

SPECIAL EVENT ON OCTOBER 1 AND 2 AT WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Wesley United Methodist Church will be the site for a Hindu festival to take place in Brewer Hall during the first weekend of October. The article below describes the various beliefs associated with the festival and is written by Mrs. Rita Ghosh. Dr. Satya Mitra will be available during coffee hour on Sunday, October 2 to explain more about their special event and will be happy to entertain any of your questions. We hope you will find it of interest to learn about their culture and practices.

Durga Puja **(Worship of Mother Durga “The Goddess of Power”)**

Durga Puja is an annual Hindu festival celebrated widely all over India, especially in the state of West Bengal. Goddess Durga symbolizes “Shakti” - divine power. She is considered to be the mother of the universe representing infinite feminine power, strength and benevolence. Puja means worship. The mythological story behind Durga Puja centers around the conquest of a demon (Mahishasur) who had tyrannized the universe. Lord Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, the creators of the universe, asked Durga to embody herself in the form of “Shakti”. She was thus created in the form of omnipotent power to conquer the evil in Mahishasur. Durga is depicted as a goddess seated on a ferocious lion, holding weapons of divine significance in ten hands. She is also shown in action about to slay “Mahishasur”. Goddess Durga thus became the Savior of the universe.

This mythological epic has inspired Hindus around the world to annually celebrate Goddess Durga and her victory - a representation of the triumph of good over evil. To enhance the infinite power of divinity and motherhood, Goddess Durga is also depicted with Lord Shiva (Durga’s husband) and her children. When viewing her image, on her left are her son Ganesha, and her daughter Lakshmi. Ganesha represents removal of obstacles and success of endeavors and Lakshmi illustrates wealth and prosperity. To her right, Goddess Durga is flanked by her daughter Saraswati and son, Kartikeya. Saraswati symbolizes the power of knowledge and education while Kartikeya embodies magnificence and valor. Durga Puja is a spiritually fulfilling experience.

Durga Puja has a very important socio-cultural significance. This is a time when communities come together and people unite in harmony, forsaking all animosities. There is unity, festivity, goodwill and peace in everyone’s hearts. It is also the time to celebrate the spirit of giving with gifts of love to near and dear ones and donations to charity. As we celebrate Durga Puja this October, we hope that our festivities and goodwill bring tidings of joy to everyone in every community.

