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Lalan Shah

The Great Baul-II

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Editor of the paper although his name was never published. The paper bore the name of Assistant Editor, Raicharan Das. It is believed that the articles which were generally published in the 'Hitakari' were contributed by Mir Mosharraf Hussain and Raicharan Das. Raicharan Das also served as a pleader in Kushtia. The story on Lalan was a big one. The paper suggested that it was commonly known that Lalan was a Kayastha and might have a link with Bjownick family of Chapa under Kushtia. No relation of Lalan did live at that time. It was stated that he was forsaken by his friends on their way to pilgrimage when he was attacked with smallpox. He was rescued by a Mussalman and on being recovered became a Fakir. He had marks of smallpox on his face. He died on the last 17th October, Friday at the age of 116. The year of his death was however known as 1297 B.S. 1890 A.D. since the paper which contained the death report published the item in the first issue of 1297 B.S.

Basanta Kumar Paul who was a man of Kushtia published an article on Lalan in the monthly Pravashi of Calcutta in Sravan 1332 B.S. and Baisakh 1335 B.S. He published detail story on Lalan based on hearsay. And since then many have written stories on the life and activities of Lalan claiming him either of Hindu or of Muslim origin.

So far records of the eye witness are concerned it is gathered that Lalan first lived at the residence of one Malam Shah in, Seuria (Kushtia). Malam Shah became his disciple and willed a vast plot of land at Seuria in the name of Lalan Shah who settled there. His wife Matijan Bibi used to take care of Lalan. Lalan Shah had a female associate Bishaka by name. They lived as a man and

wife. One of the eyes of Lalan was short because of pox. He was a tall man, bearded. His hair was long and spread around his neck. He used to put on a long dress covering the entire body. He never disclosed his identity for reasons best known only to him. He was sober, courteous, patient and philosophic in enduring trouble. He used to keep a stick by his side. He was very much hospitable and used to entertain people who came in contact with him. He used to organise an annual festival in the month of Falgun. At that time thousands of his followers participated in it. This festival was commonly known as MO-HOTSTV. There is a contemporary portrait drawn by Jitirindranath Tagore, elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore. The sketch showing Lalan in an arm chair with a stick in one hand was drawn on 23rd Baisakh, 1296 B.S. corresponding 5th May, 1889 at Shelaidean boat. This sketch of Lalan Fakir has been kept preserve in the museum of Rabindra-Varati Society, Calcutta. This sketch did not however get any publicity for reasons not known. An imaginary sketch of Lalan draw by the noted painter Nandalal Bos who was not even his contemporary was publicised as the genuine portrait of Lalan till challenged by certain scholars of present time. The sketch by Jitirindranath Tagore is a revealing one. Scholars now feel that Lalan left a tremendous impact on the members of the Tagore family while they lived in Shelaidean.

Although Lalan Shah belonged to a community of mendicant singers he is a mystic in the truest sense of the term. He has studied life in relation to man on the one hand and God on the other. His spiritu-

alism is built up by observing and accepting the full facts of life. He was rational and logical in his approach to things. This, of course, does not mean that he was less emotional. In fact his emotion was conditioned by reason. Lalan was intuitive too and his reason was never opposed to intuition. He rather apprehended facts of life by becoming intuitive. Intuition and life both became identical with him. It is a sort of self revelation. Lalan believes that life is both dynamic and centrifugal. He speaks of the human body as a microcosm of the universe and the abode of Adhar Manush or Achin Pakhi, elusive man and unknown bird. He takes into consideration the sexologic relation or the pleasure principle between male and female and understands that it is through this process the absolute is attained. This pleasure principle is not a new thing. It is associated with a sex act and was prevalent among earlier races. Lalan Shah and his followers in the Baul cult are all erotic. In fact the connection between eroticism and mysticism is indeed intimate. Lalan conceive the Universe as void and the absolute as alone in the beginning. In His infinite potency the elusive man or the Adhar Manush creates a dual (Yugal) out of love. The whole Universe thus proceeds from love which is ever creative and ever expressive. The idea of creativeness fits in with the Absolute. Lalan lays stress on the ultimate reality as synthetic and concrete. His spiritual act has a centrality in duality. whole reality in itself. He considers the human body as the epitome of the Universe which contains all truths. He was greatly influenced by Tantrism which speaks that in every man there is male and female. (Siva and Sakti).