

CREATURES OF BANGLADESH

CAPPED LANGUR



Primates in general are dully colored species. Think of humans. We have no bright colors, nothing showy, and that's typical amongst our Order. Capped Langurs are a bit of an exception as you can see here. Bright orange fur covers most of their bodies making them one of my favorite species to encounter in the National Parks of Bangladesh. They are quite a large primate, weighing in as much as 14kg which means they must consume quite a bit of fresh leaves, fruit, bark, and flowers – the availability of each will depend on the season.

One of my favorite activities while I'm in the forest is to simply sit and watch as monkeys conduct their daily business. It's incredible how similar to us they are, and this becomes abundantly clear when one begins to spend time with them. They have complex social networks; some monkeys others trust, others they don't, some are polite, some are rude, some are lazy, some are energetic. Personalities run rampant in the animal kingdom and this extends all the way down to animals we consider to be 'simple' like turtles, which value both friends and family almost as much as we do!

Capped Langurs are considered vulnerable to extinction as their populations are declining rapidly and most are not connected to each other, which leads to unhealthy inbreeding. Despite this, they can fairly easily be seen (For how much longer though, I don't know) in many national parks in the eastern region of Bangladesh. If you get a chance, go see them while you can. Take your time with them and try to be quiet so you don't disturb their tranquil days living in the trees. Watch them, ask yourself questions, and maybe, just maybe, you'll even learn something about yourself in the process.

PHOTO: SCOTT TRAGESER/NATURE STILLS

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HERITAGE

THE KALLOL ERA: A GLIMPSE INTO BENGALI MODERNISM

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PHOTOS: INTERNET

From the early 19th century, Bengal witnessed a change in its socio-cultural norms as the British Raj came into ruling. Known as the Bengal Renaissance – during this time, Bengal flourished with newspapers, magazines and journals, starting from *Digdarshan*, the first periodical in Bangla, to *Shabujpatra*, the slim magazine which introduced a new age of Bengali literature, through stories, poetry and translations. All these magazines and journals had one important aim-- to start a literary movement, catering to establish modernism in literature. Some succeeded and some didn't but there was one magazine which swayed Bengal by embracing originality. To voice against the bourgeois society, Kallol magazine was established in 1923. History now marks it as one of the first conscious literary movements of Bengal.

Describing Kallol as just a magazine will be undermining it. It is a publication which just didn't stop at printing bold articles but rather created a movement from which emerged some of the most brilliant writers of Bengali literature. Interestingly enough, this all started with a club. In 1921, Gokulchandra Nag, Dineshranjan Das, Sunita Debi and Manindralal Basu set up the Four Arts Club at Hazra Road, Kolkata to discuss and practice literature, fine arts, music and drama. Within a short time the name of the club spread far and wide, and as a result, a good number of gifted writers began crowding it. The tradition of the Four Arts Club had been flowing down

through literature, painting, handicrafts and music. Many distinguished personalities joined in all the four departments. Manindralal Basu, Suniti Devi, Dinesh Ranjan Das, Gokulchandra Nag, Sudhirkumar Roychoudhury, Nirupama Dasgupta and others belonged to the literary section while the painting section was managed by Dineshranjan Das and Gokulchandra accompanied with a great personality like Yamini Roy. The music section included Suniti Devi, Sukumar Dasgupta along with his wife and other female members who also took part in the handicraft section. The club's activities were going on in full swing till the death of a member occurred. Soon the club was forced to close its doors, leading to the publishing of an anthology of short stories in 1922 named *Jhorer Dola*. The club had also planned to bring out a monthly paper, but never could—until 1923. Though the members were disheartened, Dinesh Ranjan and Gokulchandra pushed themselves to go on with the club's plan. It is said that with three takas only, they had printed the handbills -- (what is this?) of Kallol. On the first day of Baishakh, Kallol started its journey.

Kallol's vociferous emergence gave a jolt and jerk to the system of the outdated society. It gathered young writers who were going through the post-war – (which war?) trauma. The consequences of war were so alarming, that the entire western world plunged into anarchism, from which even the people of this country could not save themselves. Influenced by Marxism and Freudian thoughts, the Kallol writers loudly and boldly protested against the society harbouring ancient thoughts. The most notable debate that Kallol



Jibanananda Das



Kazi Nazrul Islam



Buddhadeb Basu



Premendra Mitra

started was on poetry between the conservative writers, comprising of older writers and the progressive pro-modernist writers consisting of younger writers. The debate got so rough that Rabindranath Tagore, the only person respected by both camps, was drawn into this debate. The main issue was the direction in which Bengali literature should go. In March 1927, Rabindranath took the chair over the two meetings between the warring camps. He proposed a compromise, but this was not accepted by the progressive camp. More intellectual repartee followed in the literary journals until, finally, Rabindranath silenced all by his formally innovative novel *Seser Kabila* (1928) and the timely creation of *gadya kabita* (free prosaic verses).

Not only did Kallol help to establish a new perspective in Bengali literature but

also established a new generation of Bengali writers and thinkers. When writing for *Kallol*, Kazi Nazrul Islam was only twenty-five, Premendra Mitra under twenty, and Buddhadeb Basu only fifteen. The most prominent member of the Kallol generation, however, was poet Jibanananda Das. Though not much recognised in his own lifetime, Jibanananda Das came to be regarded as probably the most important Bengali poet after Rabindranath and Nazrul. Others included Manindra Dey, Bishnu De, Jatindranath Sengupta, Motilal Majumder, etc.

Kallol came to an end after the death of its editor Gokulchandra. Kallol's end indicated not only an end of a journal but the end of an era. The Kallol era of seven years added a new chapter to the history of Bengali literature – a chapter marked by Bengali modernism. ■

STRANGE HISTORY

TIPU'S TIGER

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

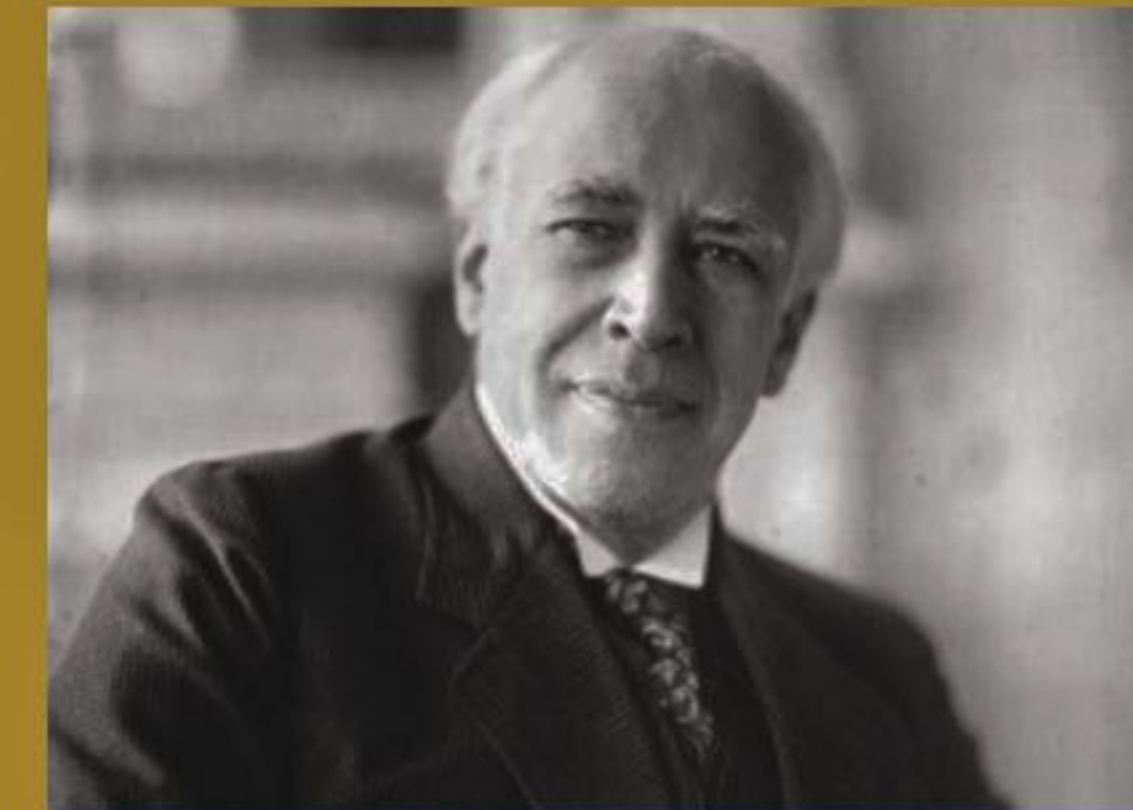
When conflict between Tipu Sultan, the independent ruler of Mysore and British East India Company reached its extreme, some Mysorean designers, in 1795 developed an ingenious instrument to appease their beloved Sultan. It was a carved and painted wood casing representing a tiger attacking a near life-size English man. Both the attacking tiger and victim were made of wooden shells where miniature bellows were inserted. Holes were carved in the bodies of the tiger and the English man in such a way that after pressing the small ivory keyboard the tiger would produce

howling noises in a regular interval. In turn, the fallen English man would wail for help. Also a special crank handle mechanism was installed in the left arm of the English man that enables it to rise and fall symbolising his helplessness in front of the tiger.

The tiger was the royal emblem of Tipu Sultan. In fact, his throne featured a large wooden tiger covered with gold. So, this toy, which is considered one of the first automatic toys in modern history, represents Tipu's triumph over colonial invaders. However, despite Tipu's valiant efforts to keep the British invaders at bay, he was defeated at the fourth Anglo-Mysore war and killed at the battle field due to the treachery of his courtiers. Several specimens of Tipu's tigers were seized by the British army from his summer palace and transported to England for an exhibition at the Tower of London. This ingenious instrument was first exhibited in London in 1806.



PEARLS OF WISDOM



“UNLESS THE THEATRE CAN ENNOBLE YOU, MAKE YOU A BETTER PERSON, YOU SHOULD FLEE FROM IT.”
CONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKI
Russian theatre practitioner



“MAKE THEM LAUGH, MAKE THEM CRY, AND HACK TO LAUGHTER. WHAT DO PEOPLE GO TO THE THEATRE FOR? AN EMOTIONAL EXERCISE. I AM A SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE. I HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN THAT.”
MARY PICKFORD
Canadian-American film actress, writer, director, and producer



“THEATRE CAN'T BE DONE AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN - IT'S ORGANIC.”
KIM CATTRALL
English-Canadian actress