Dance and Gender Relations : A Study of Male and Female Interactions in Indian Classical Dance Classes

Prof. Kusuma R.
Assistant Professor , Department of Humanities
St. Francis De Sales College, Bangalore

Dr. Shridevi Aloor
Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Studies and Research in Women's Studies,
V.S.K. University, Ballari, Karnataka, India

Laxmi Balkrishnan
Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities
St. Francis De Sales College, Bangalore

Abstract

This research paper aims to explore the interaction between male and female students in Indian classical dance classes and to analyze the implications of gender dynamics on the learning and performance of Indian classical dance. The study used a qualitative research design, including participant observation and interviews with male and female dance students. The findings suggest that while male and female students interact with each other in a respectful and collaborative manner, gender roles and stereotypes are present in Indian classical dance classes. Female students are often assigned more delicate and graceful movements, while male students are assigned more powerful and athletic movements. These gendered expectations and limitations can impact the learning and performance of students and can lead to a lack of creativity and individuality in their performances. The study highlights the importance of creating more inclusive and diverse dance communities and suggests future directions for research on the impact of gender relations on the mental health and well-being of Indian classical dance students.

Key Words

Women dance Male female Feminism mental health wellbeing.

Introduction :

Indian classical dance is a form of traditional dance that has been practiced in India for centuries. It is characterized by intricate footwork, expressive gestures, and graceful movements, and is deeply rooted in Indian mythology and culture. There are several different styles of Indian

classical dance, including Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, and Manipuri. The interaction between male and female students in Indian classical dance classes is an important area of study because it can shed light on the ways in which gender relations play out in a cultural context that values tradition, ritual, and performance. In Indian classical dance, male and female dancers often perform together, but their roles and responsibilities may be different. For example, male dancers may be expected to perform more acrobatic movements, while female dancers may be expected to express more emotion through their facial expressions and hand gestures.

Gender relations in India are complex and multifaceted, influenced by factors such as caste, religion, and region. While there have been significant improvements in recent years, gender inequality remains a persistent issue in many parts of the country. Women continue to face discrimination and violence, and their participation in public spaces and activities is often restricted. The study of gender relations in Indian classical dance classes can provide insight into these broader social dynamics and help to identify strategies for promoting gender equality and empowerment.

Literature Review :

Eexisting literature on gender relations in Indian classical dance has explored various aspects of this complex topic. Some studies have focused on the historical and cultural roots of Indian classical dance, examining the ways in which gender roles and expectations have been shaped by tradition and mythology. Other studies have focused on the contemporary practice of Indian classical dance, analyzing the ways in which gender dynamics play out in dance classes and on stage.

One important aspect of gender relations in Indian classical dance is the roles that male and female dancers are expected to play. Traditionally, male dancers were seen as the dominant performers, responsible for providing the rhythm and tempo of the dance, while female dancers were seen as more passive, expressing emotion through their movements and gestures. However, over time, these roles have become more flexible and gender norms have evolved.

Despite these changes, power dynamics between male and female dancers continue to exist in the context of Indian classical dance classes. For example, male teachers may be more likely to give opportunities for solos or leadership roles to male students, while female students may be expected to defer to male students in group performances. These power dynamics can reinforce traditional gender roles and limit opportunities for female students to fully express themselves and develop their skills as dancers.

Additionally, some studies have highlighted the potential for sexual harassment and abuse in Indian classical dance classes, particularly when male teachers hold positions of power over female students. This underscores the need for greater attention to be paid to the ways in which power dynamics can play out in dance classes, and for steps to be taken to prevent and address any instances of abuse or harassment.

Overall, the existing literature on gender relations in Indian classical dance highlights the importance of understanding the complex social dynamics that shape this art form, and of promoting greater gender equality and empowerment in dance classes and beyond

One study by Parul Bhandari (2014) examined the experiences of female students in Kathak dance classes in India. Bhandari found that many of the female students reported feeling uncomfortable when dancing with male partners, particularly during intimate or sensual movements. She also noted that male teachers sometimes made inappropriate comments or touched female students inappropriately. Bhandari argues that this type of behavior is often normalized in Indian classical dance classes and needs to be addressed through better teacher training and more open discussions about gender dynamics in the classroom.

Another study by Anuradha Kapur (2006) examined gender relations in the context of Bharatanatyam dance classes in Chennai, India. Kapur found that male and female students often had different goals and aspirations for their dance training. Male students were more likely to see dance as a potential career path, while female students often saw it as a way to improve their cultural knowledge or as a form of physical exercise. Kapur argues that this gendered division of labor within the dance class reflects broader societal expectations for men and women in India.

A third study by Pallabi Chakravorty (2017) looked at the experiences of male students in Indian classical dance classes. Chakravorty found that male students often face significant social stigma for pursuing dance, as it is seen as a feminine activity. Male students also reported feeling uncomfortable dancing with female partners, particularly during intimate or romantic movements. Chakravorty argues that this type of stigma needs to be addressed through more open discussions about gender and masculinity in Indian society.

Research Design and Approach: This study will utilize a qualitative research design, specifically an ethnographic approach. Ethnography involves observing and participating in the culture or community being studied, in this case, Indian classical dance classes. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the interactions between male and female students in the dance classes, as well as an understanding of the cultural context surrounding gender relations in Indian classical dance.

Data Collection Methods: The data collection methods for this study will include:

Participant Observation :

The researcher will attend and participate in Indian classical dance classes, observing the interactions between male and female students.

Interviews :

The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with male and female students, as well as dance instructors, to gain their perspectives on gender relations in Indian classical dance.

Document Analysis :

The researcher will analyze relevant documents, such as dance class syllabi, to gain a deeper understanding of how gender is represented and discussed in the context of Indian classical dance classes.

Overall, the existing literature on gender relations in Indian classical dance highlights the importance of understanding the complex social dynamics that shape this art form, and of promoting greater gender equality and empowerment in dance classes and beyond

One study by Parul Bhandari (2014) examined the experiences of female students in Kathak dance classes in India. Bhandari found that many of the female students reported feeling uncomfortable when dancing with male partners, particularly during intimate or sensual movements. She also noted that male teachers sometimes made inappropriate comments or touched female students inappropriately. Bhandari argues that this type of behavior is often normalized in Indian classical dance classes and needs to be addressed through better teacher training and more open discussions about gender dynamics in the classroom.

Another study by Anuradha Kapur (2006) examined gender relations in the context of Bharatanatyam dance classes in Chennai, India. Kapur found that male and female students often had different goals and aspirations for their dance training. Male students were more likely to see dance as a potential career path, while female students often saw it as a way to improve their cultural knowledge or as a form of physical exercise. Kapur argues that this gendered division of labor within the dance class reflects broader societal expectations for men and women in India.

A third study by Pallabi Chakravorty (2017) looked at the experiences of male students in Indian classical dance classes. Chakravorty found that male students often face significant social stigma for pursuing dance, as it is seen as a feminine activity. Male students also reported feeling uncomfortable dancing with female partners, particularly during intimate or romantic movements. Chakravorty argues that this type of stigma needs to be addressed through more open discussions about gender and masculinity in Indian society.

Research Design and Approach: This study will utilize a qualitative research design, specifically an ethnographic approach. Ethnography involves observing and participating in the culture or community being studied, in this case, Indian classical dance classes. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the interactions between male and female students in the dance classes, as well as an understanding of the cultural context surrounding gender relations in Indian classical dance.

Data Collection Methods: The data collection methods for this study will include:

Participant Observation :

The researcher will attend and participate in Indian classical dance classes, observing the interactions between male and female students.

Interviews :

The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with male and female students, as well as dance instructors, to gain their perspectives on gender relations in Indian classical dance.

Document Analysis :

The researcher will analyze relevant documents, such as dance class syllabi, to gain a deeper understanding of how gender is represented and discussed in the context of Indian classical dance classes.

Participants and Sampling Techniques :

The participants for this study will be male and female students enrolled in Indian classical dance classes, as well as dance instructors. The sample will be purposive, meaning that participants will be selected based on their relevance to the research question and the richness of the data they can provide. The sample will be diverse in terms of age, gender, and experience level in dance classes.

Recruitment of participants will be done through advertisements at local dance schools and social media. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants will be maintained throughout the study.

Findings :

Description of Male and Female Interactions in Indian Classical Dance Classes:

During participant observation, it was observed that male and female students interacted with each other in a respectful and collaborative manner. In group dance routines, male and female students worked together to coordinate their movements and create a cohesive performance. However, there were also instances where male students were given more prominent roles or were favored by dance instructors.

In interviews, female students reported feeling self-conscious and judged by male students during dance classes, while male students reported feeling pressure to perform and lead the group. Female students also reported feeling hesitant to ask for help or guidance from male dance instructors, while male students felt more comfortable seeking help from female dance instructors.

Analysis of Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Indian Classical Dance Classes :

The analysis of dance class syllabi and documents showed that gender roles and stereotypes were present in Indian classical dance classes. Female students were often assigned more delicate and graceful movements, while male students were assigned more powerful and athletic movements. This perpetuated gender stereotypes and limited the range of movement and expression for both male and female students.

In interviews, male and female students both expressed frustration with these gendered expectations and limitations. They also reported feeling pressure to conform to traditional gender roles in order to be successful in Indian classical dance.

Comparison of Male and Female Experiences in Indian Classical Dance Classes :

Overall, female students reported feeling more self-conscious and judged than male students in Indian classical dance classes. They also reported feeling pressure to conform to gendered expectations and limitations in their movements and expression. Male students, on the other hand, reported feeling pressure to perform and lead the group.

Despite these differences, both male and female students expressed a deep appreciation and passion for Indian classical dance. They also expressed a desire for more open and inclusive gender dynamics in their classes.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that gender relations in Indian classical dance classes are complex and influenced

by cultural expectations and stereotypes. These dynamics can impact the learning and performance of both male and female students. However, there is also potential for change and greater inclusion in the future.

Discussion :

Implications of Gender Relations in Indian Classical Dance Classes :

The gender relations in Indian classical dance classes have implications for the learning and performance of the students. The gendered expectations and stereotypes limit the range of movement and expression for both male and female students. This can lead to a lack of creativity and individuality in their performances.

Moreover, the self-consciousness and pressure to conform to traditional gender roles can cause stress and anxiety for students. This can affect their confidence and overall enjoyment of Indian classical dance.

How Gender Dynamics Impact the Learning and Performance of Indian Classical Dance:The gender dynamics in Indian classical dance classes can impact the learning and performance of the students in several ways. For instance, the gendered expectations and stereotypes can limit the development of a student's full potential. This can also limit the diversity and creativity of performances, as students may feel pressured to conform to traditional gender roles.

Moreover, the self-consciousness and pressure to conform can lead to anxiety and stress. This can affect a student's ability to learn and perform effectively.

Possible Solutions to Address Gender Inequality in Indian Classical Dance Classes :

One possible solution to address gender inequality in Indian classical dance classes is to challenge the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Dance instructors can assign movements and roles to students based on their individual strengths and abilities, rather than their gender.

Furthermore, dance instructors can encourage open and inclusive communication between male and female students. This can help to foster a collaborative and respectful environment in the classroom.

Finally, it is important to promote gender equality and diversity in Indian classical dance classes. This can be done through education and awareness campaigns, as well as through the inclusion of diverse gender identities and expressions in performances.

In conclusion, addressing gender inequality in Indian classical dance classes is essential for creating a more inclusive and diverse dance community. This can lead to greater creativity and individuality in performances and a more enjoyable learning experience for all students

Conclusion :

Summary of Findings :

The study aimed to investigate the interaction between male and female students in Indian classical dance classes and to explore the implications of gender dynamics on the learning and performance of Indian classical dance. The findings suggest that gender relations in Indian classical dance classes are complex and

influenced by cultural expectations and stereotypes.

The male and female students interacted with each other in a respectful and collaborative manner during participant observation. However, gender roles and stereotypes were present in Indian classical dance classes, with female students assigned more delicate and graceful movements and male students assigned more powerful and athletic movements.

These gendered expectations and limitations can impact the learning and performance of students, leading to a lack of creativity and individuality in their performances. Female students reported feeling self-conscious and judged, while male students reported feeling pressure to perform and lead the group.

Limitations of the Research :

One limitation of this research is the small sample size of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The research was conducted in a specific geographic location, which may not be representative of all Indian classical dance classes. Additionally, there is a possibility of researcher bias during data collection and analysis.

Future Directions for Research :

Future research can investigate the impact of gender relations on the mental health and well-being of Indian classical dance students. Further exploration of the specific gendered expectations and limitations present in Indian classical dance can also be conducted. In addition, it would be valuable to examine the impact of the teacher's gender on the classroom dynamics and the learning experiences of students.

Overall, the study sheds light on the complex gender dynamics present in Indian classical dance classes and emphasizes the importance of creating more inclusive and diverse dance communities.

References :

1. Acharya, S. (2014). Gendered bodies in Indian classical dance: An autoethnographic exploration. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27(6), 810-829.
2. Anand, N. (2019). Gender, tradition, and modernity in Indian classical dance. The Journal of the National Association for Drama and Dance in Education, 32(2), 9-18.
3. Bharucha, R. (1995). The politics of cultural practice: Thinking through theatre in an Indian context. Cultural Studies, 9(2), 245-257.
4. Desai, K. (2018). The dance of gender: Exploring gender in Indian classical dance. Dance Research Journal, 50(3), 1-16.
5. Ganguly, S. (2016). The cultural politics of gender in Indian classical dance. Theatre Research International, 41(2), 155-166.
6. Gopinath, G. (2014). Choreographies of gender: Indian dance and the politics of representation. Feminist Theory, 15(2), 171-190.
7. Nair, M. (2017). Embodied traditions: Gender, performance and culture in South Asia. Palgrave Macmillan.
8. Sharma, N. (2019). Deconstructing the gendered body in Indian classical dance: A critical analysis. Journal of Gender Studies, 28(1), 68-80.
9. Singh, R. (2015). Dance, gender and culture: Perspectives from India. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
10. Srinivasan, A. (2012). Gender, dance, and modernity in India: Performing history. University of Hawaii Press.

UGC-CARE List

You searched for **"anhad lok "**. Total Journals : 1

Search:

Sr.No.	Journal Title	Publisher	ISSN	E-ISSN	UGC-CARE coverage years	Details
1	Anhad Lok	Vyanjana Art and Culture Society	2349-137X	NA	from October-2021 to Present	View

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries

Previous 1 Next

Copyright © 2023 Savitribai Phule Pune University. All rights reserved. | Disclaimer