

# ময়মনসিংহ গীতিকা

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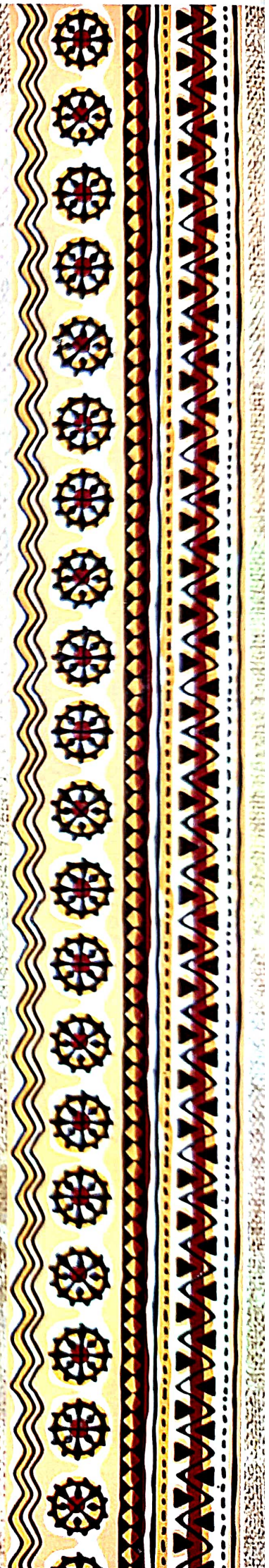
## অন্যান্য লোকসংগীত



গুরুদাস কলেজ ও সোসাইটি অফ বেঙ্গল স্টাডিজ- এর  
যৌথ উদ্যোগে আয়োজিত আন্তর্জাতিক আলোচনাচক্রে  
পঠিত পূর্ণাঙ্গ প্রবন্ধ-সংকলন

গ্রন্থনা ও সম্পাদনা

সোসাইটি অফ বেঙ্গল স্টাডিজ



# ময়মনসিংহ গীতিকা ও অন্যান্য লোকসংগীত

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নির্বাচক ও সম্পাদকমণ্ডলী

বরণকুমার চক্রবর্তী সনৎকুমার নস্কর মনোজ মণ্ডল সুমন চট্টোপাধ্যায়

সুনীলকুমার রায় শেখর রায় তপন বর পবিত্র মিস্ত্রি সুজাতা দে

লক্ষ্মী দাসঅট শর্মিষ্ঠা গণ্ডরায় ঐন্দ্রিলা বসু সোমদত্তা ঘোষকর



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Mass Awareness in Folk Song

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## Mass Awareness in Folk Song

Probin Biswas

It is the court of King Hirak. King Hirak is on the throne—the courtiers are around him. Worn-out and tattered clothed Charandas is singing with a 'dotara' (two-stringed instrument) in his hand. The subject of his song is: this world is full of entertainment. Good people live here in huts. But one who is bad, his place is on the throne. Farmer produces crops but he does not get food. Labor mines diamond with life risk but he does not have the money to spend his life. We know the reaction of the king after listening this song. The oppressive king sees his own image in this song. The king takes all initiatives so that the ignition of rebellion cannot be spread. The singer is thrown into a ditch in a forest. It is thought that director Satyajit Ray feels the importance of folk song in extending mass awareness and uses it in his film 'Hirak Rajar Deshe'.

The meaning of the word 'mass' is large community. To define the word 'mass', Professor Thomas Ford Holt says that, "A mass is not simply a lot of people, but relatively large number of persons, spatially dispersed and anonymous, reacting to one or more of the same stimuli but acting individually without regard for one another."<sup>1</sup> The folk artists disseminate this exuberance among the mass. To unfurl the pictures of exploitation before the people, to raise voice against anarchy and corruption, to appeal to accept the advancement of science, to question against various superstitions of the society—these are the duties of the folk song singers. Thus they play the role to increase mass awareness. In this respect, we can remember the

Italian singer-poets of the middle age. They roamed and collected different news and disseminated those news through songs to the people, even to the courts. They were called 'Cantabank'. In Italian they are called 'Cantabanko' that is vagrant singer. In the Middle Age Bengali literature they are named 'Charankabi' or 'Bhatakabi' or 'Bhat'. In the film 'Hirak Rajar Deshe', Charandas is also a 'Bhat'.

The folksingers are common and simple human being from village. The subjects and melody of their songs are simple. Their daily life experiences which stimulate human mind, find their places in folk songs. So, folk songs have a collective acceptability too. As these songs flow orally generation by generation, the history of society, economy and politics can be found in it. The exploration of the history of mass awareness reflected in folk songs may be considered an important aspect. The responsibility as an artist comes very incidentally.

'Chor-Chorni', 'Bhawaiya', 'Chatka', 'Mecheni', 'Baudiyar Gaan', 'Jag Gaan', 'Gambhira Gaan' of North Bengal, 'Baul', 'Tusu', 'Jhumur', 'Alkap', 'Kobi Gaan', 'Tarja Gaan' of Rarh Bengal, 'Banbibir Gaan', 'Dakhshinrayer Gaan', 'Bhatiyali', 'Pirer Gaan', 'Boyatir Gaan', 'Jari' and 'Sari' of South Bengal – in all these songs pictures of contemporary political, social, economic and historical incidents can be found. Bengali people inhabited Manbhum district was included into Bihar and Hindi was imposed upon the Bengali inhabitants. In protest of this imposition 'Tusu' is composed by the folksingers. In protest of firing on hunger march by the police in Coochbihar district Bhawaiya song is composed and sung. Dakhshinrayer Gaan is composed on how many people are eaten by tigers and crocodiles. Boyatir Gaan is based on how shelters of poor people have been overturned by the storm. In all these we can have the mass awareness.

At first, we can talk about the proclamation of mass awareness by the folksingers against various social customs. Every society has its flaws and prejudices in its structure and system. As the primitive people could not win against the natural forces everywhere, they grasped many prejudices. Some of these prejudices are irrational. The folksingers analyse these prejudices with arguments in the light of scientific thoughts and bring

out the inanity to awaken the common people through folk songs. We can mention a song by Duddushah here-

“Ballal Sen shaytani dagay  
Gotro-jati sristi kore jay  
Bedante achhe kothay, amra dekhi nai”<sup>2</sup>  
(In Ballal Sen’s devilry reign  
Creates clan and caste  
Where is it in the Vedanta, we have not seen)

The class division among the people by the order of Ballal Sen becomes a curse. There increases disintegration and violence among the people. This curse touches the overall Indian society. This is manifested in the song of Duddushah. The Gambhira artists of Malda protest against the inanity of this pseudo-class division. They demonstrate the mass awareness through their songs by using puns against the untouchability towards the so called cobblers by the ‘upper class’ people -

“O thakur kise gelo chhowa  
Bolo hey thakur, boloto ekbar shuni  
Boli tomar kise gelo chhowa.”<sup>3</sup>  
(O thakur by what your sanctity has gone  
Tell thakur, tell, we listen  
By what your sanctity has gone.)

Cobblers make shoes by cutting raw leather. The upper class people continue their eating and enjoyment by wearing those shoes. Then how their sanctity is maintained? This type of questions are articulated in the song through puns. Fakir Lalan Shah raises his voice against the inanity of the class division through his songs:

“Jat gelo, jat gelo bole eki ajob karkhana  
Satya pathe keu noy raji, sob dekhi ta na na-na”<sup>4</sup>  
(Everyone says caste goes away, caste goes away  
What a strange factory  
No one agrees with the true path, everything is hoax.)

The upper class people has turned the society into a peculiar factory to save their own caste. They do not think about the human truth. There was no

caste at the time of our birth and at the time our death there will not be any caste too. All human beings from different castes maintain their sanctity with the same water. Death destroys arrogance of everyone. According to Lalan Shah, the fallibility of ‘Caste’ is not vanishing which is very much necessary for a healthy social system.

The folksingers have awakened people through their songs about the bad effects of the current practices in the society. Suttee system, dowry system and disinclination towards the girl child - are the social diseases which find places in the songs of the folksingers. The dowry system is a type of torture on the family of the bride. In The Rajbanshi society of North Bengal the family of the groom gives dowry to the family of the bride. As a result, in spite of being unsuitable the bridegroom marries the bride. Sometimes the parents of an under-aged girl marry their daughter avariciously with an old man. We get this picture in the song of Sabula Roybarman of Coochbihar district -

“Kyanre bapoi dila biyare panchsho taka niya.  
Sara jonom gail burar pakon chul bachiya.  
Swour pailo valoy mui swauri painlo valoy  
Ghorer soyami amar na shote bogolot.”<sup>5</sup>  
(Father why have you married me by taking five hundred rupees  
The whole life has gone by removing white hairs of the old.  
I’ve gotten good father-in-law, have gotten good mother-in-law  
My husband is impotent)

We also get this picture in Gangacharan Biswas’s song: “O tui tyaha khaya” (O you by eating money). In the Bhadu songs of Rarh region the promise of buying bridegroom in exchange of money has been depicted. The women have raised their voice against the dowry system. The folksingers of Tusu songs have taken the role of spreading mass awareness about dowry system through their songs:

“Joibon jala sohibo ki kore.  
Ayato taka lili baba dili budha bore.  
Hajar taka liye mago dili budha bore.”<sup>6</sup>  
(How can I endure my youthful lust

Father you have taken so much money,  
have married me with a aged groom  
By taking thousand rupees have married me  
with a aged groom)

The penance of the conjugal life of the girl is depicted in this song. She has been married with an old man by her father in exchange of 1000 rupees. But her husband is so old and weak that he cannot stand alone. He walks with the help of stick. Her husband is also impotent to satisfy her physical demand. The Gambhira singers of the Malda districts have requested Lord Mahadeva to reform the society by abrogating dowry system and social untouchability.

The parents of a girl cannot remain reassured even after giving dowry. She is often tortured by the members of his new family and as she cannot tolerate the torture, she takes the path of suicide. The opposition against this social degeneration has been delineated in the songs of the so called illiterate and indifferent folksingers. In the Tusu song "Maye bole hego biti" (Mother says o my daughter), the daughter complains to her mother against her mother-in-law's torture. In the Bhadu songs the picture of cruelty against women is often depicted. The folksingers of Jaora song of Bankura district have awakened the people by describing cruelty against women in the song like: "Shuno pita boli katha" (Listen father I say a story)

We know that in Indian Hindu society, a widow sacrifices herself by sitting atop her deceased husband's funeral pyre. This is called Sati. Opposition to the practice of Sati by evangelists like Carey, and by Hindu reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, ultimately led the British Governor-General of India Lord William Bentinck to enact the Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, declaring the practice of burning or burying alive of Hindu widows to be punishable by the criminal courts. The folksingers also raise their voice against this bad practice. Against this Sutee practice the folksingers have written many songs and one of them is "Shono shono sobe noronarigon" (Listen listen all men and women) which is a Boyati song. The poet has awakened people about the bad aspects of co-death in this

song. According to the poet, co-death is actually the murder of women. This killing of women is described in the scriptures as great sin.

It is seen in every society that women are the victims of deprivations. Although we live in the modern world but we have not changed our outlook towards the women. It is still thought that boy child is necessary only for ensuring the family tree. Because of giving birth of girl child the mother has to tolerate the physical and mental assault. The folksingers have protested against this in the Bhadu song: "Ibar maa sasthire" (This time to mother Sasthi). In this song a mother is praying to goddess Sasthi for a boy child by touching her legs.

Not only against social practices, everywhere there has been any injustice, the folksingers have awakened the people through their songs. Indigo revolt is one of the important events in the Indian history. The songs which have been composed on Indigo Revolt are still famous and move from mouth to mouth. In the song "Jat malle padri dhore/ Bhat malle neel badore" (You have ruined caste by touching clergy/ The Indigo monkey has deprived of food) the poet shows that the British rulers not only exploits economically but they also gulp religion by converting the religion of the Indians into Christianity. The folksingers make the people aware by describing the bad effects of indigo cultivation. Thus they raise revolt among the people against the European Indigo planters and this idea is reflected in the song: "Ebar nil ese nilkantha beshe" (Now Indigo is in the form of Nilkantha). In the song "Hey nirdoy nilkorgon/ Ar sahena prane nildahan" (O merciless Indigo planters/ We cannot bear with any more Indigo burning) by Bidyabhuni, the description of the torture by the European Indigo planters is depicted and another famous song is: "Nil badore sonar Bangla/ Korlo abar chharkhar." (The Indigo monkeys golden Bengal/ Have ruined this time)

We know that Harishchandra Mukhopadhyay writes many proses in "Hindu Patriot" against the torture and exploitation of the European Indigo planters. The description of the torture of the Indigo planters is depicted in the famous play "Nil Darpan" by Dinabandhu Mitra. Reverend James Long was jailed for publishing the English edition of this book. This inci-

dent pained the poet and his reaction is found in the above mentioned song.

On 19th July of 1905 the Indian government announced its decision of forming a new state named 'East Bengal and Assam' comprising of Chhattagram, Dhaka and Rajshahi Division, Hill Tripura, Malda and Assam. Accordingly, the Partition of Bengal was effective from 6th October of 1905. There started movement of boycotting foreign articles all over the country against this decision. Ballad Singer Mukunda Das writes many songs like "Chhere deo maa kacher churi"<sup>14</sup> (Leave the glass bangles mother) inspired by nationalism. In the song "Ebar vandemataram bol sorbojon"<sup>15</sup> (Now say Vandemataram everyone) by Manomohan Chakrabarty we find his protesting attitude. People took part in this movement irrespective of their caste and religion. The folksingers also moved forward for this movement. They awakened the people through their songs and these songs were very much helpful for mass awareness.

In the 21st century everything has changed. Now we are more dependant on technology. The electronics media has taken the key role of increasing mass awareness and as an oral media the folk songs are becoming cornered. It can be said that this genre is becoming more feeble day by day. It is also to be admitted that the electronics media cannot take the role in increasing mass awareness permanently. In this perspective the folk songs are very successful. With the help of songs the folksingers not only in the contemporary society but also awaken mass awareness in the society generation by generation. So, it is an important step to keep alive folk songs.

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