



INTACH

DANCE FORMS OF LAKSHADWEEP



Lakshadweep is a tropical archipelago off the coast of Kerala, India. Not all the islands of Lakshadweep are inhabited by people. However, its dance forms, just like its art represents Kerala due to its history. Some folk dances are performed by only men, while others are performed by women folk too, which add to the culture of Lakshadweep as a whole.

HISTORY OF THE LAKSHADWEEP ISLAND

There are various legends encircling the history of Lakshadweep. It is believed that the first settlement on these islands began during the last king of Kerala, Cheraman Perumal. Under the behest of the Arabs, he converted to Islam and then silently moved out of his capital, which was then known as Cranganore. Legend bears that the King's boat was shipwrecked on the island presently known as Bangaram. They took shelter in the island of Agatti and then later moved to the mainland and sighted other islands later. The people who set sail for these islands were said to be Hindus, despite the existence of Islam here.

THE DIFFERENT DANCE FORMS



LAVA DANCE

This dance form performed in the island of Lakshadweep is aptly described as the 'riot of colours'. It is a specialty in the Minicoy Island of Lakshadweep. The costume worn in this dance comprises of apparels in multi-coloured hues and a headgear. They male dancers carry a drum and perform by dancing to the rhythmic beats of the drums and songs accompanying it.

KOLKALI DANCE

The word 'Kol' translates to sticks and hence the dance form is called Kolkali. The performances are done only by men as the women are not allowed to perform and practice. They dance in pairs, moving in circles to the rhythmic beat of the sticks. The sticks which act as props in the dance start in a rhythm initially at a slow pace and gradually reach a height of frenzy.



PARICHAKALI DANCE

The word 'Paricha' means a shield and therefore this dance form performed with shields and swords came to be known as Parichakali. This dance is a martial art form. Since it resembles fighting, swords and shields are used as props in the performance. However, these props are made of very soft wood, so that the performers are not wounded while enacting. Some of the common themes include, bravely fought wars, warriors and freedom struggle. The dance involves dual combats and is accompanied by songs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eleven out of the thirty six islands of Lakshadweep are inhabited by people. The people are mostly Malayalam and Mahl people, influenced by the Arab traders.

Find out the names of some of the other folk dance traditions that exist in the archipelago of Lakshadweep.

ULAKKAMUTTU DANCE

Amongst the other dance forms of Lakshadweep, Ulakkamuttu is one dance style, which is also understood as a kind of physical exercise. 'Uleka' translates to a long bamboo pole and hence the name was given to this art. Also known as 'Pole striking', the dancers involved are skilled and exhibit precise hand movements. The dancers perform with quick foot movements with bamboos and as such there is no scope for errors, as even the slightest mistake might lead to severe case of injury. This style is performed only by the males.



ATTAM DANCE

Attam means 'dance'. This is a dance form performed by both men and women. This freestyle form of dancing exhibits the social life of the people of the island. This style implements the use of no musical instruments. The dancers make symbolic hand and leg movements, forming alignments and finally ending up in a circle. The dance begins in a slow pace and gradually picks a momentum till the end.



ACTIVITY

a. Find out about the costumes worn by the dancers in each of the folk dance styles of the people of Lakshadweep.

b. Find out the names of the various instruments that are involved in the different dance forms of Lakshadweep.

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