

Report for the ICH scheme [Final] :

An Audio Visual Exploration on Shree Khol [The Story of Shree Khol]

under the Scheme Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India, sanctioned under Sanction Letter No : [28-6/ICH-SCHEME/71/2013-14/1711],

Dated: 31st. March, 2014.

Title of the Film : A Divine Percussion [The Story of Shree Khol .]

Brief out line of the Project :

Music, be it either vocal or instrumental, has always been believed to be the most effective vehicle for devotional adoration in multi-cult, myth-oriented India from time immemorial. A variety of percussion instruments in this aspect shall undoubtedly head the list. In ancient India, Dundubhi was the main *aanabdhavadya*, the percussions with drumheads, made mostly of cow or buffalo skin. *Dunduvi* has other varieties - *debadunduvi*, *bhumi dunduvi* and *vanaspati*. All these percussion were one headed and of hemispherical shape. It was played either by tapping by the hands or striking by sticks, placing on ground. After *dunduvi* the next phase of traceable percussions were headed barrel shaped percussions - *dhakka*, *dholak* and *mridanga* called *angavadya*) as it is braced against any part of drummer's body usually neck , shoulder or waist during playing.

In classical times *angavadya* was also called *puskarvadya* was described by the great saint Bhaaratmuni in *Natyashastra* composed probably between 200BCE to 200CE. In describing *puskarvadya* the great saint Varatmuni spoke of three varieties of *mridanga* in terms of three different shape. Engineer God Viswakarma divided this multi forms of *mridanga* into three parts, namely *aalinga* which is played appending on the body by a strap around neck. Without hanging on neck likewise upheaded percussion is *urddhak* which is quite similar to kettle drum in jazz or bongo-congas of Western and African music respectively. Such percussion which is played placing on the lap or haunch is *aankik*. *Aankik*(onlap) *mridanga* was *haritaki*(myrobalan) shaped, *urdhak mridanga* was *jav* (barley) shaped and *aalinga mridanga* was *gopuchha*(cowtail-end) shaped. As the body of these *aanabdha*(skin head) instruments were made of terracotta they were appellate as *mridanga*. In Sanskrit adjoining of two words, *mrit*(earth) with *anga*(body) made the new name *mridanga*(earthen body).

There are no exactly available datas as how and when *mridanga* became popular under the name of *Khol* or *Shree Khol* in Gour-Banga during medieval age. Shree Chaitanyadeva is regarded as the originator of this instrument and he prefixed the word *Shree* as per the Vaishnavic cult and it was titled *Shree Khol*. It is the main percussion used in *kirtan* and it is considered to be a very auspicious instrument. According to ancient scripture hymns sangeet *Parijat* - Lord Brahma one of the Trio God Supremos, tranquilly exists in the heart of *Shree Khol* .

In Assam shree khol was one of the main. *Shree Khol* was one of the main percussion instruments used during a religious and socio-cultural renaissance there ushered by prophet Shreemanta Shankaradeva. This *Shree Khol* is presently considered to be the main percussion instrument for *Shatriya* dance, *Gaayen-Baayen* (singer- drummer) and all other styles of Vaishnavic musical customs and practices.

Almost five hundred years ago In glorifying the name of Lord Supreme, Mahaprabhu Shree Chaitanyadeva introduced continuous chanting of the mantra "*Hare Krishna, Hare Rama*" in Bengal. On initiating His broadcast on this, He realised that, this might be easier and rapid to circulate the process to the ordinary people than to royal . So, bringing in a little change in the shape of ancient *mridanga*, he shortened the circumference of right-flanked drumhead to tune in a high pitch. As a result, the beating sound of *Shree Khol* did not drop down amidst the sound of singing *kirtan, usually performed* in congregation or chorus.

At first there are two separate hollow parts is prepared. Then these two hollow shells are joined together to give a final shape. Then this grey colour barrel shaped body is hardened on drying in the sun. The phases of making of a *Shree Khol* are so easy to remember easily. When the entire frame of a shell is ready, it is necessary to harden it on drying in the sun. Then it is further hardened by putting it in to a furnace . Many consider it to fall within the terracotta craft.

The shells of Assam or Manipur are made of wood from the branches of jackfruit tree, catechu tree or again some say from red sandal tree, the frame of this shell is made. Earthen shells are predominant in Bengal and Odhisa. In order to keep the clay of shell hard, a covering of thin thread on the entire body is rolled up with glue. This covering is called *sik*. In accordance with the size of earthen or wooden shell then *chaak* or *chhaauni* is made. This process may also be followed easily.

For the ardent devotees of Lord Krishna, the khol is almost always the instrument everyone wants to learn.

The *pranam* (salutation) mantra of *Shree Khol* is required to be learnt at the very beginning of taking percussion lessons of *Shree Khol*.

Thereafter starts variety of stroke-messages – right hand's strokes, left hand's strokes and both hands' strokes. Some differences are observed in *Shree Khol* playing stroke-messages of Bengal with that of Assam and Manipur

Stroke-messages of *Shree Khol* are divided into two parts in respect of the degree of blow – heavy message and light message. The stroke-message wherein the heavy blows on left flanked drumhead is being applied jointly with the right flanked one or solitarily create the stentorian or aspirate letter's sound - those are called heavy messages; such as, *dha*, *jha*, *ghee* etc. All other letters are solitarily light and these are unaspirate letters; like *ta*, *tereti tereti tere* etc.

There are some specific methods for the lessons of *Shree Khol*, very essence of which is a regular practice as per prescribed rules. From sitting posture to hand placing posture and a novice has to learn primarily how to take *Shree Khol* on lap. Thereafter starts different types of exercise for hand-practice. Hands of *Shree Khol* are of three kinds – big hand, folded up hand or small hand and fingers. Importance of thumb in playing of *Shree Khol* is immense. Big hand is played by five fingers of right hand, which is also called *chaapar*(slap stroke). Small hand is played by four fingers of right hand. Middle and index finger are used for rapidly active playing. Besides, for extraction of accurate sound from *kaani*, the index finger has to be used.

Some pertinent technical terms are the additional feature of this method or style. The hinting symbols or signs of bodies like *chhut, joda, kaal, kosh, sama* or *graha* are evident in this *kirtanic* beating style. These technical terms are not evident or have no use in other music styles.

That which is called *laoyaa[acceptance]* in Kirtanic beating style, the same is called *theka* in Hindustani style. As soon as the singer starts singing, the beating process commences. Thereafter one by one comes *prastuti vadya, paran, lahar vadya, chhakka vadya, mataan vadya, haat vadya, ghnaat vadya, prabandha vadya, pynaach vadya, murchhan* or *maan, tnehaai. Aashtataal* is noteworthy among all these available ancient examples of *kirtanic* beating style.

There is also a well directed system of recording these beats. *Koshis* (written down figures) of medium speed are indicated by “O”(big zero) sign or symbol. And in the case of slow speed beats timemark is indicated by “.” means a clear dot. Equal sign is indicated by “+”(plus) and again space sign by “o”(small zero).

In Assam, *Shree Khol* is used as the main percussion instrument with songs like *borogeet, dehabisargeet* etc.

Dance with *Shree Khol* is very popular in Assam and Manipur. *Gaayen-baayen* (singer-drummer) is one exquisitely beautiful dance of Assam which leave us absolutely mesmerized. *Pung* dance of Manipur with *Shree Khol* is not only eye-catching, but different gestures of physical grace accompanied by its rhythm, beats and tempo also fascinates us. For *Goudiya Nritya*(Goudiya dance) *Shree Khol* is the main accompanying percussion. In spite of the predominance of song in this dance, expression of moods of this dance is not feasible without percussive accompaniment of *Shree Khol*. *Shree Khol* is also the main accompanying percussion with *Shastriya Nritya*(sacred dance) *Satriya* dance.

In *Rabindra Sangeet*(Tagore’s songs) and dance this graceful instrument’s coordination transforms the song and dance into a divine form.

In Bengal there are many customs for playing of *mridanga* or *Shree Khol* with *kirtan*(divine praising) songs. Previously singer used to appear on stage with three *Shree Khol* percussionists. Presently two are only evident as accompanists. *Shirbaadak*(head drummer) seated on the rightside and *kolbaadak* (onlap

drummer) seated on the left side of the *Kirtania* (kirtan singer). Before commencement of song, accompanists or percussionists begin to play *mridanga* or *Shree Khol* in different rhythms aided by cymbals.

Internationally the *Shree Khol* was introduced to International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISCON) by Shree A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami later known as Srila Prabhupada and ever since the temples started growing, the *Khols* have diverged into four different styles.

The first is having a fiberglass body with skin heads. The second style is using brass body with skin heads. The third style which is known as *Balaram Mridanga* was invented by Shree Ishan Das who unlike orthodox making of a *Shree Khol* developed a high fiberglass body with plastic heads affixing thereon a black rubber disc as the *siyai*. A *siyai* as per Conventional artisans' term is a centrally pasted black disc evident on a number of skinned percussions' head, is applied in order to balance scale or pitch of music. Lastly, the *khol* with skin heads could be made from buffalo skin and clay *siyais*.

Today *Shree Khol* or *mridanga* is widely appreciated around the world. Nowadays, maestro Shree Gopal Burman caters this percussion to listeners either solitarily or jointly with *tabla*. This instrument is not only being used with *kirtan* or other songs but in fusion music of recent times too. This percussion has played a very significant role in Bengali film music too. In modern days *Shree Khol* is being used in big processions also.

Traditional *Nagar Sangkirtan* celebrating through songs and dances of Lord Krishna at dawn or during a festivity is a common panorama in Bengal's rural and urban areas, in the troubadours of Bengal move and perform to the delight of the masses.

After all exhaustive research works on *Shree Khol* in volume, the phonetic volume of the divine percussion shall ever remain beating and resonating in our heart at the fag-end of the day.

Report Detailed :

Personalities : The Project started in the month of April . There are few personalities who provided some very important inputs for the project. The key resource person for this project are the following: -

1. Dr. Dhimadhav Kirtania.
2. Dr. Kankana Mitra
3. Dr. Prof Mahua Mukhopadhyay.
4. Pandit Gopal Barman
5. Acharya Braja Rakhal Das.
6. Shree Dwijen Barman .
7. Smt. Kalabati Devi
8. Smt Sumana Sarawgi
9. Shree Rupen Ghosh
10. Shree Shyamal Natta

All of them have shared their vast knowledge for the required input of this project. These eminent personalities belongs to various aspects of music of Bengal, Assam, Manipur, and Orissa, From the history of Shree khol to the implementation of this percussion instrument , they shared their knowledge and experience through lecture demonstration , interviews, practical demonstration , live progamme. Apart from them there are personalities who extended their hand of support in the making process of this instrument.

The Artisan Shree Jiten Pal , and his family is a very skillful family in preparing the structure of Shree khol or Shree Mridanga.

Shyama Das, of Shree Narayan Badya Bhandar is another wonderful person in this field of percussion. The instrument prepared by him, goes all over the world . Pandit Zakir Hossain also takes instrument from him. He provides the information on the making and giving final touch of this Devine Instrument. Very Senior Khol Player like Shree Rupen Ghosh , Shree Shyamal Natta, explains various terminology , techniques of performing Shree khol of Bengal .

Dr. Kankana Mitra [Head of the Dept of Rabindra Bharati university], Dr. Santa Das [Lecturer of Rabindra Bharati University and performer] , & Shree Suman Bhattacharyay [Lecturer of Rabindra Bharati University and Renowned Performer of Radio and Television] demonstrated the usage of Mridanga or Shree khol with Kirtan of Bengal.

Dr. Prof Mahua Mukhopadhyay is the DEAN of Rabindra Bharati University - History of Shree khol and Gaudiya Nritta.

Shree Dwijen Barman : A key resource person of my film from Assam, A Satriya Dancer, not only support me through his own performance, but also extend his hand for arranging all the requirement for this film required for Assam.

Dr. Dhimadhav Kirtania, a Prof of Rabindra Bharati University has shared his experience and knowledge on practical demonstration of Bol-Bani of shree Khol in Bengal.

Dr. Pradip Ghosh provides his expert comments on the musicological aspects .

Iskon mandir or temple at mayapur also helped me.

Technicians : Cinematographer Mr. Tapas Dharmapal, a well known name in the world of cinematography and former head of dept of SRFTI, has been very enthusiastic about the visuals of the

film. His orchestra like conduction over the team gives me lot of time to think and visualize about the shots and angles. His assistant Mr. Sankha sinha , a sober gentleman has been one of the important person of the production team. Manas Das , the chief editor , with his natural calmness and humorous simple approach tries to keep the best possible shots. Shree Barun Chanda a former Ray actor with his natural elegance makes the commentary very attractive.

Places : Kolkata and its surrounding area. Assam- Gwahati , Mayapur, Nabadweep, Hoogli.

Attachment :

2 DVD of the Documentary film in 2 different format [.vob file, data file]

Grant utilization certificate signed by a Chartered Accountant

Financial Expenditure Sheet

Some still photographs of the project in a different CD

Note : 1]The version of this documentary is in English, no sub title is made . If you require it, then I will send it in a different DVD shortly .

2] A short version of 10minutes is under preparation. Will be sending to you shortly

Asok Kumar Chattopadhyay
Director

Financial Expenditure Report :

| Particulars | Amount in Rs. |
|--|---------------|
| Accountant | 500 |
| Artist | 7000 |
| Travel [Taxi fare] | 16860 |
| Camera Hire Charges | 30000 |
| Cinematographer | 50000 |
| Assistant camera man + sound recordist | 11350 |
| Accessories [Light Cassette etc] | 8400 |
| Food [Breakfast, Lunch etc] | 10550 |
| Boom Man | 250 |
| Audio studio | 1000 |
| commentary | 10000 |
| Editing studio | 7500 |
| Editor | 10000 |
| Room Rent | 3800 |
| Chartered Accountant | 2000 |
| | |

Total

Rs. 1,69,210 /-

Amount In words : Rupees One lakh, sixty nine thousand , two hundred and ten only

Enclosed :

1. Hard copy Project Report.
2. Hard copy of the Financial Expenditure Report
3. Grant utilization certificate
4. CD- for Still photographs .
- 5.** 2 DVD – Final copy of the Film of the project .

Asok Kumar Chattopadhyay
Director