

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE 49<sup>TH</sup> ALL MANIPUR SHUMANG LEELA FESTIVAL, 2021 AT THE TH. IBOYAIMA SHUMANG LEELA SHANGLIN, PALACE COMPOUND, IMPHAL ON OCTOBER 18, 2021.

Shri Karam Shyam Singh ji,

Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly,

All the participating Female Shumang Leela Groups,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

Distinguished Invitees and eminent Shumang Leela Artistes,

Brothers and Sisters,

It gives me immense pleasure to be amongst you all here today on the occasion of the Inauguration of the 49<sup>th</sup> All Manipur Shumang Leela Festival, 2021. At the very outset, I would like to convey my heartiest felicitations and congratulations to the prize winners on this occasion.

While organizing such a Shumang Leela festival, it is worth-while to recall as to how it flourished in the State. Shumang Leela - Manipur Courtyard theatre - is as popular as Jatra of Bengal, Tamasha of Maharashtra, Bhavi of Madhya Pradesh and Nautanki of Uttar Pradesh. The term "Shumang Leela" stands for "Open Air Performance", generally in the courtyards of residential houses. Originally, it started as a comic genre presented before the kings and noblemen which ultimately developed into the present form of courtyard enacted play.

Over the years the Shumang Leela has become a powerful medium for mass education besides providing entertainment and relaxation. Stories of Harischandra, Sati Savitri, Ram, Prahlada and episodes from the Mahabharata, Ramayana and other mythologies were successfully staged in this medium. The story of Moirang, the immortal love story of

Khamba and Thoibi and other historical events related to Moirang were also conveniently used by Shumang Leelas in the style called “Moirang Parva”. Here, you would find that the Shumang Leela Groups of those days attempted to preserve and promote the humanism, tolerance, confidence, devotion, truth and justice through their performances. They had not only adopted Shumang Leela as their livelihood but also contributed their best for the betterment of society. This needs to be remembered by the present Shumang Leela activists with gratitude.

It is a unique feature that the Shumang Leela Groups are composed of exclusively male artistes where even feminine roles are played by male artistes. In the meantime, the groups comprising entirely female artistes have also come up and they have become prominent in many festivals. Unfortunately, this season’s festival due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been given to understand that only 14 female groups will compete in the present festival. I hope that the present Shumang Leela festival will provide a good opportunity for the performers to show their artistic talents to the audience and also to standardize the present Manipur Shumang Leelas.

No doubt, the Shumang Leela has today developed both theatrically and artistically. I am happy to learn that the present day Shumang Leelas have been trying to focus on the issues of moral values, unity and integrity as well as brotherhood and friendship among various communities in the State with the aims and objectives of strengthening the very fabric which binds the people of Manipur together. Hence, the Shumang Leela acts as a catalyst in bringing about peace and harmony in society. I am hopeful that it will continue its endeavour to achieve the goal. As we are well aware that Manipur is at present passing through a difficult phase due to ethnic tension, conflict and mistrust coming up

from time to time. Hence, the need of the hour is to do away with these issues which are a blemish on our age-old peaceful co-existence. It is the responsibility of all of us, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and language to preserve and promote the unity and integrity of the State, for which peaceful co-existence in Manipur society is essential. I would like therefore to appeal to all sections of the people of Manipur to contribute their best in their respective capacities with sincerity, discipline and confidence for ensuring peace in Manipur so that the State of Manipur can move towards progress and prosperity.

I compliment the MSKA for their relentless efforts in organizing festivals, exhibitions, seminars, workshops and instituting awards and scholarships for art and culture personalities over the years. I am confident that the present Shumang Leela Festival organized by the MSKA will help in enhancing the standards of Shumang Leelas, particularly for female groups in Manipur. I hope that the MSKA will continue to contribute their best in order to achieve their aims and objectives.

I do not intend to take much of your time as all the distinguished people present today here must be eagerly waiting to witness the exhibition show pertaining to the achievements of Mirabai Chanu, Tokyo Olympic Medalist.

I once again extend my felicitations and congratulations to prize winners in this function and also exhort other performers to strive for winning recognition and prizes in the coming festivals.

I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.