Chapter III

The Contribution of Bengali Muslims in Bengali Folk songs

For any discussion on Bengali Folk songs it is essential to do an enquiry of historical nature of the folk society and folk lore. By indicating the meaning of the term of the folk society Shorter Oxford Dictionary has written “An aggregation of people in relation to a superior.” Here a relative natural feature of it has been emphasized – in comparison with the higher or highly civilized sophisticated society it means a relatively underdeveloped greater society. Regarding folklore also, this relative undevelopedness has been spelt out. Therefore a western folklorist defines folklore as “Folklore or popular knowledge is the accumulated store of what mankind has experienced, learned and practiced across the ages as popular and traditional knowledge as distinguished from so-called scientific knowledge.” Again he said, “Folklore has very deep roots and its traces are ever present even among people that have reached a high state of culture. folklore may be said to be a true and direct expression of the mind of ‘primitive’ man.”

So it can be seen that ‘Folklore’ denotes a definite or particular trend of the way of life, culture, manners, customs, rituals, traditions, art & literature of undeveloped group of people named common folk. The nature and character of the folk life is noticeable in the folk literature and in one of its organs, folk songs. From this angle it can be said that 1) Folk literature is not an individual creation, it is the creation of a group centric society as a whole.

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40 Islam, Dr Sa’adul, Banglar Hindu Musalman Sanskritik Oithiya O Mishran, Samakaler Jiyan Katha Prakasan, 1st published in Kolkata Boimela, 2001, p.166.
42 Ibid, p.399
43 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit
44 Chaudhury Bhudev, Bangla Sahityer Itikatha, Pratham Parjay, Calcutta, 1965, p.455

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2) The creation of a group centric society does not mean that it is the creation of a large number of people. Any particular song or a ballad cannot be the creation of many persons, rather it is the creation of a particular individual. But in the folk literature individuals represent a group. There the creator's individual mentalité and the indivisible social mentalité are of the similar character. That means although folk literature is principally an individual creation, yet it is a personal faithful reflection of an indivisible folk society's mentalité or mind. Therefore Bengal's folk songs such as sufî-devotional songs and the Baul songs etc although are individual creations, but it belongs to the folk society as a whole.

3) It is because among the society's three strata or phrases, such as the primitive, unrefined or uncultured and refined or cultured, since the folk literature is the creation of the middle phase or the unrefined society, so in all respects the idea, melody & style of the folk literature is midway between the primitive and the refined or cultured society.

4) Since the indivisible social consciousness is intense in the folk society, so it is quite natural that there shall be reciprocal influences among the difficult branches of the folk lore literature. Reciprocal warp & woof, give and take can be seen quite often among the folk tales, fairy tales, folk songs & ballads. Regarding the admixture & evolution of the folk literature due to its reciprocity of influences, Dr. Ashraf Siddiqui has said that it is the fate of the folk music.

5) The folk society is not static, it has its own mobility though it is slow moving. Owing to the easy receptibility of the folkmind, quite often the written literature has received its place with folk literature, by gaining the patronage of the folk society. In this way, Nath ballads of Bengal like Goraksha-vijay and Gopichander

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45 Ibid, p45-6
47 Siddiqui Ashraf, Loko Sahitya (Bengali folklore), Vol II, Dhaka, 1980,p.44.
Sannyas, annals of Karbala in the punthi literature, love ballads like Layala Majnu & Madhuma & the Pir literature have been acknowledged in the course of time as the wealth of folk literature.

6) The simplicity, group coherence/ cohesion and coarseness of folklife have been followed in the way of expression of the folk literature.

Therefore, in order to understand the reflection of Bengal’s tradition, cultural synthesis and synthesis in the folk songs, which is one of the main branches of the folk literature, it will be essential to have a glimpse of the aforesaid six characteristic features. The reflection of the Bengali Muslim mind with Bengali folk songs, their contribution towards it and the identification of their endeavours in religious synthesizes as reflected in the folk songs – all these have been expressed in the following phases in different branches of the folk music.

a) Self offering or Self dedication centric Islamic devotional songs
b) Sufi devotional songs – Marefati & Murshidi,
(c) Vaishnava songs
(d) Baul songs,
e) Bhatiali, f) Sari, g) Jari, h) Alkap, i) Marriage songs etc. 48

Self-offering/ Self dedication centric Islamic devotional songs

One of the main things about the folk songs is the religious folk songs. However, there is a dimensional difference between the religious folk songs and the devotional songs. Religious folk songs consist of the narrative songs of the particular community & particular ceremony. On the other hand, since the fervidity, ardency and feeling of the ascetic and devotee being the principal theme of the devotional songs, therefore these are neutral irrespective of the community and also ceremonial. Although composed in the light of a particular community or else there are descriptions of the religious rituals, still the pure devotional songs consisting of compassionate mode of the self-offering of the ascetic, are community-neutral, containing message of liberal human wealth. Baul songs,

48 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit. p.167
Islami devotional songs, Sufi songs like Marefati & Murshidi are its glorious examples.  

Through the eulogical narratives, these Islamic devotional songs of the Hamd-Nat phases contain the fervidity and ardency of the banda or the devotee towards the Allah or the Almighty. In the Islamic songs of this phase the Allah or the Almighty has been addressed as the ‘Dayal bandhu’ (compassionate friend), Dayal Nath(Master of compassion), Mamo Raja(My king) or even as community-neutral ‘amar thakur jagannath’ (My Lord Jagannath). Moreover sometimes a devotee mind confined in the falsehood, illusion/ delusion/ attachment & fascination of the mother earth & sitting on the bank of duniya(earth) –darya( a sea or a large river), remembers own loneliness of mortification for useless time pass, which the aforesaid person has draped in sorrowful sweetness. In these songs by addressing Allah as the Dayal Nath ( Master of compassion), Dayal Bandhu (compassionate friend), ‘His’ most compassionate form has been emphasized upon. Since he belonged to all people, so there is no discrimination between the Hindus and the Muslims. By pushing all kinds of communalism in farwaway places, all irrespective of the Hindus and the Muslims had composed these types of songs. Just like Muslim folk poets such as Faezullah, Abul Husain, Afzal, Irfan, Hasan Raja et al, the Hindu folk poets like Netai Chand, Swarup Chand, Radharaman, Srinath et al, also composed these type of songs. Hari, generally had been the objects of veneration, still in the composition of the of the Muslim poets addressed to Allah and in the Hindu poets compositions addressed to ‘Iman Allah’ were not far to seek.

50 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit, p.168
52 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit, p.169
Sufi Devotional songs – Marefati and Murshidi:

The Sufi Sadhana or austere practice was a mystic sadhana or austere practice. Sufi dervishes or the saints had preached the message of Islam in this country. However the indigenous Muslims could not have been able to wipe out easily from their mindset their ancestor’s religious practices, philosophical outlook, customs and rituals. Not only that due to the lack of education, their contact with the ‘Shariyat’ could not have been direct and deeprooted. Therefore according to Ahmed Sharif wherever similarities & affinities of the indigenous practices could have been found with the Sufi doctrine, the Muslims have participated there. In this way the Buddhist & Nath cult, Sahajiya tantric cult, Tantrik Bhakti cult and the yogic practices etc have attracted them.\(^{53}\)

It was for that reason in India, Sufism had been emerged as an admixed mystic philosophy.

This admixed Sufi doctrine had been expressed along with mystic feelings in the Marefati and the Murshidi songs. In it by the influence of yogic and Sahajiya doctrines the ascetic practices of ‘dehatatwa’ or human body, centric doctrine also found place. Moreover, along with these, we find in the Marefati and Murshidi songs, the influences of Sama songs of the Persian Sufis, containing the message of Allah & Rasul and own Murshid’s ‘Safat’ or the eulogical ghazal songs. Besides, there appeared as symbolic metaphors in these Sufi songs, apart from the Islamic traditions of Ali-fatima, pre-Islamic period’s Farsi traditions like Layla –Majnu, Shirin-Farhad et al, Israil dynamic traditions like Yusuf-Julekha and the Radha-Krishna cult in the context of Bengal.\(^{54}\)

\(^{53}\) Sharif, Dr.Ahmad, Madhyayuger Sahitye Samaj Sanskritir rup,.Dhaka, 1977, pp.187-188

\(^{54}\) Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit , p.170
Sufi-devotional songs – Marefati-

The most important part of the Marefati songs are the relations between the Allah and his banda (follower) and for emancipation from the earthly pang taking shelter in ‘Him’. Allah’s form is mystical, as if there is hide & seek with his followers – all these made it ridiculous the Allah-banda relationship-

“Mabud masla Sain go Allah Parowardigar 
Tomar dhuria na pai 
tui bajiar bajigiri 
bujhbar sadhya nai”.\(^{55}\)

Sometimes Allah has been addressed as ‘Amar Allah Dhandakari’ or ‘My Allah the self-seeker’. Again ‘ei bhiksha chai thakur,’ i.e, “Oh Lord I want this alms” – kind of address also could have been found. Moreover reciprocal love relationship between the Allah and the banda also had been expressed through these songs such as-

“Asik Haiya Khoda Mohammad Korila Payeda 
Mohabbater Sathi Rakho Kandiler(Alor) Vitor’ (Akbar Ali). Likewise as there was the necessity of the banda for the Allah, similarly the Allah had the necessity for the banda. It was because the relationship being reciprocal for the both such as-

“Bibadi na haila ke ba tare gone 
Ore, Hakim paila man bibadir 
gunete- yasin”.

The sufi poet Hasan Raja sought shelter beneath the feet of this lover-like humerous person, i.e., the Allah- ‘Par kariye charantale more deo basa’. In these

\(^{55}\) Mahafuzullah, Bangla Sahitye Muslim Oitijhya, Dhaka, 1977, p.70
songs the influence of the Indian environment was bright into the use of the addresses, analogies and idioms.\textsuperscript{56}

Moreover, sometimes the Sufi saint sought the shelter of the Nabijji in order to get emancipation from the earthly illusions, attachment & fascinations. Accordingly there could not be any emancipation without his protection in the Keyamat or the doomsday –

‘Mon re, adhiner pane bole,
Vaber jale hoichi giriftar,
O re akhere varsarakhi
Nabijij charandhular ‘ (Irfan). By carrying the lotus-like feet of the Rasul another Sufi poet’s aggrieved statement ran like this-

‘Ar Murshid Majaid chande bolain
Kadam Rachchul boiya
paretam paretam kori
Din to gelo gaiya Majaid (Chand)

Moreover for sending the message of peaceful felicitation to the Raoja Madina of the Rasul, the Sufi poet’s heart was broken with cry and sorrow-

‘Chalathu chalamu mera, kaiyo Nabijir
Raojay, tora jadi jaore Madinay’. 

However since the desire of love for the Almighty was deeprooted, so the mind of the poet was not satisfied in sending the message through another person, so there was the sorrowful fervidity which had been expressed like this – ‘Adhin Afzal bole, ki Kaitam, Haye re haye, ponkhe jadi ditto bandhu, uriya jaitam Madinay’(Afzal). \textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Islam, Dr Sa’adul, op.cit p.171
\textsuperscript{57} Islam, Dr Sa’adul, op.cit p.171

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Moreover, that the love of the Allah could have been gained by obeying the Shariyati dictum – this kind of notion also had been expressed through the Marefati songs. One can see that in Jamir Ali’s songs – ‘Koran mano Allah chino, Shaytaner zulm koi rona, maran hasar tare jabe, shamaner bhoy rabena’

While in Akbar Ali’s songs – respect and reverence had been narrated for the Shariyat, Koran and the Hadis & the philosophy of life of the Nabiji. Even the fact that the Hazrat Ali himself has got the Marefati gate which paved the way for getting the Allah by obeying the Shariyat – that has been expressed with vehement dedication such as –

“Ar Hazrat Ali’r muskil – Kusha (bipadnashi)
marfater darja
Shariyate jahira na
namaj kaila kaja
Hazrat Alir jonab chchara ke kare fakiri.”

Here the similarity between the Hazrat and the Shariyat and the Marefat had been emphasized. The Sufis of the initial period had expressed the opinion that the Marefat was not without the opinion that the Marefat was not without the Shariyat and here that ideology had been kept. 58

In some of the marefati songs, different aspects of the ascetic practices or the Sadhan pantha, i.e., the tarikat like ‘jikar’ or ‘kalma’ sadhan/jop’, and the three ways or the three manzil of transgressing the Shariyat like tarikat, hakikat and marefat have been expressed such as:

‘Ar Kalimar majhe achche bhai re, namaj asal
ek kalimar majhe nobboi hajr fal’(Akbar Ali)

58 Islam, Dr Sa’adul, op.cit p.172
But as one cannot get the beloved Khoda only doing namaj and through roja, likewise only by uttering tachbi (tachbi japile) even one cannot get the Khoda—that has been expressed by Hasan Raja’s song:

“Hayre, milibena milibena Khoda-matha kuthi moile”. Dr. Sa’adul Islam observed whether the mystic poet(Hasan Raja) hurt even the emotional state of affairs (hal) of the Sufis here? He has commented that for gaining the Khoda the only resort is love—“Khoda mile premik hoile” (Hasan Raja).

Notwithstanding that one of the great ways of Marefat asceticism (Sadhana) was that the preceptor’s maxim being the attainment of Kalima—“Gurubachan Kailma sadhan”. There are three ways of Kalma sadhan or the attainment of Kalma—tarikat manzil, hakikat manzil & the Marefat manzil—“Ar Sayal juriya Bhaire Allah Allah Sar, Ar eshk(iskh or love) miliaia je koribe sadhan, eso dekhibe seijon chander darshan re”. (Haq Ali). In this mystic asceticism(Sadhan) eshk/ ishk or love is the way and love is the aim. Here the way (path) and the travelling allowance/ expenses (patheyo) were the same as one. Therefore without causing any deviation from the Islamic tradition attachment or love to the Khoda and the devotee’s fervidity have been expressed. In the last part the union between the ways of Shariyat and the Marefat had been declared. However the influence of the Indian environment are noticeably visible in the use of addresses, analogies and the contents in the Marefati songs. There it can be presumed that the mystic sufis and the Marefati poets did not deny the indigenous tradition.59

**Sufi Devotional songs – Murshidi**

The way to love of the mystic absolute Khoda was also mystic and difficult. The different enclosed nets of the earthly tie also made this way to love of the Khoda thorny. So the closeness and the direction of the Murshid in each and every step

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59 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit.o.172
was necessary. The idea of taking shelter to the Murshid had been imagined on the model of preceptorism (Gurubad) under the influence of the Buddhist, yogic and tantric influences. The Pirism(Pirbad) had become essential with Sufi ascetic practice. (Sadhan pantha). Here we are not discussing about the history of Pirism, rather we are remembering only about the Murshid.

In the Marefati ascetic practice former form of ‘fana fillah’ or getting dissolved or fused into the preceptor’s (Guru’s) entity, there Pir, Murshid, Shaikh – Shayekh began to be addressed as the Guru or Sain under the Indian influence. For establishing the teaching of the tauhid in the rightful tarikat, Murshidi’sa direction was essential, such as – “Koran parh, tauhid karh, dawne dhar murshider, michamichi mulya this na nauka bojhai kitaber.’
or, ‘Allah paoa jay bhabe murshid bhajile, satya stay satya shuni koranete bole.’

This Murshid was not only ascetic preceptor or Shaikh, rather in many cases Nabiji himself.

‘Tauhideri Murshid amar Mohammader nam
Murshid Mohammader nam’

or, ‘Haye re murshidi nam sona hayere
Nabijir nam sona,
keu harail chaudda ana karo by apar du ana.’- Mymensingh district.

Sometimes, Allah himself took the role of Murshid. As we get in Hasan Raja’s song -“Obu Hadi Allahji, Oba Murshid Allahji, amare bhasailay Allah bhabosindhur néer”.

Besides that, the very word murshid was absent in many murshidi songs. These had been identified only by the idea or thinking that were expressed. The murshidi songs were the wonderful mines of wealth of the Bengali folk songs. The role of
these songs were historic in the cultural history of Bengal regarding wealth of idea, deeprooted mystic fervidity of the ascetics and community-neutral liberal idea.  

**Vaishnava giti (songs)**

The creations of the Muslim poets in the Vaishnava songs emerged out of the following quarters like the liberalism of the Sufi doctrine, endeavour for establishing love-centric relations with the absolute Almighty, rituals free mystic fervidity & the appreciative mentality of taking essence from the neutrality of country, time & religion irrespective of all the traditions, and sources that were consonant with these mystic feelings.  

The Vaishnava songs of the Muslim poets shall have to be analysed from the following angles:-

1) In the context of love of the Sufism.
2) In the context of the writings of the folk songs containing love.
3) As the influence of Indian environs,
4) As the pure Vaishnava lyrics.

To the muslim poets irrespective of Krishna & Chaitanya, were the symbols of lover identity, which tallied with the metaphor of the lovable Allah of the Sufis. In the Vaishnava philosophy only Radha and brajagopinis(or, the milk-women of the braja) of the supernatural Vrindavan were entitled to get company of Lord Krishna. The Vaishnava devotees only could be the viewers of that ‘lila’ or the dalliance / pleasure. But the Sufi poets themselves prayed for the company of the Krishna. Although in the context of the Vaishnava philosophy the lack of taste or

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60 Islam, Sa‘adul, op.cit.,p.173.
61 Bhattacharya, Dr. Jatindramohan, Bangalaar Baisnab Bhabapanno Musalman Kabi, Calcutta, 1961, see the introduction.
‘rashabhab’ happened there, yet the Sufi poets have done it with mystic fervidity irrespective of love-centric religions. 62

The desire of viewing the Krishna just like Radha by the Sufi poets had been expressed in the following song –
‘Sonabandhu peoray tumi bina
pran rakha daya
eso, ekbar asi dekhao rup, naile pran
jaliya jay’ – (Pagal Arkum)
Again, ‘Adham roichcho er gaane
e-go, jibaneri naigo asha,
Kalachander dekha bina’.

In these spheres the desire of the Sufis for viewing of the Allah or ‘Didar’ have been expressed. To the Muslim poets, just as the Krishna was the symbol of absolute love, likewise Gauranga also had been considered as the similar form of love. The folk poets of Srihatta offered love also to Gauranga. The love of the folk poets have been expressed in the model of the love of Krishna by the Sufis –
‘Sonar baran Gaurnaga chand/ dekhle pran bidare
‘O’he Nadia basi go/ man dilam rup pane,
jati kul man sob e dilam,
ami paina charan kene.’ (Hem)
The love for Chaitanaya have been expressed in the Vaishnava songs of the folk poets like Kangal Ratan Das, Sadananda, Hem, Radharaman et al. But the idea of self dedication were explicit in their prayer for seeking Gauranga’s feet. In this case Chaitanya had appeared as the content of the folk songs of love, on the other hand, he can be seen as the ultimate symbol of love in the Sufi model. 63

62 Islam, Sa’adul, op.cit. p.174
63 Islam, Sa’adul, op.cit.174
However, in the songs of the phases of ‘banshir prati’, ‘sakhir prati’, ‘basab sajjika’ & ‘bripralabdha’, deep self-agony of the mind of the devotee, unexplainable pangs of love, deeper ardency of not getting love have beautifully expressed. But the particular kind of love of Krishna of the Hindu & Muslim folk poets which had been expressed here, were not granted by the yardstick of the Vaishnava philosophy. Here one form of the ‘fana’ theory of the Sufis for getting fused into the Allah through the medium of love, have taken another form in the seeking shelter for the love of Krishna. However, these have been expressed in the analogies of the Indian mythological love stories, like Krishna –radha, Sakhi-gopi, gostha-banshi, kunja-abhisar etc. for example we can see in Usman’s songs-
“Amar mon railo udasi go
koi baje go Kalachander banshi”.
Here the folk poet said that the lover’s heart was broken by the melody of the flute, shedding tears day and night being the only resort, while the mind wanted her to become his maid, but ‘haye go, jaite nai dilo amay – nanadi nairashi go”. That means she could not go by avoiding ‘nanadi’ or the husband’s sister’s stern look, but where she has hidden herself by piercing the piriter chchel or shel, i.e. the sharp pointed Indian mythological missile of love on herself.
Here the devotee’s desire was –
“Paile charan dibo jauban / jati kul binashi”
Then Akbar Ali, the folk poet, who had declared himself as the ‘Piriter Sannyasi chchabal’ i.e. the saint boy of love, expressed his last desire –
‘Paile kairitam ami / chiradiner khusi go’.
The variety of love expressed in the songs of the phase were as regular to life, likewise also as successful form the aesthetic point of view. Besides that, sometimes the influence of spiritual theories were also noticeable in some of the songs such as:-
‘Radha kanu ek ghare keho nove vin’
(dehatatwa or the human body centric spiritual theory) or, when having been fused with Shyam, Hasan Raja says –‘Premer bati jalaiya dekho tare nirakhia, hriday mandire biraj kare, Hachchan Raja dhore nam’. Here the ‘fana theory’ of Sufism had been expressed in terms of the ‘ahang Brahma’ theoretical idea of the Indian environment. 64

Apart from that Padabalis or lyrical poetry and songs of the Muslim poets such as saiyyed/ syed Martuza, Nasir Mamud, Lal Mamud et al had been recognized as the pure Vaishnava Padabali. Dr. Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta commented that Bengal’s Sufism was a mixed spiritualism, and within it wonderful synthesis of Persia’s (Iran) love centric spiritual ideas had been fused... That a popular and easy amalgamation had been done within the people of Bengal regarding the Sufi lore centric spiritual ideas and Bengal’s love centric spiritual ideas, and in many respects, the Muslim poets of Bengal fused or amalgamated Radha Krishna’s spiritual love with that of aforesaid ideology of spiritualism originated out of that very syncretism. 65 According to Gurusaday Dutta & Dr. Nirmalendu Bhowmick, this kind of Vaishnava Padabali or lyrical poetry and songs of the Muslim poets were in all practical purposes golden harvest of cultural union. 66 Besides that Dr. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya said all these poets were fully entitled to be called as the national poets of the Bengalis. 67

64 Islam, Sa’adul, op.cit.175
65 Dasgupta, Shashibhusan, “Banglar Musalman Vaishnav kabi’, Calcutta 1381 BS.
66 Dutta, Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu ed book, op.cit p.83
67 Bhattacharya, Dr. Jatindra Mohan, op.cit, p.33
Baul Songs

Dr. Shashibhushan Dasgupta’s opinion was significant regarding the general features & nature of the Baul community wherein he has commented, “These unlettered village-singers, belonging to the lower ranks of the Muslim and the Hindu communities of Bengal and composed partly of householders & mainly of mendicants, are known as Bauls. The bauls belonging to the Hindu community are generally Vaishnavite in their faith and those belonging to the Muslim community are generally Sufistic and in both the schools the emphasis is on the mystic conception of divine rules”.

In reality, the Baul religious philosophy or religion is a mixed religion. It was through the amalgamation of the folk Sahajiya spiritualism & Sufism that the baul philosophy or Baul folk religion had been created. The Baul ascetic practice had been based with Tantrik Buddhist doctrine. The ide of the essence of the ‘maner manush’ (or, a person after one’s own heart/ a favourite/ desired/ cherished person) doctrine had been originated out of the amalgamated form of the Jnanbad or the doctrine that knowledge is the (only) way to salvation/ Gnosticism along with the feeling centric religion of love of the Sufism. Besides that the expression of love of the Bauls with the aforesaid ‘maner manush’ had been formalized through the medium of analogy of Vaishnava ideas. Of course in forming the Baul doctrine, the influence of the Vaishnava philosophy was not far to be noticeable.

Moreover, although the Baul asceticism being mystic, yet it is yogic practice centric. It is through the union of ‘Rasa-Rati’ centric asceticism for the realization of oneself with joy or ‘anandaswarup’. It is a quest for the doctrine of the universe or the ‘Brahmbhanda tatwa’ in the midst of one’s own body – it is a realization of

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68 Dasgupta, Dr. Shashibhushan, Obscure Religious cults, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1946, p.183
69 Bhattacharya, Dr. Upendranath, Banglar Baul ‘O’ Baul Gaan, Kolkata, 1364 B.S, p-66.
mystic ‘maner manush’ within one’s own body. The path or the way to this realization is through the union of ‘Purush ‘O’ Prakiti’ or man and woman. So this asceticism is secret, hidden and very difficult. Therefore, careful directions of the Guru or the Murshid is necessary.

It is for that reason the following issues have got the place within the Baul songs such as –

a) The quest for the ‘maner manush’ or a person after one’s heart and to gain his pleasure of love.

b) The worshipping of the Pir-Murshid and the Guru.

c) ‘Dehatatwa’ or the human body centric spiritual doctrine and ‘Sadhan Katha’ or the story of the ascetic practice.70

Now let us take the case of ‘maner manush’ or the mystic lover. He has been variously addressed as the ‘pakhi’ (the bird) ‘adhara’ (or, who cannot be caught), ‘mayana(a kind of bird) ‘dilal’(my mind), ‘man raja’ (or, the king of my mind), Sujan-pagal (or, the mad good person) ‘mania pakhi’ (or, a kind of bird) etc. Sometimes he has been addressed as the Sundari did or, the beautiful elder sister. ‘Maner manush’ stays within the own body of ascetic(Sadhak) – such as –

1) Vabiya dekh tore deher majhe dharte gele na jay dhara (Murshid Majaid Chand)

2) Since within the human body, these birds coming and going, is very mystical, that is why it is ‘achin pakhi’ or the unknown bird, such as :

‘Khachar bhitor achin pakhi kamne ase jaye,
tare dharte parle mon-beri ditam pakhir paye’- (Lalan Fakir)

The relation of the Baul with the ‘maner manush’ is that of profound love. Ardency of getting the ‘maner manush’ or, the agony of not getting the ‘maner manush’, the burning desire of love for the sudden appearance & disappearance of ‘maner manush’, offended state of mind, or, ‘abhiman’, fervidity for the pleasure

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70 Islam, Sa’adul, op.cit, p.176
of union – these kind of descriptions of various state of affairs of the relations of love can be found in the songs of this phase such as –

‘Ar kande kande Hachchan Raja
premer hatash hoiya’ (Hasan Raja)

‘Kotha diya kothay gelo amare parane mari’ (Akbar Ali)

‘Ar kachche bosi daki/ amar matha khao,
akheri didar ekbar / nayan melicho’ –(Ummar)

‘Diya pran, Kulaman – mon pailam na sajni,
ami hoilam go soi, Kulakalankini’ – Shitalang Fakir

‘Shyam rup dekhilam ami kadamber tole,
‘O’ re, se abadhi dui ankhji jal baran hoilona.’ (Arkum)

The agony of love of the bauls were expressed in the innumerable songs like the above in the Vaishnava ideas & environment. This ‘maner manush’ – sometimes to the offended minded lover baul had been felt as the self-seeker person or the ‘dhandha khor’ –

‘Tui baro bisham dhandakhore re bhai
mono chore’

Sometimes ‘moner manush’ had been compared as the deceitful or the ‘fanckibaaj’-

‘Re Shyam shuk pakh
ar hridpinjira sunya kari/ diya gela fancki’ –(Radharaman)

Sometimes from the agony of love, either ‘maner manush’ had been compared with ‘kalasarpa’ or, the black snake, such as-

‘Ar sadh kare palilam sarpei
hridayte rakhi’ (Afjal)
The songs of this phase (were full of wit & humour, because instead of containing only prayer-centric songs, it generally dealt with the expressions of variety and ardency of love relations.\(^1\)

b) The Pir Murshidi phase of songs had already been discussed in the sufi devotional songs, Marefati and Murshidi songs phase.

In the songs containing ‘dehatatwa’ ‘O Sadhantatwa’ (human body centric spiritual doctrine and asceticism) phase, bhanda-brahmandabad (the doctrine of human body and universe), difficult arteries and veins of the human body and the significance of their numbers had been explained through the melodies of these songs, such as:

‘Mayer chari, baper chari/ Allaher deoah dash
atharo mukamer majhe/ phire maya –ras’

According to that doctrine, the human body consists of eighteen organs such as – from man and woman each contributes four organs like ab, atas, khak, bat – that makes it eight and then from Allah or the Almighty there are 10 organs – five sensory organs of knowledge or ‘karmendriya’ like hands, feet, anus, sexual organ and talking organ or organ of expression like mouth. So the human body consists of eighteen organs. Maya-ras or favour of affection/ attachment stays within the human body. That means human body is the meeting ground of the father & mother & the Allah or the Almighty. By building human body as the embodiment of the world or the universe the Allah/ Almighty or ‘maner manush’ hides himself within the cage of the aforesaid body. It means that the Almighty stays in the mind of the following two, i.e the world / universe and the human body.\(^2\) Dr. Sa’adul Islam commented that undoubtedly the Allah described here was not the Koran prescribed Allah. The Sharh-latifa (or the six latifa) hinted here in the context of

\(^1\) Islam, Sa’adul, Ibid, p.177
\(^2\) Dutta, Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu ed, op.cit, p.124
‘ek mokame chchay nishan’ (or six banners in one residence) could be compared with the ‘sharh chakrabhed’ (piercing the six wheels) of the yogic doctrine. The doctrines of Chari mokam (or, four residence) chaudda bhuban (or, the fourteen world/universe); or, the ulta Sadhana (or the opposite/reverse ascetic practice were the contents of many baul songs). These songs, although lacking in literary values, were a mine of doctrines. There is no doubt that the most applied form of cultural synthesis have been noticeable in the baul doctrine and the baul songs. One can conclude the discussion on the bauls by citing Lalan’s song – ‘je ja bhabe sei rup se hoi / Ram Rahim Kala ek ajnana jagatmay’.

Moreover, one can see the reflection of liberal humanitarism in Lalan’s songs not only in the religious ideas but also in the social ideas such as –

‘Sab lokey koy Lalan ki jaat sangsare,
Fakir lalan bole jaater ki rup dekhlam na dui najare,
jadi sunnat dile hoi musalman/ nari jatir ki hoi bidhan?
O’re baman chini paita praman/ bamini chini kemone?’

It means all the people ask what is the caste or creed of Lalan in this world or within earthly existence. In reply Lalan says, I have not seen in my two vision (or two eyes) what is the form of the caste or creed, if by circumcision one can become Muslim (man), then what shall be the prescript for a (Muslim) woman? Oh, if one can identify a Brahmin (male) by the sacred thread, then how to identify a Brahmin woman?73

Vatiyali songs

The Vatiyali is the song of joy and sorrow, love and agony of folk life of the riverine Bengal. This kind of song is being sung in slow/delayed measure by floating the boat lazily in the current of the ebb amidst horizontal vacuum. This

73 Islam, Dr. Sa’adul, op.cit, p.177
type of song sung in the lazy moments of the helmsmen and the boatmen gradually have been transformed with the growth of meaning into the song of the lazy moments of the farmers fatigued by rain and sun and the herdsmen tired after grazing their animals.

The Vatiyal or Vatiyali is the song sung beneath the open firmament and the prairie and in the river current. This kind of song sung in the solo voice in calm and quiet penetratingly deep style expresses innermost feelings of life amidst the horizontal vacuum. Stoical melody and delayed and slow tempo are the features of this kind of songs. The main theme of this kind of song is love and it is only the song of estrangement. It is as if a person himself is enjoying his estranged agony in the lonely riverside. Sometimes ardent inner agony of the emancipation of mind has been expressed aiming directly towards someone’s own mind. It has been seen that the baul – Sufi- Vaishnava environments are being used to realize the fervidity of the spiritual emancipation.

The baul's favourite themes are river, boat, ebb and a course against the current(ujan) etc. which are also the principal analogies of the Vatiyali songs. As Radha Krishna are the symbols of love, likewise river and boat are the symbols of spiritualism. Besides, ‘man-majhi’, ‘mania’, ‘sonar baran tuta’, etc. are analogies of Sufism. In the Vatiyali songs of the farmers and the herdsmen, environs like grain fields, sunlight, rain, domestic life and their cow buffalo and how these people pass their time and work in the morning and evening etc. are being followed.

There is a basic difference between the Vatiyali and the baul songs in the sense that while Vatiyali is first of all folk based and then doctrine based, whereas the Baul songs are first of all doctrine based and then folk based. The Vatiyali songs are also sung keeping in mind the Murshid. Most probably in the stoic

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74 Dutta, Dr. Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu, ed. book, op.cit, p.147

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moment while expressing agony from the core of the heart of a person’s mind
different facets of the mystic spiritual fervidity of him/her have been added into
this kind of songs. The frustrations of a helmsman’s personal life and spiritual life
have been mixed up here. For example in the following song one can see the baul
environment-
‘Man majhi tore boitha ne re,
ami ar baite parlam na,
jiban vare bailam boitha,
tir vaitay bai ar ujayna’
It means – Oh helmsman of my mind
please take care of your scull,
no longer can I propel it
so far I have propelled the scull allthough in my life
in the ebb my boat is on the river-bank
it can no longer go in the upstream.

On the other hand, one can see the Sufi environ like ‘alma lahute’ (Asim
loke, deha ‘O’ bishwa) i.e. the infinite or, the eternal world, the human body (in the
midst of it) and in this world –
‘Ar chchiripur(Sripur) desher majhe
lahuter bazaar achche go’
Other songs in this category are –
Sekhane(there) ‘Sonar moure pekham dhore’
ruper ghare ghanta baje’
sekhae(there) ‘chander majhe bandhu (bandhur) khela’,
‘lahuter byaprira
sekhane (there) amulya rattan kine
bandhichehe kam samuddur’
We can see that the Sufi Murshid Chand Ali Shah in his song sought help from the Eternal/ Absolute Being named Murshid for crossing the river along with his followers such as –

‘Ami daki kule boia re
par karo diner nath more,
par karo chai dayer murshid
amar balak sakal boiya re’.

Moreover, the agony of estrangement in folklife especially the untold agony of the widow has been reverberated in the farmer’s song like-

‘Bharat smashan majhe ami re bidhaba bala. (Wahed Ali).  

Vaoayiya

Among the folk songs as the Vatiyali belongs to East Bengal likewise the Vaoayiya belongs to the adjacent North Bengal. Vaoayiya is basically the love song. The love is the only basic idea of the Vaoayiya songs and along with it undoubtedly the estrangement also being its principal theme. The Vaoayiya includes description of human beings such as those stricken with grief in body and mind from estrangement either of a woman whose husband is living abroad or, a man who is staying abroad from his wife generally finds expressions in the songs along with different analogies of domestic life like the cot and costly bedstead including views of the bathing ghat, beneath the tree and courtyard etc.

Both the Vatiyali and Vaoayiya are songs of estrangement being sung in delayed tempo. However although both kind of songs originated out of estrangement, yet gradually at the stages of evolution, having assumed sufi-baul

75 Islam, Dr.Sa’adul’s book, op.cit. p.179
thematic analogies, Vatiyali taken the shape of thematically neutral and spiritualistic form, while the Vaoayiya overwhelmingly is the song of love and estrangement- colourful in passion and desires. Since the Vaoayiya is the stream of agony of the folkmind, so although made of delayed tempo, still it is to some extent lively, and the dimension of biological desires have been kept here. In this case influence of slightly coarse-based ‘Chatka’ songs of fast tempo of North Bengal over it is natural. In some of the Vaoayiya songs the melody of the Jhumur songs being added which brings forth variety of musical measure. Moreover since the Vatiyali is being sung beneath the open firmament, there is no necessity of musical instruments and its melody is also not being measured owing to its being sung in the delayed tempo. While in the Vaoayiya since there is the presence of slight liveliness and biological desires, therein the dotara, a kind of musical instrument being used which maintains musical measure. Here is an admixture of delayed tempo and fast measure of music.

The expression of agony of heart of an estranged woman has been sweetened by the song’s easy style and humming sound of words-

‘Prem janena rasik kalachand ai more juriya
thake mon, kato dine bandhrur sone oibo darshan,
bandhu he...O bandhu re- nadir
opare tomar bari jaoa asar anek deri....
o bandhu re- ekla ghare shuiya thako
palong upare, mon more abil pil pil kore... (Coochbehar & Rangpur)

Here although the illicit love relations has been hinted, but still it is not naked. In the song’s humming sound of words, musical measure and fastness has been generated. In the ‘Maishal bandhu’ or, the fosterer and keeper of buffalo related songs, the illicit lover, i.e. the ‘maishal bandhu’ by brimming with emotion the

76 Siddiqui, Ashraf, Loksahitya, Dwitiya Khanda(Vol- 2), Dhaka, 1980, p.100
body and mind of a woman has gone away as a momentary guest only leaving behind the deeper agony of love. This estrangement has been expressed in slightly unrefined folk style. For example, -

‘Partame piriti korlaam re vanga ghare re,
Shuiya asli parshir matha khaitam
tora dilo kaiia re
pran kande maishal bandhu re’

Then being harassed by the neighbours, they have shifted their place of love from an abandoned broken house to a concreted landing stage on the pond/river bank and there the friendly fosterer of buffaloes or the ‘maishal bandhu’ used to bring down sun and moon of the sky for being given to his hand. So for compensating the possible loss of buffalo while making love that woman shall sell the conch bangle on her hand and the necklace. In return she only wants to see her friend. After the friend’s arrival she will welcome him with dhoti for wearing, flattened rice with curd and Sanchi betel leaf for light refreshment and ultimately she will gift her prime wealth, i.e. her luckless youthful body to him.

Then the songs related with the carter friend, or carter-brother brought in fervidity of estrangement along with the hint of remote possibility of getting him. Opera-centrism brought in romanticism and distant unembodied gem in the songs of this phase. Here the comparable theme with it can be in the open mindedness of the Vatiyali. For example-

‘O ki garial vai,
Kato rabo ami panther pane chayare.’
The Vaoayiya is the wealth of the folk songs of Bengal. Here there is almost absolute domination of the Bengali Muslims. Till to-day among the best artists of this kind of song almost all are Muslims.\footnote{Islam, Dr. Sa’adul’s book op.cit, p.180}

Sari songs

Sari songs are prolonged chorus songs, and included in the labour songs or the working songs. In order to give fast pace while sailing the boat this kind of songs are being sung which are of fast tempo and also called songs of the boat race. Originated out of rivers and canals, gradually this kind of songs also included within its arena working songs like harvesting paddy and jute. All kind of working songs are of fast tempo. Ultimately sari added with the measure of the hands and the instruments, is a song of the fast tempo. Later on it has been used to understand any song of fast measure also. We find references of sari songs even on the poetry of Rabindranath.

It has got similarities with the Vatiyali in the sense that this kind of songs are also river related. However, the dissimilarities are almost total, because the objects can be varied and different from the observation of the social and political events to that of self-observation and events connected with the Krishna-lila, or, the dalliance/pleasure activities of Lord Krishna etc. From this perspective it can be of two types, i.e. subjective and objective.\footnote{Dutta, Dr. Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu, ed. book, op.cit, p.171} Many times obscenity may also come into it because it is the song of the lessening of labour and competition which necessitates enjoyments of many persons.

Such is the folk mind of Bengal that here may come the reflection of religious ideas, personal life and easiness in love and estrangement in any kind of...
song. So the Baul, Vaishnavite & Sufi analogies have also appeared in the Sari songs. Dr. Sukumar Sen even cited the examples of the ‘Islamic Sari’ songs.\(^\text{79}\) Regarding the influence of the spiritual environment in the Sari songs it can be said that the sari is a pen-picture of the spiritual environment of the bauls, use of river and boat has been done in the Sari songs and as baul is the traveller of mind in the way to asceticism, likewise the competitors are also presumed as the passenger of any particular destination.\(^\text{80}\)

The opera related sari songs are being sung in fast tempo-for example

Sajilo sajilo nauka sajilo re,
Haye re, Madankumarer nauka sajilo re (Madan Kumar – Madhumala). Besides in a sari song being sung in a Sufi-baul environment, tempo is more fast and the strike of the oar is faster – such as:

Aga picha/nay dariya/ char chaukidar agilo go/ Luiye naukan/ dhariachi kandari ganga ar jamuna nadi/ rata-din chali
bina danre/ bana faithay/ najani kne/ koley- (Arkum)

In the songs of Bengal if there are references of river and boat then inevitably either the context of love relations or the metaphor of spiritualism are bound to occur. This kind of songs do not belong either to the Hindus or the Muslims – but to both.\(^\text{81}\)

The Jari and other type of songs

By wearing nupur on the feet accompanied by Tazia, replica of the Kabar, the Jari is the song of acting being clad in armed dress of the Karbala war. Later on any kind of mourning song and even song of estrangement also came to be known as

\(^{79}\) Sen, Dr. Sukumar, Islami Bangla Sahitya, Bardhaman Sahitya asabha, 1358 B.S, 1951, p.169-170

\(^{80}\) Dutta, Dr. Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu, ed. book, op.cit, p.174

\(^{81}\) Dutta, Dr. Gurusaday & Bhowmick, Nirmalendu ed. book, op.cit.
the Jari songs. There are wide descriptions of the jari songs in the marsia literature and the Karbala related ballads. Besides Jari songs there are folk songs like the Alkap songs which are of social relevance. It has imprints of contemporary thoughts. 82

So far in the discussions all the aspects of the folk songs cannot be covered. We only want to identify in the light of Hindu-Muslim social context similarities of the folk mind as reflected in Bengal’s agrarian life in the main currents of the Bengali folk songs. We have seen that the Vaishnavism & Sufism by generating widespread impact crystalised one syncretist life consciousness which find expressions in various spheres like asceticism, music and songs, spiritualism and aestheticism of the Bengalis irrespective of the Hindus and the Muslims.

82 Islam, Dr.Sa’adul’s book, op.cit p.182