



A Study of the Evolution of Kathak Dance Tradition in the Darbar (Royal Court)



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Abstract

The classical Kathak dance tradition, which originated and evolved within a Hindu religious background, underwent significant transformation in the face of the Mughal invasion. Originally a spiritual performance offered to Hindu deities through storytelling and rhythmic movements, Kathak dance found refuge and patronage of the courts of the Mughal emperors, Rajput kings, and the Nawabs of Awadh as temple traditions declined. The research problem of this research how have been the evolutions of Kathak dance in Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars through political and intercultural exchange as the Hindu temple-primarily based devotional tradition of Kathak arrived inside the Mughal and princely courts and formed its identity as a classical dance form? Accordingly, analyzing the transition of Kathak dance from Hindu temples to the royal court, analyzing patrons of various courts shaped the dance form, and studying the stylistic and thematic changes introduced in Kathak during the Darbar period are the objectives of this research. This research was conducted under the qualitative research methodology, and data was collected through literary sources, and electronic media. The research area covers the Darbars of Jaipur, Lucknow and Raigarh. And as a result of this research, providing insight into the artistic innovations and cultural diffusion that took place at the Darbar, including the blending of Hindu devotional and Islamic poetic traditions. The development of Kathak dance in Jaipur and Lucknow Darbar and later it's revival in Raigarh Darbar was a golden era in the history of Kathak, during which the dance form acquired its classical identity and artistic richness, and that these legacies continue to shape Kathak today.

Key words: Court, Darbar, Evolution of Kathak, Kathak dance tradition, Royal patronage

Research Paper

Introduction

The origins of Kathak dance are deeply rooted in Hindu temples, where it first developed as a devotional dance by storytellers known as Kathakars. These performers narrated episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and ancient epics through a mixture of rhythmic footwork, graceful gestures, and expressive gestures. As a result, Kathak began as a medium of worship and a medium of non-secular storytelling.

However, the trajectory of Kathak underwent a prime transformation all through the medieval and early contemporary periods, especially in the face of the Mughal invasions of India and whilst temple patronage declined and political changes altered the cultural landscape of India. With the appearance of the Mughal rulers and the shifting structures of royal courts

(darbars), Kathak moved far from its purely non secular background and entered the secular sphere of courtly leisure. The dance commenced to absorb Persian, Central Asian, and Islamic cultural influences while persevering with to preserve its devotional roots. These changes are fusion created a completely unique artwork form that become enriched through political, cultural, and social exchanges across regions.

Three Royal Darbars particularly Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh performed decisive roles in shaping Kathak in the course of specific ancient durations. Each court offered distinct patronage and encouraged stylistic evolutions that contributed to Kathak's growth as a classical tradition. The Jaipur Darbar emphasized rhythm, energy, and complex footwork; the Lucknow Darbar delicate abhinaya, thumri, and lyrical expressiveness below the Nawabs of Awadh; and the Raigarh Darbar, specifically

below Maharaja Chakradhar Singh, have become a hub of experimentation, synthesis, and studies in the 20th century (Kothari; Ashirwadam).

This studies investigates the evolution of Kathak dance in Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars, highlighting the creative, political, and intercultural exchanges that common its transformation from a temple based totally exercise into a sophisticated classical dance shape. By examining those Darbars of patronage, the take a look at aims to reveal how Kathak acquired its classical identification, enriched repertoire, and special Gharanas that preserve to outline the traditions these days.

Research Problem

How have been the evolutions of Kathak dance in Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars through political and intercultural exchange as the Hindu temple primarily based devotional tradition of Kathak arrived inside the Mughal and princely courts and formed its identity as a classical dance form?

Objectives

The study first seeks to find the historic transition of Kathak from its beginnings as a Hindu temple based devotional art form of storytelling into a sophisticated classical dance tradition presented in royal courts. It analyzes the position of political and cultural patronage in shaping the one of a kind gharanas, emphasizing on the Kachwaha rulers of Jaipur, the Nawabs of Awadh such as Wajid Ali Shah in Lucknow, and Maharaja Chakradhar Singh in Raigarh. In addition to this, another goal is to have a look at the stylistic evolutions unique to each Darbar, consisting of Jaipur's emphasis on rhythm, energy, and intricate footwork; Lucknow's refinement of abhinaya, grace, and innovations on gat nikas, and Raigarh's experimentation with syllables, rhythmic creativity, and combining elements from existing gharanas. The look at additionally highlights the intercultural exchanges among Hindu, Mughal-Islamic, Persian, and regional affects that enriched Kathak's vocabulary and performance aesthetics. Ultimately, this study strives to highlight iconic legacies of these three Darbars and how their contributions shaped Kathak's identity as an established classical dance form.

Hypothesis

This research is guided by way of the speculation that Kathak's transformation from a devotional storytelling subculture in temples to an identified classical artwork shape in royal courts turned into neither unintentional

nor uniform, but the end result of planned cultural negotiations, political patronage, and creative improvements within the Darbars of Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh. In Jaipur, Kathak developed under the mixed have an effect on of Rajput valor and Mughal aesthetics right into a vigorous fashion marked with the aid of complex footwork, robust rhythm, and a devotional but martial individual. In evaluation, the Lucknow Darbar underneath the Nawabs of Awadh, particularly Wajid Ali Shah, infused Kathak with Persian-Islamic aesthetics, courtly poetry, and tune, which led to the flourishing of abhinaya, thumri, and lyrical expression, in addition to the advent of the Rahas theatrical lifestyle. Later, within the Raigarh Darbar, Kathak underwent a highbrow and creative renaissance below Maharaja Chakradhar Singh, who synthesized elements of each Jaipur and Lucknow gharanas at the same time as introducing new rhythmic and choreographic vocabularies, thereby setting up the Raigarh Gharana. Thus, the speculation asserts that Kathak's classical identification and stylistic diversity are the cumulative products of sustained political patronage, intercultural communicate, and localized innovations nurtured in these three Royal Darbars.

Relevance of the Study

With the aid of examining Kathak's transformation inside the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Durbars, it presents a deeper understanding of how a devotional practice become reshaped right into a classical overall performance way of life underneath changing political and cultural occasions. It contributes to the renovation of gharana traditions, for the reason that each Darbar performed an important function inside the emergence of stylistic schools of Kathak; documenting these tendencies safeguards the historical roots and diversity of the dance for future generations. The studies highlights the intercultural communicate that enriched Kathak, displaying how Hindu devotional practices, Mughal-Islamic aesthetics, Persian poetry, and close by traditions merged within the courts to create a vibrant and evolving art shape. It acknowledges the important characteristic of royal customers which includes the Rajput rulers of Jaipur, the Nawabs of Awadh (particularly Wajid Ali Shah), and Maharaja Chakradhar Singh of Raigarh whose resource sustained and innovated Kathak, illustrating the intersection of politics and artwork. The study is applicable for cutting-edge Kathak, in view that some of the features significant to the dance nowadays together with complicated rhythmic compositions, expressive abhinaya, and the integration of literary



and musical issues were formed in those courts and maintain to outline its identity. Finally, this work makes an educational contribution via imparting a comparative analysis of the three Darbars, thereby enriching studies on Indian classical dance, cultural records, and overall performance concept.

Research Methodology

This studies adopts a qualitative approach trace the evolution of Kathak within the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars. The following techniques were used:

Literary Sources: Primary and secondary texts, such as treatises on music and dance, historical chronicles, biographies, and translations, were analyzed to reconstruct the traits in Kathak.

Comparative Analysis: The three Darbars were as compared in phrases of stylistic consciousness, thematic improvements, patronage systems, and contributions to Kathak's repertoire.

Performance Analysis: To take a look at, musical compositions, and rhythmic styles (including Jaipur's paran-primarily based power, Lucknow's Rahas and thumri, and Raigarh's tala improvements).

By combining literary, ancient, and performative perspectives, this approach ensures a holistic information of ways Kathak developed within the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars.

Discussion

The Evolution of Kathak Dance in the Jaipur Darbar

The Jaipur Darbar played a decisive function in shaping Kathak all through the Mughal and Rajput intervals, giving rise to what got here to be known as the Jaipur Gharana. This gharana evolved under the patronage of the Kachwaha Rajput rulers, who, at the same time as keeping close ties with the Mughal court docket, preserved their personal cultural and religious identity. As religious Hindus, the Jaipur rulers regarded Kathak not simplest as a devotional art however also as a logo of royal prestige and valor (Kothari; Ramya 252).

One of the important thing transitions within the Jaipur courtroom become the motion of Kathak from temples into the royal Darbar. Despite this shift, the devotional essence of the artwork remained robust. Themes drawn from the epics and Puranas in particular stories of Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva have been frequently completed, mixing bhakti (devotion) with

royal sophistication. Alongside those themes, Kathak in Jaipur developed a top notch consciousness on rhythm and technical virtuosity. The Jaipur style have come to be renowned for its powerful footwork, active chakkars (spins), and complex rhythmic systems. This emphasis on layakari (rhythmic play) pondered the martial spirit of the Rajputs, whose cultural values emphasized vigor, energy, and state of affairs. Dancers have been carefully knowledgeable and regularly tested on their capability to execute paran, tihai, and tukra with mathematical precision (Walker 78-80).

Although Mughal affect became present in the area, the Jaipur Darbar did not absorb Persian and Islamic aesthetics to the same as Lucknow. Instead, its intercultural synthesis strengthened technical rigor and rhythmic brilliance in preference to abhinaya (expressive performing). The Darbar also made vast pedagogical contributions by using supporting hereditary families of dancers who codified elaborate parans and kavittas, making sure their transmission thru generations (Kothari; Ramya 252).

The stylistic evolution of Kathak in Jaipur is contemplated in numerous examples. The gharana reinforced the usage of dhrupad based totally compositions, observed by way of the pakhawaj, which gave the dance a strong and masculine first rate. Jaipur dancers have become famous for executing tihais that prolonged throughout long cycles of tala, including dhamar and chautal, showcasing their mastery over rhythm and calculation. The subculture of enacting heroic memories via movement, frequently stimulated by way of Rajput valor and martial ethos, similarly prominent the Jaipur gharana from others (Massey).

Accordingly, the Jaipur Darbar preserved the devotional roots of Kathak even as enriching it with rhythmic complexity, precision, and full of life overall performance strategies. Its cognizance on energy, mathematical mastery, and tala systems laid the muse for the Jaipur Gharana's identification, making sure its recognition as one of the maximum prominent schools inside the Kathak subculture.

The Evolution of Kathak Dance in the Lucknow Darbar

The Lucknow Darbar underneath the Nawabs of Awadh marked a golden technology inside the evolution of Kathak. Unlike Jaipur, wherein rhythm, energy, and technical precision dominated, Lucknow subtle Kathak into an advanced paintings of abhinaya (expressive



storytelling), grace, and lyrical splendor. The metropolis of Lucknow itself, with its hybrid cultural identity fashioned by means of manner of Hindu, Mughal, and Persian impacts, became fertile floor for inventive boom and experimentation (Kothari; Massey).

Historically, Lucknow was part of the Awadh area and received prominence when Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula declared it the capital in 1775. Under successive Nawabs, particularly Wajid Ali Shah (1822–1887), Lucknow emerged as a center of music, poetry, theatre, and dance. This period saw Kathak's transformation from a typically devotional storytelling exercise into a cultured courtroom art finished in royal Darbar and theatres (Ramya 243-244; Sing Roy 53).

An important contribution of the Lucknow Darbar turned into the emphasis on abhinaya and lyrical grace. Performances prioritized diffused expressions, delicate gestures, and emotional storytelling, frequently followed by means of way of thumri, ghazal, and dadra. Through the ones semi-classical and romantic genres, dancers portrayed devotional moods in addition to themes of affection and longing with poetic finesse.

Patronage with the aid of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah become critical to this evolution. Himself a poet, composer, dancer, and theatre innovator, he installed the Parikhana (House of Fairies), where ladies performers, called Pari-s, had been rigorously skilled in making a song, dancing, and instrumental overall performance. He also composed and staged numerous Rahas theatrical dance-dramas stimulated via Raslila yet adapted to the Hindu-Muslim syncretic way of life of Lucknow. His first production, Kissa Radha Kanhaiya, featured courtesans in divine roles beneath the guidance of professional authorities. Later works which includes Dayera-e-Tashshuk (1850), Afsana-e-Ishq (1851), and Baharey-Alfat (1852) elevated the theatrical scope of Kathak and pondered his vision of mixing poetry, track, and dance right into a composite art (Abbassy 156; Sing Roy 60-63).

The integration of song and poetry for the duration of this time enriched Kathak's emotional range. Wajid Ali Shah himself wrote ghazals and thumris below pen names like Qaisar and Akhtarpiya, compositions that have become part of Kathak's repertoire. Simultaneously, the position of hereditary Kathak households turned into essential. Gurus inclusive of Prakashji, Dayalji, Hiralalji, and later Durgaprasad, Thakur Prasad, Bindadin Maharaj, and Kalka Prasad flourished underneath royal patronage. These masters codified abhinaya primarily based repertoires, choreographed Rahas, and subtle

Natwari Nritya, shaping the rules of the Lucknow Gharana. Among them, Bindadin Maharaj have become specifically renowned for composing heaps of thumris and lyrical pieces, a lot of which stay completed in Kathak nowadays (Ramya; Sing Roy).

Several examples illustrate this evolution. Wajid Ali Shah's treatise Bani information twenty-one gats, 16 of which were absorbed into Kathak proper, while others encouraged folk and semi-classical forms. His Rahas performances blended intricate choreography with music and poetry, setting up a theatrical way of life particular to Lucknow. Even Persian adab (etiquette) and Mughal courtly aesthetics left their imprint on the dance, with refined gestures together with salami and adab becoming a part of the repertoire (Kothari; Sing Roy 62-63).

Accordingly, the Lucknow Darbar gave Kathak its expressive depth, theatrical richness, and lyrical refinement. By merging Hindu devotional issues with Persian-Islamic aesthetics, and through the creative innovations of Wajid Ali Shah and Kathak masters, Lucknow fashioned a gharana that keeps to encompass Kathak's identity as a subculture of elegance, emotional subtlety, and cultural synthesis.

The Evolution of Kathak Dance in the Raigarh Darbar

The Raigarh Darbar within the early twentieth century represents a one of a kind section in Kathak's records. Unlike Jaipur and Lucknow, which flourished for the duration of the medieval and early modern durations, Raigarh rose to prominence within the princely state of Chhattisgarh below the reign of Maharaja Chakradhar Singh (1905–1947). His rule transformed Raigarh right into a cultural laboratory wherein Kathak become no longer simplest achieved however also systematically documented, theorized, and increased (Ashirwadani; Ramya 271-272).

Historically, in advance rulers of Raigarh supported tune and dance, but it changed into below Chakradhar Singh that Kathak attained unheard of boom. A multi-talented ruler, Chakradhar Singh became an achieved tabla and pakhawaj player, as well as a poet and prolific creator. Fluent in Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, and Oriya, he composed severa works on music and dance, consisting of Nartan Sarvaswam, Taal Tayonidhi, and Taalbal Pushpakar. His intellectual engagement with the arts extended Raigarh right into a reputable middle of education in Kathak (Sing, Yasmin; Ramya 271-272).



One of the greatest factors of the Raigarh Darbar became its fusion of gharanas. Chakradhar Singh invited and supported eminent experts from both Jaipur and Lucknow traditions, together with Pandit Jagannath Prasad, Pandit Kalka Prasad, Pandit Acchan Maharaj, Pandit Shambhu Maharaj, and Pandit Jai Lal. Their teachings merged in Raigarh, and thru this synthesis a wonderful style emerged, later diagnosed because the Raigarh Gharana (Ashirwadam; Rmya).

As a percussionist, Chakradhar Singh brought several rhythmic innovations. He developed the tala chakra, a round diagrammatic illustration of rhythmic cycles, and created compositions with evocative thematic names together with Megh Pushp, Chamak Bijli, and Brahma Beej. These rhythmic experiments gave Kathak a brand new mathematical dimension and confirmed how rhythm can be each technical and thematic (Sing, Yasmin; Ashirwadam).

Another hallmark of the Raigarh style turned into its emphasis on *ati vilambit laya* (extremely sluggish pace) at the beginning of performances. This technique supplied dancers with area to discover each nuance of motion, stressful each stamina and mastery. Alongside this, Raigarh dancers evolved *joda bols* (paired rhythmic patterns) and problematic *laykari* (manipulation of rhythm), which in addition extended Kathak's vocabulary past traditional formats (Ramya 274).

Chakradhar Singh's encouragement of artists became

similarly influential. He prepared huge-scale conferences, along with the All India Music Conference at Allahabad in 1938, in which sixty Raigarh artists showcased their competencies. In 1939, he famously followed Kathak dancer Pandit Kartik Ram on tabla at some point of a performance for Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, an occasion that earned him the honorary name *Sangeet Samrat* (Emperor of Music) (Ramya 273-274).

The legacy of Raigarh continued after Chakradhar Singh's death in 1947 through disciples such as Pandit Kartik Ram, Kalyandas Mahant, Phirtudasji, and Barmanlalji. These artists carried forward the Raigarh style and trained next generations, ensuring the gharana's survival even because it struggled for recognition along the extra mounted Jaipur and Lucknow gharanas (Ashirwadam 75-77; Ramya 274).

Accordingly, the Raigarh Darbar contributed to Kathak now not just via performance however also via innovation, codification, and intellectual engagement. Its emphasis on rhythmic creativity, fusion of patterns, and rigorous training produced a gharana that, even though younger, substantially enriched the Kathak culture.

Comparative Analysis

To apprehend the awesome yet interconnected contributions of the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars, the following comparative table summarizes their characteristics.

Aspect	Jaipur Darbar	Lucknow Darbar	Raigarh Darbar
Patronage	Kachwaha Rajput rulers (with Mughal links)	Nawabs of Awadh (esp. Wajid Ali Shah)	Maharaja Chakradhar Singh (1905–1947)
Stylistic Focus	Strong rhythm, vigorous footwork, effective spins, paran, dhrupad affect	Subtle abhinaya, lyrical grace, thumri, ghazal, Rahas theatre	Fusion of gharanas, <i>ati vilambit laya</i> , rhythmic innovation
Themes	Mythological and heroic tales, devotion to Krishna and Shiva	Romantic, devotional, and courtly love topics; Raslila-stimulated Rahas	Intellectual exploration of rhythm, thematic parans, experimental choreographies
Music	Pakhawaj accompaniment, dhrupad-based compositions	Thumri, ghazal, dadra, semi-classical forms integrated with Kathak	Complex tala structures, new rhythmic cycles, thematic bols
Pedagogy	Emphasis on tala mastery, energetic exercise, devotional orientation	Focus on abhinaya schooling, Parikhana institution, function of Kathak families	Systematic documentation (Nartan Sarvaswam), <i>move-gharāna</i> training
Legacy	Jaipur Gharana: rhythmically effective, technically stressful fashion	Lucknow Gharana: expressive, graceful, emotionally wealthy fashion	Raigarh Gharana: innovative, intellectual, scholarly style



Results of the Study

This observe demonstrates that Kathak's transformation from a temple-based storytelling lifestyle to a classical court artwork turned into essentially formed by means of political patronage and intercultural alternate. The Jaipur Darbar contributed to Kathak's evolution thru its emphasis on rhythm, lively footwork, and dhrupad-based totally precision, whilst the Lucknow Darbar refined the artwork with abhinaya, lyrical grace, and improvements consisting of Rahas under Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. The Raigarh Darbar, under Maharaja Chakradhar Singh, synthesized elements from each traditions and added groundbreaking rhythmic experiments, consisting of the tala chakra and performances in ati vilambit laya. These tendencies had been not incidental however instead the result of the deliberate vision of consumers who dealt with Kathak as a cultural logo and highbrow pursuit. Furthermore, the fusion of Hindu devotional roots, Mughal-Islamic aesthetics, Persian poetry, and nearby affects gave Kathak its precise multi-dimensional identification. The emergence of the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh gharanas presentations this wealthy courtly information, and their legacies preserve to form current pedagogy and conventional standard overall performance.

Conclusion

The evolution of Kathak dance inside the Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh Darbars demonstrates how a devotional art transformed into a sophisticated classical tradition through political patronage and intercultural exchange. The Jaipur Darbar preserved Kathak's devotional roots at the same time as emphasizing rhythm, energy, and technical mastery, laying the muse of the Jaipur Gharana. The Lucknow Darbar, under the Nawabs of Awadh, especially Wajid Ali Shah, gave Kathak its expressive soul through abhinaya, thumri, ghazal, and the creation of Rahas, setting up the Lucknow Gharana

due to the fact the epitome of beauty and splendor. The Raigarh Darbar, led via Maharaja Chakradhar Singh, synthesized factors from both Jaipur and Lucknow, pioneering rhythmic innovations, codification, and experimentation, fundamental to the formation of the Raigarh Gharana.

Together, those Darbars illustrate that Kathak's classical identity isn't always the result of a single cultural influence however of centuries of change between temple devotion, Mughal aesthetics, Rajput valor, and princely experimentation. Today, the legacies of Jaipur, Lucknow, and Raigarh retain to inspire Kathak practitioners, making the dance each a historic narrative and a dwelling way of life.

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