

Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-30.93.2023.00089

Section-1: Identification of the element

Heritage Location

Division

Dhaka

District

Tangail

Upazila

Details Address

Geolocation(Latitude)

Geolocation(Longitude)

Community Category

Others

Community

Manasamangal Performers

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

Shaone Dala

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

Bangladesh a low-lying riverine country on the northern littoral of the Bay of Bengal is not just a confluence of rivers from the East, West and the North, but also a land that has witnessed the convergence of mystic beliefs from far and wide. Often described as nadīmātr̥k, or birthed by rivers, in Bangladesh water is like a mother, providing fertility to the land, waterways for transport, besides being the source of innumerable socio-cultural activities. For centuries these waterways, crisscrossing the county, interspersed with narratives from here there and everywhere, have inspired reflexive thinking and systems of belief, building an intimate relationship between man and nature. Discourses and tales highlighting this connection are told over and over again in folk narratives and performances. Often the underlying message, of these performative rituals, subscribed to by both Hindus and Muslims, is one of plurality and diversity. Amongst the tales inspired by rivers, there cannot be a more awesome tale than that of the courageous and resolute new bride Behula carrying the corpse of her spouse, Lokkhindor, to the heavens, in an epic journey, on a raft, across seven rivers, seeking justice and retribution, from Lord Shiva, against the mighty Serpent Goddess Manasa. As the legend goes, the ill-fated Brahmin merchant Chand Saudagar refused to worship Manasa Devi, the mind-born daughter of Shiva. Manasa retaliated by taking the life of Chand's youngest son Lokkhindor. Thus, began the epic battle between Lokkhindor's newlywed bride Behula, and the mighty Serpent Goddess. Uniquely, this awesome tale of wrath and retribution is variously performed in several regions of Bangladesh, each in its own form and style. However, nothing could be more Bangladeshi than the exciting day-long, riverine, processional performance, with actors dressed as

Behula, Lokkhindor and other characters of this tale of Manasa. Competing groups take out colorfully decorated boats, stopping at seven ghats, or wharfs, emulating Behula's journey, till each boat stops at a designated household where the jiyoni, or 'bringing back from dead' last act, is performed to bring the hapless Lokkhindor back to life. •The narrative belongs to the genre of Mangal Kavyas, Bangla narrative poems written approximately between the 15th-18th centuries, depicting the greatness of popular, indigenous deities as well as the social scenario. •The poems are known as mangal-kavyas because it was believed that listening to these poems about the deities brought both spiritual and material benefits. •The three-part schema followed in the poem relates a) A conflict between male and female deities, b) followed by retribution and c) the ultimate resolution ending in glorification of the female deity and a women's power of moral persuasion.

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

Marginalized rural Hindu and Muslim communities

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

Districts of Tangail and Ghatail of Dhaka division.

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

□ 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.)

The ritual performance includes a) the householder who vows to organize a performance (which includes worship) if the boon is granted by the Goddess b) a group of performers and c) and sundry bystanders and worshippers Performers are mostly men, cross-dressing in female roles.

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

Musicians, faith healers •The cast are rarely from a fixed group and most times are not professional performers coming from alternate professions, such as landless labour, cobblers, carpenters, etc. They are mostly Muslim. •Some performers are 'ojhas' or faith healers, with the power of healing snake-bites and other ailments •The river provides a transitional or 'liminal' space between life and death. This liminality provides an ideal platform for the transformation of the meek housewife, Behula, into a powerhouse of determination giving 'glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind' (Turner 1969). •Processional events are public performances richly expressive of symbolic meanings. Such meanings are constructed by the movement of participants through space and time, in a special order, and on a particular occasion (Brown and Regalado 2001).

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

Colloquial Bangla, theatre, music

□ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

Costumes, material for worship

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

□ Division of labour during the practice of this Heritage

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

The performers, though popular village bards and actors, are all, additionally faith-healers, or 'ojhas' revered for their capacity to cure minor diseases with their wealth of knowledge about herbs and natural cure. Each performance is begun with the 'ojha' offering worship to Manasa, and with pronouncements of 'mantras'. Additionally, the faith-healing aspect of these ritual performances are a living heritage of the integration of nature with culture. In South Asia, Folk healing gathers the non-dominant healing cultures of the subcontinent and brings together all forms of herbalism and medicines for diverse ailments.

□ Modes of transmission to others in the community

The performers are initiated into the performance by a traditional 'guru-shishya' pedagogy. The guru-shishya tradition, or parampara ("lineage"), denotes a succession of teachers and disciples in Indian arts. The parampara belongs to a specific sampradaya, and may have its own gurukulas for teaching, which might be based at akharas, . It is the tradition of spiritual relationship and mentoring where teachings are transmitted from a guru, teacher, to a shishya.

□ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

Mainly the community of believers

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

□ Threats to the enactment

□ Enactment Threats Description

□ Threats to the transmission (if any)

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

□ Viability of associated intangible elements (if any)

□ 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

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

□ Section-5: Resource Person

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

□ Date of data collection

□ Place(s) of data collection

□ Section-6: Safeguarding techniques —

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

□ Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

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

□ References to/in literature

Sengupta, Saswati. 2021. Mutating Goddesses: Bengal's Laukika Hinduism and Gender Rights. New Delhi: Oxford University Press
Sen, Dineshchandra. 1920. Folk Tales of Bengal. Kolkata: University of Calcutta.

□ Audiovisual materials or archives

<https://youtu.be/y-lhflMFhk?si=1FHzT2TPCspz4vF0>

□ 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)

Lubna Marium, 2015 onwards

□ Date of Community Consent

01-01-2024

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

Consent collected from various performing groups by members of Shadhona

□ Present Condition of Heritage

Still maintaining

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

Amazingly, this tale is performed every year, on the rivers of Tangail, on 'Srabon Shongkranti', the last day of the month of Srabon, as a riverine performance on colorfully bedecked boats. Nothing could be more Bangladeshi than an exciting day-long, riverine, processional performance, with actors dressed as Behula, Lokkhindor and other characters of this tale of Manasa. Competing groups take out colorfully decorated boats, stopping at seven ghats, or wharfs, emulating Behula's journey, till each boat stops at a designated household where the jiyoni, or 'bringing back from dead' last act, is performed to bring the hapless Lokkhindor back to life. But, In the Gregorian calendar Srabon Shongkranti is around mid-August. Sadly, the Govt of Bangladesh has declared August a month for mourning when no festivities can take place. So, a Heritage practice that has been happening for more than a few centuries is under threat.

□ Section-9: Community suggestions

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

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

□ Section-10: Upload Document

Consent Document



Heritage Images

