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PREFACE

Jarigan songs comprise one of the most important genres of folk songs in South Asia, yet they are little known outside their native region, Bangladesh. Even within Bangladesh, the topic has received surprisingly meager scholarly attention. Whereas books and articles abound concerning Baul songs, for instance, only a few scholars have studied the topic of *jarigan* songs. Nevertheless, these songs are epic in scope and represent a high standard of poetic, dramatic and musical composition. During their golden years, *jarigan* performances entertained and educated rural audiences in the tens of thousands. In modified form, *jarigan* songs continue to be produced today. They merit attention outside, as well as within, their native land.

It was by accident that I first came to know about *jarigan* songs. While I was living in Dhaka during the 1960s, the Bangladeshi poet, Jasimuddin (1903-1976) was preparing a book on the topic. He had transcribed twenty full-length *jarigan* songs (a feat in itself) and written a ninety page explanatory introduction. He asked me to provide musical notations for inclusion at the end of his book. He recorded a singer whom he considered to be among the best *jarigan* singers in the region. At the time, I found the task of notating the singer's melodies was difficult because the language, literature and music of Bengal was still new to me. When I expressed my frustration at trying to capture on paper the subtleties of the music, Jasimuddin offered encouragement and assured me that some day I would be grateful for the effort I was making.

His prediction began to materialize soon after I returned to America in 1967. My experience in the work I did with Jasimuddin suggested the *jarigan* repertory as a subject for a Master's degree thesis at Columbia University in 1972. Subsequently, the material I possessed became the source of several articles and lectures on Bengali music. I realized at the same time that my material was limited to a relatively few examples of *jarigan* songs and that much of my information depended on descriptions in books of how the songs used to be performed. To verify and

understand more fully these descriptions required that I return to the country where *jarigan* songs originated.

In 1993, I had an opportunity to revisit the country which had been East Pakistan when I left it, but had become in 1971 the independent nation of Bangladesh. I mentioned my past work on *jarigan* to Bangladeshis who might be interested in the topic. To my surprise, I found not only a recognition that the topic was important, but an interest in reprinting what I had written so many years ago. Several Bangladeshis suggested to me that a book in English might serve to introduce the topic of *jarigan* to people outside of Bangladesh. A grant from the Ford Foundation and the cooperation of scholars and lay people in Bangladesh and in America made it possible to prepare the present book.

In 1995, I returned to Bangladesh to begin field work, to seek out material concerning *jarigan* in Bangladeshi libraries, and to talk to scholars who were familiar with Bengali folk literature, with Bangladeshi folk songs in particular. Since the publication of Jasimuddin's book in 1968, only one other book on the subject of *jarigan* had been published: *Bangladeshi Jarigan* (1986) by S. M. Lutfor Rahman, Professor in the Bengali Department of Dhaka University. When I saw how much information this book contained, I hastened to meet with him. He gave me one of the few copies of the book that he had left and encouraged me in my project.

I consulted with many other Bangladeshi scholars and amateurs of Bengali folk literature. They contributed useful information from their recollections of past *jarigan* performances and directed me to current sources of information. Returning to America, I supplemented my information from Bangladesh with research in libraries in New York City. Although I found hardly any material on the *jarigan* genre itself, I came upon helpful books and articles on related topics. I was able to contact scholars working on relevant subjects such as the Muharram festival, Bengali music, and Bengali theater among other topics that are helpful for reconstructing *jarigan* performances of the past.

I have divided the book into four parts. The first one (Chapters One through Five) provides a general introduction to the *jarigan* repertory: its cultural setting, its historical development, and its traditional recital form. In the second and third parts (Chapters Six through Ten), I provide a closer look at *jarigan* songs themselves: their themes, prosody and musical form. The last part (Chapter Eleven) contains a descriptive definition of the *jarigan* repertory, together with commentary on contemporary issues involved in a further study of these songs.

During the preparation of this book I found that rereading a *jarigan* song text or listening again to one of my field recordings enabled me to overcome those moments of discouragement which accompanied my attempt to piece together the probable origins of *jarigan* songs or to reconstruct their performances in the past. For example, reading the *jarigan* called "Kasem-Sokhinar Jari" (The *Jari* of Kasem and Sokhina) would restore my spirits with its moving narrative and skillful poetry.

This experience suggested to me that I recommend to readers unfamiliar with the *jarigan* repertory to peruse the translated examples that I provide in Appendix A. These translations can help to give a first-hand idea of the themes and form of *jarigan* songs. I have also provided musical notations which can introduce readers to

the melodic elements and structure of the *jarigan* tunes. Unfortunately, written texts and musical notations are "silent;" they cannot reproduce the sound of the dramatic declamation and stirring melodies of an actual performance. I have attempted to describe these intangible aspects of the *jarigan* repertory in the chapters of the book.

I am aware that readers who are familiar with Bengali culture may find mistakes and important omissions in the present book. The examples of *jarigan* songs on which I base my descriptions of the genre are limited to examples from the central areas of Bangladesh, whereas important styles of *jarigan* singing exist in the southern and northern districts of the country and *jarigan* songs are still sung on the other side of the national border in the State of West Bengal in India—in the Hooghly and Murshidabad areas, for instance. The descriptions in this book of the form of *jarigan* songs and of their recitals are necessarily generalizations based on the material available to me within the scope and time of the project.

Implied in the present book, if not explicitly stated, is a plea for preserving *jarigan* performances on film and in sound recordings. The suggestions by many friends that this book be accompanied by cassette or disk recordings is a logical one. As this book goes to press, this seems to be a possibility. For the present, I have included in Appendix C a listing of some of the *jarigan* audio-cassettes that were available in Bangladeshi music shops at the time of my research. For the future, I hope that the material in the pages of this book will convince others to participate in the preservation, study, and dissemination of a poetic and musical tradition that has served to entertain, educate and inspire Bangladeshi people throughout many generations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the preparation of the present book I have received help from many people in ways ranging from scheduled scholarly consultations to casual conversations at dinners and teas. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of a formal acknowledgment to include the names of all those who assisted me. I have listed mainly those which may help others to pursue the *jarigan* topic.

Very little has been written about this topic, so that often I depended in my research on information obtained in meetings with scholars in fields relevant to the *jarigan* repertory. In Bangladesh these scholars included Shamsuzzaman Kahn, Director General of the Shilpakala Academy, formerly Director of the Research, Compilation and Folklore Division of the Bangla Academy; Mohammed Sayeedur, the Bangla Academy's expert on Muharram festivals; Professor S. M. Lutfor Rahman, author of one of the two Bengali books on *jarigan*; Professor Ahmed Sharif, a retired professor from the Bengali Department of Dhaka University, the author and editor of many works on ancient and medieval Bengali literature; Karunamaya Goswami, Professor of musicology and author of books on the history and form of Bengali music; Professor Selim Al Deen of the Department of Drama and Dramatics at Jahangirnagar University and Professor Afsar Ahmad, Chairman of that Department; Syed Jamil Ahmed, Chairman of the Drama Department of Dhaka University and the creator of the passion play, *Bishad Sindhu*; Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, a dedicated collector and promoter of Bengali folk music; Ahmed Sofa, poet, essayist, novelist and historian; and Rustom Bharucha, a writer of essays and books on the performing arts of India. These scholars whom I consulted encouraged my study of *jarigan* songs and gave generously of their time answering questions and reviewing my work.

In America I met on several occasions with Peter J. Chelkowski at New York University where he is Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature and an expert on Muharram celebrations and Persian

ta'ziyeh. I also consulted with Professor Israel J. Katz, a retired professor of Ethnomusicology, a writer and editor specializing in Sephardic songs. I benefited from frequent discussions with Amy C. Bard at Columbia University where she is completing her doctoral dissertation on Urdu *marsiyas*. I am indebted to these American scholars for the amount of information and guidance they gave me during the preparation of this book.

A number of other American scholars provided me with their articles, specific information and encouragement: Frank J. Korom, Curator of the Asian and Middle Eastern Collections, Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe; Ephraim Miller who studied ancient Bengali literary epics for his doctoral dissertation at Chicago University; Mary Elaine Hegland, Professor of Anthropology, University of California at Santa Clara; Margaret Mills, Professor in the Department of Folklore and Folk Life, University of Pennsylvania; Milla Riggio, Professor of English and organizer of a *ta'ziyeh* conference held where she teaches at Trinity College, Hartford; Dorothy Angell from American University (Washington, D. C.), an anthropologist whose doctoral dissertation concerns Bengali migrants; and Joanna Kirkpatrick, retired professor of anthropology at Bennington College, who has taught and written about Bengali folk art. Some of the works of these scholars which were especially helpful to a study of *jarigan* songs are mentioned in the essay on sources preceding the Bibliography or listed in the Bibliography itself.

I received generous assistance for various practical needs involved in research and the collection of *jarigan* songs. I owe special thanks to Syed Shujauddin Ahmed, Director General of the Department of Mass Communication in the Government of Bangladesh, for sending out questionnaires to singers in different districts. During the 1995 Muharram festival celebrations I was hospitably received by the Pir of the Gorpara *Imam bara* during the Muharram celebrations there.

I was able to use the resources of cultural institutions in Dhaka. These included the library and audio-visual center of the Bangla Academy, the library of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, and the library of Dhaka University. At the Iranian Culture Center the Public Relations Officer, Barkat Ullah Zahiruddin, made available the Center's video films on the Muharram celebrations in Iran and Bangladesh.

A number of Bangladeshi journalists and students made preliminary translations of *jarigan* texts: Priscilla Raj, journalist for *Samaj Chetana*; Mohammad Moydul Islam Mohoshin, staff reporter for *Bichitra Shangbad*; his friend, "Kartik," student at Jaganath College; Faiyaz Murshid Kazi, an executive of Bitopi Advertising, Dhaka; and Mrs. Khalida Aktar, a bio-chemist working in Dhaka. Mohammad Tayub Hossain Khan, Principal of Nayabazar College in Dhaka, translated several songs. Madeleine Frisch, a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music in New York, helped with revisions of the preliminary translations.

I am thankful to Sukalpa Gupta, a vocalist studying Indian classical music and possessing a broad background in Bengali history and literature. He made musical notations of my recordings using the Indian system, at the same time helping to transcribe and translate the texts of the songs notated. Steven Sweeting, an American composer, converted my hand-drafted notations into computer-produced staff notations, a task which required exceptional perseverance as well as his fine musical ear.

I consulted with A. M. Saadullah, a graphic designer, about esthetic aspects of the present book. M. Amiruzzaman, an architect working for the Sthapati Sangshad firm, also gave helpful advice on the appearance of the book.

Mohiuddin Ahmed, the Managing Director of the University Press Limited, was among the first to take an interest in my work on *jarigan*. He not only undertook the publication of the present book, but patiently accepted the fact that my draft kept increasing in length. His staff worked skillfully and often over-time to effect the final product.

I owe my research assistant and photographer, Mokhlesur Rahman Lenin, unending gratitude for his intelligent and unstinting work in overseeing almost every aspect of the production of this book. As well as photographing, sound-recording and interpreting during my interviews with singers, he introduced me to valuable contacts and sources of information. He not only took charge of the practical details of field trips, but supervised the technical aspects of the book at each stage of its production.

My landlord, Mr. Habibullah, and his daughters took care to make me comfortable during many months in Dhaka while I was occupied with research and writing. Ali Joon Ispahani and Ameneh Ispahani and the Fathers of Notre Dame College were among many friends in Bangladesh whose concern for my welfare and whose hospitality I shall long remember.

The folk song singers of Bangladesh who sang for me deserve special thanks. Their names can be found in various sections of the present book.

I am most of all grateful to my husband and daughter for their moral support as well as for their valuable suggestions and help with decisions about the content, direction and format of the book.

The Ford Foundation provided the grant that enabled me to undertake research and field work. I have been thankful for this opportunity to study the topic of *jarigan* and I hope that the present work will influence scholars and amateurs to collect, preserve and foster the *jarigan* traditions that still survive.

TRANSLITERATIONS, TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSLATIONS

TRANSLITERATIONS

For the sake of readers who may be unacquainted with the Bengali language and its script, I have chosen to use a phonetic style of transliteration rather than an orthographically precise one. My aim is to make my text as easy as possible on the eye of a reader with little practice in academic conventions of transliteration. I trust that my transliterations are self-explanatory to readers already acquainted with Bengali. For the most part, my phonetic representations resemble closely those listed in Appendix XVIII of *The Students' Favorite Dictionary* by Ashu Tosh Dev (Calcutta, 1964). Readers desiring more precise representations should, of course, refer to the Bengali alphabet. For a succinct explanation of the history of changes in the pronunciation of Bengali words I recommend J. D. Anderson, *A Manual of the Bengali Language* (1920, republished in 1962).

Choosing a transliteration system for this book has been complicated by the fact that I found no model of transliteration that served the various aspects of *jarigan* studies as found in the descriptions in this book; that is, dialectal and *shadhu* (literary) Bengali, Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic vocabulary, etc. I found that eastern, if not western, spoken Bengali has changed remarkably since I did my first research on *jarigan* songs in the 1960s, so that I needed to revise the transliteration system that I worked out at that time. In my desire to reproduce the sound of *jarigan* song texts, including the dialectal pronunciation of words, I have favored phonetic transliterations rather than orthographically precise ones. I apologize for the inconsistencies that inevitably have occurred as I tried to satisfy both orthography and phonetics.

I have used diacritical marks for transliterations of Sanskrit words and for words in particular portions of the Glossary. Otherwise I omit diacritical marks. In the case

of Bengali technical words that are closely cognate with Sanskrit or Perso-Arabic words, I have favored orthography, but without including diacritical marks. For example, I have written "s" in spelling the Bengali word "*sahitya*" (literature), although the "s" in the colloquial speech of Bangladeshis often resembles the sound of "sh". On the other hand, in the case of more vernacular Bengali words, I have represented them as phonetically as possible without straying too far from orthography. I hope that the following remarks are sufficient to explain the transliterations in my text.

Representations

"a" represents various sounds:

It may represent 1) the sound of "uh" rhyming with the "u" in "cup"; 2) the sound "aw", as in "saw"; 3) the sound of "a" as in "father"; or, sometimes, 4) the sound of "o" as in "go". To understand this last possibility, read the explanation below about the letter "o". The reader who is already acquainted with the Bengali language has a feel for which sound to attribute to the letter "a". For the reader unacquainted with Bengali, it is convenient to pronounce the letter "a" like the "a" as in "father". In the majority of cases, this approach will yield an acceptable, though crude, approximation.

"e" represents the sound of the accented "e" in the French word "*café*", or a sound which is part way between the "e" in the English words "pet" and "weigh".

"i" represents the sound of "i" in "sit" or the sound of "i" in "police". For the reader unacquainted with Bengali, the second sound will yield the best result in most cases.

"o" represents the sound of "o" in "go". This "o" may represent the Bengali letter for this sound, or it may represent an "o"-sound which exists in Bengali speech, but is not expressed in Bengali writing. For example, I write "*boli*" (I or we say; pronounced "boh-lee"), instead of "*bali*", as in the academic style of orthography, for which the letter "a" has been chosen to represent various vowel sounds (including an "o"-sound) which are sounded, but which may not be written.

"u" represents the sound of "u" in "true".

"y" represents the sound of "y" in "yes", even at the end of words. Thus, for example, *jay* (he or she goes) rhymes with "pie" and not with "day". A "y" following a consonant has no sound of its own, but doubles the sound of the consonant that precedes it. In vernacular words when "y" follows a consonant, I omit it and double the preceding consonant. In the case of literary words, however, I often preserve the "y", although it is not pronounced. For example, I write "*dhuya*" (a kind of refrain song) as "*dhua*" (the way it is pronounced), but I write "*sahitya*" (literature; pronounced "shah-heet-toh") preserving the "y" although it is not pronounced.

"ch" and "chh" represent the sound of "ch" in "chin". These two Bengali letters are often pronounced today like "sh", as in "shop", or even as "s", as in "see". The letter "c" in my transliterations never represents the sound of "k".

"j" represents the sound of "j" as in "jump". In dialectal speech it may sound like "z".

"sh" represents three Bengali sibilant letters that have the sound of "sh" as in "shop" with slight variations respectively. The third sibilant in the Bengali alphabet is conventionally transliterated as "s", its original sound. In the case of erudite words, I use "s", not "sh". For example, I write "*sahitya*" (literature), although the word often sounds like "shah-heet-toh".

"th" represents the sound "th" as in "Thomas" and not the sound of "th" as in "thought" or "this".

"ph" represents the sound of "ph" as in "philosophy". Often this sound is transliterated with the letter "f", especially in the case of Perso-Arabic words.

"b" and "v" represent the sounds of "b" and "v" as in English words. However, their sounds are sometimes interchangeable in Bengali speech. Often the "v" of Sanskrit has become a "b"-sound in Bengali. For example: *kavi* (poet) may be pronounced "*kabi*" ("koh-bee"). Bengali writers writing in English vary as to how they transliterate words containing "b" and "v". For lack of guidance in this matter, I generally have chosen the spelling that is found in the Sanskrit derivation of a Bengali word, but if the modern Bengali pronunciation often disagrees with this, I have generally represented the Bengali word phonetically as it sounds to me today.

"n" in my transliterations is used to represent the sound "n" as in "note" and, in a few cases, to represent no sound of its own, but to indicate that a preceding vowel is to be nasalized. For example, in the word *banshi* (bamboo flute), the "a" is nasalized as signaled by the letter "n" following it which is itself not pronounced. In the Bengali word "*vamsha*", the "m" serves the same nasalizing purpose.

Italics. I have italicized all Bengali words, but not proper names, as, for example, in the song line, "Banu [*re*], Joynal *shopilam tor hate*"... (Oh, Banu, I entrust Joynal into your hands ...).

Capitalization. Bengali writing is uniform; it uses no capitalization. However, in my transliterations I have used capital letters for the titles of songs, books, and articles, as well as for the spelling of names and for the first letter in each new line of a poetic text.

Plurality of nouns. I use the letter "s" at the end of transliterated Bengali words in the plural, although plurality in Bengali grammar is indicated by other means. For example, I write *boyatis* (chief singers) for the plural of *boyati*.

The possessive case. I write "#s" and "s#" at the end of transliterated words in the possessive case, although the possessive case in Bengali grammar is indicated by other means. For example, I write *boyati's* for the possessive case of *boyati*, and *boyatis'* for the possessive case of the plural form of *boyati*.

Transliterations of Arabic and Persian words. I have transliterated these words from the Bengali versions of them as they are given in Shaikh G. M. Hilaly's *Perso-Arabic Elements in Bengali* (Dhaka, 1967).

Hosein and Hasan. These names are transliterated in several ways; for example, Hossein or Hussain and Hassan. I write "Hosein" or "Hasan", respectively, except when citing from specific sources. In those cases I honor the spelling found there.

Punctuation. Bengali written texts need little punctuation other than indications of a period and comma. In my transliterations, if the meaning seems clear without using a comma, I omit it. In the text of this book, when I use terminology and other special vocabulary, in Bengali or in English, I place any comma or period that would normally be placed within a closing quotation mark, outside of the mark, in order to preserve the integrity of the particular expression, as in the following sentence: In tunes where one *matra* per syllable predominates, the tunes are characterized as "syllabic".

TERMINOLOGY

Bengal-Bengali and Bangladesh-Bangladeshi. I use the words Bengal and Bengali when I refer to phenomena that apply to the whole geographic region where Bengali is spoken, including the State of West Bengal in India as well as the People's Republic of Bangladesh, especially before these two areas became separate political entities in 1947. In referring to cultural matters in eastern Bengal which are specific to times following 1947, I generally use the noun Bangladesh and the modifier Bangladeshi, even in some cases when I speak of the East Pakistani years of Bangladesh. I apologize for inconsistencies that occur in my text due to indecision as to how to treat the Pakistani interim period of Bangladeshi cultural history.

I use the word Bengali instead of Bangla in reference to language. Although Bangla is preferred by many people today, I was unable to master its use before this book was due at the press. I experimented with using Bangla instead of Bengali, but found trouble devising an adjective from it. The word Bengali serves conveniently in English both as a noun and an adjective, whereas Bangla is a noun, requiring special handling as an English word to use as an adjective. I found that if I changed the word Bengali to Bangla in my text, I would have to make radical changes in many sentences, taking time from work on the book that I felt was more important. My choice, therefore, of "Bengali" over "Bangla" is merely a matter of present convenience and does not reflect an ideological stance.

The word "text". Readers should be aware that when I use the word "text" in reference to the verbal content of *jarigan* songs, I do not suggest that the songs exist in writing. The songs are transmitted orally and only written down by collectors in their transcriptions. My descriptions of the songs involve the relationship between the texts of songs and the melody that accompanies them. In these descriptions it is more convenient to use the word "text" (as if a written text existed) than to say "verbal lines", or other such circumlocutions. I avoid using the English word "lyrics" because it connotes too readily the texts of short,

light genres of songs, not the mostly expository (non-lyrical), epic-like texts of *jarigan* songs.

TRANSLATIONS

Interjections and other extraneous elements. *Jarigan* songs contain various exclamations and interjections. In the transliterated Bengali texts I have enclosed these expressions in brackets and I have translated them with expressions such as "Oh!", "Ah!", "Alas!", etc. For example: "[*Ore*] *ga tolo* Sokhina ..." (Oh!, arise Sokhina ...). I have also enclosed in brackets the extra sounds that a singer articulates to fill out the meter of a line or to provide time for melodic embellishment. For example: "*Shonen[a], shonen[a], shrotagon [go]* ..." (Listen, listen, listeners, oh! ...). These extra syllables that are found on the ends of words have no specific meaning, but I include them in order to reproduce the sound of a line as it was sung.

Gender. Gender is not indicated in Bengali pronouns. Because *jarigan* singing is largely performed by men, I have used masculine pronouns when generalizing rather than saying "he or she", "his or her", etc., except in sections that concern women specifically.

Indicating translations. Within the text of the book, I have indicated translations by enclosing them within parentheses. Unless otherwise indicated, these translations are my own. They have been made literally, rather than poetically, in order to represent the vigorous quality of the vocabulary of the Bengali texts.

Dates. I have translated dates that I found cited in *Hijri* years ("A. H.", "*Anno Hejirae*") of the Muslim calendar into Christian Era years ("A. D.", "*Anno Domini*"). However, it should be kept in mind that some of my sources use only the *Hijri* system. My conversions may be approximate rather than precise as to the turn of one year into the next.