

# Bonbibir Palagan, A Folk Performance In Sundarban, West Bengal , India- A Cultural Anthropological Inquiry In The Frame Of Social Drama Of Victor Turner

Partha Chakraborti<sup>1</sup>, Dr.Abhijit Das<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (Research Scholar, Department Of Anthropology, Wbsu, West Bengal, India)

<sup>2</sup> (Associate Professor, Department Of Anthropology, Wbsu, West Bengal, India)

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## Abstract

The Sundarbans is the world's largest coastal wetland, the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers in the Bay of Bengal which is famous for its rich biodiversity and thus represents a vast source of economically valuable forest products for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans. Moreover, the Sundarbans are surrounded by rivers, canals and creeks, which help the islanders of the Sundarbans to create a range of nature-based economic activities. The Sundarbans is the cradle of coexistence of different religions and cultures. The folk cultural elements of the Sundarbans have given the region a unique character. The oral tradition of the region is rich in mythology and folklore. Human interactions and relationships with nature are explained in the light of these various myths. Since their economy is mainly ecology-based and especially forest-based economy, human life of Sundarban is full of uncertainty, danger, risk of life, anxiety and fear. Moreover, such interactions give rise to human-animal conflict situations. To reduce their anxiety and fear, they offered themselves to various gods and goddesses, pirs and derveshes. Of all the great traditional religious beliefs, the entire religion of the area revolves around a lesser tradition, the goddess bonbibi. Bonbibi Pala is a myth-based folk drama that narrates the story of human-wildlife conflict in the Sundarbans. In fact this Palagan reveals the glory of Bonbibi as an oral tradition and imparts firmness of faith among the people. This present paper attempts to understand how the myths and beliefs of Bonbibi are embodied through this Palagan. In the present paper, an attempt is made to unravel the nature of Bonbibir Palagan within the conceptual framework of anthropologist Victor Turner's 'Social Drama'.

**Key words :** Sundarban, Oral traditions, Bonbibi, Palagan, Social Drama

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## I. Introduction

Palagan of Bonbibi is a dramatic performance tradition associated with Bonbibi cult worship. This popular ceremony is a cultural phenomenon only in the Sundarbans and is therefore practiced in the Sundarbans of the lower delta region of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh. It is an oral tradition by nature and thus survives through word of mouth or handwritten manuscripts. The word 'pala' means a 'long narrative verse' and 'gan' means 'song' in Bengali. Traditionally, Bonbibi-ar Palagan was recited or sung only to invoke the blessings of the deity. It later evolved into an acting form, where the socio-religious tradition of Bonbibi in the country of Bhati (land of tides, i.e. Sundarbans) carries an important significance. The fact that this ceremony is practiced even today indicates the continuity of this worship tradition. Bonbibir Palagan is considered a representative experience of the Sundarbans and a symbol of the synergistic nature of the region (Mandal,2017). We can explain Bonbibir Palagan with Victor Turner's 'Social Drama' concept or theory. This paper attempts to discuss this.

Victor Turner introduced the concept of social drama (1975) in anthropology. Demographics and Economics Examining village-level social processes among the Ndembu people of Zambia. Later the concept of social drama shifted to the analysis of ritual and symbolism. Social drama is defined as "a public episode of emotional disturbance", "a unit of disjointed or inconsistent processes arising in conflict situations". These manifest in social organization and values.

In his theory of social drama, Turner (1975) argued that there are four main stages of public action that lead to change:

1. Violation: Crisis occurs in the first stage, as an individual or group openly violates the general norms that govern the relationship between parties.
2. Crisis: Crisis widens and widens the gap between parties.

3. Remedial action: At this stage the crisis is addressed using the remedial processes existing in the society and aimed at establishing social peace similar to the pre-crisis. Public ritual usually serves such a purpose.
4. Reintegration: Negotiating solutions to problems; Changes are being validated.

In both types of resolution, symbolic displays demonstrate actors' unity in ritual form. In Turner's theory, a plot is a type that has a set sequence that is linear, not circular.

## **II. Material And Methods**

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted to collect primary data for this study

Primary data has been collected with the help of observation, interview and case study methods.

Observations, both participant and non-participant, were used to collect information about Palagan. Respondents such as proprietors of Pala groups, ordinary actors, spectators and devotees were interviewed to collect contextual data. Previous monographs, books, journals, Panchali of Bonbibi have been consulted for secondary data collection.

### **Eco-cultural set-up of Sundarban and the pride of Bonbibi**

Sundarbans is an archipelago located in the southernmost part of the Gangetic basin and is spread between two rivers - the Hooghly River, West Bengal, India to the west and the Meghna River to the east. The term 'sunderban', which literally means 'beautiful forest' ('sunder' meaning beautiful, 'ban' meaning forest), is used to refer to both forest and region. The word 'beautiful' is also derived from the sundari (*Heritiera fomes*) tree that grows in the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. The entire area covers 25,500 square kilometers, two-thirds of which is in Bangladesh and the rest in India. India's Sundarbans span 19 blocks and 9,630 sq km between two districts of West Bengal—North and South 24 Parganas—about half of which is forested. Sundarbans is the largest natural habitat of Royal Bengal Tigers, and is home to about 271 tigers in India alone (Mukhopadhyay). Of the 102 islands in the Indian Sundarbans, about 54 are inhabited and the rest are declared protected forests. What is less known is that the region is home to about 4.44 million people (Ghosh et al. 2015). Located on the coastline, the landscape is crisscrossed by rivers and streams, prone to cyclones, and has one of the largest tracts of estuarine forest in the world; This makes residents vulnerable to various types of disasters.

In this kind of eco-cultural landscape, the forest becomes the center of faith and devotion. Residents who depend on the forest for their daily survival by collecting wood, honey, wax, fish and crabs from the Sundarbans are considered as the main devotees of Bonbibi. In Bengali the word 'Bon' means 'forest', while 'Bibi' comes from the Persian word for woman or wife; Hence the word 'Bon Bibi' literally means 'lady of the forest'. Bonbibi is believed to have traveled from Madina to the Sundarbans at the behest of Allah to protect the hapless inhabitants as well as the animals of the forest. Bonbibi is one of the most integrated deity of the folk religions of Bengal and both Hindus and Muslims of the region devote themselves to this deity. Anecdotes of Bonbibi, like other oral literatures, have changed forms and forms, still exist in a flexible state in present-day society and are destined to be further transformed. Bonbibi's Palagan is based on a complex system of mythology that traces the origins of important socio-political changes in Bengal's history - the rise of Islam around the 13th century and the liberal spirit of Sufism in the rural lowlands followed by the development of Hindu-Muslim syncretism in 15th century Bengal and then in the medieval period (Mandal, 2017).

Jungle (forest) is an indispensable element in the life of the people of this region. The islanders depend on the forest for their daily survival—to bring wood, honey, beeswax, fish and crabs—and they often face danger and death in various forms. This interaction of fear and belief has led to the worship of nature, personified in the form of Bonbibi, the guardian of the forest. Although residents depend on forests for their survival, forest workers losing their lives is a regular occurrence. This perpetual war/dependency translates into the worship and performance of Bonbibi as a representative of supernatural forces. Bonbibir Palagan thus establishes the inevitability of survival. Bonbibir palagan is seen as an integral part of puja offered to Bonbibi, a performance, a way to appease the wrath of natural forces.

### **Historical genesis of palagan**

Enamul Haque, in his seminal work *A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal*, writes that in the 16th and 17th centuries, 'Sufism in Bengal, along with Sufism in India, was in a transitional stage, after which it became almost independent. constituted by a mixture of local and extra-regional thought' (Haque 1975:2). According to Haque, this period of Sufism in Bengal (also called Middle Age of Sufism in Bengal), laid a tremendous foundation for Sufism in Bengal, especially in rural Bengal. If Islam became popular in India under the guise of Sufism, the main agents of propagation were the Sufi saints, popularly called *Pirs*. *Sufi pirs* adopted many local and non-Islamic practices. With a highly stratified

and oppressive Hindu society on the one hand and the decline of Buddhism on the other, Bengal was established as a fertile ground for new religions. Although the initial aim was to expand the base of Islam in India, what developed in rural Bengal was a transformation of Islam, which Enamul Haque calls 'popular Islam'. Many Pirs and Piranis emerged as religious figures and were recognized as demi-gods in various regions. They were worshiped in the Hindu system of Gazi Mian, Panch Pir, Pir Badr and Khwaja Khiz. Satya Pir, Manik Pir, Pir Gorachand, Barkhan Ghazi, Bon Bibi, Ola Bibi, Darbar Bibi and many others began to be worshiped as local sects by both Hindus and Muslims.

Sufism in Bengal expressed the fusion of Perso-Arabic Islamic literary genres with Bengali Hindu traditional literary genres during the Middle Ages. Traditional Hindu literary categories such as Mangalkavya, Perso-Arabic Qisa or Kechcha influenced the development of literature in the mother tongue; This resulted in the evolution of a distinct type of literature called *Pir Sahitya*—Bengali literature about the lives of Pirs or Piranis. The language used in Pir literature was called Muslim Bengali or Islami Bengali (Mandal, 2017).

Jahuranama is an anecdote written in *Panchali* form. Written in Muslim Bengali, this pir literature sheds light on the influence and spread of Bonbibi in the country of Bhati, the popularization of the faith. There are three separate versions of Banbibi's Zohuranama

- (i) Banbibi Zahuranama 1284 (1877-78 CE) by Boinuddin
- (ii) Banbibi Jahura Nama 1287 (1881 CE) by Munshi Mohammad Khater
- (iii) Ban Bibi's Zahurnama 1305 (1899 CE) Muhammad Munsif.

These texts are part of Bengal's early print culture; Specifically, they form a part of the *Battala* literature. The plot of Bonbibi's Palagan is rooted in the written stories of Jahuranama or the oral, folktales of the Sundarbans. According to its folkloric character, it is possible that the content of the Palagan was passed down by word of mouth, and elements of the Palagan are probably rooted in the printed Zohuranama. The story of Bonbibi has been rewritten and remade by numerous Palagan directors or script writers called *Palakars*. The palagan script of Bonbibi is thus recorded in numerous unpublished, handwritten manuscripts that the palakars produced based on the social conditions and needs of the time. One such *pala* has been published in Sujit Kumar Mandal's book *Banbibir Pala* (Mandal, 2010).

### **The Performance of Bonbibir Palagaan**

Palagan is a performative form that involves the recitation and singing of long descriptive verbal verses accompanied by mimetic gestures. Scholars believe that Palagan originated in the 10th century AD with Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* and Baru Chandidasa's *Srikoshanakirtan* (Mandal, 2017). It is an important element of Hindu rituals and involves the dramatization of myths and legends about gods and goddesses. This artistic practice describes and enacts the internalization of beliefs about gods and goddesses. In fact, the process of internalization of a Great tradition of gods and goddesses in the secular folk tradition is justified through mangalkavya. It is an intellectual process to hegemonize the folk gods and goddesses. Thus Palagan is traditionally associated with Hindu religious practices. As noted earlier, popular religious literary genres such as Panchali or Mangalkavya were appropriated by Muslim poets to create a new genre called Pir Sahitya, a similar utilitarian performance can be observed. The narrative of Bonbibi, as presented in the Zohuranamas, is borrowed from the already existing performative form of Palagan ritual, to fashion the Banbibi-R Palagan. According to Shashankshekhar Das (2004) Bonbibi's Yatra drama was first scripted and performed by Basiruddin Gayen of Bhomra village in Satkhira district (now in Bangladesh) in Bhawanipur zamindar's Bhurkhunda (now in North Twenty-four Parganas, West Bengal). Property of a British company in 1942. Girindranath Das, in *The History of Pir Literature in Bengal*, states that Bonbibi scripts were written and performed between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Satishchandra Chowdhury's *Banbibi*, starring Palagan, was produced in 1909 (Das 2004:17). However, it is impossible to specifically date the earliest performance of the bonbibi-r palagan, which indicates its folk nature—it cannot be traced back to an original performance. Neither of these dates can be authenticated due to the lack of published scripts. Shashankshekhar Das's claim that the first Palagan performance was held in 1942 therefore becomes invalid as it has been established that Palagan was performed long before that.

Bonbibir Palagan, like any folk performance form, has changed in nature over time. Bonbibir Palagan has now evolved into two forms - the traditional Bonbibir Palagan and the contemporary Bonbibir Palagan. Traditional Bonbibir Palagan can be further classified into two types of presentation: Ekni Pala and Bonbibir Palagan. The word 'ekni' is derived from the word 'ek', which means 'one'. Ekani Pala is a solo performance by an artist who sings, narrates stories and also acts out parts of the narrative. The lead singer is called a *gayen* and is usually a *dohar* or accompanist. Dohar plays songs and occasionally engages in conversation with Gayen during the performance. The traditional Palagan form

of the Bonbibi follows the form of the traditional Palagan, where the dohar and gayen sing and narrate the story. Music plays an important role in the elaboration of the plot(Mandal,2017). Palagan's script has a range of improvisation. Because instant scripts are mostly written on the fly. This becomes easier because the actors build the story of the script from life experiences. The tradition of periodical scenes like classical plays is not seen in Bonbibir Palagan. Amateur actors are mainly forest workers who perform palagans to pay homage to the deity. Some sacred rituals are observed during the performance, such as the actors have to keep their bodies clean, actors are prohibited from eating non-vegetarian food on the day of the performance, female actors do not participate during menstruation, etc. Such rituals are followed faithfully to maintain the sanctity of the worship.

The contextual facts about palagan are harnessed through interview method with the leaders of several Banbibi palakari organizations of Nagenbad in Kultali block of South 24 Parganas, Pakhiraloy of Gosaba block and Anpur village of Gosaba Block of South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. From the field investigation it is known that it takes about four hours to do the various anecdotes of the whole pala. Bablu Mandal of Anpur village in Gosaba block runs a group of palakar named 'Sundarban Sanstha'. He and his team traveled far to Mumbai. There, Bonbibir pala has been captured by the camera as a short film.

The leaders of various organizations said that they do not now do this full story as a pala. Because around 20-25 actors and actresses are needed to make this pala; the pala needs singer, musician. But they don't get enough money from the exhibition of a performance to honor enough artists. So they shortened the pala, with less actors and actresses. At the tourist lodges in the Sundarbans, the troupe show up Bonbibir Pala to entertain the tourists. They decorate themselves with various clothes and makeup. However, they have to do agriculture over a large part of the year for their sustenance. In the Sundarban areas of North 24 Parganas such as Sandeshkhali, Dakshin Raipur, Kalinagar etc. Bonbibir Pala is also known by other names in the region such as Dukher Yatra, Zarurnama, Bonbibir Yatra etc. In the past, the major musical instruments used for Palagan were drums or dhols, flutes or banshi, cymbals or kortals, srikhol etc. In later times the use of the harmonium increased, but now the casio has taken that place. Leaders of these parties have folk artist cards provided by the Government of West Bengal. As a result, they get government programs. They also get government folk artists allowance. The Dukhe Yatra is the greatest example of the harmony of all religions. People of both religions, Hindus and Muslims, participate in this journey. Earlier, men with relatively soft skin played female roles. But due to the need of the times, lower caste women or Muslim women also play the role of Bonbibi now. It is actually a great example of women's freedom. There is no written form of this pala as the actors and actresses mainly memorize the dialogues and songs by word of mouth. Acting is staged. Both the acting and the costumes are top notch. This much-heard song is still equally attractive to the people of Sundarbans.

### **Composition of Bonbibi-r Palagaan**

The Bonbibir Palagan goes beyond the narrative mentioned in the Jahuranama and draws its material from local mythology. Storytelling can be divided into three parts:

- Birth of Banabibi in Janamkhanda or tidal land
- Narayani's Janga or battle with Narayani
- Dukhe Yatra or drama of Dukhe

Below is an outline of these three sections of the plot

Birth episode or *Janmakhand*

Fakir Ibrahim and his wife Fulbibi lived in Medina. They were childless and decided to pray to the Prophet for a son. The Prophet informed them that Fulbibi would have no children, but if she remarried Ibrahim she would have twins. Fulbibi consents to Ibrahim's second marriage, on the condition that he gives her a karaar (promise), which he can claim if necessary. Not suspecting his evil intentions, Ibrahim readily agreed and married Gulal, daughter of Fakir Shah Jalil of Makkah.

Meanwhile, Allah ordered Bonbibi and Shah Jangali, who were then living in Behesta (heaven), to be born on earth from Gulal's womb, so that they could fulfill a divine mission. The 'Hindu' god, half-Brahmin sage, half-tiger was sent to the country of Atharo Bhatias (land of 18 Bhatas, i.e., Sundarbans) to protect the land from Dakshina Ray. When Gulal's nine-month pregnancy is over, Phulbibi fulfills her promise and demands that Gulal be banished to the forest. Ibrahim, trapped by his vow, vows to cheat Gulal in a sad heart. Ibrahim took Gulal to the forest and left him there when he fell asleep. When Gulal woke up, she looked for her husband, but could not find him. She screamed her heart out only to realize that her husband had left her alone in the desolate and dangerous forest. Eventually, Gulal gave birth to twins—Bonbibi and Shah Jangali—and these children were none other than Allah's Messenger.

Gulal got tired and hungry without getting food in the forest. He left his daughter and took his son with him. Allah sent a deer that breastfed and cared for the little wildebeest. On the other hand, Shah Jangali was growing up under the shelter of Gulal. After seven years, Ibrahim, overcome with guilt, returns to the forest in search of Gulal. Ibrahim finds Gulal and Shah Jangali in the jungle and offers to take them back home. Immediately, Bonbibi reminds Shah Jangali of their divine purpose and why they were born in the forest. Together, Shah Jangali and his sister left for Medina to receive their final orders from Rasul. After receiving Khilafat (inheritance) from Rasul they returned to Hindustan. Crossing the Ganges, they reached the eastern side of India and finally reached Badavan.

#### *Narayani-r Jang*

Bonbibi and Shah Jangali started their Sadhana (meditation) with Azan [14] in Badaban. The azaan became a call of warning to the previous inhabitants of the forest. This land was the kingdom of Dakshina Ray and his mother Narayani. They were Hindu Gods and Goddesses in the region. Narayani first fought Banabibi, claiming that only a woman should fight a woman. Narayani was defeated in the battle. Narayani accepted Banabibi's suzerainty and offered all her highnesses to Bonbibi. But Bonbibi declares that she has no intention of disappointing her and offers to call Narayani her 'shoei' (friend). She proposed to form a union and rule the land together.

#### *Dukhey Jatra*

The story narrates that in another locality of Barijhati village, a poor shepherd named Dukhe lived with his widowed mother Bibijan. They earned their livelihood by working in other houses. Dhana, a honey collector and a businessman, approached Dukhe and offered him a job. He lured Dukhe by offering to teach him business and also promised to arrange his marriage with his daughter. Due to their extreme poverty, Dukhe readily agreed to work for him. Dukhe's mother was unhappy with this decision as she thought that the forest was dangerous and would put Dukhe at unnecessary risk. But seeing that Dukhe was adamant in his decision to go to the forest to collect honey, he told him about Bonbibi and instructed him to take his help if he was in any danger.

Dukhe and Dhana set off for the forest along with other sailors. Crossing the rivers Varunhati, Santoshpur, Kanaikathi and Herovanga and Raimangal and Matla, they finally reached Jangal (jungle). Amazingly, they could not find a single drop of honey in the forest as the beehive was completely empty. The Hindu deity Dakshin Ray tricked them as they entered the forest without worshipping. Dakshin Rai told Dhana that he would find honey in the forest if he sacrificed Dukhe to him. If Dhana would choose to disobey him, all the sailors and he himself will be killed by the followers of Dakshin Ray, i.e. forest tigers and water crocodiles. Dhana was instructed to go to Kendokhali where they would get a quantity of honey that could fill seven boats. Dhana had to be released to Dukhe as revenue in return. So Dhana had no other choice. Dukhe heard the entire conversation between Ray and Dhana. Being scared, he remembered what his mother had told him. He began to pray to Banbibi, and she immediately appeared. After hearing about the grief, Banbibi consoled him and told him that she can save Dukhe only if he abandoned him in Kendokhali. On reaching Kendokhali, everyone was surprised to see the amount of honey available there. Finally, as Ray instructed him, Dhana convinced the other sailors and they left Dukhe ashore. Dukhe was sent to the forest to fetch wood for fuel and eventually cheated. Seeing the boats drifting away from the shore, he wept bitterly and begged them not to leave him, but in vain.

Dakshin Ray, disguised as a tiger, did hide in the forest. Bonbibi appears to rescue Dukhe. Shah Jangali and Dakshin Ray engaged in war and finally, Ray was finally defeated by Jangali. Dakshin Rai fled and reached the residence of Barha Khan Gazi. Shah Jangali chased him, and on reaching the Gazi's house, scolded him: how could he, as a Muslim fakir, shelter a beast like Dakshin Ray? The three of them finally decide to go to Bonbibi for the final judgment. Gazi convinced Bonbibi that Dakshin Roy should be forgiven like his son. Surprised, Bonbibi asked him, 'How is Dakshina Rai Betta Mor Hai?' ('How can Dakshin Roy be my son?'). Gazi cleverly points out that Bonbibi once called Narayani his 'shoei' (friend). So in that sense, Narayani's son is also Bonbibi's son. Unable to refute the argument, Bonbibi accepted Dakshin Roy as his son and forgave him. Dakshin Roy promised to give gifts of honey and wax to Dukhe. Barha Khan Ghazi assured him seven pots of wealth. Bonbibi rescued Dukhe and sent him back to his village. Bibijan was left blinded and grief-stricken by hearing the news of the death of his son. Bonbibi healed Bibijan and returned his son to him. Bibijan and Dukhi were mesmerized by Bonbibi's miracle. They undertook village-to-village begging or *magon* to collect money in Bonbibi's name and distribute *kheer-khairat* (rice pudding) among the people and tell everyone about Banbibi's miracles. Dukhe became rich and powerful with the wealth promised by Barha Khan Ghazi. Thanks to Bonbibi's grace, Dukhe's status rose and he became a chowdhury in the village [15]. When

Dukhe wanted to punish Dhana for betraying her, Bonbibi pointed out to him that Dhanna was the reason why Dukhe met Banbibi and sought her shelter. So he should have forgiven Dhana and went to marry his daughter Champa. Dukhe married Champa following the order of Ban Bibi. The story ended with their wedding ceremony.

### **Contemporary Interventions**

Bonbibir Palagan, a folk performance, is flexible in its structure and performance and thus has changed over time. Myths were recorded as oral traditions, written and printed in Jahuranama form. It also changed in genre and took the form of Ekani Pala, elaborated in Bonbibir Palagan and later influenced by Bengali Yatra. The plot and presentation of Pala is influenced by the urban contemporary Yatra. In addition to the characteristic description of forest-centered economic life, the contemporary Palagan form incorporates elements from the contemporary yatra (Bengali popular folk drama) in plot construction. Because the yatra industry is a special form of entertainment for the agrarian-based rural society. Contemporary Bonbibir Palagan is no longer just a ritual but is performed to worship Bonbibi. Professional actors and amateur foresters perform Yatra Palagan. It has now assumed a profane form. With a touch of contemporary, it was created as a means of entertainment for the residents of Sundarbans. It thus imbibed many of the features of the urban Chitpur Yatra program which is held in a proscenium stage-like structure. The plot is also divided into acting and scene. Popular characters of Yatra show like Vivek, Vishwakarma, Jhunturam etc. have been included in the script to make the show more popular among the audience. Hence contemporary Bonbibir's Palagan is also called Banabibir's Jatrapala or Dukhke Jatrapala (Mandal, 2017).

### **Bonbibir Palagan in the frame of Social Drama**

In his theory of social dramas, Turner (1975) argued that there were four main phases of public action that lead to change:

1. **Breach:** in the first phase the crisis emerges, as one individual or group publicly breaches the common norm that regulates relationship between parties.
2. **Crisis:** the crisis widens and extends the gap between parties.
3. **Redressive action:** in this phase the crisis is being negotiated by the use of redressive mechanism that exists in the society, and which have the goal to establish pre-crisis-like social peace. Public ritual usually serves this kind of purpose.
4. **Reintegration:** resolution of the problem is being negotiated; the change is being legitimized.

These four phases are perceived in the *palagan* of Bonbibi. Particularly in *Dukher Jatra* the 'Breach' is perceived when Dhona and Mona ignores Dakkhin Ray. The 'Crisis' is perceived when Dhona left Dukhey in the land of Sunderban for giving offering him to Dakkhin Ray. The 'Redressive action' is perceived when Bonbibi appeared to rescue Dukhey and defeated Dakkhin Ray and the latter took the refuge to Borkhan Gazi. Borkhan Gazi solved the antagonism between Bonbibi and Dakkhin Ray. The 'Reintegration' is perceived when the land of *aatharobhati* was divided between Bonbibi and Dakkhin Ray with the intervention of Borkhan Gazi and Dukhey became prosperous with the boon of the deity Bonbibi.

### **III. Conclusion**

After the designation of Sundarbans into World Heritage Site and a tourist center, especially an eco-tourism center, Bonbibir Palagan has been further transformed and has taken a new shape by the influx of tourists. In recent times, the government has sponsored Banbibir Palagan to be in rendition in various cultural forums of the state and country. Palagan artistes from the Sundarbans have been invited to perform at many government sponsored forums to make the form more prominent. Today, Bonbibir Palagan is recognized as an important tool for promoting tourism in the Sundarbans. Palagan of Bonbibi is playing a significant role in cultural tourism of Sundarbans. For example, Bonbibir Palagan is now included in tourist itineraries. Overnight performances are now compressed into an hour or two and only a few episodes are performed for tourists. Thus, the event which was earlier performed as a ritual to worship the deity has become an important source of entertainment as a result of tourism. The most interesting fact about the performance is that the traditional ritual Bonbibir Palagan and the contemporary Bonbibi's Yatrapala or Chota Pala for tourists all exist simultaneously. This indicates the acculturated nature of Bonbibir Palagan, which survives with the colonial period, carries the Marichzhapi massacre[16] and the Ayala disaster[17] within its narrative framework, and continues to be endowed with thoughts of the past and the present. Despite so many contemporary additions, the basic theme of Bonbibir Palagan remains intact and can be explained with Victor Turner's concept of social drama. Because as the thematic projection of this Palagan - violation, crisis, remedial action, reintegration still exists in the social cultural system of Sundarban.

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