

"DURGA PUJA" - Nostalgic Tales

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To the girl I met during Durga puja,

It was my first time in Kolkata. I was still trying to connect the lines of this metropolitan city. And adventitiously, Durga puja festival hit Kolkata to overwhelm me. I timidly showed up at the society's puja feast, where I used to live. In such an evening of drizzling rains and the boisterous Durga puja festival, your eyes met mine! You were wearing a red-orange tussore silk in Bengali style with a vibrant yellow blouse. And you were looking fabulous. Your Bengali nath (nose pin) made your face even sweeter; the small red bindi on forehead snatched all my concentrations. You smiled at me and one thousand chandeliers lit up. A smile simply crept into my lips.

"Thanks" I uttered.

"New here?" You asked spreading the luminous smile.

"Yes. From Kolkata". I replied.

"Happy Durga Puja and Navratri" You greeted me.

Your happy face made me happy inside.

"Same to you" said I. I wish I could show you how fast my heart was beating at that moment. I wanted to talk to you. I wanted to say "You look beautiful". But my lips lost words. You got busy distributing sweets among others. I realized, suddenly all my sadness, boredom and homesickness are gone and I am loving this evening, I am loving the Durga puja festival, let along the crowd and enticing puja vibes. I am loving life once again. I am not lost anymore. I looked at Goddess Durga. She is staring at us with omnipresent eyes. I asked for her blessings. My eyes searched for you once more. My eyes

wanted to get a glance of your face but you were nowhere. Finally, I discovered you at the feet of Goddess Durga. You were sobbing. And a girl was trying to console. I hesitantly walked towards you. The crowd was light by the time; the rain had stopped.

"What happened?" I asked. She looked up hearing my voice. The teary eyes were too sad to look at. She continued to sob while the other girl replied.

"Her lover Amrit died last year during immersion of Maa Durga. Today the incident completes one year." I was shocked. I don't know what to say. She was hiding so much pain under those greeting smiles. Slowly, I held her hand, "Girl, I will give my shoulder whenever you want to cry." I don't know what magic my words did but she tried to erase the tears and looked at me.

"You don't even know me."

"I will" said I. Once again her "nath" winked at me as she tried to smile amid those tears. Everyone kept themselves busy in the auspicious puja ambiance, 108 lamps and Sanskrit hymns. No one noticed a nerd Marathi boy won the heart of a Bengali girl in a rainy puja evening.

Sincerely yours,
That Marathi guy ●