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BENGAL SCHOOL OF PAINTING

Kalighat pot painting

Kalighat painting or **Kalighat Pat** originated in the 19th century West Bengal, India, in the vicinity of Kalighat Kali Temple, Kalighat, Calcutta, India, and from being items of souvenir taken by the visitors to the Kali temple, the paintings over a period of time developed as a distinct school of Indian painting. From the



depiction of Hindu gods, god, and other mythological characters, the Kalighat paintings developed to reflect a variety of themes..

History

Durga and Mahishasura, c. 1880

In the 19th century, the only school of painting that was flourishing in Bengal was the traditional art of scroll paintings that was popular in the rural areas. These paintings were done on cloth or patas. They depicted conventional images of gods and goddesses and scenes from epics like Tulsidas' *Rama Charita Manas*. The artists were villagers who travelled from place to place with their scroll paintings and sang the scenes from the epics depicted in the paintings during village gatherings and various festivals. These artists, called *patuas* or 'painters on cloth'.

The British: as patrons of this art.

Meanwhile, the British, having established themselves in the country politically started to evince interest in art, literature, and music. They set up institutions that imparted a European style of academic training to Indian artists. The Calcutta School of Art was one such school and attracted traditional artists—the *patuas*—to the city.

Initially, these artists were concentrated around the temple at Kalighat where there was a demand for religious art. Gradually, they have started to learn from the newer techniques and discovered that these could help them increase their earnings. They started creating new forms of art and the Kalighat painting was born.

Oriental and Occidental Kalighat

Another theme depicted, dear to the Bengali ethos, was that of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his disciples. But the Kalighat artists did

not restrict themselves to religious themes. Their paintings depicting different professions and costumes were also popular with tourists. Even contemporary events like crime were the subject of many paintings. The artists also chose to portray secular themes and personalities and in the process played a role in the Independence movement. They painted historic characters like Rani Lakshmibai, and Duldul the famous horse of Imam Hussain of Karbala.



Radha kishor Mondal