

A Comparative Study of the Baul Songs in Bengal and the Deh Bichar Songs in Assam

Dr. Mridusmita Borah

Assistant Professor, J.B.College

.Jorhat Assam .

Abstract

National Integration has occupied an important place of late .Cultural relativity in national integration is new area of comparative literature. Cultural diversity among different nation of the world is also noticed within a country in terms of class. Caste, religious faith, customs etc. India is a multilingual state and geographically too if is a vast country. Though there are differences in ways and expressions, the people of this vast country have the same language of their heart can be asserted on the basis of a comparative study of the Boul Songs of Bengal and the Deh Bicher songs of Assam.

Boul Songs in Bengal and Deh Bicher songs in Assam are integral parts of folklore and folkculture of Bengal and Assam. Naturally there are certain differences of social milieu, taste and cultural environment between the two states.

Yet the customs , folklore, thought etc. of bought these state bear certain stamps of similarity. It can be proved by a comparative study of the Boul Songs and Deh Bicher songs .This study would also find out the unity in diversity between the fold literatures of the both the states though there are cultural and regional divides. Hence this study is important.

Boul is a religious sect in Bengal. This religious sect has collected religious elements from various sources-like Buddhism, Hinduism etc.This sect came into existence at the and of the Middle ages.The followers of this sect consider Chatanya Deva as their GURU. They believed in one omnipotent god and express desire to be united with him.

The “Ratikhuwa” community of Assam is known for their connections with the Deh Bicher songs. This “Ratikhuwa” community was in vogue even in the days of Vaishnavism of Sri Sankardev. The Basis and customs of this community were entirely koinatoj . Later on, the vaishnavite thought got manifested in the Deh Bicher songs of this sect. The similarities between the feelings and thoughts of the Deh Bicher songs and the Sandhan Marg of the Sahajaan Panth lead to the idea that these songs were prevalent even in 8th century AD to 12th century AD. The chief concern of these Deh Bichar song is “deho-tatwa”. These people considered the body itself to be the microcosm of the macrocosm.

A Comparative study of the subject matters, thought forms and performance or recital of both Boul songs and DehBicher songs are has been done here. A sect of similarities between these two have been discovered. Which are as follow-

- (i) Boul songs could be sung by people irrespective of class. Cast or religion and similer is the case with the DehBicer songs.
- (ii) The aim of both folk songs is to arouse deep spiritualthought and’ Bairagya’.
- (iii) Human body is the basis of meditation in both Boul songs and Deh Bicher songs. The attempt is to realize the Almighty through the Body.
- (iv) The language of both Boul Songs and Dehbichar song is Symbolic and fully of iironies.
- (v) The Boul songs are recited by performers dancing to the tune of tokary.

Both Baul songs and Deh Bicher songs occupai significant place in folk literature in Bengal and Assam.

But the letter and Deh Bicher geet

A Comparative study of the BAUL Song in Bengal and the DEH-BICHAR Song in Assam

0.0 Introduction :

The topic,national integrity has received substantial importance in present time. Role of cultural relativity in creating national integrity is the new subject matter of comparative literature. Diversity in belief system or in cultural tradition is noticed among the people belonging to different races of the world, and the same happens to people belonging to different caste and creed within the same country. India is a multilingual country and geographically a massive one. Though the medium and the system of communication of all the Indians are different , yet the language of heart is the same and inseparable. To prove the truth of the above mentioned statement, a comparative study between the baul geet and deh-bisar geet of west bengal and Assam respectively has been undertaken.

0.01 The importance of the study :

Baul Geet in Bengal and deh-bisar Geet in Assam both are integral parts of the folklore and folk culture and lives of the people of West Bengal and Assam respectively. Differences of environment, social hobbies and cultural tradition among the people of both the places are quite obvious. But surprisingly, some similarities are noticed in the folk songs, traditional, thought process of the inhabitants of both the states. These features are clearly seen if careful study of baul and deh-bisar songs is undertaken. The study of these two folk songs will help us to know their real characteristics and at the same time it will prove the invisibility of Indian folk literature in spite of having geographical and cultural differences.

1.00 Baul religion or Baul community :

The word baul originates from batul. Person, who is depressed is baul. Krishnadas kabiraj in his book titled Chaitanya krishnamrit has mentioned that a person who is profoundly in love with Srikrishna and who is devoid of any practical knowledge is a baul. Baul is a religious sect in Bengal. "This religion came into existence at the end of the Middle ages. The religious sect has collected religious elements from various sources like buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism etc"(Bhattacharjya,2005). Though they regard Chaitanya dev as their "guru", yet many differences are seen between this creed and one that was preached by Chaitanya. Bauls don't have any special place for worshipping, gods and goddesses to be worshipped or rituals to be followed. They only believe in the universal almighty and try to worship in their hearts. They don't have any written scriptures. They preach their religion only by singing hymns. "Guru" spreads these only among his disciples.

1.01 The pivotal philosophy or ideology of baul worshipping.

The main thrust of baul is the physical love between a man and a woman. They think only body can help them to attain salvation. They believe meeting God could be possible when a male and a female get become one. They think of woman body to be a medium to reach God. By elevating the happiness of the union of a male and a female through yoga they want to be one with the supreme soul. According to the sage of Indian worshipping creed , Akshaykumar dutta, among this community, there is a tradition of eating human flesh (dead body) and of wearing the clothes of a corpse (Bondopadhyai,2002)

Among the whole baul community many people are there from Hindu, Islam religion and some of them are devotees of shiv and shakti. The main ideology of every baul is same.

1.02 Life of the Bauls

When people follow the teachings of baul religion, they quit their personal religion and identity (like Hindu , Islam etc) and become known as bauls. Baul creed is a creed where people don't have any caste identity and it's all about universal brotherhood. Those bauls who were

originally have come from hindu are called Vaishnab bauls and who have come from Islam are called Faqir or Darbesh. Bauls quit their conjugal life and become sages. They get divided into small groups and live in "aakhdas"(their hermitage). Yet there are also some baauls who live a conjugal life. They live with their sons and wives and the whole family becomes a follower of this religious creed and carry out the rituals. Women devotees of this creed are called "khyepee". The meaning of which is insane.

1.03 Poetic value of Baul songs

Baul songs can claim accolades for its diversity, melody and symbolism. The poetic nature, religious devotion and taste have influenced many modern educated people. Poets like Rabindranath, Bidyasagar were influenced by the poetic nature and the religious flavor of these songs.

1. Ei chand kothai pele

Bol ei chand kothai pele

Trivuban aalo kore podmaphule

Khela kore chonar chele

Many a song of illiterate bauls are equivalent to the first class ballads. The poetic nature and religious flavor of the Baul poet Laalon's songs like "Aamar ghorer chabi porer haate", "Je jon hauyar ghore fand peteche" are incredible.

1.04 Presentation style of te Baul Songs

Baul songs are sung in a specific way. This way of singing is called faqirchandi. A Baul named faqir chand had used this process of singing for the first time. Baul dance is inseparably connected to baul songs. This dance form also has a specific way of performing. Some of the elements of some "raag sangeet" of West Bengal are mixed with the baul songs. (Bhattacharjya,109).

Baul songs can be divided into two parts. Hindu and Islam. Besides these "raarhi" and "navadweepi" are two regional divisions. Raarhis dance while singing, that's why their music is vibrational. In case of the other regional variety, they sing in accompaniment of a musical instrument called ektara having only a single string, but they don't dance. Therefore, these songs are like " bhatiali songs".

While singing Baul songs instruments like ektara, dotara, gopichand are used.

2.00 The Ratikhowa (who eats at night) community and the Deh-bisar Songs

Deh-bisar songs are indispensable parts of assamese folk culture. This songs are related to Ratikhua community. The base and rituals of this religious community are completely Koirataj4. This religious community is also known as "purnabhogiya" or "kewalia". The songs sung by the people of this religious community are dehbisar geet. (Bondopadhyai,2002) These songs have religious emotion and have derived encouragement from vaishnab religion.

The time of writing of Deh-bisar songs can't be inferred correctly. In the 5th century, next to Buddhism, "sahaj jaan pontha" originated in Assam. Noticing the resemblances of thought and language of deh-bisar songs with the Chorjya geet of Sahaj jaan pontha, it can be said that deh-bisar songs were written during the period of Chorjya geet. That means deh-bisar geet were came into existence within the 8th to 12th century. Later, vaishnab thoughts were incorporated in deh-bisar songs. In those songs the influence of Anadi paton of shankar dev is immensely felt.

2.01 The main philosophy of deh-bisar songs

The main element of deh-bisar song is human body. This had sprung out of tantrism. Tantriks take body to be the model of the universe. According to tantra the backbone of our body is standing in the body universe. While worshipping the body, instructions of guru is indefeasible. According to tantra, men are idol of shiv and women are of shakti. From this perspective, sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is a union of shiv and shakti.

2.02 Life of the singers of deh-bisar songs.

These songs had originated among a secret community of Assam. These communities have scattered as purnaxewa, Borkhelia, Gopidhara, Borxewa, Ratikhowa, Koronipotia, Reetia etc.

The religious creed of those devotees who sing deh-bisar songs is called Ratixewa creed. Their public worshipping is organized at night and that gets ended at night. In this public worshipping, the entry of other devotees except those who have taken refuge is restricted. Devotees are divided into raw devotees or kecha bhokot and ripe devotees or poka bhokot. Though in normal public worshipping everyone can take part, yet in complete worshipping, only ripe devotees are allowed to take part. No discrimination of caste is found among them. Hindu, Islam everyone can join them. Among those devotees unrestricted prevalence of wine-meat, money, fish and sex is noticed. This religious practice is mysterious. Only preceptor knows the meaning. In borxewa women are essential. There hindu, islam, brahman sudra everyone enjoys equal position.

2.03 Poeticvalue of the deh-bisar songs

These songs have attained improvement from the angle of their musicality and symbolism. The lyrics and rhythm of these songs can have a deep influence in the minds of the listeners. In these songs many symbolic elements are used, like here the human body is indicated through the symbols of river, sea, house, boat, etc.

An example can make it clear how the use of symbols has made these songs very critical.

(2) Guruk mariba bhokotok mariba
 mariba xudoror bhai,
 xongor haribhokotok moriai mariba
 eteke harik pai.

These songs are like riddles. The meaning of these songs can't be understood even by the scholars. In those songs the meaning of preceptor, devotees, siblings and friend or haribhokot are Mind, sense organs, two hands and body respectively. Here it is said that if we can control those aforementioned things then only we are able to accomplish our worship properly.

2.04 Presentation style of the deh-bisar songs

These songs are sung by one or more than one. They perform these songs by dancing and playing tokari .Though these songs doesn't have specific melodious tunes, yet some distinct tunes are used by the devotees.

3.00 Comparative study of Baul and Deh-bisar songs.

The baul songs of west Bengal and deh-bisar songs of Assam are included in the folk songs of folk literature category. Resemblances are noticed between the two types of songs from the angle of emotions and subject matter. Even some similarities are there between the communities that perform and patronage these songs. A study is given below comparing all the perspectives of baul and deh-bisar songs.

3.01 Subject matter.

An extended analysis ranging from the logic of creation to the body is seen in baul and deh-bisar songs. Because of the mixing of thinkings of Buddhism, Shaiva, Shakta In the religious consciousness of the people of Assam and West Bengal these baul and deh-bisar songs came into existence. The pivotal subject matter of both the types of songs are the relationship between body and the soul, the valuelessness of the human body, indestructible nature of soul, influence of anger, greed, over body and mind etc. In Dehbisar songs body is symbolized with river, sea, forest, home, boat etc. Likewise, in Baul songs body is symbolized

through river, trees, flowers, bumble bees etc.

Another subject matter of these songs is the temporal impermanence of the universe. In these songs many advices are given to those who have entered in conjugal life. Though physical body of the human beings dies, yet the soul is indestructible. That's why soul tries to be united with the supreme soul. These subject matters have gained prominence in Dehbisar songs. In one song thinking regarding a dead body is presented this way.

(3)Kaak hoila kandari Xogun mohadani,

Srigale dukan dei mangxo tani tani.

Subornore kati kami manikere rua,

Tate uti bhojon kore xogun bopura.

Bhobonodir pare jiboi ase sai ,

Dekha dekha bondhuxokol bhelore bilai.

So, if consider from the point of view of subject matter many resemblances are found. The impermanence of life, the universe and the body is the main subject matter of both types of songs. In baul songs of west Bengal, indication of impermanence of human body is found as follows,

(4) Manab dehar gorob aar koiru nai,

Pakhi jedin jabe uire xudhu khasa pori robe,mori hai.

In dehbisar songs of Assam, naari, mind and sense organs of the human body are described precisely and beautifully,

(5)Era je Pingola xuxonna je hongxa

Chari naari anupam

Chariru modhyoto Xarangxo janiba

Xuxonna jaharo naam.

In baul songs also it is found that,

(6) Deh jomi krixu kora montu bojhe na

jomir gaan chinia korle krixu

.....

Aase era pingola xuxunna go

Mrinal hol ei tinijona.

Resemblance of baul and dehbisar songs regarding the presence of gods and goddesses within and outside the human body is also noticeable,

In dehbisar songs,

(7)Akhito aditya naake aswini kumar

jihbata baruna bakya bohniro sanchar

In baul songs,

(8)Mukhe bhodraki dotte rasavati

jihbata saraswati deh bortomane

The subject matter of both types of songs have been delineated taking mind as a basis. Among ten sense organs of the human body, the basis of accomplishment mind has received pivotal position in dehbisar songs. On the contrary, the specific aim of baul songs is to search out people of heart within the mind. It is seen that in dehbisar songs suggestions are given to keep the mind away from six evil passions of mind.

3.02 Emotional elements

These two types of songs share some similarities when considered from the view of emotions expressed. Still some differences too are noticed.

Baul songs can be divided into three categories depending on feelings expressed in the songs.

- 1) Sufi
- 2) Vaishnav
- 3) Sahojia

The mysticism of sufi gets expressions in these songs this way –

(9) Ami ekdinou na dekhilam tare

Amar barir kache Aavoshi nagar

Ak porshi bosot kore

Gram bere agadh pani

oo taar nai kinara nai tarani pare

It can be said that in the baul songs of Darbesh bauls, domination of this sort of songs is more. Vaishnav elements also appear in the baul songs due to the influence of gouriyo vaishnav religion preached by Chaitanya. Because of the influence of gouriyo vaishnav religion element of sacred love is felt in these songs. This love has won overshadowed bodily desires and has attained dignity. One song of this emotion is

(10) Se bhab sobai ki jane!

Je bhabe shyam ase Radha gopir songe

Gopi bine jane kiba xudhoroso amrit seva

Gopir paap punya gyan thakena Krishna darshane.

The main emotion of baul songs are xohojiya as bauls consider songs to be the medium of self meditation. The base of soul is human body. The descriptions of body, that is heard in the baul songs are expressions of xohojiya bhab. Bauls think the importance of human beings is more than the importance of God. The love between a man and a woman is considered as symbolic of the love of soul and the supreme soul. The aim of baul is to unite the petty selves of human body with the bhagavad self. One baul song having xohojiya feeling is

(11) Brajapure Rupnagare jabi jodi mon

tobe korge ja swarup sadhan

Swaruper Rup Ruper swarup

Swarup dehe hoi milan

Though many resemblances are found between baul and dehbisar songs, yet in dehbisar geet prominence of vaishnav emotion is felt. Moreover, here the influence of secret yoga is evident. Though dehbisar songs originated in pre-vaishnav era, yet in vaishnav era, element like the glory of lord krishna is incorporated to the songs. For example

(12) Kohoya madhobo dasa tumara charana bine nahi aana goti

Tumi dayamay jania kohoya madhava murukha moti

Though, Sufism is not found in dehbisar songs, yet element of sufi mysticism is found in those jikirs having resemblances with dehbisar songs. Expression of xohojiya vaab, slightly covering the main philosophy of baaul religion, which is felt in baaul songs is not found in dehbisar songs.

Though similarities are noticed between the ratipontha who sings dehbisar songs and the life of the bauls, yet direct expressions of main philosophy of mystery is not seen in dehbisar songs. From that perspective, baul songs are more open than the dehbisar songs. Still, the prominence of spiritualism found in both types of songs can be considered as the main similarity between the two.

3.03 Form

Baul and dehbisar songs have been able to attain an important place from the angle of form. Both the types of songs have received an elevated status due to their depth, simile, metaphor, and symbolism. If noticed from the form, it is seen that though indication of baul xaadhona is found in baul songs, yet its poetic flavor is very excellent. In many songs of Laalon fakir, this poetict element is seen preserved.

(13) Cheya dekh na re divya najare

Chari chand dise jhalak monikkothar ghore

Likewise, in dehbisar songs also poetic flavor finds its expression.

(14) Jivon binakhoni bojale bajibo

Milale milibo xur

Xei binakhonir guna chingi gole

Jivon poribo oor.

The main characteristic of both baaul and dehbisar songs is their symbolism. In these songs body is presented taking recourse to symbols. The way in which in dehbisar songs, body is symbolized through river, sea, forest, home, boat, trees, in the same manner in baaul songs, body is described using the symbols like river, tree, flower, bumble bees etc.

In dehbisar songs-

(15) Barir pasfale jatibaah ajupi

xiyu mor xohodar bhai

Jiyai thakumane koru kathi kami

morile logote jai

(16)Aaru ek nodi ase boi tikhnadhare

Kaal bikaal pokhi duti ipare sipare

Here to describe soul and the supreme soul two symbolic birds, namely kaal and bikaal are used. Though in the baul songs of west bengal, symbols of Birds are used, but no imagery of birds called kaal bikal are found in these songs.

Thus in baaul songs rivers are used as symbols.

(17)Nodi sukaye gel chara poilo taau nodir beg gel na

Use of metaphor has given both baul and dehbisar songs a significant status. In one of the baul songs of existence of human life in this delusional world is described like this way,

(18)Tribenir teere teere sudhare joyar ase

Sukh sagare manush khele behal beshe

Beautiful use of metaphor and soft musicality has given the above mentioned song a form of an art. The way in baul songs similes are used to describe inseparability of human life and rivers, in that same way in dehbisar songs also such similes are used.

In dehbisar songs-

(19)Oo mor atir deha

Bhava nodir nouka beha

That is why, baul and dehbisar songs can claim themselves to be the best from their divirese style, musicality, symbolism, metaphoricity etc.

3.04 Singing style.

No such difference is found in the singing style of baaul and dehbisar songs. While singing baul songs musical instruments like ektara, dotara, gopichand are used. Tokari is played with dehbisar songs. Like baul songs, dehbisar songs also are sung by more than one singer together. But unlike baul songs, where dance is essential, in dehbisar songs dance is not essential.

If Observed from the angle of dressing, it is seen, normally, bauls wear clothes of orange colour. In feet they wear ankle bell or junuka and in neck roodraksha mala. But the devotees, who sing dehbisar songs, don't wear ochre colour dress. Normally, they are seen wearing white.

4.00 Similarity between both the songs.

Many similarities are noticed between these songs, when compared them from the point of view , style and singing style. Some of them are briefly mentioned below...

(1) People irrespective of any caste and creed can/may sing baul songs. Likewise, in night community or rati xomprodai, who sing dehbisar songs, no discrimination of caste and religion is seen.

(2) The aim of baul and dehbisar songs is to inculcate religious thought and mortification or bairagya.

(3) In both the types of songs human body is the base of accomplishment. Through accomplishment of the body, effort is put for the realization of the absolute truth and the supreme soul.

(4) The way the lyrics of the baul songs are mysterious, thus the lyrics of dehbisar songs are also indicative and mysterious.

(5) The way baul songs are sung dancing in accompaniment of ektara and dotara, like thatway, dehbisar songs are also sung dancing to the tune of tokari.

5.00 conclusion

Baul and dehbisar songs are bright signs of the folk literature of west Bengal and Assam. Taking these two types of songs as examples a comparative study has been done to show Indian national integrity. Both types are associated with religious communities. Actually, all the folk songs of India are more or less related to religious beliefs. These beliefs and customs are the same in all the parts of India. As the teachings of the two epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata, ved-puran, ideologies of the sara"xoro" philosophy flow through every vein of the Indians. That is why the thinking of every Indian is same. Due to the sameness of thinking, though the Indians live in different parts of the country, yet the language of the heart of every Indian is same. The indivisibility of Indian folk literature is felt through the comparative study of baul and dehbisar songs. It can be expected that this sort/type of study will play an important role in Indian national integration.

Referance Books

Bangla

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Bondopadhyai, Asitkumar | Bangla Sahityar Itibritta (Tritiya khanda)
Modern Book Agency private Limited, 2002 |
| 2. Duttarai, Benu (ed.) | Uttar Banglar Lokasangeet
Sahitya Academi, 2002 |
| 3. Bhattacharjya, Ashutosh | Bangar Janakristi
National Book Trust India, 2003 |
| do | Banglar Lokasanskriti |

National Book Trust India,4th Ed,2005
4.Rai,Annadasankar Lalon Fakir O Tar Gaan
Mitra Ghosh Pulishers Limited

Assamese

1.Baruah, Prahladkumar(ed) Asomiya Lokasahitya
Asom Sahitya Sabha,2001

2.DuttaGoswami,Prafulla Asomiya Janasahitya
Baniprakash Private Limited,1948

3.Gogoi,Leela Asomor Sanskriti
Bonolata,1994

4.Sarma, SatyandranathAsomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibritta
Guwahati,9th ed,2001

5.Sarma Sasi Asomor Lokasahitya
Students stores,1993

