



HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF KATHAK TECHNIQUE: A THEORETICAL STUDY FROM THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD TO PRESENT DAY

Patil Durwakshi Dnyaneshwar

Research Scholar, Dept. of Fine Arts, JJT University, Rajasthan

Dr. S. Krishna Yadav

Research Supervisor, Dept. of Fine Arts, JJT University, Rajasthan

Abstract

One of India's most prominent classical dance genres, Kathak, has evolved greatly throughout the years while staying true to its artistic roots. Starting in the Medieval period and continuing up to the present day, this theoretically grounded research article traces the development of the Kathak method. The study objectives and data gathered dictate the data analysis methodologies used in Kathak research. Thematic and content analysis are two methods for examining qualitative data collected via interviews and observations for patterns and themes. A thorough theoretical explanation of the evolution of Kathak method in reaction to socio-cultural and political developments is shown in the study via the analysis of historical documents, academic interpretations, and recorded traditions. This research shows how Kathak, as a living heritage, may change and grow to fit into today's performance scene. From the Medieval period to the present day, this article will attempt to follow the development of Kathak technique, paying close attention to how its fundamental components have changed and stayed the same.

Keywords: Evolution, Kathak, Technique, Medieval Period, Present Day

1. INTRODUCTION

Kathak means "one who tells a story" in its literal sense; the dance itself is a means of storytelling via movement. The storytelling element is important to Kathak dance. Everyone who sang songs that praised the gods belonged to the Kathaks. However, this phrase did not originally indicate any specific caste since theatrical texts were subsequently composed using materials drawn from the Vedas. This proves that the Vedic period also had its own distinct musical traditions. Nat, Sut, Nartak, Sutradhar, Kirat, Charan, Bhand, and Bhat are some of the castes mentioned in the Yag and theatrical performances of the Vedic period. The term charan is also a gift from the Vedic period. "Atharva Veda" makes reference to the term "Charan". Those who performed musical instruments, danced, or sang in front of an audience were called Charan in ancient Sanskrit literature. Charans are still a common sight in many regions of Rajasthan today. Musicians, dancers, and singers all used bhats. Dancers who worked as professionals were known as Uttar Vedic dancers. From the Vedic period to the Gupt era, the evolution of Kathak dance is therefore



directly related. Experts agree that the history of a single caste provides the missing link in the chain that leads to the Kathak dance's origins. Kathak dancers, like the Bhat, Charan, Sut, and other professional castes, originally hail from North India. "Ashtaadhyayi" by Maharishi Panini, who lived around 600 years before the Christ era, uses the term Kathak. Kathak, in his view, comes from the term "Kathya," meaning metal. A Sutra called "Kathadibhyasthak" is put down by Maharishi Panini in his "Siddhant Kaumudi's - a word Kathika, meaning as one well versed in storytelling."

According to the epic of Maharishi Patanjali, which was composed around 200 BC, there existed a caste of artists called Granthik. It was these individuals who would introduce the audience to the granth's central idea. It is most likely that these granthis are now referred to as Kathaks. The Kushiluv is widely believed by experts to be the original creators of Kathak dance. The author of the Kamsutra, Vatsyayan, has also made reference to Nuts' (Kushiluv) performance at Saraswati Bhawan. However, an instrument player is always meant when the name Kushiluv appears in old epics. Even Kautilya's "Arthashastra" makes reference to this idea. Along with Nat and dancers, Chanakya has also made use of Kushiluv. This suggests that Kushiluv is not meant to be a dancer.

The term Kathak has been used by Tulsidas to describe dance. The term "Kathak" refers to a certain caste in Tulsi Shabd Sagar who is employed in the performance of stories via song, music, and dance. In ancient theaters, the storyteller would deliver the whole plot of the play at the beginning of the show. In recent times, members of the Kathak caste would frequently teach singing and dance to prostitutes, according to Manak Hindi Kosh. The aforementioned caste was largely responsible for Kathak's growth as an art form. "Shailali, Shailush, Jayajeev, Krishnashav, Bharat and Nat" are the six names given to Nats by Pandit Ravidutt Shastri in a commentary he wrote and had published in Bombay in 1904. Charan and Kushiluv are the two names for Kathaks. It is believed that the Kushiluv may have mimicked the Luv-Kush, sons of Lord Ram, by singing and dancing to classic old tales, while the Charans would have done the same with their dance. Kathak is one of the most well-known classical dance forms in India. The term "Khatk" has two meanings: first, a community of dancers and musicians; second, a school of dance. Kathak, in its most basic form, is associated with storytelling (Katha), although the Sanskrit lexicons (Shabdarathchjntamani, Vacaspatyakosha, and Shabdakalpadrumkosha) attest that the name "Kathak" refers to a dancer who also recounts or enacts stories.

1.1 Elements of a Kathak

Bharata Muni's ancient Sanskrit work Nriya Shastra is the bedrock upon which Kathak rests. There are primarily three parts to a Kathak dance:

- **Invocation:** in which the artist pays homage to God and his or her guru. Mudras, or hand motions, serve a similar purpose in Hindu performances. Muslims get 'salami' from the artist on certain occasions.
- **Nriya:** the artist's portrayal of pure dancing. The artist begins with delicate and elegant motions of the wrists, neck, and eyebrows. After it, 'bols' dictates rapid successions. A brief pattern of rhythm is called a bol. Additionally, the artist showcases aggressive footwork in this piece.
- **Nriya:** The performer tells a tale or introduces a topic with slow, expressive body motions and gestures set to vocal and instrumental music in an Nriya performance.

As Kathak is prevalent both in Hindu and Muslim people group the outfits of this moving frame are made in accordance with customs of the separate groups.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jaiswal, Vidushi & Upadhyay, Ranjana. (2023) The word "gharana" refers to a particular kind of art that is practiced and handed down over many generations. The term "gharana" is short for "house" and describes a group of people who continue the creative practices of their ancestors. A number of musical traditions, or gharanas, have developed throughout the years, each of which reflects a unique aesthetic framework or approach. At the current time, every single Banaras Gharana performer can trace their ancestry back to this family. The people who have made significant contributions to Kathak dancing from the Banaras Gharana are the subject of this research article's genealogy.

Adholiya, Ashish & Apekshakhopkar (2022) Both "emotion" (rasa) and "state of mind" (Bhava) are used interchangeably. Traditional Kathak dance from India is well-known for its use of dramatic body language and facial expressions into the performance. What this study finds will shed light on is how Kathak dancers convey emotion via their facial expressions and the way they move their bodies. For optimal accuracy, images are preprocessed and classified. In order to get a deeper comprehension of Kathak dance within the context of the teaching and learning paradigm, this study aims to recognize the facial expressions used by the dancers.

Kulshreshtha M, Saraswathy KN, Babu N and Chandel S (2023) The current research set out to examine a cross-section of North Indians, including both Kathak dancers and non-dancers, for signs of common mental diseases. Questionnaires measuring generalized anxiety disorder (GAD-7), depressive symptoms (PHQ-9), and perceived stress (PSS-10), were filled out by 206 female Kathak dancers and 235 healthy controls ranging in age from 18 to 45 years. After adjusting for confounding factors, non-dancers were more likely to report depressive symptoms and generalized anxiety than dancers. By honing its techniques, Kathak has the potential to become a powerful psychotherapy tool for reducing vulnerability to mood disorders and anxiety.

Upadhyay, Dwijesh & Pant, Mukesh. (2017) There seems to be a synergy between the tabla and Kathak dances since they are both rhythmic. Driang used to work well with dancing. But Pakhawaj, who was somber, honest, and profoundly relevant, couldn't make sense of the dance's subsequent additions of embellishment, miraculousness, coloration, etc. Since Kathak dance is the most advanced and refined kind of mridang (pakhavajdha), the tabla was traditionally played in conjunction with it. Because of this, tabla playing material evolved throughout time. Nritya and the dance pieces it contains. Based on this, it's safe to say that they're mutually beneficial. The planned paper's objective is to go into the evolution of the connections between tabla and Kathak dance.

Skiba, Katarzyna. (2016) Examining Kathak's modern history from a regional perspective is the focus of this essay. It centers on the Lucknow gharana ("school") of Kathak, a kind of Indo-Islamic art that emerged primarily in the salons and courts of colonial Avadh. This study looks at the legacy of hereditary artists at Delhi's recently established, state-funded institutions and how it was impacted by their relocation from Lucknow. This article draws on historical research and ethnographic fieldwork that took place in 2014 and 2015.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study objectives and data gathered dictate the data analysis methodologies used in Kathak research. Thematic and content analysis are two methods for examining qualitative data collected via interviews and observations for patterns and themes.

3.2 Data Collection

- **Primary data:** Find original materials that pertain to the development of Kathak in archives, libraries, museums, and other cultural organizations. These may include historical documents, pictures, recordings, and manuscripts.
- **Secondary data:** Find all the books, papers, and scholarly works that touch on the history, philosophy, practice, and cultural background of Kathak and read them cover to cover.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Technique of Kathak Influenced by Persian Classical Dance

The current researcher has drawn some conclusions about modern Persian classical or court dances based on the Kathak style. During the Qajar monarchy in Iran in the 18th century, Persian classical dance developed. Dancing was outlawed in Iran after the Islamic revolution in 1979. This forced the dancers to flee Iran, and now the vast majority of them call the West home. Improvisation, especially with the hands, is central to Persian classical dance. When it comes to Persian dancing, the hands are among the most expressive parts of the body. The motions of the hands and wrists are not only smooth, but they can also beat to the beat of the song. In a beautiful conversation, the upper body, face, and head react to gestures with the hands and arms.

One defining feature of Persian dancing is the extensive use of hand gestures. The dances shown in the end notes and bibliography are very new and include elements of Western Ballet and other genres. The hand gestures and their synchronization with the body movement are the only distinguishing aspect of these dances that may be likened to Kathak. To a certain degree, the smooth and easy nature of the wrist motions and hand movements in Kathak mimics the hand movements in nr̥tta. Similar to Persian dance, the wrist is crucial in Kathak while initiating hand movements. "Part of the fluidity of this style is achieved by leading arm movements with the wrists... The arms and subsequently the spine and the head, follow the lead of the wrists."

Kathak is unique among Indian classical dance forms in its use of nr̥tta language and hand gestures. Kathak is unlike any other dance form because of its distinctive wrist and hand throwing techniques, sharp and circular motions, and intricate hand and body designs that provide a variety of postures. The similarities and differences between the hand motions used in Kathak and Persian dance seen in the snippets raise the remote possibility that Persian and Indian artists may have collaborated on this front throughout the Medieval Ages. The ani bandha nr̥tta-s may have been a catch-all term for this foreign method that the dancing teachers recast inside an Indian aesthetic framework.

4.2 Influence of Folk Traditions on the Technique of Kathak

The development of thumri provides a window into the ways in which folk tradition has shaped Kathak technique. Thumri is a folk art form that evolved in the Vraj area and depicts average people's lives. Folk songs with simple lyrics written in many Hindi dialects make up the thumri. You may find an explanation of the connection between Kathak and thumri in the third chapter of this book. For its performance in royal courts, this folk art was subsequently reworked and organized according to the raga system. In modern Kathak, many thumri-s are taken from folk

traditions and transformed into classical pieces. Regardless, the thumri's underlying folk legacy in its musical rhythm cannot be entirely ignored. One folk song that concludes with the customary laggi is "ranga darungi nanda ke lalan pe" by Girija Devi.

The song also has a particular folk feel because to the dialect. Also, seasonal works like as caiti, kajari, hori, etc., are also adapted from folk music to fit the classical style. The motions of the Rasa dance remain unchanged from folk tradition, with certain modifications made to accommodate classical sensibilities, if the dance is performed with a mythical subject. Dr. Puru Dadhich, when discussing the Jaipur gharana of Kathak, notes that the tradition of dancing to folk songs like as jhūla and phag, in addition to thumri and Mand, a musical style exclusive to Rajasthan, has persisted. "The dance of Jaipur gharana shows the influence of these folk compositions." The vibrant folk music of Rajasthan has also left its mark on this gharana's abhinaya.

4.3 Technical Terms in Practice since Medieval Period

Both formal and informal vernacular vocabulary, as well as certain technical phrases, has their origins in Arabic. 'Amad' originally meant 'entrance' in Arabic. The dancer would traditionally bring a prearranged dance routine, or amad, to the royal courts. "Salami" is a greeting phrase. Court dancers were required to salute the king at all times. 'Salami ke tukade' is the name given to these works that are choreographed. Obeying the stage, or 'rangamañca' in Hindi, is a long-standing tradition that dates back to the time of Bharata. When dancing became more popular, it was used to create this stage rite during Bharata's reign. The dance treatises make passing reference to these choreographies, although they go by other titles. Salutations were still done in the court to the monarch and were called salami ke tukade. These tukada-s were redesigned and called "rangamañc praṇam" when Kathak was performed on a proscenium stage later on. The first chapter of this book explains terminology from the vernacular language, such as kasak, masak, dol, khinc, dhal, and gardan ka dora. The lack of familiarity with Sanskrit among Muslim rulers necessitated the introduction of patron-friendly terminology, which led to the use of these phrases.

4.4 Kathak in Present Time

Following the Mughal era, Kathak's allure flourished again in the modern era's liberated setting. The Kathak art form is now widely appreciated and has great social significance. Kathak dance has risen to prominence because to the work of legendary Gurus and performers. By taking up dancing, young women from illustrious backgrounds are setting an example and working to restore the art form to its illustrious past. Sangeet Natak Akademi, Kathak Kendras, and Music Colleges are some of the ways that the government is helping out in this area. A lot of schools have started teaching Kathak as part of their graduation programs, so students may have a well-rounded education in the dance form. Scholarships are available for both training and research in this area.



The Great Gurus, Maestros, and Master warts of Kathak dance have been tirelessly dedicated to the art form and have contributed much to its current prominence. Because of its energy and versatility, Kathak has become a mirror of modern society in the modern day. Dancers, like artists, delved into fresh tales and ideas, giving Kathak a contemporary spin on age-old problems. Kathak boldly ventured to dance in unison with other dance styles, resulting in remarkable partnerships that broadened its expressive potential. The rhythm of Kathak brought together Western dance forms like ballet with other Indian dance traditions like Odissi and BharataNrityam, creating a harmonious blend that captivated spectators.

Coming full circle, technology has been an invaluable tool in the fight to keep Kathak alive and share its magic with the world. With the advent of online learning platforms, students from all over the world may now study Kathak from the convenience of their own homes, interacting virtually with famous gurus in the process. In preserving Kathak's invaluable heritage for centuries to come, digital archives are rising to the role of sanctuary. Digital preservation provides a safe haven for archival materials, rare performances, and the teachings of great masters, ensuring that the spirit of Kathak is preserved for future generations. There has to be a careful balancing act between the old and the new as we jump on the digital bandwagon. It is our sacred and true duty as technological virtuosi to protect Kathak's ancient foundations.

The Kathak technique has evolved throughout the modern era. Due to time constraints, Kathak is now performed at a quicker pace, which in turn has affected the movements employed in the technique. "Trend in the 60's saw 2a lessening of the arm movements while executing patterns at a fast tempo," remarks Shovana Narayan, who is referring to this. Fast-paced dance throughout the 1980s and 1990s had even less arm extension. In a similar vein, the elbows' traditionally elevated posture has been decreased across time. Even among dances performed by members of the same gharana, there is a noticeable generational gap in the way the current generation moves. Consequently, in the present day, Kathak dancers' body motions have evolved, reflecting developments in the technique of the dance style. There has been a decrease in the extent of the arm motions in Kathak, as mentioned before, because of the increasing pace of the performances. In the fundamental posture of the dancing style, the elbow has also been dropped in recent years. The greats of Kathak have also presented it in conjunction with other dance styles, which has led to a number of innovations within the art form. As a result, their compositions for Kathak have changed the way the dancers' bodies and feet move, drawing inspiration from martial arts, Chau, and non-Indian dance styles like Flamenco and Western classical ballet. Here are a few artists who fit this description:

- One of Aditi Mangaldas's productions, "Timeless," and "Now is," incorporates Kalaripayatu and Chau motions into the Kathak style of classical dance, which is creative. Actually, she has added to the innovations in the technical aspects of Kathak

dance by fusing different kinds of front stretches and side stretches, different kinds of jumps and leaps, different styles of claps with the technical hand movements and complex footwork of the dance form. A few of her other pieces, such as "Now is" and "Inter-rupted," also use floor motions.

- A promising Kathak performer named Quincy Charles collaborated with another renowned Kathak artist named Isabell on a piece that debuted at Delhi's Kamani Theater and included gymnastic and Chau routines.
- Artists Sanjukta Sinha and Aakash Odedra showcase their original work in the technical parts of Kathak in one of their performances where they incorporate modern dance techniques within the Kathak style.
- In her Kathak production "Dhabkar," Kumudini Lakhia has given the rhythm a new texture by splitting a technical portion of the dance, Tihai, among three dancers.
- Therefore, all of the aforementioned artists demonstrate the ways in which they have influenced modern dance technique. On top of that, the 'Gharanedar' Kathak exponents have made technical advancements to the dance form by reimagining classic moves while preserving Kathak's distinctive style.
- Krishan Mohan Mishra, who is now a master at the National Institute of Kathak in Delhi, has also made technical advancements in the dance genre. For instance, modern-day Kathak performers often raise both arms in the same direction while doing a movement that looks like the "leaps" of Russian ballet but is really intended to represent terms like "Dhilang" in Kathak. By flapping his arms in opposing directions instead of in unison, Krishan Mohan Mishra has added a new technical element to this dance style.

While being true to Kathak, another "Gharanedar" performer, Ram mohan Maharaj, fused "That," a technical aspect of the dance, with Bhava and called it "Sringarik That" in an interview. He showed a woman choose a flower to wear in her hair, combing her hair, opening a jewelry box, removing a necklace, and putting it on with the help of a nayika. Thus, 'Shringar that' is termed after the fact that it depicts all of the 'Shringar' actions using the 'That' medium; this is an innovation in the Kathak technique.

5. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that in Kathak, according to academic investigations into the dance form's development through time, has maintained its core character while always adapting to new social and political contexts. Through synthesis and creativity, Kathak method has progressed from

religious storytelling in the Medieval Ages to polished court performances and current theatrical presentations. Because of the impact of several patronage systems and traditions, stylized gestures, expressive abhinaya, and intricate rhythmic patterns have evolved. While staying true to its classical roots, Kathak is nevertheless undergoing modern-day evolution via experimentation, international exposure, and scholarly discussion. According to the study's findings, Kathak's strength comes from its capacity to include both traditional and modern elements, making it an important topic for theoretical investigations in the field of Indian classical dance.

REFERENCES

1. Jaiswal, Vidushi & Upadhyay, Ranjana. (2023). THE BANARAS GHARANA OF KATHAK DANCE: A STUDY FROM THE PAST TO PRESENT. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*. 4. 10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.584.
2. Adholiya, Ashish & Apekshakhopkar,. (2022). A Deep Learning Model to Detect Kathak Facial Expression. *International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences*. 2022.
3. Kulshreshtha M, Saraswathy KN, Babu N and Chandel S (2023) Self-reported perceived stress, depression, and generalized anxiety disorder among Kathak dancers and physically active non-dancers of North India. *Front. Psychol.* 14:1114377. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1114377
4. Upadhyay, Dwijesh & Pant, Mukesh. (2017). Development of the interrelations of tabla and kathak dance: an analytical study (with special reference to the compositions of tabla and kathak dance): *International Journal of Research -GRANTHAALAYAH*. 5. 339-351. 10.29121/granthaalayah.v5.i4.2017.1828.
5. Skiba, Katarzyna. (2016). Between Boundaries of Tradition and Global Flows: Reimagining Communities in Kathak Dance. *Congress on Research in Dance Conference Proceedings*. 2016. 386-397. 10.1017/cor.2016.51.
6. Kulshreshtha M, Saraswathy KN, Babu N and Chandel S (2023) Self-reported perceived stress, depression, and generalized anxiety disorder among Kathak dancers and physically active non-dancers of North India. *Front. Psychol.* 14:1114377. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1114377
7. Deepshikha Sahu (2024) Kathak Attire Evolution: From Ancient to Modern Era, *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Vol (5), Issue (4).



8. Dr.Bhavana R.Maale, Nida Mariyam (2023) Kathak Dancing Accompanying Audios Identification and Grouping, International Journal of Engineering Research in Computer Science and Engineering (IJERCSE) Vol 10, Issue 10
9. Dr. Amarjeet Kaur (2023) Analysis Of Gati's In Kathak Dance Movements, IJCRT | Volume 11, Issue 12.
10. Roopika Sabharwal, Sonia Singh (2017) FOOT POSTURAL DEVIATIONS IN FEMALE KATHAK DANCERS, Int J Physiother. Vol 4(1), 38-43.
11. Manek, Sonali & Puntambekar, Anjali. (2020). A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOOT POSTURE DEVIATIONS IN YOUNG FEMALE KATHAK AND BHARATNRITYAM DANCERS.. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. 1-3. 10.36106/ijsr/9321330.
12. Vishwakarma, Alka. (2022). Dance Movement Therapy and Kathakin India. Sanglap: Journal of Literary and Cultural Inquiry. 08. 57-69. 10.35684/JLCI.2022.8206.
13. Gaje- Khopkar, Apeksha. (2019). Computational Model for Kathak Recitations.
14. Katarzyna Skiba (2016) REDEFINING HYBRIDITY IN CONTEMPORARY KATHAK DANCE. PRZEGLĄD KULTUROZNAWCZY NR, 4 (30), 435–451 doi: 10.4467/20843860PK.16.034.6495
15. Dalidowicz, Monica. (2015). Crafting fidelity: Pedagogical creativity in kathak dance. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. 21. 10.1111/1467-9655.12290.