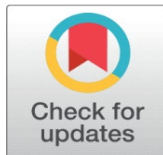
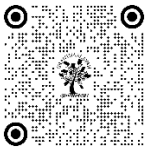


PROGRESSIVE APPROACHES TO DANCE EDUCATION: ADVANCEMENTS IN TEACHING METHODS

Geeta Bhatt ¹✉

¹ PhD Scholar, School of Performing Arts, World University of Design, Rajiv Gandhi education City, Haryana, India



Corresponding Author

Geeta Bhatt, geeta.bhatt@wud.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the dynamic landscape of classical dance education in India, emphasizing the fusion of tradition and innovation to safeguard cultural heritage. It investigates the pivotal role of teachers in shaping students' artistic development through the revered guru-shishya relationship. By integrating values, cultural immersion, and creativity into teaching methodologies, the paper elucidates how holistic approaches can enhance student engagement and performance. Additionally, it examines future strategies such as leveraging technology, fostering collaboration, and promoting cross-cultural exchange to enrich classical dance education. Ultimately, the paper underscores the imperative of revitalizing classical dance teaching methods to uphold cultural legacy, foster artistic excellence, and cultivate a new generation of dancers deeply rooted in classical Indian traditions.

Keywords: Dance Education, Tradition, Guru-Shishya Parampara, Innovation, Holistic Approaches

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian classical dance and the Indian knowledge system are interconnected elements of Indian culture and tradition, each with its unique characteristics. Indian classical dance, which includes Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, and more, is a centuries-old art form steeped in Indian mythology and cultural traditions. On one hand it involves intensive training under a guru to master intricate movements and expressions while evolving to incorporate new techniques and interpretations. On the other hand, it encompasses a wide range of disciplines like philosophy, spirituality, science, mathematics, and more, passed down through texts, scriptures, and the traditional Gurukul system. While classical dance represents a specific aspect of Indian heritage, the knowledge system reflects the depth and diversity of Indian civilization, emphasizing holistic development and wisdom transmission from teacher to student. Both contribute to preserving India's cultural legacy in their own ways. (Gate, 2023).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-evaluative research methodology to comprehensively analyse the data. The research approach incorporates qualitative methods, including interviews, conducted with experts in the field of Kathak, including experienced dancers, musicians, and scholars to gather insights from practitioners and experts in the field. Secondary sources of data, such as journals, books, articles, and websites, are utilized to support and augment the analysis. The data obtained from the above sources has been analysed thematically to extract key themes, perspectives, and expert opinions.

3. AIM

The main goal of the study is to examine and analyze the changing classical dance education methods in India. It aims to revive traditional art forms while also incorporating new ideas and preserving cultural roots. The paper will investigate traditional teaching techniques and values within the guru- shishya tradition, explore modern teaching methods and innovative approaches in classical dance education, evaluate how a comprehensive learning approach can improve student involvement and results. It will study the role of classical dance in maintaining cultural traditions and encouraging cultural exchange and find ways to sustain and improve classical dance education amidst societal and technological changes. It shall also offer suggestions for further research, practice, and support in classical dance education.

Ultimately, the paper intends to add to the conversation on revitalizing classical dance education while emphasizing the significance of tradition, innovation, and cultural conservation in nurturing the upcoming generation of dancers and safeguarding India's diverse cultural heritage.

4. RESEARCH AREA

4.1. GURU SHISHYA PARAMPARA

For generations, the eight classical dances of India have been passed down through the oral tradition from teacher to student, highlighting the importance of the guru-disciple relationship in their performance and practice. Before the mid-20th century, the guru was highly respected and often seen as a parental figure to their disciples. The guru not only taught discipline for the dance form but also took care of practical aspects like meals, costumes, and logistics, treating the students like their own children. This familial connection helped nurture the young artists on physical, emotional, and psychological levels (Sahasrabhude, 2019).

The tradition of Guru-Shishya Parampara has been an integral aspect of Ancient Indian Civilization since 5000 BC. This tradition can be broken down as follows: guru as a teacher, shishya as a student, and parampara as tradition. The traditional Indian dance style goes beyond just physical movements to represent a timeless art that connects generations. Central to this practice is the Guru-Shishya Parampara, a sacred connection between the mentor (guru) and the disciple (shishya). This revered bond has been crucial in molding and protecting the core of classical dance, lifting it above mere bodily movements. Today, we explore the deep importance of the Guru-Shishya Parampara and its steadfast commitment to conserving this cultural heritage. (Academy, 2023)

There is reason behind the success of the guru shishya Parampara tradition - despite facing challenges, there is a unique element in the guru-shishya system that makes it effective, a component that is absent in other modern learning methods. (Ananya, 1996)

The advantages of the Guru-Shishya Parampara:

- **Maintaining Authenticity:** In classical dance forms, the Guru-Shishya Parampara ensures the preservation of authenticity goes beyond just movements. Students delve into the cultural and emotional depths of each style through personalized mentorship, gaining invaluable insights and knowledge from their gurus. This personalized approach safeguards the essence of classical dance across generations.
- **Passing Down Oral Traditions:** The oral tradition in classical dance forms guarantees the accurate transmission of nuances, movements, and emotions from guru to shishya. Gurus teach with care and respect, allowing students to understand not only the steps but also the narratives and emotions behind each movement.
- **Cultural and Emotional Bond:** The Guru-Shishya Parampara cultivates a strong emotional connection between mentor and student in classical dance forms. Gurus act as guides and mentors, creating a supportive environment for students to explore their creativity and convey their authentic selves through dance.
- **Tailored Learning Experience:** Differing from standardized dance classes, the Guru-Shishya Parampara provides a customized learning experience in classical dance forms. Gurus adjust teaching methods based on individual strengths and weaknesses, aiding in skill improvement and self-assurance.
- **Preservation of Classical Teaching:** With unique styles and approaches in each classical dance form, the Guru-Shishya Parampara ensures the conservation of these distinctions by passing them down through personalized teaching methods. This upholds the diversity and richness of classical dance traditions.
- **Education Beyond Dance:** Apart from dance techniques, the Guru-Shishya Parampara imparts life lessons, values, and discipline in all classical dance forms. Students develop qualities such as patience, dedication, humility, and perseverance, contributing to their overall growth.
- **Conservation of Cultural Legacy:** Classical dance forms represent India's cultural heritage, with the Guru-Shishya Parampara playing a crucial role in its safeguarding. By immersing themselves in tradition, students become stewards of a legacy that spans centuries, ensuring the vitality and significance of classical dance continue to thrive. (Academy, 2023)

The Guru-Shishya Parampara is a vital tradition in classical dance, serving as a strong link between the past, present, and future of these captivating art forms. This sacred bond upholds the legacy, guaranteeing the maintenance of originality, cultural significance, and emotional depth in classical dances. By recognizing the importance of the Guru-Shishya Parampara in all classical dance styles, we can

appreciate its profound influence on dancers' lives, the growth of the art, and the safeguarding of our cultural heritage.

5. EMBRACING INNOVATION

Multimedia tools have become essential in modern education, including dance instruction, offering a more interactive and engaging learning experience. However, the dance teacher faces the challenge of navigating and incorporating new media technologies that students use both during and outside of class. (Sööt, 2013). Here's how multimedia technology benefits dance education -

Visual Learning: learning through videos, animations, and images help dancers visualize movements and techniques clearly, enhancing their understanding.

Demonstration: Instructors can showcase dance movements effectively through multimedia, allowing students to mimic and improve their technique.

Feedback: Recording and playback features enable detailed feedback from instructors, helping dancers refine their skills.

Cultural Context: Multimedia resources provide insight into the cultural and historical background of dance styles, enriching students' appreciation.

VR and AR: Virtual and augmented reality technologies create immersive learning experiences in digital dance environments.

Accessibility: Multimedia tools offer flexible access to learning materials, catering to diverse learning preferences.

Collaboration: Multimedia technology facilitates collaboration and communication among dance communities, fostering a supportive learning environment.

Overall, multimedia-aided teaching equipment enhances the effectiveness and engagement of dance education, empowering dancers to hone their skills and passion for the art form.

6. HOLISTIC APPROACHES IN DANCE EDUCATION

In today's disconnected world, it is important for a holistic approach to education to bring together various aspects such as personal identity, physical well-being, community involvement, and curriculum development to address the complete human experience. (Sööt, 2013). Teachers need to recognize that each individual component is valuable and should understand how to identify and utilize the connections between them effectively. In classical dance education, holistic teaching approaches aim to nurture students' cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being through various methods:

- 1) **Active Learning:** Engage students through movement-based exercises, choreography exploration, and group performances.
- 2) **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Encourage students to explore dance techniques, history, and cultural significance through questioning and research.
- 3) **Differentiated Instruction:** Tailor instruction to accommodate students' varying skill levels, learning styles, and artistic interests.
- 4) **Project-Based Learning:** Allow students to create and perform choreographic pieces, collaborate on dance productions, and participate in community events.

- 5) **Experiential Learning:** Provide opportunities for students to attend dance performances, workshops, and masterclasses to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the art form.
- 6) **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Foster teamwork, self-expression, confidence, and resilience through positive feedback, peer collaboration, and reflection.
- 7) **Multisensory Instruction:** Incorporate music, rhythm, visual cues, and tactile feedback to enhance students' kinesthetic awareness, musicality, and artistic expression.
- 8) **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Explore diverse dance traditions, styles, and stories from around the world to promote cultural understanding and appreciation.
- 9) **Technology Integration:** Utilize video tutorials, dance apps, and online platforms to supplement learning, provide feedback, and facilitate remote instruction.
- 10) **Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Techniques:** Integrate breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, and movement meditations to help students develop focus, concentration, and emotional balance during dance practice. By integrating these holistic approaches into classical dance education, teachers can inspire students to not only excel technically but also cultivate a deeper connection with the art form and enhance their overall well-being.

Future Strategies: Future strategies for advancing dance education may involve the following:

- 1) **Utilization of Technology:** Embracing multimedia tools, virtual reality, augmented reality, and online platforms to enhance learning, offer personalized feedback, and enable remote instruction. From virtual classes to interactive apps, these advancements are reshaping the way dance is learned, practiced, and appreciated. (Jyothi, 2023)
- 2) **Promotion of Cross-Cultural Collaboration:** Encouraging partnerships with international dance institutions to expose students to diverse dance forms, styles, and cultural perspectives.
- 3) **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Combining dance education with other disciplines such as music, theater, visual arts, and technology to provide comprehensive learning experiences and foster creativity.
- 4) **Community Engagement:** Organizing outreach programs to connect students with wider audiences, raise cultural awareness, and inspire social change through dance activism.
- 5) **Teacher Development:** Investing in programs to update dance educators on teaching methods, technology integration, and cultural competency for high-quality instruction.
- 6) **Research and Innovation:** Supporting research in dance education to enhance teaching methods, evaluate student progress, and advance the field.
- 7) **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Prioritizing initiatives that provide equal access to dance education for individuals of all backgrounds, including those with disabilities.

- 8) **Sustainability Practices:** Implementing sustainable practices in dance education facilities, curriculum development, and production processes to reduce environmental impact.
- 9) **Advocacy and Funding:** Advocating for increased support and funding for dance education programs at all levels to emphasize the importance of the arts in society.
- 10) **Adaptation to Changing Trends:** Staying flexible in response to societal changes, technological advancements, and evolving cultural landscapes to effectively prepare students for the future.

The table below presents a brief comparison of the traditional Guru Shishya Parampara and contemporary dance teaching methods, highlights key elements like values, teaching styles, learning methods, dance content, fitness, cultural understanding, experimentation, student-teacher dynamics, and flexibility. It also suggests potential enhancements for dance education in the future. The purpose of this analysis is to outline the distinctions and parallels between these approaches, providing valuable perspectives on their advantages and areas needing development to shape the future of dance education.

Table 1

Table 1			
Aspect	Guru shishya Parampara	Modern dance	Future suggestion
Values	Perseverance Humble Egoless Leadership	Focus on Creativity Individuality collaboration	Integrate mindfulness techniques like meditation prior to the start of the class.
	Expertise Cultural understanding Experimentation	Self expression Creativity Adaptation	Using sustainability practices, like using ecofriendly materials for props and costumes
Teaching approach	Direct mentorship Focuses on the importance of tradition Seniority	Integrate various techniques into workshops and online platforms	Discover a virtual reality experience for an immersive dance learning experience
	Story telling Oral tradition Repetitive Role modelling	Guest instructors Tutorials Peer learning Written material textbooks	Incorporate AI technology to provide feedback on technique and style.
Learning process	Repetitive practice Assisted by seniors long term wisdom	Individualized Structured curriculum Workshops Short term goals	Design personalized learning plans tailored to each student's unique strengths and interests.
	Acquiring skills by observing, listening to stories, and imitating.	Exploration of various dance styles Feedback	Introduce software that adapts its difficulty levels according to the progress of each student.
Subject Matter	Traditional dance forms Mythological stories	Fusion styles Contemporary dance forms	Incorporating interdisciplinary studies, such as combining components of both theatre and music
	Natural themes Cultural practices Costume draping	Thematic exploration Improvisation	Work with artists from different fields to create performances that blend different cultures

Fitness and wellness	Through yoga, martial arts focus is on body fitness	Combine fitness elements with dance instruction	Incorporate mental health seminars to tackle stress and anxiety among performers
	Power yoga Folk dances	Focus on building strength, flexibility and endurance	Introduce measures and strategies focused on preventing injuries to support overall physical well-being in the long run
Cultural immersion	Cultural practices, study of mythological stories.	Incorporation of cultural elements	Arrange a cultural exchange program that involves dancers from various cultural backgrounds
	Dressing up for special occasions and enjoying festive celebrations	Respecting traditions while embracing a variety of cultural influences	Encourage cultural variety by organizing themed performances and events
Experimentation	Limited experiments with abstract themes	Encourage experiments with movements	Set up a research lab to investigate cutting-edge dance techniques using technology
	Depicting natural elements, character portrayals	Use of multimedia Choreography Interdisciplinary	Utilizing hackathons as a platform for dancers and technologist to collaborate and develop innovative digital tools for choreography.
Student-teacher	Obedience Hierarchical structures Deep respect for gurus	Mutual respect Dialogue Collaborative mentorship	Introduce peer teaching initiatives where experienced students mentor those who are new to the subject.

7. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the research on progressive dance education in India stresses the importance of blending tradition and innovation to uphold the country's cultural heritage while preparing students for the future. The Guru-Shishya Parampara is crucial in classical dance education, offering personalized guidance, cultural immersion, and values-based learning. However, adapting to modern times requires incorporating technology, collaboration, cross-cultural interaction, and holistic teaching methods. Future strategies for dance education include incorporating technology, fostering cross-cultural exchanges, integrating various disciplines, community involvement, investing in teacher development, supporting research, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility, prioritizing sustainability, advocating for funding, and adjusting to societal changes. By implementing these strategies, classical dance education can stay relevant, inclusive, and impactful, nurturing a new generation of dancers who are skilled technically and culturally, creative, and resilient. By upholding the Guru-Shishya tradition while embracing innovation, dance educators can continue to enrich lives, foster cultural understanding, and preserve India's diverse cultural heritage for future generations.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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