

CHAPTER – 5

JAIPUR GHARANA

Jaipur has been the center of art in Rajasthan, Jaipur has been the old connection with the origin of Kathak dance and today it is known as “Jaipur Gharana”. One of the prominent Gharana of Kathak, Jaipur Gharana has played an important role in getting Kathak dance to a respectable position. Dance and music in Rajasthan has always been accepted in the form of an ancestral tradition. Jaipur has the very glorious tradition of Kathak dance. The effort of Kathakas from Rajasthan in its development is very precious and they played the significant role in maintaining the traditions.

“ The families of musicians, signers, dancers formed the Gharana in Rajasthan. The family following the tradition of Kathak dance in Jaipur was named as Jaipur Gharana – Kathak. Jaipur Gharana does not represent one family, but it represents the hundreds of families of Kathak dancers scattered all over Rajasthan and across the country. In other words the Jaipur Gharana of Rajasthan is a compiled form of different musical tradition. The eminent Kathak Gurus and Maestros have always contributed in developing and promoting this art form. While keeping the tradition of Jaipur Gharana protected there is a huge contribution by Kathakacharya of Jaipur Gharana in its growth and publicity. According to large number of Kathak Gurus and the history of Jaipur Gharana the tradition is more than 500 years old. The authenticity of this has been accepted by many dance scholars.

The progress of classical dance and music started in 11th century in Rajasthan as it happened elsewhere in India. A Kachhawaha Prince of Narwar (Gwalior) established a state and made Amer / Amber (ancient name of Jaipur) its capital. In those times there was a tradition of giving state shelter to people like charans, dancers, musicians etc. They use to present their art in front of kings. Painter use to paint the important people or event, charans used to recite poems and sang heroic tales of kings and sang their ancestors pedigree, musicians and dancers, used to entertain by their performance and sculptorists used to make beautiful things for the royal family. Till the time of Samrat Akbar regime (1556-1605) there is a proof available of the existence of Jaipur Gharana. During Samvat Akbar’s time the composition of Raas association was first done in Vrindavan. The Raasleela was composed by a Kathak

dancer named Vallabhdas. Then Maharaja Mansingh of Jaipur sent Vallabhdas to Vrindavan from Amer in order to learn Raas dance.”¹

“ Maharaja Jai Singh (1699-1743), who is known as the architect of Jaipur (old name Jainagar) built city palace which had 36 Karkhane one of that department was Gunijankhana. In the history of Kathak dance, Jaipur Gharana, the role of the Gunijankhana of Jaipur darbar can not be forgotten, because this was the department which at that time was providing protection to singers, instrument players and dancers.

Today the artistes of Jaipur Gharana are world wide. Behind the excellence of this 19th century Kathak dance lies the practice of at least 500 years. Jain poet Bakht Ram Shah, the writer of famous Budhi Vilash (1670) has described interestingly the cities, palaces and different factories. Though there is no detail description of Gunijankhana, it is very clear that the royal patronage was provided to artistes, musicians, dancers, writers for their development. Among all departments the important departments were Gunijanlhana, Talimkhana, Patarkhana, Alamkhana.”²

“Approximately 180 Gunijan people were appointed in Gunijankhana in the beginning which included all class of singers, instrument players and dancers. At that time there was a green bungalow in city palace, where artistes use to perform dance and music, play instrument from morning to evening. Apart from this daily performances were arranged in the temple of Bhagwan Rajrajeshwar near the city palace from 6 to 9 in night. A manager was appointed to look after the Gunijkhana. The dancers used to perform in Govind Devji temple as per the directions given by the manager. It was necessary for the artistes to inform the manager of Gunijankhana, whenever they were invited to perform dance in other Raj Darbars. The development of Kathak dance was taking place through the medium of Gunijankhanas of Jaipur.

Gradually the number of artistes kept on increasing. At one time approximately 800 Gunijan which include singers, instrument players and dancers were working in Gunijankhanas under the protection of Maharaja Jai Singh, who will always be remembered as the custodian of art and culture.”³

¹ *Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 42*

² *Kathak Prasang, Jaipur Gharana, Dr. Sunil Kothari, Page no : 133, 134*

³ *Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 49*

Maharaja Madho Singhji (1880-1922) also contributed in the development of Gunijankhanas. In those times eight families were employed in Gunijankhanas from 15th century onwards, there was state protection given to singers, instrument players and dancers in the darbar of Jaipur and that is why a reference of court patronage given to art form like music and dance is found in many granths.

“ It is a fact that the Kathak community was living in the area of Churu (Shekhavati) Sujangarh of Rajasthan in 16th century. At the time of Akbar’s rule many artistes from Shekhawat; leaders were employed in Mughal darbar (court). When Rajput leaders came into Mughal darbar, they brought along with them few singers, instrument players and dancers and that is how they came into the contact of Mughal darbars. Since Mughal darbars were rich and cultured these artistes thought that this royal patronage will help in developing this art form.

But during the rule of Aurangzeb this art form was not supported or encouraged. In 1748 after the rule of Mohammad Shah Rangiley these artistes once again were in the search of state protection. In those times also these Kathak artistes maintained their tradition by running the Gharanas on the name of artistes (individual name). This proves that before naming the Gharana on place, the Gharana known on individual names was in existence.”⁴

“ It is mention that Jaipur Gharana had a relation with the Gharana of Anadi Maharaj Sawal Dasji (Shyamalaji). Earlier their Gharana was famous particularly in Rajasthan. Their disciples and relatives used to perform in many states. Slowly and gradually the artistes of this Gharana became famous and they started traveling to different states of India but few of them stayed and settled in different parts of Rajasthan. Those artistes who migrated to other places from Rajasthan continued to visit their regularly. According to Dr. Jaichanda Sharma the lineage of Sawal Das Gharana is as follow:

Jeevandas – Sawaldas (Shyamaldas) Dedraj, Mangtuji, Gopiram, Govindram, Anand Prakash, Janki Prasad, Chunnilal, Sablaji, Dudaji, Motiram, Hukmaji, Dularam, Biharilal, Kishanlal, Mohanlal, Sohanlal, Puranlal, Madanlal, Ramlal, Hariprasad, Ganeshilal, Hanuman Prasad, Omkar, Pandit Gopal Krishnakumar.”⁵

⁴ *Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 35*

⁵ *Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 51*

Many artistes belonging to this Gharana on the strength of their talent made large number of disciple, who subsequently ran their own Gharanas in their name. Among this the artistes who became famous were mainly Bhanuji, Prakashji, Janki Prasadji, Sukhdevji, Pandit Shankarlalji, Makhanlalji, Nathuramji and many others.

As the numbers of artistes were increasing in Rajasthan, they also started spreading in different states of India. The artistes of Jaipur Gharana promoted and publicized Kathak dance.

“ These people took their art from Kashmir in North to Kamataka in South and from Assam Bengal in East to Sindh in West. They took state shelter from the rulers of that time and started giving lessons in dance and music. It is found that many artistes of Jaipur Gharana also went to Kathiyawad in Jamnagar, Shikarpur in Sindh (Pakistan), Bhuj in Kutch and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh for promoting this art form. From the above description it is clear that Jaipur Gharana has played an important role in promoting and protecting Kathak dance. Most of Kathak scholars in India have been from Jaipur Gharana.”⁶

“ As mentioned earlier, the Kathakas had ample protection and means to practice and present their art in Gunijankhanas on Jaipur. After establishing the Gunijankhanas the kings promoted and supported this art form and it reached at its peak. During his patronage many artistes contributed to give respectable position to this art form. There is no documented history available in writing of Kathakas of Jaipur Gharana, but the most ancient name in living memory is of Bhanuji, who was a devotee of Lord Shiva. It is said that some saint taught him the Shiv Tandava. Subsequently nobody knew where the saint had gone away. Before leaving the saint blessed Bhanuji by saying that the publicity of these dance teaching will provide fame to his family. Bhanuji immersed himself in the practice of dance teaching, as per the advice given by the Saint. In Jaipur Gharana the name of Bhanuji’s Gharana is taken with respect. Bhanuji was there 5 generations ago and in whole of Jaipur City, he was looked upon with respect. Bhanuji used to present his art of dancing regularly at the temple of Govindji and at the palace of Jaipur Maharaja on the occasion of big festivals. He was also sometimes invited in the court of other rulers.

⁶ *Kathak Nritya Parampara – Dr. Prem Dave, Page no : 54*

Bhanuji had a son named Malluji. Bhanuji taught his knowledge of Shvia Tandav to Malluji. Malluji along with his father used to earn his living by dancing in the temples by roaming from village to village, city to city. Malluji had three sons – Luluji, Motiji and Kanhaji. All three got their training of dance from their father. Kanhaji went to Vrindavan to learn about Krishna Raas Leelas and thus blended the essence of Lasya anga along with the Tandava.”⁷

Luluji had a son named Gopalji, Kanhaji had two sons named Gidhaji and Sahjaji. Kanhaji taught Tandav anga to Gidhaji and Lasya anga to Sahjaji. Gidhaji had five sons: Puranji, Nathuji, Bhimaji, Ramuji and Dulhaji. Out of five only Dulhaji came to Jaipur and lived there, all the others remained in the village. Dulhaji had same command over both Tandava and Lasya anga in Kathak dance. Dulhaji became, so famous in Jaipur due to his artistic talent that learned people started calling him Girdahriji instead of Dulhaji. Gopalji was blessed with brilliant sons Shankarlal, Shivilal, Pannalal and Laxman Prasad, who had a complete command over singing instrument playing and dancing, Shankarlalji had a son named Badriprasad. Gopalji’s second son Shivilalji had no child. Gopalji’s third son Pannalal also had no child, Gopalji’s fourth son Laxmanprasadji had a son named Kishanlalji who further had two sons named Pushkar Raj and Gokul Chand respectively.

“ From the records of Gunijankhana during the rule of Swai Madho Singh – II (1880-1922), 10 male dancers were working. Apart from them 48 singers and female dancers were also appointed in the court. 20 sarangi players and 16 pakhawaj players were there for accompaniment with Kathak dance. Before the states got integrated the names of the dancers, who were appointed in Gunijankhanas were Shyamlalji and his son. Natthulaji, Badriprasad, Pandit Chunnilalji, Pandit Harihar Prasadji, Pandit Hanuman Prasad, Pandit Narayanprasad and the female dancers were Guahar Jaan, Kamar Jaan, Sambhar Ki Sargar, her daughter Kamla, Dhanni Bai, Ratan and Maina. These artistes were also invited in other darbars to perform. Some of these artistes started teaching music and dance in Sangeet Shalas and some were employed in radio stations because after the states were integrated the financial assistance given to these artistes by these states was stopped and they were forced to think about their livelihood.”⁸

⁷ *Kathak Prasang, Jaipur Gharana, Dr. Sunil Kothari, Page no : 136*

⁸ *Kathak Prasang, Jaipur Gharana, Dr. Sunil Kothari, Page no : 137*

History mentioned above brings us very near to the present century. Shri Harihar Prasad and Shri Hanuman Prasad, who were employed in Gunijankhana were the sons of Shri Girdhariji, who was settled in Jaipur. Both of them were the artistes of highest caliber apart from being excellent teachers and scholars. Pandit Harihar Prasadji became famous for his Akashiki Chari and Pandit Hanuman Prasadji for his Lasya Anga.

Whenever they performed together their performance use to be blend of Tandava and Lasya aspects of dance. They were popularly known as “Devpari Ka Joda” because of their artistic specialty.

“ Pandit Hariprasadji had no child. Pandit Hanuman Prasadji had 3 sons: (1) Shri Mohanlalji (2) Pandit Chiranjilalji and (3) Pandit Narayanprasadji. Pandit Mohanlalji besides being a dancer was also a good signer. He possessed the good knowledge of Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Thumri and used to perform on stage. For few years Pandit Chiranjilal and Pandit Narayan Prasad both used to teach Kathak Dance at Gandharva Mahavidyalay in Delhi. The elder son of Pandit Narayan Prasadji, Shri Charan Girdhar “Chand” and the younger son Late Shri Tejprakash Tulsii have also contributed to keep the prestige of Jaipur Gharana. Cousin brothers of Pandit Harihar Prasad, Pandit Hanuman Prasad, Pandit Shyamal, Pandit Durgaprasad, Pandit Chunnilal and Goverdhanji were dancers of high merit. They all got their dancer education from Guru Shankarlalji who was also a good signer along with dancer of high merit.

Sons of Pandit Chunnilalji, Pandit Jailalji and Pandit Sundar Prasadji contributed in field of Kathak dance to some extent. They brought back the prestige and dignity of Jaipur Gharana, Kathak.

Pandit Jailalji’s son Shri Ram Gopal and daughter Jai Kumari earned a name in this artistic area. There is not much of material available about Pandit Shyamalji but his son Shivrulal and son-in-law Pandit Narayan Prasad was good musician. Pandit Durga Prasadji was trained by his maternal uncle Nayak Natthulal. Khemchand Prakash son of Pandit Govardhan earned his name as a music director in film industry. Guni Gandharva Pandit Laxman Prasad Jaipurwale was a singer of high merit, who was son-in-law of Badriparasad of Khoodi village.”⁹

⁹ *Kathak Prasang, Jaipur Gharana, Dr. Sunil Kothari, Page no : 137*

As mentioned earlier hundreds of families of Kathakas were living in Rajasthan and use to run the Gharanas in their own name out of these Gharanas, few are considered as important one, and named Gharana is addressed as a branch. Some sub branches of the main five branches illustrated in the book named “Kathak Dance” has come into limelight. Whose successors are also today famous artistes of Kathak dance.