



The Hour of the Goddess: Memories of Women, Food, and Ritual in Bengal

Chitrita Banerji

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Food constitutes an integral aspect of the intellectual and cultural milieu of Bengal, and rituals, social customs and day-to-day routine are closely intertwined with the preparation of traditional dishes by the women of the household. The quintessential Bengali emphasis on food was brilliantly encapsulated by Chitrita Banerji in *Life and Food in Bengal*. In *The Hour of the Goddess*, she returns with an unbeatable combination of cultural insight, personal anecdote and mouthwatering recipes. Intimate yet objective, it examines the complex connection between gender and food preparation, and the intricate relationship between food, ritual and art in Bengal. Written in her inimitable style, the book takes the reader on a journey that spans Banerji's personal growth from girlhood to womanhood in Calcutta. Gastronomy and social commentary combine to form a lucid, thoroughly enjoyable book that covers, among other things, offerings made to gods, restrictions imposed on widows, cooking tools, the role played by maidservants in Bengali households, and customs associated with eating. Beautifully written and meticulously researched, *The Hour of the Goddess* is a finely crafted masterpiece that is at once memoir, food guide and cultural history.

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