

Reading some specific
Kalighat *Patāchitra*:

An alternative mechanism authenticating
Nineteenth Century Bengali History

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Art, by way of reflection, very often gives us visual or graphic tropes and discursive artistic values to the contemporary socio-political setting. It reveals the artist's stance or inclination distinctly and be it a garbed representation like an allegory, or a direct one, it often adds to the reality-quotient beyond the aesthetic appeal of that art/text.

Taking off from here, and blending with the broad vision of this publication, a few Kalighat *patās* as unitary instances of the Kalighat school of painting, are taken up and would be read and interpreted as texts, thereby studying how this genre of art reflected the quotidian life of nineteenth century Bengal, supplanting the usual religious overtones it was otherwise known to be coloured with. To put it more explicitly, through the *patās* depicting the Tarakeshwar affair, this paper would read into the wider context that was mirrored in them and in the process catapulted the Kalighat *patās* into a distinctly unique position. From being an artistic object of purely commercial value, it graduated into an established category of 'proto-modern' art-form, and a stylised illustration of real events/contexts, becoming an ironic and satirical documentation of the history of Bengal in the colonial era.

Ad initium, we must have a clear idea of what Kalighat