

# ROTARACT CLUB OF KATHMANDU MID-TOWN

Dashain is the biggest national (religious) festival of Nepal. It is the longest and the most auspicious festival in the Nepalese annual calendar, celebrated by Nepalese Hindu of all castes throughout the globe. The festival falls around September–October, starting from the bright lunar fortnight and ending on the day of full moon. Dashain is also popularly referred to as Bada Dashain, Dashera, Vijaya Dashami etc.

The major days are Ghatasthapana (Day 1), Fulpati (Day 7), Maha Asthami (Day 8), Maha Navami (Day 9) and Dashami (Day 10). On the main day, Dashami, a mixture of rice, yogurt and vermilion is prepared by the women. This preparation is known as "tika". Elders put this tika on the forehead of younger relatives to bless them with abundance in the upcoming years. The red also symbolizes the blood that ties the family together. Elders give "Dakshina", or a small amount of money, to younger relatives



*A Rotaract from Rotaract club of Kathmandu Mid-Town receiving tika from Rotarians of our parent club*

at this time along with the blessings. This continues to be observed for five days till the full moon during which families and relatives visit each other to exchange gifts and greetings. This ritual of taking tika from all the elder relatives (even the distant relatives) helps in the renewal of the community ties greatly. This is one reason why the festival is celebrated with so much of vigor and enthusiasm. In the picture at the left, you can see that a rotaract from Rotaract club of Kathmandu Mid-Town is receiving tika from Rotarians of our sponsoring/parent club, Rotary club of Kathmandu Mid-Town. We have practice of receiving tika every year from our Rotarians.

The last day of the festival which lies on the full moon day is called 'Kojagrata' Purnima. The literal meaning of Kojagrata is 'who is awake'. On this day Goddess Laxmi who is believed to be the goddess of wealth is worshiped as it believed that goddess Laxmi descends on earth and showers whoever is awake all night with wealth and prosperity.

## Some special things that we do during Dashain:

- One gets to know that Dashain is around the corner when they see kites all over the sky. Flying kites has been a very important part of celebrating Dashain in our country as it is considered to be one way of reminding god not to send rain anymore. Not only the children of the family but during the festival you can see people of all ages in their roofs flying



kites. Colorful kites of different shapes and voices shouting out 'Changa Chait' (this phrase is usually used when one is successful in cutting the other person's kite) fill the days during the festival.

- Playing cards is another way of celebrating Dashain. Gambling is illegal in the country but it is usually permitted in public places only during this festival. While children are busy flying kites during Dashain, the older members of the family pass their time by getting together and playing cards with each other for money and fun all day long.



- Bamboo swings are constructed in many parts of the country as a way of celebration. These bamboo swings is called 'ping' in Nepali. These kinds of swings present the best of local culture, tradition, community spirit and fun. These swings are constructed with the help of community members using traditional methods which make the use of ropes made from tough grass, bamboo sticks and wood etc. These swings are normally constructed a week before Ghatasthapana and dismantled only after the festival of Tihar which comes after Dashain. Heights of some swings exceed twenty feet and one can swing really high. One can see people of all ages enjoying in the swing. It is especially famous with the children.



- Thousands of animals such as buffaloes, ducks, he-goats, etc. are slaughtered in Dashain every year. It has been considered an important ritual since it is believed that the goddesses are appeased by such sacrifices. Almost all the temples, especially the Durga and Kali temples of the country are offered with thousands of sacrifices. Asthami and Navami are the days where the sacrifices reach the peak. While thousands of animals are sacrificed to appease the goddesses, people also slaughter animals for the purpose of feasts. Since a large number of feasts and gatherings are organized throughout the fifteen days of the festival, the demand for meat goes up considerably. Hence to meet the demands the slaughtering of animals becomes considerably high and necessary during the festival. However, for the past few years the animal rights activists in the country have been continuously opposing these acts of slaughtering of animals in such a manner. They have been requesting people to stop such inhuman acts of killing the innocent animals and instead have suggested them to offer fruits and vegetables to

the Goddesses since they believe that it is mentioned nowhere in the Hindu religious books that such sacrifices appease the gods and goddesses.



*So, all in all this is our biggest festival of the year. We hope that you enjoyed reading about Dashain as much as we enjoy every*

*year celebrating it.*

*-Rotaract club of Kathmandu Mid-Town*

# ROTARACT CLUB OF MUMBAI GHATKOPAR



## History of Dusshera

- ❶ The celebration of Dussehra is rooted in the Hindu epic of Ramayana, according to which, Lord Rama, the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, killed the ten-headed demon Ravana, in Satyug. Ravana had abducted Rama's wife Sita. Rama, along with his brother Lakshmana, follower Hanuman and an army of monkeys, headed towards Lanka (Ravana's Kingdom) in order to enter a war with Ravana and rescue Sita. On his way to Lanka, Rama organized Chandi Pooja to seek the blessings of Ma Durga, the Goddess of power and courage. After seeking her blessings, Lord Rama defeated and killed Ravana, with the help of his fellow beings. Therefore, the day was celebrated to commemorate the victory of Rama over Ravana, which later came to be known as Vijayadashmi or Dussehra.
- ❷ The festival of Dussehra has a religious-historical meaning and inherent values. It is celebrated on Dashmi (10th day) of lunar month. Dussehra is celebrated in all the part of India with joy and fervor.
- ❸ One of the popular Hindu festivals, Dussehra is celebrated with pomp and gaiety. Since ages, a number of rituals are performed to please the Almighty, on the ceremonious occasion. It is the climax of the nine-day long celebrations of 'Navratris', which precede it. The festival honors the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana.

## How is it celebrated !

- ④ The effigies of the demon kings, Ravana, Kumbhkarna and Meghnath are burnt. The play of Ramayana is staged and fairs are arranged all over the country. People feast and distribute sweets. The children wear new clothes and get toys and sweets.
- ④ In some communities on this day, sisters put a tilak on their brother's forehead. They pray for their welfare. Businessmen worship their account books on this day. Dussehra not only brings joy but also inspires us to win over our bad instincts by good deeds and pious thoughts.



## Bengal, Orissa and Assam Dussehra

- 🕒 In these states, Dussehra is celebrated in the form of Durga Puja. It is a 5-day festival in Bengal whereas in Orissa and Assam the celebrations last for 4 days. The statue of goddess Durga is made and established beautifully in Pandals **on** the fifth day. Durga puja is performed on the sashti, Saptami, Ashtami and Navami followed by a great Puja held on the tenth day. Women offer Sindoor on the forehead of the goddess and on each other. In this way Sindoor holi is played amongst the married women.



# MUMBAI

- ④ The week-long festival in October is celebrated across India in a variety of different ways but in Mumbai it most closely resembles Guy Fawkes' Night in Britain with the burning of effigies.
- ④ Many of the bonfires take place in private but there are also some huge public fires which provide a focal point for locals and visitors alike to take part in the festival. Places such as *Chowpatty Beach and the Shivaji Park* come alive at night with huge bonfires lighting the sky.
- ④ Some places stuff the effigies with fireworks providing a wonderful, if occasionally slightly hairy, display for visitors. Pyrotechnic displays take place across Mumbai throughout the festival and the celebrations are taken very seriously by the locals.



*-Rotaract Club of Mumbai Ghatkopar*