

The Vent of Women's Life in Folklore Materials: 'Folk Festive', 'Folk Manners' and 'Folk Game'

Pinky Rani Kundu

Undergraduate student in the Department of Folklore, Rajshahi University

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Received: January 20, 2022
Accepted: February 23, 2022
Volume: 3
Issue: 2

In this article, folklore, folk tradition and the position of women in rural life have been embodied. There are many differences between the position and contribution of women in society, the outline of which is observed in this article. The article is based on literary reviews and intellectual discussions where the reality of rural women predominates.

KEYWORDS

Folk Festive, Folk Manners,
Folk Game, vent of women's
life

1. Introduction

Festivals are an integral part of Bengali culture. As a Bengali festival-prone nation, "Baromase Tero Parvan" (various festivals are organized throughout the year) is involved in their lives. Different festivals have been started centering on different issues of the society. Sometimes the main focus of all these festivals is nature or women being an integral part of nature. Because women are considered nature. Again, folk manners are an important issue in the celebration of festivals. It is not possible to celebrate any festival without folk manners. This is the essence of any festival. Most of the Bengali folklore is practiced by women.

The kind of struggle that was originally a means of survival in society may have changed over time into an element of entertainment which is known as a folk game in society. In addition to the various folk games created by the class struggle in society, the various deprivations of women's lives are also reflected in the folk games. The presence of women's lives in all subjects is especially observed at every level of the various elements of folklore.

2. The Nature of Women in Rural Life

Women are one of the important parts of social life in Bangladesh. Although women in the village are involved in production activities such as housework, agriculture, and animal husbandry, it is not recognized. Also, there is no recognition of women's housework in the city. The contribution of women is limited to being abused and raped. In our society, a completely positive attitude towards women has not been developed. When women have been endangered for centuries, the analysis shows that they are endangered by being called 'women'. Women face different types of oppression. But the reason for all the oppression is one: she is a woman in terms of

gender, so tortured. Conventional social beliefs and prejudices want to prove that women are not human beings by keeping them within gender boundaries. From prehistoric times, those women have again resorted to a folk goddess to express their sorrows and griefs, observing various folk customs, not for herself but the good of the family and society! Again, this femininity is considered by the society as a symbol of fertility, so in the agrarian rural society even today, as a symbol of fertility and prosperity of crops, women are again considered 'goddesses' in folklore and folk festivals. Moreover, in various rural games or the entertainment of cheerful children, rhymes, games rules come up with a breathless female character where women are being used only as personal satisfaction. Sometimes social degradation like 'lady enjoyment', 'abduction of women' is still driving women away in the 21st century.

Changing the landscape of this position of rural women in folklore or our Bengali tradition is therefore a timely subject. But that can only be done when we need to discuss in detail the areas of women's relationship with our heritage.

3. Impressions of women's suffering in 'Tusu' despite being a festival

Although 'joy' and 'festival' are two different words, their meanings are closely related to each other. The festival means a tinge of joy in the house of Bengalis. That is why the joyous Bengali folks feel revel "Baromase Tero Parvan" (various festivals are organized throughout the year).

"Tusu Parab" or "Tusu Parvan" (Tusu Festival) is one of the tribal festivals of the ancient folk culture of Radha Bengal (western part of Bengal). Tusu is generally considered to be the goddess of Cole, Munda, Orao, Santal, Bhumij, Bhuiyan, Mahato, etc communities of Dravidian and Austrian language groups. This is a famous demotic ritual. The main features of this festival are Tusu songs (folk songs, the main theme of which is demotic and physical affection). Tusu is a mythical goddess who is considered a virgin deity that's why girls do worship this goddess.

The 'Tusu Parab' begins on the last day of the Agrahayan month of Bengal or the first day of the month of Poush and the festival ends with the immersion of the deity in the virtue period of 'Makar Sankranti' (The last day of push month of Bengal). The month-long festival is celebrated through various folklores. In the month of Agrahayan, a bunch of new aman paddy is brought from the paddy field and left on the farm. On the day of Sankranti (the last day of Agrahayan), the girls put rice powder in a bowl and put husk in it. Paddy, durba (grass), flowers, garlands, and various items are placed on the husk and the bowl is placed on a pedestal with a turmeric tip. From then on, every evening, the goddess is worshiped by offering sugar-cake, molasses, turnips, gram flour, and chira.

The last four days are the most interesting times of the Tusu festival. These four days are known as 'Chauri', 'Bauri', 'Makar' and 'Akkhan'. On the day of Chauri, the daughters of the household clean the yard with dung and draw alpana on it. On the day of Bauri, a crescent-shaped or triangular mold is made and the cake is made by filling it with coconut, sesame, or sweet pur. Locally it is called 'Udhi Pitha' or 'Gargara Pitha'. 'Tusu Jagran' (awaken of Tusu) was held from the night of Bauri. During the awakening, the girls clean the house and decorate it with flowers, garlands, and lights. Apart from daughters, housewives and older women also sing Tusu songs. At night, Tusu Devi is offered Fried gram, Fried peas, turnips, and Jillipi. On the dawn of Makar, the girls sing in groups and immerse the goddess in a river or pond on a bamboo quadrangle decorated with colored paper. Then the girls put on new clothes and the boys built a house with straw and wood and set it on fire. Akhan is the song of goddess Tusu. Through this song, girls and married women

highlight various family and social issues. The songs are a unique expression of the happiness-sorrow, hope-aspiration, and love of the villagers.

Tusu Puja is observed in the rural areas of Bankura, Purulia, Burdwan, and Hughli districts of West Bengal. Earlier no sculpture was used in Tusu Puja but now Tusu sculpture can be seen in Purulia and Bankura region. Tusu sculptures are found in the fairs celebrated on the occasion of 'Tusu festival'.¹

In a Tusu song in Purulia, we see the enduring of a poor housewife in a destitute father-in-law's house:

বাপে আমায় বিহা দিলো/ father has arranged my marriage.

ভালো স্বশুরঘর দেইখে/ seeing the established in-laws

জনম গেলো মাড় খাইতে/ Life passed by torture

(হামি) রহিব কেমন মতে? / How will I stay?

Here, an anonymous housewife complains to the goddess Tusu almost every day about the suffering of a poor housewife. In reality, in real life we see a poor young lady being married off by most of the guardians in a house where she can eat twice as much. The girl's guardians know that on the off chance that they can marry the young lady in a well-equipped house, she will not be a scarcity of rice and clothes. So the married girl is complaining to Tusu here that her father and mother have married her after seeing a good father-in-law's house, yet she is not getting enough food for every day, she has to spend her life eating rice starch.

This is often what masculinity needs, ladies ought to acknowledge the rules made by them as socially recognized rules.

The word 'good' needs to be judged a bit here. In modern society, the marriage of a boy and a girl is more important than whether the mind is 'good' or just being physically or mentally better than food. We see in real life that a poor girl is married off by most of the parents when she sees a house where she can eat twice as much. The girl's parents know that if she can marry the girl in a well-equipped house, she will not be short of rice and clothes. The housewife is exhausted by the fire of poverty here and finally thinks of leaving her father-in-law's house. She may know that poverty will not leave her even if she comes home. She may not be able to save enough energy to leave her father-in-law's house but the burning of poverty has forced her to say, 'How can I live?'

Another song captures the housewife's austerity at her father-in-law's house:

হল্যদ বনে টুসু তুমি/ Tusu you in the turmeric forest.

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/bangla.asianetnews.com/amp/gallery/life/tusu-parab-the-traditional-festival-is-being-celebrated-of-bengal-and-bangladesh-q44ynk>

হল্যদ কেন মাখো না?/ Why not apply turmeric?

শাশুড়ি ননদের ঘরে/ In the house of mother-in-law and nun.

হল্যদ মাখা চলে না/ Turmeric cannot be applied.

Here could be a picture of how a conventional housewife has got to live under the restrictions of her father-in-law's house. The housewife seems to have taken the prohibition as a rule. But her intellect desires to brighten with a little bit of turmeric but she too had to give up the opportunity of such an enhancement on the sifting floor of the in-laws' house. The housewife does not indeed have the proper make-up. As if she has admitted within the tune, typically the rule of society. The mother-in-law's house does not have the extravagance of turmeric butter, so she did not revolt, she has no protest. Only the unspoken pain of her heart is expressed to the goddess within the frame of a song.²

4. Women in folk manners: Huduma Deo (The folk deity of rain)

Folk manners are entirely feminine. And all folk manners are for the sake of fertility or productivity. This is the ancient tradition of the primitive human race, magic-belief. The discovery of agriculture by women. So there are no folk manners without women. 'Huduma Deo' is a kind of folk deity. The belief of Huduma Deo is prevalent in the 'Rajbanshi' society of North Bengal of Bangladesh. This deity is considered to be the god of rain. Especially if the crop is damaged due to drought, then the folk manners of Huduma Deo are observed.³

When there's a dry spell towards Chaitra-Baishakh (months according to Bengali Calendar), the young ladies of the village get together and go from house to house begging for rice and beats. One of the girls could be a 'king' and the other one could be a 'queen'. The 'king' and the 'queen' incorporate a loosehead called 'Mathal' on their heads. Someone else plays a broken tin. This is often the scene of Magan's journey to Huduma Deo. During Magan, they sing and move to the tunes of Huduma Deo. The dialect of the tune and the dance fashion is obscene.⁴

Women worship or perform rituals of Huduma Deo. This deity is worshiped surrounded by women. The genitals are evident in the idol of the deity. He (Huduma) is naked in the form. Therefore, in his rituals, women worship naked. Men's participation in this worship is forbidden. Even if a man sees this ritual in secret, it is believed that there is great danger in society. Even when this deity is worshiped in the presence of rain, the deity becomes angry and increases the level of drought, and causes extensive damage to crops. So there is no rule for men to join this ritual.

² Garai, S. (December 1,2020). Tusugan: Feminist sociological lessons. Retrieved from <https://www.chintasutra.com/2020/12/%E0%A6%9F%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%81-%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A8-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%80-%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BE/>

³ Mondol, A.H. (2020). Utsaber utsokatha (A History of Festival). 45 Banglabazar, Dhaka 1100. Shuvra Prakash, p. 52-53.

⁴ Bhattacharya, A.(1954).Banglar Lokasahitiya:Volume:3. College Square, Calcutta-12, Calcutta Book House, p. 728.

Huduma Deo is worshiped in the dark on the night of the new moon. A group of women went into the field naked and tried to please the deity by dancing and singing. A banana tree is planted in the field.

Under this tree, banana, lamp, vermilion, paddy, durba, incense, and Jharful (a type of local flower) are offered on the 'kula'.

In the Puja ritual, the woman plays the role of cultivating the land with a yoke on her shoulder while another woman instructs them by holding the handle of the plow. At this time the women sang in unison.⁵

আয়রে আয় কালো ম্যাঘ্যা আয় পর্বত ধরায়।/ Let the black clouds leave the mountains and come to nature,

ও মুই মাথা ঘষিয়া বসিয়া আছু হুদুমার তালে চায়রা।/ I am rubbing my head and waiting at Huduma.

সেন্দুর নিয়া কেনে আসিলেন না অল্প বয়সের হুদুম দেও।/ Why didn't Huduma deo (The deity of rain) come with vermilion,

ও মুই মাথা ঘষিয়া বসিয়া আছু হুদুমার পথ চায়রা।⁶ / I am rubbing my head and waiting at Huduma.

5. Sign of women's deprivation in folk games

Although folk games are now an important means of entertainment, all the tortures, harshness, and cruel history of social life are hidden in folk games. What was once a way of surviving in social life has now evolved into a folk game. In folk games, besides other aspects of society, there are also signs of deprivation of women's life and enjoyment of women.

6. Openty Bioscope

The history of deprived women has taken refuge in the game 'Openty Bioscope'. In the open bioscope game, the practice of cutting rhymes by the players can be seen in all regions. The rhyme collected from Jessore-Khulna is—

ওপেনটি বাইস্কোপ/ The opening is Bioscope

নাইন টেন তেইসকোপ/ Nine Ten Tescope

সুলতানা বিবিয়ানা/ Sultana Bibiana

সাহেব বাবুর বৈঠকখানা/ Mr. Babu's living room

বাবু বলেছেন যেতে/ Babu says go

পানসুপারি খেতে/ Eat to betel leaf and plam

পানের আগায় মউরি বাটা/ Fennel paste at the beginning of betel leaf

⁵ ---.(1954). *Banglar Lokasahitiya*, vol. 3, College Square, Calcutta-12, Calcutta Book House, p. 728.

⁶ Mondol, A.H. (2020). *Utsaber utsokatha (A History of Festival)*. 45 Banglabazar, Dhaka 1100. Shuvra Prakash, p. 52-53.

ইস্কাবনের ছবি আটা/ Iskabon's keys fitted

আমার নাম সোনামণি/ My name is Sonamani

যাতি হবে অনেক খানি/ have to go a lot

যাতি হবে যশোর জিলা/ have to go to Jessore district

যশোর জিলার সাহেবেরা/ Mr. of Jessore district

নিয়ে গেলি ফেরৎ দে না/If taken, it is not returned ⁷

The image that emerges on the canvas of this rhyme bears the signature of the unknown history of women's lives. 'Sultana Bibiana' or 'Chultana Bibiana' is directed at a young woman. Mr. 'Shahebabu' has invited this young lady to his living room to eat betel nut. Even the masters will show her around the Jessore district. Later in the spread, it was said again that the masters (Shahebbabu) of Jessore district took it and did not return it. The rhyme involves a real truth in the last stanza. That is, no matter how many tempting offers Mr. Shahebbabu takes, they no longer allow young women to return home. During British rule, prostitution was widespread in many parts of Bangladesh. Even at that time, many people were forced to go from village to city prostitution due to various social inconsistencies. The game 'Openty Bioscope' reflects the deprivation of women.

7. Bou Basanti

In many folk games, there are signs of female consumption. Just as there are signs of life struggle in the game of Bou Basanti or Bouchi, there is also an unknown history of women's lives. There are many ways to 'enjoy women' in group life. Which of these is accepted by society and which is denied. Many societies have also accepted the practice of oppressing women. Society has never resisted that oppression again. In the life of the tribe, one group has abducted women from different groups.

The purpose is to enjoy and increase the members of the association-society. The abduction of women has taken place more or less from primitive times to feudal times. Even the practice of abducting women and marrying them was perfected in society. One such marriage ritual in ancient India was the 'Rakshas' marriage. Which was a socially recognized marriage. So this episode of society is hidden in many games. Especially the 'Bou Basanti' game says at least that. In this game, the women of one group are tried to be abducted by the members of the other group and the others guard their women or wives.⁸

8. Conclusion

"আমরা যে নারী,সমুখ ছাড়িয়া যেদিকেতে যাব,বাধাঘেরা পর্বত"/ "We are women wherever we go, the mountains surrounded by obstacles."⁹

Jasimuddin (Sojan Badiyar Ghat) Like this quote from the poem 'Palayan', the sadness of women's life has been reflected in the folk festivals, folklore, and folk games of Bengal. Needless to say, our folk society has been running these women for ages.

⁷ Ahmed, Wakil.(Edition 2011). Lokik Gyankosh, Dhaka, Gitidhara Publication, p. 619.

⁸ Mondol, A.H. (2011). lokokrirar antarpath. Dhaka, Abashor Publication, pp. 66-67, 73-74.

⁹ Jasimuddin. (1933). Payan, Sojan Badiyar Ghat, 10 Kabi Jasim Uddin Road, Dhaka-1217, Palash Pablication.

9. References and Notes

Ahmed, W. (2011). *Lokik gyankosh*. Edition. Dhaka: Gitidhara Publication, p. 619.

Bhattacharya, A. (1954). *Banglar Lokasahitiya*, vol. 3. College Square, Calcutta-12, Calcutta Book House, p. 728.

Garai, S. (December 1, 2020). Tusugan: Feminist sociological lessons.

<https://www.chintasutra.com/2020/12/%E0%A6%9F%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%81-%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A8-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%80-%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BE/>

Jasimuddin. (1933). *Payan, sojan badiyar ghat*, 10 Kabi Jasim Uddin road, Dhaka: Palash Publication.

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/bangla.asianetnews.com/amp/gallery/life/tusu-parab-the-traditional-festival-is-being-celebrated-of-bengal-and-bangladesh-q44ynk>

Mondol, A.H. (2020). *Utsaber Utsokatha (A History of Festival)*. 45 Banglabazar, Dhaka 1100. Shuvra Prakash, p. 52-53

---. (2020). *Utsaber utsokatha (A History of Festival)*. 45 Banglabazar, Dhaka: Shuvra Prakash, p. 52-53.

---. (2011). *Lokokrirar antarpath*. Dhaka: Abashor Publication, p. 66-67, 73-74.

SPECIAL ISSUE: DR. MORVE ROSHAN K.^{1*} & Dr. Md. Habibur Rahman²

1. Assistant Professor (Adjunct), University of Lodz, Poland & Honorary Research Associate, Bangor University, United Kingdom. Email: morveroshan@rediffmail.com

2. Associate Professor, Department of Folklore, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

