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**MAJOR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DISTRICT LIKE
FESTIVALS AND FAIRS**

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ABSTRACT

Innumerable fairs, festivals and socio-cultural events are held throughout the year in the district having wide admixture of religion, community and culture. The followers of the main faiths and some tribal groups observe their own religious festivals whereas they intermingle in certain melas (fairs) and ceremonies. Brief notes on the major festivals and melas of the district are given below

(a) Festivals Celebrated Throughout the State

West Bengal celebrates many pujas (worship) and festivals. The Bengali proverb “Baro Mase Tero Parbon” (thirteen festivals in twelve months) indicates the abundant of festivity in the State. We are trying to go across the State Level common festivals in brief that are celebrated with great grandeur all over West Bengal with great enthusiasm. Please note that this State is a perfect example of communal harmony that is reflected in all the festivals. Peoples of different religion, caste and creed use to celebrate and participate in all the festivals together.

Durga Puja: Durga puja or Sharadotsav is undoubtedly the main festival of West Bengal. The dates of Durga puja celebrations are set according to the traditional Hindu calendar and the fortnight corresponding to the festival is called Devi Paksha (fortnight of the Goddess). Durga puja festival marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the evil buffalo demon Mahishasura. Thus, Durga puja festival epitomizes the victory of Good over Evil. The prominence of Durga puja increased gradually during the British Raj in Bengal and erstwhile Assam. After the Hindu reformists identified Durga



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with India, she became an icon for the Indian Independence Movement. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the tradition of Baroyari (community) puja was popularized due to this. After independence, Durga puja became one of the largest celebrated festivals in the whole world. It is also the largest open Air Art Exhibition in the World. Durga puja is also called Akalbodhan (untimely awakening of Durga), Sharadiya Pujo (autumnal worship), Sharodotsab (festival of autumn), Maha Pujo (grand puja), Maayer Pujo (worship of the mother) or merely as puja or pujo. celebrate and participate in all the festivals together.

Kali Puja: Kali puja is also known as Shyama puja or Mahanisha puja, is a festival dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Kali, celebrated on the new moon day of the Hindu calendar month of Kartik (mid-October to mid-November) especially in Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Assam. While the Bengalis, Odias and Assamese adore Goddess Kali on this day, the rest of India worships Goddess Lakshmi on Diwali. In north India ‘Deepavali’ or the festival of lights is celebrated to commemorate the home coming of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile as per the epic Ramayana. Decoration with lights and cracking the crackers are part of the observation.

Saraswati Puja or Vasant Panchami: Goddess Saraswati is referred as the Goddess of learning and music. It is a festival that signifies the beginning of Vasant Ritu (spring season). This puja is celebrated on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Bengali calendar month of Magh (mid-January to mid-February). A white swan on which the Goddess sits symbolizes Satwa Guna (purity and discrimination). This puja is celebrated in all educational institutions, music schools and even in localities throughout the State.