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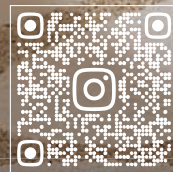
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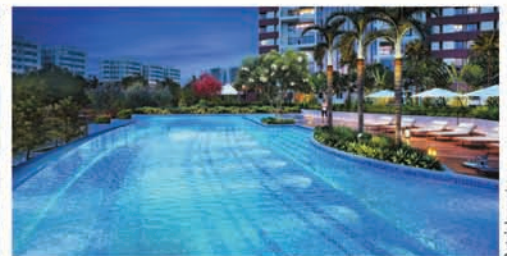
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THE M... DARD



Stylist and film costume designer Poulami Gupta constructs Bengal's indigenous fashion milestones, with actor Swastika Mukherjee portraying four classic looks rooted in the culture... | P44



DRAPED IN HISTORY

INDULGE
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Indulge is six in Kolkata! As we prepare to usher in 2025, we mark six wonderful years in this City of Joy. We look back with fondness and then take a longer walk down memory lane to trace the city's illustrious history and rich heritage—spanning food, fashion, art, cinema, theatre, and music. We celebrate Kolkata's ever-evolving spirit that melds tradition with modernity. This unique fusion of the past and present makes the city truly special. And it is this essence we aim to capture in our special anniversary edition!



On our cover, we feature stylist and film costume designer Poulami Gupta, who highlights Bengal's iconic fashion milestones, with the talented actor Swastika Mukherjee bringing to life four timeless looks deeply rooted in Bengal's culture.

We then dive into Kolkata's evolving fashion landscape with Madhu Neotia, who marks a decade of *The India Story*.

Kolkata's heritage is deeply intertwined with its food and drink culture. We take a look at the city's oldest watering holes to discover how they have evolved over the years, and trace the history of Kolkata's bakeries.

Meanwhile, we explore Pice hotels that are integral to Kolkata's identity, and we feature the iconic restaurants of Park Street. We also throw light on the Chinese community in Kolkata and how their distinctive cuisine has become an integral part of the city's foodscape.

On the culture front, we have a chat with artist Soumyadeep Roy on honouring Wajid Ali Shah through art, Paris-based artist Avijit Ghosh's journey of taking Bengal's art to France, and a feature on musicians playing instruments that are fading into oblivion.

We also have in store for you the *Desi Disco* night hosted by Mariam and Kushal on our party pages.

All this, along with our regular sections on wellness, gadgets, and automobiles.

Happy New Year and hope you enjoy reading our special anniversary edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you!

Edison Thomas

Edison Thomas
Editor, Indulge

Absurd authority

December 29 | Cathedral Road
Catch a thought-provoking performance of *Police*, adapted from Slawomir Mrozek's dark satire, at the Academy of Fine Arts. This play delves into themes of authority and conformity with wit and absurdity. Performed by Rahul Sengupta, Abhra Mukhopadhyay, and others, the play critiques oppressive systems with humour and thought-provoking twists. *The show begins at 3.15 pm on December 29. Tickets available online.*



Soulful enchantment

December 28 | JBS Haldane Avenue
Experience an unforgettable evening of music and magic at *Bismil Ki Mehfil*, happening on December 28 at Biswa Bangla Mela Prangan. Viral sensation Bismil promises to enchant the audience with his soulful performance. Immerse yourself in an electrifying celebration. *The event starts at 6 pm. Tickets available online.*



Festive delights

December 27 | Hazra Road
Relish the season's warmth with Ambrosia's special winter menu, featuring dishes like tender Dimsums with *curry* and hearty *Roti Jaali* with *curry*. This cosy culinary experience is designed to bring warmth and joy to your table, perfect for the chilly season. *From 11 am to 7 pm, until January 31.*

CHART THE
w.e.e.k.
AHEAD

Eternal questions

January 1 | Cathedral Road
Experience the powerful drama *Shesh Proshno*, adapted from Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's iconic novel, at the Academy of Fine Arts on January 1, starting at 3 pm. This powerful adaptation captures the revolutionary spirit of Komol, a character who challenges societal norms with her progressive views. Set in the Bengali society of Agra, the drama explores love, traditions, and the clash of ideologies. Presented by Charbak, this thought-provoking story is as relevant today as ever. *Tickets available online.*



Laugh riot

Dec 29 | Shakespeare Sarani
Prepare for a laugh riot as comedian Vipul Goyal takes the stage at Kala Kunj Auditorium on December 29 at 7 pm. Known for his hilarious observations from *Humorously Yours*, Vipul's relatable humour is bound to leave you in splits. *Tickets available online.*



Beta homecoming

December 29 | Chowringhee Road
Peter Cat Recording Co. returns home for a spectacular performance as part of *Good Luck Beta '24*. After two years of groundbreaking tours, this event marks a triumphant homecoming for the band. Celebrate their upcoming album *BETA* with a night of unmatched music at Roots. *Doors open at 8 pm. Tickets available online.*



Musical night

December 29 | JBS Haldane Avenue
Head to witness renowned singer Sahana Bajpaie for a moving evening of soulful music titled *Utshorgo*. Known for her evocative voice and unique style, Sahana is set to create a truly unforgettable experience. *This concert will take place at Science City Auditorium on December 29, starting at 6 pm. Tickets available online.*

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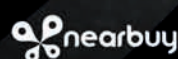


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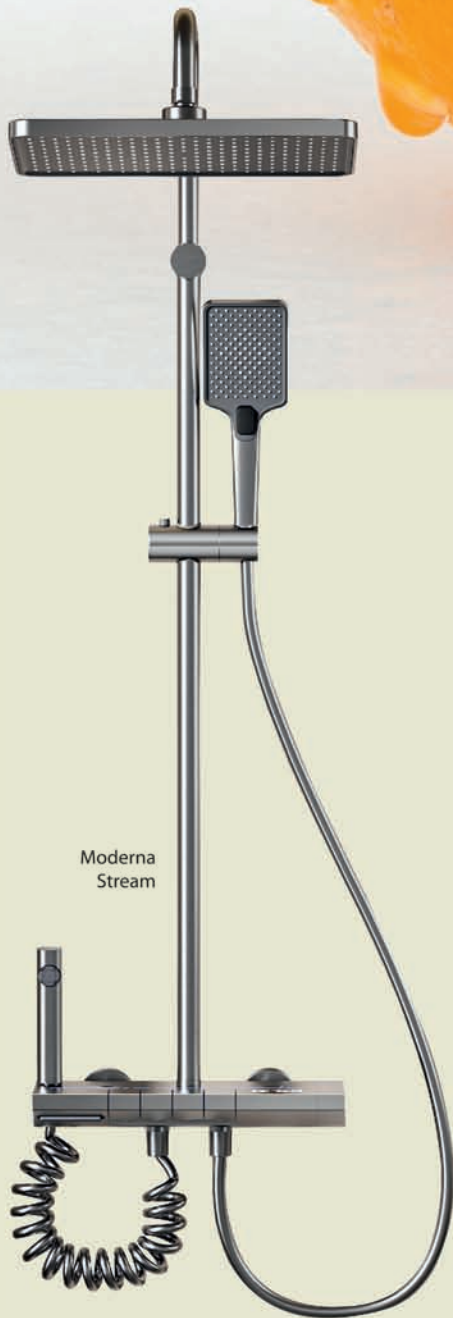


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FUTURE OF BENGAL ART

The inaugural event of the first edition of Bengal Biennale at Alipore Jail Museum was a resounding success. The evening featured an elegant ceremony, a thought-provoking panel discussion titled *The First Auspicious Moment*, and a soulful musical performance by the classical band, ARAJ. *Indulge* provides you a glimpse of the same.



Pics: Partha Saha



Close to reality

Filmmakers Sarmistha Maity and Rajdeep Paul's *Mon Potongo* had its premiere at a cityplex, joined by the cast, crew and friends from the industry.

Pics: Pritam Sarkar



Art alert

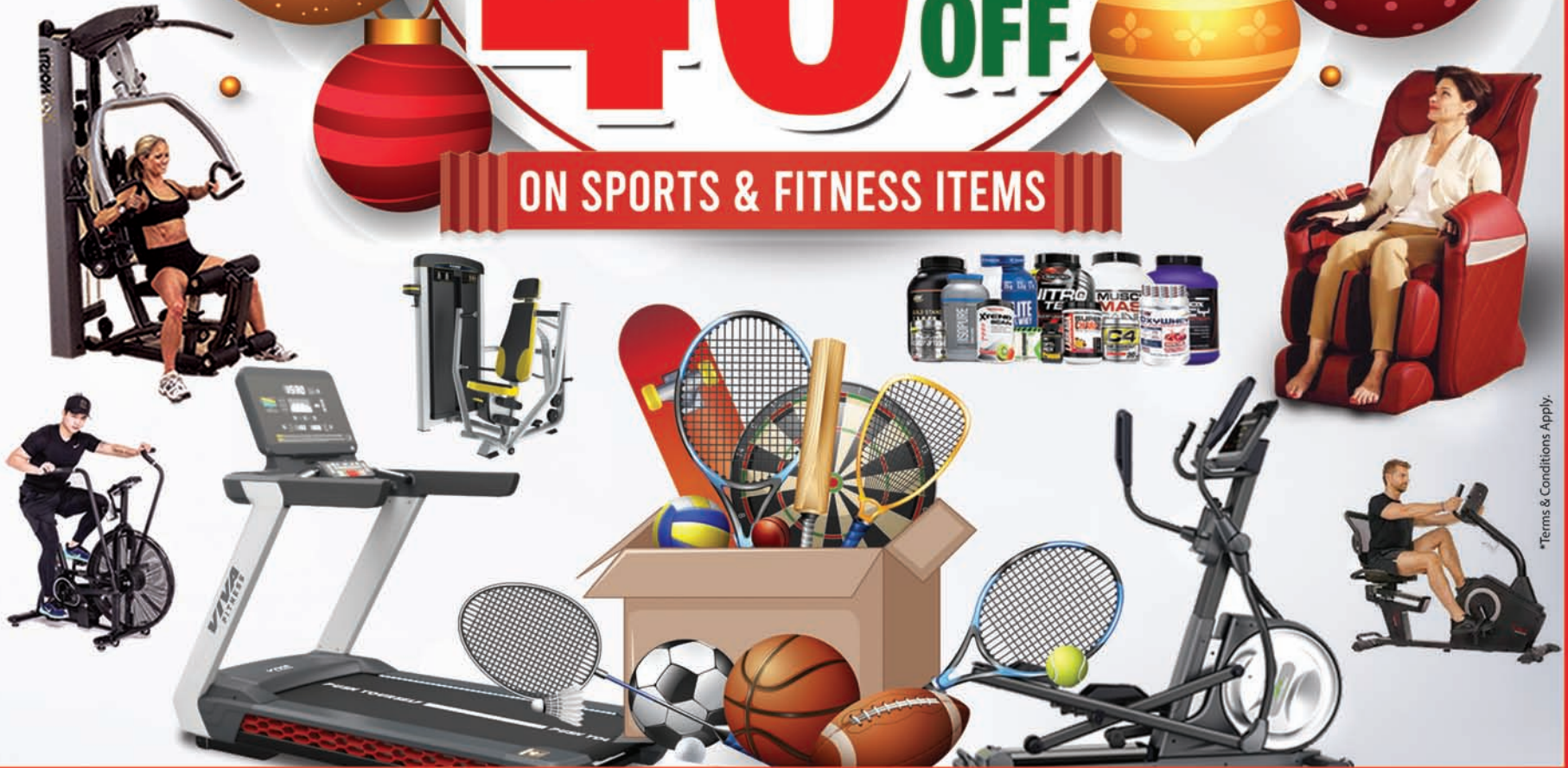
The 8th edition of the annual art fair and festival organised by ArtsAcre Foundation was held recently and was inaugurated in presence of a few honourable dignitaries. Here are a few glimpses from the evening.

PC: Pritam Sarkar

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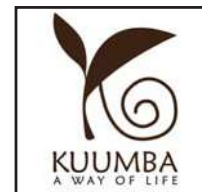
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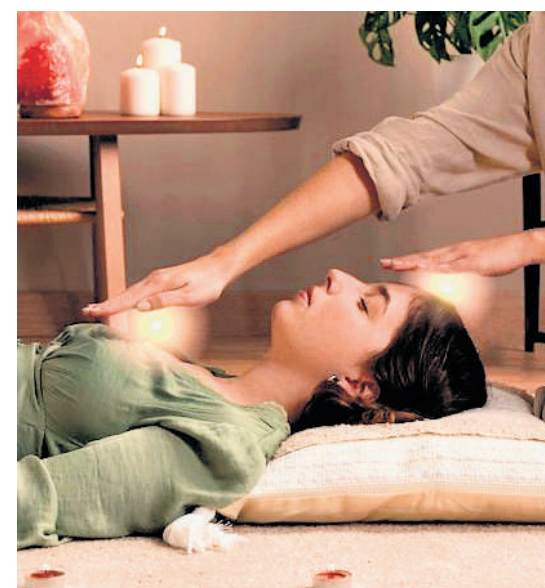
Kuumba Café – A celebration of health and wellness

At Kuumba Café, every item on the menu is thoughtfully crafted to nourish both body and soul. The café offers a wide range of health-focused options, including exclusive, master-blended flavored teas that promote wellness and immunity. From detox juices and smoothies to wholesome salads, the menu caters to all ages, blending global culinary inspirations with fresh, high-quality ingredients. Every sip and bite at Kuumba Café is designed to enhance your well-being, offering a restorative experience in a peaceful, welcoming space.

KUUMBA IS A tribute to the timeless land of India, where the earth yields rare riches, and where the skies and soil have united to create unique spices, celestial teas, and extraordinary craftsmanship. In this ancient country, artisans weave threads and colours into masterpieces of clothing, home décor, and jewellery, each piece reflecting the harmony between nature and human creativity. At Kuumba, every effort is made to honour the joy and celebration of life and nature, all while enhancing the well-being of the people who experience it.



About Deepa Shah Chaki – The visionary behind Kuumba
 Deepa Shah Chaki, a social entrepreneur, mental health counselor, and wellness professional based in Kolkata, is the founder of Kuumba. With a deep passion for supporting social causes, she advocates for mental wellness, crafts, and the empowerment of under-represented communities. She integrates holistic healing therapies, including art, music, dance movement, and psychological counseling, to promote well-being. Her lifestyle brand, Kuumba promotes locally made, handcrafted, and homegrown products from across India, empowering farmers, weavers, artisans, and tribal communities.



Kuumba Wellness – A sanctuary for holistic healing

Kuumba's wellness initiatives are designed to nurture the mind, body, and soul. The sanctuary offers a range of holistic services, including yoga, energy healing, *sujok* therapy, dance movement, psychological counseling, and nutrition guidance. Deepa and her team of healers and therapists provide a nurturing environment where clients can find balance, peace, and complete wellness. By integrating mind-body therapies and expert guidance, Kuumba helps individuals regain balance and thrive in all aspects of their lives. Through Kuumba, Deepa Shah Chaki is shaping a way of life that celebrates India's diverse heritage, promotes social change, and fosters personal and collective wellness.

Kuumba Boutique – Curated craftsmanship and empowerment

The Kuumba Boutique is home to a stunning collection of handcrafted items, each piece reflecting India's rich culture and heritage. By supporting women's groups, tribal communities, NGOs, and artisans, Kuumba fosters a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. The boutique offers carefully curated products that transform your living spaces while uplifting your spirits. Every item tells a story of craftsmanship and commitment to social causes, empowering local communities and promoting sustainable practices.



Deepa Shah Chaki



Brahmaputra Carnival

Join the Ultimate Celebration of Assam's Heritage at the Brahmaputra Carnival

Get ready to immerse yourself in the vibrant culture and natural beauty of Assam at the Brahmaputra Carnival, running from **December 15, 2024, to March 15, 2025**. Set along the stunning banks of the Brahmaputra River at LachitGhat, Guwahati, this 90-day celebration offers a perfect blend of adventure, tranquility, and cultural immersion.



The carnival offers exciting activities for all ages. Adventure enthusiasts can indulge in kayaking, river rafting, speedboat rides, ATV rides, bungee jumping, jet skiing, and more. For those seeking a cultural experience, the event features live music performances, traditional dance showcases, and local craft exhibitions. The carnival also provides a platform for local artisans, musicians, and performers to showcase their talents, celebrating Assam's rich heritage.

LACHITGHAT

At LachitGhat, the heart of the carnival, guests can enjoy:

- **Live Concerts on Weekends:** Experience performances from local and national artists spanning a variety of musical genres.
- **Food Stalls:** Relish traditional Assamese dishes and other popular delicacies, offering a taste of the region's culinary delights.
- **Handicraft Stalls:** Explore handmade crafts from local artisans, including textiles and bamboo products, perfect for souvenirs.
- **Adventure Activities:** Get an adrenaline rush with exciting outdoor adventures like kayaking and boat rides, making it an adventure-filled destination.

SANDBAR ISLAND TENT CITY

For a more luxurious experience, head to the **Sandbar Island Tent City**, where you can stay amidst nature in one of the 20 exclusive tents across three categories:

- **Deluxe Tents:** ₹7500 + taxes (09 tents available)
- **Premium Tents:** ₹9500 + taxes (09 tents available)
- **Royal Tents:** ₹14500 + taxes (02 tents available)

Each tent comes with an inclusive package offering three meals a day, hi-tea, and daily cultural performances. Guests can enjoy traditional dances like Bihu, Bagurumba, and Jhumur, showcasing the artistic richness of Assam and the broader northeast.

Visitors can also explore nearby attractions like the revered **Kamakhya Temple**, **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**, and **Umananda Temple**, each offering a glimpse into Assam's natural beauty and spiritual heritage.

With easy access from **Guwahati Airport** (22.5 km) and **Guwahati Railway Station** (2.4 km), the Brahmaputra Carnival is an unmissable event. Whether you're seeking an adrenaline rush, cultural immersion, or a luxurious escape, this celebration offers something for everyone.

Join us at the Brahmaputra Carnival to experience the heart of Assam!

For bookings and more information visit the Brahmaputra Carnival Website: <https://brahmaputracarnival.com/>



📍 Contact Us: Brahmaputra Sandbar Island & Lachit Ghat, Guwahati, Assam.

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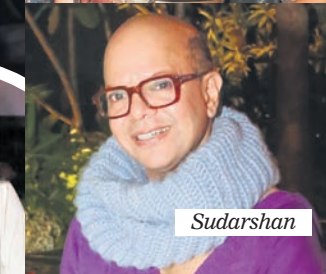
Entrepreneurs Mariam Zaki and Kushal Mehta celebrated their *sangeet* at Roots Lounge, with the theme being, *Desi Disco*. While the beautiful ladies were clad in blingy, colourful saris, the men looked dapper in suits and ethnic wear. Here are a few glimpses from the same.



Gaurav and Lopamudra



Shalini



Sudarshan



Sanjay



Preeyam



Debarun



Kanaklata



Payal

Shining bright
Filmmaker Payal Kapadia was recently in town for the special screening of her film, *All We Imagine As Light*. Indulge too was at the screening that was packed with Tollywood celebrities.



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Sauraseni

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STAR-STRUCK

Pratim D Gupta's riveting suspense thriller *Chaalchitro - The Frame Fatale*, that sees Tota Roy Chowdhury, Anirban Chakrabarti, Shantanu Maheshwari and others, had its premiere at a cityplex. Here are a few glimpses from the same.



Anirban



Priya



Pratim



Rupam



Firdausul



Hasnu



Indrajeet



Tota



The original diva

An 80-minute documentary on Aparna Sen, Suman Ghosh's *Parama* had a premiere at a cityplex amid friends and colleagues from the industry.

Churni and Kaushik

Parambrata

Esha

Indrani and Aniruddha

Kalyan and Aparna

Rajatava

Suman

Indraadip

Indranil

Rituparna

Sujoy

Sohag

Suman



Glam eve

The star-studded premiere of Manasi Sinha's film *5 No. Swapnomoy Lane*, was graced by the lead cast and crew, along with industry stalwarts. *Indulge* gives you glimpses from the same.

Anwesha

Joy

Manasi

Sayan

Rupa

Payel

Iman

Rezwan

Suman

Sumana and Anjan



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How the Irish drank

Shaw Brothers or *Chhota Bristol*, was probably a first-of-its-kind drinking bar in Kolkata that opened around 152 years back for commoners to enjoy their drink. Today, the place has a renovated seating area with air conditioning and is run by fourth and fifth-generation proprietors, still serving *channa* with julienned ginger as a side for your favourite drinks. Anjan Kumar Shaw and Uday Kumar Shaw, (originally Saha) tell us, "People who come here are mostly regulars. We have seen many strangers bonding over drinks. The concept is that of an Irish bar or tavern, where one shares tables with strangers. No music, no cacophony, just drinking and socialising," the owners say.



Fostering inclusivity

Tucked away in the ever-bustling Esplanade area, New Cathay, founded in 1945, has witnessed a significant period of historical transition, particularly during the British colonial rule to India's independence and beyond. The restaurant, which started out as a Chinese outlet has remained a timeless part of Kolkata's dining scene, and now serves a multi-cuisine menu. The establishment is now run by Amreen Rahman and her father Abidur Rahman. "Being a woman, I still at times, encounter biases and assumptions that my father may not have faced. However, these challenges also present opportunities to bring fresh perspectives and foster inclusivity," shares Amreen, who feels staying relevant in a constantly evolving landscape is both an exciting challenge and a creative opportunity. Quite interestingly, unlike any other bar, they also make buttery fruit cakes in *bhattis*, only to keep the charm of Calcutta Christmas alive.

Pics: Partha Saha



spirited

**SIPS THROUGH
TIME**

Kolkata has always loved its drinks, relishing the same in a quiet corner, often ending up creating something timeless. We list a few such heritage bars in this feature

In a city where there's a new lounge opening everyday, getting a quiet watering hole is quite a task. And the few existing ones, most with a legacy dating back to the pre-Independence era, are still carrying on despite the influx of swish lounge bars. From the no-frills camaraderie of Cecil to the old-world charm of Shaw Brothers, these places are more than mere watering holes. These places stand strong and resilient against winds of change, drawing a loyal crowd and holding untold stories waiting to be shared.



Wrapped in nostalgia

Take a deep breath in front of the iconic bar, Broadway at Ganesh Chandra Avenue to inhale nostalgia. The crispy-fried fish paired with a chilled glass of draught beer at this bar and restaurant, which goes back to 1937, has always been a haven for dreamers, storytellers, and friends seeking warmth in its vintage vibe. Resonating with the other modern-day places, the place hosts musical nights almost every week with artistes and bands playing jazz, pop and classical rock music. Broadway's Raghav Prem Sehgal shares, "I really enjoy how the place has become a hot pod of generations, where parents come with their children to introduce them to their first mug of beer, making Broadway the go-to place for the children."

Office-para special

A favourite for office-goers, Cecil Bar & Restaurant in Lal Bazar is currently owned by Malkit Singh, who took over the business some 24 years back. The place was set up sometime before independence and was frequented by tired souls during post office hours, where they rested their feet for drinks with a side of veg or chicken *pakor*s or the chilli chicken. It still continues to serve all that in an air-conditioned setting on the first floor.



Women in business

The reins of the popular Tripty's Bar and Restaurant have changed hands thrice since it opened in 1935, with the business here running mostly on goodwill and an exclusive clientele that simply loves coming back. Initially started by a woman, Bani Rani, it's now again under the supervision of Saralipi

Banerjee. Located in Bhawanipore, this was a haven for mavericks like Ritwik Ghatak and Tarun Kumar, who were spotted back in the day relishing every bit of their iconic Mutton liver *kosha* along with drinks. Manager Debananda Chowdhury shares, "Since the building is too old to get a complete overhaul, no changes have been made with time. In fact, customers come back for this next-door vibe only."

From the pages of history

Probably there isn't a single person unaware of Olypub's existence and the popularity of its *Chateaubriand* beef steak, chicken *ala kiev* or mixed grills. A juicy chunk of meat paired with mashed potatoes and boiled peas and topped with a gooey poached egg, is what you need to try here, at least for the sake of history. From Olympia Bar & Restaurant in 1947 to becoming Olypub in 1981, this place in Park Street has come a long way. With revamped interiors, this pub is popular among the oldies and the GenZs alike. NC Das, the accounts executive at Oly Pub, who has been working here for over 40 years, never thought of switching his job. "It is the ambience that brings back people. People come here alone, with friends or family to spend time for hours together without being politely disturbed by the waiters to vacate the table," he tells us the secret behind the pub's popularity.

— Dharitri Ganguly & Atreyee Poddar

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Pics: Pritam Sarkar

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DEFINING BETTER HEALTHCARE FOR THE MASSES

The Humble Beginnings

Eskag Pharma Group, a distinguished name in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry, owes its inception to the relentless determination of Honourable Sunil Kumar Agarwal, the Managing Director of the Eskag Group of Companies. Starting his journey in a modest 200 sq. ft. office with just two employees, Sunil Kumar transitioned from a pharmaceutical distributor to a visionary leader. Guided by his mother's wisdom — "Work for others, your job will be done automatically" — his entrepreneurial spirit was ignited early on.

A pivotal moment came at the age of 27, when Sunil Kumar purchased his first pharmaceutical manufacturing plant. This marked Eskag's foray from trading into manufacturing, a bold step that laid the foundation for a diversified and ever-expanding healthcare enterprise.

Pioneering affordable healthcare and empowering communities West Bengal Chemical Industries Limited (WBCIL)

In 2005, Eskag Pharma Group acquired West Bengal Chemical Industries Limited (WBCIL) in a joint collaboration with the Government of West Bengal. This acquisition propelled the group into the realm of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs). WBCIL now boasts nine patented APIs sold internationally. This API manufacturing company of India now manufactures over 150 high quality APIs and has established a strong global presence by exporting to regions such as MENA (Middle East and North Africa), LATAM (Latin America), North America, Europe and Southeast Asia.



women's empowerment, health, and family planning in rural West Bengal. To dispel myths surrounding oral contraceptives, menstruation, and hygiene, they conduct 60 awareness programs monthly. These initiatives educate women on the safety and benefits of OCPs, the importance of family planning, and proper menstrual hygiene practices.

Over the last two years, more than 1 lakh women have benefited from these awareness programs. Led by healthcare professionals, the Suvida awareness programs provide accurate information on oral contraceptive pills, women's health, hygiene, and focus on breaking myths surrounding contraceptives and menstruation.

People-centric vision

Sunil Kumar Agarwal's leadership is defined



four WHO-GMP certified formulation plants in Haridwar.

Eskag Pharma's flagship product Suvida oral contraceptive pill provides an affordable and effective family planning solution for over 50 lakh women in India daily for last 50 years. Eskag Pharma's unwavering focus on affordability and quality has cemented its reputation both domestically and internationally. Additionally, the company exports products as a pharma third-party manufacturer, delivering high-quality formulations to global markets.

Flagship brand: Suvida Oral Contraceptive Pill

The group's flagship brand, Suvida OCP, is a testament to Eskag's vision of making healthcare accessible to the masses.

by the philosophy, "For the people, by our people." With over 4,000 employees, Eskag prioritises customer satisfaction, leveraging a robust customer support system and feedback-driven improvements. This people-centric approach ensures the group remains responsive to the evolving needs of patients and partners alike.

Looking ahead

Leveraging advancements in telemedicine and data-driven healthcare, they are committed to bringing medical services to even the remotest parts of India. For Sunil Kumar, the journey is far from over. As he aptly says, "True satisfaction comes from leading a team of 4,000 people, serving over 10,000 patients across India, and empowering 50 lakh women who rely on your product daily." Then added "Miles to go before I sleep..."

Eskag Pharma Group continues to stride towards a future where healthcare is affordable, accessible, and innovative — truly defining better healthcare for the masses.

Eskag Sanjeevani Hospitals

Extending beyond pharmaceuticals, Eskag ventured into healthcare services with the launch of Eskag Sanjeevani Hospitals in 2004. Operating under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, Eskag Sanjeevani offers over 12 lakh free dialysis sessions annually across 15 states. From the borders of Arunachal Pradesh to Rajasthan, their healthcare footprint covers a diverse spectrum, ensuring 24x7 services in temperatures ranging from -4°C to 40°C. Eskag Pharma Group operates four multispecialty hospitals across West Bengal- Eskag Sanjeevani Multispecialty

Hospital, Bagbazar; Eskag Sanjeevani Hospital, Baranagar; Eskag Sanjeevani Hospital, Khardah; and Eskag Sanjeevani Hospital, Dainhat.

Eskag Pharma Private Limited

Eskag's pharmaceutical manufacturing arm, Eskag Pharma Private Limited, operates

Eskag Pharma and Suvida: Empowering rural women through CSR initiatives

Eskag Pharma, through its flagship brand Suvida Oral Contraceptive Pill, actively promotes



Sunil Kumar Agarwal





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RAKING UP MEMORIES

In these iconic bakeries, history is baked into every bite

Nahoums picture by Subhankar Ghosh



Cake from Nahoums



slice of life

Interiors of The Lalit Great Eastern Bakery



Quality and service are our main priorities. Our team strives to ensure every guest is satisfied

FOR A CITY like Kolkata, where the aroma of freshly baked goods mingles with history, its iconic bakeries are more than just culinary stops. They are woven into the city's cultural fabric, offering generations of residents not just cakes and bread, but memories and traditions. Walking through these bakeries is like tracing Kolkata's evolution, each telling its story of resilience and reinvention.

Preserving a legacy

In the heart of the city, Nahoum & Sons has stood since 1902 as a testament to the enduring charm of Kolkata's Jewish heritage. Tucked away in New Market, this quaint shop, which was started by a Baghdadi Jew, with its teakwood shelves and old-world aura, continues to enchant us with its rich fruit cakes, *marzipan*, and lemon tarts. During Christmas, the bakery becomes a hub of activity, with Kolkatans lining up for their yearly dose of yuletide spirit. For many, it's a tradition to visit Nahoum's before the festivities truly begin.

Another heritagespot, The Lalit Great Eastern Bakery, originally founded in the 19th century, has catered to generations of Kolkatans with its signature fruit cakes and delicate Belgian pastries. It's not just the food that draws people—it's the sense of history that lingers in the air. During festive seasons like Christmas and Easter, the bakery buzzes with activity, offering special hampers and treats that blend tradition with innovation. "We work to keep our legacy alive while creating new experiences for guests," says the team behind the bakery.

Red vans and tiffin tales

Barua Bakery in Lenin Sarani has been a cornerstone of Kolkata's baking tradition for 96 years. Once a staple in every household, their breads and tiffin cakes were delivered across the city in iconic red vans—a nostalgic sight now fading away. Despite the passage of time, the bakery remains steadfast in its methods. "We still use *bhattis* for baking our cakes," says Sourav Barua, the third-generation custodian of this legacy. "My grandfather began this from scratch after moving from Chittagong with little more than his baking experience."

Meanwhile, over in Bow Barracks, JN Barua Bakery had carved a niche for itself with its iconic *Chanar* cake (*chhena* cake), a Christmas speciality available in aluminium foil boxes



Plum pudding from The Lalit Great Eastern Bakery

practicality and warmth of Kolkata's working-class ethos. It's for people who are always on the go. No frills, but just the sugar rush they need. At any roadside tea stall in Kolkata, you'll rarely find a glass jar fully stocked with Bapuji cakes—they're always flying off the shelves.

Balancing heritage and modernity

Flurys, the legendary tearoom on Park Street, is a name synonymous with Kolkata. Established in 1927 by J Flury and his wife, it quickly became a favourite for the affluent British and Indian clientele of Kolkata. But in 1965, the iconic tea room entered a new chapter. Jit Paul, co-founder of Apeejay Surrendra Group, encountered Joseph Flury during a casual morning stroll. Their conversation that day led to a deal that changed Flurys' ownership, bringing it under the stewardship of the Apeejay Surrendra Group. From there, it has evolved from a quaint café into a bustling chain with outlets across the city. While places like these are synonymous with grandeur, they also symbolise evolution. Flurys is on the verge of hitting a century with its number of outlets, bringing its famed cream rolls, rum balls, and cakes to a wider audience.

"Quality and service are our main priorities. Our team strives to ensure every guest is satisfied," shares the team.

Equally cherished is Saldanha Bakery, a family-run gem started in 1930 by Ignatius and Ubelina Saldanha. Debra Saldanha, a third-generation proprietor recalls, "Our coconut macaroons and chicken patties are timeless, but the younger generation is drawn to opera cakes and *profiteroles*." During Christmas, their walnut and British tea time cakes are crowd favourites.

A slice of history

Stepping into these bakeries is stepping back in time. They remind us of a time when the city valued simplicity—a loaf of bread, a slice of cake, or a bite of nostalgia. As new bakeries and patisseries dot the city, these establishments hold their ground with an authenticity that's hard to replicate. Walking into these bakeries, you're greeted with more than just delicious aromas; you're met with memories and stories that span generations. So whether you're a resident or a curious traveller, a visit to these bakeries is more than a treat—it's a journey through the heart of Kolkata, one slice at a time.

— Atreyee Poddar & Dharitri Ganguly
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at pocket-friendly prices. Known for its creamy texture, this dessert has become synonymous with the festive season for Kolkatans.

Speaking of staples, Kolkata's love for cakes has undergone a significant transformation. The '80s and '90s were dominated by the likes of Farinni, whose Double Bite range was a household favourite before it disappeared from the shelves. Today, dry cakes are a scarce sight as French patisseries dominate the scene, offering indulgent opera cakes, *profiteroles*, mousses and New York cheesecakes.

Icons of everyday life

Speaking of nostalgia, New Howrah Bakery's Bapuji cake has been a steadfast companion for those who are constantly on the move. A simple snack cake, it reflects the



Strawberry cake from Flurys

Heritage hamper from Flurys



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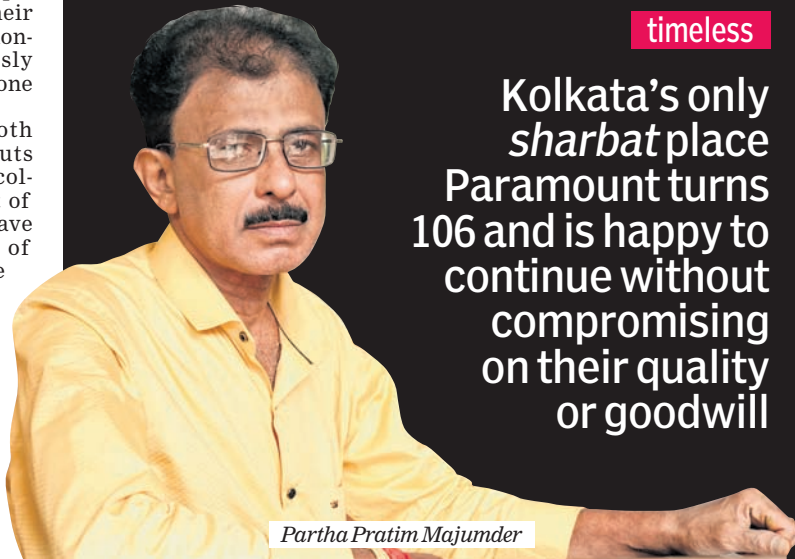


Interiors

QUENCHING THIRSTS SINCE 1918

A QUICK, CHILLED glass of beverage from Kolkata's only *sharbat* place—Paramount needs no introduction. You will rarely come across a person who isn't acquainted with this 106-year *sharbat* place on Bankim Chatterjee Street near College Square. Categorized into *malai*, curd, and syrup-based drinks, the place makes around 32 kinds of cold *sharbats*, flavoured with in-house fruit crushes and syrups. One can even grab a bottle of their syrups to take back home. But honestly, the end product obviously would not taste the same as the one you would get at Paramount.

As you enter the space, both walls are adorned with cutouts of newspaper and magazine columns, accompanied by a list of distinguished visitors who have graced the venue. Boasting of wooden furniture with marble table tops, the place speaks highly of Kolkata's heritage and its preservation. The place, started by late Nihar Ranjan Majumder, opened as a facade for the freedom fighter. The founder, a member of the Anushilan Samiti, named the establishment Paradise, originally and later changed to Paramount in 1938. It is said



Partha Pratim Majumder

timeless
Kolkata's only *sharbat* place Paramount turns 106 and is happy to continue without compromising on their quality or goodwill



(L-R) Mango mania, green mango and tamarind sharbat

Pics: Anindya Saha

that the British army had probably spotted Paradise, which led to the name change.

A century has passed, but some of the recipes still remain the same and are also the most popular, for example, the *Daab sharbat* or the Vanilla *malai* (previously known as just *malai*). Currently run by the second and third generation of proprietors, Partha Pratim Majumder, the former's grandson says, "My uncle introduced passion fruit flavour, which is currently the best seller. Other than that, *malai* has got a number of new flavours, along with a recent addition, tamarind. In a hot and humid climate like ours, many prefer the cool tamarind syrup drink."

The place that had received the heritage tag by INTACH a few years back, believes that the goodwill is a strong reason for their sustainability. "Not every day is a good day in the kitchen. Even we make mistakes. But we ask our customers

to inform us of our slightest of mistakes. We would try to rectify it," Partha adds. While we could spot a number of youngsters enjoying their Cocoa *malai* and tamarind *sharbats*, the elderly people go for green mango *sharbat* and *daab sharbat*. Made using the recipe by chemist and educationist Prafulla Chandra Ray, due to unavailability of the right kind of coconuts, this particular drink is only available 2.30 pm onwards.

With the growing population of modern-day cafés,

Paramount is posed with a lot of competition, "Because of so many options otherwise, the business is hampered somewhat. But we have no plans to open more outlets or give franchise options. Quality gets compromised that way and we can never let our goodwill get hampered," concludes Partha.

— Dharitri Ganguly

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Daab sharbat

authentic Snack the Anglo way



Chicken pantheras

Celebrate winter with a classic Anglo-Indian crepe snack

SOAKING IN THE winter festivities, snacking and spending days and evenings full of mirth are what December weekends are made for, especially when we are just four days away from wrapping up the year. Culinary expert and food columnist Rukma Dakshy shares an easy-to-make snack recipe that pairs well with a glass of mulled wine and slices of plum cake—Chicken *pantheras*, a popular Anglo-Indian version of a chicken snack, which is essentially a stuffed crepe that is crumbed and fried.

Ingredients

For the crepes | Maida: 3/4th cup | Egg: 1 | Milk: 1/2 cup | Refined oil: 2 tsp | Salt: 1/2 tsp | Pepper: 1 tsp

For the filling

Minced chicken: 200 gm | Chopped onion: 1 big | Chopped garlic: 1 tbsp | Chopped green chilli: 1 tsp | Chopped coriander leaves: 2 tbsp | Refined oil: 4 tbsp | *Garam masala* powder: 1/2 tsp | Turmeric powder: 1 pinch | Red chilli powder: 1/4th tsp | Salt: As required

To fry the pantheras

Refined oil: As required | Beaten egg: 2 | Bread crumbs: 1 cup | Salt: As required

Method

- Take all the ingredients of the crepes in a bowl and mix well to a smooth thick batter. If too thick, feel free to add some water. Keep aside.
- Heat oil in a pan and add onion and garlic to it. Cook until transparent. Next, add the chicken, salt, turmeric and red chilli powder and cook it for a while until the colour changes.
- Now, add green chilli, coriander leaves and *garam masala* and cook until well mixed. The filling is ready.
- Add salt to the beaten egg and keep aside. Brush some oil on a non-stick pan. Spread a ladle full of batter and make a thin crepe. Put some filling and fold two sides of the crepe and roll it over.
- Repeat this with all.

- Dip each roll in egg batter and coat with breadcrumbs. Deep fry till golden.
- Serve hot with your favourite dip.

— DG



Rukma Dakshy

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THE AROMA OF HISTORY

Be it *Moglai porota* or dimer devil, prawn cutlet or bread pudding, the original Kolkata cafés have been in business since the time that we can possibly think of



The Cafe, Hazra

FOR ANYONE WHO'S grown up in Kolkata, the allure of its cafés lies not just in the food but in the stories they tell. In a city where every corner seems to hum with history, the old cafés, also known as cabins—some over a century old—offer the comfort of nostalgia. With their distinct wooden chairs and tables, faded dogeared menus and unbelievable price point, these cabins are more than eateries. They are living relics of a bygone era, where conversations flowed as freely as cups of *cha*.

As Calcuttans, we've often wondered about the footfall of these spaces. It isn't just nostalgia; it's something deeper. These establishments, which flourished during the British Raj, were places where families dined, students debated politics, and couples whispered secrets—each table a small, private world. Even as the city has transformed embracing Instagram-worthy cafés with their chic décor and artisanal menus, many of us still find solace in the quiet, unassuming charm of places like The Cafe in Hazra, Dilkhusa Cabin in College Street, or Anadi Cabin near Esplanade.

There's a certain magic to these cafés that can't be replicated—a sense of stepping into a time capsule where the hustle of the city fades away. And yet, they're not just about history. They're about holding their ground in a city that



Allen Kitchen's Prawn cutlet

is forever reinventing itself. As we wander through their creaking doors, we wonder what keeps them alive in the face of change? Perhaps, it's their ability to offer something no *Instagrammable* café can—authenticity, warmth, and the soul of Kolkata.

Blending away the generational gap

These cafés are the forerunners of some iconic recipes that talk highly of Kolkata on the foodmap of India...be it the *Moglai porota* from Anadi Cabin or the Special prawn cutlet from Allen Kitchen. "It's about the quintessential, no-fuss items on the menu," says Utpal Basu, fifth generation owner of Dilkhusa Cabin. "Even though we had to revamp our interiors since it was all damaged during



Anadi Cabin



Inside Dilkhusa Cabin

Amphan (cyclone) in 2020, the flavours are still the same. We are the first to make the *Kabiraji* cutlet and people mostly come for that. To cater to the newer customers, we have introduced chilli chicken and *hakka* noodles, but that is nothing compared to the ones you would find in the market," he adds.

The freshness of flavours

Fresh ingredients and transparency between the customers and the brands go a long way, they say. Some even follow the modern concept of an open kitchen. "We have nothing to hide. We make and fry the snack items that are visible to the customers. Even the *kasundi* we serve is prepared in-house, everyday," says Subrata Saha, the fourth generation owner of Allen Kitchen on Jatindra Mohan Avenue, which has been functioning for 140 years. Subrata, along with his brothers Dipak and Goutam, run this café.

Even The Cafe in Hazra, just beside the Jatin Das Park metro station, makes fresh batches of *kasundi* every day, shares Amal Chandra Sahoo, who has been working in this 88-year-old café for the last 46 years. And you would definitely feel the difference in taste if you have it. Milder and whitish with a hint of *posto bata* (poppy seed paste), this *kasundi* tastes best with their piping hot, lightly crumb-coated fish fry.

Stories behind the walls

If you visit these places, especially in the evening, you would

find many solo diners from diverse backgrounds enjoying their mutton cutlet or dimer devil with a cup of hot *chai* or coffee. While senior citizens travel long distances to get a taste of their favourite items, a large number of middle-aged people are also spot-

ted here, solo or in groups, enjoying a tea session before heading home back after office. You could also see youngster discussing their newly started professional life or couples catching up after a day's grind. As the cafés start to close for the day, the voices of the people dropping by would be like music to the ears, no talking, just hushed voices and a lot of rush.

Carrying forward the legacy

These cafés, mostly owned by Bengali business households, are run by the younger generations who are trying to carry forward the legacy. "We make sure to control the quality so that there's no room for any complaint," adds Vivekananda Pan, fourth generation owner from Niranjana Agar. "And even with the ever-changing foodscape, I think what never dies down are the heritage recipes. For us, it's not just a family business but a blessing of Scottish man Allen, who first launched this eatery and handed it over to my grandfather," adds Saha of Allen Kitchen, who like many others, has no plans to branch out or opt for the franchise model.

—Dharitri Ganguly & Atreyee Poddar

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Niranjana Agar's Dimer devil



Chicken roast from The Cafe, Hazra

Pudding from The Cafe, Hazra

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Bengal's iconic SWEETEST SPOTS

Hop on a sweet trail around North Kolkata

Whenever someone is asked to describe the City of Joy in a few words, the one thing that would invariably come up as a part of the city's proud identity is its range of sweets. *Rosogolla*, *Mishti doi*, *Sandesh*, in no particular order, have seeped into the socio-cultural fabric of the city and are entrenched in the DNA of anyone who calls Kolkata their home, turning it into the sweet capital of the country with many of the most popular shops originating in North Kolkata. These shops have seen the test of time and have been a witness to changes in the city, people's tastes, and more. Not only have these places had popular icons as their customers, they are also known for keeping up with their traditional practices in sweet making. Many of these are the foremost choices to reach out to during any special occasions or festivals. *Indulge* takes you on a sweet trail in the very lanes of North Kolkata which makes the city a 'sweet' experience for the locals and tourists, alike.



Bhim Chandra Nag

When the wife of the British Governor Lord Canning was presented with the famous *Ledikeni* on the occasion of her birthday by the Bhim Chandra Nag sweet shop, the incident became etched in the culinary history of Calcutta. Even today, the shop is identified with three unforgettable parameters- *Ledikeni*, *Chanar Sandesh* and the iconic antique clock on the wall.

Standing tall on 5 Nirmal Chandra Street since 1826, Paran Chandra Nag had established the shop which is named after his son Bhim Chandra Nag. With time they introduced a variety of sweets like *Dilkhush*, *Parijat*, *Chanar murki*, *Jol bhora Taal shaan-sh*, *Chomchom*, or *Makha sandesh*, with the brand embossment on top of some of the sweets, that stand as crowd favourites even today.

In fact, legend has it that Ashutosh Mukherjee used to visit in his carriage, back in the days, and carry a heap full of *Makha sandesh* with him. But what is interesting is that the shop named the famous *Ashubhog* after him, showcasing mutual respect and admiration. Also, once one enters the shop, it is impossible to miss the only functioning wall clock with Bengali words replacing their corresponding numerical, which still hang proudly on the wall, having been a witness to the changing times.



Surendra Nath Dey & Sons

The long queue outside Surendra Nath Dey & Sons might make one wonder if they would be able to get their hands on their favourite sweets at all. But the constant refilling of each tray would definitely provide solace that every one returns with their choice of sweets from the shop. This iconic eatery nestled on the main road at 14 Vivekananda Road (Jorasanko) was established in 1885. For around 139 years, the shop has been winning the hearts of people with its signature delicacies like *Dilkhush*, *Babu sandesh*, *Chocolate sandesh*, *Pista sandesh*, *Strawberry sandesh*, and *Basanta Bahar*. Much like its contemporaries, the sweets are hand-made using age-old techniques and processes which have been handed down through generations to keep the taste alive. Since its establishment, it has been a favourite joint due to its location and accessibility, delivering far and wide for many occasions.



Continued on page 26

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Makhan Lal Das & Sons

If the word 'sandes' is synonymous with anything, then it has to be with Makhanlal. The popular saying—the result of patience is sweet—would be discovered on one's way to Makhan Lal Das & Sons. This busy shop is tucked away in the bylanes of an even busier Nutun Bazaar. What is bound to catch one's attention are the plateful of colourful sandesh that are always on display, and also the ones which fly off the plates.

Established in the year 1824, the variety and range varies from Chocolate sandesh, Malai chom chom, hot Gulab jamun, Chocolate misthi, Chocolate jolbhora, and more. What makes the sweets delicious and flavourful is the use of fresh ingredients like desi ghee and nolen gur, during the winters. It is said to have been established by moira (sweet maker) Ramchandra Das who came from the interiors of Bardhaman and set up shop inside the Pathuriaghata market. His hand-made sandesh became an instant hit among the people and the same processes have been retained for over six generation of artisans who have recreated the delicious recipes of Das for almost two centuries.

Even with the advent of digitalism and modernity, what saved this heritage spot from being sucked into the modern wave is its authenticity. When one visits the shop today, they would inevitably be able to see the moiras meticulously working together to craft each batch of sandesh to perfection while the ready ones are sold off like hotcakes! Much of the process involves using hands for mixing, sizing and shaping, along with the use of fresh ingredients. Every day, new batches are made and sold, while making sure the end product is fresh.



—Subhadrika Sen

Subhadrika.sen@newindianexpress.com

[@sensubhadrika](https://www.instagram.com/sensubhadrika)

Nalin Chandra Das and Sons

One would invariably find their way to the Nalin Chandra Das and Sons while navigating through the colourful sights of Pathuriaghata market. One of the pioneers in sweets and desserts, this shop is not only iconic but also re-invents itself to stay on top of the game. While some of the fan-favourites from its 1841 days are carried on, they have quickly caught up with the trend of evolving food enthusiasm and outbursts of flavour profiles, whether its trendy or seasonal, and pushes itself to re-invent in every step.

From the classic Green mango sandesh which was the OG green colour sweet-long before the Gondhorajsensation took over, to the Choco rice bowl - circular sweets with chocolate rice flakes all over, the shop has it all. With time, sweets like strawberry, gur scotch, black currant, choco malairoll, monohara, rose cream, pineapple and more started joining the original list of sweets including Chandrapuli, Shankha, Dilkush, Abar khabo, and Keshar jalbhora to name a few. The inexhaustible list is a lot longer.

These specialty sweets often find their way to special occasions for which Nalin Chandra Das and Sons, now managed by Tapan Das, happily takes orders and delivers in bulk. Although the original shop still stands tall at Nutun Bazar, six other outlets can be found at Rashbehari Avenue, New Town, Salt Lake, Hedua, Ganesh Talkies, and Bangla Mishti Hub, making sure the sweets reach out to a large number of people all across the city.

It is interesting that two of the iconic sweet shops find space right next to each other and have over time each maintained their cult status among the people of the city through their originality and specialties, which offer taste and nostalgia in every bite.

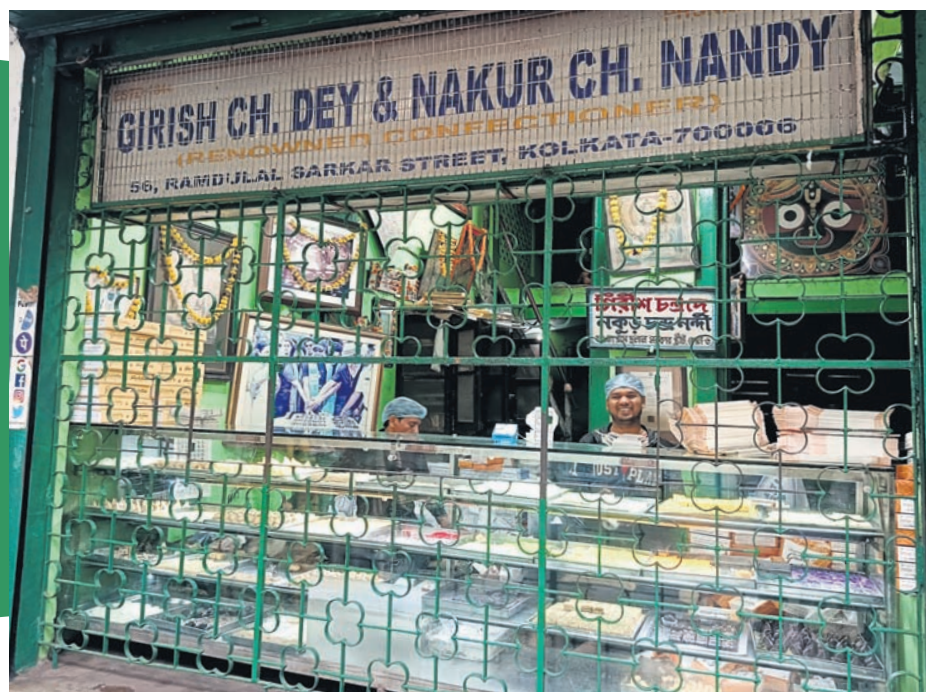


Girish Chandra Dey & Nakur Chandra Nandy

This collaboration between son-in-law and father-in-law Nakur Chandra Nandy and Girish Chandra Dey respectively started in 1844 and has stood the test of time. With every ingredient being made and processed at 56 Ramdulal Sarkar Street, Girish Ch. Dey & Nakur Ch. Nandy has been a favourite for its exceptional Karapak sandesh since its inception.

Fifth-generation entrepreneur Partha Nandy sat us down to chat and discuss how evolving industrial trends could not seep into the traditional sweet making processes followed by the shop which has earned its classic status. With the winters settling in, the shop now serves winter delicacies. He mentions, "From Kali Puja till Dol / Holi the gur season is there. But after that the supply is less and gur production gets stopped."

A common misconception stands that if gur is used as an alternative to sugar, then no sugar is required. Breaking which he says, "Gur in its raw form is slightly salty, so sugar is mixed with it for the taste and texture both." When asked about how they keep the flavours intact after centuries, he says that there are documented processes which are used to make the recipes. "Our artisans still manually work and no machines are used to prepare the sweets." He also gives us an interesting example of how Chowmein machines may be used to shape the strands for Sitabhog. But that technique heavily compromises the quality and texture of the end result. The shop is famous for its Moushomi, Jolbhora, Gurer mohini and more which cannot be missed during this season.



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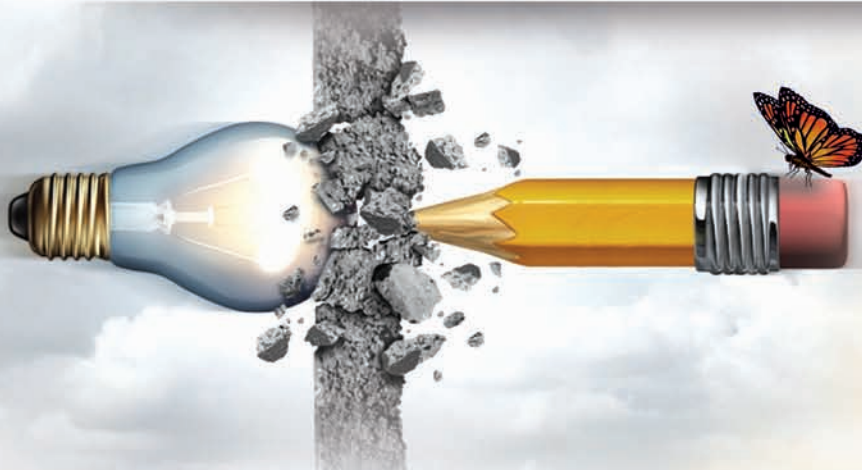
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Straight from Chinatown

If you are short of time to visit Chinatown, make sure to drop by at Park Street's Tung Fong. A relatively newer player with a history of two decades and half, this authentic Chinese eatery feels like a warm hug from the very moment you step in. Its warm yellow lights, heavy wooden tables, and cushioned wooden chairs feel as rich and old-school as any other in that area.

Owned by Monica Liu, a name popular in the industry for her Chinese origins and rags-to-riches story, Tung Fong is definitely one of Liu's most treasured endeavours. The Chinese food here is not overly laden with authentic kitchen-made sauces and is made with the choicest of ingredients. Be it the rich Chilli garlic pepper chicken, the Sweet and sour prawns, or the Fried chicken *wontons*, just a whiff of these dishes is enough to make you salivate. The best thing about their menu is that they have different portion sizes, half and full plates are available for most of the dishes.

The food at Tung Fong never disappoints. Made fresh from scratch, they have kept it closer to original recipes. Don't miss out on their yummy *tutti frutti!*



Chilli garlic pepper chicken



Sweet and sour prawns

cuisines

ETERNAL ALLURE OF PARK STREET

We find out what keeps the iconic Park Street diners at the top of any foodie's list

The moment you step out of the Park Street metro station and walk toward Flurys, the footpaths on both sides leading up to the Camac Street crossing are flanked by decades-old diners—famous for serving a legacy of Continental and other flavours. The generations-old restaurants have not only kept the authentic recipes intact, but also serve the delicacies in the exact same manner they have been served for ages, and in the same classic ambience, transporting you to a long-lost colonial era. Be it the smoky sizzlers at Mocambo, the iconic *Chelo kebabs* at Peter Cat, the hustle and bustle over drinks at Oly Pub or the wholesome Chinese and Indian dishes at Bar BQ, these places retain their charm even among GenZ foodies, who look forward to an exciting gustatory experience at these places. We curate some of the best Park Street spots and delve deep to know what keeps them rocking.



Bestsellers from Bar-B-Q

Pocketful of flavours

Bar-B-Q is all about nostalgia in a pocket. From college-students having their first 'pitched in' meals to their first dates, or first work lunches, this spacious restaurant has seen many a personal landmark being celebrated over great food. Their signature items like Chilli garlic pepper chicken, comforting Tomato soup and iconic Crispy chilli baby corn have seen generations drooling over them. Talking about retaining original flavours, owner Viraj Kothari states, "We've kept the original flavours alive by sticking to traditional cooking methods and using the high quality ingredients. We also focus on customer feedback to tweak and improve our dishes while keeping its authenticity intact." Even with time, they have managed to keep the flavours bang on. "Chefs change all the time, but since we restaurateurs work closely with our team, we manage to bring consistency. Being optimistic, we let every chef that enters our kitchen be creative and some have even helped us improve our bestsellers with their novel methods."

Since 1959, Bar-B-Q has had an immense impact on the cultural milieu. "We see patrons of various generations dining together in the same hall and families coming back. Bar-B-Q has come to symbolise nostalgia and familiarity."

Further, he shares his thoughts on Park Street being the hotspot of emerging eateries, "With several new eateries popping up, it can get pretty competitive at times. Each place tries to stand out with its unique offerings, ambience, and flavours to attract diners. It's a friendly battle where everyone is trying to win over customers. It's great for diners because they get more varieties too."

Viraj, being the third generation entrepreneur, has opened new avenues for the 65-year-old diner. "We've recently launched a new brand called Lille, which is a patisserie and *boulangerie* on Park Street, and we're looking to grow both brands together."

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Interiors

Tastes of Europe

Started in 1956, Mocambo was founded by Shivji Velji Kothari and is now run by Nitin Kothari. Whether it's their iconic Chicken *ala kiev*, the trademark Fish *meuniere*, the cheesy Devilled crab or their signature mixed grill sizzler, the diner's continental menu continues giving Kolkata the taste of the various classic European dishes to date.

"Park Street has somehow retained the premiere position on the Kolkata map, especially when it comes to food," says Nitin, and we couldn't agree more. For anyone visiting Kolkata for the first time, it's that one must-visit place in their bucket list.

"Competition is bound to be there in a saturated market, but I just tell my team in all our three diners, (Peter Cat, Mocambo, and Peter Hu). As long as the quality and hygiene of the food are maintained, the place remains clean, and as long as you keep up the service, there is no need to worry," adds Nitin, who says maintaining quality in the food service is one of the most difficult things to do.

Nitin also believes that if one sticks to the fundamentals, no change in the foodscape will ever disturb it. "Travelling across the world made me realise that if a restaurant is doing good, one should never tamper with it. If you want to give back something to the audience, give better service," says Nitin.



Chicken a la kiev

Reinventing heritage

Undoubtedly one of the most loved stops when it comes to the city's culinary heritage, Trincas is where the pulse of the city is. From hosting the doyens of music like Usha Uthup to providing a platform for emerging voices, Trincas has retained its originality while embracing the winds of change. Anand Puri, partner, mentions, "Trincas has retained a number of heritage dishes and fan favourites in its menu since the 1960s. Continental dishes like *À la kiev*, Lobster *thermidor* and *Stroganoff* have for decades formed a part of the cultural heritage of Calcutta." He also adds, "There have been changes of chefs over the years since the establishment in 1927. It takes skill and a sense of taste to maintain the original flavours. While chefs are given general recipes, a lot of the fine-tuning is done by the owners."

Having impacted the social life of the city to a major extent, it is keen to witness the evolution of the diner through the many hanging photographs from the bygone days. "Trincas has been resilient, evolutionary, and pathbreaking, all at the same time. It's the oldest restaurant on Park Street to continue its tradition of live music. It's the place where a *sari-clad* lady in the 1960s found superstardom amongst ball-gowned Hollywood-esque crooners. Currently, it continues to break the mould, having started a jazz movement in the City of Joy, becoming a beacon for the LGBTQ community in the city, and with the Trincas Timeline Project, which is a community-based memory project." The emergence of new restaurants in the vicinity have only kept it on its toes and it plans to be "relevant through its constantly updated and evolving outlook," in the future.



Dining area

Housing iconic flavours

Probably there's no one in the city who hasn't tried the iconic *Chelo kebab* at Peter Cat. Set up in 1975, the place is still thronged by people outside the establishment during both lunch and dinner time. As owner Nitin Kothari says, all through the years, the recipes haven't been 'tweaked' ever. If customers do not like something, that item goes straight off the menu. "We do experiment a lot, but my thumb rule is that I will only introduce dishes on the menu that I like," says Nitin.

Nitin also shared how the *Chelo kebab* came into being. "I like rice, so there goes the buttered rice as the base. I like my meat and egg, we include mutton or chicken *kebabs* and the poached egg. So, I thought, why not put it all together and put it on the menu? It was not supposed to be this popular, but it became popular and is by far the best-selling item. I take pride in being the first in Kolkata, and maybe in India to have introduced this dish. I still love it. Just the smell of it is so appetising," Nitin quips.

Originally opened as an authentic North Indian restaurant, Nitin was all set to name the establishment Omar Khayyam, only to realise that he may be limited to only Indian food with this name, and ultimately settled with the current name, Peter Cat. To cater to the demands of the customers, a small continental menu was introduced initially, and then came the sizzlers. While people don't talk about anything apart from the *Chelo Kebab* or sizzlers, there is a huge demand for their North Indian menu as well.



Pindi channa and bhatura

Acing quality

If anyone can take the credit for introducing the toothsome *Tutti Frutti* in Kolkata en masse, it has to be Kwality. "Since 1952, we follow the practice of using the best possible ingredients by training our chefs to maintain the standard of food. There is also a constant check on food and flavours by us personally, to make sure we maintain what we serve. The chefs are mostly the same, but the new ones are trained till they reach a satisfactory level with their cooking," says Tanvi Ghai, the owner of Kwality.

Having won over people with their *Channa bhatura* or Fish *masala kebab*, Kwality is embedded in their memories. "Kolkata, as a city, is very rich in culture and heritage. What we can do as the oldest North Indian restaurant is to imbibe the essence of the city and its culture in our food while giving them authentic flavours and ingredients from the Northern part of the country. This makes it a great give-and-take of cultures."

Interestingly, Tanvi mentions, "Customers do go to newer eateries and try different cuisines. Many come back for the the food they are used to," when asked about the rise in diners around the area.

Giving a glimpse of the future, she says the aim is, "to improve and keep working on good quality ingredients and food, as well as moving with the current demands of time and offering what the customer wants."

—Dharitri Ganguly & Subhadrika Sen

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Footprints of the past

Enter one of the narrow strips on Rashbehari Avenue and you will stumble upon the signboard that says Tarun Niketan. Upon entering the shabby space, you would find yourself surrounded by pale yellow walls with creepers and potted plants around you, giving you a homely feel, despite being in the shambles.

This eatery, established in 1915, serves a delicious array of Bengali meals at affordable prices. The inside walls have worn out caricatures of the city's emblems including Victoria Memorial, Howrah Bridge, and yellow taxi. With servers deftly striding past with plates full of delicacies, including four types of *daal*, *muri ghonto*, *ilish maach*, *ru maach*, and much more, you would be spoilt for choices.

Today, Tarun Niketan is run by fifth generation entrepreneur Amarnath Deb, who recounts the inception of the pice hotel, "In 1915 the culture of pice hotels has just emerged in the city, mainly drawing the freedom fighters, notable artistes, and sections of the intelligentsia, who would make a stop for meals. We have heard from our ancestors that the late Rashbehari Bose and actor Amitabh Bachchan too had visited the place," says a proud Amarnath.

In terms of the look and feel and the food served, the place has remained pretty much the same, informs Amarnath, adding that only the tables and chairs had to be changed. "We never served chicken eggs and have maintained that till date," he informs.

Talking about the variety of food on the menu he comments, "We go to the market twice a day and cook everything fresh. We do not have a refrigerator to store cooked food. We don't really have any signature dishes but people love our *Anchor chingri*, *Kochu shaag*, and duck egg curry a lot."

Before signing off, we discussed how he feels of continuing the legacy to which he says, "It feels great to continue the reins of this pice hotel. I often feel tempted to implement something new each day. But then, we also feel that the introduction of new items might take away from the heritage of the old menu. We do have some new dishes though, since often people ask for home-made *biryani*, or chicken *pulao* on special occasions."

Price per item: ₹20 onwards
At Lake Market.



delicious

WORTH EVERY PICE

Indulge spotlights six iconic pice hotels, tracing their evolution and the way forward

LOCATED IN THE most inconspicuous corners of the alleys dotting the City of Joy, are decades and even centuries-old rusty and spartan eateries that are still flourishing, especially in an age when even the flashiest and swankiest the emerging diners finding it tough to survive in the food F&B space.

Starting from noon, expect all kinds of patrons—ranging from wage workers to office goers and Instagrammers to foodies—making a beeline to taste the iconic dishes like *posto bora* (poppy seeds *tikia*), *sorshe ilish* (*hilsa* in mustard sauce), *pabdar jhol*, *katlar jhaal* (*rohu* curry) or *pathar jhol* (Bengali style mutton *curry*) at these pocket-friendly eateries. And if you are lucky and on time, you too can get a taste of how Bengali food has retained its authentic flavours despite the onslaught of fusion and global cuisines.

But it's not just about how pocket-friendly the meals are here, it's also about how it's shorn of any fancy paraphernalia to turn your gustatory trail into an experience to remember. You will surely recall a trip to a pice hotel for what it's supposed to do—delight your tastebuds with a burst of flavours. And that is perhaps the key to its survival and undying popularity for decades.

These pice hotels form a huge part of Kolkata's history and heritage, and each has its own story of struggles and sustenance in an evolving city. Whether tales of forlorn travellers, or trips by merchants of yesteryears, the daring freedom fighters, or the shy newly-wed couples visiting after a bout of shopping, the pice hotels are spilling with interesting spiels and we spotlight six such eateries tracing their evolution and the way forward.

Legends never die

Swadhin Bharat Hindu Hotel in College Street can be located easily, thanks to its convenient position and legacy. We sat down at this cosy 30-seater pice hotel to have a chat with third-generation entrepreneur Arunansu Panda. Recalling the inception of the institution of an eatery he says, "My grandfather, Manogovind Panda, established the place in 1912, but we are officially registered from 1927. He came to Kolkata from Cuttack in 1909/10 for work, and later set it up. In those days, there were many Odia immigrants in the city due to lack of opportunities in their hometowns. The eatery was further cemented by my grand-uncle Prahlad Panda."

He also mentions that the hotel was initially near the back gate of the then Presidency College, only to be shifted later to a side lane before finally settling down to its current location. Back then, it was either the elites or the downtrodden who patronised us in the absence of a distinct middle class. When the hotel started out, people used to sit on the floor and eat in *Kansa thala* (bell metal plates). "My grandfather used to cook and did everything on his own," says Arunansu.

Patrons who frequented the eatery include stalwarts like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, lawyer Chittaranjan Das, and former Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu. The late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's food too used to go from here when he visited Kolkata for political rallies. "When Netaji studied in Presidency College for a while, he grew fond of this place and paid visits with a lot of guests who were accommodated in a separate room," informs Arunansu.

The menu here remains largely unchanged and follows a homely style of cooking. You will get at least a dozen varieties of fish preparations on any given day, including *katla*, *tangra*, *Pabda*, *parshe*, *chitol*, and pomfret. Chicken and mutton are also available and the menu keeps changing daily, depending on the availability of fresh ingredients. One of their must-try dishes is *Tel kata chorchori*. "We roughly cook 40 dishes a day and the preparation continues from 6 am to 1.30 pm All the food items here are cooked with ground *masala* and pure mustard oil. We shop the ingredients fresh daily and keep the shop open only till all food items are over," he states.

Currently, with an in-house working force of about a dozen people, Arunansu is seeking to expand in the future by branching out across the city.

Price per item: ₹70 onwards
10 am to 4 pm ; 7.30 pm to 10.30 pm (or till food lasts)
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A walk down the memory lane

Once you cross past the Lotus Cinema building on SN Banerjee Road and move towards Esplanade, take the left and wade through a swarm of people to find this almost 100-year old pice hotel, Sidheshwari Ashram, set in a 200-year old building. Perhaps the only pice hotel run by two women, who are sisters-in-law by relation, you are sure to face a sea of crowd as you climb up the staircase at any time of the day. Initially started as a 'mess bari' in 1926, the diner was made public in 1934 when New Market was getting built. With Bengali traders and businessmen inhabiting the area, Sidheshwari became an instant hit due to the lack of other Bengali dining options. "In its initial years, meals were served in *kansa* utensils, and people ate sitting cross-legged on the floor," says fourth-generation owner Rita Sen, whose maternal great grandfather started this hotel. There was a time in 2015 when this hotel was about to be shut, following Rita's brother's untimely demise. With Rita's father reluctant about women running the show in the city's business hub, she and her sister-in-law had to take a leap of faith and give it a try. "My father had told me to ensure that nobody returned without eating a meal. Even today one can come and eat *maach-bhaat* at ₹55 only," adds Rita.

While most are age-old recipes, like their signature *katla bhapa*, modern recipes like Chicken *dak bungalow* have also been introduced. Like all pice hotels, Sidheshwari too is not for fancy meals, serving simple, homely meals to hundreds of office goers and curious visitors everyday. "Our signature *kobirajihol* (A light fish stew made with papaya and raw banana) is what Bengali people look for during the lunch hours. When there were more offices in this area, this was the highest selling item along with *dal*, and *alu bhaate*," adds Rita.

The dinner menu is a tad different from the lunch fare. With more customers preferring *roti*, the menu boasts of *tadka*, egg curry, mixed veg, and a few egg and chicken curries.

Price starts at ₹10 onwards
10 am to 4 pm; 7 pm to 10.30 pm
At Esplanade area.



Legacy tales

Sandip and Manas Mondal's grandfather started this restaurant when he came to Kolkata in search of work. Initially food and water were served at Jagannath Hotel on banana leaves and earthen cups, with arrangements for floor seating. But a renovation of the College Street Market in 2014, led to a facelift of the eatery, which now has a ground floor and a mezzanine floor decorated with modern furniture, lights and wall tiles. But what remains unchanged is the way they prepare food on a coal stove with ground whole spices.

Legendary musician Manna Dey was a regular at this 90-year-old hotel. Unlike its contemporaries, Jagannath hotel has set meals on offer, abiding by customer requirements. "Our signature items are our fish preparations... *Chital peti*, *Chingri malaikari*, *parshey*, *tyangra*," says Manas.

When asked about the survival secrets of pice hotels in the face of stiff competition from modern diners, Manas shares, "It's definitely the quality and freshness of food served, that sets us apart, besides the affordability factor."

Besides the regular neighbourhood customers, a majority of their patrons are office goers and traders from College Street, Burrabazar, Howrah, Hooghly, Burdwan, Bankura, and other such areas.

Here, you can still get a fish meal comprising rice, *dal*, a veg preparation, and a small piece of *rohu* fish curry at as low as ₹70.

Price per meal: ₹100 onwards
10 am to 4.30 pm; 7 pm to 11.30 pm
At College Street Market.



Nostalgia on a plate

Set up in 1917, Presidency Boarding House, may be a languishing accommodation for students now, but its kitchen-turned-diner, Mahal Hotel and Restaurant is still thriving. The author of *Satyanweshi Byomkesh Bakshi*, *Saradindu Bandopadhyay*, once resided in this historic mess *bari*, besides poet Jibanananda Das, who resided here while studying in Presidency College, and also during his days of teaching. It was also home to filmmaker Tapan Sinha for a brief time. With so much history associated with every nook and corner of the building, the pice hotel, set up in 1991, by Sandip Datta, is certainly a draw for its food and legacy.

Sandip is the grandson of Nandalal Datta, who had set up the boarding house. Now, the hotel, with blue walls, blue doors, blue table tops and blue chairs, is a popular joint for the nearby college and university students and teachers alike. Apart from *shukto*, *posto bora*, and *bhetki paturi*, this place also serves *pulao* on special occasions.

Almost 16-17 varieties of fish are bought everyday fresh from the market. "I go to the market to check the quality of fish and vegetables," says Sandip. And that's evident from the food served here. You will be amazed by the size of an average *rohu* fish piece here, which is about 100-110 gms.

Price per item: ₹35 onwards
10 am to 4 pm; 8 pm to 10 pm
At College Street area.

— Dharitri Ganguly & Subhadrika Sen

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Embracing the new

If you walk past the Gariahat Market, you may notice a man loudly soliciting customers to have a steaming hot lunch at Adarsha Hindu Hotel, established by Kalipada Maiti 65 years ago, and currently run by his three sons. With a relatively modern interior, Adarsha also delivers *thalis* to its online customers. But food in the eatery is still traditionally served on sal leaves, and water in earthen cups. "Our staff has changed over the years, but we have tried to retain the recipes and the style of serving food. The whole team is new, barring one, who has been serving food here for about the last 40 years," shares manager Nabasankar Das.

An interesting thing to note in terms of pice hotel is that, while the menu depends on market availability, the pricing too alters depending on the daily market value of the ingredients. "We have a few items that are fixed on a few days of the week. For instance, you will get *mocha* (banana blossom) on Mondays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, our menu boasts of more vegetarian curries, while Wednesdays and Sundays, have a typical Bengali *shukto*," adds Nabasankar.

Nabasankar says, that the advent of online food delivery platforms, have helped them get new customers. Every day vegetables, fish, chicken, and mutton are bought fresh from Gariahat market and there is no system of refrigerating the leftovers. Their *Chital peti* and *ilish* preparations are the ones that people love most.

Price per meal: ₹65 onwards
10 am to 4 pm; 7 pm to 10 pm
At Gariahat market area.



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Strawberry cloud petit gâteau

delectable

Check out what the city diners and cloud kitchens have to offer as we get ready to usher in the next year

**NEW YEAR
DONE RIGHT!**

As the world gets ready to welcome the New Year, Kolkata-based eateries and cloud kitchens get ready to whip up special menus and enviable desserts. Here's a look at what to expect if you prefer to party outside or opt for a quiet in-house get-together.

Italian fare

Calamari fritti, *Hamburger di montone*, *Arrosto turkey*, *Chocolate di avocado mousse* and more await you at Serafina. This fine Italian diner is all set to whip up some unforgettable delicacies this New Year. So, if you are pasta, pizza and all things Italian fan, then get ready to Mamma Mia your way to this diner. Meal for two (approx.) ₹1,800++.



Calamari fritti

Flavourful delights

Indulge in *Kebabs* and global cuisine when you step inside the Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residencies. Head to the experiential diner Ministry of *Kebabs* (MOK) and relish hand-crafted *kebabs* made in front of you, along with live music and accompanying spirits. If you prefer a variety in cuisine then check out The Square, which serves seasonal roasts to warm desserts that would leave you wanting for more. From ₹1,999. Available on December 31 and January 1.



Desserts



Shepherd's pie

Festive cheer

Get ready to treat your taste buds with a lavish fiesta at The Place 1860 by Namring. From traditional Oven roasted butterball turkey served with *Chicken roulade* to *Braised red cabbage*, these and more await you while you usher in the New Year. Also, do not forget to pair it with tea like *Jasmine ring jade* or *Oolong orange*, apart from the classic *Darjeeling first and Second flush*. For those with a sweet tooth, desserts like *Plum pudding with brandy sauce* are always available to bring in festive cheer. Meal for two (approx.): ₹1,400++. Available until January 5.

New extravaganza

Escape the chaotic city life during this festive season and enjoy a sumptuous meal at the Social Kitchen, Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport. All decked up to usher in another fruitful year, the chefs have curated a gala buffet meal. From *Slow roasted turkey* and *Lamb goulash* to *Fish terrine* and *Uramaki*, you would be spoilt for choices with their plethora of food. Further, do not miss out on desserts like *Red velvet Santa slice*, *Fruit pavlova* or *Baked chocolate rosogolla*. ₹1,624 onwards. On December 31.



Slow roasted turkey

A night to remember

Spend New Year's Eve and the first day of 2025 at YAYAvar, Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata which is all set to welcome you with its unparalleled culinary excellence through its dinner buffet. The expert chefs have crafted a menu which boasts items like *Tuscany tomato and bell pepper soup*, *Paya sorba*, *Paneer sirkha pyaz lababder*, *Mutton rogan josh*, and more. Of course, how can a New Year kick off without desserts? *Classic Opera*, *Tiramisu*, and many more delicacies have been arranged to satiate your sweet cravings. Meal for one: ₹1,499++. Available on December 31 and January 1.



Desserts

Return of the famous five

Nestled in the by-lanes of South Kolkata, the restaurant Chapter 2 is full of old-world charm with live music and flavourful dishes, never failing to surprise and win over the hearts of its patrons. Like every year, the celebration of the winter season has descended upon it as they host the *Festive Feast* menu. Recommended dishes include *Roast lamb shank in red wine sauce*, *Baked whole becti*, *Roasted duck in hoisin or orange sauce*, *Bavarian meatloaf with pepper sauce* and the star of the season *Orange roast turkey*. Meal for two (approx.): Rs 1,200++. Available until January 15.



Maple glazed roast turkey

— Subhadrika Sen
Subhadrika.sen@newindianexpress.com
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Gurmeet Sangha Rai
conservation architect

Gurmeet Rai is a conservation architect, heritage management specialist, permaculturist and educationist. She is the director of *CRCI India*, a premier organisation in India for heritage conservation and management (established in 1996). She was vice-president of the *International Committee on Monuments and Sites*, India, an advisory body to UNESCO (2014-2020) and continues to be a member of the international and national committees of *ICOMOS on Climate Change and Rights-Based Approaches for Heritage Management*.



Debjani Ghosh
distinguished fellow, NITI Aayog

Debjani Ghosh, a respected and transformative leader in the technology industry, serves as a distinguished fellow at *NITI Aayog* and the chief architect of the *NITI Frontier Tech Hub*. With a stellar career spanning over 28 years, including pivotal leadership roles at *Intel* and as the first female president, *Nasscom*. Debjani was at the forefront of driving India's emergence as a global innovation leader.



Dr Aqsa Shaikh,
professor,
Jamia Hamdard

Dr Aqsa Shaikh (she/her) is an out and proud transgender woman. She is one of India's first transgender doctors who worked at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic response. She is a professor of community medicine at *Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi*.

**IT WAS A NIGHT OF
THE DEVI!**

The *Devi Awards* saw another beautiful edition in Delhi recently and here are the amazing women who were honoured at that special event...



Meeta Pandit
artiste

Meeta Pandit is a leading and popular vocalist of *hindustani* classical music of India. She has enthralled audiences both in India and in more than 25 countries. Meeta is a top-grade artiste of *All India Radio*. She is a recipient of many national awards and honours including *Pandit Kumar Gandharva Rashtriya Samman* and the *Sangeet Natak Akademi Award – Bismillah Khan Award*. She is the author of *India's Heritage of Gharana Music: Pandits of Gwalior*.



Meena Bindra
chairperson, BIBA

Born in a business family and married to a naval officer, Meena Bindra was born and brought up in Delhi. In the early '80s, her desire to keep herself occupied in her free time and her keen interest in designing led to the humble beginning of *BIBA* from her residence in Mumbai. Today, *BIBA* is one of the leading ethnic wear brands in the country. It has a pan-Indian presence, spread across 160 cities with over 375 exclusive stores.



Chief guest and Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan (4th from left in second row), TNIE Group Editorial Director Prabhu Chawla (7th from left in second row) and Executive Editor Santwana Bhattacharya (2nd from the left in first row) with awardees

The 30th edition of the *Devi Awards* dazzled on December 23 at *ITC Maurya*, marking a spectacular milestone for this iconic celebration of women's achievements. A decade after the inception of these prestigious awards and the sixth edition in Delhi, 17 exceptional women leaders – our *Devis* – were honoured in a glittering ceremony that brought together the brightest and most influential figures from across the capital. Kerala governor Arif Mohammed Khan graced the event as the chief guest, eloquently highlighting that, "India's rise to pre-eminence in the modern era," owes much to the groundbreaking achievements of its women. Lakshmi Menon, CEO of *TNIE Group*, beautifully summed up the evening by declaring that Delhi is, "no stranger to powerful women." The event took a deep dive into the personal stories of each of these trailblazing *Devis*, celebrating their unwavering contributions across arts, economics, public service and governance. Here are the 17 distinguished *Devis* who were celebrated...

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Dr Jyoti Anand, founder,
Anand Organization for
Social Development

Dr Jyoti Anand is a well-respected and accomplished social activist based in New Delhi, India. She has dedicated her life to serving the underprivileged and marginalised communities, especially children and women. Her NGO, *Anand Organization for Social Development*, has been providing free education to needy children for many years. More than 400 students come to her NGO.

Jyoti Bhatia, director, Zelos Developers

Jyoti Bhatia completed her Bachelor of Architecture in 1989 and within six months, set up her enterprise by designing a small 700-square-foot office for *Tarom Airways* in Connaught Place. After doing many airline offices (Southeast Asia head office of *Air France* for one) and a few residential projects, *Zelos Developers Private Limited* was established in 1999 under her leadership.

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Manjari Chaturvedi, danseuse

Manjari Chaturvedi, a leading exponent of classical dance in India, is an unusual dancer. She has blazed her own path in the field of performing arts. She has taken the traditional form of *kathak* to a different level altogether and has created her own style, her own brand of dance. Over 500 concerts in 25 years in more than 36 countries with 406 musicians, her work is vast.



Poonam Gupta
director general, NCAER

Poonam Gupta is the director general of the *National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)*; a member of the *Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister*; and convener of the *Advisory Council to the 16th Finance Commission*. She is currently on the boards of *NIPFP* and *GDN (Global Development Network)*; a member of the *World Bank's* advisory groups for poverty & equity and the *World Development Report*; a member of the *Development Advisory Committee of NITI Aayog* and *FICCI's Executive Committee*.

Dr N Kalaiselvi
director General, CSIR

Dr N Kalaiselvi assumed charge as secretary, *Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR)* and director general, *Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)*, in 2022. Dr Kalaiselvi is the first woman director general of *CSIR*. Prior to taking over as secretary, *DSIR* and *DG, CSIR*, she was working as director, *CSIR-Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CSIR-CECRI)*, Karaikudi.

Poonam Sharma
chairperson, Accurate Group of Institutions

Poonam Sharma is the main force behind the growth of the *Accurate Institute* into one of the premier management institutes in Delhi/NCR. She has pursued her *MBA in International Business Management*. With her gifted insights, leadership qualities and zeal to contribute to the development of India by making India a more knowledgeable society, she established *Accurate Institute* in the year 2006 as the group director.



Shalini Passi
artiste & philanthropist

Shalini Passi is a Delhi-based art collector; art, design and fashion patron; philanthropist; art and design advisor and artiste. She has been on the *Khoj Studios Advisory Board* since 2012 and continues to serve as a longstanding patron of the annual *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*. She is the founder of *MASH*, a digital platform that explores the intersection of architecture, art, craft, design and fashion in an accessible and engaging format. She also founded and conceptualised the *Shalini Passi Art Foundation*.



Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit
vice-chancellor, JNU

Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit was the first woman and alumnus vice-chancellor of India's top educational institution, *Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)* in 2022. Her teaching and research career spans over three decades, beginning as a lecturer in *Goa University* and then moving on to the *University of Pune*. She has been a professor in the *Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Pune*, holding additional charge as director, *International Centre*.

Dr Rashmi Saluja
executive chairperson, Religare Enterprises Limited

Dr Rashmi Saluja brings a multidisciplinary background to corporate leadership, holding advanced degrees, including an *MBBS, MD, LLB, PhD* and an *MBA in Finance*. Since 2018, she has been the driving force behind the transformative journey of *Religare Enterprises Limited*.



Chhaya Sharma
special commissioner of Police Training

Chhaya Sharma is an *Indian Police Service (IPS)* officer of the *AGMUT Cadre* and currently holds the esteemed position of special commissioner of police training/PHQ in Delhi. Her career, spanning over two decades, is marked by a series of significant and impactful roles, including joint commissioner of police for the *Eastern Range* in Delhi, director at the *Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)* and deputy inspector general at the *National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)*, India.



Kalli Purie
executive editor-in-chief & vice-chairperson, India Today Group

Kalli Purie is the vice-chairperson of the *India Today Group*. She has been working with the *India Today Group* for more than two decades and has held several important positions through her illustrious and long career.

Upasana Taku, executive director, co-founder & CFO – MobiKwik Group

Upasana Taku is the chairperson of the *MobiKwik Board* and the executive director, co-founder and CFO of the *MobiKwik Group*. Upasana holds a bachelor's degree in *Industrial Engineering* from *Punjab Technical University* and a master's degree in *Management Science and Engineering* from *Stanford University*. Prior to her entrepreneurial journey, she worked as a product manager at *PayPal*, San Jose, USA; in the *Financial Services, Global Payments and Risk* divisions.





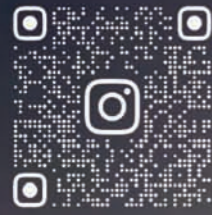
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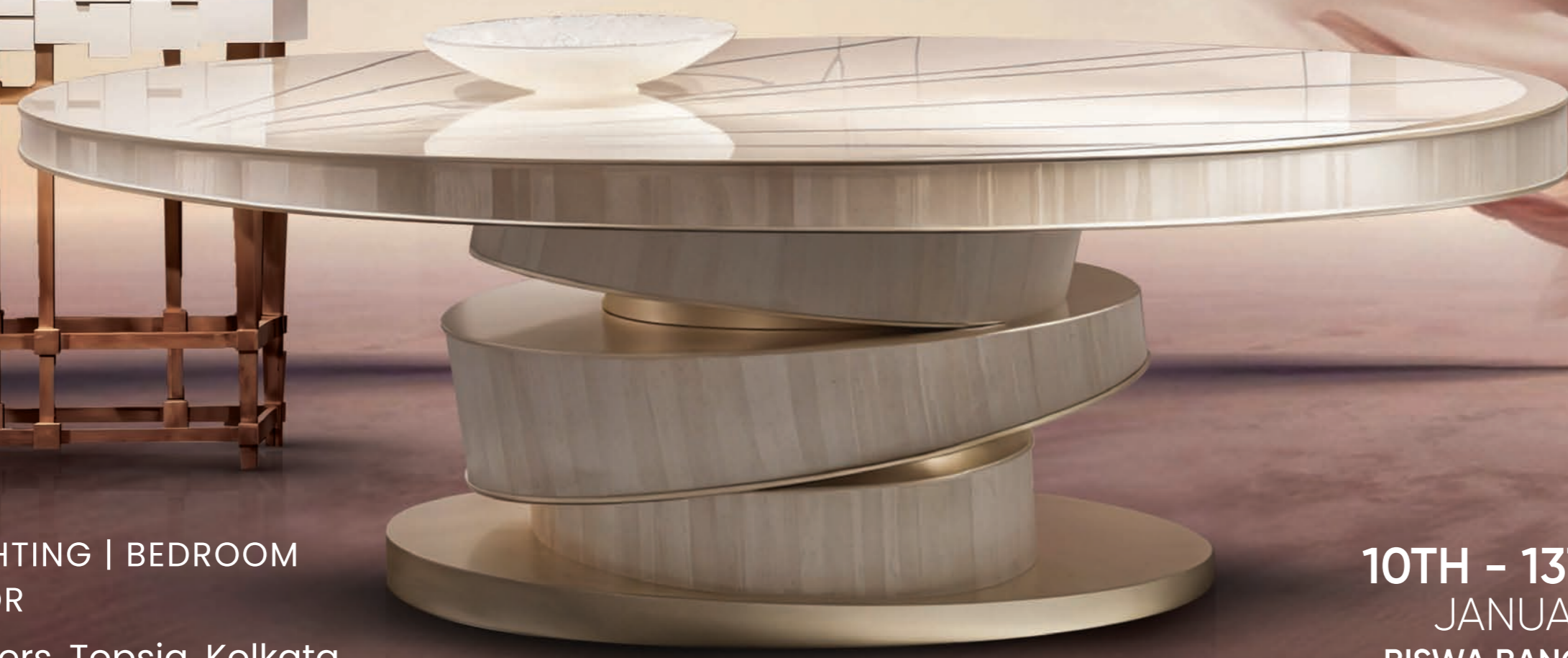
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In this special issue, we traverse through the fashion evolution that Kolkata witnessed over centuries, holding onto its tradition while embracing the new
By Sharmistha Ghosal

tête-à-tête

TRACING BENGAL'S FASHION

BENGAL PLAYED A crucial role when it came to the evolution of Indian fashion during the colonial era, changing forever the way an urban, educated Indian woman dressed. Naturally, this had to be our topic of introspection for our anniversary issue, which takes a deep dive into Bengal's past and present to find out how certain things continue their journey beyond the realms of mere nostalgia to influence and guide our choices even today. And fashion certainly is one such important aspect of Bengal's journey through the ages.

What dictated the broader fashion choices among Bengali women from around mid-19th century had been influenced largely by the impact of the political, economic, and socio-cultural changes brought about by the colonial rule that led to a melding of the indigenous and British sartorial elements. The evolution in Bengal's fashion was mostly witnessed among the elite sections of Hindu and Brahmo women spearheaded especially by women from the aristocratic Tagore household like Satyendranath Tagore's wife Jnanadanandini. During the Victorian and Edwardian era spanning across 1819 and 1910, fashion in Britain underwent a sea of change, thanks to industrialisation that led to the invention of sewing machines and synthetic dyes leading to the emergence of vibrant colours in clothes. Silhouettes like loose flowy gowns with ruffled collars and gigot sleeves in velvet, tulle, sheer silk, or cotton, embellished with laces, nets, frills, and drapes were prevalent during the time among the high-society British women. With an increasing number of elite Bengali women, like Jnanadanandini, accompanying their working husbands outside of Bengal and abroad, Kolkata saw its elite section adopting a fashion that was representative of the needs of the changing times and suitable for formal socialising. When she returned to Kolkata, Jnanadanandini's style of draping the *sari* became popular as the *Brahmika sari* or *Bombay Dostur* that had the unstitched fabric thrown over the left shoulder and worn over a stitched and embellished petticoat paired with an ornate blouse. The blouses during this period had the touch of contemporary Western styles in their necklines and sleeves.

The adaptation and amalgamation of Western sartorial culture with indigenous fashion traditions, had impacted Bengal's indigenous fashion choices to a great extent, which leaned more towards minimalistic sophistication rather than heavy ornamentation.

This beautiful mix-and-match of fashion culture continues to date with an average, well-travelled educated Bengali woman's wardrobe being largely ruled by silhouettes that embrace new trends while holding on to the traditions of our indigenous fashion. So, even though a Bengali working woman might be seen rushing to office in a suave formal suit, she will definitely deck up in her red and white handwoven-*sari* during the Durga Pujas.

Keeping this beautiful aspect of Bengal fashion in mind, we have constructed four eternal looks that appear as a leitmotif in every Bengali woman's stylesheet.

“

I don't spend a lot of money on clothes, but I know how to accessorise them to create a wholesome, gorgeous look. And the material I wear has to be extremely comfortable
- Swastika Mukherjee

A popular Anglo-Indian look from the 70s replicated with a floral printed midi skirt, a black satin shirt, white-framed retro shades, strings of pearls, and black pumps

For this particular shoot, we chose the beautiful actor Swastika Mukherjee as our muse, because almost nobody quite embodies the essence of Bengali fashion as truly and organically as Swastika does. She, at once, can look demure in a Western fusion look, and look equally convincing as a quintessential Bengali woman in a simple cotton or silk *sari*. Styled impeccably by Poulami Gupta, who is among the handful of emerging stylists and costume designers in the Bengali film fraternity, Swastika carries the looks to the tee.

Here are the excerpts from a chat with Poulami that we had on the sidelines of the shoot.

How have you planned the lookbook for this special shoot?

Our theme for this shoot is evolution of fashion for women in Kolkata and I have planned the shoot keeping certain things in mind, including the role of *saris*, the socio-economic changes women underwent over the years, the films that have influenced their choices and the impact of contemporary fashion trends.

For the first look, my inspiration is the Anglo-Indian women of the city, whom I consider as the pioneers of Western fashion culture in Kolkata. Two movies from which I took inspiration for putting this look together are *Saptapadi* and *Mahanagar*. So, we have made Swastika wear a floral midi and black shirt, accessorised with pearls, shades and bold lips. The headgear is very much inspired by the ones seen in Kolkata's race course fashion.

Celeb style guide

Actor Swastika Mukherjee takes us through her eclectic sense of fashion and why she thinks fashion in Bengal has reached a stalemate

How did you develop such a unique sense of fashion?

I feel I have imbibed that from my mother. I have always seen her wear beautiful handloom *saris*, ones with broad borders. She always bought them from reasonable places but styled them in the most exquisite yet simple manner, with a hand bun and a *bindi* placed a little higher on the forehead. My sister and I have imbibed that from her. We never look out for trendy things, and instead, we peep inside the shop to check things shoved behind the counter. I don't follow what's trending. From the beginning of my career till 2020, I have been styled by my sister for all my films. Even if I work with stylists, I give my input to own the look. I don't spend a lot of money on clothes, but I know how to accessorise them to create a wholesome, gorgeous look. And the material I wear has to be extremely comfortable.

Where does indigenous fashion in Bengal stand now?

I think it has just reached the point of stagnation when people do not want to experiment or wear good things. I get to see a lot of Bengali fashion during the festive seasons at the North Kolkata Bonedi Barir Pujas. But round the year, people only want to buy things that are trending on *Instagram*, and what Bollywood is wearing influences their choices to a great extent. In the last five years or so, I have observed that people in Kolkata want to wear brands with the names of the labels prominently visible on clothes. It's so in your face, and there is no subtlety. There was a time when everybody everywhere was wearing co-ord sets. So, for me, I think I will always wear something that is not trend-based.

Whose fashion sense do you adore?

Nobody in Kolkata. But I really like Neha Dhupia. Even when she was pregnant and gained weight, she wore clothes that made her look uniquely stylish.

What are the fashion wardrobe essentials for you?

It can be a very good denim skirt, and you can style it up with a satin shirt, a little blingy top to accentuate the look or a fitted white shirt. A black dress that doesn't need to be of a particular length. A beautiful traditional handloom *sari* with broad borders. Also, some great lingerie is essential because it really makes you feel amazing and gives a good shape and structure to your body.

Are there any indigenous brands you admire?

There is a brand called Nadiya Paar. They make beautiful *saris* and *kurtas* with intricate floral designs and anything that has flower patterns works for me. I love wearing floral designs a lot.

Is there any particular actress you loved for onscreen fashion?

The beautiful *salwar kurtas* Madhuri Dixit wore in *Dil To Pagal Hai*. The front-slit layered *salwar kameez* was so much in fashion back then. And I also liked the dresses that Manisha Koirala wore in *Khamoshi*. I tailor-made a few similar dresses with belts and the crochet work during that time.



A cerulean blue pure silk Baluchari sari from Kanishka with a red Victorian-style blouse with Western pleated work in the neck, embellished with lace and net-puffed sleeves bordered with lace work. Traditional jewellery by Jhulan Dey



A contemporary look created with Dev R Nil's hand-embroidered grey tissue sari with embroidery work. It has been paired with a raw silk blouse in fuschia pink by the same label that has flouncy sleeves in organza that are quite a throwback to the gigot sleeves of the British colonial era. Earrings by Runway Hit



A tussar silk vermillion red sari with white kalki block prints from Kanishka with jewellery by Earthaments

Pics: Debarshi Sarkar | Styling: Poulami Gupta | Makeup: Surojit Sarkar | Hair: Nita Mallick
Location and food courtesy: ITC Royal Bengal

I also wanted to curate a look of a modern educated working woman, who is confident, self-aware and intelligent. So, we have used a tussar block print *sari* with a matching blouse. Simple gold jewellery, a wrist watch, and a black frame complete the look.

Another look is an age-old traditional Bengali look. I have chosen a traditional *Baluchari sari* and a blouse with delicate lace detailing complemented by heritage Jarowa jewellery. The look has been inspired by Satyajit Ray's *Ghore Bairey* film.

There's also this look of a confident non-judgmental modern woman from today's era. She's her own boss, living her life on her own terms and hence, it has a contemporary style. I selected a hand-embroidered grey tissue *sari* paired with a fuchsia pink organza blouse and used minimal statement jewellery.

How much has the Bengali cinema influenced fashion choices among women?

Cinema has always influenced fashion sense and sensibility of the Bengalis, be it the iconic actress Kanan Devi's thin-shaped eyebrows, Sharmila Tagore's looks in *Nayak* or the eternal charm of Bengali fashion depicted in Satyajit Ray's classic film *Charulata*, that has become a Bible of a sort for anyone delving into the history of the rich world of Bengali *sis*.

Who among the Bengali actresses do you admire for their looks on and off big screen?

I admire Kanan Devi for her impeccable fashion taste. Her choice of bold yet elegant sleeveless blouses, hair accessories and the poise she had, is simply incredible given the era she belonged to. I feel Suchitra Sen is Bengal's style icon. Her exquisite collection of Benarasi *sis* that she paired with stylishly tailored sleeveless blouses were to die for. I simply love the way she used to accessorise her elegant looks with chandelier earrings and elaborate hair dos. Then, there is Madhabi Mukherjee, who immortalised the Bengali handloom *sari* looks in *Charulata*.

She, along with Sharmila Tagore, played a significant role in setting the fashion rules for a modern working Bengali woman in films like Satyajit Ray's *Mahanagar*, *Seemabaddha*, and *Nayak* with simple *sis*, bare minimum makeup, black-rimmed oversized glasses and eyelids neatly winged with black liners. I was also mesmerised with Aparna Sen's look specifically in the movie *Ekanto Apon*, where she wore an elegant range of block printed silk *sis*, matching them with well-cut blouses, loose bun, oversized shades and small *bindis*. This look still holds its relevance in fashion.

Who is your favourite Bengali fashion icon?

It's none other than Lady Ranu Mukherjee. I am a fan of her impeccable style sense which was organic and had a royal and timeless touch. Her *sis* were exquisite and the heirloom jewellery pieces made her look regal. It's also more about her personality and the kind of work she has done in the field of art and culture that has drawn my attention. The more I read about her, the more I look up to her.

What are some of the winter-festive fashion trends?

Sis, mostly in silk and velvet with surface ornamentation will be trending besides *anarkalis* and *lehengas*. Exquisite Kashmiri pashminas are game changers along with embroidered sneakers and boots.

What are the winter wardrobe essentials?

A Pashmina shawl, a silk *sari*, a long coat, beret, boots, and colourful fur stockings to go with shorts and skirts.

Tell us about your upcoming film projects.

I just wrapped up work for a Hindi film directed by Shieladitya Moulik and I have a few releases, including *Debi Chowdhurani* in 2025. It was a tough job to recreate costumes for *Debi Chowdhurani* since the story dates back to almost 300 years and finding references was a challenge. I had to spend hours researching at the National Library. We created hand-made costumes and shoes made of jute fibre. I tried to keep the looks as authentic as possible to the era the film represents.

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Madhu Neotia

interview

Luxury spiels!

Madhu Neotia on completing a decade of celebrating the stories of India

EVERY YEAR, DURING winter, Kolkata's cultural scene gets all the more vibrant with The India Story (TIS) bringing the best in spheres of fashion, music, and artisanal food. Helmed by Madhu Neotia, one of the fervent few who uphold and showcase the city's inherent culture, TIS completes a decade since its inception. And that certainly calls for a celebration. We catch up with Madhu to get an exclusive glimpse of what's in store at TIS.

Excerpts from a chat with Madhu.

How does it feel to celebrate TIS's 10-year milestone?

It's a big milestone for us, and to be honest, a part of me still can't believe that it has been ten years already.

The city has always given us so much love and encouragement all these years and I wish to make this milestone even more special to show our gratitude.

You mentioned plans to take the brand to Delhi. What are your plans there?

We are working hard to make it happen. With the blessings and good wishes from all of you, maybe we can do some good work in Delhi too.

I have always wanted TIS to not just be confined within a region. The narrative should travel to the capital. We have planned a model that is very different from how we do it in Kolkata, and I hope Delhi embraces us warmly.

Are you bringing back The India Story Design Awards?

Yes, we are having an award show this year. It is a part of our tenth-anniversary celebrations. We had The India Story Design Awards (TISDA) in our second year. The design landscape in our country today is booming with stellar work and it is so fitting to recognise this on a platform like The India Story.

What new labels are you bringing in?

We have a bunch of new names alongside brands who began their journey with us and are names to reckon with in the industry today. Among new labels, there are Graine, Quod, Deepa Gurnani, and Stackables by NJ. We are bringing a fresh curation of streetwear with Almost Gods, Unconventional, Warping Theories, and Valkyrie. There is interesting menswear as well. Also, names like Aseem Kapoor and Urvashi Kaur are coming back to TIS this year.

Amit Aggarwal is set to showcase his debut show in Kolkata at TIS. How did this collaboration happen?

It happened organically over a spontaneous conversation with my team when we were deliberating on how to create something special for the 10th year. I love how Amit innovates using traditional elements and makes them modern and edgy. He is popular among the younger generation and his works look spectacular on stage.

Who are the designers from the national scene you admire?

There are so many of them and it will be unfair to name a few as I admire them all for their uniqueness. For instance, Tarun Tahiliani's attention to detail is incomparable. I love the

way Sanjay Garg interprets Benares. Rahul Mishra displays absolutely magical craftsmanship and Manish Malhotra comes up with such effortlessly glamorous pieces always.

How have your personal fashion choices changed over the years?

I have evolved to dress according to what suits my age and what complements my comfort. I have always been a simple dresser—my aesthetic is understated and nuanced to incorporate elements like weaves, textiles and eclectic craftsmanship.

Who are your favourite designers?

Sanjay Garg and Payal Khandwala.

Which are the designer pieces in your wardrobe that you cherish?

Designer pieces are a part of one's sartorial collection, and over the years, become an extension of your persona. But what I truly cherish are pieces that have come to me as heirlooms preserved by the family—some worn by the women across generations, while some created



I have always wanted TIS to not be confined within a region. The narrative should travel to the capital

especially for me by the elders of the family. They all have a special story and they will always remain most precious to me.

Do you believe in repeating clothes?

Of course, I do, and I do it quite consciously and happily.

What is your upcoming book about?

It is about heirlooms, a journey that has covered years of contemplation, planning and seems to finally come to fruition. As a subject, it is very close to my heart. It is something that has a very deep personal connection and during every step of this process, I have felt guided by the elders of our family. It is my way of paying tribute to our ancestors, an ode to the legacy they have nurtured for us to carry forward. I hope this inspires the younger generation to cherish this timeless heritage.

How do you relax when you are not busy?

I am rarely not busy, because I feel something is not right when I have nothing to do. But it is also something I don't complain about. I enjoy working, meeting new people, and ideating on fresh concepts. However, I also love being home with my children, having meals and watching shows together with them.

The India Story will take place from January 10 to 12.

— Sharmistha Ghosal

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sanctuaries

The last melodic bastions

How are city's iconic instrument shops, where craftsmanship sang louder than commerce, doing nowadays?



Stringed instruments



Percussion instruments

a handful of people are indulging in playing or learning Indian musical instruments, which as a result, is affecting their business.

And he doesn't blame the current generation, he rather says, the system is to be blamed. "The kids go through such a maddening rush, that there is no time left to practice artforms with the kind of mental peace, or time that the art-form demands," says Ashok. Ashok is the third-generation owner, running this almost 100-year-old establishment, and shares with us that his next generation probably wouldn't join the business. "This is a lot of work. We are both the manufacturers and the salesmen. There is no apparent charm to the shop, along with this additional downfall of the whole industry," he adds. What he points out and we found really interesting is that

it is not about business. One just can't sell the instruments, one needs to learn the nuances of the craft to sell it, and also customise it when needed, which makes it extremely difficult to give away the shop to someone new.

Not just this area, there are two more in South Kolkata, The Melody and Hemen & Co., both of which have been on Rashbehari Avenue for decades. While the spokesperson at The Melody wasn't ready to talk much about the negative impact on their business, Tapan Sen, current co-owner of Hemen & Co. shared, "We don't treat this like a business, so we don't promote it too much. We have loyal customers, and we are happy with that. We are a niche shop, and we know it. It keeps us going."

IN THE HEART of Kolkata, where time lingers and melodies whisper through dusty strings, a few instrument shops remain as guardians of an art that refuse to fade. Tucked away in narrow lanes and old neighbourhoods, these shops feel like they belong to another time. These are not the flashy stores with neon signs and sleek interiors that you find in malls. Instead, they are quiet—almost

hidden—where the sound of a sitar being tuned or a harmonium being tested, greets you before you step in. The air carries a faint smell of varnish and wood, blending with the city's timeless charm. The shelves are lined up with instruments—some polished to perfection, others showing their age.

Long before music was bought with just a click online, legends like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Nikhil Banerjee would find themselves drawn towards these unassuming doorways of Kolkata's iconic instrument shops, where craftsmanship sang louder than commerce. For decades, these shops were more

than just commercial establishments, they were sanctuaries for musicians, connoisseurs, and students alike, where the craftsmanship was as revered as the music itself. But with the rise of modern, upscale music stores and online marketplaces, the demand for hand-crafted instruments is dwindling. Yet, these shops continue to survive, not by competing with the big players, but by staying true to their roots. They remain spaces where tradition and passion outweigh commercial success—a rarity in a world that is increasingly fast-paced and business-driven. In a city where change is both constant and contested, how does century-old music shops keep their tune alive amidst the crescendo of modernity?

If you walk from BBD Bagh crossing towards Lalbazar, cross it and take a left turn, you would find a host of small, unpretentious instrument shops on your right, including the popular harmonium maker BCM Music Palace or the 275-year-old J Mondal & Co. "People can buy Western instruments more at the modern shops or online, but if someone wants to buy a harmonium or tabla, they have to come to this area. And I see there's good demand for harmonium now, compared to other Indian instruments. Maybe, there are more people taking an interest in singing than learning to play the instruments," says Tapas Mondal, a third generation owner of BCM Music Palace.



Ashok Sardar

There is a huge demand for ukuleles and guitars from specific brands, as well as violins, he shares, but what is really hampering their business is the increased frequency of online shopping. "There is no alternative to buying in person, especially when it comes to things like musical instruments. People end up buying online, without even knowing what they are investing in," he adds.

We also met the septuagenarian Ashok Sardar, the present owner at Monoj Kumar Sardar & Bros, who specialises in making and repairing Indian classical instruments, especially stringed ones like Sitar, Sarod, Esraj and the likes. He feels, more than anything else, only



A sitar getting repaired at Monoj Kumar Sardar & Bros

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THE PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM



NIDHI MUNIM'S SWIMWEAR COLLECTION DAZZLES AT DABUR GULABARI FFACE CALENDAR EDITION XI'S FINAL ELIMINATION ROUND

In a world of fleeting fashion trends, Nidhi Munim stands out by creating timeless pieces that blend traditional craftsmanship with modern design. Her collections are the epitome of sophistication, tailored for the modern woman, particularly for those on the go.

Nidhi's journey began with a passion for fabrics and silhouettes, leading her to graduate as a Gold Medalist from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). She launched her eponymous label with a mission to design clothing that empowers and celebrates women's beauty.

This year, Nidhi's designs take center stage for the swimwear round at the **Dabur Gulabari Fface Calendar Edition XI**, a platform that highlights the intersection of beauty and fashion. Her 2025 collection embraces femininity, elegance, and modernity, embodying the essence of the calendar's celebration of bold, confident beauty. The swimwear photoshoot which was the final elimination round was shot at **Z-Bar, Zone by the Park, Kolkata**.

Known for creating pieces that effortlessly transition from day to night, Nidhi champions inclusivity by offering designs for women of all shapes and sizes. With her collections, she continues to redefine contemporary fashion, blending empowerment with elegance for a new era where style and purpose converge.



**Indulge speaks to
Kolkata-based
musicians, who are
among the last
of celebrated
musicians playing these
long-lost instruments**

HOW OFTEN HAVE you come across a musician from Kolkata playing rudraveena? Or tar shehnai or even sarinda? In fact, if we may ask, have you heard of Brazilian instruments like repinique or pandeiro being played in Kolkata? All of these are played here and there are only a few who are trying to play these instruments, which are slowly fading away from the music scene.

Creation of sound

Sayak Mitra, in his late 30s, is the only rudraveena player from Kolkata. Over the years, Mitra has passed through a journey with the veenas of India. From the first vakra veena, an Asian harp, to the fretless stick zither alapini, and then to the first fretted veena kinnari, followed by the rudra veena and Carnatic veena—his journey knows no bounds. “Rudra veena excited me the most, with its movable frets creating complex rhythmic patterns. India has a long history of music, instruments, and dance, and we, as the next generation of musicians and performers, should take up the responsibility of carrying forward the legacy,” says he, a disciple of Piyal Bhattacharya among other *gurus*, who believes that students should be imparted with more knowledge about the Indian musical instruments through their academic curriculum.

Sarinda spiel

Adisaptagram’s Niranjan Halder, who is also a part of the Bangla folk band Dohar, plays Bengal’s only bowed instrument, sarinda, for three generations. The piece that he plays is almost 150-years-old. The legacy that his grandfather had created, was carried forward by his uncle, and now him. He has a few students and is very eager to teach his grandson the instrument when he grows up. “Right now, there are only a few who can play this instrument, and I don’t know where this instrument originates from. Sarinda is carved from one piece of wood with three strings. But I play and make it with four strings,” says Halder.

The legacy of years

Those who grew up watching *Doordarshan*, can instantly recognise the signature tune of *Saare jahan se achcha*, composed and played by Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain Khan. Ustad Khan’s son Hassan Haider Ali Khan followed the footsteps of his father, who apart from the Indian *ragas*, also plays melodious tunes of popular songs on his shehnai. “Popularity and success doesn’t come handy. The beatings from *gurus* and struggles are a part and parcel of it. Shehnai needs a lot of training and practice. I would love to pass on the art to my next generation, but one thing that really needs to be pointed out is that many musicians are struggling to make their ends meet. I don’t have a



Sourav Chatterjee

custodians

Pic for Sourav Chatterjee by Sourav Banerjee

LINGERING NOTES



Sayak Mitra

Niranjan Halder

Debasish Halder

Hassan Haider Ali

space that allows me to teach many students. Most of the time, the accolades and funds from the government are limited to a few musicians, while the others end up struggling all their lives. So it’s high time that the government becomes proactive in looking for the talents and supporting them,” he concludes.

Elevation of sounds

Tar shehnai, a lesser-known instrument in which an esraj is played with a metal ring to create an amplified sound, is rarely played nowadays. Kolkata’s Debasish Halder, who plays sarangi and esraj, is one of those very few people who can play a tar shehnai. Halder learnt the skills of the instrument by listening to shehnai. On asking why the number of musicians playing these instruments are decreasing, Halder says that there’s a lack of *gurus* here. “Teachers should be more accepting of their disciples and shouldn’t discriminate on the basis of the *gharana* they belong to. I think it’s not just time, but the effort one must put into learning a new artform, which is lacking somehow,” says Halder.

The international harmony

This one is definitely a bonus. Though they don’t play Indian musical instruments, their effort is worth a mention. Following the footsteps of Monojit Dutta aka Kochuda, The Orient Express band members and percussionists Sourav Chatterjee, Deboprotim Baksi, and Dwaipayan Saha are playing a lot of Latin American instruments like caxixi, shekere, tamborim and others. And the music they create is a funky amalgamation of groovy tunes and afro-cuban beats. “We are carrying forward the legacy of Latin American music that Monojit Datta and Amyt Datta started. We are trying to let the world know what kind of music we are capable of making,” remarks Chatterjee.

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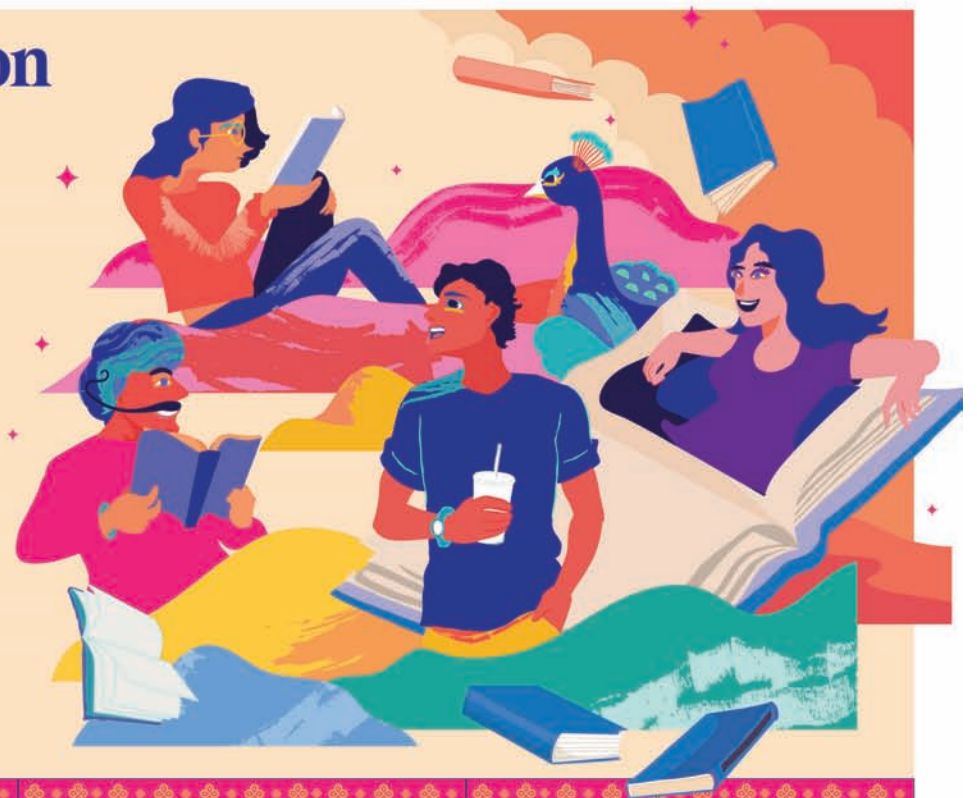
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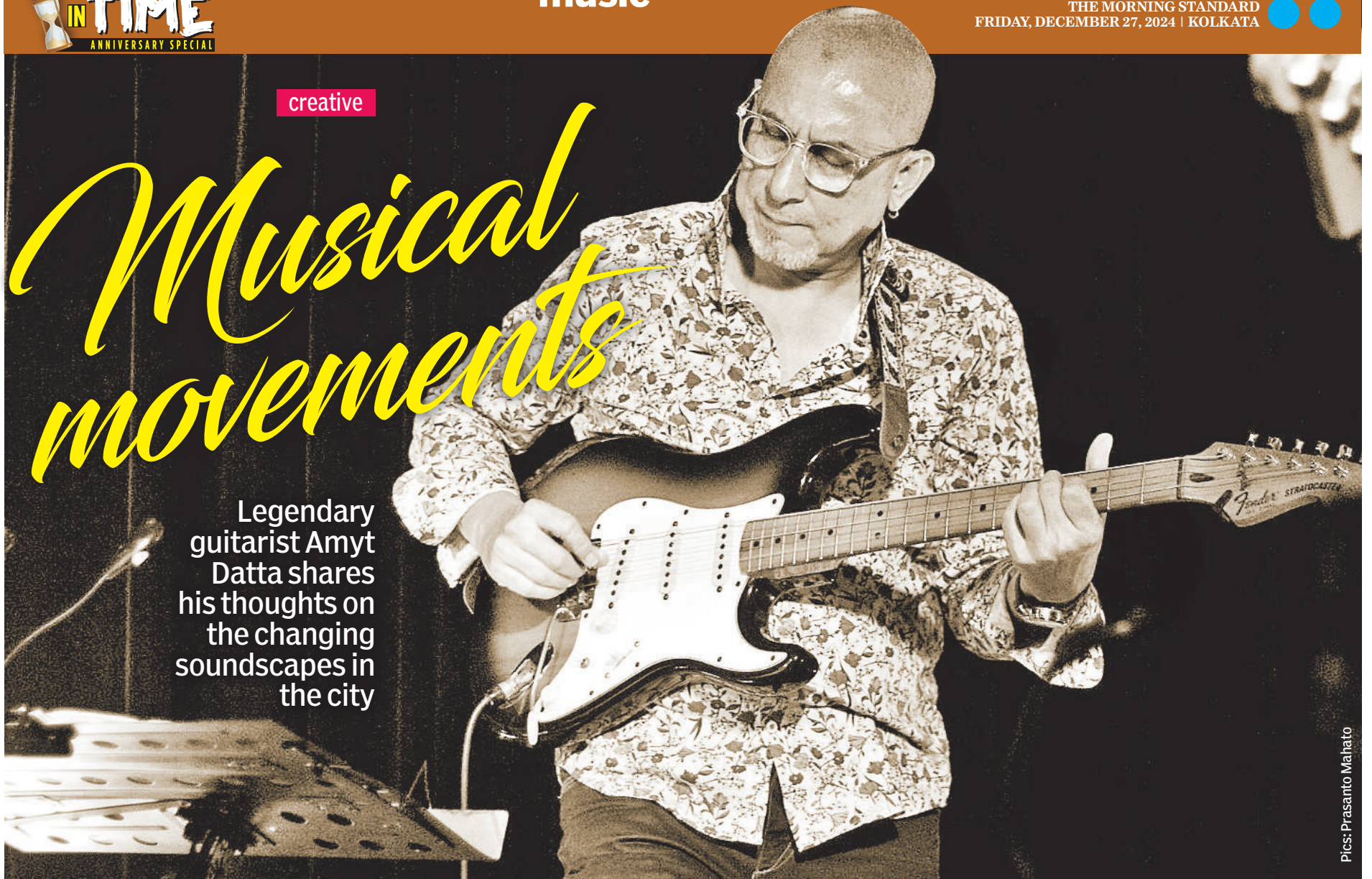
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Musical movements

Legendary guitarist Amyt Datta shares his thoughts on the changing soundscapes in the city



Pics: Prasanto Mahato

ACE GUITARIST AMYT Datta needs no formal introduction. Performing since 1981, the sexagenarian has strummed unconventional corny rock music on his guitar, largely influenced by Jazz Harmony. Apart from his solo performances, Amyt is now a part of the Electric Power quartet, formed with three other young musicians, whose new album, *Electric* has released recently. The musician, who has seen the changes in Kolkata music scene, shares his thoughts on the changing soundscapes in the city.

What is your take on the changing soundscape of Kolkata?

Well realistically, it's good and bad at the same time. The good thing is that information on music is now available within seconds on your mobile phone, but music as a source of livelihood hasn't been worse than now. There are primarily two reasons for this—declining attention span and the vanishing culture of listening to indigenous music.

Is it because of mobile phones or are there other reasons?

I don't know. It's all right to blame all these devices even though they are helpful to us, but we should also have our basic intelligence and taste for music. And then, the whole package of Bollywood music—they simply dictate what a music lover listens to. At least

that's the case in the subcontinent.

Well, live scene wise, Kolkata was a little better. People used to fill up halls but now people need perks. You have to do it in a club where people can chit-chat over a couple of beers and food. The focus is not on music anymore... even if it's there, it reaches out to a niche crowd.

“

In India, musicians are trying really hard to make some money—but at times, the quality of music gets compromised while doing so

Even for young musicians, it's very depressing today. We don't have a strong support system here. A majority of indie musicians are now moving to Mumbai to try their luck there.

I have often heard musicians saying Kolkata has the best audience. What's your take on that?

Wherever I have performed across the globe, I have mostly received good reviews, so I won't be able to tell that in particular about the Kolkata audience, but in most of the concerts you would find people who are there just for the sake of attending it.

Music or any other art form is a reflection of culture and what I believe in is, it should become all one culture. I am not talking about just guitar or jazz music. Why not sitar, sarod, and tabla players playing at coffee pubs? Travel to

Europe, or anywhere else, every other place has something or the other happening musically.

Is there any way that we can rewind this and make the situation better?

I have been screaming my lungs out all over the country wherever I go, that peo-

ple on top, be it the government or the corporate houses should take charge, in collaboration with the artistes to help uplift the situation. Even in Kolkata, I've been talking to a few people in the government. They liked the idea and we also discussed when, how, and where to do it, but it ended up being some small, half-hearted event. Work needs to be done in a methodical and serious manner. When somebody says, "is music a good profession?" I say, "It is a divine profession, and not made for the material world."

Does the picture look the same across India?

More or less yes, especially for our kind of music. Here, musicians are trying really hard to make some money—but at times, the quality of music gets compromised while doing so. Having said that, some of my friends create music for the better, like Shankar Ehsaan Loy, and even AR Rahman—they are playing up their styles. So, it's also not true that good music isn't getting made, it's just that the audience quality will have to change. They'll have to be a little bit more musically aware, especially when we have a history of 5,000 years of music and culture.

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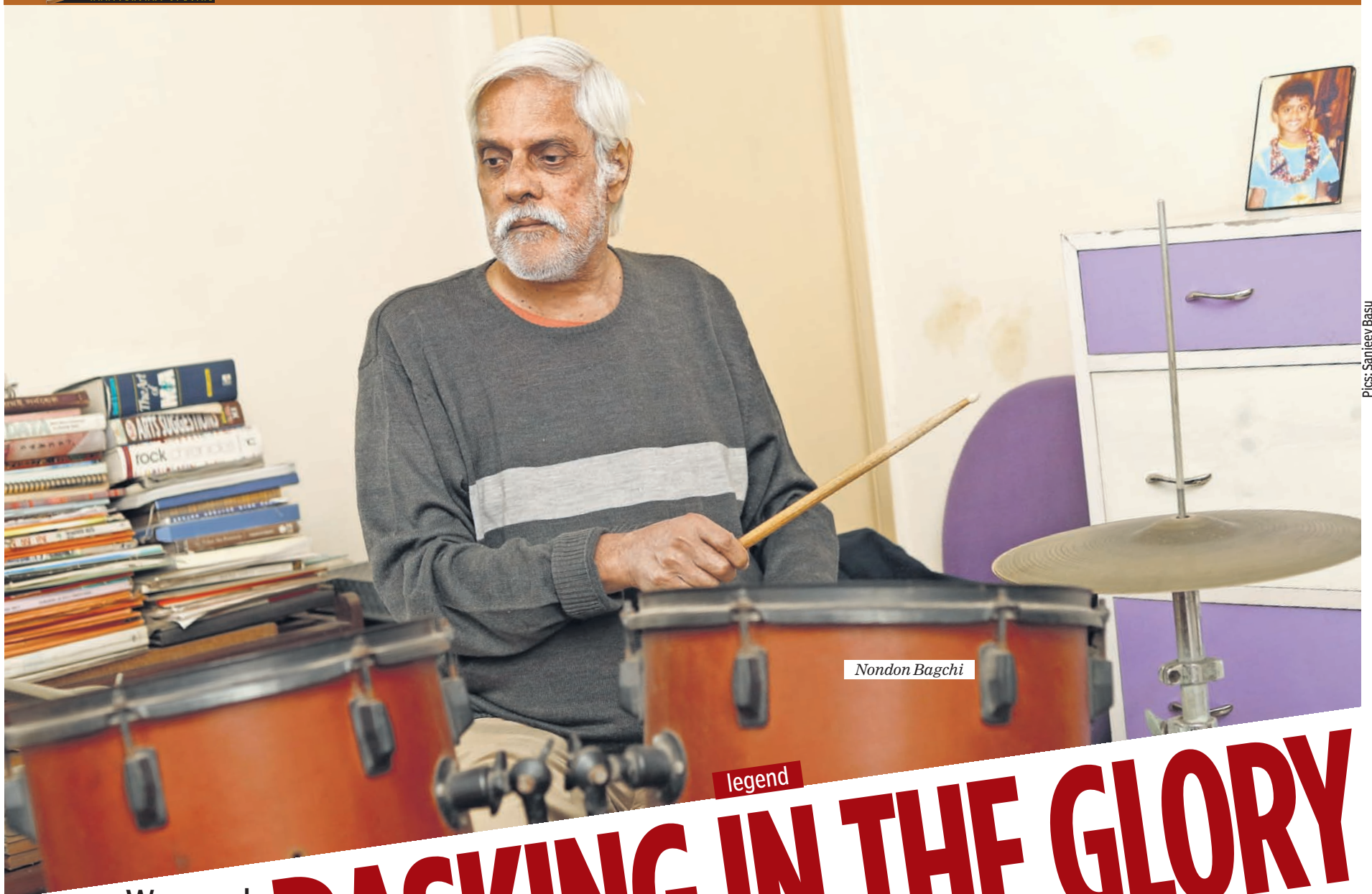
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Nondon Bagchi

Pics: Sanjeev Basu

legend

BASKING IN THE GLORY

We speak with legendary musician and foodie Nondon Bagchi on the ever-changing music scene and foodscape of Calcutta

FROM THE LATE 1960s, Calcutta became the hub for musicians, especially those pursuing Western music like rock and roll, jazz, and blues. Live musical evenings at Trinca's and the city clubs, and later at Someplace Else, encouraged many emerging musicians to pursue it seriously. Rock bands like High and Mohiner Ghoraguli that have become synonymous with the city's unique soundscape bear testimony to the thriving music scene in the city.

With time, though the music scene has undergone a sea of change, what remains unchanged is the approach of the legendary musician towards music. One such personality is Nondon Bagchi, the doyen of drums in Kolkata, who

also is one of the founding members of the band, High.

At 71, Nondon still plays the drums at live shows, and unlike many, he doesn't resist the changing music scenes. "Times change. The audience changes because there is a change in the market. The music-making companies tweak their policies and as a result, the music scene changes. I have never been critical of those things, nor did I try to analyse them," says Nondon.

While music might be a thing of fancy and glamour for many, only to be abandoned for greener pastures professionally, for Nondon, it still remains his source of sustenance. He had a brief stint with journalism, but music remained his main focus. "I left journalism after a while, but music, never! I always had 'High' and was a member of the band even in the years that I was employed as a journalist," he states.

Seeing our curiosity to know the reason behind the name High, the musician explains, "I was the one who suggested the name and I leave

the interpretation open to all." The band, however, dismantled in 1990, after one of its members Dilip Balakrishnan passed away.

Talking about the city's audience, the legendary drummer observes that Kolkata has a knowledgeable and insightful audience. "Wherever they are, or however they are placed, they would know for real what is going on the stage. Listeners should have their choice of playlist. But for me, as a performer or a listener, rock and roll would always be the first choice, especially the classic rock genre of the Woodstock generation," he says.

Nondon is not just a legendary musician but a food columnist and critic as well. He had the privilege to take out the British celebrity chef and restaurateur chef Gordon Ramsay on a Kolkata food trail, a few years back. A fan of street foods, he doesn't keep a track of the ever-changing foodscape of the city. "If somebody tells me that a new place has opened somewhere and serves

interesting food, I check it out. But I don't write about it anymore, I'm way past all that," he avers.

"I used to love the Sky Room Restaurant on Park Street. They used to serve a dish called *Chateaubriand* steak which was my favourite," Nondon reminisces. So many restaurants are opening up every now and then, especially in South Calcutta and Park Street, but what makes a diner stand out, we ask him. "That would definitely be a unique menu that nobody else has. Even if not the whole menu but at least some signature items that will have the stamp of the place, and people would know the restaurants,

because of those few dishes."

To conclude the conversation we ask, whether he listens to the new generation of musicians. "When I was younger, I listened to a lot of new stuff. But that listening habit is gone now. I listen to music only if somebody is playing something. I don't play music to listen all by myself," he says before he walks up to the other room in his South Kolkata house for a round of drum roll.

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“Times change. The audience changes because there is a change in the market. I have never been critical of those things, nor did I try to analyse them”

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tribute

RESURRECTING THE NAWAB

Visual artist Soumyadeep Roy on blending passion with craft



JAB CHOD CHALE Lucknow nagri, kahe haal ke hum pe kya guzri' - actor Amjad Khan in the role of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Awadh said these lines in Satyajit Ray's iconic movie *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* while leaving his beloved kingdom. A twist in fate brought him to Calcutta where he found himself living the rest of his days confined at Metiabruz area, where he rebuilt a mini Awadh for himself. After almost 160 years later, Kolkata-based visual artist Soumyadeep Roy resurrects the Nawab and his kingdom, which forms an important part of Bengal's heritage, through his artistic practice. Sitting at the Sibtainabad Imambara, the king's final resting place, we chat with Soumyadeep.

Excerpts:

How did Wajid Ali Shah become your creative muse?

The journey started from 2017 when I was working on how different communities came and built the city. Metiabruz became the best example because it's a very conscious re-creation of another city. Initially, my ideas were to work with the people who migrated with the Nawab. But once I started the research, his influence became very obvious, and made him my subject. I found his personality as an able ruler and a prolific artiste very fascinating.

Where did you start?

It's impossible to recreate the socio-political and geographical map in 2024. I tried to focus on the accounts of people and read the writings of Abdul Halim Sharar, Wajid Ali Shah's *Ishqnama* among others. I also interacted with families that continued to live in the neighbourhood. I was close to Dr Ramesh Kumar Saini who was a homeopath, ran a paan shop and was the fifth generation descendant of Motilal, the Shaahi paanwala to the royal family. There exists a duality about 'what is home' since they see both Calcutta and Lucknow as their homes. I try to avoid colonial narratives.

You were the only artist to have an exhibition, *Dastan e Akhtar*, here on his bi-centenary.

That was an honour, thanks to the Nawab descendents —Manzilat Fatima, Dr Talat Fatima, and Kamran Meerza. Everyone at the Imambara came forward to help as a team, which makes you recollect the plays the Nawab used to put together. Also, I would prefer this place for an exhibition because it's contextually relevant and opens art to all.

How is your work received by the descendants of the Nawab?

The bond has become stronger. Together we have had events which helped us gauge how the Nawab is popularly perceived, since there are several misconceptions floating about him. Dr Talat Fathima once mentioned how the soul of Nawab might be continuing in me, which was the greatest compliment I could receive.

What makes the medium of visual art stand out?

I work with paintings, installations, drawings, and videos. Art cannot be isolated. In *Patachitra*, you have music that goes along. Also, I was trained in *Dhrupad*, *Bishnupur Gharana* under Pandit Bhavani Shankar Mazumdar which makes me see drawing as a *riyaaz*. My education in literature and films also converge in the practice.

What's your creative process?

I have a drawing pad which I carry everywhere, even during my extensive travels. The hand and mind have become indistinct for me. Earlier, I used to study and recreate, but now the lines are blurring and it comes naturally to me. Sometimes, I keep archives of visuals in my memories that I revisit later.

How is the Nawab perceived in Lucknow and Kolkata?

It's completely different in both cities. While he was the last King of Awadh; in Calcutta, he was the first major king to have stayed for three decades. Perceptions also differ when you directly read from his writings as opposed to secondary sources.

What is your creative take away?

It gives you a sense of introspection as to how you see life. It inspires me to look into my own art.

If you meet the Nawab, what would you tell him?

We would probably listen to music, look at paintings and share our opinions. I would be interested to see how the Nawab would perceive cinema, given that his influences are found in modern day cinema, too.

How do you preserve Kolkata's heritage through your art?

When you are passionate about heritage, you are anxious about all that's going away. Archives can only do so much but stories and art live on. I feel privileged to make art in tribute to history—standing in the present, connecting past and future.

Tell us about your recently inaugurated exhibition.

It's an exhibition on my family history tracing it to 25 generations, titled *Everybody Has Moved* or *Bippojonok Bari*.

—Subhadrika Sen

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Soumyadeep Roy

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fusion

MELDING TWO ART WORLDS

Paris-based artist Avijit Ghosh shares how he keeps Bengal's traditional art form alive through his works



art and cultural practices. They love participating in these festivals like any other Indian expat and I feel a sense of responsibility towards that new generation to share and discover the culture of their land together in the City of Love.

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I am happy that during the festivals I get a chance to show another dimension of my work and share my own culture with the greater Parisian audience

ARTIST AVIJIT GHOSH'S love for art and his resolve to propagate Bengal's indigenous art form and culture in Paris—where he has resided and worked for the past 12 years—is contagious. Ghosh carries within himself the heritage of Bengal's rich art world, which he attempts to blend seamlessly with Western themes making it more relatable to his French and European audience.

His paintings see a mix of cultures, and through his work for the past 10 years, Avijit has also helped forge a stronger cultural bond between France and India. Hence, it's not surprising to see icons of Indian and European history and culture like Rani Lakshmi Bai, Ma Sarada, Gautam Buddha, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth I, and Mother Mary sharing space in one of his works, while Jesus Christ and Lord Krishna are seen together in another painting.

A student of Kala Bhavana in Visva Bharati and a postgraduate in textile design from NIFT, Avijit loves taking local Indian art and craft, folklores and rituals to a global platform and that's the reason why every year he brings along his foreign friends to his ancestral village home to witness Durga Puja.

Having showcased his works at the Embassy of India in Paris, UNESCO Paris, several town halls, Cannes Film Festival, Cabaret Sauvage, and Paris night markets, and recent collaboration with Paris Olympic 2024, Avijit has carved a niche for himself in the world of French art. Needless to say, we didn't miss the opportunity to catch up with him when he was in Kolkata to showcase his latest work on Indo-French special confluence aptly called Gangaa and Seine organised by Alliance Française du Bengale. Avijit spoke at length about what stokes his art and how he strives to preserve the heritage of Bengal and take it to a foreign audience.

What drew you towards art?

Painting is a tool that helps me tell my stories to a larger audience and art is definitely one of the oldest and strongest mediums of storytelling. The earliest human civilisations learnt how to paint to leave their stories behind for the coming generations even



before they learnt to write.

I found painting to be the best medium to share my observations about contemporary society.

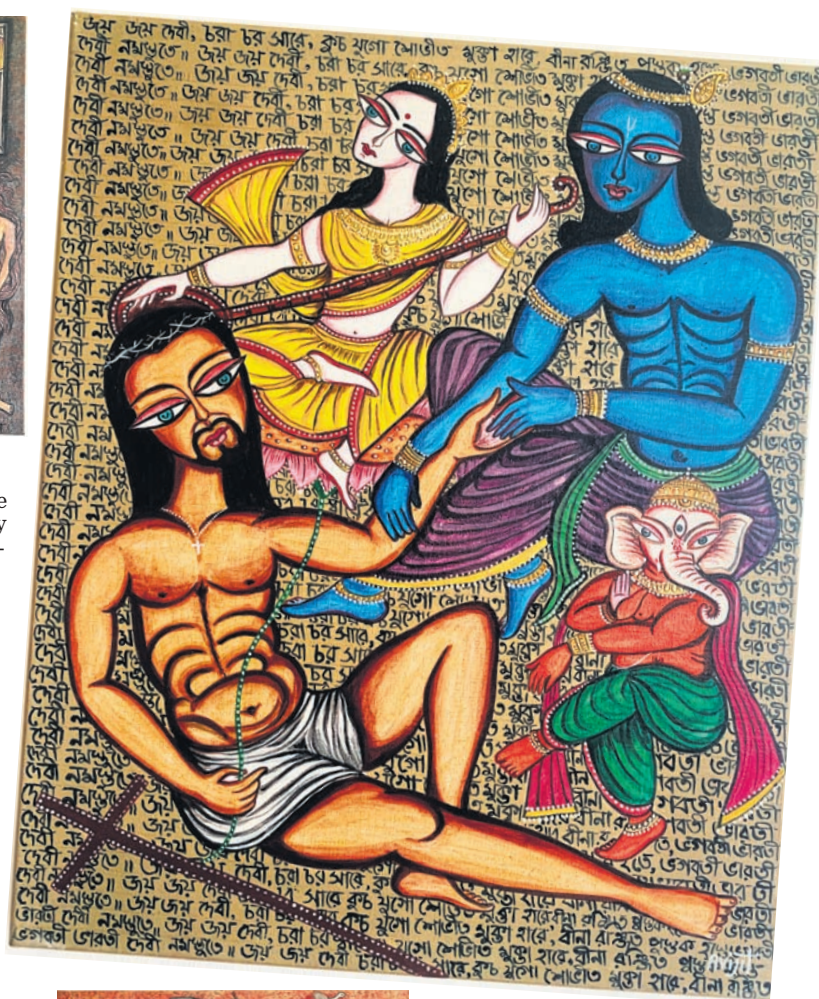
What school of painting do you belong to? What kind of art attracts you?

I use traditional fresco and tempera paint techniques on canvas. I am not very fond of oil or acrylic painting style. Traditional European church wall or fresco paintings, castles, and cathedrals attract and inspire me. Painting in layers creates a dreamy atmosphere for the viewer, which, I feel, an oil or acrylic painting cannot do.

What is your next art project?

After the successful exhibition of my work at Alliance Française du Bengale, I have a proposition from the town hall of Paris (13 arrondissement) to organise an exhibition for school kids with my works and workshop; it will be happening in 13 arrondissement of Paris at an animation centre. The date is not fixed yet. I created a Durga idol in Paris for the Paris 2024 Durga Puja which was organised by Bangladesh and French society. They came to me with a request to create this idol from an artist's perspective.

It was a new opportunity and chance for me as an artist to share my feelings and sentiments around the Puja with many more people. I took that plunge and created that idol replete with traditional Bengali *daker shaaj* and blended it with an Indo-Greek art form. The idol, once made, was appreciated by everyone and



became an instant hit among the viewers for its aesthetic appeal.

Currently, I am busy creating a Saraswati idol for the upcoming Basant Panchami puja in February. Post this, I would start with making idols of Laxmi and

Kali for the next year.

I am happy that during these festivals I get a chance to show another dimension of my work and share my culture with the greater Parisian audience.

I am enjoying this process of creating sculptures, which now helps me share my Indian traditional culture in France. And to make the new generation of French-born Indians aware of all this, who otherwise will probably not have much scope or chance to get familiarised with their roots and indigenous



Avijit Ghosh



Kavitha Krishnan

FOUNDED IN 2007, Maya Dance Theatre has redefined the boundaries of performance art by seamlessly weaving *Bharatanatyam*, contemporary dance, and social storytelling. At the helm is artistic director Kavitha Krishnan, whose experiences as a dancer and occupational therapist inform the company's deeply human approach to movement. They performed at the *INTERFACE EdX 2024* in Kolkata this winter. The team presented *Random Chapter*, a compelling production by Maya Dance Theatre and Under The Bridge Collective. *Indulge* caught up with Kavitha as she delved into the company's ethos, the magic of inclusion, and the stories they wish to share. Excerpts.

How was Maya Dance Theatre founded and what inspired its unique approach to dance?

Maya Dance Theatre was founded in 2007 by Sufri Juwahir, Shahrin Johry, Imran Manaff (our Creative Producer), and myself. Coming from a background in both *Bharatanatyam* and contemporary dance, I wanted to explore what happens when these forms intertwine—not as a 'fusion', but through a genuine dialogue of experimentation. We started as a small, youthful company searching for a fresh voice.

In 2016, Imran brought forward the idea of marrying dance with social storytelling, which led to our *Pancha series*. These performances explored themes of female archetypes, intertwined with the five natural elements, opening up a space for narratives that resonate universally.

Your performances blend storytelling with abstract movements. How do you conceptualise and choreograph pieces like *Random Chapter*?

At its core, dance is about the human spirit. Even in its most abstract form, it cannot be disconnected from the stories we carry

DANCE STORIES IN MOTION

as individuals. My training as an occupational therapist—where I've worked with patients dealing with schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, and personal loss—has shown me the power of stories to heal and connect. *Random Chapter* reflects fragmented yet poignant human experiences. Each movement explores fleeting yet powerful moments of vulnerability, strength, and connection. It's a celebration of the human spirit, showing that while we are fragile, we are also resilient.

We also believe strongly in inclusion. For instance, June Lin from the Diverse Abilities Dance Collective (DADC)—community initiative of Maya Dance Theatre—performs alongside us. Her presence reminds us that inclusion isn't a checkbox; it's a practice. Dance is one of the most beautiful tools to champion this message.

***Random Chapter* seems to explore fragmented narratives. What are some of the central themes you hope to convey**

through this performance?

The title says it all. Life often feels like fragmented chapters—moments strung together, each holding meaning in its own time. The performance is an ode to these 'moments' that reveal our shared humanity. We celebrate emotions, both profound and fleeting, and invite the audience to embrace the beauty of vulnerability. Inclusion remains central to our vision. With artists like June, we demonstrate that everyone, regardless of their ability, has a story worth sharing and celebrating.

Being based in Singapore, how do your performances reflect the diversity of your roots and surroundings?

Singapore is a beautiful mosa-



The team

spotlight

Singapore's Maya Dance Theatre merges tradition, storytelling, and inclusivity to inspire audiences globally

ic of cultures, and that diversity shapes everything we do. The respect for tradition runs deep. For example, our dancers, regardless of their cultural background, will always begin *Bharatanatyam* performances with *Namaskaram*. Singaporeans connect through shared experiences—food, language, and heritage. For instance, Shahrin can speak Chinese, which is invaluable when we perform in China, while I speak Malay, and everyone understands a bit of Tamil, thanks to *Bharatanatyam*. This natural blending of cultures is reflected in our performances. We don't compartmentalise our identities; we embrace them fully. That's the spirit of Singapore, and it comes alive on stage.

What emotions or thoughts do you think the Kolkata audience took away from *Random Chapter*?

This is our first performance in Kolkata, and we're excited to share our work with such an open and culturally rich audience. *Random Chapter* brings together diverse expressions—traditional, contemporary, and physical theatre—to create something unique and universal. We hope audiences see that inclusion is not a novelty

but a necessary practice. Art has the power to create safe spaces, where everyone feels they belong. I hope Kolkata walks away inspired to embrace diversity, in art and in life.

How do you see *INTERFACE EdX* as a platform for multidisciplinary, international, and differently-abled artistic exchange?

INTERFACE EdX is creating a space for respectful collaboration and exchange. Dance here transcends technique and form. We share this platform with artists trained in street, contemporary, and classical dance, and celebrate the diversity they bring. When we work with performers like June, there's no compromise in standards. She trains with the same discipline as any other dancer. We respect her abilities while pushing her boundaries, ensuring she's seen as an equal. The message we hope to share is: listen to unheard stories, to unspoken emotions, and learn to see beyond what's visible. Dance can offer that safe, shared space.

What's next for Maya Dance Theatre after this festival? Are there new stories or movements you're excited to explore?

We're thrilled about an upcoming three-country collaboration in June 2025. It will focus on promoting disability awareness and inclusion through international partnerships. We're working with artists from Australia and Indonesia to co-create a full-length performance, blending diverse moments and movements. The project begins in January with virtual and in-person exchanges, culminating in performances on June 13-14 in Singapore and June 28 in Jakarta. We're also proud to have June Lin perform at the upcoming *Singapore International Arts Festival*. This is just the beginning of many more inclusive and boundary-pushing works.

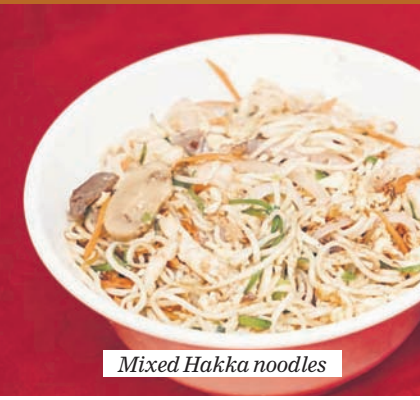
— Atreyee Poddar

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Inside Beijing restaurant



Mixed Hakka noodles



Janice Lee of Pou Chong



Chicken lollipop



Salt and pepper fish

CREATING AN IDENTITY WITH FOOD

Pics: Sourav Banerjee

How Kolkata's Chinese community, equally adept in making leather goods, and carpentry, came to be loved for its culinary magic

YEARS BEFORE CHINESE as a cuisine became a state-of-the-art presentation for the gastronomes in the city, Kolkata had more than its fair share of introduction to the world of Chinese food in the most authentic manner possible, thanks to the bustling Chinese community residing in Tyangra's Chinatown area. Dotted with authentic outlets, both big and small, serving Chinese delicacies, Chinatown is a holy pilgrimage for gourmands craving Chinese that's both filling and affordable.

It was more than 250 years back when the first Chinese traveller, Tong Achew, made Kolkata his home, establishing a sugar mill where fellow Chinese settlers started working. They started settling in small numbers in the Tiretti Bazaar area in Central Kolkata, with the numbers swelling post Japanese invasion during World War II, famine, and the Chinese communist revolution. The men started working in mills and sold leather products, and the women, especially from Hakka region, took up jobs as



Kafulok facade

oriental



Chicken Cantonese noodles



Chilli garlic pepper chicken



Chilli baby corn dry

house helps or nannies and workers in tanneries.

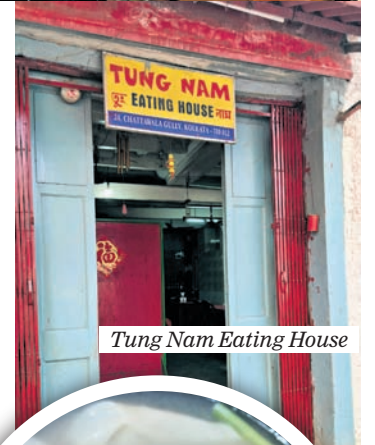
"Even our previous generations struggled a lot for a living. Instead of rice, they fed porridge to their children," says Monica Liu, a Hakka Chinese, who now owns restaurants like Tung Nam, Beijing, Kim Ling and more. "It was friends, who were fans of my version of the chilli chicken, who pushed me to open these restaurants. It was not an easy job to sustain in the food business, but my sons and I still run it," adds Liu, who is often referred to as the 'Don of Chinatown'.

"It was always easy for us to make a livelihood out of feeding people, the reason why our forefathers started this eating house," says Michael Hsieh, third generation owner of popular eating house, Tung Nam, located behind Chattawala Gully near Tiretti Bazar. The place houses around 10 tables, and can be spotted easily during lunch hours, thanks to the long queues outside. "I wouldn't say that it is purely authentic, because all ingredients aren't available here, but a fellow Chinese-run condiment and sauce brand, Pou Chong Kim, makes our job a little easier," Michael says.

We visited Pou Chong Kim too next door, to get a look at their incredible variety of sauces. The 37-year-old Janice Lee now runs this business that started in 1958. Pou Chong also has a restaurant in Kasba, run by Janice's aunt. "We are the inventors of green chilli sauce, soy sauce, and hakka noodles that you see here, and they are used in Chinese restaurants. With time, we have become more Indian than Chinese. I don't even speak Mandarin, though I can speak my mother tongue, Hakka," says Janice.

We were eager to know from Janice how much the local Chinese community has soaked in the cultural and culinary flavours of Kolkata.

"My mom loves *shukto*, she makes it too. She also makes *begun*



Tung Nam Eating House



Pork wonton soup

bhaja, *dal* and even *biryani*. When we dine outside, we usually go to Bengali restaurants and order in big Bengali *thalis*," says Janice.

But both Janice and Walter Chen, the second generation owner of Kafulok, object to typecasting the Chinese community. "Food became an easy reckoner because it was easy to run even from a home-kitchen during initial days. But it would be wrong to put out that the community only thrives on the food business here," says Janice.

"You will still find dentists, leathersmith, big laundry houses, carpenters, and salons run by the Chinese. Though the shoe-making business is dwindling, it's there. But we end up identifying the Chinese with the food they make mainly because we do believe in sitting together and eating with family or friends like any other community," adds Kafulok's Walter.

However, the sad part is that the once-thriving Chinese population in the city is now declining with only about 2,000 of them residing here, according to available records.

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literature

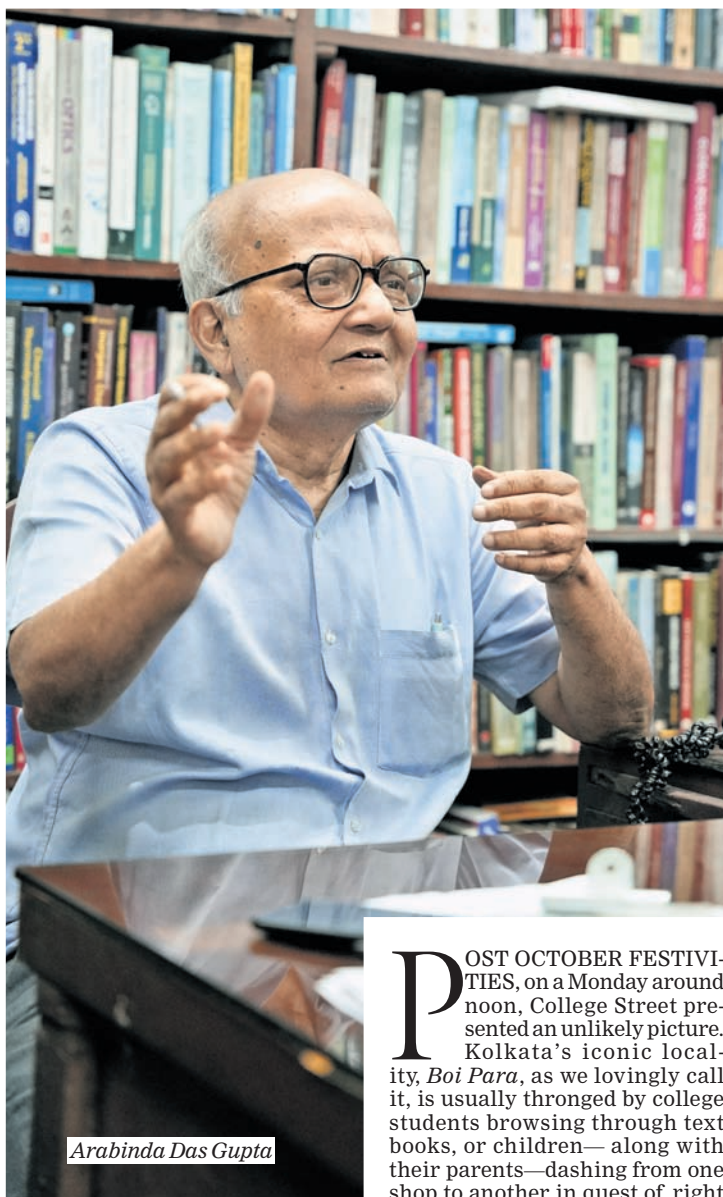
In a world of online shopping and reading, how is the iconic College Street book market faring? We try to find out



Book stalls at College Street



THE ART OF READING



Arabinda Das Gupta

POST OCTOBER FESTIVITIES, on a Monday around noon, College Street presented an unlikely picture. Kolkata's iconic locality, *Boi Para*, as we lovingly call it, is usually thronged by college students browsing through text books, or children— along with their parents—dashing from one shop to another in quest of right

reference books and test papers, or just bibliophiles looking out for newly released or rare books. But on that particular day of our visit, the bustling neighbourhood wore a relatively deserted look, devoid of buyers jostling for the best rates.

This sorry state of the locality had us wondering about the reason behind the lull. Was it just a dull day? Is it because of the growing dominance of online shopping? Was it the depleting number of readers over the years, or was it the cool comfort of air-conditioned book shops in shopping malls that has driven away a majority of the book-loving crowd?

As we went around seeking the truth, Pijush Kanti Talukdar, owner at Gyanjyoti Book Trust, tells us that online retail has indeed taken away a major chunk of buyers from the bylanes of College

Street. "Since we sell textbooks, we can say with authority that buying books for studies has almost become obsolete. There was a time, when apart from the regular textbooks, students used to buy 2 to 3 reference books. But now they are not even keen on reading their textbooks, let alone reference books," rues Pijush.

Echoing Pijush's observations, Arabinda Das Gupta, a fifth generation owner of a 137-year-old book store called Das Gupta And Company, avers, "We survived both the World Wars and even the Naxalite movements, but we haven't faced a threat bigger than the deadly concoction of lack of reading habit and online retail." Unlike most other book store owners who refrained from commenting, Arabinda adds, "We could recover fully from wars and political upheavals, but not from this one, mainly because of the way the multinational companies are devouring us. People may wonder why are we still in the business? That's because switching over to something else is not easy at this point. We are fairly a well established business now, with so many employees...we cannot just shut down one fine day. We will continue to fight even if our revenues go down. Also, rampant piracy has stoked the worsen-

ing situation further—neither the authors are receiving any royalty, nor the booksellers are earning any revenue. There were almost eight bookstores, between Phoolbagan and airport, but now there are none. In South Kolkata too, there were a few bookstores, which have closed down. Now, those in College Street too, are struggling," laments Arabinda, who recently started a free library upstairs for like minded people or needy students to read books of their choice or take notes.

"Previously, managing the store during special occasions used to be so difficult, with people thronging the shop for books to gift their loved ones. That practice is almost dead now. Instead, we witness students selling off their reading materials the same day they finish writing their exams," he concludes.

Despite these difficulties, Jayanta Das from Signet book shop and Taraknath Mondal from Mondal book shop are not yet ready to feel disappointed. "There is still a demand for books, especially Bengali ones among Bengalis



I have a customer from New Zealand. Everytime he visits, he buys books for a little community library for his fellow Bengali residents to nurture reading habits in their mother tongue

expats. People from the city may have given up on their reading habits, but that's not generic. We still get Bengalis from Bangladesh and other parts of the world browsing through and buying books worth thousands," informs Jayanta. "I have a customer from New Zealand. Everytime he visits, he buys books for a little community library for his fellow Bengali residents to nurture reading habits in their mother tongue. Also, though a variety of English books are available online, one has to visit College Street to get Bengali books, and books specialising in art, theatre, cinema, music and such," he adds.

Taraknath tells us there's also a rise in demand for religious texts and mythological stories, especially around the festive season. People travel all the way from Malda, Bankura, and other districts to buy these books. "But yes, the business has gone down. All we can do is keep our hopes high for the times to get better," concludes Taraknath.

In an age of rapid digitisation, and steadily dwindling attention span stoked by social media, all we have is a flickering hope that the printed words continue to be our window to the world.

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Priya Cinema



second show

Navina Cinema

REEL NOSTALGIA

How Kolkata's single screens Priya, Menoka, Navina, and Star Theatre are thriving amidst multiplexes



Menoka Cinema

IN AN AGE where we cannot imagine living without multiplexes and streaming platforms, a handful of single screen theatres in Kolkata stand tall, preserving a slice of the city's heritage and the common man's love for cinema. For the dwindling number of patrons who visit, these theatres are more than just venues; they're monuments of nostalgia, community, and tradition. We explore a few of Kolkata's last remaining single-screen theatres, and get to know their current status, how they're competing with the multiplexes and what keeps them relevant still.

In Deshapriya Park, a line of moviegoers snakes around the corner, waiting to step into Priya Cinema. The marquee glows softly, announcing the latest Bangla blockbuster, and the air buzzes with chatter. Crossing the entrance, it feels like a time capsule. For over six decades, Priya has been a sanctuary for film lovers—a place where generations of families, couples on first dates, and groups of friends have gathered to experience the magic of cinema. Arijit Dutta, the owner, remembers the heyday fondly. But times have changed. Arijit acknowledges the challenges single-screen theatres face in a world dominated by multiplexes. Still, he believes in Priya's unique appeal, "It's affordable, familiar, and nostalgic. That's

something a glossy multiplex can't replicate for the cost sensitive Kolkatans."

A few miles away, tucked into the leafy lanes of Southern Avenue, Menoka Cinema has been a second home to its patrons for 75 years. A staff member recalls a touching tradition: "On opening days, some regulars bring sweets to share with us. It's like we're all part of the celebration."

With its spacious seating and warm, welcoming atmosphere, Menoka feels less like a theatre and more like a gathering spot for the community.

In Tollygunge, Navina Cinema has its own tale to tell. We met Goutam Sanpui, the manager, who reminisced about the time *Titanic* was screened there. "It was the 16th week after the release, and people queued up like anything. Those were the golden days of single screens." Navina, with its no-frills ambiance and lenient rules—outside food is welcome here—remains a favorite for families and older audiences. But during Durga Puja, the theatre transforms into a bustling hub, with every show running to a full house.

There's the Star Theatre in North Kolkata, where the ghosts of Bengal's cultural renaissance linger. This is more than just a cinema—it's a stage for poetry readings, cultural gatherings, and the occasional Bengali play. As the curtains rise, the legacy of Girish Chandra Ghosh and his troupe seems to echo in the walls. Here, the past and present coexist, making Star Theatre a unique cultural landmark in a rapidly modernising city.

Despite the challenges posed by modern entertainment, represen-

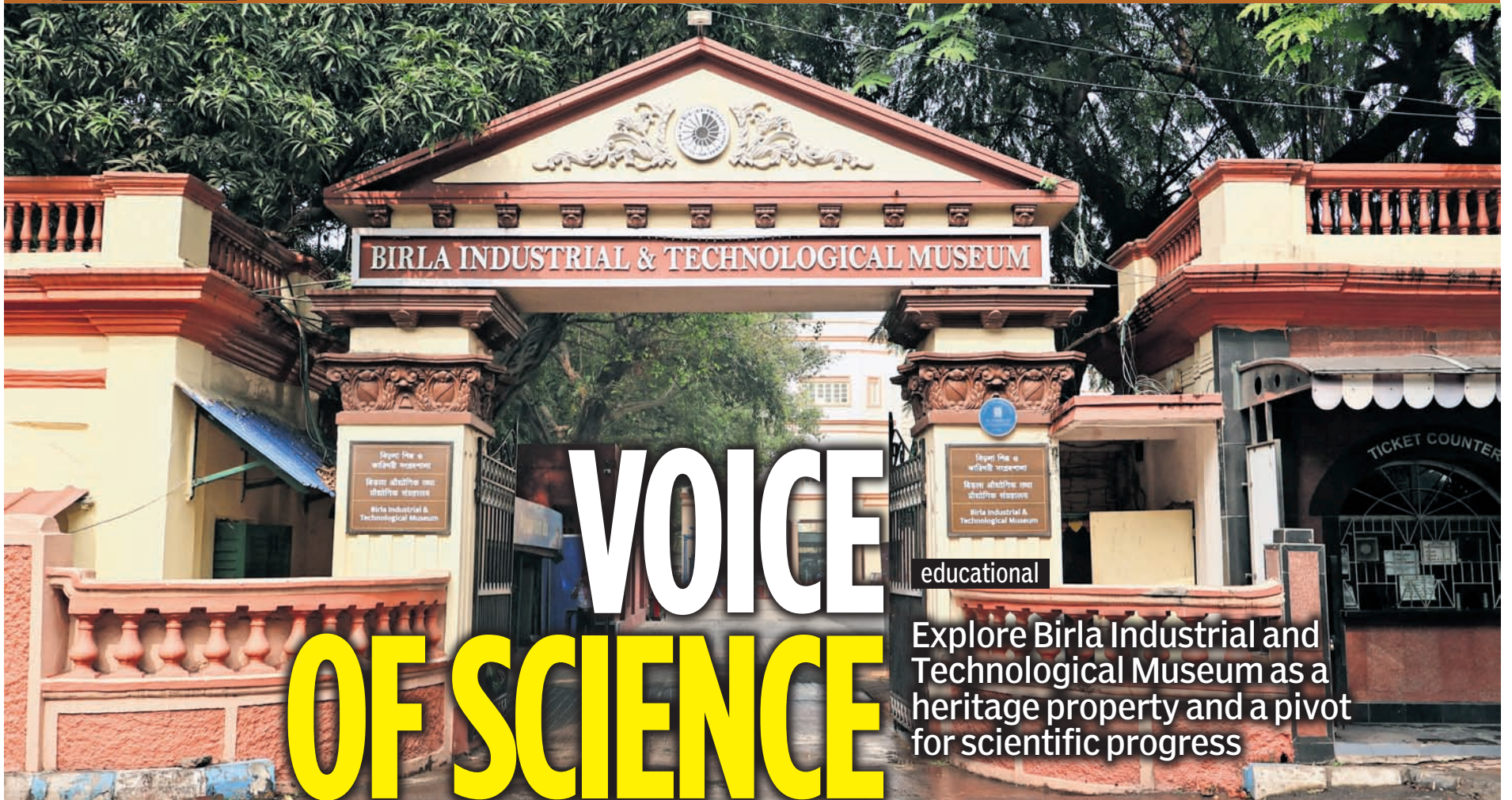
tatives from Priya, Menoka, and Navina cinemas express optimism about the future. They believe that single-screen theatres are far from being obsolete. "Business is still good," they say, crediting the enduring appeal of these theatres to their affordability and the irreplaceable sense of community they foster. The rise of multiplexes, online streaming platforms, and changing audience preferences have all affected these iconic venues, but not so much.

In recent years, several single-screen theatres in Kolkata, including popular ones like *Elite* and *New Empire*, have closed their doors. These theatres reflect the local culture and history in a way that polished, corporate multiplexes cannot. Each theatre carries its own story and character, from the architectural styles to the type of films it shows. The surviving single-screen theatres in Kolkata serve as social spaces that bring people together, reminding us of a time when watching a movie meant being part of a larger collective experience.

As the city modernises and digital entertainment becomes more accessible, these theatres face an uphill battle. As they battle for survival, they also keep alive the hope that traditional cinema experiences won't entirely fade away, but instead, find a way to coexist with modern forms of entertainment. As Kolkata changes, the city's single-screen theatres serve as a nostalgic reminder of cinema's golden age and the unbreakable bond between films and the people who love them.

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Pics: Pritam Sarkar

VOICE OF SCIENCE

educational

Explore Birla Industrial and Technological Museum as a heritage property and a pivot for scientific progress

STANDING IN THE historic and scientific premise of the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), which recently earned the recognition as a Grade-I Heritage Building with a Blue Plaque, we bore witness to an engaging chat with the museum's director, Subhabrata Chaudhuri, on its historical significance and evolution.

Back to the past

Subhabrata recalls that originally, Satyendranath Tagore's son owned the premises. Because of an unsuccessful business endeavour, he handed over the property to the Birlas for a sum of ₹24,000. During the freedom movement, lot of leaders frequented this place. After gaining independence, Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr BC Roy got in touch with the Central Government. With the support of former PM, the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Birlas were approached, and they agreed to part with the property. The museum started functioning on May 2, 1959. Initially, it was under the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research. Later, the Planning Commission established the National Council of Science Museums, and BITM became one of its units, serving as a headquarters in Eastern India.

A momentous recognition

Talking about the heritage recognition, he mentions, "It also gives due credit to the tireless efforts of Indian scientists like Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Ray, and Pramatha Nath Bose who took science forward against willful troubles created by the then British Raj. After independence, advancing science became a significant chal-



Subhabrata Chaudhuri

lenge and a big responsibility. But we still have a lot to do in this populous country."

Keeping up with time

Shedding light on the upkeep of the property, he says, "It is very difficult to identify the right type of heritage architect but we have a committee comprising specialists. Agencies are engaged to go for structural auditing

of the building. Based on their audit we go for restorations."

The stepping stone

The museum is credited with shaping the visions of famous scientists over the years. He says, "If an individual happens to be from this region, they owe their career, at least to some extent, to BITM. In fact, the first formal address to the youth through a public demonstration lecture was delivered in this heritage building by Satyendranath Bose in 1960, who was a champion in promoting science education in our mother tongue."

Restored models

Many of the artefacts here are originals or restored. Talking about them, Subhabrata says, "We have a Fiat Tipo 1925 model which belonged to Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose. We used to make our drivers take it out for a round to maintain it, but we discontinued that practice. Today, it is permanently housed at the Transport Gallery. We also have a Beam engine, used for tugging the ships in the Calcutta port, owned by Dwarkanath Tagore."

Recognition of women scientists

On entering the premises, you will see ten busts of Indian women scientists. He explains, "It is a universal problem. According to statistics and reports, women scientists are paid less and not many

are made institutional heads. They face a lot of discrimination. But things are changing fast, especially in India. My personal opinion is that women are coming up even better than men. A lot of women scientists contributed a lot towards the field but are not known to the public. That is why we came up with the busts, introducing them to the people."

Keeping up with the dynamics

When asked about embracing the rapid changes in technology, Subhabrata shares, "Today's modern science is likely to get outdated by tomorrow's developments. Generally, we stick to the fundamentals which don't change much; only the forms change. In communications, earlier, people used to use signals and codes but today it's by emojis. At the same time, we offer numerous programmes to ensure that the youth are aware of emerging fields of technology such as biotechnology, AI, and others. There are QR codes on our artefacts to give further information with soundtracks and virtual movements."

Looking ahead

Apart from the recently inaugurated Television Gallery, Subhabrata's vision for the future involves, "showcasing the development of science and technology against all odds by setting up some period rooms which trace history and use modern technologies in parallel. Say you might be able to talk to Prafulla Roy through AI, who knows?"

— Subhadrika Sen

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Lab interiors

heritage

PRESERVING THE PAST

Take a look at how this institution is spearheading art conservation and awareness in the city



An artwork before conservation



After conservation

WHILE WE OFTEN remark at well-conserved art, artefacts, and buildings of the city, a lot goes on behind the process. In this regard, we look at the Kolkata Centre for Creativity's (KCC) Conservation Lab, established in 2019 under the leadership of Richa Agarwal, chairperson, KCC. This path-breaking establishment has already worked on 4,000 objects and is currently working on 15, along with an archival project. We speak to Richa to learn more about the lab and its work.

Excerpts:

What inspired the establishment of a one-of-its-kind conservation lab in Kolkata?

The idea stemmed from the need to preserve Bengal's rich art and artefacts, a pressing issue that had seen minimal efforts. As a gallery housing modern, early modern, and contemporary art, the necessity to maintain and conserve the collection was constant, and to serve a crucial resource for Eastern and Northeastern Indian regions lacking adequate conservation facilities. This initiative sought to bridge the gap in preserving cultural heritage while supporting the long-term care of diverse artistic treasures.

For the unversed, how similar or different are the terms conservation, preservation, restoration and renovation?

The terms conservation, preservation, restoration, and renovation are often used interchangeably but have distinct meanings, especially as art and heritage conservation has evolved academically and professionally. Conservation focuses on protecting an item's historical layers through actions like cleaning and stabilisation to ensure its longevity. Preservation emphasises maintaining an object's current condition to prevent further deterioration. Restoration involves returning an item to its original or assumed state by removing later additions or recreating missing parts. Renovation is often applied to structures or

updates while retaining functional or aesthetic elements.

Tell us about the process of conservation.

Conservation varies based on an object's physical condition, custodian requirements, and purpose. Typically, it begins with visual documentation to analyse material aspects, previous interventions, and damage extent. This documentation preserves historical information for accurate interpretation and guides further treatment decisions. Conservation prioritises addressing decay mechanisms to prevent further deterioration, ensuring the object's stability. Aesthetic enhancements, if needed, are carried out



later in the process.

What kind of challenges are faced during the conservation process?

The primary challenge lies in understanding an object's unique issues and identifying feasible solutions. Visual documentation, research, photographs, and relevant information are critical in addressing these challenges. Each step of treatment requires specialised skills and in-depth knowledge of materials and techniques to navigate complexities and ensure proper care.

Could you tell us about some important works that have been restored at the lab?

The KCC Conservation Lab has restored numerous significant works, including *Adbhut Lok* (Realm of the Absurd), a collection of lithographic prints by Gaganendranath Tagore, and a series of Early Bengal oil paintings. Drawings and prints by Ramkinkar Baij, Nandalal

Bose, Somnath Hore, KG Subramanyan, FN Souza, Ganesh Pyne, and A Ramachandran, as well as iconic oils by Hemen Mazumdar, Ram Kumar, and Krishen Khanna. The lab has also worked on prints from Chore Bagan, Calcutta, and Kansari Para Art Studios, alongside traditional *patachitra*, sculptures, rare books, manuscripts, maps, textiles, and decorative objects.

Over time, how aware do you think common people are about conservation?

Collectors, gallerists, and artists have become increasingly conscious of its importance over the years, reflecting a positive shift in understanding the value of preserving art and heritage.




What are your future plans to establish conservation as a key focus in the Cultural Capital of India?

KCC aims to establish itself as a leader in conservation by setting ethical standards in art and heritage preservation. Future plans include launching educational initiatives to train conservators, engage stakeholders, and raise awareness about India's rich cultural heritage. The institution is committed to contributing to the preservation of Bengal's cultural legacy while addressing national conservation needs.

What is your vision for the future of the lab?

Future plans include expanding infrastructure to accommodate diverse materials such as photographs, textiles, rugs, and wood. Plans are underway to establish an analytical and research unit, fostering a transdisciplinary approach to art and heritage conservation. The lab envisions collaborations with individuals and institutions to advance conservation practices in India.

Key initiatives include heritage walks, artist-led workshops, art analysis, outreach programs, residencies, and grants. KCC also aims to enhance expertise, facilities, and knowledge-sharing to set new benchmarks in art conservation and cultural preservation.

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restoration

Turning pages

Pics: Sourav Banerjee

Interiors of unrestored portions of the library

TURNING A PAGE from the history of North Kolkata, we found ourselves at the remarkable two-storey institute of knowledge, which had Rabindranath Tagore as one of its trustees. The Chaitanya Library on Beadon Street, established in 1889, was a space for intellectual progress, and a reservoir of popular, rare, and lost books that lie covered in dust.

While the entrance has been worked upon, the first and second floors still require preservation. Lakhs of books lie stacked, surrounded by wobbly stairs and damaged walls; the lonely corridors tell stories of bygone days and their gradual degradation over time. A prime example of community conservation efforts are the numerous steps taken for the restoration and preservation of the library to its former glory.

We caught up with the Library Trust members to know in detail about the initiative.

A magnificent start

Speaking to *Indulge*, executive committee member Siddharth Sarkar in whose mind the seed of restoration first germinated, mentions, “When the library was instituted it was for the Indians, by which it meant the locals, and not the elite class. The idea was to spread the word of education, knowledge, and wisdom among the local community. What struck me was when my father said that these old libraries and buildings are slowly disappearing. That’s when we decided to do something to carry on the legacy.”

He continues, “At one point, the library had patrons like the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj, Darbhanga, Burdwan and Cooch Behar. With the modernisation of the city, everything started becoming futuristic. There were not

A look at how community collaboration and preservation efforts are reviving the glorious days of this magnificent library



Photograph of original founding and trustee members

many readers too since the books here were from the '70s, '80s, and '90s in the genre of philosophy, history, fiction, etc.. The library also has a one-time membership fee, which cannot help sustain its maintenance.”

Apart from the magnificent building, it’s a storehouse of lost and rare prints. “We have a book, which is a compilation of letters written by Rabindranath Tagore’s wife, printed at a time when these communications were not allowed to be

publicised. There’s also the second or third print of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bongsho Porichoy*, a 12-volume book on histories of elite families like Kalikatar Thakur Bongsho, Balihar Raj Bongsho etc. Printed volumes of speeches by revolutionaries, initially banned, too find a place here.”

Taking a step back

While the library was quite active till the '70s and '80s, several factors hit hard. He says, “With the advent



of the digital era, the habit of picking up a book or indulging in the smell of old books started waning. Then came a time when the library was supposed to be given to promoters but we stopped it since we did not want to lose a part of history. When we found the library, it was in a dilapidated state.”

Restoration on point

Delving deeper into the restoration process, Lt. Col. Nitin Shrestha, from the committee opens up, “Initially the place had not been kept for almost four / five decades. There was inadequate lighting, paint was ripping off, and the staircase leading to the first floor was in bad condition. Gradually we started connecting with other organisations and individuals and have been able to do up the entrance hall. Calcutta Heritage Collective also took up the initiative with us. It is indeed a continuous process and will take a long time. We are seeking professional help for the restoration of books as well.”

Incidentally, the liberty to make the decision lies in the hands of the trust and its notable mem-

bers comprising President Pradip Sengupta, Vice President Sankar Sarkar, and others like IPS Soumen Mitra, Pradip Dutta—whose family donated the original building, and French Chevalier Kanchana Mukhopadhyay.

Nitin further said, “Being an iconic building, we are planning to keep everything original. We found a clock in a bad shape and we restored it. Whatever comes out of the library will be restored and used, and nothing new will be added, so that it looks like its time.”

The vision ahead

Signing off with the future objective, “We need funds and professional assistance to complete the entire process. The way we are inching I guess it’s a journey of four-five years more. Our vision is to make it one of the most premiere research institutions, digital repository and place it in the tourist map of Kolkata so that it lives up to its name ‘Chaitanya’.”

— Subhadrika Sen

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new release

A lesson through cinema

We speak to power couple and director-actor duo Raj Chakraborty and Subhashree Ganguly on their latest movie *Shontaan*

HELMED BY ACTORS Mithun Chakraborty, Anusuya Majumdar, Ritwick Chakraborty, and Subhashree Ganguly under the direction of Raj Chakraborty, comes their latest *Shontaan*. A gripping family drama where values and priorities are at constant war amidst parent-children relationships, this emotional roller-coaster ride is bound to leave the audience with a crisp contemplation of their actions. We speak to Raj and Subhashree to know more. Excerpts from the chat:

From where did you draw inspiration for the movie?

Raj: In pursuit of ambition or keeping up with the rat race, we often forget the two people (parents) who had our backs forever. We don't have time for them or to think about them. Earlier, we used to live in a joint family, where there were people to take care of them, even if the children were away or we wrote a letter since smart phone usage was not this rampant. But these are disappearing now. This forms the basis of the movie.

How was it playing an advocate for the first time and how does your character give fuel to the narrative?

Subhashree: I accepted to play Indrani Sen because I could work with Mithun Chakraborty and because I have never played a lawyer. The narrative too was a strong reason to accept the offer. We can't always protest on social media or elsewhere. But we can use entertainment or cinema as a medium to express this protest. It's an important character because she transforms her perspective from the issue being emotional to a more social challenge.

How did you use the soundscape as a form of expression to complement the narrative?

Raj: If you notice the house, there is a background sound of trains and in the court, there are tram sounds. These sounds have been used as a transition cut along with the background music which has made the scene more vibrant. The overall soundscape depicts the journey, loneliness, etc. We want to reach out to the audience with a complete package. It's a first-time experiment with such a theme.

How can this constant fight between values and priorities be balanced?

Subhashree: This has no permanent solution. They are similar, like good and bad or success and failure, which balance each other.

Raj: You need to be clear with your life's philosophy. What is your priority? Parents,

money, or your nuclear family? Once you have decided, you will be able to solve all challenges. But if you are not clear, you can go on explaining or giving excuses. Self-realisation and self-analysis are very important. If I am sorted, then everyone around me are sorted.

Subhashree: And the problem is just that we try to fix everything around us without looking internally.

How was the experience of working with Mithun Chakraborty?

Raj: I was very excited to work with him. He is a one-take artist. And as a filmmaker too, you have to be a one-take director to get in sync with him. There is no scope for a confused mind on the floor, and doing the homework and coming prepared was mandatory. I did not face any difficulties. He came, worked, and left. In fact, we wrapped up in less time than we anticipated. I have tried to give my best to bring out the best from him.

Subhashree: I have done a reality show with him and we spent a lot of time together. Here, I was busy with my own part. But I used to visit to just watch Mithun *da* and Anusuya *di*'s acting. I used to ask what's his process, which character in his career was the toughest, etc. He says that he is a born actor, and that he doesn't have a process. "You give a character and dialogue, and I will play the character," he used say.

Which has been the most challenging role of your career?

Subhashree: People might expect me to say Indubala or Parineeta, but for me, Babli, Poulami (*Boudi Canteen*), Ahana (*Habji Gabji*), or Indrani (*Shontaan*) were more challenging. These characters are all around us. To make them believable on screen so that the audience doesn't find Subhashree or any of my previous roles in them was challenging.

What is the secret to your fitness and fashion?

Subhashree: I have to be comfortable in the clothes that I wear. Everyone has their style. I can't follow a trend. For fitness, I follow a good healthy diet, go to the gym, and play badminton.

What's the message you want the audience to leave with after watching *Shontaan*?

Raj: To give quality time to family.
Subhashree: To not take anything/anyone for granted in life.

Shontaan is running in theatres near you

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Raj Chakraborty

Subhashree Ganguly

Pic: Pritam Sarkar



SIMPLE

STRATEGIES FOR GOOD HEALTH

Here are some practical ways to maintain your health and fitness in the long run

IN TODAY'S FAST-PACED world, keeping your health in check or staying fit feels like an overwhelming task. The good news is, achieving long-term health and fitness doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the most sustainable methods are often the simplest and can easily be integrated into your everyday life. Let's explore practical, sustainable ways to maintain your health and fitness in a way that lasts:

- One of the key principles of staying fit is regular physical activity. You don't need to run marathons or spend hours in the gym to stay in shape. In fact, consistency and discipline are far more important than intensity. Daily movement, even in small doses, can have a profound impact on your overall fitness and health. Try adding any of these to your routine:

- Walking is one of the simplest forms of exercise that anyone can follow, and to be consistent with the same, try to aim for at least 30 minutes of walking every day. If you have a busy schedule, break it into

shorter walks throughout the day.

- Incorporating a few stretches or yoga poses for even 10 minutes a day into your routine can improve flexibility, reduce muscle stiffness, and enhance posture.

- You don't need heavy weights to build muscle. Simple bodyweight exercises like squats, push-ups, and planks can improve muscle strength and tone.

- If not anything, then the goal is to find physical activities you enjoy, whether it's dancing, cycling, swimming, or hiking. When you enjoy the process, you're more likely to stick with it over the long term.

- A sustainable approach to nutrition is about balance, not restriction. Instead of focusing on cutting out food groups or following strict diets, aim to eat real, whole foods that nourish your body.

- Fruits and vegetables are packed with all micronutrients from vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants. They are essential for supporting your immune system, improving digestion, and providing energy. Try to fill half of your plate with vegetables at each meal, and start your meal with these. Additionally, keep a serving of fruit with nuts as a mid-meal snack.

- After veggies, protein is important for muscle, tissue, and cell repair and growth, and it also keeps you feeling full for longer. Include a variety of protein sources like lean meats, fish, eggs, beans, pulses, good-quality organic paneer, etc in your meals.

- Whole grains like millets, oats, groats, unprocessed rice,

whole wheat, etc contain more nutrients and fiber than refined grains. They help keep your energy levels stable throughout the day and support digestive health.

- While it's okay to enjoy treats occasionally, try to limit foods that are highly processed and high in processed sugars, unhealthy fats, and salt. These can lead to inflammation, weight gain, and other health issues over time.

- Water helps manage digestion, regulate body temperature, transport nutrients to body cells, etc and still many of us don't hydrate ourselves enough. Aim for 10-12 glasses (around 2.5-3 litres) of water daily. This can vary depending on your activity level and climate, but it's a good starting point. If you struggle to drink enough water, try carrying a water bottle with you, adding a slice of lemon or mint for flavour to improve the taste.

- Your body needs adequate rest to repair and recover from daily activities, exercise, and stress. Lack of sleep can lead to weight gain, weakened immunity, and decreased mental performance. Establish a consistent bedtime routine to signal your body that it's time to wind down and ensure your bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet. Limiting screen time before bed and reducing caffeine intake in the afternoon can also help improve sleep quality.

- Chronic stress can have a negative impact on your physical and mental health. Mindfulness techniques like meditation, *pranayama*, and yoga can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity.

- Make time for activities that bring you joy, whether it's reading a book, gardening, art work, or going for a walk in nature. These moments of relaxation can help you recharge and keep stress at bay.

- There will be days when you skip a workout or indulge in your favourite dessert, and that's okay. The key is to be disciplined and consistent to get long-term success.

- Staying healthy and fit is a journey. The most important thing is to find what works for you and to enjoy the process with discipline and consistency.



HEALTHY LIVING
DEEPIKA RATHOD

Chief Nutrition Officer, Luke Coutinho Holistic Healing Systems. The writer is a clinical nutritionist with a focus on healthy lifestyle choices.



THE YEAR AHEAD FOR YOU

As the year 2024 draws to a close, we let you in on what 2025 has in store for you and help you plan ahead



AALIYAA H JARIWALA

Chaldean numerologist, angel oracle guide & healer



ARIES

(Mar 21 - Apr 19)

New beginnings are foreseen, and the delays of the past are coming to a conclusive end. There will be a major change in the direction. Many of you will be travelling to other destinations for the highest good. During the first half of the year, wisdom and objectivity are important. It is better to stay in your integrity as a situation will arise that will call for open communication. You will have to take some important decisions during the first half of the year. Choose logic over emotions. The second half of the year demands teamwork. You will be experiencing unexpected help and timely intervention from people around. On the work front, working with others in a cooperative manner will bring great results. The year will end on a positive note with love, romance, and compatibility from the highest universe.



TAURUS

(Apr 20 - May 20)

The first half of the year will be time for swift action. Develop a plan and know exactly how to carry it forward. The universe will encourage you to follow your mind over your heart. You are a person who is able to accomplish many tasks at once, and this is an asset you must work on. The wheel of fortune will favour you by making things easier for you. New beginnings will mark the end of delays. There will be a change in the direction of a path that will be for your benefit. The second half of the year is all about celebrations and endurance. There will be abundant rewards. A new house turning into a beautiful home is foreseen. Channel your quest for finding the highest good. Safeguard your aura from evil eyes and ask for help from spiritual guides. Forgive those who haven't been a part of your success journey, and detox your body, mind, and soul.



GEMINI

(May 21 - June 20)

Your plans will flourish and grow as long as you give them your devoted attention and love. If your focus is on family matters, such as relationships, children, or pregnancy, you can be assured of happy outcomes. Your career and words will also prove successful. Your interest in beautiful, luxurious, or artful pursuits is well rewarded. While your ability to nurture others is wonderful, don't forget to care for yourself. A happy news of a child or something related to your children will call for celebrations. New resources of money, time, or support are foreseen. A change in job or a promotion will change your life and finances for good. Surrounding yourself with wise teachers and gurus is advisable. This will be an important time for your career rather than relationships. The universe will promise you a great retirement life, provided you focus on your career.



CANCER

(June 21 - July 22)

It's time to change your life. The first half of the year represents a need to leave behind old belief systems and ways of doing things that have become stale and out of date. The universe is telling you that you can no longer procrastinate on making the changes that you know deep down that you need to make. Suddenly, everything is crystal clear to you. Change is inevitable if you are to grow and evolve. Embrace this new direction in your life, as it's liberating and exciting. You need not go through this transformation alone. Your guardian angels can help you find a new meaning in your life. Love and blessings will fill your life; harmonious relationships with family members and the promise of a happily ever after are foreseen. The universe is on your side.



LEO

(July 23 - Aug 22)

In the first half of the year, your situation may seem to be limited or not what you had hoped for. But there is more than what meets the eye. Open your eyes to all possibilities. Spend time in meditation with the knowledge that any disillusionment you feel is meant to urge you into self-reflection, leading to a happier life. For those who wish to pursue their dreams in the creative field, take the leap of faith. New projects and roles will be offered; stay stable and efficient. During the second half of the year, monitor your health, aura, and karmas. Be very clear before taking any decision. A need for detox is advisable. Expect relationships with others to develop to a new level. Any cycle or intuitive information that arises is reliable and relatable. During the last two months, face your fears and trust only your intuitions for accurate guidance.



VIRGO

(Aug 23 - Sep 22)

The beginning of the year sees major career advancement. You will be ready to follow your passion. Opportunities for excitement and adventure are headed your way. This is something that you have prepared for and have been hoping would happen. Show everyone how amazing you are. You will be ready to embrace life. Be at peace, as the universe is aligned with you. You will be finally free in the second half of the year. Put the past behind you and learn to embrace the future. You will have the power to nurture yourself and those you love. You have the ability to make anything more beautiful. Your practical and wise advice is something everybody will look up to. Overall, the year looks promising and a little challenging initially. However, you will learn to stand on your feet and become a better version and a better person in the years to come.



LIBRA

(Sep 23 - Oct 22)

Your worry related to your future is unnecessary. Focus on the outcome you desire, and release any feeling of regret, guilt, or worry. Things may not have turned out the way you expected, but now is the time to trust that the universe has something better in store for you. Joy through spiritual connection and spiritual growth will be the highlight of the first half of 2025. You want to be the light to others, and for that, you must enlighten yourself both religiously and spiritually. All the answers to your unanswered prayers will come through meditation. A big situation in the past has come to a conclusive end, and during the second half, you shall make a conscious effort to walk out of the untied ropes. Reflection and meditation will provide valuable information. You can be at peace as you are someone who only focuses on what you want.



SCORPIO

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

The beginning of the year will see an excellent opportunity being offered to you. You may adopt a new interest or passion. This is the time to get to work. Choose professional career advancement over personal gains. In the first half of the year, things will move at a fast pace. All delays will be over, and sky will be the limit. It could feel as though there are too many things going on at once, so it will be necessary to stay grounded. It is important to have an organised plan so that things don't spin out of control. It is a good time to promote yourself. Choose the right path over the fast lane. A very big dream of yours will come to fruition. For those who have been fighting a legal battle since long, stick to your decision, as the verdict will be in your favour. Overall, this is going to be a year full of emotional, professional, and personal highs and lows.



SAGITTARIUS

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Live a balanced life. Reduce your stress for the sake of protecting your health. Release any feeling of guilt and remove unnecessary obligations from your schedule. Your current challenges may feel burdensome, but there is a great deal to learn from the situation. This will be a time of growth that will make you stronger. Ask your guardian angels to place helpful people at your side. In your personal life, committed romantic relationships will sweep you off your feet. Love will make you a better person. A sudden revelation will offer you freedom. An engagement ceremony, marriage, or a grand celebration to announce the union of two souls is foreseen. Love and blessings will fill your life. You will find the purpose of your life with the blessings of your elders. Relocation to a better place with a promise of promotion is on the cards.



CAPRICORN

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

The year 2025 begins with the promise of a committed romantic relationship. Be prepared to be swept off your feet. You will be falling in love, and it can also herald creative or artistic proposals. Someone who is the champion of emotions, artistic, and well read will enter your life. This will be a person who is in love with love itself and anything romantic, optimistic, sophisticated, and introspective. There will be engagements and weddings for many. This is also the time to stay grounded. Do not get carried away during the first half of the year. During this phase, it will be safe to trust people who are offering their unconditional love and affection towards you. The second half of the year looks equally interesting. Determination and self-control will lead to career advancement. The year will end with the confidence that you can do anything now.



AQUARIUS

(Jan 20 - Feb 18)

The beginning of the year exhibits your great strength and compassion. You are far stronger than you may believe. Be clear on what you want and take action. A need for detoxification of your body, mind, and soul is on the cards. It is very important to keep your chakras balanced. Taking a small break or a vacation to embrace your inner child is the need of the hour. New friends or rescinded relationships with your old friends will be the highlight during the first half of the year. During the second half of the year, your plans will work out well as expected. Hire people to help you out during this phase, as your health is more important than accomplishing your task. If your focus is on family matters such as relationships, children, or pregnancy, you can be assured of happy outcomes.



PISCES

(Feb 19 - Mar 20)

The first half of the year encourages you to do what you love. Follow your passion and do your very best work. The task at hand can be a joyful experience and may bring recognition or financial rewards. This is a time of great personal growth in your career or artistic endeavours. Working with others in a happy and cooperative manner is important. Safeguard yourself, as more and more people will be jealous of your growth during this phase. Surround yourself with people who can comfort you and heal you during this period. The second half of the year looks very promising. You will be rewarded with an award, scholarship or a promotion. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be offered to you. Indulge in beautiful things in life, like buying a luxurious car, investing in a house, or getting yourself a nice piece of jewellery.

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Developer



Contact

90880 40082
90739 54525

marketing@sreebalaji.in



Breitling Ironman Endurance Pro

The new 300-piece limited-edition Endurance Pro Ironman 2024 70.3 World Championship Taup is a 44 mm case made of ultra-lightweight Breitlight material, a robust material 3.3 times lighter than titanium and 5.8 times lighter than stainless steel that's also thermally stable (with a touch that's warmer than metal) while being scratch-resistant, nonmagnetic and hypoallergenic. The case is water resistant to 10 bar. Powered by the COSC-certified Breitling Caliber 82, a SuperQuartz movement with a warranty of two years, this Endurance Pro Ironman Taup chronograph can measure time down to 1/10th of a second. Hands and indexes coated in luminescent Super-LumiNova allow for easy reading, even in low light. The black bidirectional bezel houses a solar compass, while the red inner bezel contains a scale for measuring pulse rates. ₹3.30 lakh.



A Lange & Söhne Datograph Handwerkskunst Edition

The Datograph Handwerkskunst is the eighth model of this special edition and features a yellow-gold case with a diameter of 41.0 millimetres and a height of 13.1 millimetres. Given the extraordinary artisanal work, this masterpiece is limited to only 25 watches worldwide. The manual engraving on the balance cock is the most distinctive design element. This minuscule yet lavishly decorated movement part with its special filigreed vine pattern sets the Datograph Handwerkskunst apart. Unlike a conventional Lange engraving where the pattern is cut into the material, the vine pattern is relief-engraved for this piece. Floral motives have been a long-standing tradition at A. Lange & Söhne. Price on request.



Chopard Happy Sport Metiers D'Art

Chopard celebrates its love of life through an exceptional watch issued in eight-piece limited editions and honouring an animal species well worth preserving: the panda. Equipped with Chopard Calibre 96.23-L with its 65-hour power reserve, crafted from ethical 18-carat rose gold, magnificently hand-decorated and entirely set with sparkling gems, they are the quintessence of all existing codes of excellence in both watchmaking and jewellery. The impression of depth exuded by its dial graced with multi-dimensional marquetry inlays makes it a veritable work of art, a fascinating miniature ecosystem. Price on request.



THERE'S A 'TIME' FOR EVERYTHING!
luxe

As a part of our sixth anniversary special, we have an eclectic collection of watches ranging from tourbillons to affordable ladies' timepieces, and India's first carbon fibre watch modelled on motorsports

Breguet Marine Tourbillon Equation Marchante 5887

A complication as exceptional as this is mesmerising. The Equation Marchante records the difference between local time – the time that punctuates our daily lives – and solar time – the time dictated by the earth's rotation relative to the sun. Featuring a perpetual calendar and a tourbillon, this Marine piece is made in platinum. Acting like a mechanical diary, this complication indicates the date with an anchor-shaped retrograde hand that follows an arc-shaped scale, graduated from 1 to 31, located in the upper part of the dial. The day, month and leap year are displayed in two open windows at 10.30 and 1.30. ₹2.6 crore.



De Bethune DB28xs AéroLite

De Bethune is proud to unveil its latest creation: the DB28xs AéroLite. With its 39 mm diameter, this watch has a deep blue dial, achieved through thermal oxidation and speckled with delicate grey gold flakes, recreating a starry sky of ethereal beauty. Each piece is unique, offering clients the opportunity to customise the constellation engraved on the dial, thus creating an intimate connection between time, space, and the individual. The DB28xs AéroLite, with its miniaturised DB2005 calibre, maintains impeccable chronometric quality while gaining in lightness, thereby improving its resistance to shocks and accelerations. ₹1.01 crore.

Tissot PRX Woman

Building on the history of the original 1978 PRX, Tissot has introduced the new PRX 25mm collection with five new models. Crafted for various occasions, these watches feature finishes from stainless steel to PVD carnation gold, perfect for the fashion-forward woman. The iconic tapered tonneau case remains central, paired with a vibrant colour palette. Three feature captivating sunburst dials in ice blue, black, or nude, with the black and nude options sparkling with diamond hour markers, adding a touch of brilliance. Powered by a reliable quartz movement with an End of Life (EOL) function, it ensures accuracy with minimal upkeep. ₹37,000.



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musical

Shreya Chaudhry, opens up about reprising the role of Tamanna in the second season of *Bandish Bandits*

BANDISH BANDITS, THE popular musical romantic series, returns for its second season. At the heart of this captivating story is Tamanna, the fiercely talented pop sensation, brought to life by Shreya Chaudhry. The actress and model — from Kolkata, is reprising her role as the lead of *Bandish Bandits*. We delve into her character, what viewers can expect in the new season, and more.

How did you get into acting?

I didn't grow up thinking I would become an actor, I was quite academically driven. But from childhood, if there's a core memory, it is being on stage. That's when I felt seen and alive — the seed was sown then. When I was in college, I was asked by a casting associate to audition for an advertisement and I landed the part. That's when I realised this was what I want to do professionally.

How has Tamanna's character evolved?

At the end of season one, she decides to go to music school —

ALL ABOUT THE ART

that decision stems from a sense of maturity. She didn't want to be mediocre or rely on auto-tune, so she decided to go back to basics. She finds an amazing mentor in Nandini, played by Divya Dutta and Tamanna becomes much more empathetic and grows into a true artiste. She's flawed — she still makes mistakes and learns from them — but her arc is marvellous.

How has the series changed your perception of music?

Bandish Bandits season two is all about art and artistes. I've always treated music as a companion throughout my life. I listen to music to focus or calm myself down. After working on the series, my connection with music has deepened.

What did you learn from being a part of this series?

As Tamanna went to music school, so did Shreya. I had to familiarise myself with technical knowledge to play the part more con-

vincingly. I can now visually imagine the structure of a song — the graphs, the layers, the distinction between melody and chorus and so on. I also took keyboard lessons because, in season two, whenever you see a character playing an instrument, we're playing the correct notes of the song. I even had to sing a semi-operatic song, which required a different kind of training compared to what you'd need for a pop song.

What can we expect from the new season?

One of the highlights for me in season two is the introduction of newer genres. People have loved and embraced *Shastriya Sangeet* and many have told us they started listening to it because of the show. This time, we've introduced genres like semi-operatic songs, rock versions and hardcore pop, which adds a beautiful diversity to the music. There's a *jugalbandi* scene between Tamanna and Radhe where they're not just lip-syncing or competing against each other. There are so many unsaid emotions conveyed through that scene while they're performing.

Bandish Bandits Season 2 is streaming on Amazon Prime Video.

—Srushti Kulkarni

@srushti @newindian

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Shreya Chaudhry

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Documentary: Avicii - I'm Tim

This documentary delves into the life of Swedish DJ and producer Tim Bergling, known globally as Avicii. The film offers an intimate portrayal of Tim's journey from a reserved Swedish youth to an international music star. Utilising home videos, private archives and interviews with family, friends and collaborators – including Chris Martin and Aloe Blacc – the documentary provides a comprehensive look at his personal and professional life. December 31. On Netflix.



Drama: Sorgavaasal

This upcoming prison drama film is inspired by the infamous 1999 Madras Central Prison riots. Parthiban is wrongfully imprisoned for the murder of an IAS officer. Inside the corrupt prison system, he encounters notorious gangster Sigamani and his aide, Tiger Mani. The narrative delves into systemic corruption, personal redemption and the complexities of prison life. This culminates in a violent uprising that challenges the foundations of the penal system. Language: Tamil. December 27. On Netflix.



Thriller: Khoj: Parchaiyon Ke Uss Paar

The series centres on Ved, who embarks on a desperate quest to find his missing wife. As Ved delves deeper into the search, he encounters bizarre events and cryptic clues that blur the line between reality and illusion, leading him to question his own sanity and the true identity of his wife. Language: Hindi. December 27. On Zee5.



Drama: Doctors

Set in Mumbai's Elizabeth Blackwell Medical Centre, the series follows Dr Nitya Vasu, a surgical resident who harbours a personal vendetta against Dr Ishaan Ahuja, believing he is responsible for her brother's disability. As Nitya works with Ishaan, she begins to question her initial perceptions, leading to a complex relationship that evolves from animosity to attraction. Language: Hindi. December 27. On JioCinema.



Comedy: Reunion

A group of high school friends gather for their 20th reunion, only to find themselves entangled in a mystery when an obnoxious former classmate is murdered. They must navigate their past grievances and work together to uncover the killer. January 1. On Netflix.

Sports: Manchester United vs Newcastle United

Manchester United's last match of 2024 takes place this weekend when they welcome Newcastle United in the Premier League. The last time these two sides met was in May this year, where the Red Devils beat Newcastle 3-2. They will be hoping for a similar result this time as well. December 31, 1.30 am. On Disney+ Hotstar.



Thriller: Missing You

Based on Harlan Coben's novel by the same name, the series follows detective inspector Kat Donovan (Rosaling Eleazar), a specialist in missing persons cases. Kat's life takes a dramatic turn when she discovers her fiancé, who vanished eleven years earlier, active on a dating app. This unexpected revelation compels her to revisit aspects of her past, including the mysterious circumstances surrounding her father's murder. January 1. On Netflix.





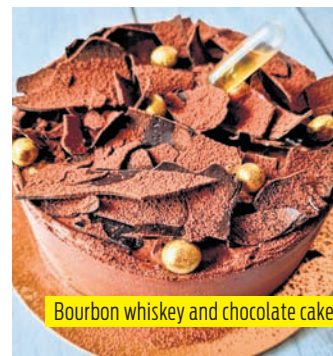
Nolen gur cake



Baileys and Chocolate cake



Engagement cake



Bourbon whiskey and chocolate cake



Assorted mini brownie box

MIMI'S BAKERY: CRAFTING SWEET MEMORIES



Upsana

MIMI'S BAKERY HAS become a beloved name among Kolkatans with a sweet tooth and a love for fine delicacies. Since its inception in 2020, Mimi's Bakery has been offering a perfect blend of innovative, curated, and delectable handmade cakes. Born from the founder's passion, mission, and a touch of "Covid boredom," what began as a small venture on a 10-seater dining table has now grown into a fully equipped cake studio. Despite this growth, the heart of Mimi's Bakery remains unchanged – the founder's unwavering dedication, care, and creativity in every cake.

Mimi's Bakery specialises in alcohol-based cakes, such as gin and tonic, Baileys, and whiskey-infused varieties. The bakery also offers signature flavours like the winter-favourite *Nolen Gur* cake, along with a variety of desserts, macarons, brownies, and custom-made cakes for all occasions. Every creation is made with utmost attention to hygiene and quality, ensuring that every slice is crafted with love and precision. Whether for a celebration or a special treat, Mimi's Bakery continues to delight with its innovative and mouthwatering creations.

Instagram: @mimis_bakery29



Buttercream art cake



Custom made birthday cake



Belgian chocolate cake



Gin and tonic cake



Bengal Ink Tattoo Studio: Crafting Stories in Ink

TATTOOS HAVE LONG been more than just body art; they are stories etched into skin, symbols of personal experiences, memories, and self-expression. Bengal Ink Tattoo Studio, located near Rabindra Sarobar metro, is a place where these stories come to life. Founded by two passionate artists, Soumen Rik Das and Ashis Das, the studio has become a trusted destination for tattoo lovers seeking unique, high-quality tattoos that speak to their identity.

Soumen, known for his black and grey tattoos, brings a blend of skill and creativity to every piece. His specialty lies in realistic tattoos, where every line, shade, and detail is carefully crafted to mirror the intricacies of life. Soumen's approach goes beyond just creating tattoos—he is committed to transforming his client's ideas and emotions into meaningful, permanent artwork.

On the other hand, Ashis has built a reputation for his soft shading and fine line work. His custom designs range from portraits to geometric patterns, religious themes, and even horror. Ashis's attention to detail ensures that each tattoo is not just a design, but a timeless expression of the wearer's story.

At Bengal Ink, every client is treated with the utmost care, as the artists collaborate with them to ensure that the final piece is not only visually striking but also deeply personal. The studio uses premium equipment, ensuring the highest standards of hygiene and safety.

If you're looking for a tattoo that tells your unique story, Bengal Ink is where your journey begins.

For more details:
Instagram: @bengalinktattoo
Facebook: @bengalinktattoo
Contact number: 9330920072



Ashis Das



Soumen Rik Das



Garmin Fenix 8 Series

Garmin's Fenix 8 Series offers cutting-edge features to enhance performance, training, and tracking. Key features include AMOLED displays and solar-charging ones with battery life ranging from 29 days to 48 days. Metrics measured include endurance scores, VO2 max, hill scores, and training status. The designs are rugged with Military-grade durability, whereas the materials used include titanium bezels and sapphire lenses. Fenix 8 series also offers top-notch navigation, dive capabilities, a Messenger app, built-in speaker and Mic as well as LED flashlight. garmin-india.com

₹86,990

Polar 360

Polar 360 is a compact, flexible wearable device that puts Polar's technology in your wrist. The 360 is more of a scalable wellness solution than a mere smartwatch and helps increase an individual's well-being's via tailored solutions (B2B). Polar 360 is fully customisable to measure metrics and solutions. Polar 360 can measure data from activity, sleep, and heart rate, as well as skin temperature, to provide analysis and solutions whether you're an individual or part of a larger corporate group. Go to polar.com to see how you can integrate the 360 into your life.



GADGET BOY

Is there a shiny new gadget you'd like to tell us about? Mail ashokpandian@gmail.com

Osteoboost

Osteoboost is an incredibly useful treatment device used specifically for a condition called osteopenia (low-bone density). The FDA-cleared device provides targeted mechanical stimulation, which is clinically-proven to significantly reduce the loss of vertebral bone density and strength. Osteoboost aims to help reduce the incidence of fractures through proactive therapy during the osteopenia stage itself. Do check with your physician/doctor for further details. osteoblast.com



₹85,000

XREAL One

The one from XREAL is an AR glass equipped with a self-developed spatial computing chip. These AR glasses allow you to incorporate your spectacle prescription (if any) and are way more comfortable to wear than current AR specs in the market. Features include a Spatial screen up to 147" with 50° FOV, 5000 nits of brightness, 120Hz refresh rate, XREAL sound tuned by Bose, and XREAL's own X1 Chip. shop.xreal.com



₹42,450

Ashok Pandian
@ashokpandian

Gadget Review



₹14,999

Poco M7 Pro 5G

Poco's new M7 Pro 5G is a fantastic device at its price point in its segment and offers incredible value for users. I've used it extensively over the last three weeks and find it to be a worthy smartphone. First off, the M7 Pro 5G has a bright and clear AMOLED display (6.67" screen) with a 120Hz adaptive refresh rate and 2,100 nits peak brightness - translating to vivid visuals and stunning clarity. You also get a brilliant camera (Sony's 50 MP LYT-600 with OIS and f/1.5 aperture delivering great photos in most lighting conditions). Other features include Dolby Atmos dual stereo speakers for good sound and Mediatek's dimensity 7025 Ultra chipset for peak performance. The phone also has a 5110mAh battery (45W charging speeds), which easily lasts me the entire day, and safe Corning Gorilla Glass for robust protection during falls and nicks. flipkart.com



₹16,999

ASICS TMM 2025 Gel-Kayano 31 LE

These incredible new limited-edition Asics' running shoes, specially created for the Tata Mumbai Marathon (20th edition), have a unique design inspired by "The Queen's Necklace" of Mumbai i.e Marine Drive lit up at night. This shining jewel merges with Mumbai's iconic urban skyline, providing a defining image depicting life in Mumbai. I've been using these for almost a week now, and they look incredible in the "Illuminate Mint/Summer dune" colour variant only available in this series. As far as comfort, these Kayano 31s are the best in my opinion when it comes to stability and balance while running for longer distances. Proprietary Asics tech such as an updated ASICSGRIP material on the outsole, an engineered mesh upper, lightweight and energetic cushioning, help provide adaptive stability and grip whenever I run. and feel super cool as well! Do try a pair on at the ASICS retail stores! asics.co.in



₹50,999

Sonos Era 300

Let me put it this way: the Sonos Era 300 is easily the best speaker I've heard all year, and this includes content not limited to music but also OTT, audiobooks, and even binaural beats. The Era 300 does take about 10-15 mins to connect to Wi-fi and Bluetooth and your smartphone/devices, but once it does, its all joy going forward. Era 300 supports spatial audio (Dolby Atmos), thanks to six optimally positioned speakers providing an immersive, real feel to sound, which is rare to experience from a singular unit. Once connected, I was easily able to stream from my Spotify, Apple Music; I also tried out Netflix and Prime Video via my paired iPad and played a few mobile games on my Android phone. Listening to Zakir Hussain's *Ektaal* in my room, I couldn't agree more! Sonos.com

MONOJIT BHATTACHARYA: CRAFTING TIMELESS WEDDING MEMORIES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY



MONOJIT BHATTACHARYA IS a renowned wedding photographer based in Kolkata, India, with over a decade of experience in capturing the essence of love and celebration through his lens. Since 2012, he has been offering his photography services for weddings, pre-wedding shoots, and other special occasions, both in India and globally. His style blends candid moments with traditional photography, creating a beautiful narrative of every couple's special day.

Known for his fun yet professional approach, Monojit is dedicated to capturing every significant moment with precision, emotion, and artistry. Whether it's a destination wedding or a more intimate event, he and his team focus on delivering images that celebrate the couple's journey, making them feel special while also giving their friends and family something to cherish. His work is known for being vibrant, colourful, and filled with energy, yet deeply honest and touching, reflecting the true emotions of the day.

Monojit's photography is not lim-

ited to weddings alone; he also offers maternity shoots, fashion and portfolio photography, and product photography, showcasing his versatility as an artist. With his expertise, he has worked on a wide range of projects, from intimate backyard weddings to grand celebrations with over a thousand guests. His goal is to create timeless memories for clients, offering a collection of about 500 edited images in a short time after the event, ensuring a quick and efficient delivery process.

As an avid traveller, Monojit finds inspiration in the landscapes and people he encounters on his journeys, which fuels his creativity. His passion for photography began with street photography and painting, and over the years, he has refined his craft, blending colours, textures, and emotions into stunning visual stories. His transition from the corporate world to full-time photography was driven by a deep desire to pursue his creative passion, and he now pours his heart and soul into every wedding he photographs.

Monojit Bhattacharya and his

team are committed to delivering exceptional service, ensuring that each couple's unique personality and style are beautifully reflected in their wedding photographs. With a focus on both candid and traditional photography, videography, bridal portraits, and themed shoots, he offers a wide range of services to meet the diverse needs of his clients. His work is marked by its attention to detail and its ability to capture the fleeting moments that make weddings so memorable.

For those looking for a photographer who combines creativity, professionalism, and a personal touch, Monojit Bhattacharya is the ideal choice. He is available for projects across India and globally, offering a seamless experience that ensures each couple's special day is preserved with exceptional photographs and videos.

You can message him at [contact@bmonojit80@gmail.com](mailto:bmonojit80@gmail.com) or WhatsApp on +91 9874756870 for further information.



Monojit Bhattacharya



Expected launch:
April 2025.
Expected price:
₹65 lakh.

Ford Endeavour

Ford is once again looking to enter the Indian market with its very successful Endeavour, though this time it aims to initially come in the CBU way and later go into CKD. The exteriors now have a 50 mm wider track and longer wheelbase that helps deliver a more controlled ride, both on and off-road. The Endeavour will be available with the 2.0-litre diesel mated to an efficient 10-speed automatic transmission. Adding to a sense of spaciousness amplified by the full-width instrument panel and centre console, the SUV offers an array of amenities that make for a comfortable and convenient drive such as integrated wireless charging and an electric parking brake. Both the second and third-row seats have also been designed to fold flat to allow for long loads to be carried safely.



Expected launch:
April 2025.
Expected price:
₹1.1 crore

Audi Q6 e-tron

In the mad dash to go electric by all mainstream manufacturers, Audi India is also gearing up to launch its Q6 Sportback e-tron. The Q6 Sportback e-tron features the familiar strengths of the Premium Platform Electric (PPE) in terms of performance, range, efficiency and charging, which is yet another example of the scalability of the PPE. Sporty and expressive, the electric SUV features a 511-litre luggage compartment and a 64-litre frunk. The long wheelbase of 2,899mm makes for ample room in the interior, even in the rear. Thanks to its aerodynamic design with a CD value of 0.28 and a large 100kWh battery, the Q6 has a range of over 600 kilometres.



Expected launch:
January 2025.
Expected price:
₹25 lakh

Maruti eVitara

Maruti Suzuki recently unveiled its first mass-production battery electric vehicle (BEV) model, the e-vitara. Production will commence in Gujarat in March 2025, with deliveries expected to begin in May. The design is characterised by large-diameter tyres and a long wheelbase, while the interior incorporates an integrated display with advanced equipment, tough-looking panels and a centre console. Allgrip-e is an electric 4 WD system that utilises Suzuki's expertise in four-wheel drive technology, featuring two independent eAxes at the front and rear. The battery is a 60 kWh unit with a claimed range of 550 kilometres.

MG Cyberster

Inspired by the legendary MG B Roadster from the 1960s, the MG Cyberster (EV) combines classic roadster charm with futuristic design and cutting-edge technology. With butterfly doors, a sleek design and exciting performance, it offers the perfect fusion of timeless style and modern innovation for those who crave both power and control. Available in both single and dual-motor configurations, the Cyberster delivers exceptional performance, with the dual-motor Cyberster GT boasting an impressive 503 horses and 725 Nm of torque. The all-wheel-drive GT accelerates from 0-100 km/h in just 3.2 seconds, making it MG's fastest production car to date. The 77kWh battery delivers up to 450 kilometres of range, with rapid charging up to 150 kW enabling a charge of 10-80 per cent to be delivered in only 38 minutes.



Expected launch:
January 2025.
Expected Price:
₹60 lakh (ex-showroom)

KEYS TO A BETTER FUTURE eco-conscious

The year 2025 will be exciting as far as new car introductions go. As expected, most of the launches in the luxury segment will be electric, with some mainstream manufacturers also going big on BEVs (Battery Electric vehicles). We bring you a selection of some of the more interesting vehicles to come and with the *Bharat Mobility Show* just around the corner, manufacturers are gearing up to throw in some googlies...

Mercedes-Benz Electric G-Class

The all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ technology is fully in keeping with the tradition of the model series established in 1979. Like the conventionally powered models, it is based on a ladder-frame chassis, a selectable low-range off-road gear reduction system, independent front suspension and a rigid axle at the rear. The 116 kWh high-voltage lithium-ion battery enables ranges of up to 473 kilometres according to WLTP1. It is housed in a torsion-resistant casing to protect it from water and dirt. Underbody protection made from an intelligent mix of materials, including carbon protects the battery from physical impact. It is powered by four individually controlled motors located near the wheels. They are integrated into the ladder frame and develop a maximum total output of 580 bhp and a maximum torque of 1,164 Nm.



Expected Launch:
March 2025.
Expected Price:
₹3 crore.

Skoda Kylaq

The Škoda Kylaq combines compact dimensions with a spacious interior and excellent handling characteristics, making it ideal for both city trips and off-road adventures. It measures 3,995 mm in length, 1,783 mm in width and 1,619 mm in height, with a wheelbase of 2,566 mm and a ground clearance of 189 mm. Under the hood, the Kylaq is equipped with a 1.0 TSI engine that delivers 114 bhp and 178 Nm of torque to the front wheels. Buyers have the option of a six-speed manual or automatic transmission. The vehicle can reach a top speed of 188 km/h and accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 10.5 seconds.



Expected launch:
January 2025.
Price: ₹7.89 lakh onwards.

Volkswagen ID.7

Volkswagen India is soon going to introduce their flagship electric vehicle in India, the ID.7. A wheelbase of 2,971 mm with an overall length of 4,961 mm that indicates that the ID.7 offers superior space for five people. LED matrix headlights and Park Assist Pro with memory function are standard, so the vehicle 'remembers' your parking spaces. You also get seats with ventilation and massage features, as well as a huge panoramic sunroof with smart glass. The electric drive motor comes with a maximum output of 280 bhp and a maximum torque of 545 Nm. It accelerates the saloon from 0 to 100 km/h in just 6.6 seconds onto an electrically limited top speed of 185 km/h.



Expected launch:
January 2025.
Expected Price:
₹75 lakh.

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THE JOURNEY OF BLACK HIVE STUDIO: A LEGACY OF ART AND PASSION

ONCE KNOWN AS Rites of Passage, Black Hive Studio is a name that echoes through the tattoo community in Kolkata. For the past 14 years, it has been a symbol of artistry, dedication, and excellence, becoming one of the oldest and most respected tattoo studios in the city. But the story of Black Hive didn't begin with fame—it began with a vision and a dream of creating something truly exceptional.

At the heart of Black Hive Studio's journey is Kabir Ray, a talented artist whose work transcends borders. With over 16 years of experience and exposure to international tattoo conventions, Kabir's passion for the craft led him to transform Kolkata's tattoo scene. His expertise spans conceptual tattoos, hyper-realism, dot work, portrait tattoos, and illustrative designs. Kabir's unique style and dedication quickly earned him a reputation as Kolkata's most sought-after tattoo artist. His influence continues to shape the city's tattoo culture, inspiring countless others. Today, his artistry defines the essence of Black Hive Studio.

Black Hive's reputation grew steadily, earning the studio numerous prestigious awards over the years, such as the *Kolkata International Tattoo Convention (2014)*, *Vietnam Tattoo Convention (2014)*, *Panama Ink Fest (2015)*, *Kula worldwide 2023-2024*, *Pune Tattoo festival 2024*, and *Neon Tattoo Festival (2020)*. These accolades, among others, solidified Black Hive's place in the global tattoo community.

But Kabir wasn't content with just being a top artist; he wanted to share his knowledge, to pass on the legacy of his craft. And so, the Black Hive Tattoo Apprenticeship Programme was born. With a commitment to fostering the next generation of tattoo art-

ists, the studio offers a comprehensive training program that spans from basic to advanced courses. Many of Black Hive's students have gone on to win awards at tattoo conventions across India, a testament to the quality of education they receive.

In addition to tattooing and training, Black Hive is also known for its involvement in the world of tattoo equipment. They work with top brands like Bishop, MD Wipes, Inkeeze, and Sullen, ensuring that every tattoo is done with the highest quality materials. The studio's influence also extends to the realm of wall painting and graffiti, adding yet another creative layer to its artistic portfolio.

Black Hive also organises seminars with artists like Sunny Bhanushali, Sameer Patange, Bimal Rai and many international artists dmitry urban (Russian).

Behind the scenes, Kabir is supported by a talented team of artists, including Raju, Vishal, Sayan, Manjul, and Priti each of whom bring their own unique flair to the studio. Together, they create an environment where art and passion thrive.

Today, Black Hive stands as the largest tattoo studio in Kolkata, a place where every tattoo tells a story. From the very first needle to the final design, Black Hive ensures that every experience is safe, clean, and inspiring. It's not just about getting a tattoo—it's about creating a piece of art that speaks of who you are.

And so, the journey continues.

Locate them at

**- BF-198, Salt Lake, Sector 1, Kolkata, West Bengal-700064
 Tel number: 033-40050601**

**- Shop No. B115, City Centre 2, Rajarhat, Kolkata, India-700156
 Tel number: 033-46022837**



Honda Gold Wing Tour

Honda's iconic Gold Wing Tour boasts an energetic frontal signature, nuanced aerodynamic detailing and trademark fairing. It features a fully LED lighting system, a feature-rich cockpit with a 7.0-inch full-colour TFT display that supports Android Auto and Apple CarPlay and provides riding, navigation and audio information. There is an extended electric screen for excellent wind protection, Bluetooth connectivity with two USB type-C sockets, a Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), airbag and a host of other equipment. At the heart of the Honda Gold Wing Tour lies a massive 1,833 cc, liquid-cooled, 4 stroke, 24 valve, flat six-cylinder engine that churns out 125 bhp power and 170 Nm of peak torque. The engine is paired with a 7-speed Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT). It also features a convenient creep forward and back function for convenient low-speed manoeuvrability. ₹39.2 lakh.



BMW K 1600 B

The design of the new BMW K 1600 B embraces the passion for relaxed, luxurious travel on two wheels. The striking rear section with LED indicators and brake lights integrated into the cases defines the style. The new BMW K 1600 B fitted with footboards, allows the rider to adopt a convenient 'feet forward' posture. Supreme drive power makes travelling long distances on the new BMW K 1600 B a relaxing pleasure. The distinctive BMW Motorrad 6-cylinder in-line engine delivers 160 hp at 7750 rpm and maximum torque of 175 Nm at 5250 rpm. ₹29.9 lakh.

Harley Davidson Road Glide

An updated Milwaukee-Eight® 117 V-Twin engine features a new cooling system which further optimises thermal comfort for the rider and enhanced intake and exhaust flow to boost performance. Selectable ride modes — road, sport, rain and custom — electronically control the performance of the motorcycle. Infotainment is presented on a 12.3-inch TFT colour touchscreen that replaces all analogue instrumentation and most switches. A new 200-watt audio amplifier powers a pair of fairing-mounted speakers. Improved aerodynamics enhance rider comfort and reduce subjective helmet buffeting at highway speed by an average of 60 per cent. Rear suspension travel is increased to 3-inches. A redesigned one-piece seat shape and padding materials offer a significant improvement in long-range comfort for most riders. ₹41.79 lakh.



Royal Enfield Super Meteor 650

The Super Meteor 650 is centred around the acclaimed 648 cc twin platform. A quintessential cruiser, the Super Meteor 650 combines uncluttered controls and instrumentation with relaxed rider ergonomics; rock-steady stability on highways with pure riding pleasure even on the most winding roads where it is keenly responsive to steering inputs. The frame and swingarm are entirely new and meet the design brief of a motorcycle with a low centre of gravity for high-speed stability and easy manoeuvrability that is confidence-inspiring for all levels of riders. Fabricated in steel with optimised forgings, investment castings, pressings and extrusions, the chassis incorporates a new cylinder head mount for additional stiffness. Royal Enfield's first USD forks, with a 120 mm stroke, and premium rear shocks with 5-step preload and 101 mm travel, perfectly complement the new frame, ensuring the Super Meteor is stable and rewarding to ride on highways and precise and engaging through the curves without being heavy to steer. ₹3.64 lakh onwards, ex-showroom.



350 Jawa 42 FJ

Jawa Yezi Motorcycles recently launched the all-new 350 Jawa 42 FJ. Its standout feature is the anodised, brushed aluminium fuel tank cladding - a segment first. This finish enhances the bike's appeal and allows for personalisation through various colour options and Jawa branding choices. Complementing the tank cladding are the aluminium headlamp holder and grab handles, along with aluminium footpegs. An off-set fuel cap adds a unique touch to the tank design. The wide, flat seat with premium stitching ensures rider comfort while maintaining style. Modern features include an upswept exhaust, delivering the signature Jawa sound, and an all-LED lighting package. A digital instrument cluster and USB charging port round off the rider-focused elements, blending traditional aesthetics with current technology. ₹1.99 lakh, ex-showroom.



Triumph Rocket 3 Storm

Featuring the world's largest production motorcycle engine with a capacity of 2,458 cc, the new Rocket 3 Storm gains 15 bhp peak power, now delivering a massive 178 bhp at 7,000 rpm. Torque has also been increased by 4 Nm, reaching a new peak of 225 Nm at a low 4,000 rpm. This flat, rich torque curve with maximum torque through the mid-range gives explosive acceleration and effortless response in any gear. The Rocket's 16-inch rear and 17-inch front wheels have been updated with a sportier ten-spoke cast aluminium design, reducing unsprung mass. The strong and lightweight aluminium frame, first introduced in 2019, uses cast and forged elements for an exceptional torque-to-weight ratio. ₹21.9 lakh.



Indian Roadmaster Elite

Powered by the Thunderstroke 116 engine, the bike pairs modern touring amenities with iconic Indian Motorcycle styling. The 19-inch precision machined wheel under the balanced front fender adds to this look, while still maintaining a classic aesthetic. An upgraded 600-watt PowerBand Audio Plus system means riders will be heard. The seven-inch, glove-compatible touchscreen features turn-by-turn navigation, customisable rider information screens, Bluetooth compatibility, and pairs with the Indian Motorcycle Ride Command mobile app for remote accessibility to key vehicle information. You also get tank-mounted analogue fuel and volt meters, rear cylinder deactivation and full Pathfinder LED lighting with driving lights. ₹71.8 lakh.



gear shift WE'RE GOIN' ROAD TRIPPIN'!

The image of a cruiser was always that of a slow bike, but this new generation of cruiser motorcycles are very quick, and have the equipment to boot. Whether pottering around town or cruisin' on the highway, these 7 big bikes ensure smiles with every mile. The range is in no particular order and all prices are ex-showroom...

—Ranojoy Mukerji

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Balakhana House



Interiors

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to end 2024 on a peaceful note or kick off the New Year with a refreshing break, consider Balakhana House, in the Maheshganj Estate, a heritage homestay tucked away in the serene town of Nabadwip, Nadia. Far from the madding crowd, this charming escape lets you trade city chaos for comforting sounds of chirping birds, temple bells, and the river Ganga flowing by. Housed in a restored 18th-century indigo planter's bungalow, Balakhana House is not just a place to stay—it's an experience steeped in heritage, where every corner whispers stories of a bygone era. Add that to the simple joys of rural Bengal, like exploring the lush countryside, enjoying authentic Bengali meals, and taking tranquil boat rides, and you've got yourself the perfect year-end retreat. Whether you're yearning for solitude or quality time with loved ones, Balakhana is where you can slow down, reflect, and start the new year on a calmer, and more mindful note.

Balakhana is accessible by road and rail. If you're driving from Kolkata, you can take the preferred Kona Expressway/Dankuni route. Roads are in good condition, barring minor patches. Trains like the Hazarduari and Bhagirathi Express connect Kolkata to Krishnanagar, followed by a short drive to Balakhana.

Balakhana House combines old-world charm with modern comforts. The villa's French-Italian architecture, colonial furniture, and preserved indigo blocks evoke its indigo heritage. Two indigo plants still stand on the estate, a treat for history enthusiasts. Guests can savour the



Exteriors

rhythm of rural life amid orchards, farmlands, and tamarind-shaded gardens teeming with langurs. This heritage estate, lovingly restored and now managed by the affable Ronodhir Palchoudhuri, has everything you'd expect from a self-sufficient heritage homestay. The fruits and vegetables you'll get to enjoy at the table are freshly harvested from the Maheshganj Estate, and the milk and dairy products come straight from their supply, making every meal an authentic farm-to-table delight.

A visit to Balakhana isn't just about basking in its tranquil ambience—it's also about exploring the beautiful countryside. Nabadwip and Mayapur brim with Vaishnavite traditions, tracing back to the 15th century and the time of Sri Chaitanya, making them key pil-

grimage hubs. The nearby towns of Krishnagar add a touch of artistry to your trip with their exquisite clay-craft and fine sweetmeats, a feast for both eyes and taste buds. Wander through these towns to feel the pulse of Bengal's cultural heritage while soaking in their charm.

Before you leave, don't miss a stroll along the picturesque Jalangi River, a tributary of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly, which winds its way north of Balakhana. The river, much like the homestay, will show you the timeless beauty of Bengal's countryside. Balakhana House offers the perfect setting to slow down, savour the moment, and embrace the simple joys of life.

— Atrejee Poddar

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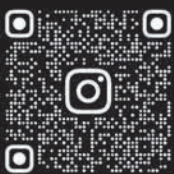


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