

Folk Song and Communal Accord

Dr. Nandita Basu Sarbadhikary

*Assistant Professor of Rabindra Sangit Dance and Drama,
Sangit Bhavana, Visva Bharati*

Abstract: *Folk music is the oldest form of expression and the true reflection of the life of the people. Various activities and emotions of life are depicted in their songs which evolved through the process of oral transmission. The role of folk culture in the life of a nation and the progress of society cannot be overemphasized. By upholding the underlying unity of the cultures of apparently exclusive communities and their similarities through applied folklore the poison of communal discord can be eschewed to a large extent. Numerous festivals and social functions such as fairs, 'brotos', songs and popular plays are evidence of genuine and cordial relations among Hindus, Muslims and also Christians. There even grew up a common faith between the two communities like Satya Pir. A folk song written in local dialects is a lyrical, simple, less artistic but rhythmic song full of the regional character of a folk community. Besides entertainment and enjoyment, the most catholic character of our folk songs free from all narrow fanaticism is its striking feature that fills us with great reverence for the authors of folk songs. Here, several examples from Bengali folk songs like Baul, Bhawaiya, Gombhira, Leto, etc. have been cited in this paper.*

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Folk music is the oldest form of expression of the people. Folk music is the true reflection of the life of the people. The various activities and phases of life are depicted in their songs, tunes and rhythms. All sorts of emotions and feelings such as love, separation, joy, pleasure, etc have been expressed through music. Definition of Folk music accepted in 1954 by the International Folk Music Council is "Folk Music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission."¹ The role of folk culture in the life of a nation and the progress of society cannot be over-emphasized. By upholding the underlying unity of the cultures of apparently exclusive communities and their similarities through applied folklore the poison of communal discord can be eschewed to a large extent. Numerous festivals and social functions such as fairs, 'brotos', songs and popular plays are evidence of genuine and cordial relations among Hindus, Muslims and also Christians.

Authors of folk songs as well as scholars who have studied folk music have admitted that a spirit of mutual harmony developed between Hindu and Muslim communities as they have lived side by side for a pretty long time. There even grew up a common faith between the two communities. For example, Satyapir draws devotees from both Hindus and Muslims. The fusion of Narayan of Hindu and Pir of Muslim has found expression in the 'SatyapirerPanchali' (lore) composed by Kanka.

*"What I have learned from the Pir
Is also the message of Hindu Shâstra
Allah and Ishwar are the same
Though they are called by different names"*²

A folk song written in local dialects is a lyrical, simple, less artistic but rhythmic song full of the regional character of a folk community. It is usually created for entertainment, enjoyment, or emotional outlet that can be easily sung, understood on different social occasions by the entire folk group. The liberal outlook of folk culture is most remarkable in its spontaneity, simplicity and unsophisticated character. Folk culture is, therefore, nothing but a re-affirmation of broad-based humanism. The all embracing ordinary society never encourages fissiparous tendencies. We are astonished to find the most catholic character of our folk songs free from narrow fanaticism. No doubt, this striking feature of folk music fills us with great reverence for the authors of folk songs. Here, several examples from Bengali folk songs of different regions and communities, translated into English versions have been cited.

Gaji song—Like the Baul, Bairagi of the Hindu religion, there are Sain, Sufi, Darvesh, Gaji, Fakir Communities in the Muslim religion. All of them do not believe in casteism and they express their protest against any narrowness of religion. Therefore we find them to be humiliated by the orthodox people. The Gajis wear a cap on their head and necklaces of beads of glass or plastic. They carry a fly whisk in one hand and a short stick in another. They recite amusing rhymes and songs when they roam about house to house.

A song of Gâji says-

*"The Muslims call him Allah
Who is the Hari to Hindus
On your death, you will tread the same path"*

A large number of people had to leave their hearth and home where they had lived for generations together owing to communal trouble.

Jari song – Jari (means crying) is a folk song of the Maimansing District of Bangladesh. It is as or to f groups on prevalent in the Muslim community. The melancholic tune is serious. Ardent emotional words are mostly used in

it. The theme of this song is mostly the heroism of Hassan-Hossain and the bewailing of Sakina. The chief singer or Bayâti sings wearing a jingling anklet and holding fly whisk in the hand. The others join the 'dohar' or 'dhuya'. This song is very popular among farmers.

A *Jâri*[†] song was composed stressing between Hindus and Musalmans-

*"Hindus and Muslims are of the same stock
they are the two arms of one body.
Neither of them is foes of other
They are friends bound to each other."*

- A song of the **Fakir** community carries this message of catholicity-

*"I crave for you, Oh beautiful Radha!
The Bengali Hassan Raja pines for you.
The Hindus call you Râdhâ,
But I know you as our Khodâ,
When I adore you as Râdhâ,
The Mullahs and Munshis are outraged
But I Hassan Raja make no distinction between Khodâ and Râdhâ."*

- The syncretist poet Shamir Khalifa referred to Jaban Haridas in one of his songs. Though a Jaban or Muslim, Haridas had become a disciple of Chaitanyadeva. A song runs –

*"We have heard that Jaban Haridas was
a follower of Chaitan Gosain
Haridas effaced all differences between Hari and Allah
as they were the one and the same."*

- A folk song says,

*"Do not be inhuman being a human being
Do not say to anybody, 'Touch me not, touch me not.'
All human beings are brotherly,
There is no difference between 'Hari' or 'Muchi' Jaban Haridas was one such
Who was embraced by Sri Chaitanya."³*

In another song, we find how Sri Chaitanyadev embraced Jagai and Madhai who were hated by the society-

*'Jagai Madhai târâ peye Sâdhu sanga
Sri Chaitanyadever parashe mad holo bhango.'⁴*

- Another folk song expresses the noble idea of the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims.

*"Giving the call of Âzân at dawn every day and
chanting the hymns of the Brahmins offering
the prayer of Nâmâz in the evening while
the house wives light the earthen lamps
We live unitedly and we play in unison
If we move together arm in arm
Why should we think of discord and dissension?"*

Kabigan–

In Bengal, in rural areas, *Kabiganor's'* Verse contest' was very much in vogue. Two Kabiyals i.e., the singers contend with each other by composing instant songs presenting opposite opinions about one particular topic. The tune of *Kabigân* is of folk song and changes from one tune to another easily. It is often found that many folk poets compose songs stimulating the awakening of society. Often the contribution of great men of the country is remembered and reverently referred to in the poetic evocations of the *Kabiyâls*. In the mid-nineteenth century during the renaissance period of Bengal, *Kabigân* faded away from urban areas and flourished in rural Bengal. Though the link with Kolkata was detached from rural Bengal, the surges of different new movements and problems of the urban society also touched the village psyche, like polygamy, the bane of westernization, national movement etc. The names Bhola Moira, Antony Firingi, Ramesh Kabiyal are quite familiar to us. Gradually, *Kabigân* became almost lost in West Bengal. But in the East Bengal region, it remained vibrant.

- To quote a Kabigan or village versifier of Faridpur our Golabari.

*"There was an awakening throughout the whole land
When the non-Aryans rose from a primitive to the civilized state of the Aryans.
Those of you who are still lonely and depressed
Must strive to attain progress and advancement in every respect.
Dismissing all caste discriminations
aim at genuine uplift by observing the dignity of labour."*

We may mention a song of Nakuleswar Goswami, the great *Kabiyâl* of the East Bengal-

*"Roza karo, Namaz paro, Sheikh-er roza, bichâr korle ek somân,
Ek-i Brahmo sarbobyâpi, nâme mâtro byâbodhân
Ketâb Korân Bible Purân
Sakol ek dharmer sopân. Mage bhaje Fârâtâra,
Jishu bhaje Christian Mussalmân bale Âllah, Hindu bale Bhagavân,
Sâm, Rik, Jajuâr Atharva, Hindur châri Ved pradhân
Taurit, Jabbur, Injil, Forkân
Châr Kamây Mussalmân'"⁵*

Another *Kabigân* of Nakuleswar is –

*'Bhaire Hindustan âr Pakistâne,
Mile Hindu Mussalmâne,
Râshthro karo sreshtho swargodhâm.'*⁶

- While discussing *Bonbibir Pala*, Sri Sanat Kr. Mitra has shown how this folk song has helped to integrate these two communities.

The *Potuâs* celebrate many Muslim festivals side by side Hindu festivals enthusiastically. For example, Muharram, Id-UI-Fitar, Id-Ud-Zoha etc. even celebrate *Rozaduring* the *Ramzan* with full reverence and sincerity, they utter Namaz and read *Quran* during this period. They also drew *pots* on tales of *Jatakas* during the Buddhist period.⁷ Some *Potuâ* folk songs have the message of social reformation singing against untouchability

*'Sri Ramprasâde târ hoy pâp nâsh anâyâshe
Shabari korilo swargobâsh.'*

Or when Ram embraces Guhak chandâl–

*'Chandâl boliâ Jodi ghrinâ karo mone
Potit pâvan nâm tabe ki kârane.
Guhak saho mîtratâ
Karen Raghunâth Sei âmi sei tumi bale Sri Ram.'⁸
'Sri Guru chintito Hari balo ekbâr
Jagâi Mâdhâi târâ Kâlir Osur
Hari nâme tarâilo Chaitanyo Thâkur'⁹*

- The communal accord between Hindus and Muslims is emphasized in a song of the Alkapgenre–

*"We Hindus and Muslims are brethren
dwelling in the same land
and singing the song of the brotherhood of faiths
Hindus and Muslims drink the same water
which they call by different names.
The salt a Hindu consumes is the same,
taken by Muslims going by another name.
Likewise, the same blood is known by
different names to Hindus and Muslims.
Why should then be any discord-between the one and the other?"¹⁰*

'*Leto*' song of Bengalis is mostly sung by the Muslims, though in recent times some Hindus are also joining with them. It is interesting to note that saluting the audience they sing the praise of Saraswati at first and then of Allah.

- Saraswati Vandana-

*"I have brought for you a casket of morning flowers
O the goddess! Wake up in the temple
Do not sleep so long,
If there is any mistake in my worship
Why are you still asleep?
O heartless one, you did not reveal yourself to me in my tears."*

- Allah Vandana-

*"O, Allah! Please come to our concert and love me
I pray to Alia, Ambia, Adam,
To put their reddish feet upon the head
Of this poor one.
Fatema is my mother Uncomparable to any other
Allah tells O Mother
He is formless."*

Bolan Gân is in vogue in some parts of Nadia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Burdwan. In one of such songs, the picture of harmony is emphasized as follows-

*"Allah Rasul of Muslims is none other than Hari
Worshipped by Hindus.
Bismillah and Giri Bistu convey the same sense
The same Lord of creation is invoked by Hindus
as Ram and Rahman by Muslims."¹¹*

Many folk songs of Nodia cry out in protest against religious bigotry, for example,

*"Some call you Allah, and some Bhagavan,
O, Lord! Hindus and Muslims are both children of the same mother.
Read the Geeta, the Koran and the Bible which are essentially the same in their
message.
Why then do you quarrel
and fight among yourselves?
What Hindus call water is called Pani by Muslims
Is there any difference between the two?
The grave of the Muslims and the cremation ground of the Hindus
are not two of the same kind
When you shed the blood of another man
do you ever consider that you have killed a fellow man?"¹²*

- In a Baul song of Nadia, the omnipotent God has been invoked –

'O Lord, you are the Kali, you the Krisna,

*You are the Haque Bari, you are omnipresent
and you are manifesting many forms
Words good and bad you do speak
Fakir Bindu Jadu songs,
Oh gracious One You are of the Muslims and the Hindus
and to me, you are Kubir Chand.'*

- In a Baul song of Murshidabad, there is no conflict of identities between Allah and Hari.

*"O my heedless soul, why are you so ignorant?
Know that all doubts in your mind are baseless,
Why do you discriminate between Allah and Hari?
The great savior will take you in his boat across the river of life,
Worship, therefore, the Ultimate one and you will gain heavenly bliss."*

- The great Baul Lalon Fakir harassing against communal discord in several songs -

*"What is this strange workshop
Manufacturing communal hatred?
What community did you belong to
at your birth my friend?
What will be the stamp of community
when you will leave this world?
The Baul worships man and enjoys heavenly bliss."*

- Another song of Lalon-

*'Sab loke kay mânob ki jât sansare'
"People want to know what is the religion of Lalon,
Lalon says in reply I know not what is the stamp of religion.
If circumcision makes a Muslim
What is done to a woman
If Brahmin is known by his sacred thread
How do we know which woman is Brahmin
If there is a sacred necklace round the neck of one,
There is a string of beads (Tasbih) round the neck of another.
Does this make any difference between the two?
Does anyone think of his creed
when he comes into the world or departs from it?"¹³*

- He also uttered,

*'Bhakter dwâra bândhâ âchen Sâin
Hindu kimba Yaban bole târ jâter bichâr nâi.'*

He never wanted to keep himself confined within narrow casteism–

*'Jât nâ gele pânâ Hari
Ki chhâr jâter gaurav kori chhusne bolie.
Lâlon kay jât hâte pele purâtâm âgun diye.'*

He expressed his strong protest against communalism–

*'Ek-i ghâte âshâ-jâwâ
Ek-i patni dichche kheyâ Keu khây nâ kâro chhowâ
Bibhinno jal ke kothây pân.'*

Again he sings–

*'Bed purâne korechhe jâri
Jabaner Sâin âr Hindur Hari
Âmi to bujhte nâri
Dui rupe sristi korlen ki târ promân.'*

He also says–

*'Ek chânde hoy jagat âlo Ek bije sob janmo holo
Fakir Lalon kay michhe kalo Keno koris sadâi.'*

From a report of a Bengali daily, we come to know that in a most underdeveloped village Utashi Narikeltala situated on the border of Nadia and North 24 Parganas districts often there were conflicts and disturbances among the people. But an assembly of communal amity called Lalon Mela is organised by Sayd Malita and Nityananda Das where Bauls and Fakirs from various regions of Bengal come to sing. It commences from 12 December and continues throughout the year. It has been able to heal all the communal discords among villagers. The Bauls of the concert 'Mahakal' of Nadia sing together with the Bauls of Bangladesh. Utashi is the place of the great artist Gosthogopal. Lots of ascetics and sages from various regions gather here to be engrossed in Baul songs. In spite of immense poverty, people find peace only by the magic power of music.

- Panju Shah(1851 -1914) a progressive thinker sings-

*"Why boast of your creed?
Does your creed matter at all
Whether in this world or the other?
I feel like setting fire to all fanaticism."*

In his *Religion of Man*, Rabindranath Tagore says in 'The Man of My Heart' "About this time, one day I chanced to hear a song from a beggar belonging to the Baul sect of Bengal...what struck me in this simple song was a religious

expression that was neither grossly concrete, full of crude details, nor metaphysical in its rarified transcendentalism. At the same time, it was alive with emotional sincerity. It spoke of an intense yearning of the heart for the divine which is in Man and not in the temple, or scriptures, in images or symbols. The worshipper addresses his songs to the Man, the ideal, and says:

*'Temples and mosques obstruct thy path,
and I feel to hear thy call or to move,
when the teachers and priests angrily crowd around me.
He does not follow any tradition of the ceremony
but only believes in love.
According to him: Love is the magic stone,
that transmutes by its touch greed into sacrifice'.*

He goes on to say—

*'For the sake of this love,
heaven longs to become earth and gods to become a man.
Since then I have often tried to meet these people,
And sought to understand them through their songs, which are their only form of
worship.*

...A village poet of Bengal says;

*'We know him when we unlock our own self
and meet in true love with all others'.*

...And another singer sings of the ideal Man and says

*'How could the scripture know the meaning of the Lord
who has his play in the world of human forms?
Listen, O brother man (declared Chandidas)
, the truth of man is the highest truth,
There is no other truth above it.'¹⁴*

All these are proofs of direct perception of humanity as an objective truth that arouses profound feelings of longing and love. This is very unlike what we find in the intellectual cult of humanity, which is like a body that has tragically lost itself in the purgatory of shadows.¹⁵

Here Rabindra Nath says, 'I have mentioned in connection with my personal experience some songs which I had often heard from wandering village singers, belonging to a popular sect, called *Bauls*, who have no images, temples, scriptures or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of Man and express for him an intense feeling of love, coming from men who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a god of cosmic force, but rather about the god of human personality.'

A verse of mystic poet *Narahari* goes-

*"That is why, brother, I become a madcap Baul
No matter I obey, nor injunctions, canons or
custom. Now no man-made distinctions have any
hold on to me,
And I revel only in the gladness of my willing love.
In love, there is no separation, but comingling always,
So I rejoice in song and dance with each and all."*¹⁶

As believed by Kabir, Nanak, Ravidas, Dadu and their followers *Bauls* also hold that 'the human body is the holy of holies wherein the Divine is intimately enshrined as the Man of the Heart. They sing-

*"I would not go, my heart, to Mecca or Medina
For behold, I ever abide by the side of my Friend,
Mad would I become, had I dwelt afar, not knowing Him
There's no worship in Mosque or Temple or special holy day
At every step I have my Mecca and Kashi;
Sacred is every moment."*¹⁷

Madan Baul of the 19th century bemoans-

*"The path leading to you is obstructed by temples and mosques.
I hear you call, Lord, but cannot reach you because the Gurus and Mursheds stand
in the way."*

Devotees from the lowest strata of the Hindu and Moslem communities are welcomed into their ranks.

The Baul *Rajjab* sings -

*"All the world is the Veda, all creations the Koran.
Why read paper scriptures, O Rajjab!
Gather ever-fresh wisdom from the universe
The eternal wisdom shines within the concourse of them millions of Humanity."*¹⁸

He also sings-

*"The Simple has its thirty million strings whose
mingled symphony ever sounds.
Take all the creatures of the World into yourself.
Drown yourself in that eternal music."*¹⁹

Daddu Shah a seeker after the truth was dead against caste barriers. He makes a striking utterance when he says:

*"Do not boast, O my brother, of your creed and caste,
Numberless are the great men who have never cared
For their religious identities."*

Daddu also reminds us that communal discord and lack of unity are the cause of India's subjugation to foreign rule. He sings-

*"It is because of communal strife
That the foreigners have come to rule our country.
Hindus, Bouddhas, Jains and Musalmans
became victims of mutual strife,
Millions of Indians could not, alas,
live in peace and harmony.
And that is why the Firingis came
and occupied our motherland."*

Daddu Shah says-

*'Never call names to Shudras, Chandals and Bagds
Day by day their lowliness will be wiped out, be sure.'*

Daddu was very socially conscious and far ahead of his time. This is evident in his song-

*'Shudras, Bouddhas and the Musalmans (of low rank) all are
children of the same mother
The soil of India is the source of their life.'*

He was dead against caste barriers -

*'Who do you caste out, Brother, because he is low born?
Maybe it is 'Brajer Kanai' in that guise.'*

The same tone rings later in a song of Kazi Nazrul Islam,

*'Who do you despise and hurt as a mere cowboy?
Maybe it is 'Brajer Gopal' in that guise.'"*

- A '**Shang**' or masquerade song issues a warning to the British rulers

*- "We warn you, plunderers, from an alien land
We Hindus and Muslims being all of one accord
sing the song of 'Swaraj'."*

- In a certain **Gunajatra** or folk drama, the sacred duty of upholding the unity between Hindus and Muslims has been enjoined.

*"Wake up Hindus and Muslims!
Tighten the bond of mutual love
The country as a whole helplessly looks on
as the foreign rulers make a mockery
Of the sanctity of religion."*

In 1947, at the time of the partition of India, communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims was largely hampered. A folk poet was unable to accept this imposed separation, composed the following lines-

*"We live as exiles in our own homeland
where our ancestors dwelt.
Alas, my motherland India
What evil days have to befall you, O my India!
O Lord Bholanath! We two have been
the children of the same mother India
Hindus and Moslems lived together for ages
Why should it be otherwise henceforth?"*

There was a parallel current of patriotic folk songs such as *Gombhirâ*, *Bhadu*, *Bauls*, *Bairagis*, *Kabigan*, *Jari songs*, *Patua songs*, etc. composed during the National Movement of India to bring the countrymen under a common umbrella and free our motherland from the British rulers. Unfortunately, these folk songs did not last very long. The probable historical explanation for this may be that the value of these songs was very topical according to the depth of the changing public involvement. These songs are almost extinct today also because of the lack of preservation.

In this context, reference may be made to the patriotic songs written by Rabindranath Tagore especially at the time of the Bengal Partition Movement in 1905, most of which were set to the tune of Bengali folk songs like *Baul*, *Kirtan*, etc. with the object of reaching, inspiring and uniting them as so four countries. For instance, '*Amra milechhi aaj mayer dake*' or '*Âmâr sonâr Bânglâ*', which later has been chosen as the national them when our neighbouring country Bangladesh attained freedom. Tagore discussed the songs of Baul Chhakku Thakur of Vikrampur.

From all these, we can conclude that Rabindranath was fully aware of Baul's song and the Baul doctrines.

We can very well understand from the aforesaid that folk songs of Bengal have never given quarter to communal ill-feeling.

The composite performance of two great epics of India, involving songs, dance and play-acting has played a great role in national integration. They have several folk and regional language versions. Wandering minstrels recount the great epics especially *Bhagavat Geeta* and also other mythologies. Even today the theme of the *Ramayana* is celebrated by people in different parts of India in their inimitable way and fashion and the characterization of music is very significant and worth mentioning.

Gombhirâ-Gombhirâ festival is celebrated with various religious rituals, songs, verse recitals, *lachari* etc.. *Gombhirâs* related to Shaivism and it was

practiced as the chief religious festival of North Bengal during 700 to 800 A.D. *Gombhirâ* continues for a few days. There is little similarity with other folk songs of North Bengal.

Though *Gombhirâ* originated one and a half thousand years back, it is noted that from the first and second World War onwards social and political issues are being introduced in *Gombhirâ*.

Once there was a serious disturbance when Muharram and *Gombhirâ* ceremony happened to take place on the same day. On that occasion, the Muslims of Bajratak village destroyed the drums of *Gombhirâ* and in return, the local Hindus broke the *Tajiya* structure. Deeply pained by this ugly incident the mystic poet of *Gombhirâ* folk drama Shamir Khalifa cried out in anguish-

*"O Shiv Niranjan, what distress have you put us in?
The Hindus and Muslims used to sing Gombhirâ songs in the union.
But now the Gombhirâ drums lie broken
And the Tajiya instead of being drawn together is destroyed too."*

The partition of the nation had a severe impact upon the folk poets-

*'Desher kato je netaa, taader baro baro kathaa
Paiyaa swaadhinataa laaddu,
kunthe hoiyaa genu gaaddu
Dekhyaa taader swarthoparotaa,
khaalle haamaader maathaa
Shyaashe ghare aagun laagaiyaa diyaa
Sonâr Bhârat korlo dukhaan,
Hindusthân aar Pâkisthân.'*

Besides politics, whenever there is any sort of religious conflict, we find it repercussions, on *Gombhirâ's* song.

Some folk songs show the intense eagerness of the uneducated village folk to live unitedly. A song of the democratic poet Shamir Khalifa may be mentioned in this context-

*'Kun the Allah Bhagobaan, Kunthe aachhe aadyer than Mondir ki
Mosjidete Pujja Sinni khan
Tomaar nurete ki tikite boshyaa ,tasbir ki maalaa ghuraay'*

A composer also wrote -

*'Haay re Allah ki holo, Hindu-Muslim dui molo
Dekhechhi jaatiyaari jaatiyaari koryaa, daangaa haangamaay polo'*

There is the presence of both Rahman and God in praise of the country and both names are uttered with the same devotion.

*'opore bondinu aasmaan Rahman
Bhagabaan, Jaardayaar gune lekhi aaijkaar gaan'*

In North Bengal, *Bhâwaiyâ*[#] is the most popular folk song. It is also sung in Rangpur in Bangladesh, Goalpara in Assam, Purnia district in Bihar.

Bhâwaiyâ – It is the most popular folk song of North Bengal. According to some, '*Bhâwaiyâ*' came from the word '*Bhâva*' i.e. feeling, or from the word '*Bhâwâ*'. When the river changes its route, the vegetation that grows along the former riverbed is called '*Bhâwâ*'. The cowherds bring their buffalos to graze on this land and sitting upon the buffalos sing in slow melancholic songs in romantic tunes while playing the instrument *dotârâ*. These songs are known as *Bhâwaiyâ*. The song is sung by the elephant-drive in lonely forest areas of Coochbehar on the plains Goalpara doesn't have the characteristics of the broken voice of the boatman rowing on the rapid river and the tune is simpler. *Bhâwaiyâ* is mainly the song of love and the pangs of separation and the intense agony of the cowherds or the *Mâhutsis* expressed in these songs. In the popular songs, social life nurtured in the lap of nature, there are frequent references to rivers, *maishaal* (cowherd for grazing buffalos), boatman, *mâhut* and birds of various kinds. But a number of *Bhâwaiyâ* songs have been composed in social and political perspectives besides the themes of tender love and separation, religious matters, etc.

In a *Bhâwaiyâ* song, the poet offers salutations to the different directions-

*"We adore the West which is the seat of Allah
That is why we salute the feet of the West
Thinking of the creator.
We bow to the North where rest
The feet of the goddess"*

The songs of Nibaran Pandit (1912-1985) deserve a high position collecting almost 22 tunes of different regions of Bengal, he composed nearly 300 songs in his life. He had to spend his days in dire distress. Still, there was no respite to his composing revolutionary songs and writing books. He was very much vocal against oppressive rule. During the Emergency period, the broadcasting authorities banned the Tagore song '*Byartha praaner aaborjona*' due to the occurrence of the term '*aagunjwaalo*' (which means 'light the fire'). Being disturbed by the ban aggrieved Nibaran Pandit became very much vocal. He composed the following in the tune of *Chatka*.

*'Murkhyu gidaal haamraagulaa Bhaawaiya gaan gaai
Bhaabinu naahoy chhaapti dim mui gaan duchaarkhaanao
Censor-e kaatiyaa gaaner bhaabe raakhilnaa
Moner aagun chokher jale nibaanor kathaa khaanaa
Censor kay aagun shabdo balaare cholibenaa
Aagun baad diyaa, shudhu jal diyaa,*

*ki kore gaan gaai bhaabe bujhinu dukkho paaileo bolibaar upaay naai
haamaar gaan tomraa bhaai re, saango dhori nio
samay ele aagun gaan haazaar kanthoto gaahio.*¹⁸²⁰

The song was published in *Gananâtya* January, 1976 number. During the composition of the song, the poet was in Kolkata due to illness.

It may be mentioned that the famous folk composer Abbasuddin, for the first time gave proper recognition to *Bhâwaiyâ* in the sophisticated sphere of music. He was always disturbed by the hostile relationship between Hindus and Muslims.

In spite of being plunged into grave poverty, it has been noted that the ups and downs in social or political affairs have a deep impact on the folk poets of Bengal. It is surprising to notice the great role of these folk songs in instilling the awareness of social rights and self-confidence among the common men though they do not speak of scholarly theories or any guidance to life with the aristocracy. Great respect for the poets fills our minds spontaneously.

Manorama Sharma says, "India is a land steeped in folklore, with its sage old civilization. Folklore fostered cultural unity and national integration despite its diverse languages, religions, regions and times. There has been easy mobility of folklore through pilgrimages, fairs, festivals, rituals, the wandering minstrels, sadhus (saints) and fakirs. These have also played an important role in disseminating them throughout the length and breadth of this country."²¹ Therefore, we find some similarity in the pattern of literature of folk songs of different regions from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, however, with slight regional variations.

Notes and References

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