International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Goddess in the City of Joy: Sabeki Idols Versus Its Modern Interpretation

Buddhapriya Biswas

Assistant Professor, English, Pailan College of Management and Technology

ABSTRACT

My research paper revolves around the Sabeki Durga Idol and how Durga Puja itself got transformed through art, standing in the modern era. I propose to work and discuss about the anthropological field research based on the *Sabeki* Durga Idol and how Durga puja itself got transformed. This apparently an unlike comparison from two distinct forms of evolved art of history and the contemporary world; which opened the alleys for me to research in-depth. It is the result of my curious attempt to decipher the hot distinction of historical art along with the intervention of British and the artworks of contemporary times. Starting from the historical reasons of how Goddess in the colonial Calcutta started to be worshipped. Particularly, the arrival of Durga Puja in several *Bonedi Bari* across rural Bengal and other parts of Bengal then (now Odisha). I argue that the paper focuses directly on diverse types of rich legacies of Zamindars, from undivided Bengal which weaves the stories of the land and its emerging arts. Likewise, *Chalchitra, Patachitra* tradition, Kalighat painting: Jamini Roy's art, *Daaker Saaj*, and also *Ek Chala* tradition are foremost examples of them. Leaping to the modern times, it is observed that, Kolkata and its different artists from Government Art College and other institutes, coupled with the craftsmen from rural side join hands to produce for the public, world-class *pandals*. Thus, I infer the rationalization with the very essence of Sabeki Durga Idol and how Durga puja itself got transmuted.

Keywords: *Sabeki*, Idol, *Patachitra*, community, tradition

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I propose to work and discuss the anthropological field research based on the *Sabeki* Durga Idol and how the Durga *puja* itself got transformed through art standing in the modern era. This apparent unlikely comparison of two distinct forms of evolved art of history and the contemporary world opened the alleys for me to research in-depth. This research paper is the result of my curious attempt to decipher the hot distinction between historical art along with the intervention of the British and the art of contemporary times.

Worship of Durga was outlawed in Bengal for a considerable amount of time during the Mughal era since idolatry is considered anti-Islamic in Islamic customs. Hindu landlords requested permission from British East India Company officials to install Durga *Puja* and Durga idols following the company's victory in Bengal. British officials not only approved of the installation and worship of the idols, but many British officers also took part in the Durga Puja celebrations. The wealthiest man in the world at the time, Nabakrishna Deb, arranged for Robert Clive to be the primary guest of Durga Puja. Robert Clive and his top officers took part in the worship with tremendous fervour. Not only this, like a faithful Hindu, he also brought lotus flowers to offer at the feet of Goddess Durga. In addition, he brought lotus

flowers to offer to Goddess Durga's feet, just like a devout Hindu would. It was now Nabakrishna Deb's turn to assume the role of a kind host. Wine and non-vegetarian food were served in honour of the British officers, as was customary at the period's English gatherings. Later on, this incident became a custom. In this sense, a combination of fun and religious customs began with Kolkata's Durga Puja. In India, a *pandal* is a man-made, temporary or permanent structure that is used in a variety of locations, such as outside of buildings or in public spaces like streets. Another difference between Durga Puja in Kolkata and other places is the *pandal*. Without a doubt, Kolkata's pandals are larger than those found anywhere else during Durga Puja. In actuality, Kolkata is the only place where one may witness the magnificent form of Durga Puja. The *pandal* of Durga Puja displays Bengali life and culture. Every pandal has a theme, around which the entire structure is built, and within is a large statue of *Maa* Durga. The children and the youth have the most enthusiasm and curiosity for the pandal. In Kolkata's Durga Puja pandal, *khichdi* is available in the *prasadam*. This *Khichdi* is different from *Khichdi* of North India.For generations, the inhabitants of Kumartuli in northern Kolkata have been engaged in the time-honoured art of creating clay idols of Goddess Durga. The finished idols are worshipped during the festival eminently known as "*Durga Puja*" or "*Kali Puja*", where all of Bengal comes together in a pageant of celebration. The artists of Kumartuli, commonly referred to as *Kumortuli*, export their highly praised Goddess Durga idols that are crafted from lightweight materials like fiberglass. Durga's clay idol is fashioned according to a few traditions. Clay is gathered from the Ganges River's banks on the auspicious day of the *Rath Yatra* festival. A lump of clay is collected from the soil of hamlets or certain areas where sex-workers reside, as this clay is seen to be sanctified. It is then added to the clay mixture for the crafting of the idol. Tapas Pal, who has been sculpting Goddess Durga idols for three generations, said, "We have collected soil from the banks of *Yamuna, Ganga*, and other plain areas to shape idols of deities." Both individuals and organizations have ordered large and small environmentally friendly idols of Goddess Durga. "This year, we have concentrated on the quality of the soil, so to form the idols and the jewellery of the gods, we have brought high-quality soil from villages and the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers." Furthermore, he went on, "We would not be adorning the idols with any synthetic colours." However, Tapas stated that the artists anticipate a busy holiday season. August is when sculptors begin working on Durga Puja orders, and by the first week of September, they have acquired raw materials such as clay, stacks of bamboo poles, wood, dry grass, hay, ornaments, and clothing for the idols. The entire process of idol-making, from the collection of clay to the final stages of decoration and ornamentation, is considered sacred. Another important event is *Chakkhu Daan,* literally the donation of the eyes, which happens on a special day when the artists paint the eyes on the face of the idol, and that is the day of Mahalaya.

My research methods were largely qualitative in order to achieve all of my goals and objectives. The techniques are mostly evaluative and explanatory. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview procedures, while observation was conducted using non-participatory observation techniques. Aside from that, I hoped to employ quantitative research methods from various secondary sources to assess the change in the community's economic patterns, but the lack of uniform, substantial data prevented this. In the research, I targeted various audiences, the most important of whom were the craftspeople. My objectives were designed in such a way that I needed to interact with a variety of people.

MAIN DISCUSSION

In a city now known for its fetish for blue-and-white and collapsing flyovers, wondering about the iconography and the origin of Durga Puja in colonial Calcutta is a welcoming relief. A sepia-tinted photograph like this can elicit a hundred lingering thoughts on and about Durga Puja in Calcutta of yore in general, and its origin in particular. It was taken by one of the "Tommy troops" who ambled around Calcutta's alleyways and byways in the closing stages of World War II. About fifteen years ago, it was included in the Smithsonian University collections and is still used today. The gelatine photographs that have survived the digital era show a side of Calcutta that is seldom seen because street photography was innovative in that city at the time. The photograph that was taken in front of a majestic palace in the centre of colonial Calcutta's "black metropolis," conveys a hundred stories. The Neo-Classical mansion and the arched entrance are typical of many north Calcutta homes belonging to families that partnered with the East India Company to enjoy the early benefits of the economic boom that picked up steam in the early 19th century.

Despite the fact that the Durga Puja was established by the family of Raja Kangsa Narayan's family of Tahirpur, well before the colonial era and that their place of worship still exists; Barisha is quite a distance from the village Troika of *Kalikata, Gobindapur,* and *Sutanuti*, which up until the 1960s comprised what was known as Calcutta. The Deb family of Sovabazar is therefore usually given the honour of hosting Durga Puja in Calcutta. The decision of whether to refer to it as a "honour" or the contrary arises right away. This shift in perspective is heavily influenced by the post-colonial rewriting of Calcutta's past. As a matter of fact, the Deb family of Sovabazar started honouring the mother goddess in 1757. Yet why? There must be a response to this query. This was founded by Nabakrishna Deb, also known as Naba Munshi by the locals. Who was he? He was a polyglot who worked for the East India Company as an interpreter. Of course, he was fluent in *Bangla*. Before the British took over, Bengal's official language was Persian, which he was familiar with. But most crucially, he was able to summon some kind of English competence. This sealed the deal. Nabakrishna stood by the Company when they began meddling in trade and commerce in a region under the rule of the *Nawab* of Bengal and when they began building an army to pursue their commercial interests in the most dynamic province of South Asia in the 18th century. He was hired by the Company as an interpreter for the opulent sum of rupees sixty. He collaborated closely with Warren Hastings. He was more than just an interpreter though. Both of them were creating new power equations. Nabakrishna shown savvy negotiating skills when the Company reached an agreement with the most powerful banker of the time and planned a plot with the disgruntled group in the Nawab's court and army. He anticipated it and he looked out for the

interests of the individuals he worked for. He found it simple to help the conspirators communicate with the Company, including Raidurlabh, Jagat Seth, and others. The treasuries of Murshidabad were taken over by the Company and its allies not long after the Nawab's army was decimated at the Battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757. In no time, a brick and mortar mansion with a courtyard in the centre was built. He wanted a chance to impress the Company executives he had made friends with the Roys, Bysacks, and Seths, who controlled the majority of Calcutta commerce, with his newly acquired wealth. The timing of Durga Puja in the month of October was ideal. Durga Puja evolved from being a wealthy men's ritual to a festival for all the people with the advent of communal puja. Additionally, technology made it possible for the revolutionaries and freedom fighters to raise awareness and inspire opposition to British rule. They took use of the event to hand out flyers, banners, and slogans that extolled the virtues of the nationalist heroes and denounced the colonial policies. Additionally, they planned cultural events that emphasized the depth and diversity of Bengali literature and culture. Therefore, Nabakrishna was celebrating the Nawab's fall from the position of power while simultaneously extending a warm welcome to the British visitors in his Thakur Dalan. From a nationalist viewpoint, this action is outright anti-national! But this started everything off. Nabakrishna quickly attained the position of Robert Clive's *Bani*. More and more *mutsuddis, seths, and banians* entered the conflict. A large number of Bengali households were prepared to welcome Richard Wellesley to their mansions, all of which were designed to resemble the Sovabazar one, by the time he set foot on the banks of the Hooghly. The Sovabazar deity was decorated in dozens of different forms in their place of devotion. The clay image makers from the countryside adhered to the texts, namely the Brihat Nandikeshwar Purana, while creating the iconography for the Sovabazar deity. Since the 15th century, the Zamindars in rural Bengal have performed the autumnal ceremonies. The Roys of Krishnanagar had already made Durga Puja a very joyful affair before Nabakrishna intervened. The iconography was already in place, replete with a superb arrangement of idols in a semicircular area. Regarding the strange lion, it was an odd instance of mimicry. In the middle of the 18th century, Bengali potters had never seen a lion. Even the Mauryan era's lion capital of Ashoka had not been discovered till then. They made it up. It was only a figment of the imagination. The fact that it resembles the lion from the East India Company seal may have been required by their employer's growing amity with British traders. Jumping to the Durga idol itself, as for the complexion, Durga is represented in many hues and shades. The predominant yellowish hue adheres to the conventional method of describing body tone. The darker ones match the colour of the *seuli* flowers that bloom in the fall. The strange dreams that the customers had during and after conception are frequently blamed for the other varieties. The *Mahisasura* occasionally remains to be sport green painted, with military-style socks and shoes, and even a beard. A possible Islamic link? Yes, may be. However, it cannot be shown with certainty, and the *Hindutva* pedagogues have nothing to celebrate.

The *Daker saaj* was considerably later. Since the raw materials needed to produce these decorations were sent by post from Germany to Kolkata, it is thought that the term "*daker saaj*" originated from "*daak*," or post. This was entirely discontinued in the First World War. Additionally, thousands of complete embellishments such as *"sholar saaj*", alternatively known as "*daker saaj*", are shipped from this village by postal service every year. The latter had to be imported from Germany at the time since it could not be found in India and was mainly made of silver foil embellished with silver sequins. Only zamindars' Durga Pujas could afford the material since it was so pricey. In the Sovabazar household pujas, shola or *pith* ornaments are placed on the Durga idols. They stayed faithful to who they were. Modern idols began experimenting with fresher materials. A ready-made option was the colourful and

vibrant wrapping paper brought from Germany, the Bullens, silver springs, (*Rangta Zari*) or foils of gold and silver. They were ordered in advance by the image creators, and the producers posted them. As a result, these decorations acquired the *Moniker Daker saaj*. The women of the Pathuriaghata Mallik family stitched the goddess's *saris* with gold thread after dying them. Construction of *thakur dalans*, which were frequently adorned with marble, granite, gold leaf, stucco friezes, and hand-painted backdrops, began in the second part of the eighteenth century. The image is still the same now. The very thought of October returns to Raja Nabakrishna Street to experience the enchantment once more. Inside the Deb family's Bagwallah palace, time has stopped. They were wealthy *Zamindars* (landowners) from an unbroken Bengal who relocated to Kolkata to live it up. Their lavish way of life gets incorporated into urban legend. Their financial standing today is only a pale echo of their illustrious past, much like the dilapidated state of those opulent homes in North Kolkata. The majority of properties are shared by several parties and either constantly cause conflict or are the subject of drawn-out legal disputes between interested parties. They are a crucial component of Kolkata's *Bonedi Bari* tradition, which is revisited during Durga puja. Members of many such legacy families still gather together to plan the yearly ritual, which includes inviting hundreds of guests to eat scrumptious dinners as a legacy of the magnificent Zamindari estates of the past, despite the burden on their budgets. Over 20 traditional pujas, totalling more than 150 years old are performed throughout Kolkata. The most well-known pujas were those started by Rani Rashmoni (founder of Dakshineshwar temple), the Sovabazar Rajbari, and the Sabarna Roy Chowdhury family, who are regarded as the city's first landowners. Devarshi Roy Chowdhury, a family member who upholds the Sabarna Roy Chowdhury family. He stated, "We have maintained to customs and some rites have been preserved alive over the generations." Traditional Bengali homes have created a new market for travel companies as Durga Puja draws closer. A glance inside the puja rituals performed by the city's previous zamindars and a visit to these traditional homes. This has emerged as the new offering, standing on the contemporary modern world, for these numerous travel companies, including the State Government-run West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. Even though the West Bengal government has been planning these excursions for more than a decade, private operator Cox & Kings are the notable newcomers. These trips featured the customs and rituals of the first three days of the puja, such as a stop at the home to see how unmarried Brahmin girls are worshipped or a vegetable sacrifice. Visitors are occasionally given briefings about the family history by guides, however this is frequently handled by a senior family member. The West Bengal Government and Cox & Kings have partnered with a number of these traditional houses, including the Thanthania Dutta family, the Dorjeepara Mitra, the Sovabazar Rajbari, the Chhatubabu Latubabur Puja, and the Hathkhola Duttas. Traditional homes do not have any revenue-sharing agreements with these businesses, despite the influx of tourists. The Sovabazar Rajbari continues to be the sole exception, since the family gets funding from the State Department of Tourism to set up luncheon facilities for tourists. Officials from the state's tourist agency, however, declined to say how much money is given annually to the Sovabazar Rajbari for these excursions. Additionally, Cox & Kings affirmed that they had no revenue-sharing arrangements with these conventional homes. The several *Barowari Pujas* held during Bengal's Durga Puja festival by various organizations and groups constitute the main event. Every year, the subjects of a *pandal* of the contemporary world are created with lot many details and innovations. The newest idol and *pandal* themes are the buzz of the town. The Durga Pujas celebrated privately in a number of families, some of whom were wealthy and staunch in the past, notably during the Colonial Regime, are typically disregarded by the Pandal hoppers. Despite the fact that the financial situation is

not as prosperous as it once was.(mostly because the Zamindari system was eliminated after independence) These households continue to conduct Durga Puja with fervour while adhering to all the customs. All of the Pujas date back more than a hundred years; some are even two centuries old. This extremely old custom is being practiced today. The *Pattachitra* art of Odisha is primarily recognized for being the producer of historic crafts, hamlet is known as Raghurajpur. The framework of Durga Pratima contains a variety of *Chalis*, including the *Bangla Chali, Mothchouri Chali, Tanachauri Chali*, *Sorbosundori Chali, Khep Chali*, and *Markini Chali*. The Markini Chali is one of them and is the most prevalent Chali. The Bangla Chali mimics the style of temple building. It is long enough to accommodate all of the idols there and extends on both sides of the idol in a suspended design. *Shib-Parvati, Kali, Shib* attending *Nandi-Vringi, Mahish-mardini*, *Dashabatar*, etc. are the principal subjects of the chalchitra. The Durga *Pot*, also known as a kind of a particular Pattachitra (In the Sanskrit, *paṭṭa* means "cloth" and *chitra* means "picture") the site is located in the *Hatsarandi Sutradhar* community in the Birbhum region. But it was worshipped in a Durga *Pot* rather than a Durga idol. Durga *Pot* is a semi-circular Pattachitra where Pattachitra of Devi is in the middle position. On this type of Chalchitra, images of Ram*, Sita, Shib, Nandi-Vringi, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shumbha-Nishumbha* are painted. *Rajrajeshwari Durga* of Krishnanager is regarded as being specially noted. Panchanan Shib stands in the centre of the Chalchitra, with Parvati standing behind him. *Dasha-mahabidya* is on one side, while *Dashabatar* is on the other. The breadth of the fabric was wrapped in a width of thick cloth, and the rear part of the cloth was folded behind the bamboo structure, which was strapped to the idol's upper surface. A few coats of chalk dust were applied once the clayed fabric had dried. The proposed plot is then sketched on it after that. One trait of the Bengal Pattachitra is the utilization of natural colour in the colouring. The Chalchitra often uses the colours blue, yellow, green, red, brown, black, and white. The Pattachitra of Bengal did in fact copy the painted images. Chalchitra uses chalk dust for white, *Pauri* for yellow, indigo from cultivation for blue, *bhushakali* for black, and *mete sindur* for red. The *Markendeya Purana* claims that Devi Durga was adorned with natural objects. The Ocean bestowed upon her a pearl necklace, a brand-new saree, a *kundal* or earring, a bracelet, an armlet, a *bhusana* or various necklaces, a *tikli* (or headpiece), an anklet or anklets, and finger rings. Ocean also accessorized her head with a lotus garland, a flowering lotus, and a seven-tiered necklace known as *Satnari Haar*. In the meantime, *Kuber* gave her a *Paan Patra* (drinking pot) and *Nagraj* gave her a *Naag Haar*. Ever since the dawn of civilization, people have aspired to adorn themselves with natural materials such as leaves, twigs, seeds, pebbles, stones, animal bones, or burned clay. They subsequently embellished their bodies with metals. The first examples of figure ornamentation were discovered among the Indus Valley civilization's remains. These were followed by chronological trends set by dynasties that came after. The epic *Ramayana* and ancient literary works such as *Sudraka's Mrichhakatikam* (2nd century BC), *Dasakumar Charitra* (7th century), Banabhatta's *Kadambari* and *Harshacharitra*, Barahamihir's *Brihad Samhita* (6th century), and *Shishupala Vadha* by Magha (7th century) all made reference to ornaments such as *Haar, Hemsutra, Rasona, Angad, Kundal, Balaya,* and *Keyur*. Ancient literary works and mythologies feature references to a multitude of jewellery worn by Gods and Goddesses. There were additional specifics regarding the consequences of donning different types of jewellery. *Ratnajali*, a jewel-encrusted head ornament that covers the head, *Kirit Kundala*, a kind of crest or *mukut* that Devi Durga wears as a headdress, *Hemsutra*, or necklace, *Balaya* or *Bala*, a type of bangle and finger rings, *Hem Mekhla*, an ornamental girdle, and *Kinkini*, an anklet or girdle set with tiny jingling bells are just a few examples of the distinct types of ornaments that can be seen in many sculptures. Gradually, Devi's *Saaj* became

increasingly modern with time. The ornamentation as a whole took on a distinctive appearance due to the consistent integration of native and regional designs. For instance, Durga's decorations have themes drawn from the indigenous flora and fauna that are also used in the elaborate *Kantha* embroidered designs, the warp and weft of a saree, and other areas. The emergence of an eclectic perspective was demonstrated by embellishments of decorative styles and patterns that reflected patron interests and absorbed local folk expressions. Scroll painters fulfilled the desire for larger sculpted tableaux, not just the main picture of the goddess with her four children, for public celebration as the Durga Puja celebrations grew increasingly ornate during the nineteenth century.

"During our childhood, the Kartika we saw was quite a handsome young man, with long and curled hair hanging down to his neck, a thin trace of a moustache, dressed in superfine dhoti, a light plaited scarf thrown around his neck and wearing a pair of gold-embroidered shoes.... But now, instead of his curly hair hanging down, we find him sporting the Albert fashion of hairstyle; in the place of the gold-embroidered shoes, he wears English shoes and covers his body in a jacket." (quoted in Banerjee 1989, 129)

The decoration of Devi Durga has changed over time. To comprehend how Devi acquired her last touches of splendour, the handicraft business in Bengal that has grown up around the complexities and nuances of her Saaj needs in-depth investigation and documentation. The needlework on quilts that Bengali women do, *Kantha* work, *Brata Alpona* (motifs and patterns created during rituals), textile weaving, and other traditional arts are all reflected in *Durga's Saaj*. Durga Saaj's variations have evolved throughout the ages in accordance with the various raw materials and components available in commercial marketplaces. *Saaj* has been impacted by economic, societal, and even modern fashion issues. As a result, the *Saaj* Shilpa genre was born. An overview of this decoration offers the opportunity to research the chronological development of Bengali jewellery. The royal family of Bengal set dress trends for a while. Because of these earlier classical Indian sculptures, Bengali old potters were inspired to add decorations to their archetypal Durga statues. Clay decorations were distinctive for their ease of design and production. They were mostly constructed by joining clay pellets of varying sizes and were based on straightforward geometric designs. Later, ornament makers added flora, fauna, and ornamental themes to their creations, increasing their complexity and nuance. Typically, necklaces and *mukut* are examples of clay decorations. Raghurajpur is famous for *Pattachitra*, the drawings on a piece of cloth. There are many types of Pattachitra like *Tassar* cloth *Pattachitra*, Palm leaf *Pattachitra*. The *Pattachitra* Tradition was basically started in order to perform the mythological stories by narrating the paintings. The Ramayana's portrayal of Durga is a well-established visual convention, as seen by its appearance in a variety of formats and media. The use of terracotta panels on temple walls, narrative scrolls, and single-scene paintings all imply that multiple groups of craftspeople used it in their creations. Usually, these artists show Rama going through the motions of worshiping the goddess, and the goddess herself arriving and engaging with him. Most likely, the artists were trying to meet the demands of a visually savvy audience. Naturally, this episode is especially relevant for this occasion because it chronicles the festival's beginnings. On such occasions, the courtyards of these houses hosted contests (*kobir ladai*) in which renowned poets participated. At the request of these metropolitan rajas, country theatre groups known as *jatradals* also arrived and presented popular stories. North Calcutta's Chitpur neighbourhood saw the gradual settling of these artists as well as their supporting cast members, including musicians, wig makers, and costume designers. Looking at the present days, *Pattachitra* is seen bag, hand fan, lamp sheds, *Kulo* as home decor etc. The goal of entertainment has evolved over

time. No musician travels about singing mythological tales with *Pata*. Also we can see, Kalighat Pat, also known as Kalighat Painting, by Jamini Roy, featured strong, broad brushstrokes. His first phase of impressionist landscape and portrait paintings began in 1921 and 1924, when he started experimenting with Santhal dance and Durga Idol. Once, this traditional form of art was practised all over the region, but in recent years this form is almost extinct. Again to the previous times, local officials who were regarded as monarchs began to worship Durga within their own homes in the 17th century. The Bengali festival of Durga Puja was initially instituted by Raja Kangsa Narayan of Tahirpur. Later, Raja Krishna Chandra Roy of Krishnanagar supported Durga puja, turning it into a chance to display riches and power in front of the Nawabs, who were then in charge of Bengal, rather than just a religious event. Raja Naba Krishna Deb established the Durga Puja tradition in British Calcutta in the 18th century, which ultimately reflected the *'Babu'* culture. Exports and imports of raw materials and finished goods between India and Britain also made progress during this time. Durga Puja is not simply a religious celebration in the contemporary Kolkata; the city transforms into a carnival as amazing public art pieces spring up all over the place. For this one week, Kolkata is transformed into a massive outdoor art exhibition with tens of thousands of pandals, and temporary temples, housing the Goddess appearing around the city. These buildings have lavished themes and artwork. The magnificent pop-up constructions are all around them, as vehicles and people weave in and out of them. The pandals may be thought of as enormous art installations, and "pandal-hopping" can be compared to a massive public gallery crawl. In Kolkata, it ornate cloth-covered buildings, the pandals are erected on bamboo frames to hold the Goddess's idol. Throughout the puja season, they serve as the focal point of the celebrations. The creative industries surrounding Durga Puja in West Bengal were projected to be worth ₹32,377 crore, which is equivalent to the economies of many smaller countries worldwide, according to an MoU signed in 2019 between the government of West Bengal and the British Council. According to the data, the week-long celebration contributes 2.58% of the state's GDP. They are constructed around a topic that can range from current events and well-known Bollywood movies to folk art, temples, the Paris Opera House, and even Hogwarts.


Photo3: Pictures taken on fieldwork at Lalit Kala *Akademi* **Photo4:** With the eminent artist Partha Dasgupta (Last Photograph-Left Hand Side)

In the meanwhile, I went to conduct a conversation with Partha Dasgupta at a very richly known historical premise. It is none other than Lalit Kala *Akademi*; India's National Academy of Fine Arts, which is in Kolkata. It comes under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. There I came to know about many unknown segments of the heart of the project. Partha Dasgupta is a prolific visual language practitioner who has worked as a painter, sculptor, ceramist, and space designer; helped me and opened creative approaches to reach the aims of how to deal with the modern interpretation of Durga Puja. Some photographs of the survey are pasted. He along with an artist from America created such a masterpiece in the year 2014. When all the famous Puja organizers were locked in a 'theme' competition spending billions, the members of the Vivekananda Park Athletic Club in Haridevpur in the southern suburbs tried something new. The club, which has been celebrating Durga Puja for forty-three years, has enlisted the help of renowned 3D street-painting artist Tracy Lee Stum to enhance the year's theme. Artist and designer Partha Dasgupta received *Pratidin Pujo Perfect Award* for his grand production. Also, Stum the American artist, holds the Guinness Record for her street painting in Milan.

Chyna Pal, one of Kumartuli's few female artists, recounted the laborious process of creating the idol's head. Two types of soil are required to create the head. These must be utilised in the exact ratio; otherwise, the face will crack under pressure or while being made. The faces are not entirely handcrafted. Because the faces must be correct, they frequently make a lot of heads, even for just one of the idols. Despite not adhering to the traditional definition of "empowerment," renowned visual artist Sanatan Dinda has made a strong case for the idea that every woman is a goddess with a unique power. The multi-media artist who won an award made a unique canvas specifically for Calcutta Times that expresses his ideology and concept of Durga. These are intricate works of art, some of which have even been displayed overseas. He said, “Every time I work on this idol, I am made aware of the horrifying attacks on women that have occurred recently. Thus, I'm sketching a girl who emerges from an earthen pillar and poses a hypothetical query on her identity. It's not ten hands, but eighteen. I have narrowed down Durga's 108 names to 18 that will be etched around the idol. I hope girls who are named after Durga, as that is the most common name for them, can find their names here. Every female is a goddess after all, only in her own unique manner. I disagree philosophically with the popular conception of Durga or Draupadi. It's not always necessary to use a weapon to defeat the demon to show off your strength or gain confidence. Certain battles are cerebral and require inner fortitude. A bold, self-assured

look directed towards our misogynistic culture, for instance, is also a form of protest. Her third eye, which allows her to change into a goddess or devi, is a symbol of her strength." Queer artist Nandini Moitra's freshly created 80-foot-tall wall painting, created by a group of trans people, has mixed in perfectly with the puja surroundings as the city prepared for puja. Representative of the ups and downs inherent in queerness, city people are discussing it inextricably linked to the forthcoming pandal décor in the city, which alludes to an inclusive puja experience. Joint secretary of Ballygunge Cultural Anjan Ukil states, "Now people are keen to see newness. Previously pujas like Bagbajar Sarbojanin had the same idol and pandal framework. Anjan continues, "In the past, artisans made pandals out of leftover sari and fabric scraps. Professional architects, interior designers, and artists now collaborate to create the framework. I can no longer refer to it as a 'pandal' because it is now considered public art and an art installation. The person who can design the biggest installation is the one who draws big audiences, sponsors, and marketers. Prize-winning artist Bimal Samanta is creating the pandal, which is based on poetry that have endured across time. Today, people are looking for distinction. Without distinction advertisers, sponsors don't come forth." Sreebhumi Sporting club is a popular choice for pandal hoppers in South Dum Dum. The club has been using the synergy of light, sound, colour, and an overwhelming depth to create a sensory experience for its audience. In 2021, the theme was Burj Khalifa, and in 2022, it was Vatican City. 2023's club theme is Paris Disneyland. Dibyendu The club's secretary, and Kishore Goswami, says, "With social media, the world has opened up to us." Individuals that journey throughout the globe come back to share their personal tales. We intended to build a model that is a popular tourist destination all over the world, keeping in mind all those who are unable to visit. A happy wave will arise if children are able to view the model. A copy of Macau's Grand Lisboa Hotel, being constructed by Luminous Club, towers in the Nadia district of West Bengal. "The pandal is 182 feet tall and is being made of structures from buses like skirt, crib, and side rails," explains Kanai Chowdhury, the club's social media manager. The *mandap* (ritual platform) and the interiors will be covered with colourful reflecting glass. Luminous Club committee member Arup Mukherjee states, "Our motif when we first started in 1992 was traditional. To arrange the puja, we had to obtain permission from the Calcutta High Court. Permission from the High Court was necessary for everything, and a three-day puja was conducted with simple facilities. As we expanded, we began to accommodate the shifting preferences of viewers who wanted to see something spectacular and fantastical. We built a scale model of Malaysia's Twin Towers last year, and it attracted many of people. Pandal hoppers are constantly looking for new experiences, and social media has made our pandal more widely known nationwide. Senco Gold is sponsoring Ma Durga's pure gold jewellery of 2023; nevertheless, I am unable to provide our budgetary details." It was assumed that 2023's celebrations would cross boundaries with growing funds and changing topics thanks to the collaboration of city artist and sculptor Ayan Saha with two Dutch artists, Martyna Maria Pekala and Benjamin Van Hoeij Schilthouwer Pompe. They were working together to create an animated video installation at South Kolkata's Behala Natun Dal pandal. Again, German artist Gregor Schneider chose a reproduction of one of the pandals to be shown all around the world. For the Ekdalia puja, Schneider also collaborated with regional craftspeople to create a facsimile of a home in Rheydt, Germany. Weeks of the old unnoticed sidewalks of Kolkata come to life under violet shadows of overarching lights, made by artisans of Chandannagar. And as pandal hoppers pass from Gariahat junction to Santosh Mitra Square, they never know what they might come across at every corner; a towering pandal, an old friend or a child blowing a *bhepu* (a noisy toy mouth instrument). Under the eaves of colourful nights, the city gives itself over to the beats of the *dhaak* (the drums of Bengal), dance

with the *dhunuchis* (traditional dance with frankincense) and the accoutrements of creativity, art, and sculpture beneath the canopy of vibrant nights. Amitabh Bachchan an Indian actor, praised the artist for his work and posted the lovely image of Maa Durga on his verified social media channels. Maa Durga's *mukut* in the portrait is the Victoria Memorial silhouetted against the Howrah Bridge. Her eyes are fish. The Goddess's *mukut* features an image of a football, and her third eye is *Mishti Doi*, a dessert that is quite popular in Bengal. The artist's painting of Maa Durga also features yellow taxis, trams, and hand-pulled rickshaws, along with *handis* full of *roshogolla*, a favourite dish in Kolkata. Although no specific information about the artist has been released, a commenter mentioned that Debojyoti Sarkar is the creator in the Amitabh Bachchan post's comments area. I learned a lot about the projected government redevelopment initiatives from my secondary study. The scheme developed by the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA), which was to be sponsored by the flagship Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM), was the most visible of them. The aim was to give the artisans with a residence with a ground plus three stories layout, as well as an art gallery. The KMDA scheme, on the other hand, was fully scrapped. The very event of Durga Puja was recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2021. In colonial Calcutta, the Durga Puja festival was started by zamindar (land-owning aristocracy) families around in the sixteenth century. The city has received deep creative currents over the years from the puja and *puja parikrama* (events), along with new syllables that represent inclusivity, celebration, and joie de vivre.

CONCLUSION

After the dismaying years of pandemic. It was the first Durga Puja that the globe was witnessing. It has to be something which remains perpetual in memories. Thus, the very urge to select the topic got implanted in my mind. After examining the details of Durga Puja closely, before October came in. It was the lull before the storm which was taking place inside me. So, I hopped to the archives, which included the Kumartuli Cult. (With *Kumar* meaning "potters" and *Tuli* meaning "locality," Kumartuli is a hamlet) that dates back more than 300 years. A group of potters who moved to the region in quest of a better way to make a living founded it. Currently, 150 families reside here and make a living by carving idols for different festivals. They have always been an important element of Indian religious history, surviving several social transitions. Even non-believers find them to be a great spectacle nowadays. Different communities make various idols of Gods and Goddesses whose stories mirror their own essential values and beliefs. Similarly, the Bengali community believes that divine feminine energy manifests itself in the form of the Goddess Durga. She is the cosmic mother or defender of all that is good, according to Hinduism. Every year in October, the Hindu community celebrates her victory over all evil with special prayers and elaborate *Pujas*, highlighting the importance of Kumartuli idol builders. To construct the Durga idols in time for the celebration, hundreds of craftsmen (many of them are hired from other locations) toil assiduously in about 550 workshops in the months before Durga Puja. It was a lucky visit to Raghurajpur, Puri. The role of identity plays a humongous role, this paper is solely dedicated to the silent artists and artisans who were there for us. In Odisha, the Chitrakara community (usually with the *Mohapatra or Maharana* surname) paints on cotton or silk scrolls using the terms '*patta*' (cloth) and '*chitra*' (painting). In the current times, the waste materials are now being turned into profitable artworks by artists in Raghurajpur. These eco-friendly pieces of art are in high demand both in India and abroad. The issue of capital acquisition before the season begins to purchase raw materials for their work is a common concern for artists. The 200 or so artisans here often work on a yearly bank loan, the quantity

of which is decided by the number of idols they can create during the festival. Traditionally, the artists would obtain small loans at exorbitant interest rates from their zamindars for this purpose. The United Bank of India established a goal to correct these behaviours in 1970. 1However, the bank financing would arrive just before the peak season, creating a time crunch for the idol-makers. Kumartuli idols have a considerable worldwide market for their wares. Most large-scale idol producers in Kolkata believe that exporting their idols to the United States, South America, Bangladesh, and even portions of Kenya generate the majority of their money. Potters have also included the ability to order Durga idols from Kumartuli online. Glass, fibre, bronze, and stone idols are being created and exported. The desire from abroad is now for long-lasting, lightweight idols with low transportation costs. As a result, some artists have specialised solely in the manufacture of fibre-glass idols and even panel and mural work that they pack and ship. The tussle between the history and contemporary world cannot mix. The research paper has pointed out the aspects of the journey from one end to another of time. The tool of comparison has been used to depict the transition of decades of transformations. Thus, the very spark resulted in a two-year spanned research paper like this.

CITATIONS

1. https://nithinks.com/2021/10/10/kolkata-durga-puja-and-bengali-literature/ **(Accessed on 18th August)**
2. https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Chalchitra **(Accessed on 23rd August)**
3. https://amitabhagupta.wordpress.com/2013/10/08/durga-puja-of-bonedi-families-at-kolkata/ **(Accessed on 6th September)**
4. https://www.whatshot.in/kolkata/visit-these-5-places-to-enjoy-the-age-old-ancestral-durga-puja-celebrations-c-17961 **(Accessed on 10th September)**
5. https://www-thehindubusinessline-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/Re-visiting-the-rich-legacy-of-Bonedi-Bari/article20512933.ece/amp/?amp_gsa=1&amp_js_v=a9&usqp=mq331AQKKAFQArABIIACAw%3D%3D#amp_ct=1662911660559&amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=16629111523632&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&ampshare=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thehindubusinessline.com%2Fnews%2Fvariety%2FRe-visiting-the-rich-legacy-of-Bonedi-Bari%2Farticle20512933.ece **(Accessed on 16th October)**
6. Das, Samir Kumar, editor. *Making of Goddess Durga in Bengal: Art, Heritage and the Public*. SPRINGER, 2022.
7. https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/69483/durga-puja-the-greatest-public-art-show-in-the-world **(Accessed on 20th October)**
8. https://thebengalstory.com/english/when-the-goddess-arrived-in-colonial-calcutta/ **(Accessed on 26th November)**
9. Pika Ghosh. "Unrolling a Narrative Scroll: Artistic Practice and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Bengal." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2003, pp. 835–71. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3591862 **(Accessed 23 Dec. 2023)**
10. BANERJEE, SUMANTA. 1989. The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta. Calcutta: Seagull

11. https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/explore-durga-puja-pandals-in-kolkata-that-have-transitioned-from-traditional-to-high-tech-art-installations/article67402690.ece **(Accessed on 1st December)**
12. Banerjea, J. N (1974). The Development of Hindu Iconography. 3rd edition. Delhi: Munishram Manoharlal.
13. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/allahabad/idols-of-goddess-durga-to-be-made-from-ganga-yamuna-soil/articleshow/103899976.cms **(Accessed on 29th October 2023)**
14. https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/west-bengal-village-durga-puja-unique-tradition-8991987/ **(Accessed on 29th October 2023)**
15. Durga idols affected. *Hindustan Times.* Retrieved from http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/gst-hits-bengal-s-kumartuli-potters-offshore-delivery-of-durga-idols-affected/story-mjcsJy05qPNyXt7EtKPrCO.html

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM FIELD WORK