THE BANARAS GHARANA OF KATHAK DANCE: A STUDY FROM THE PAST TO PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

The word “gharana” is related to that particular art, which is passed down from generation to generation. In simple words, a gharana means a “house” in which every member living follows his ancestors. In the field of music, the names of many famous gharanas are derived; each gharana represents its own different artistic structure or style. If seen in the history of the music world, the gharanas were born when one artist practiced his art until his presentation did not seem to be different from other artists and then he passed this legacy to his next generation; in this way, from one generation to another, this form of art flowed, which gave birth to the Gharana.

Mainly in the field of Kathak dance, the names of three gharanas are found: Lucknow Gharana, Banaras Gharana, and Jaipur Gharana. These gharanas seem to be different from each other on the basis of their specific artistic talents. Banaras Gharana is famous for its strong movement and devotional presentation. Janaki Prasad and Sukhdev Maharaj are considered to be the two founders of Banaras Gharana. Janaki Prasad was born in Rajasthan, but he made Banaras his workplace. On the other hand, Sukhdev Maharaj was born in Banaras, but he rendered his musical services in the court of the King of Nepal, after which his children stayed in Banaras and strengthened the Banaras Gharana. Presently, all the artists representing the Banaras Gharana are related to this lineage.

The presented research article describes the genealogy of past and present artists of Banaras Gharana of Kathak and their contribution to Kathak dance.

Keywords: Kathak, Banares, Gharana, Dance, and Genealogy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVE

The presented research article is based on the history and present of the artists of the Banaras Gharana of Kathak dance. On the basis of the facts obtained by the researcher, an attempt has been made to give brief information about the Banaras Gharana, in which mainly the genealogy of the Gharana is related to blood relations (son and Kutambijan), and an attempt has been made to describe the most special artist disciples outside the family as far as possible, with the aim of making the
students, researchers, and mainly the seekers of Kathak dance aware of the history and contribution of the artist of the Banaras Gharana in the field of Kathak dance.

1.2. MATERIAL COLLECTION

The written material in the research article has been compiled through oral discussion with the present artists of Banaras Gharan, various books, research papers, websites, and journals.

1.3. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Historical method, descriptive method, survey method, and explanatory method have been used in the presented research paper.

According to scholars, the original source of “Gharana” is derived from the Sanskrit word “Griha.” In Hindi, it is commonly called “Ghar.” The word Ghar was formed from Sanskrit “Griha,” and the word “Gharana” evolved from Ghar. A house that has some distinctive features for its identity Gharana is actually a symbol of the old Gurukul system. In Sanskrit, these classes were called Amanaya. Every disciple was a member of an Amanaya. The word Amanaya later came to be known as “Charan.” During the Mughal period, the term “Charan” became “Gharana.” 

Azad (2022)

According to the scholars, another reason for the birth of the Gharana is also considered to be the non-propagation of art by the artists. Because after the 16th century, the word gharana came into vogue, and at that time, most of the good artists obtained the patronage of princely states and resided there. Each princely state used to patronize its high-quality artists as well as give them respect in the court, but they were against sending their artists to other states, due to which the artists did not work in the same princely state. These geographical distances limited the art along with the artists, and the artists of each place became proficient in their own art styles, due to which the difference between the artists of each place was clearly visible. Accomplished artists assumed the title “acharyas” and started teaching their disciples, and from here the form of gharanas was determined.

Under Kathak dance, the word “gharana” signifies a special style of Kathak dance. At the same time, at the same place, the Kathak artists perform Thaat, Aamad, Tukde, Paran, etc. from the present. These different styles gave a different form to one gharana’s Kathak than another gharana’s. Mainly three gharanas are prevalent under Kathak dance: Banaras Gharana, Lucknow Gharana, and Jaipur Gharana, but at present Raigarh Gharana also has its own artistry is emerging due to the new dance style. Banaras Gharana is considered to be a branch derived from Jaipur Gharana, while Raigarh Gharana has properly followed the Lakshya-Lakshana tradition, incorporating the beauty of Jaipur and Lucknow Gharana. It can be considered an artistic achievement of post-independent India Byohar (2019). The beginning of each gharana is considered to be from a main artist, who laid the foundation of that gharana by establishing a new style by using innovative experiments on the strength of his amazing talent. Present According to beliefs, no tradition can be called a gharana until it has been going on for at least three generations. In other words, there must be three qualified artists in every gharana: the guru or the founder; his disciple or son; and his son’s disciple or disciple’s disciple. Azad (2022)

At present, young dancers are getting dance training from gharanas, but they do not like to be tied to any one gharana. The spread of education has emphasized the need for educated dancers to learn the specialty of each gharana and bring innovation to their dance. Today It is not surprising to see glimpses of other
gharanas in the dance of the artists; by adopting the artistic beauty of each gharana and presenting it in the dance, each dancer is trying to display innovation in his dance presentation.

Among the main three gharanas that come under Kathak dance, the “Banaras Gharana” is called a “little-known” gharana, but at present it would not be appropriate to call it a “little-known” gharana because the artists educated from the Banaras gharana are currently performing not only in the country but also in foreign countries. Art is being performed with dexterity. Therefore, it would be appropriate to call it a well-known gharana. The names of two genealogies are often mentioned in the Gharana: (1) Janki Prasad and (2) Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj.

**Janki Prasad (Banaras Gharana)**

Janaki Prasad, a member of the Sanvaldas family and a native of Bikaner, Rajasthan, laid the groundwork for the Banaras Gharana. But he gave dance lessons to his brother Chunnialal ji’s son, Sabla ji, and Sabla ji’s son, Duda ji. After this, Duda ji’s sons, Hukuma ji and Moti ji, also got education from their great-grandfather. Janki Prasad ji had no children, but Hukuma ji had two sons, Dulharam and
Ganeshilal. Dulharam made Kashi his workplace and also taught music to his three sons, Bihari Lal, Hiralal, and Puran Lal. Bihari Lal was also the court dancer of Holkar Maharaj of Indore; he had three sons: Kishan Lal, Mohan Lal, and Sohan Lal, of whom Kishan Lal trained in Mumbai and the other two brothers in Dehradun.

Hiralal, the second son of Dulharam, was also a high-quality artist, but information related to his married life is not available. On the other hand, Puran Lal, the third son of Dulharam, also contributed significantly in the field of Kathak dance. He had two sons, Madan Lal and Ram Lal, who made Patiala my workplace.

On the other hand, three sons were born to Ganeshilal, the second son of Hukuma ji, among whom were Hanuman Prasad, Shiv Lal, and Gopal Dass. His first son, Hanuman Prasad, was appointed as a political dancer in the courts of Jammu, Patiala, Bikaner, and Nepal. He had a daughter, Chunni. Devi Hui, who had three sons, Navalkishore, Vanshidhar, and Omkarpasad, propagated dance in Delhi. Shiv Lal, the second son of Ganeshilal, was a high-class tabla player who served in the court of Raigarh King Chakradhar Singh. Shiv Lal’s three sons of these, only Kundan Lal remained associated with dance; the remaining two sons, Sukhdev and Durgaprasad, made business their means of livelihood.

Ganeshilal’s third son, Gopal Dass, made Lahore Patiala his workplace and taught dance to his friend’s son, Bhure Khan, who was later adopted and changed his name to “Jyoti Prasad.” A son was born, whose name was Krishna Kumar. Krishna Kumar received dance education from his brother Jyoti Prasad, alias “Aashiq Hussain” (adopted son), and from his father’s elder brother Hanuman Prasad. Krishna Kumar had three sons: Ashok Kumar, Vijay Kumar, and Chandan Kumar.

The second genealogy of Banaras Gharana, “Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj,” is known by the name “Vanshavali.” Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj was born into a Brahmin family in Banaras; his father’s name was Shri Ramdas Mishra. He was also a Sanskrit scholar. Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj had two marriages, the first with Badko Devi, from whom four children were born: Shailjakumari, Kishan Maharaj, Bindu Devi, and Tirathraj (Tiwari’s uncle). Singers were appointed, and he married Mahalo Devi, the daughter of Raigu of the King of Nepal, from whom he had five children: Alaknanda, Tara Devi, Sitara Devi, Durga Prasad (Pande Maharaj), and Chaube Maharaj (Chaturbhuj Mishra). Achhan Maharaj adopted Choubey Maharaj and taught him dance, while their other four children received instruction from their father in all genres of music. Alaknanda made Kolkata his workplace and stayed there to train his disciples.

Tara Devi’s son was Gopi Krishna, who took the Banaras Gharana to its pinnacle. Sitara Devi, who is known as the supreme artist of the Banaras Gharana, married Pratap Barot, from whom she had a son named Ranjit Barot, but the son died. Due to his lack of interest in music, he adopted his brother Choubey Maharaj’s two daughters, Jayanti Mala, and Priya Mala, and trained them both in dance. Apart from Priya Mala and Jayanti Mala, two more children of Mr. Narendra were born. Shri Durgaprasad ji had five children, whose names were Mohan Mishra, Brijraj Mishra, Shyam Mishra, Ram Mishra, and Annapurna Devi.
“Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj (Banaras Gharana)”

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“Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj (Banaras Gharana)”

Paattu Prasad Mishra
(Sarangi Player)

(Son)

Shri Ramdas Mishra
(Singer and Sarangi Player)

(Daughter)

Baldev Maharaj

(Sukhdev Maharaj (Shukre Maharaj))

(Son)

Sarju

(Tabla Player)

(Wife)

Badko Devi
(Mahalo Devi)

Kishan Prasad Mishra
(Dancer, Singer, instrumentalist)

(Tirthra Mishra
(Shilukamari
(Bindu Devi
(Teacher)
(Teacher)
(Teacher)

(Sons)

Govind Prasad Mishra
(Dancer, Tabla Player)

Bal Mukund Mishra
(Sarangi Player)

Madhav Mishra
(Dancer, Choreographer)

Rishiraj Mishra
(Tabla Player)

Abhay Mishra
Raksha Mishra

Shashiraj Mishra

Ravi Krishan
(Dancer, Choreographer)

Aditya Mishra
Shivranjani Mishra

Venkatesh Mishra
(Balaji)

Mohit Krishna Mishra
(Dancer)

Pritam Mishra
Prity Mishra
Pawan Mishra
Naveen Mishra

(Akshay Mishra
(Dancer, Singer)

Sushma Pandey
Nirmal Mishra
Rajesh Mishra
Ranu Mishra

Shraddha Mishra
Krishna Mishra (Singer)
Shruti Mishra
Aayushi Mishra

Alaknanda Mishra
(Maharaj)

Trivedi Devi Sonthalia
(Tara Devi)

Sitar Devi

Durga Prasad Mishra
(Pande Mahara)

Chaturbhuja

(Chaube)

(Son)

Gopi Krishna Sonthalia
(Dancer, Choreographer)

Ranjit Barot
(Drummer, Music Composer)

Shampa Krishna
(Choreographer)

Malika Barot
(Singer)

(Son)

Mohan Krishna Mishra
(Brijraj Mishra
(Shyam Kumar Mishra
(Ram Krishna
(Annapurna

(Krishna Sharma)

(Vishal Krishna
(Dancer)

Shreyana Krishna
(Dancer)

Mayuri Mishra

(Daughter)

Jayantimala Mishra
(Vyjayanthimala Mishra
Priyamala
(Baal Krishna
(Mishra
(Dancer)

Narendra

(Rishika Mishra
(Dancer)

1 Genealogy Chart of Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj, Banaras Gharana, obtained from Shri Vishal Krishna (Grand son,Sitara Devi), while interviews, dated 4/22/2003
2. FORMER ARTISTS OF BANARAS GHARANA AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO KATHAK DANCE

1) **Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj:** Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj was born in Varanasi in 1888. Sukhdev was interested in music since childhood; he was a musician of high quality, poet, and Sanskrit scholar. After serving in the court of the King of Nepal, when he returned to Banaras, he started studying "Natyasastra", and taking "Natyasastra" as the basis, he created lots of 'Parans' on the stories of 'Radha-Krishna' and 'Shiva-Parvati'. Many compositions were done on related subjects. The credit for including 'tandav' and 'yoga actions' in Kathak dance also goes to him alone. Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj thought that Kathak dance, which was revered because it was performed in temples, had been given an inferiority complex by the Mughal courts. Due to this, Kathak dance has lost respect among the general public. Even in such a situation, Sukhdev ji went against society and taught Kathak dance to his three daughters (Alkhananda Devi, Tara Devi, and Sitara Devi) and got many performances done. He creates lots of 'Parans' including Kali Paran, Durga Paran, Shiv Paran, Ram Paran, etc. He made his children adept in various styles of music, regardless of their age. His dedication and selflessness restored respect for Kathak dance in society.

2) **Sitara Devi:** Sitara Devi was born in Kolkata in 1916. Even before her birth, her father, Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj, had announced that if I had a daughter, I would make her the best dancer in the world. At the age of five, anklets were tied to Sitara Devi's feet. She gave many performances in Banaras during her childhood. In Calcutta, she took classes from Shambhu Maharaj, and after going to Mumbai with Achchan Maharaj, she took dance lessons. In 1930, a famous music institution in Bombay, "Three Arts Circle", organized a program in the palace of Mrs. Atiya Begum Faizi, in which 'Guru Rabindranath Tagore, impressed by her dance, gave her the title of 'Nritya Shyam Ragini' and 'Kathak Queen'. After this she also played the main heroine in the Hindi film world, under which Mr. Niranjan Sharma's film 'Usha-Haran', Mr. Mehboob Khan's film 'Watan' and after that Pooja, Nadi Kinare, Alhilal, Holi, Roti, Hulchul, Phool, Anjali etc. For which she also got 'Gauhar Gold Medal'.

Seeing her dedication and contribution to Kathak, she was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1969. On April 13, 1970, she did a miraculous work in Birla Matushree Auditorium, Bombay. She established a record by dancing continuously for 13 hours. On the other hand, she received 'Nritya-
Vilas’ award by the Government of Maharashtra, ‘Padma Shri’ by the Government of India, etc.

Sitara Devi was such a woman who devoted her entire life to dance without caring for society when it boycotted her and her family. She hoisted the flag of her art in foreign countries as well. The Banaras gharana of Kathak dance can never forget her contribution in the field.

3) Mr. Chaturbhuj Mishra: Mr. Chaturbhuj Mishra was born in Calcutta in 1923 in the house of Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj. Since childhood, he saw his sisters (Tara Devi, Sitara Devi, and Alkhananda Devi) dancing and started dancing himself. Seeing the dance of this little boy, Achhan Maharaj asked his father to teach him dance. Achhan Maharaj gave him a formal education and got his dance performances done in many places and in the royal courts of the country. Choubey Maharaj was as skilled a dancer as he was a skilled tabla player: he also played tabla with Sitara Devi Ji for a long time and also explained the nuances of dance to her. The credit goes to you for popularizing, expanding, and giving many new compositions to Kathak dance. You were counted among the famous scholars of India. All the artists with whom he danced convinced him of his art. He used to present difficult rhythms with great ease, as well as used miraculous sparkles and blinks in Gat-Nikas. The form of Achchan Maharaj was visible in his dance.
4) **Nataraja Gopi Krishna**: Gopi Krishna was born in Calcutta in 1933. He was the son of Taradevi and grandson of Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj. He certainly took lessons from Achchan Maharaj, Lachchu Maharaj, and Shambhu Maharaj, but always included the specialty of his grandfather's dance in his performance. At the young age of 13, he was awarded the title of 'Nataraja' in the Bengal Conference, Calcutta, under the chairmanship of Lalbabu.

In the film world, he first taught dance to actress Madhubala, after which he got an influx of choreography. Apart from this, he gave dance training to actresses like Asha parikh, Geeta Bali, Waheeda Rehman, Vyjayanthimala, Meena Kumari, Hema Malini, etc. In the field of Kathak, he first presented Tandav dance through 'Angharas' and 'Karans'. From his maternal uncle, Chaubey Maharaj, he learned to dance easily, even on complex taals.

Dancing to the lyrics of Tarana, sliding across the stage, standing on a platter, through eyebrows Showing Tah, Dugun, Tigun, Chaugun, etc. is his gift to the Kathak world. Hence, the miraculous performances by Gopi Krishna made Banaras Gharana world famous.

3. **PRESENT ARTISTS OF BANARAS GHARANA**

1) **Pt. Mata Prasad Mishra**: Pt. Mata Prasad Mishra was born on July 6, 1968, in a musical family in Varanasi. His father, Mr. Mahesh Prasad Mishra, was himself a sarangi player and singer, and his mother, Mrs. Laxmina Devi, was a music lover along with a housewife. lived among well-known artists and seekers of music. Early on, he developed a passion for tabla, but at the age of 6, inspired by his older brother Mr. Chandrashekhar Mishra's dancing, he also began studying Kathak with Vidushi Alaknanda Devi, a renowned dancer from the Banaras Gharana. I received dance lessons and tabla training from Pt. Panchu Maharaj. Along with music education, Pandit Mata Prasad obtained a postgraduate degree in sociology.

Pt. Mata Prasad propagated his Kathak dance, Indian music, and Banaras Gharana through the music education received from his ancestors, as a result of which he received the Shringaramani Award, Kala Prakash Award, Sangeet Natak Akademi (2019), etc., was awarded with awards, and was also selected as a B-grade artist by All India Radio. Apart from his birthplace and workplace in Banaras, he displayed his talent on various platforms across India, including Sankat Mochan Sangeet Samaroh
(Varanasi), Artists of Tomorrow Sangeet Sammelan (Mumbai), Kathak Festival (Delhi), Shivranjan Sangeet Samaroh (Mumbai), Sharad Chandrika Kathak Kendra (Delhi), etc. In addition to this, he performed on numerous international stages in countries like Spain, Switzerland, and Japan.

Pt. Mata Prasad Mishra, as a very special master and artist of the Banaras Gharana of Kathak dance, is currently teaching the Banaras Gharana to the disciples under the Guru-Shishya tradition, as well as playing an important role in the education and promotion of Kathak throughout the country and abroad. Also playing a role.

2) **Pt. Ravi Shankar Mishra:** Pt. Ravi Shankar Mishra is a well-known Kathak artist and guru from Banaras who is the son of Pt. Nageshwar Prasad Mishra and Sundar Devi. Born on August 8, 1969, father of Pt. Ravi Shankar. He himself was an accomplished tabla player who worked in the music department of Banaras Hindu University. Pt. Ravi Shankar obtained his post-graduation degree in Hindi because he was interested in literature, due to which he chose Hindi as his subject, and at the same time continued to represent the Kathak Gharana of Banaras. Born in Kashi, shortly before the birth of Pt. Ravi Shankar, his father and his mother went to their elder brother's house in Kashmir for some time, due to which Pt. Ravi Shankar got "Pahadu." Pt. Ravi Shankar is an expert tabla player in addition to being a skilled Kathak dancer. Pt. ji received formal lessons in tabla from his father in his childhood and from his cousin Pt. He was inspired by Mata Prasad Mishra to study with Alaknanda Devi and perfect his dance technique.

He received many awards and honors as a result of his inherited art practice; he took his dance and music to foreign countries, and at present he is teaching Banaras Gharana to many students. Ancient Art Center Chandigarh to Pt. Ravi Shankar “Sangeet Bhaskar” by Prayagas Sangeet Samiti, “Sangeet Praveen” by Prayagas Sangeet Samiti, “Sangeet Martand” by Hindu University Prayag, “Nritya Prakash” by Kala Prakash Varanasi, and "Sangeet Natak Akademi” Award (2019) by Uttar Pradesh Government, etc.

The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the Governor, and the Indian Prime Minister, all gave him the chance to receive their honors. He appeared in "Parakh," a program on Delhi Doordarshan (Indian National Television)
The Banaras Gharana of Kathak Dance: A Study from the Past to Present

Vishal Krishna was born on May 16, 1991, in Varanasi. From birth, he heard the chimes of the ghunguru and musical instruments around him. He started playing the music of his grandfather's (Durga Prasad) older sister to carry on his family's musical tradition. He began taking dancing lessons after being inspired by "Sitara Devi" (the kathak queen). Along with this, she also took dance lessons from her father and Pt. Ravi Shankar Mishra. He went to Mumbai for training in dance, remained there till the age of 22, and continued to learn dance under the tutelage of his grandmother. His father, Shri Mohan Krishna, was himself a skilled dancer and was also a teacher at Guru Nanak Khalsa School and His mother Mrs. Vimla Devi is a homemaker, as a result of which after returning from Mumbai, he got the musical environment in which he propagated his acquired art.

Bringing fame to Banaras Gharana dance in the country and abroad and winning the hearts of the audience, Vishal Krishna met renowned Odissi dancer "Madhavi Mudgal." Under the leadership of "Madhavi Mudgal," Mr. Vishal Krishna gave a dance performance at Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. From her, he learned the nuances of "acting" (Abhinay). He also got knowledge of the technical side of Kathak from Pt. Birju Maharaj Ji. Through his Kathak performances, Shri Vishal Krishna Ji spread Kathak...
dance not only in India but also abroad and received many awards and honors from various institutions, organizations, and governments.

4. CONCLUSION

The Banaras Gharana is as ancient as the history of Kathak. As the saying goes, “Banaras whose juice always remains” means Kashi is the land in which nine juices (Nav Ras) always exist through music.

The nomenclature of Kashi is ancient; after this, Varanasi was named Varanasi due to its location on the Varuna and Asi rivers. This Varanasi got fame as Anandvan, Rudravas, and finally Banaras Parvatkar (2002). In the Mughal period, when Kathak came out of the temples and reached the courts, obscenities also entered the courts along with it. As a result, the existence of Kathak was limited only to the luxurious environment of courtesans.

At such a time, Pt. Sukhdev Maharaj dedicated his three daughters to the promotion of Kathak, because of which the Brahmin society of Banaras boycotted them. Society started treating them like Shudras, but the great soul did not give up on Kathak dance. Singh (n.d.)

After the Mughal period, when Kathak recovered its broken existence, the credit goes to the artists of Banaras Gharana for taking Kathak towards the path of devotion. Sukhdev Maharaj ji composed many poetic paranas for the purpose of maintaining devotion in Kathak. Kaliparan, Hanuman Paran, Shiv Tandav Paran, Ram Paran, etc. Kavitagi Parans started being presented. The artists started performing according to the gods and goddesses. In present time, devotional-filled presentations are more common in Banaras Gharana compared to other gharanas of Kathak. Therefore, in the history of Kathak, the contribution, struggle, and hard work of the artists of Banaras Gharana cannot be forgotten even at present, the work of progress of Kathak is being done continuously by the artists of Banaras Gharana and the country’s Apart from this, Kathak dance performances are also being performed in various Kathak festivals in foreign countries.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.
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