

To,
The Secretary General,
UNESCO Head Quarter,
7, Place De Fontenoy,
Paris- 07 SP,
France.

28th November, 2006.

Kind Attention: Programme Head, UNESCO Cultural Division.

Sub: Nomination of Bonobibi Yatra of Sunderbans, India as "Tangible Cultural Heritage of the World".

Dear Sirs/Madams,

We are a Community cum Conservation-based Tourism organization working in close partnership with local communities in various protected areas and cultural sites of East & Northeast India as a part of our mission to link protected areas with peoples livelihood through sustainable tourism and preserve and protect the unique natural and cultural heritages of the region as mentioned.

We are running such tourism demonstration models in Sunderbans National Park, Manas National Park, Gorumara National Park, Neora Valley National Park, Namdapha National Park, Mouling National Park, Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary, Eagle's Nest Wildlife Sanctuary, North and South Bank of Brahmaputra River, Darjeeling Himalayas, Sikkim Himalayas, Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, Central Arunachal Pradesh, North Bengal Dooars Foothills and Assam.

Please find enclosed a proposal from Bali Nature & Wildlife Conservation Society who is our local partner of our Sunderbans National Park project. With support from the local people, Eco Development Committees and individual patrons we have largely been able to revive the age-old local cultural tradition of the Sunderbans called Dukhe Yatra or Bonobibi Yatra. The story of Bonobibi starts somewhere in Arabia and ends up at the Mangroves Delta of the Sunderbans.

(Page-2)

This unique oral cultural tradition- practiced and performed by the locals with folk songs, music, dance, drama and dialogues, has been into existence since time unknown. Characters such as *Dakdhin Roy* (The incarnation of Tiger God and the Lord of the South), *Bonobibi* and *Shah Jangalee* (twin child of Ibrahim Gaji and his second wife Golal Bibi, later accepted by the locals as the saviors in the forest), *Dhona* (The local trader and harvester of wild Honey), *Moules* (Honey collectors), *Jeles* (Fishermen), *Dukhe* (the hero of the story, a poor posthumous boy), *Narayani* (the incarnation of Durga) dominate the story, and at the end delivers a strong conservation message that calls for everyone's participation in the process where "You live and let others live".

We would be most grateful to you if UNESCO considers the proposal for nomination of Dukhe Yatra or Bonobibi Yatra as Intangible Cultural Heritage and ensures that this unique oral tradition is not affected or adulterated by any form of commercialization or unethical exploitation.

With regards,
Most Sincerely Yours,



(ASIT BISWAS)
Member-Governing Body
Association for Conservation and Tourism (ACT)

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Bali Nature and Wild Life Conservation Society

03218-283273

Regi. No. - S/96129

Vill. : BALI NO. 9, P.O. : BALI HATKHOLA,
P.S. : GOSABA, DIST. : 24 PARGANAS (SOUTH)

Ref. No.

Date :

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Respected Sirs and Madams,

We are writing this letter on behalf of the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society and the local people of the Sunderbans, in order to seek your guidance and help to get the Bonobibi Yathira / Dukhe Yatra nominated in the List of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Sunderbans are located in Eastern India on the shore of the Bay of Bengal, in the extreme south of the state of West Bengal. 40% of the Sunderbans belong to India, the other 60% to Bangladesh. The Indian Sunderbans, consisting of some 102 islands, are a unique and very fragile ecosystem. They are the world's biggest river delta formed by some of the major rivers of South Asia. Moreover they are the largest mangrove forest of the world, and harbor a great diversity of species including the endangered Royal Bengal Tiger. The Sunderbans have been crowned with many important citations and special protection status such as Wildlife Sanctuary, Tiger Reserve, National Park, Biosphere Reserve and since 1987 a World Heritage Site.

The first temporary settlers were Portuguese and Arakani Pirates approx. in 1650 A.D. The British, who opened a permanent trading hub and introduced agriculture, followed them. But, local people most probably, even much longer than that used the area. Coastal fishermen used to come to that area since time unknown- for fishing, wood cutting and honey collection.

Sukumar Paiva

Chairman
Bali Nature & Wild Life
Conservation Society

Anil Krishna Mishra

Secretary
Bali Nature & Wild Life
Conservation Society



Ref. No.

Date :

(Page 2)

Thus the Sunderbans, though very hostile terrain, were of great importance for the people as they were integral part of their sustenance and livelihood. The significance of the Sunderbans has, perhaps been best manifested in the form of an oral cultural tradition, called the Bonobibi Yatra, or Dukhe Yatra respectively. Bonobibi is, interestingly, worshipped both by the Hindu and Muslim communities all across the Sunderbans.

It is the story of the young boy Dukhe, who joins a honey collection team, led by Dhona. In order to satisfy Dakshin Roy, the Lord of the forest, for a good harvest Dhona had to sacrifice Dhuke, who was incidentally rescued and saved by Bonobibi, considered as the protector of the Sunderbans people, and her brother Shah Jangalee. The Bonobibi Yatra or Dukhe Yatra unfolds the story in the form of an open-air opera, performed by the locals, and runs for hours together in a particular show.

We would like UNESCO to be a partner in our endeavor to preserve this unique local cultural tradition, which has been handed down from the past generations to the present and been able to retain most of its originality up till now. Attached with the letter please find a CD containing significant part of the drama performance and also the music.

Please let us know, if you consider this as an intangible heritage worth for nomination and also the procedures to be followed by us.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosed : List of Signatories from Bali Village, Sunderbans in Support of the proposal.

Sukumar Paikra

Chairman
Bali Nature & Wild Life
Conservation Society

Anil Krishna Mishra

Secretary
Bali Nature & Wild Life
Conservation Society



Regi. No. - S/96129

VIII. : BALI NO. 9, P.O. : BALI HATKHOLA,
P.S. : GOSABA, DIST. : 24 PARGANAS (SOUTH)

Ref. No.

Date :

- ১ রামকৃষ্ণকন
- ২ Ashin Mistrey
- ৩ মহাদেব সাহেন
- ৪ Manoj Mandal.
- ৫ অজয় নাথ
- ৬ প্রভাতী বসু
- ৭ হরিপ্রসাদ
- ৮ প্রদীপ কলিতা
- ৯ Rinkal Mistrey
- ১০ Ananta Barman
- ১১ অমিত কলিতা
- ১২ আলিফ মল্লিক
- ১৩ নিমিত্ত কলিতা
- ১৪ প্রদীপ কলিতা
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- ৩১ অমিত সাহেন
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- ৫৯ প্রদীপ কলিতা
- ৬০ প্রদীপ কলিতা



Ref. No.

Date :

৬৮/ শ্রী ব্রজেন দাস

৬৯/ প্রমোদ কুমার

৭০/ Manoj kr. Mridha

৭১/ অশীষ কুমার সান্না

৭২/ Rajib Mondal

৭৩/ Ranjit Mridha.

৭৪। শ্রী সুপ্রিয় কুমার

৭৫/

৭৬/ অশীষ কুমার

৭৭/ Bivosh Mondal.

৭৮/ ব্রজেন কুমার

৭৯/ Puspendu Mondal

৮০/ Chimer Mridha

৮১/ Japan Mondal

৮২/ Bistay ২৬/১১/০৫

৮৩/ Pousenjit Mondal

৮৪/ Soumitra Sarkar

৮৫/ সুপ্রিয় কুমার

৮৬/ মিলন মল্লিক

৮৭/ স্বপ্না কুমার

৮৮/ Prasanta Mondal.

৮৯/ জ্যোৎস্না কুমার

৮০/ সাবিত্রী কুমার

৮১/ দিলীপ কুমার

৮২/ সুপ্রিয় কুমার

৮৩/ Harabinda Biswas.

৮৪/