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*Get to Know...*

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## Armenian Traditional Dances

Having a thousand-year history, Armenian national dance art derives its origin from a pre-Christian period-time marked by the worship of pagancy. On the whole, the Armenian dance art has long been one of the most revealing expressions of its character and aesthetic thinking as well as highlights its national idiosyncrasy, inner world and attitude towards nature and life at large. In these latter days, Armenia is enormously rich with its national dances and folk songs. Stemming from pagan rituals and games, prevalent by then, Armenian national dance art has reached to us in the form of various group dances,

which, according to their nature and performance, are divided into 3 forms. These are: ritual, religious and those of daily performance.

Of Armenian old dances, wedding and round dances "Gyound", performed by men, women and collectively, were once spread especially in the regions of Historical Armenia, such as Western Armenia. The composure and entertainment of Armenian nature is notably expressed through the dances with fruits and cups. The main features of Armenian folk dance art are, as it were, preserved in modern Armenian group dances, involving men and women national and traditional dances respectively. Among men, to begin with, it manifests itself by remarkable adroitness, joyfulness and virility. Among women, however, the grace, expressiveness of movements has crystallized the spirituality, decency and worldly tenderness of Armenian women. Of rather old origin are Armenian heroic, warlike men dances that truly represent their resolute nature. The constituent elements of said dances are taken from military actions, hunting, training games and jokes. Other men group dances reveal different work activities, such as, for example, shepherd dance with sticks and belts preformed by men in ancient Armenia and many others.

More vivid expression in men dance art acquires the straight and stately posture, along with strong and decisive movements common to mountain dwellers, in which the invincible spirit, freedom-loving character, united will-power and bellicose nature finds its precise reflection.

In like manner, different occasions displaying the daily life of women such as field and housework, flower-gathering, dances preformed around the fountain constitute the content of the dance art performed by women.

The features most common to Armenian women in this regard are unique stateliness, indescribable flexibility, gentleness and expressiveness of their hands as well as accentuated modesty.

It is noteworthy, that it is the particularly the gracious and smooth movements of hands derived from ornamental and miniature painting patterns, medieval Cross-stones (Khachkar) that are brought to expression in the said mode of dance. More than anything else, it is the fine-spun, gold-knit costumes that make the movements of Armenian women gentle and fine. Historical costumes used throughout the centuries overtly emphasize the fine taste and aesthetic characteristics of Armenians.