

From the MD's Desk



Dear Reader,

Shubho Bijoya to all of you! This festive season, read Professor Amiya Bagchi's interesting story set in Naples during World War II; Mrs Anjali Gupta's memories of Lakshmi Puja, celebrated by her the Bengali way ; and Mrs. Jayashree Basu's recipe of her delicious Basanti Pulao.

It was so heartening to see the enthusiasm and initiative of our TSC members at the Durga Mela at Jal Vayu Vihar—a pre-puja exhibition-cum-sale along with food festival held on 5th and 6th August 2017. The Silver Circle members sang a welcome song. The members had a great time selling their delectable home-cooked food as well as enjoying the fair.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and suggestions. Like so many of our members, you too can share your thoughts and stories in this newsletter.

Happy reading!
Apratim Chattopadhyay



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News

Moments from the Durga Mela at Jal Vayu Vihar.

The Silver Circle members singing the Welcome song.



The Silver Circle members ready with their delicious fare—ranging from Jowan Chicken to Chaat, and Fish Chop.

Members having a great time as they busily sell their mouth watering fare.



It feels great to be appreciated as people come in for second helpings.

Member Contribution



A Boy and a Girl in Pizzofalcone, Naples

*It takes every little grain of sand to make a desert and every drop of water to make the ocean. Read this beautiful story by our member, **Professor Amiya Kumar Bagchi**, on how two children made a difference in their own little way.*

You know that during the period 1939-1945 a war was fought all over the world between the so-called Axis powers and the so-called Allied powers. This war, in which millions of people were killed is known as the Second World War. The Allied powers were led by Britain, the United States of America and Soviet Russia. The Axis powers were led by Germany, Italy and Japan. Germany was ruled by the Nazi party headed by Adolf Hitler and Italy was ruled by the Fascist Party ruled by Benito Mussolini.


The Nazis and the Fascists believed that a country should be ruled by a single ruler and ordinary people should obey whatever he and his followers ordered. They also believed that some particular nations should rule over others. For example, the Nazis believed that the so-called Aryans, that is, people

with a white skin should rule over others, and Germans should also rule over the Poles and the Russians even though the latter were also fair-skinned. Within their own nation they also hated the Jews, holding them responsible – on no evidence whatsoever - for all the sufferings of the other Germans. Holding this belief, the Nazis killed six million Jews in horrible ways, primarily suffocating them in poison gas chambers. The Fascists of Italy shared all these beliefs, but their special targets were the Africans with a dark skin colour. They launched unprovoked war against Libya and Ethiopia and conquered them.

The Allied powers, on the other hand, believed in democracy, that is, in a system in which ordinary people choose their government. Soviet Russia had a single party, the Communist party ruling the country. But it gave everybody the right to free education, free healthcare, and pension for all old and disabled people. The Nazis particularly hated the communists and hunted them out wherever they could find them.

Not every German was a Nazi nor every Italian was a

Fascist. We are going to tell a story about such a man in Italy who fought against the Fascists. The name of the man was Angelino Sabatini. He was fighting the Fascists ever since the war began. In 1943, the German army, which was already in southern Italy, of which the chief city was Naples, a city rather like Kolkata: sprawling, unplanned, full of both rich and poor people, and with little regard for traffic rules. But it was a much more ancient city, like our Varanasi. Naples had a locality called Pizzofalcone, meaning the Eagle's Crest, because it was much higher than the rest of Naples. Angelino, retreating from the Germans, found himself in the hills above Pizzofalcone and took shelter in a cave. But how long could he survive there, without food and water? Fortunately, the peculiar way in which the houses were built there and the people lived there, helped him. The houses generally had five floors. On the first floor, there were shops, workshops of blacksmiths, carpenters and of stone masons. On the second and third floors lived rich and middle class people, big merchants, lawyers, doctors, high government officials. The top two floors were occupied by blacksmiths, electricians, carpenters, masons, house painters. On such a top floor lived Cristina and Luigi. Cristina's father was an electrician and Luigi's was a blacksmith. Both of them had belonged to trade unions run by communists but Mussolini had outlawed them. Cristina's house was at the corner next to the hills. They used a small ladder to go down and played hide-and-seek games in the caves. That is how they discovered Angelino. As good little children, they decided to help him, and brought him food and water without telling their parents. But how long could this go on? Fortunately, they knew that both the fathers, who were good friends, hated Mussolini. They also knew that an Allied army had landed in the south of Italy and was making steadily progressing northwards. They were glad to be able to

help Angelino but decided to use Cristin and Luigi as the go-betweens, because it would be dangerous if two adults were seen going to the caves so often. They not only sent food and water to Angelino but also batteries for his torch and for a radio transmitter which Angelino used to keep in touch with his fellow fighters. Soon the Allied army drove out the German army from southern Italy and occupied Rome. Angelino was then able to join other fighters against the Fascists. Before going he, of course, thanked Cristina and Luigi profusely. They both deserved a medal for their heroism, don't you think? 

Member Speak

***Esho Ma Lakshmi bosho ghore,
Amar e ghore thako alo kore...***

Mrs Anjali Gupta, one of our Wellbeing members, shares her memories of the way she celebrated Lakshmi Puja.

Waiting for Goddess Lakshmi on the day of Kojagari Purnima helped us to prolong the festive feeling even after Ma Durga had left for her heavenly abode.


Although my in-laws celebrated Lakshmi Puja with much pomp and ceremony, worshipping a big resplendently adorned idol of Ma Lakshmi, I opted for a simpler version. I worshipped my home idol of Lakshmi and Narayan.

We were busy from the previous evening, as we decorated the house with garlands and flowers. As children, we used to fight amongst ourselves as to who would give alpana (traditional drawings / motifs to welcome the Goddess home). Special care was taken



to adorn Ma Lakshmi in a red saree on Lakshmi Puja. How much I liked to dress up on these festive occasions; I especially liked to put flowers on my hair. We used to keep a day-long fast as Lakshmi Puja is typically performed at godhulilagna, or twilight. We used to pray as a family for peace, happiness and prosperity. I used to especially pray for my family and children who were small at that time. As the bride of the family, I was taught to deposit a small one or two-rupee coin in Ma Lakshmi's jhanpi (basket) to earn her blessings, which would bring us prosperity and good health. This was a special act which I always liked to carry out with great devotion. The puja used to end with me reciting the mantras and offering flowers to the Goddess.

We used to make a sweet made of soaked moong dal, red batasha and grated coconut. Its unique taste still lingers in my memory. How we all cherished the simple taste of this delicacy. Prasad distribution was a big affair, with relatives and friends queueing up for the khichuri bhog, which I used to cook. After tasting the bhog, it was a ritual to have fish. I remember crying as it pricked my conscience to have non-vegetarian fare on such an auspicious day!

Once the Purnima or full moon was over, the Lakshmi idol was immersed with a heavy heart; and we would start eagerly waiting to celebrate Lakshmi puja next year. 

Recipe

Basanti Pulao

Mrs Jayashree Basu shares her recipe of the delicate Basanti Pulao.

Ingredients

Rice (govindo bhog) – 500 g
 Refined oil – 50 g
 Ghee – 50 g
 Cinnamon – ¾ inch
 Cloves – 10
 Cardamom – 15
 Cashew - 100 g
 Raisins - 50 g
 Salt – As required
 Sugar – 75 g
 Garam masala - 1/2 teaspoon
 Saffron - 1/4 teaspoon
 Milk – 2 tablespoons

Method

- 1) Soak the rice for 1/2 an hour.
- 2) Heat the oil and ghee in a non-stick pan
- 3) Put the cinnamon, cloves and cardamom in heated oil. Stir for a minute.
- 4) Put the cashew and the raisins. Stir for 1 or 2 minutes.
- 5) Add the sugar.
- 6) Add salt as per taste.
- 7) Add water. Once the water starts boiling put the soaked rice in it. The water should be ¾ inch above the rice. Stir and let it boil properly.
- 8) After the rice is properly cooked, put garam masala and stir.
- 9) Add the saffron (soaked in the lukewarm milk). Stir it and turn off the gas.

Your Basanti Pulao is ready. 



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