



LOKANESHA (ADDICTION OF FOLK PEOPLE)

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It is a habit of some people to watch a T.V. serial at the fixed time. They sit in front of the T.V. set with keen interest. Second example: Person addicted to the mobile phone frequently takes out the mobile from his pocket and checks out if the signal is there. They are always expected of some signals on the phone. This is the example of ultra modern addictions. Why don't we say this as an addiction? Can't addiction be without chewing, sucking, licking and swallowing? To which thing, we are attracted more than our need, is called addiction. We can say it as mental addiction. Its target is to shoot the mind completely. But the topic of our discussion not only influences our mind, but also affects our body. All these things are recognized as folk addiction (Lokanesha) in the folk society.

Folk culture is the most enriched branch of the Bengali Literature. In a broader sense, folk culture is an important part of Bengali culture. In folk culture, the reflection of the development and lifestyle of the folk society can be seen completely. "Folk" does not only refer to one person rather it refers to such a group of people who are the civilian of a richly united society. It means they live in the same place, their financial condition is same, they follow the same type of faith, culture, rituals, rites, festivals, etc. from birth to death and from the start to the end of the year." (1)

Living together in a group is a common feature of the folks. Agriculture is their base. They pray to God for good crops and cultivation and the prosperity in their family. They worship and fast. They organize various religious rites, rituals and worships to get the boons of the Gods and Goddesses. They take some addictions like Hariya (a type of drink), Ganja (a type of smoke), Siddhi (a type of drink) during worships. They give these the honour of Prasad (a kind of offering generally food offered to the deity later taken by the devotees after the worship). But whenever people take these addictions other than the worships and these addictions create unsteadiness in their body, is called folk addiction (Lokanesha).

The ingredients which are used as addiction by the folk society or the materials which are given importance by the folk society are called folk addiction (Lokanesha) materials. Folk addiction (Lokanesha) means the regular intake of these addiction materials.

How the demand of folk addiction (Lokanesha) does came in the people? Incorrect answer of these questions is nearly impossible to give. But it can be said that, 'during the beginning of the civilization when people used to road about in the forests they ate whatever they got. They did not understand which food was good for health and which was bad. The addictions came when people took some food and felt drowsiness, uneasiness, sleep and madness.' (2)

Now we would know about popular folk addictions (Lokanesha). Biri (the folk version of a cigarette) is placed between the two lips and breathed in with happiness. Tobacco leaf is cut into rectangular shape and rolled with a spice called Shuko and bind with a cotton string and thus Biri is made. Some people use fennel seed in place of Shuko. Some people use the justice leaf as the spice inside Biri to get relief of the cough. Some used to burn Shola and use them as Biri. Hooka (smoking pipe) was a symbol of aristocracy. Now it can be seen in the museum. Hookahas its importance after the Biri and Cigarette have gained popularity. Tobacco leaves are torn into pieces and mixed with molasses and fired in a cane shopped pot and attached to a pipe and water is kept in a round pot under the cone shaped pot (Kolke) and then people breathed out and breathed in and thus Hooka helped one to smoke. Cannabis (Ganja) leaves are kept in a damp room in the primary stage and after that, it is mixed and pressed on the palm mixing with the spices (Shuko). Then the mixture is placed in a cane shaped pot (Kolke) and the mixture is burned. Then it is breathed in with one's mouth. Thus Ganja (cannabis) is inhaled.



Leaves of the Motihar Plant (especially famous in the hilly areas as addiction ingredient) are collected and kept in the damp room for some days. Then they are cut into pieces and kept in containers. According to their need, people take out a little quantity with the finger's tip and mixed with the calcium bycarbonate and kept in the palm and pressed with the thumb. Then it is placed under the teeth and then sucked. It is called Dakta. The previous method is followed a little bit in case of the Dakta. In case of the fried Dakta coriander seeds and fennel seeds are fried and mixed with the fried Dakta. Some people are addicted by the Fried Dakta with the betel leaf.

During the Puja (worship), people drink Siddhi or Bhang as the Prasad (offering) of the God Shiva. Cannabis leaves and the roots of drumsticks are pasted in a grinder and mixed with the milk, banana, sugar cube, green coconut water and spices. It makes an intense addiction in the people after some hours of drinking the mixture. Some people grind the green cannabis (Ganja) leaves and fry it in the shape of balls. The extracts of the Mahuya flower are very sweet to taste. It helps to be addicted intensely. It is drunk by both men and women. Boiled rice is kept in a pot and rotten for a few days. Then water is drained and cleaned. Green Chili or boiled potato is mixed to make it spicy and drunk. The juice of palm or date palm trees is kept overnight and then it is called Tari. Then the Acacia bulk is put into the juice for a bitter taste and thus the intensity of the addiction is increased.

Opiod is a type of addiction taken through the nose. It is very strong. Tears came out of the eyes at the time it is taken. It is got from the opium trees. Kamalakanta in Bankim Chandra Chottopadhyay's essay was addicted to opium. We can know it from 'Kamalakanta's Office'.

The harmful effect of taking bad addiction is irrelevant to express in these days. People of all the classes of society are aware of this. But the addicted people try to express the usefulness of taking addiction. They say that addiction helps them to work actively, increase their willpower, relax their mind, helps them to forget stress, despair and sadness. It also removes tiredness and hunger. It is helpful for a sound sleep. It makes the body fit to adjust in any weather and season.

In Bengali literature remark of addiction can be noticed first in the notable work of fiction 'CHARYAPAD' by the great writer Pandit Haraprasad Sastri. 'CHARYAPAD' was invented and edited by him, - 'Maharaspone Matal Re Tihun Soel Uekhi' (3).

It means – The mind had become drunk after drinking the wine and it started ignoring the universe.

'SRIKRISHNAKIRTAN' is written after the 'dark age' of Bengali literature. It is recognized as the only proof of older-middle age. In the 'Tambul Part' of the 'SRIKRISHNAKIRTAN', God Sri Krishna sends the betel leaf as a token of love for Sri Radhika through Barai,-

'...There is a beautiful pure lady under the Mimusops elengi (Bakul Tree)
... Go and give her a basket full of flowers and betel leaves.' (4)

Addiction as a topic has frequently come in the Folk literature. The branch of literature which is taught and learned orally is mainly called Folk Literature. Folk literature was born in the beginning of the village society or folk society which started with agriculture. The three main branches of folk literature are... Rhyme, Riddle and Proverb.

Rhyme is such a type of folk literature which is composed orally. These are the little or medium sized poems where we can find the use of absurd emotions, but they are internally attached and rhymed and here, child psychology is emphasized. With or without little bit changes, it has been living forever. Such an immortal rhyme is,-

'Ghum Parani Masi Pisi Ghumer Bari Jao,
Bata Bhara Pan Debo Gal Bhore Khao.' (5)



It means,-

The aunty of sleep goes to the house of sleep,
I will give you a plate full of betel leaf and you eat that filling your mouth.

In the above rhyme, betel leaf is offered to the aunts i.e. to the guests to welcome them. But while finding reasons behind giving the guests, betel leaf as a welcome food apparently shows the hospitality of a host, but there are some uses of eating a betel leaf. It opens up our taste buds, helps to digest food and prevent indigestion. For this reason, people of all ages from old to new, can be seen to eat betel leaves.

After rhymes, the other popular branch of folk literature comes i.e. riddles. Riddles are the extracts of social experiences. It is that branch of folk literature which is dealt with intelligence. In the riddles a hidden question is thrown to the opponents under some beautiful rhyme and it is expected that the opponents would explain and answer them. We can find the reflection of addiction as a topic in the riddles,-

‘Hate Bikai, Bate Bikai
Bhat Pochiye Nije Khai.’ (6)

It means, - We make the boiled rice rotten and then we sale it to the houses and in the market.

This Riddle deals with the topic of drinking Hariya. It is remarkable that Hariya is a popular drink in the Tribal Society.

There is a riddle regarding the Hooko addiction which is sometimes taken alone and other times in a group,-

‘Pukurer Majhe Tal Gach, Bramha Korechen Basa,
Keu Khachhen, Keu Niyechen, Keu Karechen Asha.’ (7)

It means,-

There is a palm tree in the middle of a pond where God Bramha lives.
Someone is smoking, someone is taking and someone is hoping.

Another Riddle regarding Biri is,-

‘Khachho Nije, Dichho Moke
Tobu Keno Morchi Bhoke.’ (8)

It means,-

You are smoking and also giving me
Why then I’m dying of hunger.

Proverbs are mainly attached to the practical use of the Folk Literature. Proverbs have gained popularity because real life incidents are involved in it. Proverbs were born orally. The folks expressed their direct and day to day knowledge, humerus experiences or feelings in easy and brief language which is full of cleverness. These are naturally believable and supportable. Proverbs give us unbelievable information about the folk addiction (Lokanasha). It is beyond our imagination that a place can be identified through some addiction. Proverb clearly expresses this,-

‘Mukhe Pan, Hate Chun
Tobe Jao Manbhum.’ (9)

It means,-

If you have betel leaf in your mouth and calcium by
Carbonate in your hand only then you can go to Manbhum.



It shows that the tribal people of Manbhum used to eat the betel leaf a lot. At the beginning of the civilization, people became addicted to different addictions as they were ignorant of those. In spite of being fully aware of the harmful effects of those addictions, they are becoming more addicted to day by day. There were no rules and regulations regarding addiction in the folk society. That's why we can see that the tribal women used to give Hariya to the starved and hungry children and thus made them calm. The helpless child felt drowsiness as an effect of the addiction of Hariya. They stopped crying. Both men and women are addicted to all these. Religion is not a boundary when it is the matter of addiction. Beside Hindu, people of all the other religions, rich or poor take the addictions by chewing, swallowing, sucking, smelling and in many other ways. It is very interesting to say that the people who take addiction have no caste or religious bar. They belong to only one religion, i.e. 'Addicted'.

Cheap and easily available addiction ingredients are accepted with great care and pamper in the folk society. The society has been changed now a day. With the help of the government projects, the mud houses have become pucca houses (house made of bricks and cement). The roads have also become cemented. Towns are gradually extending their paws towards the villages. Beside dress codes, the food habit of the people is also changing. For this reason, the types of addiction are also changing with the passing of time. Gutkha, Khoini, Hot and Cold drink and other more valuable addiction ingredients have entered into the folk society. Naturally, folk addiction (Lokanesha) ingredients are losing their glamour. Hooko has lost its glamorous days. Although the traditional addictions (Lokanesha) have not become totally extinct, but there is no doubt that it is going towards extinction gradually.

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