In the previous chapter it has been that Charāirongbā and Garibniwāz followed also the Caitanya school of Vaiṣṇavism. The word 'Gauḍīya' appears for the first time in the Cheithārol Kumbābā during the reign of Garibniwāz and that too for only one. The Bhāgavachandra Charit says that Garibniwāz was initiated into Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism by Rāma Gopal Vāirāgī on Mērā/ September-October 10, 1716. But this sect was not strong in his time. He had his inclination to this form after dedicating the throne in favour of his son Ajit Śāl. The ex-king could not inspire the people in order to change it into a main religion. Its appearance as a sectarian term is found in Manipur Itivyrtta and a manuscript called Garibniwāz Lāiming Loubā.¹

In our opinion, Garibniwāz, though a Vaiṣṇava, was not a Gauḍīya. There are doctrinal differences between his faith and Vaiṣṇavism professed by King Jayasimha, his grandson. The former lacks the features of nine modes of bhakti. In the Guru Pranālikā system as found in Manipur a devotee has to trace the lineage of his ordination through a series of gurus upto Narottama and six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavana.² It appears from the above facts

² See supra, Ch.VII; Surchand Sarma, "Guru Pranālikā", Classical and Folk Dances of India, Bombay, 1963.
that Gaudiya Vaisnavism had its followers among a section of the masses in the time of Garibniwāz. Jayasimha was brought up in Gaudiya tradition. In his youth, he was a pupil of Rāma Gopāla Vairāgī. The latter gave him a series of discourses on the four sects of Vaisnavism, i.e., Visisṭādvaīta, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaīta and Rudra (Viṣṇusvāmī) and their merits. Later Jayasimha discarded Rāmānandī Vaisnavism and introduced Gaudiya Vaisnavism as the state religion of Manipur. His successors followed his footsteps in religious matters. Neo-Vaisnavism in Manipur cannot be studied in isolation from the Caitanya movement in Bengal. It is proper to write something on the origin and development of this school in Bengal and its spread in Manipur by the disciples of Narottama Thākura.

A short sketch of Caitanya's Vaisnavism

In Bengal, the neo-Vaisnavite movement is associated with the personality and teaching of Caitanya, a pious Brāhmaṇ of Nadiyā (fifteenth century). He advocated Kṛṣṇa, the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu as the object of adoration. He also expounded the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult in which the relation between soul and god was symbolised by the love of the lady Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya's teachings are to be found in a poem of ten verses attributed to him.3 The authoritative Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana

gave a shape to the philosophical side of his teaching. Jīva Gosvāmī established the official doctrine of Acintyā-bheda-bheda, in comparison with Mayāvāda of Śaṅkara. Baladeva's Govindabhāṣya on the Vedānta-sūtra is quite a useful guide.4

Caitanya's influence was not confined to Bengal. Orissa, Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), etc., came under his influence. When he died in 1533, the Bhakti cult had grown into a mighty river bringing solace and liberation to the people which had suffered persecution and social and political inferiority. Among his followers were Nityānanda and Advaita who were worshipped by all on account of their role in the propagation of this cult.5 Next to them there was a grade which consisted of six Gosvāmīs who produced a large quantity of Bhakti literature and theology under the teaching of Caitanya.6 The women gurus among the Bengal Vaisnavas, especially in the family of Nityānanda and Advaita and Śrīnivāsa were a strong force to consolidate this movement.

During the latter part of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth century there was a number of people who followed faithfully the path of Caitanya. Among them were Narottam Thākura, Śrīnivāsa and Syāmānanda. These three

themselves were as students of Jīva Gospāmī. Within a short time they became well-versed in the scriptures of Vaisnavism. Later Śrī Jīva Gospāmī deputed them to circulate the Vaisnava texts in Bengal. The Vaisnava manuscripts were sent in a bullock cart under Śrīnivāsa. They wandered through the jungles and experienced many difficulties in carrying the manuscripts. They succeeded in obtaining the manuscripts which had been looted by his robbers from Rājā Vir Hamvira, the chief of Vanavismupur. These three were responsible for propagating the views of the Gosvāmīs in North Bengal, Oriṣa and Kheturi. They were widely respected by the people of these places for their learning and pious disposition. On his return to Kheturi, Narottama undertook to writing a number of holy works. He travelled most of the centres of Vaisnavism and got five idols set up at Kheturi. At his suggestion, the ruler of Kheturi (since he resigned his claim to the gādi) arranged a Mahotsava ceremony which was attended by many learned people. He wrote a number of books on poetry, theology, and treatise on Tāntric form of Vaisnavism.

9. T. Kennedy, The Chaitanya Movement, Cal., 1925, p. 73; S. K. De, op. cit., p. 106. He observes as follows "... But these were different from the original ideas of the Bengal devotees and biographers, who mention Sanātana and Rūpa indeed but never speak collectively of six Gosvāmins."
Narottam was a fine singer too. He used to circumambulate Kheturi taking his own house as the centre of Kirtan singing and religious discourses. He had a number of disciples, the chief among them were Ganga Narayan Cakravarti and Ramaendra Kaviraja Bhattacarya. Ganga Narayan Cakravarti was born in a Brahman family at Murshidabad. He accepted Narottam Thakura as his spiritual teacher. The orthodox Brahman community rose in revolt against Narottam for breaking the caste rule. They appealed to the Maharaja of Pakvalli to punish him. In reply, Narottam raised his voice against corrupt practices of the Brahmanas. His disciples defeated the proud pandits in debates held in the open bazar at Kheturi. Narottam was a Sudra but the people gave him the title of Thakura (Brahman).

Ganga Narayan Cakravarti became his successor in matters of spreading Vaisnavism in other places of India. According to Guru-pranalika system, he came to Manipur with his disciples and converted a large number of the Meitheis to Gaudiya Vaisnavism. To him is given the credit of making Manipur a Vaisnava state. But Jnanananda Cakravarti Thakura, the present sebait of Bada Govind temple (Murshidabad) is of the opinion that King Jayasimha honoured him by visiting his place and received initiation from


12. Vide infra, Ch.VII. The traditions of Manipur describe the initiated Manipuris as the followers of him; vide the personal communication of Jnanananda Cakravarti Thakura quoted by R. K. Sanahal Singh in his book, Chingthangkhomb Mahtaniang Ganga Chatpa, pp.13-14 in connection with the initiation of Jayasimha.
him on Rāsa Pūrṇimā of 1682 Śaka. In the temple a khunti with an inscription has been preserved to support the fact. In the opinion of Swami Prajñananda, Narottama Thakura made tour round Assam and Manipur to propagate kirtan together with Vaisnavism. So from these views the fact of Jayasimha's association with the Vaisnavas of Murshidabad cannot be ignored.\(^\text{13}\)

Having explained the background of Caitanyaism in Bengal, we shall turn to its striking progress under the kings of Manipur. The immediate successors of Garibniwāz, viz., Ajit Sai and Bharat Sai could not effect any religious reform. They were mostly engaged in a struggle for power, and Vaisnavism was losing its hold on the masses for want of royal patronage. King Gaurasyam, the grandson of Garibniwāz was a worshipper of Rādhā-Raman (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). After his death, Yangambi Leimakhubi, one of his junior queens took the image to Nabadvip where she worshipped it for a good part of her life.\(^\text{14}\)

The period from the reign of King Jayasimha to that of Chandrakirti (1777-1891) is the most well-defined period. During this period the Narottama Parivāra of Caitanya sect of Vaisnavism was established as the state religion over the whole of Manipur. Manipur was very fortunate in having given birth to

\[\text{\(^\text{13}\) Swami Prajñananda, \textit{Historical Development of Indian Music}, Calcutta, 1960, pp.308-309; T. Kennedy, \textit{op.cit.}, p.73.}\]

a number of statesmen and saints who made considerable contributions to the religious life of the people and revival of Vaiṣṇavaism in Nabadvip. There are instances of them of having their activities outside Manipur and died in the sacred places of the Vaisnavas. We begin with the religious reform of King Jayasimha, for he is the morning star of the new day which dawns with King Gambhir Singh and reaches its noon in King Chandrakirti.

The introduction of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavaism is centred round the personality of King Jayasimha whom the Meitheis call him as Rājarṣi (a king saint). His activities were many-sided—diplomacy, public administration, religious reform, etc. It is more as a man of religion than an able warrior that he is remembered by the Meitheis. 15

A Manipuri manuscript, i.e., Sāmuphāva notes that the Burmese, at the suggestion of Khelemba (king of Moirang) attacked Manipur and defeated Jayasimha. Jayasimha sought refuge at the Ahom court. Manipur was ruled by Khelemba as a vassal of the king of Burma. 16

There is another account about the flight of Jayasimha at the Ahom court. According to Vijaya Pancaiti Jayasimha ascended the throne of Kamla in the absence of his elder brother, Gaurasya. According to the custom of Manipur, no person except

15. For the examination of this remark, see Chs. II & VII of the thesis.

16. N. Khelchandra Singh, 'Manipur Govinda and Rāś Līlā', S.J.N.M.D.A., Imphal, 1964 (English section), pp.5-10; Govinda Hirupan MS.
the reigning king can enjoy this right. As a penalty for the unauthorised act, he was driven out of the palace. He took shelter at the house of his maternal uncle, Khelembā, the chief of Moirāŋ. King Gaurasyām advised Khelemba to abandon Jayasimha. It is even said that the latter would be a murderer of Khelemba later. A plot was made against him. Scenting danger to his stay at Moirāŋ, Jayasimha left it at once in the guise of a Naga. He reached Thibomei (modern Kohima) via Karam and then reached Tekhāo (Assam, it is derived from the Dikhu river). But the second account is not verified by the chronicle and the British records. It may be noted in this connection that the relation between Gaurasyām and Jayasimha was very intimate. They agreed between themselves that each should rule for five years in turn. The second view is a story which had no historical credence.

Khelembā sent thirty men with a letter to the Ahom king, Swargadeo (spelt as Swarga Deva also) Rajeswar Singh explaining that the fugitive was an imposter and should be executed. Swargadeo resolved to test Jayasimha through an elephant ordeal. Accordingly he was asked to touch the tusks of a wild elephant called 'Rajamohan' inside a big enclosure before an audience with the promise that if he would come out unhurt he would be furnished with army and wealth for the liberation of the country from the Burmese.

18. See supra, Ch.II; R. K. Jhalajit Singh, A Short History of Manipur, p.149.
19. See supra, Ch.II and fn. 16; Kh. Kaomacha Singh, Manipur Itivrtta, pp.101-104.
Jayasimha was at his wit's end. However he agreed to the proposal. He spent the whole night fasting, meditating and praying Śrī Govindaji. He had a dream in which the Lord consoled him not to worry at the ordeal. He prayed God, "Become thou the king of Manipur and let me Thy servant." Lord Kṛṣṇa agreed and bade him look at His divine form. The Lord instructed him that He would remain growing as a jack-fruit tree in the Vasmukha Giri alias Kāīna hill and asked him to make his image from the said tree after regaining the throne. With these words the Lord disappeared. We are told that Jayasimha asked Pandit Gopirāma Pachahanbā to paint a picture of the image of Śrī Govindaji.

On the appointed day, all preparations were duly made. The king and nobles of Tekhāo (Assam) took their seats in the gallery. Jayasimha made prayers after a bath. He dressed himself like a mendicant. He entered the big enclosure. On seeing the saintly king, the elephant came in front of him, struck its tusks to the ground and sat hypnotised. King Jayasimha sat on the back of the elephant with the assistance of his attendants, namely, Pandit Gopirāma Pachahanbā and Ayekpam Rasman Keirungbā. The elephant carrying the king on its back went round the audience. It knelt down when the king dismounted. Then the elephant left the place quietly. Pandit Gopirāma carried the king on his back to the king of Assam. Then the people of Assam praised Jayasimha, "Glory to King Kārtā (the people of Assam used to call him Kārtā Mahārāja), thou art a divine king. Thou hast proved thy true lineage." 21

20. See fn. 16.
Installation of the images of Sri Govindaji and Others

When Jayasimha regained the throne of Manipur, he carried out his promise to the Lord. With the help of the pandits he set out for the Kainā hill (18 miles from Imphal via Thoubal). It is a hillock about 3000 feet above the sea level. The wood-cutter raised the axe and struck against the tree growing at the hill. The image of Sri Govindaji, Madan Mohan, Gopinath, etc., were prepared from the same tree along with this image. The image of Sri Govindaji was complete on Friday the 12th Hiyāngēi/October-November in the auspicious hour of Mahendra of the year, 1698 Śakābda/1776 A.D. The name of the Ceithāvā was Heisnām Khongam.22 The name of the Manipuri artist who made the image of Sri Govindaji was Sāpam Laksman Singh who took eleven months in the making.23 While the construction was going on, Jayasimha shifted his capital from Bishenpur alias Lamāngdōng to Kanghipur·alias Lāŋthabāl on Tuesday, Kālēl (Āksaya Tritiyā)/April-May 3, 1779. The installation ceremony was held in the Rāsamandāl (Lāŋthabāl palace) on the 11th Hiyāngēi/September-October of the same year. It was held for five days.24

22. See fn. 21.
23. See fn. 21.
The story goes that King Jayasimha had a vision of Śrī Govindaji performing Rāsa-līlā with the gopīs. He wanted to translate the dream vision into a reality. He evolved a Rāsa dance-form in association with the pandits. He dedicated the first Manipuri Rāsa to Śrī Govindaji on the 11th day of the bright half of the month of Merā/ Karttika, 1779 on the occasion of the installation ceremony of Śrī Govindaji. R. K. Jhalajit Singh assigns the date to 11th Merā/September-October, 1780.25

Vimbābatī Manjuri, the daughter of King Jayasimha played Rādhā.26 There is an image of Rāsesvārī (a Manipuri name for Rādhā) in the temple of Śrī Govindaji. It is said that this image was carved out by seven men, Kṣetri Panem Nanda Singh, Konsābā Chakrapānī, Konsābā Anindāram, Konsābā Khelembā, Konsābā Haojou, Konsābā Sāmurok and Konsābā Yoibi.27 In carving the image, the artists copied its features from princess Vimbābatī Manjuri in her role as Rādhā in the Rāsa.

The installation ceremony had a great influence in the state. The king assumed the title of Bhāgyachandra (which means the lucky moon) on this occasion.28 He was a man of no mean poetic talent. He composed poems and wrote a book on the

27. See fn. 16.
technique of dance. One Bengali song is attributed to him. King Jayasimha and his uncle Ngaubram Sai actually played the roles of main drummer and singer in the dance. The king had a sound knowledge in Vaisnava music and rāsas.

After the ceremony, he awarded seven gold bangles, seven paris of land at Irilwāngmā Samānglāirou (near the Nōmmāicing hill), one nāi-phungā (couple of slaves), one buffalo and one horse as a mark of honour to Wāṅkhei Pandit Gopiramā Pāchahanbā. According to another order, he gave three paris of land, one nāi (slave) and one buffalo each to the seven men who carved the image of Rāsesvāri.

Ananta Sai, the fifteenth son of Garīnbīwāz was the chief minister of King Jayasimha. He got the idol of Viṃaya Govinda from the king. He constructed a temple for the god at his residence, Sagolband at a distance of six miles from the capital and dug a large tank called Mantripukhuri at a place, i.e., three miles to the north of Imphal on the present Imphal-Dimapur road. He performed the ritual bath ceremony of the gods on Saturday, Hiyāṅgei/October-November 5, 1783.

29. The book which is attributed to Maharāja Jayasimha is called Govinda-Sangīta-Līla-Vilāsa, see infra, Ch.VI; The Bengali song composed by the king: "kānde Bhāgyachandra dās charan smaraje, tumi ather nath, tumi Nārāyana he, adham patita jāne, tumi dayā karohe." We translate it as follows: Bhāgyachandra dās weeps, who bears in mind thy feet. Thou art thee, Lord of the wretched, Thou art Nārāyana. Take pity on the wretched and the helpless.

30. See infra, Ch.VI.
31. See fn. 16.
32. See fn. 16.
34. CK, p.127.
Other people took a great interest in religious matters. The king presented the idol of Gopināth to Kritiddhwaja whose father had helped King Jayasimha in his flight to Cachar. He was given the title of Kalārāja and made the chief of Ningthoukhong (near the lake Loktak). Another image, Madanamohana was given to Hangoibam Chura Sarma at his own request. His descendants worship the image at a place about three miles to the east of Imphal.35

Visit of Vaisnava Missionaries

King Jayasimha had his leanings towards Gaudiya Vaisnavism of Bengal during his sojourn in Cachar. He visited "Dhākā Dakṣīṇa" which was the ancestral home of Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Sylhet. It was here that he met Rāmanārayana Siromani, a descendant of Upendra Misra, grand father of Caitanya. So gratified was King Jayasimha with his discourse that he requested him to visit Manipur. When he regained the throne, Rāmanārayana visited him.36 He expounded the philosophy of Gaudiya Vaisnavism before the people. The king was fascinated by him. Jayasimha sent a bell of about five maunds (410 lbs) for use in the Śrī Mandir of Dhākā Dakṣīna. After ninety years, the bell was destroyed when the temple caught fire.37

The king wanted to make Gaudiya Vaisnavism the state religion and some Vaiśnava missionaries from Bengal were brought to Manipur. According to the Guru Pranālikā tradition five preachers, namely, Gāṅgā Narāyaṇa Cakravarti, Krṣṇacharana Cakravarti, Kunjabihārī, Nidhirama Ācārya, Thākura Rāma Gopāla Vairāgī and Kṛṣṇadāsa Thākura visited Manipur and propagated neo-Vaiśnavism in the country. They belonged to Narottama Parivara of the Caitanya sect of Vaiśnavism.

According to tradition which has been preserved through the generation, the first man to receive the Harināma from Rāma Gopāla Vairāgī was Ngāngbam Selungbā. The second man to be a convert of the new school was Śrī Rupa Parmananda Thākura, a great devotee of Śrī Kṛṣna. King Jayasimha adopted neo-Vaiśnavism under his personal influence. The Bhāgyachandra Charit informs us that Rāma Gopāla Vairāgī suggested the name of Parmananda Thākura (his disciple) to be the preceptor of King Jayasimha. The suggestion was effectively implemented by King Jayasimha. The hut which the king erected for receiving initiation is still venerated as Gurusangā (at the palace). The influence of this school was very marked. The Rāmānandi school was superseded by this school. The literary works of Narottama Thākura such as the Prem vilāsa, Lālsa, etc., were very popular. The nine modes of Bhakti had taken roots in Manipur.

---

38. R. K. Sanahal Singh, op. cit., p.84. According to Vilāya Panchāli, Part II (1969) the last three preachers were already in Manipur prior to the reign of Jayasimha, vide pp.213-214. This is not supported by tradition.


since this time. The people began to study the Ragaftuga' Bhakti resulting in their conviction into the cult of Caitanya. The king had deep reverence for the monks belonging to Rāmānandi, Nimāndi and other schools. The Yogis visited his court from time to time and performed various religious functions. Important among them were Thākura Vidyālankār, Jagadish Thākura, Mahānārayana Thākura, Govinda Giridās Cakravarti, Mahāviṣṇu Thākura Rādhānāth which exerted some influence over the king. The official reception was accorded to them, on the occasion of their visit to the capital. Some of them returned to their country under military escort. Some Brāhmaṇs came from the rest of India and established places for themselves during the reign of Jayasimha. They have been referred to in Bāmon Khunthoklon as leaving their mark in the religious reformation. They adopted Vaisnavism in Manipur. The Manipuri Brāhmaṇs acted as the priest of this faith and initiated the people into it.

King Jayasimha took various steps for the popularisation of Gaudiya Vaisnavaism in Manipur. He initiated his own daughter, Vimbābati Manjuri into this order. He converted a large number of his subjects in his capacity as the spiritual

---


43. The ancestors of the following Brāhmaṇ families came to Manipur in his reign: (1) Adhikarimayum, (2) Dhyandāsmayum, (3) Vrajābāsimayum and (4) Wārilibam. They migrated from Santipore, Lahore, Vṛndāvan and Assam.
head of the state. Some more images are known to have been installed by him in the latter part of his life. Tradition says that the image of Advaita was carved out of the seeds of the jack-fruit tree of Kālna hill referred to earlier. It was said to be carved in accordance with the command of Govindaji in a dream when he was staying at Bishenpur on his way to Vrindavan.

But the Cheithārol Kumbābā separates the installation of the image from his last journey and placed it on Tuesday, Phāren/ January-February 7, 1792. On Friday, Phāren/ January-February 11, 1794, he set up the image of Nityānanda which he presented to his daughter whose descendants called Arambam and at present the sebaṭ of the deity. He also built a temple of Govindaji on Thursday, Ingā/May-June 5, 1797. The ceremony of placing a long flag on the temple of Govindaji was performed by him as we know from the chronicle.

During the Burmese invasion of Manipur in 1775, King Jayasimha fled to Tripura. Manipur was ruled by Bringbā Mitra, Vinada Śyām. Vaisnāvism suffered a few setbacks under him. In order to please the Burmese, he is said to give up the thread and the mālā. According to Bhāgyachandra Charit, a gosvāmī named Chandrajñā arrived in Manipur. This Chandrajñā has been differently identified with Chandra Ikā, a Burmese general and a monk, the Surumā teacher (one who denies the Veda and the sacred thread) from a part of India. The king accepted him as his guru.

44. M. Jhulon Singh, Viṣaya Pancāli, pp. 103-104; CK, p. 151. The ballads as found in Manipur are well-informed in this connection.

The monk by his pretended interpretation of the nine threads obtained much influence over him and the people. He told them that they should not wear the sacred thread without knowing the Gāyatrī-mantra. It is a practice for which only the learned people are eligible. A group of people renounced the sacred thread and dropped it into the Ningthem Pukhuri (royal tank).

King Jayasimha came back to Manipur. He, being informed of the changes, consulted the learned people and arranged a ceremony in which the people were again invested with sacred thread. He asked the people to learn the well known Gāyatrī-mantra and also told that if they did not recite it, they would be excommunicated from the Vaiṣṇava society.\footnote{CK, pp. 123, 161; L. Mangi Singh and L. Mani Singh, op. cit., pp. 176-179.}

**Popularising Gitagovinda and other Scriptures**

With the spread of Vaiṣṇavism through royal support, various other activities like the reading of the Vaiṣṇava texts, feeding the people and pilgrimage to the Ganges came to be in vogue. Another interesting event in connection with the introduction of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism is the widespread popularity of Gitagovinda throughout Manipur. E. Nilakanta Singh observes, "... he (Jayasimha alias Bhāgyachandra) dedicated three things to Lord Govindaji, his kingdom, that is Manipur, his daughter, who remained wedded to her Lord Kṛṣṇa throughout her life, a Manipuri Mirābāi, and Gitagovinda of Jayadeva." The Manipuri
Vaisnavas, it will be noted, emphasised the necessity of knowing three things, viz., *Srimad-bhagavatam*, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and Lord Caitanya for a proper estimate of *Gitagovinda*.\(^{47}\)

*Gitagovinda* is the *pravandha* type of the *gīta*. Tradition has it that King Jayasimha adopted some of the *Āstapadīs* of the *Gitagovinda* in his *kīrtan* in the style of *Padāvalī* *kīrtan*. The *padāvalī kīrtan* follows the *dhūrā-pravandha-gāna* which was mastered by the great musical saint, Narottam Thākura.

The *padāvalī kīrtan* was changed into *Nāṭapālā kīrtan* in Manipur according to regional variations. Some hold that the *āstapadīs* did not enter into the Manipuri *kīrtan* at once. But selections from them were made in the form of recitations and singing. The *āstapadīs* must have been practised by the singers with or without *tālas* in the entire pattern of *Vasanta Rāsa-līlā*. Some of the *āstapadīs* have attained great popularity through holi singers and *Nāṭapālā kīrtanists* who sang them in addition to the usual songs. We do not know definitely when the singing of complete *āstapadīs* was introduced in all the temples. There are instances to prove that King Chandrakīrti had the *āstapadīs* sung in a characteristic *kīrtan* style in association with the *dhūrūpāda* style at the palace on every ekādaśī day.

The Vaisnavas have found in them the source of meditation and concentration. 48

Jayadeva's "Dasāvatāra stotra" (ten incarnations of Viṣṇu) is sung before Lord Jagannāth in every village temple. During the Ratha-yātra festival old and young alike sing the song to the accompaniment of dances. The recitative verses begin with "pralaya payo dhijale" and end with "mangalam ujjalam gīti Jayadeva hare." These two stotras refer to Śrī or Laksānī as represented in the Aisvarya aspect with Rādhā as the chief nāyikā. This style tallies well with the ancient Assamese tune of religious bārgitas. His association with the Ahom king of Assam supported this link of two cultures.

King Jayasimha was considerably influenced by the Assamese school of Vaiṣṇavism. He showed his indebtedness to Assam in the realm of dance and popularising the scriptures among the people. The king collected a large number of Vaiṣṇava manuscripts including Srimad-bhāgavat, Dasāmkanda and Gītā. They belong to the eighteenth century. They are written in Assamese language. The Cheitharol Kumbābā says that Thākurāma brought Srimad-bhāgavat from Assam to Manipur for presentation to the king. It is also said that a Brahman named Kāmakanda brought a copy of the Bhāgavat-purāṇa with utmost care and offered to King Jayasimha on Monday, Mera/September-October 1, 1775. 49 Thus the


Assamese scriptures moulded the religious ideas of Manipuri Vaishnavas. The scriptures in original Sanskrit were read and sung in Manipur. The chronicle also informs us that the king of Tekhāo (Assam) came to Manipur along with his family on 20th Saturday, Poinu/November-December during his reign.⁵⁰

Activities outside Manipur

A certain Brahman criminal called Šāmulāilātpam Kāpei Sarma was executed by the officers of the king as the former killed an old woman. The execution was done without the knowledge of the king. There was a belief in those days that no Brahman, however criminal, he might be, should be killed. The highest punishment for a Brahman criminal was expulsion from the state. King Jayasimha was extremely mortified when the matter came to his knowledge. He exclaimed "In my time a Brahman was killed." He told angrily his subjects that he had committed Brāhmahattā. He decided to go on pilgrimage to holy places with the idea of 'brahmite brahmite kaba adeha patana hove' when I shall die by walking (in the holy places). He handed over the charge of the administration to his eldest son, Labanya Chandra alias Robin Chandra. There are some slight differences between the British accounts and local sources as regards details. British writers like Francis Hamilton, Colonel McCulloch and Captain E. W. Dun write in their accounts that

---

⁵⁰. ČK, pp.155-156.
the king abdicated the throne in favour of his eldest son. An important Manipuri book, i.e., Chingthangkhombā Mahārāja Gaṅgā Chatpā (written during the time of Labanya Chandra) says that the king did not formally abdicate. He carried the royal insignia with him in his pilgrimage.52

King Jayasimha conducted the pilgrimage on a huge scale. He was accompanied by his queens, four sons, three daughters and a large number of attendants. He had 300 porters. The number of pilgrims stood at 400. He took with all types of weapons including some guns. Among his possessions were also found ready money and wax which could be sold and converted into money.53 Prince Madhuchandra was in charge of the advance party. They prepared the way and constructed huts for rest. King Jayasimha left Imphal on Monday, Wākching/ about January 20, 1798. On his way to Cachar, he passed through Bishenpur (17 miles in the south-west of Imphal), Ningthoukhong (21 miles in the south-west of Imphal). He halted at Bishenpur for a while where he dedicated a temple to god.54 He thought that the river-route was easier than the land routes. He then crossed the Leimatag is a tributary of the Irang, which in its turn is a tributary of the Barak), and reached the bank of the Barāk. He then reached Cachar.

53. See ins. 51 & 52.
where the king of Cachar presented him with a big amount of silver coins and some cloths. But Francis Hamilton who met the priest of Jayasimha at Comilla wrote that the Rājā did not go to Sylhet by a direct route through Khaspur on account of his enmity with the king of Cachar. He cut a new road through the forest to the south and reached Sylhet with 700 men. He travelled on horse-back. He was very poor. He (Francis Hamilton) was not accurate in his statement. He had no dealings with the king. Nor did he have any idea of the relations of the king of Manipur with the king of Cachar.

Then he continued the journey by boat on the river, and reached Bhanga. From there he proceeded by boat on the Surma. After paying a short visit to a place within the territory of Jaintia, he reached Sylhet. He met the Englishmen administering Sylhet and exchanged presents in a formal meeting. Jayasimha's presents consisted of silk goods and pony. The Englishmen gave him a telescope, two tents, an elephant and two sepoys (as his bodyguard). He went to Dhākā Daksīṇa which lay on his route. It was the ancestral home of Caitanya. He developed so much faith in the temple of Caitanya that pilgrimage to it was an annual feature during his stay at Cachar. He dedicated a kīrtan (devotional music) to the temple.

55. See fn. 51 & 52.
57. See fn. 51.
58. See fn. 51.
From these he went to Tripura and gave his daughter, Hariswari in marriage to Rajdhan Manik (the British writers spelt it as Radan Manik). This marriage was important from the political aspect. The king of Tripura gave financial assistance to Jayasimha in his pilgrimage. He did not remain in Tripura for a long time. During the rains, he proceeded by boat along the Brahmaputra, the Meghana, and the Padma with the object of reaching Navadvip. There were 67 boats, out of which 15 were contributed by the king of Tripura. On the way, Jayasimha got 700 rupees which the king of Tripura sent to him. He sent back the boats constructed by the king of Tripura and travelled on foot up to an old channel of the Ganges. Then he sent all his boats to Nabadvip with some of his men while he himself proceeded on land to Kršnanagar by the land route with his men.

The Raja of Kršnanagar made adequate arrangements to accommodate him at a place called Gaṅgābās. The king unmindful of the offer, went to Nabadvip in order to fulfil his long cherished expectation.

Just near Nabadvip there was Ambika, the place hallowed by the birth-place of Advaita. He saw the Vaisnavas there. The Vaisnavas welcomed him and presented him with rice, salt, milk, ghee and sugar. King Jayasimha organised a sankirtan there.

60. The points are based on Chingthangkhombā Mahārāja Gaṅgā Chatpā.
61. See fn. 60.
62. See fn. 60.
Then he returned to Nabadvip. There was no permanent residence for the rulers of Manipur in Nabadvip. Therefore he sent his vakil Rāshbehari Das with a letter to Lord Marnington, the then Governor-General of India for a piece of land on the river for building a house which may serve him as a bathing resort. During his stay in Nabadvip he performed many religious works. He went about this place, studying the character of the people, in order to see if Gaudiya Vaisnavism had any chance of being revived by them. He was, however, handicapped by lack of equipment for such happening. We are told that he asked a gosvāmī to arrange worship for Nabadvipchandra. The Gosvāmī informed the king that the image of Nabadvipchandra was placed under the ground for protection against the Muslims. No arrangement was made for worshipping it by two bhogāratis. Again the rivalry between the Sāktas and the Vaisnavas was pursued with vigour in Nabadvip. The Sāktas disparaged the Vaisnavas to the extent they could. This is recorded in the Narottam Villas that they invoked Goddess Kāli to kill all the Vaisnavas. They clapped and hissed as a sign of contempt at the death of Narottam Das. They challenged the efficacy of Vaisnava ordinance and shrines.65

At these happenings, King Jayasimha was very unhappy and wanted to wage a war in the name of religion. He was one of complete indifference to the world since he became a Samāttdhi. He shaved his beards and had his trim. He proceeded to the

---

64. See fn. 54; D. C. Sen, H.B.L.L., C.U., 1954, pp. 490-491.
65. See fn. 64.
capital of Nadiya with his weapons and retainers. King Jayasimha was careful not to excite the king of Nadiya. King Krsnaçandra Ray was a staunch Saktä. King Jayasimha left his horse and army outside the gate and went in person to the palace ostensibly to confer with him. He requested the king of Nadiya to issue orders for the open worship of Nabadvipchandra. He further informed the king of Nadiya that he would fight out the issue as the only remedy. The latter showed him courtesy due to the head of the state. After some discussion he agreed to abolish the restriction on the public worship. Jayasimha had succeeded in obtaining from him a site of 16½ Bhighās with an annual income of 7½ rupees for the Vaisnava place of worship. The land was free from all taxes and levies. He expressed his desire to spend the rest of his life in the service of his Lord in Gauradesa.

King Jayasimha gave new life to Gaudîya Vaisnavaism in Nabadvip. The image of Caitanya was not concealed by the gosāls. Harirut was performed in the natamandir. Musical processions and sermons on the Vaisnava doctrine became a regular feature. A new era was opened in the history of Gaudîya Vaisnavaism when he lived at Nabadvip. It is said that Tota Ramadāsa Bābāji helped Jayasimha in reviving this sect at a time when it was about to die in Bengal. The Gaudîya Vaisnava Sampradāyas called him a second Gaurāṅga, the title which he well-deserved.

66. See fn. 54; O. Gokulchand Singh, Vaisnava Itihas, Imphal, 1955, p.29.
67. See fn. 66.
He visited sacred places of Nabadvip with an old gosai which are described in detail in Bhagvachandra Charit. He was indeed enchanted with them. After a brief sojourn in Nabadvip he proceeded by boat towards Vrndavana. On the way he reached Sripāt Ksetra (Gambhilapat) in Murshidabad where he dedicated a temple to Rādhāgovindaji. His name is inscribed in the temple. He also set down a khunti written in Bengali letters to facilitate the memory. It is preserved and venerated till this day in the Badagovinda temple by the sebaits. But the inscription does not mention the date and year of the construction of the temple by the king. Besides this, he worshipped the image of Gouragovinda in the akharā of Narottama Thākura Mahāsāya. He spent the last few days at Sripāt Ksetra where he died at Bhagabangola in the district of Murshidabad in October, 1799. According to Chinathang-khombā Maharāja Gaṅgā Chatpā he died in August, 1799 A.D. A few weeks before his death, he asked his sons, Chourajit and Tulsijit to throw his frontal lobe into the Ganges in Vrndāvana and to bring some portion of the same to Manipur. His cremation ceremony was held at a place where the mortal remains of Narottama Gosvāmi were cremated some years ago.

Maharaja Gaṅgā Chatpā, pp.1-3.
70. See fn. 69.
There is a difference of opinion as to the nature of his death, some say that he mysteriously disappeared under the rising tides of the Ganga. Another legend says that while the disciples were trying to cremate the dead body of Jayasimha a Mahāpuruşa came and commanded them to excavate a nearby mound and not to prepare the pyre. Covered under the mound was the citra of Narottam. It is said that at this place the people cremated Narottam but the citra was not used as it was carried away by the waves of the river. In course of time it was buried under the sands cast up by the river which rendered it invisible. The same funeral pyre was used to cremate King Jayasimha.

Sija Lairoibi

Jayasimha and his eldest daughter Vimbabati Manjuri generally lived and moved together. She used to carry out the devotional service since her childhood. As her devotion for Kṛṣṇa grew, she forgot the world and fancied herself as the wife of the Lord. She denied the early candidates and suitors, among whom figured a few neighbouring prices. She was offered in marriage to Śrī Govindaji, by her father. The wedding was

celebrated with due ceremonials. She led a life like that of Mirabai or Andal of India. She came to be known as Sija-Lairoibi (the word, lairoibi is a corrupted one coming from laiongbi), which means a princess wedded to Lai or God. Sija Lairoibi accompanied her father up to Nabadvip. She built a temple for Anuprabhu at Nabadvip which she carried in her journey. It is said that the image of Anuprabhu now worshipped in the temple was modelled to resemble King Jayasimha in appearance in 1797. She acted as the chief priestess of the temple. The temple and the road were named as Manipur Raja Kunja and Manipur road respectively.

She spent the rest of her life singing and meditating the glory of her Lord, Anuprabhu. She worshipped the idol by composing a devotional song in Bengali. She was responsible for giving a concrete shape to the devotional form of dance conceived by her father. From Nabadvip she went to

---


77. Loc.cit.

78. The song attributed to Sija Lairoibi.

"Ke Bole Karunāmaya Abatāra, Hā Hā Śrī Gourāṅga, Bindu Moyakena na hollo dayā, Nanda suta Pradhanayeśa, Mukhāraya Mridu Eṇāsi dhāri, Jiva Nistār Nātya Nodiya Bihore."

**English Rendering:**

Some call the kindness, incarnate
O, Lord Gaurāṅga
Why dost, thou not bestow an iota
Of kindness on me?
Supreme Being, son of Nanda
Thy lips are giving love-note of the flute
For deliverance of the Soul.
Srispat Kheturi where she witnessed the religious fair. From there she started for Radha-Kunda at Mathura. She spent her last days at Radhakunda. It is said that she attained samadhi under a Tamal tree (a kind of tree) in one night. The eastern embankment of the tank at Radhakunda was raised with white stone by King Jayasimha. It is about two furlongs in length.

Neo-Vaisnavism made a striking progress under King Jayasimha. Its popularity was due to the magnetic influence of the powerful personalities like Jayasimha, Sija Lairoihi, Ananta Sai (the minister of Jayasimha), Ngangbam Selungba and Srirupa Parmana Thakura. The people were mostly the followers of Umapati, cult, Saivism and earlier School of Vaisnavism. One of the notable features pertaining to his religious reform is the spirit of toleration or catholicism in place of fanaticism of his grand-father King Garibniwaz. This spirit was shown in later times also. There was no spirit of intolerance. Manipur is a land of syncretistic experiments in so far as religious systems are concerned. Such syncretic activities were noticed in connection with the reign of Garibniwaz. Without entering into details about the same, we may refer to some cases. The earlier religious systems of the Meitheis strengthened themselves

---

79. O. Gokulchand Singh, Vaisnav Itihas, p.79.
80. See fn. 76.
81. It is strange enough that Garibniwaz has been shown in the chronicle as professing one sect at one moment and punishing the followers of that sect after a short while but when Jayasimha became the king he has not been shown professing a faith and condemning it all the same.
by a plausible restatement of some of their conceptions. Saivism and the earlier school of Vaishnavism and Ramanandi got mixed up with Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Local gods like Sanamahi and other Umamalais came to be regarded as the bhakta or devotee of Krsna.

There are different versions about the position of the cult of Sanamahi in his reign. In Sanamahi Laiakal it is described that a wonderful story happened in Manipur. During the time of King Jayasimha all the twelve skandas of the Srimad-bhagavatam were not available. One hot day a Brahman heard a divine voice coming from his roof asking him with mahaprasād in return for which the Brahman would get the full set of Bhagavat purāna. The voice revealed itself as Sanamahi's and promised anything in return to mahaprasād. The Brahman wanted a proof by asking the voice to produce Heirit (a kind of fruit growing at the Lāngol Hill). Immediately the fruit was produced. The Brahman promised to worship Sanamahi's image with the mahaprasād daily. After some days he was presented with the full set of the Bhagavat-purāna. On the cover of the holy book, there was a picture of two lions facing each other.82

He set up the image of Sanamahi in bronze and worshipped him. It is said that the image did not resemble the original which was broken by Garibnīwāz. But when a piece of the broken image was placed in the heart of the new idol, it

82. Atombapu Sharma, Manipur Itihas, pp. 109-115, 125-127. This identification of Pakhamba with Garuda is developed with more arguments in his another work, Pakhamba.
resembled the original. Thus the worship of Sanāmahī as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa became firmly established in Manipur in 1777 A.D. 83

Atombapu Sharma identifies Sanāmahī with Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu. The story says that Sanāmahī conveyed the news of the popularity of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur to the missionaries. This is of a late time and cannot be taken in the real sense. But from it, we can infer that in the reign of Jayasimha the superiority of the cult of Kṛṣṇa over that of Sanāmahī was established. 84 The people worshipped primitive deities in a Vaiṣṇavite mould. They collected the Hindu scriptures with the Meithei Purāṇa. From the chronicle it is known that the king dedicated an elephant to Sanāmahī on Monday, Lamdā/February-March 20, 1789. 85

And as for the cult of Pakhambā we find that God Pakhambā became as great as Kṛṣṇa. He is the only deity in whose worship the mahāprasād is not necessary. He was called Kasnā Pakhambā and was identified with an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, in the pantheon. 86 King Jayasimha visited all the important shrines of the tribal people of Manipur and tried to understand

83. See fn. 82.
84. My own.
85. CK, p.141.
86. Rājārṣi Bhāgyachandra, pp.47, 57-59; L. Mani Singh and L. Mangi Singh, Bhāgyachandra Charit, 1967, pp.197-198. In Bhāgyachandra Charit, it is written that Pakhambā appeared before King Jayasimha in his dream and revealed to him that He was the incarnation of Balarām or Nityānanda. He must be worshipped according to primitive rite only.
their beliefs. As a result, there was a great fusion of the Vaisnava culture with the early culture of Manipur. He moulded the Lāi-harāobā festival in the Vaiṣṇavite way. His religious inclinations speak to his catholicity and his readiness to welcome any knowledge irrespective of the source. It contributed a good deal to the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur. 87

Neo-Vaiṣṇavism under the successors of Jayasimha

Mahārāja Chourajit, the fifth son of Jayasimha was a great Vaiṣṇava. The chronicle records that he went on pilgrimage to the Ganges and returned to Manipur on Saturday, Mērā/September-October 2, 1794. He also accompanied his father to the religious centres of Vaiṣṇavism. 88 He celebrated the formal coronation ceremony on Saturday, Wākching/December-January 12, 1804. Mayāṅ Kunjadās sprinkled the water of Rādhā-kunda over his head on the abhiseka ceremony. 89 He was ceremoniously bathed by one hundred and eighty Brahmā virgins. The king feasted all the people and made many presents among the relatives. 90 The Vaiṅa Panchāli says that he did penance and meditation under the shade of trees growing in the present chief Commissioner's compound. He dug a tank in the compound. 91

87. See infra.
88. C.K., p.155; see the above paragraph.
89. Ibid., p.178.
90. Ibid., p.179.
constructed a temple for Śrī Govindaji and its inauguration ceremony was celebrated on Saturday, Sajibu/March-April 3, 1807. He distributed Sel Lakhā 115,000//- Rs. 575,000/- (Manipuri coin current in those days) and silver tāṅga 50 (a peice of silver) among the Brāhmans and the Vaisnavas. He also constructed seven cultural institutions.

From the chronicle, as well as from the religious literature of Manipur, we know that the Huining Nagas stole the idol of Vṛndāvancandra from the sister-in-law of Chourajī on Tuesday, Ingen/June-July 2, 1804. It is one of the earliest idols of Manipur. The king got the image back from them and removed it to Tampākyum (the residence of the Yubarāja) on Thursday 25, of the same month. The Crown Prince began to be the regular worshipper of this idol from this time up to 1891. There are other stories in connection with the loss and discovery of this idol. From them, it can be inferred that the religious life of the people had the co-operation of the hill tribes.

92. CK, p.194.
93. Ibid., p.177.
94. Another account is that Ajit Sāl removed this idol from the Palace to the Naga village of Tharon after his defeat in the war of succession with his brothers. It was recovered from there during the reign of King Chandrakirti. Yubarāja Surachandra was an ardent worshipper of it. It is said that one evening, an old Naga woman came to the Tampākyum and wanted to have a look (darsāna) of the deity. She presented a garland to it. The story says that she was absorbed into the image. Vide Th. Kulabidhu Singh's Meithei Pung Tāl Marol, Part I, Imphal, 1966, pp.1-10.
King Chourajit sent gold tāngas to Puri, Nabadvīp and Vṛndāvan, to meet the expenses of the worship of Vaiṣṇavism. He secured the good will of the Vaiṣṇavas. The Manipuris began to settle at Nabadvīp for the first time in his reign. He, with his son and wife, spent his last days in this place. His descendants became the head of the temple of Anuprabhu. Like his father he was the highly respected devotee of medieval times. He saved Vaiṣṇavism from the rage of the Nawab of Bengal which then swept over Nabadvīp. Under him, Vaiṣṇavism prospered both in Manipur and Nabadvīp.

King Chourajit is said to have issued a square type of silver coin in 1815. It is preserved in the Assam State Museum. It bears the epithet "Śrīmad Rādhā Govindaji Padārvinda Makara-nanda-mano-mudhukara" - showing that he was a Vaiṣṇava.

The king respected other cults, i.e., Śaivism, Śaktism and other local cults. We have noticed in the above paragraph that the cult of Vaiṣṇavism was imbued with local elements. On Tuesday, Kālen/April-May 13, 1804, he performed a vaiṣṇa at Hiyāngthāng (the Shrine of Devī) before starting a military expedition against his elder brother, Madhuchandra. On Sunday,

95. CK, p.188; R. K. Sanahal Singh, Manipur Itiḥāṣ, pp.86-87.
97. See fn. 95. The point has been obtained from M. Chanora Singh, a Pandit of Manipur, when I personally discussed with him.
Poinu/November-December 8, 1805 Yerananda Ratha Sarma and his son carried the Siva-linga to Moirang where they acted as the chief priest. 99 The chronicle mentions that on Saturday, Kālen/April-May 14, 1806 he went to Leisamikhong for worship of Sahamahi. 100 He adorned the footprint of King Khāgembā with pieces of gold. Pākhambā was worshipped by him with great pomp. He provided all help and facilities to the people for worshipping them. 101

'During the seven years' devastation of Manipur by the Burmese (1819-1826) King Marjit brought the idol of Sṛī Govindaji to Sylhet and installed it at Rājabāri. 102 The Manipuris lost temples, monastic communities, scriptures and idols. The Burmese did their worst in Manipur. The shrines were repeatedly destroyed and many people were massacred. When Maharāja Gambhir Singh took over the administration, he made it his first task to bring the idol of Sṛī Govindaji and to consecrate it at the temple of Lāngthabal on Tuesday, Hiyahgei/October-November 9, 1827. Under his order, temporary houses were built in all thānas. The roads from Viṣṇupur to Lāngthabal was decorated with banana plants. The litter carrying the idol was set with gems and accompanied by rows of people bearing flags, bells and umbrellas.

100. Ibid., p.186.
101. My inference from the CK (pp.195-205).
Many musicians and mābis (Manipur devadāsīs) entertained the people. Parched rices and flowers were thrown over them. The music and dance maddened the Manipuris who had been denied sight of Govindaji for some years. 103 This was an important episode in the religious history of Manipur.

He constructed a brick temple of Govindaji on Friday, Wākching/December-January 10, 1828. He celebrated the eye-painting ceremony (anew) of Hanumānji in 1827. 104 The Manipuri Vaiṣṇavas used to worship Śrī Govindaji with vegetable dishes. On Poinu/November-December 26, 1827, the queen, the royal ladies and important citizens of Manipur plucked Kengoi (a kind of sour vegetable eaten by the Meitheis) from the Kakyāl lake and offered to Śrī Govindaji as bhog. 105

King Gambhir Singh was once invited by the British Government for taking part in the expeditions against the Khasis. On Monday, 22nd Kāḷel/April-May, 1829 he left Manipur for Sylhet. He completely defeated the Khasis. A Manipuri book called Khāhi Ngambā gives a thrilling account of his exploits in this war. When still at Sylhet he is reported to have quelled communal riot between the Muslims and the Hindus. The story goes that the Muharram and Ratha-Yāṭrā occurred on the same day. The Nawab of Sylhet, Gonārkhaṅ requested the Hindus to defer the celebration of the Ratha-Yāṭrā by one day. In the meantime the

104. Ibid., pp. 228, 229.
105. Loc.cit.
106. Ibid., p. 229.
Muslim subjects took law into their hands and assaulted the Hindus to dissuade them from observing the festival. Gambhir Singh dispersed the Muslims with the help of his troops. The grand festival in which the king and his people participated was held as scheduled. He was hailed as the protector of Hinduism by the people of Sylhet. On his return to Manipur he introduced the worship of Jagannath. On Sunday, Kālel/April-May 20, 1832, a Brāhmaṇ panda came from Jagannath Ksetra to prepare the idol of Jagannath. A twelve wheeled car is made and the jīvanyāsa ceremony of Jagannath was performed on a grand-scale. The images of Subhadra and Balarām were also carved. He was responsible for introducing the festival of drawing the car by the people to the accompaniment of chorus song and dance. The festival has some resemblance with the car-festival of Puri. He is also credited with the introduction of Tantric form of Vaisnavaism.

The king was devoted to Vaisnava saints and the Brāhmaṇs who had met with persecutions in the rest of India. An interesting event of his time was the visit of three descendants of disciples of Caitanya, i.e., Mahāśay Thākura (descendant of Nidhirām Āchārya), Nabakishor Gosai (a descendant of Anoubam, Vrajamayum and Achāryamayum. They came from Agartala (Tripura), Braja (VrndaVana), Dacca (East Bengal) and Sāntipur (West Bengal).

108. Ck, p.255; see infra, Chs.VII & IX.
109. In his reign, there arrived in Manipur the ancestors of the following Brāhmaṇ families: (1) Anoubam, (2) Vraja mayum and Achāryamayum. They came from Agartala (Tripura), Braja (VrndaVana), Dacca (East Bengal) and Sāntipur (West Bengal).
Advalta) and a gosāi of the family of Nityānanda. The king received them warmly and donated 1000/- Tāṅkā/Rs.500 to Advalta gosāi on Phairen/January-February 28, 1827. Some of them returned to their country with donation from the king to carry on the evangelical work.

King Gambhir Singh constructed a kupha (a meditating hut) at the foot of the Lāṅgthabal hill on Friday, Hiyangše/October-November 11, 1893. An apocryphal story says that he took every precaution against evil omen. He was advised by the astrologers to spend his last days in the under-ground temple. But, despite such attempts, a small snake bit him to death. On Tuesday, Wakching/December-January 9, 1893, two Manipuri noblemen, namely, Puntari Kaska Tarka Pākesvar, Sārmā and Chingkham Mimi Selungba set out from Manipur to Vṛṇḍāvana to drop the king's chintāmanī (bone) in the Ganges.

Mahārāja Nara Singh who acted as the regent of the minor prince Chandrakirti from 1834 and later became king of Manipur is stated to be a good Vaiṣṇava. His reign was marked with the revival of religious activities after the Burmese w.r. It was marked by the cultivation of nine modes of bhakti and an infusion of religious fervour into the daily life of the people.

110. CK, pp.226, 224, 234.
111. Loc.cit.
112. CK, p.238.
113. Vide a strong tradition found in Manipur.
114. CK, p.239.
115. CK, p.261.
Manipur feels the impact of his influence even to-day. On the full-moon day of Kalen/April-May, 1845, he organised the Manipuri Jalakeli on the model of the Jala-yatra festival of Radhā-Kṛṣṇa. Because of its local colouring, it had an immediate appeal to the people. He patronised music, religious discourse and the Vaiṣṇava practice of the people. During his stay at Cachar King Nara Singh had thoroughly mastered the devotional songs under the able instruction of Kṛṣṇadāsa Thākura, a scholar of the time. According to Vijaya Panchāli he introduced the singing of devotional songs in the Jhulon Yātrā festival which lasts for five days.

Another work was the encouragement of bhajana, sandhyā-vandana (twilight prayers) and nagarakīrtan. It (nagarakīrtan) is a form of religious service conducted by a leader with the assistance of a small group in which sacred songs are sung. This group apart from occasional meetings, join the temple procession. They go round the street singing early in the morning. They brave the chill and dew of the winter. Saptāha is organised from seven days to seven weeks.

In the sphere of religious costume, his service is remarkable. He gave instructions that the persons who participated in the kirtan should use huge turban the gunjā of dhoti (the front tuck of dhoti), the girdle and the long tail of Kartāl.

117. See fn. 115; M. Jhulon Singh, Vijaya Panchāli, p.126.
118. C.K., p.261.
These things have come down to us. He, in conjunction, with the princes dedicated Nava Danda Chhatra to Govindaji. The king often arranged periodical religious discourses for the propagation of Vaisnavism. Texts like Bhagavata-purana and Prema Tarangini, were expounded in unbroken silence. The chief aim was the diffusion of Bhakti Sastras of Vaisnavism. A gosai of the descendant of Nityananda delivered a discourse at the temple of Vrindavanachandra on Saturday, Inga/May-June 28, 1840. Once the hearing of the Bhagavata-purana took place for fifteen years. It was completed on Tuesday, Ingen/June-July 1, 1846. The discourse gave wide publicity to the glory and importance of Vaisnavism in his reign.

Like his predecessors he was kind to the mendicants, coming from Puri, Sylhet and Nabadvip. He is known to have given 1,000/- rupees and some cloths to Sri Mahasaya Thakura. At his direction a monk namely Gopaladasa went to Narsingh Tilla Akhara in Sylhet to act as a priest. Bamon Khunthoklon gives the coming and settlement of some Brahmans in Manipur in his time.

119. See fn. 116.
120. L. Mani Singh and L. Mangi Singh, op.cit., p.113.
121. C.K., pp.251-252.
122. Ibid., p.278.
124. Loc.cit.
125. The Brahmans came to Manipur from Barahnagar (West Bengal) and Santipur (W.B.). The descendants of the former is the Kulimmayum\$ and of the later is known as Gosaimayum\$.
King Nar Sing contributed much towards architecture and art. Temple renovation was the most valuable work done by him at his time. Reinstallation of various images was done by him. He reinstalled the image of Ramachandra Prabhu at a temple of Khwairamband Bazar on Friday, Mera/September-October 20, 1841.\footnote{126} He performed the abhisheka ceremony of Govindaji, Nityananda and Caitanya on Monday, Kālen/April-May 25, 1844. He also brought the images of Sanāmahi and Pākhambā from Cachar and re-installed them in proper places on Wednesday, Lamdā/February-March 6, 1848. Steadily and with perserverance he reclaimed the glory lost to the Burmese.\footnote{127}

Maharaja Chandrakirti was another remarkable personality in Manipur. In his early life he lived in Cachar and Surma Valley for some time where he was immensely helped by Gosāi Rādhā Vallahap Cakravarti of Mursidabad. When he became the king, the gosāi was his friend, philosopher and guide in intricate problems. He wielded a great influence over the king and the people. A significant place was assigned to him and his family members in the Court.\footnote{128}

On Aksaya Trtyā day, 1867 A.D. Bhāgavata Saptāha was held at the palace by the order of the king.\footnote{129} On the night of the 7th day of the saptah when the king lay asleep, the two deities, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in natabara dress appeared and bade him

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{126. CK, pp.225, 288, 286.}
  \item \footnote{127. Loc.cit.}
  \item \footnote{128. L. Ibungohal Singh, Meaning of Mayang, Imphal, 1963, pp.15-16.}
  \item \footnote{129. CK, pp.362, 375, 452, 458; L. Mangi Singh and L. Mani Singh, Viṣava Pāṇcāli, Part IV, pp.55, 70-74.}
\end{itemize}
install their images in the temple of Govindaji. Next morning, he summoned Chungkham Lolang Singh, a Pāhā-nanjābā (the name of a post) of Brahmapur and asked him to prepare four images of Rama, Kṛṣṇa and two images of Gopāldeva. On Ingen/June-July 5, 1868, the Pratistha (installation) ceremony of the images was celebrated at the palace by the king. Seven sankirtan parties sang successively in connection with this ceremony. King Chandrakirti acted as the main singer of Rama-Kṛṣṇa Arati. The images are worshipped to this day. He shifted the idols of Rama, Bharata, Sītā, etc., to their original abode at Ningthem-pukhri from Uripok. The chronicle says that he set up many images and distributed them to different centres. This act evoked religious devotion among the common people. Even to this day, some of them are very popular in Moirang and Mingthoukhon.

It is known from the Cheithārol Kumbārā that drought visited the country frequently within his life time. Once it lasted seven months. The people worshipped Śrī Govindaji with Berā Kirtan. At other times, they offered the milk of one hundred and eight cows to Govindaji.

King Chandrakirti performed many good deeds and put the religious teachings into practice. He treated the Brahman experts and promoters of Bhakti-rāsa cult (the recitors and translators of religious books) with proper courtesy. He satisfied

130. See fn. 128.
131. See fn. 129.
132. See fn. 129.
133. CK, pp. 441, 391, 397, 344, 317, 356-357; T. G. Hodson, The Meithiels, (Section on Religion).
them with gifts of gold and silver tānda (circular piece of gold). There was a great earthquake in 1869 in which the limbs of Śrī Govindaji were broken and the main temple was destroyed. The king was upset. The task of reconstructing them at any cost came uppermost in his mind. He asked Lolang Singh to remake them which he did. The temple was dedicated to Śrī Govindaji on Wednesday, Kālē/ April-May 2, 1876 A.D. The inauguration ceremony of the residential building was celebrated on Ingen/June-July 1, 1869. The ceremony was also observed with royal patronage at Nabadvīp, Vṛndāvana, Ambikā and Puri. The festival at Imphal aroused a wave of enthusiasm. Nineteen parties participated in the sankīrtan. Sixty Brāhmans prepared cakes for fifteen days and distributed the store of rice, cakes and Kṣira among the people. In the evening a scene from Sabhāparva was staged to entertain the people.

Mahārāja Chandrakīrti dedicated two bells to Śrī Govindaji in 1875. One of them was extant till 1835. The damaged bell is now found at the South-West corner of the temple of Śrī Govindaji. It is 3 feet and 8 inches in height. It weighs 16 maunds. The circumference of the rim is 8 ft. and 8 inches.

134. CK, p.376. In it is given an instance that he gave away 100 cups, 100 jugs, 100 kinds of clothes and sufficient amount of rupees to a Brāhman on 17th Wednesday, Lāṅgānī/ August-September, 1868 for giving a discourse on the Srimad- bhāṣagavatam at the palace.

135. Ibid., p.433; Viśva Pancaśāli, Part IV, pp.31-83.

136. Ibid., pp.171, 176.
He set up images of Hanumāna and Garuda and kept them as gate-keepers in the temple of Śrī Govindaji.137

He organised religious fairs which his predecessors had most ignored. It was an occasion to display creative works. A pyramid of food was formed and the people who came for the fair got light refreshment. The mela was held each year for five days from the 3rd to the 7th Kāḷel/April-May of the later part of his reign. It is recorded in the Cheitharol Kumbātā that the play of Prahlād was performed on the last day of the fair, i.e., Friday, Kāḷel/April-May 5, 1880.

Search for the Vaiṣṇava Scriptures

The king used to send the Manipuri scholars in search of rare manuscripts that could not be found in Manipur. They continued up to Nabadvīp and Vṛndāvana. It was because of their efforts that the cultural renaissance of Manipur reached its climax. The Loisangs (a cultural institution of the palace) contained a number of sacred books.139 The Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmī and latter preachers produced the Rāsa literature, of which Manipuri pandits made copies. They carried with them the

139. Ibid., p.429; also a paper 'The Impact of Vaiṣṇavism on Manipuri culture' read by S. Nilaṅkanta Singh, at the U.G.C. Seminar held at Imphal on 3-7 of March, 1968.
sacred writings like precious jams. Many people ceaselessly studied them. This work is closely connected with the dissemination of Vaisnava education.

The Brahmans and the pilgrims from all sides came to Manipur in large numbers in his time - some scholars, some ritualists, some monks, etc. Some were the worshippers of Rama, others were the followers of Gaudīya Vaishnavism. The high priests of the Tantricism and Saivism also came to Manipur for preaching their cults. Once thirty Rāmānanda monks visited him. On Saturday, 8ajibu/March-April 28, 1869 the king presented two-thousand rupees, two horses and several clothes to one Gosāi Rāni who visited Manipur. In Śrihatter Itivṛtta there are references to the visit of Rama-gati Vidyalākṣaṇa, a saintly person of Sylhet and Brahmānanda Puri, a Tantric monk at his request. Their discourses served as a corrective to malpractice of Tantricism.

The king dedicated a huge bell to the temple of Sri Mahon Ray Thākura at Syadbad in Khagda, Barampore. The bell and other remains of the presents made by the king are preserved in this temple to this day. Śrihatter Itivṛtta tells us that

140. The ancestors of Rādhā budbāsimayum and Adhikārimayum Anoubam came to Manipur. They came from Radha Kunda and Rai Berilly, both in Uttar Pradesh. Vide, Bāmīn Khunthoklon MS.


142. Achuyuta Charan, Śrihatter Itivṛtta, pp.41, 132.

he dedicated a brass-bell weighing two maunds with costly presents to Sri-Mandir in honour of Caitanya in Sylhet. Such works showed his keenness affecting the good of Vaisnavaism in places beyond Manipur.

Attitude to other sects

The king of Manipur adopted a generous attitude and felt actively interested even in various sects, i.e., Saivism, Saktism, Tantricism and Umamālī cults. Under King Chandrakirti also, there was no forcible conversion and no religious suppression. Religious discussions were enjoyable. But it is to be remembered in this connection, that he has given special favour to Vaisnavaism. We will have occasion to note how he created discomforting limitations to those who practiced magic. He insisted on the principles of Bhakti and Artna, though trends of Sākta thoughts had a resurgence in his time. He is reported to have introduced the worship of Devī in clay image on 10th Mera/September-October, 1851. On Monday Sajib/March-April 9, 1868, he constructed a brick temple of Devī at the thanā of Jiribām on the western boundary of Manipur. The chronicle records the erection of another temple. In Nommaiching hill, a great centre of Saivism in the eastern portion of Imphal Valley, he consecrated kundas (receptacles for

144. See fn. 142.
145. See infra, Ch.VII.
146. CK, pp.308, 380, 395, 400.
147. Loc.cit.
sacred fire) to Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī. He used to perform a sacrifice, which involved such costly things as mercury and gold.\(^{148}\)

Besides the above works, King Chandrakīrti is praised in the local legends and books as the upholder of primitive cults. Syncretisation, which was inaugurated by the former kings reached its perfection in his reign. A close affinity between Hindu gods and ancient Meithei gods, was established by the pandits. Many works were composed on this theme during his time. Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur was painted with local colourings. The text of \textit{Sanāmahi Lāihui} is one such. The hearing of this book took place at the altar of Sanāmahi. On Wednesday, Ingel/June-July 21, 1882, the king was personally present in this function.\(^{149}\) He dedicated a big bell to Pakhambā on Wednesday, Ingel/June-July 23, 1867. The chronicle describes at some length a great ceremony which was performed by the king for the attainment of long life and prosperity on Friday, Ingel/June-July 21, 1869. The ceremony lasted for five days. The king assumed the title 'Nāojjiglen Chinglèr Nongdren Khombā'. He worshipped the images of Govindaji, Nomsābā, Pakhambā and Sanāmahi simultaneously. The king performed the function through Brahmāṇ pandits, mālbās and nobles. All sections of the people assembled at the palace where the grand function was held. An assembly was held in the premises


\(^{149}\) CK, p.313.
of the palace, attended by several noble men, Brahman and three malbas of important Loisangs to each of whom he gave pieces of gold and silver. On 25th, Tuesday, of the same month, he offered two gold Kiyang-liphângs (gold-necklace) each to Sanâmahi, Nomûsabâ, Pâkhambâ and Yumjao Lairema. 150

The ritual practice of Umâmlâi involved some financial burden. The king granted some yearly amount from his pocket to some temples, Umaâmlâis to meet their recurring expenses. He dedicated two women, one to Pâkhambâ and another to Nomûsabâ in 1880 for performing the religious rites and functions. 151

The worship of Umaâmlâis has been adopted in Cachar Lamkâ, Sylhet, etc., by the Manipuri settlers, in course of their sojourn there during the Burmese war. In fact, one can see in these regions the temples dedicated to the Umaâmlâis of Manipur. They have not only preserved their religion, but also their nationality. They exercised a great cultural influence in these areas.

The king had to look into the maintenance of these places through the agents from time to time. It became more or less obligatory for him to help the people of these places to realise their religious ambition and to remove obstacles which prevent them from discharging their religious function. 152

151. Ibid., p.448.
152. The Meitheis living in these places offered their allegiance to the kings of Manipur as the protector of their religion. At times they received their deputation and assuaged their distress. Vide Ch.II (War of 1891).
Causes of the Success of Vaiṣṇavism

Various reasons have been assigned for the success of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur. Its development is to be understood in terms of the prevailing intellectual and social climates. The important factors are - 1 Royal patronage, 2 Tolerant attitude towards the pre-Vaiṣṇavite faiths, and the mode of preaching, 3 Receptiveness of people particularly the Brāhmaṇaś, 4 External influence intelligently channelised through the ruling house and 5 The influence of the varna order.

1. Vaiṣṇavism spread rapidly all over Manipur under the patronage of such powerful monarchs as Garibniwāz, Jayasimha, Gambhir Singh and Chandrakirti. They neutralised the antipathy of the people by assuming the title of Lānimthou (king of gods), and posed as an incarnation of Viṣṇu for the restoration of dharma. Their Vaiṣṇavite leanings add to their glory and divinity which is best expressed by the invariable association of the image of Viṣṇu with the king. Manipur suffered from repeated Burmese invasions and the political situation was extremely bad. Able and noble kings like Jayasimha and Gambhir Singh could restore the social order after overcoming the Burmese. They were respected by the people as the saviour of their race. Many people were attracted to the Vaiṣṇava fold by their pleading and good examples and they converted many non-Meithei people like the

154. Supra, Ch. I.
Lois and tribal people. Temples were constructed and images were placed in them with great ceremony. Many manuscripts were prepared under their patronage.

The support of the kings for Vaiṣṇavism was partly due to the desire to take the help of the gosvāmīs of Bengal. They realised that the search for political help must be circumscribed by religious considerations. For King Jayasimha this policy was not a sudden affair. He established his relation with the East India Company through Haridas Gosāi. The gosvāmīs of Bengal helped him in many ways. This, at once, evoked his admiration for Vaiṣṇavism. After coming to Manipur the king with his subjects accepted the Vaiṣṇavism of Caitanya. Similarly the gosvāmīs of Murshidabad helped King Chandrakīrti and his mother in securing his accession to the throne. It was for this reason he had deep reverence for the Bengali gosāīs as his gurus.

Not only the kings, but also the nobles took an important part in the propagation of this cult. It is mentioned in the chronicle that they spent a large sum of money in the erection, consecration of temples, and installation of images. Some of them gave liberal charities and fed the Brahmans and the Vaiṣṇavas. The brick temples constructed by Ananta Sai (the minister of King Jayasimha) and General Thāngāl are now in

155. T. C. Hodson, The Meitheis, pp. 84-85; also infra, Chs. VII and VIII (last sentence)

156. L. Ibungohal Singh’s Meaning of Mavang, 1961 may be consulted in this connection.
existence in Imphal. This shows their inclination to Vaiṣṇavaism.

2. There is an important point that needs our attention. The Vaiṣṇavaism in its travels from Bengal to Manipur borrowed many local elements and associated itself with pre-Vaiṣṇavite gods. It was the policy of the kings of Manipur to unite the conflicting interests of ancient religion and Vaiṣṇavaism. There was mutual compromise and in this process the primitive gods were amalgamated with Hindu gods. The kings issued injunctions, equating Kwāk-tānbā festival with the Durgā pūjā festival, the Heikru Hidongbā festival with the boat festival of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Vāruṇī festival was merged with the remembrance day of Nōmmāi Petangā.

Some ancient rites and ceremonies were incorporated into the Vaiṣṇava faith. Such a policy promoted at least the nominal acceptance of Vaiṣṇavaism by the Meitheis. It strengthened the reconciliation between the primitive religion and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavaism. Saṅāmahi was made a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Nompok Nimthou and Nompok Pāntheibi were identified with Śiva and Durgā respectively. Some of the primitive gods and goddesses were respected by them as secondary deities. Some court rituals were tinged with primitive practices.

157. The point is made from my personal experience. Being a local men, my data are reliable.

158. See infra, Chs. VII & IX.

159. See Chs. IV & VII.
The successful acceptance of Gaudiya Vaisnavism by the Meitheis is due to the fact that the pre-Vaisnavite religious life was characterised by dance, drama and music. Among them it was usual to engage in dance as a means of true pujā. This is in tune with Caitanya's sankirtan which is but a simple mode of musical worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa through hymns of praise and enactment of scenes from the divine sport, in the forests of Vṛndāvana. This sankirtan is far more effective than a sermon, however eloquent or impressive it may be. Very few Vaisnavas delivered sermons. Caitanya's method of group singing in private homes (to avoid Muslim interdiction of temple attendance or public theatricals) added fresh, active and vital links of communication to the masses. Kirtan is popular in Manipur in spite of its disappearance even in Bengal.160

The narration and hearing of religious parables, kathās and debates at important sessions represented indispensable aids to the propagation of Vaisnavism.161 Such functions lasted for several days, weeks and even months. As noted earlier, the Vaisnavite texts figured prominently in the discourses. They were attended by varying numbers of people.

The kings, nobles and the masses lived a frugal life. They spent their money in organising sankirtan and mahotasaba ceremonies. Sometimes for many days the kings kept their

160. See Ch.VI.
gates open to the poor and thousands used to throng at the palace. They sit to eat in long rows without any distinction of caste or creed. Uninvited persons were welcome to the kirtan. *Sri mahaprasadam* was extensively distributed among them from mid-day till evening, batch after batch. The tidings of the royal kirtan spread far and wide. The notable kirtans performed during these centuries were those of king Jayasimha and King Chandrakirti. 162

Apart from the royal feast there are other feasts in individual houses extending fifteen days from the sixteenth to the thirtieth day of Langban/September-October. Throughout the fifteen days feasts were arranged daily in the houses of different villages of Imphal and other areas. 163

3. We have discussed earlier that many Brāhmanas came to Manipur from time to time. The persecution of them by the Muslims compelled them to seek refuge in Manipur since the fifteenth century. They began to develop social and religious festivities apart from the old religious ones. The credit for the spread of Vaiśnavism in Manipur goes to them who conducted the Vaisnavite rites and rituals. They had some voice in the society. They made efforts in explaining to the king and the people the importance of Hindu rites and the philosophy of

162. CK, pp. 127, 151, 329, 369. The grand feast is called Nāthem Kirtan.

163. See fn. 162.
Gaudiya Vaisnavism. They invented stories tracing the descent of the kings from the illustrious Kṣatriya princes of the Epics. They superimposed the gotra system upon the masses.

They are known to have dedicated themselves to literary and philosophical pursuits. They are cultivated both in mind and body. They illustrated their points with apt analogies and incidents drawn from Vaisnavism and early religion. They were responsible for discovering the similarity between the folk-songs of Lāi-hārābā and the Vipralambha songs (feelings of separation).

The Madhura-rasa or pure erotic love is one of the important features of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. Before the introduction of Vaisnavism, the dual incarnations of Nompok Nimthou and Nompok Pān thoibi and of Khamba and Thoibi set the example of unalloyed love in Manipur. Parakiyā-rasa as found in Manipur can be favourably compared with that of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The underlying ideas are the same. The similarity was traced to them.

A rapid growth of popular support for Vaisnavism over these centuries is the concept of Kṛṣṇa as a God of the common people. As a result of discourses on Vaiṣnavism, the cult of Kṛṣṇa impressed them more than Siva, Sanāmathi and Pākhamba.

164. See the footnotes concerning the migration of Brāhmans cited in this book; L. Mani Singh and L. Mangi Singh, Bhāgyachandra Charit, Part II, p.225.
4. The chronicles make frequent references to the missionaries who came to Manipur. Mendicants, yogis and pilgrims belonging to different sects used to come to Manipur. They went sometimes alone and sometimes in groups. Manipur was flooded by scriptures and idols. It is significant that the descendants of Advaita, Nityānanda, and Nidhirāma Ācārya defended the Caitanya school vigorously. Some of them induced the king to follow the doctrine of ahimsā and bhakti. It is because of their efforts that Manipur remained the stronghold of Vaiṣṇavism since the eighteenth century.167

Another interesting fact is that the names of people and places were named after the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava names or terms thereof. It shows the love of the people for their faith. The words or names are memorials testifying the contact of Manipur with other parts of India. Gaurāṅga, Gaura, Caitanya, Nimāi, Visvambhara, Nityāl, Haridās, Narottama and Rādhā have become common names in Manipur. The Manipuri people were also named after Nabadvip, Nadiyā, Vṛndāvana, etc., which are the holy places with Vaiṣṇavite associations. Besides them, we have evidence to show that Hindu names like Kānhaia, Kṛṣṇa, Nilakanta and a host of others were current in Manipur. This shows them not only as followers of Vaiṣṇavism but as preservers of the same as well.168

167. The works of Hindu missionaries have been noted in the body of the text. The above is an abstract of the matter contained in the above. D. C. Sen, Chaitanya and His Age, Preface, vi-vii.

168. This mode of naming is due to Vaiṣṇava influence. It also strengthened the progress of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur. Also,
5. The success of Vaisnavism is also indirectly connected with the varna order which was introduced in Manipur. The ruling family and the majority of the Manipuris call themselves Kṣātryas. The kings proclaimed themselves as upholders of Varnasrama system. The Brahmans perform priestly functions. The people were urged to perform the duties in conformity with the varna order. The merchants and traders (not in the sense of the Vaisvas) were the worshippers of Viṣṇu and other deities of Vaisnavism. Actuated by the desire of religious merit they constructed many temples in several villages. They placed idols in these temples. Some of the well-to-do families made a gift of land to the Brahmans. Suitable areas of land were allotted for the worship of temples and erection of mandapas (hall). It is due to their religious leanings that every village has temples. Nothing can be said about the activities of the Śudras. It is to be noted that lower orders, i.e., the Lois (scheduled caste), Phuṅgānāi (slave), Tengkhul (servant of the king employed as a class of gardener), and Kei (servant of the king employed as a class in-charge of granary) served the king and not the three higher classes, as found in the Śmrtyi systems of the Hindus. They are not identical with the Śudras of India. They professed Vaisnavism with the

\[\text{R. K. Jhalajit Singh, } \text{A Short History of Manipur, pp. 126-127.} \]

consent of the king. The spread of Vaisnavism was in tune with the loose form of varna order as found in Manipur. The members of the higher varnas thought that they can earn spiritual merit by religious works; and the members of the lower varna could hope that they could better their condition in the next world by following the social order imposed upon them by a Brahmanical society.\(^{170}\)

---

170. The remark is made from my personal observation; also T. C. Hodson, *The Meiteis*, pp. 84-85.