

Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-40.65.2023.00052

Section-1: Identification of the element

Heritage Location

Division

Khulna

District

Narail

Upazila

Details Address

Geolocation(Latitude)

Geolocation(Longitude)

Community Category

Religious

Community

Hindu

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

'Daire' - Otter Fishing

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

????/Daire or Otter Fishing is a unique technique to catch fish with the help of Otter.- The element comes under two domains of ICH. They are 1. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and 2. Social practices, rituals and festive events.

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

Narail, Khulna, Sundarban

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

Otter fishing is a technique of using semi-aquatic tamed otter to catch fish in the river. The technique is already in extinction worldwide except in Bangladesh. In Khulna and Narail District this practice still exists. Fisherman are divided into small groups to execute this. Usually it takes three fishermen, 1 boat, 1 net and 3 otters. It takes three days on boat to reach Sundarban. In off season the fishermen catch fishes near their village. The practice is inherited from generation

to generation. This two-hundred-year-old tradition has come to near its extinction. Less monetary opportunities have made this fishing technique difficult to execute. Most of fishermen face more losses than profit. Also, maintaining the otter becomes expensive to some extent. However, researchers say it may be last generation to practice this fishing technique and it should be documented as still existing in Bangladesh. Swimming in circles alongside a fishing boat, two otters wait to catch fish in a river in southern Bangladesh. As the animals squeak in the water, fishermen lower a net into the river, in the heart of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest. Then, one by one, the short-haired otters dive under the water with a splash, chasing a school of fish close to the banks of the river. Otter fishing is a centuries-old tradition in Bangladesh, where fishermen have been using trained otters to lure fish into their nets – a rare technique passed on from father to son that relies on coordination between man and otter. "We use them because they catch more fish that we can alone," Shashudhar Biswas, a fisherman in his 50s whose family has trained otters for generations, told the AFP. Biswas explains that the otters do not catch the fish themselves, but they chase them towards fishing nets. "The otters manage to spot fish among the plants, then the fish swim away and we stay close with our nets. If we did it without them, we wouldn't be able to catch as many fish," says Shashudhar's son, Vipul. Vipul added that it's much easier to make ends meet thanks to this technique. Fishing is usually done at night, and the otters can help fishermen catch as many as 26 pounds of fish, crabs and shrimp. But the partnership between man and otter is on the verge of extinction. It's already died out in other parts of Asia as fish populations decline, wildlife experts say. Short-haired otters are an endangered species in Bangladesh and experts say that otter fishing may play a key r

☐ 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.)

Mostly the men perform this practice. They are called "Malo Jele". They inherit this from father and grandfather and pass this to their sons. Most of the active otter fishermen are aged from 40-50 years old.

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

The women in the community indirectly take parts in this practice. Usually they sew the fishing nets which later are used to catch fishes in help with the otter.

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

N/A

☐ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

For the practice a boat is needed, a fishing net and wooden crates to hold captive the otters. Everything in this practice is manually driven.

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

sWomen only take part in sewing the fishing nets or other help before the journey. The practice is inherited from men to men in the family. It is mostly a man dominated practice in Bangladesh for the last two hundred years.

☐ Division of labour during the practice of this Heritage

It takes 3days to journey from Gopra village to Sundarban. In these 3days the fisherman stays the whole time in boat and have meals there. The Fisherman usually catch fishes overnight.

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

Some tourism program are held where foreigners can see the practice both in Sundarban and Narail.

☐ Modes of transmission to others in the community

The practice is inherited from generation to generation.

□ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

N/A

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

□ Threats to the enactment

□ Enactment Threats Description

It is to be believed that otter fisherman who are in their 40s/50s might be the last generation to do this practice. Due to river pollution the amount of fish in the rivers are declining. Besides some rivers are drying up due to climate change. Maintaining livelihood through otter fishing is no longer economically feasible. Also increasing number of restrictions in Sundarban area gives less access to the Otter fisherman.

□ Threats to the transmission (if any)

According to the representative when he asked one Otter fisherman named BHoben Das, He said he doesn't want his son to follow this practice as his main occupation. Due to much difficulty in this livelihood he wants his son to get education unlike him and do some other productive work which will bring money to the family. This scenario is common in the entire community. In Gopra village only six families are still dependent on Otter fishing.

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

As most of the tangible elements are handmade. Availability to such elements does not cause any difficulty.

□ Viability of associated intangible elements (if any)

N/A

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

□ 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

The community feels free to give information about this old culture of theirs. As this practice is still existed on the international tourist demand, the community do not have any restrictions. Even there is some documentary on their livelihood

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

N/A

□ Section-5: Resource Person

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

Name -Md Shams Tibrij Russel Profession- Businessman Managing Director, Beautiful Bangladesh Tours and Travels

□ Date of data collection

16-05-2020

□ Place(s) of data collection

□ Section-6: Safeguarding techniques

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

Private tour operators are arranging various tourism program each year both in Sundarban and Narail. Through this program the Fishermen earn comparatively more money than doing fishing alone. also the exposure they get by the foreign tourists through this program helps the community more attention from concern groups .

□ Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

To safeguard the practice programs can be held where students from around the country can join and experience this lifestyle before it gets extinct. Seminars can be arranged with concerned parties (Ethnographers, NGOs, Zoology researchers), Not only the technique will go to extinction but it should keep in mind that because of this community breeding of tamed otter will face issue as well and will impact on the natural environment The issue in the community is poverty and hunger. Through SDG the issue can be solved. Out of 17 goals of SDG, goal 1,2,3,8,15 are most important for this practice.

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

□ References to/in literature

1. <https://roadsandkingdoms.com/2015/the-fishing-otters-of-bangladesh/>
2. https://www.iucnsgbull.org/Volume28A/Feeroz_et_al_2011.pdf

□ Audiovisual materials or archives

Private audio-visuals are available on the internet.

□ Discography or archives

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sr8EYnrWmjQ&t=45s>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PnBO2yGHSY&t=24s>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySxtYE-qHLs>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wxAk4eltEI&t=8s>

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

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

Anandita Khan

□ Date of Community Consent

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

Consent was given orally but due to both Covid 19 and Amphan cyclone Consent formality could not be fulfilled properly.

□ 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)

The community is

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

N/A

Section-10: Upload Document

Heritage Details Document



Heritage Images

