



Baul Songs in the Modern Social System: Lalon Fakir

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ABSTRACT

In modern society, the Baul songs of Lalon Fakir still serve as a profound platform for humanistic and philosophical discussion. Times have changed, technology has advanced, and the structure of society has transformed—yet Lalon's songs have not lost their relevance; rather, they have become even more vibrant with new meanings and interpretations. Lalon Fakir was a man of unconventional thought. At the heart of his Baul philosophy was humanity—a universal human being transcending caste, religion, race, gender, or rituals. In modern society, where religious divisions, social inequality, communalism, and consumerism are rampant, Lalon's humanistic philosophy stands as a powerful form of protest. Lalon's philosophy includes the guru-disciple tradition, the philosophy of the body, and the Sahajiya spiritual practice, which are often dismissed as unscientific in modern rationalist society. But a deeper understanding reveals that these are actually teachings of moral development, self-restraint, and tolerance. In today's consumerist society, these teachings are more essential than ever.

Introduction:

Main analysis:- In the history of Bengali folk culture, Baul music represents a distinct, profound, and humanistic tradition. It is not merely a musical genre, but rather an alternative philosophical perspective on life and the world. Rejecting all forms of division based on religion, caste, creed, gender, and social identity, Baul philosophy speaks of searching for the true human being within oneself. At a time when modern society is increasingly moving towards consumerism, mechanization, and self-alienation, Baul



music has emerged as a unique language of humanistic resistance. The word 'Baul' itself contains the idea of 'madness' or 'obsession,' but this madness is actually the madness of self-inquiry. Bauls disregard external rituals, religious rules, and social customs, seeking instead the inner self. The core of their philosophy is that humanity is the truth, and humanity is the field of spiritual practice. Not scriptures, but the body is their primary text. This philosophy of the body (dehatattva) lies at the heart of Baul philosophy.

The foundation of Baul philosophy is Sahajiya practice and the philosophy of the body. Bauls believe that the human body is the primary field of spiritual practice and the only path to realizing the truth. They do not give importance to external rituals, scriptures, temples, mosques, or the priestly class. According to them, if God exists anywhere, He resides within human beings. This philosophy is fundamentally opposed to institutional religion, but not anti-religious. Bauls do not deny religion; rather, their stance is against the hypocrisy, exploitation, and division imposed on people in the name of religion. The central figure of this tradition is Lalon Fakir—who is not only a Baul practitioner but also an exceptional humanist philosopher in the history of Bengali social thought.

Lalon Fakir is the greatest and most influential representative of this Baul philosophy. Although there are many ambiguities in his life history, these very ambiguities are deeply intertwined with his philosophy. Lalon concealed or denied his caste, religion, or social identity—because he believed that a person's true identity is not limited to these external markers. His famous saying is—

"Sob loke koi lalon ki jaat songsaare

Lalon bole jaater ki rup dekhlam na ei nojore |" 1

—It can also be read as a strong protest against the identity politics of modern society. In today's society, where people are divided by religion, caste, or community, Lalon's question becomes even more relevant.

The main characteristics of the modern social system are the capitalist mode of production, consumerist culture, and a technology-dependent, mechanical way of life. In this society, people are gradually turning into machines, where the warmth of relationships, spiritual connection, and human values are almost extinct. Families are breaking apart, relationships are becoming fleeting, and loneliness and mental depression are increasing among people. In this situation, Baul songs clearly identify the spiritual crisis of modern man and offer a humane alternative path. Lalon's songs repeatedly teach people to look within themselves. He says that the truth that cannot be found by searching outside is hidden within the human



heart. Through the line, "How does the unknown bird come and go inside the cage?" Lalon expresses the mystery of the human body and soul. In the language of modern psychology, this can be called the search for self-identity. Lalon's songs give voice to the crisis that modern man suffers regarding his own existence. Baul songs are profoundly humanist. Here, humanity is the ultimate truth, the ultimate refuge. Lalon did not see God as a supernatural entity, but rather considered human consciousness to be the seat of God. According to him, love for humanity is the highest religion. This humanism provides a powerful philosophy of tolerance and coexistence in modern multi-religious and multicultural societies. Where religion often becomes a weapon of division in modern society, Lalon's Baul philosophy envisions religion as a bridge of human unity.

Lalon's Baul songs are a subtle yet profound language of social protest. He did not give direct political slogans, but questioned the fundamental structure of society. His songs are a silent rebellion against the caste system, Brahmanical arrogance, religious hypocrisy, and the degradation of women. In Baul practice, there is no distinction between men and women; both are equal seekers. Even in modern society, where a woman's body often becomes an object of exploitation, the Baul philosophy of the body speaks of women's dignity and human equality. Lalon wanted to convey that a person's true identity is not their caste or religion, but their humanity. All people are one, and God resides within all people. Therefore, he writes—

"Asha kingba jaoyar kaalel

Jaater chinno roo kaare ||" 2

Lalon has shown that the distinctions of caste and religion were created by humans, not by God. We say that one's caste is lost, but the Bauls ask, how can caste be lost? A person has no caste at the time of birth or death. Therefore, in the words of Lalon Shah, the harmonious, egalitarian spirit of Bengal is evident. He says—

"Jaat gelo jaat gelo bole

E ki ajob, karkhana

Sotto kaaje keu noi raaji

Soboi dekhi ta na-na-na ||" 3



Our bodies contain characteristics of both Hindus and Muslims. Yet, there is so much conflict over caste. We must eliminate the discrimination between the upper and lower classes and establish the religion of humanity. This is where Baul music becomes relevant. He Said —

"Manush Vojle Sonar Manush hobi |" 4

Lalon witnessed the realities of society firsthand. That's why some want to distinguish themselves as Brahmins, others as Chandalas, and still others as Muslims. Yet, everyone bathes in the same water, and everyone has the same blood and the same life force. Nevertheless, the divisions in society are stark. Lalon raised this question—

"Jome to kaukei charbe na |" 5

In other words, death is the same for everyone. There is no separate place for caste or religion here.

In modern times, Baul music has become popular on the one hand, but has also faced challenges on the other. Baul songs are performed on stages, at festivals, on television, and on social media, but in many cases, their philosophical depth is being lost. Baul music is being presented merely as a matter of melody and emotion, and Lalon's philosophy is being obscured by folk romanticism. This is a reflection of the cultural consumerist tendencies of modern society. Nevertheless, the encouraging aspect is that a new interpretation and re-evaluation of Lalon has begun in modern educated society. In literature, drama, film, and research, Lalon is being seen not merely as a folk poet, but as a profound philosopher and social thinker. Similarities are being sought between his thoughts and modern humanism, existentialism, and postmodern philosophy. In matters of self-identity, opposition to power structures, and the relationship between body and consciousness, Lalon was far ahead of his time.

In conclusion, in the modern social system, Baul music, especially the songs of Lalon Fakir, is not just a cultural heritage—it is an alternative philosophy of life. In a society that turns people into objects of consumption, Lalon teaches people to live as human beings. In times of division, violence, and spiritual emptiness, Lalon's message reminds us that humanity is the ultimate truth, and love is the ultimate religion. This is why Baul music remains relevant today, contemporary, and equally important for the future. So, in the end, I can say it in his own words—

" Emon manob somaj Kobe go hobe srijon |" 6



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