

INDIAN DANCING ARTS: CHANGING THE NORMS THROUGH THE TIMES AND PLACES.

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Globalization is very old concept that took place in ancient age with common human interactions and exchanges through colonizing. Colonization resulted in increasing in knowledge, wealth, prosperity and cultural exchanges. Theatrical arts of any country are the prime mediums which tell itself about their history, rituals, faiths and other cultural concept. Theatrical developments in all around the world happened to the specific intentions to be served. According to *Natyashastra*; the oldest legend, dramatic arts are the easiest way to make people learned and educated even those who are dumb. Sometimes it is even considered as 'therapy'.

The dancing arts have religious value in India since ancient ages as it has the origin from Vedas. According to *Natyashastra*, it was created as the substitute of the four Vedas and it is said that it has all the valuable moral lessons of *rigveda*, *yajurveda*, *samveda*, and *Atharvaveda*; called as fifth veda, the '*Natyaveda*'. The dancing arts were created to the substitute for healthy entertainment and used to present in the temples since ancient ages during the worshipping of Gods and sometimes in front of the public during any religious ritualistic ceremony.

India has gone through many social, political and economical upheavals due to the series of wars, attacks, loots and a long period of dependence. The art-culture of India, whether it was dance, music or any other art, has gone through severe metamorphosis. Researcher is aimed to discuss the transformations in Indian traditional dancing during its dependent period and its development after freedom, and that how globalizing of traditional dance art helped dancers and other people in their growth. The history of India is full of scars and impressions. The periods of Mughal Empire and British reign were a dark period for Indian arts. So no specific developments were noted in the field of Indian dances. Muslim community did not have any faith in 'Idolatry', so the dance that was presented in front of Idols was considered 'immoral' by them. Holy Indian dancing faced a long period of ban due to orthodox beliefs of Muslim empires. The only dance that was adapted and nurtured in the Mughal Empire was -Kathak. Kathak was belonged to the northern region of India where the impact of Mughal reign was seemed the most. The

dance form dragged out to the royal court and to shahi haram from the holy place of temples and was subjected to modification according to their wishes. Kathak dancers, tabla players and singers were being nurtured and protected in their reign. Some notable developments were made during this period such as, 'salami' replaced the 'pranam' that was being used to offer to the God, and now it addressed to the court. In Kathak dance, usually *katha* or stories about the divine love of Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha are told. It is said that according to court's preferences the element of eroticism was added in the style of presenting these stories. During this period the dress-code of kathak; ghagra, choli and dupatta was replaced to Anarkali kurta with a short koti, a cap with dupatta and chuddidar leggings. These transformations present the example of fittest to the survival in the cultural world.

Here in South, people started to restrict their women in getting involved in holy temple dancing during the time of dependency. In order to survive, the temple dancing art was shifted in the hands of low born, low educated rustic people and accordingly degraded in its standards. These women were addressed as *Devdasi*-s by the contemporary society. According to their mythical faiths, these women were got married to the God and they used to devote their lives in the service of Gods in temple. Dancing for the Gods was the way to show their devotion for their God husband. During the early period of East India Company these women were called as 'nautch girls'. William Daniel, the famous painter who depicted scenes of Indian life, recounts in his memoir: "nothing can exceed the transcendent beauty, both in form and lineament, of these degraded women whose lives are abandoned as their persons are frequently enchanting" (From Nautch to Nritya). Their enchantment could not succeed to gain sympathy of upper class. Eventually corruption entered and these low born and powerless women of *Devdasi* community were started to being used for carnal pleasures by the priests and other influential people of society and eventually they earned a bad reputation. Tagore showed his disliking about their nasty manners and says that "the heavy cumbersome petticoats of Indian dancing girls, worn over their tight pyjamas, in the Mahmedan fasion, has always offended my taste. . .then there is their chewing of pan, their badinage with their attendants, their way of making eyes,- all nasty, not from the moral but from the aesthetic point of view . . ." (*Indian Modern Dance Feminism and Transnationalism*). The societal performances of *devdasi*-s were organized by their patrons "... who maintained the dancing girls (as concubines) and their bands of musicians" (*The Hindu Temple Dancer: Prostitute or Nun?* 74). This dance art was even addressed as the art of prostitutes that time. The colonial government eventually started the 'anti-nautch' movement for abolishing the *devdasi* custom. This movement was

spearheaded under Dr. Muthu Laxmi Reddy. The contemporary society was divided in two groups; one who wants to abolish the dance with nautch girls and the other wants to save and revive the temple dance art. The efforts for saving the dance art were being ignited in all over the India in 1911 when anti-nautch bill was passed.

The great lawyer, freedom fighter and socialist Mr. E. K. Ayyer found that the dance art of *devdasi*-s is pure and has ancient root origins and needed to be saved. He took a bold step and started to learn Bharatnatyam. He even performed the dance in female costumes too. Many socialists and reformers followed him and came forward with their contribution. "Rabindranath Tagore took the first step on the education level when he introduced dance in the syllabus of 'Shantiniketan' in 1917 then poet Narayan Menon Vallathol started institutions for Kathakali in 1930; and Rukmini Devi for Bharatnatyam in 1936. In 1938, Sadhana Bose started a dance school. Uday Shanker has a school in 1939; Madame Menaka established her school in 1941" (*Rabindra Nritya: The Cultural and Artistic Essence of Tagore's Inimitable Efforts in Dance Choreography*).

Famous Odissi dancer Sharon Lowen says, "Dance traditions are organic: living, growing and changing to remain healthy" (Challenges for classical Indian dance). In order to reestablish its reputation and to make it appropriate for educational class people, the ancient Sanskrit traditions were reemployed in the dance and their traditional way of presenting *margam* was revived. This process is addressed as 'Sanskritization' by the scholars. To spread the awareness of this newly revived 'child of Vedas'; it was one of the most important steps to make people known about it. E. K. Ayyer initiated the concept of lecture demonstrations along with performances to spread the knowledge about it and many big names joined the journey and the process of Indian dancing started going global.

Janet O Jashua tells on the account of "The Civil and Military Gazette", 1938 that "Jewish American dancer Ragini Devi's first international tours of classical Indian dance forms in 1937 and 1938 consisted of lecture demonstrations as well as concerts" (At Home in the World?). Some dancers and practitioners designed their own lectures, choreographed some of religious songs and translated them into English to approach a large size of audience. Janet tells about the framework of lecture demonstration and says that it works on two thought systems, "an English framework and a South Indian choreographic one. The explanation of *mudras* in succession interprets the "Eastern" choreographic through the "Western" linguistic system. The English-language epistemology thereby emerges as the means through which the audience finds the choreography intelligible" (177). Dominique, a French research scholar in Indian classical dances, says that the link between Rukmini

Devi and Anna Pavlova and the early tours of Uday Shanker to the Europe and France, played a great role in making the dance art of India universal. He says further that “the tours outside India by the masters, gurus and exponents gave a wider, yet elitist audience to the reconstructed or revived art”. Globalization brings multiple opportunities to the practitioners of dances and opportunities come with challenges.

“The changing values and stress of materialism, globalization and disparity of social injustice have resulted in increased restlessness. Urban audiences have shorter attention spans and increasingly would prefer a 45 minute “fast food” sampler of a dance program, rather than patiently digest an elegantly presented full course presentation of two to three hours” (Sharon Lowel). Other than patience that demands time, audience have low toleration for the classical taste and for the dancers who elegantly dressed in traditional costume, and show up for divine ‘prastuti’; rather they would prefer to attend a hip hop, salsa or any bollywood concerts which provide sufficient sensual treats to their eyes and minds. Parsvnath, a sponsor located in Dubai says, “Performing arts, like classical dances attracts few people and this is the main reason why most companies shy away from sponsoring such events” (Winter Steps: Indian Dance Going Global). To increase the audience companies usually arrange program on invitation based and not ticket based. This resulted in low amount of monetary help for the dancers and do not provide the enough wealth that is necessary to encourage an artist. Thus new generation do not see a safe future in the dance field. Established dancers like to make a career in other fields also side by side to maintain the flow of currency that is needed to run their dance career and their families too. This diverted attention harms the traditional wayof teaching and learning the traditional Indian dancing art. Classical dances need 6 to 10 years of dedicated learning and lifelong practice to understand it properly; it is considered as *Nritya-Sadhna* in India, but in this age of rapid growth; parents, students and even teachers have low patience level for learning and teaching. Parents do not take dance education seriously and take it as extracurricular activity for their kids. Degree, diploma or certificates are more important than real knowledge. Nowshort term diplomas are available; parents do not want to wait for their ward to become trained dancers and want see their child performing on the stage as soon as possible. This lack of patience has affected the traditional Guru-Shishya parampara that demands the one to one teaching over a lengthy period of time and allows the dance *guru* to totally mentor the development of shishya. This resulted in low quality of teaching as well.

The gift of twenty first century, social media platform that is the largest available medium to show up in this world scenario, is easily available to everyone to promote themselves whether a qualified dancer or a newly learned attempter. The easily availability of social stage through You Tube, Google or Face book somehow helped in promoting the brand value of dancers whereas degrade the value of traditional art as well. This commercialization of dancing brought many pigeons out of its hat. One of them is the 'taste of fame' and wanting to have treatment like a celebrity. Now dance practitioners want to be in public eyes more than before and try new variations to attract more attention of audience. Many new style of dancing is resulted through experimenting and working on new variations. The next product of this series is 'fusion-style'.

"Globalization as social phenomena highlights the blurring of boundaries of culture and nation. Consequently, fusion manifests as a choreographic tool, denoting a cultural blend of disparate elements. Depending on artistic choices, new practices, such as Flamenco Natyam, Tap Natyam and Kathak-Tap to name just few have emerged out of hybridization of dance forms" (Classical Dance takes a Global spin in the world). The concept of fusion has started with idea of healthy experimentation. In India it was an old concept and tried through '*Jugalbandi*' from ancient times. Some common fusions of classical dances are Kathak-Bharatnatyam, Kathak-Kathakali, Kathakali Mohiniattam, Bharatnatyam Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam Bharatnatyam and Bharatnatyam Odisi. Some choreographers take themes of other literature and present it in their form. Bangalore based famous kathakali exponent Mr. Prabal Gupta shares his experiences while performing on Shakespeare's Cleopatra and says "Cleopatra was more challenging because of her complex character" and that he has to work for eight months for researching and a month of choreographing. He says that "I don't think that creative work can be crystallized and made so rigid. There's always scope to improvise and find newer spaces and nuances". Some of the real dedicated guru-s are here who deals with fusion very elegantly and try to maintain the real essence of both elements. Mysore based Bharatnatyam dance Guru, Shantla Award winner, Mrs. Nadini Eswer talks about her experience of performing Shakespeare's Sonnet in Bharatnatyam style in her book *Nartana* and says, "Language is not a barrier for dance". She further says that "True enjoyment of the poem of any language is possible through voice expression 'vachika', the gestural and body movements 'Angika' the representation of the emotions "Satvika"/ and lastly through the costume "Aharya"/. designed to suit both Indian way and to reflect the nationality of the poem to which it belongs". (Eswer 256). She studied and searched for appropriate raga for emotional support; put in through the use of flute and used the '*Vachika Abhinaya*' technique for

voice expression. Working on fusion provides the opportunity to the masters /*Guru-s* to use their creativity through their own innovative approach.

Some of the great dancers try to create new forms of dances through using fusion techniques. Rabindranath Tagore created a unique dance *rabindra-nrtiya* in early twentieth century. His method of applying elements from different dance forms is compared with Darwin's method of selection by Utpal Banerjee. Uday Shanker is the unforgettable name in this series; he was a well learned dancer of classical forms and worked on fusion of multiple forms. His style generally known as contemporary style and was vastly used in Bollywood movies in the early decades of twentieth century. Bollywood dancing put a great example of global fusion and provides immense freedom and large platform for the dance lovers and creators as well.

Globalizing the art brings opportunity for learning new things with a challenge of maintaining its originality. There are many choreographers and dancers who put great deal of time and hardly earned knowledge in creating exclusive item, and they want it to be known as their creation. The globalization confers a huge scale of social networks implies a sharing of creation that help the creators to spread out their work with a chance of being used it without their concern. Who owns a dance? This question raised by Pujita Krishna (Can dance be protected from plagiarism?). "When dancers try to create theme based ballets, which may cater to a wider audience and have a wider appeal, there is the fear of it being replicated" (Winter Steps: Indian dance going global). Geeta Chandran a leading Bharatnatyam dancer says, "There is no IPR protection for any new dance dramas. A theme based drama can be easily copied and performed in any part of the world. Even if dancers want to popularize the art through VCD's, there is a need to have more stringent copyright protection" (Winter Steps: Indian dance going global). According to the Indian Copyright act 1957, in the section 2(h), ballet dances are the part of dramatic works. This act provides protection to a creator if their creations are reproduced without their consent (Pujita Krishna). Now many artists are trying to get copyright protection for their unique creations, but World Wide Web is such a big station that it is not easy to have an eye for. They need to create an intricate jargon.

In 1928, Rudolf Laban from Germany came up with a 'notation system' that described and analysed movement and helped document dances (Pujita Krishna). Music field has specific notation system for documenting their lyrics. Dr. Jayaprada Rammurthy who is senior flautist and studied copyright laws, seeks solution in developing notation system for the dance field also. Thus the journey of Indian classical dance after its rebirth is just started

and there is long way to go. Many milestones are achieved and many are yet to face. As Keats says that “truth is beauty and beauty truth”, art is beautiful when it is pure, true and creative not inspired (or pirated?).

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