

## Exploring Chandannagar's Tradition, Lighting, and Socio-Cultural Economy through the Lens of Jagadhatri Puja

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### Abstract

*Just as Chandannagar's Jagadhatri Puja has an international reputation, so too does it have a specific tradition and a well-established history of lighting. In the context of exploring Chandannagar, it is impossible to exclude Jagadhatri Puja and lighting in any part. And the combination of these two has a specific history. Chandannagar's cultural and economic infrastructure is constantly flourishing in line with the Jagadhatri Puja and its lighting, and it is directly and indirectly affecting the socio-economic and cultural life of Chandannagar. The objectives that have been given priority in the said research are to understand the traditional, cultural, and heritage economy of Chandannagar city, to explore the ritual and identity of Chandannagar Jagadhatri Puja in relation to lighting and to find out the innovativeness of lighting and its relationship with local economy, employment, and tourism. A mixed method approach was used to conduct the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to inform the research. In this regard, the semi-structured interview method was used, and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the respondents. The qualitative data enriched the discussion of the history of Chandannagar, its lighting, and Jagadhatri Puja and its remarkable impact on the economy. The evolution of Chandannagar's economy is depicted through quantitative data. My research has a total sample size of hundred. An archival study into the festival's past enhances field observations of its dynamic processions, elaborate idols, and creative lighting displays. Surprisingly, Chandannagar's historical journey has been enriched by the Jagadhatri Puja and the incredible lighting decoration. This creative and decorative lighting is a major part of Chandannagar's economy and culture. The lives and livelihoods of a large number of light artists and workers in Chandannagar revolve around lighting. This lighting has not only strengthened the local economy but also attracted a large number of tourists, which indirectly made Chandannagar's culture, rituals, and artists a unique place in the world. The study shows that the Jagadhatri Puja of Chandannagar is not just a puja; it has also highlighted the rich culture and ritual of Chandannagar, as well as given a big place to the mesmerizing lighting as the centre of that cultural theme. This world-famous lighting of Chandannagar has used the Jagadhatri Puja of Chandannagar as a trigger element to enrich the city's tourism industry, economy and provide livelihood to a large number of people.*

**Keywords:** Chandannagar, Jagadhatri Puja, lighting, tradition, socio-economic scenario

## Introduction

Jagadhatri Puja occupies a large place in the history of Chandannagar's evolution. Chandannagar has been evolving through ups and downs since the French period and has become prosperous in various ways. Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar's "*ChaulPatti*" has a 300-year-old history. At that time, French thinkers used to participate in this type of puja. The introduction and use of electricity in Chandannagar sparked a revolution in the city's society. After the Hazak, the use of electric bulbs illuminated the old city of Chandannagar. And this electric bulb made many people of Chandannagar interested and curious about presenting something new with electric light. During that period, individuals such as Sridhar Das demonstrated a mindset and curiosity for innovating with light. Sridhar Das is a key figure in the fame of Chandannagar lighting. Known as the "wizard of light", Sridhar Das achieved a groundbreaking feat by using *Tuni* bulbs instead of Hazak and neon lights during Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar. At that time, he used 6.2-volt *tuni* bulbs to create the light infrastructure (Roy, 2023). His goal was to create a thematic structure with light that would carry a specific social meaning, be acceptable to people, and, at the same time, provide them with entertainment.

The study aims to highlight three important aspects: the heritage of Chandannagar, its incredible lighting, and the social and economic lifestyle of its residents, along with the Jagadhatri Puja that is deeply connected to each of these elements. As a researcher, I consider the main relevance of this study to be how the religious presentation of Jagadhatri Puja affects the heritage, economy, and culture of an urban area, as well as how it brings about changes in people's lives. Religion serves as the foundation for a community's religious customs and ceremonies; however, signs of its integration with the culture and lifestyle of the people frequently become apparent. We understand that values and social acceptance are deeply connected to cultural continuity (Banerjee, 2017). It is clear from Auguste Comte's application of the 'historical method' present that if we understand present social structure and reality, we have to pay attention to its historical root; otherwise, it would be difficult to understand the complete picture (Eck, 1982) (Stolley, 2005). To understand the current economic and cultural situation of Chandannagar, we must know its historical background and its connection to Jagadhatri Puja. Durkheim's discussion of 'collective conscience' stresses that religion has been shaped by the collective mentality in society and that it has taken on a complex shape over time (Durkheim, 1912). Chandannagar's Jagadhatri Puja has become the centre of life and livelihood

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of a large number of people over time, as it has popularized it with structural representation of lighting. Robert K. Merton's book "Social Theory and Social Structure" talks about the manifest and latent functions in the context of the discussion of Jagadhatri Puja, making it clear that although Jagadhatri Puja is naturally the bearer of religious representation, it has indirectly connected a large number of people economically to this profession and has sustained a unique profession like lighting in the context of Jagadhatri Puja (Merton, 1949).

Jagadhatri Puja started in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when Chandannagar was an important place for the French. Because of this French influence, the culture and architecture of Chandannagar is a little different from other places in Bengal (Ananda-Utsav, 2024). Landlords and big businessmen used to patronize this puja. In the early 18th century, the famous landowner of Chandannagar, *Indranarayan Chowdhury*, helped a lot in popularizing this puja (BC, 2019). It is believed that he started this puja to unite the people of the area and keep the unique culture of the region alive. At that time, the Jagadhatri temple was lighted by the *Hazak*. Naturally, the light from the *Hazak* made it very difficult to see the idol clearly. Additionally, because the Jagadhatri idol was huge ranging from 18 to over 35 feet the existing light was inadequate for lighting the shrine in a well-decorated manner. Later, the advent of electricity inspired the idol artists of Chandannagar to invent something new about light and use it for the Jagadhatri Puja to decorate the Jagadhatri pandal with light. The perfect date of the introduction of electricity in Chandannagar is not known with certainty (Marsh, 2009). However, it is assumed that this event was contemporaneous with the large-scale electrification efforts in the Kolkata region during the colonial period, as the first electric light exhibition in India took place in Kolkata in 1879 (Bose, 2022). As in other parts of India, the development of electricity infrastructure in Chandannagar was mainly carried out by private companies serving the urban centres and industrial areas during that period. Chandannagar was a French colony from 1673 to 1951 and was later incorporated into India (Bose, 2022). Both the French and later Indian administrations influenced the infrastructural development of Chandannagar, just like they did with electricity.

### **Review of Literature**

S. Roy's discussion clearly reveals the historical context of Chandannagar, the evolution of the lighting and descriptions of all those personalities who gave a specific direction to the lightings of Chandannagar (Roy, 2023). Through whose hands, the lightings of Chandannagar have been

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able to establish themselves in the court of the world today. Roy tried to show in his book “The Wizard of Festival Lighting: The Incredible Story of Sridhar Das” how Chandannagar has been able to build its own identity in the pages of history and overall Jagadhatri Puja is providing one of the platforms for the lightings. Her discussion provides a detailed account of the identity and biography of Sridhar Das, who is known as the “Wizard of Light” of Chandannagar. The next generation of people associated with the illuminations of Chandannagar are carrying this legacy.

Bose’s writings show how the city developed a culture of its own (Bose, 2022). In her writings, “In the Shadow – The Lightman of Chandannagar”, she expressed the journey of light makers of Chandannagar and their contribution to shaping the new economic structure and employability. The authors show how the French regime, the education of the missionaries and the planning of the city created a different civic life. She said that when there was a political change, festivals became a means of expressing pride for everyone. Talking about Jagadhatri Puja, these writings show that this festival is actually a great mix of the civic organization of the colonial period and the religious customs that preceded it (Thakurta, 2015). This grand arrangement of the Puja, the competition of lights and the help of the people of the society looking at these, it is understood that Chandannagar has always been trying to create its own identity by combining both local traditions and external influences.

Burns and Novelli (Burns & Novelli, 2007) showed how small festivals boost local economies. In their writings “Tourism and Politics: Global Framework and Local Realities” authors say that these seasonal events create temporary markets for artisans, food vendors, lighting designers and transport workers. Studies on the festival-based economy of Bengal have shown that small towns are heavily dependent on such events for their annual income. The same is true in Chandannagar. These studies show how the Jagadhatri Puja transforms the city into a temporary economic hub. Lighting workshops, pandal-making units and street vendors benefit from the influx of people. And this cultural identity draws people from across the state. This study helps to see the Jagadhatri Puja as an economic driver that is inextricably linked to the social and cultural life of Chandannagar.

### **Theoretical Viewpoints**

Jagadhatri Puja of Chandannagar is no longer just a regional religious festival; it has become a major cultural event in the city and the district of Hooghly. It shapes the city's prime identity,

human interests and enthusiasms, and economy. The festival is significant for its remarkable lights, beautiful motherly idols, communal arrangements, and its ability to draw thousands of people. The ideas of Durkheim, Weber, Malinowski, Turner, Geertz, Bourdieu, etc., are very useful in understanding how this religious festival fosters beneficial relations between people and improves the local economy. All these thinkers have shown from different angles how Jagadhatri Puja works from both spiritual and socio-economic perspectives.

### **Emile Durkheim: Collective Conscience and Social Solidarity**

The Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar is very similar to Emile Durkheim's ideas of rituals and collective effervescence. During the days of the Puja, the city experiences a tremendous mental energy. The streets light up all night, people gather at the pandals, and the shared excitement temporarily makes them forget all personal differences. Such moments, Durkheim said, reawaken the collective conscience of society. In Chandannagar, the festival reinforces a sense of shared identity through tradition (Durkheim, 1912). Local Puja clubs and neighbourhood groups work together for months to build the pandals, decorate the lighting structure, and organize the processions. These preparations are a ritual that strengthens relationships between people. Durkheim believed that rituals reinvigorate moral values, and the result is evident in the cooperative spirit of the festival. Although the puja clubs are competitive, they take tremendous pride in carrying forward the cultural heritage of the city (Durkheim, 1912). Durkheim also talked about how rituals create order in society. The Jagadhatri Puja regulates the interaction between different social groups. Volunteers, artisans, light workers, club members, families, and visitors all participate within a specific framework. This discipline reduces conflict and encourages unity. The festival is not just a religious event but also strengthens social bonds.

### **Max Weber: The Economy of Sacred Matter, Work, and Festivals**

Max Weber's discussion of religion makes it clear how beliefs, rituals, and organized work influence our economic behaviour. The Jagadhatri Puja is based on traditional religious rituals, devotion, effective management, and pride in the craftsmanship of the lighting. Weber argued that rituals often reinforce norms that indirectly shape economic life. In Chandannagar, the puja encourages unity, positive planning, and teamwork (Weber, 1905). The tradition of lighting in

Chandannagar is a favourable example of the connection between faith and economic activity for Weber. Many of the light makers have been in the business for generations. They see their work as both a religious service and a professional responsibility. Their discipline, perfectionism, and desire to innovate all reflect Weber's idea that religious values can shape the principles of righteousness and excellence. Weber also shows that religious festivals create spaces for economic transactions (Weber, 1905). The Jagadhatri Puja has become a major economic event for the city. Street vendors, drivers, local businesses, decorators, and technicians all benefit from it. Religious and economic activities are not separate; rather, they reinforce each other. The sacredness of the festival draws people in, and it is these people who drive the local economy.

### **Malinowski: Rituals, Strength of Mind, and Unity**

Malinowski used to say that rituals give us peace of mind and help us cope with the unknown or uncertain. For example, the Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar gives us confidence and creates unity among everyone. This festival is a time when people prepare for winter, and with the change of seasons comes some uncertainty. The Puja acts as a pillar of culture, which provides people a sense of stability (Malinowski, 1948). He also showed that such rituals increase cooperation among everyone and create strong social ties. Several months before the Puja, committees start collecting funds, organizing things, dividing work, and uniting volunteers. As a result of this joint work, distances between people are reduced, and an understanding is created for everyone to work together. The field of economics also clearly demonstrates Malinowski's ideas (Malinowski, 1948). The coordination required for making the pandal, lighting it, decorating it, and carrying out the procession builds trust in each other. This trust not only lasts during the puja but also helps in economic transactions after it. Therefore, this puja is not just a religious event; it is also a wonderful area of unity to boost the local economy.

### **Victor Turner: Social Boundaries, Human Interaction, and the Changing Face of Festivals**

Victor Turner's concept of limitations and society helps us understand the social impact of Jagadhatri Puja. During the festival, Chandannagar seems to enter another world, where all the rules and regulations of everyday life come to a standstill. The streets are opened for walking, the city's appearance changes with the flashes of light, and the differences between high and

low become somewhat lighter. People who rarely interact throughout the year unite to celebrate this festival (Turner, 1969). This clearly embodies Turner's concept of society. On the night of the procession, everyone walks together, shares food, and inquiries about each other, and a sense of unity is created in everyone's mind. This short period of free interaction resolves old social tensions and increases empathy among people. Turner also discussed the festival's economic aspects. Limitations often lead to the creation of new jobs and opportunities. In Chandannagar, too, many temporary economic arrangements take place during the festival: food stalls open, demand for vehicles increases, a handicraft market is created, and the photography business flourishes (Turner, 1969). The festival then becomes a site of social and economic change. As a result, the city's cultural importance also increases, becoming a centre of attraction for tourists and researchers.

### **Clifford Geertz: Symbols of Culture and Their Meaning**

Clifford Geertz saw religious ceremonies as symbolic acts that highlight the meanings of our culture. Chandannagar's Jagadhatri Puja is just like that, with every aspect of it a symbol. For example, the Jagadhatri Maa is a symbol of strength, protection, and the progress of society (Geertz, 1973). On the other hand, the lighting means creativity, modernity, and the local identity. The procession symbolizes the structural representation of creative lighting artwork. According to Geertz, religious ceremonies are actually a kind of performance that teaches people how to understand the world. For example, Jagadhatri Puja teaches us aesthetics, devotion, following rules, and a sense of responsibility towards society. In addition, this puja also captures the memories of the French colonial period here, which can be seen in the art, lighting design, and city architecture. Geertz also helps explain why this festival has such a significant impact on the behaviour of society (Geertz, 1973). Because religious ceremonies create a sense of unity among all, they create a cultural environment where cooperation, respect, and artistry flourish. This cultural richness makes the city more attractive for festivals, tourism, and the arts, and in turn, contributes to the city's economic development.

### **Pierre Bourdieu: Symbolic Capital, Social Identity, and Economic Status**

It is effortless to understand the structure of festivals if we take Pierre Bourdieu's words. He used to say that these rituals actually maintain who is at what level in society and create

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symbolic capital. For example, in Chandannagar, if a club decorates with a big pandal or enormous lights, their respect increases. The festival becomes a competition, where everyone wants to increase their prestige (Bourdieu, 1977). Contributing financially to the puja committees, making donations, or securing a prominent position enhances an individual's or family's significance in society. This social importance often affects local politics, helps in getting opportunities, and also facilitates business and commerce. Bourdieu also used to say that these rituals create a relationship between everyone and strengthen it. In Chandannagar, the Jagadhatri puja festival provides a platform for strong networking among artists, club members, businessmen, shopkeepers, the corporation, and various cultural organizations. These connections are the backbone of the local economy (Bourdieu, 1977). The iconic lighting designs that Chandannagar light and *pratima* artists and light workers create also earn them jobs both at home and elsewhere, further expanding the city's economic reach.

### **Methodology**

A mixed-method approach was used to conduct the study. I have gathered both qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of research. Prioritized qualitative data to internalize the information about Chandannagar's French tradition, the invention of electricity and its implementation in Chandannagar, as well as covered the detailed information about light artists and their creativity and innovation in the field of lighting. Another important point was ritualistic interpretation in relation to culture and theme. It also covers the emotional attachment of the light makers with Jagadhatri puja and lighting. It also covered the impact of tourism on the local economy and cultural diffusionism. On the other hand, there is quantitative information regarding the age group of the light artists who are involved in this profession as well as the percentage analysis of light workers based on gender. Economic aspects also covered the salary structure of the light artist and workers, profit analysis, and marketing.

I have used purposive sampling and given importance to different sections of people who are directly and indirectly connected with the Chandannagar Jagadhatri Puja and lighting. I have focused on the perception of light artists, light workers, club members, idol makers, shopkeepers (who sell lighting materials), and inhabitants of Chandannagar. Their different perceptions help me to figure out multiple dimensions in relation to my research objectives. For the exploration of this research, I have gathered one hundred sampling data. In the primary phase, I have collected data from fifty respondents, and later, for more accuracy and

empirical understanding, fifty samples will be incorporated into this research. I have used a semi-structured interview tool to understand the rich cultural heritage of the Chandannagar lighting industry and its connection with Jagadhatri puja.

For the execution of this research, I have used semi-structured interviews. Respondents' perceptions and their empirical knowledge help me to understand the rich culture, economy, and religious importance of Chandannagar.

Preparation of this research was systematic, and after carefully framing the research objectives regarding Jagadhatri Puja, I have prepared the research title in relation to those objectives. Concurrently, the research covered intensive literature reviews. The execution of this research pilot survey provided me with proper guidelines and a systematic direction. I have gathered insider details and both qualitative and quantitative information relating to this topic through face-to-face interviews with light artists, workers, club members, shopkeepers, and inhabitants of Chandannagar. Communicating with them one by one and gathering information from different places in Chandannagar.

This research ensures that it will never disclose any personal and sensitive information to public authorities. These data are only for the purposes of research and general analysis of an overview about Chandannagar lighting and its relationship with different socio-economic factors. The primary focus of this research is qualitative in relation to this research. It is covering the historical root of Chandannagar culture, narrative analysis of light artists and workers, as well as discourse analysis of inhabitants of Chandannagar and their empirical views.

### **Research Findings**

The Jagadhatri Puja covers a major part of the historical evolution of Chandannagar. It is clear from various secondary information that the long-standing imprint of French colonialism on Chandannagar is reflected in the urban infrastructure, roads, houses, and, above all, the Chandannagar Stand, presenting a different historical picture to the people. Based on the information obtained from face-to-face interviews with the residents of Chandannagar, it is clear that the history of Chandannagar's French image, coupled with the Jagadhatri Puja and the associated illuminations, attracts a large number of people to Chandannagar. That is why, apart from the Jagadhatri Puja, a large number of people visit Chandannagar throughout the year. Through this research, an attempt was made to highlight the cultural continuity of

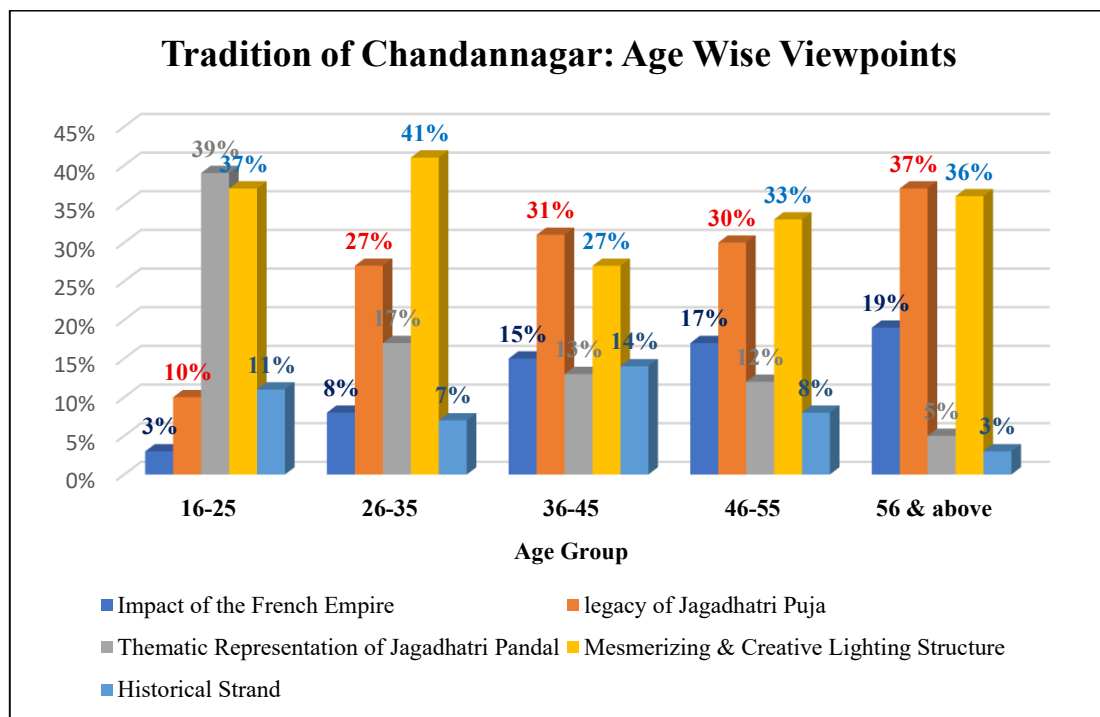
Chandannagar, its ritual, its lighting and relationship with Jagadhatri Puja, its economic impact, and its connection with tourism.

**Traditional and Cultural Heritage of Chandannagar**

People of different ages present the traditions of Chandannagar and the rituals of Jagadhatri Puja differently. The image of Chandannagar's history and its evolution has changed for the elderly, middle-aged, and adult people living in Chandannagar, focusing on various issues. It is quite natural that those who have witnessed the period of French rule closely and have experienced its influence in Chandannagar have a different picture of Chandannagar. They are able to highlight the Jagadhatri Puja, lighting, and the well-thought-out explanation of Chandannagar's economic evolution.

**Tradition of Chandannagar: Age Wise Viewpoints**

**Chart 5.2: Tradition of Chandannagar: Age Wise Viewpoints**



**Source: Survey interview schedule framed by author (2025)**

I have divided the traditional infrastructure of Chandannagar into five parameters to gather the views of its inhabitants about their tradition. These are 1. impact of the French Empire, 2. legacy of Jagadhatri Puja, 3. thematic representation of Jagadhatri Pandal, 4. mesmerizing and

creative lighting structure, and 5. historical strand. In this case, data has been collected from the age groups of 16 to 25, 26 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 55, and 56 and above. The analysis of the data shows that 19 percent of people aged 56 and above considered the influence of the French Empire as one of the most important aspects of Chandannagar's heritage. 37 percent of people aged 55 and above prioritized the tradition and continuity of the Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar. On the other hand, 39 percent of the youth aged 16 to 25 saw the thematic presentation of the Jagadhatri Puja pandals in Chandannagar as a symbol of the continuity of the tradition. 41 percent of people aged 26 to 35 gave special importance to the lighting structure of Chandannagar. In addition, 14 percent of people aged 36 to 45 identified the historical location of Chandannagar as one of the main pillars of the city's heritage.

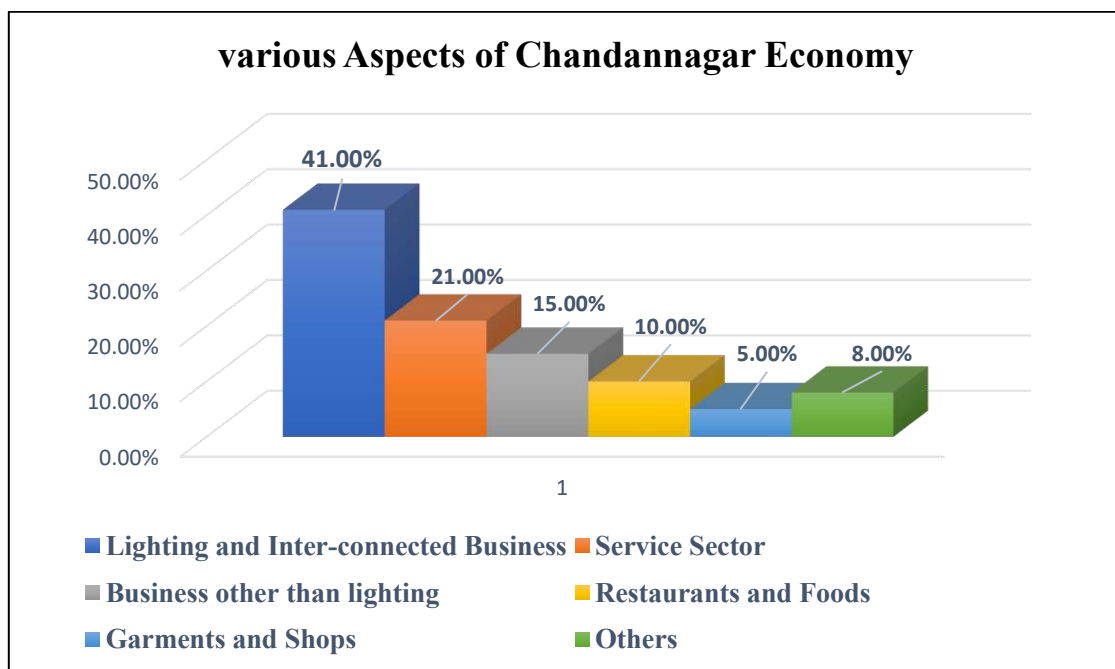
The rituals of Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar are of special significance to the inhabitants here. The most important day of Jagadhatri Puja is Navami Puja. Similar to Durga Puja, Jagadhatri Puja involves the performance of religious rituals from Shasthi to Dashami. Just as the Ashtami Puja is predominant in Durga Puja, the Navami Tithi Puja is more relevant in Jagadhatri Puja. In this context, it is worth mentioning that traditionally, three of the oldest and most notable public pujas of Jagadhatri Maa in Chandannagar are held every year. *Chaul Patti* hosts the first of these pujas, *Aadima* of Chandannagar. This puja is more than 330 years old. The second is the *Rani Maa* of Chandannagar, which is more than 170 years old. Conversely, everyone reveres and worships the highly active *Tentultala Maa* in Bhadreswar. The Navami Tithi puja of the *Tentultala Maa* attracts the general public, in particular. This puja is more than 237 years old.

Research has shown that in 86 percent of cases, the people of Chandannagar flock to the *Tentultala Maa* puja of Bhadreswar because they come to see the Navami puja. Traditional belief holds that the *Tentultala Maa's* Navami puja is so active that it fulfills any vows made to the mother. Devotees line up at night to worship *Tentultala Maa* because the *tithi* of the mother's puja starts in the morning. Furthermore, an ancient tradition of the Jagadhatri puja in Chandannagar is to keep the facial features of the Jagadhatri Maa the same and portray a maternal posture in it. For this reason, even with a theme used in the Jagadhatri Puja Mandap of Chandannagar, the idol's shape and the mother's face remain consistent. The residents of Chandannagar use Jagadhatri Maa as a metaphor for their mother, so they would rather not portray any exaggerated expressions related to the theme on the mother's face.

### Chandannagar Jagadhatri Puja in relation to lighting

As previously discussed, the history of Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar is well over three hundred years old, so naturally the influence of the French Empire is deeply connected to the Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar. On the other hand, the history of the evolution of Chandannagar's lighting is less than 80 years because Sridhar Das of Chandannagar is called "the wizard of light." Under his hand, lighting got a new dimension based on the 6.2 Tuni bulb. He is now 80 years old, so it is clear from the research that Chandannagar's lighting is deeply connected to its economic progress and profession. Sridhar Das began the journey of lighting, which was later presented as a form of the economic infrastructure of Chandannagar.

**Chart 5.2: Various Aspects of Chandannagar Economy**



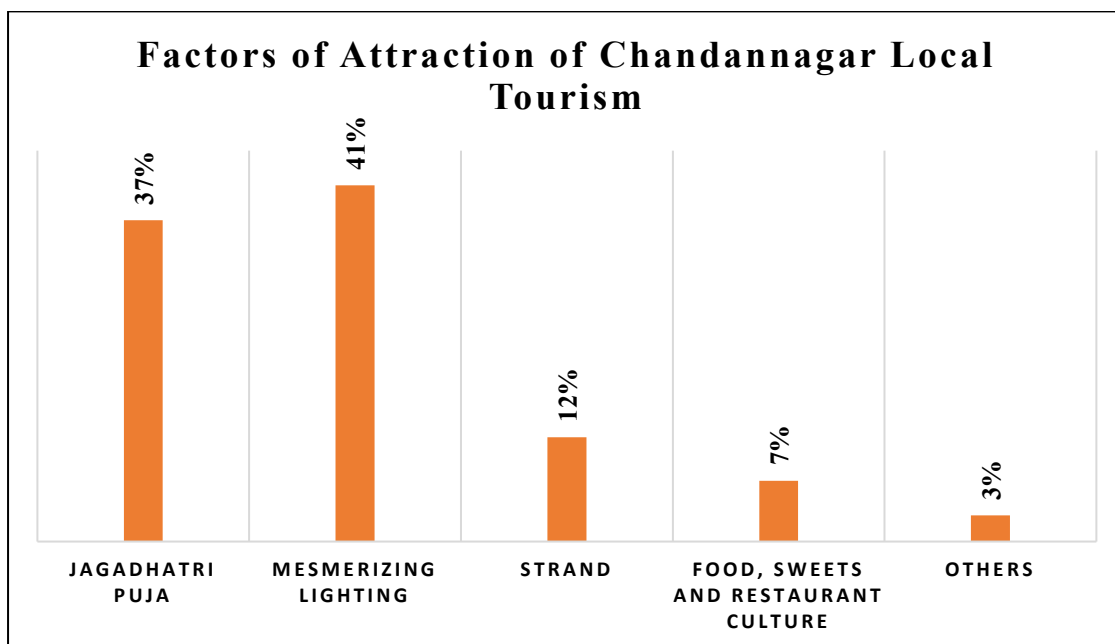
**Source: Survey interview schedule framed by author (2025)**

The study found that lighting plays an important role in the economic structure of Chandannagar. 41 percent of the people of Chandannagar are closely involved in lighting and related businesses. On the other hand, 21 percent of the people are associated with the service sector, who are employed in various government jobs. Apart from lighting, the presence of 15 percent of people in other businesses in Chandannagar has come up in the study. Restaurant culture has a great importance in Chandannagar, a large number of people are involved in

restaurants and different types of food stalls. In this case, it is seen that 10 percent of the people are associated with the restaurant and supply food profession. The number of people who are associated with garments and other shops are 5 percent. Apart from these, there are other different types of professions in which 8 percent of the people are included.

Chandannagar's economic base may have changed over time, but its relationship with lighting has remained inextricably interwoven. Sridhar Das revolutionized Chandannagar's lighting in the mid-20th century with his innovative method of using electric 6.2-volt *tuni* bulbs to create a unique light structure. Sridhar Das has presented his lighting at global platforms held in Moscow, Ireland, and Malaysia. During a personal conversation with Sridhar Das, he revealed that "his spontaneous desire to create new things using bulbs, particularly 6.2-volt *tuni* bulbs, never led him to imagine that he would later become a professional in Chandannagar's lighting industry." Since Chandannagar's lighting gained worldwide recognition, many inhabitants and others have turned to taking it up as a profession. Lighting began as a hobby for Sridhar Das, but it eventually became a major career for many others. It is particularly noteworthy here that not only has its name, and reputation played an important role in choosing lighting as a profession, but it has also opened up opportunities to express one's creativity.

**Chart 5.3: Factors of Attraction of Chandannagar Local Tourism**

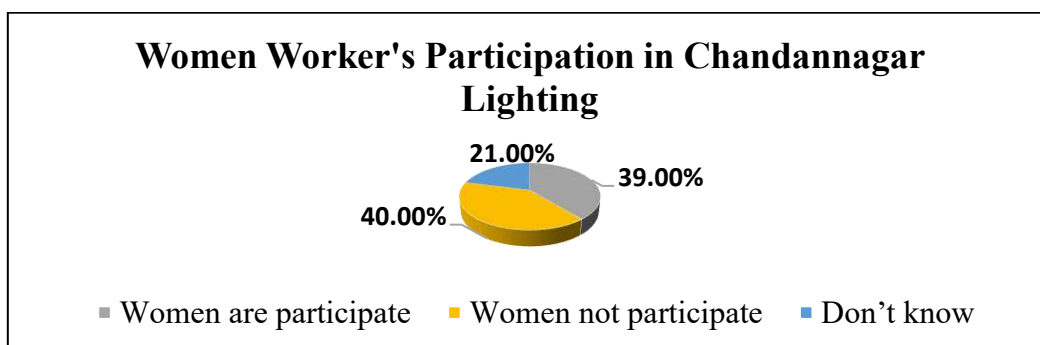


Source: Survey interview schedule framed by author (2025)

Chandannagar is a popular place for local tourism. As it has traditional tourist attractions, it is also a hub of modern amenities, as it is an important city in the Hooghly district. Information has been collected from the research field about the reasons behind the popularity of local tourism in Chandannagar. In this case, the data has been presented based on five parameters: 37% of people mentioned Jagadhatri Puja as one of the reasons behind the increase in the popularity of tourism in Chandannagar. On the other hand, 41% of people think that the unique illumination of Chandannagar is an attractive thing, which attracts a large number of people to Chandannagar. This is because, apart from Jagadhatri Puja, such illumination is seen in various events and famous shops here.

One of the tourist attractions of Chandannagar is Chandannagar Strand. The long stretch of the Chandannagar Government College in front of the crescent-shaped bend of the Ganges River is called Chandannagar Strand. A large number of people mention the Strand when talking about Chandannagar. 12% of people consider Chandannagar Strand to be one of the most attractive and scenic places. While discussing the historical context of Chandannagar, the point has repeatedly come up that Chandannagar was under the French Empire for a long time. As a result, the presence of the French empire and architectural monuments can be observed throughout the vast area of Chandannagar. 7% of the people saw this French heritage in Chandannagar as one of the most attractive areas. Chandannagar boasts a diverse array of restaurants offering a wide variety of food and sweets. Chandannagar's sweets are famous and well-known everywhere. When people visit Chandannagar or hear about Chandannagar, they express considerable interest and desire for its food. For 3% of people, the food and sweets at Chandannagar restaurants are a major source of attraction.

**Chart 5.4: Women Worker's Participation in Chandannagar Lighting**



**Source: Survey interview schedule framed by author (2025)**

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The participation of women in the lighting industry in Chandannagar has been noticeable from the very beginning. Over time, the scope of women in the workplace has changed. As discussed earlier, Jagadhatri Puja has a deep connection with respect and devotion to the mother goddess. Therefore, in this case, the respect for the mother goddess is reflected in the employment of women. Initially, when 6.2 *tuni* bulbs were used, women were specially employed to put colourful wrappers on such bulbs. They used colourful wrappers on *tuni* bulbs and decorated them in specific colours according to the theme. The use of LED lights instead of *tuni* bulbs has increased the number of women in the lighting profession. There is no fear of electric shock when working with LED bulbs. Additionally, the use of a specific circuit board in this work alleviates the pressure of a complex workplace for women. Another important reason is that currently, due to the increasing level of competition in government and private jobs, women are choosing this field as one of their professions. The research reveals that women are involved in the lighting industry in 39 percent of cases. In 40 percent of cases, women do not directly participate in such professions but rather in various unorganized sectors scattered in Chandannagar. 21 percent of people could not express their well-considered opinion on this issue. It is clear from this discussion that the use of modern technology and the constant innovation of Chinese technology are further increasing the level of innovation in lighting in Chandannagar.

### **Discussion**

This research examines how the identity of Chandannagar has developed. It shows a complex mix of traditions, rituals, the use of light, and the cultural economy. The relationship between the Jagadhatri Puja and the city is not only religious; it is also a social and economic pillar. The participation of local people for centuries and the colonial influence of the French have created a historical depth to this puja, which has given a special meaning to the city's heritage for the residents here. The study indicates that people do not see this festival as just a separate event. Instead, it establishes a cultural hub where generations sustain social memory, identity, and creativity. The symbolic and functional role of light in Chandannagar is of paramount importance. Light, which was initially a creative work, has now become an established profession thanks to people like Sridhar Das. As light has gained recognition at home and abroad, it has become a major part of the economy here. According to the chart, about 41 percent of people identified making light as their main economic activity, more than many

other occupations. This result is consistent with Weber and Bourdieu's ideas. Weber's connection between work ethics, rituals, and economic behaviour explains how making light became a well-organized profession with its own rules and responsibilities. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital is also evident here: light is not just a business; it is a source of honour, pride, and prestige for light artists and clubs.

From a sociological perspective, Durkheim's idea of collective consciousness throughout the festival is clear. The preparation, cooperation, and excitement that occur during the Jagadhatri Puja awaken the collective spirit of the community. Speaking to artisans and residents, it is known that the festival strengthens cooperation and reduces social divisions, which also supports Turner's idea of limitations. During the festival, the daily routine is broken, and a temporary social environment is created where people from different walks of life can mix more freely. This limited time gathering renews social bonds, fosters empathy, and creates new areas of cultural and economic exchange. An intriguing aspect of the study is how the festival affects the city's tourism. The chart shows that the lights (41 percent) and the Jagadhatri Puja (37 percent) attract the most visitors. These numbers show the mix of cultural heritage and the local economy. Tourism is not just a byproduct here; it directly supports the livelihoods of lighting workers, street vendors, restaurants, and transport workers. Jagadhatri puja festival acts as a season-based market, benefiting both the formal and informal sectors. In the case of Chandannagar city, the festival transforms the city into a vibrant place of consumption, creativity, and social participation.

Another important attribute is the increased participation of women in the lighting sector. The switch from *tuni* bulbs to LED technology has created safer working environments and new prospects for women. According to the data, 39 percent of people admit to being directly involved in the production of light. This indicates a major social shift, where women's economic roles are moving beyond their traditional boundaries. Taken together, this analysis suggests that Jagadhatri Puja is simultaneously a religious ritual, a cultural performance, representation of creative light work, a profession, a tourist destination, and a symbol of Chandannagar's identity.

### **Conclusion**

This study indicates that Jagadhatri Puja is not just a religious festival but much more. It serves as a cultural force that unites the people of the society, sustains the economy, and preserves the

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traditions of Chandannagar. The festival and the lighting have created a separate local industry, which is providing employment opportunities for many people, creating new businesses, and also attracting tourism. The study has discovered through the stories of light artists and workers, locals, and shopkeepers how this puja festival intensely intertwines with people's lives and social relations.

Chandannagar's French architecture, religious ritualistic devotion, and beautiful and creative lighting structure together have given the city its culture, which is different from anywhere else in West Bengal. This religious festival has also become a matter of pride and a medium to showcase new artwork. The lighting artists, especially those like Sridhar Das who started this work, have made Chandannagar's name sparkle worldwide. What they started as an innovative experiment has now become a major economic platform, fulfilling both employment opportunities for the local people and external needs. Day by day Chandannagar is becoming the hub for economic opportunity. The study also suggests that this religious festival strengthens social bonds. It brings people together, reduces everyday social divisions, and creates a sense of teamwork, which is in line with Durkheim's concept of "collective consciousness." Moreover, the increasing participation of women in the lighting of the lamps is an indication that the festival is emerging as a vehicle for social change and economic inclusion. The study confirms that Jagadhatri Puja acts as a bridge between tradition and modernity. It keeps alive old rituals and symbols while also adapting to new technologies, new industries, and new economic realities. This ability to adapt ensures the festival's longevity and relevance in the present era.

### **Further research**

Comparing Chandannagar Jagadhatri Puja with places like Kolkata (Durga Puja) or Nabadwip (Ras Yatra) reveals some unique and similar trends in the cultural economy. We are designing a long-term study to understand decadal economic conditions and how they change over time. A study over several years will show how the lighting industry, tourist arrivals, and festival costs have changed over time, especially due to new technologies. The survey revealed significant inequalities in the perspectives of various generations. Therefore, further research can be done on how the younger generation is reimagining the festival tradition and what the present means for the future. Investigating the role of artificial intelligence in lighting design,

digital equipment or smart circuits will help us understand how technology is reshaping the industry.

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