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MANIPURI NATA SANKIRTANA: A CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MANIPUR

Dr. M. Thoiba Singh

Assistant Professor

Department of Dance & Music

Manipur University, Canchipur-795003

Abstract

The Nata Sankirtana style of singing which was introduced during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1748-1799 A.D.). The great masters and scholars of that period composed and sang the padavali strictly after the Bhagavata tradition and other major Vaishnavite text and based the composition also on the traditional *Ragas* and *Raginis* of classical music tradition. Modern research has discovered a lot of regional overtones in the architecture of the particular *Ragas* and *Raginis*. The Manipuris call the *Nata Sankirtana* singing their own and it is clearly a form of collective prayer, a *Mahayajna* as they call it, lasting for about 5 hours at a stretch with a lot of rituals, movements and rhythmic pattern, strictly after the vaishnavite faith. *Nata Sankirtana* is a composite version of music, dance and tala; a *Sangeet* in the true sense of the term. It is also *Drishya Kavya*, a poem made visible.

Nata Sankirtana is a very important aspect in the lives of the people in Manipur. It is because when our end is near, people listen to *Hari-naam* to relieve us from all the wrong doings that we have done before, so that we die peacefully. After death the family members would take the dead body for the last rites. In the *shraddha* ceremony, the *Nat Sankirtan* will start with raga. Before the invocation of the god and prayers start, *Pinda- dan* cannot be offered. After offering the *Pindadan*, the owner of the ceremony will have a bath and wear washed clothes. He will then come and offer his respects towards the end of the *Sankirtana* when *Raga Bijay* is being performed. The *Shraddha* ceremony comes to an end with the guardian of the *Mandap* sending the departed soul to *beikuntha dham*.

In case of any death in a house, *Naam Sankirtan* plays an important role. In the ten days of mourning or *Dashahan*, the ritual will start with *Naam Sankirtana* and other rituals like reading *Shrimad Bhagavat Gita* will follow. The particular person who mourns, known as the *Gira thangba*, will only offer *Pindadan* after the Sankirtana starts. Even in *asti sanchai* or the ritual of picking up the remains from the grave, *Sankirtana* is performed along with *Parikrama* around the *Hari mandir*. In this manner, for Meitei Vaishnavites living in the society today, *Nata Sankirtan Mahayajna* was become an indispensable event in the lives of the people since time immemorial. In short, *Nata Sankirtana* is the only highest karma for the Meitei society. This paper attempts to understand the important role of *Nata Sankirtana* in Manipuri society.

Key Word: *Mahayajna, Karma, Pindadan, Shraddha, Drishya Kavya, Beikundha Dham*

Introduction:

In Manipur, during the reign of King Kiyamba in 1467-1508 *Vishnu temple* was set up and people started paying obeisance to Vishnu by offering *Sankirtana*. After him, his successors, King Charairongba and most of his people in 1697 A.D. took *Bhagavata Dikshya* and began worshipping Shri Krishna (Madan Mohan) through *Hari Sankirtana*. In 1709, Maharaj Garibaniwaz founded *Drupad Hari Sankirtana* which was known as *Ariba Sankirtana* (Bangdesh Pala) in the rituals of dead ceremonies like Asti Sanjay, Shradha, Samasor etc. Then in 1763-1798 A.D. under the rule of Maharaj Bhagyachandra, *Drupad Hari Sankirtana* accompanying *Gourchandrika* and *Goura Bhavi* became famous in Manipur. Maharaj Bhagyachandra was awarded the name Rajarshi and was believed to be the incarnation of Nortom Thakur Mahasoi, an intelligent Shiksha (student) of Loknath Goswami of Braja Brindavan. It was during his period that the temple of *Sri Govindajee* was installed and started to be worshipped by offering Rasa Kirtan of Lord Krishna.

Drupad Hari Sankirtana was known by the name of Dhrumel Hari Sankirtana to the Manipuris from the very beginning. However, Maharaj Bhagyachandra made it so popular that Manipuris knew it as an unique *Maha Dhrumel* for a long time. Then with the passage of time, following the footsteps of their predecessors, Maharaj Gambhir Singh offered *Goura Dhrumel*, Maharaj Narasingh offered *Nityai Dhrumel* (as shown in Fig. No.1) and Maharaj Chandrakriti offered *Devi Dhrumel*. Then the previous *Dhrumel Hari Sankirtana* ultimately came to be known as *Nata Sankirtana* keeping in mind the idea of prayer through Sankirtana. And this was how Drupad Sankirtana was divided into two types in Manipur, viz. *Ariba Pala* (Bangdesh Pala) and *Nata Sankirtana* (Nata Pala).



Fig. No.1. Nityai Dhrumel

In *Nata Sankirtana* five aspects namely *pung* (rhythm/talas), songs, dance, story and rituals are performed at the time of worshipping the lord. The different aspects used in these talas are all not that simple; they are all very ancient, it will be very hard to trace them anywhere in the whole of India. It is clearly understandable with a thorough research into the ways of *punglons* (drum-beats) as are used in the *Sankirtana* since long ago. It would be hard to trace any clue even if we scan under the eyes of *Desi Tala Shastra* as is found now-a-days elsewhere in India, perhaps it would never be possible through this *Shastra*. Most *Pandits* (scholars) are of the opinion that such aspects of the *Margi tala* have long been ceased to exist from the Indian soil; except a few mentions in the *Shastra*. It is the pride and practice of India that such types of *Vedic talas* found nowhere in India today have long been kept nourished and flourished within the folds of a tiny state like Manipur.

Nata Sankirtana is a form of worship, considered as a *Maha yajna*. *Nata-Sankirtana* is the cultural soul of Manipuri society from birth to death. All the merits of Satyayuga, Tretayuga and Dwapuryuga are attained in *Kali yuga* through *Hari Sankirtana*. These are all merged in the form of *Hari Sankirtana* in *Kali Yuga*. Sri Chatyanya preached the value and importance of *Sankirtana* to liberate the mortal and attain *moksha* with the help of rhythm, the lord is invoked, and using rhythm, is worshipped.

While worshipping one surrenders himself to the lord. This is the inevitable aspect of *Nata Sankirtana*. By singing the transcendental story of *Radha Govinda* in different rhythms, the devotees serve the lord. Worshipping the lord in tune with Vedic norms forms the *Nata Sankirtana* of Manipur. In theme and spirit, it is the embodiment of *bhakti*, depiction of the '*madhur premrasa*' of Radha Krishna. It is performance-based ritual where the leelas of lord Krishna are enacted, a sacred performance and symbol of love. A person understands the true essence of *Nata Sankirtana* only if he is liberated and attains *salvation*. This enables the performers and participants to experience Radha Krishna union and transcendental love. For centuries, *Nata Sankirtana* has been performed as an important practice, *Gandharva Bidya* and a *Maha Yajna* in the society of Manipuri *Gouriya Vaishnavites*. *Nata Sankirtana* became a part and partial of Manipuri Vaushnava community's socio-religious activities and prosperity. The form of prayer accompanied by music, song and dance has been known as *Gandharbam* since the time of *Vedas*. From time immemorial, the invocation of Gods and Goddesses; worshipping their statues and offering *Aaratika*, *Arhan*, *Pujan*, *Parichay* have been done traditionally. This culture has been passed down from generation to generation. *Nata Sankirtana* has two main social functions - it brings people together on festive occasions throughout the year by acting as a cohesive force and reinforces relationship between the individual and the community through life-cycle ceremonies. *Nata Sankirtana*, to the followers of *Goudiya Vaishnavism*, is a form of worship. It is considered as a *Mahayajna* (complete sacrifice). The *Vaishnava* architects trace its origin to the aesthetics and philosophy of *Shrimad Bhagavata*. In *Shrimad Bhagavata* the only merit in *Kaliyuga* is *Hari Sankirtana* (chanting the name of the lord) and through *Sankirtana* a person can reach his ends and attain *moksha*. A person in *Satyayuga* attains *mukti* through *dhyana*, in *Treta Yuga* by *yajnas* and *Dwarpur Yuga* through *puja* and in *Kali yuga* through *Hari Sankirtana*. The above *Dhyana*, *Puja*, *Yajana*, etc., are all combined or merged in the form of *Hari Sankirtana* in *Kali Yuga* to attain salvation. Sri Chatyanya or Lord Gouranga preached the value and importance of *Sankirtana* to liberate the mortal and attain *moksha*.

The true picture of Manipuri *Nata Sankirtana* is serving lord Krishna. *Nata Sankirtana* was introduced by devotees and priests into the state of Manipur under the aegis of the kings. With the help of rhythm, the lord is invoked, and using rhythm the lord is worshipped. While worshipping one surrenders himself to the lord and asks for his wishes and this is the inevitable aspect of *Nata Sankirtana*. By singing the love story of *Radha Govinda* in different rhythms, the devotees have been serving the lord following the Vedic tradition. In such a manner, worshipping the lord in tune with Vedic norms forms the *Nata Sankirtana* of Manipur. In theme and spirit of the *Nata Sankirtana* it is the embodiment of *bhakti* at its purest. The essence of *Nata Sankirtana* is *bhakti* (devotion). The whole performance is *bhakti* oriented. It is the depiction of the '*madhur premrasa*' (transcendental love) of Radha Krishna. *Nata Sankirtana* is performance-based ritual in which the leelas or plays of lord Krishna are enacted non-realistically. The performance is enacted with subdued acting, dance, music and songs. This abstract performance symbolically represents the merging of both the actors and participants (audience) in the process of ritual performance to another realm where each one of them can identify themselves with the lord. Thus, *Nata Sankirtana* is a sacred ritualistic performance. A person can only understand the true essence of *Nata Sankirtana* only if he is also liberated and attains *salvation*. The devotion and love enable both the performers and participants to experience Radha Krishna union and transcendental love. In later developments, *Nata Sankirtana* as one of the performing art forms, became the foremost reason to achieve spiritual goal.

FORMS

There are two forms of Manipuri *Sankirtana* since the period of Maharaj Garibniwas which are as follows:

1. Ariba Sankirtana: It is on record that *Sankirtana* singing took place in Manipur in 15th century A.D. during the reign of king Kiyamba of Manipur. Maharaj Garibniwaj ruled Manipur from 1709-1748 A.D. and in religion he was a follower of *Ramandi* i.e. worshipping of Lord Rama. During his reign, many *kirtanias* who were migrants to Manipur from the 'Nongchup Haram' (i.e. India) began to join in the service of Shree *Ramji Prabhu* with their *kirtan*. As the Maharaj was keen in the *Ramandi* religion, he supported this religion to such extent that it came to be a part in all social & religious activities in Manipur. Later, this performance having been initiated by the *kirtanias* from Bangladesh came to be known as *Bangdes Pala*. In Manipur, *Sankirtana* performance has been classified in various forms with performing groups in different names (*Pala*). Among them, *Bangdes Pala* is considered the oldest or the

first chronologically. After the emergence of Nata Sankirtana (Nata Pala), *Bangdesch Pala* has been understood as Ariba Pala (Old Pala). *For Bangdesch Pala*, glorifying Lord Ram through singing and *kirtana* was the prime feature as believed. It was agreed by all that Bangdesch Pala was introduced by Konthoujam Ojha. Konthoujam is a surname and not the exact name. In Manipur calling the guru by his surname was popularly in tradition and taking the real name was considered indecent on the part of the addresser. In the book “Ram Nongaba” written by Shri Konthoujam Labanga during the reign of Shree Shree jukta Jai Singh Maharaj the introduction says Ram Nongaba- a scene in the epic Ramayana used to be sung in kirtana when Ramandi was state religion. Therefore, it was assumed that the one which we referred above as Konthoujam Ojha who introduced Bangadesch Pala may be this Konthoujam Labanga or his close relatives. The most important point here is that the term Bangesh Pala itself was not found used before the reign of Maharaj Bhagyachandra though the practice of this kirtana and had already been there ever since the reign of Maharaj Garibniwaj after he was initiated into Ramandi sect.

Kinds of Ariba Pala:

Under the patronage of the king and also with the support and interest of the public, the Meiteis started specially to provide better service to the Vindavanchandra, Shree Ramji Prabhu and Shree Shree Govindaji. So, Bangdesch Pala was divided into two Pala groups :i) Leibakchaba Pala and ii) Sevak Pala.

i) Leibakchaba Pala:

Since then these pala has been serving Shree Govindaji in its Astakaalaseva (eight time service in a day) through rotation of 10 days by each group. Shree Surchand Sharma has stated a point in the title of “Leibakchaba” in the *Meitei Jagoi Marishuba Sharuk*, Shree Surchand Sharma,1970, p.3.as below:

*“Leibak chaba Haaibadi Leibak asibu makhoina
(Bangdesch Pala) Jajaman tourambadagi haaibani!
Masisu lounaba yai maramdi paatloibabu paatchaaba
Jajmanloibabu jajman chaaba haainei!”*

It sounds appropriate that leibakchaba was named after the one who protects the state. Because in the ‘*Ariba Manipurigilongei*’ (Ancient Manipuri Vocabulary) edited by Pandit Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh, *leibakchaba* has been referred to the one who protects the kingdom or the state of the Affairs of a kingdom. This word is found used during the reign of Maharaj Bhagyachandra in the book ‘*Cheitharol Kumbaba*’, Lairenmayum Ibungohal Singh and Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh,2005,p.157. As below:

*Kakching keithelgi Kumdi shak 1712
Lada thaa thangjana hal-e...18 ni
Yumshakeishada meidingu chingthangkhomba
Moraan naaba –thungla-e/
Lamjinglakpa waa thaaba krishnadasthoklak-e/
Ibungshija shagolshenba hanjaba ramaanchingba
Leibakchaabamee 700 thamlam-e!*

It has been deduced that the word ‘Leibakchaba’ comes from ‘Leibakchaba’ protector of the State. This title was given to the kritaniyas as they also involved in the daily affairs of the State. In short, the performers of this kirtana were almost among the high officials of the State.

ii) Sevak Pala:

The second group of Ariba Pala (Bangdesch Pala) is called ‘Sevak Pala’, which has since been in the service to the Shree Shree Govindaji without break. How was this group(pala) formed is also stated *Meitei Jagoi Marishuba Sharuk*, by Shree Surchand Sharma,1970,p.3 as below:

Shree Govindaji Vrindavanchandra and Ramji Prabhu were worshiped during the reign of Maharaj Bhagyachandra. In order to make it convenient for the service of these gods or deities a pala was constituted under the guidance of Konthoujamba Ojha. Since it is a pala constituting only of the sevbhaks it has been called Sebhak Pala.

Meitei Nata Sankirtana Neinaba Ahanba Sharuk edited by L. Lakpati Singh, 2002,p.19 stated the sequences prepared by Shri Atkokpam Parijat Singh for Bangdesh Pala singing are given below:

- a) Pung raga houba
- b) Eshei raga houba
- c) Abahan
- d) Gourchandra
- e) Duital Ghat
- f) Rajmel
- g) Tanchap
- h) Tala ama yeiba (to play any prominent tala)
- i) Nityai pada
- j) Shoi gosai
- k) Jai Bhai

As commented by many gurus, Abahan and Tanchap were not used in the singing of Bangdesh Pala in the past. But now-a-days in Nitileela singing (regular ritual singing) Abahan has been added. As regards Tanchap, Ojha Athokpam Mera Singh (Hanjaba) ,Keisham Yaima (Eshei hanba) commented that the inclusion of Tanchap in Bangdesh was a very recent development to enhance the beauty of the kirtan. *Ariba Sankirtana* (Bangdesh Pala)is still preserved and practiced at the royal palace and some other centers of Manipur.

2. Nata Sankirtana: *Nata Sankirtana* is an old type of music and it has the look of *Margi* music based on Vedic tradition because of the following reasons. Firstly, the taals used in *Nata Sangkirtana* namely *raaga*, *raagataba*, *rajmel*, *sanchar*, *dhruvmel* and the words used in describing these rhythms are not found in books describing *Desi taal Byabastha*. Secondly, the beats of these taals if looked properly are all *dhruva pada*. Within it there are *chatuspada* i.e. three taals of one *pada* combine with one *dhruva* totaling four *pada* and this is more prominent in the *nata sankirtana*.

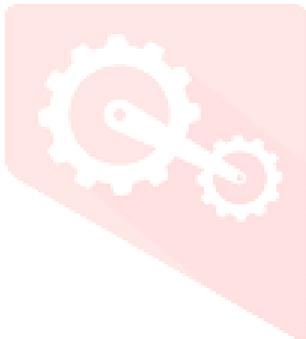


Fig.No.2 Nata Sankirtana

This particular taal is used for praising and worshipping gods because it has the look of *pranav*(as shown in fig. No.2) Rajarshi Bhagyachandra introduced this style of kirtana singing known as *Nata Sankirtana* which found its supreme expression during the reign of king Chandrakirti of Manipur(1850-1886) when the *sixty-four rasa* were presented for the first time in sixty four sessions spreading over thirty two days. The Manipuri musician singing kirtana as called *Nata*- a classical term Sanskrit, meaning the person who knows the four *abhinayas* and different types of *Natya*, gets himself merged in the *rasa* which he is trying to portray and who appears physically on the stage: a dancer with songs on the lips.

FUNCTIONS

As per the norms of *Smriti Sastra*, even though in social functions conducted by Vaishnavites such as *churakaran*, *karnaved*, funeral rites etc. the entire preparation for elaborate rituals are being done, the *Mahayajna* of *nata sankirtana* would lead all the other rituals. The ragas of the drum would invoke the lord and other prayers and rituals would follow. The function will get over with the *sankirtana* singing *bijay*. Even though in other parts of the country, as per Hindu tradition, daughters are married off before a fire hearth where a *Maha yajna* is performed after elaborate rituals and

praying to fire god. In case of place like Manipur for Meitei Hindu Vaishnavites, a *nata sankirtana maha yajna* would be conducted by invoking the god. Daughters are given *kanyadan* by the father and wish them a happy married life. Some important functions and duties are given below:

Nata Sankirtana is a very important aspect in the lives of the people in Manipur. It is because when our end is near, people listen to *Hari-Naam* to relieve us from all the wrong doings that we have done before, so that we die peacefully. After death the family members would take the dead body for the last rites.

In the *shraddha* ceremony, the *Nata Sankirtana* will start with raga. Before the invocation of the god and prayers start, *Pinda-dan* cannot be offered.

After offering the *Pinda-dan*, the owner of the ceremony will have a bath and wear washed clothes. He will then come and offer his respects towards the end of the Sankirtan when *Raga Bijay* is being performed. The *Shradha* ceremony comes to an end with the guardian of the *Mandap* sending the departed soul to *beikuntha dham*.

In case of any death in a house, *Naam Sankirtana* plays an important role. In the ten days of mourning or *Dashahan*, the ritual will start with *Nam Sankirtana* and other rituals like reading *Shrimad Bhagavat Gita* will follow.

Pindadan after the *Sankirtana* starts.

Even in *astisanchay* or the ritual of picking up the remains from the grave, *Sankirtana* is performed along with *Parikrama* around the *Hari mandir*.

The *Manipuri* have started performing many rites and rituals which they believed are good for them. For instance rites related with planting a *tulsi* or basil plant, rites performed for ponds, temples, houses, death anniversary etc. are all performed along with *Sankirtana*. Depending on the concerned persons, some have it on a small scale and some do it on a large-scale.

On the special day of lord Krishna which is held every year, *Nata Sankirtana maha yajna* is performed in all the temples within the *Shri Shri Govindaji* shrine and in the *Bijoy Govinda* temple.

The *Sankirtana*, other performances follow and it closes with *Sankirtana bijay*. The birthday is celebrated with other performances by men, women and children belonging to different panas thereby serving the lord Krishna and Radha. Even in the temples in different localities such special days are performed with *Sankirtana*.

During *holi*, men, women and children organized *holi kirtana* groups and performed in the temples and even in the courtyards of different houses.

During the *Ratha yatra* festival, young boys and young girls along with older people organize kirtans and perform in temples.

Even during *Jalakeli* and *Jhulon* festivals, young boys and girls along with married women organized *kirtana* groups and offer to the lord. Within the *kirtana* many other performances like *Krishna leela*, *Rasaleela* and *Gouura leela* are also performed following *Sankirtana*.

Manipuri *Nata Sankirtana* has been recognized by UNESCO in 2013. *Sankirtana*- the ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur-has been selected for inscription on the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The decision was taken on December 4 at the eighth session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan. Following the recognition, the art form will be able to enjoy greater popularity across the world, attract scholars and performing artistes from far and wide, and thus help in conserving it for the posterity.

Manipuri Classical Dance is closely related to *Manipuri Nata Sankirtana* as it starts and ends with *Nata Sankirtana* while being performed. For example in the performance of *Raasa leela*, *Nata Sankirtana* is performed in the form of *Purbaranga*, and then *Rasleela* would follow (as shown Fig. No 3.) The same happens with *Gouraleela* and *Udukhol leela* etc. therefore, so long as *Manipuri Classical Dance* like the *Rasleela* survives, *Nata Sankirtana* will also survive. Now-a-days *Manipuri Nata Sankirtana* has become popular in entertainment programmes. For example *Pung Cholom* (Drum Dance) of Manipur, which is a part of *Nata Sankirtana*, frequently, features in the big festivals even at the international level. This kind of exposure and nurturing will help in the survival and enrichment of this art form.

There are many stories in Bharata's *Natya Sashtra* that reminds us *Purvaranga* being performed by the *Nirgit*, *Bahirgit* and *Geet Vidhi*. The three types of songs included in *Nata Sankirtana* can please all the *Devas* and *Devis*. The *Gurus* knew this and confidently believed in the potentiality of these songs to please the *Devas* and *Devis*. The various ritualistic procedures included in *Nata Sankirtana* clearly prove that it was performed according to the prescribed laws of *Sashtra*. The rules are followed till today without any disruption or changes according to *Sashtra*, *Raga Hauba*, the first part of *Nata Sankirtana* is known as *Utthapani Dhruva*. So, *Utthapani Dhruva* is the starting point of the *Sankirtana* associated with *Upohana*. Here, *Nirgit* and *Bahirgit* are offered in the form of a *puja* to the *Devas* in the *Tala Prabandha* known as *Vardhamanak*.



Fig.No.3 *Nata Sankirtana* in *Raasa Leela*

Again the *Raga Hauba* is further divided into seven parts viz., *pung raga*, *guru ghat*, *eshei raga*, *sanchar*, *abahana*, *vaishnav sanchar* and *raga ghor* which is long process to invoke the *Ista Devata* through *puja* and *stuti* which are performed in order. The two episodes of *Nirgit* *pung raga* and *guru ghat* project the image of the *Ista Devata* *Dhyana* and put soul in to the idol so projected. *Bahirgit*, the *Eshei Raga* clads the idol of the *Ishta Devata* and in *Upohana Sanchar* *Nirgit* is then served as *Upachara*. The *Bahon Geetvidhi* is served as *Vandana* and *Vaisnava Sanchar nirgit* as *Arati*. In this way, the *Lord's puja* is performed. Thus, in the first part of *Purvaranga*, *Ragahauba*, invocation of the

Ista Devata and *Nandi* are performed and then to the *Devas* and *Devis*, then to the *King* and *Brahmins* and *Vaisnavs* are also offered homages. Here it may be noted that some small processes are performed prior to the commencement of the *Raga hauba* and it has been customary. For example, the preparation of the *Vadya Yantras* (musical instruments such as *pung* and *kartals*). The *pung* player will check the tune and sound of their *pung* and the singers check the sound of their *Kartals*. Then it is followed by the entry of the *Palas* who sit in the hall and the ritual of *Leichandal* (the sanctification process) which is served by the

Arangbham (arranger). All these are the procedures performed before the beginning of Raga Hauba. And these activities are all prescribed in the Sashtra.

CONCLUSION

The revolution of *Desi Sangeet* created a big issue throughout India. This led to the steadily declining of *Drupad Hari Sankirtana* of Braja Brindavan and *Garanhati Kirtan* of Bangladesh Nortom Thakur Mahasoi. Except the surviving *Sankirtana* in Manipur, all the *Drupad Hari Sankirtana* were totally weeded out from the soil of India. Those Brahmin, Vaishnav, Shaiva, Sakta, Buddhists who fled to different parts of the world during the Muslim invasion reached Manipur. Some settled there taking shelter and receiving protection from the King of Manipur. Many of them travelled through the land to reach South East Asian Countries like Myanmar.

And this was how the names of different Brahmins, who followed the Vedic religion, were recorded in the historical books kept at the *Loishangs* (departments) of *Konung* (palace). Those Brahmins set up the temples of *Kesha* (Devi), Shiva, Ganesh, Mahadeva, Durga, Jagannath, Kali, Sanidev at every corner of Manipur. By singing the love story of *Radha Govinda* in different rhythms, the devotees have been serving the lord following the Vedic tradition. In such a manner, worshipping the lord combined with Vedic norms forms the *Nata Sankirtana* of Manipur. In *Nata Sankirtana* five aspects namely drum, songs, dance, story and rituals are done at a time to worship the lord. Lastly, it is notable that *Nata Sankirtana* which an art form transmitted from generation to generation through traditional school of *guru-sishya parampara* is now institutionalized, along with the traditional school. And it becomes the fourth Indian art form recognized by UNESCO an Intangible Cultural Heritage. So it is hopeful that this ritualistic art form, associated with the cultural life of the *Manipuris* from birth to death will thrive to live on as part of Indian cultural Heritage despite the onslaught of mass consumerist culture.

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