"Research Paradigm" Reflection on "The Role of Social Media in Promoting Indian Classical Dances"

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Abstract: *The growing influence of social media has reshaped the ways in which cultural traditions are communicated, preserved, and experienced across global audiences. Within this changing landscape, Indian classical dance has undergone significant transformation as digital platforms increasingly mediate its transmission, pedagogy, and public reception. Rooted in philosophical traditions and aesthetic principles codified in texts such as the Natya Shastra, these dance forms embody spiritual, cultural, and narrative dimensions that extend beyond performance into broader social meaning. Contemporary scholarship on classical dance now engages with interpretivist frameworks that emphasize experiential understanding, while also integrating empirical approaches to examine digital dissemination patterns and audience engagement. The study highlights critical ethical concerns emerging from digital globalization, including risks of cultural commodification, misrepresentation, intellectual appropriation, and overreliance on technological shortcuts in research and practice. By proposing an ethical roadmap, the discussion underscores the need for balanced inquiry that sustains traditional pedagogical values while accommodating evolving technological realities. Such an approach is essential for fostering a culturally responsible and sustainable ecosystem that aligns preservation with innovation in the future of classical dance research and practice.*

Keywords: Storytelling, Guru - Shishya -Parampara, Epistemology, Natya -Shastra, Pedagogy

1. Introduction

The pivotal role social media has been playing for the society is to connect with its users or members for making different types of public communication like interpersonal, intrapersonal, group, mass communication etc. The social media as such has been emerged as a most vulnerable platform to disseminate information and arouse public awareness enabling them to make social bonding or participation. With the advent of internet or net surfing, the social media has based on ideological and technological foundations gradually creating and exchanging user-created ideas. Thus, the world has become a global village with the rise and success of Information Communication Technology (ICT) by way of advancing and maximizing interest usage. We can now estimate with ease that more than 50% of people globally are somehow connected to social media. In the backdrop of this all- pervasive nature of social media, this paper explicates the philosophical foundation of Indian Classical or Traditional Dance Form which is proposed to be undertaken as my research work.

With the emergence of Facebook, Instagram, You Tube, Zoom, Twitter and other internet -based public communication mediums, the rich cultural dance forms have revolutionized inconceivably in the fields of world-wise exposure. The classical period of Indian dance spanning from the 2nd BCE to the Middle Ages, was a period of significant development and codification of dance forms. Overtime, various distinct classical dance forms emerged in different regions of India, each retaining the core principles of the Natya Shastra while incorporating local cultural and artistic nuances. Examples include Bharatnatyam from Tamil Nadu (known for sculpturesque poses and expressive hand gestures or mudras) , Odissi from Odisha (known for fluid torso movements and sculptural poses) , Kathak from North India (emphasizing rhythmic footwork and narrative expression), Kathakali (a dance drama with elaborate costumes and facial make-up) and Mohiniyattam (a solo dance reflecting feminine grace or lasya) from Kerala, Kuchipuri from Andhra Pradesh (a combination of classical dance, drama and music), Manipuri from Manipur (characterised by soft, graceful movements focusing on Vaishnavism themes) and Sattriya from Assam (introduced by Vaishnam saint Sankaradeva). Additionally, the Indian Ministry of Culture includes 'Chhau' (a tribal martial art dance from eastern India - Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal) in the list, recognizing total nines.

All these Indian classical dance forms practically represent the cultural and artistic tradition of India. They are not simply meant to perform arts but also a unique perspective of storytelling and spirituality. They were the art forms which were nurtured or transmitted following teacher-pupil or guru- shishya Parampara, public shows, and cultural hubs or hermitages. Now-a-days, however, the digital globalization has transformed these artistic arts and most of their dissemination and consumption forms are designed and textured by the digital platforms. The performers, scholars, disciples, gurus and cultural institutions have been also sharing their arts through tutorials and discussions held virtually through these digital or social mediums or platforms.

Metaphysical Foundations
From the metaphysical point of view a researcher revolves around the nature of reality in cultural and artistic expression in classical dances. This reality of artistic expression however is not positive or objective or measurable. Rather it is expressed or communicated through interpretations, cultural context and audience narrative. So, any research work on classical dance in Indian context is inclined more towards socially constructed Interpretivism where understanding of meaning, experiences and interpretations

are most viable than mere measured quantifiable data. The reality in this research study involves the evolving relationship between tradition and technology. However, the "reality" of Indian classical dance in contemporary times involves a complex intersection of spiritual preservation, social adaptation, physical rigor, and technical, including digital, innovation.

2. Methodology Review: Epistemology in Action

In a research work, methodology is a systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. It justifies the choice of specific surveys, interviews, or experiments by means of which research objectives are addressed. Epistemology or theory of knowledgeable acts as a methodology when it provides the fundamental philosophical justification for how knowledge is generated, verified and structured within research. That is, it serves as the theoretical rationale that proves why a specific method is appropriate for the goal of the study.

Epistemologically, scholars working on Indian classical dance have heavily relied upon textual analysis, historical documentation and aesthetic theory. For example, Natya Shastra, the ancient Sanskrit text often termed as the Fifth Vedas is an epistemological basis on which Indian classical dance is rooted heavily. This text, regarded as a sacred manual, combines Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. Of these, Rigveda is accepted as the depository of all intellectual contents, Samaveda gives music and rhythm, Yajurveda emphasizes abhinaya (mime and gestures) and Atharvaveda emphasizes philosophical concepts such as Rasa or emotional or aesthetic experiences (bhava).

However, the present days ' research increasingly incorporates empirical approaches particularly while examining the role of digital platforms. Scholars analyse audience engagement, content dissemination patterns and the influence of algorithms on cultural visibility. For instance, platforms like You Tube allow researchers to study metrics such as viewership, audience comments and global reach.

3. Ethical Considerations

Culture, human values and ethics are integral components of human society. They influence our thoughts, behaviour and decision -making processes. These three concepts are interdependent and have a significant impact on each other. Culture refers to the set of beliefs, values, customs and practices that a particular group of people share. Human values are the principles and beliefs that individuals consider essential in their lives.

In research ethical consideration play a vital role while involving cultural heritage and digital media. A classical dance researcher is in principle responsible to represent classical dance tradition accurately. For the sake of online TRP or popularity, misinterpretation or oversimplification of complex and subtle cultural practices may tarnish the authenticity of the art form. The historical and philosophical foundations of dance traditions must be ensured while creating contents. Worthy choreographies and creative works can easily be copied or reported online without acknowledging the real ownership.

Temptation to "bypass learning "is a significant ethical issue in today's academic research. Excessive relying on technological shortcuts including AI or artificial intelligence tools poses a substantial threat of non- ethical issues. AI - based analysis, content generation without proper verification or citing the source are becoming cases of ethical failures suffering from intellectual or academic dishonesty, although they escape charges of violation of legal regulations. Automated reproduction of information is not based on genuine understanding, critical thinking, transparency and acknowledgement of proper sources.

However, scholars must be careful of the potential for cultural commodification where traditional or classical art forms are simplified or commercialized for online consumption. Ethical scholarship must therefore balance the goals of promotion and preservation.

4. Conclusion: Future Ethical Roadmap

The conjugation of Indian classical dance and social media gives birth to a rapidly evolving area of research that raises important philosophical and ethical questions. As digital platforms continue to transform cultural communication, researchers must adopt thoughtful and responsible approaches to studying and promoting traditional art forms.

Here is a proposed ethical roadmap to future dance researchers.
1) Research should not be confined to colonial perspectives so as to ensure that the history, meanings and social aspects of Indian classical dance, specially nurtured by marginalized communities are acknowledged and analysed in their proper sense. Researchers should also save the intellectual unique property of Teachers or Gurus and artists against unauthentic and unauthorized use in modern performances publicized through digital platforms. Careful handling of traditional knowledge requires ethical documentation of the Guru-Shishya Parampara, ensuring that the essence of pedagogical practices are preserved.
2) AI - driven dance tools (for example, movement analysis) should protect the anonymity and artistic integrity of dancers. Piracy or simulation of choreography or dancer's likenesses by using AI must also be checked and prevented by ethical guidelines. It should also be ensured that digital contents stored or archived should accurately represent the original form without distortion.
3) The transition from traditional apprenticeship to institutional training should be explored ethically in the research ensuring that the nurturing, spiritual and moral sensibilities of the old system are not lost. Classical dance should integrate future pedagogy with emotional balance, mental health and physical well-being, instead of focusing only on physical gestures or virtuosity.

4) In research there must be an acknowledgement of the authority and appropriation ensuring that the research empowers original dancers rather than exploiting them for academic gain. In case of neo-classical or contemporary adaptations of dance, there must be a balance between innovation and core traditional techniques.

5) While interviewing dancers in a research work, they must be informed and voluntary consent should be obtained beforehand. Sensitivity to the emotional bond between the dancer and their gurus should also be cared for. Every dance research should have a holistic analysis which should cover the role of dance in spiritual, psychological and social development.

In fine, the present day's researchers should mediate between traditional wisdom and modern or contemporary demands fostering a sustainable, inclusive and ethically decorated classical dance ecosystem.

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