Mystic Utterances in Tukkhā Songs of the Rājbaṃśīs: Poetics, Performance, and Liberation through the Mind-Body Amalgam

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The soul-bird will fly away
Only the body will remain
Tukkhā Song 13

To the people of Jalpaiguri, and to the nameless and unsung poets and bards.

And

To Mā and Bābā,

How will I cross the ocean of life without my Guru?
My Guru is my *Gōsāi*
Tukkhā Song 12

*With Gratitude***.**

Abstract

My doctoral dissertation aims to study the Tukkhā songs of North Bengal composed by the Rājbaṃśī community in the Rājbaṃśī lect, a living tradition largely unexplored by the academic community in Bengal and beyond. My paper analyses language and practice, combining literary criticism with anthropological research.

These songs were influenced by the esoteric devotional traditions such as the Buddhist Sahajayāna, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava traditions of north-eastern India. I have conducted extensive fieldwork in North Bengal (2017-2020) and documented and archived a number of songs (close to one hundred), interviews and audio-visual performances. My work focuses on the oral tradition (songs) and performative art and on the direct connections between the Rājbaṃśī living traditions, rituals and cosmology depicted in Tantric medieval literature.

My work explores mysticism and language, politics of an alternative imaginative space, which I examine as an expression of esoteric devotionalism in the context of the socio-historical and religious evolution of the Rājbaṃśī community. I assess the artistic and political implications of this literature through a close assessment of how it is performed in the present day. I have translated a corpus of these songs into

English for the first time and majority of these songs have not been published before. These songs have created a powerful medium of their self-assertion of the historical consciousness of the Rājbaṃśī community, which has been subjected to political and cultural marginalization. This community has produced diverse genres of songs including Tukkhā, Bhāwaiyā, Tistābuṛir gān (songs for Tista river), songs for SatyaPīr and Maynāmatī (related to the Nāth cult in Bengal), which are important documents of the cultural traditions of this community, thematically and historically in terms of content, literary value and performance traditions.

My thesis also explores notions of identity, marginality, subjectivity, and constructs a critical history 'from below' through the medium of literature of the Rājbaṃśī community. While studying the various metaphors used in the Tukkhā songs, the thesis will try to understand the various strands of heterodox religious ideas that were deeply imbricated in older Tantric traditions and how they were responded to, negotiated with, assimilated, and hybridized. The contours of Tukkhā, as a field and as a living tradition have been refigured and reinvented, while it has engaged with various socio-historical changes in historical, religious and political landscape of North Bengal. The metaphors contained in the songs reveal socio-religious and historical clues about the possible influences on these songs in the absence of substantial secondary sources of literature on the Tukkhā songs. My strategy was to connect the various strands of socio-religious traditions and their influences on the Rājbaṃśī community in constructing a preliminary history of the Tukkhā tradition.

All translations, unless indicated, are my own.

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A Note on the Translations and Transliterations

I have audio-visually recorded oral performances of Tukkhā songs and interviews through fieldwork in North Bengal. Thereafter, I have transcribed the songs and interviews composed in Rājbaṃśī lect using the ISO 15919 series of international standards for romanization. I have translated all the songs, proverbs, and ritual mantras in this thesis from Rājbaṃśī lect into English. Bengali (my native language) as well as Rājbaṃśī lect does not make a distinction between the Sanskrit labiodental consonant 'v' and the bilabial 'b' and this has been used in spelling 'Rājbaṃśī.' However, for proper nouns that have been long associated with the śāstrik tradition, such as Śiva, *jīva,* or Vajrayāna, I have used a 'v'. In Rājbaṃśī lect, certain consonants are deleted/remain silent of words that have cognates in Bengali and Assamese such as 'r' (rājā pronounced as *'ājā'*), 'l' is pronounced as 'n' e.g. '*nāgche*' in Rājbaṃśī is '*lāgche*' in Bengali, or '*nāgijā*; is 'legejā' in Bengali, '*hāmār*' is '*āmār*' in Bengali. Some pronouns are different than in Bengali such as '*mui*' is 'I' and '*mōk*' is '*amāke*' or 'to me/me' in Bengali, '*kāy*' is who. Most of the songs contained in this thesis have been transcribed from oral performances and in certain cases, the words have been changed or mispronounced in colloquial Rājbaṃśī, which have taken me hours to double-check, confirm and transcribe. This was possible through my own understanding of Rājbaṃśī, through the help of dictionaries and occasionally with help from my resource person.

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On the left side: The uppermost hands on both sides hold an elephand hide

One hand holds a human figure pierced in the trident

One hand holds a bell

One hand holds a cut head of a man

One hand is partly broken

One hand holds a skeleton of a dead man

One hand holds a small drum

Two hands partly broken

Her helmet is made of snakes, she has three eyes, earrings are made of snakes, there is a garland of human heads, and the ornaments of arms, hands and feet are all made of

snakes. There is a scorpion in the empty abdomen. She is sitting on a lotus. Under her feet there is a kneeling female figure. On the left of the seat below is a jackal and to the right is a peacock. Below the seat there are a large number of dead bodies and jackals are eating them. Above the head on two sides of the canopy of elephant hide are two female figures with snakes in their hands.



Figure 22. Sisters Surabala and Basantibala discussing Rājbaṃśī marriage rituals during an interview.

Chapter I

Introduction

Boli re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār Brahmā hoilek bhāi sārinjār kārigar

Ōre Viṣnu nāgālek tāhār char

Ār Śiba hoẏā bājāire sārinjā gāire harinām Boli

re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār sata gune sur bājilo re

Ōre raja gune bome mārilen ṭān

Ār tama gune jin bājilore man paṛilo acetan Boli

re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār mulādhāre tārer ninguṛā

Ōre nābhimule phuler tār bāhār

Ār hriday mājhe bāje sārinjā kanṭhe lay re nām

Boli re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Let me tell you that my body is a *sārinjā*!

The sound of your three strings has driven me crazy

Brahmā is the creator of this *sārinjā*

And Viṣnu attached its bow

And in the form of Śiva, the *sārinjā* praises the name of Hari

Let me tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three stings has driven me crazy

The string which resonates the finest qualities[1] is *sur*

The active qualities[2] are reverberated by plucking the *bom*

And *jin* vibrates the base qualities[3] making one unconscious

Let me tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three stings has made my mind crazy

The strings originates in the *mulādhāra*[4]

Called ninguṛā

The flower blossoms at the navel

The *sārinjā* plays in my heart and the voice echoes the divine name

Let me tell you that my body is like a sārinjā

The sound of your three strings has driven me crazy

Tukkhā Song 9

This song about metaphysical reality, performed by an amicable and eloquent septuagenarian man and his friend and fellow singer in his fifties, was one of the first Tukkhā songs that I heard during my visit to a village in Maynāguri town in Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal on a warm and humid autumn afternoon in 2017. In this song, the body is being compared to a *sārinjā*, an Indian stringed instrument[5]. It was a public

[1] Refers to *Guṇas*, which stand for attributes or quality, here the *sattvaguṇa* (purity, balance, harmony).
[2] Sur, bom and jin refer to the three strings of the sārinjā, corresponding in turn to the three *guṇas*
[3] Refers to *tamoguṇa* (chaos, destruction, imbalance)
[4] The root *cakra*, which lies at the base of spine
[5] The metaphor of the *sārinjā* is discussed in detail in chapter IV in the context of shared metaphors and symbols between esoteric religious traditions in Bengal.

performance between two singers, the older one was a Vaiṣṇava and the younger one was a minstrel and wanderer, who left his home at a very young age. According to the older singer, in a highly unexpected tone, the younger singer could become his Guru or *Sādhujon.* The reason behind this bold statement is that the younger singer had collected several songs of spiritual realization all his life, and that his music and devotion were intertwined. The younger singer and collector of songs is a carpenter by profession and had taken upon himself the task of collecting, preserving and performing several important Tukkhā songs of the Rājbaṃśī community. The older singer was in awe of him and exclaimed that his passion inspired him. The audience consisted primarily of locals and a few inhabitants of the neighbouring village. The singers were trying to interact subtly with the audience by making exclamatory gestures and asking rhetorical questions. The audience was immersed in the performance; kids and baby goats were playing around, the surroundings comprised paddy fields and mud huts with thatched roofs. The hospitality was unforgettable as we were seated in the courtyard and being served tea and sweets by the oldest woman of the household.

This was quite an unforgettable experience and an apt introduction to the tradition of Tukkhā for me.

My interest in the prolific corpus of 'folk' literature and music of Bengal developed in childhood while growing up in Bengal, and intensified during my undergraduate years and metamorphosed into a strong academic interest. While already being exposed to the Bāul songs of Bengal and the Buddhist *Caryāgīti*, I became interested in exploring the elusive doctrine of *dehatattva* and its philosophical and socio-cultural dimensions through vernacular sources in Tantra. My interest in this domain of esoteric devotional traditions, metaphors and religious imagination evolved into the aims of tracing the sociocultural, literary and religious development of the Tukkhā songs against the backdrop of the Rājbaṃśī community's evolution through the decades and the development of its complex and plural religious ideas, practices and beliefs.

The devotional music and folk literature of the Rājbaṃśī community has barely received widespread scholarly attention and the academic study of the living Tukkhā tradition, as an academic subject, is lacunose. In contrast, Bhāwaiyā, another prominent tradition of songs belonging to the Rājbaṃśī community, has received significantly more scholarly attention, which finds expression in a number of publications (Chattopadhyay 1992, Barma 2004, Khandoker 2019) as well as a documentary that was made on this subject. Bhaumik (1977), Barma (2019) and Ray (2021) have written articles about the Tukkhā as a genre with a very brief historical context of the Rājbaṃśī community. Apart from that, there were no sources of secondary literature available for me while embarking on the study of this tradition. The lack of scholarship was compounded by the sad fact that the tradition is facing a gradual but steady obsolescence, and only a few performers now remain.

I encountered other difficulties when working with these texts. Many of these songs were composed not for a public audience, but only for private practitioners and members dedicated to their own esoteric traditions. Therefore, the texts have a highly elusive and mysterious character for an outsider - they are full of technical terms and symbols, the meaning and broader context of which should have been explained to the student by his Guru. For the uninitiated, these texts are often completely incomprehensible, and if they happen to be intelligible, there is always the risk that it is only an apparent meaning, which hides another level of meaning. Moreover, since these songs cannot be dated, and have been passed down orally for generations, there are several gaps and missing dots that needed to be connected while trying to trace the history of this tradition in the background of the Rājbaṃśī community's complex cultural and religious history and historiography.

In spite of these challenges, I managed to find answers to some of the principal questions regarding this obscure tradition, which in itself is a vast treasure house of early Bengali religious ideas, both in terms of language and content. I traced my journey backwards to the connected religious Tantric history of Assam, North Bengal,
Bihar and Rangpur and Jamalpur District in Bangladesh, during the rule of the Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa kingdom (350 CE to 1140 CE). The Koch-Rājbaṃśī people are believed to have inhabited this region of ancient Kamarupa (Barma 2004, 9-10). Tantric practices in the vernacular languages as well as in Sanskrit flourished in these regions. Sanskritic brāhmanic traditions and local indigenous rituals interacted and negotiated with each other (Urban 2011, 231-47). The complex interaction between Tantric movements, non-institutional Buddhist esotericism, Buddhist *Siddhas* and the indigenous communities in parts of South Asia (especially north eastern India) has been discussed in detail by Davidson (2002, 224–34). This connection in the context of Tukkhā has been discussed in detail in chapter III of my thesis.

Tukkhā: A Textual and Ethnographic Study

The aims of this study are to provide an in depth analysis of the oral and written songs of a living tradition through a literary critical approach with a focus on metaphors and mystic language, to provide an ethnographic account of Tukkhā songs in the context of the Rājbaṃśī society, and to study how the growth of this tradition participated in and fostered the growth of a unique Rājbaṃśī cultural identity. Local traditions are not immured from wider cultural changes, and however small and regionally confined the Rājbaṃśī community is, they too responded to and were shaped by social transformation: their story may be seen as a story of a quest for selfexpression and self-preservation. This is also an attempt to fill the gaps in the study of vernacular sources in Tantra in Bengal, which have largely been focused on resources in Bengali. Through

a study of esoteric literature of the Rājbaṃśī in Rājbaṃśī lect shows a complex and rich side of Tantric literature in Bengal, that have not been explored in depth. One of the main aims of this thesis is to bring to light the gap that exists in the study of *dehatattva* traditions in Northeastern India as well as West

Bengal, which have mainly focused on Baul-Fakir and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇav traditions. *Manaśikṣā, Dehatattva, Aspāli, Khyapār Gān* highlight the uniqueness and variety of the literary resources of the Rājbaṃśī community, which can be traced back to a long history of multiple cultural encounters between various religious traditions.

This thesis presents the findings from extensive fieldwork conducted in Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, India (2017-2020), which was obstructed during the pandemic, especially during 2020-21. The findings comprise close to one hundred collected songs out of which seventy are contained in the present thesis, and their transcriptions, translations from Rājbaṃśī to English and literary analysis of some of the major songs. The results of fieldwork also include interviews and discussions with musicians and religious practitioners.

According to Barma (2019) the word Tukkhā could have several etymological origins. It could imply a form of songs that involve Tantra and *sādhanā* (worship) that are performed for salvation ('Tuk-Tak' in Bengali and Rājbaṃśī refer to incantations and magic spells). It could also have been borrowed from "Thukkhā" in Bodo language, which stands for preparation of one's body and mind for the prayer/worship and complete surrender to God, which is also similar to the meaning of Tukkhā (Barma 2019:142-143). Rājbaṃśī lect has been enriched by words from different Kamrupi lects and languages. 'Tuk-Gān' also refers to a form of Padāvali Kirtan, which is a form of Vaiṣṇava devotional music.

The collected Tukkhā songs in this thesis have been categorized into the following kinds; *Manaśikṣā, Dehatattva, Aspāli, Khyapār gān* and the songs influenced by Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism. The meaning of Tukkhā is still unclear although various suggestions have been raised. The cognate in Bodo seems the most plausible, as most of the songs center around the themes of preparing the body and/or cultivating the mind for worship, with an element of didacticism in the *manaśikṣā* songs. The songs of *manaśikṣā are* primarily about self and mental cultivation. It is a form of cultivating a transcendental consciousness, which raises the mind above mundane emotions and worldly thoughts. A particular sect or community takes up a particular form of worship for various socio-historical reasons, and self-preservation and selfexpression are two principal reasons. For the Rājbaṃśī community, *manaśikṣā* songs become such a medium of self-expression through a proximity to Divine Soul or self. *Manaśikṣā* songs are mostly performed by *Baistam bāudiyas*, who are wandering minstrels and 'madcap' poets. The *Baistam Bāudiyas* of North Bengal have been proponents of the theory of mental cultivation and put emphasis on meditation and training of the mind. This can be compared to other traditions such as Buddhist Sahajiyā, Nāth Yogis, Śākta *sādhakas* and the Bauls of Bengal. Strands of philosophical concepts and metaphors from these traditions have had a deep impact on the Tukkhā songs included in this thesis.

Music and theatrical performance have long held a vital place in the cultural life of the Rājbaṃśī community, and it is through these that they have affirmed and negotiated a heterodox identity against a backdrop of marginalization by wider Bengali culture. One of the aims of my research was also to question whether it is possible to make observations about the micro-histories and changing relationships of smaller communities with wider societal and historical events and changes through the lens of a local 'folk' tradition of a community. The Rājbaṃśī community has faced a constant and ongoing dialogue with processes of Hinduization, that is, the adoption of upper

caste Hindu ideas and attitudes by non-Hindu communities, including caste practices, as well as the consolidation of a Kṣatriya identity under their leader Panchanan Barma.

In the course of centuries, various castes, races and cultures have cohabited and merged in North Bengal. Co-assimilation and contact has resulted in the formation of a mixed folklore. Koch, Mech, Rava, Ahom, Nepali people and tea garden workers from Bihar, Orissa, and broadly the Chota Nagpur region, refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan have brought in a combination of individual customs and rituals which have led to the evolution of a widely mixed folklore and religious culture in of North
Bengal (Das 1982). The region of North Bengal has its own subjective history (Barua 1993, Ghoshal 1942), which has resulted in the distinctiveness of the culture in this region, where the combination and coexistence of diverse races and religions has been common since ancient times. The social and cultural distinctiveness of this region has not received sufficient scholarly attention in recent times, with not many publications focusing on the history of this region specifically. According to Masica, in the Indian context, the sub dialectical-continuum does not present a uniform gradient (Masica 1991, 25), and the distinction between a dialect and a language is problematic for the NIA lects. Toulmin, in his study on the KRDS lects, (Kāmta/Rājbaṃśī/Deshi Bhāshā) points out that the differentiation between language and dialects comes down to a form of socio-cultural and political ideology rather than a linguistic one, which is the case of Rājbaṃśī, as it is identified as a sub-dialect of Bengali, which is a historical misinterpretation in Northern Bengali society (Toulmin 2009, 341). Rājbaṃśī has roots in proto Kamta language that was spoken in Kamrupa Kingdom. The language underwent changes throughout the centuries, and there was mixing with other languages such as with standard Nepali in Nepal for the Rājbaṃśīs living there, standard Assamese in Assam and with standard Bengali in North Bengal. He chooses

to use the term lect, which we will also be using for Rājbaṃśī. While addressing the term 'lect', he says

> This technical term is synonymous with 'linguistic variety' and encompasses referents of both the terms 'language' and 'dialect' without distinguishing the entity regarding its relations of linguistic autonomy or heteronomy. (Toulmin 2006,19)

Toulmin's analysis is appropriate in that even though Rājbaṃśī uses the same script as Bengali, it uses several vocabulary, pronunciation, idioms, which are distinct from Bengali, giving it its distinct modern day character (also throwing light on its ancient, historical linguistic roots), which is also evident in the songs that I have collected. Another significant feature of the language used in the songs is its symbolical, cryptic and metaphorical nature, likening it with the enigmatic coded language (often referred to as *sandhyā bhāṣā-* though contemporary scholars do not usually use this term, discussed in chapter III), used in older mystical songs of Bengal, such as the Buddhist *Caryāgīti*, Vaiṣṇav Sahajiyā, and the Bāul-Fakir songs.

As discussed through the course of my thesis, the Rājbaṃśī community has been influenced by a number of religious traditions such as Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism, as well as Sufism. Tukkhā cannot be strictly labeled as a "Hindu tradition" (in spite of the majority of the Rājbaṃśī community identifying as Hindu), as the lineage of this tradition is quite diverse, heterodox and complex. In Bengal, with the the emergence of a Muslim peasantry as the majority population, under the Islamic rule of Bengal (Eaton 1993) an Islamic culture and religious practices began to develop during the course of the seventeenth century. Bengal became a space of cultural contact, characterized by a coexistence of deities, rituals, performance and textual traditions as Islamic (primarily Sufi) practice, Hindu practices, Nath-Yogic practices, and Bengali indigenous traditions intermingled. Stewart (2001, 2004 and 2019) has consolidated and

taken forward research on this topic especially on the figure of *Satya-Pir*, which is one of the deities worshipped by the Rājbaṃśī community. Both from the perspective of history of religions as well as literary theory, Stewart's translations of the tales of fantasy based on the legendary figure of Satya Pir, who could appear both as a Hindu deity (Satya Narayana) and a Muslim deity (Satya Pir) sheds light on how Islam in Bengal shared a complex relationship with Hinduism, which includes interaction between texts, rituals and performance forms.

The Goddess of the river, Tistāburi, Satyapir and Mādār Pir, Haribolā of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaiva gods such as Sannyāsi Thākur, Śākta goddesses such as Thān Kālī, Bhadra Kālī all co-exist within the community's socio-religious practices (Chapter II). Many parts of the folk music of this region are based on religious music. The subdivisions of the Tukkhā; *Manaśikṣā, Dehatattva, and Khyapār gān* are based on cryptic, mystical and symbolical themes written in a coded language.

Some of the Tukkhā songs also show Sufi and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava influence and is a fitting examples of cultural translation and sharing of conceptual worlds (Stewart, 2001) for example, in song no. 44 the figures of Rādhā and Allāh appear together.:

Bali hāẏre khyapā kathā śun

Purṇa brahma ardha candra mudhyot kyāne śun

Ār pubadige kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Ār sare a sarey ā hraswa i dirgha ī kun dale boise

Hāẏre kaōto kaōto kaōto āji re

Ō Hāẏre hraswa i dirgha ī kun dale boise

Ār uttar dike kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Hraswa u dirgha ū hāsu li ē ai kun dale boise

Hāẏre kaōto kaōto kaōto śuni āji re

Ār paccim dike kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Ār kun dalate āllāhādīni kun dale boise

Ō hāẏre 'lā il lā hā il lā lā

Hāẏre āllāhādīni kun dale

Kun dale boise

Bali hāẏre khyapā kathā śun

Purṇa brahma ardha candra mudhyot kyāne śun

Listen to me, oh madcap soul, hear my words

Brahma is full

The moon is partial

So why is there a void in the middle?'

How many letters are there in the East?

And 'a', '*ā', 'i' 'ī'*[6] belong in which group?

Oh dear, tell me, I am listening, *'i' 'ī'* belong in which group?

And how many letters are there in the North? 'u',

'ū', 'ৠ', 'ঌ', 'ē', 'ai' belong in which group?

[6] The first four vowels of the Bengali alphabet

And how many letters are there in the West?

And in which group does *āllāhādīni*[7] belong?

Oh dear! *'lā il lā hā il lā lā*[8]

Oh dear! In which group does *āllāhādīni* belong?

Listen to me, oh madcap soul, hear my words

Brahma is full

The moon is partial

[7] *Āllāhdini* is synonymous with Rādhā and symbolizes pure form of love for Krsna, who acts as a bridge between the devotee and God [8] 'There is no god but Allah.'

So why is there a void in the middle?'

This song explains the theory of Tantric alphabets. This song highlights the exchange between the religious traditions of Bengal through a synthesizing attitude of ecumenicism. In the process of *deha sādhanā* (body worship) practiced by the male and female s*ādhaka* and *sādhikā,* the position of the Tantric vowels is being identified in this song. The *varna mālās* (alphabet) arranged in Tantra contain sixteen vowels (*Svarabarṇa*). The *Sādhaka* uses these vowels to denote various symbols inside the body. These sixteen vowels are known as *mātrikāvarna* (mother alphabet), which are related to *Kalā tattva* (related to cycles of the full moon) and *Amā tattva* (related to the new moon). Amā is often referred to as a Goddess and is another name of Guhyakāli or Kāmkalā Kāli and symbolizes the ultimate imperishable form of *śakti*. She devours the sixteen phases of moon one by one and this results in the new moon. She gradually reveals herself through the phases leading to full moon. She is capable of creation as well as destruction, and represents the balance of *sattva, tama* and *rajo guṇas*, which also symbolizes *prakṛti,* the feminine principle of power. Within Amā's seed (*bindu* or dot) is contained the whole of universe.[8] From this seed emerges *bisarga* (consonant), with two dots. Once these dots of the woman and the man are joint, it creates a whole, which becomes the universe and all creations. Hence the

phrase:

Purṇa brahma ardha candra mudhyot kyāne śun

Brahma is full

The moon is partial

So why is there a void in the middle?'

[8] p.433

According Śaiva Tantra, the half moon on Śiva's head stands for Amā which also resembles the moon-dot or *Candrabindu*.[9] The 'half-moon and void in the middle' is a visual representation of the Bengali consonant *Candrabindu* (lit. 'Moon-dot), which resembles a half moon with a dot and a void in the middle. However, the worship of moons is common among esoteric traditions in Bengal such as the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas and the Bāuls (Dimock 1966, Jha 1995, 94). Kaviraj(1984) on the discussion on Vaiṣṇava tantra and Śaiva tantra, he has discussed the concept of Amā and equated it with Rādhā through the special kind of feminine force, which is also known as *hladini śakti*. *Hlādinī śakti,* symbolizes pure bliss/pleasure, which enables Kṛṣṇa to experience pleasure or joy (*ānanda*), and the essence of this ś*akti* is pure love or *prema.*[10]

Hence, the Vaiṣṇav *Sādhaka* practice chanting *Kāma Gāyatrī*[11] (during the practice of *yugal sādhanā* or united body worship), which has sixteen names and thirty two letters. In the songs of *dehatattva*, we observe the use of lotuses and its petals and the number of petals denote various points in the body, which is discussed in some of the Tukkhā songs (no. 36, 60). In this song, the disciple wants to know from the Guru, on which petals of the cosmic lotus these sixteen vowels are residing. The disciple also wants to know the location of the various directions within the body and the disciple uses the sun and the moon as reference points for determining the cardinal directions. Even though there is no answer to the questions in this song from the Guru, I have tried to construct an answer based on the cues and metaphors present in this song. The answer is that according to the conception of the body-universe in Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇav tantra, the sixteen vowels are located in the sixteen petalled lotus in the throat (*Bisudakhya*[12]), from where

[9] As quoted in Jha, 1999, 333.
[10] Dimock, 1966, p. 133-34.
[11] The *Kāma-gāyatrī* mantra is mentioned in the *madhya lilā* of the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta.* This mantra is inseparable from the identity of Kṛṣṇa. A disciple who has been initiated by a spiritual Guru can chant this mantra to achieve prema (pure, divine, selfless love) instead of falling prey to *kāma* (egotistic love)
[12] p. 431-34.

the voice originates. At a metaphorical level, the allusion to Rādhā as *hlādini* and perhaps a pun on *hlādini* expressed as *Āllāhdini* (lit. beloved girl in Bengali) is a metaphor for a force of love and joy, who acts as a bridge between the devotee and their God, in this case, Kṛṣṇa. *Āllāhdini* could also be a pun on *'āllāhādī' (Al-hadi* in Arabic*),* which is one of the "ninety-nine names" of Allah. One of the strategies of the song to create an impression of mystery is to leave large gaps between stanzas, giving the impression of disjointed-ness: these gaps are invitations to the audience to guess the actual meaning of the speaker. It is as if the speaker is playing a game with his/her audience, by deliberately teasing and igniting curiosity through half-answers and halfformed sentences. And when the answer is provided, it still appears unfinished, and unresolved.

The Muslim *Sādhaka* uses the phrase *lā il lā hā il lā lā rāsul allā* (I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) which contains fifteen/sixteen Arabic letters.[13]

Methodology

Chapter I and Chapter III of my thesis include a literary critical analysis of some of the principal metaphors in the Tukkhā songs through references to theoretical literature on metaphor theory. Chapter I also highlights the relationship between poetic and mystic language in my thesis through a study of conceptual metaphors in the Tukkhā songs.
My thesis aims to highlight the importance and implications of the key metaphors in the songs, as they are vital pieces in piecing together the puzzle of the historical and religious milieu of the Tukkhā songs in the absence of secondary literature. The double meanings

[13] p. 433.

and hidden narratives in the poetry could also be interpreted as implicitly political devices whereby the Rājbaṃśīs articulate their encounters with hegemonic

discourses. However unrelated to the world these metaphors seem to be, they can be made sense only in relation to their wider religious and social environments. They form the metaphysical explanations to the practice. This challenge was met after an intensive study of related metaphors in Hindu, Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava, and Buddhist traditions, in other published texts and after interaction with several singers and practitioners. I worked with the knowledge that was given to me and with the permission of revealing the meanings of some the metaphors and articulating the poetics of religious expression to the uninitiated audience and readers. For many of the songs, I decoded some of the key metaphors by persistent engagement in the field as well as study of secondary literature, and by intensive engagement with certain Tantric metaphors in general. The process of interpretation of certain metaphors from my own understanding and familiarity with the themes and symbols expressed in the songs helped me join certain missing dots in constructing a preliminary history of this almost obscure tradition of songs.

The focus on the body as a microcosm containing all the basic principles and components of the universe is the foundation of *dehatattva* (doctrine/truth of the body), a central concern of these songs. Therefore, the knowledge of the body and the idea of working with it is often the cornerstone of their *sādhanā* or process of worship. *Dehatattva* (literally "doctrine/principles of the body" or "truth of the body") is then a kind of map of this bodily universe, which serves as a guide for its creation through *sādhanā.* In the Tantric conception of the bodily universe, the basic elements of the subtle body are the energy channels (*nāḍī*) and centers (*cakras*), symbolized by lotuses with different numbers of petals, water metaphors such as river, ponds and the ocean. In the songs collected in this thesis, the highest *cakra* is placed in the head and associated with the thousand-leaf lotus, which corresponds to the *sahasrā*. The highest principle of the body resides in this seat.

The emotional experience, the metaphors of the body (*dehatattva*) and the mind (*manaśikṣā)* are the locus of these subjectivities that are at once religious, historical, and political, which can be contextualized within the socio-cultural circumstances of everyday life. The experiences of the body and the mind are implicated in their metaphorical imagination, which creates a sense of timelessness through their reiteration and reproduction, which is being performed since ages through the oral
tradition.

Language, undoubtedly, is one of the most important elements in the Tukkhā songs, because it is through the game of language that metaphysical truths are both hidden and revealed. Most of the singers have some religious training and aptitude. The socioreligious context and background of the songs have been discussed in depth in Chapter
I. Chapter I also contains a thematic analysis of some of the important metaphors in the Tukkhā songs. Chapter II highlights some of the socio-cultural practices of the Rājbaṃśī community to contextualize the songs with historical background of the community. Chapter III discusses some of the songs in a diachronic comparison with the *Caryāgīti* and Bāul-Fakir songs, which have several overlapping themes and religious metaphors and common religious influences. Chapter IV contains an anthology of seventy Tukkhā songs that I have collected through my fieldwork, transcribed and translated from Rājbaṃśī into English.

Socio- Religious Background of the Tukkhā Songs

One of the aims of this chapter is to trace the historical process with which the songs are in dialogue. This is important because the songs themselves confront the complicated religious and social developments of the time and their internal sense and external implications are understood better through the examination of some of the

sociocultural and religious context in which they were produced. The second half of the chapter analyzes in detail the key metaphors and themes present in Tukkhā songs by discussing theoretical literature on the study of 'conceptual' metaphors through a comparison between mystic and poetic language. Northeastern India, and North Bengal in particular (area of my fieldwork) have barely received attention in scholarship regarding the study of growth of vernacular Tantra and on the study of esoteric early and medieval literatures in Bengal.

During Biswa Singha's ascendancy over the Koch dynasty in the 16th century (15101528), which rose to political power on the ruins of the Kamata Kingdom in northeastern India, the identity of the Rājbaṃśī clan was consolidated, following which this sense of identity started evolving in the course of the next centuries.[14]Biswa Singha had successfully organized the different Koch (sanskritised as Kamboja or Kuvacha) tribes (Nath, 1989,1) including the Bodos, Meches, Kacharies, Rājbaṃśīs and Garos. The Koches were Tibeto-Burman speaking people who were Hinduized during the 16th century under the Koch Behar Royal Families of Biswa Singha, Naranarayan and Chilarai (Sheikh, 2012, 249-254). Biswa Singha, who was a major patron of Hindu Gods such as Śiva and Pārvati, was initiated into Śaivism, and had invited Brahmins from Mithila and Gaur to his court to perform religious rites in temples and promoted Sanskrit learning (Nath, 1989, 38, Ray, 2016, 59-60). The practice of the worship of Śiva as a tutelary God was also prevalent in the preceding Kamarupa kingdom (Barua

[14] The origin of the Koch Rājbaṃśī community continues to be a topic of scholarly debate. According to historians of Koch Behar such as Ghoshal (1942), Nath (1989) and Adhikary (2018), the Koches originally belonged to the aboriginal communities of an Indo-Mongoloid group. They had played a crucial part in the state formation of this region. The emergence of the Koch dynasty as a political power in the early half of the 16th century is an important chapter in the history of this region. Taking advantage of the invasion of Kamata, a remnant of the old Kamarupa kingdom that started in A.D. 1493 by Alauddin Hussain Shah of Bengal, Vishu or Bishu (later came to be known as Biswa Singha), a chieftain of his tribe established his authority over the Baro- Bhuyans in Western Brahmaputra valley, as well as took advantage of the conflict between the Baro Bhuyans and Hussein Shah, and thus founded a kingdom. Biswa Singha firmly established his hegemony in the first quarter of the 16th century (Nath 1989: 15-17). Immediately after this, he was elevated and installed as the by a section of Brahmanas and assumed the title of Biswa/Viswa Singha, meaning the lord of the world and even traced his descent from Śiva (Nath 1947, 111).

1936, Chatterjee 1951). Biswa Singha's self-proclamation as a Kṣatriya Rājbaṃśī was consolidated by the support from the Brahmins who attributed the origins of the Koches to a divine lineage of Śiva. Koches were Hinduized in this process, and legitimized by local Brahmins, who in turn benefitted from royal patronage of the king and consolidated their presence and influence in the northeastern part of the country. The Koch Behar Royal Family underwent a process of further Brahmanization during the rule of Biswa Singha's son and successor Naranarayan, with the advent of neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement of Śaṅkaradeva, under the umbrella of *ekasarana dharma*.

What is striking during this period is the confluence of Hindu practices of worship and the tribal practices of worship, which included worship of Śiva and Kali as a local god and goddess, and this mode of intermingling was highly encouraged by the Koch kings, especially Biswa Singha, who was allegedly the son of a tribal chieftain, who had embraced both kinds of practices of worship, rites and rituals (Ghoshal 1942, 121). The development of a religious culture was influential in the growth of the Rājbaṃśī socio-cultural and religious identity. Naranarayan also established temples for Durga as well as rebuilt the temple of Kāmākhyā, which is now believed was destroyed by natural calamities as well as under Hussein Shah's invasion of Kamata Kingdom (Goswami 1998, 130). The *Darrang Rājbaṃśabali*, a dynastic record of Koch Kings mentions the episode of reconstruction and renovation of this temple by Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai (Tamta 2019, 24). The figure of Madan Mohan (still worshipped in the temple of Madan Mohan in Koch Behar district) was established by Naranarayan as he was strongly influenced by Śaṅkariya Vaiṣṇavism. In the temple of Madan Mohan, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava deities were worshipped and festivals were held at the same time (until this day). Such a religious confluence deeply influenced the Rājbaṃśī religious practices, which is evident in current society and socio- religious practices.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Rājbaṃśī community was mobilized under a Kṣatriya identity as distinct from the Koch identity by their leader Panchanan Barma, who established the Kṣatriya Sabha and instilled Brahmanical values within the community to preserve and consolidate its caste status.[15]

Before the advent of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the second half of the twentieth century, as discussed, Śaṅkariya Vaiṣṇavism was the most prevalent form of devotional worship among the Rājbaṃśīs, especially during the rule of Naranarayana. The teachings of Śaṅkaradeva expounded by his disciples found profound resonance with kings Naranarayana and Lakshmi Narayana in Koch Behar, who made it the state religion alongside Śaivism, which was started by Biswa Singha. A single, unified form of Kṛṣṇa, as an avatar of Vishnu, was worshipped during this era, which led to establishment of the Madan Mohan temple. In the later times, worship of deities such as Madan Kām, Rākhāl Thākur (still worshipped by the community today) might have been influenced by the earlier deification of Kṛṣṇa as the principal deity. The influence of Kṛṣṇa worship was incorporated into the songs of *dehattatva* and *manaśikṣā*, and other kinds of ceremonial songs. The transition of the Rājbaṃśī community from the singular worship of *ekasarana* dharma into the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa under the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism happened much later with the advent of the devotees from the eastern part of Bengal (prior to partition), who brought with them the beliefs and practice of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, along with Varna based caste practices. The gradual establishment of several *hari mandirs*, performance of Hari Nām saṃkīrtana, and the influence of Gōsāīs as Gurus and Baiṣtams became prevalent everywhere. Even in

[15] In 1910 Panchanan Barma, a social reformer and political thinker and leader of the "Kṣatriya Movement" which raised the issue of Rājbaṃśī language for its recognition, preservation and development, headed the "Kṣatriya Samiti" re-asserting for Kṣatriya status for fellow Rājbaṃśīs of undivided Bengal wanted special provisions for opportunities for them to improve their socioeconomic and political position (Ray 2007, 83). The Kṣatriya Samiti started publishing the Kṣatriya Patrika (magazine) to spread awareness about not only the literary and cultural heritage of the Rājbaṃśīs (including texts in Rājbaṃśī lect, for e.g. religious texts and "folk" literature) but also raise a sense of Kṣatriya consciousness among the community and celebrate their achievements, sociopolitical conditions. (Ray 2017,16-17).

contemporary times the figure of the Gōsāīs remains important, as some Tukkhā singers identify themselves as Guru- Gōsāīs and Baiṣtam.

The figure of Nityānanda: An exchange between pre and post Caitanya Sahajiyā ideas

Nityānanda, Sri Caitanya's principal companion, friend, and disciple is mentioned in several Tukkhā songs (no. 58, 59,66,67, 68, 70). Nityānanda, along with his wife and disciples have been identified as Sahajiyās by Dimock (1966, 46-52, 91-96), a claim that is refuted by Connell (2019, 147). Nityānanda was known to have 'left-hand' Tantric associations and was also known be a champion of caste, and disregarded *jāti* while recruiting devotees. He was known to be a Śaiva *Avadhuta*, which implied a 'freefloating ascetic' (Sen, 2019) as well as a *Svarupa,* and referring to someone who had taken Tantric orders and 'renounced them' to return to normal life of a householder, and later married as well (Dimock,1966, 42). Nityānanda may or may not have travelled to regions of North Bengal during his lifetime but his Sahajiyā associations receive new attention in the songs that I have collected, with six of them having a reference to 'Nitāi' or Nityānanda, further consolidating the influence of Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism on the Tukkhā tradition. Stewart (2010) positions this discussion on the disputed sahajiyā lineages in the light of the textual reinterpretations of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava doctrines and texts by the Sahajiyā, especially Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's esoteric terms in the post-
Caitanya era. Presence of sahajiyā terminologies and concepts such as that of celebration of divine love in the *sahaja* state within the human body, *kāma* (love in its egotistic aspect) *prema* (divine love), divine androgyny, cosmic topologies of the body, highlight the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on the Tukkhā corpus.

Tukkhā is largely an oral tradition and clearly shows the influence of sahajiyā lineage of Nityānanda, which proves how these ideas travelled across Bengal, and were assimilated

in a climate where various divergent esoteric religious groups in the secret *(guhya)* practitioners (Śāktas, Nāthas, Kāulas, Sahajiyās, Vaiṣṇavs, 'Sahajiyā' Buddhists) had mutual interactions and borrowed from each other, while sharing of doctrines and metaphorical worlds.

In song 69, the reference to the splendid figure (*Haraṣita murti*) of Nityānanda (*nitya*+*ānanda*= someones who perpetually dwells in joy or bliss) is made, while explaining the process of sahaja *dehasādhanā* with references to Tantric Sahajiyā topologies of the body through ponds (*Akṣaẏa sarabar*) and rising of the *kundalini śakti* upwards. This *kundalini śakti* has been conceived in the image of Rādhā, and the rise of this energy symbolizes the union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* in the thousand petalled *Sahasrāra* in the head which is equated with Rādhā's meeting with her beloved in private. (Dasgupta, 1969, 129). The reference to *nityadhāma* or land of eternity refers to the transcendental eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa, and in this context it is a metaphor for the human body.

Ār śunyer mānuṣ śunye āśe yāẏ

Śunye thāke ṣunye base

Śunye kathā kaẏ

Ēi ye sei mānuṣke dharā nāhi yāẏ

Hāẏre sattvaguṇ er sādhan bine

And the man of void, moves in void, back and forth

Dwells in void, sits in void, talk in void

Without the *sādhanā* of the *sattvaguṇas*

Alas! One cannot reach that man

This song shows a very unique blend of ideas taken from both pre- Caitanya Buddhist Sahajiyā and Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā doctrines where the idea of finding the *śunyer mānuṣ* or the Formless one, is found in the middle of a description of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā

dehasādhanā. The idea of void or *śunya* is also in sync with the immaterialist idea of the infinite and formless nature of divine love, where the ego/self of the lover is obliterated, and the self unites with the beloved to become one, in the flow of divine bliss of love (*prem*). This conception of *śunya* has been expressed variously as *śunya* (Nothing), *ānanda* (joy) or (*Nirākāram*) (Bose, 1930, 245). This also has a resemblance with the Buddhist Sahajiyā conception of the supreme Being residing within, who is identified as the Formless One, (*sahaja*), one who is transformed into a personal God in one of the *dohās* of Buddhist *siddha* Saraha-pāda (Dasgupta, 1969, 167). This conception has been received and transformed by the Baul-Fakirs in their conception of *maner mānuṣ* or *adharā* or man of the heart or a personal God, which implies the realization of the *sahaja* or ultimate nature of the self (Dasgupta, 1969,176). It is very important to point out the difference between the Sahajiyā Buddhist aspect of psycho-physiological Tantric yogic-*sādhanā* which influenced the development of the entire culture of psychological *sādhanā* of divine love of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. This ideal form or state of divine love can only be achieved by the purification of the body and the mind, which is possible by the suppression of the *Guṇas or* qualities/elements*,* namely, *rajas* and *tamas* and the predominant worship or *sādhanā* of the *sattva* (goodness, calmness, harmonious) (See Dasgupta, 1969, 142).

Song 69

Āmār man yāi cal seikhāne
Sunyapurī ai nitya dhāme

Ār śunyer mānuṣ śunye āśe yāẏ
Śunye thāke ṣunye base
Śunye kathā kaẏ

Ēi ye sei mānuṣke dharā nāhi yāẏ

Hāẏre sattvaguṇ er sādhan bine

cāo

Ār sei mānuṣke dharite yadi

Akṣaẏa sarabare giẏā

Sātāri khelāo

Ēi ye daśmate ēk ḍubo dāo

Hāẏre kunḍalinī māj khāne

ki

Ō sādhubhāi bhābiā karichit

Nityānanda dise nāmṭā

Haraṣita murti

My mind let's go to that place
Into the palace of void[16] and *nitya dhāma*[18]

And[17] the man of void, moves in void, back and forth

Dwells in void, sits in void, talk in void

Without the *sādhanā*[18] of the *sattvaguṇas*[19]

Alas! One cannot reach that man

[16] Void could refer to the Sahajiyā concept of *śūnyatā, Karunā,(* or *Prajna* and *Upāya)* which constitutes Bodhicitta (supreme bliss) and stand for the two central nerves in the body and the middle nerve (spinal cord) which is the pathway of *sahaja* or supreme bliss.*(*Dasgupta, 1969, 107*).* The *sahaja* mystics such as Sarahapā, Kāṇhapā, position their devotional paradigm on *Śūnyatā,* which is believed to be drawing inspiration from the negativist Madhyamaka philosophy of Nāgārjuṇa, the positivist school of Aśvaghoṣa as well as the Vijñāna-vāda school led by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as well as resemblance of *sahaja* with the Vedantic conception of reality, representing nothingness. The ultimate Void is a principal theme of the *Caryāgīti*, the *Dohākośa* of Sarahapā, as well as the *Śunya Purāṇa* of Ramāi Pundit, the great exponent of the Dharma-Cult in Bengal.

[17] composed allegedly in the 11th century AD and the poems of *Dharmamangal*(Dasgupta 1969: 39-40). *Nitya dhāma* in Vaishnavism refers to the eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa, and in this context it is a metaphor for the human body.

[18] Spiritual practice towards attainment of the spiritual goal.

[19] *Guṇas* refers to attributes or quality of *sattva* (goodness, calmness, harmonious)

And if you want to reach that man

Go and swim in the imperishable lake[20]

Take a dip, as the ten commandments proclaim

Oh, the *kundalini*[21] lies in the middle

Oh sadhu, my brother,

What are you up to, while deep in your thoughts?

The name has been given by Nityananda what

a resplendent figure!

Song 67:

Āhā bhāb yadi lāge gāẏ

Purṇa bhāb gopīr nyaẏ

Baliteche nityānanda Rāẏ

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Bhābuker saṅga dhara

Bhāb kara upārjan

Ye bhābete rādhā pela

Srīkṛ iṣner caraṇ

Bhāb ōṭhe Caṇḍīdās

[20] *Akṣaẏa sarabare* stands for the imperishable lake inside the head according to Tantric Vaiṣṇava symbols - The body is made up of several vertically arranged successive sections, called padmas (lotuses) or *sarovaras* (lotus ponds). Thought about the locations and functions of these padmas is borrowed by the Sahajiyas directly from the Tantras: only the terminology sometimes differs. The *padmas* or *sarovaras* are distributed along the spinal column. (Dimock 1966, 170).

[21] The latent serpentine feminine energy coiled and resting at the base of the spine *(mulādhāra)*, which is an allusion to Tantric practice. The *kundalini* moves through the six cakras, and coming to the *sahasrāra* (hundred-petalled cakra), located above the crown is united with it. (Dimock, 1991, 178).

Baṛśī bāẏ bāro mās

Matsarupe rajakinī rāi

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Gaur gobinda nityānanda bāṁ

sari bājāẏ Bhāb dehe

mohādeber bāgher cāmṛā gāẏ

Bhāb uṭhe dharā debī Purna kara ō satī

Stan keṭe bandak rekhe atithi sebāẏ

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Oh if the essence of *bhāva* touches the body it resembles the complete *bhāva* which touches the *gopis*

Says Nityānanda Ray

In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ[22]

Let the true lover be your companion

Let yourself earn the love

The love, for which, Rādhā had attained Sri Kṛṣṇa's feet

The love arises within Caṇḍīdās

He lays the bait for twelve months

To have in the fish form Rajakini Rāi[23]

[22] Another name for Kṛṣṇa

[23] Her real name was Rāmi and she was the muse and lover of poet Caṇḍīdās and a washerwoman by profession.

In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ

Gaur, Govinda, and Nityānanda play the flute
Mahadev's body, is so full of love,
Hence is merely in a tiger-skin suit

Dharā Devi[24] is overcome with love

In order to perform hospitality, Sati
Chops off her breasts as a pledge
In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ

This song describes the state of *bhāva,* which according to the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, is a form of *Āśraya (*Bose, 1930,10-19*)* or state of refuge, which is adopted by the devotee during the *Sādhaka* stage (*Pravarta Sādhaka Siddhi* refers to three stages of Vaiṣṇava worship intended for true realization of divine love(see Dimock 1966, 222–25, McDaniel, 1989, 172). *Bhāva* can be classified as a state of divine emotion, which was experienced by poet and mystic Caṇḍīdās and is a form of a transcendental love free of sexual desires, which is the kind of love he experienced for Rajakini Ray, a washerwoman, who is portrayed as a metaphor for a fishhook to lure him into the path of *kāma* (full of desires and satisfaction of one's own senses) as opposed to *prema* (free from desires, a divine state of love). He did not fall for the bait, as he persevered like a *sādhaka*, to dwell on the feeling of *bhāva* for his lover in the same way that Rādhā obtained the love of Kṛṣṇa. *Bhāva* is also a metaphor for divine love and the aspirational ideal for the Sahajiyā *sādhaka.* This song contains a reference to a popular legend concerning Caṇḍīdās and Rajakini(also known as Rāmi). According to this story, Rāmi would sit by a pond and

[24] She is a Puranic character and a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, also known as Sati.

wash clothes, while Caṇḍīdās sat and looked on trying to catch a fish with his fishing rod, he continued to do this for twelve long years. During these twelve years Caṇḍīdās not catching a single fish and not speaking to her until the end of this time where they unite is a metaphor for the training of the *sādhaka* from his Guru (Rāmi), who teaches him not to fall prey to lustful desires, but to persevere and train his body and mind to reach the stage of divine love, that is devoid of any selfishness or ego. After he perseveres in this training, he is finally united with

Rāmi, which is a metaphor for the state of *Siddhi,* a state of achieving divine love. There are references to the Vaiṣṇava trio of Gaur, Govinda, Nityānanda, who are preachers of this divine love. The reference to Mahādev or *Śiva* clad in tiger skins, who represents the *siddha* stage (the highest stage) of *sahaja sādhanā,* one who has reached the ultimate state of *mahābhāva* symbolizing divine and the purest form of love. The singer of this song, a Vaiṣṇav *mahānta* or Guru, explained the folk legend of Dharā Devi, during my fieldwork. She was referred to as a Puranic character and a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, also known as Sati. According to the legend, in order to serve Kṛṣṇa with all her devotion, she decided to chop off her breasts and sell it in order to gain some money to buy offering for Kṛṣṇa, as she had no other material possession. This is yet another example of *mahābhāva.*

In song 66 (cf. discussion on this song in chapter III), we find a mention of Nityānanda endearingly addressed as Nitāi (his other name), who is called a *rasiā,* which means a passionate, pleasure seeking individual. This is a song on the theme of role reversal in the *ultā* or upside-down language, full of riddles , which is describing the process of liberating the mind from sexual desires during the process of *dehasādhanā.*

Tukkhā song 58

Khyapā jāniāo jāna nā

Ore ēktā lāṅgaler chaẏtā balad ripu chaẏ janā

Ār lāṅgalero duiṭi pāśe hāẏre

Gaur ār nitāi

Māir kheẏeo dhākkā māre

Jogāi ār mādhāik

Ār sei hāluā halo boẏaẏre

Yei jaminer mājhe

Sei nā jamin kathāẏ railo

Dehor bhitare

Oh madcap soul, even knowing the truth, you don't understand it

The plough is held by six bulls

And the six *ripus*

And on both sides of the plough

Are Gaur and Nitāi who

Beaten from the back, still

they keep pushing

Jagāi and Mādhāi

And that ploughman bears the plough

In the middle of that field

Where is that field located Inside the

human body?

In this song, the human body is being compared to an agricultural field, and it is being ploughed by the six bulls, which is a metaphor for the *ṣaḍripu*[25] or six enemies that are obstructing this process, which is meant to be cultivated with the right spiritual practice. The Vaiṣṇava Gurus, Sri Caitanya (Gaur) and his principal friend and disciple, Nityānanda are on the sides trying to direct the mind in the right direction, while, the two sinners, Jagāi and Mādhāi, who were redeemed by Gaur and Nitāi (according to legend), are beating and tormenting Gaur and Nitāi, while trying to break apart the process of ploughing. In spite of being attacked, Gaur and Nitāi remain unshaken and carry on teaching them the lesson of love. This is an allusion to the distractions of the mind, which come in the way of self-cultivation and disciplining of the human mind.

In song 59, Nityānanda is addressed as

Bhaber kāndārī śrīdayāl nitāi

The boatman steering the cosmic boat

Is the Compassionate One, Nitāi

This song is about following the instructions of the Guru to cross the river of earthly existence, with the body as a cosmic boat, and the *kāndārī* or boatman is Nitāi, who is the supreme Guru. It is interesting to note that in this song, Nitāi has a special place and is called the Compassionate One, giving us more reasons to investigate the *sahajiyā* lineage of Nityānanda.

This shows an important side of Rājbaṃśī *manaśikṣā* practice, which is popular among the common people of the villages, who are keen to learn about self development, according to findings from my fieldwork. The mode of performance of these songs is

[25] *ṣaḍripu* are the six enemies in Hinduism namely; *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (arrogance), and *mātsarya* (jealousy).

filled with a mood of ecstasy that sweeps over the emotional atmosphere of the audience. As Dagupta emphasizes, pre-Caitanya Sahajiya Buddhism was focused on being a religion of psychological development, and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās reinterpreted this aspect in the culture of love (Dasgupta, 1969, 122).

Chatterjee, while talking about the 'so called' minor sects in Bengal between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, addresses the issue of heterodoxy, deviance and resilience among these sects based on caste hierarchies in relation to the history and development of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. He talks about how the heterodox practices of these sects were shaped by a 'condition of subalternity', which is a history that has been shaped and developed through a changing process of interaction between the dominant and the subordinate. The members of the deviant esoteric sects took up various strategies to respond to doctrinal and ritual hierarchies based on caste, in order to assert of autonomy and self-preservation, which was often successful, often not, for example, the case of the Balarāmi sect and its stringent sectarianism and exclusiveness. (Chatterjee 1994 187,191).

In the case of the mystic practitioners and singers of the Rājbaṃśī community, they did not strictly become a part of a separate sect, but kept negotiating their preBrahmanized ritual and esoteric devotional practices even after the re-introduction of the caste practices within their community. Due to a vast school of heterodox influences, the community's identity and esoteric practices and oral literature kept evolving, while being subject to a condition of marginality within the upper casteHindu Bengali society.

In order to locate esoteric songs of the Tukkhā, we have to look at the growth and development of the yogic and Tantric philosophy within the Rājbaṃśī community in the broader context of North Eastern India, especially in the regions of Bengal, Bihar, Assam and even in parts of Nepal and Bangladesh. As discussed in chapter III on the diachronic

comparative analysis of the *Caryāgīti* and the Tukkhā songs, there has been an undeniable confluence of the schools of Sahajayāna, pre and post Caitanya Vaiṣnavism, Nāth philosophy in the making of these songs. Eastern India, especially Assam and North Bengal belonging to the erstwhile Pragjyotisha kingdom was a seat of Tantric Vajrayāna Buddhists, whose doctrine and practices thrived greatly during the Pala empire in Bengal.[26] During the Pāla age (8th-12th century), an important synthesis between culture, politics and religion took place. Eastern India witnessed an extraordinary development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in all its branches, particularly in the Tantric Way of Mantras (Mantrayāna) under the Pāla dynasty (Sanderson 2009, 88).

Buddhist Tantric traditions developed a complex relationship with Śaiva traditions (Sanderson 1988). Pāla rulers, although called themselves *parama-saugata*,

through Buddhist centres of learning in Nalanda and Somapura in Bihar and Paharpur.

The great devotees of Buddhas and promoters of Buddhism were also great patrons of Brahmanism (evident from inscriptions, land grants to Brahmins, erection of temples).

As a historical source, travelogues of two Chinese travellers, Faxian (5th century) and Xuanzang, (7th Century) who travelled through various parts of India could be consulted for an understanding of the historical past. They came across two centers of Buddhist practice, learning and teaching; one in Pataliputra in Bihar and the other one in Tamralipta region of Bengal. These Chinese records, especially Xuanzang's record, contain information on the condition of Buddhism in Bengal. (Majumdar 1943, 416422).

After the advent of Muslim invaders in the thirteenth century in Bengal, a lot of the Buddhist practitioners escaped to the foothills and forests of North Bengal and Assam, and the prominence of Buddhism was gradually obliterated. However, many of the Tantric Sahajiyā practices were kept alive and were assimilated into certain Vaiṣṇav, and

[26] Mahāyāna Buddhism was thriving in north-eastern India through a netwok of mystics known as siddhas or mahāsiddhas and heterodox practices (White 1996, Davidson 2004, Barua 2013), as well as through Buddhist centres of learning in Nalanda and Somapura in Bihar and Paharpur.

Sufi sects. The continuation of the Buddhist Vajrayāna-Siddha tradition in North Eastern India being absorbed by various marginal sects in these regions in Bengal has often been a topic of scholarly debate.[27] Dasgupta (1946) presents parallels between the Buddhist and Vaiṣnava Sahajiyās and argues for a case that these traditions were in geographical and historical proximity. In the Rājbaṃśī context, the songs present evidence that the Tantric traditions and the Siddha tradition of Anuttaraya yoga tantra of Northeastern part of India came in contact with Vaiṣnava, Yogic/Jogi and Sufi traditions in Bengal in the subsequent ages. The similarity between these songs and the *Caryāgīti* (as discussed in chapter IV of my thesis) also provides grounds for possible comparison. Some of the well known sites were places where Buddhists and Śaivas certainly met were Kāmākhyā, Devikota, Bhubaneshwar, Varanasi, Jalandharapitha and there are occasional records of Buddhists becoming Śaivas, for example, the nine Nāthas mentioned in the *Kubjikāmata* system (Davidson, 2002, 219). Within the

Koch kingdom, especially during the rule of Biwa Singha, the worship of goddess Kāmākhyā was very popular, and he is said to have worshipped a primordial female deity of the Bodo-Kacharies as a Sanskritized form in Kāmākhyā (Barua 1989, 167).[28]All these instances show points of contact between Śaivism and Buddhism in the history of Rājbaṃśī community, providing evidence of religious influence on the Tukkhā songs.

The religious landscape in which these songs were composed was highly diverse. The intersecting religious traditions, such as the Vaiṣnava, Śaiva, Sufi, the 'tribal'/nonAryanized traditions, Buddhist Siddhas formed a kaleidoscope through which these songs can be read and understood. The ascetic traditions and the Tantric

[27] The continuity of the *Sahajiyā* tradition and its assimilation by esoteric practitioners of devotional groups/sects has been discussed and debated on several occasions, for e.g.through a study of the Bāul and Fakirs of Bengal (White 1996, Dagupta 1946, McDaniel 1989, Openshaw 2004, Barma 2019, Stewart 2020).

[28] Śakta texts such as the *Kalikāpurāṇa* (Assamese text from tenth to eleventh centuries) and *Yoginī Tantra*

elements had a strong foundation that found its expression in mystical songs of Bengal such as the Bāul-Fakir, Vaiṣnava Sahajiyās well as in the majority of the Tukkhā songs.

From the time of Biswa Singha's consolidation of the Koch kingdom, to the assimilation and spread of Śaṅkariya Vaiṣnavism, to the gradual spread and all pervasive influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and through the period of upsurge in nationistic sentiments in literature and society under Panchanan Barma, the Rājbaṃśī community has seen several waves of change and incorporated and assimilated myriad religious ideas and practices.

Literary Heritage Shaping the Tukkhā

The *Vaiṣṇava Padāvali* has had a significant impact on the growth of Rājbaṃśī literature, and that is profoundly evident in the Tukkhā songs as well. However even prior to the composition of the *Sri Krṣṇakirtan* of Baḍu Caṇḍīdās, one of the earliest and most influential Vaiṣnava songs from Bengal, there was a prevalence of a folk genre of songs known as Krṣṇa Dhāmāli, Jāg-Gān[29], which predates the advent of Caṇḍīdās, Vidyāpati and Caintanya in Bengal (Banerjee 2002:84) and are sung since the time of the Koch-Kamata kingdom. The influence of these songs is evident in some of the Tukkhā songs that I have collected, which celebrate Rādhā as a folk goddess and the

(Assamese text from the seventeenth century) mention certain forms of animal sacrificies and rituals that highlight an admixture of Vedic rites and non-Hindu indigenous traditions of the northeastern hills. (Urban, 2015, 73). Barua claims that there are reasons to believe that the Assamese *Yoginī Tantra* dealing with devi worship was written under the patronage of Biswa Singha in his court. (Barua 1989, 39). To quote Urban (2010, 74):

"As the embodiment of divine desire and power, Kāmākhyā formed a key religio-political center during several of Assam's ancient and medieval dynasties, such as the Pālas, Kochs, and Ahoms. Yet at the same time, Kāmākhyā was also a central point of interaction between the various indigenous communities of the northeast and the brahmanic forms of Hinduism coming from Bengal and central India. This complex interaction between Tantra and kingship is apparent as early as the *Kalikāpurāṇa*, which not only narrates the conquest of Assam by king Naraka but also devotes its last several chapters to the seemingly secular matters of statecraft, politics, and military strategy. Clearly written for a king, the *Kalikāpurāṇa* combines elements of Vedic ritual, non-Hindu tribal practices, left-hand Tantra, and the rules of statecraft. Similarly, the second most important Tantric text composed in Assam— the *Yoginī Tantra*, from the sixteenth or the seventeenth century— also provides a mytho-historical narrative of medieval Assam, recounting the divine origins of the Koch king Visva Singha and the violent struggles for power between the Kochs, Ahoms, and Mughals that took place in the sixteenth century. The inner wall of the present temple still bears an inscription dedicated to Visva's sons, Naranarayana and Chilarai, who rebuilt the complex in the sixteenth century and were praised as generous patrons of the goddess."

[29] Jāg-Gān refers to an ancient tradition of songs sung during the worship of the "bamboo" or Bansh puja also referred to as the Madankām or Kamadeva puja, among the Rājbaṃśī, Mech, Rabha and other communities of Kochbihar district of North Bengal.

love story between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is humanized by transforming them into stories of rural lovers. The Kṛṣṇa Dhāmāli songs were popular in Rangpur, Cooch Bihar and Dinajpur have been preserved by these singers through the generations, and were transformed by Caṇḍīdās by ornamentation and refinement of language in the composition of *Sri Kṛṣṇakirtan (*Sen, 1922,17). Kṛṣṇa Dhāmāli were essentially very rustic in nature, and the figures of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa engage in human exchange between two lovers involving playfulness, banter and spontaneous expressions of love and passion. This tradition of songs was emulated by other Vaiṣṇava poets as well such as Lochan Das, whose poems show the flavour of these rural songs (Bhattacharya 1960, 284). This theme of playfulness between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as two human lovers is reflected in the Aspāli songs of the Tukkhā anthology in this thesis.

Maynāmatir Gān

An important influence on the Tukkhā songs is that of the long narrative ballads of Gopīcāndra and Maynāmati written in the Rājbaṃśī lect.[30] G.A. Grierson collected the songs from the *Jogi* or *Jugi* singers of unpartitioned Bengal and published them in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1878.[31] Later another version of the ballad titled as *Gopīcāndrer Gān* was collected by Bishweshar Bhattacharya during 1910-1911 from singers in Rangpur in Bangladesh, which was edited and published in 1924 by Dineshchandra Sen and Basantranjan Ray in Kolkata by
Calcutta University Press. In his introduction on *The Song of Manik Chandra,* Grierson states that Maynāmati is said to have founded many towns, some of which are surviving till date and one of them is Maynāguri[32], which is the area of my fieldwork. From my fieldwork it was found out that according to some local legends,

[30] A linguist and a member of the Rājbaṃśī community, Ray , (2017, 16) identifies the language of *Gopīcāndrer Gān* as Rājbaṃśī. In the collection *Gopīcāndrer Gān,* there are several common lexicon which are still found in the Tukkhā songs that I have collected as well as in the *Caryāgiti.*
[31] This collection was known as *The Song of Manik Chandra* published by The asiatic Society of Bengal in 1878.
[32] Grierson, 1878, 2.

Maynāguri[34], which is a town and municipality, where I conducted some of my fieldwork, allegedly derives its name from Queen 'Maynāmati.' As Dasupta states, Maynāmati was known to be a woman who was very well versed in yoga and possessed miraculous powers and by the virtue of her knowledge and skills she was initiated into the Nāth cult by the great yogin Gorakṣānāth himself. (Dasgupta, 1969, 397). Maynāmatī is depicted in Nāth literature as a Tantric Ḍākinī, which means a woman of mystic wisdom:

> Maynāmatī has also been deified in later times as someone midway between a witch and a goddess, she has also sometimes been identified with Canḍi or Kālī. She is still now worshipped in some parts of North Bengal with a practice of animal sacrifice by priests belonging to the Rāj-vaṁśa caste.

(Dasgupta, 1969, 397) This is substantiated by findings from my own fieldwork, which shows that the local deities such as Canḍi, Bhadra Kālī, and Nangā Kālī are very popular among the Rājbaṃśī. In the collection *Gopīcāndrer Gān* (1924), Maynāmatī transforms herself into different forms such as Canḍi, Bhadra Kālī, and Nangā Kālī on several occasions. This goes on to show the connection and influence of *Maynāmatīr Gān* on the literary-cultural heritage of this community and its direct influence on the Tukkhā songs. The songs of

[34] Maynāmatī have been highly popular and passed down within the Rājbaṃśī community, and tells us of the strong influence of Nāth traditions within this community. The ballad narratives depict how Queen Maynāmati averts her only son Gopīcāndra's death by sending him to a monastic life under the aegis of *Siddhācharya* Jālandharpā (also mentioned as Hāṛipā) to practice esoteric yoga and finally overcome his imminent death and become an enlightened king. The existing tradition of Nāth literature in Bengal include not only the different versions of the ballads of Gopicandra and Maynāmati but also various versions of the songs on Gorakṣā. The ballad of

Maynāmati and the songs on Gorakṣā were sung by wandering minstrels belonging to the *yugi* or *yogi* caste of the Rājbanshi community. Sen has attributed these ballads to the era when Buddhism thrived in Bengal, he also speaks about how Ramai Pundit's *Śūnya Purāna*, the poems of Dharma Mangal, all substantiate the prominence of a flourishing Buddhist past in Bengal. (Sen 1954: 33-34).

> The songs of Gorakṣā are still prevalent in this community, and the festival of Gorakṣā is still one of the main festivals of this community, further highlighting the Nāth influence on the local traditions. The popularity of these songs were overshadowed by the dominance of the Vaiṣṇava songs through the medium of *kirtan*, which gradually consolidated itself as the most popular form of devotional music throughout the twentieth century.

During my fieldwork, I could find only one song that is which is locally known as a song on Maynāmati. The song was originally performed by an eminent musician and spiritual practitioner, Dinesh Debnath who belonged to the Jugi lineage, who used to play a special instrument known as the *Jugi-Jantra* while singing this song. This is an oral song of that region that has been passed down the generations. However, he was was one of the last performers who preserved this song as a continuation of his Nāth heritage. He passed it on to another member of the Rājbanshi community, Anindita
Ray, whom I have interviewed (cf. discussion of Tukkhā song 43 in the next chapter in comparison with a song of the Jugi sect). I have collected another Jugi song that has very similar themes with a song from the ballad of Gopīcāndrer Gān, which I will be discussing. This is the song that I have collected:

Balore riu riu riu riu

Dhiẏānēte Maẏnāmati dhiẏānētē cāẏ

Dhiẏānēte Maẏnāmati mitẏu lāigẏā pāẏ

Ō Maẏnā bal balore riu riu riu

Āguni pāṭer śāṛī nila pairasan kariā

Hemastaker nāṭhi nila bāō haste kariā

Kāṭan kāṁ ṭā nari nilok khapāte gunjiā

Rājāro darbāro nāgi calila hāṭiẏā

Re Maẏnā bal balore riu riu riu

Chāilāre Gupināta re

Rājāro darbāre yāẏā

Upanita haila

Bẏaṭāra sāikhāte kathā balite nāgilore

Maẏnā ōho bal balore riu riu riu

Beṭinno mu rāṛi chāilā garbhe nicis bāp

Seidin kāle bhāṛuā yam gāriā geise baś

Re bāchā ōho bal balore riu riu riu

Daś bachar ō mor chāilā anitā sarir cāẏ

Biś bachar puriẏā geile yame laiẏā yāẏ

Re bāchā re he bal balore riu riu riu

Chant the rhythm of *riu riu riu riu*

Deep in meditation,

Maynāmati observes with her meditative eyes

Deep in meditation,

Maynāmati hears the news of death

Oh Mainā, chant the rhythm of

Riu She is draped in a jute sari

with the colours of fire

She carries the *Hemastak*[33] in her left hand

She pins the spinning stick to her bun

She runs all the way to the king's court,

Oh Mainā, chant the rhythm of Riu

Oh my son, Oh Gupināth,

Her motherly heart wails in pain As

soon she spots her son she starts

speaking to him The day I conceived

you while being a widow At that

moment the servant of *Yama*[34]planted

the bamboo flag of your death

This impermanent body lasts for ten years

Yama will take you once you are twenty

Oh dear child, chant the rhythm of Riu

This melodious song begins with the scene of Maynāmati seated in deep meditation who hears the prophecy of her son's death when he would turn twenty. In a vivid description

[33] Hemstak (Rājbaṃśī) and Hintāl (Bengali) is a tree whose wood is used to repel snakes
[34] Deity of death in Hinduism and Buddhism

of her powerful and magnetic physical appearance, we are given the details aspects of her social life. She pins her with her spinning stick (highlighting the weaving traditions of her community that are still practiced by the Rājbaṃśī women) and carries a *Hemastak*, which is a symbolic depiction of her wielding power over the wild forces of nature. Maynāmati runs to her son Gopīcāndra's (Gupināth) and addresses him with care and concern and cautions him about the prophecy regarding his death. According to the legend, Maynāmati had been instructed by Śīva that the only way to save his son was to let him experience ascetic life or *Saṃnyāsa* (next song) and practice *kāyāsādhana* (psychophysiological practice of yoga) through a vow of renunciation.

Jivan-mukti (liberation while being alive) was one of the aims of Nāth practice. Through the accounts of Nāth literature like legendary accounts of Gopīcāndra and Maynāmati highlight a quest for immortality and the control over death (Dasgupta, 1969, 221). Maynāmati reminds her son about the impermanence of the physical body and inspires him to embark on a psychophysiological quest to reverse the prophecy of Śiva and win over death. Maynāmati is ready to take on the fight with *Yama* to save her son's life, which she had also done previously to save his husband, Manikchand's life but had failed.

Questions of King Gopichandra, the son

Rājā balteche:

Śuna, mā janani, laxmi rāi

Sannās yābār byalā, mā sannasī haiẏā yāi

Putra haiẏā ekṭā kathā, mā, tomār āge kai

Ihāte yadi gāli pāṛa pitār dohāi Cāri cakri

pukurkhani,mā modhye jhalmal Kon birikher

boṭā āmi,mā,kon birikher phal ?

Maynāmatir uttar :

Ōre, yādudhan,cār cakari pukurkhāni modhye jhalmal

Man-birikher boṭā tui tan birikher phal

Gācher nām manohar phaler nām rasiā

Gācher phal gāche thāke boṭā paṛe khasiā

Kāṭile bām ce gāch, nā kāṭile mare Dui

birikher ekṭi phal jananī se dhare

The King says:

Hear! my mother, Laxmi Rāi[35]

It's my turn to embrace *Saṃnyāsa*[36] and so I will

As your son, let me tell you something

For my father's sake, do not scold me

The pond is a square, and dazzles in the middle The stalk

of which tree am I? The fruit of which tree am I?

Maynāmati's answer:

Oh my magical treasure, the pond is a square, and dazzles in the middle

You are the stalk of my mind and the stalk of fruit of my body

The tree is called *Manohar,* and the fruit is called *rasiā*

The fruit remains in the tree, the stalk falls down

[35] This is a salutation to Maynāmati as goddess Laxmi
[36] Asceticism

If you chop off a tree, it survives, if you don't, it dies

Two trees bear one fruit, but the mother carries it

Tukkhā Song 37:

Ōho sādubhāi balibo ārore ki

Jāna yadi gācher tatta dyaō bicār kari

Āgam ghare dekhbe man nigam kācārī

Ṣoloṭā gāche dekhre man ēkkhān pātārī

Sarge hailo gācher garā hāẏre mance tārere ḍāl

Cāirṭā ḍāl kuṛikhān sānkā dekhite baṛa bhāl

Ōho sādubhāi balibo ārore ki

Cāirṭā ḍāle das deuniẏā kare kācārī

Kāṭile gāchṭā barte, nā kāṭile huṭāmare

Ammar haẏ bhāi jalpān karāle

Oh esteemed Sage!

I have so much to ask you

If you know the theory of the tree

Please explain it to me
Dear mind, peer into the *Āgamghar*[37]

[37] Secret room of worship (Tantric connotation)

Which contains the

nigamkāchāri[38]The sixteen trees only

have one leaf O Heart!

The roots of the tree climb up to heaven

The branches are hanging on the earth

Four stems carry twenty branches Oh

what a sight it is!

Oh esteemed Sage!

I have so much to tell you

In the four stems

The ten landlords conduct their courts

If you chop off the tree, it will only keep growing

If you don't chop it, it will die The tree

becomes immortal if you water it In both

these songs the common phrase is

Kāṭile bām ce gāch, nā kāṭile mare

Dui birikher ekṭi phal jananī se dhare

If you chop off a tree, it survives, if

you don't, it dies

[38] The secret court. This is an allusion to the concept of Vaiṣṇava sahajiy*ā* texts being introduced in the form of earlier *Āgamas and Nigamas, and in these texts, Rādhā and* Kṛṣṇa are different forms of *śiva* and *śakti*. (Dasgupta, 1969, 128).

Two trees bear one fruit, but the mother carries it and

Kāṭile gāchṭā barte, nā kāṭile huṭā mare

Ammar hay bhāi jalpān karāle

If you chop off the tree, it will only keep growing If you

don't chop it, it will die

The tree becomes immortal if you water it

The metaphor for the body both in the mother's womb (*Gopīcāndrer Gān*) and the Tukkhā song is a tree. In the first song which is in the form of a question and answer (similar to the structure found in Tukkhā songs), Gopīcāndra questions his mother regarding the identity of his father and how he was born, as his father, Manikchandra had passed away before his birth. He also asks in what position he was while in his mother's womb. In the Tukkhā song, the disciple asks his Guru how is the human body formed inside the mother's womb.

These songs are in the form of a riddle, Maynāmati answers if the fruit (metaphor for the child) is plucked from the stalk, it will survive, which also symbolizes cutting off the umbilical chord of the mother. In the Tukkhā song, the question is rhetorical in a way, which symbolizes the quest for immortality and liberation from life, the chopping off the tree symbolizes the same process of childbirth. Both these songs show a prominent influence of the Nāth tradition as the essence of immortality and power of control over death and decay is one of the final goals of Nāth *siddhas* (Dasgupta, 1969,

221).

Chapter II

Poetics of signification

Dehatattva- The Soul- Body Amalgam

This chapter focuses on the poetics of signification based on the Tukkhā songs that I have collected, compiled and translated. *Dehatattva* and *manaśikṣā* are the two unique strands of the Tukkhā repertoire. The metaphorical worlds forms a distinctive part of Rājbaṃśī imagination, which takes us back to the ancient oral tradition of song writing that mirrors the various nuances of philosophical and critical thinking on notions of the body, the mind, training the mind, and the ways in which the physical worlds connects us to the metaphorical worlds. A major gap exists in the study of the esoteric devotional practice and philosophy of *dehatattva* in Bengal, where Rājbaṃśī literature on *dehatattva* (in the backdrop of Northeast Indian Tantra) has barely received attention in scholarship on Tantra in South Asia. This tradition of conceiving of the body as the replica of the universe is found in the *dehatattva* tradition practiced by the Baul-Fakir and Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā communities of West Bengal Bengal and Bangladesh, which has been studied extensively in scholarship on esoteric devotional traditions of South Asia. Through an analysis of some of the songs in my thesis, I aim to highlight this lacuna in the study of vernacular tantra on the themes of *dehatattva, manaśikṣā* and *Sahajiyā*
Vaiṣṇavism through a discussion of some of the representative Tukkhā songs. Throughout the first part of this chapter, I critically analyze and explain the major themes, metaphors, and tropes in the Tukkhā songs that I have collected. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the metaphors of Tukkhā from a literary critical approach based on the conceptual metaphor theory and try to distinguish between mystic and poetic language.

An age old question related to the practice of *dehatattva* in Bengal among the various devotional sects and

communities has been that of understanding the question of liberation associated with material world and the human body on a philosophical level. The metaphysical truth has been associated with the awareness and knowledge of the self (for example, the doctrine of *manaśikṣā*) as a way of liberation. As Sudhir Chakrabarty explains, the desire to combine the material and the physical worlds with the spiritual and metaphysical worlds has been a common tenet of the communities practicing the doctrine of *dehatattva* in Bengal.[39] For the spiritual practitioners of the Rājbaṃśī community, understanding the nature of the body has always been necessary through Tantric *sādhanā*, in order to find a path to self realization as well as selftranscendence. As we will explore, the awareness of the knowledge embodied in the human body has expanded itself to unravel itself through various complex metaphors.

Tukkhā songs explore the nature of consciousness and make the human being the central object of *sādhanā* in the majority of the literature that I have collected. In this diverse body of oral literature, the themes of mental cultivation and spiritual development of the mind have been as important on the esoteric practices centered around body worship or *dehasādhanā*. We will find that in the course of this thesis, the Tukkhā songs bring together a plethora of themes related to *dehatattva, manaśikṣā, Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, aspāli* and *khyāpār gān*. The theme of worldly liberation and training of the mind through the *manaśikṣā* songs, instructs the reader to find ways to get rid of material and misleading desires, longings and covetousness. According to findings from my fieldwork, the means of achieving such a liberation is made possible through the cultivation of the body and the mind, something which not only occurs as a theme of the songs but also is a part and parcel of the spiritual practice of the s*ādhakas* of the Rājbaṃśī community. Since ancient times in Bengal, the s*ādhaka* communities have embraced the idea of the body in the

[39] Chakraborty,2000, p. 23.

cosmic consciousness, and the idea of a social consciousness has often emerged from this idea. This is the point where there is an interplay between the metaphors of the social worlds and the worlds of cosmic
imagination.

As we see in the Tukkhā songs of this volume, especially in the songs focusing on Tantric themes of *dehatattva,* Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism*,* and khyāpār gān*,* the body is imagined as a sub-universe, which forms the basis of all knowledge. Metaphors have formed a channel to connect the conceptions of the material and spiritual worlds, while blurring the apparent dichotomy between the both. Creation of an unusual language with double meanings, allegories, and metaphors is a distinctive feature of the Tukkhā songs. The intermingling of ideas from heterodox religious traditions has given rise to the distinctiveness of the language of Tukkhā. The world of *dehatattva* also centers around the innumerable veins and focal points in the human body, and the way they are connected to each other, with recurrent references to the three principal nerves; *Iḍā, Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumnā.* The songs are replete with references to Tantric theories of the body that are often expressed through social metaphors, theory of numbers or the Tantric alphabet.

Rājbaṃśī society is largely an agrarian society and metaphors related to agriculture, fishing and farming are recurrent in the songs compiled in this thesis. The active physical and life force associated with the human body, and the cycles of life and death in nature, concepts of fertility, were themes that dominated life in agrarian society, and through this association, the human body became a centre of the mysteries of life and nature. The lives of several of these bards and singers were filled with poverty (until today) and the means of sustaining their livelihood were uncertain. According to some of my interviewees, the body was the only wealth in their lives, so they understood life and explained it to others through the analogy of the body.

Deconstructing normative ideas on gender is a central focus of these songs, which highlights the importance of *mātriśakti* or the creative feminine force as well as experiencing the fluidity of gender binaries while engaging in the process of esoteric practices of *dehasādhanā.* There is an element of transgression in respect to the existing gender roles in society, a sense of equanimity is envisioned in which between the male absorbs the feminine essence, in a metaphorical androgynous union, which is the goal of the *sādhanā.* In northeastern tantra, there has always been a great reverence for the powerful sexuality of women and their procreative powers. Kāmākhya temple in Assam has been considered by Urban as(Urban, 210, 2-4) :

as one of the "oldest seats of power (*sākta p¯ıthas*) or sites of Tantric worship in South Asia, as the "birthplace," "principal center," or "headquarters" Tantra.

The geographical location of my fieldwork is in great proximity to Assam and this is a part of the heartland of Tantra in India. The distinctiveness of the Tantric compositions of the Tukkhā songs lies in the depiction of the concepts of *kāma* (sexual desire) as well as *śakti,* which opens the gates for a number of questions regarding gender, power, and heteronormativity. In some of the Rājbaṃśī local festivals such as Satya Pī r and Hudum Deo (cf. Chapter II discussion on 'folk' festivals), reversal of gender roles take place as well an androgynous deity is worshipped. Rājbaṃśī women still posses the exclusive rights to perform and organize certain popular festivals like that of Tistāburi.

The songs of *dehatattva* are among the oldest within the Rājbaṃśī community that have been passed down orally through memory, repetition and performance. While working with the main texts of the *dehatattva* songs within the Tukkhā collection, I encountered a number of difficulties. First of all, this esoteric body of literature was not written for a wide audience, but mostly for an initiated group of practitioners. Therefore, the texts have an esoteric character - they are full of technical terms and symbols, the meaning and

broader context of which should have been explained to the student by their Guru. For the uninitiated, these texts are often incomprehensible, and if they happen to be intelligible, there is always the risk that it is only an external meaning, which hides another level of meaning. In spite of these challenges, I happened to uncover some of the double meanings, metaphors and allegories in this set of songs through interviews, attending performances and interacting with some of the singers, reading literature on esoteric Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇav and Baul terminologies related to the process of *dehasādhanā* and *dehatattva*. Gradually, I was able to connect some of the dots. However, I tried to focus my energies on the strategies, tropes and metaphors that were visible to me and the ones that helped me reconstruct a background for these songs.

Metaphors and Themes in Tukkhā Songs

The most significant methodological challenge for my thesis has been the absence of secondary literature on the Tukkhā songs that I have collected, as I was trying to trace the religious and sociocultural influence behind these songs. After a comprehensive historical survey, my strategy was to connect these various strands of socio-religious traditions and their influences on the Rājbaṃśī community in constructing a preliminary history of the Tukkhā tradition.

In the following Tukkhā song (no. 32), the spatial metaphor of the human body is compared to the universe:

Khyapā sunek diyā man
Ore biswa baṛabhānḍe yāhā āche
Mānab bhānḍe teman

Oh you madcap seer, listen carefully

The matter that constitutes this Universe
also resides in the human body

In this song we notice, the spatial metaphor of the body as a microcosm replicating the macrocosm of the universe, a theme that also pervades Baul songs in the form of the "body-as-receptacle", the metaphor of the *dehabhānda* has been deployed in the Baul songs as the corporeal container of both the individual (*jivātmā*) and the divine soul (*paramātmā*).[40] In other words, this song highlights that without the knowledge of the of the body, it is not possible to understand the knowledge of the universe, and dispel all kinds of ignorance and vices.

Tukkha song no. 36 gives us a glimpse into a similar concept:

Sādu dyahār māje ājā[41] kāẏ

Buije suije sabār māje tathya bala bāi

Jakhan dyahāṭā janam re haise
Sei samaẏe brahmābhānder jībṭā kathāẏ raiāche
Bala bala āmāẏ balare dyahār urdha ardha kun jāgāẏ

Ār jībāttā bhut re āttā ki sammandha haẏ
Bal bal āmāẏ bal re dyahār ūrdhvā adhaḥ kun
Jāgāẏ buije suije sabār māje
Tathya bala bāi
Ār dyahār mājhe kun jāgāẏ
śwaśān Kathāẏ āche

[40] Mukharji, 2009, p. 210. Mukherjee discusses the various socio-historical dimensions of metaphors found in Baul songs.
[41] In Rājbanshi lect 'r' is not pronounced on most occasions.

nīlāhāṭi kathāẏ

Golakdhām

Ksheti ab tej marut byom dyahār

Bala bala āmāẏ balare dyahār urdha ardha kun jāgāẏ

Buije suije sabār māje tathya bala bāi

Oh *Sādhu*, who is the king of the body?

Oh *Bāi*[42], explain to all present

The theory of your deep understanding When

does this body originate?

Where then does the *Jivā* reside in the Universe?

Tell tell, please do tell me, where lies the top and

the bottom of this body?

What is the relation

Between *Jivātmā*[43] and *Bhutātmā*[44]?

Oh *Bāi*, explain to all present

Where is the body's *ūrdhvā* and *adhaḥ* corners[45]?

Please explain, amidst all

The theory of your deep understanding

Where is the crematorium within the body?

[42] In Rājbanshi lect, *Bāi* is colloquial for the word *Bāhe*, which is a form of social address to a person.

[43] The non- material, eternal soul

[44] The material soul

[45] Refers to the primary directions known as *Diśā*, or *Dik, ūrdhvā* or Upwards (zenith) and *adhaḥ* or downwards (nadir), in this context it refers to the corners of the human body.

Where *Nilāhāti?*[46]

Where is the *Golakdhām?*[47]

When was the body born?

Where was the Universe situated?

The elements of earth, water, fire, air, sky[50]

Where are the body's *ūrdhvā* and *adhaḥ* corners?[48]

Oh *Bāi*, explain to all present

The theory of your deep understanding

This is a song from the selection of *khyāpār gān* ,where the disciple poses a question to the Guru on the doctrine of *dehatattva*, who obliges with an answer in a cryptic language often full of riddles. This song is a question, but I could not find another song in the form of an answer from the Guru neither during the performances nor in the g*āner khātā (*song book) of performers during my fieldwork. It is a social commentary on the creation metaphor of the universe within the body, which highlights the cosmological structure of the body and at the same time highlights the different primary directions and points within the physical body. It is posing questions on the location of the various phases surrounding human existence and the pivotal points of the body . '*Ājā'* or *'Rājā'* in this song stands for *kāma* or sexual desire. In this song, the subject who has to pay taxes to the king is analogous to the human who has to pay taxes to the *ṣaḍripu*[52] controlled by the his lust and senses. However, if the *sādhaka* is practicing *dehasādhanā*, he does not have to pay these taxes as he is liberated from the control of the *ṣaḍripu*. If the body is divided into

[46] Is a metaphor for a market of carnal temptations and illusions, *Nilā* is actually a Rājbaṃśī colloquial way of saying *lilā,* which in this context stands for worldly temptations and illusions that deters one from their path of devotion.
[47] This is an ancient rural game, which consists of sixty-four rooms, and in order to finish the game, one needs to ascend to the highest room, which is called the *Golakdhām* [50] Refers once again to the *pañca bhūta* or the five great elements.
[48] Refers to the primary directions known as *Diśā*, or *Dik, ūrdhvā* or upwards (zenith) and *adhaḥ* or downwards (nadir), in this context it refers to the corners of the human body. [52] Refer to footnote 26.

three parts, the lowermost part below the navel is the crematorium (which signifies the female genitalia), where the man sacrifices his life once he ejaculates and releases his sperm succumbing to sexual desire. The mid portion above the chest is the *Nilāhāti,* the place for *Līlā*, which symbolizes the playfulness of Kṛṣṇa with his gopis (cowherd girls), and it is a playground of love and ecstasy, where Kṛṣṇa searches for Rādhā's love, which is the purest form of love, one that a human devotee might seek from his beloved. This play happens in a state of *bhāvā,* a state of pure ecstasy, that one can achieve by coming in contact with the divine being. The highest room is *Golakdhām* in the rural game is a metaphor for the highest point in the body with sixty four nerves.

The poet is seeking an answer regarding the relationship between the *Jivātmā* and *Bhutātmā.* Tukkhā songs have a strong resemblance with Baul songs especially on the theme of *dehatattva.* The Bauls believe that the *Bhutātmā* resides at the root of the *linga* (penis) in the six-petalled lotus, the *paramātmā,* at the ten-petalled lotus, which is the place of the *kundalini,* and *Jivātmā* resides in the four-petalled lotus. The *Bhutātmā* is classified into five kinds; the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, sky[49]; these are the various Tantric points in the body, and these forms are all tormented by the *ṣaḍripu*, which can be tamed by the process of *sādhanā.* The Vaisnava Sahajiyās also have a similar conception of the yogic body concerning the location of the *ātma* or the "Self."[50]

In song 43, we find a striking explanation of the origin of the body in relation to the origin of the universe.

Paramārtya param brahma je jan nirākār

Ore e brahmanda je srijan tāre

[49] Jha, 2010, 446.

[50] For a discussion on Vaisnava Sahajiyā terminology discussed in the text *Ātmatattva* See Hayes 2012, pp. 223241.

Nije hailen swarākār

Ōki ore sadujan

Anādir ādi hailen jini

Prakṛti o chilen tini

Sunya bhare purikhāni karilen basumātā

Ore paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

Ōki ore sadujan

Śaktir garbhe anda hailo

Andate brahmanda karilo

Mahābiṣnur janma hailo kshirod basati tār

Ōre paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

Ōki ore sadujan Prakṛti

puruṣ haite Moha tatter

janma tāte

Adham bale trigunote janma tin janār

Ore paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

He, the Formless Person, the supreme meaning, Supreme Brahma, who

created this Universe, assumes 'their' form[51]

Oh hear me all the saints!

One who was the beginning of the beginning,

Who is also Mother Nature

[51] No gender is being ascribed to this creator

Filled the earth with emptiness[52],

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

Oh hear me all the saints!

In the womb of Śakti the Egg is formed

Then the Egg transforms into the Universe

The great Viṣnu was born and starts residing in the sea of cream

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

Oh hear me all the saints!

Prakṛti and Puruṣ gave birth to

The theory of attachment

This ignorant says that the three were born from

the three Guṇas[53]

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

In the *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya* Upanishads, there is a theory of unity between the human body and the universe.[54]

In this song, we are told that the process of creation of the Universe is analogous to the creation of human life within the female womb, the story of the creation starts inside the womb after the fusion of the ovum and the sperm and the formation of the egg and the Cosmic egg (*Brahmāṇḍa)*. This seed that is formed as a result of this fusion is the finest and undivided atom of the body, which contains the existence of both the male and female essence. The primordial supreme being was formless and did not have a gender (This being was both *Prakṛti* and *ādi Puruṣ*). Jha cites an example of a song of the Jugi

[52] The concept of emptiness
[53] Refers to the three *Guṇas* (cf footnote 1-4)
[54] Jha, 2010, p. 425

sampradāẏ or sect of Bengal, who were descendants of the Nāth tradition, which has a direct resemblance with this song.[55]

As the Formless floated in the form of an egg
The guardians of the Egg were three
Brahma was the yolk, Viṣṇu was water
Devī Lakṣmī was brooding with emptiness
The egg broke hatched into two
One part was the empty half
The other half had the seed

This is comparable to the following verse in the Tukkha song:

Prakṛti and Puruṣ gave birth to
The theory of attachment
This ignorant says that the three were born from
the three Guṇas
Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

In both these songs, the formation of life as well as the formation of the Universe is attributed to the union of the female and male principles (*Prakṛti* and *Puruṣ*). According to Sāmkhya philosophy, the three *guṇas* are associated with Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Śiva equipped with *rajas, sattva,* and *tamo guṇa* respectively. However, what is striking about these two songs, is that the role of *Prakṛti /basumātā/Lakṣmī* is given a higher role than *Puruṣ* in the creation of life and that of the *Brahmāṇḍa* or the Cosmic Egg. The sea of

[55] Jha, 1999, p. 487

cream is sea with male *bija* (seed) or sperm, as depicted in the cosmic body metaphors of *dehatattva*. In the both these songs, the feminine force is creating life from emptiness and formlessness. According to the doctrine of *dehatattva*, this emptiness is the form, comparable to the empty half of the egg, or the shape of zero, or a location or an atmosphere.[60]

A pervasive theme is that of understanding the body, which allows one to comprehend every truth pertaining to the universe and how it was created. For example, in song 7, we find a mention of this formless being.

Hāẏre ḍimbher bhitar ki aparup
Bājāro baise

Ēi ye ḍimbha ēlo kathāre haite
Hāẏre āgā garā kon dike
Panca gasāi āche āro
Ḍimbher bhitare

Ēi ye samudrer mājhe ēkṭi ḍimbhare
Hāẏre jalate ye se bhāse
Duiṭi mānuṣ ki liṁga
Nām dhare

Oh what a splendid bāzār
Is being held inside the Egg[61]

Where did this Egg come from?

[60] Findings from my fieldwork demonstrate this concept of emptiness.
[61] Egg symbolizes either the Brahmāṇḍa (universe) or the cosmic body (dehabhāṇḍa) or both.

Where's the top of it? Where's the bottom? The

five *Gōsāīs*[118] dwell inside the Egg

Oh this Egg in the middle of the ocean

Which floats on the water

What is the gender of the Two beings[56]

This evocative song is about the cosmic Egg, which could symbolize either the *brahmāṇḍa* (universe) or the cosmic body(*dehabhāṇḍa*) or both, pertaining to the common conception of the body being a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm in Sahajiyā traditions. The *ḍimbha* or the cosmic Egg is the place where the cosmic market is taking place. It stands for the corporeal vessel, which is a repository of the universe, within the human body, containing the feminine and masculine essence (sperm and the ovum). The woman's womb where life is created is the source of ultimate power and creativity, which is an ancient trope in tantra.

The mention of the five *Gōsāī* or *Panca Gōsāī* is a metaphor for the Tantric ritual of five elements, where the physical bodies unite, whereby the gross bodily substances disappear and the union between the 'Two Beings' or the Puruṣ and Prakṛti (male and female principles) take place. It is interesting that the poet seems to question as to what is the gender of the Two Beings; this could be an indication towards an androgynous being, which is formed during the highest form of connection between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, in their union in the state of divine love. The metaphor of the egg as a feminine

[56] the *pañcabhūta* which stands for *kṣiti, ap, tejas, marut, vyoma* (earth, water, fire, air and sky)

reproductive cell is being considered as the center and origin of the Universe, another instance of deification of the feminine principle within the Tukkhā songs. In this way the social metaphor of the marketplace acquires a metaphysical dimension representing the collusions and interactions between various entities and images. In the way that one can be mislead in a bāzār, the man can also be mislead due to his sexual and egotistic intentions to possess a woman. The Egg that floats in the middle of the universe is a metaphor for the female body, the source of all creation, which contains parts of both the mother and the father, and the essence of this being is in a sense gender-less.

Metaphor of the *Bājār* and ***Hāt***

Urban, in his book on the Bengali Kartabhaja sect[57], and its broader place in the broader movement of Tantrism, mentions Tantric imagery clothed in economic and mercantile terminology drawn from the teeming marketplaces of colonial Calcutta (Urban 2001). In the Kartabhaja songs, the metaphor of the marketplace (*bājār*) and the expression "the marketplace of the world" (bhava- *bājār*) symbolized a form of "bodily economics", which aims to transform the "economic body" of the initiate self to free him from his ordinary life in a worldly marketplace (Urban 2001:156). In the Tukkhā songs, we find the use of *Cānder bājār* (moonlit marketplace*) bhaber bājār* (earthly marketplace)*,* or *hāt* (local weekly marketplace), which are all synonyms for a marketplace*,* and these two metaphors are being used to denote a worldly place of material transactions, possessions, and doings. The Guru goes on to say that one day this marketplace will shut down, implying the chain of material transactions and the process of give and take between individuals will cease when our physical self perishes. The transformation of the physical body into a higher esoteric body through the process of *sādhanā* liberates the body from

[57] The *Kartābhajā* or "Worshipper of the Masters" was an urban Tantric sect that flourished in Calcutta between mideighteenth and early twentieth centuries, which reacted in the face of the British East India Company's rule and marginalization of people of lower socio-economic status.

the hierarchies of social order and the material world. The Tukkhā singers interacted in spaces of commerce in their daily lives, as many of them have day jobs alongside being singers. It could be suggested that their engagement with the images of commercial transactions seeks to transform them into metaphysical spaces, which speak about counter- discourses on life and hegemonic structures of society.

The overlap of metaphors between the Tantric Tukkhā songs and the Kartabhaja songs, shed light on the confluence of the Tantric movement in Bengal, and how the metaphor of the 'marketplace' was used in some folk religious songs of esoteric sects of Bengal including the Bāuls, the Sahebdhani and the minstrels of the Rājbaṃśī community.

In the following Tukkhā *dehatattva* song (no. 5), we find the mention of *bājār* or marketplace once again:

Man tui phakir habire āk bājārot[58] *yāiẏā*

Manre yei nā ghāṭote pār habi
Sei nā ghāṭot ken sātār dilire
Sei deśer ro lolā pāni
Puruṣ phelāẏ khāiẏā
Āk bājārot yāiẏā

Manore sei deśero tinjan māiẏā
Tāder kono nāi haẏ biẏā re
Tinjan māiẏār ēkṭi santān Hailo keman
kaire re

[58] *Bājārot* in Rājbaṃ sí lect means *bājāre* in Bengali (at the market).

Āk[59] *bājārot yāiẏā*

Oh mind, you will become impoverished

Once you visit the market early Oh mind, the

bank you were meant to cross

Why did you swim in it?

The salt water of that land

Devours all men

Once you visit the market early

Oh mind! The three women of that land They

always remain unmarried

How is that the three women[60] together Gave birth

to one child?

Once you visit the market early

In this highly allegorical and mysterious song, *'deś'* might be a metaphor for the female body/*deha*. The metaphor of *bājār* is used with a sexual connotation in the context of *sahaja sādhanā*, where the *sādhaka* is being warned against practicing *sādhanā* without making the body ready for such a practice, which can lead to his impoverishment. This state is compared to the act of going to the 'market' early, where the risk of losing all of one's money is extremely high. In order for the serpentine force of the *kulakuṇḍalinī*, to rise through the various *cakras* or focal points in the subtle yogic body to the thousand-petalled crown *cakra* or the *sahasrāra,* through the three major nerves or *Nāḍīs;* the *iḍā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā*, one child or '*ekṭi santān'* is born. This single child is a metaphor

[59] *Āk* in Rājbaṃśī lect means early, in this case it implies as soon as the market opens.
[60] Refers to the three major nerves or *Nāḍīs* of the subtle body in Hinduism and Buddhism*;* the *iḍā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā*

for the single, ultimate reward of liberation, which is *mahāsukha*, after the practice of *dehatattva*.

We observe once again, the metaphor of the *bājār* is used in relation to the body as the experience of a variegated, plentiful, busy world in which objects and impressions constantly accost perception, just as a deluge of things in a bazaar.

Man tui phakir habire āk bājāre yāiẏā

Manre yei nā ghāṭote pār habi
Sei nā ghāṭot ken sātār dilire
Sei deśer ro lolā pāni
Puruṣ phelāẏ khāiẏā
Āk bājārot[23] *yāiẏā*
Manore sei deśero tinjan māiẏā
Tāder kono nāi haẏ biẏā re
Tinjan māiẏār ēkṭi santān Hailo keman
kaire re
Āk bājāre yāiẏā

Oh mind, you will become impoverished
Once you visit the market early[24] Oh mind, the
bank you were meant to cross
Why did you swim in it?
The salt water of that land
Devours all men
Once you visit the market early

Oh mind! The three women of that land They
always remain unmarried
How is that the three women[25] together Gave
birth to one child?
Once you visit the market early[26]

Song 5 is an ancient song of a deeply mystical nature which describes the process of *dehasādhanā* or body worship that involves a male and female practitioner. As it is enshrined throughout the philosophy of Tukkhā songs, the ultimate reward of bliss or *mahāsukha* can only be achieved through a lust-less drive of the male, who will work to give pleasure to the woman without wanting to impregnate her with his sperm. In this song '*deś*' might be a metaphor for the body/deha. The '*ekṭi santān*' single child might be a metaphor of the single ultimate, reward (liberation) of *mahāsukha* or ultimate bliss, after practicing *dehatattva. Bājār* is a metaphor for this variegated, plentiful, busy world and its experience, in which the body is constantly accosted by objects and impressions, just as one is deluged by things in a *Bājār.*

The metaphor of the three women refers to the three major nerves or *n āḍīs* of the subtle body in Hinduism and Buddhism; the *iḍā, piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*. The mind will lose its sanity and will not get its reward of enlightenment if its grows impatient to consummate the sexual ritual by ejaculation, and this act is compared to visiting the market early, where one is at the risk of spending too much and becoming impoverished. The way on the path towards obtaining the 'sole child' or *mahāsukha* is surrounded with salty waters where there is a risk of slipping. This song becomes an allegory for controlling lust and sexual impulses to attain a path towards a form of liberated love. The aim of the s*ādhakā* is to become free from *māyā* shakti, and use the
debilitating aspects of his sexual instinct positively.

***Dehatattva*, the Worship of the Feminine and Deconstructing 'Gender'**

In several songs of this volume, it is emphasized through cryptic metaphors that the male should resist all sexual and lustful desires to possess a woman or consummate the sexual act through ejaculation. The path to attaining *mahāsukha* or the ultimate state of bliss, which is a reward of the process of *sādhanā,* has to be one that is free from greed and lust, and a form of love that is pure, that is blissful without the desire to possess or subjugate the woman's body. There is also a deep emphasis on the androgynous idea of the male and female principles existing inside of each other in Tukkhā, with various metaphors for representing the male and the female binaries, such as *Prakṛti Puruṣ* (dual consciousness), '*dehā-dehi*'(the body and the embodied soul), *duiṭā mānṣi* (two human)*, phul-phal* (flower and fruit) that ultimately merge into the idea of a single being. This message of celebration and worship of the woman *sādhika* is expressed through complex metaphors and allegories in several of the *dehatattva* songs. for example, in Tukkhā song no. 5 (discussed later in this chapter), we find an allusion to this theme. It is a subversive strategy of the practitioners to question and deconstruct patriarchal constructs in their society. There is a great emphasis on the state of a "gender-less" being, which emerges from the process of *sādhanā,* which is also known as the formless one, this is also has a great resemblance with the concept of *maner mānus* or man of the heart in Baul philosophy. As the Bauls preach the idea of a man 'becoming a woman' or attaining' the feminine essence or feminine principles in the process of y*ugala sādhanā* (a kind of joint body worship), the Tukkhā songs also contain this idea of predominance of *mātrisakti* (primordial feminine power) that destabilizes normative concepts of power and sexuality and creates a space of transgression. In the process of *ultasādhanā* on the path of opposite or upside down, which involves sexual intercourse (and not abstaining from it), the semen has to be drawn upstream in the opposite direction, and the male is impregnated with the egg of the female, in an opposite

act, which creates the highest form of pleasure for the female, and results in the creation of a formless being, which is androgynous in essence. The emphasis is not on the egotistic enjoyment of the act, but experiencing to the cosmic feminine energy of body universe and opening up one's mind to this experience. This was also a means of sex without procreation which would release one from the cycle of birth and death.

In song 62,

Gurur kāche kar āge man ṭhikānā

Prabartter kāj śeṣ nā hole Yāo
yadi mon sādhaker deśe
Ṭhekbi giẏā māiẏār hāste
Lābh karā tor habe nā

Prabartter kāj purṇa kar Māiẏā haẏā
māiẏā dhar
Takhan sādhok deśe nirak kar
Milbe re tor ṣolo ānā

Oh mind, make your dwelling at your Guru's

Without finishing the training of *Pravarta*[61]
If you want to travel to the land of the *sādhaka*
You will fall into the trap of a woman
You won't gain anything

[61] *Pravarta* is one of the four stages of Vaishnavism intended for true realization of divine love.

Finish the training of *Pravarta*

Turn into a woman before falling for a woman

Only then will you attain the whole

In the land of the *sādhaka*

This is a *gurupada*, which is a verse in the form of an instruction from the Guru. As physical lands exist on the earth, the *dehasādhaka* has four kinds of lands inside the body, *sthūla, prabarta, sādhak,* and *siddhi*. *Sthula, pravarta sadhaka siddhi* also refer to the four stages of Vaiṣṇava worship intended for true realization of divine love(see Dimock 1966, 222–25, McDaniel, 1989, 172) , as well as to the four important stages of Baul *sādhanā*, (Jha, 2010, 313). A *sādhaka* needs to go through these various stages to prepare for *sādhanā*. *Sthula,* the coarse state of training, involves chanting, training in the *mantras*, training the body and mind in the art of self control and *deha sādhanā.* In the *sādhaka stage,* one trains with the Guru in the art of realization of *prema* true love, and this will also enable the divine play between Kṛṣṇa and Rādha. In the *siddha* state, the androgynous union of the male and the female essence takes place, where a sense of pure love is realized, and the binaries of gender and the ego dissolve. The paradox that is striking is that the man has to turn into a woman (a common trope in Baul and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇav traditions) to unite with a woman. According to the rules of Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, a great emphasis is put on the rule that a man must do away with his nature as a man and turn into a woman, "before he takes the vow of love" (Dasgupta,1999,140). The female body is the microcosm of the universe, the reservoir of all human qualities; The pursuit of *dehatattva* is the pursuit of acquiring femininity.

Since the role of the guru is the most important one, the *sādhaka* has to train and submit himself to the Guru, which symbolizes the Guru will be fully aware of his physical and mental place of dwelling (address or *thikānā*) during his training. If the *sādhaka* tries to desire the woman sexually, he will fall into a vicious trap and will not attain the great joy

of experiencing and becoming one with the feminine self. This can also be an allusion for experiencing the emotional state of *Rādhābhāva* (a state in which the devotee became one with Rādhā in her love for Kṛṣṇa), which is a metaphor for turning into a woman to understand feminine subjectivity and only then can a male devotee can have attain the potential to attain *mahāsukha* or eternal bliss as the reward of *sādhanā.* This is also referring to the process of overcoming egotistic enjoyment of sexual intercourse and reaching a higher state of consciousness.

In this song, we step deep into Vaiṣṇava cosmology of divine love, the initiate or *śiṣya* needs to train under the guidance of a Guru and undergo a proper training, in order to obtain supreme enlightenment and step into the land of the *sādhaka*. *Rādhābhāva* is a metaphor for turning into a woman to understand feminine subjectivity, and this is expressed when the *śiṣya* is asked by the Guru to turn into a woman before falling for a woman. Caitanya had been revealed as a form of Rādhā- Kṛṣṇa in one person by his disciple Ramananda for the first time. Due to his intense longing for Kṛṣṇa, he had reached a stage of complete oneness and self-identification with Rādhā, and that is when, the state of *Rādhābhāva* was attained. In this state, Caitanya would continue to have fits of wild yearning, longing and depression for Kṛṣṇa for his entire life, like Rādhā (Dimock 1966:149), which is revealed in *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Caitanya's poetic biography. *Bhāva* in Bengali and Rājbaṃśī implies a complex emotional state, often times a form of ecstasy, which is a very important state of consciousness in Vaiṣṇavism. There are instances in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā text, *Vivarta-Vilasa*, where the experience of passionate love is equated with the highest possible experience, which is achievable through the experience of a divine erotic love, *madhura rasa*
(Dimock 1966:124-150). *Rasa* is an important concept for the Bengali Vaiṣṇavas. Ecstasy of the devotee, is expressed through *bhakti rasa*, and while *rasa* is impersonal, where one feels empathy or identifies with the other's emotional state, *Bhāva* is much

more personal, where one experiences their own emotions (McDaniel 1989:81-2). For the Vaiṣṇav Sahajiyā practitioners, the concept of *rasa* is of prime importance. Their conception of corporeal and spiritual bliss stems from the union between the male and female, who are conceived as anthropomorphic embodiment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, this foundational belief is to be cultivated through *dehatattva* (theory of the body) and worship of the body.

The idea of a divine erotic game is shared by Sahajiyā with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, but at the same time it differs considerably from it: Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is in a theistic direction of *bhakti*; for worship to be possible at all, it must postulate the eternal connection between the human soul and God — even though they are ultimately both of the same nature. Sahajiyā, on the other hand, assumes that there is no fundamental difference between man and God. The innermost human nature is divine, and one should discover it in oneself and identify with it - every man is so different and every woman is Rādhā. The goal of *sādhanā*, of course, is not to become a mere spectator of the divine play, but directly its main actor. This is the only way to enjoy the highest state that springs from this love affair.

In song 4, we once again find a woman's body being used as a metaphor for an old broken pond:

Dyakhre ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare
Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ār pukurtā hola jaṅgale gherā āhā
Ār nitya nitya ki cān kare
Kata hastī ār ghaṛā

Kata pāṭhā pāṛo chāgal bhyaṛā re

Ō dyakhre cān kare ai pukure

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare Dyakhre

ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ār pukure āche ēktā Gandhakālīr thān

Ār nitya nitya ai Kālīṭā jīber bali khān

Kata pāṭhā pāṛā chāgal bhyaṛā re

Ai dyakh bali haẏ kālīr duẏāre

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare Dykhre ēman

sādhu ēkjan cān kare

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

And the pond was covered in forest

Where the elephants and horses

Bathe daily

Many billy goats, buffaloes, goats and sheep
Bathe in the pond,

Behold! they bathe in the pond

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

Oh behold such a sadhu who takes a bath Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

The pond contains a place of worship

For Goddess Gandha Kālī[62]

Daily the goddess devours sacrifices

Many billy goats, buffaloes, goats and sheep Are sacrificed daily at the altar of Kāli

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

Oh behold such a sadhu who takes a bath

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

This is perhaps one of the most difficult and cryptic songs within the group songs that I have collected. In this highly allusive and esoteric song; the broken pond of Madandanga is not a real place but a metaphor for a pond of desire, where the Goddess Gandha Kālī resides, who is a goddess of Lust and her place of abode is in lower region of the body. Madandanga could be the Place of Lust symbolizing the female body (the female genitalia), the place where the God of Lust, Madana resides. Aquatic imagery, especially that of ponds is quite common in Sahajiyā literature written in Bengali. Czyzykowski, in his article, which explores the possible existence of the concept of

[62] Gandha Kālī refers to deity of Lust emobodying the feminine procreative organs. Gandha Kālī is believed to be an incarnation of Kā lī and is worshipped as a folk goddess in Bengal. Two meanings of Gandha Kālī are possible, one which highlights the word 'gandha' or smell/odour and as Czyzykowski points out, Gandha Kālī is closely connected with esoteric knowledge, aquatic symbolism, fish (thus strong smell), Tantric initiation and mystical transformation or might be interpreted as form of a human or visualized partner (*prakṛ ti, rati, jiva rati*) placed in the lower regions of the body. The odour could also be associated to feminine bodily fluids, as this song is all about sexual metaphors.

kuṇḍalinī in medieval Bengali Tantric Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions, discusses the mysterious figure of Gandha Kālī and its possible origins, and connections with *kuṇḍalinī.* Actually, two meanings of Gandha Kālī are possible (See footnote 35 below). Apparently Gandha Kālī is the *śakti* by whom the *sādhaka* achieves the state of being internally free from desire (Czyzykowski 2018:198). This makes perfect sense, as according to the singer of this Tukkhā song, Gandha Kālī is being referred to as the deity of Lust embodying the feminine procreative organs. The sadhu who 'takes a bath' in the pond of Madandanga indicates the process of *dehasādhana* during which he engages in a sexual union with the metaphoric feminine figure (symbolizing a Tantric union of the masculine and feminine principles), trying to achieve a state of being free from sexual desires by pulling his sexual fluids upwards, which is a common practice within *dehasādhana*. Many are sacrificed at her altar; this perhaps indicates the *sādhakas* who fail to achieve *mahāsukha* through the right practice of union with the Goddess and those who are unable to control their sexual desires in the process. These men are being compared to animals being sacrificed at the Goddess' altar. According to Urban (2010, 108)[63], the esoteric ritual of sexual union is "an esoteric counterpart" to the actual "primordial sacrifice", which was a form of clan sacrifice practiced in Kāmākhya, the seat of Tantra in Assam, he says:

> However, the link between sexual rites and blood sacrifice is especially clear in the literature from Assam and adjacent areas, where animal sacrifice in both Vedic and tribal forms has been widely practiced up to the present. The link is twofold, at once literal and symbolic. On the one hand, the rite of sexual union is very often preceded and/or accompanied by the offering of animal sacrifice; on the other hand, the rite of sexual union is frequently compared to offering of libations to the sacrificial fire.
>
> (Urban, 2010, 108-9)

This goes on to prove the closer proximity of Tantric influence on the Tukkhā songs which are in great geographical proximity to Assam, and throws light on the shared

[63] This is an important book and contribution in the studies on Tantra in South Asia, which explores the role of the Kāmākhyā temple in Assam. It also closely examines and tries to deconstruct the history of Śākta traditions, ritual practices, sacred sites,in relation to 'tribal' cultures and kingship in northeastern India.

religious and metaphorical worlds of vernacular Tantra in Bengal. While for most Tantric directions the basic elements of the subtle body are the energy channels (*nāḍī*) and centers symbolized by lotuses with different numbers of petals, the use of a water metaphor: ponds, ocean, rivers, are quite unique to Sahajiyā tradition.

In another aquatic imagery, we find a description of the river of Lust in the following *dehatattva* song:

Tukkhā song 12

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Ōre man āmār

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Āmār manare

Sei nadhītār bānā uṭhe

Āmābasyā purṇimāte

Keu bā dyakhe keu bā dyakhe nā

Manare

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Manare

Sei nadhīte agādh jal

Nāmle pare habi tal

Kāmanā kumbhire ōto khābe

Manare

Raktaṭā tor khābe kise

Hāṛ māṁsa kichui khābe nā

Āmār manare

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

Oh my mind

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

Oh my mind

The river's tides rise high

During new moon and full moon

Some behold it, some don't

Oh my mind

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

That river is overflowing

You will drown deep once you descend

The crocodile of lust will devour you

Oh my mind

Oh my mind

It will suck out your blood

But won't touch your flesh and bones

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

Oh my mind

Don't float your boat in the River of Lust

This song warns the reader of setting on a journey in the metaphoric river of Lust in the woman's body, which symbolizes the place of sexual attractions and worldly illusions,

where the metaphoric boat (symbolizing the body) is bound to drown. The body-boat is a recurrent metaphor in the Tukkhā songs and other mystical songs of Bengal (as demonstrated in chapter two of my thesis). The crocodiles in the river of Lust symbolize *kāmā* or sexual desires and have the potential to swallow and devour the *sādhakā,* before he realizes and falls into the temptation of consummating lustful desires. The tides and speed of the flowing river symbolizes desire. The female body is compared to a river, which is overflowing with desire in the eyes of the male. The crocodile is a metaphor for lust, which has the power to suck out the blood and destroy the human body, if it is not controlled. Even in the *Caryāgiti*, we find references to the crocodile. The rural imagination of the poet through the metaphors of a flowing river, high tides, crocodiles is constructing a physiology of human desire.

Song 9 has a similar theme:

Nadī kemnī habore pār

Nadī kemnī habore pār

Ō re ēi pār thāki dekhā nā yāẏ

Ai pārer kinār

Jal nāi nadiṭār haẏre bānā

Ainṭhe thāke kumir chaẏ janā Tār

bāde keu pār habār cāẏ nā

Jal nāi nadiṭār baṛaẏre srot

Dairgha pasta tār chaurāśi

krośa Tār bāde mor mane baṛa

āpśoś

Bhaẏ nāgeche mok dekhiẏāre ḍeu

Ēi kathā gilā kāre kaō

Sange nāi mor bandhu bāndhab keu

Oh how will I cross the river

Oh how will I cross the river

From this side of the river

The other side is invisible

The river doesn't have water

Yet it keeps flooding

In it resides six crocodiles

Because of them,

No one wishes to cross the river

The river doesn't have water

Yet it has big waves

Its length and breadth is above eighty four *krośa*[64]

My heart repents because of this

I am afraid at the sight of the waves

With whom should I share all this?

I don't have any friends with me

[64] an ancient Indian unit of measurement: appa

In this song with a very similar theme, the 6 crocodiles of lust represent the *ṣaḍripu*, the six enemies in Hinduism namely; *kāma* (lust), *krōdha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (arrogance), and *mātsarya* (jealousy). The female sexual reproductive organ is compared to the overflowing river of Lust. The poet is alone, without friends and is completely lost without the guidance of a Guru. It is not possible for the ordinary human to understand the doctrine of *dehatattva.* The female genitalia, the seat of physical sexual urges, is also the place where the serpentine *kuṇḍalinī śakti* resides. The upstream movement of *kuṇḍalinī* is guided by the process of *sādhanā*, and it reaches the highest point in the body, the thousand petalled-lotus or the *sahasrāra cakra.* This is the point where the *śiva* and *śakti* unite with each other creating an ultimate form of ecstasy in Tantra.

Body as a Boat

Tukkhā Songs 1 and 2, 39, 41, 59 compare the body with a boat. Song 1 highlights the state of the human self in the material world. Our body is greedy to acquire a lot of things, and these things (material possessions or mental vices) are compared to a form of burden, with which we fill our body boat. The boat is almost sinking under the burden of the debris of an existence dominated by material desires, an uncultivated mind and uncontrolled senses.[65] The river of the worldly desires is highly provoking, and urges one to embark on a journey filled with the illusions of material desires and possessions. The river is a metaphor for the woman's body and the boat stands for the male. If the male tries to fill his body boat with lustful intentions and desires, in the process of *dehasādhanā,* his body is sure to drown. He has to build his body boat with a lot of
mental strength and training.

[65] reference to the *ripus*

Song 1:

Ei dehatattva gān ārekkhānā gāba bābā, Ei

gān khānā hocche ye ei ye bhabanadī, Ei

bhabanadīṭā dhari hāmār nāgiche kām, Ei

bhabanadīṭā bale pār nā hoẏā yāẏ,

Ihār bale kul kinārā nāi, ekhan ei ye,

Tāo to noukā chaṛi gechi,

Chaṛi ye pār haba bali āshā karchi,

Tāi mājhiṭā koyā hoce ki koche

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Ē mājhi sābadhān madhya nadīte giyā tarī khān ḍubi yābe

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī Ē

mājhi tare hūśiār kari yāi tarī ḍubibe Ār

kata māl bharāichore mājhi

Ō tor māler bhāre ḍubibe tarīre

Ōre mājhi

Ār kata māl bharāichore mājhi

Ore mājhi kata māl bharāichis

Ō tor māler bhāre ḍubibe tarīre

Ōre mājhi

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Ār ye noukā khān bānāichis bābāre ki khuṭār bānāno?

Śāler bānāle to śanśani hay

Ār akhuṭāchi[99] *milāre noukā*

Ō tor bhār nite nā māne boiṭhāre

Ōre mājhi

Milāchila kahe jāse kahe noukā khān

Ār akhuṭāchi milāre noukā

Ō tor bhāo nite nā māne boiṭhāre

Ōre mājhi

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibere

tarī Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi

ḍubibere tarī

Dubibe tarī

Oh Dear One, can you sing another song of *dehatattva*?

This is the song of the river of worldly existence (*bhabanadī*),

This river of worldly existence has evoked my deepest desires,

They say it's impossible to cross the river of worldly existence,

They say it does not have a source or an end, it is ever-present here

Still I have embarked on this boat, I am hoping

that I will be able to cross the river,

What's wrong, says the boatman, what is amiss?

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

Boatman, be alert, the boat may drown midstream

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

Hey Boatman! Let me alert you: the boat is about to drown

"O Boatman! How many more belongings will you fill your boat with!

Oh, the boat may drown under the load of those

O dear boatman!

"O Boatman! How many more belongings will you fill your boat with!

Oh, the boat may drown under the load of those O

dear boatman!

What have you constructed this boat with? Of which wood is it made?

The Boat is made carefully with Sal wood[66] will swiftly sail through

If it were not made of wood

Oh dear Boatman, it cannot bear your load

Oh dear Boatman

The Boat which has been made carefully sails through

If it is made of poor quality wood

Oh dear Boatman, it cannot bear your load

Oh dear Boatman

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

Boatman, be alert, the boat may drown midstream

The boat will drown

***Ultasādhanā* - the Opposite path of Meaning**

In the *ulta* or opposite universe of the 'upside-down', The *sādhaka* discovers his unique path by going against the prevailing social truths and reversing patriarchal structures as well as transgressing gender constructs. This doctrine is propagated in a language distinct

[66] Sal wood is regarded to be very strong and water resistant. According to a popular saying, timbers of Sal can remain intact a hundred years buried or under water.

from the common social language, which consists of various symbols and metaphors not meant to be deciphered by the uninitiated person.

Incidentally, why this s*ādhanā* is mentioned as the s*ādhanā* of the "opposite path" needs to be discussed. This philosophy believes in revealing a perspective that is opposite to a lot of conventional religious and social values. Through the process of body worship or *dehasādhanā* , the man tries to become a woman to understand the essence of femininity, as well as get rid of lustful, egotistic delusions for self fulfillment. The private ownership that has created the family, values in traditional religion and society, and the subjugation of female sexuality, is also rejected in this practice of the opposite path. The language of opposites makes use of metaphors, riddles, hyperboles, paradoxes to describe the microcosmic replica of the universe within the human body. It also exists as category in mystic literature of India (Cf. discussion on the *saṃdhābhāṣa* and 'image of role-reversal in chapter IV), especially in the poetry of *sant* tradition and that of Kabir.[67] In the songs of *dehatattva* and *manaśikṣā,* often through the critical observation of social issues a sort of an inner transformation takes place within the s*ādhaka.*

Guru ki majār hoila kārkhānā
Ajamine hāl dhareche sādā pāgelā

Ēi ye ḍāine jurise bāsuā bolot re Guru
bāẏe jurise kṣetri pāl
Sāt samudrat dariẏār mājhot
Pāgelāẏ bōẏāche hāl

[67] For a discussion on the *ulatbaṃśī* or the 'upside-down' language in Kabir, see Hess(1983).

Ēi ye jhalār bhitar lāngal yongālre Guru

jhulir bhitar phāl

Sāt samudrat dariẏār mājhot

Pāgelāẏ bōẏāche hāl

Ēi ye sādā pāgelār ṭhāt[125] *dekhiẏāre*

Guru mantāt mor uṭheche tāo

Mane kache ai pāgelāk

Hāl bōẏā śikhāo

Guru, what an amusing workshop!

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

In a spot with no land

On the right is a ploughing bull

On the left he attaches the Owner of the land

In the middle of the seven seas

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

This plough beam and yoke sits inside his sack

Oh Guru, his pouch contains the ploughshare

In the middle of the seven seas and oceans

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

While beholding the innocent lunatic's burden

Oh Guru, I feel outraged

While my heart wishes

To teach him how to plough

In song 70, a student points out to his teacher a comical paradox: s/he sees a madman (*pāgelā*) ploughing in the middle of the seven seas, which is a metaphor for the seven seas according to the doctrine of *dehatattva* consisting of seven bodily fluids (Jha, 1999, 444). This is song can be read as an example of *ultasādhanā* and is an example of the upside down or *ulta* language. The field is a metaphor of the woman's body. *Sādā Pāgelā* could also translate to Gaur with a white complexion (*Sādā* is a pun on the word, which also means 'innocent'), and this could be an allusion to the Gaurānga or Sri Caitanya. The ploughing bull and the owner of the land to the left and to the right are metaphors for the male student who is training under the Guru during the stage of *Pravarta* (stage of the beginner training to become a *sādhaka)* and the female who symbolizes the owner of her own body. Gaur is seated on the middle and teaching them the right process of *dehasādhanā,* where the goal is to transform *kāma* (lustful desires) into a state of *prema* (pure love) in a state of an androgynous union. *Pāgelā* or *pāgāl* are epithets that are used for the wandering minstrels also known as *bāudiyās* within Rājbaṃśī society. As McDaniel observes about the nature of *madmen* in Bengali esoteric traditions (1989, 159):

> The traditional image of the holy man is a controlled yogi, peaceful and strong, while the mad saint or Baul is wildly enthusiastic, passionate toward God, and erratic toward his fellow men.

This song depicts the impossible task of trying to plough in the middle of an ocean (the woman's body), yet with the right *sādhanā,* the impossible becomes possible. This metaphor of ploughing, cultivation, is related to themes of fertility and its relationship with the feminine power to create life within the woman's womb. The lunatic is teaching

his students how to plough without the so-called right tools (the yoke and ploughsare, a metaphor for the male's sexual organs and desires) which are inside his sack, instead he is being guided by Gaur on the right path of *sahaja* (which is another word for *Sādā*). Gaur's burden is a metaphor for the burden of the male sexual organs, which he is carrying to prohibit him from engaging in lustful thoughts and sexual acts with the woman in a state of selfishness. However, the male expresses a sense of outrage at being controlled by the Guru and by the burden of his own desires, which he has to learn to control.

Guruvāda and Khyapār Gān

A principal tenet and thematic component of the songs that I have collected traces its origin to the ancient tradition and concept of *Guruvāda,* a tradition where the disciple receives formal initiation and training under the guidance of a Guru. Sahajiyās in the whole field of Indian philosophy, the role of the Guru or preceptor, especially regarding the practical and esoteric aspect of Sahajiyā practice is fundamental (Dasgupta 1946: 101-102). As discussed in chapter two of my thesis, the importance of a Guru, has been emphasized in the *Caryāgīti*, as well as many other devotional songs associated with the Sahajiyā corpus such as Sahajiyā Vaishnav songs, Bāul and Fakir songs and of course the Tukkhā songs in the present collection. Many Rājbaṃśī *Baiṣtams* and *Gōsāīs* practice under the guidance of Gurus in both *āśramas* and *akharas*, which are often the homes of the Gurus or special houses of worship. Here, spiritual discipline, practice of esoteric yoga, social service, regimentation, performances, and communions are mostly performed under the guidance of Guru.

The *akharas* are also very popular with the Rājbaṃśīs, which is a place of spiritual communion, devotional assembly (in Rājbaṃśī lexicon), musical performances, and even for informal discussions among the village people. In the collection of *Khyapār*

Gān in my thesis, the theme of a dialogue between a Guru and disciple is presented in which the disciple asks a question on certain mystical, unfathomable and complex theories related to various themes on the theory of creation of the universe to mysteries of the body, and the Guru obliges with an answer. Ancient Tantra and indigenous religious traditions guarded their doctrines (*tattvas*) and knowledge in the oral form in a language shrouded in secrecy. This ideological and instructional system was not to be found in an actual written book but through the real life instructions of the Guru. The secrecy also protected the authority of the gurus. The disciple had to earn through great discipline and training that the greatest wealth, which was the Guru's wisdom[68]. Like social wealth, this wealth is not transferable, but increases in wealth of the Gurus's wisdom (a popular saying is *Guruvastu Amulya Dhan* or the object obtained from the Guru is the ultimate wealth). Tantric secrecy is a complex religious category that ties history and lineage together into a socio-religious paradigm and goes beyond religious concealment.

Tukkhā song 36

Phuṭilo golāpero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ē sāin, ēi gurutā praśna karā hoche, ēi praśnar uttar jena parabarti āmrā pāi..Gurureb āmār dibe

Kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dhāner khai

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dudher dai Phuṭilo golāpero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dariẏār jal Kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā sariṣār tel

[68] This is also evident from the interviews I conducted. The Guru still hold a very important position among the spiritual and esoteric practitioners that I interviewed.

Phuṭilo golapero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā bām̐ ser naṛi

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā pātār daṛi

Phuṭilo golapero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ai cānder bājār ai bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

Ore dantagilā khuliā dekh mor binā dhāner khai

Māthār ghilukhān khuliā dekh mor binā dudher dai

Ai cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

Ore hāḍḍigula khuliā dekh mor binā bām̐ ser naṛi

Dehār rag gulā kāṭiā dekh mor binā pātār daṛi

Cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāngiā jābe bhāire

Cakhṣur jal khuliā dekh re mor binā

Dariẏār jal

Gāyer rakta kāṭiā dekh re mor binā sariṣār tel

Cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

The rose blossoms but it withers away

Oh guru we ask you, we hope to find an answer to our question, our guru will answer

Oh guru, pray tell, where is the parched rice but made without grain?

Oh guru, where is the yogurt but made without milk?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

And where is the water that doesn't stem from the sea?

Oh my guru where is the mustard oil but without the mustard?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

Oh guru where is the stick made without bamboo?

Oh guru where is the rope without jute?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day it will shut down! Hear all!

If you open your mouth, and uproot your teeth, and you find rice made without grain

Open your skull and the grey matter contained inside is the yogurt made without milk

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day the market will shut down! Hear all!

Dismantle your bones from your body and you will find the stick without bamboo,

Dissect your veins to find the rope without jute In this

moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day it will shut down! Hear all!

Open your tearful eyes to find the water that doesn't belong to the sea

Cut open the body to find the blood, which is the mustard oil without the mustard

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace One

day the market will shut down! Hear all!

In this highly eloquent and cryptic song, the disciple asks about a solution to a set of impossible riddles (and situations), basically, the improbable: in response, the Guru asks them to dissect their physical human form to find answers to many of those questions. Reading between the lines, the message is once again pointing towards the ephemeral nature of the human body, which blooms and withers away like a rose. If one examines and understands the 'theory of the body', only then will that person find

an answer to these riddles of these hypothetically impossible situations (rice without grain, yoghurt without milk, mustard oil without mustard etc.). In a prelude to one of the Tukkhā songs, it says:

> Guru: *Manaśikṣā* (teaching/taming of the mind) and *dehatattva* (theory of the body) involves the teacher (guru) and the disciple (śiṣya) ..When the disciple asks questions, the teacher will respond to them through songs. Right? I shall answer your questions… you have to come with me to the bank of the worldly river.

Bhavanadi, or the worldly river, is the place where the Guru and disciple meet, and with the guidance of the Guru, the disciple crosses over to the other bank, the bank of eternal bliss or non-dual enlightenment. Drawing from the broader Sahajiyā Tantric traditions of Bengal, many of the Tukkhā songs use a wide range of metaphors, which has constructed a distinctive lexical universe.

Manaśikṣā

Manaśikṣā is a part of *dehatattva*, which helps in preparing the mind for the process of *sādhanā. Manaśikṣā* is a form of mental education where one is taught to control the detrimental and unfavourable parts of their instincts. The aim of the *sādhaka* is to control his instincts, (from the grasp of the *sadripu*), train his mind for a leading a spiritually balanced life. The didacticism of the songs has a popular appeal among the masses of the villages who gather to listen to these songs. The instructional messages for self development and mental cultivation using metaphors from daily life creates a striking combination, which forms an important part of Rājbaṃśī spiritual life. The mode of ecstatic performance engages the audience and encourages interactions as well. According the my interviewees, this is a very important part of the cultural life of some

of the smaller villages. The mind is personified in several of these songs, often addressed as '*rabot man*' or the "unaware/ignorant mind", or even as "*sonār man*" or the "darling/golden mind." *Manaśikṣā* songs are sometimes performed by *Baistam bāudiyas*, who are wandering minstrels and 'madcap' poets, Although the *bāudiyas* of North Bengal did not receive any formal education and are called 'unlettered', the depth of their spiritual thought was profound. Through their own spiritual enlightenment, they took on the responsibility of propagating the songs of *manaśikṣā* in the rural society. Because they did not want to get involved in the false *māyā* or illusions of the material world, they do not get bound by any kind of material possessions. That is why another identity of *Baistam bāudiya* is 'Gosai'. *Manaśikṣā* songs highlight social issues of inequity, scarcity and misery, malice, deceit and above all, the competition to gain wealth and property among humans of the present world.

Song 6

Ādi deher guru paramāttā re

Ō hāẏre śiśya haẏre tāhār man

Guru śiśya ēki holere

Yāoẏā āsā haẏ re bāran

Ō rabot mano re

Bijat haite janme bẹ iksha bẹ ikshate haẏ

Prakẹ iti puruṣ haite moha tatthyer janma tāte

Ākāś ādi pancabhute deher gaṭhano haise

Ō rabot mano re

Bijat haite janme bẹ iksha bẹ ikshate hay phal

phul

Deha dehi samapaksha tatthya nirupan

Ō rabot mano re

Pāṁ̐ c pāṁ̐ cā paṁ̐ ciśer arttya jene śune haore matta

Panca āttā deher stiti das-chay- ṣola

Ō rabot mano re

Adham bale tattya jene sādhya bastu laore cine

Baddha kara ṣolo jan ke kara annyesan

The lord of the primal body is Paramātma

Oh the disciple is his mind

When the Guru and Śiṣya become one

The cycle of coming and going is not

allowed anymore

Oh unaware mind[69]! The tree stems from a seed

And that bears the flower and fruit

From the Prakṛti Puruṣ[70]

Is born the doctrine of desire[71]

From the *five elements* beginning with Space

The human body is formed

Oh unaware mind! The tree stems from a seed

[69] *rabot* means unware in Rājbaṃśī lect, which is *Abodh* in Bengali.

[70] *Prakṛti Puruṣ* seems to primarily mean from Primordial Nature and the Soul, and secondarily the Female and Male principles.

[71] *Moha* implying desire/delusion

And that bears the flower and fruit The body

and the embodied soul[72] become

equal

That essence is understood Oh

unaware mind!

Five five's are twenty-five[79]

Knowing this theory, be immersed

The five souls, the body's equilibrium

Is ten-six-sixteen[80]

Oh unaware mind!

Since you are ignorant, know the truth and recognize the

object of enlightenment

And defeat the Sixteen[81]

And keep seeking

In this song, we find an evocative metaphor for the Guru and his disciple; the *Ādi deher guru* or the Primordial and Supreme Being of the Universe is *paramāttā* and the mind of that being is his own disciple. Once there is a unity between between the Guru and his disciple, the cycle of birth and death comes to an end. In this song there is a visible influence of Buddhism and the doctrine of release from the cycle of transmigration. This is also a state of *sahaja*, where there is no coming or going, it symbolizes a non dual state of bliss. The process of the *sādhanā* involves a control over the six senses and ten *indriyas,*

[72] *Deha* and *dehi* symbolizes the body and the embodied soul, from a Sanskritic understanding.

to overcome the various distractions of human existence. On achieving the state of bliss, the body (*deha*) and the embodied soul (*dehi*) beome one.

In the following *manaśikṣā* song:

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[79] Jha (1995) in his study on the esoteric worship of four moons among the Bāuls shares an excerpt of the twenty-five substances the Bāul sādhaks use explain creation in biological and mechanical terms, and in the light of their knowledge of their own bodies. It is thought that bodily activities are controlled by the various natural qualities of the four or five elements. These are mechanical natural forces the twenty-five substances are:
Cari-Candra Bhed: Use of the Four Moons 93 each of the five elements, as follows: Ab (water): śukra (semen), Sonit (blood), Faeces, Urine, Marrow
Atas (fire): Hunger, Thirst, Weariness, Laziness, Sleep Khàk (earth): Bone, Flesh, Nails, Skin, Hair
Bât (air): Retention, Movement, Contraction, Expansion, Throwing Sunya: Desire, Anger, Greed, Delusion, Shame

[81] Refers to the *ṣaḍripu* and ten *indriyas*. The ten senses are: *Chakshu* (sight), *shrotra* (hearing), *ghrāṇa* (smell), *rasanā* (taste) *kāyā* (touch), *vāc* (speech), *pāṇi* (hands), *pāda* (feet) *pāyu* (excretion) *upastha* (procreation)

Tukkhā song 18

Āji śunek śunek dayāl didi

Man kānde mor nirabadhi

Mor biẏār kaẏdin āche bāki

Hoise mor āgilā biẏā

Ḍhāk ḍhol ār sānāi diẏā

Śākhāẏ sendure kataẏ nā sājeẏā

Ār hobe mor pāchilā biẏā

Khol ār kartāl diẏā

Nigābe mok haribol kariẏā

Mor biẏār didi kibā śobhā

Āge pāche kāṣṭher bojhā

Nigābe mok pālaṅke careẏā

Ore kāṁ cā bāṁ śer

pālaṅke Nigābe mok

nadir ghāṭe

Biẏāō hobe mor ainā nidhuẏāte

Listen to my prayer today, my kind sister

My childish heart weeps

How many days to go until my final wedding?

My first wedding already took place

With the sound of drum beats and sānāi[73]

Adorned in vermillion and wedding bangles

My final wedding is about to take place

To the beats of *khol*[74] and *kortāl*[75]

I will be taken on a procession chanting the name of Hari

Oh dear sister, what a spectacle for my wedding!

I am in the middle burdened with a bunch of pyres

I will be carried on a bed made of raw bamboo

I will be taken to the banks of the river

My wedding will take place in that secluded ground[76]

This eloquent song is about the metaphor of death as a second marriage. There seems to be irony in this song, while the speaker sounds excited for her 'second' wedding, which is the phenomenon of imminent death. This cryptic song could be a reflection on

[73] Sā nā i or Shehnai, a popular North Indian wind instrument mostly played at weddings.
[74] A two-sided drum used for devotional music
[75] Cymbals
[76] There is immense irony in this song, the tone of the speaker is at times ironic, and irony is a feature of the expression of dissent.

ideals of immortality and Sahajiyā philosophy. Immortality is not necessarily considered to be a great virtue in Sahajiyā tradition; on the contrary a positive acceptance of the death of the physical form is of paramount value. The *dehavādis* celebrate singularity of human life, and spiritual bliss is attainable through the practice of the body, death is a celebration, almost like a marriage, according to this attitude towards the body, which can only bring an end to the physical form that is entangled in a web of worldly illusions and attachments. Hence, for ascent into a higher realm of spiritual fulfillment, death is just a mere pathway in the song to the beat of drums. It is almost a rebellion against the idea of death, a form of dissent against the ephemeral nature of material, corporeal existence.

In the context of the Tukkhā songs, the metaphor of *Hari* is a symbolic representation of the Divine being that resides within us.

In the following song:

Tukkhā song 20

Ōki ōho re sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā
Kebā āpan kebā par man
Dyakhek nā bhābiā
Ār sādher janam yāẏ sonār man
Kāndiā kāndiā re
Ōki ōho sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā

Sonā dānā man bhiṭā bāṛī
Dhan sampatti ṭiner bāṛī re Putra
kanyā tor naẏ re āpnā
Dyakhek nā bhābiā

Sādher janam yāẏ sanār man kāndiā kāndiā re

Ōki ōho sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā

Oh my golden mind[77] you couldn't recognize yourself Oh

mind, who is one's own and who is a stranger

Think to yourself?

This precious life goes by, oh golden mind,

Only in tears

Oh my golden mind you couldn't recognize yourself

All the jewels and wealth and one's permanent residence

Possessions and opulence, and temporary houses

Son and daughter aren't your own either

Just watch and think

This precious life goes by, oh golden mind,

Only in tears

Oh my golden mind you couldn't recognize yourself

In this *manaśikṣā* song, the poet emphasizes the need to recognize the true nature of the 'golden', 'darling' mind, as self-awareness and mental cultivation is key to happiness and spiritual realization. Once again, the ephemeral nature of material possessions and relations is being highlighted, and the ideal of self-realization is being elevated. In many of the *manaśikṣā* songs, messages about life, human existence are conveyed in a didactic manner, which is always not necessarily esoteric in nature. This distinguishes

[77] Sonā is also a term of endearment. Sonā r mon is both golden mind and 'darling mind.'

this genre of songs from the highly esoteric *dehatattva* songs. The didactic flavor of these songs are indicated in their type- *manaśikṣā,* the word *śikṣā* meaning instruction. The metaphors of the ignorant mind, funeral ground, caged bird, marketplace, life being a four-day journey, the six senses as thieves, *māyā,* and worldly illusions are commonly recurrent in this group of songs.

In the following song:

Tukkhā song 23

Ō mon calo yāi āpan deśe bhabe Bāndab

keha nāi

Bhabe āmār bāṛi āmār ghar

Michāmichi ahaṁkār

Dinā cāri gairabh kiser bhāi

Māyāte majhiā maner sāthe dekh bhābiā

Āpan balte āpan keha nāi

Hāṭer upare ēktā āche baṛa ṭiner ghar

Duiṭi lāiṭ jwale tāhāro upar

Huṭā dekhte camatkār

Chaẏjan carā curi kare kakhan je kār paket māre

Dharā parile bācār upāi nāi

Oh mind! Let's travel to our homeland.

In this world there are no friends

In this world, my house, my home

My home and possessions are all pointless arrogance

What's the need in pride that can only delight for

so short a span of time, O Brother?

You are immersed in the Māyā of your heart Take a while to think

There's no one you can call your own

There sits a huge tin-hut above the marketplace

Two lights are glimmering on top

To the eyes it looks marvelous

Six thieves are out to rob!

Who knows when and whose pocket they will pick!

If caught, there's no way of escaping!

In this poetic song, we are once again told of the perils of an ephemeral material existence, whereby we are doomed to be deceived by the six thieves or the vices of *ṣaḍripu*. Once entangled in the web of *māyā*, it is easy to fall prey to the six thieves who will at once rob you of all your sanity and self-awareness. The metaphor of *Hāṭ* is used once again to describe the seemingly alluring marketplace with its glimmering lights and promise of affluent consumption. It is only an illusion that misleads man to fall victim to the trap of a worldly prison. The real destination, the homeland or *'āpan deś'* is the final destination, which is the true abode of Bliss, of familiarity. In this '*bhab'* or the earthly abode, there are no friends, and no real ties, only illusions.

Tukkhā song 32

Ōho bhagabān hāẏ hāẏ

Mānuṣ janam āmār gelo asādhane

Deher bhitar mano rājā

Das indriẏa ērāi prajā man

Sāśan mane nā

Rājāō kānā prajāo kānā

Candro surya ērāō kānā man

Kānār kārkhānā

Bāṛi parā yāẏ sabhāẏ dekhe

Man parā yāẏ keu nā dekhe man

Jalile nā nibhe

Oh dear Lord

My mortal life was spent without piety

Inside the body, the mind is the king

The ten *indriyas* are the subjects

They mind fails to control them

The king is blind, so are the subjects

The sun is blind, so is the moon

The mind is a blind man's workshop

The house burns down while everyone watches

'The mind burns but no one watches'

And once that happens

The fire of the mind isn't extinguished

In this song, we are being told about the mind that has been compared to a blind man's workshop, as well as to a blind king and subjects, a blind sun and a blind moon. The blindness stems from the inability to see beyond material illusions, attachments and possessions. The metaphor of *kārkhānā* or workshop is also found in Bāul songs, a famous one being, Lalan Fakir's:

Dil dariẏār mājhē dēkhalām, ājab kārkhānā

Dēhēr mājhē bāṛi āchē sēi bāṛitē cōr ḍhukēchē,

Ābār chaẏjanātē sid kēṭēchē

Curi karē ēkjanā, ēkjanā

Dil dariẏār mājhē dēkhlām ājab kārkhānā rē,

Dēhēr mājhē nadī āchē sēi nadītē naukā calē,

Ābār chaẏjanātē dāṛ ṭānichē

Hāl dharēchē ēkjanā, ēkjanā

In the middle of the River of Heart

I saw a strange workshop

There is a house in the middle of the body

The thief broke into that house

The six cut through

But only one steals!

Right in the middle of the River of Heart

I saw a strange workshop

There is a river in the middle of the body

The boat sails on that river

Six people are pulling the oars, once again But

only one is able steer ahead!

We find the metaphor of the 'six' thieves of *ṣaḍripu* once again, which try to mislead the mind and rob anyone's mind of their sanity. We can observe familiar metaphors in this song such as the house, the workshop, the six thieves, middle of the river, oars and rowing, ones that are used in several of the Tukkhā songs in the present collection as well. Even though comparable metaphors can be found in the *sādhansangīt* or devotional esoteric songs of Bengal, each genre has its own distinctive qualities. The overlap between Tantric metaphors of the subtle body in both *dehattatva* and *manaśikṣā* point towards a long tradition of transmission of some central archaic concepts of Tantric Sahajiyā traditions, which were localized and often changed and adapted itself according to specific historical, cultural and religious contexts.

In the following Tukkhā song, we find an example of a divine erotic affair:

Tukkhā song 60

Ḍub dile pābigo ratan

Bhakti rase āche gherā

seto phuler madhu bharā

Akul prem sāgarer mājhe

Raśikh janāẏ ḍub diẏāche re

Hāẏre ēkhai bindu pān karile

Ghuce yābe maner dhādā Seto

phuler madhu bharā

Ār phuler bhitar āche ye re nol

Tāhār upar rādhā kānon he Hāẏ

re tāhār upar chaẏ mañjarī Hari

dhani kare tāṛā

Seto phuler madhu bharā Ār

aṣṭa daler niśarī kāle Uṛiā

baśilo ḍāle he

Hāẏ re ṭhekis nā man bālucare

Ṭhekile habo disāhārā

Seto phuler madhu bharā

Once you take a dip

You will find the jewel

It is crusted in *Bhakti rasa*[78]

It is filled with nectar of flowers

In the bottomless ocean of love

The passionate lovers have taken a dip

Oh Mind! If you sip even a single drop

The conflict of the mind will be solved

It is filled with nectar blossom

The nose-ring is inside the flower

And on top rests

The Garden of Rādhā

On it blossoms six buds

Which chant the name of Hari

It is filled with nectar blossom

The lotus with eight petals[79]

The mind should sit on it

In a nocturnal flight,

Oh Mind, do not get stuck on the sand banks

[78] Bhakti is a specific state of rasa, an experience within which the devotee is immersed in feeling devotion and love towards Kṛṣ a, it is a state of becoming one with Kṛṣa.

[79] This song is filled with Tantric Vaiṣṇava symbols like the eight petalled lotus: '*asta dal'*- According to Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā doctrines, "the body is made up of several vertically arranged successive sections, called padmas (lotuses) or *sarovaras* (lotus ponds). Thought about the locations and functions of these padmas is borrowed by the Sahajiyas directly from the Tantras: only the terminology sometimes differs. Somewhere below the lotus pond of the belly is another pond, and in it grows a lotus of eight petals.This pond is gloomy and dark. It is the lake of the physical aspect of the worshipper, before he has been transformed. The first and lowest lotus has six petals. In this lotus the lilā of Rādhā and Kṛṣ a is taking place. Above this is a lotus of eight petals, in which are hidden the eight sakhis, the companions of Radha. Above this is a hundred-petalled lotus, in which is the knowledge of the truth of the guru; wise men take refuge in this lotus. In the highest place of all is the lotus of a thousand petals, in which the Lord himself resides. One who knows the truth of these lotuses says the text, knows the most profound form of the *lila* of Rādhā and Kṛṣ a." (Dimock, 1966 174-75).

Otherwise you will become directionless

It is filled with nectar blossom

In this song the sensuous imagery of a *lilā* or the divine play between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, *Bhakti rasa* becomes the central motif, and is shown as the garden of love, nectar filled flowers, taking a sip of the passionate potion of love, all of which points at the sweet savour of the divine erotic play between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The reference to an eightpetalled lotus is an allusion to one of the lotuses placed at the nether region of the body that is surrounded by the *kuṇḍalinī* force. The serpentine force of *kulakuṇḍalinī* rises through the various *cakras* or focal points in the subtle yogic body to the thousandpetalled crown *cakra* or the *sahasrāra,* through the three major nerves or *Nāḍīs;* the *iḍā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā* (as discussed in an earlier song). The mind is cautioned, however, not to be stuck in the sandbanks (with quick sand perhaps) and become directionlesshighlighting that even within the divine erotic play, the right kind of practice and cultivation of the mind is necessary to achieve the goal of *sādhanā*.

Aspāli/ Raspāli

In the Aspāli (Rājbaṃśīs pronounce 'r' as 'a') or Raspāli songs, the divine love affair between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, is described. These set of songs are different in flavor from the other songs in the collection in that they are humanizing the love-play between the Gods and Kṛṣṇa is lamenting for Rādhā's love. The figures of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are likened to rural lovers, who are constantly immersed in love games in an eternally blissful and playful manner. This tradition is inspired by the ancient oral tradition of Kṛṣṇa or Kanai Dhamāli, which predates the *padāvali* tradition of Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati. However, the *padāvali* tradition also greatly inspired and was incorporated and assimilated into these songs in later times.

Tukkhā song 49

Ō jībane āmār sukh nāi antare

Dibā niśi prāṇ kānde mor

Ai rādhā bine

Ōre subol tui āmāre prāṇer sakhā

Rādhāre āniā dekhā

Rādhār kathā mor pare re mane

Buk bhije dui naỳaner jale

Dere subol rādhāre āniā

Ō subol re

Ōre subol jabo āmi dui diner pare

Rādhāre āniā de re

Purba kathā mor pare re mane

Buk bhije dui naỳaner jale

Bahe dhārā mor āṛāl megher mata

Ō subol re

In my life, there's no joy in my heart

My heart ails day and night

Without my Rādhā

Oh my Subol[80], you are my heart's companion

Bring me and manifest my Rādhā

[80] A cowherd, childhood friend, and confidante of Kṛṣ a.

I keep reminiscing about my Rādhā

My heart is drenched in my tears

Please bring me my Rādhā, dear Subol

Oh Subol

I am about to depart in two days

Please bring me my Rādhā

I am reminded of old times

My heart is drenched in my tears

The stream flows like hidden clouds

Oh my Subol

In this plaintive song, Kṛṣṇa is yearning to see Rādhā, whose heart is lamenting day and night for Rādhā's love- a kind of a role reversal, where Kṛṣṇa is seeing pining for Rādhā. Subol, Kṛṣṇa's dear friend and confidante is expected to become a messenger of love, as well as someone who empathizes with Kṛṣṇa.

In the following song, we hear of Rādhā's version of lament:

Tukkhā song 50

Ō mui michāẏ genu jal ānibār ge ainā nadīr ghāṭe ge

Ki haila bāi mor nārir kapāle

Āji kun rasiā bājāẏ ge ore bāṁ śī

Ore bāṁ śīr sure man mor sadāẏ jhure ge

Āji candra surya yeman jaliā ore uṭhe

Ai matan nārir man mor sadāẏ jale ge

I was pretending to carry water from the banks of that river But

what did I, a woman, gain after all?

Who is the passionate flautist playing his magic flute?

My heart is weeping to the melody of his flute

As the sun and moon illuminate diurnally

My woman's heart burns eternally

It is interesting to note that Rādhā addresses Kṛṣṇa as nāgar (a clandestine, mischievous, crafty lover) in the following song:

Tukkhā song 55

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Dariẏāte nāi matsa re

O nāgar kānāi bagilā kene ōre paṛe

Tor saṅge mor nāi re piṛiti

Manṭāẏ kene jhore re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ghoṛāśāle ghuri bandi re

O nāgar kānāi matsa bandi ōre jāle Puruṣ

bhomrā jāti bandi nārīr kole re

Nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Gāch madhye baṭa bṛ iksha re ō nāgar

kānāi Bāṛiā yāẏ ōre latā

Āmito nāi bhāṅgire piṛiti

Bhāṅgise bidhātā re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re
Paṛe re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi[81]

Even though there's no fish in the river

Why do the cranes keep hovering, Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi?

If I am no longer in love with you[82]

Why does my heart keep throbbing, oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi?

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

The mare is captive in the stable

Oh my clandestine lover, the fish is trapped in the water

Look at the bumblebees; the male is bound to the female in her grasp

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Within the branches of the great Banyan

The creepers start crowding

I didn't break the bond of love

[81] Another name for Kṛṣ a

[82] This is just an emotional rebuke on Rādhā's part- of course she is still in love with him!

Almighty has broken it

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

I can't disclose it to my father, thanks to my shame

Not even to my brother, trembling out of fear

My youth shrinks, as a fine garment spun from six threads when it grows wet

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

In this song of rebuke and grievance, Rādhā is expressing her feelings towards, where she is trying to project that she is no longer in love with her *nāgar Kānāi* (a personal term of flirtatious endearment), by suppressing her feelings, whereas in reality, her heart is full of love and passion for Kṛṣṇa. She experiences a plethora of turbulent emotions such as grievance, anger, shame, passion, desire, longing, fear and all this is a poetic projection of her angst and desire for attaining the love of Kṛṣṇa, who only visits her as a clandestine lover. There are images of entrapment, bondage, temptations, and sexual tension, which heighten the poetic appeal of the song. The beautiful metaphor of a wet garment spun from six threads with shrinking youth of Rādhā is a rare one, which compares the temporal dimension of the romance between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, as it evolved through various worldly obstacles.

In the following song, we find the eloquence of Rādhā's self expression and angst:

Tukkhā song 57

Ōki ōge baṛāi āji dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba ge pāṛ

Baṛāi dil daṛiẏār tuphān ōre bhāri

Ore aiṭhe āche baṛāi chaẏ jhan ōre mājhī

Baṛāi dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba ge pāṛ

Baṛāi ye nāiẏāẏ mok karibe pār

Ōre tāke dim baṛāi gālār hār

Baṛāi āro dim mui kāner kāncā ōre sonā

Bāṛir nā catur ōre pāthe ōre nānān aṅger phul phuiṭāche

Baṛāi seō phul mor nā nāge kunay kāje

Ōki ōge baṛāi dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba paṛ

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

Oh grandma, the storm is rising in the River of Love

Six boatman are waiting, Grandma

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

The boatman who will help me cross

Will not only get my necklace, grandma

But also my gold earrings

Myriad flowers bloom around my house, but

they are of no use, grandma

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

The *Baṛāi* (grandmother or an old-lady babysitter) figure is a kind of "caricature" of the classical *sakhi* (girlfriend go-between), as and the terms *nāgar* and *nāgari* mock the gentleman, *nagarika*, of cosmopolitan love poetry (Knutson 2009, 54).

Once again, this song paints a melancholic and passionate picture of Rādhā's angst to unite with Kṛṣṇa, while crossing the turbulent River of Love. Rādhā is ready to put all at stake to cross the river and reach her Beloved. The change from the luxurious imagery of redolent flowers, ripeness and bloom, to the absence of desire to enjoy blooming flowers, capture the different moods of Rādhā- Kṛṣṇa's romance through the Aspāli songs.

Tukkhā Song 52

Aylā maner jwālā mane jāne ār jānibe re kāy

Ōre kāy ache mor āpan janā mor

Mantāk re bujay

Ār chāṛiyā geise prāṇer kālā re

Ēkelā ghare ōre thuiyā

Ore mui abhāgi basiā re ācho

Panther dike cāyāre

Ōre prāṇer kālā mor āsibe kataỳ dine

Ār mor narīṭār kapāl paṛā re

Kālā geise ore chāṛi

Ore dine āti man kāndeche sei kālār lāgiāre

Ōre keman kari thākim ēkelā ghare

Who else can feel the pangs of my heart?

Who is my very own, my dear one Who

can heal this pain?

The beloved Dark One has left me by myself

All alone in my chamber

Oh this unfortunate inamorata sits alone

With her eyes set on the pathway

Wonders when her beloved Dark One will return

This is me, the ill-fated woman

The one whom the Dark One abandoned

Day and night my heart weeps for my Dark One

Oh pray tell, how do I remain alone in this empty chamber

This eloquent song, once again, describes the angst and pain of Rādhā, while she is left lamenting for Kṛṣṇa's love and absence. In this series of songs, Rādhā's journey of realizing, savouring and feeling pain from her unparalleled love for Kṛṣṇa is captured through highly evocative images.

In this song Gaur is being compared to a serpent and a Buddhist healer at once. This is an allusion to Gaur turning into a woman and becoming a serpent, and he switches genders to teach his male disciple the message of *prema* devoid of *kāma* and to embrace the state of *Rādhābhāva* (cf. song 62, pg. 89, we find a similar metaphor for *Rādhābhāva*). The reference to a Buddhist healer sheds light on the dialogue between the Tantric Buddhism and Tantric Vaiṣṇavism. In the religious landscape of Bengal during this time period, this influence is also demonstrated by the religious influence on the ritual mantras used for healing (one such mantra is discussed in chapter III). '*Anāther nāth'* could refer to the figure of Kṛṣṇa, the preserver, as well as to Śiva, who is the destroyer.

Tukkhā song 63

Goẏur tui mok pāgalkarāli re

Anāther nāth goẏur he

Pāgal ye karāli goẏur

Doẏe nā karāli more
Morā ke jitāite pāro

Yadi mane karore anāther nāth

Goẏur he

Sarpa haẏe ḍhṁsāo he goẏur

Bauddha haẏe jhāre

Morā ke jitāite pāro

Yadi mane karore anāther nāth

Goẏur he

Gaur, you made me crazy, Protector of the destitute Oh

Gaur!

You made me crazy, Gaur,

You didn't have any mercy on me

You bring the dead back to life

If it is your will, Protector of the destitute

Oh Gaur!

You strike like a serpent

Like a Buddhist healer

You bring the dead back to life

If it is your will, Protector of the destitute

Sahajiyā the supreme Kṛṣṇa is not just an abstract principle, but a god with qualities constantly taking part in dalliance and love games, which is characterized by a strong aesthetic dimension. The body becomes ‘subtle’, which connects the ordinary physical body with the highest divine principles. This idea is common to the vast majority of Tantric traditions devoted to yoga practice and is based on notions of the body as a microcosm. *Dehatattva* (literally "doctrine of the body" or "principles of the body") is then a kind of map of this bodily universe, which serves as a guide for its creation through *sādhanā*.

In this chapter, we tried to trace the socio-cultural and religious development of the Tukkhā songs against the backdrop of the Rājbaṃśī community’s evolution through the decades and the development of its heterodox religious ideas, literary influences, practices and beliefs. While studying the various metaphors used in the Tukkhā songs, this chapter assumed that those various strands of religious ideas were deeply imbricated in older Tantric traditions. In this chapter, we tried to explore how these ideas responded to, negotiated with, assimilated, hybridized and even resisted Tantric traditions primarily through the analysis of the songs that I have collected and through the anthropological fieldwork that I have done. The contours of Tukkhā, as a field and as a living tradition have been refigured and reinvented, while it has engaged with various socio-historical changes in historical, religious and political landscape of North

Bengal. The songs become of medium of self-expression, self-preservation of the Rājbaṃśī community, which becomes historically specific for a politically, economically and culturally marginalized community. Through poetics and embodied

worship, the concept of a body as a microcosm and the mind as an eternal object of cultivation, are simultaneously translated into metaphors of language, and becomes central to a form of embodied experience, subversion and liberation.

Rājbaṃśī Metaphorical Worlds through the Tukkhā songs- Mystic and Poetic Language

"The vehicle by which we are moved in passionate spirituality is metaphor. The mechanism of such metaphor is bodily. It is a neural mechanism that recruits our abilities to perceive, to move, to feel, and to envision in the service not only of theoretical and philosophical thought, but of spiritual experience."

Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 568)

If mystic experience waters the roots of a desire to express the inexpressible, the ineffable, and the invisible, it is metaphor that forms a bridge between language and experience to make this a phenomenon. The theory embodiment and metaphors of cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson (1999) suggests that our metaphorical concepts are rooted in our bodily experiences and that these metaphorical concepts shape how we think, reason and communicate. In their influential book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), that precedes this theory, Lakoff and Johnson presented a systematic approach regarding the study of metaphors. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT hereafter), developed by Lakoff and Johnson explained how metaphors are a part of our everyday lives and these metaphors also serve as the foundation for poetic metaphors. According to CMT, metaphor is mapped across two conceptual domains in language; source domain and target domain.

While religion was an element of social organization and consolidating social power, groups of marginalized communities confronted that power with counter-metaphors

through the medium of language. The expression of different social-truths, constructing systems of cosmology as well as deconstructing ideas on gender and sexuality became possible through the means of poetic language and metaphor. The space of autonomic poetic expression of the *sādhakas* and composers of the Tukkhā songs gave voice to an experience of transcendence and transgression through the liminal space of metaphors. Sometimes the meaning of familiar metaphors were changed to present different concepts, wherein the familiar world became unintelligible, e.g. the case of intentional or 'upside down' language. In this section, through a discussion of the nature of poetry/poetic language and mystic language, I will try to answer the question if i) both are at all different ii) the importance of metaphors in the Tukkhā songs as an expression of Rājbaṃśī conceptual universe, (which is highly plural and multi-layered) through a discussion of some of the key strands of the literary critical approaches to metaphor, mystic experience and language.

In Lakoff and Turner's (1989) work on poetic metaphors, from a point of view of cognitive linguistics, one of the central claims is that metaphors are pervasive in our everyday life and language, and they are a medium of expressing various cultural and cognitive worlds, instead of being just a figure of speech. This idea of grounding of literary metaphors in 'ordinary' language and objects of daily life is a notion that is not alien to the Rājbaṃśī conceptual universe or metaphoric worlds. The embodiment of metaphorical concepts through poetic metaphors help a reader read meaning into poems and read between lines, it is not just about the importance of individual words but the combination of complex conceptual systems, and 'image-schemas' (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, 97) that have been presented in this thesis.

The importance of conceptual mapping of source to target domains in conceptual metaphor theory helps greatly in understanding the power of metaphor: these poets, many

of them who were unlettered, used metaphor as a tool to reason and make sense of the abstract or imaginative ideas. For example, the comparison of death to a 'final wedding' (Tukkhā song 16) is an unfamiliar concept, but here the source domain is death, which stands for cessation, and it is mapped onto the target domain of a wedding, which signifies an important event of celebration, something that death is not. The paradox is that the liberation from worldly existence (death) is compared to a celebration, like that of a wedding; a case of an unfamiliar conceptual mapping made possible by a metaphor. Some times abstract concepts are delineated through the help of spatial metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 15), such as the boat, body, etc. We can look at some of the comparisons we find in the songs:

- comparison of a tree with the human body
- comparison of the *Brahmāṇḍa* (universe) with the cosmic body (dehabhāṇḍa)
- comparison of the Universe with the female womb (songs on the cosmic conception of the body as a replica of the universe situated inside the woman's womb)
- comparison of the processof creation of the universe with the processof the *dehasādhana*
- comparison of *sādhana* with a journey
- comparison of a river with the female body
- comparison of the six senses with the six enemies
- comparison of the woman's body with an agricultural field
- comparison of a bird with the mind and the last breath
- comparison of a body with a boat and a musical instrument (*sārindā*)
- comparison of the Guru with a potato in the soil, and the disciple as the shovel
- comparison of the human life as well as the human body with a *bazār*
- comparison of Gaur with an innocent lunatic, a healer, a serpent
- comparison of the worship of God with the worship of humanity

- comparison of the secret rite of sexual union with the act of sacrifice
- comparison of the yoke and ploughshare with male sexual organs and desires

Going by CMT, some complex concepts like life, love, death, God may be structured metaphorically in terms of more than one single source domain. This is evident in the songs that I have discussed in this chapter, e.g. the body is symbolized as a tree, a boat, a field, a river, or a stringed instrument. These multiple mappings reveal an internally coherent logical system, which is made available for structuring the abstract target domain through metaphors. Lakoff and Turner turn highlight how poetic metaphors are more interesting than ordinary metaphors and explore how ordinary language uses poetic metaphors to extend the language beyond ordinary by four ways; extending, elaborating, questioning, and composing (Lakoff and Turner, 1989 67-77).

The last method is the most powerful one, which employs two or more complex metaphorical concepts to join two or more conventional metaphors for creating multiple metaphorical connections, a feature that distinguishes poetic metaphor from ordinary metaphor. Lakoff and Turner's (1989) method in the analysis of cognitive metaphors in poetic texts is utilized for various metaphorical structures in poetry. The question of coherence in the case of poetic and complex metaphors is highlighted as a major source of power in poetry, according to Lakoff and Turner:

> Complex metaphors grip us partly because they awake in us the experience and knowledge that form the grounding of those metaphors, partly because they make the coherence of that experience and knowledge resonate, and partly because they lead us to form new coherences in what we know and experience.
>
> Lakoff and Turner (1989, 89).

This question of coherence of shared metaphors, 'folk-cognitive models', 'cognitive topology' is discussed by Hayes (2018, 186-209) in his essay on metaphor and imagery in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions in Bengal and as we have observed throughout this thesis, this tradition shares a lot of its religious and literary themes with the Tukkhā songs. Hayes states that the vernacular Tantric traditions like the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā are using their own cosmological and metaphorical models, which has also been referred to as 'coherent metaphoric worlds' coined by Stewart (quoted in Hayes, 2018), which deploy their own 'image-schemas' for the unique structuring of imagination to express their sexual, emotional and yogic experiences(Hayes, 2018). I would like to highlight that through the study of the Tukkhā songs in my thesis, I was able to trace these coherent systems/models of metaphors on themes of training the body (*dehatattva*) and training the mind (*manaśikṣā*), which show a presence of shared and unique characteristics in terms of literary, cultural and religious influence with other vernacular Tantric traditions of Bengal, Assam, and parts of Northeastern India. This is where the question of uniqueness of mystic speech arises and we are led to ask how is poetic language any different from mystic language, in the background of the construction of the metaphorical universe of Tukkhā. It is not in fact coincidental that such major overlaps between Tukkhā, *Caryāgīti, Dohākosas*, Bengali *padāvalis,* Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā, Baul-

Fakir, songs of Maynāmati, and the mystical poetry of *sants* exist. Stewart discusses the extended and complex metaphorical "shared" and "emergent" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) worlds and the domain of the 'intersemiotic' (Roman Jakobson,1959) which is an extremely helpful piece to understand the confluence of diverse religious and literary traditions in medieval Bengal, where a conception of coherence was possible through studying the various translation models and conditions of production within which such exchange and assimilation of conceptual systems took place. (Stewart, 2001, 287).

Mystic and Poetic

Mystic experience and the variety of lived experiences, which apparently is a domain of the ineffable can help us point towards the structuring of imagination through poetic language in a way such that it helps in making the familiar unfamiliar, the silent eloquent and vice versa. Through the power of creative imagination poetry is allowing language (metaphor) to mediate the sacred experience in a way that it allows the devotee to take part in this mysterious and inexplicable process, enabling the mystic to reveal their experience that lies in a realm beyond language. In the discourse of mysticism, language plays an important part as it becomes self-reflexive and exposes its own limits of expression. Thus to answer the question if mystic and poetic speech are different- it is ambiguous, in a grammar of mystical expression, language becomes that anchor which gathers the mystic experience into speech, guides people towards understanding this experience and highlights the limits of language itself. Language is also helping in constructing the conceptual universe of mystic experience with the help of metaphors. Is it just religion or faith that distinguishes the poetic from the mystic? There is not one single answer to this, however, the poet is not one who surrenders to language, but the mystic surrenders to the divine (whatever form that assumes). When the poet is the mystic, perhaps they assume two different roles, one of surrender to the ineffable experience and one of conscious expression of the imaginal, which is beyond the phenomenal. For an unlettered poet, language of conceptual metaphors becomes a crucial medium of expression, of countering orthodox hegemonic structures. Many of the Tukkhā singers have had no formal training in education, and yet some of the most evocative, complex, and independent metaphorical expressions in this literature is their means of telling their own truth.

In asking philosophical questions, we use a reason shaped by the body, a cognitive unconscious to which we have no direct access, and metaphorical thought of which we are largely unaware. *The fact that abstract thought is mostly metaphorical means that answers to philosophical questions have always been, and always will be, mostly metaphorical.* In itself, that is neither good nor bad. It is simply a fact about the capacities of the human mind. But it has major consequences for every aspect of philosophy. Metaphorical thought is the principal tool that makes philosophical insight possible and that constrains the forms that philosophy can take.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 7, emphasis added).

In understanding the importance of shaping of the metaphoric worlds of Tukkhā, it is important to note that the structuring of experience stems in most cases from metaphors of daily life related to agriculture, pisciculture, fertility rituals, riverine landscapes, and other rural image schemas that are then mapped onto the target domain as metaphysical dimensions of the body. The Bengali word '*jibanmukhi*'or life-related or life-oriented can be applied to the philosophy of these songs where the metaphors of simple rural life are used to ask some of the most complex metaphysical questions regarding the body and the universe. Within the cosmic, mystical body there are some recurrent tropes and metaphors that help us in understanding the coherence of this conceptual and cognitive universe.

- the experience of the cosmos within the human body
- the metaphysical and metaphorical imagination of the feminine as the ultimate source of power or *Śakti,* which also sustains the universe. The *yonī* (the female organ of generation) as the source of the universe and symbol of the powerful energy of the goddess that flows through the cosmos and the human body
- the equation of the worship of humanity with the worship of the divine (Tukkhā song 29)

Sabāre upre serā sādan mānab sādhanā

The highest and greatest devotion

Is the worship of humanity

- the equation of sexual bliss without falling prey to sexual desires in non-egotistic way through the practice of *dehasādhanā*
- The androgynous being or state after the union of male and female cosmic principles
- The notion of travel within body through the various points: nerves , centres, and lotuses (Nādīs, cakras)

Among some of the unique and striking examples of metaphors found in Tukkhā, the following can help us to study the conceptual mapping of metaphors and defamiliarization, which is an example of the distinctiveness of structuring of poetic imagination by the Rājbaṃśī poets.

For example, song 55 is an eloquent plea on the part of Rādhā expressing her love for Kṛṣṇa, in the form of a rebuke. In this song we find this expression:

Sar sutār bhij bastar yaiban hāliā
Paṛe re nāgar kānāiẏā re

My youth shrinks like a fine garment spun from six threads
when it grows wet
Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

The comparison of youth with a wet cloth spun out of only six threads is a beautiful and unusual metaphor that heightens the angst of Rādhā's love in this poem.

In song 35, in Khyāpār Gān, the disciple asks a question to the Guru who obliges with an answer that is filled with riddles in the 'upside-down' or *ulta* language.

Cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace One

day it will shut down! Hear all!

The worldly experience of life on earth is compared to that of a marketplace, which is bound to be shut down one day, which is also an allusion to death.

In song 65, we find an unusual metaphor-

Ō rabot manare

Guru hailo māṭiā ālu

Śiśya haila tār khantā

Ār khacāite khacāite elāy kaire Nijjya kathāre

man tore

Oh unaware mind!

The Guru resembles a potato in the soil

The *śiṣya* is the shovel

While digging through the soil

Both of them exchange intimate words

The Guru is being compared to a potato in the soil (the best kind of potato), and the disciple is compared to the shovel used to dig out the soil to obtain the potato- a metaphor for the process of *sādhanā*, where the *sādhaka* has to overcome several obstacles and has to keep trying persistently to obtain his Guru's guidance and true wisdom, through layers of training, just like the potato can be reached after digging layers of soil.

Through a discussion of the various metaphors in this chapter, we came to realize the importance of metaphors in the context of mystic experience and the construction of a language that helps one reveal the cognitive spheres that lie beyond this language. Metaphors have been shaped by the body and the conceptual domain of the mind. One of the principal themes of *dehatattva* in the Tukkhā songs is that of *śakti*, the all pervading feminine power, *dehasādhanā* or body worship which involves getting rid of lust and egotistic desires, while worshiping the feminine energy, to control urges and engage in a union that results in supreme bliss, a state where the ego as well as the gender binaries collapse, the male and the female consciousness merge. As Urban notes,

> This reverence for the tremendous but dangerous power of female sexuality runs throughout the Tantric texts of the northeast region. The Yoni Tantra, for example, praises the yoni as the source of all creation, the divine organ that gives birth to all the gods and all the elements of the cosmos.
>
> (Urban, 2010, 131)

Through a creation of a dynamic metaphoric world, power is imagined as the woman, who is the source of all creation. What is unique about the Tukkhā is the in spite of perhaps a kind of gendering of power, with a focus on the supremacy of the feminine force, some of the songs point towards the genderless being, the androgynous state where the binaries are collapsing, the male draws the female seed within him, and metaphorically it

represents the presence of the feminine within the masculine and vice versa, perhaps a non dual state of *sahaja*. In song 7 on cosmic creation, the egg inside the female body is compared to the universe, where the union of the male and female entities take place, resulting in the creation of a being, whose gender is not assumed.

Ēi ye samudrer mājhe ēkṭi ḍimbhare

Hāẏre jalate ye se bhāse

Duiṭi mānuṣ ki liṁga

Nām dhare

Oh this Egg in the middle of the ocean

Which floats on the water

What is the gender of the

Two beings?

In the *manaśikṣā* songs which are focused on the mental cultivation and the spiritual training of the mind, the soul is embodied and personified as the locus of consciousness. In several of the songs it is compared to a bird (*manśuẏā*), which will fly away once we die. One has to live such a life that we try to understand our purpose and cleanse our soul, while detaching ourselves from the various worldly illusions. except in this song, the wind-bird is a metaphor for our last breath, and the lifeless body will remain.

Ore uriẏā yābe paban pākhi poṛiā

nobe dyahā

The wind-bird will fly away

Only the body will remain

One of the modern Tukkhā songs (song 21) that I collected shows a similar conceptual mapping of metaphors as the older songs but the language can be distinguished to be modern Rājbaṃśī with the inclusion of one or two English words in it.

Ō mon calo yāi āpan deśe bhabe Bāndab

keha nāi

Bhabe āmār bāṛi āmār ghar

Michāmichi ahaṁkār

Dinā cāri gairabh kiser bhāi

Māyāte majhiā maner sāthe dekh

bhābiā

Hāṭer upare ēktā āche baṛa ṭiner ghar

Duiṭi lāiṭ jwale tāhāro upar

Huṭā dekhte camatkār

Chaẏjan carā curi kare kakhan je kār paket māre

Dharā parile bācār upāi nāi

Oh mind! Let's travel to our homeland.

In this world there are no friends

In this world, my house, my home

My home and possessions are all pointless arrogance
What's the need in pride that can only delight for so short a
span of time, O Brother?

You are immersed in the *Māyā* of your heart
Take a while to think
There's no one you can call your own

There sits a huge tin-hut above the marketplace
Two lights are glimmering on top
To the eyes it looks marvelous
Six thieves are out to rob![83]

Who knows when and whose pocket they will pick!
If caught, there's no way of escaping!

[83] *ṣaḍripu* are the six enemies in Hinduism namely; kā ma (lust), krō dha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mada (arrogance), and mā tsarya (jealousy).

In this song on the theme of *manaśikṣā*, the body is compared to a house above the marketplace (the outside world), which looks vibrant with two 'lights.' However, the six thieves or enemies of the mind can rob one of all sanity and peace, which is a metaphor for no one being able to predict when they will pick one's pocket (modern terms such as *pocket māri* or pickpocketing and lights have been inserted). One needs to be cautious not to be immersed in the web of worldly illusions (*Māyā*). The conceptual metaphors help us in understanding that the soul is shaped in important ways by the body, while not being independent from it. If we look at this song in modern Rājbaṃśī lect from a diachronic perspective, we will notice that the metaphors reveal something about the socio-cultural conditions, which influenced the formation of these metaphors, and the conceptual categories (liberation metaphor) have not changed significantly even in the modern *manaśikṣā* songs. The conceptual domains are changing however, from caste oppression to encroachment of urbanization within the Rājbaṃśī community.

Through our study of language and metaphor, we can conclude by saying that the poetic language based on the conceptual metaphoric worlds helps in transforming the experience of the empirical world of the devotee. However, we also observe that the mystic's experience (without going into an elaborate discussion on mysticism) extends beyond a purely spiritual experience into the realm of the imaginary- where language helps in the formation of mystic speech and utterances.

In the case of mystical experience, the practitioner or *sādhaka*'s body and mind becomes the principal instrument of expression and experience. Language makes this experience a phenomenon- where the inexplicable is explicated and the ineffable is made somewhat fathomable- but that is true of all poetic speech, not strictly for the 'mystic' speech. As Blanchot puts it through the study of Mallarmé, the poetic word, then, is no longer opposed only to ordinary language, but also to the language of thought- which means

poetic language disrupts ‘crude’ language as well as it serves an end in itself, making the silent eloquent. (Blanchot, 1982, 35).

The poem -- literature -- seems to be linked to a spoken word which cannot be interrupted because it does not speak; it is. The poem is not this word itself, for the poem is a beginning, whereas this word never begins, but always speaks anew and is always starting over. (Blanchot 1982, 36).

Blanchot’s erudite analysis of poetic language in her study on the space of literature sheds light on the power of language and poetic expression to create new worlds of meaning everytime it is uttered. Each time a Tukkhā song is performed, a new subjective interpretation is possible depending upon the mode of performance, the emotional atmosphere, the socio-cultural context, the context of gender, subjectivity and faith.

Chapter III

The Singers: Rājbaṃśī Identity and their Religious and Cultural Practices In this chapter, I investigate the importance of past and present circumstances to contextualize the sociocultural conditions influencing the processes of knowledge production and the formation and negotiation of cultural values in the Rājbaṃśī community. The culture of orality in the form of songs, proverbs, legends, ballads, riddles, rites, rituals, and poetry continues to play an important part in the social, cultural and religious lives of the Rājbaṃśī community.

Barber, while discussing oral literature (indigenous African texts and a comparison with texts from other cultures) and developing a model for an anthropology of texts, uses the term ‘instauration’ that is “institution, founding, establishment’ but also ‘restoration, renovation, renewal’ to explain how texts are simultaneously created and maintained, and both these processes are creative, emergent and continuous (Barber 2007, 4). She describes how textual traditions can be seen as a community’s ethnography of itself, and

that texts are often self- reflexive, and argues for the power of language and its complex, exact and ambitious system of meaning making, in her exploration of linguistic ethnography. This is valuable while discussing the Tukkhā songs in the light of the importance of a 'text' in storing, recreating and retrieving cultural memory and the characterization of a 'text' both as the 'means' and as a 'thing' by which people affirm their existence, make demands, imagine communities and convene publics (Barber 2007, 200). Hess, in her study of Kabir, oral tradition and oral performative lives of texts, emphasizes her attempts to develop a method in which fieldwork and textwork inform and change each other, a method in which we can imagine together a larger world of "text," where one mode of inquiry does not need to eclipse the other (Hess, 2015, 4). Finnegan argues regarding the continuity of 'oral' and 'written' literature and tries to show that there is no deep gulf between the two: they shade into each other both in the present and over many centuries of historical development, and the fact that oral poetry can occur in a society with partial or mass literacy (Finnegan, 1977 24).[84]

With this in mind, I would like to propose an approach, which combines ethnography and literary criticism for this dissertation in such a way that it pushes the existing limits of how we engage with the text and the field. In the case of the Rājbaṃśīs, the Tukkhā songs have been composed and passed down orally, and some of the songs have been written down on rare occasions in later times in songbooks known as '*gāner khata'*, which in most cases do not contain the names of the poets or composers of the songs. Some of the songs are quite old and they have been passed down through memory and mastery, which have enabled interaction between oral and written forms, allowing room for individual creativity to meet the growing demands

[84] In the South Asian context several works have studied texts in connection to their performance traditions and socio-cultural contexts, such as Raheja and Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words* (1994), Elwin's *Folk-songs of Chhattisgarh* (1946), Lutgendorf's *The Life of a Text: Performing the Ramcaritmanas of Tulsidas* (1991), Openshaw's *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (2002) Novetzke's *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (2008), Stewart's *Fabulous Females and Peerless Pirs: Tales of Mad Adventure in Old Bengal* (2004) and *Witness to Marvels: Sufism and Literary Imagination* (2019).

of a changing cultural landscape. One of my interviewees expressed concerns over Bengali words encroaching upon Rājbaṃśī lect in some of the songs, in order to make it more accessible to a wider audience. The songs of *dehatattva* are among the oldest within the Rājbaṃśī community that have been passed down orally through memory, repetition and performance. These traditions embody certain emotions for certain members of the community, which connects their bodies to their cultural realities. For some of the women I interviewed, the medium of their 'folklore', helped them define their own subjective experiences, negotiate gender norms and reflect critically on their position in their society in a rapidly changing social and cultural climate.

Rājbaṃśī Identity

While trying to locate the Rājbaṃśī community in space and time, it is important to observe how this community has made its transition into modernity, while keeping in mind the complex process of identity formation, acculturation, ethnic nationalism, and discourses that have shaped and formed the theory of origins of this community as well as its modern identity. Understanding this process helps us situate and contextualize the songs of this volume in the back ground of the sociocultural history of this community.

Rājbaṃśīs hark back to the "old days" when their great-grandparents would serve as Kings of the Koch dynasty and refer to these narratives as their history, which is transmitted orally as well through a dynastic record of Biswa Singha known as the *Darrang Rājbaṃśavali* (Barua 1989, 24). Oral traditions within this community also comprise songs, proverbs, riddles, and plays that have been disseminated orally and have existed for a generation or more. Considerable literature on the history of Rājbaṃśi ethnogenesis has been written and debated.

As Wilson (2012) in her essay on the Rājbaṃśīs of Bangladesh explains, the theory of descent of this community from the Varman kings of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa, and tales of royal lineage in ancient texts, combined with a process of Sanskritization and Hinduization as defined by Weber[85] and Srinivas[86] provides a basis for the conception of a Kṣatriya identity among this community. She emphasizes, that even though these two broad terms have characterized the Rājbaṃśī movement of identity formation, the community continues to live in poverty and experiences political and cultural marginalization (from my own fieldwork experience). It is important to understand the process of

Hinduisation/Kṣatriyaization, with the patronage of Brahmins for 'rites de passage', while discussing some of the life rituals of the Rājbaṃśīs. Kulke (1992, 2018) discusses and critiques the previous concepts of legitimation/Hinduization (Weber's coinage of "external propaganda") in the study of Hindu social systems as defined by Weber (1920, 1958) and of Sanskritization as defined by Srinivas (1952), which include the adoption of vegetarianism and Sanskritization of rituals by the patronage of a Brahmin, by criticizing the focus on Brahmanic model only. Kulke is inspired by the process of *rajputisation* as defined by Sinha (1962) in the adoption of conducts and social relations of royal castes by dominant tribal clans or lineages. His analysis was based on the case of Bhumija clans of Barabhum and Manbhum districts, who claim the title of Rajput, through the legend of a Rajput prince on his way to Puri for pilgrimage and whose wife gave birth to the founder of the local dynasty. This prestigious genealogy completed the patronage of Brahmins and the adoption of Brahmanic rituals (for 'twice born'), the matrimonial alliances with Kṣatriya

[85] Weber introduces this concept of "Propaganda des Hinduismus" in his book (1920 Hinduismus und Buddhismus. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie II, translated by Hans Gerth and Don Martindale and published in English as *The Religion of India* in 1958), which implies how non- Hindu groups were assimilated by the institution of Hinduism and the Brahmanical worldview became the dominant in South Asia in this process of Hinduization.

[86] According to Srinivas, Sanskritization (made popular in his book *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, 1952) was a process adopted by castes lower in the caste hierarchy in order to raise its status by adopting practices, habits, rituals, ideology of a higher caste.

families, the rejection of manual works, and other minor signs of royal status. The Kṣatriyization of Kulke gives a wider extension to the Rajput model of Sinha, insisting on the religious aspect as well as linguistic aspects, and shows that this social imitation process was both from above and from below (Kulke 91). We can integrate this observation while looking at the history of the Rājbaṃśī community, which had witnessed a movement of identity formation (Brahmanization) during the reign of Koch kingdom and the period of cultural resurgence through the Kṣatriya movement, under Panchanan Barma in the 1930s for the legitimization of a higher 'Kṣatriya' social status in caste Hindu society (Chapter I). The influence of the term Kṣatriyaization as espoused by Srinivas and Sinha (according to Kulke, both their concepts show a high degree of correspondence with Weber's concepts of intensive and extensive Hinduization, however without referring to Weber's thesis) was adopted to describe 'social change from above' which was initiated in 'tribal' areas by chiefs and *rājās* in order to strengthen their legitimization as Hindu *rājās* in their own society to expand the basis of their political and economic power (Kulke 1976/1977/1993, 85; 2018: 56). This is comparable to the rise of Biswa Singha as the ruler of the Koch Kingdom from a 'tribal' chieftain, and his subsequent legitimation as a Hindu king by Brahmins who were inivited by him to his kingdom (Chapter I).

In order to critically engage with the community's modern identity through its folklore from philosophical and linguistic paradigm, I will focus on performance and ritual practices, festivals and deities, and some other local traditions based on my fieldwork.[96]

As Barma (2008), an eminent historian of this community, writes in his important

[96] Resources on this topic have been largely limited, especially; secondary literature on Tukkhā is almost non-existent. Majority of the materials published on this community comes from colonial literature and administrative accounts (Risely 1891, Dalton 1872, Hunter 1876), other important works include Chatterjee's book on the Indo-Mongoloids (1951), Sanyal's monograph (1965) published by the Asiatic Society, Mukherjee's study of caste ranking among the Rājbaṃśīs (1963) Clark's doctoral dissertation on the religious customs (1970), Ray (1975), Biswas (1997), Basu (2003) Barma (2004, 2020), Toulmin's linguistic study of the Rājbaṃśī dialect (2006), Ray (2007), Sharma (2009) Das Gupta (2010), Roy's doctoral dissertation (2012), Ray, PRādhān (2014) Wilson and Bashir (2016), and Roy (2018). Sanyal's monograph is seminal in the sense that it was the first of its kind to make a comprehensive study of the socio-cultural and religious customs, material culture, and language of the Rājbaṃśī people. Most of the other works have studied the ethnic origins of the community, its socio- cultural ritual and customs, material culture, literary sources, language and politics of identity formation. These works are important documents to attain an understanding and background of the Rājbaṃśī community's history, present conditions and socio-cultural as well as religious life. None of these works, however, have documented at length the history of Tukkhā songs, except Barma's (2020) short chapter in his book on Bāul songs, which talks about a brief history of the Rājbaṃśī community and discusses some Tukkhā songs, which is a valuable contribution to the field. Ray's (2021) article on Tukkhā songs is also an informative piece on the songs and the influence of Tantra, Ray, himself a Rājbaṃśī as a historian and archivist of the community makes an important contribution to the study of Tukkhā and its religious background and language.

[51] "The Portal of North Bengal Development Department". *wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in*. Retrieved 21 August, 2021.

study of the Bhāwaiyā, an important folk musical form of the Rājbaṃśī community, thus far there is no comprehensive study of the cultural history of Rājbaṃśī community. Some of the works I have mentioned are in fact a study of the religious outlook, festivals and deities, social structures, folk forms of this community. However, none of these works have studied Tukkhā as a genre, and as a matter of fact, these community has several forms of folk performance art and literature, some of which have not been explored in depth yet by any one book in particular.

The Koch-Rājbaṃśī people are spread across Assam, Meghalaya, North Bengal, Bihar within India, in Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh and is also one of the largest trans- border ethnic communities of South Asia.[51] The exact number of speakers of this lect is hard to determine, as the lect is known by various names in different regions such as Koch, Rājbaṃśī, Kamtapuri, Kamrupi, Deshi, Bahe, Tajpuria, Surjapuri (Barma, 2017). According to historian of the Koch- Rājbaṃśī community, Ray, the only authentic census of the population of was the one done in erstwhile Rajshahi Division (Now in Bangladesh) with its Headquarters at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. According to which, the total population in the Division stood as 9,130,072 in 1905, majority were Muslims with 62.4% followed by Hindus with 36.3% and rest with 1.30%. (Ray 2007, 63). According to a 2001 census report for West

Bengal, Rājbaṃśī is spoken by close to one crore people (Jalpaiguri, Koch Behar, Darjeeling, Malda and Murshidabad), Assam and Bihar) in India.[87] The census report of Nepal (2001) includes 130,000 speakers.

There are diverse views among scholars regarding the historical period, which marked the conversion of the Rājbaṃśīs to Aryan-Hindu views (Clark 199). It is important to consider the connected history of the Koch-Rājbaṃśī with the Pragjyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa kingdom (4-12th century AD) (present day North-Eastern India which includes Assam and North Bengal, the latter being my primary area of study), which was a Sanskritized kingdom long before lower or southern Bengal. The origins of the Rājbaṃśī community present before us the study of a complicated history. Sanyal states that this community belongs to the Bodo family that entered India in the 10th century B.C. from the east, settled on the banks of the Brahmaputra and gradually spread over Assam and the whole of North Bengal and the northern part of erstwhile East Bengal. He further mentions that the first introduction in the modern history of the people living in North Bengal is found in the accounts of the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji when he entered Tibet in 1206 AD (Sanyal 1965, 10). After consideration of the several secondary sources of literature on the Rājbaṃśīs, and from my own fieldwork, while it is imperative to critically engage with the understanding of the community's identity in terms of several discourses on ethnicity that have been offered, however, an in depth discussion on this topic is outside the scope and context of the current thesis.

Basu's work (2003) on the caste identity of the Rājbaṃśīs, has examined the systematic analytical history of the quest of this community for a Kṣatriya identity, their adaptation of caste symbols, Hindu Brahmanical deities and customs, the

[87] http://wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in/htmlpage/Rajbongshi.aspx. North Bengal Development Deaprtment. Retrieved 8 April, 2022.

complex case of caste movement in terms and their overall social and cultural marginalization by the Hindu upper-caste urban elites, and the course of their identity politics. In the context of the Rājbaṃśī community's varying origin theories or debates regarding its identity, Basu makes a substantial point:

> 'Whatever might have been their actual origin; there is no dispute about the fact that the Rājbaṃśīs were the early settlers in northern Bengal. They were a socially homogenous community, in the sense that there was no sub-caste among them.'(Basu 2003, 15)

Bashir and Wilson's recent article on the ethnic origins of this community questions whether discourses on ethnicity and theories of origin adequately explicate the community's complex nature of ethnic identity and claim that the discourse on the Rājbaṃśī is predominantly localized and appears as an expression of the interests of particular groups (colonial, reformist, autochthonous, political). Their argument is that these intersecting and overlapping definitions of ethnicity prove too complex for a definitive theory of origin, as they wrestle with social challenges confronting them in the postcolonial period. They sum up two main notions of collective action that persist among the Rājbaṃśī; to gather under a homogenous banner of a united, but marginalized, primordial identity, or mount campaigns for social and political advantage within the hierarchy of Hindu conversion and elite emulation. Setting these aside, the biggest challenge facing Rājbaṃśī leaders, and "those who seek to support these communities, is to identify ways in which definitions of identity allow communities to take action that will create meaningful change in the lives of the people." (Wilson-Bashir 2016,1-11).

The *Kṣatriya* Movement led by Panchanan Barma (1866-1935) in Bengal, attempted to connect the Rājbaṃśī past to a royal *Kṣatriya* lineage. The movement involved a ceremonial Kṣatriya process, and Brahmin rituals were performed to convert

thousands of Rājbaṃśī to ´Kṣatriya Rājbaṃśī´ in the villages of North Bengal as well as the appeal was made for the Rājbaṃśīs to be identified separately from the Koches (Barma 2017, 13). The term Koch is still in usage in upper Assam and in Meghalaya. The surname Rājbaṃśī is also found in those areas, but both are not understood as different, which are used to indicate people from the same community. In 2011, The Government of Assam in a letter to NCBC confirmed that the term ´Koch-Rājbaṃśī´ must be used to address the community (Pereira, 2017, 1-11). Post-independence, the rise of identity-poltics within the Rājbaṃśī community was fuelled when the princely state of Koch Behar became a part of West Bengal in 1950.[88] The Rājbaṃśī community found it very hard to absorb and assimilate themselves within the Bengali community, due to certain socio-cultural differences, and the disparity in social status as the title of SC (Scheduled Caste), ST (Scheduled Tribe) and OBC (Other Backward Classes) (in the different states in India that they reside in) was given to them against their will, as they took pride in the title of being connected to the royal lineage of *Kṣatriyas*. In the real world, people of the Rājbaṃśī community in North Bengal continue to feel marginalized by Bengali Hindu society.[89] Rājbaṃśī lect is also not recognized as an official language, which created confusion in indicating it as their language in the different states they reside.

As a result a proper census has never been conducted for this community (Ray 2017, 63). The Kamatapur Movement demanding a separate state for the Rājbaṃśīs and the demand for ST status started in Assam by the student union and political leaders, and found traction in West Bengal as well after the merger of Koch Behar with West Bengal. The genesis of "Koch Rājbaṃśī identity consciousness started due to the feeling of alienation, discrimination and deprivation."(Borah, 2019, 1-15).

[88] From the govt. website of Koch Behar district http://coochbehar.gov.in/HTMfiles/brief_history.html, Retrieved 7 April 2021.

[89] This is evident from my fieldwork interviews and time spent in the region. People admit to being discriminated against based on their ethnic background.

The community has undergone several phases in history whereby they tried to assert and consolidate a title, a status and a lineage for their identity as a group. In spite of the trials of socio-economic as well as cultural marginalization, their sense of identity and pride in a dynastic past remains intact. Their cultural identity is preserved through their lect, their traditions in the form of songs, plays, proverbs, religious practices, festivals, and material culture that play a very important part in demarcating the uniqueness of their cultural identity.

From the perspective of my studies, I have tried to locate the community in terms of its folklore and cultural-religious practices, framework of a changing linguistic paradigm (with the encroachment of Bengali onto their lect),[90] which is a mirror of its cultural identity that is undergoing a transformation with time and adapting itself to a changing cultural landscape.

Cultural assimilation has been a principal mode of survival in the historical context of evolving as a community. In spite of adopting certain Brahmanical customs, rituals and a social structure, they have retained many of their earlier practices related to nature worship.[91] Their cosmology is oriented towards fertility of the earth, and their environment, as well as their own clan organization. Some examples include faith in the concept of an *ātman* after death, worshipping the forces of nature in a feminine form or as a Mother goddess, worship of Śiva and a *liṅga,* imagination of *vāhanas* (mounts of deities), animal worship, rituals related to birth, death, marriage, funerals, prohibitory rituals and superstitions, observance of certain festivals related to seasonal changes and agriculture. Alongside observing several Hindu rites and rituals, they

[90] The language of the Tukkhā songs is undergoing a major change, and from my fieldwork, I gathered that the performers are being forced to incorporate Bengali words in order to increase the outreach of their songs to a larger audience, who do not speak their language.

[91] Brahmanical vs tribal dichotomy is not being proposed in entirety, in view of the fact that Brahmins also worship the earth and chthonic powers.

retain some unique female-oriented *laukika* practices[92]with totemic associations with tigers; for example, the worship of Bhāndānī. Guha defines *laukika* as

> Religious practices and beliefs under the broad rubric of Hinduism that are neither governed by the male Brahmana nor articulated in Sanskrit. The *laukika* is held in a hierarchical relation to the *śāstrik* that derives from *śāstr*a as in an order or a precept associated with a body of teaching in general but more commonly with the Sanskrit scriptures(Guha 2021,3-4).

The *laukika* realm comprises deities, rituals and customs that belonged to indigenous communities, that evolved in the course of time and were assimilated by and incorporated religious elements from the dominant religions of the times.

It can be concluded that in terms of a Rājbaṃśī identity (from an emic rather than an etic perspective), that in their socio-cultural and religious life, alongside their distinctive 'non-Hinduised' practices, an influence of Buddhist, Śaiva, Śākta (e.g., worship of *laukika* forms of Manasā, Caṇḍī, Śītalā, Ṣaṣṭhī) and Vaiṣṇava traditions can be strongly observed. Their religious and socio-cultural traditions are sites for contestation and meaning making on behalf of the community. Through the Tukkhā songs, an autonomous poetic voice has been retained, especially through the themes of *manaśikṣā* and *dehatattva*.[93]

The Rājbaṃśīs have witnessed successive waves of religious influence over the centuries, which include Buddhism, early Śaiva and Śākta forms of Hinduism and Vaiṣṇavism. These schools of thought amalgamated with former 'tribal' practices.[94] This was followed by the Islamic invasions in the thirteenth century, which led to a great number of conversions within the Rājbaṃśī community. The rise of the Koch kingdom in the sixteenth century led to the spread of Hinduism in all sections of the

[92] While discussing the *laukika* tradition in Bengal, Guha discusses the various forms of contestations between the *śāstrik* and the *laukika* realms (Guha 2020: introduction).
[93] These categories are discussed in Chapter I of my thesis.
[94] *Ibid.*, preface.

society and resulted in consolidation of a Hindu Rājbaṃśī identity through the incorporation of Hindu rituals, caste, festivals, and deities. The socioreligious reformer Śaṅkaradeva's conception of *ekaśaraṇa dharma* (taking refuge in one god)[95] received great patronage under Koch king Naranarayan in the sixteenth century. This concept of *ekaśaraṇa dharma* espoused an egalitarian form of religion, where people from all ranks of the caste system would be welcome to take part in devotional practices, and each person, irrespective of caste and gender had equal right to worship as a means of social reform associated with this form of a religious and spiritual paradigm. The appeal of the devotional form of worship in the form of *kīrtana* (*lit*. devotional singing) is profound in this community. Some of the Tukkhā singers identify themselves as Vaiṣṇava or *Baiṣtam Gōsāī* or *Baiṣtam Baudiā*. In local Rājbaṃśī lexicon, such a person (*Bāudia*) is one who is carefree and roams on his own, indifferent to the material world. This is reminiscent of the word Bāul or Sanskrit word *vātūla*, which is usually interpreted as a mad, or a madcap, or a freewheeling minstrel. The *Bāudia Gōsāīs* and some of the Tukkhā singers (self admittedly) engage in secret practice or *sādhana* (worship of the doctrine of *sahaja* or 'co-emergent'[96]) much like the Bāuls, the wandering mystic minstrels of West Bengal and Bangladesh.[97] The existence of an actual place called Bhuskardanga (meaning the land of Bhusuku) in Maynaguri region (allegedly named after Bhusukupā) provides further ground for investigating the influence and presence of the Buddhist Sahajiyā *Siddhas* in this region.[98] The connection with the Vaiṣṇavas

[95] See Sarma 1966, Neog 1985, Cantlie 1984 and Barman 1999.
[96] Refer to Chapter 4 for a discussion on the concept of *sahaja.*
[97] Chapter 4 did a comparative study between Bāul and Tukkhā songs.
[98] I gathered this information during my fieldwork in the region of Bhuskardanga.

seems more significant in comparison as the singers identify themselves as Vaiṣṇava. Vaiṣṇava Tantric practice is also prevalent among the singers of the Tukkhā songs.

Divinities and Deities of the Rājbaṃśīs

Oral-historical narratives can help us understand how people of a community have experienced history, which may not be explained sufficiently by the gaps in traditional documented historical sources. This can be understood by studying some of the cultural practices and the associated oral/literary resources of a community. The Rājbaṃśī imagination has been shaped by a largely rural agrarian lifestyle. There are numerous festivals such as *Biṣuā, Hudum Deō, Baisākhi Āshaṛi, Āmāti, Kṣetlakṣmi Pūjā, Buṛābuṛi, Caṛak*, which are festivals related to agrarian worship. Śiva is one of the principal Gods worshipped by the Rājbaṃśī community. The origins of 'folk' worship of Śiva can be found in the KochRājbaṃśī agrarian community, and this reference can be found in several 'folk' songs, where Śiva is idolized as an agricultural deity (Bhattacharya 1950, 43-46). There are numerous deities that make up the Rājbaṃśī pantheon and some of the principal and most distinctive deities have been discussed in this chapter.

Śiva and his anthropomorphic conception have been at the centre of this 'folk' imagination of religion in several parts of Bengal and her neighbouring states. Acharya (2014, 60-67) notes that the worship of Śiva in the plays of Gambhīrā and Mughal Tamāshā are also very popular in other regions of Bengal and Orissa. Among the agrarian community of the Rājbaṃśīs, the worship of Śiva in the form of a *liṅga* or a *śilā* (sacred stone) has been popular from ancient times.[99] It would be interesting to consider once again, the difference between 'folklore,' according to

[99] This is also the case in the ancient temples of Jalpeśa, Siddheśvara, Bhadreśvara, and Mahā kala within Jalpaiguri district.

which ‘folk’ people are only repeating older textual tradition ‘out of belief and superstition’ and from an ethnological/ anthropological perspective which tries to understand their own logic/emic cosmology, for example, if they chose to worship Śiva as a peasant, it is because it works better with their viewpoint, not because they ‘mix’ together different gods by chance. At the same time, ‘agrarian economy’ is an important reason, but not the only one for them for worshipping deities.

The hagiographic accounts of Matsyendranātha, Gorakṣanātha’s alleged guru in Bengal is celebrated through the songs of Gopīcandra and Maynāmatī, which is a folk treasure of

the Rājbaṃśī community (as discussed in chapter I). There are several gods and goddesses associated with nature worship, harvesting, and tree worship. We can also observe several religious figures symbolizing a relationship of exchange of conceptual worlds and ‘cultural translation’ (Stewart, 2001) between the Hindus and Muslims. The prolonged period of Islamic rule in North Bengal is testament to the existence and continued worship of these deities.

The presence of deities such as Satya Pīr, Pāgal Pīr, Mādār Pīr and Khoyāj Pīr have their origins in the coexistence of Islam and Hinduism, and their literary and cultural influence on each other. As Stewart claims in his book on Satya Pīr,

> His name combines the Sanskrit word for truth, *satya*, and the appellation of a Muslim spiritual guide, “Pīr.” He dresses in a distinctive garb that signals allegiance to both Muslim and Hindu religious sensibilities, reflecting the religious interests of the two communities that populate the Bangla-speaking world…Where the gender issues cluster around the actions of women in men’s roles, the issues of religious morality cluster around the actions of holy men and their devotees. Like the gender complications, religious and moral issues are most eloquently adjudicated in parody, in this case of the generic holy man—the Muslim Pīr or fakīr and the Hindu yogī or renunciant saṃnyāsī in the figure of Satya Pīr. (Stewart 2003, 11).

In the festivals in the Rājbaṃśī community, related to the worship of Satya Pīr, men dress as women and reverse gender roles. During my fieldwork and interviews, I

gathered evidence that the figures of Satya Pīr and Satya Nārāyaṇa (Hindu deity influenced by Satya Pīr) are still worshipped.

Folk gods and goddesses form a very important and intrinsic part of this society. There are several folk beliefs associated with this community, they can be classified into categories such as prohibitory, related to hospitality, rain, farming, birth, marriage, journey, supernatural and spirits, body parts. During the festivals of Tistābuṛi, Dharma Ṭhākur and Hudum Deō, there is a strong performative element associated with animism and nature worship, namely the river Goddess, the God of Sun, and the God of rain. The goddess of snake Viṣahari is also quite popular; she is usually worshipped during marriage ceremonies in order to obtain blessings for the newly wed couple.

Festivals form an integral part of folk life and folk dances, music, plays, folk games, folk art become principal tools of self and at times collective expression. Festivities associated with the worship of Tistābuṛi, Sonārāi, Madankām, Caṛak, marriage festivals, and Satya Pīr worship, have a strong musical and performative element. The singers earn alms, money through singing and performing, which helps them cover costs of organizing the festivals. These songs contain a depiction of daily lives, folk regional gods and goddesses and myriad emotions related to the lives of ordinary people, politics etc. Mantras are extremely important to this community; they serve as a medium of communication for festivities, understanding the regional rural language- gods and goddesses.

An important aspect of folk festivities is their association with nature and agriculture. The Rājbaṃśī community, which is principally agrarian, has a plethora of festivals associated with earth worship, animal sacrifices and chanting *mantras* in Rājbaṃśī lect. The practice of animal sacrifices and the chanting *mantras* in the Rājbaṃśī lect are common. Women and non-Brahmins are allowed to perform such rituals, in contrast to Brahmanical temple context. As evident from my fieldwork, the

different categories of priests in the Rājbaṃśī community are known by names such as *adhikārī*, *deusi* and *ojhā* (*lit*. magico- religious specialists/ ritualists*).* In women-centric religious festivals, the woman primarily responsible for performing rituals is referred to as the *Māṛoāni,* who plays a very important role of the priest, who performs the principal rituals in the worship of the folk goddess, Tistābuṛi. For conducting death-related rituals, the principal person is known as *kīrtaniā (*one who sings *kīrtana*)*.*

The uniqueness of Rājbaṃśī culture is in the way music and religious rituals are intertwined on most occasions. Their culture of performance connects a vast repository of songs, rhymes, ballads, proverbs, riddles, tales etc.

Tistābuṛi

Tista is the main river originating in the Eastern Himalayas, flowing through North Bengal's districts of Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Jalpaiguri. This is essentially a form of worship of the Goddess as an embodiment of the River Tista. This may signify the agrarian rural structure of the Rājbaṃśī community and a way to appease the riverine Goddess for supply of regular water for crops, pisciculture and riverine communication system as well as for preventing the flooding of the banks during monsoon, which has been a characteristic of the river. Ecology has played a major role in shaping the culture of Jalpaiguri district and its surrounding areas.

The Goddess is also remembered by the people to prevent drought, flood, excessive rain and storm. She is also a Goddess of the fertility cult and a protector from diseases like fever, measles and smallpox. Measles and smallpox are termed as '*Tistābuṛir vāhana'* (lit. vehicles of Tistābuṛi) by the well-known *gunīn* (sorcerer) of the

community. During the festival, one has to make five offerings over three days. The festival is also known as Mechenikhelā and Bhedeikhelā in different parts of North Bengal. (Ray 1975,17).

The Rājbaṃśī women visualize the figure of Tistābuṛi as an amalgamation of an old woman (as ancient as the river Tista) with a young and fierce spirit, who inspires poetry and songs composed for the occasion, which celebrates the everflowing, turbulent, voluptuous feminine beauty and vigour of the Tista river.

Gārām or Gārām Ṭhākur

The conception of Gārām represents a unique combination of deities of diverse faiths forming a unified space of worship. It is a deity to whom people make offerings in times of suffering. There is a proverb in the Rājbaṃśī lect:

> *īś Gōsāī gārāmṭhākur gārasthak baṁ cāy sakāl dupur* (Ray PRādhān 209).

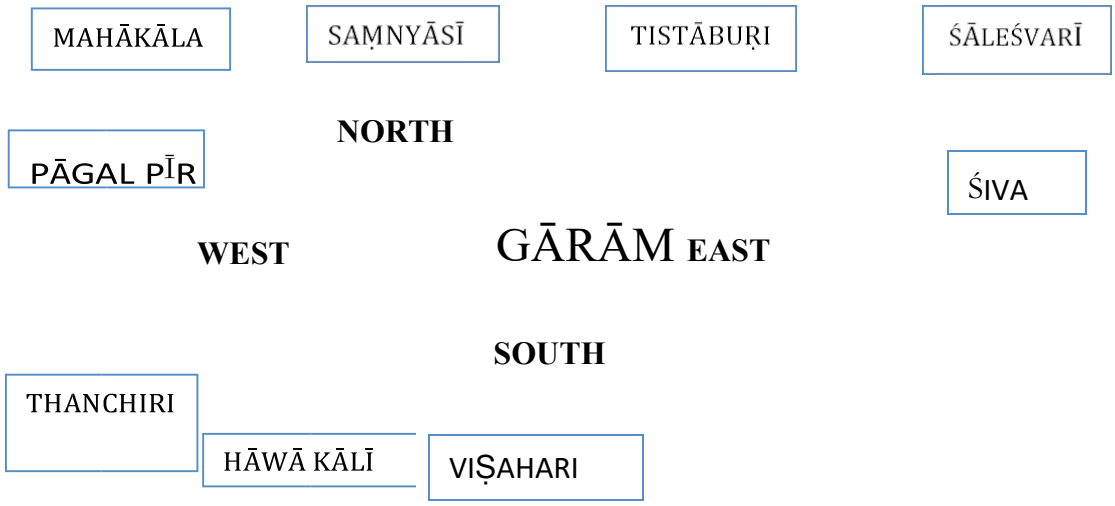
Gārām ṭhākur is the tutelary deity, always protects the householder.

As Roy describes the striking figure of Gārām:

> The god Gārām combines with Tistābuṛi (goddess of river), Haribolā (Vaiṣṇava God), Mādār (Islamic god adopted by the Rājbaṃśī), Saṃnyāsī (Śiva-Śaiva god), Satya Pīr (Islamic god adopted by the Rājbaṃśī), ThānKālī, Hāwā Kali and Bhadra Kālī (Śākta deity). This deity is worshipped on all ceremonial occasions. It is the belief of the Rājbaṃśī villagers that these goddesses can save them from any kind of evil eyes.
> (Roy 2012, 92).

The *thān* (place) of Gārām is a place where many village deities coexist to protect the villagers from various malevolent forces. There exist many such places located in a village for each closely connected neighbourhood termed as *thān* in the Rājbaṃśī lect. In many villages, there is no image of any deity or god, only a few earthen mounds represent the gods and goddesses. The non Brahmin village

priest called *adhikārī* performs the *pūjā*. The deities in the *than* are generally arranged as follows (diagram from Roy, 2012):



Inthe West: Pāgal Pīr

In the East: Śiva

In the North: Mahākala (Rudra: fearsome form of Śaiva deity), Saṃnyāsī (Śaiva deity as a monk), Tistābuṛi (River Goddess), Śaleśvarī (Forest Goddess)

In the South: Thānchiri (Goddess of wealth), Hāwā Kālī (Śākta deity), Śmaśāna Kālī (Goddess at the cremation ground), Viṣahari (Snake God)

Gārām represents confluences of diverse faiths over the centuries building a common ground of worship for the general well-being of the villagers.

Mahākāla/ Śiva

The Rājbaṃśīs believe that Mahākāla is a fearsome incarnation or form of Śiva. The figure of Mahākāla is venerated as an *ādi* (lit. ancient) form of Śiva who is the protector of the common people against nature's adversities and wild animals. Every year on the last Sunday of the month of *bhādra* (mid-August to mid-September) a big fair along with grand worship happens in many places. Śiva is also worshiped as other village deities by the names of Saṃnyāsī, Dhumbābā, Mashān, and Buṛa Thākur.

Rājbaṃśīs believe that wild animals, especially elephants, can cause great damage to people's homes, cattle and crops if they do not worship the Mahākala. As a result, Mahākala is worshiped with great splendor and with various rituals. In the dynastic history of the Koch kingdom, Śiva was one of the most popular deities. Biswa Singha had even traced his descent to Śiva during his crowning. The non- Hindu 'tribes' worshipped Śiva in primordial forms, and allegedly during the reign of Naranarayan, the 'tribal' population were not happy with the performance of vedic rites in the worship of Śiva and demanded that some of their native rituals and customs be followed (Barua 1989 166). It becomes evident that the cult of Śiva and Śaivism was a living religion both among the non- Hindu 'tribal' population of the valley even after the coming of the neo- Vaiṣnava movement of Śankaradeva. Even today there are several ancient temples of Śiva in the area surrounding my fieldwork in North Bengal.

Kālī

Goddess Kālī is worshipped by different names throughout the community and is an extremely important figure in the pantheon of deities, as popular as Śiva. Kālī has numerous names throughout the Rājbaṃśī areas, for example, Hāwā Kālī, Śmaśāna Kālī, Tārā Kālī, Bhadrakālī, Petkāṭi Kālī, Dān Kālī, and Jot Kālī.

Viṣahari

Viṣahari (Snake Goddess) is worshipped as the one who takes away the wrath of poison. The word *viṣa* (*lit*. poison) also implies 'pain' in the Rājbaṃśī lect. Rājbaṃśīs worship Viṣahari for the treatment of snakebite, eye ailments, fever, cold, cough etc. Viṣahari is worshiped in two forms, namely Kani Viṣahari and Gidāli Viṣahari. Kāni Viṣahari is worshiped on the day of the new harvest called *navānna*. Milk, banana, rice, curd, pressed rice, etc. are used as worship materials; songs are

not performed. According to Sharma, the worship of *Kāni* (another name for Bhagavati) Viṣahari is more prevalent on the western banks of the river Tista. *Gidāli* (lit. female singer in Rājbaṃśī lect) Viṣahari is worshiped on the last day of the month of *Śrāvaṇa* (August) and during auspicious occasions such as marriage. This is accompanied by songs performed for Viṣahari (Sharma
2009, 103).

Pāgal Pīr

During the half millennium of Islamic rule of Bengal, the figure of the Pīr or the preacher of Islam has travelled and interacted at different stages and influenced Rājbaṃśī culture in various ways, so much so that an Islamic Pāgal Pīr (*lit.* a mad Pīr) has been integrated in the Gārām Thān alongside many Hindu deities. A rich body of Pīr literature has been written from the 17th century onwards in the form of lyrical narrative poetry, which became a rich part of medieval Bengali literature. In the contemporary socio-religious context, people of all faiths visit shrines (Dargah) of Pīr, pray to overcome several forms of difficulties, and make a promise. Once their wishes are fulfilled, they come back to the shrines and do what they had promised (Roy 2012, 19). There is not enough information regarding the real identity of Pāgal Pīr, a wanderer. In some places, Pāgal Pīr is worshipped as Pagli Pīr by imagining her as a woman. I gathered from locals that it is customary to erect a bamboo pole in the name of the Pāgal Pīr if an animal in the village is afflicted by any form of illness that causes 'abnormal' behavior in them. During the worship of Pāgal Pīr, a group of five or seven people construct a symbol for the mad saint by tying a bunch of jute and a flower *(mandāra)* on a two and a half feet long bamboo stick and visit different houses in the village. Roy describes the ritual and speaks of the chants performed in honour of Pāgal Pīr (Roy 2012, 38.). Once they reach the house all will chant in unison— 'say Allah for the sake of Pāgal Pīr

(‘*Pāgal Pīrer nimaste bolo Allāh’*)—and continue performing various rhymes until the householder gives them alms.

Ritual Healing and Mantras

The Rājbaṃśīs have their own traditional knowledge system of cure and preventive measures inherited orally over the generations against different types of illness. The present area of fieldwork in North Bengal is surrounded by forests, where various kinds of medicinal plants crucial for traditional healing practices are locally grown. In order to fight illnesses and appease nature, Rājbaṃśīs have developed their own system of making herbal medicine and drugs with available natural substances, food items for healing, and *magical* means (exorcism) for healing illnesses.

Common householders and priests use *mantras* occasionally to allay their day-today problems and alleviate illnesses. The *mantras* broadly fall under benevolent and malevolent categories. The benevolent categories include mantras for agriculture ensuring better harvests, for fishing ensuring a good catch, for alleviating diseases, for protection, and for promising love between couples. These mantras are believed to be very effective and powerful. In this process, the benefactor, the *ojhā/gunīn/deusi* may be affected and the popular belief is that demonic evil forces become very upset and inflict harm on them, and as a countermeasure the sorcerer is made to utter a type of *mantra* called *dohan.* The mantras are uttered in a specific rhythm and scale, generally it is uttered loudly towards the beginning and softly towards the end.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed a centenarian called Shilanu Ray. Ray has treated diseases such as paralysis, by preparing medicines from herbs procured from the local

forest and by chanting *mantras* in honour of Viṣahari in Rājbaṃśī lect. He recited one such *mantra*, which according to him would be effective in serving its purpose of treatment, by sending away a spirit responsible for illness:

ai svargak tollām gohili [100]

mance diyā pāō samunde puje hari

khelāō phannār hāt chāṛ pāō

chāṛ mor kuje bhar

kar raṁger

pūja

hastat kar[101]

māo tor gohili buṛi

bāp tor

khoṛā phannār dohāi

Viṣaharir dohāināgijā

nāgijā[112]

phannār dohāi rāo kāṛiā

Biṣaharir dohāi nāgijā

nāgijā

I am sending you to Heaven, while the disease puts a

step on Earth

I have invoked Hari after worshipping the Sea Leave the

hands and the feet of this ailing person!

[100] In Rājbaṃśī lect *gohili* is the disease of paralysis.

[101] *raṁga* means *Aṅga* or the body, and *pm̐ūja* means pus, the poet is asking the Disease of Paralysis. [112] nāgijā nāgijā in Rājbaṃśī means "lege por" in Bengali, which means get to work.

And ride on my hunchback

Take the pus out of the body in your hands Or else your

mother will become an old paralyzed woman

Your father will become crippled

For the sake of ill, for the sake of the Snake Goddess

Get to work!

Leave with a promise for the sake of the ill In

the name of Snake Goddess, get to work!

In the Rājbaṃśī lect, *Viṣa* (pronounced as *Bish*) also refers to pain and by worshipping the Biṣahari (Snake Goddess); metaphorically the poisonous condition of emotional and physical pain can be quelled. Within their society, the prevalence of traditional medicine and treatments with locally procured meat, herbs, stems and leaves are still in practice. These methods have been tried and tested since ages and are intrinsically tied with the essence of local culture. The importance of mantras highlight a confluence of indigenous practices and beliefs, which later came in contact with Hinduism, Buddhist Mantrayānā and Islam in Bengal.

Women's Ritual Participation

According to one of my female interviewees, Rājbaṃśī women play a major role within their community in the field of music. As my interviewee has been observing since her childhood, Bhāwaiyā form of songs is very popular, which expresses the pathos and subjectivity of women's daily life experiences. Those songs eloquently express their sorrow for not being able to meet and stay with their lovers. The songs reflect the emotions of separation and absence and are

performed by women to enunciate their sense of grief. The women singing Bhāwaiyā are cherished and celebrated by the members of the community and society at large. Along with this form, the other major form of music where the women exclusively take part is the festival called Mecheni or Tistābuṛi. As described earlier, only the women worship Tistābuṛi. The festival of Hudum Deō (God of rain) involves a form of dance through which the God of rain is invoked to bring rains ending the spell of drought. The women exclusively perform this ritual and men are debarred from taking part. It signifies a symbolic sexual union of fertility between the masculine and feminine entities as represented by the women who dance and perform rituals and Hudum Deō.

Performance and Ritual in the Village Context

The singers[102] within this community are often referred to as *kīrtaniā* (singer of *kīrtana*), for whom devotional singing can serve various functions. 'Folk' songs form an intrinsic part of the agrarian society, and are intertwined with practices of agriculture, animal rearing, fishing, reaping and harvesting and these themes are often interspersed with devotional themes of paying homage to various gods and goddesses. The two main categories of Tukkhā songs; *dehatattva* and *manaśikṣā* touch upon deeper layers of mystical meaning by explaining the dichotomy between the body and the mind. The intricate theory of *sādhanā* (spiritual practice or a bodily practice) applied by these practitioners is encrypted within the song lyrics, which are performed for a public audience. These practices are focused upon perfecting the state of

[102] My interviewees included singers ranging between newcomers and well-known singers. At times the interviews/ conversations overlapped with their performances, especially when the song lyrics were explained by the interviewees by singing and playing instruments. This resulted in a form of an interdiscursive analysis, between the act of performance, the lyrics and the interviews.

equilibrium between training the body and the mind, which result in attainment of a higher state of a kind of psycho-physiological transformation.

The following section is sourced from a field interview with Tukkhā singers, Kalen Ray & Mana Ray of Dakshin Mouamari, Maynaguri, West Bengal.

Kalen Ray: Dear, the songs that I performed today, I have been singing these songs since the age of ten or twelve. My brother was a singer of songs of Satya Pīr, He was known as *fakir.* Satya Pīr is also linked to *dehatattva śāstra*- how man was made, how man was formed, all this concerns *fakīrī.*

Ranjamrittika: Your Tukkhā songs, can you tell me a little about the religious influence on these songs?

Kalen Ray: My dear, the Tukkhā songs are a medium of expression of the soul; to express the six enemies (*ṣaḍ-ripus*) and the five elements (*pañcabhūtas*). In order to understand the nature of the soul, the mind, you need Tukkhā and *dehatattva.* How does one cross the river of transmigratory existence (*bhāvanadī*) The mind is trying to say that precisely, through the Tukkhā songs.

Ranjamrittika: In that case, can one define *dehatattva* as way of knowing the mind through the body?

Kalen Ray: Yes, to know the mind. This body houses the *ṣaḍ-ripu* and the ten sense faculties (*indriyas*): the songs of *dehattatva* are made up of these elements. The true *sādhu* who can control the six enemies*,* will be able to reach God, I am not able to do it yet. But yes, I am practicing nonetheless. In case I can reach Govinda at least once."

This interview was crucial to understand the link between the world of *dehatattva,* emotions, senses, enemies of the mind and the practice of knowing the body and the nature of the soul, and understanding the importance of orality in the transmission of knowledge on mysticism. Only under the practice of an experienced Guru, one can be initiated into the path of *dehatattva.* However, that esoteric training does not preclude the ability to sing, to perform and to express the nature of the mind through

the songs of Tukkhā to a public audience. Let us read and reflect on the following two songs:

Tukkhā song 27

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Abodh mana re

Injirā pinjirār ghar Ghune kariche

jar ore jar batiś bandar āpane

khasiā paṛe Jarār upar

marāre

Paban kāṣṭher baiṭhāre

Sei nā naukā ṭhekilā bālucare

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Rabadh mana re

Nidhuā pāthāre re

Joṛā baṭabīthi gāch ōṛe āche

Tāte āche joṛā bugilār bāsā

Māchera nā labhe

Uṛāl dẏiā bagā paṛere phānde

Ei nā bagā paṛila re māyār phānde

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Āpanduṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Due to its own fault, the mind lost everything

Who is to blame, after all?

Oh ignorant mind!

The house of Injirā Pinjirā[103]

The termites have eaten through it

The thirty-two ports[104] collapse on their own

Death upon grave illness

The oar made of wind-wood

That boat rests on the sandy shores

Due to its own fault, the mind lost everything

Who is to blame, after all?

Oh ignorant mind!

In an open field on the riverbed

Two banyan trees are entangled

There is the nest of two cranes

Was it not out of greed for the fish that the male crane flew away?

and was trapped in the net of *māyā*[105]

Due to its own fault, the mind lost everything, who is to blame*?*

[103] Refers to *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā*; the two central nerves often seen as two channels flowing vital energy in human body in Hindu and Buddhist systems of Yoga.

[104] This refers to the thirty-two vulnerable points in the body.

[105] The male crane is a metaphor for the individual self-attracted to worldly desires or delusions (*māyā*).

This song sung by an eminent female singer from Jalpaiguṛi, describes our journey in this world of illusions on a symbolic level, and describes how we end up losing 'everything' due to our own faults. It could also imply the inevitable loss of material possessions. Instead of progressing in a path of illumination and clarity, we stumble on our way in a maze of materialistic illusions. Our situation can be compared to a pair of cranes nesting on a tree by the river. As the male crane aims for the bait of the fish, it gets trapped in the net, and nothing is said about the female crane. Similarly, we are trapped in a maze of worldly desires and face a fatal destiny. On a symbolic level, the song is trying to explain if one does not make oneself spiritually ready; he would not be able to resist the worldly desires and delusions. The metaphor of the crane explains the pathos of loss and pain one had to undergo in a mortal existence. The male crane falling into the trap due to the desire of catching a fish in the river is symbolic of human desires and the consequences.

The subjectivity of the female performer in light of *dehatattva* is contextually relevant. She is trying to talk about a sense of consciousness and desire, and the entrapment of materialistic illusions. The performance of this song highlights a form of feminine subjectivity, and agency and interpretation, according to the singer of the song. This sheds light on the agency of the performer, the gender dynamics of agency articulated through a the *ulta* or reverse language. The channels of *Īḍā-piṅgalā*, the thirty two vulnerable points, the boat of wind, death after illness all seem to refer to the loss of the subtle body, which of course is sought after by the yogī within the gross body. Can the mind ever achieve the subtle union it seeks—this seems to be the underlying message of the speaker of the song, because it describes the mind as it gets entrapped in the illusions of this world. Then the final para echoes the images of the one before: the two banyan trees seem to be the parallel- images of the *Īḍā-Piṅgalā* channels. The boat not making it to its destination but getting washed up on the sandy shore is echoed in the male crane not

turning up in the nest (its destination) and getting trapped. *Jarā* and *marā* are reflected in *māyā*.

Performance of Tukkhā

The performance of Tukkhā happens at public gatherings, social occasions such as marriages, large festivals (*melās*) to a diverse group of audience members, tries to convey esoteric theories of *sādhanā* and the blissful exaltation of mystical awareness, while concealing or partially revealing meaning by preserving Tantric secrecy through encoded language. The audience becomes a part of the performance as the songs talk about a religious and philosophic mode of life. Many of the villagers sit and listen. The audience joins the singers/performers by chanting Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's names during the *kirtana* part of the performances or as desired. It is a sense of reiteration of faith in a seamless flow of ecstasy where the performers and the audience unite.

Tukkhā creates a space and atmosphere of emotional and spiritual connection between the practitioners/performers as well as the audience. The songs are performed in many Vaiṣnava devotional sessions as well as other auspicious occasions organized in the Guru's house or *āśramas*. The disciples of the *āśramas* congregate in order to celebrate and occasionally the performance may continue throughout the night. During the winter months, Tukkhā competitive performances are organized for entertainment. The winning teams are awarded medals and prizes. The mode of competition is called *Guru Śiṣyar Dārā*. The team, which arrives earlier, is called the Guru and the team reaching later would be called *Śiṣya*. The team of the *Śiṣya* or disciples will pose a question to the other team comprising the Guru through the medium of a song and the other team has to respond. This process

will continue until one of the teams is incapable of answering the questions and a final winner emerges.[106]

There is a sense of communion where the duality between performers and the spectators is obliterated. As a part of the *sādhanā* and performative practice of Tukkhā, the individual of the community enters into the ideal world of *manaśikṣā* – while perpetuating a practice of training of the mind, preserving the subversiveness of the content in the elusive language, and at the same time inviting people in the act of meaning-making.

Within the Rājbaṃśī community, through performances, didactic information surrounding indigenous knowledge systems through the medium of mythical tales,proverbs, songs, riddles, and plays is communicated directly to packed audiences at feasts and festivals. Interpretation can happen simultaneously or in smaller, more exclusive social circles, *āśramas or ākhāḍās,* which are centres of worship and sites of devotional practices of singing and ritual performance. The houses where Tukkhā performances occur usually have a courtyard with living rooms surrounding the courtyard. The audience consists of all age groups. The dialogic form of performance has evolved in course of time alternating between poetic recitals, audience response and performative acts. Public meeting grounds for worship are quite common, and it is democratic in nature as people of all castes and creeds can assemble for performances, ritual activities or festivals. As was evident from my fieldwork, the Vaiṣnava influence is still very profound on the community, as references to Govinda, Kṛṣṇa were made by the performers, and the existence of Hari Mandirs and the Tulasī plant in the courtyards, demonstrated the religious underpinnings. The influence of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityānanda (cf. Chapter

[106] Refer to *k h y a p ār g ān* in this volume and to Tukkhā song no. 35 in particular for an example of this form of a duel known as *Guru Śiṣyar Dārā.*

II) is evident in the form of devotional singing and *kīrtana* that are performed on various public or private occasions. Majority of the persons interviewed were embodying the *grihī* (householder) side of a Vaiṣṇava, while they worked as farmers or engaged in other rural occupations during the day and returned home in the evening for musical and spiritual practice.

According to Ramanujan (1994),

> Oral traditions of every kind produce texts. "Cultural performances" (Singer 1972:47) of every sort, whether they are written or oral acts of composition, whether they are plays or weddings, rituals or games, contain texts. Every cultural performance not only creates and carries texts, it is a text.

As Ramanujan has emphasized in his influential work on folklore, texts are crucial in a network of intertextuality in a culture continuum. These orally transmitted texts undergo endless renditions, as the language also changes, which is comparable to the numerous retellings of the epic Ramayana. The written and the oral exist in interchangeable frameworks of 'fixed' and 'fluid.' The retellings and new interpretations help in contemporizing the songs to an evolving audience, where 'culture' is under transition due to dominant forces of urbanization, globalization and a changing idea of the public sphere.[107] In the case of the Tukkhā, the language of the songs is changing with inclusion of modern words (cf. song 21) and encroachment of Bengali on Rājbaṃśī.

[107] See Jürgen Habermas' The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962). In this case literature (the songs) and culture become objects of translating individual experience (devotional singing) into public understanding and awareness, which also in the Habermasian sense is directed against cultural submission to dominant machines of popular culture (bourgeois public sphere) in the smaller towns of India. The production and circulations of these 'folk' songs are not dictated by the entertainment channels propagated by mainstream media, through the television or the Internet, which doesn't allow the possibility of taking part and talking back. The 'public sphere' of the performance of Tukkhā songs does not exclude anyone based on their social or religious standing.

Life- Cycle Rituals of the Rājbaṃśīs

The rituals followed during birth, death, marriage, and those related to ecological preservation are important features of this community's socio-cultural life and proverbs, riddles, ballads and songs still play an important role in these events. According to Barma, a deep sociocultural investment in a primarily lyrical form has made Bhāwaiyā, an eminent folk form of music of this community alongside Tukkhā, a mirror for the lived realities of the people of North Bengal. He emphasizes the matriarchal ritual origins of the Rājbaṃśī community. He describes that within the origins of Bhāwaiyā and Hudum Deō festivals (where women dance naked and offer homage to the God of rain), women played the most important role in the acts of worship and performance of rituals. As attested by my own fieldwork and according to Barma, female centric folk music and folk rituals is a distinctive feature of the Rājbaṃśī community.[108]

As a part of birth rituals, the first rice (*annaprāśana*) ceremony usually happens when the baby reaches seven or eight months. During the ceremony the maternal relatives of the child (mainly the maternal uncle, grandmother, grandfather, and maternal aunt) are invited. The maternal uncle performs all the major ceremonial rites, most importantly feeding the baby a morsel of rice for the first time.

One of the interviewees, Surabala, says:

> When the child cries we sing a lullaby to make the baby sleep:
> O sleep fairy please do come, my baby will sleep O sleep fairy
> please do come, my grandchild will sleep

According to my interviewee, Goddess *Ṣāital* is worshipped for many reasons, but childbirth is the principal one. According to another interviewee, a child was born

[108] https://www.sahapedia.org/conversation-dr-sukhbilas-barma-Bhāwaiyā-songs-north-bengal, Last retrieved on August 10, 2021.

after offering sincere prayers to the Goddess *Ṣāital* but was suffering from other illnesses; owing to which they organized a worship seeking the Goddess' benevolence. During such a ceremony, women carry on singing throughout the night.

My interviewees informed me that marriage rituals have changed over time, though in few places some of the old customs are still followed. One example of this kind of marriage is *phul biā*, where there is no dowry involved. He describes the practice widows remarrying existed as a liberal means of social reality in Rājbaṃśī society long before the Widow Remarriage Act was introduced by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar in Hindu society. According to Ray, my interviewee:

> Just observe, how liberal we used to be as a society and community! This ritual is called *Jalchitā* or *Pānichitā Biāo*. This form still exists. A married woman who has become a widow can keep a younger/older man (known as *Dānguā*) and stay with him as his wife. The man takes care of the agriculture and other household chores. Society also sanctions this. We have always been so liberal.

In Rājbaṃśī community, it is mandatory for a daughter's marriage to be preceded by songs and worship of the Snake Goddess Viṣahari. There are two types; one may perform a short three-hour ritual or the event may continue for three days along with the performance of songs. The marriage cannot happen without the *pūjā* and the songs. Ray informs me that during his daughter's marriage, he will have to do the same. According to him, in their society, songs and the worship of the Goddess Viṣahari are intertwined.

From my field interviews, I have gathered that in the villages the *pañca* (*lit.* five; elders) are responsible for protecting the value system of the Rājbaṃśī society. The senior members of the village qualify as a *pañca* member in order to decide on matters of marriage, death, and other important societal issues. The only prerequisite

is that they are meant to be taking decisions regarding villagers to whom they are not related by blood. As per my field survey and Sanyal's

observations, after death, the corpse is laid in front of a holy basil (Tulasī) plant or in the courtyard of a temple (Sanyal 1965: 118).

Once the harvesting is over, the paddy is carried and stacked inside the grain store of the house, a *pūjā* is performed called *nayākhāwā*. Everyone in the community celebrates their jubilance and happiness by inviting people and organizing feasts. The village community entertains by organizing musical soiree and community Tukkhā performances begin during this time. When the farmers go to the market to sell their produce of rice, another *pūjā* is performed.

During the *nayākhāwā* or *navānna* (*lit.* new rice), the festival of rice harvesting Tukkhā performances take place. Rājbaṃśīs have an intrinsic bond of care and fondness with the environment and even worship dogs, jackals, and birds. According to the interviewees, they are deeply connected to nature and animal worship, which forms a distinctive part of their lifestyle.

Musical Instruments in Rājbaṃśī Social life

The musical instruments such as *ḍhol, sarindā koṛkhā, bom, tepā* or *sānāi* are integral parts of Rājbaṃśī social events such as marriage, various *pūjās* and customs.

The *ḍhol* (drum) is made of mango wood, and is played primarily during pūjā ceremonies, marriages and as an accompaniment to the songs. When the groom's party goes for the marriage to the bride's house and when they leave with the bride after the marriage *ḍhol* is played; this is a key musical instrument on such an occasion. A *koṛkhā* is made of mango wood and the sticks are made of bamboo. This is generally played as an accompaniment to the *ḍhol* during marriages. The

instrument is also played during *bāṃskhelā* (a traditional ritual involving bamboo sticks) and during *Gārām pūjā.* The *bom and* the *tepā* / *sānai* are also played during marriages, the rice ceremony alongside the *ḍhol* and *koṛkhā.*

A single stringed instrument known as *Yugijantra* or the Yogi's lyre has become largely obsolete. I happened to interview the last remaining expert who would play this instrument and used it to perform songs. I was informed by my interviewee, that he was the only person in that area who could make and play the Yugijantra in the entire Rājbaṃśī community of North Bengal.

After he passed away, the only remaining singer (who had trained under the expert who passed away) informed me that no one in the community can play this instrument currently. She uses the *Yugijantra* to perform a Jugi song (only one surviving song that is known to her community of singers) on Maynāmatī and Gopīcandra (cf. this song is discussed in chapter II).

The *ḍhol* is played during all *pūjā* ceremonies like Kālī pūjā, Durgā pūjā, Mahākala pūjā etc. There are different rhythms to be played as per the time of the day, whether morning or evening and depending upon the ceremonial occasions.

Through my field recordings, it was observed that there are different rhythms for *pūjā*, e.g., a specific rhythm is played during the performance of an *āratī* (lustration). A specific rhythm is played when the bride is leaving her home with the groom after marriage.

As observed through my fieldwork, the younger generations are not necessarily learning to play these instruments due to a change in taste, encroachment of globalization and the commercial popular culture that is posing to be a challenge to these 'folk' traditions in the race for survival in the villages. As a result, the training and induction of individuals to learn these arts forms is rapidly dwindling.

This chapter tried to encapsulate a part of the socio-cultural life of the Rājbaṃśī community, by tracing its past and connecting it to its present day social life. The community evolved through the ages, as they tried to form a collective consciousness centred around a community identity with common religious, literary, artistic traditions, which has been continuously subjected to changing socio-political and cultural climates. In course of time, and in the process of shifting identities, this community has tried to define its own autonomous identity, in between the origin theories of race, the nationalist movement, under the strong influence of Hinduization (Prodhani 2012), it has still retained its own autonomous literary and cultural identity through the heart of its textual repositories, performance traditions as well as the indigenous elements related to the sociocultural rituals and customs.

This chapter tried to explore the question of a present Rājbaṃśī identity, which is changing through an evolving cultural and social reality.

The practices and identity of the modern Rājbaṃśī community have been shaped by their unique tradition, including oral tradition, ritual practices, influence of religious reformers, nationalistic movements, their political positioning, being subjected to cultural and political and marginalization. The performances, the cultivation festivals, the indigenous knowledge systems and respect for animal life, the role of women and gender fluidity, express a very pragmatic village life, and yet a deep philosophical consciousness of the precariousness of human condition.

The esoteric texts produced by the individuals of this community have been memorized and circulated through oral and aural repetition, and they uphold prime philosophical secrets of their ritual lives even today.

Chapter IV

Lineages, Transmissions and Legacies: A Comparative Analysis of Devotional Songs of Bengal- Tukkhā, Caryāgīti, and Bāul-Fakir Songs

This chapter makes a diachronic comparative analysis of the songs of the *Caryāgīti,* the Tukkhā and Bāul-Fakir songs. These songs have been influenced by the esoteric devotional traditions such as the Buddhist Sahajayāna, Śaiva, Nāth, Sākta and Vaiṣṇava traditions of north-eastern India. The Buddhist *Caryāg*(8th*īti* to 12th century)*,*a collection of mystical songs of realization, was 'discovered' by Dr. Haraprasad Shastri, in a palm-leaf manuscript in the royal Nepalese archive in 1907, which was published in 1916 under the title of *Caryācaryaviniścaya* and contained forty-six songs and a missing fragment, preserved in Tibetan translations. The language of the *Caryāg īti* has beenamatter of scholarly debate sincea long time and this is addressed later in a sub-section of this paper. In order to locate esoteric songs of the Tukkhā, in light of the growth and development of the yogic and Tantric philosophy within the Rājbaṃśī community in the broader context of North Eastern India, especially in the regions of Bengal, Bihar, Assam and even in parts of Nepal and Bangladesh, it is interesting to observe the similarity of themes between the *Caryāgīti*, the Bāul- Fakir and Tukkhā songs. As discussed in Chapter I, there has been a noticeable confluence of the schools of Sahajayāna, pre and post Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, and Nāth philosophy in the making of these songs. Eastern India, especially Assam and North Bengal belonging to the erstwhile Pragjyotisha kingdom was a seat of Tantric Vajrayāna Buddhists, whose doctrine and practices thrived greatly during the Pala empire in Bengal.[109] In spite of the many differences in these traditions, the expansive time period in between, and the historical and

[109] Mahāyāna Buddhism was thriving in north-eastern India through a netwok of mystics known as *siddha*s or *mahāsiddha*s and heterodox practices (White 1996, Davidson 2004, Barua 2013), as well as through Buddhist centres of learning in Nalanda and Somapura in Bihar and Paharpur.

political shifts, there are several factors that have brought comparable dimensions in my studies, which include the doctrine of secrecy, the guru- śiṣya lineage, common conceptual metaphors and symbolism written in a coded language (*sandhyā bhāṣā*- though contemporary scholars do not usually use this term).

The aim of this diachronic analysis is to show the similarity of themes, metaphorical concepts, and to bring to light the Buddhist past of North Bengal, particularly in the area of my fieldwork. As we have seen, throughout the thesis, this area has been a ground of religious exchange, dialogue, interactions, frictions and synthesis. The idea of voidist mysticism or *sunyabād* of Sahajiyā Buddhists as well as the Dharma cult has managed to stay alive through the Tukkhā songs (e.g. song 69, 43). A large gap exists in the representation of Rājbaṃśī esoteric literature in the studies of Tantra in northeastern India and its possible links with the *Caryāg*. My *īti* thesis puts forward the idea that not only Bengali but also Rājbaṃśī had an eminent role to play in the transmission of Tantric doctrines and practices from the time of the Pālā empire in Bengal.

It is important to discuss certain developments associated with the history of Tantric Buddhism in Bengal, before we begin to discuss our literature.

A Ground of Religious Synthesis

While studying the *Caryāg, īti* we will be able to notice a synthesis between Hindu and Buddhist schools of thought, and as we say this, we have to keep in mind the period of composition of the *Caryāg* which various *īti,* scholars have argued to be between 8th and 12th centuries (Kvaerne 1986, 7). The Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna and Sahajayāna sects were esoteric offshoots of Tantric Mantrayāna Buddhism, which grew out of Mahayāna Buddhism (Dasgupta 1946, 13-17). The Sahajayāna school of thought advocated that the

most natural and easy path could be attained through the propitiation of man's most natural, spontaneous, 'inborn' propensities, beyond observance of ritualistic paraphernalia, and thus came to be known as the *sahaja* or Sahajayāna (Mishra 1991, 83).

Davidson in his study on the social and political dimensions of the rise of Tantric Buddhism in India, argues that the rise of esoteric Buddhism in medieval India was a result of working of complex matrix of medieval forces, which had a structural and ideological resemblance with medieval Indian feudalism. He distinguishes between two kinds of Buddhist sociologies of Knowledge, and two distinguishable esoteric Buddhist communities namely; "institutional esotericism" and the noninstitutional anarchic domain of the Perfected (*siddha*), those sometimes scruffy, longhaired denizens of the margins of the Indian social institutions (Davidson 2002: 114-16). Wedemeyer, while talking about antinomian Buddhist Tantric traditions, offers a different perspective and challenges Davidson by saying that these traditions were not in the Bakhtinian carnivalesque sense, an inversion of existing social strata (dualistic esotericism) by another (non-dualistic esotericism), but rather it was the authoritative counter-discourses merely replacing and inverting that which it presupposes through its rejection (Wedemeyer 2013, 188-189). Gellner talks about a reversal of institutional hierarchy while talking about Newar Buddhism (Gellner 2009, 258-260), where the power of performance of the Tantric *cacā* songs was invested solely in the high caste Vajrācāryas (who were monks, householders and priests at the same time). Interestingly, an important link exists between the *īti* *Caryāg* and the *cacā* songs still performed in Nepal by the Vajrācāryās as an integral part of the Tantric rituals of Newār Buddhism deriving its lineage from Vajrayāna (Widdes 2004, 7–41). Kitada, in in his recent study on

the *cacā* songs, traces how the tradition *īti* and *Vajragīti* of *Caryāg*is kept alive through verse and music, by the performance of *cacā* songs or the *cacāīti* titled *Naba Caryāpad* in 2017 that had been collected by nṛitya or dance in Nepal (K i t a d a 2 0 1 2 , 1 9 4) . Syed published a collection comprising a new set of *Caryāg*

Shashibhushan Dasgupta, Jagannath Upadhyaya and Rahul Sankrityayan.

Thus, we have to be cautious while mapping the context and sociology of Indian esoteric Buddhism before drawing any generic conclusions about the representations of Tantric traditions in a heterogeneous climate.

Husain in her study (one of the few detailed accounts of the everyday life in the Pāla dynasty), states that the total collection of images and epigraphs received from the Pāla period depict the influence of Puranic culture on the people, which was mostly limited to the elite and educated classes (Husain 1968, 101). Brahmins were still placed at the head of Aryan social hierarchy and the Buddhist kings did not disown or strike down Brahminical caste divisions. Mojumdar discusses the plight of the lower castes such as the *asmalegrahis, kudavas, candālas, bārudāsa, carmakatas, ghattajibis, mallas*, who were known as *adhamasamkara* or *antyaja/mleccha* (lower among the hybrids placed among the lowest stratum or further down) were subject to grinding poverty and institutionalized discrimination in several spheres (Mojumder 1973, 66). We may not be able to ascertain the castes of the *mahasiddhas*- but they did write about plight and everyday experiences of the lower castes (*Ḍom, Caṇḍāla, sabara*), and the professions like fishermen, farmers, weavers, boatmen, which is expressed in the verses of the *Caryāg*(No. *īti*

8, 10, 15, 19, 28, 38, 49 50).

R.C. Majumdar discusses how Buddhism had attained a stage in Bengal where its assimilation by Śāktism was an easy matter and the idea of the Buddha had been dispensed both in his *laukika* (worldly) and *lokottara* (supra-worldly) forms (Majumdar 1943, 413). Bhattacharya's treatise on the History of Śākta Religion, discusses the exchange between Hindu and Buddhist Tantric and Kaula cults and with the

identification of *prajñā* and *upāya* with the female and male principles respectively, the idea of Śakti and Śiva was established in the Buddhist Tantras. According to him, this kind of exchange probably led to the growth of the Nātha and Sahajiyā cults of the following centuries (Bhattacharya 1973, 122). However, it is difficult to ascertain how these currents of thoughts flowed into the later centuries as the period is characterized by major gaps, especially after the near obliteration of Buddhism during the Sena age. As Husain states, according to evidence furnished by finds from Buddhist vihāras such as Pāhārpur, Mahāsthangarh, Maynāmati and Nālandā, the worship of Śiva (temples consecrated for Śiva and Caṇḍī), Durgā, Suryā, Visnu, Brahma, Ganesa were prevalent (Husain 1968, 193-94). My research findings have also brought to light the existence of Maynāguri, which has clear links to both the Dharma Cult and Nāth Cult, and this shows the Buddhist past of this region.

This goes on to show the coexistence of both the religions. Through a critical study of the literature and philosophy of folklore (especially because our starting point is that of an almost pre-aryanized Bengal), we can merely attempt to reconstruct the past through the various residual systems of thought that have survived through the channels of these orally passed down songs.

Sahaja* and *Sahajayāna

Sahaja literally means, "born (*-ja*) together with (*saha-*) (Kvaerne 1986, 61). Different scholars have translated the term *sahaja* variously over the years and some

usual meanings are ‘co- emergent’, ‘innate’, ‘inborn’, ‘easy’ ‘equilibrium’, ‘Innate (Bliss)’ and ‘simultaneously risen.[110]’ Jackson uses the word ‘innate’ as a translation, and according to him, it seems to capture the best sense it has for Saraha, Kāṇha and Tilopā in his translations of their dohās,

This idea will be demonstrated as we study some of the selected songs through the course of this paper. While elucidating on the ‘subjective’ concept of *sahaja,* Kværne states how it refers to the a “simultaneously–arisen” state and asserts that there is no conflict with Guenther’s definition of co-emergence’ of two modes of being (Guenther 1973, 5, 46) for in the ultimate state of Absolute Truth, transcendence and immanence indivisibly blend yet remain distinct, neither Saṃsāra nor Nirvāṇa are annulled, the reality of both (even if it is relative) is affirmed (Kvaerne 1986: 62). Kvaerne states that this state of *sahaja* can be classified both as an ontological (nature of the world, which can be experienced) and a psychological category, (a fleeting feeling, which obtains a permanent condition), which are not mutually contradictory but are parts of the same reality. He further calls *sahaja* a “state of mind” where the mind is being used in the Tantric sense of *citta/bodhicitta*, a key concept in both Mahayāna and Tantric Buddhism, or an Absolute, or natural state of consciousness is reached, which is equivalent to the *sahaja* state of being (Kvaerne 1986, 62-63). In another essay, he says:

> For the moment I shall limit myself to saying that I believe that “simultaneously- arisen” or the like is the most suitable translation, and (anticipating my conclusions) that the term sahaja is basically connected with the Tantric ritual of consecration where it refers to the relation between the ultimate and the preliminary Joys. (Kvaerne 1975, 88-135)

[110] “Coemergence” (Guenther 1969), “Equilibrium” (Sen 1960) “Co-emergent, Inborn” (Mathes 2015) “the Innate/l’inne,” (Shahidullah 1928, Dasgupta 1976, and Snellgrove 1954); “Simultaneously-arisen,” (Kvaerne 1975); “Easy” (Dimock 1966) “Innate Bliss” (Gellner 1992).

His analysis is agreeable insofar as it represents a paradoxical state of duality, which has to be transcended in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a state of non- duality.

In modern Bengali, *sahaja* implies "easy" or "effortless" and as Openshaw suggests *sahaja* constitutes an ontological as well as psychological category with an emphasis on realization more than ritual or scholarship (Openshaw, 2002, 27).

In his essay on the nature of *sahaja,* Mathes also uses the term 'co-emergent' or 'inborn' to describe *sahaja,* as a state of co-existence where the ultimate exists in a world of relative truth (Mathes 2015, 20-21). He insists on using Advayavajra's designation, the "*sahaja* tradition (*sahajāmnāya*)", (which he mentions in his commentary on Saraha's *Dohākoṣa*) instead of using Bagchi's designation of Sahajayāna (Bagchi 1939, 27).

Mathes emphasizes that the essential means to liberation in this path is only possible through access to the 'co-emergent' nature of the mind with the guidance of the guru. He goes on to explain Advayavajra's commentary on Saraha's last verse of criticizing the Buddhists (*Dohākoṣa* 13), in which Saraha claims that one cannot cultivate nirvāṇa after having neglected the co-emergent[41]. If we consider the philosophical context of the songs and religious context of Sahajayāna, *sahaja* brings out the essence of co-emergence and co-existence of opposing qualities in order to arrive at a destination where all the dualities dissolve.

Sahaja **and the Body**

The emphasis on realization and practice of non-duality and pure ecstasy through the physical body – what is also known as *dehatattva* in Bāul-Fakir tradition, is inherently present in the inter-related yogic Tantric practices of Tukkhā, Sahajiyā,

Nāth and Kaula or Kāpālika traditions. Davidson observes how the BuddhistKāpālika connection is more complex than a simple process of religious imitation and textual

appropriation and that the Buddhist tantras were heavily influenced by Kāpālika and other Śaiva movements, but the influence was apparently mutual(Davidson 2002, 218).

The *Caryāgīti* have links to the Kaula Tantric heritage. Matsyendranātha, the mythical founder of the Kaula tradition, (also referred to as Macchendra, Macchenda or Macchindra) is identified by some as Lui Pā, and is credited with the composition of a number of *Caryāgīti* (Banerji 1978, 65*).* According to the 11th century text *Kaulajñāna Nirnaya* (attributed to the mahasiddha Matsyendranāth of the Nāth school)*,* Matsyendranāth belonged to the Siddha or Siddhāmṛta sect, primarily connected to Yogini-Kaula, the chief seat of which was Kāmarupa (Majumdar 1943, 344).

Although the word *kula* in Brahmanical Tantra is often synonymous with Śakti, it is undoubtedly related here to the five *kulas* of the Buddhist Tantras, representing the *pañcatathāgata* or the five Buddhas and the word *sahaja* is equated with Vajra, to be attained by vajra-yoga points towards the admixture of Buddhist Tāntric ideas and practices with Brāhmanical Tantra (Majumdar 1943, 344).

In *Caryāpada* 10 composed by Kāhṇapā, he refers to himself as Kāhṇu *Kāpāli* or Kāṇha the Kāpālika (Rāga Deśākha):

Nagara bāhire re ḍombi tohori kuṛiā choi
choi jāiso bāmhana nāṛiā ālo ḍombi tohe
sama kariba ma sānga
nighina kāpāli joi lāṁga

Outside the City, O Dombi, is your hut The
shaven headed Brahmins touch you O
Dombi, I shall unite with you.
I Kanhu, without aversions, a naked Kāpālika and a Yogi.

In this eloquent Caryā, we are introduced to a Ḍombī woman, a woman of Ḍom caste, considered to be a lower caste, who is said to be living outside of the city, which may be compared to living on the margins of society, ostracized by the Brahmins. Kaṇha (Kaṇhu), who hails himself as a Kāpālika, a yogi without aversions or shame, wants to make love to her and unite with her. According to Mojumer (1973, 6), Ḍombī is an allusion to Nairātmā, who cannot be realized by an orthodox Brahmin but resides outside the world of

senses.

In her recent book on Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, Sarbadhikary highlights how the sect of *Sahajiyās* belonging to lowest castes in present day West Bengal, are ostracized against by the Vaiṣṇava community and not regarded as true Vaiṣṇavas because oftheir controversial practices involving sexual liaison (Sarbadhikary 2015, 109110). The *Sahajiyās,* however, have claimed that not only are they true Vaiṣṇavas, but they are also the best kind of Vaiṣṇavas, whose bodies become interiorized spaces for conceptualizing a sacred geography to manifest the pleasures of Vrindavan through specified movement of breath and body-fluids in the corporeal interior (Sarbadhikary 2015, 113).

This finds resonance with my research and fieldwork on the community of Tukkhā singers in North Bengal. While some interviewees claimed that they were Vaiṣṇavas and believed in the spiritual realization of the divine through the mind, song and prayer, others claimed the importance of performing yoga, under the guidance of a guru. There is a strong influence of Vaiṣnavism on the Tukkhā singers, for whom singing is a form of *sādhanā* or worship and their songs are known as *sādhan sangīt*. There appears to be a divide within this community as well, where the individuals who were not involved in such practices ostracized the sects engaging directly in sexual yogic practices. A discussion on the nature of these practices is beyond the scope of the current thesis.

***Saṃdhābhāṣa* / *Saṃdhyābhāṣā*: Language and Symbolism**

The *Caryāgīti* have been composed in a cryptic figurative language, full of metaphors and allegories, which is not meant for the uninitiated person to decode, as in Tantric worship the key is secrecy. Various Bengali scholars have debated the usage of *sāṃdhyā/ sāṃdhābhāṣa*. H.P Shastri was the first to use the term *sāṃdhyābhāṣa* or the "Twilight Language" to refer to the metaphorical language of the *Caryāgīti* (Shastri 1916, 8-9). However, in 1928, both Bhattacharya and Bagchi had discredited this translation, showing that the term is based on a shortened form of the word *sandhāya*, and that the "import of *sandhāya* may be expressed in Sanskrit by the words such as *abhisandhāya, abhipretya, uddiśya*, etc. which can be translated into English by 'meaning,' 'aiming at,' 'having in view,' 'intending,' 'with regard to,' etc." or simply as intentional language (Bagchi 1939, 27, Bhattacharya 1928, 287-296).

Chatterji states that the language of the *Caryāgīti* contains a genuine kind of Western vernacular of Bengal at its basis and it also highlights the strong influence of Śaurasenī Apabhraṃśa in the various regions of India, especially Bengal, (local eastern dialects in Bengal adapted this language by incorporating local idioms and words) as well as occasionally of Sanskrit and the literary Prakrits of the second MIA (Middle Indo-Aryan) stage (Chatterji 1926, 114-115).

Aliva Dakkhi in her recent monograph, refers to the language of the *Caryāgīti* as the proto-form of the NIA northeastern languages of India, a hybrid form of *Abahaṭṭa*, which was an admixture of an evolved form of the Śaurasenī Apabhraṃśa and the lively colloquial form of Prakrit spoken by the common man instead of calling it the proto-form of any particular

north-east Indian language. She discusses how the intermingling of the *Abahaṭṭa* form of the ancient Śaurasenī Apabhraṃśa and the regional vernaculars was made possible by the indiscriminate stance and efforts of the Buddhist *siddhacāryas* to spread the doctrine of Buddhism among all sections of society, who were neither supporters nor propagators of the Brahmanical caste system (Dakshi 2011, 66, 95-99).

Caryāpada 49 (Rāga Mallari) by Bhusukupāda says:

bāja ṇāba pāṛī pãuā khāleṅ
bāhiu adaa baṅgāle [111] *kleśa*
luṛiu āji bhusuku baṅgālī vailī
nia ghariṇī canḍālī lelī

Sailing the boat of thunder through the canal of lotus In
an undivided Bengal, my miseries are robbed
Today Bhusuku has become a Bengali
You have taken a *canḍālī* as your own wife

Shastri decodes *ada or advaya* (non-duality) *baṅgāl* stands for an undivided Bengal, whereas Mojumder uses the word *daṅgāl* (merciless robber) instead of *baṅgāl* in a dual sense to denote non-dual/undivided truth or wisdom, which turns into a robber and robs all miseries of the self. Metaphorically, it stands for the union of the *prajñā (*perfect knowledge of void nature embodied as female) and *upāya* (means of attainment of *Bodhi-citta* embodied as male) into a non-dual state.

[111] *adaa baṅgāle* (Shastri explains this as *advaya* or undivided Bengal).

"*Bhusuku*, you become *Bengali*" implies that Bhusuku, the composer of this song, had surrendered to this *advaya* or non-dual self in Sahajayāna. According to Shastri, *baṅgālī* stands for non-dual truth, and as *advaita* was prevalent in Bengal, both words (advaya and *baṅgālī*) become interchangeable. He says there are three paths of Sahajayāna, namely; *avadhūti,* caṇḍāli and Ḍombī or *baṅgālī.* The union with the Caṇḍālī woman stands for the union with the Nairātmā, and a Unitarian wisdom is produced in his mind, while all ignorance is purged. A Caṇḍāli woman from the Caṇḍāla community, traditionally belonged to the lowest rung of the caste system. In many of the Caryās, we find reference to feminine forces variously referred to as Caṇḍālī, Ḍombī, Śavarī, Yoginī, Nairātmā, Sahaja Sundarī (also found in Bāul songs) and according to Dasgupta (1946, 116) this female figure, often associated with low caste, should not be confused with a real. Rather she is an internal force symbolizing, fundamental vacuity (*śunyatā*) and an entity devoid of essence (*nairātmya*) and the great bliss that resides in the various plexus in the different stages of yogic practice. As in the Hindu Tantras, the union of Śiva (lying in the *Sahasrara*) and Śakti (Kulakuṇḍalinī Śakti lying in the *mūlādhāra cakra*) leads to attainment of perfection of Tantric Yoga. Similarly, in Sahajayāna, the union of the *prajñā* and *upāya* results in the attainment of *Sahaja* bliss.

As Shastri states, the eight songs of Bhusuku contain a total of "three hundred and twenty three words other than the self-references. Of these, thirty-seven are Sanskrit, sixty-eight are in corrupt Sanskrit, and one hundred and eighty-six are in old Bengali and thirty-two in prevalent/colloquial Bangla. Out of the thirty-seven Sanskrit words, *samarasa, sahajānanda* and *viramānanda* are Buddhist terms. The thirty-two Bengali words are undoubtedly present in current usage of the language (Shastri 1916, 23). He talks about how the one hundred and eighty-six words of old Bangla seems to have been in use during the times of *Bhusukupā,* when the language

was new and that some of these ancient/proto Bengali words are still in use but with alternative spellings.

Davidson, in his analysis of the hermeneutics of reception of this Buddhist coded language, says that this polysemic universe of layered meanings allowed the *siddhas* greater agency for religious reception, by challenging institutional fundamentals of existing systems, and turning them on its head:

> Every term, however seemingly insignificant, thereby became implicated in a hierarchical web of symbol systems. The ensuing complexity turned many of the rather pedestrian ritual exercises found in the new scriptures into highly challenging intellectual enterprises..As a tool in the process of domestication, coded language and its analogues became invaluable assets in the architecture of criteria of meaning. It allowed siddhas to turn some of the more difficult language events into soteriological descriptions (Davidson 2002, 262).

Thus, there is something else that haunts words, perhaps some other world or state of mind, a different realm of experience, and constructs a hidden road between mystic and poetic utterance, which connects language and discourse to religious experience.

My translations and interpretations of the *Caryāgīti* have been influenced by Shastri's original edition and glossary of terms of the *Hazār Bacharer Purāna Bāngala Bhāṣay Bouddha Gān o Dohā*, Dasgupta and Mojumder's English translations, and Haq's very recent simplified Bengali translation of the *Caryāgīti* included in Bangladesh's school curriculum. Both Mojumder's and Haq's were influenced by the earlier works on the *Caryāgīti* by Shastri, Bagchi, Sen, Dasgupta, Shahidullah, Bose, Snellgrove and Bharati as well as Munidatta's Sanskrit commentary on the *Caryāgīti*.

Metaphor and Religious Imagination – A Comparative Analysis of *Caryāgīti*,Tukkhā, Bāul and Fakir Songs

While analyzing the content and symbolism of the songs, is it possible to ask if the mystic language reflects the paradoxical nature of esoteric training? Beyond the hidden or 'secret' allegories pertaining to esoteric religious codes and allusions, the symbols depict an enchanting picture of the daily nuances of the rural and contemporary social life, the forms of livelihood, and daily struggles of the common people, which is appealing to the common listener. The initiatory musical *rāga/rāginī*, which feature as a prelude to every *caryā* sheds light on how these songs were intended to be sung or performed (Kværne 1986, 8). Symbolism is used as a literary device in the composition of these songs in the *pada* form. While trying to express the theoretical intent of the songs, the imagery has unknowingly played a very important part and has risen to prominence, which increases the literary appeal of the songs, for example,

Image of Role-Reversal

Caryāpada 33 (Rāga Paṭamañjarī) by Dhendhonpāda:

ṭālata mora ghara nāhi paṛabeṣī
hāṛīta bhāt nãhi niti ābeśī benga
samsara baḍhila jāa duhila dudhu
ki beṇṭe sāmāy balada biāela
gabiā bãjhe
pitā duhie e tinā sãjhe jā so
budhī śodha nibudhī jo so
caura soi sādhī niti niti ṣiālā
ṣihe ṣama jujhā

ḍhenḍhona-pāer gīta birale bujhā.

My hut is on the hilltop without any neighbors.

Although there is no rice in my pot.

Guests frequent my dwelling.

The frog assails the snake

Does the milk, if milked, recede to the teats?

While the bullock bore a calf, the cow is barren.

The pail brims with milk after milkings on three evenings.

One who is wise is a fool.

One who is a thief is a sage.

The fox fights with the lion daily.

The song of Dhendhonpā is rarely understood.

In the above Caryāpada, on a literal level, the poetic persona talks about a solitary abode on a hilltop, presenting a paradoxical imagery; although there is not enough food in reserve, guests keep visiting the house. This could be compared to the picture of a household in contemporary Bengal with meager resources. On a metaphorical level, Mojumder's explanation of the hill stands for the summit of Mount Meru where all the vices of the mind, body and speech are purified. From a reading of the translations of Shastri, Mojumder and Haq, this place is being depicted as a place of non- duality, where worldly delusions have faded away and it is yogi's mound, thus the absence of duality is compared to the absence of neighbours (Mojumder 1973, 36-37). The rice pot without the rice implies the body without the mind, the body is freed from the ills of *avidyā* or Ignorance*;* only complete void or *śūnyatā* remains which stands for utmost meaning. *Nairātmā* or soulless visits his body (house) daily (Mojumder 1973, 71).

When one arrives into this world as a frog or without limbs, in a disembodied form the venom of the snake cannot harm it. With every passing day, as the knowledge of the disembodied world increases, the composed mind attains the highest pleasure in the path of the Vajra — this is compared to the milk returning to the teats, where milk stands for the illuminated mind. The bullock has given birth instead of the cow, whilst the bullock represents the composed neutral mind or *citta,* the heifer can be compared to *Nairātmā* or the Soulless. The transition of this bullock after it transcends worldly affairs, takes places and it becomes the barren cow, almost as if it were a Goddess of Emptiness, who could not bear children but had attained the wisdom of an utmost meaning. Before attaining this wisdom, the mind is immersed in worldly pleasures, and the roles are reversed, the mind is like a fool who acts wise and a thief who acts like a saint. This symbolizes the ignorance of worldly knowledge, speech and the body. That's why when the mind transcends the worldly illusion and reaches a state of complete void. Even the thief becomes honest or attains wisdom, ceases to be the 'other' and turns into a yogi/sage. Finally, the worldly mind enmeshed in the *samsāra* represented by the fox battles with the lures of the illusions and the fear of death, and gradually it is cleansed and attains the strength to tame and subdue the Lion of *sahaja* or supreme Bliss. This poem is based on the allegorical language of contradiction and hence the poetic persona exclaims only a few will be able to understand its meaning.

The above *Caryāpada* 33, is comparable to the following Tukkhā song in terms of the metaphor of role-reversal expressed through a highly cryptic language. The song is on *dehatattva* and tells that the owner of our body is the supreme soul, and that *iḍā, piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* reside along with fourteen thousands channels entangled very closely inside our body. The supreme soul controls our body through these channels

from six *ripus* (enemies) and ten *indriyas* (senses). When these channels try to go in the reverse direction in the body, the supreme soul faces difficulties.

Tukkhā song I

Prelude to the Song

I, Jītendranāth Brajabāsi, belong to the Rājbanśi community and I would like to sing two songs.

The first song is on *dehatattva*.

The owner of our body is the supreme soul. *Iṛā, Pingalā* and *Suṣumnā* reside along with fourteen thousands *nāḍī* (channels/nerves) entangled very closely inside our body. The supreme soul (*p a r a m a t m ā*) controls our body through these channels from six *ripus* (desires) and ten *indriyas* (senses). When these channels try to go in the reverse direction in the body, the supreme soul faces difficulties.

Katalā corer dal dyakh bābājī

Saṃge niyā ḍhukiche yāẏā tinjan mātājī

Āge suna mātājī tintār nām

Iṛā, piṅgalā suṣumnā tin haẏ

Mātājī tinṭār nām

Ēibār mātājī niyā ṭānāṭāni re

Ēibār diśā hārāiche bābājī

Saṃge niẏā ḍhukiche yāyā tinjan mātājī ār

Pratham corṭā māthā ṭān diẏā hāẏ ār

Kām nām dhare corṭā beṛāi kendiyā Uẏāẏ

majā kariche mātājīke dhariche re

Śyaṣe du dauṛ dyaiche heriā

Āsiā bāṛi āche corṭā ulaṭi paṛiā

Look at the bunch of thieves, oh *Father*[112]

They have stepped inside with the three *mothers*

First, hear the names of the three *mothers*

Iṛā, piṅgalā and *suṣumnā*

Are the names of the three *mothers*

There's a tug of war between the *mothers* and the *Father*

And now *Father* has lost his directions

They have stepped inside with the three *mothers*

The first thief tries to pull the head

'Taking the name 'Lust', the thief roams about,

crying' The thief acts mischievous trying to

control the three *mothers*

Finally defeated, the thief runs away

Comes homes and retires on the ground

In this song, we see a very similar thread of thought, as we are introduced to the supreme soul, the three nerves and the metaphor of the thief representing worldly illusions, which tries to control the mind, the soul, and the body through the three main nerves which are intermingled with the fourteen thousand (*iḍā, piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* embodied as the *mātājī*) other nerves. *Mātājī* and *Bābājī* could refer to a vocative address and on a metaphorical level; it could represent the male and female principles respectively. Interestingly for the Buddhist Sahajiyā doctrine, the three main channels are *avadhūtī* (dualistic), Candāli (non-dualism merges into non-dualism) and Dombi or Bangāli (purely non-dualistic in character) (Bose 1930, 141). All female forms are akin to the use of the term *Mātājī* or the mother figure. *Bābājī* could refer to the supreme soul facing this difficult situation. However, the illusions

[112] Bābā and Mātā mean 'Father' and 'Mother.' Mātājī refers to the three major nerves or *nāḍīs*; Iṛā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā (symbolizing the female principle in a yogic universe), and Bābājī refer to the male principle

embodied as the thief fails and resigns in the end. The soul exercises controls over our body through these channels from lustful sensations through the six enemies (*ripu*s), namely desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), pride (*mada*), delusion/ addiction (*moha*), jealousy (*mātsarya*), and ten *indriyas* (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, speech, grasping, walking, excretion and procreation)". On a literal level, there could be an implication of these forces trying to sexually control and tease *mātājī*, the feminine figure. As in the previous *Caryāpada* (33), on attaining this wisdom and freedom from worldly illusions, roles reverse, the wise turns into a fool and the honest turns into a thief. Similarly, in this song, when lust tries to make the central channels go in the reverse direction in the body, the "supreme soul faces difficulties." However, the thief (*Bābājī*) is captured, and the soul returns to the body and supreme knowledge is attained.

Image of the Guru

Tukkhā song 40

Guru tānā nā

Guru tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā āisenā

Ō mui deruṭā kāṭiā āliṭā pātānu re

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā

Ō mui hāṭuā deṅgite chokhiṭā narānure

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā

Ō mui chokhuṭā gutāite jhik khān āulānure

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā Bhāb

dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā.

O Guru! tānā nā[113]

O Guru! tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

I have placed the dyke after breaking the *deru*[114],

O Guru! That is my nature

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

Instead of using my knees to cross the canal,

I tried with my eyes

O Guru! That is my nature, tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love? I have wounded the small bamboo sticks by hitting them with my eyes

O Guru! That is my nature tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

This expressive song talks about the angst of the poet who is trying to find true *bhāva* (pure emotion or love) in return of expressing *bhāva*, however is not able to find true reciprocation. The imagery of the *deru* (fishing equipment) and *āl* (dyke) is trying to portray the process of crop harvesting during the rainy season by farmers. When the field is filled with water, the farmers place the *deru* to catch the fish in the field after

[113] a common melody

[114] Fishing equipment

it is laid out by the *āl.* In this poem, however, the opposite is done as first the deru is broken and then *āl* is placed to catch fish- another imagery of role- reversal.

The poetic persona exclaims that his nature is to make mistakes - as he had used the wrong instruments for the wrong purpose. On his journey to find *bhāva,* he has got afflicted while crossing a canal and has even hurt his eyes. In spite of having inflicted physical penances upon himself, he was not able to reach his desired destination. This allegorical poem mentions that without the spiritual guidance of the Guru, true emotion or bliss (*bhāva)* cannot be understood, and the Guru is the sole link between the cosmic world, the body, and the mind and ultimate path of bliss. Even though the cryptic language is to be chiefly understood by the
practitioners, the evocative poetic language leaves keys for the uninitiated listener to appreciate its poetic value and decipher the metaphors.

In *Caryāpada* 1 (Rāga Paṭmañjari) by Lūipāda, we find the metaphor of tree used to describe the body with five branches, which can denote the five senses or the five *skandhas* of the Buddhists (Haq 2009, 18):

kāā tarubara pañca bi
ḍālacañcala cīe
paiṭho kāla
diṛha karia mahāsuha
parimāṇa lūibhaṇai
guru pucchia jāṇa
saala samāhia kāhi
kariai sukhe dukhete
nicita mariai

eṛi eu chāndaka bāndha

kapāṭer āsasunupākha bhiṛi

lāhu re pāsa bhaṇailui āmhe

jhāne diṭhā dhamaṇa camaṇa

beṇi pānḍi baiṭhā

The body is the greatest tree with five branches.
Darkness of time enters the
restless mind
Strengthen the mind and measure the Great Bliss.
Luipāda says, ask your preceptor and learn from
him. Why must engage in deep meditation
(*samādhi*)?
Joy and sorrow certainly lead to death Avoid the
subjugation of sensual desires and
hopes.Embrace the wings of the Void
Luipāda says, I have seen in my meditation
I have sat on the two stools-inhalation and exhalation

The restless human mind is impacted by the cosmic flow of Time, which enters the mind and brings Bodhi in its train. The mind can experience the *mahāsukha* or Great Bliss only with the guidance of a Guru and when it rids itself from the shackles of the material world Mojumder (1973, 27). The *sahaja* path cannot be reached through drowning oneself in the bliss of meditation while thinking about the joys and sorrows of life. It can be reached by following a path of complete void or *śūnya*, where all the desires fade away. The *sahaja* form can be attained by controlling the two nerves (*Dhamana* and *Camana*) or vessels of the body, by regulating breath and by seeking

refuge in Yoga. *Dhamana* (*pūraka*) and *Camana* (*recaka*) are two kinds of symbolism referring to the act of *prāṇāyāma*, namely inhalation and exhalation. The *bodhicitta* in Tantric Buddhism is to be found in a unified state of complete void (*śūnyatā*) and universal compassion (*karuṇā*).

Image of the 'Middle Path'

In several of the *Caryāg*,*īti* we find the message of reliance on the middle path or middle nerve in *sādhanā*, for example in *Caryāpāda* 5 (Rāga Gurjarī) by Caṭillapāda:

bhaba ṇai gahaṇa gambhīra bege bāhī duyānte
cikhila mājhe na thāhī dhāmārthe cāṭila sāṅkama
gaṛhai pārgāmi loa nibhara tarai phāḍḍia
mohataru pāṭi joṛia ādaa diṛhi ṭāṅgī nibāṇe koria
sāṅkamata caṛile dāhiṇa bāma mā hohī niyaḍḍī
bohi dūra mā jāhī jai tumhe loa he hoiba pārgāmī
pucchatu cāṭila anuttarasāmī

Profound and deep, swiftly flows the river of life. Both
the banks are muddy, fathomless in the middle. Caṭilla
builds a bridge for the cause of Dharma
Those cross the bridge may cross without fear
The tree of illusions is split open and the planks are joined
Nirvana is carved out with a firm Advaya (non-dual) axe
When you climb the bridge, go neither right nor left
Bodhi is within reach, do not go far
Those of you who want to cross
Ask Caṭillapa, the greatest preceptor

In this Caryāpada, we find a beautiful metaphor of the Tantric Buddhist 'middle' path of establishing a balance between the three principal nerves *iḍā, Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumnā* (representing *śūnya, atiśūnya, mahāśūnya*) and embarking on the "middle path" to attain ultimate bliss (Dasgupta 1946, 28). The middle path is a metaphor used by Dasgupta. Here, we are being told about the river of life, and the two mudsplattered embankments, which represent the right and left nerves, *iḍā* (*śūnyatā*) and *Piṅgalā* (*karuṇā),* a quintessential picture of a nervous system in a yogic universe. The middle path leads to Supreme bliss and the Supreme truth, and to aid the journey, Caṭilla, the poet has constructed the bridge of Yoga. Bodhi is very near, there is no need to meander right or left, the passenger can cross the bridge over the cosmic river of existence without any fear. The non-dual axe of knowledge has cut down the tree of *moha* or illusion. The yogi should try to establish a harmony between two aspects of Bodhicitta, viz., *saṃvṛti* and *pāramārthika*; the left (*iḍā*) and the right (*piṅgalā*) are to be avoided to attain Bodhi through the middle nerve (*suṣumnā*) through the process of yoga (Jha 2012, 153). This reemphasizes the nondual idea that one need not go afar or look elsewhere; bodhi lies in the body itself.

Bāul- Fakirs of Bengal

The Bāuls of Eastern India and Bangladesh are mystics or esoteric practitioners *(sādhak*) who sing songs of spiritual devotion. According to Dasgupta, the word Bāul with its Hindi variant Baur may be variously derived; it may be derived from the Sanskrit word *Vātula* (affected by wind-disease, i.e., mad, crazy), or from *Vyākula* (impatiently eager), both these derivations are consistent with the modern sense of the word, which denotes inspired people with an ecstatic eagerness for union with the *maner mānuṣ* or the eternal Beloved- the 'Man of the Heart.' The name Bāulas and its cognate form Āul can very well be associated with the Arabic word Awliya (plural of Wāli, a word originally meaning "near", which is used for

'friend' or 'devotee.') According to Das, in Bāul-Fakir religion a tripartite union of Hindu-Sufi and Buddhist Sahajiyā confluence has taken place. Moreover the influence of Śaivism and Śāktism, Gauḍiya and Sahajiyā Vaiṣnavism has made the Bāul philosophy acquire a very unique character. Thus, in an attempt to compare songs of the Bāul with the *Caryāgīti* and while studying the connected themes and motifs of this literary field, we have to keep in mind the uniqueness of the cultural and historical shifts in this field.[115] As Openshaw mentions, in theory, people of any religion, class, caste, or gender may be Bāul, but in practice almost all are from poor, rural Hindu or Muslim backgrounds (Salomon, 2017: xvii).

The previous Caryāpada 5 is comparable to the following Bāul song:

Bāul Song 1[116]*sei nadira pāre jete bhaya*
ki hāya pāre jāoāra mana karile anā'se
pāra haoā jāya emni se nadi khāni kemne
kātlena tini ki baliba tār bākhāni sei
nadira nonā pāni kothāy tāhāra goṛā āche
theke theke jowārahaya

sei nadara mājhkhānete khāsā ek pula rayeche sei
pulera nich diye bheṭel srota baiche ābāra tāhāra
nīche gahīna pāni naṅgarete thai nā pāydekha saba
najara kare pār haye to gelāma bhāi ābāra tomrā
kehu ḍario nāko pāre jāoār samaya haya khede

[115] See Openshaw (2002, chapter I) for a valuable analysis of how the Bāul identity has been variously constructed by the indigenous and colonial elite, and for illuminating critique of the historical and sociocultural background of the Bāuls, from an anthropological point of view (based on intensive fieldwork).

[116] (Jha 2012, 153).

mominullā bale sei nadi gholā hale tāte to sonā

phale najara kare dekh tāi emani sei begera nadi

gele mānika pāoā jāya

What is the fear of crossing that
river
If you wish you could easily cross
over
How did He create the river
I cannot explain, the river's water is salty
Where is the origin, high tides come and go
periodically Right in the middle there is a beautiful bridge on
the river Below the bridge flow waves of low
tide
And below the waves water is deep, no anchor could reach the
bottomI shall cross over by my own strong belief You all carefully
behold how I have crossed You should not be afraid during crossing
the river Mominullah laments if the river becomes
turbulent
You can cultivate gold if you search intently
The river flows fiercely and you will find precious gems there

We find the image of the river once again, and that of a bridge constructed over it. The poetic voice is urging the traveller to cross the bridge, which is placed right in the 'middle' of a turbulent stream, very similar to the imagery of the Buddhist 'middle path' in Caryāpada 5 discussed above. Bengal's riverine nature is depicted in the imagery of folk songs and poetry, and therefore a direct influence need not be evident.

However, it is interesting to note the common theme of the middle way in the river, compared to the River of Life. The poet urges the traveller to cross the river without any fear and tells him even gold can bloom out of the salty waters of the river, if one has the intent or passion to look for it. We find the mention of "gold" which stands for *śūnyatā* or complete void, which is also to be found in Caryāpada 8, which we will discuss ahead.

Image of the Boat

Tukkhā Song 3

Birkher mule tedhārā nadhī ujān pākhe sot cale

Iman birakha harihar sijjālek[117] *re ki bāde*

Ār sadāi nadhī taraṅga uiṭhe

Dibāniśi duiṭā mānṣi sātār kāṭe

Ō nadhī nā dhare baiṭhā ujān pākhe sot caleche nadhīr Uṭhāchere

Phyapenā

Ār ādhā bujā jhalsā kānā huṭā khuṭār naukā cāndāche

Khuṭā khuṭi nā hay huṭā mārgote āche

Ō sadhu bhāi jāniāō jānis nā

Naukāte chaṛiā dyakho modhyete kānā

At the root of the tree, a three- course river flows upstream

Why has the Creator[118] planted such a tree?

Here the river ebbs and flows

Through day and night, two humans[119] swim in this river

[117] *Sijjālek* implies the act of creation in Rājbaṃśī lect.
[118] Harihar is Śiva and Viṣṇu's combined form, popular in Bengal.
[119] Duiṭā mānuṣ means (for a modern Bengali speaker) 'two persons': but is there a special interpretation in the esoteric context, the male and the female principles (could also symbolize the sperm and egg), are swimming and taking part

The river is so turbulent that the oars prove useless

The river's waves flows upstream creating froth A

half blind man

Is seeking a half-burnt wooden

boat with a hole But that

is not needed, the real

thing lies within

O Brother Sadhu, you know but don't understand

Once you board the boat you will find a hole in the middle

This Tukkhā song can be directly compared with *Caryāpada* 1. Both *kāā Tarubar* in *Caryāpada* 1 and *birokha* in Tukkhā 3 can be translated as a 'tree' representing the body. The human body is like a tree; the three nerves (*iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*) are carrying the force of life through them. There is an eternal flow of waves where the male and female swim together. The river is flowing in the opposite direction and an actual wooden oar cannot control the force. This song is a metaphor for the process of *ujānsādhanā,* or the process of reverse sexual ritual. The *Sādhakā* has to pull his semen upwards in the act, in order to reach the supreme state of bliss (devoid of selfish desires and lust), with the help of his Guru, the *Sādhikā,* who is an emblem of female power. The *Sādhikā* tells the *Sādhakā* (who is acting blind in his ignorance) that the simple object lies in his hand while he is looking for it elsewhere. In this song, the woman's body is the metaphor for a boat and the hole inside it symbolizes the void or *sunya* of the woman's *yoni*[120], which is the source of all creation. Whilst a wooden boat has a hole in its middle, the human body resembling a tree is the real temple of

together in the process of the *sādhanā.* The *sādhikā* tries to enlighten the *sādhakā* by telling him to realize that he does not need a wooden boat to perform his worship/ *sādhanā*, his body is the best boat to perform this. If he tries to rely on a wooden boat, he will only find a hole in the middle.

[120] According to the Tantra, the yoni is the female life producing reproductive organ.

Sādhanā or worship.Perhaps this also hints at the Tantric union of the feminine and masculine force of Śiva (*harihar*) and Śakti .

A direct comparison of Tukkhā song III with Caryāpada 8 by Kambalāmbarapāda (Rāga Devakrī) is also possible:

sone bharitī karuṇā nābī
rūpā thoi nāhika ṭhabī
bāhatu kāmli gaaṇ ubese
gelījāma bahu ui kaise
khunṭī upāṛī mellili kācchī
bāhatu kāmli sadguru
pucchī
māṅgatacaṛhilecaudis
cāhaa keṛuāl nāhi ke ki
bāhabke pāraabām dāhiṇ
cāpī mili mili māṅgābaṭata
milila mahāsuhā saṅga

The boat of compassion is filled with
gold,No space left for keeping silver
Row your boat, Kāmali towards the
sky
How does the past life return?
Uproot the anchor and release the ropes.
Row, O Kāmali, having asked the high-preceptor (Sadguru).Look around the four sides once on the boat

Who can row without oars?

By making the paths to the right and the left.He

found his way to great Happiness

In this song, we find a similar symbol of a wooden boat and its wooden oar. The boat of *karuṇā* (universal compassion) is an image of the mind's beautiful form or beauty of *citta*, which has to be filled with void or *śūnyatā* (ultimate void), which stands for "gold". There is no place for silver or *rupa* (in Bengali), which stands for the form of the material world replete with desires and sorrows. Here the boat refers to the Boat of the mind and to cross the cosmic River of life, one must row on the Boat of Mind, and instead of using the wooden oars one must use the *Guru*'s words of wisdom as oars of counsel. This is directly reminiscent of Tukkhā III. One needs to take the middle path (the Path of the *avadhūtī)* by uniting the Paths to the Left and the Right inthe confluence of Supreme Bliss.

Another similar comparison can be made with Caryāpada 13 (Rāga Kāmod) of Kaṇhapāda:

tiśaraṇa nābī kia aṭhkumārī nia deha

karuṇā śūṇame herī tarittā

bhabajaladhi jima kari māa suiṇā

majha beṇī taraṅgama muniā panca

tathāgata kia keṛuāla bāhaa kāa kāṇhi

la māājāla gandha parasa rasa jaisoṁ

taisoṁ niṅda bihune suiṇā jaiso

ciakaṇṇahāra suṇatamāṅge calila

kāṇha mahasuhasāṅge

By taking three refugees in a boat I destroyed eight

My body is compassion and the inner chambers are empty

Like a daydream, I crossed the cosmic river of existence

Mid-river, I experienced the tempestuos waves

The five '*tathagatas*' became my oars.

Kanhu steers the boat across a wave of illusions.Smell, touch and taste the same

As a sleepless empty dream

The mind is the helmsman on the path of the Great Void

Kanhu travels to unite with Great Bliss.

In this Caryā, the three refugees (*tiśaraṇa)* being referred to are the Buddha, Dharma (teaching) and Saṅgha (monastic order), (Haq 2009, 72). According to Mojumder's explanation and translation (Mojumder 1973, 46) the number eight refers to eight supernatural powers or *bibhūtis* (namely Aṇimā, or the power of becoming small, Lāghima or the power of assuming infinite lightness, Mahimā or the of becoming big, Garimā or the power of becoming heavy, Prāpti or the power of obtaining everything at will, Prakāmya or power of obtaining all things of pleasure at will, Iśitva or the power of supremacy, and Baśitva or the power of bewitching) which are acquired by the body. Haq on the other hand refers to the number eight as representing the *five indriyas* or senses and the Buddhist concepts *skandha-dhātu-āyatana*, which are captured in the body-boat of *Mahasukha,* and as a result a true union of *sunyata* and *karuna* takes place(Haq 2009, 49). The River of illusion of life can only be crossed by the body-boat (reminiscent of Tukkhā 3 body temple), and one must use the five Tathāgatas as oars. In Buddhist tradition, these Tathāgatas stand

for the five deities Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhāva, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi (Haq 2009, 49). If the stream of *Māyā* or illusion is to be crossed, the body-boat consisting of the Five Oars made out of the Five Buddhas will show you the path to Supreme Bliss or *mahasukha*, and one has to discard the five worldly senses instead. In such a state, the feelings relating to the senses appear to be like a sleepless dream, their falsities become exposed. The mind, free of all illusions, leads on the journey, along the empty path of *sunya* to unite with the Great Bliss.

The following Caryā song can be compared to **Bāul Song 1** as well as to **Tukkhā III** through the common boat metaphor discussed above.

Caryāpada 38 (by Sarahapāda, Rāga Bhairavī):

kāa ṇābaḍi khānṭi maṇa
keṛuāl sadgurubaaṇe dhara
patabāl cīa thira kari dharhu
re nāī ana upāe pāra ṇa jāi
nau bāhī naukā ṭāṇaa guṇe
meli mela sahaje jāu ṇa āṇeṁ
bāṭa abhaa khānṭabi balaā
*bhaba ulole*ṁ*biṣaa boliā kula*
lai khara sonte ujāa saraha
*bhaṇai gaaṇe*ṁ*samāa*

The body is a boat, the pure mind is its oar.
Stay at the helm with the instructions of a wise Guru.Keep your
mind still as you hold the helm
There are no other means to reach the shore

The boatman pulls the boat by his own virtue
Unite with the Sahaja,
do not proceed otherwise
The transit is dreadful and pirates are
vigorous
Everything is drowned by the waves.
Following along the bank and sailing against the swift
current
Then suggests Saraha, enter into the sky

In this Caryāpada, the body or the *kāya* is compared to a boat, the mind is the oar and the advice of the Guru is going to help the boat sail. If the body-boat is to sail freely, it has to steer steadily; keeping close to the *sahaja*, only then it will be possible to cross over to the other shore of the worldly river of Life. The path is going to be dangerous with illusory temptations or *moha* of worldly delusions and duality lurks like dacoits on the path. The boat-body has to progress on the path of *sādhanā* upstream, row against the current and follow the middle path of the *avadhūtī* (*suṣumnā*), only then one can enter the sky and attain supreme bliss.

Bāul Song 2[121]

taranga tarī tufāna bhāria ebāra jāo he dhire dhire re
ākābāki karle khābi khābi nadira kule re subātāse
bādāma tule ebāra chālāo tari kale bale ṭip rekha thika
kapikale pālear ḍuri dhare o ḍhila paṛe eki kāle jābe

[121] Collected from Jha 2012, 122.

pātālpure guru jāhāra haya kānḍārī tār tufāne

ḍube nā tario ḍheu kāṭia kara ujāna dhãar ṭhika

rekhe hāl dhare chaya ripuke baśe

rekhe mukhe gangā gangābale

ḍeka gangārupa ekbāra nayana

cheye dekha gopāla kaiche sāṛā nā paão jārā

tārāi jābe ḍube

Sail your boat now slowly because of the impending storm

If you meander instead of going straight you will drown

Raise the sail with the favoring wind and row your boat with inner strength

Aim yourself only on sailing

If you fail you will go straight to Hell

If the skipper of the boat is your Guru, the boat will never capsize even in fierce storm

You sail through the waves keeping control of the oars

Keep control over the six senses, cry out the river's Ganga's name

And behold the ephemeral beauty of the river

Gopal says those who fail to get response from within will drown.

This song tells us about the journey of the boat akin to the human body through a turbulent storm and one has to keep steady and row straight, following the advice of the Guru, which is the most important vehicle to survive the journey and cross over to the shore of bliss. The sailor cannot get distracted and has to control their six senses and keep their mind firm in order to row upstream. The ephemeral beauty of the river of Life cannot distract the sailor on their way. Gopi says, those who cannot heed to the call of Ganga, the sacred river, which is also meant to

symbolize an inner call,will drown.

Image of the Soul Bird

Tukkhā Song IV

Urāng bāirāng kare man mor ponkhiyā re

Aji urāng bāirāng kare man mor uriā

Jābāra cāya kāi āche mor āpanjanā

Ponkhiyār nām bujhāi man mor

Ponkhiyā re ghar khāni bāndhilām

Ponkhiyā mor

Mānik bānser ore uā

Sei ghare banchite nādil mor

Dārun bidhātā man mor ponkhiyāre

Konṭhe hate āsilen ponkhiyā

Mor konbā poinkhārore cāya

Ḍyanā nāi pankhe nāi tora

Kā bā bāpa māẏa

Mana mor ponkhiyā re

My soul bird is impatient to leave me

Today my soul bird is impatient

And wants to fly away, do I have anyone of my own?

I understood the name of my soul bird

I built my home, oh my soul bird My

home is made up of fine bamboo

But I could not stay in my home

That was my fate, oh my soul bird

Where are you from, oh my soul bird?

Neither do you have wings Nor

do you have guardians

You are fascinating!

Oh soul bird, your beautiful eyes weep you

have wings

Nor do you have

guardians You are

fascinating!

Oh soul bird, your beautiful eyes weep.

This Tukkhā song talks about the bird, which is a metaphor for the human soul trapped in the body that is trying to escape. The bird can escape at any time

and has no guardian much like the human soul. Much like the soul trapped inside the body, the human being is not able to remain within the four walls of their house constructed out of bamboo (*mānika bansa* or a special kind of bamboo*).* That was the fate of the poet's worldly existence, which is likened to the soul-bird, which does remain captive. No one knows the origin of the soul, where it came from, or what happens to it in the end. It is like a free bird wandering out, it doesn't have wings or any guardian to guard it; it is on its own. As the soul escapes the body, it is meant to symbolize the death of the physical body, but the mystery surrounding where the soul escapes is still unknown. The poetic persona is overcome with emotion as it identifies with the enchanting spirit animal- the soul bird.

This Tukkhā song in turn is comparable to the following Bāul song by the renowned mystic poet and saint Lālan Fakir.

Bāul Song 3 [122] *pākhi*

kakhana jānia uṛe ẏāya

bada hāoyā

lege khẽ cāya khẽ cāra

āṛā

palodhasea pākhi āra

dẽ ṛābe kise ai

bhābnā bhābchi base

camaka jvarā baiche

gāya bhebe anta nāhi

dekhia kārbā khẽ cā

kebā pākhi āmāra ei

āṅgināya thāki āmāre

majāte cāya

āge ẏadi ẏeto jānā

jaṅgalākabhua poṣ māne

nātabe uhāra prema

kartāmanā lālana phakira kende kay

My bird will fly away any day The cage has been struck with evil wind The perch is broken How will the bird stand on it?

[122] Collected from Ahmed (2006, 478).

I sit and worry always

A fever of fear

engrosses my body

There is no end to my thought

Whom the cage belongs to, who is the bird?

The bird stays in my own courtyard

Wants to overwhelm me

If I had known before

The wilds cannot be tamed, Then, I would not have loved the bird, Says lamenting Lālon

We can observe the poignant essence of these two songs is related. The metaphor of the soul bird, over which we humans have no control, tries to escape and fly away. We are unable to tame it, or make it stay with us. The imagery of a soul bird trapped in a cage comparable to the physical human body is a recurrent motif in Bāul songs of Bengal. It is very interesting to note how the Tukkhā bards have similar feelings to express about the elusive nature of the human soul to which we are attached like a fond pet bird. Like the soul- bird in the previous poem, it cannot be ascertained who is the owner of the cage or what is the real identity of this enigmatic creature. Lālon tries in vain to tame the wild winds that have broken the perch. The image of the bird staying in his own courtyard could be likened to the soul inside his human form, which knows no custodianship. The soul-bird metaphor is also a very common Sufi metaphor, and its mention in a Bāul song, sheds light on the influence of Sufism and the confluence of the perso-arabic cultural-literary field in Bengal.

Image of the Stringed Instrument- Heruka Vīṇā and Sārinjā

Caryāpada 17 (by Vīnāpāda, Rāga Paṭmañjari):

suja lāu sasi lāgeli tāntī aṇhā
dāṇḍī eki kiata avadhūtī bājai
alo sahi heruavīṇā
suṇatantidhani bilasai ruṇā

āli kālī beṇi sāri suṇiā
gaabara samarasa sāndhī
guṇiā jabe karahā karahakale
cāpiu batiśa tantidhani saala
byāpiu nācanti bājila gānti
debī buddha nāṭaka bisamā
hoi

The sun is the gourd; the moon is the strings.
The Anāhata is the neck
Avadhuti, the central channel is also the Wheel
Hark, my darling, the Heruka Vinā plays
The quaint tune of Void reverberates
And merges ino the music of compassion
Āli and Kālī are the two principal Strings
The King Elephant entered into Samarasa
Emptiness and Compassion unite

As the fingers pressed the thirty-two strings they

fill the skies, the sound fill everywhere

Vājila (Vajracarya) Dances and the

Devi is sings

Thus the Play of the Buddha

Is reversed.

In this song, we are told about the process of *sahaja sādhanā* or *sahaja* worship, through the analogy of an ancient stringed instrument, the Buddhist *vīṇā*, known as the Heruka *vīṇā*. This Caryā metaphorically stands for the yogic process of controlling the two principal nerves and raising the *bodhicitta* through the middle nerve. The sun and the moon represent the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* respectively and *avadhūtī* is the middle nerve (compared to the stand of the Heruka *vīṇā*) and can also be identified as *prajñā* and *upāya*, the male and female principles respectively. The theme of the song dwells upon the transformation of *vajra* (thunderbolt) into ultimate vacantness or *śūnyata*, with the absence of subjectivity or objectivity (Dasgupta 1946, 28). This is where Vajrasattva the supreme deity of Vajrayāna dwells. In Sahajayāna, *śūnyā* or void (male) and *karuṇā* or universal Compassion (female) need to be united to attain *bodhicitta*, and these two nerves were identified as *prajñā* and *upāya*. However *samarasa* or equanimity is created when all sense of duality vanishes and the two nerves unite into the middle nerve *avadhūtī*. The elephant is a recurrent motif in several Cāryā (No. 9, 12, 16) and it represents the *citta*. According to Dasgupta, the concept of *samarasa* has also been used in Hindu Tantric texts to show the union of Śiva and Śakti.The *bodhicitta* rises through this

middle nerve through the process of Haṭhayoga from the *nirmāṇacakra* situated in the navel to the *dharmacakra* in the heart to the *sambhogacakra* in the throat and finally to the *sahasrāra* or the lotus with a thousand petals in the brain producing supreme bliss (Dasgupta 1946, 31-34). After the

unification of complete vacuity or *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* or universal compassion, the *sādhaka* attains *sahaja* and then, roars from *anāhatacakra* from the thirty two bodied channels, the thirty two strings fill everywhere and the *sādhaka* transforms into the VajRādhāra – the God who holds thunder, and his consort *Nairātmā* – the Goddess of Soullessness, dances with him, she sings of this *sahaja* beauty and fulfilled *Nirvāṇa* is attained. Haq, points out that the word *bisamā* can be translated as opposite or reversed. In this context, the tradition is obstructed as the female sings along (*Nairātmā)* and the male (VajRādhāra) dances- a reversal of Buddha or *Nirvāna Nātaka* tradition (Haq 2009, 89).

Interestingly we can compare the **Cārya 17** with the following Fakir song.

Fakir Song 1[123] **(**by Mohin Shah):

Mora deha-kāshṭhera
sārindā tinrupe tin
raseratāre tinbhābe
eksura bāndhā
guru mana-
pabanera
chaṛe jakhanamese tāre
tāre madhura
sure beje othe
bāje bhora -
dupura
sandhyā tin

[123] Collected from Chakraborty (1990: 199).

tāre

tinadama

alla nabi ār

ādama tina sure ek

nāmera dhani hāsi-

khusi ār kāndā

mana-

ghoṛāripithe tin

tāra base oṭe

sura-gagane

ghure beṛāya

mohinera

lāgedhānda

O my *Sarinda* carved out of my body

Three strings are made of three

feelings

Three feelings resonate one melody When my

Guru plays the bow of my

mind

When the bow meets the strings

Sweetest melody emanates

And goes on all through morning noon, and evening.Three

breaths reside on three strings

Allah, Nobi and Adam Three
melodies resonate
one
emotion
Of joy and sorrow.
Mind is like a
horse Carries the
three strings
And roams in the sky full of
melodies
Mohin is utterly baffled.

In this evocative song, a *Sarinda* or a stringed Indian instrument is being compared to the human body. As we notice, the reference to the three 'strings' of the Bodyinstrument is the main theme of this song, where the bard is speaking about the unified melody produced by the three strings or the Three Nerves (*iḍā*, *piṅgalā,* and *suṣumnā)* as they become one. With the Guru's ultimate guidance this unity of the mind and body is attained, and a blissful realization comes to the soul, akin to the production of a beautiful melodious music. The bard goes on to address a theme of religious harmony where he talks about Allah, Adam, and Nobi (Prophet) are his three breathes.

In Tukkhā song V, we find very interesting allegory of cultivation, love and the prey-predator role reversal, and influence of Vaiṣṇavism as well.

Tukkhā Song V

Tui baṛa ōsiā (rasiā) nitāi

Dāruna prema bāṛālo re

Hāẏ binā tāre dotarā bājāi kāẏ

Tui mor ōsiā nitāi re

Ore bāghe bakhaṛī juṛichure hāl Bayā

khābār āśe

Ore bakhaṛī bāghak ḍisiā mārile

Naṃgal khyakkeā hāse

Binā tāre dotarā bājai kāẏ

Tui baṛa ōsiā (rasiā) nitāi

Ākāśa hate juṛichure hāl pātālate mai

Ēka hātu jalat thukuṛā

Thupite tāte phuṭlek khai

Mari hāẏ

Binā tāre dotarā bājai kāẏ

You are the ultimate lover, o Nitāi

You have induced love in everyone

Who is playing the dotārā[124] *without the strings?*

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi

The tiger and the goat are ploughing together

They wait to eat the food

[124] This is an ancient stringed musical instrument, which is widely used by the Rājvaṃśī community.

The Goat rams the tiger

The plough laughs out loud

Who is playing the dotarā without the strings?

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi

I have joined the plough with the sky

And the ladder for the plough with the Underground

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi After

planting paddy in knee deep water

It pops out as parched rice!

I am awe-struck

Who is playing the dotarā without the strings?

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi[125]

In this interesting song, we find another allusion to a stringed instrument, connected to the soul of estranged lovers, and in this song we find a direct reference to Nitāi or the legendary Vaiṣṇava saint of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. As discussed earlier, many of the Tukkhā singers identify themselves as Vaiṣṇavas, which shows a strong influence of Śankarīya and Gauḍiya Vaiṣnava traditions in North Bengal. In this poem Nitāi is identified as the supreme figure of the beloved, who is playing the stringed instrument "without the strings", which again breaks the notion of a physical instrument with strings but talks about the body with the nerves as strings. The image of cultivation is depicted, where the tiger and the goat are engaging in cultivation together and are waiting to reap the results and in the process something impossible happens. We come across an allegory of role reversal once again (as in the earlier **Caryāpada 33** and **Tukkhā I**) between the tiger and the goat, where the goat (prey)

[125] This song has a number of Rājbaṃśī dialectal features, in contrast to, say, the next song, which is more standard middle Bengali.

kills the tiger (predator), otherwise an impossible situation. In light of *dehatattva,* the tiger stands for desires, whereas the goat is taming the desires by taming senses through aligning the two nerves or 'strings' of the *dotāra or* the two-stringed instrument (*iḍā* and *piṅgalā)* along the *susumṇā or the middle nerve* of the body-instrument, which is comparable to the impossible situation of the goat killing the tiger (as the imagery in Caryāpada 33). The cultivation rice stands for the process of *dehasādhanā*, which can be done through this process of taming the senses and by liberating oneself from the shackles of sexual desires (*kāma)*, which stands for the allegory of the killing of the tiger by the goat and transforming in into divine love or *prema*. Moreover, because of the sense of overriding love (*Dārun prem* of the Sahajiā Vaiṣṇava tradition), one can play the *dotāra* without the strings, and rice grows instantly after planting paddy or true knowledge and spiritual bliss can be attained by the divine power of
love.

This vast historical period is characterized by major gaps and fissures in terms of cultural and theological shifts through ages. As we have tried to trace the historical path of Tantric Buddhism in northeastern India, we find a common theme of the aspirational goal of *sādhanā*- to reach a state of bliss , which is known by various names in the different traditions *(mahasukha, prema)* in the corpus of Tukkhā, Bāul, Fakir or Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava songs should be studied as a result of an indirect influx of interrelated ideas and practices that survived over an intervening
millennium. We have also been able to notice a number of common poetic metaphors, motifs and tropes, namely the image of the soul-bird, the image of the boat, the image of role- reversal, the image of the Guru, the image of the stringed instrument, the image of the three central nerves and so on. The use of intentional / upside down/ cryptic language is also a connecting thread between these songs. The state of union

between the male and the female entities, be it Śiva and Śakti, Prajñā and Upaya, or Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, is also a common theme in these traditions.

Chapter V

An Anthology of Tukkhā Songs

The collected Tukkhā songs have been categorized into the following kinds; *Manaśikṣā, Dehatattva, Aspāli, Khyapār gān* and the songs influenced by Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism.

Dehatattva

1. *Ei dehatattva gān ārekkhānā gāba bābā,*

Ei gān khānā hocche ye ei ye bhabanadī,

Ei bhabanadīṭā dhari hāmār nāgiche kām,

Ei bhabanadīṭā bale pār nā hoẏā yāẏ,

Ihār bale kul kinārā nāi, ekhan ei ye,

Tāo to noukā chaṛi gechi,

Chaṛi ye pār haba bali āshā karchi,

Tāi mājhiṭā koyā hoce ki koche

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Ē mājhi sābadhān madhya nadīte giyā tarī khān ḍubi yābe

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Ē mājhi tare hūśiār kari yāi tarī ḍubibe

Ār kata māl bharāichore mājhi

Ō tor māler bhāre ḍubibe tarīre

Ōre mājhi

Ār kata māl bharāichore mājhi

Ore mājhi kata māl bharāichis

Ō tor māler bhāre ḍubibe tarīre

Ōre mājhi

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibe tarī

Ār ye noukā khān bānāichis bābāre ki khuṭār bānāno?

Śāler bānāle to śanśani hay

Ār akhuṭāchi[126] *milāre noukā*

Ō tor bhār nite nā māne boiṭhāre

Ōre mājhi

Milāchila kahe jāse kahe noukā khān

Ār akhuṭāchi milāre noukā

Ō tor bhāo nite nā māne boiṭhāre

Ōre mājhi

Sābadhān sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibere tarī Sābadhān

sābadhānre mājhi ḍubibere tarī

Dubibe tarī

Oh Dear One, can you sing another song of *dehatattva*?

This is the song of the river of worldly existence (*bhabanadī*), This river of worldly existence has evoked my deepest desires,

They say it's impossible to cross the river of worldly existence,

They say it does not have a source or an end, it is ever-present here

[126] *Akutha* means wood of bad quality in Rājbaṃśī lect.

Still I have embarked on this boat, I am hoping

that I will be able to cross the river, What's

wrong, says the boatman, what is amiss?

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

Boatman, be alert, the boat may drown midstream

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

Hey Boatman! Let me alert you: the boat is about to drown

"O Boatman! How many more belongings will you fill your boat with!

Oh, the boat may drown under the load of those

O dear boatman!

"O Boatman! How many more belongings will you fill your boat with!

Oh, the boat may drown under the load of those O

dear boatman!

What have you constructed this boat with? Of which wood is it made? The

Boat is made carefully with Sal wood[127], will swiftly sail through

If it were not made of wood

Oh dear Boatman, it cannot bear your load

Oh dear Boatman

The Boat which has been made carefully sails through

If it is made of poor quality wood

Oh dear Boatman, it cannot bear your load

Oh dear Boatman

Beware boatman! Hark, be alert, the boat is about to drown

[127] Sal wood is regarded to be very strong and water resistant. According to a popular saying, timbers of Sal can remain intact a hundred years buried or under water.

Boatman, be alert, the boat may drown midstream

The boat will drown

2. *Katalā corer dal dyakh bābājī*

Saṃge niyā ḍhukiche yāẏā tinjan mātājī

Āge suna mātājī tintār nām

Iṛā, piṅgalā suṣumnā tin haẏ

Mātājī tinṭār nām

Ēibār mātājī niyā ṭānāṭāni re

Ēibār diśā hārāiche bābājī

Saṃge niẏā ḍhukiche yāẏā tinjan mātājī ār

Pratham corṭā māthā ṭān diẏā hāẏ ār

Kām nām dhare corṭā beṛāi kendiyā

Uẏāẏ majā kariche mātājīke dhariche re

Śyaṣe du dauṛ dyaiche heriā

Āsiā bāṛi āche corṭā ulaṭi paṛiā

Look at the bunch of thieves, oh *Father*

They have stepped inside with the three *mothers*

First, hear the names of the three *mothers*

Iṛā, piṅgalā and *suṣumnā*

Are the names of the three *mothers*

There's a tug of war between the *mothers* and the *Father*

And now *Father* has lost his directions

They have stepped inside with the three *mothers*

The first thief tries to pull the head

‘Taking the name ‘Lust’, the thief roams about,

crying’ The thief acts mischievous trying to

control the three *mothers*

Finally defeated, the thief runs away

Comes homes and retires on the ground

3. *Birkher mule tedhārā nadhī ujān pākhe sot cale*

Iman birakha harihar sijjālek[128] *re ki bāde*

Ār sadāi nadhī taraṅga uiṭhe

Dibāniśi duiṭā mānṣi sātār kāṭe

Ō nadhī nā dhare baiṭhā ujān pākhe sot caleche nadhīr Uṭhāchere

Phyapenā

Ār ādhā bujā jhalsā kānā huṭā khuṭār naukā cāndāche

Khuṭā khuṭi nā haẏ huṭā mārgote āche

Ō sadhu bhāi jāniāō jānis nā

Naukāte chaṛiā dyakho modhyete kānā

At the root of the tree, a three- course river flows upstream

Why has the Creator[129] planted such a tree?

Here the river ebbs and flows

Through day and night, two humans[130] swim in this river

The river is so turbulent that the oars prove useless

[128] *Sijjālek* implies the act of creation in Rājbaṃśī lect.

[129] Harihar is Śiva and Viṣṇu’s combined form, popular in Bengal.

[130] Duiṭā mānuṣ means (for a modern Bengali speaker) ‘two persons’: but is there a special interpretation in the esoteric context, which was given to me with due permission by the singer, according to whom it implies, the male and the female principles (could also symbolize the sperm and egg), are swimming and taking part together in the process of the *sādhanā.* The *sādhikā* tries to enlighten the *sādhakā* by telling him to realize that he does not need a wooden boat to perform his worship/ *sādhanā*, his body is the best boat to perform this. If he tries to rely on a wooden boat, he will only find a hole in the middle.

The river's waves flows upstream creating froth

A half blind man

Is seeking a half-burnt wooden boat with a hole

But that is not needed, the real thing lies within

O Brother Sadhu, you know but don't understand

Once you board the boat you will find a hole in the middle

4. *Ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare*

Dyakhre ēman sādhu ēkjan cān

kare Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ār pukurtā hola jaṅgale gherā āhā

Ār nitya nitya ki cān kare

Kata hastī ār ghaṛā

Kata pāṭhā pāṛo chāgal bhyaṛā re

Ō dyakhre cān kare ai pukure

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare

Dyakhre ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ār pukure āche ēktā Gandhakālīr thān[131]

Ār nitya nitya ai Kālīṭā jīber bali khān

[131] Place of worship

Kata pāṭhā pāṛo chāgal bhyaṛā re

Ai dyakh bali hay kālīr duẏāre

Madandāṅgār bhāṅgā pukure

Ēman sādhu ēkjan cān kare

Dyakhre ēman sādhu ēkjan

cān kare Madandāṅgār

bhāṅgā pukure

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

And the pond was covered in forest

Where the elephants and horses

Bathe daily

Many billy goats, buffaloes, goats and sheep

Bathe in the pond,

Behold! they bathe in the pond

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

Oh behold such a sadhu who takes a bath

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

The pond contains a place of worship

For Goddess GandhaKālī[106]

Daily the goddess devours sacrifices

Many billy goats, buffaloes, goats and sheep

Are sacrificed daily at the altar of Kali

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

Oh behold such a sadhu who takes a bath

Oh behold the sadhu who takes a bath

In the broken pond of *Madandāṅgā*

5. *Man tui phakir habire āk bājāre yāiẏā*

Manre yei nā ghāṭote pār habi

Sei nā ghāṭot ken sātār dilire

Sei deśer ro lolā pāni

Puruṣ phelāẏ khāiẏā

Āk bājārot[132] yāiẏā

Manore sei deśero tinjan māiẏā

Tāder kono nāi haẏ biẏā re

Tinjan māiẏār ēkṭi santān

Hailo keman kaire re

Āk bājāre yāiẏā

[132] *Āk* in Rājbaṃśī lect means early, in this case it implies as soon as the market opens.

Oh mind, you will become impoverished

Once you visit the market early[108] Oh mind,

the bank you were meant to cross

Why did you swim in it?

The salt water of that land

Devours all men

Once you visit the market early

Oh mind! The three women of that land

They always remain unmarried How is that

the three women[133] together

Gave birth to one child?

Once you visit the market early

6. *Ādi deher guru paramāttā re*

Ō hāẏre śiśya haẏre tāhār man

Guru śiśya ēki holere

Yāoẏā āsā haẏ re bāran

Ō rabot mano re

Bijat haite janme bẹ̣ iksha bẹ̣ ikshate haẏ phal phul

Prakẹ̣ iti puruṣ haite moha tatthyer janma tāte

Ākāś ādi pancabhute deher gaṭhano haise

Ō rabot mano re

[133] Refers to the three major nerves or *Nāḍīs* of the subtle body in Hinduism*;* the *iḍā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā*.

Bijat haite janme bṛ iksha bṛ ikshate haẏ phal phul

Deha dehi samapaksha tatthya nirupan

Ō rabot mano re

Pāṁ c pāṁ cā paṁ ciśer arttya jene śune haore matta

Panca āttā deher stiti das-chay- ṣola

Ō rabot mano re

Adham bale tattya jene sādhya bastu laore cine

Baddha kara ṣolo jan ke kara annyesan

The lord of the primal body is Paramātma

Ah Alas, its student is the Mind

When the Guru and Śiṣya become one

Their coming and going' isn't forbidden

Oh unaware[134] mind! The tree stems from a seed

And that bears the flower and fruit

In Primal Nature and the Soul [135]

Is born the doctrine of desire[136]

From the five elements beginning with Space

The human body is formed

Oh unaware mind! The tree stems from a seed

And that bears the flower and fruit

[134] *rabot* means unware in Rājbaṃśī lect, which is *Abodh* in Bengali

[135] *Prakṛti Puruṣ* seems to primarily mean from Primordial Nature and the Soul, and secondarily the Female and Male principles.

[136] *Moha* implying desire/delusion

The male and female bodies[143] are equal

That essence is understood

Oh unaware mind!

Five five's are twenty-five

Knowing this theory, be immersed

The five souls, the body's equilibrium

Is ten-six-sixteen[144]

Oh unaware mind!

Since you are ignorant, know the truth and recognize the

object of enlightenment

And defeat the Sixteen[145]

And keep seeking

7. *Hāẏre ḍimbher bhitar ki aparup*

Bājāro baise

Ēi ye ḍimbha ēlo kathāre haite

---

[143] *Deha* and *dehi* symbolizes the body and the embodied soul, from a Sanskritic understanding.

[144] Jha (1995) in his study on the esoteric worship of four moons among the Bāuls shares an excerpt of the twenty-five substances the Bāul sādhaks use explain creation in biological and mechanical terms, and in the light of their knowledge of their own bodies. It is thought that bodily activities are controlled by the various natural qualities of the four or five elements. These are mechanical natural forces the twenty-five substances are:

Cari-Candra Bhed: Use of the Four Moons 93 each of the five elements, as follows:
Ab (water): śukra (semen), Sonit (blood), Faeces, Urine, Marrow
Atas (fire): Hunger, Thirst, Weariness, Laziness, Sleep
Khàk (earth): Bone, Flesh, Nails, Skin, Hair
Bât (air): Retention, Movement, Contraction, Expansion, Throwing
Sunya: Desire, Anger, Greed, Delusion, Shame

This is the closest that I could get to decoding the meaning of the theory of "twenty-five" in this song, both Tukkhā and Bāul songs have the theme of *dehatattva* in common, and this comparison seems apt [145] Refers to the *ṣaḍripu* and ten *indriyas*. The ten senses are: *Chakshu* (sight), *shrotra* (hearing), *ghrāṇa* (smell), *rasanā* (taste) *kāyā* (touch), *vāc* (speech), *pāṇi* (hands), *pāda* (feet) *pāyu* (excretion) *upastha* (procreation)

Hāẏre āgā garā kon dike

Panca gasāi āche āro

Ḍimbher bhitare

Ēi ye samudrer mājhe ēkṭi ḍimbhare

Hāẏre jalate ye se bhāse

Duiṭi mānuṣ ki liṁga

Nām dhare

Oh what a splendid market

Is being held inside the Egg[137]

Where did this Egg come from?

Where's the top of it? Where's the bottom? The

five *Gōsāīs*[147] dwell inside the Egg

Oh this Egg in the middle of the ocean

Which floats on the water

What is the gender of the Two beings[138]

8. *Boli re deha sārinjā ār*

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār Brahmā hoilek bhāi sārinjār kārigar

Ō re Viṣnu nāgālek tāhār char

[137] Egg could symbolize either the Brahmāṇḍa (universe) or the cosmic body (dehabhāṇḍa) or both. [147] For the meaning of *pañcabhūta* refer to footnote 27.

[138] Refers to the male and female entities

Ār Śiba hoẏā bājāire sārinjā gāire harinām Boli

re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār sata gune sur bājilo re

Ō re raja gune bome mārilen ṭān

Ār tama gune jin bājilore man paṛilo acetan

Boli re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Ār mulādhāre tārer ninguṛā

Ō re nābhimule phuler tār bāhār

Ār hriday mājhe bāje sārinjā kanṭhe lay re nām

Boli re deha sārinjā ār

Ār tin tāre bāje re man mor karilo re pāgelā

Let me tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three strings has driven me crazy

Brahmā is the creator of this *sārinjā*

And Viṣnu attached its bow

And in the form of Śiva, the *sārinjā* praises the name of

Hari Let me tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three stings has driven me crazy

The string which resonates the finest qualities[139] is *sur*[140]

The active qualities are reverberated by plucking the *bom* And

[139] *Guṇas*

[140] *Sur, bom* and *jin* refer to the three strings of the sārinjā, corresponding in turn to the three *guṇas*

jin vibrates the base qualities[141] making one unconscious Let me

tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three strings has made my mind crazy

The strings originate in the *mulādhāra*[142]

Called ninguṛā

The flower blossoms at the navel

The *sārinjā* plays in my heart and the voice echoes the divine name

Let me tell you that my body is like a *sārinjā*

The sound of your three stings has driven me crazy

9. *Nadī kemnī habore pār*

Nadī kemnī habore pār

Ō re ēi pār thāki dekhā nā yāẏ

Ai pārer kināṛ

Jal nāi nadiṭār haẏre bānā

Ainṭhe thāke kumir chaẏ janā Tār

bāde keu pār habār cāẏ nā

Jal nāi nadiṭār baṛaẏre srot

Dairgha pasta tār chaurāśi kroś

Tār bāde mor mane baṛa āpśoś

Bhaẏ nāgeche mok dekhiẏāre ḍeu

Ēi kathā gilā kāre kaō

[141] Refers to *rajoguṇa* (passion, ambition, in the middle of the other two *guṇas*)
[142] he root cakra, which lies at the base of spine

Sange nāi mor bandhu bāndhab keu

Oh how will I cross the river

Oh how will I cross the river

From this side of the river

The other side is invisible

The river doesn't have water

Yet it keeps flooding

In it resides six crocodiles

Because of them,

No one wishes to cross the river

The river doesn't have water

Yet it has big waves

Its length and breadth is above eighty four miles

My heart repents because of this

I am afraid at the sight of the waves

With whom should I share all this?

I don't have any friends with me

10. *Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā*

Ōre man āmār

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Āmār manare

Sei nadhītār bānā uṭhe

Āmābasyā purṇimāte

Keu bā dyakhe keu bā dyakhe nā

Manare

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Manare

Sei nadhīte agādh jal

Nāmle pare habi tal

Kāmanā kumbhire ōto khābe

Manare

Raktaṭā tor khābe cuse

Hāṛ māṁsa kichui khābe nā

Āmār manare

Kām nadhīte tarī bāiẏo nā

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust Oh

my mind

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

Oh my mind

The river's tides rise high

During new moon and full moon

Some behold it, some don't

Oh my mind

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

That river is overflowing

You will drown deep once you descend

The crocodile of lust will devour you

Oh my mind

Oh my mind

It will suck out your blood

But won't touch your flesh and bones

Don't row your boat in the River of Lust

Oh my mind

Don't float your boat in the River of Lust

Manaśikṣā

11. *Āji manśuẏā*[143] *chāṛiā pālālo re*

Dārun āśā tui mor nairāś karālo

Ō mor śuẏā śuẏā re

Ō re yāoẏā āisā dui diner kāthā

Kebal mātra śuẏā mor panther dyakhā

Ore āśā diẏā tui mok baseẏā kāndālo

Ō mor śuẏā śuẏā re

Ō re kumantra kāẏbā dilo

Kun doṣe śuẏā mok chāṛiā gelo

[143] *Manśuẏā* is a common metaphor for the soul-bird within the Rājvaṃśī lect

Ō re bhaber hāṭot tui mok

Baseẏā kāndālo

Today my soul bird flew away

You turned my hopes into despair

Oh my dear soul-soul bird! Oh this

act of moving back and forth Is it a

tale of two days?

It felt like a chance meeting on the way

You kindled hopes in my heart

Yet you made me cry

Oh my dear soul-soul bird!

Oh who gave you bad advice?

Due to which fault of mine

Did you leave me, oh soul bird?

You made me sit in this earthly marketplace

And made me cry

12. *Guru bine bhabare sindhu kyamne hobore pāṛ re*

Guru mor Gōsāiẏā re

Ō Gōsāi guruẏ ye gaṭhāise dyahā

Twarāite bhabe nāi ār keha

Syaonā nodhī mor paṛilek bālucaṛ re

Ō Gōsāi pitārō mastake chilām

Māẏer udare āilām

Syaonā pujan mor sādhan ailo nāre

Ō Gōsāi jononī jaṭhare chilām

Hyaṭ munḍa urddha pade bhumite paṛiā ēkākār

Guru mor Gōsāiẏā re

How will I cross the ocean of life without my Guru?

My Guru is my Gōsāi[144]

Oh Gōsāi, the Guru, who crafted this human form

There is no one like Him

To help me cross to the other side

Without Him the river can only end into a sand bank

Oh Gōsāi, I used to live inside my father's head[145]

I arrived in my mother's womb

In spite of that, my spiritual realization wasn't complete

Oh Gōsāi, I used to stay inside my mother's womb

I was inverted, feet up, head down,

I landed on earth in a confused mass[146]

My Guru is my Gōsāi

[144] Teacher/master

[145] Refers to the paternal concept of a child that originated in the father's head, which was conveyed through a sperm

[146] The point being that only the Guru will lead the student out of this limited, confused, embodied state.

13. *Ō re ei harir nām panther sambal*

Ār sokoli michāre

Ore uriẏā yābe paban pākhi poṛiā nobe dyahā

Mor poṛiā nobe dyahā manare ār poṛiā nobe dyahā

Ōre ēi dyahār bharasa nāi

Yeman jaler ō bhulukā re

Ore uriẏā yābe parān pākhi poṛiā nobe dyahā

Tinpurnīr ō ghāṭe manre yāite manre

Kata mater jānā

Sādhu janāẏ hobe pāṛ

Pājī yāite mānā

In Life's path, the name of Hari[147] is my only asset

The rest is all a lie

The wind-bird will fly away

Only the body will remain

Only the body will remain

Oh Mind, only the body will remain

The body cannot be relied upon

Just like the effervescent water bubbles

The soul-bird will fly away

Only the body will remain

[147] According to my interviewees, Hari refers to the *Paramātmā,* the supreme and ultimate self, which also nothing but the human self.

All beings want to reach the banks of Tinpurni[148]

Oh my heart

So many religions acknowledge

this

The wise ones will get to cross

The sinners are barred

14. *Dāko rādhe gobinda baliā*

Manre dāko rādhā gobinda baliā

Manre dhan daulat ratan jauban

Sabe man tor niśir swapan

Dudin pare jābe to miśiā

Manre asāro sansāre ēise

Kibā sukhe din kāṭāle

Duidin pare jābe to miśiā

Oh chant Rādhā Gobindo's name

Oh my heart, chant Rādhā Gobindo's name

Oh my mind, riches, jewels and youth

All is a night-time dream, my heart!

It will perish in the blink of an eye

Oh my heart, after appearing in this 'insubstantial' world

[148] Refers to the sacred banks of three rivers, e.g. Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati.

What days did you spend in joy?

It will perish in the blink of an eye

15. *Hari tamār mahimā keu tore jāne nā*

Dhup dilām dhunāo dilām he

Tabu caran tamār pāilām nā

Maner āśā mane raila āśā miṭila nā

Ēk ḍub dilām dui ḍub dilām

Tin ḍub dite āmi pārlām nā

Maner āśā mane raila āśā miṭila nā

Hāt bāndhilām pāo bāndhilām he hari

Manke bāndhite pārilām nā

Maner āśā mane raila āśā miṭila nā

Mane kaẏ uṛiẏā yābo he

Bidhi yadi pāṅkhā dito haẏ

Ōre maner bedan mane raila ār jānibek nā

Oh Hari, how immense your glory! No one knows you in reality

Even though I offered you incense and prayers

I couldn't find a place in your feet

The hopes of my heart remained

Alas, they couldn't be fulfilled

I took a dip once, and twice

And I failed to take a dip thrice

The hopes of my heart remained within

Alas, couldn't be fulfilled

I tied my hands and feet, Oh Hari, But I

couldn't tie my heart

The hopes of my heart remained

Alas, couldn't be fulfilled

My mind wishes to fly away

If only Fate granted me the wings

Oh my sorrows remained within my heart,

And none got to know

16. *Āji śunek śunek dayāl didi*

Man kānde mor nirabadhi

Mor biẏār kaẏdin āche bāki

Hoise mor āgilā biẏā

Ḍhāk ḍhol ār sānāi diẏā

Śākhāẏ sendure kataẏ nā sājeẏā

Ār hobe mor pāchilā biẏā

Khol ār kartāl diẏā

Nigābe mok haribol kariẏā

Mor biẏār didi kibā śobhā

Āge pāche kāṣṭher bojhā

Nigābe mok pālaṅke careẏā

Ōre kāmˇ cā bāmˇ śer

pālaṅke Nigābe mok

nadir ghāṭe

Biẏāō hobe mor ainā nidhuẏāte

Listen to my prayer today, my kind sister

My childish heart weeps

How many days to go until my final wedding?

My first wedding already took place

With the sound of drum beats and sānāi[149]Adorned in

vermillion and wedding bangles

My final wedding is about to take place

To the beats of *khol*[150] and *kortāl*[161]

I will be taken on a procession chanting the name of Hari

Oh dear sister, what a spectacle for my wedding!

I am in the middle burdened with a bunch of pyres

I will be carried on a bed made of raw bamboo

I will be taken to the banks of the river

My wedding will take place in that secluded ground[151]

17. *Ōho man mor māne nā*

Kyane bā bujei nā

Piṛīti nadir bānā

[149] Sānāi or Shehnai, a popular North Indian wind instrument mostly played at weddings.
[150] A two-sided drum used for devotional music [161]
Cymbals

[151] The tone of the speaker is at times ironic.

Ciradin samān thāke nā

Mane kaẏ bhuli thāk

Naẏan kaẏ ār ēkbār dyakh

Dekhile bāṛe māẏā

Chāriẏā yāite phāṭe hiẏā

Biśweṣ nāi piṛīt juẏā

Kakhan bharā kakhan dhuẏā

Ēi kathā jāne sabe

Tabu piṛīt kare loke

Piṛīti jale māche

Marile thāke kāche

Jiban marane chāre nā

Eman piṛīti kare kaẏ janā

My heart refuses to listen

Oh why doesn't it understand?

The tides of the river of Love

Doesn't always stay level

My heart asks to remain oblivious

My eyes ask to look up and see once again As you keep looking, Māyā elevates[152]

[152] Māyā, in this context in Bengali appears to mean 'Love', especially 'erotic love/passion', aligning with 'pirīt' (Sanskrit prīti), rather than the Sanskritic/Vedāntic 'Illusion'. *Dekhile bāṛe māẏā* is an interesting paradox-the sense seems more like "The more you look, the stronger grows Māyā".

While trying to leave, the heart bursts asunder [153]

Love is a gamble, cannot be trusted

Often full, often hazy

This is a truth known to all

Still people fall in love

Like fish in love with water

Which dies yet stays close

Death doesn't do them apart How

many can feel

a love like this?

18. *Ōki ōho re sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā*

Kebā āpan kebā par man

Dyakhek nā bhābiā

Ār sādher janam yāẏ sonār man

Kāndiā kāndiā re

Oki ōho sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā

Sonā dānā man bhiṭā bāṛī Dhan

sampatti ṭiner bāṛī re

Putra kanyā tor naẏ re āpnā

Dyakhek nā bhābiā

Sādher janam yāẏ sanār man kāndiā kāndiā re

[153] This symbolizes the heart has to exert strenuous effort and ultimately perishes in trying to disengage from Māyā (here Love). There are similar bāul songs on pirīt (Love).

Ōki ōho sonār man āpan ciniloẏ nā

Oh my golden mind[154] you couldn't recognize yourself Oh

mind, who is one's own and who is a stranger

Think to yourself?

This precious life goes by, oh golden mind,

Only in tears

Oh my golden mind you couldn't recognize yourself

All the jewels and wealth and one's permanent residence

Possessions and opulence, and temporary houses

Son and daughter aren't your own either

Just watch and think

This precious life goes by, oh golden mind,

Only in tears

Oh my golden mind you couldn't recognize yourself

19. *Ei ghar chāriā kothāi caliā yābo le*

Ōre jor maẏnā

Kai[155] pare tor māẏār caukher jal

Āji ghar bāndhilām bālucare le Gharer

cār konāi cār khuṭi Tāhār upar

dhumuli diẏā

[154] Sonā is also a term of endearment. Sonār mon is both golden mind and 'darling mind.'

[155] For whom/which person

Tāhār tale citā re

Ōre jor maẏnā

Kai pare tor māẏār caukher jal

Āji māẏār chale parisit maẏnā le

Ō tor lohāẏ khāilo ghune

Binā pabane nāgise āgun

Dekhite keman sundar le

Ōre jor maẏnā

Kai pare tor māẏār caukher jal

Where should I go leaving my home today? Oh pair of myna birds, for whom are you shedding the tears of love?

I built my house on the sand banks

On the four sides are the four funeral pillars

A shade has been put on top

Underneath lies the funeral pyre Oh pair of myna birds, for whom are you shedding The tears of love?

Oh myna, you have fallen in the trap of Māyā

The termites in the iron have eaten you

The fire's burning without wind It

is magnificent to look at!

for whom are you shedding The

tears of love?

20. *Kṛṣner nām karṇe kāẏ ār śunābe*

Pinjirā chāriā ēkdin pākhīre pālābe

Ēk pinjirāẏ chila pākhīre chaẏ janā

Pāṁ c janāre phāki diẏā pālāila ēkjanā

Māo kānde tor bāchā re bāchā

Choṭa baini kānde daẏār dādā

Kolār ramanī kānde, nā bāndhe khopā

Pinjirā dhariā

Pinjirār gairab koranā re bhāi

Śwaśān ghāṭat nigiā pinjirā puriā

Kārbe chāi

Who will chant the name of Kṛṣṇa?

One day that bird will leave the cage and fly away

There were six birds in one cage

One of them tricked the other five and escaped

Mother cries and utters, “my son, oh son”

The little sister weeps for her beloved brother

Beloved wife cries, she does not tie her hair in a top-knot [156]

While holding onto the cage

[156] A woman neglecting to dress her hair is used to convey bereavement in Sanskrit poetry too.

Don’t be so proud of your own cage

As this cage will end up in the funeral ground

And turn into ashes

21. *Ō mon calo yāi āpan deśe bhabe Bāndab*

keha nāi

Bhabe āmār bāṛi āmār ghar

Michāmichi ahaṁkār

Dinā cāri gairabh kiser bhāi

Māyāte majhiā maner sāthe dekh bhābiā

Āpan balte āpan keha nāi

Hāṭer upare ēktā āche baṛa ṭiner ghar

Duiṭi lāiṭ jwale tāhāro upar

Huṭā dekhte camatkār

Chaẏjan carā curi kare kakhan je kār paket māre

Dharā parile bācār upāi nāi

Oh mind! Let’s travel to our homeland.

In this world there are no friends

In this world, my house, my home

My home and possessions are all pointless arrogance What’s the need in pride that can only delight for so short a span of time, O Brother?

You are immersed in the Māyā of your heart

Take a while to think

There's no one you can call your own

There sits a huge tin-hut above the marketplace

Two lights are glimmering on top

To the eyes it looks marvelous Six
thieves[157] are out to rob!

Who knows when and whose pocket they will pick!

If caught, there's no way of escaping!

22. *Man tui caliā yābi re yā*

Ō tok baliā habere ki

Tui nikin habār pāribo mor sanger sāthi

Ō rabot mana re

Sange ye tor yata celā re man

Ailāẏ tore pāji

Tui nikin habār pāribo mor saṅger sāthi

Ō rabot mana re

Tor sange mor kathā chilo re ki

Ō tui kachit bhālā ki

Tui nikin habār pāribo mor sanger sāthi

[157] *ṣaḍripu*

Oh mind, you may depart if it's your will,

What is the point of telling you otherwise?

Could you really be my eternal companion?

Oh unaware mind,

All your flatterers, Oh mind They

are the mischief-makers

Could you really be eternal companion?

Oh unaware mind What had been

decided between us?

Did you do any good in the end?

Could you really be my eternal companion?

23. *Hari nām diẏe jagat mātāẏ Sei*

nām ki sakali pāẏ

Jānere nām sadhui jāne

Kusādhu jānibe kāẏ

Sādhur caraṇ dharile pare

Hāẏ re anāẏāse se dhan pāoẏā yāẏ

Sei nām ki sakali pāẏ

Ār kāṣṭa kāṭā doẏāl pākhi

Sārādin bāgāne raẏ

Ō phuler kāche yāẏ nā pākhi

Hāẏre sukunā ḍāle baise

Sei nām ki sakali pāẏ

The world reverberates with the name of Hari

Can every soul attain that name?

Only the wise one knows that name

How will the unperceptive know?

If you touch the feet of the wise one

You will be bestowed with that treasure effortlessly Can

every soul attain that name?

Around the clock, the woodpecker stays in the garden

It doesn't go near the flower And

rests on the dry branch, alas!

Can every soul attain that name?

24. *Ōki hāẏre mānuṣer āsā*

Āsā ār miṭilo nā

Āsāẏ āsāẏ janam gelo baiẏā

Ār ēi āsā chilo mane

Gurur caran bhajibo baile re

Mātṛ i garbhe ēsechilām kaẏā

Ōre bhūmite pariā baddha

Cokh thākite jorne andha

Ār sab hārāilām bhūmite luṭāiẏā Ār
bālya yurbbā briddhare haite

Āsilām bhog karite karite

Tabu bailām āsār dike cāiẏā

Ōre nā miṭila mor mane āsā

Ōre nā miṭila mor pān pipāsā

Ōre nā miṭila mor jibbāro lālsā

Oh the hopes of men

They remain unfulfilled

Life came to an end, resting in hope

And because of this hope in my heart

To worship the feet of my Guru

This was my purpose since the time In

my mother's womb

Trapped lying on the ground

Blindness in spite of having eyes

I lost everything while lying on the ground

From childhood, youth to old age

I was engrossed in pleasures

Yet I kept wanting more

Oh the hopes of this heart

Remain unfulfilled

The soul's thirst remain unquenched

Oh the taste of this greed remained unsatiated

25. *Hari kon sādhane pābo tomāre Bhaber*

byapārī hari tumi baṁśīdhārī

Nāẏer māllā hari tumi haō dārī

Tomār lilā camatkār lilā bujhā baṛa bhār

Ēkbār ḍubāō ēkār bhāsāō amāre hari kon sādhane pābo tomāre

Chaẏ janāre saṅge niẏā tumi thāka ārāle

Tomār karma tumi kara kebal bādha āmāre

Tumi hākim baṭe haō hari hukum more dāō

Hākim haẏe hukum kara jelkhānā deo more hari

Kon sādhane pābo tomāre

Which worship will help me find you, Oh Hari?

You're the merchant of this earth, one who plays the flute

You're the boatman as well as the oarsman

Your play is astonishing, but hard to understand

Once you make me float, and once you make me drown Which worship will help me find you, Oh Hari?

You stay in hiding, while placing the six enemies in front

You enact your deeds, but grant me only obstacles Indeed

you are the Judge—so command me!

You become the judge and put me in prison Which

worship will help me find you, Oh Hari?

26. *Āmār man kānde go*

Guru tomār dwār koi go

Ore ēi saṁsārer māẏār chalanāre

Kemane go kāṭāba

Guru go

Ai das indriẏa ripu go chaẏ

Kāra keha bāindhab naẏ

Bāindhab kemane go karāba

Guru go

Nā bujhilām bhālo go manda

Nā karilām tomār go dharma

Bāindhab kemane go karāba

Ai āmār man kānde go

Guru tomār dwār koi go

Ore ēi saṁsārer māẏār chalanāre

Kemane go kāṭāba

My heart cries

Oh Guru, where is your door?

Oh the deception of the worldly illusions

How do I get rid of them?

Oh Guru

Those ten *indriyas*[158], and six *ripus* They

can never be one's friend

How do I befriend them?

Oh Guru

I couldn't tell good from bad I

couldn't follow your

dharma[159]How do I befriend

them?

My heart cries
Oh Guru, where is your door?

Oh the deception of the worldly illusions

How do I get rid of them?

Oh Guru

27. *Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man*

Doṣ diba kāre

[158] The ten senses are: Chakshu(sight), shrotra (hearing), ghrāṇa (smell), rasanā (taste) kāy (touch), vāk (speech), pāni (hands), pada (feet) *pāyu* (excretion) *upasthā* (procreation)

[159] In this context, *dharma* refers to the path of humanity, which that is most important religion, according to the poet

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Abodh mana re

Injirā pinjirār ghar Ghune kariche

jar ore jar batiś bandar āpane

khasiā paṛe Jarār upar

marāre

Paban kaṣṭher baiṭhāre

Sei nā naukā ṭhekilā bālucare

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Rabadh mana re

Nidhuā pāthāre re

Joṛā batabithi gāch ōṛe āche

Tāte āche joṛā bugilār bāsā

Māchera nā love

Uṛāl dẏiā bagā paṛere phānde

Ei nā bagā paṛila re māyār phānde

Āpan duṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Āpanduṣe sab hārālo man

Doṣ diba kāre

Due to its own fault, the mind lost everything

Who is to blame, after all?

Oh ignorant mind!

The house of Injirā Pinjirā[146]

The termites have eaten through it

The thirty-two ports[160] collapse on their own

Death upon grave illness

The oar made of wind-wood

That boat rests on the sandy shores Due to its

own fault, the mind lost everything

Who is to blame, after all?

Oh ignorant mind!

In an open field on the riverbed, two banyan trees are entangled,

Where is the nest of two cranes?

In the desire of eating fish, the male crane flies away and gets entrapped

The male crane falls into the trap of *māyā*[161] I lost

everything due to my own fault, who is to blame?

28. *Urāng bāirāng kare man mor ponkhiyā re Aji*

urāng bāirāng kare man mor

Uriā jābāra cāya kāi āche mor āpanjanā

Ponkhiyār nām bujhāi man mor Ponkhiyā re

ghar khāni bāndhilām Ponkhiyā mor Mānik

bānser ore uā

Sei ghare banchite nādil mor

Dārun bidhātā man mor ponkhiyāre

Konṭhe hate āsilen ponkhiyā

Mor konbā poinkhārore cāya

Ḍyanā nāi pankhe nāi tora

[160] This refers to the thirty-two vulnerable points in the body.

[161] The male crane is a metaphor for the individual self-attracted to worldly desires or delusions (*māyā*).

Kāy bā bāpa māẏa

Mana mor ponkhiyā re

My soul bird is impatient to leave me

Today my soul bird is impatient

And wants to fly away, do I have anyone of my own?

I understood the name of my soul bird

I built my home, oh my soul bird

My home is made up of fine bamboo

But I could not stay in my home

That was my fate, oh my soul bird

Where are you from, oh my soul bird?

Neither do you have wings

Nor do you have guardians

You are fascinating!

Oh soul bird, your beautiful eyes weep

29. *Sabāre upre serā sādan mānab sādane*

Ār mānab sādanāẏ āchere man

Sukher bhāndār bharā

Ār mānab sādanāẏ karile bās

Āsā yāōā haẏ nā

Ār sādan to kare sabāi

Pass kare kaẏjane

Sabāre upre serā sādan mānab sādane

Ār mānab sādanāẏ āche rākhā

Māẏār jāl pātā

Ār dekhe sune hāṭbire man

Jāle yena paṛo nā

Ār sei jālote paṛle śyaṣe

Habi diśāhārā

Sabāre upre serā sādan mānab sādanā

Ār mānab sādanāẏ āche āro

Chaẏkhān jāl bonā

Ār sei jāle bhāi ēman śakta

Ṭānile chiṛe nā

Sei jāloke śej karile

Rāge anurāger khāṛā[162]

Sabāre upre serā sādan mānab sādhanā

The highest and greatest devotion

Is the worship of humanity

And in the worship of the human, Oh mind, Resides

great treasures of joy!

When you worship humanity

There's no moving back and forth But

everyone is engaged in this pursuit

However, who manages to score a pass?

The highest and greatest devotion

[162] A form of musical rhythm created while playing the *dotārā* (two stringed musical intrusment), which was played while standing. *Rāganugā bhakti* also implies passionate devotion or love towards God without no conditions. (Dasgupta, 1969,66).

Is the worship of humanity

And in the worship of humanity

Is laid out the trap of illusions

Be careful while you tread, Oh Mind!

Lest you fall into the trap

Lest you fall into the trap

And if you fall into the trap

You will become lost in thirst

The highest and greatest devotion

Is the worship of humanity

And there are six more traps[163]

Laid out on the path of human-worship

Those traps, o Brother,are so strong

That it doesn't tear even if you push and pull

If you make a bed out of that trap

In the rhythm of love and attachment

The highest and greatest devotion is

the worship of humanity

30. *Ōho bhagabān hāẏ hāẏ*

Mānuṣ janam āmār gelo asādhane

Deher bhitar mano rājā

[163] *ṣaḍripu*

Das indriẏa ērāi prajā man Sāśan

mane nā

Rājāō kānā prajāo kānā

Candro surya ērāō kānā man

Kānār kārkhānā

Bāṛi parā yāẏ sabhāẏ dekhe

Man parā yāẏ keu nā dekhe man

Jalile nā nibhe

Oh dear Lord
My mortal life was spent without piety

Inside the body, the mind is the king

The ten *indriyas* are the subjects

They mind fails to control them

The king is blind, so are the subjects

The sun is blind, so is the moon

The mind is a blind man's workshop

The house burns down while everyone watches

'The mind burns but no one watches'

And once that happens

The fire of the mind isn't extinguished

31. *Harir nāme bāndhiā ghar*

Tāte man tui basat kar

Ore nā paṛibe ār jhaṛ bṛ iṣti pāthar

Abodh man re ār harir nāmer ghar khānā

Rupār bātā man re sonār gunā

Candra surya birāj kare tāte

Abodh man re

Ār ṣola nāmer ṣola khuti

Ār tāte āche manre saṛe cāir cāti

Dikshā mantre māro gharer ṭuhi

In the name of Hari, you built your hut

Reside there, Oh my soul

Rain and storm will come to a halt, hail won't fall Oh my soul

Oh unwise mind, this hut in the name of Hari

Golden threads are used to tie the silver bamboo slices

The sun and the moon both dwell in this hut

Oh unwise mind

The sixteen wooden pillars have sixteen names

Four and a half fences surround it

Seal the holes on the roof with your *Dikshā*-mantra[164]

[164] The mantra given during initiation.

Khyapār Gān

32. *Khyapā sunek diyā man*

Ore biswa baṛabhānḍe yāhā āche

Mānab bhānḍe teman

Ō sun khyapāre

Purba paścim uttar dakṣin deha bhānḍate

Kunṭhe kundi āche tār

Sunāo nā ājire

Ār bal khyapā bal āji

Daśjhan sunibe

Ō sun khyapāre

Sāt samudra tero nadī bhāti ujān dhāẏ

Mānab bhānḍe daurghapasta

Kata kata haẏ re

Ār bal khyapā bal āji

Daśjhan sunibe

Oh you madcap seer[165], listen carefully

The matter that constitutes this Universe

also resides in the human body

Listen, you madcap seer

[165] "Khyapā" is an address to the Guru by the disciple, both can refer to each other as "Khyapā" or madcap/freewheeling soul.

East-west, north-south inside the human form Tell

me where, in which direction, can I find it?

And today, pray tell, Dear Master

Many are eager to listen

Oh you madcap seer, listen carefully

Across Seven seas and thirteen rivers, tides rise and fall

What measures the length- breadth of the human form?

And right now, pray tell, Dear Master

Many are eager to listen

33. *Khepā sunek diyā man*

Ōre ṣolo deuniyā kareche kāchāri

Unapancās paban

Ō sun khepā re

Āt kuṭuri naẏ darjā

Gopon āche ekṭā ḍhākā

Dehār mājhe kothāi āche

Bicār kari de elā

Ō sun khepā re

Aṣta sakhi chaẏ manjari

Kun kun sthāne āche basi

Dehār mājhe kothāi āche

De bicār kari

Ō sun khepā re

Heṭe uddhe ṣolo tālā

Dehār mājhe dekhā elā

Bāhānna bāzār tippānna gali

Bicār kari de elā

Oh madcap soul! Listen carefully

The sixteen landlords have set up a court Forty-nine winds are present

Listen, you madcap soul!

The eight small rooms have but nine doors[166]

One of the lids is kept as a secret

Where do I find these inside the body?

Please explain this to me

Listen, you madcap soul!

Eight girlfriends and six buds[167]

In which places are they seated?

Where do I find these inside the body?

Please explain this to me

Listen, you madcap soul!

One has to climb up sixteen floors

Inside the body

[166] Refers to cryptic numerical codes of the Sahajiyā *deha sādhanā* or body worship.

[167] According to Tantric Vaiṣṇava (Sahajiyā) symbols, there are a number of lotuses in the body of in the body of Man, which is the Universe and like the eternal Vrndavana. [179] Refers to the various nerves in the human body

Where is it?

Please explain this to me

Fifty-two markets, fifty-three alleys[179] Please explain this to me

34. *Ō ki ōho re sādujan*

Ore kincit tatta balore ekhan

Ō ki ōho re sādujan

Ēsechile kun bā sāle

Kun bā māse kun bā bāre

Kun bā rāśi nakshetra tithite

Ō ki ōho re sādujan

Sthul prabarta sādhak siddhi

Kon deśete kara basati

Kun bā deśete kariācha gaman

Oh my esteemed Sage

Please explain to me now

Some excerpts of theory

Oh my esteemed Sage

On which year did you arrive?

Which month, which day of the week?

Tell me of your zodiac and the stars, And

your birth was on which lunar day?

Oh my esteemed Sage

Sthula, Pravarta Sadhaka Siddhi[168]

In which land do you now reside?[169]To

which land are you travelling?

35. *Phuṭilo golāpero phul ai jāy jhariā*

Ē sāin, ēi gurutā praśna karā hoche, ēi praśnar uttar jena parabarti āmrā pāi..

Gurureb āmār dibe

Kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dhāner khai

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dudher dai Phuṭilo

golāpero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā dariẏār jal

Kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā sariṣār tel

Phuṭilo golapero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā bāṁ ser naṛi

Ār kothāẏ āche o guru mor binā pātār daṛi

Phuṭilo golapero phul ai jāy jhariā

Ai cānder bājār ai bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

Ore dantagilā khuliā dekh mor binā dhāner khai

Māthār ghilukhān khuliā dekh mor binā dudher dai

Ai cānder bājār bhaber bājār

[168] four devotional stages

[169] 'Which of the four spiritual stage is the Guru now practicing, and which stage is he next aiming for?'

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

Ore hāḍḍigula khuliā dekh mor binā bāṁ ser naṛi

Dehār rag gulā kāṭiā dekh mor binā pātār daṛi

Cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāngiā jābe bhāire

Cakhṣur jal khuliā dekh re mor binā

Dariẏār jal

Gāyer rakta kāṭiā dekh re mor binā sariṣār tel

Cānder bājār bhaber bājār

Ekdin hāṭ bhāṅgiā jābe bhāire

The rose blossoms but it withers away

Oh guru we ask you, we hope to find an answer to our question, our guru will answer

Oh guru, pray tell, where is the parched rice but made without grain?

Oh guru, where is the yogurt but made without milk?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

And where is the water that doesn't stem from the sea?

Oh my guru where is the mustard oil but without the mustard?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

Oh guru where is the stick made without bamboo?

Oh guru where is the rope without jute?

The rose blossoms but it withers away

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day the market will shut down! Hear all!

If you open your mouth, and uproot your teeth, and you find rice made without grain

Open your skull and the grey matter contained inside is the yogurt made without milk

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day it will shut down! Hear all!

Dismantle your bones from your body and you will find the stick without bamboo,

Dissect your veins to find the rope without jute

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace

One day it will shut down! Hear all!

Open your tearful eyes to find the water that doesn't belong to the sea

Cut open the body to find the blood, which is the mustard oil without the mustard

In this moonlit marketplace, in this earthly marketplace One

day the market will shut down! Hear all!

36. *Sādu dyahār māje ājā*[170] *kāẏ*

Buije suije sabār māje tathya bala bāi

Jakhan dyahāṭā janam re haise

Sei samaẏe brahmābhānder jībṭā kathāẏ raiāche

Bala bala āmāẏ balare dyahār urdha ardha kun jāgāẏ

Ār jīb āttā bhut re āttā ki sammandha haẏ

Bal bal āmāẏ bal re dyahār ūrdhvā adhaḥ kun

Jāgāẏ buije suije sabār māje

Tathya bala bāi

Ār dyahār mājhe kun jāgāẏ śwaśān

[170] In Rājbanshi lect 'r' is not pronounced on most occasions.

Kathāẏ ache nīlāhāṭi kathāẏ

Golakdhām

Ksheti ab tej marut byom dyahār

Bala bala āmāẏ balare dyahār urdha ardha kun jāgāẏ

Buije suije sabār māje tathya bala bāi

Oh Guru, who is the king of the body?

Please, explain to all present The

theory of your deep understanding

When does this body originate?

Where then does the *Jivā* reside in the Universe?

Tell tell, please do tell me, where lies the top and the bottom of this body?

What is the relation

Between *Jivātmā*[171] and *Bhutātmā*[172]?

Please tell me, do tell me

Where is the body's *ūrdhvā* and *adhaḥ* corners[173]?

Please explain, amidst all

The theory of your deep understanding

Where is the crematorium within the body?

[171] The non- material, eternal soul

[172] The material soul

[173] Refers to the primary directions known as *Diśā*, or *Dik, ūrdhvā*
Upwards (zenith) and *adhaḥ* or downwards (nadir), in this context it refers to the corners of the human

Where *Nilāhāti?*[174]Where is

the *Golakdhām?*[175]When

was the body born?

Where was the Universe situated?

The elements of earth, water, fire, air, sky[176]

Where are the body's *ūrdhvā* and *adhaḥ* corners?[177]

Please, explain to all present

The theory of your deep understanding

37. *Ōho sādubhāi balibo ārore ki*

Jāna yadi gācher tatta dyaō bicār kari

Āgam ghare dekhbe man nigam kācārī

Ṣoloṭā gāche dekhre man ēkkhān pātārī

Sarge hailo gācher garā hāẏre mance tārere ḍāl

Cāirṭā ḍāl kuṛikhān sānkā dekhite baṛa bhāla

Ōho sādubhāi balibo ārore ki Cāirṭā ḍāle das

deuniẏā kare kācārī

Kāṭile gāchṭā barte, nā kāṭile huṭā mare

[174] Is a metaphor for a market of carnal temptations and illusions, *Nilā* is actually a Rājbaṃśī colloquial way of saying *lilā,* which in this context stands for worldly temptations and illusions that deters one from their path of devotion.

[175] This is an ancient rural game, which consists of sixty-four rooms, and in order to finish the game, one needs to ascend to the highest room, which is called the *Golakdhām*

[176] Refers once again to the *pañca bhūta* or the five great elements.

[177] Refers to the primary directions known as *Diśā*, or *Dik, ūrdhvā* or upwards (zenith) and *adhaḥ* or downwards (nadir), in this context it refers to the corners of the human body.

Ammar hay̆ bhāi jalpān karāle

Oh esteemed Sage!

I have so much to ask you

If you know the theory of the tree

Please explain it to me

Dear mind, peer into the *Agamghar*[178]

Which contains the

nigamkachari[179]The sixteen trees only

have one leaf O Heart!

The roots of the tree climb up to heaven

The branches are hanging on the earth

Four stems carry twenty branches Oh

what a sight it is!

Oh esteemed Sage!

I have so much to tell you

In the four stems

The ten landlords conduct their courts

If you chop off the tree, it will only keep growing

If you don't chop it, it will die

The tree becomes immortal if you water it

[178] Secret room of worship (Tantric connotation)

[179] A secret court (Tantric connotation)

38. *Āmāẏ kaō sunihe gurudhan*

Kebā guru kebā śiśya jānte ākincan

Ār guru tatta ki padārthya haẏ

Gu kāre ru kāre ki padārthya haẏ

Ēi ye balo balo āmāẏ balo re

Hāẏre jānte cāi tār mulkāraṇ

Kebā guru kebā śiśya jānte ākincan

Ār sandhyā debir kibā ākṛ iti

Dine tinbār kenbā aisere sandhyā gāẏetri

Ēi ye balo balo āmāẏ balo re

Hāẏre jānte cāi tār mulkāraṇ

Kebā guru kebā śiśya jānte ākincan

Ār na jani sei tatta samākār

Jāniba baile daẏal guru kāmanā āmār

Ei ye ki paddhatite sandhyā puja haẏ Hāẏre
jānte cāi tār mulkāraṇ

Kebā guru kebā śiṣya jānte ākincan

Tell me oh esteemed Guru

Who is the Guru and who is the disciple?

I am eager to know

What is *Gurutattva?*[180]

What matter comprises Gu-ru?

Oh do tell me, let me know I pray

I wish to know the main reason behind

Being a Guru

Who is the Guru and who is the disciple?

I am eager to know

What is the form of the Goddess of the Dusk?

Why does one has to perform daily Thrice

the evening *gayatri*?

Tell me oh esteemed Guru

Who is the Guru and who is the disciple?

I am eager to know

I don't know any of those doctrines

That I will get to know it from You, Is

my deepest desire, oh esteemed Guru!

What is the process of an evening *puja*?

I am keen to know the principle behind it

Who is the Guru and who is the disciple?

I am eager to know

[180] The doctrine preached by the Guru to the *śiśya.*

39. *Ō ki ōhore sādhujan*

Ōre kichu tatta balo re ekhan

Ō ki ōhore sādhujan

Ār kise hoila mor naukākhāni

Kebā hoila baiṭhā

Ār kebā hoila pātāl puṛi

Kāṇḍāri hoila kebā re

Balo sādhu balo āmāre

Ō ki ōhore sādhujan

Ār haṁsa care masat māre

Māchur bāndhe āil

Ār kothaẏ āmār nāẏer garā

Ke diẏāche hāil re

Balo sādhu balo āmāre

Ō ki ōhore sādhujan

Ār kebā āmār hailo chāunī

Ke bā guner darī

Ār āmi abhāgā kichu nā jāni Sunāo

nā ājire

Oh my esteemed sadhu!

Narrate some theories today

Oh my esteemed sadhu!

Oh what is my boat made of?

Who became the oar?

And who became the netherworld?

Who became the boatman?

Oh pray tell, sadhu, tell me!

Oh my esteemed sadhu! On the dry river bed the swans catch fish

The fisherman is building the dyke And where is the tip of my boat? And who is ploughing, Oh pray tell, sadhu, Tell me!

Oh my esteemed sadhu!

And who became my boat-shade?

Who is the halyard? Me, the unlucky one, don't know anything Oh pray tell, sadhu, tell me!

40. *Guru tānā nā*

Guru tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā āisenā

Ō mui deruṭā kāṭiā āliṭā pātānu re

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā

Ō mui hāṭuā deṅgite chokhiṭā narānure

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā

Bhāb dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā

Ō mui chokhuṭā gutāite jhik khān āulānure

Ō guru oiṭhe hol mor tānā nā Bhāb

dile bhāb kyānebā

Āisenā.

O Guru! tānā nā[181]

O Guru! tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

I have placed the dyke after breaking the *deru*[182],

O Guru! That is my nature

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

Instead of using my knees to cross the canal,

I tried with my eyes O Guru! That

is my nature, tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love? I have

wounded the small bamboo sticks by hitting them with

my eyes

O Guru! That is my nature tānā nā

Why doesn't one get love in return of love?

[181] a common melody

[182] Fishing equipment

41. *Ōre ēman sundar naukā*

Dekhiāẏ nāgche bhaẏ

Kon mājhiṭā cālāẏ naukā baiṭhā dhare kāẏ

Ō ki mājhire

Tomar kon kāṣṭher taiẏāri naukā

Kaẏkhān phālā kaẏkhān uẏā

Kaẏtā pāc tor āchere mārā

Ō ki mājhire

Āśe pāse kaẏ hāt tarī

Kaẏ hāt tor guner dharī

Kiser chāoni kiser kāoẏāri

Ō ki mājhire

Naukāẏ tore kaẏ hātā jal

Naukār jal tor chekere kāẏ

Kon mājhiṭā cālāẏ naukā baiṭhā dhare kāẏ

Oh what a majestic boat!

Its sight intimidates me

Who is the boatman steering the boat?

Who is holding the oars?

Oh boatman!

What wood is this boat made of? In the boat's anatomy- how many planks Are supported by how many rails?

How many screws have you used To

hold it together?

Oh boatman!

What is the length and breadth of your boat?

How long is the halyard?

What's the shade made of?

And what makes its structure?

Oh boatman!

How much water has seeped inside your boat?

Who is to sieve out the water?

Who is the boatman steering the boat?

Who is holding the oars?

42. *Ō ki ohore deunīẏā*

Jāgā jami tor āche re katalā

O ki deunīẏā

Ār bāṛir bhiṭā tor katakhān jami

Katalā tor jami ābādi

Kata rākhisit jal yāoẏā nāli

Ō ki ohore deunīẏā

Ār jamin ki tor pāṭṭā karā

Khās jamin tor āche kinā

Kata jamir tui dichit re khājenā

Ō ki ohore deunīẏā

Kata rākhilo galā bhartī

Dekhilo nā tui garīb dukhi

Śeṣe habe tor bhisan durgati

Oh Landlord, how much fields and lands do you own?

Oh Landlord, how many acres of land is your house built on?

How many acres are cultivated?

How many hosepipes to water your field?

Oh Landlord, how much land is a leasehold?

How much land is owned by you?

For how many lands have you paid taxes?

Oh Landlord

How much did you keep stuffed up in your granary?

Without sparing a glance to the poor

Your outcome will be disastrous

Oh Landlord

43. *Param ārtya param brahma je jan nirākār*

Ore e brahmanda je srijan tāre

Nije hailen swārākār

Ōki ore sadujan

Anādir ādi hailen jini

Prakṛti o chilen tini

Sunya bhare purikhāni karilen basumātā

Ore paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

Ōki ore sadujan
Śaktir garbhe anda hailo

Andate brahmanda karilo

Mahābiṣnur janma hailo kshirod basati tār

Ōre paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

Ōki ore sadujan

Prakṛti puruṣ haite

Moha tatter janma tāte

Adham bale trigunote janma tin janār

Ore paramārtha param brahma je jan nirākār

He, the Formless Person, the supreme meaning, Supreme Brahma, who created this Universe, is himself incarnate as the sacred syllable

Oh hear me all the saints!

He who was the beginning of the beginningless,

Who is also Primordial Nature

Filled the Goddess Earth's empty houses,

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

Oh hear me all the saints!

In the womb of Śakti the Egg is formed

Then the Egg transforms into the Universe

The great Viṣnu was born and starts residing in the sea of milk

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

Oh hear me all the saints!

The masculine and the feminine gave birth to

The theory of attachment

This ignorant says that the three cardinal qualities are born

Oh the creator of absolute meaning, the Brahman is formless

44. *Bali hāẏre khyapā kathā śun*

Purṇa brahma ardha candra mudhyot kyāne śun

Ār pubadige kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Ār sare a sarey ā hraswa i dirgha ī kun dale boise

Hāẏre kaōto kaōto kaōto āji re

Ō Hāẏre hraswa i dirgha ī kun dale boise

Ār uttar dike kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Hraswa u dirgha ū hāsu li ē ai kun dale boise

Hāẏre kaōto kaōto kaōto śuni āji re

Ār paccim dike kaẏṭā aikhar āche

Ār kun dalate āllāhādīni kun dale boise

Ō hāẏre lā il lā hā il lā lā

Hāẏre āllāhādīni kun dale

Kun dale boise

Bali hāẏre khyapā kathā śun

Purṇa brahma ardha candra mudhyot kyāne śun

Listen to me, oh madcap soul, hear my words

Brahma is full

The moon is partial

So why is there a void in the middle?'

How many letters are there in the East?

And 'a', '*ā', 'i' 'ī'*[183] belong in which group?

Oh dear, tell me, I am listening *'i' 'ī'* belong in which group?

And how many letters are there in the North? 'u',

'ū', 'ṝ', 'ḷ', 'ē', 'ai' belong in which group?

And how many letters are there in the West? Oh

dear! In which group does *āllāhādīni*[184]belong?

Oh dear! *lā il lā hā il lā lā*[185]

Oh dear! In which group does *āllāhādīni* belong?

Listen to me, oh madcap soul, hear my words

Brahma is full

The moon is partial

[183] The first four vowels of the Bengali alphabet

[184] *Āllāhdini* is synonymous with Rādhā and symnolizes pure bliss and joy who acts as a bridge between the devotee and God.

[185] "There is no god but Allah."

So why is there a void in the middle?'

45. *Hāire param tatta jānba baile*

Bāsanā āmār

Patit paban doẏāl guru

Tumi sarba mulādhār

Ke guru kebā śiśya

Ke garilo ēi biśwya

Agyān timirāndhasya

Ghucāiẏā deo andhakār

Kise hailo deha gaṭhan

Dehe āche kon māhājan

Āge janma hailo kār

Hāire param tatta jānba baile

Bāsanā āmār

Oh to know the ultimate theory

Is my heart's desire!

The Kind Guru

Who emancipates the sinners

You are the mulādhār[186]

[186] Root of existence or the root *cakra* in the yogic body [199] *māhājan* refers to someone who has supreme knowledge. [200] Rājvaṃśī pronounce 'r' as 'a'.

Who is the Guru?

And who is the Śiśya?

Who created this Universe?

Blinded in the darkness of ignorance

I pray you obliterate this darkness

With what was the body crafted?

Which Supreme Spirit[199] resides inside?

Who was born first? Oh to the

know ultimate theory Is my

heart's desire!

Aspāli (Rasapāli)[200]

46. *Rādhe baliba ki tore*

Āmi ye tor premer marā

Eisāchi dwāre

Śun rādhe go Bahu dine

āsilen hethā disnā rādhe

prāne byathā

Āśā bharsā sakali go tomāri

Śun rādhe go

Kaṭu kathā kais nā rādhe

Hatabhāgā tor caran dhare

Manabānchā purāo āmāre

Āmi je tor premer marā

Eisāchi dwāre

Oh Radhe, what should I tell you?

I am dying in your love,

Here I am at your doorstep

Listen to me, my dear Radhe

I am here after ages, I beg you,

Don't break my heart

My hope and my faith, all is You

Listen to me, my dear Radhe

Don’t utter harsh words, Radhe

This wretched man begs at your feet

Why don’t you fulfil my desire?

I am dying in your love

Here I am at your doorstep

47. *Kriṣna premer poṛā dehā kemne bujhābo balo Kāỳ bujhibe antarer byathā*

Rādhe go

Yeinā deśe bandhuỳā geise seinā deśe jābo

Bandhuyā bandhuỳā baile nagare ghuṛibo re balo

Śun rādhe go

Torā nāki balite pāro mor bandhuỳār kathā Mor

bandhuỳār dekhā pāile kaben dui cāir kathā go balo

How to extinguish Kṛṣṇa's burnt body of love?

Who is to understand his heart's sorrow?

Dear Radhe,

I will seek my beloved in whichever land she dwells

I will wander in that city uttering her name in love

Listen, dear Radhe

Is it true, that you know of my Beloved?

If you get to see her, in a few words, let her know

48. *Ō jībane āmār sukh nāi antare*

Dibā niśi prāṇ kānde mor

Ai rādhā bine

Ōre subol tui āmāre prāṇer sakhā

Rādhāre āniā dekhā

Rādhār kathā mor pare re mane

Buk bhije dui naẏaner jale

Dere subol rādhāre āniā

Ō subol re

Ōre subol jabo āmi dui diner pare

Rādhāre āniā de re

Purba kathā mor pare re mane

Buk bhije dui naẏaner jale

Bahe dhārā mor āṛāl megher mata

Ō subol re

In my life, there's no joy in my heart

My heart ails day and night

Without my Rādhā

Oh my Subol[187], you are my heart's companion

Bring me and manifest my Rādhā

I keep reminiscing about my Rādhā My

heart is drenched in my tears

Please bring me my Rādhā, dear Subol

Oh Subol

I am about to depart in two days

Please bring me my Rādhā

I am reminded of old times

My heart is drenched in my tears

The stream flows like hidden clouds

Oh my Subol

49. *Ōki oge baṛāi āji dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba ge pāṛ*

Baṛāi dil daṛiẏār tuphān ōre bhāri

Ōre aiṭhe āche baṛāi chaẏ jhan ore mājhī

Baṛāi dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba ge pāṛ

Baṛāi ye nāiẏāẏ mok karibe pār

Ōre tāke dim baṛāi gālār hār

Baṛāi āro dim mui kāner kāncā ore sonā

[187] A cowherd, childhood friend, and confidante of Kṛṣṇa.

Bāṛir nā catur ore pāthe ore nānān aṅger phul phuiṭāche

Baṛāi seo phul mor nā nāge kunay kāje

Ōki ōge baṛāi dil daṛiẏāṭā kemne haba paṛ

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

Oh grandma, the storm is rising in the River of Love

Six boatman are waiting, Grandma

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

The boatman who will help me cross

Will not only get my necklace, grandma

But also my gold earrings

Myriad flowers bloom around my house, but

they are of no use, grandma

Tell me dear grandma, how do I cross the River of Love today?

50. *Ō mui michāẏ genu jal ānibār ge ainā nadīr ghāṭe ge*

Ki haila bāi mor nārir kapāle

Āji kun rasiā bājāẏ ge ore bāṁ śī

Ōre bāṁ śīr sure man mor sadāẏ jhure ge

Āji candra surya yeman jaliā ore uṭhe

Ai matan nārir man mor sadāẏ jale ge

I was pretending to carry water from the banks of that river But

what did I, a woman, gain after all?

Who is the passionate flautist playing his magic flute?

My heart is weeping to the melody of his flute

As the sun and moon illuminate diurnally

My woman's heart burns eternally

51. *Śyam Kālīẏā mor bājāẏ bāṁ śī*

Yamunār pāre pāre

Bāṁ śīr sure mor nārir man

Āulā āuli kare re

Manharā niṭhur Kālīẏā re

Ōho mor Kālīẏā re

Rādhā nāme tor sādhā bāṁ śī

Mor nārīr man haẏ udāsī

Māne nā man mor thāke nā ghare

Kemne yāo mui yamunār pāṛe

Ōho mor Kālīẏā re

Dekhibār ase mui kariā chal

Kalasi niẏā yāṁ ānibār jal

Jal bharoṁ mui dhīre dhīre

Dekhaṁ kālā tok aṛe ṭhaṛe

The Dark One[188], my *Shyām* plays the flute

On the banks of Yamuna

My woman's heart trembles in ecstasy

The captor of my heart, the merciless Dark One

Oh my Dark One

Your flute is tuned to the name of Rādhā

My woman's heart becomes melancholic

My heart is impatient and cannot stay trapped How

do I reach the banks of Yamuna?

Oh my dark One

In the hope of seeing you, I pretend

To carry my pot to fetch water

I fill up the pots very slowly

While my eyes wander around,

Just to catch a glimpse of you

52. *Aylā maner jwālā mane jāne ār jānibe re kāẏ*

Ore kāẏ āche mor āpan janā mor

Mantāk re bujaẏ

Ār chāṛiẏā geise prāṇer kālā re

Ēkelā ghare ore thuiẏā

Ore mui abhāgi basiā re ācho

Panther dike cāẏāre

[188] Śyām and Kālīyā mean the same thing, 'Dark Lord', and are names of Kṛṣṇa.

Ore prāṇer kālā mor āsibe kataẏ dine

Ār mor narīṭār kapāl paṛā re

Kālā geise ore chāṛi

Ore dine āti man kāndeche sei kālār lāgiāre Ore

keman kari thākim ēkelā ghare

Who else can feel the pangs of my heart?

Who is my very own, my dear one Who

can heal this pain?

The beloved Dark One has left me by myself

All alone in my chamber

Oh this unfortunate inamorata sits alone

With her eyes set on the pathway

Wonders when her beloved Dark One will return

This is me, the ill-fated woman

The one whom the Dark One abandoned

Day and night my heart weeps for my Dark One

Oh pray tell, how do I remain alone in this empty chamber?

53. *Aylāẏ nānān kāthā pham paṛeche*

Thākiẏā bichināt

Ore gul gulāche nārīr man mor

Ninde re dhare nā

O mor subol subol re

Ore tuire subol nā karis āo

Jwaleche mor nārīr gāo

Kunṭhe gele mui kālār nāgāl pāo

Ō mor subol subol re

Ore jāg dhare pirīter dyao[189]

Ojhāẏ baidẏa nā pāo thyao[190]

Kunṭhe gele mui kālār nāgāl pāo

Ō mor subol subol re

Aphalā ḍālimer kaṛā

Phul phuiṭāche jaṛā jaṛā

Bhamar bine phuler madhu yāche sukiā

Today, memories are crowding in my head

Lying on this bed

This woman's heart is gurgling within

And my eyes are sleep deprived

Oh my deal Subol

Why are you mute? My

woman's body is burning Oh

where should I go?

To find him within my reach?

[189] *Dyao* means spectre/ghoul in Rājbaṃśī

[190] Thyao means being on the age, the inability to find a way in Rājbaṃśī, or "thai" in Bengali .

Oh my dear Subol

The one who is haunted by the spectre of Love

A wizard or a healer stumbles to cure Oh

where should I go?

To find him within my reach?

Oh my dear Subol

The fruitless pomegranate tree

Nurtures only pairs of flowers

The nectar is drying out without the bumblebee

54. *Āre ō ore prāner kālā*

Ki māẏā nāgāilen āmār hṛ ide re

Tor kālār pīṛitir māẏā

Sadāẏ jhore mor nārīr hiẏā re

Chokher jale mor buk bhijiā paṛe re

Nā dekhiā tomār mui

Bhānge mor nārīr buk

Kene prān mor kānde tomār bāde re

Nin geile mui swapan pāṁkhābār basile mui biṣam khāṁ

Tomār mata kāoke nā dekhaṁ re

Yadi kālā āmāẏ chāro māthāẏ hasta diẏā satya kāro

Marba kālā galāẏ kāṭāri diẏā re

Mor kathā yakhan paṛibe mane

Yāẏā dekhen mok śwasān ghāṭe

Citā dhoẏān mor dui naẏaner jale re

Oh my beloved Dark One,

Oh, what spell of enchantment did you cast on my heart

The spell of your black love

Makes my woman's heart quiver with a mad passion

My breasts become soaked in my tears

'My woman's heart breaks to pieces

Without seeing you

Why does this heart cry without You?

Even when I am immersed in my dreams, I almost choke myself

I haven't seen anyone quite like you

You have to promise me touching my head, that you won't leave me

If you did, I would have to put a knife to my neck and die

When you will remember me

You would have to find me in the cremation ground Perhaps
wash my funeral pyre with your tears

55. *Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re*

Dariẏāte nāi matsa re

Ō nāgar kānāi bagilā kene ōre paṛe

Tor saṅge mor nāi re piṛiti

Manṭāẏ kene jhore re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ghoṛāśāle ghuri bandi re

Ō nāgar kānāi matsa bandi ore jāle

Puruṣ bhomrā jāti bandi nārīr kole re

Nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Gāch madhye baṭa bṛ iksha re o nāgar kānāi

Bāṛiā yāẏ ore latā

Āmito nāi bhāṅgire piṛiti

Bhāṅgise bidhātā re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re

Bāpeke nāikaṁ nāje kānāi re

Bhāiẏak nāikaṁ ōre ḍare

Sar sutār bhij bastar yaiban hāliā

Paṛe re nāgar kānāiẏā re

Ō nāgar kānāiẏā re Oh my

clandestine lover, Kānāi[191]Even

though there's no fish in the river

Why do the cranes keep hovering, Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi? If

I am no longer in love with you[181]

Why does my heart keep throbbing, oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi?

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

The mare is captive in the stable

Oh my clandestine lover, the fish is trapped in the water

Look at the bumblebees; the male is bound to the female in her grasp

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Within the branches of the great Banyan

The creepers start crowding

I didn't break the bond of love

Almighty has broken it

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

I can't disclose it to my father, thanks to my shame

[191] Another name for Kṛṣṇa

Not even to my brother, trembling out of fear

My youth shrinks, as a fine garment spun from six threads when it grows wet

Oh my clandestine lover, Kānāi

56. *Man tui kāndis kārbāde*

Man tui bhābis kārbāde

Ōre kāndile ki milibere maner

Mānuṣ janamer mate

Ōre yār ṭāne tui kāndiā beṛāis Se

nā kānde hāẏre tor bāde

Bāre bāre abalār man kulbālā Prem

sāgare tui mok bhāsālo

Ō mok ḍubālo

Ō prān sakhi go man hariā nilo

Man carā rasik nāgar

Kathāẏ re lukāilo

For whom do you weep, dear mind?

Whom do you think of, dear mind? If you cry,

will you get the man of your heart For an

eternity?

You may keep weeping to his enchanting tune But
alas he doesn’t return your tears

Time and again, my weak and feminine

domestic heart

Was set afloat and drowned

By You

Oh my soul mate you stole my heart The

thief of my heart

You sensual, clandestine lover

Where did He hide?

57. *Buṛā gharer uẏā yeman ghune jaro re jwar Ō*

re dine āite jhurechere nā nāge mor nārīr antar

Ō mui kāke kahim duḥkha habāre kathāre

Ō mor bādi halek parameśwar

Ore aytaẏ duḥkha dilo re bidhi

Mor maner bhitar

Ō mui yeitāẏ hāẏ mane karisu āśāre

Ō mui kāhāker nā kara ḍar

Ō re nā nāge mok jogāre jamin

Nā nāge bāṛī ghar

Like the bamboo frames

Supporting the roof of the old mud hut That has

been eaten to bits by the termites

Day and night my woman's heart crumbles

bit by bit As it is not understood

Oh whom should I tell about my sorrows Almighty

went against me

Fate punished the deepest core of my heart

With tremendous pain

Now I have prepared myself with conviction

That I will never again be afraid

I no longer need the land nor the workman

Nor do I need a house to reside in

Tukkhā Songs Influenced by Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism

58. *Khyapā jāniāo jāna nā*

Ōre ēktā lāṅgaler chaẏtā balad ripu chaẏ janā

Ār lāṅgalero duiṭi pāśe hāẏre

Gaur ār nitāi

Māir kheẏeo dhākkā māre

Jogāi ār mādhāi

Ār sei hāluā halo boẏaẏre

Yei jaminer mājhe

Sei nā jamin kathāẏ railo

Dehor bhitare

Oh madcap soul, even knowing the truth, you don't understand it The plough is held by six bulls

And the six *ripus*

And on both sides of the plough

Are Gaur and Nitāi[192]

Beaten from the back, they still keep pushing

Jogāi and Mādhāi[207]

And that ploughman bears the plough

In the middle of that field

Where is that field located Inside the

human body?

59. *Yadi bhabo pār yete cāo man bāsanā*

Gurur caran kar sādhanā

Bhaber kāndārī śrīdaẏāl nitāi

Bhaba pār yetere jiber sādhya nāi

Tāi balo man hari balo mane

Bhabo pār yete bhābnā rabe nā

Chāiote ghi ḍhālile kona prāpti habe nā

Guru chārā jiber anya gatire habe nā

Guru bandha bātāśe deo bādām tuile

[192] Refers to Sri Caitanya and his principal friend and disciple, Nityānanda. [207] Refers to the two sinners who were redeemed by Gaur and Nitāi.

Bhabo pār yete bhābnā rabe nā

Yadi bhabo pār yete cāo man bāsanā

Gurur caran kar sādhanā

If it is your heart's desire

To cross over to the other side

Of this earthly existence,

You must worship your Guru's feet

If you wish to cross

To the other side

The boatman steering the cosmic boat

Is the Compassionate One, Nitāi

Mortals cannot cross the cosmic realm

On their own

Hence, chant the name of Hari, oh mind!

You will no longer have worries to cross the sea of existence

Pouring ghee into the ashes won't yield anything

Without a Guru, mortals will fail to achieve their culmination

If you hoist the sails of a boat

To the winds obeying the Guru's commands

You will no longer have worries to cross the sea of existence

Over to the other side

If it is your heart's desire

To cross over to the other side

Of this earthly existence

You must worship your Guru's feet

60. *Ḍub dile pābigo ratan*

Bhakti rase āche gherā

seto phuler madhu bharā

Akul prem sāgarer mājhe

Raśikh janāẏ ḍub diẏāche re

Hāẏre ēkhai bindu pān karile

Ghuce yābe maner dhādā

Seto phuler madhu bharā

Ār phuler bhitar āche ye re nol

Tāhār upar rādhā kānon he

Hāẏ re tāhār upar chaẏ mañjarī

Hari dhani kare tāṛā

Seto phuler madhu bharā

Ār aṣṭa daler niśarī kāle

Uṛiā baśilo ḍāle he

Hāẏ re ṭhekis nā man bālucare

Ṭhekile habo disāhārā

Seto phuler madhu bharā

Once you take a dip

You will find the jewel

It is crusted in *Bhakti rasa*[193]

It is filled with nectar of flowers

In the bottomless ocean of love

The passionate lovers have taken a dip

Oh Mind! If you sip even a single drop The

conflict of the mind will be solved

It is filled with nectar blossom

The nose-ring is inside the flower

And on top rests

The Garden of Rādhā

On it blossoms six buds

Which chant the name of Hari

It is filled with nectar blossom

The lotus with eight petals[194]

The mind should sit on it

In a nocturnal flight,

Oh Mind, do not get stuck on the sand banks

Otherwise you will become directionless

[193] Bhakti is a specific state of rasa, an experience within which the devotee is immersed in feeling devotion and love towards Kṛṣṇa, it is a state of becoming one with Kṛṣṇa.

[194] This song is filled with Tantric Vaiṣṇava symbols like the eight petalled lotus: '*aṣtadal*'- According to Vaiṣṇava Sahajiya doctrines, "the body is made up of several vertically arranged successive sections, called padmas (lotuses) or sarovaras (lotus ponds). Thought about the locations and functions of these padmas is borrowed by the Sahajiyas directly from the Tantras: only the terminology sometimes differs. Somewhere below the lotus pond of the belly is another pond, and in it grows a lotus of eight petals. This is sometimes called the lotus of the thigh (ura). This pond is

It is filled with nectar blossom

61. *Āmār Kṛṣṇa lilār bājāre*

Āmār gaẏur lilār bājāre abhāb yāẏre yāẏ

Acumbit[210] *kathāre*

Ār kalite apurba lilāre sune lajjā pāẏ

Ār bilāir kalo indur keman

Suiẏe nidrā yāẏ

Ār indur bilāi sarpa tin janā

Ēkoi ghare basat kare

Iṁsāō kare nā

Ār suiẏer chidra majār kathāre

Pār haẏe yaẏ garja bhare

Abhāb yāẏ re yāẏ

In the bāzār of my Kṛṣṇa's dalliance

---

gloomy and dark. It is the lake of the physical aspect of the worshipper, before he has been transformed. The first and lowest lotus has six petals. In this lotus the lilā of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is taking place. Above this is a lotus of eight petals, in which are hidden the eight sakhis, the companions of Rādhā. Above this is a hundred-petalled lotus, in which is the knowledge of the truth of the guru; wise men take refuge in this lotus. In the highest place of all is the lotus of a thousand petals, in which the Lord himself resides. One who knows the truth of these lotuses says the text, knows the most profound form of the lila of Rādhā̄ and Kṛṣṇa." (Dimock, 1966 174-75).

[210] Amusing

In the bāzār of my Gaur's dalliance

All *abhāva* vanishes

It's an amusing fact

That in the Kaliyuga[195], there's shame

Even after hearing the tale of this

delightful dalliance

And the mouse sleeps in the lap of the cat

The mouse, the cat, and the snake

Cohabit in the same room

Without any violence

The mouse sleeps in the lap of the cat

The mouse, the cat, and the snake

Cohabit in the same room

Without any violence

The needle-head is a funny tale!

Eager, the three pass through it

It's a funny tale

All *abhāva* vanishes

62. *Gurur kāche kar āge man ṭhikānā Prabartter kāj śeṣ nā hole*

Yāo yadi mon sādhaker deśe

Ṭhekbi giẏā māiẏār hāste

Lābh karā tor habe nā

[195] Metaphor for the present age, full of darkness and sins.

Prabartter kāj purṇa kar

Māiẏā haẏā māiẏā dhar

Takhan sādhok deśe nirak kar

Milbe re tor ṣolo ānā

First train your mind under the Guru's guidance

Without finishing the training of *Pravarta*[196]

If you want to travel to the land of the *sadhaka*[197]

You will fall into the trap of a woman

You won't gain anything

Finish the training of *Pravarta*

Turn into a woman before falling for a woman

Only then will you attain the whole

In the land of the *sadhaka*

63. *Goẏur tui mok pāgal karāli re*

Anāther nāth goẏur he

Pāgal ye karāli goẏur

Doẏe nā karāli more

Morā ke jitāite pāro

Yadi mane karore anāther nāth

[196] *Pravarta* is one of the four stages of Vaishnavism intended for true realization of divine love.

[197] A spiritual practitioner

Goẏur he

Sarpa haẏe ḍhṁsāo he goẏur

Bauddha haẏe jhāro

Morā ke jitāite pāro

Yadi mane karore anāther nāth

Goẏur he

Gaur, you made me crazy, Protector of the destitute Oh

Gaur!

You made me crazy, Gaur,

You didn't have any mercy on me

You bring the dead back to life If it is

your will, Protector of the destitute Oh

Gaur!

You strike like a serpent

Like a Buddhist healer

You bring the dead back to life

If it is your will, Protector of the destitute

Oh Gaur![198]

64. *Ō mari hāẏre haẏ*

[198] It is interesting to note that Kṛṣṇa is depicted as potentially malevolent here.

Prem nā jāne yeo jan Gaur kulote rayˋ

Ār prem koirāche jhane jhane re

Premer janma keman kariā hayˋ kunkhāne

Ēiye kun premete janma maran re

Hāyˋre kon premete baikanṭha dhāyˋ

Ār kālo sarpa ṣoloṭiā re

Sarpa āre ḍoṁsilo māyˋer bukote

Ēi biṣe ranga jaro jaro re

Hāyˋre bāṛile biṣ ujān dhāyˋ

Ār sarper māthāyˋ byang ye nāce

Sarpa keno āhār āro nāhi ye kare

Ēiye byang bujhi ōjhā āche re

Hāyˋre sei janya byang nāce māthāyˋ

Alas!

Even those who do not know of love

Remain in the lineage of Gaur

One by one, scores have fallen in love

How is love born? And in which place?

Which love causes birh and death?

Alas, which love leads one to heaven?

The black snake is forming sixteen coils

The snake bites the breast of the mother

This poison makes the body stifle in pain

As one attempts to extract the poison

It only rises upwards

As the frog dances on the snake's head Why

doesn't the snake devour it?

It looks like the frog is the healer

Alas! That is why it dances on the snake's head

65. *Man tore sājā dibo re*

Baiṣnaber pade giẏāre

Man tore sājā dibo re

Ō rabot manare

Guru hailo māṭiā ālu

Śiśya haila tār khantā

Ār khacāite khacāite elāẏ kaire

Nijjya kathāre man tore

Ō rabot manare

Guru yābe naukāẏ naukāẏ

Śiśya yābe heṭe

Ār guru śiśyer dekhā haibe

Śrikholār bājāre

Man tore sājā dibo re

Oh Mind, I will punish you

After throwing you at the feet of Guru Vaishnav

Oh Mind, I will punish you

Oh unaware mind!

The Guru resembles a potato in the soil

The *śiṣya* is the shovel

While digging through the soil Both of

them exchange intimate words

Oh unaware mind!

The Guru will sail in boats

The *śiṣya* will keep walking

They will both meet at the Srikholā bazaar[199]

Oh Mind, I will punish you

66. *Tui baṛa ōsiā (rasiā) nitāi*

Dāruna prema bāṛālo re

Hāẏ binā tāre dotarā bājāi kāẏ

Tui mor ōsiā nitāi re

[199] This is a metaphor for a congregation of the sādhus, of the Guru and the disciples. In this context, such a meeting happens inside the body, it is like a marketplace/bazār of sādhus inside the body.

Ōre bāghe bakhaṛī juṛichure hāl Bayā

khābār āśe

Ōre bakhaṛī bāghak ḍisiā mārile

Naṃgal khyakkeā hāse

Binā tāre dotarā bājai kāẏ

Tui baṛa ōsiā (rasiā) nitāi

Ākāśa hate juṛichure hāl pātālate mai

Ēka hātu jalat thukuṛā

Thupite tāte phuṭlek khai

Mari hāẏ

Binā tāre dotarā bājai kāẏ

You are the ultimate lover, o Nitāi

You have induced love in everyone

Who is playing the dotārā[200] without the strings?

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi

The tiger and the goat are ploughing together

They wait to eat the food

The Goat rams the tiger

The plough laughs out loud

Who is playing the dotarā without the strings?

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi

I have joined the plough with the sky

And the ladder for the plough with the Underground

[200] This is an ancient stringed musical instrument, which is widely used by the Rājvaṃśī community.

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi After

planting paddy in knee deep water

It pops out as parched rice!

I am awe-struck

Who is playing the dotarā without the strings?

You are my ultimate lover, Oh Nitāi[201]

67. *Āhā bhāb yadi lāge gāẏ*

Purṇa bhāb gopīr nyaẏ

Baliteche nityānanda Rāẏ

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Bhābuker saṅga dhara

Bhāb kara upārjan

Ye bhābete rādhā pela

Srīkṛ iṣner caraṇ

Bhāb ōṭhe Caṇḍīdās

Baṛśī bāẏ bāro mās

Matsarupe rajakinī rāi

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Gaur gobinda nityānanda bāṁ sari bājāẏ

Bhāb dehe mohādeber bāgher cāmṛā gāẏ

Bhāb uṭhe dharā debī

[201] This song has a number of Rājbaṃśī dialectal features, in contrast to, say, the next song, which is more standard middle Bengali.

Purna kara ō satī

Stan keṭe bandak rekhe atithi sebāẏ

Dākiteche brajer shyamrāẏ

Oh if the essence of *bhāva* touches the body it resembles the complete *bhāva* which touches the *gopis*

Says Nityānanda Ray

In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ[202]

Let the true lover be your companion

Let yourself earn the love

The love, for which, Rādhā had attained Sri Kṛṣṇa's feet

The love arises within Caṇḍīdās

He lays the bait for twelve months

To have in the fish form Rajakini Rāi[203]

In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ

Gaur, Govinda, and Nityānanda play the flute

Mahadev's body, is so full of love,

Hence is merely in a tiger-skin suit

[202] Is another name for Kṛṣṇa

[203] Her real name was Rami and she was the muse and lover of poet Caṇḍīdās and a washerwoman by profession.

Dharā Devi[204] is overcome with love In

order to perform hospitality, Sati

Chops off her breasts as a pledge

In Braj, lures Shyamrāẏ

68. *Āẏre dehe baṛśī bāinte yāi nautan kare*

Manre āẏre dehe baṛśī bāinte yāi nautan kare

Ō tor sāṛe tin rati ghāte jwale gyaner bāti

Gaurāṅga nityānanda śrīadwaita bhaktabrinda

Samaẏ kālate tārā mile

Manare premer baṛśī bhāber sutā

Rādhā nāme āche gāthā

Khele baṛśī mārbe ṭān

Hārāibe āpan prāṇ

Āhār khāibār lobhe

Manare ēki gācher duiṭi mūl

Tin kali cār phul

Ki śobhā dhairāche ḍāle ḍāle

Ghāṭe gaurāṅga nityānanda śrīadwaita bhaktabrinda

Manre āẏre dehe baṛśī bāinte yāi nautan kare

Come; let's tie bait to this body anew

[204] She is a puranic character and a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, also known as Sati.

Oh mind! Let's tie a bait to this body anew

Oh your three and a half *rati*[205]

Is the oil for the lamp of knowledge

Gauranga, Nityananda, Sri Advaita and the disciples

They unite at an auspicious moment in time

Oh mind! The bait of love tied with a thread in the name of Rādhā

When the bait is eaten, the thread will be pulled and your life will be lost

In the greed of eating it

Oh mind! One tree has the two roots, three buds and four flowers What

beauty blossoms in the branches!

At the pier, stand Gauranga, Nityananda, Sri Advaita and the disciples

Oh mind! Let's tie a bait to this body anew

69. *Āmār man yāi cal seikhāne*

Sunyapurī ai nitya dhāme

Ār śunyer mānuṣ śunye āśe yāẏ

Śunye thāke ṣunye base

Śunye kathā kaẏ

Ēi ye sei mānuṣke dharā nāhi yāẏ

Hāẏre sattvaguṇ er sādhan bine

[205] This is a mystic term, which is used to refer to *sādhāran* rati (related to arousing of lust), *sāmanjasya rati* (a mix of love and sexuality), *sāmartha rati* (pure love), *ardha rati* (merits attained during *sāmartha rati*). (Miya, 2009, p.92).

Ār sei mānuṣke dharite yadicāo

Akṣaẏa sarabare giẏā

Sātāri khelāo

Ēi ye daśmate ēk ḍubo dāo

Hāẏre kunḍalinī māj khāne

ki

Ō sādhubhāi bhābiā karichit

Nityānanda dise nāmṭā

Haraṣita murti

My mind let's go to that place
Into the palace of void[206] and *nitya dhāma*[207]

And the man of void, moves in void, back and forth

Dwells in void, sits in void, talk in void

Without the *sādhanā*[208] of the *sattvaguṇas*[209]

Alas! One cannot reach that man

And if you want to reach that man

Go and swim in the imperishable lake[226]

---

[206] Void could refer to the Sahajiyā concept of śūnyata, Karuna,(or Prajna and Upaya) which constitutes Bodhicitta (supreme bliss) and stand for the two two central nerves in the body and the middle nerve (spinal cord) which is the pathway of sahaja or supreme bliss.(Dasgupta 1969, 107). The sahaja mystics such as Sarahapā, Kāṇhapa, position their devotional paradigm on Śūnyatā, which is believed to be drawing inspiration from the negativist Madhyamikā philosophy of Nāgarjuṇa, the positivist school of Aśvaghoṣa as well as the Vijñāna- vāda school led by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as well as resemblance of sahaja with the Vedantic conception of reality, representing nothingness. The ultimate Void is a principal theme of the Caryāgīti, the Dohākośa of Sarahapā, as well as the Śunya Purāṇa of Ramāi Pundit, the great exponent of the Dharma-Cult in Bengal, composed allegedly in the 11th century AD and the poems of Dharmamangal(Dasgupta 1969: 39-40). 202 Nitya dhāma in Vaishnavism refers to the eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa, and in this context it is a metaphor for the human body.

[207] Nitya dhāmaVaishnavism refers to the eternal abode of Kṛ ṣ a, and in this context it is a metaphor for the human body.

[208] Spiritual practice towards attainment of the spiritual goal.

[209] *Guṇas* refers to attributes or quality of *sattva* (goodness, calmness, harmonious)

Take a dip, as the ten commandments proclaim

Oh, the *kundalini*[227] lies in the middle

Oh sadhu, my brother,

What are you up to, while deep in your thoughts?

The name has been given by Nityananda what a

resplendent figure!

70. *Guru ki majār hoila kārkhānā*

Ajamine hāl dhareche sādā pāgelā

Ēi ye ḍāine jurise bāsuā bolot re Guru

bāẏe jurise kṣetri pāl

Sāt samudrat dariẏār mājhot

Pāgelāẏ bōẏāche hāl

Ēi ye jhalār bhitar lāngal yongālre Guru

jhulir bhitar phāl

Sāt samudrat dariẏār mājhot

Pāgelāẏ bōẏāche hāl

Ēi ye sādā pāgelār ṭhāt[125] *dekhiẏāre*

Guru mantāt mor uṭheche tāo

Mane kache ai pāgelāk

Hāl bōẏā śikhāo

Guru, what an amusing workshop!

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

In a spot with no land

On the right is a ploughing bull

On the left he attaches the Owner of the land

In the middle of the seven seas

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

This plough beam and yoke sits inside his sack

Oh Guru, his pouch contains the ploughshare

In the middle of the seven seas and oceans

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

While beholding the innocent lunatic's burden

Oh Guru, I feel outraged While

my heart wishes

To teach him how to plough

Hāl bōẏā śikhāo

Guru, what an amusing workshop!

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

In a spot with no land

On the right is a ploughing bull

On the left he attaches the Protector of the land

In the middle of the seven seas and oceans

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

This plough beam and yoke sits inside his sack

Oh Guru, his pouch contains the ploughshare

In the middle of the seven seas and oceans

The innocent lunatic is ploughing

While beholding the innocent lunatic's burden

Oh Guru, I feel outraged

While my heart wishes

To teach him how to plough

Conclusion

This thesis situates the Tukkhā songs in their socio- historical and religious contexts, while studying a group of recurrent metaphors that point towards the encounters between heterodox religious ideas and practices, and socially dominant ones. Through the exploration of some of the key poetic metaphors and themes, my study highlights the devices used by the poets-practitioners to achieve a double-edged aim of both secrecy and revelation to the non-initiated curious learner. One of the other aims of this thesis was to construct a preliminary historiography of Tukkhā songs, gathering together the, admittedly, sparse secondary sources of literature and scholarly discussions on this topic. My primary focus was on collecting, transcribing, translating Tukkhā songs from Rājbaṃśī to English and preserving them as cultural and religious texts. The aim was to historically situate the literature to understand how the vocabulary

of such a religious/mystical experience was formed. While trying to understand the history of Tukkhā, it was also essential for me to situate the emotional atmosphere of the songs in relation to the material, embodied and day-today experience of the Rājbaṃśī community. We are talking about a culture of 'folk' literature that is transmitted and reproduced orally, as well as remembered and reshaped by collective memory. While looking at the performative contexts of Tukkhā, it's interesting to note that the songs may have diverse emotional impact on a diverse audience, and hence their meaning is dynamically reconstructed throughout history, through differing audience's experiences in *āśramas* or public gatherings or festivals. However, the beauty of such an oral tradition is that it is not dissociated from its historical and religious origin, as it has not yet been subjected to commercial reproduction in popular culture, hence it can still be considered as an authentic cultural and historical text. Some of the most common Tantric Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā metaphorical schemata (Hayes 2012, 113) such as the river (*nadī*) which "flows upwards" in a process of yogic manipulation of sexual fluids, which are reversed (*ulṭā*) made to flow "upwards against the current" (*sroter ujāna*) of the yogic River into the celestial realms of the "divine body", the aquatic image of ponds and lotuses situated at different points of the body, Pond of Indestructibility (*akṣaya-sarovara*), the androgynous state of *union* between the female and the male*,* achieved after the union of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, are all found in the Tukkhā songs in the present anthology, showing Tantric Vaiṣṇava influence on the songs. Nityānanda's mention in several of the Tukkhā songs was discussed in chapter I while trying to trace the Tantric lineage of these songs. Similarly, in the set of Āspali songs, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava influence is evident with the coterminous influence of Vaiṣṇavaism on the socio-cultural life of the Rājbaṃśī community in the twentieth century. Similarly the songs abound in metaphors of *dehatattva* that show a shared socio-religious historical context with the *Caryāgīti,* and Bāul-Fakir song such as the theory of 'twenty-five *tattva*', the metaphor of the body-boat, the central nerves of *Iḍā*

and *Piṅgalā*, the bodyinstrument, the middle path, the metaphor of the soul bird, and the doctrine of Guruvāda. The influence of Nāth lineage and Sahajiyā Buddhist ideas has been demonstrated in the chapter on Maynāmati. However, there are also some very unique elements about the songs, especially in the sub genre of *manaśikṣā* songs, documenting which has been one of the highlights and aims of my thesis. The use of defamiliarising metaphors are also to be found in some of the songs, e.g.

Tukkhā Song 61

Āmār Kṛṣṇa lilār bājāre
Āmār gaẏur lilār bājāre abhāb yāẏre yāẏ
Acumbit[210] *kathāre*
Ār kalite apurba lilāre sune lajjā pāẏ

Ār bilāir kalo indur keman
Suiẏe nidrā yāẏ

Ār indur bilāi sarpa tin janā
Ēkoi ghare basat kare
Iṁsāō kare nā

Ār suiẏer chidra majār kathāre
Pār haẏe yaẏ garja bhare
Abhāb yāẏ re yāẏ

In the bāzār of my Kṛṣṇa's dalliance

[210] It means amusing in Rājbaṃśī lect.

In the bāzār of my Gaur's dalliance

All *abhāva* vanishes

It's an amusing fact
That in the Kaliyuga[211], there's shame
Even after hearing the tale of this
delightful dalliance

The mouse sleeps in the lap of the cat
The mouse, the cat, and the snake
Cohabit in the same room
Without any violence

The needle-head is a funny tale!
Eager, the three pass through it
It's a funny tale
All *abhāva* vanishes

In this mysterious song, while talking about the perils of *Kaliyuga,* against the mercantile imagery of the bazaar, we are told about the amusing tale of the needlehead involving three animals- a cat, a mouse, and a snake. It could be that all forms of violence between antagonistic creatures cease to be after hearing the tales and glories of Kṛṣṇa, the impossible becomes possible, and all dearth vanishes from existence. On a metaphorical level, it is about the sexual union without of the male and the female in

[211] Metaphor for the present age, full of darkness and sins.

a state of *prema* or divine love without *kāma* or violent sexual desires. *Abhāva* stands for the opposite of *bhāva* (divine love). The cat is a metaphor for the woman's *yoni* (reproductive organ) and the mouse is a metaphor for the male genitals and in a state of *bhāva*, these apparent enemies in real life cohabit in bliss. The needle- head symbolizes the female *sunya* or void (source of life), and when the mouse enters it, the state of *Abhāva* disappears as there is the true realization of divine love free of sexual desires and lust. In another song on animal imagery, (Song 64) we come across the imagery of the frog dancing on the head of a serpent, which has been compared to the process of *dehasādhanā* between the male and the female (Dasgupta, 1969, 140).

Another methodological challenge was the absence of authorship in the songs, which made it difficult to determine the exact period of composition. However in one of the collected songs, the mention of Caṇḍīdās, gives us an idea of the possible time period of composition of those songs- or it could be that this song is one of the more popular ones to be transmitted orally. Some of the Tukkhā songs are more ancient than the others, which can be determined by the archaic nature of the language and its direct similarity with the songs of *Gopīcānder Gān* and *Jugir Gān*. As discussed in Chapter I, some of the Tukkhā songs could predate Caṇḍīdās, and show resemblance with an even older form of rustic songs on Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā known as *dhāmāli*. Some of the *dehatattva* songs are among the oldest that have been popular in the Kamta group of languages, and show uses of a different form of ancient Rājbaṃśī lect, which has evolved in nature and has incorporated new words from other cognate Tibeto-Burman languages during the ages.

One of the biggest challenges of methodology was not only the process of unraveling metaphors of esoteric embodied experience not meant for the non initiate to understand but also the ethical challenges of this enterprise. Urban (1998) and Stewart (2021) bring

to light the ethical and epistemological problems of studying and publishing about esoteric literature and "secrecy", and whether it is professionally ethical to reveal to the non-initiates practices that were intended for concealment (Urban 1998, 214). Stewart discusses the techniques and ethical issues around participant observation in understanding and studying esoteric Tantric practices and literature, and highlights the constraints and limitations such a process entails. Accoring to him, the non-initiate scholar may have either an academic or soteriological intent to be initiated by the Guru, who may choose to not reveal accurate or substantive data to an outsider who may be tempted to reveal information to non-initiate outsiders. Similarly, he points out that :

"Because *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā* and other traditions involve, to the best of our knowledge, extended training and the mastery of long and arduous yogic and other skills, the scholar-initiate cannot expect to produce quickly much of the value regarding the meaning of the tradition or its ritual processes – ethnography would of course be subject here to the same constraints." (Stewart 2021, 155).

In my methodology, I tapped into the revelations and knowledge of the representatives of the living traditions, which are primarily oral and has interacted with textual traditions at a far later stage (e.g. the song-book or *gāner khātā* of the Tukkhā singers). My position was that of a learner, a person who observed from the boundaries of a non-initiate, as things were revealed to me during my fieldwork, while most of the practices are guarded by secrecy, theory is open to interpretation and is not guarded from one who is curious to learn. The process of realizing true knowledge is embodied in the process of listening and learning. The practitioner, the Guru, or the singer, are not averse to imparting knowledge about training the mind (*manaśikṣā*) that can be then applied to daily life and practice. While facing the challenges of studying esoteric traditions, a methodology needs to be devised, through which the local knowledge systems and discursive strategies regarding meaning making and interpretation are considered more seriously. The stages of knowing, understanding, and realization of esoteric knowledge is the path that has opened its doors to all who are willing to listen and learn (in my personal experience, doors of learning were never closed on my face).

Due to the sharing of conceptual metaphorical worlds between these various traditions that have influenced the Tukkhā, I was able to connect the missing links due to the similarity of themes by reading extensively on Tantric terminology and on the doctrine of *dehatattva*, a concept that is shared between three of these traditions.

Some of the singers/*Gōsāi* who helped me in interpreting the meaning of the metaphors in the highly coded language of a few songs, wanted me to understand the process and take part in grasping the larger epistemological picture, and realize the gap between information and deeper experiential knowledge.

The question of poetic language and its relationship with mystical experience is one that was of particular interest- the use of oblique and symbolical poetic language to express the ineffable realm of mystic experience, which I tried to engage with in chapter II. In the chapter on the anthology of songs, I have pointed out some the words in Rājbaṃśī that differ from the words in Bengali pronunciation wise as well as some completely unique words that are not found in the Bengali language. Even though Rājbaṃśī is very closely related to Bengali and Assamese, it has its own phonological, syntactic and morphological characteristics. (Ray 2017, 23). Apart from containing its own indigenous (*deshi*) sources, it has also borrowed many terms from its neighbouring Tibeto-Burman languages such as Bodo and Garo, being in geographical proximity with them.

The element of social criticism and dissent is to be found in a few songs but not all, most of which focus on esoteric devotional themes. For example, in song 37 and 42, a focus on the agrarian power relations (the intimate and complex relationship to land) was described by critiquing of the role of landlords as oppressing the peasants is

highlighted. In song 37, the social angle of a landlord's systemic oppression is turned into a metaphor for landlords having set up tribunals inside the body to judge the devotees right practice through mystical numerical codes. There is the engagement with the social metaphor of the marketplace *(bājār*) as discussed in chapter I. The Tukkhā singers interacted in spaces of commerce in their daily lives, as many of them have day jobs alongside their occupation as singers. It could be suggested that their engagement with the images of commercial transactions seeks to transform them into metaphysical spaces.

The Tukkhā songs have experienced change, and continue to experience it in the context of the changing social realities of the Rājbaṃśī social reality, throughout the history of identity formation of this community, which spanned over a large span of time witnessing the rise and fall of dynasties as well as colonial rule and the rise of identity based political movements within the community itself. Internally there was a period of intense Brahmanization and that was followed by incorporation of Śaṅkariya followed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practices, belief, rituals, which found its place in the socio-cultural life as well as the language of the devotional songs (as discussed throughout the introduction and Chapter I). The interaction of the Vaiṣṇava practices with the already existent popularity of Hindu practices and indigenous and anthropomorphic worship of Śiva, Śakti and interaction with Buddhism and Sufism formed a dynamic and heterodox religious landscape. In Chapter III, I traced Rājbaṃśī history and socio-cultural identity, religious affiliation and deities, ritual healing, some samples of Tukkhā songs and the aspect of performance, summaries of life- cycle rituals, tree rituals, and musical instruments. In Chapter IV, I made a diachronic comparative analysis between the Tukkhā, the *Caryāgīti*, and the BāulFakir songs. I discussed the concept and history of Sahajayāna and *Sahaja* as well as showed the ground of religious synthesis in Bengal in the background of growth and decline of

Tantric Buddhism. I highlighted some of the debates regarding the usage of the enigmatic, coded language in these songs which is often referred problematically to as *sandhyā bhāṣā*). By analyzing some of the key metaphors that connect these songs, the aim was to highlight the shared religious background of these songs, and the themes and metaphors that continued to be used in spite of the expansive time gap and social and political changes that took place in the history of medieval religions in Bengal.

The number and variety of Tukkhā songs that have been presented here are testimony to the importance of music, and songs in particular, within Rājbaṃśī community.

They also highlight the creativity and cultural resilience of this community and in the face of this rapid globalization and social change, while they are holding onto a form of cultural memory that is still untouched by the market and capitalist reproduction. Tukkhā is only one among the many genres of Rājbaṃśī 'folk' music. It is through a literary and cultural examination of Tukkhā songs and a construction of its sociohistorical and religious background through extensive ethnographic work that the argument for continuity of themes and esoteric practice is established through this thesis. The future of this genre of songs is vulnerable as only a few practitioners, performers and singers remain. As was evident from my fieldwork, most of the later generations are taking up other professions instead of training in the art of singing and performing Tukkhā. There is still hope, however as some of the younger female artists have formed a school of practicing and singing Tukkhā under the guidance of eminent female Rājbaṃśī singer, Dipti Ray. We cannot predict how the future of Tukkhā will shape itself, but we can only imagine that their music and philosophy will continue to be as vivid and vital a part of their lives as it is today and be a means of creative and spiritual liberation.

> This river of worldly existence has evoked my deepest desires, They say it's impossible to cross the river of worldly existence, They say it does not have a source or an end, it is ever-present here

Still I have embarked on this boat,
I am hoping that I will be able to cross the river

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