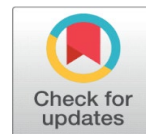


MANIPURI NATA SANKIRTANA

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ABSTRACT

Nata-Sankirtana of Manipur is considered as Purvaranga and Mahayajna in Vaisnavite culture of Manipur. Yajna means all acts performed for the satisfaction of paramatama, pritolok, devalok and for those who have sanskar (purification), for the beings and for keeping the cycle of nature, for the goodness Singh (2017). Not only these, but it also denotes mantra performed by the believers of Sanatana Dharma, Dravya, Shraddha and different Shatkarmas. For centuries, Nata-Sankirtana has been performing as an important practice, as a Gandharva Vidya, Purvaranga, and a MahaYajna in the society of Manipuri GouriyaVaishnavites. NataSankirtana became a part and parcel of Manipuri Vaishnava community's socio-religious activities and prosperity. Singh (2015) In ShrimadBhagavata, the only merit in Kali yuga is Harinam Sankirtana in which a person can reach his end and attain moksha. We have been worshipping him in one form or the other. We worship him with the help of drum or with song and dance and it is known as Gandharbam. The different religions of Prachin Bharat i.e., Sheiba, Shakta, Boudha, Jain, etc. have devised ways to worship the Istadevata starting with Sankirtana. The religious sect of Sanatana searches different means to get the almighty. In Satya Yuga, Dhyana was the only means to get blessing of God, Yajna for Treta, Puja for Dwapur and Hari Sankirtana for Kali are believed to be sure. It is also believed that the end of Dhyana, Yajna, and Puja is equal to the observance of Hari Nam Sankirtana. Thus, chanting the name of Shree Krishna is the only means in Kali Yuga. This chanting of Mahamantra will enable the soul to free from the sansarmaya and connect with Godhead. This paper tried to understand the Nata-Sankirtana and its role in Manipuri Society, to know the formalities for performing Manipuri Nata-Sankirtana and to identify the different parts required for doing a whole Nata-Sankirtana performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Manipur is well known for her unique and rich cultural heritage. Described by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as "Jewel of India," it is a small Northeastern State of India. Manipur is renowned for its famous Raas dances, Thang-Ta (Martial Arts) Sirui Lily, Sangai (Deer), Lashingphee (Cotton cloth), Moirangphee and Phanek Designs of Handloom and Manipuri dolls, besides being the exponent of the game of Polo. The only floating National Park in the world is situated on the fringes of the Loktak Lake. This is the largest fresh-water lake in the North-Eastern region; it resembles a miniature inland sea. It is last natural habitat of the march-dwelling 'Sangai' brow-antlered deer of Manipur better known as the dancing deer.





Figure 1 Nata-Sankirtana Ritualistic Performance

Source: Author

There are many developments and changes in the culture and religion of India after the invasion and influence of Persian, Greek, Sakas, Kushan, Huns and Muslims. Though this brought many social and traditional changes, the beauty and the importance of Vedic tradition cannot be forgotten by the coming generations. There were many religion confluences like Buddhism, Jainism, Shaivism, Shakta, Vaishnavism, and Sikhism. But all the important systems and traditions of Veda are still preserved today. Likewise, Manipuri Nata Sankirtana [Figure 1](#) is also one of the Vedic traditions. With the passage of time, it is carried forward in different forms and styles. The Yajna performed in the four Vedas viz, Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda are closely associated with the forms and procedure performed in the Nata-Sankirtana. With such various developments, Nata Sankirtana becomes very important as a Bhakti Sadhana in the present context. Nata-Sankirtana was the igniting Bhakti path of Shree Chaitanya of Gouradesh based on Storm Hotei of Sama Veda and the Sapta Roopa Dhruva of Natya Shastra. The whole of Indian Society was spread with Bhagavata Bhakti, and such influence came to Manipur too. Within the time span of about 400-500 years Sankirtana became a full bloom and Nata-Sankirtana in Manipur. Though Sankirtana is rarely performed in most part of India, it is truly preserved in Manipur till today as Nata-Sankirtana which was brought up under the supervision of many great kings of Manipur.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To understand the Nata-Sankirtana and its role in Manipuri Society.
- 2) To know the formalities for performing Manipuri Nata-Sankirtana.
- 3) To identify the different parts required for doing a whole Nata-Sankirtana performance

2.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Manipuri Sankirtana was included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List of Humanity. So, it is indeed the need of the hour to know what Manipuri Nata-Sankirtana is. It also plays a significant role in Manipuri society. Through this paper, the value of performing Sankirtana will be known. The different formalities needed before, during and at the end of Nata-Sankirtana performance will be dealt in detail. Being a Mahayajna and a Purvaranga, understanding the different parts which made up the whole Nata-Sankirtana performance will be of utmost importance. All these different areas will be the focus points of this paper.

2.2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Qualitative method is being used in this study. Interview and Observation are the tools and techniques for data collection applied in the present study.

3. ORIGIN

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 [Devi \(2010\)](#). [Singh \(1982\)](#) In 1709, Maharaj Garibaniwaz founded Drupad Hari Sankirtana which was known as Bangdes 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 havi became famous in Manipur. Maharaj Bhagyachandra was awarded the name Rajarshi and was believed to be the incarnation of Nortom Thakur Mahaso, an intelligent shishya (student) of Loknath Goswami of Braja Brindavan. It was during his period that the temple of Sri Sri Govindajee was installed and started to be worshipped by offering Raas Kirtan of Lord Krishna preceded by Nata Sankirtana.

4. ASPECTS

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 (drumbeats) as are used in the Sankirtana since long ago [Harokcham \(2009\)](#). It would be hard to trace any clue even if we scan under the eyes of Desi Tala Shastra as it is not found nowadays anywhere in India. 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 type of Vedic talas found nowhere in India today have long been kept nourished and flourished within the folds of a tiny state like Manipur

5. SOME FORMALITIES OBSERVED BY ARANGPHAM AND PERFORMERS BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF NATA SANKIRTANA

Prior to the commencement of a Nata-Sankirtana, the Arangpham (an arranger who arranges everything related with the ceremony on behalf of the person who organizes the Nata-Sankirtana) and the performers have to observe some formalities.

Having finished the Tilakas (making 12 marks on different parts of the body by smearing a paste made from earth or sandal wood) after SuddhaSnan, the performers, while coming along with his sankirtana dress and instruments to the place where the Nata-Sankirtana will be performed, should assume that he is a devotee, and he will be singing the HariSankirtana of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. A separate seat (called Khonghampham in Manipuri) is kept at the entrance of the courtyard; the performer should bow to it with the thought that it represents Bhakta Kalidasa. In case the sankirtana courtyard is in a secular one, the performer while entering the courtyard either from the west or east side he has to touch his right-hand fingers on the ground first and then on the forehead. If the courtyard is before a temple or related with temple, the performer, before entering the courtyard, has prostrate either in Astanga or Dandavad before the Lord sitting inside the temple.

There are three types of prostration. They are:

- 1) **Panchanga:** In this mode, five parts of the body of the person will touch the ground. The five parts are the two palms, the two knees and the forehead.
- 2) **Astanga:** In this mode, eight parts of the body have to touch the ground while prostrating. The eight parts are two legs, two palms, left chest, right chest, forehead, and nose.
- 3) **Dandavad:** In this style, the person has to stretch his hands in his front and legs behind. This type is used only when bowing to God.

[Singh \(1980\)](#) After paying respect by prostrating before the Lord, the performer has to enter the courtyard as mentioned above. When he is in the middle of the courtyard, he should first bow to the Asana of the Lord placed in the centre using Ashtanga. Then he should bow to all the people assembled there starting from the MandapMapu (the person who is Presiding the Nata-Sankirtana). He has to bow in Astanga to the Arangpham too with the thought that Bhagavati Purnimashi stays where the Arangpham's Puja is performed. Each of the palas has to do this prostration. Then the Palas (performers of the Sankirtana) will occupy their respective seats. When all the performers are assembled, the Mandap Mapu will ask the Arangpham(s) to distribute the 'Leichandan. Leichandan includes the following ingredients: incense, lamp, sandalwood paste, flowers and Paana (betel leaf). The ingredients signify as:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Dhuva (incense) | - Gandhva (smell) |
| 2) Dvipa (lamp) | - Varna (colour) |
| 3) Chandana (sandalwood paste) | - Swarupa (form) |
| 4) Lei (flower) | - Sandesha (menu) |
| 5) Pana (Betel leaf) | - Rasa (taste) |

After Leichandana, the Arangpham, as a signal that everything is ready and the Sankirtana can be started, will bow to the Palas.

6. PARTS OF NATA SANKIRTANA

A Nata-Sankirtana should be performed under certain rules. The following are the seven parts of a Nata-Sankirtana. The seven phases of Nata-Sankirtana must be performed in order without breaking the sequence. Dropping any one of the seven phases will make it incomplete. All these seven organs together make a complete Nata Sankirtana. [Singh \(2002\)](#)

6.1. RAGA HAUBA

It is the first part of a Nata Sankirtana and is very important part. The Palas including the *Moibungkhongba* (Conch player) will stand in their respective places. The *MandapaMapu* (presiding brahmin of the Sankirtana) will make the Hari Dhvani as:

Shreemadradha Govinda Priti Ananda Boloprem Sekaha

Shreeradha Krishna Bolo Prabhu Nityai Chaitanya Abdeitya

Shreeradha Rani Kahta Santa Sadhu Madhurasa Bani Hare Hare

It means the mridanga players with full concentration should start the Raga Hauba as soon as the HariDhvani reached Chaityana Advaitya. This first phase of Sankirtana is meant for inviting the Lord. It is to project the Lord's image before the performers. Then the performers decorate the Lord with dress and ornaments and offer incense, flowers, lamp, etc.

Then the Esheihanba (lead singer) starts singing Raga with Ghor, Pancham, Dhirgha and Ghor. The meaning of the song is described by Guru Laishram Ibohalmacha as:

"Ghor must be used twice in singing a Raga.

This is projecting the two legs of Sri GaurangaPrabhu.

Pancham is to visualize the body of Sri Gauranga from waist to neck.

Singing Dhirghais to visualize the head of Gauranga and

Repetition of Ghor is putting soul to the beautiful adorned idolof GaurangaPrabhu." [Singh \(2002\)](#)

6.2. RAGA TABA

The Raga Taba is the second part of Sankirtana, here mainly uses two Talas viz., Tintala Macha or Tintala Achauba. However, some other performers also use Ekatala, Dvitala, Charitala and Shara. In most cases the first two Tintala Macha or Tintala Achauba are used. There are many types of Talas. But all of them are not mentioned and discussed here. Tintala expresses the fulfilment of the three wishes or Tinbanchha of the Lord. The three Tinbanchhas of the Lord are:

1) The curiosity to know the greatness and glory of Radha's love.

- 2) The desire to experience fully what it is like to love Krishna as Radha does.
- 3) The desire to know how much Radha relishes her union with Lord Krishna.

The union of Radha and Krishna to become one i. e., GaurangaPrabhu is known as Raga Taba. Though Raga Taba is known as 'Dikpal Puja' in Indian Natya Shastra, in Nata Sankirtana it is known as Gaura-Chandrika song. The TantalRupa is made up to praise and worship Gaurachandra Mahaprabhu.

6.3. RAJAMEL

This third part with a special Tala shows the worshipping of IshtaDevata. Rajamel is the most important phase of a Nata Sankirtana. As Rasa Dance cannot be called a Raas dance without Bhangi (Dance), so as a sankirtana cannot become a sankirtana if there is no Rajamel. In this part, the beating quickens from a slow beat. Words cannot be articulated in this juncture. So only the high pitch mono syllable sounds such as 'A' can be produced. The beating of the drum and the sound of the Kartal are also in high pitch tone. The high pitch sound of the three -vocal, drum and kartal are produced simultaneously. There are some qualities in the Rajmel.

They are BeriGhat, Yantra Milan, GhatThaba, LambiGhat, SetuGhat and Mel Thaba. They are discussed hereunder.

- 1) Beri Ghat: It is considered as Nabadwip Parikrama with the drumbeat, the right footstep out, and the Palas round the centre of Mandapa in clockwise direction. It is known as BeriGhat.
- 2) Yantra Milan.: The lead drummer, lead singer and Duhar touch their musical instruments and bow each other in Astanga. Its internal meaning is the consideration of Radha-Krishna union.
- 3) GhatThaba: Its internal meaning is the description of the divine love of Sri Radha and Lord Krishna.
- 4) Lambi Ghat: It is considered as VrindavanParikrama moving in anti-clockwise direction around theMandirPuja. It indicates the journey to Vrindavan with the imagination of the Mandali as Vrindavan. LambiGhat it is also known as Vilamvitlaya
- 5) Setu Ghat: This concept exhibits the transition phase in the union of Radhika and Sri Krishna. Setughat, it is also known as Drutlaya.
- 6) Mel Thaba: Here, it is considered as the ultimate love between Sri Radha and Sri Krishna attaining Anuraga. It is the ending part of the Rajmel.

During the Rajmel, the dexterity of Cholom of drum beating including acts of Cholom is exhibited and the usage of Kartal (cymbal) is also allowed. For this, Rajmel is considered as an important part in Sankirtana.

6.4. TANCHAP

It is the fourth part of Sankirtana. In this phase the quick beat becomes slower. At this time the performers especially, the drummers take a little rest. The six talas of Tanchap Ghat (Mapi Macha) are compressed together and used in Tanchap. The six Mapi Macha of TanchapGhat are (i) Tanchap Aphakpa, (ii) Tanchap Araoba, (iii) Tanchap Apeiba, (iv) Tanchap Achauba, (v) Tanchap

Macha and (vi) Tanchap Mapi. These six altogether make the Tanchap part a special one. In NatyaShastra, this tala is known as Chanchatputa. [Ghosh \(1951\)](#)

6.5. MENKUP

It is the fifth part of the seven essential parts of a Nata Sankirtana. The beat of this Tala is a bit slower than Rajamel. The Tala is not so quick as Rajmel. In this phase also like Tanchap, there are six Talas of MenkupGhatMapi Macha. They are played in the following sequence. (i) MenkupAphakpi, (ii) MenkupAraobi, (iii) MenkupApheibi, (iv) MenkupAchauba, (v) Menkup Macha and (vi) MenkupMapi. In NatyaShastra Veda this tala is also known as Chapaputa

6.6. SWADHIN

The first five part which is a part of Purvaranga, is worshipping of Gaurachandra Mahaprabhu with Puja. From Swadhina singing of Kirtana of various Leelas starts without breaking its tradition. The Parampara of Nata Sankirtana i.e., performing the combination of drum, song, dance and Leela Kirtana compactly for many days has been a custom. As such, this phase is free from rules and norms of Raga Rupa. Any Tala or any Swara can be used in this part. There is an event of BaithaPhamba in this part.

Baitha Phamba: Palas will sit on kneeling position. It is known Baitha. The inner idea of it is the end of divine merry making and rest time. Flowers and Gandha Chandana will be offered to PungYaibas (drummers) first, then to the lead singer followed by the other Palas in a specific manner. The Arangpham will enter the courtyard with the final Leichandana with a lamp. This shows that the building up of Gauranga's idol is completed. This is taking of Nityapada. This is surrender of the Vaisnavas to Nitya and Gauranga who are one.

Nityaipada: This is the player to Sri Nityananda, who is a devotee of Sri Radha Krishna. Permission of finishing Raga will be asked to the MandapMapu by lead singer with the sloka below:

“Vasmi Vatang Vabanti Nityainanda Jayati Prema da Kanda Prakasya”

ShoiGoshai.: This is the recitation of the six Gurus of Vrindavan. The Gurus are:

- 1) Sri Chaityana
- 2) Nityananda
- 3) Advaitya
- 4) Rupasanatan
- 5) Bhakta Raghunath
- 6) Sri Jiva Gopal Bhaktadasa Raghunath

6.7. SONG OF GOSHAI

Jaya Jaya Shri Chaitanya, Jaya Nityainanda, Jaya Advaita Chandra, Jaya Goura Bhakta Brinde Jaya Rupa Sanatana, Bhakta Raghunatha, Shrijiba Gopal Bhaktadasa Raghunatha, Ae Chhaya Gurura Kari Charan Bandan, Jaha Haite Bighanash Abhista Purana. Maraesata Devaguru Charan Bandana Jahara

Kripatepai Braja Premadhon. Tarapase Banda Munshi Vaishnav Gosai Argatirogatimora Vaishnav Gosai Nama Sankirtana Kahe Norotomadasa.

6.8. VIJAYA

It is the last of the seven parts of a Nata sankirtana. It is the closing part and farewell Yajna offered to the Lord who was invoked for the Sankirtana and stayed throughout the Sankirtana. The Ishtadevata who has been offered various Kirtanas right from the very commencement of the Sankirtana has to be sent off to His GolokDham, Vrindavan. This is portrayed in this last part of Sankirtana. To conclude the Sankirtana, the organizer of the Sankirtana with much politeness bowed to all the Vaisnavas assembled there. Then Jai Bhai (Vijay) will be shouted. The last verse to be sung by the performers at the time of finishing Sankirtana:

Jaya Bhai Chaitanya Nityai Bhai Bhai Chaitanya Nityai

7. VALUE OF SANKIRTANA

[Singh \(1993\)](#) Thus, chanting of the name of Shree Krishna is the only means in Kali Yuga. This chanting of Mahamantra will enable the soul to cross the sansarmaya to Godhead. Here, we may remember one sloka-

Harernama harernama harernamaivakevvalam

Kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatiranyatha

Translation: In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.

The above sloka means that harinam is the only way of salvation in Kali Yuga. From the above, we know that the value of Nata-Sankirtana is so high that one can go to heaven with the help of Nata-Sankirtana.

All Manipuri Vaishnava Sampradhaya believes and follow the advice of Shree Chaitanya MahaPrabhu. So, Nata Sankirtana becomes a very important part and parcel of birth, death, and other occasions. Furthermore, [Harokcham \(2009\)](#)

Tasmat Sankirtanam Visnorjagan-mangalamamhasam

Mahatma apikauravyavidyaikantika-niskrtam

The Nata-Sankirtana has been in the Society of the Meiteis who have deeply embraced the Gouria Vaisnava Dharma an inalienable Ceremony as the Maharajas of Manipur firmly believe in the 31st Sloka of the 3rd Adhyai of the 6th Skanda of Shimad bhagavata Puran in which it has been laid down that the blissful Sankirtana of Shree Vishnu is the only means to absolve all sins committed by a man. According to the Vidhi of the Smart, all the religious occasions, i.e., Samskar Karma during the lifetime from the conception of a child in the womb of a mother to death are made linkup with the Nata-Sankirtana, and the Nata-Sankirtan Mahayagya has been made an accomplished solemnization for the Subha Bibaha and Pitri Shraddha Karma.

Though, according to Smriti Shastra, the ceremonies like Churakaran, Karnaveda and the ceremonies pertaining to the Upanayan Sanskar are solemnized with the setting up of the YajnaBedi, and though such ceremonies are solemnized with the Agni Hotri Yajna. Such ceremonies are, however, solemnized with Hom after the Pujah to the IstaDevata invoking with the Raga of the Pung, and then the Sankirtana has closed these Sanskar Karmas usually by singing the vijay. And a father has solemnized most of the ceremonies of the Dasha Sanskar including the Karma of Chaumba (Annaprashan) of his child over and above the three karmas as mentioned above as he is bound to Solemnize these Karmas altogether for his child.

Offering of the Dan for the daughter in the Bibaha Karma (wedding) of the Hindus by setting up the Yagya Bedi of burning fire, and by witnessing by the Agni HotriYagya which has been performed with the Pujah conducted with Hom has been prevailing in the Bharatbarsha till now. However, the auspicious SubhaBibaha of the Bor-keinya (Bride groom) in the society of the Meitei who embrace the Vaisnava Dhama has been solemnized by performing the Nata-Sankirtana Mahayajna of graceful feature of the Jaganmangal with Abahan and chanting Veda Mantra witnessing the Bibaha instead of performing the formality of Agni Hom. And thus married the daughter by offering the Kanya Dan (giving away of the bride). The reason for dropping of this formality of Agni HotriYajna be due to the fact that the Meiteis embracing the Vaisnava Dharma may consider that the Agni HotriYagya is particularly a punya karma for the welfare of the Jajmal and that the Bor-Keinya are not worshipping fire by getting the chance of Garhapatya in the Subha Bibaha which is the first step for their prosperity in life.

It has been taken for granted that in the Shaba Daha Karma relating to death, the mortal frame has been consigned to Agni Deva for his daily worship of the Deva, and for this specific reason, both the Meiteis embracing the Vaisnava Dharma, and all the Manipuri Meiteis have naturally followed this practice as a prominent SanskarYajna. The person in his Antakal has been absolved of all Sins with the Shrabana of Hari Nam Sankirtana before the state of being unconscious and thus made Dehanta in the Society of the Meiteis embracing the Vaisnava Dharma, and then, preceded by Hari Nam Sankirtana, the dead body has been carried by the sons and grandsons, put on the YajnaBedi and then the Sanskar Karma has been carried out.

The Nata Sankirtana has become indispensable in the Punya Karma regarding Priti Shraddha, etc. in the society of the Meitei embracing the Vaisnava Sampradaya. In the PritiShraddha performed giving the ShorshPinda Dan, the Pinda Dan has not been given if the Puja of the Ista Devata has not been accomplished by doing Avahan as preceded by the Nata Sankirtana. And the last part of the Raga Vijay of the Sankirtana has been preceded only when the formality of the Shorsh Pinda Dan has been executed with the bathing of the Jajman, and thereafter the PritiShraddha has been conceded as being sent up the Pretatama of the deceased person to the Veikuntha Dham by the Mandap Mapu.

The Srimad Bhagavat Patha for the Dashahan Karma in the family of the deceased person has been performed as preceded by the Nam Sankirtana. And again, the Nama has preceded the daily giving of Pindadan by the Jajman who rub shoulders the duty of Gira for the Pretatma. And as associated with the Hari Mandir Parikarma, the solemnization of the Asti Sanchay has also been preceded by the NataSankirtana.

The Nam Sankirtana is the amalgamated distinct features of the Dhruvel Sankirtana Mahayajna as abridged as possible. There are many kinds of Nam Sankirtana as developed from smaller ones to larger ones. They are used on many occasions like the GiraThangba, LairikTaba, and Asti Sanchay. And the Dhruvel Hari

Sankirtana Singh (2014) , Singh (2017) Mahayajna has been divided into four kinds as Maha Dhrumel, the Goura Dhrumel, the Nityai Dhrumel and the Devi Dhrumel as followed by the Goudiya Vaisnavites in the Meitei Society as elaborated as possible shown in Figure 2

It has been believed that the Solemnization of the Maha dhrumel Hari Sankirtana can absolve all Sins. With this belief, the Kings of Manipur who committed Sins and Violence of killing injuring began for the first time to Solemnize Maha Hari Sankirtana like the Maha Dhrumel as done by the monarchs in History by solemnizing the Ashwamedha Yagya as pratikar to absolve their Sins after waging great wars. Maharaj Bhagyachandra had solemnized the Maha Dhrumel after waging a great war against the Ava. Gambhir Singh Maharaj, after the Seven years Devastation, had solemnized the Goura Dhruvamel when he became the king of Manipur as he won the great battle. In the like manner, Maharaj Nara Singh had solemnized the Nityai Dhrumel and Chandrakirti Maharaj had solemnized the Devi Dhrumel as Pratikar when he became the king after returning from Cachhar where he lived for many years. And thus, and finally the descendants of Karta Maharaj began to solemnize Maha Dhrumel in Ningthem Kirtan (Royal Kirtan), and the descendants of Nara Singh Maharaj began to solemnize the Goura Dhrumel in Ningthem Kirtan. For the Maha Dhrumel and the Goura Dhrumel it is only to expand the sequence of the Raga Houba and as for the Nityai Dhrumel, it is only to expand the part of the Vijay.



Figure 2 Maha Dhrumel

Source: Author

The Ahoratra Kritan is another grand HariSankirtana solemnized by the people who embrace the Gouria Vaisnava Dhrama in the Meitei Society. They solemnize this as Pratikar on an auspicious day in a month to distract the sorrow and suffering and other human plights. The Astrakal Leela Kirtans are solemnized for a whole day as a whole in the Ahoratra Sankirtana. It is a type of grand Hari Sankirtana started from the morning and concluded to the morning of the following day or started from the evening and concluded to the evening of the following day. Initiated with Adhibas and proceed to the Astakal Leela successively, it has been concluded with the Vijay at last.

Singh (2017) The Nata-Sankirtana Mahayajna has been solemnized, either smaller or bigger according to personal capacities, in many Punya Karmas, as for example, inauguration of pond, tank, temple, shrine, mandop, and house – building so on and so forth and further the annual Samvatsarit Shraddha as well.

All the annual Parbadin Mahotsav of ShreeHari solemnized in Shree Shree Govindaji has been solemnized by the Nata Sankirtana. Solemnizing the following Leelas and Kirtana, then all the solemnization whatsoever has been concluded with the formality of Vijay by the Sankirtana at last. Setting up the Kirtan Palas irrespective of women, young or old for each Pana can be seen Shree Shree Govindaji in the Parbadin Mahatsavs.

Not only solemnization at Shree Shree Govindaji, but also solemnize the Parbadin Mahatsavs of Shree Hari in the Hari Mandir in specific locality in the Meitei Society. Many women, children, youngster, and old people have formed the Dals of HoliKirtan and Sing Holi either at any Hari Mandir or the courtyard of any individual person in connection with the Basanta Mahotsav known as the Yaoshang. The Kirtan Palas for Khubak-Eshei have also been formed by boys and girls in connection with the Ratha Yatra Mahotsav of Shree Hari known as the Kang Chingba and sing relevant songs at every Shree HariMandir. Women, boys and girl shave formed their respective KirtanPalas and have served Shree Hari during the Mahotsavs of Jalakeli and JhulanYatra. The Krisna Leela, the Rasa Leela and the Goura Leela are also played solemnly as the Kirtan as those Kirtans. All the Rasa Leela Mohotsavs Parbadins of Shree Shree Govinda are inclusive of the Krisna Leela Kirtan.

The Nata-Sankirtana Mahayajna has been in vogue as so much significant occasion or religiously special event for so long years, as for the learning of the Gandharva Vidya and as a Mahayajna in the society of the Meitei embracing the Vaisnava Sampradaya. Really speaking, the inalienable firm and stable Punya Karma of the Dharma of the Meitei society can be attained by this Nata-Sankirtana ritualistic performance.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper tries to give a clear idea of Manipuri Nata-Sankirtana ritualistic performance which is originated from Manipur giving a global exposure through its stage performance. As a result, Nata-Sankirtana has been recognized by UNESCO on December 4, 2013, as Sankirtana- the ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur for inscription on the Representative list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. 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. Such recognition will help in conserving it for the posterity. This research article also gives a vivid picture of the various formalities done and required for performing Nata-Sankirtana performance. It has played a significant role in Manipur society. Most of the elements of ancient Indian Sangeet Shastra have been vanished from various states of India. But all these elements are still preserved, used and performed in Nata-Sankirtana without any changes in its rules and formalities. The essential parts of Nata-Sankirtana have similar nature with the names given in Natya Sastra as Raga with Vardhamanaka, Raga Taba with Layantarita, Rajmel with Panika, Tanchap with Chanchatputa and Menkup with Chapaputa. In Manipuri society, Nata-Sankirtana performance is the only dharma of the present society. Nata-Sanakirtana is an art form transmitted from generation to generation through traditional school of guru-sishya parampara. It is now institutionalized along with the traditional schools and even at the College and

University level. Formal institutions are Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy and Manipur University of Culture. Manipuri Sankirtana is also a part of Curriculum in Visva Bharati Santineketan, Manipuri Dance and Manipur University (Department of Dance and Music). So, it is hopeful that this ritualistic art form, associated with the cultural life of the Manipuris from birth to death and other festivals and occasions will have a global impact in the performing arts arena.

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