

Calcutta CHRONICLE



The World of Bengali **FICTIONAL DETECTIVES**

CALCUTTA'S EDIFICE
Parshvanath Temple

PAGE 06

NEIGHBOURHOOD
Bagbazar

PAGE 19

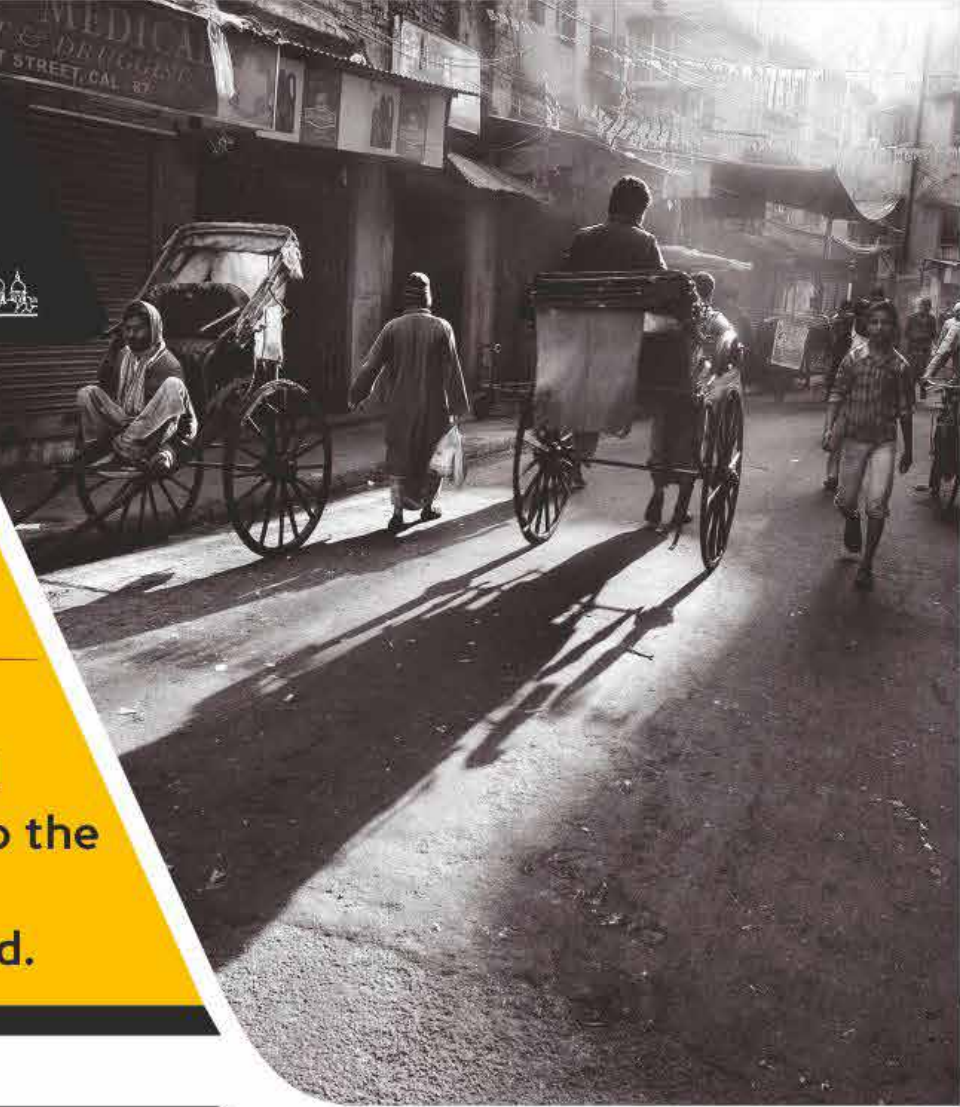
STAGE CRAFT
Kenar Pala

PAGE 44



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EDITORIAL

The name “Baag Buzar” was derived from the Perrin’s Garden, a pleasure resort, frequented by the Company’s covenanted servants with their ladies for an evening stroll or moonlight fete. Captain Perrin was the owner of several ships. His garden stretched between the present Haralal Mitra Street and Chitpur Road (Rabindra Sarani) near River Hooghly and was sold to the Company in 1749. The Company sold the property to J. Z. Holwell for a sum of Rs 2500 in 1752. Perrin’s Point was at the north-western apex of his garden. Col. C. F. Scott started manufacturing gun powder at the gardens in 1754. An octagonal “Redoubt” to protect Calcutta was built in 1855 and a year later a small garrison of 60 European and native soldiers led by Ensign Piccard repulsed the attack by the Nawab’s forces. Read the fascinating tale of Bagbazar in this edition’s ‘Neighbourhood’ column.

The British Deputy High Commission (BDHC) Kolkata and Indo-British Scholars’ Association (IBSA) jointly organised an event to shine the spotlight on wildlife and our living planet through visual storytelling at the British Club Kolkata on June 11, 2025. The event emphasised the importance of our fragile planet and the need to work more towards its conservation. It focused on the role of wildlife photographers in capturing the movements of wildlife animals, studying their habitats and effect of climate change and human influence on their existence. More on that in this edition’s ‘Special Feature’ column.

Joydip Sur
Editor



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Table OF CONTENT

18

POTPOURRI

The World Of Bengali
Fictional Detectives





35 Food Pump

Mocambo

06 Calcutta's Edifice

Parshvanath Temple

15 Past Perfect

Bharat Mata

18 Neighbourhood

Bagbazar



40 Museum

State Archaeological Museum



44 Stage Craft

Kenar Pala

46 Culture

Rathayatra of Ukhra

48 Stage Craft

Prajok Theatre Group

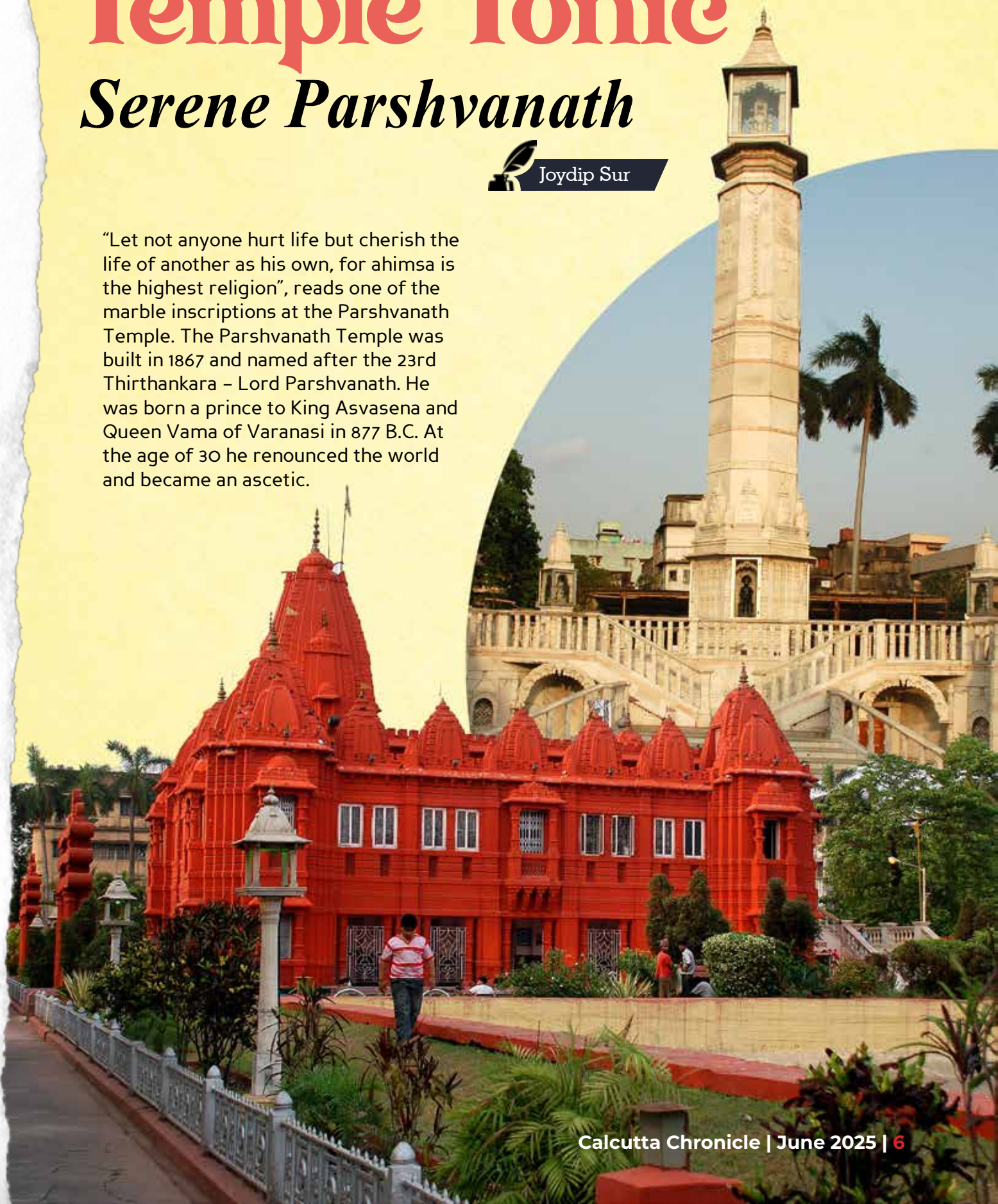
Temple Tonic

Serene Parshvanath



Joydip Sur

“Let not anyone hurt life but cherish the life of another as his own, for ahimsa is the highest religion”, reads one of the marble inscriptions at the Parshvanath Temple. The Parshvanath Temple was built in 1867 and named after the 23rd Thirthankara – Lord Parshvanath. He was born a prince to King Asvasena and Queen Vama of Varanasi in 877 B.C. At the age of 30 he renounced the world and became an ascetic.

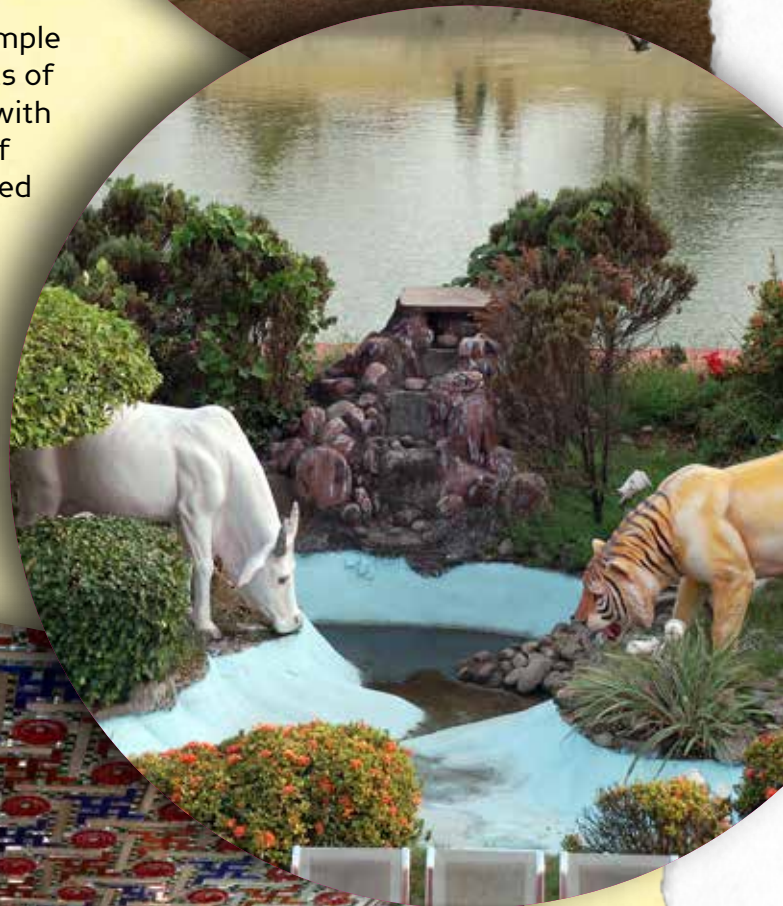
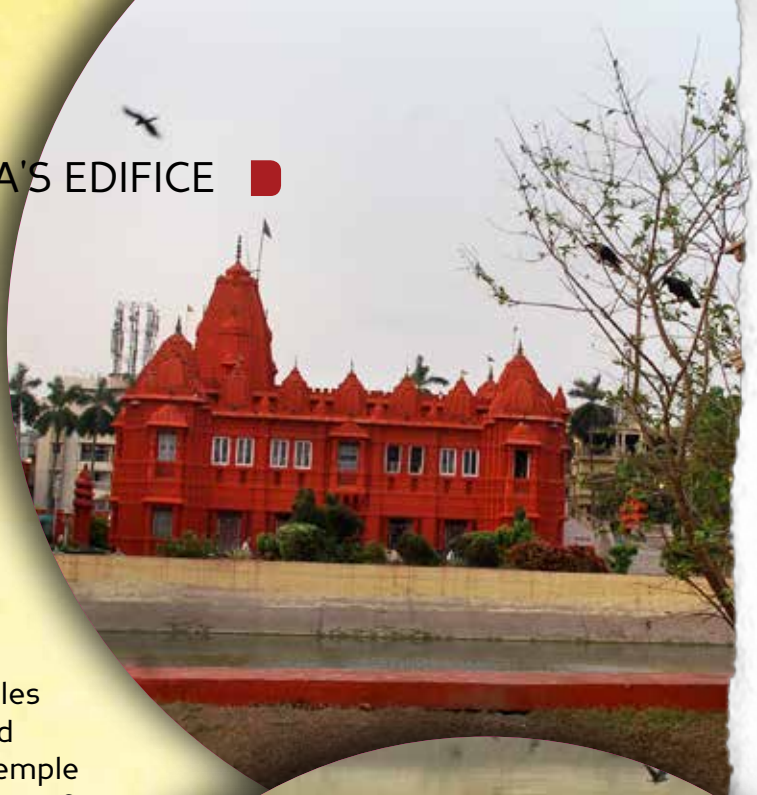


■ CALCUTTA'S EDIFICE ■

He practised austerity for 83 days and on the 84th day achieved enlightenment. Lord Parshvanath preached the doctrine of ahimsa and truth for 70 years. He went on to live for 100 years and much to the dismay of his followers breathed his last during a summit at Mount Sammeta also known as Parsnath Hills.

The architecture is of predominantly Nagara style. The ornamental pillars and sculptures have been inspired from several old Jain temples and caves. It has been built extensively with red chunar stones and marble. The beauty of the temple is enhanced by the splendid artistry that consists of mirror, coloured stones and glass inlaid ceiling with its mesmerising designs. Scenes from the life of Lord Parshvanath have been depicted on coloured glass and can be seen displayed high up on both the side walls in the main prayer hall.

Numerous statues of mythological characters are on display inside the temple. An extensive use of the colour scheme, especially gold is distinct. Holy inscriptions from religious books have been engraved on marble.



CALCUTTA'S EDIFICE



The temple is surrounded by a beautiful garden and a unique 81 feet high Mana Stambha (pillar) built of white marble. The reflection of the temple in the adjoining tank makes for a picturesque kaleidoscope.

The Parshvanath Temple is sometimes also referred to as the Sree Digambar Jain Temple. The name 'Digambar' literally means 'clothed in the quarters of the sky' and the digambar monks are often referred to as 'sky-clad.' Nudity is one of the main doctrinal differences between the two sects. Apart from this, the philosophy and ethics which form the foundation of Jainism are almost the same for both the Shvetambaras and the Digambaras. The five major vows of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-possession) and brahmacharya (celibacy) are central to their doctrine.

■ CALCUTTA'S EDIFICE ■

The Parshvanath Temple was renovated by a renowned architect Mr Brown in 1914. In the very same year, the main idol of Tirthankara Parshvanath was installed in the temple. The hood of a snake is shown as protecting the Lord from sun and rain. The Yaksha Dharanendra and the Yakshi Padmavati are seen flanking him.

There is an interesting anecdote about the Yakshas. Once when Prince Parshvanath was walking through a forest he met Mahipala, a turncoat. Mahipala had surrounded himself with by five logs and lit a fire as if to show that he was praying. Avdhignan (inner knowledge) told Parsvanath a couple of snakes were trapped in there.

He quickly warned Mahipala but instead of trying to save them, the man was enraged and denied the presence of any snake. Parshavanath gently pulled out the logs, separated them. He then saw the half charred bodies of the snakes and recited the Navkar Mantra, a prayer, for the duo before they died. It is said the snakes were reincarnated into Yaksha Dharanendra and Yakshi Padmavati.

The spectacular Rath Yatra of Thirthankara Parshvanath adorned with a colourful procession of several bajan mandalies (group of singers who sing religious hymns) and jankhis arrives here on the day of Kartik Purnima each year. The ceremony is observed with great pomp and show.

If you are looking for a calming effect in the sweltering summer heat, the temple is just the place for you.

Fast Facts:

Name: Parshvanath Temple

Nearest Metro Station: Belgachia

Phone: 033-25567191

Photography: Allowed

Parking: Limited space available for parking outside the temple premises

Note: On certain days, there is a reservation on entry for people belonging to other faiths. It is therefore advisable to enquire with the authorities before visiting the temple.



■ LET'S EXPLORE CALCUTTA ■

Sitalnath Jain Temple

- a divine marvel




Team Chronicle

History: Built by Rai Budree Das Bahadoor Mookim, a jeweler and art connoisseur to honour Sitalnathji, the 10th Tirthankar. The temple is second to no other Jain temple in the city and perhaps even India.

Construction of the temple began in 1842 and it was completed by 1867 and it was opened for public soon after. Look out for the lamp in the temple which is burning incessantly since 1867.

Introduction: The temple is one of the many marvels of architecture that the city of Calcutta can proudly boast of. A pride among the many beautiful structures adorning the city. Surprisingly, many of us have not explored the temple. Team Chronicle rediscovers the divine tranquil of the serene destination. Let's explore....





LET'S EXPLORE CALCUTTA

Spot: Maniktala Pareshnath Temple

Location: 36 Badridas Temple Street,
Kolkata- 700004

Route: Drive down Maniktala crossing towards
Raja Dinendra Street. Near Sahitya Parishad
Maniktala

Food & Beverage options: Food is not allowed
inside. Drinking water is available

Open: All days

Time:

Summer: 6.30am to 12 noon
and 3pm to 7pm

Winter: 6.30am to 12 noon
and 3pm to 6.30pm

Entry Fee: Nil

Car Parking: Available in close vicinity

Parking Fee: Nil

Photography: Allowed inside the temple
premise, but prohibited in the interior of
the temple

Videography: Allowed inside the temple
premise, but prohibited in the interior of
the temple



BDHC and IBSA Shine Spotlight on Wildlife Conservation and Living Planet Through

Visual Storytelling



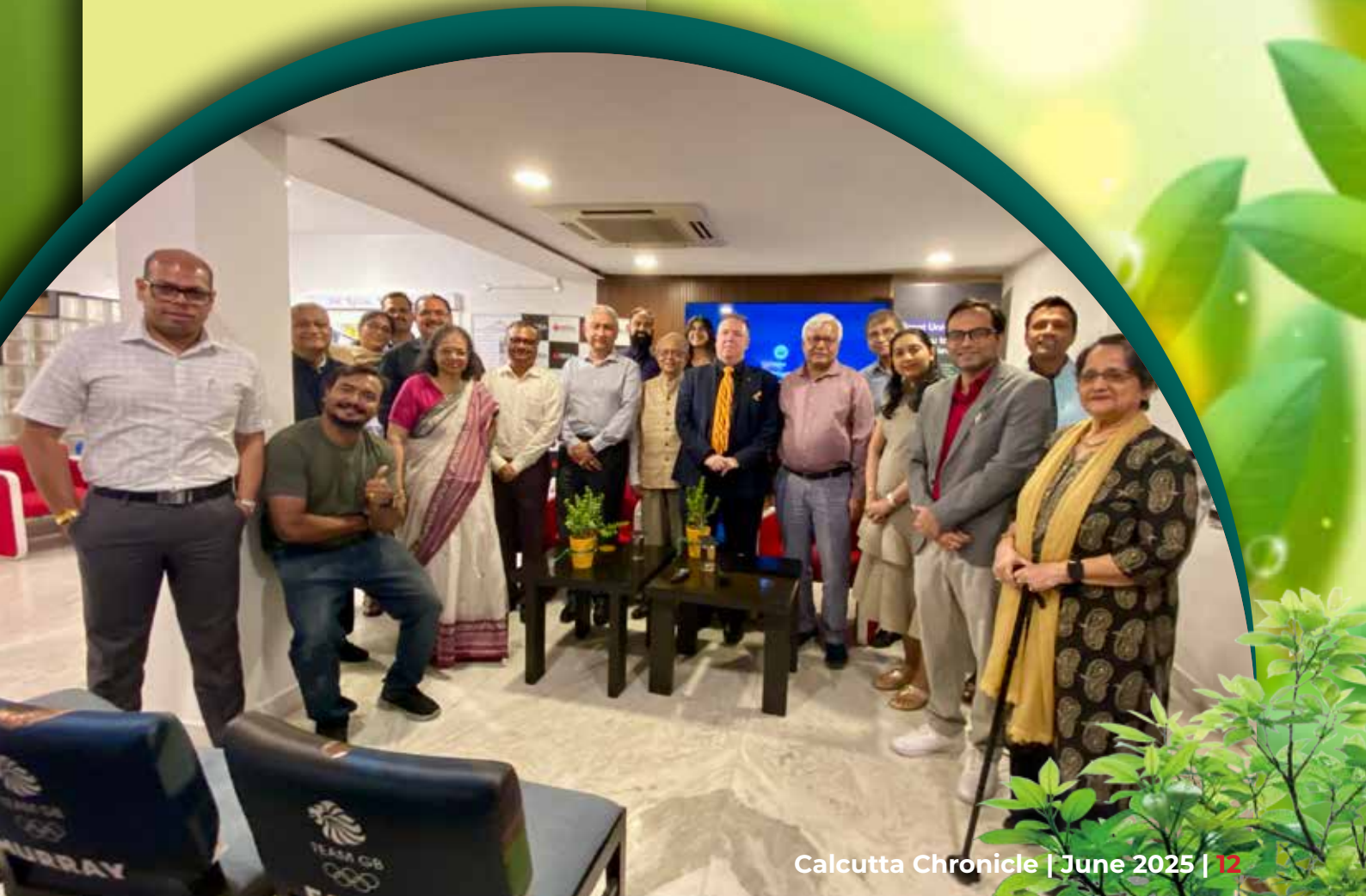
Joydip Sur

The British Deputy High Commission (BDHC) Kolkata and Indo-British Scholars' Association (IBSA) jointly organised an event to shine the spotlight on wildlife and our living planet through visual storytelling at the British Club Kolkata on Tuesday, June 11, 2025.

The event emphasised the importance of our fragile planet and the need to work more towards its

conservation. It focused on the role of wildlife photographers in capturing the movements of wildlife animals, studying their habitats and effect of climate change and human influence on their existence.

Dr. Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner to East and Northeast India gave the keynote address. Simon Hill, President, Royal Photographic Society, UK joined the event virtually as the Guest of Honour.



SPECIAL FEATURE

Amit Sengupta, Head of Media & Communications, British Deputy High Commission and Chair, Media Council, IBSA engaged in a riveting fireside chat with Dr. Somdutt Prasad, Ophthalmologist and wildlife photographer talking about the beauty of wildlife and importance of conservation through his lens.

Dr. Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner to East and Northeast India said: "Photography and by extension film is a powerful medium to capture different themes and inspire change. Wildlife is one such example and has been one vehicle of success for conservation for many of the world's best known species that have become endangered

including the Royal Bengal Tiger but this is the tip of the iceberg and threats on our natural world continue to mount. Plastic pollution, this year's World Environment Day theme, is a scourge for land and sea creatures alike; some scientists predict that by 2050 there will be more plastic in our oceans than fish. So my message is we must do more to tell the stories of environmental impact in all our collective work and encourage more young people to follow in our footsteps."

Simon Hill, President, Royal Photographic Society, UK, said: "For over 170 years, the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain has championed photography as a medium

that informs, inspires and helps fashion public opinion. In an age of overwhelming ecological danger, the medium of photography has become one of the most powerful tools in the conservationist's arsenal. From documenting environmental collapse to stirring empathy for endangered species, a single photograph can translate the most complex scientific realities into immediate emotional truths; the photograph transcends the barrier of language to have resonance and impact with a global audience. At its most effective, environmental and conservation photography doesn't just bear witness ...



it galvanises action. Through its awards, its publications, and its bursaries, the Royal Photographic Society recognises, honours, and supports the globally important work of photographers who are causing the world to take notice and take action."

Subrata Paul, Chair, Presidents Council, IBSA said: "We are delighted to partner with British Deputy High Commission on putting the spotlight on our natural world to mark the World Environment Day this year. Dr Somdutt Prasad, a member of IBSA has lived and worked extensively in the UK and travelled the world for his wildlife photography. His images are truly inspiring and capture the wildlife in their most intimate and fragile settings. We need to do more towards wildlife and nature conservation and photographers have a key role towards this collective goal."

Ophthalmologist and wildlife photographer, Dr. Somdutt Prasad, who has lived extensively in the UK said: "As a nature photographer I endeavour to capture the raw beauty and fragility of our

planet's creatures. The photographer's field craft involves studying and understanding animal behaviour. We tell the story of different species, some endangered, threatened habitats, and the urgent need for conservation. On World Environment Day, we celebrate nature photography, which inspires action, raises awareness, and drives global efforts to protect biodiversity. By showcasing nature's wonders, we remind mankind "to save wildlife is to save ourselves—our shared home, our future."

Bharat Mata

An Iconic Painting



Anindita Mazumder

It was 1905. Bengal had plunged headlong into Swadeshi movement wholeheartedly, protesting against the decision of the British to partition the province. It touched each and every section of the society and beside political speeches, the great churning threw up patriotic songs, new art, indigenous industries and nationalist educational institutions. The Tagore family had also been swept by the strong tides of the movement. Rabindranath Tagore composed songs with a fervour, sung in the processions or at Rakhi Bandhan Utsav to protest against the government's decision to divide Bengal. In this backdrop of fervent nationalism, his nephew, Abanindranath Tagore or Aban Thakur as he was more popularly known as, wielded the brush and painted his iconic masterpiece, Bharat Mata in water colour.

In his own words "I painted Bharat Mata. She bestows food,

clothing and reassurance (onno, bostro borabhoy). A Japanese artist made a larger copy on a banner. I don't know where the banner ended up afterwards. Anyway, Robi-kaka (Rabindranath) composed the songs; Dinu (Dinendranath Tagore) along with others carried the banner and sang the songs to collect subscriptions in Chorbagan area. In those days anything done to serve the country had to be done in the Swadeshi way."

Though Abanindranath's tone about his achievement sounded casual, almost bordering upon irreverential, his iconic painting not only signalled the beginning of a new age in Indian art, it also offered a nationalist but non-religious symbol for his fellow countrymen, struggling to throw away the foreign yoke. The immediate literary precursor of Bharat Mata was found in another seminal work





– Anandamath by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Abanindranath conceived his Bharat Mata or Banga Mata - as he had originally named the painting – very differently from later visualisations of Mother India – as a Hindu goddess, in all her finery, perched on a lion with a banner and a weapon with a map of India as a backdrop. She seemed to be an Indian version of Britannia with the lion. In contrast Tagore's Bharat Mata, painted in 'delicate colours' eschewed religious connotations. She is a picture of serenity and purity; dressed in a simple garb of saffron, she is more of an average Bengali woman with conch shell bangles. The radiant white halo that frames her face and the four arms bestowing onno-bastra-sheeksha-deeksha or food, clothing, knowledge and faith are the only indications of her divinity. There are four white lotuses at her feet which emphasise her Indian identity apart from her dress and features. Depicted as a yogini she stands for renunciation and transcendentalism, very Indian in ethos.

Though Abanindranath belonged to that branch of the Tagores which did not embrace Brahmo faith, his depiction of Bharat Mata embraced India's entire cultural history not through boundaries of religious orthodoxy, but through a cosmopolitan and non-sectarian spirituality. Yet, it was perhaps the first political image to personify the geographical territory as mother. His abhorrence for violence well-known, it is no wonder that she does not wield a weapon.

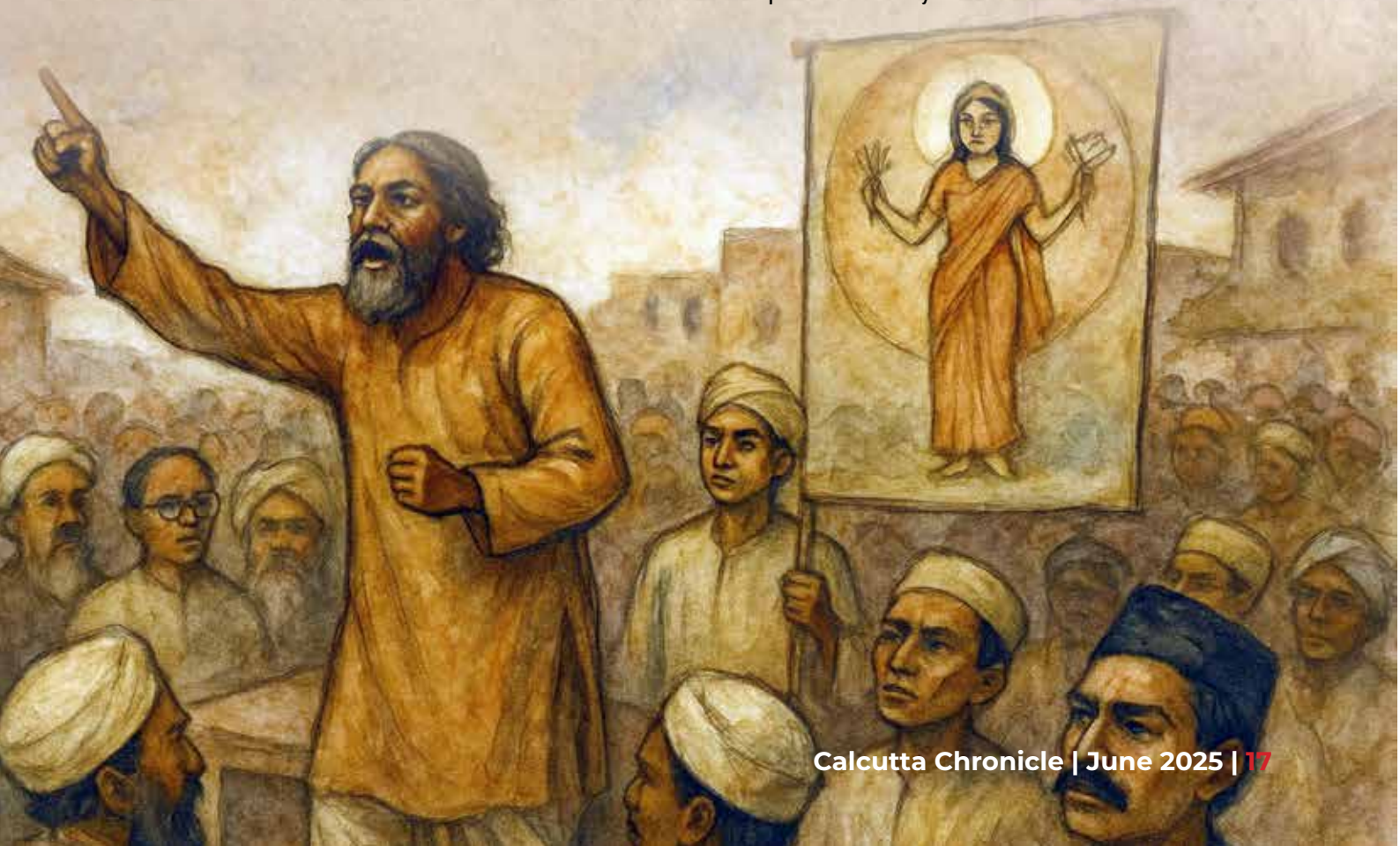
But despite her Indianness the painting also shows traces of Japanese influence. Okakura Kakuzo, the Japanese art historian who staunchly believed in Asian universalism, originally came to Calcutta to meet Swami Vivekananda and was introduced to the Tagores by Sister Nivedita. Abanindranath learnt the technique of 'wash' in water colour from Japanese artist, Yokoyoma Taikan sent to Calcutta by Okakura. Taikan taught him to wield a lighter brush. The edges are blurred, slightly out of focus evoking a mystical quality to the painting. The painting also signalled a new era for Indian art, completely removed from Western influence, different from the sensuous paintings of Ravi Verma whom Abanindranath Tagore criticised for depicting Saraswati posing like Venus. Prior to this,

Tagore drew portraits in Western style but now started studying Indian art of the past, even pat-painting. No wonder Sister Nivedita who was greatly affected by the painting described it as “the first picture of India, the mother that an Indian man makes for his people!” Aban Thakur confided that after this initial attempt he chose more and more Indian subjects and even asked his disciple, Nandalal Bose to depict Indian pantheon of gods and goddesses in art. He also tried to create indigenous dyes, gave up foreign-made colours though his attempt to fashion out paint brushes with cotton turned out to be a soggy affair.

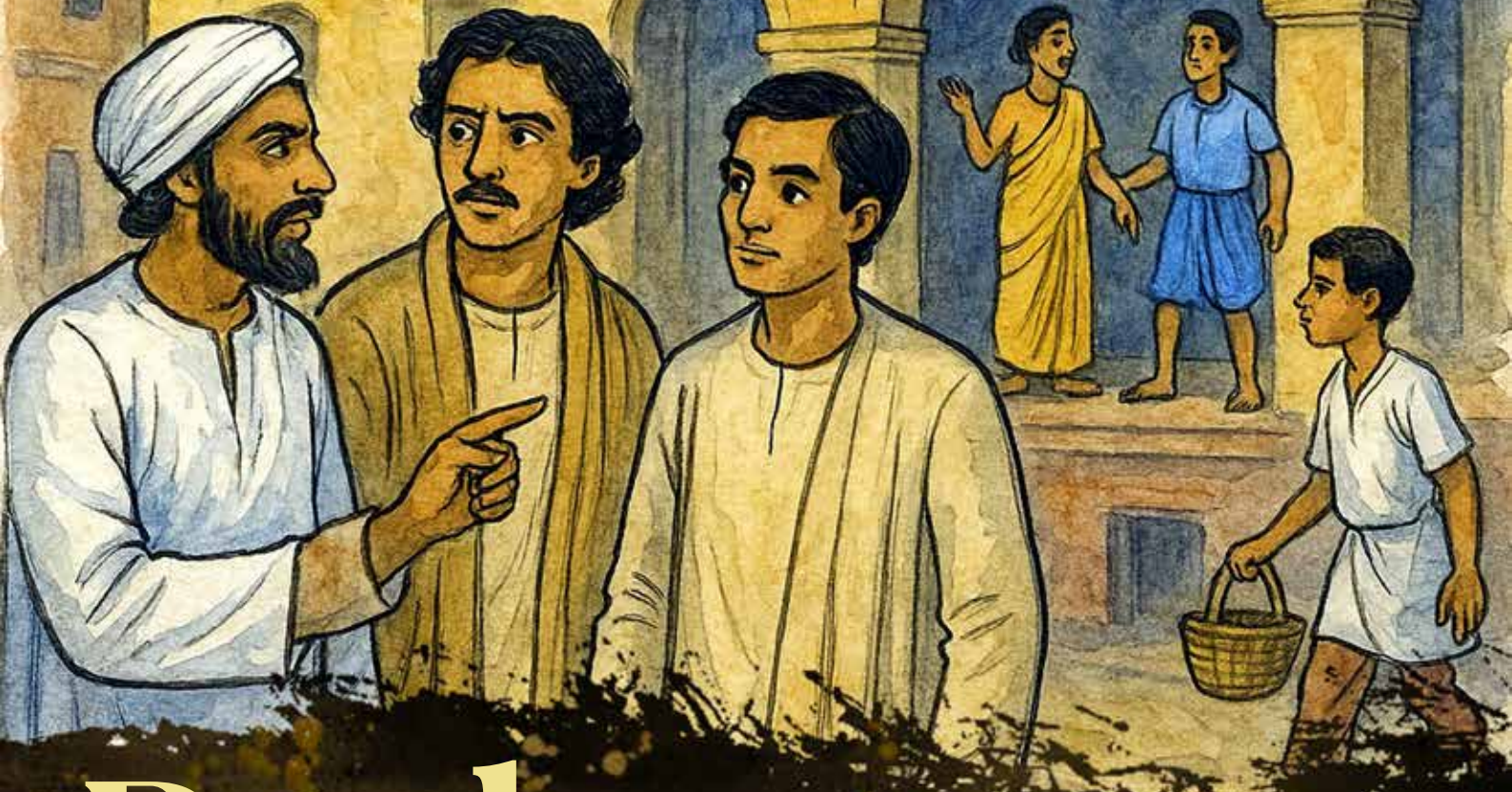
Sister Nivedita’s firebrand nature was moved sufficiently by the depiction of Bharat Mata that she declared: “I would repaint it if I could, by tens of thousands and scatter it broadcast over the land, till there was not a peasant’s cottage or a craftsman’s hut between Kedarnath and Cape Comorin, that had not this presentment of Bharat Mata somewhere on its walls.” However, subsequent visualisation of Bharat Mata resembled Britannia more than Aban Thakur’s depiction.

Just like Abanindranath could not remember

the fate of the original banner which used to mobilise people and collect subscriptions during Swadeshi days, the painting too remained hidden away from public eye for a long period of time. Since the 1950s, this image had remained stashed away in the trunks of a private archive, Rabindra Bharati Society. But in recent times, the Society’s archives have been taken on loan by the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, who chose to put it on display for a single-item exhibition. George Nathaniel Curzon, the Viceroy of India, a staunch imperialist perhaps must have turned in his grave when Victoria Memorial authorities decided to exhibit the painting, Bharat Mata by Abanindranath Tagore in the hallows of the grand edifice that the former had conceived as a tribute to the longest reigning queen. It is indeed a fitting irony that Tagore painted Bharat Mata during Swadeshi Movement in 1905 which was triggered by Lord Curzon’s decision to partition Bengal, apparently for administrative reasons but with a far more sinister design of dividing the Bengalees who were proving to be the proverbial fly in the ointment.



BAGBAZAR AMATEUR THEATRE



Bagbazar

Anindita Mazumder

In 1867, Girish Chandra Ghosh, a bookkeeper by profession and his friends including stage director, Dharmadas Sur and Radhamadhab Kar formed an amateur theatre group at Bagbazar.

The name “Baag Bazar” was derived from the Perrin’s Garden, a pleasure resort, frequented by the Company’s covenanted servants with their ladies for an evening stroll or moonlight fete. Captain Perrin was the owner of several ships. His garden stretched between the present Harlal Mitra Street and Chitpur Road (Rabindra Sarani) near River Hooghly and was sold to the Company in 1749. The Company sold the property to J. Z. Holwell for a sum of Rs 2500 in 1752. Perrin’s Point

was at the north-western apex of his garden. Col. C. F. Scott started manufacturing gun powder at the gardens in 1754. An octagonal “Redoubt” to protect Calcutta was built in 1855 and a year later a small garrison of 60 European and native soldiers led by Ensign Piccard repulsed the attack by the Nawab’s forces.

While the English left Sutanuti for Kalikata and Govindapore the native, wealthy Bengalis settled in this part by the Holy Ganges; demographically Bagbazar is primarily a neighbourhood of upper-caste Hindus. Hence, we find the locality names like Mukhujyapara, Gosainpara, Bosepara, Rajballavpara instead of Sankibhanga, Kasaitola

■ NEIGHBOURHOOD ■

or Murgihata as was the case in the brown town which had mixed population. There were a few families belonging to the lower strata of the caste system, wholly dependent on these wealthy families for a livelihood. Since the Hindus drank milk there is a Goalapara and a few families of fishermen folk in Jeliapara to supply fish, a delicacy which the upper caste preferred to mutton, observed Kironchandra Dutta who chronicled the history of Bagbazar.

It is no coincidence that Bagbazar has a number of temples including the more famous Madanmohan Jiu and Maa Siddheswari which still draws huge number of devotees every day. It is said that the

deity of Madanmohan Jiu was pawned by the Raja Chaitanya Singh of Bishnupur to Gokul Mitra who lent him money to tide over his financial crisis. The Raja failed to repay and Gokul Mitra refused to return the idol as it had brought him fortune including Chandey Chowk in a lottery. He decided to set up a new temple for the god.

Bagbazar is also the birthplace of native Bengali theatre. In 1867, Girish Chandra Ghosh, a bookkeeper by profession and his friends including stage director, Dharmadas Sur and Radhamadhab Kar formed an amateur theatre group at Bagbazar. Bagbazar Amateur Theatre performed a play by Dinabandhu Mitra, Sadhabar Ekadashi which required minimal expense on costume and saw Girish Chandra flowering as an actor, playing the role of Nimchand brilliantly. It also saw the coming together of another dedicated and talented actor, Ardhendusekhar Mushtafi. Bagbazar Amateur Theatre evolved initially to Calcutta National Theatre and went on to shed 'Calcutta' to become National Theatre while rehearsing another play by Mitra called Leelavati. Bhuvanmohun Niyogi who was the proprietor also held rehearsals at a



■ NEIGHBOURHOOD ■

beautiful pillared structure on Rasikchandra Niyogi Ghat in Bagbazar where Girishchandra met his prodigy, Binodini for the first time. Rasaraj (king of wit) Amritlal Basu known for his farces, also hailed from Bagbazar. Khirodprasad Bidyabinod was another noted playwright of the era.

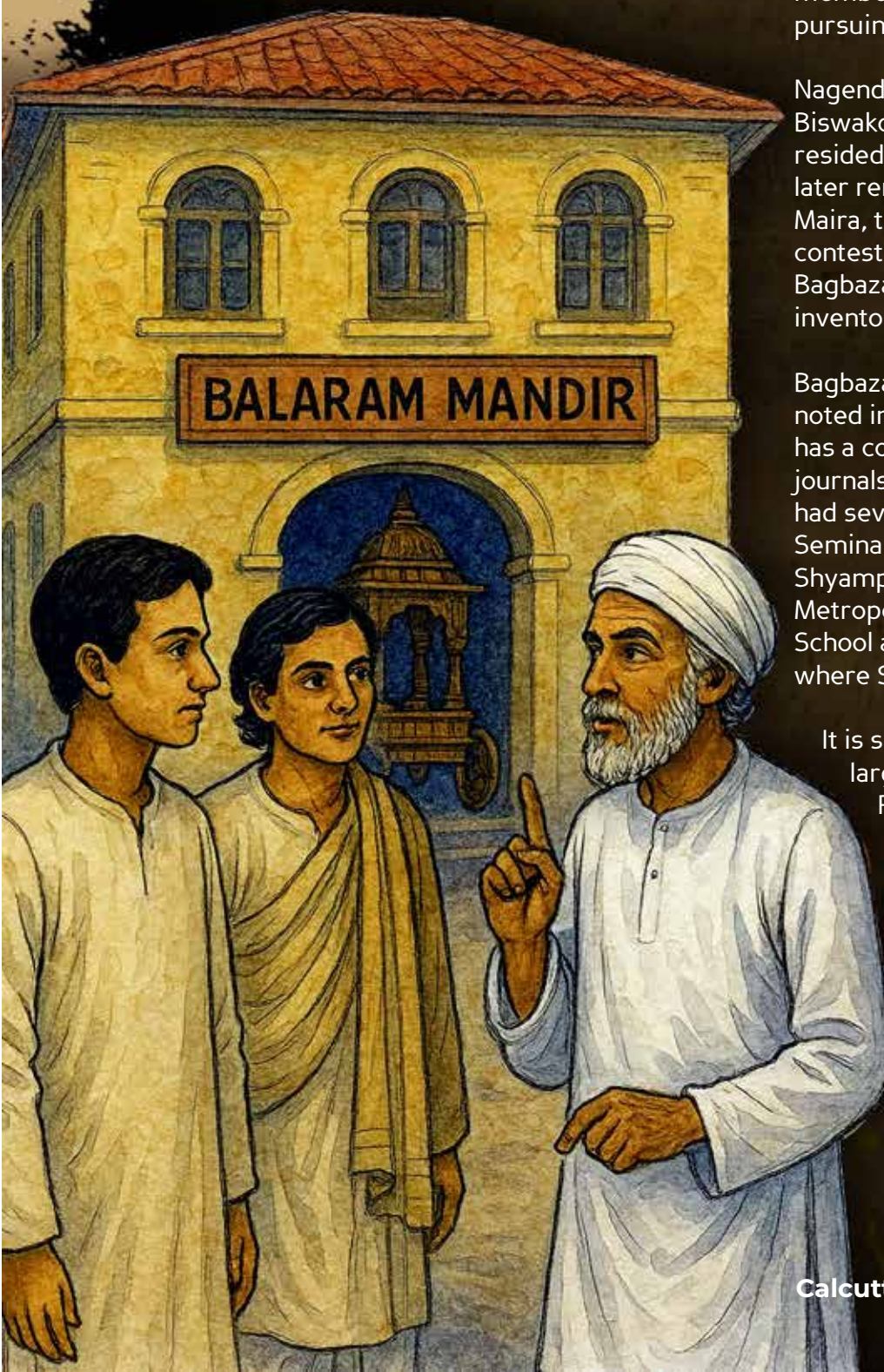
Mohanchand Basu who pioneered the half-akhrai songs also lived in Bagbazar in the

19th century. He was a disciple of Nidhu Babu. Bagbazar was also known for its Pakkhir Dal, members who not only were renowned musicians but also indulged in various addictions like ganja, charas and guli except alcohol. In fact there was an aatchala built by the sons of wealthy denizen, Durgacharan Mukhopadhyay where there were separate designated area for each addiction and the 108 odd members would spend the entire day pursuing such habits.

Nagendranath Basu who edited Biswakosh, the Bengali encyclopedia resided at 8 Kantapukur Bylane. It was later renamed as Biswakosh Lane. Bhola Maira, the renowned kaviyal (verse-contestant) had a sweet-meat shop on Bagbazar Street. So did Nabin Moira, inventor of sponge rasogolla.

Bagbazar Reading Library is another noted institution, founded in 1883 which has a collection of rare books and journals. In old days the neighbourhood had several schools like Bagbazar Seminary, Bagbazar Model School, Shyampukur Branch of Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution, Savitri Girls' School along with a large number of Tol where Sanskrit was taught.

It is said that Bagbazar had the largest number of disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He often stayed at the house of his householder devotee, Balaram Bose. Ramakrishna Mission was formed at this house by Swami Vivekananda on May 1, 1897. The house is known as Balaram Mandir and preserves a wooden rath pulled by the Paramhansa on the day of Ratha Jatra. A little distance away was the house of Girish Chandra, noted playwright,



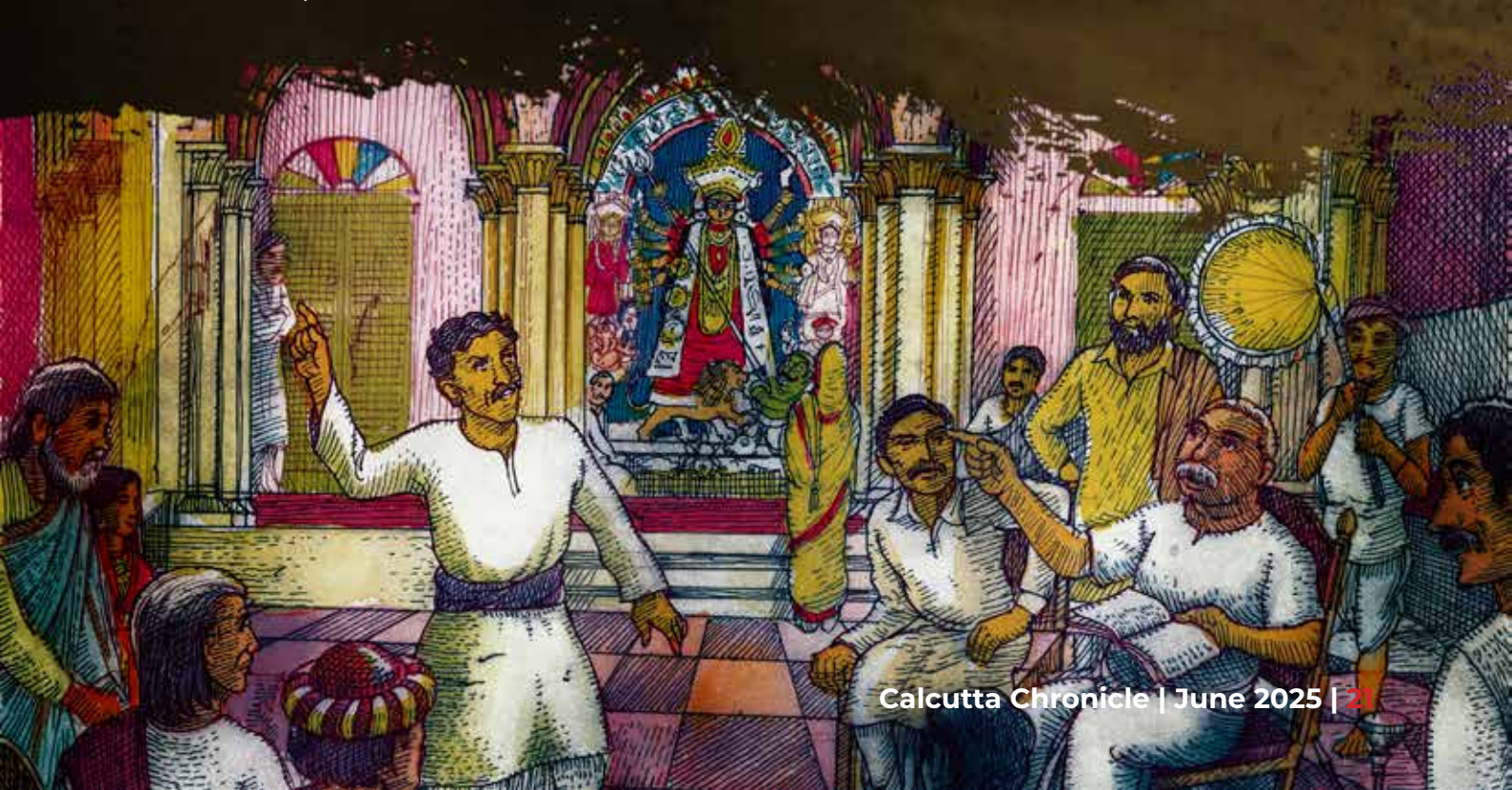
actor and an ardent disciple of Ramakrishna. Although the house is no more because of the northward extension of Central Avenue, a small replica has been preserved. Maa Sarada also lived in a number of rented houses in Sarkarbari Lane, Bosepara lane, Bagbazar Street and other areas. Sister Nivedita chose to open her school in Bosepara and hosted the historic tea party where Swami Vivekananda and Tagore had met. The office of the RKM's organ, Udbodhan founded by Swami Vivekananda is also located at Bagbazar.

Basubati, the palatial mansion of Nandalal and Pashupatinath Basu is another iconic landmark which still stands wearing a decrepit look. Both Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had frequented this house and the latter had stayed here after his return from the West. A witness to the nationalist struggle during Partition, Surendranath Banerjee gave the call to "unsettle the settle fact" to the gathering masses in 1905 in its vast

courtyard. In 1913 an exhibition of Swadeshi goods was held here; it was inaugurated by Basanti Devi, wife of CR Das and a fund was also collected.

The neighbourhood was also home to a circus company called Benimadhav Circus. Anadi Bose pioneered film distribution with the establishment of Aurora Cinema Company which had distributed Pather Panchali as well. Radha Gobindo Kar established his medical school and hospital in a rented place which was later renamed after its founder.

Bagbazar is also known for its Durga Puja. It was celebrated for the first time at Sarkarbari, at the crossing of Nebubagan Lane and Bagbazar Street; it was named as "Nebubagan Baroyari Durga-Puja". After four years it was shifted to the crossing of Bagbazar Street and Pashupati Bose Lane. Next year it was held at Kantapukur and in 1927 it took place at the Bagbazar Kali-temple. In 1926 social worker, Nagendra Nath Ghoshal along with other well-known people took initiative to give shape to Bagbazar Sarbojanin Durgotsav Committee. In 1930, Durgacharan Bandyopadhyay, an alderman at Calcutta Municipal Corporation was elected as president and the exhibition held during Puja reflected the ideals of Swadeshi movement. Bandyopadhyay requested the Mayor of Calcutta, Subhash Chandra Bose for permission to use a metal-yard belonging to CMC's road-repair department as the venue of the Puja which was immediately granted. The Puja still retains that old Calcutta charm.



Jahnabi Sanskritik Chakra Presents

'Baki Itihaas'



Shankha Bhattacharyya

The play *Baki Itihaas* (The Remaining History) was penned by Badal Sircar in 1965. Deeply rooted in the philosophy of the Theatre of the Absurd, it reflects the existential crisis and absurdities of human life—marked by weariness, despair, emptiness, and suicidal tendencies. While the play adheres to the elements of absurdist theatre, it also

dives into the depths of abnormal psychology.

Through the protagonist Sitanath, Badal Sircar explores the meaningless passage of time: “Eleven years? Eleven centuries. Eleven thousand years. A history of meaningless years. A history of meaningless men and meaningless worms.” This line, steeped in existential angst, encapsulates the thematic core of the play.

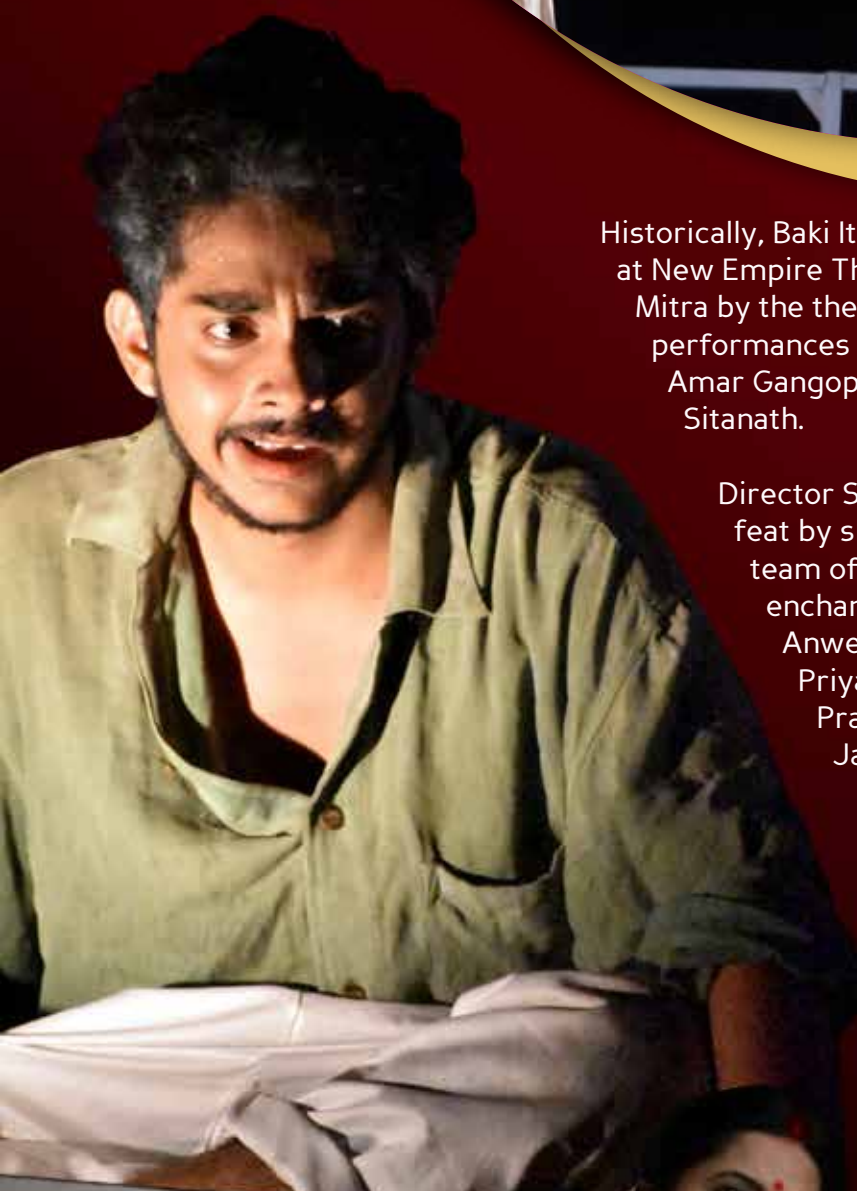
Inspired by a suicide report in a newspaper, the narrative unfolds in three acts. In the first half, characters like Basanti are introduced, while the second half focuses on Sharadindu. In the third act, Sitanath returns as a ghost who haunts the playwright Sharadindu. Their dialogue reveals the inner conflict between Sharadindu’s conscious and subconscious minds. It seems Sharadindu, like Sitanath, is on the verge of taking his own life, but an unexpected entry by Basudev averts the tragedy.

On Sunday, June 1, 2025, 'Baki Itihaas' was successfully staged at Tapan Theatre under the direction of Samarjit Das. This was the third production of the play by Jahnabi Sanskritik Chakra.





STAGE CRAFT



Historically, Baki Itihaas was first performed on May 7, 1967 at New Empire Theatre under the direction of Shambhu Mitra by the theatre group 'Bohurupee'. Notable performances included Kumar Roy as Sharadindu, Amar Gangopadhyay as Bijoy, and Debatosh Ghosh as Sitanath.

Director Samarjit Das has achieved a remarkable feat by shaping this production with a vibrant team of young artists. The play opened with an enchanting choreographed sequence featuring Anwesa Hazra, Abhay Dutta, Pritam Mallik, Priyanka Purkayastha, Granthan Das, Pratyusha Ray, Triparna Pal, Aisharya Pal, Jaydeep Dutta and Aritra.

The role of Sitanath was powerfully portrayed by Bedadyuti Das, capturing the audience's attention with depth and gravitas. Matching his

■ STAGE CRAFT ■

performance were Pronoy Patra as Sharadindu and Amit Sultania as Bijoy. Other commendable performances came from Bratati Ganguly (Kona), Mrityika Rai (Basanti), Pritam Mallik (Nikhil), Radosi Sarkar (Parbati), Udayan Chakraborty (The Old Man), Prosenjit Sur (Basudeb), and the director Samarjit Das himself as Bidhubhusan. Ankita Pal, as Gauri, delivered a fine performance in alignment with her character.

A major highlight of the production was its compelling mime performance. A team of eight—Anwesha Hazra, Granthan Das, Triparna Pal, Anwesha Talukdar, Abhay Dutta, Pritam Mallik, Priyanka Purkayastha, and Pratyusha Ray—delivered a mesmerising sequence that delighted the audience.

The stage design and execution were praiseworthy, thanks to Ajit Roy and Babu Roy. Background score by Anwesha Hazra and Mehli Das complemented the narrative well. The lighting design by Bablu Sarkar crafted several dramatic moments with finesse. Choreography was handled by Madhumita Mukherjee and Mehli Das, while Amit Chakraborty was commendable in his role as makeup artist.

With this production of Baki Itihaas, staged in the centenary year of playwright Badal Sircar, Jahnabi Sanskritik Chakra has presented a deeply reflective and artistically rich theatrical work. Under Samarjit Das's thoughtful direction, this play is poised to become a landmark production for the group.





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WHEN KOLKATA WAS CALCUTTA

Memories a la carte



Arjun Mukherjee

A non-combative silence greets you at the South Park Street cemetery as you leave the belligerent traffic behind.

You can stumble upon the oldest recorded British grave of an unsung Mr. Wood, a 'writer'.

Walk past the two sons of Charles Dickens who lie buried here.

The earliest grave dates go back to 1768. The pavilions, pyramids and mausoleums are in a state of permanent decay.

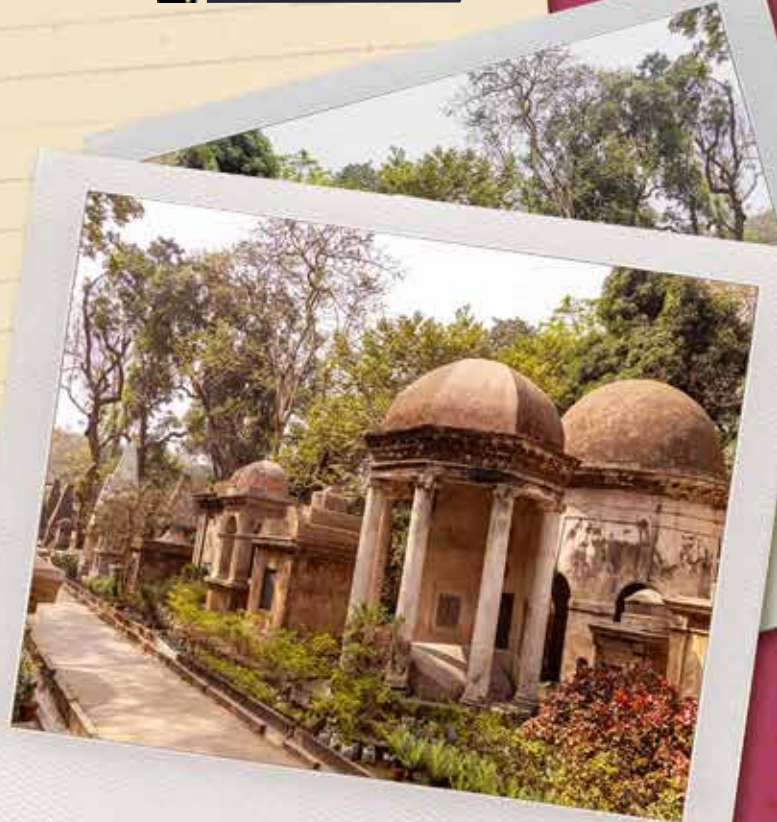
The infuriating calm around them almost thoughtful, cultivated.

A towering monument is that of Sir William Jones, the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.

A curious one is that of an eccentric Irishman, who was nick-named 'Hindoo Stuart'. Interestingly, he was Major General Charles Stuart, who cared for a dip in the Ganges every morning.

A few feet away lies the stouthearted Henry Vivian Louis Derozio who left a permanent impact on the Bengali mindset.

This could be the real flipside of Park Street.



WHEN KOLKATA WAS CALCUTTA

Room in the Sky

Mrs. Indira Gandhi used to love Sky Room's Prawn Cocktail.

Hardly surprising that it was flown in freezers regularly to Delhi.

My uncle loved his Chicken Tetrizzini except that he would order it as 'Petrizzini'. They understood.

Baked Alaska and Black Forest Pudding was like health that did 'melth in your mouth'.

The Telegraph once carried a report that Sky Room would reopen.

That never happened.

Good things hardly happen twice.



Irrepressible spirit

Some lives stay in a state of permanent surprise.

They do things unanticipated, unimagined.

They are half-remembered people who do some delightful but bizarre things.

There was this guy called Kapadia who did the strangest thing at St. Xavier's School.

He actually attempted to and successfully did bite a dog.

The Prefect almost did rusticate him for this terrible mission he was on.

To me he was the unstoppable spirit we all lacked.

Kapadia later in life went on to do extremely well at one of the Tata companies.

Tailpiece

Anthony Quinn in the film 'Lawrence of Arabia' had made a perfect statement on life - "it was written".

Without labouring the point, I do feel the spirit of Kolkata is a script already written and we are merely following it, unexpected turns included.



The World Of Bengali FICTIONAL DETECTIVES

Imagine this sight. It is 7PM in the evening on a weekday. A teenage school student is found completely engrossed with the book of either Byomkesh or Feluda, curled up in a corner trying to swallow the plot of the story while trying his or her best to escape the attention of their parents, lest they be chided for not reading their text books. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Our childhood days bask in such pleasures. And a gentle reminder about those stories immediately transports us into a world of nostalgia where the past lingers with the present.

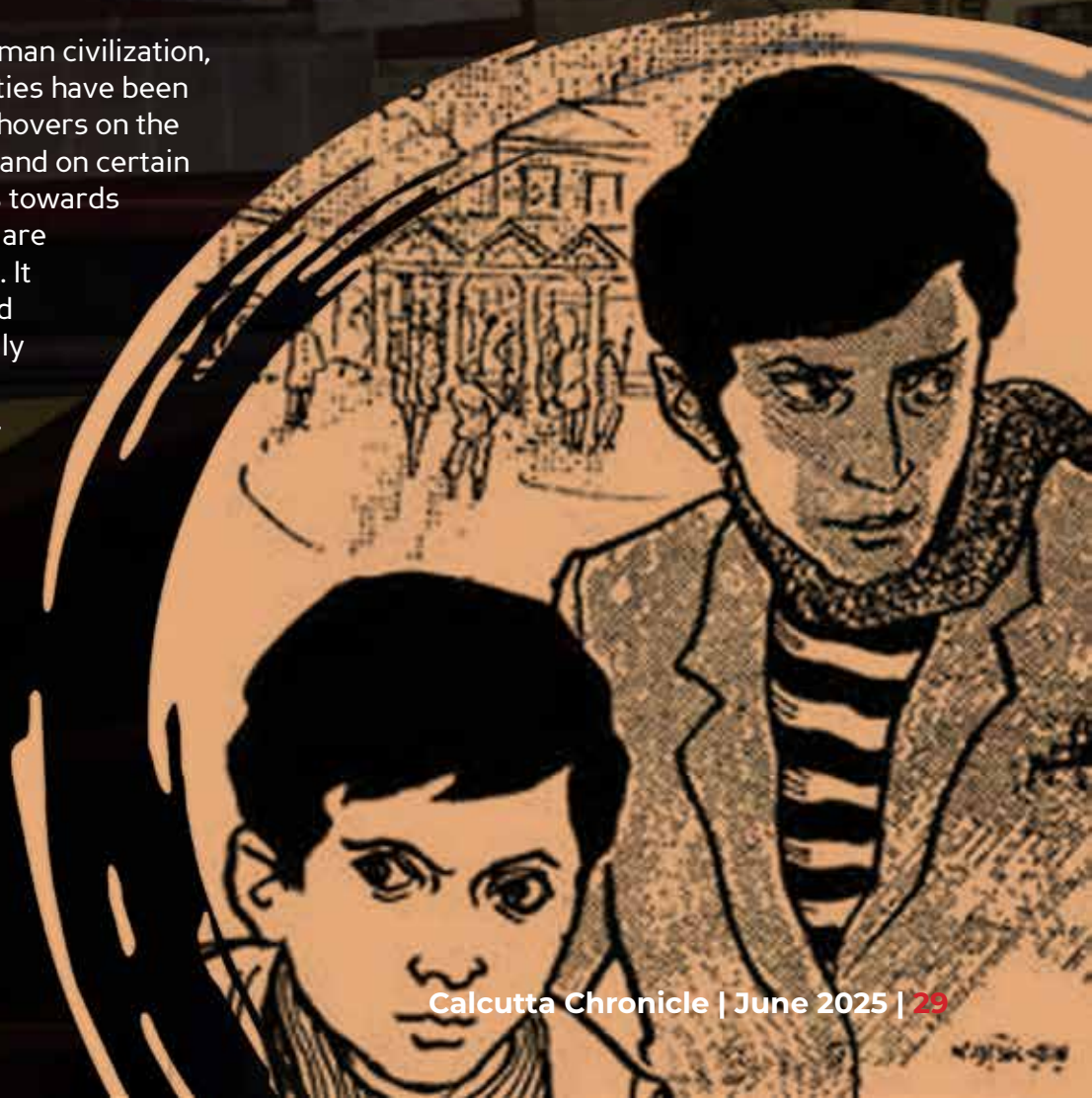
Since inception of the human civilization, crime and criminal activities have been extant. The human mind hovers on the border of righteousness and on certain response or stimuli leans towards nefarious conduct which are malign and condemnable. It is for this reason we need policing, not just externally but also internally. When the order of legality fails, the human society needs justice to prevail on those who have been subjected to atrocities. In such instances, investigation of the crime plays a crucial role in order to identify the guilty and bring them to justice. And while doing so, along with the police force and their



Sandip Banerjee & Swapnil Banerjee

detectives, we often find a band of people whom we refer to as 'Private Investigators'.

Private investigators are individuals who work on their own, sometimes even collaborating with the police force. Their methods are mostly unconventional and they are more like freelancers who are engaged by the affected party, especially in those cases which are meant to be kept away from the public eye. Since mystery always tend to captivate the imagination



of the mass, stories based on mystery and on art of detection gather popularity. In literature, as they are in real lives, such stories attract the common lot. Therefore we find an interesting group whom we call 'Fictional Detectives.' These are protagonists of detective stories, churned out of imagination; the characters themselves do not have any direct resemblance with real identities and yet they are realistic; palpable in our living.

When we think about fictional detectives, the European names naturally first comes to our mind, starting from characters like Father Brown to Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot to Miss Marple and even James Bond in that sense. But along with these European detectives, we also have in the Bengali language a substantial volume of stories, featuring detectives who have been part of our daily routine of eating and sleeping. Feluda, Byomkesh, Kiriti, Kakabau and so many others occupy large volumes in our study and we keep on reading them several times. The popularity of these figures has prompted many film makers to frame plots on these detective stories. Even modern readers or movie goers cannot escape the

thrill of these tales. The first crime chronicle in the Bengali language was written by the famous Bengali detective Priyanath Mukhopadhyay who was a detective during the era of the British Raj, working as inspector between 1878 and 1911. He chronicled some noteworthy cases in Bengal's first crime magazine 'Daragar Daptar'.

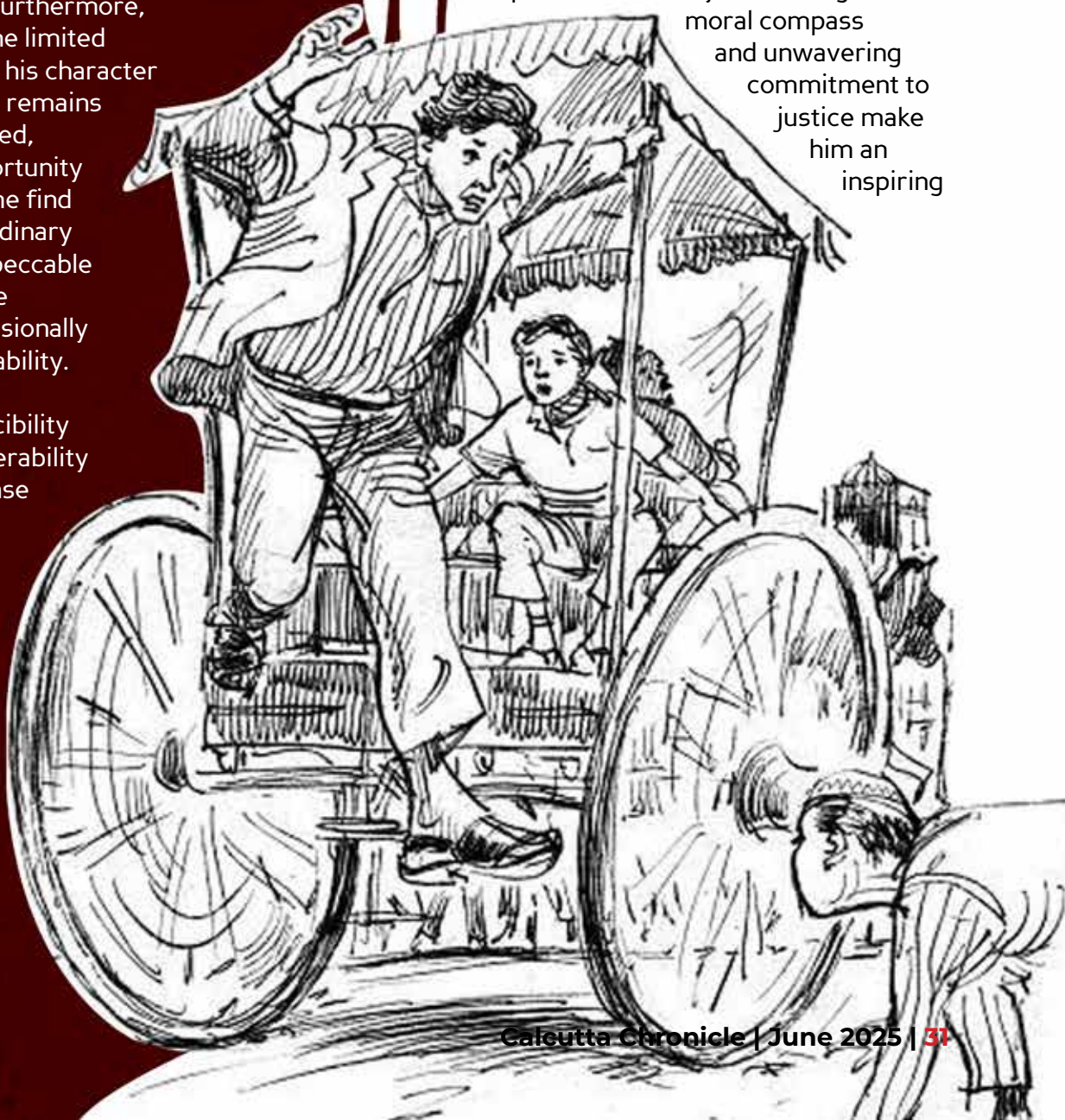
Legend has it that Sagarmoy Ghosh, the eminent



columnist and the former Editor of the esteemed journal 'Desh', once suggested to Satyajit Ray to write detective stories. Whether Ray obliged Sagarmoy Ghosh or not is matter of discussion but eventually we were gifted with Feluda, or Pradosh Chandra Mitter, the renowned Bengali fictional detective character created by the Master himself. To many of our generation, Feluda is the most popular Bengali fictional detective character. A man with an all pervasive knowledge, Feluda is perhaps the most modern of all Bengali fictional detectives. He is someone who has lot of similarities with western fictional detectives. However, he has garnered both criticisms and compliments. Critics argue that Feluda's character lacks complexity, with his deductions often being predictable and formulaic. Furthermore, they highlight the limited development of his character over time, as he remains largely unchanged, lacking the opportunity for growth. Some find Feluda's extraordinary abilities and impeccable deductions to be unrealistic, occasionally straining believability. Additionally, his perceived invincibility and lack of vulnerability can create a sense of detachment between the character and the audience. His stories lack a strong female character although Ray did not appear to be male chauvinist.

On the other

hand Feluda has received significant praise for his meticulous deductive skills, enamouring many with his sharp intellect, keen observation, and analytical reasoning. Satyajit Ray's engaging storytelling has brought Feluda's adventures to life, incorporating local culture and capturing the essence of Kolkata, which resonates with readers and viewers. Feluda has also become a cultural representation for Bengalis, embodying their literature, language, and values, fostering a strong sense of pride and identity. His strong moral compass and unwavering commitment to justice make him an inspiring



POTPOURRI

role model for many. Additionally, the memorable supporting cast of characters, including his cousin Topshe and the incomparable Jatayu, or Lalmohan Ganguly adds to the series' appeal. Moreover, the iconic adaptations of Feluda's stories, particularly by Satyajit Ray himself, have received critical acclaim, further contributing to the character's enduring popularity.

Ultimately, the question of whether Feluda deserves the rank attributed to him is subjective. While critics point out flaws in his character and storytelling, admirers appreciate his timeless charm, cultural significance, and lasting legacy. It is the interplay of both criticisms and compliments that enriches the multifaceted world of the Bengali detective, arresting audiences for generations. Feluda stories have been great sources of general knowledge for

example in 'Tintoretto Jishu' Ray explains the meaning of the name Hong Kong or in 'Gorosthane Sabdhan' a wonderful analogy is drawn referring to some facts related to the murders of two U.S Presidents, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. Ray's art of storytelling is colloquial having exemplary effect as Feluda emerges to be a friend, philosopher and guide to Lalmohan Babu and Topshe. However, Feluda at times rectifies the facts & figures stated by both of them, as witnessed with Jatayu in Sonar Kella. The villains that Feluda encounter are mostly urbanised ranging from entrepreneurs to fortune - tellers to magicians.

When Saradindu Bandyopadhyay, the

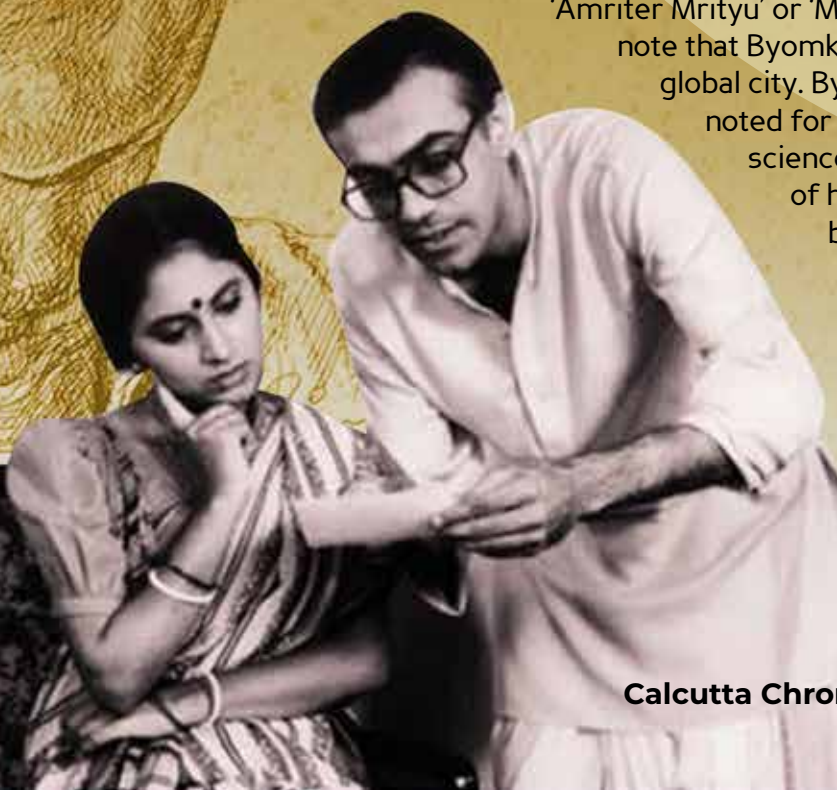
creator of the famous character of Byomkesh Bakshi figured out his sleuth, it was a different approach to detection of crime. We have to bear in mind that Saradindu was not just a detective story writer; he was a literary figure composing novels and other forms of prose work. Saradindu's Byomkesh does not introduce

himself as an investigator; rather he is 'Satyaneswi' or a seeker of truth. A dhoti-punjabi clad Bengali, Byomkesh has a razor like brain that can cut through things impenetrable to others. The time span of Byomkesh stories is pretty long, more than forty years, ranging from late 1920s to early 1970s, from the residence of Mahatma Gandhi Road to Keyatala Lane. We witness different nuances of Colonial Calcutta, slowly progressing towards post-independence era with the city changing not only in landscape but also in disposition. Byomkesh stories are certainly one of the matured crime thrillers that one can find anywhere. The diction, the language, and the expressions –all are more literary than literal. The character of Ajit as his close friend-cum-chronicler and Satyabati as the patient, tolerant wife, ready to bear with her husband's profession, gives us a kind of decent homeliness that the author found during his days. Holmes is not married, Poirot is also a bachelor, neither is Feluda or Kakababu but Byomkesh is. His marital life is, however, no stumbling block to his professional expertise.

The world of Byomkesh is a complex world of crime where the darker sensibilities of human mind are meticulously portrayed. In every respect Byomkesh stories are more matured in content as well as for reception. Saradindu's depiction of the human psyche is commendable. The suave and the confidence underlying the character of Byomkesh denotes an investigator who is not just busy in analyzing by the power of his deduction but also busy in studying the dimensions of crime and their social connection in the geo-political perspective as in stories like 'Satyaneswi' and

'Amritter Mrityu' or 'Magna Mainakh'. We must note that Byomkesh's Calcutta was a global city. Byomkesh is exceptionally noted for his knowledge in forensic science and understanding of human relationships because in the world of Byomkesh women play significant roles, even in the incidents leading up to the crime that are mostly murders.

Kiriti Roy created by Dr. Nihar Ranjan Gupta is introduced as six and a half feet



tall, fair and stout. His curled hair is mostly combed backwards, and the black celluloid spectacles make his clean-shaven face highly attractive. He is a dynamic figure with his tall stature and pipe that reminds us of Sherlock Holmes. His comrade-in -arms is Subrata who is ever ready to accompany his famous friend wherever he goes. Kiriti also relies on his keen observation and consequent analysis. In one of his famous cases, 'Kalo Bhromor', Kiriti falls in love with Krishna Mehta which eventually leads to their marriage as depicted in the tale 'Holud Shaitan'. Kiriti character inclines a lot towards Holmes with his frequent travels. He also engages himself in detection of case related to national issues. His penchant for wearing an overcoat makes his choice of attire very anglicized.

Yet another Bengali fictional detective character is that of Kakababu created by Sunil Gangopadhyay. Raja Roychowdhury, more popularly known as Kakababu is lame in one foot but undertakes heroic adventures along with his nephew Santu. Kakababu travels across the globe in stories like 'Mishar Rahassya', 'Yeti Abhijan' and 'Jangaler Modhye Ek Hotel'. He is a former CBI employee and often takes up matters of national importance. His uniqueness lies in his steel like nerves and quick response that helps him to overcome his physical impediment. He is extremely methodical and follows his own teaching to Santu that everything must be driven by logic.

There are few other Bengali fictional detective characters as well like Ghanada created by Premendra Mitra or Samaresh Basu's child

sleuth Goenda Gogol which may not have gained as much popularity as Feluda, Byomkesh or Kiriti, however, they still enjoy a modest following. The enduring popularity of all the Bengali fictional detectives owes their popularity to the movies based on them. Today in the age of digital revolution when web series are becoming very popular, fictional characters like Eken Babu have also started attracting a lot of admiration, especially among the new generation of Bengalis. It is the admiration for all these Bengali fictional detective characters combined that has kept that teenage student in us alive forever.

Mocambo



Team Chronicle

Where Nostalgia Meets Excellence

The Nordmanns – Derek and Angelina – visit Calcutta every autumn and stay at the best hotels in the city, but when it comes to their meals, they prefer not the 5-star-fare but the unique cuisine of Mocambo. It is not for nothing that this eatery commands such formidable goodwill among diners in our city and even from

overseas. It is one of the last surviving establishments offering continental cuisine as well as colonial fare.

"Mocambo was set up by my late father

(the legendary hotelier 'Baba' Kothari) in 1956 after he migrated from Lahore", recalled its present owner, Nitin Kothari. Kothari Sr. came from a very different background – he was managing director and editor of a newspaper called the 'Sindh Observer' (which has since merged with the Karachi 'Dawn') besides having interests in steel rolling mills and a host of other businesses.

The decision to step into restaurant business was influenced by his partnership with one of the great chefs of those days, an Italian





gentleman named Prandhi. Remembered even today, his contributions recorded in the restaurant's menu - the chef had experimented with the ingredients available in the post-Partition, post-Independence Calcutta and came up with Italian and Continental delights that grace the Mocambo menu even today. His role as chef and manager led to the strong Italian influence on their offerings, explained Nitin Kothari, who, with his son Siddharth, today runs the business.

In parallel, the Kotharis managed to poach one of the great Indian chefs of the day, Lab Singh, from the kitchens of the Maharaja of Patiala, a legendary gourmand and host. Singh's influence can be seen in the excellent Indian offerings on the menu. "I would rate Lab Singh as one the best chefs I have ever experienced", said Nitin. As any diner who has tucked into a plate of Mocambo Mutton would confirm, the opinion is not unjustified.

Despite the quaint red leather scoop-seats and benches, dark frescos on the walls and art deco lamp shades, Mocambo has a very loyal following, as Avishek and Sayantani Dutt from London would confirm. Like the Nordmanns, they swear by the starters like Devilled Crabs, the Prawn Cocktail, the Garlic Toast or the Soup of the day.

Most experts would agree that where the restaurant really scores in the dining sweepstakes is with its wide variety of meats, sea food and even vegetarian items on the menu. From the



Chateaubriand steak (beef), Singapore pork chops and Lobster Thermidor to its mixed grill, Fish Wellington, Chicken a la Kiev and Bhakti Meuniere, Mocambo can claim to be one of the oldest restaurants serving Continental food in the sub-continent outside British era clubs like the Bengal Club.

At one time, Mocambo had formidable competitors, like Skyroom on Park Street (shut down decades ago) or, in some respects, Firpo's on Chowringhee (dawned its shutters even earlier). Today, it is not just an institution in its own right but an inspiration for the multitude of newer

restaurants coming up all over Kolkata, seeking to serve Continental food (perhaps with a sickening vegetarian twist borrowed from Bollywood movies) and ending up with a fare that no citizen of the European continent may ever recognize.

Mention must be made of the legendary Mocambo Chicken a la Kiev, which is among the top favorites on the menu along with the Mixed grill a la Mocambo and the Beckty Bell Meuniere. For the more adventurous, there is always the Angels on Horse Back (sausage wrapped in bacon) or fish-and-shrimp combinations like the Diana or the Florentine and the enigmatically named Surf'n'Turf. The Lobster Thermidor and the beef or pork delights follow close behind.

Thanks to the contributions of Prandhi, the menu has Italian, French, Russian,

Austrian and German cuisine using Indian ingredients for the complete Continental offering. "I take visitors from any level of life, from any country to Mocambo for a meal because the quality of food is brilliant, the service unmatched and the experience captures all the nostalgia that we feel about our city" said Mrs Shikha Mukherjee, head of one of Kolkata's leading welfare foundations.

The impeccable and unwavering high quality of food is a unique Mocambo trait. As diners who have been tucking into the goodies for many decades would confirm, its quality remains unchanged despite surprisingly reasonable prices. The strategy is not to compromise from the ingredient stage to the time the food is placed before the diner.

"I was trained in cooking and hotel management in Europe and I apply my



FOOD PUMP

knowledge and experience to maintain our standards. In addition, I have trained 6-8 key members to check the food at every stage so that there is no complaint,” said Kothari.

“The art deco interiors, the prawn cocktail served on a silver plated cup set on ice, the dark carpets and wall paintings, the period lamps- these are unique and I don't want them to change. There are places with modern stuff but I want Mocambo the way it is”, said Mrs Mukherjee.

“My greatest satisfaction is when diners seek us out for we do little self-promotion. And my happiest memories are of the time when as a child, we served to Jawaharlal Nehru and thereafter to Mrs Indira Gandhi on her visits”, pointed out Nitin.

Beyond the starters and the main course, Mocambo is also a great place for desserts. There is hardly an outlet that makes a better Baked Alaska (brought to the table lit up by brandy-fuelled flames) or Caramel Custard, or even the post-meal coffee.

One differing viewpoint that comes across is that much of the menu comprises helpings that are rich in cheese and/or cream blended with the core non-vegetarian or vegetarian ingredient and baked into a smooth creamy texture.



These days, when every doctor advises a low cholesterol diet, a lot of the Mocambo menu may seem perilous from the cardio-vascular point of view. For such spoilsports, there are lighter offerings, like the delightful risottos or light Indian curries. Mocambo's great food is supplemented with equally attentive service and a surprisingly high quality of sides like sauces and creams irrespective of whether its 3:30 in the afternoon or 11:15 at night. And be it weekday or weekend, there is always a queue during lunch and dinner hours.



SWARALIPi

► a Rabindra Sangeet Academy of music in Wayland, Massachusetts ◀



Swaralipi Academy is a singing school that was founded in 2005 by Swapna Ray. Swapna is the disciple of Sm. Suchitra Mitra (doyen of Rabindra Sangeet) and Sm. Sumitra Chatterjee. Swapna is carrying on the tradition of Rabindra Sangeet as an academic and cultural practice in the United States and has graduated numerous students who have attained mastery of the style. The school also helps to connect American-born and immigrant Bengalis to their mother culture.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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State Archaeological Museum

Preserving the Past



Bengal's rich archaeological heritage dates back to the pre-historic times. Starting from the Black and Red Ware settlements that spread from West Bengal's Burdwan district to the lower slopes of Chotanagpur plateau in Jharkhand roughly between the second millennium BC to 500 BC to the exquisite terracotta architecture of the fourth century or the emergence of mosques and tombs, indigenous crafts and miniature paintings during the Turko-Afghan rule in the thirteenth century- it is archaeologically a treasure house.

The State Archaeological Museum situated at the busy southern suburbs of Calcutta gives a glimpse of this archaeological heritage and evolution of

civilisation from the pre-historic ages to the colonial times. The museum that was inaugurated in an iconic heritage building at 1 Satyen Roy Road in Calcutta's Behala on 1980 and later extended to a new annexe building in 2006, boasts a rich collection of artefacts and antiquities that would surely take the history lovers on a trip to rediscover Bengal's past grandeur. The new building that is open for public viewing has its archaeological exhibits spread across five galleries; while the ground floor houses the collections named Sites and Sights and Paintings of Bengal; the second floor of the building has three more galleries displaying Sculptures of Bengal, findings from West Bengal's early historic period, and a



miniature of Jagjivanpur at the eastern fringe of Malda district that was excavated between 1992-1996.

While taking a tour of the galleries, one forgets all about the hustle and bustle of modern day Calcutta and gets immersed in the exquisite art forms that our ancestors once produced. Upon entering the hall for Paintings of Bengal two distinctive art works entitled Krishna with Gopini and Durga Mahisasuramardini painted on large wooden panels of the chariot's (Ratha) outer surface, capture attention. Painting in Bengal had really flourished as an art and found a distinctive provincial style under Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah. Though the political power soon found its way into the hands of colonial rulers after Nawab's defeat in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the formal Murshidabad style of painting continued to be practised throughout Bengal. The portraits primarily have religious



overtones. For example, the first few paintings at the gallery represents Yama (harbinger of death) and Mahakali (Goddess Kali) in a form of scroll painting that has distinct Hindu references. However, a line drawing entitled combating tigers from the second half of 19th century and a sensual oil on canvas named 'Two women

with a rose' show how with passing time, the artists of Bengal focused on other topics to reach out to a larger clientele. Another wonderful line drawing at the gallery: Babu Bilash, portrays the lifestyle of Bengal's rich urban class during the British rule.

At the gallery of Bengal's sculptures, one would



■ MUSEUM ■

find stone carvings of the Hindu gods and goddesses that date back to the early centuries. Both miniatures and full sized black stone sculptures of Vishnu and Surya that were found from different parts of West Bengal during the Pala and Sena Dynasty, are on display. The sculptures went through significant evolution in form and representation. Two full size Surya sculptures, found in Malda's Gajole in ninth century and Hooghly district's Bandel in 12th century are distinctly different in their form and sitting position. Another significant sculpture in the gallery is a stucco head of Gautam Buddha collected from Murshidabad, reminiscent of the art in Gupta period. The wooden sculpture of Radha, found from 24 Parganas district in the 19th century is also worth mentioning.

At the gallery of Sites and Sights, one gets an overview of Bengal's rich artistic heritage through a series of photographs. The images of Raktamrittika Mahavihara remind one of the lost

alleys of Sasanka's capital Karnasuvarna. The pictures of stupas, monasteries and temples built between the eighth to twelfth century takes the visitors back to the rise of Buddhism in medieval Bengal under the Pala and Sena rule while the Turko-Afghan reign in the thirteenth century or the time of Mughal invasion during the seventeenth century portrays a distinctly different architectural trend of mosques, tombs and mansions. The post colonial era of Bengal saw an emergence of European architecture on both sides of the Hooghly River. The gallery displays several rare pictures of French and Dutch settlements at places like Hooghly, Chandannagar, Rishra at the eastern bank of the river.



MUSEUM

Walking through the galleries, delving in stories of Bengal's opulent past, the visitors reach the gallery where a detailed miniature of the excavation site at Jagjivanpur has been created. The non-descript village near the India-Bangladesh border in Malda bears resemblance with the Vikramshila Mahabihara in Bihar. An extensive amount of antiques like metal images of Buddha, terracotta beads and sealing and exquisite terracotta plaques that was recovered from the spot are displayed in the museum.

INFO BOX

Museum name: State Archaeological Museum
Address: 1, Satyen Roy Road, Behala, Kolkata 700034
Location: Behala Tram depot
Telephone: 03324688191 / 9831286753
Timings: 11.00 am – 4.30 pm
Ticket price: INR 10
Photography: Allowed
Days closed: Monday & Tuesday
Parking area: Inside museum premises

Uda GAD
Size: 15 x 25 cm
Art. No: P. 5412

Parvati standing on a lotus pedestal in tribhanga, keeping the right hand in *Kataka mudra* and the left hand in *Varada mudra*. *Karandamukuta*, *yampanjari*, diaphanous undergarment, *angura*, *valaya*, and *hatahanda* in addition to neck and necklet are the other features of the Chola period.



Money, Money, Money

Without it everything is meaningless

On May 15, Harinavi Banganatya Samaj successfully staged the play *Kenar Pala* (The Act of Buying), written by Indrashis Lahiri and directed by Chandan Mitra at Madhusudan Mancha.

Established in 1862, Harinavi Banganatya Samaj was founded by the first original playwright of Bengal, Pandit Ramnarayan Tarkaratna. Ramnarayan was the first to formally script plays and earned the title “Natuke Ramnarayan” (Dramatist Ramnarayan). His works



Chanchal Bhattacharya

like Kulin Kulasarbaswa (1854), Ratnavali (1858), and Abhigyan Shakuntalam were staged on private platforms by affluent patrons in 19th-century Calcutta. The prestigious Pathuriaghata Theatre honoured him multiple times for his contributions to drama.

When poverty-stricken lives are tempted by greed and desire, the simple worldview of the common man begins to erode. The dazzling world of buying and selling slowly pulls him away from his loved ones. To them, he becomes a distant, unfamiliar figure, devoid of values. One by one, they disappear





STAGE CRAFT

Chandan Mitra delivered a stellar performance as the character Sikandar, while Uttam Chatterjee matched him step for step as Shylock. Other cast members who portrayed their roles with precision include Arijit Sarkar, Ayantika Ghosh, Samar Banerjee, Tritipti Shil, Malay Mukherjee, Nibedita Bose, Pintu Debnath, Subhankar Bhattacharya, Basudev Adhikari, Jibankrishna Shil, Sushanta Mondal, Ruby Sarkar, Sudipta Dutta, Dipshikha Chakraborty Acharya, Puja Palit and the villagers.

Lighting was aptly handled by Bablu Roy. Chandan Mitra was also in-charge of stage design. The soundscape and set decoration were managed by Robin Das and Har Mondal, respectively. Late Indrashis Lahiri, the playwright known for works like *Basabhumi*, *Ichhe Gaari*, and *Drishtikonya*, left us too soon. His play *Kenar Pala*, in the hands of director Chandan Mitra and a talented cast, stands as a proud and enviable production by Harinavi Banganatya Samaj.



from his life. When he finally regains his senses, he finds himself a bankrupt man wrapped in wealth—having forever lost those priceless relationships that money can never buy.

This is the central theme of *Kenar Pala*. Under Chandan Mitra's tight direction and a powerful ensemble performance, the artists of Harinavi Banganatya Samaj delivered their third staging of this play with remarkable success. Among the audience were eminent theatre personalities such as Bibhash Chakraborty and Pradip Sengupta, the guiding force behind *Ashani Nattyam*.



Rathayatra of Ukhra



Kinjal Bose

Rathayatra is celebrated in several districts of West Bengal with pomp and grandeur. In some families, the chariot is made of brass instead of wood. These brass-drawn chariots are famous and spread across different parts of West Bengal. One such brass chariot can be found in Ukhra situated in the Kanksa block of Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal.

Rathayatra marks the beginning of the festive season. It is on this auspicious day that the 'kathamo puja' of Maa Durga is performed in many traditional households. Rathayatra in Ukhra was started by the Late Sambhunath Lal Singh Hunday way back on 9th Aashar, 1248 Bangabda i.e., 1841 as per the Gregorian calendar. In the early years, the chariot was made of wood. But in the year 1850, the chariot was converted to brass measuring about



30 feet in height. It was built by Radhaballav Mehatari (Karmakar) of Birbhum.

Durga Puja of the Hunday family is equally popular. Sambhunath Singh Hunday started Jhulanyatra and Rashyatra along with Rathayatra in Ukhra. Possibly, the Durga Puja also began around the same time as these festivals.

The pancharatna Ramchandra Jiu Temple was founded by Meruchandra Hunday in 1739 A.D; while the Gopinath Jiu Temple was

established in the year 1801 by Bakhtar Singh Hunday. The Hunday family has two brass chariots – one big about 30 feet in height and another comparatively small measuring 12 feet. Previously, both the brass chariots were used during Rathayatra, however, presently only the big one is in use. Both the brass chariots are kept in the 'ratha griha' throughout the year.

On the evening of Rathayatra, Gopinath Jiu and Radharani are brought out from the main temple in a palanquin and brought to the 'ratha griha'. Before the idols are placed inside the chariot, they circle around it thrice, as per tradition. For the past fifteen years, the brass chariot has been drawn by a tractor but earlier, the family members used to draw the brass chariot with the help of a rope. The rath began to move through the crowded streets with people and devotees taking turn in pulling the rope. The chariot usually travels up to Vajpayee More before returning to the temple. On both the days of the festival, a huge fair takes place on the Rathtala Road in Ukhra which attracts a lot of local visitors.



Prajok Theatre Group

Presents Two Short Plays

Shankha Bhattacharyya



On Friday, May 30, 2025, at 6:30 PM, Prajok Theatre Group successfully staged two short plays — “Goyna Bori” and “Sheshkritiya” — at Tapan Theatre, under the deft direction of Apu Ganguly.

The evening opened with “Goyna Bori”, based on a story by Anubha Nath. The narrative highlights the exquisite craft of Goyna Bori, a decorative lentil-based delicacy from the Medinipur region, often exported internationally. The story centres around Padma, an illiterate woman

whose artistry so touched Rabindranath Tagore that he once accepted her handcrafted Goyna Bori. That tender moment became the essence of Padma’s life, filled with the poet’s warmth and blessing. The play evokes a luminous emotional connection with Tagore and also touches upon the spirit of martyrdom through the portrayal of Matangini Hazra, the valiant freedom fighter from Tamluk.

Anubha Nath, already recognised as a writer, proved her strength as a powerful actress through



her portrayal of Padma. Matching her performance were Apu Ganguly, Samaresh Kumar Bhattacharya, Bholanath Acharya, Tarashankar Dhar, Bijali Sarkar, Sanchita Chatterjee, Maitrayee Chatterjee (as young Padma), Nilesh Nandi, Mousumi Mondal, Nandini Natta, and child actor Master Tamojit.

At the end of the first play, storyteller Subhamanas Ghosh and playwright-poet Chanchal Bhattacharya were felicitated on stage.

The second presentation was “Sheshkritya”, a story by Subhamanas Ghosh, adapted into a play by Chanchal Bhattacharya. The drama revolves around the forgotten martyr Jibanlal Basu. A 26-year-old revolutionary who had set out to assassinate Kingsford in Muzaffarpur, Jibanlal was captured and executed. His

corpse, preserved in formaldehyde, was sent back to Kolkata. Historian Dr. Tirthankar Raychowdhury, deeply moved by this unsung hero, becomes tormented by the present-day neglect of such sacrifices. In an act of anguish and reverence, he burns all his research documents and performs Jibanlal’s symbolic final rites — “Sheshkritya.”





Under Apu Ganguly's powerful direction, Arpan Ray as Tirthankar Raychowdhury delivered a deeply impactful performance, breathing intense life into the character. Shantanu Chakraborty was natural and convincing as Pulak C Basu. Debomita Pal Choudhury, portraying Sahana, was exceptional in both dialogue and demeanour. Saheli Ghosh was well-cast as Beethika, and Pritam De was apt as Chandra Sen. The child actor Master Sanglap playing the son of Pulak and Sahana also left a notable impression with his performance.

Babul Sarkar's lighting enhanced several key moments of the production, while the sound design occasionally surpassed the dialogues in emotional intensity.

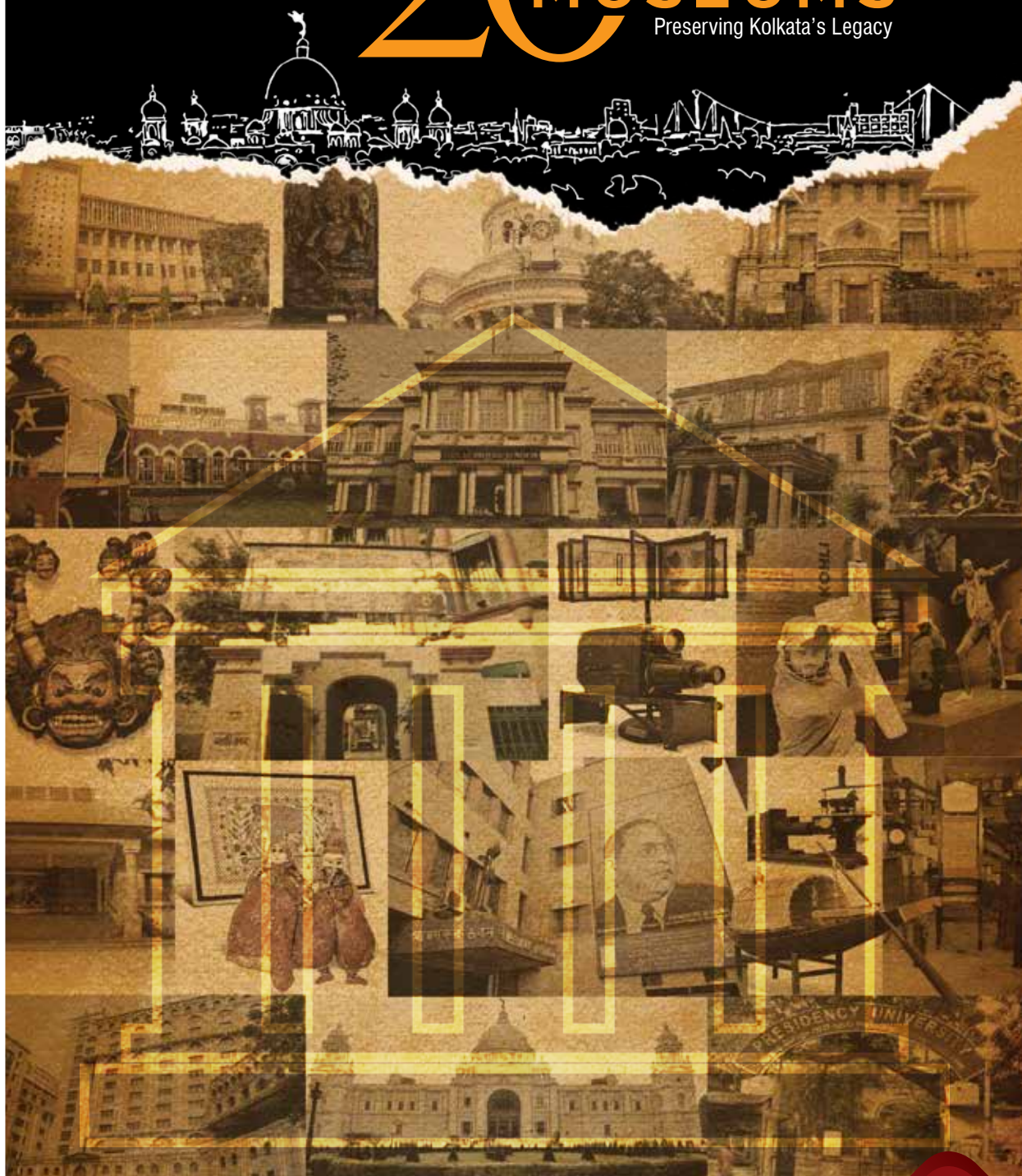
With a discerning audience in attendance that evening, Prajok's presentation of these two short plays left a lasting impression. Much credit goes to the skilled direction of Apu Ganguly.



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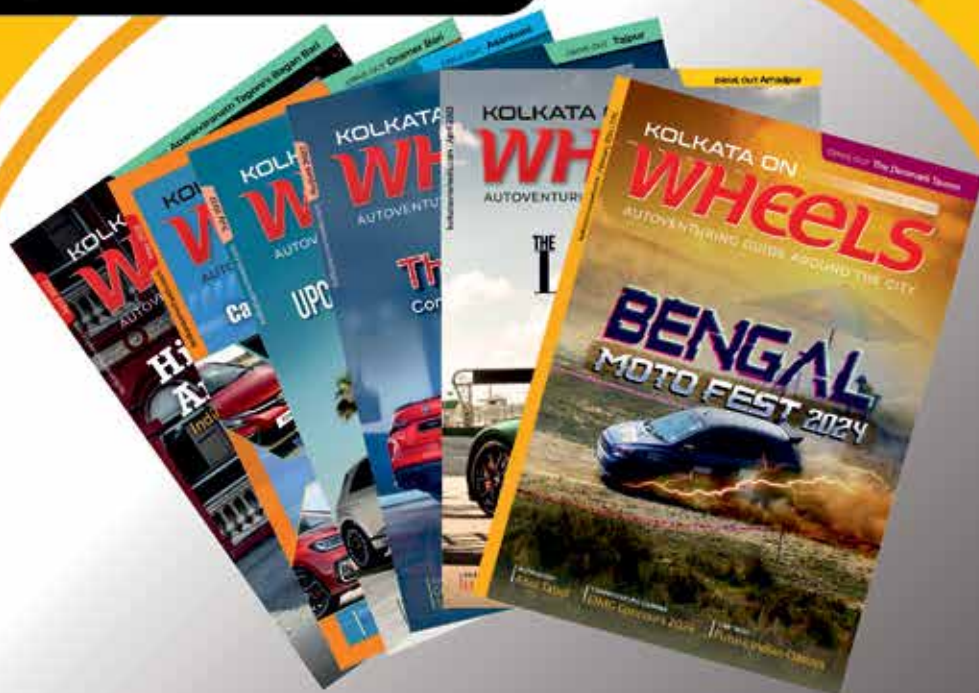
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