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An insight into the dynamics relating to the economic status of individuals on their engagement with various dance forms like Ballet versus traditional dance forms like Bharatnatyam in achieving holistic development among young dancers.

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Abstract : *Dance and other art forms are ancient expressions of various types of stories and folklore as also socio, political and economic events during various time periods. Besides this it has helped in inculcating various forms of positive attributes in children. This research investigates the relationship between socioeconomic status and young dancers' participation in different dance forms, particularly Ballet and Bharatanatyam, and explores how these forms may contribute to holistic development. The study focuses on the ways economic circumstances can influence access to dance education, including affordability, availability of training facilities, access to qualified instructors and the ability to sustain long-term participation. It also examines the relationship between technical virtuosity and creative aesthetic expression, considering how different dance traditions provide opportunities for physical, cognitive, emotional, social and artistic development.*

Key words : Bharatnatyam, Ballet, Holistic Development, Aesthetic, Movement, Mimesis, Mimetic processes, Rhythmic Dance Configurations, Synaesthesia

Introduction

Dance education promotes students' ability to work in a team and develop skills in team collaboration and creation. All colleges and universities dance programs aim to cultivate students' aesthetic skills as the primary goal. These activities integrate students' emotional characteristics and develop an artistic atmosphere. [2]

This immersive artistic atmosphere can speed up the formation of students' creative thinking. In the development of innovative thinking, the cultivation of artistic literacy is the core link. Only by constantly updating and creating can one test the changes of the students cultural and artistic levels.[2]

Students can further improve their aesthetic and creative abilities after learning dance knowledge. In addition, students continuously improve their psychological, physical, and moral qualities through learning various dance forms. In general, dance education helps students achieve all-around development. [2]

Teachers of dance adopt new methods to teach content beyond basic knowledge. They combine old knowledge with new forms during the imparting of knowledge. This new approach uses media

tools as auxiliary tools to improve students' motivation to learn and as a result enhances their subjective initiative (Qu, 2018). [2]

Dance is more than the aesthetic pleasure that is dependent on the income of the student artists who want to pursue this activity as a career. For young children dance could be valued on the willingness to pay as well as supply driven techniques that involve various revenue generation models for the dance schools **[1]**

Ballet is popular in India due to the fact that values like – discipline, storytelling, hard work, and artistry – blend seamlessly with Indian traditions. In a country where dance forms like Bharatanatayam and Kathak depict ancient stories through intricate dance movements, ballet similarly provides a different medium for narrative expression. It does not replace ancient traditions but in fact, augments India's diverse artistic ecosystem. [3]

Cultural organizations have popularised this dance form along with others in their programs and events. The showcasing of diverse dance forms have helped in bridging the gap between various forms of dance and at the same time resulted in both greater appreciation as well as acceptance among the larger audience. This method has enhanced the relevance of all dance forms among the diverse artistic landscape of India [3]

Ballet like other Indian ancient dance forms impart discipline, coordination, motor skill, posture alignment and at the same time enhances musicality and creativity in young children. [4]

Though the majority of ballet students in India are the first in their families to explore the art form, this was not the case in the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai where Taraporevala, a filmmaker in her 60s, studied ballet in Mumbai with Tushna Dallas (founder of The School of Classical Ballet and Western Dance in 1966). Her legacy has been carried forward by her daughter Khushcheher Dallas.[5]

Bharatnatyam is a form of dance that originated in the temples of southern India. It is the movement of this dance from the temple to the people that there are different forms or types of Bharatnatyam that have emerged. It is a movement from temple to courts of the kings to the concert stage which has led to different types of "Bharatnatyam" being performed. This started primarily from the 1930s to the 1980s.

As this period included the time of independence, there was a strong nationalist element that was introduced in the dance forms around 1947. The Rukmini Devi style of Bharatnatyam incorporates some type of ballet as she herself was trained in that form of dance.[6] The history of Bharatnatyam shows that participation in the dance form has been influenced by social hierarchies and culture. The reconstruction of the dance form caused the *devadasi* community to be sidelined as they were presenting Bharatnatyam in a more socially acceptable way. This historical transformation implies that engagement with traditional dance cannot be viewed alone by socioeconomic and social factors, as perceptions of status and respectability have played a major role in determining whose participation in the dance form matters.[6]

Given the importance of these two systems of dance, it is imperative that the learning of any performing art, adds to the holistic development of children.

2. Literature Review/ Background

Dance has been a significant component in the social and cultural life of humans, extending beyond physical movements to serve social, emotional and cultural functions. These functions are especially relevant during childhood, as dance-related movement can contribute to children's social and emotional experiences. Furthermore, synchronised movements with others has been associated with increased social behaviour, suggesting that participation in dance can support interpersonal skills. As children develop better control over their movements, it can further enhance their ability to interact in meaningful discussions with peers and be able to respond to different social settings. Therefore, dance may contribute to holistic development by simultaneously engaging in a variety of skills that support an individual's development. While current research describes the broader development with social benefits that are associated with dance, it mainly examines dance as a human behaviour rather than how the benefits may differ from dance to dance. In particular, restricted attention is given to Western Classical forms like Ballet and traditional Indian forms like Bharatnatyam, which differ in their techniques, culture and expression. It is important to reduce the cultural stigma between the two forms by placing dance in whichever form as an expression of kinesthetic semiotics that is an extension of movement of the human body. Dance is a format which includes social dance and thus it embodies ritualized movements that depict 'social identities' through bodily movements.
The dance during the Euro-American era was considered as a part of 'social dancing'. The moment the dance achieved the stature of being showcased on Broadway, they were then given the status accorded to artists. Ballet for example, were primarily performed by women while dances that were specific to a tribe or community were labeled as 'native dances'**.** These dances embodied the originality of the tribe and were more attuned to the physical 'body' instead of mentality. Dance as a performance was then an identification of cultural identity. These dance forms came naturally to the people of that community as it was a symbolic movement that was either actively learned or passively absorbed in the community. It was so naturalized that it was a part of life and not thought of as a secondary social complex dance form. [7]
Accordingly, UNESCO has recognized dance as intangible cultural heritage. Body and performativity, mimesis and mimetic learning, otherness and alterity, anthropological structural features, interculturality and anthropological research. This form brings to the forefront a knowledge of man and his body being represented which would not otherwise be visible nor comprehensible without them being performed. They show different images, perspectives and interpretations of human physicality. *Dances embody a knowledge of man, bring it to the representation and make it experienceable in mimetic processes*. At its center are the human body and its movements. These are subject to the dynamics of space and time in which the movements of the body unfold. From the dance movements, which take place in space and constitute in time, arise rhythmic dance configurations in which the dynamics of a collective and an individual imaginary are expressed (Wulf 2014). Bodies in dance are media of human self-expression and self-understanding. They make aesthetic experiences possible.Dances have synaesthetic effects produced by several senses. Especially important are the movement, hearing, tactile and visual

sense; but also, the smell and the sense of taste have meaning for the effects of the dance. Like rituals and games, dances are central to the formation of communities. Synesthesia and the performativity of dance create an emotional and social similarity between people who dance together. Dances have a synaesthetic and a performative surplus, out of which their social dynamics and meaning develop. Dances are physical, performative, expressive, symbolic, regular, non-instrumental. They are repetitive, homogeneous, ludic and public; and are patterns in which collectively shared knowledge and body practices are staged and performed, and in which self-expression and self-interpretation of a common order takes place. *Dances have a beginning and an end and thus a temporal communication and interaction structure*. The following anthropological dimensions are especially suitable for the development of cultural heritage:

• body and performativity;
• mimesis and mimetic learning;
• otherness and alterity;
• anthropological structural features;
• interculturality and anthropological research.

Dances are forms of expression of people and their bodies that make something tangible that would not be experienced without them.

If one approaches this knowledge today from the side of anthropology, then there is in particular, philosophical anthropology, as was developed in Germany, This emphasized inherently on the open character of human history and the possibilities of human perfectibility. The historical anthropology of the "School of Annales" developed in France in the first half of the 20th century, focused on the historical character of the human body and culture as well as questions of mentality research. In addition the AngloSaxon cultural anthropology or ethnology with its interest in cultural diversity and heterogeneity (Wulf 2009, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) was developed. With these as the background, the development of a historical-anthropological dance and body research developed. This was not limited to certain cultures and epochs. They required a transdisciplinary and transcultural orientation as well as a reflexive self-criticism **[9]**

The traditional mode of learning in ancient India, was from the Vedas.

For all disciplines of dance form it was the *guru-shishya parampara* , the traditional relationship between the guru and his disciple which was followed. The disciples admitted themselves at an early age to study with the guru and live with him as part of his household. In this case, tradition was the concept of the gurukul, home or family of the guru. When the disciple entered this parampara, then the guru's family included all his disciples who were being trained under him. The key factor in this training process becomes the complementarity of the shishya's capacity to receive and the guru's capacity to give. The shishya's dedication and wholehearted commitment in terms of time and effort become obvious. [10]

Research Gap and Methodology

The paper seeks to distinguish *'creative aesthetic expression'* from 'Technical Virtuosity' in relation to classical dances in general and the Russian Ballet and Bharatnatyam in particular. It is

argued that Creative Artistic Expression is associated with development of genre, which in turn, happens when Repertoire Deepening is attempted by performing arts theatres. Creative aesthetic expression is both 'artiste' and 'theatre' driven and invites in its wake, serious challenges in managing the economic and creative resources of a Theatre. While the 'demandprice' dynamics associated with Repertoire Deepening theatres tends to promote dead weight losses on account of their narrow 'connoisseur ' focus, the 'demand-price' dynamics of Repertoire Widening theaters that go for a mass fan base, creates pricing systems that are lower than classical monopoly prices but are above Average/ Marginal Costs. The fact that repertoire widening theatres are low in creative aesthetic expression (and perhaps high in technical virtuosity) and cater to mass spectators, cause their pricing strategy to be sensitive to costs of production.
The methodology adopted would be primarily qualitative from secondary sources. Quantitative analysis could also be attempted from authentic data available

Analysis

Difference and synergies between 'creative aesthetic expression' from 'Technical Virtuosity' in Ballet and Bharatnatyam

Darda and Cross (2022), in their study The Role of Expertise and Culture in Visual Art Appreciation, investigated how cultural background and artistic expertise influence individuals' appreciation of dance. Their research is particularly relevant to the present investigation because it explores how audiences perceive the aesthetic qualities of Ballet and Bharatanatyam, two classical dance forms that differ in their movement vocabulary, cultural origins and methods of communicating artistic meaning. Although the study does not directly compare the objective technical difficulty of the two dance forms, its findings provide insight into how technical competency, familiarity and expressive qualities contribute to the way dance performances are evaluated.

The second experiment involved 90 participants, comprising 48 Indian participants and 42 Western participants. Within these groups, some participants had dance expertise, while others had limited or no formal dance experience. Participants watched short video clips of a professional dancer performing Ballet and Bharatanatyam and evaluated the performances according to characteristics such as beauty, liking, enjoyability, familiarity, complexity, evocativeness and perceived technical competency. This method allowed the researchers to investigate whether aesthetic appreciation depended exclusively on the characteristics of a performance or was also influenced by the viewer's cultural background and previous experience with dance.

One of the most significant findings of Darda and Cross's (2022) research was that perceived technical competency was associated with higher aesthetic evaluations. *Participants who perceived the performances as more technically competent also tended to provide higher ratings of beauty and liking.* Similarly, familiarity, evocativeness, complexity and reproducibility were positively associated with aesthetic judgements. These findings suggest that audiences do not necessarily separate a dancer's technical execution from their overall artistic impression of a

performance. Instead, *technical ability may contribute to the way viewers interpret and appreciate the expressive qualities of movement.*

Hedianti and Setyaningrum (2025), in their study Babalu Dance and Holistic Development of Early Childhood: A Case Study on the Integration of Traditional Arts in Early Childhood Education, investigated the contribution of traditional dance to the holistic development of young children. Their research is particularly relevant to the present investigation because it explores how participation in a traditional dance form can contribute to physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and artistic development. Although the study focuses on Babalu folk dance from the northern coastal region of Java rather than Bharatanatyam, its findings provide insight into the developmental potential of traditional dance and establish a foundation for examining how different dance forms may contribute to the overall development of young dancers.

The study involved 18 participants, comprising six children aged four to six years, six dance instructors and six parents, at Sanggar Putra Budaya Batang in Central Java, Indonesia. The researchers adopted a qualitative intrinsic case study approach, collecting data through participatory observations, semi-structured interviews and visual documentation. Observations were conducted across eight weekly sessions, each lasting three hours, allowing the researchers to examine children's responses to dance instruction, movement coordination, social interactions and emotional expression. The collected data were analysed thematically and organised into five developmental domains: gross motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and artistic appreciation and expression. This approach enabled the researchers to examine dance as a multidimensional learning experience rather than evaluating participation exclusively through technical proficiency or performance quality.

One of the most significant findings of Hedianti and Setyaningrum's (2025) research was that different movement categories appeared to contribute to distinct aspects of children's development. The researchers documented 65 movement variations within Babalu dance, comprising 27 hand movements, 21 leg movements, 11 body movements and six head movements. Hand movements represented approximately 41.54% of the recorded variations, while leg movements accounted for 32.31%. This distribution highlights the emphasis placed on hand gestures and lower-body coordination within the choreography. The researchers associated hand movements, including ukel-ukel and sembah, with the development of finger dexterity and fine motor coordination, while movements such as gejug, jinjit and ndegdeg were associated with balance, posture and gross motor control. These findings suggest that the physical structure of a traditional dance form can create opportunities for the development of different motor skills through repeated and coordinated movement.

Beyond physical development, the study identified potential cognitive and socio-emotional benefits associated with regular dance participation. During the initial training sessions, some children experienced difficulties remembering movement sequences, coordinating their actions

with musical cues and performing confidently alongside their peers. *However, observations from later sessions indicated improvements in movement recall, rhythmic synchronisation, cooperation and expressive confidence. Parents and instructors also reported changes in children's behaviour, including greater attentiveness, increased willingness to participate in group activities and improved expressiveness.* These findings suggest that traditional dance can provide an environment in which physical activity, cognitive engagement and social interaction occur simultaneously. Rather than treating dance solely as a technical or artistic discipline, the study positions it as a potential means of supporting several interconnected dimensions of childhood development. Another important finding concerned the relationship between traditional dance, artistic expression and cultural identity. The researchers observed that children gradually moved beyond mechanically imitating gestures towards expressing greater intentionality and apparent awareness of their symbolic meanings. Movements such as sembah were associated with respect, while other gestures provided opportunities for children to engage with cultural narratives and expressive conventions. *This suggests that traditional dance may contribute to holistic development by combining physical learning with cultural familiarity, symbolic interpretation and artistic expression.* In the context of the present research, this provides a useful basis for investigating whether participation in Bharatanatyam similarly supports dancers' cultural understanding and expressive development, and how these experiences compare with those associated with Ballet.

However, despite its relevance to the developmental benefits of traditional dance, Hedianti and Setyaningrum's (2025) study does not directly investigate the influence of socioeconomic status on dance participation or development. The researchers did not measure household income, training expenditure, affordability or differences in access to dance education. Furthermore, the study did not include a comparison group participating in Ballet or another dance form, meaning that its findings cannot establish whether traditional dance produces greater developmental benefits than Ballet. The small sample of six children and the absence of standardised developmental assessments also limit the extent to which the observed improvements can be generalised. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable qualitative evidence that *traditional dance can offer opportunities for physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and artistic development*. It therefore supports the developmental component of the present investigation while highlighting the need to examine socioeconomic accessibility and compare the experiences of young dancers across Ballet and Bharatanatyam.

Thus it has clearly been indicated through various studies that the learning of traditional dance forms increases the holistic development by inculcating and bringing to the forefront various characteristics like concentration, recall, team spirit and at times the basics of maths and physics. All of this helps them in their regular studies in school. A large number of children have used this as a career path and made performance and teaching as well as comparing various dance forms their profession. In today’s world anything that interests a person and brings forward the love of that art is something that should be pursued with vigour. If an individual’s hobby becomes their profession the exponential growth for the individual in this field is phenomenal. Schools in India

have understood the importance of introducing art forms to children at a very young age. This could be in the form of dance or any other form of art, as it brings out positive characteristics in a child. To pursue such art formats are easier in private schools but the government has introduced subjects, books and curriculum for all the schools under it. Understanding that it is important for the holistic development of the child

Limitations

The main limitations of this study is that only secondary authentic data has been analysed. Due to paucity of time and finance primary research was not conducted. It would have been ideal if physical research was attempted both in private and government schools so that one could understand the importance of holistic development of the child and also the influence of family income in career choices.

Conclusion

The relationship between socioeconomic status, participation in different dance forms, holistic development among young dancers demonstrates that dance is not simply a recreational activity or an artistic pursuit, but it is also an important influence on an individual's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural development. Through an exploration of Ballet and Bharatanatyam, this research highlights how different dance traditions can contribute to the development of young individuals while also revealing how access to these opportunities may be influenced by economic circumstances, cultural background and social perceptions. Although both dance forms require discipline, consistent practice and technical training, the opportunities available to young dancers to participate in them may differ depending on the resources accessible to their families and communities. Realizing the importance of dance as one of the major art forms for holistic development governments both at the center and the state have initiated in including this as part of the curriculum so that children coming from marginalised backgrounds could also avail of this most important facility.

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