CHAPTER - 4

4.1 RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS:

The territory which is known as Manipur was called in many Sanskrit texts as the Gandharva Desh. By implication, it might be said the people of that land were of free spirit and the marriages were held mostly through elopement. The story of Arjuna and Chitrangada is remembered. The main profession of the Gandharvas was singing and dancing. So naturally they were worshippers of Noteswar or Nataraja i.e. Shiva. So in the early ages Shaiva Dharma was prevailed in Manipur. Still now Shaivism is practised in this society. The impact of Shaivism can be realised from the fact that in every village there is a temple of Lord Shiva. Among these temples the Shiva temple of Singari, Patharkandi is famous because devotees can fulfill their desires giving prayer to this temple. Shaivism has influences upon the Bishnupriya Manipuri society the impact of which can be realised through the observation of Shiva Ratri among the people of this community. Athoi baba of Paruagaon and Hunago Sadhu of Singari, Patharkandi are remarkable devotees and propagandists of Shaivism.

According to the Manipuri culture, said tradition and Sanskrit books of poetry written by the scholars of Manipur when Maharaj Judhisthir of Hastinapur decided to start for Mahaprasathan, he wanted to hand over the kingdom of Hastinapur to the grandson, Parikshit who was the son of Abhimunya, the son of the great Arjuna. But the legal bar was raised by the purahits and pandits that according to Manisanghita, the son but not the grand son inherits the property of the father. So the generation gap became a barrier in ascending to the throne of Hastinapur by Parikshit. Among the sons of the Pandavas at that time, only Babrubahana of Manipur, the son of Arjuna and Chitrangadha was alive and was ruling in Manipur. At that time all the
wives of Pandavas including Chitrangadha were in Hastinapur. So to overcome the barrier of ascending the throne, they called upon Babrubahana to Hastinapur to take the kingship of Hastinapur. But Babrubahana denied to accept the proposal for two reasons:—

a. He was given in adoption to his maternal grandfather Chitrabahana.

b. Acceptance of this proposal will violate the promise of his father to his maternal grand father.

It was finally decided that Maharaj Judhisthir will coronate Babrubahana who will again coronate Parikshit. Thus the question of generation gap was overcome and Parikshit became the king of Hastinapur. Maharaj Judhisthir was charmed by the charity and sacrifice of Babrubahana and asked him to take anything from Hastinapur as a gift from him. Babrubahana then politely requested Judhisthir to hand over him the idol of Lord Vishnu who was their family god. Judhisthir happily agreed and handed over the idol of Lord Vishnu to him. He brought the idol of Lord Vishnu with some pujari Brahmins to Manipur and installed the idol of Lord Vishnu in a temple at Vishanpur, the then capital of Manipur. Thus with the king, people of Manipur became worshippers of Lord Vishnu and became Vaishnavs. So they are called as Sanatan Vaishnavs. At the time of handing over the idol, Maharaj Judhisthir entitled him ‘Vishnupriya’ due to his devotion to Vishnu and his descendents and subjects were known as Bishnupriya Manipuris. The Dharma, which is accepted by Bishnupriyas, is known as Vaishnav Dharma.

Vaishnav Dharma has four branches i. Ramanandi ii. Nimanandi or Nimbark iii. Madhwi or Madhabacharjya iv. Shri Sampradhai or Radha Rani.

Bishnupriya Manipuri people mainly adopt Madhwi or Madhabacharjya but some Bishnupriya Manipuri people follow
Nimbarkashram. Recently some Bishnupriya Manipuri people follow the path of Shri Sampradhai or Radha Rani.

On July 5, 1738 A.D. Shantadas Babaji propagated the Ramanandi Vaishnav Dharma in Manipur. But the Bishnupriya Manipuris did not take the Vishnu mantra from him as they were originally Vaishnabs. They did not agree to perform “Praichitta Bidhan”. Shantadas babaji appealed to the king Khumal Raj of Manipur, who belonged to the Bishnupriya Manipuri, to accept Ramanandi Vaishnavism. The king replied to Shantadas by the following poetical lines which are mentioned in the “Khumal Puran”

Raja kahe shantadeb shuna nibedan
Vishnu upasak ami Vishnu parayan.
Te karane nahi chai Ram upasan
Are ek katha kahi ami purber kathan.
Shantadeb mahasiddha shuna matiman
Manipur Vishnupur ashe ek sthan.
Seikhane Bhagaban garur bahane
Upanito seikhane Deba Narayane
Tatha kare Babrubahan bishnuke pujan
Adhyapiha chandra bangsha Bishnupriya gon.
Te karane Ram name nahi pai mon
Taha shuni Shantadas nasfure bachan.

The meaning of these lines is that the King Khumal said to Shantadas with respect that he, being the worshipper of Vishnu, is loyal to Vishnu. For this reason he did not want to worship Ram. He also intimated one fact to Shantadas that Bishnupur is a place of Manipur where Lord Vishnu came riding on Gorur, sacred bird. For this purpose Babrubahan, the king of Manipur, worshipped Vishnu and
followers of Babrubahan are known as Bishnupriyas who belong to the Chandra dynasty. This is the reason for which king Khumal did not pay attention to worship Lord Ram. Hearing all these, Shantadas did not persuade the king further to accept Ramanandi Vaishnavism.

But it must be admitted that Gaudiya Vaishnavism of Shri Chaitanya has the impact upon the Bishnupriya Manipuris because Chaitanya Mahaprabhu paved the easy way for practicing Vaishnavism. Every activity of this society is always done by the rituals of Vaishnavism from birth to death. These rituals are:

i. Sashtipuja
ii. Shuddikaran
iii. Namkaran
iv. Annaprashan
v. Upanayan/Dhiksha
vi. Churakaran
vii. Marriage
viii. Shraddha Ceremony

All these festivals are performed according to the procedures of Vaishnavism. Even they worship goddess Durga as a Vaishnavi as the sister of Lord Krishna. The social festivals are also performed in the Vaishnavite way.

Priests of Bishnupriya Manipuri community propagated the Vaishnavism among the tribals like Kukis etc. This community collectively runs the Radha Madhab Mandir at Radha Kunda in Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh by voluntary contribution. For this purpose a committee was formed earlier in the name of Radha Madhab Seva Puja Committee but the scope of functions of this committee is enhanced. It is now responsible to increase the religious consciousness among the Bishnupriya Manipuris.
This committee is organising conferences in different places of the society in order to increase the religious consciousness of the community. Till today the entire community is a Vaishnavite community. There is not a single Islam in this community. Very recently some unemployed youth are adopting the Christianity for their economic benefit. But the community does not keep any relation with them. Recently some of them are adopting the path of Akhanda Mondoli, Hariom, Saibaba. But those, who are adopting these various paths of Hinduism are also observing all the festivals and ways of life of Vaishnavism. Originally they followed the practices of “Sanatan Vaishnavism” and later on they also follow the path of “Gaudiya Vaishnavism” due to the influence of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The remarkable vaishnab of this community is Shri Shri Bhubaneswar Sadhu Thakur who was born in Barapua village of Kalain circle, Cachar district, Assam. He had propagated the idea of Vaishnavism at Nabadwip, West Bengal. He was the man who had popularised “Harinam Sankirtan” at Nabadwip for which he faced many problems and ultimately became successful in his mission.

Moreover one can trace the influence of Vaishnavism upon the Bishnupriya Manipuris by the following facts.

i. Influence of Chaitanya can be realised by their religious practices.

ii. The nomenclature of the Bishnupriya Manipuri fraternity is another impact of the Vishnu cult.

iii. Life style of the Bishnupriya Manipuris are similar with the Vaishnavism.

iv. Remarkable cultprits are not found among Bishnupriya Manipuris.

v. Terrorism is not found among Bishnupriya Manipuris due to Vishnu Cult.
4.2 CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS:

Bishnupriya Manipuri people has its own distinct culture which can be explained by two heads –

i. Formal culture

ii. Informal culture.

Formal culture can be discussed by the following sub-heads

i. Music & dance culture

ii. Art culture

iii. Religious culture

Art culture is discussed in the chapter economic consciousness whereas Religious culture is already discussed in this chapter in a sub-chapter known as Religious consciousness. So our study will mainly concentrate on music & dance culture which includes singing, dance, festival, folk culture etc.

Bishnupriya Manipuri Music or Sangeet

Till the second decade of the 20th century, the Sangeet of the Bishnupriya Manipuris was based upon Rasakirtan. There was no prevalence of dias sangeet or music. From the 3rd decade of the 20th century, there was the beginning of dias sangeet or music by social reformer Gokulananda Geetiswami of Tripura and Leikhomsena Singha of East Singari of Meherpur, Silchar. But those were not recognised as modern songs because of the prevalence of the traditional musical tune. From 1950, a new trend developed and the people adopted modern trends and ideas in music. As they proceeded further, they absorbed fully and used affectively those outside ideas in their own presentations.
In 1950 when the renowned Bishnupriya Manipuri singer Oja Matilal Singha was learning music in Lucknow then a culture was developed among the Bishnupriya Manipuris to compose songs in Bishnupriya Manipuri language. The renowned educationist Jagat Mohan Singha and Matilal Singha composed songs in Bishnupriya Manipuri language which was influenced by classical songs for that reason these songs were considered as modern dias music. In the conference of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union held at Silchar in 1960, it was seen that Bishnupriya Manipuri songs are sung by the artistes coming from different parganas of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community.

During this period Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Senarup Sinha etc. composed many modern songs in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language and singers sang these songs in open platforms before audiences. The best composer of tunes of the Bishnupriya Manipuri songs was pandit Matilal Singha who was considered a pioneer in this line. He gave musical tunes in the songs composed by Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Brojendra Kumar Singha and Kaliprasad Singha. Matilal Singha is described as the father figure among the singers in the community and king of modern Bishnupriya Manipuri Dias Music. It is also seen that the budding learners in classical music from different communities in the Barak valley take musical lessons from him.

Another composer of tunes in Bishnupriya Manipuri music is Suranath Singha of Bhakatpur, Silchar who was also the disciple of Motilal Singha. His musical tune was also highly respected in the society. This fellow has given musical tunes in his self composed songs and songs of his elder brother, Jagat Mohan Singha.

Now there are many artistes who are interested to give tunes in songs composed by various writers. Among these artistes Ashutosh Singha of Guwahati, Dils Lakhsmindra Singha, Chandra Kanti Singha
of Dullovcherra, Chandra Mohan Rajkumar, Anima Sinha, Bina Sinha of Silchar, and Fuleshwar Sinha of Nurkha etc are remarkable. Some artistes such as Lakshminda Sinha, Ashutosh Sinha, Chandrakanti Singha and Bina Sinha also produced cassettes of the Bishnupriya Manipuri songs. The name of Parimal Singha of Sonapur, Hailakandi in this regard is remarkable because he is capable to sing comedy songs giving enjoyment to the gathering.

4.3 BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI DANCES:

Manipuri Dance is world renowned. In the beginning of the 20th century its area was expanded In 1917. Rabindranath Tagore was attracted seeing the Rasleela staged at Masimpur of Sylhet under the guidance of Nrityaguru Imago in 1917. In the palace of the king of Tripura, Narendra Kishore, Rabindra Nath Tagore also got the opportunity to enjoy Manipuri Ras, Kirtan and Drum dances etc. In 1918 he appointed Rajkumar Buddhimanta Singha of Tripura to teach Manipuri Dance in Shantiniketan. In the same year people of Masimpur also invited Rabindra Nath Tagore during his Sylhet visit to enjoy the Rakhwal Dance. After this he was very much attracted towards Manipuri dance. In 1925, the king of Tripura invited Rabindra Nath Tagore to enjoy the Rasleela. After then on the advice of the king of Tripura in 1926, Tagore took Nabakumar Singha of Tripura to Shantiniketan and under his guidance Manipuri dance was included as a part of the curriculum of the study of Shantiniketan under the direction of Nabakumar Singha. Two dramas namely ‘Natirpuja’ “Rituranga Nrityanatya” were staged in the dance style of Manipuri.

After Bengal, through the initiative of Rabindra Nath Tagore, Manipuri Nritya was demonstrated by Nabakumar Singha in Gujrat and Bombay also. After few days Nabakumar Singha went to Bombay as a teacher of Manipuri Dance. After Nabakumar Singha Rajkumar Chandrajit Singha of Tripura, Senarik Rajkumar, Mahimchandra Sinha,
Behari Singha, Basanta Sena Singha of Silchar, Kulabandu Singha, Nileswar Mukherjee of Bhanugach and Atomba Singha of Manipur etc were employed as Manipuri dance teacher of Shantiniketan.9

Rabindra Nath Tagore was very much pleased to see the dance technique of Senarik Rajkumar performed in the Rasleela arranged at Masimpur of Sylhet. In 1931 Tagore invited him to Shantiniketan to teach pupils there this unique dance form which he gladly accepted and stayed there till 1955 as a dance teacher. He introduced a four years course in Manipuri dance form in that famed University and gave the shapes to many of the immortal literary creations of the poet through this dance form and earned acclaim throughout the world. Sadhana Basu, Indira Gandhi and others also got lesson from Rajkumar on Manipuri dance. During the period of the Second World War Senarik Rajkumar with his wife Panthoi Debi demonstrated Manipuri dances in various places of India such as Patna, Allahabad, Delhi, Meerut, Ahmedabad and Nagpur etc.

Another Manipuri dance guru at Shantiniketan was Norottam Sinha who belongs to the Bishnupriya Manipuri Community. He also helped to compose dances according to the rhythm of Rabindra Nath Tagore’s songs. In 1936 in the staging of the ‘Chitrangadha’ at Shantiniketan, Nileswar Mukherjee played the role of Arjuna. He also taught Manipuri dance to Hema Malini, Sairavanu and Indira Gandhi etc. during his stay at Shantiniketan and came back from Shantiniketan in 1938.

In 1939, after the return of Nileswar Mukherjee, Atomba Singha became dance master of Manipuri dance at Shantiniketan. At that time Kamini Singha also taught Manipuri dance in Madras(now Chennai). With the growing of popularity of Manipuri dance at Shantiniketan, the popularity of it spread at the different places of India and countries of the world. In the sixth decade of the 20th century, style of Manipuri
dance was improved with the initiative of Guru Bipin Singha of Silchar. With the depth study and research, he was able to make a liaison of Manipuri dance with Shastriya Nritya and Dance Shastra of India.

From 1953, Guru Bipin Singh delivered lectures on Manipuri dance and arranged dance exhibition in Bombay, Delhi, Assam, and Kolkata and further enhanced the reputation of this dance form. By the efforts of Guru Atambapu of Manipur and Bipin Singha of Cachar, this dance form was recognised as classical dance. In 1965, he was awarded with Sangeet Natak Academy prize by Indira Gandhi as a Manipuri dance artiste. In 1975, on the direction of Bipin Singha, a Tagore classic “Bhanu Singher Padabali” was staged at Calcutta which was highly appreciated by the scholarly gathering. In 1977, Bombay Doordarshan also showed Manipuri dance recital conducted under Guru Bipin Singha.

Guru Bipin Singha also demonstrated Manipuri dance in different places of foreign countries such as England, USA, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Brahmadesh, Nepal and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He has highlighted the Manipuri dance into the world platform.

He has established ‘Manipuri Nartanashram’ in Bombay, Calcutta and Imphal. His disciples such as Javeri sisters of Mumbai who made the Manipuri dance form famous in Western India and demonstrated Manipuri dance with great skill in different places of India and the world. Manipuri dance was taught in various places of India under the different Gurus which is pictured below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the place</th>
<th>Name of the Gurus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shillong</td>
<td>Haricharan Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>Nilmadhab Mukherjee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aditya Sena Raj Kumar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover there are many great performers in this dance form who did not go outside. Among them Mongal babu Singha of Singari is remarkable who was awarded by the degree of "Nritya Nipun".

For the development of Manipuri dance, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad is actively thinking of propagating it. It has introduced certificate course which is called PG Diploma of Nartan in
Bishnupriya Manipuri dance (Nritya) is divided into two parts – Folk dance and Classical dance.

4.4 FOLK DANCES:

Folk dance is created in the daily life. Folk dance is not rich in Bishnupriya Manipuri Society, yet this community has few folk dances. One remarkable folk dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is Drum dance which is known to every body. This is very popular dance in this community. Drum dance of the village Dalibil of Anipur, Gurabanji, Shyamnagar of Dullovcherra, Narsingpur and Meherpur are remarkable. Besides these every Bishnupriya Manipuri village must have a group of drum dancers.

Another folk dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is rain invoking dance which is participated by both male and female in the agricultural field in the night in order to invoke rain during draught. Women by
dance will pray to God Indra for giving rain and around women men will dance with various instruments of agriculture. There was a belief that this type of dance had its impact in earlier times. This dance was also seen in ancient Greece and in ancient civilized countries of the world.

Another folk dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is “Khupak Ishei” which is exhibited in two groups male group and female group. Khupak Ishei, the gift of Ratha Jatra, has its charm and beauty. This is generally performed by women artistes in a different manner which suits their softness and feminine requirements. This folk dance is visible among the women of every village. On Sept 25, 2005, a competition of “Khupak Ishei” was organised in the Community Hall of Sri Sri Bhubaneswar Sadhu Thakur Sebashram, Silchar among the Khupak Ishei Teams of Silchar Town, Bhakatpur, Chencooree, Narsingpur and Bhakatpur team became the champion team followed by Silchar Town and Narsingpur. It is also noted that Brinda Sinha of the champion team was selected as the best dancer in this competition. In some areas males are also playing the Khupak Ishei dance specially in Narsingpur and Meherpur area. Sometimes competitions were organised for male Khupak Ishei.

Another remarkable folk dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is Joydev. The folk dance is centered by singing the song of Dashavatar in tune with the noted vaishnab poet Sri Joydev. At the outcome of this festival, a beautiful style of Natcholom i.e clapping song has emerged. This dance forms an important item of the Manipuri dance covered by pala chalam. In this dance both male and female participate in group. This dance takes place in every mandop of the village during Ratha Jatra.
4.5 CLASSICAL DANCES OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS – RASLEELA, NATAKRITAN OR NATAPALA:

The Rasleela is the renowned classical dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. It depicts the story of Sri Krishna’s divine love sports with the Gopis of Brindaban which contains the highest of divine Rasas. Seeing, hearing, performing and even a remote attention to Rasleela are considered by the followers of the Bhagabat cult as acts of supreme virtue. Bishnupriya Manipuris are worshippers of Radha Krishna, the divine communion.

The Rasleela in broader sense is divided into two categories – Gopal Ras and Sri Krishna Ras leela with the Gopis\(^2\). The Gopal Ras depicts the story of Srikrishna with his Gopal friends manifesting himself as a lover of cows and proving his worth as the most accomplished incarnation for the God during the period of his boyhood. Generally on the day of the Gostastomi, Gopal Ras is presented at the temples in the day time. Moreover on the full moon day of Kartik it is presented at day time in the temple where Ras Leela will be performed at night. The great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore got the opportunity to see Rakhal Ras Nritya and was impressed by this nritya at Masimpur of Sylhet.

The Rasleela of Sri Krishna with his divine Gopis of Brindaban may be divided into three categories i.e. Maharas, Dol Ras & Basanta Ras. Maharas is performed in the Ras purnima day in the month of Kartik where as Dol Ras is performed in the month of Falgun i.e. on the Dolpurnima day. Basanta Ras is performed during the spring season. Moreover we find another two types of Ras- Jhulan ras held in Jhulan Purnima (in the month of July) and Sharadiya Ras held in Ashwin Purnima (in the month of Sept-October). All these are performed by Gopis with Krishna. But we find another unique pattern
of Ras leela known as “Mukta Horan” which is jointly performed by gopals and gopis.

Just as there are different categories of Rasleela, there are different methods for the arrangement of these different categories of Rasleela. The first method is the individual Rasleela or Manash Ras which will be managed by that fellow. He can play the monopoly role regarding the arrangement of this occasion. This is very much prevalent in this society. But he will take the help of others because numerous gopis necessary for the Rasleela cannot be managed alone. Date of the performance of the Rasleela is generally fixed at the day of Purnima i.e. full moon day. This individual Rasleela will be performed by both young girls or also aged women.

The second method is the collective management of the Rasleela. People of a village will take collectively the management of this Rasleela. Interested parties for the main roles of the Rasleela will apply to the management who will select the gopis participating in the Rasleela. Generally young girls are selected for participation in the Rasleela of this management and they receive training from a Guru or a team of Gurus appointed for this purpose. The training and usual preparation are completed within a period of two months at the maximum. In some cases the period of the training of the gopis is one month. This type of collective management of Rasleela is generally found in many Bishnupriya Manipuri villages of Assam. Among these the Rasleela organised collectively in gorgeous way by the people of Unamgaon is very much remarkable. It is known as Maharasleela which is organised in the day of Raspurnima. This is very attractive Rasleela of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society for which Bishnupriya Manipuri people of Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh come to enjoy this Rasleela. On that day people of Patharkandi area are over whelmed with joy. But this Rasleela is always accompanied with Gopal Raj which is always organised in day time and reference of Rasleela of
Joramandam of Kamalpur of Tripura is essential. This is also observed in gorgeous way in many villages of the Barak valley and Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas of Tripura and Bangladesh.

This type of Rasleela was also visible in the village, Nurkha of Patharkandi till 1980. People of this village collectively managed this Rasleela on the day of Ras purnima in the month of Kartik corresponding to October—November every year. They were very sincere and careful to manage this occasion successfully. People of other community of the same locality also enjoyed this Rasleela. But it is a matter of regret that this collective management of Rasleela is not visible in this village because of their internal conflicts. This is also visible among the people of different villages and parganas of Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh.

The process of training of the participants may be characterised as the awakening of some dormant talent inherited by the children from their fore fathers. Professional dancers have their own footing which ordinary people cannot achieve. Usually a team of expert artistes assist the performance by their participation and contribution for which they are adequately remunerated. In a way these artistes may be called professional or full timer in this field. The remarkable artistes are Bijoy Mukherjee, Mangalbabu Singha of West Singari, Dhananjoy Singha of Dharam, Behari Singha of Rengti, once dance teacher in Shantiniketan, Gokul Singha of Rajargaon, Kutumai Singha of Unamgaon, Norottom Singha of Kailashahar, Surjya Mohan Sarma of Nurkha, Pabitra Singha of Dharam, Tribeni Singha and Sobha Singha of Singari etc. Their rates of remuneration in such performances vary from individual to individual and from class to class. There is no denying of the fact that succeeding generations of such artistes have created their own tradition. They enjoy tremendous respect from the society and the best of them in any generation get enviable position in society. The success of these artistes depends
mostly on their showmanship both as dancers and as musicians. They have to undergo prolonged and intensive training and research under very competent Gurus. Their life is completely dedicated to their trade. In a way they have been the brick and mortar with which the strong and glorious tradition has been built up over the centuries.

The Gurus are also substantial limbs of the traditions. They have inherited the skill and experience of the earlier gurus by their devotion and dedication to the tradition. On the day of the performance, the mandap which may be either a permanent structure or a temporary structure is well decorated. The members of the audience come like pilgrims to the spot. The atmosphere is charged with religious feelings of reverence and deep humility.

The actual Rasleela is preceded by the performance of a NatSankirtan which confines itself to the singing of the glory of the incarnation of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the episode of his life in which he enacted in his divine mood, Shri Krishna's Rasleela with the gopis in Brindaban. In the performance of the different categories of Rasleela, one can see the emphasis on the aspects connected with the season in question. On the basis of the particular emphasis given to each category, the different names are given. For instance in the Basanta Ras, the emphasis is on "Abir Khel" and sprinkling of coloured water as prevalent during the spring season throughout the country. Certain episodes seen in the ‘Maharas’ (recital during ras purnima) are not to be seen in other categories. The traditional ras performance begins from early hours of night and invariably continues upto the time of Mangalarati (twilight before sun rise). The period covering a whole night is considered too short for a complete staging of Ras of the Bishnupriya Manipuri tradition which consists of several episodes marked by variations in music and dance sequences.
The main scenes of Ras include among others the solo dances of Krishna, Radha, Brinda, Chandan, Chandrabali, Malini, group dances and some times duet presentation of Radha and Krishna. During the performances the sacred images are taken in the Ras arena. The music composition which can be presented subject to the availability of time in Rasleela, are many and varied. For example Bhangi Pareng, Brindaban Pareng are beautiful classical compositions which are regarded as the very foundation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Rasleela. These parengs (series) are presented in groups. Once the presentation of Bhangi starts, the members of the audience cannot leave the mandap till the presentation is over. These parengs specially the Bongi parengs (dance in circle) are many in number, so that it is impossible to present all of them in a single night. The Gurus make suitable selection and exercise their talent in editing these to suit particular performances. When a performance will be closed, it will be decided by the time factor. The performance has to be closed with necessary ceremonies at the approach of the usual time for Mangalarati even though many items, in which elaborate training has been given to the participants, remained unstaged.

The music aspect occupies an important place in the total structure of a Ras. A team of sutradharis led by the Guru of the performance includes at least two lady singers, a flute player, conch blower and other instrumental musicians whose strength and variety may differ from performance to performance according to the taste and capacity of the organisers. They sit usually in the north-western corner of the Ras-mandap to provide musical commentary and background of the performance. The remarkable sutradharis are Monjooree Singha of Nurkha, Gokulei Singha of Unamgaon, Lakshmi Sinha of Fulertal and Brinda Singha of Rongpur etc.

The makers of the costumes also play an important part in the development and maintenance of the Ras traditions. Many of them
have good earning out of this trade. The costume makers are also in competition with one another in the production of the most attractive designs within the accepted tradition. The cases of the professional artistes are different. They are not fastidious about the qualities of their costumes. It is because they come on contract basis against some fixed rate of remuneration, part of which has to be spent for their costumes. They usually select costumes of minimum charges. In the life time of Bishnupriya Manipuri girl it is very desirable that at least once she must participate in such traditional Rasleela. The mode of sharing expenditure incurred in the Rasleela is also interesting. The parents of the children playing leading roles must bear the lion share of expenditure of the occasion. Dress to perform classical dance of Rasleela is known as ‘Porlei’.

Nowadays there is an increasing trend of collective patronage of Ras performances. The friends and relatives of the parents, whose children play the leading roles, come and offer in cash or in kind presentation during the solo performances of the leading roles in the Ras. Such presentations are collected and taken by the parents of the children concerned. It is not a surprising matter that in the changing circumstances a parent with considerable influence in society may receive presentation in cash or kind value of which sometimes may exceed his expenditure. This new trend of collective patronage may be regarded as a very encouraging and healthy sign which will go a long way in keeping the tradition alive.

It must be mentioned that Bishnupriya Manipuri Ras cannot be studied in isolation from the Nat Sankirtan which provides the musical and several other fundamental aspects of the dances. A sankirtan may be divided into two aspects viz- the musical aspect and cholom aspect which have their own respective importance. One is complementary to the other. The cholom aspect may further be sub-divided into two parts viz pala cholom and Mridanga cholom. Palacholom is a form of dance
done by participants. In Nata Sankirtan it is a harmonious blending of vigour and softner. The mridango chalom performed by mridango artistes is unique and harmonious combination of masculine vigour and humility becoming of a vaishnavite.

The music aspect covers all the sixty four ‘rasa’ (notes or moods) associated with immortal love between Radha and Krishna and also the singing of glory of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu from whom the Manipuri traditions of Sankirtan originated.

The choloms which have special relevance to this chapter, are the expression of different moods of Radha and Krishna through the medium of dances which form essential parts of a Sankirtan. The Sankirtan artistes are well versed in both aspects. The choloms are performed in extremely intricate talo and movements are confined to the Manipuri tradition of dance. The renowned artistes in this line are professionals who are sufficiently remunerated. But one thing is that these professionals never make contract regarding finance with any one.

The other chalom is Mridanga chalom which is another integral part of Nat Sankirtan. It is masculine in character and performed by two mridanga players. This profession is confined only to a small number of extremely gifted artistes of every generation. In this case also the artiste to succeed in this profession must devote his entire life to this art. The training is extremely rigorous. The masters in the line were invariably young. The stories of the famous gurus of complete devotion and life long dedication to this culture are under the able guidance of competent Gurus.

Nata pala or Pala kirtan can be mainly divided into three parts- i. Shradda ceremony ii. Shandanam or Diba Adhibas iii. Adhibas or Ratri Adhibas.
In the Shradda ceremony there will be one narrative opera in minimum. In Shendaran there will be minimum two narrative operas and in Adhibas there will be three narrative operas. Besides these there is another narrative opera known as Guru kirtan.

In every pala there is a separate Raga composed of nine words-Ta, Ri, Ta, Na, Ri, Ta, Na, Ta, Na. This is a prayer for installation of Krishna in the mandaps. After then Raga sancher is prayed for installation of living god Krishna. In every pala the role of Duar, Singer, Player of instrumental music or musician and a group of singers is inevitable. Among the singers Dhanga oja of Pratapgarh, Kalidas, Chhalia of Narsingpur, Nileswar Mukherjee of Mosaulee are the oldest singers of Natasankirtan. Following them other remarkable singers are Ram Singha of Bangladesh, Kalasena Rajkumar, Adhir Singha of Patharkandi, Godoi Singha of Shibergool and Braja Kumar Sinha of Dullovcherra etc are outstanding performers.

Among the outstanding drum beaters Debo singha of Bagarangan of Silchar, Ningthou singha of Chencooree, Badan Singha of Fetipat, Suyryamoni Singha of Singari and Gokul Chand Singha of Patharkandi are the noted performers in the middle part of the 20th century. But nowadays Badal Sarma, Nishikanta Singha of Patharkandi and Sushil Singha of Singari are performing well.

Another portfolio of Singer is known as Duar who is responsible for the systematic performance of Nata sankirtan. The number of Duars in comparison to singers is limited. The systematic knowledge in this profession is acquired by Broja Singha of Narsingpur, Jhulan Singha of Japirbond who have learned this knowledge from their Guru Mukta Singha of Manipur. Madanchand of Narsingpur and Dewan of Dudpur were the disciples of Braja Singha and Jhulan Singha respectively. At present expert men in this profession are Golap Singha of Singari, Amulya Singha of Kachudharam, Ajit Singha and Premananda Mukherjee of Dullovcherra.
4.6 OTHER DANCES:

Besides these classical dances there are several other dances which are discussed below.

**Basaka** – It is also called Kunja Ras or Basak sajya. It is exhibited into padabali or Rasleela by gopis. In basaka gopis want to enjoy Shri Krishna Radha Leela by framing sajya or decorative bed for both Krishna & Radha. But that was not performed because Krishna was prevented to come by a gopi known as Chandra bali. Due to this Gopis immersed this bed in Jamuna river and on the other hand Radha withhold love towards Krishna. In the last part of the night when Krishna came to meet Radha gopis observed blockade in the way of Krishna. Ultimately Krishna met with Radha, who ultimately conciliated. This event is expressed by Basak. Maya Basaki of Gorerbond, Maharani of Kabuganj, Renu Sinha of Patharkandi, Tanukirtani of Mashughat, Jeebananda Misra and Dhana Singha of Hatir Khal etc. are remarkable. Gokulananda Geetiswami was the pioneer to exhibit Basaka in Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

**Padabali** - It is another form of dance which can be played in two parts i. Nimai Sanyas and Mathur.

Nimai Sanyas is a narrative opera which is known to all. Nimai is leaving his family specially his wife Bishnupriya. This is for the sake of the salvation of the human beings. Mon Mohan Singha of Kachu Dharam and Mon Mohan Singha of Chamtila performed these operas with a team.

**Mathur** – People of Mathura planned to take Sri Krishna from Brindaban to Mathura. Krishna had to cross the Jamuna river by boat and on the other side Srimati Radha with Gopis pretended to sell curds which is very favourite to Sri Krishna. The Leela performed by Gopis at
the time of crossing the river Jamuna by boat is known as Mathur. Noukabilash is a part of Mathur.

Besides these, dance operas performed on themes from Ramayana and Kurukshetra and these presentations are also immensely popular. It is gorgeously demonstrated in the Pipacherra village of the Longai reserve, Patharkandi. It is also seen that one actor in this opera dance Ramayan, is exhibiting the acting of different roles of Ramayana. In this process the whole Ramayan is divided into different chapters such as “Sita Haran” ‘Lakshmanar Skaktishel’ ‘Lab Kush’ ‘Sitar Banabas’ etc. Dhan Sena Singha of Singla was the pioneer in this field. He was followed by Moni Singh of Narsingpur, Nilmani, Kalidas of Pratapgarh, Raton Moni of Arua and Jhulan of Bagarangan etc.

Another folk culture of Bishnupriya Manipuris is folk game which is played in different ways from time to time. Some of them are highlighted below.

**Dudu or Kabadi** – It is similar with the present kabadi game arranged in different national and international events which need not explain here.

**Gilla** - This event is played in two ways separately for men and women – First we should discuss the Gilla game played by women. This game is played in group According to this game; geographical area of game is 25ft in length and 20ft in breath approximately. The main instruments of this game are a round piece of wood or seed of gilla and half round wood. This round of piece wood has to stick the half round piece of wood in different ways.

Male are playing another method of Gilla game in group. The main instrument of this game is Gilla made by horn of buffalo and competition of this game was arranged pargana wise. This game was
very much prevalent at Nurkha, Piplacherra, Dewali, Unamgaon Lowairpoa and Patharkandi etc.

**Redy** - It is another game mainly played in the open field by the young boys and girls in group.

**Bandi** - It is another game played mainly by young girls in an open field like a mini stadium in group.

Besides these Gayatangar, Dagakhela, Chingchiki, Laikhela, Khuma Khela etc. are also played in this community.

### 4.7 BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI CINEMAS:

Bishnupriya Manipuris nowadays are advancing towards cultural field. They have entered into a new area i.e. cinema. Many culturally advanced people have taken the initiative to produce cinema in Assam and Tripura. Bimal Singha, ex-minister of Tripura, has produced and directed a cinema known as ‘Nungshipi’ which is a pioneer film in the Bishnupriya Manipuri Society. Another film produced and directed by the same fellow is known as ‘Madoi’. Indra Kumar Singha of Kabuganj, Silchar, Assam has produced a cinema known as “Horibola E Hari”. Sashikanta Sinha of Dullovcherra has produced and directed a cinema known as “Houriok bahak”. ‘Kalling’ is another popular film produced by Dils Lakshmindra Sinha and directed by Chandrakanta Rajkumar “Akdin Belitike” of Brajendra Kr. Singha is also remarkable. “Adhare Mingal” is also another film directed by chandrakanta Raj Kumar.

Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad produced a documentary known as “Bishnupriya Manipuri”.

252
4.8 BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI FESTIVALS:

The Bishnupriya Manipuris in their social life observe many social festivals which are narrated below serially

Festival No. - 1

The most remarkable festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is the Bishu festival which is heartful and joyful. This festival is like the Bihu festival of the Assamese people. Some scholars assume that the word ‘Bishu’ has been derived from the term ‘Bishub’. This festival begins from the last day of the Bengali year and continues for five days with joy and colour.

The first day of this bishu is traditionally known as ‘Cherou’ which is a cheerful day for Bishnupriya Manipuri people residing in the villages. This cheer depends upon their feast and games. At that day every people arising in the early morning will clean the house, bath and perform their respective functions. The elders of the family after worshiping the family deity will go to the Malthep i.e. Mandir for prayer. Women of the house will be very busy to cook because on that day it is the duty to cook 108 items such as bitter, sweet, sour and cake etc. But it is practically not possible to cook 108 items. So neighbours and relatives established a tradition of mutual exchange of cooked items in order to increase the number of items. This tradition focuses social unity and cordiality among the Bishnupriya Manipuris. After preparing the feast, it is the traditional duty to offer ‘Bhog’ i.e. cooked rice to the “Elakar Debata”, the deity of that area i.e. person who first made that area residential and worship him. After that people will take their feast with joy.

2nd phase of the enjoyment starts with folk games such as ‘Das Pachis’ a kind of gambling, Gilla, Bandi, Kabadi etc. which will be played from the first day of the Cherou and continued upto the last
day. Among these events “Dash Pachis” (game of ten-twentyfive) is the game of Kshatriyas as found in the Mahabharata. Das Pachis is an enjoyable game because from child to old aged people, irrespective of sex, can participate in this game group wise. Competitions among different age groups are organised giving prizes. This competition is also arranged at night in which specially younger boys and girls participate in different groups. After playing few hours at midnight, they will roam to the cattle house of every household of the village and collect cow milk. The house owner in those days will not refuse the young boys and girls as a matter of tradition. After then they will prepare payas or porridge i.e. food made of rice, milk and sugar and khechuri i.e. hotchpotch and take it. This game will be continued for these five days. Another remarkable point is that specially playing of this game is permitted only for these days and generally prohibited in other times of the year because Pancha Pandav playing this game with the Duryadhana guided by his maternal uncle, Shakuni, have lost their property and faced insultation of their wife Droupodi by Dushwahan.

Besides these various competitions among children in different events are organised by many non-governmental organisations of the society. Among these the role of Dipti Club and Library of the village Nurkha is remarkable.

In this way during this period people enjoy this festival in harmony overcoming their social and individual differences and welcome the Bengali New year.

Another significance of the festival is the worship of the village deities, LamarDou meaning deities of the place. This is observed on any one day of the Bishu festival which lasts for five days of the month of Baisakh (April-May) in every year. This particular worship is solemnised for the wellbeing of the villagers. The invocation of deities
is done in two corners of the village symbolising the benevolent affects of the deities on all sides of the village. Lord Shiva is first offered prayers following the age old customary practice before the village deities are invoked.

**Festival No. – 2**

Ratha Jatra i.e. Kang festival is another important festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. Generally people of India are accustomed to see Ratha Jatra of Puri, the famous abode of Lord Jagannath in Orissa. In Orissa this festival is observed in centralised way. But in Assam the celebration of Ratha Jatra by Bishnupriya Manipuris is decentralised. Accordingly every temple, big or small, will take out a small Rath with the help of the group of villagers who manage the temple. In early days of the 20th century for every village there was a Hindu temple. But with the growth of population and the complexities of society, now two or three temples are found in every village. So there are innumerable temples in the society which will observe Ratha Jatra in their respective villages. Each temple consists of two buildings – one building for the deity or deities and another building is a big Mandap or Community Hall for regular gathering of religious minded people.

The Ratha Jatra is a nine day festival having daily programme of traditional music and dances to be followed by free distribution of plenty of prasad (hotchpotch) at night. The preparation for the cultural item need not be taken up at the individual level by the temples. There are professional groups who prepare themselves for the occasion. These professional performers are assisted by non professionals who are specially trained for this occasion. The jurisdiction of the professional performers covers the entire valley while the non-professionals confine only to their temples.
The first day of this festival is observed by the Bishnupriya Manipuri people. Kanai Kang is very famous which is observed at the temple of Kanai Lal Prabhu located at Kanaibazar, Karimganj, Assam. Devotees from Tripura, Assam and Bangladesh assemble at that temple the day before the festival. All devotees will pray to Kanai Lal Prabhu and spend the whole night singing the devotional songs. In the next day at 1 p.m. all devotees will pull the Ratha in which Kanai Lal Probhu was installed at the top of the Rath. Devotees will pull the Ratha singing devotional songs and spiritual songs. Regarding this occasion a Mela (large gathering) is organised in front of the Kanai Lal temple where fruits and other things are bought and sold.

The last day of this festival is gloriously observed by the Bishnupriya Manipuri people. Among them Khalaparar Kang i.e. Hat Hanar Kang consisting of Rathas of seven villages i.e. Chatragram, Mantrigram, Patragram, Pekurgram, North Bilbari, South Bilbari and Nayadahar of Khalapar is remarkable. Devotees of these seven villages will assemble in a common agricultural field along with their respective Rathas i.e. Kangs. To enjoy this festival, people of different communities of Tripura, Assam and also Bangladesh gather. That scenery is very memorable when elephants and pilgrims are pulling the ropes of the Rathas singing devotional songs specially songs of ‘Dashabatar’. Seeing this beautiful scenery, prominent Bishnupriya Manipuri poet, Madon Mohan Mukherjee composed a poem

*Khalaparar Kang,*

*Jitegate akta oya*

*Alaite thang thang.*

*The English version of this poem is*

*Ratha of Khalapar*

*To go unitedly*

*To return separately*
Reference should be made to the joyous ceremony of ‘Fira Ratha’ (return journey of Lord Jagannath) of Nurkha of Patharkandi. Villagers there traditionally observe this Ratha with great colour and zeal. People of different communities of Longai valley assemble there to enjoy this festival.

The pattern of the Manipuri Ratha is unique. The whole structure rests on a square box like foundation from which tall wooden posts shoot up to support the upper portion which looks like the top of a traditional Manipuri temple. This Ratha was pulled from one place to other place by wooden wheels. The decorations are done to the maximum on all sides. Paintings of Hindu mythological gods are displayed on the side walls of the temple. There is competition among the organisers of different Rathas in this respect.

From the first day of Ratha Jatra to the ninth day of the Fira Ratha Jatra during night, people are busy attending to their own temples participating in the cultural performances. During this festival most of the families attending in their temples, do not prepare their meals of night at home. This means that the festival has glorious economic significance. In the evening of these nine days, devotional songs are sung along with clapping and dancing by the selected people gathered in the mandap. The people sing in a group in a temple the devotional songs. Then Khechuri (boiled mix of salted yellow rice and pulses, preferably Arahar) is offered for these nine days to all people gathered in the temple after the same is offered to Lord Jagannath. Generally, this Khechuri is offered without curries and fried vegetables but in the temple, the khechuri is accompanied with three other curries including khar which is made of bamboo shoots. Lotus leaves were commonly used for serving Khechuri during this festival in early times. But nowadays these leaves are not available in quantity required.
The principal song sung during the night congregation is the sanskrit composition on the ‘Dasa Avatar’ by the noted Vaishnav poet Sri Jaidev. In the beginning of the Jaidev a beautiful style of Natcholom i.e. clapping song has emerged. This dance is performed as an important item of dance of the male people covered by palacholom. Khupak Ishei, the gift of Ratha Jatra has its charm and beauty. This is performed by women artistes in a different manner which suits their feminine requirements. The other musical aspect is that the professional groups, going from temple to temple on invitation, sing invariably the theme of Sri Krishna’s departure from Gokul to Mathura escorted by Akura in his mission to kill Kangsa, his maternal uncle. The artistes sing special compositions which depict the shock and grief of Radha and her associate gopis on the occasion.

It is a belief among the Bishnupriya Manipuris that from the day of Ekadashi( the eleventh lunar day after a full moon or a new moon) followed by Fira Ratha Jatra (return journey of the Lord). Lord Krishna does not stay in this earth and goes back to the depth of the earth (sanskrit, patal). Religious practices offering puja to Lord Krishna is prohibited from this Ekadashi which is known as the “Shayan Ekadashi” to the day before the “Hariutthan Ekadashi” which is observed in the month of Kartik.

The system of financing the celebrations is also unique. The resources of the village within the jurisdiction of the temple are calculated on the basis of some donations which are paid conventionally. The resources thus obtained are spent, distributing these over the number of days the festival continues. Such a distribution may result either in allowing specific days to a group of families to take charge of a particular day. In localities where people are financially sound and they have the requisite enthusiasm for such a celebration, the prasad (cooked food offered to the Lord) is
distributed in abundance. There is no restriction of attendance in such functions.

Festival No. - 3

Ratha Jatra is followed by Jhulan Jatra, another great festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. This is celebrated on the occasion of Sri Krishna Jhulan Jatra during the month of Shravan (in the month of July). The significance of this festival has its cultural impact on the society. Most of the temples have their own elaborate arrangements for this festival which mainly consists of making a well decorated Jhulan (swing) where the images of Radha and Krishna are installed. In front of such a swing, an improvised fountain is created and water is raised up through a siphon and then it is allowed to fall in a round container. It is recycled and adds to the beauty of the whole atmosphere. The musical parties, professionals and non-professionals, sing the theme of Sri Krishna’s Jhulanleela (swinging festival) at Brindaban. Prasad is not distributed in abundance during this festival. The festival wears the look of a rainy day and differs from other festivals in the manner and mode of celebration. The last day i.e. the night of the Jhulan Purnima is the most beautiful of all the nights of the seasons.

Festival No. - 4

Durga Puja is also another popular festival celebrated in Eastern India. The Bishnupriya Manipuris living in this region generally come into contact with the Bengali population who celebrate this festival with great solemnity and enthusiasm. Durga Puja is celebrated by all people in the region. It is a very colourful and joyful festival observed by the people in Bengal particularly when young men and women burst into great enthusiasm in those festive days. Bishnupriya Manipuris in Assam and Tripura live in the same valleys for which they are also sharing the joyfulness and excitement of this festival with their
neighbours going to the community puja pandals. In course of time, this spirit of joy also influenced the young people among the Bishnupriya Manipuri community and they came forward to celebrate the puja just to get the taste of that joyous spirit. Durga Puja is now celebrated pargana wise and a collective feeling emerge out of the festival. But number of Durga puja are still few in this community. Young people organise a committee and collect contributions from all members of the community staying within the pargana. Youth of Patharkandi pargana, Singla Pargana, Meherpur Pargana and Narsingpur Pargana are observing this puja with great enthusiasm and zeal. Previously there was no custom to purchase new clothes in this occasion. Now a convention is already established that new clothes are to be purchased during the puja for the sake of full enjoyment. Durga Puja is observed for five days starting from the sixth lunar day (sasthi) after the new moon, it falls generally in the months of September or October every year.

In Durga Puja on the day of Astami, many goats and buffaloes are sacrificed by many people. This practice is absent among the Bishnupriya Manipuris as they are staunch Vaishnavites and avoid any kind of animal sacrifice before the mother Goddess. Instead, they offer a gourd or pumpkin before the mother Goddess Durga. Beside this strict abstinence from animal sacrifice, other practices are same as the Bengalees. The Durga Puja has acquired a community character and in some places, the young men along with young people from other communities jointly perform the puja, thus creating an atmosphere of communal harmony. Another noticeable fact is that Bishnupriya Manipuris observe Durga Puja in the month of Ashwin i.e. Sharadiya Puja as a joyful festival. It is also called 'sharadiya' as it is performed in the season 'Sharat' (autumn). Durga Puja is also performed in the month of Chaitra (in April) and this occasion is called Basanti Puja.
Another important festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is the "Kartikar Pali" which continues for a month from the Lakshmi Purnima to the Ras Purnima. During this period every day in the temples 'Aratis' are performed gorgeously in the evening which is known as 'Sandhyarati' and in the morning which is known as 'Mangalarati'. Moreover at this time, competitions of dance with dols or drums, or big cymbals etc. are held almost everyday. These cultural competitions are called "Kartikar Phangna" in which both men and women participate. For the whole month, Pali (arrangement of daily puja) is arranged individually or collectively among the members of the Singloop (group). This is known as 'Niyamar Pali' i.e. pali on the basis of routine. According to this Pali system, vegetarian feast prepared by the Brahmins is arranged by the Pali holder or Paliholders in day time where only invitees will have the right to take prasads.

In the evening after the performance of Sandhyarati, religious books specially the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are recited chapter wise or event wise for near about two hours by a pandit and another pandit with him will explain the contents of the recitation before the gathering. The later pandit is also found in professional way because they are invited from one village to another village or one pargana to another pargana during this period by giving remuneration. They are highly respected in the society. Explanation of the chapters of these religious books is continued for this whole month in order to make the atmosphere holistic because Lord Krishna will come to the earth after six months.

After the recitation and explanation of the religious books prasad i.e. fried grains and fruits is distributed among the people of the gathering. In case of evening prasad, every body has the right to get without any invitation. One thing is noticed that in earlier times i.e. upto
1980, there were competitions among the paliholders regarding the amount of prasad and people, who will pay more prasad, will be highly respected. This was clearly visible among the villagers of Nurkha. Another noticeable event is that young girls are allowed to give a pali one day. This is known as “Ningalpir pali” (Pali given by the young girls of that village collectively). On that day pali will be observed in gorgeous and unique way. This pali is unique because there was sufficient lighting, decoration in the evening and competitions among the pandits groupwise for recitation. Generally two or three groups of pandits participate in the explanation of the religious books such as The Mahabharata. Another system was prevalent in the villages of Bishnupriya Manipuri people during this month. According to this system some villagers will bury a long bamboo accompanied with lighting box near the Tulshi temple. In every evening of this month the house holders will light a candle inside lighting box which will be placed to the top of the bamboo pool with the help of a rope like the hoisting of the flag. During this month, Deepabali, with other parts of the country, is observed in every Bishnupriya Manipuri house, lighting the candles in the house courtyards and houses. The other system observed by Bishnupriya Manipuri is ‘Gostastomi’ in which cow worship is prevalent. This is popularly known as the “Gobardhan Puja” when all children of the village make a cow made of mud and offers it as a prayer to the mandap. Another significance of Deepabali is that every house holder in the evening will light candles in a boat made by two or three pieces of banana tree and this boat will be lifted in the water of the river or tank. The eleventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Kartik is observed by the Bishnupriya Manipuri people as “Hariutthan Ekadashi” which implies the arrival of lord Krishna on the earth from the patal. This is symbolised by hoisting religious flags known as ‘Firal’ in the house of everybody. In the next day of this Ekadashi some aristocrat people of the society also arrange ‘Divas’ i.e. special pray to god Krishna and Radha where books such as
“Chaitanya Charitamrita” and “Bhagavat Gita” are recited and explained by the reputed pandits in day time which will be followed by a vegetarian feast. This Kartik festival ends in the day of “Ras Purnima” which is observed by many villages with the performance of Ras Leela. Villagers of Nurkha and Unamgaon are observing this Ras Leela.

It is a mythological belief that Lord Krishna sleeps after the observance of Fira Ratha Jatra. In the mean time one demon named Mahisashur threatened the lives of gods and goddesses in heaven who, finding no other way, prayed to Lord Krishna to protect them. Due to the heartiest prayer, Lord Krishna is awakened from sleep after the end of four months sleep and killed this fellow through his incarnation in the day of Ekadashi. The day in which Sri Krishna awakened is known as “Hariutthan Ekadashi”.

**Festival No. - 6**

Another festival of Bishnupriya Manipuris known as “Poush Sankranti” is observed on the last day of the month ‘Poush’ (in the month of January). It may be called “Bhogali Sankranti” because various sweet items made at home are taken by the members of the family. There is also the system of exchange of these food items among the neighbours and relatives out of joy. However well-to-do families will arrange feasts where relatives and dear ones will be invited. The logic of this festival is that people are involved in agriculture from the month of Baishakh to the middle part of Poush. After collecting paddy crops from the field in the middle part of Poush after hard labour, they will take rest from the month of Magho to Chaitra (February to April). Moreover they became economically sound for which they want to observe merriment taking rich feasts with others. This Poush Sankranti of Bishnupriya Manipuris is similar with Bhogali Bihu of the Assamese people.
Festival No. - 7

Phagua or Holi festival is another festival of the year performed by Bishnupriya Manipuris. This festival has been connected on the one hand with the spring festival enjoyed by Sri Krishna and the Gopis and on the other hand with the spirit of Bengal vaishnavism because of the fact that the holi-purnima coincides with the birthday of Sri Chaitanya or Gauranga Mahaprabhu. The manner of celebration of this festival is as follows:

The full moon day of Falgun is the beginning of Phagua or Holi festival which is a day of prayer and fasting. On that day, temporary ‘temple of Lord’ is raised in the open field made with thatch and bamboo and it is beautifully decorated with the poles, tagged with flags (phirals) on the day of Hariutthan (Hari + Utthan, the emergence of the Lord) Ekadashi. In the evening of the day, the image of the Lord Sri Gouranga is taken to that temporary temple, prayers i.e. Aratis are offered to the Mahaprabhu in memory of his emergence on earth to lead mankind and rededication of all to the eternal consciousness of Lord Krishna. Similar thatch and bamboo temples are raised in all villages. After the prayer is made to the Lord, these temporary temples are burnt out in the evening with great enthusiasm in presence of men and women of all ages. The temple is tastefully decorated only to welcome the Lord. When that ceremony is over, now it is the time of rejoicing and the thatch structure is set on fire.

From the second to the fourth day, young children go from house to house to collect alms. The children go to houses in groups and it is customary that alms are given to everybody who come to the house. No social status is taken into consideration, all join in alms collection. It is not confined to young children alone, women of all ages come out and join in the revelry and visit all houses. The collections are deposited to a common fund which is utilised for permanent
construction and beautification of temple or temples in the village and also for the purchase of essential instruments. During these four days, boys and girls play together openly with abir (red powder) which promote harmony and brotherhood in the society.

Festival No. - 8

Another cultural occasion commonly held is Apakpa Puja during the month of Phalguna corresponding to February-March when prayers are offered to the first ancestor in the clan (gosti) and a day is fixed with bright sun shine where all members of the clan take part and a feast is arranged with contributions from all in the clan\textsuperscript{17}. In this occasion, the male members cook and a senior member starts the process and he is called ‘Pipa’. The feast may be vegetarian or non-vegetarian. The ladies only participate and do not join in cooking.

After preparation, first the cooked preparation is offered to the first forefather of the clan on a banana leaf. He is offered water in a glass made of bamboo. After this is ceremonially offered, members of the clan then sit in rows on the ground to eat. A spirit of togetherness is encouraged in the clan.

4.9 INFORMAL CULTURE:

Informal culture is interpreted as such behaviour of the community which comes spontaneously and these do not spring from any formal or conscious efforts. Such culture can be studied when an ordinary man is at work, his treatment of his elders and the actions and reactions from the elders towards the younger people in the community and also how they view the work habitually.

**Work culture** – It is essential for the proper existence in the modern society because development of any society depends upon work culture. This culture helps the society to advance economically and
also contribute for the social unity because people of work culture has no time to criticise others without any reason.

It is alleged that the work culture is on the decline and there is wide gap between what was there and what it is. In an informal society, work culture was prevalent in this society because farmers honestly pursued their occupation and the vast majority of them were diligent in fields. As a result, they could maintain their livelihood properly only through agriculture. Moreover, social cohesion was maintained and members did not have any other detraction to affect their work. This honest involvement in work is not seen now as the people are negligent and do not care if the resources are scarce. The result of which is manifested in their material conditions and this community became a poor community. It is seen that the people, whose main occupation is cultivation, do not cultivate their own lands and give his land to other cultivators on contractual basis i.e. “Adhi system”. The cultivators live an idle life for which this community became economically crippled.

Lack of work culture invites social disunity and unemployment problem. When people are free from work then they will be always busy to spend time gossiping without any concrete aim. As a result they will be busy to make conspiracy against others. This is also reflected in this community.

If no conscious efforts are made to improve work culture, the unemployment problem would increase among the people of the community creating social imbalance. The lands are their own but the work force comes from the neighbours. This is a queer situation observed in the present day society. It is admitted that women of the community are more active and they look for earning often as they try to earn from their looms, that type of enterprise is lacking among the
menfolk who are mostly the farmers. The poverty does not desert them.

**Culture of equal treatment**

Culture of equal treatment is the positive sign for the development of any society. Abolition of distinction among people or between men and women is very essential for the constructive development of any society. But this culture is not properly maintained in the society. A conservative society like Bishnupriya Manipuri also does not guarantee equal treatment between men and women. Women are confined to the four corners of home mainly engaged in activities which bring economic returns. Though in the sphere of ‘silent’ economic activities like looms at home, where they are assertive and brook no opposition, they are treated as subordinate creatures in political and social fields. In the affairs of the society, man dominates and woman by tradition, accepts her subordinate position. The society decrees that the best place for woman is at home and not outside. But this notion of men is wrong. It is seen that many women have the capacity to do many things for the development of the society and they are facing obstacles as the society does not like her assertion. Now the time has come, like women in many other advanced societies, the Bishnupriya Manipuri women should shake off her sense of inferiority and demand equality with men. Different organisations of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society should involve women allotting to them different portfolios so that they can take initiative to contribute for the development of the society. The attitude of women should be positive and they should spend a little time in a day for the development of the society.

It is also observed that besides women, a distinction is also seen among men in different activities of the society. Meritocracy does not have an easy run in the society. Often, the right man does not get the
right job; equality is sacrificed at the altar of sheer opportunism. But sometimes men of quality are deprived of the right position due to jealousness. The jealousy and favouritism find place and the ordinary people lose interests in justice and fair play.

"Please be jealous of the qualities which will create thousand of qualities.

Do not obstruct the qualities which will destroy thousand of qualities".

The Bishnupriya Manipuri people had connections with the soil and the traditional values found acceptance among all, the common dining on festivities and here is respect for social hierarchy long accepted. If these values are adequately matched by the proper work culture, they would be able to survive.

**Culture of behaviour**

This culture is very essential for the proper harmony in the society. It is the distinctive behaviour of the vaishnavite community like Bishnupriya Manipuri community. People of this vaishnavite society were very much conscious about their behaviour. People of this community follow the principle to respect elders. If the elders of the society meet three times with each other in a day, they would exchange bows respectfully with each other thrice. This is one remarkable behavioural culture of this society which should be maintained.

The society has one healthy system of social debate which is held on the floor of the place of religious congregation (mandap). The current social issues are debated there but the parties engaged in discussions show respects to each other before the debate is held. Every debate is directed to find out the result with polite behaviour. After the end of the debate, both parties took their seats exchanging pleasantries with each other. This is the significant feature of the debate in this society. The debates are held mainly in the mandaps of
the village specially in the month of Kartik when people gather on the occasion of “Kartikor Pali” or “Kapakor Pali” (festival of fried grain) hearing the holistic chapters of the epics – the Ramayana & the Mahabharata

Village court system prevails in this society. People of this society settle their disputes through a sound debate with proper behavioural code maintained. This type of court of village elders was visible in every village of this society.

But nowadays this culture is gradually on the wane from this society and the verdicts of the traditional courts are often challenged. People of this society also do not follow the debate culture which was previously in the interest of the society. Now the debates, in the end, become acrimonious and sound political. Naturally, when politics creeps in, such debate is harmful for the society because it creates social disharmony. So the debate culture should be reformed in this society in order to find out the real truth and to develop social harmony. Mode of talking also should be in the social spirit. This implies that when a man talks with others, his talk will invite positive result maintaining proper behaviour. Vaishnavite community like Bishnupriya Manipuri community should have a perfect behavioural culture.

**4.10 ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS:**

It is always said, women preserve a society and it is true for the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture where women play vital role. The Rasleela is the greatest cultural festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris for which it is regarded as the national festival of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

The Rasleela is broadly divided into two categories – Gopal Ras and Sri Krishna Rasleela. In Srikrishna Rasleela, there are different role of gopis such as Brinda, Chandan, Chandraboli, Malini, group dances and some times duet presentation of dances by Radha and Krishna. Except the role of Krishna other roles are played by the girls.
Generally the director who is known as Rasdhari is from the male community. Recently many women have become directors or Rasdharis of the Rasleela. Shova Sinha of Singari, Swapna Sinha, Tribeni Sinha of Chencooree, Rajabati Sinha of Kukitilla and Madhani Sinha of Sonapur etc. are remarkable in this field.

There is another type of dance culture known as Basak Sajya in which women are the main artistes. Among them Maya Basaki of Gorerbond, Renu Sinha of Gokila and Maharani Sinha of Kabuganj etc. are remarkable.

Podaboli is another form of dance which can be played in two parts- Nimai Sanyas and Mathur in which women are playing attractive role.

Bishnupriya Manipuri dance is divided into two parts- Folk dance and Classical dance. Folk dance is not rich in Bishnupriya Manipuri society, yet this community has one or two folk dances. One remarkable folk dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is Drum dance which is known to everybody. This drum dance is generally played by men in group. But recently this is performed by women also. For example, few girls of Dharam of Silchar play the drum dance. Shova Sinha of East Singari, Silchar also plays drum dance in singular way.

Another folk dance of Bishnupriya Manipuris is rain invoking dance which is participated by both male and female in the agricultural field in order to invoke rain during draught.

In the Manipuri dance recitals, many girl artistes showed their proficiency. Among them Binita Sinha, Puja Sinha, Rimi Sinha, Ritu Sinha and Maitreyi Sinha are remarkable. It is commendable that Binita Sinha of Tarapur is now the post graduate student of Rabindra Bharati Vishwavidyalaya with the fellowship of Rs. 2000/- per month from the Centre for Cultural Resource and Training under the
guidance of Kalabati Debi, professor of Manipuri dance, Rabindra Bharati Vishwavidyalaya.  

Music occupies another important position in Bishnupriya Manipuri culture. The music structure occupies an important place in the total structure of a Ras. A team of Sutradharis led by the Guru of the performances includes at least two lady singers. The remarkable Sutradharis are Monjooree Sinha, Lakshmi Sinha of Nurkha, Gokulei Singha of Unamgaon, Brinda Sinha of Meherpur, Arati Singha of Kabuganj and Padmakala Sinha of Sonapur etc.

Another kind of music performed by Bishnupriya Manipuri women is the prayer song before gods and goddesses which is known as “Aratir Ela.” Women sing different types of songs offering prayer to different types of Gods and Goddesses such as Krishna, Shiva, Jagannath, Durga, Saraswati and Lakshmi etc composed by music experts in their own language or Bengali language. Moreover they sing songs jointly in the agricultural field at the time of sowing paddy seed trees and also at the time of harvesting paddy.

In the field of fine arts Bishnupriya Manipuri women are gradually advancing. Many Bishnupriya Manipuri women are running music schools in order to provide training. Kamala Sinha of Vivekananda Road is running an institute known as Sagar Kala Niketan which is affiliated to Bengal Music College, Calcutta. Anita Sinha of Vivekananda Road is also running Saraswati Kala Academy from 2001 which is affiliated to Bangiya Sangeet Kalakendra, Calcutta. Shanti Sinha of Bekirpar, Kabuganj, Silchar is also running a Fine Arts School known as Ashwini Kala Academy. Anima Sinha of Vivekananda Road also started a music college known as Kshetramohan Sinha Music College under Vathkhanda University.
Usha Singha of Batirgram, Bijoya Rajkumari of Rajnagar are actively involved in handiwork. Bibha Sinha, and Geeta Sinha are very expert in embroidering and cloth designing. Pranati Sinha, Suni Mishra of Kabuganj and Minu Sinha of Patharkandi have taken the profession of fashion designing for their career.

In the individual performance in the field of music, the name of Anima Sinha, Bithi Sinha, Bina Sinha and Rasabati Sinha are remarkable.

Anima Sinha is a Radio and T.V. artiste and became a reputed gitarist under the guidance of her elder brother, Rajkumar Sinha. She was inspired by her father Kshetra Mohan Sinha in Atul Prasad Geet, Rabindra Sangeet and Nazrul Geeti etc. After completion of her course at the Silchar Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Silchar, she proceeded to Lucknow to get higher education on music from Vatkhanda university. After returning from Lucknow to Silchar, she opened a music school in the memory of her father Kshetromohan Sinha. She organised a music Sangsth “Nandan Sanskritik Sangstha” in 2002. She composed a Bishnupriya Manipuri cassette known as “Aar More Ti Ningsingh Nais” and composed light music on bhajan and commercial folksong etc. She is now the examiner of Vatkhanda University from 1987. She conducts examinations for Nazrul geeti, Rabindra sangeet under Bangiya Sangeet Parishad, Calcutta.

She secured 1\textsuperscript{st} position in Rabindra Sangeet Competition organised in the sixty years observation of Silchar Sangeet Vidyalaya. She also secured 1\textsuperscript{st} position in patriotic song (Group- C) in 2001 on Rabindra Nazrul birthday celebration organised by pioneer club, Silchar. She secured 1\textsuperscript{st} position in 2004 on Nazrul Geeti Competition organised by All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangsth, Silchar Branch.

Bina Sinha of Vivekananda Road, Silchar is earning reputation not only in India but also in Bangladesh in Bishnupriya Manipuri music. But one thing we must remember in this connection that she has neither attained any musical qualification from any musical college nor any Guru in this skill. Actually she is not a singer and is inspired by Dils Lakshmindra Sinha, a music lover of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. She first gave song at the cassette “Pung Ningor Ela”. She also sang song in Kokborak language, a tribal language of Tripura in a cassette known as “Biorama Kuttai” in 1994. Pouri Sangsth, of Bangladesh awarded “Geetiswami Award” to her in 1998 for her contribution in music.

Chandana Sinha of Silchar is now the Vice Principal of Chitrangadh Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Silchar. She passed Sangeet Visharad from Vatkhanda Sangeet Vidyapeeth, Lucknow. She passed Sangeetshree in the Bishnupriya Manipuri music from Chitrangadh Sangeet Kala Academy, Silchar, a cultural institution run by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad, Silchar. Santana Sinha is a T.V. artiste and passed Visharad in dance from Bangiya Parishad. She is now the dance teacher of Chitrangadh Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Silchar.

Beli Sinha of Silchar, a Radio & T.V. artiste is associated with the music. She passed Visharad from Vatkhanda Sangeet Vidyapeeth,
Lucknow and also passed Bishnupriya Manipuri Sangeetshri course from Chitrangada Sangeet Kala Academy, a cultural institution run by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad.

Folkgame is very much popular among Bishnupriya Manipuri women. This is very essential to maintain unity and co-operation among them. Folklore game is very much familiar with every village of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas. Folklore games played by Bishnupriya Manipuri women are Kabadi, Bandi, Redy, Gilla and Kanamachi (go as you like) etc.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women also have its own folk dance i.e Khupak Ishei which is also known as Karatalinritya. This folk dance specially takes place at the time of Durga Puja. Song of this folk dance is very attractive and sometimes competitions are arranged among various groups. In 2005 Bishnupriya Manipuri women of Silchar Town organised a competition of Khupak Ishei in which teams from Silchar town, Bhakatpur, Chencooree and Kabuganj participated and the best team was Bhakatpur team followed by Silchar team and Kabuganj team respectively.

In the observance of religious festivals such as Janmastami, Radhastami, Shibaratri, Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Jhulan Purnima and Dool Purnima etc women of this community have its specific role.

Thus the role of women is very much significant for the flourishing of the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture.
4.11 FORMATION OF THE NIHIL BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI SANSKRITI PARISHAD:

The Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad was formed at the 14th General Adhibeshan of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha held at Andoorgang of Anipur in 1955 with the presidentship of Sri Golapbabu Sinha and secretaryship of Suranath Sinha in order to develop the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture. This organisation began to ponder over the increment of the wages of drum beaters and singers of vaishnavite culture. Moreover it initiates its effort to get financial assistance from the government for the proper flourishing of the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture.

But it is to be mentioned that this organisation could not progress in organised way though the president and the secretary of the Parishad contributed individually for the development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture. Sanskriti Parishad was properly organised in 1997 after the Mahasammelan of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya and Sanskriti Parishad held at Bhakatpur, Silchar with the presidentship of Sri Jogendra Kumar Sinha and secretaryship of Lakshmi Kanta Sinha. Within few days the organisation was properly developed and began to nourish properly the culture forming different sub committees in the area of vaishnabite singers, Drum beaters, Duars, Rasdharis, Sutradharis and Flute players. But the organisation faced a sudden blow due to the premature death of its general secretary Lakshmi Kanta Sinha.

Mathura Sinha, another devoted worker of Mahasabha, came to take the responsibility of the general secretary of the organisation. With his initiative in the month of February 2001, the Parishad organised a workshop of songs at the Silchar Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Silchar under the guidance of Pandit Matilal Sinha and Chandra Mohan Rajkumar. Parishad also organised a demonstration of song with the
students of that workshop. But due to ill health he resigned from the post and Sudhanya Sinha took the responsibility on Sept 16, 2001. But in the 41st Adhibeshan of Mahasabha held at Kalain on March, 2002 Sanskriti Parishad was formed with the presidency of Jogendra Kumar Sinha and secretaryship of Sri Banabir Sinha. This newly formed body began to demand before the government to broadcast of the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture in Doordarshan and All India Radio and to accomplish this mission a delegation consisting of Sri Jogendra Kumar Sinha, President, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad, Banabir Sinha, General Secretary, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad, Udoysingha, General Secretary, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha, and Mathura Sinha, General Secretary, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, proceeded to Delhi to discuss with the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Sushama Swaraj and its officials for the broadcasting of Bishnupriya Manipuri culture in the All India Radio and Doordarshan.

Due to the effort of the Sanskriti Parishad, Chitrangadha Sangeet Kala Academy was formed with the presidency of Pandit Matilal Sinha and secretaryship of Prabhash Kanti Sinha for the development of Bishnupriya Manipuri Sangeet and dance with the inclusion of songs composed by Matilal Sinha and dances demonstrated by Banamali Sinha in the syllabus framed by this academy. It conducts the 1st yr., 2nd yr and Final year examination of Sangeetshree and awards certificate who has passed the Sangeetshree course. Similarly it has the programme to start course on dance. Now Sanskriti Parishad is pondering seriously to produce
film on the Bishnupriya Manipuri culture which was broadcasted twice through local channel.

A chart of the office bearers of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sanskriti Parishad is given below chronologically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Golap Babu Sinha</td>
<td>Suranath Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Matilal Sinha</td>
<td>Birendra Kumar Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Jogendra Kumar Sinha</td>
<td>Lakshmi Kanta Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathura Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sudhanya Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Jogendra Kumar Sinha</td>
<td>Banabir Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Jogendra Kumar Sinha</td>
<td>Banabir Sinha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above analysis it is seen that the culture of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is distinct from other linguistic groups. It is a universal truth that culture is the manifestation of the identity of any community. So seeing the culture one can assume the identity of the community. So every linguistic community must preserve its own culture by their efforts and appealing media to highlight their culture. With the change of time due to the materialistic attitude for acquiring money, people of any community are not interested to preserve their own culture. This is also visible in case of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community. Moreover government is not sympathetic to highlight the culture of this community.
REFERENCES:


3. Sinha, Satyendra Kumar, informant, Village Singari, P.O. Patharkandi, District Karimganj, Assam.


6. Chakraborty, Amalendu, informant, Professor, Gauhati University, Assam.

7. Sinha, Matilal, informant, Village & P.O. Bhakatpur, P.S. Silchar, District Cachar, Assam.

8. Sinha, Ranjana, informant, village & P.O. New Bhakatpur, Silchar, District Cachar, Assam.


10. Sinha, Brojendra Kumar, Boran Dahanir Ela, an article published in the Souvenir, World Conference, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha, Silchar, 2003, page no 51.

11. Banerjee, Sandhya, informant, Meherpur, Silchar, District Cachar, Assam.


14. Sinha, Jogendra Kumar, informant, Vivekananda Road, Silchar, District Cachar, Assam.

15. Debi, Ramani, informant, village, Nurkha, P.O. Longai Reserve, District Karimganj, Assam.


17. Sinha, Subhash Chandra, informant, Village Chamtilla, P.O. Dullovcherra, District Karimganj, Assam.


19. Rajkumar, Chandra Mohan, informant, Shibbari Lane, Vivekananda Road, Silchar, District Cachar, Assam.

20. Sinha, Simu, Mahasabhar Chaturdashi Adhibeshan, an article published in the magazine, Nuwa Ela, July 2004, Silchar, District, Cachar, Assam.