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PRESS RELEASE

BBC 'Travel Show' presenter Becomes a Kathakali Dancer, For a Day

Kochi, January 12: Henry Golding, the BBC's 'The Travel Show' presenter, has lived with elephants in Kenya and cleared the debris of a devastating earthquake in the Philippines, but never imagined he would become a Kathakali dancer one day.

That happened in the New Year when on a visit to 'God's Own Country', Golding enacted a Kathakali performance in Kochi on Saturday. While shooting an episode for 'The Travel Show' with its editor Mike London and producer Dawn Layke, Golding ventured on to the stage, becoming a part of the performance.

The performance was from 'Narakasura Vadham' (The Killing of Narakasura), an 18th century play, regularly staged in cultural events. The event had been organised for the BBC team, which was on a six-day visit to Kerala to film an episode on the state's culture and nature-endowed destinations for 'The Travel Show'.

"During the performance, Golding wanted to try if he could dance like a Kathakali dancer and he did," said P K Devan of See India Foundation, which hosted the performance.

The BBC crew filmed the dance of Golding as he did the same steps and movements of the characters Jayantha and Lalitha in the play. "In Kathakali, there are no female dancers," said Devan. "Male dancers do the roles of female characters," he added.

Golding also tried the movements of eyes, feet and fingers, critical in a Kathakali performance, earning the applause of those watching the performance. "Golding succeeded in bringing a classical dance form more closer to the audience," said Devan, whose institution has been working to link Kathakali with other art forms across the world.

Two years ago, Prince Charles and his wife Camilla Parker Bowles had witnessed a similar performance of Kathakali in Kochi.

"I don't know what took me so long to come to Kerala," said Golding. "Kerala's beauty is unbelievable," exclaimed the presenter, who has travelled across the world to create episodes for BBC's hugely popular The Travel Show, which reaches a global audience of 77 million.

The BBC team, which spent two days in Kochi, also filmed the intricate make-up of Kathakali performers for the show.

Earlier, Golding climbed a coconut tree in Alapuzha as the BBC team filmed locations in the town to capture images of a coconut climbing competition between traditional climbers and those who use machines for climbing as well as the famous backwaters. The team also spent a day in "Canoe Ville" - a home-stay - an increasingly popular mode of accommodation among foreign tourists, in Alapuzha.

"The episode on Kerala on BBC's popular travel programme showing our state's natural beauty and rich culture is certain to charm people worldwide," said Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri G Kamala Vardhana



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Rao, who had invited the BBC team to the state during his visit to London for a tourism road show last year.

The BBC travel team also went to the Punnamada Lake, home to the world famous Nehru Trophy snake boat race.

The BBC team has also filmed coir making, which provides livelihood to tens of thousands of families living near Kerala's backwaters. "More and more travellers are interested in our new product, called Village Life Experience," said Shri Rao. The Village Life Experience, another highlight of the BBC travel show, involves travellers visiting local homes to experience home-made meals, local culture and their livelihoods.

"This is certainly not my last visit to Kerala," promised Golding, before he left for London on Sunday.

The BBC will beam two episodes on 'The Travel Show' from Kerala. The first programme will be on Kathakali and will be broadcast in two weeks. The second one will include the backwaters and coconut tree climbing and will be broadcast in February. Both the programmes will be repeated later in the year.

"There are so many stories here, we hope we can come back soon," said the BBC team.

Another television travel show team from the Russian private broadcaster NTV is going to be in Kerala during January 15-18 to film an episode on the state's culinary traditions.

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