


Chapter 8

Bengali Folk Music Tradition Contribution to the Culture, Awareness, and Mind Formation of Society

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ABSTRACT

Folk music in Bengal is more than entertainment. It reflects people's lives—their emotions, struggles, and beliefs. These songs are passed down orally and carry deep social and cultural meaning. This paper studies how folk music helps build awareness, emotional well-being, and preserve traditions. Bengali folk music includes Baul, Bhatiyali, Jari, and more. These songs reflect rural life and address social issues. Folk traditions have existed for centuries and are part of Bengal's cultural roots. They often deal with themes like love, pain, injustice etc. This research is based secondary data like published studies, song lyrics, cultural analysis, and community reports. The focus is on how folk music has been used for awareness, healing, and community bonding. Folk Songs speak against inequality, poverty, and violence.

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People use traditional music in mental health support and awareness campaigns. Folk music of Bengal is more than a cultural treasure. It is a tool for connection, education, and care. Its power to unite, heal, and teach makes it valuable for today's social challenges.

INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF FOLK MUSIC IN BANGLADESH

Folk music is a vibrant form of communal expression that carries stories, values, and customs across generations. In Bangladesh, it remains a **living** cultural force rather than a historical artifact—deeply rooted in rural communities where it continually evolves to reflect social realities (Lorea, 2016). These songs often blur the divide between art and pedagogy, delivering messages about the environment, health, labor, and justice. Bangladeshi folk music is inseparable from **oral** tradition. Transmitted verbally through families and villages, it preserves indigenous knowledge in a dynamic and adaptable form. As Chatterji (2016) explains, the “imagination of place” in Bengali folk songs emerges from lived experiences of everyday people rather than academic records. This oral heritage safeguards local memory and fosters cultural continuity, enabling songs to respond to events like floods, disease outbreaks, or labour issues.

Importantly, folk music functions as public pedagogy—a form of education outside formal institutions. Henry Giroux (2004) defines public pedagogy as cultural practices that shape people's understanding of social and political life. In contexts where literacy and access to formal education are limited, folk songs communicate practical advice—such as hygiene measures or disaster preparedness—through relatable narratives (Islam, 1985). Their emotional resonance makes the transmission of essential health and environmental information more effective and memorable than top-down campaigns. This chapter explores eleven Bangladeshi folk songs that tackle pressing social concerns:

1. Environmental protection – Songs promoting tree planting and water conservation.
2. Health awareness – Music about dengue control and COVID-19 precautions.
3. Labor rights – Songs advocating fair wages and dignified work, especially in the garment sector.
4. Disaster preparedness – Melodies encouraging flood resilience and safety.
5. *Child labor* – Calls for children's rights and the importance of education.

For example, a song addressing dengue vividly portrays how stagnant water breeds mosquitoes, urging communities to maintain clean surroundings. Such musical messages effectively blend technical instructions with cultural motifs,

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