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Mystic Reverberations: Goria Folksongs of the Jamatia Tribe.

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Abstract.

The article explores the thrilling world of 'Taunt', 'Lewd', 'Love' and 'Devotional' Goria folk songs sung during the sevenday Buiso celebration, highlighting their cultural significance and lyrical depth. It examines the lyrical themes and ethnomusicological aspects of these songs using a multidisciplinary approach. During the seven-day celebration of Goria Puja, it is a customary practice for the tribe to address strangers as "brother-in-law" or "sister-in-law," except for relatives, regardless of age. This tradition symbolizes a connection with Goria, the God of Fertility and ensures a joyful and harmonious atmosphere throughout the festival. Additionally, the tribe keeps their doors open twenty-four hours, welcoming guests from far and wide to rest and take part in the celebrations, reinforcing the values of hospitality and communal unity.

Keywords: Goria Folksongs, Jamatia Tribe, Cultural Identity, Mysticism, Fertility, Buiso Festival.

1. Introduction.

The historical record of when and how the Jamatia tribe began worshipping Goria dates back to 1490-1515 A.D. during the reign of Dhana Manikya after an inversion and conquest of the Kuki King Thanangchi by Raikwchak, the then General of Dhanya Manikya. The Jamatias being the forefront royal army of the king got hold of the eight-metal including the trident of Goria. Since then, Goria became the supreme deity of the Jamatia tribe. Stories, traditions, and music are deeply connected to human culture. In Tripura, the Jamatia tribe has a rich tradition of Goria folksongs, which carry both mystical and melodic qualities. These songs offer a deep and meaningful insight into the spirit and heritage of the community. These folk songs not only act as a bridge between the old and the new world but also act as a vessel of cultural preservation, the tradition that is getting lost due to the emergency of the modern world. The folksong of Tripura can be classified into ten categories. However, this article will only highlight the main three categories of the Jamatia tribe namely:

- 1. Taunt or Bogla's songs.
- 2. Lewd songs
- 3. Functional or Devotional songs.
- 4. Love songs.

2. Methodology.

1. Ethnographic Analysis:

Ethnographic approach by engaging in fieldwork and participant observation, allowing for a firsthand
understanding of Goria folksong performances during cultural events like the Buiso festival. Interviews with
elders, singers, and cultural practitioners provide valuable insights into the mystical meanings and social functions
of these songs.

2. Multidisciplinary Approach:

Integrates historical analysis, ethnomusicology and cultural studies to examine the significance of Goria folksongs
in Jamatia society. This approach helps in understanding their lyrical themes, symbolic meanings, and ritualistic
context.

3. Cultural Interpretation:

• Explores how these folksongs contribute to the preservation of Jamatia identity, social cohesion and spiritual practices. By studying their connection to rituals like the Buiso festival and their role in communal bonding, the research highlights the songs' cultural and mystical significance.

4. Taunt Folksongs.

The taunt or the fool's songs sung during this festival by young boys, girls and the Boglas, make every individual cry with laughter. Everyone present within the reach of these songs are bound to listen. Some of these songs are so obscene that the elders sometimes had to put their hands on their ears. This is perhaps the reason why Late. Chandra Sadhan Jamatia one of the resource persons was hesitant to explain the true meaning of the song and often made an excuse whenever I approached him for the translation. However, these songs are usually meant for ritualistic performance and hence are difficult to translate as the signs and symbols made during the performance cannot be fully described in the transcription and hence the true meaning of the song gets thwarted. The primary goal of the song is to make the audience laugh, so any pretence of having a logical, rational or didactic meaning is wholly unwelcome.

<u>Kokborok</u>	<u>English</u>
Wanji barini moso	The Chilies from the Bengali vegetable garden
Wanjii barini moso	The Chilies from the Bengali vegetable garden
Chini parani siklarogle	The Maidens of our village's
Sikomosi rochok rochok	Pubic hair is coarse and thick. (Trans: Mine)

Commentary:

The pubic hair of the maidens is compared to the growth of a healthy chili plants in a Bengali vegetable garden. The healthy chilli plants growing densely together are known as "rochok rochok". So, the song opines that the pubic hair of the village maidens is also healthy and dense similar to "rochok rochok". This comparison highlights that, just as chilies thrive in the garden, village maidens blossom in their youth. Their growth and development are seen as natural and healthy processes. The song's connection to the God of Fertility stems from its themes of growth and transformation, both closely tied to fertility. It serves as a celebration of youthful vitality and the fertility of the village maidens. At the same time, the song carries a playful and teasing tone, reflecting the lively and close-knit spirit of the community during the Buiso festival. Below is another folksong in which the girls playfully taunt the boys in return.

<u>Kokborok</u>	English
Chana hinbo phaiya	They did not come for food,
Nungna hinbo phaiya	Nor did they seek a drink.
Chini dadale khakwlai hi	ba Their hearts are weary,
Chwngno-si naina phai o	They came to be with us.
O Bogwla, eyang nohole	Look this side, O Bogwlas,
O Kherphang, eyang nah	le Look this side, O Kherphang ^{vi} . (Trans: Mine).

Commentary:

Through this song, the girls playfully tease the boys, claiming that they did not come to the festival for the food and drinks but rather to chat with them. They refer to the young boys as Boglas, meaning a "joker" or a "trifler", someone who fools around and doesn't take things seriously. The mention of Kherphang, the High Priest and keeper of the Goria idol, serves as a challenge to the boys. The girls suggest that if the boys truly wish to be taken seriously, then they should aspire to be like Kherphang a figure of wisdom, responsibility and devotion. This playful exchange reflects the light-hearted banter and social bonding that are central to the festival, where music and lyrics become a medium for both amusement and deeper cultural values. Now, tying this to the religious and mystical aspects, the celebration is all about Goria, the God of Fertility. The entire festival with its songs, including this one, is sung to honor fertility and growth. The playful interaction between boys and young maidens in the song symbolically celebrates fertility, youth and the promise of growth and life for the future generation.

Taken aback by the girls' teasing, the boys pause for a moment, then respond with yet another playful song. Below is the next song in their spirited exchange.

<u>Kokborok</u>	<u>English</u>
Dukseber dukseber	Wild ivy gourd, wild ivy gourd.
Tain de rojo o ber	Are they to be picked and placed in the basket?
O parani sikla rokle	The faces of the maidens in this village
Mwkhangsi sober sober	Are dull and lifeless.
Balore balore balo	Bravo and wonderful
Mwikhumo haplok Lupe	Peep of a Mwikhumu Haplok (Termitomyces)
Miya hakwtwi Lupe	Sprout of a young bamboo culm.
O para ni bwrwi sikla rokle	This village's maidens'
khaju thai lupe lupe	Hair buns are just a handful. (Trans: Mine)

Commentary.

The boys taunt back saying that the median's faces are dull like those inside of a wild ivy gourd and hence it's of no use to talk to them just as the wild ivy gourd is not fit to be picked and placed in the basket. The boys further taunt the girl by saying that their hair buns are almost similar to the first little peep of the termite mushroom and the coming out of the young bamboo shoot out of the ground describing as "ruchu ruchu" meaning "not handful". This a metaphorical way of saying, that the breasts of the maidens are not fully matured and that it's still not handful.

5. Lewd Folksong.

The tribes believes that Goria, God of Fertility, always demands certain lewd jokes and songs during his homecoming/celebration. These songs are sung in front of everyone in the community. This ritual of performing lewd jokes and songs in the open arena before people belonging from all spheres and hierarchies of the village fulfills the important function of venting out people's repressed anxieties and hidden desires effectively.

The most tabooed topic and source of anxiety is sex, one of the strongest primary driving forces behind all human activity. The taboo surrounding this subject is removed by singing songs to the young, old and respectable members of the community, revealing its importance in the realm of human consciousness. The constant need for a companion to interpret, explain, or give meaning to the phenomena, both natural and man-made, is another factor contributing to human anxiety. The song is sung without any pretense which enables one to enjoy the utter uncertainty of the world. Thus, embracing the absurdity of the universe through these lewd songs.

<u>Kokborok</u>	English
Nogbra bari o khi <mark>wi tong m</mark> ani	While shitting at the back of the house
Sipak Tilangkha <mark>Wokma</mark>	Swine took away my vagina
Angsai Phaikhele	When my husband returns
Hojak Phainai	He will scold me
Phirok Rophaidi Wokma	Bring it back you swine (Trans: Mine)

Commentary.

It is common practice for the villager to construct a bathroom in the house's backyard. Moreover, there exists a popular lore among the tribe that Burasa (God of Mischief) is present in every form and image; hence, the woman indicates that during nature's call, Burasa took away her vagina, so she urges Burasa to give it back to her back, as her husband is returning soon and that the outcome will be unreasonable when he finds out. She believes that Burasa's trickery will leave her vulnerable and dishonored, with her husband's wrath unavoidable if the situation isn't resolved. Desperation fills her plea, as she hopes the god of mischief will restore what was taken before it's too late.

The song is almost identical to a nonsensical song verse that continues for over 100 lines. This verse, on the other hand, serves a key function by making everyone laugh and allowing them to cast aside their social hierarchies and take part in laughter. Laughter, serves to cleanse the mind of suppressed anxieties, allowing the new harvest year to kick off with a new spirit of happiness and joy. The laughter and revelry that take place around the Garia Mwtai serve as a Western funfair carnival. Bakhtin believed that the carnivalesque played an important role in promoting equality among different social classes by providing a space for subversion and questioning established norms. He saw them as occasions when the ideological, legal and political authority of both the state and the church were temporarily inverted during the carnival's liberating and anarchic period. In discussing the liberating nature of the carnival, "Art and Popular Culture" asserts that:

"The carnival was not only liberating because for that short period the church and state had little or no control over the lives of the revellers, although Terry Eagleton points out this would probably be 'licensed' transgression at best but its true liberating potential can be seen in the fact that set rules and beliefs were not immune to ridicule or reconception at carnival time; it 'cleared the ground' for new ideas to enter into public discourse". (https://www.artandpopularculture.com/Carnivalesque)

However, its true liberating potential can be seen in the fact that beliefs and established rules were not prone to ridicule or reinterpretation during the funfair season. It paved the way for new ideas to become part of the discussion in society. The festivities held around Garia Mwtai functioned in the same way as a carnivalesque, as these lewd and amusing songs were performed in front of all members of society from all social hierarchies and ages and the daily pursuit of meaning was turned into a farce by singing these lewd songs during the ritual procession of a deity, thereby elevating meaninglessness and laughter as the true sources of regeneration and creation. This ritualistic inversion of social norms allowed for a temporary suspension of power dynamics, where the sacred and the profane coexisted and even the most revered figures could be subject to mockery. In this space, the boundaries between the divine and the earthly were blurred, making room for a deeper exploration of human nature through humor and irreverence.

5. Functional Folksong.

Functional songs are often performed with a specific purpose; they are not solely for aesthetic enjoyment. These songs are carefully crafted to fulfil particular functions, which can be ceremonial, melancholic, or related to rites of passage. In the Jamatia tribe, numerous functional songs exist. Lullabies, known as Lelema in the Jamatia dialect are sung to promote relaxation, creating a soothing atmosphere. These functional songs also hold cultural and spiritual significance within the tribe, fostering peace, harmony and unity. A prime example is the Goria song, which serves as an instructional tool for anyone wishing to learn about the traditions of the Jamatia tribe. Goria is the Supreme Deity of the Jamatia people. During the seven-day festival of Goria Puja, celebrated in Chaitra and Baishak, every member of the Jamatia tribe participates in the festivities. Devotees travel from village to village, carrying a symbolic representation of Goria a face crafted from gold and a seven-foot-tall idol made of Muli bamboo. One of the many songs collected and translated goes like this:

Kokborok

Ang hingya do Baba Goria

Nwng jejaga o tongphanw oro phaidi

Uttor o tong bw, Dokhin o tong bw

Pochim o tongbw Dokhin o tongbw

Saath sumurdur o tong phanw

Nwng oro phaiwi, achok phaidi

Chini bangwi nwng don tobodi

Baba Gori Raja yoi

Gomoti ni twi bai nono yakung suja o

O baba yoi Baba Goria Raja yoi

English

It is impossible for me to come walking

So, wherever you are, please come.

Be in the East or the West,

Whether in the North or the South

Even if across the Seven Seas.

Please come and take your seat.

Bring us wealth.

Baba Goria our King

Your feet are washed by the waters of the Gomti River.

Master and King of All Kings (Trans: Mine).

Commentary.

This devotional song is a solemn invocation to the Supreme Deity Goria of the Jamatia tribe. It is filled with strong yearning and deep longing for the Divine. Participants perform this song during the seven-day festival of Goria puja, in which every member of the Jamatia tribe participates, strengthening their spiritual and cultural bonds.

The song's elements can be broken down as follows:

- 1. "Ang hingya do Baba Goria/It is impossible for me to come walking" (trans: mine): This line shows the limitation of the human being in reaching the Divine. It signifies mankind's modesty and acknowledges its feebleness compared to the Divine.
- 2. "Nwng jejaga o tongphanw oro phaidi/Wherever you are, please come" (trans: mine): This shows the believer's eagerness for the Divine presence, a call powerful enough to pass through earthly boundaries.
- 3. "Uttor o tong bw, Dokhin, o tong bw/Be in the East or West," and "Pochim o tongbw Dokhin o tongbw/Be in the North or South" (trans: mine): This emphasizes the Divine's omnipresence. The East, West, North and South directional terms signify that Baba Goria's power knows no boundaries and is limitless.
- 4. "Saath sumurdur o tong phanw/Even if across the Seven Seas" (trans: mine): Is a call made to Goria, the phrase shows the devotees' belief that no matter how far away the deity may be, even if across the "seven seas" it's a passionate plea to come and participate in the ritual, thereby blessing the puja with His presence. The use of "seven seas" is a hyperbolic expression signifying an unreachable location or great distance showcasing the depth of faith and the desire for the deity to be present at the rituals, regardless of any physical barriers.
- 5. "Nwng oro phaiwi, achok phaidi/Come and take your seat" (trans: mine): It is an invitation to Baba Goria to be present among His devotees, an earnest desire for the deity to sit among them.
- 6. "Chini bangwi nwng don tobodi/Bring us riches"(trans: mine): This is a plea for blessings and prosperity, expressing a desire to endeavor to be fruitful under the watchful eye of the deity.
- 7. "Baba Gori Raja yoi/King of Kings" and "O baba yoi Baba Goria Raja yoi/Master and King of all Kings" (trans: mine): These lines acknowledge the supreme rule and power of Baba Goria over all other beings, emphasizing his magnificence and superiority.

8. "Gomoti ni twi bai nono yakung suja o/Your feet are washed by Gomti's water" (trans: mine): This line signifies a mark of devotion and respect. Washing the feet of a guest is often considered a sign of utmost hospitality and respect in many cultures, signifying the welcoming of the Divine into their seat. In this case, the use of Gomti water for washing the Divine's feet symbolizes purity and holiness, suggesting devotee's belief that Baba Goria is sacred and pure. In conclusion, the devotional song serves as an element for the devotees to voice their longing, to adore and to devote Baba Goria, paying him the highest respect.

6. Love Folksong.

The folk love songs of the Jamatia tribe are usually known for their heartfelt lyric and melodic tunes. The lyric of these song reflects the sincerity of the true love of the lover or the beloved. These Folk love songs sung during the Goria puja almost make one stand in awe as the lyric used are so enriched metaphorically, the lyric also draws inspiration from the beauty of nature. There exists a popular lore that, if the husband is upset or annoyed recite a verse from the folk love song 'Busu ni Khum then he'll burst into laughter". Given below is one of the many love-at-first-sight folk love songs of the tribe.

Kokborok

Mokol pengya hai Aswk tangwngwi angba

Kok Thaisa sarwjakliya.

Bobw ano hwnwi sini khana bilee

Ta wngwi ophlei nailangya

Buiso ni phung o khumtoya kholphro

Jaduno kisa nukrwkmani kha kisa rwktharmani

Goriyani kha khorang o Bwkha kubulwi thang o

Khuksaphanw phano jadu no

Ring bo jakliya

Kok sabojakliya

English

It seemed that he did not meet my expectations.

Why didn't I?

I could have at least spoken a word to him.

He must have recognized me as well.

Why didn't he turn back to look at me?

While picking flowers at dawn during Buiso.

I had a short glimpse of my Jadu

My heart now chases after him.

The Arrival of the Goria festival

A warmth of love fills my heart.

At least a wo<mark>rd with my Jadu.</mark>

Could have called him.

Couldn't speak a word to him. (Trans: Mine)

Commentary.

The folk love songs of the Jamatia tribe are celebrated for their harmonious tunes and emotional lyrics that beautifully encapsulate the sincerity of honest love. Sung during the sacred Goria puja ('Buisu'), these songs wonder beyond the realm of ordinary human expression as they strike wonders in the listener through their rich metaphoric lyrics drawing inspiration from the beauty of nature. A fascinating feature of these songs is the lore surrounding the Jamatia tribe. An example of this is the widely held belief that if a husband is troubled, reciting a verse from the traditional love song "Buisu ni Khum" will immediately make him squall into laughter, demonstrating the song's ability to heal and bring about positive change.

The word 'Buisu' denotes the seven days worship of the Supreme Deity Goria, making these songs not just expressions of human love, but spiritual offerings, establishing a deep connection between Divine and human emotions. Set in the background of the spiritual Buiso festival, the lyrics of one such song bear a tale of unexpressed love. Amplified by essentials of worship and sacred devotion, the story of the song weaves a magical balance of spiritual connections and deep human emotions. The song, narrates a heartfelt story of unexpressed love marked by regret, expectation and longing, but, placed within the broader context of community celebration and Divine worship. This blend of Divine worship and earthly love creates a unique narrative that represents the interconnectedness of human emotion with the realms of the Divine.

The act of picking flowers at the earliest dawn, a time when it is still dark, is a powerful symbol of new beginnings, purity and a vital offering of respect and love toward the deity. These flowers, which were picked at the earliest dawn, became the first God-created objects to be touched by human hands, symbolizing mankind's connection to nature and respect for Goria.

When the girl falls in love while performing this symbolic act, her human emotions become infused with godly significance, making her love story evolve into a spiritual journey that is seamlessly intertwined with her devotion to Goria. This overlap of Goria worship and love for another person speaks of the universal human quest to seek connection, both at spiritual and earthly levels. In this context, it is justifiable to mention the words of the renowned theologian Martin Buber, in his book 'I and Thou,' where he explores the profound interconnection between human relationships ('I-You') and the Divine ('I-It'). Another justifiable statement, in 'The Varieties of Religious Experience', psychologist and philosopher William James discusses how moments of powerful emotion can inspire spiritual transformation and wonders. The girl's experience reflects this view, that her love, born during the

Divine ritual of a seven-day worship, known as Buisu, aligns with the broader spiritual context of the celebration of Goria, bestowing her experience with sacredness and spirituality.

With Goria being celebrated as the supreme deity and the God of Fertility, the unfolding love story also indicates an abundance of emotional fertility, blessed by Goria Himself, which adds multiple layers to the girl's feelings for the boy and the symbolic tone of their meeting during the Buiso festival. The line "Mokol pengya hai" translates to "it seems he did not meet the expectation of my eye" (trans: mine). The girl assumes that the boy must have thought he is not good enough for her. However, this is a misunderstanding on her part. The real problem is that it is not him who thinks, he doesn't meet her expectations, but rather she is the one who has not clearly expressed her feelings to him, so he doesn't know how she feels about him and this misunderstanding causes heartache and confusion to the girl. This song also captures the belief that everyday experiences of love can be infused with a Divine sense of significance, similar to the manifestations of sanctified fertility. The girl's regret of the inability to connect her feelings can be seen as a form of spiritual longing, expressing a common theme found in mysticism, where the seeker feels a desire for union with the Divine. This reflects her earthly yearning to connect with the boy she loves. This theme is found in the writings of mystic poets such as Rumi and Hafiz, who often write about the soul's longing for union with the Divine being.

7. Key Findings.

- 1. **Cultural and Spiritual Significance:** Goria folksongs play a vital role in preserving the Jamatia tribe's identity, serving as both a cultural expression and a spiritual offering to the God of Fertility, Goria.
- 2. **Symbolism and Metaphors in Lyrics:** The songs use rich metaphors, such as comparing youth to blossoming chilies, to convey themes of fertility, love and growth, reflecting deep cultural beliefs.
- 3. **Playful Social Interaction:** Taunt songs, such as Bogla's songs, create a lively exchange between boys and girls during festivals, reinforcing community bonding through humour and teasing.
- 4. **Ritualistic and Carnivalesque Elements:** Certain folksongs, including lewd and humorous ones, serve as ritualistic offerings to Goria and act as a form of communal catharsis, allowing people to momentarily break social norms and engage in collective laughter.

8. Research Limitations.

- 1. Challenges in Translation: Many Kokborok words and phrases carry cultural and symbolic meanings that do not have direct English equivalents, making accurate translation difficult.
- 2. **Loss of Context and Nuance:** The performative aspects of Goria folksongs, including gestures, tone, and ritualistic expressions, cannot be fully conveyed through written translation, leading to a partial loss of meaning.
- 3. **Restricted Access to Authentic Interpretations:** Some elders and cultural practitioners hesitate to share or explain certain songs, especially those with sacred or lewd elements, limiting the depth of analysis.

9. Conclusion.

Jamatia tribe's folk songs reflect a deep sense of mysticism, love, and devotion, offering a heartfelt glimpse into their societal and spiritual connections. These songs are not individual expressions but are performed at the community level, showcasing the tribe's strong sense of shared unity and identity. The tribe's mysticism manifests through these songs, expressing a narrative that transcends earthly boundaries to connect the tribe with the Supreme Deity, Goria. This is most obvious in the rituals during the seven-day Goria puja, a celebration that is not confined to a single village but is a majestic event that includes the entire tribe. It highlights the reverence and strong spiritual ties for the deity, which are thought to have a significant impact on the way of life. Furthermore, these songs enable deep emotional expression through longing, love and reverence. The spiritual transcendental experience through earthly love expressed in the folk love song 'Buisu ni Khum' is especially noteworthy. The song tells a love story with an underlying spiritual journey, implying an important relationship between human feelings and the Divine.

Hence, it can be said that the Jamatia tribe's folk songs represent a complex interlinking of everyday life with devotion and mysticism. They encapsulate the faith and spirit of the tribe and the shared performance nurtures a sense of unity and portrays an archetypal illustration of how music can be an effective medium for spiritual awakening, communal expression and cultural preservation. These songs are performed not individually but at the community level in assemblies, symbolizing strong unity and highlighting the significance of shared experiences and communal participation within cultural practices.

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