

THE RELEVANCE OF HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF LALON FAKIR IN PRESENT ERA

Partha Shil*

In Bāul tradition of Bengal, Lalongīti is an ordinary stream and philosophy whose center is Lalon Fakir (1774 A.D.-1890 A.D. probable). A new kind of humanistic philosophy has emerged out of him, which opened a new path in the section of social and religious life. In the late phase of the medieval period, the society of Bengal was divided into the lines of religious belief that caused many riots in many parts of Bengal. The archaic casteism already took its horrendous turn, and in such an environment, Lalon sang his songs were breaking these divisions in the society. He was essaying new roads on reforming the age-old traditions and creating new philosophical establishments which are still very influential and relevant in our modern technocrat world because all these evils persist in our society where we have lost the values of humanity. Therefore, this paper wishes to search in his songs his cautious remarks about society. As living in the eighteenth century, he had no academic education; he was a self-educated man. In this article, the author will try to find out humanistic philosophical arguments, his belief in his songs that are still impactful in our present era.

The main rhythm of Indian culture is found in the tradition of folk culture, and within it, we observe the spirit of Bengal and India. There are many aspects of cultural and religious-philosophical traditions, which emanate from this folk literary culture. One of the major languages of the Indo-Aryan language group, the history of the Bengali language and its streams are since ancient times, and the folk cultural and literary values of this language are so vast and rich. The tradition of ‘*Bāul gāna*’ (*Bāul* song) is also part of this great literary language. *Bāul* is a folk culture of Bengal. *Bāul*, the popular cultural way of life, is mainly dependent upon songs which are written by Lalon is also known as *Lalongīti*¹. *Bāul* tradition is the joint inclination of *Sahajiyā*², *Vaiṣṇava*³, *Tāntrika*⁴, *Sufī*⁵, and other communities. No single religious community

* PARTHA SHIL, State Aided College Teacher, Department of Philosophy, Balurghat College, West Bengal, India. Email: anaximines1994@gmail.com.

¹ In this article, all songs of Lalon are written with the diacritical marks wherever applicable (in Bengali Pronunciation).

² *Sahajiyā* is Tantric Buddhism (see also Haroonuzzaman, 2010, p. xiii). The Sanskrit term ‘*Sahaja*’ means co-emergent. It is a term of some importance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist spirituality. *Sahaja* practices first arose in Bengal during the 8th century among Buddhist yogis called ‘*Sahajiyā Siddhas*’ (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahaja>).

³ *Vaiṣṇava Sādhak* is practice ascetic austerities. *Vaiṣṇavism* is one of the major traditions within Hinduism along with *Śaivism* and *Śāktism*. They consider *Viṣṇu* as the supreme Lord.

⁴. *antra* denotes the esoteric traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The term *Tantra*, in the Indian traditions, also means any systematic broadly applicable ‘text, theory, system, method, instrument, technique or practice’. Starting in the early centuries of the Common Era, newly

can claim “*Bāul*” as their own. It is through “*Bāul*” by which various communities have come closer to its humanist practices. Lalon Fakir is the main pioneer and the greatest spokesperson of the *Bāul* tradition of the undivided Bengal. Rejecting the religious institutions, rituals, and dogma, Lalon has created a world based on humans and humanity (Mondal 2015: 58-59). For this, *Bāul gāna*, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved “a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” on 25th November 2005 (Choudhury 2013: 127).

Bāul is folk religion, too, where there is no trace of God or *Āllāh*. To them, the human body and the human body alone are the objects of worship. They have no social and religious hierarchy in their tradition. They always keep themselves engaged in searching for “*manera mānuṣa*”⁶ (Man of the Heart) (Mondal 2015: 58). Their hymns of worship are nothing but their *gāna* or songs. *Bāul* songs do not work only as a form of public entertainment. However, it also takes people digging into the sphere of spiritual devotions, which carry forward the important aspects of folk traditions and their values— anonymous collective creation, philosophy, many facets of studies, and their impacts on society. *Bāul* is a secular sect (*Lokāyata Darśana*), and though few in numbers, they can surpass any boundary of the human wall. Most of their lives are spent passing deeper philosophical truths among the people through their behaviors, melodies of songs, and free-flowing rhythmic dancing. This disciplined *Bāul* sect carries forward the great-inherited values of its past culture in Bengal, which is a result of communications with each other, being individualistic in treatments and many rules and customs, which lead to the assembly of different religious and societal parts. If we look at the origin of this great sect, we find out that they are combined with various practices, customs, and devotional standards towards their investigative life. In the middle phase of the thirteenth century A.D., the land of

revealed *Tantras* centering on *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* or *Śakti* emerged. In Buddhism, the *Vajrayāna* tradition is known for its extensive *Tantras* ideas and practices (Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tantra>). So, it can be said that the worship of *Śaiva* and *Śakti* that is spread through the scriptures is called *Tantra*. *Tantra* is also called a mystic doctrine (treatise). Tantric is the follower of the doctrines taught by the *Tantras*.

⁵ Sufism is a mystical trend of Islam. It represents the manifestation and the most practice in Islam. Sufism can be described as the interiorization and intensification of Islam faith and practice in a broad sense. Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as ‘Sufīs’. Sufis have been characterized by their asceticism, especially by their attachment of *dhikr* (which is the name of devotional acts in Islam), the practice of remembrance of God, often performed after prayers (Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufism>).

⁶ In *Bāul* tradition, *manera mānuṣa* is ultimate and adorable reality. *Bāuls* are pursuit to capture their ‘*manera mānuṣa*’.

Bengal came under the rule of Muslim or Islam rulers, and thus Islam transformed the existing cultural norms of Bengal. Those people who were downtrodden in the Hindu religion were converted to Islam. People who changed their names only to sustain their livelihood continued their spiritual life following *Sahajiyā* belief. Before the advent of Turkey, the Sufi people from the Islamic tradition started coming to Bengal with their varied cultural norms, which influenced the people residing in Bengal. These Sufis spread their faiths through mystical-erotic-worship (*maramiyā prem sādhanā*), which is based on the understanding of self-realization. Their devotional ways were identified with the people from the *Sahajiyā* sect.

After the advent of Turkey, much lower caste Hindus converted their faith into this new way of life. Consequently, with this conversion, they got relief from the tortures of the upper caste Hindus, and at the same time, they were under protection. Even following the *Sahajiyā* Sufi belief, they were treated equally regardless of their identity and class as poor or rich people. In addition to this, the *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā*⁷ sect which spread the name of Chaitanya Dev in the 15th and 16th century came under the heavy influence of this Sufism in Bengal. Thus, the converted *Sahajiyā* sect in Sufism became known as the ‘*Bāul*’ in Bengal. Regardless of Hindu and Muslim/Islam, many downtrodden people from both religions started following this new way of life. In the middle period of the 17th century, this *Bāul* sect spread its existence all over the Bengal (see also Datta, 1978, 445-448). Moreover, these *Bāuls* were outside the formal education system, and thus their inherited knowledge came over to the next generation as a form of oral tradition. As they came from the lower section of the society; so, their songs were easy to understand, which talked about the aspirations, happiness, and sorrows of the rural people. In addition, Lalon Fakir is considered the soul-man of this marginalized *Bāul* tradition in Bengal. His songs greatly influenced the poets, the playwrights, the novelists, and even the movie directors of Bengal. Probably in 1774 A.D., he was born in Kustia (modern Bangladesh) under Nadia (undivided Bengal), and it was written in his cemetery (*mājhāra*) that he died on 17th October in 1890 A.D. It is said that he lived for 116 years that is a matter of controversy also. According to popular views, he was born in a Hindu family. When Lalon went on pilgrimage, he was attacked by small pox, Sufi Malam Shah saved his life, and afterward, he became a disciple of Siraj Shai. Siraj Shai explained Islam based on *Ma’rifat*⁸. Lalon added *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā* tradition with this *Ma’rifat* and to him God is one.

⁷ *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā* is not only Tantric Hinduism, but also ‘*śaiva-śākta*’. *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā* is a form of Tantric *Vaiṣṇavism* that centred in Bengal.

⁸ *Ma’rifat*, mystic knowledge, is for the followers of the esoteric path. The *Bāuls*

Lalon could not keep his faith in religious conservatism, which sponsors gender based patriarchal society; he was concerned about the fate of humanity. His rebellious nature against this biased society and religion was reflected in his songs. Lalon was born in a superstition-ignorance-scripted rural society, but he became a luminous person. Because his mystic thought is based on unity and equality, that is why his quest—

Kona sādhanē nura sādhanile
Sināra kālāma haya ādāya
 * * * *
 * * * *
Lalon vale āhāda kālāma
Dibena ki s̄i⁹ dayāmaya (Roy 2017: 186)

That means in what meditation on light essence/arbitrariness revealed in the core of the heart, is collected/Lalon says, would Sayeen¹⁰ gracious/bestow the unity of arbitrariness (Roy, 2017, 186-187). It is *āhāda kālāma* means sermon of unity. One who finds unity in his/her own mind, he/she finds ‘*manera mānuṣa*.’ Lalon’s position is the middle of all religious systems like Hinduism, Islam, etc. So, he said in his song, ‘Veda at right and Qur’an left, the mendicant sermon is amidst’ (Roy 2017: 188). In his own contradictory surroundings, he developed himself in his pursuit of songs and secularism. He was the admirer of ‘*mānuṣa satya*’ (man-truth). The philosophy of this devotee was an ardent connoisseur of unity and integrity of all people. Even though he was a traveler on the mysterious path, he was also anointed with deep social consciousness. All the time, high-souled men have sung the triumph of humanism, and Lalon is not exceptional to them. In *Bāul gāna*, we can harmonize spiritual knowledge of all religious cults; they are against the pompousness and hollowness in the name of religious deeds. Therefore, Lalon, like Buddha, opposed *karmakāṇḍa*¹¹ and all rituals of religious texts including *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and *Qur’an* etc.; but did not deny the *jñānakāṇḍa*¹² of those religious texts. That is why his monistic mind

regard *Ma’rifat* as superior to *Shari’* as they think *Ma’rifat* leads to a vision of the divine. (Haroonuzzaman, 2010. p. xvi).

⁹ The Sanskrit term ‘*s̄i*’ used as the Supreme Lord or *guru* in *Bāul* tradition.

¹⁰ Here, the word ‘Sayeen’ is the same meaning of ‘*s̄i*’.

¹¹ *Karmakāṇḍa* is the part of *Vedas* deals with rituals. And it is also the Vedic writings which relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites.

¹² *Jñānakāṇḍa* is the part of *Vedas* that deals with supreme knowledge. In addition, it also deals with the path of philosophical speculation.

(*Advaita Citta*) has broadcasted philanthropy in this world. He is the worshiper of humanism. One of the songs where Lalon says—

Ye yā bhāve sei rūpe se haya
Rām-Rahim-Karim-Kālā eka ātmā jagatamaya (Brahma 1994: 22)

That means one becomes what he thinks/ Rām-Rahim-Karim-Kālā all are the same sole in this world (Mondal 2015: 61). This same concept, ‘*ātmā eka*’ exists in Indian philosophical systems such as Vedānta philosophy, Nyāya philosophy, etc. At this place, an assertion of Kabir can be mentioned— *sādho eka āpa sava mātī* (Sen 1995: 63), i.e., O saint, one soul is in everyone and everywhere. Lalon says inconclusive mind— “whatever it is in body, it is in universe.”¹³ (Hasan 2012: 38). The supreme soul exists in all human beings. Human beings are in *Brahma*, *Brahman* is in Human beings, and they are apart but always brought together. That is why Lalon has declared a revolt against traditional caste-class-religion discrimination through his own song. Rather he preached the philosophy of harmony in the society, i.e., there is no discrimination among people.”

Lalon was a multi-talented Bengali who was familiar with Lalon Fakir, Lalon Shah, Lalon Shain, and Mahātmā Lalon, etc. He was at the same time a mystic devotee, a philosopher, humanist, and a social reformer. Lalon is considered one of the most influential persons in *Bāul* songs. He denied the existence of religious establishments and their rituals, and he created a new ideal world where man and humanity are the centers of that world. Moreover, that is why his ideas are called the ‘humanistic philosophy,’ and he is also humanist. Working for society was his foremost agenda behind his multi-talented personality. He was deeply agitated for the existing problems of his society. For that reason, his songs rebelled against caste, prejudice, and religious intolerance, which he was experiencing at his time. This self-educated folk poet was deeply involved in the surrounding world, the real crisis of his society. His songs’ unique subject, words, and rhythmic pattern with melodies deeply moved Rabindranath Tagore. The most important contribution of Lalon Fakir is that he brought about folk songs of the lower section of people to the literary table of the higher-class people.

As Lalon was born and grown up in a solitary locality, his mentality got the touches of rural sentiments, which are humanitarian. His songs combine the personal, social and cultural life so that their significance is still relevant like the past. The idea

¹³ This concept is also in Advaita Vedānta.

of humanity is the sole proprietor in his songs from its beginning towards the end. Those who blindly follow the dogmatic religious way of life never get attached with the absolute reality and rather they are trapped in the ritualistic religious process and its meaningless absurdities. Forcing them to believe in the rebirths and afterlife heavenly illusion, they control these people like helpless puppets. Lalon asked the question that if one ultimate creator, then why do divisions among caste and religion create the world, why the upper caste people oppress the lower caste people, and why there is discrimination based on gender. To Lalon, the origin of truth and knowledge is not based on abstract ideas but only central to ‘man’ who is *guru*¹⁴ or *murshid*¹⁵. That is why he said—

Duve dekh mana kīrūpa līlāmaya
*Ākāśa pātāla khūjisa*¹⁶ *yāre ei dehe se raya* (Choudhury 2013: 205)

Therefore, if we deeply involve ourselves with the presence of God and his blessings, we do not need to search for him here and there. God is present within us. In this context, Kabir’s remarks come to our mind that— *mo ko kahā dhūdo bande/ maito tere pāsame/ nā mai devala nā mai masajida, / nā kāve nā kailāsa me* (Sen, Kabir, 30), i.e., O religious disciple, where are you looking for me? I¹⁷ am in you. I am not in any temple or mosque. Even I am not in Kaba¹⁸ or Kailash¹⁹. In addition to this, he said that this world is a sportive place, which is like as Vedāntic *māyā*. That is why Lalon said that world is *līlāmaya*. The quoted line here depicts the *Vaiṣṇava* philosophical tradition ‘rich people build temple and poor people make their body as temple’ (Mondal 2013: 3). One *Vaiṣṇava* poet, Baḍu Caṇḍīdās of Bengal expressed that, ‘*savāra upare mānuṣa satya, tāhāra upare nāi*’. It means that the truth of man is over and above everything. In this context, the first question is who is that man? Answer of Lalon is that ‘man’ is ‘*manera mānuṣa*’ (Man of the Heart). *Manera mānuṣa* is within the man who is free from all conditions of human existence. For

¹⁴ *Guru* is spiritual guide. The main aim of *guru* is to learn properly of his disciples to promote in pursuit him.

¹⁵ *Murshid* is the one who directs his disciple to follow the path of ultimate divine. In addition, *murshid* is a person who is *guru*.

¹⁶ The word ‘*khūjisa*’ in Bengali means ‘find out’.

¹⁷ Here, ‘I’ means the supreme soul or *paramātmā*.

¹⁸ Kaba is a large cubic-shaped building, which Saudi Arabia’s Mecca, the Maṣjid al-Haram mosque is located in the middle. According to Islam religion, Kaba is considered as the most sacred place. It is the Qibla of the Muslims, that is, the way they pray.

¹⁹ Kailash is the peak of gyangadisa, which is the part of the Himalaya in Tibet. Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religions— these four religions are considered it as pilgrimage.

this, Lalon raises a question about his own existence like, ‘*sava loke kaya Lalon ki jāta saṁsāre*’. It means that the inner soul of man is not limited to a particular caste, class, religion, community, and nation or country (Hossain 2015: 80-81). Lalon did not believe in the customary functions of religion, the identity of religion is metaphorical to him, true religion resides in human and humanity is the only religion of man. Therefore, he said in a song—

Māṭira dhivi kāṭher chavi
Bhūta bhāve sob devādevī
Bhole nā se anyarūpī
Mānuṣa bhaje divyajñāne
 * * * *
 * * * *

Yejana mānuṣa ratana cene (Choudhury 2013: 173-174)

This song exemplifies that if one knows man and humanity, then he would never visit a temple to worship an idol that is made of clays. It is also said in *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*—“*na tasya pratimā asti yasya nāma mahadyaśaḥ*”²⁰ i.e., there is no idol or the comparison or attributes to *paramātmā* (the supreme soul). Lalon says that those who believe in man and humanity. And to them, man is God and humanity is the way to reach towards God or the supreme soul. But the question is that where do we get this *mānuṣa ratana*? In reply, Lalon remarks —

Vala kāre khūjisa kṣyāpā deśa-bideśe
Āpana ghara khujile
Ratan pāi anāse (Khan 2007: 353)

This *mānuṣa ratana* (humanity) cannot be found at home and abroad or outside of us. It resides in our body. Those who find his own body, it can be found easily i.e., if anyone realizes himself, then he gets this *mānuṣa ratana*. This type of realization unites people across all the cultures, religions, societies, nations. Those who believe in man and humanity to them man is God and humanity is the ultimate way to reach towards God. The great and intense love of which the *Bāul* sings is for the divine beloved residing in the innermost recesses of his heart and variously called *manera-mānuṣa* (Man of the Heart), *sahaḥja-mānuṣa* (the spontaneous man), *adhar-mānuṣa* (the unattainable one), *sāī* (Lord), *āleker-mānuṣa* (the invisible one) and so on. In this love, the end he seeks is the state of mystical union with God (Datta 1978: 450-451). The society that is replete with deprivation, oppression and injustice, therefore, to

²⁰ Gambhirananda, S. (Ed.). 2018. *Upanisad Granthavali* (Vol. II). Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya. p. 409.

protect this society from this caste ridden people and their superstitious belief he talked about a classless society. It is also to be noted that Western philosopher Karl Marx proposed the idea of classless society through class struggle. But, the soul-man of Bengali *Bāul* tradition does not support the means of violence and conflict; he gives the ideas of humanity through which we can reach towards the goal of classless society. For that, I think that the philosophical ideas of this great self-educated man attracted the large number of people (Rabindranath Tagore was also no exception of that trend²¹). Having seen pomegranate of the untouchable practices largely he wrote down—

*Emana mānava samāja kove go srjana have
Ye din Hindu, Musalamāna, Bauddha, Khrṣṭāna
Jāti gotra nāhi rave* (Khan 2007: 125)

The main themes of *Lalongīti* are the conflicts of religions and society of this country and against their racial and casteist mentality. This Mahātmā protested against casteism, riots among different religious people, class oppression, superstitions; and through his songs, he influenced the people by teaching the true significance of his philosophical ideas and their values in society that are still relevant in our times. Because casteism, class oppression, riots are still visible in our society. And that's why he sang—

*Jāta gela jāta gela vale eki ājava kārahānā
Satya kāje keu naya rāji savai dekhi tā nā nā nā
Āsavāra kāle ki jāta cile
Ese tumi ki jāta nile
Ki jāta havā yāvāra kāle
Se kathāṭi bheve balo nā
Brāhmaṇa-Caṇḍāla-Cāmāra-Muci
Ekai jale haya go śuci
Dekhe śune haya nā ruci
Yame to kāuke chāḍave nā* (Khan 2007: 246)

Through this song, Lalon says about his conflicted confusions to see the difference among people based on caste and gender. He wanted to know— when man takes birth and dies or when he exists in this world as a living being on which class or caste he belongs to. What categorization of caste man brought with his birth and what he will take when he dies? His questions are not yet finished; he says if the same water is

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore was deeply attracted by Lalon's thought (or *Bāul* tradition) of humanism; we see the result of which is reflected in Hibbert Lectures in Manchester College, Oxford (collectively '*The Religion of Man*') and also in his Bengali book '*Mānuṣera Dharma*'.

needed to sanctify the same *Brāhmaṇa* and the lower caste people such as *Caṇḍāla* (lower caste Hindu), *Muci* (Shoemaker) and *Cāmāra* (Tanner) then why there is division among these people? The humanist, Lalon through his self-educated knowledge asked these important questions whose answers are not known to anybody. He realized that this sectarian conflict is a down fall motif in the way of his life and philosophy. So, he says in his song—

Fakiri niye karavi khyāpā kon rāge
Āche Hindu-Musalamāna dui bhāge (Choudhury 2013: 191)

Even knowing the thorns of this sectarianism, he sang—

Keu mālā keu tasavigalāya
Tāite ki jāta bhinna valāya
Yāoyā kiṁvā āsāra velāya
Jeter cinha raya kāra re (Choudhury 2013: 165)

Emancipated-consciously Lalon's thought is reasonable and natural about casteism and class discrimination. He observed that there are many sects of religions, castes, and classes in his society. But the nature of man of this divided society is same for all and this is his only argument. That is why he said through his powerful voice in the above-mentioned song that people may differ in their devotions towards God but that does not mean that humanity is different. When man comes into this world, he does not bring about his religious tag and casteist mark along with him, even, at the time of death that is certain according to the natural order; there is no exception of this very episode. Therefore, Lalon asked that as the people follow different paths of their devotions towards God, then does it lead to encourage the division among the people. For that reason, we can also say that it is due to the presence of intolerance, which is also an integral part of our so-called institutionalized religions, and the defeating side of humanity that lead to the division in our society. Our society is ridden with the discrimination of gender and various customs among the people, which he said through his song—

Sunnata dile haya musalamāna
Nārīra tave ki haya bidhāna
Vāmaṇa cini paitye pramāna
Vāmaṇī cini ki prakāre (Choudhury 1990: 138)

There are many facets of women in a society. Hinduism made its own rules like 'satī' (chaste wife) to burn women with their husband in the same pyre. Islam compares widow with black spider (Al-Quran, Surah Al'-Ankabut 029: 041-43) and sometime she is forced to get married with another married man (Al-Quran, Surah An-Nisa

004:003) to protection, fulfilling the desire for polygamy. In *Bāul*, there is no concept of marriage so eventually there are no words like ‘widow’ and ‘widowhood’. Deplorable condition of widows and their miserable condition in the society is one of the main causes of their entering into the *Bāul* community. In *Bāul* tradition, women have a special importance and value (Mondal 2015: 63). The *Bāuls* have started talking about the freedom of women before the emergence of feminism. In his songs, Lalon has given women higher position, Lalon sings—

Lalon vale gupta makkā
Ādi imāma sei meye (Choudhury 2013: 188)

That means Lalon says in that secret Mecca/the high priest is a woman. In the patriarchal society where woman’s identity as, human being is in crisis, Lalon overtly announces that it’s a mother; a woman fixes a child’s real identity (Mondal 2015: 63-64). Lalon has compared women with nature and said that without man and woman creation is not possible. He believes that man and woman are equal in nature and each other’s guide. That is why he said—

Ādama valo kona nūre haya
Mā haoyā ki sei nūre nāi (Mondal 2013: 6)

The main theme of his songs is revealing the origin or bliss of God in the presence of human beings. So, he expressed the idea of Human *Brahma* (*mānava Brahma*) by giving an exalted position to human. Lalon is universally known exponent who utterly declares that the sense of equality is divinity. The entity of self carries this divinity. Therefore, the entity of the self is prophet. In the world of this prophet, God reveals himself/herself as draw stable man (Roy 2017: 189). Humans are *guru*, humans are great, humans are the means of awakening of ultimate reality, and God is in man. Hence, to Lalon human existence has been identified as sacred place (*puṇyafīrtha*)—

Gayā kāśī makkā madinā
Vāire khūje²² phākkāya paḍo nā
Deharati khūjale²³ pāvi
Sakala tīrther phala tāiye (Choudhury 2013: 219)

To Lalon, “man” is the main concern and within the abode of man, God lives. Moreover, Lalon called this God as “*manera mānuṣa*” (Man of the Heart). Lalon’s philosophy always searches for “*manera mānuṣa*” who has no religious, racial

²² The Bengali word ‘*khūje*’ means ‘find out’.

²³ The term ‘*khūjale*’ in Bengali, means ‘search’.

boundary and discrimination of gender. Human beings are the main outline and source and also the centre of the mysterious entity of the creator. In his various songs, there is no way to the attaining *mokṣa* without human birth (see also Datta 1978: 452). Therefore, it has understood that in *Lalongīti*, the clear determining direction is the focus of human beings, and by evading the religion-class-caste or any other discriminations, he will call for unified humanity or secularism. Creator and creatures exist in human beings. For that reason, Lalon said the human beings of the adoring, speaking the truth and right way with so impressive appeal—

Mānuṣa bhajale sonāra mānuṣa havi
Mānuṣa cheḍe khyāpāre tui mūla hārāvi (Khan 2007: 379)

Or,

Satya vala supathe cala
Ore amāra mana
Satya supath nā cinile
Pāvi ne mānuṣera daraśana (Khan 2007: 463)

Lalon values the human life most because the human body is the centre of spiritual practice. He affirms that the existence of the whole world within us. So, he utters—

Bhave mānuṣaguru niṣṭhā yāra
Sarvasādhana siddha haya tāra (Choudhury 2013: 198)

Within this body exists the ultimate reality which is also called ‘*manera mānuṣa*’ (Man of the Heart). This body is the ultimate source of self-awakening. To entertain the importance of human life Lalon said in this song—

Anntarūpa sṛṣṭi karalena sāi
Śuni mānavera uttama kichui nāi
Deva-devatāgaṇa
Kare ārādhana
Janma nite mānave
Kata bhāgyera phale nā jāni
Mana re peyecha ei mānava-taraṇī (Choudhury 2013: 168)

To take birth as a human is a blessing because this human body is the source of erotically adoration/pure love (*mādhurya bhajana*). It is also said in *Bhāgavata*—

Yanmartyalīlaupayikaṃ svayoga māyāvalaṃ darśayatā grhītaṃ
Vismāpanaṃ svasya ca saubhagarddheḥ paraṃ padaṃ bhūṣaṇa bhūṣaṇāṅgaṃ
(Bhāgavata—3.2.12)

It means that God has created the image of man by dint of his will power, and this image of the man and his features are most beautiful and technical creation that also provides the source of beauty and truth in this natural world and due to this enigmatic presence man is eligible to perform the human activities. That is why Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja said to signify the epitome of human life: ‘*Kṛṣṇer yateka līlā/sarvottam naralīlā/naravapu tāhāra svarūpa*’ (Mukhopadhyaya & Majumder 1954: 373). Therefore, it can be said that human life is the best creation ever on this earth. For that reason, Mahātmā Lalon always preached the humanistic philosophy through his practical life and also his songs.

The humanist Lalon was out casted from his society based on casteism due to his ideas against it. Therefore, the fight against casteism was also related with his existential survival. As he lived in the proletariat section of the society, the living standard had nothing to lose for him. This fearless motif added a new height in his songs. In fact, he never thought religion as a symbol of asset for a particular race that led him to become pragmatic in his decisions against the ritualistic manner of the religions and whole-heartedly, he delved himself searching for the real things of life. Moreover, he never stayed away from announcing in words—

Dharmera uddeśya yadi haya
Āllāra nirṇaya
Tāhale sakala dharme
Tāre pāoyā yāya
 * * * *
 * * * *
Tālevula maolā ye haya
Sakala dharme se tāre pāya
Āllā kāro ekānta naya
Ceye dyākhare
Ei duniyāya (Brahma 1994: 40)

Lalon’s songs portray the spiritual philosophy—*khācāra*²⁴ *bhitara acina pākhi/kamane āse yāya*’ (Choudhury 1990: 139) as well as the devotion towards humanity ‘*emana mānava-janama āra ki have/mana yā karo tvarāya karo ei bhabe*’ (Choudhury 2013: 167). Religion never created man; man brought about the religion in the society for his own causes. That is why religion and castes do not constitute the bigger part in man’s life; human is the best memorandum. Nevertheless, the society takes for granted the Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism etc. as the incarnations of God as religions which are very different with each other in the ritualistic manners

²⁴ In Bengali, the word ‘*khācā*’ means the cage. But, Lalon is taken this word as human body.

and they are very rigid on their own terms. These religions end their practices by performing some events and rituals. To tell the truth: these are not religions; they are religious systems in our society. Moreover, to see such levels of crises in our society for the religious hatred Lalon sang—

Ek cāde²⁵ jagata ālo ek vīje sava janma halo
Fakir Lalon vale miche kalaha āmi bhabe dekhite pāya (Mannan 2009: 391)

Bāul observes human supremacy regardless of their place, time, gender, class, caste etc. They said that ‘cows are in different colours but the colour milk is same/though roam all over the world, we are the children of the same mother’ (Mondal,2015: 64). Lalon sings in the same way—

Mānuṣatattva yāra satya haya mane
Se ki anya tattva māne (Choudhury 2013: 173)

That means those who know the true value of humanity/there is nothing more valuable to them than that (Mondal 2015: 64). Therefore, Lalon gave more importance to human as deities also contend for taking birth as a man. Lalon notes that the true identity of man is found out in the ideals of humanity, devotion and prayers and their great love for others, but not on the judgement of religion, class, and caste. He said that in this song—

Bhakter dvāre vādhā²⁶ āchen sāi
Hindu ki Yavana vale tāra jāter vicāra nāi (Choudhury 2013: 189)

Lalon not only gave theoretical words for humanity, but also practiced its philosophy in his practical life. Therefore, he does not belong to any religion, caste, and class. And we get all these notions in his various songs. For an example, he said in his song—

Sava loke kaya Lalon ki jāta saṁsāre
Lalon vale jāter ki rūpa dekhālāma nā ei najare
 * * * *
 * * * *
Jagat veḍe jāter kathā
Loke galpa kare yathātathā
Lalon vale, jāter phātnā,
Duviyechi sāta sāgare (Choudhury 1990: 137-138)

²⁵ The Bengali word ‘cāde’ means ‘moon’.

²⁶ The Bengali term ‘vādhā’ means ‘tied at’.

And also,

Save vale Lalon Fakir Hindu ki Yavana
Lalon vale āmāra āmi nā jāni sandhāna (Choudhury 2013: 165)

He did not stop here only; he sang against the casteism, class discrimination, and gender discrimination in his society and said that scripted man makes this manner. He sang on this note—

Eka eka deśe eka eka vāṇī
Pāṭhāna ki sāī guṇamaṇī
Esava mānuṣera racanā jāni
Lalon Fakir kaya (Choudhury 2013: 205)

Or,

Yadi ekai khodāra haya racanā
Tāte to bhinna thāke nā
Mānuṣera sakala racanā
Tāite bhinna haya (Choudhury 2013: 205)

Lalon gains knowledge from the point of divinity. It forgets the validity of rituals and rites that get change in different ages and countries. He is of different community who looks the world from divinity; thinks from the view of absolute equality that abhors being slave to convention sprung from the unreal sense of difference (Roy 2017: 190-191). Lalon with his enlightened knowledge and deeply rooted words, with his melodic powerful voice attacked religious intolerance, caste oppression and superstitious belief—

Jāta vicārī vyābhicārī
Jātira gaurava vāḍi vāḍi dekhālāma ceye
Fakir Lalon vale
Jāta pele jāta poḍātāma āgūna diye (Mannan 2009: 91)

These are not merely songs; they are the spokespersons of the struggle against imperialistic conflicts and the ill practices of the vested interested groups who cultivate to destroy the natural bonding of man. Because these injustices are the cult creations, of the imperialistic religions that divide people and create hatred among each other by oppressing them both intellectually and in their day-to-day livings. That is why he said—

Veda-purāṇe kareche jāri

Yavaner *sāi*²⁷ hindura hari²⁸
Tāo to āmi vujhate nāri
Duirūpa sr̥ṣṭi karalena kī pramāṇa (Khan 2007: 484)

And also,

Jāta valite ki haya bidhāna
Hindu Yavana Bauddha Khr̥ṣṭāna
Jāter āche kibā pramāṇa
Śāstra khūjale (Khan 2007: 484)

However, all these songs prove that the traditional norms of religious sects could not keep straight their backbones in front of Lalon's humanistic philosophy. The reason is that Lalon Fakir is above all the religious rituals. The philosophy of Lalon and his songs being different from the other Indian devotional philosophical traditions stand out and create linkage in the net of the whole world for its propagation of humanity; loving each other unconditionally. In all his life, Lalon Fakir has fought against all odds to find out his *manera mānuṣa*. '*Ei mānuṣe have mādhurya-bhajana/ tāito mānuṣa-rūpa gaṭhalo nirañjana*' (Choudhury 2013: 168) — this concept have proved that he is one of the greatest philosopher in the traditions of Indian humanitarian philosophy. Lalon in his life experienced the changes in our sub-continent, the imperialism of British rulings. He was aware of the incidents that took place during at that period and thus way his songs also represent the images of his time and society. Lalon has worked in the 19th century Bengal and reached out at the peak position of world literature and glittering there like a star. The society that is tormented with the racial hierarchy, religious intolerance, discriminations based on gender and class discrimination has gained from Lalon about the importance of secularism and the message of humanity. He gave the idea of one nation in the backdrop of this divided society. Therefore, he and his songs deal with the great themes as humanity, peace, and fraternity.

At the end, it could be said that in the name of religion our present country as well as the world is inflicted through its hate culture, riots, and lynching which have created chaos and shames among all of us. The incidents that are taking place around the issues of Babri Masjid (Mosque of Babar) and Ram Mandir are painful as well as shameful to us and these horrific incidents are also unacceptable in this civilized world. Every member of each religion is a human but the fundamental arrogance of religions is leading them to intolerance for each other's existence forgetting the

²⁷ Here, '*sāi*' means *Āllāh* (Lord of Muslim community).

²⁸ '*hari*' means one of the deities of Hindu community.

religion of humanity. Without the knowledge of humanity, it is impossible to fight against the sectarian conflict and its oppression in our society: the past could not amend its ways without this, the present is unable to perform for the well-beings of the people without it and the future also would not be able to function without the knowledge of humanity. Therefore, taking all the moral gist of all the religions and creating ideas that are acceptable to all and secular in nature, Lalon Fakir has given us a new path, which is above all the ideas of traditional religions and thus dressing the path, he has set up the flag of humanity. Now, it is time to assemble under this flag of knowledge. And, this would be justifiable to mention that—

*Savāra upare mānuṣa satya, tāhāra upare nāi
Ekasāthe achi, ekasāthe bāci, ājo ekasāthe thākavoi—
Sava vibheder rekhā muche diye sāmyera chavi ākavoi* (Wahab 2016: seven)

That is means— “truth of man is over and above everything/we are together, we live together and we will be together forever—/removes all the differences and draws equatorial images.”

References

- Afroza, Sultana. 1988. *Jatibhed Protha o Bangladesher Baul Somaj*. Kushtia: Folklore Research Institute.
- Brahma, Kumaresh. 1994. *Moromi Byaktittwo Lalon Fakir*. Edited by Tripti Brahma. South 24 Parganas: Sandip.
- Chakraborty, Bikash. 2013. *Baul Jiboner Somajtottwo*. Kolkata: Progressive Publishers.
- Chakravarti, Sudhir. 1998. *Lalon*. Kolkata: Pyapiras Prokashok.
- Choudhury, Abul Ahsan. 1990. *Lalon Shah*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy.
- . 2011. *Lalon Shain*. 2nd. Kolkata: Gangchil.
- Datta, Rajeshwari. 1978. “The Religious Aspect of the Baul Songs of Bengal.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* XXXVII (3): 445-455.
- Ghosal, Nilkantha. 2012. *Hindu-Jat-Pat Padabir Bhobisyat*. Kolkata: Protibhas.
- Haroonuzzaman. 2008. *Lalon*. Dhaka: Adorn Publication.
- Hasan, Jahid. 2012. *Lalon Annason*. Dhaka: Parijat Prakashani.
- Hossain, F.M. Anayet. 2015. “Universal Humanism of Tagore.” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* IV (2): 80-86.
- Khan, Mobarak Hossain. 2007. *Lalan Samagro*. Dhaka: Geetanjali.
- Mannan, Abdel. 2009. *Lalon Darshan*. Dhaka: Rodela Prokashani.
- Mondal, Anirban. 2013. “Lalon, Lalon Geeti and Society: A Humanitarian Socio-Philosophical Discourse.” *The Criterion: An International Journal in English* (12): 1-7.
- Mondal, Anirban. 2015. “Searching for Moner Manush (Man of Heart): Bauls of Bengal and Fakir Lalon Shah.” *Journal of Bengali Studies* IV (1): 58-65.
- Pal, Bashanta Kumar. 2012. *Mahatma Lalon Fakir*. 2nd reprinted. Edited by Abul Ahsan Choudhury. Kolkata: Gangchil.

- Roy, Swapon Kumar. 2017. *Two Mystic Poets: Kabir and Lalon*. Chandigarh: White Falcon Publishing.
- Rushd, Abu. 1990. *Songs of Lalon Shah*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy.
- Sen, Kshitimohan. 1995. *Kabir*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.
- Shil, Partha. 2017-18. "Ek Manobmukhi Somajdorshan: Prosongo Lalon O Lalongiti." *Jadavpur Journal of Philosophy (Darshan Biksa)* (Ebang Mushayera) (2): 156-165.
- Tagore, Rabindra Nath. 1933. *Manusher Dharmo*. Kolkata: Viswa Bharati Gonthonbibhag.
- Wahab, Abdul. 2016. *Jibon-Karma-Samaj*. 2nd reprint. Dhaka: Bangla Academy.
- Wali, Maulavi Abdul. 1898. "On Curious Tenets and Practices of a Certain Class of Faqirs in Bengal." *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*.