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Collective Effervescence and Contemporary Spectacle: Understanding Navratri through Functionalism and Postmodernism

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Abstract

Navratri and Durga Puja stand among the most dynamic festivals in South Asia, marked by devotional rituals, cultural symbolism, and large-scale participation. This paper explores these celebrations through Emile Durkheim's functionalist framework of religion alongside postmodern theories of culture and spectacle. Based on participant observation, informal interviews, and media analysis conducted during Navratri 2025, the study shows that practices such as aarti, Garba, and the worship of Durga idols foster collective effervescence and strengthen communal solidarity. At the same time, the growing presence of sponsorships, branding, and digital representations reveals the festivals' transformation into consumer-oriented spectacles. The analysis suggests that Navratri operates both as a traditional mechanism of social integration and as a cultural performance shaped by contemporary economic and technological forces. By bringing together classical and postmodern sociological perspectives with empirical findings, the paper illustrates how religion continues to function simultaneously as a unifying social bond and as a fragmented, commodified spectacle in present-day society.

Keywords: Collective Effervescence, Durga Puja, Durkheim, Functionalism, Navratri, Postmodernism, Spectacle, Sociology of Religion