

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE RELEASE OF THE BOOK TITLED 'BHAGYACHANDRA AND BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN EASTERN INDIAN LITERATURE' ON 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2019 AT RAJ BHAVAN, IMPHAL

Shri Y. Khemchand Singh ji, Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly,

Dr. Ch. Chandramani Singh, Convener, Manipur Citizen Forum,

Dr. Ng. Ngalengnam, Director, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,

Friends from Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be associated with the release of the book titled "Bhagyachandra and Bhakti Movement in Eastern Indian Literature", the result of a collective endeavour of Dr. Aheibam Koireng Singh, Assistant Professor, Manipur University, Dr. H. Shukhdeba Sharma, Head, Department of Social Work, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Regional Campus, Manipur and Rami Niranjana Desai of India Foundation, New Delhi.

Bhagyachandra, popularly known as Rajarshi was one of the most versatile rulers amongst the kings of Manipur in terms of the outstanding contributions he made for promotion of art and culture of the State and in serving the society and the ideal thoughts he had for the welfare of the future generations. It is common knowledge that the rich cultural wealth of Manipur was born out of the imaginative mind and religious ingenuity of Maharaja Bhagyachandra by blending the native pre-Hindu religious element and cultural tradition with the great tradition of Hinduism leading to the birth of a state patronized peculiar and unique form of Hindu Vaisnavite cult of religion. It is the culture he had started that put Manipur on the global map. During his rule, a vibrant society prevailed and there was a cultural

renaissance never seen before in the State. He documented and codified the Manipuri dance style, launching the golden era of its development and refinement. He composed three of the five types of Ras Lilas – the Maha Ras, the Basanta Ras and the Kunja Ras.

Rajarshi Bhagyachandra Maharaja was born in 1748. During his reign, once he took shelter in Takhel, now called Assam in a war with Awa, the present day Myanmar, where he saw the image of Lord Shri Krishna in his dream in the most beautiful and resplendent dress. The Lord was in his Natabar garb with a flute in his hand and a top-knot or Chura of peacock feathers on his head. The union or jugal murti of Lord Krishna and Srimati Radhika was seen in his vision. The king also had a dream telling him to make idols from the jack fruit grown on the Kaina hills and worship it. He followed the vision and made statues out of the jack fruit in the image of Lord Krishna.

In 1776, Rajarshi Bhagyachandra established the Govindaji temple and inaugurated the divine idol of Radha Krishna and began to worship the Lord with his consort in the Royal Palace. After this, the Rajarshi tried his dream of the Ras dance and taking the essence of the twenty ninth to the thirty third Chapters of Shrimad Bhagavata Darshan which are known as the Raspanchadhyaya, he trained many artists for the different kinds of Ras dance of Radha-Krishna as well as Bhakti. The Ras-Lila of Radha Krishna was held accompanied with the most enthusiastic mood of the religious people of Manipur from the 11<sup>th</sup> day of Hiyanggei (November), 1779 to the full-moon day. From the religious point of view and from the artistic angle of vision, we can claim that the Manipuri Classical Dance, the Radha-Krishna Ras-Lila is one of the most modest, softest and mildest and at the same time, one of the most meaningful dances of the world. Here lies the specific significance of the charm and beauty of the Manipuri Classical Dance, the Ras-Lila of Radha-Krishna in various episodes intertwined with the bhakti movement.

Many books have been written on the multifaceted character of Maharaja Bhagyachandra, a king who was at once a courageous and skilled warrior, a deeply religious person and a great nationalist. Eminent writers have thrown light on his character from different perspectives and yet many more books can be written on his remarkable exploits. The present book is a compilation of the works of reputed scholars who are familiar and well versed with the central theme and subject matter. The book has twelve chapters on the thoughts and works of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra all well researched and contributed by writers of considerable reach in the field. They have touched upon the role of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra as a cultural protagonist and a crusader of Bhakti Movement in the State. This book will be able to throw light on the pioneering role of this great king in the Bhakti Movement and a lasting source of inspiration to many. The collective effort by the eminent editors is really commendable and praiseworthy.

With these few words, I feel honoured to release this book. I, once again, thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.