

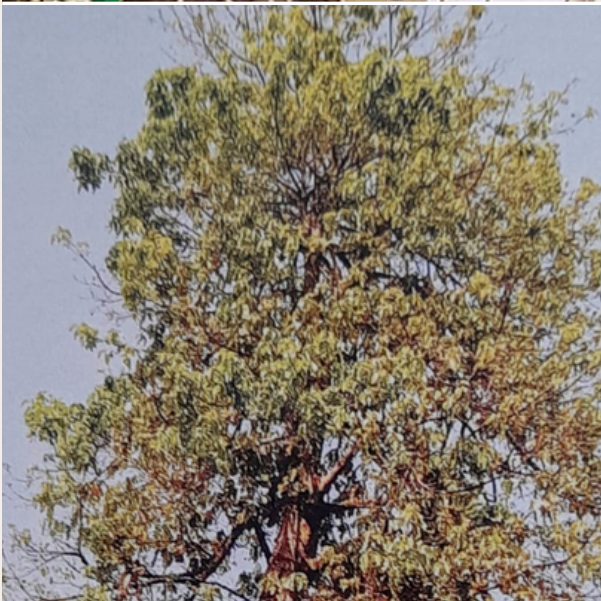
RUSSAPUGLA- THE PIR AND THE TREE

In the late 18th century, Tollygunge was known as 'Russapugla'. The name was derived from the "Russa" tree under which it is said that a Sufi Pir - known as 'Pagla Pir Baba', meditated over 370 years ago.

The 'Russa' tree had unusual branches with five different kinds of leaves. It was so called because a unique kind of sap (*rasa*) oozed from its bark.



Hazrat Maqsood Ghazi Pagla Pir's Mazaar



The 'Russa' tree

Pugla Pir's tomb is known as "Hazrat Maqsood Ghazi Pagla Pir's Mazaar" and it still exists in Jubilee park in the Tollygunge area.

THE PRINCES OF MYSORE

During the late 18th century, **Tipu Sultan**, "The Tiger of Mysore" fought the East India Company . He was killed in 1799 in the Fourth Battle of Mysore.

Tipu's three begums , twelve sons and two princesses were **banished** first to Vellore and then to Calcutta. In Calcutta, they lived in the marshy suburbs of Russapugla.

Over time they were allowed to build mansions. Some of these houses still stand — a cluster of residences where there were once mud huts!



'Lord Cornwallis receiving the Hostage Princes'



Tipu Sultan - "The Tiger of Mysore"

As the story goes at a dinner party in one of the houses, in 1960s, a guest in the powder room fainted . She had seen not her own face but that of a Muslim retainer from the past!

Was he a faithful servant of the Princes of Mysore?

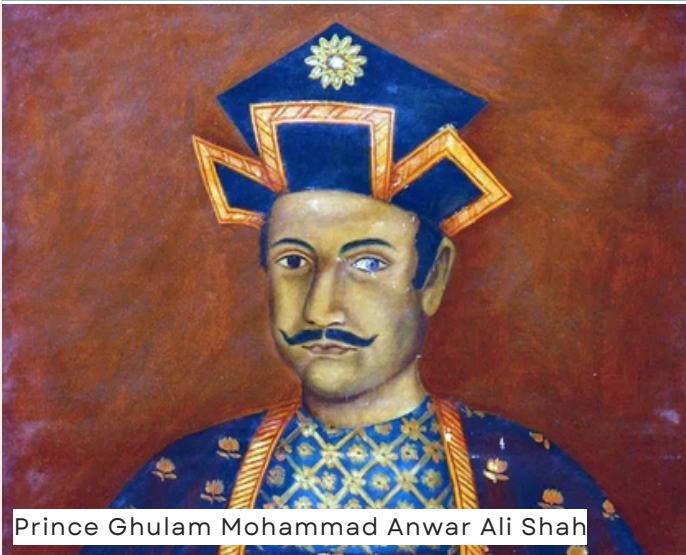
THE SHAHI MOSQUE OF TIPU SULTAN

Prince Ghulam Mohammed Anwar Shah, the eleventh son of Tipu, is credited with building two identical Mosques - the Shahi Mosques of Tipu Sultan, in the late 19th century.

After the endowment of these Mosques - one on Anwar Shah road and the other in Dharamtala, these Mosques were opened to the community for prayers and sermons.

The Mosque on the Anwar Shah Road is quite remarkable with its ten domes organized in two rows! It is quite surprising that the minarets are Gothic in nature.

The compound of the Mosque is the resting place of several members of Tipu's family, including Prince Ghulam Mohammed Shah.



Prince Ghulam Mohammad Anwar Ali Shah



Ghari Ghar



Tipu Sultan Mosque at Anwar Ali Shah road

A few yards from Tipu's Mosque is an old archway. The structure is also connected to the family of Tipu Sultan.

It is known locally as "Ghari Ghar". It was built by one of Tipu's grandsons .

There is a space on top where there was a clock once.

The gateway was built as an entrance to the Imambara, which is also known as

"Tollygunge Nabab Bari"

BORO RASHBARI

In a narrow lane off the main road is a **beautiful temple** dedicated to Radharani and Madan Mohan. The **Mondol family**, who built the temple were invited to settle in Calcutta and made their home on the banks of the Tolly's Nullah.

The Boro Rashbari's construction began in 1750 and ended in 1756. Over time, it fell into disrepair

We met **Sri Pradeep Mondol**, a senior member of the family, who was overseeing renovation work. The temple is in the process of being restored to its former beauty.

Pujo is offered everyday. The images of Radha and Krishna are taken out once a year, on the festival of Dol.



Sri Pradeep Mondol



A tunnel in the temple complex connects it to **river Ganga**. At high tide, the river water flows in through the tunnel, washing the compound with the holy water of Ganga!

A part of the complex consists of a group of twelve temples. They are arranged on three sides of a large square. Unfortunately these temples are in a state of ruin!



We met a young boy, **Arunaksha Banerjee**, who lives in the locality. He gave us a guided tour of the temple complex, regaling us with the history and anecdotes of the temple. According to him, this is the only temple which has three images of Radha!



The temple

Our little guide, Anuraksha Banerjee

CHOTO RASHBARI

The Radhanath Temple on Mondol Temple Lane is also known as the Choto Rashbari.

The Radhanath Temple which is the most spectacular of the Mondol Temples , was built by Ramnath Mondol around 1796.

The temple follows the traditional naba-ratna style, consisting of nine pinnacles.

The temple contains a huge flat-roofed nat mandir. The entire temple complex is within a large courtyard, consisting of black and white checkered pattern marbles.

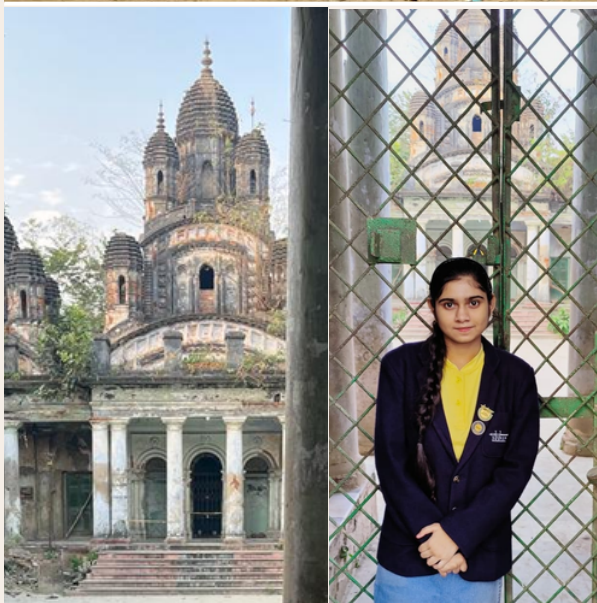
The main festival celebrated here is Rash - hence the name Rashbari.



Choto Rashbari - the outer wall



The gateway to Choto Rashbari



Akshar students out to do research.

The Choto Rashbari is unique in its architecture as the temple reflects the amalgamation of old English style with Bengal style of design. There is a ghat beside the temple named Choto Rashbari Ghat. Sadly both are in a dilapidated condition.

POET'S CORNER

Tollygunge is the home to the distinguished poet **Kavishekhar Kalidas Roy** (1889 - 1975).

As a poet, Kalidas Roy was greatly influenced by the ideas of Tagore. His poems feature ideas of romanticism, rural life and 'Vishava' sentiments.

In 1920, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad conferred the title "Kavishekhar" **(the Chief Poet)** to him.

The poet's house in Tollygunge is known as '**Sandhyar Kulaya**' which means 'Evening Abode'.

Kavishekhar Kalidas Roy



Sandhyar Kulaya



Bishnu Dey's works

Ghulam Muhammad Shah Road is the abode of the notable poet **Kabi Bishnu Dey** (1902 - 1982) where an adda of sorts would gather everyday at his home.

Starting off as a symbologist, Bishnu Dey's poetry marked the advent of '**New Poetry**' in Bengali Literature.

His home in Tollygunge would witness a gathering of friends and social reformers who brought out the journal '**Sahitya Patra**' - to resist decadence and detachment in literature!

QUIZ TIME!

During our exploration of Tollygunge we came across many houses with interesting facades.

This house on the right has realistic images of birds on the front wall.



- Can you identify the '**Tuntuni Pankhi**' or the 'Tailor bird' on the wall?



Another interesting house is the 'Durga Bari', which has a beautiful crest on its gate.

- Can you identify the two big animals seen on the crest?



- Can you name the Prince who constructed the 'Ghari Ghar'?

akshar OUR TEAM

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1. Mr. Pradeep Mondol of the Mondol Family
2. Mr. Rajiv Soni

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