

# The CHC Journal



Kolkata had its own distinctive flavour of Christmas cards printed by Kolkata's very own *Thacker, Spink and Company* which were a distinctive Kolkata Christmas novelty featuring her *Foo-Foo-Tasha Band* - **A look back on Christmas revelries in Calcutta in December, 1857** (As published in the National Herald on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020)

# The CHC Journal

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## Point of View

I was married into a “Bonedī” Bengali family with regal antecedents. Though we lived in South Calcutta, having come away from the North during the Naxalite movement, most of our relatives still lived there in aristocratic large grandiose homes, the opulence, music, laughter and gaiety of yesterday echoed as the occupants spoke of “those days” with great nostalgia and wistfulness. Unused to seeing life in these glorious mansions, I was enamoured with the shared history of famous lineage, contributing to social development, trade,

professions and maybe fighting for the freedom struggle. These homes crumbled, under the weight of lost opportunities, depleted wealth due to ostentatious lifestyles and with the end of Zamindari the rents too disappeared. The Italian marble floors which glistened once, still have some sheen despite layers of grime and dust. An army of household help to clean is an impossible dream. The chandeliers of Venetian glass hang forlornly in large halls. The beautiful canvases are translucent with years of neglect. Marble statues lurk in corners. These vintage memorabilia have been also arbitrarily sold to meet rising expenses of basic needs. The buildings made with “Surki” and lime have sturdy one foot walls, never needing air-conditioning but the walls are damp, attracting termites; the archaic plumbing desperately needing an overhaul. The high ceilings need a bigger more expensive air-conditioner. The beautiful teakwood furniture has no option for hanging suits and dresses. They stored folded sarees, dhotis, kurtas with elan. The sheer impracticality of a beautiful courtyard with running verandahs leading to rooms with shared bathrooms is not conducive to a modern lifestyle. These are owned by expanding families and greater number of stakeholders who are obviously reluctant to concede their share to relatives as it may be the only valuable possession they own. Having lost most of their livelihood they are obviously reluctant to let go. With no business instincts in their DNA, my husband’s relatives floundered and were prey to unscrupulous investors. Conservation, reuse is a laudable initiative. However the expense to get rid of damp, repair the plumbing, and a general overhaul of these beautiful structures needs large budgets. There is an increasing outcry to not destroy a rich past and legacy. Nor do the owners want to let go of their precious connections. I empathise with these owners as they are literally stuck in a cul-de-sac looking for some way to better their lives, give their children a better future. With rising expenses how can they conserve, reuse or even restore? A difficult choice indeed!

~ **Vibha Mitra**, Author, CHC Journal Editor, Serial Entrepreneur, Heritage Enthusiast

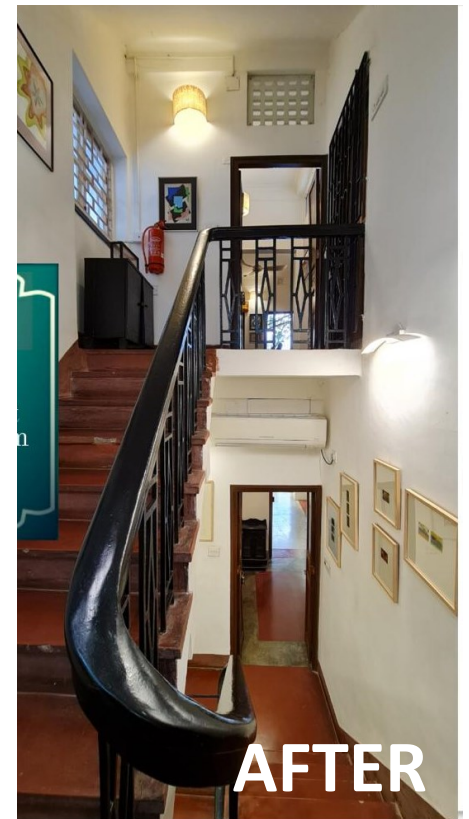
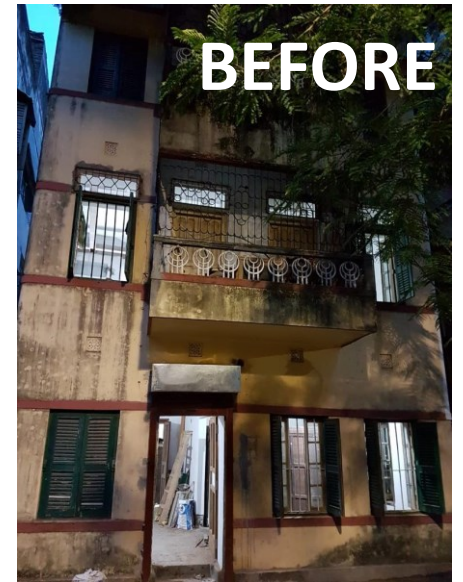
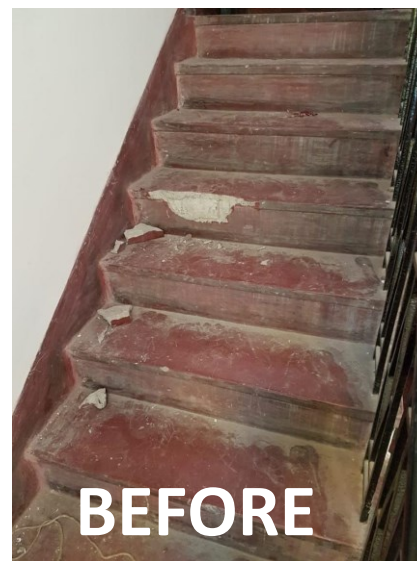
Members are welcome to contribute for any of the journal sections. We would love to publish your articles/notes. Please message Vibha Mitra (+919830933434) or Ipsita Ganguli (+919831283192) or send an email to [contact@calcuttaheritagecollective.com](mailto:contact@calcuttaheritagecollective.com)



## Conservation Showcase

### The Z's Precinct

The grandparents of the present owners bought the 1930's style house in the early 1950s. The fact that the children were open to reuse of their childhood home speaks volumes about the open progressiveness they grew up in. Mr Rajesh Sen who rented the building in 2016 and painstakingly restored and refurbished it into the beautiful Z' Precinct firmly believes that our Heritage is what earlier generations left for us to learn from and to enjoy. He restored the house keeping it's original features intact. The doors and windows, fans and lights, floors and ventilators are all original and have been restored. The show cabinets in the museum shop are cupboards from the house itself. If one has to rebuild it should be thought through in detail. There is a delicate ecosystem that needs to be maintained. The original materials of the building usually lend to a good clean up and Mr Sen's efforts in showing them off has been a very satisfactory endeavour, much appreciated by those who have visited The Zs' Precinct. There are of course issues like rising damp and building cracks. These are issues that ail new buildings as well. Investment in regular and timely maintenance is a ongoing need. Finally the ultimate test of a good reuse project should be it's ability to revert to original use. If The Zs' Precinct ever needs to become a home again, that can be accomplished easily and with minimum fuss.



## Restore. Reuse. Respect



An old mansion, keeping its character, gets a makeover and a restaurant. A spiffy new address for Kolkata Gourmets with an old world ambience! Classic precedent for reuse. Calcuttans, lets all resolve in the New Year to take up more such projects and restore some of its lost glory.

<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/story/jalsa-restaurant-in-kolkata-lets-you-step-into-the-citys-regal-past/>



# The Bengal Story

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers is a professional Institute with its corporate office in New York. The Milestones program is one of the most visible ways IEEE educates the general public about the importance of its members' achievements. It honours the achievement, rather than the person or place. The achievement must be more than 25 years old.



*Kolkata has been awarded three milestone plaques, Presidency University for Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose's pioneering work, Indian Association for Cultivation of Science for Sir C V Raman's experiment and CESC, the first electric supply company in south Asia to switch on thermal generation on April 17, 1899, in Calcutta*

<https://ethw.org/Milestones:IEEE> Milestones Program

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/another-feather-in-cap-kolkata-gets-its-third-milestone-plaque/articleshow/88364219.cms>

## Down Memory Lane



I am privileged to inherit the pocket watch with a gold chain (Elgin, Made in USA) and three clocks (Angora Wall Clock, Angora Mantle piece and Junghans wall clock - all Made In Germany) and a hand wound gramophone (HMV) from my father, Late Nikhilesh Bhattacharyya, who inherited



them from my grandfather, Late Durga Prasanna Bhattacharyya (the original purchaser). I take great care towards their maintenance and hope to hold on to them forever

~ Pradipta Bhattacharya

## Heritage News

There is euphoria, a festival celebrated with aplomb. It is said that during Pujas, West Bengal spends as much as New York does on Christmas. With the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Tag, it will get bigger and hopefully tourism and ancillary industries in the State will get a boost. Indian Museum celebrates too.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/durga-puja-inscribed-unesco-representative-list-intangible-cultural-heritage-humanity>

Must visit - <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/special-exhibition-at-indian-museum-to-celebrate-durga-pujas-unesco-tag-2669736>



## Know your CHC Members



**Turni Dhar** studied in Kolkata and Mumbai and majored in Chemistry and Management. She worked in Mumbai till 2014 with Kingfisher beer, Bacardi and Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy India Limited. She moved back to

Kolkata in 2014 and was heading a wine company till 2020. In July 2020 she started Dependablez. Senior citizens in Calcutta, specially the ones whose kids are away, need support. While people start making retirement plans she got out of her comfort zone to do this. Compassion is the key for this venture. Her hobbies are painting, classical dance, photography and heritage walks. She is a voracious reader and has read both English and Bengali authors extensively. Her idol is Ray and she has learnt from him that travel broadens one's mind, reading opens up new worlds and keeping your mind open allows new ideas to enter. She is a film buff and loves Uttam Kumar, Gulzar, RD Burman and Kishore Kumar. She indulges in photography and her photographs have been used by West Bengal Tourism and Chembur Durga Puja Association. On the other side of 40 she is doing what she wanted to do and is happy she moved back to Kolkata

**Shruti Ghosh** is a social work consultant by profession, and is the Co-founder of (Garbage Free India) GFI. She has a Masters degree from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and has worked with



various organizations in the past in pursuit of her passion for bringing about change in the social development sector. This helped her co-found GFI in 2013 with fellow Kolkata friends in the pursuit to help revive and restore Kolkata's natural heritage and work towards a litter free city. Shruti graduated from St Xavier's College, Kolkata with a degree in Political Science and prior to that completed her schooling from Modern High School, Kolkata. She is an enthusiastic gardener and enjoys road travel and exploration. She has been a member of CHC for the last three years and hopes to play a more active role once she relocates back to Kolkata.

**Did You Know:** The Esplanade Mansion was built in 1910 by Martin & Co. for Calcutta's Jewish real estate magnet, David Joseph Ezra. L.I.C is the current owner. It is located at the junction of Government place and Esplanade Row and is the only ART NOUVEAU building in Kolkata. Art Nouveau is a style of architecture that flourished in Europe between 1890 and 1910





# The CHC Connect



**Congratulations Kounteya** on being announced as “THE PHENOMENON OF THE YEAR 2021” - the most phenomenal photographer of the year award by the World Photography Forum (WPF). Additionally, The World Photography Forum has announced KOI Worldwide as “The Most Powerful Brand of the Year 2021”. KOI is a Experiential Travel Company that CHC member **Kounteya Sinha** founded with Oiendrila Ray Kapur and Gagan Kapur

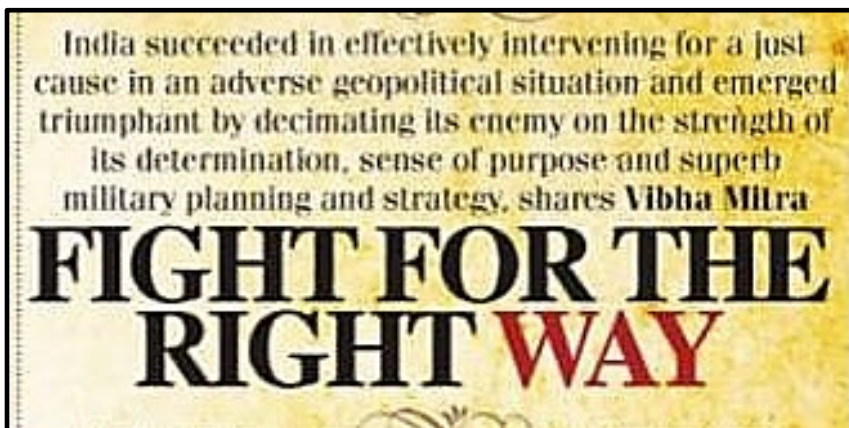
ILead spearheaded by CHC member **Pradip Chopra** received 5 best category awards at the LIFFT Film Festival, for the film “Before you Die”



CHC members **Swarup Dutta** and **Paramita Saha**, intrigued by the chequered history of Thonthonia Thakurbari, did an installation in the 300-year-old house belonging to Biharilal Mitra.



CHC member **Supriya Newar** was invited by The Orange Lit Fest in Nagpur for her book Kalkatta Chronicles



CHC member **Vibha Mitra**'s article was published in the Times of India



CHC members on tour of Hangeshwari Temple, Bandel Church, Hoogly Imambara and Chandannagore

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