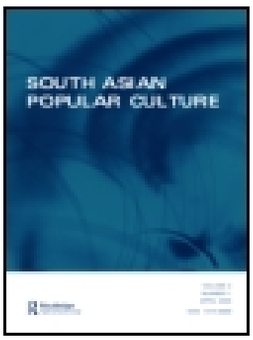

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War Cry of the Beggars: an exploration into city, cinema and graphic narratives

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ABSTRACT

This short piece is an account of the making of the graphic novel, *Kangal Malsat* (/War Cry of the Beggars, Bengali, 2013), designed, written and illustrated by the author (The graphic novel was described as the 'first' graphic work in Bengali by the popular press, and featured on the bestseller's list). It presents a short introduction to the primary text, a Bengali novel by Nabarun Bhattacharya who was one of the most influential and controversial authors of recent times. The plot of *Kangal Malsat* (2002) presents the exploits of the *Fyatarus*/Flying Men and the *Choktars*/Black magicians. The article draws attention to the contexts within which the cult of Fyatarus emerged. It elaborates on the ways in which the narrative complexity and the political content of the literary text were adapted into a sequential art form, specifically, into a popular genre-like graphic novel. It focuses on the manner in which a transgressive style and three-way exchange between literary text, cinema and sequential art was achieved as Mukherjee worked in tandem with the cinematic adaption of the same text (by Suman Mukhopadhyay, in 2013). The article reflects upon such manifold transactions, and shows in what way a dense and polymorphous form may be forged by means of revisiting and reframing an existing text. In short, this piece discusses the dialogic, multifaceted and fluid structure of graphic narratives, its function within wider political-cultural debates and the fashion in which such exchanges may produce conditions for cultural negotiations.

It may be useful to introduce the primary text or the novel written by the radical Bengali poet, novelist and activist, Nabarun Bhattacharya (1948–2014), at the onset. Bhattacharya shot to fame and gathered a forceful (Left) support following the publication of his fiery book of poems *Ei mrityu upatyaka amar desh na* (/This Valley of Death Is Not My Country, 1982). In time, some of his poems inspired political slogans and street graffiti, and eventually Bhattacharya emerged as an alternative cult figure who was critical about both mainstream Left politics, and rapid rise of right-wing ideology. Besides, his (ultra-Left) political leaning and his lineage (only son of celebrated authors, namely Bijon Bhattacharya and Mahashweta Devi) were not unknown. Bhattacharya initially worked with *Soviet Desh* (Bengali) magazine, and his novel *Herbert* (1993) received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award. *Herbert*

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was immediately considered to be a contemporary classic, and was adapted into film by Suman Mukhopadhyay in 2005. Bhattacharya was also the editor of *Bashabandhan* (Bengali) journal. The import of his work developed through his powerful writing style and subjects, which addressed current (political) crises, the darkly city and its underbelly, the urban poor, disposed and marginalized peoples. Furthermore, the post-colonial city of his stories has many planes, and the poor are yet to become a political mass. His narratives involve social outsiders and unusual situations, which are laced with black humour, and pungent words (also abuses). Moreover, the technique of suturing of multiple stories and time frames produce multi-layered texts, which are pointed commentary on the political predicaments of West Bengal, India. While Bhattacharya's poems, short stories and novels triggered fervent debates, he garnered a massive cult status following the publication of the Fyataru series.[1] These are stories about (three) underdogs, who have mastered the *mantra* 'fyat fyat sain sain', and are able to fly. The Fyatarus (Flying Men) are by and large washouts, who survive on the margins of development and sometimes disrupt the rapid advances of globalization through extraordinary methods.

Kangal Malsat, the novel, involving the Fyatarus, encompasses a broad canvas, as the plot tackles multiple times, characters and political commentaries. Set in the last decade, the plot often wanders into a range of other stories in order to produce compelling historical links between present-day and nineteenth-colonial Bengal, as well as with larger politico-cultural turmoil through the twentieth century, and the extensive process of decolonization.[2] Briefly, Bhattacharya's text maps a broader history of economic deprivation and political insolvency. Thus, while during the daytime the characters loiter around, during the night they encounter – under 'normal' circumstances – dead political leaders, ghosts from nineteenth century and other nocturnal creatures. Effectively, while daytime deals with contemporary issues, night-time unravels the complicated social history, which eventually provokes mutiny and mayhem. The novel describes the exploits of two groups, namely the Choktars (a title like 'Doctor' bestowed upon black magicians) and the Fyatarus. While the Choktars are headed by a rather loutish character named Bhodi (also known as Marshall Bhodi); however, they are practically led by an old talking Raven, who is Bhodi's father. In time, the Fyatrus and the Choktars join hands, and form the scrounger's army. Finally, they declare 'war' against the Government, and attack government offices with a 'tiny-dicky' antique cannon, old pistols, knives, scissors, shovels cockroaches, and also throw shit, pee, etc. on the buildings. And yet, the rebellion fizzles out in the end, as they accept the treaty of peace, become petty agents in disparate departments and get inducted into the corrupted system.

The chief characters of the novel, the Fyatarus or the 'flying people', namely Madan the fatuous, DS the drunkard and Purandar the failed poet, have been extremely popular ever since they appeared on the Bengali cultural scene. Typically they are duds, and often fight processes of marginalization through various unusual means. For instance, in one occasion, Purandar earnestly requests certain *kavi sammelan* (poets' meet) organizers to let him recite some of his (awful) poems. He pleads that he would read out his poems during the tea break; at the point *samosas* (snacks) are served, without disturbing the main programme. Naturally, Purandar's plea is disregarded, following which they carry a sack full of cockroaches and let those loose inside the auditorium, which results in utter chaos and discontinuation of the programme. The accounts of Fyatarus are marked by black humour, and function as political-cultural criticism. Moreover, the Fyatarus journey through the city's underbelly and dingy backyards of (under) development. The novel, in reality, considers a group of people

who are neither 'proletariat' (because they are jobless), nor 'lumpen' (since they are harmless). Surviving on the edges of defunct factories, cemeteries, dirty streams, plush housing estates and shopping malls, they neither work nor hurt, and therefore, remain unaccounted until they do something devious or throw back the muck produced by large establishments. Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha, in his passionate tribute to Bhattacharya suggests,[3]

> In that way Nabarun succeeded in carving a niche for his own *genre* of writing, a *genre* which cannot be characterised by any specific school of Bengali fictional writing. It is a curious mix of the agitprop, the magic real, the absurd *gharana* [school], artivism [art plus activism] and the carnivalesque. One can find few parallels of Nabarun in Indian literary tradition and his unique creative domain emerges as a powerful weapon for dissent and constitutes what Jacques Rancière called, a *dissensual sensorium* ….

While Bhattacharya's style is unique and subversive, his writing draws attention to the absence of political direction. Moreover, the site for such intense negotiations is Kolkata, and thus, this 'post-colonial' city, as mapped by Bhattacharya, appears like a vast wasteland, teeming with social outsiders and jobless loafers. Kolkata seems to be buried under dung, garbage and remains of the past. It is through such stories that, as it were, one traverses the invisible sewerage of the city. Indeed, such intensities throb through all Fyataru stories, and in his landmark novel *Kangal Malsat.* Samik Bag, in his article on the filmic version of the novel writes how,[4]

> Bhattacharya's freethinking shows in Kangal Malsat. He is irreverent towards Bengal's largest media house and Bengalis in general ([therefore, Bhattacharya writes] 'an entire race [community] is heading towards Nimtala (a crematorium), cellphone held in a tight grip'). He is critical of the city: [and says] 'The polluted air lends to everything a sublime maya, and any gust of wind throws up large and small flying polybags like white doves of peace.' …. [However] 'The Fyatarus are watching everything,' he [Bhattacharya] warns. 'A day will come when they'll strike back.'

One may argue that, Bhattacharya's narrative style becomes evocative, particularly because of such idiom. The novel plays with slangs and swearwords, as well as with common and locally used English expressions, which describe everyday objects, actions, etc. Hence, instead of writing in sophisticated Bengali, making of which has a historical significance, Bhattacharya subverts by using the unstructured lingo of the common people.[5] As a matter of fact, the text is seething with everyday vulgar expressions, and even Hindi phrases, which invent a powerful and contemporary lexicon. Furthermore, his exceptionally discursive and meandering style is thought-provoking, and encourages conversations of multiple orders.

The density of a world that's falling apart, of 'God forsaken' places, and of the wretched of the earth, is troubling (to say the least), and visually intriguing. In connection to this, and on a personal note, it may be specified that I studied Literature and Cinema at the University level, and have some informal training in fine arts and music (Sitar). Nonetheless, while writing screenplays seem to be a logical outcome of learning and teaching Film Studies, attempting a graphicnovel – that too of this scale – appears somewhat 'outrageous' in retrospect.[6] I presume, it was the sharpness of the writing that encouraged one to imagine a world that is tangibly multidimensional. Additionally, the scene was opening up for me, so to speak. On one hand, while young people in the University initiated a journal of comic works, in which I contributed; on the other, my first directorial venture, *Carnival* (2012), an experimental feature without dialogues (and with English inter-titles), was screened at the 41st *International Film Festival Rotterdam* 2012, under the 'Bright Future' category.[7] I also

executed a solo media-installation (*Crumbled Papers, Fragments of Cinema*) *at* the Nieuwe Oogst foundation, which was hosted by the *International Film Festival Rotterdam*.[8] Direct encounter with World Cinemas, exceptionally creative film-makers, and contemporary forms of image making generated many (obscure) ideas and perhaps inspired one to take the risk. Thus, at the point I thought of adapting the vast canvas comprising political history and critical discourse, which are presented in an overtly dark tone, or as I aspired to design, illustrate and rework *Kangal Malsat* as 'graphic novel', it somehow materialized by churning the compost as it were, and through the density and forthrightness of manifold stories. The locations, characters, their actions and misgivings, drove one to make new engagements with the emergent graphic form (Figure 1).

Speaking through graphic narratives

At the time Suman Mukhopadhyay adapted Bhattacharya's *Herbert*, it crafted fresh arguments regarding cinematic forms, and more significantly, about the networks of the post-colonial city, which are deeply scratched by accounts of refugee re-settlements and followed by chronicles of impassioned political movements.[9] Brinda Bose and Prasanta Chakravarty show how,[10]

> Suman Mukhopadhyay's film *Mahanagar@Kolkata* [2010] is predicated on the irrational, on the disparate threads that make up an almost macabre urban existence in contemporary Kolkata that is at once morbid, violent, ironic and romantic. … [i]t does not affiliate itself to any particular tradition or even discursive course but tries to map urban and semi-urban angst, in what is an entirely new syntax of thinking cinema in Bengal. Indeed, Suman Mukhopadhyay's *Herbert* (2005) and *Mahanagar@Kolkata* have both been discussed in this context of searching for a new language of cinema that all at once speaks of, and to, the chaotic and the meaningful in Bengali contemporaneities.

In reality, the city ('morbid, violent, ironic and romantic' also 'chaotic', and dystopic) has been the locus of production in a range of seminal films including Ritwik Ghatak's post-partition trilogy and Mrinal Sen's films about 1970s political discontents.[11] Moreover, Bengali novels (beginning with Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's *Chokher Bali*, published at the turn of the last century), short stories (for instance, those by Manik Bandyoapdhyay and others) and poetry (those by Kallol group et al.) as well as visual arts have relentlessly reconnoitered the city both as content and as context.[12] Therefore, the thought of adapting Bhattacharya's novel – considering its import within contemporary Bengali political-cultural milieu – into a graphic novel, via Suman Mukhopadhyay's film, appeared both audacious as well as foreseeable. In 2012, I approached Mukhopadhyay while he was planning the film (*Kangal Malsat*), and proposed that one could unpack the textures and layers of such multifarious narrative through formal experiments since, the practice of multi-planer page format of the graphic form may in effect facilitate one to explore the complexities evoked by the novel (Figure 2).

More important, during this period, I also met Nabarun Bhattacharya. As mentioned in the author's note of the graphic novel, on my first meeting with Bhattacharya (during January 2012) I enquired – somewhat waywardly – as to why there were no female Fyatarus or female flying figures. To this, Bhattacharya replied wistfully and said that, 'why, Kali [the sex worker] can be a Fyataru … you work on it'. This meeting, one imagines in retrospect, was the beginning of a three-way relationship between novel, cinema and graphic novel.

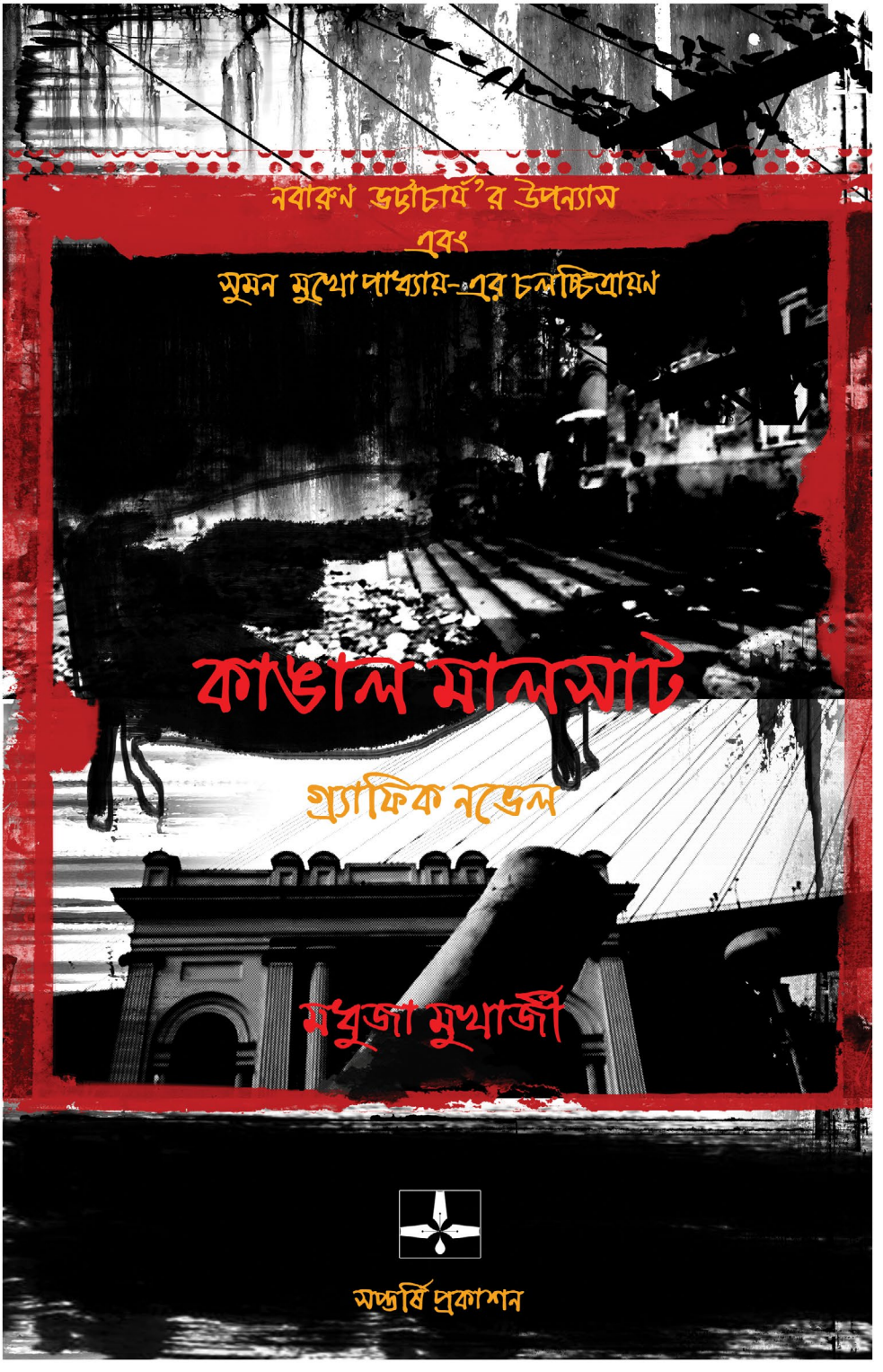

Figure 1. Cover page of *Kangal Malsat* graphic novel.

Figure 2. 'An explosion is brewing within' (page 9).

The objectives, however, were to produce ruptures within existing texts, genres, and also insert the question of gender within a text that tackles crises of masculinity and thereby forge newer modes of articulation. Eventually, *Kangal Malsat* as graphic novel, matured in collaboration with Suman Mukhopadhyay's film (of the same name), and through many conservations, trials and errors.

Prior to *Kangal Malsat* graphic novel, I had worked on a short graphic-narrative (titled 'Flaneuse wants bitter coffee' (2012)) on Kolkata and on the rapid growth of shopping malls on the premises of defunct factories.[13] Issues of gender, labour, changing cityscape, environment and public spaces became pertinent in that short work. However, the 'novel' format demanded much more rigour, patience and innovativeness. While Will Eisner's critical analysis *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) as well as Scout McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993), along with his descriptions of the different 'panel types', figured as seminal arguments, the thin line between comics and graphic novel remained conspicuously fluid.[14] Furthermore, the visual style of the pages shifted as I did many drafts or gradually progressed towards the unpredictable climax. And yet, one may reason that, if popular comics are about columns, line drawings, speech balloons as well as about coloured panels and linear stories, then, contemporary (black and white) graphic works show how comics could potentially become more playful and hard hitting if one were to dislocate the panels through new designs. In fact, the comic style was reworked through (irregular) sketches, asymmetrical frames, vertical panels, texts, and even blank and silent pages. While the storyboard pattern seemed relatively easier to me because of my exposure to film-making, breaking away from the structure and format, therefore, became imperative. Besides, the idea of including a pool of popular imageries, along with sketches (done by me) and snapshots taken from the film, added to the difficulties of execution and complexities of the form (Figure 3).

Otto Nuckel's early works like *Destiny: A Story in Pictures* (1930) and Lynd Ward's *Madman's Drum* (1930), a wordless novel, had already cast a shadow and a spell on my thinking. While these 'silent' novels were created during the forbidding interim period between the two World Wars, Will Eisner's pioneering creation, *A Contract With God* (1978) that incorporates the saga of wartime immigrants surviving in an American ghetto, became decisive for my reflections and rethinking. Likewise, Vishwajyoti Ghosh's political tale *Delhi Calm* (2010), and Sarnath Bannerjee's *Harappa Files* (2011), along with his *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007) became crucial references. The prospect of imagining in 'black and white' and the scope of juxtaposing sketches and photographs with texts was a significant impetus. Specifically, imagining in terms of grey tones, and differentiating, for instance, between pink, blue and yellow through the grey-scale, required fresh ways of looking and deliberation. Furthermore, one tried to avoid contemporary nostalgia regarding black and white images and the production of images with typical celluloid 'glitches'. In addition, the mixing of established graphic form with fragments of cinema, with frame-grabs and found images for example, was both engaging and testing. The process, needless to say, also involved a so-called artistic quest, hence, I strived to seek my own 'style' so to speak. I therefore, explored the hybridity of the form. Somehow, multiple influences and training (in fine arts, Comparative Literature, Film and Cultural Studies) came together as I laboured to achieve a pattern that was not yet part of established graphic or visual cultures (Figure 4).

The skeleton drawings or basic sketches of the pages were initially drafted on paper and then scanned. Thereafter, still images from the film's footage/rushes, as well as certain popular and widespread images, like those of guns and flying saucers (which may be found

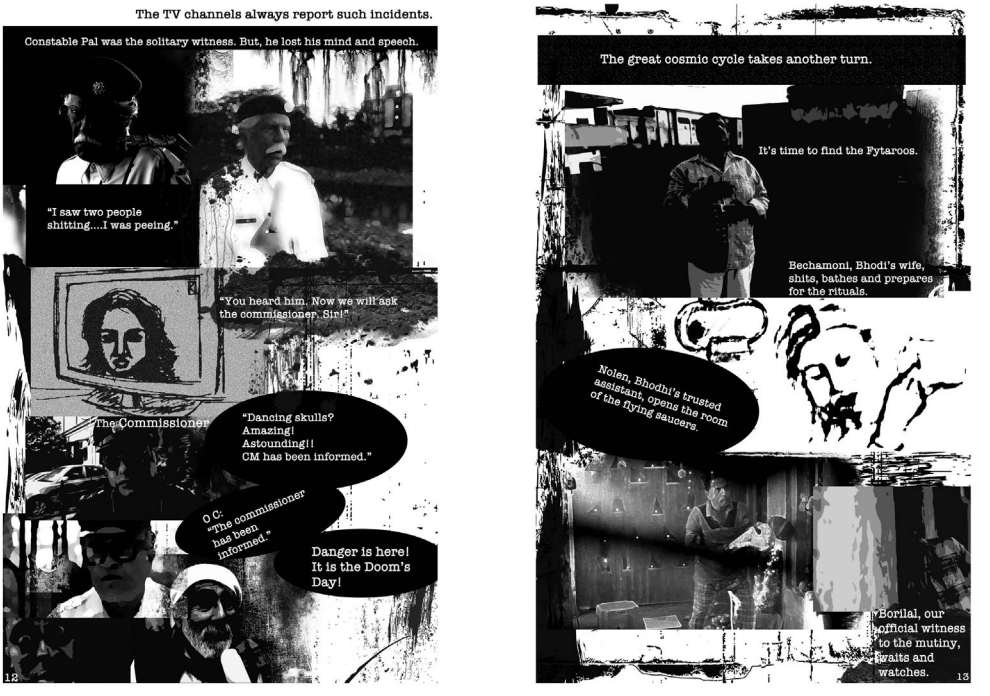

Figure 3. The news about 'dancing skulls' and preparations (pages 12 and 13, from the unpublished English version).

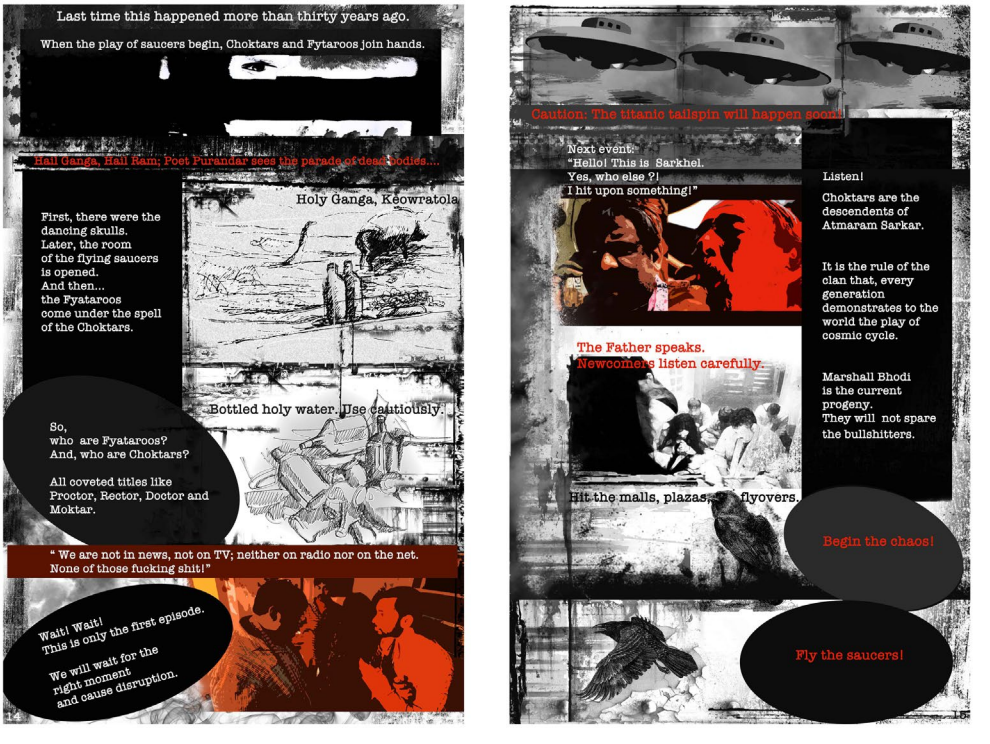

Figure 4. Pages 14 and 15 (from the unpublished English version).

on the Internet or other domains of the public sphere), were collated and added as new layers. Subsequently, sketches, photos and snapshots produced a tapestry of quotations. Thus, each page comprised drawings, imageries derived from multiple sources; moreover, I used photographs of Kolkata, some iconic images (of Terracotta soldiers, for example), as well as close-shots/cut-outs of faces of the actors (taken from the film's shots). While typical columns and panels were splintered, or were placed vertically (instead of horizontally) in relation to the texts/speech bubbles, or against blocks of colours and empty spaces, the purpose of the final illustrations was to create a dialogue between image, text and design.

Effectively, this work remains on the edge of many fields. And thus, both the content and the visual design of the work were imagined as distinct from both the novel and the film. For example, Suman Mukhopadhyay's (and cinematographer Avik Mukhopadhyay's) play with a specific colour palette – that included red, green and orange, because they referred to the Communist movements, the overall decadence, as well as contemporary political situation – was *not* adapted into the graphic novel. The palette in this case was asphalt black, charcoal, steel grey, ash, and various obscure shades of grey, as well as pale white and other muted tones, which were thereafter juxtaposed with bright red, yellow or green (complimentary colours). Through the graphic novel, I aspired to depict the sense of a rotting world; therefore, in this effort to produce murky zones, a wide range of layers and (digital) effects like mud, smoke, rusted metal, cobwebs, junk effects, etc., were applied, one after the other, in order to produce a fabric of despair. The overall ethos of the novel seemed to provoke the colour scheme. Briefly, the method of fabrication of each page entailed a primary sketch/design of the page done on paper, which was thereafter re-designed on the computer. Scans of my own drawings as well as frame-grabs from the film, and a number of other images, were put together within the design. Thereafter, texts were juxtaposed as one would add another set of images. Some of the pages eventually included more that 70 layers, which were later merged into one. Through etching, splitting of the frames and by (mechanically) devouring the edges, I wanted to craft an impression of a mucky milieu, which at the same time comprises black humour.

In reality, the 'plot' of *Kangal Malsat*, is somewhat bare. It involves the already notorious Fyatarus, who in this context encounter a superior group, that is the Choktars (the black magicians), and come under their spell. In due course, inspired by the black Raven, they team up to disturb and disrupt the state mechanism. In the end, as mentioned earlier, the rebels join the political parties and become local Government representatives. The 'narrative' of the novel, conversely, rambles into many other stories, situations and events. Moreover, Bhattacharya includes extensive political commentary, and passages regarding longer histories of colonial exploitations and post-colonial predicaments. Thus, with the nocturnal turn night fairies, petty ghosts as well as ghosts of British officers and Begum Johnson (Raven's lady-love) descend/rise from nineteenth century to interact with police officers and present-day political leaders. Furthermore, set in the Kalighat area (which comprises the famous Kali temple, a crematorium as well as red light area), the novel dwells on absurdities and plays with a dizzy exuberance along with a particular kind physical energy, that has been described as 'burlesque' by Mukhopadhyay (during a personal conversation in 2013).[15] Indeed, many such events, like digging for oil, the episode with dancing skulls, the night-time encounter of the local communist party leader with Comrade Stalin, the beheading of the police commissioner who, however, fixes his head and wears a collar to keep it straight, the attempts to produce AK-47 weapons locally and so on, produce an invigorating literary text (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Meeting with Com. Stalin following few pegs of Vodka.

To interpret, *not* the incidents, but the intent of the novel into a graphic-narrative form, thus, required certain degree of abstraction and stylization. For example, while the opening pages of the graphic novel were designed like a family tree, which explained the background of the characters, along with their co-relation with each other, a number of the early pages illustrated the context of Kalighat and its fetid milieu. Besides, a cinematic device like the 'interval' was integrated as a narrative strategy to underscore my own reflections and produce a narrative break as opposed to the episodic structure of the primary text. The attempt was to engage in a dialogue with the film as well as literary forms; furthermore, the effort was to find a liminal space that nurtures new vocabularies. In the graphic adaptation, the primary objective was to map the city of Kolkata, and shape new frameworks of storytelling. For instance, at the very the beginning, the graphic novel alerts the reader to an impending calamity, and a catastrophe that is approaching. Therefore, one can in point of fact locate a little cannon right from the start, although, both in the novel and in the film, Bhodi and his subordinate Sarkhel hit upon a 'tiny-dicky' Portuguese cannon much later (while digging for oil). Contrarily, one imagined that, for the graphic form it was imperative as well as possible to build suspense, and indicate a forthcoming action that was churning underneath.[16] Likewise, while the film focuses on Bhodi, and presents him as the protagonist (and ends with him), the graphic novel concludes with Sarkhel, who appears to be still digging even when all action is over. In effect, Sarkhel seems like a faithful representative of the Fyatarus and the Choktars, since he remains marginalized and hopeful, and does not get lapped into the powerful systems. The structure of the filmic plot became a point of reference to begin with; and yet, the purpose was to both refer to it, and break away from it.

The question of the city and gendered spaces remain close to my artistic concerns. Therefore, while one may argue that, though the novel does not subscribe to a masculine moral order and in effect, presents the meek and the famished, along with the crisis of masculinity, women, nevertheless (as mentioned earlier), do not grow wings, and do not fly. This thought was eventually extended to make Kali, the night-fairy, who is a passive character in the novel, into an active observer in the graphic novel or into yet another *Fyataru*/*Fyatarun* (or female Fyatar*u*).[17] More important, the concept of using sketches of dragonflies attached to the cut-outs of the faces of the actors to produce the figure of Fyataru emerged as one walked in and around Kalighat area. Indeed, on one occasion, during the dusk, as I walked around Kalighat taking pictures of the city, about hundreds of dragonflies swarmed the sky above my head. This experience instantaneously generated the image of a dragonfly with a human head. Furthermore, the dragonfly was merely an insect, not any pretty bird. As a matter of fact, one may suggest somewhat artlessly that, perhaps it was the deep orange twilight, which provoked such musing and mutations (Figure 6).

Recounting a few pages

Julia Round describes 'comics' as a hybrid form and elaborates on the notion of 'interacting signifiers'. Nevertheless, her critical formulation of 'heterodiegetic narration' could scarcely be applied in any straightforward way as one tried to give shape to something 'new' and outside the box. Round's writes,[18]

> [W]e may define comics narratology as based on an open half-narrative that relies on the reader both to interpret the panel contents and fill in the gutters. The panel itself is a hybrid signifier that represents a varying amount of story time ….

Figure 6. Pages 18 and 19 from the unpublished English version.

Indeed, as one worked on pages 13 and 14 or on 18 and 19 and so on, one deliberated upon the question of hybridity and 'story time'. One enquired, how does one glean a 'story' from the vast pool of information available in the novel? Which are the imperative and intriguing situations? How does the content lend itself to a/any visual design? More important, in what way can one transform the intensity and the ideological vigour of the novel into a graphic narration? Many of these issues were addressed through several trials and many errors. For instance, pages 13 and 14 present the plot and initiate the reader into the story. It brings together the episode in which Marshall Bhodi locates the Fyatarus. While three panels present three disparate moments, one intended to create unease through the placement of the 'shit-pot' sketch at the centre of the page, which is thereafter juxtaposed with the gentle face of Bechamoni (Bhobi's beloved wife and partner in mutiny). Similarly, the next page emphasized on Bhattacharya's point that the 'public are watching'. Therefore, a monocular eye, looking back at the mayhem and possible mutiny was used for the first panel. Three other panels and thought/speech balloons were framed bearing in mind a symmetrical pattern. Thus, on the left of the page one sees columns and texts, and on the right drawings are placed. These pen and ink drawings illustrate the putrid state of Ganga, on which dead bodies float like weed, while pigs devour the filth. In a similar way, one sketched discarded alcohol bottles, which are often used to carry home the holy waters. In addition, at the bottom of the page, Purandar is seen enquiring, 'who are Choktars?' Bhodi replies, 'They are titles, … like Doctors'. And, continues, 'we are not in news, not on Television; neither on radio nor on the net. None of those … shit!' These lines were (re)used to set the tone for

an impended revolution of sorts. In fact, while distinction between continuous time–space was deliberately blurred, one invoked a dual and sometimes contrapuntal mode of address. Thus, while on one hand, the panels are held together through a narratorial voice; on the other, the narrative is pushed forward or a narrative drive is created through a set of rather complex imageries, and through uses of different colours (especially red). Considering that text and images speak to each other, hence, texts function as images, while, images are used to tell the tale. Moreover, pages were imagined in terms of pairs and placed next to each other with regard to a visual symmetry.

Likewise, page 18 shows the Fyatarus actually flying, and looking down at the state propaganda machinery. Here, one used the face of the Raven (played by the influential singer-composer Kabir Suman), which is set against the figures of the flying men (with dragonfly bodies), to highlight the fact that, these flying creatures are 'watching' us. One also used Purandar Bhat's scandalous poems to stress upon the disquiet. For instance, Purandar writes,

> My life has no exciting brawls/ therefore, on cotton fields I crawl. /
>
> I have no dream either, only dregs/ Like a lizard, I eat bugs, I lay eggs. …
>
> There are no headlines as I die/on palaces, I pee; the law, I defy …[19]

Additionally, one quoted from other texts penned by Bhattacharya, which in a prophetic manner described present political conditions about a decade earlier. Bhattacharya/Purandar Bhatt inscribed, 'CPIM blossoms in our orchard/Trinamul buds in the backyard'.[20] This page, nonetheless, may also appear as deceptively bare. Yet, the narration is not limited to the text; instead, through a series of shifts in perspective and images, along with specific silent panels, the aim was to craft a tension between the literary plot and the visual design. Furthermore, page 19 stages a set of three columns on the top-horizontal, and three on left-vertical. This page brings together the iconic and found image of Goddess Kali (of Kalighat, Kolkata), as well as a silhouette picture of a dragonfly, along with the visual design done for the character of Kali (the sex worker). Kali, the unsuspecting witness to mayhem and mutiny, now has decorated wings, and smiles in joy and dances in ecstasy. Images of Kali dancing were initially grabbed from the film; though the sequence was eventually deleted.

In conclusion, one therefore suggests that, Kali's reflective dance in the graphic novel (in absence of this exuberance in the film or in the novel) throw light on the question of female Fyatarus or Fyataruns (raised earlier). Moreover, muted tones were used for both page 18 and 19 in order to foreground the complexity of the situations and actions. In the process, one enquired if films interpret and visually transform literary texts, what is the function of graphic novel? Indeed, one may propose that, the graphic novel allows unforeseen juxtapositioning of image and text, or unique deployment of texts as images (and the vice versa). Moreover, the graphic form can present multiple times and fabricate images of a multilayered world within a single page or frame. Consequently, the discursive style of Bhattacharya was not transformed into events or actions; in fact, his political thought and radicalism were translated into images, design and colour. Thus, while writing and illustrating *Kangal Malsat* graphic novel I did not simply borrow from the primary text(s), rather, the attempt was to interpret, transform and intervene in order to create a set of dialogic and polymorphous texts. In my understanding, *Kangal Malsat* graphic novel is *not* a flawless adaptation of the literary classic; however, one may say that it signals the arrival of alternative forms, and an-other type of audio-visual and textual convergence, which is

outside mainstream media.[21] Also, the process highlights the ways in which the 'popular' may be re-imagined as something that is far more provocative, radical and innovative.

Notes

1. See Bhattacharya and Chattopadhyay.
2. See Sengupta.
3. See Purakayastha.
4. See Bag.
5. See Kaviraj.
6. See Mukherjee 2015.
7. The film was in competition at the 12th *Osian's Cinefan Film Festival* 2012 and has been screened at the 'Deconstructing Cinematic Realities' festival in Moscow during 2012, and in the University of Pittsburgh in 2014 and across Indian cities (see Trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJu_3Xql0tc).
8. See Mukherjee 2013.
9. Also see Biswas 2002; Mukherjee 2012.
10. Bose and Chakravarty (138).
11. See Mukhopadhyay, Biswas Ed. And Ghatak's own writings.
12. See Chaudhuri.
13. See Mukherjee 2012.
14. Also refer to Heer and Worcester, Eds.
15. It may be noted that, Kalighat area is in south of Kolkata and is central to Bengali (Hindu) public sphere. Besides the myth of the Kali temple, and the adjacent crematorium and the holy Ganga, the place has become volatile in the recent past because of the fringe growth including the expansion red light area and political tussles. Kalighat is also well known for the early twentieth-century Pat paintings done mostly Muslim artists. Also see Barbiani.
16. Also see Horstkotte and Pedri's reading of Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (338).
17. The term Fyatarun signifying female fyataru is my own creation.
18. Round (323).
19. A number of English texts used in the graphic novel are a *reworking* of the subtitles of the film.
20. Translations author's own.
21. See Jenkins.

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