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Gestures Across Borders: A Study of Laotian Traditional Dance Through the Nāṭyaśāstra's Lens of Aṅga

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Abstract

Gestures are those meticulous movements that convey meaning and emotion through the body, that transcend linguistic and social barriers, and serve as a universal language that connects people across cultures. In dance, gestures are the stylized symbols that carry meanings, convey narratives and emotions, and allow a diverse audience of different backgrounds to engage with and interpret the performance. This study adopts the methodology of a qualitative comparative approach that foregrounds the Laotian traditional dances such as Lam Vong, Lao Phaen Noy, and Champa Muang, which were considered for this study, identifying the similarities through the lens of Nāṭyaśāstra, focusing on the gestures of the Aṅga (limbs) [Head (the Śira), Hands (the Hasta), Chest (the Uraḥ), both Sides (the Pārśva), Waist (the Katī), and Feet (the Pāda)] to reveal the influence of the Indian classical dance gestures on Laotian traditional dances. This study proves that the systematization and the codification of gestures in the Nāṭyaśāstra, as a semiotic lexicon, provide a valuable foundation for the comparative analysis of global dance tradition, despite the absence of textual documentation in the Lao Tradition. This investigation not only helps us to understand the multicultural dimensions of dance but also echoes the magnificent confluence of traditions across regional boundaries.

Keywords: *Nāṭyaśāstra, Laotian traditional dances, gestures, Aṅga, performing arts.*

Introduction:

Dance is a sacred space where humans express their emotions and explore their creativity. Its rhythm speaks to the soul, and this timeless beauty converges with the body and mind, thereby facilitating the transcendence of both geographical and mental boundaries. Dance is a vessel of *Aṅga, Vāga, Āhārya,* and *Satva*, which encompasses *Nṛtta, Nṛtya* and *Nāṭya*, guided by the *Laya* and *Tāla*, and enlivens in the realm of *Rasa* and *Bhāva*, which shows the discipline as well as the devotion, and illustrates how art is not only performed, but deeply experienced.

The traditional dances of Laos are deeply rooted in social and religious ethnicity, with coherent narratives of compassion, values, and reverence for nature, education, and truth, which are the ethos of the Lao people (Worra, 2010). Though these dance forms flourish within their native milieu, their gestures and movements give broader scope for the comparative scholarly exploration, which illuminates the cross-cultural connections and performative vocabularies across cultures.

This study examines Laotian traditional dances (viz., Lam Vong, Lao Phaen Noy, and Champa Muang considered for the study) through the discerning lens of the ancient treatise, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, authored by *Ācārya Bharata Muni*. It is a comprehensive treatise that endures the codification of performance arts, providing minute details of the intricate symbiosis of Dance, Drama, and Music. Central to the text is the concept of the *Aṅga*, the 6 major limbs: Head (the *Śira*), Hands (the *Hasta*), Chest (the *Uraḥ*), both Sides (the *Pārśva*), Waist (the *Katī*), and Feet (the *Pāda*), each having its gestures known as *Karma* (Shastri, 1975). These codified gestures underpin not only Indian classical dances but also invite to the scene of examining and appreciating this gestural affluence in Laotian traditional dances.

On the canvas of Laotian traditional dances, the colours of different *Aṅga* and their gestures present a nuanced understanding of how gestures transcend boundaries while preserving their distinct identities. This study revolves around the interconnections of Asian with Indian performing arts, giving a scope of cross-cultural analysis, which not only enhances the aesthetic and cultural importance of Laotian dance but also contributes to the global discourse of embodied expression.

1. Overview of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*:

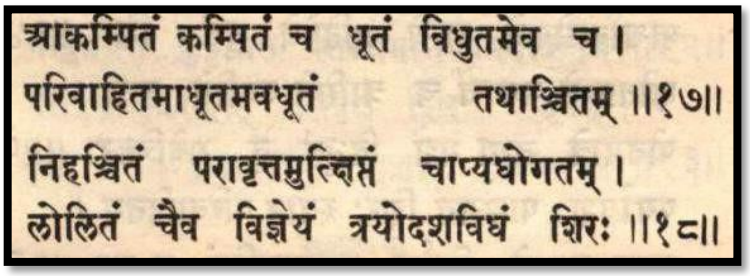
The superlative form of art is known as Poetry (*Kāvya*), and the most excellent form is Drama (*Nāṭya*), as propounded by the ancient Indian treatise, *Nāṭyaśāstra* of *Ācārya Bharata Muni*. It is not only a repository of dramatic arts but a compendium on performing arts, comprising poetry, music, dance, craft, and other subjects related to fine arts. The details of the Drama and its allied subjects are given in such a comprehensive way that it is very rare to find in any other treatise. It is known to have been created centuries after *Pāṇini's Ashtadhyayi* (5th century BCE), which estimates its creation to be approximately c. 2nd century BCE - 2nd century CE (Banerji, 2021).

The body is the soul of any performance; without the body, portrayal becomes conceptually and practically implausible. That is why, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the body and its gestures are the focal point, and their uses are of key importance in it. In the 8th Adhyaya of Nāṭyaśāstra, *Ācārya Bharat Muni* mentions the four kinds of Abhinaya: 1) Gestures and movements (*Āṅgika*), 2) Vocal or Verbal (*Vācika*), Extraneous expression (*Āhārya*), and the Temperament (*Sātvika*). In reverence to *Āṅgika Abhinaya*, *Ācārya* describes the three kinds, viz. the *Śārīra* (the limbs), the *Mukhaja* (the face), and the *Ceṣṭākṛta* (different movements of the entire body), including the *Śākhā*, the *Aṅga*, and the *Upāṅga* (Ghosh, 1959). In which, the *Aṅga* consists of six major limbs: Head (the *Śira*), Hands (the *Hasta*), Chest (the *Uraḥ*), both Sides (the *Pārśva*), Waist (the *Katī*), and Feet (the *Pāda*). The 6 major limbs and their gestures (*Karma*) according to *Nāṭyaśāstra* are as follows:

1.1 Śira Karma (Gestures of the Head)

Śira is a Sanskrit term that means "The Head"—the uppermost part of the body where all *Prāna* and *Indriya* are situated. In the 8th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Bharata Muni* describes the 13 types of gestures of the head (*Śira Karma*).

Śira Karma


आकम्पितं कम्पितं च धूतं विधुतमेव च ।
परिवाहितमाधूतमवधूतं तथाञ्चितम् ॥१७॥
निहञ्चितं परावृत्तमुत्क्षिप्तं चाप्यधोगतम् ।
लोलितं चैव विज्ञेयं त्रयोदशविधं शिरः ॥१८॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 8th Adhyāya, Śira Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The above *Śloka* mentions the 13 variations of the head as: *i)Ākampita Śira Karma, ii) Kampita Śira Karma, iii) Dhūta Śira Karma, iv) Vidhuta Śira Karma, v) Parivāhita Śira Karma, vi) Ādhūta Śira Karma, vii) Avadhūta Śira Karma, viii) Añcita Śira Karma, ix) Nihañcita Śira Karma, x) Parāvṛtta Śira Karma, xi) Utkṣipta Śira Karma, xii) Adhogata Śira Karma, and xiii) Lolita Śira Karma* (Ghosh, 1959).

Here are the descriptions of the 13 variations of the *Śira,* according to Manmohan Ghosh (Ghosh, 1959):

Ākampita Śira Karma	*Ākampita Śira Karma is the slow upward-downward movement of the Śira (head).*
Kampita Śira Karma	*Kampita Śira Karma is when Ākampita Śira moved quickly and excessively.*
Dhūta Śira Karma	*Dhūta Śira Karma is the slow right-to-left movement of the Śira (head).*
Vidhuta Śira Karma	*Vidhuta Śira Karma is when Dhūta Śira moved quickly and excessively.*
Parivāhita Śira Karma	*Parivāhita Śira Karma is turning the head to the right and then the left side consecutively.*
Ādhūta Śira Karma	*Ādhūta Śira Karma is the turning of the head towards one side, and upwards.*
Avadhūta Śira Karma	*Avadhūta Śira Karma is the head turning the head towards one side and downwards.*
Añcita Śira Karma	*Añcita Śira Karma is the bending of the neck as well as the head to any one side.*
Nihañcita Śira Karma	*Nihañcita Śira Karma is when both shoulders are raised, along with the Añcita Śira.*
Parāvṛtta Śira Karma	*Parāvṛtta Śira Karma is turning of the head to any one side, and backward.*
Utkṣipta Śira Karma	*Utkṣipta Śira Karma is turning the head upwards, and the face is looking towards the sky.*
Adhogata Śira Karma	*Adhogata Śira Karma is turning down the head, and the face is also looking towards the ground.*
Lolita Śira Karma	*Lolita Śira Karma is moving the head all around.*

1.2 Hasta Karma (Gestures of the Hands)

Hasta is a Sanskrit term that means the "hand" or the "palm". There are in total 67 hand gestures given in the 9th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Before delving deeper into the ocean of Hand gestures, it is better to understand the nomenclature of each finger, which is given as follows:

a) ***Aṅguṣṭha***- Thumb
b) ***Tarjanī***- Index finger or Forefinger
c) ***Madhyamā***- Middle finger
d) ***Anāmikā***- Ring or Annulary finger
e) ***Kaniṣṭha***- Little finger

The ***Hasta Karma*** is divided into 3 categories, they are:

1. ***Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma*** – Gestures of One-Hand

2. ***Saṃyukta Hasta Karma*** – Gestures of Joint Hands

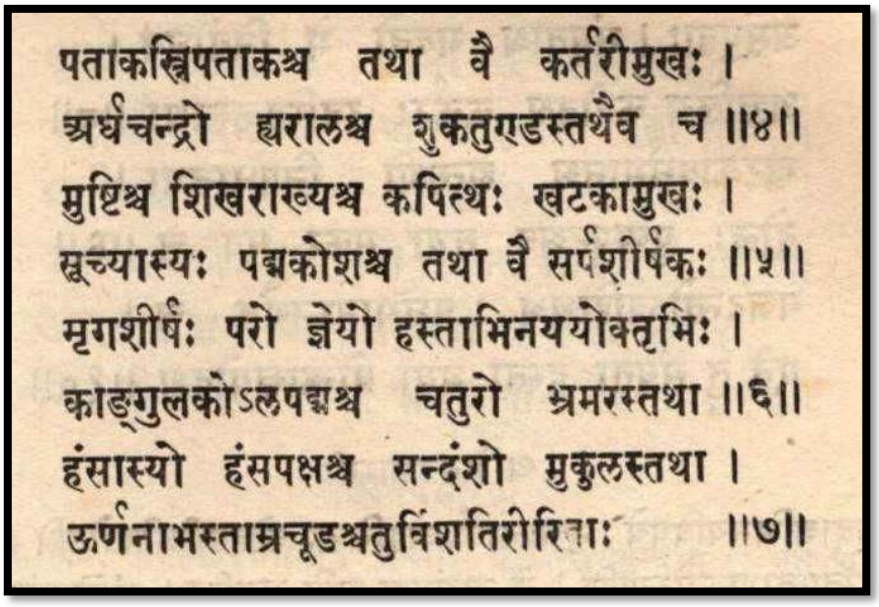
3. ***Nṛtta Hasta Karma*** – Gestures of Hasta (hand) used in Dance

- Here, for the study, we are considering only 2 categories of the ***Hasta Karma***. *They are:*

  1) ***Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma*** *(*Gestures of One-Hand*), and*

  2) ***Saṃyukta Hasta Karma*** *(*Gestures of Joint Hands*).*

1.2.1 Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma (Gestures of One-Hand)



पताकस्त्रिपताकश्च तथा वै कर्तरीमुखः ।
अर्धचन्द्रो ह्यरालश्च शुकतुण्डस्तथैव च ॥४॥
मुष्टिश्च शिखराख्यश्च कपित्थः खटकामुखः ।
सूच्यास्यः पद्मकोशश्च तथा वै सर्पशीर्षकः ॥५॥
मृगशीर्षः परो ज्ञेयो हस्ताभिनययोक्तृभिः ।
काङ्गुलकोऽलपद्मश्च चतुरो भ्रमरस्तथा ॥६॥
हंसास्यो हंसपक्षश्च सन्दंशो मुकुलस्तथा ।
ऊर्णनाभस्ताम्रचूडश्चतुर्विंशतिरीरिताः ॥७॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 9th Adhyāya*, *Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The Gestures of One-Hand (*Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma*) are 24 in number. They are:
i) Patāka Asaṃyukta Hasta, ii) Tripatāka Asaṃyukta Hasta, iii) Kartarīmukha Asaṃyukta Hasta, iv) Ardhacandra Asaṃyukta Hasta, v) Arāla Asaṃyukta Hasta, vi) Śukatuṇḍa Asaṃyukta Hasta, vii) Muṣṭi Asaṃyukta Hasta, viii) Śikhara Asaṃyukta Hasta, ix) Kapittha Asaṃyukta Hasta, x) Kaṭakāmukha Asaṃyukta Hasta, xi) Sūcyāsya (Sūcīmukha)Asaṃyukta Hasta, xii) Padmkośa Asaṃyukta Hasta, xiii) Sarpaśiraḥ Asaṃyukta Hasta, xiv) Mṛgaśirṣa Asaṃyukta Hasta, xv) Kāṅgula Asaṃyukta Hasta, xvi) Alapdma (Alapallava)Asaṃyukta Hasta, xvii) Catura Asaṃyukta Hasta, xviii) Bhramara Asaṃyukta Hasta, xix) Haṃsāsya Asaṃyukta Hasta, xx) Haṃsapakṣa Asaṃyukta Hasta, xxi) Sandaṃśa Asaṃyukta Hasta, xxii) Mukula

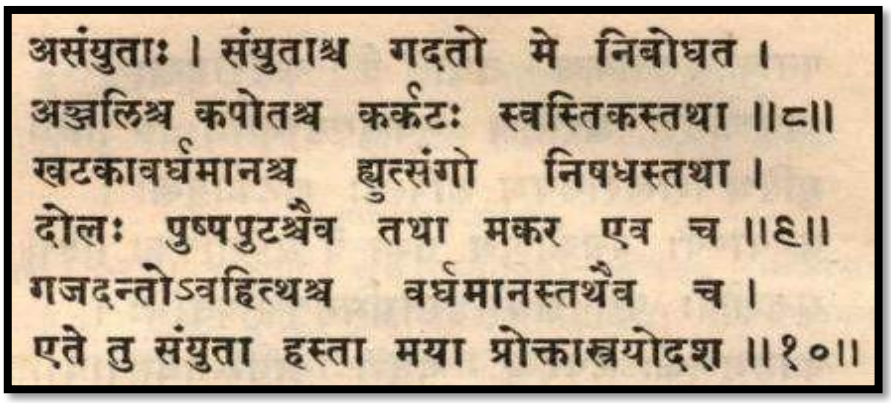
Asaṃyukta Hasta, xxiii) Ūrṇanābha Asaṃyukta Hasta, and xxiv) Tāmracuḍa Asaṃyukta Hasta (Ghosh, 1959).

The descriptions of the mentioned gestures are as follows (Ghosh, 1959):

Patāka Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Patāka Hasta Karma is the four fingers kept together and upright, with the aṅguṣṭha enclosed near the tarjanī.*
Tripatāka Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Tripatāka Hasta Karma is the anāmikā bent down in Patāka Hasta.*
Kartarīmukha Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Kartarīmukha Hasta Karma is the tarjanī bent backwards in Tripatāka Hasta, which looks like a pair of scissors.*
Ardhacandra Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Ardhacandra Hasta Karma is the aṅguṣṭha bent outwards in Patāka Hasta, and looks like a half-moon.*
Arāla Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Arāla Hasta Karma is when the tarjanī and aṅguṣṭha are curved, and the remaining fingers are upright.*
Śukatuṇḍa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Śukatuṇḍa Hasta Karma is the anāmikā bent down in Arāla Hasta, which looks like a parrot's beak.*
Muṣṭi Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Muṣṭi Hasta Karma is when all the fingers are bent inwards into the palm and the aṅguṣṭha is kept on them, which makes up a fist.*
Śikhara Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Śikhara Hasta Karma is the aṅguṣṭha raised upright in the Muṣṭi Hasta.*
Kapittha Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Kapittha Hasta Karma is the tarjanī is pressed by the aṅguṣṭha in Śikhara Hasta.*
Kaṭakāmukha Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Kaṭakāmukha Hasta Karma is the anāmikā and the kaniṣṭha held upright, and the madhyamā bent slightly in Kapittha Hasta.*
Sūcyāsya Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Sūcyāsya or Sūcīmukha Hasta Karma is the tarjanī pointing and stretched out in Muṣṭi Hasta.*
Padmkośa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Padmkośa Hasta Karma is when the tips of all the fingers, including the aṅguṣṭha, are slightly bent inwards, but do not meet one another, and look like a lotus bud.*
Sarpaśiraḥ Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Sarpaśiraḥ Hasta Karma is when the palm is hollowed and all the fingers, including the aṅguṣṭha, are close to one another in Patāka Hasta, and looks like a hood of a snake.*
Mṛgaśirṣa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Mṛgaśirṣa Hasta Karma is when the aṅguṣṭha and the kaniṣṭha are raised, and the other three fingers are pointing downwards in Sarpaśiraḥ Hasta, and looks like the head of a deer.*
Kāṅgula Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Kāṅgula Hasta Karma is the anāmikā bent inwards in Padmkośa Hasta.*
Alapdma Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Alapdma or Alapallava Hasta Karma is when all the fingers are separated from one another, turned towards the palm, and standing on the side, and looks like a full-blooming lotus.*
Catura Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Catura Hasta Karma is the tarjanī, madhyamā, and the anāmikā stretched out with the aṅguṣṭha placed under them and the kaniṣṭha finger pointing upwards.*
Bhramara Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Bhramara Hasta Karma is the madhyamā and the aṅguṣṭha meet at the tip with the tarjanī being vakra (curved) above*

	aṅguṣṭha, and the other two fingers stretched upwards, which look like a Bee.
Haṃsāsya Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Haṃsāsya Hasta Karma is the tarjanī, madhyamā, and the aṅguṣṭha connected on the tip with the other two fingers stressed upright, which looks like the mouth of a Swan.*
Haṃsapakṣa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Haṃsapakṣa Hasta Karma is the tarjanī, madhyamā, and the anāmikā fingers stretched with the kaniṣṭha raised and the aṅguṣṭha bent, which looks like the wings of the Swan.*
Sandaṃśa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Sandaṃśa Hasta Karma is the tarjanī and the aṅguṣṭha connected on the tip with other fingers kept upright, with the surface of the palm slightly sunken inwards.*
Mukula Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Mukula Hasta Karma is when all fingertips are close and connected, and look like a bud.*
Ūrṇanābha Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Ūrṇanābha Hasta Karma is when the fingers of Padmkośa Hasta are bent further, which looks like a spider.*
Tāmracuḍa Asaṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Tāmracuḍa Hasta Karma is when the madhyamā and the aṅguṣṭha are crossed with the tarjanī being curved, and the other fingers are bending inwards into the palm.*

1.2.2 Saṃyukta Hasta Karma (Gestures of Joint Hands)


असंयुताः । संयुताश्च गदतो मे निबोधत ।
अञ्जलिश्च कपोतश्च कर्कटः स्वस्तिकस्तथा ॥८॥
खटकावर्धमानश्च ह्युत्संगो निषधस्तथा ।
दोलः पुष्पपुटश्चैव तथा मकर एव च ॥९॥
गजदन्तोऽवहित्थश्च वर्धमानस्तथैव च ।
एते तु संयुता हस्ता मया प्रोक्तास्त्रयोदश ॥१०॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 9th Adhyāya, Saṃyukta Hasta Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The Gestures of Joint Hands (*Saṃyukta Hasta Karma*) are 13 in number. They are:

i) Añjali Saṃyukta Hasta, ii) Kapota Saṃyukta Hasta, iii) Karkaṭa Saṃyukta Hasta, iv) Svastika Saṃyukta Hasta, v) Khaṭakāvardhamānaka Saṃyukta Hasta, vi) Utsaṅga Saṃyukta Hasta, vii) Niṣadha Saṃyukta Hasta, viii) Dola Saṃyukta Hasta, ix) Puṣpapuṭa Saṃyukta Hasta, x) Makara Saṃyukta Hasta , xi) Gajadanta Saṃyukta Hasta, xii) Avahittha Saṃyukta Hasta, and xiii) Vardhamāna Saṃyukta Hasta (Ghosh, 1959).

The descriptions of the mentioned gestures are as follows (Ghosh, 1959):

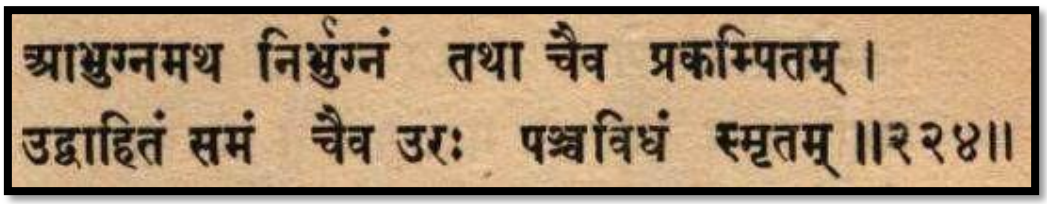
Añjali Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Añjali Hasta Karma is when the two Patāka Hasta are put together.*
Kapota Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Kapota Hasta Karma is when the hands of the Añjali Hasta meet on both sides and are hollowed from the inside.*

Karkaṭa Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Karkaṭa Hasta Karma is the fingers of Kapota Hasta interlocked.*
Svastika Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Svastika Hasta Karma is the two Arāla Hastas that are turned inwards and held together at the wrist.*
Khaṭakāvardhamānaka Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Katakāvardhamānaka Hasta Karma is the two Kaṭakāmukha Hastas held together at the wrist.*
Utsaṅga Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Utsaṅga Hasta Karma is the two Arala Hasta placed over the shoulder and bent inwards.*
Niṣadha Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Niṣadha Hasta Karma is when the right hand is kept above the elbow of the left arm, and the same with the left hand above the elbow of the right arm.*
Dola Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Dola Hasta Karma is the two Patāka Hastas hang down to the sides.*
Puṣpapuṭa Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Puṣpapuṭa Hasta Karma is the two Sarpaśiraḥ Hasta joined together.*
Makara Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Makara Hasta Karma is the two Ardhacandra Hasta turned downwards and placed above one another.*
Gajadanta Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Gajadanta Hasta Karma is when the two Sarpaśiraḥ Hasta touch the opposite arms with the raised elbows.*
Avahittha Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Avahittha Hasta Karma is the two Śukatuṇḍa Hasta meeting each other in front of the chest, and is lowered down slowly.*
Vardhamāna Saṃyukta Hasta Karma	*Vardhamāna Hasta Karma is when one hand is in Mukula Hasta gesture, grasped by another hand in the Kapittha Hasta gesture.*

1.3 Uraḥ Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma (Gestures of the Chest)

Uraḥ, also known as *Vakṣḥ*, is a Sanskrit term that means "The Chest". In the 10th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Bharata Muni* describes the 5 kinds of gestures of the chest (*Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma*).

Uraḥ Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma


आभुग्नमथ निर्भुग्नं तथा चैव प्रकम्पितम् ।
उद्वाहितं समं चैव उरः पञ्चविधं स्मृतम् ॥२२४॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 10th Adhyāya, Ura Sthalaḥ Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The 5 kinds of Gestures of the chest (*Ura Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma*) are as follows:

i)Ābhugna Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma, ii) Nirbhugna Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma, iii) Prakampita Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma, iv) Udvāhita Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma, and v) Sama Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma, (Ghosh, 1959):

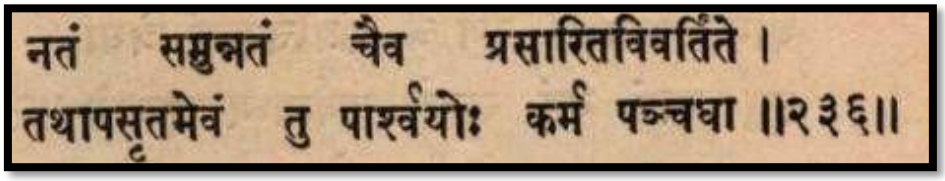
Here are the descriptions of the 5 variations of the *Ura Sthalaḥ,* according to Manmohan Ghosh (Ghosh, 1959):

Ābhugna Vakṣh-sthala Karma	*When the chest is slightly bent with shoulders lowered and loose, and the back is high, such a gesture is called Ābhugna Vakṣh-sthala Karma.*
Nirbhugna Vakṣh-sthala Karma	*When the chest is unbent and kept stiff, with the shoulders raised, and the back is lowered, such a gesture is called Nirbhugna Vakṣh-sthala Karma.*
Prakampita Vakṣh-sthala Karma	*When the chest is incessantly heaved up and down, such a gesture is called Prakampita Vakṣh-sthala Karma.*
Udvāhita Vakṣh-sthala Karma	*When the chest is raised upwards, such a gesture is called Udvāhita Vakṣh-sthala Karma.*
Sama Vakṣh-sthala Karma	*When the chest is kept in the natural state, such a gesture is called Sama Vakṣh-sthala Karma.*

1.4 Pārśva Karma (Gestures of the Sides)

Pārśva is a Sanskrit term that means "side" or "region of the ribs". In the 10th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Bharata Muni* describes the 5 kinds of gestures of the two sides (*Pārśva Karma*).

Pārśva Karma


नतं समुन्नतं चैव प्रसारितविवर्तिते ।
तथापसृतमेवं तु पार्श्वयोः कर्म पञ्चधा ॥२३६॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 10th Adhyāya, Pārśva Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The 5 kinds of gestures of both sides (*Pārśva Karma*) are as follows:

i) Nata Pārśva Karma, ii) Samunnata Pārśva Karma, iii) Prasārita Pārśva Karma, iv) Vivartita Pārśva Karma, and v) Apasṛta Pārśva Karma (Ghosh, 1959).

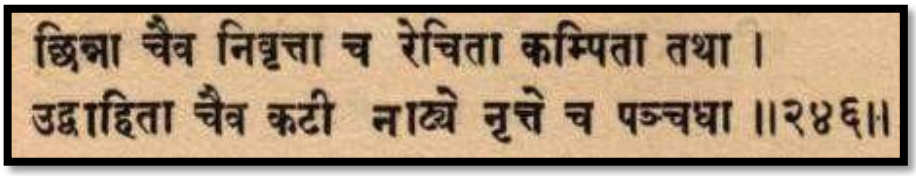
Here are the descriptions of the 5 variations of the *Pārśva,* according to Manmohan Ghosh (Ghosh, 1959):

Nata Pārśva Karma	*When the waist and one side slightly bend with one shoulder slightly drawn away, such a gesture is called Nata Pārśva.*
Samunnata Pārśva Karma	*When the other side of Nata Pārśva is raised, that elevates the waist, both sides, both arms, and both shoulders; such a gesture is called Samunnata or Unnata Pārśva.*
Prasārita Pārśva Karma	*When the sides are stretched in their respective directions, such a gesture is called Prasārita Pārśva.*
Vivartita Pārśva Karma	*When the Trika (sacrum) is to be turned around, such a gesture is called Vivartita Pārśva.*
Apasṛta Pārśva Karma	*When the sides from the Vivartita Pārśva position, restored to their original state, such a gesture is called Apasṛta or Prasṛta Pārśva.*

1.5 Kati¯Karma (Gestures of the Waist)

Katī is a Sanskrit term that means "the waist". In the 10th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Bharata Muni* describes the 5 kinds of gestures of the waist (*Katī Karma*).

Kati*¯*Karma


छिन्ना चैव निवृत्ता च रेचिता कम्पिता तथा ।
उद्वाहिता चैव कटी नाट्ये नृत्ते च पञ्चधा ॥२४६॥

Source: *Nāṭyaśāstra, 10th Adhyāya*, *Katī Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The 5 kinds of gestures of the waist (*Katī Karma*) are as follows:

i)Chinnā Katī Karma, ii) Nivṛttā Katī Karma, iii) Recitā Katī Karma, iv) Kampitā Katī Karma, and v) Udvāhitā Katī Karma (Ghosh, 1959).

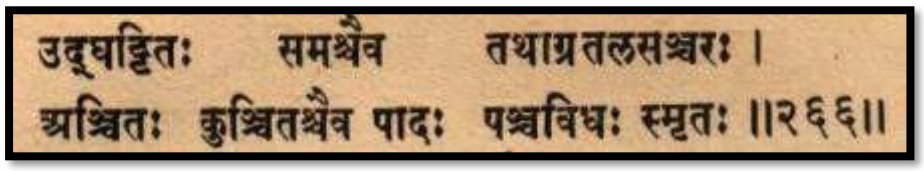
Here are the descriptions of the 5 variations of the *Pārśva,* according to Manmohan Ghosh (Ghosh, 1959):

Chinnā Katī Karma	*When the middle of the waist is turned aside, such a gesture is called Chinnā Katī Karma.*
Nivṛttā Katī Karma	*When the waist is turned around, returning from the Chinnā Katī position, such a gesture is called Nivṛttā Katī Karma.*
Recitā Katī Karma	*When the waist is moved about in all directions, such a gesture is called Recitā Katī Karma.*
Kampitā Katī Karma	*When the waist is moved obliquely up and down, such a gesture is called Kampitā or Prakampitā Katī Karma.*
Udvāhitā Katī Karma	*When the two sides of the waist are raised slowly, such a gesture is called Udvāhitā Katī Karma.*

1.6 Pāda Karma (Gestures of the Feet)

Pāda is a Sanskrit term that means "the feet". In the 10th *Adhyāya* of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Bharata Muni* describes the 5 kinds of gestures of the feet (*Pāda Karma*).

Pāda Karma


उद्घट्टितः समश्चैव तथाग्रतलसञ्चरः ।
अञ्चितः कुञ्चितश्चैव पादः पञ्चविधः स्मृतः ॥२६६॥

Nāṭyaśāstra, 10th Adhyāya, *Pāda Karma* (Shastri, 1975)

The 5 kinds of gestures of the feet (*Pāda Karma*) are as follows:

i)Udghaṭṭita Pāda Karma, ii) Sama Pāda Karma, iii) Agratalasañcara Pāda Karma, iv) Añcita Pāda Karma, and v) Kuñcita Pāda Karma (Ghosh, 1959).

Here are the descriptions of the 5 variations of the *Pārśva,* according to Manmohan Ghosh (Ghosh, 1959):

Udghaṭṭita Pāda Karma	*Udghaṭṭita Pāda Karma is when the dancer stands on the forepart of the feet, and his/her heel touches the ground.*
Sama Pāda Karma	*Sama Pāda Karma is when the dancer keeps his/her feet naturally and evenly placed together on the ground.*
Agratalasañcara Pāda Karma	*Agratalasañcara Pāda Karma is when the dancer throws up the heel with the first toe put forward, and the remaining toes are bent downwards.*
Añcita Pāda Karma	*Añcita Pāda Karma is when the dancer keeps the heel flat on the floor with the forepart of the feet being raised, and stretches all the toes.*
Kuñcita Pāda Karma	*Kuñcita Pāda Karma is when the dancer throws up the heel with the centre of the foot and toes bent down.*

Nāṭyaśāstra offers a wide range of universally accepted and applicable gestures, movements, and expressions in performance. At the core of its theoretical contribution to the *Rasa* theory, which explains the specific essence of emotion, i.e., *Rasa*, is evoked in both the performer and the audience, which conceptualizes art not only as a medium of entertainment but as an experience that has the power to transform and to induce both the artist and the spectator with deep emotions and self-reflections (SINGH, 2019). In the same way, this treatise provides a detailed description of the gestures and their uses, which allows one to dive deeper into its nuances and their meaning, accompanied by emotions, which is transmitted through the embodied performance across cultures.

This treatise is adaptable to all differences and diversity of global dance traditions because of its systematization and codification of gestures and movements. It serves as a technical and semiotic lexicon that supports the comparative and analytical study of movements and their vocabularies in other dance traditions around the world (Banerji, 2021). It is an essential foundation for the evolution and globalization of dance, enabling creative and critical exploration of the cultural heritage and shared language of global performance (Gautam, 2024).

Such treatises have had profound cross-cultural relevance, specifically in the context of Southeast Asian performance arts, due to historical exchanges, religious and philosophical roots. Southeast Asian dances are deeply rooted in the Indic traditions, and they also incorporate elements (like the gestures, movements, and many more), which are parallel to the Indian classical dances, and their similar nuances can be traced in our foundational treatises like the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Like other Southeast Asian countries, Laos also has its rich performing arts traditions, which are deeply connected with Buddhist ritual and Lao court traditions, which also show the adaptation of Indic gestures and movements. Though the dances of Laos do not replicate the Indian classical gestures identically, they have much similarity and relevance in this context.

2. Overview of Laotian Traditional Dance

Laos is the only landlocked nation situated in the heart of Southeast Asia. Its origin begins with the migration of Tai people into the Siam region and Vietnam, comprising present-day Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. In Laos, the Theravada branch of Buddhism made its evolution reflecting civilizational ties with India (Kislenko, 2009; Information on Laos, 2025). It dates back to the 2nd Century B.C. when thē King of Luang Prabang brought the Buddha's relics from India, which were encased in the That Luang Stupa, now located in Vientiane (Information on Laos, 2025). Luang Prabang and That Luang are known for the friendly ties between India and Laos. Wat Phou also has the symbol of civilization attached to India, as it

has the oldest temple of Lord Shiva that dates back to the 5th century B.C., and even the Kings of India are known to have constructed the Champa City in the pre-Angkorian period of the 11th century A.D., and this way the connection between these two regions have resulted in various cultural developments and exchanges till date (Information on Laos, 2025). India not only influenced the culture and civilization of Laos, but also traces some similarity in the gestures and movements of the Lao traditional dances and drama.

2.1 The Traditional Dance Forms of Laos

Here, the traditional dances and drama of Laos, which have been taken into consideration for the study, are as follows:

2.1.1 Lam Vong

Lam Vong, also known as the "*Fonelamvonglao*", is the celebratory dance practiced by the people of Lao communities. This traditional dance of Laos has been officially recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO on December 05, 2024 (UNESCO, 2024). Lam Vong, which means "dance in a circle" or "a circle dance", is a Lao folk dance performed in various cultural festivals and celebrations, especially during the Lao New Year (Pi Mai). From being a part of royal courts to the present-day stage performances, this dance form tries to promote harmony and cultural values, and it also illustrates the Buddhist idea of balance and the cycle of life (Hà & PHAM, 2025).

This dance is performed in a circular pattern, simple and slow, yet with graceful and smooth swaying movements. The men and women dance in harmony in a circle, stepping forward and backward to the beat of traditional music, and their hands comprise different gestures and moves in circular movements, symbolizing harmony. This dance is accompanied by traditional Lao music. The traditional costume worn by women includes a Sinh- a traditional silk skirt and men wear a Lao formal attire (Hà & PHAM, 2025).

Lam Vong Dance

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/12891-HUG.jpg

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/12889-HUG.jpg

Dancers performing Lam Vong (Dancing in a Circle)

Source: https://youtu.be/Zc5TjELmJhM

Other Styles of Fonelamvonglao and Different Patterns of Traditional Attire

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/13074-HUG.jpg

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/13076-HUG.jpg

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/13078-HUG.jpg

Source: https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/13075-HUG.jpg

2.1.2 Lao Phaen Noy

Lao Phaen Noy is a traditional dance of Laos done by Lao women that expresses their beauty, tenderness, and elegance. It has a slow and gentle rhythm based on traditional Lao music. The lyrics of the song describe the beauty of a Lao woman, who has pretty flowers tucked behind her ears and is dressed up beautifully to dance for the spectators (Taivieng, 2012). It is an original Lao traditional dance which was existed since ancient times. It was popularly performed in the village ceremonies, events, and traditional festivals to greet guests, and was widely performed in the palace of the Lan Xang Dynasty.

This dance is done by all female dancers, whether in solo or group styles. There are two styles known, one is Lao Phaen Noy dance (small), which all females, and another one is Lao Phaen Yai dance (big), which both males and females. The song for these two styles differs in lyrics. This dance has been taught since the Kingdom of the Lan Xang Dynasty. This dance also has a blend in the instrumental parts, Lam Lanat (Lanad solo) and Soum (fast beat), where the dancers showcase their talents and flexibility. The dancers used to wear Lao traditional attire and wear gold ornaments that highlight their beauty (Taivieng, 2012).

The Lao Phaen Noy Dance

Source: https://youtu.be/lAfUD6Isp7A?si=YGzxAA_b3ZNVe17E

Source: https://youtu.be/7GnT_HQOMtk?si=q4xSj9LHMwzNWF8T

2.1.3 Champa Muang

The Champa Muang or Fone Dok Champa is a cherished traditional dance of Laos, which celebrates the national flower of Laos- the Frangipani flower, or as they call it as Dok Champa. Its beautiful appearance and unique fragrance have been in harmony with society and lifestyle, and closely related to the Lao culture for centuries (유네스코아태무형유산센터, 2025). This dance is one of the most valuable works of art in the field of Lao literature. The Champa dance was originally perceived in the 1950s, which was the period leading up to the liberation of the nation. This dance is known to have been created at the Vientiane Dance School. This dance had a total of 50 dance steps, which are performed with grace and emotion, and evoke themes of love, longing, and pride in Lao identity (유네스코아태무형유산센터, 2025). This dance and its melodies have been passed down through the generations.

The Champa Muang Dance (Dok Champa Dance)

Source:
https://youtu.be/6AT00va-nCU?si=g940iuF2kwsaQ5iI

Source:
https://youtu.be/y4Q5P_FN5jY?si=T5tP5vXxZoQ0qmlG

Source: https://youtu.be/f0_oSjcN_ko?si=QYjetY-nHaRXVcW-

3. Hand Gestures of Laotian Dances

There are some primary and common hand gestures used in Laotian traditional dances. They are:

1. ***Kip/Chip Hand Gesture****: The most common hand gesture for Lao dancing is "kip (Academy, 2020). When the tip of the thumb and the middle area of the index finger are connected with the other three fingers, stretching as far backward as possible, and the palm bends as far inward towards the wrist as possible, such a gesture is called "Kip" Hand Gesture* (Go, 2022).
2. ***Wong Hand Gesture:*** *When the palm and the four fingers are close together and upright, with the thumb clasped on the palm, mostly used with the Kip hand gesture, such a gesture is called "Wong" Hand Gesture* (SUWICHACHANAN, 2020).
3. ***Nop Hand Gesture****: A short bow known as a "Nop" in Laos and a "Wai" in Thailand is the most common form of greeting and a way of saying 'good-bye'* (Facts and Details, 2014). *When the two hands are kept together in a position of prayer between the chest and the nose level, but do not touch the body, and bow down slightly, such a gesture is called "Nop" Hand Gesture* (Facts and Details, 2014).

4. Comparative Analysis

The six major limbs known as Aṅga (Head, Hands, Chest, Sides, Waist, and Feet) form the foundation of any dance movement (Ghosh, 1959). Here, we aim to explore the various gestures of the Aṅga described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* within the context of Lao traditional performing arts. In Lao culture, such treatises or texts on gestures are absent, as these forms have been taught and passed down through oral tradition for centuries. The gestures used in Lao performing arts are similar to those found in Thai dance, but they lack specific terms for individual gestures, unlike Indian classical dances.

Here we are trying to find similarities between the gestures given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the gestures used in the Lao traditional performing art form. So, let's dive deeper to discover, understand, and analyse the influence of Indian classical dance gestures on the traditional forms of Laos.

The study has been done through video observation on three Lao traditional dance forms based on the gestures of Aṅga given in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Here the study goes like:

4.1 Lam Vong

In this dance form of Laos, the men and women dance together in a circle, with swaying motion and slow and rhythmic movement. The gestures of the Aṅga used in the dance, as given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, are as follows:

1) Śira Karma

The Head gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Ākampita***: When the male and female dancers greet each other before the dance, the head gesture used here is similar to *Ākampita Śira*.

II. ***Parivāhita***: While dancing, according to the swaying movements of the hand, the head sways accordingly, which seems to be similar to *Parivāhita Śira*.
III. ***Añcita:*** While dancing, when the rhythm gets faster, a little right-to-left nod resembles *Añcita Śira.*

2) Hasta Karma

The hand gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Añjali***: It is a combined hand gesture. They use the hand gesture called "Nop" to greet each other, which resembles the *Añjali Hasta*, which is also known as a gesture of greeting others in India.
II. ***Patāka***: It is a single hand gesture, and it resembles one of the most prominent hand gestures called "Wong".
III. ***Sandaṃśa***: It is a single hand gesture which looks exactly the same as another prominent hand gesture called "Kip".
IV. ***Dola***: It comes under combined hand gestures. The dancers in this dance form have used it slightly while moving to a fast beat.

3) Uraḥ Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma

The gestures of the Chest used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Sama:*** Mostly, the dancers, while dancing, keep their chests normal and in the natural state, which spot *Sama Vakṣḥ-sthala* here in this dance form.
II. ***Ābhugna & Nirbhugna:*** While dancing slight variation in the chest gives the resemblance to the *Ābhugna & Nirbhugna Vakṣḥ-sthala.*

4) Pārśva Karma

The gestures of the two sides used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Sammunata***: While dancing, the female dancers employ the movement of the two sides, which resembles *Samunnata Pārśva*.
II. ***Prasārita***: While dancing, the male dancers move their sides, which resembles the *Prasārita Pārśva*.
III. ***Vivartita***: The dancers use this gesture especially in the fast beat with rhythmic and swaying movements which resemble *Vivartita Pārśva*.
IV. ***Apasṛta***: coming back from *Vivartita Pārśva* position, dancers employ Apasṛta Pārśva.

5) Kati¯Karma

Though waist movements are the least prevalent in this dance form, they are still employed to a small extent. The gestures of the waist that can be observed in this dance form include the following:

I. ***Chinnā***: A slightly raised waist can be seen while dancing, with the swaying hand movement slightly resembling the *Chinnā Katī.*
II. ***Nivṛttā***: When reversed to the front from the Chinna position, that movement resembles slightly with the *Nivṛttā Katī* posture.
III. ***Kampitā***: while dancing, the male and female, according to the beat they tap their foot, which makes the waist move, which resembles the *Kampitā Katī.*

IV. ***Udvāhitā***: while moving in a circle, the dancers, according to the hand movements they slightly move their waist on both sides, which resembles *Udvāhitā Katī.*

6) Pāda Karma

The gestures of the feet used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Udghaṭṭita***: According to the rhythm, the dancers tap their heels while keeping the forepart of their feet on the ground, which looks similar to the gesture of *Udghaṭṭita Pāda.*
II. ***Sama***: The natural foot movement resembles *Sama Pāda* while moving in a circle.

4.2 Lao Phaen Noy

This traditional dance form of Laos is done solely by women, solo or in a group. This dance form reflects the traditional essence of Laos and showcases its beautiful heritage. The body movements are softer and calmer, and echo graceful gestures. The gestures of the Aṅga used in the dance, as per the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, are as follows:

1) Śira Karma

The Head gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Ākampita***: When the dancer enters onto the stage, they greet the audience with a Nop hand gesture, the head gesture accompanying it, seems similar to *Ākampita Śira*.
II. ***Dhūta & Parivāhita***: While dancing, according to the swaying hand movements, the head sways accordingly, which seems to be similar to *Dhūta* and sometimes *Parivāhita Śira*.
III. ***Añcita:*** While dancing, when the rhythm gets faster, a little right-to-left nod resembles *Añcita Śira.*

2) Hasta Karma

The hand gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Añjali***: It is a combined hand gesture. They use the hand gesture called "Nop" to greet others, which resembles the *Añjali Hasta*.
II. ***Patāka***: It is a single hand gesture, and it resembles one of the most prominent hand gestures called "Wong".
III. ***Sandaṃśa***: It is a single hand gesture which looks exactly the same as another prominent hand gesture called "Kip".
IV. ***Sūcyāsya***: While dancing, sometimes they use the hand gesture where index finger is pointed and other fingers are bent into the palm such gesture resembles the *Sūcyāsya Hasta*.

3) Uraḥ Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma

The gestures of the Chest used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Sama:*** The dancers, while dancing, always keep their chests normal and in the natural state, which spot *Sama Vakṣḥ-sthala* here in this dance form.
II. ***Ābhugna & Nirbhugna:*** While dancing slight variation in the chest, with the hand movements gives the resemblance to the *Ābhugna & Nirbhugna Vakṣḥ-sthala.*

4) Pārśva Karma

The gestures of the two sides used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Sammunata***: The dancers employ the movement of the two sides, which resembles slightly to *Samunnata Pārśva*.
II. ***Prasārita***: The dancers move their sides according to the hand movements, which resemble the *Prasārita Pārśva*.

5) Kati¯Karma

Though waist movements are the least prevalent in this dance form, but still their usage can still be seen to a small extent. The gestures of the waist that can be observed in this dance form include the following:

I. ***Kampitā***: The dancers, according to the beat they tap their forepart of the feet, which makes the waist move, which resembles slightly the *Kampitā Katī.*
II. ***Udvāhitā***: While dancing, the dancers, according to their hand movements they slightly move their waist on both sides too, which resembles *Udvāhitā Katī.*

6) Pāda Karma

The gestures of the feet used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Udghaṭṭita***: According to the rhythm, the dancers tap their heels while keeping the forepart of their feet on the ground, which looks similar to the gesture of *Udghaṭṭita Pāda.*
II. ***Sama***: The natural foot movement resembles *Sama Pāda.*
III. ***Agratalasañcara & Añcita***: In this dance, the dancers first throw the heel up and then put it back to the ground with toes raised, which resembles the *Agratalasañcara Pāda* and then the *Añcita Pāda.*

4.3 Champa Muang

This traditional dance form of Laos is solely done by women, solo or in a group. This dance form inherits the beauty of the Lao national flower, named "Dok Champa". Let us now dive into the gestures of the Aṅga used in the dance, as given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which are as follows:

1) Śira Karma

The Head gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Ākampita***: When the dancer enters onto the stage, they greet the audience with a Nop hand gesture, the head gesture accompanying it, seems similar to *Ākampita Śira*.
II. ***Dhūta & Parivāhita***: While dancing, according to the swaying hand movements, the head sways accordingly, which seems to be similar to *Dhūta* and sometimes *Parivāhita Śira*.
III. ***Ādhūta & Adhogata***: The dancers, according to their hand movements they move the head upwards and downwards, which resembles slightly to the *Ādhūta & Adhogata Śira*.
IV. ***Añcita:*** While dancing, when the rhythm gets faster, a little right-to-left nod resembles *Añcita Śira.*

2) Hasta Karma

The hand gestures used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Añjali***: They use the hand gesture called "Nop" to greet others, which resembles the *Añjali Hasta*.
II. ***Svastika***: When the dancer, while dancing to the song of Champa Muang, according to the meaning, they use the *Svastika Hasta* and use the *Sandaṃśa hasta* (Kip) instead of Arāla Hasta
III. ***Patāka***: This single hand gesture resembles one of the most prominent hand gestures called "Wong".
IV. ***Sandaṃśa***: It is a single hand gesture which looks the same as another prominent hand gesture called "Kip".
V. ***Sūcyāsya***: While dancing, sometimes they use the hand gesture where the index finger is pointed and other fingers are bent into the palm, such a gesture resembles the *Sūcyāsya Hasta*.

3) Uraḥ Sthalaḥ/ Vakṣḥ-sthala Karma

The gestures of the Chest used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Sama:*** The dancers, while dancing, always keep their chests normal and in the natural state, which spot *Sama Vakṣḥ-sthala* here in this dance form.
II. ***Ābhugna & Nirbhugna:*** While dancing slight variation in the chest can be observed, with the hand movements giving the resemblance to the *Ābhugna & Nirbhugna Vakṣḥ-sthala.*

4) Pārśva Karma

The gestures of the two sides used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Nata***: While dancing, the waist and the side slightly bend according to the hand movements, which resemble the *Nata Pārśva*.
II. ***Sammunata***: The dancers employ the movement of the two sides, which resembles slightly to *Samunnata Pārśva*.
III. ***Prasārita***: The dancers move their sides according to the hand movements, which resembles the *Prasārita Pārśva*.

5) Kati¯Karma

The waist movement is less used in this dance form but still can be observed to some extent. The gestures of the waist that can be observed in this dance form include the following:

I. ***Chinnā***: A slightly raised waist can be seen while dancing, with the swaying hand movement slightly resembling the *Chinnā Katī*.
II. ***Kampitā***: The dancers, according to the beat they tap their forepart of the feet, which makes the waist move, which resembles slightly to the *Kampitā Katī.*
III. ***Udvāhitā***: While dancing, the dancers according to their hand movements they slightly move their waist on both sides too, which resembles *Udvāhitā Katī.*

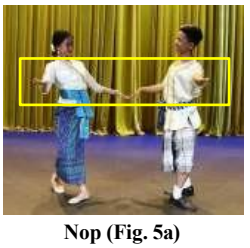
6) Pāda Karma

The gestures of the feet used in this dance form are as follows:

I. ***Udghaṭṭita***: According to the rhythm, the dancers tap their heels while keeping the forepart of their feet on the ground, which looks similar to the gesture of *Udghaṭṭita Pāda.*
II. ***Sama***: The natural foot movement resembles *Sama Pāda.*

III. ***Agratalasañcara & Añcita***: In this dance, the dancers first throw the heel up and then put it back to the ground with toes raised, which resembles the *Agratalasañcara Pāda* and then the *Añcita Pāda.*

5. Findings

Similarities in Hand Gestures (*Hasta Karma*) Between the Indian Classical Dance and the Laotian Traditional Dance			
S. No.	**Indian Classical Dance Hand Gestures**	**Description**	**Laotian Dance Hand Gestures**
1	 ***Patāka Hasta* (Fig. 1)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Patāka Hasta* (Fig. 1), and we can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- known as *Wong* (Fig.1a-right side), where all the four fingers are kept upright with the thumb enclosed, which shows a striking similarity between the two.	 **Kip (left) & Wong (Right) (Fig. 1a)**
2	 ***Sandaṃśa Hasta* (Fig. 2)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Sandaṃśa Hasta* (Fig. 2), and we can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- known as *Kip* (Fig. 2a and 1a-left side), where the tip of index finger and thumb meets and all the other three fingers are spread, which looks similar to the *Kip* Hand Gesture.	 **Kip (Fig. 2a)**
3	 ***Sūcyāsya Hasta* (Fig. 3)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Sūcyāsya Hasta* (Fig. 3). We can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- name not mentioned (Fig. 3a), where only the index finger is stretched upright. The three fingers are clasped inwards to the palm, and the thumb is set on them, which shows similarity between the two.	 **(Fig. 3a)**
4	 ***Añjali Hasta* (Fig. 4)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Añjali Hasta* (Fig. 4), and we can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- known as *Nop* (Fig. 4a), where both hands are joined together to wish or to greet.	 **Nop (Fig. 4a)**
5	 ***Dola Hasta* (Fig. 5)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Dola Hasta* (Fig. 5), and we can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- name not mentioned (Fig. 5a), where both hands hang down to both sides, which shows much similarity between the two gestures.	 **Nop (Fig. 5a)**

6	 ***Svastika Hasta* (Fig. 6)**	According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this hand gesture is known as *Svastika Hasta* (Fig. 6), and we can see a similarity with the Lao Dance Hand Gesture- name not mentioned (Fig. 6a), where both hands are crossed at the wrist, making *Sandaṃśa Hasta*, which shows the similarity between the two.	 **(Fig. 6a)**

The comparative analysis of hand gestures between Indian classical dance and Laotian traditional dance, as represented in the table above, is based on video observations, which show similarities between the hand gestures described in Nāṭyaśāstra and those used in Lao traditional dances (viz. Lamvong, Lao Phaen Noy, and Champa Muang). Each of these gestures given in the table shares visual and functional similarities. Hand gestures were only possible to document in tabular format due to their static nature, as the variations of other major limbs (Aṅga) are dynamic and movement-based, and are difficult to capture. Therefore, the tabular comparative analysis has been limited to the hasta only, and other limbs (Aṅga) have been analyzed in a narrative form, which has already been presented in the comparative analysis section above.

Conclusion

The comparative study shows the influence of *Nāṭyaśāstra* on Laotian traditional dances, focusing on the Aṅga, the 6 major limbs of the body. It is observed that the Laotian dances, which are transmitted to generation through oral tradition, do hold some similarities with the Indian classical dances, but they don't have specific terms as given in *Nāṭyaśāstra* for each movement and gesture. The study tried to find the Aṅga according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra,* in Laotian traditional dance forms like Lam Vong, Lao Phaen Noy, and Champa Muang, where different *Karma* of *Śira*, *Hasta*, *Uraḥ*, *Pārśva*, *Katī*, and *Pāda* show resemblance to the different gestures of Laotian dances.

This study gives a broader vision for understanding Southeast Asian performing arts. The cross-cultural connection between India and Southeast Asian nations gave rise to the incorporation of Indic traditions into the various art forms. Though these performance art forms don't imitate the Indian dance gestures as it is, they have adapted the Indic gestures and the movements, which shows the cross-cultural relations abiding in the roots.

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