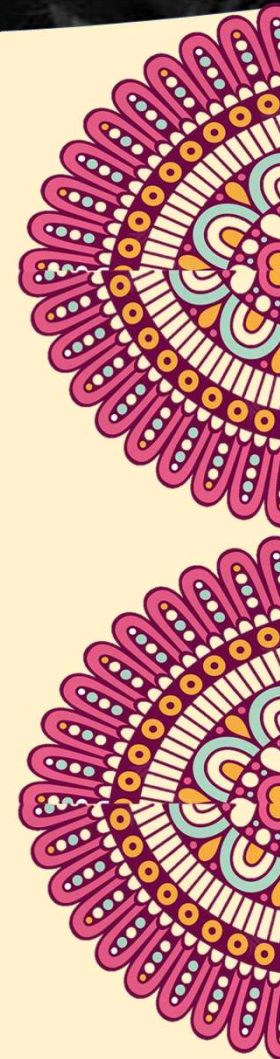




The CHC School Journal  
*In collaboration with*  
Loreto Day School, Bowbazar

# Potter's Colony - **KUMARTULI**

Volume I Issue I  
April 2022



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HERITAGE COLLECTIVE

Respect · Restore · Reuse



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“Chokkhudaan”

## Introducing Kumartuli:

Like Krishnanagar’s Ghurni is famous for doll-making, Kolkata’s Kumartuli is also a culturally enriched centre for award – winning idol-making and music.

The potters of Kumartuli have not only confined themselves in making idols but, also to make other clay objects like pots, bowls, plates; jewellerys for the idols, sculptures, daaker saaj, etc.

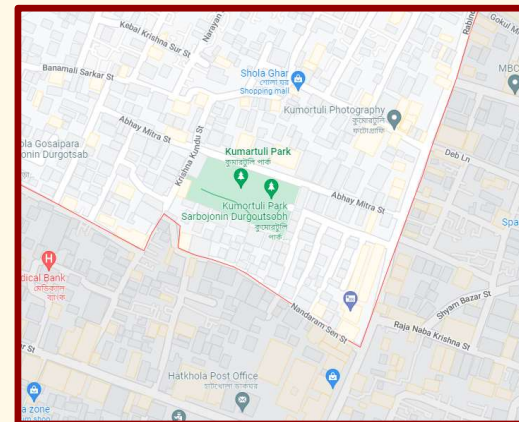
## Fun Facts!

The Durga idols of Kumartuli are exported to 90 different countries.

Potter’s Colony - Kumartuli

## Where is Kumartuli?

Between the Hooghly River and Rabindra Sarani lies our heritage of Kolkata, Kumartuli. To its north lies Baghbazar and Shobhabazar is situated to its south. Some notable places surrounding it are: Shyampukur, Ahiritolla, Jorasanko and Jorabagan.



Kumartuli location





## History:

*“Big things often have small beginnings.” We all are almost aware of this quote and it has been proved to be correct many a times. Similarly, this quote is very relevant for the beginning of the heart of Kolkata’s cultural heritage, Kumartuli. Down the pages of history, it was not initially called Kumartuli.*

*It was known as Hathkhola where a weekly thread market was arranged. Gradually, potters started residing there and making simple utensils like bowls, pots, etc.*

*During 1757 AD King Nabakrishna Deb of Shobhabazar Rajbari brought a few artisans from Krishnanagar to sculpt the idol of Goddess Durga for the puja at his place. Every year King Nabakrishna Deb brought skilled craftsmen from Krishnanagar, the centre of clay art of that period so that they could sculpt the best pratima (idols) for his Durga Puja. They used to come before the latter and return after Kali Puja. Gradually, the festival became socialised and popular which increased the demand for pratima. So, these artisans from Krishnanagar started settling here and inspired the other potters who use to make utensils to make idols. By the late 18th century, Bengal was having a cultural renaissance so, with the change in thought and social conditions, these doll - like structures started getting a human like appearance with a little touch of culture of different areas. This gave the deity a divine look and that is how Kumartuli evolved*



*Items for sale*





## Fun Facts!

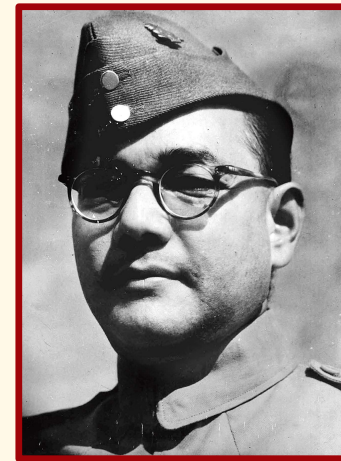
In the past, making of the idols was said to be incomplete unless dust from the brothels of Kolkata's red light district – Sonargachi – was brought and mixed with the clay used for making the idols.

### Why is Kumartuli called Kumartuli?

During the British period Hathkhola came to be known as Kumorpara. John Holwell, under the orders of the directors of the British East India Company separated a few areas according to occupations of the people residing there and one of this was Coomartolly, the area of potters. Later, two Bengali words kumor (potter) and tuli (locality) were combined to form its present name Kumartuli

### Birthplace of freedom fighters

The occasion of Durga Puja also served as a hidden meeting point for the freedom fighters and revolutionaries who used to interact with the common people to spread the flame of independence and revolution. It has also been found that Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was the president of Kumartuli Sarbojonin Durga Puja.



Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

Birashtami was conducted on Durga Puja in the Baghbazar region during 1919 and 1930s which was a demonstration of valour and Shakti. From here the youths and teenagers were taken for learning martial arts and join the Swadeshis or freedom fighters.







## Tradition of Kumartuli:

*Kumartuli has always been one of the well-known cultural precincts of Kolkata. It is the alley of potters where gods and goddesses are born in the dexterous hands of the mud-sculptors. These sculptors are in the profession of clay idol-making for several generations. Some have taken it as hereditary while the others for keen interest.*

*The representation of the goddess in Kumartuli is otherworldly; with eyes much broader than a regular human being and eight of her ten hands smaller in proportion, the figure emits a mystic and motherly aura.*



*Idol made at Kumartuli*



*“Chalachitra”*

*They mainly followed two styles: ‘Kangshanarayani’ and ‘Bishnupuri’. Both of these had a common platform on which Goddess Durga and her family were placed with various chalas (backgrounds) namely- Brindavani chala, Kailashi chala, Indrani chala and Brahmani chala. Many affluent business families and zamindars adopted the style of ekchala- where the idol was ensembled on one platform symbolizing the strength and unity of a Hindu joint family. The technique of chalas differed in different places and generations.*





## Dhakeshwari Mata Temple:



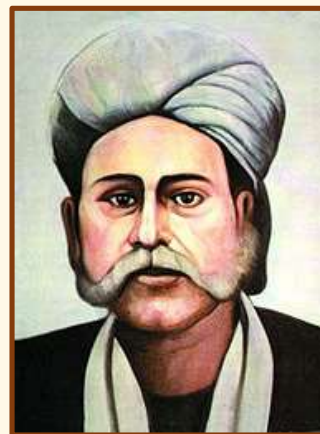
*Dhakeshwari Mata*

## Kumartuli as a Music centre

*Tappa is a type of Indian semi-classical vocal music. It is unique for its rolling pace, based on fast, subtle and knotty construction. This melodious raga mainly depicts the emotional outburst of a lover. Indian Tappa is of two types: Hindustani and Bengali. Golam Nabi elevated Hindustani Tappa and Ramnidhi Gupta introduced Bengali Tappa.*

*Ramnidhi Gupta is known as the father of Bengal Tappa. He grew up in Kumartuli, his paternal residence. Initially, the zamindars, babus and British sahibs were the only audience of Bengali Tappa.*

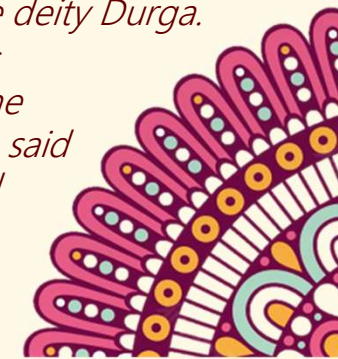
*Later, Sister Nivedita was the first indigenous person to praise his tappa and from then it started getting popular among common people. Thus, Kumartuli is also a birthplace of a new genre of music.*



*Nidhi Babu*

*The term 'Dhakeshwari' signifies a deity who is covered or hidden while among the Bengali's the term means the form of Adi Shakti who presides in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A rumour suggests that the roots of this temple originate back to the reign of King Bijoy Sen. While returning from the village of Langolband, his wife gave birth to a son who was named Ballal Sen. After he ascended the throne, he built a temple to mark and glorify his birthplace, which was known as Dhakeshwari Temple, Bangladesh.*

*Ballal Sen proceeded to have vivid dreams, one of which involved the deity Durga. He dreamt that Durga was hidden within the jungle; he proceeded to discover the said deity which was concealed there.*







*In order to celebrate this discovery, he built a temple later named Dhakeswari in 1947, During the Partition of India, caretakers of the temple evacuated the idol from Dhaka to Calcutta (now Kolkata) and since then it remained there. Gradually, it was handed over to a Tiwari Family who took care of it and then it was worshipped by Debendranath Chowdhury's family. The present priest in the temple says that the goddess is worshipped in accordance with the Navratri or nine night rituals of Northern India.*

## *Fun Facts!*

*The artisans start their work after performing the holy 'Garanlkathamo puja' which falls on the day of Rath Yatra.*

## *Fun Facts!*

*It is an ancient ritual that the priest who does the chakshu daan must impart the Goddess her third-eye in absolute darkness.*

## **Kumartuli at a Glance:**

*Due COVID we were unable to conduct personal interviews but we did use the internet and the link is given below.*

<https://youtu.be/bwmbGTVuIP8>



*Kumartuli alley*





## **Conclusion:**

*Hinduism has considered idol worship to be important thus to satisfy their needs Kumartuli produces idols of Gods and Goddesses. But that doesn't imply that all the craftsmen are Hindus. It is a melting pot where people from all religion use their creativity and happily produce idols and sculptures of their religions than their own. In addition, the artisans consist of both the genders. This little alley of Kumartuli is a perfect example of secularism that Kolkata adheres to. Just like all people irrespective of caste and creed rejoice in the festivals together, in the same way the artisans also enjoy making the sculptures in harmony.*

*From making clay idols for zamindars, the Kumartuli artisans are today making sculptures with thermocol and fibre which are being exported all over the world. But like in all businesses today, many from the next generation of the Kumartuli potters are leaving this occupation. What will the future of this artisanship be in future? A point to think about.*

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Visit for additional information



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and many more