

## Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-50.10.2023.00045

### Section-1: Identification of the element

#### Heritage Location

##### Division

Rajshahi

##### District

Bogura

##### Upazila

##### Details Address

##### Geolocation(Latitude)

##### Geolocation(Longitude)

##### Community Category

Artists

##### Community

Rural

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

Mudhouses in North Bengal

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

Mudhouses are a historically traditional way of housing practiced in North Bangladesh and other parts of the region. The practice and knowledge of developing mud houses falls under the domain of traditional craftsmanship.

##### 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

Most of the villages in Shajahanpur, Nandigram, Sherpur and Kahalu upazilas of Bogra district of North Bengal have mud houses. In addition, mud houses exist in most of the upazilas of Naogaon, Natore and Rajshahi districts. In fact, there are mud houses all over North Bengal. However, the majority of mud houses is most in the mentioned areas.

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

Innumerable mud houses can be found in the villages of the vast plains of North Bengal of Bangladesh. A unique feature of mud houses is that mud houses are cold in summer and hot in winter. There are mud houses in most of the districts of North Bengal. The people of the northern districts claim to be the children of the soil. I have also seen some mud

houses in the villages of different tribal areas of Bangladesh. Especially in Santal, Garo and Hajong areas. In terms of structure, the earthen structures in the tribal areas are very simple. However, the earthen walls / designs of the indigenous villages are more colorful, complex and pictorial than the earthen walls of the respective communities. Especially in the villages of Saotal, the walls are much more patterned and colorful. The walls of earthen two / three storey houses in the area concerned are so thick and stiff that they are stronger than concrete (in some cases). Although brick walls can be easily broken, clay walls are not easy to break, in some cases very difficult and arduous work. For this reason, mud houses have survived for ages.

#### ☐ 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

#### ☐ Practitioners(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.)

There are many localities where builders work on and make mud houses. Ekabbar Hossen, 58, male, farmer. It is to be noted that he had earlier done the work of erecting (construction) walls as a deuli (locally called) of a mud house. Now no one cultivates the land, so he changed his profession and now works as a day laborer in other people's land.

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

In addition to those who build the walls of the mud house, there are some workers who help in the construction of the walls. Just as masons' jogalis (those who procure materials are called jogalis) make a mixture of sand, cement, and earthenware to build brick walls, so do mud-house jogalis. In this case, the workers make a hole (in regional Bengali it is called 'Jaun') by throwing different types of soil in it and mixing water according to the proportions and making a mixture of them with a spade and their feet. The worker then makes pellets and supplied them to the wall builders. The wall builders sit on the walls and hang them on the wall. Once the walls of the mud house are built, the women design them by painting Alpana on the wall. Just like urban painters paint the walls of city houses. Large palm trees are cut down and the roofs of mud houses are made of hard bamboo. And in the upper part there is a tin tent.

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

N/A

#### ☐ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

Not specifically applicable, but homeowners have a number of tools that may be included. Such as: hammer, batali, baishkhan (bamboo cutting machine), saw, spade, da etc used to aid building of the mudhouses.

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

Women have a major role to play in preserving this tradition. Women maintain the buildings under construction and the houses after construction. Draw beautiful designs / alpana on the walls of the house, cover the floor of the house with red clay. However women are not able to directly participate / involve themselves in the work of building walls, erecting walls, cutting soil, preparing soil, etc.

#### ☐ Division of labour during the practice of this Heritage

Different people do different kinds of work. The erection of a mud house was built by the combined labor of all. Here, first a group of workers cut the soil, another group of people prepared the walls with the soil suitable for giving them to the walls, the bankers do the work of building the walls. The campers shed the rice, and the housekeepers make the roof and other parts of the house.

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

No practices involved with access to the element.

### □ Modes of transmission to others in the community

These works were passed down from generation to generation. But this flow has stopped due to the loss of tradition. Architecture has focused on cement, bricks and modern techniques, eschewing old traditions.

### □ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

None so far

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

### □ Threats to the enactment

#### □ Enactment Threats Description

The first and foremost threat to the continued practice of this tradition is the 'deuli' and change of occupation of the housekeepers as the construction of mud houses / houses has come down (even closed in some areas). Besides, the tendency of the present generation (now educated / less educated) boys and girls to live in brick houses instead of mud houses is a big obstacle behind this practice. Mud houses are also prone to being non-durable.

### □ Threats to the transmission (if any)

The current professionals in this field are changing their profession as they are not involved in house building. Seeing that, no one of the new generation wants to come to this profession anymore. In addition, the demand for construction of mud houses has decreased among the people. Everyone is now leaning towards brick houses. Insufficiency of clay house building materials and division of labor in procurement of materials are all partly responsible for this. Brick home materials are relatively readily available and can be bought by anyone who has the financial means. But the house materials made of clay have to be collected more than you have to buy.

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

Lack of collectible soil and soil collection space. Earlier, everyone used to dig a pond and build a house with the soil of that pond. The capacity to allocate separate space for soil collection is declining. Lack of livable and cultivable land is responsible for the overpopulation.

### □ Viability of associated intangible elements (if any)

As a child, I used to see hundreds of designs / alpana (maybe thousands) on the walls of mud houses. Before any festival or formality was celebrated, designs were painted on the walls of earthen houses to create a festive mood. Those designs used to shine as memories of the festival. The color of the festival was stuck on the wall for months. If the earthen walls had not been repainted or if it had not rained, it would not have been easily removed. If you saw a bright alpana or design on the wall of a house, you would understand that a festival was going on in that house a few days ago. How long ago it depended on the brightness of the color. If the color of the alpana / design is much brighter, then it should be understood that the formality of the festival has been completed very recently. If it is a little less bright, then a month has passed since the festival and if it is dim, it should be understood that the festival (festival) has taken place more than a month ago.

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

There is currently no protection program to address the threat of erection of mud houses and extinction of living traditions. At least the conscious civic effort to highlight the importance of this tradition was not noticed. Therefore, in order to encourage future practice and dissemination of this material, it is essential to take awareness, encouragement / motivation program among the people of the community.

## □ 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

Relevant data have been collected sitting in earthen houses. Everyone here, even me and all of my family we live in mud houses. Everyone in our home is aware of this traditional effort to preserve the earthen house heritage. Still images and videos have been captured with the permission of all concerned. I have learned the information by asking the members

of the house and the village about different things at different times. They answered all my questions with utmost sincerity.

#### ▢ Restrictions on use of collected data, (if any)

The data has been highlighted in bold. It was not possible to give a detailed description due to lack of details. Therefore, the statements of the data have been described without being specific.

### ▢ Section-5: Resource Person

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

Maznu Mia (25) is a member of the community. [www.facebook.com/folklorist.maznu](https://www.facebook.com/folklorist.maznu) folklorist.maznu@gmail.com +8801760433146

#### ▢ Date of data collection

16-05-2020

#### ▢ Place(s) of data collection

Date of data collection: Friday 15/05/2020 Saturday 18/05/2020 Sunday 18/05/2020 Data collection location: Village: Kaludam, Union: Kharna, Upazila: Shajahanpur, District: Bogra, Division: Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

### ▢ Section-6: Safeguarding techniques

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

No existing efforts have been made in the community to preserve the heritage.

#### ▢ Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

Preserving this heritage is possible only if the current generation of the community can be made aware of the heritage.

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

#### ▢ References to/in literature

In the literary works and novels of several writers and novelists born in North Bengal, including Akhtaruzzaman Ilyas, mud houses have been mentioned. Research and literature:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326250346\\_In\\_Search\\_of\\_Resilience\\_Exploring\\_Mud\\_Houses\\_of\\_Northern\\_Bangladesh](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326250346_In_Search_of_Resilience_Exploring_Mud_Houses_of_Northern_Bangladesh)

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326250269\\_THE\\_CHANGING\\_PATTERN\\_OF\\_MUD\\_HOUSES\\_IN\\_THE\\_BARIND\\_REGION](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326250269_THE_CHANGING_PATTERN_OF_MUD_HOUSES_IN_THE_BARIND_REGION)

Housing report :

<https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2013/08/Housing%20Report%20Mud%20House%20of%20Bangladesh.pdf>

Study on earthen housing:

<https://issuu.com/sss.rgu/docs/rodda>

#### ▢ Audiovisual materials or archives

Mudhouses in transition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdlkuNaO7Nc> Maatir ghor, maatir manush: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHND1cINTtw> The warmth and wisdom of mud buildings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7I5BWW-0c8>

#### ▢ Discography or archives

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

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

So far in the relevant inventory, I (Maznu Mia) have recorded the data alone. I (myself) am a member of that community. So as a representative of the community, I did not need anyone's help. However, a mobile photographer named Sabbir Hossain took pictures of the mud houses.

### □ Date of Community Consent

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

No credentials were produced, so it was not possible to obtain written permission due to ongoing covid-19 pandemic. However, verbal permission has been taken.

### □ Present Condition of Heritage

Threatened with extinction

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

Threatened with extinction

## □ Section-9: Community suggestions

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

In order to encourage future practice and dissemination of this material, it is essential to take awareness, encouragement / motivation program among the people of the community. Suggestions include developing sustainable business models involving mud houses, such as ecotourism where mud houses are used as hotels / resorts. These efforts have taken place at a small scale in some resorts but these have yet to include communities. Example - <https://www.novemecoresort.com/mud-house-4/> Durability of mud houses and developing new architectural techniques that draw from research to develop resilient mudhousing could also preserve this heritage.

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

Not applicable

## □ Section-10: Upload Document

### Consent Document



### Heritage Details Document



### Heritage Images

