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**RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF KALIGHAT PAINTINGS IN THE 19TH CENTURY  
BENGAL**

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**Abstract**

To begin with, paintings like literature or other historical sources are important repositories of a bygone era. This research paper will seek to understand the multiple experiences of the emerging ideas of India through the medium of subaltern paintings.

Replete with imageries of the past, the Patuas and their paintings provide us an important intellectual entry point to understand the times in which they were made particularly those of colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century. Although, this art at present has been relegated to the whims and fancies of mass consumption practices of the market economy as is evident in the cheap artifacts (bearing its name) proliferating the streets of Calcutta and other mundane places. Interestingly, its historical significance or its cultural utility to the times till present date continues to attract serious scholarship from historians and other social science disciplines of the academia. There are many unanswered queries and questions regarding the Patuas that merits serious attention and still awaits a proper answer. Firstly, it pertains to the nature and composition of the Patua paintings itself. Queries like who made it and for what purpose, who were the targeted audience would tell us a lot about the cultural and political dimensions of the times they were made and unmade. Precisely it is the political ethnography of the colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century, that this research proposal would look into.

Secondly, as this research paper will show, expanding on the conceptual category of inner domain of Partha Chatterjee, it will argue that through the world of paintings and its multifaceted themes : it became a way by which these marginalized sections articulated their versions of 'Nationhood' or ridiculed those 'nationalist models' of middle class intelligentsia.

The research would attempt to analyze the art of Patuas in all its 'totality'. Delineating this totality would primarily entail understanding the various nuances and intricacies that underpinned much of their works and the multifaceted nature/behavior of the painters themselves. As it is said, contextualizing any work of art is important so as to understand its various aspects to its cultural significance and utility. The colonial society and culture had its imprint on the works of Patuas has often been commented upon by scholars and historians alike.

However, one aspect that has often been ignored by the art historians is the fact that there were many interconnections between Patua style of painting and other mainstream schools of painting which are hardly recognized in the academia. Further, it would also seek to add on to the existing literature by employing painting as a source or rather a political commentary of the times in which

they were made. Political commentary through the eyes of Patua painters would open up a new space of analysis. That every art form is the performance of politics in visual form can be inferred from the ways in which these painters crafted their art. Making sense of the politics as exhibited in this art form of the Patuas would form an important aspect of this research work.

**Keywords:** Kalighat Paintings, Tribal Paintings, cultural commodity, , Inner Domain, National.

- Historically, the evolution of Kalighat painters can be traced to the fluid times of the 19th century colonial Calcutta. Those were the times where in major churning were taking place in the way identities were forged or made sense of in the socio-cultural milieus of the city. Further, this period (19th century) was to see a major changes in way the British administration diversified itself into the inner domain of the ‘Indian’ public. The company administration had evolved a lot since the dramatic events of the 1757 Battle of Plassey and the 1764 Battle of Buxar. Initially, the colonial power, owing to its insecurities did not venture into the inner domain or into the social aspects of the Indian public. However, this was to change at the turn of the 19th century. Ready with certain form of subject knowledge constructed by certain peculiar forms of colonial knowledge production, the British with its with new found commercial interest to make a colony out of India unleashed various ideological processes at different period of time in the 19th century. The rise of reform minded individuals was also to make its presence felt in the early decades of the 19th century: courtesy the English Education System (here references must be made of Charter Act of 1833 and the February Minute of the President of Committee of Public Instruction. It is such contexts of fluidity one needs to situate the emergence of Patuas and understand its utility as a conceptual entry point to understand the different social realities and tensions of the times.
- The study of social histories of Kalighat Painters, their origins, their evolution, their specific forms of cultural production would provide one with an interesting vantage point through which colonial Calcutta’s many-sided histories could be delineated and understood. It attempts a socio-cultural and economical evaluation of the Chitrakaras and the Patuas of Kalighat Patuapara. In the process, a historical analysis of the socio-economic conditions of this community in 19th colonial precincts will be attempted.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE Status of Research at National Level**

- It may be emphasized that very few studies have focused on studying the socio-economic aspects or attributes of Kalighat painters. A proper evaluation is thus warranted in its context in order to conserve their art.
- Rituparna Basu and Rituparva Basu(2009-2010) ‘The Folk Arts of Bengal and Evolving Perspectives of Nationalism, 1920S-40s’: A Study of The Writings of Gurusaday Dutt.: The paper sheds light on the ‘folk art’ which contributes the intimation not only to a regional identity but also to a set of national values, that could harmonize the discording professes of citizenship, ethnicity and history, as well as incorporates the widest universal values of humanism.
- Nandalal Bose. (2010).‘Masculine Regeneration and the Attenuated Body’ in Niharika Dinkar(ed.) Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2010), Oxford University Press . His works are

known for introducing the sense of Indian element by simultaneously discarding certain westernized aesthetics and like Abanindranath Tagore and Asit Kumar marked the beginning of the new cultural scene of Bengal in the 20th century.

- Faye Hirsch.(2016). ‘A Rare Kali Woodcut from the Era of the Battala Printers’ in *Art in Print* Vol. 6, No. 3 (September – October 2016): This work looks into the many works on Kali or its various manifestations in the cultural scene of colonial Calcutta. It also highlights the infamous press act of 1910 which sought to regulate the visual medium for its anticolonial dispensations.
- Ghosh, Pika. (2003). *Unrolling a Narrative Scroll: Artistic Practice and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Association for Asian Studies, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 3: Ghosh has talked about how the art of Kalighat painters transformed from being urban political commentaries to scholarly commentaries on Hindu political life.
- Dey, Mukul.( 2020 ). ‘Drawings and Paintings of Kalighat.’ With the emergence of the twentieth century, Kalighat paintings as a form of Indian Art began losing its charm as cheaper imitations in the form of oleographs were made accessible from Bombay and Germany. These were the paintings which were made with the help of machines. These were varnished and colored lithograph copies of the primeval works.
- S Sinha and C. Panda (ed.) *Kalighat Paintings*, V&A Publishing in association with Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad, 2011: has focused on the different manner in which the Kalighat painters could incorporate secular themes as well as at the same time reflect on the various European influence in the cultural fabric of colonial Calcutta.
- Ghose, Ajit. (1926) ‘Old Bengal Paintings.’ *Rupam* . Here in the authors talks about the colonial imprint in the many imaginings of Kali and in the various works of Kalighat painters.

#### **Status of recent research at the international level-**

- Ghosh, Pika. (2000), ‘Kalighat Paintings from Nineteenth Century Calcutta in Maxwell Sommerville’s *Ethnological East Indian Collection*.’ *Expedition* 42, no. 3: 11–21. Ghosh has tried to contextualize the artists and their art in certain political social framings of colonial Calcutta. Ghosh has observed on how its becomes pertinent to strike a balance between economic viability of the work as well as sticking to the ingenuity of their core art forms.
- GuhaThakurata, Tapati. (2011). *The City in the Archive, Calcutta's Visual Histories*, Seagull Arts :This book envisages the cultural fabrications of the modern city and implements the changing forms of middle-class affability.
- Mitter, Partha. (2007). *The Triumph of Modernism, India’s artists and the avant-garde 1922–1947*. Reaktion Books London. : Mitter looks into the relationship between western modernism and evolving forms of modern art in colonial India. He has focused on the feminine aspect of the Indian art , the disappearance of oriental art and the various interesting ways in which this art form evolved.
- Bhattacharya, Arunima. ‘The Popular and the Nation: The Kalighat Patas.’ *The Criterion: An International Journal in English* 4, no. 2 (April 2013): This journal is enthralled on how the Kalighat painters of mid and late nineteenth century, used their seditious glee in reshaping themselves to a dynamic metropolitan city.

- Das, Aurogeeta. (2010). Metropolitan and Traditional: An Exploration of the Semantics in Contemporary Indian Arts Discourse, Etnofoor, Vol. 22,
- W.G. Archer in his famous book, Bazaar Paintings of Calcutta: The Style of Kalighat (1953), H.M.S.O., for the Victoria & Albert Museum has highlighted the manner in which western ideas and influences impinged on the work of Kalighat painters

### Research Gap

- The available research work on the subject has not much focused into the political, social, cultural and economic histories of colonial Calcutta in the 19th century through the lens of Kalighat painters and their craft.
- The studies around such painters have not yet employed visualized art forms created by Kalighat Painters to understand the various lived realities of the many sections of the colonial Calcutta's society.

Not much effort has been made to understand the use of social satire as a historical method to interrogate the cultural fabric of colonial Calcutta in the 19th Century.

- Not much has been said about the consumer of such products. The patrons psyche in relation to the Kalighat paintings should also be taken into account to have a holistic understanding of their art forms?

### Objectives

- To understanding the role of social satire as a potent historical method to understand the changing the political, socio-cultural dynamics of 19th Century colonial Calcutta.
- To understand the many lived realities of the middle classes of the Bengali society and then to question the nature of colonial modernity in the city precincts.
- To understand the broader aspects of economic impact of colonialism on folk art forms like the Kalighat painters and to focus on the impact of capitalistic economic enterprise on local art forms? Does capitalism support local manufactured or produced art forms or do they always share an inverse relationship?
- To investigate the decline of small-scale industry and the harm done to the indigenous economic system as a result of British policy should be investigated. Kalighat Painters followed the style of lithography in a simple way from 1840s to 1860s. Though they used this technique until the beginning of twentieth century. First they outlined the main subject and then painted it by hand. This process of art should be investigated further.
- Academic - and extra-academic - debates on nationalism, in South Asia and beyond, have for long been hijacked by monolithic definitions of nationhood. In scholarship on Bengal, debates about 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' nationalism (or, for many, 'communalism') remain haunted and stultified by such definitions. Ghosh intervenes here by positing multi-scalar - and, in constitutionalist terms, federalist - conceptualizations of nationhood. One may or may not agree with her ideological predilections for federalist nationhood. However, Ghosh definitively

establishes that, for many Bengali thinkers between the 1910s and 1940s, federalist and pluricentric structures of nationhood and governance had more appeal than the kind of monochromatic ideas of majoritarian nationalism/communalism and unitary nation-state sovereignty that later scholars have (Ghosh believes, unjustly) largely focused on, occluding other visions. Ghosh especially lionizes two figures, Chittaranjan Das and FazlulHuq.

- While Das and Huq are celebrated politicians, Ghosh demonstrates they were original thinkers too. For both, the 'region' constituted a conceptual dyad with '(con-) federation', allowing Bengal to aim for a local autonomy which would unite Hindus and Muslims in a shared framework of local self-governance. Underlying their programmes were sophisticated grammars of politics. For Das, as Subhas Chandra Bose later underlined, a pact or contract - sharing the model of commercial agreements - brought individuals and communities together in spite of their divergent ideological-religious orientations. One sees how underlying the famous Bengal Pact of 1923, there was, I feel, a quasi-Lockean model of politico-economic social contract. Contract, rather than the (mere) affective bonds of love and sacrifice celebrated by earlier Swadeshi nationalism, anchored Das's vision of inter-communal harmony.

- Ghosh occasionally alludes to regionalist ideas among non-Brahmanical communities like the Namashudras. My own research on the Rajavamshis, and especially on the interwar Rajavamshi leader, PanchananBarma, as well as on Tripura's 'tribal' actors, including the famed Dasarath Deb, convinces me about the valence of regionalist and federalist imaginings among various (so-called 'lower caste') peasant and 'tribal' communities of late colonial and early postcolonial eastern India. (Such demands for decentring control continue to reverberate today, including among Rajavamshi activists in Bengal, as also across north-eastern India.) Ghosh also occasionally speaks about the traction of extra-Indian models of federalism, including American and Soviet ones, among Bengali actors. The author, one hopes, will pursue this avenue of research more comprehensively in a future opus. The early-mid 20th century was a time of widespread experiments in federalism across the British Empire, the French Empire (as Frederick Cooper has most recently underlined), and the Soviet Union. The latter experiment influenced Bengali socialists and communists in particular, as they debated over multi-national confederation models in the 1940s. Ghosh would enrich debates in 20th-century global intellectual history if she links her Bengali case studies more extensively to these other horizons; some of the primary sources she quotes point to the rich possibilities. The book, as it stands, is, however, already a landmark. Going beyond the worn dyad of 'nationalism' and 'communalism', it brilliantly persuades the reader to adopt federalist lenses in visualizing the politics, literature, and metaphysics of late colonial Bengal.

- It is against this general backdrop of Westernization of the perception of the "artist" that the effort to create a new, distinctly Indian art emerged. In July 1896, the English art historian and teacher Ernest Benfield Havell became the Superintendent of the Government School of Art in Calcutta, after holding the same position at the Madras School of Art for about a decade. A European himself, Havell was a firm believer that the practice of art education in India unquestionably had to be based on the Indian arts tradition<sup>2</sup>. In a statement expressing his

grievances with the arts education system in Calcutta before his arrival, Havell complains: “The study of design, the foundation of all art, was entirely ignored and throughout, the general drawing and painting classes, the worst traditions of the English provincial art school forty years ago, were followed...Oriental art was more or less ignored, thereby taking the Indian art students in a wrong direction.” Havell’s efforts at reorganizing the educational policy at the Government School of Art were driven by the desire to change the school “from a Fine Arts Academy into a school of design and applied arts, with a special focus on the Indian traditions of decorative arts.” Throughout the 1890s, Havell spilled all his energy into his role as an education reformer, creating a crafts program at the School that taught “decorative design” classes such as stenciling, fresco painting, lacquer-work on wood, and the preparation for stained-glass windows. His efforts at “Indianising” the School’s curriculum at this stage in his career, however, was focused solely on revitalizing the “decorative” art portions; he left the “fine” art areas almost totally untouched, therefore creating an implied dichotomy that assigned the “fine arts” as a purely European area of study, and the “decorative arts” its Indian counterpart and only area of concern for reforms<sup>3</sup>. Towards the late 1890s, Havell’s focus began to shift from education reform to the engagement of a new emerging Indian fine arts scene, and his role within that scene was not only as an educator, but now as an ideologue as well.

- His effort at revamping the collection at the Government Art Gallery adjacent to the Government School of Art, specifically with examples of Mughal miniature painting and samples of the Ajanta murals as well as reproductions of Byzantine and early pre-Renaissance Italian art was the initial precursor to this shift. Havell’s acknowledgment of an Indian “fine arts” tradition<sup>4</sup>, and his presentation of it in tandem with pre-Renaissance European art, may signal a dissolving of his conceived dichotomy between the purely “fine” and purely “decorative” arts, which itself allowed him later to promote, in a highly paternalistic manner, the new paintings of the artist Abanindranath Tagore as distinctly original and Indian. Havell even went so far to say, as Tapati Guha-Thakurta reveals, that Abanindranath’s evolution as an ‘Indian’ artist was owed ‘entirely to the new collections of the Art Gallery,’ despite the fact that Abanindranath had independently experimented with his own Indian-style paintings since 1895. Introducing Abanindranath Tagore In the volume titled *Art & Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922*, Partha Mitter identifies two clear periods of art production in colonial Bengal. First, he says, came the Westernising period, which I touched upon at the beginning of this paper. He places this period within the time frame of 1850-1900, and defines it by the introduction and absorption of Renaissance naturalism in India. <sup>17</sup> Then, between the years 1900-1922, he explains, came the “counterpoint,” during which a cultural nationalism emerged within the *bhadralok* and Orientalist groups in Bengal<sup>5</sup>.

- He explains this nationalist sensibility as being tied in with the *swadeshi* movement that surfaced in response to the 1905 partition of Bengal, and emphasizes that this nationalism was not confined to the form in painting alone, but implied an entirely new *weltanschauung*, or world view, for the participants. Although as an artist, Abanindranath explored the indigenous traditions of miniature painting, ornamental design, and calligraphy before 1905 and the surge of political



nationalism in the region, it is within this swadeshi context and environment that Abanindranath is often introduced and discussed.

- As Tapati Guha-Thakurta writes in one article on the artist, “His name became synonymous with the age of nationalism in modern Indian art, and the rise and spread of the movement that took on the denomination of the Bengal School... Frozen in time in his fixed slot, Abanindranath could then be dropped from that later history with no qualms.” While Abanindranath did emerge as a publically recognized artist during this historical period of swadeshi upsurge and nationalist polemics, it would be unfair to analyze his work as dependent on this environment. As R. Siva Kumar points out in one article, “the artist is well capable of making an original and independent response to his times.” Later in the same essay, Siva Kumar agrees that Abanindranath’s introduction as an artist happened at “the juncture at which the first wave of Westernisation was breaking and a new wave of cultural nationalism was beginning to take shape,” adding that “Like most modern artists

- looking for alternatives he turned from his immediate past to more distant antecedents and towards fringe-practices. Thus his moment of personal difficulties coalesced with the moment of nationalist cultural assertion.” Siva Kumar’s crucial assessment here of Abanindranath’s own personal development as an artist as something that merely “coalesced” with the advent of cultural nationalism is extremely important for a true understanding of the situation: Abanindranath’s art should be understood not as a “mere confirmation or exemplification” of the ideological discourse in the air at the time, but instead as an individual expression of creativity that happened to be contemporaneous with that discourse. As Siva Kumar reaffirms later in his essay, “Abanindranath’s involvement in the nationalist movement and his artistic career were two intertwined but distinct strands.” It is important to keep this distinction in mind when treating the relationship between Abanindranath, Havell, and the other cultural commentators to be dealt with in this essay, so as not to let the personality of Abanindranath become obscured by the anti-colonial polemics that weighed heavy in the air of his environment. Abanindranath’s Relationship With Nationalism It was through the advent of popular journalism that Abanindranath’s art was first popularized on a large scale in India during the first decade of the 20th century. It was mainly through Ramananda Chatterjee’s publications *Prabasi* and *The Modern Review*, appearing in Bengali and English, respectively, that the paintings of Abanindranath were able to stand next to a nationalist dialogue expounded by three principle Orientalists: E. B. Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Sister Nivedita. *Prabasi* was Ramananda Chatterjee’s first publication of the kind, but he decided in 1907 to produce *The Modern Review* as its English counterpart because, as Partha Mitter explains, Chatterjee was “convinced that the foreign rulers must be made aware of the emergent nationalism.” Clearly, *The Modern Review* was a cultural magazine with a mission, and it is within this forum that the Orientalists were able to brand Abanindranath’s art as nationalist<sup>6</sup>. Just as E. B. Havell demonstrated in his efforts at education reform, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita were both deeply committed, as R. Siva Kumar explains, to reviving the Indian art traditions which they believed were being smothered under the weight of Westernisation under Colonial rule. In a different work, Siva Kumar explains that these

kind of politically-charged assertions were padded by a deep background of Orientalist research in Indian art traditions that inevitably led to the binary categorization between “Western” and “Eastern” art. While the creation of this dichotomous conflict was largely of the Orientalists’ making, Abanindranath “went through the motions of subscribing to the program” in his own right, and was by no means a silent artist without personal agency<sup>7</sup>. Although he made the conscious effort to forge his own “Indian-style” painting before he had even met Havell, as will be discussed later in my treatment of his paintings, Abanindranath still allowed himself to be co-opted by the spirit of the cultural nationalist movement that was immortalized in *The Modern Review*. While the “nationalist” sentiments of his paintings were drawn almost completely by the rhetoric surrounding the art in *The Modern Review*, Abanindranath’s friendship with Havell led him to make his own swadeshi assertions. For example, when Havell put all of the Western-style paintings in the Government Gallery up for auction in March of 1905, Abanindranath followed suit by selling his own collection of naturalist oil paintings to a flea-market vendor, including his own.

- As it turned out, there are many alternative ways of imagining a nation as can be discerned from the works of the painters from these ‘marginalized’ communities.

- Or we can say that a live tradition, vibrant and deep rooted into people’s blood, ‘folk art’ reveals a massive variety of form and theme. Her ten-twelve thousand years old creative culture and a wide-spread art geography apart, India has hundreds of ethnic groups scattered from north to south and east to west, each with its own art form representing its taste, needs, aspirations, aims, joys, sorrows and struggles. Regional peculiarities, nature around and a different pattern of day-to-day life apart, their art reveals each group’s ethnic distinction and creative talent. Not in the ‘word’, these primitive peoples discovered in the ‘form’ their diction which gave expression to their joy, jubilation and intrinsic warmth and announced their rejection of violence, eroticism and the ugly.

- Kalighat Paintings refer to the class of paintings and drawings on hand-made or more usually on machine-made paper produced by a group of artists called ‘Patuas’ in the neighbourhood of the famous Kali temple at Kalighat in between 19th and earlier 20th Century.

- A N Sarkar & C Mackay remarked that “The Kalighat school of painting is perhaps the first school of painting in India that is truly modern as well as popular. With their bold simplifications, strong lines, vibrant colours and visual rhythm, these paintings have a surprising affinity to modern art”. Kalighat Paintings refer to the class of paintings and drawings on hand-made or more usually on machine-made paper produced by a group of artists called ‘Patuas’ in the neighbourhood of the famous Kali temple at Kalighat in between 19th and earlier 20th Century.

- A N Sarkar & C Mackay<sup>8</sup> remarked that “The Kalighat school of painting is perhaps the first school of painting in India that is truly modern as well as popular. With their bold simplifications, strong lines, vibrant colours and visual rhythm, these paintings have a surprising affinity to modern art”. By the early 19th century the Kalighat Temple was a popular destination for local people, pilgrims and certain foreign visitors as well. With the rise of popularity and fame of the goddess Kali, many of the artisans and craftsmen flocked to Kalighat area to capitalise the new market by selling cheap religious souvenirs to the visitors. Soon after that a number of skilled



artists moved to Kolkata from the rural Bengal especially from 24 Paraganas and Midnapore and set up stalls outside the Temple.<sup>9,10</sup> In the villages they had painted long narrative stories on scrolls of handmade paper often stretched to over 20 feet in length and were known as patachitra. Each section was known as a pat and the artists therefore became known as patuas. The patuas would travel from village to village, unrolling the scroll a section at a time and singing the stories to their audiences. However, the visitors to Kalighat did not want to buy long scrolls which would take a lot of time to paint. The patuas therefore started painting single pictures involving just one or two figures that could be painted quickly with simple forms leaving the background plain and eliminating non-essential details.<sup>9,10</sup>

- When German traders found that these pictures had a very great sale throughout the country—for they were sold in thousands all over India—they imitated them and sent back glazed and coloured lithographed copies which flooded the country and drowned the original hand-painted pictures. The old art has gone forever; the pictures are now finding their homes in museums and in the collections of a few art lovers.”

- W G Archer finally concluded that the final phase of Kalighat paintings ceased to exist after about 1930.

- Suhashini Sinha has chronologically categorised the Kalighat painting collections of V&A into three broad phases which can be expanded to the entire genre of Kalighat paintings.

- 1. Phase I: Dated between 1800 and 1850, which attributes the origins of the genre, and the formation of essential Kalighat Characteristics

- 2. Phase II: Dated between 1850 and 1890, this set depicts many variations between style, composition and colour and has attained its peak in its class

- 3. Phase III: Dates from 1900 to 1930, which shows the end of the tradition with the infiltration of cheap lithographs.

- Kalighat Paintings: A portrayal of Society

- Mukul Dey mentioned that “The folk art of Kalighat did not keep itself divorced from life. Events of burning interest, social oddities and idiosyncrasies, follies and foibles of people, and hypocrisies and meanness—these never escaped the Kalighat painters”.<sup>8</sup> In another article<sup>3</sup> Mukul Dey also cited number of examples and attributed that patuas were keen observer of life. “.. wealthy zeminders spending their money on wine and women, foppish babus spending their day and night at nasty places..... these would not escape the searching eyes of these artists and they would draw the caricatures in such a way as would repel ordinary people from such activities”.

- The rise of ‘Babu culture’ in late eighteenth century was well envisaged sarcastically by the patuas in series of Kalighat paintings where, the ‘babus’ were illustrated as high class rich gentlemen who were typically identified with nicely oiled hair, pleat of his dhoti in one hand and either chewing the betel or smoking a hukkah in the other hand, flirting with courtesan.

- In 1873, the Tarakeshwar murder case was a public scandal in Calcutta based on an affair between Elokeshi, the young attractive wife of Nabinchandra Banerji and the mahant or chief priest of the Shiva temple at Tarakeshwar. Upon discovering the affair, Nabinchandra Banerji cut

Elokeshi's throat with a fish knife (bonti). In the trial, Nabin was sentenced to life imprisonment and the Mahant was fined and imprisoned for 3 years.

- Various scenes related to the Tarakeswar affair were portrayed in Kalighat repertoire: the meeting of Elokeshi and the mahant at Trakeswar Shiva temple; Elokeshi offering betel and hookah to the mahant; mahant offering her childbirth medicine; Elokeshi embracing Nabin and asking his forgiveness; Murder of Elokeshi by Nabin with fish –knife (bonti), courtroom trial of Nabin and the mahant and the rigorous imprisonment of mahant.

- During 1890s, Shyamakanta Banerjee became famous for wrestling with tigers while performing in circuses. This subject was also reproduced many times in Kalighat paintings.

- In what was dubbed the “Oriental school” of Kalighat painting, predominant themes shone a spotlight on religious figures and scenes from sacred texts, from goddesses Durga and Lakshmi, to the characters of Rama and Sita in the ancient epic poem of Ramayana.

- The alternate discipline of Kalighat painting, known as the “Occidental school,” included pieces that depicted ordinary people engaging in everyday life or captured the changes taking place in Kolkata at the time. The artworks commented on social evils such as crime, or expressed support for the Indian independence movement through illustrations of the likes of Tipu Sultan or Rani Lakshmbai – both revered for having fought the British. The painting alerts against indiscriminate sexual relations, something that is bound to drag into the danger of AIDS. The danger of the deadly disease has been symbolised by a horrible-looking demon figure with its wide-open mouth and blood-smearred tongue. The demon figure has already grabbed the copulating couple inside its mouth and its blood-thirsty tongue lies across it, though ignorant to the danger the two figures, the male and the female, are absorbed in sexual intercourse. The demon figure has already grabbed the copulating couple inside its mouth. As becomes obvious from another painting of Shambhu Acharya included in this book as Deity-pata, this image, though quite queer, is in all probabilities a local transform of Vishnu, or a deity sharing his character of sustaining the world. In one of his hands he is carrying a paddy stem, the symbol of life which he sustained, and in the other, a wheel-symbol, Vishnu's principal attribute. Considering costume-styles of European rulers as superior to its, the folk mind, especially around Bengal, clad even its deities in European costumes. Broadly, the painting portrays the entire community engaged in one to one dialogue. The painting does not bifurcate its canvas into cosmic regions but with a roundel filled with water and teeming with fishes, crocodiles and crabs, suggestive of the ocean, and birds on wings, suggestive of the sky, it symbolically renders the world of names – the world as it reveals in words.

- Thus Patachitra had been popular among tribes like Santhals, Hos, Munda, Juangs and Kherias who painted ‘Patachitras’ depicting the birth of their first ancestors Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Burhi; how they had seven sons and seven daughters and how these seven brothers were married to their sisters. With the growing influence of Buddhism, patuas embraced the faith. Buddhist kings and monks made extensive use of scroll paintings to preach Buddhism and during this time, Patachitra probably spread to Bali, Java, Sri-Lanka, Malaysia and Tibet. With Muslim invasions, Islam spread and painters became followers of Islam.<sup>11</sup>

- Many chitrakars from Nayahave been part of international projects such as Manu Chitrakar, who has done a graphic novel about the life of Martin Luther King Jr – I See The Promised Land – in collaboration with African-American writer and Blues singer, Arthur Flowers. Chitrakars like Manu straddle both faiths --- Hinduism and Islam, practicing customs from each. Some have syncretic names and Hindu and Muslim customs are often blended in this village.<sup>12</sup> Popular image was one of the goddess Kali, a replica of the enshrined image worshiped inside the temple. Depicted with her tongue out, blood dripping from her mouth, and holding a sword and a demon's severed head in two of her four hands, this image of Kali especially fit into the colonial imagination and Victorian popular culture—an iconic souvenir to show horrified friends back home in Britain.
- But this ancient folk art is still appreciated by art lovers all over the world for its effortless style of drawings, colours, lines and space usage. The word Pata derived from Sanskrit word Patta means cloth. The painters are called Patuas. Interestingly, patuas do not just paint, they also sing as they unfurl the painting scroll to show it to the audience. These songs are known as Pater Gaan. The songs are of a wide variety, ranging from traditional mythological tales and tribal rituals to stories based on modern Indian history and contemporary issues like protecting forests and preventing spread of HIV/AIDS. Patuas generally use natural colours, which they procure from various trees, leaves, flowers and clay.
- The Kalighat painters were delightfully insidious in their derision of colonialism and globalization. Durga Killing the Demon Mahisha may have incorporated an ingenious message of resentment and revolution. According to a myth found in the Devimahatmya (Glorification of the Great Goddess), Mahisha had defeated the gods in heaven. At their request, Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma created the goddess Durga to defeat the demon. Barefoot Durga is depicted here on her vahana, the lion, with a sword in her right hand and her left foot pressed on Mahisha's throat, her face ruddy with intoxication and anticipation, poised to kill him. Atypically, Mahisha is shown wearing buckled shoes. While images of Durga killing the demon Mahisha are popular and varied, no other renders him as wearing shoes. Have the Kalighat painters offered here a subtle, but powerful, insult to the British: Mahisha, a buckled-shoe-wearing symbol of the British stomped to death by barefoot Durga? Is it a portent of things to come, or a form of subversive agitation? Here also nation/nationhood personified as durga/kali but in a bold way.. Another thing which is important is that, the kalima in bare feet standing over lord shiva indicate the woman domination over man and masculine as a whole...she is a shakti vulgarism (naked) rebellious and Nakedness indicate that women or motherhood is not only personified as graceful polite representation but it can be the symbol or representation of anger passion destruction , as we can see the ancient tribal woman and their beauty in their style and more close to soil.
- Expanding on the conceptual category of inner domain of Partha Chatterjee , it will argue that through the world of paintings and its multifaceted themes : it became a way by which these marginalized sections articulated their versions of 'Nationhood' or ridiculed those 'nationalist models' of middle class intelligentsia. Nationalist discourse therefore suffered from the tension between the National interest on the one hand, and the desperateness of various community class caste interests on the other hand.

- By linking the the idea of visual representation via the medium of paintings to the broader idea of nation making , it would argue that nation making project would always remain a contested idea. Paintings being one such medium where competing ideologies of their ‘ imagined nationhood’ were full manifest , both in its rigour and vibrancy.

### Foot Notes

- Different Nationalisms Bengal, 1905—1947 Semanti Ghosh pp 99. Discusses the idea of a regional nation within a federal India.
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- Cultural Studies (Taylor & Francis)
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- FOLK ART AND NATIONALISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY INDIA
- International Journal of Mechanical and Production Engineering Research and Development (IJMPERD) ISSN(P): 2249-6890; ISSN(E): 2249-8001
  
- Vol. 10, Issue 3, Jun 2020, 2743-2748 © TJPRC Pvt. Ltd.
- ISVS e-journal, Vol. 6, no. 4. October, 2019
- Aesthetics, Nationalism, and the Image of Woman in Modern Indian Art

**Working on several articles and project and publishing my paper in U.G.C enlisted journals and books and also the life member of CORPUS, KOLKATA and IHC.**