“Introspection and Revision
On
The Tāla System of the Jagoi Rāsa Līla”

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INTRODUCTION:

The Sanskrit word Tāla has various meanings. Musical time or measure, clapping of hands, slapping of hands together or against one’s arm, etc. Its root word is ‘Tal’ means flat, level, the palm. Karātala means the palm of the hand, clapping the hands. Bhutala means the surface of the earth. From the connotation of the surface of the earth humans became understanding the time which came to be known as tāla. Clapping hands is known as doing tāla. So also every percussion instrument which has round flat faces that creates beautiful sounds while beating on it also came to be known as tāla. “The word tāla is used in music in several senses: (1) instrument – a type of ghanavādyā which is called tāla or Kāṁsyatāla (bronze cymbal), (2) action in general – for instance, striking with the hand, (3) a specific action – one type of saśabda kriyā (on beat), (4) a specific time span – a time span consisting of the repetition of a group of kriyās such as caccatpuṭa, tīntāl, etc., (5) the inner concept i.e. the idea of supporting and unifying gīta, vādya and nṛtta by a series of kriyās,”¹ Today the Sanskrit word Tāla is used as a meiteilon word of Manipur even though it is derived from Sanskrit language.

Humans worship the Supreme GodHead by creating images and idols of various sizes naming differently so that people could able to see and concentrate worshipping the formless, shapeless Supreme Being. Likewise, people started to create the art of representing the time known as Tāla in different sizes giving different names which is employed in Sangeet (songs, instrumental music, and dance) as a medium and a part of devotional services of the Supreme God since the Vedic age.

It is quite difficult to explain the philosophy of ‘Tāla’ as it is invisible. All the materials whatever we see, living and non-living have their own life span and do will vanish when their

time is over. It does have different durations for all the things like planets, sun, moon, stars, animals, birds, trees, fields, buildings, people etc. All this different time durations is measured by the humans from the earth’s journey revolving in its axis along with sun, moon, etc. which is the only medium to measure the time.

The measurement of time on this earth is created from this planet itself. When the earth revolves one complete round of its own, it makes one day and one night. From today’s sun rise upto tomorrow’s sun rise makes one day which is the first unit of the time measurement. This first unit is divided into two halves, day and night. The first unit one day when counted to 30/31 days makes one month which is the second unit of time measurement. One month is also divided into two halves, waxing moon/Sukla Paksha/Thanil (period of the brightening moon) and waning moon/Krishna Paksha/Thasi (period of the fading moon). When one month reached to 12 months it makes one year. One year is the complete cycle of time measurement on earth where all the seasons are included. Once more it is also divided into Uttarakarnayana and Dakshinayana. Uttarakarnayana- The northward journey of the sun from winter to summer. Dakshinayana- Southward journey of the sun, summer to winter.

As the Tāla represents the time, its structure is also prepared by following the structure of time measurement consisting two sides right side and left side just like day and night of a day, waxing moon and waning moon of a month, and Uttarakarnayana and Dakshinayana of a year. The right and left sides of a tāla have various pādas of same number of beats in each side. Months are made up of days which are made up of day and night, likewise every pādas consists of various beats, and every beats are made by updown motions representing the two half of a beat which makes the tāla representing an image of the structure of the time since ancient period. Such codified tāla structure is still practiced in the Nata Sankirtana music system with strict
preservation used in ritual performances in Manipur. Thus, it can conclude that the tāla is an image of time created and designed by man/human which is considered auspicious and used in worshipping in olden days where the beats are the basic units making in different sizes known by different names. Tāla is the art to represent the time. This ‘time’ is nothing but the beating sounds which gives a particular timing. Laya or speed/tempo is also a part of tāla which has three levels. Fast/dhrut, medium/madhium, slow/bilambit. So, tāla can identify with a number of rhythms and pulse which comprises of on beats and off beats. It is not easy to explain tāla and there is not an exact term of tāla into English.

The Tāla is the rhythmic arrangement of beats in a cyclic manner. Each cycle is complete in itself and is repetitive. There are various sizes of Tāla which is formed by the addition of small units of time comprises within a minute in a definite manner. Tāla is an art form in which experts represents the time (Māhākāla) of on beats and off beats. Man creates icons or images of the Almighty God in different shapes and sizes. Likewise, Tāla is also created by the experts representing the time (Kāla) in different shapes and sizes giving different names and used them in ritual dancing and singing since the Vedic times.

ELEMENTS OF TĀLA:

There are some basic essential elements of Nata Sankirtana Tāla on whose regulations the structure of a Tāla is created. They are Tānmit(kala), mihul (Kalā), Mihul Mapi (Dhruva), Nimesha, Ghat (Laya), Tāntha (Saśabda Pāta), Haidokpa (Niḥśabda Pāta), yet (samya), oy (sanni Pāta) and Pāda. These elements will explain in detail in the next term report.

➢ Tānmit (kala):- The single unit of the fastest beat or the quickest sound which can be uttered by human tongue, playable by hands or fingers on a percussive instrument, or any
other means is known as Tānmit or kala. It is the fastest beat which can create by man. Eg., the sound of a small bell (sarik). The smallest unit has two beats to form a pulse (Kalā/mihul).

- **Mihul/Kalā or Pulse**: The Mihul or Pulse of a Tāla is the two motions of the rising and falling actions of hand while clapping or doing a Tāla. A Mihul or Pulse (Kalā) does have two equal halves which represents the form of a day where it is divided into day and night.

- **Mihul Mapi/Dhruva**: All those prime beats starting from the smallest or the fastest, a human can ever utter, which cannot further breakdown or unchangeable, but can take to its double in size, fourth times bigger in size (double of double) and so on. These pulse beats are known as Mihul Mapi or Dhruva beats. Dhruva is another term given to its initial Mihul or Pulse of the five Nimeshas. They are actually, the determiners of the other Kalā or Pulse of their respective groups. The very Sanskrit word ‘Dhruva’ more or less, gives the meaning of unchangeable, fixed, firm, unmoving, constant, permanent, and eternal etc. Mapi is another common name given by Nata Sankirtana tradition to the first and second fastest beats i.e., 2 and 3 beats of a pulse known as tānchap Mapi and Menkup Mapi and so on. The Manipuri word “Mapi” gives the meaning of a progenitor and thus this very name suggest the idea that each Dhruva pulse being the progenitor produces the concern Margas (path) as there off springs.

- **Chāng/Nimesha**: The initial or the primary beats (Dhruva) within a pulse is broadly divided into five divisions of time measurement i.e., five primary initial beats of 2,3,5,7,9 are known as five Nimeshas.
Ghāt/Laya: - There are various sizes of Pulse beat in the Tāla. The different size or the speed/tempo of a Pulse beat within the different amount of units is known as Laya which is known as Ghāt in the Nata Sankirtana music system. This Ghāt/Laya has three levels, fast, medium and slow. When the size of a pulse beat increase in its double amount it is known as Setu Ghāt (Chitra Marga). From this double, if the pulse beat is again increase in its fourth times bigger in size from its original beats, it is known as Bedi ghāt (Bartik Marga). And once again if it is increase at its eight times larger in size from its basic beats, it came to be known as Lambi ghāt (Dakshina Marga). Easiest example of this process is 2-4-8-16 and so on.

Tāntha/Saśabda Pāta: - On beats

Haidokpa/ Niḥśabda Pāta: - Off beats

Kāstha: - A complete structural form of a Tāla is known as Kāstha.

Yet/Samya: - Right side

Oy/Sanni Pāta: - Left side

Pāda: - When we do a sound by clapping hands or beating a wood on metallic things it makes a definite movement of our hands. In creating that sound we use a force in two and fro motion. Rising and falling down of our palms to strike with each other signifies the rising sun and setting sun representing day and night. Such movement of our hands to make a beat is known as pulse (Kalā). As a day is represented by a pulse (Kalā) of a Tāla as day and night time where each pulse consist of two equal halves, one for the rising and the other for the falling action. This pulse (Kalā) when came in pair is known as Pāda. Thus, a Pāda represents the structure of a month. As for a month has two equal halves of waning (Sukla Pakhya) and waxing (Krishna Pakhya) days, a Pāda also consists of a
collection of beats in two halves. This represents a lunar month however is created in any desired size according to the nature and demand of the Tāla. Hence, the smallest Pāda is made of two beats and further four, six, eight, ten beats within a pulse and so on. As human beings stands on the two feet, all the Pāda are also made of two equal parts. And further a year is represented by a measurement of a Tāla, which consists of two Pāda placing on right and left hand side. As a year is the only perfect measurement of earth’s time, which consists of two equal halves of summer and winter (Uttarayana and Dakhinayana), the measurement of a Tāla is also made by placing at least one Pāda each on the right and left hand sides.

In the right side of a Tāla the beats represents by the Pulse or Mihul of on-beats and off-beats composition. The number of Pulse or Mihul along with the on-beats and off-eats of the right side will be the same on its left side and it is the exact repetition of the right side. In both sides a Tāla starts with a Mihul or Pulse of on-beat. A Tāla is named, such as Ek tāla, Dui tāla, Tīntāla, etc. following the number of on-beat Pulse or Mihul on the right side of a Tāla and the left side is regarded as the repeat form of the right side of a Tāla.

**NATA SANKIRTANA: -**

There are so many rules and regulations for the ritual performances given by the Indian Vedas which has become out dated and remain as only archaic in the Veda. It is true that the Nata Sankirtana music system is totally different in its practical form from that of the music schools found in India at present but never ever thought that it might had followed the rules of Veda Sāstra very strictly until and unless it is proven by the scholars of Manipur. From this we all came to realized that from the very beginning when this music style was invented the pandits
and the experts were mastered in the Vedas and Sāstras. The Vedic Tāla system which is explained in the Sāstra are very much neatly preserve and adopted in the Nata Sankirtana process.

The Nata Sankirtana music system of Manipur is generally presumed as had been developed along with the timeless and infallible tract of Vedic Sangeet vyavasthā (along with the local fragrance of the Meitei tradition). This has been evidenced from three broad sections. First, the names and the words like Audibāsa, Rāga, Mel, Dhrumel, Sanchār, Bhushnā, etc. used in Nata Sankirtana music are found explained in the Vedic Sangeet Vyavasthā. Secondly, Pāda structures of the Tāla punglons is another proof, and the third one is that the structure of a Tāla consist of left side and right side in two equal halves.

During the time of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra Maharaj (1759-61, 1763-1798 A.D.) the Gaudiya Vaishnavism was codified in a new form blending with the already existing elements of Meitei culture of Manipur. The Meitei society embraces this religion widely by accepting the performance of Nata Sankirtana, created by Maharaj Bhagyachandra from the previously existing Kirtans, and also by applying the rules of Sankirtana given in the scriptures, by observing in every ritual ceremony related to their life from birth to death. Nata Sankirtana is performed not merely in the sense where it is regarded as a form of kirtan in groups but a well developed system of spiritual practice, a way of puja, a process of worship (Raga Marga). So, Nata Sankirtana is considered as the heart and soul of the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

The primary sequence of a Nata Sankirtana follows a particular structure of Tāla series which are unavoidable. The Nata Sankirtana Gurus of Manipur of olden times had sound knowledge of Tāla and they have invented various Tāla compositions since bygone days
following the rules given in scriptures which are use in ritual worship. A tentative sequence of a Nata Sankirtana performance is as follows:-

1. **Rāga Houba**:-

   I. **Pungi Rāga** (*Rāga of Pung percussion*): *Rāga of Nata Sankirtana* music had a specific structure which is very unique in its nature. It is very strictly followed till date. It starts with *Rāga of pung* (percussion) which is known as *Pungi Rāga*. It is the *Rāga* of instrument without any vocal sound. When a *Dhruva Mel Tāla* is performed starting from *Dhruva (mapi/prime beat)* by increasing its size in double (*dwiguna*) and forth times bigger (*Chouguna*) continuously making it in three parts is called *Pungi Rāga*. This part is regarded as chanting the name Chaitanya Nityai 3 times after which Shree Radha Krishna are worshipped which is followed by creating an imaginary idol of God staring from toes/legs to waist, waist to neck and from neck to head. Here all the performers *pala* bow their heads showing courtesy.

   II. **Guru Ghat**: *Guru Ghat* is the second part of *Rāga Houba* where the creation of imaginary idol is completed and giving life in it. It is the part of percussion without vocal.

   III. **Eshei gi Rāga** (*Vocal Rāga*): It has two parts. *Rāga* with vocal sound without word and with words. The first one is sung in *ta aa ri ee na ta* without words. This part is composed in three levels and for *Rāga Achouba* three and a half level. The levels are named as *Ghor/low, Pancham/medium* and *Drigha/high*. There is an extra small portion known as *Pancham Matek* found only in *Rāga Achouba*. After the part of *Ghor* is sung, the *Panchama* and *Drigha* are followed but in each
end *Ghor* is repeated again and again. In the third, there comes *Rāga* with vocal sound with word. It explains about the particular *Rāga* which also mentions its name at the end. This part of a *Rāga* is called *Bāhon*. It is not found in the *Rāga Achouba*, instead of *Rāga Bāhon* there is *Gaura Chandrika/Bhabi*. The *Rāga Achouba* does not have a *Bāhon* because it is not a *Rāga* of song but a process of prayer, the *Rāga Marga*. Here the performers imaginarily call the God through the medium of music (instrumental and vocal) in the given *Rāga* structure for the oblation the *Nata Sankirtana*. From this rule of *Rāga Marga* structure the *Rāga* of song in *Nata Sankirtana* observe the same structure with slight changes. Being a *Gaudiya Vaishnava* ceremony it is compulsory to perform *Gaura Chandrika* or the remembering of *Gauranga Mahaprabhu*.

IV. **Sanchāra**: when a *Tāla prabandha* is performed starting with large size fourth times increase from its prime beat (*chougu*na), and then triple size (*triguna*), double (*dwigna*) and ends in its basic units of beat is called *Sanchāra*.

V. **Bāhon**: Explains about the particular *Rāga* by narrative its features and mentioning its name.

VI. **Kartik Sanchāra**:

VII. **Rāga Ghor**: The first level of vocal *Rāga*.

2. **Rāga Tāba**: When a *Tāla* begins from large *misra* and decreases in 5 different *Tāla* upto the smallest *Nimesha tānchap* in a *prabandha* repeatedly, it is called *Rāga Tāba*. In this part the performers will worship *Gouranga Mahaprabhu* by singing *Gaurachandrika*. 

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3. **Mel**: When the structure of the *Tāla* has a *Dhruva* (prime beat) and a *pāda* (beats) for right side and left side, this structure is known as *Mel*.

4. **Tānchap**: The different form of *Tānchap Tāla* in *ekpadi ektāla* structure is performed during this part. Songs of *ShrimadRadha Govinda* were sung by worshipping Gauranga *Mahaprabhu* who is in a state of deep meditation for *Shri RadhaKrishna*.

5. **Menkup**: Here all the *palas* (performers) will walk *parikramā* in anti clockwise direction within the performance area known as *Bedi Koiba* which will follow with the part of *Menkup*. The different forms of *Menkup Tāla* is executed in *ekpadi ektāla* formation.

6. **Beitha or Swādhina**: In this stage all the performers will sit down where the first part of *puja* is concluded. Here another *beitha Rāga* comprises of *pungi rāga*, vocal *rāga* along with *bāhon* will begin. Even though this part is little bit relax from the *puja* episode, it is still consist of *rāga*, *kirtan*, *jugal ārti*, *challi prarthana*, *lālsā* and *manashiksha*.

7. **Bijoy**: The concluded part in which *Nityai Pada*, *Sho gosai*, *Nāma thingatpa*, *Haribol*, *Govinda bhaj Radhe*, *Joy Bhai*, *Chaitanya Nityai* are offered.

**PHYLOSOPHY OF NATA SANKIRTANA**

The Sanskrit word *Nata* is added with the word *Sankirtana* to express the idea of observing the prayer of *Sankirtana*. As the word *Nata* and *Natta* gives the meaning of prayer and
actor or dancer respectively, some used to interpret the *Nata Sankirtana* in the meaning of actor or dancers. But the meaning of the word *Nata* as prayer is quite more appropriate and reasonable in using with the *Sankirtana.*

The Sanskrit word *Sankirtana* means a *puja*, worship, oblation which is different with the meaning of the Sanskrit word *Kirtana* in the sense of praising or laudation of god or King or great person. The meaning of *Kirtana* does not give any idea of performing a *puja*. An important thing to mention here about the language is that when a prefix or suffix is added to a root word the meaning of the root word sometimes totally changed.\(^3\) Eg. When the word ‘San’ is added with the word ‘_*Kirtana*_’ the meaning of the words ‘*San*_’ and ‘*Kirtan*_’ lost their identity and turns into a new different meaning. And the word *Nata* is also added in the sense ‘prayer’ which is confused with the meaning of an actor (dance and music). As the *Nata Sankirtana* of Manipur is a way of prayer or *Rāga Mārga*, it will not be improper to term it as the *Mārga Sangeet*.

The aim and objectives of performing the *Nata Sankirtana* according to Gaudiya Vaishnavism, is believed to be the three desires of *Shri Krishna*. In order to fulfill this desires *Shri Krishna* had to incarnate as *Radha*. The three desires are: - 1. The beauty of *Shri Krishna*, felt by Shrimati Radha only, even *Shri Krishna* didn’t experienced it. 2. The degree of love of Shrimati Radha for the Lord could not experienced by *Shri Krishna*. 3. The blissful happiness in the love of Shri Krishna only experienced by Radha makes *Shri Krishna* incarnate as *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*. *Shri Krishna* as *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* with Shrimati Radhika in one body could experience the three desires through *Sankirtana*. For this, in the performance of *Nata Sankirtana Gauranga Chandrika/Bhabi* is a compulsory part and the performers (*pala*) of this *Nata*

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\(^2\) Haorokcham Sanakhya Ebotombi, ‘*Nata Sankirtana*’, Guru Gulapi Nata Sankirtana Academy, Imphal 2009, p-14

\(^3\) Haorokcham Sanakhya Ebotombi, ‘*Nata Sankirtana*’, Guru Gulapi Nata Sankirtana Academy, Imphal 2009, p-43
Sankirtana represents the devotees of the Gauranga Sampraday. Therefore, Nata Sankirtana became compulsory in every ritual ceremony of a family who are Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

The Sanskrit word “Sankirtana” means a Puja, worship or oblation along with the chanting and singing the name of God and as such it is somewhat different in meaning from the Sanskrit word “Kirtana” which means praising, speaking about, narrating, chanting the name of God or King or great person, as explain in the book Nata Sankirtana.⁴

Nata Sankirtana is performed not merely as a form of Kirtana in groups but also as a system of spiritual practice, a way of Puja/worship (Rāga Marga). It is considered as a collective prayer, a meditation and a great sacrifice (Mahayajna as the Vaishnavas call it). It lasts for about five hours at a stretch with a lot of rituals, movements and rhythmic patterns, strictly after the Vaishnavite faith, coloured with old Manipuri tradition.⁵ So, Nata Sankirtana is considered as the heart and soul of the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

The core purpose of the Nata Saṇkirtana is the devotional service to Lord Krishna. Specific tālas, pada, chanda, gati are essential in observing the devotional service as given by Sāstras. This devotional service of Lord Krishna (commonly known as Shri Shri Govindaji by the Meitei Bhaktas) is divided into eight stages of time during a day known as the Astakāla. Before the creation of Jagoi Rāsa Līla by Bhagyachandra Maharaj the episodes of Rāsa Leela occurs in the night, and it is known as Ahing Niti. For this reason the Jagoi Rāsa Līla is performed during the night time. In the words of Angana Jhaveri: “The performance of the Rasa-līla is allotted the last period in the eight-part time division, known as the ashtakāla, of Krishna’s diurnal schedule. It begins at about 7.00 p.m. after the sandhya-arati (evening prayer) and ends

⁴ Haorokcham Sanakhya Ebombi, ‘Nata Sankirtana’, Guru Gulapi Nata Sankirtana Academy, Imphal 2009, p-44
⁵ Elangbam Nilakanta Singh, “Manipuri Dance”, Omsons Pub., New Delhi, 1997, p-63
early in the morning in time for the mangala-arati (Morning Prayer). According to John Straton in his work, At the play with Krishna, this shows that the Rāsa-lila performances is an integral part of this daily cycle, and that “temple worship of Krishna and the Rāsa-lila performance in the rasa-mandapa are two arenas of a single dramatic activity.” The image of rotation is also emphasized by the duration of the performance which is related to the setting and the rising of the sun.

NATA SANKIRTAN AS MAHA YAGYA

The Sanskrit word “Rāga” has several meanings such as, colour, caste, psychic pleasure, a portion of Indian music etc. “Mano ranjate ragaha”- as Matangi says. It means enlightenment of the mind or what pleases the mind is Rāga. In Nata Sankirtana music the word Rāga is also employed. Here, generally, it means a song which is used at the starting part of a song sequence. But the meaning of the Sanskrit word Rāga used in Manipuri Nata Sankirtana music does have several meanings. Even though, it means the Rāga of a song, it is also used in the sense of the Sanskrit word “Rāga-Mārga” too. Rāga Mārga gives the meaning of prayer, deep meditation in devotion towards god, path of devotion etc. Here, the word Rāga represents both the meanings. The Rāga Achouba of Nata Sankirtana Music has a unique structure which is designed for the purpose of worship following the rules given by the Sāstras. The Rāga Achouba is the process in which the performers invoke God through the medium of music (instrumental and vocal) in the given Rāga structure for the oblation the Nata Sankirtana. Rāga Achouba was created with loyal and staunch faith of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra, still treated to be the most important Rāga in Manipur by the followers of Gaudiya Vaishnava sect. The imaging and the conceptual designing of the adored and revered body figure of Lord Gouranga is known as the Rāga itself. So,

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6 Doshi Saryu, “Dances of Manipur the classical tradition”, Marg Pub., 1989, p-34
Rajarshi Maharaj himself with other senior Gurus had the belief that misfortune and bad consequences may befall to the worshippers (audience), the performing artistes and the karma karta (the sponsor) as well as the undertaker of the performance, if there had been any lapses or break occurred in the process of Rāga Achouba. As such, in the starting of this Rāga Achouba all the Gurus and the performers Pala had with themselves greatest care and respect to the Rāga Achouba with awe. The first structure and nature of Rāga Achouba was four Anuwa without Alangkar. Then followed by Guru Ghāt, and just after the percussions of the Pung in the rhythms and beats, begins the vocal Rāga. Playing in the rhythm of the Pung will continue up to ‘Panchama’ Rāga, and then the rhythm of the Pung will be diversified (separated). The punglon will be on Rāga Dirgha then a back to the last but one step that preceded. Rhythm will be separated again. The first Sanchar will be played. After this Gauranga Avatar will be sung, with some proper Pung rhythms to be continued into Kartik Sanchar beats.

The Pung of Nata Sankirtana is presumed to be the God Himself by the Gaudiya Vaishnabs and its bol or the syllabic sounds of the Pung gives various interpretations. ‘Ghin’ syllable of Pung is considered to be Shrimati Radhika, ‘Tāṅg’ sound is regarded as Shri Krishna. Likewise, the three sounds ‘Tā’, ‘Tak’, Tāta resembles Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar respectively. With slight variations, some Vaishnabs regard the same sounds in different interpretations like ‘Tak’ as Chaitanya, ‘Tā’ as Nityainanda and ‘Tāta’ syllable as Abdeita. In this way, the syllables sounds of Pung at the beginning of Rāga Achouba – ‘Ten Ten Tā Tah – Tāṅg’ reminds one as if spell ‘Chaitanya Nityai’, and after that ‘Ghinaghra Dhe Dhen’ believes to represent ‘Shri Shri Radha Govindaji’. This gives the idea and conception of establishment and the beginning of the Nata Sankirtana by chanting the syllables of Shri Chaitanya Nityainanda Radha Krishna and this way the Nata Sankirtana begins. Solāha Nāma – the sixteen
names i.e., Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare, this sacred name of Godhead will intoned by the Pung in transverse and transpose the grand rhythmic tone in middle sweet note of ‘Ghinaghra Ghin Tāh Ghin Ten Ten Ten’ and so on. In the end part of Bijoy, the last part of Nata Sankirtana in the syllable sounds ‘Thet Dhen’ the Pala or the performer singers verbally spells ‘Joi Bhai’, and in the sound ‘Ten Ten Tā Tak – Tāng’ they sing ‘Chaitanya Nityai’, in the ‘Ghinaghra Dhe – Dhe’ they speak ‘Bhai Bhai’ and again in the repeated sound ‘Ten Ten Tā Tak – Tāng’ spells ‘Chaitanya Nityai’ once more.

After observing acutely the percussion beats and the rhythm syllables of the Pung in Nata Sankirtana some scholars, researchers advance to state that all the syllables or the language of the Pung rhythms had been found to composed on the Tāla structure of the ‘Dhruva Pāda’ (one Dhruva and three Pāda) which is known as ‘Chatuspāda’. In this Chastuspāda, as believed earnestly and faithfully by the Rishis and Seers of the Vedic age, there includes the state of ‘Pranava’ – evocation and dedication directly to God. And such Chastuspāda structure is found only in the Vedic music treatises and could not be found anywhere else. So, the syllable beats of the rhythms of Pung had been always regarded as process of worship to God and given deep respect and awe to be divine and holy.

In the Nata Sankirtana tradition, as already mentioned in the previous first term report, there are seven parts in the whole practice sequence which are unavoidable. They are known as Rāga Houba, Rāga Tāba, Mel, Tānchap, Menkup, Swadhina and Bijoy respectively. The first five parts that is Rāga Houba, Rāga Tāba, Mel, Tānchap and Menkup are regarded as the most essential parts by the gurus of Nata Sankirtana. In the sixth part, i.e., Swādhina, one can enclose the kirtana part which indicates and differentiates the particular ceremony observing like that of
marriage, Srāddha, Rāsa Līla and other Guna Kirtana, Nāma Kirtana and Līla Kirtana. The Bijoy is the last or end part of the whole process of Nata Sankirtana ritual performance which makes the Sankirtana complete.

In short it can be said that the six parts (the first five parts along with the last part Bijoy) are regarded as the Sankirtana Māhā Yeigya, a complete process of worship and prayer, whereas, the sixth part Swādhina of the Nata Sankirtana sequence which is also a compulsory component, is observed as entirely Kirtana part following the Vedic Sangeet Vyavasthā. The Swādhina part of Nata Sankirtana which is regarded as the Kirtana episode is also begins with the same process as the Nata Sankirtana used to start. Here another Rāga other than Rāga Achouba is performed. The Jagoi Rāsa Līla is included in this part of Swādhina. The Jagoi Rāsa Līla is a Līla Kirtana and it starts with a Rāga as a new beginning and is concluded with Challi Prārthana. Challi is a Sanskrit word which means “devotion towards God” or “proceeding ahead”. Prārthana or prayer is used in the sense of oblation and offer of the dance to the God. Māha Rāsa, Vasanta Rāsa, Kunja Rāsa, Nitya Rāsa and Diva Rāsa are all the beautiful creative compositions of the great exponents as a complete Kirtana part of the Nata Sankirtana.

SANKIRTANA AND RĀSA LĪLA:-

The different forms of Vaishnavism in India were built up under a single foundation of the eternal bliss where all the sects search for God and try to understand the God through love and devotion. The devotees try to lead a way of life that can help a person to remain non-egotistic, so that they can attain the enlightenment by leaving behind the entire materialistic world. Religion is not important to reach the God but need a way of life that entirely devoted in love and dedication. It does not believe in religions, but there was formal system of conversation into this Dharma (duty). The Vedic culture was the foundation of this Dharma and it is known as
Sanatana Dharma. “In Sanskrit Sanatana means eternal. Dharma derived from Sanskrit verbal root “Dhri” which means ‘to hold’. Sanatana Dharma literally means that which holds eternally. The main aim of Sanatana Dharma is to experience, even for a moment, the eternal presence of the Brahma.” 7 All the groups follow different ways which may direct them toward a particular goal. Way are many according to believe and the diverse faiths. People’s thought are differ according to places and time.

In Manipur, it is true that the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnava reached the topmost beauty which is also regarded as has attained the highest eminence in the spiritual fervor throughout the country. Still, the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnava also got a unique form and quality which is again totally different from the other sects found in India. The name Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnava itself gives the idea that it is a mixed culture of Gaudiya Sampradaya and Meitei tradition which was prevalent before the advent of Vaishnavism in Manipur. It was in during the reign of King Bhagyachandra Maharaj when the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnavism was codified mingling the elements of the Meitei Sanāmahi culture with the Gaudiya Vaishnava customs. The Meitei society embrace this culture widely by performing the Nata Sankirtana in every ritual ceremony related to their life from birth to death. Nata Sankirtana is performed not merely in the sense where it is regarded as a form of Kirtana in group but in the concept that of Rāga Mārga, a way of devotion, worship, puja. So, Nata Sankirtana is regarded as the heart and soul of the Meitei Gaudiya Vaishnavism, which is an element from the Veda itself. Until the present generation, Manipuri society still performs this Nata Sankirtana music style which has become the only music system in India who follows the rules given by the Veda.

7 Pani, jivan, celebrating of life, Indian folk dances, p-6
The Rāsa Līla of Manipur is a part of the Nata Sankirtana music where everything is same except that it is a Līla Kirtana, a visual art form. The performances done at Govindaji temple and in other local temples are not a simple dance performance but a kind of worship, prayer, devotion towards the God. That is why without the Sankirtana the Rāsa Līla cannot be performed in the temples.

The Bhangi Pareng Achouba which was performed for the first time during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra Maharaj on the Kartik Purnima in 1779 A.D. came to be known as the Jagoi Rāsa Līla of Manipur later called the Māha Rāsa. The love of Shri Krishna gleaned from the study of the scriptures can easily be attained by enjoying the Rāsa Līla in a short period of time. The Rāsa Bhangi or the Jagoi Rāsa Līla which was presented at the time of Bhagyachandra Maharaj was based on the book Shrimad Bhagavata only. As the Bhangi Pareng Achouba dance sequence is very small and short many other dance episodes were added to it. Krishna Avishāra, Radha Avishāra, Mapop, Krishna Nartan, Radha Nartan, etc. have been incorporated and subsequently developed as the Māha Rāsa.

Being the foremost form of the Jagoi Rāsa Līla based on Shrimad Bhagavata the Bhangi Pareng Achouba is present in all the five kinds of Jagoi Rāsa Līla. Without it Rāsa performance is regarded as incomplete. Every Jagoi Rāsa Līla performed at the temples of Manipur is invariably begins with Nata Sankirtana as it is believed that the Jagoi Rāsa Līla is born out of the imagination of Lord Krishna Chaitanya when he remembers Vrindavan Līla. As Elangbam Nilakanta Singh writes:

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The Sankirtana invokes the Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the “true bhakta”, and describes his desire to experience the Rasa-lila; the bhakta in audience is privileged to witness it, to identify with a gopi and to serve Krishna in Brindavan. This results in a deeply emotional response from the audience.9

The performance of Jagoi Rāsa Līla at the Govindaji temple follows a specific norm in which materials of conducting a ritual worship (Puja) for observing Nata Sankirtana are required. There is a tradition of praying the guardian gods of all directions at the front yard of Meitei households near Tulsi plant by offering dhup (incense), dweep (light), flower, fruits etc. one day before the performance of Jagoi Rāsa Līla. Lord Sanamahi, the household god is also worshipped. The light offered to the Sanamahi keeps burning until the performance is over.10 This tradition is observed in every Sankirtana Yajna which is started, with invocation to the deities all around (called Audibāsa). This is done by offering of incense, light, sandal paste and betel leaves with units prepared on two plantain leaves for the Lord and the Devi to ward off evil spirits,11 and sometimes offer Sattra (Indra’s flag worship called Jarjara puja) during the Audibāsa.

Scholars have confirmed that the Manipuri Nata Sankirtana follows Vedic principles along with Gaudiya Vaishnaba philosophy. Eg., Audibāsa is a process from Vedic culture – In order to perform a Yajna, the process where all the Gods and Goddesses (Deva, Devi) are invited before the performance to take part in the yajna are known as Audibāsa since Vedic times. It is done by purifying the mandap or rangpith etc. by sprinkling water along with mantra. In the

9Doshi Saryu, “Dances of Manipur the classical tradition”, Marg Pub., 1989, p-32
**Nata Sankirtana** tradition, the part of *Audibāsa* is followed one or two days before the actual performance. The names of the gods are converted into the Shri Krishna and other *Vaishnaba Goswami*’s name following the *Gaudiya Vaishnabas* tradition. The parts of *Audibāsa* are *ghat sthapan, mandali puja, dwar puja, Vadya Jantra puja, Bhandari ghar, Jarjar puja, diptahuti puja, dadhi mangal puja* etc.

As the *Nata Sankirtana* is considered a prayer, a meditation and a great sacrifice, *Mahayajna*, it is necessary to mention the reason how *Nata Sankirtana* is considered as a *Mahayajna*.

There are different forms of *Yajna* where we offer raw foods along with the chanting of the *veda mantras* (hymns) as an oblation or sacrificial gifts, into the fire, water, air, earth and into the space as an offering in order to reach or deliver to the gods and goddesses, or to the deceased ancestors. So, there are various ways to perform a *yajna* viz., offering raw foods burning into the fire, water, worshipping the idol of gods along with establishing an earthen pot along with other materials for an oblation.

*Yajna*, as conveyed by Rgveda, is the priceless foundation stone of *Dharma* and the living world itself of the *Devloka*. It is thus explain as ‘spring season depicts ghee, summer season represents fire, Sharada ritu (Autumn season) as elements of offering an oblation into the fire (viz., milk, grains etc), seven days as seven level of firewood, and three fire sticks being the elements of the *puja* of this living world performing the non-stop offering by the *Devas* to give salvation making the *Jiva atma* (living soul) unite with the *Param atma* (Supreme soul). Such kind of non-stop *yajna* perform by the *Devatas* itself is the first step or beginning point of *Dharma*. Therefore, “in this human life by performing varieties of *yajna* through sacrifices of the
Jiva atma again and again is considered as the highest rank of Dharma to achieve the God which is the main teaching of the srutis and smritis.\textsuperscript{12} The five Maha Yajnas are known as Brahman Yajna, Piti Yajna, Dev Yajna, Bhuta Yajna, and Nri Yajna.

- **Brahma Yajna** is performed by chanting (Jhap or Stom) hymns into the space/sky (Ākāśā).

- **Pitri Yajna** is known for yajna which is observed by offering raw foods (grains, fruits, etc.), Piṇḍa (ball of rice or flour offered to the deceased ancestors) into the water.

- **Dev yajna** perform through burning of ghee, straws, rice etc. into the fire.

- **Bhuta Yajna** is done by sacrificing foods (grains, fruits, cereals, etc.) to the air.

- **Nri Yajna** offering feast or meal to the Brahmins as a form of charity.

All these yajnas are incomplete without the chanting or reading of the Veda hymns. For this reason the Brahna Yajna is again considered to be the superior or most qualified among the Maha Yajnas. Infact the Brahma Yajna is known in different names by its size of the performance.

Hence, this Brahma Yajna which is believe as started by the Sapta Deivyā Rishis perform in the Deivyā tāla system namely, Dwipadi, Tripadi and Chatuspadi perform as stomhotra Mahayajna has been known as Sankirtana since the time of Vedas which is continuously perform by the Vaishnavas.

Since ancient period, from the beginning of Kali yuga the followers of Sanatana Dharma (‘In Sanskrit Sanatana means eternal. Dharma derived from Sanskrit verbal root “Dhri” which means ‘to hold’. Sanatana Dharma literally means that which holds eternally. The main aim of

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\textsuperscript{12} Haorokcham Sanakhya Ebotombi, ‘Nata Sankirtana’, Guru Gulapi Nata Sankirtana Academy, Imphal 2009, p-18
Sanatana Dharma is to experience, even for a moment, the eternal presence of the Brahma." (13) perform Sankirtana Mahayajna to praise Sri Hari, is mention in Srimad Bhagavatam. That is – in Kali yuga the followers of Sanatana Dharma (Vaishnavas) perform Sankirtana Mahayajna as a puja for Sri Hari in order to be freed from the rebirth and to fulfill their desire to reach God, for which the souls (atma) from Satya, Treta, Dwapura yugas wish to be born in Kali yuga.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC TĀLA STRUCTURE OF NATA SANKIRTANA:

The core purpose (Mulla) of Nata Sankirtana is Krishna Seva (service of Lord Shri Krishna). Sangeet (Nṛtyam, Vadyam and Geetam), Upasana and puja are performed together in this devotional service of Shri Krishna as Sādhana. For this reason Nata Sankirtana is accepted as a Māha Yajna. For the service of Shri Krishna there are particular tālas which were used for the upasana and puja. The songs which goes with such tālas are fixed in a particular chanda, pada, and gati etc., designed under a strict given sequence from beginning to end, performed as Nata Sankirtana Krishna Seva on a particular calculated bār, tithi, nashaktra, timing and ritu(season).

The Nata Sankirtana School of music is purely a ritual form which is entirely used for prayer/puja in traditional. The Jagoi Rāsa Līla of Manipur, one of the Indian Classical dance itself in a part and parcel of Nata Sankirtana.

STRUCTURE OF TĀLA

1. Ekpadi Ektāla

   a.  " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " ekpadi ektāla

13 Pani, jivan, celebrating of life, Indian folk dances, p-6
2. Dwipadi Mel

   a.  | | | | | | Dwipadi Mel

   b.  | | | | | | Dwigun (double) of Dwipadi Mel

   c.  | | | | | | Chougun (double of double) of Dwipadi Mel

When the tāla structure is consist of one Dhruva and one Pāda it is known as Dwipadi Mel. There are two as one Dhruva is regarded as one pāda. Symbol of one Dhruva is when it is written in single. If this symbol comes in pair it represents one pāda.

3. Tripadi Mel

   a.  | | | | | | Tripadi Mel
b. \(\text{\textit{Dwigun (double) of Tripadi Mel}}\)

c. \(\text{\textit{Chougun (double of double) of Tripadi Mel}}\)

4. Chatuspadi Mel

a. \(\text{\textit{Chatuspadi Mel}}\)

b. \(\text{\textit{Dwigun (double)}}\)

c. \(\text{\textit{Chougun (double of double)}}\)

*the Mel tālas written here are tāla forms whose Dhruva symbol remain unchanged when its pāda structure increases in Dwigun and Chougun. There are also Mel tālas whose Dhruva increases along with its pāda increases.

**TĀLA OF BHANGI PARENG ACHOUBA:**

“Achouba Bhangi Pareng is a part of Bhushana Tāla Prabhandha. This Bhushana Tāla itself is Rajmel.”\(^\text{14}\) As stated in the 4\(^{th}\) chapter of the book “Bhangi Pareng Achouba”\(^\text{15}\) clearly explains that the word Bhushana as a term given to a beat which comprises of 18 Tānmit or kala (quickest utterable sound). The speed of this unit is similar with the unit runs within a second. On the other hand, Rajmel is used in the situation when the size of a Tāla is increased where the


Dhruba (prime beat) does not increase. Here, Rajmel is the structure of the Tāla whereas Bhushana is a name given to the size of a particular beat comprises of 18 units. So, the Rajmel and the Bhushana cannot understand in the same meaning. Another word which is important to know is the word “Mel”. When the structure of the Tāla has a Dhruva (prime beat) and a Pāda (a pair Pulse) together, this structure is known as Mel. It is very important to understand such definitions more clearly and to discuss about the elements of the Tāla.

The present writing style of notation of Nata Sankirtana music could not able to explain all the details of the particular Tāla. When we write down a notation we mention the number of measurement in the name of Mātrā. In the Nata Sankirtana music the word Mātrā is recently added in Tāla notation. This is because there was not culture of writing down the notation for dance and music and everything were handed down in oral tradition. So, in relation to the word Mātrā, it is believed that this word must have been utilized by borrowing from the Desi Sangeet. It is differentiated by the researchers in Manipur that the meaning of the word Mātrā given in Sangeet Ratnakara and that of Nātya Sāstra is different. Infact the music system explained in Nātya Sāstra is termed as Margi Sangeet by Sangeet Ratnakara and the later created music is referred to as Desi Sangeet. Thus, Degi Sangeet and Margi Sangeet are the coined words much later time from Nātya Sāstra.

In Nātya Sāstra, the word Mātrā is mentioned in the sense of its Sanskrit word which means measure, unit of time, duration etc. and does not denote it as a term. According to him a Kala (single unit of beat within a Pulse) is mātrā, Laghu Guru (beats in a second or Pulse) is mātrā, Kalā (Pulse) is mātrā, and Nimesha is also a mātrā. This word mātrā gives the idea of units of time measurement with the help of which a Tāla is made. Further it is clarify that, for
this reason the smallest unit of measurement (mātrā) is known as Kala.\textsuperscript{16} Infact the Tāla system of Nata Sankirtana music school does not match the rules of Desi Sangeet Tāla system and latest studies on Nata Sankirtana shows that many similarities are found in the rules of the Nātya Sāstra Tāla chapter.

For the \textit{Tāla of Bhangi Pareng Achouba} I am writing some of the different concepts and ideas of the notation of \textit{Bhangi Pareng Achouba} in the following manner which I have been collected so far.

The first style written in the following is the notation method which is commonly used by the dance 	extit{gurus} for many decades employed in the various dance institutions. The details are as follows:-

This particular notation in the following is from \textit{Bhangi Pareng Achouba} (\textit{Punglon})/ভঙ্গী পরেং অচৌবা (পুংলোন) by Nrityaguru Shri Meishnam Amubi Singh, published by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1982, p-1

\begin{center}
\textbf{Bhangi Pareng Achouba – Mātrā 14}
\
\textbf{BhusnaMel Tāla 2, Phāk 2}
\
(Laya Atappa)
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c c c c}
Right & & Left & 2 \\
+ & o & o & 11 \text{Khit Ginna Gara} \text{1}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{16}Haorokcham Sanakhya Ebotombi, ‘Nata Sankirtana Tāla’, Guru Gulapi Nata Sankirtana Academy, Imphal 2004,p-21
In this BhushnaMel many other variety of punglons (syllables of the pung) are there which is not written here right now. It is one of the examples of such tāla.

Second example of BhushnaMel is from the book Bhangee Pareng (Bhangavali) by Guru Bipin Singh, published by Manipuri Nartanalaya, Bombay; Calcutta; Manipur, 1995, p-5

Achouba Bhangee Pareng (Boro Bhangavali)

Bhushna Tāla Prabandha

Tāla – Rajmel – 7 Barnakaal – 2 Tāli

\[
\begin{array}{c}
+ \\
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \\
\end{array}
\]

Tang s tra khit ghinna ghara
\[
\begin{array}{c}
+ \\
2 + 2 \\
\end{array}
\]

Dhin s dhin s l dhen ta s l dhin s then s l dhin ta s
\[
\begin{array}{c}
+ \\
2 + 2 \\
\end{array}
\]

Ten s ta s l ten ta s l ta s s s l khit ghinna ghara
The third notation example is from the book *Punglon Bhangi Pareng Mangagi* by Yaikhom Hemanta Kumar, published by Cultural Research Centre Manipur, Imphal, 2011, p-1

**Achouba Bhangi Pareng**

**Bhusna Mel**

*Mātrā – 7, tanthā – 2*

*(Bilambit laya)*

\[\text{II } + \quad \text{l 2 } + \quad \text{l} \]
\[\text{l} \quad \text{l} \quad \text{Khit ghinna gara} \quad \text{l} \]
\[\text{l} \quad \text{Dhin – dhin – l dhen ta – l} \]
\[\text{l} \quad \text{Dhin – then – l dhin ta – l} \]
\[\text{l} \quad \text{Ten – ta – l ten ta – l} \]
\[\text{l} \quad \text{Tak – – – II} \]

Next style is from the book *Bhangi Pareng Achouba* by Sanakhya Ebotombi Haorokcham, published by Sanchali Imphal, 2007, p-53
Bhangi Pareng Achoubagi Punglon

Chatuspadi Mel Bhusna

Ghat: 18 Bhanga Tantha

+: represents right side,
o: represents left side.

__: represents up down movement of aTāla Mihul/Pulses (Kalā).

I: represents demarcation between each pāda.

II: demarcation of two sides.

18: size of Bhusna which has 18 beats.

Example of Tāla structure:

```
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
\|\|\|\|\|\|\|\|
 o
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
\|\|\|\|\|\|\|\|
```

Ginna gara  |  dhin -  | dhin -  | dhen -  | ta -  | dhin -  | then -  | II
o

```
dhin  ta  |  ten -  |  ta -  |  ten -  |  ta -  |  tak -  |  khit -
```

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The above various notations are some of the examples of BhusnaMel tāla of Bhangi Pareng Achouba.

As far as until now it is known that Bhangi Pareng Achouba comprises of four tāla viz. BhusnaMel, Tanchap, Menkup and Challī. But there is a rule in the Nata Sankirtana music system which is utilizing since very long time that when a tāla is presenting a punglon sequence which is going to change in another punglon in the same tāla then there is a necessary to give an inggit punglon (sign for changing) previously which will followed by akhaiba punglon (separating punglon). On the other hand, when a tāla along with its dwigun (double size) and chougun (fourth size) is presented by playing various punglon sequences then there is not necessary to use the inggit punglon (sign for changing) and akhaiba punglon (separating punglon). This can be seen in the Bhangi Pareng Achouba punglon itself where the dance steps easily represent the tāla structure. According to this regulation the Bhangi Pareng Achouba must follow a single tāla instead of comprising four different tālas.

THE DANCE MOVEMENT OF BHANGI PARENG ACHOUBA:-

The dance composition of the Bhangi Pareng Achouba select the movements and gestures to depict the story of Rāsa Līla of Lord Krishna with the gopis in Vrindavana by using the traditional styles of gestures. “The mental make-up in the Rāsa dance is the bhakti or the bhava-dristi and all the gestures of the hand in this dance are also the expressions of bhakti or the
bhava-mudra. The meaning of such gestures of the devotee-artiste is found difficult for the average mind to fully understand.”

The dance movements of Bhangi Pareng Achouba is composed by following the structure of the tāla which has right side and left side from the beginning to the end. For instance, the first punglon of Bhangi Pareng Achouba that is ghinna gara dhin – dhin – dhen ta – dhin – then – dhin ta – ten – ta – ten ta – tak – khit. For the first percussion bols sequence ghinna gara dhin – dhin – dhen ta – dhin – then – the dance movements also starts with the right leg which is consider for the right bols, where the jugalrup tribhanga position of Shri Krishna and the position of Srimati Radhika is perform. And on the left side bols i.e., dhin ta – ten – ta – ten ta – tak – khit, here the same tribhanga and the Radha’s pose will perform for the left side. Mention may be made that usually the bol starts with khit ghinna gara dhin... where khit comes in the first place, but according to the steps of the dance when divided into the right side and left side it is appropriate to start with ghinna gara dhin and the bol khit comes at the end of the left side. In the punglon khit khra khra ten – ta – khit ta – ten – ta – khit ta – ten – ta – khra khra – khrang the movement starts with khra khra, like Khra khra ten – ta – khit ta – ten – ta – represents the right side of the tāla whereas the remaining khit ta – ten – ta – khra khra – khrang represent the movement of the left side. This particular part of punglon is also known as tāla lanthokpa where only the steps represent the tāla movements in the basic pose style and no exact gesture is employed. Tāla lanthokpa is also found in the Mapop part of the present Jagoi Rāsa Līla sequence.

Another punglon where we can fine the clarity of the right and left side structure of the tāla in the dance composition is khit ghinna gara dhin dhin dhen ta dhin dhin dhen ta dhin dhin

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17 Surchand Sharma, “Bhangi in Manipuri Ras Dance”, Imphal, 1993, p-4
dhen ta dhen. In this composition the left foot took steps at the bol khit, and from ghinna gara the weight of the body will be shifted from left to the right side, and right foot took a step in the punglon dhin – dhin – and vice versa. It can be recognize that in the language ghinna gara dhin – dhin – dhen ta – dhin – dhin – dhen ta – dhin – dhen – khit – both dance sequences for the right and left side will perform one after the other in this same bol by repeating it twice. In between each dance parts there is an inggit punglon (sign for changing) and akhaiba punglon (separating punglon) which always starts in the right side. In this manner all the dance sequences of Bhangi Pareng Achouba follow this structure when analyze thoroughly.

The reason for being Bhangi Pareng Achouba a complicated dance form is that this dance strictly follows the Tāla patterns even in composing the dance for both right and left sides and also it is a pure dance form and not a mime which does not express the lyrics of the songs. The dance composition of the Bhangi Pareng Achouba focus on the movements and gestures to express the story of Rāsa Līla and being the movement of dance every gestures will not interprets the words as found in today’s dance compositions.

The structure of Bhangi Pareng Achouba dance sequence must imitate the story of the Rāsa Līla as it was composed based on it. So far the Bhangi Pareng Achouba is comparing with the Hakchang Saba of Laiharaoba, there is no comparative analysis ever done on these two dances. By simply watching these dances, it could not able to find out any kind of similarities between the two in its movements. It may be so from the perspectives of their gestures, its meanings and also its theory or philosophies are quite different.

Dance is just the expression of a person’s feeling when he or she feels some satisfaction after reading or listening a prose/poem, in his or her own way. It is the only expression through
body movements of the beautiful images or beautiful thoughts which reflects the mind after seeing, listening or realizing by a person. In this world, all the living creatures express their happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction through body movements in his or her style. So, behind the beautiful dance gestures there is a sign of reflecting one’s emotion. For this reason dance is regarded as an auspicious poem taught by the Natya Veda. In this manner when the Rāsa Panchadhyay of Shrimad Bhagavatam touches the mind of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra Maharaj with satisfaction, he tries to express the unforgettable images in a very beautiful dance form which is known as Bhangi Pareng Achouba. Each/Every single dance gestures clearly reflect the pure devotion, humbleness, polite of the devotees on the contrary to the dance as we see today.

As the Bhangi Pareng Achouba dance sequence reveals and expresses the story of Rāsapanchadhyay of Shrimad Bhagavatam one can see and understand from its movements when observed carefully that the dance imitates the poses of Radha and Krishna, offers flower (pushpanjali), worship Srimati Rādha Sri Krishna and the gopis surrendering heart and soul to the God. And then come up to the story of Rāsa dance as explain in the Rāsapanchadhyay through dance by doing the gesture of dancing, playing instruments, playing karatal/madila etc. and also the idea of achieving the blessings of Sri Krishna only through the blessing of Srimati Rādhika is conveyed.

Being the foremost form of the Jagoi Rāsa Līla and also based on Shrimad Bhagavata the Bhangi Pareng Achouba is compulsory in all the five kinds of Jagoi Rāsa Līla without which the whole dance is regarded incomplete. As the Bhangi Pareng Achouba has become a small part in the whole Jagoi Rāsa Līla the value of the Bhangi Pareng Achouba seems narrowed.
PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING THE BHANGI PARENG ACHOUBA NOTATION

There was no tradition of writing records for dance and music notations in meitei/meetei society during early days and it was only through oral tradition which was continuing for generation. Instead of keeping written records, the beautiful creations of Punglon, song and dance composed by the gurus were performed and handed down for decades. There is also possibility of influencing Hindustani Music during some earlier generations which makes puzzles in understand the Nata Sankirtana Tāla system in present day.

The tradition of the Manipuri Nata Sankirtana does have its own unique Tāla system based on the Vedic rule. Even though such tradition has been strictly followed in the punglon (meitei percussion playing), song and dancing of the Nata Sankirtana and Manipuri dance, there is no books ever written or published which express the full description of a particular tāla. The present books found for the punglon notation of Nata Sankirtana music is not able to define the structure of Nata Sankirtana Tāla. For this reason, there are varieties of books on tāla notation where the number of beats of a tāla is different. E.g., for the bhangi tāla itself, different ideas and styles are found where the number of units are also different. According to Guru Meisnam Amubi Singh in his book Bhangi Pareng Achouba (Punglon), Bhusna mel of Bhangi Pareng Achouba Mātra-14 and 2 Tāla 2 Phāk i.e., 2 onbeats and 2 offbeats, laya atappa. But according to Guru Bipin Singh in his book Bhangee Pareng (Bhangavali) Achouba Bhangi Pareng, Bhushna Tāla prabhandha, Tāla- Rajmel, 7 barnakaal, 2 Tāli. Here some differences is occurred as from the first book Bhangi Pareng Achouba is Bhushnamel which have 14 Mātra with 2 Tāla (onbeats) and 2 Phāk (offbeats). From the 2nd book Bhangi Pareng Achouba is of Bhushna Tāla Prabandha, Tāla is Rajmel which have 7 barnakaal and 2 Tāli (onbeats). So, the question is what
is Bhushnamel and why is it called Rajmel? Again what is the difference between 14 Mātra and 7 Barnakaal? In a book it has 2 Tāla and 2 Phāk where as in another it has 2 Tāli. Why is it so?

In the book *Punglon Bhangi Pareng Mangagi* by Guru Yaikhom Hemanta kumar, it is written as Achouba Bhangi Pareng Bhusna Mel, Mātra-7, tantha-2, (Bilambit laya). So here in this case Bhusna Mel is common and has 7 Mātra as that of 7 Barnakaal but the term is different. Why it is written as Mātra and Barnakaal? Again it has 2 tantha (onbeats) which is same as 2 Tāli but in Bilambit laya. Here, how does the Bilambit laya (laya atappa) is going to measure?

According to Sanakhya Ebotombi Haorokcham in his book *Bhangi Pareng Achouba* it is written as Chatuspadi Mel Bhushna, Ghat-18, Bhanga Tantha. Here 3 new words added. Chatuspadi, Ghat and Bhanga in relation to Bhangi Pareng Achouba. Such variations arises many questions which is very much necessary to analyze and understand. Why this variation occurs itself is a big question. Moreover, Bhangi Pareng Achouba has 4 tālas. Bhushnamel, Tanchap, menkup and challi. But according to Sanakhya Ebotombi Haorokcham Tāla of Bhangi Pareng Achouba is only Mel Bhusna where the challi was added in the end as a prarthana or prayer with devotion.

Regarding the punglon notation of Bhangi Pareng Achouba it is necessary to understand every related question with Bhangi Tāla by the dancers. In order to understand every terms of Bhangi Tāla there came a necessity to learn the basic elements of Nata Sankirtana Tāla system.

Here, mention may be made that the dance students doesn’t have the facility of learning the tāla system as the subject is not included in the syllabus so far. The dance students as well the dancers need to have a clear knowledge about the tāla system of Nata Sankirtana Music, every
terms use in this system like mel, Rajmel, Bhusnamel, sanchar, ghat etc., structure of various Tāla, its different forms etc.

The different notations created by many gurus of dance and music have different symbol and different numbers of units. Such variation need to be unified by analyzing and understanding each style by the experts to bring out a codified notation which can be accepted by all.

This research is carried out to show the difficulties face by the dancers for not understanding the Tāla system of Manipuri dance. Without this knowledge the dancers will remain incomplete even after the completion of their courses.
Rituals of the last rehearsal day of Jagoi Rāsa Līla.
Seeking blessings from Rasdhari and Sutradhari by the participants.

Doing rehearsal of Bhangi.
Nata Sankirtana performance before Rāsa Līla.
Some clips of Bhangi Pareng Achouba from Maha Rāsa Līla