

Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-40.50.2023.00011

Section-1: Identification of the element

Heritage Location

Division

Khulna

District

Kushtia

Upazila

Details Address

Geolocation(Latitude)

23.897601

Geolocation(Longitude)

89.118185

Community Category

Artists

Community

Baul

Name of the Heritage, (as used by the community or group concerned)

Baul Gurubad

Short title of the Heritage, (preferably within 200 words)

'Gurubad', fidelity and devotion toward the preceptor, is at the heart of the radical belief system of the Bauls, or mystical seers, falling in the ICH domain of 'Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe'.

Concerned Community(ies)/Group(s), (who recognize the element as part of their cultural heritage)

Physical location(s) of the element/how often it is practiced

In Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Magura, Jessore, etc. of Bangladesh, the traditional practice of Baul Gurubad is prominent.

Short description of the Heritage, (preferably within 350 words)

One of the defining characteristics of Bauls, a category of wandering minstrels and spiritual practitioners of a system of esoteric beliefs, is their devotion to the guru or murshid (the Sufi term for preceptor), as the continuity of tradition depends upon these gurus and the devotee's fidelity to their teachings. Primarily, Bauls reject the orthodoxy of scriptural religion and its anumana or 'inference' of truth, while privileging knowledge gained through 'existent' and 'embodied'

practices, to which they are initiated by the 'Guru' or preceptor. The Baul, belief system is a renunciation of worldly desires, and submission to the Guru, who initiates devotees into the 'sadhana', or practice, of body-centered rituals, till an initiate reaches complete 'freedom' from worldly desires and becomes the 'living dead'. This is highlighted by the white garbs worn by them, signifying the white cloth in which the Muslims shroud their dead. Bauls practice 'pranayama', the regulation of the breath through certain techniques and exercises, and live an exclusive lifestyle with special eating habits. They eat only river fish, vegetables and dairy foods. The Baul Guru is also known as 'Shadhu' – a person who has realized truth, or is an adept at the esoteric, embodied practices. People of any religion can take initiation in Baul doctrine. There is no gender discrimination - man, woman and other gender including socially so called lower or upper cast can take initiation. Baul doctrine is never confined in performance, it's a complete code of life that can contribute to build a hunger free, equal peaceful society - tolerant and diverse.

☐ Domains of the Heritage (applicable fields)

- ☐ Oral Traditions and Expressions
- ☐ Performing Arts
- ☐ Social Customs and Traditions
- ☐ Knowledge and Practices related to Nature and Universe
- ☐ Traditional Craftsmanship
- ☐ Food

☐ Section-2: Characteristics of the element

☐ Practitioner(s)/performer(s) directly involved in the representation or practice of the Heritage (including roles, name, age, gender, social status, and/or professional category etc.)

Raushan Fakir is a Baul Guru, 60 years old. He is a caliphate nurturer Baul. As a Fakir he begs. As part of the Baul Sadhana, he collects rice for acquiring the feeling of being insulted to eliminate pride! And lives on donations from his disciples. Baulguru Raushan Fakirs Sadhanasangini is Benu Ara Fakirani, 60 years old. She is a woman, free of all worldly expectation and according to the Baul tradition, lives on begging and donations of the disciples. They together practice jugal-sadhana, practices of a couple, which is a must for Baul Devotee to become pure human beings, otherwise known as Sohoj Manush!

☐ Other tradition bearers (individuals/groups and their roles))

By being invited or by taking permission, the common people of the society or anyone can participate in the sadhu-sanga of the Bauls. External volunteers often have access to organizing and managing pavilions, stage sets, lighting, sewerage, microphones, food distribution etc. at any socially demanded baul events.

☐ Language(s), register(s), speech level(s) involved

The verses of the Songs are in "sandhyabhasha" or "coded language", with polysemic or double-edged meanings. The inner, symbolic meaning is a representation of the beliefs of the Bauls, which only the practitioner and devotees can decode, while the lay people enjoy the general meaning of the words. Primarily, written in Bangla, Baul literature, however, extensively uses Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit words.

☐ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

Ektara and Dugi are the main traditional musical instruments. Nowadays, however, dotara, flute, mandira, khamak, sarinda and premjuri are being used. Some also use harmoniums. The Bauls of Bangladesh wear white clothes as a symbol of elimination from all worldly feeling and desires. Bauls traditionally drink water in coconut shell.

☐ How are women and people of other genders associated with this Heritage?

The twin pursuit (Yogol Sadhana) of the Bauls is fulfilled by the essential participation of both men and women. However, there are no barriers to the participation of individuals of other sexual identities. "It's not gender identity, it's human identity," said Roushan Fakir. He said that some of the third sex have accepted his discipleship. He further said that according to Baul, there is no caste discrimination and no intolerance is allowed.

☐ Division of labour during the practice of this Heritage

The division of labor within the Baul community is rarely observed. For example, men and women all take part in cooking. Even in agriculture (vegetable farming, cow rearing, etc.) there is non-discriminatory participation of men and women. As part of Yogol Sadhana, Sadhaka / Sadhika and Sadhana-Sanghi / Sangini lead in fact shared life.

□ Elements to which other customary practices or practices may be connected or accessed in any respect of the heritage (if any)

Baul devotees in some cases perform special posture dances. However, the Baul community does not apply the word dance to the performance of Baul songs, its an spontaneous gesture based action.

□ Modes of transmission to others in the community

Guru-disciple is practiced in the tradition. Young disciples have to take long-term initiation from female / male gurus.

□ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

A guru of the Bauls plays the role of an institution. For this, the involvement of any other outside organization is unnecessary. However, in the evolution of time, no effective institutional initiative has been seen so far to protect the Bauls habitat / ashram, food, security, prevention of radical aggression and socio-economic threats due to outward socio-economic and political shifts.

□ Section-3: State of the element (viability)

□ Threats to the enactment

Resistance from Religious Parties and Other Organizations

□ Enactment Threats Description

□ Threats to the transmission (if any)

Most of the time, radical Islamist clerics make negative comments about the practice which creates reluctance in the minds of the common people about this practice. Thus the new generation is not interested in initiation in the Guruvadi sect. Baulgan, on the other hand, is presented in the media and on the city stage only as an element of entertainment, and in those cases these traditional sayings and melodies are also distorted.

□ Threat to associated tangible elements and resources (if any)

Modern instruments and peculiar costumes are being used by the urban Baul artists of the cities to perform Baul songs commercially, undermining the main features of this tradition.

□ Viability of associated intangible elements (if any)

Traditional musical instruments in todays city are under threat due to playing keyboards, drums, saxophones, etc. used for commercial purposes of baul song performances.

□ Have been taken any safeguarding measures to preserve this Heritage practices? (if any)

In addition to the local devotees, many overseas researchers and scholars are coming to Kushtia to study Baul culture. These are playing an important role in preserving this cultural heritage. UNESCO has declared the Baul Song as a Worlds Intangible Cultural Heritage. Baul songs of Bangladesh have been mapped seriously by Japans cultural tourism.

□ Section-4: Data gathering/documentation, Consent and preparation of inventory entries

□ Consent of community/group/individuals concerned for data collection with a view to inventorying

Rowshan Fakir gladly agreed to provide the information. However, he said, "I would be dissatisfied if anything written more or less than what I say." He was told with respect that he would be read again after writing his responses. He was happy to hear over cell phone, how his speech was presented. Consent taken over digital media in COVID-19 context .

□ Restrictions on use of collected data, (if any)

There are no restrictions. However, the Baul community, including Raushan Baul, has objections to distorting or exaggerating or undermining any information.

Section-5: Resource Person

Data provider/Resource person (persons/groups, community representatives)

Baul community Rowshan Fakir Dr. Saymon Zakaria

Date of data collection

16-05-2020

Place(s) of data collection

Dhaka and Kushtia

Section-6: Safeguarding techniques

Existing safeguarding techniques adopted by the community for the safeguarding of the Heritage

Community themselves faithfully safeguard the practices by dint of their devotion to Baul Doctrines.

Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

Awareness of young generation through non-formal education method. Dialogue with Orthodox groups for creating understanding and tolerance. Supporting youth to get baul initiation. Academic discourses for taking the element nationally and globally.

Section-7: References to literature, discography, audiovisual materials or archives

References to/in literature

1. City of Mirror - Songs of Lalon Sai, Text, Translation and Commentary by Carol Solomon, (Edited by: Keith E. Cantu and Saymon Zakaria), Oxford University Press, New York, 2017 2. Folk Music of Bangladesh, Simon Zakaria, Ichhamati Publications, 2013 3. Symposium Memorial Ethnomusicology organized by Bhavnagar Foundation, Editor: Simon Zakaria; Associate Editor: Nurunnabi Shanto; Assistant Editor: Nazmeen Mortuza, 2014 4. Songs in the Sadhu Family, Edited by: Nazmeen Mortuza, Bhavnagar Foundation, Dhaka 2011

Audiovisual materials or archives

1. Lalon, a movie by Tanvir Mokammel 2. Moner Manush, a movie by Goutam Ghosh 3. Interviews of Parvati Baul on Youtube 4. Scholarly Lectures on Youtube 5. Audion records of Baul Songs 6. Hundreds of photos taken and preserved by Saymon Zakaria

Discography or archives

Not applicable.

Section-8: Modalities for updating the information contained in the inventory entry

Data Compiler (persons/groups, including community representatives, who compiled the information)

Nurunnabi Shanto, Executive Director, Bhavnagar Foundation

Date of Community Consent

16-05-2020

Consent of community/group/individuals concerned for data collection with a view to inventorying

Reference: Rowshan Fakir, Phone No. +8801745453201

Present Condition of Heritage

Still maintaining

□ **Brief description of Present condition of the Heritage, (if any)**

□ **Section-9: Community suggestions**

□ **Brief description of suggestions for safeguarding of the element by community members/experts/holders, (if any)**

The community believe that Baul Sadhana will continue because the global people will finally submit to the peaceful practices of the Baul Sadhana.

□ **Restrictions on use of collected data, (if any).**

The Baul Gurus do not disclose some of their encoded practices to the non-bauls.

□ **Section-10: Upload Document**

Heritage Details Document



Heritage Images

