

A CULTURAL AND MUSICAL HERITAGE OF THE MATUA

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INTRODUCTION

The word Matua means 'submerged' in the name of lord Hari' or 'in devotion and attachments to Lord Hari'(choudhuri 2001,62).Mauta is a community. The people in this community arduously practice songs in the praises of Lord Hari and this song style is known as Matuageet. Matua community was started by Harichand Thakur (1811-1877). Harichand Thakur was born on March 11, 1811 at Safaldanga in Gopalgang .This area is now in Bangladesh. His father, Yashomant Thakur was a Maithili Brahmin and had a predilection for Vaishnava. The place of work of Harichand was in Orakanda village. In this village he proclaimed himself as an 'Avatar' and said that he was born with the will of Chaitanyadeva (Sarkar 1997, 166).

As unfortunate as it may be, the lower caste people never get recognition from the upper caste of Hindus and the higher castes hate lower castes. Even the prophets born in upper caste people of Hindu community imagined their own prophet and they discovered their prophet in Harichand Thakur. After the birth of Sri Harichand huge number of people from the lower caste Hindu, upper caste Hindu, Muslims ,Christian got organized under one umbrella, the matua community. Sri Harichand had keep desires to established a bond between all the devotees of Lord Hari spread in different parts of the globe. The Mauta community is still working on it (Sarkar 1997, 15).

Sri Harichand used to frequently to utter the holy word 'Haribol'. All near him used to join to shout the same holy word. This practice percolated among his followers. So, the boy-teenager-youth-old-woman-man all were united and uttered 'Haribol'. Thus they are acquainted to common people as 'Haribol' group. The devotee of Harichand also identify themselves as 'Mauta'. Many people od Jessore, Khulna and Barisal districts were immensely influenced by the Mauta concept and became a part of the community.

If we briefly look back we can see that Lord Curzon, the then viceroy of India, decided to partition Bengal, creating a new province as Assam, included the districts of Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensingh on sixteen October in the year 1905.Common people severely protested against this partition. For this reason the partition of Bengal was revoked in the year 1911.In the year 1947 East Bengal Province came under Pakistan with a new name East Pakistan. But the citizens of these provinces started demonstrating protests and

demanding for a separate nation. Finally East Pakistan got the independence through language movement and Bangladesh was formed in 1971. Matuas were not outside this hurly-burly. Being evacuees they left their own country {Bangladesh} in groups and took shelter in various refugee-camps in West Bengal.

During this period the headquarters of Mauta Mahasangha was founded at Thakurnagar in North 24 Pargana of West Bengal. Thakurnagar is near Bangoan, the border of India and Bangladesh.

This songs of Mauta community are idealistic folksong. Only the old men in the community are authorized to distribute the songs. 'Dayaraki' or assistant singer Associates with the main singer. Every song is sung usually for one hour. Harmonium, small Dhol and Danka are presented there as associating musical instruments. A man, as venerable as guru, directs this program with the help of 'Dandi' (Danda-Dandi). Musical instruments usually begin playing after about 15 minutes of the start of the songs. During performances the Danka the Dandi get agitated mightily. Those musical instruments players do not undergo any specific training but play with natural instincts.

Matuas have abandoned many sacraments of Hindu religion. They do not accept the guruism of Hindu religion. They refused 'Guruism' but the affection for guru is recognized in matua-songs. Like Baul, Mursidi, Marfati songs, the matuasongs also focus to get the Absolute Being through the way of devotion, the sentient or embodied soul the supreme Spirit, the Matua songs are of high literary value like other song genres like Baul, etc. the songs influenced the kabigaan.

There are many groups of Matua songs in many places of India including west Bengal. The 'Baruni' festival is celebrated for two weeks at Harichand-Guruchand temple at Thakurnagar. Matua people from different parts of the country come to join this festival and sing songs in groups.

It is the songs of labour community. Baulgaan can be brought in the discussion as both Matuagaan and Baulgaan have similarities in themes in their lyrics. Baulgaan is primarily the song of the Baul community. Bauls have no family and occupation. In contrast to this, the matuas work in many areas. They work as farmers, fisherman, little businessman and rickshaw drivers etc. the Matuasong describes the way one can get near the almighty God; it preaches love for mankind and goes above discrimination between different section of humans. The Bauls are typically bohemian type when the values of Matua. It inspires the

people with the values of life, free them from the conflicts believers of different religions and advocates for similar status among the female and male in the community

'Mauaism' helped a large cross-section of less privileged people, taught them to live better, taught them tolerance, preach the love for mankind, taught them values of life. Music played a big role in propagating the messages in the Mauta community. Interestingly, the Mauta songs have high literary value.

Jessore, Khulna and Barisal districts are currently in Bangladesh.

Creating a new provinces of Assam, included the districts of Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensingh, the proposal of partition of Bengal was considered in the year 1903. Lord Curzon then viceroy, first divided the region into two provinces in the year 1905. But common people protested severely against the partition. So the proposal of partition of Bengal was revoked in the year 1911. But the government followed another policy and shifted its administrative capital from Calcutta to Delhi. In the year 1947 India achieved its independence. But this division ended with bloodshed. The so called East Bengal provinces came under Pakistan and West Bengal in India. The Cultural isolation was greatly felt by the citizens residing in East Bengal. So they started demonstration and demanded for separate nation. Finally East Bengal got the separate status of a country as Bangladesh in the year 1971. Many common people were ejected from their homestead in this long time political wrangle and woe. So the frontier provinces of India were fulfilled by the helpless people, who came from Bangladesh.

Bongoan was earlier known as Bangram. There was heavy infiltration of refugees to India through the Bongoan border. Thakurnagar being close to the Indian: Bangladesh the devotees of Metua community found it convenient they established its headquarter there. The rail line was founded at Banga in the year 1884. Barisal Express travelled through this rail line till 1947 at present a goods train of 33 compartments move through the frontier of petropole of Banga to Beanpole of Bangladesh once in a week. The neighbouring places of Bangaon being the important entry Point to go to Bangladesh, many peoples of the Matua community chose to live there. For the need of livelihood some people were spread in maharashtra, madhyapradesh, Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh. The Matua community expanded in all over India including west Bengal.

Mursid means Guru. Admiration for guru of passionate outburst of hearts of devotees is presented in which song is called Mursid songs. Is an Arabic word. This song is next edition of Bhatiyali song. Sufism influenced the song.

The word Marfati means secret. Marfati is Muslim theological songs. orthodox Muslims, obedient of the Islamic Scripture, did not give favourable look at the practice of marfati songs. The word of many mysteries of psychology are presented in marfati songs.

In Bengali dictionary the word of (kabi) means a type of Bengali song the Kabigaan was created by the mythological incident mainly the love of Radha Krishna. Kabigyan divided into this parts like Mahara, Chiten, Fuko-melta-mad etc. The opinion of poet Iswar Gupta is that, Kabi gaan is the conflict between poem and song. Kabigaan reflects conventional subjects simultaneously the picture of contemporary life and society. Obscurity and rusticity are two main devices of kabigaan. The main singer of kabigaan is called Kabiya. In Bangladesh male Kabiya is called sarkar and female is called Kabiya.

The festival of Mauta community to celebrate the birth anniversary of Harichand Thakur.

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