

Name of the Element: Poddar Nachon

Name of Inventory: Pilot Inventory 1 _____

Serial No:

Brief Description

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Region: Kushtia

In rural Bangladesh with the downpour of the Monsoons comes the menace of snakes that spread a pall of fear. Thus, all over the countryside, amongst the marginalized communities, be they Muslim or Hindu, householders organize performative rituals to appease the mighty Goddess of Serpents, Manasa Devi. As the legend goes, she is the mind-born daughter of Shiva, whom the hapless Brahmin merchant Chand Saudagar refused to worship. 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. Popularly known as Poddar Nachon', or 'the Dance of Podda (from Padma, another name of Manasa)', these performances are in fact efficacious 'rituals' performed against a 'manot' or pledge, by a householder to appease Manasa in the hope of getting a boon from her, in the form of 'good health' for the household, or to overcome other such minor householder's obstacles. 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.

The actors of this event - the 'ojha', the householder, the afflicted and the onlookers, are all Muslims, standing testimony to the assimilative and plural practices of rural Bangladesh, especially amongst the marginalized.

Photographs: Video: Consent:

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