



GRADUAL CHANGE IN LIGHTS, STAGE MANAGEMENT AND COSTUMES IN KATHAK DANCE

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Kathak dance is a prominent classical dance of northern India. Indian dances have seen enormous changes in the past few years, but the fact that remains is not only has there been a change in the movements and “abhinay prakar” or expressions but also light and stage management and the costumes.

Kathak performing artists or the “kathakkas” as they were called were actually story tellers and were earlier the messengers of the king. Gradually this art of storytelling changed its track to become India’s most performed classical dance. In 10th century this dance became a way of tribute to the almighty and was popularly performed by the devdasis in various temples. Though they were not openly performed for the devotees at first but only for the idols of the deity. Since the dance was performed in privacy, there was no need of stage and light. It was assumed that the dance was performed to depict ones bhakti or devotion towards the god and for the god’s entertainment hence costume and jewellery were given special weightage. Blunt colours like red or green in fully covered lehenga; choli and dupatta were selected with loads of gold jewellery of all kinds.

After Nadir shah’s invasion and establishment of Mughal Empire in India, Kathak dance saw a drastic change. Temples were looted and devdasis abducted. All of this resulted in a shift of kathak from the temples to the King’s courts. This is where kathak first became a performing art and form of entertainment than as a medium of bhakti. Now that it had become a performing art, it had become essential to add aesthetics to it. For the same, light system was managed depending on the position of the sun and size of shadows. Kathak was then a solo form of art. Special floors for dancing were specially constructed at the orders of king in various places. For example a bouncing dance floor was built at lalbagh, Indore for the dancers which started bouncing when a particular number of couples danced on it. Kathak from an Indian dance changed to a Mughal dance form as far as the costume is considered. Colours like turquoise, green were used more. Dancers focused more on wearing angarkhas or frock like dresses with a head gear on top and a long dupatta. Heavy accessories were encouraged then. Head gears like chapka became popular. Muslim attire became a part of dance. There was a decline in the sanctity of kathak dance. Earlier kathak was a dance of god while now it was brought to the courts before the kings and became a mere source of entertainment. With the passage of time vocal instrumental and dance all this branches of music are not only inter related but also inter dependent.



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This era continued for a long time. Though the use of stage and light and costume increased during this era but simultaneously there was degradation in the form. This era also saw involvement of men in this art. Gradually men took the lead in this form and dominated this field for a long time. But the attire of male dancers was relatively simple and more focus was given on the number of ghungroos they wore.

The most important changes in lights, sets and costumes were seen in the last 20 years. This was mainly because the last 20 years saw a growth in an entirely new concept now known as choreography. As mentioned earlier kathak was a solo dance form but later it was changed to a group art. Due to relatively more number of people on stage, bigger stage and huge sets became a requirement. Since there were more number of people on stage now, various permutations and combinations as far as costumes were concerned became popular. For e.g. same costumes or two different coloured costumes for a group of dancers etc. costumes saw a drastic change. Indo western outfits came in fashion. Less and sophisticated jewellery and different kinds of hair dos came in picture. English colours were encouraged. In this new era where technological advancement is at its peak, how can culture be unaffected by it. Sets are slides shown on a large frame where moving pictures or even 3D sets can be established. Introduction of theme dances or dance ballet where a story is woven in a dance form demanded related costumes that would suit a particular theme. Presently lavish sets, beautiful visuals, use of efficient props, light effects and eye catching costumes are used more.

Kathak has come a long way now. Not only has there been a change in the form of this dance, the bol and recitals but also this dance has seen drastic changes as far as sets, lights and costumes are considered. When it comes to any performing art, visual effects contain their own weightage; similar is the case with kathak. It is cent per cent true that change is essential and it never stops. It may seem that kathak has seen a lot of change but it still hasn't reached saturation, there is a lot to come.