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LALON SHAH-The Great Humanist

THE 205th birth anniversary and 87th death anniversary of Lalon Shah was quietly observed the other day. There was no fanfare, and none was called for.

But he deserved more attention more group discussions, and thorough deliberations by scholars and literary personalities which could be compiled and preserved permanently in print. He deserves a better treatment than sketchy newspaper reports that get lost soon after their publication. Otherwise, we cannot claim that we deserve him and the heritage he stands for. Our claim to greatness is to be judged by our capacity to preserve and appreciate the spiritual and intellectual legacy bequeathed to us.

To say that Lalon was only a 'baoul', a mystic bard is to truncate his genius as a thinker who influenced the leading Bengali writers of the sub-continent including Rabindranath

Emetch

Tagore. His influence on Tagore which the latter has acknowledged unequivocally, is clearly discernible in his (Tagore's) writings, especially in many of his songs. We cannot afford to give him scant attention without proving ourselves unworthy of the inheritance.

He was a great humanist. Considering the time in which he lived, when men could hardly rise above parochial and sectarian level of thought and existence, it is a wonder that he was so free from prejudices and narrowness and could sing the glory of humanity.

Sablokey Kai Lalon Kijal
sangarey,
Lalon bole jaker ki roop dekh-
lamna ai najarey
Keu mala keu tasbib galey,

Taitorev jat bhinna bole.
Jaoa kimba asar belai
Jater chinha roi karey.
Jagat berey jater katha
Lokey galpo karey jatha tatha,
Lalon bole jater khatha
dubiechhi sadh bazar-
rey.

In this famous song Lalon strongly condemned casteism and all forms of discriminations that isolate man from man and creates wall of separatism and hatred. No greater exponent of humanism lived in this country split into innumerable sects and schisms.

The songs like 'Khanchar bhit-
tor achin pakhi' and 'Barir Ka
chey arshinagar' are so rich
in thought and expression that
they will endure for ever. For
these songs alone, his memory
will survive when all else is
claimed by death.