



MANOSA GAAN

1st Report

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under
Scheme for "Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage"

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1st REPORT

'MANOSA GAAN'

The tress of the ever flowing stream of joy and sorrow of social and individual life of Man is found in the reflection of folk culture. Men preserve the comparison of their lifestyle in traditional practice since ages. These kinds of works are spread all over the world like precious gems. These gems take their polished and decorated shape when they get the touch of developed civilization. The culture for a community takes form. Hence, it cannot be denied that the materials for any developed and pure culture are all derived from traditional culture.

Likewise the geographic variations of Bengal, its varied folk culture is also known by all. The cultural practice of several cults and sub cults of folk forms like 'Bhaadu', 'Tusu', 'Jhumur', 'Kobigaan', 'Jaarigaan', 'Saarigaan', 'BolaanGaan', 'Tarja', 'Paanchaali', 'Gombhira', 'Aalkaap', 'Leto', 'Bhaandjatra', 'Ashtak', 'Bonobibir Pala', 'Bhatiyali', 'Baul', 'Kirtan', 'Raybeshe', 'Chhou' and many more are shining bright in all over Bengal. However, the most important phase of this traditional culture is the age of 'MangalKaavya' in Bengal. In this very phase the cultural and social system and structure of Bengal faces some vital and novel changes.

The Shattering and Reconstruction of Society as a Consequence of the Turk Invasion

The historical analysis of India shows that from the ancient ages, races of foreign land and religion have invaded this land. Sometimes they have robed the country as their wish. After conquering and robbing village after village, region after region; they have returned to their own country or have moved on to conquer some other land. On the other hand, some races have come here for loots but have stayed here forever. They have mingled with the society, religion and culture of India. Those races have no separate existence left now. However, the Turk invasion added a different historical backdrop in India. The religion of desert, Islam, was so well constructed, strong and structural that it managed to maintain its individuality even after plunging into the ocean of Hinduism. The two most gigantic religions and cultures of the world stood face to face for the first time. The beginning was, obviously, not quite friendly; it was the

battle of enmity between two warriors. One side fought to defend its power while the other tried with heart and soul to conquer the same.

The historical account of Bengal in almost two centuries after the victory of Bakhtiar Khilji is as follows:

1. Bengal under the ministers of Khiljis (1203 – 1229)
 - a) Ikhtiyar Uddin-Bin Bakhtiyar Khilji (1203 – 1209)
 - b) Alauddin Ali Mardan (1206 – 1213)
 - c) Giyasuddin Iwaj Khilji (1213 – 1229)
2. Bengal under the Sultans of Delhi (1229 – 1341)
 - a) Reign of Mamlak (1229 – 1289)
 - b) Reign of Balban (1289 – 1341)
3. Bengal under IliyasShahi Dynasty: 1st Phase (1342 – 1412)
 - a) Shamsuddin Iliyas Shah (1342 – 1358)
 - b) Sikandar Shah (1358 – 1391)
 - c) Giyasuddin Azam Shah (1391 – 1410)
 - d) Saifuddin Hamza Shah (1410 – 1412)
4. Bengal under Bayazid Dynasty (1412 – 1414)
 - a) Shihabuddin Bayazid Shah (1412 – 1414)
 - b) Alauddin Feroz Shah (1414)
5. Bengal under the Dynasty of Raja Ganesh (1414 – 1442)
 - a) Ganesh Danujmardan Dev (1415, 1417 – 1418)
 - b) Jadu, Jalaluddin Mudammad Shah (1415, 1416, 1418 – 1431)
 - c) Mahendra Dev (1418)
 - d) Shasuddin Ahammad Shah (1431 – 1442)
6. Bengal under Mamud Shahi or Iliyas Shahi Dynasty: 2nd Phase (1442 – 1489)
 - a) Nasiruddin Mamud Shah (1442 – 1459)
 - b) Ruqnuddin Mamud Shah (1459 – 1474)
 - c) Shamsuddin Iusuf Shah (1474 – 1480)
 - d) Sikandar Shah (1480 – 1481)
 - e) Jalaluddin Fateh Shah (1481 – 1489)

7. Reign of the Habsis (1489 – 1493)
 - a) Barbak Sultan Shahzada (1489)
 - b) Saifuddin Feroz Shah (1489 – 1490)
 - c) Nasir Uddin Mamud Shah (1490, 1491)
 - d) Shamsuddin Mujaffar Shah (1490 – 1493)

8. Bengal under Hosein Shahi Dynasty (1493 – 1538)
 - a) Alauddin Hosein Shah (1493 – 1519)
 - b) Nasir Uddin Nasrat Shah (1519 – 1532)
 - c) Alauddin Feroz Shah (1532 – 1533)
 - d) Giyasuddin Mamud Shah (1533 – 1538)

[Source: '*Mangalkabyer Bibartaner Dharay Bangalir Samajik Itihas*' (Social History of Bengalis in the Course of Evolution in *Mangal Kavya*) by Bikash Paul]

However, the experts consider that the reign of Hosein Shahi dynasty succeeded to bring law and order in the Dark Age. The rejuvenation of art and culture took place in this period. Some indirect hints of positive idea of the public regarding this period can be found in some streams of folk arts of Bengal. The most significant example is the emergence of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu at this time drenching the soil of Bengal with devotion.

When the Turks conquered the throne of Bengal; the high caste Hindus had lost their place on the ivory pillar of worship and respect. Those who were once rulers became the subjects. So the high caste people came down to the low castes. Hence, the high caste Hindus had to accept the gods and goddesses of low caste such as Manosa, Bonochandi, Shiva --- the god of the farmers or Sri Krishna. People of low caste also had the chance to access the *Brambanya* religion. The practice of Sanskrit scriptures, Veda, Purana; which could only be read by the high caste Hindus till then; became accessible to all. Hence, the books which belonged to the Indian culture such as Ramayana, Bhagvat, Mahabharata; they all started being translated into Bengali and on the other hand, the authentic Bengali myths and religions flourished as the *Mangal Kavyas*.

General Discussion on Mangal Kavya

The word '*Mangal*' means benevolence. According to the mass belief writing, reading or listening to these sagas bring benevolence to the concerned people. The name is derived from here. Another name for this kind of poetry is '*Ashta Mangala*'. Since the traditional custom for singing them says that it should start from one Tuesday and end on the next (eight days in total), it is named so. Apart from that, since they are sung all night, they are also known as '*Jagaran Pala*'.

They most popular *Mangal Kavyas* of Bengal are *Chandi Mangal*, *Manosa Mangal* and *Dharma Mangal*.

All of these *Mangal Kavyas* are actually songs. All of them had been written as lyrics. It is evident because in many manuscripts for these sagas, there are instructions for tunes and rhythms.

One of the primary features of *Mangal Kavya* is the initial part of the story focus on the gods of heaven and their power. The rest of the story tells about the earthly events or the course of establishing the gods and goddesses among mortals.

Structure:-

Bandona Khanda (the prayer segment):

The poem starts with saying prayers to the gods and goddesses. Apart from the particular god or goddess who is worshiped through the specific saga, other gods and goddesses are also prayed and respect is shown to the parents and elders. May be the intention for this was to accumulate all the singers and listeners in the cultural practice irrespective of their religion and community.

The poets of the *Mangal Kavyas* have mentioned their names, locality and identities rhythmically in the poems. The reason for their inspiration for writing them is also written there. Whether he is writing such a saga for hearing some oracle or has he been instructed by someone, has the same poem been written by some other poet, even the criticism of the works of earlier poets --- all are found in this part. Moreover, contemporary political, economical and social reflection is also found here.

Deb Khanda (the god segment):

This part tells about the association of mythological and mundane gods and goddesses. The gods of heaven are cursed and come down on earth with the intention of being worshiped by men. This very portion proves the process of uplifting of the rural, non-Aryan gods to the level of Aryan mythological ones.

Nara Khanda (the man segment):

This is the most important part of a *Mangal Kavya*. The cursed gods and goddesses try to establish their worship on earth and after achieving the goal, they return to heaven.

Rhythm:-

Usually 'Payar' rhythm of 'Mishra Kalabrita' style is found here (8/6 strokes). It was also called the 'Panchali' rhythm in the middle ages. A fast tempo was maintained while singing the ballad. So it was heard like nursery rimes and it does so even now.

'Tripadee' rhythm is also seen here. Short and long both types are there.

In the 'Manosa Mangal' by Bijoy Gupto, 'Ekabolee' rhythm has been used. The instances of 5+4=9 strokes, 6+5=11 strokes and 6+6=12 strokes are there.

Refrain:-

Actually refrains are used in order to interrupting the dullness of the singing pattern. For every segment or 'Pala' separate refrains have been composed.

'Bhonita':-

In some cases, after concluding a divine description, the poet puts his name and identity in the poem. Thus it becomes easy to find out who has written that particular poem. This is called 'Bhonita'.

The contemporary time, nation, community, society, geography --- all have been reflected in the *Mangal Kavyas*. The account of daily lifestyle of Bengal is found in such writings. It can be said that apart from their

excellence in poetry, the poets of *Mangal Kavya* has also accomplished their responsibility towards history distinctively by depicting the chronology of their time. These sagas are the product of soil the first and prime effort among them is '*Manosa Mangal Kavya*'.

The Story of 'Manosa Mangal'

A brief version of the '*Janma Khanda*' or the heavenly life of Manosa is as follows. Lord Shiva (Mahadev) goes to Kalidaha to visit Dharma. There his semen drops on a Lotus leaf (Some say on Keya leaf). The drop reaches under water through the stem. Serpent Vasuki's mother Nirmani (Some say Kadru) makes a statue with that drop. She puts life in that statue and Manosa is born.

Later on we see that Shiva meets Manosa and unaware of her being his own daughter, he proposes to her. But then he recognizes her and brings her to his home. Chandi, wife of Shiva, cannot accept Manosa and blinds one of her eyes. Hence, Shiva brings Manosa to Sijuya hills and keeps her there with another girl named Neta as Manosa's companion (Neta is born from the tears of Shiva).

After '*Samudra Manthan*', Shiva almost dies for drinking the poison which came out from the whirl. For the request of her step mother Chandi and other gods and goddesses, Manosa sucks out the poison from Shiva's throat. That is why she gets the name '*Bishhari*' (one who steals poison). Shiva is named '*Neelkantha*' (blue throat) after that as some trace of poison remained in his throat.

According to the will of her brother Vasuki and father Shiva, Manosa gets married to hermit Jaratkaru. But he leaves Manosa alone after some days. Manosa gives birth to Jaratkaru's son Astik. Later on, he becomes Astik Muni (hermit) and stops '*Sarpasatra Yagya*' (ceremony for assassinating snakes) of king Janmejaya. Snakes survive from extinction.

From now begins the earthly story of Manosa. The story briefly says --- A merchant named Chand lives in Champak Nagar and he is a die heart devotee of Lord Shiva. Manosa asks Chand for his devotion towards her, Chand denies. He finds out that his wife Sanoka is worshiping Manosa secretly. Chand gets angry and breaks the sacred earthen pot of Manosa into pieces. His six sons die for the curse of Manosa. His seven trading

ships '*Saptadinga Madhukar*' drown under water. Penniless Chand merchant is forced to roam about on streets because of Manosa's fury, but even then he does not agree to worship her. Chand gets his seventh son Lakhindar married to Behula. Lakhindar and Behula are actually two fallen deities of heaven named Aniruddha and Usha. The '*Basor*', the room where the couple is going to spend their wedding night, is built with iron in order to prevent Manosa's attack. In spite of being entirely solid, a small hole remains there caused by Manosa's spell. Following Manosa's order, a cobra (Kaal Nagini) sneaks in through that hole and kills Lakhindar. Behula does not accept her husband's death. She sets out for heaven in a raft made of Banana stem with her husband's dead body. Bearing with all the humiliations and hindrances of the journey, Behula reaches heaven. She dances there to please the gods and pleads for her husband's life. After giving her word that Chand will worship Manosa, she gets back the lives of her husband and six brothers-in-law and also the seven trading ships of Chand. Later on, Chand agrees to worship Manosa on Behula's request. When Manosa receives the offerings from Chand merchant, her worship begins on earth.

The Singing Pattern of '*Manosa Gaan*'

Following both stories of heaven and earth, '*Manosa Gaan*' is being sung in villages after villages since ages.

In some places this song is sung for 18 days, somewhere for 8 days and somewhere it is sung for 4 days. Even sometimes the song is cut short for being sung for 2 days as well.

The song is not the sole element of the carnival. It includes the rituals for worshipping Manosa, hymns, travelling with the earthen image of Manosa, community cooking and so on.

Nowadays mostly it is sung for 2 days only. The professional singers and musicians come to perform. In that case, they skip the heavenly stories of Manosa Mangal. One prime cause is to cut the story short. The second reason is that the earthly story is more popular and because of plenty of sexual innuendos, this portion cannot be sung in an open public ceremony containing people from all sorts of ages and sex.

The most popular portion of the song is '*Bhasan*'. This portion starts from the beginning of Behula's journey with her husband's dead body on a raft of Banana stem. Since, from now on incessant struggles emerge in Behula's life, she faces various kinds of problems in the 18 halts on her journey and solves all of them because of her morality; the rural women indentify with her in their daily struggle.

Apart from the plot, the singing pattern of the song also changes in this segment. The rhythm, tempo and tune speeds up here and that is why this segment is more entertaining.

Another segment is '*Jhapan*'. This portion is a part of the worship rituals. Several hymns, prayers and mythological descriptions are found here.

The singers of *Manosa Gaan* follow various manuscripts while singing. Sometimes they add some of their own composed works in it. To break the monotonous nature of '*Payar*' and '*Lachari Tripadee*' rhythm, they sometimes stop the music and describe stories from Purana, Ramayana or Mahabharata. Some social or mythological suggestions are also included here in simple rural style. The lead singer also includes his conversations with accompanying singers and musicians in the song. These conversations usually contain casual jokes and leg pulling to entertain the audience. They also crack riddles in between and then solve it in conversation with the audience and then again return to the song.

The quality of the song depends on the efficiency on the lead singer and his team. Since the story is the same, the audience is habituated to hear it year after year from ages. Some of them even recites or sings a large portion of the song accurately. Hence, the singers have to incorporate new techniques to impress the same audience every year. One who cannot do that, loses his popularity.

Usually the singers of *Manosa Gaan* are not experts in music. They also survive on farming or shop keeping etc. in a certain time of the year, they sing *Manosa Gaan* to earn money. They also sing '*Kirtan*' at the same time. Since they do not have a particular knowledge of *Raags* and *Raginis* (Tune), they learn the songs by hearing their mentors and thus the tunes are predominantly based on audio receptivity and memory. Hence, it can be seen that some of the songs have lost their original singing pattern and have inclined towards '*Kirtan*'. Sometimes tunes of '*Baul*' or other folk songs are also imposed on it. Thus the original tunes are gradually being lost. Moreover, the songs usually do not indicate to any notation or tune pattern. However, some of the age old manuscripts, which have been

discovered recently ('*Manosa Mangal*' of Bijoy Gupta, Biprodas Pipilai and Khemananda and the '*Baish Kobi Manosa*'), contain some instructions about rhythm and tune. From those manuscripts the initial tunes can be assumed faintly.

'*Raga*' Names mentioned in the manuscript of Biprodas Pipilai:-

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Kamad Raga,</i> | 2. <i>Dhansee Raga,</i> | 3. <i>Shri Raga,</i> |
| 4. <i>Sindhurha,</i> | 5. <i>Patmanjari,</i> | 6. <i>Naat Raga,</i> |
| 7. <i>Raga Suhai,</i> | 8. <i>Maharatee,</i> | 9. <i>Pahirha,</i> |
| 10. <i>Ahree Raga,</i> | 11. <i>Kou Raga,</i> | 12. <i>Karuna,</i> |
| 13. <i>Mantrajata,</i> | 14. <i>Raga Sindhu,</i> | 15. <i>Raga Bhairavee,</i> |
| 16. <i>Raga Bageswaree,</i> | 17. <i>Jharikhandee,</i> | 18. <i>Poorvee Raga,</i> |
| 19. <i>Yatha Raga,</i> | 20. <i>Raga Prabhatee,</i> | 21. <i>Raga Malhar,</i> |
| 22. <i>Raga Kanarha,</i> | 23. <i>Raga Iman,</i> | 24. <i>Raga Gauri,</i> |
| 25. <i>Suyee,</i> | 26. <i>Raga Behag,</i> | 27. <i>Kedar,</i> |
| 28. <i>Bararhi Raga,</i> | 29. <i>Bhatiyari,</i> | 30. <i>Malsee Raga,</i> |
| 31. <i>Kalyan,</i> | 32. <i>Gandhar,</i> | 33. <i>Vasant Raga,</i> |
| 34. <i>Paharhee,</i> | 35. <i>Naag Raga,</i> | 36. <i>Mangal Raga</i> |

[Source: '*Biprodaser Manosabij Puarbichar*' (Reconsidering '*Manosabijoy*' of Biprodas) by Dr. Mihir Chawdhury Kamilya --- See Pg. No. 32, Pic. No. 9]

Name of '*Ragini Lalit*' is mentioned in the present copy of '*Manosa Bhasan*' by Ketaka Das Khemananda. No other *Ragas* or *Raginis* are found in the book. This copy is kept in Akkhay Library, Kolkata.

'*Raga*' Names mentioned in the present '*Baish Kobi Manosa Mangal*' or '*Padma Puran*':-

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Patmanjari Raga,</i> | 2. <i>Karun Bhatiya,</i> | 3. <i>Bararee,</i> |
| 4. <i>Karnaat,</i> | 5. <i>Dhamsee Raga,</i> | 6. <i>Paahi Raga,</i> |
| 7. <i>Raga Giri,</i> | 8. <i>Kamad Raga,</i> | 9. <i>Gandhar,</i> |
| 10. <i>Shri Raga,</i> | 11. <i>Suhi Raga,</i> | 12. <i>Raga Ramgiri,</i> |
| 13. <i>Malab Raga,</i> | 14. <i>Malhar Raga,</i> | 15. <i>Vasant,</i> |
| 16. <i>Sindura,</i> | 17. <i>Ramkeli</i> | |

[Source: '*Baish Kobi Shri Shri Padma Puran*', Edited by Sri Beni Madhab Shil, From the collection of Akkhay Library, Kolkata --- See Pg. No. 31, Pic. No. 4]

The Reason for Worshiping Goddess Manosa

The chief cause for the worship of goddess Manosa is the fear of snakes. The introduction of the book '*Banglar Saap*' (Snakes of Bengal) by Shivabrata Pattanayak says:

"Every year many people die in our country out of snakebite. Though the number is told to be 1500 to 2000 in government statistics, according to several private statistics 45000 to 50000 people die annually because of snakes. The reason behind this huge difference between the two types of statistics is that most of such patients are treated by *Ojhas* or *Gunins* (rural magicians, said to have the power to cure snake bitten people) instead of being brought to hospitals.

We know about 2500 species of snakes all over the world. In our country, 236 species of them have been located till now. Among them, 50 species are venomous. About 25 species can be found in the land area of West Bengal."

Some data regarding the snakebite cases in our country and state are given bellow:

RECORD OF SNAKEBITES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF INDIA IN 1969

[It must be noted while examining this data that it has been collected from the database of government hospitals and almost 90% of total snakebite cases do not reach hospitals.]

SI.	STATES / CENTRALY RULED AREAS	POPULATION	SNAKEBITE CASES IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS	DEATHS
1	Andhra Pradesh	43,502,000	141	23
2	Assam	15,947,000	141	5
3	Bihar	56,353,000	872	21
4	Gujarat	26,697,000	2,274	62
5	Haryana	10,036,000	259	8
6	Himachal Pradesh	3,460,000	72	15
7	Jammu & Kashmir	6,616,000	832	33
8	Karnataka	29,299,000	682	36
9	Kerala	21,347,000	1,484	97
10	Madhya Pradesh	41,651,000	1,612	90

SI.	STATES / CENTRALY RULED AREAS	POPULATION	SNAKEBITE CASES IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS	DEATHS
11	Maharashtra	50,412,000	992	100
12	Manipur	1,072,000	682	36
13	Meghalaya	1,011,000	9	0
14	Nagaland	516,000	64	1
15	Orissa	21,944,000	895	27
16	Punjab	13,551,000	196	16 ('67)
17	Rajasthan	25,765,000	1,426	62 ('68)
18	Uttar Pradesh	88,341,000	1,351	68
19	Tamil Nadu	41,199,000	968	31
20	Tripura	15,56,000	21	3 ('67)
21	West Bengal	44,312,000	7,835	384
22	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	115,000	171	3 ('70)
23	Arunachal Pradesh	467,000	90	0 ('67)
24	Chandigarh	257,000	28	4 ('68)
25	Dadra Nagar Haveli	741,000	---	---
26	Delhi	4,065,000	195	4
27	Goa, Daman, Diu	857,000	195	4 ('67)
28	Lakshadweep	31,000	0	0
29	Pondicherry	471,000	97	1
	TOTAL		23,584	1,134

[Source: 'Snakebites in India' by Dr. Yoshio Soai and Dr. M. Homa, published by Japan Snake Institute in 1975]

RECORDED CASES OF SNAKEBITES IN WEST BENGAL IN TEN YEARS (1969 - 1978)

YEAR	OUTDOOR TREATMENT CASES		ADMITTED TO HOSPITALS		DEATHS		CASE TOTAL Outdoor + Indoor	DEATH TOTAL	DEATH RATE %	MOST AFFECTED AGE RANGE (Yearly)
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women				
69	2727	1686	941	5208	3382	1826	7935	384	4.83	30-39
70	3113	2061	1052	4573	3045	1528	7686	194	2.52	20-29
71	2702	1819	883	4987	3329	1658	7689	225	2.29	20-29
72	2394	1610	784	5268	3573	1695	7662	205	2.67	20-29
73	2378	1601	777	6486	4064	2422	8864	280	3.15	10-14
74	3133	1911	1122	6974	4373	2601	10007	359	3.58	10-19
75	3171	2006	1165	6874	4320	2554	10045	404	4.02	20-29
76	2597	1659	938	6032	3736	2296	8629	283	3.27	10-19
77	1020	635	385	2108	1288	820	3128	99	3.16	20-29
78	725	430	295	2295	1339	956	3020	101	3.34	20-29
TOTAL	23860	15518	8342	50805	32449	18356	74665	2534	3.39	10-19 (781)

(63.5%)
(36.5%)

According to Dr. Mihir Chowdhury Kamilya, "The primitive forest dweller caveman had elevated snakes to the position of god for mere self defense. The one which scared him, he imagined methods of satisfy it with devotion. From this fear and awe, the worship has been formed. Once, the trend of worshipping snakes was found in all over India. Even now it is worshiped in several regions ... In Kankora village under Mangalkot Police Station in Burdwan district a Banyan tree is worshiped as living snake on the occasion of *Naag Panchami*. The devotees belong to the Bagdi community. Subal Mera, resident of Niljora under Raipur Police Station in Bankura, worships living snake with milk on new moon. The snake remains in the basket. First the basket is worshiped with *sindoor* and then it is opened with a pot full of milk in front of it. The snake comes out and drinks milk (it is believed so). In the same way, Akalanka Nandi of Bishnupur, Kashidas Makar of Porshura village of Galsi in Burdwan and Balaram Dhibar of Harmasra in Bankura worship snake."

[Source: '*Biprodaser Manosabijoy Punarbichar*' (Reconsidering '*Manosabijoy*' of Biprodas) by Dr. Mihir Choudhury Kamilya]

This fear of snake is evident enough not only in Bengal but all human societies around the world. Hence, many images of this idea of snake are found on earth. In India, this snake thought is found in several tribal communities.

- Snake Deity (some say Fiend) in ancient Greece --- Medusa
- Goddess of bellow Brimhin castes in Mysore --- Mudama. Her image resembles Manosa. She is also worshiped in Mayurbhanj.
- Snake Deity of the Jains --- Padmavati
- Goddess in '*Rig Veda*' --- Mana
- Goddess of venom according to Buddhist Mahajan cult --- Janguli Tara
- Goddess in '*Sadhanmala*' --- Janguli Devi
- Goddess of the Oraon community in South India --- Manchamma

INTERVIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS AND EXPERTS: 1

[30 March 2015 || Bhabanipur, Saithiya]

Interviewee : Sri Nanda Ghatak
Designation : Eminent Local '*Manosa Gaan*' Artist

Q. For how many years are you singing '*Manosa Gaan*'?

A. Almost 22 to 24 years.

Q. Which Manuscript do you follow?

A. The manuscript written by Bishnu Pal.

Q. From who have you learnt these songs?

A. From Sadananda Mandal.

Q. Is there a way to understand whether the tunes of your songs are original or not?

A. It is difficult to say whether they are original or not. It is hard to assume what it has been before and what it is now.

Q. Is the thought of snake very much associated with '*Manosa Mangal*'?

A. Very much.

Q. '*Manosa Mangal*' is sung in various places now. Is it only because of the sense of snake or is there any other reason?

A. Most of it comes from the idea, rather the fear of snake.

Q. Even now?

A. Yes, even now, because even nowadays the '*Ojhaa*' (rural magicians, said to have the power to cure snake bitten people) cures people who have been bitten by really venomous snakes, if they are brought to him alive. I have seen it myself. A man has been bitten by snake, they have brought him to that village instead of hospital and he is still alive. The sons of the '*Ojhaa*' are also doing the same work. If the snake bitten person can have their medicine, then they will survive.

Q. Where is that village?

A. Kellagram. 5 Km. away from Saithiya.

Q. Is it a village of the 'Ojhaas'?

A. Yes, only one 'Ojhaa' lives there. He works with his family.

Q. In the old days, there was no provision for street lights, no vehicles. Men had to move on feet on muddy paths. Lots of old houses were there in which the snakes lived. Hence, there was more reason to be frightened. But now it is not that frightening, isn't it?

A. No. nowadays various chemicals are used to get rid of venomous creatures. Even the fields do not contain many snakes.

Q. In that case, has the reason behind the worship of Manosa been changed?

A. Yes, it has.

Q. Where did 'Manosa Gaan' originate from?

A. We do not know about that.

Q. Lots of places have been named in 'Manosa Mangal'. Right?

A. Yes, there are names like Dhuliyari Nagar, Champai Nagar and so on.

Q. Aren't there names of rivers mentioned as well?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the rivers belong to this region?

A. No. they are the rivers of Bhagalpur.

Q. Is it in Bihar?

A. No, in Jharkhand. There is some reminiscent of the iron room ('Basor Ghar', where Lakhindar and Behula spent their wedding night) even today.

Q. Does the iron room really exist?

A. Yes. The incident is said to have taken place in *Kaliyug* only. Though goddess Manosa was born in *Satyayug*, but there are controversies regarding this.

Q. So, is the place in Bhagalpur of Jharkhand?

A. Yes, it is Champai Nagar.

Q. Is there a town called Champai?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Champai Nagar and the Champak Nagar in mythology same?

A. Yes.

Q. In which month does the actual worship festival take place?

A. In the month of 'Bhadro' (August-September). Among the twenty four villages of this region, seventeen to eighteen villages participate in the worship and the carnival accomplishes with devotion.

Q. Does it go on throughout the year?

A. Yes. Actually it takes place in different times in each village. For example, it is held in a particular time in Assam, in another time in our Ketugram. There is a place called Pengo where about two thousand geese are sacrificed at this time.

Q. But goose is the carrier of goddess Manosa. Then why do they get sacrificed?

A. The custom varies from one place to another. Somewhere a Snake Image is made just as like the Earthen Image of goddess Durga.

Q. Have you composed any song for 'Manosa Gaan'?

~~What is the type?~~ I composed some. (he sings one)

Q. What kind of tunes or words do you follow while composing them?
The 'Lopna' songs. It has variety in it. The type is same. Rhythm and verse change.

Q. Are the worship rituals and song interrelated?

A. Yes, of course.

Q. Are hymns read while performing this ritual?

A. After the five holly gods are greeted, the worship of the actual goddess begins. (he reads the hymn) After the hymns of worshipping, the hymn for salutation is read.

Q. Where do you find this hymn?

A. In some books of '*Manosa Mangal*'.

Q. Is the hymn is sold separately in the market?

A. Yes. But those books do not have the hymn for salutation.

Q. Do the *Bramhins* conduct the rituals of this worship?

A. They do in most cases. But the *Bramhin* families do not perform this ritual for themselves. Mostly the '*Sadgop*' (a Hindu low cast, now regarded as OBC) families perform it in their homes.

Q. Who utter this hymn at the time of worshipping?

A. in special days, the *Bramhins* utter it.

Q. Does the song is sung before the worshipping rituals or afterwards?

A. The song is sung at night. The goddess has to be carried over on a tour and the song is to be sung while doing it.

Q. Are there other composers than Bishnu Pal?

A. Yes, but we only sing the songs composed by Bishnu Pal. Because we know it in dreams and we obey it.

Q. Where did Bishnu Pal belong?

A. Somewhere in present Bangladesh. I cannot tell the exact location.

Q. What musical instruments are used with these songs?

A. '*Dhak*', '*Dhol*' (percussions), '*Banshi*' (flute), '*Kansi*' (a small cymbal), Harmonium, '*Khol*' (percussion) are '*Kartaal*' (cymbal) played.

Q. Were these instruments used before or they have been added later on?

A. They were used earlier as well.

Q. How much time is required to perform it as a whole?

A. Not less than three hours. Sometimes it even takes four to five hours.

Q. What particular 'palas' (parts or chapters) are sung when you have to cut it short?

A. 'Janmapala' and 'Samudra Manthan' are sung.

Q. When does the special worship take place?

A. In the month of 'Bhadro'. The day is called 'Boga Panchami'. It is said that on that particular day goddess Manosa had brought Lakhindar back to life. On that very day Chand Sadagar worshiped Manosa.

Q. Does the worship take place on the last day of 'Bhadro'?

A. It takes place when the three Panchamis unite on one day --- 'Baga Panchami', 'Chhat Panchami' and 'Nishi Panchami'.

Q. Do you have to obey any rules as you sing these songs?

A. We do follow some rules about food habit.

Q. What do you follow on the day of this ritual?

A. We shall not eat eggs in particular on the day of *Panchami*. The vegetables which are red in colour are also forbidden. This is the usual custom.

Q. Is there no rule for fish and meet?

A. No. We can have them as creatures are sacrificed as a part of the ritual. Durgapuja is not celebrated in many of the remote villages of our state. Manosa Puja takes over there. The entire village participates.

Q. Is the tune applicable for these songs only?

A. The same tune is followed while reading Ramayana.

Q. Is there a particular name for this tune?

A. No. The rhythm is derived from 'Lopha'. It goes on for three hours by adding on different subjects and mythological stories.

Q. Is it acted as well?

A. Yes. It is somewhat acted even in our region. The song is not performed in Burdwan and Hoogly. But the worship is performed.

Q. Are there any similarity between the tune type of 'Kirtan' and 'Manosa Gaan'?

A. Yes. (he sings some of them)

Q. What would you consider as the original tune of 'Manosa Mangal'?

A. (he sings it) This tune is almost lost now. We start from the original tune and then shift to 'Lopha'. The rhythm is a modulation of 'Lopha'. The original ballad contains only religious materials. But one has to sing it according to the ritualistic decorum; some villages have suffered for not following them.

Q. How many artists are there in your team?

A. Six to seven are there.

Q. Is there only one lead singer?

A. Yes, others give him company in times.

Q. Does more than one performance take place on a single day?

A. Yes. They do.

Q. Does the same singer leads even then?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the old manuscript of Bishnu Pal available?

A. It is available but it has been changed in many parts.

Q. How much popular is this song now?

A. Most of the singing teams are inclined to 'Kirtan' as the remuneration for 'Manosa Gaan' is lesser.

Q. What do you think, whether the worship of Manosa has increased or decreased?

A. It has increased. But people who have learnt it or still learning, are forsaken by the society.

Q. How many known lead artists are there in this region?

A. Eight are there. The number of lead artists is decreasing. Many of them have died.

Q. Are there any new artist?

A. No. most of the young singers are interested in '*Kirtan*' as it is more glamorous.

Q. There are lots of variations in '*Kirtan*'. What about '*Manosa Gaan*'?

A. No, there is no variation in '*Manosa Gaan*'.

Q. Do you perform '*Kirtan*'?

A. I used to.

Q. Do you perform only '*Manosa Mangal*' now?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you thought about preserving these songs?

A. Yes, I preserve them in my copy. Else they will be lost because people are not that interested in '*Manosa Gaan*'. It is restricted to some particular regions, while '*Kirtan*' is spread everywhere.

[Photograph of Interview: Pg. No. 37, Pic No. 18]

[Audio Recording of 2 days' performance of Sri Nanda Ghatak and Video Recording of the first day is enclosed. For photograph, see Pg. No. 41, Pic. No. 27]

INTERVIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS AND EXPERTS: 2

[8 April 2015 || Palashipara, Nadia]

Interviewee : Sri Sushanta Haldar
Designation : 'Manosa Gaan' Artist and
Administrative Head of the 104 years
old Manosa Temple in Palashipara

Q. Which Saga of Manosa do you follow while singing? Who has written that?

A. '*Baish Kobi Manosa*' by Ketaka Das Khemananda. Apart from that, I have found information from the copies of my ancestors. Since this is an ancient worshipping ceremony, the devotion of people is prominent. Its objective is to communicate the saga of goddess Manosa to people.

Q. Those who used to sing in early days, who's writing did they follow?

A. Maybe poets like Ketaka Das who used to write such things. It cannot be told specifically. Songs were used to be composed from different sources, so it is difficult to say which song is written by whom. I have collected them from my grandfather. I myself have composed some. Some writings of Khemananda are also there.

Q. Names of 'Taal' and 'Raagini' are found in the songs of Narayan Deb and Bipradas Pipilai. Is it a rule?

A. There is no rules as such. But some rules always remain in the tunes. However, it cannot be told what they are exactly. I may say some about the beats, that this song may follow this '*Taal*'.

Q. From who have you learned this song?

A. None has taught in that way. My ancestors are singing them from the very beginning, I have learned by hearing them.

Q. One more thing that I have noticed in the books is that the *Manosa Mangal Kavya* is written sometimes in '*Poyaar*' rhythm and sometimes in '*Tripodee*' rhythm. Do you follow these rules when you write lyrics now?

A. In most cases, we do it on the basis of the tunes. If a tune is familiar to me, I put words accordingly.

Q. The saga has many chapters, hasn't it?

A. Yes. In Murshidabad, I had seen that seven chapters are being performed during seven days. Different poets split the chapters differently.

Q. Do the performances of present time contain so many chapters as well?

A. No. Nowadays usually only Behula-Lakhindar is shown according to '*Padma Puraan*'. No one uses the entire '*Manosa Mangal*' now.

Q. From where do you start when you sing the song?

A. I start with '*Bandona*' (Prayer). I pray to goddess Saraswati first, then pray to goddess Manosa and then another prayer is said to all of the gods. It concerns not only Manosa but Ramayana and lord Krishna as well. Like, in which age he went to Mathura, the assassination of Kansa and so on.

Q. That means you do not follow the chapters while singing?

A. No. I don't follow the story, I sing.

Q. A hymn is uttered when the worshipping ceremony takes place. Is it a part of the verse?

A. No, it isn't. I had heard it from a man who came here to sing. (he recites the hymn)

Q. Is it uttered by a *Bramhin*?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't they recite anything in Sanskrit?

A. Yes, one or two as usual.

Q. How much time it takes to complete the worship?

A. It gets started at dawn and continues for a long time. Offering ceremony takes place. Acts are done according to our singing. When we sing the last '*Pala*', they conclude the worship.

Q. What do you do in the time of offering?

A. We sing the songs of offering.

Q. When does the song start?

A. When goddess Manosa is brought, the song begins saying "*Eso Maa Manosa, Boso Simhasane*" [Come goddess Manosa, sit on the throne]. Gradually we start the hymns after songs. Then we tell about the offering ceremony like, what materials are required, what are to be offered.

Q. How do you know about these requirements or rules and regulations? Is it mentioned in the saga?

A. It is not there in the saga. Only the story is there. I have four to five hymns of offering. Two of them are in the collection of my grandfather. One has been collected from my uncle Padmananda. He was the assistant of the local '*Ojha*' Matilal. They used to sing '*Jhapan*'. I have not found several hymns in it, such as '*Aarhi Mantra*', '*Bhaanda Mantra*' --- this hymn is composed of vulgar words. When '*Bhaanda*' is recited, no woman has her presence there.

Q. Is it all in Bengali? Isn't there any trace of Sanskrit?

A. No. Actually these are practiced by the mass. Hence, Sanskrit could not find its entry here.

Q. Were the songs of early ages sung by the '*Ojhas*'?

A. Yes, their disciples also used to sing with them.

Q. So, is the only Sankrit portion here is the initial description?

A. Yes.

Q. Where do the most of your collected verses belong to – West Bengal or the present Bangladesh?

A. Most of them belong to the present Bangladesh. People of this side used to go there for singing. The communication was there in both ways.

Q. Have you ever found tunes of '*Baul*' or '*Kirtan*' in these tunes?

A. No. I am a devotee of Manosa with my heart and soul. I do not like to mix other tunes in '*Manosa Gaan*'. The tune of '*Jhapan*' is primary to me. Nowadays I see that those who beg performing these songs use modern tunes.

Q. Have the Bramhins ever been associated in a mentionable way?

A. Not much.

Q. Some say that Manosa was born on *Keya* leaves and some say that it was Lotus leaves, what do you say while singing?

A. I say that she was born on Lotus leaves.

Q. Do Muslims participate in it?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they do it here?

A. Yes. They take oath to the goddess (*'Bata'*) and hear the song.

Q. Do they sing themselves?

A. Yes, many of them do.

[Photograph of Interview: Pg. No. 33, Pic No. 10]

[Photograph of lyrics written by Sri Sushanda Haldar is enclosed in this report (See Pg. No. 32, Pic. No. 6 & 7). Hence, he was not well at the time of this interview, we shall send the audio files of his singing with the next one.]

INTERVIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS AND EXPERTS: 3

[9 April 2015 || Haldar Para, Palashipara, Nadia]

Interviewee : Sri Shantanu Biswas
 Designation : Ex-journalist and Historian;
 Author of *'Itihaser Prekkhapote Palashiparar Oteet Kahinee'* [Past Stories of Palashipara in Historical Background --- See Pg. No. 32, Pic. No. 8]

Q. Your book has a reference of *'Raajbanshi Para'* (neighbourhood of *Raajbanshis*). Are this *'Haladar Para'* of today and the *'Raajbanshi Para'* the same? Have these inhabitants brought the ceremony with them?

A. These people cannot exactly be called *Raajbanshis*. I cannot say how they have come or lived here. I have seen this worshiping ceremony since childhood. Besides that, I had collected information from the old dwellers of the locality to write the book. The practice of this kind of songs is almost obsolete now. I have quoted one.

Q. A touch of East Bengal (present Bangladesh) is found in the songs of Narayan Deb or Biprodas Pipilai. Was it there when you used to hear the songs?

A. No, it wasn't. They all used to sing or write in the same pattern. Actually the composers of that age have not printed their works. Maybe some manuscripts were there but they have not been preserved properly. I have not found anything in written form. Whatever I have found is by hearing from them. Same goes for the song.

Q. Had Matilal Halder begun this worship here?

A. Yes. It started bellow that tree.

Q. Do you mean this very *Gaab* tree of that time?

A. Yes. It is not merely used for this ceremony. They also need it for commercial purpose. (See Pg. No. 35, Pic No. 15)

Q. Do all the inhabitants of this area survive on the river?

A. Yes. Fishing, and Boat sailing. But some of the boys have been educated. To tell you the truth, the educated people do not have much interest in this. They perform the worship because it is an age old ceremony. I tried to find some books or documents while writing my book. I had got some of them, some I could not.

Q. Have you learnt about the 'Ojhas' from book or from the 'Ojhas' themselves?

A. From books.

Q. It is a little bit difficult to accept the treatment of snake bite by sorcery. But this kind of treatment is still going on. What is the reason behind it? Do they use any medicated herbs?

A. No. the scientists say that if a venomous snake bites and the venom mixes with blood, the victim cannot be saved. But it was believed in the old ages that hymns can save victims. There are lots of opinions for and against this view.

Q. Did the first dwellers of this locality belonged to East Bengal (present Bangladesh)?

A. No.

Q. Where were they from?

A. They are living here since ages. The 'Borgi' (Marhatha) attack took place at time of the Battle of Plassey. They are living here since then.

Q. Is it possible to get those old manuscripts?

A. No. Besides, it is really difficult to preserve manuscripts like that.

Q. This worship is the ritual of schedule castes. Have you ever seen any high caste Hindu to participate in it?

A. No, the ritual belongs to them, I mean the schedule castes. But nowadays the rich people perform it as well. Even women of our households participate. They give *saaris*, even gold jewelries to Manosa. They also place sacrificial prayers. Not only this Haldar Para, but people of entire Palashipara area do the same. From that point of view, it has turned to be a popular ceremony. It is no longer owned by them only. They only conduct the worship.

Q. This area has a lot of varieties. Such as, the tribal people of Dhaora Para and the Muslims also live here. Do they participate as well?

A. They do not exactly participate but the Muslims do believe in it. Those who treat snake bite by sorcery have Muslims in them. Nowadays all have mingled up. But they do not participate in the ritual as the high caste Hindus, especially *Bramhins*, would not accept it if they do. No conflict has sprung up for this though some of their proverbs have found place in the songs. It shows that there was a time when Muslims also took some part in it. But now the whole ceremony is being extinct. This particular worship of our locality is being held for several years. Usually the fishermen perform this ritual. I think that because the fishermen often encounter snakes while going into canals and rivers for fishing, they respect goddess Manosa out of fear. They worship her to keep her appease. However, different areas have different types of this ceremony.

Q. There are two more statues of women standing beside Manosa in the temple. Who are they?

A. The companions of Manosa. (See Pg. No. 36, Pic. No. 16)

[Photograph of Interview: Pg. No. 33, Pic No. 11]

INTERVIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS AND EXPERTS: 4

[19 June 2015 || Bhabanipur, Saithia, Birbhum]

Interviewee : Sri Sadananda Mandal
 Designation : Eminent and Most Aged '*Manosa Gaan*'
 Artist of the locality

Among all '*Manosa Gaan*' artists in all the villages surrounding Bhabanipur near Saithiya, Sri Sadananda Mandal is the most experienced and aged artist. This age long artist shared his experience with us. Sri Sadananda Mandal is the mentor of Sri Nanda Ghatak, the interviewee in '*Interview of Professionals and Experts: 1*'. He has taught Sri Nanda Ghatak '*Manosa Gaan*' and '*Kirtan*' as well. This aged person has trained a lot more students throughout his life. We talked to him sitting on his own front yard. We heard it from his own mouth that his singing career contains forty eight to forty nine years. He has sung in several villages of various districts. Sri Sadananda Mandal follows the manuscripts of Dwija Banshi Das and Bishnu Pal while singing. He regrets that the press has not published these manuscripts as they are not written in sophisticated language. His mentor and trainer is Sri Panchanan Das. He has passed away long ago. Sri Sadananda has received the lyrics written by Sri Panchanan according to the mentor-disciple tradition. Shy in nature, Sri Sadananda said that he has written one or two songs himself. He told us that the types of his songs are '*Kirtan Anga*' and '*Boithaki Anga*'. He informed that the original worshiping ceremony goes on for eight days according to the rituals. Such as ---

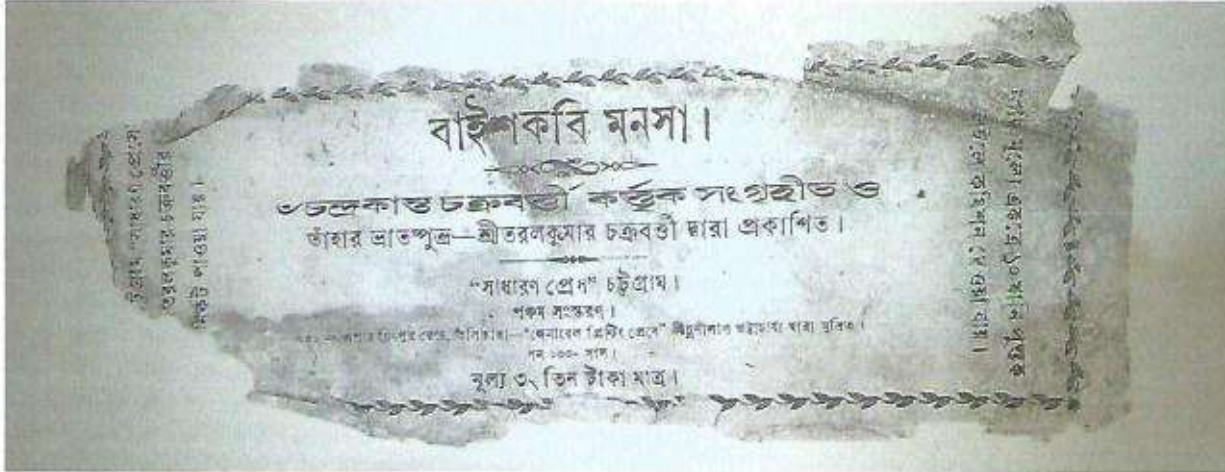
1st Day : Goddess Manosa is born
 2nd Day : *Vanavaas*
 3rd Day : *Samudra Manthan*
 4th Day : The Demolition of *Mahagyan* and the death of six sons of Chand
 5th Day : The voyage of Chand, annihilation of Usha and Aniruddha

- 6th Day : Lakhindar is born, his marriage is fixed, the room for his wedding night (*'Baasor'*) is constructed
- 7th Day : Starting from the wedding of Behula and Lakhindar to the snakebite
(This very part is called *'Jagaran Pala'*)
- 8th Day : *'Bhasan Gaan'* and then the worship rituals take place at night

[Photograph of Interview: Pg. No. 37, Pic No. 19]

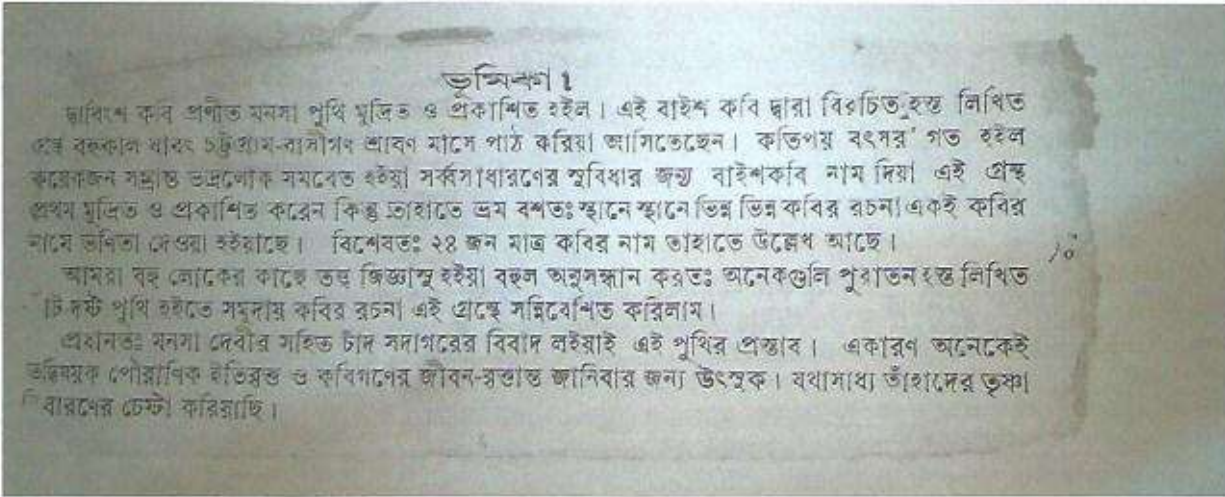
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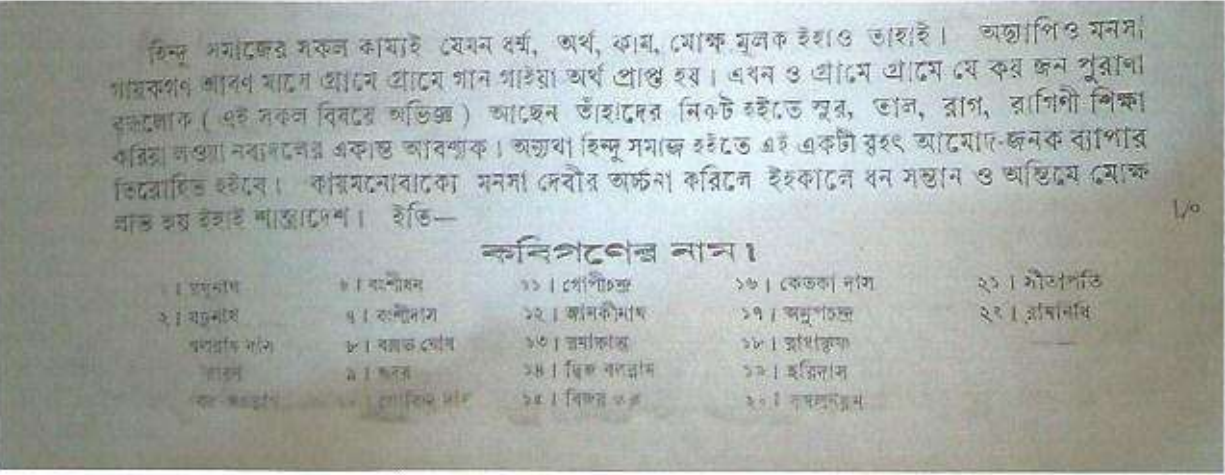
(1)

'Baish Kobi Manosa' [Chattagram Publication] : Cover Page



(2)

'Baish Kobi Manosa' [Chattagram Publication] : Introduction

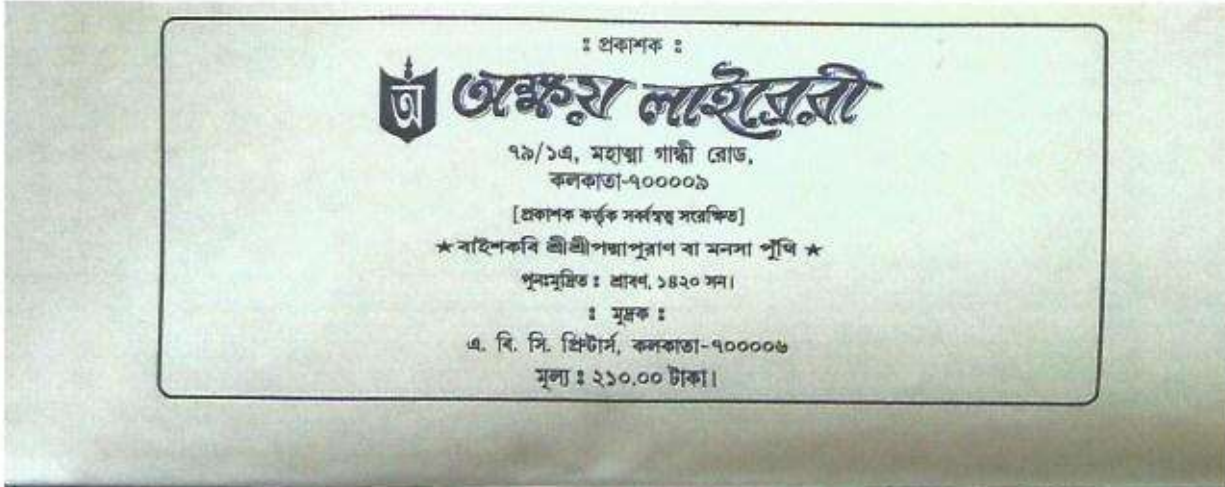


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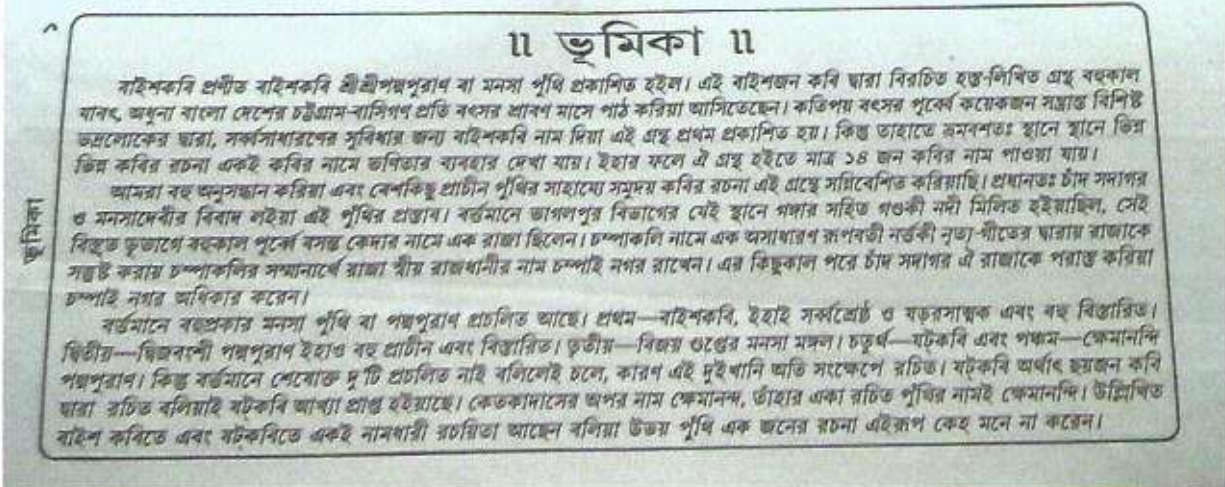
'Baish Kobi Manosa' [Chattagram Publication] : Names of 22 Poets

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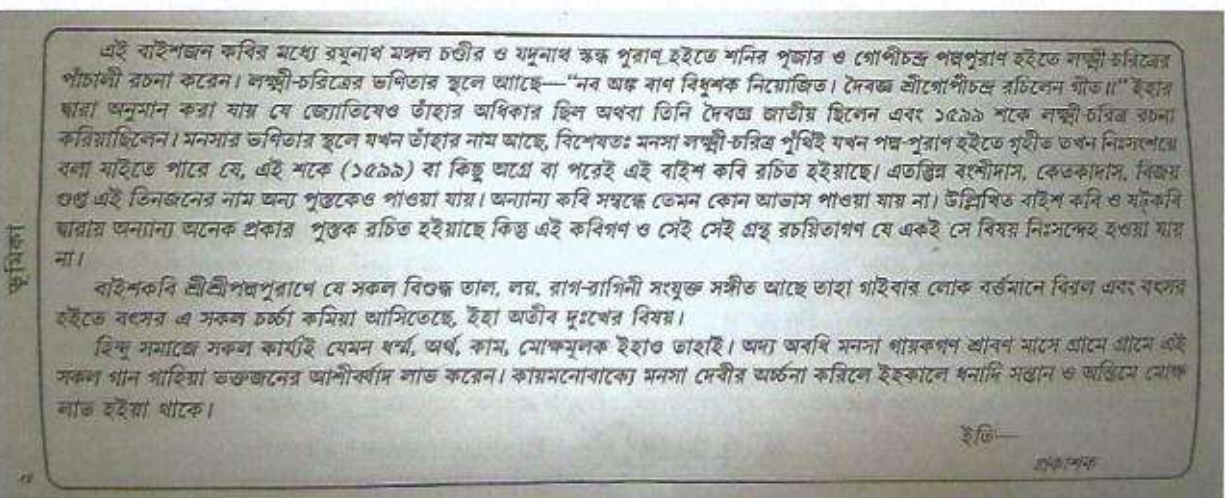
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(4)



'Baish Kobi Shri Shri Padma Puran' [Akhaya Library, Kolkata Publication]



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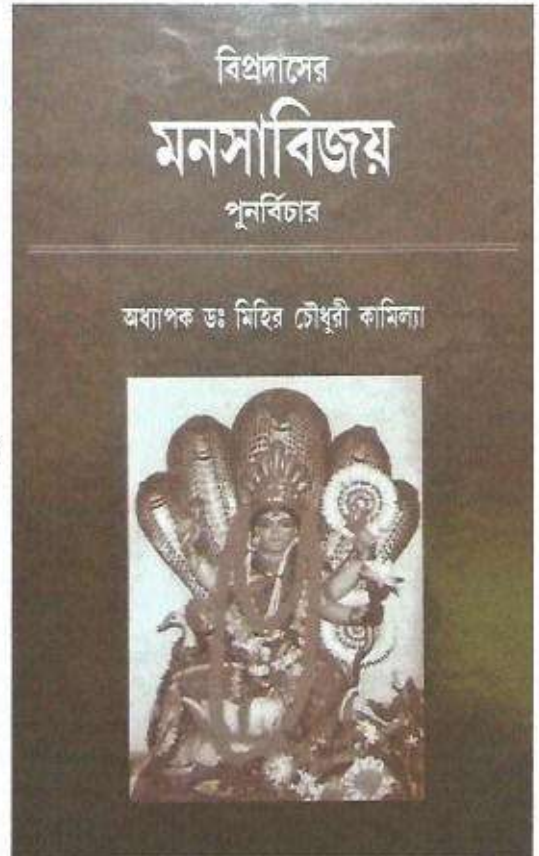


(7)

Printed version of 'Manosa Gaan' Artist Sushanta Haldar's own composed song



(8)



(9)

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(10)

Interview of Sri Sushanta Haldar, 'Manosa Gaan' Artist and Administrative Head of the 104 years old Manosa Temple in Palashipara, Nadia

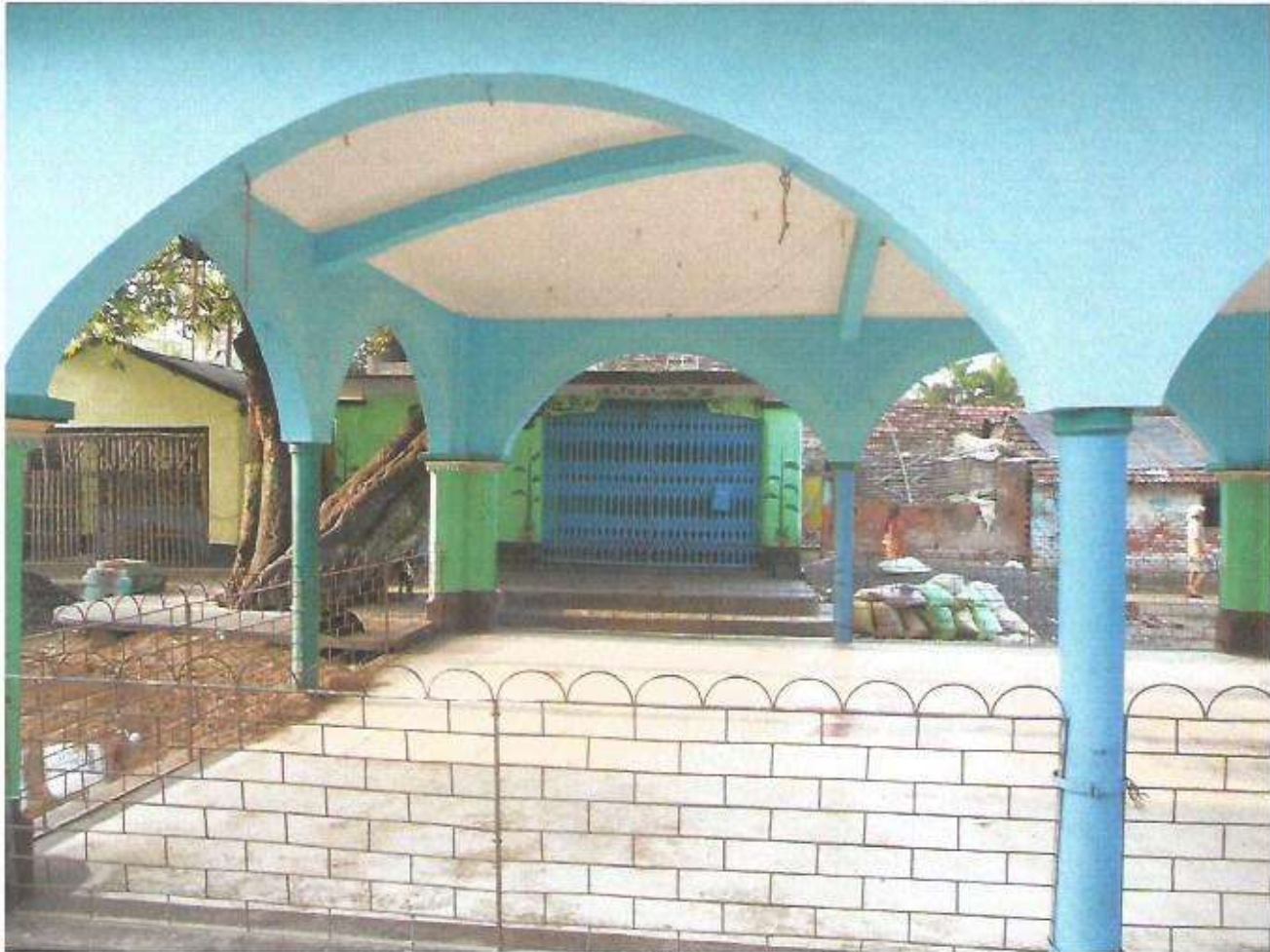


(11)

Interview of Sri Shantanu Biswas, Ex-journalist and Historian; Author of 'Past Stories of Palashipara in Historical Background'

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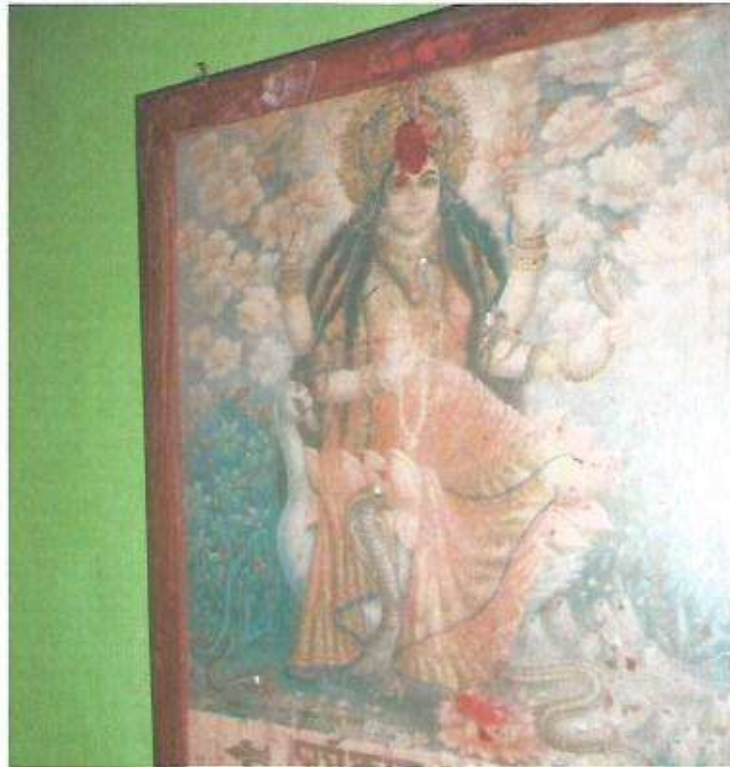
104 years old Manosa Temple in Palashipara, Nadia.
Outside view with adjacent 'Naat Dalan' or Performance Space (above). Inside view (below)



(13)

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(14)

Image of goddess Manosa inside the Temple



(15)

The Century Old 'Gaab' Tree under which the Worship Ceremony first started

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(16)

Earthen Image of goddess Manosa on the 100th year of Manosa Temple in Palashipara, Nadia. Manosa at the centre with her companions Jaya (right) and Bijaya (left), Chand Merchant (Jaya's right), his wife Sanoka (Bijaya's left), Lakhindar (down right) and Behula (down left)



(17)

News Paper Review of the 100th year of Worship Ceremony of Manosa Temple in Palashipara, Nadia.

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(18)

Interview of Sri Nanda Ghatak, eminent 'Manosa Gaan' Artist of Bhabanipur, Saithiya, Birbhum



(19)

Interview of Sri Sadananda Mandal, eminent and most aged 'Manosa Gaan' Artist of the entire surrounding locality of Bhabanipur, Saithiya

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(20)

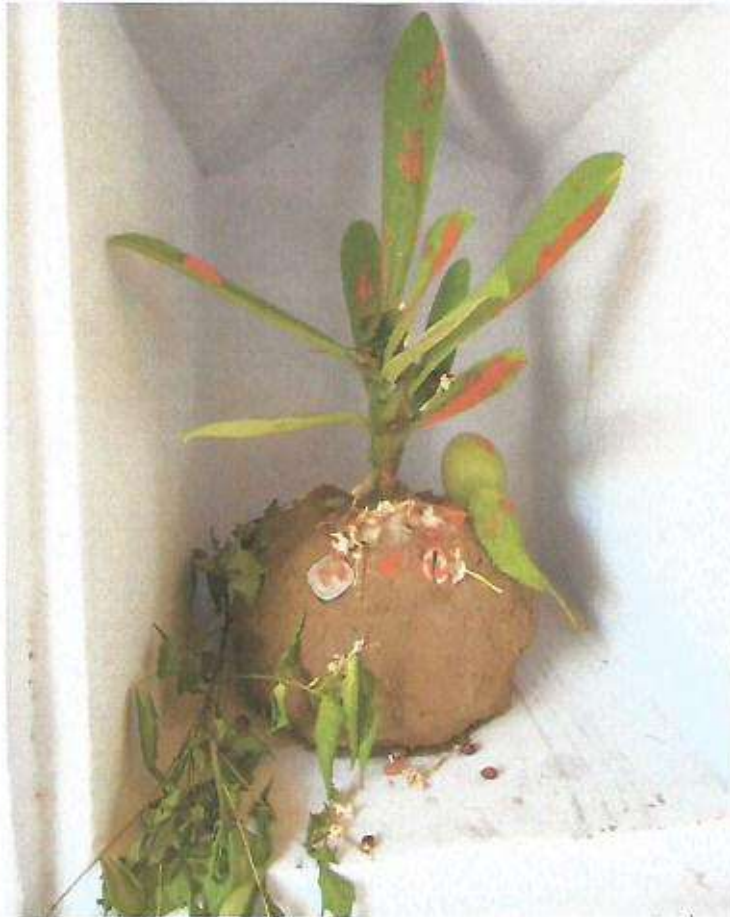
Manosa Temple in Deyara village, Birbhum. Outside view (above) and Inside view (bellow)



(21)

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(22)

'Naag Manosa', a sacred tree essential for worship ceremony of goddess Manosa

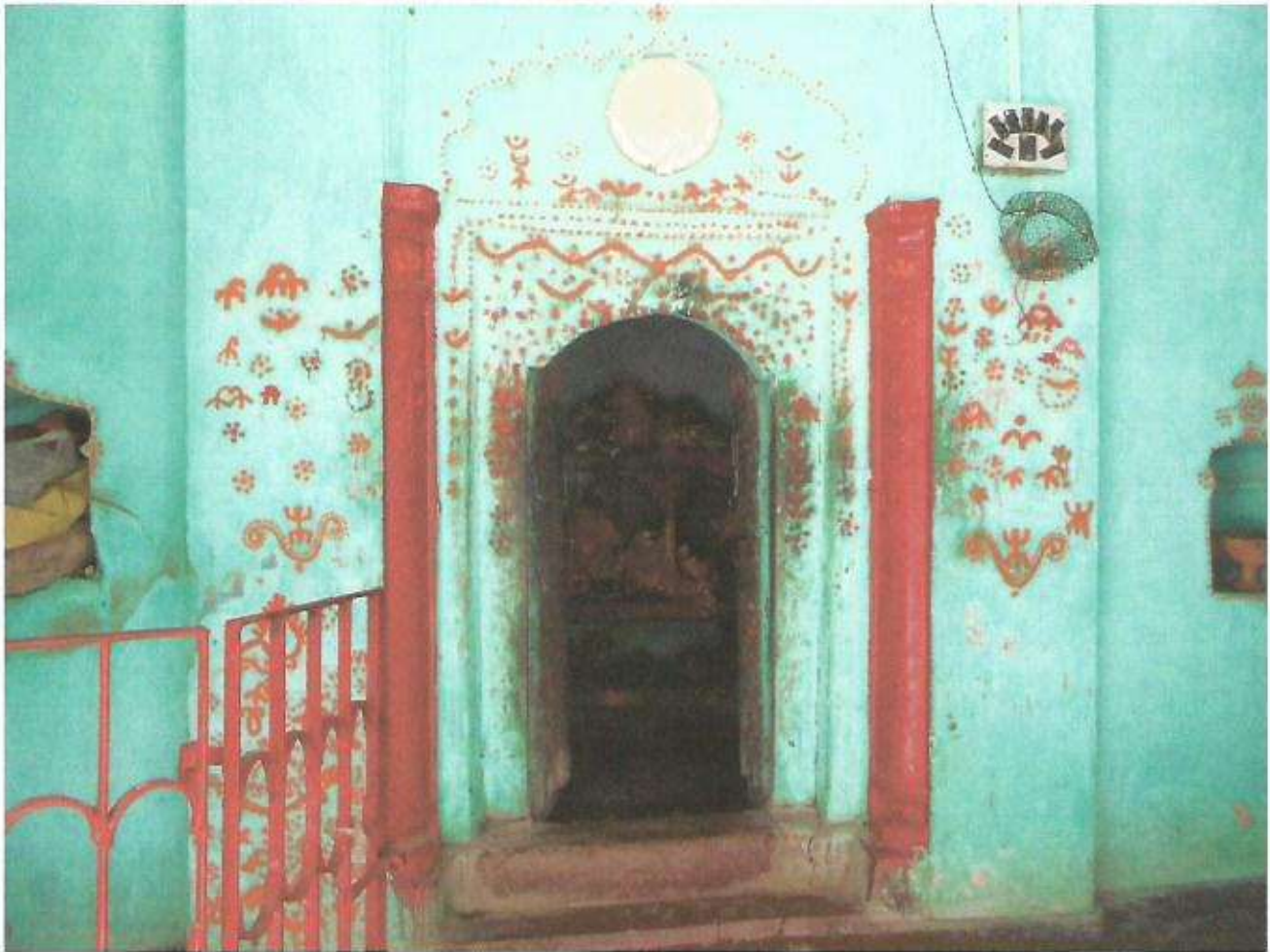


(23)

Temporary worship place for goddess Manosa of Deyara Temple

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(24)

Temple of goddess Manosa in Gorhola village in Birbhum.
Outside view (above) and Inside view (bellow)



(25)

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(26)

Performing Team of Sri Nanda Ghatak before Performance



(27)

Performance of Sri Nanda Ghatak in Gonpur village in Birbhum

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(28)

Goddess Manosa is being carried to the Temporary Worship Place in Gonpur village in Birbhum for the Ceremony



(29)

Worship of goddess Manosa

MANASA MANGAL KAVYA

(The Weal-Ballad of Manasa - the Snake Goddess)

(An analysis into the lyrical content & the folk form of the Ballads)

1. MANGAL KAVYA : DEFINITION AND ITS BRANCHES

The literary endeavours since the 13th century to the time of poet *Bharatchandra* in the 18th century, is viewed as the era of *Mangal Kavya*. This genre of poetic creations in the medieval era, is not only the most popular form of literature but quite vast in number and contained lots of enchanting elements. This form of literature was created in the backdrop of new humanitarian evolution that was gradually taking place in that age, particularly in Bengal. But, why the word *Mangal* (weal or welfare) was prefixed in the title, is a subject of an insightful quest.

'Asking blessings from the deity in the form of a song for personal or community welfare', is defined as *Mangal* or *Mangal Gaan*', opines Dr. Ashutosh Bhattacharya. Prof. Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay elaborates, '*Mangal Kavayas* are a form of song, which was sung in a particular tune for proclaiming the sublimity of a deity and that definite tune is titled as *Mangal*. . . . *Mangal* also means to go to fair or to some gathering, where the song is sung for eight days, expressing the greatness of a deity for bringing welfare to the listeners.

Possibly in the earlier writings - describing the sublimity of some god and his/her power to salvage sufferers from awesome and potential misfortune, were regarded as *Mangal*. Probably the two factors - (i) the concept of the folk ritualistic practice & worshiping of deities of non-Aryan or pre-Aryan era and (ii) the effort to conjugate those folk deities with the mythological deities of the Aryan era, had given birth to this form of literature titled *Mangal Kavya*.

One may find some scriptural characteristics of the Aryans in this genre, as follows :

(1) Each *Mangal Kavya* has a hymning part at the beginning for the concerned deity, which continues with the hymn for other scriptural gods & goddesses, pilgrim-deities and other local folk deities. There was never any room for fundamentalism.

(2) The hymning part is followed by the biographic part, which explains why the ballad was written along with an autobiographical sketch of the poet. It is followed by a noteworthy part, where the poet describes how he received a divine oracle for writing the ballad. Perhaps, to add sanctity to their writings the poets used to do so.

(3) The following part is *Deva Khanda* (the divine part), which contains - the mythological concept of creation, description of *Daksha Yagna*, resurrection of *Uma*, that followed by the domestic accounts of *Hara-Gauri*. The *Deva Khanda* is a major integral part of almost all the *Mangal Kavyas*. From the descriptive point of view, this part follows the traditional scriptural approach, but describes in details the day to day life of the then masses.

The *Deva Khanda* ends with the story of a cursed God, who is expelled from the heaven for some misdeed and born on earth as a human. This description links between *Deva Khanda* and the following part *Nara Khanda* (the human part).

(4) The *Nara Khanda* (the human part) is the key segment of the ballad, where the story is described. The story usually goes like that - a cursed god has fallen from heaven, takes birth as a human on earth and attains a new godhood as a folk god, who establishes his or her divine exploits on the earth and finally departs for heaven. The differences in the *Mangal Kavyas* are very prominent in this part. But, the poets were unable to avoid the traditional approach in spite of these variations.

(5) The following noteworthy descriptions are found in every *Mangal Kavyas* – *Baramasya*, a versified yearly account of weal & woe of a woman, which vividly depicts the reprehension against husband; making of modesty-vest of women by *Viswakarma*; the culinary descriptions of the then Bengal; an appreciable references of various fruits & flowers, birds & animals; presentation of popular riddles to outwit folks and pertinent answers thereof etc.

2. COSMOGONY FROM THE HISTORICAL ASPECT

Historically *Mangal Kavyas* were written in the tormenting periods of the mediaeval Bengal. Prolonged socio-political turmoil and unceasing decadences at every stage of the society were engulfing the common distressed people, who were intensely searching a way out and putting an agonising effort to come out of that social onslaughts.

The kings and the kingdoms with different ideological beliefs were shuffling quite often. Battles and social conflicts were mounting, affecting the masses deeply; mercilessly disrespecting the values & social harmonies and destroying the redeeming & traditional values in society.

When abrupt Turkish aggression took place that followed by the sporadic raids of Pathans and Mughals, the people, in absence of a competent king, were exposed to the worst form of tyranny and uncertainty. In such acute social chaos the kind & mighty scriptural gods were losing their foot holds very fast from the reverential mind of the vanquished & helpless peoples.

The oppressed folks were looking for some psychological refuge and prayed for some new deity, who would arrive on earth and salvage them from their misery. At this juncture, concept of a mighty goddess came into existence in the new spiritual backdrop of the common people and they began to accept her as their savior. According to Rabindranath, “the new deity is born from the fancied mind of those ill-fated people, who do not have food to eat, piece of cloth to cover, no roof on their head and without any humane dignity”.

But, the hibernated life-force in them did not give up in such acutely adverse & abhorrent conditions and craved a through a herculean way to a genesis of hopes and aspirations for something better –towards their traditional values, aesthetics and culture. This had deeply inspired the poets to take up their pen for writing *Mangal Kavyas*.

It is also observed that when these vanquished, ill-fated masses were not able to find a reason and solution thereof against their sufferings, they had tolerated and gratified these social evils with worship and prayer, which is the foremost inspiring factor of *Mangal Kavyas*.

On the outset of establishing this transitional period, the erudite class of practitioners of *Smriti* (a form of philosophy, established by *Kapil Muni*, that denies god) had shown a strong denial attitude towards these beliefs. Since 15th. & 16th. century that attitude began to diminish, because of the severe Turkish invasion and the tyrannical suppression of the Muslim rulers thereafter, which had shaken the very existence of the Hindu society and an amalgamation of the folk deities with the *Pauranik* gods were welcomed as a measure of unification of different sects of the Hindus, which was unavoidable at that perilous hour.

Apart from this, onslaught of the concurrent natural calamities were taking its toll and as these helpless salvage seeker - the common people, especially the higher class were composing new *Mantras* to welcome these folk gods into the mainstream series of *Pauranik* gods. Many traditional rites and rituals were altered and absorbed into the day to day life, which was prevailing deeply in the *Mangal Kavyas*.

In its own merit the popular pre-Aryan religious convictions and ritualistic practices in Bengal had coexisted with the *Pauranik* religious faiths. And in spite of the following scriptural paths, various social rituals related to marriage, births & deaths and such other social occasions in Bengal; the traditional women rites and other such social practicing customs were the contribution of the sub-Aryans culture. This actually had given birth to an ethnic deity-circle in Bengal, like - *Manasa, Dharma, Chandi, Sheetala, Dakshin Ray, Bana Bibi, Panchu Thakur, Keshtrapal* etc. and one would find their origin in the indigenous social cultural practices instead of scriptures. Moreover, the non-Aryan tastes and attitudes had established the scriptural gods & goddesses into different forms.

Earlier, the constant strife over the caste system and the economic tyranny of the greedy and tormenting rulers from both the religions were weakening the accommodating attitude between the Hindus and the Muslims. But as most of the Muslims in Bengal were converted, had similar cultural base and physical features and had some combined and common cultural traditions under disguise of religious practices. This pioneering social reformation was initiated by the heavenly personality, the greatest revolutionary, social reformer and pioneer of *Vaishnavite* faith, *Shri Chaitanya Deva*. This was followed and carried forward by *Sufis, Darbesh, Bauls* and *Fakirs*, who had preached for the ideals of harmony in bringing the Muslims and the Hindus closer. These had also projected in *Mangal Kavyas*, written later.

In the pre-Aryan era, some heroic landlord, who had achieved a deity-hood for his exploits and begun to be regarded as an idol of agriculture. He was worshiped in an idol form under some large tree in open space (not in a temple) and that place gradually came to be known as *Babar Than* (seat of the father-deity), or worshiped in the rustic *Gajan* festival. Over the period he was idolised as the central character in folk songs and folk dramas.

Later, during the era of synthesising the folk-deities with the *Pauranik* or scriptural deities, he was upgraded along with Durga, his wife, sons and daughters and became known as lord Shiva, whose abode is on Mount *Kailash* and regarded as the God of Agriculture. In popular sub-Aryan folk literature and culture, he was described as an old man with a young wife and many children; he lives on begging; not only he is a fervent addict to *Ganja* (cannabis), but quite famous for that, but more celebrated for his passionate attraction for other women. This is portrayed more or less in all the verses, titled *Shivayana* of *Shankar*, of *Kabichandra*, *Rameswar Bhattacharya* and *Ramakrishna Kabichandra*. Similar verses are also available in Bangladesh, titled *Mrigalubdha*.

3. MANGAL KAVYA : SECTIONS, SUBSECTIONS & POETS

As the deities of the *Mangal Kavya*-s were originated from the non-Aryan concept, initially the writings were limited to two or three such ballads. With the advent of time these literary works were multiplied with the diversification of subjects and popular believes.

According to the qualitative aspects, ancientness and numbers, these literary works are classified into two sections – (1) Mainstream *Mangal Kavyas* & (2) Other *Mangal Kavyas*.

(1) Mainstream *Mangal Kavyas* include *Manasa Mangal*, *Chandi Mangal*, *Dharma Mangal* and *Shiva Mangal* or *Shivayan*.

(2) Other *Mangal Kavyas* include *Krishna Mangal*, *Shasthi Mangal*, *Sheetala Mangal*, *Ganga Mangal*, *Ray Mangal*, *Sarada Mangal*, *Annada Mangal* and some few more.

Poets of different *Mangal Kavyas* :

(1) *Manasa Mangal* : *Kana Hari Datta*, *Bijoy Gupta*, *Narayan Dev*, *Bipradas Piplai*, *Dwija Banshi Das*, *Ketakadas Kshemananda* are the prominent poets.

(2) *Chandi Mangal* : The most prominent poet of *Chandi Mangal* is *Kabikankan Mukunda Ram Chakrabarti*, who is regared as the Best Poet of medieval Bengali literature.

The other prominent poets of *Chandi Mangal* are *Dwija Madhab*, and *Dwija Ramdeb*.

(3) *Dharma Mangal* : *Manik Ganguli* and *Ghanaram Chakrabarti* are the prominent poets.

(4) *Sheetala Mangal* : *Krishna Ram*, *Manik Ganguli*, *Shankar*, *Nityananda Chakrabarti* are the prominent poets.

(5) *Shasthi Mangal* : The prominent poets are *Krishna Ram*, *Rudra Ram* and *Rudra Deb*.

(6) *Ray Mangal* : The prominent poets are *Krishna Ram* and *Rudra Deb*.

(7) *Sarada Mangal* : *Daya Ram*, *Bireswar*, *Muni Ram* are the prominent poets.

(8) *Krishna Mangal* : The prominent poets are *Raghunath*, *Madhabacharya*, *Krishna Das* and *Kabishekhar*.

In 19th century, Poet *Bihari Lal Chakrabarti* has written *Sarada Mangal*, which is also considered as a *Mangal Kavya*.

4. SECTARIANISM IN MANGAL KAVYAS

Majority of population in India follows Hinduism. Since the advent of the Aryans, this religion has developed through various practices and phases. In the earlier phase the religious practice in India was regarded as the *Vaidik Dharma*, as it had followed the *Vedas*, which is a treatise on socio-religious practices by the Aryans.

After the advent of *Puranas*, which are another form of religious treatise and also by the Aryans, were regarded as *Hindu Dharma*, though there were some marked differences between these two - the form of the deities, the ritualistic practices and the idolatry rituals were different.

Though, this form of practicing religion originated from the *Purana* much later, was accepted more by the larger mass of Indian society than the *Vaidik Dharma*. According to many historians and scholars this *Puranik* form of religion had flourished and achieved a prime form in the Gupta period.

But this practicing religion soon had laden with rituals. Many new deities came into being for the perceptual security of the folks against the supernatural, social and elemental evils. Many forms of petite philosophy were emerged for these nascent gods and a new array of priest was emerged in the process. The *Vaishnavites*, the *Shivites* etc. were the outcome of that. With the advent of time these practices became complicated with the introduction of many sub-sections, which marred with acute sectarianism and made a claustrophobic Hindu society.

Moreover, the institution of caste-system, enforced by Aryans made it more distressing and two prominent classes were emerged in that strife-torn society – one elite class, who were so called Aryans and had the right and control over the scriptural literature and culture and their religious practices and cultural thoughts were interrelated with the conventional Hinduism. The other was the non-Aryans formed by the low caste (mostly non-Aryans) and had their own culture, which is quite different in nature. They used to worship of symbolic deities, evil spirits, demi-gods, & local folk deities and support voodooist activities.

If one probe deeper into these practices & beliefs, will find the influence of various ritualistic reflections of the higher class - like worship of the human reproductive forms and deep belief in supernatural activities, which had percolated down to the lower strata of the society. The fusion of these two separate flows had given birth to multiple streams of literary endeavours, which were not so prominent in that earlier era, but developed gradually with the Islamic aggression and became backdrop of the *Mangal Kavyas*.

5. CONTENT & HISTORICAL BACKDROP OF MANASA MANGAL

Considering the story and the style of presentation of different *Mangal Kavyas*, Prof. Tarapada Bhattacharya has edited the additional contents and classified these literary creations into following classes – he described *Manasa Mangal* as a thriller of that era, *Dharma Mangal* is an adventurous story, *Chandi Mangal* is a social novel and *Shivayanis* a compilation of domestic short stories.

HISTORICAL BACKDROP :The reference of *Manasa Mangal* was found in *Chaitanya Bhagavat* by poet *Vrindavan Das* and during the end of 15th. century (AD), worship of *Bishahari* or *Manasa* was quite popular in Bengal. It is also found around the same period, the worship of *Manasa* was celebrated with grandeur through *Natagiti* (an ovation through song &

performance) in *Mithila*. *Manasa Gaan* or *Manasa Geeti* used to be performed customarily with the worship.

Profound scholar Prof. Sukumar Sen found reference of *Manasa* in the *Wrik Veda*, where *Manasa* was worshipped as *Vastu Devta* (family deity that symbolised as snake), *Arogya Devta* (Deity of Cure) and in many different forms as a general social deity. Though she is regarded as the deity of Snakes, she herself is not a snake. The original meaning of *Manasa* is intense passion or desire of mind (*Manas*).

In pre-*Pauranik* era *Manasa* was worshipped ritualistically with *Saraswati* as *Vastu Naaga* (family deity in the form of a snake) and since then she was regarded as the queen of the 'Naaga' (Snakes) but, without any name', though at the initial stage she was not accepted or worshipped by the elite class, but was popular and worshipped by fishermen and farmers. Prof. Sen also observed the similarities in actions and in somatic with goddess *Laxmi* and goddess *Shasthi*.

As she was worshipped largely by the womenfolk, an assumption is drawn that she represents a deity from the matriarchal society. Finally she was accepted by the larger section of the society through her strategic and unkind strife with *Chand Sodagar* and established herself as a Goddess.

STORY : Perhaps, this is the oldest ballad and the sign of ancientness is quite prominent. The intense strife between *Chand Sodagar* and *Manasa* is thrilling, so is the passionate story of *Behula* and *Lakhindar*.

The influence of the traders (*Banik* or *Sodagar*) over society was indubitable and *Chand* was their supreme leader. *Manasa* was frantic to win *Chand's* veneration as a deity and asks for his 'Puja', which *Chand* refused vehemently, as his adorable deity was lord *Shiva*.

'Jei Hate Puji Aami Deva Shulapani,
Sei Hate Na Pujibo Changmuri Kani'

(The hand, which performs the worship of my most reverential, trident-in-hand-lord *Shiva*, the worship of that wretched one-eyed female will never performed with the same).

The strife between cruel and spiteful *Manasa* with her mean and tyrannical actions to fulfill her intention and *Chand* with his prowess and deep humane conviction, ignoring *Manasa's* malicious endeavors, is there all through from beginning to end of the ballad. To fulfill her ambitious desire *Manasa* had killed six grown up sons of *Chand*, making their wives widow and drowned his entire merchandise-full merchantman and made *Chand Sodagar* a pauper.

But *Chand* did not give up, denying *Manasa's* tricks and with his human conviction & effort he again established his normal life & fortune. *Lakhindor*, his son was born. When he grew up, *Chand* fixed his marriage with *Behula* and as a precaution he made a iron bridal chamber, where no snake was able to creep in. But here too *Manasa* played her dirty trick and forced *Viswakarma*, the engineer-god to keep a capillary hole in the wall and sent her pet snake *Kalnagini* to enter slyly into the well protected iron-bridal chamber and bite *Chand's* last son *Lakhindor* to death.

Then follows the story of unique and fascinating *Behula* and *Lakhindor*, begins from their iron bridal chamber and continues. *Behula* with the body of her husband, *Lakhindor*, had put on a raft of banana stems and floated away in *Gangur* to some indefinite destination, facing and passing through various hazardous & agonising hurdles enforced by *Manasa* and lastly managed to reach the court of the god-king *Indra*, where she had to dance provocatively to win the mercy of the gods present and managed to enliven *Lakhindor*, but in one condition that *Chand* had to worship *Manasa*.

Finally *Chand* gives up to the affectionate plea of *Behula*, his beloved daughter-in-law, but never to *Manasa*, who gets her deity status at last.

6. MANASAMANGALIN RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Mangal Kavyas were created as a result of ignorance, fatalism and deep psycho-social insecurities those were engulfing the society. In spite of many finer differences, *ManasaMangal*, *ChandiMangal*, *Dharma Mangal*, *AnnadaMangal*, *SheetalaMangal* were grossly similar in nature. The dependence on god or such imaginative natural entities were born as a means of refuge & security from frightening & destructive natural calamities. But, if probed deeply, one may find a stark characteristic difference in the approach of the deities of *Mangal Kavyas*, some of them threatens, some bestows a gratifying approach and becomes extra-compassionate for managing their worship from the folks. Perhaps the diminishing age old traditional practices were the cause of such emergence. In this perspective and with a *Pauranik* outlook, we have to look into *ManasaMangal*.

7. MANASA MANGAL IN A POPULAR CONTEXT

While assessing *Manasa Mangal* in the light of popular context, we found that the body of the ballad is traditional & scriptural in nature, but the heart is very humane. Perhaps the poet had appreciated the struggle of the human in a broader spectrum and observed the conflicts of multiple ritualistic ideals outwardly, but felt the greatness of the human endeavour with a deep inner spirit.

While establishing the sublimity of the almighty deities, he could not disrespect the dignity & glory of the human being. The poet in his creation put an effort to glorify the human struggle that has earthly limitation, but ultimately conquered against all possible odds. Thus the win of the mighty goddess *Padma (Manasa)* over *Chand Sodagar* did not bestow with glory, but *Chand's* unvanquished struggle against her.

By describing the dignified & determined strife of a human against all odds, the poet receives the best laurel for his creation. Thus, *Chand Sodagar*, a human is ascertained his greatness, while his deity is not.

In *ManasaMangal*, lord *Shiva* is depicted in a folkloric style and his social and his family life is shown quite non-theologically. He is portrayed as an indifferent, lazy, harmless commoner and he is quite shaky in an adverse situation. He may be very popular and a loving deity to the folks, while they are passing their simple day to day life. But, while facing an untoward antagonistic situation, they are not able to depend on this simple hearted lord and instead

they seek someone apparently stronger and indomitable, like Goddess *Manasa*. Hence, Goddess *Manasa* was introduced and established by diminishing the popularity and prowess of lord *Shiva* and this was the prime objective of *Manasa Mangalkavya*.

Goddess *Manasa* is also known to us as any other dominating and ambitious woman in a society and with her divine qualities she also possesses the virtues and vices of an average woman. Some of her vices are very inhuman and satanic, yet she has to submit to *Chand Sodagar*, a human with his limited prowess and deep humane qualities and convictions, to whom finally *Manasa* has to pray with clasping palms to *Chand Sodagar* for establishing herself socially as a deity by introducing her worship among the folks –

‘Chandor Kop Dekhi Podmar Bhoy Atishoy
Jor Hate Kohe Debi Kariya Binoy’

[Frightened by the wrath of *Chand Sodagar*, *Padma (Manasa)* humbly asking for his mercy]

7. PHILOLOGICAL EVOLUTION IN MANGALKAVYAS

While flipping through some confining literary work of some claustrophobic past with a sophisticated modern outlook, we mostly find it's boorish in expressions that may seem at times unacceptable to our refined mind and may feel to discard it. Yet it is a fact that we cannot evaluate the progress of a period or a society without evaluating its literature in the milieu and ambience of that era.

In the eternal perspective, Bengali literature is apparently new and *Mangalkavyas* may be considered as the initial steps, where some signs of staggering are quite natural. The other factor was the claustrophobic social backdrop, where self-consciousness in a broader perspective and refined finesse of philological expression were absent or very assorted. The day-to-day experiences were expressed with a rustic and indigenous manner.

But progressively over the ages the core feelings were manifested in a refined elegance, which apparently looked quite simple, yet very special in nature, which had taken a journey from the crude expression of the *Mangalkavyas* of the past to a sophisticated literary stream of the future to gratify the future connoisseurs.

8. MANGALKAVYAS, AS THE MOTIVATORS OF THE MODERN LITERATURE AND THE NOVELISTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Before probing deep into the discussion, we may define which form of literature is considered modern. In general, prose, poetry and play genre of writings are regarded as modern literary work. The modern literature could not have been born, until inquisitiveness of creative human mind towards the diversified life in backdrop of the contemporary reality was transpired. Modern literature is such a cultural manifestation that expresses the various shades of human life with a crystal clear outlook and shows some unique objective point of view about life.

With the harbouring of complexities into the life and existence, a sensitive human mind has chosen this mode of expression, where it may paint the different shades of life on a vast canvas - that even may contain just a simplistic story of life. The root of the

elements required to create a literary form of modern literature, is interred into the literary soil of the past.

A prominent characteristic of modern literature is the expression of multiple shades of human mind and the key element is the human. The spirituality here becomes secondary. An earnest observation into the *Mangal Kavyas* expresses the same. The spirituality and supernatural imaginations have been liberated from traditional theological captivity and embrace the day-to-day simple human life. Keeping the divinity away, the modest living becomes earthlier and the same has been infused into the creative practices. The motivated artistic pursuit is sculpting more into reality and liberating itself from the clutches of the non-existing and imposed divinity. This deep sense of emancipation leads the way to more liberal and inspirational way towards modern literature.

Mangal Kavyas are considered religious in nature and has many realistic characters as per the need of the story, but poets had to take ample care to lead the story ahead with apt dialogues and with description of the surroundings. And there is a conflict between the frantic, worship-seeker deities and the folk those had denied to do the worship. The human protagonist becomes the rival of the antagonist deity. The same is prevailing in *Manasa Mangal* and *Chandi Mangal Kavya*. This fight between the protagonist and the antagonist motivates the form of modern literature to more fascinating one.

If a classification of characters in modern literature is sought, we shall get two kinds of characters in general – one having a straight mind and the other with a curved one. Both are significant in the creation of literature, though the curved ones are more palpable, because a modern litterateur finds more space in these characters to explore and express the inner depth of life more successfully. But, one noteworthy point is that in the mediaeval literatures the characters might not have achieved that individual prominence, as the trend was not there, but the characters like, *Chand Sodagar*, *Behula*, *Sonoka*, *Fullora*, *Lahona*, *Khullona*, *Ranjaboti*, *Bharu Datta*, *Murari Sil* and few others are definitely depicted well in those ballads. *Chand's* manly fight and protest against frenzied *Manasa*, *Behula's* determined clash with *Manasa* for her husband's life and such other accomplishment of human characters against evils and odds were glorified by the poets, which may be considered as the forerunner in the depiction of individual prominence in characters in modern literature.

A character is enlivened with the appropriateness of dialogue and a poet or a writer has to choose a right dramatic moment to enhance the interest of the story with impeccable dialogue. Unlike a dramatic approach, as it applied in a drama, a poet or a writer tries to sculpt a character's weal & woe, dark & bright aspects, ideology, cruelty, meanness, strength of character and many such accomplishments through dialogue. The same approach of *Mangal Kavyas* followed in modern literature, while achieving the two key aspects- progression of story and development of character with dialogue.

8. THE LAST WORDS ABOUT MANGALKAVYAS,

This literary journey may be described as an advent with the concept of a future evolutionary society, which was embedded in the womb of the past. The society, which was

imagined by the erstwhile the poets and the people - with an ideology that would preach harmonious unity instead of stark bellicosity and unity instead of conflict. And such ideological realisation would not have been possible, unless a beneficial atmosphere prevails in a society.

To achieve that ideological realisation, the poets of *Mangal Kavyas* evaded the stringency of the rituals and followed the honest expressions of the heart and the human mind and endeavour, which was undergoing the process of liberation. The natural evolution, both physically and psychologically in human was emancipating an invigorated shape through the practice of materialistic thoughts with the inner enlightened which was derived from the redeeming traditional and scriptural perceptions.

The *Mangal Kavyas*, regarded as the National literature is able to conveyed the inspired and enthralled expression of those masses, who had denied the agonizing social tyranny and onslaught with a strong earthly conviction for arriving to a new world.