

# Origin, Evolution, and Impact of Sharod Utsav on Bengali Society

Shouvik chattopadhyay



## Introduction

Sharod Utsav or Durga Puja is not just a religious festival. It is the heartbeat of culture in West Bengal and Bangladesh, a symbol of social unity, and a name full of deep emotions. Every autumn, with the arrival of Goddess Durga, the whole of Bengal fills with joy and celebration. Over time, this festival has crossed religious boundaries and has become a major social, cultural, and economic event.

## Origin and Beginning

According to mythology, the gods created Goddess Durga to defeat the demon Mahishasura. She symbolizes power and strength, destroying evil and establishing truth and justice.

Historically, Durga Puja in Bengal started mainly in royal and landlord families. In the 16th century, it spread in South Bengal. Notably, historians believe that in 1610 the Sabarna Roy Choudhury family in Kolkata organized the first Durga Puja. At that time, the puja was a way for landlords to show their wealth and power.

## Evolution

From landlord houses to community puja

In the 18th century, Durga Puja moved beyond the boundaries of landlord houses and slowly reached common people. In 1790, the first “Baroari Puja” was held in Kolkata, where twelve friends came together and contributed money to organize the festival. This later became the model for Sarbojonin Puja (community puja), which symbolizes collective power and participation of society.

Today, Durga Puja is not limited to Bengalis only—people from all religions, languages, and backgrounds take part in it. In short, it has become a festival for everyone.

## Art and Culture

From the 20th century, Durga Puja became a stage for art and creativity. Paintings, sculptures, decorative patterns (alpana), music, and dance all became part of the celebration. In modern times, theme-based pandals (temporary structures) and idols have earned international recognition.

## Entertainment and Commercialization

Durga Puja is no longer just about devotion—it is also a huge economic activity. New clothes, lighting, food, travel, and entertainment—all together involve transactions worth thousands of crores of rupees in West Bengal alone. It also creates job opportunities for many people during the festive season.

## *Impact on Bengali Society*

### Religious and Spiritual Impact

Goddess Durga is the symbol of motherly power. Her worship inspires people to believe in the victory of good over evil.

### Social Impact

Community pujas bring people together, creating harmony and unity. Rich and poor, people of all religions and languages join in equally.

### Cultural Impact

Every year, Durga Puja inspires new literature, poetry, music, drama, dance, paintings, and theme-based art.

### Economic Impact

The large-scale economic activities not only strengthen the market but also provide temporary employment to lakhs of people.

### Emotion and Identity

Sharod Utsav is deeply connected with the identity of Bengalis. Even Bengalis living abroad feel an emotional pull towards their homeland during Durga Puja. It is both a memory and a cultural identity.

## Conclusion

Today, Sharod Utsav is not just a religious festival—it is an inseparable part of Bengali life. It combines devotion, spirituality, social harmony, art, culture, and economy in a unique way. That is why Durga Puja is not only a celebration but also a deep expression of Bengali roots and culture.

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