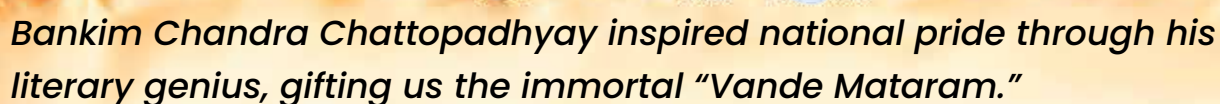


63rd Annual Conference of The Indian Academy of Pediatrics
16TH JANUARY - 20TH JANUARY, 2026 | KOLKATA



The Vibrant Tapestry of Art & Culture in Kolkata and Bengal..





16th – 20th January, 2026



Venue: Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, Kolkata, India

PEDICON 2026 Newsletter — Issue 4

Theme: The Vibrant Tapestry of Art and Culture in Kolkata and Bengal

As the countdown to PEDICON 2026 in Kolkata gathers momentum, we welcome you to the 4th edition of our monthly newsletter — a journey through the artistic and cultural heartbeat of Bengal.

Bengal is not just a place on the map — it is an emotion, a rhythm, and a living archive of creativity. However, in trying to capture the vastness of this cultural treasure, we realized that a single edition could not do justice to its richness. So, this month, we bring you Part 1 of a two-part exploration — an immersive dive into the soul-stirring heritage of the Bengal Renaissance, the life and legacy of Rabindranath Tagore, and the evolution of music and dance that continue to inspire across generations.

From the spiritual melodies of Baul singers to the global genius of Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Rashid Khan — from the poetic grace of Rabindra Nritya to the contemporary brilliance of Ananda and Tanushree Shankar — this edition is a celebration of rhythm, reform, and renaissance.

In our next issue, we will take you through the vibrant world of Bengali literature, cinema, visual arts, and traditional crafts — exploring how words, images, and creativity continue to shape Bengal's identity.

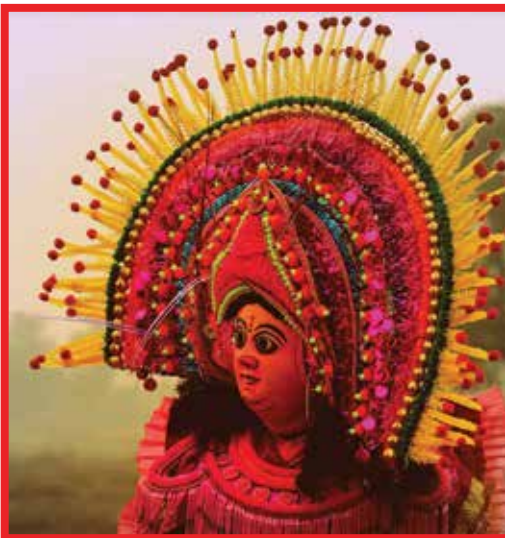
We hope this issue stirs your curiosity and admiration for the cultural legacy that awaits you in Kolkata — the City of Joy.

Bengal's Cultural Odyssey: From Antiquity to Modernity

The cultural roots of Bengal trace back over two millennia, flourishing along the banks of the Ganges and its delta. In ancient times, Bengal was a vibrant center of learning, spirituality, and craftsmanship, as seen in the archaeological marvels of Chandraketugarh and Mahasthangarh. It played a vital role in the spread of Buddhism, with Bengal-born scholars like Atish Dipankar journeying across Asia.

During the Pala dynasty (8th–12th century), Bengal witnessed a golden age of art and education. The Palas were great patrons of Buddhist art and architecture, evident in the exquisite sculptures and manuscripts preserved from that era. The medieval period brought Islamic influences, enriching Bengal's music, literature, and architecture. The Bhakti and Sufi movements promoted syncretic traditions, while folk forms like Baul music and pattachitra painting flourished in the rural heartlands.

The colonial era saw a complex cultural transformation. While British rule imposed new systems, it also sparked a

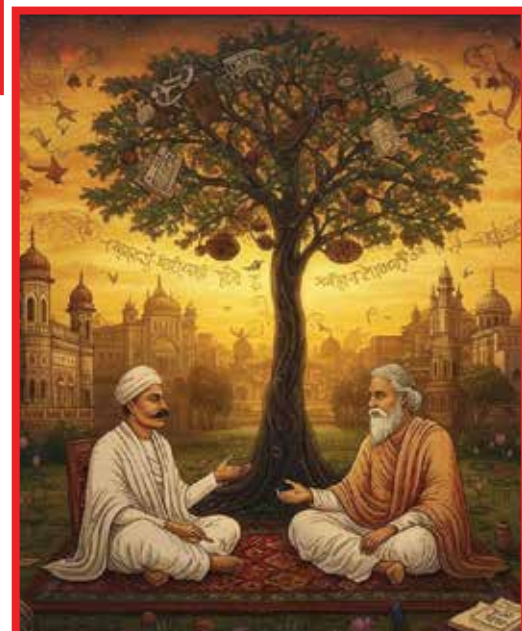


remarkable cultural awakening — the Bengal Renaissance — which birthed thinkers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Rabindranath Tagore. Literature, science, reform, and education bloomed as never before.

In the modern era, Bengal continues to be a beacon of culture — from Satyajit Ray's cinema to contemporary theatre, fusion music, fashion, and visual arts. Its heritage is both preserved and reinterpreted, keeping the cultural soul of Bengal vibrantly alive.

The Bengal Renaissance: Awakening of a Nation

The Bengal Renaissance was not merely a cultural movement — it was a civilizational reawakening that spanned the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was rooted in Calcutta (now Kolkata) and marked by a unique confluence of traditional Indian wisdom and Western Enlightenment ideals brought in through colonial education and global exposure.





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The Pioneers of Thought and Reform

- Raja Rammohan Roy, often called the Father of the Indian Renaissance, laid its foundation. A visionary reformer, he fought against sati, child marriage, and caste discrimination, while advocating women's rights, education, and freedom of thought.
- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a champion of women's education and widow remarriage, made Sanskrit learning accessible to common people and revolutionized Bengali prose.
- Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, through his literary genius, infused a new sense of national pride, giving us the immortal "**Vande Mataram**".
- Rabindranath Tagore, the crown jewel of this era, redefined poetry, music, education, and philosophy – becoming the first Asian Nobel Laureate in Literature and a global symbol of spiritual humanism.



Raja Rammohan Roy

Impact on Literature, Education, and Science

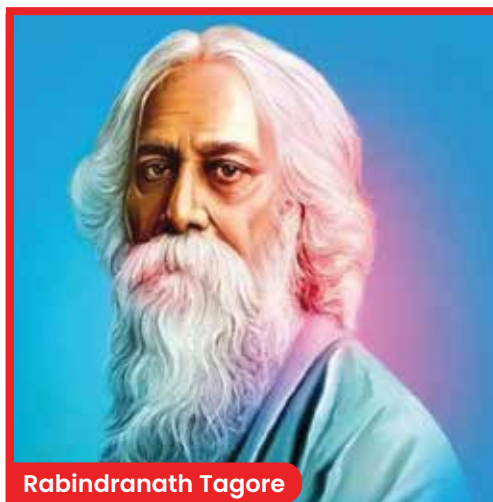
- This era saw a boom in Bengali literature, with newspapers, magazines, novels, and essays creating a thinking public.
- Institutions like Hindu College and Bethune School became centers of radical ideas.
- Scientific minds like Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Ray demonstrated that Bengal's contribution was not limited to the arts, but extended to science and innovation.

Rabindranath Tagore: The Soul of Bengal

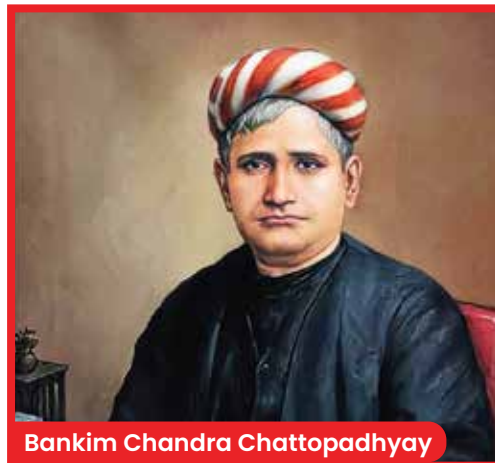
No name resonates more deeply in Bengal's cultural consciousness than Rabindranath Tagore – poet, philosopher, composer, artist, playwright, educationist, and the first Asian Nobel Laureate. Revered as "Gurudev", Tagore was not merely a cultural icon but the living embodiment of Bengal's intellectual and artistic awakening.

Born in Jorasanko, Kolkata, in 1861, Tagore was nurtured in an environment steeped in creativity and progressive thought. His pen gave birth to Gitanjali, a collection of deeply spiritual and philosophical poems that earned him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 – making him the first non-European to receive this honor. The Swedish Academy praised his "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse," elevating Bengali literature to global prominence.

But Tagore's genius extended far beyond poetry. His creation, Rabindra Sangeet, remains the emotional and spiritual soundtrack of Bengal. These timeless compositions – more than 2,000 in number – touch on every facet of human experience, from romantic longing to patriotic fervor, from devotion to introspection. They are sung in homes, on stages, in classrooms, and during every major celebration in Bengal.



Rabindranath Tagore



Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

Tagore's literary treasure includes:

- Poetry: Gitanjali, Sonar Tori, Balaka
- Plays: Raktakarabi, Dakghar, Chitrangada
- Short Stories: Kabuliwala, Postmaster, Samapti

His works were marked by a unique fusion of eastern spirituality and western modernism, shaping a universal humanist philosophy that inspired not just India's freedom movement, but thinkers and artists worldwide.

Tagore was also a visionary in education. He founded Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan – a space where learning transcends walls, and students are taught to grow in harmony with nature, creativity, and humanity. To this day, it remains a sanctuary of artistic and intellectual pursuit.

Tagore was a painter in his later years, producing bold, abstract art that defied convention. He wrote national anthems for India (Jana Gana Mana) and Bangladesh (Amar Shonar Bangla), and his influence continues to bridge nations and generations.

More than a century later, Tagore's vision and voice remain deeply embedded in Bengal's cultural identity. To speak of Bengal is to evoke Tagore – for his verses are not confined to pages, but live in the rhythms, thoughts, and soul of every Bengali.

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Music: From Classical Roots to Other Classical Forms:

Contemporary Beats

Music has always been at the heart of Bengali culture, and Kolkata thrives as a musical crucible where timeless traditions coexist with evolving modern sounds.

Classical Beginnings

Bengali music traces its origins to ancient classical traditions, deeply spiritual and lyrical. The Baul singers of Bengal, known for their mystic folk music, symbolize a nomadic quest for divinity through music. Classical forms like Kirtan, Shyama Sangeet, and Bhakti geeti have been integral to devotional and cultural life.

Rabindra Sangeet: A Legacy of Melody

Rabindranath Tagore's contributions to music are unparalleled. His compositions, known as Rabindra Sangeet, blend classical and folk influences with poetic expression. These songs reflect the cultural and emotional landscape of Bengal and remain beloved across generations.

Nazrul Geeti: The Voice of Revolution

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the "Rebel Poet", gifted Bengal Nazrul Geeti—a collection of compositions rich in emotion, rebellion, and spiritual depth. His songs tackled themes of patriotism, love, and resistance and continue to inspire across political and social spectrums.

- **Tappa:** Originating from Punjab but refined in Bengal by artists like Ramnidhi Gupta (Nidhu Babu), Tappa is characterized by quick, intricate note patterns and romantic themes.

- **Dwijendra Geeti:** Composed by Dwijendralal Ray, these lyrical songs mix classical depth with nationalism and sentimentality.

- **Atulprasad Sangeet:** Created by Atulprasad Sen, these are emotive pieces often exploring themes of devotion and longing with Western musical influences.



Ustad Rashid Khan

Ustad Rashid Khan: The Modern Ustad

A torchbearer of the Rampur–Sahaswan gharana, Ustad Rashid Khan brought Hindustani classical music to younger audiences with his soulful renditions. Based in Kolkata, he remains a respected figure in both classical and fusion circles.

The Modern Era: A Musical Melting Pot

As cinema and radio took center stage, artists like Hemanta Mukherjee, Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, and Lata Mangeshkar gave a new voice to Bengali and Indian music. Kolkata became a powerhouse of music production and experimentation. Contemporary artists like Anupam Roy, Sahana Bajpaie, and bands like Chandrabindoo, Cactus, and Fossils blend Western rock with Bengali identity, creating a musical genre unique to Kolkata.



Pandit Ravi Shankar

Famous exponents of these genres include Suchitra Mitra, Kanika Bandyopadhyay, Amar Pal, Sumitra Sen, Manabendra Mukhopadhyay, and Arati Mukhopadhyay.

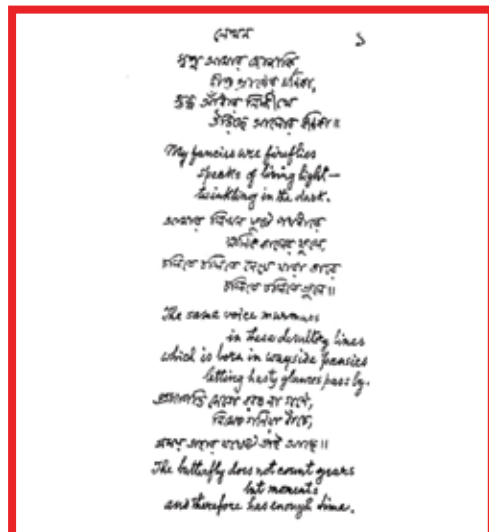
The Legendary Pandit Ravi Shankar: The Sitar Virtuoso

Born in Varanasi but raised in Kolkata, Pandit Ravi Shankar revolutionized the global perception of Indian classical music. His collaborations with global icons like George Harrison of The Beatles made him a cultural ambassador for India.



Folk Meets Fusion

There's a strong revival of Bengali folk—Baul, Bhatiyali, and Jhumur—now fused with jazz, rock, and electronic styles. Artists like Paban Das Baul and Bickram Ghosh (in percussion fusion) have pushed these genres globally.





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Music Conferences and Festivals

Kolkata has always nurtured musical scholarship and appreciation. One of the most prestigious events is the Dover Lane Music Conference, held annually since 1952. This iconic classical music festival attracts the best vocalists and instrumentalists from across India and the world, offering all-night concerts to rapt audiences.

Other notable events:

- **ITC SRA Music Conference:** Celebrating Indian classical heritage
- **Kolkata Music Conference:** A melting pot for global and Indian genres
- **Bangla Sangeet Mela:** Celebrates regional music traditions



Bengali Music Today

From Sufi to hip-hop, EDM to indie rock, Kolkata continues to embrace sonic experimentation. Today's youth blend heritage with creativity, making the city's music scene more dynamic than ever

Dance: The Rhythm of Bengal

Kolkata, with its rich artistic heritage, has long been a central stage for traditional dance forms, from classical styles to contemporary expressions. The city has been a nurturing ground for many acclaimed dancers and choreographers who have contributed to the evolution of Indian dance.

Classical Dance Forms of Bengal

Bengal has a long-standing tradition of classical dance forms that have been celebrated and preserved over centuries. Kathak, Odissi, and Bharatanatyam have flourished in Kolkata alongside traditional Bengali folk dance. These dance forms are known for their grace, intricate footwork, storytelling, and expressive hand gestures (mudras).

Ananda Shankar: A Fusion of Tradition and Modernity

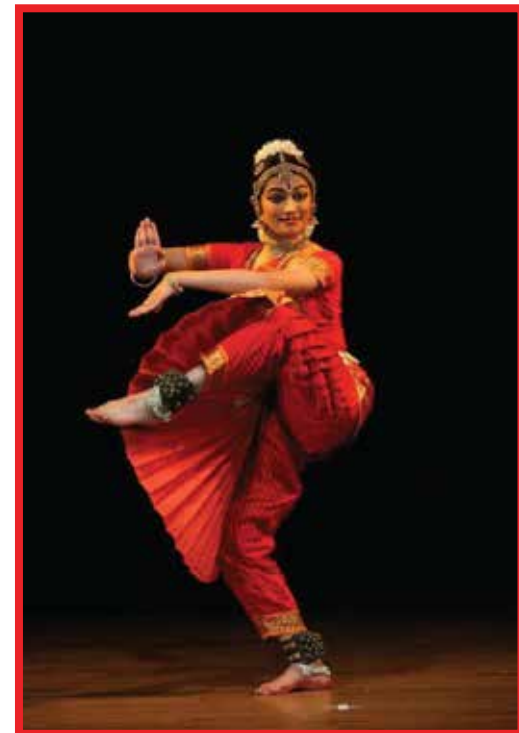
Ananda Shankar, the renowned choreographer and dancer, revolutionized the world of Indian contemporary dance by merging classical traditions with modern movements. Ananda Shankar's innovative fusion of Kathak and modern dance created an entirely new genre that redefined dance in India. As the son of Uday Shankar, one of the pioneers of Indian dance, Ananda built upon the legacy of his father, taking his experiments in dance beyond conventional borders. He remains an iconic figure in Kolkata's dance history, bridging the gap between the classical and modern dance worlds.



Tanushree Shankar: Pioneering the Global Stage

Following in her father Ananda Shankar's footsteps, Tanushree Shankar has become a global ambassador of Indian contemporary dance. A talented and

dedicated artist, Tanushree has transformed her family legacy into a dynamic modern dance company known as the Ananda Shankar Centre for Performing Arts. With her deep understanding of classical dance forms and a flair for contemporary expression, Tanushree's choreography blends tradition with innovation. Her work resonates with audiences worldwide, showcasing Kolkata's role as a center of cultural experimentation.



The Evolution of Dance in Kolkata

Dance in Kolkata continues to evolve, from traditional Rabindra Nritya (Rabindranath Tagore's dance) to Kathakali, Manipuri, and Kuchipudi. These classical forms have been practiced in the city for generations, supported by institutions like the Rabindra Bharati University and the Bengal Dance Academy. However, the 20th century also saw the rise of modern and experimental dance under the guidance of artists like Tanushree Shankar, Madhavi Mudgal, and Nudrat Ansari, bringing Kolkata to the forefront of global dance stages.



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Bengali Folk Dance and Modern Innovations

Alongside classical traditions, Bengali folk dances such as Chhau, Jhumar, and Baul dances are also integral to the cultural landscape of Kolkata. In recent years, the fusion of folk, classical, and modern dance styles has paved the way for innovative performances. Young choreographers in Kolkata have embraced contemporary movements while paying tribute to the region's traditional roots, producing performances that push the boundaries of dance.



Dance Festivals and Performances

Kolkata is home to several prestigious dance festivals and events that bring together some of the finest dancers and choreographers from around the world. These festivals provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, the showcasing of new work, and the celebration of traditional and contemporary dance forms. Festivals such as the Kolkata Dance Festival and the Ananda Shankar Festival allow artists to showcase their creativity while fostering a deeper appreciation for the evolving art of dance.

Dover Lane Music Conference: A Melodic Legacy

The Dover Lane Music Conference, held annually in Kolkata, stands as one of the most prestigious and long-standing events in India's classical music calendar. Established in 1952, this conference brings together maestros, music enthusiasts, and scholars to celebrate and promote the rich heritage of Indian classical music.



Renowned as a platform for the finest classical performances, the conference has hosted many iconic figures, including Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Rashid Khan, Kishori Amonkar, Santoor virtuoso Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, and Ustad Zakir Hussain. It continues to attract top-tier artists and offers an opportunity for younger generations to engage with the rich tradition of classical music.



Held every January at the Dover Lane Music Conference Hall, the event showcases performances in Hindustani classical music, Carnatic music, and Rabindra Sangeet, among others. This annual gathering not only offers a space for musical excellence but also acts as a meeting ground for cultural exchange, preserving and fostering Kolkata's status as the cultural capital of India.



Culture



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A Culture in Continuum

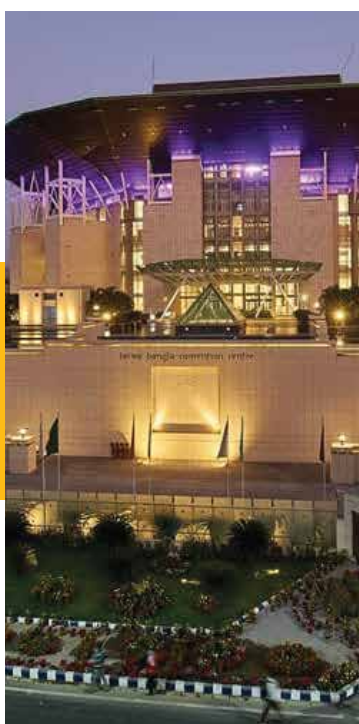
As we close this issue on Art and Culture – Part 1, we are reminded that Bengal's cultural heritage is not a relic of the past, but a living, breathing force that shapes our present and future. From the intellectual sparks of the Bengal Renaissance to the timeless genius of Rabindranath Tagore, from classical ragas to contemporary rhythms, and from folk dances to experimental choreography – Bengal's artistic soul continues to inspire, evolve, and embrace.

In this edition, we have only begun to trace the vast cultural canvas of our land. The journey continues.

Stay with us for **Part 2 of the Art and Culture series**, where we will explore Bengal's **literary legacy, cinematic brilliance, visual arts, and rich tradition of crafts and design**. These expressions too have shaped the conscience of Bengal and contributed to India's creative and national identity.

Until then, let the music play and the poetry linger.

– Team PEDICON 2026 Newsletter



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