



## Abol Tabol: Sukumar Roy as Humorist and Graphic Illustrator

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### Abstract

Although much has been written on Sukumar Roy as one of the greatest humorists in Bengal his artistic talents receive little scholarly attention in comparison to his nonsense verses. In this article, I attempt at analysing his humorous illustrations, mainly those published in *Abol Tabol*, a remarkable book that he wrote and designed in his death bed. I argue that the book is a work of art, a unique creation not only in the history of Bengali book illustration but also in the history of modern caricature art in India.

### Introduction

*Abol Tabol*, Sukumar Roy's famous book of nonsense verses, came out on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1913, a couple of months after his death.<sup>1</sup> Although he did not live to see the printed book, he had selected the poems, done the cover-design and illustrations and edited the major part of the book's manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Most of the poems of *Abol*

*Tabol* previously appeared in *Sandesh*, the well known children magazine published by his father, Upendrakishore Roy Chowdhury, in 1913. The book, however, was not a compilation of the earlier poems. He thoroughly revised them as well as changed and modified the earlier illustrations before including them in the book, conceptualized as a single work of art, chef-d'œuvre of his short, but intensely productive creative life, both as a writer and artist.

There has been much discussion on the literary works of Sukumar Roy. Scholars have taken great pain to make sense of the nonsense verses by unravelling the satirical contents veiled by the humorous and often

<sup>1</sup> Sukumar Roy died on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1923 at the age of thirty six. He was born in 1887 to Upendrakishore and Bidhumukhi Devi in Calcutta.

<sup>2</sup> Sukumar Roy had prepared the dummy of the book, some of the pages of which were shown in the documentary on him by Satyajit Roy. We have not yet had the opportunity to see the original book. See the biographical sketch of Sukumar Roy by Siddhartha Ghosh in Sukumar Roy, *Abol Tabol*, Ed.

Siddhartha Ghosh and Saumen Pal [Facsimile Publication] (Kolkata: Subarnarekha, 2004)

absurd play of words. It has become quite clear from their critical writings that, though intended to be a children book, *Abol Tabol* is a serious text, a piece of subtle literary politics of laughter, which should be read, as Sudipta Kaviraj has suggested, in the historical context of the literary modernity and satirical literature in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, however, we do not add anything to the rich corpus of critical discussion on his literary works; rather focus on the illustrations published in *Abol Tabol*, which, though an constituent as opposed to ancillary part of the book created by the author himself, have not yet received considerable critical attention.

### Artistic Talents of Sukumar Roy

Like Upendrakishore, Sukumar Roy was a refined but an untrained artist. But, unlike his father, he did not pursue the career of professional painter and limited himself to book illustration. A large body of his illustrations appeared with his own writings and those of other writers in *Sandesh* from its inception. He was the illustrator of Abanindranath's children story *Khatanchir Khata*, published serially in *Sandesh* in 1920. His illustrations were retained when the story was later published in book form by the Indian Publishing House. However, his first mature illustrations were probably those that he did for Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay's novel *Nabin Sanyasi*, serialized in *Prabasi* in 1910. From the very beginning, Sukumar Roy's drawings revealed his personal style, showing no obvious influence either of the naturalistic art of the colonial art schools or the Indian style of the Bengal School, about which he was both sympathetic and critical. Besides being an artist, he was a seasoned art critic, who engaged in heated public debate on the legitimacy of modern Indian Art – the aesthetic monopolization of the Bengal School art – with O.C. Gangoly, the veteran art historian and custodian of Bengal School art, in the pages of *Prabasi*.<sup>4</sup> In 1914, he published *Shilpe Attukti* [distortion in art], in which he interpreted the formal distortion in the western modernist art and its deviation from the academic norms of naturalism as a gesture of revolution against the age-old artistic cannons and conventions, which, having been practised habitually over a very long period of time, lost their vitality and relevance.<sup>5</sup> It is probably the first ever essay written in Bengali in which the Futurist and Cubist art movements were critically discussed. He also translated

Abanindranath's essay on Indian Iconography for the *Modern Review* [March Issue, 1914].<sup>6</sup> The translation was later published as a book with a changed title.

Widely known today as the greatest writer of nonsense verse in Bengal, Sukumar Roy was a man of science. He studied chemistry and physics in Presidency College with Jagadish Chandra and Prafulla Chandra as his mentors and was awarded the Roy Bahadur Amritanath Mitra Prize as the "Best Hindu in Combined Physical and Chemical Sciences."<sup>7</sup> In 1911, five years after he graduated with a bachelor's degree from Presidency College, he went to England on Guruprasanna Scholarship to study advanced printing technology. He was selected for the prestigious scholarship because one of its criteria was that the candidate must have adequate knowledge in the subject he was willing to pursue abroad. The son of Upendrakishore, the pioneer of photographic halftone in India, Sukumar knew the techniques of modern printing very well and often assisted his father in his studio. In England, he was admitted to the London County Council School of Photoengraving & Lithography and also took private lessons in collotype lithography and colour lithography under W. Griggs, the veteran printmaker who prepared the lithographic reproductions of the extremely delicate Mughal paintings for E.B. Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, published in London in 1908.<sup>8</sup> Fascinated by the advantage and possibilities of modern lithography, Sukumar wrote his father in a letter to add a lithography department to the studio of their family enterprise, U. Roy & Sons.<sup>9</sup> He was also fascinated by the other printing developments in the west, particularly Intaglio Halftone and Mechanic Photogravure process.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Abanindranath Tagore, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy* (Calcutta: Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1914) the earlier title in the *Modern Review* was *Indian Iconography*.

<sup>7</sup> Hemanta Kumar Adya, *Sukumar Roy: Jiban Katha* (Kolkata: Pustak Bipani, 1990) p. 30

<sup>8</sup> Sukumar Roy, *Sukumar Sahitya Samagra*, Vol. III, *Op.Cit.* P. 171

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, P.172

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, although halftone was widely used for printing coloured pictures in the magazines in India, it was not thought "artistic" enough in comparison to the Kokka or Japanese woodcut reproduction prints or photogravure. When O.C. Gangoly decided to publish *Rupam* with good quality pictures, he got the pictures printed in photogravure process abroad. It is interesting to study the aesthetic hierarchy between the various commercial printing mediums in the nationalist period in Bengal.

<sup>3</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, *Laughter and Subjectivity: "Self-Ironical Tradition in Bengali Literature," Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 34, No. 2 (May 2000) P379-406

<sup>4</sup> Sukumar Roy's essay "Bharatiya Chittrakala," was published in *Prabasi*, Sraban-Agrahayan, 1910

<sup>5</sup> Sukumar Roy, *Shilpe Attukti*, in Sukumar Roy, *Sukumar Sahitya Samagra*, Vol III (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1996) p. 84



Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Nabin Sanyasi*, Half-tone, Prabasi (1910)  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Nabin Sanyasi*, Half-tone, Prabasi (1910)

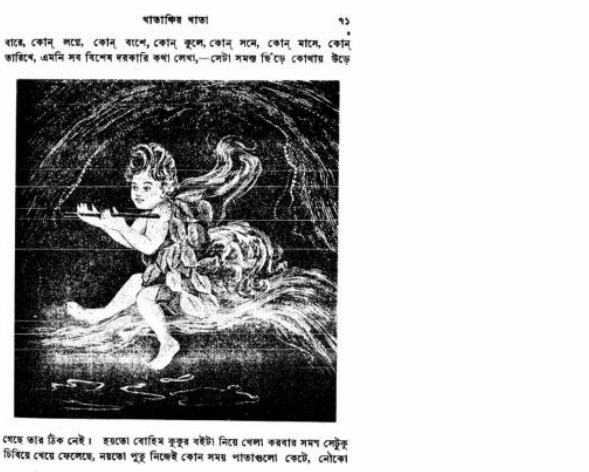


Fig 5.3. (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Khatanchir Khata*, Half-tone, Sandesh  
 Fig 5.4. (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Khatanchir Khata*, Half-tone, Sandesh

Sukumar Roy's educational and other print activities in England are described in detail in the letters he wrote to his father and other family members. He proved his talent in his college and his teachers spoke highly of him. His technical research papers on the problems of modern printing were published in the *Penrose's Pictorial Annual* and *British Journal of Photography*, two prestigious international journals of modern graphic art. During his stay in England, Sukumar showed interest in fine art, visiting the art galleries and museums. In order to get some professional training, he tried to enrol himself in an art class, particularly one of the Life Classes held at various places in the summer.<sup>11</sup> He even sought advice in this regard from William Rothenstein, the noted English painter and a close friend of Rabindranath.

The publication of *Sandesh* was begun when Sukumar was abroad and he regularly sent his writings and illustrations for the magazine. In 1915, after Upendrakishore's death, he took the charge of editorship and since then, his contribution in *Sandesh* grew in number.

**Abol Tabol: the Shape of the Book**

The earlier versions of the illustrated verses published in *Abol Tabol*, as we have already mentioned, were published in *Sandesh*. *Khichuri* (Hotchpotch) is the first poem, published in 1914. The poem is about the grammatical fusion or *Sandhi* of the names of two different animals. In the illustration, Sukumar Roy followed the poem closely, representing all the eight strange hybrid creatures described in the poem. In one, he attached the head of an elephant to the body of a whale; in another, the head of a giraffe and the body of a dragonfly

<sup>11</sup> See biographical information in, Sukumar Roy, *Abol Tabol* (Facsimile), *Op. Cit.* p. 13

were joined together, and so on. Sukumar Roy did not change the illustration much when he published it in the book; he rather tweaked it, making it look more neat, bold and graphically elegant. Unlike this illustration, some other illustrations in *Sandesh*, such as *Katukutu Budo* (Old Tickler) and *Khudod Kol* (Uncle's Contraption) were changed significantly. The change and modifications were mostly compositional and did not indicate any change of interpretation, which was literal to the texts.

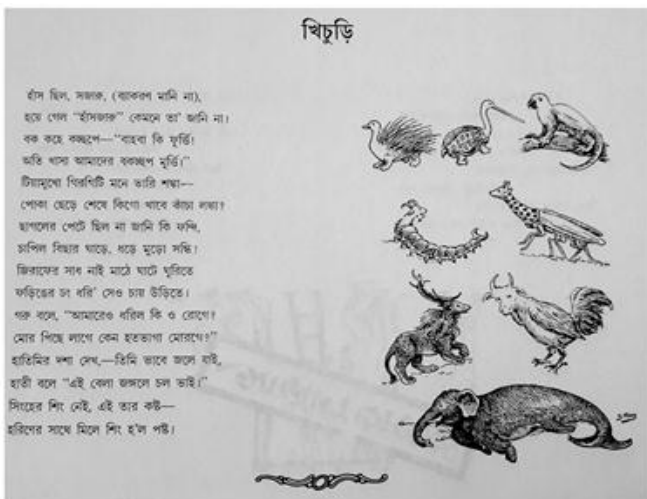
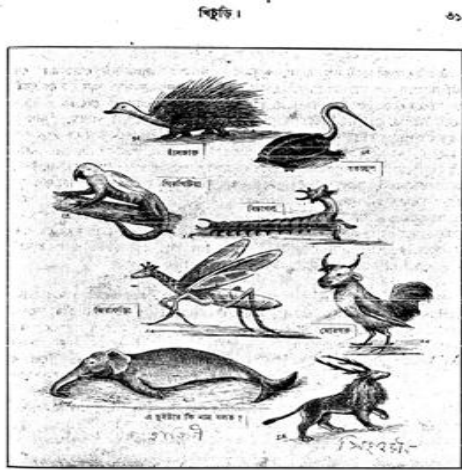


Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Khichuri*, Halftone, *Sandesh* (1914)  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of *Khichuri*, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1923

All illustrations in *Abol Tabol* are straightforward visual translation of the characters and events described in the verses. No effort was made to show anything which is additional and not described in the text. However, even as the illustrations throw no new light on the verses, they show Sukumar Roy's remarkable graphic skill and power of imagination in visualizing the fantastic characters with their full visual charms. If it is the verses that make the readers laugh, it is the images that intensify the laughter by making the literary events and characters concretely visible before their eyes, defying their own imagination.

In *Sandesh*, the illustrations were printed both in halftone and line block, and often outlined by a border separating the image from the rest of the page. In the *Journal Home Page*: [www.kaavpublications.org](http://www.kaavpublications.org) Copyright 2019 Kaav Publications

book, Sukumar Roy did not use halftone and reproduced the illustrations in line block, discarding the border and placing emphasis on the graphic quality of the images and their harmony with the typographic body of the printed text. The placement of the images in relation to text was crucial to the entire design of the book and was thoughtfully planned by the author in his death bed. The two illustrations of *Foska Garo* (the Mishit) showing the two subsequent moments of the action described in the poem suffice to make us understand how carefully the pages of the book is designed. One of the reasons why he chose the unconventional top-bound format for the book was that, unlike the conventional side-bound format, this format allowed him to play with the image-text alignment more freely and creatively.

Besides the illustrations, there are two colour halftones of Sukumar Roy's paintings used as its cover and frontispiece. The frontispiece was in fact based on the black and white illustration of the poem *Ganer Gunto*, published in *Sandesh*. The cover representing various humorous scenes and activities - none of them is related to the content of the book - indicate the strange world into which the reader is about to enter.





Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Katukutu Buro, Halftone, Sandesh

Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Katukutu Budo, Line Block, Abol Tabol 1923



Fig (Left) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Bombagarer Raja, Line Block, Sandesh  
 The figure of King's uncle with a garland of hookahs is removed from the illustration of the poem in Abol Tabol

Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Bombagarer Raja, Line block, Abol Tabol, 1923



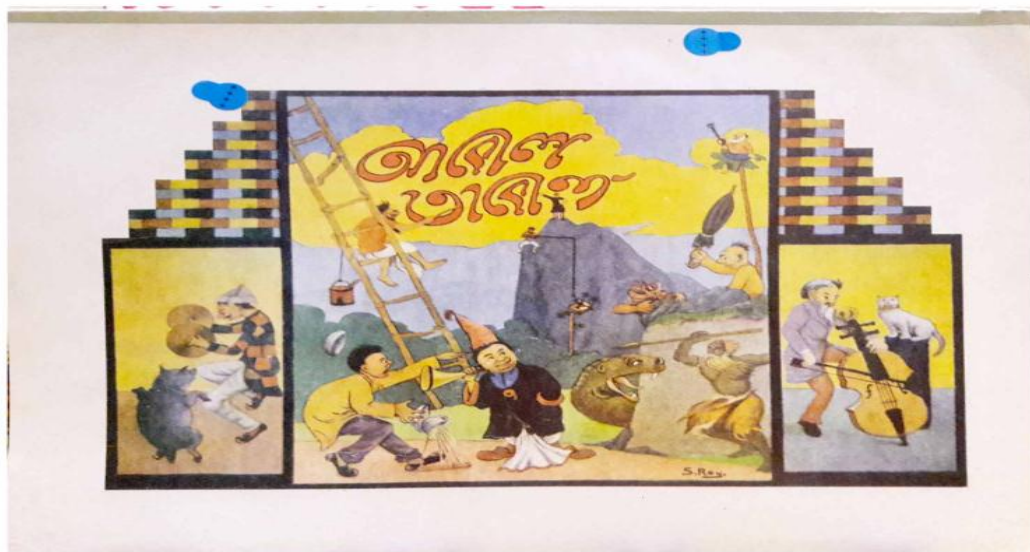
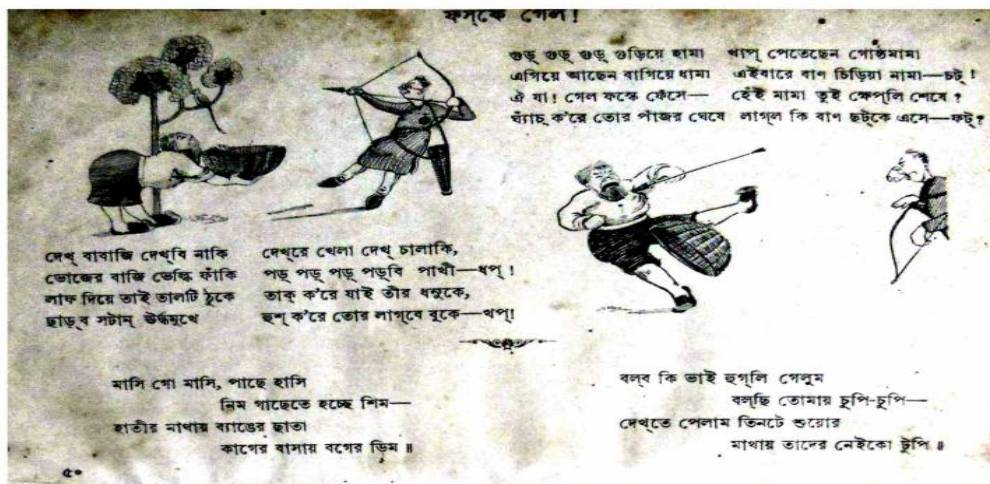
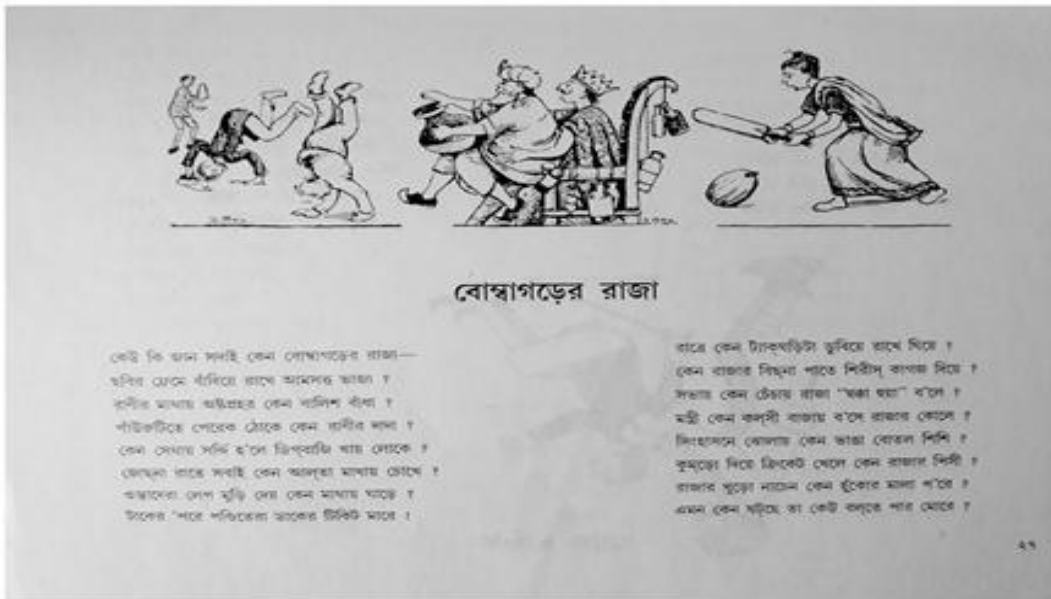


Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1923  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Book-Cover, Halftone, *Abol Tabol*, 1923



Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Ganer Gunto, Half-tone, *Sandesh*  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Ganer Gunto, Half-tone, *Abol Tabol*, 1923

### ***Abol Tabol: Images of Laughter***

We can see the humorous illustrations of *Abol Tabol* as part of the history of caricature and satirical art in Bengal. Although both Gaganendranath and Sukumar used images as a means to stimulate laughter, they did not use the same form or employ the same strategy and their nature of humour is very different from one another. Gaganendranath's was largely a satirical humour with strong ethical underpinnings. His cartoons made the viewers laugh by showing or unmasking the bitter truth or incongruities of the society. But, Sukumar Roy's humorous images are not "significant comic," which Baudelaire defines as a combination of image and

moral idea.<sup>12</sup> They make us laugh solely by the power of their depiction, by the play of images, and not primarily by the thought or idea expressed. Play is probably the best word to define the essence of the creative act involved in the making of the images of *Abol Tabol*, for play lies outside the antithesis of folly and wisdom, truth and falsehood and good and evil which often dominate the social and political satires. However, it needs to be mentioned here that all the pictures of *Abol Tabol* are not of the same kind. They can be grouped in two categories: the illustrations of the verses and the pictorial tailpieces, independent of the texts. The

<sup>12</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "On the Essence of Laughter," *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Publishers Inc, 1964) p. 157

tailpieces, created especially for the book, were not published earlier in *Sandesh*.

There is a poem called *Babu*, published in *Sandesh* in 1922, not included in *Abol Tabol*.<sup>13</sup> Dressed in fine apparels and doused in perfumes, the stylish westernized Bengali Babu is walking on the road, while smoking a cigarette. All of a sudden, a small girl spits betel on his clothes, which further get dirtied with the mud water splashed by a passing carriage. Encountering such situation, the man becomes simultaneously sad and angry. In his brilliant essay on the self-ironical literature of Bengal, Sudipta Kaviraj discussed the poem as a continuation of the self-ironical literary tradition in Bengal, in which the figure of Babu, whose historical existence was thought as fragile, inauthentic and full of contingencies, cropped up as the prime target of attacks.<sup>14</sup> However, according to Kaviraj, Sukumar Roy's unique critique of the Babu can best be found in his poem *Tans Garu* (The Westernized Cow/ the Blighty Cow), published in *Abol Tabol*. Although this poem, unlike the previous one we have discussed, does not represent the Babu in any straightforward way, but the physical description, behaviour and dietary habit of the cow, which is in fact not a cow but a strange bird, argues Kaviraj, are not representational, but ideological, indicating the quintessential character and attitude of the *Babu* in an indirect way.<sup>15</sup> However, one can find Kaviraj's analysis attractive and compelling but not entirely convincing. Kaviraj, while interpreting the poems, completely ignores their illustrations, created by the author and semantically closely connected to the poems. His brilliant decoding of the meaning of *Tans Garu* as a disguised Babu does not help us to understand the illustration, which rather resists the ideological reduction, and thereby makes laughter possible. The question is not if Kaviraj is wrong; he is perhaps right. But, following him, we may reach the social and material world of the Babu kept shut behind the poem, not the "estranged world"<sup>16</sup> in which the fantastic bird of the picture actually lives.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sukumar Roy, *Sukumar Samagra*, Vol I, *Op. Cit.* p. 112

<sup>14</sup> Kaviraj, *Laughter*, *Op. Cit* Pp.399-401

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Kayser's makes the term "estranged world" famous in his analysis of laughter. Basing his understanding mostly on the literary works from Romanticism to the twentieth century, he argues grotesque is "the estranged world" that has ceased to be reliable and therefore instils fear. The First World War, the changing political climate of Indian politics in the second decades of the twentieth century was a period of insecurity that led Sukumar Roy to turn to grotesque, perhaps as a form of protection. For a detailed discussion of Kayser's literary grotesque, see <sup>16</sup>



Fig (Left) Sukumar Roy, Babu, halftone, *Sandesh*

Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Illustration of Tans Garu, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1915

Virginia E Swain, *Grotesque Figures* (London: John Hopkins University Press: 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Satyajit Roy also remarks on Sukumar Roy's fantastic creatures in *Abol Tabol* and elsewhere. Comparing them with those by Lewis Carols and Edward Liar, he argues that they do not belong to the land of fairy tale. They live in our world somewhere around us, though we don't know them. For him, the greatest achievement of Sukumar Roy is the creation of a world that exists half ways between the real and the imaginary ones. When Kaviraj argues that *Tans Garu* is the Bengali Babu in disguise, he is predetermined to read the poem not as a grotesque but as a significative comic or allegory, whose meaning would reveal not instantly by means of intuition but only a while later after the semiotic and ideological connection between the poem and the real world has been analytically established. Importantly, it is mentioned in the poem that Sukumar Roy put the portrait of *Tans Garu* because its appearance is too strange to be described in words. It seems more appropriate to read the poem and its illustrations as grotesque figures, and not a significative caricature. Even if the image of Babu had inspired Sukumar Roy to write the poem, the image became completely transmogrified in *Abol Tabol*. For Satyajit Ray's analysis, see the introduction, Sukumar Roy, *Sukumar Sahitya Samagra*, Vol. I, *Op. Cit*



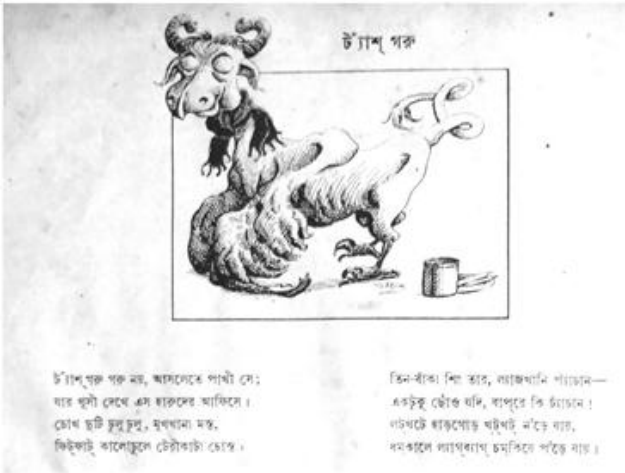


Fig Sukumar Roy, Grotesque Illustrations, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1923

The picture of *Tans Garu* is a grotesque picture per excellence, like the pictures of *Kumropatash*, *Hukomukho Hangla*, *Ramgarurer Chhana* and *Kimbhut* in *Abol Tabol*. Grotesque, according to Baudelaire, is the “absolute comic” holding a rank above the “significant comic” connected to the contextual meaning lying outside the image. However, for our understanding, we follow Virginia E Swain who extracts a general definition of grotesque from the expositions of many noted writers, including Baudelaire.<sup>18</sup> For her, grotesque is a composite entity, a fusion of heterogeneous forms that follows no specific model, ignoring nature as well as the stable hierarchical ordering of the world. Hence, grotesque is a “pure product of imaginary”, an antithesis of representation. Sukumar Roy was fond of grotesque because of its hybrid, lawless and unstable existence that defy normalcy on every ground and therefore suited his modernism, the revolutionary urge to break away with the cultural practices that have lost their relevance being habitually maintained and propagated by institutions. Virginia Swain also points to grotesque’s relation to time.<sup>19</sup> Unlike allegory, grotesque does not inhabit double time, the time of encounter and the time of recognition. The viewers are not allowed to look for truer meaning of the image elsewhere. Grotesque is a closed form; a composite and hyphenated entity, in which multiple forms, known and unknown, are confused. In the grotesque images of Sukumar Roy, in *Tans Garu* and elsewhere, the temporal as well as the “species boundaries” overlap. In the picture of *Tans Garu*, we can see that Sukumar created its form taking elements from diverse sources, from naturalistic art and the grotesque figures of ancient Indian art, such as Kirtimukha. The illustration of the poem *Kimbhut* closely resembles another grotesque creature in Indian art. The experience of looking at the illustrations is like traversing an imaginary land of heterogeneous time and

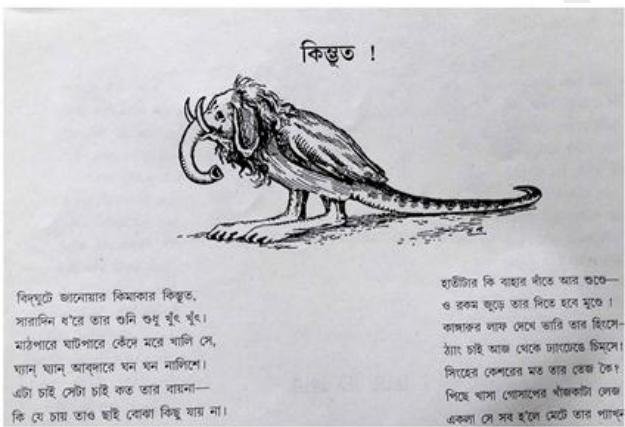


Fig (Above) Grotesque Sculptures, Vaideshwara Temple, Outer Walls, Kalakuda, Karnataka  
Fig (Below) Illustrations, *Abol Tabol*, 1923



<sup>18</sup> Virginia E Swain, *Grotesque Figures* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004) p.3  
<sup>19</sup> Ibid

forms in which the viewers find no logic and no exit to return to the normal except through laughter.

As opposed to the grotesque images, the silhouette pictorial tailpieces in *Abol Tabol* are based absolutely on the logical time that helps us understand the course of events in our everyday life terms of causal connection. Unlike the illustrations, they are independent pictures, semantically not connected to the text, showing the common, conventional yet powerful strategy of the caricaturist's art that Daumier used brilliantly in his famous *Le Dernier Bain*. This caricature was one of Baudelaire's favourites; he gave a lively description of it: "Standing of a parapet of a quay and already leaning forward, so that his body forms an acute angle with the base from which it is parting company – like a statue losing balance – a man letting himself topple into the river. He must have really made up his mind, for his arms are firmly folded, and a huge paving stone is attached to his neck with a rope." <sup>20</sup> There is no doubt that the man is committing suicide; but will he be successful? What makes us sure, asks David Carrier, that no accident will not take place in-between preventing him from drowning into the water? <sup>21</sup> Unlike the real event, the arrested action in a proto-comic caricature would not tell us the earlier and later moments of the action, which could only be imagined. The genius of a humorist lies in his capacity to portray an unambiguous pictorial action, specifying and determining both its later and earlier moments, ruling out every other possibility. Carrier tries to answer the problem by showing proto-comic caricature's relation to time, particularly to the empty, homogenous, linear time of the everyday modern world, in which every action is understood as part of a sequence casually interconnected. It is our general experience of the modern time (not our personal experience of the world) that guides us to understand the meaning and orientation of the caricatures. The experience of time is not guided so much by reason as by fear and anxiety. Daumier knew that his viewers would imagine no other consequence than the drowning of the man because it was the most fatal consequence of the action depicted. It is true, as E.H. Gombrich argues in his famous essay on the psychological role of the beholder in completing the artistic work that many great works of art were created for certain audience, and it was through their active

participation that the meaning of the works were established. <sup>22</sup>



Fig Honore Daumier, *Le Dernier Bain*, Lithograph, Le Charivari, 7 June 1840

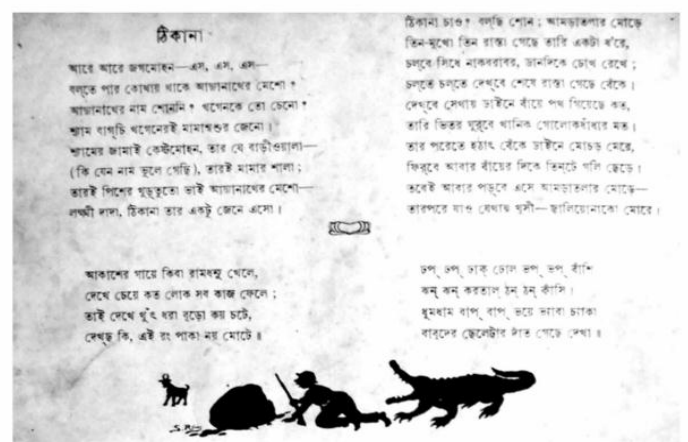
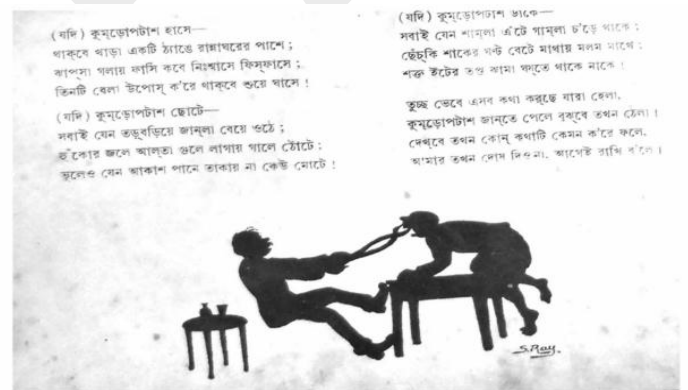


Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Tailpiece, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1923  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy, Tailpiece, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, 1923

<sup>20</sup> David Carrier's essay "Caricature" in Ed. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, *A Comics Studies Reader* (USA: University Press Mississippi, 2009) p. 107

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> See E.H. Gombrich's essay, "Beholder's Share" in E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial representation* (London: Phidon Press, 1960)



But, in the case of caricature art, the psychological participation of the beholders is essential and even more active, for they have to imagine not what is present in the image – the white patch as a house in Constable’s painting – but what is imminent in it, the future of the image.

In the tailpieces, Sukumar Roy brilliantly explored the potentiality of the comic caricature. The tailpieces - all of them are silhouette pictures - show not only his graphic skills but also his remarkable power of imagination. Below the poem *Thikana* (Address), the tailpiece shows a hunter hiding himself behind a large stone. He is looking at a goat, his bait, and waiting for the crocodile, his target, which, without his knowledge, has already come behind him to swallow him. In another tailpiece, we see five thin men trying to pull a very fat man in a tug-of-war. It shows a fight between unequal powers. Even as the five men unite they shall fall and could not defeat their opponent. At the bottom of the poem *Kumropatash*, a quack dentist is shown as extracting the bad tooth of his patient with a large kitchen thong. The surgery involves no fine medical knowledge, but rough physical strength, expressed violently. Although they make us laugh, the pictures are gruesome, like much of our nursery rhymes, sweet in sound, but violent in content. Unlike Daumier, Sukumar Roy did not use detailed drawing; his tailpieces are silhouette pictures, which, due to their homogeneity of surface and lack of detailed information, project the temporal sequence of the composition flatly and prominently, without any distraction. The use of silhouette that flattens linear time into space, quickening the sequential movement of the event, from its present depicted moment to the fatal future consequence, creates a condition for laughter to take place. One of the reasons why Sukumar Roy chose the top-bound format for *Abol Tabol* is that he could fit the tailpieces, due their long compositional pattern, only in the horizontal and not in the vertical pages.

**Abol Tabol: The Signet Edition (1945)**

In the 1940s, Signet Press published many of Sukumar Roy’s illustrated books, including *Abol Tabol*. D. K. Gupta, the owner of the Press, who wanted to change the original format of the book completely to make it look more colourful and attractive, amenable to the taste of the modern readers, asked young Satyajit Roy to redesign *Abol Tabol* by adding some new illustrations along with those by his father. The new side-bound book which was large in size and elegantly printed disappointed many of the renowned writers of the time, particularly Kamal Kumar Majumder, who saw it as a foolish act of unforgivable audacity. Satyajit Ray

also admitted later that he disagreed with the plan, but failed to convince D.K.<sup>23</sup>

What D.K. failed to understand was that *Abol Tabol* is not just a book, but a work of art and every part the book’s visual appearance, from illustration to binding, had been carefully planned by Sukumar Roy himself. For the change of the format from top-bound to side bound, the sequential images, mainly the tailpieces, were most badly affected in the new edition. As the spine of the book ran through the tailpieces, the sequential continuity of the composition was interrupted. As a non-artist, it was not possible for D.K. to understand the sophistication and subtlety of Sukumar Roy’s thought as master illustrator and caricaturist. In the caricature art, what is represented is as much important as how it is represented. By changing the original format and text-image alignment of the book, D.K., far from improving the book, invalidated its original project.

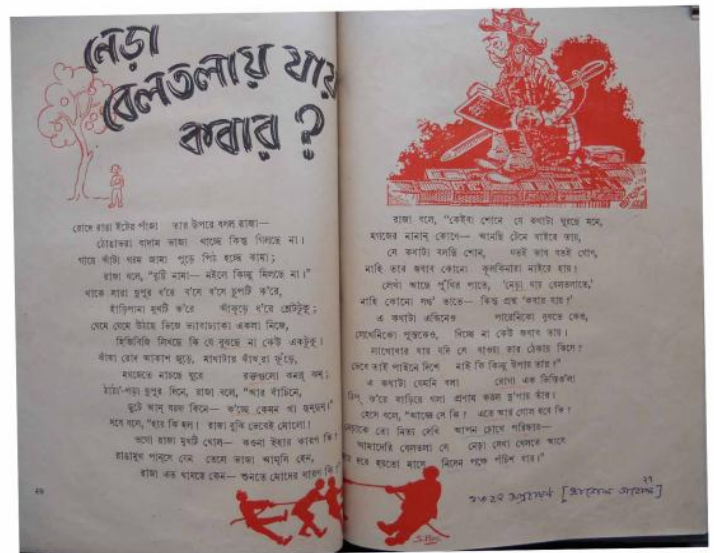
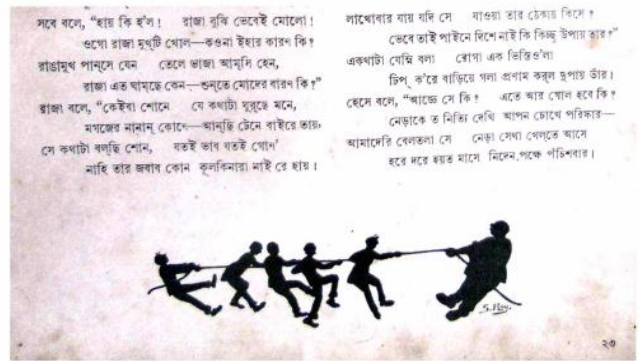


Fig (Above) Sukumar Roy, Tailpiece, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*  
 Fig (Below) Sukumar Roy and Satyajit Ray, Illustrations, Line Block, *Abol Tabol*, Signet Ed.

<sup>23</sup> See Satyajit Roy’s *Kajer Manush D.K.* in *Bibhab* [ Dilip Kumar Gupta Number] (Kolkata: 1983)