

The CHC Journal



Watercolor painting by William Prinsep (1794-1874), c1840

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Point of View

Calcutta Cinema Halls and Us

Calcutta Heritage Collective has an important role to play vis à vis heritage in terms of spreading awareness and even direct intervention for preservation. The post-independence and post-colonial period in Calcutta/Kolkata is witness to many grand buildings being torn down to accommodate buildings which fit into new visions of space, economics, commerce and utility. The Senate House of the University of Calcutta built in 1872 and demolished in 1960, is one such

notable example. We cannot turn our eyes away from the inevitable march of history and its inevitable reordering of civic realities and its creation of new civic values.

In the Western world however, commitment to the preservation of heritage buildings is part of public policy. Hence if one visits Vienna or Prague one has a sense of their continuous history, inscribed in the history of their buildings and evolving architectural narratives.

Within the context of this argument, I would like to draw attention to the many cinema halls of the Dharmatollah area whose dereliction is part of the tragic demise of a popular nineteenth and twentieth century bhadralok practice in Bengal of visiting theatre and cinema halls. The names of Elite, Minerva, Globe, Lighthouse and New Empire ring through my mind like so many sonorous bells. Many happy and fulfilled moments of my childhood and teenage years are tied to these magnificent cinema halls. We all know that The Lighthouse is now a Mall, a fact causing sadness as I pass by it every day.

Sad stories also cluster around the cinema halls of the Bhowanipore area, among which I am also including Priya, Bijoli, Indira and Basushree are barely able to stand on their feet. Sreemati Mukherjee Professor, Presidency University

- Sreemati Mukherjee, Professor, Presidency University. Recently published a book “The many dialogues of the Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita”

Members are welcome to contribute for any of the journal sections. We would love to publish your articles/notes. Please message Vibha Mitra at **+919830933434** or send an email to vibhamitra@gmail.com

The Bengal Story

The year was 1757 just after the Battle of Plassey. Raja Naba Krishna Deb decided to celebrate Robert Clive's victory by having a grand Durga Puja celebration. The autumn months, post monsoon, Rama praying to Shakti for victory against Ravana (akala bodhan, Durga is normally prayed to during spring, hence untimely awakening). The slaying of the demon Mahishasura and Ma with her children joining in the pomp and pageantry - till date, a scale unmatched anywhere in the world. It was the beginning of a cult, the beginning of a ten day celebration almost irreverent in its opulence and feasting. The priest chants mantras and one is steeped in the religiosity of the ten days. The opulence of the zamindars and the elite families all vying for attention. Read More at <https://vibhamitra.com/bonedi-baari-puja/>



Durga and Mahishasura, c1860
Kalighat Pata, Calcutta (Kolkata)

Conservation Trivia

Buildings with architectural significance and historical values are considered for their preservation and conservation. For this purpose an inventory of such buildings upon which the heritage status has been conferred is drawn up by the expert committee formed by the Government of West Bengal. The Corporation with the recommendation of the Heritage Conservation Committee has prepared a Graded List of Heritage Buildings for Grade-I, Grade-IIA & Grade-IIB Buildings

Grade	Sub-Grade	Permissible intervention of the heritage premises
I		No external change will be permissible. Use of the building should also be compatible with the category of the heritage building
II	A	Same as Grade-I for the heritage building. But new construction may be allowed in the open land within the premises in compatible manner with the heritage building. In no case new construction should obstruct the view of the heritage building.
	B	Horizontal and vertical addition and alteration of the building may be allowed in compatible with the heritage building
III		A plaque depicting the history of the building should be provided. Where the structure is having no architectural importance, demolition of the structure may be allowed.

Note :- The HCC would be the final arbiter of the case-to-case examination of the compatibility issue.

<https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/HeritageBuildingHome.jsp>

Down Memory Lane

Our heritage is an intrinsic part of us, it simmers and bubbles at the very core of our being. Places where our ancestors lived and worked, the food they ate, the objects they used — these are all very much an essential part of what we are made up of.

I think often of my paternal grandfather's journey. He was born into an ordinary middle-class family in Comilla, East Bengal. Because he was a good student, he was singled out as a prospective groom for their daughter by one of the most prominent families of Bengal, and then went to England to complete his Medical studies. He joined the British Indian Army during WW1 as a Medical Officer and went to Mesopotamia, coming back with carpets and rugs (as he'd become quite the 'saheb') instead of gold, much to my grandmother's disappointment. He settled down eventually in Patna and was given the title of Rai bahadur by the colonial government — a title he never used and a document he hid at the back of his cupboard.

When I was young I spent many sunlit days in the house he built. I remember being fascinated by the beautiful old furniture he had collected over the years to fill his home, and that fascination has stayed with me ever since. I hold on to our heritage through old furniture and through the stories they tell.

~Kasturi Khaitan

Heritage in the News

The Kolkata Partition Museum becomes a reality [KOLKATA PARTITION MUSEUM](http://kolkata-partition-museum.org)
(kolkata-partition-museum.org)

The first woman surgeon, Kadambini Ganguly's house to be protected. [Kolkata: Heritage panel to protect Kadambini Ganguly house | Kolkata News - Times of India](http://indiatimes.com)
(indiatimes.com)

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/world/tagore-london-house-for-sale/cid/1831412>



Photo: Dr. U.M. Gupta
of Patna (photograph
from family collection)

Know your CHC Members



Navpreet Arora, describes herself as a third generation "abangali", helplessly in love with her city. After working in

the Mutual Fund industry for 16 years. she took a leap of faith in 2016 and embarked on a venture to transform her undying love for Kolkata into an endeavour to show people the beautiful heritage, the myriad colours and flavours of the City of Joy. Through her walks, she likes to bring out the magical enigma of Calcutta in its multi faceted glories - the Land of the Babus, the Birthplace of Reformers, the Brewery of Nationalism. Navpreet weaves an "insider" narrative to Kolkata or Calcutta with its fascinating time warped decadence and peeling opulence of the bygone era, beautifully co-existing with the modern, fast-paced whirlwind existence of today.



Sandip Nowlakha is an entrepreneur who has studied Hotel Management in Switzerland and his experience spans across

diverse sectors, that include food processing, coffee plantations, fast food cafes and hospitality. A global consultant for the vegetarian food services sector and the author of Nowlakha Restaurant Management Manual, he is also an investor and advisor in the real estate business. He espouses many causes which include vocational and skill development training programs, Ayurvedic Medicines, Art of Living Foundation since 1987, programs to promote spiritual growth and environmental awareness. He has established the Murshidabad Heritage Development Society for the resurgence of Murshidabad.

Did you know? Malkhanas are rooms inside police stations where seized articles are stored to preserve them. Majority of these malkhanas have a manual register where an officer in charge - referred to as the "Malkhana Babu" makes the entries. The malkhanas in 79 city police stations contain seized articles, some of which are over half-a-century old. Several police stations like Burrabazar and Posta have a large quantity of demonetised notes and gold jewellery that need to be preserved, said an officer in Lalbazar. Similarly, many police stations have 20-30-year-old arms that can be disposed of following a uniform rule. Some items on record are 1974, Alipore- Rs 2,059.74 seized in a theft case; 1982, Gariahat - a gold chain seized in connection with a cheating case; 1994, Amherst Street -Rs 12 left unclaimed after a road accident. As part of a project announced by Calcutta police commissioner Soumen Mitra, renovations have started and the Calcutta police get a chance to restore and preserve the old and important seized items of the past few decades. Interesting objects and stories are sure to emerge and are looked forward to.

Congratulations



The prestigious Award was given at the annual event of Fulcrum Awards which recognized work relating to communications and advertising in different categories. This year the Awards Ceremony was held online. **CHC member Rajiv Soni** was honoured and joined the ranks of the Late Irfan Khan (2016); Mr. Sanjiv Kataria (2017); Mr. Roger Periera (2018); Dr Pragya Ram (2019) and Dr Shravan Dang (2020). The Fulcrum Awards is the only awards system which ensures the separation of jury, sponsors and participants and are the only awards in India that have been collaborating with an independent process reviewer for due diligence. The nominations for Lifetime Achievement Award are sent by the 20 member Jury and later, as a collective decision, they choose the Lifetime winner. The name they suggest has to match the following criteria: Has more than three decades of work experience in the field of communications/Has been an ambassador for the communications business, especially in India/Has introduced best/innovative practices/Has been a mentor and developed future leaders/Preferably someone who has retired from active service. Rajiv's journey began in 1975 and covered free-lance journalism, photography, banking, advertising, public relations, marketing communications and corporate branding. He continues as a Mentor, Brand Engineer, Author and Researcher. **Well deserved Rajiv. We celebrate this with you!**

The CHC Connect

CHC with MCC and WBHC presented a symposium “Conservation of Built Heritage, A Way Forward”

CHC was very ably represented by **Mukul Agarwal** and **Munish Jhajharia** at this panel discussion on conservation. Many issues were covered, the focus being the TDR Law possibilities, and Grading of Buildings as per the International norms introduced by UNESCO. Also stressed was the need to raise awareness not only for all people regarding the value of our legacy but also for owners of such homes, to inform them of ways to maintain integrity of the heritage status of the building. To provide them a forum to share business or resale opportunities. Tourism suffers in comparison to other places even in India as entry is restricted to most sites, infrastructure is poor. Most importantly Zoning overlays was mentioned whereby to maintain areas like Dalhousie with its heritage ambience. Ending on a positive note there is an exciting journey ahead to make Calcutta a coveted heritage destination.

<https://www.facebook.com/calcuttaheritagecollective/videos/411567003875701/>



CHC organized a visit to **Ghare Bair**, an Exhibition at the Currency Building. Led by **Swarup Datta**, the attendees spent a wonderful afternoon learning about Bengal art and its history

Vibha Mitra – Recently released her book “Odds and Bends” which is a diary of anecdotes, some on Calcutta
https://www.amazon.in/Odds-Bends-Vibha-Mitra/dp/9390925193/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=vibha+mitra&qid=1632976622&sr=8-1

The Quiz - CHC continues to conduct it's online Quiz series. The winners were Garden High and Indus Valley Schools. Log in to watch two more in October

QM's: **Sangeeta Dhudoria** and **Oindrilla Dutta** https://fb.watch/8k_lyWAK8P/

QM's: **Supriya Newar** and **Tehnaaz Dastoor**

<https://www.facebook.com/calcuttaheritagecollective/videos/599332914573946/>

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