



NEWSLETTER FROM PBWA

March 2023, Vol. 01

We are happy to launch the first edition of the PBWA Newsletter. The main focus of the design, content and value of PBWA Newsletter is to provide a quick updates PBWA's activities, views from it's members, social presence of our association, event announcements, and interact on important ideas that can help us usher a better social community.

Please come forward and participate in editorial, design, content delivery or just ideate together to take this publication to higher heights of readership quality.

Happy reading.

Editorial PBWA 360

What seemed like a meeting of minds in the year 2006 is now an organization of depth and a character focused on making a positive difference to our society. Over the last 16 years, our organization has made steady inroads in the areas of women empowerment, healthcare, education, and rural community development, apart from organising Powai Sarvajani Durgotsav.

One of the sustained engagements for PBWA has been in the area of building communities in and around few villages of Palghar district of Maharashtra, through providing for daily breakfast to schools, education support, water management and infrastructure development. We also

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Theme of the Month

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

at PBWA, as seen from My Eyes

I've seen PBWA being conceptualised when I was very young. My childhood has been weaved through this Organization And at its very foundation has been the involvement and decision making power of the women. I've seen the zeal and fierceness with which my mashi and ma would plan, strategise and execute almost everything that goes into making our Durga Puja what it is today. From deciding the Natmancho to designing the interiors, from planning and scheduling the cultural program calendar and artists to heading the designing and branding of our pujo, from drawing elaborate alponas to designing the cover page of our magazines and logos, our womenfolk have always led the path. Not to mention the Pujo team that prepares the bhog for the goddess early in the morning, cooks and arranges the Prasad to be distributed..all while being gorgeously decked up and fasting till the time the Goddess has had her share. I have seen the power, the dedication, the desire and the humility with which they work together.

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Mission Swayam Siddha

Mission Swayam Siddha (MSS), the social initiative of the Powai Bengali Welfare Association (PBWA) to empower economically and socially less privileged women resumed its operations since mid-2022 after a hiatus of nearly two years owing to the Covid 19 pandemic. The various activities of MSS which came to a sudden halt due the pandemic, resumed one by one, and with each passing day, gathered momentum as opportunities opened up. MSS activities include expanding the skill set of our trainees through various training programmes, daily production of various handcrafted products, and showcasing the same in public and corporate exhibitions.

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Social Welfare

PBWA SOCIAL WORK AT A GLANCE FY 2022- '23

PBWA has been impacting the lives of people through its various interventions in the area of Education, Health, Women Empowerment, Environment, Inclusivity & community engagement. While much is required to be done but so far, we could impact the lives of the beneficiaries in a very positive way. We continue our sustained interventions in the following areas:

1. EDUCATION:

A. Employment of Teachers: This is an on-going program. This year, we continued to bear teachers' salary in Vilatpara school in Talasari. For standard 9 & 10 we appointed 5 teachers & the result has been phenomenal. Last academic year they recorded 100% pass percentage in SSC board exam for the first time. This academic year too we expect the same result.

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Social Media 360

PBWA has had a 360 degree presence on Digital and Social media for over a decade. What started as an effort to enhance awareness of our work within the Bengali community in Powai through our website launch in 2013, has scaled up over the years to become the largest online Bengali community globally with Lakhs of followers and subscribers.

Our online Assets include - a website, a Google Business Profile, a Facebook Page, a YouTube Channel, Twitter and Instagram handles and a Times of India

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Know Your Members

- Anamika & Anshuman Das, Raheja Vistas
- Seema & Rajesh Bhattacharya, Raheja Vistas
- Sumela and Satyajit Dutta
- Pushkar and Deepa Mazumder-

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Editorial have undertaken significant social initiatives in the areas of management of deadly diseases, under privileged children, commercial sex workers & the LGBT community. PBWA has tirelessly worked to help people across sections of the society to survive through the difficult years of COVID 19. Be it safety gears, PAP machines, food, medicine, we have tried to extend support to as many areas of concern as possible. Notably, our members have generously contributed to the rebuilding of the Sunderban areas of West Bengal that was devastated by the Amphan cyclone. Our efforts to showcase our rich cultural heritage is noteworthy. PBWA has organised stage-shows of some of the most reputed artists in the areas of music, dance and theatre during Durgotsav, Kobi Pronaam, and beyond. Apart from renowned professional performers, cultural performances by our in-house talents have always been awe-inspiring, aptly living up to our credo – culture binds us!

Rejuvenation of our modern cerebral society, through inclusivity and dialogue is core to the ethos of PBWA. Powai Sarjanin Durgotsav is the social format which helps us engage in that dialogue. And at the heart of this grand event, there still lies the resolute and commitment of trying to make the world around us a better place and ushering in a brighter tomorrow.

The purpose of this newsletter is to acknowledge and appreciate the good work that the association is engaging with in the social and cultural sphere and also to reiterate that there is a lot to learn, a long way to go. And, we want to make every step matter.

-Editorial Desk

Theme of the Month The biggest testament to PBWA's vision of creating a harmonious society is seen through our cultural programs. It provided a space for those, who didn't even realise they could dance or sing, but they did eventually become graceful dancers and musicians, those who never had the time apart from home-making, became excellent theatre artists. Isn't that what empowerment is all about? To provide that space where people can realise their potential and express themselves?

I believe a huge part of our social and cultural empowerment happens through inclusive and equitable practices. Growing up, I've seen many Durga Pujas, where our goddess would be served only by Brahmins. This awful distinction and discrimination was nipped in the bud at the very beginning of our pujo. I've seen my caregiver, Jyoti and her mother Mathura, be the backbone of the Pujochors. Those 5 days of pujo, they would ensure all the rituals go smoothly. Eventually, their children participated in all the programs, be it drawing competition in the morning or cultural performances in the evening. And I've seen the gradual social transformation in their lives through this exposure because it provided a space for them to learn, unlearn, experience and

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Mission Swayam Siddha Production and exhibitions started with a big bang during the PBWA Durgotsav in October 2022, when MSS trainees put up a three day exhibition cum sale of its products on the Durga Puja ground. These products included the extremely popular embroidered cloth and jute products, costume jewellery, paper stationery and diyas. With visitors flocking the MSS stall, our MSS trainees were enthused to see their hard work being appreciated by one and all. It was also a morale booster for them; their lives and livelihoods were back on track! As normalcy was being restored all around, corporates started opening their doors for day long exhibitions which has been one of the major sources of income for MSS. The first such opportunity post-pandemic was provided in October 2022 by Axis Bank Corporate Office, which coincidentally was the venue of the very first MSS corporate exhibition! The success of this exhibition led to invitations for two more exhibitions with the same bank in the months of December 2022 and February 2023. It was also heartening for the MSS trainees to receive an invitation from Indusion on the occasion of the International Women's

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Social Welfare B. Project UDAAN- Learning coding without computer. A unique program we are implementing for BMC school students. Coding is the new literacy in today's digital world & learning coding techniques at an early age will enable BMC school students to prepare them to join the digital revolution that the country is going through. We have committed to enable 500 such students in Powai to start with.

2. HEALTH:

TB Eradication program: Nikshay Poshan Yojana: PBWA has embarked on partnering BMC for TB Eradication program. We have committed ourselves to this cause as an official partner of TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan. As "Ni-kshay Mitra", PBWA is proud to be contributing to the "Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana" to support nutritional needs for poor TB patients in Powai. We have worked with BMC doctors and nutritionists, and worked out monthly "poshan bag" for each patient. To start with 600 such monthly poshan bags have been earmarked & are being distributed to the beneficiaries of Powai. Apart from providing for nutritional needs, PBWA will also now undertake various programs to build awareness about TB.

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Social Media 360 mircosite. Our dynamic website (www.pbwa.in) gives an overview of all the four pillars of our work (Cultural and Social) and also hosts our Annual Souvenir e-book 'Parichay'. It is also cross-linked with our social media pages, and allows visitors to have a single view of all our social media updates as well.

Our YouTube channel (youtube.com/@PowaiBengaliWelfareAssociation) with ~1 Bn video impressions, 2 Lakh subscribers and 700+ videos is amongst the Largest Global Online Libraries of Bengali Arts and Culture, apart from having a distinctive library of Live Concerts of the finest singers - from Anjan Dutta, Rupam Islam and Anupam Roy to KK, Shreya and Alka Yagnik and many many others. The Channel releases new videos every weekend and we have a strong pipeline of unreleased videos, which will be available progressively. Our FB Page (facebook.com/pbwaofficial/) is the first stop for all updates and member engagement, and is a vibrant community of nearly 4K members. Our Instagram Profile (instagram.com/powaibengaliwelfareassociation) and Twitter Handle (twitter.com/pbwadurgapujo) mirror the large followership of PBWA online, and further aid an integrated amplification of our communication efforts.

Our Google Business Profile displays 10,000+ pictures uploaded by visitors to our Puja and drove almost 3 lakh visitors, using search based Apps like Uber and Ola to our Durgotsav in 2022.

Using the online assets in an integrated media campaign was one of the key achievements in 2022, wherein high quality video

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Events Calendar

Kobi Pronaam- May 13th, 2023

Annual Day - July 22nd, 2023

Mahalaya - October 14th, 2023

Durgotsav - October 19th - 24th, 2023

Lakshmi Puja - October 28th, 2023

Kali Puja - November 12th, 2023

Annual Sports day - January 7th 2024

Annual Picnic - January 28th 2024

Nikshay Poshan Yojna- Ration for 50 TB patients to be given every month

Theme of the Month

grow through various interactions. Another highlight of our Pujo has been the “Devi Baron”. I had been told that only married women participate but in reality I see commercial sex workers and the Queer community who identify as women, donning the most beautiful sarees and welcoming Goddess Durga, dancing to the beats of the Dhak. And why wouldn't they, when they see themselves in their Goddess?

The trainees of 'Mission Swayam Siddha' (MSS), who didn't dare look in the eye while speaking or being spoken to, now walk with pride and their head held high, owning small enterprises and becoming a master of their craft. It was a very creative partnership and an artistic journey where the grooming of the MSS women were done by our very own women volunteers from PBWA. This was surely an empowering experience for them both as the volunteers had no formal training and neither did the trainees, but they've both evolved in the process. I was in 6th std when MSS was envisioned and I speak on behalf of all my Young Turks when I say, that the values of inclusivity, empowerment and empathy have been ingrained in us in our formative years through our association with the cultural ethos of our organisation. I think we all have had some sort of psychological empowerment growing up through our engagement with so many social activities that focus on uplifting individuals, specially women in rural areas. They are the ones that run the entire household, from cleaning, to fetching water from far off distances, fetching firewood from the forests and then cooking and then doing agricultural activities. So When PBWA distributed solar lamps, provided groundwater through installation of borewells etc in the adivasi villages of Talasari, we were in a huge way impacting the lives of these women and continue to do so, through so many other initiatives. Different people have different understanding of what Women Empowerment mean. For some it may be financial independence while for some it must be social and cultural empowerment, where even taking control and cognisance of your household decision making can make you feel worthy. For some being able to express themselves through the medium of art could be empowerment. So, what does this term truly mean? Is it more of an intrinsic feeling, an awakening of sorts or something that can be measured as an extrinsic quality? It's when you've been denied something, for generations so much so you feel like that's the norm and normalise such behaviour and attitudes that you often forget your individuality. But overtime when you realise the capacity and potential you have as an individual, you need the space and support system to be able to exercise that ability. Providing that space, help and aid to realise this potential, is what leads to empowerment. And I believe PBWA has provided that space to many.

So when I was asked to write about the vision of women empowerment in PBWA, I didn't have to think much because we pretty much live it everyday (and not just on Women's day).

- Paloma Mitra

Mission Swayam Siddha

Day, to showcase their beautiful creations at its office. Needless to say, our trainees won everyone's hearts and the MSS brand made a splash once again. Along with the resumption of corporate exhibitions, MSS made its presence felt at the Fun Street organised on Christmas eve last year at Hiranandani Gardens, Powai. MSS introduced a new line of high end home décor embroidered products On the occasion of Christmas which caught the attention of many a visitor. Participation in the event added another layer of confidence to our trainees as they competed on equal footing with numerous other wonderful stalls at the event and made a mark.

Finally, an important component of the training programme at MSS is periodical workshops by professionals who introduce new skills to the trainees. In the past there have been workshops on folk arts, candle making, costume jewellery, stitching and embroidery. After a hiatus of almost three years, professional training has begun in earnest, kick starting with a two week bag making workshop in January 2023 by Ms. Sheila Wagh and Ms. Mangal Wagh, who taught MSS trainees six styles of bags and ensured that they acquire a high level of proficiency in making these products. The bags will be among the new line of MSS products to be launched soon. In the months to come, the main focus of our goal to empower women through Mission Swayam Siddha is to build on the initial strides that our trainees have made post the pandemic and build on the momentum by looking out for more income earning opportunities, expanding as well as deepening the skill set of the trainees and explore new avenues to scale up and reach out to more potential beneficiaries. The last several months of activities have shown that our trainees are geared up to face fresh challenges and focused on their journey of empowerment in a post-pandemic world.

- Jayati Sarkar

Social Welfare

3. Community Engagements: 1. We continue to strive hard in our efforts to create an inclusive society. The association takes pride in its meaningful engagements with a cross section of communities viz., transgender, and commercial sex workers, in and around Mumbai. PBWA has always been connecting and involving its social partners in all its events throughout the year. Spreading happiness and smiles to our friends from societies with different eco systems has always been our honest endeavour. And hence they continue to be an integral part of our various cultural and social events.

2. Since its inception, Powai Bengali Welfare Association (PBWA) has been celebrating Diwali with an objective to bring a moment of happiness to the less privileged children of society. This year we despatched 1000 goody bags to destitute girl children, street children, cancer afflicted children, children of red-light areas, home for orphans and physically challenged children.

- Sourav Mitra

Social Media 360

and pictorial posts were simultaneously released across FB, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google Business and WhatsApp. Our campaign and organic amplification efforts of the same using influencer channels gave us ~220 Million online impressions over just 5 days.

Apart from having these vibrant assets, we have also worked on achieving a high SEO (Search Engine Optimization) score, such that any online search on Durga Puja starts with a display of PBWA's online assets. We are ranked No. 1 Globally in Google Search amongst Durga Pujas globally. Efforts like Synergy Branding and Cross linking of assets have also enabled this.

Looking ahead, our focus will remain on disseminating unique content and updates, and double our online followership over the next three years.

- Prateek Bhattacharya



Know Your Members

Anamika & Anshuman Das, Raheja Vistas

PBWA has struck such a beautiful chord between celebrating life (ever so enthusiastically reaching out to old age homes, orphanages etc.) and festivities. This is our home away from home and we are truly honored to be a member of the esteemed PBWA Family.

Seema & Rajesh Bhattacharya, Raheja Vistas

Our experience with PBWA has been so overwhelmingly different from our expectations. Despite being new we got an opportunity to participate in cultural events, bhog distribution etc. It was heartwarming to see our daughter perform on stage

Sumela and Satyajit Dutta

PBWA for me is an extended family, a conglomerate of enthusiastic, socially aware, creative people in Mumbai. It provides a cultural & social flavor similar to Kolkata. I would encourage everyone longing for a "Bengal out of Bengal" to become a part of PBWA!

Pushkar and Deepa Mazumder-

We have always been awestruck with the magnitude, immaculate planning and execution of the PBWA pujo. Being part of it has been a great experience. The josh and camaraderie shown during cultural programmes, pujo arrangements, bhog distribution etc is commendable.

Rumi-nation

A Poem

By Jayatri Dasgupta

Is it the air
Is it my thought
Why do eyes open wide
And weary bones do not!

Mind's crevices seep, overflow
Some light, some darkness duel toe to toe.
Much like the dawn that breaks the night
I ruminate those lost, those that I cried!

I crowd myself with memories old
The body weary, battling today's goals
All the while seeking what lies beyond
The reason we breathe, our life's call!

Much is transient, changeable, new
Much of what we know, all ages hold true
In the eternal ebb of time and tide
The heart lives for those, who in it reside!



PBWA Annual Picnic 2023:

The only thing better than a great meal would be a great meal with friends under the blue sky.

This February, we celebrated the annual PBWA picnic at a scenic location (Gorai beach) with great food and excellent company.

Sharing some moments of excitement - right from the bus journey in the morning, to awesome food and fun.



Thank You