

KOLKATA ON **WHEELS**

AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY

Best of Kolkata on WHEELS



2008 - 2025



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KOLKATA ON
WHEELS
AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY

EDITORIAL

And it's a double century!

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 200th Edition of Kolkata on WHEELS!

Kolkata on WHEELS was the brainchild of the Founding Editor Mr. Souvik Ghosh who had an all-consuming passion for automobiles, motorsports and Kolkata. It was his vision to bring motoring and the City of Joy on one single platform which led to the birth of Kolkata's first and only autoventuring guide around the city. More than 16 and half years and 199 editions later, since the launch of its first edition in October 2008, Kolkata on WHEELS continues to wear the mantle of being the only English motoring magazine being published every month from Kolkata.

200 editions is a significant milestone in the journey of any organisation. Like every organisation, we too have had our highs and lows, but never for once losing focus from our goal and vision to bring the very best from the world of automobiles and motoring to our readers. As we continue wheeling ahead with renewed zest and passion towards the next 100 editions, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to all our editorial advisors, senior columnists, editorial contributors, advertising partners, Team WHEELS members and most importantly our dear readers for your unconditional love and continued support.

Happy wheeling!




Joydip Sur
Editor

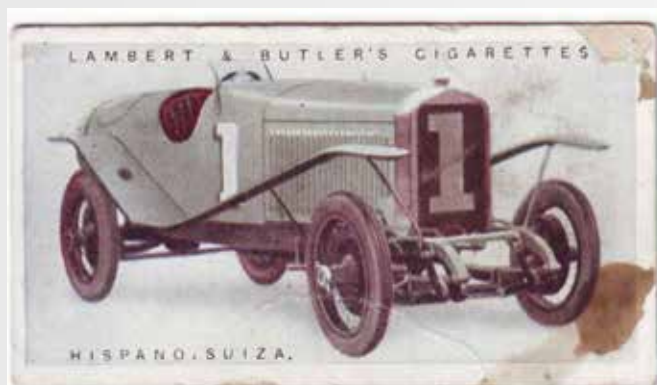
KOLKATA ON
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AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY

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EDITORIAL

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We are at crossroads. We live in a country where we fasten our seat belts for fear of fines and not for our own safety. On the other hand, we have the fastest growing automobile industry in the world. Quite a contradiction of sorts!

In an endeavour to bridge the gap, we at Guide India Publication have come up with a monthly magazine 'Kolkata on Wheels' dedicated exclusively to the motorists of Kolkata, with information on the city, its cars and life style.

We offer three exciting gifts to our subscribers:



a 24X7 dedicated Helpline;



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and a membership to the the activity wing of the magazine.

'Kolkata on Wheels' together with this set of gifts, will surely prove to be resourceful and effective for our subscribers.

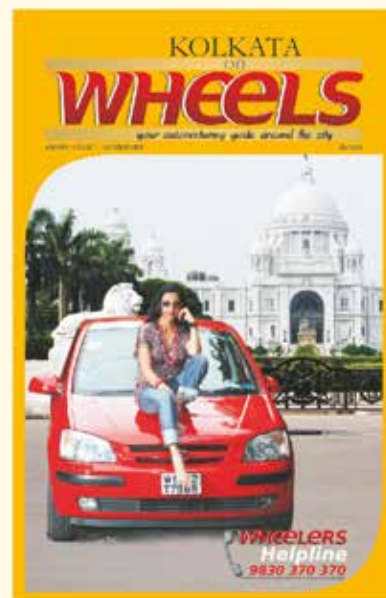
The active cooperation of Kolkata Police and Automobile Association of Eastern India in support to this endeavour is an added motivation.

We sincerely look forward to your participation and suggestions in all our efforts.

Yours in Wheeling,

Souvik Ghosh
Editor
Kolkata on Wheels

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WHAT A MARVEL!

 Jayeeta Ganguly

Kolkata has always been known as the 'City of Palaces' and a recent visit to Marble Palace, located at Mukhtar Babu Street off Chittaranjan Avenue confirmed that. I was probably four or five years when I had first visited Marble Palace, which was built in 1835 by Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur and was christened as the Marble Palace by Lord Minto as 126 different types of marbles from all over the world were used to create this beauty.

Of course, back then, neither the history of the place nor the exquisite works of art — ranging from statues to paintings to objet d'art to furniture — had appealed to the young mind. It was the zoo and the aviary that had impressed me the most.

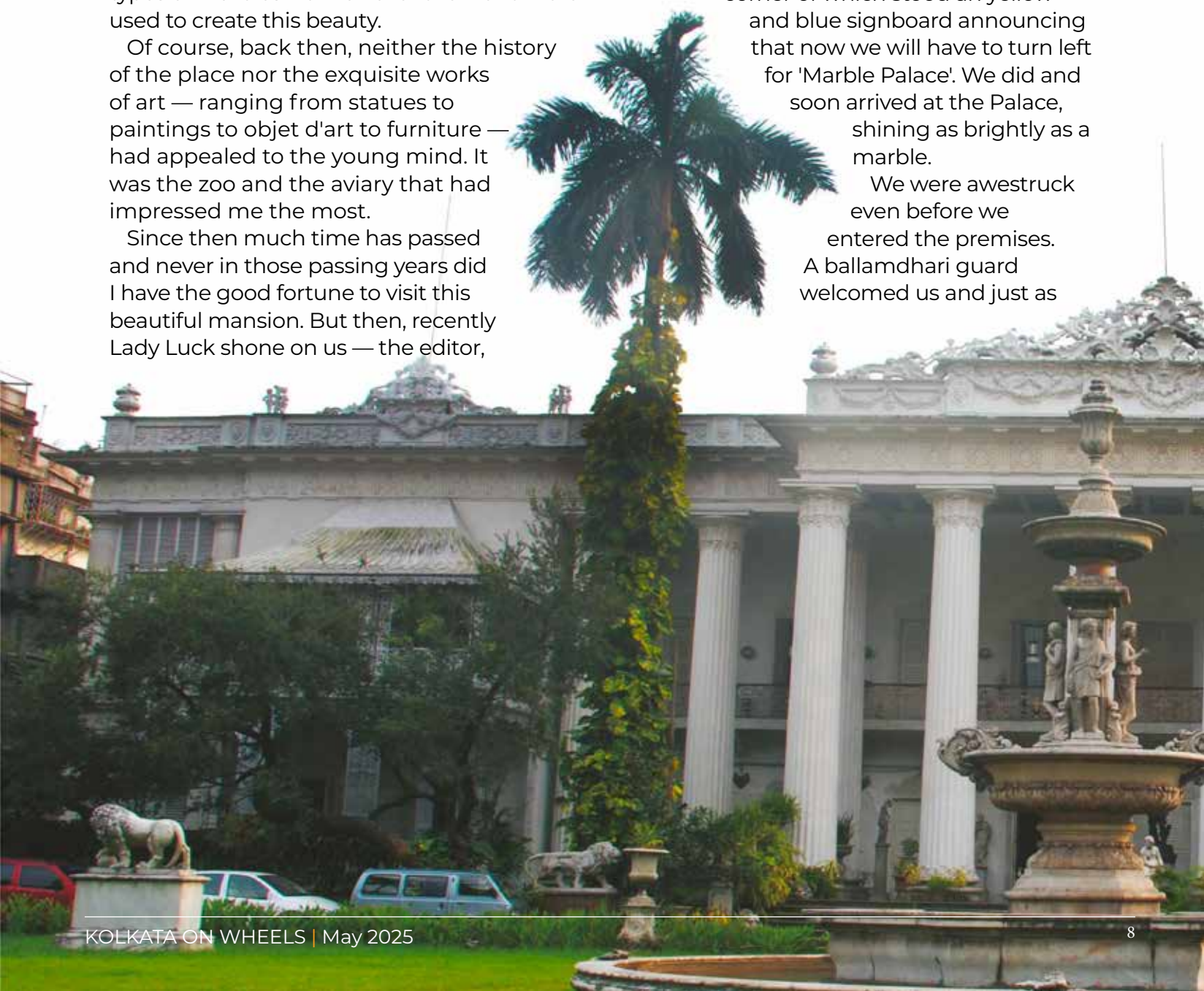
Since then much time has passed and never in those passing years did I have the good fortune to visit this beautiful mansion. But then, recently Lady Luck shone on us — the editor,

the managing editor, the photographer, his assistant and me. And we were able to knock on the gate of the illustrious Marble Palace — our very own Acropolis.

Usually C. R. Avenue wears a busy look, but the day we had set our date with the Marble Palace, we reached the Mahatma Gandhi Road crossing in record time and soon came across a narrow lane on the left at the

corner of which stood an yellow and blue signboard announcing that now we will have to turn left for 'Marble Palace'. We did and soon arrived at the Palace, shining as brightly as a marble.

We were awestruck even before we entered the premises. A ballamdhari guard welcomed us and just as



the car went around the front lawn, we saw a beautiful marble fountain and four lions in four corners of the lawn. The moment our car was parked, we were received by Brotindro Mullick (seventh in descent from Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur) who took time out from his busy schedule to spend the day with us.

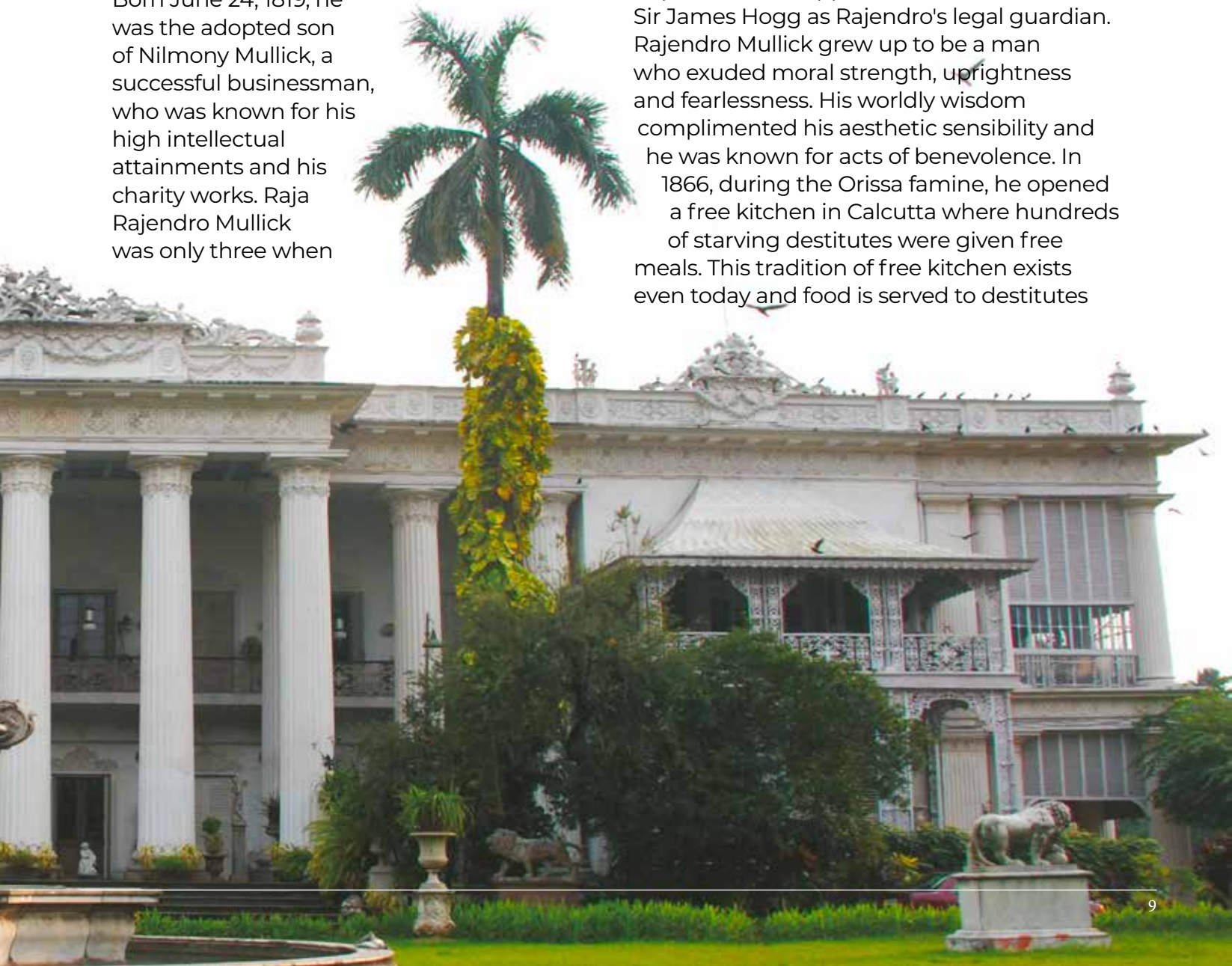
We learnt that the Marble Palace is one of the oldest mansions of the city. It is older than St Paul's Cathedral, G.P.O. and the High Court buildings and it is set on 12 acres of land. The area houses the Palace, the residential quarters, the temple of Lord Jagannath, the zoo, the aviary and so on. It is still a working residence.

We first went to pay our respects to the statue of Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur. Born June 24, 1819, he was the adopted son of Nilmony Mullick, a successful businessman, who was known for his high intellectual attainments and his charity works. Raja Rajendro Mullick was only three when



A view of the first floor verandah

his father passed away. Soon, thereafter, a civil suit was started between his mother. Hiramoni Dasi and his cousin Vaishnavdas Mullick. It was around this time that the Supreme Court appointed noted barrister Sir James Hogg as Rajendro's legal guardian. Rajendro Mullick grew up to be a man who exuded moral strength, uprightness and fearlessness. His worldly wisdom complimented his aesthetic sensibility and he was known for acts of benevolence. In 1866, during the Orissa famine, he opened a free kitchen in Calcutta where hundreds of starving destitutes were given free meals. This tradition of free kitchen exists even today and food is served to destitutes





Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur



A view of the main worship hall and the courtyard

and no distinction is made on the basis of caste and creed.

The titles of Rai Bahadur and Raja Bahadur were conferred on Rajendro Mullick in 1867 and 1878 by the Government for his charity work. He also donated many rare species of animals and birds to the Zoological Garden. He built this Palace when he was just 16 years old and he wanted it to be 'the temple of art and beauty'. Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur died on April 14, 1887, but his legacy lives on. And we couldn't wait to be a part of it ourselves.

So, our next step was to take a closer look at the fountain and the lions (which is the insignia of the Mullicks) on the front lawns. The fountain depicts the four seasons and is a beauty in itself. After inspecting the lawns and the pool area, we walked down the long alley on the western side of the house to enter the Billiard's room where the heads of two moose deer welcomed us.

Once inside, we were rivetted to the spot. We just did not know where to start this adventure from. Should we just sit down on the cool marble floor and gape at the beautiful designs or should we admire the bronze dancing girls, or the statues of Apollo and Mercury or just allow the sheer grandeur of the room to sink in? Talk about being in a dilemma!

After spending about 20 minutes in this one room (which, of course, as the name suggests, possesses a huge billiard's table which is at least 100 years old), we stepped into the next one. Here, the lights were off and we were for a second greeted by a larger-than-life figure. We were a wee bit intimidated. When the lights were switched on, we came face-to-face with a statue of Queen Victoria, carved from a single piece of wood. Brojendra Mullick informed us that the statue was originally placed at the helm of a ship that was shipwrecked at the Calcutta Port and then it was brought to the Palace. You will have to see it to believe it. Majestic is the word that can describe it best.

Well, this was the beginning of our tour. It took us three hours to explore the Palace. Right from the reception hall to the thakur dalan to the courtyard to Ruben's chamber, the Ball room and Durbar hall (these are located upstairs)—Marble Palace revealed to us why it should be called the Marvel Palace. Take a look at the box titled 'What Left Us in Awe' and you will get some idea. But, you will have to come here and explore it yourself. Because if you don't, you are not a true blue Kolkatan.

The mirrors, the chandeliers, the original paintings by Ruben, Reynolds, Raja Ravi Verma, Bijoy Chandra, the sculptures, the

clocks, the statues of various Roman gods and goddesses, Madonna, Jesus Christ, Lord Buddha (on the lawns) Sophocles, Napoleon, Chinese vases, Burmese incense burner and many other paintings, antiques and objet d'art will leave you spellbound.

Every nook and corner of this Palace showcases the eclectic aesthetic sense of Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur. But our journey was far from over. There was still so much to check out. Like the zoo where we found some really energetic spotted deer and the two-horn antelope, the aviary which is the home to the saras, geese, ducks and some beautiful birds and the artificial hill which has a majestic lion protecting the mouth of a cave.

Seriously, Marble Palace has so much to offer and you can don the mantle of Indiana Jones and explore the rich cultural heritage of the Palace. Or you can just be like Alice in Wonderland. We were a little bit of both. It was 4.00 pm when we bid adieu to the Palace but each one of us made a silent promise that we will be back again, soon.

And we just can't wait to fulfill our promises!

FINE POINTS

Address: 46, Muktagam Babu Street, Kolkata: 700 007 (Near Mahajati Sadan on C. R. Avenue)

Timings:

10 am-4 pm daily, except for Mondays and Thursdays

Photography: Strictly prohibited

Parking: Allowed within the Palace premises

Admission: Admission is free for Indians, but foreign tourists will have to take permission from the West Bengal Tourist Information Bureau 24 hours in advance before visiting the Palace.

Contact: Tourism Centre, 3/2 B. B. D. Bag, (East), Kolkata -700 001.

Phone: (033) 2248-8271, 2248-8272, 2248-8273, (Reservation & Information Office),
E-mail: www.wbtourism.com



A statue of Lord Buddha gracing the artificial hill




A view of the Reception Hall

No traveller is completely prepared for his first experience of India. More so a westerner who is coming with visions of great progress.

Often termed as the problem city of the world Kolkata is really bursting to the seams. Only New York, London and Tokyo perhaps have more people than what Kolkata boasts. Disturbances stretching from Gorkhaland to Lalgurh and even deeper, has left the rag-tag Communist Government more anorexic than

Kolkata has changed undoubtedly and is still changing. But part of the tragedy of this evolution is its smouldering growth. The entire length of Salt Lake and a large section of EM Bye Pass is a sore disfigured trench whose outcrops have made a nuisance for the next few miles of daily travels. But then it's all for a new Metro. The poor old trams, which in their jalopy way have outlived their lives, continue to ply with

Ode to K♥lkata!

 Arindam Basu

ever. But it is also true that Kolkata is one of the largest cities of India and perhaps its most important intellectual seat.

Paradoxically set in one of the most ancient cultures that man knew, it is one of the youngest cities. Henry Hudson had dropped anchor off Manhattan and New York came into being 81 years before Job Charnock pitch-forked his tent on the Eastern Banks of river Hooghly and laid the blue-print for what was to become his Calcutta. Maisonneuve founded Montreal half a century earlier, and Rome and Venice a century before. So whatever Kolkata is to offer today is largely Anglican.

Almost everyone has had some observations about this city be it Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain or Sir George Trevelyan and they seem to see only the negatives. But then there are some unexpected admirers in William Hunter, Winston Churchill and an anonymous quote largely attributed to Lenin, "The road to world revolution lies through Peking, Shanghai and Calcutta."

new stickers on them. But the Whiteliners and Volvo bus-services are a handsome addition.

The streets are mostly an apology and the taxi-cabs swerve and swing their way through the potholes with an amazing élan. Pollution drive notwithstanding, a journey through the Central Avenue is nauseating. The air reeks of so many worn-out engine fumes, mixed with a dozen varieties of decay. The pushing and shoving, the jostling and sidestepping the hand-pulled rickshaws and cows, that roam abandon to the most thunderstruck logic, make up for Kolkata, with a collateral symphony of noise—honks, clatter, clamour, rumbles and shouts all mixed and shaken together into a bottle of sound-pickle. Taste it!

If that was not all, look at the political transience. Someone is killed this weekend, some other mugged a weekday and the strike follows. Strikes come in all forms and colours, accompanied by smashed windows of public buses and torched



vehicles. Provocations, reprisals, politicians playing extravagantly to the gallery, resultant strikes, a few foundation stone laying and ceremonious beginnings and its attendant uproars make for an unpredictable and yet one of the most wanted and recalled cities of the world—Kolkata.

True Kolkata is all this and more. There is salvation in this chaos. All you need is to face the claustrophobia for the first 48 hours and then the city grows on you with its old world charm. You are titillated by the histories that lie strewn in every corner and nook of the city. You will be amazed that Calcutta is not the result of half-a-day's stay by some East India Company trader. In 1783 when the foundations of Bethune College was being laid, 200 Gupta Dynasty coins pushed back its civilization far beyond. To the more real and recent, Guru Nanak had come to these parts in 1503 and preached at the crossing of Chitpur and Harrison Road. Guru Tegh Bahadur bought the place in 1666 and built Bada Sikh Sangat Gurduwara. Abul Faisal (1585-1596) mentions Kolkata as 'Satgaon' in 'Ain-i-Akhbari'. In 1575 Manohar Ghosh, a gomasta or land collector of Raja Todarmal settled in Sutanati. All of these and many more romances make up for Kolkata.

The warmth of the city exudes not in its streets, but among its people. There is warmth in its narrow lanes and green frames of giant colonial windows that lie closed so staidly in the hot summer afternoons. There is a kind of genial fondness and intellectual fervour in the uproars of coffee-house, in the adda sessions on the porticos of old houses in North Kolkata, in the admiration of a hitherto unknown footballer in the maidans. Kolkata is a living breathing city, unlike a fast one like Mumbai, a techie one like Bangaluru or a wanna-be London like Delhi.

The city boasts of a heart, bigger than all of its problems put together. It is a living city, it breathes life onto others and sits and wakes with its people.

Kolkata has far more poets, than novelists ever existed in Dublin. And the vivacity and courage of putting pen to paper makes it so



special. And then you turn your head around towards Maidan or Nandan and you have Mukta Prangon, a cultural carnival, where poets share their verses and composers open their voices to the ballads composed recently. It is the land where the mind is indeed without fear and where the head is held high.


It is the land where after a day's struggle people will rather listen to Raga Jayajayanti or Todarmal and stay in rapt attention to the 'alankars' of a sarod or sitar recital. Here drama unfolds on streets and stages with equal venom as people celebrate life with Luis Bunuel Portoles and Satyajit Ray. Here you rummage through miles of second hand books in the biggest book-bazaar of the world and yet feel charged to see more, despite the petrifying jungle of automobiles, people, houses all mangled into one.

That is Kolkata. As true as the nausea of the first sight, is its sense of life. It pulsates and churns and swirls in all direction. It can march angrily and viscously in the traffic clogging rallies, but it also laughs idiotically and infectiously. In all its staggering misery, it is dreaming and drawing for something bigger and better. It rebuilds minute by minute, it brandishes its sheen and dominates in the hearts.

At its alarming and despicable best, it startles you with its fearlessness and vivid humanity. It is the city of joy amid its stark poverty, it's a city of renaissance amid its colossal decays, a modern heartthrob in its medieval living. Perhaps it's this paradox and its people that make for an enticing charm, people so fondly call 'amader sohor Kolkata'.



Red Road The Road Royale

 Joydip Sur

1 943: The participation of Japan in the Second World War and its advancement into South East Asia had created an atmosphere of fear and threat in Calcutta. The Japanese Air Force had repeatedly bombed the city spreading a sense of panic among Calcuttans. Several affluent families of the city had moved out to places like Madhupur and Deoghar for safety.

The air base at Barrackpore was situated at a substantial distance from the city creating an impediment to provide emergency cover against the Japanese air strike. Therefore, the British decided to create a temporary air base at Ellenborough Ground (near Calcutta Race Course) to facilitate the take off and landing of fighter aircrafts. The neighbouring Red Road was used as a parking bay for these aircrafts.

Gobindapur was one of the three villages, which were merged to form the city of Calcutta, the other two being Kalikata and Sutanuti. Many eminent families of Calcutta like the Ghosals, Tagores, Seths and Bysacks had their garden houses in Gobindapur. While Kalikata and Sutanuti lost their identity as the city grew, Gobindapur was demolished to make room for the construction of the new Fort William and Red Road.

Red Road was constructed during the early 1720s. The road was originally paved with shurkhi (red laterite soil) leading to the naming of the road as Red Road. The road

was constructed to facilitate the commute of Britishers to their garden houses situated in Alipore and the suburban areas.

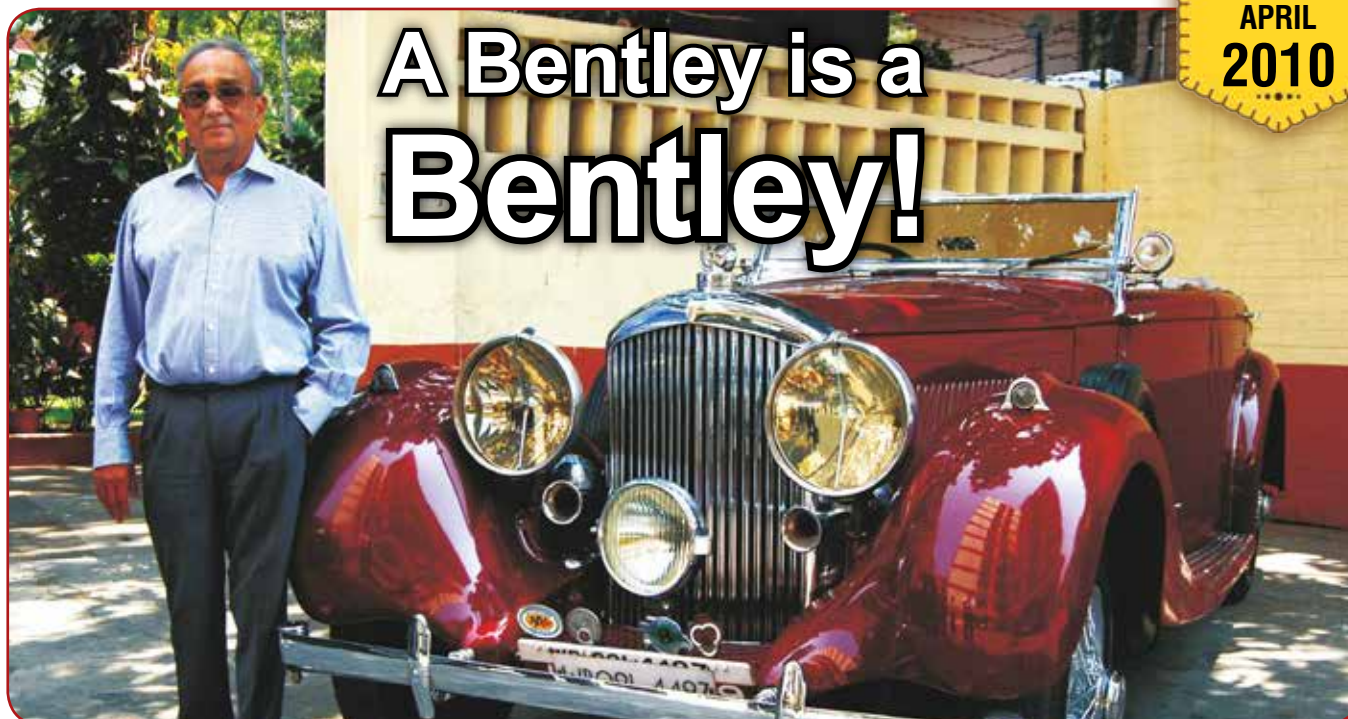
The present Red Road was constructed when Fort William was under construction during 1757-80. Originally, there were no trees on either side of the road as we see it today. It was Lord Dalhousie who took the initiative to beautify the area by planting trees and erecting statues of several eminent British Generals on both the sides of Red Road.

During 1970, these statues were brought down and replaced with those of eminent Indians. Some of these statues were later re-erected in the Barrackpore Park and can still be found there. The government of West Bengal renamed Red Road as Indira Gandhi Sarani in October 1985.

Every year on 26th January, Red Road turns into a fortress as the nation celebrates its Republic Day. The Republic Day parade held at the Red Road is a spectacle that leaves its beholders in awe. And during the Id-ul-Fitr, several thousand followers of Islam gather on Red Road to offer their prayers to the almighty.

As hundreds of vehicles breeze past us everyday, we can't help thinking that this is the wide stretch of molten bitumen and tar that stand tall in the city memoirs as one of the most decorated and prestigious roads of Kolkata.

(WITH INPUTS FROM RENOWNED HISTORIAN P. T. NAIR)



A Bentley is a Bentley!

Entrepreneur and vintage car connoisseur Golam Momen shares the tale of his 1938 Bentley 3½ Litre Tourer in an interview to **Joydip Sur**

How did you develop a passion for vintage and classic cars?

(Smiles) Love for cars runs in the family. My father was always passionate about these golden oldies. In fact at present his 1937 Rolls Royce Phantom III is in prime condition and parked at my Rawdon Street residence. It is fair to say, that my father's passion for cars rubbed onto me.

When and from whom did you acquire this Bentley?

This car belonged to a friend of mine. I bought it from him about 30 years back and the car has been with me ever since.

What was the condition of the car when you purchased it?

The car was in prime condition when I purchased it. My friend had maintained it really well.

So you really didn't have to restore it?

(Smiles) Oh not at all. Other than some

minor alterations, I really didn't require to do much with the car. Although I must mention that the car was originally cream in colour. I got it repainted to its present maroon shade.

Tell us about the most special thing about this car.

This car is a single piece custom made Bentley. The coachwork has been done by Pack Ward.

How do you maintain this car?

A gentleman called Mojahid is in charge of the maintenance of this car. In my opinion, he is the best in the business when it comes to maintenance of vintage and classic cars. He diligently cleans the car and polishes every nut and bolt on a regular basis.

How often do you drive this car?

I drive this car once a week. But during the winter months I drive it more frequently.

What is your take on this car?

This car has a unique blend of style and grace. It exudes a sense of class and at the end of the day, a Bentley is a Bentley!



Fast Facts:

Bentley 3½ Litre

The Bentley 3½ Litre was first manufactured in September 1933, shortly after the death of Henry Royce and was the first new Bentley model following Rolls-Royce's acquisition of the Bentley brand in 1931. This era of Bentley models are also known as "Derby Bentleys" because they were built in the Rolls-Royce factory located in Derby, England.

At a time when the Ford V8 could be purchased for £100, an early Bentley 3½ Litre cost around £1,500, putting it beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest consumers. Despite not being a car of remarkable outright performance, the car's unique blend of style and grace proved popular with the inter-war elite and it became known as the "silent sports car."

The Bentley 3½ Litre featured a higher compression ratio, sportier camshaft profile and two SU carburetors on a

crossflow cylinder head. Actual power output was roughly 110 bhp at 4500 rpm, allowing the car to reach a top speed of 90 mph (145 km/h). The engine displaced 3.5 L (3469 cc/223 inches³) with 6 cylinders, 3¼ inches bore and 4½ inches stroke.

A 4-speed manual transmission with synchromesh on 3rd and 4th, 4-wheel leaf spring suspension and 4-wheel servo-assisted mechanical brakes. The car also has a glass partition between the front and rear row of seating.



THE JEWS OF KOLKATA



Sarvani Gooptu

Explores how the Jewish community has attained a balance between flowing with the times and keeping their culture alive

From the early 19th century the Jews settled in the capital of British India in successive waves of migration. Kolkata, or Calcutta as it was known then, saw many types - the 'native' or Cochin (speaking Malayali) Jews; the Bene Israelites (speaking Marathi); the Ashka or the European Jews; and the Baghdadi Jews (speaking Judeo Arabic) from the Persian Gulf region.

The Jews traded mainly in gems - like diamonds - and indigo. The first Jew to settle in Calcutta was reportedly Shalom ben Aharon Obaidiah ha Cohen at Potato Lane, Murghihatta, in 1789.

By 1850 there were 1,500 Jewish families here. The first Hebrew printing press was established here in 1841. Till 1891, the Jews were concentrated in Burrabazar and Kolutola but later spread all over the city.

The Jews gradually adopted English as their official language and Hebrew was reserved for prayers. From the late 19th century they also adopted western clothes and took English names and surnames.

Moses Dwek Cohen was the founder of the Jewish Community of Kolkata and became its Rabbi as the President of the Community in 1825. It was under his inspiration that the Maghen David Synagogue was established and the first

Jewish school was started in 1881.

The Ezras were another prominent Jewish family and David Ezra became the Sheriff of Calcutta. They owned some of the most prestigious buildings of the city like the Chowringhee Mansions, Ezra Mansions, Salvation Army house etc. A street was also named after the family.

The Gubbays, the Ha Cohens and the Elias families established important trading houses. The Nahoum family still owns the most popular bakery of the city - Nahoums and Sons- in New Market. They started residing in the city from 1868. Starting as a small bakery on Metcalfe Street it was established as a shop in New (Hogg) Market in early 20th century and has continued to rule the hearts of all Kolkatans.

Yvonne D'Silva's father Robert Goldberg was an Ashkanzi better known as a French Jew and mother a Catholic. "There was a time when I had many Jewish friends from Weiz, Hallens and Ezra families in Kolkata. They studied with me in Pratt Memorial School and later migrated to Australia," she said.

Her Jewish grandfather came to Calcutta in the early 20th century with his wife to sell diamond jewellery to the maharajas. They settled down in Park Street. Yvonne Goldberg was not brought up as a Jew, since to be Jewish one has to be inherit norms from the mother's side.

Yvonne or Goldie as she was known in her childhood recalls the Jewish festivals that were celebrated here. The most important was the Feast of the Passover around Easter.

Before the Passover there was a fasting for two Seder nights. Also during the Spring Cleaning no bread is allowed in to the house for a week. Another important festival was the Day of Atonement which ushers in the New Year and this too meant fasting.

On the Day of Atonement the Jews fast from sunrise to sunset to usher in the New Year. They then visit the Synagogue to pray and then enjoy the Yom Kippur Feast.

Another important ritual of the Jewish faith is the Sabbath. On Friday the women clean their house and themselves and also light candles. Then the family and close friends sit together at the dinner table for the Kadush which consists of unleavened bread and wine.

The women say a prayer, dip a piece of the bread in the salt and distribute it. They then say a prayer of the wine, sip it and pass it around. Men then wash their hands and greet each other with Sabbath Shalom which means peace. After this no Jew will do any work for the day.

Cooking on the following day has to be simple and uncomplicated. The cuisine of the Eastern and the Western Jews differ. This brought together a variety of culinary specialties to the community in Kolkata.

The Baghdadi Jews make Hamim Chicken

which is stuffed with rice and herbs and cooked over a low flame. The fire is started before Sabbath and the chicken is roasted the next day by which time the rice becomes like a pastry. This delicious meal is eaten throughout Saturday till the sun sets. After bath and prayers the Sabbath is broken.

The Ashkanezi Jews make a dish with steamed fish balls and eat it with horseradish sauce called the kreme and unleavened bread called maza.

Another delicacy of the Baghdadi Jews is the Alu Makah, where the potatoes are peeled, partly boiled with salt and turmeric and cooked for four hours over a low flame. The potatoes are then fried crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. This is served with halba - a sauce with methi and pudina and served up with roast chicken.

Yvonne recalls, "These dishes were so good and even today I yearn for them."

With very few Jews remaining in Kolkata today, it is Jewish institutions, buildings and shops set up by the leading men of the community, that keep yester year memories alive.

The Jewish Girls School for example was set up to educate the Jewish girls who were at the risk of conversion in Christian schools. This is a testimony to the strong will

of the Jews who were determined to spread education but preserve their rich and ancient culture at the same time.

Today this school provides highly valued English medium instruction to Muslim girls of the area. The Jewish traditions are still followed in the school though there are no students or teachers who are Jewish.

Jews remain a symbol of the cross community tolerance which has been so unique in Kolkata.



RELISH YOUR Ilish



Chef, food columnist and owner of Kewpie's **Rakhi Purnima Dasgupta** needs no introduction among the food connoisseurs of Kolkata. This month she explores Kolkata's romance with the king of fishes – the Hilsa

For centuries the argumentative Bengali has been involved in a dispute - which mighty river provides the best catch of Hilsa - the Ganga or the Padma. While the 'ghotis' (from western part of Bengal) vouch for the Ganga bred catch, the 'bangals' from East Bengal (now in Bangladesh) will scoff at their claims, believing that the catch from Padma taste far superior! Needless to say the issue remains unresolved but whichever is true, Ilish is undoubtedly the piece de resistance among the fish of Bengal.

Traditionally, in West Bengal Ilish is not consumed during the period following Durga Puja till Saraswati Puja since it is believed the fish is not tasty in the months from October to February which coincides with the spawning season. But once the Ilish season starts, a sumptuous feast is on the platter of every Bengali. Countless dishes are prepared, and countless more are being innovated.

However, traditional Bengali cooking harbours reservations

against using onion or garlic to prepare the fish. Traditional dishes include Ilish Bhape (steamed), Ilish Kacha Jhol (light stew), Doi Ilish (in yogurt), Tetul Ilish (in tamarind), Ilish Tak Jhol (with mustard and tamarind), Ilish Jhal (spicy with chili and turmeric) or simply Ilish Bhaja (fried).

Across the border, there many imaginative dishes with liberal use of onion, garlic and ginger, such as Ilish Korma (with yogurt and spices),



Ilish Biryani, Ilish Pullao (with rice), Ilish Annars (with pineapple) to name a few.

Hilsa, like Topse or mango fish, has taken an eminent place in Calcutta's Anglo-Indian kitchen as well. The most famous dish is, of course Smoked Hilsa. During the monsoon all the Clubs and continental restaurants in the city have it on their menu along with a variety of other Hilsa dishes such as grills and bakes. Another famous Anglo-Indian preparation of the Hilsa is the Moulee or Moolu, which originated in southern India. Hilsa Vindaloo and Pickled Hilsa were very popular with the travelling British-Indian troop, as it did not require refrigeration up to a month.

The Hilsa's life cycle is similar to the Salmon; it lives its adult life in the sea and comes to spawn in the rivers. It is an oily fish rich in Omega 3. It has a lot of fine bones and is also very delicate. Hence, it should neither be cooked too long as it tends to break easily, nor should it be washed or put in water for any length of time, otherwise it loses its flavour. The

ideal size for the catch is between 1 ½ - 4 kgs in weight. The roe is prized like 'caviar' and fashioned in delectable dishes such as Ilish Dimmer Tak Jhal (with mustard and tamarind), Dimmer Bora (fritters) and Dimmer Ambol (relish). It is such a versatile fish that every part is used, including the head and bones to make delicious Kattar Chorchori.

So what are you waiting for? Go out and simply relish this King of fish, with or without bones!

Photograph courtesy:
Kewpie's – Purveyors of
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2, Elgin Lane, Kolkata – 700020
9831677610/9883059818
Ilish festival – Aug 13 to Aug 29
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THE PROVERBIAL WORLD OF "BABU" CALCUTTA



Anindita Mazumder

Calcutta's initial brush with its colonial rulers produced a class of neo rich who amassed great wealth as zamindars and benians or agents of the East India Company. Their vulgar display of wealth through preposterous luxury, ostentation and waste and even philanthropy both shocked and fascinated the commoners so much they became legends and were immortalised in Bengali proverbs and sayings. Anindita Mazumder remembers some of these legendary denizens of 18th century European Calcutta

A popular rhyming proverb on the eminent native personalities of Calcutta, mentions their special attributes which set them from the rest of the brethren:

**"Banamali Sarkarer bari
Govindaram Mitrar chhari
Amir Chander dari
Huzuri Maler kari
Ke na jane?"**

Banamali Sarkar, the first dewan to the Resident of Patna who subsequently went on to become Deputy Trader to the East India Company in Calcutta, built his "bari" or magnificent residence at Kumartuli between 1740 and 1750. A street in Kumartuli still bears his name.
Govindaram

Mitter was the most famous or infamous of the four as can be readily assumed from the allusion to his "chhari" or stick symbolising the immense power he wielded as the "black" or Indian deputy to the British zamindar or revenue collector of Calcutta. Govindaram, notorious for his extortion, held office from 1720 to 1756. He amassed huge wealth and went on to build a "nabaratna" temple or black pagoda in 1731 on Chitpore Road whose lofty pinnacle was higher than the Ochterlony Monument. But this mark of pride was destroyed by the severe cyclone and earthquake of 1737. However, his residence built on 50 bighas of land at Kumartuli still stands. He also had a garden house, Nandan Bagan where he housed his favourite mistresses. After Plassey when Mir Jafar paid compensation for the damages to the city during Siraj's reign, Govindaram was one of the Native Commissioners appointed to disburse the money. He along with others appropriated huge sums. The British zamindar, John Zephaniah Holwell had once tried to depose him for embezzlement but Company's directors reinstated him. The term



“chhari” bears testimony to his oppressive and tyrannical ways to collect revenue from the native population and Holwell alleged that no native dared to complain or give information against him.

Although HEA Cotton in Calcutta Old and New mentions Amir Chand's “dari” and Huzooree Mull's “kari”, other variations of the saying attribute the beard to Huzooree Mull and the money to Amir Chand. This was quite possible since both Sikhs had flowing beards and were moneyed as well. Moreover, Amir Chand's estate came to be later managed by Huzooree Mull. It is said 10 men were employed solely to take care of Huzooree Mull's beard and the attar used was brought from Lucknow. His munificence was also well known. He excavated a large tank at Boytaconnah and constructed the Armenian Ghat as well as the steeple of the Armenian Church. He also gave several bighas of land near Kali temple at Kalighat and also built a pucca ghat. He rendered invaluable service to the English during the battle of Buxar. He also has a lane named after him.

Notwithstanding the allusion to his “dari” or “kari” Amir Chand or Omichand would go down in history as a man deceived by Lord Clive by a ploy of twin treaties. Omichand was quite trusted by Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula and the latter had put up at his garden house when he attacked Calcutta. Prior to the Battle of Plassey, Omichand had demanded Rs 30 lakhs for betraying the Nawab but Clive did not have the resources. Yet he needed Omichand's assistance and so he made two treaties, one on red paper with Admiral Watson's signature forged which promised to pay Omichand the sum while the genuine one was on white paper which did not have any such clause and the red treaty was shown to Omichand. After the Battle of Plassey Omichand was told the truth “but he did not die from the chargin of deception and lived on to see the Company established as the real rulers of Bengal.”

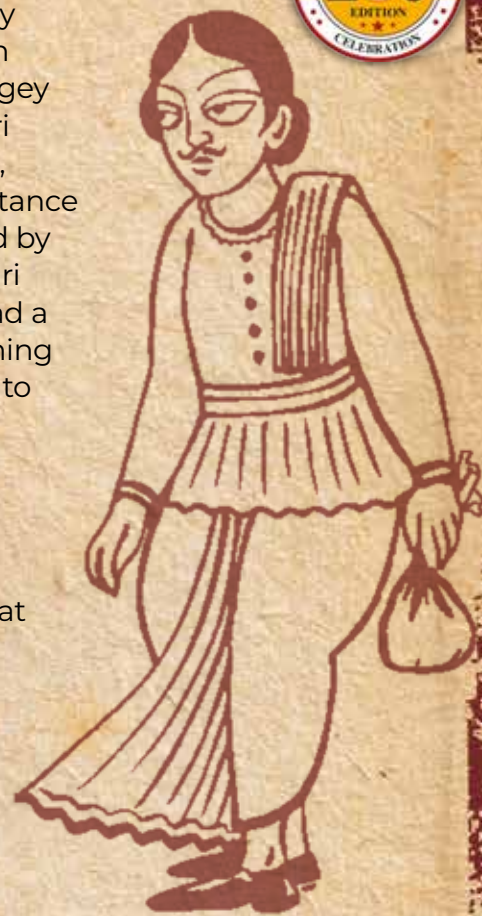
Another legendary figure was Gauri Sen,

his philanthropy immortalised in the proverb, “lagey taka debe Gauri Sen” (If needed, monetary assistance will be provided by Gauri Sen). Gauri Sen's wealth had a humble beginning and he owed it to the generosity of his partner, Baisnabdas Sheth, one of the greatest merchant of that time. When a consignment of zinc bought on Sen's account was found to contain much silver, Seth insisted

in foregoing all shares of the profit. Recently, Kolkata Municipal Corporation has put Gouri Sen's residence on 36, Belgachia Road in the list of heritage property.

Diwan Hari Ghosh's misguided munificence has also received flak in the saying “Hari Ghosh's goal” (cow shed) for maintaining a retinue of idlers and parasites. A street bearing his name is still found in North Calcutta.

Despite their fame not all of them were great men. They had grown rich by “canvassing, commissioning, cheating and pimping” in the Company's era. According to another saying: “Kayet mare kheyaley banik mare deyale” (Kayasthas get killed by their extravagant whims while baniks or merchants by raising walls to divide their property) but long after the products of their whims were effaced by the vagaries of time these men have survived in the folklore of Calcutta.





Adda with Ray



Tarun Goswami

In an interesting scene from Satyajit Ray's *Agantuk* (The Stranger) the long lost uncle, Manomohon Mitra picked holes in Ranjan Rakshit's claims that adda was an 'invention of the Bengalis'. He chose to remind him of the tradition of dialogues of ancient Greece; Socrates and Plato indulged in discourses over politics, philosophy, art and literature at the 'highest level' and Mitra, an anthropologist, dismissed the adda sessions of contemporary Bengalis as "empty twaddle" instead of being a cerebral exercise.

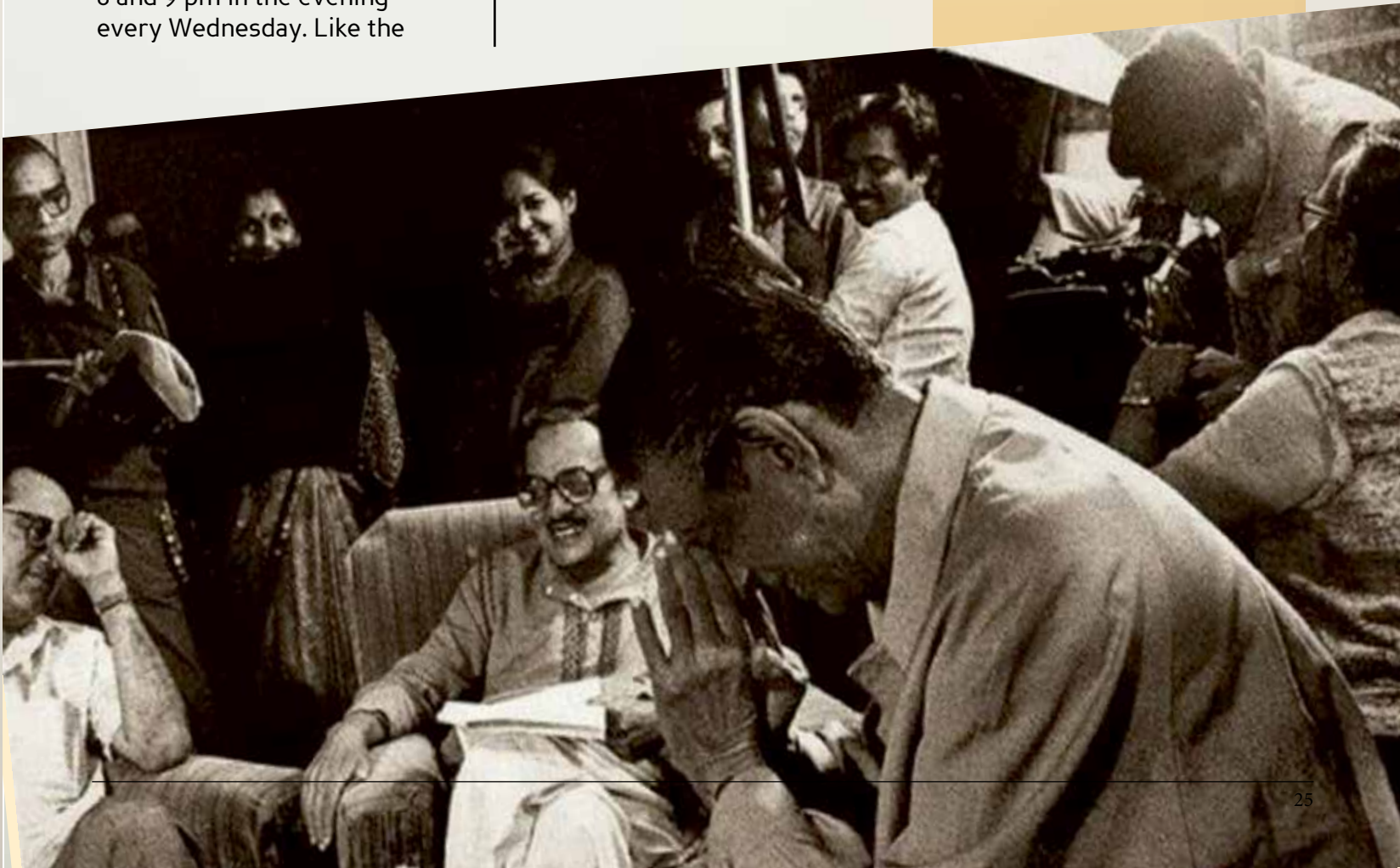
Not many people know that Ray, a man of few words was a frequent visitor at such an adda or “productive discourse” as was described by Manomohon Mitra, the role essayed by Utpal Dutta in Agantuk. Kalipada Banerjee, a chemist by profession was the nerve centre of such an adda held every Wednesday, at his residence on Shakespeare Sarani. Kalida was no less than a living encyclopaedia and mind you this was at a time when there was no Google search engine and internet. The adda venue with a simple seating arrangement comprising desks and benches for those assembled, resembled a classroom while Kalida sat on a chair. The sessions stretched between 6 and 9 pm in the evening every Wednesday. Like the

Monda Club or Monday Club set up by Ray’s father Sukumar and his friends like Prasanta Mahalanobis and Amal Home, a participant would read out a paper following which discussions were held on it. Kalida would often supplement the discussion with little nuggets of information which were often simply brilliant. However, unlike Monday Club the refreshments were limited to tea, that too without milk or sugar and cream cracker biscuits, served twice. Both old and young from various walks of life took part in these long academic discourses with equal enthusiasm.

This columnist was present in such a session where Kalida was expounding on Indian classical



music and its links with the Upanishads. At the end of the lecture, Ray said “You are really brilliant.” It is often said that Ray penned the character of Sidhu Jyatha in his Feluda stories after Kalida. His interest in science particularly chemistry was also induced by Kalida and later found reflection in the character of Professor Shonku, another memorable creation of Ray.





Once, at a particularly interesting session Ray had drawn comparisons between Western and Indian Cinemas. On another occasion this columnist had read a paper on Bertrand Russell at the adda; Kalida surprised everyone by saying that Russell had played the role of a matron in a Hindi feature film, Hum Hindusthani directed by IS Johar – a little known fact. Readers will be delighted to know that it was in Kalida's adda that poet Shakti Chattopadhyay wrote his famous poem, 'Jete pari kintu kano jabo'.

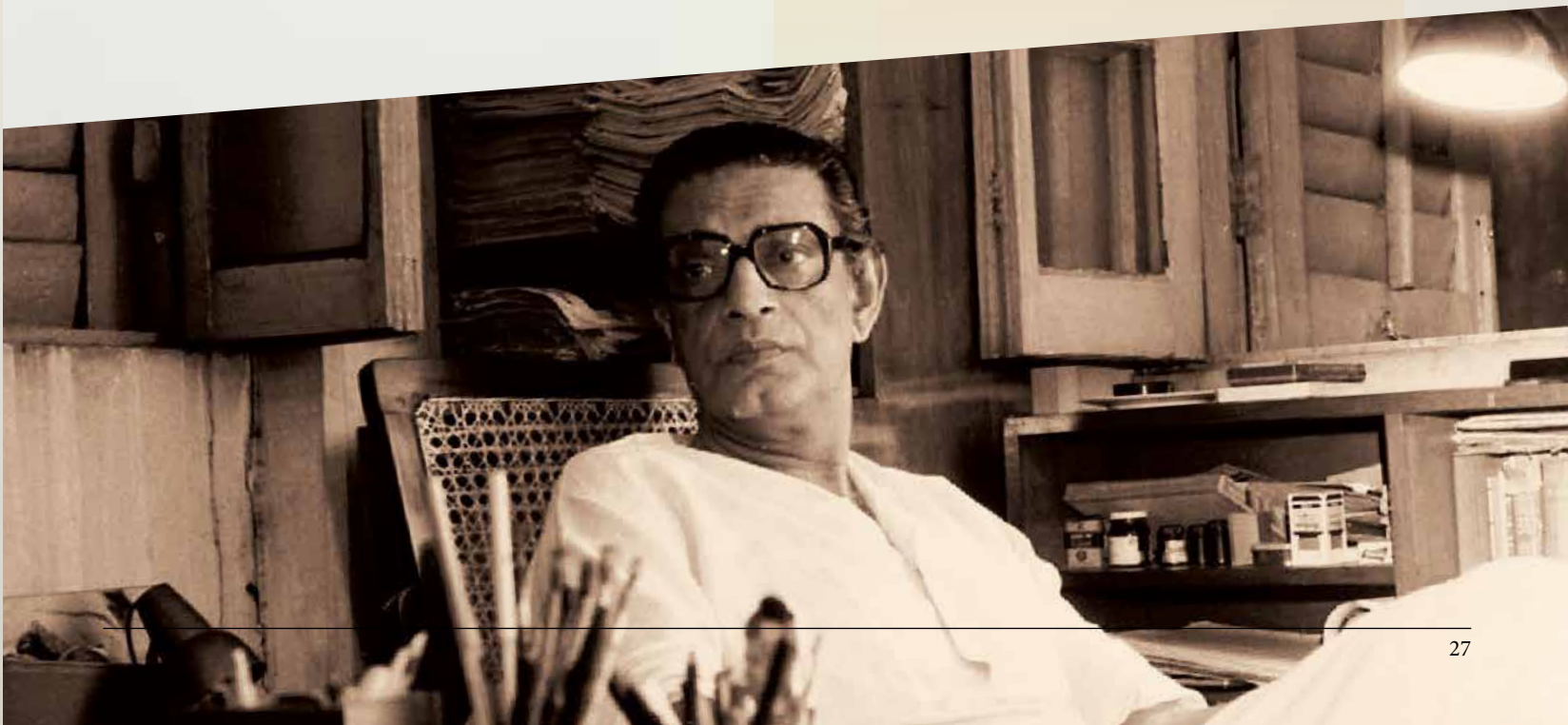
While in Presidency College, Ray often visited the house of Pratap Chandra Chunder whose rich library was definitely an added attraction. Chunder, an avid reader of history books and those on films was an erudite man

and Ray spent long hours discussing about Hollywood films. While working in an advertising firm, Keymer Ray, Radhaprasad Gupta popularly known as Shantulbabu and Judhajit Mukherjee used to visit the Coffee House on Chittaranjan Avenue where they met Kamal Kumar Majumdar. The adda went till late in the evening in the early 1950s. Majumdar was a scholar in French literature. "While Majumder gave vent to his views on anything from the sensibility of Mallarme (French poet and critic) to the voluptuous rotundity of the jala (clay pot) Ray provided the counterpoint to Majumdar's verbal pyrotechnics with his clarity of thinking, sharpness of wit and total sensibility." Gupta had shared many happy moments with Ray. "We talked about the diction of advertisement for hours together. We were both avid reader of Life Magazine. Manik was a great illustrator and his sketches were appreciated by all," he had said.



“We talked about films and when Manik proposed to make Pather Panchali, we all congratulated him. He spent hours with Subrata Mitra, the cinematographer of Pather Panchali. We were often joined by Harishadhan Dasgupta who was the assistant director of Renoir and veteran cinematographer, Ramananda Sengupta. Harisadhan’s house on Southern Avenue house became our adda’s central point and often Salil Chowdhury who stayed close-by joined us. Salil, Suchitra (Mitra), Hemango (Biswas), Hemanta (Mukherjee), Subhas (Mukhopadhyay) and George (Biswas) used to come to come to our adda. Manik avoided discussions on politics. Salil read out the

poems he wrote and Suchitra and George sang duet songs. In such addas, Manik was primarily a listener and the adda sessions went on and on for several hours,” he had reminisced. Parimal Roy who was one of the close associate of Ray recollects Kamu Mukherjee and Soumitra Chatterjee were frequent visitors to Ray’s house. Mukherjee, known for his ready wit and pranks had great expertise in selecting sites for outdoor shooting. Viswa Guha Thakurata, who had acted in Ray’s films, said “Manikda was the centre of attraction in any adda. He listened to everyone and then made his comment. It was a life time experience to take part in any adda attended by him.”



SMOKING OUT 'FAG' CARDS



Tarun Goswami



The Second World War had just ended and a young boy would often venture into the military barracks at Ballygunge Circular Road, some distance away from Bhawanipore, where he resided. Inside the

barracks, the soldiers of the Allied Force would be busy playing football. The boy's sole interest would lie in collecting the empty cigarette packets and match boxes, strewn inside the large compound.

One day an army officer noticed the boy and gave him some 20 odd empty cigarette packets and match boxes along with two boxes of chocolate and mosquito repellent. The boy was overjoyed with this unexpected treasure. It was the beginning of his brush with cartophily- the hobby of collecting cigarette or chewing gum cards.

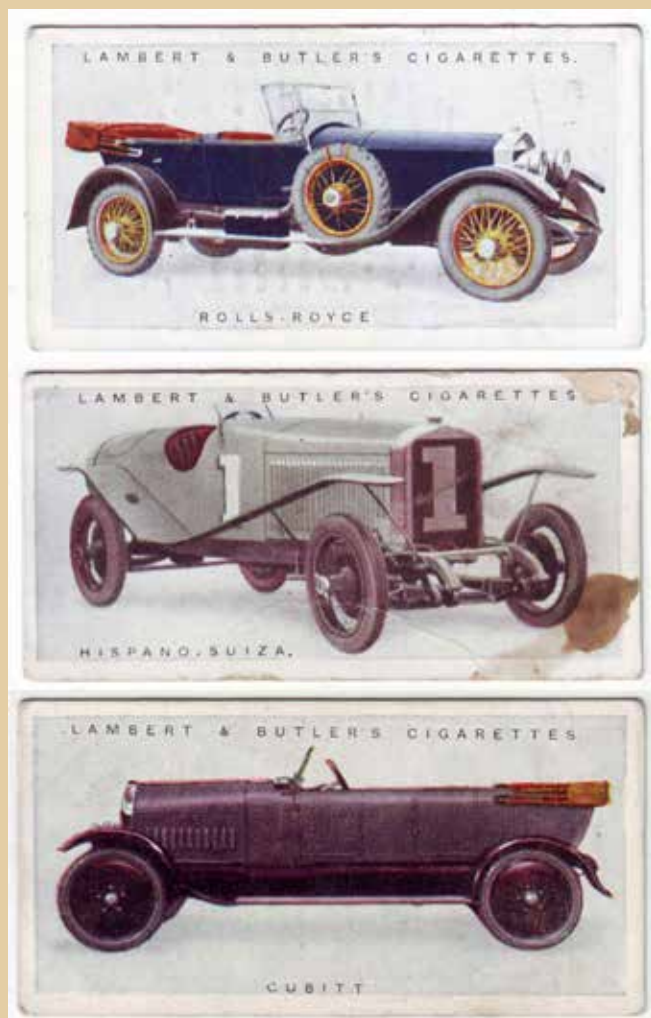
"I still remember the army officer who first inspired me to collect empty cigarette packets. Now I have more than 3000 empty cigarette packets and cards," said Mr Parimal Roy who over the years became the most prominent cartophilist in the country. His collection is unique because every item is catalogued and well-preserved.

It was a business strategy by tobacco companies to boost sales as apart from the smoker even the kids in the family were interested in buying the cards. Mostly the cards contained photographs of motor cars, the Viceroys of British India and even gods and goddesses. The companies would

advertise about introduction of a series, like automobiles or animals. One would have to collect the entire series, usually 25 to 30 cards within a period, say, three or six months. Though kids would often compel elders to buy in a bid to complete the series, not every packet bought contained the cards, causing disappointment and heartburn. Rarely, a series could be completed within the stipulated time. Often two different companies would introduce the competition simultaneously to boost sales.

Generations of children collected these fag cards and swapped them with their friends to complete the series. High quality of production –vivid colours and sophisticated printing process made these collectors' items including Dickens series, Conan Doyle series or Henry series where characters from the novels or cartoon strip would feature in the cards. Famous tobacco companies like John Player Special, WD and HO Wills and Chesterfield would run such competitions. Other manufacturers included Smith's Sun Cured mixtures and Ocken whose Polo brand was very popular. Taking a cue





vehicle which came as number 23 in the series. Minute details about Cubitt were included; for instance that it was a 5 seater model, painted in French Grey or blue with dark upholstery, came with adjustable wind screen, four cylinder engine and Rotax lighting set.

Sunbeam, featuring as number 14 in the series is described as a medium powered 14 horsepower, four- cylinder- car and an all-round touring model. Detachable side curtains along with the hood rendered the car absolutely weather proof.

The series on Governor General was also quite popular. There were photographs of Lord Charles Marquis Cornwallis (1786 – 1793) who had introduced permanent settlement of Bengal in 1793. The Marquis of Dalhousie (1848-56) had introduced the Doctrine of Lapse system setting the ground for the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. There are also rare photographs of Governor Generals like Lord John Lord Teignmouth (1793-96) of Lord Charles John Viscount Canning (1856 - 62).

The photographs of Indian gods and goddesses used in cigarette cards were printed in Europe. Lord Krishna and Radha were the most popular ones. In addition to the cards there were stickers which also came from Europe. John Player was the leading cigarette company to introduce this. “Just think of their market strategy and how intelligently they attracted the youngsters. There was also an educative value because the youngsters became aware of history and heritage,” said Mr Roy.

from the European and American cigarette manufacturers, Indian companies also began introducing cigarette cards. Kali Cigarette, the Imperial Tobacco of India which introduced the railway brand cigarette and Hawagarri brand of Peninsular Tobacco were the prominent Indian brands. The Indian companies carried photographs of nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi in their cards but did not hold any competition.

The automobile series had become quite popular among the children in 1940s said Mr Roy. The details of that particular model of car were printed on the other side of the card. Lambert and Butler, the famous tobacco company had introduced a series of 25 photographs of cars in the mid 1930s. The fleet included photos of Rolls Royce, Hispano- Suiza and even Cubitt - a rare



Slowly lapping at the fragrant banks of the flower market, tottering over the quaggy steps, the Hooghly nudges at yet another levee of the city. The awed hush around the couch of waters settles in and the dying day breathes out her last. The river has fed herself all day - earthy ashes, mouldering flowers and human ordure; and yet it remains untouched; the virginal Ganga. Now it gives way as 'Night's ghostly army', the many lurking shadows, plunges headfirst into the yielding embankment of Mallick Ghat.

ROUTE

Mallick Ghat is perched on River Ganges connected by Strand Road right beside the Brabourne Road Flyover on the south of Howrah Bridge. As you enter the Strand Bank Road



Mallick GHAT



Jonaki Lahiri

through the Strand Road near the Howrah Bridge cantilevers, meandering through the fascinatingly colourful flower market running along the riverside, you will come across the narrow alley on your right behind a bevy of florists leading to the Mallick Ghat, otherwise shunned from public view.



THE GHAT

Popular among Kolkattans as the 'flower market,' Mallick Ghat is actually a bathing ghat. A large ornate European-style square pavilion showcases wrought iron vine, thick with foliage, flowers and fruits spun around the pillars, delicate lacy railings and carved pillars which deserve far more attention than they are accorded.

A flight of crumbling stairs descends to the river. Pigeons flock around the shallow water tanks.

Meanwhile numerous platforms service more than a hundred Oriya pandas (priests),

who earn their daily wages by performing small religious rituals for the bathers and devotees of the ghat. The flower sellers, 'blithe spirits', also use this refuge – blithely!

The faint light seeping in and the mild breeze offset voluminous quantities of clothes suspended from ropes obscuring lofty high ceilings. The quintessential gloom is amplified by the stink of rotting flowers and scats.

Completely hidden by the flower stalls, this magnificent structure is hard to discover today. The pavilion is now stifled by infiltrators, greedy pandas and flower



vendors, who gorge and suck on this ghat, wringing out the last vestiges of its dignity and beauty. Kolkata Port Trust is working towards bringing some reform.

HISTORY

Mallick Ghat is named after the prosperous trader Nemaï Charan Mallick. He was engaged in salt trade and established mercantile relations with the overseas merchants of the European States. He distinguished himself as the trusted banker and financial advisor of Sir William Jones, founder of the Asiatic society, in 1784. He left vast estates to his eight sons. Ram Mohan, the fifth son, founded the ghat sometime in 1855, in memory of his late father.



Anecdotal references in texts like 'Kolikatar Kotha' scripted by Pramoth Nath Mallick make for interesting reading. While some of his eight sons owned large residential mansions in various corners of north Kolkata his eldest son, Ram Gopal, built a sprawling residence at Chitpur, which later housed the Hindu

Metropolitan College and Metropolitan Theatre.

It was here that in the aftermath of the historical Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, Umesh Chandra Mitra's historical play 'Vidhwa Vivah' was enacted in 1859. The drama troupe was directed by the great Bengali scholar, orator and religious reformer Keshab Chandra Sen.

The eminent historian, Rudrangshu Mukherjee described the Shraddha

ceremony of Nemai Charan where Rs.15000 was donated in addition to gold, silver, palanquins and horses along with community feeding of around 200,000 beggars.

An interesting fact lifted from the archival records claims that Sir Bradford Leslie's famous floating Pontoon Bridge, the earlier version of the modern Howrah Bridge, initially set up in 1874, was eliminated by fixing electric poles at the centre using electricity from the dynamo at Mallick Ghat pumping station.

LIFE AT THE GHAT

Every day, at the crack of dawn, Mallick Ghat wakes from its quiet slumber. At 4 in the morning a sea of fiery orange marigold, lush lotus, fragrant rose, vibrant sunflower greet you as you enter. Trampling over mud, mulch, madness, if you manage to reach the ghat, watching the break of the dawn over the heads of those colourful flowers is like watching a Monet spring to life.

A vigorous oil-massage and bath prepare the resident men who then gather for tea near the blue ramshackle shacks. The pandas rush to sell prayers for a fee to the ladies who appear for a dip. The vendors garlanded with their wares, haggle with customers. They also don't forget to show their love for the river by using her as a kind of giant cesspit to relieve themselves in.

If ever the dark ambience of the ghat unnerves you, simply touch your cheek to the stoic cool of the pillars of the pavilion, tread the leaf-green carpet - and you will realize why Kolkata, despite its murk, is so fascinating. If you can but once embrace the colourful, raw essence of Mallick Ghat, the cold, sad gloom that clouds the minds of less enlightened souls will leave you forever. You will sing when 'Night, upon her sombre throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world'. And as the glorious sun bursts in splashes of gold across the sky you will bless the visionary who created the Mallick Ghat -just for you.





1950 Standard vanguard family car

Living it up in Good Times

 Pradeep Gooptu

The end of World War II ended years of car shortages and petrol rationing, and raised the excitement of the country becoming independent. Ignoring communal tensions, car companies rushed to offer new cars to Indian buyers. The war had greatly improved technology and designs on offer, and many more people had learnt to drive. The years 1945-60 therefore mark in many ways, the best years for a motorist looking for excitement.

AMERICAN JEEPS & SEDANS

The magic of the Jeep, the hero of the war, generated big demand for the wonder vehicle. Many jeeps were dumped in the market by departing American troops. Willys, the maker, also cashed in with the new station wagon. A sales brochure of 1950 says a ready-for-delivery jeep was priced at Rs. 12,160 with canvas top.

The popular jeep station wagon seated six was equally indestructible. Its price in 4-wheel-drive (4WD) version was Rs. 18,150 while the 2WD was pegged at Rs. 16,500. The 4WD was one of the more expensive vehicles on the market.

American sedans were all the rage, having proven their toughness in the war. A Dodge four-door sedan and its sister Plymouth was worth around Rs. 21,000 at the no-frills



Chowringhee road, with a 1940s Daimler & humber (rear)



Calcutta Police traffic sergeants, 1940s



Studebaker Champion, a popular 1950s buy



american, British and indian cars at new market, 1950s



Chowringhee road-esplanade, 1950s

level, while the upgraded Kingsway Deluxe or Savoy Custom models were almost Rs. 23,000.

At the entry level, the popular Dodge, Pontiac and Plymouth taxi models with a typical rounded back body were priced around Rs. 17,000. They were spacious, comfortable and ultra-reliable 7-seaters.

Dodge and Plymouth from Chrysler Corporation faced competition from Studebaker, among others. A price sheet from 1957 shows the smaller but very stylish Commander was being offered at Rs. 20,000 with a vast passenger area and boot.

The not-so-good-looking but larger Studebaker President was priced just above Rs. 22,000. The combined Studebaker-Packard motor company offered a station wagon too at the same price.

The real American world leaders – Ford and General Motors – were also in the market with similarly priced cars and excellent after sales support. The difference was that Ford had side-valve engines while GM offered a full range of overhead valve engines that were speedier and fuel efficient.

GM had plants near Bombay and in Bengal for assembly. In fact, GM used to assemble its Overland cars in the heart of Calcutta, in a factory on Hazra Road! Studebakers were assembled at the Birlas' Hindmotor plant.

SMALLER BUYS

The best small buy in the market was the Morris Minor (later Baby Hindustan). This world beating British small car was offered at Rs. 8000 for the side valve version, and Rs. 500 more for the later overhead valve ones. The Fiat 1000cc Elegant model

was one step up, at Rs.

9,750 in 1956, along with the Standard Super 10, 4-door saloon at Rs. 9,450.

The next step up was the Morris Oxford MO (Hindustan 14) and Morris Cowley (later Hindustan Landmaster), both side-valve contraptions worth around Rs. 10,500.

These were killed off (except for the Baby Hindustan) by the vastly superior Ambassador by 1957, which sold at a very competitive Rs. 11,200! Of course, by this time, Morris imports had virtually stopped and while the HM plant at Hindmotor, Uttarpara, was yet to be completed, the cars came from there.

The Standard Vanguard offered some competition at Rs. 14,700 in a larger, softer package but the Ambassador reigned supreme once it entered the market.

This is a small sample of the options before a consumer. These were the good years – you could buy everything from a Cadillac or Rolls to a Minor if you wanted to. And petrol was cheap, and hardly taxed. The good times!



Jeep station wagon, a big hit



The first 'Car Meet and Run' in 1904 organised by Automobile Association of Bengal



Bipin Behari Das at his workshop

Looking Back



Abhijit Dasgupta

Calcutta has many firsts. Yet if one searches through the labyrinth of just its motoring feats, one will possibly not come up with much. Unfortunately that is our character. We do not preserve or care to look back at our past. One of the vital damages done by the British is this creation of a Kolkatan who lives, suspended, only in the present. Lord Macaulay cleverly and effectively changed the system of education to create a class who would basically be translators with unquestioning devotion. A race of semi-robots if you will, human in flesh, conditioned to survive.

This Covid pandemic has done some good.

It has given me the time and opportunity to browse through some ancient dirty moth-eaten files. And guess what I found – a treasure of a different feather for enthusiasts.

The 'Swadeshi' was built in Calcutta. One Shri Bipin Behari Das made a car in his workshop. The three photographs given here are from a well-researched book by Siddhartha Ghosh. I knew him as Amitava. He used Siddhartha as his pen name. We would often sit for hours late at night going through old manuscripts and documents that were extremely difficult to decipher, not because of the language, but because they were so ill-preserved. We also did a few television programmes together.

Then there was the 'Russa'. Not much could



The Empress published a front-page story of the first car meet and run



The 'Swadeshi' – built in Kolkata by Bipin Behari Das

CALCUTTA - RANCHI - TRIAL

1965 - 1966

OFFICIAL ROUTE ITINERARY

| Official Distance | Corresponding Road Mile-stone, if any. | Description |
|-------------------|--|--|
| 0 | | Starting point at Calcutta. Proceed towards Grand Trunk Road via Central Avenue, Barrackpore Trunk Road and Vivekananda Bridge. (Toll 0.50 P). |
| 10 | 7½ | First available Mile-stone on Grand Trunk Road while proceeding towards Burdwan. |
| 75 | 72½ | Congestion of Burdwan for 3 miles. |
| 91½ | 89 | First Check Point. |
| 139½ | 136½ | Congestion of Asansol for 3 miles. |
| 142 | 139½ | Stop for 30 minutes at N. P. Vyas & Co., Asansol Branch, for rest and refreshment. |
| 151 | 148½ | Congestion of Barakar for 2 miles (½ mile distance of Barakar Bridge ignored). |

The route map of the Calcutta-Ranchi Endurance Rally

Tagore and Mr Birkman took care of the gastronomical needs of the participants at his B T Road house.

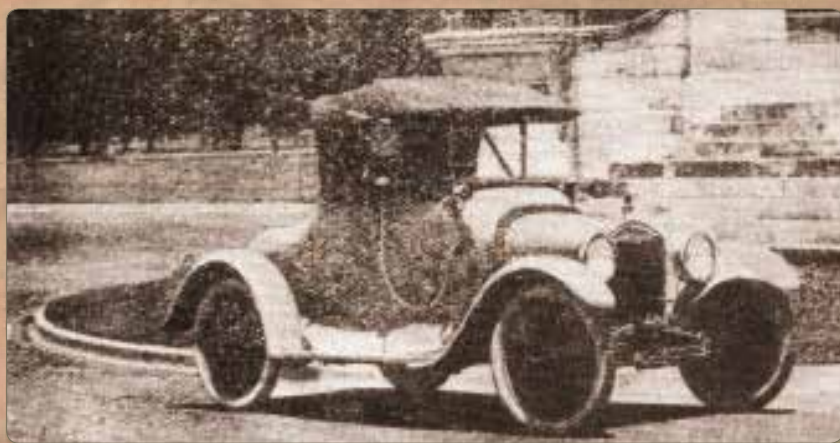
I had framed the copy of the THE EMPRESS and presented it to Kalyan Bhadra. It was prominently displayed in his room. Wonder if it is still there or lost forever.

The AAB and later the AAEL organised an annual 'Endurance and Reliability Trial' for many years. I found some very old magazines.

My first motoring event was in 1965. It was tough to find funds to participate. Because of a tragic heart ailment my father was afflicted with, I had to go to work early and began my career as a trainee journalist in 1963. Attending evening classes, I worked the day. We had a family car though, but I had to earn enough to at least buy petrol! Some extra long hours got my team enough to participate. Given here is the route.

be found about this car. It might be a good idea if some volunteers could patiently scan through old newspapers at the National Library. It will be a marathon task but perhaps rewarding. Perhaps the authenticity of these would emerge.

There of course is a fascinating detailed report of the first 'car meet and run' in 1904. It was organised by the Automobile Association of Bengal (AAB). The Empress of 1st September 1904 carried a front-page story on how the cars participated from Park Street to B T Road, no small achievement. It describes how generously Maharaj Pradyot Kumar



Picture of 'Russa'.


It had one declared time check point and four or five secret check points. Because of a silly mistake, we missed the first position in our first attempt. After a check, the rule said we were to start from the next minute. Young as we were, we did not read the rules very carefully. N C Mitra told us later on to read even in between lines. We got the youngest participant prize. In 1980, I visited the Greenfield Village and saw the Ford Museum. It put me to shame. They have preserved more history than we have ever cared to. Photographs in the 'Hall of Fame' had pictures of even the tiniest motoring event around the globe.

It will do good to preserve the past. After all, the present stands on that foundation.



The first 'Car Meet and Run' in 1904

Calcutta Motor Racing Legacy

 Abhijit Dasgupta

'Remember how we laughed away the hours and think of all the great things we would do...'

Calcutta was never a city created, like some other aspiring upstarts, accidentally. The British came to loot and loot they did. But in the process, they left behind the legacy of a sport that once was entirely theirs. Our patriots built the 'swadeshi' but there is no history of 'natives' participating. The



Robin Mitra – open jacket and no helmet – who cares?



The watchful eyes of Justice P B Mukherjee, President AAEI



Ram Ratan Goenka & Nani Gopal Chanda forgot their front no. plate



Reba Goho behind the wheels with J C Goho

A MIXED BAG OF SPEED

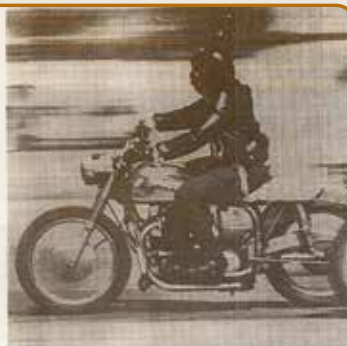
Motor cycle racing is a recent addition to the speedy agenda of the All India Motor Sports Council. The likes are mixed-up versions of the standard models.

Initially inexperienced, and the roughest racing career, prevented many riders from giving of their fullest best. Now, within the short space of a few, semi-rammed motor, roadster, open, sports and sports have all considerably risen.

Their machines screaming and spluttering with the strain of speed, the wild ones of the track jockey, grim-faced, for first position. The skimming, speed-racing track corners and points and little beneath whirling wheels.

Whether you are racing a car or a bike it is a long, nerve-racking run from the start, starting slowly to the last home lap.

And then it's all over and you are (like) and suddenly discover that you are (like)



THE JOURNALIST, JANUARY 10, 1960.

The starting grid. The Cheetah on the extreme left

British, however, never hesitated to take favours from the rich and famous to meet their gastronomical needs.

Post-independence, motor sports too was initially dominated by the *phoren babus*.

The sixties provided both thrills and spills in the motoring history of Calcutta. There were the annual AAEI events and CMSC which had races at Taratolla.

I was covering a race on a Sunday in 1969 when Mike Satow's Cheetah ploughed through the crowd and hit a fence. I think no one died but the excited crowd suddenly surged and ransacked the temporary structures. That drew the curtain on the Taratola races.

My coverage is here.

Early 1967. I call a meeting of my friends. Some later become my



Mike Satow leads

rally mates. There are six of us from five states and we decide to drive to a 'foreign' country. For us, foreign is Nepal. But where is the money? Ganesh and Prabodh, both navigators in later years, and I, begin visiting various offices. This is the mid 60's and the concept of sponsoring or putting an advertisement on a car was unheard of. I thought it could be done, even if it might sound preposterous. In office, we try to convince how 'effective' it'd be when an advertisement bedecked car drove from Calcutta to Kathmandu and back. There were occasions when we were told to 'come back,' meaning get lost. And there were many offices where we were unable to get past even the reception desk. At many offices, we were kept waiting for hours on end, ultimately managing to meet only a junior guy who could not take decisions. Ultimately, we succeeded

in convincing Brooke Bond, Union Carbide and Exide. Each company gave us Rs 1000/- on condition that we display their banners on the car. So, on the luggage roof carrier we fixed and painted four ply boards. And on the four doors, we painted the advertisements. We had money to drive to Kathmandu, stay in a Dharmasala, return with money still left unspent to patch-paint the car with.

We usher in a new era. We begin our car sports participation with stickers. It took the organisers a few years to impose extra entry fee for sponsored cars.

In 1966 was my next participation. Being young has its advantages and disadvantages. Even with some backing from sponsorship, we did not have money enough for much needed fresh tyres. So, we got retreads done. We had one puncture between Calcutta and Ranchi and one between Ranchi and Durgapur,



Barin Mukherjee in his black Amby leads



Mike Satow zooms ahead

In a burst of sympathetic media, the crowd watched the Mustang make its 1964 debut.

Amongst his questions, you can always tell the real author when the words change. In automotive journalism, there has been more no language barrier. Their hands did not contain glass in the shell of a vintage car.

And the man in the racing track, such as the Mustang, had the conventional corner. Even the drive of the windows are covered in the heat and fall of the sun.

When the test man, a head model in the Mustang, had the test and was back, it showed and extended the test, capturing of a test point, a specific direction.

And of course, a great reporter is always bright, before or after the test.

(For both these sections, see the very end.)

| Name | Navigator | Vehicle Number | Competitor No. | Starting Time |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Mr. Ramesh Ch. Roy Mr. Sambhu Nath Nandy. | Mrs. Minoti Roy | MRY 7649 | 1 | 16.00 |
| Mrs. Reba Goho Mr. J. C. Goho | Mrs. P. K. Sen Barat | WBD 3585 | 2 | 16.03 |
| Mr. Asim Kumar Ghose | Mrs. Santa Ghose | | 3 | 16.06 |
| Mr. Robin Sinha Mr. Pinaki Roy | Mr. Kishore Chatterji | WBG 1088 | 4 | 16.09 |
| Mr. Abhijit Das Gupta ✓ Mr. Sumantra Sen Gupta | Mr. Natesan Ganesh | WBG 2424 | <u>5</u> | 16.12 |
| Mr. Biswajit Guha ✓ Mr. Indrajit Guha | Mr. Samar Basu | WBF 6998 | <u>6</u> | 16.15 |
| Mr. Baria Mukherjee ✓ | Mr. M. R. Bose | WBE 9080 | 7 | 16.18 |
| Mr. G. Burman Mr. A. Kothari ✓ | Mr. P. K. Jajodia | WBG 2523 | 8 | 16.21 |
| Mr. Surendra Singh ✓ Mr. Barin Banerjee | Mr. Ramesh Burman | WBG 114 | 9 | 16.24 |
| Mr. Narendra Nath Dutta Gupta Mr. Dulal Biswas ✓ | Mr. Jiten Mazumder | WBF 9464 | 10 | 16.27 |
| Mr. Ram Ratan Goenka ✓ Mr. Nani Gopal Chandra | Mr. B. N. Dhar | WBG 3592 | 11 | 16.30 |

There was no concept of a helmet and Robin Mitra – the winner, went off with an open jacket.

In the car section, the indomitable Surendra Singh drove on incheck tyres with Justice P B Mukherjee at the starting line. There are no photographs of Barin Mukherjee, who gave Surendra Singh the sporting fight he deserved.

Car 1 had a lady navigator being flagged off by another lady.

These reflect the involvement of the 'family' in the sport.

Those who participated in those days had to be good in arithmetic. In a 'seconds' basis trial, the road stones play a vital role. The days of Halda hadn't come. Many road stones were still in miles. Therefore, to help the navigator, the organisers mentioned that 5 miles is 8 kilometres. We finished fifth. Nanida (Nani Gopal Chanda), was with the motor vehicles department. He modified a taxi meter. We too got a speedometer specially assembled at a dingy workshop where we could get the odometer reading in 50 metres. Several late night calibrations in Southern Avenue almost perfected it.

I had an excellent team. We were friends and professionals. And we

received the moral support of our families. My co-navigator Prabodh Sanghvi's father owned the Rajaniklal service station. On Sundays, he asked all four of us to go, service one car all by ourselves under the supervision of his service head. He then filled up our car and we practised with a route and speed chart made by ourselves. It paid us a dividend.

Those were good days. We worked, we played...had fun.

Kolkata on WHEELS is trying all kinds of events. One hopes it'll reintroduce the 'family' to pave the way to better involvement, understanding and appreciation of this sport.



The fall and after



The Taratola u-bend

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THE NEVER ENDING SAGA OF THE CALCUTTA DERBY



Sandip Banerjee

There is a very popular Bengali song – ‘Sab khelar sera bangalir tumi football’ featured in the Uttam Kumar starrer ‘Dhanyimeye’. The very song reflects the ever burning passion of the Bengalees for football. Despite the penetration that cricket has made into the mindscape of the Indian public; Bengalees still vibrate in the pulsation of the game of football. Now with the ongoing World Cup, football frenzy is in the air. Though by courtesy of digital revolution, the names of world football giants are familiar to many and even though most of us are fanatic about Manchester United or Real Madrid, yet, when we think about Derby in Indian football scenario, the clash between the Calcutta giants Mohun Bagan and East Bengal looms uppermost in our minds.





The clash of the titans at the Calcutta Derby

It is no wonder that FIFA has acknowledged this Indian Derby as one of the ten enlisted derbies in the world. This Calcutta Derby is not just a football match, it is an emotion. The Bengalee community gets split into two on the date of the Derby. To track the great legacy of this Derby, one needs to delve deep into the socio-political history of the Bengali community torn by the strength of partition of India and consequent displacement & migration. These displaced population from the eastern side of Bengal poured into the newly formed state of West Bengal, after Indian Independence. The original inhabitants of western part of undivided Bengal popularly known as 'Ghotis' had some problems in accepting the displaced persons termed as 'Bangals'. The East Bengal Club as the name itself has a geographical connotation became an emblem of identity for the 'Bangals'; it became a symbol of their struggle to establish themselves in the face of challenge for existence. Thus this Derby, since inception became an issue of pride and prestige.

Reams have been written about the 'ghoti-bangal' divide that has dominated the mindscape of every football fan whenever these two Calcutta giants have met on the

field. But it is the sheer weight of history as well as the achievements of the two clubs that has added to the mystique over decades.

14, Balaram Ghosh Street saw the birth of Mohun Bagan in August 1889, with a view to promote the game among the youth. And steadily, the club gained prominence as it started showing up on the big stage of Indian football, one that had been dominated by British Army teams. Prominence turned to reverence when a bare-footed Mohun Bagan led by the venerable Shibdas Bhaduri, beat the much-fancied East Yorkshire Regiment 2-1 to become the first Indian club to win the IFA Shield. A momentous feat on the day that seemingly spurred the passionate thousands present at the game to connect the victory with the wave of nationalism as the country struggled to break free from the clutches of Imperial rule.

A kilometre and a half away from Balaram Ghosh Street, at 20 B Nimtola Ghat Street saw a group of Bengali gentlemen come together in 1920 to form East Bengal. The reason being Jorabagan Club had dropped Sailesh Bose and Nota Sen from their squad that was to play Mohun Bagan in the Cooch Behar Cup. Since these two players originally belonged to eastern part of Bengal it was

perceived as an anti-Bangal move. The two teams finally met for the first time in the semi-final of the Cooch Behar Cup in 1921 but it wasn't given official 'Boro' match or Derby status. The real rivalry took off when the two clubs crossed paths in May 1925, with East Bengal winning by a solitary goal scored by Nepal Chakraborty, despite the presence of the legendary Mohun Bagan defender Gostho Pal. This sparked the famed duel between the two teams and soon it became part of football folklore in India.

The impetus to win every title in the need to dominate the game, and above all, to topple the arch-rival, became the foundation for the famed battles as East Bengal and Mohun Bagan truly emerged as the biggest clubs in the country. With fan bases cutting across the country, it couldn't be anything better. East Bengal versus Mohun Bagan was always a game both wanted to win, and hated to lose.

And their vast multitude of loyal fans would give this compelling rivalry an added dimension. The

fate of the Derby would often decide who had the bragging rights for the season.

The 1934 Darbhanga Shield semi-final saw the two teams lining up for what would turn out to be a big win for the Mariners. Amiya Deb scored a hatrick, and ended up scoring four goals as Bagan mauled their rivals 4-1 to claim the bragging rights. When the Mariners lifted the 1947 IFA Shield beating East Bengal, much was mentioned about how fate had played a part in Bagan's ascendance and India's

independence. Legend has it that when the 1911 IFA Shield winning Mohun Bagan team was being carried on the shoulders of the spectators after their historic win, someone had asked them about when India would become independent. The reply as old-timers say went something like, "when Mohun Bagan will win the IFA Shield again". With



Gostho Pal



East Bengal with the 1949 IFA Shield

the likes of Sailen Manna, Dr. T AO, Mahabir Prasad in their ranks, Bagan would go on to beat East Bengal in the 1947 Shield final 1-0, courtesy a goal by Salim.

The Cooperage in Mumbai saw one of the first dramatic derbies as the Big Two, as they were referred to, came out to play the semi-final of the Rovers Cup in 1960. While the stands were packed, there was immense Bollywood presence too. The legendary music director SD Burman and his son, Rahul, along with actor Ashok Kumar, had come to watch their favourite East Bengal team. Not to be outdone, Mohun Bagan had among its supporters, the iconic singers Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Manna Dey present at the game. Though Bagan struck first, East Bengal hit back with two goals from Lakshminarayan and Arun Ghosh to script a memorable 2-1 win. The year 1961 saw another terrific encounter in the return leg of the Calcutta Football League (CFL) as Tulsidas Balaram skipped his way past a host of Mohun Bagan defenders to score the winner, thus handing East Bengal the title. In 1967, the Derby saw Chuni Goswami

smack in the winner for Mohun Bagan to pip their rivals 1-0 in front of a packed house at the Eden Gardens in the Calcutta Football League, a result that enabled Mohammedan Sporting to win the title for only the third time since India's independence.

While the two clubs virtually dominated Indian football from the 50s, it was the 70s that saw one of the most memorable matches to have ever been played between the two clubs. With East Bengal dominating their rivals, stretching their unbeaten streak to nearly five years against Mohun Bagan, the green and maroon brigade pulled one back, beating the red and yellow unit in the 1975 Durand Cup semi-final. But no one, not even their staunchest supporters would have imagined what would play out later that year. East Bengal spurred on by the rampaging Shyam Thapa and Subhash Bhowmick, tore apart the Bagan defence as the two met in the final of the IFA Shield at the Mohun Bagan ground. Thapa struck twice, with Bhowmick running rings around the Bagan defence as the Mariners were simply outclassed. Surajit Sengupta, Ranjit



Victorious Mohun Bagan team

Shyam Thapa seen here lifting the cup



Mukherjee and Subhankar Sanyal scored once each as Bagan were mauled 5-0 in what is still the biggest margin of victory in a Derby. And 22 years on, East Bengal would nearly repeat the act when they met Mohun Bagan in the semi-final of the 1997 Federation Cup at the Salt Lake Stadium. Coached by the legendary former footballer PK Banerjee, who incidentally was also in charge during the 5-goal victory, East Bengal rode on a brilliant hatrick by Baichung Bhutia to simply outclass their rivals 4-1 in front of 1,31,000 spectators. The match was all the more famous for the 'diamond formation' following which Bagan played under Amal Datta. Along with the rivalry of the two teams, the verbal exchanges of the two iconic coaches P.K. Banerjee and Amal Datta used to be the tell-tale for so many supporters.

The Mariners would hit back with good measure in yet another iconic Derby when Mohun Bagan under Karim Bencherifa's charge met East

Bengal in the I-League in 2009. The Salt Lake Stadium witnessed another historic humdinger as Nigerian Edeh Chidi struck four goals to lead the Mariners to a 5-3 win, to unleash unbelievable scenes of joy among its supporters who would go on to celebrate for days. There are so many other memorable matches as well for who can forget the brilliance of Pranab Ganguly when he scored a hatrick within 25 minutes in the finals of 1969 IFA Shield or the record making 16 seconds goal scored by Mohun Bagan's Akbar in the Calcutta League of 1976.

When we talk of the Calcutta Derby and the enthusiasm associated with it, we cannot forget how this reactionary enthusiasm turned into a fatal debacle as on August 16,

1980 when sixteen people died at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta coming to witness the final of the IFA shield. All started with Dilip Palit of East Bengal pulling out an unfair challenge on Mohun Bagan's Bidesh Bose.



Chuni Goswami & PK Banerjee

The gallery erupted, spectators lost their reason momentarily bringing out perhaps the darkest day in the history of the Calcutta Derby.

There are so innumerable tales associated with 'catching players' for these two iconic clubs. There would be 'special recruiters' or 'player catchers' for ensuring that the best players around could be the part of the respective teams. If East Bengal had the likes of 'Jiban and Paltu' in charge for recruiting player, then Mohun Bagan had Sajal Bose popularly known as Goju Bose who lured the best talent for the club. The players were kept at undisclosed locations only to be exposed on the date of signing for the clubs. It was like a festival as fans thronged outside to see their football heroes. Over the years such emotion is on the waning and today's generation may not have that feeling or its pulse.



*Silver Jubilee of Diamond Derby - 1997
Federation Cup semi-final*

As time has approached the whole emotion associated with the Calcutta Derby has changed. But one cannot forget that this Derby gave birth to football heroes. Great

names of Calcutta football attained cult status out of their performance in the Derby. Fans went mad over victories and became bizarrely sad over defeats. Such has been the stir of sentiments that people have suffered cardiac arrests in despair. These may appear as fabricated stories to many of the present generation. Names like

Dhiren Dey or Jyotish Guha has faded in the annals of time. In the era of ISL with the names of Mohun Bagan and East Bengal having commercial tags before them, it is a different perspective, particularly with not so many Bengali players lining up for the two teams. Let us hope that even as the times are changing, the Calcutta Derby retains its aura so that the future generation does not find it only as a piece of history.



Mohun Bagan vs East Bengal: Calcutta Derby

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Tollygunge Tram Depot
Opp. Petrol Pump & Metro Station

Santoshpur Trikon Park
Battala, Sukanta Setu

Mukundapur (Purbalak Singhabari)
Opp. Kishore Bharati Krirangan, Near Metro Cash & Carry

KALI PUJAS OF KOLKATA



Kinjal Bose



Kali Puja is celebrated all over the state of West Bengal. Likewise in Kolkata, it is celebrated with great pomp and splendour not only in the barowari puja pandals of the city; but also in some households where the puja is being celebrated for more than a century. The tradition, splendour and aristocracy still remain intact. Like Durga Puja, this puja also attracts a huge number of spectators especially at night as Goddess Kali or Shyama is worshipped at night and, the households are decorated with oil lamps or candles as this puja is the festival of light.

Chorbagan Mitra Bari at Muktaram Babu Street has been celebrating Kali Puja for more than 330 years. Here, the Goddess is worshipped as Shyama. This grand residence with six large Corinthian pillars at the entrance was built by well known engineering firm Macintosh and Burn. The idol of Goddess Kali is about 18 feet in height and sweets of the same size are arranged by the side of the Goddess which earned her the name of 'Mithai Kali'. The family also worships Goddess Durga.



Pal Bari of 96B, S. N. Banerjee Road is celebrating Kali Puja since 1785. The present house belonged to the estate of Rye Charan Pal where Durga, Kali and Kartick pujas are held, and that too in the same thakurdalan. Though Durga Puja started here from 1775, Kali Puja started a decade later. I have been told by a family member that about a century back, the idol used to be made in the thakurdalan itself; but in present day, it is brought from Kumartuli. The puja here is performed according to Sakta rituals but instead of animal sacrifice, fruits are used for bali.



Kali Puja of Tarak Pramanik's House of 154, Tarak Pramanik Road has been celebrating Durga Puja for more than 230 years. Here the Goddess is worshipped as Maa Kali. Kumari Puja is also performed; however, no animal sacrifice is made. The practice of animal sacrifice was stopped from 1998 onwards. A unique feature of the puja is the century-old chalchitra made of brass with nickel embellishments. Here arati is performed with 108 oil lamps.





Kali Puja of Chunder Bari of 23, Nirmal Chandra Street is more than hundred years old. The puja was started by Ganesh Chandra Chandra who was the grandfather of Late Pratap Chandra Chandra. The family also worships Goddess Durga from 1877 onwards. Here, Goddess Kali is worshipped in the thakurdalan which was designed by famous architect, Satish Chandra Chattopadhyay. The thakurdalan features stucco works.



Goddess Kali of 108, Muktaram Babu Street has eighteen hands. Here, the idol of Maa Kali is unique since it is made of astodhatu (an alloy of eight metals). The idol is about five feet in height. There is a story behind this idol. I have been informed by Shri Sukanta Mukherjee, a family member that his ancestor Ashutosh Mukherjee once went to Nepal for 'tantra sadhana'. There while meditating in the mountains, he suddenly found an idol of Goddess Kali made of stone. Looking at the idol, he found that the Goddess has eighteen hands instead

of four. He brought that idol at his home in Muktaram Babu Street in 1902 and as per the divine dream a much larger idol was built from astodhatu. Special worship is performed on each Amavasyatithi. Earlier there used to be animal sacrifice but now the practiced has completely stopped. The ritual of Kumari Puja though previously performed; but now stopped. Maa Sitala is seen on the right of Maa Kali and Jarasur (green coloured), son of Maa Sitala is seen on the left. The temple also houses a Shiva lingam and Radha Krishna.

Goddess Kali of 108, Muktaram Babu Street has eighteen hands. Here, the idol of Maa Kali is unique since it is made of astodhatu (an alloy of eight metals)



Kali Puja of Sanyal Bari of 20, Bosepara Lane, Baghbazar is worshipping Goddess Shyama from 1916 onwards. The house belonged to Late Baikunthanath Sanyal who was one of the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansadev. Swami Vivekananda fondly called Baikunthanath "Sandal". The puja here is done following Kalika Puran and no sacrifice is offered in this puja. Apart from Kali Puja, Durga Puja and Annapurna Puja are also held here.



Kali Puja of Pramanik Bari of 37A, Tarak Pramanik Road has been celebrating Kali Puja for more than four centuries. Besides Kali Puja, the family also celebrates Jagadhatri Puja in a grand way. The idol is prepared in the thakurdalan itself, and only on the morning of Kali Puja, the Goddess is decorated with ornaments. When this puja started four hundred years back, this present place was known by the name of Gobindapur. And this house together with the thakurdalan was made of mud. Animal sacrifice used to be held earlier but from 2004 onwards it was stopped permanently. The ritual of 'dhuno porano', which is a familiar feature of Durga Puja of the bonedi households are practised here meticulously. There are a number of unique features connected with this Kali Puja. Firstly, the family members follow a vegetarian diet seven days prior to the puja; secondly, the family members follow the ritual of Bijoya the following day after Kali Puja. Earlier the idol was carried on the shoulders and taken to the ghat for immersion.



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As India embraces the transition to electric mobility, the development of a robust public charging infrastructure is becoming increasingly crucial. The government's push for electrifying transportation, coupled with growing public interest in electric vehicles (EVs), has spurred the need for a nationwide network of charging stations. The challenge lies not only in building the infrastructure but also ensuring it can meet the needs of a large and diverse country like India.

Public Charging Infrastructure For EVs

 Promit Hazra



As of 2023, India had about 5,151 charging stations, a modest figure given the expanding EV market, according to the Ministry of Power. With the electric vehicle market predicted to reach 10 million units per year by 2030 and a total of 50 million EVs expected to be on the road, there is an urgent need for a dependable charging infrastructure to match this growth. Currently, the public charging network is concentrated in major cities and industrial hubs, indicating early-stage development. The increasing



market share of EVs emphasises the necessity to expand this network rapidly.

The electric passenger vehicle market, though small, has seen steady growth. Tata Motors, the leading player in this segment, sold around 50,000 electric cars in 2023, capturing 85% of the market. The company projects that by 2026, electric cars will account for 10% of their total car sales further highlighting the need for enhanced charging infrastructure to meet the growing demand.

India's government has already introduced various measures to support the development of public charging stations. Under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME II)



scheme, subsidies are provided to both EV manufacturers and developers of charging infrastructure to accelerate the adoption of EVs. By 2030, the government aims to have about 69,000 charging stations across the country. This expansion is essential to accommodate the growing number of EVs and ease range anxiety among potential EV buyers.

Geographic distribution remains uneven, with most charging stations located in urban areas, particularly in regions like Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. However, rural and semi-urban areas still lag behind, making long-distance travel challenging for EV owners. To address this, the government plans to install charging stations after every 25 kilometres along major highways, which would help alleviate concerns regarding intercity travel. Private players are also actively contributing to the development of charging infrastructure. Companies such as Tata Power, Fortum, and Indian Oil are leading the way in installing public chargers across various locations. Tata Power, for instance, has over 1,000 charging stations and aims to expand this number to 25,000 by 2027. Meanwhile, start-ups like Ather Energy are focusing on fast-charging

grids for electric two-wheelers.

Additionally, battery swapping, which allows vehicles to exchange depleted batteries for fully charged ones, is emerging as an alternative solution, particularly for commercial two- and three-wheelers. Overall, India's charging infrastructure is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 40% by 2030, but challenges like geographic disparities and grid reliability still need to be addressed to ensure the successful mass adoption of electric vehicles.

West Bengal is making quick progress in setting up electric vehicle (EV) charging stations as part of its push for green energy. As of 2023, there were already over 300 public charging points, mostly in Kolkata and other key cities. The state plans to boost this number to around 1,000 by 2026, thanks to its focused EV policy. Major highways like NH-16 and NH-19 are also getting fast chargers to ease long-distance travel for EV users. The West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company (WBSEDCL) is leading the charge, aligning with India's aim to have 30% of vehicles electric by 2030.



OUR WHEELERS

| Year- 2013 | Year- 2014 | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Suwendu Biswas | Shyamal Roy | Debasish Kumar Sinha | Satyendra Nath Saha |
| Saurabh Sha | Asim Kumar Mukhopadhyay | Atish Ghosh | Subir Ghosh |
| Partha Laha | Kaustav Majumdar | Sekhar Datta | Aloke Nath Basu |
| Rajeev Gupta | Debasish Banerjee | Partha Chatterjee | Indranil Deashi |
| Debdulal Ghosal | Manab Kr. Mukhopadhyay | Supriyo Banerjee | Tridib Ghosh |
| Pradeep Kumar Chakravarti | Rahul Sengupta | Pradipta Biswas | Faisal Momen |
| Sandip Kumar Bhattacharya | Bikash Lal Das | Chandan Sur | Gaurav Surana |
| Sudhir Kumar Kothari | Shiladitya Dasgupta | Chandra Kant Ved | Raktim Banerjee |
| Soumen Paul | Swarup Paul | Ranjan Chakraborty | Sanjay Biswas |
| Subhanu Pal | Debraj Dey | Raj Kumar Chhajaj | Arindam Sarkar |
| Rezaul Kabir Mondal 🌸 | Biswanath Guha | Saradindu Sanyal | Tridip Das |
| Raja Dey | Rajkumar Bhattacharya | Gautam De | Anirvan Chaudhuri |
| Subrata Boral | Sujoy Roy | Amit Srivastava | Bhaskar Ghosh |
| Souvik Bhattacharya | Debojit Kolay | Shaik Mohammed Habib | Madhumita Kumar Das Lala |
| Supriyo Sen | Kamalendra Narayan Deb | Dr. Pintu Rudra 🌸 | Debabrata Sarkar |
| Arnab Bhowmick | Sreemoyee Mukherjee | Peeyush Bhaduri | Kausik Samadder |
| Kaunish Chakraborti | Samrat Sarkar | Pavan Mukherjee | Prabir Choudhury |
| Dr. Alok Nag | Sekhar Basu Majumdar | Arindam Mukherjee | Debanjan Dutta |
| Sunil Agarwal | Dr. Manas Kumar Chakrabarti | Gourav Udani | Tanmay Chattopadhyay |
| Prabal Kumar Dey | Munisish Bhagwanani | Dr. Prabal Bandyopadhyay | Dwarakeswar Mondal |
| Shyamal Kiron Bose | Jyoti Prakash Banerjee | Dr. Mahua Basu | Ashim Roy |
| Raktim Nag | Anindya Mookerjee | Rakesh Prasad | Rishabh Agarwal |
| Krishnendu Basu | Rajesh Pathak | Shantanu Kumar Roy | Syamal Sinha |
| Aditya Poddar | Mouktick Dasgupta | Sumitava Basu | Sudipto Das |
| Dipak Kumar Banerjee | Bhaskar Banerjee | Siddhartha Chakraborty | Prasanta Kumar Bose |
| Dr. Amarnath Mukherjee | Pradeep Kumar Tarafdar | Arun Kumar Agarwal | |
| Dipali Poddar | Mahua Biswas | | |
| Amit Singh | Colonel S.k. Saha | Year- 2015 | Year- 2016 |
| Dr. Avijit Chattopadhyay | Subrata Ghose Chaudhuri | Koushik Daw | Swarup Lal Mitra |
| Abhijit Dasgupta | Aritra Sardar | Aninda Biswas | Bhaskar Dutta |
| Sudip Kumar Ghosh | Arindam Bhaduri | Rudra Prasad Biswas | Bhaskar Dutta |
| Debasish Bose | Swagata Guha Mustafi | Samik Mukherjee | Debnath Ghosh |
| Amarnath Banerjee | Sanjib Kumar Paik | Sanjay Dasgupta | Debjyoti Datta |
| Sandip Mukherjee | Surya Narayan Jaiswal | Pradeep Chowdhury | Amit Sen Gupta |
| Jayant Basu | Indrajit Saha | Chandan Gupta | Biswajit Addy |
| Prabal Sen | Ashit Marwah | Abhradip Jha | Dr. G.r. Ashok |
| Atindranath Bhaduri | Siddhartha Majumdar | Gopa Sarkar | Bharat Bhushan Rakheja |
| Dr. Amit Paul | Tarun Kanti Das | Abhijit Datta | Manav Kejriwal 🌸 |
| Noshir Naval Framjee | Soumen Kar | Sutanu Ghosh | Samick Kumar Sinha |
| Ashok Mukherjee | Sanjoy Kumar Misra | Keka Dutta | Shourya Lahiri |
| Barnali De | S. Sarbadhikary | Prasun Shaw | Debasis Chakraborty |
| Dibya Kanti Chakravarti | Santanu Chakraborty | Dipankar Sen | Jayanta Mitra |
| Biswajit Lahiri | Prateek Das | Dipanjan Ganguly | Pijush Ranjan Chowdhury |
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| Ranaji Ganguli | Rajib Majumder | Tamanash Dutta | Anupam Biswas |
| Debapriya Brahma | Rajarshi Maitra | Saurjya Pratim Mitra | Sandeep Sengupta |
| Soumya Roy | Sekhar Mukherjee | Dashmeshbir Singh Sodhi | Soumen Pramanik |
| Debopam Bandyopadhyay | Aditya Narayan Chakraborty | Amit Kumar Banerjee 🌸 | Anurag Majumdar |
| Samirendra Nath Mukherjee | Pradip Das | Debabrata Deb | Rahul Bose |
| Sunirmal Chakravarthi | Sumitava Mukherjee | Shreeparna Ghosal | Arindam Bhanja |
| Chandan Roy | Jay S Kamdar | Sanatan Ray Chaudhuri | Debasis Bhattacharyya |
| | | Sipra Mukhopadhyay | Dr.sanjay Bhattacharyya |
| | | | Dr.jayanta Kumar Gupta |
| | | | Dr. Tanmoy Das |

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
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| Pradeep Kumar Sen | Avijit Das | Subimal Ghosh | Subir Kumar Nandy |
| Paul Austin D'cruze / Amit | Dr. Debasish Bhose | Prabal Biswas | |
| Jagannath Ghatak | Prabal Nag | Siddhartha Chakraborty | Year- 2019 |
| Pradip Ghosh | Sandip Kumar Bagchi | Sikharendra Datta | Amit Tibrewal |
| Karna Sengupta | Sanjib Das | Aditya Nethewwala | Shankar Gangopadhyay |
| Soumyabrata Bose | Manik Nath Bandyopadhyay | Sourav Guha | Sanjay Mukherjee |
| Sajal Roy | Manish Debnath | Anjan Kumar Roy | Majid Ali Khan |
| Sougata Ghosh | Joyanta Chatterjee | Ajoy Kumar Law | Mohammed Ali |
| Ravi Shankar Asopa | Tapan Kr. Halder | Ratan Mondal | Ajay Kumar Tantia |
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| Binod Bihari Biswas | Anjan Das | Biswajit Chatterjee | Mihir Majumder |
| Supradip Mullick | Sutanu Roy | S. Bardhan | Dipankar Goswami |
| Saikat Konar | Sourav Ojha | Debasis Mallick | Biplab Roy Chowdhury |
| Ashim Kumar Dutta | Dibakar Dutta | Yadvinder Singh | Sandipan Mukherjee |
| Abhijit Dhar | Arindam Mukhopadhyay | Sapna Dey | Goutam Kumar Biswas |
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| Sandip Kumar Hunday | Subrata Basu | Sangram Kar | Santanu Roychowdhury |
| Saikat Sarkar | Sayantana Das Purakayastha | Santanu Das | Ashok Kumar Basu |
| Shib Nath De | Gaurab Mitra | Barun Saha | Subhas Chandra Sarkar |
| Subrata Banerjee | Kumardeep Biswas | Arijit Chakraborty | Kaushik Guha |
| Dr. Debashis Chatterjee | Maharshi Banerjee | Shivaji Sengupta | Raju Sarkar |
| Tanushree Nandan | Saikat Sengupta | Huzefa Feroze | Subhankar Pal |
| Indranil Kanti Chakravarty | Dalia Majumdar | Himadri Das | Sarbani Bhattacharyya |
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| Kamal Dutta | Sujit Guha | Subrata Ghosh | Sandip Agrawal |
| Ca Chandan Chatterjee | Tamal Nath | Sauradeep Chattopadhyay | Swarnabha Paul |
| Arijit Bhattacharjee | Sarbani Ghosh | Shyambenu Basu | Partha Sarathi Kar |
| Tarakjit Saha | Mukulendra Dutt | Samirendu Dutt | Aditya Vikram Dasgupta |
| Suvankar Dasgupta | Sutirtha Talukdar | Saurav Nandy | Karan Asopa |
| Pronobesh Poddar | Kuldeep Narayan Banerjee | Dilip Sarkar | Sujata Sinha |
| Sudipta Chakraborty | Shubha Ranjan Nandi | Rakesh Shovan Ghosh | Mukesh Mantry |
| Rebanta Dasgupta | Shroyita Lahiri | Kuldeep Jaiswal | Arunabha Biswas |
| | Anubrata Gangoly | Mrinmay Mandal | Raktim Gangopadhyay |
| Year- 2017 | Raajat Chaturvedi | Sunil Bajaj | Vishal Sikaria |
| Malay Kumar Sarkar | Sragdhara Ghosh | Capt Noel Dcruz | Kaushik Sengupta |
| Uday Sankar Sarkar | | Nirendu Konar | Tushar Kanti Sett |
| Ravi Choudhary | Year- 2018 | Ujjal Maitra | |
| Mostakin Jamadar | Anirban Ghosh | Sambddha Deb | Year- 2020 |
| Kavita Dutta 🌸 | Subhasis Gangopadhyay | Atanu Kar | Suman Ghosh |
| Kaustuv Roy | Samar Kumar Ghosh | Shantonu Moitra | Prithveer Roychowdhury |
| Dipayan Dutta | Bidyut Ghosh | Syed Humayun Siraj | Pravin Nahata |
| Ranajit Kumar Biswas 🌸 | Amlan Kumar Biswas | Abhijit Biswas | Abhisek Chowdhury |
| Amit Mukhopadhyay | Riteswar Sikdar | Tapan Kumar Ghosh | Pratap Mukherjee |
| Arijit Lahiri | Biplab Bhowal | Pradip Chakraborty | Sonjoy Biswas |
| Suman Mukhopadhyay | Bitan Biswas | Amitava Dutt | Piyush Kumar Jain |
| Priyobrata Daw | Anupam Bhattacharyya | Pradip Kumar Banerjee | Sanjib Bose |
| Nasimuddin Ahmed | Giridharilal Chhaohchharia | Tapan Dutta | Jit Mitra |
| Kaushik Saha | Sujit Kumar Das Sarma | Elina Sengupta | Ratan Bahadur Postwalla |

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| Dr. Gautam Ghosh | Kaustav Mitra | Sonia Bhattacharya | Arup Ghosh |
| Mahua Palit | Anil Sharma | Arup Mukherjee | Tapas Moitra |
| Chandan Chatterjee | Asit Kumar Mandal | Arun Kumar Bhatia | Soumik Kumar |
| Jayanta Kumar Basu | Dhiman Mukherjee | Kaushik Ghosh Chowdhury | Goutam Dass |
| Siddhartha Ghosh | Sayantan Mondal | Debasish Guha | Dr.shomik Sarkar |
| Abhijit Chattopadhyay | Abhrajyoti Ghosh | Anirban Saha | Eshna Dey |
| Soumendra Roy Chowdhury | Ananda Chowdhury | Ashish Agarwal | Arijit Ray |
| Siddhartha Sarkar | Reema Mukherjee | Bikash Kanti Sarkar | Neermalya Deb Sikdar |
| Subrata Kumar De | Obaidullah Babar | Mousumi Chatterjee | Chirabrata Majumder |
| Madhumita Bishnu | Pranab Moitra | Alok Kumar Bhartia | Paromita Bhattacharjee |
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| Sanjana Laha | Sumit Binani | Kuntal Chattopadhyay | Pratik Kumar Das |
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| Sumit Soni | Abhijeet Mukherjee | Gapinath Adhikary | Dr. Biswajit Panda |
| Pratip Mukherjee | Dipak Kumar Das | Shekhar Agarwal | Amitava Banerjee |
| Bikash Pradhan | Ranbeer Banerjee | Samantak Roy | Surajit Mitra |
| Kinjal Bose | | Pranab Barman | Shilabhadra Banerjee |
| Narayan Roy Chowdhury | Year- 2022 | Bikash Dutta | Suranjan Paul |
| Raja Banerjee | Subhash Chandra Goenka | Sanjay Guhathakurta | Aniruddha Chatterjee |
| Amitava Deb | Sanjeet Singh | Indrajit Saha | Abhishek Sarvadhikari |
| Subham Poddar | Ashok Kumar Basu | Year- 2023 | Amitava Chakraborty |
| Biplab Kumar Ghosh | Goutam Saha | Dr. Debanjali Ray | Kanchan Purkayastha |
| | Ruchir Mohunta | Subrata Basu | Shibendu Bikash Guha |
| Year- 2021 | Anand Acharya | Anshuman Roy | Tanmoy Roy |
| Santanu Ghosh | Pushan Kar | Priyanuj Moitra | Abhijit Das |
| Indranil Roy Chowdhury | Partha Sarathi Sengupta | Dr. Ravindra Wankhede | Sanjay Chirania |
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| Golam Mastafa Chowdhury | Anjan Bose | Abhijit Dutt | Shravan Kejriwal |
| Arindam Datta | Indrani Maji | Prabal Chowdhury | Chandan Banerjee |
| Tapas Kumar Mukherjee | Kaushik Bargi | Indranil Bhattacharya | Vivek Gandhi |
| Soumya Brata Dhar | Vishal Kedia | Satyabrata Gupta | Jimmy K Tangree |
| Kaushik Bhattacharyya | Swapan Banerjee | Raj Kumar Sharma | Year- 2024 |
| Sabyasachi Ghosh | Ranajit Dey | Swarnali Paul | Sanjay Chatterjee |
| Arnab Dey | Narayan Sahoo | Subhabrata Ghose | Robin Mallick |
| Rakesh Bajoria | Samudra Mondal | Samanya Ray | Amrita Acharya |
| Surajit Das | Indranil Bhattacharya | Subrata Roy Choudhury | Chandra Shekher Netram |
| Shihab Rezaul Mondal | Dulal Mitra | Debabrata Chakraborty | Subham Bandyopadhyay |
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| Subhajit Banerjee | Soumendra Nath Banerjee | Baichitra Sarkar | Rakesh Agarwal |
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| Mainak Bagchi | Arijit Bhowmick | Arnab Kumar De | Sayantan Mukherjee |
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| Soumyadeb Shaw |
| Rohan Roy |
| Avijit Baran Das |
| Chanchal Kumar Chandra |
| Abhishek Biswas |
| Naresh Agarwal |
| Partha Mukherjee |
| Siddhartha Ghosh |
| Niladri Shankar Mukherjee |
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| Jitendra Mahapatra |
| Soumik Dutta |
| Moloy Chakravorty |
| Sumit Kumar Sinha |
| Suddha Sattwa Datta |
| Indraneel Choudhury |
| Partha Sarathi Chatterjee |
| Brij Mohan Mundhra |

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| Lalit Singh |
| Sambit Pradhan |
| Vinesh Kumar Joshi |
| Sailesh Rupani |
| Subhra Baran Sengupta |
| Prosenjit Dey |
| Anindya Sengupta |
| Indranil Roy Chowdhury |
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| Ajay Kejriwal |
| Kanchan Mukherjee |
| Dr. Gairik Das |
| Sandip Kumar Ghosh |
| Ashes Bhattacharyya |

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| Debyeet Barua |
| Sudipta Ghosh |
| Dishari Guha |
| Palash Sen |
| Ajeet Pal Singh |
| Sourav Bose |
| Debaprem Chatterjee |
| Avijit Hazra |
| Prakash Kamath |
| Rakesh Desai |
| Subir Dutta |
| Rakesh Tandan |
| Soumen Ganguly |
| Pameli Sengupta |
| Koyel Bandyopadhyay |
| Prasenjit Daw |
| Vikash Agarwal |
| Rabindra Nath Tandon |

| Year- 2025 |
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| Debashis Ghosh |
| Rajat Kanti Sarkar |
| Aritra Mukherjee |
| Saugata Guha Roy |
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| Sandipan Basu Mallick |
| Dr Th. Dinesh Chandra Singh |
| Ayan Das |
| Soumya Kanti Chakravarti |
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