

The traditional sail-and-carry boat of rural Bengal is extinct

Riazur Rahman, Patuakhali :: In the river-mother Bangladesh of rural Bengal, boats were once the traditional means of transport of primitive reality.

Nowadays, the enchanting images of the present rural Bengal have disappeared under the influence of modern mechanical civilization. The rivers of Patuakhali district, surrounded by canals, beels and rivers, include Payra, Lohalia, Tentulia, Andharmanik, Agunmukha, and the rivers and canals include Baga, Jhilna, Karkhana Thoda, Karkhana, Kabai, Baherchar, Burishwar, Bishkhali, Algi, Muradia, Adabaria, Rabnabad and Kajal rivers.

Although rows of sailing boats were once seen in the river in Atrai, due to the evolution of time, the pitiful condition of the rivers that have lost their charm and the development of mechanical civilization, the traditional sailing boats, one of the holders of the folk culture of the present rural Bengal, are on the verge of extinction.

Although a handful of one or two sailing boats are seen, people no longer board their boats like before. The new bride no longer takes the helm of a sailboat to go from her in-laws' house to her father's house. The fleet of merchant boats that float with colorful sails and display their wares to the tune of Bhatiali are no longer seen.

Recently, the relationship between rivers and sailboats,

dinghies, and other boats, including sailboats, was closely associated with the daily lives of most people in various upazilas surrounded by small rivers in Patuakhali. Even ten to fifteen years ago, rows of boats enhanced the natural beauty of the Padma, Jamuna, Kaliganga, and Dhaleswari rivers of the country. These boats had colorful sails. The gurgling of clear water and the sound of the wind blowing on the sails gave a sense of emotion to the soul.

The sight of people gathering in groups on the banks of the Atrai river in the district, which flows through the heart, would make my eyes water. And listening to the melody of Bhatiali songs in the voice of Daraj floating from the middle of the river would bring satisfaction to the mind. Once upon a time, sailing boats were the means of transportation around the river. Boats used to carry passengers from one side to the other. However, with the passage of time, these boats are now a thing of the past. Now, whenever there is water in the river, especially during the months of Ashadh-Shravan, sailing boats are not seen. At one time, various types of sailing boats including sampans, passenger boats, ekmalai boats, kosha boats, chipanaos, dinghinukas, petkata boats, and bonchas were used.

Sailing boats are disappearing with the touch of modern mechanical civilization. Even the sailors and sailors are not appreciated. Diesel-powered engines are being used instead of sails and standing seats in boats. Occasionally, one or two sailing boats can still be seen in the rivers. Poets and writers have written their invaluable works of poetry, rhymes, stories, songs, etc. based on the sail boat. Renowned artists have created high-quality works of art. Not only domestic poets, writers, artists or humorists, but also many foreign tourists have been moved by the sail boat.

Boats of various shapes and types were the most reliable means of transportation and travel for people. And the role of the sail was immense in sailing all these boats. Sails such as the Hazaripal, the Batalipal, the Baturpal, etc. were used in the boats. Along with the sail boat, the boatmen were also very popular at one time. The old boatmen were quite adept at the various techniques of boating. They had to keep track of the tides, different dates, and auspicious and inauspicious times. It is said that the wise boatmen could tell the advance news of a storm by smelling the smell of the wind. While sailing in the dark of night, the boatmen had to rely on the stars in the sky to determine the direction. So, they had to learn in advance which star was in which direction.

Patuakhali Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rawjatun Jannat said, "Once upon a time, boats were the primary means of transport for the people of rural Bengal. According to the needs of the era, there is also an appeal for engine-powered boats or trawlers. Therefore, we should not forget the ancient heritage of rural Bengal. We must also take measures so that those boats are always valued. I also think it is necessary to preserve the ancient heritage of rural Bengal.