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The Eastern Bengal Ballads, and the English and the Scottish Popular Ballads: Comparison and Contrast

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Abstract

Ballad is one of the main genres of folk literature. If we look at the ballads of any nation, we can see the similar views of the folk poets. *The Eastern Bengal Ballads*, and *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, which have different origins, have some similarities and dissimilarities. Both the oriental and the occidental ballads share the same characteristics in some respects and differ in others. The Eastern Bengal ballads have the atmosphere of their own. Similarly, the English and Scottish popular ballads exhibit an atmosphere which is their own. The Eastern Bengal ballads have some special qualities for which they are unique from other ballads of the world. Likewise, The English and Scottish Popular ballads are a separate genre of literature for their individualistic characteristics. This paper attempts to make a comparative study on *The Eastern Bengal Ballads*, and *The English and The Scottish Popular Ballads*.

Keywords: Folklore, Ballad, Genre, Comparison, Contrast

1. Introduction

Folklore is the pulse of the people (Islam 1998:308). So, we can assert that folklore is close to the heart of the people. The purpose of folklore is to illustrate the problems of the folk life from different angles. Actually, it reflects the world view of various folk groups and strengthens the identity of these groups. The knowledge in folklore can determine the identity of the people, their likings and disliking, their weal and woe, their customs and traditions, their love and affections, emotion and passions, their actions and reactions, their mode of life and the like. No humanities like ethnography, history, the history of literature, linguistics or anthropology can go without folklore. It plays a vital role in solving many diverse phenomena of spirited culture. Ballad is a rich component of folklore. Albeit the ballads from both the Eastern and the Western world focus on the real global issues of mankind, they share some common and uncommon on different perspectives. Let us now find out the similarities and dissimilarities between the two types of ballads from the perspectives of facts, action, character, language, geographical condition and dramatic action of the facts and the like.

2. Results and Findings

2.1. Traits and Traditions

Firstly, the action of the English and Scottish Popular ballads revolves around a single situation which may be either the culminating point in a large series of events or an isolated happening of sensational value. There is no subplot related to the main plot to make the story advance. So, the plot of the English ballads is a unified one. We can exemplify from some of the ballads. Treachery is a common human trait which is nicely presented in “The Queen of Scotland” (301). Here we find that the queen treacherously sends Troy Mair to lift a stone under which is 'a serpent that lang wanted meat' and she is baulked of her revenge only by the casual appearance of a maid who cuts off one of her breasts to heal the young man. We can take another instance of a single incident through which the reunion of lover and beloved has been narrated. In “The Suffolk Miracle” (272) the devotion of the separated lovers is emphasized by the young man's return as a ghost and the girl's unquestioning acceptance of his invitation to ride with him. As the story in English ballads is short and compact, they do possess the qualities of short stories.

On the other hand, the Eastern Bengal ballads are long and prolix. There is hardly any ballad which centres round a single action. Each and every ballad is a combination of more than one story. Here the main plot is supported and reinforced by the subplots. For example, “Dewana Madina” pala is the combination of three stories. The main story is the nuptial love between Madina and Dulal and the subordinate stories are the evil mechanism of the cruel stepmother and the victory of Alal and Dulal over Baniachong. Similarly, in “Mahua” we observe that the principal episode Mahua-Nadar Chand episode is supported by some episodes such as gipsy episode, Sadhur Dinga episode, forest couple episode etc. But it is to note that the subplots are relevant to the main plot. The main plot and main characters are surrounded by the subplots and sub-characters just as the moon is surrounded by the clusters of stars. So the plot of *The Eastern Bengal ballads* is episodic and is loosely connected whereas the plot of *the English and Scottish Popular ballads* is well-knit. As they are very long, they contain the characteristics of a novel. The Eastern Bengal ballads are descriptive whereas The English ballads are full of action. Though descriptive our ballads are not 'extensive description or mere decoration'.

Objectivity is one of the principal traits of the English and Scottish Popular ballads. They are more and more impersonal. There are no comments or reflections by the narrator. He merely tells what happened. The story is told for the story's own sake, while prepossessions and judgments of the authors or authors are kept for the most part in the background. For the western ballads, writers are less emotional and they are lost in their own community. They have the power to negate themselves from their own creation. In *The English and Scottish ballads*, to be sure, there is the occasional use of first person 'I'; but this is nothing more than an attempt to bring the events of the tale closer to audience and performer. The impersonal quality is not destroyed, as a matter of fact, in “The Wee-Wee Man” (38), though the first person is used throughout:

As I was walking all alone,
Between a water and a wa,
And there I spy' d a wee wee man,
And he was the least ere I saw (Child ed. 1882:330).

We must note that objectivity is also the significant quality of modern poetry. Hence, we can profess that the ballad composers are the precursors of modern poetry.

The Eastern Bengal ballads, on the other hand, are quite subjective. In many cases, the ballads begin with invocation which is the direct speech of the composers themselves. In most of Bangla ballads, the narrator or the singer is present. Sometimes they tell their tale on their own and sometimes they make comments on joy and sorrow, submission to deity or woof and warp of life. We can mention the writer's comments on the life of Nadar Chand and Mahua after the formers recovery in the wood:

They two live on forest fruits
and sleep on smooth stones,
They pass their days and nights happily
But the thunder roared on their heads suddenly (Siddiqui ed.2000:83).

Our Bangla ballads are subjective because the ballad composers were very much emotional. The moderate climate of the tropical country can be attributed to their intense emotion.

Invocation, as we find, is the significant part of some of the Eastern Bengal ballads. In this respect the Eastern Bengal ballads follow the tradition of medieval *Mongal Kabbaya*. The invocation functions as the preparatory song to the ballad song. It can be compared to the prologue to *Charjapada*, ancient Bengali literature or *Baisnab Padabali Kirton*, the medieval Bengali literature. Invocation is not affected by any religious bias, rather it is secular. Every invocation reflects the communal harmony because the ballad composers or the singers were much aware of their audiences- both Hindus and Muslims:

I invoke to the Kailas mountain on the North
where lies the soft stone of Ali,
I invoke to the holy place of Mecca
whereto I bid my salam for the Muslims (Siddiqui ed. 2000:51).

In The English and Scottish Popular ballads invocation is absent. This is because of their objective quality.

2.2. Treatment of Nature

Nature is the integral part of human life. So, the folk bards, like the sophisticated poets, tend to present nature in ballads. In *The Eastern Bengal ballads* nature is presented as such as (i) Diversity of nature (ii) Background to an incident and (iii) Guiding force on human characters. The folk poets present diverse natures as they have seen with their simple observation. Nature appears as it really is without any meaning underneath. Six seasons of a year, which are prominent in a tropical country like Bangladesh come with their special forms and varieties. Human mind is ever changeable like nature. Nature which influences man in various ways is manifested in 'Baromasi'. 'Baromasi' literally means (a song) of twelve months. From the artistic viewpoint, it is a description of the twelve months of the year and composed with a special purpose. In the 'Baromasi', we view the rich panorama of nature. In most cases, though not always, it connects the changes of nature during the course of the year with human sentiments and emotions. The folk writers have used 'Baromasi' in the Bangla ballads. The rich description of nature in 'Baromasi', in fact, reflects the mental makeup of the separated lady. In this regard, Dusan Zbavitel observes:

The majority of the Bengali folk 'Baromasis' describe the sorrows of a woman separated for a full year from her husbands or her beloved and they usually devote the first of each month's portion to short description of a natural scene, characteristic of the month in question (Zbavitel 1963:144).

In "Dewan Bhabna" the 'Baromasi' is the effective externalization of mental state of Sunai, a parting woman. Every month highly corresponds to her internal turmoil, and her emotional turmoil becomes poignant in the month of Falgun (Spring). The poet says:

How can you realize the agony of spring
How can you realize the turmoil of a forlorn damsel (Siddiqui 2000:222).

There is a complete Baromasi in "Bogular Baromasi" where the chastity of a forsaken woman has been tested through ordeal. We must mention that in some ballads 'Sunmasiki' or 'Dosmasi' have been used in lieu of 'Baromasi'. In "Mahua" the 'Dosmasi' is not related to Mahua, the heroine, but to Nadarchand himself. This 'Dosmasi' expresses how passionate Nadar Thakur is to Mahua. The 'Dosmasi' in "Malua" is somewhat different from others because, though it narrates the grief of separated woman, Malua, it ends with reconciliation between the hero and the heroine. A critic comments:

The very principle is the same to connect some natural phenomenon with either an element of action or, even more frequently with a certain mood or emotional state. (Zbavitel 1963:144).

Nature in the Eastern Bengal ballads functions as the background to the incidents in the course of a narrative of human action. While describing nature the poets become restrained and frugal in words. They just present nature as needed for their purpose. The poet presents a love-adventure (Ovisar) of Nadar Chand and Mahua after their prolonged separation through fine description of nature. It is dead of night Mahua and Nadar Chand get reconciled on the lap of nature. The poet describes:

It goes away at *Falgun* but comes in *Chaitra*,
The cuckoo coos on the tree;
The rice *Sail* has become purple
Nadar Chand wakes up at midnight.
The *Chaiter Bow* sings songs in the sky (Siddiqui ed. 2000:61).

When Mahua proceeds to kill her lover, Nadar Chand, at the command of Homra, the poet narrates:

The stars disappeared, the moon was not visible
The moon-lit night became dark (Siddiqui ed. 2000:70).

In this connection we must quote a scholar's comment. 'In "Mahuya" before going on to describe the despair of the heroine who has been commanded to kill her lover, the poet inserts a single verse. Stars disappeared from the sky, the moon is not to be seen' (Zbavitel 1963:142).

"Moisal Bandhu" is a ballad where nature plays a part not only as a background of narration but the whole story is based on the nature. Dingadhor's emotional attachment to his beloved, Sajuti has been better expressed through nature description:

The eyes of the damzel are
like the twinkling stars in the sky
seen through the strips of clouds.
The damzel goes to the ghat wearing blue shari
like the black clouds hovering in the sky (Sen ed. 2000:303-304).

The folk poets are somewhat Wordsworthian so far as their presentation of nature in the Eastern Bengal ballads is concerned. Nature is mother, nurse, savior and antidote to the troubled soul. Nature, as though the safe abode of the distressed people. Mahua and Nadarchand build their humble paradise on the riverside in wilderness:

There is the nice brook where water plays
hide and seek with waves,
We will spend our day and night on the river side,
where colorful flowers and the ripe fruits are available.
where you will get, my dear lady, the sweet fountain water (Siddiqui ed. 2000:83).

The exiled convicts take their shelter in the wood. For example, "Bogular Baromasi", "Kanchon Mala", "Kazolrekha", "Raja Tilak Bosonta" bear the reference to exile in the forest. Again Joyananda in "Chandravati," Malua in "Malua" Ayana in "Ayana Bibi" and Ziralni in "Ziralni" all choose river as their eternal sleeping place. We must not forget to note that when the heroines surrender their body and soul to the heroes, they select natural objects as true witnesses:

Let the sun, the moon, the sky and you also
be witness of mine
Nadar Thakur is my dearest husband (Siddiqui ed. 2000:60).

So the winter breeze, the autumnal cornfield and the vernal flora, the rainy flood, the stars, the sun, the moon, the beels and ponds with emotional undercurrent- all appear vivified through the hands of the folk poets. In fact, the

Bengali folk poets did not prefer the wild aspects of nature like Byron, or the shifting aspects of nature like Shelley, or the purely sensuous in nature like Keats. Nor did they recognise the ugly aspect of nature "red in tooth and claw" as did Alfred Tennyson. The folk poets put stress on the psychological influence of nature on human being.

In *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* also natural beauty resembles the beauty of heroes and heroines. The natural objects like flowers, plants, trees, the sun, the moon, the hills, the rivers, the mountains, the birds are presented in *English and Scottish ballads* as either the gift of God or as the comparison elements for the heroes and the heroines. Here everything sparkles, the lawn is green, the sky is blue and fair, the birds chatter, the rivers murmur, the lady's hand is milk white, her dress is green as grass, her cheek is rosy. Flowers have been presented in the following way:

The flower of my affected heart,
Whose sweetness doth excel (Demsmoreodell 1892: 286).

The poets present natural objects such as trees, plants and flowers to elucidate the ancient belief of metamorphosis. In "The Lass of Roch Royal" (76) the lover and beloved are reconciled after their death with the happy touch of bounteous nature:

The one was buried in Mary kirk,
The other in Mary quire;
Out of the one there sprung a birk
Out of the other a bryar; (Child ed. 1886 :217).

In a number of English and Scottish variants recovered since Child, the plants are usually a rose and a briar; a 'green, green rose', and a 'briar' a 'golden briar' and a 'thorn' a 'damask rose' and a 'sweet briar' and a 'diamond rose' and a 'sweet briar', a 'cherry tree' and a 'willow'.

The folk poets, indeed, depict aspects of nature accurately. We often get the actual tone of the country in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. However, the bards are not interested in Nature for itself. The simple-minded bards find no sustaining power or source of joy and moral health in nature. Hence, they are realist in their accurate descriptions of England countryside and its people. But their realism does not imply the cataloguing of minute details whether pleasant or brutal. They, as we see, believe in stripping life to form in their art. Their method of nature description is to suggest rather than explain all. The folk bards were the illiterate working class people and so they never romanticised nature. They simply were alive to the external beauty of nature. Here natural objects are always concerned with them not as foci for mystical meditation or starting points for fantasy, but as comparable elements with the beauty and attributes of the heroes and the heroines.

2.3. Myth and Supernaturalism

Occultism and supernaturalism are more prominent in the *English and Scottish Popular ballads*. Fairy land, witchcraft, magic, underworld charm and enchantment, transmigration of soul- all these unexpected features make the ballads rich and unique. The ballads deal with the ancient philosophy which held that the soul might at death pass into anyone of a number of forms, that of a tree, a bird of serpent, a fish or inanimate objects such as a stone, or it may reside in certain parts of the body- the blood, the bones or the hair. In ballads it is said that the metamorphosis of man into a plant or animal or other forms does not, as a rule, carry the idea of retribution. In other words, metamorphosis does not seem punitive, for it is generally the good man or woman, the hero or heroine who is changed into a flower or bird or an animal. From the numerous examples of metamorphosis we can cite here a single one. The universal and primitive idea of tree or flower metamorphosis is illustrated by the familiar ballad commonplace of love animated plants that spring from the graves of lovers (Wimberly 1965:33-38). It is especially well preserved in "Earl Brand" (7). Here the lovers are expressly said to grow up as plants:

The one was buried in Mary's kirk,

The other in Mary's quire'
The one sprung up a bonnie bush
And the other a bonnie brier (Child ed.1882 :102).

Supernatural presentation is almost absent in Bangla ballads with some exceptions. Only one ballad, "Horin Kumar Ziralni" exemplifies the transmigration of soul where the dear is transformed into a prince. There is a touch of supernatural in "Kazalrekha" which illustrates Kazalrekha's seven days long starvation watching her dead husband. Hence it is found that our Bangla ballads are more lively and realistic than the English and Scottish ballads.

Both Bangla and English ballads illustrate the use of myth. In the *Eastern Bengal ballads* Bangla myth has been used in the right context. *Ramayana* with its mythical characters Rabon, Ram Lakhoon and Sita has been alluded several times. In "Chandravati" there is a reference to *Ramayana*. Chandravati being frustrated in love affair is suggested by Diz Bongosi Das to realize the value of life. His advice:

Worship Shiva and compose the *Ramyana*
And thus beguile the time. (Siddiqui ed. 2000:158).

In *English and Scottish Ballads* the poets have used myth in order to serve their purpose. We find the myth of pagan other world, the beings and circumstance of that place. The myth of apple tree is a well-known myth of all ages and countries. The apple tree, as we have already observed, plays a part in the enchantment of Tam Lin, according to two texts of the ballad of this name (39 G, K). Tam is asleep beneath an apple tree when he falls into the hands of the elf queen:

I went out to my father's garden,
Fell asleep at yon aple tree:
The queen of Elphan [she] came by,
And laid on her hands on me (Child ed. 1890:456)..

The English and Scottish Popular ballads stress on the next world. The idea of heaven and hell has been best expressed in English ballads. The dualism of Christian thought as reflected in the ballads finds expression in antithetical description of other-world – the highness of heaven, the lowness of hell; the path to the realm of the blest, the road to the regions of the damned; the pleasure of the former place, the pains of the latter. To match the thorn-beset "narrow road" to heaven, the Elf Queen shows True Thomas (37 A 13) the lovely 'braid braid road' to hell (Wimberly 1965:413).

And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across you lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven (Child ed. 1882:324)

2.4. Philosophy of Love

Love, as we notice, is the main theme of most of the Bangla ballads. The folk poets have presented love in Bangla ballads as ethereal, celestial and immortal. Love is not here a mere physical contact of two persons but the unification of two souls. Almost all the Bangla ballads centre round love between man and woman. The folk poets have praised the triumphs of free love over social barriers, religious obligation and aristocratic influence. Here 'Monarch of heart' defies and defeats all the wealthy and powerful kings of the world. Love does not flourish in the fairy land, it does not bloom in the smash soil on earth. So the poets tend to unfold the deep mystery of love germinated in human heart. 'Why love cannot find its own path' is the motto of ballads so far as love is concerned. And this love has existed for ages.

In the ballads love is not akin to love of Shri-Forhad or Lily-Maznu. In the Eastern Bengal ballads love has been shown as an instance of true love. This love advances along the path of caste and creed, religion and society,

customs and traditions towards the unknown destination. Characteristically, love found in the *Eastern Bengal Ballads, and The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* can be compared and contrasted from different points of view.

Firstly, we can compare love in “Mahua” with that in English ballads. For instance, the story of “Lady Maisry” (65) is similar to that of “Mahua”. The Lady Maisry is wooed by so many lords of the Northern country. They tried to convince her with beautiful things such as ‘brothches’ and ‘rings’. But Maisry, mad for Lord William rejects the suit of all the lords decided by her parents and brothers, and finally sacrifices herself for Lord William. We can quote:

O pardon me, my brother dear,
An the truth I'll tell to thee;
My bairn it is to Lord William,
And he is betrothed to me. (Child ed. 1888 :114).

“Mahua” is also a romantic tragedy like “Lady Maisry”. Mahua is a girl from a gipsy family. At the time of her snake charming, Nadar Chand, a son of a Zamimder falls in love with Mahua at the first sight because of her bewitching beauty. They would like to be united into wedlock. But their love cannot attain perfection, because it was an unequal love. Besides, Mahua’s selfish foster father Homra stands barrier to their marriage. He wishes to marry off Mahua with his fellow player, Sujon. But Nadar Chand is the sole possessor of Mahua’s heart. They cannot bear a single moment of separation. Mahua expresses:

When he goes a moment beyond my sight
I become mad.
I am caught in a cage like a mad bird (Siddiqui ed. 2000:62).

So they flee to a distant wood where the new couple makes a bed of happiness. But the irony of fate is that Homra, who has been in quest of both Nadar and Mahua, happens to meet them. So he orders Mahua to stab Nadar Chand. Mahua, in lieu of stabbing her sweet heart, stabs herself to death. Then the gypsies killed Nadar Chand at the command of Homra. At their deaths, Homra, highly sorrow-stricken, is seen to bewail their deaths. Upon a close interpretation we can see that the lovers do not care about religious obligation or social bindings. The lovers sacrifice their lives on the altar of love. The intensity of love is best expressed in the following lines of “Mahua”:

Where I will get the pitcher
where I will get the rope,
Let you be a deep river
where I will be drowned (Siddiqui ed. 2000:59).

Perhaps this is the most sublime expression of love in world literature. The moral of Mahua is that the splendour of love in life is not obliterated, even when life and love are blotted out together. We cannot but feel pity and fear at the sad demise of the ‘Star crossed lovers’ of Cupid’s world. A renowned European critic named Dr. Stella Kramrische throws more light on the romantic tales of medieval Europe, Aucassin and Nicolett, and Tristan and Iseult in relation to the Bengali ballad “Mahua”. Aucassin, the only son of Count Beaucare, like Nadar Chand, falls in love with Nicolett, a comely girl of unknown, descent, bought of the Saracens whom his father does not permit him to marry. The story runs towards the adventure of lovers and ultimately they are rewarded. But the story of Mahua and Nadar Chand ends in tragedy. So we can profess that in the western ballads love tinged with Western idealism reaches the level of Christian ideal of self-dedication. They illustrate Milton’s Maxim that ‘Man is born to rule and women to yield to his sway’ (Siddiqui 1976:51). On the contrary love in Bangla ballads like “Mahua”, “Konka and Lila” are absolutely free from any religious /obligation. They have no sentiment other than that of human heart in all its purity and strength.

Similarly, the story of “Feroz Khan Dewan” can be compared with the Romantic tragedy of “Earl Brand” or “Douglas Tragedy” of the Scottish ballads. So far as love is concerned, “Dewana Medina” is similar to “Fair Annie” or “The Butcher Boy”. And also the ballad “Hati Khedar Gan” can be compared with “Songs of the Forecastle and Lumber Shanti” of the English Popular ballads. Therefore, keeping even the question of historical truth regarding time and circumstances under which the characters are introduced in the ballads one can easily observe that the heroes and heroines were not bound by the Shackles of scripture or social bindings. Their main concern was love and love alone as expressed in the following lines:

Love is my treasure,
Love is my care
Love is my necklace,
He who dies for love
is immortal (Siddiqui 1976:52).

2.5. Power of Resistance

Practice of protests is remarkable in Bangla ballads. If we analyse the social history we find that this is a history of oppression of the powerful over the weaker, the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. The conscious people dream of an exploitation-free, happy and prosperous society; but they have to cross the bar set by the tyrants. As a result, the peace loving persons voice protests against the tyranny to establish their legal rights. We can find out the high sounding protests in the Bangla ballads. In “Mahua” we notice the protest of Mahua from two perspectives. First, we notice this at the time of her husband selection. A daughter of Brahmin family, Mahua is brought up in gipsy family by Homra. He wants Mahua to be married to Sujon. But Mahua is determined to be united with Nadar Chand. She wants Nadar Chand as her life partner because blue blood flows in the bodies of both Mahua and Nadar Chand. Besides, to Mahua, Nadar is as glittering as the sun or moon whereas Sujon is just like a glow-worm. Her protest is there:

How can I go to other land deserting my friend,
who glitters like the sun or the moon
I'll never marry Sujon, a gipsy
As Sujon, your boy, flickers like a fire-fly (Siddiqui ed. 2000:87).

Again on the eve of her suicide she expresses her protest:

O dear parents, listen to me,
Who are my real parents
From whose lap you stole me, their sweet child
I have never seen my own parents in my life
Now I am to die at the will of fate (Siddiqui ed. 2000:87).

In *English and Scottish Popular ballads* such kind of protest is quite absent. We believe that some heroines are selfish, arrogant and revengeful. Here we can also refer to Robin Hood ballads where Robin Hood, an outlaw, is seen to loot the wealth of the rich so as to help the poor. Here socialistic philosophy of life has been presented in Robin Hood ballads.

2.6. Representation of Women

Women characters in *The Eastern Bengal ballads* are delineated as stereotyped ideal characters. They have been shown as love seekers and husband devotees. They appear before us with some special characteristics. Love and devotion to husband, patience and restriction, shyness and tolerance, brevity and creative power, womanly zeal and chastity, self-sacrifice and self-confidence, personality and simplicity are the prominent traits of women characters. In these ballads the dark aspects of the women have been projected indicating the contemporary social values. The characters are unique for their having instinctive qualities and freedom in love affairs.

Notwithstanding so many social predicaments and obstacles, they have been enlightened in glorious love. The poet points out:

The melody from your flute thrills my heart
My heart bleeds to forget that sweet note (Sen ed.2000 :193)

The queen, enchanted by the sweet melody of the blind pied piper, leaves the palace and sets out with romantic heart to the unknown path. Malua, Chandravati, Kamala, Lila, Sunai, Rupavati, Sakhina, Dewana Madina become the symbol of eternal love and self-sacrifice. Similarly, Mahua, Bhelua, Kamala exhibits their presence of mind. Preservation of chastity and ordeal of chastity become the ingredient of ballads which influence in blooming the women characters.

On the other hand, women characters in English ballads are portrayed as realistic, aggressive, extrovert and revengeful. Although they do possess love in their heart, they can do anything destructive if love is not reciprocated. An instance should be cited from the ballads of English language. In "Sir Peter's Leman" it is mentioned that the beloved of Sir Peter is serving wine at the wedding party of Sir Peter. When the new bride of Sir Peter comes to know from a maid servant that Kirsteen is Peter's former beloved, Kirsteen's fire of revenge kindles to a large extent. She makes a rosy bed in bride's chamber for the new couple but alas she puts the bed on fire. This is a notable example of how love may be turned into revenge. We can compare Kirsteen with Mahua or Dewana Madina or Kazalrekha. Kirsteen is vindictive whereas others are self-sacrificing and devoted lovers in the realm of love. So, women characters in the English and Scottish Popular ballads are seen to challenge the all-pervasive patriarchal ideologies.

2.7. Musical Quality

As regards the English ballads, we must evaluate the artistic worth of the musical accompaniment of folk ballads. A ballad's life depends not only on theme and attitude, but on tune. Melody and rhythm, acting as a background for the tale, control its simplicity, colour, its emotion and aid the work of memory (Well 1950:6). The melody in ballads is as inevitable as the words. We may surmise that they would therefore be inseparable, a given tune forever mated with a given poem, and that the music must come first in the estimation of the singer. They are stories narrated in rhythmic pattern but, we do believe, moulded to a very marked degree by the musical accompaniment to which they have been set. It is not strange that the same ballad should be sung to more than one tune. Certain ballads may well be sung to different melodies because the tune originally attached to them has varied itself out of existence. So we can say that ballad airs like all folksong, are ever shifting, ever renewing themselves. A ballad singer may habitually vary every phase of his tune in the course of a ballad. As for the tune used in the English ballad, Sharp's explanation is quotable:

A pentatonic variant of a ballad melody may be quite as delightful an accompaniment as one in which all the tones of the octave appear. The same tune, we must remember, may be sung in different versions according to different modes; and it may sometimes be hexatonic, sometimes pentatonic, and sometimes heptatonic. This is quite at the option of the singer, who, without being aware of musical terms or musical technicalities, knows by his inherited art how to transpose from key to key from scale to scale (Gerould 1957:82).

The English and Scottish Popular ballads are written in stanzas. In each stanza the lines rhyme. As the poem is divided into stanzas, there is a pause between the stanzas. So the English ballads were sung in slow motion. On the contrary, our Bangla ballads are written line by line with the first line rhyming the second. The Eastern Bengal ballads are divided into cantos, each canto containing a special subtitle. The causes attributed to this division are to relieve the monotony of the ballad singers. But this division of the ballad never hampers the continuity of the ballad story.

3. Conclusion

From the above discussion we may conclude that The Eastern Bengal ballads, and The English and Scottish Popular ballads have some parallelism and contrast. They might be different in various points such as structure, presentation, subject matter, geographical position, style, language and art and artifice. The English and Scottish Popular ballads are objective with no comment by the narrator. These ballads are pivotal around a single event and there are no subplots or side plots. So, the ballads pertain to the quality of a short story. These ballads are short, compact, well-knit and rich with fine rhetoric skills. The foremost characteristic of the English and Scottish Popular ballads is the dramatic action which moves the story towards tragic end. The language of this kind of ballad is homely and colloquial. These ballads written in stanzaic form maintain the conversational tone. One the other hand, the Eastern Bengal ballads are subjective and in most of the ballads the writer's comment is present. These ballads are long and irregular. So, the Eastern Bengal ballads contain the elements of a novel. The plots of this type of ballads are loosely connected where the main plot is supported by the subplots. These ballads are written in simple dialect of Eastern Bengal. The most obvious quality of these ballads is simplicity of thoughts and clarity of expression. But one thing that is common in both the Eastern Bengal ballads and the English and Scottish ballads is the development of humanity. Man is the nicest art of God. Every wonder on earth is created not by any deity or superpower but by man himself. The helpless cave residing man has raised his position to the space exploring man. Whatever good has been done by man is done for the welfare of human being. Notwithstanding the geographical distance, the way of thinking of the folk bards of the East and the West is the same. Not only the great men but also the folk bards of all nations think alike. The balladists could see and understand so much of folk life and could pierce the heart of so many passions and emotions. They have been able to touch upon different points of morals, of philosophy, and of the conduct of life. Life and death, wealth and poverty, love and prize of life have been nicely presented by the ballad writers. In all ballads we find pure mirth, bright and tender fancy, ardent passion, questioning into the deep and terrible mysteries of folk life. In almost every ballad we have the most diverse elements, the high and the low, the great and the small, the noble and the base, the merry and the sad, brought under the dominance of one dramatic purpose. Man may vary in race, religion, nationality, caste, colour and culture etc. But inner flow of every man in the world is the same. So astonishingly widespread is the glory of ballads that it might be said that 'they are not of a land, but of all lands'; 'They are not of an age, but of all times'. So, we can contend that the literary excellence of our Eastern Bengal Ballads is not less significant than that of the English and the Scottish Popular Ballads. Thus, we may conclude with universal theme of Gazi's song with which our ballads deal:

Cows are of various color
but their milk is white
I traveled the whole world
And saw all men the sons of a single mother.

Note: The original Bangla quotations from The Eastern Bengal Ballads have been translated into English by the researcher himself for the convenience of the readers.

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