THE FREELANCER

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Women's Safety : The Capital Question Remains



Indian women out in Delhi, reclaiming their fundamental rights

By Sreejani Chakravarty

Indian women are once again out in Delhi, reclaiming their fundamental rights after three men reportedly posed as police officers and gang-raped a 17-year-old minor on September 21, 2026, at Aastha Kunj Park near Kalkaji Temple in Delhi.

According to police reports, the victim and her male friend were visiting Delhi from Faridabad to celebrate her birthday. While they were visiting Aastha Kunj Park, three men dressed as cops used legal terminology to intimidate the two, telling them that they were minors, had done something wrong, and could face a case. The trio then separated the girl by taking her to a secluded spot and threatened her with a firearm and a knife before sexually assaulting her one after another. The male friend was also assaulted.

The accused, Asif (31), Hemant Singh (31), and Mukesh Singh (24), were subsequently arrested by the Delhi Police, and a case was registered under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The repeated series of not so sole incidents like these restrict women's freedom even more, as one of the premier colleges of our country, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, arranged for online classes for a day, as going out in the streets might result in another sexual assault. The Delhi court responded by ordering that women are not allowed to visit parks post 7 p.m., as the night might not be safe enough for them. So, it is better to lock them in homes that might not be safe either! These incidents triggered protests by students from several Delhi University colleges, including Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Miranda House, Gargi College, and Kamala Nehru College, carrying placards and raising slogans against sexual violence. "Educate your son," some placards said, while others demanded freedom to go out at night without fear. As hundreds of women walked from the gates of their university campus into the streets of Delhi where sexual harassment, assault, catcalling, and molestation are a constant, daily threat they shouted together in a chorus of rage and defiance: "We want justice." From Nirbhaya to Jamui, the burden of safety from sexual assault cannot fall on women. India is facing a rape epidemic, as there are a series of rape cases that take place on a day to day basis. It is a systematic failure that the country that worships its women during the day let's their autonomy be taken away from them at night because men have the freedom to prowl and hunt them, while women are expected to cover themselves fully and lock their bodies.

SRFTI tensions escalate!

By Rudrani Sengupta

Tension escalates at Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI) after students at the institute claimed that members of Bangiyo Hindu Jagran March (BHJM) gathered outside SRFTI and attacked them. On October 4, Hindu Jagran Manch supporters marched to SRFTI and allegedly banged on the locked campus gates and hurled stones, bricks and bottles inside, injuring several students.Students said they were assaulted by supporters of Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat (ABGP), an RSS-affiliated, right wing consumer welfare group on September 27 after they objected to the presence of an outside political group using their academic space and put up protest posters.

As a mark of protest, students put up posters at the main entrance on Sunday evening carrying slogans such as "Our campus is not your Sakha" (a branch of the RSS) and "Stop Saffronisation ofEducational Institutions".A week after the initial unrest at SRFTI, on Sunday, the Manch supporters organized the protest over allegations that the students had insulted Swami Vivekananda and Bharat Mata. The Manch said its "march" to the institute was aimed at avenging the students' act of "tearing images of Swami Vivekananda and Bharat Mata" while protesting the renting of the campus auditorium to the ABGP a week ago. The police had tried to push the Manch supporters back when they had arrived at the institute gate but to no avail. A scuffle broke out when some of the raiders tried to climb over the institute walls and tried to jump in. The Manch supporters abused the students by calling them "dimagi Naxals" and tore pictures of B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi which had been put up by the students.

The raiders, many of whom wore saffron scarfs, pasted images of Bharat Mata and Swami Vivekananda on the campus gate and put up Hindu Jagran Manch flags before leaving. The incident has raised serious concerns about campus autonomy, student safety, political interference, and the growing polarisation of educational institutions all across the country.



Tension escalates at SRFTI

Samba in The City of Joy: Brazil Defeat India in the historic Kolkata showdown



Kolkata witnessed a historic night as Brazil championed

By Bhoomika Nag

Kolkata witnessed a historic night as five-time world champions Brazil faced India for the first time at the senior men's international level, securing a 4–0 victory at Salt Lake Stadium.Around 51,000 spectators filled the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan on October 3, 2026, creating an electric atmosphere. Coach Khalid Jamil fielded a determined Indian side after their groundbreaking 1–1 draw against 44th-ranked Panama — their first-ever result against a top-50 nation. However, Carlo Ancelotti's fifth-ranked Brazil dominated with clinical finishing.Brazil broke the deadlock in the 28th minute when teenage star Estêvão scored past the Indian defence. He assisted Pedro in doubling the lead in the 42nd minute. Despite trailing 2–0 at half-time, India displayed attacking intent, creating promising build-ups that drew cheers from supporters.

Samuel Lino scored his first two senior international goals in the second half, striking around the hour mark before completing his brace in stoppage time (90+').

Despite the defeat, the fixture marked a milestone for Indian football, offering 138th-ranked India invaluable experience against elite international opposition. The match also highlighted India's growing ambition on the international stage, inspiring local fans and strengthening the nation's footballing aspirations.

A FAILED SYSTEM ?

On September 8 2026, a bill was approved that empowered the state government to transfer teaching and non-teaching staff from one state university to another. Chief minister Suvendu Adhikari defended the legislation in the Assembly, saying it would help strengthen newly established universities by making experienced faculty available to them. The Bill was opposed by the left-leaning Jadavpur University Teachers Association (JUTA), that had slammed the government and called it an attack on the self-reliance of the institutions and job security of the employees. The opposition argued that this will lead to selective targeting of academics critical of the state government.

Nevertheless that's not the only problem with this bill. The leading issue lies on how this will impact student persuing higher education and specially research students. In case of research, it might highly affect the students who are under the counsel of the professors. One professor puts it the best-"students might get highly affected who are already under any professor, it might also disrupt the target of the universities in aspect of NIRF ranking". This raises an important concern among students as well, while some professors are supportive of this amendment in only as a view for "development of underdeveloped universities", on the other hand majority of the professors vehemently opposed this amendment concerned about the changes that might affect the teaching-learning pattern of the university.

If a PhD supervisor is transferred, a research scholar may face disruption in supervision, delays in fellowship renewals, and uncertainty over whether their PhD registration can continue smoothly. Long-term laboratory work, experiments, datasets, and funded projects may also suffer because they often depend on the expertise, funding. Critics, including Jadavpur University research scholars and senior academics, argue that the bill threatens research continuity, academic autonomy, and the stability needed for high-quality scholarship; therefore, universities must ensure safeguards such as continued supervision, co-supervision arrangements, and protected access to laboratories and research funds.

The question rises in, will there be any necessary changes that might be taken to help the phd pursuing professors willing to be transferred? CM Suvendu Adhikari put his views as "Those unhappy with the provisions of the Bill are welcome to quit their jobs", this rises the concern that if it is a failure of education and academic curriculum.

THE DIFFICULT BALANCE:

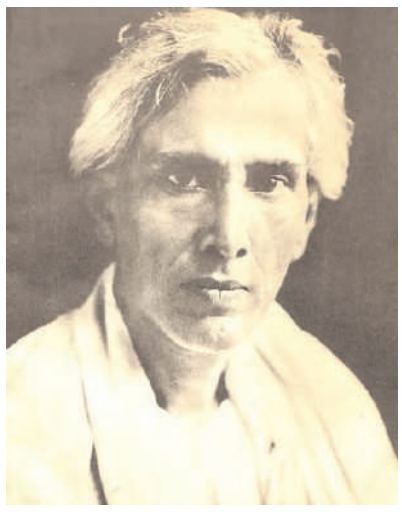
Rethinking safety, accountability and childhood.

Can a child be held responsible for an act without being defined by it? Perhaps that is the hardest question the South Point School stabbing incident leaves us with. A school more precisely a classroom is meant to be a safe haven for a child but when the safety is breached the immediate priority becomes the one who is affected. Violence can never be or should not be minimized in any circumstance but yet somewhere between demanding accountability and seeking justice, lies the danger of allowing one act to consume the identity of the child who committed it.

On September 30, what reportedly began as an argument between two Class IX students over a textbook escalated into an assault inside the classroom, leaving one child seriously injured. The one who was accused of the assault is not merely an accused but a juvenile. Though the fact of being a juvenile does not erase the seriousness of the act but there is a distinction which definitely matters. In response to juvenile wrongdoings the question should not involve what type of punishment should be given to the accused but as children are still in the stage of mental, moral and social development the questions to be asked should also involve intervention, guidance and rehabilitation.

At the same time the incident raises legitimate questions about whether schools are equipped enough to identify escalating conflicts, recognise warning signs and ensure that students remain physically and emotionally secure. Safety is not merely about what enters a school it is also about what goes unnoticed within it. And safeguarding does not end when the immediate crisis is over. The ultimate demand of the incident is not a choice between protecting the victim and understanding the accused child. In the aftermath of such an incident a responsible institution's responsibility cannot end with identifying fault it should strictly follow the path that accountability should exist but so is the possibility of rehabilitation. A question remains after the incident itself. For the students who witnessed what happened, returning to the same classroom may not immediately mean returning to normal. An incident like this can affect how safe they feel around their peers and whether they feel comfortable speaking about their fears. Their experience, too, deserves attention, because ensuring safety is not only about preventing another incident but also about helping students feel secure again.

Honoring 150 Years of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay: The voice that still Speaks



By Fabeha Adil

Five thousand copies of Pather Dabi were reportedly sold within a week before the British government banned the novel. That one fact says a lot about Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. He was not just a writer of love stories; his writing could reach people, raise uncomfortable questions and even attract the attention of the colonial government.

Born 150 years ago, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote about people and problems that were part of everyday life. Poverty,caste, marriage, social pressure, inequality and the position of women appeared repeatedly in his works. His characters were often ordinary people dealing with situations that readers could recognise. This closeness to everyday life was one of the reasons his stories became so popular. His concern for people was also seen outside his writing. During his years in Burma, he lived among workers and craftsmen and was known to help people around him. He assisted people with medical needs and personal problems.

At Samtaber, he reportedly treated poor people with homeopathic medicines without charging them and took an interest in local prob lems. His relationship with ordinary people was therefore not limited to the characters he created on paper.

There was also a clear political side to his work. Sarat Chandra supported the nationalist movement and was associated with the Non-Cooperation Movement. Pather Dabi openly dealt with revolutionary nationalism and British rule, while also touching on issues such as untouchability, economic inequality and social conservatism. Its ban showed how literature could become politically powerful. Yet, Sarat Chandra's legacy is not beyond criticism. His progressive portrayal of women and marginalised people has been appreciated, but his ideas have also been examined in relation to his upper-caste background and the social limitations of his time.These contradictions make his work worth discussing rather than simply celebrating.

After 150 years, Sarat Chandra remains relevant because he wrote about people rather than distant ideals. His stories gave ordinary lives a place in literature. Society has changed considerably since his time, but questions of inequality, social expectations, freedom and human dignity still remain. His characters often reflect the struggles of individuals caught between personal desires and the demands of society. Through their experiences, he encouraged readers to look beyond appearances and question the traditions they had long accepted. That is perhaps why his words continue to find readers even today. They continue to inspire debate, reminding generations that literature can give magnanimous voice to the unheard.

When the Pen Refuses to Bow

By Ankshika Singh

মানুষরে চামড়ার রঙ ত তার মনুষ্যত্বরে মাপকাঠি নয়।

A hundred years have passed since Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's Pather Dabi first entered the public imagination. Its centenary is not merely a reason to remember a celebrated novel but an opportunity to revisit the questions of power dissent and freedom that made it so consequential.This Puja, while Bengal prepares for another season of crowded theatres and familiar festivities, a century old literary battle is returning to the screen. Srijit Mukherji's Emperor vs Sarat Chandra, releasing on October 15, revisits the controversy surrounding Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's Pather Dabi. The timing could hardly be more appropriate. A novel that once unsettled an empire is now being revisited by an audience that has inherited the freedom that the novel imagined. Pather Dabi was published in 1926. The British government banned it the following year because of its revolutionary politics. But reducing the controversy to "the British banned a revolutionary novel" would be far too comfortable a conclusion. The more uncomfortable truth is that the colonial government understood the power of literature. A gun can frighten a person. An idea can outlive a government.That is what makes the centenary worth thinking about.We like to believe censorship belongs to another age. We congratulate ourselves for having moved beyond the anxieties of the Raj. Yet even today we are remarkably comfortable with expression until it becomes inconvenient. We praise writers for having a voice until that voice questions authority. We celebrate dissent until it stops agreeing with us.Perhaps that is the realrelevance of Pather Dabi in 2026.The forthcoming film brings Sarat Chandra and his fictional revolutionary Sabyasachi back into public memory. But the greater value of the film lies in the argument it can reopen. What happens when literature refuses to remain literature? What happens when a fictional character begins influencing political imagination? And who gets to decide when an idea has crossed an acceptable line? Even the disagreement between Sarat Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore over the ban reminds us that freedom of expression has never been a comfortable conversation. There were disagreements then. There are disagreements now. Perhaps there should be.A healthy society should not be frightened by disagreement. It should be frightened by a society in which disagreement becomes impossible.The British Empire tried to silence Pather Dabi. It failed.A hundred years later, we are not merely reading the novel. We are debating it.and filming it. We are arguing over what it meant and still means.Perhaps that is literature's most enduring rebellion.The State may silence a sentence. It cannot guarantee that the idea will disappear.The book survived the ban. The question survived the book.Perhaps the question to be asked not whether it was too political. It is whether we have become too comfortable with literature that is not.

'FIRINGI PARA' debuts as Pujo Venue

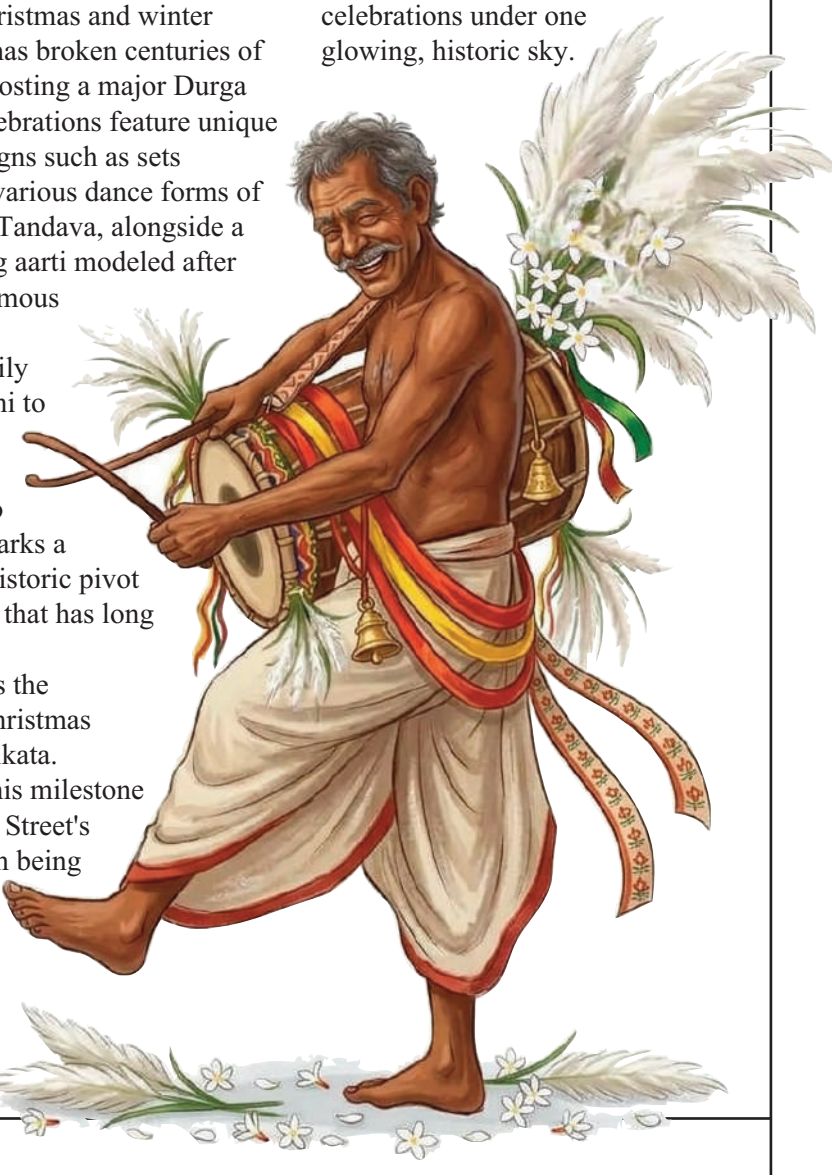
By Koushani Dey

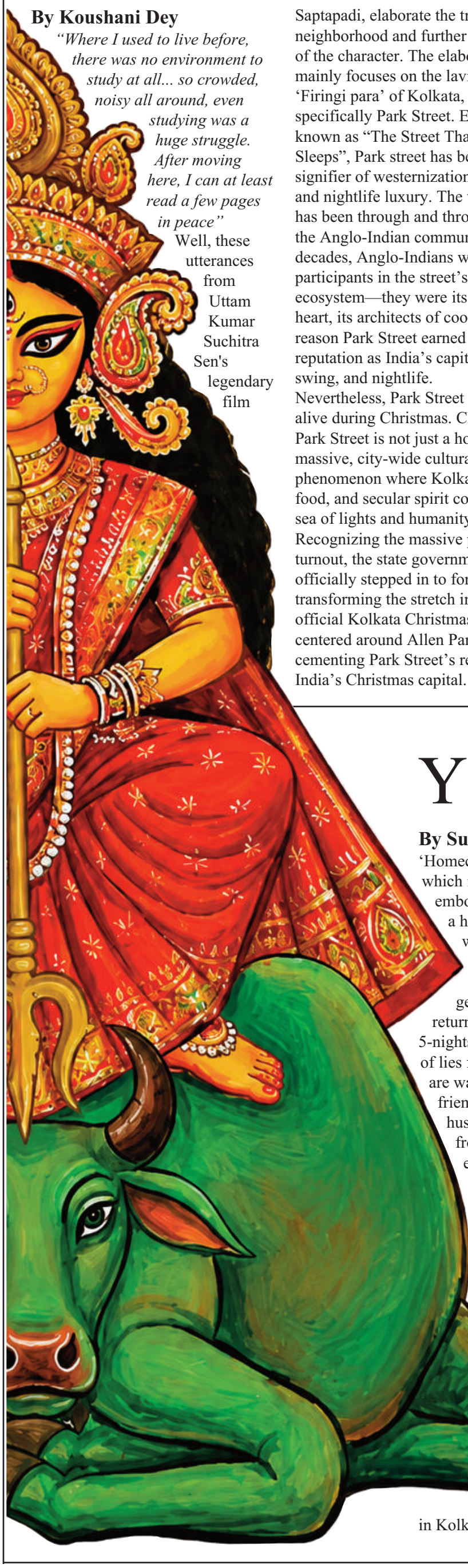
"Where I used to live before, there was no environment to study at all... so crowded, noisy all around, even studying was a huge struggle. After moving here, I can at least read a few pages in peace"

Well, these utterances from Uttam Kumar Suchitra Sen's legendary film Saptapadi, elaborate the transition of neighborhood and further the lifestyle of the character. The elaboration mainly focuses on the lavish and elite 'Firingi para' of Kolkata, more specifically Park Street. Earlier known as "The Street That Never Sleeps", Park street has been a signifier of westernization, affluence and nightlife luxury. The whole area has been through and through, tied to the Anglo-Indian community. For decades, Anglo-Indians weren't just participants in the street's vibrant ecosystem—they were its beating heart, its architects of cool, and the reason Park Street earned its reputation as India's capital of jazz, swing, and nightlife.

Nevertheless, Park Street truly comes alive during Christmas. Christmas on Park Street is not just a holiday; it is a massive, city-wide cultural phenomenon where Kolkata's history, food, and secular spirit collide in a sea of lights and humanity. Recognizing the massive public turnout, the state government officially stepped in to formalize it, transforming the stretch into the official Kolkata Christmas Festival centered around Allen Park, cementing Park Street's reputation as India's Christmas capital.

This historic Allen Park on Park Street, traditionally known globally as the undisputed epicenter of Kolkata's Christmas and winter celebrations,has broken centuries of tradition by hosting a major Durga Puja. The celebrations feature unique thematic designs such as sets highlighting various dance forms of Lord Shiva's Tandava, alongside a grand evening aarti modeled after Varanasi's famous Ganga Aarti performed daily from Chaturthi to Dashami. Bringing Durga Puja to Allen Park marks a fascinating, historic pivot for a location that has long defined itself exclusively as the winter and Christmas capital of Kolkata. Ultimately, this milestone expands Park Street's narrative from being "The Street that Never Sleeps" in December to a year round epicenter of Kolkata's boundless festive spirit. Park Street now unites Bengal's greatest autumnal and winter celebrations under one glowing, historic sky.





Youth pujo perfection

By Sudarshana Mitra

'Homecoming', the word which is the literal embodiment of nostalgia and a heart reaching for the warmth of home, is exactly what Durga pujo is for today's generation. Some are returning home for these 5-nights by making up a spur of lies for college, and some are waiting at home for their friends and family as if their husbands are returning from war itself. But what exactly are the plans for these reunited souls is what we are here to discover.

Ritankar, a 2nd year student from Amity University is a fanatic for pandal hopping and starts right from the Dwitiya. He carefully plans out each day with friends and covers every region in Kolkata except for Behala and Dum Dum. Ankshika, 2nd year student at Shri Shikshayatan College is eager for her own homecoming to Durgapur and uniting with her school friends. From Saptami's 'bhuri bhoj' with her mother, Ashtami's endless adda, Navami's blur of food and pandals to Dashami's farewell, she is looking forward to it all. Although some plans are not always pre planned, there are often impromptu ones which start from a random phone call from a friend. No pre planned routes or a check list to complete, it's just a spontaneous ride across the city and a decision to "just let's see where we end up today", says Purbayan, a 4th year student at IEM.

But while some are busy planning outings, some are carrying heavy hearts like Nabanita, another 2nd year student from Shri Shikshayatan college, unable to make it home this year but excited about her first Durga puja in Kolkata with her boyfriend. Love is definitely in the air during Durga puja and has been for every generation.Yet, beyond the grand pandals and meticulous itineraries lies the true magic of Durga Pujo: the silent, shared glances under fairy lights, the comforting aroma of street-side rolls and khichuri, and the deep reassurance that no matter how far life takes you, these four days will always welcome you back. As the sound of the dhak fades into the distance on Dashami, leaving behind a haze of red sindoor and heavy-hearted goodbyes, the separation anxiety sets in almost immediately. But hope remains alive in every heart. Whether returning to distant college campuses or quiet hostel rooms, these reunited souls carry home a year's worth of warmth, laughter, and memories to sustain them. Until the next autumn breeze whispers asche bochor abar hobe, Kolkata's heartbeat echoes a universal truth: home is never just a place; it is the people we share it with.

It is the smell of old streets, the essence of unhinged laughters and definitely the cosiest comfort of all those who make every pujo an absolute *'Utshob'*

INDIA SHINES AT THE 2026 ASIAN GAMES

By Samadrita Chatterjee

The 2026 Asian Games came to an end in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, after more than two weeks of competition involving athletes from across Asia. The Games saw exciting contests, unexpected victories and several memorable performances. India finished fourth in the overall medal table with 85 medals, including 21 gold, 27 silver and 37 bronze. While the total was lower than the 107 medals won in Hangzhou 2022, the quality of gold medals made this campaign truly memorable for India. Among the biggest successes were the golden double in cricket, the historic wins in hockey, and strong performances in archery, boxing, shooting and kabaddi.

Cricket was the biggest talking point for India. Both the men's and women's teams won gold medals, giving Indian fans a memorable double victory. The success was especially important because of the popularity of cricket in the country and the huge attention surrounding both finals.

The Indian women's cricket team was the first to bring gold home. In the final at the Aichi Cricket Ground, India defeated Sri Lanka by a huge margin of 147 runs. After winning the toss and batting first, India posted a commanding 216 for 3 in 20 overs. Smriti Mandhana led the charge with a brilliant 79 runs from 45 balls, hitting 9 fours and 3 sixes. She was well supported by Shafali Verma, who scored 43, and Richa Ghosh, who added an unbeaten 38 off just 18 balls. The total of 216 was the highest ever in an Asian Games women's final.

Sri Lanka's chase never took off. The Indian bowlers were disciplined and clinical. Pooja Vastrakar picked up three wickets, while Deepti Sharma and Renuka Singh Thakur kept the run rate under control. Sri Lanka was bowled out for just 69 runs in 15.2 overs. The victory gave India its second consecutive Asian Games gold in women's cricket after Hangzhou and showed how much women's cricket has grown in India in recent years.

The men's team followed with another gold, defeating Pakistan by 19 runs in a high-pressure final. Led by captain Shreyas Iyer, India batted first and put up a strong total of 189 for 5. Abhishek Sharma was the main contributor with a fearless 67 off 38 balls. Tilak Varma scored 41 and Iyer added 33 valuable runs. In reply, Pakistan started well but lost momentum in the middle overs. Ravi Bishnoi took two crucial wickets, and Arshdeep Singh bowled an excellent 19th over, giving away just 4 runs. Pakistan finished on 170 for 8, and India successfully retained its Asian Games title. The match attracted huge attention because of the long-standing rivalry between the two nations.



Hockey also provided India with a historic moment. The women's hockey team defeated China 1-0 to win gold after 44 years, their last title having come in 1982.

Lalremsiami scored the only goal of the final in the fourth quarter with a sharp reverse hit. The victory also secured India a direct place at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The men's hockey team added another gold by defeating Malaysia 5-1, with captain Harmanpreet Singh scoring twice, successfully defending its title.India also excelled in other sports. Archery produced nine medals, including three golds, while boxing won three golds led by Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain. Shooting, wrestling, golf and kabaddi also contributed, with both kabaddi teams winning gold. Overall, the Aichi-Nagoya Games gave Indian sport many reasons to celebrate. The golden double in cricket and the emotional wins in hockey made 2026 a memorable chapter for India and gave athletes great confidence for future global competitions.

Overall, what made the Aichi-Nagoya campaign special was not just the number of medals, but the character shown by the Indian contingent. Many of the gold medals came after tough fights and years of waiting, especially in women's hockey and cricket.

The performances showed that India's strength is no longer limited to one or two sports, but is spreading across disciplines.

As the athletes return home with their medals, the success in Japan has given the country great optimism for the road ahead. The confidence gained from beating top Asian rivals in front of large crowds will be crucial as India now prepares for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and other world championships. For the fans, 2026 will be remembered as the year when India shone brightest on the Asian stage.

Looking beyond the podium finishes, the 2026 Games highlighted a fundamental transformation in India's sporting ecosystem. Behind each medal was a story of improved grassroots development, modern training facilities, and psychological resilience. Young athletes, who previously struggled on international stages under pressure, demonstrated remarkable composure when competing against world-class opponents. This mental toughness was particularly evident in high-stakes matches like the men's cricket final against Pakistan and the closely fought hockey encounters.

Furthermore, the extensive multi-discipline success underscored the crucial role of tactical preparation and athletic conditioning. Indian federations have increasingly integrated sports science, specialized coaching, and international exposure into their training regimens over the past Olympic cycle. This systemic approach ensured that shooters maintained focus during critical shoot-offs, archers adapted seamlessly to challenging outdoor wind conditions, and combat sport athletes executed precise strategies.As nationwide celebrations continue, sports administrators and coaches are already shifting focus toward sustaining this momentum. The valuable experience gained in Aichi-Nagoya provides a solid blueprint for targeted development in disciplines showing immense potential. With renewed public enthusiasm, stronger corporate backing, and clear qualification pathways, India's strategic focus now turns firmly toward translating this Asian dominance into unprecedented success on the global stage at Los Angeles 2028.

Crucially, this campaign proved that private-sector sports foundations and targeted public funding can deliver high return on investment when channeled through long-term strategy. By identifying niche events and expanding bench strength in track, combat sports, and precision disciplines, India has laid a sustainable blueprint. This structural shift ensures that future multi-sport campaigns rely on systematic athletic pipelines rather than individual brilliance alone.

It also strengthens talent identification, grassroots development, and long-term athlete preparation, ensuring sustainable success across major international sporting competitions worldwide.

Advisors: Principal Dr. Tania Chakravertty, Mayukh Lahiri (Head Of Department), Subir Chakraborty, Manasi Sengupta, Rajashree Biswas & Pallabi Roy
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