

JYOSHNA LA TROBE

## **RED EARTH SONG**

***Marāī Kīrtan of Rāṅh: Devotional singing and the performance of ecstasy in the Purulia District of Bengal, India.***

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*“Externally we are only singing two names, Hari Bolo but internally all of our expression and emotions come out through these two words”. (J.Māhāto 2006:Pers.comm.).*

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15/07/2010

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

**Signature:**

Jyoshna La Trobe

**Date: June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

## Table of Contents

Abstract	10
List of Figures	11
List of Tables	16
Musical Examples	17
Acknowledgements	18
Transliteration Policy	19
Abbreviations and Description of Māhāto informants	20
<b>Introduction</b>	21
1. A multitude of ways of calling god's name	21
A. <i>Marāī</i> kīrtan	26
B. Methodology	28
C. Key findings	35
2. Historical and geographical background	37
A. Geography: the boundaries of Rāṛh	37
B. Historical influences	40
C. Social context: tribe, caste and social considerations	42
D. Religious culture	49
i. Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism	51
ii. The <i>bhakti</i> movement	54
3. Kīrtan	63
A. Sources of information	63
i. Literature	63
ii. The oral tradition	66
B. Questions and hypothesis	67
C. The origins of the <i>marāī</i> kīrtan tradition: following the guru's trail	69
D. Overview of thesis	76

<b>PART ONE: Kīrtan and its meanings</b>	76
1. Kīrtan definitions	76
2. The spiritual power of kīrtan	78
3. Tantra, <i>Baul</i> and kīrtan	80
4. Kīrtan, trance and ecstasy	91
5. Rāḥi kīrtan, inclusiveness and access to participation	100
6. Musical characteristics of kīrtan	102
A. Kīrtan styles	102
i. Story telling ( <i>katha</i> ) and poetic verse ( <i>padavali</i> ) kīrtan	102
ii. Kīrtan episodes ( <i>pala</i> ) and sentiment ( <i>rasa</i> )	103
iii. Singing the name of god or <i>nāma</i> kīrtan	103
B. Kīrtan types ( <i>tatt</i> ) of Rāḥ	104
C. Kīrtan instruments	106
D. Kīrtan melodies	113
i. Kīrtan rāgas/ rāginis and songs ( <i>gan</i> )	113
<i>Udara, mudara, tara</i>	116
ii. Kīrtan <i>rang</i>	117
E. Kīrtan tālas	118
i. Kīrtan <i>mātrās</i>	119
ii. Kīrtan notation	120
iii. The khol drum <i>bol</i> patterns	122
iv. <i>Theka</i>	123
v. Drum practice ( <i>hāt sādhanā</i> )	123
vi. The kīrtan infrastructure	124
7. Musical influences in Kīrtan	126
A. Outside influences and the origins of <i>marāī</i> kīrtan	126
B. Baul philosophy and music	127
C. The classical music of <i>dhrupad</i> and kīrtan	131
D. Folk songs, rhythms ( <i>jhumur</i> ) and kīrtan	133
E. Conclusion	134

8. Six Kīrtan teams of Purulia	135
A. Māhāto Kīrtan team	136
i. Background	137
ii. Distinctive characteristics	138
iii. Performance	139
iv. Musical qualities (as seen on DVD 1, Māhāto):	143
Gauralap and Emon rāga	143
<i>Udara mudara tara</i>	144
Śiva Ranjani rāga	145
v. Kīrtan stories	149
vi. Conclusion	150
B. Rājwar Kīrtan Team	152
i. Background	152
ii. Distinctive characteristics	155
iii. Performance	157
iv. Musical qualities (as seen on DVD 1, Rājwar):	161
<i>Gauralap</i> : “wild ecstatic devotion”	161
Dāspira rāga	162
v. Kīrtan stories	165
vi. Conclusion	167
C. Vaiṣṇava Kīrtan Team	168
i. Background	168
ii. Distinctive characteristics	169
Musical Influences, Baul melodies (DVD 1, Vaiṣṇava)	171
<i>Pada</i> Kīrtan (as above)	172
iii. Performance	172
<i>Ektāla matan</i> (DVD 1, Vaiṣṇava)	175
iv. Musical qualities	176
Middle Section – Sohni kātān, (DVD 1, Vaiṣṇava)	176
v. Kīrtan stories	178
vi. Conclusion	179

D. Karandhi Kīrtan Team	180
i. Background	180
ii. Distinctive characteristics	181
iii. Performance	182
Dance movements – the Chorus girls (DVD 1, Karandhi)	183
iv. Musical qualities	184
The Percussionists – the khol players (DVD 1, Karandhi)	185
v. Kīrtan stories	187
vi. Conclusion	187
E. Brahman Kīrtan Team	188
i. Background	188
ii. Distinctive characteristics	189
iii. Performance	193
iv. Musical qualities	195
<i>Mul gayaks</i> and Chorus (DVD 1, Brahman)	195
Gopinath Goswami	196
The Khol players	196
v. Kīrtan stories	197
vi. Conclusion	198
F. Kostuka Kīrtan Team	199
i. Background	199
ii. Distinctive characteristics	202
iii. Performance	203
iv. Musical qualities	204
v. Kīrtan stories	205
vi. Conclusion	206
<b>PART TWO: The Kostuka Kīrtan team’s performance analysis</b>	208
Introduction	209
The Kostuka kīrtan team	210
I. The Juran (00 – 12:44 mins)	214

I.A. The <i>jurān</i>	214
I. B. the <i>Gauralap</i> or guru <i>vandana</i> “offering to the guru”	215
I. C. The <i>jurān</i> instrumental piece continues	216
I. D. Songs to Gaurāṅga and Kṛṣṇa	218
I. E. The <i>patha</i> “path” or “travelling” song to the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	221
II. Dāspera Rāga (12:06-35:13)	223
Background	223
An Overview of Dāspera Performance	223
II.1. <i>Gauralap</i> introduction (12:06-17:56)	225
II. 1. A. The <i>Gauralap</i> preparation, the guru directs	226
II. 1. B. The <i>Gauralap</i> part two	227
Observation and analysis of the <i>Gauralap</i>	229
II. 2. Dāspera <i>la</i> introduction (17:56-25.46)	230
II. 2. A. Dāspera <i>la</i> (M1) introduction with tāla	231
II. 2. B. <i>Udara mudara</i> with kartal pattern 1 (KP1)	232
II. 2. C. Combination of Dāspera <i>la</i> and <i>udara mudara</i>	234
II. 2. D. Dāspera <i>la mātān</i>	238
Observations and Analysis of Dāspera <i>la</i>	240
II. 3. Dāspera <i>kātān</i> introduction (25:46-35:13)	248
II. 3. A1. <i>Kātān</i> introduction	248
II. 3. B. <i>Kātān bols</i>	249
II. 3. C. Dāspera <i>kātān duni</i>	253
II. 3. D. <i>Kātān</i> in <i>cho duni</i>	254
II. 3. E. <i>Cho duni</i> , <i>udara</i> improvisation, <i>kātān mātān</i>	255
A Structural analysis of Dāspera <i>kātān</i>	256
Further observations and analysis Dāspera	262
Comparison between kīrtan and <i>dhrupad</i>	265
Comparison between the <i>Gītagovinda</i> and kīrtan	267
Pulse relations in Dāspera rāga performance	270
Conclusion of Dāspera rāga performance	274
III. The Interlude, rāgini <i>alap</i> and kīrtan <i>rang</i>	277

Introduction	277
III. A. The rāgini interlude	279
Observations and analysis of the Rāgini	282
III. B. Kīrtan <i>rang la</i>	283
Observations and analysis of the kīrtan <i>rang</i> interlude	287
IV. Pākāchutā Rāga	290
Introduction	290
Comparisons between Dāspera and Pākāchutā	292
Conclusion	294
Pākāchutā song ( <i>gan</i> )	294
IV. 1 Pākāchutā rāga	295
IV. 1A Pākāchutā <i>alap</i>	295
IV. 2. Pākāchutā <i>kātān</i>	299
JM discusses Pākāchutā <i>kātān</i>	315
Characteristics of the Pākāchutā <i>kātān bols</i> performance	316
The pyramidal structure of Pākāchutā <i>kātān</i>	317
V. Jhorchutā	319
Introduction	319
Jhorchutā song ( <i>gan</i> )	320
V. 1. Jhorchutā <i>Alap</i> and <i>la</i>	322
V. 2. Jhorchutā <i>kātān</i>	326
Observation and analysis of the Jhorchutā <i>kātān bol</i> composition	331
VI. Leaving the <i>mandīr</i> – <i>Rang</i> Songs	332
VI. 1. Vrindavan song	332
VI. 2. Sanjay Māhāto's house, around the tulsi tree	333
VI. 3. „ <i>Jāi Jāi Jāi</i> ’ song	333
VI. 4. Calling <i>Hari Hari Bolo</i>	333
VII. Sohni Rāga	334
Introduction	334
VII. 1. Sohni <i>Alap/la</i>	335
VII. 2. Sohni <i>kātān</i>	336

Observations of Sohni rāga	344
Further comments on Sohni rāga	345
VIII: The Kostuka kīrtan team night time performance	346
Background	346
Comparison between the day and night Dāspera rāga performance	347
(III).The rāgini interlude	348
(IV). Pākāchutā rāga	348
Summary of Pākāchutā rāga night time performance	349
The <i>rang</i> song	350
<b>Epilogue: The beginning, the end and eternal song</b>	<b>351</b>
Verses from the Gurugīta	351
Kīrtan Glossary and Appendices	360
Bibliography	375



Figure 0.1 Offerings (*puja*) to Hari, inside the kīrtan *mandīr* at Dabar village.

## Abstract

### ***Marāī* Kīrtan of Rāṛh: Devotional singing and the performance of ecstasy in the Purulia District of Bengal, India.**

Kīrtan is devotional hymn singing, music and dance in praise of a deity usually performed by a group of devotees, as well as a literary tradition. *Marāī* kīrtan is a style of kīrtan found in the rural area of West Bengal known as Rāṛh, particularly in the Purulia District (Manbhum) where the tradition exists in its most potent form of expression. It is performed inside the local temples by a variety of village based kīrtan groups that are both egalitarian and competitive in nature.

In Purulia, the term *marāī* meaning “circular”, but the inner meaning is “to grind”, for “if you grind Hari *nam*, the name of god, like sugar cane in your heart, then it will also melt for god” (JM, 2006: Pers.comm.). *Marāī* kīrtan is considered the best way of worshipping god, of creating musical intensity and arousing devotion for god. It also has various utilitarian purposes such as the bringing of rain and auspiciousness to the village as well as a means of social protest.

My research reveals that *marāī* kīrtan has a very distinctive performance structure consisting of various musical sections that generate musical/devotional intensity to reach a climax (*kātān matan*). Elaborate melodic lines and complex rhythmic compositions are interwoven with improvisations and dance choreographies that produce ecstatic heights for prolonged periods with the use of only two words, *Hari Bolo*, highlighting the inherent creative musical dynamism within the *marāī* kīrtan performance.

My methodology consists of ethnographic investigation built upon observation and interviews in the field, incorporating Rāṛhi terms and meanings, combined with an analysis of performances through a study of audio/visual recordings made on location. Due to the paucity of documentation on *marāī* kīrtan and lack of relevant literary material, my investigation concentrates on the collection of data at its source and a phenomenological perspective of the tradition. I have examined six different kīrtan groups: the Brahmans, Māhātos, Rājwar, Karandhi villagers and the Vaiṣṇavas with particular focus on the Māhāto group from Kostuka village, whose lives have been transformed by *marāī* kīrtan.

## List of figures

All photographs and illustrations are provided by La Trobe except where otherwise stated.

Figure 0.1 Offerings <i>puja</i> to God, inside the <i>kīrtan mandīr</i> at Dabar village	9
Figure 0.2 Sri Jagaran Māhāto and <i>kīrtan</i> group, Dabar	20
Figure 0.3 The Gods and Goddesses of Rāṛh	21
Figure 0.4 At the Shanti Hotel with Sanjay (Tinku) Māhāto and musicians	28
Figure 0.5 Laksan Das Goswami and group sing <i>kīrtan</i>	29
Figure 0.6 Baul <i>kīrtan</i> group perform at Madhu Sudhana’s Baul ashram	29
Figure 0.7 The Kostuka <i>kīrtan</i> group performing at a 14 day <i>kīrtan</i> festival	30
Figure 0.8 Sri Rishi Das Goswami from Joypur	31
Figure 0.9 Jagaran Māhāto with a few of his western <i>kīrtan</i> students	33
Figure 0. 10 Typical <i>kīrtan mandīr</i> in Rāṛh, depicting Kṛṣṇa / Rāḍhā	35
Figure 0.11 The boundaries of Rāṛh, India	37
Figure 0.12 The Purulia District in the heartland of Rāṛh	37
Figure 0.13 Quartz crystal rock formations in Rāṛh	38
Figure 0.14 The Rāṛhi music genres	40
Figure 0.15 The Kashipur palace gate, Manbhūm	40
Figure 0.16 The Kashipur palace front view	41
Figure 0.17 Decorated house, Karandhi village, Purulia	42
Figure 0.18 The Karandhi <i>kīrtan</i> team performs	43
Figure 0.19 The <i>Chhau</i> musicians with dhol drum, kettle drum, and <i>shantai</i>	45
Figure 0.20 Gopinath Goswami from Balarampur, leading <i>nagar kīrtan</i>	46
Figure 0.21 Lalgārh <i>kīrtan</i> group with khol player Kamal Dev on right	47
Figure 0.22 The Śiva <i>lingams</i> at Madhu Sudhana’s ashram, Purulia	48
Figure 0.23 The Jain shrines at Deoglata, Purulia	49
Figure 0.24 Śiva (left) and Viṣṇu (right), Purulia	50
Figure 0.25 Śiva dancing in Purulia Chhau	51
Figure 0.26 <i>Ardhanara Ishvara</i> , Purulia	52
Figure 0.27 The Vaiṣṇava <i>kīrtan mandīr</i>	53
Figure 0.28 The Śiva temple next to it	53

Figure 0.29 Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Devi Das Baul ashram, Purulia	56
Figure 0.30 Poster of Sri Caitanya dancing kīrtan at Mahanti's house	57
Figure 0.31 Caitanya and Nityananda traveling through Rāṛh, Navadvip	57
Figure 0.32 Sri Caitanya and Nityananda, Kashipur	58
Figure 0.33 Nityanandas temple at Kardaha	59
Figure 0.34 Nityananda's shrine	60
Figure 0.35 The Rājwar Kīrtan group from Bhagra village	62
Figure 0.36 Summer rainfall in Kostuka village following kīrtan session	65
Figure 0.37 <i>Ba</i> notation of Mihir Māhāto showing eleven mātrās	67
Figure 0.38 The Rajwar Kīrtan group from Bhagra village	67
Figure 0.39 Tapan Haldar of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Sampraday	69
Figure 0.40 Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā at the ISCON temple at Mayapur	70
Figure 0.41 Madhal Acarya in Viṣṇupur	71
Figure 1.01 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar	79
Figure 1.2 Śiva <i>lingam</i> , Purulia	79
Figure 1.3 Tantric symbols, <i>trishala</i> , Śiva <i>lingam</i> , Devi Das Baul ashram	80
Figure 1.4 The guru of Kostuka team, Sri Jagaran Māhāto with khol	80
Figure 1.5 The late Mihir Māhāto, kīrtan expert from Dabar village	83
Figure 1.6 The <i>carak</i> ceremony with a <i>bhogta</i> dressed as Parvati	85
Figure 1.7 The <i>bhogta</i> swings on the <i>carak</i> pole, calling to Śiva	85
Figure 1.8 Chayarani Das Baul from Purulia	87
Figure 1.9 The khol drummer	92
Figure 1.10 The kīrtan drummer	94
Figure 1.11 The Śiva devotee at the <i>carak</i> dresses as Parvati	95
Figure 1.12 <i>Pada</i> kīrtan performance at Bhansh Ghar village	102
Figure 1.13 <i>Nagar</i> kīrtan led by Sri Gopinath Das Goswami	103
Figure 1.14 The cobbler caste ( <i>muchi</i> )	107
Figure 1.15 Black <i>gab</i> placed on the left side of khol	107
Figure 1.16 The left side of the khol,	108
Figure 1.17 The khol drummer inside the <i>mandīr</i>	108
Figure 1.18 The Māhāto kīrtan group	109

Figure 1.19 A <i>kīrtaniya</i> from the Rājwar team playing kartal	109
Figure 1.20 The Brahman <i>kīrtan</i> team playing kartal	109
Figure 1.21 Christo Das Baul with the <i>ektara</i> (left) and Chayarani Das Baul	110
Figure 1.22 The clarinetist of the Rājwar team	111
Figure 1.23 The bamboo nose flute is played during <i>kīrtan</i> , Purulia	111
Figure 1.24 <i>Ba</i> notation by M. Māhāto of Dabar Village, Purulia.	121
Figure 1.25 <i>Ba</i> notation of Jagaran Māhāto’s	121
Figure 1.26 The <i>hat sādhanā</i> , or khol drum patterns ( <i>bols</i> )	124
Figure 1.27 Chayarani Das Baul and Christo Das Baul,	128
Figure 1.28 Laksan Das Baul at Baul <i>mela</i> in Purulia	128
Figure 1.29 Devi Das Baul plays <i>ananda lahari</i> and sings	129
Figure 1.30 Devi Das Baul and Sri Mataji at their <i>ashram</i> in Purulia	129
Figure 1.31 A descendent of Dijyotima Thakur, singing a <i>jhumur</i> song	132
Figure 1.32 <i>Nacini</i> “dancing girl” of Purulia, sings <i>kīrtananga</i> at <i>mela</i>	133
Figure 1.33 The <i>kīrtan mandīr</i> at Bhansh Ghar village	134
Figure 1.34 Māhāto <i>kīrtan</i> team from Bagra village, Purulia	136
Figure 1.35 Hemanta, the second MG playing the casio keyboard	146
Figure 1.37 <i>Dohari</i> on far right kneeling to play kartal	147
Figure 1.37 Māhāto team khol players, Naba, Rasaraj and Brikodar	147
Figure 1.38 <i>Ektara</i> on far left and casio on right	148
Figure 1.39 Māhāto team <i>kīrtan</i> - the performance of ecstasy	151
Figure 1.40 Khol players with the small drums and <i>dohari</i>	151
Figure 1.41 Rājwar <i>kīrtan</i> team’s performance in front of the <i>tulsi</i> plant	152
Figure 1.42 The Rājwar women looking in	153
Figure 1.43 Rain clouds in the summer sky soon drench us during <i>kīrtan</i>	153
Figure 1.44 Rājwar team perform the <i>ghat</i> or <i>Juran</i> outside the <i>mandīr</i>	156
Figure 1.45 Third MG, Ajit Rājwar, sings <i>tara</i> and plays kartal	158
Figure 1.46 Kartal players/Chorus warrior like dance	160
Figure 1.47 Nose flute played in the Rājwar team	163
Figure 1.48 The Dom clarinetist supports the MG	163
Figure 1.49 Samatan Rājwar, uncle and teacher of the khol players	165

Figure 1.50 Sakhi Amsari, a Muslim, listens to the Rājwar kīrtan	165
Figure 1.51 Jhapor Khan, a Muslim, listens to the Rājwar kīrtan	166
Figure 1.52 Rājwar kīrtan team performs the <i>ghat</i>	167
Figure 1.53 Sri Rishi Das Goswami, wife, and grandson in Silfore village	168
Figure 1.54 Members of the Vaiṣṇava kīrtan group at home in their village	168
Figure 1.55 Śiva <i>lingam</i> at back of Sri Rishi Das Goswamis	169
Figure 1.56 Sri Rishi Das Goswami, Silfore, Joypur	171
Figure 1.57 Sri Rishi Das and khol partner	172
Figure 1.58 The <i>tara</i> singer (front), the <i>dohari</i> , and <i>mul gajak</i>	173
Figure 1.59 Hierarchy of the Vaiṣṇava kīrtan team	174
Figure 1.60 Dvija Pada Goswmi playing	175
Figure 1.61 Sri Rishi Das Goswami (right) and family, with author in middle	178
Figure 1.62 Karandhi kīrtan team with khol players and Chorus girls	180
Figure 1.63 Painting upon the mud wall at Karandhi village	181
Figure 1.64 Karandhi team Chorus girls	183
Figure 1.65 Two khol players, Svapan Karmakar and partner	185
Figure 1.66 Karandhi khol players with small drums	186
Figure 1.67 Brahman kīrtan team at Bhansh Ghar village with Sri Gopinath Goswami (far left) and Sri Narayan Mahanti (centre)	188
Figure 1.68 Sri Narayan Mahanti recited verses from the Ramayana	188
Figure 1.69 Bhansh Ghar village kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	189
Figure 1.70 Śiva, Parvati and Ganesh and stories from the Puranas	190
Figure 1.71 Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Hanuman and Rama	191
Figure 1.72 Lord Śiva being blessed by Parvati, Bhansh Ghar	191
Figure 1.73 Brahman group performs the <i>outy</i> or instrumental <i>Juran</i>	192
Figure 1.74 Khol players with <i>mul gayak</i> singing classical improvisation	194
Figure 1.75 Sri Narayan Mahanti and apprentice playing khol with <i>tara</i>	196
Figure 1.76 Sri Narayan Mahanti singing <i>padavali</i> kīrtan	197
Figure 1.77 The Kostuka kīrtan team at home in their village <i>mandīr</i>	199
Figure 1.78 Sri Jagaran Māhāto, the guru of the Kostuka team	200
Figure 1.79 Māhāto brothers, Sakti and family compound at Kostuka	201

Figure 1.80 Khol players of the Kostuka team	204
Figure 1.81 Kīrtan team at home in Kostuka village	206
Figure 1.82 Sri Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, with Caitanya and Nityananda	207
Figure 1.83 Caitanya depicted inside the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	207
Figure 2.1 The Kostuka team performing kīrtan in their village <i>mandīr</i>	208
Figure 2.2 The Dabar kīrtan <i>mandīr</i> before being decorated for the <i>mela</i>	211
Figure 2.3 Kostuka team with the guru (centre) performing <i>patha</i> songs	214
Figure 2.4 Sri Caitanya with his mother Saci in Nadia	218
Figure 2.5 Rādhā / Kṛṣṇa depicted at Baul temple in Purulia	233
Figure 2.6 Sri Jagaran Māhāto, with his wife, two grandsons (left) at Makrabena	235
Figure 2.7 Spiritual twins, Caitanya and Nityananda	237
Figure 2.8 A khol player	251
Figure 2.9 Daspera <i>kātān bols</i>	257
Figure 2.10 The Kostuka khol players	259
Figure 2.11 The kartal players	260
Figure 2.12 The infrastructure of Dāspera	262
Figure 2.13 Clockwise and anti- clockwise kīrtan dance movements	264
Figure 2.14 Inside the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	272
Figure 2.15 Jagaran Māhāto playing khol in the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	275
Figure 2.16 The Kostuka kīrtan team after their performance	277
Figure 2.17 The khol players and th guru performing inside the <i>mandīr</i>	308
Figure 2.18 Pākāchutā (top line) in <i>Ba</i> notation	316
Figure 2.19 The khol player	328
Figure 2.20 Inside the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	333
Figure 2.21 Sri Jagaran Māhāto in the <i>mandīr</i>	344
Figure 2.22 The Kostuka kīrtan team at the end of the night	350
Figure 2.23 Painted head piece inside the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i> at Bansh Ghar	351
Figure 2.24 The eternal sound <i>Om</i> depicted inside the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	352
Figure 2.25 The children of Dabar village dancing kīrtan	358

## List of Tables

Table 0.1 The origins of kīrtan according to Acarya Madhalji	72
Table 0.2 The <i>Painca Tattvas</i> according to the <i>Caitanya Caritamṛta</i>	73
Table 0.3 Goswami's view on the constituents of <i>padaballi</i> kīrtan	74
Table 0.4 After Narottama Das's formulation of kīrtan at Kheturi	75
Table 1.1 The khol drum mnemonic syllables or <i>bols</i>	122
Table 1.2 The <i>Bol</i> patterns for Dāspera <i>la</i>	123
Table 2.1 The primary roles in the kīrtan ensemble	210
Table 2.2 The kīrtan procession to the kīrtan <i>mandīr</i>	211
Table 2.3. An overview of the Kostuka kīrtan team's <i>Juran</i>	213
Table 2.4 An overview of Kostuka kīrtan team's Dāspera rāga	222
Table 2.5 Dāspera Rāga performance structure overview	224
Table 2.6 A Brief Comparison between <i>dhrupad</i> , the Gītagovinda and kīrtan	266
Table 2.7 A detailed analysis of the rāga performance in b.p.m.	273
Table 2.8 Summary of Dāspera rāga rhythmic intensity measured in b.p.m.	274
Table 2.9 The pyramidal structure of Dāspera rāga	276
Table 2.10 Chart of the ragini / <i>rang</i> performance structure, Kostuka team	278
Table 2.11 Summary of the rāgini / <i>rang</i> Interlude	278
Table 2.12 Comparison between the kīrtan <i>rang</i> and Dāspera rāga	288
Table 2.13 Pākāchutā rāga outline	291
Table 2.14 Pākāchutā performance structure overview	291
Table 2.15 Pākāchutā <i>kātān</i> example of a 28 <i>mātrā</i> bols cycle	298
Table 2.16 Pākāchutā <i>bol</i> variations	315
Table 2.17 Pyramidal structure of Pākāchutā rāga	318
Table 2.18 Jhorchutā performance structure	320
Table 2.19 The kartals play the <i>kātān</i> introduction with the khol <i>bols</i>	326
Table 2.20 Songs to leave the <i>mandīr</i>	332
Table 2.21 Sohni rāga performance structure	335

**List of Musical examples, with time according to the DVD sections:**

Musical example 1 (01:07): I. The <i>Gauralap</i> performed outside the <i>mandīr</i>	215
Musical example 2 (02:00 mins): I. The <i>Juran</i> instrumental	217
Musical example 3 (06:42mins): I. <i>Eso He</i> devotional song	220
Musical example 4 (18:50 mins): II. <i>Dāspēra la</i> with <i>khol bols</i>	233
Musical example 5 (19:17): II. <i>Udara mudara</i> after <i>Dāspēra la</i> with KP1	234
Musical example 6 (20:40 mins): II. <i>Dāspēra la</i> and <i>kartal</i> part 2 (KP2)	235
Musical example 7 (24:24 mins): II. <i>Dāspēra la mātān</i> KP3 and KP4	239
Musical example 8 (26:30 mins): II. <i>Dāspēra kātān</i> with KP5 and <i>khol bols</i>	252
Musical example 9 (00:50 secs): III. <i>Ragini theka bols</i>	280
Musical example 10 (06:39 mins.): III. <i>Kīrtan rang tāla</i>	284
Musical example 11 (07:13 mins.): III. <i>Kīrtan rang tāla</i> and KP6	285
Musical example 12 (00:51secs.): IV. <i>Pākāchutā la bols</i> and melodic line 1	296
Musical example 13 (11:11 mins.): IV. <i>Pākāchutā kātān</i> improvisations	301
Musical example 14 (05:14 mins.): IV. <i>Pākāchutā la</i> and <i>kātān bols</i>	309
Musical example 15 (01:32 mins.): V. <i>Jhorchutā la</i> and <i>khol bols</i>	322
Musical example 16 (02:20 mins.): V. <i>Jhorchutā la</i> M2	324
Musical example 17 (07:07 mins.): V. <i>Jhorchutā kātān bols</i>	329
Musical example 18 <i>Sohni la</i> M1 and <i>khol bols</i>	336
Musical example 19 <i>Sohni kātān bols</i>	341

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*Guru reva Parama Brahma, tasmae Shri Guruve namah.*

### Transliteration Policy:

Due to the fact that the majority of my informants, with the exception of the late Mihir Mahato, either didn't want to, or were unfamiliar with written forms of kīrtan music there has been considerable difficulty in the transliteration process, with great efforts made to stay as close to the Bengali pronunciation as possible. With sparse written material to refer to, I have had to plot undiscovered territory. Though it is an ongoing process, I have endeavoured to give a transliteration of the terms in common usage by the kīrtan musicians today in the Glossary below. For the majority of other Bengali words, I have adopted a practical approach, and written them in Roman script as pronounced in English. A brief note on basic Bengali pronunciation for those unacquainted with the language: The ā, ṛ ī and ṣ (sh) sounds are „long“ or „heavy“ in comparison to their English equivalents, but I shall not delve into matters that are best left to Bengali adepts. Hence, where there are discrepancies between the English pronunciation and the thesis, a transliteration of terms is as follows:

English pronunciation	Bengali	In the thesis
<b>Daspera</b>	দাস্পেরা	<b>Dāspēra</b>
<i>Hat sadhana</i> (হাত সাধনা),	হাত সাধনা	<i>Hat sādhana</i>
<i>Jhorchuta</i>	ঝর্চুতা	<i>Jhorchutā</i>
<i>Katan</i>	কাটান	<i>Kātān</i>
<i>Katha kirtan</i>	কথা কীর্তন	<i>Kathā kīrtan</i>
<b>Mahato</b>	মহত	<b>Māhāto</b>
<i>Marai</i>	মারাই	<i>Marāī</i>
<i>Matra</i>	মাত্র	<i>Mātra</i>
<i>Pakachuta</i>	পাকাচুতা	<i>Pākāchutā</i>
<b>Raga</b>	রাগ	<b>Rāga</b>
<b>Shiva</b>	শিভা	<b>Śiva Ranjani</b>
<b>Tala</b>	তাল	<b>Tāla</b>
<b>Vaishnava</b>	ভায়স্নাভা	<b>Vaiṣṇavas</b>



Figure 0.2 Sri Jagaran Māhāto and kīrtan group, Dabar.

**Abbreviations of informants:**

There are many Māhāto informants cited below, not out of any preference, but because the Māhātos are one of the most predominant indigenous groups of Western Rāṅh (see Part one). The Māhātos included in the thesis are:

Jagaran Māhāto, (JM), Kīrtan expert and guru of the Kostuka Kīrtan team as well as my primary informant.

Sanjay Māhāto, (SM) also known as Tinku, my research partner whose late father Satyendranath Māhāto was the host of the kīrtan *mela*. Sanjay had no knowledge of the kīrtan tradition before we began this investigation, yet was a kīrtan enthusiast.

Binapani Māhāto, (BM) Professor at Ranchi University for Women, Ethnomusicologist and *jhumur* singer from Jamshedpur (see bibliography).

Pashupati Māhāto Professor, Anthropologist and writer, from Dabar village, Purulia.

Mihir Māhāto, the late kīrtan expert from Dabar, whose kīrtan manuscript with *Ba* notation, I have in my possession.

Acaryā Kirtyananda Avadhuta (AKA), Sanskrit scholar and writer, see bibliography.

To all of the above, I am greatly indebted for their invaluable contributions.

# Introduction

## 1. A multitude of ways of calling god's name

In the panorama of music traditions all around the world, the sounds of devotional singing, *kīrtan* or “praise music”, can be heard. Whether in praise of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa,

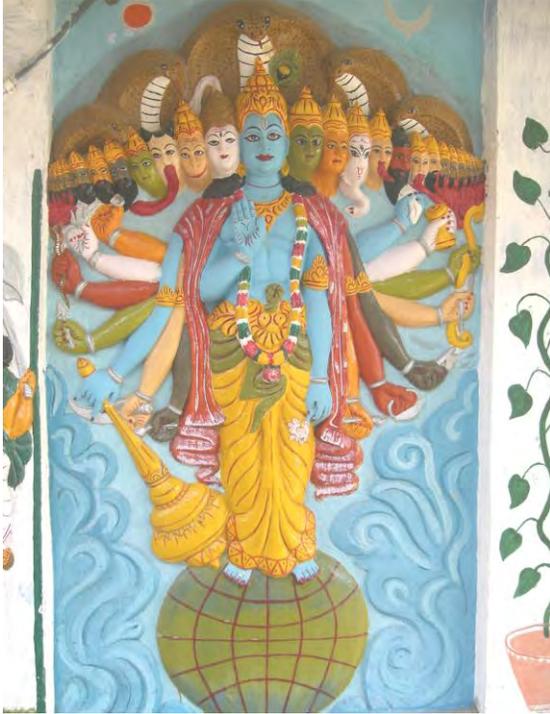


Figure 0.3 Gods and Goddesses of Rāṛh

Baba, Jesus, Allah, Buddha or Mahavira, to name a few, the devotees call to their lord wherever there is a ceremonial gathering. In essence, *kīrtan* is “a means to approach union with the divine” (Henry 1988:139), an expression of spiritual longing and a horde of other emotions, with the goal of merging into the Deity. Yet *kīrtan* is integral to Rāṛhi culture, a thriving regional musical tradition, with its heartland in the present Purulia District (previously known as Manbhum) of West Bengal. In this region where a multitude of Gods and

Goddesses are worshipped, there are none more prominent than Śiva the *adi* (the first father) and Kṛṣṇa, the reincarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and God of Love. On the temple walls of Devi Das Baul’s ashram in Purulia, (Figure 3) some of the Gods and Goddesses of Rāṛh are depicted such as Viṣṇu (centre), Brahmā the creator, Kālī spouse of Śiva, Hanuman the Monkey king, the elephant headed Gāṇeśha and Manasā, the snake goddess.

The historical, religious and socio-cultural aspects of the devotional (*bhakti*) movement in Bengal, of which collective devotional singing is an essential part, have been well documented (Kaviraja, Dimock, Levertov, Bhattacharyā, Slawek, Henry, Sanyal, Chakrabarti), yet the initiative to investigate the *kīrtan music* has so far been lacking. Just as other non-classical music traditions have received scant attention in ethnomusicological literature, such as “chutney” (Ramnarine 1996:134), so too Rāṛhi *kīrtan music* has been neglected. Perhaps because the congregational singing of god’s

name is by nature repetitive, sometimes sounding like a wild cacophony of sound to an unfamiliar ear or because the very ecstatic nature of kīrtan has masked the central corpus of the music tradition upon which its foundation lies, as well as the infrastructure which harbours this performance. Catherine Bell notes that “performance has also come to mean the enactment of a script or score, as in a theatrical play or musical recital” (1998:205) and even, I might add, of a „divine play“ or *lila* written not in words but in the musical imagination of the performers.

Therefore the focus of my thesis is on the kīrtan *music*, its meanings and the performance structure by which kīrtan is able to take participants to heights of ecstasy, for prolonged periods of time. The inherent creative dynamism within the kīrtan tradition has inspired its musicians to devise a multitude of ways of singing God’s name with only two words, *Hari Bolo*, meaning to “call or tell” *Hari’s* name, the “cosmic thief” who steals his devotees sins without their consent.

Stephen Slawek, one of the few western ethnomusicologists to have reported on kīrtan *music*, discusses Varanasi kīrtan, as one that crosses musical boundaries and social strata,

Kīrtan includes people of various castes and classes under the same banner... singers from the community of wealthy businessmen, middle class educators, professional musicians, Brahmans, as well agricultural workers from the village, all participating in an evening kīrtan session. (1988:7)

Qureshi reports from the perspective of another devotional music genre, Qawwali,

To partake of this „spiritual nourishment“ of Qawwali, men, - and, rarely women - from all walks of life, and seekers of any spiritual station and persuasion, are drawn toward the *sama* ritual where it is most splendidly and abundantly practiced: at the shrines of the great Sufi saints of the past (1986:1) From the most exalted spiritual leader to the lowliest devotee, from the richest to the poorest, all are there to listen to the ritual hymns now being intoned by a large contingent of shrine performers (ibid:4).

The egalitarianism of the kīrtan tradition is a prime characteristic, reflected not only in Varanasi kīrtan, Qawwali, but also in Rāṛhi kīrtan, for in this region the kīrtan “teams” (a term *they* use) are welcoming of participants from all sections of the community regardless of caste, social group or gender. Yet in practical terms, this is rarely the case, for each of the kīrtan teams are village based, i.e. comprised of musicians from the same street or village, and as each village has a predominance of one caste or another, so does the village kīrtan team. Similarly, although kīrtan teams are open to both genders, the majority are male, although women are not barred from playing a musical instrument, singing or dancing kīrtan (as I witnessed on various occasions). Within the range of kīrtan teams represented in Rāṛh there is a broad compass of General and Scheduled Castes as well as Scheduled Tribes. Although I am aware of the issues surrounding the term “tribe”, these are official terms used by the Government as well as my informants. There is also a wide spectrum of teams ranging from the Brahman kīrtan group at one end at the top of the social hierarchy and the Karandhi kīrtan team in a Scheduled Tribe area, at the other. Though the Rāṛhi kīrtan teams are village based and dominated by a certain caste, “tribe” or class, each one has their own unique characteristics as well as core musical elements in common.

The majority of Rāṛhi kīrtan teams participate in the local kīrtan festivals (*melas*) throughout the summer months (March till June or *Chaitra - Jyāistha*) and the Dabar kīrtan *mela* held on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, is just one example. Brahmanic rituals were conducted at the *mela*'s inauguration, followed by a seamless twelve hour kīrtan session with various performers, such as the Rājwar, “warriors”, the Vaiṣṇavas or “professionals” and the Māhātos “land owners” of Purulia participating. Hence a commonality was expressed between all layers of society, prevalent at the time of the Dabar *mela*.

Slawek describes Varanasi kīrtan as being “spawned by a popular pietistic movement in opposition to the ritually orientated orthodoxy of the Brahmanic order” (ibid.) and Qureshi says about *sama*, that “both rhythm and melody are part of the conception, rendered acceptable by their context and function despite their proscription in orthodox Islam (1986: 83).

Yet long before kīrtan became a popular pietistic movement in the fifteenth century, the composer Jayadeva (twelfth century), a Brahman from Kenduli, Birbhum

wrote the *Gītagovinda*, the exquisite kīrtan love song of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa which stands above the exclusivity of the Brahmanic order with its expression of devotion and tender eroticism (*madhu bhava*), in direct relationship with the divine (as discussed in part 1).

Various western ethnomusicologists (Goesbeck 1999), Babiracki (19991), Henry (1988, 2002), Slawek (1988) have argued the validity or non validity of the categorization of Indian devotional singing within the *Great /Little* divide. Slawek’s paper on *Popular Kīrtan in Benares* (1988: 249-264) references Harold Power, who suggests that a piece of music belongs to the *Great* tradition if the melodic configurations are governed by a rāga and if the performer belongs to a reputable *guru sisha parampara* (master-disciple line of succession) determining ones musical pedigree states. Several text related musical features are shared by classical music and folk/kīrtan music according to Babiracki (1991: 69-90) who suggests that classical and devotional music may be regarded as *Great* and *Little* expressions of the *same* tradition, while “tribal” music lies outside of the continuum, largely because of certain characteristic such as “cross rhythms” (ibid). Goesbeck suggests that an alternative scheme to the *Great/Little* traditions would be a more appropriate way of displaying the interactions that cut across genre boundaries (1999:103) as seen in Rāṛhi kīrtan where the musical/sociological boundaries are blurred, lying on both sides of the divide and beyond.

A brief summary of key elements held in common with the *Great* tradition are: a) The first renowned kīrtan composition (twelfth century) the *Gītagovinda* by Jayadeva, is written in Sanskrit, the sacred, universal language of the *Great* Tradition with designated rāgas ascribed to each song, although these are largely unintelligible today; b) Rāṛhi kīrtan has a traditional guru/disciple system of disseminating musical/religious knowledge (Slawek 1988:249); c) The reputable musical lineages or *gharana* (ibid.) of the *Great* tradition are also reflected in Rāṛhi kīrtan, (see in Part one) as seen in the Garanhati *gharana* of Narottama Das for example which has been in existence since approximately 1572; d) The melodic configurations of kīrtan music are governed by specific tālas/rāgas which feature an opening *alap* “unmetered melodic section”, melodic parts with a similar compositional structure to *dhrupad* (Widdess, 2004); and e) the incorporation of Hindustani rāgas, Śiva Ranjani, Yaman and Palaborti rāgas, to name a few (as discussed in Part one).

On the side of the *Little* tradition, various elements of the *kīrtan* tradition are also situated such as: a) A Rāṛhi *kīrtan* performance incorporates *rang* or “popular melodies” also called *kīrtananga* i.e. *kīrtan* mixed with folk songs (*jhumur*), traditional *Baul* „mystic” song melodies (*sur*), contemporary and other regional music genres of Rāṛh; and b) The *Gītagovinda* although written in Sanskrit, also incorporates the rhythmic influences of vernacular songs (Stoller Miller, 1977) associated with the *Little* tradition.

Factors straddling both *Great* and *Little* traditions are: a) One of the hallmarks of *jhumur* songs is that they were developed under the patronage of the feudal kings and queens as court (*dabari*) *jhumur* resulting in folk music specialists coming into contact with classical musicians (Binapani Māhāto, 2000), and visa versa (Groesbeck,1999:102); b) Although *Baul* and *jhumur* folk melodies have been incorporated into the performance, they have, from analysis, been treated similarly to that of a *kīrtan* rāga with a short *alap*, fixed *tāla*, elaborate rhythmic patterns and a performance structure, thus bringing them within the boundaries of the *Great* Tradition; c) *Marai* *kīrtan* is said to have been based upon devotional *pada* verse with text related musical features shared by classical music that is cyclic, leading back from stanza to refrain, with music and textual contrast between verse and refrain which according to Babiracki (1991:69-90), must be regarded as *Great* and *Little* expressions of the same tradition; and d) Another factor is that, from investigation it is evident that the key compositions or central corpus of Rāṛhi *kīrtan*, around which the other popular melodies (*rang*) revolve do not appear to be from the Hindustani classical music tradition, but distinct regional or *desi* rāgas. Yet as Widdess states, “even *desi* rāga names – link the songs concerned with the “Great Tradition” (*marga*) category of universal, immemorial, spiritually efficacious music, hallowed by tradition and by theory (2004:23), and are therefore located along the spectrum of the *Great/Little* continuum.

Since the arena of the Rāṛhi *kīrtan* tradition spans a wide panorama and has elements on both sides of the divide with its combination of local, regional and pan-South Asian characteristics, the validity of the *Great/Little* distinction must be called into question. Similarly, the assumption that the devotional music genres are any less influential and revered than classical music must also be challenged, as demonstrated for example by the lives of two renowned *dhrupadiyas*, Narottama Das Thakur and

Dijyotima Thakur for example, who preferred kīrtan<sup>1</sup> to classical music (see Part one). Hence, the bidirectional influences are so considerable as to problemise any impermeable division (Goesbeck,1999:102) and I would therefore affirm, that it seems more reasonable and “far preferable, to categorize the genres, in terms of performance contexts” (ibid.).

### **A. Marāī Kīrtan**

So far, this discussion has come under the general heading of Indian kīrtan and its regional forms. Yet the topic of this thesis is not the whole spectrum of Rāṛhi kīrtan which is too vast for this study, and carries within it a diversity of literary and musical forms and language concerns that only a Bengali adept is properly equipped to document. This research is therefore limited to the music of *nāma* kīrtan “calling the names of god only”, which in local terms of Purulia is called *marāī* meaning “circular” or “grinding” kīrtan, a particular style, with its own unique characteristics.

Other popular forms of kīrtan in Rāṛh, are called *padavalli* or *pada* meaning “verse” kīrtan, and *katha* or “story telling” kīrtan, as discussed below. In these styles, music and song is predominant while dance is insignificant, whereas in *marāī* kīrtan, dance movements are an essential component of the performance. In *marāī* kīrtan, one can observe devotional singing, dance and ecstatic performance in excess. Interwoven multiple melodic parts are combined with diverse rhythmic compositions in a musical structure that facilitates the rise of musical intensity, strung together to create a colourful “garland of devotion around the lord” or *Hari pari mandala*.

Extremely high climactic peaks and deep gushing rivers of musical expression are typical of Rāṛhi *marāī* kīrtan (as discussed in Part two), reflecting the local terrain, with its searing hot windswept summer landscape, soft modulating mountain ranges, low lying plateaus, ancient rock formations with crystal laden pathways and below freezing winters. These excessive environmental conditions have long featured in the mystical songs of the Bauls (from Sanskrit *batul* “madmen”) of Rāṛh, the fierce devotional expression of the Shavities, as seen in the *Śiva gajan*, (Part one) as well as the more

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<sup>1</sup> Narottama Das was a *dhrupadiya* according to Sen and Goswami, who reinvented the kīrtan tradition in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see Chapter 2.

contemporary, graceful (*lasya*) sensual movements and musical modes of the Vaiṣṇavas in the distinct local genre, called *marāī* kīrtan.

Textually speaking, *marāī* kīrtan could not be simpler, with only two words *Hari Bolo* as lyrics, yet it is undoubtedly a highly complex musical performance, similar to a classical music piece with its various movements. Yet what sets it apart from classical music, is the continuous or repetitive nature of *Hari Bolo* that melts away any sense of separation, allowing the honey (*madhu*) of devotion to pour forth and be drunken by the Deity. As Jagaran Māhāto (JM), guru of the Kostuka kīrtan team says,

“*Marāī* is not a Bengali word, it is local Purulian or Rāṛh local word, it means to move in a circle, while the internal meaning is “to grind”, for if you grind Hari’s name, in your heart, like sugarcane, then it will melt and become nectar for God”, (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

To achieve this state of “melting” or merging into the Deity, *marāī* kīrtan is performed without halt for many hours, weeks, months or longer, depending upon the occasion and hence the Bengali term *akhanda* “endless” has been ascribed to it,

Kīrtan is a type of music that you can’t compare with other types, you can’t bind it, you can’t make a boundary line or limit it, or say that there is an end to it (ibid.).

Local ethnographer and historian Acarya Kīrtyananda Avadhuta states that kīrtan is “the best kind of music, because it takes one to ecstatic heights for the *longest* period of time” (1996: Pers.comm.). Although it is outside the realms of my thesis to examine the validity of this statement, my research reveals that kīrtan employs musical techniques and performance structures that facilitate musical intensity and ecstatic devotional expression at its greatest heights. Hence by focusing on the *marāī* kīrtan music, its meanings and performance structures in a contemporary context my endeavour is to demonstrate this.

## B. Methodology

I arrived in the Purulia District of West Bengal, India, the heartland of a region previously known as Manbhum, a small “country” (*bhum*) within the ancient kingdom of Rāṛh “red soil” in February 2006, to embark on my fieldwork with little more than an outline of the task at hand. Following on from my previous post graduate research<sup>2</sup> broadly descriptive of the five indigenous music genres of Rāṛh, I had come to investigate only one, the kīrtan tradition that I had briefly documented in my previous research trips. While observing a traditional kīrtan performance in April 2000, it was as if an electrical current was coursing through my veins causing the hair on my body to stand on end and for the first time I understood the meaning of Kirtyanandas comment above, “kīrtan takes one to the greatest heights for the *longest* period of time” (1996: Pers.comm.). Though I had only scraped the surface of kīrtan’s deep musical foundations it was obvious to me that kīrtan induced ecstatic states, that it took many years of practice to master, and that there was a “science” behind it, which had not previously been documented.

Arriving in Purulia in February 2006, my first meeting with research partner Sanjay Māhāto (called Tinku) and his colleagues was at the Shanti Hotel, a renowned meeting place for Baul musicians, dancing girls (*nacini nach*) folk (*jhumur*) artists and their agents. Being from the locality, Tinku had a good rapport with the artists, was a sympathetic communicator and very enthusiastic about kīrtan, although as yet, was not



Figure 0.4 At the Shanti Hotel with Sanjay Māhāto on left

familiar with the kīrtan music tradition. I began my investigations that same day in the Shanti hotel at the Purulia bus station where we gathered with other members of the Purulia Cultural Committee, of which Sanjay was president. A mixed group of both Muslims and Hindus sat together at a wooden table, to discuss the local *marāī* kīrtan teams. I enquired about where they were and after conferring with the

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<sup>2</sup> From Feb. – Oct. 1996, and March to April 2000.

Committee over a cup of *chai*, Sanjay and I made up a list of different kīrtan teams that were selected. We then sent out messengers with letters addressed to the leader of each *marāī* kīrtan team of the village enquiring if we could come and see them perform. Thus began our journey to document the *marāī* kīrtan teams of Rāṛh which was to continue throughout the summer of 2006.

That very night in the cool evening temperatures, I was invited to listen to Laksan Goswami, a Baul/ kīrtan singer and his group. As I sat inside a small red mud hut in soft candlelight, they performed devotional songs accompanied by harmonium, *tabla* and Chorus singers who also played small brass cymbals (*kartal*). Overcome with the thrilling calls, the sound of crashing cymbals and deep resonant khol drum rhythms, I sat dazed in the power of the kīrtan music and its ability to transform the atmosphere into one of searing longing and spiritual rapture.



Figure 0.5 Laksan Das Goswami and group sing kīrtan

Sanjay’s friend, Madhu Sudan Das Baul, invited us to come and visit his Baul ashram/school (*gurukul*), the next day. This seemed an appropriate beginning to my



Figure 0.6 Baul kīrtan group perform at Madhu Sudhana’s Baul *ashram*

fieldwork, as local experts in Rāṛh all say that Baul music is a precursor of kīrtan (Christo Das, Devi Das Baul 2007: Pers.comm.), that “the Baul cult is much older than kīrtan and has greatly influenced kīrtan in Rāṛh” (Kirtyananda 1996: Pers.comm.). Arriving at Madhu Sudan’s Baul ashram, the Baul kīrtan team was preparing to perform. I was at first struck by the willowy, sinuous sounds

of western clarinet, perhaps because of its familiarity, as it was sometime before the strength, vigour and sophistication of the traditional khol drum patterns and scintillating kartal playing could mesmerize me in their seductive power.

After a few weeks of intensive observation in the field and interviews I began to recognise some of the melodic configurations that were repeatedly sung. The realisation that the different teams were singing the *same* melodies inspired me further with my music investigation. It was now that I could identify the opening rāga (called *Dāspēra*) and Baul melodies that I began to communicate at a level that the kīrtan gurus could respond to. We had a common language. Armed with a few local musical terms, I could then ask directly “what tālas/rāgas are you playing, how many *mātrās* (beat cycles)?”, and discuss their performance with them. Thus I began to perceive common musical elements within the performance that were connected to the ecstatic experience that they were sharing. I was beginning to understand that the kīrtan tālas and melodies the teams had in common were part of something more substantial, in other words a greater infrastructure began to emerge.

During this time I met two very significant *kīrtaniyās* in the region. The first was the singer/ lead cymbal player, (*dohārī*) of the Kostuka kīrtan group who I met at a fourteen day kīrtan festival (*mela*) nearby (see figure 0.5). On this visit, a friend of Tinku’s was approached by a man dressed all in white to come and see his kīrtan group perform. This man later became known to me as Shakti Māhāto. We went and saw a



Figure 0.7 The Kostuka kīrtan group performing at a 14 day kīrtan festival in Purulia

group of strong, tall, young men singing an enchanting kīrtan melody, (which I later found out was called Sohni *kātān*) and dancing around the kīrtan temple (*mandīr*). We left a donation in the bowl and walked away as Tinku’s friend looked back amazed. He told us that just a few years ago, these men were renowned criminals. The deep rich sonority of their voices rang inside me for the next few days

and a curiosity arose about the role kīrtan had to play in transforming their lives. This group later became the principal focus of my study.

The second significant *kīrtaniyā* was Sri Rishi Das Goswami who I met a few weeks later while travelling on the road to Balarampur where a kīrtan *mela* was



Figure 0.8 Sri Rishi Das Goswami from Joypur

happening in the *mandīr* next to the Śiva temple. There, after watching an extraordinary kīrtan performance I interviewed Sri Rishi Das Goswami and sometime later, he also came with his group to perform at the Dabar *mela*. I will never forget that first meeting, crouching down outside the *mandīr* to interview him, his face beaming when we discussed the local kīrtan rāgas and tālas. It was the first time he had ever been interviewed. Some time later we went to his village where he showed me his home including his Śiva temple and I met his family and the rest of the kīrtan team.

In April 2006, as part of my fieldwork, Sanjay and I organised a kīrtan *mela* in order to film and make audio recordings of the performances of five kīrtan teams from the region for later analysis, hosted by Satyendranath Māhāto, Sanjay's father who had just recently begun to build a kīrtan *mandīr* (temple) in their village. Assisting me with the filming were Robert Lush (a SOAS graduate) and Śivani Cameron, a friend and filmmaker from Australia. With two cameras at our disposal we were able to position one directly in front of the *mandīr*, (operated by Robert and myself) allowing Śivani to move freely inside the *mandīr* and village surrounds. Having two cameras on site also meant that I could interview performers, as well as capture the performance inside the *mandīr*.

Following the *mela* we visited the different kīrtan team's villages, and played back their performance on a small video player so that I could ask related questions in order to gather feedback. Armed with the appropriate resources and local terms for the musical components, I interviewed the *kīrtaniyās* and built up charts of the performance structure for each kīrtan team, with a time scale on the horizontal axis, the rāga/tāla names along the plotted line of the vertical axis and approximate degrees of musical

intensity. Thus I created a visual approximation of each team's performance which formed the initial foundation for my analysis of the kīrtan performance structure.

Playing back their video performance to the teams allowed me to observe their responses, gather feedback and verify my observations. My fieldwork experience was similar to other ethnomusicologists, such as Qureshi, who writes that, "Consulting and checking my conclusions with Qawwali participants was crucial, especially with reference to video recordings of performances, through what Stone and Sone (1981) term the feedback interview" (1986:13).

I was also fortunate enough to be given by Sanjay, a kīrtan manuscript written by his uncle, the late Mihir Māhāto, with kīrtan music notation previously unknown to western academia. Sri Rishi Das Goswami, who also had his own manuscript and Sri Narayan Mahanti, kīrtan expert of the Brahman team, were both eager to discuss, what appeared to be a mysterious blend of diagrammatic shapes, letters from the alphabet and text in Bengali script, that is, the so called *Ba* musical notation. Unfortunately however I was unable to find a kīrtan expert who could translate Mihir Māhāto's kīrtan manuscript, due to the specific nature of his notation, and also the fact that only a few kīrtan gurus use *Ba* notation today. Hence further investigation is necessary in the near future.

I also met with local ethnomusicologist Prof. Binapani Māhāto, who has done extensive research on the Mayurbanj *Chhau* dance drum patterns (*bols*) and local folk songs (*jhumur*) in Kurmali, a dialect rapidly falling out of use. In describing her research methods she says,

I have to listen, very carefully because when it is played on the *dhol* drum it has already been transformed from the kīrtan *khol* drum, thus the mnemonic syllables have changed. But when I count the *mātrās*, and listen properly, very devotedly I listen, the way it sounds, like the *ektāla* rhythm, I hear that these are kīrtan *bols*. So I ask guruji, I say, I think this is *ektāla bols* and he confirms it, because they are the masters, usually they don't like to tell everybody, they don't like to sell off their wealth you see, this is their treasure. (2007: Pers.comm.).

My methodology in the field was comparable to BM's as I first listened to the music for some time before beginning to recognize some of the more distinctive kīrtan

melodies. After learning the local musical terms, I could then ask relevant questions of the kīrtan experts, who responded positively, understanding I had a genuine interest in their music. They were very willing to share their knowledge, and fulfill my fieldwork goals without any hesitation. The only limitation to their communication with me was a shortage of time perhaps with the demand of other tasks to fulfill and occasionally their shyness in sharing humorous stories about the erotic nature of some of the kīrtan songs.

After the summer months of fieldwork (Jan. - June 2006), I returned to SOAS and began my visual and audio analysis from recordings and interviews at the Dabar kīrtan *mela*. With the use of music computer technology such as Sound Forge and Transcribe, I analysed the performance captured in the recordings, labeled the different musical sections and measured the beats per minute (b.p.m.) to gauge the intensity of each piece of music. With support from Janet Topp-Fargion from the British Library Sound Archives, I also copied all my film onto DVD and audio materials onto CD and compiled the Rāṛhi Bangla Kīrtan Collection under the World Music Collections.

One year later, in March 2007, I visited Purulia for a second time to ask more in-depth questions of the kīrtan experts. I needed to gain clarification of the traditional kīrtan tālas and rāgas, as there were no references to Rāṛhi kīrtan music in the British libraries, so my investigation had to be first hand. I again interviewed kīrtan experts and played back their video performances on a DVD player a second time going through each performance systematically rechecking my analysis. I received confirmation of my work. The kīrtan gurus showed gratitude for my efforts while at the same time, a pride in their kīrtan performance, which they believe is more sophisticated than other regions further afield, of which they are well aware. They also expressed their concerns about the preservation of the *marāī* kīrtan tradition with the present socio- economic climate especially as the younger generation is increasingly more interested in popular music culture, than in village kīrtan. On my return to SOAS in April 2007, I continued with the performance analysis and writing up of my research work. I also made a DVD of the Kostuka kīrtan performance using Adobe Premier and Encore realizing that visual representation is essential in gaining a thorough understanding of *marāī* kīrtan.

My third trip to Rāṛh (Jan - March 2008) was to assist in the organisation of the first international Rāṛh Kīrtan Festival (*mela*), at Dabar village, to promote exposure of

Rāṛhi kīrtan to an international audience. In this way, music appreciators from overseas were able to experience the local Rāṛh kīrtan directly and participate in it. The *mela* was successful as the results show: there were approximately 5,000 local attendees and 20 international; a greater networking and sharing of knowledge between the kīrtan experts and local as well as international performers; the revival of at least one new kīrtan group in Dabar village; media coverage before and after the event, generating enthusiasm in the community and inspiring people from long distances to come to the kīrtan.



Figure 0.9 Jagaran Māhāto with a few of his western kīrtan students, Lidia, Melanie, the author, and Kavita, 2009

The fourth stage of my kīrtan documentation (Jan.-March 2009) was to document the kīrtan tradition purely from a musicians/participants perspective. I was among five students from different parts of the world who came to study Rāṛhi kīrtan with Sri Jagaran Māhāto. This has given me practical knowledge of the kīrtan tradition and inspired immense admiration for Sri Jagaran’s teaching

methods<sup>3</sup>. Prior to this point I had been observing, documenting and thus learning the kīrtan music through analysis of the video footage. I had not been participating in their performances except on rare occasions, although they would always invite me to do so. However, this experience gave me direct knowledge of the kīrtan tradition and hence greater confidence. Thus I started to participate in kīrtan performances with the Kostuka team.

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<sup>3</sup> Lidia Montemurri, another of his students from Italy writes, “Jagaran Māhāto’s teaching method is possibly the most effective teaching method I have experienced. It involves no talking and no explanations. It is based on capturing every ounce of attention from the student, full alertness of all the senses and concentration. Once he has that, he simply feeds you melody and rhythm. His classes are very intense, productive, and thoroughly riveting. With the use of repetition he takes you through the chosen kīrtans, from beginning to end and he succeeds in making you follow him. His method is as ancient as the kīrtan itself, and is conducted through direct transmission from guru to student with the aid of clear and effective hand signals, facial expressions, and emphasis on the rhythm. He lets you know what he needs of you, and when you get it wrong he humorously threatens you with corporal punishment (always with a smile on his face). And when you get it right it is a pleasure and a joy to witness the bliss on his face” (2009: Pers.comm.).

The fifth and final stage of my research was subsequent to my PhD viva (June 2010), and was a brief field trip to Purulia to investigate the Dom clarinet players in the kīrtan ensembles. I was also delighted to observe many new groups kīrtan performances and to assist in organising the third kīrtan festival at Dabar village, for after the success of the first *mela*, and the passing of Sanjay’s father in that year, we promised to Hari we would do it biannually (the first was April 2006, the second was Jan. 2008 and third June 2010).

In hindsight I remember being asked by Brikodhar Māhāto, leader of the Bagra Māhāto kīrtan team, “why are you researching Rāṛh kīrtan?” He said that many overseas researchers had come to investigate the local Bauls “mystic songs”, the *Chhau* “masked dance of the ancient warrior” and dancing girls songs and dance (*nacini nach*) yet no one had researched Rāṛh kīrtan music (2006: Pers.comm.), the underlying query being, why are you interested in *this* music? My answer to his question was simply because of a desire to understand *how* kīrtan works, *what* are the musical elements that create this powerful, ecstatic performance and *what* effects kīrtan has had on their lives?” Brikodar accepted my answer unequivocally, with a kind of humility that is typical of Rāṛhi people, whose tenderness, yet fierce determination to preserve their music culture has kept it alive without any support or interest from outsiders for centuries. Hence my research is fired by my connections with the Rāṛhi *kīrtaniyās* who have taken me into their trust, as well as the depth, musical intensity and devotional expression in their performance of ecstasy.

### C. Key Findings

During my investigation key findings have arisen, most of which the local experts agree are essential components of the Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition including: by calling to Hari, a holy, auspicious name of God one brings spiritual and social benefits to both participants and non-participants; *Hari Bolo* is not only



Figure 0.10 A typical kīrtan *mandīr* in Rāṛh, depicting Kṛṣṇa / Rādhā and Śiva stories from the Puranas

the worship of *Hari* as in *Kṛṣṇa*, as but also *Śiva*, for it represents a spiritual marriage between Śaivism and Vaisnavism, as displayed in *Ardhanara Ishvara*, (one side as *Śiva* and the other as *Kṛṣṇa*) temple sculptures of Rāṛh; traditional *marāī* kīrtan is a form of *samgit* i.e. instrumental music, song and dance and hence includes the khol drum and cymbal (*kartal*) players, singers as well as dance choreography; the central corpus of traditional rhythmic patterns (*tālas*) and melodic compositions, called *rāgas* or *gans* “songs” originated and developed from within, not outside of the region; that there is a unique infrastructure that is fundamental to kīrtan that is further described in Part one including *la* “refrain”, various rhythmic patterns and compositions (*kātān*); a system of kīrtan *aesthetics* achieved through an ordered sequence of musical sections beginning with an opening instrumental section (*Juran*), invocation to the Supreme (*Guru vandana*), unmetred section (*alap*) and then traditional kīrtan *rāgas* to create a “solid” (Rājwar 2006 Pers.comm.) kīrtan, with a balanced combination of local Rāṛhi kīrtan *tālas* and popular contemporary melodies (*rang*); the inclusion of specific Hindustani classical *rāgas*, such as *Śiva Ranjani* adapted to kīrtan due to its cultural significance as well as musical compatability; *satsaung*, “spiritual company”, egalitarianism or social inclusion as well as a keen sense of friendly competition being integral to the kīrtan tradition and pivotal to its success; and the other vital ingredient is Rāḍhā *bhava* or the devotees “embodiment” of Rāḍhā’s love and emotions during performance, for as the female lover of *Hari* they can offer themselves to him with emotional abandonment and devotional surrender, through their kīrtan performance, in all of the above. Hence, rather than being largely derivative, my findings reveal that *marāī* kīrtan of Purulia, exists not only as a contemporary expression of Vaiṣṇavism (with *Śiva* worship at its base) but also as an original, highly structured and extremely intense music performance tradition. In other words, behind this wildly ecstatic expression of devotional singing and dance, there is a central corpus of *tālas/ rāga* melodies and a clearly defined musical structure which has not originated from any outside source other than Rāṛh itself.

Though the musical elements described above are essential elements of Rāṛhi kīrtan performance, each team is unique in the way that it brings kīrtan to life, for the invention of a distinctive performance is dependent on various factors: the guru’s direction; quality of musicianship; enthusiasm and dynamics of the group; spiritual

ideation of the singers and in some cases the musical lineage or *gharana*, of the team as each of these factors influence the *kīrtan* in significant ways. Hence the characteristics of each *kīrtan* team’s performance are revealed through an appreciation of their differences, as well as similarities of traditional elements. *Kīrtan* performed successfully is a

seamless flow that draws the listener up to high peaks of ecstasy, along calming terrains, to loose oneself into an all embracing sensory experience.

The detailed musical analysis of *marāī kīrtan* that follows in Part two, uncovers a system not previously documented that is consistent with first hand oral accounts. However, in order to contextualise the performance, I must briefly discuss the historical and geographical background of the *kīrtan* tradition.



Figure 0.11 The boundaries of Rāṛh, India

## 2. Historical and Geographical Background

### A. Geography: The boundaries of Rāṛh

What is the significance of Rāṛh to the *kīrtan* singers under investigation? As MacLeod and Harvey say, “Indigeneity is a matter of affirming belonging *to* a place” (2000:4), an awareness of which permeates my entire fieldwork experience in Rāṛh, for the people of this ancient land existed as one kingdom until the



Figure 0.12 The Purulia District in the heartland of Rāṛh, with points signifying the *kīrtan* villages visited

seventh century when King Shasaunka was defeated, yet continues to exist as such in the memory and imagination of the Rārhi people.

In the Austric language, Rārḥ or Rārḥo, means “reddish soil”, says Sanskrit scholar and local expert, Acaryā Kirtyananda Avadhuta (AKA). He says the territory mostly in Bengal, from the West Bank of the Bhagirathi River to the Parasnath Hills (on the Bihar border), extending from Birbhum in the north to Bhanjabhum in the south, was known as Rārḥabhum, with *bhum* meaning “land or country”. AKA states the boundaries of Rārḥ are as follows,

There are seven major rivers within this area of Rārḥ, the Subarnarekha, Kangsavati, Damodar, Ajay, Mayuraksii, Dwarakeshvar and Bansh rivers; three prominent hills, which surround Rārḥ are the Parasnath Hills, Maghasani Hills, and Rāj Mahal in Bihar. If you make a circle around these hills you will find that the whole of Rārḥ will be included in the circumference. It can also be said that more than 60% of Rārḥ is within West Bengal, including the Districts of Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Bardhaman, Howrah, Hooghly, Midnapore; one third of Rārḥ is in Bihar and includes Singhbhum District, Dhanbhad District, and Bokaro District; and in Orissa there are Mayurbanj and a third of Balasur District is included in Rārḥ (1966: Pers.comm.).

Purulia District is the western most part of West Bengal, with a particular geographical significance due to its location and shape making it function like a funnel between the monsoon currents from the Bay of Bengal to the sub tropical parts of north



Figure 0.13 Quartz crystal rock formations scattered across the landscape

west India. Purulia is nestled in amongst the surrounding Parasnath Hills, the wide river valleys of the Kangsavati (Kansai) and Damodar flowing through and alongside of it. Its rainfall is highest during monsoon with extreme humidity (75%) while in the summer it is exceedingly dry. However due to the topography, most of the rainfall falls

away as runoff with soil erosion as one of the greatest problems facing the agricultural community today.

Early records of Rāṛh are documented in Bimala Churn Law's book on the *Historical Geography of Ancient India* where it is referred to as Rāḍhā, or as early Buddhist scriptures call it, Lāḍha, a "pathless country... rude and generally hostile" (1954:254). Law reports that the province of Rāḍhā (Rāṛh) includes the modern districts of Hooghly, Howrah, Burdwan, Bankura and major portions of Midnapur. At the heartland of the western portion of Rāṛh is Manbhum, (one of the East India districts during the British Rāj) from which Purulia was carved out. It is an area of around 4000 square miles, largely dry with undulating hills speckled with trees and the gentle Kansai River flowing through the centre. The environment is mainly rural, with vivid deep reds, browns, and effulgent greens during the growing season, with ancient rock formations that line the red earth paths, laden with quartz crystal so ancient, that it makes a brittle crunching sound beneath one's feet, *palash* trees spotted around the landscape with bended trunks, sculpted to the winds movements, and the hot, sweltering summer's furnace heat that finds respite in the kīrtan frenzy of the cool evening temperatures. With only one harvest a year, due to lack of rain, Rāṛh is one of the most economically impoverished areas in India. Nevertheless it remains extremely rich in music culture with at least five indigenous music genres: the *Chhau* martial dance, the *nacini nach* or "dancing girls dance"; the Baul "mystic" songs; the local folk songs called *jhumur* and the kīrtan "praise songs", which continue to flourish at the community level (2000:212).

Figure 0.14 next page: The indigenous music genres of Rāṛh: 1. The *carak* ceremony of the Śiva *gajan* festival, 2. *Marāī* kīrtan 3. Seraikella *Chhau* dance, 4. Folk *jhumur* singer Binapani Māhāto, 5. Bauls singers, Chayarani and Christo Das Baul, 6. Dancing girls *Nacini nach*.



## B. Historical Influences

In recent years, Indian ethnographers and historians P.R.Sarkar (2004, 2008), Pashupati Māhāto (1987, 2004), Acaryā Kirtyananda Avadhuta (1994) and Binapani Māhāto (2004, 2005) whom I met prior to, and during my post graduate research, have made significant contributions to the existing body of Rāṛhi literature bringing to light different aspects of Rāṛh’s powerful military past, religious and music traditions. In a broader perspective, writers such as Atul Sur (1975), Law (1954), Sukumar Sen (1960), Deben Bhattacharyā (1972, 1977) and Richard Widdess (2004) have also informed my work.

Various historical records from Ptolemy state that Alexander the Great (327BC) was discouraged from coming to eastern India due to the military power of the Rāṛh army, at the farthest off part of Ganga *Ridai* (Sen, 1975:61), and according to Meghasthenes, “whose king possesses 1,000 horses, 700 elephants and 60,000 foot soldiers and apparatus of war” (McCrinkle, 1901: 6-17).



Figure 0.15 The Kashipur palace, Manbhum

Sarkar reports that there were a number of smaller kingdoms joining to form one independent region, most of which had the suffix *bhum* meaning “country” or “land” added to their names. These *bhum* were generally called after their founding rulers:



Figure 0.16 Front view of the Kashipur palace, Manbhum, today

Manbhum was ruled by King Mansingh Dev during the later part of the sixteenth century, with Manzabar as its capital (later the kingdom of Kashipur was formed out of a large part of Manbhum); Senbhum, with Vijaya Sena c 1097-1160 AD as the founder of the Sena Dynasty (the *Gītagovinda* by Jayadeva was written during Laksmana Sen’s rule);

Sapatashati after the Brahmān kings called Saptashati, whose rule came to an end during the Mughul period; and Howrah District was ruled by the Rārhi Brahmān kings with the surname Ray (or Bandyopadhyay), whose rule also came to an end during the Mughul period (Sarkar 2004:119). These kingdoms cross over and intersect with existing districts within Rārḥ and although the names are used rarely today, the cultural memories are ever alive.

Viṣṇupur, in the Bankura District of Rārḥ, named after Viṣṇu, the Deity of the royal family, the Mallarājas, with the capital Mallabhumi, (Law 1954:271). Apart from the Mallabhumi kings expertise in wrestling and archery Viṣṇupur was renowned as a cultural centre for Hindustani classical music in the eighteenth century. The Viṣṇupur classical music lineage is reported to have originated from a descendent of Mian Tansen, court musician of Emperor Akbar, called Bahadur Khan, a Muslim Seniya *dhrupadiya* patronized by the Maharāja Raghanath Singh Deo II of Viṣṇupur, who settled in the royal court and started a school of music, which came to be known as the Viṣṇupur *gharana*. From this school a line of eminent musicians was produced “and handed down by Brahman Hindu musicians from various families” (Widdess 2004:31, (Goswami 1971, Mukherjee 1978, Ray 1980)), many of whom were patronized by wealthy landlords, including members of the Tagore family (whose lineage is Rārhi). Goswami writes that

as a result of this patronage in the nineteenth century, kīrtan became an integral part of urban culture (2002:21).



Figure 0.17 Decorated house front at Karandhi village, Purulia

### **C. Social Context – Tribe, caste and social considerations**

In the broad context of Indian languages, “tribe” or *ādivasi* means “original inhabitant” and was a modern term used by the British administrators for classification and enumeration purposes (Wolf 2000:6). Although the term “tribal” has fallen out of favour in an African context, it is very much alive and important in India, with a population of over sixty-seven million scattered across the country (Knight, 2000:1). Tribes are listed in the Indian Constitution, referred to as S.C.S.T. (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) and “identified for the purpose of not being overlooked in the affairs of the state” (ibid.). Tribes are often situated within a specific geographic area, such as the Kota people of the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, the Munda people of the Chottanagpur Plateau in Bihar and the Mina of Rājasthan (ibid.).

According to the 1991 Census, the majority of Purulia’s two and a half million people are agriculturalists, with approx. nineteen percent of the population deemed Scheduled Castes and eighteen percent Scheduled Tribes. Popular views of „tribe“ have been publicized more since the colonial period, views which are fraught with European ideas of evolution and the “primitive”. Even in the anthropological writings of some Bengali writers for example, there are references to Rārh as being inhabited by “wild tribes” (A.Bhattacharya, 1977:9) and to the physical appearance of the Rārhī people who wear masks in order “to cover their ugly human features” (Census Handbook, Purulia, 1961).

Recent investigation into tribal music in Rāṛh has been undertaken on the Munda (Babiracki 1990, 1991, 2000), the Santal tribes of West Bengal and Bihar (Bhattacharyā 1973, Prasad 1985, Culshaw 1949) and the Kurmali Māhātos, an agrarian based, numerically dominant ethnic group of Rāṛh (Pashupati Māhāto 2004). In the 1921 Census the Māhātos were reported as an aboriginal “tribe” which they still subscribe to today. Earlier anthropologists, such as Risley (1891) have cited the Kurmi Māhāto's of former Manbhum district, as a typical case of a hitherto “tribe” transformed into a Hindu caste even though the majority of Māhātos still consider themselves “tribal people”. This is a contentious issue revolving around land ownership. Binapani Māhāto says that the reason the government did not class them as a Scheduled Tribe is because of a ban on purchasing “tribal” land, therefore they would have no access to their lands, so they have listed them as a non-Scheduled Hindu caste (2008: Pers.comm.).

Criteria for being considered “tribal”, as outlined by Wolf (2000) are distinctive cultural practices, social organization and a unique language. The Māhātos marriage system for example is determined by which clan one belongs to, each clan having their own animal totem (SM, 2008: Pers.comm.). Another primary characteristic is, “the maintenance of a distinct music” (Babiracki 1980: 75), which the Māhātos demonstrate



Figure 0.18 The Karandhi kīrtan team performs, as discussed in Part one

with their *dabari* “court” *jhumur* folk songs, and *bhaduria* or *karama jhumur* in Kurmali, performed in every Rāṛhi village (La Trobe 1996:90) as documented by local experts Girish Māhāto<sup>4</sup> and Binapani Māhāto (2008).

Performing in the kīrtan *mela* at Dabar are many *kīrtaniyas* with the name Māhāto, largely because

they are one of the predominant indigenous groups in Western Rāṛh, the educated landowners who play significant roles in the religious and social life of their communities. According to Gopinath Goswami, the guru of the Brahman kīrtan group,

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished Manuscript 1996

the status of the Māhātos is similar to that of Rāṛhi Brahmins (Goswami 2007: Pers.comm.) and their relatively high status means that they are called upon to perform ceremonial roles when a Brahman priest is not present. They also are patrons of the Dom musician caste, “whenever they travel to another village to settle, they bring one or two families including the Dom so they can play for their social ceremonies that support their agricultural work (BM, 2008: Pers.comm.). In the statement below, BM differentiates the Māhātos as “tribal” people from the “the true *Hindu* society”, particularly in terms of gender roles where the women have a great deal more social and economic freedom than other women,

In Māhāto society the men and women are equally free. The women assist their husbands, and he also joins in planting the crops. The ladies take the basket of crops to the market to sell and earn something too. Women are regarded equally as their male counterparts. There’s no taboo in the arena of singing, dancing or playing instruments and we can dance together in the same arena. In true Hindu society this is a taboo, the girl cannot dance in front of the father in law, but the Māhātos can dance together (ibid.).

Babiracki opinion is that certain musical genres and performances would be considered “tribal”, while others as “folk” (1980: 74). One of the hallmarks of the non-tribal musics or folk musics, are that they have developed under the patronage of the feudal rājas and landlords as demonstrated by the *darbari jhumur* folk tradition of Rāṛh developed in the feudal courts, (BM 2007: Pers. comm.) and can thus be placed along the same continuum as the *Great/Little* Traditions (see page 5). Yet these folk songs are performed by people who identify themselves as “tribal” people, i.e. Māhātos, placing “tribal” people and “folk” music *inside* the *Great/Little* continuum, while “tribal” music *outside* of it, thus challenging the distinction even further.

Typically “tribal” music has parallel harmonies, bitonal responsorial singing, asymmetrical rhythmic divisions and perhaps most characteristically, a slightly offbeat or out of phase quality between the melody and the drum rhythms, or cross accents (Babiracki 2000:54). In *marāī* kīrtan some teams perform popular *rang* “folk” melodies with “tribal” music/dance influences, as I observed at the Mayurbanj kīrtan *mela*, and in

the Karandhi kīrtan team performance, as discussed in Part one. Yet according to the above, “tribal” music influences are not included in the *Great/Little* continuum while devotional and folk music is, again calling into question the problematic nature of categorizing kīrtan within the *Great/Little* traditions.

**Caste**, reports Henry, is a ranked, endogamous group, usually associated with a traditional occupation, one’s caste identity is usually ascribed at birth and is immutable (1988:14). While the predominant social groups associated with traditional music culture in Rāṛh are hereditary castes also described as “specialist ethnic groups” (Pashupati Māhāto 1987:14), they are however, by no means the exclusive participants in the music culture.

The majority of the musical experts in Rāṛh are from the Scheduled castes, such as the Sahis (soldiers) SutRāḍhār (carpenters) the Dom (music caste) and the Kurmi Māhātos, (agriculturalists), but anyone can perform kīrtan (SM 2008: Pers.comm.).

The Doms are the hereditary music caste of Rāṛh. They can be heard playing the traditional instruments in all the social and spiritual ceremonies including marriage, *shraddha* “funeral” and housewarming ceremonies. They are the hereditary musical specialists who play the large kettle drums (*dhamsa*), double sided barrel drums (*dhol*), *shantai* double-reed wind instruments (Figure 0.17). Prior to the British rule, the Doms were employed



Figure 0.19 The *Chhau* Dom musicians, *dhol* drum, *dhamsa* kettle drum (behind) and the *shantai* (centre). Photo Credit: Franco-Suarez

as court musicians to play at all the social and religious ceremonies including *Chhau* martial dance music. Although originally from a warrior (*ksatriya*) caste, they have been relegated to the lowest status of society due to their landlessness yet still hold the sacred

repositories of traditional musical knowledge. In a contemporary context, Doms, “tribal” groups, and different castes are all included in the *marāī* kīrtan teams of Rāṛh. Even if in other ways, Rāṛhi “tribal” people and Dom musicians are often economically and politically marginalized, in a kīrtan performance a spirit of egalitarianism prevails. Binapani Māhāto comments on the status of the Dom musicians of Rāṛh,

The Dom play during various *pujas*: Durga *puja*, Lord Bhaerav *puja*, Tusu *puja* and the Śiva *Gajan* for their music is a must. They have a particular kind of music for every ritual and ceremony, and it is known by none other than the Doms. It is an ancestral profession and they are ancestral players, they learn these things from their ancestors, so none other than the Doms know this music. If someone else plays, it is not regarded as sacred, but whenever the Doms play then only it is regarded as sacred. This is the importance of *dhol* players in our social structure and spiritual life. Yet they are of the downtrodden caste. They play during the celebration of marriages, birthdays any kind of worship. So the *dhol* players are especially invited guests even though they belong to the lower strata. Without *dhol* playing and without *shantai* playing, the ceremony is considered incomplete. To invoke our goddesses a special environment is needed, to make it congenial for us, for our cultivation and wellbeing. The music



Figure 0.20 Gopinath Goswami from Balarampur, leading *nagar* kīrtan

on our *shantai* and *dhol* is regarded as the purest form of music (2007:Pers.comm.).

**The Vaiṣṇava Goswamin:** Flood states that Vaiṣṇavism was developed by six of Caitanya’s disciples, known as the Goswamin (1996:141) from Nadia. The status of the Goswamin are historically recognised as the learned teachers in

the dissemination of knowledge through formal education which was in vogue in the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava society of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, among both men

and women of the upper and lower castes (Chakrabarti, 1991: 454). Even though the predominant social groups associated with traditional music culture in Rāṛh are the Dom, Ghasi, Kaura, Kurmi Māhāto and Munda (P.Māhāto 1987:26), the Vaiṣṇavas hold a special place in Rāṛhi society. Though the Goswamin are a caste invented by Caitanya most are descendents from Rāṛhi converts rather than from Nadia. However, I observed a team of teenage boys passing through Dabar singing kīrtan one day who are said to be the direct descendents of the original Goswamis who came with Caitanya from Navadvip, because they “do not own land of their own, like gypsies, they roam from village to village, singing kīrtan and living from donations of rice and coins” (SM, 2007:Pers.comm.).

Yet “in Rāṛh the Goswamis are the Vaiṣṇavites, as they are performing rituals in every house”, (BM, 2007: Pers.comm.), their status is similar in a contemporary western context to a Christian minister and hymn singer.

Though there is a commonality among the Vaiṣṇavas in Rāṛh today there is also great diversity. Gopinath Goswami for example holds a prestigious government position by day and is a Vaiṣṇava guru by night. Then there is Sri Rishi Das Goswami who is well established with his own ancestral land and Śiva temple, a teacher and performer all over Rāṛh. He is not from the original group of Vaiṣṇavas, but descended from one of their Rāṛhi converts. Being from a Rāṛhi kīrtan (called *Maynadal* or *Manoharshashi*) lineage his knowledge of kīrtan tāla is profound, as Rāṛhi kīrtan is said to be more developed than Navadvip kīrtan (JM 2008: Pers.comm.) which from investigation, seems a valid



Figure 0.21 Lalgarh kīrtan group with khol player Kamal Dev on right

comment (see Part one). Finally, there is a group of fifteen young men who have formed a Youth club, called the Lalgarh *Hari Gouri Kīrtan Sampradai* from a variety of caste and social backgrounds and perform kīrtan all over Purulia. They have a very significant connection with Lalgarh, where Caitanya is reported to have stayed,

I have a story. The committee people here at Lalgar asked us to play one year, but we did not because they wouldn't pay us enough money. Next day we had a very bad car accident and three people were badly injured. Two were in a coma and the doctors didn't think they would survive. So we came to this place Lalgarh and we prayed to the lord that if our team members should live we would play every year without pay. Because of Caitanya, Hari, we were successful, our wishes were granted, and since then we have been doing kīrtan here every year without money. So we know the importance of this place. Because of Caitanya they got well, so we feel Gauranga is still here, this place is very important for us (Kamaldev, 2006: Pers.comm.).

From my knowledge, I have never heard of anyone being refused from performing kīrtan on the basis of gender, caste, "tribe" or social group. In fact Jagaran Māhāto was also willing to teach women from overseas and took delight in showing off their musical talents to his male students. Kīrtan guru Mihir Māhāto, whose manuscript I was gifted, says that a person doesn't have to be from one of the traditional music castes, they only have to have sincerity and desire (1996: Pers.comm.). Kamaladev from the *Lalgar Youth Group*, says, "In *Hari nam* there is no question of castes, creed or colour it



Figure 0.22 The Śiva *lingams* at Madhu Sudan's *ashram*, Purulia

is open to all, if you come with a pure heart and mind then there is no question of caste," (2007: Pers.comm.).

The importance of guru is paramount and the guru/*shisha* system of kīrtan, as discussed below in Part one. Although it is not strictly Vaiṣṇavas who are the kīrtan guru's, it is however traditional, as Sri Rishi Das Goswami and Gopinath Goswami demonstrate. Generally speaking, while Rāṅh does have the caste system

common to the rest of India, there are no stringent requirements for training to become a kīrtan player (*kīrtaniyā*) as far as I am aware. A sense of social inclusion permeates Rāṅhi music culture like a subterranean flow, as revealed in the annual Śiva *gajan* festival

where all the village devotees (*bhogtas*) come together to form one Śiva clan (*gotra*). The instigator of popular kīrtan, Caitanya (15<sup>th</sup> century) who also included both Hindus and Muslims, untouchables and Brahmans into his fold, made it possible for those other than the traditional music castes to sing and play kīrtan together. The Dabar *mela* exemplified this egalitarianism, with kīrtan teams coming from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including: a) extended family members and friends from the same street (*para*), with the majority being from the same caste, such as the Vaiṣṇavas from Silfore; b) predominantly from a Scheduled Tribe and living in the same street (*para*) of the village, such as the Rājwar from Bagra; c) predominantly from the same caste and village, such as the Brahmans from Bhansh Ghar, and d) from different Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes living in the same village, such as the Karandhi group. Thus a broad panorama of cultural expertise was demonstrated at the Dabar kīrtan *mela*.



Figure 0.23 The Jain shrines at Deoglata, Purulia

#### D. Religious Culture

We think Śiva is more powerful than any other god so we always try to please Śiva. Śiva's door is always open to all people, for all religions (Kumar 1996: Pers.comm.).

The ancient kingdom of Rāṛh is reported to have been a religious/cultural nexus for Śaivism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Vaisnavism throughout the ages, with some of the more notable events listed in a brief chronology as follows: In 400BC Jainism was established by Vardhaman Mahavir in Astiknagar, (which later became known as Burdwan), Sainthia, (Sv miisth na in Sanskrit) now in Birbhum District and Adyapur, one of the names of the Jain deities, with shrines erected by a few members of the wealthy merchant *vaeshya* community (Kirtyananda 1996: Pers.comm., Sarkar 1981); In

350BC Gautama Buddha preached Buddhism in the kingdom of Magadha (adjoining Rāṛh) having a great influence upon the region (ibid.); In 330AD the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien (319-414 AD) stayed at Tamralipti port in Rāṛh for two years, copying Buddhist sacred books and images and reported that there were twenty-four Buddhist monasteries and a large number of monks at Tamralipti, a major port in Rāṛh at that time (Legge, 1886, Beal 1884).

In 600-625 AD the reigning King Shasaunka a staunch Shaivite, reunited the different kingdoms of Rāṛh for the last time. After his death, Rāṛh was ruled by the Magadha empire. From 800-1200 AD the Pala kings ruled Rāṛh and Mahayana Tantric schools of Buddhism flourished followed by Vaiṣṇavism (the Sena kings rule), from 1200- 1500 AD, during which time the *Gītagovinda* was composed, the devotional songs of the Caṇḍīdāsas and other Vaiṣṇavas who paved the way for the formulation of *nāma kīrtan* introduced by Caitanya.

From 1486-1700's AD, Vishvambhar Mishra (1486-1534) or Caitanya and Nityanānda Thakur, his close companion, preached Vaisnavism in Rāṛh, followed by Nitayananda's disciples Narottama Das, Govinda Das and others during seventeenth century Muslim rule. From 1690- 1912, Bengal was the arena of political resistance



Figure 0.24 Śiva (left) and Viṣṇu (right) depicted on a temple in Purulia

between the Muslim *nawabs* and British regime with their capital in Kolkata. The social and religious reformer Rammohan Roy (1774- 1833), born in Murshidabad of Rāṛh is considered to be the “father of the Bengali Renaissance” along with the Dwarakanath Tagore, who spearheaded the *Brahmā Samaj* movement. From India's independence in 1947 to the present day, India establishes a new international profile in the classical music world and urban film music industry, with traditional music of Rāṛh, particularly Baul and *Chhau* music, also exposed to audiences worldwide.

### i. Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism

However, without a doubt, lying beneath Jainism, Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism there is a profound familial bond with Śiva, as seen by the children's clay dolls of Śiva and Parvati scattered along village paths, where ancient Śiva *lingams* stand beneath large trees in every village covered daily with fresh *prasada* "offerings" of flowers, fruit and milk by the village women and children, and in the evenings the men come before Him to pay their obeisance before their performance. There is a common metaphor in Rāṛh that says Śiva is like an earthen pot and upon it are the colourful enamels of Buddhism, Jainism and Vaisnavism for in Rāṛh, Jain temples are found every ten miles, but a Śiva temple can be found in every village.

The musical expression of the Śiva cult permeates Rāṛh in through a conglomeration of ceremonies, as seen in the annual Śiva *gajan* "roaring" festival held in all the rural areas such as: the *loton* "stick" dance is performed by the devotees as they call out *Śiva Bone Bol*, "say the name of Śiva" repeatedly while jumping high in the air and hitting their sticks against each others in a spontaneous expression of joyous exuberance; the Purulia *Chhau* "masked dance of the warrior" is performed throughout



Figure 0.25 Śiva dancing in Purulia *Chhau*

the night; and the *carak* "Tantric hook swinging ceremony", where *Thakur* is worshipped in the form of Śiva and Śiva's spouse (*patini*), (LaTrobe 1996, Ferrari 2005).

For Sri Rishi Das Goswami Śiva is the *ādi guru*, "the one who never changes, whereas Viṣṇu has taken many incarnations on this earth" (2006: Pers.comm.). Depicted on the temples of Rāṛh (Figure 22) Śiva (*Hara*) is painted with a white crescent moon above His head, carrying a begging bowl, called "Brahmas skull" and

*trishula*, “trident”. Viṣṇu or Hari, on the other hand, is depicted with a blue body, holding a conch shell, the *paincajanya* and mace, or *kaumodaki* representing the elemental force. Śiva (Hara) and Viṣṇu (Hari) are depicted as two distinct sides of one body, because philosophically speaking, *Hari- Haratmaka*, this world is identified with both *Hara* and *Hari* the rhythms, or cycles of fertility and decay, “In our lives the battle between *Hari* and *Hara* goes on unabated. So long as *Hari* wins, the heart is astir with excitement – The moment *Hara* starts winning, the rhythm of life gets dimmed” (Sarkar 1992:6).

Various cultural embodiments of *Hari /Hara* in the music culture of Rāṛh are seen in Purulia *Chhau* dance music for example. Though Śiva *tandava* is the basis of the dance, Vaiṣṇava kīrtan melodies are performed when Śiva enters into the performance arena (*akara*). The *Chhau* musicians play the same Śiva Ranjani rāga heard in *marāī* kīrtan, when the performers join together to dance kīrtan around Śiva and goddess Durga at the end of the episode (*pala*), thus highlighting the combination of *Hara* and *Hari* in another of Rāṛh’s indigenous music genres. The merging of *Hara/Hari* is demonstrated in *marāī* kīrtan also through a multitude of ways, such as the potent Śiva Ranjani rāga counterpointed by the sensual *lasya* dance movements and *madhu* “sweet” sounding melodic lines of Dāspera for example, as discussed in Part two. The poignant combination of fierce (*tandava*) and gentle (*lasya*) expressions of Śiva/Parvati are visually apparent in the *Ardhanara Ishvara* sculptures on Rāṛhi temples. On one side Śiva is holding a small hand held drum (*damaru*) with two sides separated from each other by a thin neck-like structure.

One side symbolises the unmanifest (*Nirguna* Brahmā) and the other, the manifest (*Saguna* Brahmā) worlds connected by a small bridge, thus Śiva, is the guru that bridges Supreme Consciousness with worldly existence, called *Taraka* (bridge) Brahmā. Parvati on the other side is holding the conch shell, *shanka* or *panchjanya*, symbolising “auspiciousness”, “purity”, the sound which “rids the atmosphere of evil



Figure 0.26 *Ardhanara Ishvara*, Śiva and Parvati, Purulia

spirits” and played at the beginning and end of any religious performance. Indian ethnomusicologist, Binapani Māhāto comments on the significance of the divine couple Śiva/Parvati, and the Śiva/Viṣṇu combination,

Śiva is the symbol of *tandava*, besides him there is goddess Parvati and she is the *lasya* “graceful” part of *tandava*. *Tandava* is a virile dance and *lasya* is the soft one. When both are mixed together, then only something is created, male and female being united so that a new generation is born, as in the cult of fertility. This is seen in Seraikella *Chhau* dance, with *tandava* at its base, where the presiding deity is *Ardhanara Ishvara*, with one side of the body female and the other half, male. After Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism entered the society. They say that Sri Caitanya is the incarnation of goddess Radhika, and he admits that himself. It is clear that softness and grace, the feminine side, comes with Vaiṣṇavism. Kṛṣṇa is the incarnation of Viṣṇu, and Kṛṣṇa is a musician who plays the flute and attracts everyone around him, while if you hear the sound of Śiva *Shankar*, the time is to be alert. Musically speaking, Vaiṣṇava rāgas are more melodious, softer rāginis like Bageshrii rāga. These are in *kīrtan* and *jhumur* tunes. While the deep rāgas are for Śiva, like Khedar, Malkaus, they express a deep virile part inside. Śiva



Figure 0.27 The Vaiṣṇava kīrtan *mandīr*.



Figure 0.28 The Śiva temple next to it.

*Ranjani* rāga in kīrtan is a mixture, it is very graceful, beautiful but also very deep (2007: Pers.comm.).

Thus as described above Śiva *Ranjani* rāga, embodies both the fierce devotional expression of Śaivism as well the *lasya* harmonizing force. The fact that Śiva *Ranjani* rāga is the most common Hindustani classical rāga performed in *marai* kīrtan, as discussed in Part one two, illustrates the pervasive influence of Śaivism in Rāṛh. *Hara/Hari* with contrasting qualities depicted in *Ardhanara Ishvara*, are nevertheless inextricably connected, for in Purulia the local kīrtan experts say that the kīrtan incantation *Hari Bolo* has *Hara* (Śiva) embodied within it, and that when Caitanya came to Rāṛh, he realized the peoples devotion for Śiva and connected Kṛṣṇa with Śiva in the name *Hari*, so that the local people would accept Vaiṣṇavism more easily (Rājwar, Māhāto, Mahanti 2007: Pers.comm.). Thus at the base of the Rāṛh peoples culture lies the worship of Śiva seeping through and merging with the more contemporary expression of Vaiṣṇavism. In *marāī* kīrtan it is the Vaiṣṇava melodies that form the core of the traditional kīrtan tālas and *desi* rāgas with Śiva *Ranjani* rāga, traditional Baul songs and modern melodies (*rang*), adding “spice” to the mixture. Thus “kīrtan encompasses the whole of Rāṛhi culture” (JM 2008: Pers. comm.).

## ii. The *bhakti* movement

According to Dimock, the *bhakti* movement was spearheaded or rather driven from within by the *Sahajiyā* movement (1966: 56) with kīrtan as its musical, literary expression. During the Buddhist Pala kings reign (9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> centuries) the *Sahajiyā* movement or “the easy, natural way”, to bring about the divinization of human love through sexual/spiritual practices, had “its roots in the Tantric cult of Bengal and was embraced by the lower castes en mass” (Bhattacharya 1967:45). During Sena rule however, Buddhist Tantra was submerged beneath Vaiṣṇava Tantra and the *Sahajiyā* movement flourished “but within a closed circle” (ibid.).

**Jayadeva** wrote his renowned *Gītagovinda* during the Sena rule at a time when the Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition flourished and became popular within the context of the Gauriya (Bengal) *bhakti* movement from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (Stoller-Miller, Dimock,

Levertov and Bhattacharyā). Although kīrtan was already in existence before the Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā kīrtans composed by Jayadeva, yet it was he who brought to life the passionate love between Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā, saturating his works with the *madhu bhava* or “tender emotion of erotic love”. Classical rāgas were designated for Jayadeva’s masterpiece, although it is perplexing today which rāgas were used at the time. Yet, “Jayadeva’s lyrics would not have survived, and the Vaiṣṇava lyric poetry would long have gone out of fashion, but for their music” says Goswami (2002:98), Indian historian and writer, who discusses the importance of musical performance in the propagation of the *bhakti* cult,

It is believed that Jayadeva sang in the royal courts as well as temples and that Badu Caṇḍīdāsa was a great performer, that he moved from place to place with his troupe to perform the Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan songs. These and the other Vaiṣṇava *padavalli* songs became an important medium for propagating the *bhakti* cult (ibid.).

Similarly, Sen suggests that the lyrics of the *padavalli* kīrtans would never have survived but for the composed music and Caitanya’s profound love for Jayadeva’s kīrtans naturally had a profound influence on his devotees,

Although kīrtan songs were being composed long before [Caitanya], under Shri Caitanya the Vaiṣṇava songs in Bengali flourished in surprising number, variety and depth. Caitanya was a tireless singer of Kṛṣṇa devotional songs. So when Caitanya himself took ardent interest in kīrtan the spotlight of popular interest fell on this genre and people in ever increasing numbers as poet composers and singers began to take part in the *bhakti* movement. (Goswami, 2002:1)

In the Birbhum District at Kendulī, a temple has been erected in honour of Jayadeva and an annual Baul *mela* hosted in his name, where it is not unusual to find more than 20,000 Bauls attending. Jayadeva, though not a Baul himself is celebrated as the guru of both the Bauls and Vaiṣṇavas in Rāṛh, “Jayadeva was a romantic poet (*prema kabi*) and he was the guru of both Baul and Vaiṣṇava, because both sing his songs sincerely” (Taraka Das Baul 2007: Pers.comm.).



Figure 0.29 Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa entwined, Devi Das Baul ashram, Purulia

I can't say that Jayadeva is totally a Baul because he hasn't written anything about Baul spiritual practices to do with the body (*deha tattva*), which are essential in Baul life, or any "double meaning" songs. He has written only about Rādhā Kṛṣṇa so he is not a full Baul, but he has made a pathway for both Vaiṣṇavas and Bauls, he has influenced both (*ibid.*).

**The Chandidas's:** Jayadeva was followed by three great kīrtan poets, whose last name was the same, yet distinguished by their place of origin: Dwija Caṇḍīdāsa (1390-1430) was from Nanur, Birbhum, Dina Caṇḍīdāsa was from Burdwan and Barhu or Badhu Caṇḍīdāsa was from Chatna in Bankura (Sarkar, 2004:10), all of whom wrote Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa love songs. Dwija Caṇḍīdāsa is considered to be the most important of the Caṇḍīdāsa poets who wrote the *Sri Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan* (Mukherjee, 1999:101). There is however some contention about the dates of the Caṇḍīdāsa poets and the source of their inspiration, i.e. whether or not they were practitioners of esoteric cults (Dimock, 1966:61). However, at least one Caṇḍīdāsa was practicing *Sahajiyā* Tantra which supplied him with constant material for his Rādhā/ Kṛṣṇa kīrtan ((Dasgupta ORC, p.132) Dimock, 1966:57). Another of the Caṇḍīdāsa's, signed his name as the servant of Vasuli, a name of a Tantric goddess from the Birbhum District, (*ibid*: 67). Though these arguments are inconclusive, what is certain is that Jayadeva's and Caṇḍīdāsa's books gave Caitanya tremendous inspiration (Mukherjee 1999:101), as reported in the *Caitanya Caritamrita*, Madhya 10:113, "Vidyapati, Caṇḍīdāsa and the *Sri Gītagovinda*- [Jayadeva] these three gave Prabhu great joy" (Kaviraja 1600's).

Parallels can be drawn between Dwija Caṇḍīdāsa's and Jayadeva's life for both were Brahmans who thwarted caste distinctions and religious orthodoxy. Jayadeva used Sanskrit, the language of the educated elite while adopting popular song meters in his verse which made it accessible to a wide audience. Caṇḍīdāsa was the first of the Rāṛhi kīrtan poets to write in the vernacular, with a bold, directness. Though common amongst *bhakti* poets to write in the female

persona, Caitanya’s mysticism went further. He is reported to have all of the qualities of Rādhā, swooning and crying tears of love for Kṛṣṇa.

Dimock writes “the most significant aspect for the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal was Kṛṣṇa the lover and the beloved, whose foremost characteristic is the giving and receiving of joy, who is



Figure 0.30 Sri Caitanya and his kīrtan party in popular imagery (Mahanti’s house)

approachable only by *bhakti*, devotion and selfless dedication” (ibid: 1967p. xiv). A Vaiṣṇavas attitude must be one of surrender to the Deity so that the nectar, “honey” or “sweetness” (*madhur*) of devotion can flow in the relationship of erotic love (*sringara rasa*). When the *kīrtaniyās* identify themselves as Rādhā and direct all of their longings towards Hari, by singing his name loudly with full concentration, the mind is “emptied” and thus can absorb the sound (*shabdha*) of God (*nada Brahmā*).

A verse from the poet Satyendranath Dutta gives a similar indication, *Kīrtane āṛ Bāuler gāne āmrā diyechi khuli, Maner gopane nibhrta bhuvane dvār chila yataguli*. “Through kīrtan and Baul songs we have opened up, opened up all the doors hidden in our minds and in our solitary

worlds” (Sarkar 2004:22).

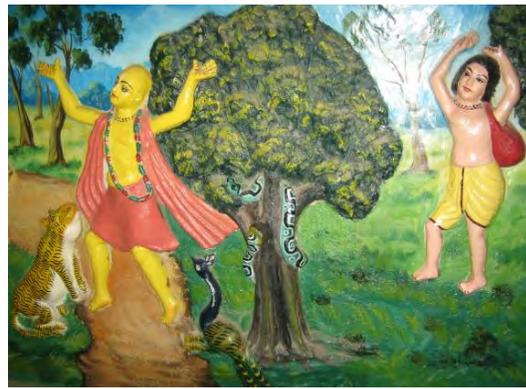


Figure 0.31 Caitanya and Nityananda travelling through Rāṅgh, from a temple in Navadvip

**Vishvambara Mishra or Sri Caitanya**, his initiated name, (1486-1533), was the Vaiṣṇava saint from Navadvip, born at the confluence between Rāṅgh and Bagri during a transitional phase or historical junction between the old and the new emerging orders. Because of the prevalent religious and social stagnation<sup>1</sup> Caitanya envisioned a collective spiritual renewal called Gauriya Vaiṣṇavism to revitalise spirituality (*dharma*) and public welfare, with universal education a key factor (Chakrabarti, 1991:454). After being

<sup>1</sup> To counteract the devaluation of human values arising from the combined influence of Jainism with its impractical philosophy of *ahimsa* (non- harm), and the Bauls (from *Batul* which means „mad“ in Sanskrit) Caitanya’s revolutionary *Gauriya bhakti* movement infused a sense of social egalitarianism through kīrtan.

initiated in Gaya by Ishvara Puri, Caitanya became an emotional mystic and the leader of a small “underground” movement of Vaiṣṇavas from Navadvip. Sen reports,

Caitanya and his companions took the various names of Kṛṣṇa, in which they recited, sang and danced together. This was the beginning of congregational kīrtan introduced by Caitanya as the only act of worship (1960:80).

Flood suggests that at this time, Caitanya began to experience ecstatic states by focusing on the love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, a love that is strongly erotic, though with an eroticism which is regarded as transcendental and not worldly. The ecstatic experience of divine love play he calls *līla kīrtan* (1996:139). Due to his mother’s wish, Caitanya’s place of residence was the Jagannath temple at Puri and on his journeying from Navadvip to Puri he would invariably pass through Rāṛh. Local experts say that the emerging *Gaurīya* Vaiṣṇavism, adopted Rāṛhi kīrtan traditional melodies for its propagation (*pracar*) purposes, for although Caitanya revitalized the kīrtan music tradition, he did not invent it, as it already existed in Rāṛh long before Caitanya’s time (N.Māhāto, JM, Goswami 2007: Pers.comm.). It is likely therefore that prior to the Caitanya era, that Rāṛhi kīrtan had developed to the point of being capable of expressing the subtle spiritual and erotic nuances of Jayadeva and Chandīdas’s kīrtans but it was Caitanya and his followers that were able to inspire a mass movement. In other words, though *pada* kīrtan existed in Rāṛh prior to the fifteenth century it was Caitanya who initiated an invigorated ambience of spiritual, social awakening and rejuvenation, where a direct experience of the divine was advocated, inspiring many Vaiṣṇava musicians of the time to compose new kīrtans in praise of Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā.

Indian historian, Sukhumar Sen reports that the social revolutionary side of Caitanya is best illustrated in a story where he entrusted his companions, Nityanānda Thakur from Rāṛh and Yavana Haridas a Muslim devotee, to perform a public kīrtan in the daytime. However, certain men in the town who were jealous of Caitanya because of rumours saying that he was the next *avatara* of Kṛṣṇa. They complained to the Kazi (Muslim magistrate) about the public kīrtan and as a result it was forbidden. But Caitanya did not accept the prohibition and led a large kīrtan



Figure 0.32 Sri Caitanya and Nityananda, the divine twins, Kashipur, Manbhūm

party through the streets of Navadvip to the residence of the Kazi. After the kīrtan crowd became more frenzied the Kazi came out in a chastened mood, begged pardon and withdrew his order. Sen suggests that “it was perhaps the first act of civil disobedience in the history of India” (1980: 81). Chakrabarti comments on the organizational strengths of Vaiṣṇavism, saying that “it was with the help of this organisational strength that the followers of Caitanya could resist social opposition and assault from the state” (1991:454).

**Nityanānda Thakur:** Nityanānda Thakur, Caitanya’s closest companion, was from Ekchakra village, Birbhum, Rāṅh, a place renowned for Baul *gan* and kīrtan. The two having met in Navadvip at Nandan Acarya’s house when Caitanya was in his early 20’s, and Nityanānda in his 30’s, worked side by side for most of their lives. Due to this closeness, Caitanya and Nityanānda were likened to Kṛṣṇa and Balaram and the two were inseparable during the early years of Gauriya Vaiṣṇavism.

However, much controversy surrounds Nityanānda’s later years for two main reasons.

Dimock writes that Nityanānda was concerned with the lower echelons of society (1966:69), that he stayed with the low caste people, (*sudras*) and was not averse to visiting the houses of the untouchable Āndālas (ibid.) which offended some of the Goswamins. Secondly, Nityanānda did not remain an ascetic as did Caitanya and his Goswamins. Nityanānda was initiated into Tantric *sādhana* at 12 years of age and lived as a renunciate (*avadhuta*) for many years, and only later married Basudha and



Figure 0.33 Nityanandas temple at Kardaha where the devotees line up to have *darshana*

Janavhi, the daughters of *pandit* Surya Dasa. However, contrary to Dimock's view that Nityanānda's marriage “made Caitanya furiously angry” (Dimock 1966:49), local experts say that Caitanya and Nityanānda were in agreement about his marriage, that he was to propagate Vaiṣṇavism as a householder (*grhastha*) (Mukhopadhyay 2000:51). Thus Acarya Madhalji says<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>2</sup> from the *Nitai Gaur Sampradai* in Viṣṇupur



Figure 0.34 Nityananda's shrine at Kardaha, showing images of his descendents

Caitanya Mahaprabhu is called the father of kīrtan, he was distributing kīrtan in certain places, but Nityanānda was the main propagator (*pracaraka*) as he moved and distributed kīrtan all over Rāṅh (2009: Pers.comm.).

Nityanānda's contribution to Caitanya's missionary work is immense for due to Nityanānda's influence Gauriya Vaiṣṇavism spread throughout the region, a missionary movement which gave respect to all levels in society, especially the lower castes and classes. The Rāṅhi *kīrtanīyas* allegiance towards Nityanānda, their *acarya* "example in spiritual life", is demonstrated by the fact that before any kīrtan performance in Purulia, Nityanānda's name is always called first, as *Sri Nitai*, (an abbreviation of Nityanānda)

*Gaur*, [Caitanya] *Hari Hari Bol*.

Secondly, Nityanānda was from Birbhum, Rāṅh, where Baul music and Jayadeva's kīrtans were enormously popular, (Goswami 2002: ff). This means that the connection between Nityanānda and Caitanya was mutually beneficial for Nityanānda introduced Rāṅhi kīrtan to Caitanya and in turn, Rāṅhi kīrtan was a tool for propagating Caitanya's *bhakti* movement locally. Later in life, Nityanānda settled in a small village close to the river Ganges, a place called Kardaha, north of Kolkata. The word Kardaha comes from "straw land" and the legends goes that Nityanānda was instructed by Caitanya to go to the king of Gaura and ask for some land on which to settle. But the king was not impressed with Nityananda "looking like a Rāṅhi man"<sup>3</sup> and so donated only a very small piece of land. When Nityanānda came to the place and saw only a tiny area of land surrounded by water, not even big enough to build a house on, he tugged on a piece of straw and pulled up a large tract of land beneath, which was called Kardaha which means "straw island" (SM, 2009: Pers.comm.).

The home of Nityanānda's present family (the 17<sup>th</sup> generation) is still at Kardaha and a temple stands where Nityanānda used to sit for his meditation in front of the images of both Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. Every morning Nityanānda's statue of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa and his Śiva *lingam*

<sup>3</sup> S.Mahato, pers.comm.2009

are brought out from the inner temple by Brahman priests for his devotees to see and mediate upon (*dārshana*), just as Nityanānda did. However, I was unable to locate any *marāī* kīrtan group at the temple and the only kīrtan player in the area was singing *pada* kīrtans with harmonium and was not aware of the traditional Rāṛhi kīrtans such as Dāṣpera, Pākāchutā etc. Hence it appears that the practice of singing the Rāṛhi kīrtan at this temple may have fallen out of use, although this is still inconclusive.

**Narottama Das:** Narottama Das (d.1630) was the principal disciple of Nityanānda Thakur and a *dhrupadiya*, said to have been trained by Haridas made renowned by his disciple Tansen. Narottama Das’s kīrtan compositions are still performed today in Purulia, as reported in Part two. From a historical perspective, Sen’s writings (1960) shed light on Narottama Das’s role in the development and systematisation of kīrtan, affirming local experts (Māhāto, Mahanti 2007: Pers.comm.) opinion that “kīrtan prevailed since early times but was elaborated and developed by Narottama Das towards the end of the sixteenth century” (Sen 1960:102). Sen also discusses how *padavali* (Bengali Vaiṣṇava lyrics) verses were transformed into *lila* kīrtan, systematized and firmly established the practice of singing them in public by Narottama Das, in other words, they were brought out from the royal courts into the open platform (1980:81). In Vaiṣṇava history the festival at which Narottama Das presented his new kīrtan style on the occasion of the ceremonial installation of deities Rāḍhā/ Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya/ Nityanānda in the temple was called the Kheturi Festival. Therefore “To him [Narottama Das] goes the credit for the formulation and standardisation of the kīrtan style” (ibid.).

Sen also says that Narottama Das was instrumental in developing two lighter styles of kīrtan, “which were influenced a great deal by folk music, and presented a unique and highly expressive form of Indian music” (ibid: 98), which may possibly be local folk music genres, i.e. Baul and *jhumur* songs of Rāṛh, if their present popularity among the Vaiṣṇavas today is any indication. However, this notion also needs further investigation and verification.

He further says that Narrotama Das’s implementation of a new form of kīrtan was successful in uniting the different Vaiṣṇava factions of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism composed the Goswamin’s spiritual philosophy and the characteristic features of Bengali devotionism such as Tantric *Sahaja* form of worship (Chakrabarti 1991:456). Although *marāī* kīrtan is said to have existed in a more sketchy Narottama Das (Sen, Goswami, Chakrabarti), it was further developed

along similar lines to *pada* “song verse” *kīrtan*, except that instead of singing the *padas*, they sing *nāma kīrtan* (the name of god) only. Narottama Das also fixed the *Gauralap* securely within the opening *jhuran* of the *kīrtan* performance for the first time, in order to unite the worshippers of Caitanya Gaur and Nityananda from Rarh with the Goswamin from Vrindavan. Hence the works of Narottama Das Thakur, Lochandas Thakur (1523-89), who wrote the *Caitanya Mangala* (ibid: 207) Jyanandadas Thakur (also mid sixteenth century) and Govindadas (late seventeenth century) who wrote *Kṛṣṇa lila padavali* among others, brought a depth of *bhakti* devotion on the theme of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa to different layers of society never known before. Govindadas’s poetry is written from the feminine perspective, as is typical of the *bhakti* poets,

Let the earth of my body be mixed with the earth my beloved walks on  
Let the fire of my body be the brightness in the mirror that reflects his face  
Let the water of my body join the waters of the lotus pool he bathes in  
Let the breath of my body be air lapping his [Kṛṣṇa] tired limbs  
Let me be sky and moving through me that dark cloud Shyama [Kṛṣṇa] my beloved  
(Dimock & Levertov, 1967:p. xiv).



Figure 0.35. Inside a *kīrtan mandīr*, Purulia

### 3. Kīrtan

#### A. Sources of information

##### i. Literature

As mentioned above, while the historical, social, and religious context of kīrtan has been documented to some extent, scant can be found on the actual kīrtan *music*, with notable exceptions being Stephen Slawek (1988) and Edward O. Henry (2002: 33-55). Slawek's article on *Popular Kīrtan in Benares* (1988: 77-92) discusses the emergence of devotion to a personal god in Hinduism, tracing its growth from the sixth century B.C.E. onwards with the Vaiṣṇava Ālvārs and Saiva Nayanar saints of South India, to Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavism (ibid: 91). From a purely musical perspective, Slawek describes the repertoire of Benares kīrtan, with musical items drawn from a diversity of sources ranging from Bhojpuri village music to the latest hit tunes of the *filmi git* (ibid: 79) as well as a typical rendition of *nam* kīrtan performance (ibid: 80). He states that kīrtan is of an eclectic and derivative nature, with elements held in common with North and South Indian classical music. Although he suggests that the ultimate origins of kīrtan might be Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*, from Rāṛh, no mention is made of the kīrtan performance structure or kīrtan rāgas/tālas that are integral to the Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition. Slawek's paper is mainly concerned with concepts closely affiliated with the *Great /Little* traditions and secondly, Benares kīrtan is geographically and culturally distinct from Rāṛhi kīrtan.

On the other hand, Henry's article on *The Rationalization of Intensity in Indian Music*, places Indian kīrtan second in the hierarchy (2002:35) with the Bauls of Bengal as first, in the long list of Indian music genres with the goal of generating intense feeling and excitement in its listeners. Drawing from Rouget's study of music and trance, Henry discusses the bedrock techniques of musical intensity outlining these as: an increase in tempo, volume and rhythmic density, a melodic ascent relative to a fixed pitch, the holding of a single high pitch for what seems like a very long time, arousing lyrics, a shouting of interjections, forceful, exciting demeanor and dance, repetition of Sanskrit incantations or *mantra* and a movement from free rhythm to fast beat all of which aptly describes Rāṛhi kīrtan, while not diminishing the highly structured, compositional aspect of the musical performance.

Mention is made of Rolf Groesbeck's work on the Tyampaka (2000:939), in Henry's article (2002:43), a genre within the larger category of South Indian temple drumming in Kerala where the accelerating effect of the successive *nilas*, a constituent part of the *ennam*, "a largely fixed, non notated pattern", is but one aspect of Tyampaka's constant rhythmic and metric intensification and acceleration (1995:415). He continues to say that towards the end of the performance the musicians express excitement caused by the increase in tempo, rhythmic density and volume, and the decrease in tāla cycle length by jumping ecstatically and waving their arms in the air with fingers pointed. Henry also discusses Slawek's (1986) report on Benares *nāma kīrtan*, or *Hari kīrtan*, which he uses as a prime example of the process of intensity in Indian music. He cites a recording in 1971, where a soloist sings a phrase which the Chorus then attempts to duplicate, parrying the leaders challenge with an accompanying increase in tempo, which starts at a moderate pace of 81 beats per minute (b.p.m.) and increases to 147 b.p.m. (2002:35),

This simple music material was also stretched over fifteen minutes, during which a series of controlled upward shifts in dynamic intensity and tempo took place. These changes were reflected in both the voice quality and the instrumental accompaniment provided by the *dholak* and the cymbals. Body position was also changed in correlation with the tempo shifts. The performance began with the participants in a relaxed cross legged seated position. As the tempo increased so their backs straightened, then hands were lifted from stomach to chest level. At faster tempo the arms were raised so the elbows were at chest level, and the hands at face level. Finally when the loudest volume and fastest tempo was reached participants raised themselves on one knee, shouting as loud as possible, neck muscles straining, contorted faces ((1986:12), (Henry, 2002:36)).

In the region of Slawek's investigation, the intensity of the kīrtan music was documented yet the musical structure that facilitated it, was not. However, in Rāṛhi kīrtan, the significance of the performance structure is intrinsic to the creation of ecstatic devotional expression (see Part two). Apart from Slawek and Henry, scant documentation exists on the traditional kīrtan *music* of Rāṛh except in brief: Bhattacharyā (1967), Goswami (2002), La Trobe (1996), Sarkar (2004), Sen (1960). Perhaps there are few who

report on the *music* because “the texts are not only easier to reproduce but are also deemed to convey the essential meaning and significance of the songs” states Sorrell (2007:119), in reference to S.W. Fallon, the nineteenth-century British ethnomusicologist. By his omission of any *musical* material on Indian folksongs, Fallon was “typical of his era in treating text and context as the real stuff of folksong research, to the exclusion of music” (ibid.). However, Sorrell’s musical transcription of Ram Narayan’s *sarangi* performance (1980) and Qureshi’s (1986) of a Qawwali performance are innovative examples “of the real stuff” of contemporary ethnomusicological practice.

In terms of Rāḥi kīrtan, there is evidence that some very important sources of knowledge have already been lost to the next generation as demonstrated by the comments made by kīrtan experts recently about the present generation of *kīrtaniyās* not being expected to know the traditional kīrtan songs (Rājwar, 2007: Pers.comm.) and the difficulties finding a kīrtan expert that can decipher the kīrtan notation of the late Mihir Māhāto (1947), due to the fact that the traditional knowledge is currently diminishing. Hence, my concern is the criticality of researching a music tradition that is reported to have profound, reformative effects, yet according to some, is disappearing from village life. Mihir Māhāto says,



Figure 0.36 Summer rainfall in Kostuka village following kīrtan.

Kīrtan gives mental peace, you know the people of this world are not happy, their minds are full of tension, so if they sing kīrtan, they will be relieved from sorrow and mental anguish. Yet it is decreasing, slowly, slowly kīrtan is disappearing from our village, for now the younger generations are taking more interest in the cinema, TV and video and not devoting time to kīrtan (ibid.).

Contrary to Mihir Māhāto’s opinion however, JM reports that he is presently training at least four kīrtan teams in Purulia. In one village where he is teaching, there are three gurus working with their different kīrtan groups. Hence from the perspective of one

kīrtan expert, kīrtan is receding from village life due to economic and social pressures, and on the other, there is a strong demand for kīrtan teachers in Purulia. From observation, both perspectives are valid, for as local expertise in kīrtan is diminishing, there also seems to be a new surge of inspiration, coming in various forms, from both within and without the present tradition, as time and effort will soon reveal. Yet it is certain that this very rich, potent and sophisticated music tradition has a major contribution to make to the existing body of devotional music and dance.

## ii. The oral tradition

Kīrtan is both a literary and an oral tradition. There is an abundance of Vaiṣṇava song poems in print and still to be published<sup>1</sup> (see Part one), as well as a wealth of kīrtan stories, that are not reflected in the literature, but shared among devotees. In terms of the oral tradition, reports of kīrtan experiences and stories (*katha* kīrtan) from Caitanya's time are documented in the *The Caitanya Caritamṛta* (sixteenth century) written by Kṛṣṇa Das Kaviraja who resided in Jhamatpur village in Burdwan district of Rarh (Sarkar 1985: 245), and recited during performance. However, the rich oral tradition reflected in the guru's teachings and passed down generation after generation has not been published for public viewing, it has been dictated by the guru and written down by the disciple during lessons and kept as a personal document. Therefore, although kīrtan literature is available in print, kīrtan *music* is largely an oral tradition, yet with its own system of notation, called *Ba*, passed down generation to generation of disciples, as the personal manuscripts of Mihir Māhāto, Jagaran Māhāto and Sri Rishi Das Goswami bear testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as compositions by local *kīrtaniyās* Udai Karmakar, Dijyotama Thakur and descendents in Purulia viewed by Tinku and I.

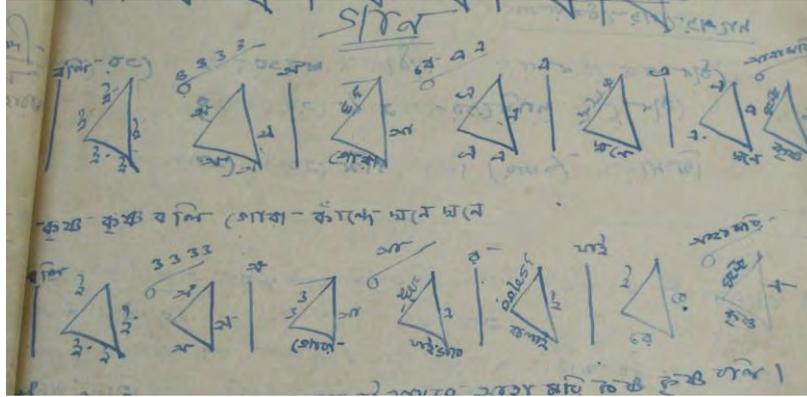


Figure 0.37 *Ba* notation of Mihir Māhātos showing eleven mātrās.

The widespread absence of printed material on *kīrtan music* today, is perhaps because of an attitude reflected below,

Many people believe that if you put *kīrtan* music into print, it will die. So by listening and learning through the *guru*, it stays alive, hence you will not find any printing materials on *kīrtan*. I have my own written “copy” [record of lessons] dictated to me at the time of learning by my *guru*. (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

Though it is the first time that it has been documented, it is only a matter of time before *Ba* notation will be available in print for the *kīrtan* experts showed



Figure 0.38 The Rajwar *Kīrtan* group from Bhagra village.

no opposition towards me including it in my thesis or publishing it in a book, hence I shall investigate it further in the near future.

### **B. Questions and hypothesis**

My research has been conducted with three primary questions in mind: a) The first is of an ethnographic nature, related to the

documentation of the previously unrecorded *Rāṛhi marāī kīrtan* tradition with an emphasis on the *music*; the second is about the origins of *Rāṛhi kīrtan* spurred by various

contradictory comments made during interviews in the field, and the third is an investigation into the effects of Rāṛhi kīrtan on both participants and non-participants alike.

With reference to the first question I was able to identify many of *marāī* kīrtan's primary musical characteristics after a few months of intensive observation and interviews in the field, as described above under Methodology above and in the musical analysis Part two. Regarding the second question on the origins of *marāī* kīrtan, numerous *kīrtaniyās* responded with the names of various Gods and saints outside of Rāṛh. Yet, I was perplexed as to how such a potent and organised musical tradition could have originated elsewhere. This query was to take me outside of Purulia to Nadia and Navadvip, the birthplace of Caitanya and to Viṣṇupur to investigate further, as reported below. The third research question on the effects of kīrtan music, both mundane and transcendental, was limited primarily to historical records (from the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* for example) and oral findings, as described in the Six Kīrtan teams, in Part one. Unfortunately this question requires a great deal more research than is possible in this thesis, and hence will have to be investigated at a later date.

The primary focus of my investigation is therefore of an ethnographic nature, focusing on the musical characteristics of *marāī* kīrtan, its meanings, compositional structures and strategies geared towards the creation of intensity, and ecstatic unity. Through observation, interviews, and musical analysis my research reveals, contrary to popular notions that it is derivative, *marai* kīrtan is original/traditional at its core and derivative/contemporary only at its periphery. The titles of the core tālas Dāṣpera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā for example, are not known Hindustani classical rāgas or tālas, they are specific to Rāṛhi kīrtan as the names demonstrate. Popular melodies from the folk music culture (*rang*) and even Hindi film melodies have also been incorporated into the performance tradition, but are situated on the periphery and generally performed after the central corpus of traditional tālas and hence are generally of a more contemporary nature. Specific Bauls songs and Hindustani rāgas such as Śiva Ranjani rāga are also integral to the performance for cultural as well as musical reasons, and lie between the two (central corpus and periphery). Thus, my thesis concentrates on the extant kīrtan *music* and performance structure rather than the origins and evolution of the Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition.

Through this investigation my endeavour is to demonstrate that *marāī* kīrtan of



Figure 0.39 Tapan Haldar of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Sampradāy.

Rāṛh, in its broadest sense may be categorized in the pan Indian genre as *samgīta*, i.e. instrumental music, song and dance, yet it also has many distinct characteristics that set it apart including: an original set of kīrtan rāgas/rāginis (as called by the *kīrtaniyās*), roughly defined as a group of melodic lines performed in a cyclic manner derived both from known i.e. kīrtan *gans*, (songs) and unknown sources, with a fixed tāla, at its core; a traditional dance form called *lalita marmika* and in most cases,

contemporary choreography; specific adaptations from classical Hindustani rāgas that are significant to the religious culture of this region; and popular song melodies (*rang*) from Baul and folk (*jhumur*) traditions incorporated as highlights, or transitional pieces between major rāgas and ending sections held securely within a unique performance structure that facilitates the creation of musical intensity and ecstatic unity and not replicated in other Indian music tradition to my knowledge. Hence, rather than being largely derivative, my findings reveal that *marāī* kīrtan of Purulia, exists not only as a contemporary expression of Vaiṣṇavism (with Śiva worship at its base) but also as an original, highly structured and extremely intense music performance tradition. In other words, behind this wildly ecstatic expression of devotional singing and dance, there is a central corpus of tālas/ rāga melodies and a clearly defined musical structure which has not originated from any outside source other than Rāṛh itself.

### **C. The origins of the *marāī* kīrtan tradition - following the guru's trail**

Further to my description of methodology in the introduction above, I expanded my research criteria to include studying *marāī* kīrtan from the perspective of a musician with Sri Jagaran Māhāto during my fieldwork trip in 2009. The second part of this research was designated to following up on some hunches about the origins of Rāṛhi kīrtan. As is logical, the question of origins arose only after a period of intensive observation and interviews in the field, when I realised that the depth and sophistication of the present day *marāī* kīrtan tradition, could not have come about by coincidence, it must have been

formulated or invented by one or more kīrtan composers. The question was, who, when and where? I knew I could not possibly answer these questions, without some kind of miraculous intervention, especially as previous informants had told me that *marāī* kīrtan came from Śiva, Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya or from Navadvip (D. Māhāto, J. Māhāto, Rājwar, 2008: Pers.comm.).

Of course, the notion that kīrtan comes from Śiva cannot be disputed as He is called the first (*ādi*) lord and to Him is ascribed the invention of music, the six rāgas and thirty six rāginis (Sarkar 1983:9), while to Parvati is ascribed the invention of *lalita marmika* [kīrtan dance], *marmika* meaning “that which touches the innermost recesses of the heart” (Sarkar 1987:14). Śiva is always worshipped before any creative or spiritual endeavour in Rāḥ, and so naturally He is considered to be the originator of *marāī* kīrtan.



Figure 0.40 Kṛṣṇa / Rāḍhā at the ISCON temple at Mayapur.

Similarly, the notion that Kṛṣṇa invented kīrtan cannot be disputed, for it was He who played the magic flute enchanting Rāḍhā and the *gopis*, making them sing and dance in a frenzy of passion around Him. However, the scope of this thesis does not extend to a discussion on the ultimate origins of Indian music and dance, but the current practice of kīrtan *music* in a specific location of Rāḥ.

Hence in order to investigate the contemporary *marāī* kīrtan music I visited Navadvip, the birthplace of Caitanya, where a few of the Rāḥi *kirtaniyas* said that the tradition kīrtan rāgas were invented. I observed numerous kīrtan performances and interviewed *kīrtaniyās* Tapan Haldar, Kartik Das and Sudhir Magdhal<sup>2</sup> (Figure 0.34) realising that if the Rāḥi kīrtan tradition had originated there, then the kīrtan tālas would be known by at least a few and passed down generation to generation, as is traditional, or at least some remnant would remain to be seen or heard of the original kīrtan performance structures. However, the Rāḥi kīrtan tālas were not known to my informants, and according to the kīrtans that I

<sup>2</sup> Including Tapan Haldar of the *Hare Kṛṣṇa Samprady* at Banshidas Babaji Ashram, Kartik Das and Sudhir Madhal from the ISKON temple at Mayapur

observed, they were not being performed. Thus it seems likely that Rāṅh kīrtan, in its present form did not originate in Navadvip as some informants suggested.

The next stop was Viṣṇupur, the ancient capital of Hindustani classical music where I met Acaryā Madhalji from the *Nitai Gaur Sampradai* to discuss the origins and *marāī* kīrtan and its connection with Hindustani classical music. Madhalji had a number of spiritual aspirants (*sādhakas*), including Śiva devotees living with him at his ashram, performing kīrtan and spiritual practices (*sādhanā*) together. During interviews<sup>3</sup> we discussed the traditional *marāī* kīrtan tālas such as Sohni, Dāspera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā etc of which he was aware, although he is more familiar with *pada* kīrtan. When I sang Pākāchutā to him for identification purposes, as I had learnt from Jagaran Māhāto, Madhalji said that they are following the Garanhati *gharana* of kīrtan and the tune is a little different, (see Part one). Being from Viṣṇupur, he said that “there is also the effect of classical tunes, Śiva Ranjani, Vehag, Malcosi, rāgas that are used in kīrtan” (2009 Pers.comm.). When I asked him about the origin of *marāī* kīrtan, he said,



Figure 0.41 Acarya Madhalji from Viṣṇupur.

If you go back to the Narada *puranas* then you will see that Lord Śiva is the creator of *sangīta*, Caitanya Dev is the father of kīrtan and he was distributing the name in certain places, but Nityanānda is the main propagator of kīrtan (*pracaraka*), and the pattern or kīrtan style has been changed by Narottama Das Thakur (ibid.).

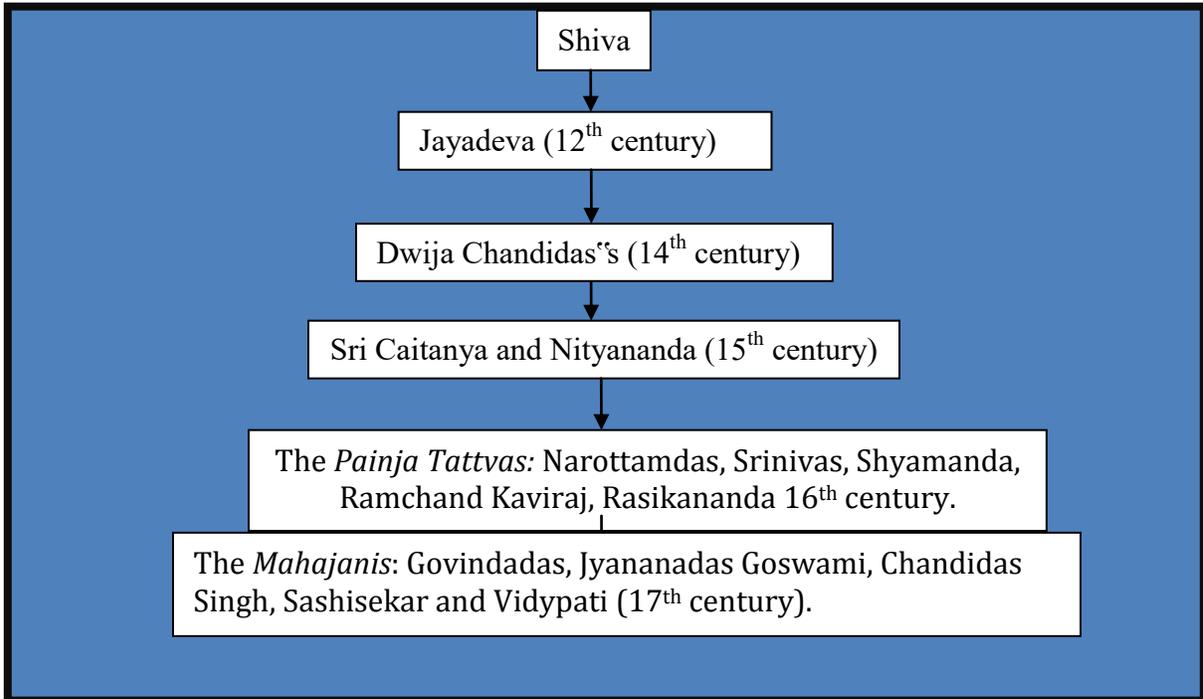
Hence there are four personalities in the hierarchical line of descent according to Madhalji that runs from Śiva - Caitanya – Nityanānda - Narottama Das. I assume the original kīrtan poets, Jayadeva and the Chandidas<sup>4</sup>s were also there, as Caitanya always

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<sup>3</sup> February 2009.

carried their song books with him, although he failed to mention them. The next clue came when Madhalji decided to ask his elder brother (*dada*) about the origins of the *kīrtan tālas*, who said that it was the five saints, called the *Painca Tattvas* whose names are Srinivas, Narottama Das Thakur, Shyamanda, Ramchand Kavirāja and Rasikananda, the disciples of Nityanānda who invented these *kīrtan tālas*. He continued to say that after these five came the next generation of *kīrtaniyās* called the “*Mahajanis* who were Govinda Das, Jyanana Das Goswami, Chandidas, Sashisekar and Vidypati, who wrote many *padas* on Rāḍhā Kṛṣṇa” (ibid.).

Table 0.1 The origins of *kīrtan* according to Acarya Madhalji from Viṣṇupur.



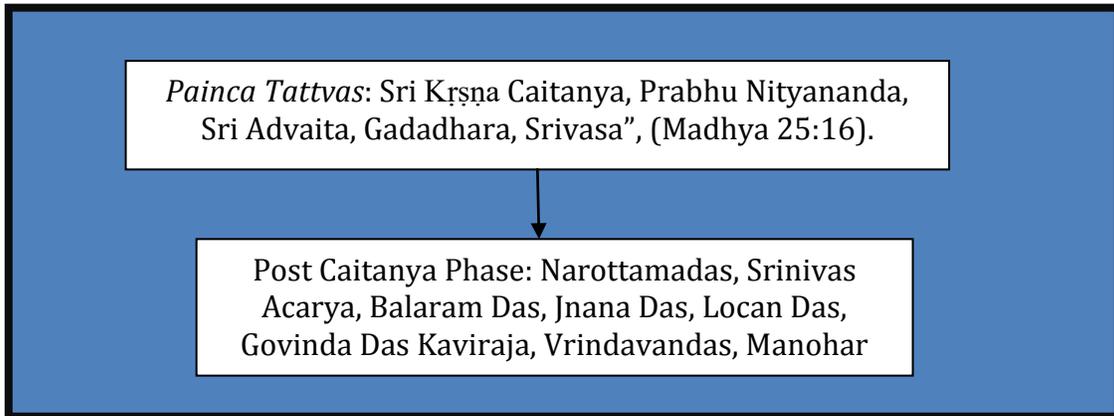
The next clue surfaced when Sanjay Māhāto (SM) remembered reading the words *Painca Tattvas* in the opening dedication of the *kīrtan* manuscript given by his uncle, the late Mihir Māhāto. Was this the sign I had been waiting for, could it be that these *Painca Tattvas*, led by Narottama Das, composed many of the traditional *kīrtan padas* upon which the traditional *kīrtan tālas* are based and systematized the infrastructure of the present day *marāī kīrtan*?, SM’s response is that,

Before Nityanānda, there was an infrastructure in *marāī kīrtan*, but then Nityanānda requested of his five disciples, known as the *Painca Tattvas* who

were also from Rāṛh, to systematize the kīrtan structure. At the head of the five kīrtan poets *padakars*, was Narottama Das. They collected songs from *padaballi* and created different types of kīrtans, including jhuran, Sohni, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā (2009: Pers.comm.).

In order to investigate these oral accounts I went to historical sources where in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* (Madhya 25:16), I found a description of the *The painca-tattva-akhyane*, as Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityanānda, Sri Advaita, Gadadhara, Srivasa, the five saints whose glories are described” (Kavirāja 16<sup>th</sup> century). In Madhali’s account, Caitanya and Nityanānda are placed in a category of their own, then their followers, but in Kṛṣṇadas’a earlier account, Caitanya, Nityanānda and three other Vaiṣṇava saints are at the same level and on the second level are the followers of Caitanya and Nityanānda with Narottama Das first, and others contemporary to him who brought new inspiration to the *bhakti* movement after Caitanya’s demise.

Table 0.2 The *Painca Tattvas* according to the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* (16<sup>th</sup> century).



However, the specific origins of the traditional kīrtan tālas/rāgas and performance structure unique to *marāī* kīrtan, are not mentioned in these historical sources and hence remain largely unknown. Structural similarities exist between the kīrtan musical structure and the *Gītagovinda* and *dhrupad* compositions however, possibly due to Narottama Das’s influence (Sen 1960:98) as discussed in Part two. In a broad context, Goswami’s article (2002) resonates with local experts on the origins of kīrtan,

The *padavali* kīrtan of Bengal evolved out of the materials of variant types of *gītis*, like Baul, etc, which were current *before* the advent of Caitanya. It also drew its inspiration from the Tantric Buddhist *dohas*, *caryā* and *vajra* and the *Gītagovinda*. We see therefore that there was no definite musical style known as *padavali* kīrtan. The kīrtan musical growth was multidirectional. Its core was lying within classical music, but every other music genre then current in Bengal was accommodated into it. Fifty years later, Narottama Das Thakur (1531-1587) was able to give it musical direction. It is believed that he received musical training from the great Swami Haridas, much known in history for his disciple Tansen. The model before him was the music he learned in Vrindavan, namely *dhrupad*. Thus he devised a kīrtan style on the basis of his own musical experiences and his insight into Vaiṣṇava aesthetics (ibid.).

Table 0.3 Goswami's view on the constituents of *padavali* kīrtan prior to Narottama Das.

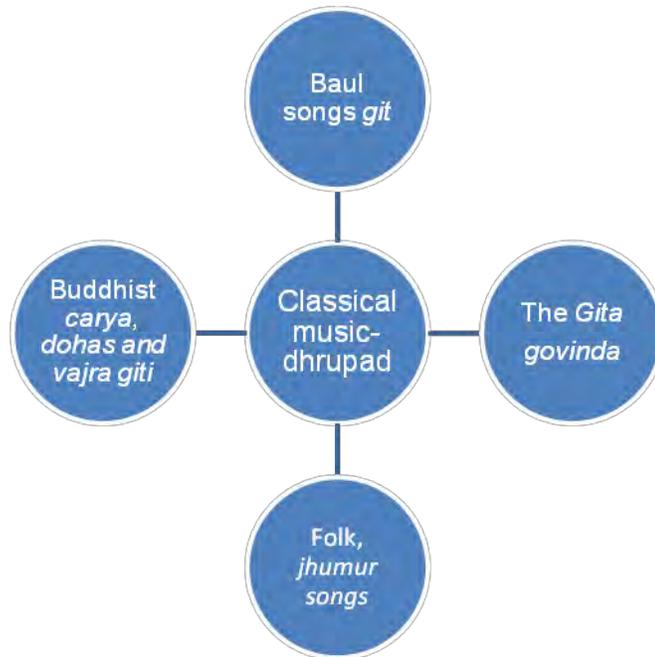
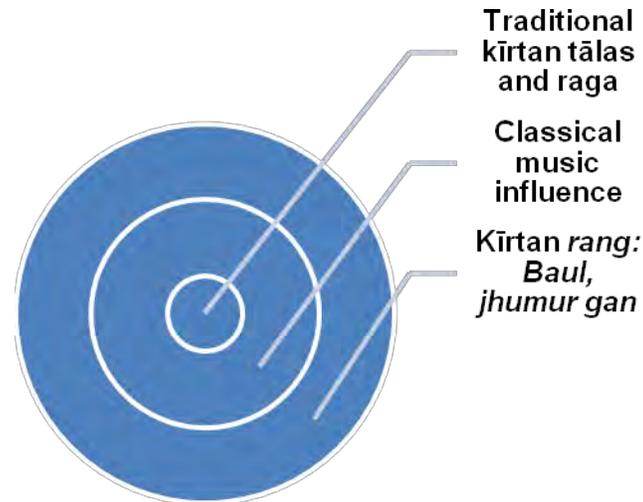


Table 0.4 After Narottama Das’s formulation of kīrtan at Kheturi.



The Tables above represent Goswami’s view on kīrtan’s development, before and after Narottama Das, depicting a more highly concentrated mix of musical intensity and devotional expression in the latter. However as already stated, the term *marāī* kīrtan is never specifically mentioned, although there is likely that *marāī* kīrtan was incorporated within Narottama Das’s musical scheme due to its vital importance in the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism throughout Bengal.

Later followers of Nityanānda and Narottama Das in the post Caitanya phase, such as Balaram Das, Jynana Das and Govinda Das Kavirāja also made immense contributions to Vaiṣṇava literature. Such an abundance of Vaiṣṇava composers in Rāṅḥ therefore cannot be just coincidence. The local *kīrtaniyās* could not simply be copying kīrtan tālas from other places with such potent expression and expertise, even if it they have the same names as ones in Navadvip. Rather, from investigation it appears that *marāī* kīrtan from Rāṅḥ is the most sophisticated kīrtan music, and can only have originated within its boundaries where it has flourished in its various styles and forms, for more than a thousand years.

#### **D. Overview of Thesis**

The thesis began with an expansive, aerial view of the *marāī* kīrtan tradition, its categorisation within the *Great/Little* traditions, the problematic nature of it lying within

and beyond both, and its possible origins. Part one is concerned with the meanings of kīrtan including the philosophical premise of kīrtan, including Tantra, Baul philosophy, the music of trance and outside influences. It surveys the kīrtan scene from a macro perspective, discussing the local musical terms as far as possible, then focuses on the microscopic perspective of *marāī* kīrtan. Six kīrtan teams from the Purulia District selected to perform at the Dabar *mela* are investigated for their specific characteristics and performance highlights revealing variations and extensions of the Kostuka kīrtan performance and placing it within a broader context. The section on the six kīrtan teams ends with the Kostuka kīrtan team who are the main characters of Part two, in the musical analysis section.

Part two puts a magnifying glass on the opening Dāspera rāga, analysing in great detail every aspect of its performance. The following rāgas, such as Pākāchutā, and Jhorchutā, which have a similar performance structure to Dāspera, are also discussed as well as Sohni rāga, the favourite rāga of the Kostuka team, and the last performed on the night of the Dabar *mela*. Comparisons are made with the daytime performance of Dāspera rāga, as well as a brief account of the night time performance. The epilogue summarises the previous sections and also areas of further investigation and future directions arising from the investigation of *marāī* kīrtan and the performance of ecstasy in the Purulia District of West Bengal, India.

## **Part One: Kīrtan and its meanings**

### **1. Kīrtan Definitions**

**Kīrtan** is from the Sanskrit root, *kirt* which means to “tell, name, call, recite, repeat, declare, communicate, commemorate, celebrate, praise, glorify” (M.Monier-Williams 2008:285), V.S. Apte defines kīrtan as “1. Telling, narrating 2. Praising, celebrating” (Pathak 2000:9). According to Singh, kīrtan is “laudatory recital, verbal and literary of the name and qualities of a person, but its technical meaning consists of the repeated utterance of the name and description of the qualities of divine beings or being (1982:75). Kīrtan must be “sung in a loud voice” (Goswami, Sarkar), and “One must say the name of God, *Hari*, loudly, not just internally, but with devotional expression” (Rājwar 2007: Pers.comm.).

Sen refers to Vaiṣṇava kīrtan as “a song that has a shorter verse line in the second couplet or refrain”, as well as a “musical style in which these songs are sung,” and says it “prevailed since early times, though was elaborated upon by Narottama Das towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (1960:98), echoed by Mukherjee (1999:182). Goswami also says that kīrtan is far older than Vaiṣṇavism, going as far back as the *caryā* songs of the 11<sup>th</sup> century” (2002:4), and Dimock suggests that Vaiṣṇava kīrtans resemble Buddhist Tantric and yogic forms of “circle worship” (1966:46). In other words *marai* kīrtan is a contemporary expression of ancient Tantric culture, presently existing in the Purulia District and beyond, a flourishing tradition of *samgīta* (devotional singing, dance, instrumental music) that is geared towards creating an ecstatic performance through growing intensity of musical expression and dance.

Slawek describes the spiritual qualities of kīrtan<sup>4</sup> as a “laboratory through which we spread the verbal form of Brahmā” (1988:84). In Tantra, kīrtan is known as a valuable aid for *sādhana* “spiritual practice” assisting in the channeling of thought and emotion towards the Deity (Dimock, Sarkar, and Bhattacharyā) through the constant singing/listening to God’s name, and accompanying instruments while dancing *lalita marmika*, so that all the motor and sensory organs are engaged with the divine. From a local experts perspective “kīrtan is the most sacred of the music genres, because it is the best way of worshipping God” (Mahir Māhāto 1996: Pers.comm.). It is the musical expression of emotional and spiritual release, a vehicle that transports one to ecstatic states, or “rapturous delight, an overpowering emotion or exaltation”, “excessive or overmastering joy and enthusiasm”<sup>5</sup>. Thus traditional methods have been devised for the *marai* kīrtan based on the certain aesthetics,

Kīrtan is not only singing, it is also the worship of god through singing, so it has some rules from ancient time. First you have to worship Sri Caitanya or Gauranga through the *Gauralap*, then the worship of the instruments coming together (*jhuran*) and after that the kīrtan starts. Like before eating, first you wash your hands, then sit and then offer a little food to the gods and then you start to eat (2007: Pers.comm.).

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<sup>4</sup> In a quote from Sri Ragaulji Banarsi

<sup>5</sup> Websters Revised Unabridged Dictionary 1996

Indian philosopher Prabhat Sarkar has invented the term “supra - aesthetic science of kīrtan” (2007:25), to describe its transformational effect as a spiritual practice, the lyrical component that directly reflects the divine, i.e. the name and qualities of God, and the musical structure behind that creates intensity and thus arouses devotional expression, to evoke the experience of ecstatic unity (see Part two).

## 2. The spiritual power of kīrtan

Slawek stresses that the spiritual power of kīrtan is embedded in the actual sound, and not the referenced meaning of the text, giving the example of *ra-ma-ra-ma* or Lord Rama and *ma-ra-ma-ra-ma* meaning “to strike” (1988:84). His informants confirm the claim that recitation of the name with inverted syllabic order is as effective as the normal order (ibid). In Rāṛhi kīrtan however, if one inverts the lyrics *Hari Bolo* “say the name of *Hari*” to *Bolo Hari* the referenced meaning remains the same with the change in word order. Yet in accordance with Slawek’s findings, *Hari Bolo* is as effective whether recited as *Bolo Hari* or *Hari Bolo* and also whether it is sung with reverence or without, as the popular aphorism goes, *shraddhaya helaya va*, which means “either with veneration or without”. In other words, while performing kīrtan, not only the participants, but also the non participants, and even the non participants who do not like it, enjoy the spiritual benefits of kīrtan. However, just repeating the name of God like a parrot will not bring about the desired result for the participant must be consciously engaged, either with reverence or irreverence, as illustrated in the *Ramayana*. In this story Sita is surrounded by a number of female servants (*raksasis*) who are guarding her in the Ashoka forest. Ravana being obsessed with the annihilation of Rama, his arch enemy, repeats Rama’s name over and over again, saying that he must defeat him in battle. But he instructed Sita’s attendants to tell her not to say Rama’s name, knowing its spiritual power. However, by telling Sita, “Sita, Rama’s name is not to be uttered” they were also unwittingly repeating the name of the lord: Sita-Rama, which was their actual desire (Sarkar 1980)<sup>6</sup>. Hence the effect of saying the divine name, whether out of fear, hatred,

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<sup>6</sup> Quotation is from Sarkar’s Discourse 10, titled “*Raganuga* and *Ragatmika bhakti*” given in 1969, published in *Namami Krishna Sundaram* (1980), see Bibliography.

love and devotion, will eventually bring the desired result, “for the goal is merger in Him” (Singh 1982:75).

In the Indian music panorama *marāī* kīrtan is essentially a type of *samgīta* and when performed “all three together they create such a pure, heavenly environment that people completely forget themselves” (Sarkar 1981:5). Yet the intention behind kīrtan is not just to receive bliss (*ananda*) but also to *give* bliss or pleasure to god. In Vaiṣṇava Tantra the state of *rāgānugā bhakti* is where the devotees desire to experience Kṛṣṇa’s love, or “I don’t want to be sugar, I want to taste sugar”, is superseded by *rāgātmika bhakti*, or the state called *rāgātmika samādhi*, or “absolute absorption” into God, where there is the overwhelming desire to merge (ibid.). This can be achieved through concentrated collective singing of Hari *nam*, for the name is believed to embody spiritual



Figure 1.1 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar.

power i.e. it is not just the name of God, it *is* God, combined with profound spiritual ideation and visualisation (*dhyāna*) of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa’s love making from the perspective of Rādhā. As Slawek says, “in identifying the sung name of god with divinity itself, kīrtan singers in the same moment create that which is propitiated - here the symbol merges with that which is symbolized” (1988:89).

That is why kīrtan singers say that *Vaikantha* or “the abode of Lord Viṣṇu” is not present in any geographical location, but exists within the devotee’s heart. The generation

and accumulation of intense love and devotion at the place where kīrtan is sung, results in both individual and collective wellbeing for when many devotees converge together to sing the lords name, then the *Vaikantha* is shifted to the place where the devotees are congregated (Sarkar 1978: 34).

The basic spiritual instruction given by Caitanya, the leader of *Gauriya* Vaiṣṇavism, and instigator of public kīrtan, is summarized in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* as

Figure 1.2 Śiva lingam, Purulia.



“One should be as humble as the grass and as tolerant as the trees, one should give respect to those whom no one respects, and always do kīrtan to the Lord” (Kaviraja 16<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>7</sup>. Succinctly put, the ideal attributes of a devotee are humility, tolerance, respect for the underprivileged and the constant singing of God’s name, values which embody the spirit of social equality and spiritual devotion (*bhakti*), upon which Vaiṣṇava kīrtan is based. Hence Caitanyas’ prime philosophical injunction is at its core humanitarian, practical and collective form of worship, thus having a wide appeal across the region.



Figure 1.3 The *trishala* “trident”, *kundalini* “coiled serpent” wrapped around a Śiva *lingam* and *yoni*, symbols of the Tantric cult at Devi Das Baul ashram, Purulia.

the yogic aspects of Tantric practices; S.C Banerji (1978) provides valuable insights into Bengali Tantric culture; Prabhat Sarkar (1993, 1994), the most comprehensive Tantric philosophy to date; Richard Widdess’s discussion on the ancient *caryā* and *cacā* Newar Tantric Buddhist ritual songs (2004); Hugh Urban (2001) writing on the secrecy, sex and the politics of Tantra; and Judith Becker (1997) on Tantrism, *rasa* and Javanese Gamelan music.

### 3. Tantra, *Baul* and kīrtan

Of the various works on Tantra that have informed my work the most significant are: A. Bharati (1965) who places the Tantric tradition within a cultural, anthropological and philosophically sound perspective; Dimock and Levertov (1966, 1967) discuss the Tantric *Sahajiyā* movement and Bengali kīrtan poets; S. Gupta (1979) describes the ritualistic as well as



Figure 1.4 Sri Jagaran Māhāto at Makrabena village.

<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 7 of the *Ādi Lila*, Text 50

According to Charles Capwell, Tantra “teaches the individual to pursue his/her own release from phenomenal existence through direct, empirical means, the manipulation of his own physical and psychic constitution and these means are learned *viva voce* from a preceptor who also demonstrates the necessary techniques” (1988:123). In a general sense Tantra “is the systematic process that leads one from dullness towards liberation” (Sarkar, 1979) yet it tends to deal with such aspects of popular Hindu Tantra as spells, rituals, and symbols, most of which are not applicable to this present study. Tantra is essentially a practical culture (cult) and *not* a religion, and hence it has been incorporated into many faiths, Buddhism, Jainism, Vaiṣṇavism etc without being called as such. Becker gives an example, saying that Tantrism, entering as an integrated element of Śaivism and Buddhism in Java, yet over time ceased to be identifiable as a distinct ideology (1997:19). Recognising the difficulties in identifying Tantra in Indonesian Tantrism she says “over time [Tantra] ceased to be identifiable as a distinct ideology and blended into the general stock of Javanese cultural beliefs and practices, “Therefore it is not surprising that the word Tantrism is not used in Java today to identify certain patterns of belief with clear Tantric historical precedents” (Becker, 1997:19). Similarly in Purulia, for although Vaiṣṇavism has incorporated Tantric practices into its fold, the word Tantra is generally not used to identify these beliefs or practices.

From the texts on Tantra mentioned above, a list of “ingredients”, can be gleaned (though not unique to Tantra), that are relevant to *marai* kīrtan particularly: *shravana* “hearing the name of the Deity” (Dimock 1966:189); remembrance of God (*manana*) through *mantra* or the invocation of the name of the Deity (Widdess, 2004:157); the guru *shisha* or master-disciple relationship; *sāadhanā* meaning “sustained effort” or “spiritual practice”; and *sandhābhāṣā* “intentional language” in which many of the Tantric song texts are written. In addition to the above, is the practice of Rāḍhā *bhava* “ideation” on being the lover of Kṛṣṇa, performed by the majority of kīrtan singers in Rāḍh<sup>8</sup>.

The first concept, *shravana* or “hearing and calling the name of the Deity” is the sound form of the Deity through which a singer can reach a state of *samādhi*, described by Eliade as a “state of absolute absorption into the divine”, or “union”, “totality” and

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<sup>8</sup> The practice of donning a female persona is traditional for Indian devotional singers and writers, as discussed above.

“conjunction” (1996:77). The second ingredient is *manana* remembrance of God through *mantra*, defined in the *M.Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary* as “an instrument of thought, i.e. sacred text or speech, prayer, song of praise or Sanskrit incantations” which may be recited or sung, or repeated internally, as in *japa sādhanā*. The most sophisticated purpose of *mantra* can have is “identification” with the Deity or “intrajection” i.e. an inward projection of the Deity (Bharati 1965:112), also called *dhyāna* “visualization”. Sarkar defines *mantra* as “a sound (*shabda*) or collection of *shabdas* which, when meditated upon, lead to liberation” (1993:49) and Banerji says “God is conceived as *mantra* and is the surest means of attaining *moksā*” (1978:13). According to Bharati, a *mantra* is something that is imparted personally by a guru otherwise “a syllable or a collection of syllables constituting a *mantra* is not a *mantra* at all hence, *Om* is no *mantra* at all” (1965:196). During Tantric initiation the guru “imbibes the proper spirit” (Hoens 1979:107), of the *mantra* for “it is the true form of the guru, the initiator or *diksa*-guru called Kṛṣṇa; and the disciple or *siksa*-guru Rādhā is of one soul (*atma*) with him,” (Dimock 1966:199).

Songs can also be *mantras*, reports Widdess from the *Hevajra Tantra*, a Buddhist treatise on Tantric ritual, possibly from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, where adepts performed music and dance (quoted from Snellgrove 1987:168), with “release as its object”,

If in joy songs are sung, then let them be excellent *vajra* songs, and if one dances when joy has arisen, let it be done with release as its object... song replaces *mantra*, dance represents meditation ((*Hevajra Tantra I, vi.10, 13*), (Widdess 2004: 11)).

The most common *mantra* or name of God used in *marāī* kīrtan among the Purulia teams, is *Hari* due to its special significance to the people of this Śiva drenched region, as discussed in Part one. Yet kīrtan is a public form of worship, and the kīrtan *mantra*, or name of God, is imparted universally, as it was in Caitanya’s time. For the *kīrtaniyās* however, a personal relationship with a Vaiṣṇava guru, assists in their musical and spiritual development, whereby the inner meaning of the *mantra* and traditional kīrtan songs are imparted directly to the disciple. The Vaiṣṇava gurus, whose lineage reaches back to Caitanya or one of his Goswamin, are most sought after. Kailash Goswami for example, is the

guru of the late Mihir Māhāto, who was descended from the original *Hari Bol* kīrtan party of Caitanya. Kailash began teaching Mihir Māhāto kīrtan in 1947, and in return he was given food and thirty rupees a month. Mihir Māhāto speaks about the strict regime he underwent in his musical training with Kailash Goswami,

I first learnt khol drum playing, from thirteen years of age to twenty five years. From twenty five to twenty seven years of age, I learnt the harmonium and after that I learnt to sing, my guru taught me in the evening and in the morning. He would give me one task to perform over a period of seven days and if within seven days I was able to accomplish it, then he would give me another task to practice for the next seven days. With the help of my guru I have made a copy of all the *tālas* and songs that he taught me (1996: Pers.comm.).



Figure 1.5 The late Mihir Māhāto, from Dabar, with his kīrtan manuscript, pictured in 1996.

Sri Jagaran Māhāto was trained by Akul Das, a Vaiṣṇava kīrtan guru for ten years and has been teaching kīrtan in Rāṅh for more than seventeen years. He is presently teaching three kīrtan groups in the region with students ranging from four years to sixty five years of age, and he recently acquired his first female students. When starting a new kīrtan group it is traditional for the men from the neighbourhood to approach a kīrtan guru for instruction, and if he accepts, then the guru *shisha* relationship is formalised by a Vaiṣṇava ceremony, as discussed in Part one.

Becker states that “Tantric beliefs about the relation of music to spiritual development are still discernable a stepping stone towards the ultimate goal of enlightenment” (1997:15), yet Tantra is “never assumed to be easily accessible” (ibid:16). In fact it embodies a dynamic, courageous battle between light and darkness, symbolised by the powerful Śiva Nataraja *tandava* dance with knife in one hand, and a snake or skull in the other, representing the fight to overcome death or negativity. Thus

Tantric *sādhānā* or “spiritual practices” are by nature extremely difficult, for to achieve the spiritual goal in a single lifetime, one must bring under control the negative propensities, called *ripus*<sup>9</sup>, keep oneself free from *asta pashas*, the eight fetters<sup>10</sup> and be able to raise the *kundalini* “serpent energy” within, to reach the thousand petal lotus (*sahasrara* cakra) where enlightenment is achieved. Hence for success in *sādhānā*, the guidance of an adept is imperative, and once initiated by a Tantric guru, the disciple must keep her/his *sādhānā* secret.

This spiritual endeavour is achieved through Tantric *sādhānā* including “visualisations (*dhyāna*) on the love affairs of Rādhā/ Kṛṣṇa, repeating of the name of God (*japa*), worship of the temple icons and of the *tulsi* plant sacred to Viṣṇu” (Flood, 1996:141) prescribed by Caitanya for his Goswamins. Dimock also states “there is very little doubt that the Goswamins were deeply influenced by the Tantras and that this influence was passed on by them to their pupil Kaviraja [author of the *Caitanya Caritamṛta*], who was the link between the Tantra-influenced Goswamins and the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal” (1966:83-85). In other words, the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* was the main vessel for disseminating Vaiṣṇava Tantra, whether known or unknown. In terms of public worship, Caitanya simply advocated the performance of *kīrtan* as the primary Tantric *sādhānā* and vehicle for spiritual enlightenment, without caste distinction, “for the caste structure of society has never been viewed with particular favour in the Tantric tradition” (Dimock, 1966:68), and as Sir John Woodroffe says “the Tantra *śāstra* makes no distinction as regards worship” (ibid.).

As stated above, the *kīrtaniyās* practice of Rādhā *bhava*, is a common device used in *bhakti* poetry of Rāḥ, where the *kīrtan* literary giants Jayadeva, Chandīdasa, Narottama Das and others donned a female persona to arouse devotion for Kṛṣṇa. Yet prior to Vaisnavism, the devotees, have performed *kīrtan* for Śiva, expressing themselves as his feminine counterpart as seen in the Śiva *Gajan* festival today. At the *carak* “ancient circular hook-swinging” ceremony the devotees (*bhogtas*) dress as Parvatī, and swing a hundred feet in the air on the *carak* pole and sing Śiva *kīrtans*, while dropping

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<sup>9</sup> The *ripus*: lust, anger, avarice, blind attachment, vanity and jealousy.

<sup>10</sup> *Asta pashas*: hatred, doubt, fear, indifference, shyness, vanity of lineage, cultural superiority complex, and egotism.

*prasad* to the crowd below, in the hope that Śiva will take pity on them and fulfill their wishes.



Figure 1.6 The *bhogta* as Śiva’s wife.

Similarly when the *kīrtan* singers don a female persona as Rāḍhā, and call Hari’s name, they implore him to come, pouring out their emotions in a stream of devotional longing. The notion of embodying the feminine counterpart of Śiva or Kṛṣṇa is also practiced by the Bauls in their Tantric *sāadhanā*,

In Baul life, both man and woman are equal and here a man will always think himself as a woman and together they do Baul practice. You have to think yourself as a woman for to get Kṛṣṇa *sāadhanā* you have to have emotions, without emotion you can’t proceed” (Christo Das Baul 2007: Pers.comm.).

Basanta Rājwar, leader of the Rājwar *kīrtan* group, supports this notion, “when we sing *Hari Bolo* we are thinking of ourselves as Rāḍhā” (2007 Pers.comm.). Dimock so poignantly states,

The Jiva [unit soul] is a Gopi, or Rāḍhā. One is, and should consider oneself, a woman, in relation to the sole male in the universe, to Kṛṣṇa (Dimock, 1966:158).

Yet whatever emotional or ecstatic state they are in during *kīrtan*, is difficult to ascertain from an observers point of view, and doesn’t seem to affect their musicianship. Rather they appear to have extraordinary musical control and vitality during performance, as discussed in Part two.

The final ingredient of Tantra, termed *sandhābhāṣā*, coded or “intentional” language, is intended to suggest something different from the factual meaning of the words (Bharati 1979:169). In the earlier writings of H.P Shastri, Beynotosh and Bhattacharya it was assumed that *sandhābhāṣā* “twilight language” was used to keep the



Figure 1.7 The *bhogta* swings on the *carak* pole, for Śiva.

Tantric lore secret from the orthodox public, Buddhist and Hindu alike, thereby communicating to the initiate only, in order to prevent the non-initiate from dabbling with the implied practices lest he should come to grief (Bharati: 1979:169).

When singing kīrtan, though there are no lyrics other than Hari *nam*, the inner meaning of the original kīrtan songs may be recalled by the singer, the associated emotions experienced, and projected into *Hari Bolo* performance, experiences which remain personal to them. Dimock writes that “the Goswamins, writing as they did in Sanskrit, seemed to have no trouble hiding the true meaning of the Caitanya-*lila* from the unworthy, who, assumedly had no access to the noble language” (1966:84). However as Kavirāja in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* (CC) did not choose to hide his meaning in the natural obscurities of Sanskrit, had to camouflage the Tantric influences in oblique statements of multiple meaning (ibid.) such as “this theory of rasa is very mysterious and profound. Svarupa Gosvamin alone knew its meaning”<sup>11</sup>.

In the Districts of Purulia and Birbhum, the Baul, from *batul* or “mad”, singers are renowned for their common use of riddles, humorous antics, flouting of caste and didactic song texts and double *entendre*. Chayarani Das Baul discusses the differences between Baul and kīrtan,

There is no difference between Baul and kīrtan except that for the kīrtan singer the calling of god is external, meaning there are special types of dance movements and songs. They are getting in touch with god directly through *Hari Bolo*. But for a Baul, it is an internal path (*sādhana*) because we are singing songs about many topics, and it is always “double meaning” songs. We are not calling God directly in these songs, the main theme is to seek, to experience the self and unite the self with the Supreme soul, this is the message of the Bauls. A *kīrtaniyā* must sing kīrtan, but for a Baul, it’s not necessary to sing always. As long as they follow the rules and Tantric practices, they are a Baul. A Baul does not have to sing all the time, but a *kīrtaniyā* must sing, this is their worship (2007: Pers.comm.).

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<sup>11</sup> ((CC Ādi 4:137:38) (ibid.).



Figure 1.8 Chayarani Das Baul from Purulia.

In other words, a Baul's spiritual path is primarily an internal *sāadhanā* whereas *kīrtan* is an extroverted *sāadhanā* or form of worship, leading to internal bliss (*ananda*). The Bauls seek "the man of the heart", giving expression to their quest via encoded songs whereas *kīrtaniyās* weave both song and dance into the performance of ecstasy. Baul music has lyrical complexity and musical

simplicity whereas *marai kīrtan* has musical complexity and lyrical simplicity, yet both are Tantric, for residues of the ancient Tantric cult are so deeply rooted in the religious milieu of Bengal, "that no religion, let alone *bhakti* can gain a toehold in Bengal without coming to terms with it hence the ultimate success of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal was in fact due to its tacit understanding and compliance with Tantra" (Chakrabarti, 1991:456).

Bauls belonging to the Hindu community are Vaiṣṇava and/or Shaivite in their faith and those belonging to the Muslim community are generally Sufi but "in both schools, the emphasis is on the mystic connection of divine love" (Dasgupta 1969:160). Taraka Das Baul is from the Hindu community and lives in Kenduli. He is from a long line of Bauls and his father's name was Kanai Baul and his grandfather was a *pakawaj* player. He illustrates the difference between Śiva Tantric practice in Baul life and *kīrtan* in a song,

*Mortey ekti gorti dui saper jyora jyore*, "In this world, there is a hole, and in this hole two snakes are interwoven,

*Diney dhora, ratrey keotey*, - *diney* means "daytime", *ghora* is "a type of non poisonous snake", *rate* is night and *keote* "poisonous cobra snake".

The first line says, "In Śiva Tantra, Śiva is the perfect Baul and the perfect symbol of *Hara* and *Hari*. *Sap* means "snake" in Bengali, it is the symbol of

*kulakundalini sakti*, the coiled serpentine energy within. So Śiva exists in everyone like *Ardhanara Ishvara*, Śiva/Sakti, or half male and half female, and through *sādhanā* one can realize this” (Taraka Das 2007: Pers.comm.). The second line says that Śiva is the symbol of both light and darkness or destruction. On another level, you can say, in the earth there is a hole, in which two snakes, one without poison and one with poison. So if you compare kīrtan and Baul, kīrtan is without poison, anyone can do it without difficulties. The other hole has poison, so seeing these things the singer is apprehensive” (ibid.). The song continues,

*Śiva jeneche Shiver ghora* – Śiva only knows His origin,

*Atal sindhu ved kori* - To know Śiva’s origin is to know the depth of the vast ocean,

*Sadhanar yog, bise, bise, bhog* – Through *sādhanā* (spiritual practice) you can enjoy spiritual unity (*yog*), while the alternative path leads only to further darkness and pain,

*Ambu bimbu mul dhorī* – A bubble takes birth inside water yet we can not catch it, it remains a mystery. (ibid., SM, 2009: Pers.comm.).

There are multiple layers of meaning in this song, in which Śiva is represented as the vast ocean of pure consciousness, and the unit, as the tiny bubble, yet both are of the same substance in the mystical blue ocean. Through Tantric practice (*sādhanā*) the unit can realise the infinite consciousness and become one with Śiva, while the alternative path, leads towards spiritual ignorance. Another layer of meaning suggests that Śiva Tantric *sādhanā* is dangerous to those uninitiated or misguided practitioners, whereas kīrtan is easy to perform and without “danger”.

The link between *Sahaja* Tantra and the Vaiṣṇava kīrtan composers is suggested by Bhattacharyā (1967), and Dimock (1966). The *Sahaja* means “inborn” “spontaneous” and expresses in a bold direct way that which is “natural”, such as the human desire for sexual union. Dimock quotes from a *Sahajiyā* text which describes a blissful state called *Gopibhava*,

Assume the *Gopibhava* and incessantly let the mind dwell upon the body of Kṛṣṇa. Each in his own way will enjoy the pleasure of coition. The *Gopibhava* does away with maleness in sexual relationship... and the altar of beauty, the fulfillment of all passion is Rādhā. In union with a woman, if a man becomes a woman, he is purified (1968:158 – 159)

Yet what disturbed the traditional Hindu society about the *Sahajiyā* movement was the unorthodox nature of the cult, which claimed that the erotic relationship of a spiritual nature can only take place with a woman who is either already married, or of a low caste, such as a Domni, i.e. the traditional music caste of Rāṛh. However, “the Tantric approach was precisely to reverse orthodox conventions and seek spiritual power through non-canonical practices” (Widdess, 2004:10).

According to Dimock the *Sahaja* Tantric influence is reflected in the kirtans of Chandidās and (quoting from Haraprasad Sastri), says that Baru Chandidās was a Tantric for two reasons: Firstly, in almost all the songs Chandidās signs himself “as a devotee of Vasuli” a Tantric goddess in the Birbhum district of Rāṛh and secondly, just because he is from Birbhum District, “an area in which the Tantric tradition is ancient and all pervasive” (1966:65). Thus, both Indian and western academics suggest that the origins of Vaiṣṇava kīrtan are early Tantric forms of worship, such as the *Caryāgit-Padavali*, described by Goswami (2002:4), as “a kind of Buddhist kīrtan” (ibid.),

The form of Vaiṣṇava songs is not very different from that of the *caryās*. The styles are similar. The Tantric or Yogic worshipers performed *heruka sādhanā* [Tantric worship] or *mandala upasana* (circle worship). Perhaps Caitanya was unconsciously following the older custom of these worshippers ((Sen, 2002:37) Dimock, 1966:46).

Widdess makes the connection between Bauls and the *caryās*, “it is assumed that the present day Bauls of Bengal, to some extent resemble the phase-I ascetics and mystics, associated with the origins of *caryā* music” (2004:33) also linking the *caryās* with kīrtan, for Baul *sur* are incorporated into *marāī* kīrtan performance. If the goal of

Tantra is such that <sup>12</sup> the deity takes up temporary residence in the body of the devotee” (2004:19) then similarly, the *kīrtaniyās* experience of Rāḍhā *bhava*, is one of ecstatic union with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the relationship between Tantra and *marāī* kīrtan is reflected in the following ways: a) Through historical connections with the early *caryāpadas* of Tantric circle worship and the incorporation of mystical Baul melodies (*sur*) in *marāī* kīrtan; b) Tantric references within Vaiṣṇava kīrtan poems via the Chandidasas for example; c) Vaiṣṇava Goswamins Tantric practices as prescribed by Caitanya and reported in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* according to Flood; d) The practice of Rāḍhā *bhava* in *marai* kīrtan, whereby the devotees arouse devotion for Kṛṣṇa; and finally the goal of kīrtan is to reach a state of absolute absorption (*samādhi*) into the Deity, as discussed below under kīrtan, trance and ecstasy. The degree to which the Tantric influence has permeated Rāḍhi kīrtan is illustrated in a story by AKA,

A customer complained to the milkman that his milk is too expensive. So the milkman mixed some water with it, and sold it to her cheaper the next day. The customer complained again about the price of the milk, so he added more water, till it became opaque. After the third complaint the milkman added even more water and it appeared almost clear. The customer then complained that it did not look like milk at all (1996: Pers.comm.).

Hence the intensity of Tantric (milk) content in Rāḍhi music culture is expressed in Baul *sāadhanā* with its full richness, as well as the Vaiṣṇava Goswamins with its *Sahaja* influences, while the *kīrtaniyās* “milk” is almost opaque, with only traces left of the original Tantric substance. Yet *marāī* kīrtan is brimming over with devotional (*bhakti*) nectar to be drunk by the Deity, a direct means of pleasing Hari and procuring His blessings. As Geertz notes, “for the participants, religious performance are additionally the very enactment of the religious experience” (1973:113-114).

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<sup>12</sup> In Nepal, “The *cacā* [contemporary *carya* songs of Nepal] are indeed intended to assist meditation on the deities or concepts on Tantric Buddhism (Widdess 2004:19).

#### 4. Kīrtan, trance and ecstasy

“Kīrtan transforms the consciousness of its singers as well as satisfying social needs” states Henry (1988:139). Kīrtan music’s ability to alter the consciousness of a participant, with the goal of achieving an “out of body state”, has been associated with drug use and placed within the category of trance music. In my investigations into kīrtan music and trance I found only one reference by Rouget (Rouget 1985: 81) in a quote from Alain Danielou (1967:92),

In the kīrtan, which in Bengal are the mystic chants danced to in groups, the dancers are first of all drawn into an easy rhythm with which they identify completely and thus sink into a sort of hypnotic half sleep. The musicians then create a shock by means of several violent drum strokes and embark on a new, much more complex rhythm. After hesitating for a minute, the dancers are taken over by this new rhythm without even consciously willing it. In some of them, this provokes a trance state and a complete loss of control, as though the rhythm were a kind of spirit that had possessed them. This trance state is characterized by insensitivity to pain, complete loss of modesty and visionary perceptions (ibid.).

Danielou’s description of kīrtan however is atypical of Rāṛhi kīrtan, for although they are ecstatic and full of devotional zeal and emotional expression, I have never observed a *kīrtaniyā* exhibit “complete loss of control” or “a complete loss of modesty”, because of their highly structured performance of rāga expositions, choreographed dance movements and rhythmic compositions, even if they appear haphazard. The yardstick of a successful kīrtan in local terms is measured not be whether one goes into a trance state, but whether they have been able to “move together in unison” and “engage the audience”, rather than “a complete lack of control”, as described above (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

In Rouget's terms there are clear distinctions between "shamanic trance" and "possession trance" for briefly, in the former trance, the soul of the *shaman* is said to travel to other worlds and in the latter, the spirit of the deity is said to enter the body of the possessed person. The aim of *shamanic* trance music is "transformation", through the power of incantation or sound (Rouget 1885:131) whereas the goal in possession music is to create an alliance, or identification with the divinity. *Shamanic* music uses "incantation" considered to have "magical" powers whereas possession music is said to be dance music whose melody is associated with the divinity responsible for the trance (ibid:322). Similar to *shamanic* music, *kīrtan* includes *mantraic* syllables that are believed to have healing, even magical powers and a *kīrtan* melody may also be associated with the deity as in possession music. In *kīrtan*, communication with the deity or forming of an alliance is achieved through collective singing, dance, instrumental music and spiritual ideation and the ideal group image is one of Rādhā and the *gopis* singing and dancing in a circle around Kṛṣṇa, called *Hari pari mandala gosthi*. Yet, alongside this ecstatic expression, is the ability to produce a musical performance where all parts are moving in unison (JM 2007: Pers.comm.). If one is successful in procuring the blessing of the Deity through collective *kīrtan*, then certainly "magical" effects may result, such as the bringing of rain, or the procurement of a wish fulfilled.

Referring to *shamanic* music Anne Chapman's collection of Selk'nam songs of Tierra del Fuego show that many relate to notions of *shamanic* journey's and magical power. They are concerned with not only healing but also the action of conjuring a lunar eclipse, aiding whale hunters, or preventing rain through rituals (Rouget 1985: 132).



Figure 1.9 The khol player in a trancelike state.

Stories of healing and supernatural effects also occur in *marāī kīrtan* although these are extraneous to the primary goal of pleasing lord Hari and procuring his blessings, hence

intermediaries such as a *shaman* are not needed in *kīrtan*, for an experience of the Deity is sought through direct, empirical means.

Similarities and contrasts between *kīrtan* and *shamanic* music are that: both are *mantraic*, incantatory (ibid: 319), very repetitive, make use of unusual sound effects (ibid.) and have auspicious or “magical” effects that can transform the participants and non-participants. However *shamanic* music cannot produce trance mechanically or automatically and therefore a *shaman* often resorts to drugs (ibid.) unlike the Kostuka *kīrtan* singers (see Part two) who follow a strict regime of abstention from alcohol and drugs as prescribed by their guru; both *shamanic* music and *kīrtan* use “corporeal techniques” combining singing and dancing as the two principal elements, “for entering into communication with God” (ibid: 320); in *kīrtan* there is no use of sensory deprivation to promote altered states, rather a heightening of sensory perception through creative expression; and finally, both operate within a specific belief system that constitutes a cultural model integrated into a certain general representation of the world (ibid: 321). In other words, *kīrtan* and *shamanic* or possession music are culture specific yet have shared characteristics within a broader context.

The trance state described by Rouget bears comparison with the state described as *samādhi* “state of absolute absorption into the divine” by Eliade ((pg. 7), 1996: 77) or spiritual intoxication, experienced by both participants and non-participants alike. I have, on rare occasions, seen a musician fall into *samādhi* during a *kīrtan* session, but normally they perform uninterrupted. In the *Caitanya Caritamrita*, by Kṛṣṇa Das Kavirāja (b.1507) there are many references to *samādhi* states experienced by the Vaiṣṇava saint Sri Caitanya. In the *Madhya lila* in Part one, Text 162-163 it says,

When the lord performed *kīrtan* he manifested all kinds of transcendental symptoms. He appeared stunned and trembling, his hair stood on end and his voice faltered. There were tears and devastation. Frequently the lord would tumble to the ground. Seeing this mother Saci would cry (Kavirāja 16<sup>th</sup> century).

In the Text 72-76, *Antya-lila* Ch.10 of the *Caitanya Caritamrita* it also says,

The hairs of his body constantly stood up like thorns on a *simula* tree. Sometimes his body was swollen and sometimes thin. He bled and perspired from every pore of his body. His transcendental bliss increased at every moment. .. and everyone present forgot his body, mind and home (ibid.).

Rouget lists the principal symptoms of the trance state as: trembling, shuddering, swooning, falling to the ground, yawning, foaming at the mouth, protruding eyes, large extrusions of the tongue, paralysis of a limb, thermal disturbances, insensitivity to pain,



Figure 1.10 The kīrtan drummer, plays in a state of ecstasy.

noisy breathing, fixed stare and so on, to the extent that s/he loses all reflexive consciousness, having no recollection of it afterwards (1985: 13). As for behavioral signs, Rouget notes that one may be endowed with certain extraordinary or astonishing aspects, making it possible to walk on coals without being burnt, pierce one's flesh without bleeding, cure diseases, see into the future, embody a divinity, trance manifests one way or another as a transcendence of one's normal self, as a liberation resulting from the intensification

of a mental or physical disposition, in short as an exaltation (ibid: 81). Similarly in a kīrtan performance, a person may fall into *samādhi*, thereby losing all reflective consciousness, experience paralysis of a limb and insensitivity to pain, thermal disturbances, noisy breathing and other symptoms, although it is uncommon to see the more extroverted physical expressions mentioned above as: foaming at the mouth, protruding eyes, large extrusions of the tongue for example. Other extraordinary behaviours associated with trance, such as piercing one's flesh without bleeding, are prevalent among the Śiva devotees (*bhogtas*) at the annual Śiva *Gajan* festivals of Rārh, where the beating of the *dhak* (large double sided barrel) drum and the singing of Śiva's name (*Śiva Bone bol*) are present at every ceremony. There is also an emphasis on



Figure 1.11 The Śiva devotee, with hooks inserted into his back for the *carak* ceremony. Photo credit: Franco-Suarez.

purification through fasting, meditation (*puja*) and other ritual performances. In the “hook swinging ceremony” (*carak*) for example, life threatening feats of devotion are performed by the devotees, with hooks inserted into their backs as they are strung upon the *carak* pole and swung in the air. Yet the Śiva devotees say that they don’t feel any pain.

One of the primary musical characteristics of both *kīrtan* and *shamanic* music is the sheer volume of the singing and instrumental playing. *Kīrtan* singers usually sing at the loudest possible level and highest pitch for at least one hour at a time, although often for much longer. Citing an example from Jane Belo in Bali, a description is given of the official entrance of a god where the people “were singing loudly in order to encourage trances in the mediums present” where the orchestra played “as loud as it could”, and in order to trigger the trance state, “the singing and the music of the orchestra redouble their intensity” (Rouget, 1985: 82). In *kīrtan* the Chorus and *mul gayaks* all sing with their head thrown back, and absolute emotional abandonment at a shrieking high velocity level. Thus it is difficult to find a *kīrtan* session in Rāṛh that is *not* utterly riveting, extremely loud and intense, full of reverence and excitement, all expressed through just two words, *Hari Bolo*.

If one compares the musical characteristics of possession music and *kīrtan* music then similarities also exist. Rouget states that on the one hand, breaks or abrupt changes in rhythm occur and on the other, *accelerando crescendo*, which is so frequent among different cultural traditions, that one may view it as a universal of possession music (ibid: 91). In Tibet, Rouget says that the medium goes into trance as a result of “special prayers” chanted in “a particular, quick rhythm” (Nebesky - Wojkowitz 1956:547) accompanied, depending on the case, by drums, bells, cymbals and sometimes thighbone trumpets. Similarly, in *kīrtan*, the *juran* “instrumental warm up” includes abrupt changes

in rhythms as well as *accelerando crescendo*, as discussed in Part two. Although the *jurān* has attributes of possession music, it is not geared towards an out of body experience, rather ecstatic release, which is more likely to occur once the musicians have entered inside the *mandīr* and doubled their intensity in performance.

In possession music, Rouget notes that, sometimes the divinities are addressed directly by the mediums, summoning them, or alternatively telling them to go away; sometimes they describe them in a flattering way, yet whether they are prayers, praises or insults, the important thing is that they are addressed to the deity and constitute communication with him or her (1985:99). The *kīrtan* singers however, implore their Lord, not in an insulting way, or to be “possessed”, rather to be “absorbed into” the Deity, as his feminine counterpart, the divine lover, Rāḍhā.

Rouget also differentiates between the musician and the *musicant*, those whose activity is to make music only episodically, accessorially, or secondarily (ibid: 103). Musicians are often professionals, whereas the rest of the invocations to the divinities, sung mottoes, calls, playing of various accompanying or punctuating instruments, handclapping and so on are provided by the adepts and spectators, all of whom are called musicants (ibid.). He states that as far as musicians are concerned they do not, in principal, go into trance for to do so, would be incompatible with their function, which is to provide for hours on end, music whose execution must continuously adapt itself to the circumstances (ibid: 104) and that they should be constantly available and at the service of their clients. They have never lived through the experiences themselves, and never go into trance (ibid: 105). One exception noted by Rouget of musicants and musicians is among the Mussey of Chad where the adepts are entranced while they play “which to my knowledge this is the only case of its kind” (ibid: 110). Therefore the Rāḍhī *kīrtaniyas* are another exception, fulfilling the requirements of both musician and musicant in that, though musicians, they are also “adepts”, and although I have rarely seen a Rāḍhī *kīrtaniyā* loose consciousness and play “out of rhythm” for any length of time, I have often seen them in a state of euphoria (see Fig. 10 above). Hence the most significant aspect of *kīrtan* is the creation of “intensity”, the “stylistic traits, clearly intended to generate excitement” (Henry, 2002: 33-55). Quoting from Slawek’s description of *nam kīrtan* in Varanasi he writes,

Finally when the loudest volume and fastest tempo was reached, participants raised themselves on one knee, shouting as loud as possible, neck muscles straining, as beads of sweat rolled down contorted faces ((1988:111-112) 2002:34).

Henry outlines the bedrock techniques of musical intensity as: an increase in tempo, volume and rhythmic density, including *accelerando* and *crescendo* ((Rouget 1985: 82 and 84) 2002:35), a melodic ascent relative to a fixed pitch, the holding of a single high pitch for what seems like a very long time, arousing lyrics, a shouting of interjections, forceful, exciting demeanor and dance and a movement from free rhythm to fast beat (ibid.), *all* of which aptly describes Rāḥi kīrtan while not diminishing the highly structured, choreographed, compositional aspect of kīrtan as a traditional music genre. Where *marāī* kīrtan differs from *shamanic* music however is: its unique musical infrastructure (see Part two) facilitating the creation of ecstatic performance; social inclusion, collective coordination and choreography and the importance of *satsaung* (spiritual company) the goal being to arouse *bhakti*, rather than supernatural or “magical” effects, which are an added bonus arising out of the intensity of devotional experience. Oral accounts of kīrtan being able to bring rain in a very dry, arid landscape, of averting natural catastrophes (Bardwell 2006: Pers.comm.), being used as a form of political or religious protest (Sen 1960, Brikodhar Māhāto 2007: Pers.comm.), creating social cohesion among a diverse set of participants (Schultz 2002:307) and other auspicious effects, as reported under the Six Kirtan teams.

Another significant study of a comparative devotional music and ecstatic performance genre is Quereshi’s *Sufi music of India and Pakistan sound context and meaning in Qawwali* (1986), whose primary description of a Qawwali performance coupled with a schematisation of gradual intensifying states of ecstatic trance, is systematically displayed (1986:119). Quereshi describes Qawwali as,

Mystical love, to become the dynamic force of both *maqam* and *hal*, must be cultivated spiritually and aroused emotionally. This is achieved through ritual or devotional practice, in particular the reciting or ,recollection of Gods name (*zīkr*) and the listening to

spiritual music (*sama*). *Zikr* the constant recollection of god, (Schimmel 1975:84) consists of the repetition - silent or voiced - of divine names or religious formulae..Although there is controversy surrounding the use of *sama* in the *zikr* regarding the use of instrumental music in *sama*, the mainstream of Sufi tradition in India and Pakistan accords importance to *sama* as the context for the Sufis attaining *wajd* the ecstasy, of what means literally “finding god” (Qureshi 1986:82).

Describing a ritual performance she writes,

..here in this intimate atmosphere already charged with powerful emotion one significant phrase of the song so moves an elderly Sufi that he cannot contain himself; he rises and begins a dance of ecstasy. For the performers this signals a moment of extreme responsibility, for unless the ecstatic person continues to hear the phrase of the song that so moved him, he may die. (1986:4)

In her musical description Qureshi writes that three basic categories or types of Qawwali music: there are Sufi songs with popular success, added to the repertoire to keep up with the trend of the day (1986:20), similar to *rang* melodies of the *kīrtan* tradition; well as songs associated with Nizamuddin Auliya including ritual songs and Amir Khasrau compositions which constitute the essence of Qawwali Bachche tradition and comparable to Dwija Chandidas or Narrottama Das Vaiṣṇava *kīrtan* compositions, upon which many of the *marai kīrtans* are based; Qawwali “old” tunes (*purani, dhunen, purani bandishen*), and typical Qawwali tunes for common use (*am dhunen*) that can suit any poem within a given range of structural features (ibid.), akin to some traditional *kīrtan rāgas* that form the central corpus of the *marai kīrtan* tradition, such as Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā and Sohni for example.

What differentiates Qawwali however from *kīrtan* is that “Sufi poetry, the source of Qawwali texts, constitutes a principal vehicle for expressing and communicating mystical thought and experience” (1986: 83), whereas in *marai kīrtan*, it is the repetition of god’s name and not the song lyrics which are the primary vehicle for expressing emotion and mystical thought, accompanied by traditional and contemporary musical instrumentation and dance performance. Another point of departure is the underlying

purpose of Qawwali performance which is “a process of interaction between the audience with its needs, and the performer, with the task of satisfying them” (ibid:75) whereas in *marai kīrtan*, the importance of engaging the audience is only one primary factor, the others being to: “move together” (as a team) in a coordinated cooperative fashion with all musical parts working together; give pleasure to Hari by ideating on him as Radha towards Kṛṣṇa, and fulfill a promise to complete the kirtan at the allotted time (*prahara*); as well as create a “solid” performance, i.e. one that has a balance of traditional *tālas* as well as contemporary *rangs*. The deepest devotion called *rāgatmika bhakti* is where the devotees seek to *give* pleasure to god and is created by the *Hari pari mandala gosthi*, a circle of devotees singing and dancing kīrtan in ecstasy around Hari.

In Qureshi’s analysis of the process of musical/devotional intensification she categorises the participants into three stages of behavior, placed within a continuum and ranging from the normal unaroused inner state to the state of ecstasy in a Table (1986:119). Table 24 gives a framework for spiritual arousal concepts and stages of arousal from zero to III: From neutral to activated devotional attitude and enthusiasm (I); then to deeply moved, overcome with spiritual emotion, intense spiritual experience and strong arousal II; to transported, self obliterated, trance, ecstasy where self control is obliterated by the experience of mystical union III (ibid.). The standard manifestations of strong arousal specific to Sufism in order of increasing intensity are: sudden uncontrolled movement, weeping, arms raised - both, shout, standing up, dance, walk, fall down, roll, toss about, die (1986:121). In the gradual arousal of devotional, trance states a correlation may be made with *marai kīrtan* where the audience (and in rare cases the *kirtaniyas*) experience varying degrees of bliss (*ananda*) in stages I and II, to finally fall into a state of *samadhi* or intoxication (as described above in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta*) in part III. However, kīrtan has other transformative effects, both subtle and physical or environmental, which are reported by the *kirtaniyas* under the Six Kirtan teams below.

The actual musical process of arousal says Qureshi is one that,

“must above all express and convey intensification since intensification is a process..the process of musical performance itself. This is not musical units or attributes but the principle of structuring such units or attributes which represent intensification musically. Multiple repetition finally is the intensifier par excellence in a Qawwali performance

impressing the message fully and continuously. Different types of repetition are associated with different stages. Reiteration belongs to the lowest stage where no or little arousal is present. Insertion recurrence [is where] some mild enthusiasm or mild arousal is present. Multiple repetition finally, implies intense arousal and even ecstasy” (1986:216-217).

Similarly, the musical process in *marai* kīrtan builds in intensity to create arousal through the constant repetition of god’s name and interjections, as well as a complex musical performance structure, which includes variation of rhythmic and melodic highlights rising to climactic peaks of concentration and zeal, as discussed in Part two.

## **5. Rāṛhi kīrtan, inclusiveness and access to participation**

The concept of social inclusion and *satsaung* “spiritual company”, are significant characteristics of Rāṛhi kīrtan with *bhakti* “devotion” as its fundamental goal, as reported by Slawek’s informants,

You see there is the saying that sound is absolute, *nada* Brahmān *hai*, thus, there is no good or bad kīrtan. It used to bother me when people sang out of tune, but when I thought about it, just like *laddus*, Indian sweet, some are round, some are out of shape, but all are equally sweet. Emotional love and *bhakti* is one aspect, style of music is another. A kīrtan is like a laboratory through which we spread the verbal form of Brahmā (Slawek, 1988:84).

Though egalitarian in spirit, in a musical context, *marāī* kīrtan groups have devised specific tactics to overcome difficulties presented by including those less musically proficient members in the team without causing disruption to the overall kīrtan. Hence the musically proficient members find ways to compensate for others who are less “musical”, as when the lead singer calls out of rhythm the Chorus respond by never missing a beat, bringing the kīrtan again into a regular tempo, as described in Part two.

Local ethnomusicologist Binapani Māhāto discusses the social and spiritual significance of kīrtan to the people in Mayurbunj, adjacent to the Purulia District,

The first to adopt Vaiṣṇavism was the king of Mayurbanj, a disciple of Rasikananda Goswami who was a direct disciple of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Since then kīrtan has flooded this region and had tremendous impact on the daily social lives of the people. For example in every house there is *tulsi* plant, people worship everyday at this *tulsi* shrine. During many different rituals they perform kīrtan and in the most important events of our daily life, like birth, marriage and death ceremonies, you can find the influence of kīrtan. We receive and welcome a new born baby with kīrtans, sung for his wellbeing and development and when he gets married after the finishing each ritual we sing *Hari Bolo, Bolo Hari* kīrtan. Through uttering god’s names, we believe that it is good for the new couple as they start a new life together. At the end when we depart the physical body and achieve *moksa*, at that time also we do kīrtans for the salvation of his *atman* soul, while carrying the dead body to the burning *ghat*. So these things reveal the impact of kīrtan and Vaishvaism in our life. The best dance form in this region is *Chhau* where the influence of kīrtan can also be seen (2006: Pers.comm.).

Hence in all the social ceremonies of Rāṅh, the use of kīrtan is mandatory, from a daily prayer sung in front of the tulsi tree, to a simple verse sung of *Hari Bolo* at a wedding, or a whole night’s funerary (*shraddha*) performance, kīrtan functions as a way to bring spiritual communion and provide comfort to the family of the deceased, thus demonstrating how deeply entrenched kīrtan has become in the social structure of Rāṅh society. At a *shraddha* ceremony one informant said, “kīrtan is necessary to carry the lost soul to the heavens for without kīrtan the soul will remain lost in the ether” (G. Māhāto 2006: Pers.comm.). The social, caste or “tribal” backgrounds of six kīrtan teams that performed at the Dabar *mela* in Purulia are discussed in detail in Part one following.

## **6. Musical characteristics of kīrtan**

### **A. Kīrtan styles**

#### **i. *Katha* and *padavali* kīrtan**

Generally speaking, three major types of kīrtan prevalent in Rāṛh today are: *katha* “story telling” which is a combination of narration, song and instrumental music; *pada*



Figure 1.12 *Pada* kirtan performance in Bhansh Ghar village, near Balarampur.

“poetic verse” or *pala* “episode” which includes prose, song and instrumental music; and *nāma* kīrtan or calling the name of the Deity only, through melody, instrumental music and dance. *Katha* kīrtan is stories about Kṛṣṇa, or one’s chosen Deity, in an intimate, private or public setting. The story is told in prose and poetry, alternating with song, narrating experiences of spiritual “grace”

(*krpa*), certain loving deception or secret play (*lila*) of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa.

*Pada* “verse” kīrtan is the performance of devotional love poems of the Vaiṣṇava poet/composers of Rāṛh particularly Jayadeva, Chandidas’s, Narrotama Das Thakur, Govinda Das Thakur and Locan Das Thakur, to name a few whose influence has been profound not only in Rarh, but throughout Bengal.

## ii. *Pala* and *rasa* kīrtan

*Pada* and *pala* kīrtan may both be used in *rasa* kīrtan, i.e. kīrtan songs about the sweet expression (*madhura*) of Kṛṣṇa, rather than the terrible (*rudra*). *Pala* “episode” kīrtan is also based on story telling, as ethnomusicologist Deben Bhattacharyā says,

The success of a *pala* kīrtan depends upon the standard of the commentary on the songs since the audience is too familiar with the story to tolerate monotony the presentation must be original. A kīrtan singer today, addressing his audience in an open air temple or courtyard on a village green, sings as well as elaborates or explains by an extempore commentary in half chant. Since the performance of kīrtan lasts for several hours the technique of presentation is an important factor so each legend of the Kṛṣṇa episode is treated as a compact unit or *pala*. Sometimes the entire Kṛṣṇa legend is serialized over a period of weeks but

broken into different *pala* with each *pala* offering a sequence to the main episode. (Bhattacharyā 1967:67)

On a summer night in the village of Bansh Ghar village in Purulia, I attended a *pada* kīrtan performance by a *kīrtaniyā* and her accompanists from Nadia. Dressed in a silken sari and standing tall in front of a large crowd, she told the story of Kṛṣṇa's childhood in Vrindavan, through both narration and song with backing vocalists, keyboard and khol players. At certain moments she would cry as she told the story in a song and half chant like voice, or call out *Hari Bolo* as the audience responded with loud interjections, proclaiming their tearful longings for Kṛṣṇa.

### iii. *Nāma* kīrtan

In *nāma* kīrtan, the only lyrics are the kīrtan *mantra*, such as *Hari Bolo* and the insertion of the occasional *pada* verse as a highlight of the drum (*kātān*) performance and hence there is little scope for *rasa* kīrtan. However, there is another manner in which *rasa* may be expressed i.e. through Rādhā *bhava*, so that while singing kīrtan, they may ideate upon the blissful form (*madhura rupa*) of the Deity. In



Figure 1.13 A *Nagar* kīrtan led by Sri Gopinath Goswami.

Bengal, *nāma* kīrtan is called “endless” (*akhanda*) because it is performed continuously without stop for a fixed period of time or number of hours (*prahara*) which ranges from one to twenty four hours, or longer, but usually in groups of three. In Purulia the local term for *nāma* kīrtan is *marāī* kīrtan, (See Introduction) and when it is performed through the village, town or city streets, it is called *nagar* (town) kīrtan.

## B. Kīrtan *tatt* “types” of Rāḥ

The topic of kīrtan *tatt* “types” or “styles” was something that my informants rarely discussed, and appeared to know very little about, hence it was not the focus of my research work. However the subject did arise during interviews on a few occasions, and

the conversations were meaningful and significant for future investigations. Sri Rishi Das Goswami says,

You know kīrtan has four *tatt*, or types, one is Nawadvip *tatt*, second is Viṣṇupuri *tatt*, third is Maynadal *tatt* from Burdwan and Hoogley side, and fourth is Uthori *tatt* from the north. Bankura and Purulia belong to Viṣṇupuri *tatt*. I know Maynadal, because one *vairagi* (monk) called Rishikesh Vairāga, came from outside to our village, and I have heard that our ancestors learnt from him and we are following our ancestors, so I think we are doing Maynadal. (2006: Pers.comm.).

According to Madhalji there are also four styles or *gharana* of kīrtan: *Garanhati*, *Reneti*, *Manoharshashi* and *Moynadal*. He states that depending on the kīrtan *gharana* one belongs to, the tune *sur* will be slightly different but the *tāla* will be the same and the “the kīrtan rhythms (*bols*) are fixed, but the tune or *sur* varies place wise”. Sarkar also reports that there are different schools of kīrtan with names that reflect the locality from which they originated,

In Bengal, there are different schools of kīrtana, such as Manohar Shahii *gharana*, *Reneti gharana*, *Garanhati gharana* and *Mandarin gharana*. According to some, Manohar Shahii belongs to Birbhum; according to others, it belongs to Orissa. Haranhata is a locality of Calcutta. *Reneti* is a distortion of “*Ranihati*”, a developed village of Howrah District where kīrtan was very popular. *Mandaran* refers to a place known as *Garh Mandaran* situated in *Arambag* Subdivision of *Hoogly District*” (Sarkar, 2004:59).

Goswami (2002) further elaborates on the origins of the different *padavali* kīrtan *gharanas* in Bengal starting with the *Garanhati* school origins,

The *padavali* kīrtan style devised and introduced by Narottama Das soon earned the status of a school and was named as *Garanhati Kīrtan school*, *Garanhati* being the name of the sub-division (an administrative unit of a district), to which Narottama’s village *Kheturi* belonged. This is regarded as the basic school of

kīrtan music. Complex rhythmic patterns, slow tempo, and elaborate execution of melodic structures were identified as the predominating symptoms of this school. This kīrtan school is compared to the *dhrupad* school of Hindustani music (2002:7).

The *Garanhati* school of kīrtan was presented to a crowd of Vaiṣṇavas at the Kheturi festival in 1572/3 according to Goswami and has been used as a kind of template for Vaiṣṇava *padavali* kīrtan ever since. Apparently the first performance was well prepared and dramatically presented by Narottama Das with two khol players and two supporting vocalists. Goswami continues,

The next kīrtan style or school developed by a Vaiṣṇava named Jnanadas who lived at a village called Kandara under the administrative unit Manohar Shahi. So his school was identified as the Manohar Shahi school of kīrtan. Jnanadas made his style easier than the Garanhati style, he added more speed to the tempo and opted for vocal improvisation to make the composition more attractive. This kīrtan school was counted as being equivalent to the *kheyal* school of Hindustani music (ibid.).

Whether the above *Manohar Shahi gharana* mentioned above is the same as the *Maynadal* that Narayan Mahanti and Sri Rishi Das speak about, is unknown at present and will have to be further investigated. However it could be a local variation of the name in the Rārhi dialect, as there are many local variants of Bengali names in this region.

Reneti *gharana* was from a village called Ranihati in Burdwan District where a famous *padakar* called BipraDas Ghosh was living (Chauduri, 2009:11). Goswami writes about a particular Jharkhandi school which,

was developed by Kavindra Gokul and devised in the Jharkhand region which gave away the classical modes of the earlier schools and tinged its compositional style with the colours of folk music. It even accommodated some elements of *ethno* music of the indigenous people of Jharkhand (2002:7).

However, I haven't been able to locate any further information on Kavindra Gokul and it isn't stated what he means by "ethno musical" elements that have been incorporated into kīrtan. Possibly Goswami is referring to the local folk (*jhumur*) music melodies that are prevalent in *marai* kīrtan performances, if there present popularity is any indication. Goswami also discusses the more recent urban influences or "melting pot" of city based kīrtan styles, for "through the inevitable interaction among these schools there was a perceptible unidirectional development of the city based kīrtan styles" (ibid: 8), which is a topic that goes beyond the present scope of this thesis.

### C. Kīrtan instruments

The traditional *marāī* kīrtan ensemble, during Caitanyas time, according to the *Caitanya Caritamrita* (16<sup>th</sup> century) consisted of khol drums, a principal dancer and singers. In the Text 72-76, *Antya-lila* Ch.10, Kaviraja reports that there are seven kīrtan groups with drums and a principal dancer, such as Advaita Acaryā and lord Nityananda and the kīrtan "was so loud it sounded like a tumultuous roar that filled the sky, as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began dancing in the center in great ecstatic love" (ibid: 66).

Contemporary kīrtan experts such as Mahanti of the Brahmān group, say that the original ensemble consists of singers (*mul gayaks*), *kartal* players, and khol players. Jagaran Māhāto's ideal ensemble includes six or more Chorus singer/kartal players, two khol players, a *mul gayak*, with additional *mul gayak* who is the representative of Gauranga and dances with his arms upwards in complete surrender, as well as a clarinet player, which he calls "flute" to support the melodic parts, making a total of eleven or twelve members. The Brahmān ensemble does not include harmonium, clarinet, *ektara* or *dutara*, as they say that these instruments were not played during Caitanyas time and therefore are not traditional according to Mahanti. They are able to retain the purity of the percussive sound alone while all of the other kīrtan groups, incorporate western instruments into the ensemble, such as the harmonium, casio keyboards, and clarinet to support the melodic lines, as well as Baul instruments, such as the *dutara* "two stringed lute" to support the traditional rhythmic section of the ensemble (see below under the Six Kirtan groups).

**The khol drum and its symbolism:** As stated above the khol is a traditional instrument for *marāī* kīrtan, with historical accounts that stretch back to Caitanya’s time. Every aspect of the khol drum has deep spiritual significance for the *kīrtaniyas*. According to Naba Māhāto and Basanta Rājwar from Bagra, the black paste on the khol (*gab*) are the black eyes of Rāḍhā, crying tears from the pain of separation from her beloved. The *gab* is placed on the right side and on the left (*baya*) or large side of the khol called *korom*. The black paste is made from a mixture of rice flour and very fine stone dust, from the local area, which is placed on top of the skin, then pressed and rubbed, layer upon layer with a metal hammer until it is thick and firm. The khol drum body is made from red earth (*lal mati*) of Rāḍh and the strings on the surface of the *khol* are made from goat skin. The special role of making the khol, is given to the cobbler caste, or *muchi*, with instructions from Caitanya, that they are the only ones who can make the khol drum,



Figure 1.14 The *muchi* or cobbler caste. The whole family are involved in repairing the khol drums.



Figure 1.15 Black *gab* is placed on the left side of khol.

Only the Hari Das caste can make the khol, the untouchables, the real cobbler, the *Harijon*, the *muchi*, only they can do it because without touching with your feet to the khol, you can't make it, and nobody else can touch the khol with their feet but the *muchi*. It is only this caste that can do these things. When you do *puja*, when



Figure 1.16 The left deep (*bayya*) side of the khol representing Rāḍhā's eyes.

you start Haribol you first give them *prasad*, first you worship the cobbler caste, and then Kṛṣṇa, Kālī or Śiva. Other castes can't touch it with their feet. When Caitanya came he made a rule, he gave the power to the low castes, he gave them a special role, so only they are allowed, because this *khol* symbolises Rāḍhā's love and separation, and all of Rāḍhā's emotions and tears are inside the khol, so even if I know, I can't do it, only the *muchi*, cobbler caste can do it (SM, 2007: Pers.comm.).

JM says that the right hand side (high sounding) represents Kṛṣṇa while the left hand side (deep sounding) represents Rāḍhā and the strings connecting the two sides are the *gopis*, the milk maids of Kṛṣṇa called the *āsta sākhis*, "eight friends" representing the eight tālas of Sohni, as described by Sri Rishi Das (see Part One). The three white stripes around the centre of the khol represent the three gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheshvara Śiva and the clay body of the khol is said to be the made from the body of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha (JM 2007 Pers.comm.).<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1.17 The khol drum played inside the *mandīr*.

<sup>13</sup> It is told in the *Kālīka Purana*, the *Devi Bhagavata*, the *Mahabharata*, in the chapter titled "Prayers of Akrura", and in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (7.9.37, Purport).



Figure 1.18 The Māhāto kirtan group with khol players, *dohari* playing kartal (right) and the casio keyboard player behind.

In this story it is said that as Brahmā sat in deep meditation, Viṣṇu was lying down and “ear wax” flowed out from his ears. Two ferocious demons, Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of that wax. After performing great penance for thousands of years they were granted a boon from Laksmi that they could not die. However, in their lust for power, they misused their boon and were terrorizing both the gods and humans. After being tricked by Viṣṇu

himself into granting Him a boon, they repented, asking for forgiveness and agreed to die but only if they could come back to serve Him. Through their devotion, they were reborn as the earth from which the khol is made, so that they may listen endlessly to Lord Viṣṇu’s name until such time as He came again onto this earth as Kṛṣṇa. Thus, every aspect of the khol construction is meaningful and endowed with profound spiritual significance.

Another slight variation to the significance of the khol is given by Rājwar (2006 Pers.comm.), who says that the left side represents Rāḍhā, all of her emotions and longings, the right side, represents Kṛṣṇa, and the middle part of the drum represents their ecstatic union. The strings between the two sides are the *gopis* or *āsta sākhis*, “eight friends, of Rāḍhā Kṛṣṇa”, who also experience the nectar of divine love and separation



Figure 1.19 A *kīrtaniya* from the Rajwar playing *kartal* or *jhail*.



Figure 1.20 The Brahman *kīrtan* team team.

and communicate between the divine couple, all the nuances of their relationship.

**The Kartal:** The term *manjira*, or *jhail* is the local name of the large brass cymbals that are used to accompany the kīrtan, although the most common term is *kartal*. The *kartal* are more commonly known as small wooden clappers with six cymbals inside, yet in the Purulia and Midnapur District, the term *kartal* refers to the large cymbals played during kīrtan. The *kartal* or *jhail*, are an ancient instrument and absolutely essential to the kīrtan performance, laying the rhythmic foundation of the music. The reverberating sound of the *kartal* permeates the atmosphere with its scintillating ring. It has a tremendous uplifting effect on the kīrtan and resonates with the Tantric concept of divine sounds, heard in deepening states of meditation that assist the devotee reaching a state of complete absorption (*samādhi*) into the Deity.

**The *ektara*** or “single stringed lute or plucked drum” is another instrument used by some kīrtan groups in Rāṛh, though it is traditionally a Baul instrument not kīrtan instrument, but is part of the cultural milieu of this region. The different sounds on the *ektara* are created by pulling the single string in different strengths of tension. The instrument is held tightly under the left arm and when the string is pulled tight with a cork attached to the end of it, it creates a



Figure 1.21 Christo Das Baul plays the *ektara* (left) and Chayarani Das Baul plays the *ananda lahari* (right).

variety of pitches while being plucked with a pick in the right hand. The tighter the single string is pulled, the higher the pitch sounds. The symbolism behind the single stringed *ektara* is as significant to the Bauls as it is to *kīrtaniyās* for it represents “a single mindedness” towards their spiritual goal. Because traditional Baul melodies are incorporated into *marāī* kīrtan, it is not out of character to have an *ektara* in the kīrtan group although it is not essential either.

**The *ananda laharii*:** The instrument that sounds similar to the *ektara*, but has a plucked string, is the *ananda laharii*, which means “waves of bliss”. It is made from a wooden cylinder, with one end covered with skin. A single string fastened to the center of the membrane and passing through the open end is held taut by the left hand, and plucked by a bit of ivory or bone held in the right hand. This instrument is played like a “plucked drum”, which matches the *khol* and *kartal* rhythms, yet has its own unique sound.

**The wind instruments:** The most popular wind instruments played in *marāī* kīrtan is the clarinet (Figure 22), taking the place of the bamboo flute of the past. Occasionally a bamboo nose flute is included in the kīrtan ensemble, which gives a high melodious quality. The clarinet is more audible than the bamboo flute, and is played by the Dom, musicians caste of Rāṛh. The purpose of the clarinet is to give melodic reinforcement to the lead singers, *mul gayaks*, although according to Jagaran Māhāto, it also drowns out the rich sonority of the singers voices.

Rampada Kalindi from Balaramapur is a Dom musician, whose family has for countless generations played the traditional instruments of Rāṛh such as the *sahnai*, *banshi*, *dhak* and *dhol* drums. Rampada was given his clarinet by the late Mihir Māhāto (Kandu) and played for the Dabar kīrtan team for over 25 years.

Before I was playing *banshi* or flute, and then Kandu brought me this instrument. He taught me *sa re ga* for two years, but because I already knew the *banshi* it was easy to learn (2010 Pers.comm.).



Figure 1.22 The clarinetist of the Rājwar team.



Figure 1.23 The bamboo nose flute.

Mihir Māhāto’s nephew, Sanjay says that “Mihir mixed socially with the British and probably saw this instrument being played at their concerts and decided to incorporate it into his kīrtan ensemble” (2010: Pers.comm.). Of all the Dom (with the surname *Kalindi*) musicians that I interviewed none could say exactly when the clarinet arrived in Purulia and was incorporated into the traditional kīrtan ensemble, except that it was a long time ago, “when I was small I saw this instrument being played in kīrtan” says Rampada Kalindi, now in his seventies (2010 Pers.comm.). The most common opinion is that the clarinet was brought over by the British for their entertainment, and many of their classical concerts were also attended by local officials such as Mihir Māhāto who then adopted it for their own purposes. The clarinet consequently replaced the bamboo flute in the kīrtan ensemble because of its capacity for greater volume, and ability to be heard above the crashing cymbals and powerful drum rhythms, thus rendering more support to the melodic line. Rampada Kalindi says “I always follow the harmonium and the *sur* (kirtan melodies) sung by the *mul gayaks*” (ibid.).

Vasudeva Kalindi is also from a traditional Dom family who plays clarinet in a kirtan team. His father was a *dhak* (large cylindrical drum) player, who used to play in the Shiva *gajan* festivals of Rāṅh and encouraged Vasudeva to accompany him on the clarinet. He also had a clarinet teacher from Bagmundi whom he learnt from for two years. Vasudeva has been playing clarinet for thirty years both in kīrtan teams as well as Indian brass bands. Although the majority of clarinet players are from the Dom caste, it is not the exclusive right of the traditional musicians to play the clarinet, as demonstrated by Para Māhāto, seen performing with his village kīrtan team team at Santaldi village. He is the first in his family to play an instrument and was taught the clarinet by Gobinda Das Goswami from Bagmundi and has been playing now for two years.

Ghaltu Kalindi and Vasudeva Kalindi are of the opinion that the *sahnai* is as ancient as the *dhak* drum and “was invented by Lord Shiva, as stated in the Shiva Puranas” (2010, Pers.comm.). The khol drum is traditional and documented in the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* (16<sup>th</sup> century) whereas the clarinet, and more recently the casio, are “like ornaments (*alankar*) that decorate the sound with their colourful beauty)” says JM (2010, Pers.comm.). Though not traditional, they symbolise an essential characteristic of

kīrtan, to adapt and change with the times, while staying within traditional musical boundaries.

#### D. Kīrtan Melodies

##### i. Kīrtan rāga/ rāgini

Some *kīrtanīyas* believe that kīrtan belongs to the classical genre but does not strictly follow the classical mode, and others state that it is not bound by classical rules and hence fits within folk music. JM states “there are musical boundaries in kīrtan [i.e. an infrastructure], yet the musical grammar is not fixed, therefore it *is* rāga but *not* rāga” (2010: Pers.comm.). In Purulia, the term kīrtan rāga is often interchangeable with rāgini or song (*gan*) yet what is meant is essentially the same: a complex musical composition comprised of two or more primary melodic lines, the first is called *la*, or “introduction” or “refrain” with a fixed tāla, and the second melodic part is *kātān* “skilled playing” with a drum composition similar to a drum solo, except that it is recited in *bols* (drum language) as well as being played. There is also an *alap* (free rhythmic section), as well as melodic improvisations (*udara mudara tara*) combined with rhythmic elaborations held securely within a pyramidal structure that reaches an apex of intensity at the *katan matan* “*katan* climax” or grand *finale*, as discussed in part two.

JM states that a “rāga is male, and a rāgini is female, and in a Rarhi kīrtan both exist (2010, Pers.comm.) as reflected in the *Ardhanara Ishvara* (Siva/Shakti or half male/half female) sculptures that abound on the temples of Purulia, symbols of the fierce devotion of Saivism combined with the tender eroticism of Vaisnavism. In Dāspera for example, the first section *la* has melodic line (M1), a higher part called *udara mudara* (M2), a combination of M1 and M2, that climaxes at the *matan* or “accelerated *crescendo*”. The second section, Dāspera *kātān*, has an elaborate rhythmic composition accompanied by a different melodic line (M3), but one modeled on *la* (M1), as well as a melodic improvisation called *udara* improvisation or (M4), based upon the previous *udara mudara* (M2), higher in register than M3, adding a greater dimension to the *kātān* composition. Thus, Dāspera *rāga* includes M1, M2 of *la* and M3 and M4 of the *kātān* similar to the *stayi* (M1), *antara* (M2), *sancari* (M3) and *abhog* (M4) in a classical

*dhrupad* composition (see Musical examples 4, 5, 7 and 8). The most common *rāga/rāgini* used today in *marai* kīrtan are Śiva Ranjani, Yaman (called Emon locally), Malkaus, Bhairavi, Bhageshvari, and Sohni which have been adapted from Hindustani classical music, while Gitangi, Dāspera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā and others are kīrtan *rāga/rāgini*.

Historically speaking, the use of the term *rāga/rāgini* in a kīrtan context is likely to stem from the earliest known kīrtan composition, the *Gītagovinda*, which has ascribed eleven different *rāgas* to each of the twenty four verses (*padas*), but there has been no traditional transmission or notation to assure that these names designate the same melodic patterns they do in later times. The term kīrtan “*rāga*” is also likely to have been part of the musical vocabulary of Narottama Das (16<sup>th</sup> century), the *dhrupad* singer and *kīrtaniyā* who would certainly have known which Hindustani *rāgas/ rāgini* and *tālas* to incorporate and into kīrtan, such as *ektāla*, which is common to both kīrtan and Hindustani classical music, but played differently (Bihari, JM 2007: Pers.comm.). He certainly knew the *Gītagovinda* and Chandidas’s kīrtans as these books were a constant source of inspiration to Caitanya, his guru.

The Vaiṣṇava savants of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were at one to declare the mainstream *padavali* kīrtan as classical (Goswami 2002), some of them emphasised the *alap* phenomenon which dwells on the essential *rāga* frame and introduces its fundamental nature to its listeners. Although efforts were made to retain the *rāga* character in kīrtan they did not always corroborate with the Hindustani classical *rāgas* says JM,

If we are talking about other *rāgas* like *Emon*, *Bhairav*, from the classical tradition, they are not played in the same way as we play them in Rāṛhi kīrtan. Rāṛhi kīrtan has its own style. And if you compare our Śiva Ranjani *rāga* with classical Śiva Ranjani *rāga*, you will see the difference. Our own version of Śiva Ranjani *rāga* has been created by Rāṛhi people and passed down generation to generation (2008 Pers.comm.).

Sri Narayan Mahanti, leader of the Brahman kīrtan group from Bhansh Ghar, describes some classical *rāgas* used in *pada* kīrtan, and the origins of *nāma* (see below) or *marai* kīrtan melodies,

In *pada* kīrtan we use the rāgas for any time of the day and night. At midnight there is Malkaus, a classical rāga, in the morning Bhairavi and evening Emon [Yaman]. With *pada* it is very difficult for ordinary people to understand, so Caitanya simplified it into only two words, *Hari Bolo* mixing Śiva and Kṛṣṇa together with *Hare* or *Hara* being the name of Śiva. Actually [*marāī*] kīrtan was created from *padavali*, using Jayadeva’s kīrtan, and other Rāḥ kīrtan *pada* writers such as Chandidas, Narrotama Das, Vaiṣṇava Das. (Mahanti, 2006: Pers.comm.).

Therefore a kīrtan rāga is a complex musical composition with a musical structure consisting of an *alap*, a fixed tāla and at least two melodic lines, (usually two in *la* and two in the *kātān*). The second melodic phrase of the first melodic line (*la*) is quite possibly the refrain of the original kīrtan *gan* composition, as it is the most often repeated melodic phrase of the rāga, as in the *stayi* of *dhrupad*.

*Udara, mudara and tara* (see Musical example 5), are Hindustani musical terms used to refer to the base, middle and top notes of a melodic improvisation, that ascend in a step like fashion in a kīrtan rāga/rāgini, such as Dāspera rāga for example. The *tara* part is one step higher than *udara mudara* creating a sequence of rising pitches in three steps. According to Rājwar, *udara, mudara* and *tara*, are also terms that refer to three respective roles for the lead singers or *mul gayaks* (MG’s) in a kīrtan ensemble, similar to soprano, mezzo soprano and contralto voices in western classical music for example. He says,

The first singing voice called *udara* comes from *udar* meaning “stomach”, plus *dar* or “door”, therefore means the lower voice. The second is called *mudara*, and comes from *mukh* meaning “mouth” and *dar* which means “path” or “door”, and therefore means the mid range voice, then there’s the third voice, called *tara*, which comes from *ta* meaning “heart” and *ra* which means *shabdha*, “sound” or “voice”, and represents the highest singing voice (2007: Pers.comm.).

As the notes of one melodic phrase are broken into smaller parts for the three to sing, each one is higher in pitch and longer in rhythmic duration. The *udara* sings the first few notes that ascend in thirds above the other, held for at least eight beats (*mātrās*), followed by the *mudara* who sings one note a third above the previous *udara* for at least eight *mātrās*. The final note of the melodic phase called *tara*, is a third above the second part and held for at least sixteen beats. So the singers roles are to complete the melodic phrase in one continuous sweep. Thus the significance of the *udara*, *tara* and *mudara*, is more than just different ascending melodic parts, it also represents a spirit of collective social movement towards a single spiritual goal. In musical terms, these separate, yet interconnected parts produce a hocket effect on a single melodic line, similar I am told, “to running a relay in a marathon” (SM 2007: Pers.comm.). Although not necessarily in any particular order of importance, each part has a vital role to play in creating a dynamic and varied performance and as a means of displaying their vocal expertise as well as engaging the audience. In *Dāspēra*, the different vocal parts, *udara*, *mudara* and *tara* are sung consecutively creating a continuous, collective, melodic line.

**Dāspēra melodic lines:** Other than the *la* (M1), *udara mudara* (M2), *kātān* (M3) and *udara* improvisation (M4) lines sung in *Dāspēra*, there are additional melodic lines sung by various *kīrtan* teams: a medium pitched (Mp) part; a lower minor (Lm) sounding part; as well as *tara* making a total of seven melodic lines in *Dāspēra* as discussed under the Rājwar team in Part one.

According to some *kīrtan* experts, the correct term for the *kīrtan* composition is *kīrtan* song (*gan*) because the *kīrtan* melody is derived from an original *kīrtan pada* (verse) composed by a Vaiṣṇava. Yet the melodic lines of *padavali* *kīrtan* have been adapted to a specific *kīrtan tāla* and placed within a traditional *kīrtan* infrastructure (as described in Part one). Other *kīrtan* experts use the term *kīrtan tāla*, rather than *kīrtan rāga*, *rāgini* or *gan*, because they say the *tāla* is always fixed, whereas the melody is not, (Rājwar, Madhal, 2009: Pers.comm.). However, from analysis it is preferable to use the term *kīrtan rāga* or *rāgini* rather than *gan* or *tāla* to describe a performance, for a number of reasons: firstly, only the melody of the *kīrtan* song is used, not the lyrics; secondly the *gan* melody is adapted into a complex infrastructure with *la*, *udara mudara tara*, *duni*,

*cho duni, matan* and *katan*, for example, similar to a *dhrupad* composition with a fixed rhythmic pattern and composition, but with its own unique characteristics; thirdly each separate composition is woven into an elaborate performance structure comprised of a number of traditional *rāga/rāginis* and *rangs* designed to take one to heights of ecstasy, as discussed in Part two.

## ii. Kīrtan *rang*

In *marāī* kīrtan, the Rarhi kīrtan *rāgas/ rāginis* and *tālas* form the core of the tradition, whereas the *rang* meaning “colourful” songs, are interspersed to a lighter mood as well as a dramatic flavor to the depth and complexity of the kīrtan compositions. In JM’s words, kīrtan *rang* means,

When we put *jhumur* or Baul or modern songs such as cinema songs into kīrtan it is called *rang* which means “colour”, or different types of songs. As an example, suppose we are singing Śiva Ranjani *rāga* and inside we suddenly put a *jhumur* and after that again we came back to the Śiva Ranjani, then we repeat that pattern. You see in the middle we are putting different types of songs and those are called kīrtan *rang* (J. Māhāto 2008 Pers.comm.).

The importance of kīrtan *rang* in Rāṅh kīrtan is described as,

Kīrtan *rang* is very, very essential, it’s like salt, without salt your *tarkari* “vegetable” will be tasteless. Without *rang*, kīrtan will be tasteless, so in *Dāspira*, or in *Pākāchutā* or in *Sohni* we use *rang* inside of these *tālas* (ibid.).

By contrast however, the Kostuka kīrtan group performance at the Dabar *mela*, directed by JM was almost devoid of *rang* with the majority of traditional kīrtan *gan/tālas* being performed instead. Jagaran later commented that he prefers the purity of *Jhorchutā rāga* and not put any *rang* inside, as do other groups. So on the one hand, Māhāto speaks about *rang* being “essential”, and on the other hand, retains the purity of *Jhorchutā rāga*. It seems therefore to depend largely on the guru’s mood or particular circumstances i.e.

the audience's requests, village's "rules" or what he might consider as more appropriate, which has a bearing upon whether or not *rangs* are performed. Hence from observation, there is a wide spectrum of choice regarding kīrtan *rang* with some groups having a "purist" approach, some preferring a mixture and others, mostly *rang* in their kīrtan performance, as discussed in Part one.

### **E. Kīrtan tālas and mātrās**

From a historical perspective, that the first renowned kīrtan poet, Jayadeva adapted the metrical rhythms of the popular songs of the day to his exquisite Sanskrit verse, the language of the religious orthodoxy, was considered literary heresy at the time (Bhattacharyā 1967:28). His juxtaposition of the *Ten Reincarnations of Kṛṣṇa* in the first part of the kīrtan, followed directly by a song on the erotic love of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa, was also innovative and had astounding results, for "through this bold experiment Jayadeva brought the vigour of the popular rhythms to the educated and linguistic refinement to the lower castes" (ibid.).

By contrast Miller suggests that Jayadeva's adaptation of the musical non-Sanskrit meters of medieval vernacular poetry, to create a medium of song within conventional poetic Sanskrit was not an isolated phenomenon, and reflected (the four beat subdivision) the most common rhythmical pattern (*tāla*) of both Hindustani and Karnatic classical music (1977:11), although no *tāla* designations were given. Taraka Das Baul from Kenduli, says that "Jayadeva gave very hard tālas in the *Gītagovinda*, which are used by *kīrtaniyās*" (2007 Pers.comm.), affirming the complexity of the kīrtan tālas and suggesting that they are still being used in kīrtan today. The kīrtan compositions generally include an *alap* "non metered section" performed with intermittent but extremely powerful drum strikes, and a fixed *tāla* with rhythmic embellishments, a complex *tāla* composition (*kātān*) with *bol* recitations, rising towards the *kātān matan* or accelerated climactic ending, a comprehensive music composition and dance choreography geared towards the creation of devotional intensity and ecstatic unity.

i. Kīrtan *mātrās*

In Rāṛhi kīrtan, the time signatures (*tālas*) refer to a combination of beat cycles (*mātrās*) within one rhythmic cycle. A *tāla* is made up of fixed number of *mātrās*, the most common being *ektāla* in eight or twelve *mātrās*, Pākāchutā and Sohni, in seven *mātrās* and Jhorchutā in three and a half *mātrās* for example. The term *mātrā* is defined by JM as,

If we measure a *tāla*, then the unit of measurement is called *mātrā*, like seven *mātrā* which together makes up Sohni for example. In other words,  $mātrā + mātrā + mātrā + mātrā + mātrā + mātrā + mātrā = \text{Sohni}$  (2008 Pers.comm.).

The cymbal (*kartal*) players generally mark the *tāla* with a single strike on each *mātrā*, so that one can easily count the *mātrās* in a piece by observing the kartals play. Rhythmic variations and elaborations are also hailed as signatures of expertise performed by the khol players. Hence the *kartal* rhythms are the foundation of the rāga performance, as they establish the *mātrās*, set the tempo and highlight the rhythmic changes from *la* into *duni* “double time” to *cho duni* “quadruple time” while the khols play the sophisticated rhythmic compositions of the *kātān*. Similarities can also be found with the principal *tālas* of *cacā*, in the Newar Buddhist ritual songs as Widdess says,

Like Indian *tālas*, they comprise various numbers of beats, namely 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16...Each subdivision is marked in performance with a cymbal strike on the first beat (2004:27).

He further states that “in their different lengths, their subdivisions into unequal units, and the use of cymbals to mark the subdivisions, these *tālas* bear comparison with temple-music traditions of North and South India as well as Nepal” (ibid.). This is seen in kīrtan *tālas* which display various number of *mātrās*, namely, 8, 10, 12, and 24 in

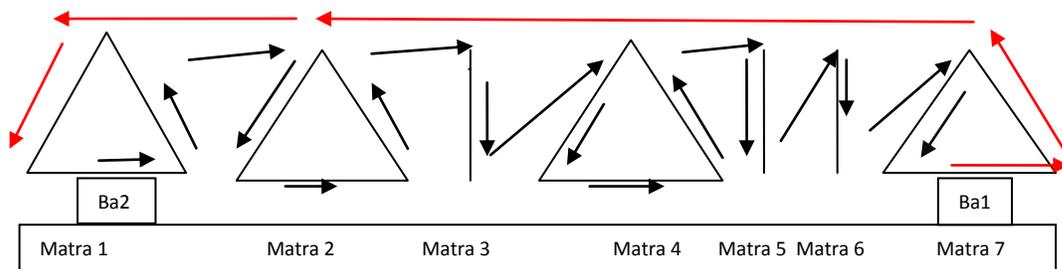
Dāspera for example; some have subdivisions of different or unequal length depending on the rāga; each subdivision or *mātrā* cycle is marked with a cymbal strike on the first beat; and they are performed inside the temple (*mandīr*).

ii. Kīrtan notation

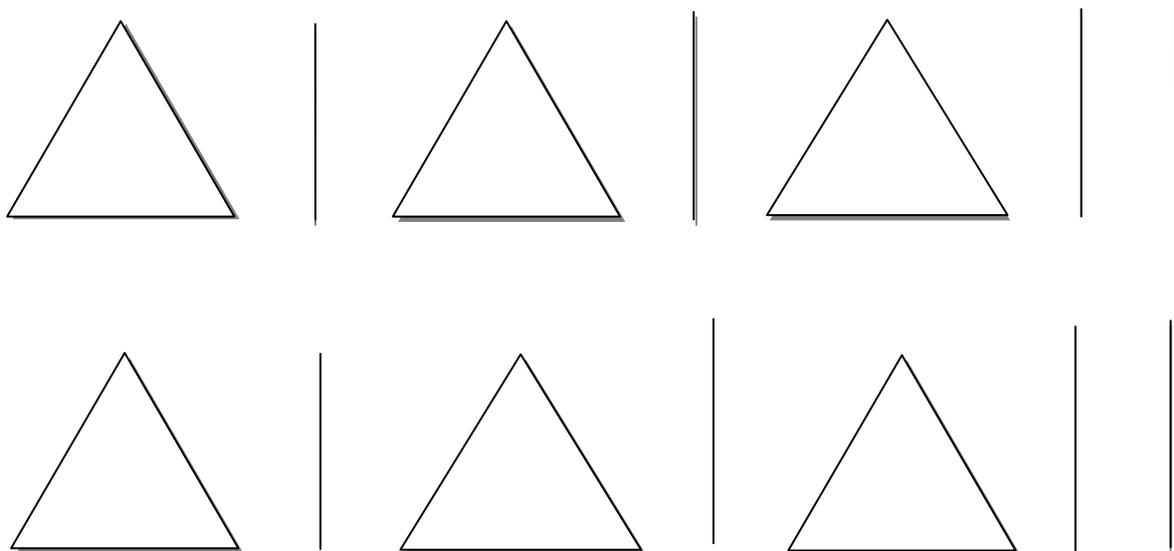
Kīrtan expert Narayan Mahanti from Bansh Ghar discusses *ba* notation for Sohni below,

We write Sohni tāla by using three and a half *ba* [triangular shapes] and in the middle of three “*ba*’s there are four *dari* or *phak* [straight lines]. These straight lines are *mātrā* and each “*ba*” at the top corner is also *mātrā*”, which means that when you move through each corner of the triangle and get to the top corner then it is one *mātrā* (2007 Pers.comm.).

Starting from the last *Ba* he describes in what order to read the geometric shapes,



Pakachuta *Ba* notation below (see Musical example 14), Pakachuta *la* (1<sup>st</sup> row) and the *kātān* (2<sup>nd</sup> row):



After the first two *ba* then there is *dari* straight line, then another *ba*. It starts from the first corner of the last *ba*, and at head of the first *ba* it finishes. From that *ba* the song will go to the top of the second *ba* and from the top of the second *ba* the *gan* (song) will go to the head of the *dari* and so forth till the top of the last *ba* (Mahanti 2006: Pers.comm.).

In other words, in *ba* notation each *mātrā* is written either as a *ba* “triangle” or *dari*

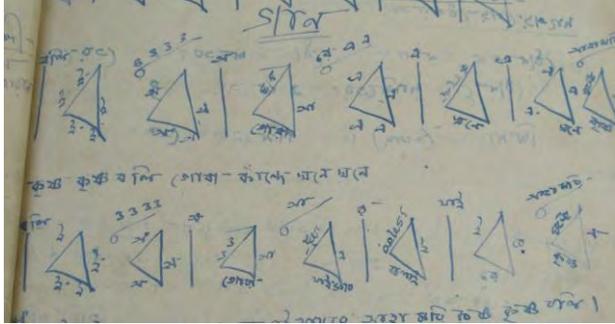


Figure 1.24 *kīrtan* notation called *Ba* by M. Māhāto of Dabar Village, Purulia.

(*phank*) “straight line”. Written upon the sides of the *ba* shapes and *dari* are the words of the original *pada* verse. A single word may extend over three sides of the *ba* for the period of one *mātrā* for example, or over two *mātrās* depending on the song. A word written over a straight line is a single *mātrā*. However, further investigation into *ba* notation is essential, as it is already falling out of use, demonstrated by the difficulties experienced in finding other experts to decipher the late Mihir Māhāto’s *kīrtan* manuscript of 1947.

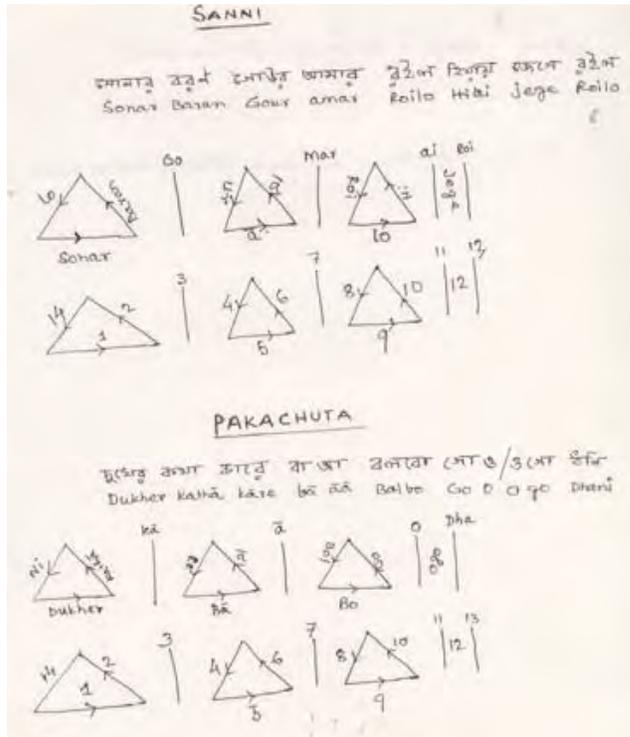


Figure 1.25 *Ba* notation of JM’s showing Sohni and Pakachuta.

In Figure 1.25, the lyrics of Sohni *gan* are written above and around the *Ba* notation to give an indication of how to sing with the rhythmic cycle divided of seven *matras*. The *matras* are written below, along the second line. The *khol bols* of Pakachuta and Sohni are transcribed in Part two.

### iii. The khol drum *bol* patterns

Through intense observation and analysis, I have transcribed the mnemonic syllables of the khol *bols* below, never reported on before to my knowledge. They were recited while playing by JM during the Kostuka kīrtan team performance,

Table 1.1 The khol drum mnemonic syllables or *bols*.

Right Hand	Left hand - middle	Left hand – edge	Both hands
Ta	Ka	Dha	Da
Ti	Ke	Dhi	Dhe
Te	Ki	Ghi	Dhey
Ni	Ko		Ge
Tai	Toi		Ghe
Tre	Tho		Jai
Ya	Urr		Jha
Nau			
Na			
Ne			
Re			

The phonetic syllables are strung together in different sequences within the rhythmic cycle. The drummers may vary the *bols* in the sequence for variety, just as we, for example, might say *yes*, *yea*, or *yep*, meaning the same thing,

In our system the tāla has codified syllables called *theka*, these are composed tāla, in other words, they cannot change, but we don't play this every time. So that it's not boring, we change to suit the tune, and sometimes, instead of playing these *theka*, we play the names of *Nitai Gaur*, such as *Duti Duti Gour Nitai*, *Duti Duti Bhai Gour Nitai Nitai*, these are khol *bols* (Mahanti, 2007: Pers.comm.).

There are some particular fixed patterns in each *tāla* that are repeated, such as in Dāspera *la* below, which has eight *mātrā* in single and double strikes as follows,

Table 1.2 The *Bol* patterns for Dāspera *la*.

<i>Mātrā 1</i>	<i>Mātrā 2</i>	<i>Mātrā 3</i>	<i>Mātrā 4</i>	<i>Mātrā 5</i>	<i>Mātrā 6</i>	<i>Mātrā 7</i>	<i>Mātrā 8</i>
<i>Dha</i>	<i>Ke +ta</i>	<i>Na +ka</i>	<i>Dhe +na</i>	<i>Dha</i>	<i>Ke +ta</i>	<i>Na +ka</i>	<i>Dhe +na</i>

*Dha* is equal to one strike in one *mātrā*, while *keta*, *naka* and *dhenā* are two strikes for each *mātrā* and the whole pattern is repeated, making a total of eight *mātrās*. The combination of different rhythmic strikes (*bols*) within each *mātrā*, create the distinctive “groove” of song.

#### iv. *Theka*

The word *theka* refers is generally conceived of as a conventionally accepted arrangement of *bols*, such as *dha*, *ta*, *tete*, *ta ka*, *na ke*, *dhe na*, *ghin*, *ghere*, above, which are the most common kīrtan *bols* played on the khol. Some of the more popular *theka* “fixed rhythmic patterns” as noted above.

#### v. *Hat sādhanā*, “hand practice”

Some examples of basic kīrtan rhythms to be learnt by khol players via the *guru shisha* system of transmission are called *hat sādhanā* lit. “effort made by the hands” because traditionally the disciple would learn the rhythmic patterns by playing them on the knees first with his hands, while reciting the *bols*, and not on the khol drum. Only after practice for some time would the khol player begin to play the actual khol drum. The *bol* patterns begin simple, then become more elaborate as the student progresses. Each of the rhythmic patterns are repeated (*bahubar*) innumerable times until played proficiently, and only then the guru teaches the next pattern.

In the first pattern for example, *Tete* is played with first three fingers of the right hand, then *dha* is a strike on the deep or left side of the drum edge, then *tete* again, then *tho* is a strike to the left side with the whole palm in the centre. Basanta Rajwar says that “If you learn these then you can play the main kīrtan tālas, Sohni, Teyhot, and

Pākāchutā” (2007: Pers.comm.). The *hat sādhanās* below are given by JM to his students, becoming progressively more difficult to play. Each pattern is repeated innumerable times and ends with a traditional series of triplets or *tihai* of *dini dini da, dini dini da, dini dini da*. The first four patterns are transcribed below.

1. *Tete do, tete tha,*
2. *Tete tete do, tete tete tha,*
3. *Tete tete kiti tako, tako tete kiti tako,*
4. *Jha tete kiti, jha jha tete kiti, Tako tete kiti, tako tako tete kiti, Kiti tako tete kiti,*
5. *Tete ta ghin dul, tete ta ghin dul, tete tete ghin dul ghin dul,*
6. *Dhere tete ghini naok, tere tete kiti tako,*
7. *Dag dhere ghini tako tete kiti,*
8. *Gheda gher gere gere tere tere, Ghreda da gere tere tere, Gheda da ghere nako tere tere*

Note: top notes refer to the right, treble side of the khol and bottom notes refer to the left, bass side of the khol

Trad.

Rhythm pattern 1

khol drum 
  
 te te do te te tha Di ni Di ni Da Di ni Di ni Da Di ni Di ni Da

6 Rhythm pattern 2

khol drum 
  
 te te te te Do te te te te Tha Di ni Di ni Da Di ni Di ni Da Di ni Di ni Da

12 Rhythm pattern 3

khol drum 
  
 te te te te ki ti ta ko ta ko te te ki ti ta ko Di ni di ni Da Di ni di ni da

15 Rhythm pattern 4

khol drum 
  
 Di ni di ni Da Jha te te ki ti Jha jha te te ki ti ta ko te te ki ti ta ko ta ko

Figure 1.26 The *hat sādhanā*, khol “drum patterns” (*bols*).

## vi. The infrastructure of the kīrtan performance

Although there are similarities with *dhrupad*, (See Part two) my research reveals that the *marāī* kīrtan performance has a unique infrastructure, consisting of five sections or styles of playing:

1. “*La*” means “introduction” or “refrain”;
  2. *Duni*, means “medium tempo”, played at double the original speed or “double strikes”;
  3. *Cho duni* means “fast tempo”, four times the original speed;
  4. The *jarop* or *matan* “climax” described by JM as the time when the *kīrtaniyās* are literally “running around the *mandīr*” (2007: Pers.comm.);
  5. The *kātān*, “skilled playing” section or “drum solo”, performed by the *khol* players, while the singers repeat the *kātān* melody innumerable times;
  6. Occasionally, *tin tāla* (*tāla* of three) is also played before the *kātān*. At the end of the cycle they are apt to start the cycle again in the same *tāla* or change to a different one.
- The infrastructure of *ektala*, meaning “cycle of one” in which multiples of beats pairs are played, usually eight or twelve, is discussed by Rājwar,

*Ektala* is broken into five styles of playing : *la*, “introduction”, *duni* “double time”, *Cho duni* “quadruple time” *kātān* “skilled playing part” and *matan* or “climax” whereas the infrastructure of *Pākāchutā*, *Teyhot*, *Jhorchutā* and *Sohni* is only four parts *la*, *duni*, *kātān* and *matan* (2008: Pers.comm.).

Hence, only in *Dāspera* is there *Cho duni* while in the other *tālas*, *Pākāchutā*, *Jhorchutā*, *Sohni* and *Teyhot* there is only *la*, *duni*, *kātān* and *matan*. Rājwar also says that in *ektala la*, there may also be a *kātān* “skilled playing section” inserted within it, as there is the potential for different *rāga* parts to be extended and developed to a lesser or greater extent depending on the *kīrtan guru*’s knowledge and expertise. Actually the *la* or “introduction” varies with each team, he states, and “one can sing *la* in their own style although the *tāla* is fixed” (ibid.). In other words the *khol bols* do not change, while the melodic component may vary. Into the regular *la bols*, however, some elaborate rhythmic patterns are inserted to provide rhythmic variation and increase the dynamism, on their journey towards ecstasy. The second section of the *rāga* performance (*kātān*) is a complex rhythmic composition made up of variable drum patterns played in a fixed sequence with *bol* recitations. In the *kātān* the virtuosity of the *khol* player is demonstrated through an increase in rhythmic density, hence one is improvising, not on the number of *mātrā* (beats) per cycle, but within the *mātrā*.

Although the *kīrtaniyās* may be in a state of ecstatic bliss or devotional zeal as they run around the *mandīr (matan)* they still maintain a certain discipline, rather than fall into trance, demonstrating their professionalism, as discussed under trance and *kīrtan* above.

## 7. Musical Influences in Kīrtan

### A. Outside influences and the origins of *marāī* kīrtan

JM comments on the typical characteristic of Rāṛhi people to absorb influences from outside, yet maintain their own identity, their capacity to “accept and tolerate others” without compromising their own culture (2007: Pers.comm.) so that when Caitanya travelled through Rāṛh and was confronted with an already established *kīrtan* music tradition, rather than trying to impose Nadia *kīrtan* on the Rāṛhi people, he simply encouraged them to adopt *Hari Bolo* into the existing system (ibid.). Therefore, according to JM, Rāṛhi *kīrtan* is not the same as Nadia *kīrtan*, but a unique mixture of ancient traditional *pada* *kīrtans*, local *ādi jhumur* and Baul songs (*sur*), fired by the spiritual currents of missionary zeal brought by Caitanya and Nityananda to Rāṛh. He says,

Gauranga [Caitanya] got *kīrtan* from Rāḍhā/ Kṛṣṇa and he spread it. So when Caitanya crossed this area, he didn’t want to change their lifestyle he just fit his own things inside our culture, he made a good mixture. Wherever he went, he adjusted with the people. Rāṛh is famous for accepting things, it is this area’s specialty. So if you walk through from Nadia to Puri you will find more *kīrtan* in this area because they have this special quality, also because this area is based on “*ādi jhumur*” [original folk and devotional songs] on Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa, and you can’t change these things. There is a special type of infrastructure, where we are telling the *kīrtan* stories, playing Sohni, Pākāchutā, Teyhot, Lupha, Jhorchutā, and you can’t change these. But it’s not the same Sohni as in Nadia, maybe the name is the same in Nadia and Purulia and Orissa, but there is a difference when they are singing (ibid.).

In his interview, he continues to discuss the differences, between other regions kīrtan and Purulia kīrtan. At times he infers that the origins of Sohni and other kīrtan tāla are from classical music or from Nadia when he says, “you won’t find the original Sohni, but one that is influenced by the Rāṛh indigenous music”, an assumption he then challenges when he says “there is Purulia Sohni and Orissa Sohni, but Purulia is best, Purulia Sohni is more powerful, with music and dance, and tāla” (ibid.). He describes his experience at a kīrtan competition, where four kīrtan groups performed and how they won first prize in the competition,

There were four parties from Manasol, Nadia, Orissa and Purulia, and we performed last, at 3 am. We played Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā, Sohni, Teyhot, Sam tāla, and we came first, at the end the audience was still sitting (ibid.).

He says that Rāṛhi kīrtan is more developed in comparison with the other areas because of their *tāla/gan*, story telling and dance expertise, that the Purulia team was more proficient and could “cover” for each other, “I was demonstrating how *Ba* kīrtan notation has come, telling kīrtan stories. In our kīrtan there is song, dance, khol, and stories, and if one is not strong the others can help to recover, but with other kīrtan teams, there’s only one man who is covering” (ibid.).

Perhaps, due to an imposed inferiority resulting from economic exploitation of the Rāṛhi people, JM first suggests that the original Sohni is from Nadia and not from Purulia. Then as he continues to speak about his experiences, JM says that Purulia kīrtan is a more potent expression of collective expertise. Hence it is a better candidate for being the homeland of *marāī* kīrtan in the wider region.

## **B. Baul philosophy and music**

In Rāṛh the names Baul and Vaiṣṇava are almost synonymous, (BM, 2007: Pers.comm.) for one of the most distinctive characteristics of Rāṛhi kīrtan, is that, it has been impregnated with the mysticism of Baul music (Sarkar 2004:49). The devotee of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa’s *madhurya* (erotic love) utilises the compulsive power of his/her own emotions in trying to find union with god, with a fervor equaling that of Rāḍhā’s intense passion (Bhattacharyā 1967: 39-40). The “double entendre” of the Baul lyrics camouflages

Tantric references yet not the emotional content whereas in *marāī* kīrtan, all of their emotions come out through *Hari bolo*, as JM says,

Externally we are only singing two names, *Hari Bolo* but internally all of our expression and emotions come out through these two words” (2006 Pers.comm.).

The infrastructure of *marāī* kīrtan is also designed to reflect the divine play (*lila*) of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa, leading to their spiritual union. Other considerations, such as the guru’s selection or choice of repertoire, the interplay of call and response between the lead singers (*mul gayak*) and Chorus all interweave and contribute to the divine *lila* for all to partake. In *marāī* kīrtan, everything depends upon the repetitive singing of *Hari bolo*, the musical accompaniment and dance, rather than the song lyrics, to express a whole gamut of human emotion.

According to Chayarani Das Baul, Taraka Das Baul and Christo Das Baul “Baul music is older than kīrtan” (2006: Pers. comm.) and although it is not within the scope of my thesis to investigate the validity or otherwise of this statement, the fact remains that Baul melodies (*sur*) are an intrinsic part of the *marāī* kīrtan performance with their commonly disjunct melodic motion, i.e. with large intervallic leaps from low to a very high pitch and their accented syncopated rhythms are, created from a *tāla* of six *mātrā* (*dadra*). There is an emphasis on triple and duple rhythms results in an uplifting joyful cadence, suited to the Baul dance movements. The Baul *sur* are incorporated into the kīrtan using the traditional *talas* and *la*, *duni* and *matan* infrastructure for example, and



Figure 1.27 Chayarani Das Baul and Cristo Das Baul performing at a Baul *mela* in Purulia.



Figure 1.28 Laksan Das Baul at Baul *mela* in Purulia.

are easily distinguishable with their theatrical flair and intense mysticism.

Not only has Baul melodies been adapted to the *marāī* kīrtan performance, but also *marāī* kīrtan has attracted many Bauls to form their own *marai* kīrtan teams in Purulia. One such group is led by Kripa Sindhu Das Baul from Barairga village, who performed at Madhsudhan Das Baul’s ashram. Their performance was traditional, i.e. it began with *jhuran* “musical introduction”, Guru *vandana*, “offerings to the guru”, followed by Sohni, Śiva Ranjani and Jhorchutā rāgas. Yet they did not perform the most popular rāga, Dāšpera in *ektala* or Pākāchutā i.e. there were fewer traditional rāgas. In an interview, Kripa discusses how they adapt Baul songs to *marāī* kīrtan,

We take a Baul song and sing Hari *nam* to it, or a Hindi song. It is difficult, but with practice you can do it. Also there are songs that suit kīrtan so those songs we use, not others, only those that fit kīrtan. There is a rule, first we have to do the traditional song melodies for one or two hours, and then we can do *rang*, that’s how we keep our old *purano* things. Because of public demand we are doing *rang* kīrtan (Kripa Sindur, 2006: Pers.comm.).

Devi Das Baul is the most prolific Baul composer I have met in Purulia. He has



Figure 1.29 Devi Das Baul plays *ananda lahari* and sings.



Figure 1.30 Devi Das Baul and Sri Mataji at their ashram in Purulia.

written over 1,000 Baul songs and kīrtans to date. Leaving home to become a Baul at the age of 17 years, he is now in his sixties, lives with his partner Mataji and has established

a beautifully decorated Baul ashram over the years. His health has suffered tremendously from the mendicant lifestyle and recently had to have both legs amputated. However his songs are the most popular all over the region, being recorded and performed by Chayarani Das Baul and others. Devi Das Bauls's songs cover such themes as the status of women, Tantric practices or "double entendre" songs, and *padavalli* kīrtans on Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa. In one song of his titled, *Ami tomār, ashai, gunbo go*, he recites the lyrics,

I'll count the days waiting for you, sung in the name of Rāḍhā, played in the tune of Mohan Kṛṣṇa. Oh when I listen to your flute till full hearts content, mixed with memories of millions of births, my thirst is yours and mine sweet love, I will fall at Your feet, I'll count the days waiting for you (2006: Pers.comm.).

Describing how he composes, Devi Das says,

Depending on my mood and emotion, I can write songs when my mind is calm, cool and when it is emotional. When I am emotional I can write one, two or three songs within one sitting. I try to communicate to the common people with my songs, how to love and to come to god (ibid.).

In Baul *tālas*, as in kīrtan, one can hear *ektala*, but to say that the *ektala* in kīrtan and the *ektala* in Baul music is the same is an oversimplification. The diversity of *mātrā*, rhythmic elaborations, and *kātān* compositions which are unique to *marāī* kīrtan, are not part of the Baul music tradition to my knowledge. Also Bauls generally perform solo, with accompanying musicians, rather than as a socially cohesive group as in *marāī* kīrtan, largely due to the nature of their role as itinerant musicians.

In *marāī* kīrtan the performance of a Baul *rang* is markedly different from a Baul performance for: the Baul song is brought within the traditional kīrtan infrastructure with *la*, *duni*, *matan* and *kātān* rhythms; the tempo of a Baul song is generally of a medium to fast pace without rhythmic embellishment whereas in *marāī* kīrtan there is tremendous rhythmic variation; the other most significant factor is that kīrtan has only two lyrics *Hari Bolo* whereas Baul songs are characterized by the "common use of riddles, paradox, and enigmatic metaphor in didactic song texts, flouting of caste, frequent use of riverine and nautical imagery" (Capwell, 1988:123).

Baul songs are not as poetic or descriptive as the *Gītagovinda* for example, they carry spiritual messages, such as the temporality of mundane life and the permanence of the spiritual abode, for “Puranic Hinduism states that after 8,400,000 lives, a human being takes birth and the human body is the best vehicle for worshipping god” (Devi Das 2007 Pers.comm.). Thus by incorporating Baul *sur* in *marāī* kīrtan a poignant mysticism is infused, with or without knowledge of the “double entendre”.

However, one of the major differences between Baul music and *marāī* kīrtan is obviously the individual versus collective expression which creates a far more complex performance structure. All of the separate dance, instrumental music and singing parts are intertwined in *marāī* kīrtan, for the melodic parts are derived from *padavali* kīrtans and adaptations from *rang*, interwoven with the khols rhythmic patterns, supported by the cymbal players, which trigger the kīrtan dance movements. In Baul music, although the musicianship may be remarkable and the dance delightful, it is rarely so well rehearsed or choreographed, as in *marāī* kīrtan. Another significant difference is that unlike Baul *gan* which is largely an oral tradition, (with some notable exceptions)<sup>1</sup> the kīrtan tradition has a rich literary repository, hallmarks of the educated Vaiṣṇava society, stretching back to Jayadeva’s *Gītagovinda* and possibly further to the *cārya padas*.

### **C. *Dhrupad* and kīrtan**

The Bengali ethnomusicologist, Deben Bhattacharyā says “the music of kīrtan suggests a popular trend and displays a strong tendency towards blending styles and types”... [and that] on the classical end, “*dhrupad*, is often interwoven with popular folk melodies and styles” (1967:41), with its purity of rāga and slow tempo.

From an historical perspective the Malla kings of Viṣṇupur (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century), attempted to build a literary tradition at the court after Srinivas Acaryā (one of Caitanyas main followers), initiated the Viṣṇupur king Bir Hambir (Sen 1960:110). Over a period of a hundred years or so, a Vaiṣṇava cultural tradition flourished at the Malla Court culminating during king Gopal Simha’s rule (1712-48). Naturally, the royal family patronised kīrtan as the musical expression of their faith, including the composition and performance of *padavali* kīrtan in a classical style, thereby contributing to its

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<sup>1</sup> Devi Das Baul is a contemporary example.

development as a performance genre. It seems likely therefore that the *Great* Tradition of classical music would not only have influenced the kīrtan tradition, but rather that the kīrtan tradition provided musical material for the *Great* tradition, even merging at times. Acarya Madhalji from Viṣṇupur suggests, “the classical *gharanas* and kīrtan *gharanas* are very much related, Śiva Ranjani, Vihag, Malcosi, these rāgas are used in kīrtan” (2009: Pers.comm.) and visa versa, some very significant classical musicians became *kīrtaniyas*. Hence the kīrtan tradition not only adopted classical rāgas into its repertoire but also wielded its influence on Hindustani classical music, as in other temple traditions, thus “it is reasonable to suggest that the paths of influence are bidirectional” (Groesbeck, 1999:101). Narottama Das and Dijyotima Thakur for example, two classically trained *dhrupadiyas* made substantial contributions to the already established kīrtan tradition.

Dijyotima Thakur (1925- 1995), whose original name is Sanatan Batihaka, a *dhrupadiya* and Brahman from Uttar Pradesh was brought by King Shankari Maharāj of Kashipur (Manbhūm) to Rāṛh, to perform in the royal courts. Yet his family report, that he composed many *padavali* kīrtans and *jhumur* songs, in a classical style. Dijyotima Thakur lived in Ghanga village, and was gifted a few villages from which to collect taxes and thus live comfortably while residing at the royal court. According to his family, Dijyotima Thakur wrote many Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa *padas*, and was even creating songs while sleeping by writing them on the wall at night. They said he was constantly in Rāḍhā *bhava* and always donned a female persona, wearing *saris* like the village women. Hence Dijyotima



Figure 1.31 A descendants of Dijyotima Thakur, singing a *jhumur* song in the Durga temple next to their ancestral home.

Thakur is renowned, not as a *dhrupadiya* but for his Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa kīrtans.

Dijyotima’s descendants are still living in the ancestral home and continuing the family tradition as musicians. One of the brothers teaches classical music in a local school, the other writes and composes *jhumur* and kīrtan and all are members of a *marāī* kīrtan group who sing traditional Rāṛhi kīrtans. Sasankar Thakur says “Music is our

wealth just like agriculture is to others, and the songs and music that we have composed are our family treasure” (2009: Pers.comm.). Over time, their social and economic situation has deteriorated, yet they have become integrated into the local music culture and perform *marāī* kīrtan, as it also provides a small income for its musicians.

In their kīrtan repertoire they perform Dāspera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā, Sohni and Teyhot as well as the classical rāgas Śīva Ranjani, Lupha, Bageshvari, Malkaus and Gitangi. Thus, it can be surmised that even though the classical music of *dhrupad* was being performed in Kashipur (Manbhum), Dijyotima was drawn into the rich, ecstatic kīrtan culture, demonstrating its effect upon some classical musicians in the region. A brief outline of the similarities and contrasts between *dhrupad* and kīrtan compositions are seen in Part two, with reference to Widdess’s work.

#### D. *Jhumur*, folk rhythms and kīrtan



Figure 1.32 Nacini “dancing girl” of Purulia, sings a *kīrtananga* and dances at a local *mela*.

Bhattacharyā mentions that the *gad kempta* rhythm is most favoured for kīrtan which is “also related to a very popular type of dance for girls and was one of the chief entertainments of feudal Bengal” (1966:42), although there is no information whether the kīrtan singers adopted these rhythms from the *kempta* dancers or the reverse. Other than *gad kempta*, the kīrtan rhythm is in twelve beats which

is divided into two bars of six, where one bar gives the bass sound and the other the treble alternately (ibid.), referring to common kīrtan tāla of *ektala* in twelve *mātrās*. The *kīrtananga*, or “kīrtan influenced *jhumur*” are discussed by BM,

People appreciated and adopted kīrtan into their daily lives. We find *jhumur* songs also in this region, the sophisticated and most developed folk song of Rāṛh, and here also you get the influence of kīrtan. The semi classical songs called

*kīrtananga jhumur* are a mix of *kīrtan* and *jhumur* together, but the influence, the bent, is towards *kīrtan*, as in the song titled *Asi bhule gelo* where Rāḍhā is desperately longing to be united with Sri Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has made her wait a long time and still he has not arrived. In this song Rāḍhā says to her *sākhis* or companions, “how can this happen to me, Kṛṣṇa told me to come earlier and I have waited till late in the night, how can I survive?, I cannot bear this pain of separation, bring me a knife so I can kill myself, or bring my lord Kṛṣṇa, otherwise I will finish my life by drinking poison”. So a sense of utter desperation is being expressed in this song. In the end the poet says there is nothing to worry about, the lord is the here in your heart, be faithful to him, he will come, definitely he will come to his devotee, he will never turn you down, but have patience” (2007: Pers.comm.).

## E. Conclusions



Figure 1.33 Kīrtan *mandir* at Bhansh Ghar village with images of Śiva/Parvati, Rāḍhā / Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya, Nityananda and stories from the Puranas.

“Kīrtan is like a sea, absorbing everything, but the sea will not go to the river, the river will come to the sea” (JM, 2009: Pers.comm.). Just as the sea is the original home of life on earth and symbol of one’s spiritual destination, so too one of the qualities of *marāī* *kīrtan*, is that it can absorb other musical influences without loosing its original identity. Profound inspiration, stemming from one’s

endeavour (*sadhana*) to bridge the gap between the human and divine love, has been given full expression in *marāī* *kīrtan*. Thus the origins of the *marāī* *kīrtan* can be represented by the sea or the vast blue sky surrounding the mighty mountains, upon which Śiva/Parvati sit and Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa are locked in passionate embrace. The smaller mountains surrounding Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa are the renowned Vaiṣṇava’s who have composed, propagated and reinvented *kīrtan*, such as Jayadeva, the Chandidas’s, Caitanya,

Nityananda Thakur, Narottama Das Thakur and others. Major rivers created by these great personalities, are the literary compositions such as the *Caryāpadas* (11th century), the *Gītagovinda* (12<sup>th</sup> century), the *Sri Kṛṣṇa kīrtans*, (14<sup>th</sup> century), the *Caitanya Caritamṛta*, (16<sup>th</sup> century) and others that provide pathways of inspiration for *kīrtaniyās* to follow. Popular *kīrtan* songs and types (*tatt*) have formed various streams depending upon geographical location in Rāṛh, such as the *Garanhati gharana* and *Manohar Shahi gharana*. Other great rivers converge into the *kīrtan* currents creating deep and shallow surges, dramatic combinations of sounds and colourful variations of the mystical Baul songs and *ādi* (original) *jhumur* songs. Still the central tributaries of the *kīrtan* tradition remain intact (with its *desi* rāgas and tālas), called Dāspera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā, Sohni and others. Other indigenous music genres of Rāṛh, such as *Chhau*, *nacini nach* and *jhumur* songs, borrow and give new interpretations to the *marāī* *kīrtan* rāgas/tālas, yet *kīrtan* keeps flowing onwards along the path to the infinite sea of ecstatic fulfillment,

There is Jhorchutā in *Chhau*, they can use it, but *kīrtan* will not take anything from *Chhau*, they only take from *kīrtan*. *Kīrtan* is a type of music that you can't compare with other types, you can't bind it, you can't make a boundary line or limit it, you can't say this has an end to it. (J.Māhāto 2008: Pers.comm.).

## 8. The six *kīrtan* teams of Purulia

I selected five *kīrtan* teams from among the many I had observed during my fieldwork in the Purulia district of Rāṛh. There seemed to be no necessity to go beyond this region, in the very heartland of Rāṛh, mostly for reasons of time. As well, in this small area alone, there were many proficient *marāī* *kīrtan* teams to document, providing me with sufficient material for my ethnographic investigation.

After observing the *kīrtan* performances of many teams over the first two months of my fieldwork, I identified six distinct *kīrtan* teams. With my research partner Tinku, (who also had no prior knowledge of *kīrtan*) I then arranged a *kīrtan* festival in April 2006, so that I could record, document and film their performances for later study and detailed analysis. The six teams that we interviewed and invited to perform at the *Dabar mela* were selected on the basis of proficiency, location and diversity. All were excellent

kīrtan performers, from within the Purulia District and each with their own unique characteristics. Below is a list of the teams, with the colours of their kīrtan clothing for identification purposes:

- I. Māhāto kīrtan team from Bagra (gold and rose)
- II. Rājwar kīrtan team from Bagra (orange)
- III. Vaiṣṇava kīrtan team from Silfore (saffron)
- IV. Kīrtan team from Karandhi (white)
- V. Brahman kīrtan team from Bansh Ghar (white)
- VI. Kīrtan team from Kostuka (white and beige)

For each kīrtan team I shall discuss their: background, including local history; distinctive characteristics including cultural, philosophical and musical influences; performance structure, including content, team hierarchy, leadership, dance movements and structural markers; musical qualities (as seen on the DVD), singers (*mul gayaks*), percussionists (khol and kartal players) and other instruments; personal kīrtan stories, experiences and conclusions.

### A. Māhāto Kīrtan Team



Figure 1.34 The The Bagra Māhāto *Para Yung Karnar Hari bolo* Committee.

The Bagra Māhāto *Para Yung Karnar Hari bolo* Committee above refers to the village Bagra, Māhāto the “tribe” (the name they use), *Para Yung Karnar* the street name, and *Hari bolo* the kīrtan *mantra*. The members of the team are, from left to right: Naba Kishore Māhāto lead *khol* player; Surjay Kanta Māhāto “middle voice” (*mudara*); Prabhash Kālīndi (Dom) clarinet player; Hemanta Rājwar, harmonium, *casio* keyboard player and “high voice”(*tara*); Brikodar Māhāto, “low voice” (*udara*) and lead singer (*mul gayak*); and Rasa Rāj Māhāto, *khol* player on right. The other members of the team behind are: Nirmal Māhāto, Shyamal Māhāto, Vasudev Māhāto, Ambuj junior Māhāto, Āmāresh Māhāto and Sunil Māhāto, who play cymbals (*kartal*) and sing in the Chorus.

### **Introduction**

*The whole environment is charged with an electric pulse as Brikodhar Māhāto leads the team in the Gauralap and guru vandana, “offering to the guru”, with the khol players beating in thunderous unison at both sides of him. The Chorus join in playing their cymbals (kartal), splashing colours of different sounds into the kīrtan arena and singing with complete emotional abandonment as they begin their devotional music performance.*

### **i. Background**

The Māhātos, (from Sanskrit *Mahatman* meaning “great soul,” magnanimous”)<sup>2</sup> are the one of the original people’s of Western Rāṛh and the main agriculturalists. Māhāto is not a surname, but a title meaning “head man”, and therefore they have a relatively high social and economic ranking, “Others used to address them as Mahatman, which later turned into Māhātos” (Sarkar 2008:108). BM also says, “The Māhātos are sufficient by themselves, they are the most sophisticated farmers of this region. They are the well-to-do families, because they have their own land” (2006: Pers.comm.).

Most of the members of the Māhāto kīrtan team live in the same street (*para*) of Bagra village. This particular village in Rāṛh is unique in that more than ninety percent of the locals are Muslim, yet the two kīrtan teams voted “best” in the region in 2006, the Māhātos and the Rājwars are from Bagra village. Each kīrtan team has its own kīrtan practice areas, i.e. on the rooftop or courtyard of the family compound, as well as

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<sup>2</sup> Cologne Digital Sanskrit lexicon ([http://webapps.uni\\_koeln.de](http://webapps.uni_koeln.de))

a *mandīr* in the village. Brikodhar Māhāto, lead singer of the Māhāto teams talks about the history of the team,

We have been performing *Hari bolo* kīrtan since 1988, and our village kīrtan team have been in existence for five generations, from my great, great grandfather’s time. This is a Muslim village, and they created many problems for us in the past. They didn’t allow us to do *Hari nam* kīrtan when they do *Allah*, but we did anyway. When we did kīrtan through the village, they didn’t allow us to go into their part of the village, only our part of the village. We had a court case against them and in 1945 a judge also decreed that we couldn’t do kīrtan in their part of the village. But we continued, we didn’t stop doing kīrtan, we did more. Now we do kīrtan throughout the village. Because of *Hari’s* desire, we have been successful, and the laws have been changed. Now there are two teams in this village. The Rājwar team is eight years junior to our Māhāto team (2006: Pers.comm.).

The first time I observed the Māhāto team perform in a courtyard of a family compound in the Māhāto part of the village, Brikodhar Māhāto played the harmonium and led the Chorus. I was surprised by the sonority and poignancy of his deep bass voice, as generally a kīrtan *mul gayak* has a high tenor voice. I sat, mesmerized by their kīrtan performance.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics of the Māhāto kīrtan team performance

Cultural and Philosophical influences: “This area is a Śiva area so we must first give respect to Śiva” (B.Māhāto 2007 Pers.comm.). The combined worship of *Hara* Śiva and *Hari* Kṛṣṇa comes across in their performance and their comments, “We play *Śiva Ranjani* rāga, which comes from a song with the names of Śiva, starting with *Shankara*, *Hara*, *Mahadeva*, while the *kātān* of this rāga is based on a Kṛṣṇa song and describes Kṛṣṇa playing his flute on the bank of the river Jamuna” (ibid.). In other words, the *Śiva Ranjani* rāga has a *la* section derived from a Śiva song, describing His divine attributes, while the *kātān* has a melody derived from a Kṛṣṇa song, thus *Hara* and *Hari* are combined inside the rāga performance.

**Musical influences:** The most distinctive features of this kīrtan team overall, are their classical music influence and creative resilience. They have adapted to *marāī* kīrtan, for example, the Hindustani rāgas Yaman or (Emon) its local name, Śīva Ranjani, Palaborti as well as Gitangi (a *desi* rāga) and others, performed with astounding beauty and strength. “We are more classically based, and to match the classical rāgas we may add a Bengali *rang*” (ibid.). In other words they would choose a Bengali *rang*, similar to the Hindustani rāga to insert into the piece, to create a diverse, sophisticated musical performance. A creative resilience was demonstrated through their broad repertoire, the adaptation of various *rang*, and the addition of various divine names in their kīrtan performance using traditional ragas. So, when asked to perform the traditional rāgas, singing a different *mantra*, they were very enthusiastic to participate.

### iii. Performance

**Content:** Brikodar discusses their performance infrastructure based on a fixed tāla, in this case *ektala*,

There is an infrastructure given by the guru, but it is a liberal infrastructure so you can be creative. Inside *ektala* you can use many tunes, but the base is still *ektala*. There are many types of *ektala*, maybe twelve or so. With the base of these original songs, you can create your own and put them inside to match with the rest, but you have to use the proper tāla. (2007: Pers.comm.).

Their performance structure demonstrates both creative and traditional elements as follows: a) Beginning from outside the kīrtan *mandīr* is Guru *vandana* “calling the spiritual guru” addressed to Caitanya and Nityananda with *Premanaday Gurupranam Gaur, Nitai Hari bol*, followed by reverential verses from the *Gurugita*, “songs to the guru”; b) *Juran* or Introduction, “setting up” time with traditional instrumental music based on kīrtan songs; and c) *Dohar* meaning “on the way” songs.

Inside the kīrtan *mandīr*: a) the *Gauralap* performed in *Emon* rāga beginning with an opening rhythmic flourish followed by a fast rhythmic piece; b) *Dāspira rāgini*, (the term used by Brikodar) in *ektāla*, which continues for around fifteen minutes, with *Dāspira kātān* or “skilled playing” section at the end; c) *rang* section, including

traditional *jhumur* and *Baul* melodies for fourteen minutes, with the *matan* for three minutes; d) a traditional *kīrtan* melody in *ektala* with four different rhythmic variations e) *Sohni la* followed by *Jamal Sohn*, played with small drums; f) another *rang* section with a traditional *Baul gan* song called *Lalan Giti*, *Lalan* being the composer's name; g) Śiva Ranjani *rāga* which is their speciality, a profound, vigorous Hindustani classical *rāga*, adapted to *kīrtan* and very popular among the *kīrtan* teams of Rāṛh. The Māhāto team performs Śiva Ranjani *alap*, and *kātān*; and h) the *kīrtaniyas* prepare to leave the *mandīr* with a typically light *jhumur* song.

During an interview, Brikodar Māhāto and Naba Māhāto discussed the *kīrtan tālas* and *rāgas* that were most significant to their *kīrtan* performance, ones that could not be omitted without it seeming incomplete,

Dāsp̄era *rāgini* in *Ektala* is essential, because when you perform these you give regards to Śiva and Durga. This area is a Śiva area so we must give respect to Śiva. If, in another place they don't use Dāsp̄era, they will use Gitangi *rāga*, as it is also one type of *ektala*. *Sohni* is also very important, because there is a rule in *kīrtan*, that (even if the audience doesn't request *Sohni*), still we must do it. Without *Sohni*, the *kīrtan* is incomplete. There are also many types of *Sohni* – Sam *Sohni*, *Jamal Sohn*, but first there is *Sohni la* or *Sohni gan*, then *Sohni's kātān* (2006: Pers.comm.).

Hence Brikodar explains that there are guidelines in *kīrtan* that must be followed, one must give respect to Śiva and his spouse, and must incorporate some traditional *rāgas*, such as Dāsp̄era and *Sohni*, because without these the *kīrtan* “will seem incomplete” (ibid.). The *tālas* of *marāī kīrtan* are fixed yet diverse, as Brikodar suggests here, with many different variants or types of *ektala* and *Sohni*, which needs further investigation.

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** At the top of the *kīrtan* team hierarchy is always the guru. For the Māhāto team, their first guru was a Vaiṣṇava called Akul Das from Baikata village. Then they accepted Mahadeva Das, as well as learning from senior family members. As Naba Māhāto, the *khol* player says, “We have a guru, like a non-

playing captain, but actually we learned from our forefathers” (2006: Pers.comm.). Brikodar and Naba speak about the guru/disciple relationship,

Akul Das was our guru. But tradition-wise we get knowledge from our grandfathers. After we started with this guru, then all the old men came and encouraged and told us this is wrong, this is right, so we learned like this. In the upper part of the village, there are many old men who sit and talk there. Akul Das is dead now, but his son is still alive. The system is to make a guru. We had to make a ceremony for ten days. Then after that we learn from our grandfathers and elders. It’s traditional to have a Vaiṣṇava guru. Unnecessarily we pay lots of money, lots of rice, paddy, and clothes because of tradition (ibid.).

Although they followed the traditional “system” to create a kīrtan team, there is no guru actively teaching them at present. Still there is an accepted hierarchy, headed by Brikodhar Māhāto, the first *mul gayak*. His role is like that of a musical director, selecting the rāgas and setting the performance structure. The lead khol player is the second in charge. He is always next to the first *mul gayak* and keeps the team discipline and morale high. As this kīrtan team has a relatively high educational standard overall, unlike some other kīrtan teams in the region, they discuss and plan their performance structure, writing down what they will sing, then rehearsing and executing it in a cooperative and orderly fashion.

The Māhāto team explained how there came to be two very dynamic kīrtan teams in their village when most villages had only one. In the past, there was only one team combining the Māhātos and the Rājwars but owing to clashes, they split into two. However there are still some crossovers, as the second *mul gayak* in the Māhāto team is a Rājwar, although there are no Māhātos in the Rājwar’s team as far as I am aware. They say that the Māhātos were “higher up” in the tribal hierarchy, although the social inequality that existed between the two teams appears now to be long past.

In terms of leadership and team dynamics, the first *mul gayak* Brikodar chooses the rāgas to be performed, and directs the performance while dancing in step with the Chorus/*kartal* players. He often looks behind to see how the other team members are doing, sometimes placing his hand on the shoulder of the *khol* player in solidarity, while

moving around the *mandīr*. Brikodar appears to have the team's confidence for when he succeeds in taking the lead, the others respond instantaneously with an exuberant rush of energy and inspiration. However the others don't always respond to his effort to lead and take center stage as the second MG is at times leading and unable to detect the repeated gestures of the first MG. Thus the first MG's efforts to steer the melodic parts of the performance in new directions are sometimes thwarted. In the final instance, he overcomes this difficulty by speaking directly to the second MG during the performance. This has the necessary effect and the kīrtan changes in a bold new direction.

**Dance movements:** At the beginning of the performance during the devotional calling of the *Gauralap*, as well as at the end of *Dāspera rāga*, the Chorus/kartal players kneel in reverence. With enormous dynamism and emotional intensity they represent the collective spirit of kīrtan with its socially diverse congregation and devotional ambience. They are the humble devotees of Hari who respond wholeheartedly to the call of divine, singing and dancing around him as the Hari *mandala* or "garland" of flowers.

During the *kātān matan* of *Dāspera*, when the rhythmic climax is at its height, the Chorus stands absolutely still, playing the kartal with zeal and singing with full volume. At all other times they are in motion, dancing *lalita marmika* or some choreographed movements. They often jump forward at the beginning of the Chorus response section, and then make a four step turn with large dignified strides, stepping forwards and backwards in time with the accelerating rhythms of the kīrtan. The predominant dance routines of the *Māhātos* are a side-to-side swaying movement of the legs coinciding with stepping forwards and backwards and a four-step turn or spin at the ending point of each rhythmic cycle. The *Māhāto* Chorus/dancers are led by the *dohari*, who is an extraordinary performer, with long strides, an intense, ferocious energy, and ecstatic facial expressions.

**Structural markers:** Brikodar discusses how the team changes between pieces, the structural or transition markers that the members use to signal each other during performance,

Before Sohni, maybe we are doing *rang*, so we will call out *Hari Bol, Hari Bolo*, in quick succession. When we do this, we give some indication on the khol, to say, “now change to the next part”. When we fall out of sync with each other, people easily understand that there is something wrong. This change comes about with the help of the *dohāri* and other *kartal* players. It’s a team game, and we have a game plan. As the khol finishes his rhythmic marker, it then passes onto the *dohārī*, because we will have to come back to the place from where we start. The *dohārī* has to be careful. If he misses the cue, everything will fall apart (2007: Pers.comm.).

Key signals in transitions between musical sections begin with calls from the MG. Then the khol players make some distinctive beats that alert the *dohari* who then changes the rhythmic pattern accordingly, followed by the Chorus. Hence the kīrtan performance is a team effort requiring a great deal of collective awareness and coordination between team members to be able to keep the different musical parts moving in unison.

#### **iv. Musical qualities**

**Gauralap in *Emon* rāga (DVD 1 Māhāto):** Though it is called Yaman in Hindustani classical music, the local term for this rāga is Emon. In this *Gauralap* performance, Emon is five minutes long, slightly longer than other teams.

The effect of this rāga on the audience is mesmerizing, for its intervallic structure is powerfully evocative with the semitonic ascent from G to A flat and descending from A to A flat, in particular has a subtle effect of immediate release. In the *Gauralap*, *Emon* rāga is explored in its heights and profundity, its glorious upward leaps and downward slides. The rhythmic section begins with a rapid pyramid-like ascent, then drops into intermittent thundering strikes and a very rapid rolling motion. The Chorus kneels in the beginning, then after a few minutes begins to dance, alternating between a two step movement, standing still while striking the *kartal* and moving forward again, striking, then spinning in a circle on the spot, creating a sonic circle of devotion within the *mandīr*. Hence with the beginning *Emon* rāga the Māhāto team set the stage for a spiritually empowering performance.

**Udara mudara tara melodic improvisation (DVD 1 Māhāto):** “We are more classical based” (B.Māhāto 2007: Pers.comm), as demonstrated by their *Gauralap* in Emon rāga and their performance of the Hindustani classical improvisation *udara, mudara and tara*, the focal point of their melodic performance in Dāspera. The sharing of one melodic line between the three MG’s is another distinctive feature of the Māhāto team’s performance, which extends the melodic line in a stream of sound coursing around the *mandīr* and beyond. The melodic parts *udara, mudara* and *tara* are sung in a sequence of notes, rising towards the highest pitch of the rāga, in a precise and systematic way delighting the audience. The first MG, Brikodar sings the *udara*, the third MG sings the *mudara*, and the second MG, sings the *tara* which he then continues into the *la* melodic line. The *udara* and *mudara* notes are held for approximately eight *mātrās* and the *tara*, for sixteen *mātrās* and continuing into the *la* for the sake of collective singing, making thirty two bars or more, which one MG could not possibly achieve on his own, thus demonstrating the collective spirit of kīrtan. The rhythmic section, support the MG by adjusting their playing to the melodic line, especially when there is some variation during the course of *udara mudara tara*, i.e. the *mātrā* is shortened or lengthened. This is due partly to the MG’s movements to and from the front of the *mandīr*, and their ease of access as they come forward to sing their respective parts. For example, when the second MG is dancing behind the *khol* players and must sing his *tara* part, he must maneuver in front of the other performers. The shuffling backwards and forwards of the MG’s as they sing their respective roles takes coordination and cooperation among the team. To avoid clash, a *mātrā* or two may be added or omitted to the melodic line while the *khol* and *kartal* players adjust accordingly.

Another reason why there is some rhythmic variation in *udara mudara tara* may be the MG’s miscalculation or a desire to display his virtuosity. During *udara mudara* for example, on the second cycle, the third MG anticipates the rhythmic cycle by two *matras*. Also on a few occasions I observed the second MG extending his part of the melodic line for sake of vocal display while the *khol* players always compensate for the variation in rhythm and continue without disruption.

In a similar spirit of unity, the Chorus responds to the MG’s lead, repeating the melodic line *udara mudara*, but do not improvise, shorten or extend it. They do not

attempt to create any vocal ornamentation as the previous MG's have done as that would break the collective flow. During the melodic improvisations, rhythmic variation is a feature of the MG's vocal performance, not of the Chorus, at this time, who continue moving as coordinated parts of the same organism. The *udara mudara* and *tara* improvisation in Dāspera rāga may have evolved as a creative response to the preexisting Hindustani classical improvisation, nevertheless it is congruous with the spirit of egalitarianism that is inherent in Rāṛh kīrtan performance.

This classical improvisation is applied only to the upper melodic lines of Dāspera, for when a new, low variation commences, there is no sharing of parts, and the same melodic line is sung consistently by both the MGs and Chorus. This change in melodic line is accompanied by a shift in interest from the melodic line to the rhythmic section with a change of rhythmic pattern at this point. By alternating different vocal and *tāla* emphasis, the audience attention is maintained throughout the performance by a subtle play of rhythmic and melodic highlights and juxtaposition.

**Śiva Ranjani rāga (DVD 1 Māhāto):** “Our Śiva Ranjani rāga is best, because the other teams only sing the *kātān*, they don’t sing the rāga *alap*, which we do” (ibid.). Śiva Ranjani rāga symbolises Śiva, (ibid.), as seen in popular depictions of him upon Mount Kailash, with long dreadlocks, holding a *trisula* or trident, the symbol of spiritual power and renunciation. In Śiva Ranjani rāga the khol rhythms are extremely rapid and powerfully played, with repeated accents on the deep bass side of the drum, contrasting with the high soaring melodic line of the *alap*, extending far beyond what seems possible. The disparity between the fast beating khol patterns and long held notes of the melodic line creates a hypnotising effect on the audience, where one can easily visualise Śiva’s *tandava* dance on top of the stony Rāṛhi mountain ranges, with its mesmerizing beauty and profound virility. In the *la* melodic section of Śiva Ranjani, the traditional rhythms of the Śiva *Gajan* can also be heard, but here played on the khol instead of the *dhak* drum, once again demonstrating that the worship of Śiva Hara and Hari have combined within *marai* kirtan.



Figure 1.35 Hemanta Rājwar, second MG playing the casio keyboard.

Inside of Śiva Ranjani they have inserted a few minutes of Palaborti rāga, “as there is only a slight difference in the instrumental music and rhythms (*bhajna, tāla*) between Palaborti and Śiva Ranjani” (ibid.), adding greater variation to the rāga performance, thus demonstrating their musical expertise, and heightening the musical and devotional intensity.

**Lead singers (*mul gayaks*):** Although most of the kīrtan team are Māhātos, the second MG is Hemanta Rājwar who is the *tara* singer (Fig. 1.35). Hemanta plays the electronic *casio* on the electric guitar sound preset, connected to a speaker hanging over his shoulder. Though there is some friendly competition between the two MG’s, Brikodar and Hemanta, it doesn’t seem to have any visible effect on the other members of the team. The difficulty seems to lie in the fact that Hemanta's electronic casio, is self adjusted and set to be loud (like all electronic music devices in Rāṛh) in comparison with the overall volume of the kīrtan. He can therefore easily dominate the melodic performance with this support from his electronic device and high tenor voice with a piercing nasal quality. Hence the inequality in the dynamics between the two MG’s partly exists because of the casio, and partly because the first MG with his sonorous bass voice, is without the support of a harmonium, which could assist him in asserting his melodic pitch and carry the others along with him. Hence without the aid of a harmonium to compete with Hemanta, it is more difficult to make his wishes known and to direct the team on the occasion of the Dabar *mela*.

The third MG has a softer, less nasal voice than Hemanta and is positioned to the right of the other two *mul gayaks*. The clarity and fragility of his pure tenor voice is best suited to the higher notes of the Dāspera rāga. In the performance of *udara, mudara, tara,*



Figure 1.36 Māhāto team khol players and MG.

he usually sings the middle, *mudara* role while dancing *lalita marmika* with arms held upwards to the sky in a gesture of devotional surrender, as the representative of Gauranga.

**Percussionists - khol players:**

The rhythm section is composed of two khol drum and five cymbal (*kartal*) players as well as one

*ektara* a “single stringed lute or plucked drum” player who generally replicates the rhythmic patterns of the cymbals (*kartal*). Of the two khol players, the leader stands on the left, from the observer’s perspective, facing the Chorus and therefore having direct eye contact with them. The khol player on the right faces the lead khol player, therefore having his back to the Chorus. The lead khol player has a very important role in the team dynamics. He is the initiator of the different rhythmic patterns. On occasion, I saw him taking charge of the team, guiding the Chorus to their places, giving feedback and advice before the performance, and sometimes chastising as well as encouraging.



Figure 1.37 *Dohari* on far right kneeling to play *kartal*

**Cymbal (*kartal*) players/Chorus singers:** The *kartal* players/Chorus, keep the rhythmic foundation of the *kīrtan* in a tight grip as they sing the response parts. The lead *kartal* player (*dohārī*) of the Māhāto team is an incredibly dynamic, absolutely frantic performer with fierce, warrior-like dance movements. His nickname is “big foot” because of the size of his feet which move at lightning speed. Sweat pours down his face as he shakes

his head and steps precariously over any obstacle. He dances at the front of the Chorus team of *kartal* players, and coordinates his movements with the lead *khol* player and MG's, keeping in time with them while leading the rest of the Chorus dancing behind him. The *dohari* must adjust his dance steps to the particular melodic part initiated by the MG and the rhythmic pattern lead by the khol players, which changes often throughout the performance.

**Other instruments:** In addition to the MG's singing there is the clarinet part, which matches the MG's singing parts exactly. In fact, the clarinet often sounds like a second voice, adding strength and volume to the melodic line. The clarinet is invariably played by a Dom musician, in this case Prabhash Kalindi, and can be heard above the percussive din of the cymbals and khol drum beats. Traditionally a kīrtan team consists only of singers, *khol* and *kartal* players, but nowadays, with added social and economic pressures, western instruments like the casio keyboard and clarinet have been added to supplement the original ensemble. Some say this is for competition purposes, or to appear "modern" and stay ahead, or because the "audience demands it" (ibid.).



Figure 1.38 *Ektara* on far left and casio keyboard on the right.

The incorporation of a western casio keyboard may be an expression of musical "modernity", ambition and inventiveness, however, the result of placing a *cheap* western electronic instrument into a traditional kīrtan context, has a multitude of implications that impact the genre in various ways. On one hand, it appears to sabotage the strength and purity of the original traditional ensemble sound. On the other hand, it expresses an intrinsic part of the genre, which is both traditional and creative at its core. It represents a certain egalitarianism which Rāṛhi kīrtan encapsulates, without sacrificing traditional values or even their way of playing (as the casio players play with one hand only, as with the harmonium). The other traditional Baul instrument included in the kīrtan ensemble is the *ektara* positioned behind the lead khol player, supporting the

rhythmic cadence as would a kartal player, yet on the other side. Thus the Māhāto team have both traditional, and a range of contemporary instruments in their ensemble, reflecting their relatively high economic and social status in the community. As one of the predominant indigenous peoples of Rāṛhi, the Māhātos have ancestral lands, are generally well educated and often perform leadership roles in religious and social ceremonies in Rāṛh where a Brahman is not present.

#### **v. Kīrtan stories**

During interviews, one of the most significant research questions I asked of each team is if they have any stories about kīrtan to share. It was interesting to note that many stories reflect their particular caste and social considerations as well as spiritual experiences. The Māhātos for example speak about their work as agriculturalists, their team history, how kirtan appeases the rain God Barun, and the need for spiritual nourishment. Their unusual beginnings marked by political struggle and team divisions are significant factors in their team history. Thus their kīrtan stories are full of trials, hopes, and spiritual faith,

Kīrtan is essential in social life. Our profession is cultivation, so rain is essential. But this is a drought area. Nature is not kind to us. In summer when the soil is cracked, then we do kīrtan for twenty four hours to please Barun, the god of rain (Brikodar Māhāto 2006: Pers.comm.).

Regarding the use of kīrtan performances in social and religious ceremonies they say,

We also believe that saying *Hari nam* will lead us to the gateway of heaven. It is our gate pass, and it is easy to do. Kīrtan is very much part of our social system. We sing kīrtan during the marriage ceremony when the groom puts red paste (*sindur*) on the bride; also while carrying the dead body to the burning *ghat*. In other social and spiritual ceremonies we do kīrtan. That gives relief from our social circumstances (ibid.).

About the difficult circumstances of their everyday lives they say,

Naturally poor people have lots of sorrows. They don't know next day what they'll eat. But if they do *Hari nam* at that time, those who listen and those who sing, forget the pain and get relief. If you have disease you can also get relief from *Hari nam*. It works like a medicine. To survive, one of the singers sells ice cream, and another sells water. Another's child is very sick and has a disability. We have many problems. Yet when we sing kīrtan, we forget all these things (ibid.).

On the changes that kīrtan has undergone in Purulia, over the past 50 years, they say,

In 1947, and around that time Sohni rāga was very popular, but today the *rang* melodies are very popular. The kīrtan gurus do not like this *rang*, but nowadays they are forced from outside to put the Hindi songs also. In the Vaishnava *para* in Purulia there is a place where they don't allow *rang* and when they organize the kīrtan they write "no *rang*", only tāla (ibid.).

In other words, changes are taking place due to the influence of Hindi film songs and socioeconomic pressures. This threatens the future of the kīrtan tradition in Rāṛh which concerns many kīrtan experts. However, JM says kīrtan "will remain, and you cannot compare kīrtan to other kinds of music" (2007: Pers.comm.).

#### **iv. Conclusion**

The performance of the *Gauralap* in Emon rāga, the *udara mudara tara* classical improvisation and the Śiva Ranjani rāga are three aspects that reveal the influence of Hindustani classical music upon the Māhāto team's kīrtan repertoire and their musical strategies to create intense, ecstatic experiences. Distinctive characteristics of the Māhāto team are: their diverse performance structure with its requisite amount of traditional rāgas/tālas mixed with contemporary *rang*; their collective movement, through the use of *udara*, *mudara* and *tara* roles; and their emphasis on classical rāgas. Whether they meet their own criteria for judging if the kīrtan is successful or not, i.e. "engaging the audience" and "moving together", (Brikodar Māhāto 2007, Pers.comm.) seems positive. The above factors also reflect their relatively high social and economic status. Some

reasons why they did not win the competition at Dabar might be that the Kostuka team's performance was more highly organized, "purely" traditional and boldly directed by JM. In addition, the Kostuka team has undergone a profound personal and collective transformation recently, as representatives of the kīrtan tradition to which they belong, (see Part two).



Figure 1.39 Māhāto team, perform with great intensity and devotional zeal.



Figure 1.40 Khol players with the small drums and *dohari* to the right, soaked in sweat.

## B. Rājwar Kīrtan Team



Figure 1.41 Rājwar kīrtan team begins their performance in front of the *tulasi* plant, symbol of the Vaiṣṇava faith, with Basanta Rājwar (MG) centre.

The Figure above shows the Rājwar kīrtan team, whose official name is the Bagra Rājwar Sudar Hari *Nam San* kīrtan team, with Basanta Rājwar (first *mul gayak*), Satyajit Rājwar (khol), Nepal Rājwar (khol), Navin Rājwar (Harmonium), Tapan Rājwar (harmonium), Ajit Rājwar, Chodhury Rājwar, Phani Rājwar, Dash Rājwar, Sishir Rājwar, Swapan Rājwar (*jhail* or *kartal*), Biswajit Kalindi (clarinet), Ajit Rājwar (*Kanjari*), and Gaju Rājwar is their manager.

### i. Background

Approaching Bagra village, the red dirt road is dry, dusty and full of holes. Immediately before entering the village *para* there is a very large pond, with concrete steps leading down into the water. It is an oasis of activity where women and children bathe and wash their colourful garments. There is an atmosphere of excitement yet tranquility about this village. There are no metal walls streaming with black smoke, as

seen in many other places in the Purulia District where steel and coal factories would pollute the rural landscape, and alter the sensitive natural balance in the environment upon which this village depends for survival. Unlike the past when the Bagra kīrtan



Figure 1.42 The Rājwar women look inside the hut.

musicians were banned from singing kīrtan in the village streets, today both Muslims and Hindus live together peacefully. Many Muslims also come to enjoy the kīrtan.

Smiling faces greeted us as we entered the family compound. The name Rājwar is carved into the door frame, a kingly title it seems, with Navin, 2003, written below. We are ushered into a small but comfortable room and sit on a wooden bed, with an array of Śiva and Kṛṣṇa/Rāḍhā posters on one wall and family photos on the other. After a snack of delicious Indian sweets, offered to us by the family

members, we are led outside to the kīrtan performance arena, that they have erected for the occasion and decorated with brightly dyed cloths stitched together to make a silken canopy moving in gentle waves above us. The radiant smile of the kīrtan leader Basanta Rājwar reveals his delight at having created a very pleasant environment for everyone to sit and watch kīrtan. Meanwhile the women of the family are preparing lunch. They are

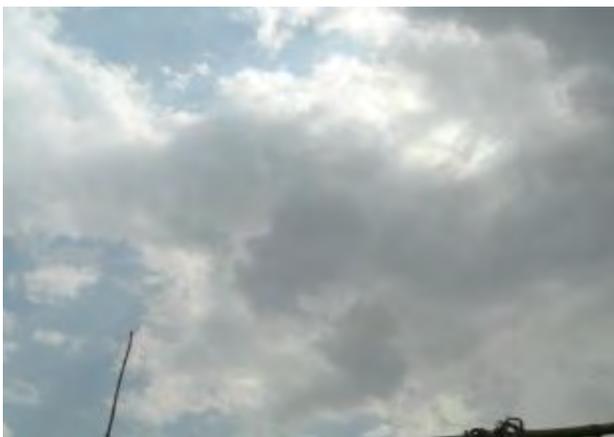


Figure 1.43 Rain clouds fill the summer sky and drench us during kīrtan

experts at fire-making, which they keep alight with just a few handfuls of sawdust thrown onto the fire intermittently, a log that is thrust further into the center of the flame and one cow dung cake (*goita*) sitting in a delicate balance, on top.

With one high shrill call, the Rājwar kīrtan team begins. Their high voices calling to Gaur send thrilling

ripples of joy through the crowd, as we sit together around the *mandīr*, totally absorbed in

the singing. Halfway through the recording, my recorder gave up, so I gave myself over to the waves of ecstatic bliss that swept over us. One of the Māhāto kīrtan team from the nearby *para* sits and watches the Rājwars perform and the other villagers also sit and listen quietly, not interrupting by talking or clapping. The harmonium player has his instrument strapped around his body. It's heavy, but he doesn't show any signs of fatigue. He continues dancing, sometimes like a *Chhau* (martial) dancer, sometimes like Rādhā, but always singing and playing his instrument. He has the hardest job. After some time we feel droplets of rain wetting our heads. It is a hot summer's day, but the rain pours down. It seems Lord *Hari* is pleased with the kīrtan and everyone receives this auspicious blessing. After an hour or more, I realise that my capacity to absorb the continuous repetition of *Hari nam* seems to be increasing, for the time has passed without me even noticing.

The Rājwar are Bhumij, meaning "person of the soil", and like the Māhātos are a major indigenous group of Western Rāṛh<sup>1</sup>, categorized by the government as a Scheduled Tribe. The main occupation of the Rājwars today is the manufacture of fine rice flour although

originally the Rājwar were hunters, living in the forests. Various kings came to Rāṛh and "captured" them to make soldiers. The kings gave them land, and they began collecting land tax. Some of them became zamindars and added the title Rājwar to their names. They were also employed as soldiers during the British regime (SM, 2007: Pers.comm.).

Analysis of the Rājwar kīrtan team's performance structure reveals many similarities with the Māhāto team from the same village, with whom they were amalgamated until approximately eight years ago. However, some of their most distinctive qualities are the effective merging of traditional Rāṛh kīrtan tālas with innovative rhythmic improvisations, and a greater emphasis on *rang* rather than classical rāgas, as well as their powerful martial dance movements. The traditional rāgas

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Census of India 2001, there are 7.6 percent of Scheduled Tribes in the region, but in reality the percentage is much higher as the Māhātos for example are not included, who consider themselves "tribal".

performed were *Dāspira la* and *kātān* in *ektala*, *Sohni la* and *Teyhot*. These are interspersed with Baul and *jhumur rang* adding more local “colours” to the performance as well as Śiva Ranjani rāga. The complementary mixture of traditional *tāla* with popular Baul or folk melodies and innovative structural markers are skillfully executed. The Rājwars blend the tender sensuality of Rāḍhā *bhava* with martial or warrior-like precision, like Kṛṣṇa’s army in the *Mahabharata*, they draw the audience into the realm of other worldliness.

The Rājwar Team is considered to be the best in Purulia (2006) as its not possible to avoid the competition aspect of the kīrtan performance when so many cultural events in Rāḍh are competitive. Basanta Rājwar, their leader, tells the story about how they originated as a team. Bagra is a village in the Purulia District with a predominance of Muslims. To keep their Hindu religion alive, the Hindus started a kīrtan team under the tutelage of a Vaiṣṇava guru. After some time however the conflicts between the Māhāto and Rājwar members, based on their being too many *mul gayaks* I suspect, created a split between the two teams. The Rājwars say that the Māhātos were too dominant and certainly in terms of the “tribal” (a word *they* use) hierarchy this appears to be true (and the Māhātos agree). Yet there doesn’t seem to be any deep-seated animosity between the two teams. Indeed, they share performance invitations, so that if one team can’t play, the other takes their place.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics

**Cultural, philosophical and musical influences:** A depth of devotion to Lords Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, *Hara* and *Hari*, is demonstrated throughout the kīrtan performance. When outside the *mandīr* for example, the team perform the *Gauralap*, the riveting call to Gaur, which Basanta calls the *Ghat* (also called *jhuran*), “preparation music” or “opening instrumental piece” played in Śiva Ranjani rāga. It is an offering to god and “something we do to recharge ourselves”. (B.Rājwar, 2007: Pers.comm.).

Śiva is the first god and the symbol of the indigenous people. Viṣṇu on the other hand is the symbol of high society, but Caitanya mixed these two in a very good way so everybody can worship both Śiva/Kālī and Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā (ibid.).



Figure 1.44 Rājwar team performing *ghat* or *jhuran* outside the *mandir*, Bagra village.

Basanta says that a devotional offering to Śiva and Kālī is made in the introductory *jhuran*, “with the music of the Śiva *tandava* dance. We then play a Kālī song, as both are from this area” (ibid.). The opening *Ghat* or *jhuran* is also common to the other indigenous music genres of Rāṛh, yet is a unique and intrinsic part of the kīrtan performance, as discussed under

Musical Analysis (Part 2). There is a song that goes with the *jhuran* melody, as one exists for all these melodies (ibid.). In one of the Kṛṣṇa *lila* kīrtan songs performed in the *jhuran*, the composer describes a pond in which there are two lotus flowers. One is *nil* or blue and the other is *kamal sadar* or white,

This Kṛṣṇa *lila* song is not fixed. There are many songs that can be used for the purpose of moving along the path to the *mandīr*, according to the guru, but all the songs are from *lila* kīrtan. The song says, we don’t know which flower is Kṛṣṇa and which one is Rādhā, we don’t know (B.Rājwar 2006: Pers.comm.).

The other common song melody incorporated into their kīrtan *rang* is from a Baul song that is also popular among the *nacinis* of Rāṛh. The literal meaning of the song is,

I open my heart, now bird you can fly anywhere, I don’t know where you will go, or if you will ever return”, another meaning is about Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa was going to Mathura, Rādhā said I know you will go, but I don’t know when you will come back, though you have taken my heart and still I wait and hope for you to return (SM, 2007: Pers.comm.).

Speaking about the inclusion of *rang* and how they adapt a Baul song to the kīrtan, Rājwar says,

We just keep the tune, then change the choreography to suit the kīrtan style. In this way we adapt all kinds of songs, Baul, jhumur, even Hindi songs, so that in the kīrtan we are never bored. Sometimes you can hear a galloping sound in the kīrtan rang or in a Baul song for example and that's because in these songs tabla is traditionally used. To imitate the *tabla* on the khol they create a galloping sound (2007: Pers.comm.).

### iii. Performance

Regarding the ingredients of a successful kīrtan performance Rājwar says,

It depends on the audience. If you give time to *tāla*, it is appreciated. In general it is the combination of things that you are giving to people, first *la*, then *ektala*, then three or four *rang*, then *Sohni*, after *Sohni* some explanation, then again *rang*. So not always do you get sweet. Sometimes you get salty. If you give a comprehensive, solid presentation, with traditional as well as modern tunes, that will be best. If it is always traditional, then not all will like it. So both traditional and modern tunes are best (2006: Pers.comm.).

The Rājwar kīrtan performance is a combination of coordinated military-like precision and wild, ecstatic devotion held within a tightly organised, and complex performance structure. Rājwar describes the kīrtan infrastructure including the *la*, *duni*, *matan*, *chār duni* and *kātān* in detail (see Part one). On close analysis, there are innumerable peaks and troughs in their performance and each one has a particular meaning or significance. In the opening *Gauralap* for example, the rhythmic playing and singing parts are at opposite ends of the spectrum with the very loud, high-soaring melodic line contrasting to the sparse percussive strikes, as in the performance of Śiva Ranjani rāga, which create a subtle, mesmerizing effect on the listeners.

**Content:** The musical intensity of the Rājwar performance that continues throughout is beyond description. There is an explosive beginning, followed by the two most intense and highest (in pitch) melodic parts of Dāspera, the *matan/kātān* and *tara*, which are repeated at the grand *finale* of the rāga. In contrast to the other teams, bar one (the Vaiṣṇava team from Silfore), the Rājwar team hold back nothing in the beginning, they start climactic and end even more so. Hence their performance style is characterized by absolute emotional abandonment, incredible dynamism, absolute precision, overwhelming musical intensity and devotional surrender, combined with a variety of innovative musical strategies leading towards the performance of ecstasy.

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** If there is one thing that this team demonstrates is highly coordinated cooperation among its members. Yet the main *mul gayak* (MG) Basanta Rājwar leads the kīrtan performance without the accompaniment of an instrument, reflective of his charismatic personality and the tremendous reinforcement he is given by the other members. The main harmonium player, or second MG, supports the first MG and leads the kīrtan occasionally in the *rang* parts. Then there is also a third MG, who plays the *kartal* and stands behind the lead *khol* player. He comes forward to sing the *tara* “highest” pitch in the rāga at appropriate times. Though the first MG, has a predominant role, still the overall disciplined performance of all members focuses the audience’s attention, not on an individual, but on the coordinated cooperation and unity of the team. Every performer plays a significant role in the kīrtan. While these roles are clearly defined, fusions and crossovers also occur. When for example, the third MG/*kartal* player, standing on the right side behind the others, initiates the first *tara*, or highest melodic part, there is a sense of surprise, but no disruption to the performance. The positioning of the *kartal* player/*tara* singer behind the others is discussed in military terms,



Figure 1.45. Ajit Rājwar, sings *tara* and plays *kartal*.

The one leading the kartal is in front of the Chorus (*dohari*). One kartal player stands alone on the other side. He covers the other side. He's an expert, as he can't seem, only listen to the others. If no one is there, then this side will be blank. We need to cover all sides. No other team does this. It is like a battlefield. We need to defend ourselves on all sides. This is our speciality" (Rājwar, 2006: Pers.comm.).

The first impression gained from an outsider's perspective is that the first MG has complete control over the other team and is head of the hierarchy. However on closer observation one sees that there is some degree of flexibility and role-sharing among team members. When the third MG supersedes the first MG, in singing the first *tara* part, the notion of coordinated cooperation rather than domination is reinforced.

**Dance movements :** The Rājwar kīrtan dance is of three types: the traditional *lalita marmika*; choreographed martial movements and *lasya* Rādhā-like, sensual and evocative dance. The predominant warrior stance of the Rājwars is in sharp contrast to the feminine seduction of Rādhā's movements, like two sides of *Ardhanara Ishvara* (Śiva/Shakti) depicted on the temple walls. Sometimes the Chorus stand in a martial posture as if ready for battle with feet flat on the ground, legs splayed wide apart and turning or spinning like tops in a circle, as if to protect themselves from all sides. One can also detect influences from other indigenous Rāṛhi dance traditions, such as *nacini nach* "the dancing girls dance" and the *Chhau* "dance of the masked warrior" which are also very popular among the youth of Rāṛh. When asked if *Chhau* and *nacini* dance traditions have impacted their dance choreography the Chorus simply say "whatever you see could be there, but we don't set out to copy these other dances", suggesting that their adaptations were unconscious rather than staged. Rājwar says



Figure 1.46 Kartal players/Chorus warrior like movements mixed with sensual Rāḍhā like dance.

four step patterns, with two steps backwards, then a turn. When the music changes into a relaxed *duni* rhythm, the dance also becomes more sensual and graceful (*lasya*). Hence, during certain parts of *Dāṣpera rāga*, (minor-sounding and mid-improvisational parts for example) the dancers don a female persona and move with arms raised upwards, as if carrying water from the pond, hips moving side to side in a seductive manner, or washing themselves in the pond, their arms laced low beneath the water, as if playing like Rāḍhā and the *gopis*.

Hence the first MG, as the representative of Caitanya, performs *lalita marmika*, the second MG accompanies him on the harmonium, and the third MG plays the *kartal* and moves in unison with the Chorus until the time comes to sing *tara*, when he comes forward to the front of the *mandīr*. The *khol* players, though more restricted because of carrying their instruments, still dance in unison with the Chorus, with legs splayed wide and turning in a circle when not performing *bol* interludes.

**Structural markers:** “Gunshot” and “Scatched-Record” *bol* rhythmic interludes: The *khol* player employs two kinds of rhythmic interludes or structural markers that act as transitional pieces between the different melodic parts and are unique to this team. For identification purposes I have called these “gunshot” and “scatched-record” interludes, because of their similarity in sound. Both are accompanied by loud, frequent vocalizations, spurred on by the first MG who stands between two *khol* players

They’re not consciously using steps from *Chhau* or anything else, it all comes through the heart, the emotions, depending on the *rang* melody and they devise *kīrtan* movements accordingly (2007: Pers.comm.).

Other than the traditional side-to-side dance movements of *lalita marmika*, there are repeated

provoking their response. The “gunshot interludes” are rhythmic transitions, with the sound of *Hari Bol Hari Bolo* called repeatedly by the MG and khol players in quick succession while beating the khol with an explosive energy. The “scratched-record” *bol* interludes are melodic interludes performed between two musical sections, a continuously repeated melodic phrase with simultaneous strikes. Both striking techniques create excitement (the “gunshot” being much faster than the “scratched-record” interludes), heightened intensity, in anticipation of the next piece.

Samantana Rājwar, their khol teacher and uncle, alerts them to the notion of *chamuk* which means the “eye contact” that is essential between two khol players when performing, saying “that the khol players have to pay particular attention to *chamuk* as well as foot movements during the *kīrtan*” (2007: pers.comm.).

#### **iv. Musical qualities**

The three most outstanding characteristics of the Rājwar team are: their wild ecstatic opening *Gauralap* sung with the maximum intensity of devotional expression; rhythmic peaks of expression; military-like precision with coordinated dance movements; and a greater number of melodic parts within *Dāspera*.

**Daspera’s *Gauralap*, “wild ecstatic devotion” (DVD 1 Rājwar):** One of the most intense parts of the Rājwar *kīrtan* performance is the opening *Gauralap*, sung first upon entering the *mandīr*. The devotional expression of their united calls for Gaura Caitanya in a series of long-held high, piercing notes is electrifying. Together, they create a splendid garland of sound, as thrilling calls for God send ripples into the village surroundings. Successive melodic waves of brilliant transparency reverberate with colorful percussive splashes to create a waterfall of sonic devotion. The Chorus throw their heads back to the sky, echoing the MG’s calls and extending the sound into the beyond, like a stream of passionate longing pouring outwards into the landscape beyond.

With powerful vigour the *khol* players strike with strategic precision. Their playing is both exuberant beyond extreme and restrained beyond endurance, going so slowly and deliberately at first then in a split second, exploding into a whirling tornado of energy and emotional fury, beating and calling Hari with all their might.

**Dāspera raga melodic parts (DVD 1 Rājwar.):** Basanta Rājwar, leader of the team, states that the basic order of *rāginis* (as he calls them) is Gauralap, Dāspera, a Baul *rang* and Sohni. He also comments that Dāspera *la*, in *ektala*, although it is only the “introduction” part, may include a *kātān matan* (2007: Pers.comm.). In other words, the traditional kīrtan compositions may incorporate different melodic parts, repeat and/or improvise on them to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the kīrtan guru’s expertise.

Basanta describes their opening performance of Dāspera *la* immediately followed by the *kātān matan* as “traditional”, and says, “To play it at the beginning and the end is traditional, unlike the other teams who play other *tāla* at the beginning.” (ibid.). In other words, although most kīrtan teams play *kātān matan* at the very end of the Dāspera performance, as the grand *finale*, the Rājwar team plays it both at the beginning and the end. Therefore the highest point of devotional and musical expression in the *rāga* performance, is not withheld until later in the piece, as is most common, but performed at the very outset.

Compared to the Kostuka team for example, there are at least three additional melodic parts performed by the Rājwar during Dāspera, making a total of six melodic parts “and then there is one additional *tāla* that he has invented, made up from a few notes or melodic lines taken from each of the previous parts, thus creating a new *tāla*” (ibid.). In total there are seven melodic parts in the Rājwars Dāspera compared to four in the Kostuka performance. Hence musical and dance innovations are also characteristic of this kīrtan team, demonstrating the fact that one does not have to be from the traditional kīrtan caste of Vaiṣṇavas to be able to make a creative contribution to this music genre.

**Singers or *mul gayaks*:** The first *mul gayak* (MG) Basanta, is a kīrtan expert as he knows and can sing the kīrtan verses (*padās*) from which *marāī* kīrtan has been derived, such as Gitangi, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā and Śīva Ranjani among others. He maintains that the main theme of all kīrtan songs, is the pain of Rādhā’s separation from Kṛṣṇa,

When we sing kīrtan we feel that we are Rādhā, and that Kṛṣṇa is here with us. All the *tālas* belong to Rādhā. From Rādhā’s pain, all these kīrtan *tālas* took birth (2006: Pers.comm.).



Figure 1.47 Nose flute player in the Rājwar team.

The second MG's voice is harmonious with a wide vocal range, yet is not as forceful as Basanta's and so is not easily distinguishable above the others in the team. The third MG sings on the other side of the Chorus, except when he is singing the *tara* when he comes forwards and takes the lead, sometimes solo, sometimes together with the first MG. Basanta Rājwar describes the necessity of having the other *mul gayaks*,

A minimum of two singers are needed to sing the different parts and complete the melodic phrase successfully if we want to extend the melodic phrase for a greater length of time. When the rhythm is accelerating, I cannot sing the melodic phrase alone. So the other singers support me by singing the other parts (ibid.).

Normally the first MG of the Rājwar team leads the melodic changes. However sometimes the third MG supersedes the first MG by initiating the *tara*, the highest melodic part of the *rāga*. This crossover from support to lead singer is at a crucial point in the performance, revealing significant aspects about the Rājwar teams' social organization that is not easily discernable at first. Although it appears that the first MG has complete control over the performance, on closer examination one sees that it is not always the case. In this instance the *tara* challenges the established hierarchy of the team, then recedes into the background

as the first MG takes the limelight once again, hence keeping it within specific boundaries. There are also another three *udara*, *mudara*, *tara* parts performed after this first one, that are sung by the both the first MG and the *tara* together in cooperative



Figure 1.48 The Dom clarinetist gives melodic support to the MG.

fashion. Hence the three MG's work in clockwork precision to complete the melodic phrase in an exquisite melodic sequence, like running a relay (SM 2006: Pers comm.). Rājwar says that “to sing classical ornamentations, one should use *udara*, *mudara*, *tara*, and one should sing from the inside, at the stomach” (2007: Pers.comm.).

**Percussionists - The khol players:** The *khol* players are extremely dynamic, dancing as well as playing during performance and are also very loud vocally, not as singers, rather as “cheerleaders” with their loud exclamations and *bol* recitations. The sounds they make help to spur the other performers forwards as it takes a tremendous amount of energy to dance, sing and play the *kartal* for more than an hour at the height of intensity, without pause. The khol players spar vocally with the first MG who makes fighting movements with his hands and vocalizations as he stands between them while they respond with similar exclamations and hard hitting strikes on the *khol*. By sparring with each other, the MG and *khol* players create an explosive energy that inspires and ignites the *kīrtaniyās* passionate response.

The *bol* patterns are unmetered and varied in the *Gauralap*. When Dāspera in *ektala* commences the metered rhythmic section of the rāga, they build up the *kīrtan* from slow to an accelerated pace with occasional plateaus of calm and intermittent peaks and waves. Rājwar says,

*Ektala* is a good combination, a good mixture. It is a composition, a combination of *sur* (melody) and rhythm (*tāla*), (2006: Pers.comm.).

Although there are rhythmic peaks during the opening sections, the rhythmic highlight of Dāspera is the *kātān*, with its height of intensity and complexity of *bol* patterns.

**Kartal players/chorus:** The *dohārī* lead kartal player seems ever alert to the *khol* players’ rhythmic changes, and can determine which *kartal* pattern to perform next while leading the others behind him.

**Other instruments:** Apart from the traditional khol, kartal, there is also the harmonium, tambourine and clarinet in the Rājwar team, as well as the nose flute (see Part one),



Figure 1.49 Samantana Rajwar, uncle and teacher of the khol players.

although there is no electronic casio or *ananda lahari* as in the Māhāto team. The harmonium has a similar effect to the *tamboura* in a classical performance i.e. it creates a drone, as well as individual notes that support the *mul gayaks* in establishing the melodic line.

#### v. Kīrtan stories

Watching the performance from the sideline is the khol players' uncle and teacher Samantana

Rājwar. He's now seventy five years old and has a heart complaint. When his nephews ask him to be careful of his health and not speak too much, he replies,



Figure 1.50 Sakhi Amsari listens to the Rājwar kīrtan.

Oh leave me! If I die while I'm saying His name, I will be happy. I will go straight to heaven, nothing can stop me. I love kīrtan. It is good for spiritual reasons. Through kīrtan we take *Hari's* name. I told them they should come and learn from me because I can die anytime. So they came and learnt from me.

(Samatana Rājwar, 2006: Pers.comm.).

One of the topics of our discussion is the process of transforming *padavali* kīrtan songs into *Hari Bolo* lyrics,

In *marāi* kīrtan all melodies are based on songs. First we learn the songs, then we insert *Hari Bolo*. Śiva Ranjani song also has a *pada* or stanza. Yet all these kīrtans are created from Rāḍhā's feeling, because she is the *bhakta*, the devotee.

We are the mediums for Rādhā. Rādhā's mind is always with Sri Kṛṣṇa as she has the longing, the desire to be with him. So all of this comes from her. There is a story. One day Radhika went to the river Jamuna with her friends for water. She says, "let's go quick because Sri Kṛṣṇa is playing his flute and I have to go to him." She's in a hurry, saying, let's go because I can't bear this pain of separation any longer. Radhika says, the heart has no patience, I will not delay I have to go to meet Sri Kṛṣṇa. So Radhika's pain and anxiety gave birth to Teyhot rāga. Today my boys performed *Ektala*, Sohni, Teyhot, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā and *rang* (ibid.).

Samantana Rājwar discusses the difference between today's kīrtan and the past kīrtan, saying that there is a great deal more *rang* in today's kīrtan whereas in the past, there were Sohni, Teyhot, Jhorchutā, Pākāchutā, Ari, Dos kusi, Ektala tālas. Basanta Rājwar also comments on the kīrtan tradition today,



Figure 1.51 Jhapor Khan, listens to the kīrtan.

Ten years ago, both the *kīrtanyas* and the MGs were expected to know the original *padas* as well as kīrtan melodies; today however, it is not the case, the younger generation are not expected to know the kīrtan songs, but just to be able to follow the MG's lead (2007: Pers.comm.).

Figures 50 and 51 above picture members of the audience who sat and listened to the kīrtan performance. Sākhi Amsari, a Muslim, says "I felt very good listening to the kīrtan. I felt peace in my heart." Japor Khan, also a Muslim, says "It is one of the best streams in Purulian culture, because it has lots of specialities. That's why everybody enjoys it. There's no caste or colour division in kīrtan" (2007: pers.comm.).

## vi. Conclusion

The distinctive characteristics of the Rājwar team are: their extremely disciplined approach and coordinated cooperation between team members; their martial as well as graceful dance movements; an emphasis on incorporating melodies from other traditional music genres rather than classical rāgas; innovative rhythmic strategies, and improvised melodic lines, all of which create heightened musical/devotional intensity; and the perfect blend of military like precision and wild ecstatic devotion in their performance. Though normally voted first place in kīrtan competitions around the region, they were not the winners of the Dabar kīrtan competition, perhaps because by comparison their performance had less traditional tāla than the Kostuka team, i.e. they did not perform Pākāchutā or Jhorchuta. However, they also had severe time restraints, as the next team



Figure 1.52 Rājwar kīrtan team performs the ghat outside in the hot summer sun before moving into the *mandir*. Soon after, rain falls with blessings from Hari.

after them, the Vaiṣṇavas came into the *mandir* early, stopping their performance after only forty five minutes, whereas the other teams had over an hour to perform. Basanta Rājwar is addicted to kīrtan,

Kīrtan is like a drug or a hidden ornament with deep inner qualities. If you take *Hari nam*, it creates a link direct to God. It's like a magnet. Whatever you want you can get (2006: Pers.comm.).

## C. The Vaiṣṇava kīrtan team of Silfore

### i. Background

In the village of Silfore, Joypur, a subdivision of the Purulia District<sup>2</sup>, I conducted an interview with Sri Rishi Das Goswami, the guru of the Vaiṣṇava kīrtan team whom I had seen perform in the *mandīr* next to the Śiva temple on the road from Purulia to Balarampur. Arriving at Silfore village, Sri Rishi Das explained that the majority of the team in the village were of the traditional kīrtan caste, called Goswamis. The rest of the village were made up of Māhāto (landowners), Kumar (pot makers), Kālīndi Dom, (wind players), and Ansari (security men).



Figure 1.53 Sri Rishi Das Goswami, his wife and grandson in Silfore village.

who perform mostly in the summer months when no agricultural work is done, the Goswamis perform all year round. Sri Rishi Das says he has over a thousand kīrtan students in Rāṅh.

This might be an exaggeration, but he undoubtedly has a very full tour schedule as it is difficult to find him at home in his village. Sri Rishi Das also performs at funerals as well as teaches, “We don’t have to beg. Besides teaching, we do *mangal ratri*

**Extended family members:** The Silfore Team has perhaps the greatest musical expertise among all the kīrtan teams documented, for they are from the professional kīrtan caste created by Caitanya (fifteenth century) to preach Vaiṣṇavism and perform kīrtan. Unlike other kīrtan teams,



Figure 1.54 Members of the Vaiṣṇava kīrtan group at home in their village.

<sup>2</sup> The interview was held in Silfore village in 2006 on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

funeral kīrtan. So with the help of Gauranga we are living very well” (2006 Pers.comm.).

The Vaiṣṇava team pictured in this photo are: (from right to left) Sri Rishi Das’s khol partner, Sri Rishi Das Goswami, his wife, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, then his son, Dviija Pada Das Goswami (tallest at back), the *dohārī* lead kartal player, the *tara* singer (second left), and the son of second khol player on far left.

Most of the Silfore kīrtan team are from Sri Rishi Das’s immediate and extended family. His younger brother and son for example are both *mul gayaks* in the team and his seven-year-old grandson also plays *kartal* in the Chorus. The clarinet player is a Kalindi,



Figure 1.55 Śiva *lingam* at back of Sri Rishi Das Goswami’s home

a Dom, as is usual. The second *khol* player’s son is in the Chorus and a kartal player, who also plays the khol when Sri Rishi Das retires. All team members come from the same village and have passed on their musical knowledge from father to son, generation after generation.

Sri Rishi Das is from a kīrtan lineage that goes back many generations. He learnt from his father, Mohan Das Goswami who was a very accomplished *kīrtaniya* and was second in a kīrtan competition at Puri where “all the traditional kīrtan parties came, from Bankura, Purulia and Jharkhand.

There were sixty five kīrtan teams in this competition” (ibid.). The names of the two previous generations in his family are Chinivas Das Goswami his great grandfather and Duku Das Goswami his grandfather. His son, Dviija Pada Das Goswami, is the leader of the next generation of *kīrtaniyās* in the family. His grandsons, Mathur Goswami and Hala Dhar Goswami, are also learning kīrtan from him.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics

**Cultural and philosophical influences:** As their livelihood depends on *kīrtan* and the propagation of Vaisnavism they have Goswami affixed to their names. Though they are worshipers of Kṛṣṇa, they also have deep love for Śiva, as evidenced by the Śiva *lingam*

located within their family compound. Though it is typical in Rāṛh to have a Śiva *lingam* in every village, it is unusual to have one in the back yard for worshipping the *ādi* guru, Śiva, thus demonstrating their devotion to both Hara and Hari.

Dressed in orange with deep red sashes tied around their hips, the colours of a *sannyasin*, they are devotees of both Hari and Hara,

Śiva is *Hara* and Kṛṣṇa is *Hari*, *Hara* and *Hari*. Seeing it from another angle, Śiva comes from the beginning. He never changes his body. With Kṛṣṇa, there are ten avatars. But Śiva is unchangeable. When we sing *Hari* we also think *Hara*. Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. “*Ha*” is the same for both. So when we sing *Hari*’s name, we also sing *Hara*’s. In this house, from ancient times, we worship Śiva, our *ādi*. We created this village. This is a Vaiṣṇava village. And we have our *ādi* Śiva here (Rishi Das, 2006: Per.com.).

The effect of the combined influence of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in Rāṛhi kīrtan is variable, depending on the different interpretations given by each team. The Goswamis for example embody the fierce devotional expression of Śaivism and incorporate *Baul rang* into *Dāspera*, which shows a certain perspective that goes deeper than Vaiṣṇavism, as discussed below.

Undoubtedly, Sri Rishi Das is an expert at performing and teaching kīrtan, his family’s profession for many generations, the depth of his knowledge including *Ba* kīrtan notation is profound and his *khol* playing is impeccable. However, as he is well established with ancestral lands and a Śiva temple, it is unlikely that he is from the original line of Vaiṣṇavas that came with Caitanya from Navadvīp, as some claim in this region, rather, he is descended from one of Caitanya’s Rāṛhi converts (SM 2006: Pers.comm.),

They probably became Vaiṣṇavas later, but first they are Śaiva. Then when Caitanya came, they converted, but they stayed here. They have everything here, they also have their own Śiva, so they have been here since ancient times (ibid.).

Essentially the Goswamis perform Vaiṣṇava Tantric practices, (see Flood, Dimock, Part one), which they hold secret. Rishi Das’s wife says “A Vaiṣṇava’s duty is to perform spiritual practices, such as *upavasya* “fasting”<sup>3</sup> (2007: pers.comm.). They also follow certain food restrictions<sup>4</sup>, while performing kīrtan and other ceremonial roles, such as presiding over the dead. The belief that kīrtan creates a “holy” environment because the gods come to listen, is described below in a Vaiṣṇava ritual, where ancient Śiva



Figure 1.56 Sri Rishi Das Goswami, Vaiṣṇava Team, Silfore village, Joypur.

Tantric symbols of a *lingam*, *yoni* and milk, have been transformed into Vaiṣṇava Tantric symbols of lamp, clay pot and curd,

At the beginning of the kīrtan festival, a pot and a lamp are placed in front of the deity. On the last day, they take the clay pot, with curd inside and break it. Then they start the kīrtan from the temple moving throughout the whole village as they play and dance with coloured powders. This is the end part of the kīrtan, called *dulot*, which means „colour dust“. After doing kīrtan for three days the whole area has been made holy, because it has been touched by the kīrtaniyās feet and we think that the gods may

have come to visit during the kīrtan and have touched the ground with their feet also. So with the dust from the ground and the colour dust we play and sing kīrtan (ibid.).

**Musical influences, Baul melodies (DVD 1.Vaiṣṇavas):** The incorporation of a Baul melody (*sur*) into Dāspera rāga is one of the signature marks of the Silfore Team. It is not replicated by any other team and stems from a depth of traditional values and musical expertise that runs beyond Vaiṣṇavism. The insertion of a Baul *rang* into the opening

<sup>3</sup> They fast on *ekadashi*, the eleventh day after the full moon and new moon each month as at this time astrologers maintain that the moons effect is strongest, so to keep the mind in a calm state they fast.

<sup>4</sup> They follow a *nilamis* or pure vegetarian diet, i.e.no meat, fish, eggs, garlic, mushrooms or onions during kirtan.

rāga indicates deep ancestral roots from within rather than outside this region as Baul melodies reverberate with ancient Tantric spiritual practices (*sādhana*) encoded within them as “double *entendre*”, where the song texts though not sung may be recalled and projected into the performance. Thus in the context of *marāī* kīrtan, the adaptation of a Baul melody is deeply traditional, resonating with the ancestral memories of people in this Śiva-drenched region of Rāṛh.

***Pada* kīrtan (DVD 1.Vaiṣṇavas):** Another special characteristic of the Silfore team is their inclusion of *pada* verse from the Vaiṣṇava composers/poets in their performance, with verses (*pada*) from the Kṛṣṇa/Rāḍhā *lila*, with the rhythmic patterns replicated simultaneously on the khol. This occurs during Sohni rāga about halfway through the performance. Kīrtan stories are also a means of instructing the listeners as well as an opportunity to display their rhythmic skills and thus a way of affirming their traditional role as educators in the Vaiṣṇava community.

### iii. Performance

**Content:** There are ten main sections to their kīrtan performance at the Dabar *mela* according to Sri Rishi Das Goswami. The names of the sections given in local terms are as follows:

1. Dāspira *la* in *ektala* with a Baul *gan* melody inserted;
2. Ektala *kātān*; khol *bols* in 12 *mātrās*.
3. *Rang yatra*, or “theatre song”;
4. Śiva Ranjani rāga, which changes into Bhagesvari or Bhageshri rāga, then reverts to Śiva Ranjani rāga;
5. Rāṛhi folk song melody (*jhumur*) in *ektala*, twelve *mātrās*;



Figure 1.57 Sri Rishi Das Goswami and his khol partner.

6. Sohni rāga, in seven *mātrā*, which includes “story telling” (*katha*) about the eight friends of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa (*āsta sākhis*), each named after a different type of Sohni and *pada kīrtan*;
7. *Jhumur sur rang*, or traditional Rāḍh folk song tune;
8. *Ektala matan*; climactic part in 12 *mātrās*;
9. Ancient *bol* patterns, called *mayno tāl ār gāti bol*;
10. Final *rang* section, when Sri Rishi Das gives his khol to the young kartal player.

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** At the top of the team hierarchy is their guru Sri Rishi Das Goswami/khol master, who directs the kīrtan while playing khol. His



Figure 1.58 *Tara* singer (front), *dohari* (middle), and *mul gayak* (back) and his daughter (front).

son Dvija Pada Goswami is the first *mul gayak*, whose voice can be heard above the others, calling out at the appropriate times when to change to the next section. Sri Rishi Das’s brother, also a MG, appears to be equal to Dvija in the hierarchy, although not quite as vocal as Dvija. The *tara* stands the centre representing Caitanya, dressed all in white. The second khol player, drums in unison with Sri Rishi Das as if they have been playing together their entire lives. The second khol player’s son is a kartal player cum singer in the team and an apprentice khol player.

In the kīrtan hierarchy, there is a central triangle of power composed of Sri Rishi Das at the head, his brother and son Dvija Pada who are the main *mul gayaks* at the second point, and the *dohārī*, the most experienced kartal player/dancer in the team, who stands at the front of the Chorus. Behind him are the other Chorus/kartal players, situated across the base of the hierarchy, who are generally younger than the rest, the apprentice khol players and *mul gayaks*. There is a strong sense of traditional values and fixed roles in this team, unlike the Rājwar or Māhāto team, perhaps due to the professional nature of their work. Sri Rishi Das for example is not shy about requesting

that his title *Sri* be added to his name when others address him, as a show of respect, to be afforded himself as a Vaiṣṇava.

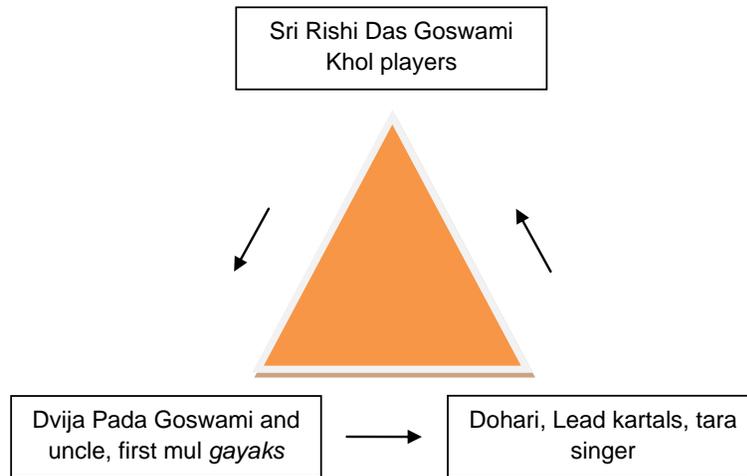


Figure 1.59 Hierarchy of the Vaiṣṇava Kirtan team.

**Dance movements :** During the *tāla* elaborations and *kātān* composition, the proficient *khol* drummers play in perfect synchronicity with each other, attracting audience attention with their flamboyant antics and dramatic arm movements. Sri Rishi Das and his *khol* partner raise their arms above their heads and splay their feet wide apart in a martial pose as they drop down and strike the *khol* drum with power and precision. The *dohārī* is ever alert to signals from the *khol* players, as when to change or accelerate, leading the Chorus with absolute confidence. The Silfore team’s movements appear almost automatic and their choreography is very stylised. Compared to other *kīrtan* teams, whose dance is more sensual and Rāḍhā-like, theirs is fierce and theatrical, interweaving dance parts in figure-eight formations.

The dancers respond immediately to the first *ektala matan* “climax” at the beginning of the performance, as they move in a clockwise direction around the *mandīr*. Occasionally they step backwards in an anticlockwise direction, then move forwards again as the same dance cycle is repeated in each of the four directions. During the *ektala matan* the dancers movements consist of four steps backwards, four steps forwards, then a turn, in a repeated, cyclic movement.

**Structural markers: *Rang* songs and *ektala matans*:**

**Rang songs** - At the finale of the first rāga and to mark the commencement of the next piece, the first *mul gayak* enters with a very high call, as the Chorus stands up from their kneeling position and move around the *mandīr*. A pattern emerges where a division between two rāgas is created by inserting a popular *rang* song, repeatedly throughout the performance, so that rather than going directly into the next rāga, the space between them is filled by a lighter piece, such as local folk song *sur*. Compared to the *rang*, the traditional rāgas require greater concentration and skill to perform with their complex interchanges between melodic and rhythmic highlights and compositions. Nevertheless, this team are so professional and well rehearsed that everything runs like clockwork, with or without concentration.

**Ektala matan (DVD 1.Vaiṣṇavas)**: One distinguishing feature of the Silfore team is that they introduce Dāspera rāga with a *matan*, “climax”, and melodic section that most other kīrtan teams leave till the end as the grand *finale*. The Silfore team also perform the *matan* a second time at the end of Dāspera, and again a third time at the end of the traditional part of the kīrtan, where the structured part of the kīrtan concludes and the “free rhythm” *rang* section begins. In other words, at seventeen and a half minutes into Dāspera rāga, there is a repetition of the *matan*, previously played at the beginning of the metered section (at seven minutes). However, this second *matan*, is a much greater “climax”



Figure 1.60 Dvija Pada Goswami playing harmonium.

than the first, because it has a longer lead up, with many melodic highlights, such as *udara*, *mudara*, *tara* preceding it. The Baul *rang* is revisited again briefly during this short interlude, after which the music reverts again to the *matan* where it is very brief (one minute long), but conclusive. Hence the *matan* is performed at the three most significant points of the kīrtan performance, and is therefore the most repeated melodic

part in the kīrtan and a major structural component in the Silfore kīrtan team's performance.

#### **iv. Musical qualities**

The Silfore team also demonstrates their musical expertise through their rendition of Śiva Ranjani rāga (at 23 minutes) by interweaving another classical rāga within it. Although a very short and concise performance on this particular occasion, they still find time to diversify the rāga performance with the insertion of another short rāga improvisation. Soaring above and in contrast to the extremely rapid and continuous rhythmic accompaniment, is the long, drawn-out vocal *alap* of Śiva Ranjani rāga, which reaches three climactic points both in pitch and rhythmic intensity in just three minutes. The third pinnacle is a brisk upwards motion, rising to the highest pitch of the rāga, then a change into Bhagesvari (or Bhageshri) rāga for one minute, which quickly reaches a resolution and as they descend, they revert back to Śiva Ranjani rāga for a final thirty seconds. Thus the Silfore team, surprises the audience with their astounding vocal acrobatics building the intensity of the music in ever greater increments.

#### **Middle Section - Sohni *katan*, story telling and *āsta sākhi tāla* (DVD 1. Vaiṣṇavas):**

Another very distinctive highlight of their performance is Sohni *rang* and Sohni *kātān*, where the khol players perform to the lyrics of the devotional songs. In Sohni *rang* tāla, Sri Rishi Das Goswami, tells a story called *āsta sākhi nam mālā* or “eight friends” of Rāḍhā. Each *sākhi* is said to have created one tāla each. The Sohni *rang* melody is in seven *mātrā* and has been derived from Sohni *gan*, which describes the beautiful attributes of Caitanya *Gaur*, recited as *Sonar Boron Gaur āmār o hiyā mājhe* with tāla, then *jege riolo*, repeatedly or “Listen my golden-coloured Gaur, please won't you come closer, come and join us in the kīrtan”.

The song of Sohni *kātān* is titled *Charanay Chandan Dheya* (at 28:56 mins) which means “I am putting sandalwood on your feet”, addressed to Kṛṣṇa. In this piece the rhythmic composition is based on the accented rhythms of the lyrics. In other words, the exact *bol* sounds are played simultaneously to match the recited lyrics in a continuous (*nam mālā*) fashion. The *kātān bol* compositions, are repeated to the audience each side

of the open *mandīr* and end with *Premanande Nitai Nitai Hari Hari Bol*, salutations to guru. This extraordinary performance was not replicated by any other team at the Dabar *mela*. It demonstrates the Goswamis’ musical expertise beyond par. Sri Rishi Das describes the musical structure of Sohni,

Sohni *la*, means the “starting point” of the rāga, after which the kīrtan continues to rise in a steep upward motion, called *ghat* or „stairs”, then progresses into the Sohni *kātān* where the khol players show their special rhythmic skills. Finally, there is the *matan* or “culmination, completion” where the rāga ends at the very highest point of expression, never the lowest (2006: Pers. comm.).

**The *mul gayaks* - The *tara* (DVD 1. Vaiṣṇavas):** There are three *mul gayaks* in the Vaiṣṇava team, with the two main ones being the son Dvija and his uncle, who play the harmonium and casio keyboard as well as sing the *udara mudara* parts of the kīrtan. The *tara* or third *mul gayak* is dressed all in white and standing in the center yet behind the other two *mul gayaks* and represents Caitanya. He has the greatest vocal range of all MG’s in this team and is endowed with a powerful, melodious voice and delicate vibrato, unlike the other two *mul gayaks*, whose voices are raspy.

During the opening *alap* the first *mul gayak* sings the slow elucidation of the rāga, accompanied by the Chorus who sing the ending note of each phrase, extending it till the MG’s next note. The percussion section plays intermittently, as the first *mul gayak* gradually builds up to the mid-notes, then higher notes of the rāga, each one held for a considerable length of time. Though it appears that Dvija Pada Goswami is dominating the melodic performance at all times, sometimes his uncle also takes charge, especially if it is a very traditional rāga, where Dvija is not as knowledgeable. When the highest *tara* notes of melody commence, the third *mul gayak* comes forward to sing, as well as in the *rang* sections where he leads more frequently.

**Percussionists- the khol players:** Sri Rishi Das says “If you learn from a proper guru, then you can learn *kātān* as well as *la*, although most khol players only know this *la*”. Shri Rishi Das and his khol partner give an absolutely stunning performance displaying their tāla knowledge of the *kātān* with powerful, precise movements. They play perfectly

in sync with each other throughout, giving the impression that they could play together blindfolded.

**Kartal players and chorus:** With powerful exactitude, the kartal players lay the rhythmic foundation of the piece. From the beginning of the *Gauralap*, the kartal played sparsely, then gain momentum growing in intensity and *accelerando* as the khols progress from slow, light beats to a drum roll. As the khols play three very strong and dramatic strikes at the end of each twelve-beat cycle, the kartal match them in perfect accord.

**Other instruments:** The kīrtan ensemble is made up of the traditional instruments plus the harmonium, as well as casio keyboards played by Sri Rishi Das's brother and another *kīrtaniyā*. The clarinet played by the Dom musician replicates the melodic parts of the piece exactly, adding strength to the *mul gayaks'* melodic lines. Upon entering the *mandīr*, the instruments play with suspense. At this time, they must show their respect not only to Hari but also to *Sri khol* (as they call the drum) and *kartal*, demonstrating the significance of these traditional instruments in the kīrtan ensemble.

#### v. Kīrtan stories

In his role as a Vaiṣṇava, Sri Rishi Das is occupied with agricultural work or other jobs, as are the other team members as he is a professional kīrtan player. This is reflected in his kīrtan stories, the fact that he is completely dependent on his role, and Hari's grace for his livelihood and the well-being of his extended family. Sri Rishi Das says,

If you do *marāi* kīrtan, it depends on your faith or belief in God as to what benefits you get. If you trust *Hari*, you will receive more. If you don't, you won't. It totally depends on trust. It is not hard. You only have to take God's name, and you can get *moksa* (liberation). If I need something, I can



Figure 1.61 Sri Rishi Das Goswami (right) and family with author in middle Photo credit: SM.

ask *Hari*. If I say to Him, I will do kīrtan for three days if you will make this happen, I get what I ask for. So according to your belief and devotion you will receive (2006: Pers. comm.).

As a full time kīrtan musician Sri Rishi Das has gained insights into the effects of kīrtan on the performers, listeners and surroundings,

Kīrtan is the best way to call God, because in this way all persons will be benefited. If you do *puja* (meditation), only you will be benefited. But in kīrtan, the one organizing the kīrtan will be benefited, the people listening to the kīrtan will be benefited, those who are doing kīrtan will be benefited, and the way to heaven will be smooth, because your house and money, these things cannot go with you but His name will help you go to God. With the help of His name we can cross the worldly ocean, we can cross it with His name, and it will save you from every kind of danger (ibid.).

## vi. Conclusion

The main characteristics of the Vaiṣṇava team are: musical mastery as professional full time *kirtaniyas*; auspicious kīrtan lineage and extended family; virtuosity, particularly the *āsta sākhi bols* in Sohni, the insertion of Bhagesri rāga into Śiva Ranjani and the Baul *rang* into Dāspera; a leaning towards Śaivism whilst following Vaishnava protocol; and a depth of kīrtan knowledge and expertise that is vast, including kīrtan notation and *pada* kīrtan. The intensity and complexity of their performance is absolutely astounding, with the three *ektala matans*, inserted at pivotal points in the performance creating the basic structure of the kirtan. The second *matan* builds with a greater acceleration than the first, and the third is the ultimate “climax”, marking the end of the traditional part of their ecstatic performance. Theirs is a fierce kind of devotion, for they are the ancestral worshippers of *Hara* and *Hari*, and their traditional role is spiritual, musical and educational. They were not awarded first prize at the kīrtan competition at Dabar, perhaps because they were the only professional team there, by virtue of their caste. It may also be because, by comparison the Kostuka team underwent greater transformation, rising above very difficult circumstances to be in the position that they are in today.

Nevertheless, the Vaiṣṇava team fulfills a major role in the kīrtan tradition of Rāṅh, having perhaps the greatest musical expertise and traditional knowledge of all the teams.

## D. Karandhi Kīrtan Team

### i. Background

The village of Karandhi is in a remote, commonly designated a “tribal” area of the



Figure 1.62 Karandhi Kīrtan Team with khol players in front and Chorus girls.

Purulia District. The mud walls of the village huts are decorated with striped colours and hand painted designs. The children come out to greet us as we arrive and seat us on a wooden cot within the cool walls of a small hut beneath a thatched roof. When the kīrtan team is ready to commence they beckon us out into the kīrtan arena and we sit under the shade of a canvas tarpaulin to watch the performance. The incredible vitality and joyous exuberance of the team is contagious, especially the khol players who spar with each other in “mock battle”. The Chorus enters, a row of five young girls, between the age of

seven to twelve years of age, with white dresses down below their knees and orange sashes around their waists, in the style of their English colonisers.

The guru is the harmonium player Haradhan Rājwar in the role of *udara* and the second *mul gayak* is Jivan Māhāto who also plays the harmonium. The *tara* is Parameshwar Karmakar and is always in the limelight dressed in white *dhoti* (cloth tied about the waist) and shirt, with his arms up towards the sky. Svapan Karmakar is the lead khol player, and his uncle is the second khol player.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics

**Cultural and philosophical influences:** The guru of the Karandhi team speaks about their love of Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, as demonstrated in their song titles, *Śiva Shambhu Thakur* in Śiva Ranjani rāga. As well as using traditional *theka* they also use names of Śiva to



Figure 1.63 Painting upon the mud hut at Karandhi village.

recite the khol *bol* patterns (see Part one) and in the guru *vandana*, verses from the Sanskrit *Gurugita*, they call to guru Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Caitanya. So with sincere and urgent appeals the *kīrtaniyās* begin their performance. While walking towards the *mandīr* they are singing a devotional song from the Kṛṣṇa *lila*. It is dedicated to Caitanya Gaur and Nitai his closest companion, *Gaur neche Jāire āmār, Nitai niche Jāi, ranga paye sonar nupur ki ba shobha paire āmār ki ba sabha* describing the beautiful attributes of Caitanya and Nityananda, requesting them to

come with the enchanting sound of their ankle bells. Thus their music is impregnated with devotion at the very outset, as they sing with as much volume and devotional expression as they can muster, while keeping within traditional boundaries.

**Musical influences:** The initial idea for creating an all-girl Chorus was inspired by a visiting *kīrtan* team from Bankura who had a female Chorus. So the first *mul gayak* gathered together a group of girls from the village and began choreographing their movements. The Chorus girls high level of proficiency is today demonstrated by the fact

that on various occasions they initiated the next stage in the performance, as discussed below.

### iii. Performance

**Content:** The content of the Karandhi team's performance structure at Dabar is very similar to the previous three teams, with a balanced combination of traditional *tāla* and contemporary *rang*. The two main kīrtan rāga/tāla are Dāspera *la* and *kātān* in *ektala* and Sohni *la* and *kātān*. Interspersed within these traditional rāgas are *padavali* kīrtans in *ektala*, Baul and folk melodies (*jhumur rang sur*). Śiva Ranjani rāga is also performed near the beginning, similar to the Vaiṣṇava team. In the *rang sur* there is a *matan* and then the *rang sur* repeats followed by Śiva Ranjani with a *rang* inside. They also perform Sohni *la*, with *hat bhajna* or "hand music" i.e. playing of small drums before the *kātān* to end the performance inside the *mandīr* and a Baul *rang* as they move outside again.

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** There are three MG's in the Karandhi team as well as a Chorus of five girls who sing and dance throughout the performance. The second MG is the youthful representative of Gauranga. He has the highest profile, standing at the very centre between the two khol players and drawing most of the audience attention. In the Rājwar team the first MG stands in the centre, whereas in the Karandhi kīrtan team the second MG is centre stage, with arms raised upwards in *lalita marmika*, or at the heart in a prayer position, as he moves around the *mandīr*. The third MG, playing the harmonium also, sings the *tara* along with the second MG. The first MG who sings the *mudara* role, is also the choreographer and the most experienced *kīrtaniyā* of the team. However he is less in the limelight than the second MG, as his back is often to the audience during the *Gauralap*, although, he can be heard leading the kīrtan and prompting the second MG.

Another unusual feature of the Karandhi team is that throughout the performance, the role of lead singer is shared by the MG's and the Chorus girls, it is not restricted to first MG, as is usually the case. The distribution of the lead singer's role lessens the hierarchical structure of the team and creates a more diverse performance. At the beginning of *udara mudara* for example, the first Chorus girl, of around twelve years of

age, leads the kīrtan into the first *tara* part of the rāga, which is then continued by the third MG. Therefore the most egalitarian, non-hierarchical of all the *kīrtan* teams is the Karandhi team with their overwhelming exuberance and ecstatic devotional expression.

**Dance movements - The Chorus girls (DVD 1 Karandhi):** While the *kartal* players are sitting around the circumference of the *mandīr*, the khol players are in full swing moving inside the *mandīr*. The MG's dance the simple steps of *lalita marmika*, while the Chorus



Figure 1.64 Karandhi Team Chorus girls dancing and singing while the *kartal* players kneel on the edge of the *mandīr*.

girls weave elaborate designs with their feet and arm movements in rhythm with the melodic lines, as representatives of Rādha and the *gopis*. They do not play the *kartal* as is usual for a Chorus. Rather, they dance with their arms held high, in *lalita marmika* or some other posture (*mudra*) such as to the side and above, as if holding a water pot

upon their heads coming from the river. The *kartal* are not restricted to males only, many female musicians, especially Bauls play them. But the size of the kīrtan *kartal* is much larger than that of the Baul singers *kartal* and in the hands of young girls, the kīrtan *kartal* might prove cumbersome after a while.

The Chorus dance movements vary, they often step forward on the *Hari* at the beginning of the melodic phrase, or on the *Bolo* when the *kartals* make their first strike by the *kartal* players. Generally, however, once they have begun, their dance movements are regular and continuous, making small adjustments when the rhythm parts change.

They perform a great variety of dance movements during the kīrtan including: a regular four-step movement starting on the *Hari*; a walking and winding movement; a two-step skipping movement with legs splayed to the sides, backwards and forwards with a turn at double tempo; and a slow running movement during the *kātān matan*. Stepping forward with the right foot on the *Hari*, they begin together with the first matra of the melodic line, while the *kartal* players commence playing on the *Bolo*, and the *khol*'s who play in syncopation to the *kartal* on the "off" beat, weaving in and around each other in a complex polyrhythmic pattern. Hence the Chorus girls are a musical and visual highlight of the Karandhi performance, bringing a tender joyfulness to the kīrtan, delighting the audience and drawing them further into the kīrtan with their harmonious sound, diverse choreography and visual appeal.

#### iv. Musical qualities

***Mul gayaks*:** Other than the two main *mul gayaks*, as described above, there are also the Chorus Girls who have very high voices that are piercing at times, yet also enchanting and fitting in this dry, arid, mystical landscape. Their eyes are always fixed upwards and their feet firmly on the ground. When I enquired as to why all the girls were so young, the MGs said that when they reach the age of puberty, they cannot perform kīrtan any longer inside the kīrtan *mandīr*. When questioned as to why that is, the *khol* players/*mul gayaks* said that at the time of menstruation, it is not considered proper if they were to perform inside the *mandīr*, therefore it is prohibited<sup>5</sup>. Generally, however, women are permitted to sing and dance kīrtan inside the *mandīr*, as I observed in Bhansh Ghar village for example, where the women joined the men in the *marāī* kīrtan near the end of the performance.

The third MG also plays the harmonium and is the *tara* singer. He has an extraordinarily high, rich melodious voice and wide vocal range. He can often be heard leading above the other vocalists, although he is less prominent in terms of performance than the first and second *mul gayaks*. However, the MG's do not command as much attention as the two *khol* players in this team with their humourous antics.

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<sup>5</sup> Translated by Sanjay Mahato 2006 Pers. comm.

**Percussionists - the khol players (DVD1, Karandhi).** Both *khol* players are extremely



Figure 1.65 Two khol players, Svapan Karmakar and uncle.

dynamic and give an absolutely stunning performance. They are very skilled players, always entertaining the audience with their mock “battles”, played out in a spirit of friendly competition. The lead *khol* player, the younger of the two, exudes a tremendous vitality throughout and his

facial expression is euphoric as he plays with unparalleled zeal. Because of the lead *khol* player’s enthusiasm and the team spirit of cooperation, their performance is full of jubilation, and the pure excitement and elation they bring to the crowd is truly contagious.

### **Polyrhythmic effect**

In the beginning of the *rāga*, the dancers begin by moving on the first *mātrā* of the melodic phrase, i.e. the *Hari*, whereas the kartals always begin on the second syllable *Bolo*, and the khols play in syncopation to the kartal. Thus a complex polyrhythmic effect is created between the dance movements of the Chorus girls who move in rhythm with the melodic line combined with the rhythmic section, whose diverse patterns are performed simultaneously within the *rāga*.

While performing *Hari Bolo*, the dancers often begin on the *Hari*, the *kartal* begin on the *Bolo*, and the *khol* occupy the space in between the two. This polyrhythmic effect is likely due to the fact that this is designated by the government as a “tribal” area, and thus the “tribal” music influence, the hallmarks of “tribal” music are “asymmetrical

rhythmic divisions and a slightly offbeat or out-of-phase quality between the melody and the drum rhythms, or cross accents” according to Babiracki (2000:54) are apparent.

**Kartal players and chorus:** Unlike the other teams the *kartal* players position themselves around the circumference of the *mandīr*, to make way for the Chorus girls dance. Nevertheless, they provide the foundation of the rhythmic section and the melodic response, holding it in a firm grip, whether it be in eight, twelve, *duni* “double” or *cho duni* “quadruple” rhythms, the kartals always mark the *mātrās*, while the *khols* have greater liberty to play different rhythmic patterns, compositions and embellishments. Hence the *kartals* may respond at a regular pace, or with a variable, elaborate rhythmic pattern, driving towards the *kātān matan*, the highest point in the performance of ecstasy.



Figure 1.66 Karandhi khol players with small drums and seven kartal players kneel on the circumference.

**Other instruments:** Other than the traditional instruments of the *kīrtan* ensemble, the *khol* and the *kartal* of the Karandhi team use both the harmonium and the clarinet for melodic support. The drummers also entertain the audience by playing small drums and story telling near the end of the performance demonstrating their rhythmic dexterity. However, they do not use any electric instruments such as casio keyboard with the electric guitar sound, as do the Māhāto Team for example, reflecting their preferences as a mixed team in a predominantly “tribal” (the government term) area, that has been economically and politically marginalized. Yet they are both traditional and innovative in their perspective.

## v. Kīrtan story

Harāḍhān Rājwar, the leader of the Karandhi team speaks about the importance of *ektala* as a traditional kīrtan tāla and the future of kīrtan with an increase in modern film songs (*rang*) in *marāī* kīrtan,

*Ektala* is very important. Without *ektala* there cannot be kīrtan. Then Pākāchutā, Sohni, Tehot, Lupha, Śiva Ranjani and *rang* songs. Today most people perform only Sohni and *rang* as *rang* are very easy to perform. We also do *rang* songs, but I don't believe they will last long (2006: Pers.comm.).

The kīrtan guru and khol players firmly believe that kīrtan can save a person's life and also protect and propel them towards their spiritual goal, as seen in the lyrics of a devotional song they sing as they leave the *mandīr*. Haradhan Rājwar translates as follows,

*Ek bar bolore madhumakha Hari nam bolore*, which means,  
“Once you say the name of Hari, you will get rid of all types of sin”,  
*Namer gune Jogai Madhai udhar Hoil lore x 2*  
“Jogai and Madhai were criminals, but by saying the name of Hari they both became saints”,  
*Madhmakha Hari nam ekbar bolore*  
“So you also say this name once and you also will get this heavenly pleasure”  
(2006: Pers.comm.).

## vi. Conclusion

Although the Karandhi team's musical performance is proficient, with the inclusion of traditional kīrtan melodies, Baul and *jhumur rangs* and Śiva Ranjani rāga for example, there is little unusual about it. However their most extraordinary features are: the overwhelming exuberance emanating from the khol players; the all-girl Chorus who can be as commanding as the male counterparts the MG's; their egalitarianism, spirit of cooperation and friendly competition; and the polyrhythmic effect created by the juxtaposition of dance steps, melodies, khol and kartal rhythms performed at once,

demonstrating their unique contribution to the kīrtan tradition. The Karandhi team was also not chosen as the winners of the Dabar kīrtan *mela*, possibly because in comparison the Kostuka team had more traditional kīrtan tāla knowledge than this team.

### E. Brahman Kīrtan Team



Figure 1.67 Brahman kīrtan team at Bhansh Ghar village with Sri Gopinath Goswami (far left) and Sri Narayan Mahanti (centre).

#### i. Background

Driving through Balarampur along a long narrow dirt road, Sanjay Māhāto and I arrived at Bhansh Ghar village and parked our van in front of the highly decorated kīrtan *mandīr* with brightly coloured images of the Rādha Kṛṣṇa *lila* painted upon sculpted reliefs on the columns and roof. We came in the late afternoon, to speak to the Brahman kīrtan team leader Sri Nārāyana Mahanti, only to find him reading the Ramayana to a captive audience in the temple behind the *mandīr*. He wasn't expecting us that day, but when he saw us, he beckoned us to sit on the mat inside the temple while he continued.



Figure 1.68 Sri Narayan Mahanti recited verses from the Ramayana.

The villagers, mostly elderly, dressed in white saris or *dhotis*, had a welcoming smile upon their faces as we sat and listened to *dadaji* “elder brother” with his loud voice reciting verses from the Ramayana. Later he took us to his home and we discussed their *kīrtan* performance in their village *mela* on 11th April, 2006, as they did not attend the Dabar *mela* where the other *kīrtan* teams performed.

The guru of the Brahman team is Gopinath Goswami, the musical leader is



Figure 2.69 Bhansh Ghar village *kīrtan mandir* depicting Shiva, Parvati and Ganesh.

Nārāyana Chandra Mahanti and the *kīrtaniyas* are Bas Chandra Mahanti, Sukumar Mahanti, Uttam Mahanti, Shibaram Layek, Shyam Sundar Layek, Shadan Chandra Layek, Dharanidar Layek, and Sukdev Mahanti (see Figure 1.69).

This village has a predominance of Brahmans, a few Dom (Kālīndi, music caste), Vaiṣṇavas (Goswami, *kīrtan* caste), Karmakar (Karmar, carpenters), and other caste members who were “brought to the village to serve the Brahmans” (SM 2007: Pers.comm). The highly decorated *kīrtan mandir* is at the top entrance of the street, where most of the *kīrtaniyās* live. On its walls are scenes from Kṛṣṇa’s and Caitanya’s life and stories from the ancient *Puranas*. Gopinath Goswami, says “From at least 100 years ago, every month we do *kīrtan* on *ekadashi* and full moon. There is also a festival in Vaishak, and in the month of *Chaitra* for five days, where we organize an *akhanda kīrtan* in the *mandir*” (2006: Pers.comm.). Mahanti says that his family is not from a *kīrtan* lineage, he is a Brahman priest and makes a living as a fruit and vegetable wholesaler. He trained with a *kīrtan* guru from the same village and is an “all rounder”, being well versed in the *kīrtan* literary tradition, a *mul gayak*, and a very proficient *khol* player.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics



Figure 1.70 Shiva, Parvati and Ganesh and stories from the Puranas depicted on the kīrtan *mandīr* at Bansh Ghar village.

**Cultural and philosophical influences:** The Brahman team’s kīrtan performance, though similar in some respects, has its own distinctive characteristics. Their speciality is the guru *vandana* in Sanskrit sung at the beginning of the kīrtan, as well as the extensive use of *padavali* kīrtan, i.e. singing verse or *padas* from the renowned *padakars* of Rāṛh.

From a musicological perspective, the importance that Mahanti gives to traditional *padavali* kīrtan as well as contemporary *padakars* from Navadwip raises questions regarding the Brahman team’s cultural affiliations, whether they belong to the Nadia or Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition or to both. The influence of the Nadia *padavalli* kīrtan tradition is clear with their frequent guest performers visiting the village. There is also the issue of whether the emphasis on Sanskrit verse from the Gurugita and *padavali* kīrtan of the Vaiṣṇava composers signifies high social status, requiring an educational standard that not all teams meet. As Rājwar says, “Śiva is the first god and the symbol of the indigenous people. Viṣṇu on the other hand is the symbol of high society” (2007: Pers.comm.), represented by this team. Yet the Brahmans also incorporate traditional Rāṛhi kīrtan rāgas like Pākāchutā in their *marāī* kīrtan performance. In short, one can observe Sanskrit verse, Vaiṣṇava *padavali* kīrtans, and *marāī* kīrtan existing side by side in their performance with the emphasis on the first two.

**The Brahmans and Goswamis:** Nārāyana Mahanti, the leader of the Brahman team believes that “the whole kīrtan system is an expression of devotion and purity” (2006:

Pers.comm.). In terms of their kīrtan ensemble, this translates as only “original” instruments being used, i.e. khol and kartal, and not the harmonium, *casio*, clarinet and *ananda lahari* that the other teams use.



Figure 1.71 Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Hanuman and Rama depicted inside the kīrtan *mandīr*.



Figure 1.72 Lord Śiva being blessed by Parvati, Bhansh Ghar kīrtan *mandīr*.

Mahanti says that only the kartal and khol were used during Caitanya’s time, so we only use these in our kīrtan” (ibid.). All other instruments are kept outside the boundary of “pure and traditional”, due perhaps to the privileges that only those at the head of the caste hierarchy can afford. While those at the top of the ladder have no need to include “modern” sounds, those on the lower rungs, who fail to satisfy “popular demands”, may result in their team not being invited to perform again and thus a loss of spiritual benefits, musical opportunities as well as any remuneration. Brahmanic notions of “purity” also exclude the influence of other indigenous genres within their kīrtan. “Kīrtan *sur* is different from Baul for example, what we are doing is kīrtan *sur*”, (Mahanti 2006: Pers.comm.) giving the impression that only kīrtan *sur* is allowed, in contrast again to the other teams. Nevertheless the observance of musical “purity” and/or the incorporation of other musical influences does not appear to inhibit *any* kīrtan team from responding to the spontaneous impulse of creative expression, adaptation and invention that kīrtan encapsulates.



Figure 1.73 Brahman group performs the *outy* or instrumental *jhuran*.

According to local informants there is an ongoing “fight” between the Vaiṣṇava Brahmans and the Vaiṣṇava Goswamis, largely because the Goswamis are a caste invented by Caitanya in the fifteenth century to give status to the lower castes, whereas the Rāṛhi Brahmans have been here since time

immemorial. The ceremonial roles that the two perform reflect the difference. The Goswamis perform the *shraddha* “death” ceremonies, while the more prestigious ceremonies like marriage, baby naming, are reserved for the Brahmans (Goswami, 2006, Pers.comm.).

Another point of discrepancy is the emphasis, or lack thereof, on the worship of *Hara Śiva*, the lord of the indigenous people in Rāṛh. For the Goswamis of Silfore, Śiva worship is overt but for the Brahmans it appears covert. Yet, the omniscience of Śiva has still been acknowledged, evidenced by the paintings on the *kīrtan mandīr* as well as verses sung in the *Guru vandana* as follows,

*Papaham papa karma ham*  
*Papata pap sambhabe*  
*Traihiman kundori kaitan*  
*Sabo pabo Hari Hara*

The lord is Hari and Hara, the preserver the destroyer. I came into this world and I don’t know what is right or wrong. Maybe it is right or maybe it is sin, I don’t know. But all that I am doing, and all my possessions, all my work, in this world, I offer to You. You will judge and show me the right way. (Mahanti 2007: Pers.comm.).

Thus the influence of Śiva and other indigenous genres though not a special feature of the Brahman kīrtan performance, is still prevalent in subtle ways.

**Musical Influences:** In musical terms, the differences between the Brahman kīrtan team and the other the Rārhi kīrtan teams are: a) The Brahman team performed guru *vandana* or guru *pranam* in Sanskrit for over an hour, compared to a few minutes by the other teams, as well as *padavalli* kīrtan in the vernacular by Narottama Das, Vaiṣṇava Das, and the Caṇḍīdāsa’s; b) They used only the kartal and khol and no other local or western instruments; c) There are no coordinated, choreographed dance movements only the traditional *lalita marmika* is performed; and d) They do not include Baul or jhumur *rang* as do the other teams, rather the emphasis is on kirtan songs and classical rāgas.

Sri Narayan Mahanti’s training as a *kīrtaniya* began when he was twenty years old, which is relatively late compared to the other kīrtan gurus. Narayan’s teachers were the late Banāmali Panda from his village, whose guru was Makan Lal Ganguli, a Bengali Brahman from Dhadkidih, Purulia, as well as Mahadeva Das his “teaching guru” who lives one kilometre away. He has also been teaching his team for three years, “but to learn kīrtan needs ten to twelve years”, (ibid.). Speaking about his guru Makan Lal Ganguli he says that he could compile *padavali* verse and expand on its meaning for many days in song and prose,

The *pada* writers, such as Premananda Das, Narottam Das, Vaisnav Das made some fixed tunes for tāla and *pada*. I sing their *pada* songs, from Caitanya *Caritamrita*, Bhagavata, Caitanya Mangal, and *pada* writers, and make a mixture. My guru collected verse from all of these writers; then he would make up a chapter to sing. With just one line I can stay two or three hours, but my guru could stay one day, and his guru, perhaps stay for two or three days explaining and singing with this one line of a *pada*. This *pada* has fifteen lines. These I learnt from my guru” (2007: Pers.comm.).

### iii. Performance Content

The sequence of parts as performed are: *Juran* or *outy* instrumental, *Guru vandana* verse in Sanskrit, *Guru vandana padavali* in the vernacular, *lila kirtan (Jat abahan)* “calling”, the *Gauralap*, *Guru vandana* continues in *ektala*, *Daspera katan*, *Pakachuta la* and *katan*, Śiva Ranjani raga, then *rang*.

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** At the top of the hierarchy is their Vaiṣṇava guru, Gopinath Goswami from Purulia, who holds a government job by day and is a Vaiṣṇava guru by night. Then there is Nārāyana Mahanti, the musical director who



Figure 1.74 Khol players with *mul gayak* as he sings kīrtan with classical improvisation.

has two apprentice khol players and a Chorus of about fifteen singers/kartal players, who meet regularly on *ekadashi* to perform kīrtan in the village *mandīr*. Within the Brahman team, there is a strong sense of social egalitarianism and cohesion, with frequent guest singers invited to perform with the team. One in particular had a very powerful, deep,

classical voice with a strong vibrato, (Figure 1.74), who sang the traditional rāgas Pākāchutā and Sohni in the village *mandīr*.

**Dance movements :** During *guru vandana* the Chorus sits or kneels inside the *mandīr* and in *marāī* kīrtan they perform *lalita marmika*. Sri Nārāyana Mahanti’s opinion is that,

In kīrtan everything is fixed: tune, tāla, dance, everything. If you dance like *chhau* in kīrtan, it’s not good. If you sing like *nacinis* in kīrtan, it’s not good. Kīrtan comes traditionally from father to son. It is different from other dances (ibid.).

The other kīrtan teams have unique choreographies, some of which may have *Chhau*, martial movements, “dancing girls” *nacini nach* influences or the sensual

eroticism of Rādhā and the gopis, which is absent in the Brahman team’s performance. They dance only *lalita marmika*, side-to-side foot movements, with arms upraised or at the heart.

**Structural markers:** Structural markers are also not distinct in the Brahman team’s performance, perhaps because they have no coordinated choreographed dance movements or complex musical arrangements. In the guru *vandana*, it appears that often Sri Narayan Mahanti directs the performance and therefore decides when to change to the next rāga, as indicated by his singing and khol playing. In terms of the *marāī* kīrtan, however, the system seems fairly liberal or democratic, where any one of the *mul gayaks* may initiate and lead a kīrtan melody.

#### **iv. Musical qualities**

**Singers (*mul gayaks*) and Chorus (DVD 1.Brahman):** The Chorus singers of the Brahman team have rich, deep and harmonious voices unlike the majority of the other male Chorus who generally sing in a high tenor voice. There is also more emphasis on the slow rendition of a rāga and a classical style of singing and improvisation. During the guru *vandana*, Mahanti sings the Kṛṣṇa *lila* verses and the Chorus responds with the same melodic line for “We are using the original *pada* for kīrtan. It is the old style. We use the *padas* rather than *Hari Bol*” (ibid.). Hence, Mahanti sings the original songs from the Rāṛhi kīrtan composers in a responsorial fashion. However, I have also witnessed the Brahman team using *Hari Bolo* exclusively, with Mahanti playing the khol rather than as lead singer.

Regarding the traditional melodic parts, I did not observe *udara*, *mudāra*, *tara* parts specifically operating within the Brahman team, although there were some excellent singers who could have fit those roles, in particular one *kīrtaniya* having a very high (*tara*) voice with delicate vibrato, who often led the kīrtan (see Figure 1.75 mid). Hence, while the Guru *vandana* is invariably led by Mahanti, the *marāī* kīrtan section is usually divided among three or four *mul gayaks*.

**Gopinath Goswami (DVD 1.Brahman):** Their guru is seen throughout the performance singing and playing kartal, then at the very end of the performance he calls out the various names of God as the Chorus responds with “*Jai*”.

**The khol players (DVD 1.Brahman):** The *guru vandana* khol rhythms are played with powerful expertise and theatrical exuberance by Sri Nārāyana Mahanti and his two



Figure 1.75 Sri Narayan Mahanti and apprentice playing khol with *tara* voice at centre playing kartal.

disciples, standing in front of the Chorus who sit around the circumference of the *mandīr*. During the *marāī* kīrtan, however, some *kātān bol* compositions that feature in the other teams’ performance and elaborate kartal patterns appear to be absent. Thus their musical expertise is primarily in the *Guru vandana* section, rather than the purely melodic improvisations like *udara mudara* and *tara*, and rhythmic patterns and compositions.

**Kartal players and Chorus:** The Chorus/kartal players sit and play during *Guru vandana*, then dance and play during the participatory *marāī* kīrtan. As far as I know, they play primarily single and double strikes, without the more elaborate rhythmic patterns performed by other teams, as described in Part two.

**Other instruments:** For Mahanti and the Brahman team, only the khol and kartal are used, because “It is traditional. In ancient times, when Mahaprabhu was there, they didn’t use harmonium. So we continue this tradition” (Mahanti 2006: Pers.comm.). However, the historical records from Caitanya’s time report only drummers and not kartal players. In the *Caitanya Caritamrita* [*Antya-lila*, Ch.10, Text 66], it is written, “The seven teams

began chanting and beating their drums in seven directions, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began dancing in the center in great ecstatic love” (Kavirāja 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Yet the scintillating sound of the *kartal*, and drums, without voices, played in the *outy* or *jhuran* is a very distinctive sound, which resonates with earlier Hindu/Buddhist Tantric ceremonies like the *caryā giti* or *cacā* songs where the instruments recorded are “handbell (*ghante*), small cymbals (*tāh*) and pellet drum (*dāmāru*)” (Widdess 2004: 17).

#### v. Kīrtan stories

As with most teams, kīrtan stories reflect caste and social considerations as well as common spiritual matters. As with other *kirtaniyas*, Mahanti also says that “with the help of God’s name, we can attain salvation” (2007: Pers.comm.). The expectation of



Figure 1.76 Sri Narayan Mahanti singing *pada* kirtan with two khol apprentices.

achieving *moksa* or „liberation“ in a single lifetime stems from deeper sources than Vaiṣṇavism, harkening back to Saivism that abounds in this region. Mahanti explains the importance of having a guru in a devotee’s life,

If you go to someone and request fruit, he will give you one or maybe five or six maximum. But the guru is like

a tree, with lots of fruit, full of love. Love is like a jewel. If you go to the tree-like guru, guru will give you everything. There is a tree in heaven. If you go to the tree, it will fulfill your desire. So guru is like this *kalpa taru*, a tree of heaven. We believe that you will also find the tree in this area, called the *jhori* tree locally or Asatha tree. We hug this tree because we think this tree never lies – the tree witnesses our ceremony, in *Vaishak* month, we take bark from the tree and eat it (ibid.).

On spiritual philosophy, Mahanti says,

*Artha* is the earth, and *Parāmārtha* is heaven. Our main goal in life is to meet *Parāmārtha*. We must do something to end our pain and sorrow. So we request our guru to give us the light, like moonlight, that gives peace inside. With moonlight your eyes will not be burnt like with sunlight (ibid.).

## vi. Conclusion

The philosophical background for the Brahman kīrtan team is derived from ancient beliefs in the sacredness of sound, a system of worship based on Brahmanic ideals of purity and devotion. Therefore their kīrtan performance is “fixed” in time, not allowing *rang* or “modern” music to enter as they maintain their position at the top of the caste hierarchy. An extensive rendition of Sanskrit verse from the Gurugīta, *padavalli* kīrtans of the local *padakars* as well as the traditional Rārhi kīrtan tālas/rāgas are distinct characteristics of the Brahman kīrtan rather than choreographed dance movements, and various instrumental accompaniment, aspects of kīrtan that have popular appeal elsewhere in Purulia. However, their performance did not feature the purely musical aspects of Rārhi *marāī* kīrtan: systematic use of *udara*, *mudara*, *tara* melodic improvisations; clear delineation of *Dāspira la*, *Sohni la* and *Pākāchutā la*; and various melodic and rhythmic parts of the kīrtan rāgas that are part of other teams” performance.

The Brahman team strictly holds to the ancient philosophical injunctions and the musical expressions that represent them. This creates a “purity” of sound with just the traditional instruments and an emphasis on a classical singing style. What appears to be lacking however is the identification with contemporary, popular forms of *marāī* kīrtan with strategies that leads to great musical intensity, prevalent in the local area and developed by other village teams. Yet these different emphases and creative expressions only serve to broaden further the spectrum of the *marāī* kīrtan tradition, with the Brahmans and the other teams, all situated somewhere across the wide panorama (see Part one).

## F. The Kostuka kīrtan team



Figure 1.77 The Kostuka Kīrtan team in their village *mandir*.

The Kostuka Kīrtan team includes Jagaran Māhāto (guru), Sakti Pada Māhāto (*dohārī*), Bhakti Māhāto (*khol*), Methar Kālīndī (clarinet), Nepal Māhāto, Svapan Māhāto, Hari Ram Māhāto, Purna Chandra Māhāto, Saral Sardar, Ankur Māhāto and Bhim Paramanik.

### i. Background

On the day of filming the Dabar Kīrtan *mela*, the Kostuka kīrtan team was is of the five teams that came to perform that day. Like all Rāṛhi musical or dance events there is a competitive element to it, designed to encourage the musicians’ training and development. At the end of the *mela* one kīrtan “team” (the term they use), is selected by the village elders to be the winners, and a small monetary prize is awarded. To my surprise, the Kostuka Team won first prize. At first, it was not clear to me why this team had been chosen when I considered other teams to be more dynamic, exuberant, or musically proficient than they. However, after much analysis, it became apparent why.

After reviewing visual and recorded material of their performances and interviews with their guru, I noted three things: a) their performance was highly structured, based on



Figure 1.78 Sri Jagaran Māhāto, the guru of the Kostuka team.

the traditional rāgas rather than the *rang* songs; b) the rich sonority of the men’s Chorus was very appealing in that they were not overwhelmed by the piercing sounds of the clarinet as in other teams; and c) their guru, Jagaran Māhāto, was present, guiding them throughout the entire performance. This meant that the rāgas were carefully selected, that the melodic parts were sung at the correct tempo and in the proper sequence, and the rhythmic compositions or *kātān bols*, were performed with exactitude.

Sometimes they danced with feminine seduction as if they were Rāḍhā while at other times they performed the traditional *lalita marmika* kīrtan dance. But always they were full of devotional expression and showed signs of great respect towards their guru through absolute obedience to his every command.

There was another factor that made this team exceptional. Just two years ago most of the members of the team were renowned criminals. They were “hit-men” hired by political leaders and others to harm their enemies, rob sacred sites or commit other crimes. Theirs was a village that was too frightening to visit unprotected, being full of political and social strife and infighting. That this change had been brought about to the point that they could win first prize in a Kīrtan competition is not only a tribute to their guru’s guidance but also a testament of their dedication and sincerity.

Sri Jagaran Māhāto, from Makrabena village, is also the guru of many other kīrtan teams in the Purulia District. His guru was Kogen Māhāto, from Durohoi village, Purulia, whom he learnt kīrtan from for ten years. He has a very old and worn manuscript dictated by his guru with the kīrtan tālas written in *Ba* notation, which he showed us one day during an interview. Jagaran has taught and performed kīrtan in Rāḥ and surrounds for more than thirty years. He says his teaching schedule depends on time availability and travel distance from his home. For example, he may stay and teach in one village for one

week if it is far from his home or if they're near to his home then he rides his bicycle there and back each day. Generally he teaches three or four teams a year, with a one week gap between the teams. In 2007, he was teaching only one team at Bhalka village, but he says that the Kostuka team is the best in tāla performance.



Figure 1.79 Māhāto brothers and father in family compound with Sakti Māhāto centre.

When asked what he looks for in his students, he says, “It depends on their desire, attitude and eagerness to learn. They must have moral discipline. They can’t drink alcohol or smoke” (JM, 2006:Pers.comm.). This strictness has influenced the lifestyle of the Kostuka team radically in less than two years into a proficient kīrtan team, who have reverence for their guru and are full of devotional expression. Figure 46 shows

Sakti Pada Māhāto (centre), his brother Bhakti Māhāto on the left, Svapan Māhāto and Ankur Māhāto, the other *kīrtaniyās*. According to local informants, Sakti’s younger brother was infamous for his knife skills but now his quick hand movements have been put to much better purpose as the first khol player. Sakti Māhāto, the *dohari*, tells the story of how the team was formed,

We had a kīrtan team in our ancestor’s time, but in the middle we had none. One day, we decided to make a team so that we could come together to fight against political corruption in our village. Because of political causes there were lots of problems in our village. Inside the family, there were fights between brother and brother. To overcome these problems, we formed this kīrtan team. We brought a guru named Jagaran Māhāto from Makrabena to teach us, and for the past two years we have been doing kīrtan (2007: Pers.comm.).

The Kostuka team consists of two families from Kostuka village and their friends. Sakti Māhāto is one of five brothers in this kīrtan team. One of his younger brothers sings and plays kartal and his other brother is the khol player. His elder brother is the second

*mul gayak*. His friend plays the kartal behind him and is also a Māhāto. The two more senior kartal players in the team are brothers from another family in the village. Their nephew is the third *mul gayak*, the young representative of Caitanya who sings in support of the first *mul gayak* with the harmonium and dances with arms held high.

## ii. Distinctive characteristics

**Cultural and Philosophical influences:** In a discussion about the symbolic relationship between Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā and Śiva/Parvati, JM quotes from a book that says Śiva described himself as Kṛṣṇa, with Gouri as Rādhā (2007: Pers.comm.) titled *Bangla Mangalkavye* by Ksirod Chandra Māhāto. He even gives the date, publishers (2002, Sujana Publication, Calcutta), and pages number (120-121),

Śiva himself says that he is Kṛṣṇa and Gauri his wife is Rādhā, in *Hara Gauri milon* and because of Gauri's request Śiva is spreading the name of *Hari kīrtan*. It is a kind of heavenly pleasure to do kīrtan (2007: Pers.comm.).

Although I have not yet been able to locate this book it is interesting that Jagaran had memorised the publication details to quote in his interview. He had no prior knowledge of what questions I would ask him, yet he had prepared his answers and was ready to support his beliefs with a quotation citing Śiva's approval to perform *Hari kīrtan*. Perhaps he thought having a reference would make his beliefs more acceptable to a western academic. However, his point was that Śiva instigated kīrtan and that he and his spouse reincarnated in the form of Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā to implement it, as a kind of heavenly enjoyment (as discussed in Part one) for all.

**Musical influences:** In the Dabar performance Jagaranji structured the performance to maintain the purity of the traditional Rāṛhi kīrtan rāgas, with few intervening or ending *rang* melodies (*sur*). The incorporation of classical rāgas is also not a feature of their performance, as in the Māhāto's, nor the prominent Baul or *padavali* influence, as in the Vaiṣṇava Goswami team, or the Guru *vandana* of the Brahman team. Rather, a clear and thorough delineation of the traditional kīrtan rāgas are highlighted in the Kostuka team's performance.

### iii. Performance (see Part two)

#### Content (see Part two)

**Team hierarchy, dynamics and leadership:** Although it may not be obvious at first, on close observation it is clear that the guru, JM is guiding and directing every change in the kīrtan. A guru's active participation in the performance is not unusual, if one considers the role of Sri Rishi Das Goswami, Narayan Mahanti or Basanta Rājwar. However the way in which Jagaran conducts the kīrtan is unparalleled. He neither leads the singing (Rājwars) nor plays any instrument (Sri Rishi Das), as do the other gurus yet he directs the whole performance as both the commander and witness. JM is positioned at top of the team hierarchy although the reverence and obedience shown to such a guru cannot be compared to a teacher, it is beyond that. Thus he is in a category all his own.

Another unusual factor about this team is that second in the hierarchy is the lead kartal player (*dohārī*) Sakti Pada Māhāto rather than the first *mul gayak*. This is because he is the leader of the Māhāto brothers that dominate this team (and the past criminal team) and this leadership has carried over from the criminal team to the kīrtan team. Sakti Māhāto is the one that JM relies upon for musical support whenever he requires it. Sakti stands next to the guru and sings the melodic lines when the guru recites the *bols* as the other team members stand near, following Sakti's lead. It is not certain who is next in the hierarchy. Perhaps it is the first *mul gayak* or the first khol player, as both are prominent figures in the performance although it is not certain. Hence, the guru is at the head of the team and holds the ultimate position of power, with Sakti as his righthand man. Though this team performed anti-social activities in the past, they are now transformed into a highly dynamic, cohesive, and successful kīrtan team.

**Dance movements (see Part two):** The Kostuka dance both the traditional *lalita marmika* and choreographed movements, led by the *dohārī*, combining a fierce devotional expression with the sensual and erotic movements of Rāḍhā, the feminine counterpart of Kṛṣṇa. The *lasya* movements are more noticeable in the *duni* "medium

tempo” section than the *la* “refrain” or *matan* “climax” sections. The *matan* is heralded by a running movement around the *mandīr* contrasting to the *kātān* with its combination of still and strident movements, beginning with a kneeling position at the *kātān bols* and developing to broad steps and turns in *cho duni*. The *kātān matan* rises to a kind of ecstatic frenzy inside the *mandīr*, and ends in calm motionlessness.

**Structural markers:** The primary structural marker in this team performance is not any



Figure 1.80 Khol players of the Kostuka team.

*bol* recitations, repeats of the *matan* or even the insertion of a *rang* melody but simply the guru’s call and claps that are heard above all else, like a conductor’s baton beating out change in the musical performance. There is a time lapse from when the guru calls to the actual change of part, governed by a system they have devised where, from the point of the gurus call, the team waits to conclude the present

cycle before moving onto the new melodic part.

#### iv. Musical qualities

**Singers (*mul gayaks*):** There are three MG’s in this team. The first MG plays the harmonium and sings both the *udara* and *mudara* parts. The second is the youthful representative of Caitanya who accompanies the first *mul gayak*, then Sakti’s elder brother who sings the Chorus parts. The latter two walk around next to the altar, at the centre of the *mandir* and sing with arms raised upwards most of the time. I did not observe the roles of *udara mudara tara* being performed consecutively by the three MG’s, as in the Māhāto team at this time. Rather, the first MG sings the *udara mudara* parts together with the support of the other two MG’s. The Chorus singers have rich, loud, harmonious voices, with no clarinet to mask the sound. Hence, the depth and clarity of the voices resonate above the other instruments, similar to the Brahman team,

We are not using the clarinet or flute as it dominates the whole song. It's always higher in volume than the voice. We are not using it because then the original voices will not be heard, they will be buried underneath. (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

### **Percussionists- the khol players (see Part two)**

### **Kartal players/Chorus singers (see Part two)**

### **Other instruments:**

There are no casio, clarinet or other instruments used in the Kostuka team, simply the traditional kartal and khol with only the harmonium for the MG's melodic accompaniment. The accent is on the purity and richness of vocal sound and traditional rāga performance.

### **v. Kīrtan stories**

Speaking from the feminine perspective of Rāḍhā, the kīrtan songs have been composed,

All kīrtan songs are about the pangs of separation, from Rāḍhā's perspective. Rāḍhā speaks about her pain to her friends. These are *viraha* songs, and *marāī* kīrtan means *viraha* songs (JM.2007: Pers.comm.).

Sakti Māhāto speaks about the meaning of the word *Bolore* instead of *Bolo* in the *marāī* kīrtan,

We don't sing *bolore*, because it means you have no respect. The syllables are important. Just as we have four ages, the name *Hari Bolo* has four syllables. But *Hari bolore* has five. You can't use five. To whom will you tell *bolore*? To the one who is younger? No, you can't, because those who are listening, they are high, and who is singing, they are low. So how can we say *bolore* to the listener? (Sakti Māhāto, 2006: Pers.comm.).

When I went to the Purulia police station to register as a foreign visitor, I told a police officer about my research into Rāṛhi kīrtan and how it had transformed the lives of many former criminals. He replied with humour,

Yes, in future to save the new generation, we will have to post kīrtan teachers throughout Purulia, not policemen. (2007: Pers.comm.).



Figure 1.81 Kīrtan team at home in Kostuka village.

## vi. Conclusion

The Kostuka kīrtan team is unique in many ways as shall be described in Part two. Through their humility and devotional surrender, they embody the true spirit of a Vaisnava according to Caitanya's tenets (see Part one). Coming from a background of criminality and being exploited by unscrupulous politicians, they experienced the worst kind of personal tragedy, family and community divisions. Yet, similar to the story of Valmiki<sup>6</sup>, the criminal who became a saint, they left their previous anti social activities and became spiritual heroes in their village and beyond. After finding a strict but compassionate kīrtan guru, they transformed their lives into something noble by his example and teachings. Hence their kīrtan is not only an expression of musical excellence and traditional values but also of spiritual awakening, social unity and advancement.

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<sup>6</sup> Valmiki (400BC), the writer of the Ramayana, was previously *Ratanakara*, or feared dacoit.

**Summary:** The six Rāṛhi kīrtan teams discussed above each have unique features spread across the whole performance spectrum. A brief summary of the different kīrtan teams most distinctive characteristics, surveying the beginning, middle and end sections includes: a) The Brahman team’s opening *jurān* instrumental part with its purity of sound followed by the Sanskrit verse of the Guru *vandana* and collective *lalita marmika* danced by all at the end of the evening kīrtan; b) The Rājwar team’s opening *Gauralap* with its ecstatic, thrilling calls and Dāṣpera rāga improvisations; c) The Vaiṣṇava team’s middle section with its Sohni *bol* recitations, *padavali* verse and story telling; d) The Māhāto team’s *udara mudara tara*, and their mesmerising performance of Śiva Ranjani rāga near the end of the performance; e) The Karandhi’s joyous exuberance and collective cooperation throughout, particularly by the khol players and all girl Chorus; and f) The Kostuka team’s comprehensive traditional rāga/tāla performance, as analysed, transcribed and discussed in detail in the following Part two .



Figure 1.82 Sri Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, surrounded by Caitanya and Nityananda at Bhansh Ghar.

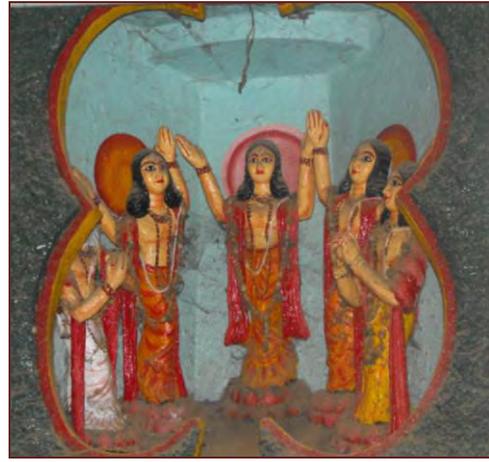


Figure 1.83 Caitanya and his followers depicted inside the *mandīr*.

## Part Two: The Kostuka kīrtan team performance analysis



Figure 2.1 The Kostuka team performing kīrtan in their village *mandīr*.

### Introduction

The Kostuka village kīrtan team's performance on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, was staged in front of me and the local villagers of around 150 at Dabar village (*gram*) in the Purulia District. There were no conditions imposed on them as to how or what to perform, except one, that due to time constraints that they would limit their performance to approximately one hour due to the availability of sunlight needed for filming the five different kīrtan teams that day. Yet some of the incidents that occurred could not have been foreseen, nor had been directly influenced by my request. One kīrtan guru for example, complained about the next kīrtan team who came into the *mandīr* too early, cutting their performance to only 45 minutes while another team leader said that their performance was very long and that the following team was not ready to enter the *mandīr* on time. Just these two occurrences alone made apparent significant factors about *marāī* kīrtan. Firstly, that kīrtan requires a certain amount of time to perform properly i.e. there is a performance structure that is followed and secondly that it must be continuous, there are to be no breaks in the kīrtan once it has commenced and the time fixed into specific *praharas* "hours" usually a

multiple of three. I was informed that one could not stop or break that fixed *prahara* as it would amount to a broken promise to god, and if that happened for any reason, the kīrtan will not be considered auspicious. Thus the singing of kīrtan was seen to create beneficence for the whole community and if a promise made was fulfilled, then Lord Hari would be pleased and bestow blessings upon the whole village.

Another time consideration which I was not aware of is that each team would expect to perform at night as well as during the day, for inviting a team to perform at a kīrtan *mela* did not mean they only performed once but as many times needed to fulfill the allotted *prahara*. At night the atmosphere seemed to envelope everyone in a deep mystical mood, there was not the hot sweltering summer sun to thwart their vitality, nor a scattered audience that came and went with the flow of domestic duties. At night the villagers all sat quietly, listening to the kīrtan in the cool evening air. Women were now joined by the rest of their family and other local villagers who had been working elsewhere during the day and were now able to be present. Hence each team performed once during the day for the filming and once at night for the villagers.

It is a hot summer morning in the Purulia District of West Bengal, as the Kostuka kīrtan team arrives at Dabar village and begins their preparations for the performance. The kīrtan *mandīr* is situated at the end of the village road, opposite the house of the late *kīrtaniyā*, Sri Satyendranath Māhāto, who built it. The previous team has been performing for approximately one hour and now the time has come for the next team to enter into the *mandīr* and continue the *marāī* kīrtan. Standing on the red earth pathway, the kīrtan *guru* of the Kostuka kīrtan team, Sri Jagaran Māhāto, is surrounded by his team. He directs the players to their respective positions, at times placing his hands on the khol and moving one player in front of the other. Then when all is ready, he raises his arms above his head to the sky in surrender to Lord Hari, and calls out *Nitai*, (the shortened name of Nityananda, closest disciple of Caitanya) thus signaling the kīrtan to start. The Kostuka team start with the performance of guru *vandana* “praise, worship of the guru”, the absolutely riveting call to God, that is so powerfully charged that it fills the atmosphere with an electric pulse, that makes the hair on ones body stand on end, as well as alerting the villagers of the beginning of the auspicious kīrtan performance.

**The Kostuka kīrtan team consists of:**

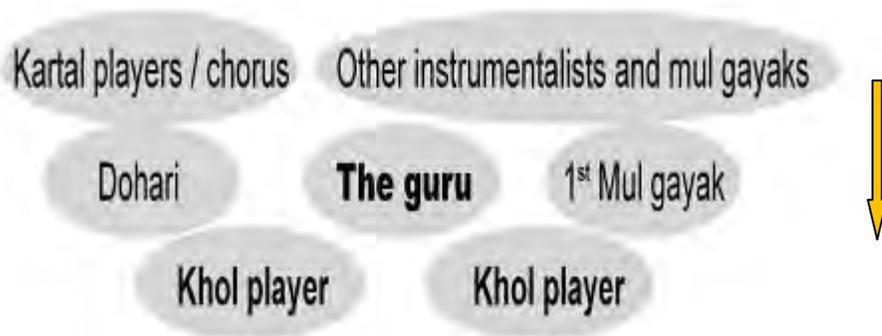
- a) Three lead singers (*mul gayaks*), including a harmonium player who is the principal *mul gayak* (henceforth abbreviated as MG), one very youthful representative of Caitanya and one senior MG;
- b) The lead dancer/ *kartal* player/ Chorus singer (*dohārī*) and six other dancers/ chorus/*kartal* players;
- c) Two kīrtan drum (*khol*) players;
- d) Other instrumentalists, such as a double stringed lute, (*dutara*) and percussion;
- e) The kīrtan *guru*, Sri Jagaran Māhāto (JM), who directs the kīrtan performance.

Table 2.1 The primary roles in the kīrtan ensemble: the guru (director), the lead singer (*mul gayak*), the lead khol drummer and the lead *kartal* player (*dohari*).



In the procession along the village path, the kīrtan team are positioned (from the viewer’s perspective) as follows: the *dohārī* stands at the head of the dancers/*kartal* players on the far left; the guru stands in the centre with the MG’s and other singers on the right, and the khol players are in front of the team, leading the journey to the kīrtan *mandīr*.

Table 2.2 The position of the performers in the kīrtan procession moving from the end of the village path to the kīrtan *mandīr*.



**Kīrtan  
Mandīr**



Figure 2.2 The Dabar kīrtan *mandīr* before being decorated for the *mela*.

**Brief outline of the musical performance sections:** Before embarking on the musical sections in detail, I will give a brief outline. This structure has been gained from observations and interviews in the field (Sept. 1996, Feb. - June 2006, Feb. - March 2007, Feb 2008, Jan. - March 2009, June 2010) as well as detailed analysis. Below is a list in brief of the complete Kostuka kīrtan performance, with numbers in Roman numerals, as written on the DVD subtitles:

I. Outside the Kirtan *mandīr* - The *Juran*;

II. Inside the *mandīr* - Dāspēra rāga, Gauralap;

Dāspēra *La*

Dāspēra *Katan*

III: Ragini and kīrtan *rang*;

IV. Pakachuta rāga;

V. Jhorchutā raga;

VI. Leaving the *mandīr*, *Vrindavane* song;

Following the filming and documentation of the day time performance I have also included a description of the other major rāga, Sohini (VII), performed in the evening of the Dabar kīrtan *mela* as well as a comparison with the complete night time performance with Dāspēra, the Ragini and Pākāchuta (VIII).

The Kostuka kīrtan performance leading up to and including Dāspēra was staged both “Outside” and “Inside” the *mandīr*, thus the top of Table 2.3 below is broadly locative. Following down beneath “Outside the *mandīr*” section, the opening instrumental introduction (*jurān*), offerings to the guru (guru *vandana*), devotional songs to Gaur (*Eso He*) and travelling song (*patha gan*) sung on the way to the kīrtan temple (*mandīr*) are performed. In the next section beneath “Inside the *mandīr*”,

Dāsp̄era rāga in *ektala* consisting of the *Gauralap*, the melodic lines (*la* and *udara mudara*) and the skilled rhythmic section (*kātān*) are performed (Table 2.4).

Table 2.3. An overview of the Kostuka kīrtan team’s performance structure of the *Juran*.

Location:	Outside the <i>mandir</i> 'temple'				
Raga/Piece	I. The <i>juran</i>				
Music Section:					
Music Parts:	I. A. <i>juran</i> 'joining' instrumental introduction	I. B. guru <i>vandana</i> 'invocation to the guru'	I. C. <i>juran</i> instrumentals - 1/2/3 rhythmic changes	I. D. Gauranga song titled <i>Eso He</i>	I. E. <i>patha</i> or 'path' song on the way to the <i>mandir</i> .

**Introduction:** Outside the *mandīr* the *kīrtan* players gather together at the far end of the village path. From their village they have travelled a long way by bicycle to perform in the twelve hour *kīrtan mela* at Dabar village. Through their *kīrtan* performance they bring auspiciousness to the village and imbibe the blessings of Hari. The *juran* can be described as the preparatory journey leading from the „profane“ world outside of the *mandīr* to the „sacred“ inner world of the Hari *kīrtan mandīr* for it prepares both the musicians and the villagers for what is about to commence: beginning with an instrumental piece they weave together their separate identities into one entity and enter into a spiritual world of song; followed by a prayerful offering to the guru and to god; then another instrumental piece that grows in intensity and drives towards a climax; the second part of the *juran* is a loud and thrilling call to Gaur requesting him to be

present among them during the performance; ending in a travelling song, that carries them to the *mandīr*, the sanctified arena of their *kīrtan* worship.



Figure 2.3 Kostuka team with the guru (centre) performing *patha* songs.

**Note:** Numbers I. A1 – II. 3E. below refer to the DVD subtitles.

**I. OUTSIDE THE MANDĪR: The *Juran*** (00 – 12:44 mins): Musical example 2 (pg.211).

**I.A. The *Juran* or “joining” of music parts**

*Juran* is from the root verb “*jud*” meaning “addition” or “to join” together, (Binapani Māhāto: 2006: Pers.comm.), when the different instrumental players and singers “tune up” or play preparatory music, before moving along the village path to the *kīrtan mandīr*.

**I. A1. The Kostuka *kīrtan* team stands ready to perform:** The guru signals the performance to begin.

**I. A2. The *juran* introduction:** The *juran* functions as a “warm up” before the *kīrtan* performance inside the *mandīr*. The musicians playing the cymbals (*kartal*), the

double stringed instrument (*dutara*), and the khol drums all play and sing together in harmony with the MG on harmonium. In essence, the *juran* music is performed when the individual musicians first meet and through the music join together as a team.

### I. B. Guru *vandana* “offering to the guru” or *Gauralap*

The instrumental *juran* lasts only a minute before the invocation to the guru and to god, called the *guru vandana*, commences. In this form of worship, the devotee describes the guru/God as *purna* “absolute”, *nitya* “eternal” and *saratsara* or “the supreme essence of all”. The *guru vandana*, is sung with fervent devotion and complete emotional abandonment as the *kīrtaniyās* offer themselves up to the guru, by calling His names: a) Brahmā “the generator”, Viṣṇu “the operator” or “preserver” and Maheshvara or Śiva “the destroyer”; or God; b) “Nitai”, the shortened version of Nityananda from Ekchakra village (*gram*) of Rāṅh, the closest disciple of Caitanya; c) “Gauranga”, also called Gaur,

Musical example 1 (01:07): The *Gauralap* outside the *mandīr*.

**Gauralap**

Trad. Trad.

Lead  
Sri Nitya nande Ni tai Gaur Hari Hari Bol Pre ma

Chorus  
Bo ol

8  
Lead  
nan de Ni tai Ga ur Ha ri Ha ri Bo lo

Chorus  
o

15  
Lead  
Ha ri Ha ri Ha ri bol

Chorus  
bol

or Sri Caitanya, recognized as the embodiment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; d) *Premanande* or Kṛṣṇa as the embodiment of *prema* “divine love” and *ananda* “bliss”; e) “Hari”, the name of Kṛṣṇa in his role as the “cosmic thief” and *Bolo* meaning to “speak”, “say” or “tell” Hari’s name. Hari’s association with *Hara*, or Śiva is discussed in the Introduction and Part one, for “in Bengal, Vaiṣṇavism coexists with Saiva-Saktaism” (Sliwczynska 1994:62). Hence the *kīrtaniyās* are saying to their audience “say the name of Lord Hari!” Thus the guru *vandana* is a devout and thrilling call to God both as the formless eternal Brahmā, and in the form of Kṛṣṇa (*Hari*) or the most immediate manifestation as Caitanya/Gauranga, imploring him to come to the *mandīr* and be present among them. The melodic line is led by the MG with the Chorus extending the last word “*bolo*” of the melodic phrase well into the next MG’s lead.

### I. C. The *jurān* instrumental piece continues (1:57 – 3:51 mins on DVD)

After the guru *vandana* the *jurān* instrumental resumes with a continuation of the previous melody and rhythmic pattern (*duni*). During the course of the *jurān* instrumental, the tempo changes three times, from single strikes, to *duni*, to *cho duni* as it accelerates and increases in volume until the *mātān* “climax” is reached. Hence the *jurān* instrumental continues as in musical example 2 with the repeated melodic line, the kartal and khol parts, performed sequentially, not simultaneously as transcribed above.

**The *jurān*, rhythmic part 2:** Jagaran Māhāto states that the *jurān* tune is a traditional Rāṛhi melody and the *tāla* is in *theka* or “fixed”. The *jurān* instrumental begins to accelerate with *cho duni* rhythmic “quadruple time, fast tempo”, patterns.

**The *jurān*, rhythmic part 3:** After the rhythmic triplet at the end of the melodic line, the tempo increases again as the *jurān* continues in the traditional melody and *duni duni* “double strikes, medium tempo” rhythms.

**The *jurān mātān*, rhythmic climax is reached.** Hence the rhythmic patterns of the *jurān* vary considerably during the first five minutes of the performance. Half way through the first cycle for example the rhythmic pattern changes from single strikes to *duni*. At the second cycle, the rhythms accelerate from *duni* to *cho duni*, and finally during the *jurān matan*, they are playing a continuous, rapid rhythmic pattern. After the *jurān mātān* “rhythmic climax” is reached each *kīrtaniya* reaches down to touch the earth

Musical example 2 (at 01:57mins on DVD): The *Juran* instrumental.

*JURAN*

Traditional. Khol cycles are played sequentially not simultaneously  
 Kartals are played, as single strikes (1st cycle), duni (1st cycle), cho duni (2nd cycle), duni matan (3rd cycle)  
 Dance: Standing and swaying

Traditional  
 Performed by the Kostaka Kirtan team, Purulia, India

The musical score is divided into three systems, each starting with a Harmonium part. The first system (measures 1-6) includes five Khol parts with lyrics: Khol 1: 'Da da da dhi ge re ge re'; Khol 2: 'Da da da dhi ge re ge re'; Khol 3: 'Te te ki ni te te ki ni'; Khol 4: 'Dha dhe ne ge re da dhe ne'; Khol 5: 'Te te ki ni te te ki ni'. The second system (measures 7-12) includes two Kharal parts and three Khol parts with lyrics: Kharal 1: 'Da dhi na dhi na dhi ge re ge re'; Kharal 2: 'Da dhi na dhi na dhi ge re ge re'; Khol 1: 'te te ki ni ta ge re ge re'; Khol 2: 'Tai ti tai ti Tai te re te te'; Khol 3: 'ki ti ta ko te te ki ti ta ge re ge re dha dha dhe ne'. The third system (measures 13-18) includes two Kharal parts and three Khol parts with lyrics: Kharal 1: 'Da dhi na dhi na dhi ge re ge re'; Kharal 2: 'Da dhi na dhi na dhi ge re ge re'; Khol 1: 'ta ki ta ge re ge re dha dha'; Khol 2: 'dhe ne ta ki ta ge re ge re'; Khol 3: 'dha dha'. The final Khol part in the third system has lyrics: 'Dha Ge re ge re da ge re da dhe ne', 'Dhi ni dhi ni Da Dhi ni Dhi ni da Dhi ni dhi ni', and 'dhe re ghi ni dhe re ghi ni'.

Colour Key for Khols  
 Pink= Treble, right hand (Radha), Blue = Bass, left hand (Krisna)  
 Black = Both hands. Khol Cycles are played sequentially.

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beneath their feet, and give salutations to their holy ancestors who have walked upon this red earth before them. They place earth on their tongues so that they may be able to sing better, then on their crown, in recognition of their own latent spirituality and their *ādi* “original” guru, Lord Śiva (see Part one).

The *jurān* ends at this point for as one *kīrtaniyā* says “we believe that Caitanya and his followers have been here before us so when we place the earth on our tongue and crown we feel we will be blessed by the dust of their holy feet” (SM 2006: Pers.comm.).

**The *jurān* music ends:** As they give salutations to their holy ancestors of the past.

### I. D. Songs to Gaurāṅga and Kṛṣṇa (4:00 – 8:49 mins)

An invocation to Gaurāṅga (Caitanya) begins with a short *Gaurālap* “unmetered vocal improvisation” and traditional song to Gaurāṅga.

**D. 1. Song to *Gaurāṅga*:** (4:00 – 5:40mins) The introductory invocation or prayer describes Gaurāṅga (Caitanya), as the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, the feminine and masculine aspects of god, with his golden coloured skin reflecting the moon light. This composer of this song is the Vaiṣṇava poet Narottama Das as seen in last line,



Figure 2.4 Sri Caitanya and his mother Saci, depicted at Bhānsh Ghar village.

*Gaurāṅga bolite hoi pulaka sarir*  
*Hari Hari bolite nayane bohe nir*  
*Ār kobe Nitai Chand karuna karive*  
*Sansar basanamayii kobe tucha hobe*  
*Visaya chariya kabe suddha habe mana*  
*Kabe kama herabo Sri Brndabana*  
*Rupa raghunatha-pade hoibe akuti*  
*Kabe hama bujhabo se jugala – piriti*  
*Rupa raghunatha- pada rahumarasa*

Narottama is asking “When will that opportune moment come, when there will be a shivering of the body when we chant Gauranga's name? and afterwards, while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa tears will rise up in the eyes? Tell us oh compassionate Lord, who has risen above worldly enjoyment. When, through the grace of Nityananda, the mind is pure and free from desire, then I shall be able to understand Vrndavan and the love of Radha/Kṛṣṇa, to find spiritual fulfillment” (Prabhupada 1991:70).

Jagaran Māhāto says,

When I think or sing the name Gauranga, my whole being becomes stirred with emotion, even the hair on my body stands on end. While singing Hari's name, I delve deep into the mood of love, and can't help but cry tears of longing. Oh Gauranga, moon-like golden bodied Lord, please help us understand the temporary nature of this world and release us from material desire. Bless us, as we sing your holy name, says Narottama Das, the author of this song (JM, 2007: Pers. comm.).

**Kṛṣṇa song, *Eso he* “Come Lord Gauranga” (6:30- 8:39 mins DVD) Musical example 3 (pg. 216):** The *dutara* or two stringed lute, can be heard behind the singers, as well as the percussive instruments and the *kartal* on the left. The song is requesting “Gaur, Caitanya from Nadia, come, just once, we implore you. Come and be present among your devotees”, or *Eso he, eso o he Nadia Bihari, O Chande Gaur, ekbar, eso He*.

***Eso He*, Musical example 3: The Chorus/kartal players begin on the *sam* (6:34mins)** at the beginning of the *tāla* cycle in four *mātrās*, their first strike crashing down on the second word *He*, while the khols play *theka* “fixed rhythm” in response to the MG's short introductory *alap*. After a minute the MG sings the next melodic line and the kartal pattern changes to *duni*, with their double strikes accelerating the tempo and creating devotional fervour among the team, as loud interjections of “*Hari, Hari*” are heard above the percussive din.

When the MG's sing the first line *Eso He*, the khols play *theka* without any elaboration, but when the Chorus respond with the same melodic line they break out into

Musical example 3 (06:30- 8:49mins): *Eso He*, devotional song.

*allegro* Lead and Chorus

E so He. E so O He Na di a Bi ha

kartal Cymbals (kartal)

6 Lead and Chorus

ri O Chand Ga ur Ek bar Es o He E Eso

Cymbals (kartal)

tereke ta... dha tereke tak dha tere ketak dha...

Glossary for khol coloured notes:  
 Pink = right hand (Radha)  
 Blue = Left hand (Krishna)  
 Black = Both hands  
 Grey = Both hands

a powerful display of accentuated bass beats. The *guru* calls from the centre of the team to signal an increase in tempo to reach the *mātān* “climax” as the khol players beat with tremendous vigour and reciting the khol *bols* as *ta ta ta* with all playing in unison and singing with intense devotional expression. The song *Eso He* comes to an abrupt end followed by another brief praise song to Kṛṣṇa *Rasarāj*.

### **I. E. The *patha* “path” or “travelling” Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa song to the kīrtan *mandīr* (9:00 – 11:30 mins DVD).**

The song is titled *Rasarāj* another name of Kṛṣṇa in which the humorous love play between Rādhā, the *gopis* and Kṛṣṇa is described, while on their short journey to the kīrtan performance arena:

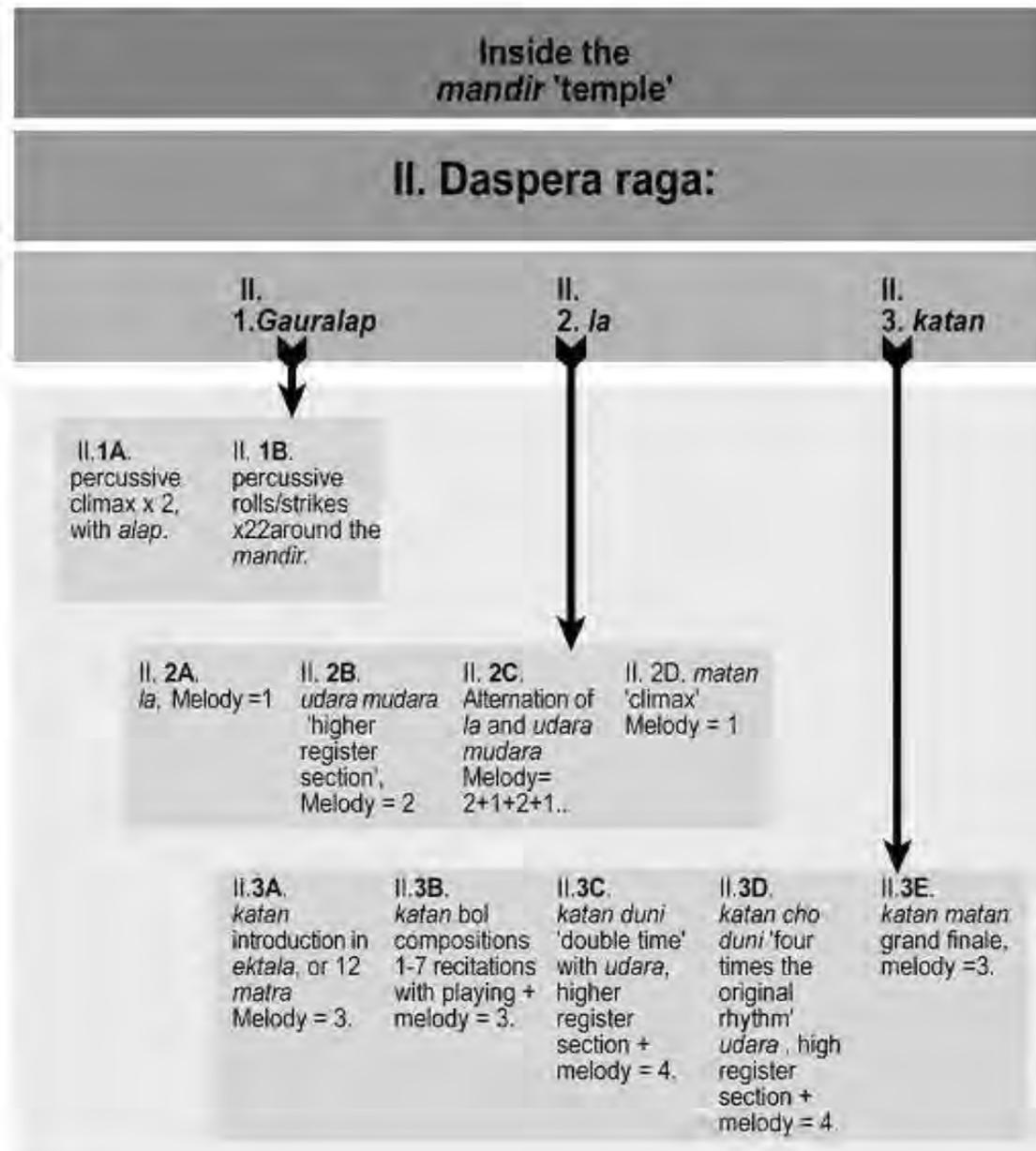
*O He Rāsharāj rāsha mandere chalo he rāsha rāj  
tomār bine sāje nāhe Gopir o samāj*

“Hey Kṛṣṇa *Rasarāj* let’s go and sing kīrtan with the *gopis*. Without You, our *gopi* team has no meaning, let us go and sing kīrtan” (JM, 2006: Pers.comm.).

Beginning with a powerful rhythmic introduction they sway to the music and walk towards the kīrtan *mandīr*. The *patha* song alerts the previous kīrtan team of the new team’s coming and also imparts auspiciousness to the village, as they journey along the red earth pathway. As they walk and sing together a truck passes in front of them yet they continue undeterred on their way till they reach the *mandīr*. The Karandhi kīrtan team who are presently performing inside the *mandīr* become aware of the new arrivals as they approach the *mandīr* singing the Kṛṣṇa *lila* song. The Karandhi team are singing a kīrtan *rang* or “popular song” melody as it is traditional to end the kīrtan performance with a *rang*. The Karandhi team Chorus girls have been dancing and singing kīrtan continuously for over an hour, yet their expression does not show any fatigue. Everyone knows the procedure, as soon as the next team arrives the previous team will continue to sing until the new team are ready to enter the kīrtan *mandīr* in order to ensure the continuity of the *akhanda* “endless” kīrtan performance. Then they leave the *mandīr* in a line, singing songs from the Kṛṣṇa *lila*.

**End of the *patha* song:** As the previous *kīrtan* team is ushered out of the *mandīr* the Kostuka team enters. One by one, they touch the earth to give salutations to the holy ancestors once again while stepping over the outer edge of the circular floor and into the *mandīr*, the sacred arena of worship. Once inside, the guru places the team in their respective places, with the Chorus kneeling at the circumference of the *mandīr* and the *khol* players to either side in preparation for the *kīrtan* to begin.

Table 2.4. An overview of the Kostuka *kīrtan* team's performance structure of *Dāspēra rāga*, (for *Dāspēra rāga* melodies, see Musical examples 4-9).



## II. Dāspēra Rāga (12:06-35:13)

*Introduction:* Once entering into the sacred arena of the kīrtan mandīr, the team’s musical “worship” begins with a thrilling calling to god and a slow unravelling of the rāga in the alap. The purpose of the alap is to begin to move together and engage the audience after which the tāla enters and the rāga develops with a delightful interweaving of different melodic parts and improvisations. The mul gayaks, the representative of Caitanya, and the Chorus, representing Rāḍhā and the gopis, respond with voice and dance, as all jointly climb towards a climactic union between the divine lovers, leading into an elaborate flourish or rhythmic composition with bol recitations, that build to a peak of intensity at the end of the first rāga.

### Background

According to Jagaran Māhāto, each traditional kīrtan tāla or rāga has been derived from a particular kīrtan song (*gan*) based on the *lila* of Kṛṣṇa/Rāḍhā and adapted to the *marāṭ* kīrtan performance. Jagaran Māhāto sings a kīrtan song called Dāspēra, although there are more than one kīrtan song composed in the same tāla and melody he says,

It’s important that a *kīrtaniyā* first learns the kīrtan song, so that he will know how to sing the kīrtan in the proper melodic and rhythmic style, because if you don’t know the song and you put the *Hari Bol* to the tune, then there can be some mistake, that’s why all my team know the kīrtan songs,

*Ai ke pāre jabi bhai*

*Pārer kari lagbe nāi,*

*Hari Bolo Bolo ... jāi*

Who wants to go to the other side of the river Jamuna? I will not take any boat fare from you” says Kṛṣṇa to Rāḍhā and the *gopis* in a playful manner (JM 2006:Pers.comm.).

### An Overview of Dāspēra Performance

Dāspēra, (also called Dashpede), is the name of a traditional kīrtan of Rāḍh, which has been described as “sweet and easy to play” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.) and is therefore performed first. The alternation and combination of different melodic phrases and

improvisations with various rhythmic patterns as well as the complexity of the rhythmic (*kātān*) khol composition bear testament to the fact that truly speaking, Dāspera is not so “easy to play” (ibid.).

In brief, the Table 2.5 gives the Kostuka performance overview of Dāspera in five columns describing the melodies, kartal and khol patterns performed and *mātrās*:

Table 2.5 Dāspera Rāga performance structure overview.

<b>DĀSPERA RĀGA sections as in DVD</b>	<b>Melodic sections</b>	<b>Kartal Patterns</b>	<b>Khol patterns</b>	<b>Mātrās</b>
<b>Gauralap</b> 1A and 1B	<i>Alap</i>	Roll and strikes	Roll and strikes	Nil
II.A. <i>La</i> or refrain	M 1	Single strikes (SS)	<i>Ektala</i>	8, 16
II.B. <i>Udara mudara</i>	M 2	KP1	“	10
II.C. <i>La, udara mudara</i> combined	M 1	KP2 on <i>la</i>	“	8, 16
II. C.1	M 1	Single strikes (SS) <i>duni</i> “double”	“	8, 16
II. C. 2.- 4	M 2+1+2+	SS on <i>udara</i>	“	10
II. C. 5	M 1 +2	KP3 <i>duni</i>	“	8, 16
2. C. 6 – 8	M 1+2	Single strikes/ KP3	“	8, 12
II. D. <i>La mātān</i>	M 1	“	“	8
II. D.2 “	M 1 +2	KP4 <i>mātān</i>	“	8
II. D. 3 “	M 1+2	“	“	8
II. A. B. <i>Kātān</i>	M 3	KP5 <i>kātān</i> and KP4 in 12 <i>mātrās</i>	Khol <i>bols</i>	12
II. C. 1 <i>Kātān duni</i>	M 3	KP3	<i>Ektala</i>	12
II. C2 – 6, <i>Udara</i>	M 4 + 3	“	<i>Ektala</i>	12

improvisation				
II. C.7 <i>Duni mātān</i>	M 3	“	“	12
II. D. <i>Cho duni</i>	M 3 +4	KP7 (KP4 <i>cho duni</i> /KP5)	“	6
II. D2-3 – <b>Kartal interludes</b>	M 3	“	“	6, 12, 24
II. E, <i>Udara</i> improvisation	M 4 + 3	“	“	“
II. E.1 <i>Kātān mātān</i>	M 3	“	“	12

### II.1. *Gauralap* introduction (12:06-17:56mins)

“The *Gauralap* is totally a traditional tune, it is like a practice. During the *Gauralap*, we measure the audience’s response before moving on. Everyone has practiced with me to know when to strike. We are moving together to come onto the right track, so we go around the *mandīr* many times (JM 2006: Pers. comm.).

Thus the *alap* (local abbreviation of *Gauralap* is *alap*) is a traditional melody that everyone knows and has practiced before. It functions as a preparatory section where everyone comes together into a unified team (*gosthi*), only *this* time, it is inside the *mandīr*. Moving in a circle (*mandala*) around Hari, (*Hari pari mandala gosthi*) they establish a link between themselves as devotees (representatives of Radha and the gopis), the listeners of the *kīrtan*, and Hari. The *Gauralap* music consists of:

II. 1. A. Two brief percussive, rhythmic apexes, while calling Hari’s name,

II. 1. B. A series of 22 percussive rolls/strikes while moving around the *mandīr* and calling Hari’s name.

**Note: Numbers II. A1 – II. 3E. below refer to the DVD subtitles.**

**II. 1. A. The Gauralap preparation, the guru directs**

Once inside the *mandīr*, the *guru* looks around to check that everyone is present and ready to begin the performance. The *kīrtaniyās* are holding their instruments while kneeling inside the *mandīr*. The MG is already playing the opening note on his harmonium like a drone, the *dohārī* jangles his *kartal* lightly and the Chorus all look towards the guru in anticipation. At the first piercing call, while all the *kīrtaniyās* are kneeling except the guru who is standing erect, there are two rhythmic *mātāns* played in quick succession. The individual strikes on the percussion instruments are interspersed with accelerated rolls that gain in speed to reach an explosive climax within the first twenty five seconds, while the second rhythmic peak is reached within four seconds. Meanwhile the MG sings the *alap*, soaring high above the percussive din, while the Chorus echoes the MG's last note, extending it for what seems like an eternity. The MG then rises to a second higher note on the word *Premanande* that comes cascading down with interjections of *Hari, Hari!* from the Chorus.

**1. A2. Gauralap- The percussive climax or *mātān* (13:02mins):** From the moment they begin, the sound of fifteen powerful male voices singing the same tune in ecstatic unison is absolutely riveting. The penetrating loudness of it sends ripples of ecstatic joy through the village surroundings, moving the villagers into motionless awe. Then the MG sings the next note, even higher than the first one, calling to *Hari*, the sound of spiritual longing in his voice so audible. A loud interjection of *Hari* coming from one of the *khol* players startles and jolts the listener out of the seductive sound of the rich melodious Chorus. The call of the guru reminds the team that a command has been given and they are now embarking on a musical/spiritual journey with the same courage, and trepidation of a soldier going off into battle, for once inside the *mandīr* there is no stopping the *kīrtan* and no turning back.

Inside the *mandīr* the performance begins with the *Gauralap*, the section of the *rāga* where long held melodic notes or phrases cascade downwards then soar upwards again in a wave-like motion above the thunderous peaks of the *khol*s and *kartals*. It

commences with a tremendous crest as the first rhythmic peak brings everyone into unison playing with maximum force and devotional expression.

**1. A3. Gauralap- the second rhythmic climax (13:16mins):** The second rhythmic climax builds at a quicker pace than the first, reaching a furious height within a few seconds and halting with one forceful strike on both sides of the *khol* drum. These percussive apexes accompany the loud devotional calls and loud interjections of “*Hari, aha... aha....*” from the drummers that ignite a passionate response from the Chorus. Hence at the beginning of the *Gauralap* all the *kīrtaniyās*, except the guru, are kneeling inside the *mandīr* and calling to Hari with shrill, piercing voices, that grow in intensity along with the rhythmic accompaniment. The opening section thus consists of two rhythmic peaks that occur in quick succession, where individual strikes are accelerated into rolls to reach an opening climax within the first twenty five seconds, and the second one, within four seconds. Meanwhile the MG sings the vocal *alap*, and the Chorus echo the MG’s last note lengthening it for at least ten beats and extending it into the MG’s second higher note on *Bolo* that drops downwards as interjections of *Hari* can be heard from the *khol* players.

## **II. 1. B. The Gauralap part two**

**1. B1. The khol players stand and move (13:33mins):** The *khol* players rise and begin to move around the *mandīr* while the Chorus remains sitting.

**1. B2. Percussive strikes and rolls:** The second section is a series of powerful strikes from the *khol* and *kartal* in unison, with intermittent drum rolls played while the MG sings the soaring *alap* and the Chorus move in a clockwise direction around the *mandīr*. Each strike is played with an explosive energy creating audience excitement and anticipation.

**1. B3. The Chorus begin to move (14:24mins):** While the MG sings the *alap* the Chorus responds at the end of the melodic phrase, and begins moving very slowly in a clockwise direction around the *mandīr*. They also make small counterclockwise movements at times. The MG is in the middle while the guru stands behind the MG with a view of everyone. It is from this rear position that the *guru* guides the team, calling

loudly and directing everyone with his arm movements at pivotal moments, alerting all to the next change.

After the second rhythmic climax, the percussionists play only single strikes alternating with rapid drum and cymbal rolls rather than accelerated peaks as the MG continues to sing the *alap* notes that ascend, descend, and then ascend again. The khols and kartals play a total of twenty two strikes and rolls.

At each percussive beat and roll, the vocal *alap* continues to soar in waves and crests above. Then at the ninth strike, the guru makes a loud shout to increase the intensity of performance, making the Chorus spin in anti-clockwise circle, then continue to move in a larger clockwise direction afterwards. This is repeated on the eleventh strike.

The only lyrics that are sung throughout the *alap* are *Hari Bolo* there has been no change in the lyrics whatsoever except the occasional vocal interjection from the khol players. Hence the static lyrical component is contrasted with the variable, dynamic rhythmic and melodic elements as well as the rise and fall of intense devotional expression.

**1. B4. The guru calls to change/ the *alap* strikes and rolls continue:** While the MG continues to expound the notes of the *rāga alap*, starting at the upper register, he then descends, adding melisma on the “o” of the *Bolo*. The MG sings the whole phrase *Hari Bolo* while the Chorus sings only the *Bolo*, extending it into the MG’s next melodic phrase as before. Then the guru gives a loud shout, not in this case as an expression of heightened devotion, but as a signal to change to the next musical part. The khol player on the left makes loud interjections of *Ha Ha Ha Hari*.

**II. 1. B5. The *alap* ends at the 22<sup>nd</sup> strike (17:50 mins).** When the guru considers that the audience has been captivated by the *kīrtan rasa* or “nectar”, “sentiment” (Monier Williams 2008) and the team are ready to commence the next part of the *rāga* he gives a loud shout, signaling the next change. The MG then descends from the upper notes of the *alap* in preparation for *Dāspera la* “introductory melody” (M1) and metrical part of the performance to commence.

## Observation and analysis of the *Gauralap*

The *Gauralap* expounds the notes of the *rāga* before the structured part of the performance begins and allows both the *kīrtaniyās* and audience come into accordance.

It is approximately six minutes long and comprises a soaring vocal *alap* from the MG, melodic response from the Chorus, loud beats and interjections from the khol players, and percussive strikes from the kartal players as they all move in a slow clockwise direction inside the *mandīr*.

**The origins of the *Gauralap*:** The *alap* beginning a *kīrtan rāga* has historical foundations that precede Vaiṣṇavism, possibly stemming from the *caryā* songs of pre Islamic times, “in Nepal for example, each Newar *dapha* temple hymn is preceded by a short *alap* (simply called *rāga*) and in the *caryā* hymns of the Newar Buddhist priests, a similar short *alap* (*reg kaygu*, lit. “grasping the *rāga*”) both precedes and follows the song” (Widdess 2004:142). Widdess explains by saying that *alap* is inseparable from the domain of *rāga* which extends beyond boundaries of the court music tradition into religious and folk music, “existing in both non-classical and classical court traditions” (ibid.).

Whether or not the ragas noted in Jayadeva’s *Gitagovinda* were preformed with an *alap* is unknown, however Sen and Goswami state that Narottama Das (16<sup>th</sup> century), a *dhrupadiya* disciple of Swami Haridas, began his performance at the Kheturi festival (approx. 1572), with the *Gauralap* which included verses in praise of Caitanya, before going on to the main devotional theme. His intention was to firmly attach the worship of Caitanya in the *alap* of the performance structure, thus uniting the different Vaiṣṇava factions from Bengal and elsewhere. In *marāī kīrtan*, the *Gauralap* has been retained as one of its most distinctive characteristics, placing it within a historical context, as well as preparing the *kīrtaniyās* “to move together along the same track” (JM 2006: Pers.comm.), it functions as an introduction to the *rāga* and establishes a rapport with the audience (Widdess 2004:178) as discussed in Part one. Thus the *Gauralap* was first performed by Narottama Das and group at the Kheturi festival organised by Jahnava Devi of Kardaha (wife of Nityananda) and has continued since then in a similar form.

**Gauralap’s “inner logic”:** Widdess states that “an exposition in *alap* is free of the metrical and textual constraints that bind every other kind of vocal music” (ibid: 143), yet also with a palpable if elusive “inner logic” (ibid: 178). Similarly, the khol and kartal strikes in the *Gauralap* are seemingly random, yet upon analysis, can be predicted to within a few seconds. The “inner logic” of the rhythmic patterns for example, can be mapped out, due to the MG’s style of singing which descends in pitch at the end of each complete melodic cycle just before the khols and kartal strike. In other words the rhythmic *sam* occurs at the end of the MG’s three cascading phrases creating one melodic line. The melodic configurations of the *alap* lead directly into *Dāspera* and seem to have been derived from it.

One of the significant features of the *Gauralap* is that the percussion instruments play with acceleration rising to a climactic peak at the very outset, contrasting to the opening *dhrupad alap* with its slow, profound unraveling of the *rāga*. It is however similar to the later part of the *dhrupad alap* where a dramatic increase in tempo and rhythmic density, builds to a vigorous climax, “combining speed, rhythm, high pitch, high volume and a variety of melodic timbral, rhythmic and other effects” (ibid:200). Hence in *dhrupad*, rhythmic acceleration occurs at the end of the *alap* after the slow melodic exposition of the *rāga*, whereas in *marāī kīrtan* it occurs at the very beginning, followed by a slow but forceful transition into the metrical part of *Dāspera la*. Why in *marāī kīrtan*, the order has been reversed, is possibly due to the very specific nature of the *kīrtan* performance, with its emphasis on the ecstatic worship of God, not a slow, gradual beginning, but an all embracing, sensual and emotional invocation of the Deity, building to an even greater apex at the end, (*kātān mātān*) where the collective spiritual congregation, identifying as *Rādhā* and the *gopis*, seeks consummation with *Hari*, as discussed below.

## **II. 2. *Dāspera la* (17:56-25.46), Musical example 4 (pg.230).**

According to Jagaran Māhāto the guru of the Kostuka team, *Dāspera*, has only two primary sections, the *la* or “refrain”, and the *kātān*, or “skilled drum playing” section while simultaneously reciting the *bol* patterns. Yet within the first section, *Dāspera la* there is four musical parts:

II. 2. A. Dāspera *la* “introduction” (M1);

II. 2. B. *Udara mudara* (M2) and kartal pattern (KP1);

II. 2. C. Dāspera *la* and *udara mudara* combined (M1 + M2);

II. 2. D. Dāspera *la mātān* or “climax” (M1 + M2);

Dāspera *la* is structured metrically by *ektala* and depending on the musical expert that is asked, consists of eight or twelve *mātrās*, depending on the length of the melodic phrase which in turn has been determined by the original verse length of kīrtan song, or a melodic improvisation such as *udara mudara*. Dāspera *la* consists of eight *mātrās* for example, while *udara mudara* generally consists of ten or twelve *mātrās* and sometimes eleven. This unpredictability is largely due to the MG’s vocal dexterity, or the length of time he can sustain the melodic notes, as discussed below.

**Note: Numbers II. 2 – II. 3E below refers to the DVD subtitles.**

### **II. 2. A. Dāspera *la* (M1) introduction with tāla begins (17:56mins)**

In this section the first melodic part Dāspera *la* (M1) of the rāga is combined with *ektāla*.

**II. 2. A1. Dāspera *la* with tāla and Chorus:** While the MG is singing Dāspera *la* (M1) with full voice the khol drummers are performing the *tāla* with powerful dynamism while simultaneously reciting the *bols*. The gurus voice can be heard above all others. His calls halt the mounting dynamism at the beginning of *la*. The kartal also accompany the khol rhythms in a regular cycle of eight *mātrās*. In other words, at the very start of Dāspera *la* the *tāla* is established with melodic part (M1), demonstrating their equal importance. On a symbolical level, one can identify the MG’s as being Caitanya, the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa/Rāḍhā and the rhythmic players as Rāḍhā and the *gopis*, who have devised intricate ways of captivating Kṛṣṇa through various rhythmic patterns and dance movements, or simply the notion that both Rāḍhā, representing the devotee and Kṛṣṇa, the universal Lover, have equally significant roles to play in the *marāī* kīrtan performance.

After the MG sings *Dāspēra la* (M1) the Chorus respond with the same tune. *Dāspēra la* consists of two melodic phrases creating one line, with the first phrase being variable and the second phrase is fixed, which I have called the “refrain” for convenience. The first variable phrase of the M1 is later improvised upon to create different melodic parts. Both phrases of the M1 are sung over a cycle of eight *mātrās* and each *mātrā* is marked by a kartal strike.

The second melodic phrase of the first melodic line M1 is the most repeated phrase in the composition. The first melodic phrase consists of four *Hari Bolos* in four *mātrās* and the second phrase or “refrain” consists of four also, so together making eight *mātrās*. Hence each word is equal to one *mātrā* in *Dāspēra la* (M1).

**II. 2. A3. *Dāspēra la* with khol bols (18:41mins):** The *bol* patterns of *Dāspēra la* are accompanied by the *kartal* pattern in eight *mātrā*. The kartal play single strikes at first then increase to double (*duni*) strikes with acceleration played to the same melodic line.

In an interview (May 2006), JM demonstrates basic tāla of *Dāspēra la* in twelve *mātrās*, what he calls *Jarop Toyla*, or the khol *bol* pattern as seen on the bottom line of the score above with the *bols* spoken as: *Dha keta naka dena, Gere gere gere gere, jha jha*.

## **II. 2. B. *Udara mudara* with KP1, Musical example 5 (19:17mins).**

**Introduction:** After *Dāspēra la*, (M1) introduction of the tāla, the melodic part rises dramatically to the upper register, and the highest pitch of the rāga, called *udara mudara* or melodic part 2 (M2), which hosts a very distinctive kartal pattern (KP1) of five *mātras*, played simultaneously with the MG’s lead vocals. The positioning of the tāla as complementary to the MG’s lead is indicative of the tālas significance in the rāga.

The MG’s are normally carefully selected by the guru, taking into consideration their vocal qualities, especially their range and ability and placed into either the *udara*, *mudara* or *tara* roles. However, in the Kostuka team, JM has decided that the MG’s will sing *udara*, *mudara* together in unison without having different roles. Hence the first MG sings the *la* and *udara mudara* with the accompanying MG’s without a *tara* part, which featured in the other kīrtan groups. The *udara*, *mudara* (M2) in five *mātrās* is accompanied by the elaborate KP1 made up of a sequence of different rhythmic

combinations (*bols*). KP1 is the second rhythmic highlight of *Dāspēra la*, after the introduction of *ektāla bols*. Of the five *mātrās* in KP1, the first three have an accent on the first beat of each pair, followed by a rhythmic improvisation in two *mātrās*. Hence the *kīrtan* shifts rapidly from *Dāspēra la* (M1) to a higher register (M2) *udara mudara* accompanied by KP1, followed again by *Dāspēra la*, (M1) with single strikes rather than

Musical example 4 (18:41 mins): *Daspera la* with *khol bols*.

### DASPERA La

La begins at 17:56–25:47 on the DVD. Udara, mudara, KP1 and KP2 are not included here at 20b.p.m. (see pg. 267).

Traditional Traditional

Dance: (19:06-19:17) walking movement, right foot leading, arms horizontal between *kartal* strikes, occasional anti clockwise circle in four steps.

**System 1:**

Lead/Chorus: Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartals: (Rhythmic notation)

Khol cycle 1: Da ke te na ka de ne Ke ne da te te ta Da ke te na ka de ne Da ur te ta

Khol cycle 2: Da ke te na ka de na Da ke te na ka de ne Da ke te na ka de na Geregeregerejha jha

**System 2:**

Lead/Chorus: Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartals: (Rhythmic notation)

Khol cycle 1: Te te Te te Te te Te te Dha ke ta na ka de na Dha ke ta na ka de na Dha ketanaka denageregeregerejha jha

Khol Cycle 2: KeketakeKeketakeKeketakeGedada gedada gedaghiniGhedada gedaghiniGhedada GedaGhi Giregeregerejha jha jha

**System 3:**

Lead/Chorus: Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartals: (Rhythmic notation)

Khol cycle 1: TaDhaunGere te te Gere d a h e n e n a k a t e t e T a D a u n G e r e t e t e G e r e D h a d h e n e n a k a t e t e T a d h a u n T a d h a u n T a d h a u n T a k e t a T a d h a u n t a d h a u n T a d h a u n T a k e t a

Khol Cycle 2: T a d h a u n T a d h a u n T a d h a u n T a k e t a T a k e T a k e t a T a k e T a k e t a D i n i d i n i d a D h i n i d i n i d a D i n i d i n i D a

**System 4:**

Lead/Chorus: Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartals: (Rhythmic notation)

Khol cycle 1: GheneTakeDheneGheneNegeTakiGhereGheneGheneTakeDheneGheneNegeTakiGhereGheneGheneTakeDheneGheneNegeTakiGhereGheneNegeTakeNegetakiNegetaki

Khol Cycle 2: (Rhythmic notation)

5

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartals

Khol cycle 1  
NakaGhadaNakaGhadaNakaGhadaDha dhi ge dadhadaghiha dah ge da gedahogighi geda Dha da dhi GedagedaGetaGetaNetaGheneGetaGetaNetaGheneGetageta

Khol Cycle 2  
NetaDheneGeta Ge taNetaGhene Ge taGeta DheneDhiFa Dha DheneDhiFa Dha Dini dini da Dini di nida Dini diniDa

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Colour Key for khol: Pink for treble, right hand side (Radha)  
Blue for bass, left hand side (Krishna), black for both sides

Musical example 5 (19:17): *Udara mudara* after *Daspera la* with KP1.

### *Udara Mudara*

Traditional *Udara mudara* and KP1 begins at 19:57-23:54, and alternates with *Daspera La* and KP2. Traditional

Dance: During KP1, swaying backwards and forwards and spinning on fourth *matra*. Otherwise stepping forwards and backwards.

Lead  
Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Kartal part 1

Khol cycle 1  
dha te te dha te te dha te te dha te te gere gere gere gere jha jha jha te te

Khol cycle 2  
Da ke te na ka de na dha ke te na ka de ne dha ke te na ka de na ge re ge re ge re jha jha jha te te ta

2

Lead  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Cymbals

Khol cycle 1  
dha te te dha te te

Khol cycle 2  
te te ta Da ke te na ka de na Da ke te na ka de na Da ke te na ka de na ge re ge re ge re jha jha

Colour Key: Pink=treble, Right hand side (Radha)  
Blue= Bass, Left hand side, (Krishna)  
Khol patterns are played sequentially.

the elaborate KP1, adding rhythmic variation to the opening piece. The khol patterns are written in mnemonic syllables and are played sequentially not in unision (as below).

Reverting back to *Dāspēra la* now the melodic parts are enhanced by a more elaborate eight *matra* kartal pattern called KP2 (see pg.231) followed by a repeated melodic pattern of *udara mudara*, which is played with single strikes (instead of KP1). Though the Chorus continues to sing *la* as the MG alternates between *udara mudara* and *la*, the *tāla mātrā* varies, depending on the particular melodic phrase and rhythmic cycle that is being performed. Hence the more elaborate kartal patterns KP1 and KP2, in five and eight *mātrās* are juxtaposed with single beats and alternating melodic parts M1 and M2, to bring greater diversity and intensity into the kīrtan composition.

## II. 2. C. Combination of *Dāspēra la* and *udara mudara*

Alternate melodic lines *la* (M1) and *udara mudara* (M2) are then combined together.

**II. 2. C1. Dāspēra *la* with single strikes:** The Chorus response is invariably Dāspēra *la* (M1) and not the same *udara mudara* (M2) improvisation sung by the MG. While they repeat M1, the *kartal* play single strikes in eight *mātrās*, in contrast to the previous KP1 in five *mātrās*.

**II. 2. C2. The guru signals change, *udara mudara* repeats:** After the completion of the Dāspēra *la* (M1) the *udara mudara* (M2) is repeated with the elaborate KP1. The guru signals the next change.

**I. 2. C3. Dāspēra *la* with single strikes repeats:** There is a repeat of the Dāspēra *la* with single strikes, but the intricate, accelerated *kartal* pattern 2 (KP2) is performed as below:

Musical example 6: Dāspēra *la* and *kartal* part 2 (KP2) on the second line, (20:33 mins).

**DASPERA *La* Kartal parts 2 and 3**

Traditional Traditional

Dance: (19:06-19:17) walking movement, right foot leading, arms horizontal between *kartal* strikes, occasional anti clockwise circle in four steps.

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

Kartal, single strikes (SS)  
Da ke te na ka de ne Ke ne da te te ta Da ke te na ka de ne Da ur te ta

Khol cycle 1  
Da ke te na ka de na Da ke te na ka de ne Da ke te na ka de na Gere gere gere gere jha jha

Khol cycle 2  
Da ke te na ka de na Da ke te na ka de ne Da ke te na ka de na Gere gere gere gere jha jha

Dance: at KP2 stand still with left foot forwards, then jump back 2x and spin on last strike

2  
Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

KP2 (20:35-21:07) alternates with SS  
Te te Te te Te te Te te Dha ke ta na kadena Dha ke tana ka de na Dha ke tanakadenageregeregere/jha/jha

Khol cycle 1  
KeketakeKeketakeKeketakeGedada gedadagedaghiniGhedada gedaghiniGhedada GedoGhiniGeregeregeregere/jha jha jha

Khol Cycle 2  
KeketakeKeketakeKeketakeGedada gedadagedaghiniGhedada gedaghiniGhedada GedoGhiniGeregeregeregere/jha jha jha

Dance: at KP3: Legs swinging side to side, and spin on last strike of KP3 alternating with backwards and forwards jogging on *dumi* below.

3  
Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri

KP3 (21:40-22:29) alternates with SS  
TaDhaun Gere te te Gere da dhe ne na ka te te Ta Daun Gere te te Gere Dha dhe ne na ka te te Ta dhaun Ta dhaun Ta dhaun Ta ke ta Ta dhaun ta dhaun Ta dhaun Ta ke ta

Khol cycle 1  
Ta dhaun Ta dhaun Ta dhaun Ta ke ta Ta ke Ta ke ta Ta ke Ta ke ta Di ni di ni da Dhini di ni da Dhini di ni Da

**Rhythmic variation in *la*:** The Chorus sings *Dāspēra la* with KP2 in response to the MG's *udara mudara*. In KP2 each *mātrā* has, a maximum of eight divisions, making a total of sixty four divisions per melodic cycle played at maximum density. There are four different rhythmic variations, as seen above for KP2 is more complex and physically demanding than KP1, yet is performed with vigour at an extremely rapid speed. The khol players jump with enthusiasm and beat with passionate exuberance at the commencement of KP2.

During the MG's lead *udara mudara* (M2), KP1 occurs, and similarly, KP2 is performed during the MG's lead in *Dāspēra la* (M1). Hence the rhythmic counterpart (KP1, KP2) of the MG's lead consists of a combination of equal and unequal subdivisions with the first few *matras* of each kartal part played with maximum zeal and rhythmic density. As KP2 requires more speed and stamina to play than the elaborate KP1, there is a powerful building up of intensity in the musical performance, with an increase in rhythmic density and acceleration progressing from KP1 in *udara mudara* to the extremely rapid and intricate KP2 played in quick succession. It is significant that these two rhythmic flourishes both occur during the MG's lead rather than during the Chorus response, again highlighting the importance of the *tāla*, being both equal and complementary to the *rāga* melody.

After the mounting intensity of *Dāspēra la* sung with the khol and KP2, the *kīrtan* drops slightly to a plateau, as the *kartal* play regular single strikes on each *mātrā* of the following *la* melodic phrase. Hence after *Dāspēra la* with KP2 played twice during the lead MG part, the *la* then repeats with single strikes. As the rhythmic pattern emerges, the more complex kartal parts alternate with single strikes, adding greater dynamism to the *rāga* piece.

**II. 2. C4. *Dāspēra la* with kartal part 2 (KP2) x 2, *udara mudara* repeats with single strikes (21:25mins):** *Udara mudara* now repeats, as the drummers beat *theka* "fixed rhythm" on the high, right hand side of the *khol* in syncopation with the kartals single strikes. One of the *khol* players raises his left arm high into the air in an expression of joyful surrender to Hari while using the other hand to play single beats. After another round the *guru* calls out loudly, *Hari Bol* and the *khol* players respond by initiating a series of triplets (*tihai*) three times in a row, the first two accenting the high side and last

accenting the bass, to mark the ending of the rhythmic cycle and herald the beginning of the next rhythmic part.

**II. 2. C5. Dāspēra *la* and KP3 repeats with acceleration (21:41mins):** The *khol* and *kartal* continue with single strikes, playing in syncopation with each other. The *kartals* strike on the accented first, of the beat pairs while the *khol*s accent the “off” beats. Hence KP3 is a combination of single strikes (SS) and *duni* rhythms occurring during the Chorus response of *la*, rather than during the MG’s lead part, which remains relatively sparse of rhythmic improvisation while rising in tempo. As the acceleration increases the dancers movements change from a slow to joyful lilt.

**II. 2. C6. Dāspēra *la* then *udara mudara* x2:** When the high vocal M2 *udara mudara* is being sung by the MG, the percussionists play single strikes, but when the Chorus repeats Dāspēra *la*, the rhythmic intensity increases with powerful double (*duni*) strikes. Hence the order has reversed now with the Chorus playing a pattern of five double strikes followed by three single strikes on the response part of the melodic phrase (KP3) while on the MG’s part, there are only single strikes.

During the first cycle of *udara mudara* the MG first sings in twelve *mātrās* while the second round there are eleven *mātrās* due to the variable melodic lead. Whatever small adjustments the *kartal* and *khol* players must make to keep the rhythmic pattern intact, they do it seamlessly, so that the *kīrtan* continues unabated. The *kartal* hold the rhythmic foundation of the piece in a firm grip as they respond with a regular eight *mātrā* pattern on *la*. At this time the Chorus swings their legs from side to side as they dance around the *mandīr* with compelling force and dynamism. They also turn in small anti - clockwise circles creating the effect of two cycles moving in opposite directions, the smaller individual one within the larger, collective cycle, seeming like planetary movements around a singular sun, or Rāḍhā and the *gopis* dancing in ecstasy around Kṛṣṇa, here represented by the rhythmic players as Rāḍhā, and the younger MG in the centre as the representative of Caitanya, considered to be the embodiment of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa.

Here the rhythmic intensity has been reversed, i.e. played with intensity during the response parts rather than the MG’s lead parts also reflecting the *Ardhanara Ishvara*

sculpted Shiva/Parvati image on the temples around Rarh, of two complementary, distinct, merged, yet equal parts.

### **II. 2. C7. Dāspera *la* and *udara mudara* with KP3**

Dāspera *la* repeats three times with accelerated tempo and double strikes (*duni*) on the second part of the KP3. The *udara mudara* repeats again with the MG singing in a twelve *mātrā* pattern, rather than ten or eleven as in the previous *udara mudara*, in other words he extends the melodic phrase, by holding the *Hari Bolo* by an additional *mātrā*. Thus at the beginning of this section, the first *udara mudara* was ten *mātrās* in length, then further into the piece, it is in eleven *mātrās*, but this time the *udara mudara* are twelve *mātrās* in length. The *kīrtan* gains in tempo, starting at 77 and ending at 111.5 beats per minute (see below), and volume while alternating the two singing parts *la* and *udara mudara* with mounting intensity of musical and devotional expression.

**II. 2. C8. *Udara mudara* with Dāspera *la*:** *Udara mudara* is played with single strikes rather than KP1, as the tempo increases, followed by Dāspera *la*, which then repeats. There are also some very rapid rhythmic interludes interspersed in *la* adding rhythmic variation to the performance. These intense rhythmic interludes herald the next significant movement, building towards Dāspera *la mātān* “climax”.

### **II. 2. D. Dāspera *la mātān* (24:24mins)**

Accompanied by kartal pattern 4 (KP4), the *mātān* or climax of this section is reached, when the tempo is so fast that the kartal players are literally “running around the *mandīr*” (a definition of *mātān* given by Jagaran Māhāto), while playing with maximum speed and intensity. Soon after they come to a halt and kneel down to play the kartal in order to keep pace with accelerated intensity of playing.

**II. 2. D1. Dāspera *la mātān*, KP4 (25:23mins):** At this point of rising tempo and intensity of devotional zeal, the Chorus change from a walk to a slow run to keep astride the vigorous pace of the *mātān* rhythm driven by the guru and MG.

**II. 2. D2. *La mātān*, *udara mudara*, then *la* x2:** The MG sings Dāspera *la* (M1) then *udara mudara*, (M2) while the Chorus responds, singing *la* (M1) with fervor. Upon reaching a height of rhythmic intensity, the *kīrtaniyās* run at full speed around the *mandīr* as the *mātān* comes to a pinnacle of expression.



## Observations and Analysis of Dāspera la

**The *lila* “divine play” between the melodic and rhythmic parts:** It is significant that the Dāspera *la bols* are played while the MG sings the lead part (M1), during the introduction of the metrical part of the rāga, symbolic of Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa where one role is not subordinate to the other in their “love play” (*lila*).

This is immediately followed by *udara mudara* (M2), where the highest pitch of the melodic piece occurs, and the intricate *kartal* pattern 1 (KP1) accompanying the powerful *khol* drum rhythms. KP1 and Dāspera *khol bols* are performed at the same time as the MG,<sup>s</sup> *udara mudara* lead and not during the Chorus response. Yet the Chorus always responds with the Dāspera *la* (M1) melody, rather than the *udara mudara* (M2) thus keeping the rhythmic foundation intact while performing with tremendous gusto and devotion. KP1 alternates with single strikes played at a moderate tempo. The following KP2 is also performed during the MG’s lead parts, then alternates with single and double strikes. The fact that the Dāspera *bols* and KP1 and KP2 are both performed during the MG lead parts and not during the Chorus response, demonstrates that the *tāla* is integral to the rāga melody and not secondary. It is not merely an accompaniment to the melodic lines, rather, it is essential to the Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa devotional theme of the kīrtan. Hence in the kīrtan performance of Dāspera rāga, the melody and *tāla* play equal, yet complementary roles, bringing inspiration and vitality to the kīrtan performance.

This musical *lila* reenacted by the MG, representing Caitanya and the Chorus/*kartal* players, representing Rādhā and the *gopis* is played out in a variety of ways: During the introduction of Dāspera *la* with M1 and M2 the *tāla* is as significant as the melody lines. Yet it is variable, and not limited to accompaniment for the Chorus, are the representatives of Rādhā the triumphant lover of

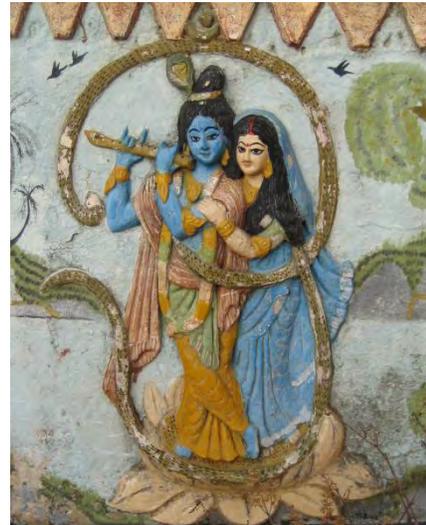


Figure 2.5 Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa depicted at a Baul ashram in Purulia.

Kṛṣṇa and hence are not subservient to Kṛṣṇa in their love making. They perform vigorous, elaborate rhythmic patterns and dance, requiring skill, physical prowess, powers of seduction and endurance. In terms of rhythmic sophistication, KP1 for example has five *mātrās*, KP2 has an intricate eight *mātrā* pattern with many subdivisions, while KP3 and the *mātān* (KP4) have double (*duni*) rhythms, mixed with single strikes. The percussionists and melodic parts merge at times, or manoeuvre themselves around each other, alternating lead/support roles as initiators/ followers during the course of the performance. Thus the kartal players role has diverse functions: a) they may respond to the MG's lead with simple accompaniment, laying the rhythmic foundation; or b) wait and respond later with great flourish, as in KP1 played during after *udara mudara*; or c) play elaborate rhythmic patterns (KP2) that are complementary to the melodic lead, expressing a devotional relationship that is diverse yet mutual in its passionate intensity.

Although it often appears that the MG (in the role of Caitanya) is taking the lead role in the performance, this is not always the case, as frequently the Chorus (representatives of Rāḍhā), is as powerful in her role. During the very rapid *la mātān*, for example, or the elaborate KP1 and KP2, the Chorus (Rāḍhā) expresses greater strength than the MG's (Caitanya), in the love play of Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa. At the beginning of the metered section of *Dāspira la*, the *tāla bols* are established and when the MG sings *udara mudara* the Chorus play KP1 for example. Hence the MG's and Chorus are not limited to a single role, they are not strictly one or the other, rather they interweave various manifestations of leader/follower, initiator/receiver, lover/beloved, in this musical "play" (*lila*) of Kṛṣṇa and Rāḍhā. The constant ebb and flow of melodic and rhythmic highlights, creates the nectar of ecstatic love making, with kīrtan as the musical medium. For if the purpose of *marāī* kīrtan, is to "grind" and churn the emotions to produce the nectar of divine love that is drunk by Hari (Kṛṣṇa), then *marāī* kīrtan is the expression of a multitude of ways of making love with the divine, through the most intense musical means possible. Through a transformation of searing, painful separation, into ecstatic bliss, the individual (Rāḍhā) merges with the cosmic (Kṛṣṇa), in other words, the kīrtan singers, through a process of singing His name, reach a state of complete saturation with the divine (see Introduction).

A key player in the kīrtan performance is Sri Jagaran Māhāto, the kīrtan guru who is both witness and guide on this musical journey. Though it seems that the MG is instigating the changes, in reality it is the guru who is initiating them from behind the team, at the back of the MG's inner circle. Almost invisibly, he walks slowly around the central altar of the *mandīr* at times waving his arms in the air and calling out to the players or just walking with his hands in a prayer position at his heart.



Figure 2.6 Sri Jagaran Māhāto, with his wife, and two grandson (left), Makrabena village, Purulia.

Yet on close observation one can see that it is the guru who is the director of the performance every step of the way: he maneuvers the team to their various positions, telling them when and where to sit or stand; selects the rāgas during the performance, guides and instructs the MG what to play; propels the

whole team forward with his calls at appropriate times to accelerate or decelerate the tempo and recites the *bols* to remind the *khol* players giving different hand and arm movements to signal the players. The *guru* is not only the teacher, his influence extends not only into every aspect of the kīrtan performance but also to other spheres of their lives. This is apparent by the way the team listen and respond to his every command, and also how many of them have abandoned their previous anti social, criminal activities and taken up a more healthy and spiritual lifestyle.

**The kīrtan refrain, the *la* or *kātān*?** According to kīrtan experts (JM, Rājwar, M.Māhāto) Dāspera and other traditional kīrtan rāgas have been adapted from kīrtan songs written by the Vaiṣṇava poets/composers, of which Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* (12th century) is the most renowned. The kīrtan songs from the Kṛṣṇa *lila* provide the melodic component of the *marāī* kīrtan rāgas to a large extent, which are then adapted to the unique kīrtan musical infrastructure. Many of the songs are known to Jagaran Māhāto and other kīrtan gurus that I interviewed. Yet regardless however of how many songs *are* sung by the gurus and the *kīrtaniyās*, they all seem to know them to some degree being as

an essential part of their cultural legacy. If the team know the kīrtan songs then they can “move together” says Jagaran Māhāto, otherwise “they won’t be able to sing kīrtan properly” (2006: Pers.comm.).

If therefore, the kīrtan song provides the melodic foundation for the kīrtan rāga performance, then it is likely that Dāspera *la* is the “refrain” of the original song, judged by the fact that it is the most repeated part of the rāga. The *kātān* is a separate melodic line (M3) from the *la*, and includes a rhythmic composition based on the original kīrtan song. It may be a later addition to the original *marāī* kīrtan performance, adopted for the sake of rhythmic display, or it may be integral to the kīrtan performance, as further investigation will reveal. Occasionally, the Dāspera *kātān* melody (M3) is sung at the beginning as well as end of the rāga, as seen in the Rājwar and the Silfore teams performance for example, although not the *kātān* khol composition which is always left to the end of the piece. Sri Jagaran and Basanta Rājwar say that the *kātān* is traditional and fixed, and therefore one can assume that it is not as contemporary as are many of the popular *rang* melodies.

As yet, I have not been able to locate any historical records that mention *kātān*, yet the *bolbant* of *dhrupad* or the thumri *laggi* seems to bear a similar purpose. In the *dhrupad* performance, near the end of the composition, when the singer returns to the *sthai*, there ensues a lengthy rhythmic improvisation, called *bolbant* which continues through to the end of the performance. The *bolbant* is a rhythmic translation of a text or a play on words in mnemonic syllables, used in a variety of patterns to create a complex rhythmic composition. In *marāī* kīrtan, although there are few lyrics, other than *Hari Bolo*, the rhythmic textures of the *bolbant* have perhaps been reinvented in the *kātān* to create a similar effect. Thus the lyrical components of the *padavali* verse, some of which have possibly been forgotten, are played out in the khol *bols* of the *kātān* composition. Similarities may also be drawn from the classical *thumri laggi* which is a fast rendition, of a certain pre-composed *bol* combination, normally played at the end of a performance on *tabla*. It is also frequently rendered in the performance of the devotional music genre, *ghazal*. Thus there are a number of classical “cousins” to the *marāī* kīrtan *kātān* which have a similar function. Yet Dāspera *kātān* also has a very specific application as further discussed below.

The *kātān* melody (M3) is created to accompany the rhythmic composition and provide a backdrop to the *kātān bols*, the rhythmic highlight of the *rāga*, similar to a table composition. Yet it is also very similar in structure to a rhythmic triplet, with its three cascading melodic lines. Although the *kātān* melody may be performed in the beginning and end of *Dāspera rāga*, it does not occur within the main body of the composition as does the *la* (M1), except in the case of the Vaiṣṇava Goswamis where it occurs three times, in the beginning, at the end of *Dāspera* and the very end of the traditional structured part of the performance (at approx. 54 minutes). Thus further investigation is essential to clarify which melodic part is actually the *la* or “refrain” of the original song. In any case the inherent creativity of the *kīrtaniyās* to manipulate musical elements *within* the traditional performance structure has already been noted in Part one.

**Improvisation versus regularity or individuality**

**versus collective *satsaung*:** After the introduction of the *Dāspera la* rhythmic pattern, the first MG sings the ascending *udara mudara* vocal improvisation on “o” of *bolo*, thus extending the melodic line to ten, sometimes eleven or even twelve *mātrās* so that the rhythmic pattern becomes somewhat uneven, irregular and at times unpredictable. However, when the Chorus sings the *Dāspera la* response, without vocal improvisation, the rhythmic pattern again reverts to an even eight *mātrā* pattern. Thus when the MG sings the *udara mudara* there is sometimes a “play” between the rhythmic and melodic parts, which does not imply breaking the collective flow, rather just a small adjustment on the part of the *khol* players for the sake of individual expression.



Figure 2.7 Caitanya and Nityananda, Manbhum temple.

The fact that the improvisational part sung by the MG, is not kept within strict rhythmic boundaries or is somewhat unpredictable is perhaps intentional, or it may be an indication of other musical cum spiritual priorities that *kīrtan* represents. For example, that the MG singer’s pitch range is limited, that he cannot reach the highest *tara* melodic

part of the classical improvisation that ascends from *udara mudara* to *tara* that is typical of other kīrtan teams in Purulia, and that his rhythm is at times irregular, is apparent to all, yet it does not prevent him from being the MG. It may be that individual shortcomings or strengths can be compensated for by the collective, so that, in this case, the kartal players keep the rhythms strictly within *tāla* boundaries i.e. regular cycle of eight *mātrās*, while the MG is not obliged to.

As indicated above, one of the primary purposes of kīrtan is *satsaung* “spiritual company” or social cohesion among the individual members, and principles such as this are perhaps more significant than musical expertise in kīrtan. In the Kostuka team for example, the *kīrtaniyās* are of varying musical ability yet all are able to participate and even take leading roles in the performance, provided that the collective movement is not hindered but enhanced. In other words, the inconsistencies in the lead singers performance, does not appear to be detrimental to the team performance. It may be random, or incidental, but whatever the case, it is an acceptable part of a performance which is devotional as well as musical, with a fundamental egalitarian spirit that allows for some degree of individual creative expression, given that it doesn’t rock the boat too much.

**Kostuka versus the Rājwar kīrtan teams:** Dāspera *la* of the Kostuka team has two major melodic sections, *la* (plus *udara mudara*) and the *kātān*, whereas the other kīrtan teams such as the Rājwar, the Māhāto and Vaiṣṇava for example, have additional melodic parts including *tara* which is higher than *udara mudara*. Therefore a comparison of Dāspera rāga performance among the other kīrtan teams is essential, in order to discuss their differences and similarities, as discussed in Part one.

I shall give an example from the Rājwar (also seen as Rajuar) team’s performance of Dāspera as seen on the DVD (Kirtan highlights, Rajuar team, *ektala matan*). There are three Dāspera melodic variations in the Rājwar’s *la*: the deep (minor sounding) low and medium parts; an improvisation, said to have been invented by them; a traditional *tara* part; as well as the primary *la*, (M1), *udara, mudara* (M2), the *kātān* (M3) and improvisation (M4) parts. The sequence in which the Kostuka team perform them is as follows, with the Rājwar team’s melodic parts in bold following:

1. The *Alap - Alap*
2. Gradual ascent upwards, starting from *la*, M1- ***kātān* melody, M3**;
3. Daspera *la* M1 continues - **low variation (1A) in *la***;
4. Rising with *udara, mudara* M2 in *la*, - ***tara* part**;
5. *Udara mudara* M2 mixed with M1, -**minor (1B) sounding variation in *la* then rising again, this time from a medium (1C) part to the highest *tara* part in *la***;
6. *Kātān* M3 ***Katan***
7. *Kātān* M4, improvisation based on *udara mudara*
8. *Kātān matan* M3, the ending melodic part in Dāspera and *finale* of the rāga.  
***Katan matan***

This makes a total of four major melodic lines and three variations. Hence the Rājwar team begin with the *kātān* melody M3, dip down into a low variation (1A), then rise up to sing the M2 *udara, mudara*, plus the *tara* parts, followed by two other melodic variations (1B, 1C) to end with the *kātān matan* (M3).

Dāspera generally has a very melodious and bright sound, however when the Rājwars sing (1B) the minor variation, (17:05 mins on DVD 2), it adds a greater dimension to the kīrtan rāga, taking the listener into deeper, internal realms. The *kartals* play a constant rhythm, striking on the first, and gently fading out on the second with reverberation, within a four *mātrā* pattern while the *khols* play in syncopation to the *kartal* on the unaccented beats creating an interesting polyrhythmic effect. There is also a change in the dance movements at this point. Previously the kīrtan movements were martial-like. Now they become *lasya*, gracefully feminine, as they dance in Rāḍhā *bhava* with a provocative sensuality.

After the *tara* part, the Rājwars sing a medium variation (1C) is sung innumerable times. The *kartal* players become unusually quiet in the background, yet alert to change, as the first MG withdraws to consider what should come next in the performance and lets the second MG lead the team as the Chorus lingers in the wings waiting for the next signal. Suddenly the first MG comes forward again, having a plan in mind, and initiates a very dynamic *bol* interlude, followed by a new melodic part into which he mixes a series of rhythmic *bol* interludes adding variation and heightened intensity to the performance.

This innovative section, serves as a short but delightful digression from the traditional rāga piece.

During the short *bol* interludes, the first MG spars with younger khol players of the Rājwar team, provoking them and acting as a kind of protagonist. He incites the young *khol* players with loud vocalizations and fighting arm gestures to respond with similar kinds of fast and hard hitting strikes on the *khol*. This particular pattern of singing the new melodic part, followed by a *bol* interlude occurs four times, before being brought to a resolution with another brilliant *udara, mudara, tara* climax.

At the close of the previous part there is the climactic *tara* followed by the *la* refrain, which acts as a transition between the two parts. At this point the *la* refrain is performed not just once, as is usual when used as a transitional marker, but six times signaling the *la matan*. After bringing this part to a conclusion, the *kātān* commences as the *la matan* is not the ultimate climax of the rāga but only the climax of *Dāspera la*. The following *kātān matan* is the one part of *Dāspera* where all four instrumental parts i.e. the *kartal, khol* players, Chorus and MG's, sing and play at their ultimate speed and devotional expression. During the other sections of the rāga, the percussion and vocals alternate. While the vocals are at the height of their performance, the *kartal/ khol* play only intermittently. Where the *kartal* and *khol* play with dramatic intensity and acceleration, the MG's sing a low part of the rāga. Yet during the *kātān matan*, the final climax and culmination of the rāga, all four musical parts come together in a pinnacled performance of ecstatic expression, like a whirlwind of energy, with the MG standing in the centre as the eye of the tornado. During the *katan matan* the *khol* players stand braced, then once the signal has been given by the first MG, they start beating with fierce intensity. Thus the MG's stand at the center of the *mandīr* singing in full voice, and all else spins around them.

The Rājwar rhythmic players turn and play rapidly on the first two cycles of the *kātān matan*. On the third and fourth times, the greatest climax of the rāga is reached. The Chorus/kartal players move their torsos like rearing horses, backwards and forwards in short spurts, as the *khol* players jump and turn in circles. On the sixth repeat, the Chorus stand and play frantically on the spot and the *khol* players wind down as the MG's stand at the centre and sing facing the audience. The grand finale of *Dāspera* comes

to an end as in the *Mahabharata* epic, where Kṛṣṇa stands directing the war of Dharma, with his beloved charioteer Arjuna and soldiers all around. Thus the Rājwars performance is both similar yet also contrasting to the Kostukas with their choreographed martial like movements, their creative melodic innovations and greater dynamism.

**Note: Numbers II. 2 – II. 3E below refers to the DVD subtitles.**

### **II. 3. Dāspera *kātān* (25:46-35:13)**

The *kātān*, or “skilled playing”, as defined by Māhāto, Rājwar and other experts, is where the khol composition is performed simultaneously with the *bol* recitations, while the MG’s and Chorus sing M3 to provide continuous melodic support. Form observation and analysis, the *kātān* performance structure is divided into five different parts, and confirmed by Jagaran Māhāto<sup>1</sup> as:

II. 3. A. The *kātān* introduction: Transition between Dāspera *la mātān* and Dāspera *kātān*;

II. 3. B. The *kātān bol* sequences with recitation of mnemonic syllables while playing;

II. 3. C. The *kātān* in *duni* “double time”, with the MG’s melodic improvisation on *udara* ending in the *duni mātān*;

II. 3. D. The *kātān* in *cho duni* or “quadruple time” with the MG’s *udara* improvisation;

II. 3. E. The *kātān mātān* or grand *finale* in *cho duni*.

### **II. 3. A1. *Kātān* introduction (25:47mins)**

The *kātān* introduction may be seen as a continuation of Dāspera *la mātān*, forming a bridge between Dāspera *la* and Dāspera *kātān*. So when the Dāspera *la mātān* has been reached and all are running around the *mandīr* with maximum zeal and intensity, there is a brief pause or slowing down at the end as the MG introduces the next melodic line.

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<sup>1</sup> Confirmed in JM's interview, Feb. 2007.

Then another surge of energy and blissful release as the melody changes from *la* (M1) into *kātān* (M3) and the *mātrās* change from eight into twelve, though the *mātān* rhythmic pattern remains the same (KP4). The drummers and *kartals* continue playing together in thunderous unison, giving percussive strength and vitality to the performance. The *kātān* introduction is played in a twelve *mātrā* pattern by the *kartal* in quadruplets, making forty eight strikes to each melodic cycle. However, the *kartal* patterns alternate between the first pattern (KP5), played while the *khol* players are circling around the *mandīr* and the second, (KP4), which is the same as *la mātān* except that there are twelve *mātrās* instead of eight.

### II. 3. B. *Kātān bols*

The *khol bols* are accompanied by the alternating KP4 and KP5.

**3. B1. *Kātān bols I* with KP5 (26:30mins):** The first part of the *kartal* pattern designated below (KP5) is slower, sparse and variable and performed inbetween the *bols* cycles. The second *kātān* *kartal* pattern (KP4) is faster and more regular and occurs during the actual *bol* performance and recitation. KP5 above is therefore made up of 24 *mātrās*, or twelve *mātrās* repeated twice, or three strikes (*mātrās*) followed by a silence (for one *mātrā*) in one melodic cycle. Then there is KP4 which is a continuous and very rapid playing of *duni* „double“ rhythms with the accent on the first beat, played twelve times, making up forty eight strikes or subdivisions, in twelve *mātrā* cycles.

**II. 3. B2-4. *Kātān bols V and VI* (27:39mins):** While the Chorus is kneeling down, the *khol* players stand and begin to move inside the *mandīr* as they prepare to play the *kātān bols*. The rhythmic composition is in twelve *mātrās* with seven sequences and seven cycles in each sequence making forty nine rounds. Of the seven cycles, the first three repeat, making three pairs and the last solo round equals seven cycles. Every new *bol* sequence making up a cycle is played with increased rhythmic density and acceleration, building from a slow, deliberate pulse to a rapid one, and fewer *bol* divisions to a greater number i.e. longer to shorter rhythmic lengths.

***The kātān transcription:*** *In an interview with JM after the mela performance, I was able to record him reciting the Dāspera kātān bols while the Chorus sang the kātān*

*melody to accompany him. I transcribed the kātān bol composition (A). One year later, I returned to Rārh, and asked him to recite the khol bols that the khol players were calling during the actual Dabar mela performance (B), which he did. Hence I was able to transcribe the kātān bol composition (A) recited in an interview with JM, with a different composition than the mela performance, and the second (B) which is the exact kātān performance on the DVD performed by the two Kostuka khol players.*

**An overview of kātān transcription (A):** The start of the *kātān* can be ascertained by the khol drummers calling the mnemonic syllables *jha jha jha*, a sound that represents left and right hand movements played simultaneously with force on both sides of the *khol* drum. On the third rhythmic cycle of the *kātān*, it is apparent that the rhythmic pattern is thickening as the *bols* change from two syllables to four, from *tun dak* to *naga dena* for example, as a greater number of *bols* are played in the same rhythmic space. On the seventh round of the rhythmic cycle, there is the *tihai* spoken as *dini dini da*, repeated three times, signaling the end of the first *kātān* cycle and the start of the next one. In a discussion, JM makes the comment that the *kātān* is “very long”, and this is evident as the *kātān* continues with seven cycles in each round, there being seven rounds. After the *kātān bols* the rhythmic tempo drops to another platform, in *cho duni*, where it stays constant for a few minutes. After a short repose, the *cho duni* quickly accelerates again to a faster jogging tempo, as the team begins to jump up and perform at the very highest pinnacle of thrust and poise, both rhythmically and melodically, to reach the *kātān mātān*, the grand *finale* and ultimate culmination of the piece. The *kātān mātān* is played with twelve swift single beats to each cycle, alternating with rapid rhythmic intervals, ending with *dini dini da* x3. Hence the Dāspera *kātān bols* or mnemonic syllables as recited by Jagaran Māhāto during the interview (A) are transcribed below.

**Kātān bols transcription (B), as recited at the Dabar mela performance:** The Dāspera *kātān bols* or mnemonic syllables as recited by Jagaran Māhāto during the interview (A) and those which correlate to the *bols* performed on the day of the filming at the Dabar *mela*, (B) are transcribed below, with each rhythmic cycle sung over a single *kātān* melodic line (M3) in twelve *mātrā*.

The *kātān* bol composition is played as the MG and Chorus repeatedly sing M3, the traditional *kātān* melodic part, for at this point in the performance the rhythmic component of the rāga is highlighted, as both the *tāla* and melodic lines have alternate leading roles in the rāga performance. At the commencement of *Dāspēra la*, and *udara mudara*, the rhythmic players have joint lead roles with the MG's i.e. they feature along with the melodic lead, as a duo. During the *kātān*, the *khol* and *kartal* players play solo lead roles, otherwise they accompany the MG's parts with *theka* or "fixed *tāla*". In the *kātān* however, the rhythmic composition is the primary factor and the melodic parts are secondary, simply accompanying the *bol* compositions. When the *kātān duni* commences after the *kātān bols*, the MG's melodic improvisation on *udara* is highlighted, coupled with the Chorus's sensual dance movements. The *cho duni* features vigorous rhythmic interludes by the *kartal* players who then come into the limelight, similar to the *khol*s at the *kātān* but this time on the *kartal*, with the MG's repeated *udara* improvisation added at the end. Hence there is an alternation of rhythmic and melodic highlights throughout the rāga piece, adding richness and variation to the otherwise repetitive lyrical component.



Figure 2.8 A khol player (credit:SM).

**Glossary:** Line 1: *Kātān* melody line, M3

Line 2 and 3: *kartals*, the top line is KP5 played alternatively to KP4, beneath.

Lines 4-9: *Kātān bols* are played sequentially to the repeated melodic line M3 and KP4.



### **II. 3. C. Dāsp̄era kātān duni (28:10mins)**

During *duni*, “medium tempo”, the khol players recede into the background as the Chorus dancers come forward to take the limelight in the *kīrtan mandīr*.

**II. 3. C1. Kātān duni with KP6:** After kneeling down for most of the *bol* composition and recitation, the Chorus stands and begins to dance in a rocking motion, inspired by the joyful lilting movement of the *duni rhythm*, marking the end of the first major *kātān bol* sequence. The *duni* section represents a period where the drummers can enjoy a brief interlude of relaxed playing, after a strenuous yet exhilarating *bol* performance while the Chorus dances in a heightened mood of sensual and spiritual fervor, delighting the audience with their movements and evoking a blissful response. KP6 *duni* is the same as KP4 of the *mātān* but in twelve *mātrās*. It repeats at a moderate tempo and with the accent on the first of every beat pair.

**II. 3. C2. Kātān duni, udara improvisation (29:06mins):** After the *kātān bols*, the rhythmic highlight of Dāsp̄era rāga, the MG then again takes the lead with his *udara* improvisation (M4), a classical ornamentation that cascades downwards, descending from the higher to the lower notes of the rāga. The Chorus responds however, not with the *udara* improvisation but with the same traditional *kātān* melody (M3). At this point the drummers play *theka*, predominantly on the bass side of the drum while the Chorus continues to play the *kartal* in *duni* rhythm. The Chorus dance with the right foot leading as they step forwards then backwards, in sensual (*lasya*) Rāḍhā-like movements.

#### **II. 3. C3. Kātān duni continues (alternating udara M4 with kātān M3):**

The MG also reverts to the *kātān* melody as the tempo rises again. The Chorus sings with the same full voice and dances with the feminine seduction of Rāḍhā and the *gopis*. Even the usually serious, more senior khol player has an ecstatic smile on his face as he dances with a seductive side to side hip movement while playing *theka* on the bass side of the khol. The younger khol player makes loud interjections calling *Hari*’s name and dances in an ecstatic mood.

**II. 3. C4. Kātān duni with udara repeats (31:18mins):** As the khols continue playing *theka* on the bass side of the khol the guru claps his hands above his head in exuberance and the senior khol player turns in a wide circle. The MG stretches his neck far forward as he projects his voice outwards and dances in full swing while furiously

pumping the harmonium to increase its volume. Just at that moment the guru issues a very loud call, in preparation for the next part.

**II. 3. C5. *Kātān duni* repeats:** The kīrtan movement increases in acceleration as the younger khol player's interjections promote more vigorous playing and response from the Chorus. The voices gain in volume as they near the culminating *kātān duni mātān*.

**II. 3. C6. *Kātān duni* with *udara* repeats:** The improvisation on *udara* (M4) repeats as it accelerates. After the *guru* has given the call to change, the *khol* players move into a snake like formation dancing side by side in two lines simultaneously as they wind their way around the *mandīr*. The khol players are leading and stepping in synchronicity with each other while the Chorus follows behind, giving a strong visual impact of potent strength and unity. They continue playing *theka* on the bass side, with powerful strikes as they dance at the front of the line making two short spins in an anti clockwise direction. This anti clockwise spin is immediately copied by the Chorus, who mark the guru's command bringing the kīrtan to a climax in the tumultuous *kātān duni mātān*.

**II. 3. C7. *Kātān duni mātān* (31:49mins):** The kīrtan has accelerated to such a furious speed that the Chorus is forced to come to a halt and stand still to be able to play the *kartal* while singing. One more time around the *mandīr* and the drummers also stop and play a short *tihai* to indicate the end of *duni* and beginning of *cho duni* "four times the original rhythm".

### **II. 3. D. *Kātān* in *cho duni* (32:04mins)**

*Cho duni* starts with khol players calling out the *theka bols* played on the bass side of the drum.

**II. 3. D1. *Kātān* in *cho duni* and KP7:** The single strikes on the *kartal* begin at a slow speed then within a few minutes accelerate to a very brisk one. The Chorus evolve from slow walking backwards and forwards movement, gaining momentum, to running and skipping. Even the drummers now jump high into the air with enthusiasm at the beginning of the rhythmic cycle as they recite the *bols*. Everyone is dancing and singing with exhilaration as the kīrtan moves with increasing fervor towards the ultimate climax of the piece, the *kātān mātān*.

During *cho duni*, there are clear signs of melodic reductionism (M3) with many *Hari Bolos* omitted compared to the previous *kātān duni*, as the original twelve beat cycle is now halved. It begins in a slow tempo, but as it has now been condensed, moves again quickly with greater speed to an even higher apex than the previous *kātān duni mātān*. At this point the rhythm players start to take larger strides and jumps, and play various kartal patterns as follows: the variable KP3, the sparse KP5 and the climactic *mātān* KP4. However, these are played in twelve *mātrās* rather than eight *mātrās* (as in *Dāspira la*): KP3 in *cho duni* is *duni* combined with single strikes in twelve *mātrās*; KP5 is twelve single strikes over the period of the one *kātān* melodic phrase and KP4 is the continuous playing of double strikes in twelve *mātrās*, which I have combinedly termed KP7.

**II. 3. D2. *Kātān cho duni*, rapid percussion interludes (32:48mins):** In *cho duni* the rhythm seems to take on a new character as it erupts into a series of rapid percussion interludes. The *kīrtaniyās* are running so swiftly that their *dhotis* (white cotton cloth folded around the waist) lift and sway from side to side. Again the *theka* continues on the bass side of the khol, then changes as the players jump in the air and beat both treble and bass sides with incredible energy.

*Cho duni* is played over two *kātān* melodic phrases, to make up twelve *mātrās*. Hence during *Dāspira*, the rhythmic patterns have changed from eight to ten, to twelve, and now six *mātrās* over a single melodic cycle while the tempo has quadrupled in speed. The kartal patterns are in both *duni* patterns and single strikes, followed by a continuous playing of vigorous *cho duni* beats within a six *mātrā* pattern similar to KP4.

**II. 3. D3. *Cho duni* rapid rhythmic interludes repeats (33:12mins):** Approximately thirty seconds after the first rapid rhythmic interlude, the guru calls with a high voice to initiate the next one. At the commencement of the rhythmic interludes there is a powerful surge of insatiable verve and emotional intensity leading to the climactic grand *finale*.

**II. 3. E. *Cho duni*, udara improvisation, *kātān mātān* (34:12 – 34:17mins)**

At the height of the *kātān mātān* the MG continues to sing the high *udara* improvisation (M4) with the kartal pattern (KP4) *duni kātān*. At the final part of *cho duni*, as in all the above intense climactic parts of the *kīrtan* performance, the kartal patterns are basically

the same pattern KP4, except that the *mātrā* changes from eight in *la*, to twelve in *duni kātān* and six through to twenty four in *cho duni kātān mātān* played at maximum speed and intensity.

**II. 3. E1. *Kātān mātān* in *cho duni* with udara improvisation/ grand finale (33:44mins):** The Chorus repeats the *mātān* dance pattern of running forwards, backwards, then turning in small circles as they move with wild excitement around the *mandīr*. Their single strikes and running movements are interspersed with explosive rhythmic interludes. While singing *Hari*''s name, everyone is drawn into the rising vortex of devotional expression and vivacity to arrive at the final round of the *kātān mātān*, the ultimate culmination of Dāspera rāga reached at the apex of unison. Then together they halt, turn towards the centre of the *mandīr* facing each other slowly and bring the rāga to a close. As if being completely scoured and made to shine, the *kīrtaniyās* are physically depleted, yet spiritually cleansed and effulgent by the end of the performance of Dāspera rāga.

**II. 3. E2. Dāspera *kātān* ends (35:12mins)**

**A Structural analysis of Dāspera *kātān***

The *kātān* “skilled playing section” is by far the most complex rhythmic section of Dāspera rāga. It is a *kīrtan bol* composition that is both elegant and immensely strident, developing in rounds from a slow, expressive beginning, to greater rhythmic density and a furious ending. Yet, due to the gurus direction and *kīrtaniyās* discipline there have been no major fall outs during the performance as one would expect from a rising tornado of ecstatic expression.

As already noted above, the rhythmic structure of the *kātān* is divided into five different parts, with the local terms as given by the guru:

- A. The *kātān* introduction or transition between Dāspera *la mātān* and Dāspera *kātān*, changing from eight to twelve *mātrās*;
- B. The *kātān bols* or recitation of mnemonic syllables in a sequence of various *bol* combinations, in twelve *mātrās* while playing;

- C. The *kātān* in *duni* and *udara* vocal improvisation ending in *kātān duni mātān* “climax” in twelve *mātrās*;
- D. In *cho duni* “quadruple time”, with *udara* improvisation, and *kartal* rhythmic interludes, in six *mātrās*;
- E. *Kātān mātān* or “climax” in *cho duni*, the grand *finale* of the *rāga*, building from six to twenty four *mātrās*.

I shall then give a summary of Dāspera *rāga kartal* patterns and further observations and analyses of Dāspera *rāga*.

JM states that the *kātān* is always performed as the *finale* of the *rāga*, immediately after the Dāspera *la mātān*. Primary indications that *la mātān* has commenced are when the Chorus start running around the *mandīr* in a devotional frenzy while playing with maximum speed and intensity. Then after a short time, due to concentrated effort required, they recline into a kneeling position and continue playing. The transition from the Dāspera *la mātān* to Dāspera *kātān* is seamless, marked only by the change in *mātrās*



Figure 2.9 Daspera *kātān bols* (Photo credit: M.Jones).

from eight to twelve. The *khol* players then stand and take centre stage ready for the *kātān bols* to begin while the Chorus remains kneeling at the outer circumference of the *mandīr*.

It is in the *kātān* that the *khol* drummers come into the limelight as they play with full concentration and vigour, reciting mnemonic syllables simultaneously as they play the *kātān bols*. They are positioned in the front of the team, looking out of the *mandīr* towards the audience for though the *tāla* is introduced early in the performance and there are many rhythmic

highlights throughout, the *kātān* is the time when the *khol* players are expected to display

their *tāla* knowledge and prowess. Even though the *kātān bols* appear improvised and spontaneous, they are not, they are fixed, and each player must maintain the correct *bol* sequence to be able to play in unison with the other and provide a coordinated collective performance. Hence, there is a very clear structure to the Dāspera *kātān* composition as seen in the transcription.

The *kātān* melody is in twelve *mātrā*, with each new *bol* cycle gradually increasing in rhythmic density and tempo. In other words, the mnemonic syllables multiply as the *bol* cycles progress from the first cycle with fewer divisions, to the seventh where there are a greater number, played in rapid succession. The *kātān bol* composition is integral to the *rāga* and is highly appreciated by the audience, adding rhythmic interest to the performance, as well as an occasion for the *khol* players to demonstrate their *tāla* skill and dexterity.

The third part of the *kātān*, called *kātān duni* or “double time”, is where the Chorus features with their seductive dance movements and compelling *kartal* playing attracting audience attention, while the *khol* players recede into the background. The *kartals* emphasise the first beat of each rhythmic pair, thereby creating swing like dance movements creating a provocative sensuality to the predominantly spiritual ambience. Thus the *duni* rhythm infuses powerful dynamism into the rhythmic texture, interwoven with the *kātān* melody (M3).

Led by the Chorus/*kartal* players, this section is more relaxed than the *bol* composition and allows the drummers some repose after their strenuous and concentrated drumming. It also gives the Chorus an opportunity to delight the audience with their Rāḍhā like movements and powerful *kartal* playing. Here, at times, the *khol* players don't seem to be beating their drums at all, they wipe a small wet *rāga* in a circle around outer rim of the deep end of the *khol* to moisten the surface of the skin, thus preventing cracks and making it more resonant on this steaming hot summer day. After a few minutes they begin to beat the bass side of the *khol* more deeply, resounding throughout the village surroundings, gradually rising in tempo and velocity until they climb to another crest beneath the apex of *kātān duni*. When reached the *kartal* players halt for a moment, standing ready for the next dramatic movement to commence.

After a brief pause, the *kātān* changes as the *kartal* and *khol* players begin to play at the faster *cho duni* “four times the original tempo”, and the melodic phrase has been condensed and hence lyrics reduced to fewer repetitions of *Hari Bolo*, to be able to keep up with the extremely rapid tempo. The MG sings the *udara* improvisation (M4) while the Chorus continues to sing the *kātān* melody (M3). The *duni* rhythm has doubled in speed, so that at first, the *kartal* strikes are reduced in number, and then gradually increase again, as the dance movements become more exaggerated. The *kartal* players strike only six times in the first melodic cycle then gradually increase to twelve. This is followed by a rhythmic spurt as the *khol* players “jump at the beginning of each round playing rapid, robust strikes. In other words, the *kartal* players begin by playing every second *mātrā* of the twelve, then they double it in the next round to every *mātrā*, then combine both single and double strikes as in KP3. They alternate between the two rhythmic parts (KP4 and 5), then build to a climax with regular rapid strikes (KP4) while the MG sings two melodic cycles in M3.

At the *kātān mātān* in *cho duni*, the tempo becomes furious as the Chorus strides become larger and the rhythmic intervals become shorter. As the melodic line condenses it also becomes louder in volume, until all arrive at a pinnacle of expression, the grand *finale* and *kātān mātān* of *Dāspera rāga*. In the final culmination, all parts of the *kīrtan* move together in ecstatic union.



Figure 2.10 The Kostuka *khol* players.

**Rhythmic density, syncopation and synchronicity:**

Alternation between binary rhythms and single strikes occurs throughout *Dāspera rāga* as a primary means of variation, and the creation of musical intensity. During KP1 for example, there is a combination of three different rhythmic phrases played in quick succession over the MG’s

*udara mudara* (M2) and Chorus *la* (M1) response. Starting with the first long note of *udara*, the rhythmic pattern begins with six pairs, then at the second note or *mudara*, the

pattern changes to a varied combination of four strikes (both accented and unaccented), followed by a third pattern, played over the *la* response, as eight unaccented strikes. Therefore the rhythmic patterns of KP1 and KP2 alternate from accented beats to a combination of accented and unaccented and finally a sequence of unaccented beats with an increase in acceleration. Hence the *la* rhythmic patterns of equal and unequal subdivisions within a fixed rhythmic cycle, are a special characteristic of the kīrtan performance, resonating with other devotional music genres such as the *cacā* Newar Buddhist ritual songs (Widdess 2004:27).

Rhythmic intensity and variation occurs at the beginning, not the end of Dāspēra *la* as the occurrence of highly dense and variable rhythmic patterns is more noticeable at the introduction of Dāspēra *la* rather than later in the piece where it is at a continuous accelerated pace. In KP1 for example accompanying *udara mudara* above, there are three *mātrās* of six rapid pairs, the fourth *mātrās* is a rhythmic improvisation or flourish, then a powerful strike at the start of the fifth *mātrā* with the last subdivision left empty. Thus the first three *matras* of the kartal pattern are rhythmically denser than the subsequent parts. In KP2, there are four sections divided into eight strikes, making thirty two subdivisions per cycle. The first two *mātrā* are very dense with sixteen strikes and the last two are very sparse with only two played repeatedly with an increase in tempo making it seem almost impossible to play at such high speed. Thus a powerful rendering of the opening rhythmic pattern is an important feature of the *marāi* kīrtan performance followed by a slow and gradual build up of the raga piece.

Generally the new rhythmic pattern is played at the introduction of the new melodic phrase but does not continue throughout the section, as that would lead to oversaturation and eventual boredom. KP1 for example is played at the start of *udara mudara*. Similarly KP2 is played at the introduction of the Dāspēra *la*



Figure 2.11 The kartal players  
(Photo credit M.Jones).

melodic phrase, during the MG's vocal lead, not the Chorus response part and does not continue for long.

When the rhythm changes to *duni* and KP3, the first of the five beat pairs are accented, starting on the *Bolo* followed by three unaccented, single beats. During *Dāspēra duni*, when the *udara* improvisation is sung, the *kartal* pattern has three parts, each consisting of eight beats, which begin with the more complex rhythms and gradually becomes simpler, but more accelerated. Similar to KP1 and KP2, the beginning of the rhythmic pattern KP3 has greater intensity than at the end, where it becomes more sparse and without accent.

Though there is rhythmic intensity at the start of KP3, when it comes to the end of the *duni* pattern, it is played consistently until the *mātān* commences. *Duni* is typically played as a series of quadruplets with single strikes played at the end of the cycle. The binary rhythm alternates with the single strikes, until the *duni* rhythms become more rapid, linking together to form one continual rhythmic stream as the *mātān* begins and the Chorus/khol players all run around the *mandīr*. Thus the khols and kartals begin by playing in syncopation with each other and then as the pace accelerates and intensity of devotional expression intensifies it changes from syncopation to synchronicity or rhythmic diversification to unification.

KP4 is played during the height of the *la mātān* and is characteristically without accent. The next rhythmic pattern played during the *kātān bols* is similar to KP4, although in a cycle of twelve rather than eight *mātrās*. There are two *kartal* parts played during the *kātān*, KP4 when the *kātān bols* are being played, and KP5, when they are not. During the *kātān bols*, the KP4 rhythms intensify doubling in volume and alternating with KP5 which is sparse and lightly played. Hence KP4 is dynamic, regular and very loud, while KP5 is softer and more variable. During the *kātān duni* (II. 3C) the *kartal* pattern is the same as KP3 but the accent is on the 1, 3, 5, etc of the twelve beat cycle.

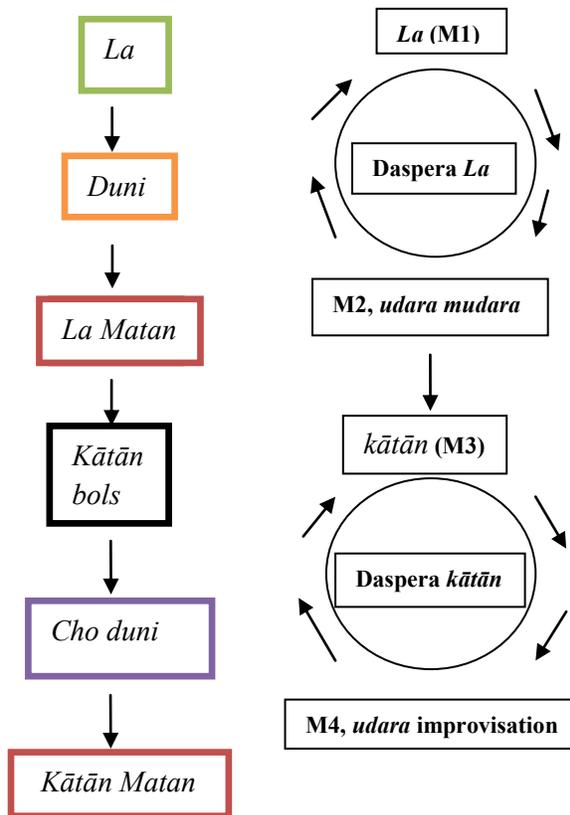
In *cho duni* (II. 3D) and *kātān mātān*, (II.3E) the final climax of the *rāga*, KP7 starts with half the number of strikes, i.e. six single strikes or *mātrās*, and builds to twenty four, followed again by twelve single strikes. The third part is a combination of double strikes or *duni* and singles strikes on the *kartal* (KP3) which progresses into a continuous, vigorous playing of the twelve beat pattern (KP4) over two melodic phrases,

not one. Thus *cho duni* combines the previous KP3, KP4 and KP5 which I have combinedly called KP7 with its mixture of accented and unaccented beats, binary rhythms with single strikes, allowing for rhythmic variation, while continuously building in intensity towards the *kātān mātān* peak, a comprehensive, ecstatic culmination of Dāspera rāga.

### Further analysis of Dāspera rāga

**Cyclic or through-composed:** Dāspera *la* (M1) and *udara mudara* (M2) are not repeated in the *kātān* (M3) as it is a separate melodic piece in Dāspera rāga. Dāspera *la* and *udara mudara* are however combined together in alternate rounds, ending with a powerful *mātān* on *la* (M1) refrain, and thus are cyclical. The figure below demonstrates that the rhythmic infrastructure of Dāspera is “through composed” while the melodic line is cyclical in two parts.

Figure 2.12 The Infrastructure of Dāspera, both cyclic and “through composed”.



Dāspira *la* has an ascending melodic line, whereas the *kātān*, on the other hand, begins on the *sa* of the melodic line, ascends to the highest note of the *rāga*, then plummets downwards in three cascading phrases to the *ni* below *sa*. Dāspira *kātān* melodic line (M3) repeats innumerable times. It does not include the *la* melodic line (M1) except for *udara*, sung as a springboard to the vocal improvisation during *cho duni* (M4). The *kātān* M3 and M4 alternates in *cho duni*, then reverts back to M3 at the *kātān mātān* and hence is also cyclical. In the Dabar *mela* performance by the Kostuka team, the structure of Dāspira *la* is cyclical (M1, to M2 then back to M1) and the *kātān* is cyclical (M3 and M4, then M3 again) yet in terms of the complete *rāga* performance i.e. from *la* and *kātān mātān*, it is sequential or “through-composed” which means that it moves from *la* M1 and M2 to *kātān* M3 and M4, and ends at the *kātān mātān*. On the other hand, *udara* improvisation does occur both in the *la* section (II.2B) and in the *kātān* (II.3D), similar to *dhrupad*’’*santara*, and *abhog* respectively, although it is not the refrain as it is a classical Hindustani improvisation, rather than a fixed melodic line.

In a comparison with the *kīrtan* performance of the Rājwar and the Vaiṣṇava teams on the same day, who begun and ended with the *kātān* melody, thus creating both a cyclic movement, and “through composed”, although as it did not recur in the middle of the piece, as does *la*, and hence is unlikely to be the refrain. Thus overall it seems that the first melodic line’s second phrase or *la* (M1) is the best candidate for being called the “refrain”, as it is the most repeated part of Dāspira.

Further comparisons with classical models such as *dhrupad* and the rhythmic patterns of the Gitagovinda will perhaps clarify these issues as discussed below. However through this investigation it is clear that the traditional musical structure in *marai* *kīrtan* is fixed, although there is still creative license within it, for “the characteristics of traditional music, is that you can play according to your capability inside of the structure, but you cannot change the structure” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

**The *kīrtan* dance:** There is the juxtaposition of the two cyclic movements reflected in the dance *lalita marmika*, where the greater collective movement is in a clockwise direction, while the individual turns and spins are in the opposite, anti clockwise direction. *Kīrtan* is the expression of both individual and collective movement towards

and away from the central spiritual hub, Lord Hari. The *kīrtaniyā* dances forwards and backwards, spinning and swaying like a playful lover, luring, seducing, hiding and seeking, while the MGs representing Caitanya, are endlessly adrift in bliss, dancing with arms held high encompassing all in the nectar of divine love (*premananda*).

If the circle of devotees dance around Lord Hari, as microcosms move within the macrocosmic system, then the larger movement is derived from the Kṛṣṇa *lila* which is “through composed”, like a stream of endless longing for the Supreme i.e. spiritual realms beyond time, where the names of God are eternally (*nitya*) present and represented by both cyclic and “through composed” movements. Also existing are the temporal/individual movements, with a beginning and an end in time, and fixed according to a specific *prahara* (hour). Hence the names of God, existing on a higher plane are combined with the rhythmic infrastructure representing both the timeless and time bound planes.

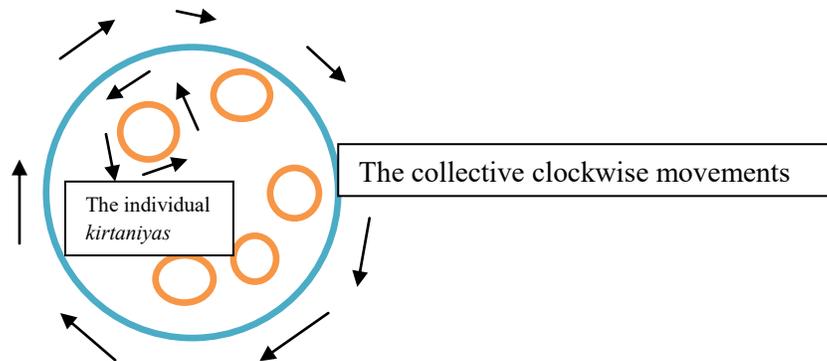


Figure 2.13 Clockwise and anti - clockwise kīrtan dance movements.

Parts of the kīrtan performance are cyclic, with the alternation of *la* and *udara mudara* and back to *la*, yet the whole infrastructure is “through composed”. This is succinctly reflected in the dance movements, where smaller individual episodes occur within greater ones, existing in a timeless realm. Hence the kīrtan performance structure facilitates the eternal and the ephemeral, the divine and the mundane, the collective and individual, with its cyclic/through composed and clockwise/counterclockwise movements. A brief survey of the Chorus/kartal players dance movements, growing in degrees of intensity with the tempo increase are:

1. A slow forward movement, in four steps and turning in an anti clockwise direction, with arms outstretched then in front, at the *alap*;
2. A medium tempo forwards and backwards four step, jogging movement with arms in front playing kartal at *la*;
3. A fast tempo with legs splayed side to side during KP3,
4. A fast tempo, with forwards, backwards and forwards again movements and a turn, during the *la mātān* and KP4;
5. A rapid tempo, with forward movements, knees bending, right foot leading and turning during the *la mātān*;
6. An extremely rapid tempo, with Chorus running, then kneeling at the height of *la mātān*;
7. The *duni* „moderate“ sensual four step movement, with right foot leading, a side to side sway, growing faster till they are forced to stand still at *la duni matan*;
8. A more strident stepping forwards and backwards with a turn at *cho duni*;
9. A running movement around the *mandir* with long strident steps at Daspera *cho duni*, the *katan matan*.

**Comparison between the musical structures of kīrtan and *dhrupad*:** Widdess writes that “the Hindi word *dhrupad*, from Sanskrit *dhruva-pada*, denotes a short poem for singing (*pada*), part of which functions as a refrain (*dhruva*)” (2004:14), “The poem comprises two or four rhymed lines and these lines correspond to two or four musical sections, nowadays called *sthayii*, *antara*, *sancari* and *abhog* respectively, .. the four line structure is shared with the South Indian *kṛiti* or *kīrtana*” (ibid: 13). If one compares the performance structure of Rāṛhi kīrtan with *dhrupad* for example then there are similarities between *la*, *udara mudara*, *kātān* and *kātān* with *udara* of *marai* kīrtan and the *sthayii*, *antara*, *sancari* and *abhog* of the *dhrupad* compositions.

Dāspera *la* (M1), moves up a register to the *udara mudara* (M2), followed by a combination of *la* and *udara mudara*, just as the first melodic lines of each section in the *dhrupad* are both in a lower tessitura than the second section (ibid:231). The four sections of the *dhrupad* are distinguished by their melodic tessitura (high or low pitch range) with the *antara* moving to a higher range than the *sthayi*, the *sancari* occupying a middle

range and the *abhog* “returns to a range similar to that of the *antara*” (ibid:223). Similarly with Dāspera kīrtan performance, the *udara mudara* (M2) is in a higher range than the *la* (M1), and the *kātān udara* (M4) is higher than the *kātān* (M3) and in a similar range to the *udara mudara* (M2).

The nature of the two is such that in *dhrupad* the *sthayi* must be repeated after itself, after the *antara* and at the end of the composition after the *abhog*, so the cyclic structure has no clear ending (Widdess 2004: 223). However in the kīrtan, Dāspera *la* is repeated after itself, and after the *udara mudara*, yet not after the *kātān* in the Kostuka performance, as does the *sthayi*. However in the Vaiṣṇava team’s performance the *kātān* occurs at the beginning, middle and end of the traditional part of the kīrtan performance, although it does not occur after every section, as does the *stayi* in *dhrupad*.

In *dhrupad* the *stayi* occurs at the beginning of the piece and hence is refrain antecedent, and in the *Gītagovinda*, the *dhruva* occurs after the first two rhyming couplets and hence is refrain consequent, whereas in *marāi* kīrtan the *la* occurs at the beginning the piece, as the first melodic couplet, and then is performed consequent to each new melodic phrase that is introduced. In fact it is the second melodic phrase of the first couplet, and thereafter the repeated refrain. Hence the *la* refrain lies in between the two, i.e. *dhrupad* and the *Gītagovinda* as seen in Table 5 below.

Table 2.6 A Brief Comparison between the *Gītagovinda*, *dhrupad*, and *marai* kīrtan.

<i>Gītagovinda</i>	<i>Dhrupad</i>	<i>Marai Kīrtan of Kostuka team</i>
<b>Basic structure:</b> 1, 2, 3, 4	<b>Basic structure :</b> 1, 2, (1+2) 3, 4 (3+4)	<b>Basic structure:</b> 1, 2 (1+2), 3, 4 (3+4), 3 (Kostuka), 1 (Silfore)
<b>Alap</b> presumed, not verified	<b>Alap:</b> A. Slow elucidation of rāga	<b>Alap:</b> A. Opening rhythmic climax
	B. Rhythmic climax ←	B. Slow elucidation of rāga
<b>Melodic refrain</b> - <i>Dhruvapada</i>	<b>Melodic refrain</b> <i>sthayi</i>	<b>Melodic refrain</b> called <i>la</i>

Refrain antecedent first couplet	Refrain consequent - second couplet,	Refrain antecedent and refrain consequent, first couplet- second phrase, hence lies somewhere between <i>dhrupad</i> and <i>Gītagovinda</i>
Unknown	<b>Melodic part 2: Antara (M2)</b>	<b>Melodic part 2: Udara mudara</b>
“	<b>Combination of M1 and M2: Sthayi and antara</b>	<b>Combination of M1 and M2: la and udara mudara</b>
“	<b>Melodic part 3: Sancari</b>	<b>Melodic part 3: Kātān</b>
“	<b>Melodic part 4: Abhog</b>	<b>Melodic part 4: Kātān udara</b>
“	<b>Melodic part 1: Stayi</b>	<b>Melodic part 3: kātān mātān,</b>
<b>Talas:</b> The two most common talas in the GG are twelve and seven beats. Seven four beat measures are in 19 of the 24 songs.	<b>Talas:</b> The most common talas in dhrupad compositions are in 7 <i>matras (tivra)</i> , <i>Chau</i> (12), 14 <i>matras (dhamar)</i> , associated with Holi spring festival, as well as and 10 <i>matras (jhap)</i> tala.	<b>Talas:</b> The most common talas in <i>marai</i> kirtan are in twelve <i>matras</i> such as <i>ektala</i> , and seven <i>matras</i> , such as <i>Pakachuta</i> , <i>Sohni</i> , <i>Jhorchuta</i> .
<b>Divine names:</b> Hari is used more than any other name of God (17 times)	<b>Divine names:</b> various	<b>Divine names:</b> Hari is used exclusively

**Comparing the *Gītagovinda* and *kīrtan*:** From the table above one can observe that the *marāi* *kīrtan* performance is closest structurally to *dhrupad* i.e. especially the Silfore team

with its repeated *ektala matans* at the beginning, middle and end of the performance, similar to the *sthayi*. Although a strong resemblance to *dhrupad*, adapted by Narrottama Das is prevalent in *marāī* kīrtan the rhythmic infrastructure of *la*, *duni*, *cho duni* and *matan* has been retained.

One of the most important factors of *marāī* kīrtan is its complete and utter intensity of musical and devotional expression, coupled with its many crests and troughs. Three pinnacles of expression are located in Dāśpera rāga: at the very beginning of the *Gauralap*, though it is very short lived; in the middle at the Dāśpera *la mātān* and at the *kātān mātān* at the very end, where it is longer and denser, uniting all the various musical parts together at the height of expression. In between these rhythmic and melodic climactic peaks there are some very significant rhythmic embellishments, melodic improvisations and tempo changes that enrich the ongoing rāga performance.

If one must find a metaphor that best illustrates the performance structure of a kīrtan rāga, one could use the *Gītagovinda*, the original kīrtan poem of Jayadeva's from Rāṅh, with its exquisite song poetry. The fixed structural unit in the *Gītagovinda* is called the *dhrupapada*, or "refrain" which serves to unify the songs through sound and meaning, with recurring words that "suggest correspondences between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at different stages of their separation" (Stoler-Miller 1984:10). The *dhrupapada* is repeated after each couplet and therefore is refrain consequent, not refrain antecedent as in *dhrupad*. However in the *marāī* kīrtan as stated above, the *la* falls on the second line of the first couplet, and therefore is somewhere in the middle between refrain antecedent and refrain consequent.

Comparisons may be made between *marai* kīrtan and the *Gītagovinda* in that: a) The basic structure of the *marāī* kīrtan has been derived from original kīrtan songs and the first renowned kīrtan poem of Rāṅh is the *Gītagovinda*, so the likelihood of some degree of influence on the *marāī* kīrtan tradition is very real, even if only through distant echoes or structural remnants; b) The name *Hari* as Kṛṣṇa appears in Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*, at least 17 times, that is more than any other name for Kṛṣṇa and in *marāī* kīrtan, the name *Hari* is used almost exclusively; and c) The erotic mood of the love play (*lila*) between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa expressed literally in the *Gītagovinda* is also deeply embedded in *marai* kīrtan through various symbolic structural components such as the

*asta sākhis* or “eight companions of Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā”, and “ideational” techniques such as Rādhā *bhava* as discussed in Part one as well as the complex interweaving of melodic and rhythmic parts.

An investigation of the rhythmic patterns of the *Gītagovinda* songs and the *kātān tālas* of the traditional kīrtan rāgas for example could bring to light correlations between the two, yet without delving deeply into the subject, it is impossible to ascertain. There are however common numerical elements in both. *Ektāla* for example in twelve *mātrās* is the first and foremost tāla in Rāṛhi kīrtan, and in the *kātān cho duni*, there are between six and twenty four *mātrā* cycles. Similarly in the *Gītagovinda* there are many multiples of twelve,(24 songs), as well as seven, for “the most prominent meter in the *Gītagovinda* repeats a pattern of couplets structured into lines of seven four beat measures which govern nineteen of the twenty four songs in the *Gītagovinda*” (Stoler-Miller 1977:6). In *marāī* kīrtan, in all except Dāspera, i.e. Pākāchutā, Sohini and Jhorchutā, are played in seven *mātrās*, which also has seven four beat measures in the *kātān*. Although these numerical similarities may merely be a coincidence, still the fact is that the *Gītagovinda* and contemporary *marāī* kīrtan rāgas, originate from the same region. Hence the predominance of twelve and seven *mātrās* in their compositions warrants further investigation.

The use of the name “Hari” for Lord Kṛṣṇa in both *marāī* kīrtan and the *Gītagovinda* is another significant aspect in common. It is used exclusively in *marāī* kīrtan of Purulia, and in the *Gītagovinda* the name Hari is written more often than any other name for Kṛṣṇa. He is painted with deep emotion and associated with both erotic pleasure as well as cruel love in the *Gītagovinda* for while *Hari* roams in the forest, Rādhā’s heart pines for her beloved “My heart recalls *Hari* here in his love dome, playing seductively, laughing, and mocking me” (Stoler-Miller 1977:76), *Hari* is the centre of attention for the *gopis* “In spring young *Hari* plays, like erotic mood incarnate” (ibid.). Stoler-Miller also notes the similarity between *Hari* and Śiva’s name *Hara* “the destroyer” and states that it is exploited by Jayadeva for ironical effect. In *marāī* kīrtan lord *Hari* is considered to be the manifest form of both *Hara Śiva* the destroyer and *Hari* the lover of Rādhā. This is demonstrated through the expression of fierce devotion (Śaivism) and tender, eroticism (Vaisnavism) as well as the selection of different rāgas

such as Śiva Ranjani with its depth and mesmerizing power, compared to Dāspēra with its sweet intoxication.

The erotic mood of love between the divine couple is expressed literally in the *Gītagovinda* and subtly (without lyrics) through musical mastery and dance in *marāī* kīrtan. When the *kīrtaniyās* speak about themselves as Rādhā, they actually “embody” (Rājwar, Māhāto 2007: Pers.comm.) her emotions, longings, sensual, *lasya* “graceful” movements and devotional surrender.

The expression of devotional fervor and sexual play also reflects in the kīrtan performance structure: beginning with the first sight of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, (opening rhythmic “climax”); to their first encounter and intricacies of their love affair in the forest grove, as the rāga unravels with various elaborate peaks of intensity (KP1 and KP2 and *La mātān*); plateaus and playful expressions (*duni*); and building (*kātān*) to meet its final culmination in complete surrender when all musical parts merge together into one ultimate ecstatic expression and mighty climax of the rāga (*kātān mātān*). Although purely suggestive, there is however, ample scope to reflect on the Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa *lila* while singing Hari’s name and moving in a ecstatic flow around the *mandīr*, as prescribed by Caitanya for his Goswamins as *dhyāna* “visualizations” of the divine couple’s love-making in Vaisnava Tantric *sādhanā* (see Part one).

**Pulse relations in Dāspēra rāga performance:** Considering the continual, unrelenting high intensity of the *marāī* kīrtan performance, I have attempted to measure the rhythmic tempo in all sections of the rāga in beats per minute (b.p.m.). The kartal strikes (as above) evenly spaced, are the yardstick by which I have measured the tempo’s rise and fall in motion, for they fix the *mātrās* at the beginning of the rāga and hold the rhythmic foundation in a firm grip. As one progresses through the different sections of the performance the kartal rhythms remain at the foundation giving a clear indication of the changes that occur during the performance.

The first percussion climax played by the kartal and khol players during the opening of the *Gauralap* rises abruptly in a flurry of sound and excitement. The second is twice as fast, rising even more rapidly in just four seconds and is the highest rhythmic peak of the performance, so that the audience’s attention is alerted to the start of the

kīrtan performance. The *Gauralap* consists of a series of twenty two strikes and rolls played while rotating around the kīrtan *mandīr* and the unmetered section is then superseded by the metered section *la* in *ektala*, with eight, ten and twelve *mātrās*.

The *Ektala bols* begin at 40b.p.m. and rise to 51b.p.m. during the Dāspera *la tāla* introduction, followed by two rhythmic patterns (KP1 and KP2) initiated during the MG’s lead. The elaborate *tāla* patterns occur in the beginning of the rāga performance when the tempo is still moderately paced and the intensity of the rāga elaboration is focused, yet restrained. In the later part of the performance, the intensity and intricacies of the *tāla* are expressed in the *kātān bol* composition where the tempo doubles more than twice from 104-232b.p.m.

In brief, the rhythmic intensity gains momentum when the *udara mudara* melodic line (M2) is sung by the MG’s and accompanied by the intricate rhythmic pattern (KP1). When *la* (M1) is repeated, the rhythm accelerates from 78 – 210 b.p.m. and the two rhythmic parts alternate between the shorter eight *mātrā* pattern of *la* (KP2) and the ten or twelve *mātrā* pattern (KP1) of *udara mudara* allowing for the MG’s creative expression.

The culmination of *la* at *la mātān* is where the rhythmic intensity is at its highest, starting at 226 and ending at 243 b.p.m. The *kātān* ensues with the dazzling *bol* composition as the tempo doubles from 104 at the start to 232 b.p.m. at the end, followed by *kātān duni* where it levels to a plateau for a while, then quickly rises again from 144 to 224 b.p.m.

The *duni* continues for two and a half minutes before changing into *cho duni*, accelerating from 208 to 310b.p.m. Here again the dancers get ample scope of expression. In *cho duni*, the kartal players begin by playing six *mātrās*, then alternate between twelve and twenty four *mātrās* in a series of fast rhythmic sprints, continuing until the *kātān mātān* at the end of Dāspera rāga. Between the beginning and end of Dāspera *la* to *la mātān* and *duni* to *cho duni* there is a rapid increase in tempo and rhythmic density which can be measured in pulse relations. There are four pulse relations during the performance of Dāspera rāga, corresponding to the local terms *la* “introduction”, *mātān* “climax”, *duni* “double the original time” and *cho duni* “four times the original time”.

Measuring the pulse relation between the beginning of *la* and the end of *la mātān* comes out as 1: 4, i.e. *la mātān* is four times faster than the *la* introduction. From the start

of *duni* and end of *cho duni* the pulse relations are 1:2 (or in relation to the original pulse of *la* is 2:4). At the outset of Dāspera *la* for example (II.2A), when the *khol bols* are being recited the average length of one melodic phrase is twenty seconds, whereas at the end of the *la* at the *la mātān* (II.2D) the average length is five seconds meaning that the *la* melody is sung four times in the same rhythmic space. Thus, the tempo has increased four times the speed over a period of ten minutes.

In the case of *kātān duni* (II.3C) and *kātān cho duni*, (II.3D) while it would normally take ten seconds to sing one *kātān* melodic phrase in *duni*, it actually takes five seconds to sing it in *cho duni*. In other words the time value has been halved to be able to accommodate two *kātān* (M3) lines in the same rhythmic space, or one melodic line has been condensed into half the time in *kātān cho duni* compared to *duni*, while the rhythmic tempo, which begins as twice that of the original *la*, ends as four times the original or 2:4. This is indicated by the *cho duni* KP7, where two cycles of the melodic phrase are sung over the complete twelve *mātrā* rhythmic cycle. Thus, the pulse relations between the original pulse and the final pulse in *la* (II.2A) and the final *kātān mātān* in *cho duni* (II.3E) are: 1:4 and 2:4 (or 1:2 for the pulse relation between *duni* and *cho duni*). From *la* to *la mātān* the tempo gradually accelerates while the original tempo of the *kātān* is halved abruptly when it changes from *duni* to *cho duni*, (see b.p.m. chart below).

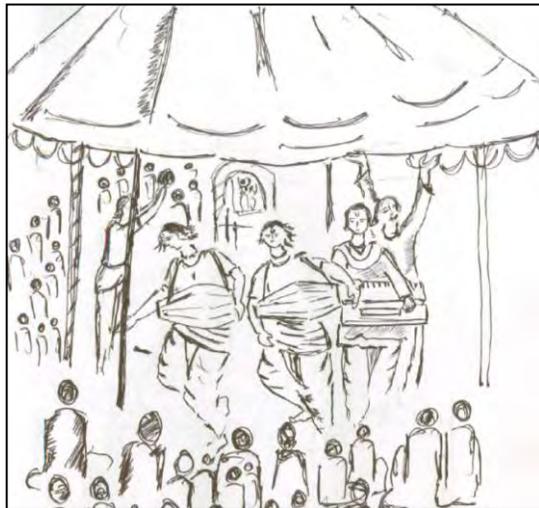


Figure 2.14 Inside the kīrtan *mandīr*  
(credit: SM).

Table 2.7 A Detailed Analysis of the Rāga performance in beats per minute (b.p.m.).

Time	BPM	DVD	Description of Tāl and Rāga	Description
2.41	92.96	II.1A.	<b>Gauralap,</b>	The first percussion climax, rises to 350 at 2.54, (crashing approx every 10-15 secs.) The second climax rising to 650 bpm in 10 secs
2.54	350	II.1A.	Gauralap percussive climax 1 start, Gauralap percussive climax 2 mid rises to 650.	
3.11	650	II.1A/B.		The non fixed tempo percussion is changed into a fixed pattern with ektala coming in with the la (M1) of the rāga.
7.55	20	II.2A	<b>Dāspēra La with bols start.</b>	The ektala bols are a set rhythmic composition or pattern of twelve beats per cycle. M2, udara mudara is higher pitched and longer than the first part.
9	51	II.2A	Dāspēra La with bols end.	
9.1	64.2	II.2B	Dāspēra Udara Mudara start	With a repeat of La there is a new rhythmic pattern played KP1
10.5	66.7	II.2B	end	
10.4	78.78	II.2C	Dāspēra La with rhythmic pattern	
11	83.8	II.2C	end	
11.2	94	II.2C	Dāspēra Udara Mudara	After Dāspēra La returns then the rhythmic pattern changes to duni, It is typical at this time to highlight the movement or dance aspect of the kīrtan performance, as the percussion parts recede into the background.
11.4	122	II.2C	Dāspēra La duni start	Alternating La and Udara Mudara (M1) and (M2) in the performance.
12.2	153.5	II.2C	end	
12.3	142	II.2C	Dāspēra Udara Mudara start	
12.1	151	II.2C	end	
13.1	163	II.2C	Dāspēra La duni start	Duni gives the dancers ample scope of expression.
13.3	168	II.2C	end	
13.3	167	II.2C	Dāspēra Udara Mudara duni start	The La and Udara mudara combined with duni
14	156.4	II.2C	end	
14.1	179	II.2C	Dāspēra La duni start	The kīrtan accelerates again, the rhythmic patterns densify
14.4	194	II.2C	end	Again alternating between La and Udara Mudara of the rāga, until finally the matan or 'climax' of La begins, which brings this part of the rāga to a final conclusion.
14.5	193	II.2C	Dāspēra Udara Mudara duni start	
15.1	210	II.2C	end	
15.2	226	II.2D	Dāspēra La Matan	
15.3	253	II.2D	end	
15.4	245	II.2D	Dāspēra La Matan sitting	The La Matan at its highest peak
15.5	195	II.3A	Dāspēra Katan sitting	After the climactic Matan of La and Udara mudara the next section of the rāga begins, the Katan or 'skilled playing' part which highlights the rhythmic bols or compositions. These are performed in seven cycles or rounds, each of twelve beats
16	242	II.3A	end	in ektala.
16.2	104	II.3B	Dāspēra Katan standing Bols	Next comes the duni part of the Katan, where the rhythmic tempo changes to double time, without any fixed bol patterns, being a more relaxed, less intense part of the kīrtan where the dancers can move with a greater freedom.
17.5	232	II.3B	end	
18	144	II.3C	Dāspēra Katan Duni	
18.5	160	II.3C	end	
19.1	166	II.3D	Dāspēra Katan Udara Improvisation	
21.2	224	II.3D	end	
21.4	208	II.3D	Dāspēra Katan in Cho Duni	The Katan also has a Matan, or climax, played with the greatest intensity and devotional expression. The rhythmic intensity rises with the changes in rhythm from Duni to Cho Duni with greater acceleration and concentration until the final
22	240	II.3D	Dāspēra Katan in Cho duni	
22.4	206	II.3D	End	
			Dāspēra Katan cho duni,rhythmic	
22.5	266	II.3E	interludes	katan matan is reached and final culmination point.
24	308	II.3E	End	
24.1	300	II.3E	Dāspēra Katan Matan cho duni	Dāspēra rāga is complete when the group are kneeling down together, playing

The Table above gives a detailed analysis of the rāga performance with columns showing the time, the beats per minute (b.p.m), the DVD section number, melodic and rhythmic part and a further musical description. Table 2.8 below is a summary of the chart above plotting the rhythmic intensity of the rāga measured in b.p.m. across the vertical axis with the time in minutes, along the horizontal axis. Thus one can observe

where rhythmic acceleration occurs, particularly at the *Gauralap*, *Dāspira mātān*, the *kātān bols*, then takes a dip at *duni*, rises again at *cho duni* and soars high to reach the *kātān mātān*, the grand *finale* of the piece.

Table 2.8 Summary of the rhythmic intensity of *Daspera raga* measured in beats per minute (b.p.m.).



### Conclusion of *Dāspira rāga* performed at *Dabar mela* (daytime)

*Dāspira rāga* is traditionally performed first at any *Rāḥi marāī* *kīrtan*, as it is relatively “sweet and easy to play” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.), although in reality it has a complex texture with many interwoven rhythmic and melodic parts. *Dāspira rāga* is in *ektala*, primarily in eight or twelve *mātrās* with elaborate *tāla* patterns, a major composition, sensual *duni* parts and the frenzied *cho duni*. The melodic lines also weave various patterns: *la* is mixed with *udara mudara*, *kātān* with *udara* improvisation while the Chorus/kartal players keep both the melodic and rhythmic foundation of the piece intact. The rich, sonorous voices of the male Chorus and their powerful kartal playing is a special feature of the Kostuka *Kīrtan* team, as well as the *khol* players extensive *tāla* knowledge.

However, in comparison, the Kostuka team’s performance of *Dāspira* with only four melodic parts: *la* and *udara mudara*, *kātān* and the *udara* improvisation, is less extensive than the other teams who combinedly perform seven melodic parts, also adding a traditional part called *tara* that runs in a sequence from *udara*, *mudara* to *tara*. On the

other hand, the *tāla* compositions and *bol* recitations of the Kostuka team’s performance structure are more comprehensive and systematic than the other teams. Thus further comparisons have been made with other teams previously, placing the Kostuka team’s performance of Dāspera rāga in a broader context.



Figure 2.15 Jagaran Māhāto playing khol in the kīrtan *mandīr* next to the Shiva temple, Purulia.

Another very significant feature of the Kostuka Teams their relationship with their guru Jagaran Māhāto. The role he plays is vital to the success of the performance and this is discernable upon close observation and analysis. In an interview with Jagaran he states that the role of guru is paramount and that the guru must take both blame as well as the credit for the team performance. Having their guru directing every step of the way gives a strong impression of “correctness”, and keeping within traditional boundaries, without diminishing the devotional expression. Thus the team has a certain advantage over others who do not have a guru, and the respect accorded to a guru can only be measured in a way similar to the reverence shown to god.

Another significant point that emerged during from musical analysis is the degree of complexity in the kīrtan rāga performance structure, which must place it firmly within the *Great* tradition. Yet it is also in a category of its own due to its performance structure

and musical characteristics that are geared towards rapturous heights, and giving of direct and immediate pleasure to god with body, mind and spiritual surrender. In fact kīrtan allows for the general dissemination of a broad spectrum of musical ideas that facilitate the performance of ecstasy, while still keeping the central corpus of traditional tālas and rāgas intact. The process of rhythmic intensification can be observed through the *kātān bols* transcription and measured via the b.p.m. chart above, for as Henry notes, among the numerous examples of intensification in South Asian music, kīrtan is second only to Baul music, (2002:35) whereas *marāī* kīrtan of Purulia would certainly be the first.

Apart from the *Gauralap* in the beginning with its opening *accelerando*, the performance of Dāspera rāga can be seen to fit into a pyramidal structure. Though there are a few shallow dips at the commencement of the *kātān bols* for example, the purpose of these interludes is to give a short repose, before the next musical surge begins, similar to a change of gears before accelerating. Considering the *Gauralap* rhythmic “climaxes” the performance starts with acceleration then takes a dive for the first five minutes, mounts again as the intensification process continues, reaching its first height of expression in the *la mātān*, followed by a deeper climb (in density) further upwards to the *kātān bols* cycles, to reach its highest culminating point in the *kātān mātān*. Hence, a combination of two melodic ingredients (*la* and *udara mudara*) mixed with rhythmic embellishments create the first explosive *la mātān*. Then new ingredients are added, the *kātān* melody with colourful and intricate garlands of rhythmic decoration, the suave *duni* patterns and brisk *cho duni*, until finally all is baked and merged together into one ecstatic expression of *madhur bhava* “sweet” devotion.

Table 2.9 The pyramidal structure of Dāspera raga





Figure 2.16 The Kostuka kīrtan team pictured after their performance  
(Photo credit: M.Jones)

### III. The Interlude, *rāgini alap* and *kīrtan rang*

#### Introduction

*After embarking upon the sacred musical journey the Kostuka team successfully perform Dāśpera the first traditional kīrtan raga. With confidence they proceed to the next, creating a colourful jaunt in between, before weaving their magic in subtle ways to join the two major rāgas/tālas together. Bringing a dramatic light into view they travel through the ragini and kīrtan rang with their guru at the helm.*

The *rāgini alap* and *kīrtan rang*, both relatively short pieces in the overall performance structure, make up what I term the Interval, because it is situated between two major kīrtan tālas/rāgas, Dāśpera and Pākāchutā. The purpose of the Interval music is primarily to provide lighter relief and variety between the two kīrtan tālas/rāgas that are performed either side of it. It is traditional for a Rāḥi kīrtan team to sing a popular *rang* in between two major rāgas, however, the Kostuka team's performance structure is innovative. They insert a *rāgini* and then a *kīrtan rang* melody (*sur*) with *udara* inside of

it instead, connecting the Interval with the previous rāga in a cyclic fashion. As the kīrtan continues inside the *mandīr*, progressing from Dāspera to the rāgini/*rang*, the guru is the ultimate guide, always churning the kīrtan “juice” (*rasa*), and alert to the audience’s interest, by initiating changes in order to facilitate the growing intensity of devotional fervor while holding the traditional performance structure intact.

Table 2.10 Chart of the *ragini/ rang* performance of the Kostuka team.

Location:	Inside the <i>mandir</i> 'temple'				
Raga/Piece	III. <i>Ragini alap</i> and kirtan <i>rang</i> 'song'				
Music Section:	Interlude between ragas				
Music Parts:	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>III. A. Ragini alap mixed with ragini rang melody = 1+2</td> <td>III. B. Kirtan rang song- melody = 3+4</td> <td>III. B4. Kirtan rang song- mixed with udara in higher register, melody = 5</td> <td>III. B4-10 Kirtan rang combined melodic parts 3,4,5.</td> </tr> </table>	III. A. Ragini alap mixed with ragini rang melody = 1+2	III. B. Kirtan rang song- melody = 3+4	III. B4. Kirtan rang song- mixed with udara in higher register, melody = 5	III. B4-10 Kirtan rang combined melodic parts 3,4,5.
III. A. Ragini alap mixed with ragini rang melody = 1+2	III. B. Kirtan rang song- melody = 3+4	III. B4. Kirtan rang song- mixed with udara in higher register, melody = 5	III. B4-10 Kirtan rang combined melodic parts 3,4,5.		

Table 2.11 Summary of the rāgini /rang Interlude

III. RĀGINI	A.	Melody section	Kartal pattern	Khol pattern	Mātrā
III. Rāgini alap	A.1.	M1 (high)	single strikes, (SS)	<i>theka</i> on bass	0
A.2. <i>Alap</i> with <i>theka</i>		“	SS, fast	<i>theka</i> on both sides + <i>bols</i>	8
A.3. Rāgini <i>rang</i>		M2, descending	Double strikes (DS) and SS, fast tempo	<i>theka</i>	8
A. 3-7 Rāgini <i>alap</i> and <i>rang</i> combine		M1 + M 2	SS, fast tempo	<i>theka</i>	8

A.8 Rāgini <i>mātān</i>	M1	DS	<i>theka + bols</i>	8
A. 9-10 Rāgini <i>alap and rang</i>	M1 + M2	SS	<i>theka</i>	8
<b>III. B. Kīrtan <i>rang alap</i></b>	M3(high)	Jangling	–	–
B2. <i>Rang la</i>	M3	KP6	<i>theka bols</i>	6 x 7 = 42 <i>mātrās</i> x 8 times
B3. <i>Rang la</i>	M4 (low)	SS	<i>theka</i>	6 x 5 = 30 <i>mātrās</i>
B4. Kīrtan <i>rang udara</i>	M5 (MG) <i>udara</i> + M3 Chorus	“	“	6 x 7 = 42 <i>mātrās</i>
B5. Kīrtan <i>rang</i> <i>tala</i>	M3	KP6	“	6 x 7 = 42 <i>mātrā</i>
B6. “	M4	SS	“	6 <i>mātrās</i>
B7. Kīrtan <i>rang</i> <i>acceleration</i>	M4	<i>Cho duni</i>	“	8 <i>mātrās</i>
B8. Kīrtan <i>rang</i> <i>Udara</i>	M5 + M3	<i>Cho duni</i>	“	8 <i>mātrās</i>
B9. Kīrtan <i>rang</i>	M4	“	“	“
B10-11. Kīrtan <i>rang udara</i> +M4	M5 + M3 response	“	“	“

Note: Numbers III. A – III. B. below refer to the DVD subtitles.

### III. A. The Rāgini Interlude

**III. A1. Rāgini alap, M1:** Dāspera rāga comes to a close as the next piece, called the rāgini, commences. It begins with an *alap*, as the MG sings the long held notes while

the Chorus sings the last syllable of the *Hari Bolo*, extending it into the next MG’s melodic line. Starting on the first note or *sa* of the *rāga*, the MG immediately ascends a third above, then cascades downwards. The kartals are playing single strikes at a slow tempo while the khols play *theka* on the bass side of the drum only.

**III. A2. Rāgini alap with theka and bols (00:35secs):** The drummers jump up excitedly at the start of the melodic phrase as they begin the *tāla* pattern in eight *mātrās* and dancing vigorously around the *mandīr*. The Chorus responds with ignited passion extending the last note of the *alap* while hitting the *kartal* with single strikes. After just five seconds, the khol players begin reciting the khol *bols* as the tempo changes from the slow *alap* to a rapid pulse. The Chorus’s high melodic voices and drummers accelerated beats, fuse together to form one pulsating rhythm moving in joyful unison around the

Musical example 9 (00:50 secs): Ragini *theka bols* recited JM.

Khol cycle 1  $\text{12}$   
 $\text{8}$   
*E da ge ge da ke (E) na ke na na ke*

*kīrtan* arena. When the khol players introduce the *tāla*, they are, at the same time “winding up” the Chorus/kartal players, who set the rhythmic foundation of the *rāgini*. The younger khol player jolts the Chorus by loudly calling out the *bols* and beating his drum fiercely so that they respond immediately. The *bols* of the *ragini tāla* are spoken by the khol players as follows: *E da /gege/E da /gege// E da/gege/nake/nake*. A few moments later the guru calls out the complete *theka* (00:50secs) starting with *da* which falls “on” the beat, in the *mātrā* pattern below, while the kartal play single strikes on each *mātrā*. In contrast to the khol players pattern recited above is JM’s *bol* pattern

Then: *E nakene nake*, repeatedly.

**III. A3. Rāgini alap changes to rang interlude, with M2 and low M1 (2:23mins):** Sprinkled inside the *rāgini* is a *rang* or “colourful” expression, referring to a melody derived from a popular or contemporary song. The purpose of a *rang* is to provide a diversion from the long held notes of the *rāgini alap*. The *rang* is lower in pitch than the *alap* and its melodic progression is from high to low register moving with rapid

succession, in contrast to the slow tempo of the *rāgini alap*. The *kartal* continue with the single strikes, change briefly to *duni* then back again to single strikes, with the tempo remaining at a similar busy pace. The senior *khol* player dances joyfully in front of the camera and calls out the *bol* syllables.

**III. A4. *Rāgini alap* continues with M1 and M2, (2:54mins):** After the brief *rang* interlude, the MG again reverts to the long sweeping notes of the *rāgini alap* for a second time, contrasting dramatically with the brisk movements of the drum and *kartal*. Thus the ascending and descending notes of the *rāgini alap* are accompanied by the vigorous percussion eight *mātrā* cycles played at a swift pace.

**III. A5. *Rāgini alap*, the guru signals change:** One can observe the intensity of emotion on the face of the young *khol* player as he dances in front of the Chorus/*kartal* players, cajoling them in friendly competition. At the guru's call the *rāgini alap* changes into the *rāgini rang* again.

**III. A6. *Rāgini rang 2*, the guru calls (3:37mins):** Directly after the second round of the *rāgini rang* the guru calls and after completion of the second cycle, the Chorus move with a seamless motion into the *rāgini alap* for a third time without any noticeable change in tempo.

**III. A7. *Rāgini alap* part 3, M1 (4:07mins):** The *khol* player continues to cajole the *dohārī* and Chorus as he dances around the *mandīr*, yet the Chorus does not seem to respond. They simply continue to play single strikes until the guru calls again to herald the next change. The Chorus then concludes the melodic line of the *rāgini alap* and enters into the *rāgini mātān*, with a rapid pace.

**III. A8. *Rāgini kātān mātān*, M1 (4:32mins):** There is an explosive burst of energy as the *khol* players jump up and beat in thunderous unison at the beginning of *rāgini mātān*. The rhythmic parts are the same as in the beginning of the *rāgini* piece, yet briefer and louder as the *khol* players shout out the *bols* simultaneously while playing with tremendous force and precision. The *kartal* patterns change dramatically from single to quadruple strikes as the *rāgini kātān mātān* is in full swing. Instead of finishing the piece at its peak however, the music slows again as the *kartals* revert to single strikes and the *khol*s play *theka* at a moderate pace. This change in tempo heralds the next and final

movement of the rāgini, where the rāgini *rang* is brought to a conclusive ending, it being an independent yet integral part of the rāgini.

**III. A9. Rāgini *alap* part 4, M1 (4:45mins):** Though the melody reverts briefly to the rāgini *alap*, the kartal remain playing single strikes at the same rapid tempo, in one continuum.

**III. A10. Change to *rang* low/high 2 (5:26mins):** Finally after a few more cycles of the rāgini *rang* M2 (low), the rāgini interlude is brought to a gentle close, leading directly into the second section of the Interlude, the rāgini *rang* high part 2, that bridges the gap between the two major rāgas Dāspera and Pākāchutā, starting with a high and piercing call from the MG, *Hari Hari Bolo!*

Observation and analysis of the Rāgini

The contrast between the rapid pulse beating beneath the slowly soaring *alap* has a hypnotic effect upon the listener, resulting in a shift of consciousness to a level above the ordinary. This subtle mesmerizing effect also occurs in *Śiva ranjani* rāga, with its contrasting high vocal *alap* and hurried bass khol rhythms beneath. The *Śiva ranjani* rāga was not performed by the Kostuka team on this day, but by the Māhāto team, as discussed in Part one.

In the beginning of the kīrtan rāgini the MG sings the *alap* while the khols play rolls beneath. Then just thirty seconds later, the guru calls out to signal change and the khols begin to play *theka* and recite the khol *bols* as the MG continues to sing the *alap*. This rapid shift in the rhythmic texture from “non-fixed” to “fixed” *tāla* beneath the soaring *alap* is a unique feature of the rāgini performance and an effective strategy to keep the audience engaged.

The rāgini *alap* is a very short piece simply because it is part of an Interval between the two major kīrtan rāgas, Dāspera and Pākāchutā. Dāspera rāga has an *alap* of over five minutes whereas the rāgini *alap* is approximately thirty seconds long. The brevity of the rāgini *alap* is likely due to the fact that the audience have just listened to the Dāspera *alap* a short while ago and so don’t want a repeat so soon. Also the purpose of the Interval is to provide variation and lighter relief from the intensity of the major rāgas that are performed either side of it. Therefore the guru calls at a strategic moment to

change from the “free” to the fixed rhythmic pattern very quickly after beginning the *alap* so that the audience interest does not wane. The second part of the interlude is the *kīrtan rang* song which continues after the *rāgini* without stop.

### III. B. *Kīrtan rang la*

**III. B1. *Kīrtan rang la* introduction- *bols* and KP6 (6:26mins):** From the deep compelling mood of the *rāgini* in eight *mātrā*, to the *kīrtan rang* played in six *mātrā* in the second part of the Interval, these two parts provide the listener with dramatic contrast. At the first melody of the *kīrtan rang* in the high tessitura (M3), the kartal play two single strikes per *mātrā*, and the khols play the six *mātrā* cycle. According to Māhāto the *kīrtan rang* is a song composed in the same *rāgini* melody and performed instead to *Hari bolo*. The *rang* begins with a short, but high *alap*. The khols respond with a powerful opening rhythmic pattern played seven times, in forty two *mātrās*, with the *bols* sequence, each in six *mātrās* voiced by JM as follows:

- (I) *Ki ge| geda| Gre da| ge geda| dey |dey |*
- (II) *Da da| geda| te te| ta ki | Dage| dage|*
- (III) *Gege da| geda| ghi| Da ge| da ghi| \_ |*
- (IV) *Tete| tete| ta ki| Dage| Dage|\_ |* repeatedly.

The *bols* increase in acceleration, ending with:

- (v) *Tete| dage| daga| dage| tere| dage|*

**The senior Khol player’s *theka*:** From observation, the main *theka* played after the opening rhythmic flourish by the senior khol player and distributed over both sides of the khol in six *mātrā* sounding like *Te Te Ta ki ge (tete ta) dake* (see Fig.2.26).

Musical example 10 (06:39 mins.): Kīrtan *rang tāla* as recited by JM.

**Kirtan rang tāla**

Traditional Traditional

Colour Key for Khols:  
 Pink= Treble, right hand side (Radha)  
 Blue = Bass, left hand side (Krishna)  
 Khol cycles are played sequentially

Though there appears to be some discrepancy between the guru’s *bol* pattern spoken and the one performed by the senior khol player, they are perhaps just different variations of the same *theka* pattern. While the khols are beating the *bol* sequence above, the kartal accompanying them with single or double strikes over the melodic phrase, called KP6 (above). KP6 is a cycle of forty two *mātrās*, or six *mātrās* played seven times.

**III. B2. The kīrtan rang high part (6:43mins):** The kīrtan *rang* has two melodic parts, the first being higher than the second, following the traditional structure of a Vaiṣṇava kīrtan verse (*padavali*). When the first high melodic part begins (M3), the khol play a forty two *mātrā* cycle while the kartal strike on the first and fourth *mātrās* of each khol cycle, making twelve strikes per melodic phrase. Therefore while the khol are

Musical example 11 (07:13 mins.): Kīrtan *rang tāla* and Kartal pattern 6.

Melody: M3, Dance: standing still at the beginning then four steps forwards, backwards, with occasional turn.

2

3

M4

M4 Variation

playing a forty two *mātrā* cycle, the kartal hold the rhythmic foundation intact with two strikes per *mātrā*. The khol players pound the *theka* with vigour and call out the *bols* while circling the *mandīr*. The lilting quality of the drum pattern shows in the dance movements of the senior khol player and the Chorus.

**III. B3. Kīrtan *rang* low melodic part, M4, (7:23mins):** The kīrtan *rang* continues into the second part, lower than the first, while still moving at the same slow rhythmic pace, without high crests or waves of emotion. The M4 is slightly shorter than M3 and has a thirty *mātrā* cycle instead of forty two. In the low part M4, the kartal play ten single strikes while the khol play five rounds of six *mātrās* each. Thus for each M4 low melodic part to be complete, the khol must play the *theka* five times, making thirty *mātrās* to each melodic line, which is twelve less than the M3, the first melodic line.

Though there is variation in the length of the two melodic lines, the *theka* remains in six *mātrās*. Hence the two parts played seven times (forty two *mātrās*) at the M3, (high), and five times at the M4 (low) or thirty *mātrās*, equals a total of seventy two *mātrās* in the rhythmic cycle of the *kīrtan rang*. Seven and five makes twelve complete cycles in six *mātrās* in the *kīrtan rang*, the number that recurs again and again in *marai kīrtan*, as well as in the *Gītagovinda for example*

**III. B4. Kīrtan rang, udara mudara improvisation M5, (8:14mins):** The *udara mudara* is a springboard for the vocal ornamentation in the *kīrtan rang*, while the Chorus repond with M3, rather than the same *udara* improvisation. The MG repeats the *udara mudara* improvisation once more as the guru and the khol players recite the drum *bols*, and together they create a rich, resonance of variable sounds and mnemonic syllables.

**III. B5. Kīrtan rang rhythmic pattern (8:51mins):** A stronger round of the opening rhythmic pattern is performed with further acceleration as the Chorus sing the M3 (high) part of the *kīrtan rang*. The drummers beat with powerful strikes while the kartals provide reinforcement, thus repeating the powerful beginning of the *kīrtan rang* of a few minutes ago. The climactic rhythmic performance is treated similarly to a *kātān*, highlighting the khol player's rhythmic skill and dexterity. It also occurs after the combination of M3 and M4, similar to Dāspēra's M1 and M2. Nearer to the end of the *kīrtan rang* the *mātān* climax is reached, similar to Dāspēra's *kātān mātān*, as the MG sings the *udara mudara* improvisation once more, taking the performance to another level.

**III. B6. Kīrtan rang low part repeats (9:07mins):** While repeating M4 the guru's call can be heard above the powerful voices of the Chorus and khol players, as all move around the *mandīr* at an increasingly rapid pace.

**III. B7. Kīrtan rang change of rhythm, M4 cho duni (9:40mins):** At the change of rhythm, the guru can be seen clapping his hands above his head while the Chorus dance with increased speed, almost running while adding more sway to their movements, as is typical of *cho duni*.

**III. B8. Kīrtan rang, udara mudara repeats M3 and M5 (10:08mins):** The *kīrtan rang* mixed with *udara mudara* M5, is repeated, each time growing in velocity as the musical and devotional intensity mounts. The steps of the Chorus dancers become

more vigorous as they run forwards then backwards in a four beat pattern, jumping as they turn in unison with the khol players.

**III. B9. Kīrtan rang low part (M4) repeats (10:32mins):** With the tempo of the Chorus's dance growing, the MG and Chorus repeat the M4 (low) while the junior khol player makes excited, loud exclamations at the *dohārī* issuing a friendly challenge.

**III. B10. Kīrtan rang udara mudara improvisation, M5 and M3, (11.05mins):** The Chorus dance with exhilarated steps as they reach the *mātān*. The youthful MG stands in the middle with his arms raised high and the main MG dances backwards and forwards with exuberance. The senior MG following behind swaps between clapping his hands and raising them high in *lalita marmika*, surrendering to Hari. When the rhythmic and melodic pinnacle of the kīrtan rang is reached the Chorus dance with giant steps, singing with full, melodious voices and playing the kartal with all their might, rising up to match the *mātān*. Even the khol players are sweating with profusion, the veins in their necks protruding under the strain.

**III. B11. The kīrtan rang low part M4 repeats (11:44mins):** The guru calls after a few rounds of the kīrtan *mātān* as a signal for the team to slow down their running speed. Gradually they come to a halt and prepare for the end of the kīrtan rang in anticipation of the next rāga piece.

**III. B12. Kīrtan rang ending (12:06mins):** The guru gives the final signal of the Interval as they all stand ready to enter into the second major rāga of the kīrtan performance, Pākāchutā rāga.

### **Observations and analysis of the kīrtan rang interlude**

It is interesting to note that in the first part of the Interlude, the classically based rāgini *alap* was mixed with a *rang*, yet in the second part of the Interval, the order is reversed where a kīrtan *rang* is mixed with the *udara mudara* improvisation, as in Dāspera rāga. This is because, the kīrtan *rang* is based on a traditional *padavali* kīrtan i.e. a *rang* from the same genre, and not from another such as, *jhumur* folk song for example. Though the kīrtan *rang* is not as grand as the traditional Dāspera or Pākāchutā tālas/rāga, for example, it is still a very significant musical piece, demonstrated by the fact that it has been treated similarly to a kīrtan rāga with a *la* melodic line and *bol* recitations, *udara*

and rhythmic embellishments (KP6), which can be compared to Dāspera *la, udara mudara* and the intricate rhythmic patterns (KP1 and KP2). The main differences however are that the kīrtan *rang* is in six *mātrā* and not eight and also that it is a very brief composition without an *alap* or extensive *bol* composition, in comparison to Dāspera *kātān*.

Overall, the similarities between the kīrtan *rang* and Dāspera are apparent with its two melodic parts (M3 and M4), as well as an *udara mudara* improvisation (M5), an elaborate kartal pattern accompanying the *bols* (KP6), a *mātān* and a “mock” *kātān bol* section with a repeat of the opening *bol* section. Hence the kīrtan *rang* is an abbreviated version of a traditional kīrtan rāga, thus affirming its importance in the *marāī* kīrtan tradition.

Table 2.12 Comparison between the kīrtan *rang* and Dāspera rāga structure.

<b>Kīrtan rang</b>	<b>Dāspera</b>
M3, M4 – high and low parts	M1, M2 – <i>la</i> and <i>udara mudara</i>
M5 <i>udara mudara</i> improvisation	M2 <i>udara mudara</i> improvisation
Six/twelve <i>mātrās</i>	Eight <i>mātrās</i> , twelve <i>mātrās</i>
Kartal pattern 6 (KP6), in 6 <i>mātrās</i>	KP1 is in 8 <i>mātrās</i> , KP2 in 10 or 12 <i>mātrās</i> , <i>katan</i> in 12 <i>mātrās</i>
Brief <i>kātān bols</i> section, same as beginning at B5.	Elaborate <i>kātān bols</i> section, opening <i>bols</i> are different from the <i>Kātān bols</i> .
<i>Rang mātān</i>	<i>La mātān and Kātān mātān</i>

Hence, in this short Interlude between two major rāgas, the Kostuka Kīrtan team perform a musical composition that has various sections: a rāgini *alap* and *rang* inserted within it; a traditional kīrtan *rang sur* from the Kṛṣṇa *lila* with an *udara mudara* improvisation; combined in matching pairs and played in juxtaposition to each other to create an extraordinary musical piece, and a diversion from the two major kīrtan rāgas on either side. The classical rāgini for example is juxtaposed with a popular *rang* song and the traditional kīrtan *rang sur* is juxtaposed with the *udara mudara*, creating a unique and

innovative performance structure, that nevertheless lies within the traditional boundaries of the *marāī* kīrtan genre.

As already stated the Interval provides a lighter mood, between the two more rhythmically complex and strenuous rāgas and adds variation and entertainment value to the kīrtan performance. However in the case of the Kostuka team they adopt a different approach, firstly they perform a *ragini* directly after Dāspera rāga, then sprinkle a touch of *rang* inside of it, then in the second part, they perform a traditional kīrtan *rang*, based upon the previous *rāgini* melody (JM 2007: Pers.comm.) and weave *udara mudara*, a classical improvisation within it, connecting the Interval with Dāspera. This complex juxtaposition of different musical parts and performance strategy is an outstanding innovation.

By introducing a traditional *rāgini* next to Dāspera rāga rather than a *rang*, the classical “flavor” is heightened, and then by adding some traces of a kīrtan *rang* song for audience entertainment it is brought back into the popular realm. The cyclic nature of the Interlude is demonstrated by the incorporation of *udara mudara* into the second part of the Interval connecting it back to Dāspera at the beginning, thus tying together all the previous musical parts into one garland (*mandala*) of devotional musical expression.

Another strategy adopted by the guru to vary the performance is the juxtaposition of “free” *alap* and “fixed” *tāla* or *theka*. The way he maneuvers the performance away from the MG’s *alap* in the *ragini* to a fixed *tāla* only thirty seconds later, is a decisive move to hold audience interest with the purpose of creating an interruption or diversion from, rather than a continuation of, the previous rāga performance. Thus by keeping the *rāgini alap* at five minutes yet shortening the unmetered rhythmic part to just thirty seconds, a bare minimum, the guru is able to maintain both the integrity of the classical *rāgini* yet keep it as an interlude. In this way, the audience attention is considered without compromising the beauty and depth of the classical *rāgini* or the entertainment value of the *rang*.

As the khols beat a six *mātrā* pattern underneath the unmetered vocal *alap* the juxtaposition of fixed *tāla* with soaring *alap* melodies produces a mesmerizing effect on the audience, taking the performance to a transcendental level where the Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa *lila* can be reenacted in the imagination of both musician and listener.

On a philosophical level the different combinations of rāgini/ *rang* and kīrtan *rang/udara mudara* in the interval, adds “spice” to the kīrtan performance reflecting episodes from the Kṛṣṇa *lila* “love play” upon which the kīrtan *rang* is based. The kīrtan *rang* appears unobtrusively in the mix, keeps floating in and out of the rāgini mysteriously, enticing the audience and keeping them enthralled. By combining the rāgini/*rang* and kīrtan *rang/udara mudara*, the performance has greater appeal and recreates a sense of heightened drama reflecting the devotional relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, thus inspiring intense spiritual longing. As Rājwar says “all of kīrtan is from Rādhā’s perspective in a state of separation (*viraha*)”. (2006: Pers. comm.).

#### IV. Pākāchutā Rāga- Musical example 13/14.

##### Introduction

The next rāga in the kīrtan performance is Pākāchutā, *paka* lit. means “ripe” and *chuta* “flower” (Māhāto 2007: Pers.comm.). Pākāchutā is a primary rāga within the *marāī* kīrtan tradition of Rāṛh. Other rāgas in the same category are Dāspera, Jhorchutā and Sanni to name the most common ones today which are from Rāṛh whereas *Śiva Ranjani*, and *Emon* raga are derived from the Hindustani classical tradition.

At some historical junction (where both kīrtan and classical Hindustani musicians met) certain specific Hindustani rāgas have been adapted to *marāī* kīrtan, most likely by a kīrtan expert with a background in classical music, such as Narottama Das, *dhrupadiya* from Kheruri or Jinana Das (16<sup>th</sup> century). Perhaps the adaptation of various Hindu classical rāgas occurred as a collaboration between kīrtan and classical musicians from the Viṣṇupur *gharana* of *dhrupad* for example (the classical music nexus of Rāṛh) as discussed in Part one.

Certainly, Pākāchutā rāga is a very comprehensive rāga, although somewhat tough or raw to the ear, matching the dry, summer terrain of the Rāṛhi landscape with its low curvaceous mountains and thin forests of sinuous trees. It is not so “sweet and easy” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.) as Dāspera rāga, although there are “sweet” (*madhu*) elements within it, especially the high improvisational melodic parts (M4) of the *kātān*. It has a brief *alap*, five melodic lines, as well as a lengthy *kātān* composition. Dāspera has two

primary melodic lines, *la* and *kātān*, plus two *udara* improvisations, whereas Pākāchutā has three primary melodic lines (one in *la* and two in the *kātān*), and two improvisations, one of which is a *rang* melody (*sur*). Dāspera is in *ektala*, generally performed in eight and twelve *mātrā* cycles, whereas Pākāchutā is in seven *mātrās*, a more complex rhythmic cycle.

Table 2.13 Pākāchutā rāga - melody section, kartal patterns, khol and *mātrās*.

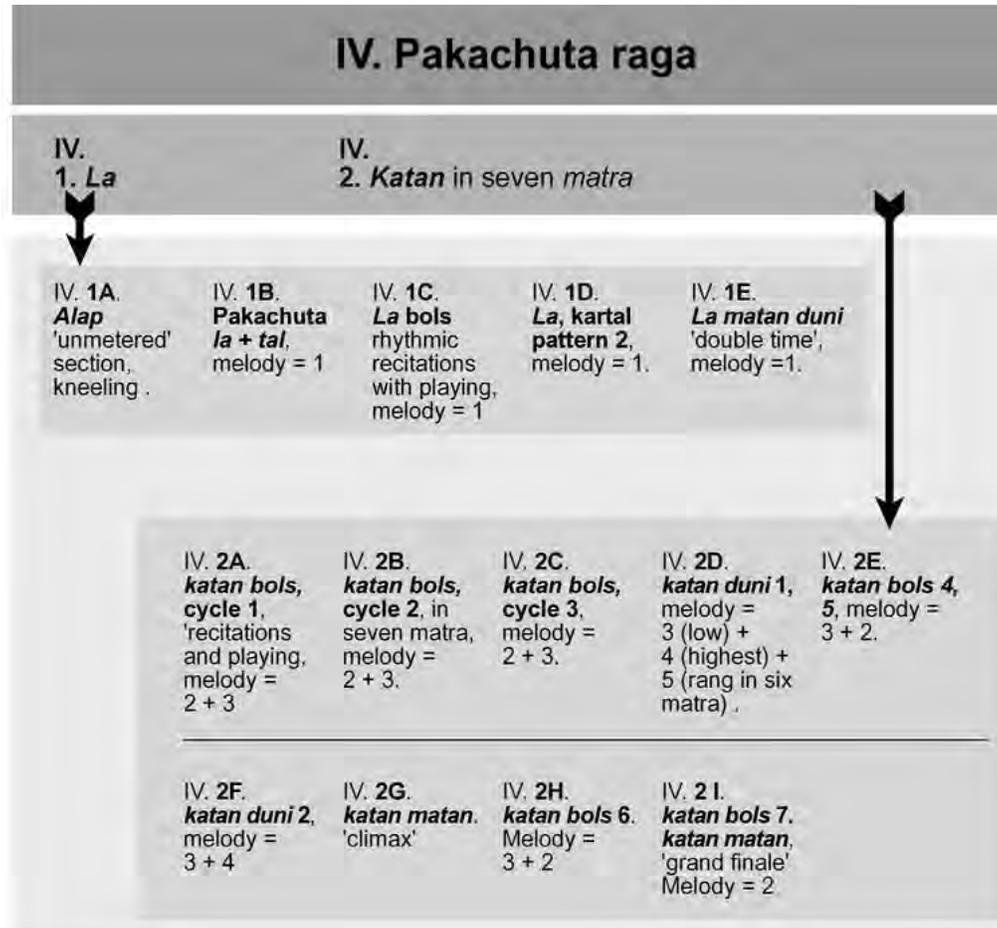


Table 2.14 Pākāchutā overview (see pages 304-309 for transcription).

IV.PĀKĀCHUTĀ Rāga	Melody	Kartal patterns	Khol	Mātrā
IV. 1A. <i>Alap</i>	<i>Alap</i>	Jangling	Rolls and SS	7 <i>mātrās</i>
1B – D <i>La</i>	M1	Single strikes (SS)	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“

1E. <i>La Mātān</i>	M1	SS/Duni	<i>Tāla bols</i>	“
IV. 2. A <i>Kātān</i>	M2 (high)	KP4	<i>Tāla</i>	“
2.B –D <i>Kātān</i>	M3	KP5 and KP4	<i>Bols 1 -3</i>	“
2. E <i>Kātān duni</i>	M4 (v.high)	KP4 <i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7 <i>mātrās</i> x 4 = 28 beat cycle
IV. E1. <b><i>Kātān rang</i></b>	M5 (low)	SS	<i>Theka</i>	6 <i>mātrās</i> x 4 = 24 beat cycle
E2. <i>Kātān duni</i>	M4	<i>Duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28 beat cycle
E3 – 4. <i>Rang</i> and <i>duni</i> combined	M5 +M4	SS and <i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7 <i>mātrās</i> + 6 <i>mātrās</i> combined
E5 – 6. <i>Mātān</i>	M5 +M4	<i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28 beats
IV.2.F. <i>Kātān bols</i> 4	M3 +M2	KP5	<i>Kātān bols 4</i>	7 <i>mātrās</i>
2. F2. <i>Kātān bols 5</i>	M3	“	<i>Kātān bols 5</i>	“
2G. <i>Kātān duni 2</i>	M2 + M3	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28
2H. <i>Kātān mātān 1</i>	M3	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28
2I. <i>Kātān bols 6</i>	M3 +M2	KP5	<i>Kātān bols 6</i>	7 <i>mātrās</i>
2J. <i>Kātān bols 7</i>	M3	KP5 and 4	<i>Kātān bols 7</i>	“
J1. <i>Katan matan</i>	M2	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	“

Comparisons between Dāspera (II) and Pākāchutā (IV), with numbers relating to the DVD:

**IV.1A. Pākāchutā alap:** The *alap* is very brief, having only one strike and drum roll, compared to Dāspera’s *alap* which is five minutes long with twenty two strikes and rolls.

**IV.1B. Introduction:** Pākāchutā *tāla* is introduced with recitation of the *bols* accompanied by single strikes (SS) as in Dāspera.

**IV.C - 1D. Pākāchutā La:** Is accompanied by SS played with acceleration, rather than the elaborate KP1 or KP2 of Dāspera.

**IV.1E. Pākāchutā La mātān:** *La mātān* is where the single melodic line M1 continues without the *udara mudara* improvisation, with accelerated single strikes on the *kartal* changing into *duni* KP4. Hence in the first part of the *rāga*, Pākāchutā is simpler by comparison to Dāspera with its intricate and elaborate *kartal* patterns. The Pākāchutā *la* is performed with only one melodic line includes *bols* patterns and either KP1, single strikes or KP4 *duni*.

**IV. 2A – C. Kātān bols:** Pākāchutā *kātān* bols begin with a change into KP5 and the kneeling Chorus as in Dāspera. In Pākāchutā *kātān* there are two primary melodic lines, M2, (high) and M3 (low), compared to only one primary line in Dāspera (M3). The expanded *kātān bols* cycles, 2 and 3, is where the two *rāgas* deviate significantly for in Dāspera there is only one major section of *kātān bols* recitations whereas in Pākāchutā there are seven sections.

**IV. 2D. Pākāchutā duni:** Pākāchutā *duni* includes the high improvisation M4, similar to Dāspera which also has *duni* and the MG’s sing the *udara* vocal improvisation.

**IV. 2E. Pākāchutā rang:** The *rang* melody (*sur*) is inserted within *duni* and combined i.e. six *mātrā* is combined with seven *mātrā*. In Dāspera, there is no *rang* inserted at this point, rather *duni* continues unabated. Pākāchutā then reverts to the improvisational M4 part, with *duni* KP4. This combination of Pākāchutā M4 alternating with the *rang* is repeated four times.

**IV. 2F. Pākāchutā bols 4 and 5:** The *khol bol* composition and recitations grow in rhythmic density and acceleration, while the Chorus sing the *kātān* melodies, M2 and M3.

**IV. 2G. *Kātān duni 2*:** The second *duni* occurs after Pākāchutā *bols* 4 and 5, where the khol players traverse the *mandīr* in a state of intoxication, dancing in Rāḍhā *bhava* with *lasya* movements. There is no second *duni* part in the Dāspera rāga however, it is performed only once after the Dāspera *kātān bols*.

**IV. 2H. Pākāchutā *kātān mātān*:** What appears to be the grand *finale* is actually a precursor of it, as the khol players embark upon another two cycles of *kātān bols*, making a total of seven *bol* compositions, each with seven cycles making forty nine cycles or rhythmic lines, compared to Dāspera’s seven cycles in total.

**IV. 2I. Pākāchutā *kātān bols 6 and 7*:** The *kātān bol* cycles 6 and 7 are performed with maximum zeal and devotional expression.

**IV. 2J. Pākāchutā *kātān bols 7 and kātān mātān*:** M2 and M3 with the *kātān mātān* bring the performance to pinnacled expression with all playing and singing in unison at the height of intensity, as in Dāspera’s *kātān mātān*.

Concluding comparison between **Dāspera** and **Pākāchutā**: The primary differences between the Pākāchutā and Dāspera performance structures are: there is only one melodic line in Pākāchutā *la* whereas in Dāspera there are *la* and *udara mudara*; the rhythmic patterns of Dāspera are more elaborate in the beginning of the rāga with the inclusion of KP1 and KP2 for example compared to Pākāchutā *la*’s single and double strikes only; Pākāchutā *kātān bols* composition is greater in length and complexity, with seven cycles of seven or forty seven rhythmic lines, and two *duni* sections interspersed, compared to Dāspera’s *kātān bol* composition with seven rhythmic lines in total and one *duni* section. Hence in terms of melodic lines, Dāspera and Pākāchutā are similar in number. However Pākāchutā is a more strenuous rāga both in melody and rhythm as reflected in the *kātān* where Pākāchutā far surpasses Dāspera with forty nine rhythmic lines to the composition compared to only seven in Dāspera.

Pākāchutā *gan*:

*Sākhigo oho nāi nāi dukher/ sima nāi go*

*Dukher katha kāre bā ā bolbo*

*O bolbo go ago dhoni*

*Dukher katha kare bā bāli,*

“I cannot bear this painful separation from Kṛṣṇa. Neither do I have anyone to whom I can tell about it. To whom can I speak about this pain and gain some relief” (JM, 2006:Pers.com.). There are many songs for Pākāchutā and Sanni but the rhythm pattern is the same. The theme is mostly based on *viraha*, pain of separation, where Rāḍhā is telling her companions the *sākhis* about her love for Kṛṣṇa (ibid.).

Note: Numbers IV below refer to the DVD subtitles.

#### **IV. 1. Pākāchutā rāga**

##### **IV. 1A. Pākāchutā rāga *alap***

The khol players wipe a wet cloth around the outer rim on the left, deep side of the khol to moisten the skin, in preparation for the first strike. At the commencement of Pākāchutā, the MG sings the opening *alap* amidst jangling kartals and intermittent khol strikes. The khol players walk around the central altar as the MG’s penetrate the *mandīr* and village surroundings with their piercing calls to Hari. The Chorus echoes the MG’s ending note, extending it with full voice into the MG’s next lead, while kneeling around the circumference of the *mandīr*.

IV. 1B. Tāla is introduced (00:51secs)

The khols strong attack on the first *sam* reverberates throughout the *mandīr* and beyond, is met with loud exclamations from the MG and Chorus as they stand erect, ready to begin *lalita marmika* the kīrtan dance. After the MG’s first melodic cycle and Chorus response, the MG repeats Pākāchutā *la* as the khols play slowly with precision to establish the *tāla*. Pākāchutā *la* is played in seven *mātrā* with the *sam* falling on the *jha*, the second beat of the rhythmic cycle as follows:

Musical example 12 (00:51 secs.)

**Pakachuta La**

Trad. Trad.

Starts at 1:04mins, at approx. 20b.p.m  
 Dance: Stepping forwards and backwards with hands together, swinging side to side, and turning in an anti clockwise direction.

Lead/Chorus  
 Ha ri Hari Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo

Cymbals

khols  
 Dha te te Dha di da

2

Lead/Chorus  
 Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo

Cym.

khols  
 Ge Geda ge da Jha ge re ge re da da ya toi toi ke ta di da Ge da Ge da Te te ta

**Kartal strikes:** In Pākāchutā *la* the kartal first play single strikes on each *mātrā*, with a kartal roll after the *sam* leading to the third strike. The second kartal part is double strikes instead of one, making fourteen instead of seven strikes. As Pākāchutā *la* progresses and becomes more accelerated, the kartals play *duni*, (KP4), with the accent on the first beat, for “inside *la*, in between, is *duni*” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

IV. 1C. Pākāchutā *la bols*, KP1, single strikes, (1:00mins)

While the khol *bols* are being recited as *da de ta*, the kartals play single strikes, with a roll on the beat following the *sam*. Slowly and with exactitude they establish the Pākāchutā *tāla* while reciting the *bols* then gradually increase the tempo and intensity of devotional expression. The *kartals* keep a steady pulse as they dance forwards and backwards in a clockwise direction, then turn in small anti clockwise circles while playing single strikes.

IV. 1D. Pākāchutā *la*, KP2, accelerated (2:30mins)

The tempo has accelerated considerably and after a few more cycles of single strikes, accelerates again, causing the Chorus to move in a more sprightly fashion around the *mandīr*.

#### IV. 1E. Pākāchutā *la mātān* (3:30mins)

Here the density of the basic rhythmic pattern is increased with a greater number of strikes within each *mātrā* as well as the tempo, to reach *la mātān*. As the Chorus can no longer take small steps to keep up with the accelerated pulse, they now must run and skip around the *mandīr* with considerable speed.

**IV. 1E1. Pākāchutā *la mātān*, *duni* (4:06mins):** Half way through the *mātān* the kartal players break into a *duni* pattern, requiring greater skill and concentration. They increase their strikes from single to quadruple, which at first causes them to slow down to a slow walking pace, then quicken again. The khols play the Pākāchutā *bol* pattern mixed with *theka* predominantly on the right side of the khol, to maintain the high speed and intensity of playing. The younger khol player interacts with the *dohārī* in a playful manner, thus keeping the spirit of collectivity and friendly competition alive.

**IV. 1E2. *La, mātān* “climax”, *duni*, the guru’s call (4:36mins):** To complement the tempo increase of the *mātān duni* rhythms, the Chorus dance together in pairs, skipping and weaving in and out of each other in delightful figure eight formations. On hearing the guru’s call in the background, the Chorus responds immediately.

#### IV. 2. Pākāchutā *kātān* (4:55mins)

Pākāchutā *kātān* is an expansive rhythmic composition with seven sections, each section has seven *bol* sequences in seven *mātrā* and each *mātrā* is broken down into various subdivisions, depending on what part of the *kātān* is being performed. Therefore there are twenty eight rounds consisting of seven *mātrās* in each of the seven sections, and within each of the twenty eight cycles of seven *mātrās* there are different rhythmic patterns or combinations that grow in acceleration and density as the *kātān* progresses. The *kātān bols* are recited in a series of repeats for the first three cycles, followed by a single line (the seventh cycle) which reach a peak of intensity at the end of each cycle. Pākāchutā *kātān* is notated in the transcription below (silences are intentional):

Pākāchutā *kātān* begins with the Chorus and MG singing the M2 (high), followed by the M3 (low) while the *khol* players are circling around the *mandīr* as they prepare to play the *kātān bol* compositions. They call *tete tete* (right hand movement) at the end of

the M2 part, and start of the *kātān bols* with (M3), with tremendous vigor and concentration.

Table 2.15 An example of a 28 *mātrā bols* cycle in Pākāchutā *kātān*.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tar	Tar	Tar	Tar	Tere	Tete	Tere
Take	Take	Take	Ta	Tete	Tete	Ta
Tete	Tete	Tete	Ta	Tete	Tete	Ta
–	Toi	Toi	Toi	–	–	–

In the above Table 2.15, the top line represents the *mātrā* number or beats. *Toi* for example, is played with the left hand and *Da* played both sides. *Tete* and *ta* are right side only, making up one *mātrā*.

#### IV. 2A Pākāchutā *kātān bols* 1 (5:08mins).

At this point there is a gap in the filming where the first sequence of the *kātān bol* composition is being performed while the camera person is away briefly. In a later interview, the guru Jagaran Māhāto recited some of the *kātān bols* that were missing, although only three of the seven *mātrā* sequences, as transcribed in the score following. Due to the complexity and length of the score I have included it in total at the end of this section (pg. 303)

#### IV. 2B. Pākāchutā *kātān bols* 2 (5:15mins).

After the *kātān bols* cycle 1 is performed, the filming continues with *kātān bols* cycle 2. The melodic line (M2), khol and kartal patterns are given in the Musical example 16, at the end of this section. In each of the *kātān bol* cycles the kartal patterns are comprised of different combinations. KP5 is more sparse, including strikes and silences in each *mātrā*, and the second KP4 is doubled, having a greater density of regular strikes. There is also the distinctive silence on the seventh *mātrā* and on the last three strikes in both kartal patterns.

When the khol players are circling the *mandīr*, in between playing the *bol* cycles, the kartal play KP5, but when the khols actually play the *bol* compositions per se, then

the kartal play continuous rapid strikes with full strength and vigour KP4. There is a marked increase in tempo and rhythmic density in the rhythmic parts as the *kātān* performance progresses.

**Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 2, M3 (low):** The *khol* players, standing in front of the *mandīr* centre stage, take the lead as they play the next *bol* sequence. Meanwhile the Chorus and MG provide melodic accompaniment to the rhythmic lead by alternately singing the *kātān* melodies, M3 (low), M2 (high), then M3 again. The *khol* players recite and play the *bols* simultaneously with great force and concentration.

A significant characteristic of the *kātān bol* composition is that each rhythmic line always begins on the *Bolo* of the previous melodic phrase and not at the *Hari* at the beginning. Hence the *khols* always “lead in” the *kātān* melodic cycle with the first *kātān bol* cycle. Each cycle consists of three repeated *bol* sequences and each *bol* sequence is made up of different rhythmic combinations or strike patterns, totaling seven *mātrā*. The various rhythmic combinations that make up the seven *mātrā*, with four or eight subdivisions, can be seen below. The first three cycles of the *kātān bols 2* are repeated, making six cycles (shown in lines 1-3) and the seventh is solo as seen in *bol* sequence 4.

In between the *kātān bols 2* and 3 the *khol* players are moving around the *mandīr* while the accompanying kartal rhythms KP5 and KP4 are being played. Therefore there are seven *bol* rhythmic lines, multiplied by seven cycles, equals forty nine *bol* sequences in the *kātān bol* composition in seven *mātrās*.

The *kātān bols 2*, were recited by JM (interview in Feb. 2007) as follows:

1/2. At 5:31 mins, *is Tor da dada dagere dada dagere dade ya \_* x3, then repeats;

3/4. (Recited by JM on Feb 2007, but omitted in performance) *Gereda da gereda dene gereda gereda gereda \_* x3, then repeats;

5/6. At 5:53 mins *Ketak ta keta dene keta keta keta \_* x3 then repeats as above.

7. At 6:09mins. *Deya keta deya kete deya kete ta ta ta/ Dene da dene da dene da| getere keretak, Dini dini da |dini dini da |dini dini da.*

***Kātān bols 2:*** The *kātān* M3 is sung four times, the first being without *bol* recitations, and the following three, with *bol* recitations. It is noticeable that the seventh *mātrā* silence falls on the *Bolo bolo*, which occurs immediately before the last *Hari* of the

melodic phrase. The last *Hari* is also the first beat of the *kātān bol* cycle as shown in *Ba* music notation, so that the first beat of the rhythmic sequence actually starts on the last *mātrā* of the melodic phrase, on the \*Hari, which creates a very dynamic performance because the *sam* of the rhythmic cycle always precedes the melodic line, thus “leading in” the kīrtan melody behind (see musical example 15)

**Description of *kātān bols* 2:** The first and second *kātān bol* lines above are accompanied by M3 (low), then midway through, on the fourth cycle (the second part repeat) M2 begins and continues through to the end of *kātān bols*. The seventh line begins with *deya kete* and ends with *dini dini da*. The *kātān bols* 2, in Chart form can be seen in Appendix B. Thus completes the second section of the *kātān bol* composition in seven *mātrā*. This is followed by a third section of *bol* sequences, greatly accelerated.

IV. 2C. Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 3 (6:35mins) see Appendix B, example no. 4.

The third *bol* section begins on the M3 (low) then switches to the M2 (high) and remains there till the end, as the tempo rises dramatically and the rhythmic patterns grow in complexity.

1/2. At 6:40mins, *Da geregere dene takete, jha jha terekete, kin au kiti tete, kiti daga dene, da geregere, doya takete jha jha x 2*

3/4. At 6:58mins, *Tor doya, tor doya, tere kete tin nauna, kiti tete kiti tete tini, tor doya tor doya x 2*

5/6. At 7:16mins, *Da tata geregere, tini kiti daga tini, kete, ti nauna kiti tete, kiti dage, tina tik, kiti dage tina tik, tini kiti daga tini tik, x 2*

7. At 7:32mins, *Dene daga tere, geregere geregere, deneda deneda, dene daga tere geregere, dini dini da, dini dini da, dini dini da.*

IV. 2D. *Kātān duni* 1, (7:42mins):

Previously the third round of *kātān bols* was performed in seven rhythmic lines each with a pattern of seven *mātrā*. In order to allow a brief diversion to gather strength, or break the intensity of the *kātān bols*, the first *duni* section is inserted. The Chorus now stands and begins to move with sensual fervour around the *mandīr*, their graceful *lasya* dance movements expressing their identification with Rāḍhā, as the lover of Kṛṣṇa.

Musical example 13 (11:11 mins.): Pakachuta *katan* improvisations (M4 and M5).

Meanwhile the khol players take some repose in the middle of the *kātān bol* recital and play *duni theka* in twenty eight *mātrā* cycles.

The *kātān* M2 continues after the *kātān bols* 3 cycle as the rhythm changes into the relaxed *duni* mode. In *kātān duni* there are twenty eight *mātrās* in each melodic cycle, divided into seven *mātrā* with at least four subdivisions in each. The accents are on strikes one and three. The melodic line then ascends to the high improvisation, M4, as the kartals continue playing *duni*. Hence there is an alternation of melodic and rhythmic highlights, where the rhythm changes first from *kātān bols* to *kātān duni* then the melody changes from the *kātān* M2 (high) to M4, the highest, “sweet” *madhur* improvisation, as they weave in and around each other in a dynamic play of divine seduction.

The *bols* for *duni theka* are *Da ka ge da na ka te ne* = one *mātrā*, in four rounds of seven to make one melodic cycle, played on the left hand side of the khol. The khol players recite the *bols* with the accent on the first strike of each pair, *da ka gede | na ka dena*, “They use *badike*, the left side of the *khol* at the *duni* part of the *kātān* during *theka*, when the *bols* are not being performed” (JM 2006: Pers.comm.).

Pākāchutā *kātān* M3 (low) is sung as the khols play *duni theka* receding into the background after the intensive *bol* performance. The Chorus now comes into the limelight as they play *duni* in a regular four beat patterns and dance with a joyful,

victorious gait. In *duni*, the Chorus's dance features as a highlight, having been kneeling in the background during the previous khol *bol* composition.

IV. 2E. *Kātān duni* melodic improvisation M4, (8:16mins):

The M4 is higher in register than the previous melodic parts of the rāga, it is an improvisation, sung by both the MG and Chorus. It is also the most appealing of the Pākāchutā melodic lines, sounding very madhu “sweet” compared to the previous more strenuous ones. Interwoven with the khol and kartal parts, the M4 gives the kīrtan a very rich texture and although it seems to strain the voices of some of the Chorus, the overall effect is very harmonious.

**IV. 2E. 1. *Kātān* low improvisation M5, (9:06mins):** Creating a new rhythmic variation, the pattern changes from seven into six *mātrā* as they insert a *rang* melody (M5) briefly into the *kātān*. The Chorus responds by changing from double into single strikes, while accenting the “on beat” in a faster tempo as the khols play the “off” beats in syncopation with the kartal, on right hand side of the khol. The kartal's single strikes and the khol's *theka* are played in juxtaposition to each other as they dance together with elation, creating an exhilarating effect. The melodic improvisation (M5) varies with the *kātān* M3 (low), being even lower in pitch and shorter in rhythmic duration.

After twice through the M4 (high improvisation), the melodic line descends to M5 (low), sung twice, then ascends again to M4 and M5 alternately. The rhythmic line changes now from a twenty eight *mātrā* cycle in seven *mātrā* into a twenty four *mātrā* cycle in six *mātrā*. When the melodic line descends (M5), the kartal play single strikes in six *mātrā*, then ascends again (M4) while reverting to *duni* in seven *mātrā*. In this way they create musical diversification through variation and alternation of the rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

**IV. 2. E2. *Kātān duni* high improvisation M4, (9:49mins):** Here the drummers play primarily on the bass end of the drum as the singers revert to M4 (high), then alternate between M4 and M5, backwards and forwards. During M5 (low) in six *mātrā* the kartal and khols play in strict syncopation with each other, but when they switch back to M4 the kartal change to the previous accented rhythms of *duni*, played in a seven beat cycle or twenty eight *mātrās* to the melodic phrase, thus keeping the rhythmic foundation firmly in a tight grip.

**IV. 2. E3. *Kātān duni M5, (10:32mins):*** The kartal break into six *mātrā* and single strikes once again, but with increased acceleration and more vigorous dance movements, spinning in anti clockwise circles, backwards and forwards inside the greater clockwise movement around the *mandīr*. The MG and Chorus repeat M5 and rather than playing single strikes as has previously been the case, they now play *duni* during both M4 and M5 of the *kātān*, thus heightening the rhythmic intensity of the *kātān*. As the rhythmic performance increases in acceleration, it also becomes more uniform and regular as the team rise to greater heights of devotional expression.

**IV. 2. E4 *Kātān duni M4, (11:10mins):*** After the M5 in six *mātrā*, the high improvisation M4 is repeated in *duni*, and this alternation of melodic and rhythmic parts creates a dynamic and diverse performance. Some of the Chorus finds it hard to reach the higher register yet the overall effect is uplifting. The juxtaposition of seven *mātrā* in the high part with six *mātrā* in the low *rang* is an effective device to keep audience interest thereby highlighting their rhythmic expertise.

With the right foot leading the clockwise movement around the *mandīr*, the Chorus's more fluid dance steps are accentuated. The kartal play *duni* while the drummers play *theka* on the left or deep side of the khol. When the guru calls the team respond by slowing down to begin the next part.

**IV. 2. E5. *Pākāchutā kātān duni M5 repeats a third time (11:51mins):***The MG and Chorus repeat M5 and rather than playing single strikes as has previously been the case, they now play *duni* through both M4 and M5 of the *kātān*, thus heightening the rhythmic intensity of the *kātān*. As the rhythmic performance increases in acceleration, it also becomes more uniform and regular as the team rise to greater heights of devotional expression.

**IV. 2. E6. *Pākāchutā kātān duni M4 repeats (12:21mins):*** With the right foot leading the clockwise movement around the *mandīr*, the Chorus's more fluid dance steps are accentuated. The kartal play *duni* while the drummers play *theka* on the left or deep side of the khol.

**IV. 2. E7. *Pākāchutā kātān duni ends (13:08mins):*** The guru calls to the team to signal another change and at the next cycle they slow down, almost stopping, then begin to play the next *kātān bol* pattern. This can be clearly seen when the usual *kātān*

kartal pattern 5 (KP5) begins. Māhāto says that the kartal patterns for the *kātān/mātān* are generally the same for each rāga, whether it is Dāspera or Pākāchutā, i.e. the sparse KP5, alternating with the rapid KP4, *mātān*. These two alternating kartal patterns continue to form the basis of the *kātān bol* sections.

IV. 2F. *Kātān bols* 4 (13:21mins).

The start of the *kātān* M3 (low) is the signal for the drummers to embark on the next seven rounds of *kātān bols*, each with twenty eight beats over a single melodic phrase. Unlike the previous *kātān bol* sequences, there are no breaks in Pākāchutā *bol* cycle 4, rather it is continuous playing of seven *bol* cycles, as it grows with pinnacled expression. Pākāchutā *bol* cycle 4 follows:

1/2. *Da da tere tete, dregeda tere tete, tinauna kiti tete, kiti daga dini gede, drege drega da drega drega da, drege dak da* (13:21mins);

3/4. *Drege drege dere tere, drega dak tere tete, tinauna kiti tete, kiti daga dini gede, drege drege da drege drege da, drege da* (13:45mins);

5/6. *Drege dhena drege dena tere tete, tinauna kiti tete, kiti daga dini, drega nada drega nada, drega nada* (14:04mins);

7. *Deneda da geneda da, geneda da giritere kiti tak, deneda da geneda da giritere kiti tak, dini dini da, dini dini da, dini dini da* (14:21mins).

**IV. 2. F1. *Kātān bols* 4, high melodic improvisation (M2):** Mid way through the *bol* composition, the vocal part changes to M2 at cycle five and remains there till the end of *bols* 4. While the junior drummer is beating, he is making loud interjections, while beating the syncopated rhythms with all his might. The kartal players lift their arms upwards at the end of the rhythmic phrase emphasising the *sam*, in dramatic exuberance. At the end of the seventh *bol* cycle, it then slows down again in preparation for the next *kātān bol* cycle 5.

**IV. 2. F2. *Kātān bols* cycle 5 (14:48mins):** The kartal play the KP5 and wait for the *bols* to commence the *kātān bols* 5. With an explosive, thunderous vitality the khol players rush forwards like warriors to the front line, as the guru calls out the *bols* in a

commanding voice starting with heavy sounds, i.e. long mnemonic syllables, *Tar tar tor tor*, and claps loudly.

1/2. *Tor tor tor tor, tere tete tere tete, tat a tat a, tere tete tere tete, tere thakena tekete jh, toi toi toi* (14:48mins);

3/4. *Jha dene tun da, kiti taki dene kete, da dene tun da, kiti taki dene kete, tunda tunda tunda toi toi toi* (15:10mins);

5/6. *Da keta naka dene, naka dena doya, ta keta naka dene, naka dene doya, to keta to keta to keta jha jha, jha* (15:27mins);

7. *Deneda deneda deneda, giritere keteka, deneda deneda deneda, Giritere ketaka, dini dini da, dini dini da, dini dini da* (15:42mins).

There are no intervening breaks in the *kātān bols 5*, as it becomes progressively louder in volume, accelerated in tempo and thicker in rhythmic density. The khol players recite the *bols* in a powerful voice, with the guru's support from behind. They raise their left arms up at the *sam* of each cycle, as if in surrender to Hari, creating a dramatic interlude then continue onto the next cycle. The drum rhythms speak a language that reverberates within, sounding sharp and loud but congenial, like humming crickets on a moonlit night or water dripping from within dark caverns, somehow satisfying the internal spaces of the mind and harmonizing with the natural surroundings of the red coloured earth and curvaceous mountains of the Rārhi landscape.

The khol players spin around with ecstatic smiles upon their faces at the completion of the *kātān bols 5* cycle and the beginning of *kātān duni 2*.

IV. 2G. *Kātān duni 2* (15:51mins).

The dancers feature again in this second *duni* section, as the melodic line continues with the same *kātān M2*, the high melodious part, not the M4.

There is a sense of intimacy between the *dohārī* and the junior kartal player who moves up to dance next to him. Together the dancers create a united front, a close formation of pairs moving (16:15mins) at a moderate pace and turning in small anticlockwise circles as they sing devotedly with full voice and expression. The khol players also dance with exhilaration in tandem around the *mandīr* while playing the

*theka* on the bass side only. This is a blissful moment of emotional/devotional release for the khol players, who have completed three quarters of the *kātān bol* composition.

One villager has pinned money onto the sleeve of the *dohārī* as a show of appreciation for his performance which in turn inspires the team even further. The younger khol player continues smiling ecstatically and exclaiming “*he ya he ya*“ in time with the khol beats. He cajoles the *dohārī* who looks straight at him but isn’t visibly moved. The senior player looks almost luminous as he dances sprightly around in circles, as if celebrating a battle victory at the end of a long arduous day.

#### IV. 2.H. Pākāchutā *kātān mātān* (17:57mins).

At the *mātān* the Chorus is spinning as the tempo rises to a feverish pitch. They cannot keep up the intensity of playing and dance at the same time, so they begin to walk around the *mandīr* then kneel at the circumference and play at a frantic pace. The drummers again take centre stage and beat with a powerful determination, slapping the drum at the beginning of the next stage of the *kātān bol* composition.

#### IV. 2. I. Pākāchutā *kātān bols* 6 and 7, M3 (18:29mins).

The khol players are now kneeling in the *mandīr* as the guru steps forward to prompt them, taking charge of the final *kātān bols* sequence nearing the end of the final battle scene. He shows the khol players what to do with his hands while shouting out *Nitai* and the *kātān bols* at the same time. The junior khol player shakes his head involuntarily vibrating in symmetry with the *kātān* beats as the MG and Chorus repeat the M3 four times without a break. The bols are played in one long continuum without any intervals. Though there are seven distinct sequences in each cycle, they run into the other at an incredible speed, making it impossible to transcribe or decipher the *bol* patterns. However the first bol cycle 6, starts with *dha dene* and the second, and final (*kātān bols* 7), starts with *tere kiti* and appears to continue with it.

At the *kātān bols* cycle 6, the junior khol player glances down at his red and bleeding fingers, then looks up again without stopping to play. One can see from his face and his light touch on the khol that his hands are bleeding and he is having great difficulty playing. Yet within a few seconds his head is shaking again in response to the

rhythmic pulse, forgetting his pain. He then looks towards the guru and speaking silently to him, tells him of his agony, yet continues unabated on the final leg of the journey towards the completion of the rāga and thus fulfillment of his spiritual promise to Hari, i.e. to perform kīrtan until the next team enters the *mandīr*.

The team carries on unabated, completing *bol* cycle 6, then slow down at the end of the cycle to distinguish it from the next, highlighting the fact that there are two, not just one continuous cycle. At the end of *kātān bols* 6 the rhythmic impetus is so fast that the khol players can barely keep up, while in the background one can hear the guru calling *Nitae*, in an expression of ecstatic bliss, that captures the last few climactic minutes left of Pākāchutā rāga. Then after plummeting down to almost a stop, they sing M3 (low) as the more senior khol player shouts out in a high pitch, *tere kete* at the start of the last *kātān bols* cycle 7.

IV.2.J. *Kātān bols* 7, (19:13mins).

Embarking on another furious *bol* movement, the rhythms rapidly merge into *theka* as they ride the highest kīrtan wave to its final culmination with ever increasing speed.

**IV.2.J1. The *kātān mātān* “grand finale” (19:51mins):** It is obvious at this point that the kartal and khol players have reached beyond their level of physical endurance, because they are not able to play with any greater force at the end of the *kātān bols*, rather they are playing at the same hectic pace, carried along purely by ecstatic bliss. Yet without the gurus command they do not break ranks or stop for any reason. Rising with the high melodic *kātān* part and the grand *finale* of the piece, the team now surge together in one single thrust of inspiration and potent release towards their destination.

Finally, the guru raises his arms to motion change, nodding his head and steps forward between the khol players, then bends down to instruct them what to sing next. The team wind down, momentarily relieved of the rāga’s intensity then prepare for the next part of their journey, under the guru’s constant guidance. Thus after a brief transition, the *kīrtaniyās* slowly progress towards the next kīrtan rāga, the performance of Jhorchutā rāga, as very concise rāga with a distinctive „fragrance“ i.e *chuta* means flower in local terms.

**IV. 2. J2. Pākāchutā rāga ends (20:07mins).**



Figure 2.17 The khol players (credit:SM)

**NB: The Pākāchutā transcription** below was recited to me in an interview with JM (Feb. 2007) while I was playing back the video of his team performing at the Dabar *mela* of 2006. Through listening to JM's recitation of the khol bols, and observation of the visual material I have transcribed Pākāchutā *la* and *kātān*. Rather than write all of the repeated intermediary parts I have opted to show only the cycles with *kātān bols* for sake of space. JM also said that there are other Pākāchutā *kātān bol* compositions, depending on the rhythmic skill and dexterity of the players.

1. **Numbers** such as 2:5/6 for example, refer to *kātān bols* cycle 2, rounds 5 and 6.
2. **Titles** such as *duni*, or katan M4, for example, written above a melodic line, refer to the start of that particular melodic part.
3. **Colours** such as *blue*, refers to the low pitched, left hand of the khol, *pink* refers to the high pitched right side of the khol and *black* refers to both sides played together.

Musical example 14 (05:14 mins.): Pakachuta *la* and *katan bols*

Pakachuta *la* and *katan*

Traditional Rarhi kirtan **largo**  
 Starts at 1:04mins, at approx. 20b.p.m.  
 Dance: Stepping forwards and backwards with hands together, swinging side to side, and turning in an anti clockwise direction.

Lead/Chorus  
 Ha ri Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo

Cymbals (kartal)  
**largo**

Khol cycle  
 Dha di da

---

2  
 Lead/Chorus **largo**  
 Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo

Cym.  
**largo**

Khol cycle  
 Ge Geda ge da Jha ge re ge re da da ya toi toi ke ta di da Ge da Ge da Te te ta

---

3 **adagio**  
 Katan bols 1 (5:09mins)

Lead/Chorus  
 Bol Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Bolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Cym.  
**adagio**

Khol cycle  
 Te te ta Tor dena dena ka dena na ka dena da gere gere

---

4 **moderato**

Lead/Chorus  
 Bol Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Bol lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
 Dadenadenakadenakadenada geregere Nadenadenakadenakadenada geregere Dhadeneda Dene da Denedeneda geregere

---

5 **andante**

Lead/Chorus  
 Bol Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bolo Bolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri bolo

Cym.  
**andante**

Khol cycle  
 Dene da Dene da Dene da gi te re gere gere<sup>re</sup> Dini dini da Dini Dini da Dini dini Da Dagere gere dene ta ke te Jhajha te re ke te

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*Andante*  
Katan bols 2:1/2 (5:30mins)

6

Lead/Chorus  
lo bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Hari BoloBo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bolo Hari bo

Cym.  
*Andante*

Khol cycle  
Kinauu naki ti tete ki ti da ga de ne da gegere gere do ya ta ke ta Jha jha jha te re te ke ta Tor da da da gere da da da gere da de ya

Katan bols 2: 3/4

7

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Hari boloBo lo Bo lo bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Tor da da da gere da da da gere da de ya Tor da da da gere da da da gere da de ya Gere da da Gere da de ne Gere da da da gere da da gere da *allegro*

Katan bols 2:5/6

8

Lead/Chorus  
Bol Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri boloBo lo Bolo Bolo Ha ri Bol Hari Bo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Gere da da Gere da De ne Gere da Da gere Da Gere da Da Gere da De ne Gere da da gere da gere da Gere da Gere da *allegro*

Katan bols 2:7

9

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Ke ta ta ke te de ne Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta ta ke te de ne Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta De ya ke te de ya ke te De ya ke te ta te ta

Katan bols 3: 1/2 (6:35mins)

10

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo loBo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bo

Cym.  
*moderato*

Khol cycle  
De ya ke te de ya ke te De ya ke te ta te ta De ya ke te de ya ke te De ya ke te ta te ta Da gere gere de ne ta ke ta Jha jha te re ke te

Katan bols 3:3/4

11

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo loBo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri bo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Ki na u naki ti te te ki ti da ga de ne da gere gere do ya ta ke ta Jha jha jha te re te ke ta Tor do ya Tor do ya te re ke te

12 *allegro*  
Katan bols 3:5/6

Lead/Chorus  
lo bo lo Ha ri Bolo Ha ri BoloBo lo Bo lo Bolo *allegro* ri Bol Ha ri Bo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Ti Nau naki ti te ki ti te te ti ni Tor do ya Tor do ya Tak geregereNa Da tatageregere Ti ni ki ti daga ti ni

13 Katan bols 3:7

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo BoloBoloHa ri Bol Ha ri Bolo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
kenedade neda dederadagite regeregereDiniidinidaDiniidinidaDiniidinida Denedagi te regeregeredenedage te re geregere

14 Katan Duni (7:41mins)

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Bolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
de te ti nau naki ti ti na te ki ti da ge ti na ti ki ki ti da ge ti na ti ki ti ni ki ti da ge ti Da ne ta ke Dake Dene Ta ki Dagi Naga Dene

15 **Dance:** swaying side to side, stepping forwards, turning, relaxed style. Katan M4 high improvisation, (8:10mins)

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri BoloBo lo BoloBolo Ha lo Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Dhene ta ke Dake Dene Ta ki Dagi Naga Dene Dene ta ke dake Dene Deneta ke dake Dene Dhene ta ke Dake Dene Ta ki Dagi Naga Dene

16 **Dance:** arms together, stepping forwards and backwards, with turn on fourth matra Katan M5 (9:06mins)

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Bo lo Bol o Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri BoloBolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Dage Dagenaka dene dage dagenake dene Dage Dagenaka dene Dage Dagenaka de Dheneke ta Da neke ta Ta Deneketa Daneke ta

17 **Dance at katan bols 4:** standing still and swaying backwards and forwards. Katan bols 4:1/2 (13:21mins)

Lead/Chorus  
Bol Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bolo Bolo Ha Ha ri Bol Ha ri bo lo bo lo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
Da ne ke ta Ta ki Dagi Naga Dene de re ge da te re te Ti Nau naki ti te te

18

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bo

ki ti da ga di ni ge de dre ge dre ga da dre ge dre ga da dre ge da ka da Dre ge dre ge de re te re Dre ge dak te re te re

19

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri bo

Ti Nau na ki ti te te ki ti da ga di ni ge de dre ge dre ga da dre ge dre ga da dre ge da ka da Dre ge de na Dre ge dhe na te re te re

Katan bols 4:5/6

20

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

lo bo Bo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri bo

Ti Nau na ki ti te te ki ti da ga di ni Dre ge na da Dre ge na da de ne da da ge ne da da Ge na da da Gi re te re

Katan bols 4:7

21

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

lo bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Bolo Bolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri bo

de ne da da ge ne da da Ge na da da Gi re te re Di ni di ni da Di ni di ni da Di ni di ni da Tor Tor Tor Tor Tere Te te Tere Te te

Katan bols 5:1/2 (14:47mins)

22

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

lo bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bolo Ha ri

Ta Ta Ta Ta Te re Te te Te re Te te re Ta ke na Ta ke te Jha Toi Toi Toi Jha de ne Tun Da Ki ti Ta ki De ne Ke te

Katan bols 5:3/4

23

Lead/Chorus  
 Cym.  
 Khol cycle

Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Da de re Tun da Ki ti Ta ki De ne Ke ta Tun da Tun da Tun da Toi Toi Toi Dha Ke ta na ka de na Na ka de na Doi ya

Katan bols 5: 5/6

24 **Katan bols 5:7**

Lead/Chorus  
Bol Bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Ha ri bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Hari Bo\_

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*Ta KetaNaKa denaNaKa denaDoi Ya Ta ke taTa ke taTa ke taJhaJha Jha DenedaDenedaDheneDheGite reKeTaka*

25 **Katan duni M3 (15:52mins)**

Lead/Chorus  
lo bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo \_\_\_ Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol HariBoo

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*DenedaDenedaDeneDaGitereKiTakaDiniDiniDadiniDiniDa DiniDiniDha DenenakaDenenaka DregedeneDenakada*

26

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Hari BoloBo lo \_\_\_ BoloBolo Ha ri i i Bol Hari Bo\_

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*GeregereDa NakadeneDenenakaDenedeneDageregereDa NakadeNedaGridoy kereta DenenakadenenakaDregedenedenenakada*

27 **Katan duni M2**

Lead/Chorus  
lo Bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Hari BoloBo lo \_\_\_ BoloBolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*geregereDa NakadeneDenenakaDenedeneDageregereDa NakadeNedaGridoy kereta DenenakadenenakaDregedenedenenakada*

28 **Dance at katan duni, in pairs, (16:58mins), then at 18:17mins during the katan duni matan, the dancers are running around the mandir.**

Lead/Chorus  
Bol Bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Hari Hari Bo lo BoloHari Bo \_\_\_ lo Ha ri

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*GeregereDa NakadeneDenenakaDenedeneDageregereDa NakadeNedaGridoy kereta DagridoyKere takeDheydaKereTakeDheyda*

29 **Dance: Chorus are kneeling** **Katan bols 6:1/2 (18:39mins)** **Katan bols 6:1/2**

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Bo lo \_\_\_ Hari Bo \_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo loBoloBolo Ha ri Bol Ha ri Bo\_

Cym.

Khol cycle  
*Kereta keDheydaKere ta kiDheydaKereta ki Di ni di ni da Dini di ni da Dini di ni Dha TorDadaDagereDadaDa GereDaDeYa*



### Jagaran Māhāto on Pākāchutā *kātān*

As noted above I was able to record two sequences of Pākāchutā *la bols*, in an interview with JM (Feb.2007), in order to note the differences between the two compositions and observe certain characteristics. During the second *bol* cycle for example, Jagaran did not repeat the accented double sided *Jha*'' sound that was heard at the beginning of the first, instead he played a softer strike *de*. Neither did he say *gere gere* but instead *te gere gedā*. Hence one can deduce that there is a softening and thickening in rhythmic density as the *bol* cycle progresses as below. Line 1 is the lyrics, line 2, 3 and 4 represent the kartal patterns as they develop from single, to double then quadruple strikes per *mātrā* and line 5 is the khol *bols*, (A) and (B) as they soften and grow in density.

Table 2.16 Pākāchutā *bol* variations.

Hari Bo	<u>lo</u> Hari	Bolo Hari	Bolo Bolo	_Hari	Bo__lo	_ *Bolo
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X
xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Gegeda geda Gegeda gegeda	Jha gere gere ta geregere	da de ta kedada de ta	toi toi Toi toi toi	ketadi dha Ketadi da	geda geda keta keta	*dha dhik da Ketadi da

The *kātān bols* are played in a series of seven *mātrā* cycles while the *kartal* play a constant, lilted fourteen *mātrā* pattern, with the accent on the first of each pair. The *bol* sequences are in twenty eight *mātrā* cycles, and generally consist of four repeats of one *bol* sequence, while the *kartal* are playing a regular pattern of 1+2+. In the *duni* section, the *kartal* drop the last beat as follows, 1+2\_ while the *khol* play *theka* on the deep side in syncopation with the *kartal*, as means of relaxation after the strenuous *kātān* composition.

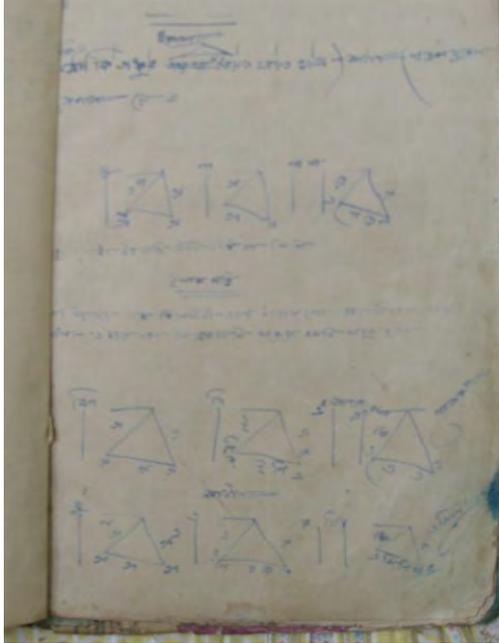


Figure 2.18 Pākāchutā (top line) in *Ba* notation.

Nearer to the end they play *duni* on both the M2 and M3, then as the *kātān* accelerates towards the very last part, only M2 (high) is sung. As is usual, the kartal play two distinctive patterns during the *kātān*, the first KP5 is slower and sparser than the more dynamic KP4 with three silent beats at the end of the twelve beat cycle. JM stresses the fact that the *kīrtan* is a dynamic performance where the team “alternate between slowing down and accelerating, till they reach the height of rhythmic intensity at the *kātān/mātān*” (2007: Pers.comm.).

### Characteristics of the Pākāchutā *kātān bols* performance

In Figure 2 of Pākāchutā *Ba* notation, the rhythmic cycle line begins on the *Ba* triangular shape on the far right side, not on the straight line (*phank*) at the beginning. The Pākāchutā *bol* patterns in *Ba* notation are from the manuscript of the late Mihir Māhāto, *kirtaniya* from Dabar.

Each Pākāchutā *kātān bol* sequence actually starts on the last or seventh *mātrā* of the melodic cycle, as stated above, with the second *mātrā* of the rhythmic cycle coming on the *Bolo*, yet the first or *sam* of the melodic line. This creates a very dynamic rhythmic performance because the khols are always one *mātrā* in front of the melodic cycle. Hence the rhythmic section propels the melodic performance forwards.

The complexity of the *bol* cycles is astounding. Pākāchutā *kātān bols* 3 for example contains seven melodic lines, starting with the low part (M3) sung once, followed by six high melodic parts (M2), each time building in tempo. There are seven *kātān bol* cycles in *kātān bols* 3 and each cycle has different *bol* phrases or subdivisions. Each *mātrā* is divided into approximately four or more *bols*, therefore seven *mātrā* multiplied by a minimum of four *bols* is equal to twenty eight rhythmic subdivisions or

*bol* combinations. Twenty eight different subdivisions, with seven rounds in one *bol* cycle, is equal to 196 parts or combinations per *kātān bol* cycle. If one multiplies 196 times seven *bol* cycles in one composition equals 1,362 different rhythmic subdivisions in total. Also the complexity of the *bol* composition is magnified when one considers that the *bol* patterns have all been memorized and that they are increasing the tempo and rhythmic density as the composition progresses. In other words the Pākāchutā *kātān bol* composition has seven song “verses”. Each “verse” has seven song lines and each song line has different *bol* sequences made up of various *bol* combinations that build in complexity and intensity as the composition develops.

That the *kātān bols* sequences are a rhythmic replication of specific kīrtan poems/songs, such as the *Gitagovinda* is a notion that must still to be investigated, as stated above. However what is clear from this investigation is that the rhythmic structure is based on seven *matras* per *kātān bol* cycle, similar to the rhythmic pattern in 17 of the 24 songs in the *Gitagovinda*, in seven *matras*. The first three rhythmic lines are repeated (a couplet) and the last or seventh one is solo, ending each *bol* cycle. Then there is a cycle without *bols* where the khol players take repose. Another seven sequences are then played in the same order, thus suggesting that the rhythmic structure of the *kātān* may be a replication of a generic kīrtan song, and instead of singing, the khols play a drum composition that matches the short and long or “heavy” accents of the song lyrics.

This notion seems to be supported by the Silfore team’s performance of *Āsta Sākhis* “The eight companions of Rāḍhā and Kṛṣṇa”, described in Part one, where the two khol players played matching rhythmic patterns on their khols to the recited verses, translating and enhancing the natural accents of the verse lyrics simultaneously.

### **The pyramidal structure of Pākāchutā *kātān***

The khol *bols* below are a perfect example of the pyramidal structure of the *katan*, as each new cycle becomes progressively denser, and is played with greater acceleration:

1/2. *Tor tor tor tor, tere tete tere tete, tat a tat a, tere tete tere tete, tere thakena tekete jh, toi toi toi;*

3/4. *Jha dene tun da, kiti taki dene kete, da dene tun da, kiti taki dene kete, tun da tun da tun da toi toi toi;*

5/6. *Da keta naka dene, naka dene doya, ta keta naka dene, naka dene doya, to keta to keta to keta jha jha, jha;*

7. *Deneda deneda deneda, giritere keteka, deneda deneda deneda, Giritere ketaka, dini dini da, dini dini da, dini dini da.*

As in Dāspera rāga, it is apparent therefore that the *kātān* performance structure is, of a pyramidal form. Starting from a relatively slow beginning it progresses towards greater rhythmic density, acceleration and intensity of devotional expression, seen for example,



Table 2.17 Pyramidal structure of Pākāchutā rāga

at the start of the *kātān bols* where the seven *bol* cycles are interspersed with seven cycles without *bols*. Then by the time they reach *kātān bols* 4, there are no intermediary breaks or cycles. By the sixth and seventh *bol* cycles, although there is a slowing down between the *bols* 6 and 7, there are no breaks between the two. Rather they play with lightening speed from one to the other, the rhythmic lines all running together as one continuum and concentrated peak of expression.

The *duni theka* however, seems to contradict the notion of a pyramidal

structure, because it moves at a moderate pace. However from analysis it is clear that it is not the case, for although there is a break in the rhythmic intensity of the *kātān* with *duni theka* after the *kātān bol* cycles 3 and 5, this is compensated for by the introduction of two new melodic improvisations M4 and M5 (*rang*) adding greater depth and range to

the melodic lines of the rāga, thus creating alternate melodic and rhythmic highlights. The purpose of the second *duni*, between *bol* cycles five and six lessens the pace briefly, in order to expand the melodic dimensions of the rāga and to gain momentum for the last tremendous climax to come, the *kātān bol* cycle 7 and the *kātān mātān*. Hence *duni theka* is actually just like the quiet before the storm, or a lessening of pressure on the gas pedal prior to changing to a higher gear, and therefore the pyramidal structure of the *kātān bols* performance remains intact (also see end of Introduction).

## V. JHORCHUTĀ

### Introduction

According to Jagaran Māhāto, the word Jhorchutā comes from *jhor* meaning “pair” and *chuta* which means “flower”. Jhorchutā is a very potent and concise rāga, but not as comprehensive as Pākāchutā or as “sweet” (*madhu*) as Dāspēra. There is a very distinctive and powerful double strike pattern played on the *sam* of each rhythmic cycle in Jhorchutā. The melodic lines are also very appealing. In this performance, Jhorchutā is in its original form, “We are playing pure traditional Jhorchutā, we’re not mixing any *rang* into it. Other teams, to make it more interesting, they will introduce *rang* into the song, but we don’t do it” (JM 2006: Pers.comm.).

In the Kostuka performance of Jhorchutā there is no *rang* within it to diminish the impact and purity of the rāga performance. The insertion of *rang* melodies into the rāga, is a common structural device applied to create variation, as in the Pākāchutā *duni* section. However in this case, it is obvious that there is no necessity to include *rang* melodies into the rāga piece, because the strength and beauty of the melodic and rhythmic parts are sufficient to carry the audience along with it.

Jhorchutā is the third rāga in the Kostuka kīrtan performance, and is played in three and a half *mātrā* cycles, as well as in seven *mātrās*. Certainly, one can observe at the beginning of Jhorchutā *la*, the kartal are playing a tāla of three and a half *mātrās* over the melodic phrase, although this develops into seven *mātrās* later in the piece when they change into *duni* and continue into the *kātān*. The most distinctive feature of Jhorchutā

*tāla* is the accented double strike pattern that is played with precision on the *sam*, throughout the *rāga*.

The performance structure of Jhorchutā is more condensed with two melodic lines in *la* and two in the *kātān* as in Dāspera, instead of five in Pākāchutā, (which has one in *la* and four in the *kātān*). Though Jhorchutā *tāla* is outstanding, the *kātān bols* are much briefer than either Pākāchutā or Dāspera *kātāns* as seen in the DVD.

Table 2.18 Jhorchutā Performance structure.

Location:	Inside the <i>mandir</i> 'temple'	
Raga/Piece	V. Jhorchuta Raga	
Music Section:	V. 1. <i>Alap/la</i>	V. 2. <i>Katan</i>
Music Parts:	<p>V. 1A. <i>alap tal</i> introduction with melody = 1 (high), then melody = 2 (low)</p> <p>V. 1B. <i>la</i> melody = 1 (high).</p> <p>V. 1C. <i>la combination</i> of melody = 2+1.</p> <p>V. D. <i>la combination duni</i>, then <i>matan</i>, melody = 1.</p>	<p>V. 2A. <i>katan</i> introduction, melody = 3 (low) and 4 (high)</p> <p>V. 2B. <i>katan bols</i>, melody = 3 and 4 (low/high).</p> <p>V. 2C. <i>katan matan</i> melody = 4</p> <p>V. 2D. <i>katan matan finale</i>, melody = 3 and 4.</p>

### Jhorchutā song (*gan*)

The Jhorchutā *gan* “song”, written on the theme of Rādhā’s longing for Kṛṣṇa is replaced with *Hari bolo* in the performance of *marāī kīrtan*. The lyrics as performed by JM are,

*Chikan kāliā rupa marame nā gelo sākhi go,*  
*āmi keno bā gelām go kadam tālā,*

*āmi heri gelām go chikan kāla,*  
*chikan kālia rupa marame na gelo sākhi go.*

**Kātān:** *Roilo hi ai jege riolo bhulā gelonā.*

“Rādhā has fallen in love with Kṛṣṇa who is described as *chikon kala* which means “glittering black”. So she’s asking her friend, why did I go to the *kadam* tree where Kṛṣṇa was playing the flute? Now I have fallen in love with him and I can’t forget him. He is ever alive in my heart”. (JM and SM 2007: Pers.comm.).

Table 2.19 Summary of Jhorcutā raga

V. Jhorcutā	Melody	Kartal	Khol	Mātrā
V. 1. <i>Alap</i>	<i>Alap</i>	jangling	Rolls and double strikes	3 and a half
1. A. <i>La</i>	M1 (high)	Single strikes, SS	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“
1 B. <i>La</i>	M2 (low)	SS	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“
1. C. <i>La</i>	M2, M1 combined	SS	“	“
1.D. <i>La duni</i>	M1, M2	<i>Duni</i> ,	Alternates playing <i>on</i> and <i>off</i> beat	Seven
1.D. 2 <i>La mātān</i>	M2	<i>Duni</i> accelerates	“	“
V. 2. A. <i>Kātān</i> introduction	M3 (low) M4 (high)	KP5 and KP4	<i>kātān bols</i> ,	“
2. B. <i>Kātān bols 1-2</i>	M4, M3	“	<i>Bols</i>	Seven
2. C. <i>Kātān mātān</i>	M4	KP4	<i>Bols</i>	“
2. D. <i>Kātān mātān finale</i>	M3, M4	KP4	<i>Bols + finale</i>	“

Note: Numbers V. below refer to the DVD subtitles.

### V. 1. Jhorchutā *alap* and *la* (00:29secs)

Jhorchutā begins as usual with an *alap*, sung by the MG alone, accompanied by a few sparse percussive strikes. The khol players are looking a bit distracted as the junior one misses the first *sam* strike completely while the senior khol player enters at the right time, but plays very lightly, recognizing the everyone is not paying attention, so wipes a piece of wet rag around the large circumference of his khol to moisten it after taking an arduous beating from the previous *kātān*. The team seems a bit disorientated, perhaps not expecting that the guru will choose this particular rāga, except for the *dohārī* who stands up immediately ready to perform. However after the MG sings the first melodic phrase in a flat tone, the guru gives a strong clap and sings the correct pitch in a very loud voice, commanding the team to rise and begin (00:13secs). The Chorus now gives a more hearty response and at the end of the first melodic line the khol players play in powerful unison with the signature *tāla*.

The Jhorchutā *alap* with its double strikes and accelerated rolls is similar to Dāspera *Gauralap* except that it is much shorter, with only four cycles compared to twenty two in Dāspera *alap*. The *alap* is intended as an introduction and elaboration upon the essential features of the rāga as well as time set aside of the team and audience to come into accord, before the main *tāla* commences. Jhorchutā *la bols* then begin abruptly on the fifth melodic cycle of the *alap* and hence it is very brief.

#### Musical Example 15 1.A. Jhorchutā *la tāla* with M1 (1:28mins).

rad. NB: Jhorchuta M1 begins with tala at 1:27mins, changes to M2 at 1:41mins, then continues at 2:17mins. Trad.

Dance: side to side motion and turning in anti clockwise circles.

Lead/Chorus

Cymbals

Khol Cycle 1

Khol Cycle 2

Due to the nature of the *tāla* in three and a half *mātrās*, the khols alternate between playing the *bols* “on” (percussion line A) and “off” (percussion line B) the beat, while the kartals mark each *mātrā* of the rhythmic cycle.

**Description of M1 (low):** While the M1 (low) is sung by the MG, the khols play strongly “on” the beat (A) in synchronization with the kartal. The second time around they play the shortened version (B) of the *tāla*, i.e. when the Chorus respond with M2, the khols play „off“ the beat, in syncopation with the kartal who continue to play in a regular pattern. Hence on alternate rounds, the khols play “off” the beat on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> *mātrās*, whereas the third and half *mātrās* remain in unison with the kartal. Though there appears to be some discrepancy between the *bols* the guru is reciting and those of the senior khol player in the opening *la* section, it seems that they are just variations on the same rhythmic theme. The difference is between the gurus *bols* recited as *Da geda* and the khol players as *Naka dena x2 Da Urr te Da*, which may be played in syncopation to the first and main khol drum line.

**V. A.1. Jhorchutā la with tāla melodic part 1:** As a continuation of the high cascading notes of the Jhorchutā *alap*, the opening melodic *la* part M1 (low) is sung by the MG with the powerful double strikes of the *tāla* played by the khols on the first round. By the second round of the *tāla* with the drummer’s *bol* recitations spoken loudly while playing, the MG has already descended into the lower registers of the *rāga* with M2 (high). The more senior khol player calls out the *bols* cycle above, sounding like *dhenaketa x3* with two strong *da da,,s* at the end of the melodic phrase marking the Jhorchutā *tāla* signature, with distinctive double strikes concluding the three and a half *mātrā* cycle. The Chorus singers alternate between the M1 and M2 consecutively.

**Jhorchutā la with M2:** The low melodic and rhythmic parts are in full swing as the khol players perform the *bols* on both the MG’s lead and Chorus parts. M1 alternates with the first M2, which is the same melodic line as the *alap*, yet given rhythmic structure.

Musical example 16 (02:20 mins.): Jhorchutā *la* M2.

**Jhorchuta *la* (M2)**  
(Starts at 1:41mins)

Dance: side to side motion, turning anti clockwise circles.

Trad. Trad.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes 'Lead and Chorus', 'Cymbals', 'Khol Cycle 1', and 'Khol Cycle 2'. The second system includes 'Lead /Chorus', 'Cym.', 'Khol Cycle 1', and 'Khol Cycle 2'. Lyrics are written below the corresponding musical staves. A color key for Khol is provided at the bottom left.

**Colour key for Khol:**  
 Pink= Treble, right hand side (Radha)  
 Blue= Bass, Left hand side (Krishna)  
 Black = both hands

V. 1.B. Jhorchutā *la*, high melodic part 2 (2:20mins).

The M2, is higher than M1, and sung with gusto while the khol players continue with the distinctive Jhorchutā tāla, and double strike pattern on the *sam* at the end of the melodic phrase.

V. 1.C. Jhorchutā *la*, M1 and M2 alternate (2:51mins).

The M2 with tāla then leads into the M1 (low) part again and repeats.

**V.1.C1. Jhorchutā *la* M2 (3:18mins):** The alternation and repetition of the two melodic parts is deeply compelling with the complementary rhythmic pattern, drawing the listener deeper into the kīrtan and creating an intoxicating effect. While other kīrtan experts describe Jhorchutā tāla as having seven mātrā, JM says it is three and a half,

which can be observed from the *kartals* who place their strikes clearly on each *mātrā* during the opening *la* section. This is their third round of M2.

**V. 1. C2. Jhorchutā la M1, third cycle (3:50mins):** With the accompanying *bol* recitations beginning with *Dhena keta x3, ki ti ta*, alternating with M1 (low), the performance is moving with accelerated speed and intensity. Just at that point, the guru's piercing calls penetrate the devotional ambience as the physical strain from the blazing summer heat can be seen on the bodies of the Chorus whose clothing is soaked with sweat. Yet they cannot halt the *akhandā* kīrtan for it must continue till the end of the allotted *prahara*, or else the auspiciousness will be lost.

V. 1. D. Jhorchutā la, *duni* (4:23mins).

At the gurus signal a *duni* pattern begins, as the rhythm doubles into seven *mātrā* on their fourth cycle of M1. So while the Chorus dance and sing M1 and M2, they also begin to play *duni* with acceleration and zeal, raising the musical intensity. The Chorus/ percussionists take the limelight accenting the first and third beats of the *tāla* while dancing with feminine seduction and vigour.

On listening back to the audio recording JM simply says “now we are taking the rāga up and up”, yet on analysis they are using the same double strikes as *duni*. When the melodic cycle is finished, the team starts anew by slowing down the tempo and kneeling inside the *mandīr*, i.e. after they have performed *duni* and as they are beginning the *kātān*, they kneel, then start the *kātān bols* for “This is our style of taking the music upwards” (ibid) before the *kātān bols* sequences.

**V. 1. D1. Jhorchutā la M1 and M2, cycles 5 -7, duni (4:38mins).** After two more rounds of the M1 (low), the melody changes to M2 (high) again as the kartal rhythm becomes increasingly accelerated. During the MG's lead, the khols play the *tāla* but when the Chorus sing they play *theka* to create greater rhythmic variation and interest. The juxtaposition of different patterns played on the khol during MG's part (*on* the beat) and the Chorus's part (*off* the beat), in syncopation with the kartal, limits the monotony of a single rhythmic pattern by alternating the cycles. Thus the khol patterns played in and out of sync with the kartal, gradually build in intensity, and acceleration,

towards the *la mātān*. In the background the guru claps in rhythm, accentuating the double strikes at the end of each melodic cycle.

**V. 1. D2. Jhorchutā la mātān, M2, cycle 8 (5:50mins).** When reaching the *la mātān* the climactic part of the rāga, the M2 (high) is sung continuously, and the kartals are played with tremendous speed until the guru signals another change. Calling above the clashing kartals and rich tenor voices, the guru brings them down in pace, by shouting out the khol *bols* that conclude the *la* section. Again the khols alternate the *tāla* with *theka*, in syncopated rhythmic patterns.

## V. 2. Jhorchutā kātān

V. 2 A. Jhorchutā kātān introduction, M3 (7:08mins).

The Jhorchutā kātān commences with the guru shouting out the “heavy” mnemonic syllables, *da da da*, as the Chorus change to M3, the deep, vibrant melodic part. The kartal players kneel at the circumference of the *mandīr* and begin to play the traditional *kātān* rhythmic pattern, beginning with the kartal part KP5, played more sparsely than the rapid KP4, transcribed in 7 *mātrā* cycles. Continuing from the *la mātān* the drummers also kneel with the rest of the team and play the *kātān* introduction with powerful determination, perhaps because they are fatigued, nearing the end of the kīrtan performance.

Table 2.19 The kartals play the *kātān* KP5 with the khol *bols*.

<b>Bol</b>	<b>_ Bolo</b>	<b>Hari Bolo</b>	<b>Hari</b>	<b>Bolo</b>	<b>Bolo</b>	<b>*_ Hari</b>
<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>	<b>Xxxx</b>
<i>Geneta kete</i>	<i>Da da da</i>	<i>geneta kete</i>	<i>Do keta doiya</i>	<i>Da Da</i>		<i>Da da da</i>

**V. 2 A1. Jhorchutā kātān M4 (7:23mins).** The guru stands motionless, then suddenly raises his arm upwards with a great swing and brings them down on the *sam* signaling the khol players to stand and rotate around the *mandīr* in preparation for the *kātān bols*. The first round is a sequence of *bols* ending with *ta tai ti ta* and the final three beats left empty. The *ta tai ti ta*, recital is repeated again four times after the second *kātān bol*

cycle, making a total of six rounds then the khols play *theka* as the *kartal* keep a constant *duni* beat pattern and kneel down again. The transcribed *kātān bols* recited by JM with M3 are as follows:

1. *Da da da gene ta kete, da da da, gene ta kete, dokete doya, da da;*
- 2./3 *Da gere gere, den eta kete, da gi tere, teretere, terekete, Ta tai ti ta;*
4. *Ta tai ti ta, ta tai ti ta, ta tai ti ta;*
5. *Geregere jha, geregerejha, geregerejha, ti ta, Do kete, Doiya, tete tete;*
6. *Gere gere jha, Geregerejha, Ti ta, Geregerejha, Ti ta, Geregerejha, Ti ta.*

The transcribed *kātān bols* recited by JM with M4 are as follows:

1. *Dene da dene da, dene dag ere tere, keretere terekeretere kete, Ta tai ti ta, ta tai ti ta;*
- 2./3. *Dha diti da, dha diti da, keretere ta, dhiti da, tere kere;*
4. *Geregere jha, geregere jha, Ti ta, Do keta, doiya, tete tete;*
5. *Da gi da gi, Da gi gi gi;*
6. *Dha de teretere, da de teretere, dene da, Urr ti at.*

V. 2 B. The *kātān bols* with M3 and M4 begin with a tempo increase (7:50mins):

During the *kātān bols* the MG and Chorus sing M3 and M4, while the khols play with exuberance and exactitude, inspiring the other players. Then as they kneel again and play, the bass beats on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 7th strikes can be heard above the musical din. After the first round of *kātān bols* they come to a slow halt then start the second *kātān bols* sequence with more drive, accelerating at an ever increasing pace.

In comparison with the Pākāchutā *bol* patterns, the Jhorchutā *kātān bols* are considerably shorter having just two main sections with six rounds, compared to Pākāchutā which has seven sections with seven sequences each in seven *mātrā*. Nevertheless Jhorchutā has a very distinctive rhythmic and melodic configuration.

V. 2 C. Jhorchutā *kātān mātān* (8:56mins).

The drummers now join the rest of the team in kneeling in the *mandīr* while playing, as all unite in single pinnacled expression at the *kātān mātān*.

V. 2 D. Jhorchutā *kātān mātān grand finale* (9:30mins).

The singers begin with the deep and powerful M3 then rise up and sing M4 as the rhythm

hastens to such an extent that the kartal players can only sit and play at such a furious pace, running each beat into the next, sounding like a team of galloping horses. The guru stands and claps the accented beats with his hands then comes to the front of the *mandīr* and directs the grand *finale* of the performance. The *kātān mātān* continues with the repetitive singing of the M4 in total unison, then tumbles down to a halt, as if falling into a nest of ecstatic bliss.

**V.2D.1. The guru ends the performance (10:33mins).** Near to the grand *finale* of Jhorchutā *kātān mātān* the guru at first claps on the accented beats of the *tāla* with great force. He gives a reassuring call, then lifts his arms up and calls out the concluding *khol bol* patterns, and claps sharply once again. The rhythmic players respond by slowing down immediately. Then the MG starts to sing another melody, but the guru reaches down and touches his shoulder, motioning him to stop. The MG looks up at him, a bit surprised, as normally the performance would end with a *rang* melody. However the guru's decision is final and the very last motion of the *kīrtan* performance concludes as it began, by the guru.



Figure 2.19 Khol player

Musical example 17 (07:07 mins.): Jhorchutā katan bols

Traditional Rarhi kirtan **Jhorchuta Katan** Trad.

*prestissimo* Katan M3 (low part) starts at 7:07mins on the DVD. Dancers: kneeling

Lead/Chorus  
Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cymbals

Khol  
Da da da Ge ne Ta Ke ta Dha dha ge

2  
Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.

Khol  
Ne ta ke te Dha Ke ta Doi ya Dha Dene da Dene da Dene da Gere te re Kere te re Tere Kere

3  
Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.

Khol  
Toi Toi Toi Toi Ta Toi ti toi Gere Gere Jha Gere Gere Jha Gere Gere Jha

4  
Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.

Khol  
Ti ta Da ke ta Da Ya te te te te Dene da de ne da Dene da gere te re Kere te te toi

5  
Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.

Khol  
ti ta Ta toi ti ta Dha di ti da Dha di ti da ke re te re ta Di ti da

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6

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
te re ke re da gi da gi Da gi gi Da gi Da Da gi

7

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
Da gi Da gi da gi Da gi gi Da de te re te re Da de te re te re De ne da te re te re De ne da

8

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
te re te re De ne da te re te re De ne da Ur ti ta Ur ti ta Dini di ni da Dini di ni da Dini di ni da

9

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
ne Ta ta ne Ta ta ne Ta ta Da da da Ge ne Ta Ke ta Dha dha ge

10

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
Ne ta ke te Dha Ke ta Doi ya Dha Dene da Dene da Dene da Gere te re Ke re te re Te re Ke re

11

Lead/Chorus  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Cym.  
Ha ri Bo lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Ha ri Bol Bo lo

Khol  
Toi Toi Toi Toi Ta Toi ti toi Ta Toi ti toi Ta Toi ti toi Ta Toi ti toi

Katan M3 (7:45mins)

Duni at 8:32, katan matan at 9:27, ends at 10:36mins.

The euphoria on the faces of the *kīrtanyas* and the guru is clearly discernable at successfully completing the *kīrtan* performance and the fulfillment of a promise made to Hari. With three traditional Rāṅh *kīrtan* rāgas completed, one *rāgini* and a *kīrtan rang* interspersed, all played with great proficiency, power and beauty, the Kostuka team are in a ecstatic state.

### **Observation and analysis of the Jhorchutā *kātān bol* composition**

Jhorchutā rāga consists of four melodies, two in *la* and two in the *kātān*. The *kātān* is only four cycles long, compared to Pākāchutā which has five melodies and a very extensive *kātān* of seven cycles each with seven sequences or forty nine cycles long. Though a more concise rāga performance, Jhorchutā does however have a unique infrastructure with: three and a half *mātrā* cycles; the twice repeated *bolo bolo* in the melodic line, instead of the usual once; the manner in which the lyrics and the rhythmic structure are precisely interwoven with the *Bolo Bolo* falling on the *sam* at the end and beginning of the rhythmic cycle; and the very distinctive “beat pairs” played in unison and syncopation with the kartal strikes.

Though Jhorchutā is similar to Pākāchutā (hence the name ending with *chuta*) the *tāla* is halved in the beginning from seven to three and a half *matras*. As in Pākāchutā, each sequence of the Jhorchutā *kātān* is repeated seven times, although it is difficult to know the exact number as the guru is not reciting every *bol* line. In contrast to Pākāchutā *kātān* however, Jhorchutā *kātān* is like a moving train, there are no intervening cycles where the drummers move around the *mandīr* without playing, rather it is a continuous rapid movement from beginning to end of the *tāla* composition. Also unlike previous rāgas, Jhorchutā *kātān* is performed sitting down, except for the beginning sequences, presumably because this is at the end of the *kīrtan* performance and they are winding down. Even though the khol players have been drumming for over an hour, still they are able to perform the sophisticated khol composition without a halt, though in a kneeling position.

After a minute’s break at the end of the performance they wipe their sweat laden brows, stand up and begin to move again while singing a *kīrtan pada* “verse” on the theme on Vrindavan, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, symbolic of Kṛṣṇa’s home, existing within

the hearts of His devotees. As they leave the *mandīr* they are dancing in a line meandering towards a small altar inside Satyendranath Māhāto's house. Beaming with radiant smiles on their faces and full to brim with relief and joyful inspiration, they make their way down the alleyway.

## VI. Leaving the *mandīr* – Rang Songs

Table 2.20 Songs to leave the *mandīr* (04: 09mins).

<b>Outside the <i>mandir</i> 'temple'</b>	
<b>VI. Rang Songs</b>	
<b>VI. 1. <i>Vrindavan phul phulete.</i> 16 <i>matra</i></b>	<b>2. <i>Jai jai jai, 8 matra</i> Guru leads with chorus response</b>
VI. A. Melodic line 1 +2	VI. 2. Melodic lines 1+2.

Note: Numbers VI. below refer to the DVD subtitles.

### VI. 1. Vrindavan song

Instigated by the MG, with the khol players in front leading, the team sings the first *rang* titled *Vrindavane*, while moving along the village path. The khols are playing an eight beat *theka*, and the MG and Chorus are singing the two melodic lines (M1, M2), in call and response, with the Chorus following behind and local guides on either side steering them towards the courtyard of the Māhāto family compound, the hosts of the *kīrtan mela*. Upon entering the compound they all sing and dance with exhilaration around the *tulsi* tree, the symbol of the Vaiṣṇava faith.

## VI. 2. Inside Sanjay Māhāto's family compound, around the *tulsi* tree:

The lyrics of the *gan* are:

*Nitai bol, bol go, koun kunje naba Vrindaban*

*Shyam Kunja Rādhā Kunja Giri Gopardhan*

Meaning: Nitai, tell us where can I see Kṛṣṇa? Which *kunja* “place” will I go? Rādhā *kunja* or Shyam *kunja*, which place will I go to see Kṛṣṇa? The inner meaning of which is that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are like the two sides of one body, as in *Ardhana Ishvara* of Śiva and Parvati, “where one sees Rādhā, one also sees Kṛṣṇa” (JM 2007: Pers.comm.).

## VI. 3. Jagaran Māhāto leads a Radha Krishna song - ‘*Jāi Jāi Jāi*’

It is the guru, not the MG that leads the team into the second Rādhā/ Kṛṣṇa song in ten *mātrās*. After moving in a circular fashion for approximately three minutes, they turn to face the central altar, with a *tulsi* tree planted inside.

## VI. 4. Calling *Hari Hari Bolo*:

The guru shouts repeatedly *Hari Hari Bolo* and the Chorus shouts back, as the whole team congregates in a circle around the *tulsi* tree, giving their final victory call at the end the *kīrtan*. Therefore, as they begin, so too they end outside the sacred space of the *kīrtan mandīr*, in the realm of the mundane, allowing the next *kīrtan* team to enter the *mandīr* and start their *kīrtan* performance, in the same manner in which they began, continuing with the next cycle in the *akhandā kīrtan*, an endless stream of spiritual nectar for *Hari*. Thus singing, dancing and playing in a multitude of ways the Kostukas *kīrtan* team of Rāḥ has structured their *kīrtan* performance, arriving at its present state of sophistication and pinnacled devotional expression.

Figure 2.20 Inside the *kīrtan mandīr* (Credit: SM).



## VII. Sohni Rāga

### Introduction

*A shift in time. The Kostuka team rests after their ecstatic day time performance while other teams take turns to add their spiritual touch to the kirtan spectrum. They erupt once again into the dark night with an explosive performance of Sohni, a very popular traditional kirtan raga, with its dramatic flavour and enchanting melodic configurations that capture and immerse everyone in the sound of Hari bolo.*

The next major traditional tāla/rāga, called Sohni, also in seven *mātrā*, was not sung during the day time performance due to scarcity of time. It was performed at night, as the final rāga of the evening. Sohni is the favourite of the Kostuka team, who revel in it like a signatory piece. It was also performed by the Māhātos, Rājwars and the Vaiṣṇava teams during the *mela* demonstrating its popularity in Purulia. The Kostuka team performed Sohni after Dāspēra, the *rāgini* Interlude and Pākāchutā rāga, just prior to the allotted hour (*prahara*) when the *mela* was to end, and hence was an abbreviated version of the complete rāga.

### Sohni gan:

JM states that there are many Sohni *gans*, yet he gives the lyrics of a single *gan* which describes the attributes of Caitanya Gauranga as “a golden colour like the moon” and requests him, “please come and be with us” (ibid.),

*Sonar baran Gaur āmār,*

*Hiyār mājhe, jege roilo*

*Sonar baran Gaur āmār hiyār mājhe*

*Katan: Sonar baran Gaur āmār roilo hiyār jege roilo*

Table 2.21 Sohni rāga performances structure

Location:	Inside the <i>mandir</i> 'temple'	
Raga/Piece	VII. Sanni	
Music Section:	VII. 1. <i>Alap/la</i>	VII. 2. <i>Katan</i>
Music Parts:	<p>VII. 1A. <b>Alap/ La</b> melody = 1</p> <p>VII. 1B. <b>la tal</b> introduced, melody = 1</p> <p>VII. 1C. <b>la matan</b>, melody = 1</p>	<p>VII. 2A. <b>katan introduction</b> in seven <i>matra</i>, melody = 2</p> <p>VII. 2B. <b>katan bol cycles 1-2</b> composition with 'recitations' melody = 2.</p> <p>VII. 2C. <b>katan duni</b> melody = 2</p> <p>VII. 2D. <b>katan 3-7</b> melody = 2 + 3.</p> <p>VII. 2E. <b>katan matan</b> grand finale, melody = 2.</p>

### VII. 1. Sohni *Alap/la* (48:56mins)

#### VII. 1A. Sohni *alap*

The Sohni *alap* is very brief, lasting not more than twenty seconds before the Sohni *tāla*, the metrical part of the rāga commences. The drum rolls and the *kartals* shimmering sound accompany the *Hari Hari Bolo* calls. Then the *bols*, recited by the khol players as *Dha gere Dha gere Dha x 3 Urr tete ta x3, dhena geda geda dhin*, begin loudly, as the *la* melodic line commences (50:01mins), the last hard strike on the khol reverberating throughout the village surroundings.

#### VII. 1B-C. Sohni *la*

The fervour with which the Kostuka team play this rāga is astounding. Even though it has been a long and arduous performance, they are still beating with a ferocity that is difficult to imagine, singing with full voice and swaying their bodies in a side to side motion while still kneeling.

Musical example 18 Sohni *la* M1 and khol *bols*.

Traditional

Sohni *La* (M1)

Urr te te Urr te te Ge da ge da ge da Dhi Gere ge re Gere Gere Da ge re Da ge re Da ge re Da ge re Da da Gere Urr Urr te te Urr te te

Meanwhile the guru directs with large arm and body gestures as if conducting the last great movement of an orchestral piece. In the performance of this rāga, Sohni *la* runs straight into the *matan*, then over into the *kātān* without a break, as the fierce concentration of the players remains unbroken.

## VII. 2. Sohni *kātān* (50:45mins)

### VII. 2A. Sohni *kātān bols*

Sohni *la* melodic line is performed five times and on the sixth, runs over into Sohni *kātān* without even a slight slowing of tempo between the two. The guru directs the changeover masterfully, conducting with his hands and powerful voice in a dramatic style, leading in with *kātān* melodic line 1 (M1). The M1 is higher in register than the second M2, and is sung four times before the guru calls out the ending *bols*, to begin the lower M2. The distinguishing factor about the second, lower melodic line is that it always heralds the *kātān bol* cycle to begin, with the Chorus playing the KP5 to accompany the *kātān bols*. It also signals the beginning of the *duni* pattern following the *kātān bols* cycle 1.

### VII. 2B. Sohni *kātān bols* cycle 1-2 (51:37mins)

Begins at a slow to moderate pace with the khols playing *tete tete ta* on the right side of the khol. Just prior to when the Sohni *kātān* commences the junior drummer begins to stand up, presumably because he is uncomfortable in a kneeling position. However, the guru quickly stops him with a single arm action, commanding him to sit down. He kneels in front of the *dohārī* once again, without qualms and calls out “*aha..a*” loudly in front of the

*dohārī's* face, not the guru's. There is no visible response to this exclamation from the *dohārī*, his brother, and immediately afterwards he commences playing the *kātān bols*.

The guru has tight control over the performance and when the *mul gayak* attempts to bring back the high M1 prematurely the guru sings louder than him, to keep it at the lower melodic line allowing the *khol* players to continue playing the *kātān bols* sequence. However it is slightly shorter than the usual *kātān bol* cycle of seven sequences, with only five being played this first time. From observation it appears that the first *kātān bols* cycle is very similar to Pākāchutā *kātān bols*, also in seven *mātrā*, although I am not able to verify this at present, as I don't have a recording of the Sohni *kātān bols* from Jagaran Māhāto.

During the *kātān*, the drummers continue to kneel, while the guru stands and directs from above. The first *kātān* cycle has two *bol* sequences that are repeated as seen below and sung to the lower M2, making four sequences. A fifth *bol* sequence is then instigated by the guru, and accompanied by the higher M1, making five complete sequences. The *bol* cycles appear to be very similar to the first and second rounds of the Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 2. The second two cycles (3 and 4) of Sohni *kātān* also appear to be identical or at least very similar to Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 5 and 6, as below.

**The *kātān bols* cycle 1, with M2:** At the completion of the *kātān bols* cycle 1, with five *bol* sequences being played, the melody again plunges into the M2 lower part to begin the *kātān duni* while the *khol*s play a relaxed *theka* on the bass side of the drum. The melody remains as M2 for the first two repeated rounds, then on the sixth cycle changes into the third melodic line *kātān* M3, as the tempo accelerates and the dance movements become more vigorous.

## **VII. 2C. Sohni *kātān duni* (52:44mins)**

As is usual when the *kātān duni* is introduced, the Chorus begin to move around the *mandīr* with sensual movements while the drummers play *theka* on the bass side of the *khol*. The junior *khol* player, farthest from the Chorus is swaying from side to side and making exclamations in a loud voice, “*bolo ah..ha ha..*” completely absorbed in an ecstatic state while the senior *khol* player is jumping and swaying his body in a sensual motion. It seems everyone is overcome with the surge of bliss as the *mantra Hari Bolo* continues unabated.

The Chorus are dancing like Kṛṣṇa's *gopis*, swinging their hips left and right, stepping backwards and forwards, making a slow turn while singing the *kātān* melodies 2 and 3, with full voice, while accentuating the first of every beat pair, in a 14 *mātrā* cycle on the *kartal*. After another round, the junior drummer has raised his left arm up high in a posture of surrender. He no longer plays *theka*, but has a large, euphoric smile upon his face. The second MG, the youthful representative of Caitanya has both arms stretched straight upwards, as the mounting intensity grows and the blissful expression becomes more and more visible.

The *dohārī* also responds to the intense devotional current by moving in a more feminine, erotic manner, rocking his lower body backwards and forwards, with his right foot leading, dancing and playing the *kartal* with potent regularity. The movements become more and more exaggerated as the Chorus dance with increased strength and sensuality. The *guru* also shows greater freedom of movement than previously, as his normal composure is softened from a straight line to a slight curving sway. He steps in and out and claps with exuberance. His hands mimic those of a conductor's baton, as he keeps rhythm with his pointed fingers directed towards the drummers. Bringing his arms together and apart he moves them vertically up and down as well as horizontally across the wide open space, forming triangular shapes in front of him.

After a few minutes the tempo accelerates yet again, as the MG's dance in *lalita marmika* with arms stretched above their heads, and the drummers play fast *theka* with command on the bass side of the *khol*. After a few more rounds of mounting intensity the *guru* calls and a rhythmic climax is reached. The Chorus stand still in the thrill of the moment with peaked concentration, then kneel on the floor once again as the drummers take centre stage ready to perform the next *bol* recitation of the *kātān* composition.

#### **VII. 2D. Sohni *kātān bols* 3-7(58:11mins).**

Following *kātān bols* cycle 2 the junior *khol* player stands and walks around the *mandīr* for a short break while playing *theka* to a single melodic cycle. At the *kātān bol* cycle 3, the senior drummer gives his *khol* to another player, a tall middle aged man, who takes it and begins to loosen the strap to make it longer to fit his size. The now free senior *khol* player raises his arms in abandonment and dances joyfully along side while clapping in the air. The junior *khol* player makes an assertive exclamation "ha" directly into the *dohārī's* face,

then turns for a moment in the opposite direction with his back towards him in a timid gesture of submission. Immediately after, he bends down once more for two more rounds of *kātān bols*. The *guru* now directs the youthful khol player with his hands and recites the khol *bols* with considerable volume so that he can hear him above the shimmering *kartals* and melodious voices. He then comes forward, standing next to the junior *khol* player and guides him through the *kātān* composition while the new khol player continues to adjust the drum strap. The *guru*'s commanding presence, *tāla* demonstrations make it vividly apparent to everyone, that his expertise and leadership are crucial to the success of the performance, as he points, claps and recites the *bols* with force and absolute authority.

Under the concentrated pressure of the Sohni *kātān bols* and possibly out of weariness, both drummers remain kneeling as they play. The *guru* stands quietly to the side at first then at the exact moment, he bends down to the junior drummer and calls out the *bols* beginning with *Da gere gere*, his arms moving up and down violently in rhythm with the khol patterns. The fresh new drummer begins with an opening flourish then starts to beat the khol with a brutal force while kneeling next to the junior *khol* player. The junior khol player holds up his arm at the end of the rhythmic cycle for a moments pause as if to take a breath, signaling completion of the first cycle, as the *guru* continues to conduct the *kātān*.

While kneeling, both *khol* players endeavour (1:00:35mins) to provoke the *dohārī* and Chorus by twirling their arms around and around in circles, as if to demonstrate how to play the *kartal* with more speed and fervor in a kind of “one upmanship” or friendly competition. This playful challenge by the khol players to the *kartal* players, is just another *līla* in the Rāḍhā/Kṛṣṇa drama as if Rāḍhā and the *gopīs*, are exchanging banter between themselves as a means of drawing attention from their beloved Kṛṣṇa who looks on, entertained by their flamboyant play. It's also a means of asserting their rhythmic prowess and expertise. In fact, it seems that the *kartal* players are more exhausted than the drummers, as they are not able to play any faster or stronger to meet the challenge of the drummers.

After more aggressive hand movements from the khol players, encouraging the *kartal* players to increase the tempo, the new drummer lets out a shout of exasperation. His hand gestures speak of disgust at the Chorus's failing performance, yet the *dohārī* and

Chorus continue unperturbed. Though not anything serious, this competitive display is also a theatrical ploy to distract themselves and the audience from the intensity of the lengthy rāga performance, allowing for some diversion from the physical exertion and concentrated, devotional ambience.

**Sohni kātān bols 3:** The third *kātān bol* cycle is also difficult to transcribe as the khol players are not reciting the *bols* as they play. The guru at one mid point in the cycle calls out a *bol* pattern sounding like *Da geregere dhena taki* and at the end, *toi toi toi*, which could therefore be similar to Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 5.

**Sohni kātān bols 4 (1:01:18):** The new khol player is brimming with energy, enthusiasm and confidence. At times he is so busy taunting the kartal players and demonstrating how they should play with his arms flying around, that he is not drumming at all. One can also hear him literally roaring like a lion in the middle of the *bol* sequences, then circling his arms round and round mocking the others, and finally hitting the drums with thunderous strikes. The clarity of the *bol* recitations is largely lost in the kīrtan frenzy brewing among the team at the height of their final rāga performance.

The senior khol player is now plucking the *ektara* while the youthful *mul gayak* lifts his arms high in the air ready for the last victory ride of the performance. The tempo increases and the intensity begins to rise to near boiling point. Both drummers play the fourth *bol* cycle together with a ferocity that is unmatched as the new khol player recites the *bols* with seething vehemence. The *bols* from the fourth cycle are not clearly discernable from the video recording, however they appear to be similar to the Pākāchutā *kātān bols* cycle 4.

Hence goaded on by the new drummer, the junior khol player recites the *kātān bols* while playing as JM stands and directs him, beginning with *Da geregere*, then turns and goes to the other side of the *mandīr*. While he talks with the young MG standing in the centre the khol players in his absence continue to provoke the Chorus by making loud remarks and rolling their arms to spurn them on, somewhat like over spirited youths. JM then comes forward and makes a twirling gesture with his hands to „wind up“ the *kātān bol* performance (1:02:09mins) so with relief showing in their facial expressions the Chorus begin to play the *mātān* kartal pattern. The junior player responds immediately, stops

playing and stands up while the new khol player continues on the last cycle of the *kātān* composition without his support.

### VII. 2E. Sohni *kātān mātān* (1:02:30-1:03:00mins)

The final *kātān bol* cycle is also the *kātān mātān* as the kartals play with an accelerated pace, towards the highest pinnacle expression of the *rāga*. The performance rises quickly and smoothly as if floating in a stream of *rasa*, and intoxicating nectar of *ananda* “bliss” until they reach a natural climax, the final culmination of the *rāga*.

Musical example 19 Sohni *katan bols*.

2 Sami *Katan* (M2)

Lead/Chorus: Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari Bolo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri

kartal

khol

Urr te teUrrteteGedagedagedaDhi GeregereGereGereDagereDage re Da gereDagereDadaGereUrr Tonladadagere dada

3 Sami *Katan* (M2)

Lead/Chorus: i Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari Bolo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri

kartal

khol

Dagere da de ya Tor da da dagere da da da gere da de ya Tor da da dagere da da da gere da de ya Ke ta ta ke te de ne

4 *Katan* (M3)

Lead/Chorus: i Bo lo bo lo Hari bo lo Hari Bolo Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo loHa ri

kartal

khol

Ke ta ta ke ta ke ta Ke ta ta ke te de ne Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta ta ke te de ne Ke ta Ke ta Ke ta Da gere gere de ne ta ke te

5

Lead/Chorus: i Bo lo Bo lo Hari bo lo Hari bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Hari bo loHa ri

kartal

khol

Jha jha te re ke te Ki nau ki ti te te ki ti da ga de ne da gere gere do ya ta ke ta Jha jha jha te re te ke ta Tor do ya

6 Katan (M2)

Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Hari bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
 Tor doya tereke te Ti nauna ki ti te te ki ti teteti ni Tor doiya Tor doiya Takgere gere gere na Data tagere gere

7 Katan (M3)

Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Hari Bo lo Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Ha ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
 Ti ni ki ti daga ti ni ke te ti nauna ki ti te te ki ti dage ti na ti ki ki ti dage ti na ti ki ti ni ki ti dage ti ni tik Denedagite regere gere

8 Katan (M2)

Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
 denedagete regere gere denedadeneda deredagi te regere gere Dinidini da Dinidini da Dinidini da Tor Tor Tor Tor

9

Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari bo lo Ha ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
 Te re Te te Te re Te te Ta Ta Ta Ta Te re Te te Te re Te te Te re Ta ke na Ta ke te Jha Toi Toi Toi Jha de ne Tun Dha

10

Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari bo lo Ha ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
 Ki ti Ta ki Dene Ke te Da de re Tun dha Ki ti Ta ki Dene Ke ta Tun dha Tun dha Tun dha Toi Toi Toi Dha Ke ta na ka de na

11  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Hari BoloBo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
*Na Ka de na Doi ya Ta Ke ta Na Ka de na Na Ka de na Doi Ya Ta ke ta Ta ke ta Ta ke ta Jha Jha Jha Dene da Dene da Dhene*

12  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri BoloBo lo Bo lo Hari BoloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_ *Katan (M3)*

kartal

khol  
*Dhe Gi te re Ke Ta ka Dene da Dene da Dene Da Gi te re Ki Ta ka Dini di ni da Di ni di ni da Di ni di ni da Da da te re te te*

13  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Hari BoloBo lo Bo lo Hari BoloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
*dregeda te re te te tinauna ki ti te ta Ki ti daga di ni gedadregedregeda Dregadregeda Dregedakda Dregedregedere te re*

14  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri BoloBo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_ *Katan (M2)*

kartal

khol  
*dregedak te re te ta tinau naki ti te ta ki ti daga di ni gedadregedregedadregedregeda Dregeda da Dregadrena*

15  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo Hari Bo lo Hari boloHa ri\_\_\_\_\_

kartal

khol  
*dre te re te te ti nau na ki ti te te ki ti daga di ni dregenada drega neda Dregana da Denedadagenedada*

16  
 Lead/Chorus  
 i Bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ bo lo\_\_\_\_\_ Hari bo\_\_\_\_\_ lo Ha ri Bo lo Bo lo

kartal

khol  
*Gene da da gi ri te re ki ti tak de ne da da gene da da gene da da gi ri te re ki ti tak di ni di ni da di ni di ni da di ni di ni da*

## Observations on Sohni rāga

The Kostuka team's Sohni *kātān* is an extremely dynamic, ecstatic performance. It is however an abbreviated version of the rāga as it is the last of the night. Usually it is the *rang* melody that adds entertainment value to the performance, but in this case it is the friendly goading between the khol players and the *dohārī* his elder brother. For example, after the third *kātān bol* cycle the senior drummer gives his *khol* to a fresh new player, who at first wrestles with the strap then with a burst of energy starts to play the *bol* patterns and to challenge or cajole the *dohārī* to play faster. At one point the younger khol player calls "aha.." loudly in front of the *dohārī*'s face, yet there is no visible response from him. This friendly banter between the khol and kartal players is a means of drawing audience attention and asserting their prowess, as well as a distraction from the growing intensity, and constant searing exertion required to play the *kātān bols*.

As stated above the Sohni *kātān bol* cycles 1-3 are comparable to the Pākāchutā *kātān bols* 1-3, both being in seven *mātrā*. However the later rounds 4 -7, are not clearly recognizable as the first three, in terms of their similarities to the earlier Pakacuhta *kātān bols* performance and therefore are probably specific to Sohni *kātān*. It is also likely that



Figure 2.21 Sri Jagaran Māhāto.

the *kātān bols* performance was cut short, as there was a moment in the performance of the *kātān bol* cycle 3, when a village elder came up to the youthful *mul gayak* and whispered in his ear. Soon after, the guru went over to talk to the young *mul gayak* and when he came back to his place behind the khol players, directed them to "wind up" the performance. Perhaps the final moments had come when the twelve hour *kīrtan mela*, was to finish.

In this performance of Sohni rāga, the *guru* takes both an authoritative role as well as being more emotionally expressive. He is also stern occasionally when giving commands, yet shows greater freedom as his normal

composure is softened from a straight line to a slight curving sway. His hands mimic those of a conductor's baton as he directs the performance, and his recitations are bold.

### Further comments on Sohni rāga

JM relates his experiences performing Sohni at a kīrtan *mela* outside of Purulia recently. He comments on the fact that his team members are knowledgeable of *tāla*, and that *marāī* kīrtan from Purulia is the most potent and developed expression of the other traditions in Rāḥ,

There is Purulia Sohni and Orissa Sohni, but Purulia is best. They also do Sohni but Purulia Sohni is more powerful, with music and dance, and tāla. There were four parties, Manasol, Nadia, Orissa and Purulia. We performed last, we played Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā, Sohni, Tehot, Sam tāla, but we came first [meaning, we won the competition] and at the end the audience was still sitting. I was relating how this *Ba* [system of kīrtan notation] came, telling kīrtan stories. In our kīrtan there is song, dance, khol tāla and stories, and if one member is not strong in our team the others can help cover for him, but with other kīrtan teams there wasn't anyone who could cover for them" (JM 2006: Personal comm.).

According to Sri Rishi Das Goswami, the kīrtan guru of the Vaiṣṇava team, there are eight types of Sohni tāla and the *bhājna* "music" or *tāla*, are different for each. He names seven of those eight types but gives no further explanation. The seven types of Sohni which warrant further investigation in future are:

1. PakaSohni, *paka* means "ripe", in seven *mātrās*;
2. *Sam* Sohni in nine *mātrās*;
3. *Dhima* Sohni, seven *mātrās*;
4. *Jamal* Sohni, fourteen *mātrās*;
5. *Kata* Sohni, nine *mātrās*;
6. *Jhor* Sohni, *jhor* means "beat pairs" and has four *mātrās*;
7. *Ār* Sohni, with seven *mātrās* (2007: Pers.comm.).

## VIII: The Kostuka kīrtan team night time performance

### Background

The atmosphere of the night time kīrtan *mela* at Dabar *gram* is vastly different from the day time performance. Whereas the day time performance is more comprehensive, precise, yet somewhat restrained by comparison, the night time performance exudes an atmosphere of deep mysticism, seething dynamism, greater freedom of expression and exuberance than the day time performance. This is because, it is the second and not the first time that they are being filmed so they are less self conscious I imagine. Also, there isn't the hot searing sun of the summer's day to contend with, having since set beneath the low lying hills and surrounding dry paddy fields. The *kīrtaniyās* have had time to eat, rest and thus ready themselves for their next performance in the cool evening air. Also there is a larger crowd at night to inspire a response, for the villagers have since returned from their public duties and are now able to sit together and enjoy the collective spiritual ambience.

In terms of the night time performance of the kīrtan rāgas, on the one side there is a greater dynamism and emotional/devotional expression, yet on the other, clear signs of reductionism of the kīrtan structure compared to the more comprehensive, although less lively, day time performance. Even the Chorus has been reduced from eight to five members, the two older members and the youngest are now sitting on the outer circumference of the *mandīr* playing the *kartal* and *gungur* a percussion instrument with small brass cymbals nailed onto a wooden spine. Other members are also present and playing the casio keyboard and *kartal*. Other significant signs of reduction, are the omission of various melodic parts and *kātān bol* sequences, as discussed below.

At the opening *Gauralap* the guru is the only one standing above the Chorus *kartal* players who are kneeling inside the *mandīr* and calling Hari with emotional release, to come and take his place in their hearts. The fact that the guru is standing and all else are sitting is significant, for the guru's word is paramount, and in this performance the guru is much more demonstrative and wielding of his spiritual/musical power over the team than the earlier performance. Again the three MG's are present, the junior one as the representative of Caitanya with his arms outstretched towards the sky in surrender, the

more senior one is following behind the main MG, who is carrying the harmonium and leading the Chorus.

**Comparison between the day and night time performances of Dāspera rāga (with DVD markers in brackets, relating to the daytime performance):**

The structure of Dāspera rāga in both performances is very similar in its progression from the *Gauralap* to the *kātān mātān*. The main difference between the two is not the kīrtan structure however, but the degree of dynamism that is exhibited. The night performance has a great deal more movement compared to the daytime, as team members are far more animated, including the guru who is directing the performance with great flair. Another significant contrast in the performance structure between the night and daytime is the rapidity with which changes are made between the different parts, as for example, when they jump straight into *duni* after a brief rendition of *la* and *udara* combined, rather than a more gradual climb in intensity as in the day time performance. Similarly the *duni* continues straight into the running movement of Dāspera *la mātān* with a powerful build in acceleration. It halts, changes into Dāspera *kātān* then recurs immediately after the *kātān bol* composition. The result of placing *duni* straight after Dāspera *la* and *udara* combined is that there is an increase in tempo and dynamism in the early stages of Dāspera rāga, which does not lessen throughout the performance.

There is also a significant reduction of rhythmic and melodic parts in the night time performance with only 17 strikes in the *Gauralap* compared to 22 in the day time performance and the *udara* melodic improvisation is in the *kātān duni* only and not in the *kātān cho duni*, as during the day time i.e. the MG and Chorus sing the *kātān* melody (M3), change to the *kātān duni* (M4), then revert to M3 and remain in M3 until the *kātān mātān* finale. Hence with the addition of *duni* in the *la mātān*, singles strikes become double strikes very early in the performance, so there is greater rhythmic acceleration. Then by omitting the *udara* at the *kātān duni* there is a lessening of melodic improvisation, suggesting a greater emphasis on the tāla rather than the melody in general. A pinnacle pyramid like structure is created through a strategic intensification process of rhythmic variation and acceleration, resulting in heightened devotional expression and ecstatic bliss (*anandam*).

### **(III). The rāgini interlude**

Goaded on by the guru's direction, the interlude between the two major rāgas in the night time has been reduced drastically, with the inclusion of only the *rāgini alap* with *rang* interspersed, and the complete omission of the second part, the kīrtan *rang* with the *udara* improvisation that was performed during the day time. Again the team's dynamism is far more vigorous than the earlier performance, and the guru is more prominent in his directions, with dramatic arm movements, loud calls to signal changes and *bol* recitations. It is he who decides to reduce the interlude by singing the Pākāchutā *alap* immediately after the *rāgini* rather than singing the kīrtan *rang* song.

Hence only the (III.A) Rāgini *alap* mixed with rāgini *rang* melodies M1+M2 are performed while the (III. B.) kīrtan *rang* song mixed with *udara* in a higher register, melodies M3+M4 are excluded. The guru stands centre stage as the next rāga commences, singing the opening *alap* and standing with arms upraised in *lalita marmika*.

### **(IV). Pākāchutā rāga**

A brief description of some of the more significant changes in the performance structure follows:

#### **(IV.1A). Pākāchutā alap**

Consisting of only one round, while the Chorus is kneeling, the MG's and Chorus standing.

#### **(IV. 2B). Pākāchutā kātān and duni**

In the morning performance the *kātān duni* occurs after the *kātān bols* 2-3 (at IV. 2D), whereas in the night performance it occurs straight after *kātān bol* cycle 1. The Chorus dance and play in a joyful mood, moving in a seductive manner as the drummers play *duni theka* on the bass side of the *khol* with increasing dynamism. Alternating between double and single strikes the kartal players vary the rhythmic patterns then take a giant leap in tempo, accentuating the first of a double beat pattern to create a rich, trebly sound. When the *guru* calls, the tempo increases dramatically as do the vocal interjections from the drummers before kneeling down to begin the *mātān*.

#### **(IV. 2.I). Pākāchutā kātān mātān with *duni theka* and kātān M1 and M2.**

At the Pākāchutā kātān mātān the whole team are kneeling except for the MG's. Starting from a slow pace they build upwards with a gradual rise in tempo as the drummers recite *dhere gini dhere gini* with strident voice and the Chorus sing the kātān M2 and M3. Drums and kartal are beating in unison sounding like a powerful steam train as it accelerates along the tracks. The *guru* takes centre stage guiding the team through the oncoming pass, calling first, then clapping and singing loudly at the interchange into Sohni *la*. He raises his arms straight up the lets them fall, in an effort to slow them down as they come to the Sohni *la* crossing. As the team move through to the next phase, he brings his arms into a prayer position at the centre of his chest.

#### **Brief summary of Pākāchutā rāga night time performance**

The Pākāchutā rāga performance structure is very similar to the day time performance, except that it has been shortened, made more concise and intensified with the emphasis again on keeping the dynamic rhythmic intensity at it's highest. For example, the first kātān *duni* comes after the first kātān *bols* sequence and recitation, rather than after the third cycle, as in the day time. Hence the first kātān *duni* now comes before IV.2B and IV.2C (kātān *bols* cycle 2 and 3), earlier than during the day time.

Another strategy of increasing the rhythmic intensity is demonstrated by the kātān *bols* 2 -5 played consecutively. As there are no intervening cycles between the *bols* the pyramidal performance structure is greatly enhanced with each kātān *bols* cycle performed in a continuous sequence rather than alternate sections, which grows progressively more animated and pinnacled in expression. The melodic parts have also been reduced, with (M4) high *udara* improvisation and the lower *rang* (M5) in six *mātrās* both being omitted. Hence only the traditional kātān M2 and M3 are sung in the kātān *duni* section.

Although the *bol* sequences in Pākāchutā kātān are similar to the day time performance, they are played in a slightly different order. There has also been some reduction, according to the transcription of kātān *bols* recited by JM after the performance, in kātān *bols* 1-4 above. The kātān *bols* 5– 7 are in the same order, although the last two *bol* cycles 6 and 7 beginning with *tarakete* are not divided into two separate sequences as in

the daytime performance, they run together. Hence although the Pākāchutā *kātān bols* composition is fixed, there appears to be some flexibility in terms of sequence order.

The marked increase in devotional zeal is clearly observable in the night time performance, with the guru demonstrating greater freedom of movement and expression, copied by the whole team. Thus the Pākāchutā night performance has undergone intensification through: increased rhythmic densification and acceleration; the *kātān* being played without alternating “free” cycles; the different melodic parts being shortened in length (especially the *alap*), and the M5 being omitted completely, making it a highly concentrated mix of only the essential rhythmic and melodic parts, performed with profound devotion and theatrical style.

### **The rang song**

At the end of the night time performance, there is a burst of joyful exhilaration as the drummers and Chorus stand and sing a traditional Rāṛh folk song tune (*jhumur*) to *Hari Bolo*. The *rang* melody consists of two lines, the second in a higher tessitura than the first, sung alternatively. The MG begins as the drummer initiates the *theka* and the *dohārī* responds with very *lasya* dance movements while playing the *kartal*. The drummers play a short rhythmic flourish at the end of the melodic phrase and make delightful “*ah ha*” exclamations that further inspire the Chorus. Then, after a few minutes of inflamed devotion, JM motions to wind up the performance. Everyone obeys and thus the *kīrtan mela* ends on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 at approximately 10pm, twelve hours later. A peaceful euphoria shows on the faces of the Kostuka team at the fulfillment of their promise to Hari, the *mandīr* is alive and resounding with the sound God’s name and the villagers are in a state of ecstatic bliss (*anandam*).



Figure 2.22 The Kostuka kīrtan team at the end of the night

## Epilogue: The Beginning, end and the eternal song



Figure 2.23 Painted head piece inside the kīrtan *mandīr* at Bansh Ghar village.

### Verses from the *Gurugīta* sung at the commencement of the kīrtan performance:

*Akhanda mandala karam*  
*Vyaptam jena cara caram*  
*Tat padam darshitam jena*  
*Tasmae Shri Gurave nāmah,*  
*Ajina timirandasya yijnam janan shalaya kaya,*  
*chaksurun militam jena, tasmae shri gurave nāmah*

The guru can give self knowledge as many things are hidden in this world, yet the guru can shed light on these things that you cannot imagine. The guru can help you imagine them, because maybe for your eyes it is very small, maybe I don't know the importance of something but when the guru shows me, simple things become profound (Mahanti 2006: Pers.comm.).

*Hiyā agaenano timira baro yijnam*

When we come to this earth our heart is dark, it is covered by darkness, coming here you always forget that as a human being what spiritual duties we have to do, but guru wipes away this cover of darkness, shows us the path, so that we can have success in this life. Guru takes us from darkness to light (ibid.).

*He Kṛṣṇa karuna sindhu,*  
*Dina bandhu jagatpati,*

*gopis gokakanta,*

*Rāḍhā kanta nāmastute,*

We are using different names of Kṛṣṇa. He's the ocean of mercy, god of the helpless, *jagat pati* means king of the whole world', *Gop* means leader of the cow herd, and *Rāḍhā kanta* means Rāḍhā's lover, so we are praying to him to make our performance good, that you can come to our group and come and join in the performance (ibid.).

*Guru Brahmā guru visnu,*

*guru deva mahesvara*

*Parama Brahmā guru deva*

*Tasmae shri guruve charanbo nāmah nāmo,*

*Brahmāno Vaiṣṇava pade ami pade nāmaskar*

*nijo bane pada duli dehor masto ke āmār*

We have three Gods, Brahmā the creator, Viṣṇu the preserver and Śiva the Destroyer and above them we have the Supreme God, Supreme soul, our guru, to that guru we offer ourselves. We are praying to them that they can also help and give them their blessing. The last part is directed to the audience who are looking, maybe they are Brahmāns, maybe they are Vaiṣṇavas, we also need their blessing, so we are asking for their cooperation and saying please give us the dust from your feet, (ibid.).



Figure 2.24 The eternal sound *Om* depicted inside the kīrtan *mandīr*.

My investigation is directly concerned with a music tradition that, to date, has not been documented before and therefore is primarily ethnographic by nature. In this pursuit I have focused on the *marāī* kīrtan music and performance of one team, the Māhātos from

Kostuka village, whose performance at the Dabar *mela* won them first place in the competition. By means of comparison, the significant characteristics of five other *marāī* kīrtan teams performance have been brought to light in Part one, leading to the musical analysis section (Part two) of the Kostuka kīrtan performance. While the Introduction follows the musical journey from the early kīrtan composers of Rāṅh to the contemporary kīrtan groups of the Purulia District, Part one examines the meanings of kīrtan, its unique musical components and traditional infrastructure.

Following Boyce–Tillman’s (2000) model of music as sacred site: the “materials” of the Kostuka kīrtan performance are the lead singers (*mul gayaks*), a harmonium, two khol players, six kartal players, and an all-male Chorus; at the level of the “expressive” character there is great devotional/musical intensity and diversity held securely within a fixed performance infrastructure; in terms of “form” *marai* kīrtan is a form of *samgit* i.e. singing, instrumental music and dance with structural similarities to the *Gitagovinda* and the classical music of *dhrupad* yet with its own central corpus of traditional kīrtan tālas/rāgas combined with specific Hindustani ragas and *rang*, that are moulded into a pyramidal or spiral performance structure that progressively grows in intensity; in terms of “value”, the calling of God’s name is considered of the highest spiritual value, yet musically it varies considerably, depending on social/caste/class status of the ensemble and their musical proficiency; at the “transcendental” level *marai* kīrtan represents a contemporary expression of ancient Tantric culture, i.e. Vaiṣṇavism with underlying currents of Shaivism that is so deeply rooted in the religious milieu of Bengal, “that no religion, let alone *bhaktī* can gain a toehold in Bengal without coming to terms with it” (Chakrabarti,1991:456).

The kīrtan time line runs from: the early Tantric *cārya gīti* from around a thousand years ago, to Jayadeva’s *Gītagovinda* (early 12<sup>th</sup> century) in Sanskrit, the oldest renown kīrtan song of Rāṅh; to the Chandidas’s kīrtans in the vernacular (14<sup>th</sup> century); heralding Caitanya’s popular kīrtan movement (15<sup>th</sup> century), with Nityananda his principal propagator; to Narottama Das, the disciple of Nityananda and reinventor of *lila* kīrtan; Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj, the author of *Caitanya Caritamṛta*, Vaiṣṇavism’s chief exponent (16<sup>th</sup> century); and other Vaiṣṇava *kīrtanīyas* such as Govindadas (16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>

centuries), culminating in the *marāī* kīrtan groups of the Purulia District in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Some of the musical characteristics and strategies of the kīrtan performance are also hallmarks of *shamanic* and possession music, as reported by Rouget, whereas others are unique, including: the *kīrtaniyās* role as both musicians *and* musicants; the omission of any medium between the deity and devotee, or drug induced states; the ultimate goal is to reach a state of *samādhi* or complete *absorption into*, rather than possession *by*, the Deity; and from beginning to end, the excessive emotional/devotional and musical intensity in *marāī* kīrtan that is insurmountable and ultimately indescribable which is its most unique and abiding characteristic.

The cyclic as well as “through composed” nature of *marāī* kīrtan music is symbolic of both the “endless” (*akhanda*) story line of Kṛṣṇa/Rādhā’s love (*lila*) and ephemeral nature of the kīrtan performance. The act of personal transformation from human emotion to ecstatic devotion is masterfully created through a multitude of ways of singing Hari’s name, elaborate performance strategies, various ideational techniques such as Rādhā *bhava* “embodiment of Rādhā’s emotion” as well as an intense desire to please and to merge (*rāgatmika samādhi*) into Hari.\*

The *marāī* kīrtan tradition of Rāṛh is a regional performance within the pan Indian *samgīt* tradition of song, dance and instrumental music, incorporating both traditional and innovative features: the instrumental *jhuran* and guru *vandana* in Sanskrit verse (traditional) combined with the *Gauralap* instigated by Narrottama Das (16<sup>th</sup> century); the traditional *lalita marmika* dance mixed with contemporary choreography; kīrtan melodies derived in part from the traditional Vaiṣṇava *padavali* kīrtans, Baul mystical songs, adaptations from traditional Hindustani ragas such as Siva Ranjani raga and contemporary *rangs*. Yet it has developed along independent lines: *pada* kīrtans of the Rādhā/Kṛṣṇa *lila* would normally follow the *Gauralap* whereas in *marāī* kīrtan the repetitive singing of *Hari bolo* follows; *desi* rāgas/tālas specific to *marāī* kīrtan, such as Dāspērā, Pakachutā, Jhorchutā, Sanni do not feature in the Hindustani classical music tradition and the unique infrastructure of *marāī* kīrtan with *la*, *duni*, *mātān* and *kātān* which is said to be a Rāṛhi invention created in response to the ecstatic nature of kīrtan performance and brilliantly sculpted into a pyramidal structure.

From a social perspective, *marāī* kīrtan is performed by a broad spectrum of castes, classes and “tribal” (an official governmental term) groups, within a broad spectrum of kīrtan teams, as displayed through their performance and kīrtan experiences. The Brahman team repertoire for example with its reliance on Sanskrit and *padavali* verse reflects their role as priests and educators at the top of the social hierarchy; the Māhāto team’s outstanding performance of *udara mudara tara* and adaptations of various classical rāgas demonstrates their relatively high social and economic status, and the Rājwar team with their mixture of military like precision and wild ecstatic devotion, reveals their martial origins. Kīrtan is not only a spiritual practice, it is also an integral part of the social life and performed at birthdays, weddings, housewarmings and *shraddha* (funeral) ceremonies, as reported above.

As a political tool, Caitanya’s *nagar* kīrtan performed through Navadvip in protest of a Muslim order banning their public kīrtan is reported by Sen as the first recorded act of civil disobedience in India. Similarly the story reported by the Māhātos of Bhagra, about a local courts decision to prohibit their kīrtan, then overturned is, in a contemporary context, a reenactment of Caitanya’s protest movement. The kīrtan story of Swami Haridas (*Caitanya Caritamṛta*) being protected from an evil plot by a jealous landlord using a local prostitute sent to corrupt him is another example of kīrtan’s power to transform the lives of its practitioners.

The establishment of a new form of *lila* kīrtan at Kheturi festival by Narottama Das, successfully uniting the different Vaiṣṇava factions, is reported by Sen and Goswami. Other stories about kīrtans proficiency in bringing rain where there is drought, peace where there is personal or social strife, and spiritual fulfillment where there is personal loss, are reported by *kīrtaniyās* all over Rāṅh, and none more poignant than the Kostuka’s story of family and political warring, soothed by the formation of a new kīrtan team in their village.

On an ecological level, Rāṅhi kīrtan reflects the extreme local conditions: severely parched red earth, swept by hot winds during blistering summer months; lush green paddy during the monsoons; bitter coldness during winter months; surrounded by low undulating hills, which according to geologists were once higher than the Himalayan peaks and vast, but now shallow river beds that used to carry trade ships to the

hinterlands of Rāṛh. These environmental excesses have long been mirrored in the Baul and kīrtan music with its wide intervallic leaps, swiftly rising rhythmic peaks, high soaring melodies, complex and powerful khol compositions that spiral upwards with *kātān mātān* at its peak.

There are three primary musical layers in *marāī* kīrtan, on one hand there is a central corpus of traditional Rāṛhi *marāī* kīrtan *tālas* and *rāgas*, on the outside, popular *rang* songs lying at the periphery of the core compositions that are interchangeable, while various adaptations of Baul, *jhumur* songs and classical *rāgas*, fit somewhere in between the two. In this investigation I have: documented, filmed, analysed and transcribed the traditional kīrtan performances; revealed their musical structure, such as the instrumental *jhuran*, the *Gauralap*, *Dāspera*, *rāgini* and *rang* Interlude, etc including the major (*la* and *kātān*) and minor sections (*udara mudara tara*, *udara kātān*) as well as various structural markers. Comparisons have also been made with the predecessors of *marāī* kīrtan, the *Gītagovinda*, classical *dhrupad*, and Baul music, to reveal similarities and contrasting characteristics.

The notion that the *Great* tradition has had a dominant influence on the *Little*, has been challenged through this investigation for although the Śiva Ranjani and Yaman *rāgas* have been appropriated from the Hindustani classical tradition, they have been significantly changed and adapted through the use of specific *tālas* and performance structures of *mārai* kīrtan. Also, traditional Rāṛhi *kīrtans* have so enchanted classical *dhrupadiyas* of this region, such as Narrotama Das and Dijyotima Thakur that they have opted to compose and perform kīrtans rather than *dhrupad* music. Regional folk (*jhumur*), Baul and *Chhau* genres have also incorporated kīrtan *rāgas* into their performance repertoire, thus the *Great/Little* traditions have been inextricably merged within the *marāī* kīrtan tradition of Rāṛh. Yet fundamentally it exists beyond categorization in a performance genre of its own, something akin to Christian choral singing with dance, in a western context.

Musically speaking, though *marāī* kīrtan is based on *padavalli* kīrtan verse it has a far more complex performance structure than any *padavali* kīrtan performance that I have observed. Its reliance purely on musical means, rather than text, to communicate musical meaning, means that it must be incredibly innovative. Compensation for a

minimum of lyrical content has resulted in the invention of a multitude of ways of singing *Hari Bolo*, with sophisticated instrumental arrangements and strategic devices to create diversity and sustain audience attention for long periods in order to create the performance of ecstasy. To observe classical musicians, such as those of Dijyotima Thakur's descendents performing kīrtan today is a testimony to the depth, power and expressive beauty embodied by *marāī* kīrtan. By concentrating on two words only, yet releasing spiritual longing, the pain of separation and a whole gamut of other emotions, the *kīrtaniyās* must completely absorb themselves into the sound of God yet perform within a highly organised musical infrastructure, thus demonstrating their musical excellence beyond par. Where there is an emphasis on the traditional kīrtan *tālas* and *rāgas*, the kīrtan is considered “compact” and without them the kirtan is “lacking”. According to local experts, a successful kīrtan is one in which all the different musical parts are “moving together” in unison, engaging participants and non-participants alike, with the ultimate goal to arouse devotion and give pleasure to the Deity.

The spectrum of kīrtan groups in Rāṛh is vast and the Kostuka, Karandhi, Māhāto, Rājwar, Silfore Vaiṣṇavas and Brahman teams are just a few. Yet they are representative of the many in a region that exists as a nexus not only of Vaiṣṇavism but also, on a subterranean level of Śaivism, where a village without a Śiva *lingam* is considered “unholy” and without a *mandir* is unseen. That Rāṛh is the homeland of the *mārai* kīrtan tradition is confirmed through current investigation and thus it is a very potent and sophisticated musical expression. The fundamental elements of the *marāī* kīrtan tradition of Purulia Rāṛh are therefore: the name of god *Hari* has a composite meaning resonating with Śiva as well as Kṛṣṇa; there is a central corpus of traditional *tālas/gan* i.e. Dāspera, Pākāchutā, Jhorchutā, Teyhot and others composed by the Vaiṣṇavas; the traditional infrastructure of *la*, *duni*, *matan* and *katan* is geared towards creating musical intensity and the performance of ecstasy; kīrtan aesthetics incorporates a specific order of musical pieces within a performance starting with the *jhuran*, the traditional *rāgas/tālas* woven into an elaborate arrangement with *rang* melodies interspersed or at the end, combined to create a “compact”, and “spicy” (*rang*) performance; Śiva Ranjani is also an essential *rāga* in Rāṛhi kīrtan for cultural as well as musical reasons as a way of showing respect for Śiva; and the blending of fierce and tender devotional expressions in *marāī* kīrtan as

the expressions Rādhā *bhava*, the beloved of the cosmic lover, Hari. Thus, Rāṛhi kīrtan is a comprehensive performance tradition, part of pan Indian *samgīt*, with its own unique characteristics, an ecstatic, all consuming recital and calling of Gods name with complete emotional abandonment and devotional surrender held securely within the boundaries of musical control and expertise.

Areas warranting further investigation that have arisen during fieldwork are: the *Ba* kīrtan notation; comparisons between Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and the rhythmic structures of the *kātāns* for example to ascertain whether they have been derived from the above; the Rāṛhi kīrtan *gharanas* particularly the Manoharshashi *gharana* where the local experts say their musical lineage has originated; documentation of the other traditional kīrtan tālas such as *sam tāla*, Teyhot and Lupha mentioned by JM but not performed at the *mela* and hence not yet transcribed; and finally, indepth research into the effects of kīrtan from various perspectives, having been omitted in this thesis due to time limitations.

As to be expected, when coming to the end of such a colossal endeavour an inner shift has taken place, and new insights gained into the meaning of kīrtan performance. A concise definition of kīrtan given by Sarkar (2007:25) as a "supra aesthetic science" has only now fallen into place and the realisation that some of the materials of the musical "science" of kīrtan, i.e. its ragas/talas, *rangs* performance strategies and structures in a contemporary context, has been gathered for future investigation and discussion. Similarly the "aesthetics" of kīrtan with its musical parts in proper sequence and form, its creative choreography, beautifully coloured garments and highly decorated *mandīrs* have also been documented, as well as the "supra" or transformational aspects, i.e. lyrics which directly reflect the Deity, the devotees desire to delight and give pleasure to God through singing Hari's name, the ultimate goal being mergence (*sāmadhi*). Though I have begun to uncover stories about kīrtan's powerful healing and miraculous effects with reference both to historical records and personal stories, relating to the "supra", transcendental aspects of kīrtan through a brief discussion on Tantra, trance and *sāmadhi*, there is still so much to be unveiled. Thus my investigation, (1996-2010), has assembled a large amount of ethnographic material with which to begin to erect a broad structural model based on Sarkar's succinct definition above. Yet not now, that is the next step

forward. From my present research however, it is certain that this rich, potent and sophisticated music tradition has a major contribution to make to the existing body of devotional music and dance. Study of Rāṛhi kīrtan provides essential background knowledge of an original body of musical compositions, tālas and performance structures for contemporary kīrtan artists, laying a secure foundation upon which kīrtan music as a genre can stand and be recognised. Just as classical musicians are expected to know the major composers and compositions of the classical tradition, so too a kīrtan musician must know *their* musical heritage, of which Rāṛhi kīrtan is an extraordinary example of musical excellence.

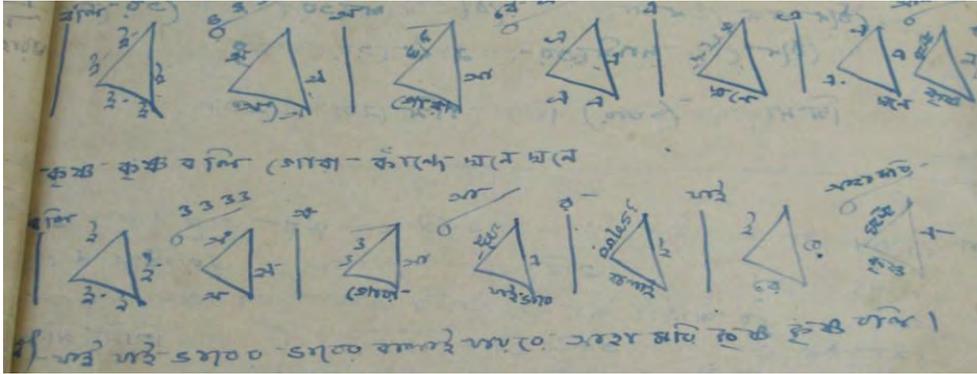


Figure 2.25 The next generation of *kīrtanīyās*, the children of Dabar village pose for a photo.

## Kīrtan Glossary:

**Alap** (আলাপ), the “non-metered” section of the kīrtan rāga performed inside the *mandīr*. The *alap* is a preparatory section and a way of establishing a rapport between the audience and the *kīrtaniyas* before moving onto the next metered part of the rāga.

**Ba** (বা), Traditional kīrtan notation consisting of a system of diagrammatic shapes, *ba* (triangular) and *dāri* (straight line) and lyrics of the kīrtan song (*gāns*) around them, see below.



**Bajna** (বাজনা), refers simply to music, and includes the *tāl* and all instrumentation of a kīrtan song.

**Bol** (বল) for every sound on the khol there is a corresponding mnemonic syllable, known as *bols*, such as *Tete do, tete to*.

**Chorus** refers to the “responsorial” section of the kīrtan team, the Chorus singers cum *kartal* players who respond to the lead singers or *mul gayaks* (মূল গায়ক) melodic line. **Dāspēra rāga** (দাম্পেরা), considered to be a devotional rāga suited to marai kīrtan. It is perhaps the most popular kīrtan rāga and is usually the first rāga performed in the kīrtan, after the *Gauralap*. It is a sophisticated rāga consisting of at least four meodic parts: *la*, *udara mudara*, *katan* and *katan udara improvisation*; a major rhythmic composition (*katan*) and various rhythmic and melodic variations and improvisations.

**Dohari** (দোহারী), the lead cymbal (*kartal*) player of the kīrtan ensemble.

**Duni**, (দুনী) is a rhythmic measurement of time, being “double time” or “medium tempo”, also includes **Cho** (ছ) *duni* “quadruple time” and **mixed duni** “a combination of the above”. **Ektāla** (একতলা), *Ek* means “one” but in this case refers to “one pair”. *Ektāla* generally has eight or twelve beats or *matras* (মাত্র) to the cycle, (see Part one).

**Gauralap** (গুরালাপ), the *alap* section, or unmetred vocal section performed at the very beginning of the *kīrtan*, dedicated to Caitanya (*Gaura*), and the Hindu trinity, Brahma, Visnu, and Maheshvara (Śiva). Here the *kīrtanyas* “call loudly”, to the Guru/God, requesting that he come and be present at the *kīrtan*.

**Ghat** (ঘাট), refers to “preparatory music”, and is another term for *Juran*, (যুরণ).

It is also a transitional piece played at an intersecting point between two *rāgas* or between a *rāga* and a *rang* (রং). The inner meaning of the term *ghat* is “to strike other peoples hearts, in other words one must say the name of god, *Hari Bolo* loudly, not just internally, but with intense emotion and devotional expression” (Rājwar, 2006: Pers.comm.).

**Hat sādhana** (হাত সাধনা), “hand practice” on the *khol* drum, certain rhythmic patterns performed in a sequence, such as *tete tete do, tere tete ta* repeatedly.

**Juran** (যুরণ) is performed outside the *kīrtan mandīr* (মন্দির), and includes an instrumental introduction, the *Gauralap*, and *padavalli kīrtans*.

**Jhorchutā:** (ঝর্চুতা), comes from *jhor* or “beat pairs” and *chuta* which means “flower”. According to some experts the *tāla* is in seven beat cycles (*mātras*) and others, it is in three and a half beats (*mātras*). *Jhorchutā rāga* is very concise and charming *rāga*, although not as comprehensive as *Pākāchutā* or *madhu* “sweet” as *Dāspēra*. The major characteristic of *Jhorchutā* is the very distinctive “beat pair” that is played with great force on the *sam*, throughout the *rāga*. There are two melodic parts in *la* and two melodic parts in the *katan*. Comparatively speaking *Jhorchutā* is considerably shorter than *Pākāchutā*.

**Jhumur** (ঝুমুর) *rang*, a “traditional Rāḥi folk song”.

**Jhumur sur** (ঝুমুর সুর) *rang*, (রং) or “traditional Rāḥi folk song melody”.

**Kartal** (করতাল) are large brass cymbals traditionally played in a *marāī kīrtan* ensemble that hold the rhythmic foundation in a firm grip allowing the *khol* players to perform elaborate compositions.

**Kātān**, (কাটান), described as “skilled playing” or “rhythmic composition”, played by the *khol* drummers, similar to a drum solo at the end of a *rāga*.

**Kathā kīrtan** (কথা কীর্তন), “story telling” kīrtan, about the *lila* (play) of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

**Khol** (খোল) the traditional kīrtan drum of Rāṅḥ, made from fired red earth, goat skin and bamboo strips. The **gab** (গব), or black paste on both ends, is made from rice flour and ground stone dust. Every aspect of the khol drum has deep spiritual significance (see part one).

**Kīrtan** “praise music, sung loudly”, a profound literary and sophisticated musical tradition of Rāṅḥ, with its own system of notation and compositions, possibly originating more than 1000 years ago from the *carya padas* and Jayadeva’s *Gitagovindā*.

**La**, the first melodic line or “refrain” in the kīrtan rāga, comparable to the *sthayi* in *dhrupad*.

**Lalita marmika** (লালিতমার্মিকা) is the classical kīrtan dance, said to have been invented by Parvati, wife of Śiva. It is a repeated two step movement where the tip of the big toe touches behind the opposite foot in a side to side motion and the arms are raised above the shoulders to the sky.

**Lila kīrtan** “story telling” about the love play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

**Māhāto** (মহত), or Mahatman, lit. meaning “head man”, one of the predominant ethnic groups of western Rāṅḥ, and are generally land owners and agriculturalists.

**Marai** (মারাই) refers to “circular” kīrtan, or “endless” *akhanda* (আখন্দ) kīrtan. *Marai* is a word from the Rāṅḥi dialect, and its inner meaning is “to grind” for, “if you grind Hari *nam*, the name of god, like sugar cane in your heart, then it will also melt for god” (JM, 2006: Pers.comm.) *Marai* kīrtan is usually performed in *praharas* or “hours” based on multiples of three *praharas*, such as three hours or days.

**Mātra**, (মাত্র) refers to “beat” of a rhythmic cycle or tāla.

**Matan**, (মতন) is the “rhythmic climax” or “climactic kīrtan melody” which occurs after the *la* melodic section, also called the *jarop* (যারপ).

**Maynadal ar gati bol**, (মায়নাদল আর গতি বল) literally means “garland of devotional musical offerings”, or “ancient traditional *bol* patterns” (Sri Rishi Das: Pers.comm.), rarely played today, known only by kīrtan experts.

**Mul gayak** (মূল গায়ক), abbreviated as MG, is the “lead singer” of the kīrtan team.

**Nacini nach**, (নাসিনি নাচ) “dancing girls dance” one of the five indigenous music genres of Rāṛh.

**Padavalli kīrtan**, (পাদাবলি) traditional or contemporary kīrtan song poetry or prose that is performed in certain *rāgas* and *tālas*, the Gitagovinda by Jayadeva for example.

**Pākāchutā** (পাকাচুতা), Pākāchutā, *paka* lit. means “ripe” “full” or “cooked” in the sense of “complete”, and *chuta* “flower” (BM, 2006, Pers.comm.). Pākāchutā is a significant *rāga* composition in the Rāṛhi kīrtan tradition with four melodic lines, excluding the opening *alap* section, one in *la* and *three* in the *katan*, with one *rang* inserted, as well as a lengthy *katan* composition in seven beat (*matra*) cycles. Other *rāgas* in the same category are Dāspera, Jhorchutā and Sohni to name the most common ones.

**Patha** (পথ), or “path” song, performed on the way to the *mandīr*, before the *marai* kīrtan performance begins.

**Rāga** (রাগ), in Rāṛhi kīrtan refers to a “group of melodic lines” that make up a melodic composition or piece with a fixed *tāla*. It includes two primary sections: *la* and *katan*. For example, in Dāspera *la* in *ektāla*, there is a refrain called *la* (melody 1) and a second melodic improvisation higher than the first, called *udara mudara* (melody 2). Dāspera *katan* has its own melodic line (melody 3) and an improvisation on the *katan* (M4) interspersed with *udara*. Dāspera may also include *tara*, a higher melodic phrase than *mudara*, making the sequence rise in pitch from *udara*, *mudara*, to *tara* as well as other improvised melodic lines. Hence a kīrtan *rāga* is a complex musical piece, similar in structure to *dhrupad*, but with its own unique infrastructure, including *la*, *duni*, *matan*, *katan* that can last up to 30 minutes in length.

**Rang** (রং), meaning “colour”, and refers to popular Baul, Bengali and Hindi folk song melodies that have been adapted to a kīrtan style. The *rang* adds a lighter mood to the performance and is generally performed after the traditional kīrtan *rāgas*, as a transition between two *rāgas* or at the end of the kīrtan.

**Rang yātra** (যাত্রা), or “theatre song melody”.

**Sohni** (সফি), is a Hindusani classical *rāga* that has been adapted to kīrtan *rāga*, in seven beat cycles. Nearly all the groups performed Sohni during the *mela* highlighting its popularity. In Sohni there is a brief *alap*, one melody in *la* and two in *katan*.

**Śiva Ranjani** (শিভা রান্জানি) rāga, a deep, profound rāga based on the classical Hindustani rāga, but adapted to the kīrtan tradition.

**Tāla** (তাল), or “time signature” in the context of Rāṛhi kīrtan refers to the beat (*mātra*) cycles, “If we measure a tāl, then the unit of the measurement is called *mātra*, like twelve *mātra* together makes up *ektāla*” (JM, 2006: Pers.comm.).

**Udara mudara tara** (উদার মুদ্রা তারা), are three respective roles for kīrtan singers or *mul gayaks*. A Hindustani improvisation, *udara mudara tara* is also an ascending melodic line in three steps, starting at *udara* (5<sup>th</sup> of the scale), going upwards to *mudara* (the 6<sup>th</sup>), and finally *tara* (the octave above). The significance of the *udara*, *tara* and *mudara*, is more than just the vocal parts, it also expresses three separate yet interconnected roles in the kīrtan group that combine to produce a melodic hocketting effect, similar I am told, to running a relay at a marathon (SM, 2006:Pers.comm.).

## Appendices:

### Appendix A: Comparison chart of the six kirtan teams of Purulia:

Summary of Group Comparisons	Mahato	Rajuar	Vaisnavas	Karandhi	Brahman	Kostuka
<b>1. Background Features</b>	Indigenous tribal group Mahato means 'head man' land owners	Indigenous tribal group Originally Rajuar were hunters, then became soldiers in British regime	Vaisnava lifestyle Called Goswamis, originally from Rarh are one extended family	Tribal group Mixture of different castes, Rajura, Karamakar, Mahato	Brahman Mahanti and Layek All living in village.	Mainly Mahato
<b>A. Village</b>	Bagra village mainly Muslim Has two kirtan groups Kirtan mandir, Shiva temple	Bagra village, mainly Muslim Second Kirtan group Kirtan mandir, Shiva temple	Silfore village Living in same village Has Shiva temple	Karandhi Village remote area Shiva temple	Bansh Gar, near Balarampur highly decorated mandir	Kostuka village Living in same village kirtan mandir Shiva lingam
<b>B. Guru</b>	No teaching guru there was Vaisnava guru, but learnt mainly from uncles.	Teaching guru is Basanta Rajuar, learnt from his Father	Guru is Sri Rishi Das Goswami, learnt from his father Mohan Das Goswami.	Haradhan Rajura is guru and mudara and Choreographer	Sri Narayan Mahanti is guru His guru was late Banamali Panda, Makan Lal Ganguli	Sri Jagaran Mahato is guru
<b>C. Kirtan Group</b>	Established since 1988 Occupations are agriculture and sales educated land owners Mahato + Rajuar castes Living in same street, para	Established 1996 Occupation is making rice flour Living in same village	Full time, Professionals Established since 1920's Tour all year round Perform mangal ratri kirtan funerary kirtan + Teaching	Forefathers were also Kirtanyas	Established for 100 years  Brahman rituals	Started five years ago, Was kirtan team in previous times
<b>2. Philosophical and 2.C. Musical Influences</b>	Shaivism Classical tradition Indigenous genres, Baul	Shaivism/Kali Jhumur and Baul songs, Nacini, Chhau dance	Shaivism Baul songs Lila or Pada Kirtan Purano tunes	Shaivism Lila or pada kirtan jhumur, Baul songs Hindi cinema dances	Brahmanism Padavali kirtan from Vaisnava poets, Guru Vandana in Sanskrit.	Shaivism Baul, lila or padavali kirtan Classical ragini alap
<b>3. Performance: A. Content:</b>	Juran Guru Vandana Dohar patha song Gauralap in Emon Daspera in Ektala Traditional Rang Ektala in four melodies Sanni La Jamal Sanni with kenjuri Baul gan rang Shiva Ranjani raga	Juran Guru Vandana Gauralap Ektala, Daspera la, katan matan La, Melodic improv + Katan Baul rang Matan Rang tal jhumur Sanni La Ar Sanni Shiva Ranjani Ragag	Juran Guru Vandana Gauralap Ektala, Daspera la Ektala Katan Rang Yatra Shiva Ranjani raga Jhumur rang in ektala Sanni Ektala matan Mayno tal ar gati bol	Juran Guru Vandana Gauralap Ektala La Ektala Katan Rang sur/Matan/Rang sur Shiva Ranjani rag Kirtan sur in Ektala Sanni La Sanni hat bajna- 'small drums' Sanni Katan	Juran Outy Instrumentals Guru Vandana Sanskrit verse Guru Vandana padavali Juran instrumentals lila kirtan -Jat abahan 'calling' Gauralap Guru Vandana in ektala Songs in ektala Daspera katan Pakachuta Shiva Ranjani raga	Gauralap Juran Guru Vandana Lila kirtan /patha songs Gauralap Daspera La udara mudara tara Daspera Katan Ragini, Kirtan rang Pakachuta Jhorchuta

	Leaving mandir -jhumur	Teyhot	Rang section	Baul song outside mandir	Rang, 'Free rhythm'	Lila kirtan outside mandir
<b>B. Group Hierarchy</b>	1st MG, Brikodhar Mahato 1st Khol Player 2nd Khol Player	1st MG is Basanta Rajuar 1st khol player Coordinated cooperation	1st Sri Rishi Das 2nd is Dvija Pada (son) 2nd is brother of Rishi Das	1st MG Haradhan Rajura 2nd MG Jiban Mahato 3rd, Parameshvar Karmakar	1st MG Sri Narayan Mahanti call and response Chorus	Sri Jagaran Mahato 1st MG Dohari, Sakti Mahato
<b>C. Movements</b>	Choreographed + Lalita Mar	Choreographed 'marital mvts' lalita marmika lasya Radha like Influenced by Chhau and nacini nach.	Choreographed Lalita marmika Fierce devotional expression	Choreographed Choris girls Lalita marmika Cinema dances	No choreography lalita marmika open participation, rang section	Choreography Lalita marmika Lasya
<b>D. Structural Markers</b>	MG calls Hari Bolo in quick succession Khol plays bols then kartal follows	"Gun Shot" bol interludes "Scratched Records" Bol interludes, as markers	MG calls out Hari Bolo The three matan katans The Rang songs	MG calls out Hari Bolo khols and Chorus follow	MG calls and plays khol Chorus/kartal follow	The guru guides 1st MG, then khols and dohari
<b>4. Musical Qualities</b>						
<b>A. Vocals</b>	Three MG's - in sequence udara, Mahato mudara, Mahato tara, Rajuar sing in perfect sequence	Three mul gayaks but main MG is Basanta Rajuar Udara, Harmonium Jiban Mahato Tara- kartal player is Parameshvar Karmakar, in sequence	Three Mul gayaks: 1st is Dvija, Udara, mudara 2nd is Uncle, Udara, mudara 3rd is Goswami, Tara	Three MG's: hocketting effect udara, Jiban Mahato mudara, Haradhan Rajura tara, Parameshvar Karmakar but tara is most prominent	Main MG leads Chorus with various MG's leading after Guru Vandana Emphasis on classical vocals no udara, mudara, tara	1st MG and guru lead no tara
<b>B. Khol Players</b>	Lead khol player, Naba is second in command 2nd Khol player, also an expert, play in unison	lead is Satyajai Rajuar 2nd Khol is Nepal Rajuar Khols spar with 1st MG.	Lead, Sri Rishi Das Goswami 2nd Khol player- plays in unison experts at Sanni katan	Lead is Svapan Karmakar 2nd Khol is also Karmakar spar with each other in mock 'fight'.	Lead is Sri Narayan Mahanti two apprentice Khol players	Both khol players are proficient at tal and katan
<b>C. Kartal Players</b>	Dohari, powerful leader called "Big Foot" five kartal players	Dohari, plus five kartal players military like movements Precision	Dohari, plus five kartal Most senior, dynamic, expertise in tal	Dohari and kartal Players are seated Around the mandir	Dohari was not prominent as there is no choreography Chorus also play kartal	Dohari is strong leader plus five Chorus following behind
<b>D. Other Instruments</b>	Casio played by 2nd MG Clarinet - Dom Ananda Lahari,	Two harmoniums Clarinet- Dom Tambourine	One harmonium Two casio Clarinet	Two harmoniums Clarinet	Only khol and kartal, no other instruments	No clarinet, Harmonium only
<b>E. Conclusive Characteristics</b>	Classicism Vocal hocketting Shiva Ranjani raga	Incredible Dynamism Military like precision Wild Ecstatic devotion	Expertise and mastery Tradition and innovation Professionalism, Ba Notation	Polyrhythmic effect, Joyous exuberance Vocal Hocketting	Purity of sound Guru Vandana and Padavalli kirtan expert, Ba notation	Reverence for guru Respect for kirtan Tradition Transformation
<b>5. Kirtan Stories</b>	Assert Vaisnavism /Political Barun Rain god Gateway to heaven Social ceremonies Relief from hunger, pain Works like a medicine Changes in kirtan ragas.rang	Assert Vaisnavism/Political Radha Bhava Kirtanias change of role Kirtan is like a drug, a magnet a direct link to God	Can attain moksa liberation Benefits to all listening, organising, doing.. The way to heaven Save you from danger	Can transform someones life, Can save them	Gurus grace Spintual philosophy of moksa Jayadevas' life	Kirtan culture On Hari bolore Marai kirtan is Radha's songs

## Appendix B: Chart of Pakachuta *katan bols* recitations:

### 1. Pākāchutā *la* in chart form with khol *bols* and hand movements:

1. Hari Bo	<u>lo</u> Hari	Bolo Hari	Bolo Bolo	_Hari	Bo__lo	_ *Bolo
2.gegeda geda	<u>jha</u> gere gere	da de ta	to i t o i	keta di dha	geda geda	*dha dhik da

### Description:

1. Lyrics with \* =starting point of melodic phrase

2. Khol: the *sam* or first beat of the seven *mātrā* cycle, is on the lo underlined in bold and spoken as *jha*.

### 2. Pākāchutā *katan* cycle 1 *bol* recitations

Bol_Haribol	__ Bolo	_HariBo_	Lo_Haribole	Bo_lo_	Bolobolo	*Ha_ri_
Naka dene da gere gere	Da denada naka dena	naka dene da gere gere	Da denada naka dena	naka dene da gere gere	___	*Tor denada de naka dena
Naka dene da gere gere	Da denada naka dena	naka dene da gere gere	Da denada naka den	naka dene da gere gere	___	*Da denada naka dena
Naka dene da gere gere	Deneda Deneda	Deneda gitere geregere	Dini dini da, Dini dinida dinidini	Da_		

Note: that the *bol* cycle begins at the \*, the seventh *matra*, then goes to the first.

### 3. The Pakachuta *katan bols* cycle 2 recitations, with first M3 (low)

Bol_Haribol	__ Bolo	_HariBo_	Lo_Haribolo	Bo_lo_	BoloBolo	*Ha_ri_
Da gere Da Deya	Tor dada da gere da da	da gere da deya	Tor dada da gere da da	da gere da deya x2	_	*1./2.Tor Da da Dagere Da da

**Description of *katan bols 2* notation:** The first and second *katan bol* lines above are accompanied by M3 (low), then midway through, on the fourth cycle (the second part repeat) M2 begins and continues through the fifth, sixth and seventh lines of *katan bols*. The seventh line begins with *deya kete* and ends with *dini dini da*.

**The *katan bols 2*, M2 (high) part, Chart form:**

Bol_Haribol	_ _ Bolo	_ HariBo	Lo_Haribolo	Bo_lo_	BoloBolo	Ha_ri_
Gerede gereda gereda	Gereda dagereda dene	Gereda gereda gereda	Gereda dagereda dene	Gereda gereda gereda	_	*3./4.Gereda dagereda dene
keta keta keta	Ketak ta keta dene	keta keta keta	Ketak ta keta dene Jha jha	Jha	_	*5/6.Ketak ta keta dene
deya kete Tata ta	Dene da dene da dene da	getere keretak	Dini dini da dini dini da dinidini	Da	_	*7.Deya keta deya kete

#### 4. Pākāchutā *katan bols 3* recitations

Glossary: Column 1- Lyrics. Column 2, 3, 4, 5 - Khol bols.

1.Bol_Haribol	_ _ Bolo	_ Hari Bo	Lo_Haribolo	Bo_lo_	BoloBol o	Ha_ri_
2. Jah jah Tereteke	Ki Nau kiti tete	kiti daga dene Da geregere	doya takete jha jha	jha tere teke ta x2	_	1/2.Dagere gere dene takete
3. Tor doya	Tere kete tinauana	Kiti tete kiti teke tini	Tor doya tor doya	Tak geregere gere na x2	_	3/4.Tor doya
4.Tini kiti daga tini	Kete tinauna kiti tete	Kiti dage tina tik	Kiti dage tina tik	Tini kiti daga tini tik x2	_	5/6.Da tata Geregere
5. Geregere Geregere	Deneda deneda	Dene dagi tere geregere	dinidinida dinidinida dinidini	Da	_	7.Dene dagi tere

#### 5. Pākāchutā *katan bols 4* recitations

1.Bol_Haribol	_ _ Bolo	_ Hari Bo	Lo_Haribolo	Bo_lo_	BoloBolo	*Ha_ri_
2. Dregeda Tere tete	Tinauna kiti tete	Kiti daga dini gedé	Drege drega da drega drege da	Drege dak da	-	1./2Da da tere tete
3.XxxxXxxx	XxxxXxxx	XxxxXxxx	XxxxXxxx	XxxxXxxx	-	XxxxXxxx
4.Drega dak Tere tete	Tinauna kiti tete	Kiti daga dini gedé	Drege drege da drege drege da	Dregeda da_	-	3./4.Drege drega dere tere
5.Drege Dena Tere tete	Tinauna kiti tete	Kiti daga dini	Drega nada drega nada	Drege nada_	-	5./6Drega dhena
6. Genada Da Giritere kiti tak	Deneda da geneda da	geneda da giritere Kiti tak	Dini dini da dini dini da dindini	da_	-	7.Deneda da geneda da

Glossary: Column 1- Lyrics, 2 - Khol bols, 3- Kartal, 4. 5. 6.- Khol bols.

6. Pākāchutā *katan bols* 5 cycle recitations: (Column 1- Lyrics, 2/3/4/5. Khol bols),

1.Bol_Haribol	_ _ Bolo	_ Hari Bo	Lo_Haribolo	Bo_lo_	BoloBolo	*Ha_ri_
2.Tere tete Tere tete	Ta ta ta ta	Tere tete tere tete	Tere thakena takete Jha	toi toitoi		*1/2 Tor Tor Tor
3.Kiti taki Dene kete	Da dene tun da	Kiti taki dene kete	Tun da, tun da, tun da toi toi	Toi		*3/4 Jha dene tun da
4.Naka dene doya	Ta keta naka dene	Naka dene doya	To keta, to keta to keta Jhajha	Jha		*5/6. Do kete naka dene
5.Giri tere Ketaka	Deneda deneda deneda	Giri tere Ketaka	Dini dini da dini dini da dinidini	Da		*7. Deneda deneda deneda

## Appendix C. Chart of Jhorchuta *katan bol* recitations:

### 1. Jhorchutā *katan bols* with M3 (low) part

Bo_	_lo Bolo	Haribolo	Hari	Bolo	BoloBolo	*_ Hari
Gene ta kete	Da da da	gene ta kete	Doketa	Doya	Da da	1. da da da
Dena ta kete	Da gi tere	teretere kerekete	Ta tai ti ta repeats x2			2/3.Da gere gere
	Ta tai ti ta		Ta tai ti ta			4.Ta tai ti ta
Geregere jha	Gere gere jha	Ti ta	Do kete	Doiya	Tete tete	5.Geregere jha
Geregere jha	Ti ta	Geregere jha	Ti ta	Geregere jha	Ti ta	6.Geregere jha

### 2. Jhorchutā *katan bols* with M4 (high) part in chart form:

Bo_	_ol Bolo	HariBolo	Hari	Bolo	Bolo Bolo	*_ Hari
Dene da gere tere	keretere terekereterekete	Ta tai ti ta		Tatai ti ta	_	3. Dene da dene da
Dha diti da	Keretere ta	Dhiti da	tere kere, repeats		_	4. Dhaditi da
Geregere jha	Ti ta	Do keta	Doiya	Tete tete	_	5.Geregere jha
Da gi gi gi	Da gi gi gi	Da gi da gi	Da gi gi gi	Da gi gi gi	_	6. Da gi da gi
Da de teretere	Dene da	ur ti ta			_	7. Dha de teretere

## Appendix D. Chart of Sanni *la bols* recitations:

_Bolo	Bolo	Hari Bolo	_Hari	Bolo Hari	BoloBolo	*Hari
<i>Urr tete Urr tete</i>	<i>Urr tete urr tete</i>	<i>Denagede x3</i>	<i>Da urrrrr</i>	<i>Dagededa gede da</i>	<i>Dagededa gede da</i>	<i>Urtete Urtete</i>

**Appendix E: Comparisons between the day and night time kirtan performance of Dāspera**

<u>1.Day time</u> <u>RĀGA</u>	Melody section	Kartal	Khol	<i>Mātrā</i>	<u>2.Night time</u> <u>RĀGA</u>	Melody	Kartal	Khol	<i>Mātrā</i>
1A. Dāspera Gauralap	<i>Alap</i>	Rolls with 22 strikes	Rolls with 22 strikes	-	1A. Dāspera Gauralap	Alap	Rolls with 17 strikes	Rolls with 17 strikes	-
1B	“	“	“		1B	“	“	“	
2. Dāspera A.La	M1	SS	<i>ektala</i>	8,16	2. A. Dāspera La	M1	SS	<i>Ektala</i>	8,16
2.B. Udara mudara	M2	KP2	“	10	2.B. Udara mudara	M2	<u>SS</u>	“	10
2.C. combination	M1	KP1		8,16	2.C. combination	M1	<u>SS</u>	“	8, 16
2. C.1	M1	SS		8,16	2. C.1	M1	<u>SS</u>	“	8, 16
2. C. 2.- 4	M2	KP2		10	2. C. 2.- 4	<u>M2,M1</u>	KP2	“	10
2. C.5	M1, M2	KP3		8,16		<u>1</u>	<u>KP1</u>	“	8, 16
2. C. 6 – 8	M1, M2	SS/ KP3		8, 12	2. C. 6 – 8	M1,M2	<u>Duni/</u> KP3		8, 12
2. D. la matan	M1	“		8	2. D. la matan	1	KP4		8
2. D.2-3	M1, M2	KP4		8	2. D.2	M1, M2	KP4		8
3.A.B. Katan	M3	KP5 A and B	Khol bols	12	3.A.B. Katan	M3	KP5 A and B	Khol bols	12
3. C. 1 duni	M3	KP6	<i>ektala</i>	12	3. C. 1 duni	M3	KP6	<i>ektala</i>	12
3.C2–6, udara	M3, M4	“	<i>ektala</i>	12	3. C2 – 6, udara	M3, M4	“	<i>ektala</i>	12

3. C.7 <i>katan duni matan</i>	M3	“	“	12	3. C.7. <i>katan duni matan</i>	M3	“	“	12
3. D. <i>katan char duni</i>	M3, M4	combination	“	6	3. D. <i>katan char duni</i>	M3, M4	combination	“	6
3. D2-3 – with kartal interludes	M3	combination	“	6,12,24	3. D2-3 – with kartal interludes	M3	combination.	“	6, 12, 24
3. E, <i>Udara</i> improvisation.	M3, M4	combination	“	“	3. E, <i>Udara</i> improvisation.	M3, M4	combination	“	“
3. E.1 <i>katan matan</i>	M3	combination	“	12 DS	3. E.1 <i>katan matan</i>	M3	combination	“	12

**Note: SS = Single strikes, DS = double strikes**

**Appendix F: Comparisons between the day and night time kirtan performance of the *ragini* Interlude:**

III. A. RĀGINI day time	Melody section	Kartal	Khol	Mātrā	III. A. RĀGINI night time	Melody section	Kartal	Khol	Mātrā
A. Alap	M1 high	Single strikes (SS)	<i>Theka</i> on bass		A. Alap	M1 high	Single strikes	<i>Theka</i> on bass	
A.2. <i>Alap</i> with <i>theka</i>	“	SS fast	<i>Theka</i> on both sides + <i>bols</i>	8	A.2. <i>Alap</i> with <i>theka</i>	“	SS fast	<i>Theka</i> on both sides + <i>bols</i>	8
A.3. Rāgini <i>rang</i>	M2, descending	Double /SS fast	<i>Theka</i>	8	A.3. Rāgini <i>rang</i>	M2, descending	Double /SS fast	<i>Theka</i>	8
A. 3-7 Rāgini <i>alap</i> and <i>rang</i> combined	M1 + M2	SS fast tempo	<i>Theka</i>	8	A. 3-7 Rāgini <i>alap</i> and <i>rang</i> combined	M1 + M2	SS fast tempo	<i>Theka</i>	8
A.8 Rāgini <i>matan</i>	M1	Quadruplets	<i>Theka</i> + <i>bols</i>	8	A.8 Rāgini <i>matan</i>	M1	Quadruplets	<i>Theka</i> + <i>bols</i>	8
A. 9-10 Rāgini <i>alap</i> / <i>rang</i>	M1 + M2	SS	<i>Theka</i>	8	A. 9-10 Rāgini <i>alap</i> / <i>rang</i>	M1 + M2	SS	<i>Theka</i>	8
B. Kīrtan <i>Rang</i>	M3high	KP8 – 42 beats	<i>Theka</i> <i>bols</i> _	6 mātrā x 7 _	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil

**Appendix G: Comparison between day and night time Pakachuta raga performance:**

Day time Pākāchutā Rāga	Melody	Kartal	Khol	Mātrā	Night Pākāchutā Rāga	Melody	kartal	Khol	Mātrā
1A. <i>alap</i>	M1	Jangling		7	1A. <i>alap</i>	M1	Jangling		7
1B – D <i>La</i>	M1	SS	Tāl <i>bols</i>	“	1B – D <i>La</i>	M1	SS	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“
1E. <i>Matan</i>	M1	DS	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“	1E. <i>Matan</i>	M1	DS	Tāla <i>bols</i>	“

2. A <i>Katan</i>	M2 high	“	Tāla	“	2. A <i>Katan</i>	M2 high		Tāla	“
2.B –D	M3 low	KP5 KP4	<i>Bols</i> 1, 2 and 3 cycles	“	2.B –D	M3 low	KP5 KP4	<b><u>Bols 1 sitting</u></b>	“
2. E <i>katan duni</i>	M4 high improv.	KP4 <i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7 mātrā x4 = 28	2. E <i>katan duni</i>	<b>M2 only</b>	KP4 <i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	7
E1. <i>katan rang</i>	M5 low	SS	<i>Theka</i>	6 mātrā x4 = 24	–	<b>M2 only</b>	KP4 <i>duni</i>	<i>Theka</i>	<u>7</u>
E2. <i>Duni</i>	M4	DS	<i>Theka</i>	7 x4 = 28 beats	E2. <i>Duni</i>	M4	DS	<i>Theka</i>	7 x4 = 28 beats
E3 – 4. <i>Rang duni</i> combination	M5 +M4	SS, DS	<i>Theka</i>	7 + 6 mātrā combination	<u>nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>
E5 – 6. <i>matan</i>	M5 +M4	DS	<i>Theka</i>	7 x4 = 28	E5 – 6. <i>matan</i>	<b>M2 only</b>	DS	<i>Theka</i>	7 x4 = 28
2.F1. <i>bols 4</i>	M3 +M2	KP5	<i>Katan bols 4</i>	7	<b><u>2.F1. bols 2, 3 and 4</u></b>	M3 +M2	KP5	<b><u>Katan bols 2-5</u></b>	7
2.F2. <i>bols 5</i>	M3 +M2	“	<i>Katan bols 5</i>	7	2.F2. <i>bols 5</i>	M3 +M2	“	<i>Katan bols 5</i>	7
2G. <i>duni 2</i>	M2 + M3	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28	2G. <i>duni 2</i>	M2 +M 3	<b><u>DS and SS</u></b>	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28
2H. <i>katan matan1</i>	M3	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28	2H. <i>katan matan1</i>	M3	KP4	<i>theka</i>	7 x 4 = 28
2I. <i>bols 6</i>	M3 +M2	KP5	<i>Katan bols 6</i>	7	2I. <i>bols 6 /7</i> continuous	M3 +M2	KP5	<b><u>Katan bols 6 and 7 sitting</u></b>	7
2J. <i>bols 7</i>	M3	KP5	<i>Katan bols 7</i>	7	–	M3 +M2	KP5	<u><i>Katan bols 6 and 7 sitting</i></u> –	7
J1. grand finale	M2	KP4	<i>Theka</i>	“	J1. grand finale	M2	KP4	<i>theka</i>	“

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