CHAPTER 5

IMPACT OF GAUDIOYA VAISHNAVISM ON THE RELIGIOUS CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF BISNUPRIYA MANIPURI COMMUNITY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of early religion of the Bisnupriya Manipuri Community is difficult to ascertain today. The constraint as observed by Jyotirmoy Roy is that “Almost all the accounts of Manipur refer to the spread of Brahmanical Vaishnavism on a wide scale in Manipur under the royal patronage of King Niwaj. Baptized by the Vaishnava missionary, Santadas Adhikari, he declared Vaishnavism as the state religion and advised his subjects to accept it. In view of the rapid progress of vaishnavism, the champion of the old faith, Kirtaangthaba with his followers, tried to stem the tide. The account of the event given by local historians ends with a tragic conclusion. The king enraged by the opposition, ordered all the scriptures of old religion to be burnt. Manipur to-day is thus deprived of her valuable religious and historical literatures of old due to religious fanaticism of the king”.

Therefore, our knowledge for the nature of early religious life of Bisnupriya Manipuris is scanty at present day. The culture of its people is very
rich but it still awaits proper accounting and re-production in writing adequate to the taste of the time.

There had been pre-Vaiśṇavī Hindu religious rites among the Bisnupriya Manipuris which are identical with traditional religion of Manipur. The Gods to the Bisnupriya Manipuris of pre-Vaiśṇavite period were Āpotkpa, Pākhāmbā or Pāhāmpā. The Bisnupriya Manipuris adopted Hinduism fairly early; exactly when it happened, we do not know. Definite evidence of hinduisation through the spread of worship of Viṣṇu is found in Manipur as early as the 15\textsuperscript{th} century when king Kiyamba ruled over the Meities apart from traditional accounts which take the matter to a hoary antiquity\textsuperscript{2}. The Bisnupriya Manipuris had come within the pale of Hindu people but a great many pre-Hindu customs are prevalent among them.

5.2. STAGES OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE BISNUPRIYA MANIPURIS

On the basis of the study of the history of Manipur, the gradual evolution of religious consciousness of the Bisnupriya Manipuris roughly be determined as consisting of three layers overlapping and intermingling with one another, viz. 1. Pre-Vaiśṇavite period, 2. Early Vaiśṇavism and 3. Gaudiya Vaiśṇavism.
Pre-Vaiṣṇavite Period:

The pre-Vaiṣṇavite period covers the indigenous religious concept up to 663 A.D. The form of religion as it has been in existence since the early period of the Bisnupriya is ordinarily the worship of the ancestors with animistic trend. In the ancient period some of the deities which the Bisnupriya Manipuris worshipped without fail are: Apokpa, the house hold deity, Pāhampā or Pākhāngbā, Lāmardou, god of the country side controlling rain, and Okmaren or Okparen. At that time, the Bisnupriya Manipuris came in close contact with the Meities as a result of which Bisnupriya Manipuris became replete with Meitie words and influenced by the religious thought of the Mieties. Before the adoption of Vaiṣṇavism the Bisnupriya Manipuris were also the follower of Animism like other people of the Manipur valley.

The ancient Manipuris had their own thought and philosophy, own gods, rites and festivals which profess a religion rich in mythology and colourful in ritual. The religious practices of pre-Vaiṣṇavite period is the solid evidences that Bisnupriya Manipuris were much related with the traditional thought and faith of Manipur. The non-Aryan religious practices were adopted by the Bisnupriya Manipuris due to close touch and intimate cultural contact with the Meities and other people.

Some instances of the indigenous religious concept of the Bisnupriya Manipuri may be referred to here. In earilier days of pre-Vaiṣṇavite period
the god Āpokpā would be worshiped with non-vegetarian food. It was also believed that the animals they take as food can be offered to please the spirits so that they themselves are not harmed. They started the animal sacrifice. Mysteries confused their minds. Superstition became part and parcel of their affairs. The ancient Bisnupriya Manipuris were non-vegetarian in food habit, and this is evident from the poetic work of Gokulānanda Gītisvāmi, a renowned poet of Bisnupriya Manipuri community of the earlier part of 20th century.

>aoge bāpak bāpā atā māhu mānga skāsilā/
Kukūr sāde jūra bādia kāne ānqī lāmkārī // 2

This means that our ancestors ate non-vegetarian food and wore card-drop making braid of hair like the kukis (a branch of tibeto-Mongoloid).

The great characteristic of the rites of pre-Vaisnavite age is the management of rites by the maipa (priest cum healer) or by the piba, or in more important cases by the Raja.

**Early-Vaiṣṇavite Period:**

This second stage starts with the arrival of Chingurembi in 7th century AD in Manipur. According to the text Chingurembi Khungonglup, the king Naothingkhong who ascended the throne in 667 AD married the princess (Chingurenbi) from the west. From which part of India she came is not known. But this much is certain that she was a Mayanglaima (Western princess). R K.
Jalajit Singh, a noted writer of history of Manipur also considered that contact was established between Manipur and Western side of India since the 7th century A.D. The people of Manipur began to study the Mahabharata and Rāmāyana and other scriptures from that period onward.

There were several numbers of local deities which had animal conception. After the spread of Vaiśnavite Hinduism the deities of indigenous faith though retained their position they were worshipped in Hindu ritualistic way.

The Khumul Ningthou (ancestor of the Bisnupriya Manipuri) worships the Tribal deity Okparen or Omparen on behalf of the clan whenever it is needed. He has to abstain from meat of any kind and from all sexual intercourse before this pūjā. To purify him water is poured over his head by a virgin from a new jar which is promptly broken. He does not worship Senamehi or Laimaren. But the Meiteis are worshippers of Senamam and Laimaren. This fact supports that Bisnupriya Manipuris were non-vegetarian in food habit but while conducting puja’s they have to be abstained from such non-vegetarian food. This points to the influence of Hinduism.

Besides this, the practice of worshipping Āpokā with Wallaga (Fish) / Boyal / Cat fish) is also noticed which is also the case of the influence of

- Manusmṛti as is evident from the following verse:

  pāthinā rohitāvādyau niyuktau havya kavyayoh /
The worshipping of Āpakā (ancestors) with fish took place in early Vaiṣṇavite period. The community has switched over from meat to fish. Āpakā is being worshipped during the spring season i.e. in Phalguna in the house of the Pipā, (Pibā in Meitei). The eldest son of the head of the clan is called Pipā who is considered to be the king of a clan. In sakei (sibling) function of pipaship is hereditary. He is worshiped once in a year particularly on a Sunday (laimongsing) praying to bestow blessings upon the clan or family. This god is worshipped in every home privately also.

There is a legend about Āpakā in Bisnupriya Manipuri Community. Āpakā is a family god and considered to be Mahādeva. This is corroborated by the Khumul Purāna of Nabakhendra Singh, court poet of the Khumul King. Mahādeva once said to Durgā, that he had cherished a desire for long time in his mind to be born as human being in Manipur Valley and to rule there for many years for the improvement of the clan and to be worshipped as their Āpakā.

The two renowned ancient folk songs viz (i) The Rain Invoking song and (ii) Mādai Sarālel song in Bisnupriya Manipuri which have been handed down through oral tradition bear the evidence of Pre-Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavite stage of Bisnupriya Manipuri religion. The Rain song does not bear even the slightest reference to Vaiṣṇavism of Śrī Caitanya or to any other form of
Vaiṣṇavism. The society reflected in this song retains the old form of religion with Pāhāṃpā as the highest god and Sarālel as a rain god under him.

Similarly in the Mādai Sarālel song we do not find even the slightest reference to any of the names of the Vaiṣṇavite cult. Such as Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā, Gaurnitai etc. Moreover, this song has a clear reference to drinking and eating of meat—a custom which goes back to a period anterior to conversion of this people to the school of Śrī Caitanya. This song, therefore, points to a period when the Vaiṣṇavism had not struck its root into the hearts of the people.

Another remarkable point is that this song refers to a cultural conflict in the society—a conflict between those accustomed to drinking and eating meat and those who were against them. Hence, according to Dr. K.P. Sinha, MA, Ph.D, D. Lit. the date of this song is ‘during the first part of 18th century when the Vaiṣṇavism of Śrī Caitanya entered into the society as a result of which a cultural conflict arose therein’. The song also indicates that it was composed during the time of a severe famine caused by draught. And in the period mentioned above such a severe famine occurred in 1515 A.D during the reign of Lam Kiyamba, which was the first recorded famine in the history of Manipur. It is therefore, probable that the original Rain Song was composed in 1515 A.D to which newer elements were added from time to time. Hence, the early-Vaiṣṇavite stage or hinduisation period covers upto this time i.e. 15th century. Regarding the period of early vaiṣṇavism the views of Mahendra
Kumar Singha and I. Iboongohai Singh are noteworthy. As early as 1389 A.D. Viṣṇu was worshipped in the time of king Śripati. It was in this time that the Burmese (king of Pong) invaded Manipur and took away the image of Viṣṇu as the war trophy. He used it as an instrument for scratching the itches to insult the Manipuris. But itches became ulcer. Thus the image was sent back with all courtesy. Kikhomba, the reigning king of Pong and Chintamani rather known as Kiyamba, king of Manipur became friends. Kiyamba who worshipped Viṣṇu destined to become a regular feature in the faith of the Manipuris. Kiyamba was not formally initiated to Vaiṣṇavism by a gurū (preceptor). But it is not clear in what form it was worshipped before this (1467 A.D.). The temple is still found where Viṣṇu was once worshipped and the place is known as Bishnupur. The brāhmaṇas who were engaged in performing the pūjās have come to be termed ‘Bisnuratfam’. On account of defilement of the temple on invasion, the image was not installed. The names of Śripati and Chintamani are not appeared in the list of royal chronicle of Manipur as they are the descendents of Kṣemūl.

Generally Bisnupriya Manipuri dwelling house would be built earlier having the fore portion facing eastward and the hind westward. Inside the hind portion in South West angle of the house, the place of Āpokā is particularly demarcated. At this side the bārañ (Bisnupriya Manipuri word meaning storing place of rice i.e. granary) is also located. During the worship of Āpokā
symbolized by a stone is placed on the phamlen-phamban (right side) portico outside the dwelling house facing the north. The *Phamlen-phamban* is a Manipuri word-pham means seat, len means super and phamban means throne which combinedly means super throne of god. The *Āpokpa* worship is a traditional and never abandoned and forgotten cult which had been prevailing since memory even after conversion of the Bisnupriya Manipuris to Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism. This religious practice is still prevailing in every house-hold of Bisnupriya Manipuri community even to-day.

In ancient times Pākhāngbā or Pāhāmppā (in Bisnupriya Manipuri) became very popular as one of the deities to the Bisnupriya Manipuri. Pākhāngbā literally means one who can recognize one’s father (from *pa* meaning father and *khangbā* meaning one who knows or recognizes). His other name is yaviṣṭha in Sanskrit and means the youngest. But in Bisnupriya Manipuri the word is changed to Pāhāmppā. It is believed that Pākhāngbā looks after the well being of the Manipuris from behind. He is in the form of a snake. If he is displeased with anybody some disaster will befall on the person. This belief is current in the minds of Bisnupriya Manipuris that when a person suffers a particular kind of disease *Leingok* is a case of Pāhāmppā’s evil sight. In such situation a maiba or maipa (in Bisnupriya Manipuri) is called to ward off Pāhāmppā’s wrath through *chapal* (propitiation) which is a kind of worship. This practice of Pāhāmppā worship was dominantly in vogue in ancient time.
But now-a-days the Pāhāmpā worship is on the way of extinction due to advancement of civilization and change of philosophic thought and impact of Vaiṣṇavism.

'Lāmar dou' or Lamlai (in Meitei) worship is prominent among the Bisnupriya Manipuris still today. Lāmar dou means God of the countryside, controlling the rain, the primal necessity of an agricultural community. 'Lāmar dou' is worshipped on the day of Caitra Samkrānti that is the ending day of the Bengali month Caitra which is called Bisu and Bihu in Assamese. The God is worshipped offering cooked rice with curry, parched rice, fruits, tambula (betel nut and leaf), bari (lamp), frankincense, water etc. at a place on the road cleaning it properly. The offered food to the God is completely vegetarian and after the worship the family members have to take their food. The worship of the above god is confined to the members of one family or of one house. All these practices indicate that there is the existence of some religious performances among the Bisnupriya Manipuris which are outside Vaiṣṇavism.

The stage of early Vaiṣṇavism includes Bhāgavatism. The Bhāgavatism which is synonymous with old Vaiṣṇavism came to the foreground in Bisnupriya Manipuri. From the epigraphic evidence and other accounts, it becomes evident that Bhāgavatism which existed as a form of worship of Bhagvat was a living religious faith in the pre-Caitanya era which later merged in Vaiṣṇavism. Bhāgavatism has incorporated within itself certain non-
aryan dogmas, beliefs and practices in order to counteract the growing popularity of Buddhism. Bhāgavatism during the Saka-Kusāna period established itself as a dominant religious faith and in course of time identified itself with Vaiṣṇavism which assumed a well defined form and shape in the Gupta or post-Gupta period. Bhāgavata religion is a mono-theism, and the way of salvation in the religion is devotion or bhakti. The identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu and pre-eminence of Viṣṇu, as not merely a great god but as the greatest of them all belonged to this period. According to S. Radhkrishnan, “It is sometimes said that the name Bhagavat indicates that the religion is a development of an old Vedie cult. We read in the Vedas of a deity called Bhaga considered to be the bestower of blessings. Bhaga gradually came to mean goodness and according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar the god possessing goodness comes to be known Bhagavat. The worship of such a god constitutes the Bhāgavata religion.”

The worship of Viṣṇu as highest spiritual soul in Bīsnupur by the Bīsnupriyas makes it evident that they were Bhāgavatas and this mono-theistic religion is absolutely independent of any foreign influence and is the natural outcome of the life and thought of the period.

The kings of the period from 1467 A.D. to 1697 A.D. were devotees of Viṣṇu but they did not adopt Vaiṣṇavism formally. The sect of Vaisnavism like Viṣṇusvāmi, Mādhavācārya, Rāmāndi etc. were prevalent. Ahom Boram
also records the existence of contact between Manipur and Assam written in a
period from 1497 A.D. to 1539 A.D. The Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam
introduced by Sankardeva in 15th century A.D. has made an impact on the
Vaiṣṇavism of the Bisnupriya Manipuri. Oja-pah, a religio-cultural function of
Assamese are started with the musical tune called rāga comprising sounds or
syllable, as tā, re, nā. The Bisnupriya Manipuri musical tune called rāga
comprising four sounds of tā-ri-ta-nā by which religio-cultural functions called
Kīrtana are started which is strikingly similar to that of Assamese musical
tune. The Bisnupriya Manipuri convention of having a ‘Mandapa’ in every
city village has a close similarity with Assamese tradition of having ‘Nāmagharas’
Moreover, Bisnupriya Manipuris perform the rites in the form of
Nāāmasamkīrtana after the death of a person as in case of Sankardeva school of Vaiṣṇavism.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism:

The Bisnupriya Manipuris were initiated to the religion of Śrī Caitanya
during the middle of 18th century A.D. G.K. Ghosh informs that “Although
Vishnu image was established long back, it is said, the Bisnupriyas formally
converted to the Vaiṣṇavism towards the beginning of 18th century during the
reign of king Chorai-Rongba. They were converted to the Vaisnavism of Śrī
Caitanya sect”. But even before that time, these people follow some other
form of Vaiṣṇavism as is known from the Khumal Purāṇa and other sources.
seems that early form of Vaiṣṇavaism followed by Bisnupriya Manipuris had some relation with the Vaiṣṇavism of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and the religious impact. Affinities between the Assamese and Bisnupriya Manipuris are due to their religious impact. Thus we may say that Bisnupriya Manipuris were traditionally Vaiṣṇavites, but their conversion during the 18th century was only from Śrī Śaṅkaradeva school of thought to Caitanya school of thought. But the custom of putting special white turban (kaveti) on ceremonial occasions indicates even today the influence of Rāmānandi cult.

It has already been discussed that in about 1728 A.D. Garib Niwaz, the King of Manipur was initiated to Rāmānandi form of Vaiṣṇavism by Śaṅkadāś Adhikārī. Again, the king Garib Niwaj was also initiated into Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism by Gopāla Dāsa. When the king was old, he was more devoted to Gaudīya cult and then Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism dominated in Manipur.

Thereafter during the reign of Bhagya Candra (1759 A.D.) the subjects accepted Caitanya school of Vaiṣṇavism and the king offered royal sanction to the sect. Before Śrī Caitanya's school of Vaiṣṇavism influenced Bisnupriya society, the society was divided into four castes, viz., Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. This again shows the influence of Manu Sanhitā on their social network. When Śrī Caitanya's philosophy of equality influenced them all except Brahmans merged into one class of people and called themselves Kṣatriyas.
Investiture of sacred thread (upavīta) is another remarkable milestone in the life of Bisnupriya Manipuri. They were allowed to put on holy thread sitting on the veranda of Govindaji Temple during the reign and by the initiative of Gambhir Singh (1825-1834 A.D.).

The stage of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism in the evolution of religious consciousness in the life of Bisnupriya Manipuri is very important as it has influenced the life and society of the Bisnupriya Manipuris till today.

**5.3. SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES OF GAUDIYA VAIṢṆAVISM**

It is well known that Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism, the prevalent school of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal has developed on the already existing vast canvas of the Vaiṣṇava faith of the Indian sub-continent and theological legacy. But Caitanya with his intensely devotional and charismatic personality revitalized the faith and added new cultic dimension to it. Gaudiya or Bengal Vaisnavism is based on the life and teachings of Caitanya (1486-1533 A.D.) the founder of the sect, who is called Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Gauranga (fair limbed). Śrī Caitanya is credited with the task of preaching the religion of love and devotion.

The teachings of Caitanya are based on the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* in which Brahmaṇ, transcendental reality is fully personal (*Bhagavān*) and Kṛṣṇa is the quintessence of this divine person. Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism regards *Śrīmad bhāgavatam* to be an authoritative and revealed scripture and a principal
source of inspiration where Kṛṣṇa-līlā had been portrayed in all its beauty, sublimity and also in utmost details. The Gaudīya school of Vaiṣṇava accepted Śrīmad-bhāgavata Purāṇa to be the genuine commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra. S.C. Mukherjee remarks that “Like the Mādhvas, the Caitanyaiteś also based their religious beliefs on Śrīmad-bhāgavatam, but unlike the former the latter exalted Rādhā to high position and laid stress upon the Rāsapāṇa-ādhyāya section of the Bhāgavata. According to S.K. Bel the Caitanya sect like other chief Vaiṣṇava sects originated from the tradition of the Śrīmad-bhāgavatam and owed a great deal for its development to the mystic emotionalism interpreted and established by a class of emotional Samnyāsins from the time of Śrīdharā (Circa 14th century A.D.)

Caitanyaism believes in three stages or gradation of one indivisible reality, which are designated respectively as the Brahman, Paramātman and the Bhagavat. The Bengal school identifies Bhagavat with Kṛṣṇa, who is depicted in the Bhāgavata and presents Him as its Highest personal God. It maintains that Kṛṣṇa is not an incarnation of the Divine Being, partial or complete but the Bhagavat Himself in his perfect form i.e. as Paramātma- cf. kṛṣṇaṁ bhagavān svayam.

The fundamental concept of Śrī Caitanya’s Bhakti philosophy has been stated and analysed by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, the nephew of Rūpa Gosvāmī in his Sandharvas-Tattva, Bhagavata, Paramātma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bhakti and Prāti which
are apparently of the nature of commentary on some verses of the Sāṅgītā
bhāgavatapurāṇa. The three other Gosvāmis—Rāghunātha-dāsa, Rāghunātha
Bhaṭṭā and Gopāla Bhaṭṭā also helped in the propagation of Śrī Caitanya's
Bhakti doctrine.

The philosophy of this sect is based on Vedānta. In his book Śat
Sandarva, and in his commentary, Krama Sandarva, Jīva Gosvāmi has
thoroughly discussed the viewpoint and philosophy of this sect. According to
this view, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being. He alone is to be meditated upon.
His name alone is to be uttered15. The Gopāla Upanisad corroborates this
view19. Devotion which does not seek any reward and which is otherwise
known as Parābhakti (supreme devotion) is the only means to the realization of
the desired end. The realisation of the Supreme Being is the end of life.

According to their doctrine, the Jīva, though small like an atom, is Nitya
(�ernal) and is a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devotion to the lotus feet of God is the
highest kind of liberation20. Though other kinds of liberation such as Sālokya,
Sāyujya etc. are admitted, they are not to be desired. The doctrine of Māyā
which is supported by Śaṅkarācārya is strongly criticized and refuted by Jīva
Gosvāmi in his Śat Sandarva and the commentary on the Bhāgavata and it is
said to be too unsuitable to be supported21. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣan, too, does
the same thing in his Gobinda Bhāṣya. They never accept Nirviṣeṣa Brahma.
Saviṣeṣa Brahmaṇ is their goal. They vehemently oppose the Vivartavāda of
Sankara: but they support the Parināmavāda of the Sāṅkhya. According to them though the world is subject to destruction, it is not false. Hence are neither monists like Sankara, nor qualified monists or non-qualified dualists like Rāmānuja, nor dualists like Mādhva; but they prefer to the Bhedābhedavāda of Nimbārka though they differ from him in some respects. They accept the difference and unity of both the Jīva and Brahman. As both difference and unity are unthinkable, they call it the Acintyabhedabhedavāda. R.G. Bhandarkar holds that ‘Krṣṇa is the support (Āśraya) and Jīva rests on him (Āśrita). The relation between the two is identity as well as difference. Thus the Vedāntic theory of Caitanya’s system is the same as that of Nimbārka. As the bee is distinct from honey and hovers about it and when it drinks it, is full of it, i.e. is one with it, so the individual soul is at first distinct from the Supreme soul, seeks the Supreme Soul consistently and continuously, and when through love he is full of the Supreme Soul, he becomes unconscious of his individual existence, and becomes, as it were absorbed in him having described the ecstatic condition in which the individual soul becomes one with God, though they are really distinct.23 The saying of the Śruti, “He is bliss personified: bliss is the nature of Brahman”24 is accepted as the most authoritative basis of their doctrine. They have tried to establish their doctrine on devotion and love and they place them above mere knowledge of the supreme.
The divine love episode of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the central idea of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism. But this divine love episode has been symbolically interpreted to represent the spiritual yearning of the devotee to be united with the Divine. Rādhā’s passionate love for Kṛṣṇa has been taken as a symbolical representation of the jīva’s devotional love for God. Gradually the joint worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as the highest object of meditation came to be recognized as a special feature of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism. It is believed that Caitanya combines in himself the eternal bliss of Kṛṣṇa and the passionate love in its plenitude symbolized by Rādhā.

Another very important aspect of Caitanya’s Bhakti movement is his introduction of Kīrtana, the congregational singing of the names of Kṛṣṇa. One form of it, known as Nagarkīrtana or processional singing conducted on a grand scale in the streets, is an unconventional mode of worship which was unknown in Bengal before the advent of Caitanya. Kīrtana, especially Nagarkīrtana created an unprecedented spiritual ambience in society which ushered in an era of spiritual resurgence and moral regeneration. Caitanya endeavored to win the hearts of man, by instituting Kīrtana or the fervent singing of songs about love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and other devotional matters.

The Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas believe that Samkīrtana or Nāmakīrtana is the creation of Mahāprabhu, but Nityānanda also was another leader of such
kīrtana\textsuperscript{25}. Though Nāmasankīrtana was prevalent prior to the birth of Caitanya, its popularity has been grown through Caitanya.

Rūpa Gosvāmi has defined \textit{Kīrtana} in \textit{Bhaktirasāmrtasindhu} as: \textit{nāmalilāgovinādinām uccairbhāsa tu kīrtanam}\textsuperscript{26}. This means that the uttering of the name and quality of god aloud is called kīrtana. Sankīrtana is defined as \textit{vahurmilitvā kīrtanam saṅkīrtanamucyate}\textsuperscript{27}. Harekrishna Mukhopadhayaya states that “Kīrtana is of two forms—Nāmakīrtana and Līlākīrtana”\textsuperscript{28}. Kīrtana or singing of God’s name is the only religion. \textit{Bhāgavata} also advocated \textit{kīrtana} as the only mode of worship which is evident from the following

\begin{verbatim}
satyeyaddhyāyate viṣṇuh tretāyāṁ yajate makhaïh /
dvāpare paricaryyāyām kalau taddharikīrtanāt //\textsuperscript{29}
\end{verbatim}

Krṣṇadāsa Kāvīrājā also states in Caitanya Caritāmṛta

\begin{verbatim}
saṅkīrttana haite pāpasāṁsārnāśana /
cittvaśuddhi sarvabhakti sādhana udgama //\textsuperscript{30}
\end{verbatim}

“The most striking feature of this neo-Vaiṣṇavism was the simplification of religion. The only requisite was the chanting of the sacred name. In it, the humblest, the most ignorant and the poorest of all could join. It was an emancipation of common man from eclesistical tyranny”\textsuperscript{31}. Temple worship no doubt occupied a prominent place in the practice of Caitanya and his followers. But the heart of this movement was Saṅkīrtana.
Both Asit Kumar Bandhopadhyaya and Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya hold that the system of kirtana was introduced at the aegis of Narottamadāsa at Khetori festival of North Bengal. The system was that a kirtana should start after Gauracandrika. It is held that Khetori festival took place in 1583-84 A.D. According to science of music pure sangita is of two types viz. Nibaddha or arranged and Anibaddha or non-arranged.

The non-arranged song is the practice to set to music or run through the scale of notes where there is no lyrical words. But lyrical words are endowed in nibaddha (arranged) song. In those days there would be only introductory singing with notes, then the notes will be mixed with words before the kirtana. Narottamadasa had introduced and planned the system of singing of Gaurāngalilā (song related to dalliances of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu) before the narrative song (pālā gāna).

Kirtana is one of the means of worshiping the Lord. In other words, the mode of singing of the name of God loudly to the accompaniment of the khol (drum) and kartal (cymbals) is Kirtana. According to Bhaktirasākara, mālyacakanda (garland and sandal paste) are to be offered to the khol and kartal at the beginning of a saṅkirtana. After offering mālyacakanda to musical instruments the singers (kirtanivaśa) are to be received with flower garlands.

As has been mentioned above Kirtana centers round the act of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Thus some of the main items of the Kirtan are...
The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas regard Caitanya as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Advaitacārya and Śrīvāsa unequivocally proclaimed that Caitanya was an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa particularly in its aspects of Rādhā. In other words, the dual nature of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā incarnated in the person of Caitanya.

Thus majority of the Vaiṣṇavas regard him as Kṛṣṇa. Gradually, the joint worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as the highest object of meditation came to be recognized as a special feature of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. Caitanya would teach the truth by practising the same. Whether conceived theologically as the unification of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in one body or commonly as an Avatāra, the belief in the God-head of Śrī Caitanya became widespread, particularly in Bengal and Orissa. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa incarnated in the persons of Caitanya while the other Gopīs became incarnate as his followers. There is reference to the divine personality of Caitanya in the poetical works of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

In accordance with the Mādhurya theory of the school it is held that Kṛṣṇa in order to relish the supreme taste of his own mādhurya as it was relished by his most beloved Rādhā, assumed feelings as well as the beauty of Rādhā so that the two became one in Caitanya. The orthodox records show that...
Caitanya imagined himself as Rādhā longing for her beloved Kṛṣṇa and tried to realize the same intense yearnings.\textsuperscript{37}

Caitanya legends deified him with his band of companions. Vṛndāvanadāsa models the life of Caitanya on the Vṛndāvana life of Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa himself who in his recollection of Vṛndāvana pines for Rādhā. They also believe in Rādhā Bhāva of Caitanya. i.e., they regard Caitanya as both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in one personality. The most beloved of Kṛṣṇa are the Gopīs and among them the best is Rādhā.

Rādhā is the most beloved of Kṛṣṇa among the Gopīs. In the Caitanyaśṭaka of Rūpagosvāmi it is stated that Kṛṣṇa desiring to experience the sweet feeling of the Gopīs concealed his own dark complexion by stealing the golden hue of Rādhā, his beloved.\textsuperscript{38} The most approved mode of devotional realization of this sect consisted of the practice of Rāgānuga form of Bhakti. Caitanya himself practised this in Rādhabhava. Rādhabhava is a nameless madness for Kṛṣṇa which is referred to in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja:

\begin{align*}
\text{sei gopi bhāvā mrte yar lobha hay} & \\
\text{vedadharma loka tyaji sei krsna bhajay} & \\
\text{ataeva gopībhāva kari anigikār} & \\
\text{rātr-dine cinte rādhākṛṣṇer vihār} & \text{\textsuperscript{39}}
\end{align*}
The Caitanyaítes also believe that for realization of the līlā or divine sport of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa a devotee has to accept a Gopīdeha (the body of a Gopī). One must accept a Gopīdeha, culturing the Bhāva of the Gopī in Rāgānugābhakti.

The Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavas regard Rādhākūnda as an important place of pilgrimage. In their view, as Rādhā is endeared to Kṛṣṇa so the place Rādhā Kūnda also.

During the period of staying at Rādhākūnda (for Caturmasīs Vow) Caitanya being full of immeasurable joy, described to eligible listeners the glories of Rādhā and performed the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava bhajana.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also described the glory of Rādhākūnda in 28th chapter Madhyalīlā of Caitanya-caritāmṛta as follows:-

\[
saba gopī haite rādhākṛṣner preyasī /
\]

\[
taiche rādhākūnda priya priyār sarasī //
\]

\[
yei kunde nitya kṛṣṇa rādhikār saṅge /
\]

\[
jale jalakē kare āre rasa-rāinge //
\]

\[
sei kunde yei ekhār kare snāna /
\]

\[
tāre rādhā sama prema kṛṣṇa kare dāna //
\]

\[
kunder mādhurī yena rādhā mādhurimā
tunder mahimā yena rādhār mahimā 41
\]
Rādhākūṇḍa is as dear to Krṣṇa as Rādhā herself with wonderful qualities. As the moonlight dances in the water of the Kūṇḍa, so Krṣṇa who is handsome like the moon also makes sports with Rādhā day and night in the Kūṇḍa. Anybody who takes bath in the Kūṇḍa attains the grace of Krṣṇa like Rādhā. Caitanya fell into trances when he discovered the Radhakunda at Airat (Uttar Pradesh). This Kūṇḍa was glorified in various way by Gauranga Mahāprabhu. Bathing in Rādhākūṇḍa generates the fruits of all tirthas of the three worlds (triloka).

5.4. IMPACT OF GAUḌĪYA VAIṢṆAVISM ON THE BISNUPRIYA MANIPURIS

The impact of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism was very deep in all sphere of the Bisnupriya Manipuris. The Manipuri people, through the influence of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas of the Caitanya school from Nabadvīp accepted Bengali script for their language and now this has been fully established. This has enabled the Bisnupriya Manipuris to come to intimate touch with Bengali in its literature and also with Sanskrit. There developed a very deep religious faith among the Manipuris for the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and way of life as inculcated in the Purāṇas and this, with the help of Sanskrit Pandits and also of the Bengali script helped to make modern Manipuri literature and culture entirely Sanskrit oriented. One can read the Bengali philosophical classics of Vaiṣṇavism Kṛṣṇadasa Kavirāja’s Caitanya-caritāmrta, other Vaiṣṇava books etc.
The influence of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism became so powerful that the Manipuris became abstinent from killing animals for food. They eat fish but do not touch flesh and profess to be very particular in their social and religious observances. In all rituals non-vegetarian food is completely prohibited. Regarding the intake of fish the author of Bhaktitattvatarangini upholds that this is only the deśācāra of Bengal and hence is permissible. It is said there

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
kintu gauda-desī grha dharmīgan
ni̊ja deśācāre matsya karena bhojan /
anya deše matsyahāre doṣa haite pāre
gaudete nāhika doṣa deṣer ācāre /ī
ataeva matsyahār deśācāra hāy /
grhipakṣe dosū kimbā nindaniya nay 43
\end{center}
\end{quote}

In accordance with this tradition the Bisnupriya Manipuris also take fish in their day-to-day life.

Like the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas the Bisnupriya Manipuris also regard the love episode of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā as the central theme of their religion. The combined worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa has become the most important religious practice. They have made the Rādhā-kṛṣṇa legend their very own.

The emerging religious consciousness of Bisnupriya Manipuri Vaisnavism has taken Vaiṣṇavism its ideological basis. The new faith offered new avenues for the expression of the Manipuri energy and display of talents. The energy
charming Rāsa dance based mainly on the Rādhā-kṛṣṇa legend has been built up.

*Rāsa Līlā* and *Nāta Sāṅkīrtana* are the most important features of their religious function. The religious feelings of Bisuṇuṇya Manipuris are best reflected through their cultural activities and food habits. The finest product of fusion of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism with the culture of Manipuris is the beautiful Rāsa dance or Rāsa nṛtṛya or Rāsa līlā. The physical movements and other technical details of Rāsa dance are in accordance with those found in *Abhinayadarpāṇa* and *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the two main manuals of classical Indian dance. Śāstras are closely followed even in the arrangements of seats for the audience. This is actually a dance drama which is always accompanied by selected songs of the great masters like Jayadeva, Candraśīla, Vidyāpati, Narottama-dāsa and others sung in classical style in the rhythms created by the sweet beats of *Mañjirā* (cymbal) and *Mṛdanga* (drum).

It is mentioned earlier that the Caitanyaiteś based their religious beliefs on *Śrīmadbhāgavatam*; exalted Rādhā to a high position and laid stress upon *Rāsapāñcādyāya* section of the *Bhāgavata*. This has influenced the Manipuris and they regard *Bhāgavata* as an authoritative and revealed scripture and a principal source of inspiration where Kṛśna līlā has been portrayed in all its beauty and sublimity and also in utmost details. In the
Manipuri Rāsalīlā the theme is taken from this holy book. Rāsalīlā is modeled in a special Manipuri style.

The dance continues as a divine play which Manipuris have preserved till today as a dance form. When Vaiśnāvism entered Manipur, it continued with a thematic concept of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa episode. The theme is selected from one of the set situation like Kṛṣṇa's infidelity to Rādhā, her forgiveness and their union, the general concord and blissful state of agreement between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, their sportive play together or the abandonment of Rādhā by Kṛṣṇa and their reconciliation because of her threatened suicide.

Following the Gaudīya Vaiśnāvism, the Bisnupriya Manipuris consider Caitanya as the Avatāra (incarnation) of Kṛṣṇa. They also worship Caitanya and their temples contain images of Caitanya in addition to Kṛṣṇa, Jagannātha etc. Caitanya is usually represented as a shaven-headed robed monk. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa mantra is used for the worship of Caitanya as he is the avatāra. Moreover, the image of Nityānanda, the most intimate disciple of Caitanya and one of the four prabhūs is also worshipped by them. Nityānanda and Caitanya images called Gaur-Nitāi are found side by side in the temples.

The cult of Manipuri Kīrtana is derived from Gaudīya Vaiśnāvism. The Manipuri Naṭa kīrtana (pālā kīrtana) has evolved new shape following the line of Gaudīya Vaiśnāvism. On the adoption of Gaudīya Vaiśnāvism, the Kīrtana cult has fascinated the Manipuris. Hence, the Manipuris introduced Kīrtana in
their religious life. The cult of Kīrtana was improved with varied aspects of cultural traits and ritual symbolism and as such the Kīrtana has become unique in temple institution revealing real festivity and reflecting curious character of socio-religious life of the people. The influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is very much on the Manipuris and it has become a popular religious-cultural function to them still today Kīrtana is considered as means of aprasana (worship) to Lord Caitanya.

The genesis of Pālā Kīrtana or Saṅkīrtana is Bengal Vaisnavism but the Manipuris have modeled it in line of some Vaiṣṇavite books such as Śrīkṛṣṇarasa saṅgīta samgraha, Saṅgītasāra Saṅgraha of Ghanasyam Das, Nārādiya pañcam sāra saṁhitā, Śrīgauralilāmṛta, Śrīmadbhāgavatī etc. The beauty of 'Nāta Saṅkīrtana lies in the fact that it is a new creation patterned on Vaiṣṇavite philosophy. In the following lines a brief description of Nāta Saṅkīrtana is given.

E. Nilkanta Singh holds that “In Manipuri Kirtana Cult songs are not merely sung but danced. Hence, the Manipuri musician singing Kirtana is called ‘nāta’ a term in Sanskrit meaning a person who knows the four Abhinaya and different type of Nātya (Drama), gets himself merged in the Rasa (sentiment) which he is trying to portray and who appears physically on the stage, a dancer with songs on the lips. The Manipuri style of Kirtana is known as Nāta Saṅkīrtana which is also an old Indian tradition”
A special attention is paid to the rāga which precedes any performance of the Saṅkīrtana. Rāga has been defined in Rāgaratnākara as follows:

\[
\text{yaistu cetāmsi rajyante jagattritayavarttina} /
\]
\[
te \text{rāga iti kathyante munibhirbharatādibhibh} //^{45}
\]

Rāga has the same connotation in all systems of Indian music, but it has a special type of application in the nāta system. A rāga as the pradhāna rāga precedes every performance and is declared, not in the sā, re, gā, mā notation nor in the tā, ri, tu, ta, thā, nā but in tā, ri,ta, nā type notation.

The Manipuri Nāta Samkārtana is accomplished by the accompaniment of songs, musical instruments, and dancing. Therefore, Aribam Chittreswar Sarma while explaining the traits of Nāta Saṅkīrtana has quoted from the Saṅgīta Pārijāta and Krṣnarasa Saṅgīta Saṅgraha:

\[
\text{gitavādītra nṛtyānām trayam saṃgītamucyate} /
\]
\[
\text{gitatasyātra pradhānatāttatsamgītamīritam} //^{36}
\]

In Saṅkīrtana, the singers reflect their bhakti. But this bhakti is a bhāva which passing through various stages like prema, māna etc. gets itself metamorphosed into bhakti rasa culminating in the ultimate union of māna Rasa. In Caitanya-Caritāmṛta saṅkīrtana has been mentioned as an instrument for dispelling sins of men^{47}. 

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Natā saṅkīrtana starts with the notations called antiḥakṣaṇa sangīta which is influenced by Pañcāmsāra saṁhitā as quoted by Aribam Chittreswar Sarma as follows–

\[ \text{ariśāntādi varṇāśca prothyāpante śanaiḥ śanaiḥ} \]

\[ \text{prathmate rangalilāyām giyante gāvanottamaia} \]

The natā rāga is started firstly with slow pronouncing the notation tā, ri, ta, nā, etc. by some excellent singer on the stage. Then there must be invocation to Lord Gourāṅga called Gaudacandrīkā as is the rule in kīrtana of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The preliminary verses in praise of Caitanya called prologue or Gaudacandrīkā. The songs that are true to the spirit of emotions of Caitanya’s love of Rādhākṛṣṇa are apparently the subject of the usual Gaudacandrīkā. The artistes (called Pālās) begin the rāga of vocal music with tā, ri, ta, nā (corresponding to ha, ri, te, nā of classical Indian Sangīta) in the cyclic order of Ghora. Dīrgha and Pañcama and the appropriate nāvā along with poses of meditation (Dhyāna Mūrti) is introduced. The rāga of the saṅ kīrtana song is tā, ri, ta, nā. Similarly, the musical rāga of the kīrtana also starts with the notation or sound of the khol (drum). The musical notation made by the dākulā (drum beater or mṛdanga vādaka) are ten, tain, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, tā, etc. These notations have been presented in Kīrtanatattva, Saṅgītāntāvatā, Saṅgītacintāmaṇi, Saṅgītadīnavarta, Rūpa Gosvāmi, and Harisamkīrtanamūrīvay of Krṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Vaṇīk.
to some Gosvāmis ‘tena’ stands for preceptor (Guru), ‘tain’ for Kṛṣṇa, ‘tā’ for Nityānanda, ‘tāk’ for Caitanya and ‘tā’ denotes Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In the same manner the vocal notation or rāga has different meaning according to different saṅgītaśāstra. According to some, the sound ‘a’ is for Ganeśa, ‘ri’ for Kṛṣṇa, ‘ta’ for Brahma and ‘nā’ denotes Mahādeva. But some Bismuprya Manipuri isālpā (singers) like Kunjalal Sinha (Kailasahar) and others explained this notations as they have got by legacy from their traditional gurus as the following:-

‘tā’ barne rādhikā ‘nā’ varne śrīkrṣna cka

‘ri’ varne yugal milan

ei tin rāga varne tin bāṇchā hay purṇa

bāṇchā rne gaurāṅga prakāśa

tā- ri-ta- nā-ri-nā- ta-nā ei asta aksar

kāvavyuha rupe şobhe gaura kalehara

This is an unique way of invocatin of the Bismuprīya Manipuri singers to Caitanya who is the father of Saṅgītānanda. It means that ‘tā’ denotes Rādhā, ‘nā’ denotes Kṛṣṇa and ‘ri’ stands for coupling of them. These three notations satiate three desires (i.e. bhāva, kānti and vilasa of Rādhā) and the triple craving of Kṛṣṇa led to the incarnation of Gaurāṅga. The last letters of notations- tā- ri- ta- nā- ri-nā- ta-nā are the embodiment of Caitanya.
Kīrtana is held in a Maṇḍapa. The space is consecrated and transformed into Vṛndāvana and time has been made transcendental. The performance area is situated in the centre. In the centre of the centre the idol of Mahāprabhu (Caitanya) is installed as the Bīsnupriya Manipuri worship Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. (Jugal Mūrti). Mahāprabhu is compared to a wonderful Kalpavṛkṣa which means a tree that yields the desired fruits to everybody. Of this wonderful tree of wish fulfillment Mādhavendrapurī was the root, Advaita the sprout, Nityānanda, the shoulder and Savants like Bakreśvar and others the original branches. Its perennial sweetness permeates throughout its limbs; devotion is its flower; love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, its fruits. Its roots penetrate through the ocean of bliss, its shade is soothing balm for the fatigue resulting from the troubles felt in the journey of life and it is the bestower of the desired object of the devotees. The Bīsnupriya Manipuris adore Caitanya and Nityānanda. They have been deified. They love to sing Bengali devotional songs with Manipuri intonation.

When the detailed preliminaries being over, the Samkīrtana begins with Jayadhvani at a specific bol of pong (drum) which starts with ten, ten, ā, tat-tām, symbolizing Gaur-Nityā. This is known as major rāga of the drum (Pura Āchoubā) consecrating to the making of the mental image of Gaur-Nityā. Set of rhythmic patterns are introduced for creating the various states of the image and one’s offering to Kṛṣṇa Caitanya passing through waves of...
progressive relation (*Pravartaka, Sadhaka and Siddha Delhi*). All the participants including the audience are now metamorphosed into *sakha* of Vṛndāvana at the stage of *siddha*. There are five major artistes in a *Varta Sankirtana* performance, viz., Isālpa (Isheiuanba), the lead singer (representing Śrīvāsa of Nabadvipa tradition) assisted by a Dohar (Nityānanda) and a helper. Khonpāngbā/Kholpāngpā (Gadādhara) along with a major pong (*Mrdanga*) player (Advaita) assisted by another drum player (Govinda). Eleven other Bhaktas of Nabadvipa are there in the circle for a group of sixteen artistes. In a sense, the Bhaktas are also sakhs of Vṛndāvana.

At the south west of the Maṇḍapa sits the president of the function (Maṇḍapamāpu) representing Nityānanda. Both the Vṛndāvana and Nabadvipa tradition have been integrated. The host of entire *Yajña* is supposed to be Rādhā being assisted by Bhagavati Pūrmāśī (called Arangpham) who supervises the whole līlā. There is a seat for the conch player (blowing conch) indicating supreme happiness at various stages of the play. At the entrance area to the Maṇḍapa there stands a person representing Gopesvara (Śiva) as guardian of the departed soul (in case of śrāddha rites). This is explained in charters under the occasional observances of the Bishnupriya Manipuri. The lead singer is supposed to have escorted the departed souls from there to be handed over to the president who makes *Nīma-Sīnkāt*, which means making journey of...
departed soul over all Vaisnava tirthas culminating in attainment of Vrndavana through Gopi Deha.

This is followed by tala-dintal called raimel. The artistes first move clock wise (representing pilgrimage to Nabadvipa), where meeting of instrument (Yantra Milan symbolizing the union of the Lord with His sakhis) takes place. This is followed by anti-clock wise movement (the normal movement of the San kirtana) representing pilgrimage to Vrndavana. To the Gaudiya Vaisnavas Nabadvipa and Vrndavana are holy places which have been stated by Yajnesvara as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
nabadvipa & \text{ vrndavan sabate pradh\=an} / \\
svcc\=a & \text{ prakat lil\=a kare bhagavan} / \\
ei dui & \text{ dhame dui kal\=er nir\=nay} / \\
nityakali. dv\=apare kramete prak\=\=avay // \\
\=sr\=i\=nanda & \text{ nandana kr\=\=n\=\=a p\=\=atra dv\=aparete} \\
kr\=\=n\=\=a & \text{ vina anye n\=\=re ei prema dite} .51
\end{align*}
\]

The purport of the stanza is that Nabadvipa and Vrndavana are the best places where the Lord takes revelation for sport. Vrndavana meant for lil\=a or dv\=apar epoch while Nabadvipa for the Kali age of Lord Krsna. None other than Krsna can bestow unmixed love (prema).

Nabadvipa, Vrndavana and other places which are connected with the life of Caitanya became pilgrimage of Bispriya Manipuri Vaisnava.
The impact of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism has been of great help in making Bisnupriya Manipuris advance in the scale of civilization. The Bengali or North Indian Hindu dress was adopted by the Manipuri men. Abstinence from flesh of animals (though not from fish) as well as strict adherence to the formalities of Vaiṣṇava religious practice and way of life mark off the Bisnupriya Manipuris from other Kirāta people by whom they are surrounded and give a social Hindu atmosphere and a distinction of culture to their life. The impact of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism might not have been sudden in the period of history but it has an evolutionary effect on the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-religious aspects. The ultimate spread of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism was the product of the progressive evolution. Bisnupriya Manipuri society of the present day is a highly advance Hindu society and it has adopted all norms of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism and ritualistic complexities to the most micro details.

It has no exception in case of disposal of dead body also certain provisions for disposal of cadavers have been made. In case of cremation, the funeral pyre is framed on six poles which represent six Gostvāmis with a ditch dug beneath the pyre. There is also a canopy hanging above the pyre. The cremation takes place to the accompaniment of Kirtana songs. The sandstone is preserved and thrown in the Ganges at later date as opportunity arises.
The discovery of Rādhākūnda is really a landmark in the religious life of the Manipuris. The glory of the Rādhākūnda is immense to the Bīsnupriya Manipuris. It is the greatest shrine to them. Every Bīsnupriya Manipur, rich or poor strives to visit the Kūnda for holy ablution in life. They feel that it is the duty of them as devotees to bathe in Rādhākūnda during the month of Kārtika and to worship Janañādana there. The Bīsnupriya Manipuris set up the temple of Śrī Rādhāmādāya at Rādhākūnda on the dol purnimā tithi in 1860. It was established by Pundarikākṣa Śarma, a Bīsnupriya Manipuri Brāhmin with collective effort of Bīsnupriya Manipuri Community. A registered committee namely ‘Śrīdhām Rādhākūnda Śrī Śrī Rādhāmādāya Sevā Paricālan Samiti’ under the provision of the Societies Registrations Act, 1860 has also been formed to manage and regulate the state of affairs of the temple and the pilgrims. Every Bīsnupriya Manipuri family has to render annual contribution in cash for the management and development of the temple. Rādhākūnda in Uttar Pradesh is one of the greatest pilgrimage centres like Vṛndāvana to the Bīsnupriya Manipuri who also offers oblation of water and ball of food (pinḍadāna) to the ancestors here.

Another cultic aspects of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is to adopt the title of a Gopi and meditate on the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. For the devotees of Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa was the most lovable, perfect beloved and embodiment of bliss. They abandoned everything and consecrated
existence to the love of Kṛṣṇa, without any ulterior motive. Caitanya accepted the Gopī prema as the ideal of God realization.

The concept of Gopī Deha is prevalent in Bisnupriya Manipuri also. The Bisnupriya Manipuri Śādhaka believes all men are female and Kṛṣṇa, alone is Male in the universe and that the highest ideal of devotee, like that of Rādhā is the desire of a woman eternally seeking to satisfy her lover who, frankly but divinely, thirsts after womanly charms of adolescence and youth. Therefore, the right way to worship Kṛṣṇa is through ‘Gopī Deha’. The Bisnupriya Manipuri Śādhaka meditates on Lord Kṛṣṇa considering himself as Gopī. The devotee feminises himself as a Gopī to be seduced by Kṛṣṇa.

The Gopīs were the followers of Kānta-prema. Kānta-bhaktas are superior to all other types of devotees and the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana, the Chief of whom is Rādhā, are the most shining examples of divine love, which culminates in its fullest extent in the state of highest ecstasy technically known as Mahābhāva. The Gopīs consecrated their whole being to the beloved Kṛṣṇa without craving for anything, not even anything connecting their own selves but His pleasure. Their devotion was constant, unmixed and unthrice rapt. In this context, the view of the S.Radhakrishnan is note-worthy as he observed that “The Gopīs symbolise people who found God by devotion without craving. The desertion of home and husband by milkmaids is a symbol of devotion or self-surrender to the heavenly Bridegroom. Vṛndāvana is the very Garden of
Radhā and Gopis are entangled in the māyā of the world. The flute of Kṛṣṇa is the voice of God. To follow him means to sacrifice name and fame, cast away dignity and self-respect, and give up home, family and all. Those who care for social safety and peace cannot respond to the call of infinite. To love God is to take up the cross. The surrender of the soul to the heavenly Bridegroom, who is common to all and special to each metaphor not peculiar to India - involves the desertion of earthly home and husband.”

NOTES AND REFERENCES
5. ibid., P.108.
6. MS. 5.17.


17. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. 1.3.28.


19. ibid. P. 52.

20. ibid. P. 53.


22. ibid. P. 53.


28. ibid., P.51.

29. *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, 12.3.52.


33. ibid., P.112-113.


36. svayam bhagavān yei brajendra-nandan

   tehota caitanya krṣṇa śacīra nandan   CC, Ādīlīlā, Ch.17. P.133.

37. CC, Ādīlīlā, Ch.1.P.2.

38. S.K De, op.cit., P.424.
39. CC. Madhyalilā, Ch.8. PP.222-23.

40. yathā rādhā priya viṣṇostasyāh kunḍam priyam tathā sarva gopīṣu saivaikā viṣṇoratyaṁ vallabhā Qouted from Padmaparamān: CC. Ādililā, Ch.4. P. 47.

41. CC. Madhyalilā, Ch.8. P.228.

42. sei kunḍe yēi ebār kare snān / tāre rādhā-sama prema kṛṣṇa kare dān // CC. Madhyalilā, Ch.8. P.328

43. Yajñesvar. Bhaktitattva Tarangini. 1344 (B.S). P.112-113

44. S.K. De, op.cit., P.432.


47. Vide. saṁ kīrtana haitē pāpasaṁsārṇāśana / cittasuddhi sarvabhakti sādhanam udgam // CC. Antyalilā. Ch.20. P.62


49. Oral Tradition/ Kirtanmala karapek (Manuscript).

50. Swami Tattvananda. op.cit., P.40.


52. S. Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy. vol. 1. London.1958. PP.