

Institution: Loughborough University
Unit of Assessment: D29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Presenting and Preserving Baul Culture: The Man of the Heart Project
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research conducted at Loughborough University by Sudipto Chatterjee into Lalon Phokir, the nineteenth-century Sufi-Baul Bengal saint, whose music is a living oral tradition across the boundaries dividing Bangladesh and West Bengal, has preserved, conserved and presented Baul cultural heritage. This has been achieved by utilising the findings of the research in a solo-performance involving live music, dance and film. Through a practice-as-research undertaking, Chatterjee's research has engaged a broad range of public audiences to contribute to processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation across the Bangladesh/Bengal border.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Sudipto Chatterjee was appointed at Loughborough University as Senior Lecturer in Drama in 2007, the year in which he published his monograph <i>The Colonial Staged: Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Calcutta</i>. His move from the US to the UK marked a new lease of life for his research: adopting the British model of 'Practice as Research in Performance' (as described in the AHRC-funded <i>PARIP</i> project, and refined through successive HEFCE/RAE iterations), he developed a major practice-based research project based on his lifelong interest in the work of Lalon Phokir, the nineteenth-century Sufi-Baul saint, whose music is a living oral tradition in Bangladesh and West Bengal.</p> <p><i>Man of the Heart</i> is located between deep ethnography and exhilarating mediated live performance, and has involved both field and archival research resulting in: traditional academic publishing [3.1]; live performances by Chatterjee [3.2]; and permanent documentation of the project's outcomes for those with an interest in Asian culture, including those living in South Asia and those of Asian descent elsewhere. Chatterjee (re-)reads Lalon's psychophysical practice by means of performance, supported by digital documentation, using video, traditional live music, dance and spoken word to explore this practice through Lalon's songs. The <i>Man of the Heart</i> project tackles the central question of representing and preserving a non-Western tradition based on oral communication that is under threat from both religious fundamentalisms and forms of scholarship that freeze orality within the written or printed word, while standing the risk of being sold as 'exotica' in the global culture market.</p> <p>Chatterjee has developed these outputs through a series of research trips to Bangladesh. In 2008, funded by the American Institute for Bangladesh Studies [G3.1], he went to Kushtia for extensive fieldwork, meeting with followers of Lalon and recording their memories. This led in 2009 to lectures about the project at the Shilpokola Akademi of Bangladesh, and at the Bangla Academy in Dhaka and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi in 2010-11.</p> <p>Meanwhile, performances to diverse audiences in India, Bangladesh, Berlin, Helsinki, the US and the UK developed the project's insights, and set additional questions for research trips in 2010 and 2011. Chatterjee consulted with key scholars of the Baul-Phokir tradition in India, Bangladesh, and the USA, and throughout the project he has collaborated with the Calcutta-based director Suman Mukherjee. Support from the British Council in Kolkata and the British Academy [G3.1] made it possible for Mukherjee to join Chatterjee at Loughborough in March 2010 to revise the show so as to integrate the latest phase of the research; performances in Loughborough and at the Barbican followed [3.2.1]. Thereafter, Chatterjee returned to Kushtia to attend the annual Lalon <i>Mela</i> marking the saint's anniversary; recordings from this research visit were incorporated into performances in 2011-12 in Berlin [3.2.2], where Chatterjee held a year-long visiting Fellowship at the Freie Universität [G3.2]. Berlin performances included the International Theatre Institute and the world-renowned 'Wassermusik Festival' of the <i>Haus der Kulturen der Welt</i> (both July 2012). Further performances followed in India in January and April 2013 [3.2.3].</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

This practice-as-research, combining performance with field and archival research and with rigorous and high-quality traditional publications, is evidenced across these outputs:

- 3.1** Book chapter: 'Man of the Heart: Iterative Possibilities between Anthropology and Theatre', in *Folklore in Context: Essays in Honor of Shamsuzzaman Khan*, ed. by Firoz Mahmud and Shafiqur Rahman Choudhury (Bangladesh: University Press, 2010), ISBN: 978 984 5060134; book positively reviewed in *Asian Ethnology* (2011), and in *The New Nation*, 28 October 2012, as 'an essential book on folklore'.
- 3.2** Illustrative Research Performances of *Man of the Heart*:
- 3.2.1 - March 2010, performance at the Pit Theatre, Barbican Centre, London
- 3.2.2 - 2011-2012, performances in Berlin
- 3.2.3 - January 2013, performances in Kolkata and Bangalore

Grants awarded:

G3.1. 2009, British Academy Visiting Fellowship, research conducted January – March 2010, Suman Mukherjee and Sudipto Chatterjee, British Academy/AHRC/ESRC, value £5,707

G3.2. 2010, International Research Center 'Interweaving Performance Cultures', Freie Universität Berlin, Sudipto Chatterjee, research completed August 2011-July 2012, value £47,000

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Preserving, conserving and presenting Baul cultural heritage:

Chatterjee's research contributes to processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation across the Bangladesh/Bengal border, reaching descendants of that divided community. It has been presented over 35 times, across 3 continents to a range of audiences:

- USA: 2 performances in California, 12 performances in New York, and 1 performance in Los Angeles.
- UK: 3 performances at Loughborough University, organised in collaboration with Charnwood Arts. A further performance took place at the London Barbican's *Do Something Different* weekend, which was a sell-out, as evidenced in the review [5.1].
- India: Kolkata—10 performances in total. Bangalore—2 performances at the prestigious *Ranga Shankara*. A review of the performances in *The Times of India* demonstrates the clearly engaging presentation of Baul culture that is achieved through Chatterjee's work: 'Employing projections, audiovisual (AV) clips, light and sound, the play takes you on a haunting musical journey where various chapters of Lalon's life are rediscovered through music and lyrics' [5.2]
- Bangladesh: 1 outdoor lecture-demonstration in Dhaka.
- Europe: 2 performances in Berlin [5.3], 1 in Paris; in Berlin Chatterjee also coordinated a concert, 'Interweaving Lalon'.

The performances have made significant impacts on the preservation, conservation and presentation of Baul cultural heritage. In so doing, they enrich and expand the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups. As reviewed by the online magazine website *Weekly Blitz*, the performance 'makes inroads into the deeper understanding of life and its purpose, while unfolding the story of a man who believed in the power of music to alter the physical, intellectual and emotional state in order to be able to understand and appreciate life itself' [5.4]. *Man of the Heart* is reported as 'satiating the hunger of the viewers by nourishing their imagination and leaving enough food for thought' [5.4].

The research of Chatterjee has brought the work and philosophy of Lalon to a global general audience interested in world music performance, theatre, religion and spiritualism, and returning

Impact case study (REF3b)

the results of the research to the people who are its source. Lalon lived and worked across what is now the border dividing India and Bangladesh, and across the theological divides of Islam, Hinduism, and Tantric Buddhism [3.2]. Public engagement with the research is partly demonstrated through the extensive programme of performances detailed above. The project was also seen in Rome by a broad public audience on the occasion of the first International Lalon Festival, in October 2011 [5.7].

As is essential for the preserving and presenting of Baul cultural heritage, *Man of the Heart* has directly engaged the communities from which this heritage has developed. The project has employed translators and guides during Kushtia fieldtrips, and incorporated professional musicians at the key public performances:

- the 2008 Kolkata performance featured two phokirs, Nazrul Shah and Balai Shah from Kushtia, taking the project back to the people whose work inspired it.
- in 2010, all performances of *Man of the Heart* in Britain were accompanied by Labik Kamal Gourab, the Bangladeshi strings-player and vocalist.
- In 2011, Berlin performances were accompanied by Rashmi Bhatt, an Italian drummer, Nour Eddine Fatty, the Moroccan strings-player, and Pietro Silvestri, Italian dotara-player.
- In 2012, further Berlin performances were accompanied by Rashmi Bhatt, Satyaki Banerjee (Indian dotara-player), Mriganabhi Chattopadhyay (Indian percussionist), Nazrul Shah (Bangladeshi phokir-instrumentalist), and Daminee Basu (Indian vocalist).
- In 2013, performances in Kolkata and Bangalore employed musicians including Nazrul Shah from Bangladesh and the local Satyaki Bandopadhyay.

Engagement with the work of Lalon and the preservation of this cultural heritage is further evidenced through access to the social media and online content, including the project website (with over 32,000 visitors) [5.6] and on its videos on YouTube (with over 46,000 hits) [5.7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The following sources of corroboration can be made available at request:

- 5.1. Barbican 'sell out performance': http://www.charnwoodarts.com/projects/man_of_the_heart
- 5.2. Review of Bangalore performances in *Times of India*
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-01-12/news-interviews/36295939_1_moner-manush-khanchar-door-frame
- 5.3. Review of the performance in Berlin: <http://en.gantara.de/content/lalon-shah-and-the-bauls-the-mystic-minstrels-of-bengal>
- 5.4. Review by Weekly Blitz online magazine: <http://weeklyblitz.net/2013/07/man-of-the-heart/>
- 5.5. YouTube videos:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7RpONFek0>,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0Pz3YY8j5Q>,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHHouODZpgI>
- 5.6. Project Website: <http://www.lalon.org/>
- 5.7. Rome Lalon International Festival:
http://www.romamultiethnica.it/news/subcontinente_indiano/item/8014-lalon-international-festival-2011.html