The enchanting coral archipelago known as Lakshadweep comprises ten inhabited and seventeen uninhabited islands, which lie about 200 to 400 kilometres off the Indian west coast in the Arabian Sea. The islands span from north to south for approximately 350 kilometres. The inhabitants of all the islands are ethnically very similar and speak a dialect of Malayalam, the language of the neighbouring Indian state of Kerala. The population numbering 50,000 is almost entirely Muslim, mainly Sunnites, apart from a smattering of Wahi- bis and Ahamadiyya who are not very popular with the other population.

Sufism and Caste

The islanders are devout Muslims and mainly orthodox in their orientation, but there is a substratum of Sufism underlying their faith and practice. The Sufi leaders, known as Tan- gals, are extremely popular and highly regarded, and their followers engage in a lot of healing and performing of miracles. The Sufis of Lakshadweep belong to two orders, namely the Quadiriyya and the Riffai. The two orders are distinct in their beliefs and practices, and they are not always on friendly terms in the islands. Caste-like stratification is noticeable among Muslims in various parts of India, though none of them can compare in rigidity and severity with the caste system of the Lakshadweep Muslims. Many attribute the caste systems among Muslims to the vestiges of their Hindu ancestry. However, it has been suggested that the caste system in the islands is a product of Islamic influence. The inhabitants of all the islands are said to have been converted to Islam by Udai Allah, a grandson of Caliph Abu Bakr. Udai Allah was shipwrecked on Androth Island, and it is believed that he was attacked by the population, but materia- lized tigers and other wild animals hitherto never seen in the islands. It is said that when he stepped on the island, it lifted toward the West, and this is when the astounded population accepted islam wholesale. He performed similar mirac- les in the other islands. These legends laid the foundation for mysticism in the islands and led to a more charismatic form of the faith. Udai Allah (tomb) is still found at the Juma masjid in Androth Island and is the centre of a popular and grand festi- val each year. Sheikh Mohammed Kaim Tangan (died AH 1140), whose tomb is found in Kavaratti Island, near the picturesque Ujra mosque, was about 200 to 400 kilometres off the Indian west coast in the Arabian Sea. The islands span from north to south for approximately 350 kilometres. The inhabitants of all the islands are ethnically very similar and speak a dialect of Malayalam, the language of the neighbouring Indian state of Kerala. The population numbering 50,000 is almost entirely Muslim, mainly Sunnites, apart from a smattering of Wahi- bis and Ahamadiyya who are not very popular with the other population.

The Sufi Tariqas of the Lakshadweep Islands, India

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The Sufi Tariqas are a group of Islamic Sufi orders that have existed in various parts of the world for centuries. They are characterized by their focus on spiritual and mystical practices, including meditation, dhikr (recitation of the name of Allah), and other devotional practices. The Sufis believe that these practices help individuals to attain a deeper understanding of Allah and to experience a direct connection with the divine.

One of the most prominent Sufi orders in the Lakshadweep Islands is the Quadiriyya, which is led by a dervish known as the “Tanagal” or “Head of the Order.” The Quadiriyya is known for its mystical practices, including the use of dhikr (recitation of the name of Allah) and other devotional practices. The Quadiriyya is considered to be the most important order in the islands, and its members are known for their piety and their dedication to the service of Allah.

The Quadiriyya is led by a dervish known as the “Tanagal,” who is considered to be the head of the order. The Tanagal is responsible for leading the dhikr and other devotional practices, and for providing guidance and support to the members of the order. The Quadiriyya is known for its mystical practices, including the use of dhikr (recitation of the name of Allah) and other devotional practices. The Quadiriyya is considered to be the most important order in the islands, and its members are known for their piety and their dedication to the service of Allah.

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