

Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-60.58.2023.00061

Section-1: Identification of the element

Heritage Location

Division

Sylhet

District

Moulvibazar

Upazila

Details Address

Geolocation(Latitude)

Geolocation(Longitude)

Community Category

Religious

Community

Hindu

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

Dhamail

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

Dhamail is a dance form of Sylhet district which is a combination of Sylheti folk music and oral culture, falling in ICH domains 1, 2 and 3.

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

All over Sylhet district, especially Sunamganj, Habiganj, Moulvibazar Districts, Dhamail singing and dance is prominent.

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

Dhamail is mainly a genre of ritual dance and songs by women. Hindu women of Sylhet and Mymensingh districts perform Dhamail or dhamali dance and songs with pomp and grandeur on the occasions of certain religious rites, different religious festivals and birth and marriage ceremonies. Twenty to twenty-five women stand in a circle in the yard and perform this rite. Although it has similarity with Bhatiali (another genre of performance) in tone, it does not have the stretched-out intonation or the sweet or pleasant rolling from one note to another. And the musical measure is

maintained by the clapping of the hands; hence, no musical instruments are needed. There is a speciality in the step and pace of the dance - women clap their hands successively by bending down and lifting their head to the front. In Sylhet, hand clapping is called thapri in the local vernacular. They have to dance moving forward and backward alternatively and in circle, keeping pace with the hand clapping. The toes of the back leg touch the ground and the heels remain high; thus they have to alternate the right and left legs. Dhamali is erotic music relating to Radha and Krishna. Social Dhamail song narrating events of north Bengal, conversations between brides and bridegrooms and containing proverbs are still prevalent. Dhamail is folk song of the ancient tradition. Scholars believe that fourteenth-century poet Chandi Das wrote Srikrishnavakirtan (Songs in Glorification of Krishna) after being inspired by Dhamail and jhumur songs. The word dhamali is there in Srikrishnavakirtan in the sense of jokes. 'dhamali bulite kanhe diholi ash. / Basali shire bondi gailo Chandidash. (Dankhondo). In sixteenth-century poet Daulat Wazir Bahram Khan's Laili-Mojnu, the word dhamal is used in the sense of dance and music 'balemu shubdoni / donho mili nirojoni / khelot robge dhamal. In Satimayana-Lor-Chandrani, seventeenth-century poet Daulat Kazi uses dhamari in the same sense 'Khelai bondhur sone premer dhamari. These quotations indicate the antiquity and popularity of dhamali gan (song) and dance. Dhamail song and Dhamail dance is also a kind of story dance which is a part of the folklore of Sylhet region. Although this song-dance performance is common in any mangolik (auspicious) ceremony, it is now more commonly used in traditional religious wedding ceremonies. Radharman Dutt is considered to be the creator of this genre of performance. However, Dhamail songs composed by Prataparanjan Talukdar ha

☐ 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.)

Women of all ages and social status participate in Dhamail performances. They form a group from teenagers to elderly women. One person is the leader of the group and the songs are first sing by her. After that, others join the chorus. The breakdown of Dhamail is as follows: the songs usually start with one woman standing in the courtyard, clapping. She is the leader, singing the lines of a dhamail song — usually an ode to the divine affair between Radha and Krishna. As a few lines are sung, one or two women join her in the chorus, and the cheering continues with the hands. And as the song goes on, more women join in. As the clapping reaches a crescendo, so does the circular movement. The voices are raised, and the sound of the beat reaches a deafening peak. And then the beat regresses to normal. Most often, the dhamail ends on a highest note, where the singing and dancing reaches a peak. All the womenfolk sing in unison. Some are incapable of holding their breath for a long time, and thus, it is important that all participants sing and maintain the beat. Dhamail songs do not roll from one note to another in a pleasant manner. It is the total performance; the dance and the song combined make it appealing. There is a speciality in the step and pace of the dance — women clap their hands successively by bending down and lifting their head to the front. Footwork is equally important in dhamail dances. The toes of the back leg touch the ground and the heels remain high; thus, they have to alternate the right and left legs. The clapping is called 'thapri'

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

Damail is only performe by women. But the performance is accompanied with kartals, dhak and many other instruments which are usually played by the males members of community. Besides the the performers, people who gives donations or called performers to perform plays vital roles in this ICH element

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

Dhamail is performed in a local dialect of Bengali.

☐ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

The instruments used with the folk performance are percussion instruments like karate and Dhak. However, because of the practise of accompanying clapping, Dhamail is sometimes performed without any instruments.

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

Dhamail is an art form practised by women. The other members of community help Dhamail by playing accompanying instruments.

□ Division of labour during the practice of this Heritage

Women sing and dance, while men accompany with instrumental music.

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

This is open to all.

□ Modes of transmission to others in the community

Since it is a community performance, it is transmitted from one generation to another through practise.

□ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

Some cultural organizations like the Bengal Foundation

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

□ Threats to the enactment

□ Enactment Threats Description

Dhamail continues to be practised within the community. However, as the communities themselves are vulnerable, there is a waning of the practise.

□ Threats to the transmission (if any)

Threat is to the diminishing community.

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

N/A

□ Viability of associated intangible elements (if any)

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

Some organizations are working to documents these performances.

□ 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

Ramkrishna Sarkar who is a researcher and Director of Dhamail Academy agreed to provide the information. He was happy to discuss over cell-phone and gave verbal consent during the COVID19 pandemic.

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

□ Section-5: Resource Person

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

Ramkrishna Sarkar Researcher and Director of Dhamail Academy Sreemangal, Moulvibazar, Sylhet

□ Date of data collection

□ Place(s) of data collection

Sylhet and Moulvibazar

□ Section-6: Safeguarding techniques

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

https://www.sylhettoday24.news/news/details/Press_Release/67989: 51 member Committee to safeguard 'Dhamail' formed.

□ Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

1. Awareness of young generation through non-formal education method. 2. Encouraging oral artists 3. Supporting young to get essence of Dhamail dance

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

□ References to/in literature

1. Roy, Anuradha. 2006. "The Music of Politics and the Politics of Music." India International Centre Quarterly pp. 71-84 32 (4): 71-84. 2. Bhattacharjee, Sukalpa Narrative. 2011. "Narrative Constructions of Identity and the Sylheti Experience." In The Oxford Anthology of writings from North-East India, by Tilottama Misra and eds, 245-258. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

□ Audiovisual materials or archives

<https://www.prothomalo.com/northamerica/article/1644650/?????-?????-???-?-?????-?????>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJo2FnJDmP8>

□ 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)

Joyeta Banik Member of Nrityashaily, Sylhet

□ Date of Community Consent

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

□ Present Condition of Heritage

Still maintaining

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

Still maintaining

□ Section-9: Community suggestions

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

The community believes that Dhamail will remain safe if people in the urban areas practice it's original form, not the fancy one.

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

Not applicable

□ **Section-10: Upload Document**

Heritage Details Document

