

# The Unanimity of Cultural Traditions of Bharat (India) with South East Asian Countries: A Saga of inclusivity and Universality

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## **Abstract**

*The paper introduces the history of movement of various communities during the reigns of several kings in Uttar Purbo Bharat. The settlement of communities in those areas gave birth to a new concept of livelihood. The livelihood changed, along with the way of living. This marked the beginning of a new culture and, in turn, a holistic Sanskriti. Typically, the whole North Eastern Region (Uttar Purbo Bharat) before the division of Bharat (India) and precisely before the 18th century A.D., there were many more changes with regard to religion. Similarly, it would be pertinent to mention that the Pragjyotishpur was the conglomeration of three religions- Hindu, Jain and Budha, as per excavations in Surya pahar (hill) now in the Goalpara District of Assam in India. During this time, Indian kings traveled to many places, from Myanmar to Indonesia and to Ankorbhat, Laos, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka etc. these far-reaching places from Bharat led to a study to know whether there are any similarities of Folk culture and traditions among Uttar Purbo Bharat and South East Asian Countries. Initially, the folk tradition of the communities of Uttar Purbo Bharat were narrated. Then, the various communities of selected countries were briefly mentioned after considering almost all the facets of their traditions. The authors collected both primary and secondary data from Uttar Purbo Bharat and Countries under study of South East Asia. The authors collected data through interviews during his visit to these countries. Observation through participation and historical research method were followed throughout the investigation and findings of the study.*

**Keywords:** Bharat, Tradition, folk culture, South East Asia

## *Abstrak*

*Kertas kerja ini memperkenalkan sejarah perpindahan pelbagai komuniti semasa pemerintahan beberapa raja di Uttar Purbo Bharat. Penempatan komuniti di kawasan-kawasan tersebut melahirkan konsep baru mata pencarian. Mata pencarian berubah, bersama dengan cara hidup. Ini menandakan permulaan budaya baru dan seterusnya, Sanskriti yang holistik. Secara amnya, seluruh Wilayah Timur Laut (Uttar Purbo Bharat) sebelum pembahagian Bharat (India) dan tepatnya sebelum abad ke-18 Masihi, terdapat lebih banyak perubahan berkenaan agama. Begitu juga, adalah wajar untuk menyebut bahawa Pragjyotishpur merupakan gabungan tiga agama - Hindu, Jain dan Buddha, mengikut penggalian di Surya Pahar (bukit) yang kini terletak di Daerah Goalpara, Assam di India. Pada masa ini, raja-raja India mengembara ke banyak tempat, dari Myanmar ke Indonesia dan ke Angkor Wat, Laos, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka dan sebagainya. Tempat-tempat yang jauh dari Bharat ini membawa kepada kajian untuk mengetahui sama ada terdapat sebarang persamaan budaya rakyat dan tradisi antara Uttar Purbo Bharat dan Negara-negara Asia Tenggara. Pada mulanya, tradisi rakyat komuniti-komuniti Uttar Purbo Bharat diceritakan. Kemudian, pelbagai komuniti dari negara-negara terpilih disebut secara ringkas selepas mempertimbangkan hampir semua aspek tradisi mereka. Penulis mengumpul data primer dan sekunder dari Uttar Purbo Bharat dan negara-negara Asia Tenggara yang dikaji. Penulis mengumpul data*

*melalui temu bual semasa lawatan mereka ke negara-negara ini. Pemerhatian melalui penyertaan dan kaedah penyelidikan sejarah telah diikuti sepanjang penyiasatan dan penemuan kajian.*

*Kata kunci: Bharat, Tradisi, budaya rakyat, Asia Tenggara*

## **Introduction**

Uttar Purba Bharat (Northeast India) is a conglomeration of many indigenous communities; their folklore reveals various facets of Bharatiya Sanskriti. In spite of having 220 languages used by these ethnic groups and having more diversity amongst major ethnic groups, there are many characteristics which are sufficient to support a unified India concept with a strong sense of Indian nationality. Due to rich natural resources, the people of this NE region celebrate various festivals according to the availability of grains etc; however, it is pertinent to mention that the festivals are related to rituals and religious customs.

Similarly, South Asian countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma, Malaysia, etc. have very rich natural resources consequently, these festivals, rituals as revealed from various folk traditions are based on the availability of nature and grains etc. In addition to this, the traditional history talks about the movement of Indian king and community in these countries have influenced Bharatiya Sanskriti, thus it shows unanimity in many aspects of life, which cannot be ignored. The present study focuses on the unanimity of cultural folk tradition such as folk dance, folk songs, etc. between the communities of Uttar Purba Bharat and the selected countries of South East Asia.

An investigation found that the rhythms used are the same even the scaling of song varies only with language. The meaning and mood of the songs are the same, which are mostly love for nature, love for animals, observation of animals and their activities. In dance animal's movement and postures were incorporated. There is unanimity in dress for both men and women. The dress signifies the meaning of the color and its design carries meaning too. In addition, the various customs related to harvesting and planting are similar which are aimed at conservation and preservation of nature and well-being of communities as a whole. It could be concludes with a strong note that if these are correctly interpreted, then there will be no barrier among the people of Uttar Purbo Bharat (North East India) and South East Asian countries. This will mark a greater unification of these countries and can serve as a role model for the rest of the world for greater harmony, for the peace and tranquillity in this world.

## **Traditional History of Southeast Asia**

The Hindu colonies were the outstanding example of Indian unity and Cooperation. All the region of India contributed to the making of Hindu colonies which had been termed Suvarnabhumi or the land of gold. In this section the traditional history of selected countries of Southeast Asia have been discussed.

### **Burmese traditions**

First, in the Arakan region of Burma, the traditional history tells us that just after the Mahabharata, there came Indian warriors who overpowered the local rulers and set up their own kingdoms. One of the two leaders of Indian warriors was a Sanyasi. Second, a Rajakumara of Indian kingdom of Hastinapura came to

Brahmadesha (Upper Burma) and laid the foundation of his kingdom at Shri Kshetra. Third, in Upper Burma, originally called Brahmadesha, has another tradition to its credit is that the forefathers of Lord Buddha, long before the birth of Shakyamuni, the chief of Shakya clan of Kapilavastu, came to Brahmadesha and settled in the upper valley of the river / airavati (now Irawadi). Sakhya clan ruled for 31 generations when they were driven out by savages from the east. The tradition becomes more specific in some places. The tradition says that the savages, who destroyed the kingdom of Shakhya clan, were from Gandhara Rastra. It should be noted that the Chinese province of Yunnan, when ruled by Hindu kings in ancient times, was called Gandhara Rastra. Fourth, just after the Sakhya dynasty was destroyed, Kshatriyas came of Ganga valley and dethroned the tribal ruler, married the queen of the deposed ruler and established their kingdom. The very first ruler was the son of the king of Varanasi. Fifth, the traditional lore of the people of delta region of lower Burma tells us that in the remote past, Indians belonging to the regions lying between Godavari and Krishna rivers crossed the sea and settled in delta and also occupied the adjacent coastal region.

### **Javanese tradition**

The heroes of the Mahabharata came to Yavadvipa under their leader, Aji Shaka (ajiska) of Hastinapura in India. They claimed their descent from Parikshita, son of Arjuna. Gradually they colonised the land. Jyeshtha a Brahmana introduced Hindu worship, Indian language and Hindu law. Second, twenty thousand Kalingas from the east coast of India came by the sea route and colonised the island. Many of them perished in an epidemic. Some went back to India. The rest remained in Yavadvipa and continued ruling. Third, the island was colonised by a prince of Gujarat in India. He came in 78 A.D. in a ship with soldiers and established his kingdom in Yavadvipa.

### **Sumatra tradition**

Sumatra tradition tells us that just after the Mahabharata, there came Ashvasthama, son of Drona, and established law and order among the warrior tribes. Sumatra's traditions not only reflect the island's rich history and cultural complexity but also demonstrate the ability of its communities to preserve their heritage amidst modernization. These customs continue to be a source of pride and identity for the people of Sumatra.

### **Vietnam**

The main part of Vietnam, Tonkin, called Annam by the Hindus, came under Hindu influence for a short period prior to 2nd century B.C. It remained a dependency of China for 1000 years from 2nd century B.C. to 8th century A.D. Its culture, customs, and language are more closely allied to Chinese than anything else. Yet the Annamese hated Chinese and everything pertaining to China. It is a fact that Hinduism and Buddhism reached much before the 2nd century B.C. The Annamese openly assert that they learnt nothing from China. Whatever they learned came from India. The Annamese claim that they are the descendant of Rama, son of Dasaratha, who killed Dashanana for having kidnapped his goddess like wife Sita. They have their own Ramayana known as Indo-Chinese Ramayana. Each country in Indochina has its own Ramayana.

## Sri Lanka

*Maahavamsha Jataka*, written in 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. tells that in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the king of Bengal banished his son, Vijaya Sinha, who came to Sri Lanka in a large ship with 500 warriors. They enforced law and order and Prince Vijaya was made king with the consent of all. The country was then named Sinhala after the name of their first king Vijaya Sinha, who was duly coronate.

## Kampuchea/Cambodia Tradition

It has its tradition connected to the northern part of India. Adityavamsha, king of Indraprastha, and his queen Candra Devi, became displeased with one of their sons, Rajakumara Pradyumna and banished him. The prince has been described in the tradition as Sundara Kumara, meaning handsome prince. Crossing rivers, trampling valleys and traversing mountains, Sundara Kumara Pradyumna reached Kokathaloka. The country was being ruled by a tribal ruler, Naga king, who had three daughters in the form of Kinnaris of marvelous beauty. They were in the habit of visiting Gandharvaloka in the Himalayas. The region around Kokathaloka was full of Kiratas who were of savage cannibals. Pradyumna happened to see the youngest Kinnari one day while she was bathing naked in the crystalline water of a rivulet. He fell in love and Kinnari had also her heart on the price. Both married with the help of his father-in-law, the Naga king, Pradyumna expanded his kingdom. Once it so happened that Pradyumna had to go on a military expedition. In his absence his Kinnari wife went away to Gandharva loka. Upon coming back to headquarters and not finding his beloved wife the price was in grief. As a true lover, he vowed to get back his wife at any cost. With a fairly large contingent of fully armed troops, Sundara Kumara Pradyumna rushed off to Gandharva loka to search for his wife. The king succeeded in getting his wife back and the couple thenceforward lived happily. People going from India used to disembark at Takkola now called Takua Pa which is also the name of the river on the mouth of which the port is situated. In ancient times it was a large port but now it can accommodate only fishing boats. People used to sail upriver for some distance to on the foot of Girirasta mountain. After climbing the mountain, they were descending the other side by following the course of Girirasta river. On Girirasta river on low hills is the village Bansok where the natives point out even today that Indian came by this route and with them also came their civilisation and culture. Sundara Kumara's story is still played in drama liked by masses as well as the elite. [1]

## Traditional Culture of Southeast Asian Countries in brief

In this section, the folk cultural traditions such as song, dance etc. of South Asian countries are narrated.

### Burmese

The beginnings of Burmese dance are traced to the Pyu, Halin, and Mon cultures in the central and lower Irrawaddy regions from at least two centuries before the Christian era. Archaeological evidence shows Indian influences in this.[3][4] There were also influences from Thai and Khmer cultures during the many invasions and counter-invasions that occurred over the next two millennia. There was a particularly well-documented infusion of dance forms, such as the Yama Zatdaw (the Burmese version of the Ramayana) in 1767, when the Burmese sacked Ayutthaya and expropriated a large component of the Thai court.

Some of the surviving forms (including the belu, nat gadaw and zawgyi dances) honor folklore characters that are quintessentially Burmese, some of these from pre-Buddhist times. There is also a close relationship

between the classical Burmese marionette and human dance art forms, with the former obviously imitating human dance, but also with human dance imitating the movements of the marionette.



### **Bagan dance**

This dance originated from the time of the Pyu kingdoms (5th-10th century). A small number of relatively crude musical instruments were used, and the dance style is slow and sedate. The costumes of dancers, as depicted in wall paintings, were scanty and revealing.

### **Bilu dance**

The bilus (demons or ogres) are ancient characters, thought to originate from a legendary race that roamed India and Burma circa 2000 B.C.. Buddhist literature describes them as primitive and feared by other races. In literature, the Belus are described as having transmogrifying powers—an ability to take on different physical appearances. There are twenty-four different classical demon forms, each with its own name and role in stories and plays. One of the best-known demons is Dasagiri, a demon in the Indian Ramayana epic.

In any of his forms, the Belus embodies the Devil. He is terrifying, overbearing and diabolical by nature. But he also has a gentle side. In a typical dance, Dasa-Giri often offers a bouquet of flowers to a dainty damsel. The demure lady is unable to overlook the beastly side and declines his offering. The demon then expresses his dejection at the refusal.

### **Kinnara and Kinnari dances**

There are many references in the Pali and Sanskrit literature to the mythical birds with human head and torso, Kinnara (male) and Kinnari (female). According to the literature, these birds originated in prehistoric India. They appear in some of the discourses of the Lord Buddha himself.

In Burma, images of the Bird's dancing styles are found painted and carved on the walls at Bagan and (even earlier) from the Pyu kingdoms. The songs and dances describe the Bird's happy re-union after a separation of 700 nights due to heavy rainstorms and floods. The dance is a popular emblem of true love and has an ancient history that is kept alive by the Burma dance troupes.

The dancers are attired with flapping wings at their wrists, in contrast to wings at their armpits, as is characteristic of Thailand and other Asian countries. The dance of bird-like movements is very supple and fine, and intricately coordinated with the accompanying music

### Ramayan Dance

In 1767, King Hsinbyushin of the Konbaung dynasty brought back Siamese captives to the Inwa (Ava), the kingdom's capital. Among the captives were Siamese court dancers who performed the Ramayana (Yama Zatdaw) wearing masks. In this epic, Rama is the hero and chief character, Sita is the heroine, and Dasa-Giri is the villainous demon. In a typical segment, Rama is enticed away by the Golden Deer, who is a transformed form of the demon sister of Dathagiri (Ravana). Dathagiri himself is metamorphosed as a Hermit. Rama is then seen gravely following the tracks of the alluring Deer. The Deer leaves subtle hints as a trail.

### Nat Dance

A nat gadaw (spirit medium) dance in Amarapura in Burma, it is traditional to make an offering of a green coconut, three hands of bananas, and a few other accessories, to the Guardian Spirit of Land (a nat) prior to an important event such as an inauguration. This appeasement of the Spirit is usually done by a professional Spirit Medium (Nakadaw). The dancer is often attired in red silk, including a red headband and, around the chest, and a tightly knotted red scarf. With the offerings on a tray, he or she dances in propitiation and repeats the sequence three times. As medium dances she sings ritual songs to the 37 National Nats (Spirits) and the Local Nat.

At the onset, the dance is delicate and the music legato. After a verbal injunction, the dancer quickens to the rising intensity of the music. As the Medium enjoins the Spirits, the movements and the music reach a frenzied crescendo. In addition there are many such fold dance art performances such as Mount Popa's guardian spirits dance, U Min gyaw dance, Oil land dance, Ushwe Yoe and Daw Moe dances.[5]

### Images of Burmese Dances



## **Folk Tradition and Dance of Laos**

The dance and theatre of Laos is the primary dramatic art form of Laos' majority ethnic group, the Lao people. It is shared with the ethnic Lao that inhabit the Isan region of Thailand as well. There are mainly two types of dances (or dance-dramas), the classical dances performed in the royal courts and the folk dances now associated with morlam. The dance-dramas and musical accompaniment are all very similar to those of Thai and Cambodian classical dances. Lao legends of the first ruler of Lan Xang say that, in addition to a large army of Khmer soldiers, he was also accompanied by many female dancers from the court of Angkor. Most dance dramas depict scenes from the Phra Lak Phra Ram, or the Lao Ramayana and the Sadok, or Jataka. Other scenes come from legends, historical epics such as Sin Xay, stories from local or Hindu mythology, or adaptations of stories from surrounding nations. Lao classical dance has two main forms, khone and lakhone. Each is accompanied by Lao classical music.

### **Khon**

*Khon* and Cambodian Royal ballet dance is the most stylized of the Lao dance-dramas, with troupes of male and female dancers in elaborate costumes and masks performing very graceful movements demonstrating their great flexibility, and very common dance-drama form for the Phra Lak Phra Ram. Each dancer plays a character in the drama, although most of the narration comes from a singing chorus to the side. Lakhone dances are usually only performed by females, but male lakhone dancers are not unknown. Instead of each dancer portraying an individual character, such as the *Khon* dance-dramas, the dancers mimic the scene and events together. There is more variety of dance-dramas performed in the Lakhon tradition.

Although lacking in dance, *nang taloung* or shadow puppets are an important part of Lao theatrical traditions. An adaptation of the traditional Malay wayang shadow puppets, but there are numerous puppeteers instead of one puppet master. Shadow puppet plays are based on similar themes and stories as the other classical dramas, but can be accompanied by either classical music or morlam instrumentation.

### **Lam Lao**

Lam lao is the general descriptor for Lao folk music, which at its most basic level consists of the singer/story-teller and the khene). In Isan, both terms are interchangeable, but in Laos, *morlam* only refers to the singer. Troupes travel around like minstrels performing at various locales. There are many regional styles, depending on the local tone contours and preferred instrumentation and melodies.

The music that accompanies a lam lao performance may also include various types of percussion, fiddles, lutes, xylophones, or oboes as well as some that are more characteristic of classical ensembles. Lyrics are drawn from old poetry, classical stories, or improvised according to the complicated tonal rhyming patterns of the verse and can range from topics as serious as religious sermons and Jataka tales to sometimes bawdy verses about love and sex.

Although the performances themselves are not necessarily theatrical, the closest being the exchanges of witty repartees in alternating verses or songs between a male and a female morlam who pretend to fall in love before departing or friends who try to outwit each other. The songs are interspersed with dance numbers, comedic routines, ham acting, and teasing between the performers and the audience.[6]

## Folk dance

Lao folk dances are numerous and varied, much like lam lao. In fact, most *lam* also have an associated folk dance. And Other popular dances include the southern *lam Tang Vai* and *Lam Saravane*. The most popular folk dance, however, is the *lam vong*. It is the national dance of Laos, and versions of it exist throughout the Lao-speaking region and even Cambodia, where it is known as ramvong. A slow and graceful couples dance, the men form an inner circle and the women an outer circle, with couples dancing around each other while moving in their respective circles. It is a common feature of weddings, celebrations, and other social events.

## Lam luang

A truly theatrical derivative of morlam, it is believed to have developed when the morlam began to dress up and act out various characters from the sung repertoire of oral traditions, myths and legends. it is better known as Lam Luang or *sung story*. Stories range from traditional to lewd, serious to bawdy, and are drawn from a diverse range of sources, such as the traditional stories and Jataka tales to even development projects and community concerns. Music can be classical, morlam, or even modern, and costumes also run the gamut depending on the needs of the story.

Common to Lam Luang theatre performances are stock characters common to all stories. These include the hero, the heroine, king father, queen mother, clown, villain and supernatural forces such as gods, demons, spirits, or ogres.[7]



## **Malaysia**

Dance is also a popular cultural form in Malaysia. Each ethnic group has its own dance forms which characterizes its culture. Malaysian dances can be identified with certain regions or religious practices which are often performed in festive celebrations, wedding parties, cultural shows, religious ceremonies or other public events. Below are the dances of the three major ethnic groups in our country: Tarian Melayu or Malay dance portrays the customs or adat resam and culture or budaya of the Malays. It depicts the true nature of the Malay people and their way of life.



Generally, Malay dances are divided into two main categories which are the “original” Malay dances and “adopted” Malay dances. The “original” Malay dances are indigenous to the Malay region, encompassing Sumatra, the Malay Peninsular, Singapore, the Riau Archipelago and Borneo, and its origins can be traced back to the early Malay civilizations. The “adopted” Malay dances are influenced by foreign cultures due to political and historical events. The various forms or styles of Malay dance are further categorized by its beats (rentak) and rhythm (irama). The four basic genres of Malay dance are Asli, Inang, Joget and Zapin. Asli and Inang dances are categorized as the “original” Malay dances whereas Joget and Zapin are categorized as “adopted” Malay dances. [8]

## **Indonesia**

Indonesia is rich with tribes and customs; therefore, Indonesia has thousands local culture heritage which need to be preserved. Cultural education can be done simply by disseminating information related to the local cultures such as traditional foods, weapons, customs, dances, costumes, etc. The articles below provide important information about the folk dances in Indonesia.



### **Saman Dance**

This is one of the Indonesian folk dances that captured the world's attention. Saman Dance which originates from Aceh. This folk dance is named after its creator Syekh Saman, a religious scholar from Gayo Tribe in Aceh. This dance is interesting because it is done by group of people in sitting position and the highlight lies in their hands' motions and heads. The dance motions must be synchronized with the music meanwhile the tempo of the music will be getting faster.

### **Jaipong Dance**

Jaipong or jaipongan is a traditional dance which is found in 1960s in West Java. This dance becomes popular on 1970s until now because the dance is not that difficult because this folk dance can be done spontaneously. The values of jaipong is as a media to bond the friendship between Sundanese.

This folk dance becomes more popular because it is performed during welcoming the guest who comes from abroad to Indonesia. The objective is to symbolize friendship.

### **Kecak Dance in Bali**

Bali is the most popular tourist destination in Indonesia. Besides of its tourist attraction places, Bali also have an interesting folk dance called kecak dance. This dance is done by group of males which sit in a circle and shouting “CAK” several times and raising both hands. On the other hand, song of this Kecak Dance originated from Sang Hyang Dance Ritual. Moreover, it cannot use any musical instruments on it. Only using the sounds of bell worn on foot dancers. It portrayed the characters of Ramayana. Those movements are used to convey a story, Ramayana is the center of this folk dance.

### **Pendet Dance**

Another popular folk dance from Bali is *pendet* dance. *Pendet* dance has been stealing the tourist’s hearts, even some tourists are coming to Bali to join a course to learn *pendet* dance. This dance conveys a story about the descent of Gods to the world. It was performed during worship in the past. The highlight of this folk dance is eyes; the dancer’s eyes are moving to left and right rapidly. Still embracing the religious values, this dance is now can be performed on welcoming ceremony as well.

### **Reog Ponorogo Dance**

*Reog ponorogo* is a popular folk dance from East Java especially *Ponorogo* district. This folk dance is related closely with supernatural things. This folk-dance use *barongsai* or la big lion’s head which weight dozens kilogram and the dancers are carrying that mask by teeth. This dance consists of 2-3 opening series and the last stage is the dancers carrying the lion’s head, it is the highlight of this folk dance. *Reog Ponorogo* usually be showed when there is a big cultural ceremony in Java Island, especially in East Java. Moreover, it recognized as one of aesthetic Indonesian Heritage in world stage.

### **Merak Dance**

This dance also originated from West Java, this dance is influenced by peacock’s life and being performed on stage. Peacock is expressive especially when it comes to love affair, according to this dance a male peacock will spread its tail feathers to attract the peahen. The music also conveys a situation; the wooden part will be hit loudly to tell that a pair of peacocks is flirting each other. The costume has a motive like peacock’s feathers meanwhile he fabric shows peacock’s feathers, a pair of wings, and a crown to complete the appearance.

### **Tor-Tor Dance**

This dance comes from North Sumatera especially from Batak Tribe. This dance is accompanied by *gondang* music, the music and the dance movement is inseparable. Not only as an entertaining media, this dance is also used as communication media between the dancers and the audiences. Tor-tor also performed during ceremony or ritual to respect the house host, the ancestors’ spirit, audiences, and God. On the other hand, Despite of Batak which is one of tribe in North Sumatra Island, and have so many traditional art, they also have delightful and delicious Traditional Foods in North Sumatra.

### Srimpi Dance

*Srimpi* is a repertoire classical dance from Central Java. This folk dance shows a graceful motion which reflects modesty, a soft soul, and gentleness which accompanied by gamelan music. This folk dance is special and sacred even it was only selected people who can perform this dance in the past. The dance movement in *srimpi* dance is dominated by hand, feet, and head movements. The dancers are performing it gracefully and sometimes playing the shawl which is tied in their waists.

### Kipas Pakarena Dance

The people in *Gowa* South Sulawesi has been performing this creative folk dance using fan. This dance is performed by girls who play with fan following the rhythm. The soft movements reflecting the *Gowa* women who is graceful, obedient, humble, and respecting men. The dance consists of several stages; the dancers are sitting in the beginning and the ending, the clockwise round movement tells the life matters, and up & down movement reflecting life cycle. In addition, **Monong Dance**: originating from Dayak Tribe which serves as a cure for illness or disease so the patient will be healthy again. **Gong Dance**: a folk dance which is performed to welcome the great guests in Central Kalimantan. **Malinting Dance**: this dance retells the story of Lampung people in the past. **Dingu Dance**: comes from Southeast Sulawesi which shows the mutual cooperation during pudding rice. **Mengket Dance**: a couple dance which requires a man and a woman to symbolizes love and affection from North Sulawesi.[9]

### Tradition of Thailand

Thai dance, like many forms of traditional Asian dance, can be divided into two major categories that correspond roughly to the high art (classical dance) and low art (folk dance) distinction. Although traditional Thai performing arts are not as actively embraced as they once were, suffering from competition from modern and western entertainments and generally changing tastes, Thai dance is still very much alive. It is an integral part of the culture of Thailand at all levels. The Thai dance technique has indeed many features in common with Indian techniques. They include several poses, the use of three different speeds of movements, and the original series of 108 basic movements (now reduced to 68) corresponding in number to the 108 *karanas* of the *Natyashastra*. However, there are also definitive differences between the Indian and Thai traditions.



*Ram Muay* is the ritualized dance that takes place before Southeast Asian kickboxing matches such as Muay Thai. At the beginning of a match the fighter performs a ram muay which is an exhibition of his prowess, skill, and grace. The moves range from very simple and slow to highly complex choreography that is almost too fast to follow, and often include clues and tributes to their past teachers or training styles. These dances (also known as wai khru) are usually performed on each side of the ring before each match. Also See Muay Thai (Kick Boxing) Under Sports.

Wai Khru is a ritualized form of dance meant to pay respect to, or homage to the khru or teacher. It is performed annually by Thai classical dance institutions as well as before Muay Thai matches. Other regional folk dance styles in Thailand include *Pleng Cha-Pleng Reo*; *Mae Bot Lek*; *Rabam Chiangsaen*; *Tawai praporn*; *Rabam Tawarawadee*; *Baisri sukwan*; *Manora Buchayan*; *Uayporn Oonwan*; *Chuichai Bhran*; *Chuichai Benyakai*; *Sinuan Worachet*; *Chuichai Wantong*; *Sinuan Arnu*; *Rabam Loburi*; *Klidda Phinihan*; *Rabam Srichaisinghn*; *Rabam Sriwichai*; *Keb Baicha*; *Rabam Sukhothai*; *Rabam Dowwadueng*; *Nora Dance*; *Bugna Lampai*; *Choom-num Pao Thai*; *Kinnaree Ron*; *Sad Chatri*; *Soeng Praewa*; *Krailassamrerng*; *Ten Kam Ram Keow*; *Soeng Sawing* and *Ramwong*. *Fawn Thai* is another form of "folk-dance" accompanied by folk music of the region. The first Fawn originated from the northern region of Thailand, it was designed and taught by Chao Dararasami of Chiang Mai. Since then, a variety of "Fawn" came into practice, according to the music and style of each province, such as the Fawn-Lep finger-nail dance from Chiang Mai, Fawn-Ngiew from Chiang Rai with the influence of Burmese music and costume. While they are sometimes performed alongside classical dances, the Fawn Thai are a set of folk dances performed by female dancers that have become famous throughout the world. There are five basic styles: 1) *Fawn Leb* (Fingernails Dance); 2) *Fawn Tian* (Candle Dance); 3) *Fawn Marn Gumm Ber* (Butterfly Dance); 4) *Fawn Ngiew* (Scarf Dance); 5) *Fawn Marn Mong Kol* (*Happy Dance*).

Each of these dances has its own particular musical accompaniment by traditional Thai instruments and singers, usually five to seven musicians accompanying four to six dancers. The costumes are traditional, simply-cut sarongs and shoulder-cloths with some minor variation in color depending on the region the dancer comes from. These dances also often have props such as long brass fingernail extensions for the [10]

### **Traditions of Uttar Purba Bharat**

Uttar *Purba* Bharat (officially called North Eastern Region, NER) is the easternmost region of India representing both a geographic and political administrative division of the country. It comprises the eight states Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The region shares more than 4,500 kilometers (2,800 mi) of international border with Tibet in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bangladesh in the southwest and Bhutan to the northwest. It comprises an area of 262,230 square kilometers (101,250 sq mi), almost 8 percent of that of India, and is the largest salient (panhandle) in the world.

### **Assam**

The Bihu dance is a folk dance from the Indian state of Assam related to the festival of Bihu. This joyous dance is performed by both young men and women, and is characterized by brisk dance steps, rapid hand

movement, and a rhythmic swaying of the hips in order to represent youthful passion. Dancers wear traditionally colourful Assamese clothing.

The most important and colourful of the three Bihu festival is the Spring festival "*Bohag Bihu*" or Rangali Bihu celebrated in the middle of April. Songs sung in Bihu are woven around themes of love and often carry erotic overtones. People adorn traditional attires like Dhoti, *Gamocha* and Chadar, Mekhala. In addition to this there are many more festivals and rituals are associated with Assam which are mostly based on nature and harvesting etc. Another very popular traditional religious dance of Assam which is known as *Satriya* dance dedicated to Lord Krishna. [11]*Tamul* and Pan (betel leaf and nut) is another important cultural part of assam which is offered to guest and others.



## Tripura

The love and attachment of the people of Tripura for music and dance is a common feature. The music and dances of Tripura show the outburst of the emotions of the people related to harvest or worship or in some cases wars and marriages. Different Communities have different form of dances with different dresses, ornaments etc. For instance, Garia is a dance of the Tribes for the prosperity of the people. Below are some of the special dances of different Communities. Garia is a dance form of *Koloi*, Tripuri and Jamatia communities. This dance is performed on the beats of drums during Garia Puja festival which begins on the last day of the month of 'Chaitra'. *Lebang Boomani* is a dance form performed by the *Tripurians* before the monsoon season. This is a dance festival in which Tribal youths gets indulge in catching charming colourful insects called '*Lebang*'. The male folks make a peculiar rhythmic sound with the help of two bamboo chips in their hands, the womenfolk run tottering the hill slopes to catch this *Lebangs*.



*Bijhu* is the most popular dance of the *Chakmas*. It is a religious devotional dance performed at the compound of a Tempel with the accompany of 'Dhul', 'Flute' and some bamboo made instruments. This dance is marked by sudden lull in between different from other dances.



*Cherawlam* dance is performed by the Lushai (Mizo) girls in honour of one dying an untimely death, between and across a pair of horizontal bamboos or pestles which are held by two persons, one sitting at each end, who continuously raise and lower them twice and bring them together twice in regular rhythm. *Gajan* is another popular mainly in the rural areas. During the 'Chaitra Sankranti', people dressed like

Shiva and Gouri perform such form of dances, where Lord Shiva is projected with “*trishul*” and “*damru*”. The performers dresses in loin cloth painting the face in white wearing matted artificial hair on head. The boy playing the role of Gouri wears red saree and holds a plate in one hand. The dancers perform in every houses and collect rice, money etc for “Charak Mela” organised on the last day of the month of ‘Chaitra’.



*Dhamail* is a dance of harmony. This is a very popular group dance of the womenfolk irrespective of caste and community. This is not an instrument-oriented dance, but is dominated by good rhythm and tune maintained by clapping and stepping. It is performed to praise God and also give festive mood to happy occasions like marriages and other ceremonies.[12]

### Tradition of Nagaland

Nagaland is exotic in all forms, rich in primeval beauty and most importantly the traditional dance. Music and dance play a huge part in Naga culture and any event won't conclude without a folk dance. The people of Nagaland believe in togetherness hence you will notice all their dances are presented in groups. Speaking of which, Nagaland has multiple tribes each having their own uniqueness, dance forms, cultures, language and more. For instance, the major folk dances of Nagaland include *Modse*, *Agurshikukula*, *Butterfly Dance*, *Aaluyattu*, *Sadal Kekai*, *Changai Dance*, *Kuki Dance*, *Leshalaptu*, *Khamba Lim*, *Mayur Dance*, *Monyoasho*, *Rengma*, *Seecha and Kukui Kucho*, *Shankai* and *Moyashai* etc, however, the prominent ones are War Dance and *Zeliang Dance*.[13]

The men in Nagaland perform War Dance with an outburst cry and humming tune. It can be said, this dance form mocks war scenario by involving dangerous war movements. A single wrong step could ruin an entire act, it's martial and athletic style requires a performer to whirl his legs while keeping the body in an upward posture. Besides the traditional attire worn by the performers are simply unique. Apart from War Dance being popular in Nagaland, there is another artistic dance of the Zeliang Naga tribe, *Zeliang* dance. Most of the Naga dances are predominantly performed by men but this tribe allows their women to partake in the dance as well. Nothing too instrumental but with only beating of the drum in a synchronized melody along with leg movement makes men and women merge together forming a circle, chanting some chorus. This chanting, clapping and shouting of words, thumping of feet, gracefully endowed with traditional headgear

and clothes inspires every member of the group and the spectators as well. In order to add vigour to the dance, the performers are garnished in metal ornaments.

Chang Lo or Sua Lua is a traditional dance of the Chang tribe of Nagaland state. Similar to the *Zeliang* dance, this tribe is gracefully performed with men and women both geared up with traditional war weapons like dao, shield and spear.



#### **4Folk Tradition of Manipur**

According to the traditional legend, the indigenous people of the Manipur valley were the dance-experts revered as Gandharvas in the Hindu epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata), suggesting a dance tradition has existed in Manipur since antiquity. With evidence of Vishnu temples in the medieval era, the dance arts have been passed down verbally from generation to generation as an oral tradition. The first reliably dated written texts describing the art of Manipuri dance are from the early 18th-century [14].

The roots of Manipuri dance, as with all classical Indian dances, is the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text *Natya Shastra*, but with influences from the culture fusion between India, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, Siberia, Micronesia and Polynesia. The Manipuri dance is a team performance, with its own unique costumes, aesthetics, conventions and repertoire. The Manipuri dance drama is, for most part, marked by a performance that is graceful, fluid, sinuous with greater emphasis on hand and upper body gestures. It is accompanied with devotional music created with many instruments, with the beat set by cymbals (kartal or manjira) and double-headed drum (pung or Manipuri mrdanga) of *sankirtan*.

Manipuri dance is a religious art and its aim is the expression of spiritual values. Aspects of this performance art is celebrated during Hindu festivals and major rites of passage such as weddings among the Manipuri people, particularly in the ethnic majority of Meitei people. The dance drama choreography shares the plays and stories of 'Vaishnavite *Padavalis*', that also inspired the major *Gaudiya* Vaishnava-related performance arts found in Assam and West Bengal.



Gandharva as dancers are found sculpted in early medieval era temples of southeast Asia. Manipuri people believe that they are the Gandharvas According to tradition of the Manipuri people in the Himalayan foothills and valleys connecting India to Burma, they are the Gandharvas (celestial musicians and dancers) in the Vedic texts,<sup>[14]</sup> and historic texts of Manipu. Manipuri people calls the region as *Gandharvadesa*.<sup>[17]</sup>The Vedic *Usha*, the goddess of the dawn, is a cultural motif for Manipuri women, and in the Indian tradition, it was *Usha* who created and taught the art of feminine dance to girls.<sup>[11]</sup> This oral tradition of women's dance is celebrated as *Chingkheiol* in the Manipuri tradition.<sup>[16]</sup>

The ancient Sanskrit texts such as the Mahabharata epic mentions Manipur, where Arjuna meets and falls in love with Chitragada. Dance is called *Jagoi* in a major Meitei language of the region and it traces a long tradition in Manipur. Lai Haraoba dance likely has ancient roots and shares many similarities with dance postures of Nataraja and his legendary disciple called Tandu (locally called *Tangkhu*) Similarly, as does the dance related to commoner *Khamba* and princess *Thoibi* – who perform as pan-Indian Shiva and Parvati, in the legendary tragic love story of Khamba-Thoibi found in the Manipuri epic *Moirang Parba*.



A Manipuri dance musician playing *pung cholom*. The 19th century musician and Hindu king Chandra Kirti wrote sixty-four drum dances. Maharaja Bhagyachandra (r. 1759–1798 CE) of Manipur State adopted Gaudiya Vaishnavism (Krishna oriented), documented and codified the Manipuri dance style, launching the golden era of its development and refinement. He composed three of the five types of Ras Lilas,

the *Maha Ras*, the *Basanta Ras* and the *Kunja Ras*, performed at the Sri Sri Govindaji temple in Imphal during his reign and also the *Achouba Bhang Pareng* dance. He designed an elaborate costume known as *Kumil* (the cylindrical long mini-mirror-embellished stiff skirt costume, that makes the dancer appear to be floating). The *Govinda Sangeet Lila Vilasa*, an important text detailing the fundamentals of the dance, is also attributed to him. King Bhagyachandra is also credited with starting public performances of Raas Lila and Manipuri dances in Hindu temples.



### **Relation between Uttar Purba Bharat and South East Asian Countries**

Shared cultural and historical roots connected *Namphake* village, about 500 km off Guwahati in upper Assam's Dibrugarh district, with Thailand. The village here is populated with the Tai-Phake community. This community is rooted in Yunan province of China and Myanmar and is about 650 years old. Royal Kathina ceremony is in line with the policies of both India and Thailand in promoting Assam and the Northeast India as the gateway to Southeast Asia and vice versa. The proximity between the two regions and culture would be the key factors to strengthen and deepen India-Thailand relations. Tai-Phake people of the village, along with four other groups of Tai roots, migrated from Kunming in Yuanan to *Howkong* valley in Myanmar about 650 years ago and subsequently they came to Assam from Myanmar in 1775.

Many communities in India traces their origin south of the *Yarlung Zangbo*, source of the Brahmaputra River, including the *Tai-Ahoms* or *Ahoms*, an offspring of the Tai people who are called Shan in Myanmar, Thai in Thailand, Lao in Laos, Dai and Zhuang in China and Tay-Thai in Vietnam. The oral history of Chin-Kuki-Mizo communities places their origin to *Sinlung/Chinlung* or closed cave, probably the Great Wall in China. The exodus of Chin-Kuki-Mizo people from China was necessitated by the forcible conscription of people for the construction of the Great Wall by Emperor Shi Huang Di around 200BC. The personal names of many Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups have many similarities with the Chinese hint to a connection.

Cathay is the old name of China then, the term Kathe which is used by Burmese to describe the Meitei is a pointer of the possible migration rather an original or early settler of China proper. Similarities in the nouns between Chinese languages and speeches used among communities in Northeast India and Southeast Asia are also a point worth investigation. Many of us are not aware that the Meitei, who is assumed to be a part of the Black Tai, out of the three kindred of Tai: White Tai, Black Tai and Red Tai, are addressed as Tai mi meaning Tai people by many hill tribes in Manipur. Even the Manipuri vernacular meaning of the universe as *Taibangpan*, meaning the world in which the Tai reign, is suggestive of the old connection with the Tai community in Yunnan.

The similarities in the name of places may be no coincidence. A predominantly Loi village Tairenpokpi, which is situated at the foothills of Imphal West may be one of the early settlements of the Tai people who probably migrated from Yunnan, as the name suggest. In Yunnan there is a place called *Damenlong*, pronounced as *Tamenlong*. Whether *Tamenglong* in Manipur and *Damenlong* has any mythological and historical connection even in the oral history and tradition must inspire our Anthropologist, Linguists and Historians alike. Tangkhul Naga legend has that Yunnan is the place of origin of the Tangkhul. Many Naga friends from Nagaland, when inquired about the origin of the Naga shares that some of the Naga may have migrated from South East Asia, as there are oral history and discovery of fossils and shells peculiar to ocean.

Exploring the similarities in the cultural and settlement patterns of the Chiangmai in northern Thailand and Sekmai in Manipur could be the beginning of Manipur's *nongpok thong hangba*. Further Manipur is known as Manipura in the Thai chronicles. Khasi, one of the few matrilineal communities in India, have migrated from Yunnan before being pushed out of the Red River delta of Vietnam. Again, there is possible connection between the Khasi and the Mosuo community of Lugu Lake in Yunnan. The Mosuo is one of surviving matrilineal community in China practices a system of marriage called *zouhun* or walking marriage, where one can choose a female partner for a day, months, and year or for a life time.

Lord Vishnu riding over the *Garuda*, when Pong (Shan) king *Sabwa Khekhomba* gifted to *Meitei King Thangwai Ningthouba* also known as *Kyamba*. The idol which is still worshipped in a temple at Bishnupur bears resemblance to *Chandis* temple of Java as in the Chandi Punta Deva of 7th century such as the corbelled arch in Borobudur and ventilation holes in *Chandi Pawon*. This should be reason enough for us to ponder over the early connection. Balinese dance and Manipuri dance form may have visibly similar gestures. The Balinese dance gestures are played above the shoulder with direct eye gestures and contacts, whereas Manipuri and Thai dance form are gestures from below the shoulder with no direct eye-contact. There are no touts and beggars imposing their service and wares in this temple, largest in Bali.

Manipur history has valorised King *Khagemba*'s defeat of Chinese giant *Khagi* king of China. Inquiries into this matter with some Chinese scholars suggest that there was no such record. There are suggestions that King *Khagemba* might have defeated one of the chiefs of the Yi tribe and the word *Khagi* probably means Kha Yi meaning South Yi. Nonetheless this testifies the fluctuating links either through conquest or expeditions on either side. The ubiquitous yellow color among the Tais in Yunnan tell that the yellow *khudei Meitei* grooms traditionally wears day after the wedding and yellow muga silk suit that adorns the bride on the *mapam chakouba* the possibility of Tai lineage.

The copper plate used in the *Umanglais* bust and in idols at *Kondong Lairembi* and *Eengourok* are reminder of the Buddhist influence from South East Asia. The Thai scholar *Mattani Rutnin* has noted: Thai dancers, in both the folk and classical styles, hold their bodies straight from the neck to the hips in a vertical axis and move their bodies up and down with their knees bent, stretching to the rhythm of the music. Indian dancers, on the other hand, often move their bodies in an S curve. The arms and hands in Thai dancing are kept in curves, or *wong*, at different levels, high medium or low, and the legs are bent with the knees opening outward to make an angle called *liem* (lit., angles) ... The grace and beauty of the dancer depend on how well these curves and angles are maintained in relationship with the proportion of the whole body. Furthermore, *Mattani* adds that the Indian mudras are simplified in Thai dance to a few basic hand gestures, which when combined with dance gestures (*phasa ta*), can denote the actions and, especially, the moods of the characters. She also notes that the foot movements of Thai dance are generally slower than in India and, furthermore, that in Thai dance the toes are mostly curved upward or kept flat at an angle with the legs, but never pointed, as they sometimes are in Indian dance. These differences may be interpreted as signifying that the Thai adopted their dance tradition, not directly from India, but from their neighbours, the Khmer and the Mon, in an already localised form.

The Instruments used by the various communities amongst the studied areas are similar. The costume as it is found across all the dance performance are very high qualities having decorations which show the beautiful mind of the people. The movement of body and hand not only shows different posture of various animals incorporated in the dance forms but their implications in human mind and soul as well. The food habits of the communities are one of the phenomena which perhaps reminds us that there is no difference as far as taste are concerned the common food habit is that the studied region use boiled food and rice is the main food. Ingredients common to many cultures in the East and Southeast regions of the continent include rice, ginger, garlic, sesame seeds, chilies, dried onions, soy, and tofu. Stir frying, steaming, and deep frying are common cooking methods.

While rice is common to most Asian cuisines, different varieties are popular in the various regions. Basmati rice is popular in the subcontinent, Jasmine rice is often found across the southeast, while long-grain rice is also popular. Curry is a common dish in southern, southeastern Asia and Japan and also found to some extent in other Asian cuisines. Curry dishes with origins in India and other northern South Asian countries usually have a yogurt base while those in southern India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia generally use coconut milk as their foundation.



Image of Common food of South East Asia countries and North East India

## Conclusion

Traditions may be oral or may be written. Since they are backed by specific dates they are not considered as history. This is one side of the coin. Every type of evidence may it be literature, inscriptions, monuments, can be obliterated by any fanatic or tyrant who gets into power by destroying them to dust and burning them to ashes. Traditions to the contrary, are indestructible. They are imprisoned in the heart of the people and passed down from one generation to other generations by word of mouth. Events per chance, by being passed from one mouth to the other for centuries, might have become exaggerated or minimised. Yet the essence of tradition is always true.

The culture and its tradition as it grows and varies from one country to the other, however, the folk literature of the world has some similarity with each other. One folk song of Finland sang in IFLA 2012 remind the author about the folk song of his native village called *Gaoalpariya* folk song owing to its rhythm, tune and its effect except language, the properties of folk song found to have the same spirit. Likewise, the folk tradition of India, precisely the folk song of Uttar Purba Bharat (North East India) have many more similarity than dissimilarities of course language differs with the South East Asia countries.

The various instruments such as *Dhol* (is a two faced drum, played with a stick and a hand), a wind instrument and has a major role, An instrument made of Bamboo (just like Toka in Assam) *Xutuli*, Bamboo flute, Bin, *Bhortal* which are usually used by the Vaishnavite; *Madol*, Mridanga, a stringed instrument either having many strings or two strings etc. The posture as used in various dance performance is very significant amongst the folk traditional dances of the studied areas. All such postures have meanings both culturally and physically as it is related with the health of the performer. The various postures with movement signify a special meaning to the society. These movements of the dance performance are related to nature and the environment. The various animals such as snake, tiger, birds, etc. are incorporated in the dance. The observation with the nature and its animals can give special skill to live a better life. The environment friendly tactics are very much prominent in these art forms which are very unique in the traditional performances of these communities of Uttar Purba Bharat and South East Asia Countries.

Finally, it is nevertheless to mention that the song, story and literature related to this tradition led to ultimate peace and propagate inclusive theory of nature and human being. The thrive for holistic approach of life as it is revealed through the performances of these communities of Uttar Purba Bharat and South East Asia Countries are to be retained and the same be disseminated to other part of the world. The better bonding between these countries can remove the international boundaries and can become one nation. Owing to its similarities, right from food, the true love for nature, the posture of dance etc. shows unanimity in cultural tradition amongst each other only language differs. If these regions get united, then it will be an example for the whole world and the message of one globe and universe will be possible. A message towards global peace and harmony can be initiated as a part of Indian philosophy *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

- **Special note**

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