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SOCIAL INCLUSION & EXCLUSION

IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PERFORMING ARTS - DANCE

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ABSTRACT

The thought of social inclusion exists because social exclusion takes part in our society. No society is a perfect set up. It is us humans who have to understand and accept the diversity that exists in our society and do our bit to improve the situation. There are various reasons of social exclusion for example colour, caste, creed, sexual orientation, financial capability/incapability etc. A society should rise above all this and regard everyone with equality. Equal opportunity should be accorded to all within the society. There should be no discrimination whatsoever. Social exclusion exists all over the world, in one nature or the other. Dance may have been used as a tool of social interaction that promoted cooperation essential for survival among early humans. Historically, dance was an inherent part of the society and was regarded as part of our rich culture and heritage. During the British rule dance was linked with immoral trafficking and prostitution and public performance were prohibited. Dance lost its austerity and became redundant. To bring back lost glories, Dance could be included in the mainstream curriculum right from the primary education. Media can play an important role in the development and propagation of Dance. The Government also has to play its part by providing direction and access and financial help. Dance therapy can be used to help several disabilities prevalent in the society.

Keywords –Dance, Divinity of Dance, Dance therapy, Social Inclusion, Social Exclusion, Devadasis, Dance Education, Finance, Media



INTRODUCTION

The thought of social inclusion exists because social exclusion takes part in our society. An all-Inclusive society, is an ideal situation, wherein all individuals across all strata of the society, are viewed as one. There is no discrimination within the society be it because of one's Gender, Colour, Caste, Creed, Religion, Being Differently Abled, Financial Capability or Incapability, Sexual Orientation, Political Inclinations etc. Equal opportunity is provided to who-so-ever within the societal framework. The social structure is built in a way, to provide and promote, equal participation of all the members within the society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged. A few examples of processes which bring about Social Inclusion are strengthening the core values of humanity, spreading awareness, provision of quality education, providing access to resources, freedom to voice opinions and respect for human rights.

Social Exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live.

In a nutshell, Social Exclusion refers to a state wherein individuals or groups within the society are not able to fully participate in the socio-economic and or politico-cultural life. The non-participation, of individuals or groups, might be due to the lack of material resources, income inequality, inadequate health care and education. Non-participation might also occur when there is lack of mutual respect and protection for freedom of expression, fundamental rights and self-dignity. Unemployment also becomes a cause of social exclusion.

We shall now analyse the root causes and reasons of Social Inclusion and its Exclusion in the area of performing arts specifically in the field of classical and folk dance.

DANCE AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

Dance may have been used as a tool of social interaction that promoted cooperation essential for survival among early humans. Studies indicate that today's best dancers share two specific genes associated with a predisposition for being good social communicators.



HISTORY OF DANCE

Historically, dance was an inherent part of the society, and was regarded as part of our rich culture and heritage, especially during the times of Natyashastra. The literary works of Kalidasa, consists of wordings of dance movements, hand gestures, and Abhinaya words, without exactly describing them. This proves that the words were well known and well understood by the common people. **In the Vedic Age dance was performed during ‘Yagna’(Hindu religious ritual done in front of sacred fire) and during the procession of death. Laughter (*Hasaya*) and Dance (*Nritya*) are associated with each other at the moment of sorrow, and such is the continuity of Hindu culture that we find even today, when an aged man dies without leaving a widow or when the old lady predeceased her husband, the funeral march is accompanied by music and dancing.**

We can see even princesses learning dance in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. For example, in Mahabharata, prince Arjuna took to teaching dance during banishment from the kingdom. Hence, we come to know that dance was highly regarded, and was an integral part of the society.

Another early use of dance may have been as a precursor to ecstatic trance states in healing rituals. Dance is used for this purpose by many cultures from the Brazilian rainforest to the Kalahari Desert. Medieval European ‘*Danse Macabres*’ also called the dance of death, were thought to have protected participants from disease; however, the hysteria and duration of these dances sometimes led to death due to exhaustion.

According to a Sinhalese legend, Kandyan dances originated 2500 years ago, from a magic dance ritual that broke the spell on a bewitched King to cure the King of a mysterious illness.

‘*Devadasis*’ or Servant of God, traditionally, had a high status in society. They were dedicated to God, they were considered as married to God. This tradition dates back to the 7th century AD, during the reign of ‘Cholas’ and ‘Pandyas’. They were patronised by the temples during those times. Slowly, the ‘*Devadasis*’ lost their dignity due to the lack of patronisation of the temples and had to then seek the patronisation of the King. During British rule, in the Indian subcontinent, Kings who were the patrons of temples and temple arts lost their power. As a result, ‘*Devadasis*’ were left without their traditional means of support and patronage. Some of the



'Devadasis' married wealthy patrons and some become prostitutes. Even after their marriage to wealthy patrons, the 'Devadasis' spent their time honing their skills instead of becoming just a housewife. They had children from their husbands who were also taught their skills of music or dance. Often their patrons had another wife who served them as housewife. Some of the eminent personalities who hail from this community are 'Bharat Ratna MS Subbulakshmi', 'Lata Mangeshkar', 'KishoriAmonkar', 'Padma Vibhushan Tanjore Balasaraswati', 'Padma Bhushan MuthulakshmiReddi' and in 'Odissi' Dance 'Adi Guru Pankaj Charan Das'.

The British were unable to distinguish the 'Devadasi' from the girls who danced in the streets for the reasons other than spiritual devotion to the deity. This caused socio-economic deprivation and perusal of folk arts. The 'Devadasi' system had started to disappear, having been outlawed in all of India in 1988.

During the British rule dance was linked with immoral trafficking and prostitution, and public performance were prohibited. Many opposed and disapproved this prohibition. In 1947, after India won her independence, dance revived, and efforts were put by a few to regain its past glory. Classical forms and regional distinctions were re-discovered, ethnic specialties were honoured, and by synthesizing them with individual talents of the dance masters, fresh innovations in dance emerged albeit with a new face but adhering to the old traditional values and grandeur.

DANCE AND EDUCATION

In present India, most schools do not have classical Dance as a cultural activity or a subject. There are very few universities having Performing Arts as a category, fewer or negligible have classical dance as a subject. Hence, to become a professional classical Dance artiste, getting a professional degree becomes very difficult. There are a growing number of private institutions by the day. People are forced to join these institutions to learn dance. But among these institutions, there are a miniscule number that are getting the government grants and support. Artistes who are financially sound or are financially supported are in an advantageous position. Remunerative programmes and festivals are a scarcity and hence the dancers are rarely financially rewarded. Therefore, there is no source of income in this profession. In this age of uneven contest and cutthroat competition we have left behind our rich culture and tradition. The general perception in the society is that it is a waste of time trying to build a career in the art field as opportunities to



earn a living and be financially viable is literally non-existent. Performing Arts according to some can only be a leisurely extracurricular activity. We see today, the classical Dance community is moving onto other professions which are more financially viable or rewarding. Classical dance as a profession is becoming an inferior option.

To avoid this outflux, and to save the dance community from literal extinction, Classical Dance must be included as part of the education curriculum right from primary stage. This would not only save our rich culture and heritage but can also be developed and secured. Theoretical knowledge on the aspects of dance can also be imparted along with the practical performing part. Job opportunities can also be created this way. Individuals who have natural flair for the art form can be educated in theory and their skills can be further honed. Through education and performance, the talent and could be showcased and could be made financially viable. It is only then can the profession be included within the society and saved from extinction.

Many transgender population within our society also have a natural flair in Classical Dance. If professional training and education can be imparted to them, they can be included within our society. Financial aid by way of governmental support and grants are required to further this initiative.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEVELOPING ART

When it comes to media and arts, we acknowledge the efforts of those who have passionately reported on arts, talked about it, followed artists and presented a diversity of arts to the public. The media has previewed the art in electronic media and has published critical reviews in print media. However, more coverage and in detail attention is required to be given to this field. Media can showcase articles on talented artistes and critically analyse the art industry and its shortcomings. Media can bring forth the problems faced by the artists and put it in the social medium for everyone to see and understand. Media through their various resources can play a vital role in the development of classical dance. Governmental agencies can be made aware to take notice and can be compelled to take necessary steps for the revival of the art form. Journalists also need to be trained for reporting in Arts, they need to design media relation strategies. Media should project this art form as a career-oriented program.

A serious national discourse must be undertaken to explore the use of existing and rapidly



emerging media technologies to foster hope and promote social inclusion and development. The media have both an opportunity and possibly a responsibility to help people understand their cultural and artistic diversity. Such an increased understanding can be a powerful resource for social and economic development, provided that the Arts sector in its turn remains faithful to artistic diversity as well.

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF DISABLED THROUGH DANCE THERAPY

Dance movement therapy (DMT) is to support intellectual, emotional, and motor functions of the body. Dance has been used therapeutically for thousands of years. It has been used as a healing ritual in the influence of fertility, birth, sickness, and death since early human history.

A variety of approaches to dance and movement are used in DMT depending on the needs to the client. These may include codified dance forms (such as partner dances, Modern Dance, ballet, folk and circle dances etc), creative movement, improvisation and choreographic process, as well as somatic practices, Movement Analysis, Authentic Movement and body psychotherapy. Through dance one can relate the four brain work that is kinaesthetic, rational, musical, and emotional functions. This needs continuous action of physical and mental workout. Dance therapy combines multiple areas of the brain to work together at once rather than just stimulating one area at a time. It helps also mentally disturbed people.

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