation to generation. He shared that his father was an artisan, portraying the devotion and heritage intricately woven into each idol.

The idols of Durga Pujo are intertwined with stories of legacy, craftsmanship, and familial bonds. While the festivities of Kolkata come alive with music, dance, and colours, it is essential to remember and honour the hands that shape the city's faith, bridging the past and present in a harmonious dance of clay and colour.

- Sadiyah Mahbub and Suhani Kothari



The Generational Art of Idol Making



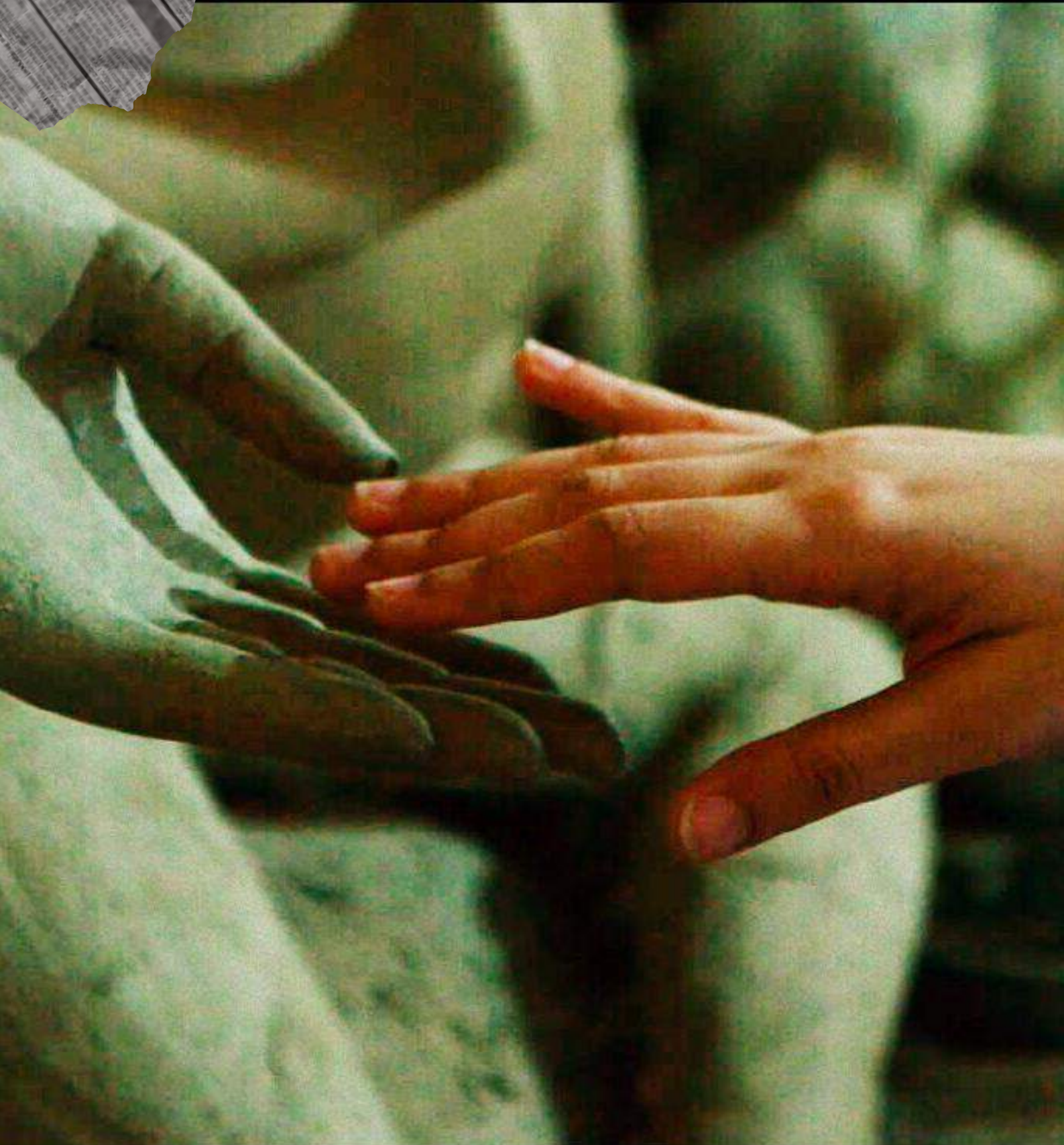
Born and brought up in the Sundarbans, Manohar Mondal was influenced by his father, a skilled artisan. He entered the world of sculpting and clay work at the early age of six. His work spans a 50-year-long career, a testament to his dedication to his craft.

He emphasised the role of economic change played in his craft stating that big Durga idols ranged from a few hundred rupees to a few lakhs due to the increasing demand for authentic and handmade idols. Individually, these artisans can make about 25 idols during the Pujo, with each idol taking 8-10 days.

Speaking to Mr. Mondal gave us an insight to the strenuous and careful task of molding each idol to perfection.

- Avni Surana, Mihira Burman, Saachi Goenka and Suhani Gupta





A touch of the divine

The Booming Business of Durgā Pujo



Talking to Mr. Joyraj Dey, the owner of the studio, was an exceptional opportunity for us. “I love to create; I love to transform,” Mr. Dey truly lives up to these words and transforms the lives of innumerable children throughout India. With a background in psychology, he identifies children with inherent artistic talents and then adopts, trains, and encourages them to work for their passion.



“Turning one’s passion into your profession is the best thing that can happen to one,” grateful towards life, Mr. Dey inspires us all to take a step forward and chase our dreams.

As art is the greatest therapy, Mr. Dey encourages us all to practice some form of art that we feel passionate about, be it painting, music, or cooking. He encourages us to make art our haven and reveal our skills to the world.

- Anya Sinha and Vishakha Jhunjunwalla



Changing the Lens: Mr Kaibalya Dey

We were privileged to interview Mr Kaibalya Pravo Dey, a financial analyst at Zach's Research Pvt. Ltd. He is also a seasoned photographer whose lens has been his window into the vibrant festivities and practices of Durga Pujo developing an intimate connection with its cultural significance, and witnessing the aesthetic evolution that has taken place.

Interviewer: How did you originally get interested in photography?

Mr Dey: I needed a way to pursue my passion. My dad is a writer. My mom was an artist, and so is my brother. Most of my family members are artists, and the available options were really limited. So, photography and art were a natural interest.

Interviewer: The art of designing these idols is time-consuming and only possible during the festive season. That said, how do you feel that these festivals are a good source for creativity and art, and subsequently, a good career for artists?

Mr Dey: It is very difficult to portray the vast range of emotions connected to Durga Pujo. You need to capture it in detail, in different ways, utilising multiple forms of art. For example, these artisans create clay idols and colour them to give them life. We take photographs to capture these emotions. This whole process is lengthy and a massive source of creativity. This can be a good career, especially if you are good at it. People around the globe can be your market, although tapping that market can be tricky at first.



Changing the Lens: Mr Kaibalya Dey

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the commercialisation of Durga Pujo?

Mr Dey: At the end of the day, all these people need a source of employment. These artisans get jobs and employment due to the commercialisation. The market that is being generated boosts the economy and helps these people. It is all right that when culture rises, the economy rises, and vice-versa.

Interviewer: You have grown up looking at Durga Pujo pandals. What is your opinion about the change from the traditional aesthetic to a creative and modern one?

Mr Dey: I feel that the aesthetic has not changed drastically. It is more of a mix, like the current Disneyland pandal at Sreebhumi. Disneyland is not a part of our culture, but is incorporated into it. Many such cultural inclusions happen, such as the Bengali-Gujarati diaspora in the US influencing the pandals in Kolkata, and vice versa. The more these groups interact, the more the cultural mix happens, and the more the idea of one Earth, one family is brought out.

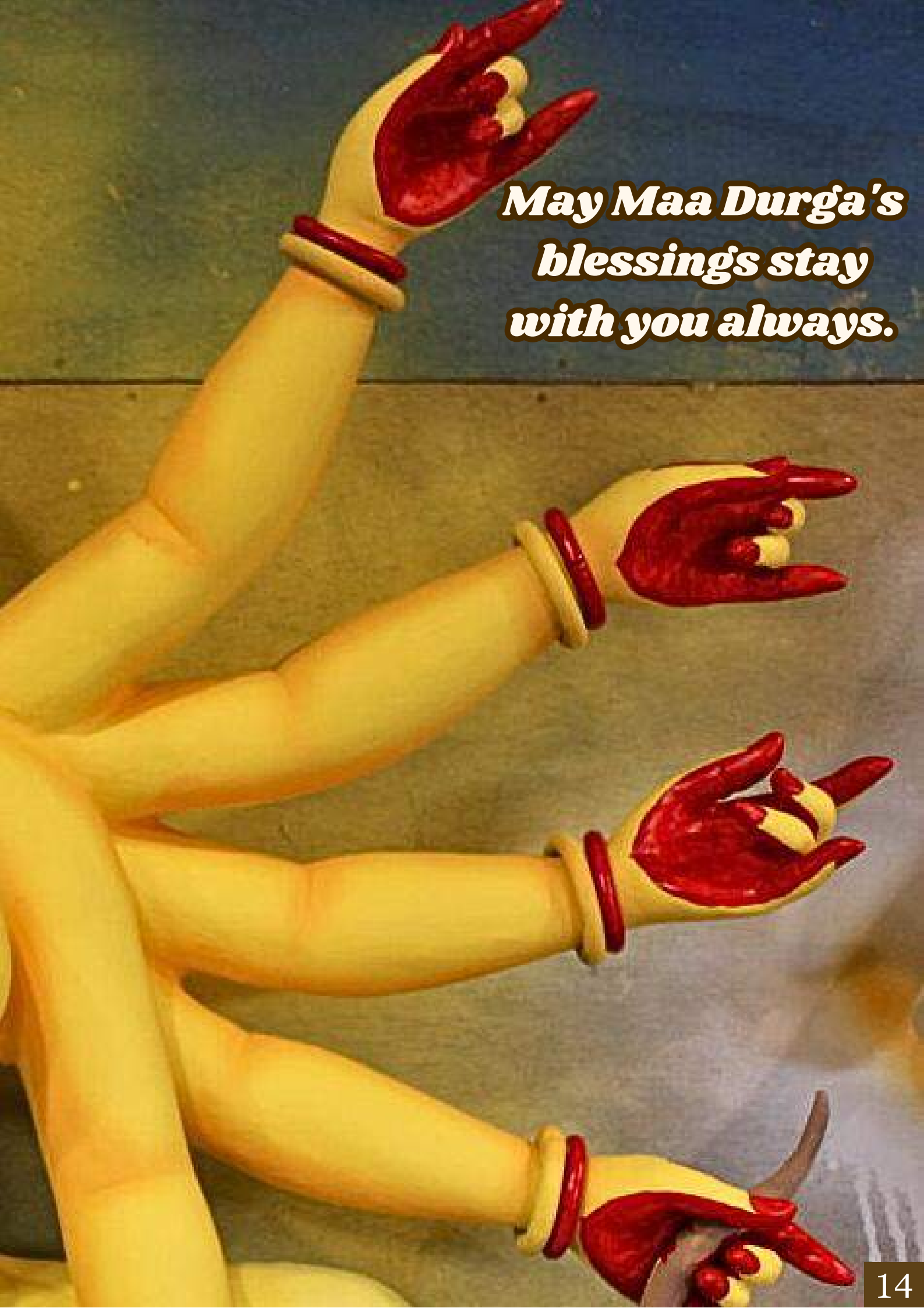
- Prashansa Pasari and Priyal Binani











***May Maa Durgā's
blessings stay
with you always.***