

Heritage Information

Unique Id:

BGD-55.94.2023.00113

Section-1: Identification of the element

Heritage Location

Division

Rangpur

District

Thakurgaon

Upazila

Thakurgaon Sadar

Details Address

Geolocation(Latitude)

26.1160485

Geolocation(Longitude)

88.58228891

Community Category

Small Ethnic Groups

Community

Barman

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

Dhamer Gaan

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

Dhamer Gaan is a rural theater form immensely popular in the Northwest region of Bangladesh (Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Dinajpur), where all characters are portrayed by male actors. Usually held during the harvest season, Dhamer Gaan theater is performed at night till dawn and the shows can last for a week.

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

Barman, Rajbangshi, Koch indigenous communities. Rural communities of Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Dinajpur.

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

Villages across the northwestern districts of Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Dinajpur. Dhamer Gaan is usually performed in the months of Aswin, Kartik and Agrahayan. It was hugely popular in the past, each show running even for 7 days straight, but these days the shows usually last only for a night.

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

Rooted in the cultural history of the districts of Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Panchagarh districts, Dhamer Gaan is a of pala (rural narrative play form) which has been practiced from generation after generation. Dhamer Gaan performances

are usually held during the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik during the Durga and Kaali Puja festivities. In addition, Dhamer Gaan is held in Agrahayan during the new paddy harvesting season. The songs and dialogues of this performance are delivered in local dialects. The subject of the song is usually historical, based on religious scripts or social issues. The female roles of Dhamer Gaan are played by men dressed as women. This theater form is immensely popular among the inhabitants of Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Dinajpur region. Regardless of age, gender or religion, the audience will stay awake all-night to watch the drama, which sometimes runs for a week. The stage of Dhamer Gaan is an open arena stage. The stage is a raised platform where the drama is performed while the audience sits around this stage under the sky. Music is an essential part of the performance and the musicians are seated at the center of the stage while the actors perform around them.

☐ 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.)

Dhamer Gaan performers do not have any formal education or training. All of the performers have other professions such as farmers, van drivers, masonry and others. Both male and female roles are played by male actors. The actors who play female roles are called 'Chokra' in local dialect. The ages of the performers can vary, usually ranging from 17-55.

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

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

The language of Dhamer Gaan is the local dialect of the region.

☐ Associated tangible elements used (if any)

Costume, musical instruments.

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

The performers who play female roles are sometimes transgenders, but not all. Women form a large part of the audience. Dhamer Gaan is hugely popular among all genders.

☐ 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)

☐ Modes of transmission to others in the community

☐ Organizations concerned (non-governmental organizations and others)

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

☐ Threats to the enactment

Yes

☐ Enactment Threats Description

In the past Dhamer Gaan was organized by local zamindars. Now due to funding shortage the performances have become short in duration and number. Also, due to rising social stigma, male members of the communities are reluctant to play female roles.

☐ 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)

Gidree Bawlee has been organizing programs related to Dhamer Gaan since 2014. The local district commissioner offices also organize Dhamer Gaan performances. The villagers also raise funds to organize small scale performances regularly.

☐ 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

Yes.

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

☐ Section-5: Resource Person —

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

Sonapatila village community. Representative - Somaru Barman, Kandura Barman.

☐ Date of data collection

30-06-2023

☐ Place(s) of data collection

Sonapatila village, Balia, Thakurgaon Sadar, Thakurgaon

☐ Section-6: Safeguarding techniques —

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

Organizing small scale Dhamer Gaan shows by community fund raising.

☐ Suggestions for safeguarding of the Heritage from the community

Patronage from Government and other organizations.

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

References to/in literature

A resourceful book on Dhamer Gaan has been published by Monotosh Kumar Dey called "????????? ??????? ? ???????".

Audiovisual materials or archives

There are several audiovisual materials of Dhamer Gaan.

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)

Salma Jamal Moushum, Amal Tudu, Shanto Barman.

Date of Community Consent

30-06-2023

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

Yes.

Present Condition of Heritage

Becoming less

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)

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

Section-10: Upload Document

Heritage Images

