

ART EXPOSURE PRESENTS

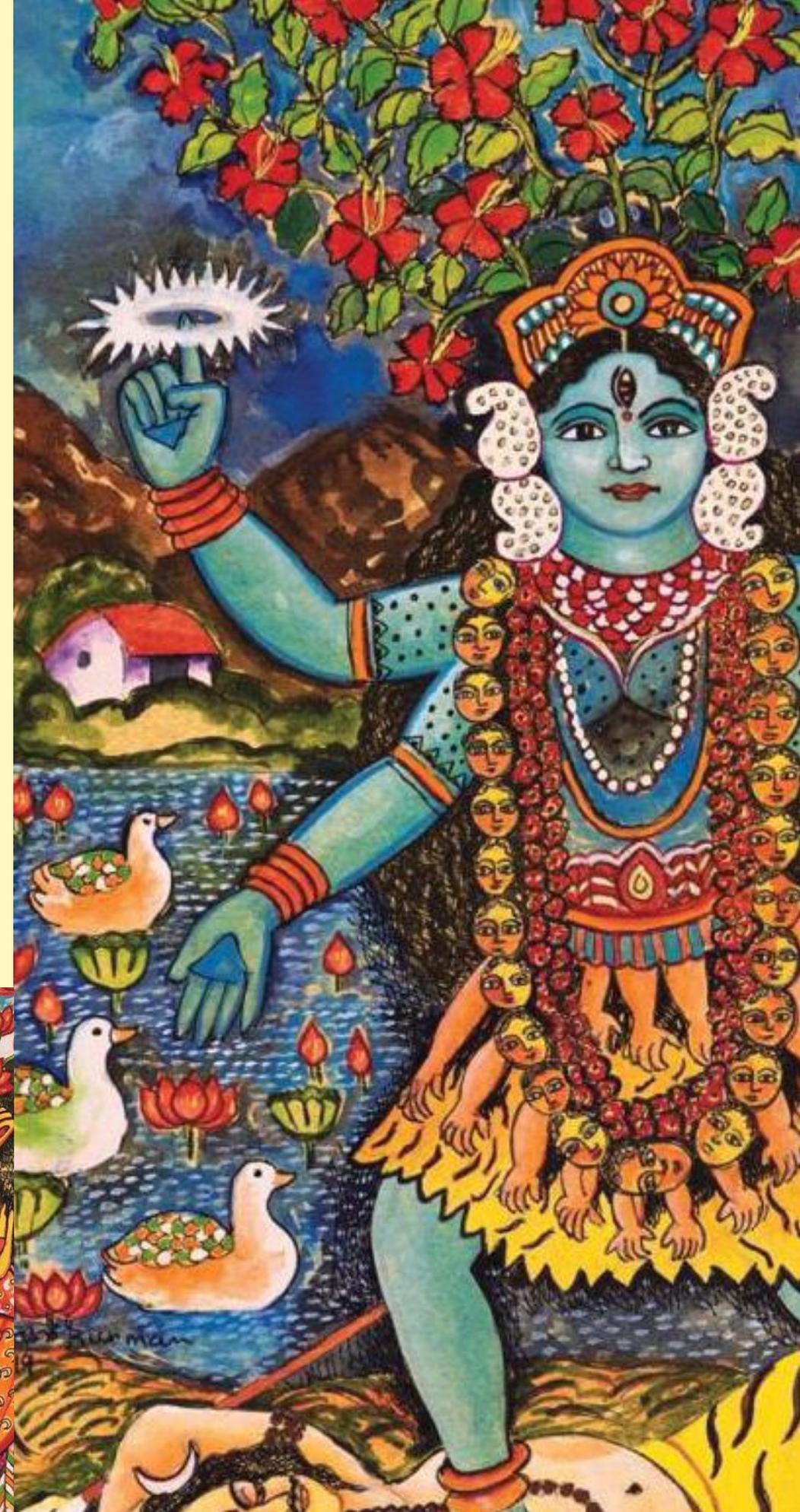
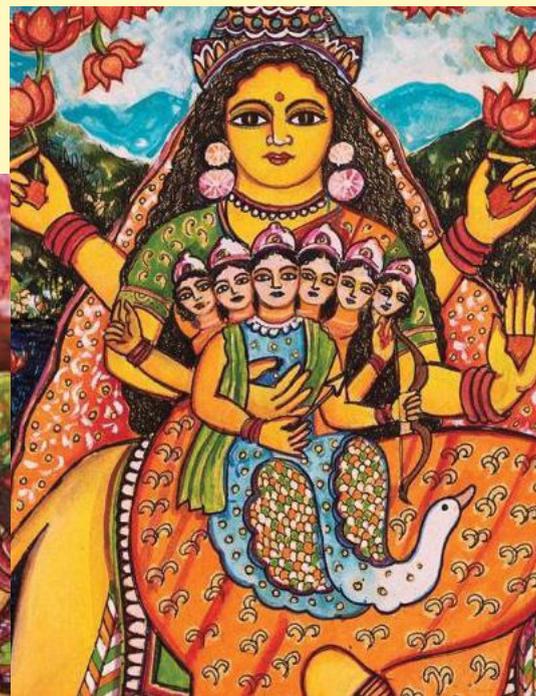
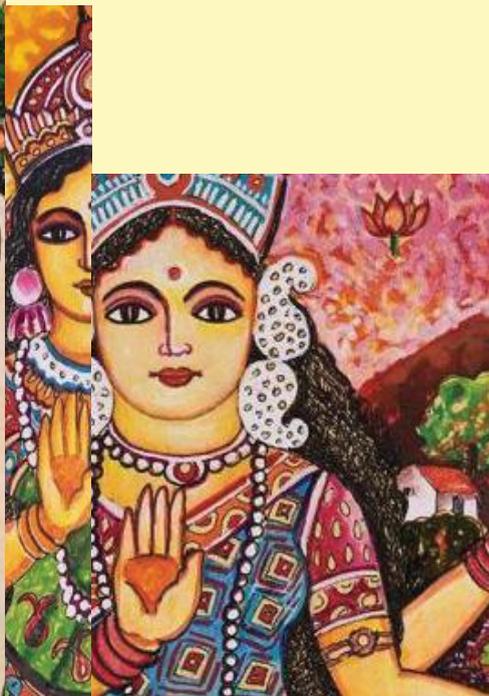
# SHAKTI

NINE FORMS OF DIVINITY

JAYASRI BURMAN

17th October - 17th November, 2020

[artexposure.in](http://artexposure.in)



*The gods came into a counsel when they witnessed the world brimming with injustice and chaos. Deliberating upon how to bring an end to this unruly world order, Durga was created out of the gods' special powers. She was moulded into a fierce being who could demolish the entire evilistic powers.*

For me, **Shakti** is the essence of goodness, with which we protect ourselves and our dear ones, and fight wrongdoings. Shakti establishes a symbiotic harmony with love and peace, to bring about a better earth and empowered humanity.

- Jayasri Burman



# Celebrating Devi

*By Ina Puri*

'Mind and words are powerless  
To encompass your glory  
Whose extent is as immeasurable  
As that of cosmic space..'

Subrahmania Bharati: Invocation to Mahashakti.

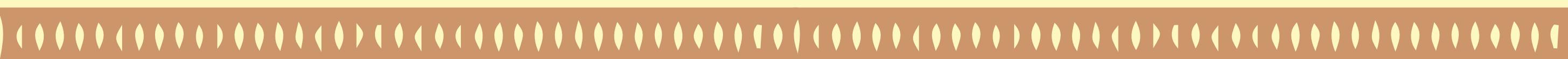
The bright morning was reminiscent of past autumn days when the skies were a dazzling blue and Durga Puja was around the corner. It was the season for 'Kaash' blossoms, 'Agomoni' songs and the tingling romance that signaled the advent of puja in the hearts of every Bengali. Fittingly, I was in Jayasri Burman's spacious studio, to look at her new works getting ready for an exhibition at Art Exposure, Kolkata, coinciding with the festivities. The painter herself, surrounded by the paraphernalia of her art materials, was in the meanwhile, perched on a long wooden table, putting final touches to a canvas, delicately shading the petals of the lotus flowers at the feet of the central figure, a strikingly proportioned form of the mother goddess. The canvas she was precariously bent over, was seven feet in height and shaped like a giant 'kulo' (where rice is cleaned in Bengali households), bordered with a pattern of 'alpona' within which she was in the process of creating an enchanting domain of flowers, trees and mythical creatures.

Scattered around, canvases are stacked against the walls with half-finished paintings, the background blank or penciled with motifs she was yet to fill in. There are persistent calls from galleries and collectors; she directs her staff to organize the transportation of the works that are packed and waiting to be couriered to distant cities, there is much to be done as the exhibition dates loom ahead, her first in Kolkata after a long gap. Yet, characteristically, she is full of energy and enthusiasm, keen to discuss the new works she has been making in the last many months. Her technique, it would appear, has become more meticulous, the texture now a mesh of fine lines that crisscross across the canvas in exquisite detail. While the artist's vision draws inspiration from the scriptures and the Chandi Path she had memorized in girlhood, she uses the trope of ancient tradition to juxtapose it with the contemporary and it is at through this juxtaposition that she arrives at her own unique artistic oeuvre. Her myths, legends and fables become in their retelling also a narration about the environment.

There is an immediate need to look after our forests and rivers and skies before we harm our environment even more, therefore, surrounding the goddesses are sylvan woods and streams where swans and fish play amongst the waves, where the wild animals roam free. She refers to the hymn where the Devi is a protectress. 'Also where forest fire rages, even in the midst of the ocean, abiding even there, you protect all.... O Goddess, be gracious: protect us ever from the fear of enemies, just as you have now quickly saved us from bondage to the demons.'

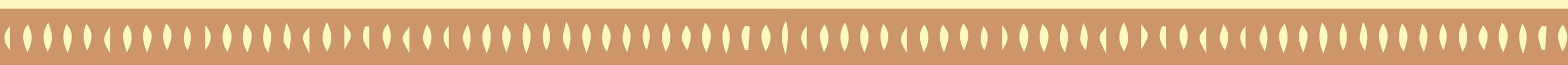
Speaking of her early years, she trained as an artist initially in Shantiniketan, winning an award for printmaking, before leaving Viswa Bharati under circumstances over which she had no control. Afterwards, she continued her practice, determined now, never to give up, no matter how challenging the conditions. This time, when she took up painting again, she worked by herself, taking only the occasional guidance of her uncle, Sakti Burman apart from Ganesh Pyne and Bikash Bhattacharya (who were known to her family). Her early work was mostly abstract veering occasionally to the figurative genre, in the medium of oil and watercolour. The initial years were tough and she had to struggle hard before she finally gained recognition and accolade for her work, but from that juncture, onwards, there was no looking back for the young Jayasri Burman. Observing her for the last two decades, one can only say that her trajectory as a painter has been nothing less than spectacular, even though she remains till date, the person she always was, grounded and faithful to her convictions and ideologies. She gratefully acknowledges her father as her mentor, the guiding force who taught her 'Bhakti' and the worship of Shakti. When she chants from Chandi Path each day, she recites the text as she had learnt it from him, as a girl.

Jayasri Burman's greatest strength is undoubtedly her spirit of unaffectedness and I was personally delighted when she accepted an invitation to create an actual Durga 'protima' in Kolkata a few years ago at the behest of an organization. Following her acceptance, she proved her sincerity to the challenging project by spending days at Kumhortulli learning to sculpt the clay figure, the armature, with the clay-modelers, watching how a piece of 'mulmul' would be treated and softened to make the limbs and face of the figures smooth, every little technique so that she could actually be involved at every stage. The going was great till it reached the final stages of how the 'protima' should look, and then all hell broke loose.



The 'kumhors' were aghast to learn that their Devi was to have features they had never heard of earlier, like winged limbs, for instance! But they yielded, at last, and Jayasri's Devi became her unique creation, with the Jayasri Burmanesque winged limbs and minutely detailed 'chaalchitra' (backdrop) comprising of her distinctive motifs. It had been an emotionally charged experience being a part of this process and she could hardly believe she had sculpted the magnificent 'protima' when crowds gathered and the rituals began on the first day, but her role was over. She could not claim ownership of the goddess that was duly worshipped and immersed as the tradition demanded.

Coming to the present suite, Jayasri paints in imaginative detail the different manifestations of Devi as she appears in the ancient texts, each form different from the other in temperament, appearance and spirit. The palette changes in accordance with the depiction, therefore, for instance, the raging figure of Kali is painted in shades of deep indigo, while a softer, radiant mustard is used to portray the luminosity of Durga, likewise, the same attention is seen in the detailing of drapery, appearance and posture of the female deities, each one equally distinctive and magnificent. Quoting from the ancient Sanskrit texts, she says, that is believed that Nobo Durga wards off evil, pestilence and disasters and by worshipping her, the world will protect itself from further calamities. While that remains to be seen, Jayasri Burman is delighted to be back in her native city as it prepares for Durga Puja, once more.

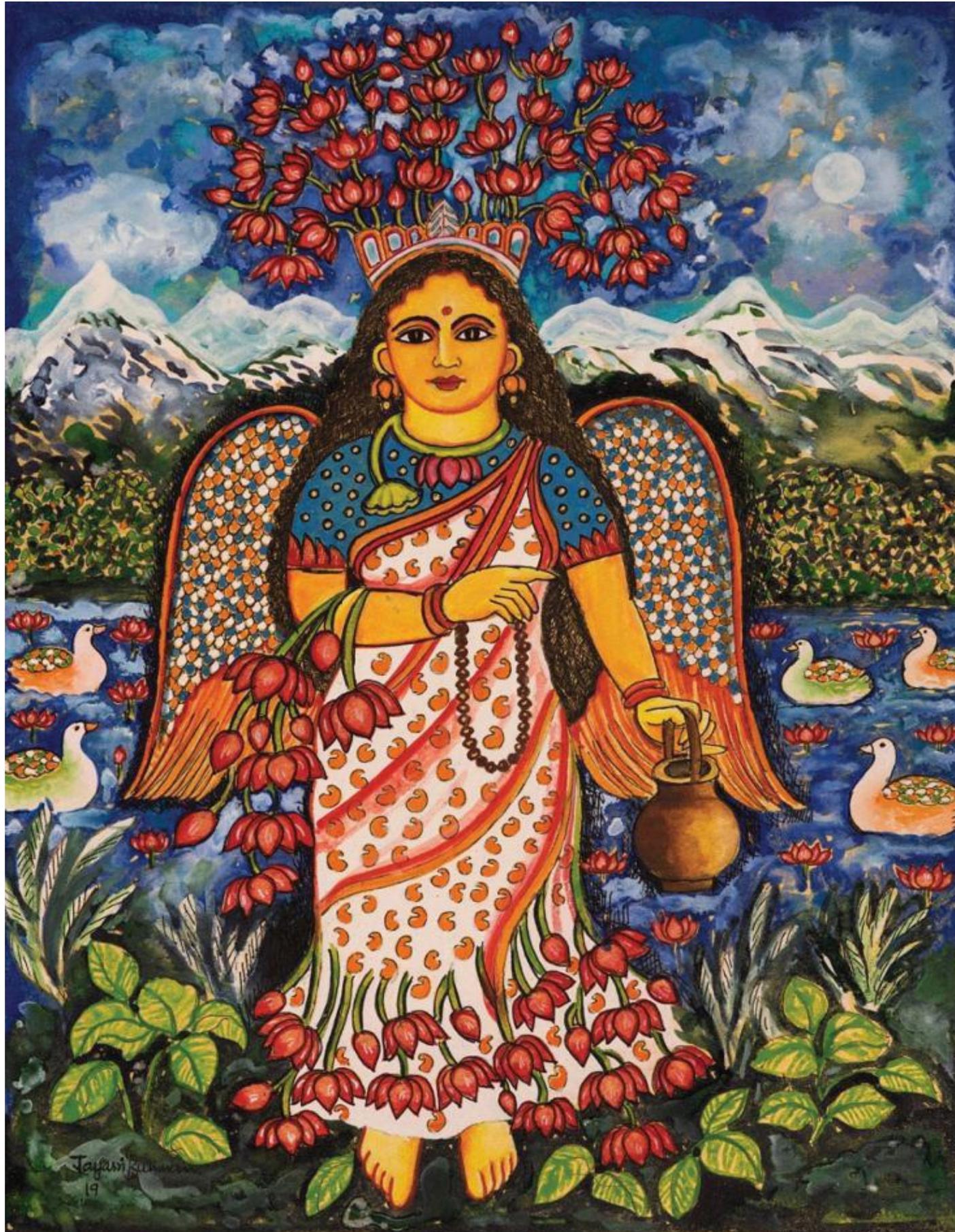




Shailaputri, commonly known as Sati is honoured as the Goddess of Nature. Mounted on a bull, she holds a trident on her hand and is the embodiment of the collective power of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar.



**Shailputri** | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



The second day of Navratri is dedicated to the worship of Goddess Brahmacharini who is blissful and endows happiness, peace, knowledge and prosperity. Adorned in Rudraksha, she is worshipped to attain emancipation or moksha



### **Brahmacharini**

Water Colour on Sikishi Board

12 x 16 inches | 2019



Embodiment of bravery, peace, tranquillity and prosperity, Chandraghanta is the symbol of overcoming physical and mental suffering. She represents that side of the Shakti that can destroy demons to maintain peace within the world.



**Chandra Ghanta** | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



It is often said that Devi Kushmanda created the cosmic egg with her smile which resulted in the creation of the universe. On the 4th night of Navratri, we celebrate the divine power of creation by worshipping Devi Kushmanda.



**Kushmanda** | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



Skandamata, who is worshipped on the 5th day represents vulnerability of a mother who can fight anyone to protect her child. The lotuses on her hands depict defending and gesture of granting to her devotees.



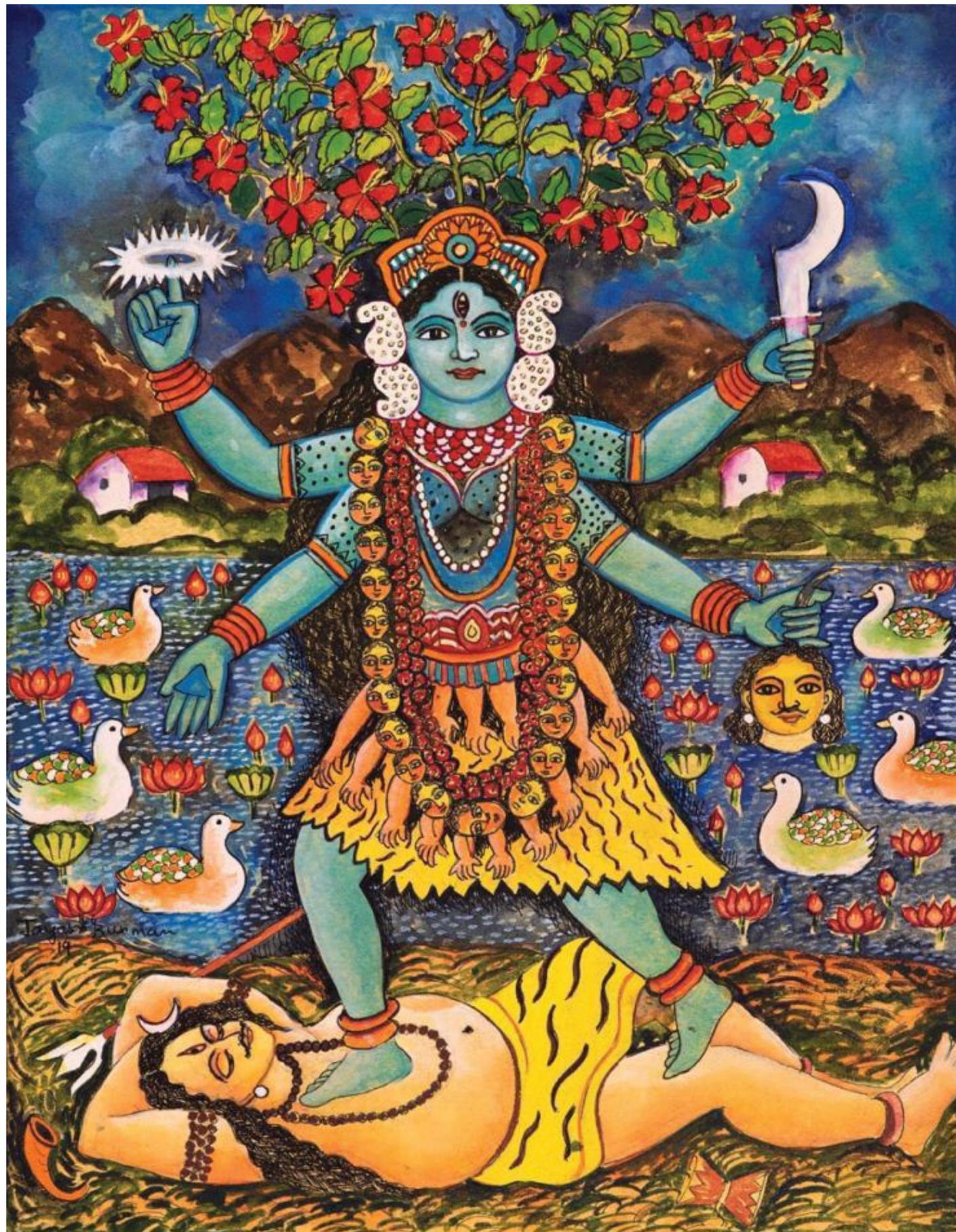
Skandamata | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



Devi Katyayani was born to the great sage Kata and is the embodiment of immense courage. She is most popularly known as the power who slayed the demon, Mahisasura.



Katyayani | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



The destroyer of darkness, ignorance and evil, Devi Kala Ratri is worshipped on the 7th day of Nav Ratri. Dark skinned, dishevelled hair and her fearless posture represent the fierce form of Shakti. She is also represented as the dark side of the Nature which leads to destruction.



### **Kalratri**

Water Colour on Sikishi Board  
12 x 16 inches | 2019



The 8th day of Navratri is dedicated to Devi Maha Gauri who represents intelligence, peace, calmness and prosperity. She is often worshipped by devotees as the remover of all sufferings and evils in life.



Mahagouri | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019



Siddhidatri | Water Colour on Sikishi Board | 12 x 16 inches | 2019

The 9th Day or the final day of Navratri is dedicated to Devi Siddhidatri who is believed to be the remover of ignorance and obstacles and help her devotees in the realisation of the divine. Just like the clear blue sky, Devi Siddhidatri represents a blissful state of mind owing to her supernatural healing powers.





Art Exposure

54B, Mahanirban Rd, Dover Terrace, Ballygunge,  
Kolkata, West Bengal 700029

Ph : +91 98305 42565 , 11 am - 8 pm , Closed on Sundays

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