

Impact of the Sufism of Bengal on Baul Songs of Haor Region

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Abstract

Bengal Sufism, a broad term referring to the Sufism that significantly impacts the people of Bengal region, greatly influences the mystic and baul songs of haor region of Bangladesh. Vaishnavism or Tantrism, Buddhist Sahajiyas and Islamic Sufism have influenced the people of Bangladesh including the baul devotees though the emergence of Sufism at the end accelerates the impact. According to Edward C. Dimok, "there is abundant use of Sufi technical terminology in the Baul songs." Dr. Mohammad Akhter Hossain, discussing the spiritual consciousness in folk literature of Bengal, directly claims that baul devotees like Lalon Sain, Hason Raja, Shah Abdul Karim, Jalal Uddin Khan and many others were influenced by Sufism. While reading songs of Rashid Uddin, Ukil Munshi, Hason Raja, Jalal Uddin Khan, Shah Abdul Karim, Deen Sharat, Radharaman and others of haor region, elements of Sufism like appreciation of the Creator and the Prophet, importance of the guidance of pir / Murshid, search for the Supreme soul, love with and separation from the love or spiritual Murshid, sympathy for the outcaste and many issues are found. Haor region baul devotees and their songs, which are quite different from bauls of Kushtia and Nadia region, will be analyzed in the light of the Sufism of Bengal (Bengal Sufism). Moreover, some features of Maizbhandari songs, another type of mystic song sung in Chattogram region, resemble with those of baul songs. Both sects have received mystic songs as a medium of devotion and echoed the identical ideas of appreciation of Allah (^{Subhanahu} ~~Oa~~Ta'la), the Prophet and saints or pir in songs. This paper attempts to identify the most influential Sufis or Pirs and their influences on baul devotees of haor regions, discuss the characteristics of Bengal Sufism that are found in baul songs and finally shed light on the shared elements of Sufism in Maizbhandari and baul songs.

Key words

Bengal Sufism, Baul Songs, Maizbhandari, Spirituality, Supreme Soul, Worshipping God

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Introduction

Sufism refers to the mystical dimension of Islam, which, moving away from its rigid doctrinal form, emphasizes self-realization, love, submission, and intense personal devotion as the means of approaching the Almighty (Khan and Talukdar 9). Bengal Sufism indicates a branch of Sufi ideology preached in Bengal that has a great impact on the people of this region. Historically, the people of this land experienced the ideologies of Vaishnavism, Buddhist Sahajiyas, and Islamic Sufism, but the emergence of Sufism at the end accelerated the impact on people’s lives. Specifically, in their songs the mystic poets and baul devotees of Bangladeshi wetland have expressed how greatly they are influenced by the Bengal Sufis, and their baul songs about the Creator, the Prophet, and *Pir* or *Murshid*. They use Sufi terminology to convey their message, which includes the way to achieve the satisfaction of the Almighty and to seek His mercy, in addition to the search for the supreme soul, the body as a microcosm of the universe, both spiritual and physical love, as well as separation, which are at the center of Bauls’ endeavors. Edward C. Dimock comments that “there is abundant use of Sufi technical terminology in the Baul songs” (Karim 282). Dr. Mohammad Akhter Hossain elucidates the spiritual consciousness in folk literature of Bengal and thereby claims that baul devotees like Lalou Sain, Hason Raja, Shah Abdul Karim, Jalal Uddin Khan, and many others were influenced by Sufism.

In addition, a significant resemblance is found between baul songs and Maizbhandari songs, another kind of folk literature and an important literary heritage of Bangladesh. These songs are mainly composed and sung in the Chottogram region. Baul devotees and followers of Maizbhandar have simultaneously received songs

as a medium of devotion and echoed the identical ideas of appreciation of Allah (^{Subhanahu} ~~OaTaTa~~), the Prophet, and saints or *pirs* in songs. Another concern of this paper is to compare the impact of Sufism in both kinds of songs.

Previous research mainly focused on the history and development of Sufi ideology in Bengal, but none of it examined its direct impact on baul songs. This study aims to identify the most inspiring religious masters. The qualitative method is applied to collect data for this research where it is available. Research papers, books, newspaper articles, and online materials have been thoroughly studied, and baul songs of the Haor region have been critically read to sort out the features of Sufism. A few translations of baul songs have been found, and, in most cases, the songs or parts of the songs have been roughly translated solely for the purpose of research.

However, this paper plans to recognize the most influential Sufis or Pirs and their influences on baul devotees of the Haor region, sort out the characteristics of Bengal Sufism that are found in baul songs, and finally compare how the elements of Sufism are treated in Maizbhandari and baul songs.

Literature Review

Bengal Sufism and baul songs of Haor-region are not new terms in academic discussion. Many studies have been conducted on them. Edward C. Dimock focuses on the use of Sufi terminology in Baul songs and comments, “That there was considerable interaction between the Sufis and the Bauls is undeniable” (Karim 282). Muhammad Ismail discusses various traits, orders, and saints of Sufism who had a great impact on the lives of people in Bengal in his PhD thesis titled “Development of Sufism in Bengal.” The dissertation includes the origin and development of Sufism in Islam and the early history of Sufism in Bengal. He discusses the Sufi-saints who came to Bengal from the thirteenth to the twentieth

centuries. Ismail describes the impact of Sufism in Bengal in a separate chapter (Ismail 2). He defines bauls of Bengal and writes, “Bauls of Bengal form a great community. Bauls are a group of people, some of whom are quite stoic and indifferent to the world and some of whom are worldly than stoic. The former ones are called *Udasin* and the late one are called *Grihi*. Different groups of Bauls hold different opinions with regard to the originator of their community. The Bauls are found both among the Muslims and among the Hindus. The originators of the Muslim Bauls are called *faqirs* and those of Hindus are called *Gurus*.” (201-2)

James Fadiman and Robert Frager wrote *Essential Sufism*, which deals with the many faces of Sufism and how life, love, and an open heart are dealt with in Sufism (Fadiman 2). Anne-Helene Trottier describes the fakirs of Bengal. Trottier writes,

“Ever since Islam came to Bengal in the 13th century (and probably earlier, through individual Muslims’ interaction with local bearers of other traditions), it has participated, via a merging of Sufi inputs with vernacular strands of Vaishnavism (Vishnusim), Tantrism, and local folk cuts, in a very rich blend of religious beliefs and practices in the lower strata of society” (Trottier 148).

Imtiaz Ahmed publishes “Sufi & Sufism: A Closer Look at the Journey of Sufis to Bangladesh,” which sheds light on the birth of the Sufis, the arrival and the ordering of the Sufis in Bangladesh, the formation of the state, and the consolidation of Sufism. This paper broadly concentrates on “a lasting impact on the lives of the people.” This paper also interprets Sufis and their order, or *tariqa* (Ahmed 1). Ahmed illustrates,

The first Sufis who had arrived in modern-day Bangladesh, whether Shah Sultan Kamaruddin Rumi from Baghdad (1053 AD) or Maulana Asharfuddin Tawwamah from Bukhara (1282 AD), who settled in Netrokona and Nayaranganj, respectively, were able to impress the locals with their freshness of thought and message of universal love (10).

A Hidden Treasure is a collection of the writings and stories of mystic poets, scholars, and saints. This book deals with female Sufi-saints (Helminski 19). Additionally, there is evidence of female Bauls in the Haor region who share the same Sufism-inspired beliefs. Tahmid Zami writes in ‘Vernacular Sufism’ that

The Sufi poets produced a variety of texts, including translated romances, didactic poems, religious instructions, cosmological expositions, prophetic genealogies, Yogic manuals, and so on. Literature produced by Bengali Muslim authors is not invariably Sufi literature, but the distinction between the Sufi and the non-Sufi, the religious and secular, was not clear-cut in medieval texts. Literary culture among Bengali Muslims was closely tied to the relationship between spiritual master and disciple (Zami 337).

To explain the term Bengali Sufi, he writes, “The term that Bengali Sufi authors mostly used to refer to their spiritual culture was *marifat*, or theophany that involved a certain direct experience of divinity” (337).

In ‘The Contributions of Sufism in Promoting Religious Harmony in Bangladesh’, Masud, Abdullah and Amin write

Sufism has played a vital role in promoting religious harmony in Bangladesh. The Sufis penetrated a new spirit of tolerance, brotherhood, equality, and universal love in this country, so that the masses accepted Islam while Hinduism was deeply affected, as seen in reforming brahmin society. All people irrespective of caste, creed, race, sex, and religion loved the Sufis (Al Masud et al. 118).

They also mentioned the history of Bengali Sufism. While discussing the influences, major sub-topics include the noble characteristics of Sufis, their role in establishing a welfare state, spreading teachings for both Muslims and non-Muslims, participation in humanitarian activities, respect for non-Muslims, open-hearted approaches, and their influence on communal harmony (111). The study by Khan and Talukdar sheds light on the

emergence and growth of Sufism in India's Bengal and Assam regions. "...whether Sufism and its ideals can become useful in promulgating a culture of peace and tolerance in an increasingly polarized and divided society (Khan and Talukdar 9).

William C. Chittick writes in *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* about the Sufi path, the Sufi tradition, name and reality, self-help, the remembrance of God, the way of love, the never-ending dance, images of beatitude, the fall of Adam, and the paradox of the veil. Zami and Ash-Shams write, "The long transition in Bengal Sufism: Onto-Theological Debates and Colonial Margins." In 'The Sufi Sheikhs and their socio-cultural roles in the Islamization of Bengal during the Mughal Period (1526–1858)', Halim writes,

One of the most observable influences of Islam on the Indian subcontinent, especially in today's Bangladesh, is the spiritual and humane teaching of Sufism during the medieval period (Halim 175).

In Bangla *Lokosongite Adhyatmik Chetona* Dr. Mohammad Akhtar Hossain identifies Sufism as the best religious cult that ensures the freedom of human beings. In the first chapter, he discusses the *Oli-Awliya*, or spiritual masters of Bengal. He added that, since the triumph of Ikhtiaruddin Muhammod Bin Bokhtiar Khilji in 1204 BC, the Turkish reign began in Bengal. Since then, *Oli-Darvishes* had started to preach Islam in Bengal. Many devotees came from different areas of Arab, Persian, Bokhara, Turkey, Yemen, Iran, Iraq etc. Hossain writes,

People of Sufi community are known as *Pir*, *Fakir*, and *Darvish* in this country. There are roughly four names for those who want to keep the Sadhana secret. For instance, 1. *Awl* or *Awliya*, *Pir* or first-class devotee. 2. *Baul*, "b + Awl A journey towards the first one. 3. *Sain*, symbol of superiority or God-ness. The word *sain* came from Swami, the husband. 4. *Darvish*. Sufi-saints spend their early lives in rigorous austerities (Hossain 15).

The second chapter of *Bangladesher Baul: Somaj, Sahityo and Sangit*, written by Doctor Anwarul Karim, is entitled “Baul: A mundane spiritual pursuit.” He writes, “They are spiritualists despite being materialistic, so we have termed their philosophy worldly spiritualist ideology” (Karim 261). Haq shows “the influence of the enlightened Sufis who devoted their major efforts to developing the spiritual dimensions of the Bengali minds” (Haq). As Muslim leaders could free marginalized and oppressed people, Sufism, or the light of Islam, became very popular among all people. Another issue is that, due to the duration of the reign and the engagement of all people, the culture was accepted by the people. Sufism had a significant influence on Baul devotees as well. They spread the fragrance of Islam through their songs. The blend of Vaisnavism and Sahajiya in Sufism cannot be denied. As a result, Sufism has an impact on people and their lives.

Miazbhandari is a popular Sufi sect in Bangladesh, primarily in Chattogram. Syed Ahmad Ullah (1826–1906) founded this Sufi sect in Bengal in the early nineteenth century. The tomb of Hazrat Syed Ahmad Ullah is located in the Chittagong region of present-day Bangladesh, at Maizbhandar Darbar Sharif (Matin 34). Sarwar Alam, an international Sufi scholar, expressed his opinion in his article, which names Sufi Pluralism in Bangladesh: The Case of the Maizbhandariyya Tariqa:

The Maizbhandariyya Sufi Order's aims and objectives are as follows: (1) attaining nearness to the Almighty by abandoning mundane self-interests; (2) establishing universal ideals of religious equality by minimizing religious conflicts in the world; (3) motivating humankind toward a true and just life; (4) encouraging humane attributes; (5) ensuring mundane and spiritual well-being; (6) attaining God through love; and (7) establishing personal and social peace (Alam 34).

The aforementioned goals have been reflected in the last nearly 150 years with the publication of approximately 10,000 Maizbhandari songs. Peter J. Bertocci expressed his opinion in his article, named “A Sufi Movement in Modern Bangladesh.”

Over more than a century since its inception, the Maizbhandari movement is said to have produced hundreds of published songs, representing to the ears of the initiated a distinctive lyrical tradition within the genre of indigenous Bengali religious music as a whole” (Bertocci 62). Moreover, he also added Native instruments like the *ektara*, *dutara*, and *dhol*, which are also used in Maizbhandari songs, like Baul songs (61).

In short, the above-discussed review of literature upholds the history of emergence and development of Sufism in Bengal. The Sufi-saints, who came to Bengal at different times, have been conversed with, though the spiritual masters, who dwelt in remote parts of Bengal and hence directly influenced the Baul devotees, did not get equal academic attention. Even the bauls of Bangladesh were separately discussed in different books, but the research gap is that none of them tries to find out the specific influences of the *pirs* upon baul devotees or the search for mystic songs written by them. No research has yet been conducted on the shared elements of Sufism in Maizbhandari and Baul songs, which is another research gap.

Research Questions

This study is conducted to search for the answers to the following research questions:

1. Who are the most influential Sufis or *Pirs*, and what are their influences on Baul devotees in Haor regions?
2. What characteristics of Bengali Sufism are found in baul songs?
3. What are the shared elements of Sufism in Maizbhandari and Baul songs?

Discussion

To define the impact of Bengali Sufism on haor-region baul songs, a list of *pirs* and saints who came to Bengal to preach Islam and Sufism is required. The most significant concern of the paper is to prepare an overall list of *pirs* and to discuss the contribution of spiritual gurus who explicitly enchanted the Baul devotees, which is reflected in their songs. Then, prominent characteristics of Sufism will be discussed, which will be sorted out in baul songs. The final part will compare baul songs with Maizbhandari songs, as there are many similar contents between them. Detailed discussions of these findings are as follows:

Identification of the Sufis or *Pirs* and their Influences on Baul Devotees of Haor regions:

Bangladesh, previously known as Bengal, is greatly influenced by Sufism. The journey of Sufism started in the 8th century though it was hastened after the Turkish conquer in Bangla. Maulana Obaidul Haq author of *Bangladeser Pir Awliyagan* has given the following four names of early Sufi-saints of Bengal who propagated Islam in Bengal before the Turkish conquest: 1. Hazrat Shaikh Abbas Bin Hamza Nishipuri (d. A.D. 900), 2. Hazrat Shaikh Ahmad Bin Muhammad (d. A.D. 952), 3. Hazrat Shaykh Ismail Bin Najd Nishipuri (d. A.D. 975), 4. Shaykh Ibrahim Turki of Murshidabad (d. A.D. 1169)” (Ismail 35).

Ismail discusses many Sufi-saints who came from the earliest to the 20th century. Most noted of them are Shah Muhammad Sultan Rumi (Madanpur in the Netrokona subdivision of Mymensing), Shah Makhдум (Dargahpara, Rajshahi), Shah Jalal, Shah Paran and many others. He also focuses on different orders of Sufism: for instance, the Suhrawardi order, the Chisti order, the Qalandari order, the Madari order, the Ahmadi order, the Sattariya order, the Naqshbandi order and the Qadiri order. These orders defined and

designed the traits of Sufism in Greater Bangla to a great extent. Emdadul Haq writes,

The earliest record of Sufism in Bengal goes back to 11th century AD in connection with the continuation of Sufism in northern India. Shah Sultan Rumi was the first Sufi to come to Bengal, when he came to Mymensingh in 1053 AD. Subsequently, Baba Adam Shah Shahid came to Dhaka in 1119 AD and Shayekh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, more popularly known as Hazrat Shah Jalal, arrived in Sylhet in 1225 AD. The list of names is a lengthy one (Haq).

He mentions the time from 1200 to 1500 AD as the Golden Age of Sufism in Bengal. According to Hossain, in the eighth century, ancient Arabians founded their colony in Chattogram. Chattogram is regarded as the land of *twelve Awliyas*. Most prominent of them are Sultan Bayejid Bostami (R.), Sheikh Farid, Bodor Shah or Bodor *Awliya* or *Pir* Bodor, Kotolpir or *Pir* Kotol, Shah Muhsin *Awliya*, Shahpir, Shahumor, Shah Badol, Shah Chand and Shah Jayed; though these *Awliyas* did not come to Chattogram at a time (19). Dr. Hossain writes,

Not only Chittagong but also the entire part of Bangladesh was enlightened with the light of Marifat of Shah Bodor. The impact was immense among poets and litterateurs. In regards of the preach, spread and Sufi devotion in Bangladesh, the contribution of Hazrat Shah Jalal (R) and Hazrat Shah Poran (R) of Sylhet region is worth-mentioning. Being inspired with their religious ideals, devotional music was developed in this country. Fakir Lalon Shah, Poet Pagla Kanai, Shah Abdul Karim, Dewan Hason Raja, Jalal Uddin Khan enriched this stream to a great extent (Hossain 20).

Hossain directly asserts the influence of Sufism upon greatest mystic poets of Bangladesh. To focus on the ideals of Sufism which attracted people's attraction, he adds,

The secular culture of Bengal is characterized by its richness, harmony, spiritual philosophy and universality. Mystical pursuits and music associated with folk life add a different dimension to this culture. In this spiritual climate, Lalon Shah (1774-1890), Radharaman (1834-1916), Hason Raja (1855-1922) and Jalal Khan (1894-1972) are saints and artists with a combination of aesthetics and art (44).

Historically, the Turkish conquer hastens and paves the way of the arrival of Sufi-saints. But even before their arrival, many saints came to this subcontinent and had direct influence upon the life of people. In 11th century, Shah Sultan Kamaruddin Rumi (R) came to Greater Mymensingh, specifically in Madanpur, Netrokona Sadar, Netrokona. He is considered the first Sufi who came to Bengal and spread the light of Islam and Sufism. Then Shah Jalal, Shah Poran, Shah Makhdum, and many other saints came to Bengal. They had many followers, and even followers of these *Pirs* or Sufis became *pir* and preach Islam. Noted information is that the area, enlightened by Shah Sultan Kamaruddin Rumi (R), is blessed with many mystic poets: the list must include Rashid Uddin, Jalal Uddin Khan, Ukil Munshi, Abdul Mazid Talukder, and many others. In their songs, elements of Sufism are vivid.

The concentration of this paper is not only the Sufis who came to Bangla and influenced people but also those Sufi-saints who directly impacted the mystic poets of Bangladeshi wetland. Rashid Uddin is the most prominent mystic poet and the maestro of nearly all bauls in the Haor regions. Rashid Uddin was profoundly impacted by Majjub *Pir*, who appeared in Netrokona in 1909. He originated in Kotiadi, Kishorgonj. Rashid Uddin became a follower of the *pir* and participated in *zikr*. Rashid Uddin abruptly fled his home after the loss of his first child. The pilgrimage to the shrine had a significant impact on Rashid Uddin's spiritual pursuits and Baulattva practice. In 1928, when another baul poet, Jalal Uddin Khan, came to know

about the departure of Rashid Uddin, he tried to find him out (Dayen 15). Md Nurul Islam writes,

In his twenties, he was committed to Majjub Pir, who came from Kotiadi. Basically, Majjub *Pir* is his spiritual guru. From him, he got detailed ideas about mysticism, spirituality, and theories. Thus, through perseverance, he established himself as a baul (90).

Ukil Munshi was another of the greatest mystic poets of the Haor region. Ukil Munshi was a follower of *Pir* Mojaffar Ahmad of Richi village in Habigonj district (Kabir 17, 21; Rahman 69-70; Sarkar 63-64). Being a strict follower of Sufism, he did not even allow anyone to take a single photograph. Astounding information about him is that, despite being a baul poet, he was a very popular Imam of the mosque and was invited to offer the prayer to Almighty Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{Oa Ta'la}) for someone's salvation and peace. It is rare in this region to carry on both religious practice and fascination for music.

Shah Abdul Karim, another greatest baul devotee of Sunamgonj, received his first lesson on music from Koromuddin. Koromuddin, a devotee of music, sang devotional songs by playing *dotara*, a two-string musical instrument. At a time, after being suggested by many people, Karim went to Moula Box, a devotional teacher. Karim became a disciple of Moula Box and stayed a few days with the *pir*. He was a supporter of anti-communism but also drew inspiration from Sufism. After the death of *Pir* Moula Box in 1951, he went to *Pir* Ibrahim Mostan of Shreepur village, Bishwonath Upazila, Sylhet. In-depth theological understanding and explanation of the *pir* inspired Karim to become a disciple. He wrote in a song: "Murshid Moula Box Munshi/ I know him with faith/ I acknowledge Ibrahim Mostan/ as my *pir*" (Das 20).

Jalal Uddin Khan is a very popular and well-known baul poet of Netrokona.

He became a disciple of *Pir* Syed Abdul Quddus of Akurdandi village in Chattogram; Jalal Khan gained

knowledge of the hidden mysteries of the spiritual world by taking bayat to this *murshid*, who was a follower of Sufism. Jalal Uddin Khan dedicated his book, *Visva-Rahasya*, to *murshid* Syed Abdul Quddus (Hossain 49).

In the introductory part of *Jalalgitika Samagra* titled ‘Bangla Kabitar Muldhara O Jalal Uddin Khan,’ Jatin Sarkar adds,

He became of a follower of *Pir* Syed Abdul Quddus of Akubdandi village in Chittagong. He dedicated his prose book named *Visva-Rahasya* to this *pir*. Jalal’s discipleship of this follower of Sufism brought a new dimension in his thinking and hence, his secular religious ideology was accelerated (Part 7).

It should be mentioned that Syed Abdul Quddus was the Caliph of Gausul Azam Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari. Since the spiritual guru of Jalal Khan was a *khalifa* of Maizbhandari, the influence of Maizbhandari sect cannot be denied upon Jalal Khan, rather he was greatly impacted by these sages and spiritual saints at different times of his life. Rob Newaj Khokon confirms about the *Pir* of Jalal Uddin Khan in his writing. Khokon adds that Jalal Uddin Khan started his primary education in a village madrasa. Maulana Mirash Uddin was his inspiration. Some people believe, Ramkrishna Sadhu was the devotional master of Jalal Uddin Khan. But he took the oath of allegiance with *Pir* Syed Abdul Quddus.

The impact of Sufism is found in the songs of Hason Raja though the explicit name of any *pir* is not found. In the introduction to *Hason Rajar Gan*, Abul Ahsan Chowdhury writes, “Hason Raja (1855-1922) is the most prominent representative of the world of bhab and mystic songs” (7). He adds,

The search for the ultimate man, the favor of the creator, the impermanence of the world-life, the illusion of the world, and the reluctance-inability of the ecstatic man to worship are mainly reflected in his songs (Chowdhury 9).

Chowdhury clarifies whether Hason Raja follows any specific order. He writes,

It is not clear which path he followed. There is no mention of Guru in his Padavali. Some believe that he was a saint of the Chishtiya sect. Although Sufism inspired and influenced his music and philosophy, he may not have been a full believer in this view.... There is no doubt that a mixed Sadhana-philosophy influence was behind his music (11).

Deen Sharat, despite being a Hindu, wrote Eslam Sangeet, Islamic songs. His songs focus on creation, angels, the day of judgement and other things. But who inspired his Islamic ideology is not directly found. Abdul Mazid Talukder is a politically conscious Baul poet who wrote songs on bauldom, Murshidi, Marifoti and many others.

Sanjoy Sarker mentions that *Pirs* were present in different programs where baul songs were sung. He provides a list of residence and Khankah of *Pirs* of Netrokona where bauls met to have gossips and conversations. The list includes the names of the then *Pirs*: *Pir* Asmot Ali Shah of Letirkanda village of Purbodhola Upazila and Niskin Shah of Komolpur village of Mohongonj Upazila (53). He asserts, many bauls got ideas about various theories when they listened to the *Pirs*.

In addition, there are many *Pirs* in the wetland part of Bangladesh who had great influence on many other mystic poets. This study concentrates only on the most prominent mystic poets who are distinguished by their own identity, distinct writing style, and depth of themes.

Characteristics and Impact of Bengal Sufism as Found in Baul Songs of Haor-region

The characteristics of Bengal Sufism will be sorted out for clarification, and simultaneously, examples of these features will be discussed herewith, as these Sufi-influenced baul songs are the

direct harvest of the spread of Sufism. The greatest bauls of the Haor region, like Hason Raja, Rashid Uddin, Jalal Uddin Khan, Ukil Munshi, Shah Abdul Karim, Abdul Mazid Talukdar, Deen Sharat, and many others, are directly and indirectly influenced by Sufism, which has been revealed through their songs.

In *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*, Fred W. Clothey wrote that

Sufis followed ten basic principles to popularize Islam in India. 1. Repentance was to be done in several stages and included an emptying of self-orientation [...] 10. submission to the Divine will (Clothey 135).

While reading the songs of mystic poets of Bangladeshi wetland, many elements of Sufism are found in their songs; they are appreciation of the Creator and the prophet, importance of the guidance of *pir/murshid*, search for the Supreme soul, love with and separation from the spiritual *murshid* and so on.

The following discussion interprets the major characteristics of Sufism that are found in baul songs written by baul-devotees from haor region.

Appreciation of God, the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Merciful and Kind

Baul devotees of the Haor region have acknowledged the greatness of God and His sovereignty in their songs. His merciful and kind characteristics are also emphasized. Even though it is explicitly and often recognized that God is the ultimate salvation. Dr. Hossain writes in the introduction that “Allah, the Prophet, and the Pir- love for these three entities are the basics of Sufism.” So, the holy place of the creator is prioritized even in mysticism. Rashid Uddin writes,

“To whom will I talk except you, the merciful?
O the kind, the merciful.” (Dayen 88)²

² The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:
“আমি দয়াল গুরু বিনে গো কইব কথা কার সনে॥

Abdul Mazid Talukder discusses the secret presence of God among humans. He writes,

“God is in disguise-
You couldn’t identify Him.
Kader Sobhani
Is in disguise in you.” (Mostafa 99)³

Rashid Uddin was grateful to the merciful God. To express the power of Bismillah, he writes,

“O Mumin, you’ll be benefitted one day if you utter Bismillah
Nineteen letters of Bismillah are a surety from the hell.
In the beginning of the Quran, Alif, Lam and Mim are written.”
(Dayen 70)⁴

Rashid Uddin urges others to utter the greatness of Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa’la}) and hence writes, “Read Al Hamdu Lillahe, Rabbil Alamin” (Dayen 70)⁵. The Arabic sentence says, read that all praise goes to Allah, the great Lord.

Hason Raja, a mystic poet of Sunamgonj, spent the later part of his life by praising God and doing religious activities. He claims that the creator has made him a mystic poet. He says,

“Who is it that turned me into a Baul
Who made me a baul?
He who did make me a Baul is my lord.” (Chowdhury 210)

Hason Raja finds Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa’la}) inside and outside his self. He writes,

“I see only the Most Merciful inside me
and outside too.” (Chowdhury 210)

দয়াল গো ।”

³ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“গোপনে রইয়াছে খোদা-
তারে চিনি।
আপে গোপন রইয়াছে-
কাদের সোবহানি ।”

⁴ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“গুনরে মমিন, বিছমিল্লা পড়লে ফল পাইবে একদিন।
বিছমিল্লার উল্লিখিত হরফ দোযখের জাবিন।
কোরানেতে প্রথম লেখা আলিফ, লাম আর মীম ।”

⁵ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আল হামদু লিল্লাহে পড় রাব্বিল আলামীন ।”

Hason believes that to be a lover is to find God. He asserts,

“If you are a lover, you will find God, O mind.

If you are a lover, you will find God.

And if you want to get God-

Increase your relationship with him.” (Raja 181)⁶

Shah Abdul Karim seeks mercy to the Almighty God. He writes,

“The most kind and compassionate you are

Have mercy on me; forgive me

You are the great Lord....

Please keep me under the shadow of your feet

Don’t just throw me away

If you become my own, Karim doesn’t want anything.”

(Haroonuzzaman Shah Abdul Karim 27)

Hason Raja is afraid of the distance between God and him. To eliminate the distance, he urges,

“Don’t stay away from Allah, don’t remember Hason Raja but only Allah

Don’t stay away from Allah.

See nothing in the heart’s eye but Allah

Keep nothing but Allah in mind.” (Raja 135)⁷

Abdul Mazid Talukder announces the greatness of Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa’la}) and says that he will leave everything only to utter the name of Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa’la}). He writes,

“I’ll be a beggar by the name of Allah

⁶ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“খোদা মিলে প্রেমিক হইলে, রে মন,

খোদা মিলে প্রেমিক হইলে।

আর যদি খোদা ধরতে চাও-

তার সনে পিরিতি বাড়িও।”

⁷ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আল্লা ছাড়িয়ে থাকিও না, আল্লা বিনে হাছন রাজায় মনে রাখিও না

আল্লা ছাড়িয়ে থাকিও না।

আল্লা বিনে দিলের চক্ষে কিছু দেখিও না।

আল্লা বিনে আর কিছু মনে রাখিও না।”

Leaving the works of the world.

I'll only utter

The name of kind Allah.” (Mostafa 81)⁸

Ukil Munshi writes about the return to God after death. He writes,

“Four bearers will take me

In three-hand house.

Ukil says, if I go to father's house,

I'll never return here.” (Ullah, “Three Baul Songs” 13)

Ullah explains these lines,

In Muslim society, when one dies, he is carried on a bier or Khatli which is carried by four bearers. The house of three feet indicates the grave and the size refers to the grave size of the Muslim. Munshi's direct name is present in the song, but he is speaking in the voice of a woman (Ullah 73).

Shah Abdul Karim addresses Allah (^{Subhanahu} ~~Oa~~ Ta'la) as the kindest and urges to make him free from the trap of earthly illusion. He writes,

“The helpless cries by addressing you as the kind

O kind, free me

I am trapped in illusion.

You're the lord of the world

You belong to everyone

I pray to you

Let me get you in last time.” (Das 109)⁹

⁸ The quoted extract is author's own translation from original Bengali text:

“আল্লাহর নামে ফকির হব-রে,

ছাড়িয়া দুনিয়ার কাম।

হরদমে লইব কেবল

দয়াল আল্লাজীর নাম।”

⁹ The quoted extract is author's own translation from original Bengali text:

“দয়াল বলে যাকে তোমায় কাঙালে

মুক্ত করে দাও গো দয়াল

বন্দী আছি মায়াজালে॥

তুমি যে হও জগৎস্বামী

তুমি সবার অন্তর্যামী

এই আবেদন করি আমি

পাই নে অন্তিমকালে।”

Hason Raja cannot leave God, rather he will stay on the feet. He urges to “become one” with God (Chowdhury 219). He writes,

“I cannot leave You my Friend to go anywhere else
I hold on to Your feet, this is my heart’s desire
If I had to leave You, I could not stay alive
I could not leave You for a moment.” (Chowdhury 218-9)

Abdul Mazid Talukder expresses his dependence upon Allah. He writes,

“O kind Allah-
My dependence is upon your holy name.
By which name I should call you
To get your affection.” (Mostafa 75)¹⁰

Hason Raja is helpless in the ocean of life. Hence, he prays to Allah (Subhanahu OaTa’la) to take him to the shore. He writes

“O Allah (Subhanahu OaTa’la), in the ocean of bhava, take me across.
Falling at the depth of river, I call you.
He has no roots in such a bank-less river.
I, an unfortunate, don’t know how to swim.” (Raja 137)¹¹

This inability to swim indicates that without the help of God, nobody can lead their life in the earth and afterlife.

Thus, uncountable examples from wetland baul songs can be presented to substantiate where mystic poets promote the greatness of merciful Allah (Subhanahu OaTa’la), who is the ultimate source and inspiration of Sufism, the creator of humans and the world.

Appreciation of the Prophet

¹⁰ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“ওগো দয়াল আল্লা-
তোমার পাক নামে ভরসা আমার ।
আমি কোন নামে ডাকিলে দয়াল
পাবো গো তোমার দিদার ।”

¹¹ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আল্লা ভব সমুদ্রে, তরাইয়া লও মোরে ।
পড়িয়া দরিয়ার পাকে ডাকি হে তোমারে॥
এমন অকূল দরিয়া কূল নাই তার ।
আমি অভাগিয়া আর জানি না সাঁতার ।”

According to the Islamic theology, Prophet Muhammad (^{Peace Be Upon Him.}) is the last prophet and messenger of God who is considered as the ultimate *murshid* or savior or teacher of humanity. Sufis tend to believe that without the advocacy of this prophet, no one can cross the *pulsirat* in the day of judgment and get access to the heaven. The prophet is the ultimate savior of mankind. The prophet is celebrated in many baul songs. Rashid Uddin writes,

“Today in the desert blooms the flower
The bee and the bulbul flew eagerly. (Dayen 72)¹²

Rashid Uddin urges the prophet to help him cross the Pulsirat. He writes,

“Cross me, dear prophet
The bridge of Pulsirat in the dark night of Akhirat
You’re the boatman of all’s boat, the bank in the banklessness
You’re air, you’re ore, you’re the mast.” (Dayen 83)¹³

Ukil Munshi addresses the prophet as the advocate for mankind. He writes,

“You are the king of the world, the guarantor of the Ummah
Khatemun Nabin” (Rahman 82)¹⁴.

Munshi announces that the heart should not make any delay to visit the land of the prophet. He writes, “Oh heart, if you want to go to the domain of the prophet, please come” (Rahman 83)¹⁵.

¹² The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“মরুতে আজ ফুটল কুসুম বাজিল ভেরী
ভ্রমর বুলবুল হইয়া আকুল আসিল উড়ি।”

¹³ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আমায় পার কর রাসুল॥
আখেরাতে আধাঁররাতে ফুলসেরাতের পুল
তুমি সবার নায়ের মাঝি, অকূলেতে কূল
তুমি হাওয়া তুমি বাদাম হও নায়ের মাঞ্চল।”

¹⁴ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“দীন দুনিয়ার বাদশা তুমি, উম্মতের জামিন
খাতেমুন নবীন।”

¹⁵ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“নবীজির খাসমহলে যাবে যদি আয়রে মন।”

Shah Abdul Karim says to “sail the boat carefully” and to keep “the name of Allah (Subhanahu ʾAla) and the Prophet” in heart while sailing (Das 121)¹⁶. Abdul Mazid Talukder requests that the people strengthen the friendship with the prophet. He writes,

“Increase your affection with the prophet.

To save the followers in the day of judgement

The prophet will often utter- O my followers, My Ummati.”

(Mostafa 77)¹⁷

Talukder cautions people about not forgetting two names:

“Don’t forget two names-

Names of Allah (Subhanahu ʾAla) and the Prophet.” (Mostafa 95)¹⁸

Thus, baul songs celebrate the dignity of the prophet and through baul songs, devotees seek the help and guidance of the prophet which is one of the basic ideals of Sufism.

Importance of the guidance of *Pir / Murshid*

Pir, Awliya or spiritual teacher plays a great role in Sufism. To get God and the Prophet, *pir* or *murshid* is a must. *Pir* or *Murshid* works as a medium to reach God and the Prophet. Though according to many scholars, the prophet is the ultimate *murshid*, the savior of mankind, after the death of the prophet, *pir* or *awliya* plays a significant role of preaching the light of Islam and Sufism. To get guidance and proper direction in terms of leading their lives in the earth and to get salvation and support to cross the *pulsirat* in the day

¹⁶ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“বাইও সাবধান হইয়া

আল্লা নবীর নাম রে মাঝি ভাই স্মরণ রাখিয়া ।”

¹⁷ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“নবীর সনে বাড়াও পিরিতি ।

রোজ হাসরেতে উম্মত তরাইতে,

নবীজী বলবেন কেবল “উম্মতি” ।”

¹⁸ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আল্লাহ-নবীর দুইটি নাম-

ভুইলনা, ভুইলনা, ভুইলনা-রে ।”

of judgment, people tend to love *pir* or *murshid*. Shah Abdul Karim expresses his deep faith in the Murshid. He writes,

“Kind Murshid, without you
Who do I have?
Trusting in your name
I swim in the ocean.” (Das 110)¹⁹

Abdul Mazid Talukder writes,

“O kind Murshid-
Anchor your boat at this dock.
By anchoring your boat at this dock-
Kindly take me.” (Mostafa 112)²⁰

Jalal Uddin Khan writes,

“Murshid, my teacher and treasure, how can I get your vision
I am always looking forward to seeing you.” (Sarkar 328)²¹

Jalal Khan writes, “Who is there in your world without Guru?” (Sarkar 330)²². This Guru is none but the *murshid* himself.

Shah Abdul Karim says,

“Would like to go to Murshid’s love-bazar?
If you are to go, don’t delay then
Let’s go in the morning.” (Haroonuzzaman Shah Abdul Karim 35)

¹⁹ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“দয়াল মুর্শিদ, তুমি বিনে
কে আছে আমার
তোমার নামে ভরসা করে
অকূলে দিলাম সাঁতার।”

²⁰ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“দয়াল মুর্শিদ গো-
এই ঘাটে লাগাও তোমার নাও।
এই ঘাটে লাগাইয়া নাও-
আমার লইয়া যাও॥”

²¹ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“মুর্শিদ আমার মৌলা ধন কেমনে পাইব তোমার দরশন
দেখবার আশায় আমি সদায় থাকতে আছি উচাটন।”

²² The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“গুরু বিনে আপন কেবা আছে তোর সংসারে”

While focusing on the help of spiritual teacher to get relief from turmoil in the Day of Judgment and even on earth from worldly sufferings, Shah Abdul Karim writes, “You’ll reach ashore if you get *murshid*” (Haroonuzzaman Shah Abdul Karim 49). According to him, complete submission towards “*Murshid’s* feet” is the only way of human salvation (49).

Thus, the importance of *murshid*’s guidance is depicted in haor-region baul songs. The *murshid* or Sufi-saint or *pir* occupy a very prestigious position in Sufi ideology.

In addition, not only love for *murshid* is expressed in baul songs but also any kind of apparent separation or distance from the spiritual *murshid* is also discussed in songs. The spiritual teachers are loved by people without any hesitation. But sometimes they experience a kind of distance due to lack of religious practice and depth of faith. Ukil Munshi’s *pir* was *Pir Mojaffar Ahmad* but for some reasons, Munshi had to experience a kind of distance. The *pir* got disturbed with him. In this circumstance, Munshi addresses himself as “unfortunate” and writes,

“O southern wind
O wind
My friend’s house is in the southern part
He has never returned to me for what fault of this unfortunate?
Many people from this and that land come and go.” (Ullah, “Three Baul Songs,” 13)

In this song, apparently Ukil Munshi talks about someone living in the southern part with whom he was in love with but right now, there is no communication between them. It is measured from the house of Ukil Munshi, the house of *Pir Mojaffar Ahmad* will be at the southern part. Munshi cries for the apparent separation from his spiritual *Murshid*. (Ullah “Passivity” 73)

Repenting for Misdeeds and Emptying of Self-orientation

The common nature of religious people influenced by Sufism is that they always repent for their sin and cry for the mercy of Allah.

Hason Raja spent his early days of his life in different fruitless and vain works. Hence, he cries,

“Neither I utter the name of Allah

Nor did the things He suggested

Hason Raja spent his days in fruitless works.” (Raja 126)²³

Thus, repenting for misdeeds is a great sign of Sufism which is found in mystic songs.

Practicing Basic Orders of Islam

Practicing the basic orders of Islam is the fundamental work of Sufism. Baul songs focus on the basic rituals of Islam. *Namaj* or Prayer is the most prominent of them. Hason Raja urges to offer Prayer and says,

“Offer the prayer, offer the prayer, say the prayer, O faithful brother

Offer the prayer attentively and heartily.

Offer the prayer with attention and ultimate dependence

Know that Lord Allah (^{Subhanahu} ~~OaTa~~’la) is in front of you.” (Raja 213)²⁴

Purity of Heart

Shah Abdul Karim focuses on the purity of heart. Without this purification, no one can get the love of Allah. He writes,

“Learning *elim* does not make you a scholar

If not practiced

If the body and mind are pure

The lamp of faith burns.” (Das 113)²⁵

²³ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“আমি না লইলাম আল্লাজীর না।

না কইলাম তার নাম।

বৃথা কাজে হাছন রাজায় দিন গুয়াইলাম।”

²⁴ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“নমাজ পড় নমাজ পড় ভাই মমিন নমাজ পড়।

এক মনে পড়িও নমাজ চিত্ত করিয়ে দড়॥

কাতর হইয়া নমাজ পড়িও এক মনে।

মাবুদ আল্লা জানিও যে তোমার সামনে॥”

²⁵ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

Search for the Supreme soul

Jalal Uddin Khan tries to find out the trace of the Supreme soul or the existence of God. He writes,

“O my Lord
Do I know where you are?
I found no trace of yours while being present
So much of harassment I had to undergo!” (Haroonuzzaman Jalal Uddin Khan 47)

Search for Humanity and Prioritizing Mankind over Religion

There are many religions and beliefs, but at the core, all are humans. Sufism does advocacy for humanity and prioritizes mankind over any kind of religion. Shah Abdul Karim writes,

“Why is the controversy about these
Some are Hindu and some are Muslim
You are human and I am human
All are children of one mother.
The Creator is one
He is not an enemy, rather he belongs to everyone
Birth and death at his will
He is the soul of all souls.” (Das 132)²⁶

Similar message is found from Abdul Mazid Talukder. He writes,

“We will work together

“এলিম শিখলে আলেম হয় না

আমল না হলে।

দেহমন পবিত্র হলে,

ইমানের বাতি জ্বলে।”

²⁶ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“এই সব নিয়ে দ্বন্দ্ব কেন

কেউ হিন্দু কেউ মুসলমান

তুমি মানুষ আমিও মানুষ

সবাই এক মায়ের সন্তান॥

সৃষ্টিকর্তা সবার একজন

শত্রু নয় সে সবার আপন

তার ইচ্ছাতে জন্ম-মরণ

সে যে সবার প্রাণের প্রাণ।”

Both Hindus and Muslims with hand in hand.” (Mostafa 354)²⁷
Jalal Uddin Khan writes,

“Either Hindu or Muslim, or Shakto, Buddhist or Christian
Everyone is equal in the eyes of God in the judgment of sin.”
(Islam 255)²⁸

Komol Shah, another baul poet, writes,

“While thinking about it, everyone is equal- either a Hindu or a Muslim

When it comes to caste, I see, everyone is equal.” (Islam libid.)²⁹

Thus, human beings are given the highest priority in Sufism, which is reflected in baul songs.

The heart is commonly regarded as the central organ of the human body and is believed to house the Divine essence within individuals. It can be referred to as a microcosm within the larger microcosm that is the human body. Hans quoted it from an ancient Maizbhandari song writer, Aliullah

“The Qur'an is inside the heart.

Behold it with your eyes and recite.” (195)

Ramesh Shil announced in his Maizbhandari song,

“Give up the worship of earthen idols and worship man.

Seven continents and eighteen worlds are inside man” (Ramesh Shil)

Gafur Hali, another well-known Maizbhandari song writer, expresses his strong belief in the unity of religions in Maizbhandari philosophy. (220)

²⁷ The quoted extract is author's own translation from original Bengali text:

“এক সাথে কাজ করিবো

মিলে হিন্দু মুসলমান।”

²⁸ The quoted extract is author's own translation from original Bengali text:

“হিন্দু কিবা মুসলমান, শাক্ত বৌদ্ধ খৃষ্টিয়ান

বিধির কাছে সবাই সমান পাপ পুণ্যের বিচারে।”

²⁹ The quoted extract is author's own translation from original Bengali text:

“ভাবতে গেলে সবাই সমান কে হিন্দু কে মুসলমান

জাত বিচারে গেলে পরে ভেবে দেখি সবাই সমান।”

“Unity of religions Kaba, Kashi and Vrindavan are the living places of that man

Gafur says, Recognize and catch that man as long as there is time.”

The Shared Elements of Sufism in Maizbhandari and Baul Songs

Another significant aim of this research is to identify the similarities between Maizbhandari and baul songs. Maizbhandari songs are sung in Chattogram areas of Bangladesh while baul songs are popular in two distinct areas of Bangladesh: Kushtia region and the haor-region. These two regions are far from the tropical land of Chattogram. Despite this geographical distance, there are many similarities between these two different kinds of songs. The initial part of the paper is about Baul devotees and their songs and there is no discussion of the greatest poet of Maizbhandari. Ramesh Shil is one of the early 20th-century’s musicians of Maizbhandari tradition, who composed about 350 Maizbhandari songs praising the tariqa, Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari, and Syed Golam Rahaman Maizbhandari. The songs of Shil had been published in nine volumes titled *Ashekmala*, *Shantibhandar*, *Muktir Darbar*, *Nure Duniya*, *Jibansathi*, *Satyadarpan*, *Bhandare Maula*, *Manab Bandhu*, and *Eshke Sirajia*. There are many similarities between the songs of Maizbhandari and Baul. The similarities are as follows:

Music and Songs as a Medium of Devotion and Worship

Devotees and disciples of both Maizbhandari and Baul receive music and songs as a medium of devotion and worship. Both Maizbhandari and baul songs deal with the creator, prophet and spiritual masters; consider the prophet as the leader who can save them from the fire of the hell and receive music and songs as a medium of devotion and worship. Rahman writes, “The medium of devotees of mysticism is song” (23). In *Maijbhandari Gan: Bangla Songiter Ekti Byatikrom Dhara*, the author writes, “Maijbhandari song is a mystical song sung by the followers of Maijbhandari genre.” He adds,

Maijbhandari songs are usually composed in the style of Pir.” Thus, it is clear that both kinds of songs focus on the orders of Islam. Hans asserted that Maijbhandari songs employ a wide range of communicative patterns. The most common of these is a direct address to a Maijbhandari saint or pir. Maijbhandari songs are composed by the bhakta, not by the saint (Harder 191).

Both types of songs deal with the creator, prophet and spiritual masters, also known as *pir* or *murshid*. Both consider the prophet as the leader who can save them from the punishment of the hell.

Anti-communal Concept

Anti-communalism or secularism is patronized in both Maizbhandari and Baul songs. Islam writes, “Bauls are believers of secularism or anti-communalism” (libid.). Many songs focus on that idea. Similarly, Maizbhandari songs also represent secular idea where other beliefs and religions are not hampered. Dr. Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury writes in ‘Maijbhandari Dorshon o Osamprodayik Dhormo Chetona’ that “Maijbhandar today is a gathering place for countless devotees, a great pilgrimage site, irrespective of caste and religion. There are many methods of Marifot or spiritual pursuits in Islam. The core of the tariqa followed in Maizbhandar sharif (Soul 264) is love and devotion. So, there is no caste-religion-sectarian distinction here. All who come here are travelers on the path of love and devotion; All are one and all are equal. Maizbhandar is a wonderful synthesis of love and devotion.”

Representation of folk culture

Both types of songs represent folk literary-cultural heritage of Bangladesh. Maizbhandari song is one of the accessories of our Chattogram and native culture. Although the Maizbhandari song was composed in the style of *pir awliya*, its Sufi philosophy and spiritualism have enriched the repertoire of our folk culture above all. Even baul songs are a popular form of folk literature. The theory of the body is unique in India, particularly Bengal. Songs and other

literature expressed it. Human bodies are thought to reflect God. Baul, Vaishnava, and other regional philosophical developments reflect these theories. Because many Maizbhandari song writers are fakirs and folk singers, they have contributed to local body theory. Many Sufis practice specific body movements. Thus, global Sufi orders influence. Example: breathing. Maolana Hadi, a notable Maizbhandari, wrote a song about breathing:

“O mind, chant La Ilaha Illallah in every breathing.” (Awal 33)³⁰

Hans Harder, a world-renowned Maizbhandari research scholar, asserted that “Some of the contents and motifs of sufi literature is still in full sway in Maizbhandari songs and other genres of mystical songs like bāul gān, Hāsan Rājār gān, etc” (Harder 325).

Conclusion

This study shows the emergence, development and impact of Sufism in overall Bengal, simultaneous focus is given on the distinguished *Pirs* or Sufi-saints who directly influenced the mystic poets of Bangladeshi wetland. This research examines different baul songs in the light of Sufism and identifies the characteristics of Sufism. Final section analyzes the similarities between Maizbhandari and baul songs. Both types of songs deal with the devotion and worship of God, prioritizes anti-communalism and represents the heritage of enriched folk culture. These findings of the paper will open scopes for further researches on many other aspects of Sufism, Baul Songs and Maizbhandari songs. Jalal Uddin Khan’s *pir saheb* was Syed Abdul Quddus Yakubdundhi who was the Caliph of Gausul Azam Syed Ahmadullah Maizbhandari, so Jalal Uddin was influenced by the Maizbhandari sect. Devotees of both groups are regarded as religious sects. Further research will pave the way for discovering different windows of thought, philosophy, and devotional actions.

³⁰ The quoted extract is author’s own translation from original Bengali text:

“দমে দমে জপ রে মন লা ইলাহা ইল্লাল্লাহ।”

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