

# CLASSICAL KATHAK DANCE

by

MANJARI CHATURVEDI

Kathak Danseuse of Lucknow Gharana

The Kathak dance form of India is the magnificent heritage of Avadh Culture of North India. The Kathak dance reflects a story telling form and owes its evolution from the ancient temples of North India to the royal courts of Avadh. Kathak was initiated and nurtured in the temple environment and was primarily used as a medium for worship (aradhana), namely communicating with the Almighty. With the advent of Muslim cultural ethos during the Mughal period, Kathak was transformed into a form, which pervaded the court of Muslim rulers where it further evolved as form of entertainment from its original form of a medium of devotion.

Kathak is a unique form, which covers two distinctive styles - the devotional Temple Kathak and the exotic and dazzling Darbari Kathak. The Darbari Kathak, characterized by lovely costumes and Persian influence was patronized in the opulent Darbars of cultured Nawab Wazirs of Avadh. The Kathak of Lucknow Gharana has become famous for its delicate nuances of expressiveness, alluring grace in movements, eloquent gat bhav and its unique abhinaya (expressions) to the accompaniment of lilting thumri's, ghazals and holis.

Kathak is a living tradition which conveys the rich heritage of poetry, literature, mythology, philosophy and the spiritual and emotional thoughts.

The Indian Dance has been aptly described as "the expression of all the souls, which are in torment about the separation of Man from God symbolized as Radha from Krishna". Raas Lila tradition of Kathak is based on the divine love of Radha and Lord Krishna - depicting the union of Soul with the Almighty.

The Kathak dancers learn to master the intricacies of rhythm and speed. The dancer translates the sound of percussion instruments with the dynamic and complicated patterns of feet, the linear, angular and circular movements of hand and body.

## **MANJARI**

Manjari Chaturvedi, Kathak danseuse of the Lucknow Gharana, is imaginative with a futuristic outlook and possesses the ability to effectively communicate the nuances of dance. Manjari amalgamates various elements of music to produce harmonious body language and has the ability to add subtle innovations to the Kathak repertoire. She improvises during the complex and highly emotive Hindustani classical music. Each of her presentation tends to be unique where Manjari is in complete unison with the theme of music. Her dance form spans from earthly romance of Hindi folk to the evolved Sufi imagery of love in Persian poetry, from a beloved in flesh and blood to the abstract presence of the Almighty, from a form to formlessness.

Manjari is devoted to making Kathak dance form more audience friendly, while preserving the tenets of the classical temple and darbari forms. Manjari, with her enchanting stage presence has earned acclamation for her intense, sensitive and graceful Kathak dance presentations. In her creative dance presentations Manjari skillfully integrates the elements of Awadhi cultural ethos of the contemporary period. Her efforts to promote tourism are appreciated by a large foreign audience due to her ability to explain the intricacies of Kathak in fluent English. Manjari has performed extensively for over a decade at both the national and International Cultural Festivals.

Manjari, in her peerless journey, blended her dance with diverse cross cultural music ...kathak to the haunting music of Rajasthan...lilting music of Kashmir...Qawwalli from Awadh...spiritual music of Bulleh Shah of Punjab...folk music of Turkmenistan... Kyrgyzstan and spiritual music of Iran. With her own efforts Manjari has made the Kathak form richer by adding new dimensions to the form with varying music...a wide repertoire... an extraordinary effort for a young classical dancer.

Manjari has grown up in the Awadh cultural milieu, imbibing the elements of Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb in the association of various artistes and intellectuals. The finesse in her Kathak dance is a consequence of the cultural impact of Lucknow and the same is reflected in her dance. A postgraduate in Environmental Sciences, Manjari blends the outlook and sensitivity to portray the complexity of modern cultural ethos. For over a decade Manjari has tirelessly devoted herself to learning classical Kathak dance of Lucknow Gharana under the guru-shishya tradition from Guru Pandit Arjun Mishra. The detailing of abhinaya in her style is due to her association with Smt. Kalanidhi Narayan. In her efforts to elevate Kathak with selected elements of other dance forms, Manjari worked at Nrityagaram in Bangalore in association with Guru Protima Bedi and Guru Kumudini Lakhia.

MANJARI CHATURVEDI  
Mobile – 91-9810082340  
[www.manjarisufikathak.com](http://www.manjarisufikathak.com)  
[manjarisufikathak@rediffmail.com](mailto:manjarisufikathak@rediffmail.com)