

**Event report
of
Ethnic Folk Festival (Northern Part of
Bangladesh)-2023**



GBK গ্রাম বিকাশ কেন্দ্র
GRAM BIKASH KENDRA

**Gram Bikash Kendra-GBK
Haldibari, Parbatipur-5260,
Dinajpur, Bangladesh**

Introduction:

Bangladesh is a land of multicultural people with diversified ethnic communities. According to the Government statistic in 2019, total 50 diversified ethnic community people live in Bangladesh and among them about 33 ethnic communities are scattered in the northern part of the country. Rajshahi, Noagoan, Joypurhat, Dinajpur, Rangpur as well other districts of northern part of the county are the main dwelling place of these ethnic communities. Each of these ethnic communities are unique from each other for their language, traditional culture, festivals and religion. They have diversified festivals such as; shohorai, baha, dashai, fagua, sarhul, amloban, jitiya and each of these festivals have rich mythological background. The ancient people of ethnic communities celebrated these festivals with own traditional ways, each festivals have its own songs and dances. However, in present days, most of these traditional culture and festivals are about to extinct due to aggression of different wider culture and lack of practice and observance. To overcome this situation and to protect this rich ethnic culture Gram Bikash Kendra-GBK took the initiative to arrange ethnic folk festival-2023 for the first time in Dinajpur Shilpokola Academy on 29 April 2023.

On 29 April 2023, the colorful Ethnic Folk Festival-2023 was celebrated and this is the report of the festival.

Introducing Gram Bikash Kendra-GBK:

Gram Bikash Kenra-GBK is a non-profit development organization working in the north-west region of Bangladesh. GBK was formed by a group of self-motivated and committed youths under the leadership of the present Chief Executive. Afterwards, GBK become a fully accredited NGO in 1993, working as an enabling force for the poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged and destitute peoples among which women, children, widow, ethnic, Dalits, persons with disabilities, marginal farmers.

From the beginning GBK is working to build a fair society where all marginalized people including ethnic communities will have a better life through different livelihood, education and financial development

programs. From last 30 years, apart from these development programs, GBK is promoting the ethnic traditional culture and heritage of diversified ethnic communities at national and international level by contributing in Baha, Sohurai, Karam, Jitiya festivals in fund and initiatives. GBK also establish a Heritage Collection Centra, to keep the ancient ethnic and wider community people's materials such as; traditional musical instruments, hunting weapons, regular usage traditional cookeries and ethnic mythological information with details description.



Description of ethnic folk music:

Folk music is a special types of music forms and the main characteristic of the song; created orally by local artists long time ago. There is a Santali folk song “ Amdo Adibashi Santal honpon ho, mayam re tam raska, anec seren ge tam marang dhon do”, the meaning of this folk song is, “ ethnic people are very rich in their own culture by born” The ethnic people are practicing and promoting their traditional music from ages. Different ethnic folk music forms are dhon, baha, sohorai, karam, fagua, dashai etc. The most wondering part; each folk music of each ethnic communities are different and ethnic music carries different rhythm, lyrics, dances, emotions and meanings. Each ethnic communities have several types of folk songs and dances each reflects different social and religious festivals, emotions and historical events.



Purpose of the Folk Festival:

It is necessary to value folk artist to preserve folk music. For this we must add value and acknowledge ethnic folk music artists. GBK observed that the ethnic folk culture is already in an extinct situation for absent of proper platform to promote and practice as well as by the aggression of different modern culture. To practice, preserve and promote this ethnic culture in wider range, GBK realized to create an ethnic folk musical platform where local music artist from diverse ethnic communities can performed. The main specific purpose of the Ethnic Folk Festival-2023 were:

- Create a platform for the ethnic folk music artists to perform and acknowledge their talents
- To add value in ethnic folk music
- Disseminate ethnic folk music in national and international level
- Introduce and encourage next generation of ethnic communities to practice this culture

Formation of Ethnic Folk Festival-2023 committee:

A committee was formed to arrange the ethnic folk festival-2023. Before forming the organizing committee GBK communicated national and local level different ethnic cultural and social teams and committee and organized a preparation meeting. Representatives from 13 different ethnic social and cultural groups participated in the preparation meeting and delivered their valuable thoughts in this particular issue. According to the decision of the meeting an organizing committee of Ethnic Music Festival-2023 was formed consisting 07 members. Details information of the organizing committee is given below:



Organizer committee of the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Sl#	Name	Designation	Organization	Remarks
1	Ms. Lucky Marandy	Convener	Gram Bikash Kendra-GBK	
2	Mr. Gopal Kisku	Join convener	Upazilla Adibashi Adhoq committee, Sadar Dinajpur	
3	Mr. Manik Soren	Join convener	Jatiyo Adibashi Parishod-JAP	
4	Ms. Archona Soren	Join convener	Hihiri Pipiri cultural group	
5	Mr. Zemi Hasda	Join convener	Santal Musicians Association of Bangladesh-SAMAB	
6	Mr. Jogen Mingee	Join convener	Bangladesh Oran Welfare Association-BOWA	
7	Ms. Rita Hembrom	Join convener	Sarjom Baha Cultural group	
8	Ms. Shuily Bara	Join convener	Oran Shishu Kishor Nattodol	

Details description of the festival:

Venue: District Shilpokola Academy, Dinajpur

Date: 29 April 2023

The Ethnic Music Festival-2023 was a daylong celebration. It was divided in different segments and all segments had different programs.



Distribution of ethnic related publications of Gram Bikash Kendra-GBK to the chief guest

Inauguration and Rally:

The Ethnic Music Festival-2023 was inaugurated by Santal freedom fighter of liberation war of Bangladesh Mr. Rabon Kisku. National flag of Bangladesh was raised hosting national anthem “Amer Soner Bangal”. Afterwards a colorful rally was circled at Dinajpur town. Diverse cultural



Colorful rally in Ethnic Folk Festival-2023

groups, ethnic community people, ethnic musical artists, ethnic folk music artists, Chief and special guests of the festivals, social activists and ethnic friendly people participated in the rally with traditional musical instruments, dresses and costume and wearing traditional jewelry. Approximately 500 people from different ethnic community; Santal, Mahali, Turi, Kora, Oran etc

ecstatically participated in the rally.

Discussion Session:

The discussion session was chaired by Professor Mr. Gonesh Soren, former Principal of Dinajpur Songeet College. Honorable Chief Guest and main speaker of the Ethnic Folk Festival-2023 was Mr. Mohammad Nurul Huda, Director General of Bangla Academy. Respected speakers of the discussion session were Mr. Moazzem Hossain, Chief Executive of Gram Bikash Kendra, Dr. Mohammad Rejaul Karim Talukder (Tareq Reja), Professor Department of Bangla, Jahangirnagar



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University, Shah Iftekhar Ahmed PPM, SP of Dinajpur, Dr. Masudul Hoq, Principal, Birganj Government College, Mr. Chitta Gosh, Journalist and Chairman of Dinajpur Natty Somiti, Mr. Manuel Soren, Music Teacher, Rajshahi Divisional Ethnic Cultural Academy, Ms. Sabitree Hembrom, Social Activist and Founder of Rahala Rimil Dance group. The discussion was started by the welcome speech of Ms. Lucky Marandy, Convener of the Ethnic Music Festival-2023. This session was moderated by Mr. Manik Soren, joint convener of the festival committee. The highlighted speeches are given below:

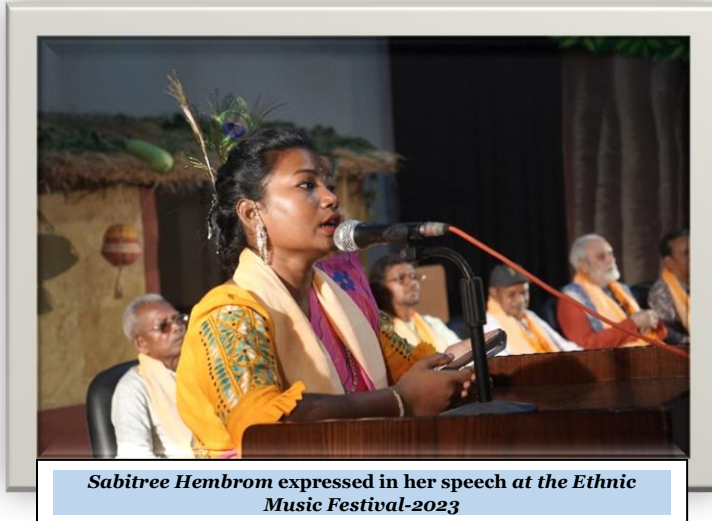
Ms. Lucky Marandy, Convener of the Ethnic Music Festival-2023:

The discussion session was inaugurated by the welcome speech of Ms. Lucky Marandy, Convener of the festival. She explained the objectives of the Ethnic Music Festival-2023. In her speech she mentioned that there is no written documents of ethnic cultural genre and for this day by day it is lost from practice among the ethnic next generations. She invites all respective guests to take initiatives to preserve this rich traditional ethnic culture through research and publishing books on it.



Ms. Lucky Marandy, Convener of the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Ms. Sabitree Hembrom, Social Activist and Founder of Rahala Rimil Dance group:



Sabitree Hembrom expressed in her speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

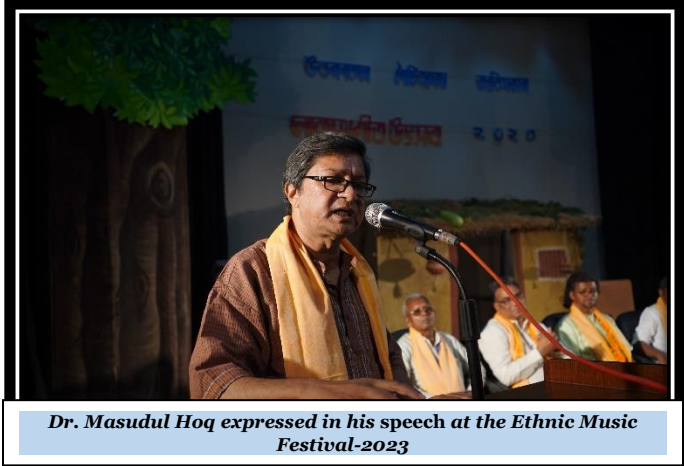
Ms Sabitee Hemrom, cultural activist and Founder of Rahala Rimil Dance group, expressed in her speech that in present days ethnic people are converted from their ancient religion to other religion and stopped practicing ancient traditional music and dances. She mainly calls all ethnic people, though they are converted but keep practice and promoting their traditional culture.

Mr. Rabon Kisku, Santal Freedom Fighter of Liberation war of Bangladesh:

Mr. Rabon Kisku, Santal Freedom Fighter of Liberation war of Bangladesh, thanked the organizing committee to invite him in the festival and inaugurated the rally by him. In his speech he describe his experience in liberation.

Dr. Masudul Hoq, Principal, Birganj Government College:

Dr. Masudul Hoq, Principal, Birganj Government College discussed about the rich ethnic culture and tradition. In his speech he discussed about the importance to conduct research on this issue and to publish dictionary on ethnic language. For the first time in Dinajpur, such a program is being held with ethnic folk music. And feel proud to be associated with this event. Ethnic folk music and folk artists are living in dire straits today. But still, they continue to practice folk music. I would like to salute them through this program



Dr. Masudul Hoq expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Shah Iftekhar Ahmed PPM, SP of Dinajpur:

Shah Iftekhat Ahmed PPM, SP of Dinajpur, thanked the committee to invite him in the program as special guest. He encouraged the committee to arrange this festival in future and also promised to provide all types to support from his side.

Dr. Mohammad Rejaul Karim Talukder (Tareq Reja), Professor Department of Bangla, Jahangirnagar University:

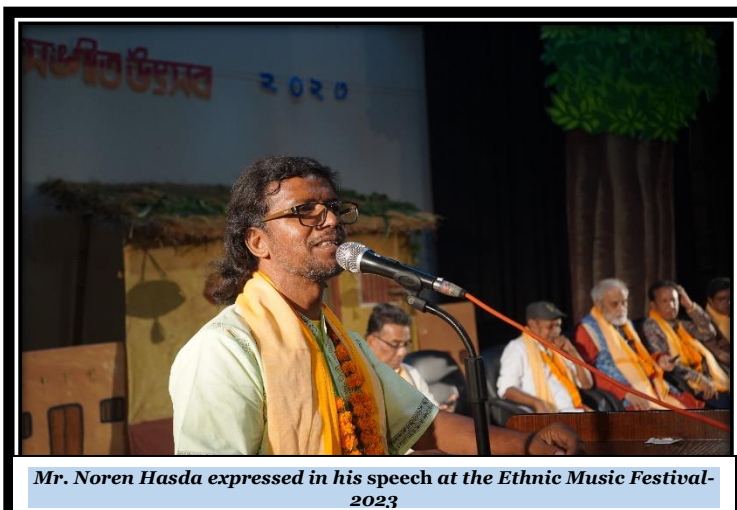


Dr. Mohammad Rejaul Karim Talukder (Tareq Reja) expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Dr. Mohammad Rejaul Karim Talukder (Tareq Reja), Professor Department of Bangla, Jahangirnagar University said, “Bangladesh will remain forever with its diverse people, in our country we have diverse people, language, own traditional culture, music, dance form, dress, here Adibashi and Bangali are equal. We have to emphasize to preserve, practice and promote Adibashi folk music, culture” in his speech.

Mr. Noren Hasda, renowned Santal Folk Singer:

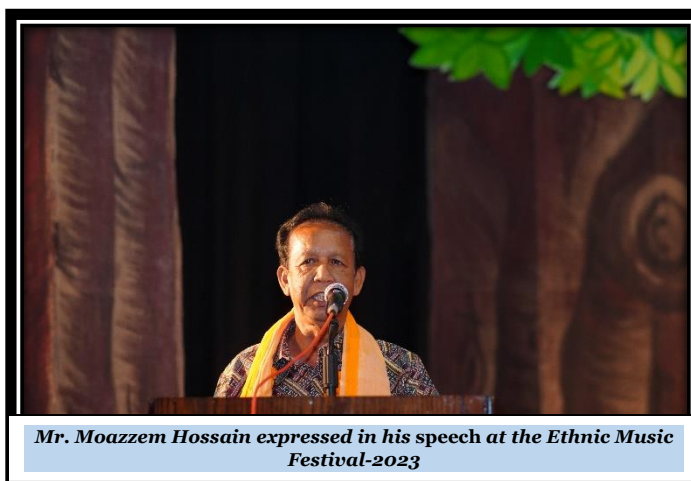
“BABU HAMI ADIBASI MANUS, JANGAL MAHALER MANUS, GAN POCHONDO KORI, NACH POCHONDO KORI, HAMAR ACHE ONEK GULA SONGSKRITI”. “That means, I am an adivasi, lives in the jangal-mahal, I am naturally good at singing and dancing and I have a rich cultural and heritage.” Today I feel very happy for Being able to speak at this event because I am also folk musician. And I am very surprised that most of the viewers of this program are young people, who are studying in various colleges and universities. Which I think makes the purpose of this show worthwhile. Nowadays many cultural events are organized in ethnic society, but very few events where our folk artists get a chance to sing. So, I believe there will be folk music festival every year, which will be considered as a platform for ethnic folk music artists.



Mr. Noren Hasda expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Mr. Moazzem Hossain, Chief Executive of Gram Bikash Kendra:

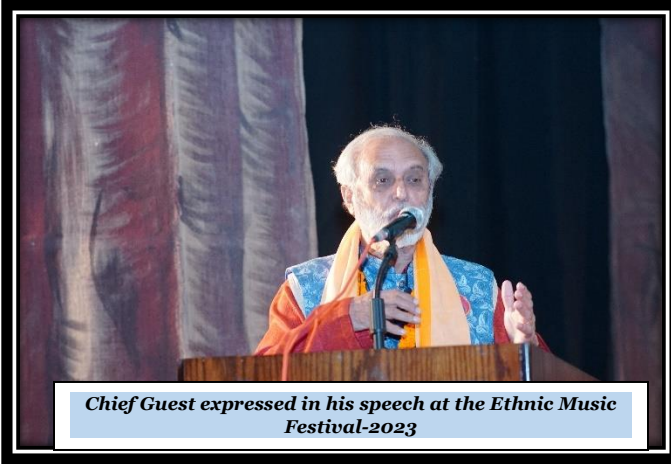
Mr. Moazzem Hossain, Chief Executive of Gram Bikash Kendra, shared his journey with the ethnic people and described about the colorful traditional culture of diversified ethnic communities. He said, “I got a great learning from Mr. Mongal Soren, that, Adibashi community can manage food, but if we want to keep Adibashi people alive, we have to give them musical instruments and scope of practice, preserve and promote Adibashi traditional culture”. I dreamed of organizing such a program at the national level on ethnic folk music. I would like to thank the organizers for making my dream come true. He also said, from last 30 years, GBK is promoting the ethnic traditional culture and heritage of diversified ethnic communities at national and international level by contributing in Baha, Sohrai, Karam, Jitiya festivals in fund and initiatives and it will continue. I think if the culture survives the nation survives.



Mr. Moazzem Hossain expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Mr. Mohammad Nurul Huda, Director General of Bangla Academy:

Mr. Mohammad Nurul Huda, Director General of Bangla Academy said in his chief guest speech that “Adibashi’s should be uncompromising; festivals like Baha, Sohrai, Karam need to be



Chief Guest expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

observed regularly. Language is the main pillar of building a nationality. Bangladesh is the land of diverse people, language, their own traditional culture and heritage.” He discussed the dictionary of Bengali language from Santali Language. He encouraged organizing such programs in Bangla Academy and promised full cooperation. He assured that he would take all necessary steps to publish a publication on Ethnic folk music from Bangla Academy through research. Many of the present generation have no idea about their folk songs. These folk songs are on the way to extinction due to lack of practice. So,

this kind of event should be organized more. I hope those who organize and facilitate the event will organize this event at different places every year for the benefit of ethnic culture.

Professor Mr. Gonesh Soren, former Principal of Dinajpur Songeet College:

Mr. Gonesh Soren, former Principal of Dinajpur Singeet College and Chairperson of the Festival, thanked the audience, guests, folk artists to participate in the Ethnic Folk Festival-2023. In his speech he calls all the ethnic people to take initiatives to practice and promote their traditional culture.



Mr. Gonesh Soren expressed in his speech at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Special reception to the renowned Santal Folk Singer Mr. Noren Hasda:

A special reception was given to the renowned Santal folk music artist of Indian Sub-continent and founder of Sidhu Kanhu mission Mr. Noren Hasda. Mr. Noren Hasda, who is the founder of the Sidhu Kanhu Mission, is also well-renowned artist. He has received a lot of recognition nationally as a folk artist. His songs address social issues, environmental issues, and being from



A special reception was given to the renowned Santal folk music artist of Indian Sub-continent and founder of Sidhu Kanhu mission Mr. Noren Hasda. Mr. Noren Hasda

a Santal community; his songs also tell people why it is necessary not to forget about their mother tongue. One of the main reasons of his songs are loved so much is that his song is entertaining, and it also makes people aware of these problems. Mr. Noren Hasda visit the villages and sings about the latest social and environmental issues; in this way, he collect his daily income for his mission and family.

After his warm reception he charmed the whole audience by his solo music performance.

Cultural segment of The Ethnic folk festival of north-west of Bangladesh-2023:

A multi-culture cultural program was arranged in The Ethnic Folk Festival of northern part of Bangladesh-2023. Local ethnic cultural artists from different ethnic communities performed their traditional dances, songs, poems and played special traditional musical instruments. These folk



HIHIRI PIPIRI cultural group performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

artists are not famous. They came from the remote ethnic areas of the country. Few of them had the opportunity for the first time to perform on stage. These folk artists were practicing and promoting their traditional culture from their childhood without expecting any return or reward. This is their passion. The folk festival committee found out these folk artists from the ethnic villages situated in the remote area. Shared the idea and objective of the festival

with them and requested them to perform in the festival. Total 06 ethnic dance groups performed traditional dances and 06 folk singers of local community performed traditional songs from 04 types of ethnic communities (Santal, Oran, Turi and Kora).

Santal performance:

The Santals are the largest ethnic community of north-western part of Bangladesh. The Santal lives in Rajshahi, Noagoan, Bogra, Dinajpur and Rangpur district. The Santal has glorious history of Santal Hull (Santal Rebellion), the first rebellion against the British Raj.



Lokkhiram Murmu performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

They also have rich traditional culture, heritage and festivals; Sohorai, Baha, Chata, Ero, Sakrat and Jantar. 03 Santal dance groups Hihiri-Pipiri dance group, Sarjom Baha dance group, Nawa Marshal Group performed Baha, Sohorai, Dashai and Dong traditional dance in the festival. Santal Dom cultural group performed their traditional musical instrument playing art “Da-Bapla”. In solo performance Taramini Kisku and

Rumila Hembrom, Lokkhiram Murmu sang Santal traditional songs Baha, Sohorai and Dong.

Oran performance:

The Oran is the second largest ethnic community of north-western part of Bangladesh. The Oran lives in Pabna, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Joypurhat, Noagoan and Nilphamari district. They speak 02 different language; Koruk and Sadri. They have traditional festival Karam. In this festival 03 Oran folk singers performed solo songs. Ms. Sibani Tirki, Ms. Runu Minji and Mr. Magu Barla.



Ms. Sibani Tirki and Runu Minji performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

Both of them are Oran folk artist from community. They sang Karam songs in Kuruk. Mr. Shwapon Ekka Oran poet recited his poem in Shadri in the festival.

Turi Performance:

The Turi is an ethnic community of northwestern part of Bangladesh. Their ancestors migrated to their current location from India's Duemka, Chhapra, Munger and south Dinajpur district. The Turis are followers of Hinduism.



Turi ethnic communities people performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

The perform Karam Puja and Jitia Puja. The Turi has their own language, which is similar to Sadri. They have their own culture, tradition, heritage, songs and dances. A community cultural group from Turi community performed traditional dances and songs in the festival. This group came from Khanpur Union of Dinajpur Sadar Upazilla. They played drums, jipsi and sang songs in own language. A Turi lady from the

community mainly sang all songs and the young girls danced and young boys played drums.

Kora Performance:

The Kora is a very small ethnic community of Bangladesh who has been living in the plains land of hundreds of years. They had been here even before the British rule. However, they do not know how their ancestors migrated to what is now Bangladesh. The Koras are one of the extremely poor and marginalized ethnic people in the country. The Koras have their own language, which is similar to Hindi. They have their own culture, tradition, heritage, songs and dances. In Birol Upazilla of Dinajpur a Kora community is found about 19 families live there. Folk Festival committee communicated with the community people and invited them to perform in the festival.



Kora ethnic communities people performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

There is a Kora old woman in the Kora culture team who led the team. She mainly sang all songs in their own language and the young boys played drums and young girls danced. This was the first time the Kora community team received the opportunity to perform on stage also the wider community had the opportunity to come to know about Kora culture.



Mr. Naren Hasda performed at the Ethnic Music Festival-2023

At last famous Santal folk artist of Indian sub-continent Mr. Naren Hasda, performed his solo songs in Snatali. He also described the background of each songs and the message of the song. The audience enjoyed the cultural program very much.

Conclusion:

The Ethnic Folk Music Festival-2023 was organized for the first time in northern part of the country. Through this program a platform was established and we are aiming that in upcoming year this program will be organized in more gorgeously. Also many folk music artists from each 33 ethnic communities of north part of Bangladesh will perform in the festival. But to fulfill this dream all we have to take initiatives. We must take initiatives to increase different support such as; media publication, youtube account support and disseminative support to the ethnic folk artist and encourage them to keep practicing and promoting this traditional culture. Through these initiatives this culture be reach to all people and also will be preserved in modern media technology.