

# Durga Puja: from Spirituality to Modernity – What Next?

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The aim of this study is to provide some suggestions as to how *Durga Puja* can benefit Indian economy optimally and contribute simultaneously for the welfare of the people.

**Method/ Statistical Analysis:** The findings in this study are based on the data collected during the *Durga Puja*, 2018 in Kolkata, interactions with the *Puja Samitis*, people from public and Government agencies, articles and reports published in the contemporary media and the information gathered from official records. Comparison of the size of the *Durga Puja* economy has been made with the budget estimates of Government of West Bengal and various Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

**Findings:** If *Durga Puja* is organized in the manner as suggested in this study, it may result in real time development of the people as well as economic growth of the country, which may ultimately lead India to become a developed country. The time has come when the Government may step in to play a proactive role in organizing the *Durga Puja* festival. *Durga Puja* is the best time to promote the culture and tradition of West Bengal throughout the world. If organized properly, *Durga Puja* festival may enhance tourism manifold, which is beneficial for the people & economy of India. The size of the *Durga Puja* economy is much higher than the budget estimates of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes being run for welfare of the people, including some flagship programmes. Therefore, if *Durga puja* is managed properly and it is linked with various centrally sponsored schemes, it may not only benefit the economy of India but also accelerate the welfare of the common people of the country.

**Applications/Improvements:** As suggested in the paper, *Durga Puja* economy, in convergence with the main Centrally Sponsored Schemes, can contribute towards the welfare of people and take our economy to scale new heights.

**Keywords:** Durga Puja Celebration, Economic Development, Durga Puja Economy, *Puja Pandals*, Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

**JEL Subject Classification:** I 31, I 38, Z0, Z1, Z3, O10, O49, H10, H53

## 1. Introduction

Festivals are important and integral part of Indian culture. In India, festivals are celebrated with much vigour and enthusiasm. Probably we are a country where the number of festivals celebrated in a year as well as the total span of the festive season in terms of the number of days per year is greater than any other part of the globe. Generally, the festivals are linked with the religion, culture and tradition of the society, and, some religious and spiritual aspects are associated with each of the festivals. Due to the interlinkage between the festivals and the custom & culture of the people, the festivals have a great social and cultural impact. As per Indian tradition, years back, the festivals used to be more focused on religious and spiritual part and less orientation was there towards enjoyment and celebration. However, with the passage of time, now-a-days more emphasis is paid towards the enjoyment and celebration, which has widened the scope and impact of the festivities on the state of affairs of the country. Besides affecting the society, its culture and tradition, now-a-days the festivals are also having significant effect on the economy. That is the reason the corporate sector has started taking keen interest on festivals which is increasing day by day. Huge amount of money circulation takes place during the festivals, which, in turn, has a great impact on the economy of the country.

*Durga Puja* is one of the important festivals of India which is celebrated mainly in West Bengal and its adjoining States. However, year after year the span of celebration of *Durga Puja* is spreading to various other States of India.

In terms of the people's participation, the expenditure involved in celebration and involvement of various communities, *Durga puja* is undoubtedly the largest festival celebrated in West Bengal and nearby States. As per Hindu mythology, *Durga puja* is organized to celebrate the triumph of Goddess *Durga* over *Mahisasura* (a devil). Goddess *Durga* symbolises the power of destroying all evils in the great battle among *Asura* (devil) and all Gods. It is believed that during the last three days of *Durga Puja*, the Goddess came to her father's home with her sons – Lord *Ganesh* and Lord *Kartik*; and with her daughters – Goddess *Laxmi* and Goddess *Saraswati* and on the day of *Vijaydashmi* she returned to Himalaya, the abode of her husband Lord *Shiva*. This convention is being followed for years.

Initially the *Durga Puja* was celebrated individually or at family level but with passage of time it has become a social and collective public festival. Huge *pandals* are made, decorated in different styles with excellent lighting in which Goddess is worshiped with her children. Each *pandal* depicts a different theme related to our customs and culture or on issues of social and national importance. People's participation in large scale and expenditure of huge amount of money is involved in celebration of *Durga Puja*. During the festival season the economic exchanges get accelerated in various activities in several sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and service. Thus the festival season causes huge impact on the economy. Inspired by the mobilization of economy during the festival season, corporate sector has started taking keen interest in the *Durga Puja*. Even some international players have also entered in the market to utilize the festival season to accomplish their financial motives. Keeping in view the spreading size of *Durga Puja*, involvement and participation of people in this festival, interest of corporate from inside and outside the country and the quantum of economic activities that take place around *Durga Puja*, it is the perfect time to explore as to how *Durga Puja* can be managed so as to utilize this festival for welfare of the people and to strengthen our economy.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The findings in this paper are based on the data collected during the *Durga Puja*, 2018 in Kolkata. The author found a chance to visit several *Puja Pandals* in Kolkata during *Durga Puja*, 2018 and to have interactions with the Puja Samitis, people from public and Government agencies. The data used in this paper is based on the articles and reports published in the contemporary media, personal visits to several *Puja Pandals*, discussions with the people, organizers and Government functionaries and the information gathered from official records. On the basis of the data collected, comparison has been made between the size of *Durga Puja* economy and various welfare Scheme of the Government of India. Some suggestions have been provided to make *Durga Puja* as a welfare measure of the common people and as a booster for the Indian economy.

## 3. Results and Discussion

*Durga Puja* is being assumed as a perfect time for branding by the corporate sector ranging from local companies to the established national and international companies. As per an estimate, average footfalls per day per *pandal* in Kolkata during 2018 *Durga Puja* is around 2,00,000 – 3,00,000. The brands remain in race to utilize this opportunity to advertise about their company and products among public. Increasing digitization and use of social networking apps have motivated each group of the society, particularly youngsters and teenagers, to participate actively in the *puja*. Most of the young people utilize the opportunity to hang out with friends, to taste the delicacies, for shopping, clicking selfies and posting them to social networks.

Spiritually *Durga Puja* is a festival of self-realization. It is the time to feel the power of goddess *Durga*. The Goddess exhibits feminine power. A fighter goddess, the divine Shakti, conquers the devil. With passage of time Festivity has become dominant over Spirituality and now *Durga Puja* has become one of the biggest festivals of India. People have started planning to make it one of the biggest festivals of the world like "Rio Festival". Expenditure and people's involvement in celebration is increasing each year. As per 2013 Report of ASSOCHAM, *Durga Puja* economy is increasing at an estimated Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 35%. As estimated by ASSOCHAM, *Durga Puja* of West Bengal became an industry worth around ₹ 40, 000 Crore in 2015 (1 Crore = 10 million). The contemporary media reports have estimated the size of *Durga Puja* economy of West Bengal for the year 2018 to the tune of ₹ 1,00,000 Crore ([1], [2]).


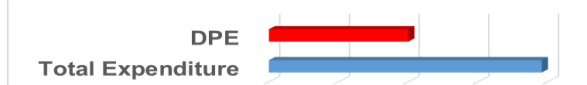
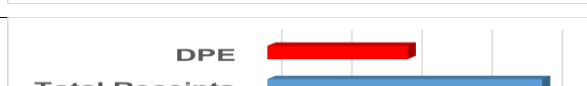

### 3.1. Durga Puja, 2018 of Kolkata

In 2018, the author found a chance to witness the *Durga Puja* of Kolkata. After visit to several puja *pandals*, interacting with the organizers and public and referring to the contemporary media reports it came to know that huge expenditure to the tune of several Lakhs to several Crores of Rupees is involved in making of these puja *pandals* (1 Crore = 10 million, 1 million = 10 Lakh).

Making of idols, decoration, dresses and ornaments of the idols, formation and decoration of *pandals*, basic arrangements for public, crowd management and security arrangements etc. require a huge amount of money. Every *puja samiti* wishes to make its *pandal* different and better from the others. Some *pandals* focus on lighting, some pay attention to the themes, some spends more on dresses of idols; whereas; in some *pandals* the focus area is ornaments and jewellery of the idols. In accordance to the focus or priority area decided by them each *pandal* spends a lot in an endeavour to be best. The *pandals* and *pujas* are judged by the experts and there is a provision to recognize the best by conferring prizes under several categories, viz., best *puja*, best idol, best theme, best decoration, best ornaments, best lighting, best thematic music, best innovation, Best jewellery, *Oitijho Srestho* (Age of *Pujo* – 75 years or more), *Shimito Khomotaye Shera Pujo* (Budget of *Pujo* is less than ₹. 5,00,000), best crowd management and best safety measures inside the *puja* premises etc. Such promotional measures along with people’s interest and involvement in large scale have catalysed the growth of expenditure in *Durga Puja*. In view of large scale mobilization of public towards *puja*, the political parties have also started to use *puja* as a platform to communicate with public. During the festive season the earning of artisans, business community and of the people/ establishments associated with travel and tourism gets increased multi fold, which provides momentum to circulation of money in the system. As a result, the *puja* season gives impetus to the economy.

The contemporary media reports have estimated that the size of *Durga Puja* economy in West Bengal in 2018 was approximately about ₹ 1,00,000 Crore (1000 billion). The estimation was based on studies carried out by organizations like ASSOCHAM. It is for sure that the actual size of the economy would certainly be higher than the estimation because in India several financial transactions, intentionally or unintentionally, still undergo unreported. Our system of financial transaction is not sufficiently open to allow us to estimate correctly the size of economy on the basis of the transactions. As evident from various reports, presuming the size of *Durga Puja* economy of West Bengal in 2018 worth 1,00,000 Crore, let us now compare the Economy of West Bengal with the expected economy of *Durga Puja*. In Table 1, first column provides the details of the economy of West Bengal for the FY 2018-2019, the second column gives the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy for the year 2018 (Table 1).

Table 1. Economy of West Bengal vis-à-vis Durga Puja Economy

West Bengal Economy (2018-2019) (in ₹ Crore)		Durga Puja Economy (DPE) (estimated) (2018) (in Rs. Crore)	Comparison (WB economy vs Durga Puja economy)
Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)	10,48,678	Rs.1,00,000 Crore (approx.)	
Total Expenditure	1,95,829		
Total receipts (excluding borrowings)	1,48,834		
Borrowings	46,991		

Third column of the Table 1 shows comparison between the West Bengal economy and the *Durga Puja* economy. Interestingly, total borrowings of the Government of West Bengal for the FY 2018-2019 is ₹46,991 crores, whereas the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy for the year 2018 is approximately ₹1,00,000 crores.

Table 2 shows a comparison in budgetary expenditure of the Government of West Bengal in some of the important Departments in financial year 2018-2019 vis-à-vis the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy.

Table 2. *Durga Puja Economy vs Sector-wise budgeted expenditure of West Bengal for FY 2018-2019*

Sl. No.	Department	Budgeted Expenditure (in ₹ Crore)	<i>Durga Puja</i> Economy (2018-2019)
1.	School Education	24,722	₹1,00,000 Crore (approx.)
2.	Health & Family Welfare	8,770	
3.	Women, Child Development & Social Welfare	5,183	
4.	Panchayats & Rural Development	19,063	
5.	Urban Development & Municipal Affairs	10,013	
6.	Food & Supply	8,037	
7.	Public Works	5,008	
	Total	80,796	

Bare look of the Table 2 shows that the size of *Durga Puja* economy is substantially large. Motivated with the size of the *Durga Puja* economy, some of the foreign countries have also started to use the occasion to promote their business and cultural interests. The author found chance to visit a *puja pandal* fully sponsored by the China (Figure 1) in *Durga Puja* 2018. During discussion with the organizers, it came to know that they have received offers from other countries like Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand etc. for sponsorship of *Durga Puja pandals*. Undoubtedly, cultural exchange is the one of the prime benefits of such events but the foreign organizers are not limited to cultural exchange only. Certainly the target is far more than the culture exchange and enhancement of business opportunity is in the centre of the entire exercise.

Figure 1. A scene of *durga puja* fully sponsored by the Republic of China in 2018



Economy plays a vital role in the development of any country. The status of education, health, safety; security and quality of life in a country are primarily determined by the economic status of that nation. *Maa Durga* is the goddess of universal wellbeing. As per Hindu mythology, *maa* is prayed like a goddess who brings auspiciousness, benevolence and consciousness for all human beings. The following *mantra* is recited during the worship of goddess *Durga*:

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके।

शरण्ये त्रयम्बके गौरि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते॥

Meaning – Goddess you are auspiciousness of the auspiciousness, you are the accomplisher of all objectives; you are the source of refuge, mother of the three worlds, exposor of consciousness. We bow to you again and again. We worship you.

Strong economy is the prime requirement for welfare and wellbeing of all and is necessary for any kind of benevolence. Today India has become an advance developing economy and we are close to reach to the mark of developed country. Planning at both micro and macro level is required to bring India to the list of developed countries. To achieve consistent growth, we should not lose any chance of economic development. Festivities and celebration during festivals are important part of Indian culture and we have a tradition of good spending during the festival season, which ultimately leads to boost the economy during festival times. If the property of spending during festivals, which is inherited in our blood, is channelized properly through micro and macro level management, it may result in strengthening our economy as well as in welfare of the people. Moreover, when the countries from around the globe are heading towards India for financial gains, we should not keep us away from the scene and explore how best we can benefit ourselves from the situation. In fact, it is the high time to connect the festivities with the development of the country. If *Durga Puja*, which is one of the biggest festivals celebrated in our country, can be connected to the economic development of the people of India, it may be the true and ultimate way to bestow the blessings of *Sarva-mangal-kamini* (auspicious) *Maa Durga* to them.

The time has come when the Government may step in to play a proactive role in organizing the *Durga Puja* festival. *Durga Puja* is the best time to promote the culture and tradition of Bengal throughout the world. If organized properly, *Durga Puja* festival may enhance tourism which may ultimately benefit the people & economy. For this purpose, world class infrastructure and facilities would be required followed by publicity of *Durga Puja* & promotional campaigns outside Kolkata and outside the country as well.

### 3.2. Some Suggestions:

In the following lines, some suggestions have been provided to make *Durga Puja* more effective, in organized manner, for welfare of the citizen as well as for the economy of India.

Many people from within West Bengal as well as from other parts of India and outside remain interested to visit West Bengal to watch and enjoy the celebration of *Durga Puja*. However, only some of those, who manage to get their travel and accommodation arrangements, can actually visit. Most of the visitors remained confined to Kolkata and nearby areas. To facilitate tourist and attract more people to visit West Bengal during *Puja*, not only to Kolkata but to other places in the State as well, wide publicity and arrangements would be required. Fortunately, in this era of information technology, we are able to connect anywhere in the globe. Government may launch a website providing the details of various *Pujas*, *Pandals*, themes, location and timings of *puja* etc to facilitate the visitors. There is need to develop a coordination between various *Pujas* being held in different parts of the State. An online portal consisting of the detailed programme of every *puja pandal*, timings of *puja* and cultural events in the *pandal*, online seat booking facility etc., may be launched so that the tourists from different part of the country and outside may plan their visit and book online the events as per their choice. Simultaneously online booking option for hotel accommodation and transport during *puja* for the visitors may also be made available online. If these facilities are provided through online portal (managed by Government or some reliable authorized agency of the Government), it will definitely increase the turnout of the visitors, which will help in promotion of our culture, creation of employment, enhancement in tourism and other related activities, which, in turn, will ultimately help in strengthening the economy.

Impressed by the size of the *Durga Puja* economy and the turnout of huge crowd in the *Puja Pandals*, some of the foreign countries have started promoting their culture and business during *Puja*. During visit to Kolkata in 2018 *Durga Puja*, the author visited a *Puja Pandal* fully sponsored by China. The *Pandal* was designed as miniature of a city in China depicting the main components of Chinese culture around it, including dragons at the main gate. Chinese cultural programmes were going on there and some kiosks and food courts were adjacent to the *Pandal* selling Chinese food and other items. The Chinese found the *Puja* as perfect time to explore possibility to expand their culture and business in India. During discussion with organizers it came to know that many other foreign countries have expressed their interest in sponsoring the *puja*. Such cultural exchange is good and must be appreciated. However, the foreign players may be allowed only on quid-pro-quo basis.

If we allow any country to spread their culture and promote their business in India, a condition may be imposed that equal number of *Durga Puja Pandals* would be installed in the said country by us to promote our culture and the business interests of people from our country. This may not only help us in promoting our culture and business outside India but may also lead, albeit slowly, to make *Durga Puja* an international affair.

*Durga Puja* may be used for the welfare of the people. The expenditure involved during the *Puja* is much higher than the budget of several welfare Schemes. For e.g., the estimated Size of *Durga Puja* Economy vis-à-vis the budget allocation of the important welfare schemes being implemented by the Government of India is as follows[3-6]:

The estimated size of *Durga Puja* Economy is:

1. more than 100 times the allocation made for West Bengal during 12<sup>th</sup> FYP in *Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram* (PMJKV), one of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for welfare of the minorities (source: [4]).
2. About 17-18 times of the budget allocation made in FY 2018-2019 for National Livelihood Mission-*Aajivika*,
3. About 50 times of the budget allocation for National Health Mission made in FY 2018-2019.

*Maa Durga* is symbol of welfare of people. It may be seen as the blessing of the *Maa* if the occasion of *Durga Puja* can be utilized to keep the people employed, to keep them hale and healthy and provide them basic amenities to live. *Durga Puja Samities* may be encouraged to do Welfare measures from a part of the money they spent in *Puja*. Presently all *Durga Puja Samitis* remain in the race to make their *Pandals* unique and attractive to pull more and more crowd. The main attraction of the *Pandals* is the theme adopted by them followed by the decoration and use of latest techniques. Some *Puja Pandals* are famous for expending huge amount of money in decoration, ornaments, lighting etc. The expenditure ranges from few lakhs to several crores. It would be in the interest of the people and the country if every *puja samiti* is motivated to do something for social welfare and exhibit its contribution during the *puja* so that sense of competitiveness among various *puja samities* may be developed alongwith other things. It was a very good experience to watch that the themes of some of the *puja pandals* were based on burning issues of social, cultural, national and international importance. This is an excellent way to sensitize people about these issues. However, the occasion can be utilized in better manner if people's participation and their welfare is also associated with it. The *puja samities* may be encouraged to some act of social welfare by adjustment from their budget and exhibit it during the *puja* seeking community participation to extend the work further. People visiting the *pandals* may motivate to contribute voluntarily to extend the welfare work. For e.g., education of poor girls or unprivileged children, maintenance of parks and eco-system promotion of alternate sources of energy, awareness for health and fitness, construction of houses for the poor, employment to economically deprived people etc. are some of the works which the *puja samitis* can take according to their choice and do something for welfare of people. During the *puja*, there is a provision to give awards under various categories to the *Pandals* and *puja samities*, such as – Best *Puja*, Best Lighting, Best Decoration, Best Jewelry, Best Attire, Best Theme etc. If 'Social Welfare by *Puja Samiti*' may also be made as one of the criteria in selection of Best *Puja*, it will add a new dimension in the glory of the *puja*. The *Puja Samitis* may be encouraged to spend some amount in welfare of the people. For e.g. if a *Durga Puja Samiti* can afford ₹ 44-45 Crore in making a Silver Chariot, it can easily afford ₹1 Crore 20 Lakhs (marginal share of total expenditure) in sponsoring 100 houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY(G)) [100 x 1.20 Lakh = ₹1.20 Crore]. Under PMAY (G) the beneficiaries are provided ₹1.20 Lakh to build their house. Under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) the Government is providing financial help to the poor elderly persons, widows and persons with disabilities. The amount is around ₹500/- to ₹1500/- per month. Though the scheme has helped a lot, however, the amount is not sufficient. The *puja samities* may provide additional ₹500-₹1000/- per month to some families, say 100, 200, 500, and 1000 according to their budget to these people. They may also arrange training of widows and socially deprived classes and provide them logistic support to start their own work. The *Puja Samiti* can think of lighting the nearby area by using solar or wind energy or may take up issues like plantation, water harvesting etc. which will help people throughout the year. If such a practice is followed this will certainly add a new feather in the cap of the *Durga Puja*.

It may be made mandatory for every *Durga Puja Pandal* to provide at least 2 or 3 Stalls to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) or local artisans so that they can they can sell their products there. It may be an excellent opportunity for the artisans to sell their products and earn money.

Promotion of Women SHGs may lead to women empowerment. Goddess *Durga* symbolizes women power. It would be very significant and purposeful to utilize the festival to do something for women empowerment.

Every *Durga Puja Pandal* may be encouraged to invite the '*Lok Prasar Prakalpo*' Artists to perform cultural items and pay these artists. This will not only help in protection of culture but the artists will also get some remuneration. It is relevant to mention here that '*Lok Prasar Prakalpo*' is a flagship programme of the Government of West Bengal which is benefiting several folk artists and helping in protection of culture as well.



Table 3. Budget estimates made by the Government of India in 2018-2019 budget for the Core of the Core Schemes and Core Schemes under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes

Sl. No.	Name of the CSS*	Budget Estimates 2018-2019* (in INR crores)	Durga Puja Economy (in INR crores)	Comparison (budget estimates w.r.t. Durga Puja Economy)
<b>Core of the Core Schemes</b>				
1.	National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)	9975.00	1,00,000	9.98 %
2.	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP)	55000.00		55.00 %
3.	Umbrella Scheme for Development of Scheduled Castes (USDSC)	5182.58		5.18 %
4.	Umbrella Programme for Development of Scheduled Tribes (UPDST)	3806.02		3.81 %
5.	Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities (UPDM)	1440.00		1.44 %
6.	Umbrella Programme for Development of other Vulnerable Groups (UPDVG)	2287.15		2.29 %
<b>Core Schemes</b>				
1.	Green Revolution (GR)	13908.92		13.91 %
2.	White Revolution (WR)	2219.89		2.22 %
3.	Blue Revolution (BR)	642.61		0.64 %
4.	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna (PMKSY)	9429.05		9.43 %
5.	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)	19000.00		19.00 %
6.	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY)	27505.00		27.51 %
7.	National Rural Drinking Water Mission (NRDWM)	7000.00		7.00 %
8.	Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)	17843.10		17.84 %
9.	National Health Mission (NHM)	30634.04		30.63 %
10.	National Education Mission (NEM)	32612.51		32.61 %
11.	National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools (NPMDS)	10500.00		10.50 %
12.	Umbrella ICDS (UICDS)	23088.28		23.09 %
13.	Mission for Protection and Empowerment of Women (MPEW)	1365.58		1.37 %
14.	National Livelihood Mission – Aajeevika (NLMA)	6060.00		6.06 %
15.	Jobs and Skill Development (JSD)	5071.13		5.07 %
16.	Environment, Forestry and Wildlife (EFW)	1019.00		1.02 %
17.	Urban Rejuvenation Mission: AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission (URM)	12169		12.17 %
18.	Modernization of Police Forces (MPF)	3157.29		3.16 %
19.	Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary (IFJ)	630.00		0.63 %
20.	Border Area Development Programme (BADP)	770.97		0.77 %
21.	Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Urban Mission (SPMUM)	1200.00		1.20 %
22.	Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY)	2000.00		2.00 %

[\* Source: Indian Budget 2018-2019]

Under 'Lokprasar Prakaipo', which is the flagship project of the Government of West Bengal, I-Cards are issued to the folk artists to bestow dignity on them, retainer fee is given to the enlisted folk artists and provisions of pension are there for needy and elderly artists. The services of these folk artists are utilized for the publicity of developmental projects. Till November, 2018, 1,94,300 artists had been provided I-Cards, about 8,596 were receiving pension @ ₹1000 pm and about 76,000 folk artists were getting retainer fee @ ₹.1000 pm.

It should be made mandatory for every *puja pandal* to invite these artists and provide them opportunity to perform. This will help in proliferation of our culture and simultaneously the artists will get the remuneration. The Government should play a proactive & leading role to make *Durga Puja* more organized to get optimum benefit for the economy of West Bengal. Government has launched a number of schemes for welfare of the people from economically weaker section, for unprivileged or underprivileged section of the society, for children, for women, for elderly people, for physically challenged people etc. Table 3 provides the details of budget estimates made by the Government of India in 2018-2019 budgets for the Core of the Core Schemes and Core Schemes under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes

If the budget estimates of these Schemes are compared with the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy in 2018, it transpires that the size of the Puja economy is much higher than the budget estimates of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The estimate for MGNREGA, one of the flagship schemes of the Government of India, which is being implemented successfully, is around 55% of the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy. Budget estimates for NSAP, NPMDMS and PMKSY are around 10% of the estimated size of *Durga Puja* economy. Estimates for PMGSY and SBM are less than 20% of the estimated size of the *Durga Puja* economy. Therefore, if *Durga puja* is managed properly and it is linked with various centrally sponsored schemes, it may benefit the economy of India and the welfare of the common people of the country. The Figures 2 and 3 show the comparison of the *Durga Puja* economy and the estimates of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

Figure 2. Comparison (*Durga Puja Economy vis-à-vis Core of the Core Schemes*)\*  
 (\*for abbreviations refer Table 3)

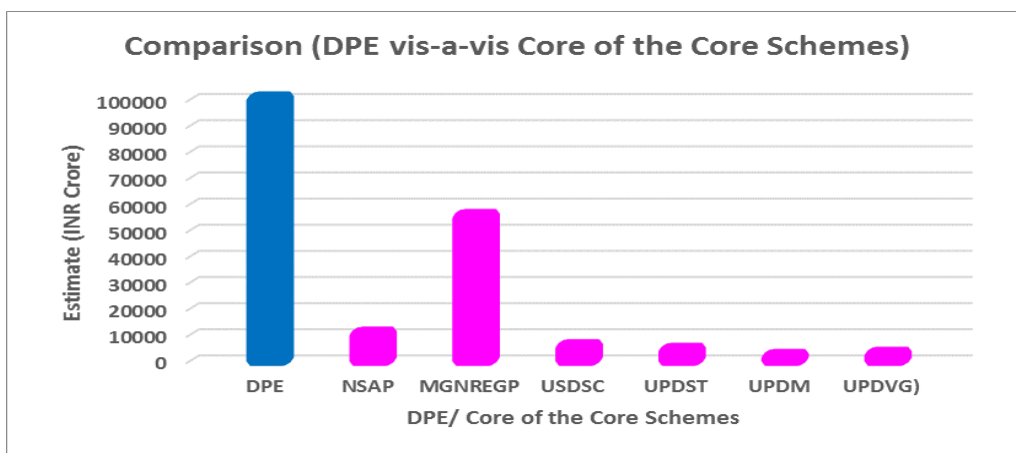
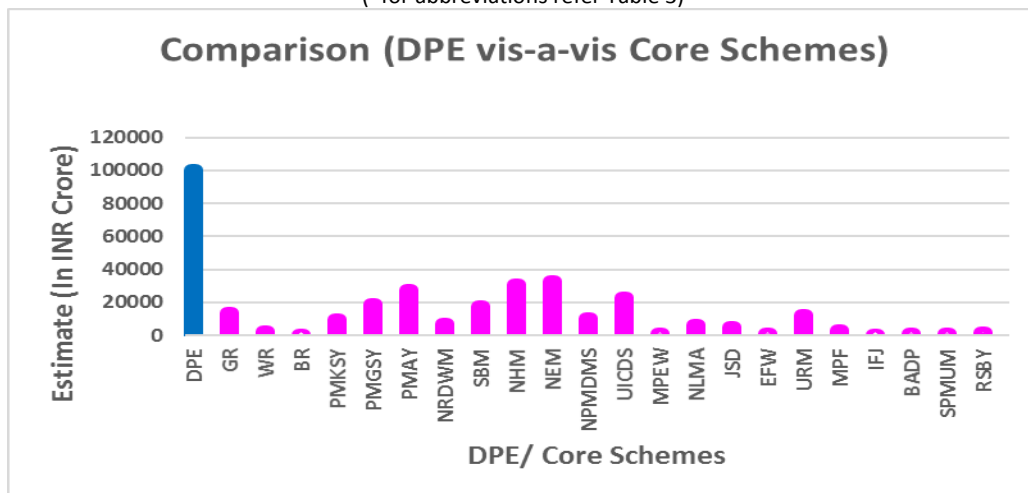


Figure 3. Comparison (*Durga Puja Economy vis-à-vis Core Schemes*)\*  
 (\*for abbreviations refer Table 3)





#### 4. Conclusion

Today there is need to make concerted efforts to channelize the *Durga Puja* celebration to make it one of the biggest festivals of the world and link *Puja* with the economy of the country. Firstly, serious efforts are required from Government to organize *Durga Puja* in well-organized manner so as to optimise the economy of the *Puja*. The pace of development will accelerate with enhancement in the size of the economy. Secondly, the *Puja* must be linked with the welfare of the people of the country. As indicated in preceding lines, the *puja* may be linked with the welfare schemes of the Government and the organizers of the *puja* may be encouraged to do welfare measures for the common citizens of the country. Not only *Durga Puja* but other religious festivals like *Ganpati Utsav*, *Jaggannath Rath Yatra* of Odisha (Chariot festival of Puri, Odisha), Holi, Diwali etc. may also follow the same line and be publicised internationally to promote tourism, spread our culture and strengthen our economy. *Durga Puja* is one of the largest festivals in India in terms of size of its economy and turn out of the people. If it is organized properly, it may not only enhance the tourism and mass involvement in multiples to the present quantum but can also boost the economy to scale new heights. There is also a need to associate *Durga Puja* and other big festivals of India to the welfare of the people to get real time benefit. The ideas brought out in the paper are very practical and capable to bring out drastic change in welfare of the people and economy of the country. If *Durga Puja* is organized in the manner as suggested in this paper, it may result in real time sustainable development of the people as well as the economic growth of the country, which may ultimately lead India to become a developed country.

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