My First Field Work Experience

When I was a student of MA in the University of Calcutta, I learned about the importance of field work in the discipline of folklore. But there was no scope of fieldwork during my studies in the University. Eventually, I got a chance to go to a field work with our teacher Dr. Sk. Makbul Islam. In this presentation I would like to express my experience of first field work, in brief.

It was a sunny day of January 3rd 2009 when I went to the historical Barahnagar Pathbari and the Jagannath temple inside the campus. I have a specific intension to observe the Jagannatha Heritage and Culture in the light of interpenetrative theoretical view, with particular reference to folklore of Bengal. We were looking for the Jagannatha temples all over the state. In actual situation, Jagannatha cult has interpenetrated into different states of India and even beyond, with its cognitive identity in different degree.

The Pathbari is the sacred place (Vaishnava Sripat) where Sree Chaitanna Mahaprabhu came to visit in 1515 AD. Sri Chaitanyadeva talked to Srila Raghunath Bhagabatcharya and listened to the holy chanting of Srimadbhagabat. To remember the historical meet of the two towering personalities, Sree Kaliprsanna Chakroborty had established a small temple there, which is now, known as Pathbari. The term Pathbari is composed of two words path and bari. The word path means – chanting of reciting. And the term bari implies - place. Then the term Pathbari means the place of chanting.

Folk-tradition is commonly carried out by two ways - tangible and intangible. Vaisnab-belief originated form folk tradition and has spread out among the then subaltern people of the society. Sree Chaitannya Mahaprauv was the pioneer in recognizing the marginals, bought
them back into the main stream of society in the *Holy Name of Hari*, bringing about the first democratic vision in Bengal. Chaitanya Deva’s devotion for Hari and his democratic vision has added a priceless treasure to the culture of Bengal, which later on has influenced the entire cultural fabric of Indian subcontinent.

The monks of the *Asram* have installed a pair of the *Khadam (Paduka; a type of wooden sandal)* of Chaitannya Mahaprabhu upon a holy alter. Since the Paduka was once touched by the holy feet of Chaitanyadeva, it is considered holy for ever. Like contagious magic, itt is treated to be a holy article for having once contact with Chaitanyadeva.

We know that the *Gurubad* (concept of Spiritual Master) and the *Guru-Sishya Parampara* (disciple succession) are remarkable tradition in this part of land. This tradition is also carrying through the monks of the *Barahanagar Pathbari*. They pronounce a specific *Samboodhan* (salutation) when they meet each other. The salutation is - *Jay Nitai*. This can be interpreted as a folk custom. And the specific words *Jai Nitai* indicate the sect identity of the *Baraha Pathbari* order. This salutation itself is an identification mark through which one can identify them as the followers of a distinct order. The main temple is rectangular in shape reflecting Victorian architecture. The outer most part of the walls of the *Chatuspathi (study center)* are decorated with Indo-Persian floral motif.

This field-work experience made me aware of how the field-study in folklore is to be done. The cordial hospitality and cooperation of the monks of *Pathbari* has captivated me like anything. On the way back home I stood by the bank of the river *Ganga* for a few minutes. The sun surged into darkness gradually and a peaceful evening came down.

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