

Blueprint for “Dhamaal” (A Ritual dance form of Sufi Islam in Kashmir) under the Scheme Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India, sanctioned under Sanction Letter No: 28-6/ICH-Scheme/26/2013-14/13641, Dated: 31st. March, 2014.

1. INTRODUCTION

“DHAMAAL”

A Ritual dance form of Sufi Islam in Kashmir

Kashmir Valley is dotted with religious and sacred sites all over its beautiful landscape. There are temples and mosques, where people perform their religious duties of respective faiths.

There are also shrines of Rishis, Saints and Faqeers with their Dargah and Khankahs. Millions of people visit these places of worship to be blessed by these saints for the happiness and prosperity.

During the annual Urs (Festival) at these holy shrines, people come in large numbers from far flung areas to celebrate and pray together in honour of saints and be blessed. Most of the true celebrations are spread in large areas and do not get confined to the area of the holy shrine only. The whole happening turns into a community get together of feasting and praying. At these large gatherings, a large group of DHAMAAL male dances arrive to perform their ritual dance for general public.

These Dhamaal dancers are rare community groups, who trace their sacred origins in the Zikar (Sufi Dance) traditions of the Sufi Islam. This Dhamaal dance form has been practised and has been performed in the Valley for many centuries mostly performed at annual Urs Dargahs of several Rishis.

Rishis were rare holy souls who were messengers of love, peace and of equality among all faiths. They have given the message for humanity crossing religious boundaries. They believed in the ultimate unity of one God, who belonged to all beyond caste, colour and creed.

The ritual dance of Dhamaal starts from a simple circular body movement of the dancers with a larger group of male dancers. As time passes by, the dance ritual gradually develops into complex body movement, constantly changing and improvising fresh patterns of choreography and visual designs. Having a

mesmerising impact on the watchers, hence the experience of dancers and the public becomes one of faith and prayer.

Dancing these ever changing dance patterns and movements dance grows towards various crescendo and climaxes to reach a stage of trance while losing their self, these dancers enter into secret zone of their self and transcend into a rare spiritual experience of peace with the self. It is an experience of total surrender to the higher being.

The entire dance ritual is played on the huge drums; mostly they can be more than two big Dhols, which starts with a simple beat and finally goes into various taals, thus creating complex rhythmic patterns of taals and their improvisations.

This performance has another level and depth, which is experienced by the people who watch them in utter faith. Performers who are undergoing through spiritual experience and the individual who is watching their performance, also under goes an experience of liberation from the self and achieve the state of calm and peace. This experience is very positive to the dancer and also to the one watching this spiritual. It is an unconscious experience of release from the subjective world around us.

Hence both the dancer group as well as the larger public congregation, it is a joint sense of self purification ritual and also sense of cleansing once body, mind and soul.

For the last 25 years, when militancy and violence took the centre stage and disturbed the normal life in Kashmir. Culture became major casualty. Performance ceased to exist and gradually performers could not perform their traditional art form Dhamaal a very popular ritual dance form also took a hit. People or community who were performing this ritual dance either stopped or took to other ordinary form of work to survive. Many masters of the art of Dhamaal passed away, hence the quality and the depth of the form got lost and at present there are few groups with very limited capacity and talent.

2. OBJECTIVE

To preserve and revive this rare form of ritual dance so that the younger generation of Dhamaal and other families will join again this form of ritual dance form of the valley of Kashmir.

3. IMPLIMENTATION

15-20 Children / Younger generation from the Dhamaal and other families will be mobilized for 30 day long workshop, in which these selected participants shall be given a complete knowledge about our culture, heritage and tradition, and about this Ritual dance form of Sufi Islam in Kashmir.

I will also find out 2 Masters who will help me to teach this art to the children / younger generation.

All the new 15-20 Children / Younger generation will be taught basics of this rare form through practical and guest lecturers in this workshop of 30 days, keeping this in consideration that this workshop will not affect their education.

The timing will be in evening daily from **4.30 pm to 7.30 pm**, so that the education of the participant children / youths shall not affect.

4. LOCALE

Akingam, Anantnag, Kashmir.

5. DATES

The workshop will be commenced from 15th May 2014 to 14th June 2014.

6. CONCLUSION

A presentation will be presented by these talented youth before general public at a Dargah of **Baba Naseeb-u-din Gazi at Bejbehara Anantnag Kashmir** where an annual Urs (Festival) is being celebrated on 13th & 14th. June 2014 and participant dancers be blessed there that they will become the feature example of this art form Dhamaal of Kashmir.

Manzoor Ahmad Mir
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FIRST REPORT

A. Name of the State **Jammu and Kashmir**

B. Name of the Element/Cultural Tradition (in English)

Dhamaali: (A Ritual dance form of Sufi Ism in Kashmir)

B.1. Name of the element in the language and script of the community
Concerned, if applicable

C. Name of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned
(Identify clearly either of these concerned with the practice of the said
element/cultural tradition) **Dhamaals and Fakirs**

D. Geographical location and range of the element/cultural tradition (Please write
about the other states in which the said element/tradition is present

Kashmir Province of J&K State.

E. Identification and definition of the element/cultural tradition of the India

(Write "Yes" in one or more boxes to identify the domain(s) of intangible
cultural heritage manifested by the element. If you tick 'others', specify the
domain(s) in brackets.)

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------------|---|
| i. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | oral traditions and expressions, including language as a
vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage |
| ii. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | performing arts |
| iii. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | social practices, rituals and festive events |
| iv. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | knowledge and practices concerning nature and the
universe |
| v. | <input type="checkbox"/> | traditional craftsmanship |
| vi. | other(s) | () |

F. Provide a brief summary description of the element that can introduce it to
readers who have never seen or experienced it:

During the annual Urs (Festival) at holy shrines Kashmir Valley, people come in large numbers from for flung areas to celebrate and pray together in honour of saints and be blessed. At these large gatherings, a large group of DHAMAAL male dances arrive to perform their ritual dance for general public.

These Dhamaal dancers are rare community groups, who trace their sacred origins in the Zikar (Sufi Dance) traditions of the Sufi Ism. This Dhamaal dance form has been practised and has been performed in the Valley for many centuries mostly performed at annual Urs Dargahs of several Rishis.

The ritual dance of Dhamaal starts from a simple circular body movement of the dancers with a larger group of male dancers. As time passes by, the dance ritual gradually develops into complex body movement, constantly changing and improvising fresh patterns of choreography and visual designs. Having a mesmerising impact on the watchers, hence the experience of dancers and the public becomes one of faith and prayer.

Dancing these ever changing dance patterns and movements dance grows towards various crescendo and climaxes to reach a stage of trance while losing their self, these dancers enter into secret zone of their self and transcend into a rare spiritual experience of peace with the self. It is an experience of total surrender to the higher being.

The entire dance ritual is played on the huge drums; mostly they can be more than two big Dhols, which starts with a simple beat and finally goes into various taals, thus creating complex rhythmic patterns of taals and their improvisations.

- G. Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element/Cultural Traditions? Are there any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of it? If yes, who are they and what are their responsibilities?

Yes there are specific practitioners of Dhamaali and they are called Dhamaals and Fakirs. They are given responsibility of practising dhamaali at Shrines on certain religious and cultural events and people consider their presence and performance of Dhamaali to be necessary in order to get blessings from the Almighty.

- H. How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?

The knowledge and skill related to Dhamaali was traditionally transmitted by these Fakirs and Dhamaals to their generations but from last 27 years, militancy and violence took the centre stage and the performance of Dhamaali ceased to exist. People or community who were performing this ritual dance either stopped or took to other ordinary form of work to survive. Many masters of the art of Dhamaal passed away, hence there are few groups with very limited capacity and talent and thus are not able to transmit this skill today.

- I. What social functions and cultural meanings do the element/cultural tradition have today for its community?

Dhamaali dancers give the message for humanity crossing religious boundaries through this dance form. They believe in the ultimate unity of one God, who belonged to all beyond caste, colour and creed and convey the same to masses. Performers who are undergoing through spiritual experience and the individual who is watching their performance, also under goes an experience of liberation from the self and achieve the state of calm and peace. This

experience is very positive to the dancer and also to the one watching this spiritual. It is an unconscious experience of release from the subjective world around us.

- J. Is there any part of the element that is not compatible with existing international human rights instruments or with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, or with sustainable development? I.e. describe any aspect of the element/cultural tradition that may be unacceptable to Law of the country or may be in opposition to practicing community's harmony with others.

(NO)

- K. Your Project's contribution to ensuring visibility, awareness and encouraging dialogue related to the element/cultural tradition

My project will be aimed to preserve and revive this rare form of ritual dance so that the younger generation of Dhamaal and other families will join again this form of ritual dance form of the valley of Kashmir and people will once again gain faith through self liberation and spirituality on being affiliated to this dance form. The project will also try to spread message of equality among people and convey them to shun discrimination on the basis of cast, creed and colour.

- L. Information about the safeguarding measures that may protect or promote the element/cultural tradition

- a. (Write "Yes" in one or more boxes to identify the safeguarding measures that have been and are currently being taken by the communities, groups or individuals concerned)

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|------|--------------|--|
| i. | (Yes) | transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education |
| ii. | (Yes) | identification, documentation, research |
| iii. | (Yes) | preservation, protection |
| iv. | (Yes) | promotion, enhancement |
| v. | (Yes) | revitalization |

- b. Write about the measures taken at local, state and national level by the Authorities to safeguard the element/cultural tradition?

The authorities as such are not taking any direct measures to safeguard this dance form. Though there are a few number of schemes for safeguarding cultural art forms in general but at practical level they are rarely implemented and has not touched the plinth of Dhamaali yet.

- M. Write about the threats, if any, to the element/cultural tradition related to its practice, visibility and future longevity. Give facts and relevant reasons based on the current scenario.

In current scenario the performers of Dhamaali are moving towards other professions for a survival because the modernisation has hit upon their financial conditions very badly. The Dhamaals are not able to earn their livelihood through this profession because people are very less interested in their performance.

The second and serious threat is that this art form is rarely transmitted to our new generations.

- N. Safeguarding measures proposed

(This section should identify and describe safeguarding measures to protect and promote the element/cultural tradition. Such measures should be concrete and can be implemented to formulate future cultural policy for safeguarding and promoting the element/cultural tradition in the state)

The people ought to be made aware about the social and cultural importance of this dance form so that the people will once again generate interest in it. It will be beneficial for the people in getting self liberation as well as for the Dhamaals so that they can earn something.

There is also a need to train new generation in this skill through workshops, Seminars, Training Courses and Festivals.

- O. Community Participation

(Write about the participation of communities, groups and individuals related to the element/cultural tradition in formulation of your project)

The Masters of the Dhamaali will be involved to sensitise people in getting awareness and also training the younger generation in workshops, Seminars and Training Courses.

The data gathered from dhamaals regarding this art form will be analysed, discussed and documented.

P. Concerned community organization(s) or representative(s)

(Provide detailed contact information for each community organization or representative or other non-governmental organization that is concerned with the element such as associations, organizations, clubs, guilds, steering committees, etc.)

i. Name of the entity:

Kashmir Performers Collective

ii. Name and title of the contact person:

Manzoor Ahmad Mir

iii. Address:

Shah-i-Hamdan Mohalla, Kursu,
Rajbagh, Srinagar 190008 Kashmir
9697000033

iv. Telephone number

v. E-mail

kashmirperformers@gmail.com

vi. Other relevant information

Q. Give information of any Inventory, database or data creation centre (local/state/national) that you may be aware of or of any office, agency, organisation or body involved in the maintenance of the said inventory etc.

N/A.

R. Principal published references or documentation available on the element/cultural tradition

(Books, articles, audio-visual materials, names and addresses of reference libraries, museums, private endeavours of artistes/individuals for preservation of the said element, publications or websites)

Progress: The project titled “DHAMAAL” related to A Ritual dance form of Sufi Ism in Kashmir which was approved under the Scheme Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India under Approval No: 28-6/ICH-Scheme/34/2014-15/11404, Dated: 9th February, 2015, in which the following seven boys from Dhamaal and other families from different areas were mobilized for 30 Sunday’s workshop from 3rd May 2015 to 29th November 2015.

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Naveed Ahmad Shah | Age: 10 years |
| 2. Shakir Ahmad Faqeer | Age: 15 Years |
| 3. Aadil Ahmad Shah | Age: 17 Years |
| 4. Muzamil Ahmad Baghat | Age: 12 Years |
| 5. Aabid Ahmad Baghat | Age: 13 Years |
| 6. Mohammad Yaseen Shah | Age: 08 Years |
| 7. Jehangir Ahmad Shah | Age: 18 Years |

All these seven students were taught basics of this rare form through practical Training and lecturers and were given a complete knowledge about our culture, heritage, tradition, and about this Ritual dance form of Sufi Islam in Kashmir.

Two Masters, Mohmmad Lateef Shah and Bashir Ahmad, associated me in teaching **Saalm (Raas) & Sawaer Taal, Du-Qadmi Taal and Charkei Dambali with Gardaan of previous learnt Taal & dances, Tru-Qadmi Taal with Dambali on Tru-Qadam Taal, Band Tru-Qadmi Taal with Sama (Gestured) Dambali. Chaar-Zarb Taal with Zikre-Dambali, Pompur-Dambali, Dum and Dua** to the new younger generation. Some **Yoga exercises of Breath were taught to the participants in addition of above.**

Signature:

Name: Manzoor Ahmad Mir

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