

# Design and Development of Practice Wear for Kathak Dance Rehearsals and Regular Classes

Aadya Katte<sup>1</sup>, Nagaveni K<sup>2</sup>

*1 Student, B. Des in Fashion Design, M S Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences*

*2 Assistant. Professor, B. Des in Fashion Design, M S Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences*

**Abstract** — *This study investigates the design and creation of practice attire for Kathak dance utilizing three distinct fabrics: cotton, mul Chanderi, and bamboo. Kathak is an Indian classical dance style that is very expressive and requires strong footwork, quick spins, smooth hand movements, and long practice sessions. Dancers often find that the practice wear they already own is uncomfortable, too tight, and not good for repeated movement, especially when it's humid. This study employs ethnographic survey results, fabric analysis, and prototype creation to develop functional practice attire that facilitates movement, ensures comfort, and reflects cultural aesthetics. The study finds that dancers need clothes that are breathable, flexible, and light so they can practice easily. Three prototypes were made and compared based on how comfortable, drapey, mobile, and good they were for Kathak practice. The results indicate that fabric selection significantly influences rehearsal performance, and that a harmonious balance among tradition, functionality, and aesthetic appeal is crucial in dancewear design.*

**Index Terms**—*Kathak, practice wear, cotton, mul Chanderi, bamboo fabric, dancewear, prototype development.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Kathak is one of India's most important classical dance styles. It is known for its complicated footwork, expressive gestures, fast spins, and elegant presentation. It is a type of dance that requires both technical skill and the ability to keep going and be comfortable while practicing. Unlike performance costumes, practice clothes need to be able to handle repeated movement, soak up sweat, be flexible, and be easy to wear. Because of this, making clothes that are good for rehearsals is an important area of study in fashion and textile design.

For centuries, audiences have been enthralled with the captivating combination of rhythmic precision, storytelling grace, and cultural syncretism that characterizes Kathak, one of India's eight highly regarded classical dance forms. It has its origins in

northern areas like Uttar Pradesh and can be traced back to the ancient kathakas, who were wandering storytellers and dancers in Hindu temples who used expressive gestures and deft footwork to weave devotional tales. The fluid spins (chakkars), quick tatkar (footwork), and hastas (hand poses) that characterize the form today were developed under Mughal patronage starting in the 16th century, fusing Persian influences with native customs. By institutionalizing its three gharanas—Lucknow's narrative elegance, Banaras' fervent devotion, and Jaipur's angular percussion—and adapting it to international stages, post-independence revival efforts elevated Kathak to the status of a national symbol.

Fundamentally, Kathak requires exceptional physicality during rehearsals, where dancers devote five to twenty hours a week to perfecting techniques that test their mobility and endurance. Practice sessions in cities like Bengaluru show a thriving community of intermediate students with two to five years of experience navigating stuffy studios while dealing with ongoing clothing issues. The average level of comfort for current practice wear, which is typically repurposed churidar-anarkali sets made of 100% cotton from websites like Myntra, is moderate (3.2/5 rating among dancers surveyed). Fabric binding ankles during tatkar, inadequate flaring for chakkars (rated 2.8/5), excessive perspiration in non-wicking materials, and slips interfering with the placement of ghungroo (ankle bell) are common complaints. In addition to impeding technique, 60% of practitioners report blisters, muscle strains, and fabric tears as a result of these problems.

The study also links fashion design to the needs of dance practice, showing how new textiles can help support cultural art forms. Kathak practice wear isn't just clothing; it's also about making it easier to move, keeping grace, and making the dancer's learning and

rehearsal experience better. This makes the subject relevant to both fashion design and cultural studies.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review for this study encompasses three primary domains: the prerequisites of Kathak dance, the functionality of practice attire, and the selection of fabrics for performance-oriented garments. Existing literature on Indian classical dance costume underscores that attire must facilitate movement while embodying cultural identity. Kathak, in particular, needs clothes that let you move freely so you can spin, do footwork, and make expressive hand gestures. Nonetheless, the majority of current studies concentrate on performance costumes rather than rehearsal attire, resulting in a deficiency in research.

Research on dancewear and ergonomics indicates that the selection of fabric directly affects comfort, mobility, and endurance. Breathable fabrics are important because dancers often practice for long periods of time, and too much heat or sweat can make it hard to focus and move around.

The properties of stretch and drape are also essential factors, particularly for clothing items that need to follow body movements without hampering their actions. The latter is particularly true for the dance form of Kathak.

## III. PROCEEDURE

The research process went through four main phases: researching and planning, design development, prototyping, and testing. First of all, we had to understand movement restrictions in the practice of Kathak dance and find out the problems with current practice wear. An ethnographic survey was conducted among the dancers of Kathak to obtain information concerning their comfort and preferences, restriction of movements while wearing practice clothes, and fabric preference.

In the second phase, we focused on selecting fabrics for garment designing. As a result of the previous phase, three types of fabric were selected as prototypes: cotton, mul Chanderi, and bamboo. They were chosen because of three concepts which reflect the needs of the dancers: basic comfort, elegance of Indian culture, and performance in modern

conditions. Fabric boards, mood boards, and concept sketches were created.

In the final phase, the prototyping itself took place. We developed three designs of practice costume that differed according to the selected fabric. Silhouette, ease of movements, fitting, neckline, sleeves, flare, and overall comfort were taken into account in order to make the garment suitable for regular classes. In addition, the garment was designed for practicing Kathak in class and not for performance on the stage.

The testing phase involved the evaluation process. Prototypes were evaluated based on factors such as fabric feel, ease of movement, aesthetics, and comfort while dancing. Information collected from dancers on the types of fabric that performed well for practice was utilized in order to know how to develop the garment further.

## IV. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Design development of garments for Kathak dancers involved determining the needs of the dancers. Since the dance style involved frequent movements, garments had to be light and comfortable. Design elements like silhouettes included traditional elements but in a contemporary style like anarkali, churidar and flare silhouettes that allowed movement.

The prototype was done using cotton. This choice of material was guided by the fact that the dance required lightweight materials. In addition, it is affordable and common in dance wear.



Fig1 - Concept sketches Developed for Cotton Fabric

However, design development involved aesthetic considerations because practice wear should still be able to reflect the culture of the dance style. Decorations like details and lines were chosen because they gave minimal interference with

movement unlike other decorations. The design development thus balanced between aesthetics and functionality.

Finally, the designs of the garments were drawn. This decision was made following the assessment of visual possibilities and practical applications of each fabric used. The designs were later developed for testing.

## V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The need for good Kathak practice wear was proven to be correlated with movement requirements, comfort, and fabric qualities. The need of the dancers is in clothes that would enable foot work, pirouettes, movements of hands, and long hours of exercise without discomfort. Practice wears were shown to often not be sufficient as the material may be either too heavy, hot, or tight.

Among the three studied materials, cotton proved to be the most practical and comfortable, which is good for everyday wear. It enables breathability and easy care, thus being a great choice for both students and practitioners.

As shown by the research, there is no ideal fabric as each one has its strong sides. Cotton works best for simple practice wear, gracefulness, and tradition while synthetic materials are great for practical purposes.

It can be said that practice wear deserves special attention and should not be neglected when creating outfits for performances. Good practice wear is helpful for training as it allows focusing on the techniques of dancing and not on discomfort.

## VI. CONCLUSION

It is evident that Kathak practice wear design requires attention in terms of textile, body motion, and comfort. With the help of 4 different prototypes created out of cotton fabrics, it becomes apparent that practice wear is not only possible but also culturally relevant. Every fabric used brings something unique into its garment and allows creating practice wear for different occasions.

The cotton cloth prototype became the most effective and reliable choice as an outfit for Kathak practice. The breathable nature, comfortable feel,

and convenient washing process make cotton the perfect material for rehearsals where comfort and ease of movement play a significant role. By meeting the basic requirements of a dancer through improved ventilation and decreased irritation caused by repetitive movements, this cloth was able to meet certain criteria well. Even though it may lack the aesthetic appeal and moisture regulation features that can be observed in some other fabrics, the affordable price and commonality of cotton make it highly relevant for this context.

At the same time, there is a need to emphasize that it was important to approach the research and designing of practice wear separately from designing rehearsal clothes. In other words, performance clothes should look beautiful; however, dancers require special attention in regard to comfortable garments, which would allow them moving freely.

In this respect, the results obtained during the research can be considered valuable contributions to fashion design as the whole sphere of activity since they link textile choice with practice requirements. At the same time, they offer new directions for further research and exploration in the sphere of designing clothes for Indian classical dance.

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