

**Name of the Element:** Nata Pala/Nata Sankirtan  
**Domain 2:** Performing Arts  
**Name of Inventory:** Pilot Inventory 1  
**Serial No:** P1-D2-004

**Brief Description:** The NataSankirtana style of singing which was introduced during the reign of RajarshiBhagyachandra (1763-1798 A.D.). The great masters and scholars of that period composed and sang the padavali strictly after the Bhagavata tradition and other major Vaishnavite text and based the composition also on the traditional Ragas and Raginis of classical music tradition. Modern research has discovered a lot of regional overtones in the architecture of the particular Ragas and Raginis. The Manipuris call the NataSankirtana singing their own and it is clearly a form of collective prayer, a Mahayajna as they call it, lasting for about 5 hours at a stretch with a lot of rituals, movements and rhythmic pattern, strictly after the vaishnavite faith. NataSankirtana is a composite version of music, dance and tala; a Sangeet in the true sense of the term. It is also DrishyaKavya, a poem made visible. NataSankirtana to the followers of GoudiyaVaishnavism is a form of worship. It is considered as a Mahayajna (complete sacrifice). The Vaishnav architects trace its origin to the aesthetics and philosophy of ShrimadBhagavata. In ShrimadBhagavata the only merit in Kaliyuga is HariSankirtana (chanting the name of the lord) and through Sankirtana a person can reach his ends and attain moksha. A person in Satyayuga attains mukti through dhyana, in Treta Yuga by yajnas and Dwarpur Yuga through puja and in Kali yuga through HariSankirtana. The above dhyana, Puja, Yajana, etc., are all combined or merged in the form of HariSankirtana in Kali Yuga to attain salvation. Sri Chaitanya or Lord Gouranga preached the value and importance of Sankirtana to liberate the mortal and attain moksha. In this manner, for Meitei Vaishnavites living in the society today, NataSankirtanaMahayajna was become an indispensable event in the lives of the people since time immemorial. In short, NataSankirtana is the only highest karma for the Meitei society.

On the top of the Nata Kritana tradition lies the most stylised and complicated Dhruvel Kirtana-both old and new. There are 14 pung players in it and the entire sequences of the usual Nata Sankirtana plus a few additions in movement and rhythmic patterns shall be followed. The accent here is on the complicated talas known as Samcharas numbering 14 and dedicated to 14 Gurus of Bengal Vaishnavism. The first chaitanya Samchara to be executed by 13 drummers in movement by turns. It touches the core Goudiya Vaishnavism as the Gurus, Sadaks, mohantas are recollected. The movements of Pala musicians in the mandali include supposed movements on the head of the coiled serpent- Kundalini called paphal representing the cosmic coil, the head biting tails. Thus the Dhruvel based on astakal leelas of Govinda with the Sakhis in Vrindavan (8 periods of 24 hours) is a highly stylised, ritualised pattern of Yajna which involves a lot of training, expense and patience. It is derived possibly from Dhruva Melaka of Indian musical tradition and becomes now a rare art form. It admits of 4 types viz: Maha Dhruvel (of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra), Goura Dhruvel (of King Nara Singh), Nitya Dhruvel and Lairemma Dhruvel (of King Chandrakirti).

**Region:** In the Districts of Sylhet Division in the North East of Bangladesh.  
**Photographs:Video: Consent:**

**Submitted by: Lubna Marium**  
Shadhona – A Center for Advancement of South Asian Culture  
House 5, Road 27, Block J, Banani, Dhaka 1213, Bangladesh

Tel: 8801713040814

Fax: 91-11-23385715

E-mail: [kanchendzonga@gmail.com](mailto:kanchendzonga@gmail.com), Website: <http://www.shadhona.org>