

Folk Dances of Manipur, Famous Dance Form Name List 2026

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Folk Dances of Manipur reflect the state's diverse ethnic traditions, religious beliefs and community life. Manipur has both folk and classical dance traditions. Each ethnic community preserves distinctive costumes, music, movements and themes. Dance is closely linked with festivals, rituals, ceremonies and social life. The traditions of the Meitei, Tangkhul Naga, Kabui, Mao Naga and other communities add diversity to Manipur's cultural heritage.

Folk Dances of Manipur 2026

Folk Dances of Manipur are mainly connected with religious worship, festivals, agriculture, folklore and community traditions. Many forms are performed collectively. Lai Haraoba, Thabal Chongba, Luivat Pheizak, Kabui dances and community dances preserve important aspects of local history and customary life. The wider Manipuri tradition also includes Raas Leela, Nupa Pala and Pung Cholom, which combine dance, music and devotional expression.

Folk Dances of Manipur Features

The key highlighting features of the Folk Dances of Manipur has been listed below:

- **Religious and Social Role:** Folk Dances of Manipur are closely connected with worship, **festivals**, ceremonies and community life. They provide a medium for preserving mythology, customary practices, agricultural traditions and collective cultural memory.
- **Cultural Diversity:** The dance traditions of Manipur show the cultural diversity of its ethnic communities. Meitei, Tangkhul Naga, Kabui, Mao Naga, Maring and Kom traditions contribute distinct themes, movements, costumes and performance practices.
- **Cultural Expression:** Manipuri dance is valued as more than entertainment. It expresses spiritual beliefs, folklore and social traditions. The state's artistic culture is also reflected in its handloom and handicraft traditions, known for distinctive designs and colourful workmanship.
- **Community Tradition:** A major feature of Folk Dances of Manipur is the close relationship between movement and community tradition. Some dances narrate legends, while others represent cultivation, worship, festivals, warfare or everyday social practices.
- **Cultural Continuity:** Many Manipuri dance traditions have been transmitted through generations as living cultural practices. Their continued performance during festivals and ceremonies helps preserve the historical identity and cultural knowledge of different communities.

List of Folk Dances of Manipur

Folk Dances of Manipur represent different communities and cultural traditions. Their themes range from creation myths and cultivation to festivals, worship and martial practices.

Maibi Dance

- Maibi Dance is performed by Meitei priestesses during Lai Haraoba.
- The movements symbolically describe the creation of the world, construction of houses and different activities that supported traditional community life.
- Lai Haraoba is a traditional Meitei ritual **festival** dance tradition associated with Umang Lai.
- Maibas and Maibis use symbolic movements to portray creation, community occupations and the traditional way of life.

Thougal Jagoi

- Thougal Jagoi, also called Khamba Thoibi Jagoi, is performed during Lai Haraoba before the deities.
- It represents the legendary dance of Khamba and Thoibi associated with the ancient Moirang tradition.
- Khamba Thoibi Dance is a male-female duet connected with the deity Thangjing of Moirang.

Yelhou Jagoi

- Yelhou Jagoi covers dances performed during Lai Haraoba, particularly by Maibis.
- It includes forms such as Laiching Jagoi, Nunghao Jagoi, Panthoibi Jagoi, Longkhon Jagoi, Paton, Thang Thaba and Phibul Jagoi.

Thabal Chongba

- Thabal Chongba is a popular Manipuri folk dance traditionally associated with Yaoshang.
- Participants hold hands in a circle, move rhythmically and advance together while performing coordinated foot movements.

Luivat Pheizak

- Luivat Pheizak is a traditional dance of the Tangkhul Naga **community**.
- It depicts different stages of cultivation and the simple lifestyle of the community. It is performed during traditional festivals.

Kabui Dance

- Kabui dances belong to the Kabui community living in the western hills of Manipur.
- Performances feature traditional costumes, powerful drumming and high pitched singing, with different dances representing community traditions.

Shim Lam

- Shim Lam is a Kabui Naga dance also known as the Fly Dance.
- Its theme comes from the Kabui legend of Mhung and the Jourumei sacrifice.
- It is associated with the dance of Tajuibon, a flying insect.

Kit Lam

- Kit Lam is a Kabui Naga dance associated with harvest celebrations.
- Its rhythmic movements are linked with the movement of crickets. It forms part of the community's traditional cultural expression.

Mao Naga Dance

- Mao Naga dances are associated with the Mao Naga community of the northern highlands.
- Young men and women perform them during seed sowing and **harvesting ceremonies**. Complex footwork and controlled body movements are important features.

Mao Maram Dance

- Mao Maram Dance, also called Asharali Odo, is associated with the Mao community.
- It is recognised for vocal rhythms and graceful movements.
- It forms part of the community's wider traditional dance heritage.

Lhou Sha

- Lhou Sha is a traditional battle dance of the Maring community.

- It was historically associated with conflicts between villages.
- The tradition later developed as a folk performance involving both men and women.

Thang-Ta

- Thang-Ta is an ancient Manipuri martial tradition based on the use of Thang, meaning sword and Ta, meaning spear.
- It demonstrates combat techniques, physical strength, speed, sensitivity and mental alertness.

Pung Cholom

- Pung Cholom combines drumming with energetic dance movements.
- The Pung is the Manipuri Mridanga and an important instrument of Sankirtana music. Performers display changing rhythms through footwork and body movements.

Nupa Pala

- Nupa Pala, also called Kartal Cholom or Cymbal Dance, is performed by male groups using cymbals.
- Performers wear large white turbans and accompany their singing with Pung.
- It can precede Raas Leela or be performed independently.

Raas Leela

- Raas Leela is a major classical Manipuri dance drama based on the divine love of Radha and Krishna.
- Performances combine solo, duet and group movements with devotional music, graceful gestures and elaborate costumes.

Dhol Dholak Cholom

- Dhol Dholak Cholom is associated with Yaoshang and uses dhol, dholak and other drums.
- Performers combine rhythmic drumming, energetic movements and acrobatic actions during the festival.

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