

## **An Analytical Study of Tusu: A Traditional Folk Song**

Debashree Deb

Research Scholar

Department of Music, Tripura University

Email: [debasreedeb6666@gmail.com](mailto:debasreedeb6666@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*Music is the best art among different fine arts. This Music is always streaming from very ancient period i.e. from pre-Vedic period. It can be learnt from the history of music that there were two categories of music in ancient time namely `Marg Sangeet` and `Deshi Sangeet`. The songs sung by the ancient people in marriage ceremony, funeral ceremony and other ceremony. The old `Lok Geeti` being influenced by different types of modern tunes has evolved into different forms of folk song. `Tusu` song is one of the most popular traditional folk song, which is prevalent in Rarh Bangla region from very ancient period. Tusu is considered as the Goddess of crops. Tusu song is sung throughout the month of `Poush` starting from `Agrahayan Sankranti`. It is like a true public festival and local people from all the religion like Kora, Mahato, Lodha, Santal etc. participate in the festival. Though the folk culture of India has mutated massively but trace of ancient folk culture is still existent which is evident in Tusu song which is prevalent from very ancient time and its example can be observed in the Rarh region of West Bengal.*

**Keyword:** Rarh Bangla, Tusu Brata, Chaudal, Paush, Tusudoll, Tusu, Bol, Pitha, Puli .

### **Introduction:**

Music is considered as the foods for our souls and its relationship with human race is so intense that we cannot think of a single country or society that does not have its own music. Music is related to our relaxation, our festival, our national pride, pray, daily activities, joys, celebration and many important aspects of our personal and social life. The music a society or country adopts reflects its traditions, cultures, history and unique features. The national anthem which is also music is revered by all the country men and inspires people. The impact of music on the human life is gracious and profound. The presence of music with individuals, nature and societies all over the world.

### **Historical Perspective of Folk Song:**

Music is a living form of art. In folk society it forms and integral part of its life cycle daily, occasional and annual. It remains grafted with belief and reasons the study of folk music, thus becomes meaningful to understand how to reflex the society of which it forms an integral part. The presence of music with individuals, nature and societies all over the world. In general, the significance of music in human life is undeniable because, no other adjacent fine arts can activate human sensory feelings, imagination, thinking as much as music does. History of Indian music

proclaims the fact that music becomes a medium to attain a world of spirituality and some sort of deliverance.<sup>1</sup> In ancient period, common people expressed their feeling through simpler tune which was known as Deshi Sangeet. Later on this Sangeet is known as folk song. Folk song usually means byword songs that is to say – the songs which run through the adoption of oral tradition based on ‘Shruti’ (which has been heard) and ‘Smriti’ (which has been remembered) are known as folk songs. The peasant class is the originator of these folk songs<sup>2</sup>. Folk songs, according to lexicon, are those oral songs which are sung by the illiterate countrymen through the ages generation after generation. On the other hand, the age old tradition of folksongs is streaming orally through the ages generation after generation. The history of songs depends on racial and ethnic research of people. If we discuss about the Indian people then it can be seen that as most of the races have evanesced in a single body so different types of songs have been mingled to create a special trend. It is necessary to discuss about different groups of Indian people before discussing about the folk songs as the contribution of ancient people in the field of folk songs cannot be denied at all. The history of Indian songs are created with the great works of great composers of music. The great composers appeared in different era and kept the course of Indian songs uninterrupted. The history of songs depends on racial and ethnic research of people. People of this ancient Astroloyed race are converted into different aborigines of India. Santal, Munda, Todo etc. have descended from the ancient Astroloyed race. Santal Pargana of South India and Rarh region of West Bengal are their habitat. Their custom, rituals, festivals, dance and music are still alive among us. Their songs and dance are occupying a great place in our folk songs. Many of the lyrics and tunes of these aborigines have merged with the lyrics and tunes of conventional folk songs of Bengal, especially of Rarh Banglas. Their songs are also merged with the folk songs of those regions. As the race of one region mingled with the other so the folk songs of India have also mingled with one another. The Pre-Vedic period men were divided into three classes, namely – Hunters, Herds men and Farmers. Then, men in rhymed motion and women in solo timber started to express their thoughts like songs.<sup>3</sup> The result of this expression was ancient songs and folk songs. The ancient man used to dance and sing socially in groups to celebrate birth & death, hunting, marriage ceremony, hypnotism etc. which can be traced out in history. Flutes made of bone and musical instruments made of leather are the instances of musical instruments found due to the excavation in Mohenjodaro and Harappa. These are the instances of demotic musical instruments. Flute made of bone is an example of the most ancient musical instrument. The famous musicians of that time namely Kohal, Bimba, Bashu, Matanga etc. have mentioned popular art based local songs as ‘Deshi Sur’ (country

---

<sup>1</sup> Ishrat Jahan (2014) *The Book Indian Music and its Assessment – A Sociological perspective*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 118

<sup>2</sup> Mridul Kanti Chakraborty (2007) *Loko Sangeet o Swaralipi*, Dhaka: Merit Fair Prakashan, p.13

<sup>3</sup> Budhadev Roy (1998) *Lokasangeetikee*, Kolkata: Farma K. L. M, p.2

melody). Thereafter, we get acquainted with some other groups. Those groups were usually known as 'Boudha Jaan', 'Sahajjaan' and 'HeenaJaan'. 'SahajJaan' is a collective group. The lower class people of the society as for example – fisherman, barber, goldsmith, harijan were included in this group. The people of this class used to express their happiness through small verses which were known as 'Charja Pad'. 'Charja Geeti' is composed in demotic language. This language is forefather of present Maitheli, Bengali, Assameese, and Oria languages. The demotic material can be observed in the language and lyrics of 'Charja Pad' which is considered as forefather of folk songs as well as Baul songs. The main idea of the 'Bauls' is –“We have stuff in us, what is there in the universe.” So, they find the universe within themselves. They have sacrificed everything in the name of God through their 'Baul Song'. So, to define the folk songs, it may be said that folk songs are the style of expression of non artificial hearts of group of people or a person from rural civilization which initially keeps streaming depending on oral tradition but without being influenced by 'Raag Sangeet'(Indian classical songs) or modern popular songs. Such ancient form of singing style is folk song which is keenly related to day to day life of human. Diversity in tune, lyrics and articulation of folk songs can be observed from region to region. So, impact of folk song is different in different places.

### **Origin & History of Tusu:**

The 'Tusu' festival in the Rarh region of West Bengal is also such a festival. `Tusu` song is one of the most popular traditional folk song. This is prevalent in Rarh Bengla region from very ancient period. The term Tusu has actually derived from ostrick language. Tusu is considered as the Goddess of crops and songs are sung for her. It is tough to determine the exact time of the origin of Tusu song in ancient period. Tusu is the most popular folk festival of the South-West Frontier of Greater Bengal. It continues for one month, Paush (Dec. & Jan.) in harvesting time. In some places, Tusu is a female deity, worshipped for the whole month, but for what purpose this deity is worshipped has not been ascertained. Some think that she is the emblem of wealth and others take her to be the incarnation of the Goddess Ganga, the most sacred river Ganges. Perhaps in the beginning it was a folk festival of harvest time in the tribal zone, and it had no link with religion though it will be lost into Hindu practice, con-joining with various local deities. 'Tusu' festival is not only a festival of Hindus. It is like a true public festival and local people from all the religion like Kora, Mahato, Munda, Lodha, Santal participate in this festival. 'Tusu' is not limited to any religious command. It is not limited to any treatment. The unmixed joy of people is evolved through this festival.

Perhaps tusu is a Sanskrit word from an Austro-Asiatic Kol origin, to mean flower, a bunch of flowers, bud etc. In Santali baha-tusu means a bunch of flowers; tusu means simply a bud, a leaf of a bud—a symbol of youth and beauty. Tusu—this word has been taken to express the heart's beauty and joy. In Bengali tos-tose, a very common word is used to mean fresh and lively. It has been seen in some Tusu fairs that tribal women come with branches of flowers singing Tusu songs loudly. Chauda/ (chaturdola) or a flower-house, a kind of palanquin in which Tusu should be placed, is so decorated with, colorful papers and flowers. That it has become the symbol of Tusu itself now and it is immersed into water. It is amazing for a stranger to see

countless chaudals (choturdola) or flower-houses being immersed into the stream at the fairs. Regarding the icons of Tusu one thing should be mentioned —that the area of Tusu can be divided into two parts North and South, In the Northern area (Ranchi, Flazaribagh, Purul'a and North Singhbhum) flower-houses or Chaudal (Chotur-dola) have been the symbol of Tusu. No image of Tusu can be seen in this area. On the other hand in the Southern area (Midnapore, Bankura and South Singhbhum) choudals (palanquin) are not so popular. Various types of images are immersed there. The influence of tribal lyrics and tunes are clear in the 'Tusu' songs of Purulia region. 'Tusu' is worshipped as the Goddess of crops. Idol of 'Tusu' can be seen in different places which almost look like female dolls. Generally, the idol wears a crown made with glass paper and a saree made with red and blue color papers. The idol wears golden ornaments in its hand and neck which are made with glass papers<sup>4</sup>.

### **How to observed Tusu Festival in Rarh Bangla:**

This song can also be heard throughout the month of *Pousha* in the region of Birbhum, Bakura, Bardhaman, Purulia, Medinipur and Murshidabad due to the celebration 'Tusu' festival. In the Bakura district of West Bengal, at the dawn of Agrahayan Sankranti, 'Itur' and 'Khola' is brought home to give life to 'Tusu'. The woman sings songs throughout the month of *Poush*. Young girls along with young boys and even aged women participate in the song. The convention of 'Tusu' festival differs from region to region. This 'Tusu' festival is prevalent in different regions of Purulia, Birbhum and Bakura of Rarh Bengal. Though the object and time of the celebration of the festival is same but its convention differs from place to place. 'Tusu' is named as *Toshala Devi* in Bankura. Apart from that the waves of joy flow in different parts of Bardhaman during the month of Poush.<sup>5</sup> Then comes the time to part with 'Tusu'. There are various festivals prevalent in the peasant society related to the harvest. 'Tusu' is the most famous among them. I happened to be in a Tusu fair for the first time in my life, the fair was being held on both sides of the Kassai river and Satighat. I saw gaudily dressed men and women, individually and in groups, pouring in large numbers from all directions chanting songs loudly with Tusu images of various moulds. They make Choural in various decorations. On the day before Poush Sankranti they awake whole night and they were singing various song based on Tusu on the day of Makar Sankranti. It has been seen in some Tusu fairs that tribal women come with branches of flowers singing Tusu songs loudly. Chaudal (Chaturdula) or a flower house, a kind of palanquin in which Tusu should be placed is so decorated with colorful papers and flowers that it has become the symbol of Tusu itself now and it is immersed into water. It is amazing for strangers to see countless chaudals or flower house being immerge into the stream at the fairs. A large of people joined in this fair. Tusu parties facing each others debating in songs, the situation in which can be compared with Tarja Lorai or Kobi Lorai. This day the people

<sup>4</sup> Amit Dey (2006) *Lokosangeet Annesha*, Kolkata: Anchita Grafo Art, p. 32

<sup>5</sup> Prabhat Kumar Goswami (2005), *Bharatiya Sangiter Katha*, Kolkata: Adi Nath Brothers, p. 322

enjoy very much. They also eat various sweet dishes like Pita and Puli, in the early morning they all came to the river with all musical instrument. Although the Tusu has been observed by female folk as `Brata` (Vow) from ancient time but it has also been observed by the male in course of time.<sup>6</sup> `Tusukatan` song is now prevalent in this festival and all people irrespective of male and female participate in this festival.

Some popular Tusu songs are;

(1)

Tusumani Aso ma ghare  
Amra raikhhbo koto adore  
Tusu ma ailo ghore  
Ator phuler mala gathe porabo ma tomare  
Tusur phiria din jaibo ma kato anondo kore  
Tirish dine tirish ta phul dibo Tusur mondire  
Kriti base bole ma go rakhibo ma eak mas dhore  
Maser sese makor dine diboma biday kore<sup>7</sup>

(2)

Makar parabe madna chara dhamsa bajaise  
Tusu chori dhamsar bole keman dekho nachiche  
Makar dine bihan kale gelo nadir dhare  
Dekho halud ranga muri khaiye thotter ki bahar  
Dekho ranga thottee ranga muri kemon dekho manaiche  
Dupur bela nodir jole Tusu kore snan  
Sinan saira Tusur mon Kore anchan  
Boli ghar jabe bole tusu  
Kapor chopar badhiche<sup>8</sup>

(3)

Amar Tusu dhone biday debo kemone  
Masa boti tusu dhonke pujechi jotone tusu dhone  
Sakha sari sidur dilam Alta dilam charone  
Mone dukho hay baro Phire jete bhavane  
Daya kore Asbe abar thaki jeno mone  
Bhulona bhulona Tusu asbe amar sane<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <http://taleof2backpackers.com/tusu-festival-purulia/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdE\\_Tir2jlc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdE_Tir2jlc)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp10PwPCF8>

<sup>9</sup> <https://youtu.be/vUVDwVSQoQY>

**Conclusion:**

Though the folk culture of India has mutated massively but trace of ancient folk culture is still existent which is evident in Tusu song which is prevalent from very ancient time and its example can be observed in the Rarh region of West Bengal. This song is still alive either in written or oral form. I, through my research work, want to bring forth this ancient culture i.e. the Tusu song. It is clear from my discussion that folk song though a very ancient form among the fine arts but it is still streaming endlessly.