



LALAN is the original seer of those baul-fakir thinkers who are in relentless search of alternative form of social, religious and cultural practices, still active and pervasive in either parts of Bengal.

LALAN's songs, which elaborate his theory and philosophy of life, are equally popular to rural and urban people as well.

This book contains the texts of only 25 songs written by LALAN, transcreated from original Bengali by Sri Sudipto Chakraborty, who had also translated wonderfully a couple of other books published by *Monfakira*.

Ratan Khanna had captured some of the self-devoting moments of the modern successors of LALAN through the lens during his free roaming in this world.

A selected few from those along with the songs may be attributed as our deepest respect to that flowing stream of universal humanist consciousness which defies all the manifestations of social evils.



Dinabandhu

FAKIR LALAN SAIN

O my silly, silly, silly mind!

Songs of LALAN
Selected & transcreated from original Bengali

Transcreation
SUDIPTO CHAKRABORTY

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MONFAKIRA
www.monfakira.com

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PREFACE

It is sacrilege to translate Lalan without scholarship.

Then why did the translator dare?

Firstly, trusting that the current world has become a bit tolerant. There is an emerging belief that there may be no harm in allowing people to vent their efforts; quality work would linger and the trash would perish. So this bunch of translated Lalan songs is an effort; nothing more, nothing less.

Secondly, believing that there may be many levels of approach to the great depth and mystery that Lalan is; every translator can only penetrate this treasury according to individual capacity. So this endeavour is neither claimed to be the only way, and surely not the best way, of translating Lalan, but of course one particular way, and that is the humble claim.

Thirdly, there was indeed an urge to familiarize a greater circle of readers with Lalan, and to draw the attention of more competent translators to this mission.

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Ma Gosain

7 *Fakir Lalan Sain: O my silly, silly, silly mind*

The effect of Lalan is something very very sobering on the vain minds of the majority of us, who are proud of our modern education, hold positions of power, but are superstitious and rigid in our perception of life. The greatness of Lalan lies in two layers— he came from a so-called low background, did not have formal education, yet could discern the dire danger of division of the human society on the basis of religion, status and caste. Firm in his faith and profound in his wisdom, he fought his long crusade against human indignity with a unique weapon— his songs. Lalan kept his compositions outwardly simple and inwardly splendid, reaching the listeners' soul through powerfully austere tunes, opening up stratum after stratum of uninhibited, timeless truths capable of salvation. The depth of Lalan's literary and musical talent shines forth through his diction, in spite of this apparently simple recipe. There is substance in the belief that the hallowed humanitarianism of Tagore has drawn heavily from Lalan. The path of Lalan leads to the pole star of humanity. It is the last and only resort for our civilization today. Let us appreciate and adopt it even now, better late than never.

A few other points may deserve mention. The translator, though devoid of specialist knowledge, has the good luck of exposure to *Baul* songs during childhood. While translating, he could never bypass the gripping influence of the memory of those shrill yet sweet simple songs, accompanied with emphatic rhythms of rustic instruments, sung by plain yet special people, bearing glimpses of a fathomless philosophy. The tunes had cut too deep into his mind. So the translated verses have rhymes too. They may even be set somewhat into their original tunes and sung, just as a respectful liberty, as an experiment. The translator has translated songs with their context and not as mere text. So the powerful rhyme always tried to surface. The apparent rhetoric of the English text would take a total form, if recited in tune. Again, when the original Lalan songs are at least partly incomprehensible even to the natives, the translations would naturally have a lesser claim of being fully lucid. Lucidity, retaining the depth yet the rustic flavour, as far as possible, has been attempted.

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Lalan Fakir being a respectable icon now, there are books, researchwork, folklore, talks and lectures around him, apart from his songs. Lalan songs are floating in the society in various forms, in print and audible media. Though there are palpable variations and evident deviations, the basics of both text and tune are quite discernible. The overall common impression and ambience of the textual form, lingual and cultural chemistry and audible renditions of Lalan songs are rather clear in public mind. The current translations are in fact transliteration of that overall abstract impression of a selected few Lalan songs, and not necessarily of any rigidly particular and specific textual version. Among all the Lalan material that formed the basis of such transliteration, special and prime mention must be made of the copy of Lalan songs collected by Shri Shaktinath Jha, which was provided to the translator by Shri Sandipan Bhattacharya, the helmsman of Monfakira.

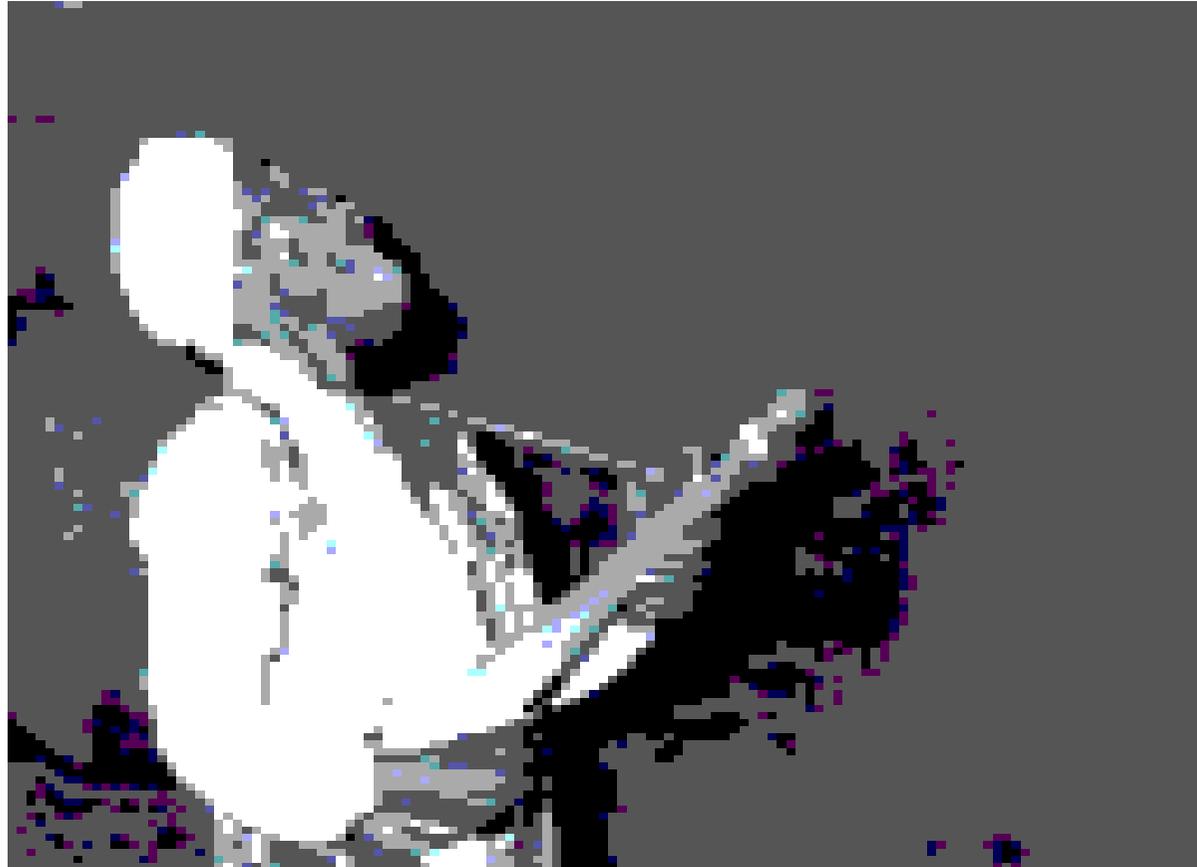
It is earnestly solicited that true Lalan scholars may kindly see this as an experiment only, in the light of the permissive spirit of the modern times. The language of translation has been kept consciously simple, the grammatical twists retained to reflect the original flavour, and line arrangements recast expecting better comprehension. Songs containing themes from Muslim religious background could not be translated simply due to the translator's lack of first-hand knowledge. This deficiency would hopefully be removed in later editions. Also in later editions there would hopefully be English prose gists of a few more Lalan songs.

Shri Sandipan Bhattacharya of 'Monfakira' happens to be the driving spirit behind this literary adventure; if this work is at all approved by any reader, the entire credit goes to him. The faults and follies are totally shouldered by the translator who rushed where the angels fear to tread.

Sudipto Chakraborty
Ranchi, October 2008

FAKIR LALAN SAIN

O my silly, silly, silly mind!



Sanatan Das

1 —

Such human life can be had but once!
So hurry up, O my mind
(O my silly, silly, silly mind)
Do take up the chance!

The Lord created eternal in Man—
Man is unparallel in the creation;

Gods and saints in the heaven
Are ready to take all sort of pain
To get this human appearance!

We are so lucky to get this raft of
Human incarnation;
Let us sail it carefully
Avoiding all collision;

The Supreme Being created humans
To facilitate supreme obeisance
The boat must not capsize, must reach,
It is Lalan's ardent utterance.

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2 —

O Crazy, whom do you search all over?
Open your own abode, find the gem of your soul matter !

Why running around up and down—
Search your own ground,
In the form of human soul
The unbodyed Lord resides right there !

The mystery of the whole universe
Is manifest in this human vase

To know one's own inner being
Is worship's truly real thing

Lalan says, without vital sap
Man cannot find a direction proper!