

LA MARTINIÈRE FOR GIRLS

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কলকাতা
CITY OF JOY



HISTORY JOURNAL

6th Edition

HERITAGE BUILDINGS OF KOLKATA



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FOREWORD

When we think of "Kolkata," we think of home - a different universe, a place so magical that it cannot be described in words, it can only be felt.

It is impossible to capture all of Kolkata's heritage in a few pages, but with the Sixth Edition of our History Journal, we aim to walk you through the history of this enchanting city –the City of Joy. We invite you to explore the hidden gems and iconic landmarks that define Kolkata's rich heritage. Here, one street is not just a street but a bank of culture. One person is not just someone, but an artist in their own way. Every small shop on the road has a story to tell, and every yellow taxi gleams with years of experience. Through the pages of this Journal, you will discover the soul of the city. Each article, each photograph, is a piece of the larger mosaic that makes up our beloved Kolkata. *Indian culture's harmony with nature is reflected in its arts and crafts, portraying animals like elephants to symbolize human values and ecosystem bonding.*

Welcome to a world where history lives and breathes, and where the past and present coexist in a beautiful, eternal dance.

Welcome to Kolkata! Welcome home!

- Asikni Garodia
XII-B

“Kolkata”- A place where every lane speaks of the tapestry of time while also highlighting the cultural and monumental dynamic. Seeped in history and bursting with cultural vibrancy, Kolkata’s heritage buildings are the heartbeats of the city, echoing memories of struggle, art, literature, music and revolution. From our very school being a part of this heritage to the house where Tagore lived that speaks volumes about our heritage - Kolkata has it all. While we show you Kolkata’s cultural legacy through this Journal, it is also significant to keep this legacy alive by not damaging any heritage buildings, which we can quite often see happening. Through these articles, evocative photographs and personal reflections, we not only hope to capture Kolkata in a mere few pages but also hope to keep this legacy and culture alive. It was truly an enriching experience to work on this journal. As we present the Sixth Edition of the History Journal to you, we hope to create a bridge between you and the city we call home.

- Akanksha Panda
XII-B



KALIGHAT KALI TEMPLE: A TIMELESS ABODE OF DEVOTION

Kalighat Kali Temple, nestled in the heart of Kolkata, stands as a revered sanctuary dedicated to the formidable Hindu goddess Kali. Perched on the banks of the Adi Ganga, the temple's history dates back to 1809. Yet, references to its sacred grounds are found in ancient texts such as the 15th-century Mansar Bhasan and the 17th-century Kavi Kankan Chandi, hinting at its deep-rooted spiritual significance. Esteemed as the holiest Shakti Peeth among the 52 Shakti Peethams of India, Kalighat holds a unique place in Hindu mythology. It is believed to be the divine location where the toes of the right foot of Shakti or Sati fell during Shiva's Rudra Tandava. This profound connection imbues the temple with a powerful aura of spirituality and reverence. The central shrine houses an enigmatic image of Goddess Kali, whose form appears mysteriously incomplete. Despite this, the devotion of the pilgrims remains unwavering, as they gather in large numbers to offer their prayers and seek blessings.

Annually, the temple comes alive with the vibrant and traditional celebration of Kali Puja.



THE KALIGHAT KALI TEMPLE



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: A SYMPHONY OF TIMELESS GRACE

St. Paul's Cathedral in Kolkata, a prominent Christian church built in 1847, stands proudly at the southern end of the Maidan, east of the majestic Victoria Memorial. It was intended to replace St. John's Church as the principal cathedral of the Diocese. St. Paul's Cathedral holds the distinction of being the first Anglican cathedral built in the overseas territories of the British Empire, marking a significant milestone in the spread of Anglicanism.

One of the cathedral's most notable features is its Indo-Gothic architectural style. This unique style combines traditional Gothic elements, such as pointed arches and ribbed vaults, with adaptations suited to the tropical climate of Kolkata. The building is constructed from a mix of local materials and imported stone, ensuring durability in the face of the region's weather conditions. Its tall spire and baroque stained glass windows are reminiscent of English cathedrals, while the open, airy design helps keep the interior cool.

Beyond its architectural significance, St. Paul's Cathedral remains an active place of worship and a vibrant part of Kolkata's religious life. The cathedral hosts regular services, including well-attended events during Christmas and Easter, drawing both locals and tourists.



THE ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL – PAST AND PRESENT



BADRIDAS TEMPLE : WHERE DEVOTION MEETS DIVINE ARTISTRY

The Badridas Temple, also known as the Parshwanath Temple, is a Jain Svetamber temple and garden located on Badridas Temple Street, Gouribari in Maniktala, Kolkata. This temple was built in 1933 by Rai Badridas Bahadur Mookim. It serves as a place of worship dedicated to Lord Jagannath, a form of the Hindu god Vishnu, and acts as a spiritual centre for the local Hindu community.

The architecture of Badridas Temple is inspired by the renowned Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha. The temple is noted for its intricate marble work and beautifully decorated interiors, which reflect the traditional craftsmanship of the era. The elaborate marble carvings, colorful frescoes, and detailed ornamental work make it a visual delight for visitors. The temple complex includes a serene garden, which adds to the pleasant atmosphere and provides a relaxing retreat for worshippers and tourists alike.

The temple is not only an architectural marvel but also a vibrant place of worship. It remains well-maintained and is frequently visited by devotees and tourists. The temple hosts various religious ceremonies and festivals throughout the year, drawing large crowds. One of the most significant events celebrated at the temple is the Rath Yatra festival. During this festival, an idol of Lord Jagannath is placed on a chariot and pulled through the streets, attracting thousands of devotees who come to participate in the festivities and seek blessings.



THE BADRIDAS TEMPLE – PAST AND PRESENT



SCOTTISH CHURCH COLLEGE :

THE LEGACY OF KOLKATA'S LEARNING

The spread of European education in alliance with the doctrine of Christianity had been an important impetus to missionary enterprise in India in the nineteenth century. Scottish Church College, founded on 13th of July, 1830 as the General Assembly's Institution and given its present name in 1929 is an institution born out of one such impetus. The college founder, Rev. Alexander Duff, was the first missionary to India from the Church of Scotland. His idea was to set up an institution that linked western education with the Christian mission and the eventual progress of the people – years later the College is committed to the vision of its founding father and aims at academic excellence along with social awareness and character.

The Scottish Church College is currently one of the oldest and most prestigious educational institutions in India. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses in various disciplines, including arts, science, and commerce. The college continues to uphold its legacy of academic excellence and is affiliated with the University of Calcutta.

An interesting fact about the Scottish Church College is that it was the first institution in India to provide English-medium education. Rev. Dr. Alexander Duff's pioneering approach in blending Christian missionary zeal with modern education laid the groundwork for subsequent educational reforms in India.



SCOTTISH CHURCH COLLEGE – PAST AND PRESENT



PRESIDENCY COLLEGE: WHERE DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT

Presidency University, Kolkata (formerly Presidency College, Kolkata), is a public state university located in College Street, Kolkata. It was among the best colleges in the country when the institute was affiliated to University of Calcutta. The institution was elevated to university status in 2010 after functioning as a constituent college of the University of Calcutta for about 193 years.

Presidency College was established in 1817 (as Hindu College); renamed Presidency College in 1855. It was established to provide higher education to the youth of Bengal, promoting Western sciences and liberal arts. It was part of the broader Bengal Renaissance movement and aimed to cultivate an enlightened and educated Indian elite capable of advancing societal reforms and development.

Presidency University, Kolkata, is now a public state university renowned for its rigorous academic standards, research output, and historic significance. It offers a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs across various disciplines. The institution continues to be a prominent center for higher education in India.

Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European Nobel Laureate in Literature, was a student of Presidency College (though he didn't complete his degree). The institution has a long list of distinguished alumni, including several Nobel laureates, prime ministers, and prominent intellectuals.

PRESIDENCY COLLEGE – PAST AND PRESENT



LA MARTINIÈRE , KOLKATA: WHERE LABOUR AND CONSISTENCY CONVERGE

The La Martiniere Schools in Kolkata, established in 1836, are two of India's most renowned educational institutions: La Martiniere for Boys and La Martiniere for Girls. Both schools were founded as part of the legacy of Major General Claude Martin, a French soldier who served in the British East India Company. His vision was to create institutions that would offer quality education and build character among young people.

La Martiniere for Boys is known for its grand architecture, combining European and Indian styles. The school's campus, with its sprawling grounds and historic buildings, reflects its rich heritage. Over the years, it has built a reputation for academic excellence, producing graduates who have excelled in various fields. The school emphasizes a holistic education, balancing academics with sports, cultural activities, and leadership training.

La Martiniere for Girls, founded later, mirrors the values of its counterpart while fostering an environment where young women can excel. The school has a strong focus on academics, but it also encourages participation in extracurricular activities, promoting the development of well-rounded individuals. Like the boys' school, it boasts an impressive alumni network, with many former students making significant contributions in various spheres. Together, the two La Martiniere schools have played a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape of Kolkata, maintaining a legacy of excellence for nearly two centuries.



LA MARTINIÈRE , KOLKATA



THE INDIAN MUSEUM: WHISPERS OF THE PAST

The Indian Museum, founded in 1814 within the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkata, is the earliest and largest multipurpose museum in the Asia-Pacific region. This institution symbolizes India's transition from medieval times to modernity, significantly impacting its socio-cultural and scientific development. Established under Danish botanist Nathaniel Wallich, the museum operates under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and holds national importance.

Initially conceived as "an institution for the reception of all articles that might be sent to illustrate Orient manners and history," the museum has expanded its scope, evolving into a modern establishment with extensive collections in art, archaeology, anthropology, zoology, geology, and botany. It also features a library, publication department, modeling and presentation units, a photography section, and a conservation unit.

The Indian Museum aims to be more inclusive and community-centric, encouraging public participation and interaction. This transformation reflects a symbiotic relationship between artifacts and events, connecting deeply with people and their culture. The museum designs exhibitions and events to cater to diverse visitors, using storytelling and digital tools to enhance interactivity and interpretation.

Beyond exhibitions, the museum conducts scientific research in art, archaeology, and anthropology, publishing findings to disseminate knowledge globally. It also organizes events and seminars, documenting activities in digital formats for broader access.

As it embraces modernity while preserving its historical essence, the Indian Museum aspires to be a dynamic institution that connects people with their cultural heritage. Through public engagement and digital advancements, it serves as a bridge between the past and present, making history accessible and engaging for future generation.



THE INDIAN MUSEUM – PAST AND PRESENT



NATIONAL LIBRARY: THE TREASURE TROVE OF KNOWLEDGE

The National Library of India in Kolkata is the country's largest and one of its most prestigious libraries, situated in the serene Belvedere Estate, Alipore. Housed in the historic colonial-era Belvedere House, the library spans a 30-acre campus conducive to reading and research. It features multiple well-equipped reading rooms catering to scholars, researchers, and the public, and offers a range of digital resources, including e-books, online journals, databases, and a digital catalog for easy access to materials. The library boasts over 2.2 million books in various languages and a significant collection of rare manuscripts, subscriptions to numerous national and international periodicals and newspapers, and an extensive collection of 86,000 maps and atlases. Special collections include a section dedicated to young readers and a rare books collection featuring first editions, antique volumes, and works by eminent authors. The library provides reference services with staff to assist with research queries and finding resources, and regularly organizes exhibitions, lectures, and cultural events. It also focuses on the conservation and preservation of rare and fragile materials. The National Library of India is a dynamic center of learning, preserving the nation's literary and cultural heritage, and supports scholars, researchers, and the public with its extensive collections and modern facilities, promoting knowledge and a love for literature.



THE NATIONAL LIBRARY – PAST AND PRESENT



VICTORIA MEMORIAL: KOLKATA'S CROWN JEWEL

Victoria Memorial, the first building in Queen's Way, is perhaps the most renowned building in Kolkata. Established in 1921, this beautiful marble monument stands tall at the very heart of Kolkata. It is dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria, Britain's empress from 1876 to 1901.

It is the largest monument dedicated to a monarch in the world. It was built by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy at the time. It is a majestic building, with domes and high temples built in the Indo-Saracenic style.

It now serves as a museum, immortalising the era of the British Raj in India. It contains artefacts from the British empire that helps us to visualise India under the colonial influence. The museum has 25 galleries. The Memorial is located in the middle of the Maidan, and serves as a great tourist attraction.

Victoria Memorial, in all its history and grandeur, is one of the most iconic buildings in the city.



**VICTORIA MEMORIAL –
PAST AND PRESENT**



EDEN GARDENS: THE MECCA OF CRICKET

Eden Gardens is an international cricket stadium near the Maidan, B. B. D. Bagh. It is named after Eden Gardens park, where it is located. It was the first purpose built ground for the sport.

This huge stadium, established in 1864, is the oldest cricket stadium in India, as well as the second largest. It is also the third largest cricket stadium in the world. It has a capacity of 68,000 people.

It is owned by the Cricket Association of Bengal and the home-ground of our very own Kolkata Knight Riders. The Eden Gardens stands have been named after prominent local cricketers and soldiers. It has hosted 15 World Cup matches to date.

Eden Gardens, often referred to as the 'home of Indian cricket,' is known for its exciting matches and wild crowds. A match watched from the stadium is an unforgettable experience that all must try.



EDEN GARDENS



JORASANKO THAKUR BARI: THE GEM OF THE LITERARY WORLD

The Palace of the Tagore Family, also known as Jorasanko Thakur Bari (Thakur Bari means "House of the Tagores"), is the ancestral home of the illustrious Tagore family in Kolkata, West Bengal. Jorasanko Thakur Bari was built in 1784 by Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, the grandfather of the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

The mansion was constructed to serve as the primary residence for the Tagore family, one of the most prominent and influential families in Bengal. The Tagores were known for their contributions to literature, art, music, and social reform. The house became a cultural hub and played a significant role in the Bengal Renaissance.

Today, Jorasanko Thakur Bari is a part of Rabindra Bharati University, established in 1962 to preserve the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore and promote arts and culture. The mansion has been converted into a museum, known as the Rabindra Bharati Museum, which houses a vast collection of artifacts, manuscripts, paintings, and personal belongings of the Tagore family. The building and its surroundings are well-maintained, attracting numerous visitors, researchers, and scholars.

The West Bengal government and Rabindra Bharati University have undertaken significant restoration efforts to preserve the mansion's historical and cultural heritage. These efforts ensure that the legacy of the Tagore family remains intact for future generations.

Jorasanko Thakur Bari hosts various cultural events, including Rabindra Jayanti (Rabindranath Tagore's birthday), literary festivals, and art exhibitions. These events draw large crowds and continue the mansion's tradition of being a center for cultural exchange.

JORASANKO THAKUR BARI – PAST AND PRESENT



CALCUTTA HIGH COURT: PILLARS OF KOLKATA'S LIBERTY

The Calcutta High Court, inaugurated in 1862 during British rule, stands as one of India's oldest and most esteemed judicial institutions. Situated in Kolkata, it exercises jurisdiction not only over the state but also over the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Architecturally, the Calcutta High Court building is a masterpiece, celebrated for its majestic design that seamlessly integrates classical European architectural elements with intricate Indo-Islamic motifs. This blend reflects the historical cross-cultural influences prevalent during the time of its construction. Beyond its architectural splendor, the Calcutta High Court plays a pivotal role in the Indian judicial system. It serves as a cornerstone for justice, adjudicating a wide spectrum of cases ranging from civil and criminal disputes to constitutional matters of national significance. Its decisions and rulings resonate throughout the legal landscape of India, shaping precedents and contributing to the evolution of Indian jurisprudence.

CALCUTTA HIGH COURT – PAST AND PRESENT



TOLLYGUNGE CLUB :

AN ODE TO TRADITION

The Tollygunge Club, located in Kolkata, India, is one of the oldest and most prestigious country clubs in the country.

The full name of the club is "The Tollygunge Club" and is popularly known as Tolly Club. Tolly Club was founded in 1895 by William Dixon Cruickshank as an equestrian and horse racing Club.

The Tollygunge Club was founded to provide facilities for games, sports and pastimes in the neighborhood of Kolkata and to afford to its members all the usual privileges, advantages, conveniences and accommodation of a residential and Gymkhana Club. The land was partly acquired and partly leased from Prince Gholam Mohammad Shah, son of Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

Established in 1895, it has a rich history and is known for its colonial-era architecture and lush green surroundings. The club offers various recreational facilities including golf, tennis, swimming, and horse riding, among others. It also has dining options, banquet halls, and accommodations for its members and guests. Over the years, the Tollygunge Club has been a hub for social gatherings and sports activities, maintaining its status as a prominent landmark in Kolkata's social scene. The club's architecture reflects its colonial heritage, with elegant buildings and sprawling lawns that transport visitors back in time. The club also undertakes conservation initiatives to preserve its natural surroundings, including efforts to maintain its lush greenery and biodiversity.

TOLLYGUNGE CLUB – PAST AND PRESENT



KOLKATA RACECOURSE :

RACE COURSE

The Kolkata Race Course, also known as the Royal Calcutta Turf Club (RCTC), is one of the oldest and most prestigious horse racing venues in India. The Royal Calcutta Turf Club, now known as the Kolkata Race Course, was established in 1847. It has a long and storied history, making it one of the oldest horse racing venues in India. The Royal Calcutta Turf Club (RCTC) was established during the British colonial era. Its primary purpose was to provide a venue for horse racing, a popular sport among the British officials and the Indian elite of that time. Horse racing served not only as a form of entertainment but also as a social event where the colonial society mingled and socialized.

Over the years, the Kolkata Race Course gained prominence as one of the premier horse racing venues in India. It became known for its well-maintained tracks, high-quality facilities, and hosting of prestigious racing events. The RCTC also played a significant role in promoting the sport of horse racing in the region, attracting enthusiasts, breeders, and betters from across the country. Throughout its history, the Kolkata Race Course has witnessed various changes and developments, reflecting the evolution of the sport and the society around it. Despite facing challenges such as changing demographics, regulatory changes, and competition from other forms of entertainment, the race course has retained its status as a cultural landmark in Kolkata and continues to host thrilling racing events, social gatherings, and cultural activities. During the British Raj, the Kolkata Race Course was a major social hub where the city's aristocracy and British officials gathered. It continues to be a popular social destination in modern times.

The Kolkata Race Course, with its roots tracing back to 1847, remains a timeless emblem of equestrian elegance and sporting tradition in India. Steeped in history, it has evolved into more than just a venue for thrilling horse racing events; it's a cultural cornerstone of Kolkata's social fabric. Despite facing challenges, including the recent disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the race course perseveres, offering a blend of excitement, prestige, and community engagement that ensures its enduring relevance in the hearts of enthusiasts and the city alike.



KOLKATA RACECOURSE



RABINDRA SETU: SPANNING THE RIVER OF TIME

The Rabindra Setu, also popularly known as the gateway to Kolkata is one of the many engineering beauties of Kolkata. It is a cantilever bridge which was built over the Hoogly River, in 1943. In fact, the bridge was originally named as the New Howrah Bridge, for it replaced a pontoon bridge which existed in the same location. Back in 1860, a pontoon bridge was built between Howrah and Kolkata which was unfortunately damaged during a great cyclone in 1874 and caused major losses. Then the construction of the bridge was completed during late 1874 and was opened to traffic in October. That pontoon bridge would periodically unfasten, to allow streamers and vessels to pass. Gradually, the load increased and it was impossible for that bridge to handle such load.

With this, the Port commissioners started planning for a new bridge in 1905, which was called the New Howrah Bridge and later, on June 14th, 1965, it was renamed as the Rabindra Setu, in honour of Rabindranath Tagore - a great Bengali poet, who was also the first Indian and Asian Nobel laureate. The most interesting thing about Rabindra Setu is that it is the busiest cantilever bridge in the world. Not only that but also it was the third-longest cantilever bridge during its time of construction and it is also the sixth longest bridge of its type in the world. It is quite surprising to find out that this bridge does not have any nuts and bolts. It is of a riveted construction, that is, the bridge deck hangs from 39 pairs of hangers suspended from the main trusses. The first vehicle to use this bridge was a solitary tram.

RABINDRA SETU – PAST AND PRESENT

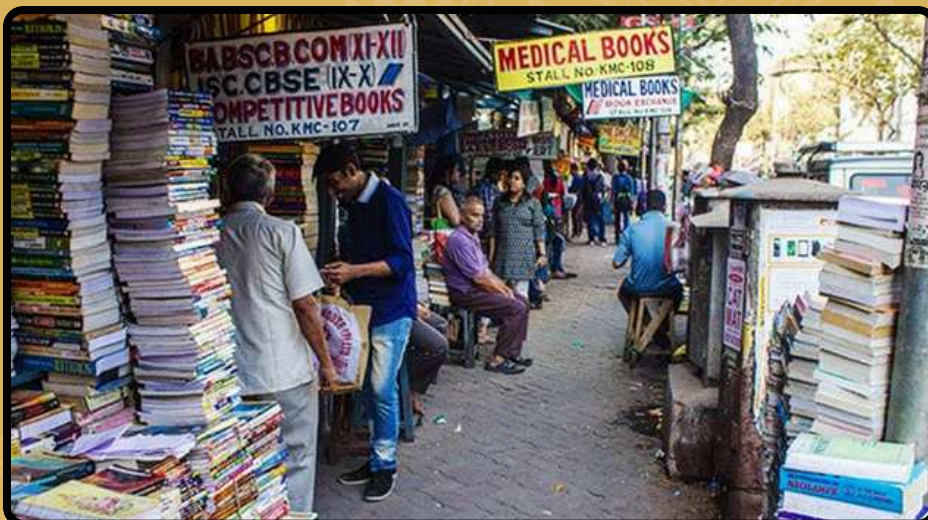


COLLEGE STREET : THE LITERARY LIFELINE OF KOLKATA

College Street, is a prominent center of Kolkata's literary crowd. It is the largest second-hand book market in the world and the largest book Market in India.

College Street is colloquially known as 'Boi-Para.' The street came to be known as the College Street black in 1817 when the Hindu college was established. The street on which David Hare established the Hindu college came to be known as 'College Street' under the Governorship of Lord Wellesley. Lord Wellesley first introduced the construction of planned roads in Calcutta and it was under him that The Great Arterial Road found its new name - College Street. The first medical college in India, The Calcutta Medical College was in fact established in College Street. Not only that but also, in 1885, the first session of the Indian National Conference was held at the prestigious Albert Hall of College Street. Currently, College Street is regularly filled with students from nearby institutions, literary enthusiasts and travelers from all around the world. College Street has its own unique charm. One can find all types of books here and the universal availability of books makes this experience truly mesmerising.

COLLEGE STREET- PAST AND PRESENT



BHIM CHANDRA NAG: KOLKATA'S ICONIC MISHTI HAVEN

Nestled in Nirmal Chandra Street, Bhim Chandra Nag is a legendary sweet shop established in 1826. Known for its iconic creations like Ledikeni, Ashubhog, and Abar Khabo mishti, it has consistently ranked among the best sweet shops in Kolkata.

Bhim Chandra Nag is celebrated as the creator of the Ledikeni, a beloved Bengali sweet. With almost two centuries of history, this heritage eatery has managed to stay relevant by embracing contemporary trends while preserving its rich cultural legacy. This blend of tradition and modernity is one of the many reasons why it holds a special place in the hearts of true Calcuttans.

In Bengal, sweets, or mishti, are an integral part of social, religious, and everyday life. During the 19th century, a period marked by reform and renaissance, Kolkata saw a surge in sweet shops as talented confectioners capitalized on the Bengali love for sweets.

Paran Chandra Nag was one such visionary who founded Bhim Chandra Nag in Bowbazar, Kolkata, naming it after his son. The shop quickly became a favorite among the locals, striking a chord with its delectable offerings. Its list of patrons reads like a who's who of Bengali history, including luminaries such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Rani Rashmoni, and Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee.

Bhim Chandra Nag continues to be a cherished institution in Kolkata, embodying the city's enduring love affair with sweets.



BHIM CHANDRA NAG



GIRISH CHANDRA DEY AND NAKUR CHANDRA NANDY: A LEGACY OF SWEETS SINCE 1844

Established in 1844, Girish Chandra Dey and Nakur Chandra Nandy is a renowned sweet shop in Kolkata, holding a prestigious heritage tag. Known for its exquisite Butterscotch Sandesh, Malai Sandesh, Malai Roll, and Kacha Golla, this shop has been delighting sweet lovers for nearly two centuries.

Founded by Mahesh Chandra Dey, the shop was later managed by his son, Girish Chandra Dey. Eventually, Girish's son-in-law, Nakur Chandra Nandy, took over, and the shop was renamed to honour both family members. It has become a pioneer in crafting sandesh, a classic Bengali sweet, and remains a popular destination for locals and tourists alike.



GIRISH CHANDRA DEY AND NAKUR CHANDRA NANDY



INDIAN COFFEE HOUSE: KOLKATA'S HISTORICAL HUB OF INTELLECTUALISM

Located opposite Presidency University, the Indian Coffee House in Kolkata has been a cherished landmark since it was established in 1941. Known for its iconic dishes like Mutton Kaviraji, Veg Cutlet, Chicken Afghani, and Mutton Cutlet, this heritage restaurant offers more than just food—it offers a rich slice of history and culture.

Originally established as Albert Hall in 1876, the venue was transformed into a coffee house in 1941 and later renamed the Indian Coffee House in 1947 by the Indian Government. The building's classic Indo-Saracenic architecture, with its high ceilings, balconies, and long-corded fans, creates an atmosphere that transports visitors back in time. The turbaned waiters, dressed in starched white uniforms, add to the colonial charm.

The Indian Coffee House has long been a hub for intellectuals and creative minds, hosting discussions and debates among legendary figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Manna Dey, and Amartya Sen. Its walls have echoed with conversations on topics ranging from global politics and cultural revolutions to cinema and literature, making it a vital part of Kolkata's cultural landscape.



INDIAN COFFEE HOUSE



THE PROTECTION OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

Culture and Heritage shapes human society

The identity of a nation, region, community or a group lies in its past- its historical and cultural heritage which is unique to that group or society and reflects the rich and diverse creations of humankind. What comes to one's mind when you hear the term cultural heritage- arts, crafts, and monuments? Cultural Heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from the past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Cultural Heritage includes tangible culture such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art and artefacts. It also includes intangible cultural traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts as well as folklore, language and natural heritage such as landscapes and biodiversity. Whatever the shape, size and form of a heritage it requires efforts to protect and safeguard it. But why do we need to preserve, conserve and protect?

Why preserve, conserve and protect?

Culture and heritage shapes human society. We all grew up on stories- mythologies, fables, historical events glorifying our past which helped us construct our identities. Human race has always relied on its past to build the present and construct its future. Generations have lived before us and have shaped the world we reside in. It is important to protect our heritage as it adds character and distinctiveness to the place, region or community and hence provides a sense of identity.

Heritage, tangible as well as intangible, has a positive influence on many aspects of the way a community develops. Preservation, conservation and protection is highly valuable because:

- The historic environment is a proven source of benefit to local economies, particularly through tourism.
- An attractive heritage benefits in attracting external investment as well as maintaining existing businesses and not just tourism.
- Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is an important factor in creating sustainable communities.



- A greater social inclusiveness can be achieved through heritage protection.
- Heritage places are an excellent educational resource for people of all ages.
- World Heritage properties also harbor options for society to mitigate and adapt to climate change through ecosystem benefits, such as water and climate regulation as well as carbon that is stored in world forest sites.

World Heritage Day

April 18, every year, marks World Heritage Day. The origins of this special day can be traced back to 1982, when the ICOMOS—the International Council for Monuments and Sites established this day as the International Day for Monuments and Sites. Later, UNESCO adopted this day as the World Heritage Day during its 22nd General conference. A theme is picked every year for the commemoration of the day. The theme for 2021 being, “Complex Pasts: Diverse Futures”. The theme not only highlights the urgency to preserve, conserve and uplift the legacies of monuments and cultures, but also the desperate need to critically analyse, comprehend and recognize the diversity around us. The global networks of World Heritage help raise awareness on impacts of climate change on human societies and cultural diversity, biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as world’s natural and cultural heritage.

Challenges for management of Heritage sites

A few cities from India such as Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Gwalior and Orchha are listed as UNESCO’s World Heritage Cities. Every city is promoted by the local governments by identifying its unique heritage in terms of architecture observed in palaces, forts, temples, individual houses or neighbourhoods. Due to the recognition by UNESCO, these cities get a chance of publicity and attracting tourists and may also gain some financial assistance from UNESCO for conservation of the sites. However, India has immense wealth of heritage sites which also require attention and preservation. Only select sites, depending upon its significance, get more attention for conservation.

It is challenging to manage and protect the vast rich cultural heritage of India especially due to lack of proper funds. Moreover, apathy on the part of common public, government and other stakeholders results in complete neglect of sites of historical and cultural significance. Lack of latest technology and methods for conservation can also be a challenge in the current ever-increasing pollution and climate change. What can we as citizens do? Apart from trained manpower and funds can we as citizens come together and adopt a site? Use available resources to preserve, and protect the local heritage sites which in turn can draw attention from larger funding bodies for safeguarding our cultural heritage.



It is our civic responsibility to acknowledge and honor the heritage and traditions of not only our own communities but also those of others. We must also make the necessary efforts to overcome the outdated and archaic narratives and ideologies which will help lead us to a more tolerant and respectable future. Our involvement in the World Heritage Day is a step in the right direction to achieve our goals of inclusivity and understanding the multiplicities of the various communities and cultures across the world. We must pledge to contribute to this great cause of honoring the reverential heritage of monumental sites as well as the multifaceted heritage of diverse cultures and communities across the world.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN BENGAL



SUNDARBAN NATIONAL PARK



BISHNUPUR TEMPLES



DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY



SHANTINIKETAN



NEORA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK



এই শহর
আমার
নয়নমাণি,
এ শহর জানে
আমার
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THIS CITY IS THE APPLE OF MY EYE,
THIS CITY KNOWS MY STORY



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Heritage Buildings of Kolkata

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