

A Peek On Lakshadweep Folk Dances: Cultural Study

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Abstract: Lakshadweep, the group of 35 islands known for its exotic and sun-kissed beaches and lush green landscape. Social and environmental changes in the Lakshadweep Island led to a completely new culture and art forms made by the Islanders. The Hindu dominated population has now taken to the Islam religion and presently 100% of the locals of Lakshadweep are Muslims. However, the spoken language of Lakshadweep known as Jasari. Malayalam is predominantly mother tongue in the islands, due to the influence of Kerala state. The folk ballads based on the history of the Island used to perform local dances even today.

Keywords: Lakshadweep, folk, jasari, culture, dance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The name Lakshadweep in Malayalam and Sanskrit means hundred thousand islands. India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 35 islands. Previously there was 36 islands, but a recent research survey proved the submergence of an island Partli-1 (20,000 m²) near Agatti island. It is comprised of 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks and ten inhabited islands. Islands situate 220 to 440 km away from the coastal city of Kochi in Kerala, in the emerald Arabian Sea. The natural landscapes, the sandy beaches, abundance of flora and fauna and the absence of a rushed lifestyle enhance the mystique of Lakshadweep.

Lakshadweep dance as any other art form of this union territory resembles that of Kerala due to its historical past. The young men of Lakshadweep are known to perform some spirited folk dances that contributes to the fabric of Lakshadweep culture as a whole. Dances of the Island, the variety of folk dances that are performed in Lakshadweep are Kolkali, Parichakali, Lava, Dandi, Bhandiya, Fuli, Attam, Ulakkamuttu, Opanna, Attam, etc. Due to the historical background of the region, most of the dance forms are inspired from Kerala or the Islamic culture. These art forms are usually performed on auspicious occasions of birth, marriage and festivals. Some of the popular dances of the region have been elaborated below:

KOLKALI DANCE



Figure 1

This dance is performed with sticks (Kol) and hence it is called Kolkali. Kolkali dance is the most widely known and popular folk dance of Lakshadweep. Men are only allowed to perform and practice this dance form not women. Kolkali is performed in pairs and they move in circles to the rhythmic beat of sticks. The performers hold these special sticks in their hand and use them as props while dancing. The dance begins with a slow pace but slowly the rhythm becomes fast as the time passes and ultimately reaches to the height of frenzy.

With the accompanied folk songs the dancers dance in a variety of alignment in due course.

PARICHAKALI DANCE



Figure 2

The Parichakali dance is also a popular dance form in the Lakshadweep Islands. Parichakali literally translates as Shield dance, as Paricha refers to a shield and as the dance performed with sword and shields. This dance form can be somewhat called a martial art form. The dance resembles fighting and therefore shields and sword are used as props. These are, however, made of very soft wood so that it does not wound anybody while enacting. Brave wars, warriors and freedom struggle are common themes. The dance usually involves dual combats and the bravery is honored in it. The performance is accompanied by songs which slowly begins and increases to culminate into a highly energetic dance

ULAKKAMUTTU DANCE



Figure 3

This dance style is also known as the 'Pole striking' dance. It can be comprehended as a physical exercise than a dance form. The dancers involved in this regime are skilled and are precise in their hand movements. There is no room for error by the dancers holding the bamboo poles, as this may result in an injury to the dancers making quick foot movements in between the poles. This dance form is only male oriented. 'Ulaka' means a long bamboo pole; hence the art got the name. It is performed in two styles, one in round and another on strait. Only well experienced persons can perform this dance.

ATTAM DANCE



Figure 4

'Attam' literally means dance. It is performed by both men and women together. It exhibits the social life of the people of Lakshadweep Islands. It is a freestyle form of dancing, with no musical instruments on background score. The dancers make hand and leg movements symbolically, forming alignments and end up in a circle. The dance begins slowly and picks up momentum at the end. Now a day, only men are performing this dance.

LAVA DANCE



Figure 5

The Lava dance is the traditional folk dance of Minicoy Island. It can be described as the riot of colors! It is a vigorous and high intensity dance form. The costumes worn by the participants are multi-hued, with a traditional head gear. Constant drumming, with the melody of the folk songs, enhances the movements of this dance. It is performed on religious ceremonies in particular. One can find this art form resembling the dance form of Maldives Island viz. Maldivian Bileh Dhafi Negin. During this performance, the men either line up in pairs or in a single line. Then they form a circle and make movements based on drums sound.

The Lava dancers flash colorful costumes along with a marvelous performance. Other specialized dances of the Minicoy Island apart from the Lava Dance are Dandi Dance, Bandiya Dance and Fuli Dance. It is a highly charged male dominated dance form. The dance clothing comprises of bright red trousers, with a white scarf tied around the waste and a

black and white head gear to complete the look, locally known as 'Bolufeyle'. Folk musical instruments accompany the dancers, to add rhythm to the dancing performance.

OPANNA DANCE



Figure 6

This dance form has been inspired by the Muslims living in Kerala and it is performed at the wedding ceremony, on the bride's side. Opanna dance is performed by the women on the 'Mehndi ki Raat' of the bridal celebrations. The girl sits in the centre while the women of the family and friends sing and dance around her. Through this ritual, the bride is being prepared for her nuptial night. As it is a part of the wedding ceremony, the women are clad in glittering clothes.

BHANDIYA LAVA



Figure 7

It is performed by the women of same age by using pots with artistical designs. It is also known as pot dance. During olden days they use to collect water to the houses using this

kind of pots. This dance is a memorization of their cultural good olden days. This art form is being performed by the ladies of Beebi and Kambila categories (a kind of class) of the Minicoy. Dancers used to wear the traditional dress of Minicoy women. Colorful embroidered tapelines are worn across the ankles. An undergarment in green and blue colors worn with Libus, which a long cloth and a type of cloak. It is stretched from the shoulder to ankle. There is a waist ornament in Minicoy, known as Kodakam or Vola, for ear and wrists. Alikkath and Koodu are necklaces. Vala is beautiful bangle and the Urukku is also a good looking necklace with its extraordinary black beads combined for performing Bhandiya.

II. CONCLUSION

A group of islands located as the mighty wonder in Arabian Sea and which has popularized as Lakshadweep. These groups of islands are situated far-off from Kerala. Folk songs and arts symbolize divine culture of good olden days. It is a modulation of a group of people living in the coral island namely Lakshadweep. The artistic tradition which monitors in Lakshadweep is its important feature to focus and to expose. The various artistic breeds expose its habitual sculptures and inherited artistic ethos. The conventional and basic culture can be felt by having a touch with the artistic forms like Kolkali to Bhandiya lava in Lakshadweep.

There has no yawning efforts made to expose the artistic culture and cultural hereditary of these islands. Here focus to view and to expose the mélange of art culture monitors in Lakshadweep. The traditional hereditary art kind in Lakshadweep has its own importance as the folk and art culture locates in other provinces of the universe. The artists in Lakshadweep who taste the arty forms are continuously in the path of making a wrap to keep them traditional.

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