

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL SANKIRTANA DAY CELEBRATION AS CHIEF GUEST ON 4TH DECEMBER, 2017 AT THE AUDITORIUM OF LAMYANBA SHANGLLEN, IMPHAL.

Hon'ble Speaker, Shri Y. Khemchand Singh ji,

Hon'ble Minister, Forest and Environment, Shri Th. Shyamkumar Singh ji,

Hon'ble Maharaja of Manipur,

Hon'ble Members of Legislative Assembly on the dais,

Distinguished Nata Sankirtana Gurus and Artistes,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Khu-rum-jari,

I am happy to be associated with this celebration of Sankirtana Day today. It is, indeed, heartening to know that Nata Sankirtana Music was inscribed in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in the sitting of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in December, 2013. And the Sankirtana Day is being observed every year in the state in commemoration of the recognition on this auspicious day.

Manipur Sankirtana is a hymn in glory of Lord Krishna in classical ragas synthesizing various indigenous rhythms and has its ancient origins in the vaishnavite bhakti traditions prevalent in the country. The Sankirtana follows an extremely strict code in its performance with rhythms pattern as well as costumes determined by specific rules and regulations. The Sankirtana is performed to mark important occasions during a person's life from birth to death. Sankirtana despite being very popular in Manipur and extensively performed in different versions and variations, is not so well known as the Manipuri dance form. I personally feel that awareness about heritage tradition of Sankirtan would help and go a long way in identification

of Manipur with the widespread and nationally popular vaishnava bhakti parampara revered and followed from Gujarat to Manipur and from Kashmir to Kerala.

I feel proud of the rich cultural heritage of Manipur and the recognition given by UNESCO to Sankirtan of Manipur as an intangible heritage is richly deserved. In order to promote it further, I also propose to create a small core in the Manipur University of Culture of which I am the Chancellor to formulate a project with a detailed approach paper on documentation of Sankirtan including its historical, sociological, ethno-musical and folkloristic origins, its ramifications and linkages with other regions including the South East Asian countries where there is a strong presence of Hindu culture and traditions. It would open up a systematic study of the culture of North East in the various centres of higher learning. This platform would also provide a synergy between the hitherto underutilized academic institutions of Manipur and the advancements in the other academic institutions of the country. I have also written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his continued guidance and support in our endeavour.

Manipuri culture today is very much on the international radar of culture. There is no doubt that Manipur is today best introduced to the world through her rich performing arts and culture and not through her geographical position and size. It is through the Manipuri culture that the world knows the existence of such a tiny State in this far-flung North Eastern part of the country. I know very well that artistes from this State have already performed thousand shows in our country and overseas, bringing commendation and recognition from various foreign countries. The grace and power of attracting viewers' mind is superb in the elegant Manipuri dance which is a delicately sensitive type of classical dance including Nata Sankirtana. I would like to reiterate that Manipuri dance and music is not of

Manipur alone, but of this country as a whole. Therefore, it is our bounden duty to preserve, nurture and enrich Manipuri culture so that it may continue to enrich the Indian culture.

I hope that the International Sankirtana Day Celebration Committee will continue its commendable good works for sustaining, propagating and enriching the Manipuri Nata Sankitana and Manipuri culture as a whole. With these few words, I, once again, thank the organizers for inviting me to this sacred and auspicious event.

Thagat-chari,

Jai Hind.