



CALCUTTA  
HERITAGE  
COLLECTIVE

• Respect • Restore • Reuse

# The CHC Journal

Volume I Issue VI  
February 2022

Image source: Welcome Collection : Watercolor by an Indian artist, 19<sup>th</sup> century

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## Point of View

6 months to this beautiful Journal! 4 years of Calcutta Heritage Collective! Some steps taken, miles to go yet! For those interested in History and Heritage, we seem to be sitting on a treasureland waiting to be discovered. Almost like the first explorers. There is so much to be done. So much work to do towards realising our vision of Restore Respect and Reuse! Bengal has gone through turbulent times post Independence and the resultant Partition, bringing in a huge influx of people from across the border, creating a socio political divide between the haves and have nots, resulting in extreme Naxalism, where aristocracy and enterprise were specifically targeted, plundered and looted. Unlike most of India, We in Bengal, are perhaps only now being able to focus on our lost Heritage. For decades our Aristocracy literally were forced to go into hiding. Now that it is being unearthed, one requires a very

sensitive handling of the situation. Firstly there is the issue of the remnants of their beautiful historic properties, very often now beyond the capacities of the custodian families to upkeep especially as the families have grown and ownerships have become divided. How do they get their rightful dues as well as maintain and sustain the Heritage? Secondly how does the general public get access to these magnificent structures? Thirdly and most importantly there must be some question of historic authenticity. Very often the present day custodians weave stories using social media, spinning yarns of aggrandisement, not necessarily historically true. Post independence, in a democratic nation Heritage belongs to all of us. We, The People need to come forward to claim, sustain and be responsible towards our common inherited legacy. It's historic authentication is therefore our common responsibility. Along with the maintenance and sustenance of the physical properties. Hand in hand with this authentication and sustenance planning of Heritage structures, Bengal is a treasure trove for Heritage Tourism. The Shakti and Bhakti Movement had a huge presence in Bengal, As well as the Budhists, Islamic and five colonial settlements, The French, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch and British had their presence here. Calcutta has been immensely cosmopolitan with its fair share of Greeks, Jews, Chinese as well as Indians from several states. To trace so much history is an exciting prospect. To work towards sustaining it for the future should be the responsibility of this generation ~ **Ipsita Ganguli**, *author, poet, heritage enthusiast, CHC journal co-editor, dame extraordinaire*

Members are welcome to contribute for any of the journal sections. We would love to publish your articles/notes. Please message Vibha Mitra (+919830933434) or Ipsita Ganguli (+919831283192) or send an email to [contact@calcuttaheritagecollective.com](mailto:contact@calcuttaheritagecollective.com)

# Respect . Restore . Reuse



Suniti Chattopadhyay house has been converted and is being **reused** as commercial space

We need to be vocal to preserve the gems from the past. They are razed for financial gain. Active legislation and forceful implementation may help us save these

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/a-quiet-de-listing-of-heritage-buildings-in-calcutta/cid/1677975>



Poet Jatinder Mohan Bagchi house has been converted and being **reused** as a cafe

## Did you know?

This is an interesting place. Manohar the Dacoit who lived closeby used to pray in this Kali Bari before going around to waylay travellers through the dense forest which is what that area was. True to the thuggee ritual human sacrifice was undertaken but later replaced by animal sacrifice. Inside there is an ancient well in the courtyard. Also, the stone on which the sacrifice was made exists till date



19<sup>th</sup> Centruy Britishers started the Richie Road dhobhi ghat where 500 dhobhis wash clothes



## The Bengal Story

During the 18th and 19th century Calcutta was the cradle of resurgence social, economic and political. At the cynosure of this was the Brahma Samaj which heralded the Bengal Renaissance. It was the first organised movement on British Indian soil and laid the foundation for a new, educated and secular India. It condemned superstition and dogma, unscientific rituals, priests and all places of worship. It played a crucial role in suppressing the caste system and dowry. They stressed on women's education and campaigned against child marriage and catalysed the passing of the Special Marriages Act of 1872. The first meeting was held on August 20, 1828 at a house in Chitpore road in Calcutta. It was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Prasanna Coomar Tagore and Debendranath Tagore. They wanted to change contemporary Hindu society without uprooting themselves from tradition. Ironically this sense of cultural pride and patriotism was a consequence of the Western education they were exposed to. The movement lost momentum by the end of the 19th century but it had a long lasting impact on the psyche of the Bengali middle class ~ **Vibha Mitra**

<http://www.thebrahmosamaj.net/history/history.html>



## Down Memory Lane

A few memories of Partition and a Lost Heritage. As one of the very last generation of survivors who recall the pain and trauma of Partition, it is only now that some memories emerge from the subconscious of those – who like myself, were children at that time. Though shielded and protected by elders, we still carry within us... and remember that vague sense, that all pervading sense of fear and foreboding of those days... the furrowed brows of our parents,... the frequent hushed meetings of family elders. My mother Savitri, sister Maya and I flew out from Karachi to Bombay in early 1947, with the bare minimum of our possessions, on a BOAC plane (in jest often referred to as Better On A Camel). Many years later, I inherited this beautiful 3-tier jewellery box, gifted to my mother by her uncle as a wedding present, which somehow made it across the border. The beautiful “meenakari” work is much admired today, as well as the few ornaments inherited by us. A treasured piece of heritage indeed! ~ **Maina Bhagat**



# Our Cultural Heritage



One of the main festivals celebrated in Bengal, Makar Sankranti is more popularly called Poush Sankranti or Poush Parbon in this state. It marks the first day of the sun's transit into Makara rashi (Capricorn), marking the end of the month with the winter solstice and the start of longer days. Many observers go to sacred rivers or lakes and bathe in a ceremony of thanks to the sun. The most common food for celebration is called pithe, hence in Bengal this festival is also called Pithe Parbon. Along with pithe, Payesh made of rice, milk and date palm jaggery is a winter dessert cooked and offered to the gods virtually in every household. Poush Sankranti is also celebrated with Nabanna. In Bengal Nabanno (নবান্ন) festival was celebrated to ensure good crops and healthy livestock for the coming year. As the name describes, Nava means new and Anna refers to grain. It is a time of joy as the smell of newly harvested crops rise into the air. This ritual is also celebrated by eating the first crop in a preparation made with the new rice grains, milk, jaggery and seasonal fruits which incidentally is also named Nabanna ~ **Ipsita Ganguli**

Over years, Kumartuli has developed into an iconic heritage precinct in the city. It is the traditional potters' quarter in the northern part of Kolkata, known particularly for its beautiful clay images of Gods and Goddesses. Most of the artisans use the clay from the river beside their homes to fashion into pots to be sold at Sutanuti Bazar which later came to be known as Burrabazar. They took to making the images of gods and goddesses which were worshipped in large numbers in the mansions all around. These idols are now not only sold locally but also exported all over the world



Image Credits: Supriya Newar

# Know your CHC Members



A 'Calcuttan' and an alum of Modern High, **Supriya Newar** holds a Masters degree in International Relations and a Post Grad in Mass Communications & Journalism. Author of the acclaimed title, 'Kalkatta Chronicles', she has clocked two decades in the world of brand and communications. She befriended the pen two decades ago and since then has traversed the entire cycle of communications, from copy writing, marketing and brand communications to noteworthy coffee table books and more. A poet and a music aficionado, She authored a tribute dedicated to Late Girija Deviji and has also translated the biography of the illustrious Seth Govind Das from Hindi to English. She is a guest lecturer at various reputed institutes. She's a zealous traveller with more than 1000 published articles in leading publications. She is attached with a clutch of firms as a Communications Consultant and also serves as an Non-Executive Director. For more, [www.supriyanewar.com](http://www.supriyanewar.com)



**Oindrilla Dutt**, arts and events curator, has used venues like Prinsep Memorial and Raj Bhavan and has worked with

Amitabh Bachchan, Mallika Sarabhai etc. She has directed son-et-lumieres at heritage sites such as Victoria Memorial, been a broadcaster, is a moderator (interacted with Mother Theresa, Jaya Bachchan etc). She has written a book on the Kolkata Police and columns for The Telegraph and Times of India, served on the editorial board of Upper Crust, directed 'Supermen of Soccer' and was the first Kolkata delegate to the Cannes Ad Film Festival. She is associated with a number of NGOs, is passionate about books, travel, music, history/heritage, cricket and Man U, loves phuchkas and dislikes fish!

CHC member **Supriya Newar** did an interactive session with the Ladies Study group

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CHC member **Oindrilla Dutt** moderated a book launch session at Oxford Bookstore

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CHC member **Ipsita Ganguli** was invited to read at the Newtown Book Fair

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Visit for additional information



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