

**FAKIR LALAN SAI: AN UNACKNOWLEDGED HERO OF THE INDIAN  
RENAISSANCE**

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**Abstract:**

Lalon Fakir is a multi-talented Bengali poet as well as social reformer. He was a spiritual Baul saint, humanitarian, philosopher, composer and singer of many wonderful songs. Lalan is considered one of the pioneers of Baul music and is also referred to as the 'Baul Emperor'. He did not believe in discrimination of people according to religion, caste, caste, caste, gender and so on. In fact, Lalan was a humanist, non-sectarian spirit who is known even today as Lalan Sai, Lalan Shah, Mahatma Lalan etc. Lalan Sai, the saint of Ādhyātmavāda, his songs have been purifying the spirit of mysterious people and quenching their thirst for ages. Lalan Fakir also created a distinct genre in this Baul Sādhanā in folk culture. Above all, his spirituality and mystical theory gained strength in the international cultural arena across the country. In this article, I would like to discuss Lalan Fakir's contribution to social reform in subjugated India.

**Keyword:** *Fakir Lalan Sai, Social reformer, Indian Renaissance, Emancipation and Baul song.*

**Introduction:**

Whether Renaissance came to Bengali society in the 19th century or not, what was its nature, how much did it match with the icon, or was it fragmented or incomplete - there has been no less debate about these! But it cannot be said that these questions have been resolved or a clear decision has come out. But we have to admit that despite the limitations and imperfections, there was an awakening in nineteenth-century Bengal, specifically in urban Bengal, more specifically in the literate-wealthy-aristocratic Hindu society centered around the metropolis of Calcutta. Ram Mohan Roy is said to be the driving force behind this awakening in various contexts. However, the two major shortcomings of this revival are that firstly, Bengali Muslims had no connection with this revival, though the discussion

is irrelevant here. Secondly, the message of civic-renaissance never reached the life and society of these neglected and disrespected rural dwellers. But in this downtrodden, humiliated life there was a need for someone who would speak of social equality, shelter the lower caste with absolute mercy, pioneer in establishing scriptural human values, cut the roots of caste and take the right path to resolve communal conflicts. Finally, Fakir Lalan Sai came with the gospel of social commitment and human truth.

### **Life & Philosophy:**

Lalan Sai had a long life and lived almost the whole of the 19th century. According to the sources of 'Hitkari' newspaper edited by Mir Musharraf Hossain, Lalan died in 1890 AD. 'Hitkari' mentioned this in a news published two weeks after his death. The year of birth there is said to be 1 Kartika of 1179 Bangabd. As such, throughout the 19th century, Lalon was engrossed in his pursuit of creation. Human benevolence and desire were the main tone and voice of that pursuit. Lalon was a humanitarian. Rising above religion, sectarianism, caste, class, discrimination, he called for the creation of a society without discrimination in song after song. In the entire nineteenth century, there is no character like Lalan anywhere in Bengali literature and in the socio-political history of Bengal. Lalan was the Baul emperor. But besides developing the style and wealth of Baul Sadhana, he was devoted to the emancipation and well-being of people. Chandidas wrote at that time, '*Śunaha mānuṣ Bhai, Savāra upare mānuṣa satya, tāhāra upare nāi*'. Lalon wrote, "*Jāta valite ki haya bidhāna Hindu Yavana Bauddha Khrṣṭāna Jāter āche kibā pramāṇa Śāstrā kjūjale*". The difference between Lalan's offering from Chandidas is that he not only offers but also keeps asking questions. Lalan was not concerned about who was pierced by that question and who was made to face a harsh truth, here is not only his exceptionality and uniqueness, but also an incomparable example in exposing the treacherous being.

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As we know, in the nineteenth century, a renaissance took place in Bengal. That renaissance may not have been like the Italian renaissance. Not supposed to be. Italian renaissance was the renaissance of an independent country, Bengal was subjugated. If a similar renaissance is expected from a different geography, a different population, a different time, then it will be absurd and unreasonable. The Bengali Renaissance was more European than Italian. For this reason, rather than asking whether a renaissance took place in Bengal in the nineteenth century, it is logical to say how successful the Bengali renaissance was. Here we ask why the 19th century renaissance is called the Bengali renaissance but there is no local representative of East Bengal. Was there anyone in East Bengal in any case? If the Bengali Renaissance is called a Calcutta-centered Renaissance, will it be unfair or a one-sided decision?

If the period of the Bengali renaissance is limited to the nineteenth century, then it appears that a century has passed since this renaissance took place, or about two hundred and twenty centuries. There is no one from East Bengal in the assessment-analysis and research and research of Bengali renaissance which is still going on. Most recently (May 2022) Prasad Sengupta has written a book titled 'Bengal and Bengali of Navajagaran', where East Bengal Kanganal Harinath Majumdar has been given a place. Kanganal Harinath, the editor of Grambartha Prakashika, is mainly famous as a journalist-editor-publisher but he fulfilled the needs of the people of that time in many other ways. In his last life, he brought a wave of new life in the world of thought in Nadia, Pabna, Natore, Rajshahi, Faridpur, Jessore regions even as 'Fikir Chand Fakir Dal'. It should be noted that Kanganal Harinath Majumdar was a contemporary of Lalon (1833-1896). Lalon was not only an elder, but a true well-wisher in the sense of being a Guru local, friend, relative and well-wisher. Kanganal Harinath's diary and autobiographical work by Kanganal's disciple Jaldhar Sen have mentioned in detail about it.

In the then Kushtia region of Nadia in the 19th century, a world of thought developed around Lalon. All of whom had the aim of human goodwill, human liberation, removing injustice and

discrimination in the society as well as protecting people from communalism. Lalan was at the center of it. At the same time, we find many other philanthropists like Kangal Harinath Majumdar, Mir Musharraf Hossain, Jaldhar Sen, Akshay Kumar Maitreya. It should be noted that the great man Chaitanya appeared in this river a few centuries before Lalan's birth, who without writing a single pen introduced a new era in Bengali society and literature, gave birth to a renaissance. Not only in Bengal, but in the whole of India, Nadia is known as a fertile field of art, literature and culture.

It is a surprising fact that in the Bengali renaissance there was no place for cherishing those who were recognized as Prana Purusha and have been respected to this day. If we avoid it as a riddle or a mystery, then it is not only lowliness, but also shame, or there is a trick of divisiveness going on here. Even in the 21st century, there is no one to present the same questions that Lalon asked in the 19th century. Lalan said, '*Sava loke kaya Lalon ki jāta saṁsāre, Lalon vale jāter ki rūpa dekhālāma nā ei najare' or 'Jagat veḍe jāter kathā Loke galpa kare yathātathā, Lalon vale, jāter phātnā, Ḍuviyechi sāta sāgare'*.

Lalan is the last representative worth mentioning of the auditory mode of learning. Lalon did not know education. Therefore, the question of writing songs does not arise. Even Lalan's disciples wrote down a few of his songs, which we find in Rabindranath's sources. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, the most eminent researcher in Lalon research, has taken that opportunity by writing a book titled 'Rabindranath-Collected Lalon Song Manuscripts'. The tradition of Dadu, Kabir, Lalan is characterized by the knowledge flowing through hearsay. Written knowledge is barely two hundred years old. The thousands of years of knowledge that preceded him were largely hearsay. Aural knowledge survives, though not as strongly, among several stratifications of knowledge. Ahmad Chhafa mentioned in an article titled 'Lalan Fakir: Hindu Ki Yavan', the combination of knowledge and poetry has taken Lalan to such a high level, if you calculate it, it can be seen that Lalan deserves a place among the best sages of all time in Bengal. On the other hand, if you look at love, there is a comparison of love with the

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Supreme Lord Ramakrishna Paramahansadeva. Both are people of the same time. When Lalan and Ramakrishna arrived, Bengal started to enter the New Age. Vidyasagar, Michael, Bankim and then Rabindranath came. But in the renaissance of the 19th century, Ramakrishna was recognized as a representative, but Lalan Fakir was not given a place. Lalan was from East Bengal, Lalan was not a Brahmin, Lalan was not an English-speaking disciple like Vivekananda, Lalan was not a resident of Calcutta but in a rural like Kushtia in Nadia - are these reasons to ignore or hide Lalan?

The human liberation and religious reform movement of Brahminism, Rammohan's effort to change the society dedicated to the progressive method, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's struggle for education and social reform, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's religious reform and Swami Vivekananda's associational movement, Lalan Sai combined them into a single formula. He continued that movement song after song throughout the nineteenth century. It is not only the thought that was in his songs, but as he took the thought to a great height, he was one of the main characters of the Bengali renaissance period and the school of thought and practice of the school of thought and practice in social reformation, protecting communal harmony above all for the welfare of people and the liberation of people. However, even after 200 years of that awakening, there is no list, discussion, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of representatives of the Bengali Renaissance at any stage.

**Upshot:**

At the end, it could be said that in the name of religion our present country as well as the world is inflicted through its hate culture, riots, and lynching which have created chaos and shames among all of us. The incidents that are taking place around the issues of Babri Masjid (Mosque of Babar) and Ram Mandir are painful as well as shameful to us and these horrific incidents are also unacceptable in this civilized world. Every member of each religion is a human but the fundamental arrogance of religions is leading them to intolerance for each other's existence forgetting the religion of humanity. Without the knowledge of humanity, it is impossible to fight against the sectarian conflict and its

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oppression in our society: the past could not amend its ways without this, the present is unable to perform for the well-beings of the people without it and the future also would not be able to function without the knowledge of humanity. Therefore, taking all the moral gist of all the religions and creating ideas that are acceptable to all and secular in nature, Lalon Fakir has given us a new path, which is above all the ideas of traditional religions and thus dressing the path, he has set up the flag of humanity. Now, it is time to assemble under this flag of knowledge.

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