



Book Review

Expressions of the Soul: Folk Dances of Rajasthan-Costumes, Culture and Traditions

Dr. Kiran Kapoor
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The role of costume and its importance related to the dance moves in the folk dances of western Rajasthan have been minutely studied, analysed, and documented with passion by Dr Kiran Kapoor in the book titled, '**Expressions of the Soul: Folk Dances of Rajasthan-Costumes, Culture and Traditions**' with the simple writing makes it enjoyable to read.

Dr Kapoor has meticulously documented the selected ten folk dances just of the Marwar region of western Rajasthan, where she has covered its six districts named 'Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Barmer, Pali, Jalore and Sirohi. The female and males of different communities of the region perform folk dances, and the selected ones are 'Ghoomar, Kalbeliya, Loor, Teratali (by women) Ghair, Dandiya, Dhol, Kacchi Ghori, (by male) Garasiya (by female and male) and Bhawai (by a male in women attire). With these few dances and their various aspects, the author tried to show glimpses of the rich heritage of the colourful dance tradition of Rajasthan, which have a glorious past, today people need to preserve it and her efforts of documenting it are in that direction.

Dr Kapoor had gathered authentic information from the artisans, tailors, jewellery hairstyles, makeup artists, feet wear and accessories in absence of less information on folk dancers in museums. However, the important information comes from archival records and miniature paintings of Rajasthan. The author divided the book into four main chapters to explain 'the



Rajasthan', its 'Traditional Garments', 'Dance: the hidden language of the soul' and 'Folk dances and their traditions. An interesting and important feature is the male and female dancers' costumes construction with detailed sketching in the appendix will be helpful for a fashion designer to take it further. Such a wonderful thought for students, only the experienced professor can think and work, who had devoted her life to teaching, working closely with the students of Fabric and Apparel Science, Lady Erwin College, Delhi University.

Keeping the interest of common readers (National and International) Dr Kapoor introduced the 'Rajasthan: The Glittering Jewel', where she discussed the famous festivals and fairs in detail. When and how these festivals were celebrated, different types of dances and their costumes associated with them give a wide perspective to the dance book. While discussing 'the traditional garments of Rajasthan', the author described female and male costumes in detail. Explaining the traditional garments, types of garments, and their wearing style makes an interesting study. The third chapter; 'Dance: The Hidden Language of the soul' is an important aspect to understand the dance and its various types. Tracing the history of Indian dance is reflected from cave paintings to the Harappan period and the earliest recorded history comes from Bharat Muni's Natya shastra. Bharat muni provides the comprehensive grammar, and technique of the performing arts-(be it dance, drama or music) and three aspects of dance; Natya, Nritya and Nritya have been explained well. Various reasons for dance and the classification of various dance forms have been explained beautifully.

The main chapter is dedicated to Folk Dances and their traditions, in which the number of dance forms practised in western Rajasthan has been discussed in detail. The most fascinating aspect is that each folk dance has been analysed by 'History of dance', 'Dance performance', 'Communities dancing', 'Costumes of dance' and 'Movements of the dance about the costume', in which the last one is exceptional. Here the author has explained the dancer's costume with the movement of dance steps, beats of music, the rhythm of dance, and how a particular costume's length, pattern, and construction has been designed thoughtfully. The folk dances are not a mere source of entertainment, as happened in the past. At present, these dances have become the stage performance, a source of livelihood, and the involvement of government and NGOs step in, which had made several changes in dance forms, speed, movement and costumes also. It's much more important to preserve, and document the folk dances, their forms and costumes so that future generations should refer to them. In this regard the author had done commendable work, to make the book for everyone to enjoy, learn and understand the importance of the tradition.