

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL SHOW OF DANCE-DRAMA "KURANGA NAYANI" ON 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2017 AT MAHARAJ CHANDRAKIRTI AUDITORIUM, IMPHAL.

Prof. H. Tombi Singh, Vice-Chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy,

Shri L. Upendro Sharma, Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy,

Friends from the Media,

Respected Gurus,

My dear young Artistes and students of the Academy,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to have this opportunity of witnessing the Dance-Drama "Kuranga Nayani" directed and choreographed by Shri Th. Chaotombi Singh, Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee and the script written by Smt. Devjani Chaliha, noted Manipuri Dancer and Tagore Puruskar of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Congratulations Shri Chaotombi Singh and Smt. Chaliha for your invaluable contribution in the field of dance. This is the second time I am witnessing a Dance-Drama produced by JNMDA. I witnessed the Dance-Drama "Karna Bharam" (agony of Karna) directed and choreographed by Smt. N. Amusana Devi, Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee and a renowned dancer on 8<sup>th</sup> December last year. I really enjoyed it.

Kuranga Nayani, daughter of King Joy Singh was offered to King Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh, the Ahom Monarch of Axom (Assam) for his help to drive the Burmese away from Manipur and restoring the throne. Kuranga Nayani remained loyal to her husband and because of her loyalty, she became the most favourite and was named the grand Queen of Ahom Monarch. Unfortunately, after her husband demised, his brother Lakshmi

Singh became the King of Axom and during his reign the Morans attacked and imprisoned him. Thereafter, Romakanta became the new king of Morans. The Chief Executive of Romakanta was very cruel and he forcibly married her. However, due to her knowledge and intelligence, she was able to uphold her chastity throughout her life and restored the throne to her brother-in-law after killing the Chief Executive. This is the substance of the story I know. I may be able to understand the whole story better after witnessing this Dance-Drama.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, a National Institution, the first of its kind in India for Manipuri Dance, was established in the year 1954 under the patronage of late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. When Pandit Nehru visited Manipur in 1952, he saw a presentation comprising of a number of dances such as Manipuri, Naga and others. He observed, “The normal dances that we see elsewhere in India (excepting, of course, the classical dances like Bharat Natyam) seemed pale and insipid in comparison with the show at Manipur”. We all know that Manipur is today best introduced to the world through here rich performing arts and culture apart from sports. It is mainly through the Manipuri dance that the world knows the existence of such a tiny State in this far-flung North Eastern part of the country. Artistes from this state have given innumerable shows in our country and abroad and have brought commendation and recognition from various foreign countries. The grace and power attracting the viewer’s mind is superb in the elegant Manipuri dance which is a delicately sensitive type of classical dance. I would like to reiterate that Manipuri dance is not the art of Manipur alone, it is also an art of India as a whole. It is, therefore, our bounden duty to preserve, nurture and enrich Manipuri culture so that it may continue to enrich the Indian culture. Today, I would like to take an opportunity to inform you all here that I myself belong to the family of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, my great grand uncle who led the cultural

movement in the country after independence. He established Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies funded by the Ministry of Culture and Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (Cairo), for the promotion and propagation of Indian culture. He also founded the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Sangeet Natak Akademi. He carried forward his passion of Indian culture even during the days of his imprisonment by the British.

I am happy to know that the Academy is at present conducting various courses such as Raas, Lai Haraoba, Nata-Sankirtana (Ishei), Nata-Sankirtana (Cholom), Nata-Sankirtana (Pung – Mridanga), Tribal Dance and Thang-ta. I have no doubt that the introduction of some other classical dances in this Academy with an objective for their dissemination among the artistes of the state will further enrich the Academy. I am told that Nata-Sankirtana is indispensable for any religious function of Hindus in Manipur, as they are part and parcel of the rituals of the celebration. The students of the Academy have also excelled in their chosen field and they have spread Manipuri dance far and wide. Their contribution is immense in the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the state.

I am also glad to know that the Academy's Production Unit has been bringing out various forms of Dance-Drama which have brought international fame. I congratulate the Artistes who are playing different roles in the Dance-Drama "Kuranga Nayani" which we will witness in a short while from now. My good wishes to all the Artistes, Gurus, particularly Shri N. Chaotombi Singh, Director and Choreographer and Smt. Devjani Chaliha, Script Writer of this Dance-Drama "Kuranga Nayani".

Thank you,

Jai Hind.