



ACCLAMATION OF MALES IN INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE- KATHAK

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ABSTRACT-

Art and performing arts have been considered the area reserved for women to shine and take the spotlight. This gender-based discrimination or pre-conceived gender norms have created trouble for both men and women in all workspaces. The current paper emphasizes the struggles and the strength shown to overcome them. For someone who is not aware of the historical contribution made by their male counterparts has thrown obstacles their way in the form of societal judgemental opinion. The aim of the paper is to throw light on the struggles of male performers and how they can overcome battles and contribute in baffling ways. The paper highlights the spaces where male artists have showcased their experiential skills, which are not just conventional margins but have gone above and beyond. The paper points out to the target audience examples from history and in the present scenario who have been able to shackle the hindrances and pursue their passion despite the yet so ever-existing barriers.

KEYWORDS- Kathak, gender-discrimination, male artists, male contribution

INTRODUCTION-

The entire world around us has been divided based on gender roles, society has intervened and defined some duties and tasks just for women and some for men. There is not a single sphere left where these gender-based classifications are not made. The debate of the biologically determined sex of a human and the societal and culturally determined gender of a person makes it even more complicated. Society has made these differences in all sectors, let it be household economics, business, science and it has drawn down to performing arts as well. The Indian classical dance of Kathak faces similar discrimination. From the period of 19th and 20th centuries, people have thought the art of dancing and performing specifically in the Indian classical dances be the field belonging to women, and their domain to take the highlight. Whereas men belong in the fields and battlegrounds, far away from the delicate art form. The consequences are severe on both sides of the table but this paper focuses on putting forth the recent history and hardships faced by them brought to them by the societal norms and critical views and how yet they were able to soar through the heights in different sectors and make their contributions.

Kathak, as a dance form was a medium of, connecting with God, storytelling and entertainment, throughout history. People who are unable to trace its origin and are unaware of the history would be surprised to know that the origin of movement as a medium, outlining the rules and building blocks for performing arts were laid in a book "Natya Shastra" written by a man sage "Bharat Muni". The origin of Kathak as a separate classical dance and its branching into different gharanas was because of some of the eminent male dancers and their gift to the art form. But recent history has seen the discrimination coming towards male classical dancers and kathak more or less being considered for women, and to those who still find the courage to pursue their love despite facing harassment from society

Here we will look at different areas where male artists who are presently in the domain have conquered despite all the odds that came their way.

1. Teaching

The art of teaching comes to only a few, you can be a great performer but, to teach you the need to have patience, empathy and belief not just in yourself but in your disciple as well. In different gharanas, male artists have undertaken various pupils underneath their wing and trained them under the guru-shishya parampara. They train them and guide them to be better performers working on their overall personality development and their skill. The male artists are masters in their gharanas and particular style. They take workshops and classes not just for their students in the country but internationally as well, imparting the knowledge that they have gained over the years. They play a major role in spreading the word and creating a trend for kathak to all age groups. Sh. Pratap Pawar, Dr Purshotam Dadheech, Pt. Tirath Ram Azad, Sh Subash Chandra, Sh. Dheerendra Tiwari, are amongst the few who have made contributions as teachers and doctorates not just on performing levels but theoretical perspective as well by holding positions at famous associations and university heads as well. These personalities are not just teachers but have been students and themselves trained under harsh conditions to reach the position that they are in today, with the capability to impart knowledge to future generations.

2. Dance performers

Male performers have added beauty on the stage with the help of their skill and talents and made the name of Kathak as a dance form even more popular than before. The grace, and fineness with which they move. The expressions and the beauty with which they tell their stories on the stage is more than enough proof of the hard training and number of hours that they put in to reach that stage. And exactly as pointed out earlier that from generations this talent has continued and performers trained under experiential teachers to refine their art, some of the artists are even 3rd -4th generation who have continued learning and performing classical dance and now they have a family heritage and reputation to keep up to that name and the responsibility of maintaining that family name comes on them. Tribhuvan Maharaj(grandson of Pandit Birju Maharaj), Sanjeet Gangani(son of sh.Rajendra Gangani), Abhimanyu Lal (son of Smt. Geetanjali Lal), Vishal Krishan(grandson of Smt. Sitara Devi), are amongst the many talented artists who were encouraged by their families and now they do shows and performances all over the world. They have been recognized by the Indian government and many associations for their remarkable work and have been awarded for the same. The skill that they have in common makes it unfair to be discriminated against just by the virtue of belonging to a particular gender. In the ideal world kathak for them is a medium of expression and art for which they ought not to be judged.

3. Choreographers

One of the other areas where it is vital to point out the work of male artists is in the field of dance direction or choreography, to a layman person who watches TV, even they would be able to tell now names of some famous male choreographers along with female ones like, Prabhu Deva, Remo' D'souza, Terrance Lewis, Bosco-Ceaser, Ganesh Acharya, Shaimak and list goes on and on. They are not just performers who also play a huge role in directing dance performances, on Tv shows, Movies, music videos, plays and designing and directing shows and performances as well. There are also a few other names who have grown up in relatively smaller and unconventional backgrounds and now have risen to the point of making an individual name for themselves and being recognised for their work in the field of classical dance- kathak. They have made appearances in different dance shows as contestants initially and grown their brand name turning into dance directors, making their groups, academies and institutions as well. People who even know a little about classical dance via media are aware of the names of Anuj Mishra, Piyush Chauhan, Devesh Mirchandani, Avinav Mukharjee, Kumar Sharma and work in changing and giving a contemporary twist to the ancient originated art form.

CONCLUSION

Looking at all these different works by the male artists makes us think maybe there would be other areas where their effort is not recognised as compared to those of female artists in the same genre of work. The gender bias makes it difficult to identify the well-deserved work of males in the classical dance Kathak, they are underappreciated and not frequently recognised as they should be. As a society, it is very important to learn and move past the preconceived notions of gender and the defined roles. Everyone must have the freedom to follow their career and make their pathways without a second thought of what everyone else will say or any other kind of hardship from family or friends. As we see in the paper many of the artists were eventually able to move past the struggles and achieve the goal and dreams that they aspired for but the unspoken struggles might have crushed the dreams of so many artists and performers out there. We hope this paper comes out as a source of determination and hope to those out there to resonate with their field and learn from the given set of examples how they can also achieve and be where they want to be if they see their role models do the same.

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