

seemed to be making an almost heroic effort to reconcile the traditional romantic notion of yearning for eternal love and the unity of the two souls and the existentialist belief in freedom and contingency. Passionate love, especially for the women characters, uproots them from the mundane and generates a preparedness for radical options as well as sacrifices. Thus the thinking, sensitive women seduce not merely by their beauty and virtue but by their minds as well. But can such an enterprise be successful under patriarchy? While the husbands are rogues, indifferent or just weak-willed, the lovers fare no better. Exposed to the duplicity and cowardice displayed by the men in their sexual dealings, the women often spontaneously face the fundamental ambiguity of existence in their attempt to live authentically. Existentially speaking, under patriarchy women risk more, fall deeper and rise higher than men. That is why, perhaps, the men in Chalam's fiction pale in comparison to the women, for whom the stakes are higher and there are more victories and more failures than there are for men.

Thus although the stories unfold as what appear like ideal romance, the women are not happy or content. Their anguish and struggle to define themselves in the context of the conflict between autonomy and love, between the need to assert themselves and the need to be overwhelmed, in short, between freedom and control, often end tragically in death, mysterious disappearance or in a self-sabotaging outcome of their love.

This project attempts to explore the notions of autonomy, the need for dependence, reciprocity and authenticity not only in Chalam's 'women' but in the present context of changing definitions of femininity and masculinity, using psychoanalytic and feminist insights.

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### Folk Songs of India: Some Observations

The study of folk songs scattered in different part of our country may go a long way to help national integration. If they are presented in Hindi they might come closer to the common people in many parts of the country who may enjoy reading about the life-styles and culture of each other. A strong thread can easily be made to run through different flowers of songs having various colours and fragrance.

In this short survey, I intend to present a summary of the material collected. It may be mentioned, however, that the material gathered so far is rather incomplete.

A purely academic and conservative approach to folk songs often overlooks and even ignores one of the most important categories – the protest songs. They are the songs that express, in various ways, the struggle of oppressed people through the ages, against an unjust social order. These protest songs can be further classified into two categories: socio-economic and political. The former raised a voice against the feudal order of our society, with its caste-system and economic exploitation. The latter category of songs is mainly a product of our national movement and the numerous peasant rebellions against British rule.

Our folk song researchers very often fail to see the social content that lies behind the religious and spiritual trappings of songs of the former category. While assessing the second category, too, they are apathetic and sometimes even refuse to accept them as folk songs. Scholars have often regarded them as the compositions of 'politically motivated individuals' who have gone off the time-worn track of tradition.

In a broader sense a good number of the love and marriage songs or songs known as *Bārāmāsā*, *Birhā* or *Dehotallva* etc. indirectly express a protest against the prevalent social system. The village lovers always protested against any censor from above. An Assamese *Bihu* song says:

God created the earth first  
And then created life  
If this God can fall in love  
Why should we not?

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 166).

To our village girls the husband's house seems to be a stranger's house for the first time, as another *Bihu* song has it:

The birds brought up their offsprings  
To beautify the branches of the tree  
O' my mother brought me up with love  
only to adorn a stranger's house.

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 166.)

Let us now proceed to some other parts of our vast country in order to have a glimpse of the different kinds of song flowers with

various forms and colours that have an old but everfresh fragrance. Without going through theoretical details, we shall see here the nature and subject matter of the songs which are popular in different regions.

To begin with Bengal we find that *Bhatiāli*, *Bhawaiyā*, *Bārāmāsā* and *Māhut* are the most popular forms of folk songs here. The *Bāul* songs of Bengal are often interpreted by scholars as philosophical and mystic songs. They are taken to be obscure and esoteric. The secrets of these songs, they maintain, can only be discovered by those who belong to that cloistered sect of mystics. If that had been so, the *Bāul* songs would probably cease to be considered as folk songs. But the robust social content and appeal of the *Bāul* philosophy as expressed in their songs is a direct challenge to the conventional religions that create divisions between men. For them man is above all religions. The philosophy of the *Bāul* is the philosophy of the outcast and the downtrodden. To them the temples and the mosques are hindrances to the realization of their '*Moner Manush*' or the man within for whom they search. Those acquainted with the lifestory of the great *Bāul* composer and a well-known teacher of *Bāul* philosophy Lalan can easily make out the meaning of his song.

Every body asks me; what caste  
do you belong to, Lalan  
But Lalan replies –  
I have not seen, what caste looks like.

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 168)

The *Bihu* is the most popular form of Assamese folk songs. More than a thousand *Bihu* songs have been published so far. They are still being composed but not with the same zest as in earlier times. These songs are marked by a feeling of spontaneity. They thrive best in agricultural and pastoral settings. The *Bihu* songs were born close to the soil at the spring festival. *Bihu* songs today are undergoing a change because of the influence of western education and the indifference of the urbanized class towards folk culture. All these have tended to discourage the dances and songs of the *Bihu* festival. The sadness that is associated with such a turn of events is well expressed in modern *Bihu* songs.

The songs of Uttar Pradesh or of the Bhojpuri region can be broadly divided into three categories. The first category comprises of the songs which have either *Pauranic* or religious themes as their subject matter or which possess a devotional background. The songs of this category naturally show great affinity with classical music

because they have been greatly influenced by the Bhakti movement of the middle ages which has left its impact on the whole of northern India. Among such songs can be mentioned, the *Nirguṇa*, the *Purvi*, the *Parāti* and the *Devī* songs. Under the second category of songs we can count the type that is of a more independent nature. They are not connected with the tradition of the past but are the actual outcome of a modern society. The *Kajari*, the *Birhā*, the *Chaiti* and the *Bidesiya* may be included in this category. The third category of Uttar Pradesh or Bhojpuri folk-songs may be said to be those which are more clearly influenced by the music of various tribes scattered all over this region. Trilochan Pandey (*Bhojpuri Folklore and Music*) notes that, 'Tribal music has some of its own peculiarities. The ascent and the descent of the *swaras* in such folk songs may appear, at times, ridiculous to those who are accustomed to listen to the so-called "cultivated music". Out of the twelve notes employed in classical music, we find about nine of them being used in the ceremonial and ritual songs of this region.' Seven of these notes are pure (*suddha*) notes and the remaining two are the *Komal Gāndhār* and *Komal Niṣād*. Such songs generally employ the notes of *Kāfi* and *Khmaj thāts*. Other Bhojpuri songs like *Kaharvā* and the songs of washermen employ mainly the notes of *Vilāwal thāt*. The *rāgas* belonging to these three *thāts* are comparatively easy to grasp. Hence the tribal singers adapt them easily in order to intensify their different modes of expression.

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## Archaeology and the Study of Sangam Society in Tamil Nadu

Earlier studies on Sangam literature concentrated exclusively on the cultural and political history of Tamils. They perceived a highly advanced society with the development of a full-fledged state apparatus. These works further treated the society as static and stagnant over a long period of time without any appreciable change. This tendency towards glorification needs to be corrected in order to understand the multi-faceted nature of the society. Except in certain favourable economic pockets Sangam society was in the nature of a tribal society gradually being transformed into a farming society wherein a complex state apparatus had not yet fully developed.

The development of any society is considerably influenced by