

Calcutta CHRONICLE



Anglo-Indian Cuisine Colonial Fare

PAST PERFECT

Remembering A Maharajah

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STAGE CRAFT

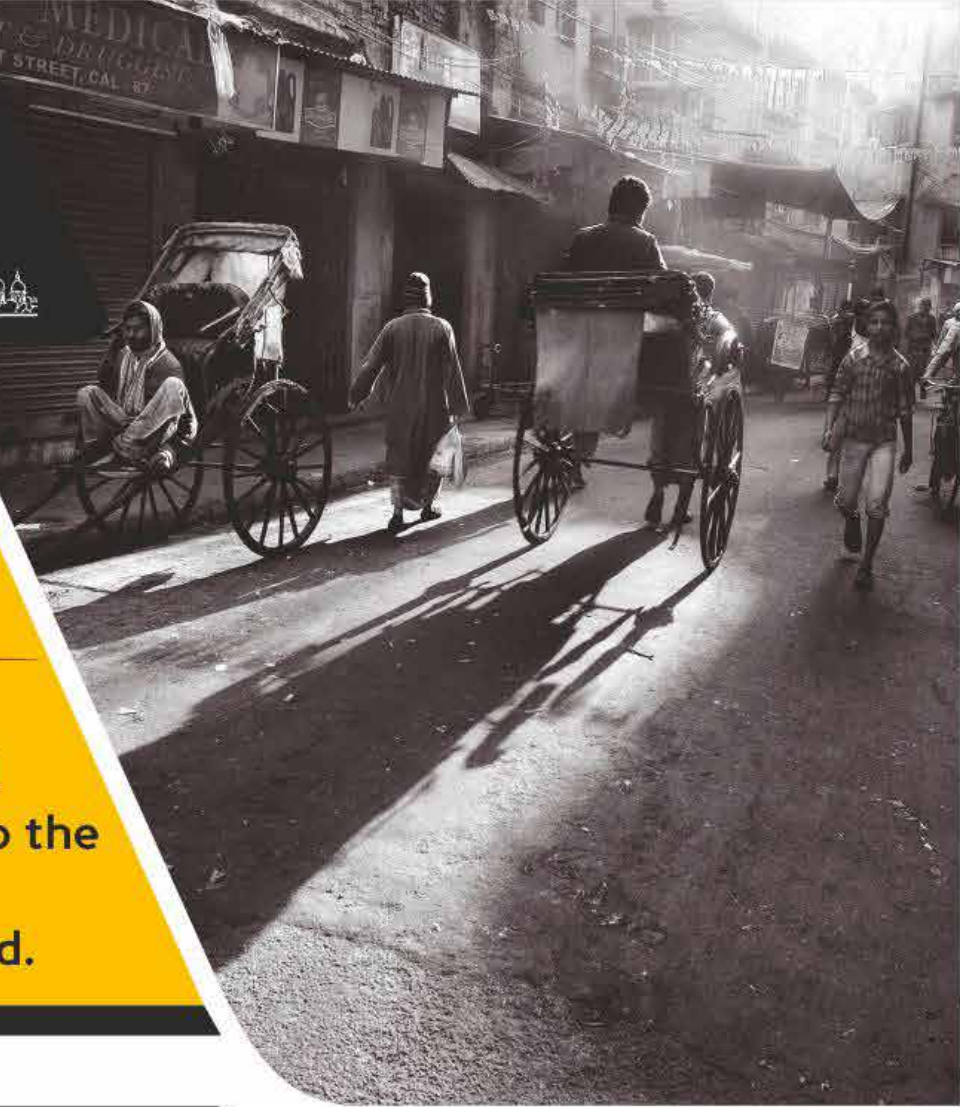
Bijan Bhattacharya

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EDITORIAL

The Anglo-Indian community is an integral part of Calcutta's cultural heritage. This community is more than two hundred years old with origins dating back to the arrival of Europeans in India for trade and commerce. A concentration of Portuguese, English, Dutch and French traders developed in the port cities of India. The men married Indian girls and for the next nearly 150 years, the Anglo-Indians grew as a community, culturally as well as in size. In fact, in the 1800s, they even outnumbered the British in Calcutta. The Anglo-Indian culture was evolved by combining both the European and Indian cultures, and even though the community adopted the religion, manners and ways of dressing of their European forefathers, their food is a mixture of both western and Indian. In this edition's 'Food Pump' column, allow us to take you inside an Anglo-Indian kitchen.

In the sixties, most colonial relics were transported lock, stock and barrel to Barrackpore beyond the public eye, but this one survived, perhaps because it belonged to an Indian aristocrat. But then, we wonder why the statue of a mere zemindar of Bihar was installed at the very heart of imperial Calcutta – Dalhousie Square? Turn to this edition's 'Past Perfect' column to read this fascinating tale.

One of the foremost pioneers of the new theatre movement in Bangladesh, Bijan Bhattacharya was born on July 17, 1915, in Khankhanapur, Faridpur. He left a lasting mark as a playwright, producer, actor, and musician in the world of Bengali theatre. The ideals of his teacher father, his love for literature and music, and his deep engagement with Shakespeare all had a profound influence on his life. Read this edition's 'Stage Craft' column to know more.

Joydip Sur
Editor



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Rabindra Sarani



Joydip Sur

The famous globetrotter Gary Moore had once said, "A journey is not so much about changing landscapes as about seeing them with new eyes." We pass through so many different roads and streets every day, without even pausing for a brief moment to behold their beauty, analyse their character, to hear their tales. One afternoon, we set out to rediscover Rabindra Sarani - one of Calcutta's most historic, versatile and perhaps, the longest stretch of road - with new eyes.

One of the very first roads to be 'macadamised' in Calcutta, way back in 1839, Rabindra Sarani was formerly known as Chitpore Road. This road which remains materially unaltered for more than a century initially derived its name from the goddess of Chiteswari, whose temple stands at Khagendra Chatterjee Road, opposite the Gun and Shell Factory at Cossipore.

■ CITYSCAPE ■

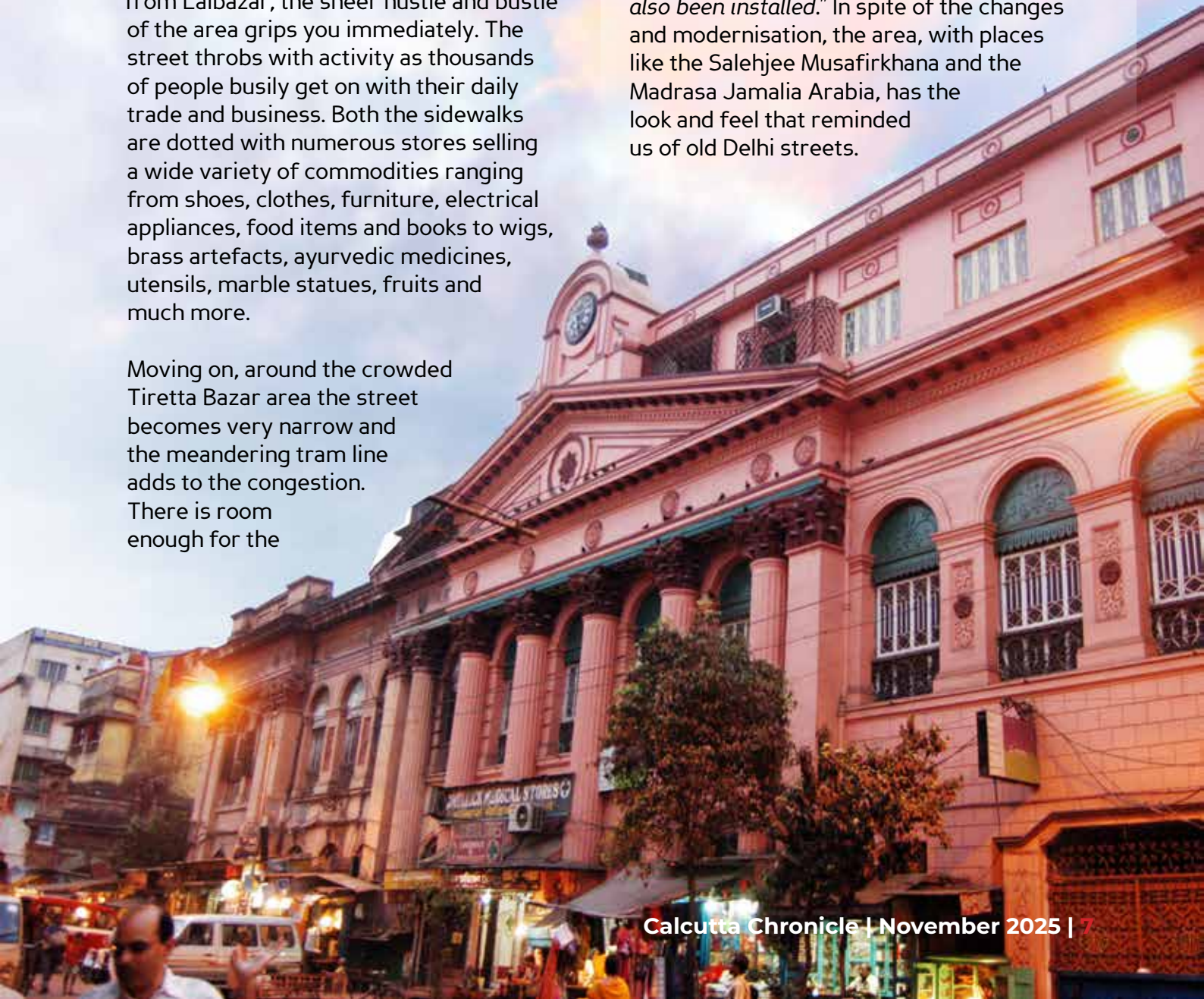
On Friday, May 3, 1963, the Corporation decided to rename a road after Kavi Guru Rabindranath Tagore. Many roads, such as College Street, Gariahat Road and Southern Avenue among others, were under consideration to be renamed after him. But finally, Chitpore Road, where the ancestral home of Tagore is situated was selected to be rechristened after the poet laureate. The present name came into effect from May 9, 1963.

Rabindra Sarani, perhaps the best exemplification of Calcutta's consummate thoroughfares, is in the thick of things from start to finish. It stretches from Lalbazar in the south to Chitpore Bridge in the north. As you start walking northward from Lalbazar, the sheer hustle and bustle of the area grips you immediately. The street throbs with activity as thousands of people busily get on with their daily trade and business. Both the sidewalks are dotted with numerous stores selling a wide variety of commodities ranging from shoes, clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, food items and books to wigs, brass artefacts, ayurvedic medicines, utensils, marble statues, fruits and much more.

Moving on, around the crowded Tiretta Bazar area the street becomes very narrow and the meandering tram line adds to the congestion. There is room enough for the

tram lines and little else yet other forms of traffic somehow manage to squeeze through.

A few hundred metres' walk from here will bring you to the Rabindra Sarani and Zakaria Street crossing where stands the Nakhoda Masjid on the right - the city's largest and grandest mosque. This truly is a sight to behold. We spoke to Rahim Ahmed, 42, who has been selling coolers and syrups on his wooden cart right outside the Nakhoda Masjid for the last 25 years. He said, *"After Dalhousie Square, this place used to be the nerve-centre of trade during British India. A lot has changed over the last three decades. New shops have come up by the dozen everywhere. Tram lines have been repaired and new street lamps have also been installed."* In spite of the changes and modernisation, the area, with places like the Salehjee Musafirkhana and the Madrasa Jamalia Arabia, has the look and feel that reminded us of old Delhi streets.





A few more steps and you would be at the Royal Indian Hotel on the left. Food connoisseurs from different parts of the city, as well as visitors from outside come here to dig into Royal's chaap and biryani among other favourites. For decades now Royal Indian Hotel has been a fitting ambassador of 'Mughlai' cuisine in Calcutta.

The next prominent landmark on Rabindra Sarani is the Jorashakho Thakurbari, the ancestral home of Rabindranath Tagore. A beautiful brick-red building, it is now home to Rabindra Bharati University.

Jatra Para is yet another unique location on Rabindra Sarani. This place is home to numerous drama production houses like Bhairav Opera, Tarama Opera, Agragami Jatra Company and Trinayani Opera. This is unique to this area of Calcutta.

Three red-light areas - Seth Bagan, Ram Bagan and Sonagachi, are located adjacent to Rabindra Sarani. Ironically, a walk of about 500 metres more will land you at Kumartuli. This fascinating place is where the idols of Hindu gods and goddesses are made.

Mullick bari, Lohia Matri Sewasadan, Nayan Krishna Saha's Charitable Dispensary, Mahalaxmi Mandir, Digambar Jain Temple and Maa Sarada Ghat are some of the other

interesting landmarks on Rabindra Sarani.

We were tempted to gorge on some lip smacking street food like kachoris, samosas, keema paratha, fruit juices and lassi that are available at regular intervals along the stretch of Rabindra Sarani.

Our trail finally ended at Chitpore Bridge. We realised that this street is, in the true sense, a melting pot of cultures. Apparent disparities merge to give Rabindra Sarani its secularity, history and diversity. We thoroughly enjoyed our walk down this street which was throbbing with life and yet seemed frozen in time. Explore it yourself to discover a different face of a cosmopolitan Calcutta.



CHINATOWN

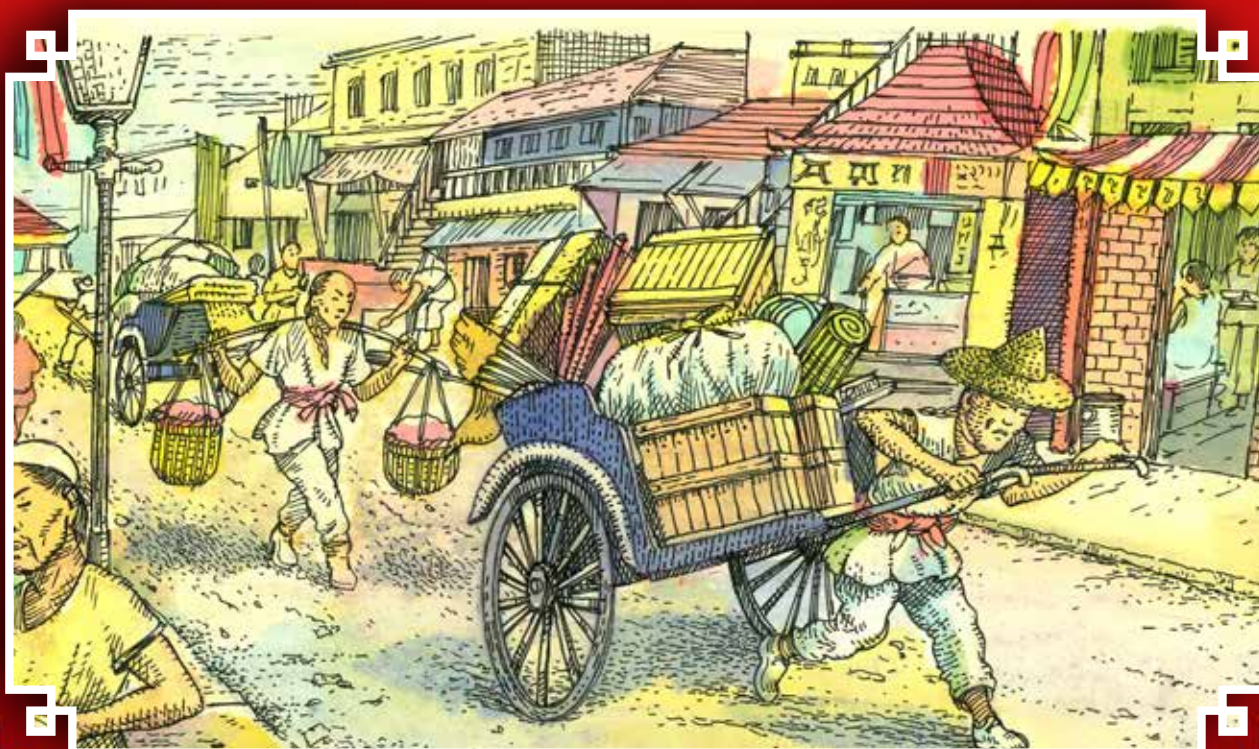


Anindita Mazumder

While China had sent itinerant tradesmen, monks and travellers over the centuries, the first Chinese settler to Bengal was Yong Atchew who arrived at around 1780 at Achipur in Hooghly, a village which was eventually named after him. Warren Hastings had granted Atchew some 650 bighas of land at an annual rent of Rs 45 in order to set up a sugar plantation and mill. Nearly 110 workers came at his call and by 1782 he had 2000 maunds of sugar ready along with good quantities of arrack- a popular spirit. However, his enterprise was plagued by labour problems and

Hastings issued a warning notice against those trying to entice away his cheap labour. Atchew died in 1783.

The next batch of Chinese migrants comprised 'Macao ship deserters' - Chinese sailors who were virtually kidnapped or Shanghaied into service deserted the ship and waited for a friendly vessel to take them home. Thus the Chinese had made forays into the colonial city. The original Chinatown- the only one in India- was located near the oldest part of the city - around lower Chitpore- spreading over Bentinck





Street, Phears Lane. Today, though overtaken by the new Chinatown at Tangra, it comes alive for quite a few hours at dawn for an open air bazar which still serves the best and cheapest Chinese breakfast in the city. Sauces and fresh ingredients for Chinese cuisine are also sold here.

Around 65 years after Atchew's death Colesworthy Grant observed that the 25 Chinese shoe makers of Kasaitola (Bentick Street) "manufacture with much taste and modest charges". Moreover, all carpenters attached to the ships in the country service were Chinese and in matters of skill and ingenuity the Chinese mechanics and artisans claimed precedence over all other Orientals, he added.

By mid-19th century the Chinese in Calcutta had established themselves as a skilled, industrious, sober, honest and above all, clean people. The only charges brought against them were related to the fearful addiction to

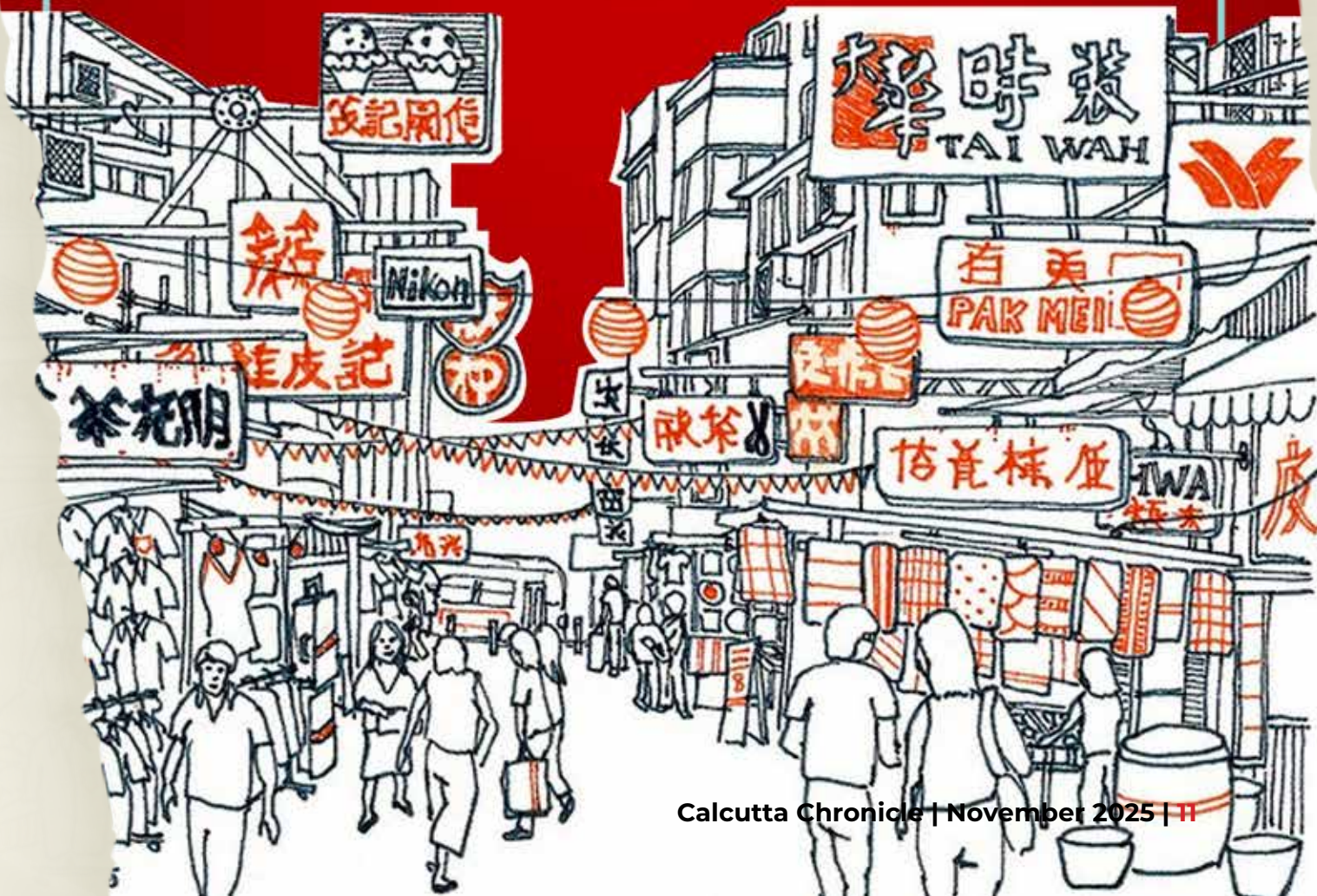
opium smoking which led to occasional midnight brawls mainly over gambling with serious consequences. Among the Chinese, the Hakkas dominated, being primarily involved in tanneries and shoe-making, followed by Cantonese who took up carpentry or to running restaurants while the Hupey took up dentistry. Laundries were run by a small group from Shanghai.



India under British rule was considered safe by the immigrant Chinese as long as they did not meddle in local politics and remained loyal to the government. *"The English government is a very good one; it lets us manage our own affairs and helps us if anyone else tries to injure us, its policeman leave us alone and its small causes court has been established specially for our convenience,"* wrote **Charles Alabaster**, an English traveller while quoting an immigrant. Many Chinese came to visit their relatives in Calcutta and then took up apprenticeship in shoe making or carpentry. Often, the men came alone and chose to marry fellow Eurasians women in the Grey town. The first Chinese temple at Kasaitola was set up by the shoe-makers though it cannot be traced anymore today. The next one was set up by the carpenters

in Bowbazar area. They were also credited for introducing the rickshaw to ferry goods before migrants from UP and Bihar took over.

Visiting the city in 1970s Geoffrey Moorhouse observed: "Lower Chitpore conceals what is left of Calcutta's old Chinatown. A generation or so ago the whole of Bowbazar between here and Chittaranjan Avenue is said to have echoed to the clomp of wooden sandals and the ivory click of mah-jong pieces, to have been largely peopled by men and women in blue boiler suits and said to have boasted at least one opium den." The growing Chinese community had set up their own schools such as Moi Kwang and Pei May in Bowbazar and Tangra respectively in order to teach



the children Mandarin and traditional values before the parents discovered Western Education and decided to move on. It is no surprise English medium schools like Grace Ling Liang or Sacred Heart Chinese Schools survived though the number of Chinese students has dwindled over the years.

Post- independence, the Corporation took up large scale development work, setting up multi-storey blocks for business the Chinese moved to east to Tangra and set up tanneries and a piece of China in East Calcutta complete with Chinese temples, dragon architecture, festoons, colourful signboards and aroma of Chinese food . The Chinese continue to be a closed community at Tangra and little is known about the life beyond the high walls of the tanneries cum residences, fortress like gates and padlocks. The Chinese New Year is heralded in February with house cleaning and repayment of debts, fire crackers, dragon dance and traditional music while during the moon festivals moon-shaped cakes are offered.

Structural reminders of the community's presence exist in the old Chinatown though in a state of decay including the

once grand Nanking restaurant at the Tiretta Bazaar, occupying the ground floor of Tong Oon Church. Apart from the more favourably located Sea Ip Church in Chatawallah Gully dedicated to Kwan Yin- the goddess of mercy, there are five other churches in and around the Bowbazar area, where joss sticks and candles are still lit. Moorhouse described Sea Ip temple and its curious architecture –*“with its antique Chinese weapons, cooking, its chapel, curved roof top with two large porcelain fish standing on their tails on top.”* Most of the Chinese are Buddhist, even Catholic or Protestants and even Muslims.

There were fresh influxes during the Kuomintang rule, World War II and Mao's revolution. The Chinese community grew following the revolution in 1949 and then shrunk following emigration to Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and the US following the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. The war changed the official attitude of Indians towards the Chinese and the latter were looked upon with suspicion. Many were repatriated, and many more lost their employment or herded into camp in Rajasthan leading the Chinese population to dwindle in Calcutta. The next blow came when Supreme Court ordered the removal of tanneries to Bantala. But the industrious Chinese community was able to reverse the decline and set up restaurants serving Indo-Chinese cuisine gratifying the Bengali weakness for gastronomic adventures. And they continue to make the annual pilgrimage to Atchew's grave and the shrine set up by him.



Skål Kolkata *Celebrates Diwali*



Joydip Sur

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luxury. Vivid warmth and
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at The Rajbari Bawali
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to relish some fine
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and celebrate the true
essence of Skål.

The courtyard shone in
a resplendent mood as
we all came together
to witness the magic,
before we headed for a
culinary journey. Music,
fun quiz and sheer
bonhomie, it all thrived
under the stars.

Amin Asghar,
President, Skål
International Kolkata
said, "We were delighted



■ SPECIAL FEATURE ■

to celebrate our Skål Diwali Bash this year at the splendid The Rajbari Bawali, where even the heritage walls seemed to glow brighter with our festive cheer. It was an entertaining evening where we bonded like family, proving once again that Skålleagues only need good company and great food to create magic together. The following day, our celebrations rolled on with a delightful lunch hosted by Skalleague Ajay Rawla at the picturesque River Lodge beside the sacred Ganges, where laughter flowed just as smoothly as the river. My heartfelt gratitude to all our Skålleagues for bringing the true Skål spirit of Friendship and Tourism."

The sumptuous lunch beside the River Lodge overlooking the incredible Ganges didn't disappoint either. It was a tempting, picturesque setting for a fine, sit-down lunch with some

fine soulful music playing in the background.

Ajay Rawla, Founder, The Rajbari Bawali said, "The post-Diwali celebration at The Rajbari Bawali was a special evening for all of us. As hosts, we were delighted to welcome such passionate and committed members of the travel fraternity who embody the true spirit of the SKAL family."

The warmth, laughter, and sense of togetherness continued into the following day's lunch at the River Lodge — a perfect reflection of Skål's motto: 'Doing business among friends.' We look forward to seeing more of everyone in the months ahead."



"SPHULINGA"

***A Production of Harinavi
Banga Natya Samaj***



Chanchal Bhattacharya

Before Michael Madhusudan Dutt, among the playwrights who gained fame for their works, Ramnarayan Tarkaratna stood out as one of the finest. The theatre group he founded, Harinavi Banga Natya Samaj, has been carrying forward its legacy for 163 years.

On November 6, 2025, under the initiative of Ashani Natyam, Harinavi Banga Natya Samaj successfully staged the play 'Sphulinga' at Sujata Sadan, Hazra. The play was written and directed by Chandan Mitra.

The story revolves around three ordinary women who fight to assert their existence within a patriarchal society. Chandan Mitra presents a realistic portrayal of their struggles. In society, women constantly face obstacles—irrespective of caste, religion, or economic background. Yet, we never tire of holding seminars and discussions on women's empowerment. The play depicts the journey of three women from different communities—Mrittika, Rabeya, and Alice—who are forced to leave their homes and stand up against societal norms.



STAGE CRAFT



Ultimately, a police officer, upon learning their stories, salutes their courage and resilience. Their struggle continues in every woman's heart—until society changes its perception. This movement is eternal and unending.

The roles of Mrityika, Rabeya, and Alice were played by Shrabanti Roy, Rubi Sarkar, and Ayantika Ghosh, respectively—all delivering powerful and convincing performances. Sudipta Dutta, as the police officer, was well cast and acted effectively. Pintu Debnath, who played Akash, was also impressive.

Supporting performances were natural and well-coordinated with the

overall team effort—Jyotsna Barui (Mrityika's mother), Deepshikha Acharya (Alice's mother), Shubhankar Bhattacharya (Mrityika's uncle), Basudev Adhikari (Rabeya's father), Jiban Krishna Shil (Rabeya's uncle), Joy Kar (Hasan), and Maloy Mukherjee (Alice's uncle).

Lighting was managed by Nandagopal Dutta, sound effects by Rabin Das, and set design by Hara Mondal—each contributing aptly to the production.

Playwright and director Chandan Mitra demonstrated remarkable skill and sensitivity through his writing and direction. As a result, Harinavi Banga Natya Samaj's 'Sphulinga' left a lasting impression on the audience.



Remembering A Maharajah

As speeding buses, taxis and cars swerve round the southwest corner of the erstwhile Dalhousie Square, hurtling towards GPO, more often than not, passers-by miss this beautiful statue of Raj era. Overgrown foliage and battered tram cars often hide it from view but if you ever have a moment to spare, do stop by to admire the statue of Maharajah of Darbhanga, Lakshmishwar Singh.



Anindita Mazumder

In the sixties, most colonial relics were transported lock, stock and barrel to Barrackpore beyond the public eye, but this one survived, perhaps because it belonged to an Indian aristocrat. But then, we wonder why the statue of a mere zemindar of Bihar was installed at the very heart of imperial Calcutta – Dalhousie Square?

In the words of **HE Cotton**, the chronicler of Calcutta, Maharajah Lakshmishwar Singh Bahadur, GCIE, of Darbhanga *“was in every sense the best type of the Indian nobleman and landlord. He was the leading zemindar in Behar, where he owned no less than 2,152 square miles with a net yearly rental of 30 lakhs, and was the recognized head of the orthodox of Hindoo Community.”* Darbhanga was actually the largest



and richest among all zemindari estates in the country.

The principality of Darbhanga owed its origin to Mahesh Thakurji, appointed by Akbar as the tax collector of Mithila or modern Bihar. Subsequently, the family consolidated itself at Darbhanga which became the largest zemindari in the country. It was the best managed estate when zemindari system got abolished in the country after independence. The family scions assumed the title of 'Maharajah'. They were great patrons of education, arts, literature and music. Lakshmishwar Singh patronised both Maithili and Hindi languages. In addition, by 19th century, Darbhanga was an important seat of Hindustani Classical music and their patronage to Dhrupad led to the creation of a separate Darbhanga Gharana.

Contrary to the popular notion that landowners and zemindars survived by appeasing the imperial masters, the Maharajah was the principal donor for the Indian National Congress during its initial days, quite apparent from the correspondence between him and its founder, AO Hume and its first president, WC Bonnerjee. When the British Government denied permission to Congress to hold its annual meeting in 1892 in Allahabad, he bought a piece of land at Lowther Castle and handed it over to Congress.

A "progressive and liberal minded statesman" he was the President of British Indian and other Landowners' Associations and took active part in debates on Bengal Tenancy Act,

1885. He was a member of the Supreme Legislative Council till his death. He sat in the Bengal Council and the Governor General's Council.

The Maharajah was easily the most generous among philanthropists and he contributed £300,000 for relief work during the Bengal famine of 1873-1874, and after his death it was computed that during his reign "he spent £2,000,000,011 on charities, works of public utility, and charitable remissions of rent."

In his praise **Cotton said:** "Few Asiatics have combined more successfully in themselves the apparently incompatible characteristics of East and West." Born in 1858, he became the ruler of Darbhanga at the age of two. He was the first Maharajah of Darbhanga to receive Western education when he and his brother were placed under the Court of Wards. After assuming charge of his estate, he set about its modernisation. He commanded esteem among all influential people because of his fearless nationalist outlook and zeal for developing his country and his region as well. He was only 43 when he died in 1898.



■ PAST PERFECT ■

This statue in white marble stands out among those of other Indian nationalist leaders that dot BBD Bag or Maidan area. Again, unlike most other statues of the era which are found to be in standing posture or equestrian, this particular one has the Maharajah sitting upon his guddee or ornamental throne *“with a scimitar in the right hand and a shield in the left, and wearing the ancestral head dress of his family and the robes and chain of a Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire.”* Each detail, be it his beard, the engraved low throne or the fold of his ornamental dress – has been etched with care rendering it as a wonderful work of art of the era.

Its significance lies in the fact that the statue was the last work of eminent British sculptor, Edward Onslow Ford, who was credited for some beautiful works such as the colossal memorial statue of Queen Victoria in Manchester and the nude, recumbent statue of poet Shelley at University College, Oxford. In 1890, the Maharajah himself had commissioned Ford in 1890 to produce two full-length allegorical figures of ‘Dance’ and ‘Music’ to occupy niches in his ballroom.

The statue of Lakshmishwar Singh was unveiled by Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, on March 25, 1904, in the presence of many illustrious personalities such as Sir Gooroodas Banerjee, Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee and Prodyot Coomar Tagore.

The Maharajah was also an accomplished player of the sitar. Passionate about music, he had invited Gauhar Jaan to make her debut at Darbhanga in 1887 when she was still unknown to the world of music. He bestowed great honour upon the singer by appointing

her as the court musician of Darbhanga. It was appropriate that the statue of such a great connoisseur of art should also be equally aesthetically pleasing.

It is a pity that Kolkata was not able to preserve the beautiful house of Darbhanga Raj - an architectural marvel with exquisite domes and carriage gates which was demolished overnight. A group of 14 companies had bought the mansion on 42, Chowringhee Road for INR 11 crore but by the time the municipal authorities woke up, the domes were gone.

The statue of the Maharajah of Darbhanga is now the sole link between this principality and our city and we must do our bit to save this tenuous bond for the sake of the great philanthropist who came forward for every public work undertaken for the benefit of the citizens of the City of Joy.

FAST FACTS

Statue: Maharajah of Darbhanga

Location: South-West corner of BBD Bag

Car Parking: In the vicinity

The Caregivers Redefine Home Healthcare in Kolkata



Arundhati Dasgupta

As healthcare continues to shift beyond hospital walls, The Caregivers — a Kolkata-based home healthcare company — is leading the charge by offering advanced medical services, including home dialysis, with a strong focus on empathy, accessibility, and round-the-clock patient support at home.

Since its inception, The Caregivers has been dedicated to providing hospital-grade care within the comfort of patient's homes. Its wide range of services includes basic nursing, ICU-level Intensive Care, Complete Equipment Support, physiotherapy, Home Dialysis, Doctor Visits and Home-based Diagnostic Testing. Staffed by trained ANM, GNM, and GDA, Nursing team, the company delivers care that is not only clinically sound but deeply compassionate.

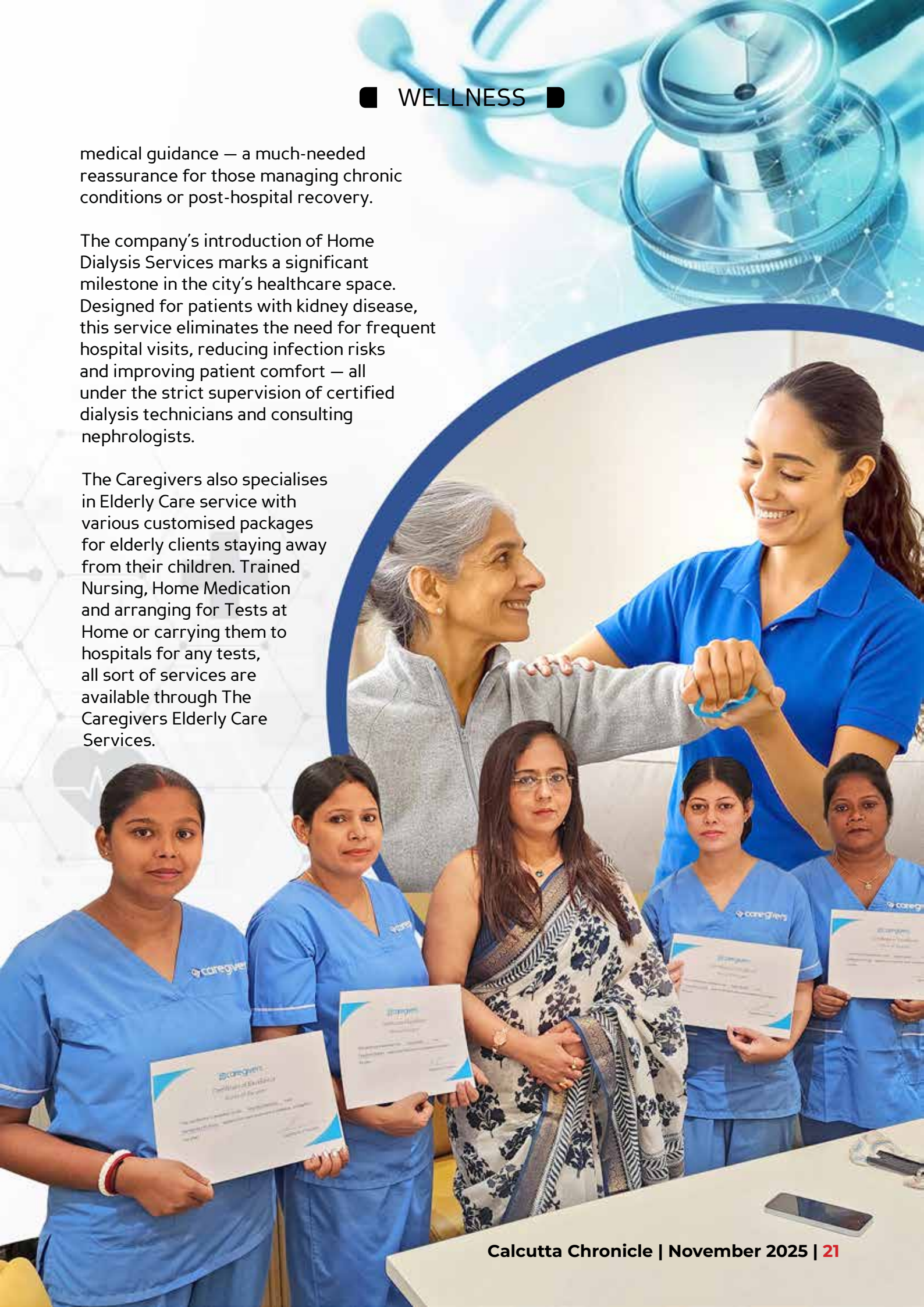
A key differentiator for The Caregivers is its 24x7 support system for enrolled patients. From emergency assistance to routine health monitoring, patients and their families have access to continuous



medical guidance — a much-needed reassurance for those managing chronic conditions or post-hospital recovery.

The company's introduction of Home Dialysis Services marks a significant milestone in the city's healthcare space. Designed for patients with kidney disease, this service eliminates the need for frequent hospital visits, reducing infection risks and improving patient comfort — all under the strict supervision of certified dialysis technicians and consulting nephrologists.

The Caregivers also specialises in Elderly Care service with various customised packages for elderly clients staying away from their children. Trained Nursing, Home Medication and arranging for Tests at Home or carrying them to hospitals for any tests, all sort of services are available through The Caregivers Elderly Care Services.



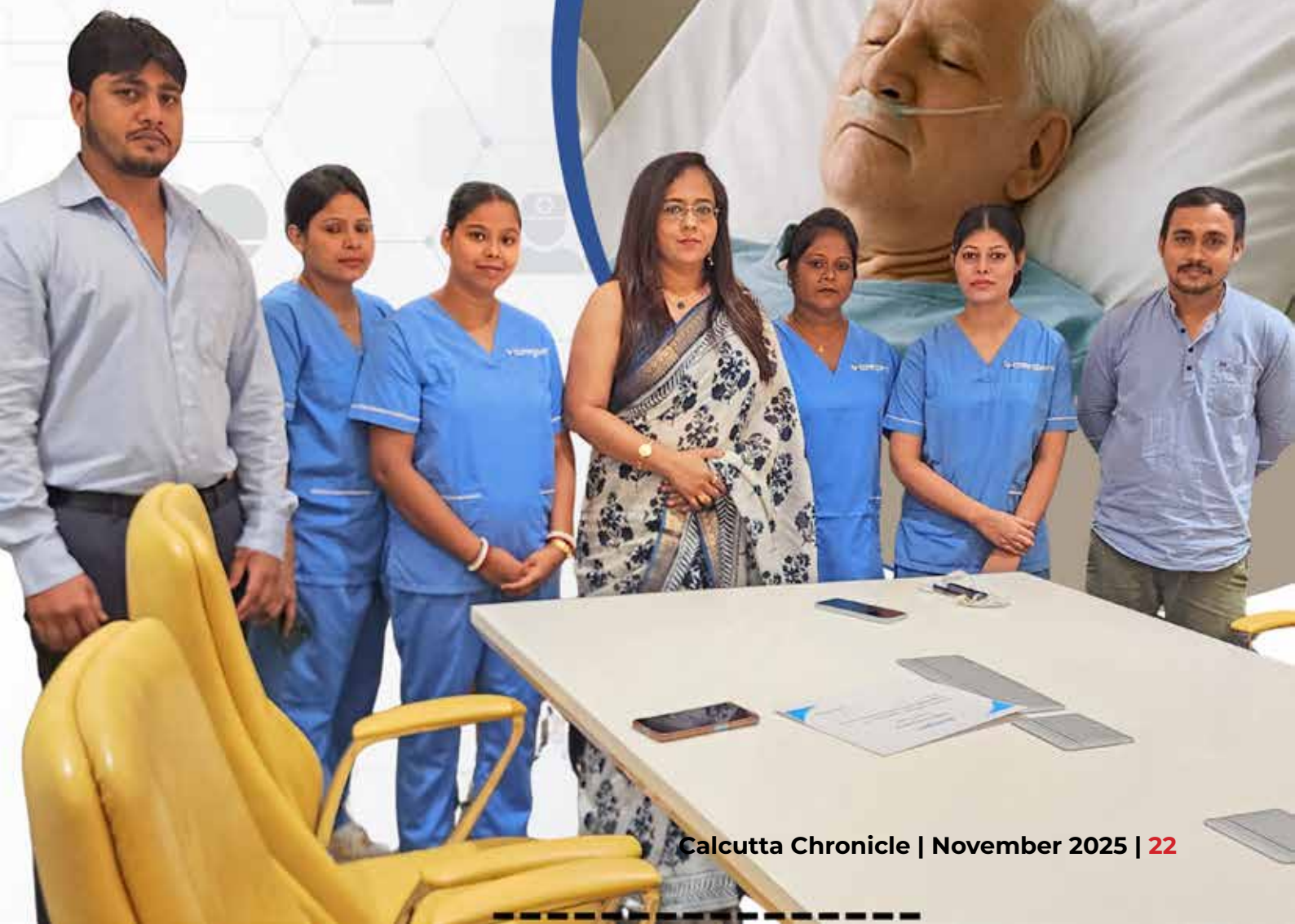
■ WELLNESS ■

Beyond clinical excellence, what sets The Caregivers apart is its empathy-driven approach. "We treat every patient like family," says the founder, reflecting the organization's core belief that healing begins with human care.

With ongoing partnerships with top pathology labs, eminent doctors and paramedic staffs, The Caregivers is poised to set new standards in Kolkata's home healthcare sector — blending technology, compassion, and professionalism like never before.

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NO LONGER NIGHTER



Tarun Goswami



Before the computer's keyboard had not overtaken all and sundry, fountain pen was the true companion of every cerebral man. Thought to be the perfect symbol of the intellectual man during the rice eating ceremony of a newborn he would be given a choice between a fountain pen and a gold or silver coin denoting riches. Filling ink in fountain pens was another task deserving great attention every morning along with winding the watch before one left for work. Louis Waterman patented the first practical fountain pen in 1884 but the oldest pen was designed by a Frenchman named M Boir in 1702. The costliest pen is manufactured by Mont Blanc. The famous Meisterstück (Masterpiece) with lifetime guarantee was introduced way back in 1924. After the First World War, there was hatred for Germans, globally yet many could not abandon their habit of using two German products - Mercedes Benz cars and Mont Blanc pens. Lenin and Mao Zedong who hated the Imperialists

used Mont Blanc pens. But now fountain pens are rarely seen. In this edition of Calcutta Chronicle, we remember the good old days with a sense of nostalgia.

Once a local sculptor had made a full-length wax statue of Jyoti Basu way back in 1994 and when his close comrade, Subhas Chakraborty showed him the statue the veteran Communist leader was impressed by the likeness. "It is brilliant," he said but then paused to wonder aloud: "But one thing is missing. Where is my fountain pen?" And with a smile playing on his lips the normally reticent chief minister took out his fountain pen and placed it on the pocket of the Punjabi draping the

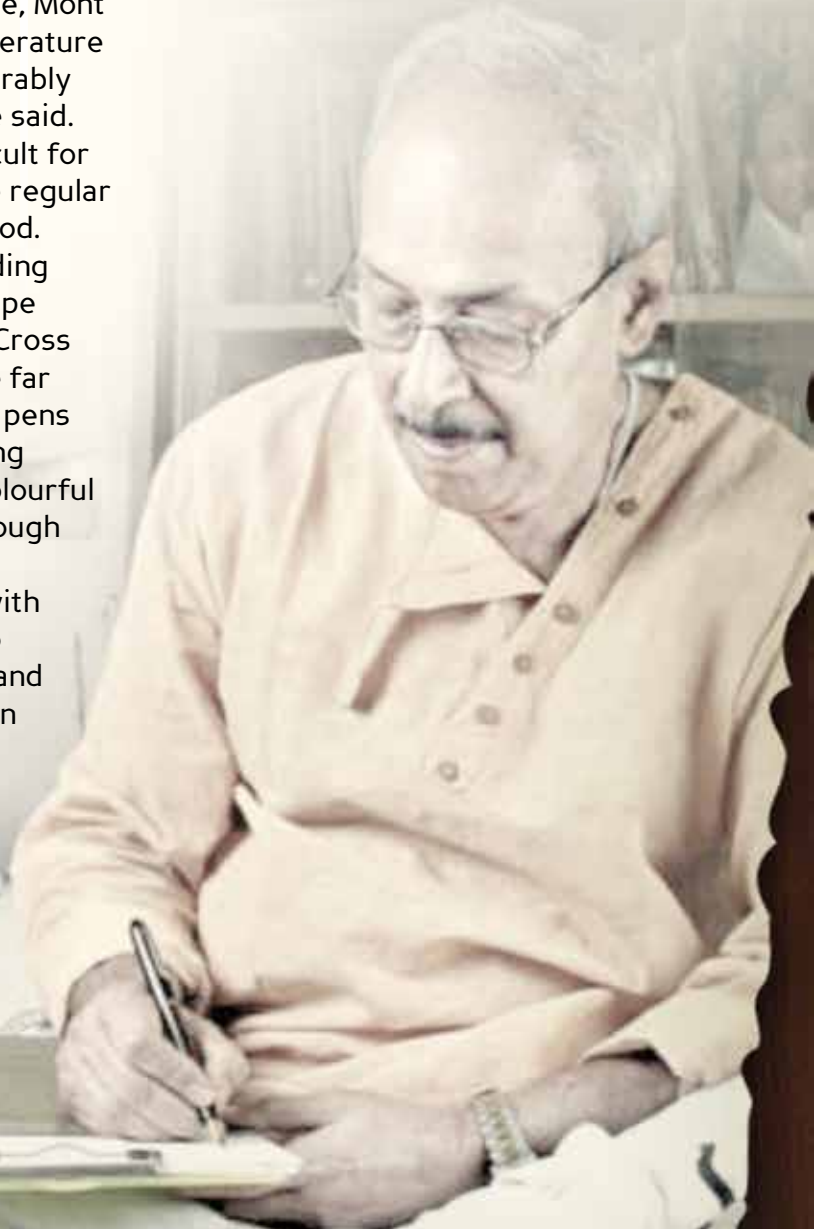


■ POTPOURRI ■

statue. "Whenever I venture out, I carry my fountain pen. It is a habit from my college days," Basu reminisced in front of the media persons who had assembled on that day to witness waxwork.

Well-known Bengali litterateur, Saramesh Basu was also very fussy about his fountain pens. He had a beautiful handwriting and preferred good quality German made paper for writing. He had a couple of Eversharp and Mont Blanc fountain pens in his possessions which he maintained meticulously. Sanjib Chattopadhyay, another litterateur is a true connoisseur of fountain pens. He has several cupboards full of fountain pens at his Baranagore residence. In fact, BBC had even covered his collection, once. His rich collection includes the American pens like Eversharp, Sheaffer and Parker. He is also quite fond of Pelican and of course, Mont Blanc. "You cannot create a good piece of literature without a good pen. I prefer fine nibs, preferably gold ones because they are dependable," he said. "Since I am growing old it has become difficult for me to maintain fountain pens which require regular cleaning. Nowadays, I find gel pens to be good. Indian ball pens are really good," he said adding "I had visited the pen market in US and Europe and have used US made gel pens including Cross and Parker but believe me Linc gel pens are far superior. Gel pens have the feel of fountain pens yet can be used for hours without developing writer's cramp." He also uses a variety of colourful inks like purple, turquoise blue and black though his favourite is Mont Blac ink. Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, however prefers to write with fountain pens with medium quality nib. "I do not like ball point pens at all. They are hard and difficult to grip. Writing with a good fountain pen is a real pleasure," he maintained.

Swami Lokeswarananda had observed once, "Ball point pens are excellent to sign cheques but I find it difficult to write without fine tipped fountain pens," he often said. He had friends, admirers and followers all over the world who often presented him expensive fountain pens.





It was a custom to present a fountain pen to those who did well in public examinations. Debendranath Tagore had presented a gold watch and a fountain pen to Rabindranath when he got the first glimpse of his son's talent at the age of 12. Once Netaji Subhas Chandra had gone to Pabna, now in Bangladesh, in 1922 and was to address a public rally with Gandhiji. Gandhiji along with some Congress leaders were waiting for Subhas Chandra anxiously and finally when he did not come down Gandhiji asked them to go and fetch him. Two young Congress Seva Dal workers went upstairs and found Netaji walking up and down the room with a fountain pen in his hand. A visibly nervous Netaji asked them whether they can fill up his pen with ink since he was unaccustomed to doing it on his own. However, fountain pens often embarrassed its users, too. In schools it was a common sight to see students with ink-stained

pockets caused by leaky pens. There is a famous saying in Bengali "Hate kali, mukhe kali, baba amar likhe eli!"

A senior manager at one of the leading pen stores said the craze for fountain pen is growing among school children, nowadays. Many schools ban the use of ball point pens as these are not good for developing a legible hand. There was a time when students were not allowed to write with ball point pens and even the banks did not entertain cheques written with ball point pens. But from the 1980s this ban was lifted and students were allowed to use ball point pens to write answer scripts in public as well as internal examinations. Dr Subrata Basu, a well-known orthopedic surgeon said young kids who use ball point pens often develop writers' cramp early in life and suffer from pain in the thumb and index. "It is always good to use fountain pens instead of ball point pens," he maintained. So, it might be a little too premature to sing the dirge for the fountain pen at the moment.



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■ EVENT ■

Cultural and Bijoya Sammilani Celebration by **Yogmantra Kolkata**



Shankha Bhattacharyya

The Bijoya Sammilani celebration organised by Yogmantra Kolkata was held with great enthusiasm and cultural spirit. The event beautifully reflected the organisation's commitment to art, wellness, and community bonding through a series of engaging performances.

The venue décor, conceptualised by Bipasha Bhattacharya, Soma Hembrom, and Abhijita Khanra, created a warm and festive atmosphere befitting the occasion.

The dance performances, presented by Soma Hembrom, Abhijita Khanra, Oyendrila De, and Kiranmala Auddy, and choreographed by Bipasha Bhattacharya, Soma Hembrom, and Abhijita Khanra, were graceful and well-coordinated, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

The Readers' Theater, featuring Bipasha Bhattacharya, Subhajit Chatterjee, and Sarmishtha Som, showcased strong stage presence



EVENT

and expressive delivery. The recitations by Swagata Bhattacharya, Moumita Banerjee, and Shibani Paul added a literary depth to the evening's cultural offerings.

A musical segment by Abhiroop Khanra, Purbasha Dutta, Swayam Majumdar, Sreyan, Aritra Bhattacharya and Rekha Dutta further enhanced the evening with melodious and well-received performances.

The program was effectively anchored by Rina Bhattacharya and Moumita Majumdar, whose professionalism and warmth ensured smooth transitions throughout the event.



Behind the scenes, the management team comprising Bipasha Bhattacharya, Soma Hembrom, Abhijita Khanra, Debolina Dutta, and Kiranmala Auddy ensured flawless coordination and execution.

The culinary arrangements, managed by Kiranmala Auddy, were well appreciated, while Rekha Dutta graciously provided the venue, adding to the overall charm of the celebration. The makeup team — Moumita Majumdar, Priyanka Paul, and Subho Naskar — contributed





to the performers' stage-ready appearance, enhancing visual appeal.

The event was well-documented through the lens of Subhadeep Pakhira, whose photography captured the energy and emotion of the occasion.

Overall, the Bijoya Sammilani and Cultural celebration was a resounding success, marked by artistic excellence, teamwork, and the shared joy of festive togetherness.



SKAL International Kolkata

Elects New Board at Annual General Meeting



Joydip Sur

SKAL International Kolkata successfully hosted its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Board Election at the Kenilworth Hotel on October 13, 2025. The event marked a significant milestone in the chapter's journey, bringing together members from the travel and tourism trade to reflect on the chapter's achievements.

The AGM commenced with a welcome address by the Secretary, Avijit Sarkar, who highlighted the chapter's initiatives in promoting sustainable tourism, fostering industry collaboration, and enhancing member engagement.



SKAL INTERNATIONAL KOLKATA 127 NEW COMMITTEE 2025-2026



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President



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SKL SWETA CHOUDHARY
Auditor 1



SKL NEHA SIL
Auditor 2

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The meeting also included presentations on financials, membership growth, and upcoming strategic plans.

A key highlight of the evening was the election of the new Board for the 2025–2026 term. Amin Asghar was reinstated as the President of the new Board for the second term. The newly elected Board comprises of the following members:

- President: Amin Asghar
- Vice President 1: Avanti Basu Chatteraj
- Vice President 2: Amit Sachdev
- Secretary: Avijit Sarkar
- Treasurer: Jay Agarwal
- Director, Sports & Events: Maanav Saraf
- Director, CSR: Srinjoy Sen
- Director, Young SKAL: Sanghita Chatterjee
- Director, Membership Development: Sneha Mukherjee
- Director, PR & Corporate Communications: Amit Sengupta
- Auditor 1: Sweta Choudhary
- Auditor 2: Neha Sil

Amin Asghar, President, SKAL International Kolkata said: *"I am delighted to lead the SKAL Kolkata chapter for the second year in a row. I congratulate all my Board members. As we step into a new beginning with our Board members, our focus remains on fostering meaningful partnerships and embracing innovation. We would harness the soft power and continue to showcase Kolkata as a vibrant, culturally rich destination for leisure or business. We also look forward to provide excellent services to all our clients from the City of Joy to tap into the exciting potential*

of outbound destinations. Our chapter is committed to promote sustainable tourism, creating opportunities for our members to thrive in a rapidly evolving global travel ecosystem."

The National President of SKAL International India, Sanjeev Mehra spoke about the vision of SKAL International India and growing numbers of SKAL clubs in India. He congratulated the new Board members of SKAL International Kolkata and urged them to do business amongst their members.



Anglo-Indian Cuisine Colonial Fare



Joydip Sur

The Anglo-Indian community is an integral part of Calcutta's cultural heritage. This community is more than two hundred years old with origins dating back to the arrival of Europeans in India for trade and commerce. A concentration of Portuguese, English, Dutch and French traders developed in the port cities of India. The men married Indian girls and for the next nearly 150 years, the Anglo-Indians grew as a community, culturally as well as in size. In fact, in the 1800s, they even outnumbered the British in Calcutta. The Anglo-Indian culture was evolved by combining both the European and Indian cultures, and even though the community adopted the religion, manners and ways of dressing of

their European forefathers, their food is a mixture of both western and Indian. In this edition of Calcutta Chronicle, allow us to take you inside an Anglo-Indian kitchen.

Perhaps, the Anglo-Indian cuisine is very first example of 'fusion food' in the world. It is a result of reinventing and revamping popular European dishes with a dash of exotic Indian spices giving it a completely new flavour. Thus a completely new contemporary cuisine came into existence, which was neither too bland nor too spicy, but with a distinctive flavour of its own. It became a direct reflection of the multi-cultural and hybrid heritage of the new colonial population.



While Anglo-Indian cuisine is said to be influenced by the various European invasions in India like the Portuguese, Dutch and French, but it was the British who left the most lasting impact on it. This new cuisine was often called "Club Food," referring to the food served even today in some of the elite clubs in Calcutta. Roasts, stews, bakes, sandwiches and white bread are a legacy of the British, and Anglo-Indians took these to new heights, making them part of their daily diet. Other dishes such as fish and chips, cutlets, croquettes, sausages, bacon, ham, egg variants, puddings, custards, and many other savoury treats became a part of the Anglo-Indian culinary repertoire.

The French too left us with a legacy of French loaf, quiches, crêpes, baguettes, croquettes, liver fry, beef assad, crumb fried chicken, onion soup, batter fried fish and chocolate mousse, while the Scottish delicacies like treacle pudding, pancakes, Scotch eggs, short bread, oats porridge, beef mince and potatoes, hotch potch, bread pudding, cottage pie and kidney pie also ventured into the Anglo-Indian kitchens. Sadly, the Dutch didn't have much of an influence on the Anglo-Indian cuisine with the only exception of the beef cutlet.

Yellow rice and ball curry is still a must for Sunday lunch in many Anglo-Indian homes. And then there is Pork Vindaloo (a Goan-Portuguese dish that Anglo-Indians made their own), Mulligatawny Soup, Railway Mutton Curry, Fish Kedegeree, Grandma's Country Captain Chicken, Jhalfrezi, Rose Cookies, Kulkuls (during

Christmas) and Salt Meat (huge chunk of meat salted and kept for days and weeks; holes gouged in it and slices of lime put in).

Pork Vindaloo

Many of the dishes have a unique history behind their existence. The very popular and familiar curry dish "Vindaloo" is derived from the Portuguese word "Vinha De Alhos" from the two main ingredients in it, which were "Vinho", meaning wine or wine vinegar, and "Alhos", meaning garlic. It was originally vinegar and garlic based watery stew made with pork or meat in Portugal. However, after the Portuguese introduced it in India, it was completely revamped with the addition of spices and chilies, and over the years it has become one of the spiciest and most popular curry dishes all over the world. "Vindaloo" was originally prepared as a pork dish but later became popular using other types of meat, fish, poultry and even vegetables. Potatoes were added to absorb the extra vinegary taste and it became to be known as "Vindaloo" instead of the original "Vinha De Alhos".



Railway Mutton Curry

Railway Mutton Curry is a direct throw back to the days of the British Raj, when traveling by train was considered aristocratic. This slightly tangy dish was served in railway refreshment rooms and on long distance trains, with bread or dinner rolls. The curry was not too pungent keeping in mind the delicate palates of the British. It was also popular with the railway staff who had to be on duty for long periods at a stretch. The vinegar or tamarind juice used in its preparation ensured that the curry would last for quite a few days and was an ideal accompaniment with rice as well.

Mulligatawny Soup

Mulligatawny is a popular Anglo Indian curry flavoured soup. The word 'Mulligatawny' is Tamil for 'pepper water'. The mulligatawny is substantially and deliciously a complex meal by itself. Since soup is not a significant dish from the traditional Indian cuisine, the mulligatawny soup poses its own mystery as rumors say that the English adapted a traditional spiced pea and lentil Indian peasant dish to suit their own love of soup. This soup became popular with the British who were living in India during the colonial years.

Fish Kedegeree

The Fish Kedegeree is the Anglo-Indian version of the Indian kichudi. It was prepared with rice, lentils, raisins, etc along with the addition of fried fish flakes and hard boiled eggs. Fish, either steamed or fried was a regular item for breakfast during the Raj and the cooks tried to incorporate it with local dishes. Eventually the Fish Kedegeree became a hot cooked spicy dish, with the addition of various spices and was invariably included in the breakfast menu all over the Commonwealth. Minced meat was also later added as a variation.



Grandma's Country Captain Chicken

Grandma's Country Captain Chicken was a very popular dish during colonial times since it was very easy to prepare. In those days, the poultry used in its preparation were authentic well-fed, homegrown country chickens, which would take at least two hours to cook over a firewood oven, but the curry when done, would be rich and delicious.

Jalfrezi

Jalfrezi is a type of curry in which marinated pieces of meat or vegetables are fried in oil and spices to produce a dry, thick sauce. It is cooked with green chilies, with the result that a jalfrezi can range in heat from a medium dish to a very hot one. Typically those eating jalfrezi cool it down by combining it with cream. Other main ingredients include pepper, onion and tomato.

Rose Cookies

Rose Cookies are delicious fried Christmas treats. Though named as cookies, they are not cookies in the strict sense of the term as they are not baked but deep fried in oil. Rose Cookies are also known by various other names like Rosette Cookies, Rosa Cookies, etc and are prepared with a sweetened batter consisting of flour, eggs, vanilla extract and coconut milk. Believed to be another culinary legacy left by the Portuguese in India, they were earlier known as Rose de Coque or Rose de Cookies in Portugal.

Kulkuls

Kulkuls are prepared in almost all Anglo-Indian homes during Christmas time. A variant of 'Filhoses Enroladas' a Portuguese Christmas sweet, kulkuls, (always referred to in the plural) are crunchy inch-long curled or shell shaped sweetened fried dough sweets. Sugar and flour are combined with eggs, milk and butter to soft dough and then small

marble sized balls of this dough are rolled on the tines of a fork or a comb to form a shell or a scroll. Then these are deep fried in hot oil. The kulkuls are later frosted or coated in hot melted sugar syrup.



Bijan Bhattacharya

The Pioneer of the New Theatre Movement

One of the foremost pioneers of the new theatre movement in Bangladesh, Bijan Bhattacharya was born on July 17, 1915, in Khankhanapur, Faridpur. His father's name was Khirodbihari Bhattacharya.

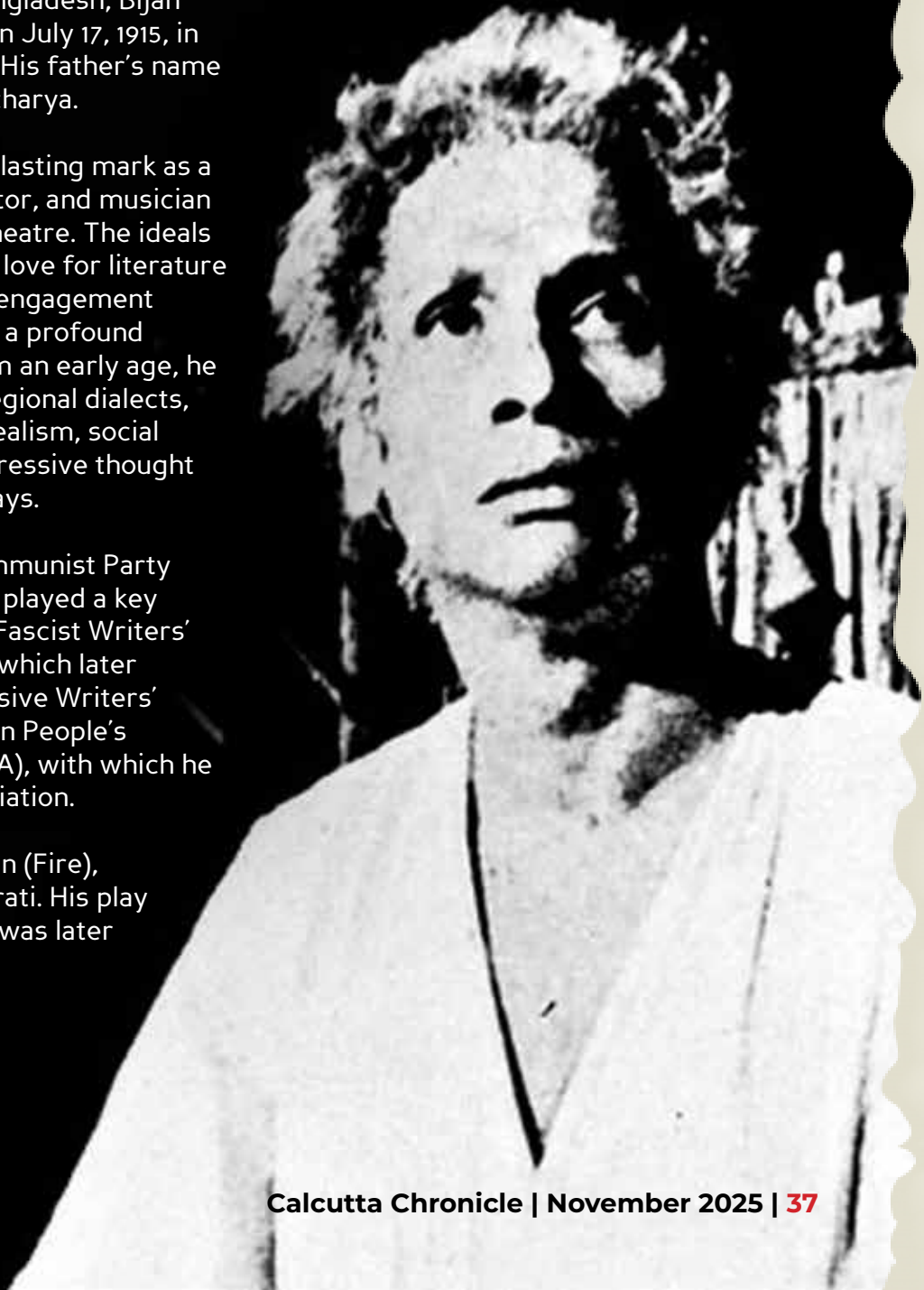


Chanchal Bhattacharya

Bijan Bhattacharya left a lasting mark as a playwright, producer, actor, and musician in the world of Bengali theatre. The ideals of his teacher father, his love for literature and music, and his deep engagement with Shakespeare all had a profound influence on his life. From an early age, he had close contact with regional dialects, which later shaped the realism, social consciousness, and progressive thought that characterized his plays.

In 1942, he joined the Communist Party as a full-time worker. He played a key role in forming the Anti-Fascist Writers' and Artists' Association, which later evolved into the Progressive Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), with which he maintained a close association.

In 1943, his first play, *Agun* (Fire), was staged by Natyabharati. His play *Jabanbandi* (Testimony) was later published in Arani.



■ STAGE CRAFT ■

In the aftermath of the famine of 1943, he wrote his most famous play, *Nabanna* (Fresh Harvest), which reflected his deep awareness of social realities.

In 1944, Bijan Bhattacharya himself played the lead role of "Pradhan" in *Nabanna*, produced by IPTA. A skilled singer as well, his performance brought him nationwide fame. *Nabanna* not only marked the beginning of the new theatre movement but also became its most influential and representative play.

In *Nabanna*, the main characters were drawn entirely from the peasant community. Rather than being presented as individual personalities, they represented the collective class of rural labourers. The play portrayed the collective life, suffering, and struggle of the entire peasant society. In *Nabanna*, the demands of ideology took precedence over mere artistic flourish.

Through his plays, Bijan Bhattacharya chronicled the pain and collective life

of the common people. In 1943, he married the renowned Jnanpith Award-winning Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, though the marriage was not long-lasting. Their only son Nabarun Bhattacharya, a Bengali writer, was born in 1948.

In 1946, against the backdrop of communal riots, he wrote *Jionkanya*. In another play, *Morachand*, through the character "Paban Baul," he inspired the masses to rise in protest with his songs.

Later in 1946, following ideological differences, he left IPTA and moved to Bombay, where he acted in films and wrote screenplays to earn a living. Returning to Calcutta in 1950, he founded the Calcutta Theatre Group, writing, performing, teaching, and directing plays for over two decades.

In 1966, he wrote *Debi Garjan* — twenty-two years after *Nabanna*. In those two decades, both society and the nation had undergone great change. *Debi Garjan* reflects those transformations vividly, revealing his artistic mastery and his vision of social revolution shaped by real-life experience.



■ STAGE CRAFT ■

Set against the backdrop of World War II, his play *Kalanka* is another significant work. Drawing from his own experience as a displaced teacher after the Partition of India, he wrote *Gotrantor* (Change of Lineage) in 1960.

In the preface to *Gotrantar*, the playwright wrote:
“It is not a question of morality — *Gotrantar* is a truth of life itself. And the truth of life shines as brightly as the sun, the moon, and the stars. To deny it would be against the very religion of a dramatist.”

Some of his other notable plays include *Chhayapath*, *Mastermashai*, *Dharma Gola*, and *Hanskhalir Hans*.

In 1970, he left the Calcutta Theatre Group and established his own theatre organization *Kabach-Kundal*, where he remained active until his death. During this period, he wrote and staged several plays, including *Krishnapakhya*, *Aaj Basanta*, *Swarnakumbha*, *Sonar Bangla*, and *Cholo Sagare*.

According to Dr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh: “Bijan Bhattacharya was a revolutionary — a playwright who believed in communist ideals. But he never imposed his political ideology upon his characters.”

The rare genius and pioneer of the new theatre movement, Bijan Bhattacharya, passed away on January 19, 1978.



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.

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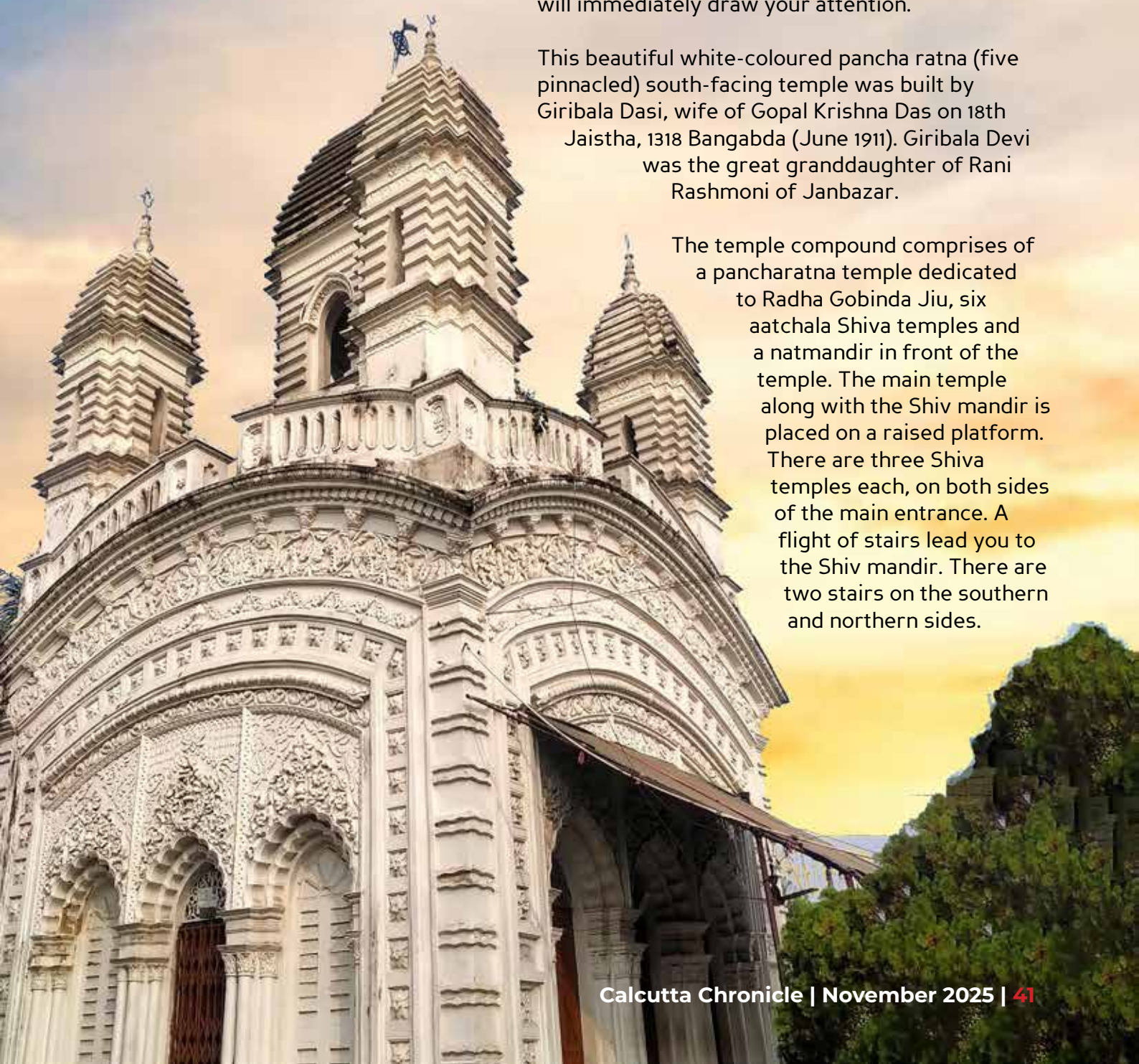
Giribala Thakurbari of Agarpara



A beautiful pancharatna temple by the side of the Ganges at Agarpara in North 24 Parganas district will immediately draw your attention.

This beautiful white-coloured pancha ratna (five pinnacled) south-facing temple was built by Giribala Dasi, wife of Gopal Krishna Das on 18th Jaistha, 1318 Bangabda (June 1911). Giribala Devi was the great granddaughter of Rani Rashmoni of Janbazar.

The temple compound comprises of a pancharatna temple dedicated to Radha Gobinda Jiu, six aatchala Shiva temples and a natmandir in front of the temple. The main temple along with the Shiv mandir is placed on a raised platform. There are three Shiva temples each, on both sides of the main entrance. A flight of stairs lead you to the Shiv mandir. There are two stairs on the southern and northern sides.



Each Shiva lingam has a distinct name. From the southern side they are referred to as – Rameswar, Rajeswar and Gopeswar; and from the northern side they are known as Tarakeswar, Bhuvaneswar and Giriswar. One can find beautiful stucco works not only in Radha Gobinda temple but also at the top of each entrance of the Shiva temples. It is testimony to the exquisite craftsmanship of the artisans.

The temple compound is well kept. There is a big natmandir just in front of the temple. The ceiling of the natmandir rests on a number of beautiful pillars. The floor of the same is made of white marble.

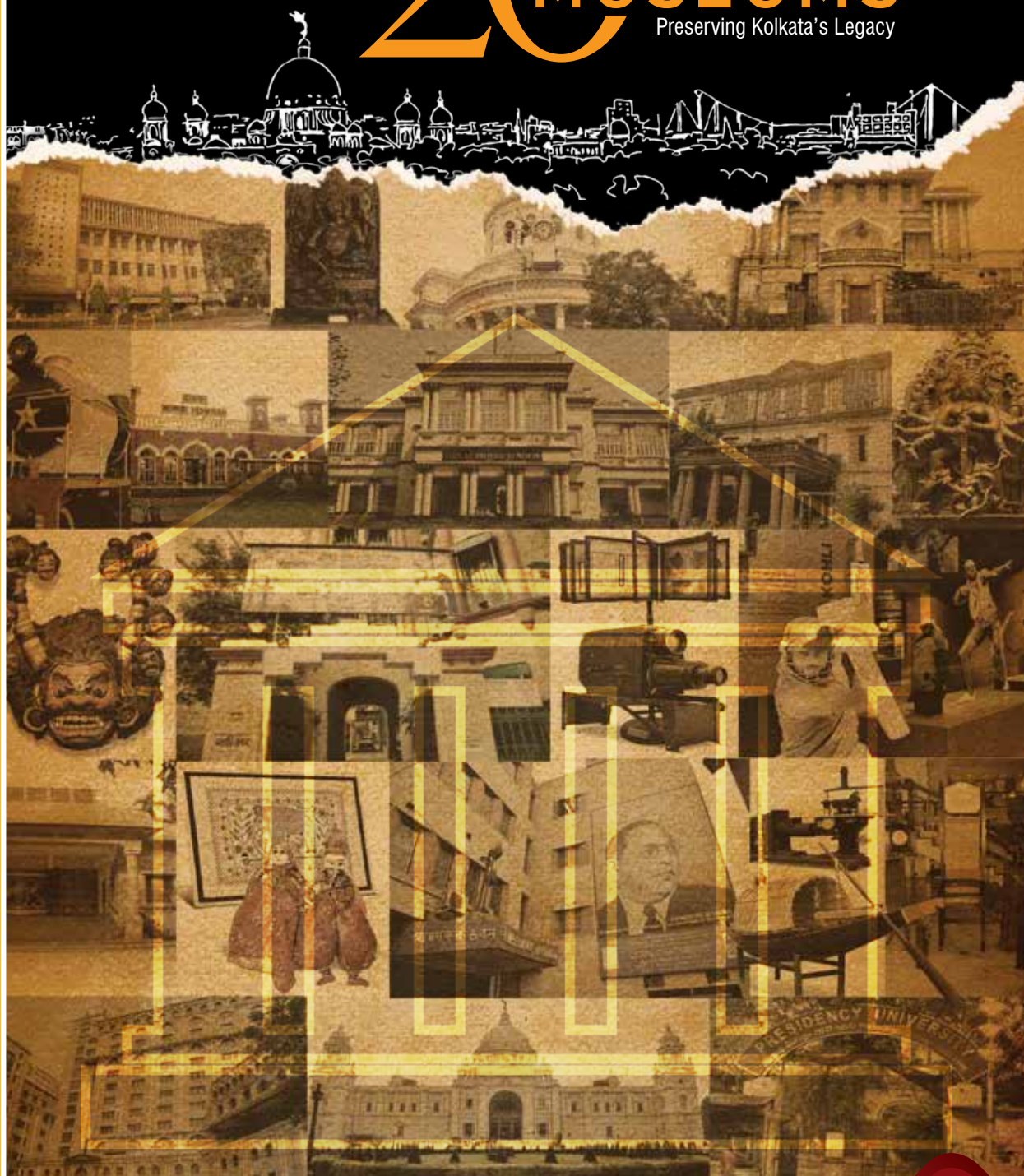
The festivals which are celebrated here with great pomp and splendour are Rashyatra, Dolyatra, and Janmastami.



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