**Name of The Element:** Jangam Gāyan

**Community/ies:** Jangam Gāyan is a narrative of Shiva's marriage with Parvati sung by the Jangam community of the state of Haryana, India. The members of this community are wandering mendicants and earn their living mainly by performing the element in Shiva temples.

Zile Singh Jangam has been instrumental in giving a voice to the Jangam Gaayan community. Over time, he has risen to be the leader of the performing troupe of the community. Being one of the very few educated members of the group, Zile Singh has helped in making the community conscious of their cultural heritage. By organising public performances of Jangam Gāyan, Zile Singh has improved the economic and social conditions of the community by helping them earn a decent livelihood through their art form.

**Region:** The Jangams live in Shiva the state of Haryana in north India. The community is concentrated in and around Kurukshetra, the great battle field of the epic of Mahabharata and in the historical town of Thaneswar which has been a strong centre of the Pasupati (Shiva) tradition of Shaivism. At these places as elsewhere, devotees make it a point to make offerings to Jangams in appreciation of their performance. However, with the passage of time, the income from the temples of Kurukshetra could not sustain them and as such, they have settled in about 15 villages around the town.

Besides, they also move as itinerant religious mendicants in the adjoining states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir in north India. The movement reaches its peak in the Phalgun (February-March) season of Indian Lunar Calendar, the season of the wedding of Shiva and Parvati. The Jangams are specially commissioned to sing the narrative by the managements of major Shiva temples in these north Indian states from all the neighbouring states of North India.

**Brief Description:** Jangam Gāyan is a narrative sung by the Jangam community and is performed in the temple courtyards of Shiva temples to huge gatherings. Sometimes, there are public performances in village squares.

The main component of Jangam Gāyan is a poem that deals with the narrative of the wedding of Shiva and Parvati. The poem is sung in a chorus and the singers double up as actors and musicians, as they dramatise the sequence of events leading up to the wedding. The music accompaniment for the performance is provided by the damru (a small drum, associated with Shiva) and bells.

The poem is a rare narrative as it describes a process of transformation of Shiva from a deity to a human being. Significantly, this transformation is not presented as some kind of Fall but an experience of earthly passion leading to the realisation of one's being.

The poem begins with the story of the birth of Parvati. The narrative moves on to a detailed description of Parvati’s growing up into an exceptionally accomplished, beautiful girl and her dream of marrying Shiva, followed by a description of Parvati guiding the Brahmin match maker to the abode of Shiva. This part of the narrative deals with a fascinating expose of Shiva, the wild god in an intoxicated state surrounded by dangerous serpents and black snakes. The poem then elaborates on
the preparations and rituals of the marriage ceremony and talks about how Shiva, the wild god becomes a family man who can never afford to displease Parvati.

Photographs

Video

Community Consent

Submitted By: Director, North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala
Virs Vihar Kendra (Near Bhasha Bhawan),
Sheranwala Gate, Patiala - 147 001
Tel: +91-175-2202918,2211429
Fax: +91-175-2202918
Email: nzccindia@gmail.com