The ancient tradition and culture of the Bede community of Chalanbeel is being lost day by day

Chalanbeel is formed by rivers, canals and beels. The historical Chalanbeel of Bangladesh is well known to the people of the whole country as a storehouse of grain and fish. The 9 Upazilas of Chalanbeel are Tarash, Ullapara, Shahjadpur, Faridpur, Bhangura, Chatmohar, Gurdaspur, Singra and Atrai. From ancient times to the end of the 20th century, the people of the Gipsy community were eye-catching in this region and their importance and necessity in the society were immense. Now the tune of the Bhatiali song of the Gipsy village comes to mind: Ekghate randi bari mora arek ghatte khai moder sukher sima nai. The Bede community of Chalanbeel was one of the nomadic communities. The majority of the men and women of this community were accustomed to living a floating life. Although some of them live permanently on the land, a large part lives floating in the river in boats. They are known as “Gipsy’s” permanently. They decorate their lives with colors throughout the diverse and colorful life of present-day rural Bengal. They are called nomads or Gipsy because they spend their lives traveling from boat to boat. They have remained very backward due to their lifestyle, behavior, and culture being different from the mainstream people of the society. In various villages of Chalanbeel, we see Gipsy. They are very neat and wear colorful clothes and roam around the area. Their standard of living is very neat like their clothes. From ancient times to the present time, they used to earn a living by showing snake games and selling amulets and charms. The activities of Gipsy are not limited to snake games and selling amulets and charms. To earn their living, they used to travel to different

villages in Beel per and sell women’s bangles, ribbons, various types of cosmetics, and various herbal medicine materials. Although the Vedas were matriarchal with the touch of modernity, many changes have occurred in their social system today. Today, they have created a patriarchal society called the merchant Sheni. The Vedas consider manual labor on the land to be a dishonorable job. Therefore, they used to earn money by showing snake games in various markets in the Chalanbeel area and treating people with various types of wild plants, leaves, and roots and herbal medicines. In their medical system, the use of mantras, i.e., blowing on the wind is very common. Apart from this, the professions of the Veda community include petty trading, selling amulets and charms, treating snake bites, showing snake games, rubbing the loins, applying horns to cure arthritis pain in the hands and feet, selling herbal medicines, using dead animal body parts or making medicines from plants and selling them, showing monkey games, showing various magic tricks, etc. The men and women of the Veda community leave their homes every morning and return home at the end of the day after earning an income. However, due to the current downturn in these businesses, many of them are getting involved in mainstream professions of the society. While some aspects of the life of the Veda community are fascinating, some aspects are very difficult. Many say that they are living a subhuman life while maintaining their original profession. In the digital age, modernity has not touched these people, but the people of this Veda community are living their lives through constant struggle amidst hundreds of adversities. The people of the Veda community are a nomadic community. The Vedas are also said to be a part of the Mantang tribal tribe in Arakan State. It is known from history that they came to this country in 1638 AD with the Arakan King Ballal Raja. After coming to this country, they first started living in Bikrampur. Then they spread from there to various remote areas of Bangladesh, West Bengal and Assam, India, and most of the people of the Vedas community converted to Islam. The Mantangas say that since most of the people of

the Vedas community are involved in hammer treatment, they came to be called Vedas over time. The Vedas follow the customs of their society and live in groups. Since tribal love is strong among them, they help and cooperate with each other in various ways. Among the Vedas community, boys are lazy in nature. On the other hand, girls are very hard working and do all kinds of hard work. The Vedas usually build lofts in groups around rivers and canals on flat land or live in boats. Boats are a valuable asset of the people of the gipsy

community; they travel to villages for business most of the year, especially during the harvest season. This travel is called Chanting by the gipsy women. Women of the gipsy community mostly go chanting. They carry with them bangles, snake charmers and bags of medicines etc. During Chanting, they stay permanently with their families in boats, tents or on the veranda of a school house. After Chanting, they return to their permanent address in the evening in groups. At their permanent residence, the gipsies generally organize various joyous festivals. In these festivals, the bride and groom marry each other with the consent of their guardians. The young men and women have complete freedom in marriage. After marriage, the husband goes to his wife’s house and makes the wife promise to take care of her husband and children. If an outsider is present at the wedding dance and song of the Veda community, they try to lure him to marry a Veda community girl and keep him in their own tribe after the marriage. If a young man from outside marries a young woman from the Veda community, he has to pay compensation. Polygamy, child marriage, and joint family practices are very rare in Veda society. Even though they are Muslims, Veda girls do not wear a veil. Gipsy women Vedic women are independent-minded and when husband and wife divorce, property and even sons and daughters are divided, of which the wife gets the majority. Vedic women like to dress up, they wear scorpions on their waists and imitation jewelry

on their bodies, and they put flowers in their hair to attract people. Their standard of living is very low and unclean; they are addicted to various types of drugs. Vedic people have their own language. This language is called Theta or Their. Vedic people use this language while talking among themselves. However, they speak Bengali to Bengali speakers. Vedic means a traveling or wandering nation. Houses are made of boats, settlements are made of boats, and these are mysterious people. Among the different religions and castes of the Chalanbeel, the life of the Vedic community is the most diverse and problematic among the people. With the evolution of time, they are forced to change the profession of their ancestors. Now they are no longer able to earn a living by showing snake games and selling amulets and charms like before. Of course, some gipsies are still involved in this community-based profession. However, with the touch of modern technology, their ancient traditions and culture are being lost day by day in Gipsy Village. During the on-site information search, we spoke to Md. Anu Sardar, an elder of Gipsy Village in Singra Upazila of Chalanbeel area. He said with great sadness that our things are no longer sold like before; so many people are changing their profession and joining other professions to earn a living.

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