

Name of the element: Durga Puja in Kolkata

Community: Traditional families which have been conducting Durga Puja for over 200 years, in an unchanging manner. Durga Puja committees and clubs who organise the 'Barowari' or community Durga Pujas in all neighbourhoods of the city. Elected people's representatives like local councillors and members of the state legislative assembly, who preside over the community Pujas of their respective constituencies. Apartment complexes. Forum for Durgotsav, which is an association of the prominent community Pujas in Kolkata, formed in 2010. Various departments and wings of the Government of West Bengal. Groups of artists, designers, artisans and craftspersons. Print and television media and corporate firms which sponsor awards and invest in Puja-themed advertisements and on-site publicity in Puja pavilions or 'pandals'. Commercial industries – primarily food, apparel and tourism, and a series of smaller subsistence livelihoods of hawkers and pavements food stalls. Citizens' groups and volunteers who help the crowds touring the Puja 'pandals'.

Region: Durga Puja is most important festival of West Bengal and is observed in many states of India, in Bangladesh, and in major cities of the world by the Bengali diaspora. Over the years, however, Kolkata has emerged as the geographical and cultural heart - of the national and world-wide celebrations of the festival. It is where we can trace the longest history of Durga Puja, from its grand celebrations within the mansions of the traditional families to its growing life as a community event. In recent times, the festival has taken on its grandest scale in Kolkata, encompassing all city spaces, its largest commercial dimensions, and its spectacular artistic profile. Today, approximately 5,000 Durga Pujas are organised in the city, involving elaborate organisational infrastructure of the communities and the government. While Durga Puja has become the city's biggest cultural event, the city's identity has grown increasingly synonymous with this festival.

Brief Description: Durga Puja marks the ten-day worship of the Hindu mother-goddess Durga. Durga appears in her divine incarnation as 'Mahishahuramardini' – a goddess created by the gods to kill the demon, Mahishasura. This image of the demon-slaying goddess is coupled in Bengal with her image as divine mother and daughter, who descends annually from her husband Shiva's home in the Himalayas to her parents' home on earth, accompanied by her four children, Ganesh, Kartick, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The worship of the goddess begins with the inaugural day of Mahalaya, when the clay images have life invoked in them through the painting of the eyes, and ends on the tenth day of Bijoya Dashami, when the images are immersed in the river. Durga Puja is the best instance of the public performance of religion and art in the city. It witnesses a celebration of craftsmanship, cross-cultural transactions and cross-community revelry. The manner in which the festival is enmeshed in a web of competition and consumption, accelerated by the winning of accolades, secures its secular identity, embedding it in the contemporary global cultures of touring, spectacle, and entertainment. The exemplary character of Durga Puja lies in its ability to not temporally bound itself to the ritual occasion. Its

dynamism lies in it being a constantly mutating event – in its fusion of tradition with changing tastes and popular cultures, and in the adaptation of the iconographies of Durga and the styles of her temporary abodes to cater to new regimes of art production.

Durga Puja in Kolkata- Inscribed in 2021 on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO