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### Findings

The thesis titled 'Bodies in Motion: Performer, Performance and Performativity in Kathak' is a research divided into 6 chapters, including an introduction and conclusion, all of which have foregrounded the body of a kathak dancer as the sight (visual appreciation), site (location) and cite (point of reference) of cultural narratives to be constructed. With this thought in mind, the research explores the individuality of bodily expression of the dancer vis a vis the systematised comprehension of the dance. The work therefore chooses to look at the history of kathak from multiple entry points of enquiry to challenge the normative ideas of the form that have been established through an act of repetition and reinforcement. Besides the introductory and conclusive chapter, the other 4 chapters address the relationship of kinaesthetic freedom of expression of the dancer versus institutional definitions of it from the lens of sartorial choices, embodiment and performance of gender identity, the question of dis-ability, performing the nation/for the nation.

The introduction lays the foundation for the definition of a classical body in cultural practices that idealises a discipline specific normative corporeality through Chris Shilling's reading of cultural historiographies. Using this as the starting point of enquiry, my research pulls out narratives of corporeal and somatic autonomy practiced by kathak dancers by addressing their performance and pedagogic choices in the field. However, before delving into the non-normative, almost daring, alternatives undertaken by the dancers, the introduction locates the role of memory in *riyaz*, which is a repeated set of exercises designed to embody the semiosis of the form such that a conscious separation of the body of the performer and the language of the discourse is nearly impossible. Through this, the introduction establishes how institutionally imposed ritualistic practices have decreased the erstwhile semiotic malleability in the form (improvisation), consequently idealising the kathak dancer as an already existing being (especially as a performer) than an individual in the act of becoming. It is, in fact, this journey of becoming a kathak dancer who is in a conversation with the form as also with oneself that interests my thesis to look for instances of ruptures, slippages, absences that asserts subjectivity of the form and its practitioner. The introduction designs the ground for the kathak dancer to be interacted with as a non-normative and at times even subversive subject.

For my research, I interviewed 25 dancers and dance historians in order to create trace the mutations in kathak through instances that iterate non-normative attributes of the dance and thus problematise the institutionalised definition of it as a classical performing arts practice.

The first chapter is titled 'The Second Skin: Sartorial Choices and Performance in Kathak' which establishes costume as visual feature in a performing arts practice, which carries with it a presupposed appearance that guarantees the intention of the composition. The chapter addresses factors like space of practice and performance, affective interaction with the audience and other environmental conditions all of which are tied to the idea of repeatability

of a costume. Through this line of thought, the question that is addressed is the co-dependent nature of the form and the materiality of the costume donned by the performer. Following this, the second chapter titled 'Palta' reiterates Judith Butler's idea of a norm being subtly reminded by emphasising on the "lack" that the gendered body carries with it and with what it is expected to be. This sense of submission of the body to project a performative being is addressed as a dissociation with oneself through spiritual advancement and intellectualisation of the classical dance form. The third chapter 'Dancers with Disability: Making Meaning through Movement and Training the Body' through several case studies and interviews undertaken understands the manner in which a dancer with disability chooses to master a fraction of the form which their corporeal ability enables them to secure. The fourth and the final chapter titled 'Dancing (for) the (Inter)National Stage' looks at Homi K Bhabha's idea of the location of culture to understand the placement of kathak dancers vis a vis the State cultural ties that determine the style of kathak that has been practiced, acknowledged and promoted.

Though these chapters appear to be discrete, what ties them together is the body of the kathak dancer as an active agent of the palimpsestic cultural signifiers it shares through the signs that are attached with it, through means of costume, gendered identity, dis-ability and cultural/national identity. My thesis makes a humble endeavour to foreground disruptions in the nearly uniform, linear definition of what kathak is and who the kathak body is. The faultlines exposed through the research is a mere attempt at demystifying the classical form to celebrate the plurality and the somatic materiality of the kathak body as opposed to it being a malleable agent of a canonical cultural practice.

To conclude, a further scope of study in discursively engaging with a kathak body in a postmodern world could be explored through an evolutionary analysis of its representation on visual and digital platforms. This study can find its stretches from the early Indian paintings that depict kathak repertoires as analysed by Vincent A Smith and Milo Cleaveland Beach, to Arshiya Sethi's study of the kathak dance on camera, up to Chris Shilling's reading of an uncertain, digitally captured body of a performer that exceeds the bounds of tangential control that dance has otherwise seemingly offered. The bridging though between these two ends of the study can perhaps locate its hypothesis by discrediting the dancer's body as a blank screen. The thesis thus suggests, that despite the corporeal control institutionally imposed on the dance body, it escapes regularity to emerge as a non-normative expression in some capacity or the other. Hence a reading of Kathak from a post-technological perspective must come with an appreciation of the inevitable evasiveness of the moving body.