

INFLUENCE OF SUFISM ON LALON FAKIR

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We the Bengalees, though are a nation with intellectual curiosity and artistic inclination, have very little contribution in the field of philosophy. Lalon Fakir (? – 1890) was a rare exception. Without much, or any institutionalised education whatsoever, Lalon asked some basic questions in any philosophic quest— who is God? Or is there any? How was the universe created? What is Man? Who am I? These cosmogonic and existentialist questions, and the way Lalon had tried to answer those, were not unique in our cultural history. It was rooted in the *Baul-Fakir* meditational tradition of pre-modern Bengal, steeped with Buddhist *Tantric* cosmology of human body, *Nath-Vaisnab-Sahajiya* practices and incorporealism of Islamic Sufism. Thousands of enigmatic songs by different Gurus have been composed in this musical tradition. But Lalon Fakir, with his profound depth and artistic excellence, has remained the most gifted one and towers above all.

It is interesting to note that Sufism, though emerged in the Middle-East yet thrived more on the fringes of the Muslim world, i.e., in West Africa, in Central Asia, or in India. Before reaching Bengal, already in North India, the Sufis came into interactions with the *Yogis* and other *Tantric* practitioners;

*“Different Indian Sufi groups, particularly the Chishti and Shattari orders, incorporated certain yogic practices into their repertory of techniques, but this addition did not fundamentally alter the character of existing Sufi practices. Hindu mantras, for instance, were infrequent in Sufi texts and clearly subordinate to Arabic formulas of Qur’anic origin. “THE POOL OF NECTAR” was probably the most important single literary source for the diffusion of knowledge about yoga through Islamicate languages. Sufis and Yogis alike both felt the need periodically to take account of the other group.”*¹

So it makes sense to guess that in Bengal, at this far frontier of the Islamic epicentre, no pristine form of Sufism did appear nor only one school of Sufism existed either!

*“From the 17th century downward Sufism in Bengal adopted a new channel and within a century and a half it absorbed so many indigenous elements in both beliefs and practices that it not only lost its pristine purity and individuality but also its spiritual significance, inherent strength and expansive character. With the loss of all these, Sufism in Bengal became in many respects identical with Tantricism, Yogism, Nathism and other similar system of indigenous thoughts and aesceticism.”*²

To grasp the influence of Sufism in Bengal, it is therefore imperative to place Sufism on the backdrop, and in the context of the syncretic advancement of Islamization here. Sufism, for proliferation, had to infiltrate in different indigenous non-Islamic cult practices. Similarly, to obtain and maintain popularity during those early days, the Sufi *Aulias* also had to incorporate quite a few meditational practices of pre-modern Bengal into their own rituals, even in their belief-system. 17-18th centuries witnessed the prime period for this kind of religious syncretism. And the *Baul-Fakirs* of Bengal, Lalon Fakir perhaps being the most outstanding one among them, were the most conspicuous examples of that syncretic assimilation.

Sufism in Bengal manifested itself in two spheres, one in the esoteric discourses, another in the tradition of the mendicant singers. Lalon Fakir uniquely combined the both. Like the mendicant singers, his songs were popular. But at the same time they were esoteric with metaphoric riddles and enigmas. Sufis, from their earlier days, had the tendency to form

communities with a residential centre. Lalon Fakir, once a mendicant, also established his own hermitage (*ashram*) on the bank of the river Kaliganga in Kushtia's Cheuria.

As the Sufis were marginalized by the *Shariat* religious establishment, so also Lalon and his followers had to remain perennially outcaste. For the Sunni religious establishment, the *Baul-Fakirs* were outsiders, a dangerously subversive community, ever active to sabotage the belief-system of the dominating religions by posing serious questions with their enigmatic songs.

It seems there was a deliberate endeavour from Lalon Fakir's side not to divulge his life-story in details. What is known about his life is more shrouded in myths than based on facts. So it is through his songs, and songs alone, that we have to perceive the man and his persona. Song, music and systematic breathing exercise were part of the *Tantric-Sahajiya* practices. And the ethnomusicology of Lalon's songs was already an age-old tradition among the Bengal mystics. This kind of enigmatic songs were composed to teach esoteric lessons to the disciples by the Gurus. So the songs had dual planes. On the surface, they can be love-songs or devotional songs. But underneath remained similes and metaphors of an encoded language (*Sandhya-bhasa*) of heuristic teaching through which the Guru disseminated the ways and rituals of the sexo-yogic practices to his disciples. The hidden meanings of these metaphors remained unknown to the uninitiated ones. Only the Guru or *Murshid* could unravel the meaning of these riddles and enigmas. The Sufi *Darbeshes*, as we know, also use encoded language to preach their ways of meditation.

Though in some areas of Bengal the terms '*Baul*' and '*Fakir*' are often used interchangeably, substantial differences of creed exist between them. Actually, the term *Baul* has no single definition. '*Baul*' has become a generic term in the Bengali gentry vocabulary for all kinds of mystics, including the Sufi *Darbeshes*. During the 18th-19th centuries, being tormented by the caste-ridden Hinduism and the Islamic Wahabi zealots, the low caste people of Bengal tried to form their own equalitarian religious sects—*Kartabhoja*, *Sahebkhoni*, *Balarambhaja* etc. The two sects, *Bauls* and *Fakirs*, though had emerged much earlier, also became prominent during those syncretic period of Bengal history and the borderline in the belief-systems of these two sects often overlapped. For the common people these two diverse terms, *Bauls* and the *Fakirs*, often remained synonymous. In some places of Bangladesh, the *Nara's Fakirs*, a kind of mystics with Sufi tenets, were also known as *Bauls*.

Among the four stages of Sufi meditation of *Shariat-Tarikat-Hakikat-Marfat*, it was the *Marfat* way of meditation, the one to achieve oneness to God, seemed to have the most pronounced influence on the Bengal mystics.

According to Lalon;

"Alif is Allah, Mim letter is Rasul
Lam has dual meanings
One is in Shariat
Another meaning in Marfat."³

Actually the *Fakirs* of Bengal were never keen followers of the *Shariat* laws. Rather the anti-establishment and subversive tenets of the *Marfati* ideas, disguised in Sufism, appealed to them more. For generations, their total belief-system has remained an anathema to the *Shariat* codes and *Shariat* rituals.

Bauls generally are a sect of heterodox mystics, ever searching for the '*Sohoj Manus*' or '*the Unknown Bird*' who hides within our human body. This quest of the *Bauls* to find the God within, to some extent resembles to the eternal yearning of the Sufis for the divine love between *Ashek* and *Mashuk*— the creator and the creation. But Sufi love for God is often a romantic love. But Lalon's idea of reunion with the creator (to catch the *Achin Manus*) is essentially a physical

act— an *Yogic-Tantrik* practice. *Bauls* are air-meditators. According to Fakir Mohin Shah, a direct disciple of Lalon-lineage and a respected Guru, the person who, by controlling the breath and the air-movements inside the human body, has crossed the five different stages of "*bayam*", "*opal*", "*nash*", "*kumbho*" and "*mokhkho*", is a *Baul*. This much is *Nath-Tantric* cosmology. But then Mohin Shah adds that the person who has attained the four cups of "*fana*" (*char piala*), is a *Baul*. The use of the word "*fana*" here, and also the frequent use of the Sufi terminologies like "*Rabbana*", "*Muqam*", "*Latifa*", "*Panjaton*" etc. in Lalon's songs, indicates that Lalon and his disciples were well versed in the Sufi discourses and this frequent use of the Sufi terms can also be cited as an example of assimilation of Sufi and *Nath Sahajiya* meditational techniques among the Lalon followers.

Though Lalon's songs are the main staple for the *Bauls* of Bengal today, Lalon himself did not identify him as a *Baul*. He rather called himself '*Lalon Fakir*'. A Guru of Lalon-lineage and a highly esteemed Guru of Cheuria, Fakir Abdul Goni Bader Shah, told me emphatically that they were *Fakirs*, not *Bauls*. According to Lalon, *Fakirs* are those whose path is;

*"The Vedas on the right
The Quran on the left
Fakir's path is in the middle"*⁴

Lalon never seemed to believe in the scriptural orthodoxy, or in this core Islamic belief that the holy books were Godsend;

*"What message did our Lord send
Were different messages sent to
Different lands by different Gods*

*If the holy books are written
By the same God
Then they should not be different
Since they are written by men
They remain so different."*⁵

Lalon and his followers were never the *etherealised bauls* as the Bengalee middle class intelligentsia have constructed them and like to see them as. Lalon and his followers were "*bartamanpanthis*" (for the present material life) in opposition to the "*anumanpanthi*" (the world of belief).

Lalon sings;

*"You will find the priceless gem
At the present
Worship the simple Man as divine
Worship the human feet
You will get the
Quintessence of eternity
With death everything vanishes
Know that as soon as you can
There is heaven after death
Does not convince me
For an unknown future
Who discards the present world?"*⁶

Lalon, and the *Baul-Fakirs* in general, were men of free spirit. For them freedom of body and soul were all important. Lalon says;

*"How can you be an ascetic
Hindus and Muslims are divided
Muslims want the paradise
Hindus are eager to be in
Hindu heaven
Islamic or Hindu
Any heaven seems a jail
Who wants to be there"*⁷

Due to their sensitive minds and fascination for non-scriptural meditations the *Baul-Fakirs* of Bengal seem instinctively felt drawn to the Sufi ideas of meditation through love. And Sufism also satiated their penchant for songs to seek and reunite with the invisible creator, who in Lalon's vocabulary was '*Achin Manus*' or '*Sohoj Manus*'. To Lalon's cosmogony, God did not have a place to reside. Hence God created human beings with love. God chose human body as his abode and resides within it in an incorporeal form as "*Achin Manus*", "*Moner Manus*" or "*Sohoj Manus*". So if one worships human beings one worships God too;

*"He who worships human beings in this world
All his meditations become fulfilled
In rivers, fens or in canals
The water is same
The same Lord
Moves alone
Mingled with humans
He expresses himself
Without a form
He is luminous
The incorporeal takes an appearance
You have to be
Divinely wise to know
In this infernal age
Man is the incarnation of God."*⁸

To seek and find that elusive and invisible creator, the *Achin Manus*, who hides within human body, remained the eternal quest for Lalon;

*"Who speaks inside me
But does not show up
He moves nearby
But cannot find him searching whole life*

*I search him
On land and in sky
I do not know myself
I suffer from an illusion
Who am I
Who is He?"*⁹

Then Lalon gradually realizes;

*"Oh crazy mind
Without knowing yourself
Where do you roam
If I am not true*

*Guru is never true
He looks alike me
The merciful Lord Himself.”¹⁰*

This simile of viewing the human body as the microcosm of the cosmology of the universe, a belief in this kind of non-dualism of “*Whatever is in universe/ Is in the human body too*”,¹¹ was well entrenched among the Bengal mystics even before the Sufis came. It was a core belief omnipresent in the generations of meditators, inherited from the subdued undercurrent of the Buddhist *Tantricism*, in the *Nath-Yogic* practices and also in the *Vaisnav Sahajya* meditations in the post-Chaitanya era.

Knowing about one’s own self, the quintessence of all wisdom according to the ancient Indic scriptures, was also for Lalon the best of knowledge;

“If you know yourself you know all

*In Arabic He is named Allah
In Persian He is called Khoda’tala
The disciples of Jesus call him God
Different names in different lands*

*But if you know yourself
The Lord will show Himself to you.”¹²*

Among all the different frolics of the invisible Lord, the human incarnation is regarded as the best.¹³ The elusive and invisible God hides within human body. Now to catch that incorporeal “*unknown man*” (*Achin Manus*) from inside the human body was Lalon’s meditation. And to achieve that goal human body becomes the playfield;

*“Except the pure lover
None can get him
He is ‘the Unknown Man’
Remains invisible
The initiated ones
Knows the occult meaning
From juice and copulation
The pearl drop from the juice
Makes the root.”¹⁴*

This non-dualism of *human body-God* cosmology remains all pervasive;

*“Who can fathom your frolic Allah
Himself being Allah you call for Allah.”¹⁵*

The human body, the abode of Allah, is not only the playfield, but also becomes the ultimate. For Lalon, the human body becomes the original Mecca. This kind of belief in an absolute non-dualism was common among the post-Chaitanya *Vaisnabs* i.e., *Krishna hides within Krishna by seeing Krishna*¹⁶. But one can ascribe this monism to the Sufi idea of *Ashek-Mashuk* as well.

According to Lalon;

*“Creation was made by chance
Now so much writings about it
You cannot find Him so easy
He is the formless creator*

*He moves in unknown lands
He has no companion
And moves all alone.*"¹⁷

For Lalon, the cosmology ends up being:

*"In the confluence of three rivers
In shape of a fish the Lord moves"*¹⁸

Now this simile of "fish" for the creator, as *Matsyendra* ("Lord of the fish") was common among the Indian *jogis* but may also remind one the Islamic myth brought in by the Sufis of Hazrat Yunus who lived within a fish. To catch that uncatchable "fish" in the proper auspicious moment, it is necessary to build a dam.¹⁹ According to Lalon's meditational technique, after breaking the seven locks one can enter the air-room. In that all-important air-chamber one may finally find and catch "The Uncatchable Man". The "Achin Manus" dwells in the bi-petal of human body. *Ira*, *Pingola*, *Susumna* veins are around him. The dormant *Kulokundolini* force has to be aroused through air-meditation to catch him.

But is not an easy task. So to catch that discrete invisible Lord, or "the Unknown Bird", Lalon suggests;

*"As the pied crested cuckoo
Doesn't drink any water
Except the rain water
And waits for the cloud
Day and night—"*²⁰ so a true meditator also waits for an auspicious moment.

And the auspicious moment is a particular time in the menstrual cycle of his female companion (*Sadhan Sangini*);

*"That moon is far away
Covered with millions of
Diamonds and gems
Millions of Gods
Covet it
Praise to Brahman-Vishnu-Shiva
The moon appears in Hades
Also in the upper world
The moon appears in
An auspicious time."*²¹

So the timing is all important. Lalon warns his disciples not to miss the rare and short-lived auspicious moment;

*"If time passes away
You cannot do meditation
During daytime
Why did you not finish
The day's meditation
Do not you know
In fens and in marshes
Fishes disappear if
Water recedes
What is the use*

*To build a dam
 In a dried up estuary
 By ploughing the field
 In wrong season
 What is the use of useless labour
 The tree may grow due to seed
 But it bears no fruit
 In the night of new moon
 The full-moon appears
 The auspicious time
 Appears then
 Lalon says its time
 Lasts momentary.”²²*

During a particular time of his female partner’s menstrual period, by sucking it through his penis, the meditator hopes to catch the ‘*Sonar Manush*’ and to attain a virile human body, even immortality! So sexual penetration is not for just carnal desire but to catch the “*Achin Manus*”. To achieve that, control on body during sexual union is an imperative, especially control on ejaculation. That is why the meditator practices retention of semen (*Urdhoroti*). A good meditator sucks, makes the partner suck, but does not ejaculate. Ejaculation has to be delayed as late as possible. In this esoteric sexual practice (*Sadhana*), the ability to control male orgasm, or retention of semen, remains the utmost desired goal. One has to avoid the slippery slide of the three-river vaginal confluence. Only a Guru or *Murshid* knows the ways and means of this practice (*Karan*) and advises his disciples accordingly. Lalon advises his disciples not to have sex without following the abstinence rules. So the central core of meditation, as expressed in Lalon’s songs, was nothing ethereal but retention of semen virile ‘*bastu*’ (matter). Lalon Fakir and his fellow *Baul-Fakirs* are *materialists* in the true sense of the term!

One may question the scientificity of this belief or practice but this body-focused practices of meditation, the ‘*four moon*’ or “*pancham rasa*” cosmology, had a deep root in the age-old *Nath-Tantric* rituals in rural Bengal.

One of the main tenets of Sufism is “*Drunk with love*”, that is, a kind of platonic but ecstatic love between Allah and His creation. But the *Baul* sexual practices between Man (*Purush*) and Woman (*Prakiti*) is not at all a platonic love but a sexual act of speical nature. Semen (‘*bastu*’) and menstrual blood are the main concerns for the Lalonites. So it is imperative for the meditators to understand the *essence of sperm*. The meditation is aimed for steadiness.²³ Only God is steady and humans are unsteady.²⁴ To achieve that Godly steadiness regarding ejaculation, breath meditation remains seminal.²⁵

For Lalon, lust is the mere creeper of love.²⁶ But the ultimate aim is not carnal lust but to reach a superior plane, that is—love. He rows his boat against severe storms. His river of lust dries up but his river of love becomes full. To Lalon, to become lustless from lustfulness, to reach the state of a blissful love, seems to be the ultimate aim of meditation. Otherwise one has to remain a mere slave of Eros throughout his life.

Lalon says;

*"First shut the door of lust
 Man will shine in bright form*

*Catch the air
 Steady the fire
 Die before your death*

*And let your death-warrant return
I forbid you again and again
Do not live in illusion
Keep your strength well-protected
By retaining semen"*²⁷

It is a complex and heuristic learning process, and only after initiation (*Vek-Khilafat*), a disciple fully learns the secrets of these practices (*Mantras*) from his Guru or Murshid.

One distinct difference with the Sufism of the West Asia and Lalon's *weltanschauung* is the role of women in meditation. In Lalon's gender perception, women are agents of nature and more complete than men. Hence women (*Prakiti*) are superior to men (*Purush*) and are extolled ("Chetanguru"). Without a female companion man's meditation ('*Sadhana*') to catch the *Sohoj Manus* is an impossibility. So dual meditation (*Jugal Sadhana*) is a must.

Lalon sings;

*"The original Mecca is human body
Try to understand
Why are you tiring yourself roaming around the word
God has created the human Mecca
With the celestial light
.... ..
Lalon says in that secret Mecca
The high priest is a woman."*²⁸

Lalon also sings;

*"The covert truth
Comes to light
By adulating mother
One learns the identity of father
Who was inside the egg
Whom did he see after coming out?"*²⁹

The primordial mother-image of an agrarian society's fertility-cult seems to creep in here, which has nothing to do with Sufism, or to with Islam *per se*.

But Lalon's ideas, of course, were not free from contradictions. At one stage he preaches not to procreate children as it divides soul, a seminal belief of the *Fakiri* tradition, but again extols motherhood to the extent that Lalon even certifies a mother's place next only to God and even above the prophet;

*"In this world
There is an unknown person

One has to recognise her
She is lower only to God
But higher than the prophet
Lalon says move to understand
Without her
You will not reach the shore."*³⁰

And according to Fakir Mohin Shah, one of the most prominent among the Lalon-lineage Fakirs, this "unknown person" is— mother. Motherhood seems to be pre-eminent and even something sublime for the Fakirs.

It is difficult to attribute the core essence of Lalon's ideas, the union of man and woman in some sexo-yogic practices to the *Ashek-Mashuk* divine love of the Sufis or to the Radha-Krishna myth of the *Vaisnavs* as well. This sexo-yogic practice have a more indigenous root and seems more a continuance of the ageold *Nath-Sahajiya-Tantric* ritual than anything else.

Lalon believes, human beings are not only 'Man' (*Manus*), they are potential 'Human-Gems' (*Manabroton*). Sufi doctrine preaches a kind of dialectics. That is, when the estranged opposites, the creator and the creation are reconciled, the individual not just becomes a complete self but also transcends the human physical limitations. Similarly, in Lalon's belief-system too, when 'Achin Manus' is reconciled with the meditator, he transform into a 'Human Gem' (*Manabroton*).

Each person, through the help of the right *Murshid* and meditational practices, can become a *Gem of a Man*. So the meditator's aim is not only to reach for God but to become a *Manabraton*, a *Human-Gem* himself;

*"In the pi-petal Lotus
The golden Man shines
With compassion of human Guru
You will come to know
If you meditate man
You will become a golden man."*³¹

As "*The Invisible Man*" lives inside human body so the "*Gem of Man*" (*Mabonraton*) is also omnipresent inside each human being. A reason why, for Lalon and his followers, nothing of human body is impure and the belief extends even to the extreme of drinking or consumption of the four body excreta—semen, menstrual blood, urine and faeces. These are ancient *Yogic-Tantric* beliefs which had nothing to do with Persian Sufism.

This body-centric humanism of Lalon Fakir, placing man at the epicentre of all meditations, did not arrive from the Renaissance Europe, but was an indigenous breed of humanism created, held and propagated by the mystics of Bengal with Lalon Fakir as their doyen.

But for Lalon the humanist, these *Sahajiya-Tantric* practices of 'four moon' or 'five juices' not seemed the main goal. For him, as told earlier, the main aim of meditation remained love, that is, by conquering physical lust to reach the stage of love. So retention of semen (*Urdhoroti*), instead of discharging it, remained so important in his meditational practice.

As it is never easy to catch "*The Uncatchable Man*" or to become a "*Human Gem*", to become a true meditator, one is required to give up all worldly desires, have to become a living-dead (*Jante-Mora*). One needs the ultimate initiation— *Vek-Khilfat*. That is, to put on a deadman's attire on a living body. Hence the color for the dress of the Lalon-follower *Fakirs* is white shroud.

This *Fakiri* tradition of obtaining 'Khilafat', i.e, the denunciation of the material life and to don a white dress until death, seems a tradition inherited from the Sufi denunciation of the worldly life;

*"Who has donned you this dress
A deadman's dress on a living person
Khilqa-Taj and loincloth*

*Wearing a deadman's attire
You have lost your identity
You destroy the ills of life*

*Which is otherwise impossible
 If one dies before death
 Death warrant cannot reach him
 We have heard from the Gurus
 Which have enriched us
 You seem to have dressed well
 Try if you can live by dying
 Lalon says if you return
 Your both shores will be insulted.*"³²

One mainstay of Lalon's kind of Fakiri meditational belief-system is not to procreate children. Otherwise one's soul gets divided. One will fall prey to the eternal cycle of rebirth. To be born again as a human, a soul has to traverse through eighty-four lacs of vaginas again! So being born as a human itself is a great fortune. And one should not let one's soul slip into the eternal cycle of rebirth again.

The Islamic cosmogony, inherited from the Semitic myths, believes that all the Angels (*Fereshtahs*) had bowed down to Adam, made of clay, except Iblis. So Iblis became Satan, proactive to destroy the humans. According to Lalon, God created Adam in his own image and if Allah and Adam were not the same it would be a sin to pay obeisance;

*"God created Adam in His own Image
 Otherwise the angles would not be asked to pay obeisance
 If Allah was not Adam
 It would be a sin to pay obeisance
 Which is Shereki sin
 In this world."*³³

He, who refuses to worship humans even now, is anti-God, a belief brought in by and trickled down from the Sufi saints of West Asia to the Fakirs of Bengal.

Lalon also sings;

*"One has to know
 The origin of Adam
 Azazil did not know
 How Adam's form was made
 From the earth of Jeddah
 The outer shape was formed
 It is not a lie but true
 With which matter
 He created the spirit
 In that house of Adam
 By making an eternal abode
 In the middle placing a circle machine
 The Lord sits there
 Only a human can know Adam
 Can get him inside his heart-Quran."*³⁴

The Sufis, and the *Baul-Fakirs* as well, believe in a loving relationship between a benevolent God and his creation, the human beings. This concept of a malleable and loving God-human relationship is distinctly different from the Judaic-Islamic stern relationship of man with an all powerful and punishing God. Instead of a ruling patriarch, the idea of a loving God, as believed by Lalon and his fellow *Baul-Fakirs*, may well have been inspired by the Sufi ideas. The

yearning to look within oneself, the oft-quoted maxim of Mansur Hallaj's "*Ainal Haque*" ('*I am the truth*'), was not unknown to Lalon as well;

*"Fakir Monsur Hallaj said
I am the truth
It was correct for Lord's law
Shariat does not understand."*³⁵

The Quranic doctrine believes God remains invisible but sends his representatives (*paigambers*) to punish the evil and defend the righteous ones. But the Indian philosophy upholds the doctrine of incarnation (*avatarism*). To Lalon, Mohammad (R) was another incarnation of God himself;

*"We see the body
In the shadow
But He is shadowless
Without a partner
Fakir Lalon says
I am afraid to tell His might
Who came to Medina
In the name of Rasul?"*

Lalon then himself answers;

*"If you recognise Rasul
You recognise God"*³⁶

This faith in avatarism was an integral part of Lalon's belief-system.³⁷ To him, as Rasul was the *avatar* of Allah, so also was *Sree Chaitanya* an avatar of Lord Krishna.

Like the Sufi *Darbeshes* Lalon also excelled in punning the words. His play with the two words "AHAD" and "AHMAD" is loaded with a profound statement.³⁸ According to Lalon;

*"Whether the Lord is
Visible or invisible
Inference of AHAD and AHMAD shows
In human body
God Himself hides
If M is added to AHAD
It becomes AHMAD again
For AHMAD
Prophet uses the M letter
If M letter is dropped
AHMAD does not exist any more"*³⁹

To Lalon's belief-system the trinity of *God-Rasul-Adam* are no separate entities;

*"Allah in 'Alif'
Mohammad in 'Mim'
Adam is 'Dom'."*

Mingling these three together the Lord plays inside a human body. To know which letter of the alphabet means what one needs to be initiated into the '*Tariqah*' (meditational sect) and learn the lessons from the *Murshid* or *Guru*. Only then the agonies of rebirth can be avoided!

For the Sufis, imbued with their ideas of love, the *Wahabi* concept of Jihad is not a struggle with the outside world but with the enemy within, with the perennial vices of human

nature. But unlike the Islamic belief of one particular Iblis or Satan, in Lalon's vocabulary, it is the six inherent vices (*shororipus*) of human nature—greed, anger, envy, infatuation, vanity and sexual passion that destroy the potentiality of human beings. Lalon's songs are full of references, both in serious and in lighter moods, of the inner struggles of human beings against these six pertinacious vices.

The practice among the Lalon-followers to call the Guru as "*Sai*" or "*Saiji*", which can be a variation of both "*Swami*" and "*Shah*", also reminds the close proximity of the Lalonites with the Sufi concept of *Murshid*. What is a *Shayakh* to the Sufis of the Middle East has become a *Murshid* to the Lalon-followers in Bengal. For the *Baul-Fakirs*, the *Gurus* or *Murshids* who teach those heuristic and *sexo-yogic* practices are all important;

*"Guru, you are the saviour of the distressed
You are the overlord
All over the universe
You are spreaded out"*⁴⁰

In his songs, Lalon often mentioned that his own Guru was '*Darbesh Siraj Sai*'. '*Darbesh*', a term itself is reminiscent of a living Sufi tradition. But Fakir Anwar Hossain Montu Shah, another renowned Lalon follower from Cheuria who was the first to publish Lalon's songs in three volumes, informed me that "*Darbesh Siraj Sai*" was a non-existent character. According to Fakir Montu Shah, '*Siraj*' happens to be one of the ninety-nine names of Allah. As Lalon had preached a humanist religion, he too required a human Guru. Hence for his own imagined Guru, Lalon chose the name '*Siraj*', one of the names of Allah. Lalon's Guru '*Siraj Sai*' was none but the creator himself with a human name.

In Lalon's form of meditation the *Murshid* or Guru remains pre-eminent, almost omnipotent;

*"Except the Murshid
What treasure my world has
Utterance of his name
Colds the body
Removes the agonies of life
Day and night pray his name
Drinking the nectar of Murshid's feet
Satiates the hunger
Do not hesitate in mind
He is Murshid and He is God
He is Allah and He is Rasul
He is also Adam
He takes an eternal shape
Who understand his frolics?"*⁴¹

So at one plane *Allah-Murshid-Guru* all become synonymous. But Lalon Fakir, though a Guru himself, but being a man of refined sensibilities and unusual humility, did not try to institutionalise himself in those high altars. He was, above all, a creative artist, a song-composer of consummate skill. Neither scripture, nor hermitage, his main weapon were his songs and he expressed his life-philosophy through his enigmatic songs only. With all humility he remained an artist till the very end of his life. During the entire period of his long-life, even just before his death, Lalon had composed songs. Around five hundred thirty of his songs are known so far. But more can still remain unlisted in the oral tradition among some non-alphabet *Baul-Fakir* mendicant singers.

Lalon, as evident from his enchanting songs, was a pure artist and an artist par excellence with exquisite skill. His own meditation was pristine and his songs were sublime. But unfortunately later, as Lalon Fakir earned fame in the elitist circles and became indispensable for the culture-industry, lot of dilettantes or impostors pretending as 'Bauls' emerged, who hardly knew the meaning of the term itself or had any stint of meditation in them.

Rabindranath Tagore (1860-1940), in whose estate of Shelidah, Lalon had lived, was immensely impressed by the spiritual depth of Lalon's songs. Tagore published some of Lalon's songs and introduced Lalon's works to the intelligentsia of Bengal. Tagore was so deeply impressed by Lalon, and the *Bauls* in general, that he began to don dresses like them and called himself "*Tagore Baul*". Now this Tagorean concept of *Baul*, an ephemeral figure of a lonely bearded man with an one string lute (*ektara*) in hand searching for his '*Achin Manush*' with no concern for the worldly matters of life, was more a myth than a reality. But it succeeded to catch the imagination of the urban elites. And unfortunately, Lalon Fakir became an icon and archetype of that kind of *ephemeral baul* which is more a middle class construction than a real representation of the man and his persona.

Decoding Lalon's songs rather makes one wonder how subversive and iconoclastic his ideas were! No wonder, why Lalon had to compose his songs in such an enigmatic and encoded language. For the caste-ridden Hindus and the Sunni religious establishment, Lalon's ideas were too subversive to be spreaded, even tolerated. Lalon was not only worried about the "*The Vedic Cloud Casts a Fearful Darkness*" but also had to remain concerned of the *Wahabi* fanatics to whom his ideas of *God-lives-within-human body* or *Allah-Muhammad-Adam* to be synonymous, were too iconoclastic to be palatable. No wonder *fatwas* were promulgated against the *Bauls* (*Baul Dhangsa Fatwa*) in Kushtia in different times.

It is only later when Lalon's songs were spiritualised and decontextualised by the middle class intelligentsia that Sunni religious establishment conceded, but of course not without occasional grudges. Antagonism, even tension, still exists between the village Mullahs and the *Fakirs* which I experienced during my research work for the documentary film *The Unknown Bard* when I had travelled in the rural areas of Kushtia with Fakir Mohin Shah. In the national plane, when a *Baul*-statue made after the image of Lalon Fakir in front of the Dhaka international airport was forcefully removed by the Islamic fundamentalists, Bangladesh state machinery conceded and did not dare to replace the statue any more. The apparently simple imageries, symbols and metaphors of Lalon Fakir's songs—*the unknown bird, the fish, the moon, the pond, the river*, all have sexo-yogic connotations. The real meaning of Lalon's songs, and the body-centric practices of the Lalon-lineage *Fakirs*, are bound to be abominable for the gentry sensibility. Fakir Mohin Shah told me that the main alibi for the *Baul-Fakirs* was the fact that the inner meanings of Lalon's songs were not known to the common villagers. Uninitiated people become charmed by the poetic beauty of these songs without at all being aware of their subversive subtexts. It would be an irony of history that Lalon Fakir's songs have now become popular love songs, or have become a source of spiritual escapism for the urban elites, which these subversive songs were never meant to be!

The quest for a more personal relationship with a malleable God, a tradition close to the Sufi doctrines and a total anathema to the *Wahabi* Islam, was well practiced by Lalon and other mystics of Bengal. Lot of Lalon's songs are imbued with this yearning. We know that the Sufi belief-system involves humility and concern for one's neighbours. Lalon's songs are also full of humility and his quest for an unknown neighbour is eternal.²⁵

*"A mirror-city⁴² is next to my house
A neighbour lives there
I never saw him*

*The village is surrounded by water fathomless
 And no boat is available
 I long to see him
 But how can I reach that village
 If the neighbour would touch me
 Anguishes of death would disappear
 He and Lalon live side by side
 Still a million miles wide gap remains.*⁴³

But unfortunately, due to too much secular middle class interest in *Bauls* these days, the *Baul* elements in Lalon are more emphasized in Bengalee nationalist discourses and the Sufi influences on Lalon Fakir are pushed aside or neglected.

But there is a risk to overestimate Sufi influence on Lalon as well.

'*Sohoj Manus*', '*Adhar Manus*', '*Achin Manus*', '*Moner Manus*' or '*Sonar Manush*' all are manifestations of the same concept of an elusive creator who can be caught only in an auspicious moment of sexual practice with the aim to obtain a golden body, or, immortality. As told earlier, these ideas of Lalon were actually the indigenous *Nath-Tantric* ideas and had very little to do with Persian Sufism. The Sufi concept of divine light or *Nur-e-Mahammed* has occasionally showed in Lalon's songs, but the cosmogony of Lalon Fakir and his followers was essentially an indigenous, human body-centric belief-system based on the already existing *Nath-Tantric Sahajiya* mystic practices. This indigenous belief-system was quite far from the pristine Sufi cosmology of the Arab World. On Lalon, the influence of *Sufi* beliefs and practices were certainly there, but the core of Lalon's *weltanschauung* seems to be the age-old *Yogic-Tantric* ideas mingled with the post-Chaitanya *Nath-Sahajya* cults of the *Vaisnavs* of Nadia, a region Lalon belonged to.

How much Lalon Fakir was influenced by Sufi ideas, or Islam as a religion, is still an uncharted zone in the world of academia. But there are reasons to imagine that as Muslims were the majority population living around him, to neutralize the fanatic Islamic religious establishment, or at least to keep them in good humour, Lalon Fakir composed some *Nabitatta* songs about prophet Mohammad (R) or used Islamic imageries and terms. As we find, half a century later, Kazi Nazrul Islam, another iconoclast and a secular rebel poet of Bengal, also composed Islamic songs like *Hamd* or *Nath*.⁴⁴

Regarding the difference with the ethereal divine love of the Sufi *Aulias* with their God and Lalon Fakir's idea of a pantheist "*Achin Manus*" God, one has to keep in mind that Lalon and his followers belonged to the outcaste and downtrodden social classes and lived with the impoverished farmers-weavers-boatmen and other subaltern toiling communities of poor Muslims or low caste Hindus of rural Bengal. As the main profession of the *Baul-Fakirs* was *dole* (*madhukari*) they were organically linked with a very resource-poor and vulnerable rural economy. Themselves being poor and toiling people, they knew the importance and value of the human body, the only property they possessed. So it is no surprise that they had to become, and remain, more body-centred practical people than the ethereal Sufi mediators who were mostly cosmopolitan or men from the upper echelon of the society. The 18th-19th centuries, by no means, were any happy time for the poor populace of Bengal. And some of Lalon's songs are full of allusions of those deprivations. This sense of loss and deprivation seeps into lot of Lalon's songs and created a tone of profound melancholy;

*"The hopes and longings of my heart
 Remained unfulfilled

 God is the Lord of the world*

*I am a mere subject
He punishes if I fail to pay the taxes
He does not pay heed to any excuse.*⁴⁵

He further sings;

*"Being born in this country
I received these afflictions
I got a broken boat
My whole life spent bailing water.*⁴⁶

Lalon has quite a few songs on caste theme which shows his deep rooted disliking for the caste-system, or anything that divides human beings. So biting was his enmity for the inhuman caste-system of Hinduism, administered by the authoritative Brahmins and other upper castes, that he declared that if he could catch the caste-system in hand he would burn it with fire!⁴⁷ One has to remember that Lalon and his followers were socially outcaste people themselves.

In fact, much of the pangs, pathos and existentialist quests of Lalon Fakir as expressed in his songs seem to be the pangs, pathos and existentialist voidness of that very impecunious class and the dispossessed social milieu that he belonged to.

Lalon Fakir's story is a story of creativity and dissent on the face of persecution. Apart from exoticisation of Lalon by the urban intelligentsia and the corporate interests, the fact remains that the iconoclastic beliefs of the *Baul-Fakirs* of Bengal, with Lalon Fakir as their inspirational Guru, is still a force to reckon with. Lalon's influence is still immense in the lower echelon of Bangladesh. This is a very positive phenomenon so far secularism in the society and polity of Bangladesh is concerned. And perhaps the undercurrent of these humanist ideas will save Bangladesh in future from becoming an Afghanistan or a Pakistan, and hopefully keep the misogynist Islamic fundamentalists at bay.

It is impossible for one to miss out the all pervasive humanism in Lalon's songs. But the very *joie de vivre* of Lalon's worldview is something that humanity can also always draw from, when Lalon the great humanist sings;

*"A human life like this will never be repeated
My heart, do what you desire soon in this world
The Lord created infinite forms
But nothing is superior than human
Even Gods and Goddesses pray
To be born as humans
Due to immense good luck
You have got this human boat
Row it and take care
The boat does not sink
The Lord created human beings as
With the humans the ultimate beauty will be achieved.*⁴⁸

And for this profound humanism of Lalon Fakir, the man and the artist, we are grateful to all the major influences on him—the human body-centred *Tantric* Buddhism, the love and humility of the Hindu *Sahajiya Vaisnavism*, and last but not the least, the humanist ideas of the Sufi saints.

Footnote:

- ¹ 'Situating Sufism and Yoga' Carl W. Ernst, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15:1 (2005).
- ² Enamul Hoque, "Sufism in Bengal", quoted by David G. Cashin, (Introduction, "Ocean of Love").
- ³ "আলেফে আল্লাজী, মিম মানে নবী
লামের হয় দুই মানে
এক মানে হয় শরায় প্রচার
আরেক মানে মারফতে ।"
- ⁴ "ডানে বেদ বাঁয়ে কোরান
মারখানে ফকিরের বয়ান ।"
- ⁵ "কী কালাম পাঠালেন আমার সাঁই দয়াময়
এক এক দেশে এক এক বাণী
কয় খোদায় পাঠায় ।

যদি একই খোদার হয় রচনা
তাতে তো ভিন্ন থাকে না
মানুষের সকল রচনা
তাইতে ভিন্ন হয় ॥"
- ⁶ "পাবি রে অমূল্য নিধি বর্তমানে
সহজ মানুষ ভজে দেখ না রে মন দিব্যজ্ঞানে
ভজ মানুষের চরণ দুটি
নিত্যবস্ত্র পাবি খাঁটি
মরলে হবে সকল মাটি
তুরায় এই ভেদ লও জেনে
মরলে পাব বেহেশতখানা
তা শূনে তো মন মানে না
বাকীর লোভে নগদ পাওনা
কে ছেড়েছে ভুবনে?"
- ⁷ "ফকিরী করবি ক্ষ্যাপা কোন্ রাগে
আছে হিন্দু-মুসলমান দুই ভাগে
থাকে ভেষ্টের আশায় মুমিনগণ
হিন্দুরা দেয় স্বর্গেতে মন
বেহেশত-স্বর্গ ফাটক সমান
কার বা তাতে ভাল লাগে"
- ⁸ "মানুষ গুরু নিষ্ঠা যার
সর্বসাধন সিদ্ধ হয় তার
নদী, কিষা বিল-বাওড় খাল
সর্বস্থলে একই এক জল
একা মেরে সাঁই ফেরে সর্বদাই
মানুষে মিশিয়া হয় বিধান তার
নিরাকার জ্যোতির্ময় হয় সে
আকার সাকার হইল সে
দিব্যজ্ঞানী হয় তবে জানতে পায়
কলিয়ুগে হোল মানুষ অবতার ।"
- ⁹ "কে কথা কয় রে দেখা দেয় না
নড়েচড়ে হাতের কাছে খুঁজিলে জনমভর মেলে না

খুঁজি যারে আসমান-জমিন
আমারে চিনিনে আমি
এ বিষম ভোলে আমি
আমি কোন্‌জন
সে কোন্‌জনা ॥”

10 “ক্ষ্যাপা তুই না জেনে তোর
আপনার খবর যাবি কোথায়
আমি সত্য না হলে
গুরু সত্য হয় কোন্‌ কালে
আমি যেরূপ দেখ না সেরূপ
দীন দয়াময় দীন দয়াময়”

11 “যা আছে ব্রহ্মাণ্ডে/ তা আছে দেহভাণ্ডে”

12 “আপনার আপনি ফানা হলে সকল জানা যাবে ।

আরবতি বলে আল্লা
পারসিতে কয় খোদাতায়ালা
গড বলেছে যিশুর চেলা
ভিন্ন দেশে ভিন্ন ভাবে ॥

আপনার আপনি হলে ফানা
দেখা দেবেন সাঁই রব্বানা ॥”

13 “অধর চাঁদের যতই খেলা
সর্বোত্তম মানুষলীলা ।”

14 “শুদ্ধ প্রেম রসিক বিনে কে তারে পায়
যার নাম সে আলেক মানুষ
অলকে রয়
রসিক রস অনুসারে
নিগূঢ় ভেদ জানতে পারে
রতিতে মতি ঝরে
মূল খন্ড হয়”

15 “আল্লা কে বোঝে তোমায় অপার নীলে
আপনি আল্লা ডাক আল্লা বলে ।”

16 “হরিকে দেখিয়া হরি হরিতে লুকায়”

17 “বরাতে করিল সৃষ্টি
তাই নিয়ে লেখাজোখা
পাবে সামান্যে কী তার দেখা
নিরাকার ব্রহ্মা হয় সে
সদাই ফেরে অচিন দেশে
দোসর নেই সে একা একা”

18 “ত্রিপিনের ত্রিধারে
মীনরূপে সাঁই বিরাজ করে”

19 “জগৎ জোড়া মীন অবতার
কারণ্য বারির মাঝার
বুঝে কালাকাল বাঁধিলে বান্ধাল
অনয়াসে সে মীন ধরতে পারে ।”

20 “চাতক যেমন মেঘের জল বিনে
দিবানিশি চেয়ে থাকে মেঘ ধিয়ানে”

21 “সে চাঁদ লক্ষ যোজন ফাঁকে রয়
হীরা-মোতি-জোহরা কোটিময়
উনকোটি দেবতা সঙ্গে আছে গাঁথা
ব্রহ্মা-বিষ্ণু-শিব-নারায়ণ জয় জয় জয়
সে চাঁদ পাতালে
উদয় ভূ-মন্ডলে
সে চাঁদ মহেন্দ্র যোগে দেখা দেয়”

22 “সময় গেলে সাধন হবে না
দিন থাকতে দিনের করন
কেন করলে না মুর্শিদ
জান না মন খালে-বিলে
মীন থাকে না জল শুকালে
কী হয় তার বাঁধন দিলে
শুকনা মোহনায়
অসময় কৃষি করে
মিছামিছি খেটে মরে
গাছ যদি হয় বীজের জোরে
ফল ধরে না
অমাবস্যায় পূর্ণিমা হয়
মহাযোগ সে দিন উদয়
লালন বলে তার সময়
দন্ড রয় না”

23 “দমের সঙ্গে কর মিলন
আজব খবর জানবি রে মন ।”

24 “টলে জীব অটলে ঈশ্বর”

25 “কামের ঘরে কপাট মেরে
উজান মুখে চালাও রস
দমের ঘর বন্ধ রেখে যমরাজারে
কর বশ ॥”

26 “বলবো কি সে প্রেমের কথা
কাম হয়েছে প্রেমের লতা
কামছাড়া প্রেম যথাতথা
নয় সে আগমন ।”

27 “আগে কপাট মার কামের ঘরে
মানুষ বলক দেবে রূপ নিহারে

হাওয়া ধর অগ্নি স্থির কর
যাতে মরিয়ে বাঁচিতে পার
মরণের আগে মর
শমণ যাক ফিরে

বারে বারে করি মানা
লীলাল দেশে বাস কোর না
রেখ তেজের তেজিয়ানা
উর্ধ্ব চাঁদ ধরে ।”

- 28 “আছে আদি মক্কা এই মানবদেহে
 দেখ না রে মন চেয়ে ।
 দেশ-দেশান্তর দৌড়ে এবার মরছ কেন হাঁপিয়ে ॥
 গঠেছে সাঁই মানুষ মক্কা
 কুদরতি নূর দিয়ে
 লালন বলে সেই গুপ্ত মক্কায়
 ও তার আদি ইমাম মেয়ে ।”
- 29 “নিগুম বিচারে সত্য গেল যে জানা
 মায়েরে ভজিলে হয় তার বাপের ঠিকানা
 ডিম্বের ভিতর কি-বা ছিল
 বের হয়ে করে দেখিল
 সাঁই লালন বলে বেহেশত পেল”
- 30 “আছে দিন দুনিয়ার
 অচিন মানুষ একজনা ॥

 কেউ তারে চিনেছে বড়
 খোদার ছোট নবীর বড়
 লালন বলে নড়চড়
 সেই নইলে কুল পাবা না ॥”
- 31 “দ্বি-দলের মুণালে
 সোনার মানুষ উজ্জলে
 মানুষ গুরুর কৃপা হলে
 জানতে পাবি
 মানুষ ভজলে সোনার মানুষ হবি”
- 32 “কে তোমারে এ বেশ-ভূষণ
 পরাইল বল গুনি
 জিন্দা দেহে মূর্দার বসন
 খিলকা-তাজ আর ডোরকোপনি
 জাণ্ডে মরার পোষাক পরা
 আপন ছুরাৎ আপনি সারা
 ভবরোগ ধ্বংস করা
 দেখে অসম্ভব করণী ।
 মরণের আগে যে মরে
 শমনে ছোঁবে না তারে
 গুনোছি সাধুর দ্বারে
 তাই বুঝি করেছ ধনী
 সেজেছ সাজ ভালই তর
 মরে যদি বাঁচতে পার
 লালন বলে যদি ফের
 দু'কুল হবে অপমানি ॥”
- 33 “আপন ছুরতে আদম গঠলে দয়াময় ।
 তা নইলে কি ফেরেশতাদের সেজদা দিতে কয় ॥
 আল্লা আদম না হইলে
 পাপ হইত সেজদা দিলে
 শেরেকী পাপ যারে বলে
 এই দুনিয়ায় ।”

- 34 “জানতে হয় আদমছফির আদ্য কথা
 না জেনে আযাযিল সে তো
 কী রূপ আদম গঠলেন সেটা
 আনিয়া জেদার মাটি
 গঠলেন বোরখা পরিপাটি
 মিথ্যা নয় সে কথা খাঁটি
 কোন্ বীজে তার গঠলেন আত্মা
 সেই না আদমের ঘরে
 অনিন্দ কুর্হুরী গড়ে
 মাঝখানে হাতনে কল জুড়ে
 কীর্তিকর্মা বসলেন সেথা
 আদমী হলে আদম চেনে
 ঠিক নামায় সে দেল কোরানে।”
- 35 “মনসুর হাল্লাজ ফকির সেতো
 বলেছিল আমি সত্য
 সেই পলো সাঁইর আইন মতো
 শরায় কী তার মর্ম পায়।”
- 36 “কায়ার শরীর ছায়া দেখি
 ছায়াহীন সে লা-শরিকী
 ফকির লালন বলে তার হাকিকী
 কহিতে ডরাই
 মদিনায় রসুল নামে
 কে এল রে ভাই?

 রসুলকে চিনলে পরে
 খোদা চেনা যায়
 চিনিতে বলেছে খোদা
 সেই দয়াময়”
- 37 “কীর্তিকর্মার খেলা কে বুঝতে পারে
 যে নিরঞ্জন সেই-ই নূর নবী নামটি ধরে।”
- 38 “কে পারে মক্করউল্লার মক্কর বুঝিতে
 আহাদ আহম্মদ নাম হয় জগতে।
 আহম্মদ নামে খোদায়
 মিম হরফে নফি সে হয়
 মিম উঠায়ে দেখ সবায়
 কী হয় তাতে।”
- 39 “আকার কি নিরাকার সাঁই রব্বানা।
 আহাদ-আহাম্মদের বিচার হলে যায় জানা॥
- খুদিতে বান্দার দেহে
 খোদা সে লুকায়ে
 আলোফে মিম বসায়ে
 আহম্মদ নাম হোল সে জনা॥
- আহাম্মদ নাম দেখি
 মিম দিয়ে মিম করে নফি
 মিম গেলে আহাদ বাঁকি
 আহাম্মদ নাম থাকে না॥”

40 “গুরু তুমি পতিত পাবন পরমেশ্বর
অখন্ড মন্ডলকারম
ব্যাগুং জগৎ চরাচর”

41 “মুর্শিদ বিনে কী ধন আর
আছে রে এ মন জগতে
যে নাম স্মরণে আনে
পাপী অঙ্গ শীতল করে
ভববন্ধন জ্বালা যায় গো দূরে
জপ এই নাম দিবানিশি
মুর্শিদের চরণ সুধা
পান করিলে যাবে ক্ষুধা
কর না রে দেলে দ্বিধা
যেই-ই মুর্শিদ সেই-ই খোদা
আপনি আল্লা আপনি নবী
আপনি হন সে আদমছবি
অনন্তরূপ করে ধারণ
কে বোঝে তাঁর লীলার করণ ।”

42 “Mirror-city” is a literal translation of “আরশীনগর” (Aarshinagar). But “আরশ” (Aarosh) is also the abode of God. So the word “Aarshinagar” may also mean *God’s abode*.

43 “বাড়ীর কাছে আরশীনগর
সেটা এক পড়শী বসত করে
আমি একদিনও না দেখিলাম তারে
গিরাম বেড়ে অগাধ পানি
ও তাঁর নাই কিনারা নাই তরণী পারে
বাধা করি দেখব তারে
কমনে সে গাঁয় যাইরে
পড়শী যদি আমায় ছুঁত
যম যাতনা সকল যেত দূরে
সে আর লালন একখানেে রয়
মাঝে লক্ষ যোজন ফাঁক রে ।”

44 For this point, I am indebted to my discussion with Rangan Momen, UK-based collector and producer of *Baul* songs.

45 “আমার মনের বাসনা
আশা পূর্ণ হোল না ।
বিধাতা সংসারের রাজা
আমায় ক’রে রাখল প্রজা
কর না দিলে দেয় গো সাজা
কারো দোহাই মানে না”

46 “এই দেশেতে এই সুখ হোল
আমার কোথায় যাই না জানি
পেয়েছি এক ভাসা নৌকা
জনম গেল ছেঁচতে পানি”

47 “লালন কয় জাত হাতে পেলে
পোড়াতাম আগুন দিয়ে ॥”

48 “এমন মানবজনম কী আর হবে ।
 মন যা করো তুরায় কর এই ভবে ॥
 অনন্ত রূপ সৃষ্টি করলেন সাঁই
 শুনি মানবের উত্তম কিছু নাই
 দেব-দেবতাগণ করে আরাধন
 জন্ম নিতে এই মানবে ॥
 কত ভাগ্যের ফলে না জানি
 মন রে পেয়েছ এই মানব তরণী
 বেয়ে যাও তুরায়, তোমার সুধারায়
 যেন ভরা না ডোবে ॥

মানুষে করতে মাধুর্য ভজন
 তাই মানুষরূপ গঠলেন নিরঞ্জন ।”

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8. “Mapping the Esoteric Body in the Islamic Yoga of Bengal” — Shaman Hatley
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