

CHANGES THAT MAKE US #NOWINLIFESTYLE

The soul sings folk

Dhaka has proudly hosted three folk festivals of international standard as of 2017. Previously unchartered performance territories were presented in their full glory to the audience and the welcoming response has been tremendous. As this platform is reaching more and more listeners and performers, it's not too difficult to look into the true folk songs of Bangladesh.

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Bangladesh's folk songs are as unique as its geographical location and climate. After language, the next element of a culture is revealed through the lyrics and melody of its folk songs. The sheer



variety in the types of folk songs in this area is itself staggering. Scholars have listed nearly a hundred folk song types in this delta. Then again, each are of their own minds when sub dividing these under broad categories. From a simplified standpoint, listeners today

can view these songs under the sections of region, functionality, ritual, love, humour and work.

All sections aside, ask any person about the folk song he or she is familiar with, the answers are bound to be Bhatiali, Bhawaiya and Baul. If you pose this question in a group, other answers too will pop up like Jari, Shari, Pala, Gambhira, Gajon etc. Prized nuggets of insight too are bound to come up to clearly differentiate one from the other.

The most mentioned folk song styles, Bhatiali and Bhawaiya, are miles apart in terms of region, tune and lyrics. Dry regions like Rangpur and Dinajpur are the birthplace for Bhawaiya. Bhatiali hails from the areas of greater Mymensingh and Sunamganj. Bhawaiya embraces the vibrations of vocal chords while Bhatiali takes in the calm waves of the haor areas.

Shari is a type of active song style, specifically associated with Nouka Baich. A contrast from Bhatiali's slow tempo, Shari Gaan stands out with its fast, active tempo. Also, while Bhatiali is the song of a solitary boatman, Shari is a chorus for unified boatmen heading towards one goal.

While the people are forthcoming with the names and types and may even churn out a tune or two, folk songs from this region can be made

into a standard study for scholars. Performers may spend a lifetime trying to perfect their art of performance of a specific variety or try to learn as many as they can.

Folk songs and classical pieces have existed as parallels and crossed over since the pre-Mughal era in this delta and surrounding regions. While the classics enjoyed widespread patronising by the ruling side, the folk songs stayed with the common people — from the farmers to the boatmen to the common house people. Also, folk songs retained their core characteristic of being passed down orally without any specific notation.

This is where fusion, the art of mixing the old styles and the new tunes to make a single seamless melody, comes in to change the musical vista. Fusion is opening new frontiers for folk songs to reach newer audiences. Of course, up to a point, the purity of melody may seem a bit off to the seasoned listener, especially with modern mixing and added wordings. But fusion, with its added nuances, has touched the people, as seen from the successful folk fests. With the advent of far reaching digitisation, regional performers too are able to reach out to more people through the social platforms. Radio, which has had an immense comeback over the last few years, has been offering audiences with a mix of modern

songs and folk songs.

The term 'folk song' itself was coined much later in the nineteenth century, but that does not mean that the folk songs themselves did not exist before the term! On the same note, folk songs are the heralds of the people of said region and its quirks. No matter how urbanised and modernised a country becomes, the folk songs have the singular appeal that can, without losing a beat, make the soul weep or draw it into pure ecstasy. Instead of focusing on being right or wrong, one of the best practices for enthusiasts should be to attend performances in their specific regions.

Folk songs are as unique as a planet's motion. Just as the solar system's many rocky elements have their own orbits, folk songs too are tied to the people of region and its climate. They are shaped by the joys and the struggle as well as the turmoil of the people. At the same time, it contains desires and loss, while incorporating dance. Audiences need to be aware of these back stories to fully delve into the melody that is born of this land.

All discussions and talk aside, the impact of folk songs on the young and old eventually boils down to two things — is it fusion that will keep this art alive or will it be the original form that needs preservation to continue? While a binary answer is absent in this

context, vigorous arguments and discussions naturally go a long way.

From a modern and open standpoint, singer, writer and composer Syed Waqel Ahad shared his insights on fusion and folk songs. He states that he is in fact a pro-fusion individual. Fusion is itself an 'always-in' aspect of music from his perspective.

Folk songs are the closest things to the people of a region and people are bound to change and transform. Ahad believes that this change is incorporated through the folk songs and fusion makes it easier to blend into the ever-shifting times. As people are the creators of folk songs, alterations should be accepted as a natural process, he adds further. Focusing solely on the pure performance can only end up in pushing the folk songs into a corner.

Ahad of course emphasises the need for preserving original forms. Recording performances is as easy as it can be in these days, and the process is getting simpler as time passes. He agrees that while melody or presentation can change, the core emotion can never be altered. Sometimes it is necessary to reach for the originals to better understand the key thought.

Coming back to fusion, Ahad pulls in references from performances.

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চিরস্থায়ী সঞ্চয়ে কল্যাণ অফুরান

আপনার ক্যাশ ওয়াক্ফের মুনাফা কারো জীবনের আঁধার দূর করে সূচনা করতে পারে নতুন দিন। এককালীন অথবা ছোট ছোট কিস্তির মাধ্যমে বিভবানসহ মধ্যম বা স্বল্প আয়ের মানুষেরাও ক্যাশ ওয়াক্ফ করতে পারেন। ইসলামী ব্যাংক চালু করেছে মুদারাবা ওয়াক্ফ ক্যাশ জমা হিসাব। এ হিসাবে সঞ্চয়কারীর ইচ্ছানুযায়ী তার মুনাফার অংশ দান করা হবে সমাজসেবায়, গরিব ও অসহায় মানুষের কল্যাণে।



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