



Folk Songs of Bengal Performed by Men: A Glimpse

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Abstract

Folk music is a traditional music genre that develops over time. Its content is enriched with natural resources. As natural resources change, the traditional form and performance of folk music changes. Folk music can be said to be the bearer of various behaviors, 'Ceremonies', 'Problem Solving', 'Awareness', 'Create Energy', 'Work', 'Cultivation', 'Hunting', 'Gariyali', 'Maishali', 'Mahut', 'Activities', 'Worship', 'Festivals', 'Various customs' and 'Traditions' of people from 'Birth to death'. 'Bangla' word refers to West Bengal and some regions outside it. Over time, many folk songs of Bengal are becoming extinct. Folk music is traditionally practiced sometimes by men, sometimes by women, sometimes individually and sometimes in groups. Folk songs practiced by men give a different message for the welfare of society. They keep the society disciplined and inform about some of the rules and regulations of the society. Male-dominated songs have been present in Folk music of Bengal since a long times and still exist today. Folk music practiced by men has been used from time to time for the welfare of the society, but now this momentum seems to have slowed down a bit. Folk music practiced by men needs to be discovered through research and introduced to the next generation. It is important to record the folk songs obtained from research in written form, which can be an important document for future generations of researchers.

Keyword: Folk song, Bengal, Folk songs of Men

Introduction:

Folk songs are songs written orally by the people. Villagers sing and work in the busyness of life, Plowing the fields, Harvesting crops at home, Watering trees, Driving cars and Building boats, singing songs at Festivals and Religious ceremonies. Their songs relieve the fatigue of long journeys and the monotony of hard work. In this way, folk songs were first born orally and spread among the people. Therefore, no history of the names of the composers of folk songs, the date of birth of songs is found accurately. (Pati, 2021). From ancient 'Nath' religion songs to the present day 'Bhawaiya', 'Baul', 'Maramia', 'Jhumur' and 'Dehatta' songs, the names of the composers and their compositions are available. The people of rural Bengal have composed these folk songs based on the themes of festivals in the twelve months, explanations about the world and life, the beauty of Bengal, creative thinking and consciousness at the Junction of rivers and boats, Poverty, Injustice in society, Rising prices of daily necessities, etc. (Chakraborty M., 2015). Bengali folk music is an excellent medium for spiritual exploration, reflection on social reality, aesthetic expression and philosophical practice. The sound, melody and form of the song contain all the questions that are at the heart of philosophical, sociological and aesthetic thought - who am I? Why do I live? In what society do I live? It is not just a vehicle for melody and emotion - it is a profound philosophical and sociological exercise on the relationship between self, society and God. (Shakhwat). Among the 'Folk songs of Bengal' performed only by male artists, some solo, duet and group forms are found, folk songs with dance or folk songs with drama are especially important in the society. Some of the folk songs studied by men in various aspects of human social customs from birth to death are - Madankam's songs, Gorakhnath's songs, 'Sona Roy's songs, 'Gambhira' songs, Sari songs, 'Bhatiali' songs, 'Bhawaiya' (women's songs sung in male voices, but nowadays the acceptance of these songs for female artists has increased a lot) songs etc. These songs can be called a mirror of society of Bengal. This article presents a brief description of some individual and group folk songs performed or conducted by men of Bengal-

Gamira Thakur's song: The deity worshipped in 'Gamira' Puja is 'Shiva'. This worship is also practiced in generally Muslim society under the names 'Gazimia', 'Hatila Saheb', 'Bibi', 'Sah-Sadar', 'Bara Madar'. Gamira Thakur's worship is seen in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling in North Bengal. Games and songs are also seen on the occasion of this worship. The Gamira songs of Malda and Dinajpur are very similar to Gamira Thakur's songs. During

Charak Sankranti, male devotees entertain themselves by singing songs from house to house and collect Magan. (Dev). There is a slight difference between Gambhira and Gomira's songs. Here, all kinds of songs are played except songs about 'Shiva'. Gamir is a corruption of Gambhira. It is held in the last four or five days of the month of 'Chaitra' in the rural areas of Jalpaiguri. (Deb C.)

Madankam Thakur/ Jaggan: 'Madankam' Puja is controlled by men. This worship is also practiced among Rajbanshi Hindus as well as Muslims in North Bengal. 'Madankam Thakur' is 'Shiva' (Symbol of the bamboo). This puja is popular in the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri, in the 'Terai' and Cooch Behar districts to the Darjeeling district, and also in the 'Bogura' district of Bangladesh. The puja festival is held from the first day of 'Baishakh' to the day of 'Sankranti'. During this 'Puja', a 'Kanchi' and a bamboo are buried in the ground in the Northeast of the courtyard inside the house, offerings are made and kirtan is arranged all night long. For the Madankam Puja, the largest 'Bansh' (Bamboo) has to be invited long in advance with the permission of the owner of the bamboo grove. For seven days, only men dance and play music, going from house to house. Finally, the 'Bamboo drinking' festival with men's dance and bamboo worship is celebrated in an open field called 'Thalabari' (Open cultivated land). Women are prohibited from entering there. (Dev). 'Madanakama' is found in various 'Puras'. 'Madan' and 'Kama' are identified as the same deity. An etymological analysis of the word 'Madan' shows that it is derived from the 'Sanskrit' root 'Mad' along with the elements 'Nich' and 'on'. The word 'Madan' is formed by adding the suffix -, which means the god of desire, Kamadeva, Kandarpa, Atanu, Ananga, intoxicating. If we analyze the etymology of the word 'kama', we find that the word 'kama' is formed by adding the suffixes 'nich' and 'ta' to the Sanskrit root 'kim'. Which means the desire, desire, and mental longing for sexual intercourse. Then it is seen that the lexical meaning of the word 'Madanakama' is 'Madana, the god of desire'. This desire can be both sexual and emotional. (Barman, 2016). 'Rajbanshi' youth used to play the bass on 'Madan Chaturdashi' day in the month of Baishakh after harvesting paddy, which is known as 'Madan Kama Puja'. On the last day of this puja, they worship Goddess 'Kali' for the welfare of the village, epidemic-free areas, etc. (Barman K. C., 2022)

Songs of Gorakhnath Puja: Men participate in 'Gorakhnath Puja'. This puja is held from 'Phalgun' in the Bengali calendar to the Baishakh month. Gorakhnath is worshipped as agricultural and cow worship. This puja is popular in some areas of the 'Muslim' community. The name of the 'Pir' is found in the songs sung in this puja— "Chamra Khasera Banaile Chhera Ooti. Tak Khaya Manik Pir Haya Gel Khushi." Among the Rajbangshis, these songs are like – Thube Na Na Thube Saje, Kana Kadia Jhumur Baje, Bajuk Jhumur Bajuk Tal etc. (Dev). Gorakshanath: Since ancient times, the cow or cow has been the mother who destroys sorrow. The ten meanings of the word cow are - Disha, Drishti, Kiran, Swarga, Vajra, Bani, Ban, Bari, Bhumi, Guru. Many call this puja Gorkhanath or Akhwali Barakhwali Puja. (2021)

Saari Gaan (Song): A large number of people in the Bengali region earn their living by focusing on the rivers. Therefore, Saari Gaan (Song) are more popular among the boatmen. Although the main occasion of this song is boating. As a formal folk act, the contestants sing a sari song before and after the competitive boat race, either through dance or while the boat is in motion. Basically, the leader or 'Dohari' of the Saari Gaan (Song) sings the first song while standing at the foot of the boat. (Dey). In the series of songs, the rural fishermen have narrated the essence of their lives. They have narrated the history of the society and culture of the nation. All the boats sail abroad loaded with goods. Day after day, about twenty-five boatmen sing a series of songs together, standing by the river, while moving along the road. (Deb C.)

Song of Roofing: While roofing, the masons sing a kind of song as a 'Work song'. Most of the tunes are Bhawaiya and Bhatiali. In terms of folk music, these are sometimes 'Psycho-educational', 'Spiritual', 'Physical' and 'Romantic'. (Dey). To ease the work, to endure it, or to get rid of boredom, the masons sing this song individually or collectively. Although most of the workers are Muslims, the content of the songs is centred on the love affairs of 'Radha-Krishna' and nature. (Deb C.)

Song of Satya Pir: There is a type of song popularized by promoting the greatness of Muslim religious preachers, especially 'Satya Pir', 'Ghazi Pir', 'Torsa Pir', etc., which is known as Satya Pir's song. This song is popular among both 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' communities. (Dey)

Jari Song: 'Jari' songs are more popular than 'Sari' songs in Bengali Muslim society. Although there is no religious occasion for 'Saari' songs, the original occasion for Jari songs is Muharram. On the day of Muharram, Muslim youths sing Jari songs with loud music by playing sticks with tazia. (Dey). The subject of this song is the story of the war of 'Karbala'. It is a man's music. A song about the tragic nature. There is a main singer in this song. (Bhattacharya S. A.)

Kabi Gaan (Songs): 'Kabi' songs or 'Kabi Gaan' have been popular in the whole of Bangladesh since the middle of the 18th century. This song was originally born to entertain the rich people of Kolkata. Kavi songs are performed through 'Khand Chitra'. The poets of Kavi songs have immense intelligence, knowledge of mythology, and knowledge of contemporary society. A stream of Kavi songs has always been flowing in the rural areas along the River banks of the Bhagirathi. Although men sing Kavi songs, sometimes women can hear Kavi songs. (Editor-Basunia). 'Kavigan' is own wealth of Bengal. It is an instrument of education and knowledge dissemination for countless men and women of the country. The main singer is called 'Kabiya' or 'Sarkar'. In addition, there is a dohar and a band of musicians in the group. 'Bangla Dhol' and Kashi are the main instruments. There is no specific turn of the song. The song begins with understanding the mood. Only one side tries to prove the other side is good. (Deb C.). and 'Deshi Dhol' in different places

Birua Gaan (Song): As a folk song, the 'Birua' song prevalent in the Northern part of Bengal is uniquely emotional. 'Mahouts' (The Driver of Vehicle of Elephant) sing this 'Karma' (Work) folk song to tame the elephants in the jungle. The main melody of this song is 'Birha' (Separation). (Editor- Basunia)

Natua Gaan (Song): A song composed with various words is called 'Natua Song'. The main song is composed with a mixture of 'Radha-Krishna' love, separation and marriage stories of local society men and women. In Natua Song, there is a main singer and 4-5 'Dohar's with him. There are three to four boys who dance. And there is Baptiya. (Roy D.)

Sori Pala Gaan: In the villages and towns of North Bengal, 'Sori Pala' songs are performed from the first day of 'Agrahan' to the end of 'Magh' of the Bengali calendar. Pala songs such as 'Nayan Sori', 'Bostom Baudia', 'Ambal Sori', 'Chhalpi Baudia', 'Shital Sori' are celebrated with pomp. The reflection of the happy and sad lives of men and women and the socio-economic conditions are reflected in the 'Sori Pala' Gaan (songs) with clear rhythmic images and colourful and humorous atmosphere. These Pala songs usually have 12 to 14 artists in the group. They are all men. The 'Bandana group' (Group of pray of God and ten directions) sits under the stage. Before the song starts, 'Asar Vandana' begins. (Roy D.) (Deb C.)

Bolan Song: The lexical meaning of 'Bolan' is response or reply. Bolan songs are performed mainly in Nadia, Burdwan, Birbhum and Murshidabad in Bengal. It is a creation of 'Gajan' of lord Shiva. Bolan is basically a drama song based on ancient mythology. There are cremation Bolan, Dara Bolan, Santali Bolan, Palabandi Bolan, and Rang Panchali Bolan. Among these, Dara Bolan is known as 'Gitinritya' or 'Gitinatya' (Song & Drama). (Chakraborty V. K.). Bolan songs are presented in a question-and-answer style. Bolan is a folk drama with a lot of music. There are at most four main actors or singers. The rest are duos. 'Men' have to dress up as 'Girls' to play the role of 'Women'. Bolan is performed in Nadia, Murshidabad, and Birbhum during the 'Chaitra Sankranti' season. Bolan is performed centred around the singing of 'Shiva'. (Bhattacharya A.)

Ashtak Gaan: Since long times, 'Ashtak Gaan' has been practiced in the villages of Jessore, Faridpur, Khulna, Rajshahi, Pabna, Kushtia in East Bengal and Nadia, North 24 Parganas of West Bengal in India. It is a spring music. Throughout the month of 'Chaitra' groups of Ashtaks roam around the villages singing songs. Illiterate and illiterate farmers folk artists compose and sing Ashtak Gaan. Basically, Ashtak Gaan is a religious, mythological, contemporary, social, and rhythmic song. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013). The song about 'Radha', 'Krishna', and 'Chaitanya' on the occasion of 'Nil' or 'Shiva's Gaan is known as Ashtak Gaan. However, it has a context related to Shiva. Sometimes, it also describes the contemporary conditions of society. (Bhattacharya S. A.)

Alkap: 'Alkap' is a folk drama. This folk drama is prevalent in some parts of Rajshahi, Malda, Murshidabad, and Birbhum. Although it originated from the 'Gajan festival', it is a comedy program of 'Jamati Gaan' without rituals. Both Hindus and Muslims participate in it as working people. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013). Short moral stories are the subject of Alkap. All these are performed to the tune of songs. (Deb C.)

Kushan Gaan (The Ramayan Song & Drama): Ramayana, i.e. the local name 'Kushan Gaan', is widely practiced in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Plain Darjeeling, Rangpur districts through the singing style of 'Lob-Kush' (Son of lord Rama). Perhaps the name of this song is Kushan Gaan (Song) from the predominance of 'Lob' – 'Kush' in the song. 'Byana' is the main musical instrument, so it is called 'Byana Kushan' Song. The 'Pala' begins with 'Asar Vandana'. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013) (Bhattacharya S. A.)

Gambhira Song: 'Gambhira' is the regional name of the 'Shiva festival' prevalent in Malda district. Gambhira songs are sung on Chaitra Sankranti or the day before it, focusing on contemporary events, based on 'humour' and 'comedy'. However, the musical program that lasts for one or more days at the end of the Gambhira festival is called "Bolbai". (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013). 'Gambhir' is the name of 'Lord Mahadev', according to some 'Gambhir' means lotus, according to some it is the name of a type of tree. In Malda, the Gambhira festival begins on Chaitra Sankranti and ends in the month of 'Jaishtha' in Bengali calendar. 'Gambhira' in Malda, 'Gamira' in Jalpaiguri, 'Gajan' in West Bengal, 'Nil' Puja in East Bengal - all are known by different names for the same thing. These songs have traces of society, religion and politics. They are exhortative songs. 'Shiva' in Gambhira is not the 'Shiva of Purana', here he is the people's God. During the partition of 1947, Gambhira's songs were protested. (Deb C.)

Banad Song: 'Banad' is a folk song once popular in Birbhum and Murshidabad regions. The subject of this song is theology, the ideals of Islam, and philosophy is the guiding principle. Rhythmic competition is the main part of 'Banad'. It is about two prayers and an imam. One group will fight over the prayer; the other group will fight over the imam. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013)

Leto Gaan (Song): 'Leto' is a song performed. Leto songs are usually composed orally based on a folk story. Leto songs were once very popular in the regions of Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, Bankura, etc. of the 'Rarh Bhumi' (Rarh Bangla region). Now they are almost on the verge of extinction. Leto songs are usually popular among general Muslim and Hindu artists of urban areas. The performers of this song are all men. A group of 20 to 30 people is formed. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013)

Song of Trinath: This song is popular in Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal and Dhaka districts of East Bengal, as well as in 24 Parganas, Nadia, Burdwan, Hooghly, Bankura, Malda, Murshidabad and West Dinajpur in West Bengal. Trinath's worship is usually held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the week. After working all day, the farmers sing with devotion until late at night, accompanied by the traditional musical instruments Khol, Kartal, and Dotara. (Dulal Chowdhuri, 2013). Every night refers to the three greatest 'Sanysasi' (Saints) of 'Nath' religion, namely

Gorakhnath, Minnath, and Jalandha Ripa. They are worshipped. The main ingredient is 'Ganja' (Marijuanas). (Bhattacharya S. A.)

Conclusion

Some genres of songs sung by men in Bengal are almost obsolete today. Because the demand for that genre is not very high in some places today, while it is in some places. For example, in the case of the 'Kamadeva Nritya' (dance) song, the demand for that group dance song has decreased to a large extent due to the busyness of men and their travel abroad for work. The song 'Sona Ray Puja' was sung in the same way. This song is about growing crops in the fields. It is believed that the practice of 'Sona Ray Gaan' (songs) has decreased due to the relatively reduced tendency to adopt agriculture as a profession and the increase in the tendency to grow agriculture with modern technology. In the case of the song 'Sari Gaan', it is seen that the water of the river dries up during drought and even during the rainy season, due to the construction of dams or embankments in different places, the water is used differently. As a result, water does not normally remain in the rivers of Bengal even during the rainy season. Since this song is a song about boating or boating contest, its use or practice can be seen to have decreased a lot today. In conclusion, it can be said that Folk music of Bengal itself carries the trend of a region and itself carries forward an ancient, great culture. Due to the continuous change in natural resources, the form of the song will change, the method of performance will change, the essential content of the song will change and the singer will also change with the hand of time. However, if the new generation of artists are a little careful about the antiquity and practical style, melodic projection, use of words, pronunciation of the ancient Folk music of Bengal, then these resources will survive for the next generation.

