Chapter 6
Conclusion

In conclusion, I will try to tie the different threads of discussion continued throughout the thesis so as to look at the emerging identity of idol-makers today. The next step then would be to generalize them as an artisan group and their relation to the broader aspects of Durga puja celebrations and performance. What this work has specifically tried to establish is not the religio-cultural aspect or superstructure of Durga puja but the economic base of it, the market that has changed and affected changes in the lives of the artisans through the changes in the religious observance of Durga puja as a social festival. The work will also relocate the status of the idol-makers as urban workers and how their lives are being influenced by urbanization. With this in mind the concluding arguments have been separated into three sections, the first will look at the identity and the present state of idol-makers; the second part will focus on their problems from settlement in the changing urban profile and the third will lead towards broad generalizations on economy and culture of Durga puja as a religious and social festival.

Present Status of Idol-Makers

In this section I will summarize briefly the main propositions of the thesis - of how the idol-makers establish themselves through their work, make an identity with their distinct craftsmanship, and how the work itself is always changing and being developed, and are not always determined by the logic of supply and demand and control of the market system. The next few pages will discuss the present state of idol-makers in Kumartuli in relation to the different aspects of their life and work, and what the future possibilities might be. In taking up the thesis I had three important foci, which I wanted to look at vis-à-vis the festival of Durga Puja. First, the identity of idol-makers as a city-based occupational caste group. Secondly, their economy and mobility pattern as against the rising popularity of Durga puja. Third, the scope and problems of the market for the traditional idol-makers. In looking back towards the whole exercise I have felt that even with certain inadequacies, it has added to the repertoire of sociological knowledge, through the understanding of economic underpinnings of caste and occupational group. It
has explored how the different concepts of caste, occupational mobility, urbanization, social network structure and emerging markets interplay to establish the positionality of the idol-makers.

Firstly, we can say that in the schema of sociology of caste and social stratification, the traditional idol-makers of Bengal, mostly having a common surname of Pal, seem to be in a unique position in the hierarchical order of local jatis or caste groups. More importantly, they belong to several endogamous sub-castes within the region and occupy positions that vary even within the regional boundaries of Bengal. Their ritual status is definitely below that of the Brahmins, Vaidyas and Kayasthas of the Bengali caste structure, but they hold an upper position in the realm of sudras. Not unlike the left hand castes of South India, they derive their reference from the Brahmanical model and not the Kingly model. They call themselves mostly as sat sudras who are ranked higher than the ritually polluting asat sudras or untouchables. In certain localities they have formed themselves into a group of artisan castes called ‘nabashakhas’ and rank themselves as just below the Brahmins. Six occupational groups in the handicrafts category define themselves as ritually pure ‘navashakhas’, of which potters, i.e., Kumbhakaras are a part. Thus, they are primarily a service caste. The idol-makers identify themselves as a special group of Kumbhakaras. However, for them it is their occupational identity that is more prominent and prestigious than their caste identity, because even though they belong to the potter’s caste, they are considered to be more prestigious as artists and not mere craftsmen because of their occupational specialization. The occupational specialization confers in the making of hand moulded clay idols without the use of wheels, and is considered a higher form of craftsmanship. Thus, their occupational status is comparatively higher than their ritual status. Thus, the occupation of idol-makers in our case sets them apart from other low income occupation because of the ‘honorific value’ of their work as ‘creative’ and also because of “their actual independence with regard to control of their work and their time, and the accompanying ideology of freedom”¹ (Kumar 1995; 13) and hence more leisure time.

¹ For more details on leisure and lives of artisans see Kumar (1995).
The ritual position of women is inferior to men but that does not prohibit them from helping in the hereditary occupation, though they do not have an identity as idol-makers even while they are capable of executing the work. This is more so because they do not go through formal learning skills from the older generation and hence do not recognize themselves as craftsmen. They remain to be flexible resources, reckoned with importance only in the absence of the male, even though they are constantly working in the support activities of production of idol-making. Their status primarily remains of the housewife. However, though the status of idol-makers as a community is located to be not ritually impure, the work is considered ‘dirty’ in the functional sense of the term, i.e. the materials that are used in making the idol, like clay, hay, etc are messy and grimy. In the political order, the idol-makers belong to the other backward classes category both in the Central and State List, though a sizable number of population in my interaction have not been able to derive any benefit that can be accrued from OBC certification though many of them are aware of their reservation mandate in government jobs.

Secondly, idol-making as a specialized occupation is integrally linked to the public celebration of Durga Puja. The social history of the popularity of communal celebration of Durga Puja runs parallel to the rise and perpetuation of this occupation and hence it can be said that compared to other traditional occupational caste group, the history of idol-makers is more recent. This is not to say that idol-making community is formed only because of Durga Puja since the culture of image-worshipping in Bengal has also been recorded in the ancient past of the region. Nevertheless, I would say that the prominence of idol-makers as an occupational group is directly related to the community celebration of puja in an urban culture. Urban culture has been important because though in the rural villages one can find Durga Puja being celebrated; it is limited to a single celebration by the local landlord for the benefit of the entire village. In contrast, the display of wealth, social prestige and rivalry are what marked the beginning of Durga Puja in the urban culture of Kolkata which has led to the sheer numerical increase in the number of Pujas thereby drawing a large number of the artisans/ clay craftsmen into this occupation who later claimed a higher status as artists.
The practice of idol-making as an occupation has being influenced by the non-religiosity of the Durga Puja, caste being steadily undermined by the socio-economic factors linked to urban industrial society, especially in multiethnic neighbourhoods where we see that Muslims, Christians and Dalits participating in the organization of the puja (Ghosh 2000). Numerous examples of Durga Puja being a more of a community festival than a religious festival abound in the State. In Lalbag of Murshidabad Distirct Durga puja is organized at the patio of a Masjid, another is celebrated at the entrance of the South gate of the Hazarduari. History says that these were permitted in writing by Munni Begum, the wife of Mir Zafar, and later by Waresh Ali, the son of Nabab Wasif Ali. In another instance we find that a committee of Hindu and Muslim women organizes a puja in Murshidabad (Anand Bazaar Patrika, September 29, 2006). This very nature has in many ways given an impetus not only for the traditional idol-makers, but also other individuals to make idol-making their part-time engagement. It is considered as an enviable livelihood. I say ‘enviable’ not because it is a very lucrative option but because for many it is the lure of fame and prestige that draws them into it. Thus we find that in Boko, a small village in West Bengal, Roshan Khan, art teacher of the local primary school, is making idol for the only public celebration in the village and the villagers making proud statements about the fact (Anand Bazaar Patrika, September 24, 2006). Reports from Bankura of erstwhile homemaker desiring to display her artistic talents in the making of a unique idol and her efforts being whole heartedly supported by not only her husband but by the entire township also speak of the increasing acceptance of women as artists and idol-makers. Similarly, even among the traditional idol-making households, we find women who are now being increasingly recognized as idol-maker or artist, and hold more prestige than others. Thus, Durga puja has not only incorporated the participation of disparate castes and classes but also enabled women to leave the domestic sphere and inhabit public spaces.

This brings us directly to the issue of economic sustenance of the occupation. How has idol-making become a chief source of income for many traditional clay artisan families? With the rising demand of clay idol for the purpose of veneration, the clay artisans’ families from the rural areas of Bengal started migrating to the city in search of
a better future. They hoped to have more work and a full time occupation. In the rural areas of origin many of them were peasant potters, combining the making of clay wares like pots and other household utensils along with farming, or share cropping, making a single idol for each of the annual celebration of the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon. Thus, the scope was limited within the spatial boundaries of the village or at the most to the neighbourhood village or township, and idol-making per se was not a very sustainable main occupation for the artisans: the possibilities for better earning by working for the city merchants and zamindars\textsuperscript{2}, led to a rural to urban migration among the clay artisans who were adept in idol-making. What also played a significant role in this migration pattern are the kinship networks that made the whole of extended families migrate to Kolkata and set up new residence in the Kumartuli area. However, those who were talented enough could establish themselves as artists or master craftsmen, while others remained as either small artisans or karigars. They were later joined by master craftsmen from places like Dhaka, Maimansingh, Rangpur etc., in Bangladesh. With the arrival of the population from East Bengal, divisiveness also arose on the line of regional ties and separateness in terms of innovation and style of work, with the artists from Bangladesh achieving more acclaim than the existing idol-makers. This growing competition escalated when idol-makers from Bangladesh started to set up workshops in other places because of paucity of space within Kumartuli, thereby threatening the exclusivity of the area. However, with the spurt of festivity in regions outside Bengal from the 1960s onwards, the trend of migration also shifted wherein the artisans from the rural villages or small towns of Bengal started to shift to other states, like Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat. Here too, the role of social network and kinship ties played an important role. Hence, we find that it is the closely-knit groups of uncles and nephews, friends and friends’ sons and individuals from the same village who have migrated together in small groups to the city from the rural parts of Bengal. The information about new destinations and possibilities of work were mainly brought back by the karigars who seasonally migrated to Kumartuli and did not gain much foothold there. This culture has led to the

\textsuperscript{2} This is where we can find a similarity in the birth of certain artisan and artistic culture. As in the case of artisans of Benaras (Kumar 1995), or the actors of Ramhila (Kapur 1990), here too the preferences and strategies of the elites, especially of the rulers have given birth and sustenance of the artisan/artistic culture.
influx in the erstwhile limited and seasonal population of idol-makers and many were converted into full time idol-makers. The numerical increase in Durga puja celebration across the country’s metropolises has also provided an impetus to geographical mobility. The mobility pattern is again influenced by network ties. Thus, we see that caste and kinship categories interplay in the individual idol-maker’s decision to migrate to a particular city, and to the nature of settlement, that is permanent or seasonal migration. Therefore, migration to Delhi is higher as compared to other cities where the culture of Durga Puja celebrations have gained ground much earlier than in the other metropolises and smaller cities of India and where the city has the culture of idol-making and a few permanent Bengali idol-makers. These permanent migrants have provided the information network and initial support to the later idol-makers who mostly remained seasonal migrants. To some extent I found the migration pattern to be also linked to skill sets of the individual idol-maker. Hence we find that while the renowned idol-makers of Kumartuli migrate seasonally for a brief period only under fixed and prior contracts with the puja organizers, the lesser known labourers and idol-makers from the rural and semi-urban areas migrate to different cities before the Durga puja, in search of work or for minimum of wages.

But it is also clear that despite the existing ties of kinship network, the undercurrents of severe competition surfaces beyond the mutual cooperation that is to be expected from the kin group. It is in this respect that we may say here that the pervasive money economy of Simmel (1969) has fostered self-sufficiency and increased emotional detachment with relationships becoming less personal and more functional. However, at the same time this money economy has associative functions whereby we find associations of different levels of craftsmen as forms of urban organization based on shared economic interest.

However, we may also say that while Durga Puja as a site of cultural performance has provided a scope for the idol-maker for the imaginative creation and efficacy, it has provided a scope for the urban business too. It has become increasingly corporatised because Durga puja season is also the period of high consumption for the Bengali middle
class and hence the right time for the publicity and showcasing of commodities\textsuperscript{3}. Moreover, puja in itself is becoming a consumption item through the emergence of ‘theme’ pujas and has evolved into a popular tourism culture by transforming the everyday social reality.

In this schema of highly corporatised Durga puja, it is the idol-makers who lose mostly in their trade. On the one hand as traditional craftsmen they are yet to cope with the market research skills like advertising to grow business, and the accounting skills of bookkeeping, to tracking the volume of business; on the other hand their habitual aloofness as artists prevents them to take into consideration their time and labour in the final pricing of their goods. The costs therefore are much less when compared to actual production costs. These inefficient production and marketing practices eat up the profit.

Gradually therefore, within the idol-makers of Kumartuli, the traditional occupation does not have in store much inspiration for the newer generation. Not all the sons or grandsons were engaged in ‘dirty’ clay-work any more. They either shifted to a different occupation, mostly to a salaried job or continued the family business mainly with the help of good \textit{karigars} and engaged themselves directly, only occasionally. For many who remained to work, further competition was posed by the rise of theme pujas in the late 80s and early 90s. There are two types, one is of \textit{shilpo}, where the handicraft is given the centre stage, and diverse materials are used or improvised to make the pandals and decoration of the idol. The other is \textit{galpo}, where a specific story from the Puranas or other old text, about Durga or the eternal Goddess is depicted in the entire environment of the puja, the goddess is of clay and there is no distortion of her form. The threat comes mainly in the form of ‘\textit{shilpo}’ puja where in many cases the freelance artists may do away with a clay idol altogether and instead craft the idol from any other material. With the ‘\textit{galpo}’ puja, it is the idol-makers who are still required since the idol is essentially of clay and it requires them to actually execute them.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{The Telegraph} reported the volume of business during the festival period to be of Rs 350 crore in September 2003 (Ghosh 2006).
The constant shift in the customer’s taste, problems inprocuring raw materials, environmental disturbance like flood and rain etc., affect the market condition in each of the different cities — both Delhi and Kolkata, which in turn affects the prospect of the idol-makers livelihood. Some of the major drawbacks that were identified by the idol makers are: huge competition and dwindling prices of idols; increasing financial burden; lack of space for expansion or diversification of products.

Though the fundamental aspect of the life of the idol-makers is their poverty, economic stringency and insecurity, yet it is their pride as master of themselves, their work and their relative independence in their work and time, which sets them apart from other poor, lower caste, dominated people. It is their identity as artists and creators and the accompanying sense of freedom that is in some senses unique to themselves but at the same time is also similar to other handicrafts castes. Hence, rather than being more concerned about the wastage of raw material, we find craftsmen spending endless hours in creating a perfect work of art. They seem to be caught between the agonies of the lower status as craftsmen and yearn to be recognized as artists. They feel that it is the impermanency of their work which makes them mere craftsmen rather than artists. As makers of the idol, their creation is destroyed as soon as the puja is over, thereby obliterating their memories from the collective community at large. Their work is not preserved and hence the lack of appreciation as ‘art’. Thus, they remain artists at heart alongside their daily struggle for a livelihood as urban craftsmen.

The basic features of their market — the low capital, the uncertain demand, the rising prices and uncertain supply of raw materials keep these idol-makers at a barely viable state of existence. Their life in the slum reflect a distinct sub-culture of its own — it is more like what Lewis (1967) termed as the ‘culture of poverty’, as distinguished from poverty. It (culture of poverty) is both

*an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, high individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society. Indeed, many of the traits of the culture of poverty can be viewed as attempts at local solutions for problems not met by existing institutions and agencies...*

*Lewis 1967: xli*
Under these circumstances their only hope for a better future is pinned on the highly proclaimed Kumartuli Urban Renewal Project of the West Bengal government\(^4\). The atmosphere is ripe with expectations around the talk of development, though a significant number of them are sceptical about the process.

**Future in relation to the Changing Urban Profile**

In 2001-02 the Ministry of Commerce and Development initiated a scheme in collaboration with Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA). Accordingly, a detailed survey was done and a Detailed Project Report (DPR) was completed in 2004. In 2005 the development scheme of five acre land within Kumartuli was placed before the GOI for consideration under the Urban Renewal with the JNNURM (BSUP), which was passed in 2006, after certain modifications. The GOI did not sanction the individual workshops/go-downs proposed in the DPR. The revised project has scrapped down the plan of individual shops/go-downs because the artisans will not be able to bear the cost\(^5\). The DPR was modified and now it has proposed to provide community workplaces/go-downs to the artisans. The modified DPR of January 2007 has been re-submitted to GOI for reconsidering providing of additional funds to the project. Thus the modified proposal is waiting for approval in respect to community space, community centre and Community Park for children. The total project has been estimated at Rs 26.80 crores, of which the GOI will share Rs 10.06 crores.

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\(^4\) Earlier, the CMDA (Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority) has had a series of policy interventions ranging from BI (Bustee Improvement programme), CIT (Calcutta Improvement Trust) and Bustee Rehousing Programme, but almost all are like immediate fire fighting programme, result of immediate intervention. CIT as part of civic administration attacked the problem in a piecemeal fashion by sanitising the city from the pollutant and disorganizers, the slum dwellers were not the object of development (Roy 1994: 140-141). The second phase of bustee development started with the inception of CMPO (Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization), which carried out the first comprehensive survey of slums. Later CMDA embarked on a full-scale interventionist strategy and the slum dwellings were accepted as part of the city. Thus beyond extending civic amenities, human resources and economic development also emerged in the agenda of the social planners, through various urban schemes and international financing, like that of World Bank solved the funding problem (Roy 1994: 142).

\(^5\) According to the State Government policy for accessing JNNURM funds under BSUP, 20% of the cost is to be borne by beneficiaries. The first plan included allotment of new or renovated workshops for individual artisans for an additional payment of 20% of the costs of the shop structure, but it was later felt that it will not be economically viable for the artisans. They will not be able to afford the extra cost.
The present scheme includes provision of modern residential accommodation for the artisans and their families as well as construction of community workspace for the artisans. Infrastructural facilities like water supply, sewerage, drainage, roads, streetlights etc., have been proposed. The project completion period is two years and will be implemented in three phases. Phase I – temporary rehabilitation of inhabitants; Phase II – infrastructure development after demolishing existing structures; Phase III – construction of community workplaces, residences and other community facilities. The proposed plans are:

1. Living space for 528 families of which the families will have to bear 20% of cost, (Rs 30,000). There will be 524 dwelling units of floor area 26.9 sq metre each with kitchen and toilet.

2. Modern workspace, shops and go-downs for 300 beneficiaries, which includes clay artisans, jewellery makers and designers, sola artisans (solashilpi). There will be ten buildings of G + 2 height and ten buildings of G + 3 height that will serve as community workshops, for housing 20ft and 10ft high images.


4. Health centre, dormitory and community hall for the residents of the area.

An advisory committee has been created for smooth functioning of the project. The committee members are Municipality and Urban Development Minister (Pur o Nagar Unnayan Mantri), Chairman of KMDA and community representatives of the local area (Janopratinidhi) and the heads of KMSS and KMS. The first meeting was held on 27th December 2006. The meeting minutes showed certain important points around which there were discussions and contentions. Firstly, in the proposed plan 90% of the existing area occupied presently will be given to the residents and artisans and 10% will be taken for road and better civic amenities. The artisans wanted to retain 100% of their present occupancy (point number four of meeting minutes). Secondly, as per the beneficiary list 165 clay artisans (mritshilpis) have shops/outlets in Kumartuli and out of them 80-85 families live in Kumartuli area itself, while 75-80 families live outside the project area. However, the secretary of KMSS proposed that the 10% area that the Mrit Shilpis will be sacrificing shall have to be distributed amongst those artisans who did not have
residential accommodation in Kumartuli (point number nine). Thirdly, the secretary of KMSS demanded a 20 ft height for workshops for both clay modellers and sola jewellery designers, instead of the proposed 10 ft for sola designers (point number five).

For the purpose of temporary rehabilitation the KMDA has identified open land, the premises belonging to the East Bengal River Steam Service workers Co-Operative Limited in Cossipore area. This will be rented by the KMDA at a monthly rent of Rs 60,000 till the project is completed. Another strip of land along the East Bank Standard Road behind Kumartuli has been identified for temporary workshops. Temporary go-downs will be shifted to an area beside Kumartuli Road (near circular rail track), in three of the four two-storied go-downs of the Health and Family Welfare Department and Public Health Engineering Directorate. The remaining one will be retained by the Health Department. The paperwork indicated that on 31st January 2007, one model dwelling unit in Cossipore and one model workshop in East Bank Road has already been proposed to be build by KMDA.

Whether the fate of idol-makers will change towards a better existence remains to be seen, the hope lies in the fact that they have been accepted as the crucial part of the city’s culture and identity by the authorities. The idol-makers are sceptical because they feel that once they move their business activities from the demand zone, it will not be easy to re-establish the business after a gap of some years. For this is the area where those agencies, institutions or people through whom the group derives livelihood in exchange of the goods they make are familiar with.

Parallel may be drawn with the urbanization and urban planning, development and labour struggles that compete and co-exist in the city of Mumbai⁶. The urban issues of land development and the conditions of workers lives are reflected in the present proposal and developments around the Kumartuli Renewal Scheme. The incompatibility of the interest of the state government and the perception of the idol-makers, is not unlike the

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⁶ Patel & Thorner’s (1995-2003) edited work on the city of Bombay or Mumbai is an exploration of urbanization and urbanism in general that is also applicable to a large extent for other Indian cities.
conditions of the textile workers who has been alienated in the process of Mumbai’s land-use policies because of the clash of interest between the government, mill owners and trade unions (Patel 1995).

**Some general thoughts...**

While for most of the idol-makers of Kumartuli today the activity is reduced to an economic pursuit, with the occasional pangs for creativity, there are others for whom it is not an activity that is ‘set apart’. Rather, it is a part of the social life, the rhythms of social activities, not unlike the Cho dancers of Purulia for whom art whether as performing art, visual art or the craft of making masks is a part of their larger consciousness (Chatterji 1985). For them, the textual and the oral traditions of Katha, Kahani and Jān Kahānī are woven together to form the popular consciousness. This is perhaps absent among the idol-makers, who are city based artisans and cannot form a world in themselves but are a part of the larger social milieu, influenced by the urban processes of industrialization, displacement and re-settlement.

The notion of festival, either in the Balinese cockfight⁷ (Geertz 1973) or in the World of Rabelias (Bakhtin 1968), the everyday language is shot through with imagery. The present form of celebration of the Durga puja in itself can be seen as a dramatization, similar to the theatrical aspects of the Ramlila of Ramnagar (Kapur 1990), where the artists and the artisans form the part of a milieu with its typical sense of space and time, of sacredness and in the enactment of the play. Durga Puja as a performance – from the making of the image to the immersion of the deity –can also constitute of both a social performance and a “cultural performance”, “concrete observable units of Indian culture, the analysis of which might lead to more abstract structures within a comprehensive cultural system” (Singer 1972: 64). Moreover, the performance of Durga Puja, constituting the making of idols, worship and rituals is an event that “encapsulates...the elementary constituents of the culture and [can be treated] as the ultimate units of observation” having a “definitely limited time span, or at least a beginning and an end, an

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⁷ The Balinese attachment with their favourite cocks and the enormous time spent on their grooming, feeding and discussing (Geertz 1973), is parallel to the passion of Bengalis over the organising of Durga puja
organised program of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance” (Singer 1972: 71). The Western tradition of performance that is based on theatre and film traditions may judge the events and ritual of Ramlila or Durga Puja as something inauthentic, staged or put on but, “performing in a ritual or behaving in a ritualized manner may be the point at which they are most truly themselves” (Hughes-Freeland in Balzani 2007: 26), a “proclamation of kinship, identity and personhood” (Balzani 2007: 26). The performance of Durga Puja is more “emotional, aesthetic and embodied” (Balzani 2006: 27) rather than a performance which should only be read as a text to decipher the hidden meanings. These “cultural performances, such as rituals, ceremonies, carnivals and dramas... can be seen as interpretations of social life by the actors themselves and are then exhibited to the participants as well as to the outsiders” (Brückner et al 2007: 7).

In terms of observation of rituals as a popular religion, Durga Puja rituals have a very different trajectory than many other popular religions like the Mahima Dharma. While Durga puja gained popularity in the throes of prosperity and abundance, Mahima Dharma emerged and gained prominence in the throes of devastating famine. As a part of mainstream culture, Durga puja upholds the saguni tradition that gave a fillip to idol-worship unlike the nirgunī tradition of Mahima Dharma (Lorenzen 1995 in Dube-Banerjee 2008: 16-17). Thus, the questions of imaginative creation, construction of social reality and efficacy when explored in this background reflect the ever changing face of the Durga Puja, in terms of the presentation of the ‘spectacle’ of Durga Puja as a marketing venue for advertisers, the artists’ interpretation of the Devi murti or the innovation in the designing of the entire tableaux.

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8 Balzani, (2007) in the analysis of the spectacle and power of the organization of a kingly ritual in Jodhpur cited in detail the works of Schieffelin (1998) and Hughes-Freeland (1998), details the comparison between how performance is treated in different traditions of the east and the west.

9 Geertz (1973) analyzed cultural performances as texts, to look for hidden meanings in the symbols and language manipulated in the rituals under scrutiny, and emphasized the cognitive aspects of ritual performances. While Durga Puja can also be interpreted following Geertz’ approach, it will involve dealing with the sociology of religion and interpretation of narrative in detailed which is beyond the scope of the present thesis. Here I have limited myself to what Balzani (2007) adapted in his analysis of the Kingly ritual of Jodhpur “religion is not so much thought out as danced out” (Marrett in Balzani 2007: 27). Or, as Bailey writes, “the performance is not, even when it purports to be, an invitation to be rational, to doubt, to ask questions even-handedly. It is an enticement directly to feeling, to unquestioning belief...designed to make people not think, not question, not calculate, only to feel” (Bailey 1996: 5 in Balzani 2007: 27).
Thus the public celebration pattern of Durga puja has undergone many changes in the last 50 years and is being celebrated with features that existed never before, with *mela*, competition, prizes, and decoration. It is also wonderfully open to flexible entertainment, including the most ‘modern’ film songs, orchestra, cinema and video but the course of these popular forms of entertainment are rarely influenced by the working class culture. This is because the present puja committees are mainly of the elite, and the artisans and workers are least powerful stakeholders in this entire industry.

Thus, we can see that several factor, i.e., the social, political and the economic transforms the conditions of work of the workers in the city, especially in the home based urban production units. While we shed light on the idol-makers of Kumartuli area, the groups of domestic workers, plastic goods manufacturers, undergarments producers who inhabit the same neighbourhood clamour for attention. Same is true for the other associated occupations like the drummers, artificial hair-makers, and clay suppliers etc., who lie in an equally morbid existence. While the idol-makers are poised for change the other associated artisans are unsure about their own existence. For example, the drummers, traditionally *muchis* or leatherworkers, say that since cassettes of drumbeats were released in the market, the drummers are having a tough time to get orders and many are forced to leave their traditional occupation (The Statesman, October 3, 2002). A more detailed work including idol-making and its associated occupations would have given a more nuanced and in-depth understanding on the interdependence and interrelationship of the various groups involved in idol-making and a clear view of the existing power structure in terms of the position of each group in the market of idol-making. While being limited to understand the present conditions of idol makers of Bengal, this study has also raised concerns on the macro issues of economy and society, and has depicted the tales of survival and loss in a modern, metropolitan city.