

**Mysticism in Lalon and Tagore:  
A Question of Textual Influence and Intertextuality**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of  
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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## **Approval**

The thesis/project titled “Mysticism in Lalou and Tagore: A Question of Textual Influence and Intertextuality” submitted by

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## Abstract

Lalon shai, his philosophy and contribution in Bengali literature is vast; he is the 'Guru' of Baul music in Bangladesh. Lalon's song creates a huge impact in Bengali literature; but, his philosophy and 'Sadhana'(Meditation) is unknown to many people, the esoteric meaning of his songs is unknown to the general people. Hence, many intellectuals have followed Lalon shai in many ways, Rabindranath Tagore included; yet, the similarities of Tagore's and Lalon's literature is a topic which is undiscussed in English literature. So, this thesis will give an idea of 'Textual influence' and 'Intertextual relationship, of Lalon and Tagore's literature, primarily songs. In my thesis paper, I will describe the development of this mysticism. For this, I will trace back to 'Charyapada' the ancient vindication of Bengali literature; 'Esotericism' which is the hidden way to express the inner feeling of the Bauls' meditation and also 'Deho totto.,' non-duality and their connection with Lalon's mysticism. 'Intertextuality' and 'Textual influence' are the major theories of my paper, it means when a writer uses a text as a reference in another body of a text, the writer basically being influenced from that writing. My paper's major part is the influence that Tagore got from Lalon's song and philosophy; and both of their ideologies. Tagore not only got influenced by Lalon's song but also his attire and mystic philosophy attracted Tagore. My thesis will also talk about Lalon's humanistic, and secularistic thoughts about superstitious society of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, and his hatred towards the caste system. So, in the end, my thesis is a compact description of Intertextuality and Textual influence of Lalon and Tagore's literature and the similar philosophy they had.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Bengali language has come from the Indo-Aryan family, and its history is very archaic. Bengali literature, with its vast literary heritage dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. *Charyapada* the first example of Bengali literature in the ancient period, it was a collection of some mystical poems written by the believers of Buddhist Shohojia/*Sahajiana* basically the seer-poets named Luipada, Kanhapada, Kamilapada. This mystical poems collection was written in between 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. That was just the beginning of the Bengali literature after that a great deal of literature was produced such as Baru Chandidas (14th century) who rendered Jaydev's Sanskrit lyrics *Radha and Krishna* into Bangla. The names of several poets who went by the name of Chandidas have been found in the middle Ages: Adi Chandidas, Kavi Chandidas, Dviya Chandidas and Dina Chandidas, in the modern period Bengali literature was in its full form. The rise of the Bangla novel Peary Chand Mitra (1814-1883) and Kali Prasanna Singh (1840-1870) were the first Bangla novelists. Peary Chand Mitra was a fine essayist, writing on a variety of varied subjects. However, he also wrote the first Bangla novel, *Alaler gharer dulal*. (1858) Bengali literature also has its folk cultures basically the Folk tales, Folksongs, of which a significant portion contains Baulsongs. Baul songs were invented in 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century though its evolution is debated, but Baul song had its basic recognition in 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century and its inventor is Fakhir Lalon Shai (1774-1890), the Baul doctrine is the mixture of three concepts of three religions: Buddhist Sahajia, Vaishnav Sahajia and Islamic Sufism. Lalon songs are basically esoteric, through their songs Baul singers express their meditation in a symbolic way, only the followers of 'Baulism' can understand these songs. These songs have different themes and have been considered both Mystic and Secularistic. Lalon was born in a period when British colonialism was going on, he saw the downfall of a society how the people used to be oppressed by the British rulers and

he also saw a broken social condition which has created a huge impact in caste system and superstition. Lalon was also a victim of that caste system for that reason, he had to change his religion because his surroundings forced him to. Then he became a believer of Baul religion his Guru Shiraj shai influenced him to convert. He used to compose his songs and the topic of his songs was his surroundings and what was going wrong in that society, he always tried to figure it out by his songs. His songs and lyrics can easily attracts the mass people, the main subject of his song was practice to find the God which is inside everyone but one of the other topic of his song was about secularism, Lalon has been described as a naturally secular thinker, for whom Humanism superceded religious differences or ideologies, he composed his songs to protest against the conservative thoughts that were present in the rural areas. Lalon's mystic and humanitarian thought influenced Rabindranath Tagore and he composed many songs from the inspiration of Baul music, in fact there are many novels where Baul's charecter was portrayed by Tagore; together this verisimilitudes suggest the question of influence, both textual and philosophical, of Lalon on Tagore. In my thesis, a brief discussion will be held on Charyapada, because we have to trace back to find the origin of Baul songs, Charyapada is somehow interconnected with today's evolvement of Baul songs. The Esoterism, Non-duality and Deho-totto all are interconnected to Lalon's mysticism, I will discuss about their inter-relationship, theory of my paper which is Intertextuality and Textual influence they will be described shortly and finally, the intertextual relationship between Lalon and Tagore's literature and also Lalon's influence on Tagore will be discussed.

## **1.1 Research Question**

This thesis will be an investigation of the philosophical basis of Lalon's supposed mysticism and secularism in light of apparent similitude and influence of Lalon on Tagore. Specially the question is; is there any Intertextual relationship, whether of intertextuality and textual influence, between Lalon's and Tagore's work? A secondary question will delve into reasons for such inspiration and borrowing by Tagore.

## **1.2. Thesis Statement**

The aim of this paper is to find out the intertextuality and textual influence between Lalon's and Tagore's work and a simple Baul singer Lalon, who created a huge impact on Tagore's mind and philosophy. It will further uncover the superstitious cultural thoughts in Lalon's society that was dividing people's unity.

## Chapter 2

### Research Methodology

For my research paper I will use Intertextuality theory, as a framework which will examine Lalon's humanitarian thoughts about his society, Lalon's mystic thoughts about God, Lalon's inspiration for Tagore, especially how Lalon's philosophy and thoughts inspires Tagore in his lifestyles and his belief. Intertextuality needs to be distinguished from Textual Influence. First of all, the main focusing theory of my paper is Intertextuality, which is basically a literary device used as a textual reference within a body of a text, which again reflects that the text used as a reference. Intertextuality basically takes the concept and ideology from another text and merge in the new text. It is basically retelling and old story and rewriting an old story into a modern context. Intertextuality means taking a text unintentionally or uncontrollably from another text and interjecting that text into a body of another. Though authors sometimes do not actually notices this fact but readers identify that fact. Textual Influence is completely opposite of Intertextuality; in this case, an author got inspired from a text from another author and intentionally referred to the text in the body of his text. That author also accepts the fact that his writings are inspired from other writers, that influence can be of many types such as writings, newspaper articles, concepts etc.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Review of Literature**

In this section, I will be referring to those books and scholarly articles that are relevant to the area of my research. These chapters will discuss elaborately how these theories and prior research are related to my research and what scholar's have said about that issues will also be discussed. So, a brief summary of the researches will be given and how that links to my thesis will also be mentioned.

#### **3.1. Brief Introduction**

My research will look back on the history of Bengali literature, it will trace back to Charyapada's literature period to examine how mystic thought came in Lalon's mind generation to generation, I will also discuss about esoteric philosophy and Deho-Tatta, this chapter will also cover a brief discussion about Textual influence and Intertextuality and finally, Lalon's influence for Tagore; their texts and lifestyle were connected at a certain period of time, the intertextual relationship in their texts.

#### **3.(a).Charyapada**

'Baul' this name is known to every Bengali; Baul songs have been popular in Bengali society. We have to trace back, to find the evolution of this Baul community. The time is thousand years back, when Buddhist 'Sahajiana's disciples used to express their worship through songs, delivering the songs in an esoteric manner to their followers. That type of song used to be called 'Charyapada' or 'Charyagiti'. According to Banglapedia:

-“The language of the Charyapada is referred to as 'Alo-Andhari' (light and shadow) or 'Sandhya bhasa' (twilight language). Though predominantly Bangla-with

a recurrence of such words as 'Babgal Desh', 'Panuya Khal' (the river Padma), 'Babgali Bhaili'-it also draws from Oriya, Assamese or Ahamiya and Bihari, suggesting that the Charyapada poets came from the regions of Bengal, Orissa, Assam, and Bihar. The Charyapada poets include Sarhapa, Shabarpa, luipa, Dombipa, Bhusukupa, kahnapa, Kukkuripa, Minapa, Aryadev, Dhendhanpa.”-

Baul worship and Baul songs are included in this 'Charyapada'. The ancient idea of Baul can be traced from 'Buddhist Sahajiana', but the concept of Baul has a deep relation with 'Hindu, 'Muslim', 'Buddhist' 'Sahajiana'. Baul doctrine evolved in medieval period in Bengal. Upendranath Bhattacharya said "The Baul philosophy in Bengal evolved between (1625-1675) B.C"(11). Baul doctrine has its influence from 'Islamic Sufism' and 'Vaishnava Sahajiana'. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury said-"The word 'Baul' came from the word 'Batul', some people said that from 'Charyapada's 'Bajrakul' the word 'Baul' has evolved"- (11). Md. Intaj ali said:

-“Baul is widely known and appreciated as a folk music of Bengal but it is a religious sect that espouses a specific philosophy through their songs. Members of the sect are called Bauls, and what they sing is popularly called baul-gaan (baul songs). These wandering musicians have a special place in the history of Bengali folk tradition and spiritual ideology. Bauls live in a community, but do not adhere to any particular religion”- (2).

There is always a community that exists in this society which community hates inequality in the society, the racism, the caste system and emphasize a 'pure' love or 'Sahoj'

way or path, involving loving people, avoiding traditional religion and wanting to establish mystic thoughts through their songs.

### **3.(b). Esoteric Philosophy**

Esoteric is defined as; the quality of having an inner or secret meaning. This term and its correlative exoteric were first applied in the ancient Greek mysteries to those who were initiated (eso, “within”) and to those who were not (exo, “outside”), respectively. Esoteric in the sense of mystic is also used to describe certain schools of Buddhism. The basic focus of Baul’s worship is their ‘Guru’; this worship centers body and soul. Baul community has no religious books, they have their songs and the sayings of their Guru’s by this, they follow their lifestyle. There are many types of Baul songs they are- ‘Deho-totto’, ‘Manush-totto’, ‘Gouro-totto etc. Likewise ‘Buddhist Sahajiana’ Baul songs also have hidden or esoteric ways to express their worship, the people outside of their community will not be able to understand their esoteric language. Nobody will solve that riddle without worship and by the help of the Guru. The Baul’s are highly restricted to keep that words hidden from the outsiders.

Apon vojonkotha na kohibo jotha totha  
Apna te apni hoibe shabdhan.(Chowdhury,13)

This song refers that, a member of Baul community should hide the process of their worship, this is a strict regulation from their religion or doctrine. Only their followers were able to know the proper meaning of these songs, as the outsiders would have found many very confusing.

Like, other Baul songs Lalon’s songs, are also mystic, here they also speak of a God that is within oneself, Lalon named the God ‘Moner Manush’, to find this ‘Moner Manush’

is not an easy task, a strict worship and prayer is required to find this 'Moner Manush', for this, Lalon used to compose and sing very different types of songs the actual meaning of these songs are unknown to the listeners, the mystic song contains Esotericism.

That Man mixes within this man  
 Saints and sages, hermits and Yogis  
 Are searching for him for four ages  
 As the moon is reflected on the water  
 But who can catch it by hand.  
 Likewise that invisible man  
 Sits on the unknown world. (Hossain, 268)

This song actually mention the search for the Invisible Man, but he is hidden somewhere and Lalon is searching for him, Lalon can see, can feel that Invisible Man but he is unable to catch him.

### **3.(c).Duality/Non-duality**

Whether or not a spiritual philosophy is Dualist or Non-dual makes a huge difference in terms of how it formulates our relationship with the world, finding the meaning of life, the nature of reality and what we are seeking to realize. Dual means two-specifically the two are set up in opposition and separate in some way. The hope of Dualism is basically if there is a spirit or soul distinct from the body, we can imagine it surviving the death of the body. If there is a second world beyond this world, why, that is where this surviving soul will go after the body dies. Dualism is a theory that basically tells that philosophy of mind is non-physical. Body and mind are separable, and this philosophy encompasses a set of views about the relationship between mind and matter, subject and object. On the other hand, Nic Higham describes about Non-duality, he said:



-“Non-duality’ is actually a translation of the Sanskrit word ‘Advaita’, which simply means ‘not two’ and points to the essential oneness (wholeness, completeness, unity) of life, a wholeness which exists here and now, prior to any apparent separation. It’s a word that points to an intimacy, a love beyond words, right at the heart of present moment experience. It’s a word that points us back Home. And despite the compelling appearance of separation and diversity there is only one universal essence, one reality. Oneness is all there is – and we are included”- (1).

Dualism discusses the division of body and mind in the western philosophy from the perspective of alternative body and soul, Yoga/Samkhya a school of indic philosophy based on sacred Vedic texts. Nic Higham mentions -“In the schools of Yogic Non-Dualism, we primarily have Advaita Vedanta and Tantra. They believe that the inherent nature of all things is Consciousness, or the True Self, and that there is only One Consciousness or Self.”- (2). The Non –dualism is all about the oneness, one Consciousness, one self, true self. Non-duality is not against Dualism, it is an open space where every thoughts and feelings are allowed to appear and disappear. It is not personal and impersonal, it holds all the concepts as they come and go. Lalon also believed in true self rather believing in Deities and God he believed that one self is just like an open space where any thought can come, Non-dualism is related to Theravada Buddhism, Tantra, Vajrayana. Bahujanahitaya describes Duality and Non-duality more closely, he said:

-“It teaches with kalyana-mitta or a spiritual friend and takes refuge in the Buddha dhamma and the sangha, whereas, Dualism basically teaches in the manner of Traditional Vedanta with a guru, who is seen as being the supreme God, Lord, divine

or holy: a Bhagavan or Supreme Being, avatar, or God on earth and of the heavens above, and everything that exists.”- (Sutta,11). Lalon said:

I do not know myself  
Who is uncatchable on the earth and in religion  
How could I know him. ( Hossain,230).

Here, Lalon mentions that he can not find himself, he himself is lost somewhere he could not find him on the earth he is no more in any religion, and also he interrogates he could not recognize him.

### **3.(d).Deho-Totto or The concept of Body and Soul**

From Duality and Non-duality, we may move toward Deho-Totto or the concept of Body and Soul. Depending on this Deho-Totto theory Lalon composed many mystic songs and these songs indicates Lalon’s mystic thoughts. The author Abu Ishhaq Hossain observes “philosophically speaking, the root essence of mystic philosophy of Bengal is centered on the term ‘Unknown Bird’ which for hundred years mesmerized the thinking surface of Bangalees as well as claiming the curious enthusiasm of the world”(56). ‘Unknown Bird’ is an important term, this term is unknown to most of the people, very few people know the actual meaning of that term outside the Baul tradition and its aura makes one want to know its proper meaning. The term ‘Unknown Bird’ has a significant space in Bengali literature and philosophical discourse.

How does the Unknown Bird go  
 Into the cage and out again?  
 Could I but seize it,  
 I would put the fetters of my heart  
 Around its feet.

The cage has eight rooms and nine closed doors;  
 From time to time fire flares out. (Hossain,57)

Abu Ishaq Hossain also mentions -“ Baul philosophy, utterly the Body mystic philosophy has mostly been developed evolving two particular terms ‘The Unknown Bird’ and ‘Cage’ which at the same time echoes the utterance of world philosophy. But, at this stage, we try to comprehend it according to Lalonic elucidation. Lalon herein, by the word ‘cage’ expresses body mystic philosophy adopting the metaphor of human body and bird successfully compared with subject and object as well. Lalon fakhir symbolizes this body as an unconscious phenomenon and soul as the conscious one which invigorates the body”-(57).

(yet) the cage was made by you,  
 Made with green bamboo;  
 The cage may fall apart any day. (Hossain, 57)

Baulism is basically Guruism based . Without Guru they do not have any rescuer and without following Guru’s instruction they cannot perform any ‘Sadhana.’(Meditation) Without performing ‘Sadhana’(Meditation) properly raw body is not suitable for the ‘Unknown Bird’ to reside. For this reason, Lalon warns his disciples to make the cage sound and safe for the ‘Unknown Bird’, otherwise the unknown bird will fly away from the cage. If the ‘Unknown Bird’ flies away the cage will collapse and this vulnerable life will end because this body (cage) is a consciousness matter and the soul ( Unknown Bird) makes it

animated. Human body which is a-consciousness in material form this body actually finds sense and has a thought about what to do or not when it's connected to soul, without the presence of the soul the body becomes useless and it loses all its sensual activities, human body is the basic form of consciousness, when there is a presence of soul human body indicates that, that is how human body became a consciousness matter. This human body cannot function without the soul which is the 'Unknown Bird.' So, without presence of the Unknown Bird the body is meaningless.

Shall we ever get such a valuable human life again?

O my mind, whatever you intend to do

Do it early in this world. ( Hossain,288)

Actually in this song, Lalou praisess the soul, by praising, he said this soul actually makes the decision that what a man should do or not. He also said that we are actually proud that we have a soul, this soul makes a man best in the world. Mustafa Zaman, art critic and writer, also described Body Mysticism he said:

-“Kaya-shadhana, which is integral to achieving a state of shahoj manush, is a method of corporeal meditation to attend to both internal and the external worlds working as a unified force; thus the macrocosmic stands aligned with the microcosmic in the Lalonian way. Though informed by yogic practices of self ordering, unlike yogic strictures, it is driven by non-esoteric, real-life engagement with other bodies in the body politic with kaam or desire, including sexual and spiritual love motoring its engine. With the Kaya as the locus, Chakrabarty's perception seemed to provide a clear guide. The bipolarity of aunumaan (assumption) and bartomaan (real, though in literal translation: now), which he situates in the subaltern belief system, prioritizes

the body before any kinds of excursions into the realm of the divine – such as pilgrimage or even privileging of the holy spirit”-(4).

This comment actually justifies that, Deho-totto gives preference to human body over any religion, worshiping a body can make anyone achieve this divine feeling which is equal to any holy spirit.

### **3.2. Textual Influence and Intertextuality Theory**

In this chapter I will discuss the differing definitions of Intertextuality and Textual Influence, and how these two theories are connected in research. First of all, Intertextuality is how texts shape each other, their interrelationship, the way similar or different texts differ, reflect or Influence each other using a textual reference within some body of text, Intertextuality just takes the concept, Ideology from another text rather taking referential phrases into the new text. This is just like retelling an old story or rewriting a popular story in a modern concept. A writer take ideas from previous text just to give a layer of meaning in his text. When a reader reads a new text which is influenced from another text it gives them a different meaning, changing technique of interpretation of the original text. For writers, intertextuality allows them to open new perspectives and possibilities to construct their stories. Thus, writers may explore a particular ideology in their narrative by discussing recent rhetoric in the original text. However, there also are many examples of intertextuality that are either accidental on the part of the author or optional, in the sense that the reader is not required to understand the similarities between texts to fully grasp the significance of the secondary text. So, Intertextuality is basically when an author got influenced from another text which is written previously and merged it in his text to give a new meaning, and that merged body is also used as a textual reference. Intertextuality has several arguments and counter-arguments, on the other hand, according to Snyman:

-“Textual influence pertains to historical criticism in that it focuses on the author and his/her production of the text, asking what the influences were that led the author to writing a particular text. By investigating the responses of an author to texts s/he is assumed to have read, one, may, come closer to a picture of the author as maker. Textual influence is a biographical exercise in determining causes that led the author to use certain sources of influence”-(436).

Textual Influence focuses on the production of author texts and makes a reader think what kind of influence an author gets to write that particular text. Textual Influence basically determines the actual causes that led the authors to use the certain text and also determines why an author is influenced by that particular text. Intertextuality and Textual Influence have significant differences; for example, when an author uses a text as a reference and also adds that text into body of his writing this is called Intertextuality, that text also refers that the particular text has been used as reference. This can be direct borrowing or can be indirect like allusion and translation. The function of the effectiveness of intertextuality often depends on readers knowledge and understanding before reading the secondary text. A reader has to know what is allusion and parody are, before understanding that either the text is alluded or parodied. On the other hand, Textual influence is quite different from Intertextuality, Textual Influence basically focuses on the authors production of text and investigates what the influences of on an author. Textual Influence basically determines the causes actually it analyses the causes that led the author to use certain source of influence.

Intertextuality is the theory that I will be using in my paper, and if we look closely at Lalon and Tagore’s work we will find a relation between them, Tagore was influenced by Lalon’s songs, the lifestyle of the Baul, and also Lalon’s philosophy about life. Once, Tagore

became completely Baul and he started composing songs with the combination of the music of Baul song. The lyrics and songs of Baul, as well as their concepts deeply inspired Tagore. We have found intertextuality in many songs of Tagore, as example, in a Lalon's song,

The key of my locked house is under outer's custody  
How do I watch the pearl of that house opening the gate?  
(Hossain,238)

Tagore was inspired by this song, and by inspiring he wrote a song whose meaning is almost same as Lalon's song, he wrote:

Who'll break me free and take me out,  
O, My friend!  
Lonely I am, time seems to freeze for me,  
You being out of sight. (Ganguly,1)

This song can equalize or express the same meaning of Lalon's song, one that expresses the key of the locked house is under another person's custody. And the other one was calling the person who might let him escape from the custody, so there is resemblance between two songs: the meaning of the songs are same but the words are different, Tagore actually did not copy Tagore's song, he just took the meaning from Lalon's song.

Abul Ahsan Chowdhury mentions in one of his books that -"Tagore was the first person who published Lalon's song in a literary magazine named "Probashi" in 'Vadro-1314' edition. Tagore was very much obsessed about Lalon, Tagore in his novel named *Gora* mentioned a Baul who was standing beside a store and singing"- (84).

The unknown Bird in the cage  
 How does it fly in and out?  
 And put my minds chains around its feet  
 Catchit,I would, if I could. (Chowdhury 84)

This is an example that Tagore, in his novel named *Gora* brought Lalon's character a Baul, Additionally, Tagore's reflection of Lalon's concepts reveal Intertextuality. A reader can easily observe that Tagore is bringing Lalon's reference into the body of his novel.

### **3.3.Influence of Lalon's life on his Philosophy**

Lalon's lifestyle, basically the information about his Religion, Caste and his birthplace was unknown at one period of time, but, nowadays we got a lot of information about Lalon through some hardworking researcher. Lalon had died on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1890. Mir Mosharraf Hossain said on his literary magazine *Hitokari* that Lalon was known as 'Kayasth'. Mir Mosharraf Hossain used to know Lalon. Similarly, Moulovi Abdul Wali said Lalon was known as 'Kayasth', he and his 'Guru' Shiraj Shai was born in Harishpur village of Jessore district. Before Abul Wali's statement, nobody knew the truth. Lalon Fakhir was the most celebrated and most renowned name of Bengali language was a mystic poet, Baul Sadhak and philosopher. Today, the influence of Lalon's mystic philosophy inundates the entire world.

Abu Ishhaq Hossain in one of his book describe Lalon's life like this:

-“Lalon's personal life is full of clandestine and enigma. It is difficult to ascertain actually where and when Lalon was born. When Fakhir Lalon died in 1890, a local fortnightly magazine *Hitokari* edited by Mir Mosharraf Hossain, carried out an essay on Fakhir Lalon Shai titled *Mahatma Lalon Fakhir* in this essay it was written ‘



it is very hard to get substantial evidence to write his biography. He did not disclose anything about himself. His disciples either due to their ignorance or for prohibition by Lalon Fakhir decline to voice anything about him. But it is believed that Lalon was a *Kaesthoby* caste. Members of *Bhoumic* family of Chapra under Kushtia were his relatives. None of his relatives is left alive. There is an evidence that once on his way to pilgrimage, Lalon was infected by chicken pox and was abandoned by his fellow companions. He was rescued by a Muslim family and with their affectionate care Lalon recovered from ailment and at the end he established himself as a Fakhir. On his face chicken pox took its toll with deep spots. He passed his last breath on 17<sup>th</sup> October at the age of 116 years”- (40).

This author added some more information, he said:

-“Lalon Fakhir was the pacesetter of a new religion. It can be noted here that between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the then Nadiya district, some folk religions surfaced having substantial influence on general mass. *Kartabhaja*, *Saheb dhani* and *Balahari* are noteworthy among those and it is Akshay Kumar Dutta who focused on folk religion deliberately in his book *Bhartiyo Upashak Samprodai* where he illustrated around forty folk religions”-(41).

Lalon actually did not initiate any movement he just revived one movement that is ‘Baul’ that was initiated in 17<sup>th</sup> century, the basic goal of this religion is to uphold the dignity of human being. Baulism is also a part of other folk religion, Baulism was under the leadership of Lalon, this religion embraced the common people rapidly, this religion became a threat for the other classic religion. The classic religion was all about caste and the inequality in the society, but in Baulism all humans are equal, there is no difference between the caste or the religion. Lalon

Fakir's philosophy was to uphold the highness of human beings. In his early age he was abandoned by his religion for that he had to separate from his family and society this incident created a huge impact on his life, depending on this incident he became a Baul, converted into a new religion where there is no inequality and caste system. Lalon said:

Everybody inquires of Lalon's caste  
Lalon replies how the caste is looked like  
I did not see it in my eyes. (Hossain,656)

In this song, everybody inquires about Lalon's caste, that which caste he belongs to, but Lalon replies them that he does not belong to any religion. The people of every religion is equal to him. Whenever that question arises he replies to them in this way:

Everybody inquires of Lalon's caste  
Whom do I make understood  
I myself do not bother for caste. (Hossain,660).

Lalon, in this song simply mentions that he does not bother to any religion, he hated the caste system and the inequality between humans. In, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, the society was full of superstition, humanity was not present there. Caste system was a big issue on that period, Lalon was 'Kayestho' in caste. Lalon had noticed that this caste system creates the inequality in the society, Lalon was also victim of this Caste system, for this reason, he had a thought to establish the greatness of human being, he used to believe in this statement 'humanity is higher than any religion.'

### 3.4. Lalon's Inspiration for Tagore

The philosophy and songs of Lalon attracted many intellectuals of Bengal. The author and researcher Abu Ishhaq Hossain mentions “Rabindranath Tagore not only attracted by the Baul philosophy and songs, but he also had followed Baul philosophy in his life. After having knowledge about Lalon's songs and his philosophy Tagore started to collect Lalon's songs and he started to live like Bauls”(209). We can find a similarity between Lalon's ‘Moner Manush’(Man of Heart) and Tagore's Jibon Devta’. The inspiration for many of Tagore's humanitarian thoughts came from Baul songs such as this, in fact we can trace the development of his thoughts in this area through intertextuality, Baul song and worship has strongly attached to Tagore's heart. The Baul has been included many times in Tagore's short stories, novels, plays, songs and poetry, by this Tagore became like Lalon. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury talks about Tagore's transformation “Baul's attire influenced Tagore just like Baul's songs, Lyrics and theories influenced him, Bauls' gown have become a symbol of Tagore's attire”(78) The major causes of Tagore's inspiration for Lalon are Lalon's song and Tagore's interactions with his disciples. Tagore discussed this in his widely known book, -  
*The religion of man:-*

-“One day I was chanced to hear a song from a beggar belonging to the Baul sect of Bengal... What struck me in this simple song was a religious expression that was neither grossly concrete, full of crude details, not metaphysical in its rarefied transcendentalism. At the same time it was alive with an emotional sincerity. It spoke of an intense yearning of the heart for the divine who is in Man and not in the temple, or scriptures, in images and symbols. The worshippers addresses his songs to Man the ideal”-(96).

There are many debates about Lalon and Tagore's face to face Conversation:- some critics have said they had a conversation and some said they had not a conversation. Jaladhar Sen mentions in *Kangal-Jiboni* that "I heard that once Lalon Fakhir visited to Tagore's Shilaidoho's house and performed, the programme held from morning to evening; on that particular time nobody barely moved"(Chowdhury,79).But some critic has different opinion, Sachindranath Odhikari claimed "There is no reliable source that proves Tagore knows Lalon, some people said Tagore had a conversation with Lalon but it is not believeable"(Chowdhury,79).As; this incident of Tagore and Lalon's conversation is controversial, that incident is unsolved.

Tagore came to 'Shilaidaha' to look after his land, on that period he came to know 'Baul-Fakhir and Vaishnavs.' After coming to this place he felt the mystic thoughts of Bauls and kept that feelings in his heart. Tagore was among the first to publish Lalon's songs;- that is the reason why people knew about Lalon and his talent. Tagore first mentioned Lalon's song in the literary magazine named '*Probashi*' "Vadro-1314' edition, he also mentioned a Baul character in his Novel *Gora*. When Tagore was in 'Shilaidaha' he took initiative to collect Lalon's songs, he collected Lalon's song's collection from 'Cheuria's akhra' which is now in 'Ravindra bhavan.'The music, lyrics, theory of Baul song deeply affected Tagore.Tagore explained "my many songs are quite similar to Baul song, but I don't want to copy those; that belongs to 'Rabindrabaul'.Lalon's famous song *Khachar vetor ochin pakhi kemne ashe jay* was the source of Tagore's inspired thought process. Shoshivushan dasgupta said "Lalon Fakhir;s *Khachar vetor achin pakhi kemne ashe jay* revolves around a question that resembles Tagore's deep interrogation about life"(Chowdhury,88).Baulism and philosophy which was fulfilled in Lalon that inspired Tagore's philosophy about life. Lalon's song inspires Tagore's song and poems also. If we notice Lalon said

The key of my locked house is under another's custody  
How do I watch the pearl of that house opening the gate?  
(Hossain,238)

Tagore said:

Who'll break me free and take me out,  
O, My friend!  
Lonely I am, time seems to freeze for me,  
You being out of sight. (Ganguly,1).

These two songs can be compared to one another, one said that the key of his locked house is outers custody and other one mention the savior as his friend. Deho mysticism is the major Sadhana of Baul, if anyone does not know where is man of heart then the Sadhana will not fulfil. Lalon said,

I didn't see him  
Even for a single day in my whole life  
Who resides in my body chamber. (Hossain,236)

Besides that Tagore said,

My eyes could not find you -  
As you had sneaked into my heart.  
Looking into my core I did ignore -  
As my gaze beamed outward. (Ganguly,1)

If someone knows about himself he can recognize of 'Achin Manush', the identity is hidden in self-searching. Tagore was a great artist that is why he edited Lalon's songs and reinvented that song in a new way which is the composition of 'Rabindrabaul.' Though Tagore was influenced by Lalon's philosophy and attire there is some difference in their

writing style and chosen language. Arguing against easy similitudes regarding the latter, Mustafa Zaman notes;

-“Chakrabarty also likens the semantic achievement of Lalon with that of Rabindranath's, which is a travesty of judgment, as Lalon uses a hybrid language Rabindranath never even paid much heed to, a language where Arabic, Sanskrit and Farsi terms share space with phraseologies from Hindu, Buddhist cults, including the most influential Chaitanya Vaishnavism”- (3).

### **3.5. Secularistic Lalon was against social Inequality**

Social- conscious poet Lalon Fakhir was always against conservative and religious superstitious thoughts of the society. His songs are not only about secularism but also about existentialist and social thoughts. He was never inspired by anyone for this type of thoughts. His secularistic inclination had a combination with his logical thinking. He was a ‘Baul Fakhir’, his lyrics and music can easily attract anyone’s mind and feelings. Basically, esoteric meditation is the major area of his song, besides he also talks about secularism, existentialism and humanism in his songs- as mentioned earlier, Lalon was against the caste system and also against the inequality between Hindu-Muslims that occurred because of religion. He also brought up radical spiritual and moral questions regarding social justice in his songs, such as the following:

Please tell me how God is the justice?  
If he is a real justice  
Why does the discrimination of rich and poor  
Prevail on earth? (Hossain,350)

In this song, Lalon criticises the notion of the justice of God, asking whether God is a true justice or not, if he is a true justice then why there exists two classes in society? Why there is rich and poor? Why one class leading a happy life and another class in complete misery? The author of Bengali literature named Mohammad Moniruzzaman said -“Lalon used to believe that religious distinction brings unrest in the society. He always showed logic in his songs and protested against social inequality. These songs are all about the human and their unique station”- (102). in this vein Lalon said the following about human life:

Shall we ever get such a valuable human life again?  
O my mind, whatever you intend to do  
Do it early in this world. (Hossain, 288)

Moniruzzaman also added -“In the British colonialism period, the condition of the farmer was very poor. In the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century British rulers started to oppress the Bengali farmers, as a result the farmers used to complain to the magistrate of supreme court, but the farmers never got their justice”-(102).

Lalon knows everything about this that is why he said:

Rajjeshor raja jini,  
Chorer o she shiromoni,  
Nalish korbo ami  
Konkhane kar nikote.(Moniruzzaman, 103)

In this song, Lalon explained the corrupted British ruler in Bengal, British ruler oppressed the general people of Bengal, these people were helpless because the supreme court also belongs to the British government so the people would not get proper justice. Lalon also asked that, where the general people will get proper justice if the government itself

is corrupted. Lalon puts humans in the highest position of the society, Abu Ishhaq Hossain said -“No one can demean humans for the sake of religion. But this religion is the main reason why human is always underestimated. Caste system actually created the division between people, it has also created the ‘Untouchable’ tradition in the society. For this inequality, the people from lower class have suffered most.”-(112) Lalon said about this inequality:

Jaat na gele pai na hori  
 Ki chaar jaater gourab kori  
 Chushne boliye,  
 Lalon koy jaat hat a pele  
 Poratam agun diye. (Hossain, 113)”

Here, Lalon mentioned his hatred about the caste system, this caste system brings the ‘Untouchable’ in the society which is main reason that created social inequality, only for this caste system, lower caste people are being oppressed by the society that is why Lalon wanted to destroy that caste system. Once Lalon was being asked that what his caste is? He said:

Everybody inquires of Lalon’s religion  
 Whether he is Hindu or Muslim in faith  
 Lalon says I do not bother for religion.(Hossain, 658)

Lalon wanted to help society to recover from superstition, Lalon believed that, every person is same, no one is superior to another. That is why when someone asked about Lalon’s caste he replied that, he does not know anything of his caste. This is how Lalon expressed his secular thoughts through his songs.



### 3.6. Lalon's hatred towards class distinction and caste system

Lalon was born in a 17<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, when the society was contaminated superstition, the general people were oppressed by the British rulers, the high class society always looks down upon the lower class people. Another major matter of that period was caste system which basically created the inequality in society. Lalon was also a victim of this caste system, for this matter he had to left his society and family. Klaus Beurle talks about the era of Lalon shai, he said:

-“The era when Lalon Shah composed his poems was a period with a society marked by caste system and caste oppression. The people used folk songs and folk poetry to vent their emotions and pains. While singing during the whole night they forgot their bitter fate, their *karma* or *kismet* as they do it until now. They used their own Puranic stories and legends to express their sufferings and hopes. People had their own hermeneutics to explain their social stratifications”-(1).

Puranic stories are basically the sacred literature of Hinduism, puranic literature were written in a narrative couplets, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* both were Puranic literature. Lalon used to protest against this evil of the society by his songs, he criticised the system of the society, and supporting the lower caste people, these people wanted to get rid of this kind of social and religious oppression. Beurle also mentions:

-“Lalon had experienced himself the marginalisation and humiliation by the religious leaders of a caste ridden society. He used in his poetic songs the same means – folk philosophy and poetry - as the Brahmins did. He did it not for the sake of justifying but of opposing the repressive caste system. However, his songs are more than mere expressions of rejection of the evils contaminating religion, society and

culture. They are first of all existential expressions of Lalon's longing for the One, for the Beloved by which he expressed the experiences and longings of the ordinary peasant and fisher folk and their desire to escape from social and religious oppression and exploitation"- (2)

Lalon's songs are not for the high class society who lives their life in a pleasant way, his songs are for the lower class people who are the victim of society's injustice. Lalon was driven by his vision of a class- and casteless society. *Jātir utpati kothāe?* He was asking (where lies the origin of caste?) replying that there is no divine hand in the creation of a caste system. He criticized people following the caste system by claiming to be religious and devotees of the Divine as betrayers of religion and of the Divine. Refusing to acknowledge the Divine in the human person, they are to him like blind people in the darkness. Lalon always wanted to know the origin of caste, sometimes he blamed people for having this kind of superstitious belief, the belief of the caste system, Lalon also thinks that it is a false belief, there is no existence of caste system in any religion it is completely a man made idea for believing this false idea lalon mentions everyone as a blind person who lives in the darkness. Lalon criticized and challenged the mercilessness of the elite class, even now in many places this caste system is still exists and the lower class people are still suffering. Lalon used to search for God and religion through human. From his point of view, human is worthy only for being worship. No religion can bring happiness if we forget about human. Religion and humanism both are opposite to others, but Lalon combined this two things and he saw these into human. There is no God without human. Lalon said:

Odhor chander koto I khela  
 Sorbo uttom manush lila  
 Na bujhe mon- holi vola  
 Manush birodhi. ( Hossain,112)

This song describes the greatness of human, taking humans in a higher position than religion, religion and humanism both can be found in human, and worshipping a human is a best worship. If someone does not realize it he is against humanism. Abu Ishhaq Hossain said -“ Lalon used to see human not into a religious perspective, Lalon was astonished after seeing caste system in his society. Lalon was also hurt by the ‘Untouchable’ fact that exists in the society”-(113). That is why Lalon wanted to established a humanism philosophy in the society, he said:

Everyone is scared of losing his caste  
 What a strange fallacy it is!  
 None is on the right terrace  
 Everybody is in wrong track.( Hossain,398)

In this song, Lalon describe the existing caste system in the society, the function of this caste system and this system enhance the inequality of human, the whole society is going in a wrong way just because of this caste system. So, Lalon in most of his songs wanted to discuss its dangerousness in the society and this caste system is opposing to develop humanism in a society.

## Chapter 4:

### Mystic Thoughts of Lalon

In this chapter, firstly, I will give a small introduction about Mysticism, then I will discuss about the mystic thoughts that Lalon had through his life, how Lalon observes his surroundings with good logic and free mindedly, at the end, Lalon's searching for God and invention of God within Thyself.

#### 4.1. Lalon's Mystic thoughts in his lifetime

Before discussing Lalon's mystic thoughts, I want to discuss about mysticism, What do we mean when we are saying Lalon Fakir is a mystic poet? What do we mean with mysticism? "Mysticism," according to Merkur , "mysticism is basically the practice of religious ecstasies (religious experiences during alternate states of consciousness), together with whatever ideologies, ethics, rites, myths, legends, and magic may be related to them"(1).It can also be said that, mysticism is a belief that the knowledge of God and real truth can be gain by meditation and spiritual vision that comes from mind and sense. A mystic person believes in that spiritual vision that comes from proper meditation.Dan Merkur describes mysticisemas a term:

-“The term ‘Mystic’ comes from the Greek noun ‘Mystes’,which originally designated an initiate of a secret cult or mystery religion. In Classical Greece and during the Hellenistic Age, the rites of the mystery religions were largely or wholly secret. The term mystes is itself derived from the verb myein (“to close,” especially the eyes or mouth) and signified a person who kept a secret”-(1).

Klaus Beurle gives a deep concept of mysticism, he said:

-“Mysticism, putting aside esoteric or mere emotional ecstasy, is an intense spiritual search for the divine, an experience of what is unconceivable, indescribable and unseen. Basically mysticism is a deep longing and yearning for the Infinite to overcome separation between the human and the divine One and thus to overcome any kind of segregation”-(2).

Now, let's talk about Lalon's Mystic thoughts, how this mystic thoughts came to Lalon's mind it is a question, Lalon was born as a 'Kayestho', this caste is the lower caste of Hindu religion, so 'Untouchable' system was present, In the early age, Lalon was abandoned by his society due to Untouchable fact. That incident hurt him, Lalon noticed his surroundings and thought if there is God the condition of a society will not be like this, there would be no caste system, Inequality in the society, he also observed that God is the creation of Man, they have a belief that God and Deities have special power, it can protect them from any danger, but Lalon realized that the God which is made of clay and soil cannot protect a man, Lalon said :

You will be the enlightened one  
Through offering worship towards Man  
Otherwise, you the crazy must fail to achieve target. (Hossain,574)

In this song Lalon, actually praises the Human being and gives highness in the society, he also mentioned that a person can be enlighten by worshiping Man rather worshiping a statue which is made of clay. If someone does not worship Man, he will fail to achieve his target. Abdul Wahab a researcher and author talks about Lalon's belief. He said:

-“In the philosophy of Lalon the existence of God is questionable, Lalon shai who is the ultimate leader of Baul, that Baul religion never supported the inequality of race and caste. Rich-poor, man-women all are equal in the eye of Baul religion. Lalon always mentions equality in his songs, Bauls never believe in the invisible, that which is invisible and unsolved for them”-(114).

Thus, Lalon and his religion do believe in mysticism which is actually not believe in God rather believe in thyself.

#### **4.2. Lalon’s Free mind and logical judgement**

Lalon shai was brought up in a society where there is no scope to express free will, the period was 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century when British colonialism was going on, the society was experiencing many crisis. The caste system was destroying the whole society, there was no equality in the society, there was always a vendetta going on between Hindu and Muslim religion. Lalon was also a victim of that society, his society abandoned him for just a simple reason, caste system played a huge role on that incident. Lalon found that society very uncertain and hazardous, that is why he became separated from that society he made Siraz shai as his ‘Guru’ and started to follow ‘Baulism’. In ‘Baulism’ he can think freely nobody could hinder him for his free will, after having that free will and mind he used to think about this society, how this society became like this? Why people are following this rule? Where is the equality in the society? He used to think that question. He criticizes the society by bringing its condition in his songs. His free mind built his logical thinking, he started to think about his surroundings the problem of people thinking and they could not express their thoughts, whole society is trapped in a superstition. The superstitious thought came from their believe, the believe of religion where caste system exists and that divides people. People believe in such a religion which has no meaning, he raises the question about God, God exists

or not?and from his free and logical mind he analysed that Humanism should situate on a high position in the society. Though Baul songs are mystic it also talks about the oppression of human in the society. In Lalon's song secularism, humanistic thoughts, hatred towards caste system, social inequality, this topics are highlighted. Lalon have searched for 'Moner Manush (Man of Heart)' not in any religious way but by his own knowledge. Abdul Wahab said "Whether he Was born in a Muslim family or in a Hindu family this discussion is illogical, he was a secularistic person. He did not accept the fact of religious inequality or division, religion and worship is illogical for him, he gave human being in the societies highest position" (106). Lalon through his free mind and logical judgement, judged others opinion and then he analysed and established his own perspective. He talked about many religions in his songs besides, he also talked about his own thoughts. He believed in humanitarian thoughts, his concentration on one's own body mysticism. Lalon was a non-believer of after life. Lalon said

Everybody inquires of Lalon's caste  
Lalon replies what does caste look like  
I did not see it in my eyes. (Hossain, 656)

Lalon describes here that everybody asks about Lalon's religion but he replies that he doesn't know anything about caste, how does it looks? Though different religions have different signs Lalon abandoned that religion from his life. That is how he analysed his societies' thoughts.

### **4.3. Lalon's invention of God within Thyself**

Lalon always gave 'the human' a special station:, his Sadhanas, teaching, preaching, and philosophies all evolved to the philosophy of the human. Lalon Fakhir in his whole life time worked for the mystic and social liberty for human being because his religious belief at

last turned into humanism. Lalon was not a sectarian rather he think himself as the part of human and his thinking turned into humanism. Lalon Fakhir was the preacher of Baulism where humanity and humanism is the main message.He was a great philosopher and innovator of a new humanist doctrine.Lalon wanted to discover ‘Shai’ or God which is hidden in everyone’s body,this search is endless, though Baul Sadhak knows that fact they absorbed in this Sadhana. The process of Sadhana has been told in a symbolic way in every song. Baul songs are not just songs, it also symbolizes their Sadhana. Baulism believes that in everyone’s heart there is a ‘Moner Manush’ if they found that, all about this world will finish and they will find God or they will have the power like a God. The worship of God, Namaz, Roja, Pooja that became useless to them, even the religious difference between Muslim and Hindu is also useless to them. They have some mystic body sadhana; in this process there is Tantra, yog, by following them they search for freedom of their body with the help of ‘Pranayam’. But, this process is very hidden it is also an esoteric Sadhana process.Baulism doctrine is above of superstition, they only believe in humanism and materialistic philosophy. Baulism portrays a humamitarian society where there will be no violence and inequality. To a society human being is must, human being is proper wealth of a society.God can be found in the heart of a man, if man connects to another man then a secular and equal society could be made. Lalon said

You will be enlightened one  
Through offering worship towards man  
Otherwise, you the crazy must fail to achieve target. (Hossain,574)

If someone wants to be enlightened and searching for God he should find it within thyself, because ‘Moner Manush’ is hidden in everyones heart, if someone doesn’t find that he will lose his track in life.



Abu Ishaq Hossain points out -“ Lalon fakhir portrays a specific notion of God and identifies his abode. With the symphony of all philosophy and metaphysics, Lalon draws the supreme being as iconless being. Lalon for sketching the supreme being adopts the notion from the Bible, Quran, Devas and purana where the God is depicted as formless being”-(81).

Lalon actually claim that the supreme being resides no other place but into this human body. That is how Lalon claimed that if anyone wants to search for God he should search within himself, if he doesn't find God there, he will not find happiness anywhere.

## Chapter 5:

### Lalon's Influence in Tagore's literature

In this chapter, I will trace back to Tagore's life in Shilaidoho and how mysticism influenced him in his literature and how this place played an important role in his literature, then I will compare between Tagore and Lalon's philosophy, comparing Tagore's 'Jibon Debota' with Lalon's 'Moner Manush', after comparing that I will explain how Tagore became a Baul, how Lalon played an important role to convert Tagore to become a Baul.

#### 5.1. Tagore's search for mysticism in Shilaidoho's life

Lalon's mystic songs and philosophy influenced many intellectuals of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore was also influenced by Lalon's philosophy and his songs. Tagore actually accepted Lalon's philosophy by his heart, Lalon's mystic thoughts amazed him, he became attracted to Baul songs, Baul's lifestyle and their knowledge. Tagore's way of thinking has completely changed after having knowledge about Lalon's philosophy. From inspiration of Lalon's 'Moner Manush' (Man of Heart) Tagore found 'Jibon Debota'. Tagore brought the character of Baul in his poetry, play, novel, songs and stories. He mentioned his interest about the culture of Baul many times. Tagore showed his interest about Baul music by saying:

-“Those, who have gone through my writings, know that I have expressed my love towards the Baul songs in many of my writings. When I was in Silaidaha I would frequently meet these Bauls and I had occasion to have discourse with them. I have fitted the tune of the Bauls to many of my songs, and in many other songs the tune of the Bauls has consciously or unconsciously been mixed up with other musical modes and modifications. It will be easily understood from the above that the tune as well as

the message of the Bauls had at one time absorbed my mind as if they were its very element”-(Mansur).

Tagore even also followed Baul’s attire, he used to wear gown before leaving Shilaidoho. By doing all of these certainly he converted to ‘Rabindrabaul’. All this influence came from Lalon’s song and the interactions with Lalon’s Disciples.

Tagore and Lalon belonged to completely opposite social conditions/class, one to an oppressed and poor family, the other in stark contrast to a rich Zaminder family. In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the condition of Bengal was hazardous and destructive, British East India company oppressed the whole society, the caste system created the differentiation between people that system was against humanism. Humanity was in a huge risk, that period the religion about humanism begun, Lalon invented Baulism that actually talks about humanism. Now, let’s come to topic which is Tagore’s influence, Tagore belongs to a zaminder family and they had an estate in Shilaidoho, Kushtia. In 1888, Tagore came Shilaidoho to look after his estate, he liked the nature of Bengal and he fell in love of this nature, the nature and the people of Bengal inspired him in his literature. At that period, Tagore had an introduction with the disciples of Lalon, they had many conversations and Tagore used to listen to their song, Tagore was also inspired by their simple lifestyle and their knowledge about life. Though the Baul community is illiterate they had much knowledge;

Baul song inspired Tagore to compose a different kind of songs. Baul songs attracted him so much, as well as humanism. Tagore used Baul music in his songs also. In the time of partition Tagore composed *Amar Sonar Bangla ami tomay valobashi* the music of this song

basically inspired from Baul music, this song actually taken from Gagan Harkara's song *Amar Moner Manush je re, Ami kothay pabo ta re?* There is a confusion that whether Lalon and Tagore met each other or not, this topic is very controversial, some agree about that statement and some disagree. But, Lalon had a conversation with Tagore's elder brother Jotirindronath Tagore. Mustafa Zaman also criticized this issue, he actually criticized Shudhir Charabarty saying:

-“He [Lalon] used to visit the estate of the Tagores. From the fact that Jyotirindranath executed his portraiture in a sketch we may conclude that between the two there transpired some exchanges of higher thoughts on theology.' And from this Chakrabarty draws his conclusion about how synergic Lalon's position was, and in generating new thoughts how he resorted to experimentation with 'boldness', 'without fear'. Lalon, in all probability, grew up in the tradition of the Sufi fakir. He was mentored by Shiraj Shai, one of the murshids, famous in his time for his dialectics and axioms”-(2)

Tagore was the first publisher of Lalon's song he published and edited many Lalon's song, which now reserves in 'Shanti nicketan'. Actually, Shilaidoho played an important role to change the thoughts and variation of Tagore's writings, and also from this place he had a humanistic and mystic thought about life and society all are inspired from Lalon's philosophy.

## **5.2. Tagore had same philosophy about life as Lalon**

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned, how Tagore came to know the disciples of Lalon shai, how Baul philosophy and music attracted him. After coming to Shilaidoho, Tagore's life had changed, he found a new element to compose his literature, his

mind, thoughts are completely different now, a different view or philosophy capture his mind, that philosophy is about human, society and a different thought about God. Lalon's philosophy was just about humanitarian, he had also a belief in 'Moner Manush' (Man of Heart), which is situated in everyone's body, but one has to find that Man of Heart by meditation. From the beginning of a life Tagore was a religious person, he used to believe in God, he composed many songs by praising God; Tagore also composed many romantic songs about nature. Tagore and Lalon both are humanitarian, both of them gave human being the highest position in the society. But there were different scenarios of how they became humanitarian, one actually have learnt from society and nature, the other on the other hand, other one having learnt from a harsh reality. Tagore said:

Make my soul blossom as a flower, thou who art my very own –  
 Make me pure, bathe in blessed light and make me beautiful in your eyes  
 Awaken me and give me the strength to cast aside all fear.  
 Shower me with your love so that I may grow tireless in casting aside all doubt.

Tagore actually consecrates all of these to God, he actually got inspired from nature, he was a nature lover poet, and human is an important element of nature. On contrary, Lalon grew up in such a society where people were oppressed by the British ruler, and also the society was full of the superstitious caste system, in that situation Lalon wanted freedom, he said,

Manushtotto shotto hoy jar mone  
 She ki onno totto mane.  
 Matir dhibi kather chobi  
 Voot-vobishhot deba-debi  
 Vole na shey kono rupi  
 Manush voje gyaan a. (Wahab, 267)

Every monotheistic religion has a belief in one God, but Lalon had an objection that if God is one, then why there is difference between the holy books and why there is different religion, he claims that the holy books are created by human that is why it is different. From the perspective of Baulism there is no holy book, for them, holy book is unnecessary because holy book is the cause which makes human apart. Lalon wanted to avoid this holy book so that they can make an unequal society. Lalon said about the Holy Book that:

What a message sent by my God  
Which differs from language to language  
But claimed, it is revealed by God. (Hossain,320)

Lalon always believed that God is situated within a person, he always suggested to find God in a heart of a man. From the year of 1891, Tagore has experienced a new world when he came into Shilaidoho, he was amazed by the nature of this place and also surprised by the simple living of the people, the singing and the philosophy of Lalon's disciples also inspired him to think more deeply about humanism. Baulism never searched their 'Moner Manush' in a boundary, their search is included in every man from different caste and religion. They never accept the fact that 'caste system makes people separate'. Tagore also appreciated the fact started to believe in humanism.

### **5.3. Lalon's 'Moner Manush' is Tagore's 'Jibon Debota'**

Lalon and his disciples never believed in any religion, any holy book, because Lalon used to believe that, this holy book actually created difference between man as it talks about religion. Baulism never search for God here or there, they never believe in something which is invisible, they have a belief that within every person there is God, just they want to discover that God, for this, a person have to meditate, if a person meditate properly that person could be like God, Lalon call this 'Moner Manush' (Man of Heart). Lalon said:

Shall we ever get such a valuable human life again?

O my mind, whatever you intend to do

Do it early in this world. (Hossain,288)

In this song, Lalon gives importance to human life, he says human life is very valuable, we are lucky enough that we got such a valuable thing, we do whatever our heart wanted us to do and the deities came to the world to worship this human. Lalon's belief that human the only worthy for worship, a God which is invisible can not do anything for the human being, a man can be happy by helping another man and can bring him proper happiness.

Tagore came in Shilaidoho to look after his estate, there he came to know some disciples of Lalon and he was amazed by their philosophical thought and knowledge. Tagore took Lalon's language, word, music in his heart, the main perspective Baul philosophy is to know thyself, by knowing thyself one can find 'Moner Manush'. The question that a Baul asks are: what am I ?, who am I ? why I am here ? by searching these questions, Baul continues their meditation. Baul songs can also be said to be body mystic songs. That is why they never trust anything which is outside of the body. To express their mystic meditation they used to compose songs. Baul songs are basically about religion, society, life and mysticism. This Baul song attracted Tagore a lot and that song and philosophy made Tagore as 'Rabindra baul'. Lalon's search for body mysticism explain in this song:

I did not see him  
Even for a single day in my whole life  
Who resides in my body chamber. (Hossain,236)

The song of Lalon's inspired Tagore so much that he composed a song which is close to his heart,

My eyes could not find you -  
As you had sneaked into my heart.  
Looking into my core I did ignore -  
As my gaze beamed outward. (Ganguly, 1)

Lalon and Tagore both have searched for their most wanted thing which is 'Moner Manush' they both have searched here and there and when they have not found it they discover it within themselves, they feel really happy after finding this important and awaiting thing. That is why Lalon sings:

shall we ever get such a valuable human life again?  
O my mind, whatever you intend to do  
Do it early in this world. (Hossain, 288)

This feelings is expressed by Tagore so nicely,

I am invited to the festival of joy in this world.  
This mortal life is fulfilled.  
Free of desires my eyes roam this flood of forms.  
My ears are filled with serious melodies. (Parekh,1)

According to Abu Ishaq Hossain -"Baul's mostly wanted 'Moner Manush' exists everywhere, they pass their whole life to search this 'Moner Manush, when they meditate and became successful they feel pleasure,they feel its existence everywhere in the universe. At



that time the world became full of humanism”- (217). ‘Moner Manush’ becomes the heart of a person and keeps alive the human. Tagore said:

Amay niye melecho ei mela  
Amar hiya e cholche rosher khela  
Mor jibon a bichitro roop dhore  
Tomar ichha torongi te.(Hossain,217)

Tagore also discovers ‘Jibon debota’ in his heart as a very intimate person, in this stage, Tagore and his ‘Jibon debota are same entity. Tagore feels this entity by his limited entity.

## Chapter 6:

### Intertextuality in Tagore's Literature from Lalon

In this chapter, I will going to discuss about Intertextuality, which is the basic theory of my paper. First of all, I will briefly discuss about Intertextuality, then I will describe if there is any Intertextuality in Tagore's literature, Lalon and Tagore's thoughts as, both of their thoughts were same, both had humanitarian thoughts. The similarities between Lalon's 'Moner Manush' and Tagore's 'Jibon Debota'. The presence of Baulism in Tagore's literature, intertextual influence also because the music of Baul song came into Tagore's literature, just like Lalon, Tagore also searched for 'Jibon Debota' which resides in ones own heart.

#### 6.1. Lalon and Tagore both were Humanitarian

Before talking about Lalon and Tagore's similarities, I want to talk about Intertextuality, what is Intertextuality? Richard Nordquist defines Intertextuality he said:

-“Intertextuality refers to the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to one another (as well as to the culture at large) to produce meaning. They can influence each other, be derivative of, parody, reference, quote, contrast with, build on, draw from, or even inspire each other. Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum, and neither does literature”- (1)

Intertextuality basically means when a text is used in other body of a text as a reference, these texts are interconnected, it actually draws upon the concept or Ideology of the other writings that merges into a new text. Intertextuality occurs when a writer is influenced by other writers writing, so it is basically influential, all writers got influenced by

what they have read, they sometimes got influenced from other genre, sometimes they do want to draw parallels between their work and an inspirational work or influential canon.

In one particular instance, Tagore was also influenced from Lalon's philosophy, after coming to Shilaidoho a new chapter of Tagore's life begins. Tagore had a conversation with Lalon or not it is a controversial topic, some critic said they had a conversation and some said they had not. Tagore got influenced of his humanitarian thought from Baul songs. Baul songs and philosophy deeply touches Tagore's heart. Tagore brought the Baul topic in his novel, stories, poetry, play, songs everywhere. These influence occurred just because of Tagore's interaction with Shilaidoho's Baul community and Lalon's song. Shilaidoho's Baul amazed Tagore by their simplicity, their knowledge. Tagore was the first publisher of Lalon's song, he published in literary magazine 'Probashi' 'Vadro-1314' edition. Lalon songs are mostly humanitarian and mystic, this songs are written for the people who belongs to the lower class and caste, these songs talks about how this society oppressed the people, it also criticizes the religion doctrine and its culture. Man is the first and final concern of Baul song. Anirban Mondal a researcher mentions:

-“Those who blindly believe on god and religion do not allow men's supreme position rather their religious dominance, abstract philosophy and scriptures force men to go through the religious, cultural and socio-economical differences. By the concept of rebirth and heaven they try to control human beings which make men a helpless doll of the fate. Through the folk-materialistic outlook the Bauls preach that if this world is created by the same Creator, if this world is His cosmic enblame then why this caste system, why so many religions, why this gender discriminations, why this class dominations and the Bauls try to create a 'man' based society and culture.

According to Lalon the source of Truth and Knowledge is not an abstract one rather it is a 'man-guru'-(3).

'Moner Manush' (Man of Heart) should only be worthy for worship, other religions are all useless, a person can find happiness when he will discover 'Moner Manush' within himself. Lalon gave human a special place, he believed that a man can find 'Moner Manush' only if he helps other human and love them, Lalon said:

You will be the enlightened one  
Through offering worship towards man  
Otherwise, you the crazy must fail to achieve target. (Hossain,574)

Tagore followed that quality of Lalon, his songs were also about humanism, he wrote:

My innermost one resides within me,  
And He seems omnipresent hence.  
He rests within my eyes,  
I need not search Him at all – (Ganguly,1)

Tagore also used to love his surroundings, though he did not do as much as Lalon did to the poor, but what did that was published Lalon's song, and introduced him to the world and he also published Kangal Harinath, Gagan Harkara's songs famous and everyone came to know them also.

## 6.2. Similarities between Lalon's 'Moner Manush' and Tagore's 'Jibon Debota'

Lalon's song and philosophy brings a huge change in Tagore's life, Tagore was amazed after coming to Shilaidoho, the nature excited him, the simple living of the people attracted him and most importantly Baul songs and Baul's knowledge made him to think more deeply about life. From the influence of Lalon's 'Moner Manush' Tagore had the idea of 'Jibon Debota', Lalon never believed in any religion or any holy book because he thinks religious books are written by men. He believed that if there is one God then why there are differences between the holy books? He always said that never roam here and there, God is not too far, it is situated in everyone's heart Lalon call itself 'Moner Manush'. Lalon observed the condition of humans in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, when general people used to be oppressed by the colonialism and caste system consumed humanity, at that time, Lalon took a stand for human and gave them a special place in the society through his songs. He wrote many songs about 'Moner Manush' like:

I did not see him  
Even for a single day in my whole life  
Who resides in my body chamber. (Hossain,236)

In this song, Lalon talks about 'Moner Manush' who lives inside the heart of a man, Lalon was searching for this man who resides in his body chamber, but he did not find him yet. To find that man is not an easy task a proper meditation is needed for that. Tagore after coming to Shilaidoho was affected by Lalon shai's song and his disciples knowledge and simplicity. Certainly from a romantic poet Tagore became a mystic poet. Certainly, he started to find 'Jibon Debota', the concept he found from Lalon's 'Moner Manush'. When he found 'Jibon Debota' his heart became joyous. He said:

My eyes could not find you -  
As you had sneaked into my heart.  
Looking into my core I did ignore -  
As my gaze beamed outward. (Ganguly,1)

When a Baul finally found that special man, this types of feelings comes to a Baul, roaming here and there is useless, on that time he feels the greatness of that special man, he said:

O the crazy whom do u  
Search for in home and abroad?  
If you look for your own house  
You can get him easily. (Hossain,510)

Rabindrabaul has also same faith, emotion, feelings, philosophy that creates the symphony in his heart. He said:

Kaachhe aachhe dekhite na paa,  
Tumi kaahar sandhane dure jaa.  
Moner mato kare khuje maro -  
Se ki aachhe bhubane,  
Se je royechhe mone. (Hossain,215)

After having faith in 'Jibon Debota' his belief had changed, he began to believe in humanism, God who gives him all the power to survive and to compose his songs, poetry, and most importantly give him enourmous thoughts, this person is 'Jibon Debota'. So. Here Tagore inspired the philosophy of Lalon's 'Moner Manush' and he got 'Jibon Debota'.

### 6.3. Presence of ‘Baulism’ in Tagore’s Literature

Intertextuality sometimes happens directly or indirectly, sometimes an author admits his inspiration from a particular text; on the contrary, sometimes an author does not mention anything, readers find the similarities and then assume that this text might be interconnected to that particular text. Not only text but also sometimes songs and particular character or culture can influence other writer. In Tagore’s literature, we also find direct influence and sometimes indirect influence of Lalon’s song. Tagore was directly influenced by Lalon by his philosophy and attire, Tagore collected 290 songs into two note books, and this note book is now reserved in ‘Bishhovaroti’s ‘Rabindra bhavan’. Though Tagore was influenced from Lalon’s song he did not copy or plagiarize, Tagore claimed that his many songs are similar to Baul song but he did not copy, he also claimed that it was the composition of ‘Rabindra baul.’ Tagore’s types of transformation came from the influence of Lalon. Many Lalon’s songs create an impact in Tagore’s thought, these songs provide a question and that question becomes Tagore’s question about life. We also have noticed that the lyrics and music of Lalon’s songs have also made an impact in Tagore’s songs. For example:

O my crazy mind where do you wish to go  
Without knowing thyself  
You will be deceived  
If you try to explore him outside  
Of your own chamber.  
(Hossain, 362)

Tagore had also the same plea:

Akhyapa tui achhis apon mor mon.  
Aabar chokhe naame aaboran.  
Aabar e je naaaa kathai jome, Chitto amar naana diki bhrome,  
Daaho aabar bere otthe krome, Aabar e je haarai shricharan. (Ganguly, 1)

Deho-totto is the major topic of Lalon's song, searching for that special man who lives inside the heart is the main moto, if someone could not able to find him, the meditation remains unsuccessful. Lalon Fakhir said:

I did not see him.  
Even for a single day in my whole life  
Who resides in my body chamber. (Hossain, 236)

Besides this song, Tagore also said:

My eyes could not find you -  
As you had sneaked into my heart.  
Looking into my core I did ignore -  
As my gaze beamed outward. (Ganguly, 1)

Elsewhere, Abul Ahsan Chowdhury mentions-“Baul character is also prominent in Tagore's play. Most of his allegoric or symbolic play had a Baul character. He who talks but never show up himself that Lalon's song inspired Tagore and Tagore said: Who talks but does not show up? That symbolic question he included in his play *Raja*.”-(91) he also added that -“In his novel we also find Baul character, in *Gora* he introduced that a baul character is singing a song *Khachar vetor achin pakhi kemne ashe jay* that song actually inspired the main character of the novel 'Binoy'. Tagore also mentioned about this song in his novel *Jibon sriti*.”-(84). So, Baulism is present in almost every genre of Tagore's literature, this Baulism created a huge impact in Tagore's thoughts and his writings.



#### 6.4. Tagore's search for Thyself and 'Jibon Debota'

Tagore came into Shilaidoho in 1890 to look after his estate, here he lived for 20 long years. Those years brought a huge change in Tagore's thoughts and belief, Tagore who was brought up in a modern culture slowly transformed into 'Rabindra baul'. The author Abu Ishhaq Hossain also mentions about the transition of Tagore, he said:

-“A romantic poet became a mystic and humanitarian poet. Baul philosophy deeply influenced Tagore. Tagore listened to Gagan Harkaras song *Amar moner manush je re ami kothay pabo ta re* and that song attracted him about this Baul song; in the time of partition Tagore followed that Baul music and composed *Amar sonar Bangla ami tomay valobashi*”-(209).

Tagore composed his 66 songs into Baul music. Baul songs and meditation basically occurs for only one condition and that is to find 'Moner Manush' who lives inside a person, if someone find 'Moner Manush' then his meditation is successful and if someone does not find him, his meditation is incomplete. Tagore and Lalon both roamed here and there to find 'Moner Manush' but they have not found there when they found him in their heart, they felt really excited. They both realized that how important this human life is, Lalon said:

Shall we ever get such a valuable human life again?  
O my mind, whatever you intend to do  
Do it early in this world. (Hossain,288)

From this happiness Tagore also composed:

I am invited to the festival of joy in this world.

This mortal life is fulfilled.

Free of desires my eyes roam this flood of forms.

My ears are filled with serious melodies.

When a person finds this special person in his heart, he thinks that roaming here and there is just a waste of time, that person celebrates his life with that special person. man's cry is to reach his fullest expression It is the inner light that reveals him when this light is lighted, then in a moment he knows that Man's highest revelation is God's own revelation in him. Man's inner self is the thing which teaches him what to do or not, it has the power to think and analyse what is good and bad, so, suddenly a person reveals that God resides inside in him. The romantic poet Tagore suddenly became changed with the inspiration of Baul philosophy, the 'Manoshi' of his thought turn out to 'Jibon Debota' once he was unable to find his 'Manoshi' it was tough to reveal her, he could not reveal her actually he became frustrated and thought revealing a woman is tougher than revealing God. After knowing the Baul philosophy and revealing 'Jibon Debota' inside him he finally got what he was searching throughout his life. This 'Jibon Debota' had changed all of his philosophy and thoughts about life, his pride as a zaminder and rich family came to an end. He also started to believe in humanitarian religion and neglected his own religion. He said:

Ami bratto ami montrohin  
 Sokol mondir er bahir a  
 Amar puja somapto holo aaj  
 Devlok theke Manoblok a. (Hossain, 222)

In this way, Tagore was influenced by Lalon's 'Moner Manush' and with this concept he created his own 'Jibon Debota' and also converted from his religion to humanitarian and mystic thoughts.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the basic aim of this paper is to analyse Lalon's thought, through the introduction of a legendary person who actually decorated the literature of Bengal and his influence on another legendary figure of both Bengali and world literature. He actually introduced Baul music in Bengali society. Actually, my research question was the mystic philosophy in Lalon and in Tagore's mind, also the intertextual relationship between Tagore and Lalon. To answer this question I had go through three chapters, first chapter was the mystic thoughts of Lalon here I found that Lalon had mystic thoughts throughout his lifetime, Lalon had a mind with logical judgement and by working on it delivers another point which is how Lalon invented God within oneself. In second chapter, I talked about the influence that Tagore got from Lalon, and the presence of Lalon in Tagore's literature. The similar philosophy of Tagore and Lalon; Tagore got introduced to mystic thoughts in his life of Shilaidaha, and Tagore's Jibon Devta which was also similar to Lalon's Moner Manush. In the third chapter, the intertextual relationship in Tagore's literature they both had a same humanitarian thought, the presence of 'Baulism' in Tagore's literature. Tagore also searched for 'Jibon Devta' just like Lalon searched for 'Moner Manush' through his life. This paper is a complete work to introduce Lalon in a proper way, Lalon's mystic thought is present in the most of his songs, and this paper discusses how mysticism is connected to *Charyapada*, Esotericism, Non-duality. To know more about mysticism I actually traced back to the ancient Bengali literature, the *charyapada* period, when the authors used to express their meditation system through their songs. Baul songs are all about body mysticism, they always worship the human body, giving the human body a higher position than any religion. All these things are connected to one of the major points of my paper which is Intertextuality and textual influence, since mysticism pervades Tagore and Lalon's work through these

theoretical connecting threads. I closely research how Tagore was influenced by Lalon's mystical theory and how this influence also creates an impact on Tagore's literature, as he became 'Rabindrabaul' after the influence of Lalon. This paper also investigates intertextuality and how this important literary device has been used by the authors both intentionally and unintentionally. This literary device has not only been used in writing but also it has been used in any movie character, in a song etc. I actually bring that unknown theory to introduce it to the readers for whom the theory is unknown. In spite of Tagore's Brhama-samaj adherence and his Hinduism Lalon's secularism and concern with social injustice carries through in some of Tagore's humanitarian subjects. He actually introduced Baul music in Bengali society. He always tried to bring social problems in his songs and protested against the injustice that occurred in his surroundings, as, that period was so conservative, he and the people of his sect suffered a lot of disturbance from the followers of institutional religion. But, after all of these, Lalon still had the courage to speak out about the injustice of the society. Lalon's bravery teaches us how to raise the voice against the social injustice.

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