



Kushtia

Lalon Festival

THE three-day long Lalon Smaran Utshob (memorial festival), carrying the spiritual saga of Baul king Lalon's shrine, ended at Churia Lalon Akhra (the den) in Kushtia recently. On the occasion, the Akhra was colourfully decorated and attracted an influx of devotees and admirers from all over Bangladesh and abroad. This festival is a regular phenomenon, held every year on the occasion of Dole Purnima (full moon) on the last day of Bangla month of Falgun. It is also called Dole Purnima Utshob. The festival draws many Baul pilgrims.

According to a research paper, Dole Purnima Utshob has been observed for about 200 years. From the very beginning, this Utshob was organised by donation of many well wishers. Lalon himself organised it every year at his den when was alive. After his death, his Sishya (deputies) carried on with the Utshob. They formed a committee named Majar Sarif and Seba Sadan Committee (MSSSC) soon after his death. This committee initially organised various programmes in the Akhra. However the subsequent government formed the Lalon Academy to look into the

Akhra and chased out MSSSC from the Akhra in 1982. In the course of time, the Utshob has turned into a government programme. Every year the government launches a three to seven-day programme. As in previous years, a large number of Bauls attended the Utshob. In a departure from norm, this time a large number of female Bauls were seen at the festival. Baul Munnujan, 45, from village Harinakundu told this correspondent that she was a Baul by ancestry. Her grandfather, father, mother and two brothers of her family are Bauls.

Munnujan has been a Baul for the last 27 years. Another Baul visitor, Ratan Saha, said that he came to the festival every year from India to pay obeisance to Guruji (Lalon). Folk song is the main base of Lalon's music. This genre fuses two streams of spiritual thought--Sufist Islam and Baishnav--the Krishna cult. The common trait of both these cults is 'mystic thought', which denotes an 'own self' as the centre of the thought. In course of time, this was turned into a culture named 'Baul culture'. In the seventeenth century the



Baul culture was not given its due. The Baul was regarded as a mad person. On the other hand it was a band matter according to religious discipline. No branch of religion, including Shariat and Shastro, permit this culture. Even when a Baul dies, a debate arises on observing the religious service for him. Thus when Lalon died he was buried without religious ceremony at his thatched house at Churia. To date no religious occasion is observed at Lalon's graveyard. The Bauls strictly follow their own customs. In their eyes every religion is good, but division in

mankind in the name of religion is not acceptable. Every baul actually prefers to keep away from worldly desires, a philosophy that was developed by the king of baul Lalon. They only follow their mystic ideology, which was professed by Lalon at Churia village about two a hundred years ago through a baul convention. Lalon even in his lifetime made paradox about query on any religious. The existence of a baul is only for 'self-knowing'.
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