

CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Dance has been a medium to develop and express the internal tendencies of human from the start of the universe. Same as the brush of a painter, the mind of a dancer by arranging the body's different shapes in his mind incarnated a form and in order he invented different types of song, style, dance styles and different type of instruments. Indian classical dance Kathak was one of those invented different forms. Dance form is the powerful medium of getting Moksha.

In India the Indian classical dance has a long tradition. Kathak is a North Indian Classical Dance style. There is no authenticated scripture available as to how and when the origin and development of Kathak dance took place but it has been established through number of proofs that indicates that the reference of Kathak dance is found since Ramayan and Mahabharat period. It is also said that Kathak dance was born from Raas dance. Even it is mention that there can be direct link between Kathak dance and Lord Shiva's tandav. It had been mention that Lord Shiva taught the art of dancing to his wife "Shakti" in ancient times. Second name of Shakti is "Parashakti" or Gauri. Gauri has written "Gauri Kathak" having one lac shlokas and on the basis of this Granth, Sarangdev wrote "Mahabharat Sudamini". From the said excerpt it is clear that Kathak dance had its existence in India during ancient times.

Literal meaning of Kathak is "one who tells a story" i.e. a dance in which the story is narrated through the medium of gestures. Kathak dance is mainly based on a story telling. All those who sang phrasing the god, came in the category of Kathakas community. But in the beginning this word did not hinted towards any particular caste as later on drama scriptures were made from elements that were taken from Vedas.

This means that there must have been definite form of dance and music in Vedic era also. In Vedic era during the Yag and drama acts, there is a mention of castes such as Nat, Sut, Nartak, Sutradhar, Kirat, Charan, Bhand and Bhat.

"Charan word is also a gift of Vedic era. The word Charan is mentioned in "Atharva Veda". During ancient times in Sanskrit literature those who sang, played instruments or dance in front of people were known as Charan. Even today Charans are living in many parts of Rajasthan. Bhats also used to sing, play instruments or dance. In Uttar Vedic era dancers were called professional dancers. Hence there is a

direct relation between the development of the dance from Vedic era to Gupt era in Kathak dance.”¹ According to some experts the thread regarding the origin of Kathak dance is to be found in the history of one caste. Once upon a time the society of Kathak dancers were from North India same as the professional caste of Bhat, Charan, Sut etc.

“ The word Kathak can be seen in “Ashtaadhyayi” written by Maharishi Panini was approximately 600 years before Christ period. According to him Kathak word is derived from “Kathya” i.e. Metal {Fit}. Maharishi Panini has laid down in his “Siddhant Kaumudi’s – a Sutra “Kathadibhyasthak” from which the word Kathika is derived which means as one well versed in story telling.”² There was a class among the list of artiste, who were known as Granthik, according to Maharishi Patanjali’s epic written in 200 BC. These people used to present the theme of the granth to the audience. Probably those granthis are today known as Kathakas. Many scholars think that Kathak dance was originated by Kushiluv. “ Kamsutra’s author Vatsyayan has also mentioned the dance performed in Saraswati Bhawan by Nuts (Kushiluv). But whenever the word Kushiluv is mentioned in ancient epics, the meaning is that of an instrument player.”³

“ This meaning is also mentioned in the “Arthashastra” written by Kautilya. Chanakya have also used Kushiluv along with words Nat and dancers. This implies that the meaning of Kushiluv is not a dancer.

It is written in Natyashastra:

nini tiw(vwin[pyity%t: pvidh k% : .
aiti[w[a%y(tk% i[yAmitAmin k%)l v: Ay(t ..

means the person who is skilled in playing many types of instruments are called Kushiluv. Even today Kathaka’s are expert in musical instruments i.e. different percussions playing Tabla, Pakhavaj, Harmonium, Nal.”⁴

¹ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 16

² Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 16

³ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 17

⁴ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 18

The tradition of Kushiluv was in a thriving state before the birth of Christ. There is mention of Kushiluv in Manusmriti also. In Ramayan also, Valmiki has described special kind of people who are expert in the art of story telling and hence Luv Kush are said to be Kushiluv.

“ Kathak word has been found in Mahabharat also. In Bhavishya Puran (Madhya Parv) Kathak word is used in the form of Brahmin caste.

j i(t BḥiSy cKviri[Bij k: kYkAtYi .
(Sv(vp)S%vp%ct% p(rpqt[. .

Means caste has 4 types:

(1) Bhojak (2) Kathak (3) Shivvipr {S}v(vp) (4) Suryavipr {S%vp}

Further it is written

kYki[m'ymAtPi>S%vp%iltm: .
(Sv(I gi cart (Sv(vp)At%at: . .

In the above mentioned four castes Kathak is considered as Madhyama and Shivvipra is known to be Supreme.”⁵

In Puran Sandarbh Kosh the meaning of actor and a story teller is mentioned. In few Sanskrit granths for literary work words like Katha or Kalha is used. In Jain dictionary “Abhidhan Rajendra”, “Kalpadridkosh” and “Kalpasutradi”, “Kahub” word is used for Kathak. Shabdarth Chintamani Vachaspatyakosha and Shabdakalpadrum – Kosha are regarded as standard Sanskrit lexicons.

⁵ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 18

“ Kathak is variously defined in them as story teller, narrator of drama and solo performer. In Pali language Kathaka word is used for religious preachers. In Nepali language and dictionary, the word Kathak is used for the one who describe or explain. In ancient Charit Kosh on page 113, Kathak is said to be of Vishwamitra’s Gotra. In the same Charit Kosh on page number 875, one can find the description of four gotra’s such as Udrenu {udr{N}}, Vishvami{v{A}vi{m}}, Udaahi{udi{h}} and Kathak{kYk}. In Hindi Shabdha Sagar there are number of descriptions of Kathak like (i) Story teller (ii) Recitation of Puranas (iii) a character who describes a story of a drama or Nat.”⁶

This meaning resembles with the ancient meaning of Kathak i.e. main actor and Sutradhar. In Hindi Shabda Sagar Part-II meaning of Kathak is (i) A caste whose work is to sing, play music and dance (ii) a form of dance.

Tulsidas has mentioned the word Kathak in reference to dance. In Tulsi Shabd Sagar Kathak is defined as story teller, a caste whose work is to sing, play music and dance.

According to Manak Hindi Kosh the meanings of Kathak are story teller, a character or a Nat who at the start of a program recites a whole story of a play in an ancient theater, a modern caste who often gave training to prostitutes in singing and dancing. The development of Kathak as an art form was primarily done by the said caste. Pandit Ravidutt Shastri has written a commentary published at Bombay in 1904, which says that Nats are known by 6 names: “Shailali, Shailush, Jayajeev, Krishnashav, Bharat and Nat”.

For Kathaks there are 2 names, Charan and Kushiluv. It is said that their was possibility that Kushiluv imitated Luv-Kush, sons of Lord Ram by singing the traditional ancient stories and Charans used to express it by their dance.

⁶ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 19

“ In Nrityadhyay by Sangeet Ratnakar’s there is mention of word Kathak.

kYki v(dnøi# (vwiv^ot (pyvdi .
pSsi k%l ci^oy[ct% svmit%no.

means Vidyavant and Priyamavada are the adjectives used for Kathakas. In Sangeet Darpan, Sangeet Makarand and Kohal Rahasya etc. description is found in main defining words for Kathak dance like Tatkar, Gat etc.”⁷

Thus the reference of Kathak is seen in many epics and also in existence of Kathak is seen much earlier. Thus present researcher would like to focus on the historic origin of Kathak to know the development of Kathak dance art form at every pace of time.

⁷ Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 20