

SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED OF DANCE IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

The objective of this article is to enlighten the significance and need of dance in the education system. Dance occupies a very important role in the cultures and traditions of Bhārat since times immemorial. Dance, besides being the divine art form, it has various obscured disciplines and benefits that need to be explored and educated in order to understand the exact essence of it. If dance is to be of any moment and significance, it must necessarily be included in the education systems beginning from the school level to a university doctorate level. This article might provoke thought among the individuals and entities like government, educational institutions, welfare organizations, teachers, parents and further inspire them to devise various ways and means in understanding the significance of dance and incorporating it in the educational system of the country. It would also facilitate in creating interest among individuals and professionals and further help in taking up in-depth research in this domain.

Keywords: Dance, education, educational institution, need, significance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

Keeping in view of the abstract, the following are the objectives of the study.

- To give an overview of the significance and need of dance in the education system by explaining the five W's – when, what, why, where and who.
- To explicate the significance of dance by analysing various means and modes.
- To analyse various features and disciplines concealed in dance and substantiating its implementation in the education system.
- To establish, prove and recommend the need of dance education in the education system by enumerating its numerous benefits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This is a theoretical study which uses analytical and descriptive methods to analyze the ideas, opinions and theories presented in relation to the significance and need of dance in education system by analyzing its various features. The researcher explored various ways and means in understanding the significance and need of dance with an analytical approach to substantiate the objectives of the study. The study involves the analysis of origin and evolution of dance by investigating the functions, features and tools of dance, which are evidenced in the cultures and traditions of *Bhārat*. The analysis is drafted through the descriptive method.

INTRODUCTION:

Bhārat is a land of art and culture with its unique and diverse features. Different art forms have evolved in various regions across the *Bhāratēya* subcontinent that reflects the regional cultures in their ways and means. Culture and tradition is very important in every nation's integration which is evidenced through various dance forms across the nation. *Bhārat* has various such dance forms pertaining to each region. Every dance form is unique in nature in terms of its performance, costume, themes and many more. Though there are various dance forms across the nature they all follow a common feature of entertainment, communication, propagation, promotion, preservation of the art form in specific and culture as a whole. Beyond entertainment and communication, the dance forms, especially the *Shāstrēya* dance forms have various other benefits hidden in them.

DISCUSSION:

Dance incorporates almost everything to maintain a perfect life style. It is no less than an education system as it incorporates and imbibes various other disciplines and features concealed and overlooked in this modern era of globalization. Today, with various explorations and researches on dance, the significance and need of dance is widely accepted not only in general perspectives, but also in educational institutions. This can be substantiated by answering the five W's that includes when, what, why, where and who.

WHEN IS DANCE ORIGINATED?

The origin of dance can broadly be related and explained from three different perspectives - Mythological, Historical – human evolution and Human developmental. The mythological origin of dance is divine in nature as it is created by the gods. Such divine art is passed on to the humans to

ward off the evil practices executed by them. As explained in my earlier article ‘Origin and evolution of Dance’, Lord *Brahma* created this divine art as a remedy and therapeutic benefit to the humans on reciting the four *Védas* and naming this art as the ‘*Nātya Vēda*’. The mythological origin of dance was later developed into various *Shāstrēya* dance forms from various regions of the *Bhāratēya* subcontinent. These dance forms follow a particular *Sastra* and are performed with divinity in performances, themes and dressing that reflect the cultures and traditions of *Bhārat*.

The historical – human evolution origin of dance can be traced back to the early man, where he has used various gestures, movements and mime to communicate with the fellow humans before language was developed. The movements and gestures started as a mode of communication was later developed into dance that was part of their stress buster and celebrations.

The human developmental origin of dance can be mapped out from the movement of limbs, feelings and emotions felt by the new born child to communicate with their parents. The child moves the hands and legs, smiles or cries, to express the joy or sorrow in the presence or absence of their parents respectively. These movements, gestures, emotions, feelings expressed by the child to communicate with the parents can be referred as dance in a broader context.

The mythological origin of dance can closely be related to the *Mārga Shāstrēya* dance traditions of *Bhārat*. The historical – human evolution and human developmental origins of dance can be related to the *Dēsi* traditions like the tribal dance, folk dance, western dance, filmy dance, contemporary dance etc prevalent in the *Bhāratēya* subcontinent.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF DANCE?

Art is a valuable heritage passed on from generation to generation since times immemorial. A holistic vision is expressed through *Bhāratēya* art, a vision that is always aware of the divine deeds of humans. Human life by itself is considered as an art. Art is the mirror image of the nature and can be witnessed in every nook and corner of the nature.

Bhārat is a land of art and culture, a land of devotion, and a land of proud heritage and rich legacy. *Bhārat* has always been known for its rich heritage and culture. This wonderful land has presented a wide range of performing arts. Dance is the most interesting form of performing arts that has been encouraged from centuries in *Bhārat*. The sacred texts like the *Védas*, *Purāṇas* etc explains the close association of divinity with dance and thereby humans and God.

Dance, one among the sixty four arts and more precisely amongst the fine arts is created by Lord *Brahma* and is treated as divine. Dance is offered as one of the offerings to the deity in the temples since ancient times while the priest utters the line ‘*nṛtyam darshayāmi*’ however it is not performed practically today. It is considered equivalent to the *Védas* (*Nātya Vēdam*) and is acknowledged as the fifth *Vēda*. History shows that in almost all the ancient civilizations, dance played an important part in religious rituals.

Dance culture is divine, vibrant, diverse, multidimensional, ancient and contemporary which is the legacy of the youth of the country. Though dance had always been a part of the social life of the community in *Bhārat*, the last decade has seen major shifts in the way dance is produced and performed. It has traveled from a divine art, to a spiritual discourse, to a profession, to a cause for social change and many more. Once considered a ‘esoteric art,’ dance today has become the signifier of a socially mobile, globally aware, politically astute, media savvy, technologically advanced younger generation. Dance is well received and for the last seven decades, government bodies like the *Bhāratēya* Council for Cultural relations (ICCR), *Sangēt Nātak* Academy (SNA) and the Ministry of Culture have spearheaded a policy of preservation of traditional arts through a schema of grants, awards and festivals.

Dance represents the miniature world. Dancing is evident in life; it is an indigenous part of human existence, which is a universal phenomenon. Though un-noticed by us, it is a part of our day to day routine. The early man expressed his ideas and feelings only through the body movements as a mode of communication, before language was created. This is the pre-verbal beginning of communication before speech. A new born baby starts waving the hands and legs before he could speak, he laughs when the mother comes closer and cries when the mother goes away adding different movements with hands and limbs. Hence the beginning of expression in human life starts from a new born baby. The nature herself dances in joy at spring time; a bird sitting on a tree branch at sunrise greets the sun out of joy by the graceful movement of its head; the child shouts and jumps in upwelling joy and so on. Dance can be observed in the swaying trees, the moving clouds, the water flowing, the ocean waves, the fire heaps, the rain drops, the peacock's joy, deer leaps etc. Similarly dance has begun with such expressive movements and manipulation of the body through the emotions, feelings and opinions.

WHY IS DANCE IMPORTANT? BENEFITS OF DANCE:

Dance is very important in one's life as it is a powerful support for developing various attributes in an individual. Dance helps to develop physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. The physical benefits of dance are widely accepted, but the emotional, social and cognitive attributes have only recently being appreciated.

Physical Development: Dance involves a greater range of motion, coordination, strength and endurance than most other physical activities. This is accomplished through movement patterns that teach coordination and kinesthetic memory. Dancing utilizes the entire body and is an excellent form of exercise for total body fitness. Dance offers an avenue to expand movement possibilities and skills.

Emotional Maturity: Dance promotes psychological health and maturity. It helps to express their emotions and become aware of themselves and also others through creative movement. Movement offers a structured outlet for physical release while gaining awareness and appreciation of oneself and others through proper training.

Social Awareness: Dance fosters social encounter, interaction, and cooperation. An individual learns to communicate ideas to others through the real and immediate mode of body movements. Children quickly learn to work within a group dynamic which evolves cooperation and understands themselves in relation to others.

Cognitive Development: Young children create movements spontaneously. Movement provides the cognitive loop between the idea, execution and outcome. This teaches an individual how to function and understand the world.

WHERE IS DANCE EVIDENT?

Dance is widespread and represents many disciplines. It incorporates almost everything in it. Dance involves all the fine arts, science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, mythology, fitness, therapy, culture, tradition, management, language, grammar and what not? It improves communication skills, memory, discipline etc. Hence Dance can be said to be a "Unified art form" which imbibes almost everything in it.

Dance involves the fine arts: Dance is a performing art that showcases all the fine arts like music, literature, sculpture & painting and drama. In dance, music (poetry) and literature (prose) gain vocal gestures; sculpture & painting gain sculptural gestures and drama gains theatrical gestures. Thus it becomes a pitch of all fine arts as they have no alternative than to mix themselves with dance.

Hence dance is said to a “unified art”. The basic purpose of these fine arts is to afford pleasure

Dance comprises of Mathematics: In dance, the movements of hands and legs are placed in different shapes and angles. Dance is performed in straight line, horizontal line, diagonally, crisscross, in different angles; circular movements etc. In dance, few movements are added, subtracted and few are multiplied and divided too depending on their need. The *tala* system in a *Shāstrēya* dance is pure mathematics. The footwork is perfectly calculated to set a particular ‘*jati*’ to a particular ‘*tala*’.

Dance includes physics: It has different speeds like *Dhruta laya* (Hi speed), *Madhyama laya* (medium speed) and *Vilamba laya* (low speed). A dancer in their performance covers certain area or distance while applying certain force while dancing. The time taken to complete a certain step or a *jati*, the sound and vibration produced while performing dance is nothing but physics.

Dance encompasses chemistry: The combination of certain steps turns out to be a *jati* and a combination of certain steps and *jatis* develops into an item. The expressions involve various reactions and changes in the face and body while performing dance. Different colours and chemicals are used while doing a dance makeup.

Dance is biology: The skeletal and muscular system helps in holding a particular posture effectively. The dance movements help in good blood circulation and the nervous system gets stimulated to the footsteps and *hasta mudras*. The *hasta mudras* used in the *Shāstrēya* dance form has therapeutic benefits and hence acts as a mode of healing apart from communicating and dance movements.

Dance is closely associated to mythology: Dance is divine and as said earlier is created and passed on to the humans by Gods. The stories are taken from *Védās*, *Purānās*, *Itihāsās* and mythological stories. The costume, makeup, stage, orchestra, performance are all treated as divine and are all closely related to the gods. The dance numbers, dance dramas and thematic presentations are mostly mythology related in terms of the lyrics, portrayal of characters, performance etc.

Dance represents culture and tradition: The *Shāstrēya* dance forms take the themes from the mythology or closely associated to the religious social elements and cultures. The costumes and makeup used in the dance forms perfectly represent the culture and tradition of that particular region. For instance, the costume and makeup used in *Kuchipudi* dance reflect the way of dressing and makeup of the *Telugu* land. Similarly is the case with *Mohiniattam*, *Bharatanātyam*, *Odissi*, *Kathak*, *Manipuri* and so on. The themes, language, stories used in these performances also reflect the culture and tradition.

Dance has language with technical grammar: The literatures used in the songs reflect the language and grammar. In dance, the written or verbal language is communicated through gestures. The gestural communication is more effective added with literature more than a language singly. The *slokas*, hymns and songs are with perfect grammar and meter like *yati – prāsa*, *vyākaranam*, *chandassu*, *alankāras* etc. Each *Shāstrēya* dance form of *Bhārat* reflects the regional languages and their technical grammar in its form and technique.

Dance involves management: The footwork and expressions are perfectly managed keeping in view the story and character to be portrayed. Makeup also has to be well suited keeping in view of the character. When you learn dance as a hobby and have to manage both study and dance, a proper planning is required. The timings for both study and dance is properly planned and maintained. Similarly during a performance, if the slot is given for 30 minutes, a dancer plans effectively and selects such items which fit in that slot. This requires a proper planning and management. Executing the plan and maintaining it in a long run is nothing but management. So management is involved in dancing.

Dance improves communication skills: Dance performance keeps you away from stage fear. Fearlessness is cultivated in the dancers as the dancers practice in groups and perform in huge gatherings. The body gestures are improved as a dancer feels completeness on maintaining the personal skills apart from their general education. Keeness on self development is cultivated. When there is no fear and feel completeness in them, communication skills are improved. Communication skills are very effective in a dancer when compared to a normal person.

Dance improves memory: The *Shāstrēya* dances have various steps, *jatis*, *slokas*, and items on various deities. Memorizing and practicing these elements on a regular basis improves the memory. Also the *hasta mudras* used in the *Shāstrēya* dances have therapeutic effects which also help in improving memory skills.

Dance cultivates discipline: Practicing the songs by understanding the stories, there by knowing the good and bad; cultivates good behaviour. The training process under a guru helps an individual to improve and maintain discipline. Dance training cultivates a perfect systematization. Respecting others, the standing position, walking style, behaviour, talking culture, dressing sense, helping nature are all cultivated through a structured learning especially in a *Shāstrēya* dance form.

Dance is a fitness health: Dance is a good exercise. Regular practice of dance is more than regular workouts in a gym and *yoga*. A regular practice of dance keeps an individual fit, active, enthusiastic and in good form. Dance practice cultivates good health. We can maintain a fit body, thereby refreshes the mind and can be active the whole day. Practicing dance every day keeps the body in a perfect shape and fitness. It keeps an individual fit, active, enthusiastic and in good form.

Dance imparts knowledge: Apart from giving good health and happiness, dance also imparts knowledge about the mythology, culture, tradition, behaviour, discipline, customs, social aspects, good, bad, nature and what not.

Dance is entertainment & refreshment: Practicing dance or watching a dance show is an entertainment. It gives freshness and keeps you active all through the day. Dance gives peace of mind and relaxation to the body. It is such an extraordinary art where both the dancer and the spectator forgets the external world, their sorrows, hectic schedules and experiences the zeal and happiness in it. With proper involvement both the dancer and the spectator forgets the external world and enjoys the internal pleasures.

Dance is therapy: The *hasta mudras* used in a *Shāstrēya* dance are very holistic and every *mudra* has its specific meaning and usage. The *hasta mudras* in dance can also be related to the *hasta mudras* used in the *Yoga*, *Hindu*, *Jain* and *Buddhist* religious practices, which have their specific characteristics. The *hasta mudras* of dance are used not only to express or communicate a particular meaning, but it is also therapeutic in nature. Research has been undertaken by me to study the therapeutic effect of the *hasta mudras*. The *hasta mudras* of dance have been correlated to the *hasta mudras* of *Yoga*, *Hindu*, *Jain* and *Buddhist* religious practices and the acupressure points. A detailed study of the physiology (skeletal, muscular and nervous system) of hand is also undertaken apart from studying the pharmacokinetics. The effective *hasta mudras* are selected keeping in view the ailments and has been experimented to cure them. The *hasta mudras* are proved to be therapeutic and hence they also act as a mode of healing. It even cures certain ailments and keeps the body in perfect fitness.

Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving direct expression through the body. Thus, it is an intimate and powerful medium of education. People generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they hear and see, 70% of what they say and write and 90% of what they do. So retention is best done when the learner is involved, because what we hear - we forget; what we see - we remember and what we do - we understand. Based on this dance is one of the best ways to practice as it also acts as the best medium

of education. Dance education elevates various potentials in an individual and benefits in various ways.

- Dance education aids the development of kinesthetic intelligence and creates opportunities for self-expression and communication through the medium of the body.
- Dance education teaches the values and skills of creativity, problem solving, risk taking, making judgments in the absence of rules, and higher-order thinking skills.
- Dance provides an opportunity to recognize multiple solutions to problems.
- Dance fosters an individual's ability to better interpret interpersonal nonverbal communication.
- Learning dances of other cultures helps an individual to develop an understanding and respect towards them.
- Dance stimulates all the senses and promotes the development of multisensory beings.
- Dance education prepares people for careers in dance and other fields.
- Dance enhances an individual's lifelong quality of life.
- Dance education helps students develop physical fitness, appreciation of the body, concern for sound health practices, and effective stress management approaches.
- It stimulates the thought process and demands concentration and focus on things which in turn improves meditation.
- Dance develops confidence that helps an individual to be independent.

WHERE IS DANCE TAUGHT?

Today, dance education in *Bhārat* is a study in contrasts. A large number of schools do not have basic equipment, even electricity and water, yet there are other schools with state-of-the-art studios and extensive performing arts departments. Schools provide dance training and view dance as an important physical and creative activity. The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training), which is the apex body for school curriculum has established an elaborate curriculum for dance training in schools. This curriculum focuses on “an aesthetic culmination of movement, musical expression, literature, mythology, philosophy, rhythm, *yoga*, *sādhana* etc” (NCERT). Dance training primarily focuses on familiarizing students with the dance traditions, both folk and *Shāstrēya*, of this country. University education in dance is limited to about seventeen out of 200 plus universities in the country which include Hyderabad Central University, *Potti Srērāmulu Telugu University*, *Kurukshetra University*, University of *Baroda*, *Punjab University*, University of *Mumbai*, *Ravindrābhārati University*, *Sri Shankarācharya University of Sanskrit*, *Visva Bhārati University*, *Padmavathi University*, *Andhra University*, *Sri Venkateshwara University*, *Tamil University*, *Benaras Hindu University*, IGNOU, Alliance Francis University, REVA University etc. These universities offer programmes in theory and training in primarily traditional dance practices. Dance is taught as part of academics in few government and private schools and colleges across *Bhārat*. It is also offered at graduation, post graduation and doctoral levels in universities However dance education is lacking in schools, which is the basis for child development. Dance has a place but not a goal in higher education in *Bhārat*.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE DANCE?

The knowledge, culture, tradition, history, sculpture, music, literature, action, mythology etc are perfectly balanced in dance. It represents a miniature world and hence known as a unified art. This excellent art form has to be incorporated in the education systems not only to educate but also for various other valuable benefits that helps them to develop themselves in various ways. The educational systems include drawing and singing and often neglect to include dance in most of the institutions. It is essential that education provides the individuals with the developmental benefits and unique learning opportunities with the aesthetic experience of dance.

The twenty-first century is an age of drastic changes in the way arts, including dance, are a part of everyday life. Perceptions of what dance is and what role it plays are undergoing a rapid change. As the world opens up, young people now have access to dance forms from around the world.

The government has to take proper measures to include dance as a necessary and compulsory subject in all the public and private schools and colleges, along with the other subjects as it has various benefits. Parents have to encourage their wards to learn dance as it is a unified art form and has various benefits that are explained above.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, dance is an excellent art which has imbibed almost everything necessary to maintain a perfect lifestyle. Dance is an ocean which has boundless and inexhaustible benefits hidden in it. This divine art form is rich in its artistic exploration with the body an instrument. , it's a skill which keeps you fit and good health. Dance is a coordination of body and mind. It is a form of worship and meditation through which an individual can gain spirituality. A continuous learning and practice of dance will inculcate discipline and patience in them. Dance practice gives fitness and control over the body too. As dance is a mode of expression, it helps to develop the thought process and expression of emotions and inner feelings, which builds self belief, self control and self confidence. Dance practice acquires knowledge of rich cultural heritage, mythology, history, literature, *dharma* and *adhama* and so on, which enhances the knowledge in various disciplines. Dance, as an importance aspect of culture serves as an all-round development of various human faculties.

Hence, dance, especially *Bhāratēya Shāstrēya* dance has to be educated, performed, propagated and preserved, as it reflects *Bhāratēya* culture and tradition apart from several useful features concealed in it. Dance education occupies a very important place in the education systems, as it is a unified art form and involves almost everything in it. It is therefore obvious that education on dance aesthetics has to be encouraged and introduced right from the basic school education, which develops the overall human personality in all aspects.

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