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# RAMA KRISHNA MISSION (C.B.S.E.)

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## GWALIOR



NAME - SHUBHA KULSHRESHTHA  
CLASS - 10<sup>th</sup> SECTION - 'A'

TOPIC - KATHAK

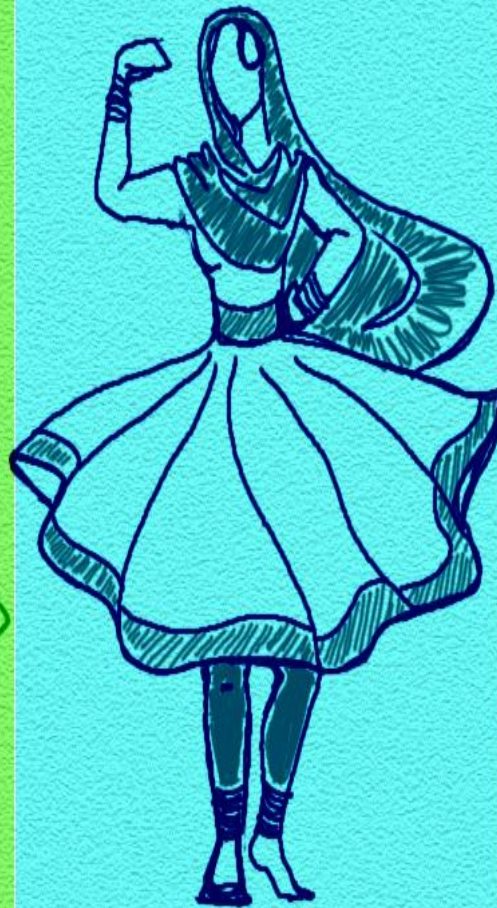


Khantaanyat Lambayat Geetam  
Hastana Artha Pradakshayat  
Chakshubhyam Darshayat Bhavom  
Padabhyam Tala Acherait



# infinity kathak

CLASSICAL INDIAN DANCE



# ***WHAT IS KATHAK ?***

*Kathak is one of the eight major forms of Indian classical dance .The origin of Kathak is traditionally attributed to the traveling bards of ancient northern India known as Kathakars or storytellers. The term Kathak is derived from the Vedic Sanskrit word Katha which means "story", and Kathakar which means "the one who tells a story", or "to do with stories".Wandering Kathakars communicated stories from the great epics and ancient mythology through dance, songs and music. Kathak dancers tell various stories through their hand movements and extensive footwork, their body movements and flexibility but most importantly through their facial expressions. Kathak evolved during the Bhakti movement, particularly by incorporating the childhood and stories of the Hindu god Krishna, as well as independently in the courts of north Indian kingdoms. Kathak is unique in having both Hindu and Muslim gharanas and cultural elements. Kathak performances include Urdu Ghazals and commonly use instruments brought during Muslim rule.*

*Kathak is found in three distinct forms, called "gharanas", named after the cities where the Kathak dance tradition evolved – Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow. While the Jaipur gharana focuses more on the foot movements, the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas focus more on facial expressions and graceful hand movements. Stylistically, the Kathak dance form emphasizes rhythmic foot movements, adorned with small bells (Ghungroo), and the movement harmonized to the music.The main focus of the dance becomes the eyes and the foot movements. The eyes work as a medium of communication of the story the dancer is trying to communicate. With the eyebrows the dancer gives various facial expressions. The difference between the sub-traditions is the relative emphasis between acting versus footwork, with Lucknow style emphasizing acting and Jaipur style famed for its spectacular footwork.*

*Kathak as a performance art has survived and thrived as an oral tradition, innovated and taught and from one generation to another verbally and through practice. It transitioned, adapted and integrated the tastes of the Mughal courts in the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly by Akbar, and was ridiculed and declined in the colonial British era,<sup>a</sup> then was reborn as India gained independence and sought to rediscover its ancient roots and a sense of national identity through the arts.*





# ***HISTORY OF KATHAK***

***According to Mary Snodgrass, the Kathak tradition of India is traceable to 400 BCE. The earliest surviving text with Kathak roots is the Natya Shastra, attributed to sage Bharata, and its first complete compilation is dated to between 200 BCE and 200 CE, but estimates vary between 500 BCE and 500 CE.***

***The most studied version of the Natya Shastra text consists of about 6000 verses structured into 36 chapters. The text, states Natalia Lidova, describes the theory of Tāṇḍava dance (Shiva), the theory of rasa, of bhāva, expression, gestures, acting techniques, basic steps, standing postures – all of which are part of Indian classical dances including Kathak. Dance and performance arts, states this ancient Hindu text, are a form of expression of spiritual ideas, virtues and the essence of scriptures.***

***The 2nd century BC panels found in Bharhut show the dancers in a vertical stance with their arms' positions already suggesting today's Kathak movements. Most of the dancers have one arm near the ear in a "pataka hasta" (Mudra). In subsequent years, the hasta was lowered to the bust level.***

***The term Kathakas in the sense of "storytellers" appears in ancient Hindu texts, such as the Mahabharata.***

वेदवेदाङ्गविद्वांसस्तथैवाध्यात्मचिन्तकाः ।  
चौक्षाश्च भगवद्भक्ताः सूताः पौराणिकाश्च ये ॥२॥  
कथकाश्चापरे राजञ्श्रमणाश्च वनौकसः ।  
दिव्याख्यानानि ये चापि पठन्ति मधुरं द्विजाः ॥३॥

# ***BHAKTI MOVEMENT ERA***

*Textual studies suggest that "Kathak" as a classical dance form likely started in Banaras (Varanasi) and from there migrated northwest to Lucknow, Jaipur and other parts of north and northwest India. The Lucknow tradition of Kathak dance attributes the style to a Bhakti movement devotee named Ishwari from the Handia village in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, who credited Hindu God Krishna appearing in his dream and asking him to develop "dance as a form of worship". Ishwari taught his descendants, who in turn preserved the learning and developments through an oral tradition over six generations ultimately yielding the Lucknow version of the Kathak dance – a family tree that is acknowledged in both Hindu and Muslim music-related Indian literature. The evolution in Kathak dance theme during the Bhakti movement centered primarily around divine Krishna, his lover Radha and milkmaids (gopis) – around legends and texts such as the Bhagavata Purana found in the Vaishnavism tradition of Hinduism. The love between Radha and Krishna became symbolism for the love between Atman (soul within) and the supreme source (Cosmic soul everywhere), a theme that dance ballet and mimetic plays of Kathak artists expressed. Although central asian influence of Kathak rapid whirls has been proposed, Sangitaratnakara, a 13th century Sanskrit text on Indian classical music and dance in Chapter 4 mentions a dance movement with rapid whirling around like a wheel keeping the arms in the Dola pose and bending the body inwards called 'Chakramandala' It is employed in worshipping gods and in vigorous movement.*





## ***MUGHAL ERA***

***The Mughal era courts and nobles accepted Kathak as a form of aristocratic entertainment, which low income families were willing to provide. According to Drid Williams:***

It should be remembered that the first Kathak dancers were, after all, Hindus who danced for Moghul overlords. Too much outward expression of religious belief was without doubt undesirable. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the wide use of 'abstract' dancing, intricate bell work (*tatkar*), dazzling turns and the fleeting, transient, glimpses of Radha and Krishna in Kathak arose both to remind the dancers about their reasons for dancing and (gently, unobtrusively) to deceive their courtly Moghul audiences. Perhaps *tatkar* and *tukras* formed the bulk of these first dancers' performances. Gradually more and more images, then stories of Krishna and Radha crept in.

*— Drid Williams, Anthropology and the Dance*

***Over time, the Kathak repertoire added Persian and Central Asian themes, such as the whirling of Sufi dance, the costumes replaced Saris with items that bared midriff and included a transparent veil of the type common with medieval Harem dancers. When the colonial European officials began arriving in India, the Kathak court entertainment they witnessed was a synthesis of the ancient Indian tradition and Central Asian-Persian dance form, and the Kathak dance performers were called the "nautch girls" (or natch, a derivative of the more difficult to pronounce Sanskrit natya).***

# **BRITISH RAJ ERA**

*With the spread of colonial British rule in the 19th century India, Kathak along with all other classical dance forms were discouraged and it severely declined. This was in part the result of the Victorian morality of sexual repressiveness along with Anglican missionaries who criticized Hinduism. Reverend James Long, for example, proposed that Kathak dancers should forget ancient Indian tales and Hindu legends, and substitute them with European legends and Christian tales. Missionaries recorded their frustration in Church Missionary Review when they saw Hindu audiences applaud and shout "Ram, Ram" during Kathak performances.*

*The seductive gestures and facial expressions during Kathak performances in Temples and family occasions were caricatured in *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood*, published at the start of the 20th century, as evidence of "harlots, debased erotic culture, slavery to idols and priests" tradition, and Christian missionaries demanded that this must be stopped, launching the "anti-dance movement" or "anti-nautch movement" in 1892. Officials and newspapers dehumanized the Kathak dancers and the sources of patronage were pressured to stop supporting the Kathak performing "nautch girls" (also termed as devadasis and tawa'ifs in mid 20th century literature). Many accused the dance form as a front for prostitution, while revivalists questioned the constructed histories by the colonial writers.*

*Not only did missionaries and colonial officials ridicule the Kathak dancers, Indian men who had been educated in colonial Britain and had adapted to Victorian prudery joined the criticism, states Margaret Walker, possibly because they had lost their cultural connection, no longer understood the underlying spiritual themes behind the dance, and assumed this was one of the "social ills, immoral and backward elements" in their heritage that they must stamp out. However, the Hindu families continued their private tutoring and kept the Kathak art alive as an oral tradition. Kathak teachers also shifted to training boys to preserve the tradition, as most of the 20th-century ridicule had been directed at Kathak "nautch girls".*

*Kathak was brought to the attention of audiences outside India in the early 20th century through Kalkaprasad Maharaj.*





## ***POST COLONIAL ERA***

*The movement to end the colonial era and for an independent India, states Walker, also witnessed a revival of Kathak and more broadly, a cultural ferment and effort to reclaim culture and rediscover history. The Kathak revival movements co-developed in Muslim and Hindu gharanas, particularly by the Kathak-Misra community. Of these the Jaipur and Lucknow sub-traditions of Kathak have attracted more scholarship. The oldest Kathak department at a degree college (university) was formed in 1956 at Indira Kala Sangeet University, a public university located in Khairagarh where Dr. Puru Dadheech instated the first Kathak syllabus for degree programs. It was inspired by the diploma syllabus of Mohanrao Kallianpurkar at Bhatkhande College.*

*According to a BBC Arts article, Kathak is unique in being practiced by the Muslim community of the India, and thus has a "historical link to Islam." Farah Yasmeen Shaikh, a Muslim and a disciple of Pandit Chitresh Das in the Lucknow school, considers Kathak as a "confluence of Hindu and Muslim cultures", and has presented her performance in Pakistan. In contrast, states BBC, "Nahid Siddiqui, settled and nurtured in the UK, has a hard time practising and presenting her [Kathak] art in her birth-country of Pakistan".*

*While most scholars consider Kathak as an ancient art, some such as Margaret Walker suggest the modern Kathak is a 20th-century phenomenon, more a form of cultural revival, if one relies on the music-related Indian documents.*



# ***COSTUMES***

*The costumes vary among Kathak performers, and find their sources in either Hindu or Muslim culture.*

*The Hindu costume for female dancers has two variations. One is based on a Sari, but is worn in a style different from the customary style that goes over the left shoulder. A Kathak artist generally wraps the sari around the waist and it hangs down from the left. A blouse called choli covers the upper body. The artist may wear a scarf (called orhni in some places). Hair, face, ear, neck, hand, wrist and ankle jewellery, typically of gold, may adorn the artist. A tika or bindi in the middle of forehead is common. The second variation of a Hindu Kathak dancer uses a long, full (just above the ankle), light-weight skirt usually with embroidered border that helps highlight the dance motion. The skirt is contrasted with a different color choli, and a transparent scarf typically drapes over it and the dancer's head. Jewelry is typically present in the second variation.*

*The Muslim costume for female dancers also uses a skirt, but includes close fitting churidar pyjamas and sometimes a long coat covering hands and the upper body. The head has a cover scarf and the jewelry is light.*

*The Hindu costume for male Kathak performers is typically a silk dhoti draped around the waist, and covered with a silk scarf tied over the top. The upper body is usually left bare or with only the Hindu thread, but is sometimes covered with a loose sleeveless jacket. Kathak male artists also wear jewelry, but often of stones and much simpler than the female artists.*





## ***HOW YOU CAN GET BENEFIT FROM LEARNING KATHAK***

**Better expressions:** Kathak originates from the word 'Katha' meaning story. Kathak sharpens the expression of your child because this dance form is all about expressing a story through dance. Since it has a script which needs to be put across, the dance performance consists of a character with lot of facial expressions which lets your child learn how to express better.

**Weight bearing exercise:** Kathak is an amazing way to stay fit, because it gives a good exercise to the whole body and more than that it is equivalent to a proper weight bearing exercise as the dancer is supposed to tie ghungroos to their ankles which are considerably heavy, making it a weight bearing exercise. This strengthens your child's muscles and boosts their stamina.

**Becoming graceful:** Learning Kathak adds more grace to the body language of your child, making them look more flexible and graceful. Their body seems to be in better control of themselves and it makes your child look more elegant and poised.

**Getting culturally and traditionally rich:** If your child learns Kathak, she will be able to learn new and a lot of things about the Indian culture and our tradition, enhancing her knowledge and making her more culturally rich. This could be a prized possession in today's world, because kids these days are hardly interested in learning things about our culture.

**Increased opportunities of participation:** Taking up Kathak gives your little one a new avenue to participate in competitions across the city or country. You never know if your child would be the next Super Dancer on TV and make you proud with her elegant dance moves.

**A simple stress buster:** Participating in a Kathak class can be a very good diversion for your little one from the regular hustle and bustle of her school life. It would distract her well and give her a fresh feeling at the end of the class.

**Physical benefits:** Practicing Kathak daily improves the bodily posture and overall body balance of your growing child and not just that it also strengthens the eye and neck muscles as these are used a lot during the dance moves. The active movements involved (especially tapping the feet constantly) increases the blood flow to the whole body and makes the body more supple.

**Boosts Confidence:** You wouldn't ever find any Kathak dancer out of shape, overweight or obese! This proves that Kathak dancers remain fit and physically attractive always. This boosts your child's confidence and gives her an upper edge over other children.

# ***GHARANAS OF KATHAK***

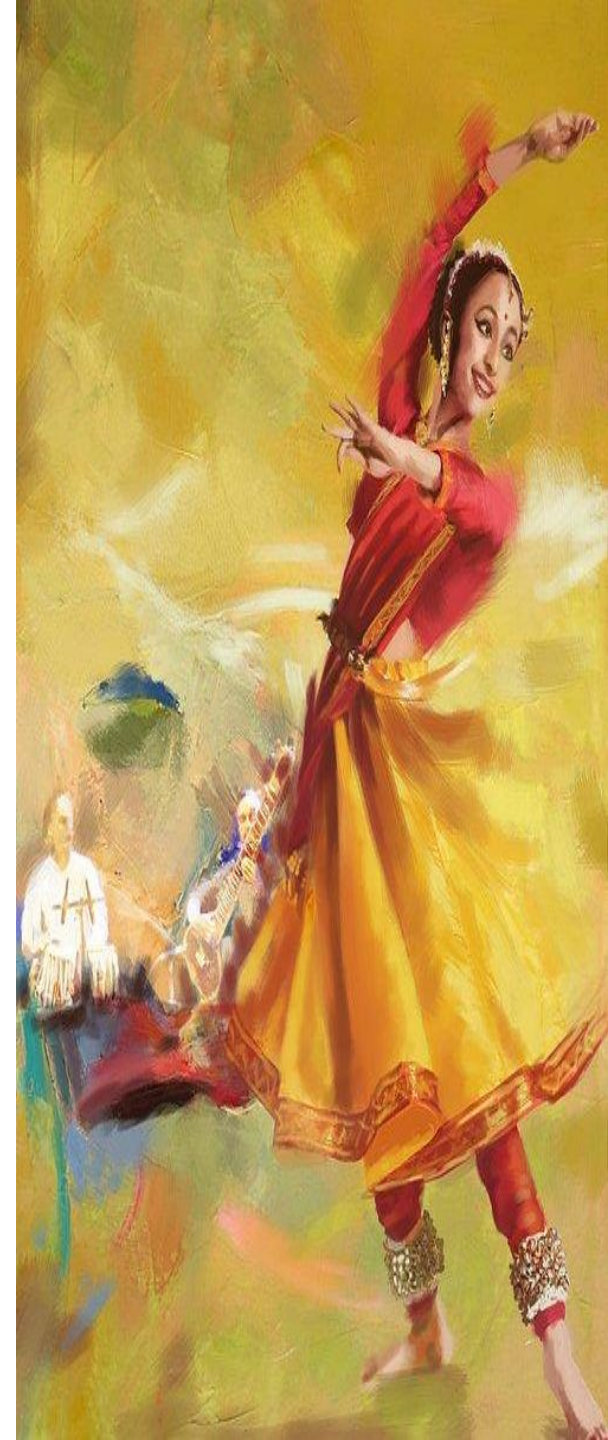
*Kathak is a diffuse tradition, of which three gharanas (schools) are more well known and studied – Jaipur, Benares and Lucknow. The schools place different relative emphasis between aspects of a Kathak performance such as the acting versus footwork. The Lucknow style, for example, emphasizes acting while Jaipur style emphasizes the dance and footwork. Traditionally, the Jaipur gharana has had a strong spiritual flavor, covering a diverse range of ideas in Vaishnavism and Shaivism.*

*The Jaipur gharana traces its origins to Bhanuji, a famed Shiva Tandava dancer who upon visiting Vrindavan was inspired and taught Natvari Nritya. Bhanuji's grandsons Luluji and Kanhuji were similarly inspired by Krishna. They returned to Jaipur, and together they began the Jaipur gharana of Kathak. The Jaipur style developed under the sponsorship of Rajput rulers, and they favored the Kathak dance with Hindu religious themes. In the modern era, this school has continued their emphasis on dance and footwork with Jai Lal, Janki Prasad, Kundan Lal, Mohan Lal and Nawal Kishore. This school is best known for its systematic innovations in rhythmic dancing, and the use of dance movement to express a story.*

*The Lucknow gharana of Kathak dance attributes its origins to a rural Krishna devotee named Ishwari from the village in southeast Uttar Pradesh, who aimed to develop Kathak dance as a form of loving devotion to Krishna. This school thrived after the Mughal Empire collapsed, when Kathak artists moved from Delhi to Lucknow under the sponsorship of Avadh nawabs who favored court dance culture. In the modern era, the Lucknow gharana style influences the dance school in New Delhi with Shambu Maharaj, Birju Maharaj and Lacchu Maharaj. Kathak choreography there has developed themes beyond Krishna-Radha, such as those based on the drama works of Kalidasa's Shiva-Parvati and Bhavabhuti's Malati-Madhav. This school has also attempted a Hindu-Muslim Kathak fusion style, highlighting the court dancers theme.*

*The Benares gharana is the third major style, traditionally believed to be the oldest. Its history is unclear. According to Kothari, the school started with Janakiprasad from a village near Bikaner who resettled in Varanasi, but one whose ancestors were famed dancers and musicians. Janakiprasad was a dancer and a Sanskrit scholar, and credited with inventing the bols of Kathak, which are mnemonic syllables within the language of this classical dance of India.*

*According to Nicole Lehmann, modern Kathak dancers show, to varying degrees, a fusion of the styles from all three gharanas.*





# ***IMPORTANCE OF KATHAK***

***Kathakars or story-tellers, are people who narrate stories largely based on episodes from the epics, myths and legends. It probably started as an oral tradition. Mime and gestures were perhaps added later on to make the recitation more effective. Thus evolved a simple form of expressional dance, providing the origins of what later developed into Kathak as we see it today.***

***The Vaishnavite cult which swept North India in the 15th century. and the resultant bhakti movement contributed to a whole new range of lyrics and musical forms. The Radha-Krishna theme proved immensely popular alongwith the works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas.***

***The emergence of Raslila , mainly in the Braj region (Mathura in Western U.P.) was an important development. It combined in itself music, dance and the narrative. Dance in Raslila, however, was mainly an extension of the basic mime and gestures of the Kathakars or story-tellers which blended easily with the existing traditional dance.***

***With the coming of the Mughals, this dance form received a new impetus. A transition from the temple courtyard to the palace durbar took place which necessitated changes in presentation. In both Hindu and Muslim courts, Kathak became highly stylised and came to be regarded as a sophisticated form of entertainment. Under the Muslims there was a greater stress on nritya and bhavagiving the dance graceful, expressive and sensuous dimensions.***



*Thank  
you*

