

CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE OF KUCHIPUDI DANCE

A dissertation submitted to the **University of Hyderabad** in partial
fulfillment of the award of a **Ph.D. degree in Dept. of Dance**

By

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Dedication

It all begins with love.

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1. Introduction

During my teenage years, a fitness instructor emphasized that I, being a dancer, should also be trained in other routines to improve my performance. He taught me several exercises like leg raises, squats, lunges, sprints, and several flexibility and strengthening exercises. He, having had traveled to places like Chennai¹, Chidambaram to witness dance performances, excitedly narrated stories of the amazingly acrobatic dancers of Chennai and their pre-performance, pre-makeup workout routine which included ten rounds of running in a nearby park, high knees, leg raises, butt kicks and a few stretches. That was my first encounter with training in movement forms other than Dance. Another instance that left me a bit more curious was when I performed in Kūchipūdi Nrutyotsav² conducted by Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University³ in Kūchipūdi village⁴, where there was also an Odissi⁵ group's performance in the festival. The Odissi dancers were practicing their basics and a few exercises on the day of their performance. Everyone in the village was in awe about how they were practicing on the day of

¹ Students of Sridevi Nrithyalaya, a prime dance institution of *Bharatanatyam* in Chennai

² A week long dance festival showcasing Kūchipūdi solo and dance drama performances

³ Is a government University which was established By the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri N T Rama Rao which is one of the few Indian language universities, main language of the university being Telugu. This university is equivalent to Sangeet Natak Akademi in Andhra Pradesh (Now in Hyderabad, Telangana). the department of dance of the university plays a major role in conducting dance festivals, workshops, seminars and conferences.

⁴ Throughout this study, Kūchipūdi in some contexts is the dance form and in other contexts, it is the name of the village from which the dance form originated. In both the cases, the word 'Kūchipūdi' has not been italicized.

⁵ *Odissi* is one among the eight classical dance forms of India which belongs to the state of Orissa.

their performance. As a teenager from a small town, I did not understand the importance of practice on the day of a performance as I rested as much as I could, on the day of my performance. In a pre-internet era, being aloof from what's happening in other parts of the world, the place, and space in which we lived played a vital role in how we perceived, learned, and understood a dance form and its purpose. A cross-cultural routine, which surprised me fourteen years ago, has become a trend in the world of Dance today. Today, after migrating from a small town to an urban milieu, being in an environment where the intellectual inquiry of art is valued⁶; and being exposed to different cross-cultural routines of many professional classical dancers both online and offline, I further grew inquisitive about the role of cross-cultural understanding and cross-training routines in impacting the performance of a dancer. Conversations with my fellow Kūchipūdi dancers and teachers fueled my inquisitiveness on how cross-cultural training of dancers could develop the dance form as a whole.

My supervisor, Aruna Bhikshu's vast experience in the field of cross-cultural movement training, coupled with my interest in conducting practice-oriented research, motivated me to choose the current area of study. My journey from being a young dancer in a small town context to being a practitioner and researcher in an urban setting helped me to play the role of a practitioner-performer-researcher in the current study. It all starts with a fundamental question of what is 'dance' and what is the purpose of 'dance' in my country, further evolving and revolving around the question, what is the purpose of my own dance form, i.e., Kūchipūdi both in the past and in the present. As a

⁶ Being the student of the department of dance, University of Hyderabad enlightened me in so many ways

Kūchipūdi dancer, my constant urge to contribute to the development of the dance form, my love for the enormous potential and liveliness of the form⁷, and my grit to uphold the pride of my form inspired me to find this new avenue of research. Delving deeper...

The word ‘dance’ bears a duality of both sociological and artistic functions. To understand in detail, universally, Dance is a way of life for many a society. Also, Dance is technically learned and professionally performed as an art form for a set audience world over. In any case, ‘Dance’ is the most complex and intricate form of embodied expression of a particular culture. While all fine arts like music, painting, and sculpture are reflections of culture, Dance, which involves ‘body’, has many layers of impressions on it and also many limitations to it. Depending upon the social environment, geography, space, context, and purpose of Dance, the technique and body dynamics of any dance form are formulated.

Over the past thousands of years, many dance forms were created, recreated, perished, and revived. Like every dance form has its context and purpose, it has its training system. A few centuries ago, there was a clear demarcation and definition of what ‘dance’ was to people. For instance, while the goal of a ‘*Devadāsi*’⁸ was to conduct a ritual in the temple through her Dance, the goal of Kūchipūdi *Bhāgavatās* was to entertain the audience and make their living. *Devadāsis*, as professional dancers, worked on their music, physical suppleness, *Abhinaya*⁹, and sound knowledge of *Sanskrit*¹⁰.

⁷ The word ‘form’ is used throughout this study to represent any movement/ dance tradition (e.g., Kūchipūdi, Kalari, Pilates, Yoga)

⁸ A female dancer who was dedicated to temple to worship and serve the deity.

⁹ In this context, to emote. Expressions.

¹⁰ Indic language of the ancient Indian sub-continent

Dance was also a profession to Kūchipūdi *Bhāgavatas*¹¹, but as they were making their living by performing dance dramas and *Kalāpa*¹²s, their approach, goal, and ideology to dance were different. They focused on physical training to keep their body supple to suit the female impersonation, character playing, *Vacikābhinaya*¹³, grammar, and literature of both Telugu and Sanskrit, along with learning other folk elements like *Pagati Vesham*¹⁴, *Veedhi natakam*¹⁵ and the like. In this manner, the context and purpose of the art forms were clear, specific, and confined to only that particular community or region. But, after independence, most of the dances especially traditional dances became a product of ‘heritage’ for the country.

Dance traditions post-independence have only become showpieces in the proscenium theater to give only a shallow sneak-peak into the culture of the regions in which they flourished. Such change raises another important question as “who is dancing?” For example, *Sādir*¹⁶ was performed by women *Devadāsi* clan, and Kūchipūdi was performed by *Brahmin*¹⁷ men who were agriculturists. Women from regular households were not allowed to dance due to a degraded notion of Dance as a professional in general.¹⁸ During the nationalist movement, educated women from the upper-class learned classical dance forms and popularized them across the nation and the

¹¹ The male, Brahmin performers of Kūchipūdi were called Kūchipūdi *Bhāgavatāss* as they mainly performed the stories of Lord Krishna, from the 10th canto of *Bhāgavatāsm*, which is one of the 18 Hindu puranas (mythology).

¹² Kalaapa is a genre in a Kūchipūdi performance which consists of not more than three characters. Kalāpa literally means the tail of a peacock, or to narrate your own story.

¹³ Kalaapa is a genre in a Kūchipūdi performance which consists of not more than three characters. Kalāpa literally means the tail of a peacock, or to narrate your own story.

¹⁴ A folk tradition in the Telugu region.

¹⁵ A folk tradition in Telugu region where the drama was performed on the streets.

¹⁶ The ancient name for *Bharatanatyam*

¹⁷ A varna in Hinduism specializing as priests, teachers and protectors of sacred learning across generations (Wikipedia).

¹⁸ *Devadāsi* system was not encouraged by the British and the institution of *Devadāsi* was abolished by the British claiming that the institution was spoiled. This led to a notion in general public that dance is a lowly profession and not well respected.

world. This scenario paved a new path and gave dignity to dance. Today, 'Dance' became an every house-hold activity majorly for the upper class and middle class. But the nature and place for Dance as a profession remain highly ambiguous in our country. To a full-time dancer, the personal space is always interspersed with the formal workspace. In such a context, who is considered as a professional dancer?

As 'Dance as a profession' is an individual pursuit by the solo dancers, an undefined workspace, work time, and practice routine make the profession very ambiguous. A dancer who works in the public sector for five days a week but who dances on weekends is equally considered as a professional dancer to that of a dancer who teaches Dance in schools to make his living. The meaning of 'Dance as a profession' as "a paid occupation" is only partly true. Today, the general understanding of professional Dance is attributed to 'performance' (Pers. Comm. Aruna Bhikshu). Someone who gains popularity through performance, who performs often or who delivers a performance of high-rank quality, is considered a professional dancer. However the roles of a dancer as a performer, a teacher, or a choreographer are yet unclear and quite often self-proclaimed. The pedagogy of every dance form should look into the training aspects of a dancer to different roles along with setting standard regulations. In a globalized multi-cultural world where the context, content, purpose, and performance space of the dance forms changed, did the training system change?

In a world where the dancer claims to be everything (performer-teacher-choreographer) and tries to balance everything, what is the role and importance of a trained performance and a well-informed pedagogy? Since how we are viewing 'Dance' as a profession is changing and since the working style of dancers is changing, dancers

are exploring new methods and systems to train themselves and be well-equipped to meet the demands of a dancing career. Cross-cultural training is one such widely explored arena to which dancers are turning. Hence, this study explores the nature, purpose, and impact of cross-cultural training in the context of Dance with special reference to the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi, a dance-drama tradition of the Telugu states and one among the eight classical dance forms of India.

Practice and Pedagogy - *Bōdhana* and *Sādhana*

The word ‘practice’ is the most common term we hear in the field of arts. The general perceived meaning of ‘practice’ is:

1. “the customary, habitual or expected way of doing of something
2. The actual application of the use of an idea, belief or method as opposed to theories relating to it.
3. Perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one’s proficiency” (“Practice”).

Does making something a routine is enough to excel at something? Parallel words for ‘practice’ in Sanskrit are ‘*Sādhana*’ and ‘*Abhyāsa*.’

“*Abhyāsa* (Practice) is the art of learning that has to be learned through the cultivation of disciplined action. This involves long, zealous, calm, and persevering efforts” (Iyengar 5-6).

Practice is a loose translation of *Sādhana*¹⁹ in the Indian context. “*Sādhana* is a methodological, sequential means to accomplish the *Sādhaka*’s aims in life”²⁰ (Iyengar xiii).

On a careful analysis of the above definitions, we find that *Abhyāsa* and *Sādhana* speak about practice as beyond a mere routine. ‘Practice’ in the Indian context is something more than just making it a habit. In search of an alternative and more profound word for ‘practice,’ I found a phenomenon that became popular (to study in academia) in the past few decades, i.e., “Reflective Practice.”

Reflective practitioners think about their experiences in practice and view them as opportunities to learn. They examine their definitions of knowledge, seek to develop broad and multifaceted types of knowledge, and recognize that their knowledge is never complete. Reflective practitioners are concerned about the contexts of their practices and the implications of the action. They reflect on themselves, including their assumptions and their theories of action of the practice, and take action grounded in self-awareness. Finally, reflective practitioners recognize and seek to act from a place of praxis, a balanced coming together of action and reflection (Tembrioti and Tsangaridou 5).

Few other definitions:

Reflective Practice:

“The ability to think about why and what one does is critical to intelligent practice,

¹⁹ In a spiritual context, it is training or discipline through which an individual attains Samadhi, a state of deep meditation which leads to higher consciousness

²⁰ There are eight limbs of yoga and the practice of these limbs sequentially is called *Sadhana*.

practice that is reflective rather than routine” (ibid., 5).

The Doer:

“A *Sādhaka* is one who practices, applying his mind and intelligence with skill, dedication, and devotion” (Iyengar 107).

Meanings of ‘*Sādhana*’ according to spoken Sanskrit Dictionary:

Sādhana=device, means, realization, productive of, worship, preparing, acquisition, etc.

Analysis of the term ‘practice’ in this study with regards to Kūchipūdi dance is two-fold.

1. Examining the changing practices/procedures of teaching and training in Kūchipūdi dance.
2. Analyzing the actual ‘practice’ or ‘*Abhyāsa*’ of the dance form by the dancers, finding the lacuna, and deriving to possible solutions to make it a ‘holistic’ practice.

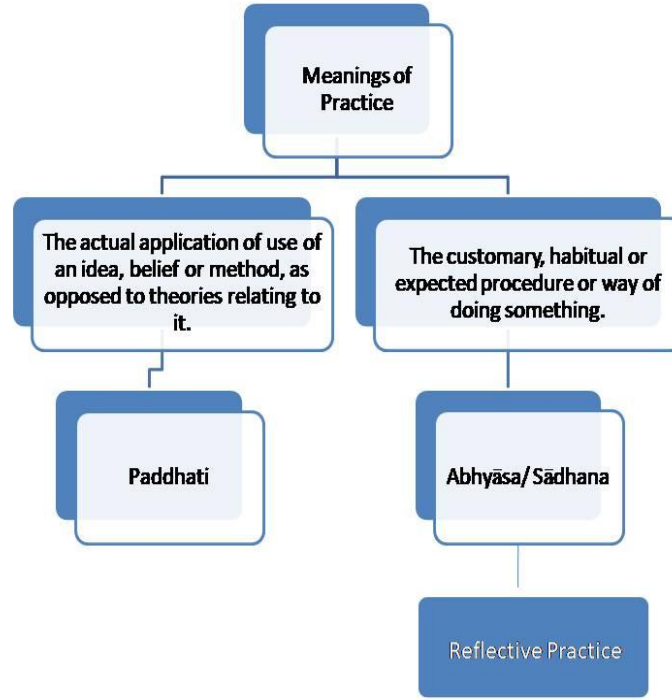


Figure.1.1. A flow chart demonstrating multiple meanings of the word ‘Practice.’

The teaching methodology will be decided based on the ‘practice’ and ‘practices’ of any dance form. Possible translation for the word ‘pedagogy’ in Sanskrit can be termed as ‘*Bōdhana*.’ There are many meanings for the Sanskrit word ‘*Bōdhana*’ such as teaching, instructing, causing to awake, informing, burning incense, and exciting. When we observe the latter meanings like awake, burning incense, and exciting, such meanings cannot be reflected in a mere word ‘teaching.’ A more profound name for a teacher was discovered, which is widely used in academia today, which is ‘Pedagogue.’

“The roots of the term are to be found in the ancient Greek word *Pedagogue* which referred to “a man having the oversight of a child or youth, an attendant

who lead the boy from home to school, a man whose occupation is the instruction of children or youths, a schoolmaster, teacher, preceptor” (qtd. in Tinning 7). ²¹

‘Pedagogy’²² is a term first popularized in the European countries in the field of physical education. While a few scholars term pedagogy is equivalent to PE ²³(Silverman 2007), few others demonstrate that PE, which is synonymous to Pedagogy, is a sub-discipline of Kinesiology (Rink 2007).

The competence to dance and perform needs a level of fitness and understanding of just one’s own body. To teach, one should have thorough body knowledge on how to correct others too. Good teachers are not necessarily good performers and vice versa. But in today’s scenario, for the artist to survive, they have to play multiple roles competing for the opportunities along with their students (Venkataraman 290). But do we have enough training to practice and teach the dance form? In the school education system, teacher training is an essential process for a person to become a teacher. What is the criterion for someone to become a dance teacher?

Here is an example scenario which demonstrates the existing gaps in the Dance education system:

Person K is a quick learner, and Dance is innate to her body. Hence, she could grasp quickly and did not need much explanation and break down of the movement to learn a movement. Fifteen years down the lane, she became an accomplished performer and choreographer as well. When she began to teach, she encountered a problem. Person K, who is an excellent practitioner and performer of Dance, is not a great pedagogue. She struggled to teach an average student as she never thought about breaking down the

²¹ Pedagogue is an adult “who shows the child the way in the world” (Tinning 10).

²² Simple meaning in Oxford English Dictionary: “The art and science of teaching”.

²³ Physical Education

movement. What seemed extremely easy for her was the toughest to her average student. She might have excellent theoretical knowledge, and she might be a great dancer, but that was only limited to her body as a performer and a practitioner. She didn't have enough knowledge to understand others' bodies. She doesn't have a methodology to teach the technique of the Dance other than asking her students to imitate her movement.

Prarthana Purkayastha²⁴ discussed this exact scenario in her book *Indian Modern Dance, Feminism, and Transnationalism* on how Uday Shankar failed to bring an identity to his institute established at *Almora*.²⁵ “Uday Shankar²⁶ may have been an artist par excellence, but he was not a pedagogue like Tagore, whose vision and commitment to education had provided a strong foundation for *Shantiniketan* ensuring its secure future” (Purkayastha 69). Teaching is an evolving process, and the teacher might eventually figure out better techniques of teaching. But equipping the teachers with better tools rather than leaving it to their individual pursuit is vital for a system to thrive.

During the preliminary research, it was found that due to lack of proper practice and pedagogy in Kūchipūdi dance, the system is struggling to make competitive teachers, performers and choreographers, thereby, leading to the current study, making it very vital in the field of Kūchipūdi dance.

What is cross-cultural?

“I do not want to stay in a house with all its windows and doors shut. I want a house with all its windows and doors open where the cultural breezes of all lands and nations blow through my house. But I refuse to be blown off my feet.

- Mahatma Gandhi”.

²⁴ Lecturer in theatre and performance at Plymouth University, UK.

²⁵ The pioneer of modern dance in India (1900-1977)

²⁶ A town in Uttarakhand, India

The definition of Culture, as defined by Google dictionary, is:

1. “The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.
2. A refined understanding or appreciation of culture.
3. The ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society “(“Culture”).

To be more specific, from an anthropological perspective, culture “refers to the unifying characteristics of a group of people; these may include geographical proximity; shared language, intellectual and artistic traditions; kinship, religious, economic or political systems; and so on. Culture refers to those circumstances, world-views, and habits of life that distinguish a group of people from other groups” (Leuthold). In a more rigorous sense, Geert Hofstede definition to culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another” (Lewis 17).

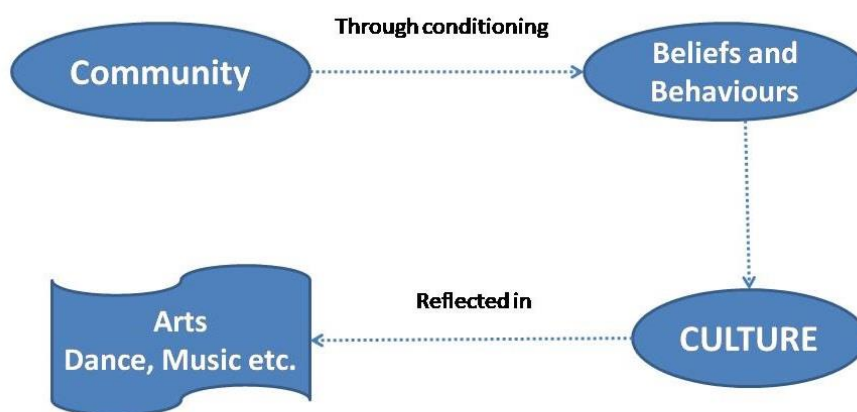


Figure.1.2. Reflection of a culture in its art forms

“Culture is obtained through the process called enculturation, that is, the process of social interaction through which people learn and acquire their culture. Human beings acquire their culture consciously through formal learning and unconsciously through informal interaction” (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 41).

Such a community-specific ‘culture’ was never stagnant as there had always been a give and take among different communities in the form of traveling and invasions. While culture gives a strong sense of identity and belonging to people, that very culture changes from time to time and forces people of that culture to change and adapt. Such an exchange of cultures resulted in Multi-cultural societies. Dance and music that evolve and thrive in a multi-cultural society are also cross-cultural with many such intercultural exchanges.

The Definitions

Intercultural is defined as: “taking place between cultures or derived from different cultures”²⁷ (“Intercultural”). Cross-cultural means: “relating to different cultures or comparison between them” (“Cross-cultural”).

Cross-cultural (adj.)

“Relating to or involving two or more different cultures or countries. First mentioned in circa 1942”²⁸ (“Cross-cultural”).

The first reference to cross-cultural training was found in the field of communication. Individuals are trained to communicate with people of different cultures in an empathetic way. This definition can be partially adapted to the cross-culturalism in Dance where the

²⁷ Cross-cultural, Intercultural, Multicultural | European
<https://www.europeanmarketlink.com/2019/10/18/cross-cultural-intercultural-and-multicultural/>

²⁸ “Cross-cultural.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cross-cultural>. Accessed 11 Feb. 2020

artistes modify the aesthetics, presentation, body dynamics, concepts, choreography, and training either to be on par with the cultural standards of the cultures they are inspired from / mingled with or simply to grab elements that they find useful and sensible. We can find several examples reflecting either of these phenomena in the history of Indian Dance.

Example 1: Until the invasions of the *Mughals*²⁹, *Kathak*³⁰ was a dance form which danced the stories of the gods from Hindu mythology. When *Mughals* took over the rule, be it out of choice or inevitability to get patronage, the costume and stories of *Kathak* changed empathizing with the sentiments of *Mughal* culture. Today *Kathak* stands as a cross-cultural product of the *Hindu*³¹ and *Muslim*³² cultures.

Example 2: *Sādir* was initially a temple dance, as well as a court dance. The body dynamics of the revived form, Bharatanatyam, took heavy inspirations from Ballet³³ along with drawing training methods from indigenous forms like Kathakali.

Example 3: *Oriental* dancers like Uday Shankar represented Indian Dance in the West; what people thought was authentic Indian Dance. But such dancers portrayed their artistic individuality first to suit the presentational aesthetics of the West. They made such changes to indigenous forms based on their travel experience, their western education, and their exposure to dance techniques of different dance cultures (Decoret-Ahiha 257).

These examples demonstrate how cross-cultural interventions occurred in the past due to various reasons in various aspects of Dance. Since we cannot deny the fact that the

²⁹ Mughal dynasty rulers ruled India and much of South-Asia between 16th to 19th centuries.

³⁰ Kathak is one among the eight classical dance forms of India which prevails in the northern part of India with three styles, Lucknow, Jaipur and Banaras.

³¹ A religion practiced majorly by Indians and South East Asians.

³² Those who follow a religion called Islam.

³³ A dance form that originated during the Italian renaissance and later developed into a concert dance in France and Russia.

present traditional dance forms of India (‘classical’) are a result of several cross-cultural influences, how are we training ourselves to do justice to the dance forms without a cross-cultural understanding of the dance forms as a whole? When we miss that link, and when we ignore history, a real problem arises in understanding the form. The modern solo form of Kūchipūdi dance, dating its history back to only 70 years ago, somewhere lost its links to both the traditional holistic training of Kūchipūdi and also couldn’t adapt the modern professional schooling of the body and the technique. This led to the hypothesis of the current study which is presented further in this chapter.

Cross-cultural training is considered as an essential factor in the pedagogy of Dance. As there are far more complex and varied definitions of these terms and often, they are used interchangeably, it is essential to derive to one particular definition of what is “cross-cultural training” in the current study. While cross-cultural can be reflected in the term “integrated,” intercultural can be reflected in the term “mutual.” In a multi-cultural society, due to mutual give and take among different cultures, there evolves a different culture, which is an integration of both cultures. Thus, cross-cultural and intercultural are a part of evolving cultures in a multi-cultural society. As the final product that comes out of such exchange is cross-cultural (across cultures), the term “cross-cultural” is used. Cross-cultural training the context of the study may be defined as: “Training the dancer in other movement forms as supplemental forms in order to enhance his/her performance in the primary form.” This formulated definition is close to that of the meaning of cross-training which is used in the field of sports where the sportsperson is trained in supplemental forms to enhance his/her performance in the primary form. When we superficially look at the definition, the training is intended

mainly to improve physical performance. But the dancers who learn new dance forms grow empathetic towards new dance forms, gain awareness in the history, evolution, and changes in the dance forms, cross-cultural influences on the dance forms and find contrasts and parallels of the new form in their form. Bringing the dancer aware of the standards of global aesthetics to which every dance form is abiding by, across the world including dances like African dance forms and accordingly how they are changing their pedagogy, is also a matter of discussion. Whether the dancer abides by it or not should be a matter of choice.

Cross-cultural training in the context of Indian Classical Dance

The beginning of it:

Boys between the ages of eight and sixteen were selected for the training. I was one of them; some of the young teachers also joined the class.

Beginning of the first day of class, Buddhimantra Singh asked us all to bring one bamboo stick each and tied the stick to our back with some kind of rope. Before beginning the actual training, the posture of the Dance had to be perfected, and in that, it was essential that we did not bend our vertebral columns, or did not hunch (....)

Every day the practice was scheduled for the evening slot reserved for games.

(...)The boys are practicing rhythmic physical exercises taught by them to the rhythm of the Manipuri drum – Mridangam(qtd. in Ghosh 9-10).

This was the training system of *Manipuri*³⁴ students at Rabindranath Tagore's³⁵ *Santiniketan*³⁶. Although taking aid of fitness cultures to hone the physical body was inherently there in every culture, it was around the 1900s, dancers in India started exploring other forms and using them as tools to train the dancing bodies. In the times when too much physicality was considered a shame (due to degraded perspective towards Dance and the body by the colonial rulers), emphasizing on the body was revolutionary in India. Hence, dances by Rabindranath Tagore, Uday Shankar were not approved in India. They were not considered pure and traditional. At the same time, interestingly, Uday Shankar was viewed as the representative of the '*Oriental*' or 'India' in the West. He used dazzling costumes and headgears, gas lights, which suited the Western proscenium theatres, and which were not heard of, in India.

This phenomenon led to the first phase of cross-culturalism during colonial rule. After independence, the same process continued but in the name of 'classical.' A cross-cultural understanding is inherent to Indian culture, and we lost it somewhere during the post-colonial period. Dance is a comprehensive art form. To master the art, one needs to understand and assimilate the nuances of many arts integrated into it which sculpts Dance as a multidisciplinary form.

...the well-known story from the Vishnudharmottarapurana, where a king goes to a teacher and asks to be taught painting. The guru sends him to a stone carver to learn sculpture first. The sculpture guru sends him to a stone carver to learn

³⁴ One among the eight Indian classical dance forms from Manipur.

³⁵ A polymath, poet, musician, artist and an ayurveda researcher who played a key role in shaping the arts and education in India during his period. He won Nobel Prize in Literature.

³⁶ Established by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore in 1863, was later expanded by the nobel laurette Rabindranath Tagore. It later became a University town as Viswabharati University was founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921 which became central university of national importance.

sculpture first. The sculpture guru tells him that before he can be taught sculpture he must know what architecture is all about. So off he goes to an architecture guru who asks him to first learn the art of Dance, and then come back. His search starts all over again but the dance guru whom he finally locates refuses to accept him until he masters the art of music. Only when he has completed that whole circuit can he go back to the first teacher and begin to learn the art of painting.

In other words, holistic, multidisciplinary, cross-cultural training rooted in the conviction that if you were able to master one genre you could quietly likely manage to understand at least the broad contours of the others, was the bedrock of the transmission of the arts (Singh 119-120)

Shanta Serbjeet Singh further explains in her article of how Indian way of practice is cross-cultural and multidisciplinary by quoting the example of “cross-cultural discipline of Ayurveda.”³⁷ Just like how modern medicine took over the traditional methods of healing, modern education took over the holistic approach of education during and after the colonial rule in India. As Pavan K. Varma explains,

“Successful colonial policy is about erasing all memory of the origin of events by rationing out privilege and praise that eventually make the consequences of those events acceptable, even desirable. It rids institutions of their historical context, leaving behind only a sense of utility and status, of the opportunities in the present, not the humiliations of the past” (Varma).

Such an education system crept into all fields, including arts, where everything is taught in isolation. It is not just a result of colonization but many other factors like:

³⁷ In Ayurveda, rather than treating a disease by mere mechanical diagnostic deductions, uses multiple creative ways of understanding the nature of the body which needs a thorough knowledge of several aspects of the body other than mere physiology.

Urbanization, Industrialization, and Globalization. Without even fully gaining back our identity after colonial rule, we are being affected by globalization and other modern trends.

“The authentic re-appropriation of one’s cultural space is thus one of the most critical unfinished agendas of our time. But the task is doubly difficult because even as we grapple with the consequences of the past, a new present is taking shape in the form of globalization”. (Varma)

By the hypnotic internalization of the Western’s standards of what’s beauty and aesthetic, we revived the dance forms of India and gave them the classical status. All the dance forms became rigorously physical (to suit the proscenium stage³⁸), which demanded high physical strength and stamina from a dancer. Padmini Chettur³⁹ opines that, but for few exceptions, dancers have lost the connection with the core of their own body, and the pedagogy of Indian classical Dance became very stagnant. With such on-going problems in understanding the post-colonial bodies, the fast-paced modernization hit us hard by not giving us enough time to practice the dance forms in holistic ways. Such compelling demands from both the past and the present resulted in injured dancers, lack of depth in the knowledge of both the dancers and students and above all, lack of *bhāva*⁴⁰ and *rasa*⁴¹ in the dances.

³⁸ A proscenium is the metaphorical vertical plane of space in theatre, usually surrounded on the top and sides by a physical proscenium arch and the bottom by the stage floor itself, which serves as the frame into which the audience observes from a more or less the events taking place upon the stage during a theatrical performance (Wikipedia)

³⁹ Indian Contemporary dancer trained under Chandralekha.

⁴⁰ Expression

⁴¹ Emotion

Dilemmas and conflicts started emerging in the minds of dancers for the past few decades; dancers realized the importance of a holistic approach to learning dance which led to two changes:

1. Going back to roots and exploring traditional training systems.
2. Finding cross-cultural alternatives.

While dancers like Chandralekha⁴² took resort of native forms like Kalari *Payattu*⁴³ and Yoga, institutes like *Nrityagram* applied both native and non-native strategies and found a mixed pedagogical system which is a blend of tradition and modern. But what is cross-cultural in the above examples? Broadly, we see cultures today as Indian, European, American, and the like. As both Kalari and Yoga are part of Indian culture, was Chandralekha's choice cross-cultural? If we take Yoga, Kalari, as different body cultures from that of Dance, integrating them in training dancers also becomes cross-cultural. Hence, anything intercultural or intra-cultural falls under the umbrella of cross-cultural in this study. Fig (1.2) gives a framework of what is considered cross-cultural.

⁴² Being the niece of Vallabhabhai Patel, Chandralekha was a dancer and choreographer who was an exponent in creating experimental works combining *Bharatanatyam*, Kalari and Yoga.

⁴³ A martial art from Kerala.

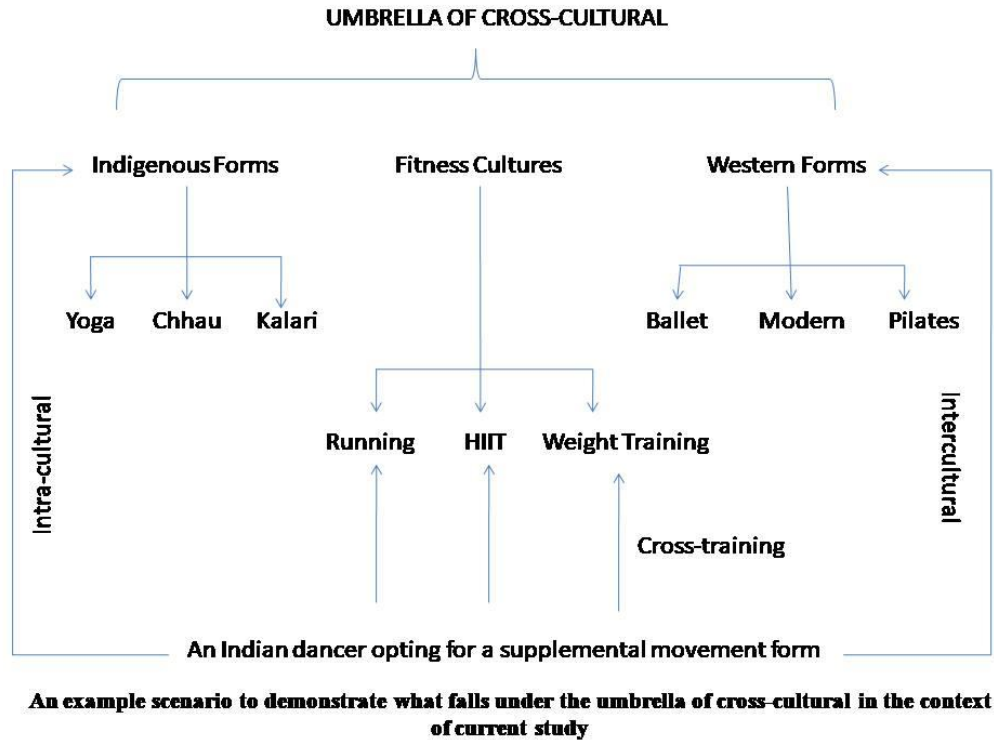


Figure 1.3. The Umbrella of Cross-Cultural In the context of this study

The current study majorly focused on observing the impact of different body cultures on Kūchipūdi dance at a different level. Example: drawing pedagogical inspirations from different body cultures (Kalari, Yoga, Flamenco, Pilates, Ballet, Modern Dance and the like; which were discussed in Chapter 3 in detail) to enhance the performance of a dancer in his or her primary form (in this study, Kūchipūdi). Any art is simultaneously both ‘whole’ and ‘fragmented’ in nature. With this orientation, Cross-cultural training, although it has several meanings in different contexts, as mentioned earlier, **is defined for this study as, the training [of the dancer] in other movement forms to enhance the dancers’ performance in their primary dance form.**

This study discusses the aftermath of such re-scribed traditions (of Indian classical dance forms as explained by Guru Rao Bapat⁴⁴) and provides possible alternatives of practice and pedagogy to meet the demands of the revived traditions. The study is not looking at the possibilities of inventing new traditions through cross-culturalism, but looking at the possibilities of altering the training system to understand and train the body to meet the demands of the existing classical dance forms.

Hypothesis

Cross-cultural training in other movement forms⁴⁵ as supplemental training enhances the performance of a dancer in his/ her primary form, which is Kūchipūdi in this study.

Current Trends

Why it is a trend?

“Just as seeing with two eyes give us stereoscopic vision and sense of depth, thinking in two different languages gives us added dimensions of reality. The bilingual Swedish is a case in point. A striking is that while French (a language very similar to English) would expand our world view by maybe an extra 10 percent, a “primitive” language different from our own, with its logic and set of assumptions, might show us things we have never dreamed of”⁴⁶ (Lewis 10).

Just like language, artists try to explore the possibilities of art from different angles; such cross-cultural orientation widens their horizons in various possible ways. Especially in today’s world where empathy and understanding towards other cultures, is considered

⁴⁴ A scholar from Karnataka who worked on the South Indian theatrical and dance traditions and authored books like – Re-scribing traditions, Modernisation of South Indian Drama etc.

⁴⁵ Movement forms include any body cultures like yoga, martial arts, dance forms, or exercises like HIIT, running, Pilates etc.

⁴⁶ When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures, 4th Edition. <https://b-ok.cc/book/5304758/3f2b50>

very important, people are looking out for different cultures and continuously updating their art form without losing the specificity. The trends that we see today as part of cross-cultural training mainly emerged to cater to the needs of either non-Indians or among the Indian Diaspora. Not just in Dance, but in other fields like Yoga, teachers adjusted their teaching methodology to suit the West. B K S Iyengar became extremely popular in the West for his unique and device-based pedagogy of Yoga which empathized with all body types. It was only after winning in the West; he became famous in his home country, i.e., India. Knowledge is inherent in any culture, but a strong pedagogy is necessary for it to be understood by any culture.

Sometimes, while teaching a subject to the people of the same culture, we assume certain things are automatically understood and hence take them for granted. The pedagogy only thrives and finds creative ways of expression when put in challenging environments. Such an approach also crept into the cities of India.⁴⁷ Indian Diaspora in other countries get influenced by the Western pedagogical methods and had to adapt their teaching methodologies to suit the standards. The positioning of diasporic dancers in the world of Dance is beautifully explained by Royana Mitra in her article “Cerebrality: Rewriting Corporeality of a Transcultural Dancer” as:

Historically, dancers’ bodies have been primarily studied only within their cultural contexts. This has been limiting for those dancers’ bodies that cannot be identified within a singular cultural framework. In recent years, dance practice has seen a significant number of practitioners who are using their bodies to reflect the diasporic transition between their cultures and the disciplines that arise out of them. These dancers’ realities are complex and threaten the purity of a singular

⁴⁷ Perhaps this is because both the setups, diasporic and urban are multi-cultural in nature.

performance discipline. However, Homi Bhabha theorizes and empowers their hybridized reality as “such a form of luminal or in-between space, where the cutting edge of translation and negotiating occurs.” Bhabha calls this luminal reality the “third space”, which he regards dynamic and articulate “space that engenders new possibility” (Mitra).

We understand this phenomenon by closely looking at the pedagogy of Pandit Chitresh Das, who was instrumental in bringing *Kathak* to North America.

Das incorporated ideas of overall fitness, athleticism, and strength into *Kathak*. He stressed aerobic training, strength-building exercises, and stretching designed for flexibility and injury prevention. Relatively unconventional approaches in class promoted the development of overall fitness. In workshops, Das would have students perform fairly unorthodox exercises for *Kathak* training, such as jumping up and down or running laps, developing the cardiovascular system, and encouraging the idea of being fit and ready. (Dalidowicz 212-213)

Along with such teachers in every dance style in the Diaspora, several other dancers returned from the USA and UK. They invented their method of pedagogy in Indian classical dance forms. For instance, Rukmini Vijay Kumar, who completed her bachelor in Boston Conservatory, designed her method of teaching Bharatanatyam. Her website describes her pedagogy in Bharatanatyam, which she calls, the Radha Kalpa Method, as: “a pedagogical system that approaches Bharatanatyam in a systematic analytical manner that trains the body progressively while cultivating creative exploration” (Vijay Kumar). Having trained in Ballet, Modern, Jazz, Stagecraft, Pilates, African, Human Anatomy, Tap, Laban Movement Analysis, at the Boston Conservatory,

Rukmini has the influence of all the above if not some of the above-mentioned movement forms. She also strongly endorses the understanding of the body along with training in strengthening the body with the help of movement forms like Pilates. Her usage of space in choreographic patterns reflects her training the modern Dance. Similarly, the profile description of Bijayni Satpati, a celebrated dancer from Nrityagram says:

“Bijayni’s research on the moving body in all its possibilities has resulted in a scientific body-training program that is sourced from yoga, Natyasastra, Kalaripayattu, Western fitness methods, and Odissi body-conditioning exercises. This makes ‘practice’ of dance injury-proof and increases the performance life span as a dancer.

(...) She has also developed an expanded, systematic, and accessible training program for Odissi dancers, which is equally valuable for beginners, advanced learners, performers, and Teachers” (“Nrityagram”).

Nrityagram calls their training system as “a unique blend of traditional knowledge with contemporary understanding.....” (“Nrityagram”).

This reflects the increased importance of cross-cultural pedagogy in Indian classical Dance, and their pedagogies were successful and sought by many dancers today. Such success stories in Kūchipūdi are unheard of despite having a significant number of Diaspora and Urban population of Kūchipūdi dancers. What is holding Kūchipūdi dancers from creating a strong and holistic pedagogy with the help of cross-cultural inputs? Why cross-cultural training and understanding for Kūchipūdi dancers is necessary?

Why cross-cultural training?

When I was in Madras along with my guru, I saw [Bharatanatyam] Kamala and was most inspired by her. VAK: What is it that you saw in her Dance? Vempati: Perfection. Angasuddham. I have seen many other dancers, too, of that time. But there was a distinguished technique to whatever Kamala did. Footwork, movement, expression, whatever..... she coupled perfect lines with ease of execution. I thought how wonderful it would be if the Kūchipūdi style also could have such perfection (Satyam, *The Transformation of Kuchipudi Dance The Doctor's Perceptions & Performance*).

“Widely traveled with an exposure to various cultures, she”[Sonal Mansingh]” had imbibed a sharp and perceptive understanding of various dance forms and over the years has evolved her own art of aesthetic presentation”⁴⁸ (Sunil Kothari 115).

Leela Samson in her autobiography explains the ideology of Rukmini Devi in structuring the pedagogy of Bharatanatyam,

Rukmini Devi’s intent was not to change the basis of the style. She was overwhelmed in fact by the beauty of it. But she was exposed to the body technique of Western ballet and had an instinctive reaction to movements that seemed cramped or contained. She understood the use of the body and perceived the possibilities within the existing framework. She was also concerned about what people danced to, what the music was like, whether it was the kind of music composed for a particular viewer or whether it was chosen purely because of its musical merit and excellence. And she found that very often the music was

⁴⁸ This in-text citation was found in Dinanathpaty’s “Re-thinking *Odissi*” book.

composed for occasions and for the people for whom girls were dancing. She disliked that very much (Kothari 15).

The above narrations by and about the stalwarts of neo-classical dance forms reiterate the fact that today's traditional dance forms are the result of cross-cultural influences and inspirations on the revivalists of the dance forms. While Rukmini Arundale was influenced by Anna Pavlova's ballet, Vempati Peda Satyam⁴⁹ and China Satyam⁵⁰ were motivated by Bharatanatyam and the *Oriental* dance forms, which reiterates the fact that no art form is pure and stagnant. It only depends on the revivalists of how intelligently they use their cross-cultural forms in their indigenous forms. After almost seventy years of post-colonial classical dance history in India, youngsters today are again looking at other cultures to either enhance their understanding in their primary form or to improve their physical capabilities in their primary art form by training in other forms.

There are several unaddressed and under-rated millennial dancer problems some of which include- lack of a holistic way of learning which is not completely preparing the dancers' body for performance, and increased competition which in turn is pressurizing the dancers to push their physical limits, a need for better understanding of the body to avoid injuries and to have long careers, a demand for authenticity in one's dance form with a blend of creativity and newness, and a need for a fair and feminist pedagogical⁵¹

⁴⁹ Hailing from Kūchipūdi village, Vempati Peda Satyam worked as choreographer for Telugu cinema and was instrumental in modernizing the technique of Kūchipūdi.

⁵⁰ Being the cousin of Vempati Peda Satyam, Vempati China Satyam assisted his brother in choreographies for Telugu cinema who later established Kūchipūdi Art Akademi in Chennai. He was the pioneer of Kūchipūdi dance.

⁵¹ Feminist pedagogy is a method of teaching which doesn't believe that teaching is restricted to classrooms. It doesn't believe in binaries and believes that knowledge is not just limited to classroom rather to the society as a whole. Classrooms that employ feminist pedagogy use the various and diverse

approach which is scientific and equipped enough to train every ‘dancing body’ according to its needs.

Why Cross-Cultural?

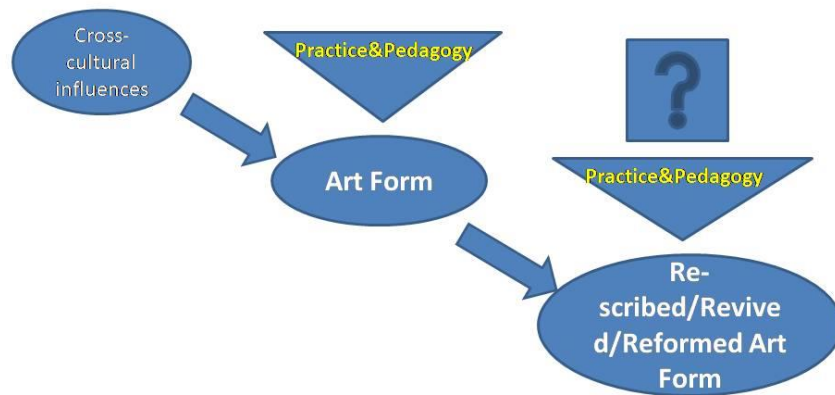


Figure 1.4. Why cross-cultural?

‘Training’ in any dance form comprises of three components. 1. Teaching the technique of the dance form. 2. Preparing the dancer’s body fit for the execution of the technique of the form. 3. Going beyond the body and the technique to excel in the dance form. Dancers believe in the ideology of “thinking with the body”. Through constant repetition of certain form specific movements, the dancer’s body gets used to the movement patterns and accomplishes those movements effortlessly. Hence, every dance form, especially every classical dance form has its own set of adugus/adavus⁵² to incorporate the culture of the form into dancer’s body. Yet, every kind of body culture needs specific biomechanical training, which is only partially achieved in ‘just

experiences located within the space as opportunities to cultivate learning by using; life experiences as lessons, breaking down knowledge, and looking at gender, race and class as one. (Wikipedia)

⁵² Basic steps that are practiced in any dance form are called adugulu in Telugu and adavus in Tamizh which literally means ‘steps’.

adavu/adugu practice culture.’ For example, every Bharatanatyam dancer is expected to execute *aramandi* with equal perfection, while only a few dancers have a natural turn out and flexible hip flexors. The rest of the dancers only struggle throughout their lives in an aim to attain perfect *aramandi*⁵³ if not injure themselves by forcing the turnout. Hence either the dance forms should inherently have a holistic training system to train the dancing bodies of all physiological types to meet the biomechanical needs of the dance form or should draw pedagogic models from other forms. Only such all-round educational models could be said as fair towards all dancers, not just towards the inherently talented ones. As mentioned earlier, it is also an on-going trend that dancers are learning a varied range of dance forms to explore their physical capacities and to train their bodies better. (Kashap)

This led to many questions like: is the pedagogy of the existing classical forms not holistic enough or lost their comprehensive nature of study? If lost, when did this happen (with particular reference to Kūchipūdi)? If there is embodied culture of the practicing form in every dancer, how much is too much of cross-cultural training that disturbs the body culture of the dancer? If practiced moderately, how cross-cultural training helps widen the vision of a dancer in their primary form along with fitness benefits? Keeping these questions in mind, I move forward in elucidating and analyzing the existing schooling system in Kūchipūdi in chapter II, and I discuss the impact of cross-cultural training on me as a Kūchipūdi dancer in chapter III through an ethnographic analysis as a participant observant.

Today, Dance (mainly classical), after layers of de-contextualization, is, by and large, a means of entertainment and a showcase of heritage and culture. Post-

⁵³ The half sit position which is equivalent to the ballet’s plié position is called ‘araimandi’ in Tamizh.

independence, the revival, and reconstruction of Indian Dance started with an idea of nationalism, and to prove the antiquity of Indian culture, we looked back to the ancient treatises like *Nāṭya Śāstra*. “It is a fascinating paradox that the “cultural ideology of traditionalism is one of the major instruments of modernization.” Movements that progressive intellectuals in developing countries would castigate as revivalist frequently contain elements of modernization. Often, such revivalism is the best means for introducing new ideas and practices. The process of modernization is complicated enough in any society but far more so in the historic civilizations.” (Singer). As a part of such a process, every Indian classical form reformed itself in such a way that it can impress and sustain its audience and claim its authenticity attribution to *Nāṭya Śāstra*. Nrtta, being meaningless⁵⁴, and easily understood by everyone, underwent significant changes in every form. The revivalists in India also found inspirations from multiple cultures in classicizing the Indian dance forms. Especially in Madras⁵⁵, the constant back and forth referencing between western standards and ancient Indian treatises like *Nāṭya Śāstra* with layered impositions of puritan ideas of what is ‘cultured’ removing any traces of vulgarity and crudity, resulted in a neo-classical form called “Bharatanatyam” setting standards to other dance forms on how a form should be classicized. Kothari, in his article also mentions how Rukmini Devi unabashedly took the aid of Kalari *Payattu* and Kathakali in training her male dancers and in the warrior sequences in her dance dramas. When an only woman, solo ritualistic dance form, had to be transformed into a democratic art form, indeed, the sources had to be taken from other cultures, be it intra-culture or inter-culture. Once the new tradition is formulated based on cross-cultural

⁵⁴ According to *Natya Sastra*, Nrtta or pure dance is like an embellishment or ornamentation in dance with no special meaning to the movements.

⁵⁵ Old name for Chennai, a city in Southern India.

influences, the pedagogy also should support the same. Kūchipūdi, which like many other dance forms, looked at Bharatanatyam as an immediate source of inspiration and reference in transforming itself into a neo-classical style. The metamorphosis was from a “theatrical, only men” dance form to a solo form, which included women (clearly, the transformation was in opposite direction to that of the source of inspiration). The transmutation was from a rustic and crude⁵⁶ body dynamics to the most sophisticated and graceful body language.

As a part of this process, it was the ‘dancing body’ that was subject to major alteration. But the problem comes in Kūchipūdi as there was and is much resentment to change. In this continuous conflict of ‘authenticity,’ the understanding of the fundamental body dynamics of Kūchipūdi by the younger generation is confusing, directionless, and dooming. This topic will be discussed at length in Chapter II.

Area of study

Research in Dance is an evolving field. There are several areas of research in Dance. Performance, choreography, dance history, dance medicine, critical issues in Dance, choreography are to name a few. The current area of study falls in the field of pedagogy and education, narrowing down the topic further to *Kūchipūdi*. As practice, pedagogy and performance cannot be mutually exclusive, this study oscillates back and forth among these terms and concepts to fulfill the purpose of the study. Geographically speaking, the current research is majorly conducted in Hyderabad and Telugu states

⁵⁶ Based on the then brahmanized and *Bharatanatyam* standards of what is ‘classical’, Kūchipūdi was considered as folkish, tacky and crude. When I searched for antonyms for ‘culture’ on a web dictionary, I got the following list of words as result- rustic, crudeness, vulgarity, coarseness, unsophistication, clumsiness. Hence, we can find the English influence of what is considered as ‘culture’ in Indian standards too. The dance, is supposed to be ‘pure’, ‘spiritual’ with inner poise removing any traces of vulgarity and eroticism.

where Kūchipūdi was originated, and the ethnographic participant observant study was conducted in Bangalore and New York City in the USA.

Statement of Purpose

This study is titled “Cross-cultural training and its impact on the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi dance,” is a multi-dimensional inquiry into the nature and trends of cross-cultural training in Dance and its impact and necessity in the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi dance in particular. Cross-cultural training, although it has several meanings in different contexts, is defined for this study as the training [of the dancer] in other movement forms to enhance the dancers’ performance in their primary dance form. The enhancement could be in different areas of Dance like pedagogy, choreography, body conditioning, firing new neural connections. This study explores the background and transformational history of Indian classical dance forms after independence and how this scenario led to the current trend and necessity of cross-cultural training. In the arena of cross-cultural training and its impacts, the scope is restricted to one dance form, i.e., Kūchipūdi. Kūchipūdi, being one among the eight classical dance forms of India, has a multifarious transformational history, which led to dramatic changes in the context, technique, and texture of the dance form. Establishing the transformational history of Kūchipūdi through multiple lenses of social, political, and gender, this study further investigates the need and impact of cross-cultural training on a Kūchipūdi dancer. It explores its place in the pedagogy of Kūchipūdi along with discussing the cons of cross-cultural training.

Relevance of the Study

While ‘performance’ becomes the front face of any dance form, practice and pedagogy become the foundation of it. It is the training and practice of the dancers that equip them to cater to the demands of a ‘performance.’ From a male-oriented dance-drama tradition, today Kūchipūdi has become a predominantly female-oriented solo classical tradition. While the earlier dance-drama tradition emphasized versatility, character fitness, dialogue delivering capability, and *sattvikabhinaya*⁵⁷ of the dancer, the current solo tradition demands agility, stamina, endurance, sophistication, grace and an injury-free long careers (both as performers and teachers) from the dancers. While the front face of the form is in all its glory and success, did the foundation/background change according to the changing needs? Is it strong enough to prepare the dancers to meet the demands? The pedagogy of Kūchipūdi has not addressed several issues such as the gender shift from male to female, the contextual shift to proscenium theatre, and the cultural shift from local to global. Among thousands of Kūchipūdi dancers across the globe today, not even a handful of dancers are competing professionally with the dancers of other classical forms. There is a huge gap in the quantity to quality ratio in Kūchipūdi. The only way is to go back to roots and inquire into the loopholes in the pedagogy and practice of Kūchipūdi. One way of looking at it is how cross-cultural training would help *Kūchipūdi* dancers. While dancers of other classical dance forms are rigorously exploring the cross-cultural avenues to train and practice, not many Kūchipūdi dancers are initiated into cross-cultural training. In the current scenario of lacuna, rigidity in the practice, pedagogy, and ideology, this study plays a crucial role in filling the gaps in the system.

⁵⁷ One among the four kinds of abhinayas. The abhinaya that which comes from the heart (sattva) is called Sattvikabhinaya. One cannot emote the eight kinds of sattvikabhinaya unless they really feel it.

The current study can provide a pedagogical model for training the dancing bodies in Kūchipūdi to enhance their performance.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework to which I could attribute my current study is what Zarrilli calls ‘body in practice’ framework. The current discourse is majorly an ethnographic study that is derived out of constant positioning of and analyzing a *Kūchipūdi* dancing body in its own culture as well as in cross-cultural environments. Zarrilli emphasizes the importance of how the experiential knowledge of the individual through his/her body becomes the collective identity of the form. This argument acts as a foundation to my methodology as a participant observant. “As Johnson points out, the ‘who I am’ shaped in practice cannot be divorced from the ‘who we are,’ i.e., individual experience and collective identity form a dialectic which is the arena through which the ‘self’ is forged in practice”. (Zarrilli 7) Keeping ‘body in practice’ as my base framework, I further analyze the body, practice, and practices from different perspectives throughout the study based on the context of the discussion. Figure 1.5. represents the keyword mapping method I used to read the related theories for both literature review and as tools to do my data analysis.

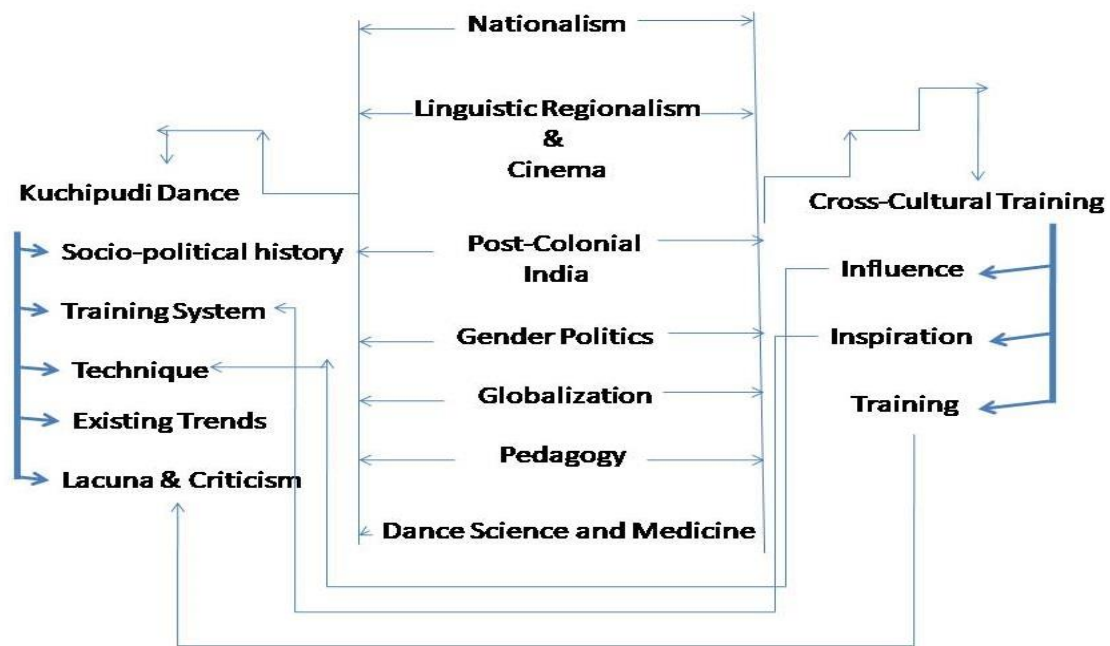


Figure 1.5. Key word mapping for literature review

For example, in the figure, ‘*Kūchipūdi*’ and ‘*Cross-cultural*’ are primary key words. the keyword ‘*Technique*’ in the category of ‘*Kūchipūdi*’ is connected with the sub keyword of ‘*Influences*’ of ‘*Cross-cultural*.’ This mapping means that I search for the literature related to the ‘*cross-cultural influences on the technique of Kūchipūdi*’ and how it led to the changes in the dance form. Similarly, to take another example, ‘*Gender politics*’ is connected to ‘*Lacuna and Criticism*.’ This means I looked at how the shift in the gender brought a lacuna in the training system of the dance form. In this manner, many permutations and combinations were used with the keywords and collected all the books, articles (online and offline), personal interviews, and visual archives to find the literature.

Hence, the literature review was on varied topics and very fragmented. The topics that were covered in the literature review (including related/synonym words) were: cross-cultural training, intercultural training in Dance, cross-training in Dance, post-colonial

pedagogy, de-colonizing the art, dance science, and medicine, dancing body in ancient treatises, technique and transformational history of Kūchipūdi, fitness for dancers, gender in Dance (especially Kūchipūdi).

Review of Literature

For any art form to thrive and excel, it should have a robust pedagogical system. To make a critical assessment of the pedagogical system of *Kūchipūdi* dance, the literature review was done, and it was divided into three major segments:

1. To study the pedagogical system and practices of the past and present in Kūchipūdi dance.
2. To inspect if the existing practice and pedagogy are preparing the dancer/ teacher in different arena of Dance like attaining a strong injury free physical body, strong technique, a sense of understanding about the evolution of the dance form (in terms of body dynamics), a high level of expertise in executing, choreographing or teaching the dance form, and appropriately positioning the dance form in a global world along with other dance forms.
3. To find the gaps in the Practice and Pedagogy of Kūchipūdi dance form.
4. To audit if there is any existing literature that speaks about the significance of cross-cultural training in filling up the gaps that exist in the present pedagogy, with a special focus on the preparation of the dancer's body.

To conduct my literature review, I posed four questions, and the literature that could answer my questions became part of the literature review. The questions are:

In terms of body technique, embodied culture and training:

1. Why is Kūchipūdi Dance the way it is?

2. Where is the lacuna?
3. What are the probable solutions?
4. What are the related works done either theoretically or practically?

These questions cannot be answered from a single point of view. Hence the literature review is multidisciplinary in nature. In order to answer the first question, I had to look into the socio-cultural history of Kūchipūdi and how the context, social and economic conditions made the form the way it is today. Theories on gender, colonial, and post-colonial pedagogies would help us understand the circumstances that led to the current status of the form.

The second question deals with understanding the gaps in teaching the technique and training the dancers' body of Kūchipūdi. To answer this question, along with reviewing the ideologies of masters who brought changes in the dance form, personal interviews, and visual archives played a vital role in understanding the changes that occurred in the dance form across three decades. Once the gaps were identified, literature related to cross-cultural training in Dance was reviewed. As there is no literature directly dealing with this topic, the review was further broken down into searching the literature related to the keywords in a step by step procedure and further integrated. The keywords identified for the search are cross-cultural training in Dance, cross-training, conditioning, cross-culturalism in Indian Dance.

The review is further organized based on the types of literature review:

1. General
2. Specific
3. Vernacular

4. Visual archives

The strategies used in finding the literature review using the online platforms/databases were the “Snowball Method” and “Pearl Growing Method.”

“The snowball method is a way of finding literature by using a key document on your subject as a starting point” (University of Groningen - Libguides). A key document related to the topic is selected first. Then, referring to the bibliography of the key document, other relevant articles or books are extracted on the topic. Then, the bibliographies of the newly found titles are inspected in the same manner. In this manner, a bulk of relevant literature is collected in a snowball effect.

Pearl Growing Method “involves searching in [SmartCat](#) or databases (including library databases) using subject terms” (University of Groningen - Libguides).

In Pearl growing method, I collected data related to the above keywords (as mentioned earlier), segregated them into general, specific, vernacular, and visual resources. (the table of resources is available in appendix). Once I started reading the collected books and articles, I collected a few other resources in the ‘snowball method’ of collection. These two methods continued during my fieldwork, also as I had to read several new concepts based on my audited courses as part of my fieldwork.

While the general literature review helped in understanding the cross-cultural training in Dance and cultural politics related to the dancing body, vernacular literature helped in understanding the history of Kūchipūdi. Video archives are the major source of analyzing the technique and training in Kūchipūdi.

Socio-cultural history of Kūchipūdi

Vernacular texts like *Kūchipūdi Bhāgavatulu* by Chintalapati Lakshmi Narasimham and *Andhra Yakshagāna Vangmaya Charitam* by S V Joga Rao give a broad historical perspective of the dance traditions in Andhra region. Texts that specifically talk about Kūchipūdi are Koochipudi Dance by Swapna Sundari and Sunil Kothari's book on Kūchipūdi.

However, theses played a key role in gaining deeper insights into the socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions of Kūchipūdi. *Traditions and innovations in Kūchipūdi* of Anuradha Jonnalagadda, *Revisiting the Classical: A Critical History of Kūchipūdi* of Rumya S. Putcha, *Stage to Screen, and Back: A Study of the Dialogue between Kūchipūdi and Telugu Cinema* of Katyayani Thota are important among the few. With a primary orientation regarding the history of Kūchipūdi, a much recent work, Guru Rao Bapat's (2012) *Rescribing Traditions* gives a critical analysis on the process of transformation of dance-drama traditions like Kūchipūdi to Solo format gave valuable insights which helped me in framing my thought process while working for this study.

Gururao Bapat's *Rescribing Traditions-: Modernisation of South Indian Dance Drama* is an important source on Kūchipūdi among the works that helped to understand traditional dance forms from a new perspective. Bapat opines that Indian traditional dance forms were only "Re-scribed traditions" but not "re-invented traditions" as the term coined by Eric Hobsbaum and Terence Ranger. Re-scribed traditions, according to Bapat, are those that underwent changes, transitions, transformations, or even ruptures to suit according to the sociopolitical changes that occurred in the society. The introduction chapter in this book lists a very important set of reasons why changes occurred in the

dance forms like Kūchipūdi. Bapat analyzed four theatrical forms in his book and mentions the commonalities in all the four dance forms: the influence of Bhakti movement, open-air performance, the role of music, the prominence of Dance, the use of the hand-held curtain, emphasis on *Veera*⁵⁸ and *Raudra*⁵⁹ emotions, performed only by men, a period of destabilization, revivalism, post-independent scenario, identity politics, the era of globalization and western interest and its impact. Although the central point of the current research is to discuss more of the bodily training and embodied knowledge, the above said reasons by Bapat are the key phenomena that are changing the face of the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi today. Bapat explains the socio-political and gender shifts in the dance form which gave me a primary analysis to apply the same on how the body dynamics, the technique, and the training system changed.

Technique

Although brief, Yamini Krishna Murthy's biography holds as an important resource in explaining the technique of Kūchipūdi during the time she learned the art form from Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry⁶⁰ and P V G Krishna Sarma.⁶¹ Being one of the first generation female performers of Kūchipūdi, Yamini Krishna Murthy's narratives and opinions about the technique, *abhinaya*⁶² and teaching methodologies of Kūchipūdi reveal the encoded messages on gender politics, vulgarity, and toning down of the abhinaya due to the shift from male to female dancer. However, except for one or two aspects, the present-day Kūchipūdi dancer cannot relate to the technical aspects that

⁵⁸ Valour

⁵⁹ Anger

⁶⁰ One among the trinity of Kūchipūdi, Vedantam was the first one to teach Kūchipūdi to women and popularize it as a solo dance tradition.

⁶¹ P V G Krishna Sarma, hailing from Kūchipūdi village, was famous for his musical prowess and his mastery over *Yakshagānas*.

⁶² In this context, emotion or expressions.

Yamini spoke of in her biography. This shows how rapidly the form is changing in terms of technique and body dynamics. It is interesting to note that the technique of Kūchipūdi in any book is not as widely discussed as they did to other forms like Bharatanatyam or Kathakali or Odissi. Is it because Kūchipūdi shares somewhat similar body dynamics with its immediate sister form Bharatanatyam? Or is it because there is no one particular way of dancing for Kūchipūdi? While analyzing the technique, I, too, found the same difficulty as the beauty and specificity of Kūchipūdi is very subtly embedded in the energy manipulation by the dancer. The repertoire of the dance form is widely discussed in all the books as the repertoire includes the variety of dance numbers such as *Tarangam*⁶³, *Sabdam*⁶⁴, *Daruvu*⁶⁵, *Kandarthams*⁶⁶, *Koutvams*⁶⁷, *Javali*⁶⁸, *Padam*⁶⁹, and *Jati swaram*⁷⁰. Perhaps, as the texture of the dance form is reflected in the music and literary nuances of the repertoire, every author chose to discuss the varied repertoire of the dance form rather than studying the bodily technique. In terms of analyzing the technique, discipline, and critical analysis, video archives from the library of Sangeet Natak Akademi were very helpful. The videos ranging from performances to lecture-demonstrations dated between the years 1986 to 2000 gave a sneak-peak into the

⁶³ Tarangams were written by Saint Narayana Theertha in his Sanskrit Opera, Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini. Tarangams are widely used in Kūchipūdi repertoire where the dancer dances on the rim of a brass plate with water filled pot in the head.

⁶⁴ Sabdam means sound. Sabdams are numbers in dance which narrate an entire story in not more than 10-12 minutes where the lyrics are interspersed with jatis sung in ragam.

⁶⁵ Said to be derived from Dhruvaganas of Natya Sastra, Daruvus are mainly seen in *Yakshagānas*.

⁶⁶ A telugu literary meter.

⁶⁷ Also known as Kavativam, koutvam is a poetic dance piece.

⁶⁸ A fast paced peppy abhinaya number being eroticism as the main content.

⁶⁹ A piece of love poetry in Indian Literature, that can be turned into a musical composition and danced for Indian Classical Dance (Padam).

⁷⁰ A pure dance piece which consists of a pallavi, anupallavi and charanam is a combination of swara passages in a particular raga and tala.

performing trends in Kūchipūdi. By carefully analyzing more than 200 performances in these video archives, three points must be strongly mentioned here.

1. The standards are changing – If we watch those performances with the lens of present-day standards, most of the performances fall in the mediocre category. Young dancers should keep in mind that we could only dance today because of the path paved by yester-year's *gurus* and performers.
2. The island of “elite performers” is very small compared to other dance forms. Be it forty years ago or be it now, the percentage of excellence to the numbers of people who are learning Kūchipūdi dance is very low when compared to other dance forms. Kūchipūdi, as a community, should give a serious thought in understanding the reasons behind such mediocrity.

Training System:

A deeper insight into the training system was gained by personally interviewing several traditional and non-traditional *gurus* of Kūchipūdi. The inputs of *gurus* who are in their mid-forties or early fifties are very valuable to the study as these *gurus* were youngsters/teenagers during the transition period that happened in the 1980s. My informal ethnographic experience as a child who learned Kūchipūdi in the village and personal narratives by several teachers and students from different contexts (village, urban, small town, traditional, non-traditional) also played a vital role in a holistic understanding about the pedagogy. Several articles on the pedagogy of Indian classical Dance, in general, gave me strong points to authenticate my opinions.

Chatterjea(1996) discusses the changes that occurred in the training system of India over a while in her article. The schooling of students into arts like Dance and music was done

in a *Guru-Sishya Parampara* in India since *Vedic* times. In this system, the *Sishya* lives with the guru, serves him and performs his household tasks, and learns from the guru whenever the guru teaches him. In such a system, the student learns more than just the technique and the repertoire (Chatterjea 68-91). A conversation with several traditional *gurus* reiterates that the '*habitus*' of the village played a vital role in shaping the dancers and teachers in the village. The very informal setting, which taught many nuances to the *gurus*, didn't make them professional performers of international acclaim except for one or two as they lacked the presentational skills and practice discipline as artists. While this was the scene in the village, the institutional system discarded the holistic training of a student in Dance.

The Souvenir publication of *Kūchipūdi Mahotsav* that was conducted in 1999 with different articles gave many insights into the past and to the aspirations of the veterans for the art form. Although it is a souvenir published by *Kūchipūdi Kalakendra*, an organization which worked for the promotion and the propagation of *Kūchipūdi* dance training and performance in Mumbai, it can be seen as the first attempts to make academic writing inclusive.

Uma Ramarao(1999) in her article, *Kūchipūdi Dance – it's distinctive features with special reference to Angika (body) and Aharya (attire) aspects* gives a sneak-peak into how the training used to be in earlier days.

Voleti Rangamani(1999) in her article *The Kūchipūdi Teaching Systems of Late Sri C.R. Acharyulu* gives some interesting insights into her father's teaching methodology that he taught facial exercises like eye, eyebrow and neck movements rather than steps. This, he believed, would help the dancer to learn movements much faster.

Insights from contemporaries of Vempati China Satyam sounded unique and interesting and sound like there were no cross-cultural influences on the form. But Vempati's vision in his article *My experiments with Kūchipūdi* in this very book reflects how he was not only influenced by the technique and presentation of Bharatanatyam but also the practice discipline of the city. Here, '*habitus*' plays a vital role again in bringing the success and discipline into Kūchipūdi.

About the progress of the dance form:

G. M. Sharma's⁷¹ article in this book gives interesting insights into the then situations and his aims in popularizing the form. The article which was written twenty years ago still holds good for the current situation in Kūchipūdi. Few key points that were mentioned in the article are worth mentioning:

(...) It is desirable that male artists from Kūchipūdi village come forward to enroll themselves for a training schedule to improve their skills and qualify themselves as teachers. This will enable them to establish centers outside Andhra Pradesh to teach students and train them to become good artists.

(...) It is my conviction that only Guru Dr. Vempati China Satyam is equipped to train the artistes from the traditional families as good performers and teachers. He had in the past, twice conducted refresher courses for teachers, who later settled down in various parts of Andhra Pradesh and established their institutions. (G 92)

Another article by Anuradha Jonnalagadda(1999) titled *What constitutes Kūchipūdi dance form* gives valuable insights into the evolution of the training system which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

⁷¹ Promoter and connoisseur of Kūchipūdi

Aruna Bhikshu's(1998) article *Nāṭyam Sarē, Sikshana Sastreeyam Kāvāli* in *Chiguru*, a Telugu children's magazine is one of the rarest works that speak about how training should be, in Indian Classical Dance. She elaborately speaks about the necessary awareness and clarity that a training system should have, in order to make dance part of primary education. Bhikshu in her article explains about the right way of holding the *Soushtava*, equal distribution of weight on both the legs while dancing, importance of breath and nutrition. She opines that for a dancer, fuel that is more important than food, is oxygen. Dancers should practice breathing and Yoga to improve the lung capacity. Bhikshu suggests that a dancer, before his/her performance, should fill their body with oxygen using breathing techniques. Then the dancer should be able to mindfully utilize the stored oxygen during their performance.

The literature review also included many other books and articles to *Kūchīpūdī*. As they do not bear a direct connect with the present study, they are not being mentioned here. The next section focuses on the general literature that gave me a perspectives and theories that fit in with the analysis of the dance form Kūchīpūdī. The first aspect is 'habitus'. As mentioned earlier, 'habitus' plays a vital role in learning certain skills and also in achieving excellence. 'Habitus' is how an individual perceives his/her world around and how they form specific habits based on the community and social structure they dwell. My study of 'habitus' is two dimensional – 1. Physical (More obvious) 2. Mental (abstract). The physical aspect of 'habitus' (being in an environment which constantly speaks about Dance and music) makes it easier for the traditional dancers in the village to learn Kūchīpūdī quickly, even the not so loudly pronounced nuances which are hard for non-traditional dancers to learn. The mental aspect (such as fear due to lack

of financial stability, not pushing hard enough to be disciplined) of it is what has been holding them back. To a non-traditional Kūchipūdi dancer, interestingly, there is no physical '*habitus*' to learn the untaught nuances of the form but there is a mental '*habitus*' that is prevalent in most of the *Kūchipūdi* dancers born into the community which works as a negative factor in holding them to excel. The very traditional Vempati China Satyam went to Chennai and flourished as his '*habitus*' changed to a more serious, professional setting and he adapted his habits accordingly and could achieve success. Although the aspect of '*habitus*' is not much discussed in this study as 'Kūchipūdi and its '*habitus*' can be viewed as a separate area of research altogether, it gave me a fair idea on how '*habitus*' plays a vital role in defining one's habits and behaviors. *Techniques of the body* of Marcel Mauss(1973) further helped me to understand about culture-specific movements and patterns.

Why do we pick influences and what is the necessity for the dancers to pick from other cultures, blend it in their cultures, and make it part of their culture over some time? The increased cross-cultural exchanges among the countries from around the 1960s are because of the availability and affordability of international travel through the aviation industry. This was also the period where India was trying to show its identity at its best. Hence foreigners traveled from other countries to India and Indians traveled overseas to perform. Such an exchange of cultures brought in a new empathetic theory called cross-culturalism. Cross-culturalism started in the field of communication initially, which looks at how people from different backgrounds interact "in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures"⁷². Taking this definition as a base, I go on defining my definition for cross-culturalism (across cultures)

⁷² Wikipedia. 23 March 2020 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-cultural_communication>.

further in this study. But before that, thorough scrutiny of books and articles on Interculturalism, transcultural and multiculturalism gave insights on when and in what context these terms were used.

Richard Schechner (1985) was one of the key persons in exploring intercultural training. In his article *Performer Training Interculturally* from the book *between theatre and anthropology*, Schechner elaborates on his experience of Kathakali training. Along with elaborating the traditional training system of Kathakali, Schechner compares and contrasts the Indian way of training system which is ‘doing-as-training’ system to Euro-American way of training where the emphasis is more on “inner technique”(self-analysis, psychologizing)” like that of Grotowski’s method or “biomechanics” like that of Meyerhold’s method. He further elucidates on the pros and cons of each of the training system. Such analysis helped me in analyzing my cross-cultural experience as a participant observant. He also gives the four theorems that are applicable to any traditional training system in India.

1. The inner and the outer are manifestations of a One, and therefore training either inner or outer is training both. Since the outer is more easily trained, it is the object of training. And the chief method is repetition based on imitation.
2. Training consists of repeating concrete sequences of behavior. These sequences are taken as integers from the finished form.
3. A limited repertory exists – and a limited history, a limited cosmos. All that is will ultimately repeat itself.

4. The whole is greater than its parts: by repeating the parts the whole will be grasped; by repeating the whole the form of the whole will (or may) ultimately reveal itself. This is the mantra theory of knowing. Illumination occurs, if at all, only when the performer no longer thinks about “doing the part” or doing anything but just blankly does (Schechner 225-226).

At this point in reading the article, I was thinking that the system looks all ideal and what is the need for cross-cultural training? To which Schechner answers in the following paragraph regarding the training system of Kalamandalam.

Such an approach to art, to life, is extremely conservative. In this way, the training at the Kathakali Kalamandalam is consistent with old-style Indian thought. If this kind of training is not done with careful attention to the particular relationship between teacher and student (what Indians call the *Guru-Sishya* relationship) – which must be the one of mutual respect, even love – the whole thing can quickly become brutal, authoritarian, mechanical, and deadening (Schechner 226).

This reaffirms my belief that although the pedagogical system we showcase is an ideal one, we are not exactly following such an ideal system in practice, and that is where the flaw lies.

Along with Schechner's work, Phillip Zarrilli's body of work regarding the transmission of body knowledge in his books and articles gave me insights on how to interpret and translate the ethnographic experience of 'body as practice.'

Rustom Bharucha (2000), in his work “The Politics of Cultural Practice – Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization,” strongly opposes the Euro-American approach to borrow elements from non-dominant cultures in the name of Interculturalism which comes from the idea of Capitalism. However, Bharchu (2005), in his work “Theatre and the World – Performance and the Politics of Culture,” also describes how inevitable it is for us to co-exist with the unavoidable cross-cultural influences. He beautifully explains how the mediation of technology, environmental changes (placing the dance forms in an alien context – Example: a *Koodiyattam*⁷³ performance in a *mela*⁷⁴ in Paris) and the Victorian stage changed the presentation of Indian theatrical forms by taking case studies like *Yakshagāna*.

I, through this study, emphasize that despite the endorsing or opposing theories, cross-culturalism grew massively in the past two decades. ‘Cross-cultural training’ in this study is an academic and theoritical reflection of the already on-going trend of cross-culturalism in the field of Dance. The decontextualized Indian culture today cannot be separated from the undercurrent colonial mentality. This study also speaks about the aspects the cross-cultural inspirations that we can take from other dance forms in terms of training, practice, discipline, professionalism, or developing expertise, respecting all genders and all-dancing bodies. All these works gave me a detailed understanding of what is cross-culturalism, thereby giving me leverage to define my own.

During this course of discovering more about cross-culturalism, multi-culturalism, and transnationalism, works like *Dance Transcending Borders* and *Traversing Traditions* of Urmimala Sarkar Munsif (2011), *Engendering*

⁷³ Ancient theatrical tradition from Kerala which is listed as the intangible heritage by the UNESCO

⁷⁴ exhibition

Performance by Bishnupriya Datt(2010) and Urmimala Sarkar Munsii, *Dance Matters* by Pallabi Chakraborty(2017), *New Directions in Indian Dance* by Sunil Kothari(2003) and *The Beyond: Renaissance of Indian Classical Dance* by Leela Venakataraman(2015) gave me critical insights into the current trends of tradition and modernity and the experiments of Indian classical Dance with other cultures. The main facet of cross-cultural training is training the body for physical fitness- which was majorly discussed in this study. For this purpose, several works on fitness cultures and conditioning dancers were of great help. Although there is hardly anything on Indian classical Dance, except for few works of Tripura Kashyap, I got sources to apply on my form. In cross-training, I got several insights on physical training and pedagogy from works like *The art of somatic coaching* by Hanna(2014), *The dancer's companion*, *Dance Anatomy and Kinesiology*, and Eric Franklin's(2004) *Conditioning for dancers*. As I audited courses on practical modern, ballet, Flamenco, African Dance, and Pilates, related works helped me in understanding the practice and pedagogy of the above said forms along with understanding the context in which they thrived (Review was done in "snowball effect").

Dance Science and Medicine

There is hardly any in dance science and medicine on Indian classical dance forms while the same branch is thriving and growing very fast for other dance forms like ballet, modern Dance or Irish river dance. Among the very few of the articles written from this perspective, *Anatomical Drawing of Lower Limb Musculature Involved in the Eccentric Stances of Bharatanatyam: A Theoretical Aid* by Akhilesh Anand Prakash, a

Physician helps us in understanding the muscles involved in the basic stances of *Sama Pada*, *Aramandi* and *Muramandi*. Although the article is written about Bharatanatyam, it is useful for a Kūchipūdi dancer as the basic positions are the same. Many other articles in this perspective are studied to understanding the basic knowledge of how cross-training helps a dancer.

The Effects of Cross-Training on Ballet

The importance of cross-training was more emphasized and elaborated in the field of sports rather than in Dance. There are only a handful of books and unpublished research works that speak about the physical benefits of cross-cultural training. One such work was written by Allison Holland from the University of South Carolina. She spoke about the basics and benefits of cross-training to ballet dancers in her Master's thesis. She specifically discussed what kind of cross-training is required to ballet dancers at primary, pre-professional, and professional stages. Such group specificity is essential to train the dancers in a proper path. Such a path is not defined in the context of Indian classical Dance which creates ambiguity and lack of discipline in training the dancers. The thesis elaborately discusses how lean body, low body mass, and the ballet dancers' lifestyle contributes to the low fitness levels of the dancer and hence pressing on the need for the ballet dancer to take supplemental training. "According to a study conducted in the Sports Medical Journal, aerobic power, muscular strength, muscular imbalances, and bone and joint integrity are problematic areas for dancers" (Holland 16). She also mentions the problems with overtraining which further leads to injuries in ballet dancers. Just a pre-professional dancer dances for more than 10 hours a week. Indian classical Dance, on the other hand, falls are under-trained which leads to muscle imbalances, lack of strength and

stamina and the like. Although ballet and Indian classical dances are very different from each in terms of technique, training, and context, Allison's thesis gave me a fair idea and a framework on how to look at cross-cultural training and its impact on the physical body of a dancer.

Eric Franklin's *Conditioning for Dance* is like a manual to all dancers on how to keep their bodies fit and injury-free. He mentions conditioning through exercises and therapy bands in the book. Several principles listed by him for cross-training are noteworthy and could be *applied* in training the dancers in any dance form. The Concepts of conditioning are Principle of specificity, Principle of progressive overload ⁷⁵ , Principle of periodization⁷⁶, Warming up, Cooling Down. Along with the elaborate list of exercises in strengthening each part, his introductions of each chapter are beneficial in understanding each part of the body from a dancer's perspective.

Aim

To investigate the need and impact of cross-cultural training in other movement forms [as a supplementary training] on the practice and pedagogy of *Kūchīpūdī* dance?

Objectives

This study aims at focusing on the following aspects...

- To inspect the phenomenon of cross-culturalism and its role in the transformational history of Indian classical Dance.

⁷⁵ Method of strength training that advocates for the gradual increase of the stress placed upon the musculoskeletal and nervous system.

⁷⁶ A process of dividing the annual training plan into a series of manageable phases (mesocycles). The goal with periodization is to maximize your goals while also reducing your risk of injury and the staleness of the protocol over long term.

- To inquire into the current trends of cross-cultural training in the context of Indian classical Dance with special reference to Kūchipūdi.
- To closely examine the pedagogical system of Kūchipūdi throughout history in varied contexts.
- To find out the lacuna/gap in the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi.
- To explore the possibilities of imbibing cross-cultural training as an aid to fill the gap in the pedagogical system of Kūchipūdi.
- To investigate the impact, pros, and cons of incorporating cross-cultural training in the training system of Kūchipūdi.

Methodology

Since research in Dance is a combination of multiple methodologies, this study also involved various approaches and methods to analyze and to arrive at an objective work. Typology of the current study is field-oriented, practice-led research. “Research that takes the nature of practice as its central focus is called practice-related research” (Candy 2). This type of research is usually carried out by researchers who are in the field of arts like music, writing, and dance.

Practice-led Research is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice or to advance knowledge within the practice (Candy 3).

In this monograph, I tried investigating the existing practice and pedagogy of *Kūchipūdi* dance from multiple perspectives of gender, socio-cultural history, technique, and training, which becomes ‘advanced knowledge about the practice’ as mentioned by

Linda Candy. My ethnographic participant observant study of the impact of cross-cultural training on a *Kūchipūdi* dancing body and my conclusions would add to the existing epistemology of *Kūchipūdi* dance, which in a way is ‘to advance knowledge within practice’ by giving suggesting new forms of practice. Few other methods that were employed in the current research were: Historical Method, Personal Interviewing, Participant observation, Survey method, and experimental method. The data collected through about methods were both observational⁷⁷ and experimental⁷⁸ in nature.

To gain the primary understanding regarding the area of research, I was part of the process of **historical method**, read, and extracted relevant insights from books, theses, articles, periodicals, which were in the literature review section of this book. I collected historical evidence from the past through interviews, video archives. After carefully analyzing the data collected from the above-mentioned resources, I attempted to document the history of technique and its transformation due to a change in several aspects of Dance like gender, performance space, and place. I also gave a detailed analysis of the history of training in different contexts like rural, small-town, and urban. With this primary analysis coupled with the information I gained through personal interviews, I used **survey methods** to gain insights about the training process of *Kūchipūdi* dancers along with their opinions on cross-cultural training, their issues with practice, and their injury history. I collected around 115 responses through the survey method, which gave me a chance to see through the gaps and lacuna in the training system and its perception in *Kūchipūdi* dance. I also interviewed the experts and

⁷⁷ Observational data is data that is collected through careful observation of activities. This data is collected through open ended surveys or through use of an instrument to monitor and record information.

⁷⁸ Data collected by using a test method or a measurement is called experimental data.

exponents like Dr. Kannan⁷⁹, Illeana Citiristi⁸⁰, Sharan Lowen⁸¹, Jayachandran Palazhy⁸², Sasidharacharya⁸³, who used cross-cultural training as a tool or as a process in their career either on themselves or on others. Historical insights, coupled with insights from experts (through **personal interviewing**) of cross-cultural training, gave me a clear view of the elements that I should focus on while undergoing cross-cultural training as a participant observant. Initial case studies that I chose for analysis were Attakkalari, Nrityagram (Institute category), and Rukmini Vijaykumar (in Individuals category).

After the completion of my three-month certification course at Attakkalari, I got an opportunity to conduct my research at Barnard College as a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Research Fellow, which changed the course of my study. I was asked by my supervisors to narrow down my research area to one specific dance form as it gives more depth to the investigation. Instead of just choosing and analyzing case studies of other dance forms, I chose several case studies and examined their impact on me as a *Kūchipūdi* dancer as a participant observant as I restricted the scope of my research to one form, i.e., *Kūchipūdi*.

Narrowing down made me revisit my understanding of the history and technique of *Kūchipūdi*. I conducted a second round of literature review specific to *Kūchipūdi* as well as literature related to body training and cross-cultural training. I visited SNA visual archives and watched all the performances and lecture demonstrations related to *Kūchipūdi* (1986-2000) to analyze the technique of *Kūchipūdi*.

⁷⁹ Dr. Kannan Pugazhendi is a sports science doctor and an MBBS. With an experience of being sports therapist for many national and international football and cricket teams, Dr. Kannan also designed a da

⁸⁰ Hailing from Italy, Illeana is an Odissi and a Chhau dancer.

⁸¹ Hailing from America, Sharan learnt Ballet, Modern, Odissi and Chhau

⁸² The founder director of Attakkalari Center for Movement and Digital Arts

⁸³ A Chhau dancer and teacher hailing from the traditional families of Mayurbhanj Chhau.

As a **participant observant**, I audited several practice courses like Ballet, Modern, Pilates, Flamenco, African Dance, and theoretical courses like Biomechanics of Dance. I conducted a detailed analysis of how each of those forms impacted me as a *Kūchipūdi* dancer. To gain objective observations, I also conducted personal interviews of a few of my instructors at Barnard College, along with reading the related literature to understand the history of the forms.

After coming back from the USA, I conducted a one-time experiment (**experimental method**) to study the impact of cross-cultural training on *Kūchipūdi* dancing bodies.

While the first half of my research focuses on providing the knowledge about the practice of *Kūchipūdi*, the second half of research focuses on adding new knowledge to the practice of *Kūchipūdi* by giving cross-cultural insights into the dance pedagogy.

Scope

In terms of geographical boundaries, the scope of this study is mainly situated in the Telugu states (Andhra and Telangana). As *Kūchipūdi* is a Telugu dance tradition, all fieldwork related to personal interviews, literature review, especially with regards to video archives, was carried in Telugu states. Regarding the inputs about cross-cultural training in other movement forms, a participant observation method was carried in Bangalore (Attakkalari) and New York City (Barnard College).

While the introduction chapters broadly speak about the changes that occurred in the practice and pedagogy of all Indian classical dance forms and the impact of cross-cultural training in general, the study is further narrowed down to diagnosing one form,

i.e., Kūchipūdi. Further in Kūchipūdi, there are ‘n’ numbers of banis (styles) like the old style and the *Vempati* style. Owing to the limitations in conducting a study on multiple styles, only one style is chosen for analyzing the technique and in giving the possible solutions. I chose *Vempati* school of Kūchipūdi for my analysis as it is the popular school of *Kūchipūdi* which is practiced by artists world over. After a series of periodical transformations in any dance form, going back to the original is only close to impossible. Hence this study, speaks about the necessary changes one could do in the practice and pedagogy to be able to meet the demands of the current solo technique of Kūchipūdi.

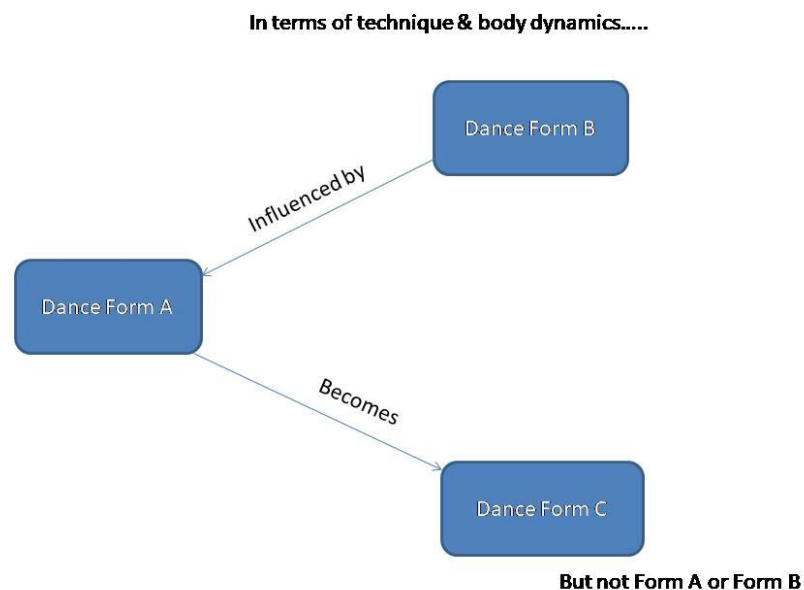


Figure 1.6. Transformation of a dance form

Any dance form that alters itself with the influences of other dance forms finds its in-between in the space and becomes a new form altogether.

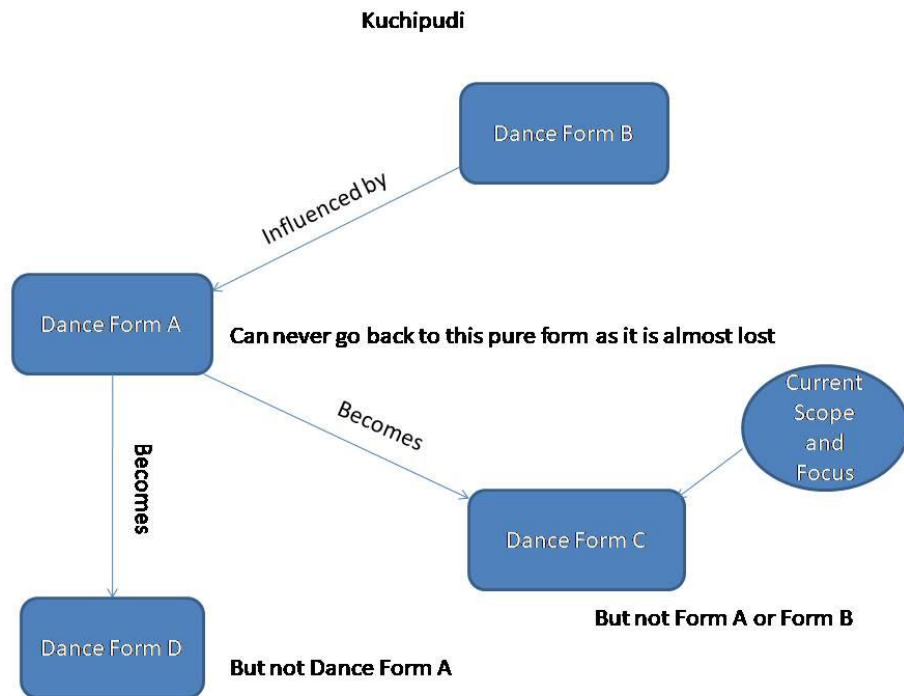


Figure 1.7. Scope of the current study

For example, Kūchipūdi (form A) influenced by *Orientalism*, Bharatanatyam, Cinema, Odissi (Form B) and the imagination of the pioneer becomes Form C. Even if we try to revive the old (in an attempt to trace back the original) from Form A (which was already subjected to changes), it only becomes Form D (something new) but not Form A. Hence, Form C, which is primarily the school of Vempati, being the popular one, is the scope for the current study.

Brief Chapterization

Chapter 2

This chapter speaks about the different aspects of cross-cultural training, and why just dancing the technique is not enough for the dancer to survive as a professional solo

dancer. Along with explaining the Indian understanding of body and training, the chapter focuses on the benefits of various training systems on the dancers' bodies and the minds in terms of fitness, gaining pedagogical inputs, different perspectives on spatial and choreographic understanding.

Chapter 3

This chapter sets a strong background and context, which led to the current research. It elaborately explains the pedagogical history of Kūchipūdi across parameters like political, socio-cultural, economic, and gender through the lens of a practitioner-performer-researcher. The political history covers a wide range of issues like the Tamil-Telugu conflict and a strong urge to have a Telugu identity and taking Bharatanatyam as a model to revive the art form. The socio-cultural history encompasses the comparison teaching and learning dance in different social settings (rural and urban context) of the earlier Kūchipūdi practitioners to present-day practitioners and thereby how it affected the body dynamics and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi. Finally, gender, being the most important of all, emphasizes how its shift changed the entire texture of the form and therefore how this led to a gap between the old pedagogy and the new technique and style of the form.

Along with speaking from the above perspectives, a detailed note on the technique, training system and traditional exercises that were practiced in the dance form is discussed. This discussion on the pedagogical history of Kūchipūdi reveals several unresolved points in the system in terms of practice, performance, and training. The arguments of the practitioner-performer-researcher are supported and validated by the data collected from personal interviews of veteran *gurus* and students, anecdotes,

literature, and video reviews, and surveys conducted. The chapter ends with a discussion on the realizations and lacunas in the system, along with explaining the possibilities of expanding the pedagogy to meet the lacuna.

Chapter 4:

This chapter leads into the cross-cultural experience of a Kūchipūdi practitioner as a participant observant. It gives a very detailed analysis of how each of the case-study movement forms helped or did not help the participant observant as a Kūchipūdi dancer. Several movement forms have been explored by the researcher, such as Marathon training, Certificate course in Attakkalari, Zumba, Ballet, Modern Dance, Kalari Payattu, Flamenco, Pilates, African Dance, Bharatanatyam, Aquatic pool experiment to strengthen dancers and Gym training. I chose the following framework to discuss each of the case studies:

- Training Context
- Training Process
- Transformation of the performer.
- Objective Observations
- Findings (How the case study movement form helped or did not help the participant as a Kūchipūdi performer-practitioner-trainer)

All the above points are discussed with the help of relevant supporting material taken from personal interviews, classroom observations, teacher's notes and philosophies, socio-cultural and political contexts of the case study movement forms, scientific theories, explanations, and pieces of evidence.

Chapter 5:

The first part of this chapter elucidates on the responses of an online survey conducted for Kūchipūdi dancers. This survey was conducted to understand the nature of practice and training of Kūchipūdi dancers and their opinions on cross-cultural training. The second part of this chapter puts forth the results of a one-time experiment conducted to examine the physiological impact of cross-cultural training on Kūchipūdi dancers. Based on my experience as a subject in an aquatic training experiment at Barnard College and with the help of experts, testing tools and the exercise regime were created. The Post Graduate students of the Department of Dance were taken as subjects. Students practiced the exercises for 6-weeks thrice a day. Physiological results are taken before and after the test, along with self-reported questionnaires from the participants. The data, along with the background of each participant, are analyzed and presented in detail. The results are analyzed along with statistical analysis.

Chapter 6:

This chapter, being a conclusion chapter summarizes each chapter presenting its relevance, necessity, and results, and elaborates on how the cross-cultural experiences helped the researcher-practitioner-performer to evolve a new pedagogy for the holistic training of Kūchipūdi dancer to meet the present-day demands. This chapter ends with suggesting a three-dimensional view in practice and pedagogy of any dance form discussing the future scope and improvements on the topic.

2. Why Cross-Cultural Training?

The main question that lingers our mind is that ‘do dancers opt for cross-cultural training because there’s a lacuna in their primary form’? Every culture lives and thrives in a notion that it is ‘whole’ and ‘complete.’ Cross-culturalism in any field is not a ‘solution’ to any problem. Instead, it is a philosophy and an approach to learning and teaching. The idea of cross-cultural learning started with an intention to break “stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination.” Often cross-culturalism is looked as a forced phenomenon by the developed countries on to the developing nations in the name of doing a favor to the developing nations. The hegemonic cultures played a crucial role in shaping the politics, culture, and arts of post-colonial modern India (and countries of the like). We, through this study, are only going to looking at how to deal with the after-effects of the already occurred change.

In the field of Dance, we can observe a pattern in the ideals and goals of developing classical dance forms. The primary goal has been kept shifting/ changing from time to time. For instance, while the idea of nationalism was in full swing, linguistic-regionalism⁸⁴ crept in. The division of States base on language added fuel to this urge. This influenced dance forms in working more on their specificities. A classical dance form to a state was a matter of pride. It was during this period, all the traditional dance forms revived themselves and thrived and enjoyed all the privileges until the 1990s.

⁸⁴ Language is closely related to culture and therefore to the customs of people. Regionalism is a linguistic term for a word, expression, or pronunciation favored by speakers in a particular geographic area. Since independence in 1947, linguistic affinity has served a basis for organizing interest groups; the language question itself has become increasingly political issue.

The state and national cultural policies encouraged many programs like the exchange of artistes between the countries and the States, festivals showcasing all the art forms on the same platform. Cultural bodies like ICCR⁸⁵, *Sangeet Natak Akademi*, *South Zone Cultural Centres*, played a vital role in this regard. These cultural organizations gave the dancers across different states and countries a chance to interact and exchange their art. A wave of Globalization in the 1990s and 2000s opened new doors and broader horizons to explore. Antony Giddens defines ‘Globalization’ as, “Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”(Giddens 64).

Hence, Globalization gave access to all kinds of practices across the world, and dancers started picking and choosing what they liked from other dance forms. While anything that slightly deviated from the traditional presentation of a dance form was called ‘contemporary’ a few decades ago, several experiments are happening today under the name of ‘classical’ or ‘traditional.’ From the perspective of how to read, study, observe, and understand Dance to new pedagogical inputs, choreography, technology, body training, the cross-cultural influence is very evident in today’s art forms. For example, analysis of Dance in terms of anatomy or biomechanics is a new perspective.

Training to explore the possibilities of the ‘body’ and the ‘mind.’

“The concern is about the ‘body.’ Dance just happens. My concern is constantly; I realize it is about the body and its enigmatic nature, its secrets, there is no end to it. So my questions are not about Dance. But when I think of the body, there are hundreds of things simultaneously come cascading down my head. The geometry of the body, fantastic

⁸⁵ Indian Council for Cultural Relations

geometry, the triangles, erotica in the body, sensuality in the body, sexuality in the body, spirituality in the body, all living together. How does one cope with it? How does one understand? All these live together in our body. In my body... ”

- Chandralekha

Each country has its own identity and purpose for the ‘body’ which is reflected in the way they train their body. For example, Susan Brownell (1995) opines that “Chinese nationalism has been very closely linked with the body, so that the act of individuals strengthening their bodies was linked to the salvation of the nation” (qtd. In. Tinning xv). In such a way, if we observe, since times immemorial, Indians identify themselves with their soul rather than with their body. Indian philosophy believes in the idea of “I am the soul, and I have a body,” which is opposite to the Greek philosophy, as explained by Bulchmann, “I don’t have soma” rather “I am the *soma*”⁸⁶(Kennan 332). But, the ‘body’ was always respected, explored, and disciplined in Indian culture, as Indians believe that ‘body’ is the instrument to achieve the highest salvation.

“For one who lacks ethical discipline and perfect physical health, there can be no spiritual illumination. Body, mind, and spirit are inseparable: if the body is asleep, the soul is asleep”(Iyengar 7). At the same time, too much love on the body is considered as a hindrance to spiritual growth. Perhaps, such theory led to the concept of *Uttama abhinaya*, *Madhyama abhinaya*, and *Adhamābhinaya* by Bharatamuni in *Nāṭya Sāstra*. The *abhinaya*, which has more *Āṅgika* ⁸⁷ and less *Sātvika* ⁸⁸ is considered as

⁸⁶ Greek parallel word for ‘body’ is ‘soma’. But ‘soma’ is never used to describe a dead corpse. In that sense, we can assume that soma is the one with life. Such analysis will somewhere coincide with the Indian ideology that soul doesn’t have death. It is only the body that dies.

Bulchmann is a German Theologian and one of the noted figures of the early 20th century.

⁸⁷ Bodily movements

⁸⁸ That which arises from the heart

Adhamābhinaya. Indians' value on the body only degraded due to the British Christian degraded view on the 'body.'

In the post-colonial era, Indians linked their identity with their 'culture' which included performing arts. Hence, Indian dancers became the heritage and examples of nationalism. Such pressurized linkage of nationalism with the Dance and the impact of Globalization later, Indian classical dances changed and still changing their faces very rapidly to meet the standards of the global and the hegemonic cultures. In such endeavor, *Āngikābhinaya* and its complexities increased. To perform such heavy *Āngikābhinaya*⁸⁹, the mere practice of the technique is not enough. Even to perform seamless *abhinaya*, one should have an effortless dancing body.

Apart from learning the right technique, a well-conditioned body is essential to be able to execute the learned technique. Human mind is limitless. We can imagine and create extraordinary movements in our minds. However, to materialize them, we need a crucial aspect called training as the capability of the physical body is limited when compared to the mind's capabilities. The functioning of the physical body is limited based on three factors – the biomechanical structure of the body, fitness, and embodied cultural memory. In contrast, the nature of the mind is limitless and multidimensional with an infinite number of dimensions/possibilities. Although the body does not support, the brain can think of high jumps and leaps, splits or squats, creative concepts or choreography, think about new movements and the like. At every stage, we crave to expand the limited physical capabilities to match our limitless intellect, to give form to our thoughts. But the mind is also conditioned to think in a certain way, and seldom it is the blockage in the mind that stops the body from performing or pursuing something.

⁸⁹ One among the four abhinayas

Hence, the idea of cross-cultural training is to balance the mind and the body and bring harmony between them.

Every form has a certain kind of body mechanics that does not give a complete range of motion to all the joints. Hence, dancers take the aid of other dance forms to explore and experience the limitless nature of the body. In this course, we also increase, improve, or rewire our minds (complementing each other). This theory is the prime idea of cross-cultural training in Dance. This urge to explore and push the limits of the physical body became easy due to an easy access to other forms in a globalized world.

Context	Mind	Body
Own culture	Conditioned to think in a certain way	Conditioned to move in a certain way
The process of creation	Tries to think in a conditioned way but constantly pushed to think new in terms of movement, choreography, concept etc.	Follows the mind unless the mind thinks of something that cannot be done by the already conditioned body
New learning in other cultures	Mental block to go beyond the conditioned cultural behaviour	Mind controls the body (sometimes). For example: For someone who never did a handstand, along with physical inability, there is a fear of falling down that majorly controls the performance
Consistent learning from other cultures	Mental blocks slowly disappear. Now the resources for the mind have doubled	Body practice slowly changes the mind too. It is a vice versa phenomenon.

Table.2.1. Possibilities of limitations with the mind and the body in different learning contexts

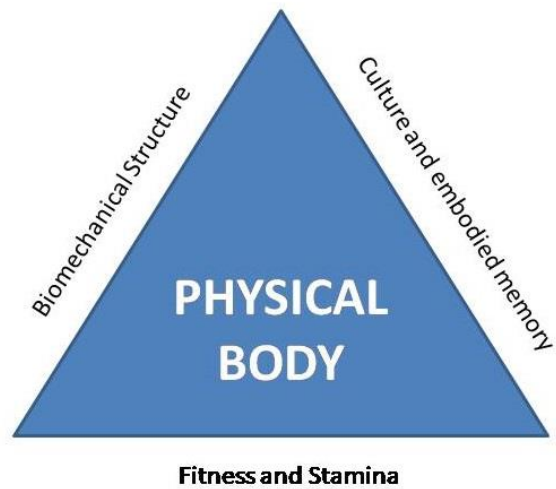


Figure.2.1. Three limiting characteristics of the physical body

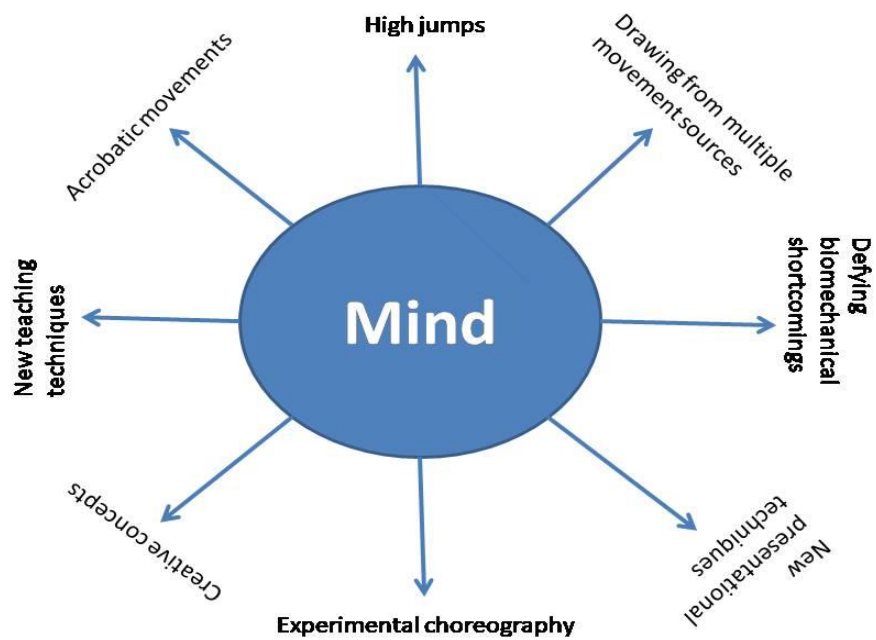


Figure.2.2. Limitless nature of the mind

Train to Transcend:

The best dancers have an integrated combination of two talents – a knowledge of what is to be expressed, and the physical and mental tools to accomplish that expression. A dancer who is able to jump higher, balance longer, achieve more turns is not necessarily a better dancer but does have the advantage of a greater range of tools with which to create desired images (Laws).⁹⁰

One of the major hindrances for dancers is that despite having a creative, dance-friendly nerve in them, they cannot do justice to it due to lack of physical preparedness. Dance, for that matter, any art form is known for its strict practice regime, which believes in the ‘repetition’ of basics. With repetition, the technique is ingrained in the body, thereby not struggling to check the placement of the movement every single time. Along with the repeated practice of the technique, cross-cultural training helps in transcending the physical limitations of the body one by one, thereby creating more scope for the dancer to succeed.

Before delving deep into the modern perspective, let us look into the perspectives of the ancient treatises. In *Nāṭya Sāstra*, Bharatamuni dedicates a separate chapter on *Āngikābhinaya*. Nandikeswara wrote a treatise called *Abhinaya Darpana*, focusing on just the *Āngikābhinaya*. He elaborately discusses the gestures, usages, qualities of a dancer. Nandikeswara, in his *Abhinaya Darpana*, mentions ten qualities of a dancer as *Patra Antah Prana*⁹¹. *Prana* means life. Hence, these ten qualities are considered to be vital for someone to become a dancer.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Laws, "The Application of Physical Principles to Dance," in *The Dancer as Athlete* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1986), 123-127.

⁹¹ Inner qualities

Javaha Sthiratvam Rekhā Ca Bhramarī Drishtiḥ Sramāḥ |

Medhā Shraddhā Vācō Geetam pātra prāṇāḥ Dasāsmritāḥ ||



Figure 2.3. Ten qualities of a dancer mentioned by *Nandikeswara* in *Abhinaya Darpana*

Among the above-mentioned qualities, swiftness, composure (stability), symmetry, and graceful execution of *bhramar*⁹² can be developed by only practice. While swiftness can be equivalent to agility, stability comes with strength and functional training. *Asramah* or Ease is developed by improving cardiovascular endurance. Although all the treatises explain a detailed technique that demand a great range of motion, strength, and suppleness from the dancers, there was no mention of how to achieve such suppleness or strength except for one or two instances. In *Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nrīta Ratnavali*, there was a mention of how exercises are ought to be

⁹² Pirouette

performed by dancers. While two people hold a rope horizontally on either side, the dancer should perform several exercises holding the rope. This exercise is close to the *barré* exercises performed by ballet dancers.



Figure 2.4. The traditional way of practicing basics with the help of a rope/cloth.

Ashish Mohan Khokar. *Attendance: The Dance Annual of India 2015-16*.

The anatomical understanding of the body is also in terms of major and minor limbs (and joints) in *Natyasastra* rather than in terms of muscles, micro muscles, ligaments, which play a major role in executing a movement and the muscle endurance plays a vital role in the Dance.

The Indian dancer is not concerned with the musculature of the human form, but rather, like the sculptor, takes the joints and fundamental anatomical bone-structure of the human form as its basis. From such a basis, the dancer strives to achieve absolute form, since the muscles cannot suggest absolute form and create abstract geometrical patterns easily. The different parts of the body and their respective movements have been analyzed from this point of view. It from the key

joint of the knee, hip, and shoulder that movement emerges in both the lower and upper limbs; the neck joint is the pivot for movements of the head and face(Vatsyayan 13).

This point of view is undoubtedly a creator's spectator's point of view rather than the performer's point of view. As discussed in chapter 1, perhaps, the dancers in ancient days were expected to be already training in physical forms like *Yoga* (which talks about alignment, anatomy, and muscles) before starting to learn Dance. In any case, such emphasis on either the musculature of the body or the *Yoga* is lost.

We must also consider the fact that the ancient treatises listed out the possibilities of movement with the human body (Example: *Karanas*), but however, every dance form need not incorporate such movements in their form. Hence, movement is purely a choice for each dance form. While folk forms like *Dommarata*⁹³ chose to be agile and acrobatic, the *devadāsīs* in the temple chose not to be too physical. This choice shows how important the 'context' of Dance is. As mentioned in chapter 1, the de-contextualized neo-classical Indian dance forms, which traced themselves back to the ancient Sanskrit treatises like *Nāṭya Sāstra*, tried incorporating all the elements from the treatises. Every form 'chose' to become more physical.

Apart from such pressure, Dance, which was considered a way of life, became a serious profession in an urban setup coping with the demands and busyness of an urban lifestyle. Reduced time slots for the performers demanded dancers to showcase their best in a very short performance slot resulting in speeding up the dance numbers. The multi-lingual audience forced many dance forms to become more physical rather than

⁹³ An acrobatic folk form where the dancer walks on a rope at a height, balancing a bamboo stick in hands.

presenting something elaborately in their native language. Irrespective of the language, people enjoyed fast dance numbers better than the slow or *abhinaya* pieces, which resulted in the elimination of pieces like *Javali* and *Padam* from the repertoires. The dancers had little or less training to cope with such extreme physical demands (excluding exceptions). With the advent of the proscenium stage, good dance floors, increasing competition, many forms today, have become exceedingly athletic and acrobatic and demanded a new level of fitness from the dancers. As the notion of the ‘dance’ as a holistic way of learning and living has been lost, the training system also changed. With increased physical demands, the notion of “practicing dance itself is enough to keep the dancer fit” became obsolete, especially with the case of professional dancers.

Hence, dancers started finding different ways to increase their strength, flexibility, agility, and endurance. One of the popular trends today we see is that dancers are opting to undergo cross-training in other dance or movement forms to improve their fitness like any other athlete. The meaning of the word athlete is “a person trained or gifted in exercises or contests involving physical agility, stamina or strength; a participant in a sport, exercise or game requiring physical skill” (“athlete”). Hence, by looking at the above definition, we can say that a good athlete need not be a good dancer, as Dance involves grace, emotion and an aesthetic appeal which is beyond athleticism. But a good dancer should have a good amount of strength and other athletic qualities to have a healthy, long, injury-free career. Hence, a dancer is considered as a ‘performing athlete’ who has a blend of aesthetic abilities and athletic abilities. Agility, stamina, and strength, which are considered as the qualities of an athlete, are equally important to a dancer. Until recently, cross-cultural training is not very popular in the dance field as the dancers

and dance teachers believed that being trained in two different forms (Dance or fitness) would reduce or damage the aesthetic capability in executing the form specific movements by the dancer. Over the past few years, dancers have been looking for cross-training for several reasons, such as to have a healthy, long career without injuries. The wisdom of the previous generation warned the present generation to strengthen the body right from the beginning of their careers to avoid wear and tears in the middle age. Hence, many present-day generation dancers have their designs for cross-training. At different levels of their career, dancers are opting for different kinds of cross-training. For example, in the initial stages of learning, cross-training should help to build the skills specific to the form rather than giving a contrasting skill. At a later stage of the career, the dancer can choose a contrasting form for a while to practice to break the monotony of the primary dance form so that the nerves are rewired and can work better.

The changing standards of beauty and Dance:

Having a well-rounded body with high bosoms and hips and slender waist are the ancient standards of beauty. In *Apatra Lakshana*, Nadikeswara explains it as “*Naati Krusa naati sthoolaaa...*” which means a dancer should be neither too slim nor too heavy. But if we observe the current trends, dancers no more abide by these standards, and the audience’s expectations also changed by watching famous slender dancers. Anita Ratnam⁹⁴, in her online journal *Narthaki*⁹⁵, says, “There was a time when a lovely figure was described as a **Paavai Vilakku**, a graceful woman with the right curves where it mattered. Another expression was **Yaanaai Dantha Kai**, arms like a smooth ivory tusk. Today being curvy like the Ajanta painting is not considered a compliment. Thank the

⁹⁴ The founder of *Narthaki.com* and a well known Bharatanatyam dancer who is also known for her experimental work in Bharatanatyam.

⁹⁵ An online dance forum

combination of media, cinema, health and fitness centers, and huge auditoriums. Look at the top four of our Bharatanatyam stars - my acronym taken from the world of fashion. **R - A - M - P**. Rama Vaidyanathan, Alarmel Valli, Malavika Sarukkai, and Priyadarshini Govind. Look at their more than slender figures - specially Priya and Rama. Tall and very skinny, these superstar dancers work out daily in variety of ways, gym, running, weight training, Yoga and who knows what else. Two of the dancers are in their forties and the other two in their early fifties. And what slim bodies! Fitness for Dance is not a chance happening anymore. I remember my mother telling me how Vyjayantimala used to eat four Threptin biscuits instead of a meal and then walk around her dining table 25 times to remain slim and fit. This was to remind me to hold off that cheese sandwich I was fond of, and still am! ”(Ratnam Narthaki.com). Anita Ratnam’s narrative put forths two pertinent issues, yet conflicting issues.

1. Fitness of a dancer
2. ‘Slenderness’ of a dancer

Slenderness or slimness cannot be equaled to fitness as there are many dancers who are not fit yet slim and vice verse. The tall, slender figures and the strength of the four mentioned dancers are two separate aspects, the first one related to body type and genetics and the second one to the training. Cross-cultural training brings awareness not only among dancers but to the audience in two ways.

1. To empathize with and celebrate every body type rather than setting Patra Lakshanas or the bodies of the star performers as ideal bodies.
2. To make fit dancers (in all aspects) rather than just slim dancers.

Hence, this thesis focuses on the current trends of cross-cultural training in Dance, whether it helps the dancer or not, and other than the benefits at the physical level, what are the other benefits and inspirations that occur due to cross-training, and an observation of how cross-training helps Kūchipūdi dancers in specific and what makes a good cross-training program for a dancer.

As a part of knowing the benefits and disadvantages of cross-training, I have interviewed several physiotherapists, dancers from traditional backgrounds, and artists who came from cross-training backgrounds. While the fitness experts like physiotherapists and sports science medicine doctors are firm about the benefits of cross-training, traditional *gurus* didn't approve of cross-training. Dancers like Sharon Lowen, who had vast exposure to various arts endorsed cross-cultural training provided the dancer is capable enough in keeping the forms separate. While the dancer's perspective of cross-training is discussed in chapter 4 in detail, let us look at a doctor's view of cross-training, pros, and cons of it.

Since ages, the traditional notion of "dance is enough to keep the dancer fit" worked only in the ideal cases in the Indian context. Let us start with the premise that "dance is enough for the fitness of the dancers" and look at the biomechanical functioning of the muscles in the basic stance "half-sit" of Kūchipūdi. There are four kinds of functions that a muscle does while in a movement. Muscle contracts to cause the movement of a body segment, thereby acting as an agonist muscle or the mover. A muscle that acts in opposite forces to that of the *agonist* muscle, while the movement of the body segment is called antagonist or the *opposer* muscle. The "agonists and antagonists are typically positioned on opposite sides of a joint." The stabilizer muscle is

involved in “stabilizing a portion of the body against a particular force.” The fourth function of a muscle is neutralizing “unwanted accessory actions that occur when agonists develop concentric tension,” and such muscle is called neutralizer. The group of muscles cannot act in isolation, and the action of one muscle triggers other muscles to react. The movement of a particular body segment is a collective reaction of a group of muscles(Hall 163-164). The agonist and antagonist muscles come in pairs; for example, quadriceps and hamstrings are agonist and antagonist muscles.

The nature of lower body movements in Kūchipūdi is such that there is a scope for quadriceps muscles to strengthen by repeated practice. But hamstrings being the antagonist muscles to quadriceps, have lesser scope to strengthen just by repeated practice of Kūchipūdi movements. This creates an imbalance in the muscle groups, thereby creating a chance for the occurrence of injuries.

Another example is ‘core strength.’ While dance forms demand ‘engaging the core,’ they don’t provide any aid to strengthen the core. This is where, cross-training takes over, by understanding the movement biomechanically and by providing a solution for it. While cross-training helps as formulating a theory on how the body should work and maintain strength, dancing is where the dancers apply the theory they’ve learned during cross-training.

Despite dancing for years together, the quality of muscular strength is not maintained in Indian dancers. Due to the accelerated lifestyle and lack of awareness, warm-up and cool-down routines are not part of many Indian dance schools. Women, being a majority in today’s Indian classical Dance, go through many phases like puberty, marriage, childbirth, and there is much pressure physically, mentally, and socially on the

women dancers, which remain unaddressed in the field of Dance. Especially, Kūchipūdi being a male-oriented dance form until as late as the 1930s surely didn't foresee the issues related to women dancers. Dr. Kannan opines that like how an athlete is trained throughout the year or for a competition (involving “general preparatory phase, specific preparatory phase, competitive phase”), a dancer should also have phase wise training, which is called as the Principle of Periodization. E.g., Three months of general training, one month of choreography specific training, 15 days of tour specific training. All the dancers don't make that edge of excellence. Those dancers who wanted their careers to be strong and long have been starting cross-training much early in their lives like Leela Samson, Nrityagram (Kannan).

Rather than just people going lucky with their dancing careers, there is no proper study on the problems and health issues of the dancers at an institutional level or on a general level. Hence there is a need to look into why people are looking at cross-training as an aid to improve their overall fitness and health.

For body conditioning

Cross-training is known to improve functional fitness by working out more muscle groups and avoiding the overuse of certain muscle groups, which, in turn, helps avoid injury. (...) Since most yoga poses don't entail pulling muscles, like in resistance training or swimming, cross-training helps to improve posture and coordination and, thereby, mental strength. When specifically speaking, in combination with [weight training](#), Yoga helps improve endurance, posture, and flexibility. While enabling optimum physical performance, Yoga helps improve meditative capability.

(...)The integrated flexibility owing to cross-training helps tap into areas of the body that tend to be missed out on in just one type of training routine. This also adds variety and helps break the monotony (Indian Express).

Hence, based on each individual's strengths and weaknesses, one can decide on what and how to cross-train. Stamina, flexibility, cardiovascular, and muscle endurance, agility are four critical components of physical fitness, which can undoubtedly be improved with cross-training.

Cardio-vascular Endurance

Indian classical dancers need more cardio-vascular endurance as they have to sustain their energy to perform for more extended hours both in rehearsals and on stage.

To further understand the need for cardiovascular exercise, it is important to recognize two energy systems that fuel your body. The burst of energy needed for a leap comes from the anaerobic system. The stamina needed for a long slow adagio comes from the aerobic system. The aerobic system can be targeted through cardiovascular exercises that get your heartbeat at 50 to 70 percent of your maximum heart rate for longer than thirty minutes (Landon).

Endurance sports like running, swimming, skiing help dancers to tremendously improve their stamina. But each of them has its own drawbacks too. The prolonged practice of running and swimming may hurt the dancer's back⁹⁶. Although Dance demands a tremendous amount of cardiovascular endurance, it provides the dancer with less of it. Many dancers believe that constant practice of basics (of their specific form) helps the dancer develop the kind of stamina they need for their form, but the intermittent

⁹⁶ There are evidences that prolonged running might stiffen the runner's lower back. I have shared my marathon training experience in chapter 4.

nature of Dance does not equip the dancer with better cardiovascular endurance. Cardiovascular endurance training targets the decrease in resting heart rate⁹⁷, decrease in the recovery time of the heart rate from training level to resting level, a decrease in blood pressure, and an increase in the fat-burning enzymes, which raises the metabolic rate⁹⁸.

In cross-cultural training, a dancer who wants to improve their cardiovascular endurance, can choose and get trained in movement forms like running, swimming, HIIT training as supplemental forms under an expert's supervision.

Anaerobic fitness

While aerobic exercise focuses on low-intensity training at longer intervals like running, swimming, cycling, etc. anaerobic exercise focuses on high-intensity interval training (HIIT) where the heart rate of the performer is raised to as much as 90% of the maximum heart rate. This is important to improve the power, speed, and strength of the individuals. Strengthening the muscle either using weights or bodyweight, is anaerobic kind of training. Although most of the dancers seem to be aware of aerobic training, they are either unaware or prejudiced about anaerobic training. There are several misconceptions that weight training builds the muscle, which disturbs the aesthetics of a dancer's body. Whether or not anyone is a dancer, muscle atrophy, and availability of less muscle mass in body composition is more in Indians compared to other Asians or Europeans(E C Rush). Although the religious practice of dancing helps in strengthening the muscles to a certain extent, one definitely needs supplemental training in

⁹⁷ Heart rate at rest is called resting heart rate. Heart rate is the speed of the heartbeat measured by the number of contractions of the heart per minute. Resting heart rate is usually measured after one minute of stopping any physical activity.

⁹⁸ Werner W.K. Hoeger, Principles and Labs for Physical Fitness and Wellness. 2d ed., (Englewood, Co : Morton Publishing Co., 1991), 50.

strengthening the agonist, antagonist, and stabilizing muscles to avoid problems in the long run.

Muscles and Strength

“In muscle fibers, there are two types of fibers called Fast-twitch fibers and slow-twitch fibers. While activities like sprinting and jumping need ‘powerful muscular contraction’ require fast-twitch fibers, endurance sports like distance running, cycling, swimming need require ‘effective functioning of the more fatigue-resistant slow-twitch fibers’”(Hall 158). Dancers (irrespective of which form they are dancing) are believed to develop slow-twitch fibers first and then develop fast-twitch fibers. While fast-twitch fibers help the dancer in performing jumps and leaps, slow-twitch fibers are those who withstand the fatigue and keeps the dancer dancing. Statistics prove that exercises and endurance training can change the fast-twitch fibers into slow-twitch fibers.

Indian classical dancers, who need to dance for longer durations (as long as 2-3 hours), should have more slow-twitch fibers. The composition of FT and ST fibers depends on the age, genetics, and fat percent of an individual. A good dancer should have a balanced composition of FT and ST muscles so as to reduce problems like muscle tensions, strains, cramps.

Hence cross-training in low impact movement forms like Pilates (which uses bodyweight, resistance machines, and bands), training a particular muscle with more repetitions, and less resistance helps the dancer maintain muscle health without fear of increasing muscle fiber diameter.

Flexibility

Flexibility is “the range of joint motion available in a joint or group of joints, mobility”(Corbin C. B. Dowell). Regular stretching increases the length of the muscle fibers, which further increases the flexibility. “The individual muscle fibers can grow in length by the addition of little contractile units called *sarcomeres*.”(Coulter).

Along with increasing the length of the muscle fiber, increasing the length of the connective tissues of the muscle fiber and the overlying fascia⁹⁹ is also vital to holistically build the flexibility.

There are two kinds of flexibility static and dynamic. Static flexibility, having no emphasis on speed, means to be able to touch the floor even with assistance. Dynamic flexibility is to be able to use the range of motion of a joint in a performance at a rapid rate of speed (Charles B. Corbin). A gymnast being able to do a split in the air effortlessly comes under dynamic flexibility. Flexibility, in general, is a complex topic as the range of motion varies from joint to joint. Indian dance forms neither demand extreme flexibility like ballet nor deny it. There are certain aspects of flexibility, like doing splits, complete leg raises, or any kind of acrobatic poses, which is just extra icing on the cake. But certain fundamental aspects of flexibility which determine the fitness of the dancer like flexible hip flexors without tightness facilitating a comfortable turn out, hamstrings without any tightness, and a flexible spine are essential elements. Flexibility is a matter of age and mobility. Although dancers are flexible while young, lose their flexibility, and build stiffness with aging. Many Bharatanatyam dancers suffer quadriceps muscle tightness, Iliotibial band tightness, and hamstring tightness(Anbarasi V.). Many

⁹⁹ A band or a sheet of connective tissue, primarily collagen, beneath the skin that attaches, stabilizes, encloses and separates muscles and other internal organs.

Kūchipūdi dancers report lower back tightness¹⁰⁰. Hence cross-cultural training in forms like Yoga, Pilates, Ballet, Martial arts keeps the dancer necessary to maintain the flexibility.

Compensation

Lack of strength in the muscles and lack of flexibility in the joints lead the dancers to do compensation in a movement, which eventually leads to injuries. For example, when the dancer has to lift the leg to the front horizontally up to ninety degrees without bending at the knee, they should have a strong core, strong quadriceps, and flexible hamstrings. The dancer, lacking any of these elements, compensates for the movement with hunching or bending forward.



Figure. 2.5. An Example for Compensation.

Gigi Berardi. *Finding Balance- Fitness and Training for Lifetime in Dance*. Book.

Princeton Book Company Publishers. 1991. p. 100.

¹⁰⁰ According to a survey conducted by me which has been mentioned in chapter 5.

Similarly, when there is no enough core strength and flexibility in the hip flexors, in an attempt to do a perfect turn out, the dancer either compensates it by overarching in the lower back or by turning out from the knees rather than from the hip sockets. Hence strength and flexibility at the micro-level of joints and muscles are vital for any dancer.

To address the biological and biomechanical shortcomings

It is impossible and unfair for only the dancers with the ‘ideal body’ type to take up Dance and excel in it. Some dancers excelled despite their ‘so-called flawed’ bodies according to the standards in the dance field. Keeping aside those exceptional few dancers who succeeded, are we addressing the biological problems of the dancers and training them accordingly in Indian Dance? The existing body of knowledge lacks proper research addressing the musculoskeletal disorders in Indian dancers. Many dancers with knee valgus¹⁰¹, hyperextended knees¹⁰² need extra care and support to strengthen their muscles, although Dance is supposed to increase the strength of the muscles around the knee to some extent¹⁰³. Involving students with such problems in cross-training would help them to strengthen their weaker parts of their bodies. Dr. Kannan¹⁰⁴ reported that a Bharatanatyam dancer with the training background of Kalakshetra was able to open up her hip correctly only after she got introduced to Kalari training (Kannan). Such examples show that, while the best teachers and institutes can orient the dancers to some extent, some students yet need special care according to their body types.

¹⁰¹ Valgus is defined as the angle formed at the knee between the femur and tibia in which the knee angulates toward the midline with the tibia angulated away from the midline **Invalid source specified.**

¹⁰² When knee is pushed past its range of motion from a straightened position.

¹⁰³ Bala Kondala Rao, a well known Kūchipūdi guru from Vizag has trained a dancer with extreme knee valgus and reported that the dancer improved tremendously over a period of time. Apparently, the dancer was unable to walk properly and used to frequently fall down before she began her dance training. Now, she is in her advanced dance training without any problems. **Invalid source specified.**

¹⁰⁴ Dr. Kannan Pugazhendi is a sports science doctor and an MBBS. With an experience of being sports therapist for many national and international football and cricket teams, Dr. Kannan also designed a dance medicine curriculum for Kalakshetra, the prime institute for *Bharatanatyam* in Chennai.

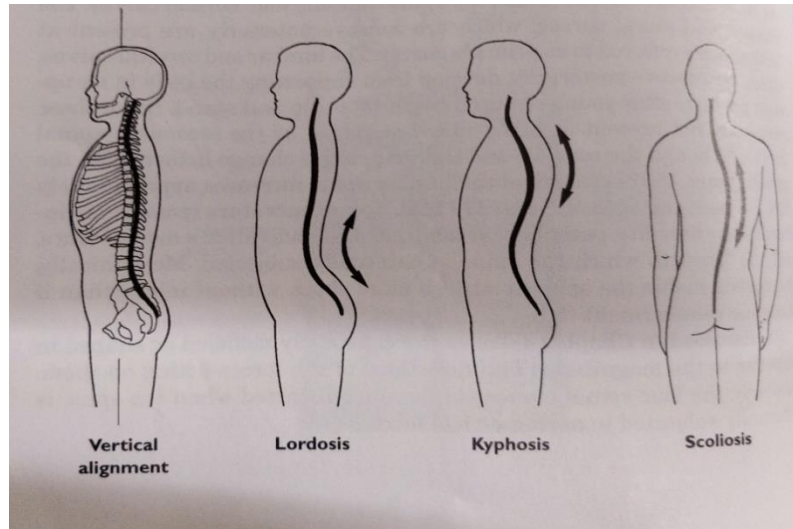


Figure 2.6. Abnormal Spinal Curvatures

Susan J. Hall. *Basic Biomechanics*. Book. McGrawHill. 2007. p.286.

For example, Lumbar Lordosis occurs for various reasons like “congenital spinal deformity, weakness of the abdominal muscles, poor postural habits, overtraining in sports requiring repeated lumbar hyperextension, such as gymnastics, figure skating, javelin throwing and swimming the butterfly stroke”(Hall, n.d.) Or, as mentioned earlier, if the dancer’s hip flexors are weak, their turn out is compensated by an overarched back, which creates problems in the long run. Hence, cross-cultural training brings awareness on how each culture is dealing with the body and its shortcomings, thereby equipping the dancer with proper tools to deal with the biomechanical issues of the dancing body.

Gender Issues

Women, being the predominant gender in the field of Indian classical dance field today, face many problems during their careers. Women’s issues remain unaddressed not only in Indian traditional dance forms but in other dance forms world over.

“In the tradition from Plato to Freud, art is conceived as a mode of sublimation, an alchemical conversion of lower or bodily energy into a higher,

mental or spiritual state. To create a work of art is to transcend the lowliness of the body. Hence the odd paradox that dance – the only art form whose raw material is the human body – began to idealize the image of the disembodied woman”. (Copeland 27 qtd.in.(Aalten 112))

Dance as a profession evolved in history through a male gaze¹⁰⁵ perspective ignoring the biological issues faced by women deal. Recently, associations like the International Association for Dance Science Medicine are investigating the problems faced by women in their dancing careers. Female athletic triad is the most prevalent phenomenon that occurs in women who are physically active (like athletes and dancers). “Female athletic triad is a combination of three conditions: disordered eating, Amenorrhea which is the decrease in hormones that regulate menstrual cycle and Osteoporosis, which is weakening of bones due to loss of bone density and improper bone formation. These three conditions, if not taken care, one or all of them, can occur in female dancers”(Auralia Nattiv). Issues like bone health, fluctuations in women’s energy levels, irregular periods, are not generally addressed in Indian Dance, and it is even a taboo to speak about such issues. Just like how research in ballet and modern Dance is being cross-disciplinary with other fields like sports science medicine, Indian Dance should also progress in dealing with the issues of women. Along with disorders like anorexia, there are misconceptions regarding gaining weight when we learn Indian dance forms like Kūchipūdi or Bharatanatyam.

¹⁰⁵ Act of depicting women and the world, in the visual arts and in literature from a masculine, heterosexual perspective that presents and represents women as sexual objects for the pleasure of the male viewer.

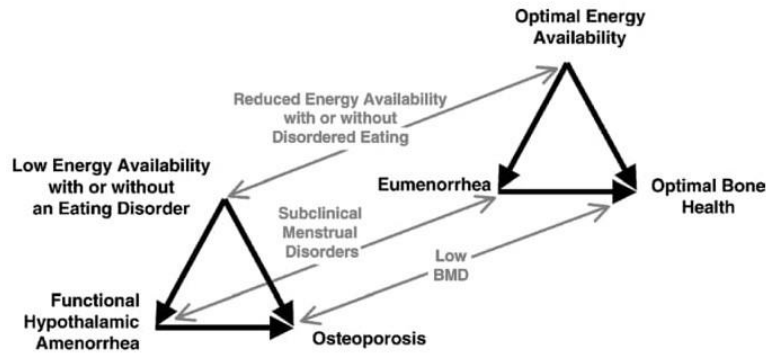


Figure 2.7. Female Athlete Triad

Auralia Nattiv, Anne B Loucks, Melinda M Manore, Charlotte F Sanborn, Jorunn Sundgot-Borgen, Michelle P Warren. *The Female Athlete Triad*. American College of Sports Medicine (2007): 1867.

There is a prevalent notion that when girls stop practicing Dance, they will put on weight. Rather than blaming Dance, we should check the reasons behind putting on weight. We should be able to enlighten practitioners with relevant knowledge regarding diet and nutrition and should be able to cater to the needs of the health of an individual. Nutrition and exercise for dancers to cater to their health needs would be a separate study of research and would not be covered in this study. This section is mentioned in this chapter only to understand that study across cultures on how each culture is dealing with women's bodies and how interdisciplinary approach to involving medical sciences can address the problems of the women.

Breaking monotony, Enhancing Neuroplasticity

Bruce-Lee extensively pursued forms other than Kung-Fu (which he was good at) to build more sources to enrich his form. Every form has a certain kind of body dynamics (Kannan). Training only in one form for years gives the dancer, an embodied memory which they cannot go wrong in execution even while in sleep. But that very embodied memory sometimes becomes monotonous, hindering the creative pursuits of the dancer at

a professional level. At such stage, cross-cultural training significantly benefits the individuals in breaking the monotony and gives a new perspective to body movements, and space. “When people learn a new motor skill, a progressive modification of movement kinematics reflects the learning processes” (Hall 322). I, being a classical dancer, was extremely uncomfortable while learning Modern Dance¹⁰⁶. But, at the end of two semesters, it gave me a less rigid body, a new understanding of space and movement. I started trying to reflect the feel and mood of the music in my body a bit more. My spatial patterns in choreography subtly changed. Some Modern dance exercises which helped me bring more body awareness were discussed in chapter 4. “The brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life”(Sheil Jr.). Cross-training increases the neuroplasticity of the brain, which opens the dancer to new horizons of awareness and creativity.

To earn pedagogical inputs

At what point a dancer decides that they are eligible to teach? Who validates their pedagogical skills? An excellent performer need not necessarily be an excellent teacher or vice-versa. What are the requirements for someone to be a good teacher? As quoted by Eric Franklin, “Teachers should create a basis of knowledge and sensation that enables the students to make sound movement decisions. He then can create his path and reach the highest of his abilities. The goal is to help the student to help himself” (Salk 97).

Sharon Lowen credits her expertise and talent to her cross-cultural training background. She emphasizes that by learning other forms, one learns how to see a movement, the dynamics, and energy. Sharon also uses some of her Modern dance

¹⁰⁶ My OCD for symmetry was shattered while executing asymmetric movements of modern Dance. My OCD for symmetry was shattered while executing asymmetric movements of modern Dance.

techniques in her Odissi class, like the use of images of *effort*, *shape* techniques in describing a movement, and activities like partnering to develop a pro-active behavior amongst the students in dance class. She further elaborates, “every dance form, we think is complete; depends on your body and in the way you trained. Have you been trained to have your knees over your toe, engaging your thighs and pressing back that your knee will never be forward? The basic kinesiology is taught in America in the PE department. If you know this, you don’t need cross-training”(Lowen). Hence, to fill in the gaps in our pedagogical system or to create new ways of teaching for each student according to their individual needs, cross-training helps. I have received significant pedagogical inputs in terms of anatomy from my ballet class and inputs regarding how to make children practice the rhythm through Flamenco class.

Insights:

Although cross-cultural training seems advantageous, there are several risks involved too. If cross-training intends to improve the fitness of the body, the proper choice of the form is critical. We should choose the supplemental form, which has “identical elements” to that of our primary form. In sports, the choice of a supplemental sport depends on the similarity of three elements, which are transferable into “movement, perpetual and conceptual elements”.

“Movement elements refer to the biomechanical and anatomical actions required to perform a task. For example, throwing a baseball ‘overhand’ and an ‘overhand serve’ in tennis share movement elements. Perpetual elements refer to environmental information that individuals interpret to make performance-related decisions. For instance, field hockey and soccer both require participants to

accurately interpret the actions of their opponents in order to be successful; therefore, these sports share this perpetual element. Lastly, conceptual elements refer to strategies, guidelines, and rules regarding performance. Gymnastics and diving share conceptual elements (e.g., similar rules), as do basketball and netball (e.g., similar strategies)” (Baker).

In a similar way, a dancer choosing other movement forms which share similar strategies and guidelines add value to the performance of the dancer. Some of the movement forms that I chose as case studies (discussed in chapter 4) for ethnographic participant observant study are popularly chosen by dancers for cross-training. Ballet, Modern dance and Pilates stand as examples. I also decided to experience a few rare forms that dancers, especially Indian classical dancers would not opt for, like African dance and Flamenco.

My discussion about the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi dance across different contexts in the past few decades in the next chapter would give a fair idea about the system, beliefs, and lacuna in Kūchipūdi dance.

3. *Doing, Being and Becoming* a Kūchipūdi Dancer

A practitioner-performer-researcher perspective on the process of training and practice of Kūchipūdi Dance

We say we ‘Dance.’ But are we really dancing or just ‘doing’ the Dance? There are several stages in learning any art where we keep changing our identities. After deciding the terms ‘doing’, ‘being’ and ‘becoming,’ it is only a coincidence that I found a framework with the same words in occupation therapy theory, which is quite close to my understanding of doing being and becoming. In this framework, “doing” refers to the occupation and occupational performance of an individual, which is essential for the individual to interact with others, and develop own identity, and create and shape the society. “Being” refers to being true to Self, that people are required to spend time thinking and reflecting themselves, which helps an individual describes and sustains their roles. “Becoming” means how people re-define their values and rethink their priorities to prepare for transformation of their new roles. This concept of becoming may change continuously over time, reflective of how a person sees his or her future (OT Theory).¹⁰⁷

In Kūchipūdi dance, ‘Belonging’ is another crucial aspect that plays a vital role. A sense of belonging acts as a significant motivator and confidence booster for an individual. Kūchipūdi practitioners from families of traditional lineage in the village have a sense of belonging to the form and proudly claim that the dance form is theirs. Along with this confidence, the habitus¹⁰⁸ they live in gives them more, not so obvious insights into the dance form with little effort. As a practitioner of Kūchipūdi since the last eighteen years, I analyze the history of the practice, pedagogy, and perspectives of Kūchipūdi dance through the lens of a

¹⁰⁷ **Key Reference:** Wilcock, A. A. (1998). *Reflections on doing, being and becoming*. Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 65, 248-256

¹⁰⁸ General constitution especially physical build.

researcher. This analysis draws to a few key findings regarding the technique and training of the form, current situation, and lacuna in the form, thereby giving a lead to finding the possible solutions.

Background

“Tradition (Sampradayam) is different. Sastram is different. We have to change according to time.”

- Vempati China Satyam (Satyam)

Resonating with the quote above, Kūchīpūdi changed its face time to time for survival. During the time of independence in the early 1930s, along with the thought of nationalism, there was a strong urge to showcase ‘regional identity’ based on language, called ‘linguistic regionalism.’ The linguistic bifurcation of states in India based on the State Reorganisation Act of 1956 divided people and cultures, which flourished as interwoven cultures for centuries. Separation always leads to an urge to create an individual identity. Such a call to showcase the regional specificity also crept into the field of arts, culture, and festivals. The standards of ‘classicism’ and ‘identity’ were influenced by the ‘Victorian thought.’ For instance, the British Raj abolished the *Devadasi* system claiming that the institution was degraded and the dances of *Devadasis* were overtly erotic and vulgar. Hence, in the new nationalistic identity of *Dasiattam*, such perceived vulgar elements were curtailed or eliminated in the newly revived form which is Bharatanatyam. Uttara¹⁰⁹, in her article *The Sanskritized Body* mentions the abolition of the *Devadasi* system as, “The *Orientalist* discourse and Christian dualist concepts of

¹⁰⁹ Uttara Asha Coorlawala is an adjunct professor at Barnard College. Having completed her Ph.D. in Dance, Uttara is a well known Modern Dancer who also learnt Bharatanatyam and Kathak.

separating sensuality and spirituality generated the perception of exploited womanhood” (Coorlawala 51). Bharatanatyam, a revived form of *Sādir*, which was a result of the Victorian Morality¹¹⁰, was perceived as a model for the revival of other art forms, especially to Kūchipūdi for the apparent reason of being the sibling dance form to Bharatanatyam. Kūchipūdi stands as an example that underwent so many changes based on the above ideologies post-independence, although the structure and of Kūchipūdi was different from Bharatanatyam. Kūchipūdi follows the *Natyamela*¹¹¹ tradition, which is a theatrical tradition where Bharatanatyam always followed a *Nattuvamela*¹¹² tradition, which is a solo tradition. What led to the changes in the art form was initially an act of survival rather than revival.

The *Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas*, being the breadwinners of their families, always grabbed new elements in Dance and drama, and adapted them into their dance form to enthrall the audience. The troupe, which consisted of Pasumarthy Krishna Murthy¹¹³, Vempati Peda Satyam¹¹⁴, and Vedantam Raghavayya¹¹⁵, used to perform several short pieces like *Pakeevadu*¹¹⁶, hunter dance and the like in the name of *Oriental Dance*. From the influence of *Parsi* theatre¹¹⁷ on the dance dramas of Kūchipūdi to the impact of the

¹¹⁰ Is a distillation of the moral views of the middle class in 19th century Britain, the Victorian Era

¹¹¹ Theatrical tradition

¹¹² Solo tradition

¹¹³ Well-known choreographer in Telugu film industry who hailed from traditional Kūchipūdi family.

¹¹⁴ Well-known choreographer in Telugu film industry who hailed from Kūchipūdi family.

¹¹⁵ First person from the Kūchipūdi traditional families to migrate to Madras and work for Telugu film industry.

¹¹⁶ A Scavenger

¹¹⁷ Parsi theatre is one of the first modern theatre companies in South Asia. Parsi theatre was pluralist polyglot in nature. The theatre was under Parsi management but actors were Muslims, Hindus, Anglo-Indians, Baghdadi and Jews. They were professional writers, painters and creative personnel who were often non-Parsi. The themes of the theatre were contemporary, progressive with elaborate and spectacular stage props, costumes and music. The Parsi theatre was initially patronized by the British and the performances were only to the elite. Later in 19th century, Parsi theatre started entertaining all kinds

Oriental Dance, from following the format of Bharatanatyam for classicization to take inspirations from Odissi on formulating the technique of neo-classical Kūchipūdi, Kūchipūdi always expanded and grew with cross-cultural interventions and influences. The change in the dance form visually and aesthetically is so much so that the present-day Kūchipūdi dancers can hardly relate to the Kūchipūdi presented by Vedantam Raghavayya¹¹⁸ in the film *Raitu Bidda*¹¹⁹ in 1936 (Apparently, one of the first video references for Kūchipūdi). The current chapter looks at what led to the changes in the art form. It also investigates the technique and the training system of Kūchipūdi. This chapter also acts as a prelude to chapter four and chapter five, where I discuss the possible influences of cross-cultural training on Kūchipūdi.

The History So Far

It is a known fact that the first reference of Kūchipūdi was found in a chronicle called *Machupalli Kafiya* of 1502, which narrates an interesting story. The people of *Siddhavatam* were oppressed and tortured by a tyrant called Sammeta Guruvaraju. Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas, witnessing Sammeta Guruvaraju's tyranny, enacted his cruel acts in the form of a *Kelika*¹²⁰ in the presence of their emperor Veera Narasimha Rayalu. The emperor beheaded the tyrant and rewarded the Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas. Later, *Abul Hasan Tanasha*¹²¹, who was impressed by the performance of the Bhagavatas gifted the village,

of audience showcasing the elements heavily drawn from both from the West and from the indigeneous forms. The plays were initially in English and later in Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. **Invalid source specified.**

¹¹⁸ First hereditary Kūchipūdi artist to dance in Telugu cinema; noted Telugu cinema director, choreographer and producer.

¹¹⁹ A 1936 Telugu film.

¹²⁰ Sport, play or dancing according to Brown Telugu-English Dictionary (1903). Nrityam or dance according to Sabdaratnakaram (1912). **Invalid source specified.**

¹²¹ Eight and last ruler of Qutub Shahi Dynasty (1672-1686)

‘Kūchipūdi’ to Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas. The content that was performed by Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas was mainly *Bhama Kalāpam*¹²² and, sometimes, *Kelikas*.

*Yakshagānas*¹²³ found a place in the repertoire of Kūchipūdi in the 19th century. Soon, the *Yakshagāna* tradition became synonymous with Kūchipūdi, and the form flourished. The form stood firm with the test of time by upgrading itself from time to time. The real challenge occurred during the nationalist movement when the form had once again to prove its greatness. During the same period, Telugu cinema based in Madras flourished. The then existing politics of linguistic regionalism probed the Telugu cinema industry to find a place to a Telugu dance form, which acted as parallel to Bharatanatyam. Such a drive to proclaim ‘Telugu-ness’ in Telugu cinema gave a chance to Bhagavatas to come out of their habitus and work. While *gurus* like Vedantam Raghavayya, Vempati Peda Satyam, Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy succeeded in the industry, Vempati China Satyam and Vedantam Prahlada Sarma worked in the industry for a while. They contributed to the Kūchipūdi fraternity outside the cinema. There are three milestones for the dance form.

1. The entry of Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas into Telugu cinema.
2. Metamorphosis of Kūchipūdi into a solo dance form and the subsequent entry of women into the art form.
3. Reformation of the technique of Kūchipūdi by Dr. Vempati China Satyam.

While the first milestone introduced a broader world view to *Bhagavatas*, the second milestone opened avenues for everyone to learn the dance form, thereby reaching a wider audience. The third milestone, finally, gave the form popularity, identity, and

¹²² An operatic text written by Saint Siddhendra Yogi.

¹²³ Desi dance drama tradition prevalent in the southern parts of India like Andhra and Karnataka.

stardom like never before. Despite all the glory and reputation Kūchipūdi achieved, there have always been conflicts and criticism. While several *gurus* from the village didn't approve of *Vempati's* Kūchipūdi as authentic, the Madras *rasikas*¹²⁴ termed the village-style as rustic and crude. While there were internal conflicts within the form, heavy criticism poured from outsiders of the form. It is necessary to diagnose the changes in the technique and training system and find the gaps in the form.

The journey of a 'dancing body' with Kūchipūdi

“Reconstruction makes it possible to test the way in which different dances are embodied according to their character (vocabulary, spatial schemes, dynamic qualities, the prevalent use of a certain part of the body, rhythm, accents, and so forth), their context, and the dancer's stylistic and interpretative choices” (Nordera 178).

From Male to Female

Kūchipūdi was performed by only Brahmin men from the traditional families of *Kūchipūdi*¹²⁵ village. It was Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, one among the trinity of Kūchipūdi, who went to Chennai and started giving lessons to the upper class educated women. It was with this initiative, women started learning Kūchipūdi. That was the time when women other than Devadasis started learning Dance (be it Bharatanatyam or Odissi or Kūchipūdi) altogether. This shift in gender brought grace to the form and a need to discard several unwanted elements from the form, which were considered to be significant in female impersonation by men. For instance, when men played the role of women in the dance-dramas or *Kalāpas*, they adapted exaggerated mannerisms of women

¹²⁴ A person who possesses of literary, artistic or aesthetic taste.

¹²⁵ Kūchipūdi as a village has been italicized while Kūchipūdi as a dance form has been kept as it is.

like crying theatrically or repeatedly setting the place of the *pallu*¹²⁶ to make the audience believe that they were women.

Another example was found in *Vipra Narayana* by Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma in the 1986 video archives of *Sangeet Natak Akademi*. In one of the scenes where *Devadevi* tries to lure *Vipra Narayana*, Vedantam (who was *Devadevi*) comes on to the stage in complete wet saree and lures *Vipra Narayana* in all possible ways. While Vedantam's portrayal of *Devadevi* was phenomenal, such bold act on stage was shocking to me as a woman as I wouldn't attempt to do such act being a woman. Hence, this shift in gender, made the bold and carefree form more conservative and cautious.

De-gendering¹²⁷ *Nritta*

“‘Degendering’ means to make gender-neutral, as by eliminating reference to gender or sex” (Farlex). A solo dance format is generally a gender-neutral phenomenon as. Usually, the solo dancer can play any character, male/female, depending on the context of the item. Hence, the execution of a movement is not differentiated based on gender. In a male-oriented art form, which was also revived and reformed by male *gurus*, the technique became rigorous. Hence, *nritta* was de-gendered.

Although *nritta* was de-gendered, feminine (graceful) body dynamics were brought in to *Kūchipūdi*. Uday Shankar was the first among revivalists to be influenced by sculptures in temples. He brought sculpturesque characteristics into his Dance (which was called *Oriental Dance*). *Kūchipūdi Bhāgavatulu*, as mentioned earlier, were influenced by the *Oriental Dance* around the 1930s. It was Vempati Peda Satyam who choreographed keeping gender neutrality in mind yet brought feminine body dynamics to

¹²⁶ Border of a saree, usually sort of a golden lace

¹²⁷ In Feuillet's treatise, however, there is no hint of distinction between masculine and feminine execution of steps.

the form by adding torso movements. This phenomenon changed the whole dynamics of the form. The form evolved from a male-oriented, masculine vigor based dance-drama tradition to a soft and graceful solo tradition. Grace, suppleness, flexibility, softness in the body require a great amount of body training. For example, if we look at the Dance forms Bharatanatyam and Odissi, Odissi seems to be a softer form; hence seems more comfortable to learn and dance. Bharatanatyam looks rigorous and, therefore, challenging to learn and perform. But in reality, grace, softness, and the movement of eight in the torso demands greater strength and stability from a dancer. Hence Odissi also requires extensive body preparation. To quote another example, Sattriya looks softer than any other classical forms. But it takes an enormous amount of flexibility, strength, and body control. Traditionally, Sattriya has around 80 kinds of exercises called *Matia-khora*¹²⁸ to prepare the ‘dancing body.’ In the theatrical format of Kūchipūdi, the characters danced based on their characterization as male, female, hero, heroine, *sakh*¹²⁹, and the like; where not every character has to dance with equal vigor. But when it became a solo form, Women and men were given equally rigorous movements. Men did not have to prove their masculinity by being more vigorous with their Dance or women did not have to prove their femininity by being softer or graceful. Aruna Bhikshu¹³⁰ states that the shift is due to shift in the role of a dancer – from a character to a narrator, which demanded women be on par with men in practice and performance, which clearly shows that supplemental/ extra training is necessary for women. But it was only during this period, the exercises were eliminated from the training system or there was no emphasize on

¹²⁸ Preparatory exercises in Sattriya for making the body flexible

¹²⁹ . A friend

¹³⁰ A Kūchipūdi dancer, choreographer, acting-trainer, and the head of the department of department of dance, University of Hyderabad.

exercises both for men and women. The result of this shift will be discussed in the training section later in this chapter.

From Rustic to Sophisticated

Collins Dictionary defines the word rustic according to the British English as “of, characteristic of, or living in the country; rural.” Other meanings are “simple, unsophisticated, crude.” My reference to the terms like *rustic* and *sophisticated* here is only referring to the popular perception of the dance forms in post-independent India. However, without any agreement or disagreement, I use the word rustic as a synonym to unsophistication as the transformation occurred according to the standard norms of what was rustic and what was sophisticated to gain ‘classical’ status. Kūchipūdi, having come from a rural background, was rustic in nature for two reasons. 1. It has connections with *desi*¹³¹ movement practices like *samulu*, *pagati veshalu*, *Yakshagāna* etc. 2. It was performed by men, which added vigor to the form. Alongside performing *Kalāpas*, and *Yakshagānas*, *Kūchipūdi Bhagavatas* also performed *Pagati Veshas*. “Normally, these Pagativeshas were donned by those who did not practice dance regularly and also those who ceased to take part in the performance” (Jonnalagadda 42). Such connections with *desi* forms and the entertainment value gave the form vibrant and rustic energy. Being a theatrical form, vernacular elements like *desi* meters in the literature, humor in the dialogues gave the form a specific flavor and texture. For example, meters in the *Yakshagāna* literature have a certain inherent rhythm in them. That natural rhythm also reflects in the music, *jatis*¹³², and the dance form. In the process of transformation, the

¹³¹ Name given to native mode [of music] according to Sankaranarayana Telugu-English Dictionary (1953)

¹³² Rhythmic patterns used for pure dance.

element of *Natya*¹³³ was reduced, and the element of *nritya*¹³⁴ and *nritya*¹³⁵ increased in the dance form. Mere entry of women wouldn't have changed the texture of the form to graceful. This is because, when a woman learns from a male guru with rustic energy, she tries to embody the same energy that of the guru. Hence, masculinity or femininity is culturally conditioned (here the technique of the dance form is the culture) embodiment. Softness and sophistication were added by introducing subtle torso movements, adding more control to the jumps and swings ('control' is a characteristic of the feminine energy which in turn makes something look soft rather than sharp). Few movements were modified from the sagittal plane¹³⁶ to the frontal plane¹³⁷ to suit the two-dimensional view of a proscenium theatre. The dance form was made to adhere to *Sastras* (or proved that it already existed in *Sastras*), and the sculpturesque aesthetics, the dancing body, became sophisticated. Did everyone subscribe to these changes is the question which was discussed further in the chapter.

From rural to urban to global

“Much of what is today called ‘social criticism’ consists of members of the upper classes denouncing the tastes of the lower classes (bawdy entertainment, fast food, plentiful consumer goods) while considering themselves egalitarians.

- Steven Pinker”

The entire phenomenon of classicization across the country and the world is an urban phenomenon. Uttara, in her article *The Sanskritized Body* cleverly names the process of

¹³³ Drama – that which tells the story of the past (Abhinaya Darpana)

¹³⁴ Pure dance devoid of rasa and *bhāva* (Abhinaya Darpana)

¹³⁵ Combination of abhinaya and pure dance which consists of rasa and *bhāva* (Abhinaya Darpana)

¹³⁶ An anatomical boundary that exists between the left and the right sides of the body.

¹³⁷ A vertical plane that divides the body into ventral and dorsal (belly and back) sections.

classicization in India as ‘Sanskritization’ as *Sanskrit* is said to be ancient, the language of the gods and the urban elite. Such naming was also for the reason that all the oral traditions were traced back to the ancient *Sanskrit* textual traditions. “In dance, Sanskritization has become a legitimizing process by which dance forms designated as “ritual,” “folk,” or simply insignificant, attain social and politico-artistic status which brings the redesignation, “classical”” (Coorlawala 53). Considering several *desi*¹³⁸ elements in Kūchipūdi like *Pagati Veshas*¹³⁹, *Yakshagāna* meters, and the like, Kūchipūdi was regarded as a rural theatrical tradition. Such tradition changed its aesthetics to gain the ‘classical’ status, which is defined by the urban elite influenced by the European standards of beauty and aesthetics.

As Urmimala Sarkar Munsî says,

A folk dance form is not only something that entertains but is also representative of the culture of a particular community. A folk dance form plays an important part in its culture’s religions and rites of passage; it is also an important tool for the maintenance of in-group solidarity. Removing it from its context means taking away most of its functions and leaving it with only one overwhelming task, that of entertaining the audience. This in turn makes it absolutely necessary for the form to be attractive enough to do the job of entertaining the hilt. Thus arises the need to gift-wrap the performance in what is “acceptable”, “attractive”, “presentable”, and “refined” to its new bigger, varied, and cosmopolitan audience (Munsî 27).

This was how Kūchipūdi kept changing for the trends and demands, which were inevitable for survival than anything else.

¹³⁸ Margi and Desi

¹³⁹ Daylight portrayals or also balled Bahurupalu (many roles). An ancient solo folk form of role playing in Andhra Pradesh, of stereotyped professions or faiths. **Invalid source specified.**

For the dance form to reach a global audience, it should be understandable to everyone, which led to the discarding of *Vacikābhinaya*¹⁴⁰ or dialogues in the *Yakshagānas*; should fit in the proscenium theatre which resulted in an enormous expansion of the body dynamics and technique of the dance form; should be sophisticated, which led to the removal of exaggerated expressions or movements which were considered to be obsolete. Kūchipūdi, as a form, changed so much, but are we catering to the needs and demands of the form with appropriate pedagogy? What is a typical training system in Kūchipūdi? What are the elements of the form that must be examined to improve the pedagogy? As technique comes first, what is THE technique of Kūchipūdi? As the debate on multiple styles is out of the scope of this study, the technique described in the following section is based on the dance analysis of several dance videos on SNA video archives. After careful examination, I came to the conclusion that further observations regarding the dance form (after the technique section) would be made based on one school of Kūchipūdi dance, i.e., the Vempati school as it is the widely followed school of Kūchipūdi. When I specifically needed to talk about other *banis*¹⁴¹, I mentioned it clearly.

The Technique

The ‘technique’ is the texture and soul for any dance form. “With a grueling training period, the technique gets embedded into the dancer’s body such that it becomes a practiced natural for the dancer and the dancer is able to associate her expressive self with the acquired body” (Kumar). Only after attaining seamless technique, one can master the form by going beyond the technique. We have to train well in the technique to

¹⁴⁰ Dialogues (in this context)

¹⁴¹ Different schools of thought

transcend the technique. Based on watching dance video archives at *Sangeet Natak Akademi*, formal and informal interviews with teachers and students, my training in the form for the last 15 years and by analyzing three main reference videos based on the book *Dance Analysis*¹⁴², here are few points I have elucidated regarding the technique of Kūchipūdi.

1. The basic position is a half-sit position or the *arthamandali*. The dancers were asked to sit as deep as half of their height. (Sarma). But in most of the schools, reducing to half of the height of the dancer was not the emphasis. The individual can go as deep as he/ she can comfortably without losing the alignment between the knee and the tip of the toe.
2. The upper body has a natural upright posture which is called *Saushtavam*¹⁴³ in *Nāṭya Sāstra*. It is neither too rigid nor too loose. The arms are held to the sideways at the shoulder level with an angle of 145 degrees at the elbows.
3. The characteristic feature of the technique of Kūchipūdi lies in the spritely swings and the vertical up and down movement of the body, which is called *Ubuku* or '*Usi*' which is a *desi* element that has been retained by the form. This is what Sunil Kothari, in his book "Kūchipūdi Indian Classical Dance Art", calls 'the up and down bobbing movement.' While the village-style¹⁴⁴ emphasizes on the exaggeration of this *Usi* or *Ubuku*, Vempati's style presents it in a subtle yet evidently in the form. In fact, this very aspect of *Usi* and the jumps and leaps with light-footedness in the Vempati style requires a different level of stamina, control,

¹⁴² Lansdale, Janet. *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*. London: Dance Books, 1988. Print.

¹⁴³ The upright posture in Indian dance where the ears and the hips are in-line.

¹⁴⁴ The school of Kūchipūdi which existed before Vempati is referred to as 'village style' throughout this study for the sake of convenience.

and command over energy, which differs from the stamina that Bharatanatyam demand, which is comparatively a more grounded dance form. As the base for Kūchipūdi also lies in *Nāṭya Sāstra*, the specificity of the form is only retained in the way the energy is presented in the technique. Although there is core engagement, control of energy like in any other forms, the Dance is executed with natural ease and sharpness.

4. Graceful upper body movement (torso) – Unlike the exaggerated torso movement in Odissi, Vempati has introduced a subtle torso movement in Kūchipūdi. This movement is only found in the Vempati style. This adds grace and a kind of femininity to the movement. It is not found in the village-style, and this one subtle introduction changes the entire energy and shape form¹⁴⁵ dynamics of the dance form. Execution of the torso movement in items with speedy tempo needs a lot of energy control, engagement of the core and internalization of the energy which is different from the outward energy we find in the village style. This movement is executed by manipulating the region between the chest and the belly button in the front. The energy required to initiate the movement comes from the belly button. The torso moves with the energy that arises from the middle back rather than from the chest or the hips.

¹⁴⁵ Shape forms describe the static shapes that body takes, such as Ball-like, Wall-like and Pin-like. **Invalid source specified.**



Figure 3.1. *Natyarambha*. Ravi Shankar,Vempati; Kalpalatika; Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives. 43145.



Figure 3.2. Naturally acquired '*arthamandali*' or 'half-sit' position without much emphasis on 180 degree turn out of the feet.

Ravi Shankar,Vempati; Kalpalatika; Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives. 43147.

The Dramatic Element – Characterization While presenting the meaning of the song, generally, the essence of the sentence is taken and performed rather than presenting the word to word meaning through interpretative *hastas*. Mood of the character can be established only if the meaning is reflected in the body language of the character rather than presenting the meaning just with *hasta* ¹⁴⁶ s. Example: *Raju vedalenusabhaku...Ravitejamulalaraga...* (The King is arriving at his sabha like a bright sun with his illuminating rays) In this example, the literal meaning of *Ravitejamulalaraga* is only presented once or twice. In the remaining repetitions, the splendor and brightness of the sun god are manifested with exaggerated body movements of the king to show the grandeur. In this regard, dancer Kanchanamala who is well versed in both Kūchipūdi and Bharatanatyam elucidates the differences in interpreting a song in both the styles. In Kūchipūdi style, the word to word meaning is interpreted for once or twice followed by the showcase of *anubhāva*¹⁴⁷s and *vibhāvas*¹⁴⁸ that prove the *nayika*¹⁴⁹. If the song is sung by *dooti*¹⁵⁰, the feelings of *dooti* are also well established. Finally, the philosophical interpretation of the song (if any) is also showcased. She says that in Tanjore Bharatanatyam, they only showcase of the word to word meaning with five to six varieties of *hastas*. Yamini Krishna Murthy¹⁵¹, in her biography, also gives some interesting insights about the technique of the form. “In Bharatanatyam, the lines are straight, and the various geometrical movements are woven horizontally, vertically, in a

¹⁴⁶ Hand Gestures

¹⁴⁷ Consequent actions.

¹⁴⁸ Determinant actions

¹⁴⁹ The heroine.

¹⁵⁰ Messenger(lady)

¹⁵¹ One of the first generation women dancers in India who learnt Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam and Odissi.

triangle, and so on. In Kūchipūdi, the movements of the arm are rounded, and their up and down movements are also very peculiar to the form”. She further adds, “The curves of the body called ‘ponkam’ and ‘kungadam’ have to be maintained throughout the dance sequence. The movement emulates a crescent moon ploughing through the clouds. This lends a sinuous quality to this style, making it quite distinct from Bharatanatyam, which is more angular and geometrical” (Yamini Krishnamurthy 64).

5. The musicality of the form defining the movement and Abhinaya(deducing from the Aural elements in the video analysis, how instruments define the texture of the movement) – If we have to describe the movement of Kūchipūdi in one sentence, it is not an exaggeration to say that the movement in Kūchipūdi is only as heavy or as light as the texture of the music used. The movement and footwork always go in flow with the music, although different kinds of *gatibhedas*¹⁵² are used. Even in *gatibhedas*, more than the mathematical brilliance and complexity, the flow of the footwork with the musicality of the song is very important. When we observe the evolution of the technique, the technique evolved and changed according to the changes in the music. Though the music used for Kūchipūdi is based on *Carnatic music*¹⁵³, some *lokadharmi*¹⁵⁴ and *desi* aspects make the Kūchipūdi music a little lighter, peppier, and character-specific. For example, when we take *Kathakali music* or *Sopana Sangeetham* for *Mohiniattam*, the music is very slow, which demands sustenance of the movement and the *Abhinaya* from the dancer. The staunch *Carnatic kutcheri sampradaya*,

¹⁵² Overlapping permutations and combinations of different rhythms(4,5,7,9,3) mathematically set on a base rhythm(of 3,4,5,7,9) which finally end on samam.

¹⁵³ Classical music prevalent in the Southern part of India.

¹⁵⁴ Realistic and unstylised involving natural expression and movement as occurs in daily life.

followed by *Bharatnatyam*, demands a particular kind of stylized body movement and expression that distances the artist from the audience to a certain extent (as underlying element both for *Sādir* and re-constructed Bharatanatyam being Bhakti but not entertainment). When it comes to Kūchipūdi, the form, having emerged from an entertainer perspective, emphasized on the style of singing that caught the attention of the audience. *Ragas* that suited the character and mood of the character were incorporated to elevate the dramatic element in the form. The sudden tempo variations (*Vilambam*¹⁵⁵ to *Dhrutam*¹⁵⁶/ *dhrutam* to *madhyamam*¹⁵⁷ etc.) are not accepted in the traditional *katcheri* system. Kūchipūdi *bhagavathas*, in several instances, took the liberty in changing the tempos to not to bore the audience and make the piece interesting. A perfect example that can be referred to demonstrate both the tempo variations and the musical brilliance would be *Madana Daruvu*¹⁵⁸ from *Bhama Kalāpam*. *Madana Daruvu* was said to be performed in the slowest tempo (*Vilamba kala*¹⁵⁹) in 128 akshara¹⁶⁰ cycle with different gati¹⁶¹ variations manifesting all the *sanchari bhāvas*¹⁶² relevant to the *virahotkhanthitha nayika*¹⁶³ for three nights. The *purvangam*¹⁶⁴ of the *Madana daruvu* is presented in *Dwikala sahityam*¹⁶⁵ while the *uttarangam*¹⁶⁶ is presented

¹⁵⁵ Slow tempo

¹⁵⁶ Speed tempo

¹⁵⁷ Medium tempo

¹⁵⁸ One of the daruvus in *BhamaKalāpam*

¹⁵⁹ Kaala means time.

¹⁶⁰ Literally means an alphabet. Each mnemonic syllable is counted as one akshara.

¹⁶¹ Time signature

¹⁶² Transitory emotions

¹⁶³ One among the eight nayika avasthas (states) where the nayika is distressed by separation.

¹⁶⁴ First half

¹⁶⁵ Kalaa, means part of a whole can be called as beat per count. Dwikala means – two beats per count

¹⁶⁶ Second half

in Eka kala sahityam¹⁶⁷. The *daruvu* starts in *Vilambakaalam*, proceeds to *madhyamakalam* in the beginning of *uttarangam*, and then reaches its peaks in *dhrutakaalam* by the end. This tempo variation is supported by the efficient use of ragas like *Ananda Bhairavi*¹⁶⁸, *Nata Bhairavi*¹⁶⁹, *Shanmukhapriya*¹⁷⁰ to manifest the emotion of the character.

Mood and the music – The *gandharam*¹⁷¹ in *Ananda bhairavi*(in Madana) is sung without the *gamakam*¹⁷² and sung as *suddhagandharam*¹⁷³ to reflect the *bhāvam*¹⁷⁴ in the literature which gives a tint of sadness that is required for the situation. When the *daruvu* was re-choreographed by Vempati China Satyam, Sangeetha Rao¹⁷⁵ used *Shanmukhapriya* instead of *Nata Bhairavi* at the lyric ‘*Ravva Cheyutamela.. Raja Gopala*¹⁷⁶’ in order to intensify the emotion of the character (Sastry). It is interesting to note that, when we observe the choreography of this *daruvu* in the village-style, the musicality of the song is reflected in the explicit movements and energetic body language but the very *daruvu* in Vempati style, reflects the musicality in the internalization of the emotions by the character. In whichever case, one of the striking features of the Kūchipūdi technique is that it doesn’t become unusually mathematical without being in flow with the music. If it does, perhaps it doesn’t look like Kūchipūdi.

¹⁶⁷ One beat per count

¹⁶⁸ Derived scale of a 20th fundamental music scale, Nata Bhairavi

¹⁶⁹ 20th fundamental music scale or melakarta ragam in Carnatic music.

¹⁷⁰ 56th melakarta ragam (fundamental music scale) of carnatic music.

¹⁷¹ Third note in carnatic octave which is an equivalent of Mi in Western music.

¹⁷² Aesthetic ornamentation given to a musical phrase or a single note.

¹⁷³ Note Ga1 in Carnatic music.

¹⁷⁴ emotion

¹⁷⁵ Music composer who composed music for several dance dramas to Dr. Vempati China Satyam.

¹⁷⁶ Why do delay O Rajagopala!

Local elements

Along with the swing and flowy nature of Kūchipūdi, a few foot movements that were taken from the agricultural background are unique.

Mande Koppu- This resembles the *Udghattita Paada*¹⁷⁷ of Abhinaya Darpana.

Palugudu varasalu – *Palugu* means a ‘pickaxe’ in English. This movement resembles plowing field with a pickaxe and can be used for both the demonic character and a feminine character like *Usha Kanya*¹⁷⁸.

Katteranatu – *Kattera* means a ‘scissor.’ This step is a scissor-like criss-cross movement with the legs.

venaka natu, pakkanatu – Variations of *Kattera Natu*.

Agratala sanchara – usage – According to Vempati China Satyam, this movement was picked by Vendantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry. When Satani people came to collect their alms, they used to collect the alms by doing this agratala sanchara movement, which means moving quickly on the big toes of the legs (VAK 59). *Agratala* means the toe ball of the foot. Moving on the toe balls of the feet is called *Agratala Sanchara* which is widely used in Kūchipūdi as *digidigidigidigi*.

What ‘technique’ demands from the dancer’s body?

Choice vs. Inevitable

As mentioned in the previous chapters, every form claimed its ‘classicality’ by attributing itself to *Nāṭya Sāstra*. *Nāṭya Sāstra* provides a wide range of body movements

¹⁷⁷ Heel rises in paada bheda of Abhinaya Darpana

¹⁷⁸ Lead female character in the *Yakshagāna* Usha Parinayam.

ranging from as simple as *Angas*¹⁷⁹, *Upangas*¹⁸⁰ to as complex as *Karanas*¹⁸¹. *Nāṭya Sāstra* is a manual of possibilities that can happen in Dance rather than a manual of training (Pers. Comm. Rajiv Velicheti). What are we choosing from *Nāṭya Sāstra* into our form? Is it inevitable for a dancer to perform complex *Karanas*, or is it a choice? Unlike Ballet (where every movement is inevitable for the dancer to perform), Indian Dance is heavily a matter of choice. While young and strong dancers can choose to do rigorous and challenging *Angika abhinaya*, aged and weak dancers can choose to be less rigorous. Apart from this scenario, there will be an innate quality in every dancer. Few dancers are strong at *nritta*, while few others are good with their *Abhinaya*. Such leverage made Indian classical Dance very flexible for the performer, portraying his/her strong aspects. There has been no single yardstick for measuring one's talent in Dance. But for every dance form, there will be a minimum requirement of physical capacity from a dancer, which is inevitable. In the reformed technique of Kūchipūdi, which is majorly a solo format, a proper solo concert lasts for one to two hours with an elaborate repertoire of *koutvam*¹⁸²/any invocatory item, *jatiswaram*¹⁸³, *sabdam*¹⁸⁴, *keertana/padam/javali*, *tarangam*¹⁸⁵ and *thillana*¹⁸⁶ or similar items based on the order. Hence, owing to the long performance hours, a Kūchipūdi dancer must have strong cardiovascular endurance,

¹⁷⁹ Major limbs of the body

¹⁸⁰ Minor limbs of the body

¹⁸¹ Transitions mentioned in Natya Sastra

¹⁸² Hymn or a song of devotion in praise of a deity. The structure of a Koutvam begins rhythmic recitations followed by lyric recitation, melodic rendering of the lyrics and ends with rhythmic recitations.

¹⁸³ A nritta piece which is a combination of jati and swara patterns.

¹⁸⁴ Sabdam – literally means sound – which is a composition narrating a story in not more than 10-12 minutes. Usually sabdams end with terms like Salamure or namostute as they are sung in praise of kings or deities.

¹⁸⁵ Songs from a Sanskrit opera written Sri Narayanateertha called “Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini”

¹⁸⁶ A rhythmic piece in Carnatic music which is usually performed at the end of a concert.

which is also called as stamina. Consistent practice of basics and repetition is the traditional method in Dance to improve stamina.

Along with stamina, a dancer needs muscle endurance, strong core, and flexible hip joints. Again, with consistent practice, a dancer achieves some level of flexibility and muscle endurance, which is not sufficient for a dancer to have a long career.

Along with maintaining stamina, a dancer has to adjust and supplement their training with age as aging decreases muscle strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular strength too. Hence, cross-cultural training comes to train the dancer to attain what is inevitable rather than choice. Today, due to increased competition, reduced time slots for performances and the constant pressure on the dancers to prove themselves, there is no time for the dancers to train leisurely and thoroughly. A fair amount of body preparation can give Indian classical dancers long and injury-free careers compared to other dance forms like Ballet or Irish river dance.



Figure 3.3. Serpent in *Prahlada Natakam*. Yamini Yashoda. Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives. 42630.



Figure 3.4. Vempati Ravi Shankar and Kalpalatika executing an *adugu* of Kūchipūdi.

Ravi Shankar, Vempati; Kalpalatika; Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives. 43148.

Figure 3.3. shows a dancing girl performing something similar to *gangavatarana karana*¹⁸⁷, which is a choice. Not every dancer need to showcase such acrobatic ability. But in Figure 3.4. where an *adugu* is being performed, to execute that pose, strong oblique muscles with flexible hamstrings are necessary. Such strength and flexibility are inevitable, but not a choice.

Anatomical understanding of a Kūchipūdi Body

After discussing all the changes in the socio-political, cultural, and gender contexts, sometimes, it is also important to discuss the basic and superficial understanding of a dancing body in terms of muscle and joint. This understanding gives the dancers a fair idea to go for target-specific training. Although many dancers, including the Western dancers, prefer experiential anatomy rather than knowing the accurate details, this section gives the basic details for understanding a dancer's body.

¹⁸⁷ 108th karana

If we take the basic positions of Kūchipūdi, they are *sama pada*, *aramandi* or *arthamandali* or half-sit position and the *muramandi* position. These positions show that a Kūchipūdi dancer should have a strong understanding of the lower extremity of the body.



Figure 3.5. Three basic positions of Kūchipūdi & Bharatanatyam – *Mandi*, *Aramandi* and *Samapada*

Prakash Akhilesh Anand. “Anatomical Drawing of Lower Limb Musculature Involved In the Eccentric Stances of Bharatanatyam: A Theoretical Aid”. Indian Journal of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.2017. Vol 11(1). pp. 29.

Sama Paada: Although *Sama pada* looks very simple to execute, a dancer’s posture and stability are understood just by looking at how they are executing their *sama pada* posture. The shoulder to hip alignment that Pilates teaches is also present in *Nāṭya Sāstra* as ‘*Kati Karna Samayatra*’ which means the *Kati* or the hip and the ear should be in the same line. Core muscles should be engaged well while standing with feet facing forward and hands on the waist.

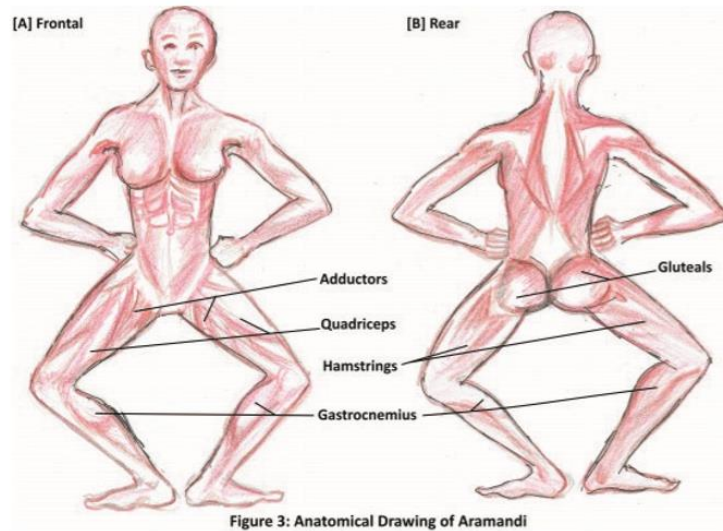


Figure 3.6. Anatomical Drawing of *Aramandi*

Prakash Akhilesh Anand. “Anatomical Drawing of Lower Limb Musculature Involved In the Eccentric Stances of Bharatanatyam: A Theoretical Aid”. Indian Journal of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.2017. Vol 11(1). pp. 31.

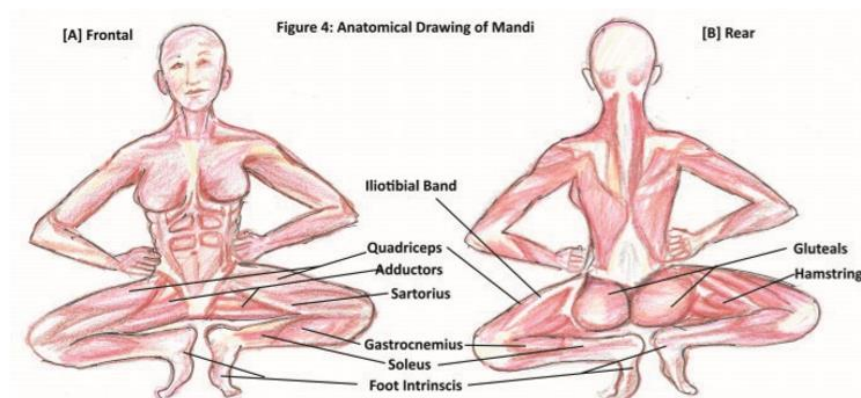


Figure 3.7. Anatomical Drawing of *Mandi*

Prakash Akhilesh Anand. “Anatomical Drawing of Lower Limb Musculature Involved In the Eccentric Stances of Bharatanatyam: A Theoretical Aid”. Indian Journal of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.2017. Vol 11(1). pp. 31.

The above discussion is just an anatomical description of the static poses. There will be a constant dynamic shift from different poses to *muramandi* and *aramandi*, which demands a greater amount of strength from the dancer. Dynamic forces constantly act on joints and muscles while dancing and moving swiftly from one pose to another. The joints should be stable to withstand the dynamic forces of the muscles, and hence an extra in training the muscles is very important. Along with these basic muscles, another very important aspect for the dancer is to cultivate strong abdominal muscles to be able to execute high and long jumps in Kūchipūdi. The torso movement and lateral bends¹⁸⁸ demand strong oblique abdominal core muscles and a flexible lower back, especially in the lumbar region.

How is the training system in Kūchipūdi catering to the requirements of the technique? The training system can be authentically traced back to only three generations as before that through personal interviews, participant observation, literature review, and video archives. Hence, to demonstrate this chapter further has been divided into three parts, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, how a dancer experiences three phases of doing, being, and becoming. With my personal experience, which represents the typical scenario of teaching and learning in small towns, I establish the act of ‘doing’ Dance and what it means. In the next setup, the process of ‘being’ a dancer is established and how a student like me will try to evolve and adjust in an urban scene as a performer and a teacher. Then I establish the sense of ‘belonging’ which I added and not part of OTT and its role in learning and teaching in Dance. Then what makes a dancer actually in ‘becoming’ a dancer is discussed in the section – Reckoning the future.

¹⁸⁸ Bending to the side

Representing the present

'Present' in this context represents the training experience of the millennial generation as dancers, performers, and their experiments as teachers with the help of subjective narratives as well as generalizations based on facts.

The small town setup (Doing)

Learning context:

“Since the age of 12, I was engaged in full-day dance classes every weekend. My master came from *Kūchipūdi* village, which is two hundred kilometers away from our home town, *Rajahmundry*. The practice would begin at 9 AM every day after breakfast and would end only at around 8 PM or sometimes would go late until 10 PM with only a break for lunch and a nap for my *guru* for two hours. I also used to spend my summers and holidays at my mater’s home for practice. I underwent this kind of training for about eight years. Sometimes the classes wouldn’t happen continuously for two, three months, but I was physically active in one way or the other doing yoga, fitness class. ”

Was this the case with every dance student in small towns like *Rajahmundry*? Apart from local dance schools where the students were taught three classes a week, it is not uncommon to see students and teachers traveling to other cities or towns to learn or to teach Dance. Teachers usually traveled from Hanumankonda and Hyderabad to Warangal, Simhachalam, Anakapalli to Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada to Kūchipūdi, Kūchipūdi to Gudiwada, Vijayawada and to rest of the towns in Andhra Pradesh. Teachers traveled across towns for their livelihood, and we cannot deny the fact that, in most of the towns, there were not many Kūchipūdi dance teachers. Hence, when

compared to students who took Dance as full time since their childhood, like that of Kerala Kalamandalam or Kalakshetra or some ballet companies in the West, the daily number of practice hours were less or maybe unorganized.

Pedagogy and Perspectives:

My *guru* was twenty-three years old when he started teaching me. I was not taught basics very keenly as he thought I would pick up the items due to my prior orientation of two years under another *guru*. Hence, my first class at the age of 13 (I got trained under another *guru* for two years before this, where he also didn't teach me basics. He started the class with a *Jhem Jhem tanana*¹⁸⁹) started with *Gajavadana Beduve*¹⁹⁰. I understood neither the complexities nor the nuances of the item. What all I knew was '**doing**' dance.

'Doing' dance perhaps doesn't have a very reflective mindset. I was doing what I was told to do. In terms of picking up a movement, I used to imitate the movements of my guru, who would show me each and every move all by himself. I neither was thinking nor was I taught to explore the origin of the movement, energy, and flow of the movement. Few things came right due to the inherent wisdom of the teacher. I missed a few things too, which I realized only after a few years. I was not shy of making mistakes, I wasn't fearful of whether I can execute a movement or not, or I wasn't doubtful. Although, as a child, I was very naive and innocent, I was a very spontaneous and confident child in Dance, which I feel is a very small town phenomenon. There were long term goals neither to my guru nor to me. He taught me items, and I learned them. Whenever there was a competition or a performance, we would go, Dance, and come

¹⁸⁹ An invocatory composition composed by Sri M Balamurali Krishna

¹⁹⁰ A Purandara dasa Keertana

back. I wasn't thinking much about my stamina, body language, or anything about the 'self' as there were no physical tools for self-reflection. We did not have a video camera or a mirror to look at myself of how I was dancing. When I performed, and when few of those performances were recorded, I got a chance to watch myself. Hence, I was not very conscious of how I danced. My guru was my mirror. After him, it was my parents and then the audience.

Impact on the technique and body dynamics:

“Beyond the right and wrong, there is something called STYLE”.

There was a lot of emphasis on the technique, but I didn't know I was learning the technique back then. Most of it was watch, observe, and practice until I get it. It was embodied body language after a period of time. There were loose ends too. Although my guru would correct my finishings, I wouldn't do everything with perfect finesse. Today when I look back, lack of proper practice of basics created such loose ends. Above technique, there was style. Everyone was awed by my guru's style of dancing and suggested me to imbibe it as much as possible. Whenever someone said, you dance like your guru, that was the biggest compliment one could get, I thought. Overemphasis on physicality was never there. Over arched Kunchitam¹⁹¹ or deep half sit was not the emphasis. The flow of the technique was natural, unconscious, and happy.

Discussion

When we trace back the immediate history of Kūchipūdi, to just forty years ago, it thrived majorly in small towns. *Gurus*, who taught to first-generation women dancers of Kūchipūdi like P V G Krishna Sarma, Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, traveled from Kūchipūdi village to nearby towns to spread the art and to make their livelihood. It is

¹⁹¹ Pointing the foot on the toe ball of the foot.

interesting how small towns played a vital yet in-between role in the history of Kūchipūdi. While the village, Kūchipūdi, is the birthplace of the dance form and carried the aura and energy of the dance form, cities looked at a broader perspective in sophisticating, if not politically placing the dance form in a better place. Whereas, the dancers from small towns either stopped learning Dance after a point of time or moved to cities to earn their livelihood. Only a few of them established their own schools in their native place. For the past few decades, this phenomenon led to a massive crisis of qualitative dance teachers in small towns in Telugu states. The quality dance education was concentrated only in few places like Hyderabad or Chennai or in Kūchipūdi and in Vijayawada, Vizag, Warangal to some extent.

Being

The Urban Setup

In this section, I share two perspectives, one that of dancers who take up Dance as their profession and who are in the process of ‘being’ a dancer and two, the beginners perspective of ‘doing’ Dance in an urban context which is pretty much same to a small town ‘doing’ dance setup. When I shifted from the small town setup to an urban setup to do Masters in Dance, here, the emphasis was more on lines, finesse, grace, perfection, and sophistication rather than on the energy and spontaneity. The Dance is carefully crafted, well-rehearsed, and presented neatly on the stage. The costumes are subtler and classy, makeup is toned down, and the hairdo is not overdone. This is quite a contrast from the regular small-town scenario as to how people identify dance forms and overemphasize on costumes¹⁹².

¹⁹² Like two buns are a must in the hair if it is a Kūchipūdi dancer, only white flowers on the top of the bun and red flowers on the bottom and an extra poky red paper flowers on top of the half bun

The process of ‘Being’ a dancer gave me a chance to self-reflect, judge my past and present experiences. I had to continually prove myself and upgrade my knowledge and understanding of Dance to tell the world that I am being a dancer rather than just ‘doing’ Dance. Anuradha Jonnalagadda opines that the process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ a dancer, sometimes involves ‘undoing’ several aspects of one’s dance. (Pers. Comm. Anuradha Jonnalagadda)

On the other side – As a teacher

“It was a Monday evening in the metropolitan city of Hyderabad. I was running late to my one-hour long dance class due to heavy traffic, and I messaged my students on the WhatsApp group to start practicing exercises. I quickly rushed, revised a few basics, and taught them one new step. At the end of the class, I announced that every student should attend a fitness class on Sunday for two hours under the supervision of a fitness expert as the dance class duration is not sufficient to cover everything. One of my student’s parents informed me that her daughter could not attend the fitness class as she was in 11th grade, and as she thinks, it is a waste of time. She also promised me that she would send her on Sunday mornings if it is a dance class. ”

The generalization about the awareness and exposure in small towns and cities seems to be partially correct. The rest of the truth is not dependent on the geographical placement of the student or the teacher but depends simply on the individual’s exposure. In the above narrative, the student’s parent, despite being in the city, is not aware of the importance of basic fitness class to dancers.

Pedagogy and Perspectives

In the busy-ness of cities where the children could only learn two classes a week of one hour each, where can we incorporate supplemental training? The lack of projecting Dance, as a profession (unlike in the West), created a lacuna in the training system too. As there are no institutes like Kalamandalam and Kalakshetra, which have a strict curriculum, the curriculum, style of teaching, and everything has become very subjective, leading to the deterioration of the training system. To put it more direct, Kūchipūdi, as a form itself, has never experienced a strict training system [that catered the needs of a solo form] except for in very few institutes like Kūchipūdi Art Akademi, Chennai.

Impact on the technique and body dynamics

The sophisticated taste of the urban audience greatly affects the technique and presentation of the dancers. Subtle expressions and body language, uniform costumes (if in a group), fine makeup are appreciated in an urban setup. In contrast, more in everything is appreciated in a rural or small town setup. Humour used in the village, or small town sometimes doesn't work in the cities, and people get offended with some dialogues too. This very shift from rural to the urban setup made Vempati China Satyam bring reforms into the art form. Vempati, in one of his interviews with V A K Ranga Rao¹⁹³ opined that due to their (the bhagavatas) placement in a village and lack of exposure prevented them from development and his guru Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry also opined the same (VAK 56).

Discussion

These examples show that every stage of learning- doing, being, and becoming, is equally essential. In analyzing the teaching and learning contexts of Kūchipūdi in the past few

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decades, I observed that the initial stage of *doing* Dance was not rigorous enough, and the inputs regarding the technique were not sufficient. Schechner, in his article *Performer Training Interculturally*, explains how repeated practice brings professionalism.

With repetition, and maturity, the professionalism will come in, the polish will shine not through intense hard work over the short-haul but through repeated additions of patina over years of working. There is time here to “let it happen” rather than, as in Euro-American training, “make it happen”. The focus is on the work being done here right now, not on the audience to be (Schechner 221-222).

Although he had complaints on institutes like Kalamandalam regarding the lack of self-reflection in practice, he explains that the repeated practice prepares the bodies to be ready in terms of technique, strength, and stamina. Chapter 5 discussed the background of the participants in a one-time cross-training experiment, and the subjects from Kalamandalam turned out to be the strongest of all.

Revisiting the past (Belonging)

“Every morning, we used to go to class and exercise for two hours. Then we used to practice basics. We used to go to school, come and back in the evening, and practiced music and Sanskrit. As elders in every household could sing, they used to wake us up early in the morning and made us do music practice with *akaara ukaara saadhana*¹⁹⁴. Whatever little we could sing today is because of that practice. In this manner, we used to practice atleast 5-6 hours a day” (Pers. Comm. Pasumarty Rattayya Sarma).

“For two years, we were only taught exercises like *gunjeelu*, *dandelu*, *baskeelu*, *samulu*, *asanas* like *mayurasana* etc. Then we were taught steps and *jatis* and then were

¹⁹⁴ A practice method to improve the voice range and flexibility of the singer where the Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Da Ni Sa are replaced with sounds Aa or Uu and practiced.

advanced to items. We didn't have any stipulated class time. We might be called anytime and were asked to dance anywhere" (Pers. Comm. Pasumarty Srinivasa Sarma)

The first narrative was by Pasumarty Rattayya Sarma, who is one of the last generation *gurus* to teach old-style Kūchipūdi and *Yakshagānas*. The second anecdote was by Pasumarty Srinivasa Sarma, my first guru, who learned Kūchipūdi during the transition phase, in the 70s and 80s. He learned Dance from his father P V G Krishna Sarma and also learned the Vempati school's choreographies in the teacher training camps conducted by Vempati China Satyam in Kūchipūdi. These camps were by Vempati China Satyam for free to orient all the dancers from villages and small towns. Pasumarthy Srinivas mentioned that they learned the items that they already knew, but they were asked to do with little more perfection. Most of the time, he would be restrained from attending the camp classes by his father, P V G Krishna Sarma who himself was a stalwart in Kūchipūdi.

Pedagogy and perspectives

Should the Kūchipūdi *bhagavatas* think about complex terms like Pedagogies and perspectives? They were all dancing, performing, and belonged to dance since their birth. The pedagogy after a couple of formative years was definitely multi-dimensional learning from different *gurus* and learning different genres like *Yakshagānam*, *Kalāpam*, solos. If you ask any typical dancer from a traditional family, he would say that he learned *Kalāpams* from one uncle, *Yakshagānas*, from another uncle and solos from yet another uncle. This can never happen anywhere except for in Kūchipūdi. In the small town or the urban scenario, the student is supposed to have only a single guru. Going to another guru to learn a new genre is a strict no-no. Despite have multi-dimensional, multi-layered

learning in the village, there too were no long term plans. The plan was only to practice, perform, and cater to the needs that arrived. Since they didn't feel the pressure of other dance forms like in Chennai, they were happy in their own sweet world. Hence there was no vision or no vision at least for every dancer or for every guru.

Technique and body dynamics:

'Technique' for them would have come effortless, and again, the emphasis was definitely not on the picture-perfect dancing. As most of them did character dancing, it was more about convincing the audience with their character playing, if not leaving them in awe was the target. Here again, the style becomes more important than the actual technique. For example, playing the role of Hiranyakasipu with mannerisms of S V Ranga Rao¹⁹⁵ or N T Rama Rao¹⁹⁶ would impress the audience more than the dancer sitting in perfect *aramandi* and dancing.

Discussion

The emphasis on the technique of Dance became more and more prominent only with solo dancing. Until then, it was always about doing justice to the roles the *bhagavatas* played. Perhaps, this didn't get into the head of many teachers from the village. They only concentrated on the overall experience that a dancer would give to the audience than the body itself. This led to mediocrity in the younger generations as – character playing is not taught as part of solo dancing, and perfection is not emphasized as the *gurus* are from dance drama background.

¹⁹⁵ Popular Telugu actor in 1950s and 60s who was famous for his portrayal as antagonist in mythological movies.

¹⁹⁶ Popular Telugu actor who was famous for his mythological roles like Rama, Krishna , Ravana, Duryodhana.

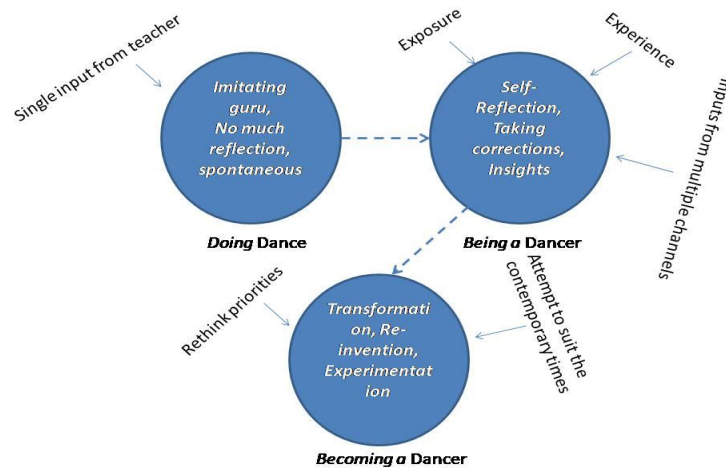


Figure 3.8. The transition from *doing*, *being* and *becoming* a dancer

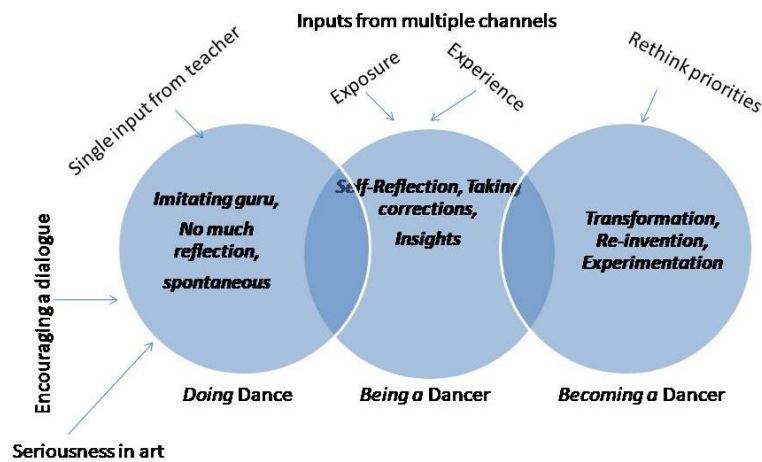


Figure 3.9. The overlap of the phases *doing*, *being* and *becoming* a dancer

Training System in Kūchipūdi

To loosen their muscles and acquire grace for movements and dancing, strenuous exercises must be learnt by the new students. Some of these are Kali Samu, Kuppi, Niluvu Mogga, Ali Prtyali and Chakra Dandem movements. Some of these are steps and poses to acquire good deportment and a sense of poise. Some of the exercises resemble yoga. The jumping exercise (kuppi) must be

executed without the feet making any sound when landing. There are some steps to be learned such as Adavu Samu Chowkam, Mande koppu, Kaththera Vatu, Jaru Adavu, ChuttuAdavu etc. Their music lessons consist of the elementary swaras or notes and ragas (scales). The basic tala(rhythmic) systems must also be learned. They should know the exercises for voice and religious songs. (Ranganathan)

Initially, young boys in the Kūchipūdi village were taught the basic exercises called *Saamulu* for a while. After honing their bodies, they were introduced to *Adugulu*¹⁹⁷ or the basic steps, then *jathulu*, *kautvam*, *sabdam*, and some other solo items of the repertoire. After a certain age and training, based on their skills and appearance, they were given the characters to play based on their capabilities and physical capacities. Though the traditional exercises were limited in number, the exercises are dynamic in nature, comprising of two to three static poses in one exercise. One should master the basic static poses first to be able to execute the main exercise. For example, to master *Chakra dandem*, one should master the execution of planks, pushups, and back bridges. Only then, one can perform *Chakra Dandem*. It is interesting to note that the base for all the dynamic exercises performed by the Kūchipūdi *Bhāgavatulu* was *Yogasanas*¹⁹⁸. Today, the Western pedagogical system suggests that dynamic stretching¹⁹⁹ for warm-up before the beginning of the class is more beneficial than static stretching warm-up routine. Perhaps, this is the reason why the traditional *gurus* added some movement to the

¹⁹⁷ Adugulu or adavu saamu is nothing but the execution of steps. Saamu means exercise, kaali saamu means exercise to legs.

¹⁹⁸ Asana is a pose or a posture of the body.

¹⁹⁹ The limb is never held in a specific position for a prolonged period of time. Here the limb is taken through its range of motion, from full contraction to full extension, at a controlled, slow to moderate speed, as in performing a fondue or plie. (Wyon)

postures of yoga and customized their dynamic warm-up routine. For example, a dynamic combination of *Chaturangadandasana* and *Urdhvamukhasvanasana* makes up *Baskeelu* (a variation of pushups).



Figure 3.10. Chaturanga Dandasana

B K S Iyengar. *Yoga Guru The Ultimate Freedom Yoga BKS Iyengar*[1976] (13:55).



Figure 3.11. Urdhvamukhasvanasana

B K S Iyengar. *Yoga Guru The Ultimate Freedom Yoga BKS Iyengar*[1976] (14:10).

List of exercises:

1. Dandelu
2. Baskeelu
3. Kuppilu
4. Gunjeelu
5. Kali Samulu
6. Pakkasamulu
7. Chakradandem
8. Mayurasanam
9. Koppulu
10. Totmangalu
11. Upper body rotations for torso flexibility.

Though, it looks like the traditional exercises only consisted of 10 exercises, it takes lot of time to master these exercises. Hence here is a list of small exercises to master the above exercises.

SNO	Traditional Exercise	Description	Exercises to master to be able to perform the traditional exercise
1.	Baskeelu	Situps	
1.	Dandelu	Variation of pushups	Plank-Chaturangadandasana Cobra Pose – Urdhvamukhaswanasana For transition – arm and core strength

1.	Gunjeelu		
2.	Kuppilu	Jumps	Core strengthening exercises
3.	Pakka Samulu	Variation of Lunges Transition from one lunge to another should be led by core and quads with no pressure on knees.	Lunges, strong quadriceps, strong core.
4.	Kali Samulu	Basic steps of Kūchipūdi	<i>Plié</i> , <i>demi-plié</i> , strong quadriceps and core, cardiovascular endurance
5.	Chakra Dandelu	A traditional dynamic exercise	Pushups, back bridge, plank
6.	Mayurasanam	Peacock pose- a hand balancing pose in Yoga	Strong arms to be able to lift the body, strong core and technique to lead the movement from pelvic region.

Table 3.1. List of *Desi Vyayama* in Kūchipūdi



Figure 3.12. *Baskeelu* or Sit-ups - 1



Figure 3.13. *Baskeelu* or Sit-ups - 2



Figure 3.14. *Baskeelu* or Sit-ups - 3

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, Vedantam Venku, Kuruvi Prasad. *Kūchipūdi Re-visited(Full Movie)*. (5.45)



Figure 3.15. Spine rotation exercise for spine flexibility - 1



Figure 3.16. Spine rotation exercise for spine flexibility - 2



Figure 3.17. Spine rotation exercise for spine flexibility - 3



Figure 3.18. – Spine rotation exercise for spine flexibility - 4

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, Kuruvi Prasad. *Kūchipūdi Re-visited(Full Movie).(6:05)*



Figure 3.19. *Chakrasan* - 1



Figure 3.20. *Chakrasan* - 2



Figure 3.21 – *Chakrasan* - 3

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, Vedantam Venku. *Kūchipūdi Re-visited(Full Movie).(6:24)*



Figure 3.22. Vendatantam Rattayya Sarma demonstrating flexibility exercises - 1



Figure 3.23– Vendatantam Rattayya Sarma demonstrating flexibility exercises - 2

Vendatam Rattayya Sarma. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives*. 43270.



Figure 3.24. Side lunges/stretches - 1



Figure 3.25. Side lunges/stretches - 2



Figure 3.26. Side lunges/stretches - 3



Figure 3. 27. Side lunges/stretches - 4



Figure 3.28. Side Lunges/Stretches – 5

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, Vedantam Venku. *Kūchipūdi*

Re-visited(Full Movie).(6:38)



Figure 3.29. – Side Lunges/ Stretches - 6

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives*. 43268.



Figure 3.30. *Dandelu* or *Desi* Pushups - 1



Figure 3.31. *Dandelu* or *Desi* Pushups - 2



Figure 3.32. *Dandelu* or *Desi* Pushups - 3



Figure 3.33. – *Dandelu* or *Desi* Pushups - 4

Pasumarthy Rattayya Sarma, Kuruvi Prasad, Vedantam Satyam. *Kūchipūdi Re-visited(Full Movie).(6:40)*



Figure 3.34. - Vendantam Rattayya Sarma demonstrating *Bhujagansan*

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives*. 43266.



Figure 3.35. – Students performing *Bhujangasan*

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives*. 43267.



Figure 3.36. – Vendantam Rattayya Sarma demonstrating *Kuppeelu* at
Kalakshetra, Kūchipūdi.

Sunil Kothari. Avinash Pasricha. *Kūchipūdi Indian Classical Dance Art*. E-book.

Abhinav Publications. 2001.



Figure 3.37. - Vendantam Rattayya Sarma performing *Kuppeelu* along with his female students at Kalakshetra, Kūchipūdi

Sunil Kothari. Avinash Pasricha. *Kūchipūdi Indian Classical Dance Art*. E-book. Abhinav Publications. 2001.

This was the existing training system until the emergence and popularization of solos. The exercises were picked from the *desi* sports culture like body-building, martial arts (*Saamu*) and more male friendly. For instance, there are 12 kinds of *Dandelu* - *Misra Dand*, *Sadharan Dand*, *Rammurthy Dand*, *Vakshaviakasak Dand*, *Hanuman Dand*, *Vrischik Bhag Dand* (2 variations), *Parsva Dand*, *Chakra Dand*, *Palat Dand*, *Sher Dand*, *Sarp Dand*²⁰⁰ of which we see Kūchipūdi *Bhagavatas* perform only two variations. In *Chakra Dandem* again I came across two versions of which only one variation was performed by the *Bhagavatas*. Perhaps all kinds of *Dandelu* are not suitable and required for dancers (male or female) as an ideal dancer's body has to be lean but not bulky (both male and female) which helps the dancer move swiftly. Slowly, with the popularization of solos, the initial preparation of the body disappeared. A new technique requires a new

²⁰⁰ मंदिर, भारत. भारत के दण्ड व्यायाम. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJaZMNuKX20>>

kind of preparing the body. For instance, sound and non-sound exercises were formulated for a reconstructed Odissi dancing body. In the same way, standard set of exercises must be designed which are friendly for a Kūchipūdi dancing body.

From 1980s (when the teaching training camps were conducted 1982-87) most of the Kūchipūdi *gurus* (the then young generation) started juggling between the Vempati style and village style. Although some people brush off that there is no much difference except for little sophistication in Vempati's style, the subtleties of the school are to be mastered only under who knew the exact school of teaching the movement. If we have to divide the energy of the body, the village-style represents a masculine body language with rigidity in the upper body (no torso movements), and Vempati's school of thought is very feminine, giving importance to *Silpam* of the body. Although men played the character of women in the village-style, the effort to showcase that they are playing the role of a woman is very superficial. Movements like setting right the pallu, hands-on the cheek, standing with one leg in the front with Kuncita (Insert photos) represent the obvious choice of movements to do justice to their portrayal of a woman. When a woman herself plays a woman's role, all the extra mannerisms are discarded, and more depth to the character and characterization is necessary.

Differences between the old style and the new style:

S. No.	Old Style	New Style	Discussion
1.	Upper torso is always considered as one unit. The manipulation	Torso movements are more specific.	An 'S' kind of movement is visible in the torso in Vempati style.

	of the torso is absent.		
2.	Fan like movements in Sagittal plane.	Some of the movements were changed into frontal plane Lateral bends	Earlier: While executing a side to side movement (example: <i>taam digi digi taam digi digi taam digi digi taam digi</i>), the goal is to bend to the side, as low as possible so that the hands touch the ground. Now, the goal to bend only halfway through and hold – for the sake of the visual beauty of the movement.
3.	Jumps are side to side.	Jumps are like a pendulum.	Village style: In steps like <i>todhimmi</i>, there is more displacement from the center point to the right and then to the left. Vempati style: The dancer jumps vertically, lifts the leg in Kuchita (like in <i>taam digi digi taa</i>) and

			shoots the same leg to the back of the other leg with the front leg bearing all the weight. Rather than horizontal displacement, the emphasis is on shooting the leg straight to the back. (which needs more core strength).
5.	Rounded limbs	Still rounded yet clean lines	In Vempati school, arms are stretched out a bit more than that of old school
6.	Core makes it vigorous	Core makes it softer	Both styles need core strength but in a different way.
	Outward flow of energy	Internalized energy	While are the energy is exerted from the core in old school, all energy is drawn and held in the core for Vempati style.

Table 3.2. Differences between the old school and Vempati school of Kūchīpūdi
Reckoning the future (Becoming)

Kūchipūdi, for Bhagavatas earlier, was a means of livelihood where they used to perform all over the country by traveling from one place to another. These wanderers, who were agriculturists during the harvest season, were Brahmin men performers. Hence, Kūchipūdi performers then were

1. Agriculturists
2. Men
3. Brahmins

Today, Kūchipūdi is like any other art form to showcase the cultural heritage of the Telugu land. Both women and men from all the castes and religions are learning and performing Kūchipūdi today. Hence, Kūchipūdi performers, today are

1. Both Men and women
2. Diverse occupations (Not just agriculture)
3. All religions and castes
4. Need not be necessarily their main profession – but a hobby (Yarasuri 232)

Realizations

Keeping different contexts and goals aside, Kūchipūdi as a whole is stuck in confusion in proving its specificity. Periodical rigorous political movements politicized the dance form too much, linking the identity of the Dance to the identity of the region. While this scenario could draw a huge number of students to learn the art form, it couldn't bring out the quality required. The reasons are:

(i). The introduction of government music and dance colleges created job opportunities for the dancers. This introduction, not necessarily improved the quality of Dance as learning dance has become goal-oriented rather than process-oriented. Completing certification, finishing diploma has become the trend. It is surprising to see that serious practitioners always opted for private teachers than government colleges, with an aim to get more quality dance education.

(ii). Constant political unrest and politicizing the dance form – Kūchipūdi became a key tool in bringing the identity to Telugu states since forever. During the time of nationalistic movement, the linguistic bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh from Madras presidency created a strong need for Telugu people to have their own dance form. After about 60 years, the Telangana and Andhra bifurcation once again encouraged the Andhra government to include teaching Kūchipūdi in government schools as a compulsory activity. Such interventions from the government, channels like SVBC, private events like Silicon Andhra Guinness records created huge scope and opportunity for the dancers, unlike in any other state. But every opportunity was either politicized or politically grabbed, which diluted the quality and value of the events.

On this note, there is a great need for Kūchipūdi dancers to re-define the purpose of why we are dancing. In order to re-define, we have to understand the context in which we are dancing and training for Dance in the present day scenario.

(iii). Current Scenario

Kūchipūdi, which started as a form practiced by a small set of male Brahmins in a tiny village in Andhra Pradesh, today has crossed all the boundaries – “village to urban to transnational, Brahmin to non-brahmin, hegemonic to non-normative” (Kamath). While

Kūchipūdi witnessed all success and glory for the last few decades, it has been facing severe criticism from several art critics as “Kūchipūdi on deathbed,” “Kitchy form,” “Kuch Kuch form” which are too strong comments to hear (Sai).

There is a clear gap in understanding of the form by the practitioners. While some dancers own the spark and sprightliness of Kūchipūdi yet lack professionalism and presentation, some other dancers are good at presentation but lack the understanding of the soul of the form. For the dance form to change its pedagogical system, the collective understanding of the Kūchipūdi teachers and dancers should change. For various reasons, there are confusions and insecurities among teachers, which is holding them back from teaching without inhibitions. The scenario explained by Janet O’Shea’s concept of supralocal can be *applié*d to the situation in Kūchipūdi too. O’Shea explains,

“Unlike Bharatnatyam, which has arguable been sanitized through its complete and absolute classicization, and in so doing gradually been removed from the local but also opened the way to its relocation(s) in a global context (O’Shea 2001), in Odissi the interaction of a local and supralocal identity is played out on uneven ground through different power networks.

It is constantly reiterated in Orissa and by Oriya that to dance Odissi well one has to be Oriya. The understanding of Odissi classicism that ensues is marked by the unease and insecurity generated by a situation in which the local is aggressively confronted by the supralocal and the global. Thus, on the one hand people cling to reassuring notions of Oriya-ness, coinciding with an Oriya high-caste and middle-class socio-cultural elitism of which Odissi dance is seen as an expression. On the other hand, any reference to local, non-elite culture projected in the Dance is seen

as a dangerous threat to its classical status, determinedly won through re-alignment with and imitation of a hegemonic form²⁰¹. In this context, this hegemonic (and global) form is an ahistorical, reconstituted Bharatanatyam, synecdochic of Indian culture as whole” (Lopez Y Royo 274).

A similar scenario of local, non-local, traditional, non-traditional exists in Kūchipūdi. While the artists from traditional families are insecure about the intrusion of outsiders, the dancers who represent the form at national level have always been non-traditional artists. In this conflict of local-non local, traditional-non-traditional, the Yakshagana wealth has already been lost.

Unlike other regions where Dance is flourishing as an individual profession, ‘dance’ in the Telugu states is still considered a ‘hobby’ or a ‘part-time’ pursuit. With the advent of yet another bifurcation (the Telangana and Andhra bifurcation), promoting Kūchipūdi has become part of the political agenda. Especially in Andhra Pradesh, Kūchipūdi has been introduced into every school. Thousands of dancers started learning the art form seriously both in India and abroad. Yet, there is no national and international representation for the form on par with other dance forms. This issue can be looked into from two angles. 1. Excellence 2. Physical fitness. Although a dancer is extremely fit, there is no guarantee that he/she could excel in the dance form. Yet, a fit dancer always has an extra edge over a less fit dancer in terms of survival and sustenance. Hence, this chapter looks into the technique and training system of Kūchipūdi, what does the form demand from a dancer’s body, and where the gap lies.

²⁰¹ Ruling or dominant in a political or social context

Issues with gender and ingrained colonial thought in training system

“The internalized attitude of ethnic or cultural inferiority felt by people as a result of colonization, i.e., them being colonized by another group is called a ‘colonial mentality.’ It corresponds with the belief that the cultural values of the colonizer are inherently superior to one’s own” (David and Ozoki).

Along with a feeling of inferiority at the national level, Telugu speaking people experienced inferiority when the Telugu region was part of Madras state. Although we separated from Madras in 1956 (and a further separation of Telangana State from Andhra Pradesh), there is an inherent sense of fear, insecurity, along with superiority complex(which sounds contradictory) in the community as a whole²⁰².

In early colonial literature, explorers, missionaries, and amateur ethnologists were caught between curiosity and disgust with exotic languages, rituals, and bodily practices such as Dance (see Farnell 1999). The dancing body became associated with alien physical gestures that were stigmatised and labelled primitive; this ideology led to many efforts to civilise the ‘savages’ thus the oppression of Dance. Important to add here was that Dance was also interpreted by most Christian ideology as devil’s work (Browning 1995; Camaroff 1985; Stuckey 1995). This occurred because one could not deny the strong spiritual connotation of Dance (Banks 359).

²⁰² Study on the social psychology of Kūchipūdi artistes as a community is a separate research area which has great scope to unravel many interesting points. A mere conversation with teachers and students reveal some interesting yet not so obvious insights into their mentalities. Not accepting other’s talent, not letting children learn from other teacher, criticizing other’s personalities rather than their works, not teaching without inhibitions are all qualities that rise out of insecurities and Kūchipūdi as a community is not an exception. According to Cambridge society, voicing one’s insecurities in a classroom is quite common irrespective of any field. The society suggests that proper teacher training courses would help teachers come out of their bubbles. Hence, teacher training camps are not just to train the artistes in the technique of the dance form but also to prepare their minds to be confident, unbiased, uninhibitive and positive.

Such notions were not completely wiped off in the minds of both the society and the dancers themselves, which is somewhere influencing the way they are pursuing their profession – half-heartedly, without passion and confidence. Such notions could be erased by constant education, exposure, and awareness through cross-cultural training.

According to the Galenic theory of the plethora, the human body produces an excess of blood that has a negative influence on health and must be eliminated. Man does this by the sweat produced through physical exercise, women through menstruation. For women, therefore, physical activity is not only useless, it is discouraged as well” (Nordera 174).

Is gender just biological? “It is embodied in social and theatrical practice and staged after having undergone a process of public semiotization (Nordera 174).

A culture influenced by such colonization and patriarchy does not allow sitting in a chair with legs wide open. Contrastingly, the turnout position in Dance demands such an opening of the legs. Perhaps this is the reason why women except for devadasis were always forbidden from dancing and dancing was and is still considered by some people as not a respectable profession. Kūchipūdi is not an exception in treating women indifferently either due to a lack of awareness of women’s physiology or due to a patriarchal thought. Initially, women were not allowed to dance Kūchipūdi, and even after the entry of women, most of the Kūchipūdi *gurus* didn’t allow their daughters to learn Kūchipūdi. This is because of two reasons. 1. They don’t want them to suffer their children in the field of Dance (which is internalized colonialism that their profession is lowly, less) 2. Traditionally, Kūchipūdi has always been a male-oriented art form. While

few of the male *gurus* in the village opine that women should not do any kind of acrobatic moves or heavy tandava movements (Prasad), the training of women with traditional exercises was eliminated claiming that the exercises that were existing were not meant for women and they make them masculine.

When we look into the syllabus for certification prescribed by Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University, the first year practical course prescribes traditional exercises for men and lasya related exercises to women. Although we do not know what exactly that meant, no such exercises were taught to women. Women are not given any concessions in performing an item like *Ananda Tandavam* or *Marakata Manimaya* where equal energy will be demanded from both the genders. Existing exercises were eliminated, but no special care was taken to cater to the needs of the women. When women are expected to dance on par with men in solo tradition, and when they need extra care to handle their bodies, the training system not addressing their issues is a matter of concern.

Lacuna

Not catering to the needs of a solo form

The group, at times, becomes a very convenient medium for accommodating average dancers who lack the potential for a solo performance. Birju Maharaj says, "I am totally against people treating the group as a convenience for peddling mediocrity. On the other hand, the solo form alone is the base from which one has to work, and every group participant needs to be a potential soloist. If we lose solo strength, we lose our tradition (Venkataraman 290).

Kūchīpūdi is a dance drama tradition that always looked at the overall performance of a group rather than individually carving each dancer. As discussed earlier, the strong

dancers were given bigger roles, and weak dancers were given smaller roles. Rather than working on making every dancer strong, they gave characters according to their natural ability. Such a perspective does not work well with a solo format where every dancer must have a minimum of standard. Hence, the training system of Kūchipūdi should look at how to train individuals to reach their perfection with an individualized training system.

Lack of pedagogical tools

Learning a dance form that evolved in the medieval period in the 21st century needs a different way of looking at things, and we need to revisit our old texts and traditions as many times as possible in order to provide a fair training to students. From a feminist pedagogical perspective ²⁰³, slokas like “Tanvee Rupavatee Syama peenonnata payodhara” reflect a patriarchal and biased outlook towards the physical attributes of a dancer. Rather, the sloka of patra antah prana discussed in chapter 2 (“Javah sthiratwam rekha...”) are characteristics of a dancer which cannot be denied. And most of these characteristics can be cultivated through proper training and practice. For this, pedagogy should meet the physical and psychological needs of each individual student. Earlier, Kūchipūdi masters chose dancers for their characters without belittling the physical attributes of the individuals. In a dance-drama tradition, everybody has the scope to play different roles according to their strengths. When Dance became glamorous after the entry of women, and when the aesthetics of the form are given more importance, the idea of beauty came in. Only beautiful and physically deserving candidates were given preference. Most of the teachers had no prior understanding of how to train dancers with

²⁰³ The purpose of Feminist pedagogy is to create a new standard in the classroom or possibly even take away the standards that classroom hold. Feminist pedagogy addresses the power imbalances present in many Westernized educational institutions and works towards de-centering that power. (Wikipedia)

biomechanical issues like hunch back, bow legs, hyperextended knees, long arms, short arms, or any such similar problems.

1. Lack of awareness and scholarship

When Dance becomes a commodity, the purpose of it is lost and never understood both by the teachers and the students. Lack of proper awareness regarding the ‘importance of training’ is making parents rush the process of learning. Lack of proper financial stability and vision is making teachers succumb to the demands of the parents. Lack of proper scholarship in teachers is leaving them with no tools to tutor the students smartly. Hence, addressing such issues with a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary approach is important.

Selective feedback from an online survey conducted by me (115 Kūchipūdi dancers as participants) where the individuals shared their practice regime, their opinions on the current training system and the lacuna. Each bullet point represents feedback from each individual²⁰⁴.

- Teachers should be aware of all the parts of the body so that teacher can help out their students regarding injury-free dancing.
- I personally feel that warm up sessions are lacking in Kūchipūdi on a general note when compared with other dance forms like Bharatanatyam. These warm-up sessions really help the dancer to be a performer for a longer period of their life
- We need to start earlier in life with cross-training- working systematically on flexibility and strength and balancing muscle groups. Presently I train on an on-

²⁰⁴ More detailed analysis of the survey conducted is presented in chapter 5.

need basis. The present Kūchipūdi is certainly different from the practice of the earlier generations, which focused on Vachikabhinaya too. The higher importance on nritta demands that dancers be more physically agile and have greater stamina esp when contrasted with the other South Indian dances, which have a tempo that is more regulated. It perhaps means a training that focuses on knee strength back and thigh flex and strength

- I have observed that the basic *aramandi* posture is not being taught correctly to the students who have just started learning Kūchipūdi. I was not aware of the correct posture for many years because of which I used to get tired easily and end up strained. Once I got the technique right, my spondylosis problem is solved just with Dance
- Many artistes usually forget the idea about strength training, which is a must in today's hectic lifestyle. Usually, after the 30s your body starts to be different, as your metabolism in your body changes, and there are also hormonal changes that take place and put on fat and weight very quickly. Strength training is a must, in my opinion, which not only keeps you fit but energetic and very active the whole day.
- Firstly, Kūchipūdi dancers have to concentrate on Nritta too. Month by month we have to improve our body strength, maintain weight, and should have a good knowledge of dancing techniques, through which I think we can have injury-free dancing.
- My injury was a big lesson for me. Currently, I am training to build my muscle and core strength. There is a misconception that women should not engage in

muscle training for fear of “looking masculine”. This is wrong since improper body training can cause long term issues with physical health. With proper diet and exercise, you can become a well-versed dancer in all areas.

- I believe a sustained and regular practice is only feasible if a strict regimen is in place. Kūchipūdi training system may have had one in place, but in the present day scenario, very few seem to implement it. This necessitates that a cross-training system that focuses on certain levels of fitness or flexibility and endurance comes into play. While I may not be able to comment on the benefits of the exercise pattern of Kūchipūdi practitioners of yore, the little that I have been exposed to certainly seem beneficial- for the style that was practiced earlier. The current day practice, however, has drastically evolved from what was there earlier. The challenges to cope up with the attractive and impressive calisthenics that other Indian/ western dance practices have affected how Kūchipūdi is being presented too. the pressure to cope up with the altered Kūchipūdi style may only be aided by other fitness practices that can add value to the demand

Possible solutions

The three possible solutions for a dance form to thrive with such drawbacks are three Cs

1. Cross-cultural understanding and vision

In a rapidly changing societies and needs, the way we handle problems should also change. Hence exposure to other cultures on how they are dealing with the issues can

give us insights into how we can solve the issues in our form. Hence a constant lookout for what is happening in the world is critical to the knowledge of the dancer and a teacher. More insights into this aspect are discussed in chapter 4.

2. Collaboration

In an era of information, new knowledge and creations are not easy. Collaborating with fellow teachers or dancers gives multi perspectives on solving a problem or in creating a new concept. This also creates a sense of togetherness, belonging, and empathy among artistes, which thereby gives a wider scope for the development of the dance form.

3. Critical analysis of the Self

When the first and second aspects are achieved, we automatically tend to assess our own standards. Putting ourselves out there without insecurity and fear also shows us our way to excellence. Self-analysis regarding our own training methodology, discipline, and the attitude of the community as a whole, plays vital in the development of the dance form.

With this analysis of the technique, training, and lacuna of Kūchipūdi dance, I give insights into the impact of cross-cultural training in different movement forms on me as a participant observant along with giving objective observations of the benefits of learning those forms as supplemental forms.

4. Initiation into the cross-cultural avenues

An analysis on cross-cultural training in different movement forms as a participant observant

“The only reason for mastering technique is to make sure the body does not prevent the soul from expressing itself.”

- La Meri (1899-1988)

The advent of proscenium theatre demanded new body dynamics that suited the proscenium theatre. Almost all the forms like Odissi, Kūchipūdi, Bharatnatyam, Sattriya were reconstructed to fit in the global arena. The performance shifted from ‘spontaneity’ to ‘systematic choreography’; ‘Casual body language’ to an ‘sophistication’ in dancing. The reconstruction happened from two parallel perspectives. 1. Revisiting ancient treatises to build the indigenous content. 2. Visiting the Western methodology of performance elements and body training to meet global standards. In this process of evolution of neo-classical forms and with the increased *Āngikābhinaya*, the demand to keep the body fit, agile, flexible, and injury-free increased immensely. The changes that occurred in Kūchipūdi were even more varied. A theatrical dance form became a solo tradition, which created a need to understand what the solo tradition demands both from the performer and the teacher. A predictable solution for this situation is to look at other dance forms on how they deal with each of the elements like stamina, strength, pedagogical approach, and the like. In India and the world, looking for cross-cultural training as an aid to develop strength and build overall fitness is an ongoing trend. Especially cross-cultural training for fitness helps to prevent injuries. “[Injuries] why do these occur? It is because one muscle has been developed or overworked at the cost of

another. For instance, quadriceps are enhanced with weight training. This is at the cost of the hamstrings, which gets shortened and, therefore, prone to pulls or tears. Take the case of knees. Excessively developed quadriceps put a load on the knees, making them easy targets for injuries. If a player develops awareness of his body, he can free each and every joint and muscle of resistance. This, in turn, protects his body from injuries and strain.” (Andrew Leipus, 2015) Andrew Leipus explained the scenario in sports. There is a similar scenario in dance. A ballet dancer, due to overuse and repetition, commonly gets injured in the lower back or ankles. A Bharatnatyam or a Kūchipūdi dancer generally experiences lower back or knee issues as they have relatively strong quadriceps than their antagonist²⁰⁵ muscles, which are hamstrings. Hence to strengthen particular body parts or to release the tension around the overused body part, cross-cultural training helps. While one reason for the dancers to take cross-cultural training is to manage and prevent injuries, another reason as discussed in previous chapters is to bring novelty to their dance form, to take new pedagogical inputs and inspirations and to break the monotony of the body by practicing a new dance form for a while. One should be careful in choosing the forms for cross-cultural training. Although how bodies respond while learning two different dance forms is highly subjective, taking up forms that are culturally contrasting or neutral is better than taking up the forms which are culturally very close. For example: taking up Bharatanatyam and Ballet is better than Bharatanatyam and Kūchipūdi. Parwati Dutta²⁰⁶, the founder of *Mahagami Gurukul* in Aurangabad opines that an Odissi dancer pursuing Chhau (for fitness) is better than an

²⁰⁵ Agonist in a movement is the muscle that provides major force to complete the movement. Antagonist is the opposing muscle which has action directly opposite that of agonist muscle. Antagonist and agonist muscles occur in groups. If one muscle contracts other muscle relaxes and the work of both the muscles help in the movement.

²⁰⁶ Founder of Mahagami Gurukul, Aurangabad; a Kathak and Odissi exponent.

Odissi dancer taking up Kalari *Payattu*. Both Chhau²⁰⁷ and Kalari Payattu²⁰⁸ are warrior art forms, but Chhau emerged from the region where Odissi also developed, and it is a known fact that few movements are common to both Chhau and Odissi. Hence, training in Chhau (Form specific training) benefits an Odissi dancer than in Kalari (Dutta). Form specific cross-training is a separate area of research and is not discussed in this study. However, there are some basic and essential questions that dancers should be able to answer before beginning their cross-cultural training.

1. Why do you want to cross-train? How strong are you at your own dance style?

The reason and purpose of cross-training should be clear. If the dancer is not strong in the technique of the primary form, and cross-trains, especially in another dance form, there are high chances of mixing the styles without mastering none. One cannot reap the benefits of cross-cultural training with such combination.

2. How often you practice your own form?

Even though the dancer is good at the technique, if the practice is not consistent, the body memory of the primary form goes away.

3. At what point of your career as a dancer, you are cross-training?

Especially at the initial stages of learning a dance form, the students are discouraged from learning another dance form as the body memory gets confused. Instead, the dancers can go for cross-training in exercise routines like Pilates, Yoga to maintain strength and flexibility.

4. Is cross-training just being used as an aid for your overall fitness, breaking the monotony (or) are you pursuing another form seriously?

²⁰⁷ Martial Art form from Odisha and Bengal Region.

²⁰⁸ Martial Art form from Kerala.

If the goal is just to strengthen the primary form, perfection in the secondary movement forms is not required. But to master two forms simultaneously, again, the dancer should be cautious.

5. How long and how consistent are you cross-training?

The results of cross-cultural training also depend on how rigorous the practice is. Exposure to a new art form for a brief period of time might not yield expected results. (This scenario is explained in my case study: *AttakKalari*).

After answering the above questions, I have attended several classes at the department of dance, Barnard College for two semesters and recorded my observations as a participant observant.

Background of the practitioner-performer-researcher to initiate into cross-cultural training in dance

My background as a participant observant

1. Consistent training²⁰⁹ in Kūchipūdi dance for the last 15 years with a strong foundation in the technique of the form with regular practice.
2. Been undergoing cross-training since the age of 16. Initially, I cross-trained in aerobics, a combination of strength and flexibility training, and Yoga. Since the age of 23, I have been cross-training in Running, Pilates, Yoga, HIIT²¹⁰. However, I have not been consistent.
3. I have been only pursuing my primary form seriously, and cross-cultural training for me is just an aid to improve my fitness in my primary form.

²⁰⁹ Got trained under eminent gurus and pursued Masters in Kūchipūdi at University of Hyderabad.

²¹⁰ High Intensity Interval Training

Data Collection Method: Participant Observation, Personal Interviews.

Participant Observation: Running (Duration – 3 months), *Attakkalari* (Duration – 3 months), Barnard College (Duration – 9 months), and randomly attended HIIT training, Jumba sessions, and few other fitness routines.

Case studies

Note: All the case studies attended by me as a participant observant are of basic levels 1 and 2 in the respective forms, and the training in each form lasted for three months (average of three classes per week). Ballet, Pilates, and Modern were taken for six months (two classes per week). The case studies are arranged in the chronological order I attended. Only major case studies (from which I have benefited) are presented as separate sections in this chapter and minor case studies (couldn't see evident results) which were either informal settings or from which I didn't see much difference were eliminated. I did not present the results of Jumba and HIIT training as my training was not consistent in those forms.

Attakkalari

Background

AttakKalari was established by “artists from different disciplines to help create contexts for contemporary movement arts. Exchange and performance, strategic movement and digital art development, research and documentation, new performance works for *AttakKalari* repertory, a diploma in Movement arts and mixed media, education, and outreach programs” are a few of *AttakKalari*'s activities. *AttakKalari* mainly offers classes in *Kalari payattu* and contemporary dance.

Training context

Attakkalari designed a three-month certificate course called '*Sankshipta*' in 2016. As a part of my research, I have completed this course and experienced forms like Modern, Ballet, Pilates, Yoga, Bharatanatyam, and Kalaripayattu. My first practical encounter with ballet and modern dance was at *Attakkalari*. The participants were a group of ten, who were mostly non-dancers yet who were active in several physical activities. The class was three hours a day, four days a week, for three months. Since it is a certificate course, we were introduced to the basics of all the above-mentioned art forms.

Training process

Since it was a basic course, the stress was more on the technique than on the choreography. They further validate their view, saying proper understanding of the technique at the basic level can make you a better dancer and choreographer. Core Muscle Engagement is the primary concept for all the forms. Engaging the core tight (but not stopping your breath) can make your body light and easy and can prevent you from doing the wrong technique, thereby prevents you from injuries. They teach different forms to extract positive points from all the forms. Ex: one can learn perfect lines from Bharatnatyam, core strength and flexibility from Kalari and Core engagement and technique from Ballet (Contemporary is a revolution against Ballet. Hence, with a concept of "Know the rules and then break them", they stress on the learning of Ballet technique)

Transformation of the performer

Although *Attakkalari* was a rigorous course, it was not rigorous enough for me to transform as a performer. We had a very few ballet classes by the guest lecturers. The Modern classes were creative, where the choreography material was mostly drawn from our very own movements. Perhaps, this helped us to be creative and thoughtful, but we did not learn enough grammar to explore modern dance more.

Objective observations

All the classes focus on working around the core area and how to use the pelvic area to improve mobility and lightness in a movement. We were made to do headstands and handstands. While non-dancers could do such challenging exercises without fear, as a dancer, I struggled to perform them as I had a constant fear of falling and getting injured. Such exposure to other forms and techniques is primarily a challenge to the mind than to the body. Such challenges improve the brain's ability to think differently. The impact of learning new dance forms on the brain is briefly discussed in the brain and neuroscience section of chapter 2.

Mere exposure to new forms will not make a difference unless the practice is rigorous and consistent, and at *Attakkalari*, the training was not rigorous, and I did not explore the new forms further. But, my exposure to Western forms like Ballet and Modern acted as a primer to my training at Barnard College, and I could compare and contrast the difference in the style of teaching and understanding of the Western form by both the institutes.

Background of the institute – department of dance, Barnard

Barnard College is one of the prestigious private colleges for women in New York City. Affiliated with Columbia University, Barnard is majorly an undergraduate college. The department of dance in Barnard college offers interdisciplinary courses combining dance with liberal arts. The practical courses provided by the department are Ballet, Modern, Flamenco, Pilates, Bharatanatyam, African. Some of the theoretical courses are Biomechanics for dancers: Theory and Practice, Dance Composition, World Dance History, Movement Analysis, *Appliéd* Anatomy for Human Movement, Dance Criticism, and the like.

At Barnard, I audited one theoretical course, i.e., Biomechanics and Six Practical courses – Pilates, Ballet, Modern, African, Flamenco, and Bharatanatyam. Here I am presenting my analysis only five practical courses excluding Biomechanics and Bharatanatyam. Although the impact of Biomechanics is not discussed, it gave me the vocabulary to describe movements throughout this study. Since I am looking at the contrasting forms to Kūchipūdi from which I benefitted, I did not give the analysis on the impact of Bharatanatyam.

Pilates

Background

“What is balance of body and mind? It is the conscious control of all muscular movements of the body. It is the correct utilization and application of the leverage principles afforded by the bones comprising the skeletal framework of the body, a complete knowledge of the mechanism of the body, and a full

understanding of the principles of equilibrium and gravity as *appliéd* to the movements of the body in motion, at rest and in sleep” (Pilates).

Pilates is a “fitness system developed by Joseph Pilates in the 20th century”, after whom it was named. Along with Yoga, Kalari, Pilates is one of the most popular aids that dancers are looking at in order to build their alignment, stamina, core strength, and balance. Just like *Yoga*, Pilates was developed to bring harmony among the mind, body, and soul.

While the intention behind the invention of the Pilates by Joseph Pilates itself was to build a healthy, aligned, and flexible body, many sportsmen and dancers are taking the aid of Pilates to recover from Injuries.

Below are the Five Fundamental Principles of Pilates, according to Joseph Pilates:

Centering represents the act of drawing your own mental and physical focus during each exercise to the core, or center (often called ‘powerhouse,’ of your body. This is roughly the area between your lower ribs and hips, although it also includes the lower and upper back muscles.)

Concentration is simply paying close attention to the specifics and details of every Pilates exercise. Bring your full attention to the movements of each exercise in order to obtain maximum value.

Control represents the concept that it is your mind that directs and manages each separate muscular movement.

Flow – the intention is that the energy one exerts during each exercise should connect all body parts smoothly and thereby flow evenly through your body.

Precision – is the final fundamental principle, and for the technically inclined among us, it is imperative that we as students maintain, and we as instructors teach, conscious awareness of precision during each exercise's movements(Judd Robins, Lin Van Heuit-Ribbins, 2012).

Joseph Pilates initially called his exercise regime as “Contrology,” as the philosophy of his work out system is based on the above principles.

Training context

Class Analysis:

Instructor: Mary Carpenter²¹¹ (also a Ballet Teacher)

Time: 1 hour / twice a week

Semester: Fall -2017 Spring-2018

Type: Traditional Pilates on Mat. No use of machinery.

Participants: Participants in the Pilates class were Ballet and Contemporary dancers, Baseball and Football players. Some of the sportsmen came to strengthen the lower back as they had the previous history of injuries in the lower back.

Training process

Our instructor, Mary Carpenter, says that the instruction of Pilates is majorly through verbal cues. The instructor should continuously be giving verbal cues to the students for their understanding. Cues like “Sit up tall and try to create space between your vertebrae,” “keep your core engaged,” “scoop your belly button in” make the students aware of their anatomy. Even after such verbal cues, Mary comes to each student and corrects their exercise. Such detailed instruction is essential for any student not to do

²¹¹ Mary Carpenter is a lecturer at Barnard College, who was trained at Cincinnati Ballet Company and the College Conservatory of Music CCM.

a mistake as Pilates works at a very subtle level. If the exercise is done wrong, the students might not reap the results. One hour class was intense, cued based, painful in the core, but made every student lighter and stronger in the core after every single class.

Transformation of the performer

The first important aspect that Pilates training brought to me was awareness. Constant cue by the instructor to engage my core muscles registered in my subconscious mind, and today, I am aware of my stance, body square, and core in whichever activity I do, like running, jumping, dancing, or even walking. In a conversation, the instructor, Mary Carpenter, brings out the issues that come with the new generation. Students bent over the desk in studies, and looking over their phones with flexion in the neck causes severe postural problems. Students or dancers with a desk job are sitting for long hours and working. This causes Gluteal atrophy, which is commonly known as Dormant Butt Syndrome. We lose the activation of glutes and the hamstrings in this syndrome, which further causes loss of strength in the core, lower back, and legs. She adds, “If you are a dancer full time, you’re going to be in an athletic state to some extent, and your cross-training would augment that state. But if you’re not a full-time dancer, for example, you are a student, and where you are forced to sit and study, bent over a desk, you are being forced into a non-athletic state. Then the cross-training becomes even more important because we have got just you to get you to maintain a certain amount of strength. I cannot emphasize enough on how important cross-training is for two kinds of people 1. Professional dancers to fine-tune their bodies. 2. Non-professional dancers to make sure

they are at an athletic level enough that when they get to perform, they don't get injured” (Carpenter 2018).

Objective observations

Since classical dance demands many biologically imbalanced postures, a perfectly aligned turn-out, and an equal balance on both sides of the body, the emphasis on Pilates training cannot be stressed enough. Pilates, like Yoga, is to nullify or to balance out all the imbalances, misalignments, strengths, and weakness. The dynamic nature of Pilates gives faster and more evident results than Yoga when done under the right instructor. And since the form is derived from fitness culture but not from any dance culture, Pilates doesn't affect the body culture of a dancer. Hence, it can be introduced to students right from the preliminary stage of dancing.

Findings, Suggestions, and Predictions as a performer

In a brief questionnaire given to Kūchipūdi dancers (age: 35-50) asking the major injury-prone part of the body after a while of dancing, the major complaint was the stiffening/discomfort in the lower back. (Insert questionnaire results)

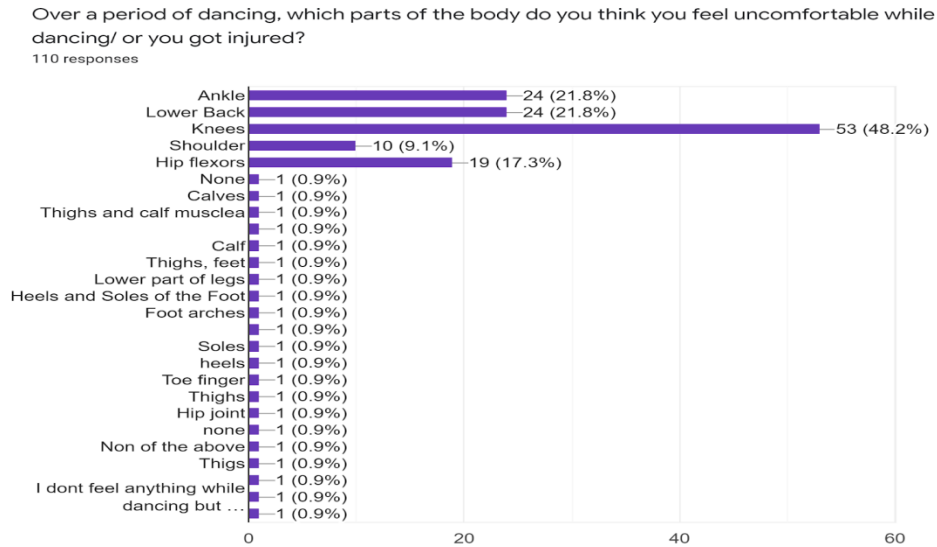


Figure 4.1. A graph from an online survey [to Kūchipūdi dancers]

A close biomechanical analysis of knees and lower back reveals that strengthening the core and conscious effort to create the space between the vertebrae is important for a strong lower back. As the knee is a joint, we cannot strengthen the knee itself. We can strengthen the agonist and antagonist muscle groups to support the knees. Most of the Kūchipūdi dancers, through constant dancing in the *plié* position, develop strong quadriceps. Quadriceps, act as agonists for knee flexion. But there are no constant movements in Kūchipūdi technique that strengthen the hamstrings. Hence, the agonist-antagonist imbalances are created over a period of time, which creates problems for knees. Pilates gives good exercises which strengthen the hamstrings, quadriceps, and core muscles. Constant cues in a good Pilates class would be: “imagine someone is pulling you from the head. Imagine elongating the spine and try to create a space between vertebrae.” Hence, a constant effort to create the space between vertebrae reduces the

chances of getting lower back issues due to Lumbar Lordosis, Degenerative disc disorder and the like.

Constant dancing keeps the human in threat of imbalance. As dancers, we get used to dancing and constantly be on single legs in the air while jumping, and we tend to forget how to balance out our bodies. This is where cross-training in forms like Yoga or Pilates helps. Mary Carpenter explains that if we emphasize strengthening specifically the deep pelvic floor muscles and the transverses abdominus, Rectus abdominus (which we activate in Roll-Up exercise), they prevent the knees from loading. For example, whenever there is squatting where the knee goes over the toes, the deep abdominals should lift our body weight rather than the knees. Also, getting our hamstrings and glutes (medial glute is very important) stronger will lift the body weight and gives less pressure on the knee. This kind of specific strengthening is not possible in just learning the technique of the form; hence, supplemental training is clearly necessary.

Based on my requirements, I have divided the class experience comprising of Contrology experiments into two parts.

1. Exercises- that can eliminate beginner problems like Body Misalignments, core engagement, straight spine.
2. Exercises that will help build strength and remove rigidity over a period of time, which helps dancers have a long career with less/ delayed injuries/stiffness.

Exercises for beginners- To avoid misalignments of the body and to maintain the Saushtava.

1. Feeling the Basic Pilates Imprint (or Pilates box) – to feel the alignment of the hip to hip, shoulder to shoulder, and the square of the body.

Analysis

Feel the imprint of the body on the mat

When I was first asked to lie down on the mat and feel the connection from the belly button to the spine, folding the legs and when asked to feel the imprint, I felt a different sense of connect with my body. Dancers often take the alignment or feeling the body for granted after a certain level of training. Likewise, I used to have some confidence in myself that I have a good alignment. But when the instructor came to me and corrected my imprint, that's when I have realized that revisiting basic stances and basics is important to keep checking for the alignment of the body, which can reduce some injuries in the long run. The dancers were asked to sway back, tuck the pelvis in and put the back in neutral and this exercise is repeated for a number of times for us to understand the pelvis position. The same exercise is repeated while standing. In Somatic education, this exercise is used for controlling the flexor muscles of the stomach. By lying down in the position, by doing the movement and by sensing the difference, makes us more aware of our posture. Sometimes, we might think we sit in the right position while we actually sit in a swayed back position. How we perceive our physical body and its position is called Body Image, and it might not always be the right perception. Hence through Body Image²¹² Training where we sense whether our back is swayed back or neutral tall and vertical by movement and by taking visual feedback from the mirror.

Exercises:

²¹² "body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception."

1. Basic Pilates pose lying on the mat.

Variations: 1. with legs straight. 2. With legs bent and belly button tucked with a flat back.

2. The One leg circle (Insert Description)

3. The Swan Dive

4. The shoulder bridge – raising each leg alternatively trying to maintain the neutral. In an attempt to maintain the neutral at the core, we become more aware of the alignment and weight management of the body.

5. The Leg Pull

2. To strengthen the core

Though the ‘*Saushtava*’ is constantly emphasized in all Indian Dance Forms, the aid to maintain ‘*Saushtava*’ is not taught. For healthy and strong core muscles, Pilates is extremely helpful, which can make the ‘*Saushtava*’ effortless. (The square of the body – *Kati Karna Samayatra*)

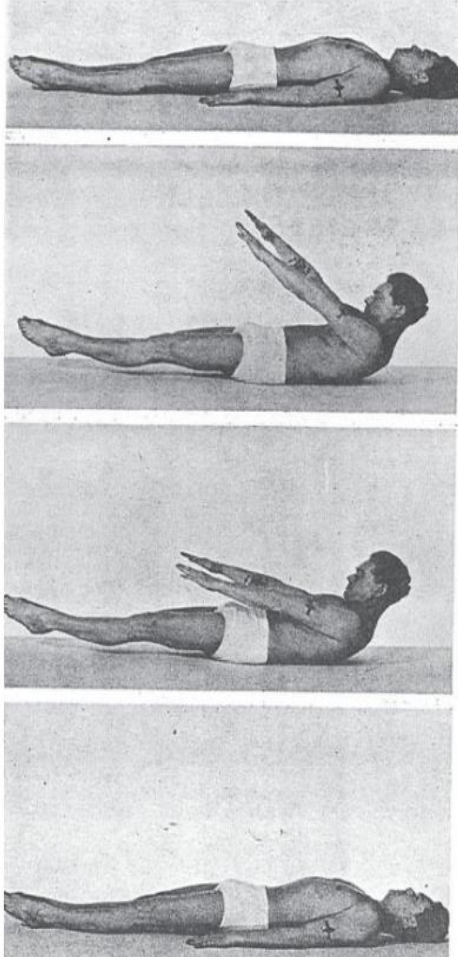
Exercises for strong core: Constant emphasis is ‘to engage your core’ or cues like ‘belly button to the core,’ ‘scoop your belly button in.’

Glossary of Basic Terminology in Pilates

1. Core engagement – when all the four sections of the abdominal muscle (transverse abdominus, the internal and external obliques and rectus abdominus) are braced together to stabilize the torso by working with the muscles that are connected to the spine, it is called the engagement of the core (ORIGYM).

2. Pointing the feet – stretching the feet outwards so that the toes are away from you.
3. Flexing the feet – pulling the feet inwards or towards you.
4. Supine position – Lying horizontally on the back where the face and torso face up.
5. Prone position – lying on the belly , with face down.
6. Pilates way of inhale and exhale – Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. While inhalation, breathe should be directed towards the sides of the ribs. While exhalation, rib cage should be close (Studio Pilates).
7. Flat Back – Flat back is a supine position where all of the spine bones are on the mat leaving no gap. Legs are usually bent in order to maintain this posture.
8. Table top your legs – lying in supine position, bend your legs at the knees so that the thighs are perpendicular to the floor and shins are parallel to the floor with a flat back and thighs engaged (Very Well Fit).

1. The hundred



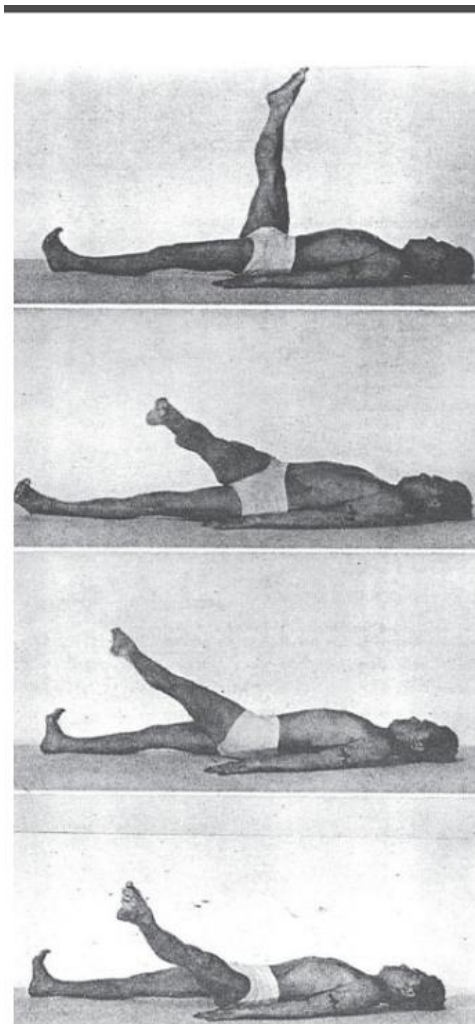
'The hundreds' is one of the first exercises taught in mat pilates. There are basic, intermediate, and advanced levels in executing this exercise, which is a dynamic warm routine. Lying down in the floor with flat back and core engaged, you either lift your legs into tabletop¹ (intermediate) or lift the straight legs few inches off the ground up to 45 degrees. Raise your shoulders off the ground and extend your arms and legs. Inhale for a count of 5 and exhale for a count of 5 while pulsing your arms up and down. This exercise helps in warming up core muscles and also increases the strength and stability of the abdomen muscles.

Figure 4.2. The Hundreds.

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

2. The one leg circle



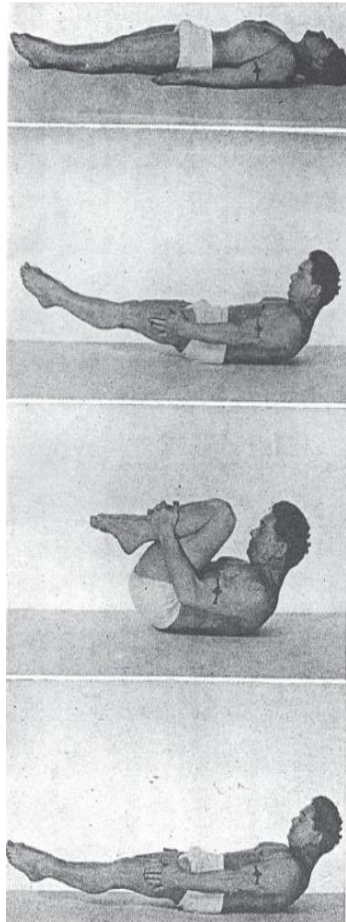
The ‘one-leg circle’ is specifically very helpful for dancers. A Kūchipūdi dancer may have to do a lot of leg movement variations, which involve twisting and turning legs from the hip joint. Although a constant leg work is going on, the Kūchipūdi dancer must keep their hip stable and core strong. Hence careful execution of single leg circles engaging the core, keeping the hip and pelvis stable and lower back intact with the ground, not only strengthen the core and stabilizes the

Figure 4.3. The one-leg circle

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates’ Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

3. The double leg stretch



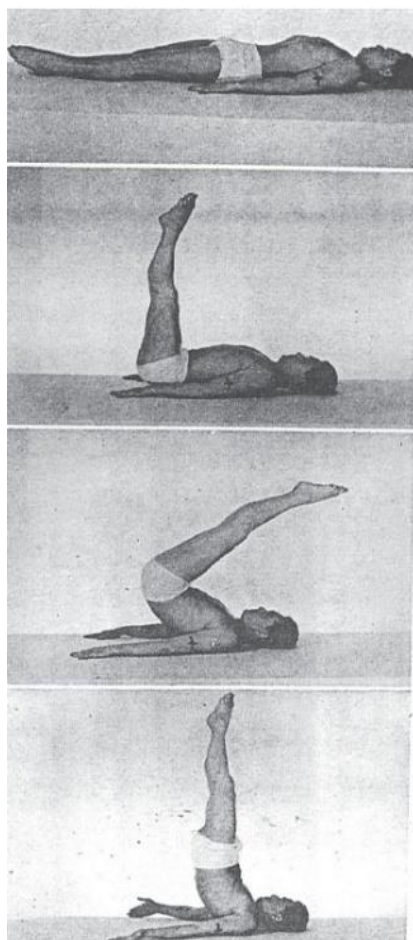
Lie on your back with core engaged and back flat on the floor. Hug your knees with your hands and then stretch your arms and legs straight. Exhale and circle the arms around as you come back your “hug your knees” posture. Repeat this at least for 8 times. This exercise not only helps in strengthening the core but also helps in coordination abilities as it involves coordination of the breath and the movement; stretching arms and legs at the same time and then bring them back while inhaling.

Figure 4.4. The Double-Leg Stretch.

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

4. The Jack Knife



This is an advanced mat Pilates workout which helps in strengthening the spine and in improving the articulation of the spine. Since, this is an advanced exercise, few exercises like roll over must be practiced for a consistent amount of time before attempting this exercise. In Jack knife, keeping your palms and arms on floor, inhale and bring your legs into roll over position by lift you legs to the ceiling and then to by using your abdominal muscles and by pressing your arms on to the floor, bring your legs above your head upto 60 degrees, inhale and then slowly come back to roll over position. Repeat this exercise for a couple of times. Throughout this exercise, the weight is on your

Figure 4.5. The Jack Knife

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

3. For Spine Flexibility and Strength

Exercises:

1. The Roll Up (To relax the spine)

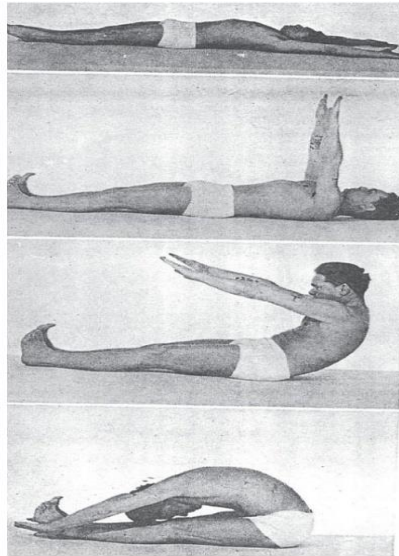


Figure 4.6. The Roll-Up

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

“Lie down on your back with core engaged and scoop your belly button in. Bring your arms to ceiling. Inhale through your nose and while exhaling through mouth, slowly come up and sit straight with feet flexed. Now slowly go back while exhaling, vertebrae by vertebrae by taking your arms all the way back. Now bring your arms to ceiling and inhaleeeee...slowwwly come up with exhaling...” This was cue instruction given by Mary Carpenter to make us all perform this exercise. She believed that the roll up was a great exercise to massage our spine and hence after every 2-3 exercises, she made us do the roll up for a couple of times. By practice and by developing strength in the core, the

students do the roll up effortlessly without jerks and a smooth roll up with stable flexed feet on ground means the student has a great core strength.

2. The Rocker

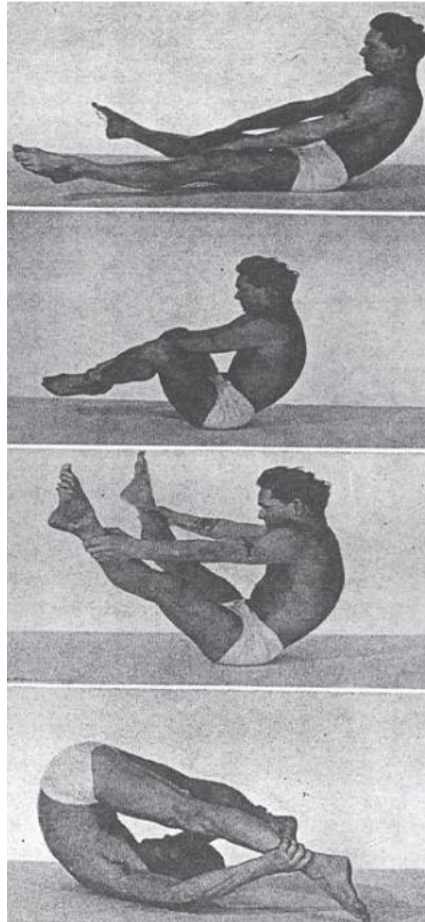


Figure 4.7. The Rocker

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

The Rocker is another exercise along with the roll up which Mary believed was a great spine massage exercise. There were three varieties basic, intermediate and advanced level of doing this exercise. The rocker with open legs is the advanced level of doing this exercise. The emphasis was to rock like a tea cup with the initiation from the core rather

than from the legs. Mary used to bring a tea cup and used to demonstrate on how to rock like a tea cup. This exercise which requires balance and control where we have to balance on the sit bones with back straight stabilizes the trunk and improves the spine articulation.

3. The Spine Stretch and the spine twist

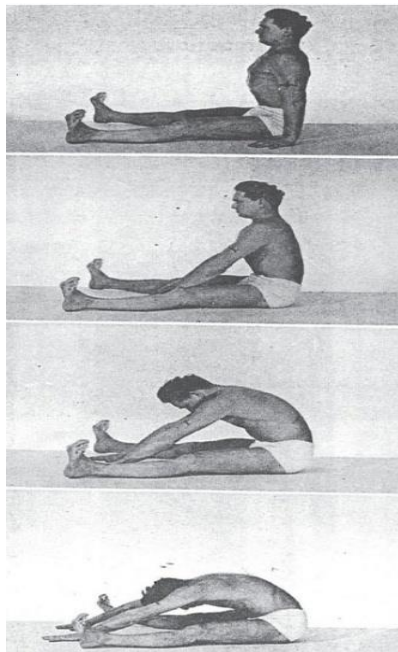


Figure 4.8. The Spine Stretch

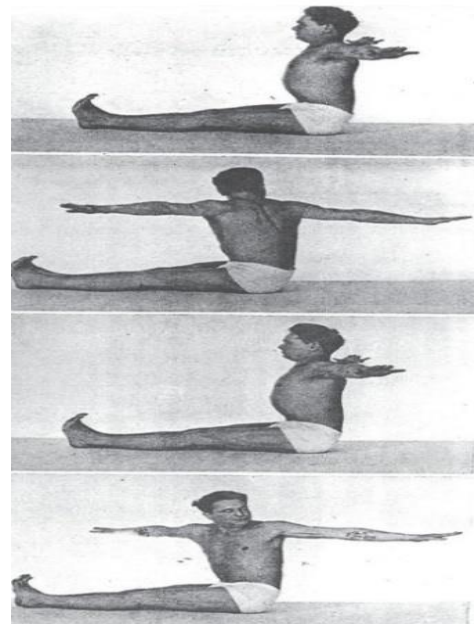


Figure 4.9. The Spine Twist

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

Occasionally, after the roll up and rocker exercises, Mary used to make us do the spine twists. In this exercise, you should sit tall with feet flexed and arms stretched. Inhale deeply with the core engaged and while exhaling twist your torso to the right and look towards your back arm while turning. Then come back to center and repeat the same on the left side. This exercise works on the oblique muscles and wrings the stale air from the

lungs as you stretch the muscles of your back (Pilates Exercise of the Month: SPINE TWIST).

4. The Swan Dive (To build the strength to lower back)

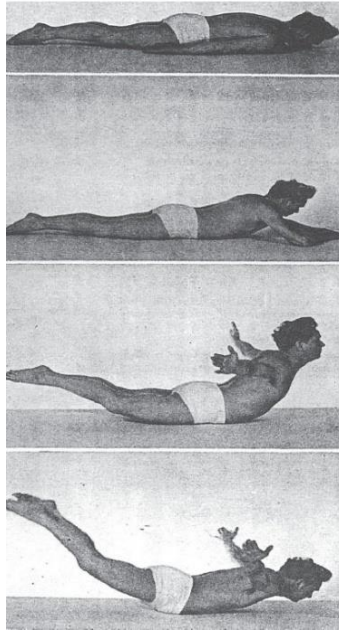


Figure 4.10. The Swan Dive

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

In the set of exercises in prone position, Swan dive was one of the important exercises that were taught by Mary to build strength in the gluteal muscles and back muscles. Lying in prone position, the core should be engaged which makes it easy to perform the exercise. Inhale and while exhaling, lift the arms and legs off the ground for about 45 degrees and stay there. Then slowly relax and repeat the exercises. The position of the arms was changed by Mary from horizontal, which she called as 'T' position to diamond to super man position to vertically straight arm positions. After a while, we were

instructed to flutter the legs in the air like a Swan while changing the arm positions upon the cue given.

5. The Shoulder Bridge and variations (To build strength to the back)

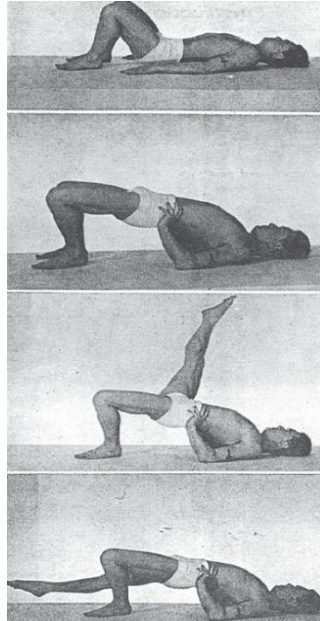


Figure 4.11. The Shoulder Bridge

Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller. *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*.

E-book. Presentation Dynamics. 1998.

Mary stressed on this particular exercise that builds great strength for lower back. The shoulder bridge strengthens the posterior leg muscles which include glutes and hamstrings. It also works on the transverse abdominus and rectus abdominus and the erector spine muscles.

Lay on the floor with knees bent and arms rested to your side. Inhale and upon exhale, slowly lift your tailbone to the ceiling until you are bearing your weight through your shoulders. To hold the lift, you should contract your gluteal muscles and core. Return back to the mat one vertebrae at a time starting from the upper back, middle back and finally the lower back.

Once this exercise is mastered, you can attempt to do a variation where you lift one of your legs to the ceiling without dropping your pelvis maintaining your pilates square. This requires more strength in the core and buttock muscles.

4. Neck Strength

Strengthening of the neck is not possible in any other forms except in Pilates. For every exercise which demands a roll few vertebrae up and perform the exercise, involves neck strengthening. The right technique to roll up the neck is not straight but to roll up like a ‘spring’ – Elongate first and then come up. Below is the illustration on the right and wrong ways of ‘Roll up.’

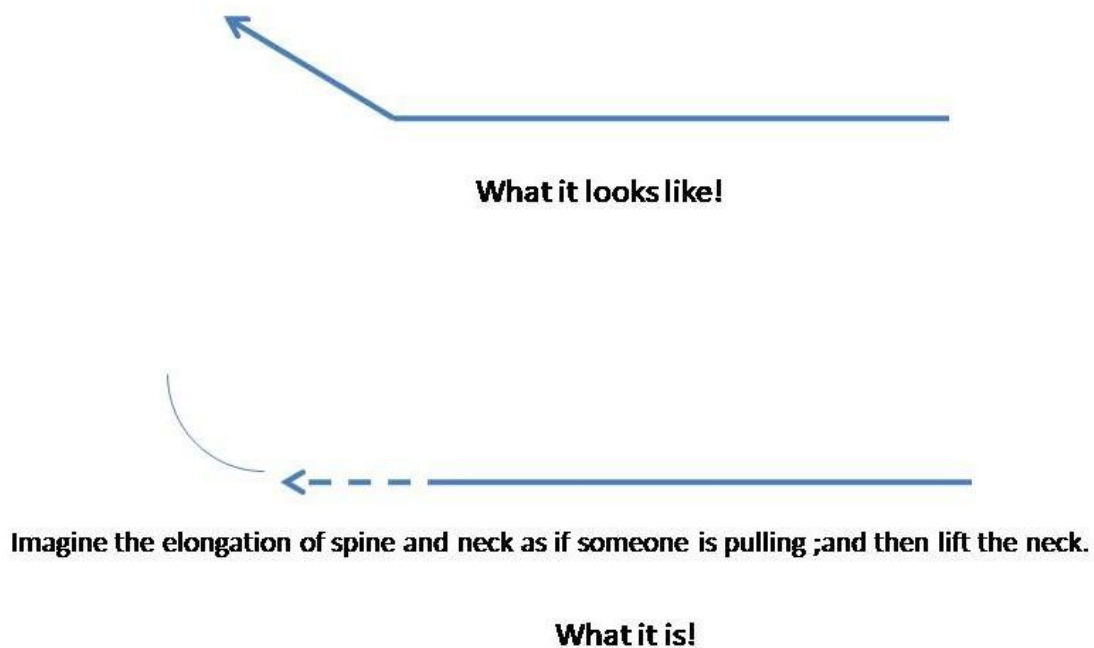


Figure 4.12. Lifting head in Pilates – The right way

Transformation of the performer

A regular Pilates class for a consistent period increases muscular strength and flexibility in dancers (Ahearn 2006). Two semesters of Pilates class (twice a week with a spring break) improved my core stability and strength, control in my movement and improved my overall fitness, which reflected in dance too. For further specificity on how Pilates impacted each of my fitness areas, new research has to be conducted.

Modern Dance

Background

“Modern dance emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States as a rebellion against the rigidity of ballet. Modern dance believes in the liberation of body and expression, refusal of the aesthetic paradigms of ballet, anti-academism as some of its characteristics” (Naranjo).

Training Context

Today, modern dance is so popular that almost all the ballet dancers shift to Modern dance at some point in their careers to have more freedom and injury-free, long careers. Some ballet dancers simultaneously practice both forms. The recent trends in India also show that the classical dancers are learning modern dance and pursuing it either full time, or as a secondary form. While institutes like *Attakkalari* blend Indian and contemporary dance movements, dancers like Rukmini Vijaykumar are pursuing both classical and modern as separate forms. Before learning Modern dance, I posed the primary question of ‘why classical dancers are getting interested in learning modern or contemporary dance movement?’ for which I got answers later, after experiencing the form.

At Barnard College, since I took a basic modern dance class, the class again was a minor for most of the students. The group was a bunch of students from different ethnicities who were non-dancers or amateurs like that of in ballet class. However, interestingly the mindset of the students reflected the culture of the modern dance: Unabashed, free-spirited and more open. The dancers were not aiming for perfection, preferably aiming for dancing for the sake of dance and their joy. Especially modern dance is considered as a way of expression without any rules and barriers. Youngsters at Barnard believe that it is truly liberating and not confining.

1. Exercises to gain awareness of the body

Several exercises in modern dance help me gain awareness in understanding my body, center of gravity, shifting of weight from one leg to another and the like.

Exercise 1: To stand in parallel and try to move the upper body forward and backward and find a neutral point in between which is neither arching back nor slouching forward.

Exercise 2: To almost fall forward with back straight and run quickly with that given momentum of falling. This exercise made me realize that I am letting go the tension around my hip.

Exercise 3: To stand in parallel and spread your fingers of your feet widely and feel the earth and gravity and try to exert the weight evenly on both the legs.

Exercise 4: To identify the square of the body (left shoulder to left hip and right shoulder to right hip). We find a parallel to body square in *Nāṭya Sāstra* too in the slokam.. “*Kati Karna Samayatraya...*” where the hips and ears should be in the same vertical line, but we never consciously take time just to feel the square of the body and practice it.

Exercise 5: Caitlin gave an exercise to practice the full *plié*²¹³ or Muramandi. She asked us to stand against the wall with the butt facing the wall. Make sure that the shoulder is over the pelvis and the shoulder doesn't touch the wall. This exercise gives the dancer an awareness of whether he/ she is overarching the back or slouching while doing the *plié*. This exercise can be implemented in the pedagogy of Indian dance while teaching the beginners.

Exercise 6: Make sure that the hips are square, the leg is moving like a compass, and tracing the circle on the floor. Mindful practice of this exercise helps in the core stabilization.

Exercise 7: Skipping and hopping (joyful, happy motion while letting go the hands and shoulders) – this relaxes the tension around the shoulder and hands we develop as classical dancers as we are always said to make the hands stiff and firm.

2. Body as an instrument

Modern dance gives the dancer a better understanding of the space and the choreography. – Being an Indian Classical Dancer, I heavily rely on the literature and text to convey the meaning of context or story. But with the little exposure to modern dance for eight months, I started thinking to convey the mood and the meaning of the text and context not just with my gestures and expressions but with my whole body. Perhaps, this would increase the depth of the choreography. Along with making the body an instrument, the spatial patterns in the choreography of modern dancer helped me to become a better thinker in choreography.

²¹³ Muramandi

3. To break the monotony

After practicing a classical form for 14 years, where I have been practicing the same half sit, stamping, storytelling, and *abhinaya*, learning dance broke the monotony in the way I look at dance and in the way I think about dance. Standing tall with feet parallel, high jumps, and running all over the studio gave me a perspective of how to teach my students once in a while to make them more aware of how they are dancing. Shoulder rolls, cartwheels, and floor exercises broke my mental blocks (still breaking) and fears to try things which I never tried as a Kūchipūdi dancer. The chaotic choreography and asymmetric dancing broke my obsession to be symmetrical and right left-aligned (in classical, if we dance to the right, we should, or we will dance the same movement to the left too).

The instructor's philosophy

Modern dancer is heavily dependent on the instructor's philosophy, such as his/her aesthetic choices, movement background, and ultimate goals. (Meenan). Some instructors believe in sophisticated and soft movements, while some instructors believe in energetic movements. Having an experience in Cunningham technique, instructor Caitlin personally believes in the natural flow of the movement with energy in Modern I class, which will make the students comfortable and uninhibited. From Modern II, she starts correcting the proper technique. She also believes that to understand a movement, first, the dancer should keep dancing. Then the movement sinks in through body memory first, and then internalization and understanding of the movement will happen. She says, "Keep moving to understand better."

I have realized that along with participating in dance, if we seldom come out of the group, sit and watch the choreography, we understand the patterns in the space and thought process of the choreographer better. In Indian dance, the training starts with mimicking the teacher's movement. Unlike this system, in modern dance, I feel they tell you the right technique of the movement and set you free to learn the movement. For an experienced dancer, such freedom gives a different perspective. Mental rhythm in Modern dance makes you more aware of your movement and body rhythm and makes you less dependent on the music. Instructor Caitlin Trainor also constructed her own rhythmic warm up routine.

Transformation of the performer

One should practice Modern dance for a significant period to know the impact of it on their primary dance form. The pursuit of Modern dance impacts a dancer psychologically. Although Modern dance made me think to bring emotion to my body movement, gave some exciting inputs regarding teaching methodologies, I did not have tools to test my growth as a dancer due to the impact of Modern dance. The level of impact of cross-cultural training on the creative levels of a dancer, as mentioned earlier, is a separate study altogether.

Objective observations

The following are some of the reasons I have figured out at the end of the dance class.

1. Modern dance gives freedom in movement and thoughts, unlike the strict rules in classical forms. This gives the dancers an opportunity to let their ideas flow without strict adherence to rules.

2. After practicing a classical form for several years, modern movement breaks the monotony and rigidity of the body and movement, therefore, rewiring the brain patterns.
3. The way a modern dance piece choreographed is different from a choreography of a classical dance number. This creates a new understanding of space and rhythm (Ex: Maintaining a mental rhythm in coherence with other dancers in the group for silent pieces in modern dance is a new experience for me with a classical dance background)
4. Especially classical dancers unknowingly develop rigidity around their hip region in an attempt to maintain *saushtava* position. The dancers can get over such rigidities by using some floor exercises and fall and recovery²¹⁴ technique.

Ballet

“Ballet is a type of performance dance that originated during the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century and later developed into a concert dance form in France and Russia” (Ballet).

Ballet, despite all the criticism for its extremely demanding practice regime, has become the center of focus for the dance world. Having had a long history of evolution, the research in ballet is much advanced, be it in the field of pedagogy and in the field of kinesiology/physiology. Hence, having basic training in Ballet opens us up to different methods of teaching and techniques in executing the complex and physically demanding movements. A ballet class usually takes a lot of time to teach the right technique to the student to seamlessly perform the complex moves in the advanced choreography. What

²¹⁴ Doris Humphrey's version of contraction and release of muscles and of the breath cycle is called “fall and recovery”.

makes ballet interesting is the science behind the sophisticated technique like executing *pirouettes*, *arabesque* and the like. and its timely interaction with science for handling the injuries and understanding the bodies of the ballet dancers.

Training context

The ballet class (basic 1 and 2) I attended at the department of dance, Barnard College was a diverse group of non-dancers, amateurs and aspiring professional dancers. Hence, the instructions were from fundamental level in order to understand the technique and anatomy of the class.

Training process

The class initially began with a warm-up routine to prepare all the dancers for the class. After four classes, we were asked to do the warm-up on our own as an hour class was not sufficient to teach everything. All the classes were done at the *barré*, and dancing without the *barré* was very rare. We were given constant cues about engaging the core muscles, butt muscles, about the directions, *plié*, and *grand pliés*. Off the *barré*, we practiced some walks traveling between the 9 points of the stage. (Stage center, upright, upleft, down right, down left, up center, down center). This exercise was to teach us the sense of stage and to feel the space and the directions.

The nine areas of a proscenium stage:

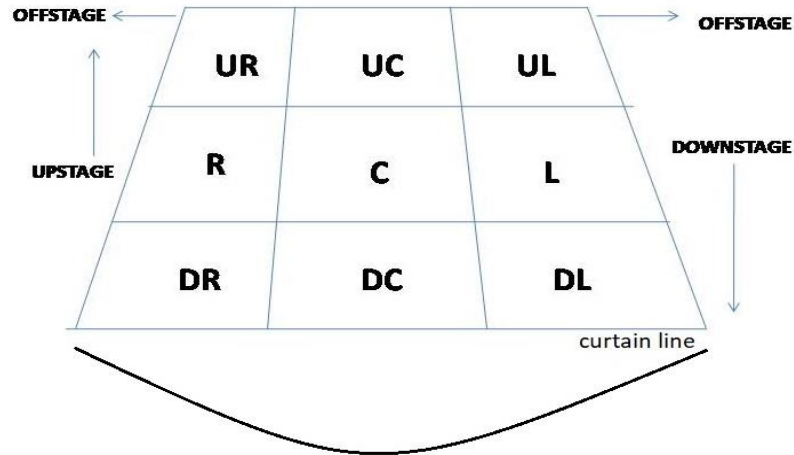


Figure 4.13. Nine areas of a proscenium stage

Based on the inputs from my ballet class, I have given two inferences for each of the exercise.

1. Pedagogical – Different methods of teaching
2. Anatomical – Better understanding of the anatomy of a movement.

Hence, as a practitioner, once we learn anatomy properly, perhaps we can find different ways of training the students depending upon the individual's needs.

Important exercises from the Ballet class

Exercise 1 – Basic stance

Although, a well-informed Kūchipūdi dance teacher points out this issue of the right stance, I re-iterate the exercise that I learned in ballet, as many Kūchipūdi dancers have the issue of swaying back while standing in the basic position. Ballet corrects such misalignments at the very beginning of the class.

Pedagogical input – the instructor asks the students to sway back, be in neutral, then to tuck the pelvis in so that the students understand the difference and be more conscious about it. I found this exercise being given utmost importance across all the Pilates, Ballet, and Modern classes, as, despite knowing the right technique, the students tend to do it wrong.

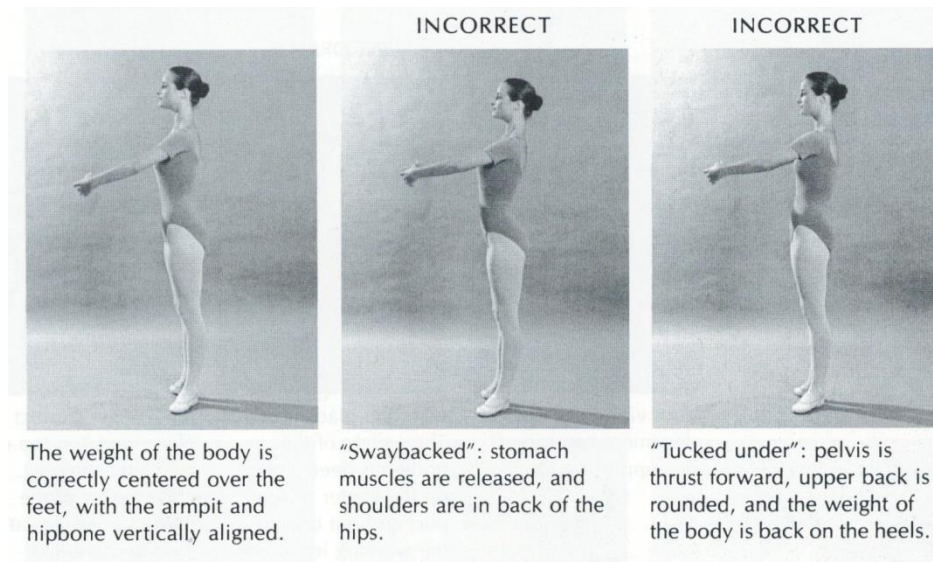


Figure 4.14. Ballet Stance – The right and wrong ways

Gretchen Ward Warren. *Classical Ballet Technique*. Book. University Press of Florida. 1989. P5.

Anatomical input – While the constant swaying back can decrease the space between the lumbar vertebrae (Lumbar Lordosis²¹⁵), thereby creating back pain, the tucked-in pelvis (Kyphosis²¹⁶) also compresses the lower back thereby causing an injury. Despite knowing the right technique, students tend to sway back to compensate their weak hip flexors for a proper turnout.

²¹⁵ A condition where there occurs an unusually large, inward arch on the lower back, just above the buttocks.

²¹⁶ A forward rounding of the back or hunch back.

Exercise 2– Proper technique for turn out

Turn-out is equally vital in both Kūchipūdi and Ballet. While doing a proper turn out naturally came to me in my Kūchipūdi class, I have observed over a period of time, that, in an attempt to have more turn out, we tend to do the wrong technique as shown in the picture below.

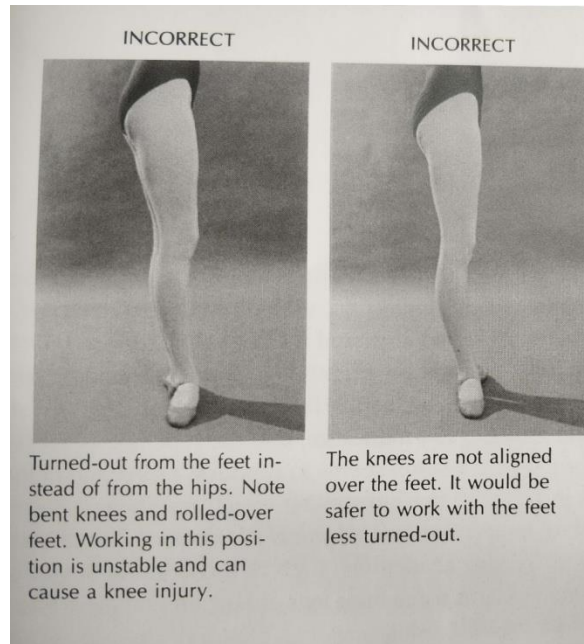


Figure 4.15. An incorrect turn-out

Gretchen Ward Warren. *Classical Ballet Technique*. Book. University Press of Florida.
1989. P9.

Anatomical Input - The direction of our knees should be in alignment with the direction of the big toe. A forced turn-out leads to forcibly turn out from the knees, thereby causing knee injuries. Hence turning out from the hip flexors is the only way for right alignment.

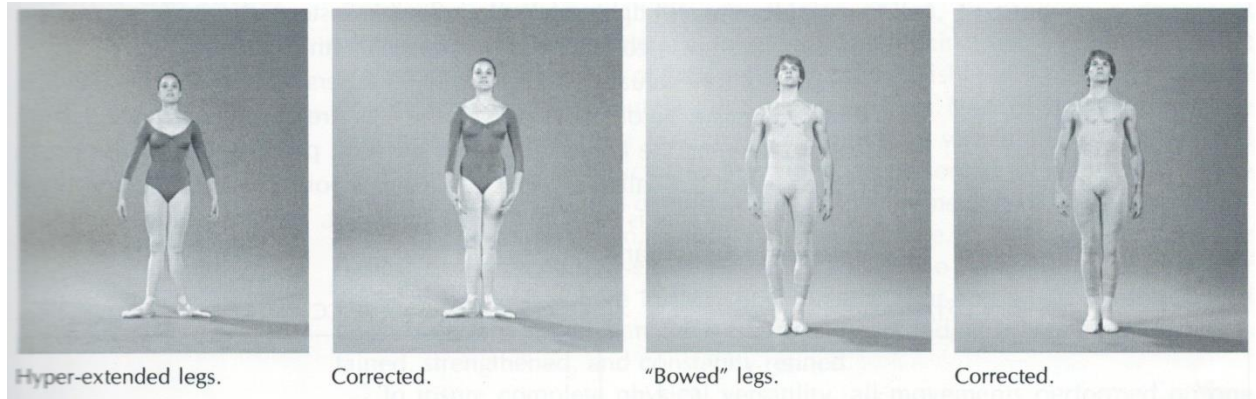


Figure 4.16. Correcting physiological anomalies

Gretchen Ward Warren. *Classical Ballet Technique*. Book. University Press of Florida.
1989. p69.

Pedagogical Input

Instructor's philosophy

For executing *plié* without rigidity around the hip flexors, our ballet teacher taught us technique. She asked us to squeeze the gluteal muscles as if we're holding a coin between our buttocks, then she asked us to *plié* forward and then turn. Engaging the gluteal muscles frees the hip flexors to a certain extent which in turn gives a better turn out. But not all the ballet teachers agree with this philosophy as buttock muscles are not responsible to maintain the turn out. "The hip rotator muscles rotate the legs outward. However, the buttock muscles are often used to stabilize the body in the turned-out position and can help the dancer to feel and control turn-out. These muscles should not be overused. The sensation of tightening should be felt at the top of the back of the legs—more underneath the buttocks than on top of them. **Never** pinch the buttocks together so that the pelvis is thrust forward (i.e., tucked under)" (Warren). When I posed the same question to my ballet teacher, she explained, "The 6 deep lateral rotators are UNDER the gluteal muscles. It takes years and years and years to develop these muscles so that

supported rotation can be achieved. It is challenging, at best, for a dancer NOT to use the gluteal muscles and yes, the only visual cue I've been able to come up with is close to what you've written. I wish I had a better one. One engages the pelvic floor in the process, too, to some extent. The gluteus maximus muscle fires up when pursuing running and jumping. The gluteus medius is a stabilizing muscle. My teacher and mentor - Christina Bernal and now no longer in this world - presented this particular idea to me and it has always made mechanical sense to me. When I trained as a very young child with Russian and Balanchine trained dancers, we were simply told to "tuck under". At the time, I probably understood this as clenching all my butt muscles and literally flattening my lower spine. I came to understand that I needed that curve in my lower back! Fortunately, I have never had any lower back issues or injuries related to dance. I'm also convinced that the equal weight theory Bernal espoused in addition to the contraction of those glorious deep outward rotators are the reasons why I have remained injury free for so much of my dance life”(Pers. Comm. Katie Glesner).

Exercise 3 – *Barré* exercises

The *barré* exercises initially gives the balance and stability for the dancer to warm up and practice the basics of the ballet. *Barré* plays an instrumental role in training the dancer in ballet. As I mentioned in chapter 1, the ancient treatises on Indian dance like Sangita Ratnakara, Nritta Ratnavali also speak about the use of something similar to *barré* to prepare the dancer and for exercises. Hence, implementation of *barré* in Indian dance for preliminary exercises or just practicing ballet *barré* routine is good for any dancer.

(Insert attendance photo where a little girl holds a rope and does *aramandi*)

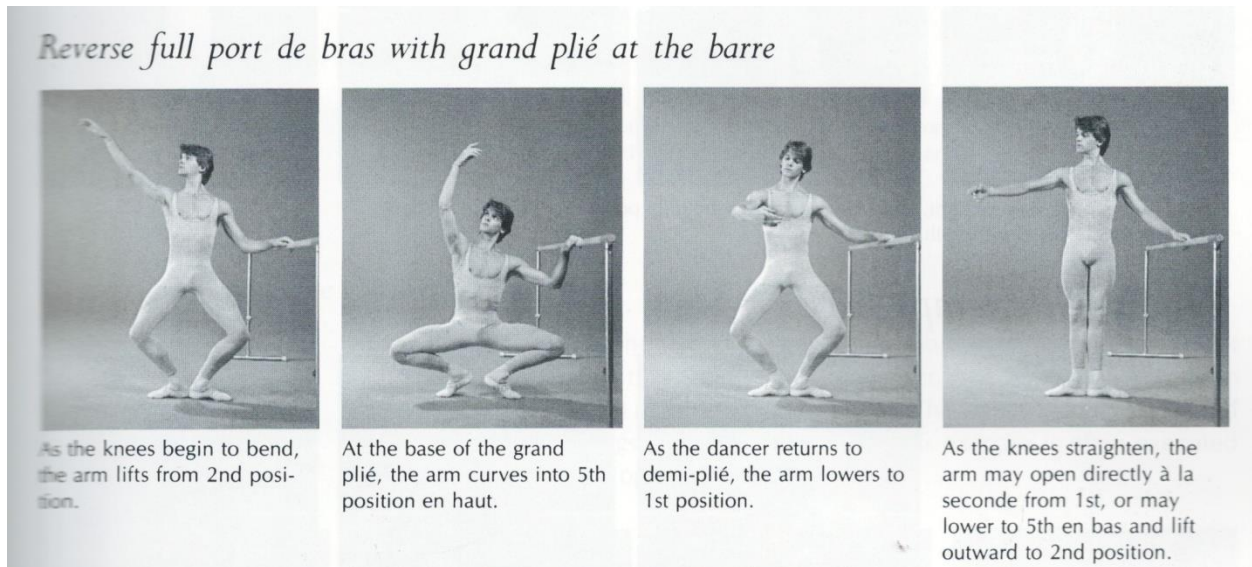


Figure 4.17. *Barré exercises*

Gretchen Ward Warren. *Classical Ballet Technique*. Book. University Press of Florida.

1989. P 89.

Exercise 4 – Weight distribution

The basic 5 positions of ballet teach the weight distribution of the body on the legs. This gave me pedagogical inputs of how to teach the concept right from the beginning of the technique class in Kūchipūdi.

Exercise 5 – Pelvic tilt in extensions

While we raise our leg sideways or forward, the pelvis tends to tilt to either sideways, or forward or backward. Each pose should clarify on where the pelvis should be placed in the pose.

Exercise 7 – Pelvic stability through En Dehors and En Dedons

Consciously exercising the EnDehors and EnDedons gives stability to the pelvis. Fig. 4.17. shows the floor patterns of EnDehors and EnDedons.

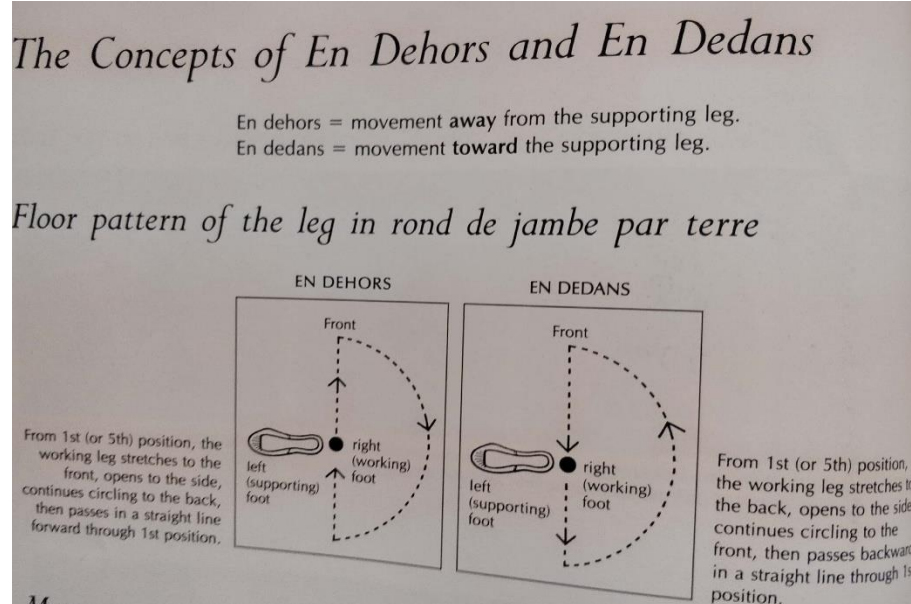


Figure 4.18. En Dehors²¹⁷ and En Dedans²¹⁸

Gretchen Ward Warren. *Classical Ballet Technique*. Book. University Press of Florida.

1989. P34.

Exercise 8 – Exploring the stage space

Ballet divides the proscenium stage as “Stage Center, Stage Up right, Stage Up left, stage Down right, stage Down left”. The initial exercises for the students include cuing the students to move to stage up right, run to stage down left etc. This exercise gives a sense of space utilization for the beginners.

Transformation of the performer

My learning of ballet was not rigorous enough to observe the change as a performer.

However Ballet gave a better understanding of the body and gave me pedagogical inputs.

For instance, the concepts of core engagement, alignment of the big toe to the knee

²¹⁷ Of a circular ballet movement of arms or legs leading away from the body or of the position in which the toes are turned out. (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

²¹⁸ Of a circular ballet movement of arms or legs leading toward the body or of the position in which the toes are turned in. (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

during turn-out, *Barré* exercises for strength, and stability can be introduced in any Kūchipūdi dance class, which equip the students to understand their bodies.

Objective observations

Ballet being the widely researched dance form, gives many inputs regarding the body, anatomy, and alignment, if not anything else. Understanding the body in the right way reduces half the problems, and ballet greatly helps in this regard.

Running training

Background

Running is one of the easiest ways to improve cardiovascular endurance for anyone. After starting my research, running was my first encounter as a cross-cultural training aid in 2015 but a very informal setup. I joined a group called by Hyderabad runners group and underwent training for three months.

Training context

Since, the participants were all of the different age groups and various professions, the context of running training was to keep everyone fit, maintain a healthy weight and BMI. The emphasis was on careful preparation of running so that no one is injured. Our trainer was an IT professional but who would push every participant to the maximum of their limits. He, who was once an obese person transformed into a fit, muscular man motivates every participant to have will power like that of an iron. Although I practiced for hours together, I never pushed myself to the maximum of my limits. Hence I showed a cautious approach in the running training too as I didn't want to injure myself.

Training process

The training was very rigorous, which included a set of preparatory exercises and stretches, then running (every week, the mileage is increased), followed by cool-down and core strengthening exercises like planks, squats, lunges.

Transformation of the performer

Running was the single most exercise in my entire journey as a participant observant, which phenomenally increased my cardiovascular endurance. My stamina levels were high in the five years of my research only while I was running. Although I didn't measure my stamina levels, I could experience high energy levels, which helped me in doing a two-hour concert effortlessly.

Objective observations

Cardio-vascular endurance through running comes with a cost of lowered flexibility and loading²¹⁹ on ankles, lower back, and knees. Hence it is essential for any dancer who turns to running as a tool to improve cardio vascular endurance. Another important aspect of running is that in an attempt to run with the right technique, one understands how to engage the core muscles in order to keep the body light. Every movement form falls into either of the following two categories in dealing with the core muscles.

1. Exercises that strengthen the core muscles – Pilates, Yoga.
2. Exercises that require engaging the core muscles – Jumps in dance, running, several upper torso movements.

This means, having strength is one aspect and making use of it is another. As the demand of consciously engaging the core is high in running, which otherwise loads lower back,

²¹⁹ Force put on a weight-bearing or load-bearing joint during activity.

knees and ankles, I found running to be a great activity to train a dancer on how to engage the core muscles.

African Dance

Duration Four weeks – 2 classes per each week

Semester – Fall

Date: 01/19/2018

Course Description: “Concentrates on the dance of the West Africa, including Senegal, Mali and Guinea, and a variety of dances performed at various functions and ceremonies” (Barnard College).

Inspiration:

African dance learning both in practice and theory, was a great learning experience for me and gave me insights into how to think critically regarding culture, identity, and analyze dance forms in the post-colonial context. Although several articles were read to understand the context and history of African dance, one article that greatly helped me in not only analyzing my experience with African dance at Barnard but also which made me rethink the cultural context and pedagogy of my own dance form, Kūchipūdi, in post-colonial India was Oyeja Cruz Banks’s article titled “Critical Post-Colonial Dance Pedagogy: The Relevance of West African Dance Education in the United States.” Oyeja through her article not only enlightened me with the technical understanding of the African dance forms, but also throwed light upon the deep rooted, internalized racism. Such internalized racism among the oppressed is due to the superiority of a particular race/community which sets the tone and the rules for dance forms both from a practical and epistemological perspective.

Training Context

The representation and portrayal of African dance in the United States is a real by-product of inter-cultural performance complexities. In the European/ American context, while all the South-East Asian dances are considered as ethnic dances, African dance in particular is considered as the ‘cool’ dance. Hence, the craze for African dance among Americans would be out of two reasons: 1. Some of the African origin students take up African dance to find a sense of connect to their African roots. For them, this dance, perhaps gives a sense of home and identity. 2. Other students in general are attracted to the dance form due to its high energy and high musicality of drums and beats. Hence, the beginner African class at Barnard was a mixed group of students from different ethnicities of African, American, Europe and Asia.

Training Process

Everyday class started with a set of warm-up exercises. Perhaps, it was only in this class, there was no emphasis on the square of the body, flat back, tucked in belly button or the space between the vertebrae. The warm-ups were rigorous yet gave the dancer a sense of freedom. In the following technique class, the instructor would teach phrase by phrase in counts of 4s, 3s etc. and then would combine all the phrases at the end of the class to the drum beats. A traditional *Bougarabou*²²⁰ drum was used to give music to the dance class. In a conversation with my supervisor *Uttara* on how African dance retained its originality despite being in a multi-cultural society, she opined that African dance in New York is definitely not the same as that of the African dance in Africa. Any dance form, in the multi-cultural setup of American schooling, has a format and tone in the style of

²²⁰ Set of drums commonly used in West Africa. The drums are single headed (cow skin), with an elongated on a single stand, and most commonly played in sets of three or four.

pedagogy. The practical format includes initial warm up, technique class, creative engagement of the students and the cool down. The tone of any class is to find a sense of freedom, self-expression, and to be non-judgmental about body type, ethnicity, race, and religion. A class in America expects students and teachers to engage in a critical dialogue and questioning regarding the context, history, and significance of the dance form they practice. There will be a constant endeavor to put the teaching in a feminist perspective, thereby eliminating any scope for superiority, hierarchy, or stereotypes. These are the aims of an ideal educational system, although these goals are not entirely achieved in every class by every student/teacher. It is a constant endeavor. African dance positioned itself in the dance education of America with all the above goals. The class led by an African-American instructor has a warm-up routine followed by technique class followed by group work and then cool down. But there was little talking and more dancing in African dance class compared to ballet or modern classes. This scenario somewhat resembled an Indian dance class setup. In a typical Indian dance class, the teacher gives inputs, and the student follows. Any conversation perhaps would be about technique or something related to dance but not a critical analysis of why the dance is the way it is.

Objective Observations

Ojeya Cruz Banks, in her article mentions that “Agility in the hips is important to Guinea dance. Students often found hip articulation uncomfortable and embarrassing” (Banks 27).

“Isolation of pelvis is central to Guinea dance technique, and a good technician is one who can execute nuance and intricate actions in the hips” (Banks, Critical Postcolonial

Dance Pedagogy: The Relevance of West African Dance Education in the United States 25)

Being an Indian classical dancer, isolation of hip in dance was something new and embarrassing to me too. Why is it embarrassing? “Embarrassment or awkwardness is an emotional state that is associated with mild to severe levels of discomfort, and which is usually experienced when someone has a socially unacceptable or frowned upon act or condition that was witnessed by or revealed to others” (Wikipedia) . As a society, we have set our rules that are acceptable and that are unacceptable. Due to the social conditioning both by society and by the field of classical dance, perhaps, isolation of pelvis somewhere felt wrong to me—the same theory applies to all the changes that occurred in Kūchipūdi. Vulgarity in expressions, crudeness in body movements, fan-like movement in the upper body; all such elements were slowly discarded slowly to suit the appropriateness of the standards set by the dominant culture. Oyeja used “internalized racism” in her article, explaining how the African American students were less receptive and less excited about African dance than the students of other ethnicities. Was it because of the same sense of disowning of the roots made the Kūchipūdi *Bhāgavatāss* change their dance form or was it the opposite - resistance to change? On the one hand, resistance to change by a set of people is hindering the progress; on the other hand, not having faith in our own technique and dance form is creating a lack of self-confidence among Kūchipūdi dancers. “The Western African dance pedagogy stimulated self-knowledge. The cultural energy embodied in the dance became a vehicle for seeing themselves and connecting to their bodies” (Banks 28). This statement holds good to Kūchipūdi or any other Indian forms too. Such pedagogy was lost somewhere in an

attempt to seek approval from the dominant cultural education system. African dance class made me think on how to incorporate pedagogies that decolonize the minds and bodies of the dancers thereby giving them a strong sense of freedom and happiness for pursuing their dance form i.e., Kūchipūdi.

Transformation as a performer

Rather than transforming as a performer, African dance transformed as a perceiver and a thinker. My takeaway from African dance was not physical, or to put it in a better way, one need not learn African dance to become better at their primary form. However, learning African dance for a little while gave a sense of freedom, happiness, and a critical perspective on dance and its purpose.

Flamenco

Background

“Flamenco is a folk art culture from Spain. It is particular to the province of Andalusia in Spain. Flamenco is a tripartite art involving singing, dancing, and guitar – simultaneously – as well as rhythmic punctuations (by hand-claps and other methods)”.

Teaching Context

Melinda Marquez, the flamenco instructor, is also a ballet dancer and instructor for ballet dancers. She also taught wrist movements to ballet dancers. Hence, her pedagogy and approaches are very systematic, contemporary with the verve of boldness that the culture of flamenco gives her. The course description of this course says: “traditional techniques through contemporary approaches.” I wondered what was contemporary in the approach? Was it about the method of instruction, or the movement, or the story? This was later understood when the instructor shared her philosophy of instruction. Flamenco is popular

as a café dance, always assumed to be done by only female dancers. Melinda wants to break such stereotypes and make Flamenco a gender-neutral form. She wants to find a way between traditional Flamenco and contemporary flamenco. According to Melinda, Contemporary Flamenco is softer with footwork than that of traditional Flamenco.

Teaching Process:

Exploring the space - When Melinda started teaching her first exercise to explore the space in three different planes and three levels, I understood her orientation of teaching a traditional art form in contemporary context came as a result of placing herself in a metropolitan city like New York. This is when I realized that be it Uttara Asha who taught us Bharatanatyam, or be it our African dance instructor, they have re-oriented their pedagogy to suit the needs and contexts of contemporary urban context. This primary orientation of a tradition in a different dimension is necessary because the participants come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and the dance forms are already placed out of their cultural context and cultural space. Hence, new ways of pedagogy are essential to teach the technique and make the students of different backgrounds understand. Apart from the above-said reasons, the exercise was exciting for me because it allowed me to work beyond my inhibitions and to move my body. I would feel shy to randomly move my body in such a way as I am very used to patterned choreography and a certain way of carrying my body. Hence, this perhaps, which was an inspiration from contemporary dance, helped me to break my inhibitions.

After exploring the bodily kinesphere and space around, she started with basic footwork wearing shoes.

Footwork – The rhythm aspect of footwork was very similar to Indian dance and didn't give me any discomfort like Modern dance except for learning the right technique of stamping with the foot. We were asked to bend our knees forward and dance so that the knees wouldn't be hurt. We should lift our legs and hit the floor, which I found was again similar to my primary dance form. The rhythmic patterns and playing with them was interesting and complex. The closest possible art form in my culture that I could associate with was *Kathak*. This firm grounding in rhythm made many *Kathak*, and Flamenco dancers come together for collaborations. As rhythmic knowledge is essential to Kūchipūdi dancers, I found some rhythmic exercises in Flamenco helpful for me to apply to my art form and teach my kids. She also showed us the right way of clapping to make the sound and clapping were used to make the students practice the rhythm. This system, although different, resembled the tala practice in my own culture. How she made us clap and intertwine the rhythm and dance can be taught to beginners of how to learn rhythm.

Attitude - While ballet is all about being composed and graceful, Flamenco has an attitude along with grace. Flamenco has always been the art form of the oppressed. Hence, the dancers dance like warriors where they need to show their sense of power, strength and revolution through their dance. Melinda's graceful attitude while traversing from one point to another in space, her raised chin, sharp look and her powerful footwork was an inspiration to learn the 'performance' elements. Although Flamenco has adjusted and was being taught in an urban setup, it didn't change its core texture, just like how African dance didn't change.

- In the words of Melinda, "A rhythm can be taught either by being verbal or by the sound of the foot." Eg: A pattern with a count of 123 1234 was taught in class to

us by stamping the rhythm with the feet. This also resembled my system of learning rhythmic patterns in dance.

Transformation as a performer:

I did not learn Flamenco long enough to analyze how it changed me as a performer, but I picked lot of pedagogical exercises to teach my students. Following are some exercises.

1. Explore the space around in three planes.

In this exercise, the students were asked to randomly move their body without any inhibitions. According to Melinda, movements again are of two types – expansion of the central region and contraction of the central region. In the expansion, the energy is expanded out and in contraction, energy is drawn into the body. The instructor gives cues to students like “upper plane,” “mid plane,” “expand,” “contract,” “turn around in midplane” and several other permutations and combinations and the students change their course of movement based on the cues given by the instructor spontaneously. This exercise brings awareness to the students about the origin of the movement, and engagement of the body with space around. It feels like drawing an imaginary painting the invisible area around.

2. Rhythmic Exercises

One of the basic rhythmic exercises that Melinda gave us was a dance-off at the center of the classroom surrounded by fellow participants/students. The guitarist or percussionist will play a base time signature of four, and each student should go to the center, perform a sequence of footwork (based on what has been learned till then) and then come back to their position in the circle. Another student goes

to the center and make their own pattern and comes back and this continues. Such rhythmic activity significantly improves the spontaneity and the understanding of the rhythm in the student.

Analytical Report on the uses of cross-cultural training in the primary form (i.e., Kūchipūdi)

Form	Stamina	Strength	Rhythmic awareness	Spatial Awareness	Anatomical Awareness	Overall help to primary form	Creative/Aesthetic awareness
Ballet	3	5	-	4	5	4	4
Modern	2	3	4	5	5	5	5
Pilates	3	5	-	3	5	-	5
Flamenco	4	3	5	-	3	4	3
African	4	3	3	-	-	2	2
Running	5	3	-	-	4	4	-
Yoga	4	4	-	-	5	5	-
Kalari	4	5	3	-	5	5	-

Table 4.1. Table illustrating the benefits of each movement form in different aspects.

Discussion on the overall impact by being the participant in the case studies

Inferences and Revelations

As a participant, I have attended the basic courses of ballet, modern dance, Pilates, African dance, Flamenco, Bharatanatyam at the department of dance, Barnard College. From each dance/ movement form, I have a different take-backs to home. While ballet taught me how to be more specific about the technique and improve pedagogy, Modern dance broke the monotony of my movement and thoughts about space.

On a broader level, experiencing other forms at the primary level brought more awareness to my body or movement. The flow of energy and weight management are better understood. The mental blocks that were created as a result of practicing only one dance form for fourteen years were distorted, which helped to gain more bodily awareness. With a strong foundation and ongoing practice in the primary dance form, cross-training leads to overall fitness. On the pedagogical side of it, it helps to correct the misaligned body postures, multiple techniques to teach the posture, engagement of core muscles, and the like. I have attended several dance classes like Ballet, Flamenco, African Dance, Bharatnatyam, Modern Dance, and Pilates. In the first semester, I participated in the courses in the following order. I started my day with African dance, which I felt like an activity which increased my aerobic capacity. Then I attended ballet, which focused more on being controlled and flexible, after which I went to Modern dance, which gave freedom of expression. After modern, I attended Bharatanatyam, and then I used to end the day with my regular Kūchipūdi practice.

Even after extreme dancing and activity of African, Modern, and Pilates, thigh muscles and arms used to pain in my Bharatanatyam class. I used to practice Kūchipūdi after

Bharatnatyam class, which demanded more stamina and endurance. Then I realized, each style will give you specific muscle memory, and to hone those particular muscles, you should practice that specific form every single day. It is interesting to observe that every dance style has the concept of engaging core muscles, yet the dancing body of each style looks different around the core. What is a correction of the posture in ballet need not be a correction for Kūchipūdi. For example, dance demands a lifted chest, which is not necessary for Kūchipūdi. Yet, every style is scientific and emphasizes on avoiding anatomically incorrect postures like over swaying of the back (which is not allowed either in Kūchipūdi or in ballet).

In this way, each form has each lesson for me as a participant observant. In table 4.2, I provided the information on how each style gave me inspiration in different aspects.

Impact of cross-training on different aspects

SNO.	Form	Impact
1.	Ballet	Technique, Pedagogy
2.	Modern Dance	Technique, Pedagogy, Psychological
3.	African Dance	Energy, Socio-cultural background
4.	Pilates	Physical (balance, corrections, alignment, core engagement)
5.	Flamenco	Pedagogy (rhythmic patterns)
6.	Bharatnatyam	Physical
7.	Biomechanics	Understanding the anatomy of the body

Table 4.2. Table illustrating the inspirations from cross-cultural training

With my experience as a participant observant and as a subject in an aquatic pool experiment, I designed and executed a one-time cross-training experiment. Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the process and the results of my investigation.

5. Speaking in numbers

A Survey and A One-time Experiment to study the impact of cross-training on Kūchipūdi Dancers in Improving Their Overall Fitness

“Teaching is my passion and profession. Though it was told that there used to be lots of warm-up exercises before dance sessions, during our tuition, we never had any. After facing a few issues, I am particular about the warm-ups to my students. I make them understand their body.”²²¹

“Myths need to be undone. All dancers must understand that it is good to borrow or be inspired, but only if due acknowledgment is given. Psyche has to be worked on through the body. Inclusiveness should be inculcated.”²²²

Above are the responses recorded by two very famous *gurus*²²³ of Kūchipūdi Kishore Mosalikanti and Yashoda Thakore, for the question: “Do you think cross-training is necessary? What are the changes do you think are necessary for our dance form in terms of learning and teaching?” cross-training in dance is majorly understood as an aid to improve the dancer’s fitness. Hence, this chapter focuses on the results obtained in a six-week cross-training experiment conducted on post-graduate Kūchipūdi dance students in the department of dance, University of Hyderabad.

Extensive literature review on Indian dance and Kūchipūdi in particular shows that there is not even a single research study which addresses the health issues of a

²²¹ The teacher has a vast experience of teaching and choreographing especially to the dancers who learnt other forms like *Bharatanatyam* and *Odissi* and also to Indian diaspora and non-Indians in USA, UK, Russia, Singapore etc.

²²² Having learnt from senior teachers of the form, she has exposure to multiple forms like Vilasini, Kalavantula forms. She conducted her PhD study broadly on the impact and importance of Yoga on Kūchipūdi dancers.

²²³ Guru is a Sanskrit term which means “the one who takes away the ignorance”. In Indian context, a GURU is more than a teacher, who knows everything about his student (both mind and the body) catering him to his needs accordingly.

Kūchipūdi dancer. For that matter, dancer's health has been the last thing to research in Indian art forms as they claim to have a holistic way of learning. Even though Indian arts are holistic in their basic nature, how many teachers are following an all-embracing pedagogy in training their students today? Since the literature didn't provide any statistics, I sent a one-time questionnaire to all Kūchipūdi dancers across the country and asked them if they had ever cross-training? If they have any warm-up and cool down routine? If yes, are they following their own regime or their teachers' regime? Etc.

Abstract

The basis of any research depends on the need for a body of knowledge in the chosen field of research. Hence, in order to understand the awareness of dancers regarding the injuries, need-specific training, etc., this one-time, general, self-reported questionnaire was sent to Kūchipūdi dancers. One hundred fifteen potential participants submitted their responses to the questionnaire, among which five responses were eliminated due to redundancy (double submission). All the compulsory questions were answered by all the participants. The results were analyzed individually and through cross-tabulation²²⁴ of related questions to gain some insights and conclusions. According to this study, Kūchipūdi dancers are not aware of how to manage their dance practice and injuries, and target-specific training. This conclusion shows that more studies regarding the health and cross-training of a Kūchipūdi dancer are necessary.

²²⁴ Guru is a Sanskrit term which means "the one who takes away the ignorance". In Indian context, a GURU is more than a teacher, who knows everything about his student (both mind and the body) catering him to his needs accordingly.

Methods

Participants

A hundred and fifteen potential participants submitted a specially prepared questionnaire, out of which five participants submitted the questionnaire twice, having forgotten that they already submitted it. Hence, I have excluded four redundant responses leaving a total of 110 participant responses for final analysis. However, I kept the comment section of the redundant participants for analysis as they gave different comments each time.

Study Design and Field Procedures

This was a one-time questionnaire distributed to Kūchipūdi dancers across the country. An online questionnaire was created and sent to select Kūchipūdi dancers across the country and the world via email. I got a total of a hundred and fifteen responses. Since there has to be an inclusion criterion, the experience of learning became the filter. Responses from dancers with a minimum of four years of experience (Kūchipūdi or other form+Kūchipūdi) were taken into consideration for analysis. All the participants are actively engaging in learning and performing Kūchipūdi dance currently, and they found that the questionnaire was easy to interpret and be filled in a reasonable time.

Results

Potential factors associated with cross-cultural training

Age and experience:

While the lowest age on the scale is 11 years, the highest was 47 years. The mean or average of the ages of the participants who submitted responses was 27.2 years. Standard Deviation of the ages is 6.87.

The average experience of learning among the participants is 15.06 years, which is a good enough average to get legitimate information from the dancers regarding their history, which will be useful for the study.

Number of hours of practice (per week):

Assuming professional dancers dance for at least at least 0-5 hours a week, I have given options of '0-5 hours', '5-10 hours', and 'more than 10 hours' as the option. For special cases, I also included the option 'other' with a facility to comment below this option. My data reflects 8 'other' responses commenting about their varied timings and ways of practice. As most of these responses are explaining their situation where they couldn't practice consistently for a fixed number of hours, I have included all of them in 0-5 hours of practice category.

Other Responses

"Every time it changes. mostly I practice during my program or else I go for running and practice my Abhinaya."

"when we have performances."

It is interesting that these are the responses of two very notable dance performers of Kūchipūdi.

How often do you practice in a week?

110 responses

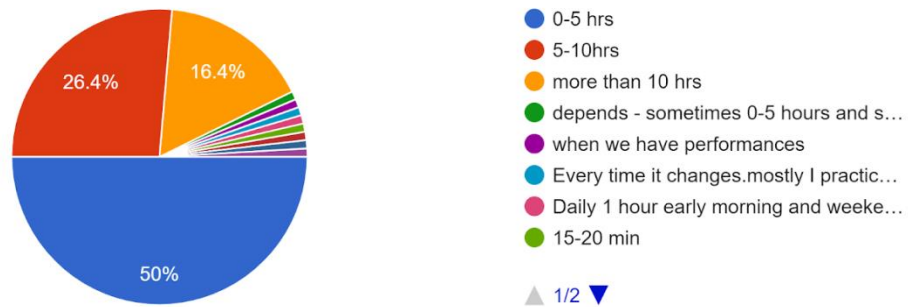


Figure 5.1. Practice hours pie-chart

0-5 hours of practice	5-10 hours of practice	>10 hours of practice
64 responses	31 responses	19 responses
55.65%	26.95%	16.52%

Table 5.1. Table illustrating number of hours of practice of the participants

Profession

A standard scale to define a professional dancer on the basis of practice hours is, however, not set in the field of Indian classical dance. Whereas in other dance forms like moderBalletballet, there are phrases like primary, pre-professional and professional dancers. A general of the word professional dancer in the Indian context is mostly referred to as someone who is on stage for a longer period (who can dance for longer duration and also who performs quite frequently). In this questionnaire, the profession is an open-ended question where the participants were allowed to give their own responses. After reading varied responses like “Biotech professional/dancer,” “model,” “dancer, want to be a government employee,” I have identified 36 responses who claim

themselves as professional dancers. This clearly shows a lack of professional approach in learning and performing Kūchipūdi dance as to most of the dancers; it is a vocation rather than a sole career. This also reflected in the patterns of the dance practice of the participants. As there are no proper standards to determine one's professionalism (other than certification and diploma exams), the training of the dancers has been random, directionless, and individualistic. This emphasizes on standardization of Kūchipūdi dance as a professional dance form.

Participation in non-dancing movement routines

Around 55% of the participants reported that Yogao yoga and 49% reported that they do walking.

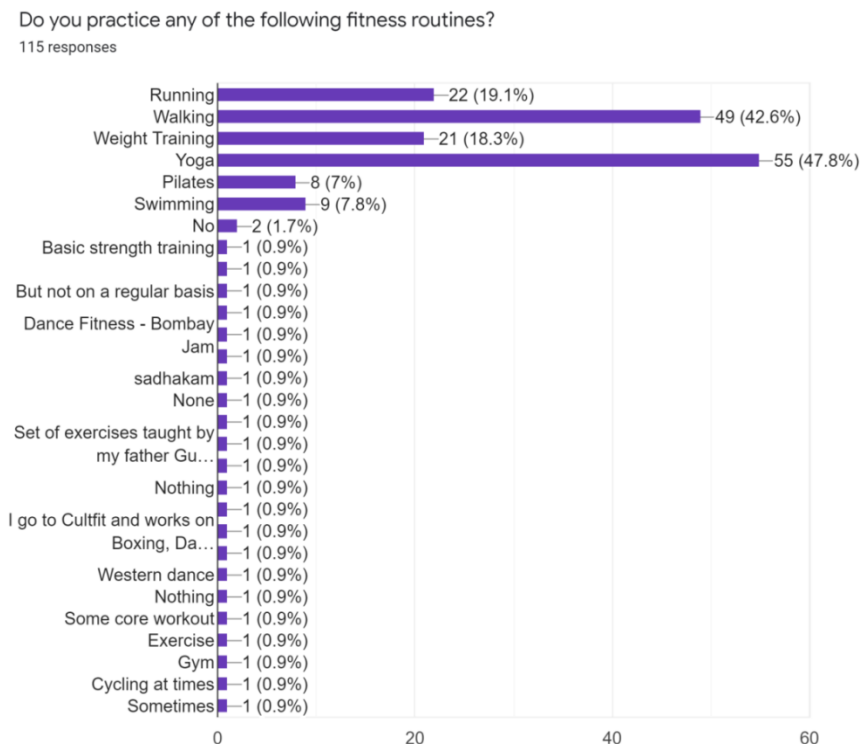


Figure 5.2. Practice routines - Graph

How many hours you practice fitness routines other than dancing?

110 responses

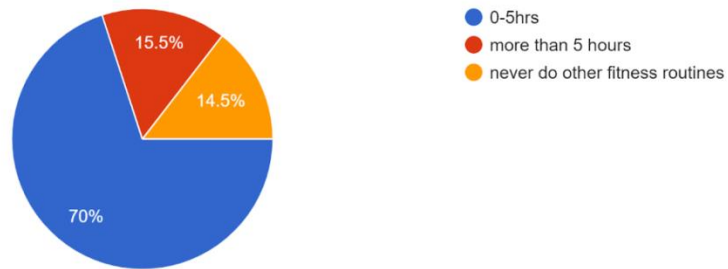


Figure 5.3. Practice hours of other fitness routines – Pie chart

did you train in other dance forms ?

110 responses

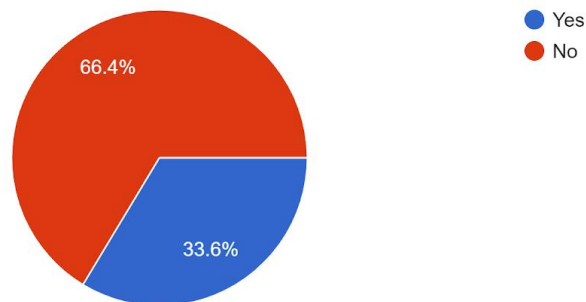


Figure 5.4. Training in other dance forms – Pie chart

70% of the participants reported that they don't do non-dancing activities for more than 5 hours, and 14.5% of the participants reported that they don't do any non-dance workouts. That constitutes to 84.5% of the total responses. This is also a clear sign that not many dancers explore other movement forms to improve their performance in the primary form.

Injury Surveillance

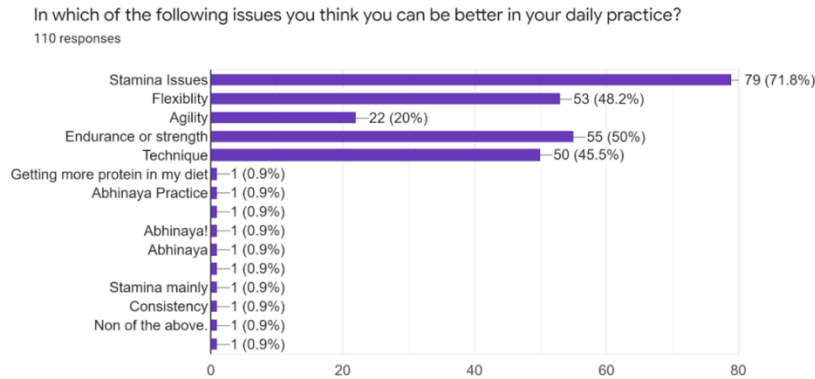


Figure 5.5. Aspects of physiological performance – Bar graph

If yes for the above question, is the routine prescribed by your teacher or you do it by yourself?

110 responses



Figure 5.6. Prescription of warm-up routine – Pie-chart

Over a period of dancing, which parts of the body do you think you feel uncomfortable while dancing/ or you got injured?

110 responses

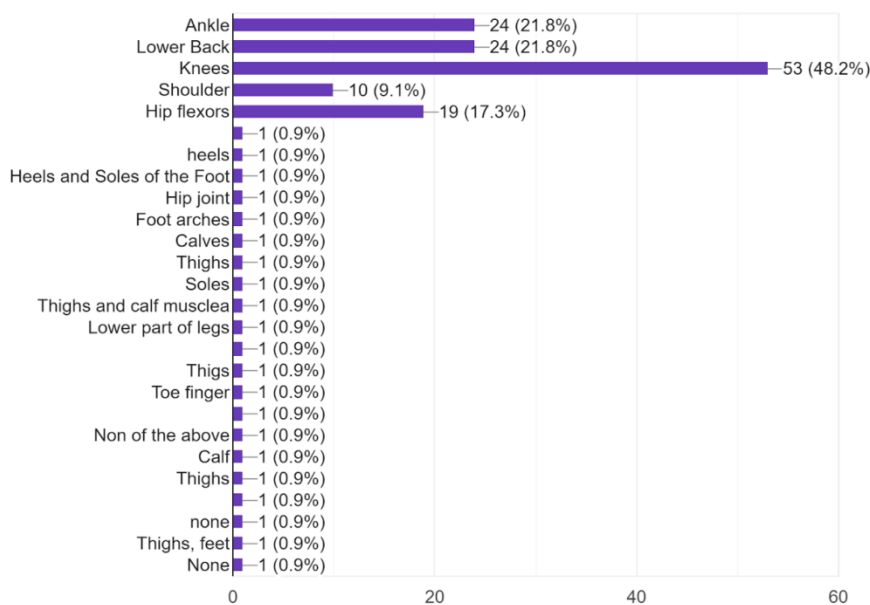


Figure 5.7. Injuries – Bar chart

It is interesting to see that around 79% of the participants reported they have stamina issues, while 55% of them opt Yoga and 49% for walking in the non-dancing activities section. This shows a clear gap about the basic knowledge of dancer's fitness because Yoga and walking are anaerobic activities, and stamina is increased by training in aerobic activities like running, jogging, or activities that increase heart rate. Another simplest way to increase one's stamina is by practicing daily. 50% of the participants don't practice for more than 5 hours a week, which is not even an hour of practice each day. This reflects the lack of organizing in practice in the dancers. Fifty-three percent of the participants reported discomfort in the knees. Keeping the knees healthy requires strengthening and resistance exercises.

Q12 * Q15 Crosstabulation

Count		Q15			Total
		Major	Minor	No	
Q12	No	3	35	35	73
	Yes	3	17	17	37
Total		6	52	52	110

Table 5.2. Cross-Tabulation of Question 12 and Question 15

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.761 ^a	2	.683
Likelihood Ratio	.721	2	.697
N of Valid Cases	110		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.02.

Table 5.3. Chi Square Test for cross-tabulation of Question 12 and Question 15.

Q12: Did you train in other forms?

Q13: If injured, were they major or minor?

This cross-tabulation is to check whether training in other forms reduce the injury rate.

Please see the graph in next page for a better understanding.

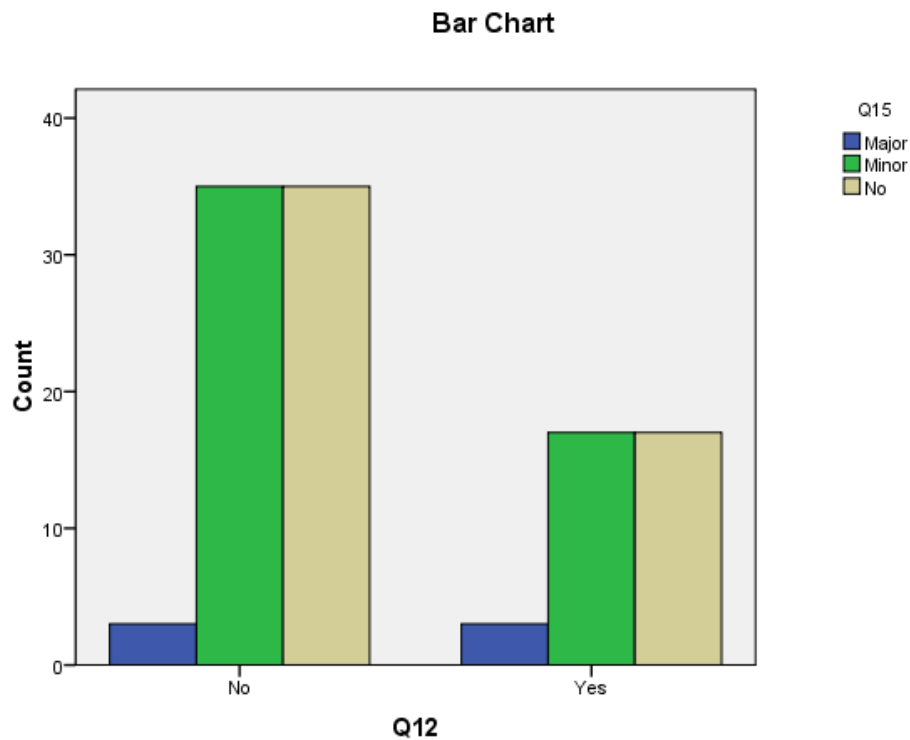


Figure 5.8. Cross-tabulation for Q12 and Q15

Checking the correlation between the age of the participants and injuries occurred, 19 out of 110 participants were of the age 20 and below. 11 out of 19 were reported to be injured, and eight were never injured. In the next age group 21-40, 41 out of 88 participants reported injury, while 47 participants reported no injury. In the last age group, which is 40+ years, 2 out of 3 participants reported injury. This shows that irrespective of the age group, about 50% of the participants got injured due to dance activity in every age group. This data is not sufficient to come to any further conclusions like the role of the dancer's age in finding the probability of the dancer getting injured, leaving a future scope to conduct a study.

A cross-tabulation was done between "no. of hours practiced" and "injury." In this, 13 out of 16 dancers who practiced for 5-10 hours a week reported an injury while 13 out of

18 dancers who practiced for more than hours a week also reported an injury due to their dance activity. 38 out of 63 participants who practiced for less than 5 hours a week also reported an injury due to their dance activity. This again emphasizes that more than 50% of the participants reported an injury in every category. Irrespective of age and duration of practice, more than 50% of the participants are reporting injuries (most of them are minor) due to their dance activity. With proper awareness and training, these minor injuries can be prevented among the participants.

Age * Q14 Crosstabulation

Count		Q14		Total
		No	Yes	
Age	11	1	0	1
	15	0	2	2
	17	2	1	3
	18	2	1	3
	19	0	2	2
	20	3	5	8
	21	5	3	8
	22	2	4	6
	23	5	0	5
	24	4	2	6
	25	3	2	5
	26	1	3	4

27	1	1	2
28	7	0	7
29	2	6	8
30	3	3	6
31	1	3	4
32	3	3	6
33	2	5	7
34	1	1	2
35	1	0	1
36	2	1	3
37	1	1	2
38	1	2	3
39	2	1	3
45	1	1	2
47	1	0	1
Total	57	53	110

Table 5.4. Cross-tabulation for Age and Question 14.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.378 ^a	26	.340
Likelihood Ratio	35.979	26	.092
N of Valid Cases	110		

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.378 ^a	26	.340
Likelihood Ratio	35.979	26	.092

a. 54 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

Table 5.5. Chi square test for cross-tabulation of Age and Question

14

Bar Chart

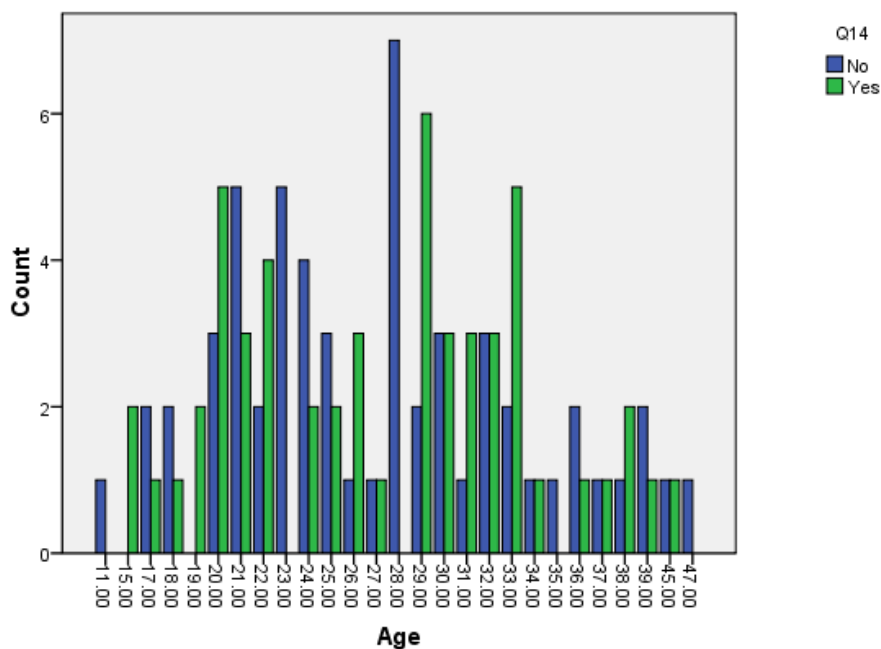


Figure 5.9. Cross-tabulation for age and Q14 – Bar graph

Q7 * Q14 Crosstabulation (Q7:How often do you practice? Q14: Have you ever been injured)

Count		Q14	Total
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		No	Yes	
Q7	0-5 hrs	33	22	55
	1 hour	1	0	1
	15-20 min	0	1	1
	5-10hrs	16	13	29
	Daily 1 hour early morning and weekends 3 hrs per day	0	1	1
	Due to my work life, i am unable balance it which is the most painful thing for me, right now.	1	0	1
	Every time it changes.mostly I practice during my program or else I go for running and practice my	1	0	1
	Not really	0	1	1
	depends - sometimes 0-5 hours and sometimes 5-10 hours	0	1	1
	more than 10 hrs	5	13	18
	when we have performances	0	1	1
Total		57	53	110

Table 5.6. Cross-tabulation for Questions 7 and 14

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.939 ^a	10	.176
Likelihood Ratio	17.154	10	.071
N of Valid Cases	110		

a. 16 cells (72.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

Table 5.7. Chi-square test performed for Questions 7 and 14

Bar Chart

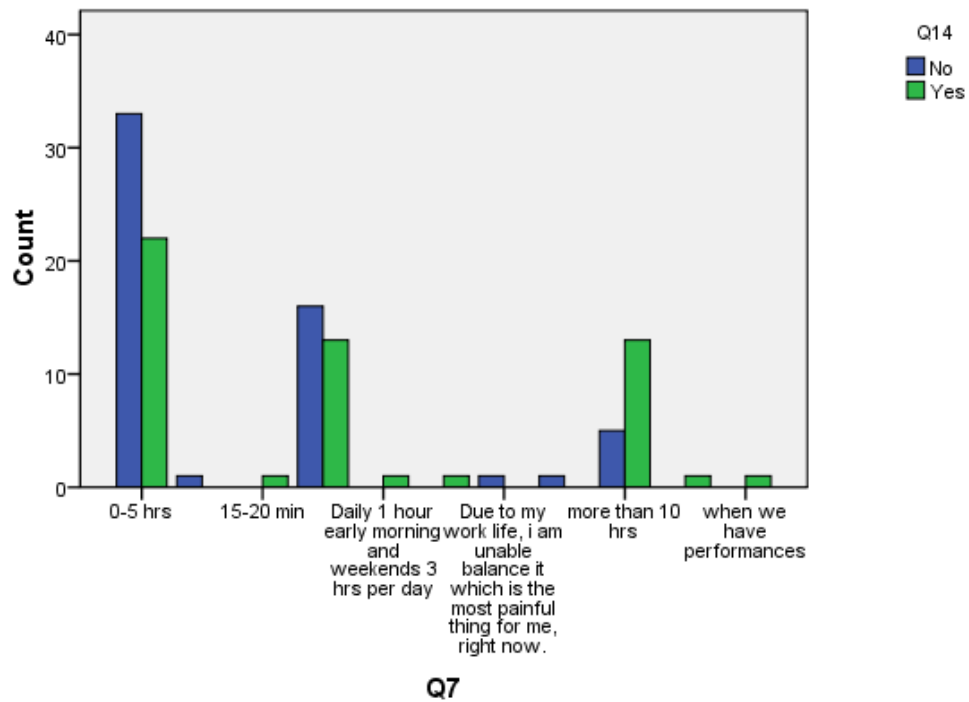


Figure 5.10. Cross-tabulation of Q7 and Q14 – Bar graph

Q7 * Q15 Crosstabulation

Count		Q15			Total
		Major	Minor	No	
Q7	0-5 hrs	3	23	29	55
	1 hour	0	0	1	1
	15-20 min	0	1	0	1
	5-10hrs	2	12	15	29
	Daily 1 hour early morning and weekends 3 hrs per day	0	1	0	1
	Due to my work life, i am unable balance it which is the most painful thing for me, right now.	0	0	1	1
	Every time it changes.mostly I practice during my program or else I go for running and practice my	0	0	1	1
	Not really	0	1	0	1
	depends - sometimes 0-5 hours and sometimes 5-10 hours	0	1	0	1
	more than 10 hrs	1	12	5	18
	when we have performances	0	1	0	1
Total		6	52	52	110

Table 5.8. Cross-tabulation for Questions 7 and 15 (To check the correlation between no. of hours of practice and injury rate)
(Q7:How often do you practice? Q15:If you are injured, was it minor or major?)

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.940 ^a	20	.880
Likelihood Ratio	16.094	20	.711
N of Valid Cases	110		

a. 27 cells (81.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 5.9. Chi square test for questions 7 and 15

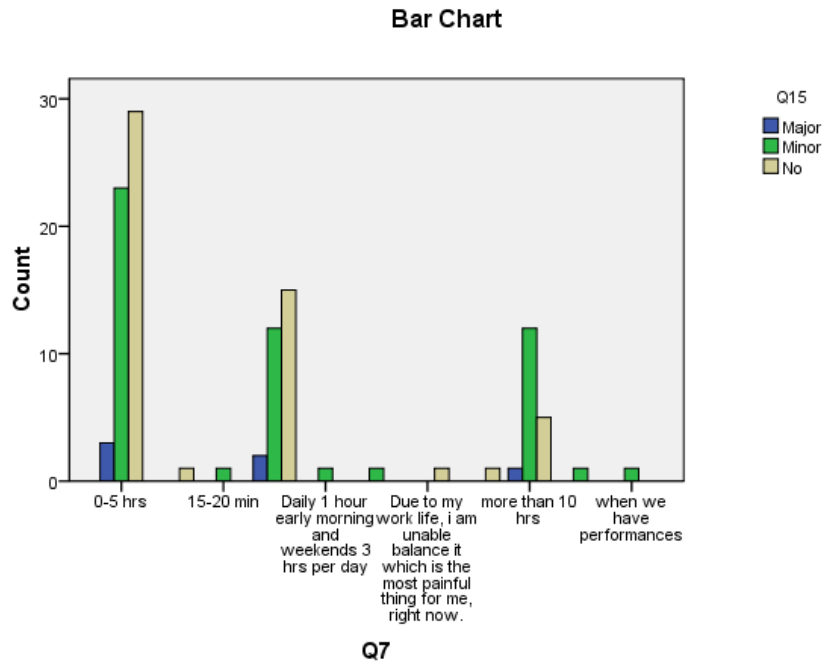


Figure 5.11. Cross-tabulation of Q7 and Q15 – Bar graph

Limitations

It was initially designed to inquire only to understand the lacuna in the training system of Kūchipūdi dancers in terms of physical parameters such as Flexibility, Strength, Stamina, and Injury Management. Hence, this questionnaire does not inquire about the expansion of the creative sensibilities due to cross-cultural training or taking pedagogical inputs from other movement forms. Flexibility and strength are the next reported issues by the participants for which clearly a specialized training system is necessary.

Conclusion

Understanding the lacuna and awareness among the dancers is the first step for improvement. This questionnaire helped in understanding the practice patterns of the dancers, their awareness and opinions on cross-cultural training in dance. Everyone opined that cross-cultural training helps, but there is no one standardized system for them to train in. Hence, this questionnaire acts as a primer for my research and also for many studies to come in the future on cross-cultural training in dance.

Part II

Introduction

Several personal narratives and the previous survey conducted among Kūchipūdi dancers suggest that Kūchipūdi dancers are not well equipped in training their bodies to have a fit and injury-free dancing body. Having experienced different movement forms like Ballet, Modern Dance, Flamenco, Pilates, Kalari, and Fitness training as a participant observant and having been part (as one of the subjects) of an aquatic pilot study experiment for cross-training dancers, and having conducted a survey on the understanding and awareness regarding cross-training among Kūchipūdi dancers, I have designed a one-time experiment on cross-training Kūchipūdi dancers to see if their performance (in terms of agility, strength, and stamina) improves with cross-movement training. Based on my experience as a dancer, participant observant, and as a subject of an experiment, I designed this one-time experiment with the help of a fitness expert. The exercises were a heterogeneous group that covered agility, stamina, and muscle endurance along with alignment and flexibility. The movement forms that were mainly involved were Pilates, fitness training, HIIT, and Ballet (just basics). The end results proved that these exercises greatly helped the dancers in improving their overall fitness.

Material and Methods

Subjects

Ten students who were in their first semester of MPA Kūchipūdi dance from the department of dance, (25 ± 4 years; 50 ± 10 kg; 155 ± 10 cm) the University of Hyderabad were considered as subjects for the experimental group. An inclusion criterion for the dancers was defined as follows: 1. Regularly attended the classes conducted by the

department of dance. 2. Danced for at least five years 3. Practiced for at least 5 hours, three times a week. A consent form was signed by the subjects, which also stated the participants could drop whenever they want to. The physical readiness of the participants was evaluated based on the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q)²²⁵ filled by them(Check Appendix).

Designs and Procedures

Pretest and posttest measurements were taken for stamina, agility, flexibility, functional performance, core stability, and core strength. Physical tests like passive leg raise test, and hip abduction test were conducted to check if there are any biomechanical anomalies. After the pretest, all the subjects were trained in a variety of exercises, which covered flexibility, strength, stamina, and agility for thrice a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for six weeks. A major portion of the class time was dedicated to teaching core strengthening exercises through Pilates. All the exercises were designed and executed with the help of a fitness instructor. Apart from pretest-posttest results, all the participants were asked to answer a self-reported questionnaire containing questions like:

1. Do you have new dance-related injuries or complaints?
2. Discomfort rating scale of the foot, ankle, lower back, shoulder arm, upper back, neck, etc.
3. Do you think the experiment is beneficial to you?

All the group members had similar dance practice hours, and all of them practiced the same items or basics in their dance class. They have reported their extra dancing hours in the self-reported questionnaires given to them. Out of ten, three subjects dropped the experiment, one in the first week, and two in the second week due to their personal

²²⁵ Attached to the appendix

reasons. Another subject who was suffering from cervical spondylitis was not regular to classes but completed the experiment and tests.

Tests

Physical Performance

Passive Straight Leg Raise

The dancer lies supine on the table with knees extended and pelvis in a neutral position. The examiner passively raises one leg keeping the knee fully extended with the foot relaxed. When the anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) of the ipsilateral leg begins to move posteriorly and/or the dancer reports pain, the test is stopped, and the angle of hip flexion is measured. Measurement is performed with a goniometer” (Kendall F) (Magee).

Thomas Test

The dancer is placed supine on the table and holds one knee to the chest and allows the contralateral thigh to extend to lie flat. The pelvis remains neutral throughout the test. If the contralateral side is unable to lie flat to the table (i.e., there is a gap between the thigh and the table), this will be considered a positive test. The test will be done on both sides (Aalto TJ).

Double leg lower

Dancer lies supine with arms crossed over chest and places both legs in the air with hips flexed at 90 degrees and knees fully extended. The dancer slowly lowers the legs while maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt so that there is full contact of the lumbar spine against the table. When the pelvis moves forward, or the lumbar spine loses contact with the table, the test is stopped. The test is graded as a 5/5 if legs are able to be lowered to table level, 4/5 if legs are able to be lowered to 30 degrees with the table, 3/5 if legs are

lowered to 60 degrees with the table, 2/5 if legs are lowered to 65 degrees or greater with the table (Kendall F).



Figure 5.12. Double Leg Power Test - 1



Figure 5.13. Double Leg Power Test - 2

Hip Abduction Strength

Hip abduction will be tested similar to the description by (Bohannon) with the dancer lying supine (to eliminate the effect of gravity), knee extended, and hip in neutral alignment. The tester will place the dynamometer immediately proximal to the lateral malleolus while another person stabilizes the dancer's pelvis by applying downward

pressure at the ipsilateral pelvis and contralateral thigh. The dancer will be instructed to apply maximum force in abduction against the device. Three trials will be done.

Functional Performance

For each of the following tests, the dancer will be shown the sequence first but will not be allowed to practice prior to assessment.

Developmental Sequence

The dancer will start seated on their heels and progress to tall kneeling. Then the dancer will weight shift into a half kneel and then progress to weight acceptance into standing on one leg. The arms will remain crossed across the chest throughout the movement sequence. This is repeated once on each side (right steps up onto the right leg; left steps up onto the left leg). A “pass” is defined as the ability to perform this maneuver with appropriate weight shift, limb dissociation, and full-body neutral alignment (Liederbach).

10-Second Balance Error Scoring System (Modified BESS)

The dancer is asked to balance with eyes closed in a single-leg stance. Each stance is held for 10 seconds. Hands are placed on the iliac crests. The dancer is timed for 10 seconds and observed if the dancer lifts hands off the iliac crest, opens eyes, steps/stumbles/falls, moves hips into more than 30 degrees of abduction, lifts forefoot or heel, remains out of test position for more than 1 second. This is repeated once on each leg. A “pass” is defined as the ability to perform this maneuver without any of the aforementioned deviations (Hunt TN) (Liederbach M).



Figure 5.14. 10-Second Balance Error Test

Airplane Test

The dancer is asked to perform an “airplane” position, which is a familiar position to most dancers and is often performed as part of a modern or contemporary dance class. This position requires the dancer to stand on one leg with the second leg extended to the back, and the trunk pitched forward, making a horizontal line with the body parallel to the ground and keeping the pelvis square to the ground. The arms are held horizontal to the side of the body. The dancer then performs five *pliés* (bending of the knee) and adducts the arms to bring the fingertips as close to the ground as possible. This is repeated once on each leg. A “pass” is defined as the ability to perform this maneuver at least four out of the five repetitions without a pelvic drop, hip internal rotation, hip adduction, knee valgus, or foot pronation. (Richardson M).



Figure 5.15. Airplane Test - 1



Figure 5.16. Airplane Test -2

Single-Leg Sauté Test

The dancer will be asked to perform 16 single-leg sauté jumps in a parallel position. This is a common jumped in dance technique, and all dance test subjects will have had prior training in this maneuver. This involves standing on one leg, lifting the opposite foot next to the standing ankle and jumping sixteen times. The number of “pass” and “fail” jumps will be recorded for each side out of the 16 attempts. A “pass” is defined as the ability to perform all 16 jumps while maintaining neutral pelvis position, upright and stable trunk posture, neutral lower extremity position without evidence of knee valgus, neutral foot alignment while landing without pronation, proper toe-heel landing technique, not “bucking” with the upper body, and fully extending knee with fully plantarflexed (“pointed”) foot while in the air. The arms will remain crossed across the chest (Liederbach M).

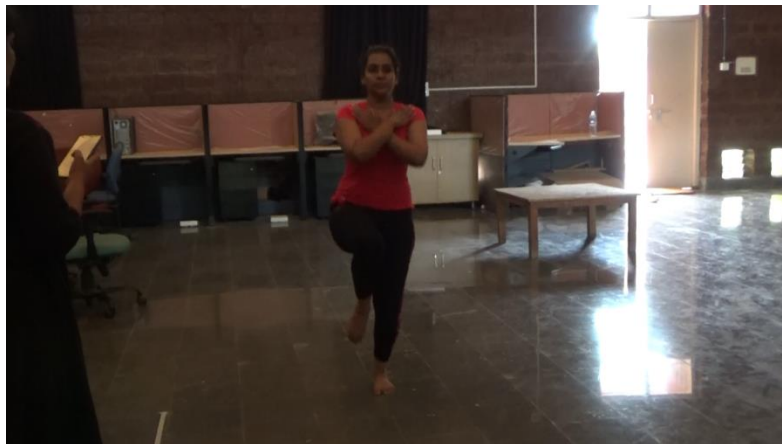


Figure 5.17. Single Leg *Sauté* Test

Physiological Performance

YMCA 3-minute Step Test

Dancers will be asked to step up and down from a platform at a rate of 24 steps per minute for 3 minutes. Dancers will then immediately sit down and rest, and heart rate is measured one minute later (ACSM, 2001).

Standing Broad Jump Test

After a warm-up, the dancer will start with feet on a flat surface at a self-selected comfortable distance apart. The dancer will jump as far as possible. Three jumps will be performed, separated by 20-30 seconds, and the farthest jump will be used in data analysis. They will be allowed to swing their arms for momentum (Ortega FB) (Mistiaen).

Agility T-Test

The T-test is a test of agility for athletes and includes forward lateral and backward running. A set of four cones are placed in the shape of T, as illustrated in the diagram. The subject starts at cone A. On the command of the timer, the subject sprints to cone B, touches the base of the cone with the right hand. Then they turn left and shuffles sideways to cone C and also touches its base, this time with their left hand. They then shuffle back to cone B touching with the left hand and run back to cone A, and the stopwatch is stopped as they pass cone A. The trial will not be counted if the subject crosses one foot in front of the other while shuffling, fails to touch the base of the cones, or fails to face forward throughout the test. The best of the three trials near to 0.1 seconds is taken as the score (PAULO KAINOA, 2000).

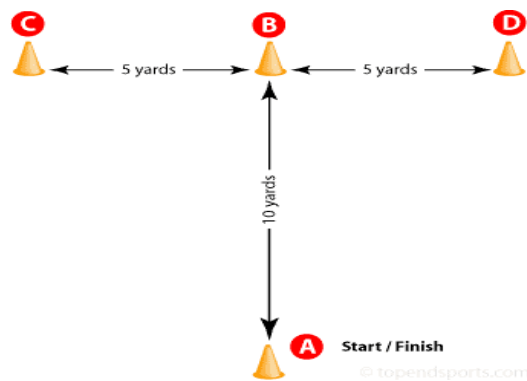


Figure 5.18. T-Test Cone Arrangement

Topendsports. “*Test Setup*”. Website. <https://www.topendsports.com/testing/tests/t-test.htm>

Sit and Reach Test

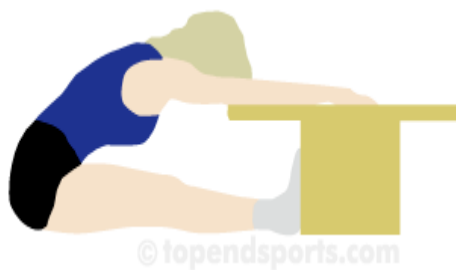


Figure 5.19. Sit and Reach Test -1

Topendsports. “*Sit and Reach Test*”. Website.

<https://www.topendsports.com/testing/norms/sit-and-reach.htm>



Figure 5.20. Sit and Reach Test -2

“This test involves sitting on the floor with legs stretched out straight ahead. Shoes should be removed. The soles of the feet are placed flat against the box. Both knees should be locked and pressed flat to the floor - the tester may assist by holding them down. With the palms facing downwards, and the hands-on top of each other or side by side, the subject reaches forward along the measuring line as far as possible. Ensure that the hands remain at the same level, not one reaching further forward than the other. After some practice reaches, the subject reaches out and holds that position for at one-two seconds while the distance is recorded. Make sure there are no jerky movements. The score is recorded to the nearest centimeter or a half-inch as the distance reached by the hand” (Wells, K F Dillon, 1952).

Training program

Everyday training consisted of exercises for warm-up, stamina and agility, flexibility and core strength (Pilates), muscle endurance and strength, cool down, and breathing routine in the same order. Depending on the time and student’s willingness, the duration of each section was altered.

Below is the basic class structure followed to train the subjects:

Aspects covered in training the participants: (Flexibility *implied*)

1. Stamina + Agility – Sprints, running, jumping
2. Muscular Endurance – lunges etc.
3. Core Strengthening + Alignment - Pilates
4. Injury Management – Knee, Ankle strengthening exercises (For lower Pilatesilates is covered) – These have been just demonstrated but couldn't be performed in class due to time constraints.

Class Duration – 60 minutes (Grace time 10minutes)

Dynamic Warm-up Routine– 10minutes – Each exercise 10 to 15 sets on each side

1. Swinging the legs
2. hurdles
3. Squats (hold with hands) sit, bend and stand (dynamic squat stretch)
4. Knee drops from squats
5. Wringing out the towel
6. Shrink in and out (shoulders and upper body)
7. plank
8. Side to side lunge with reach (3 variations)
9. Standing calf and hamstring stretch (crescent to the hamstring, half kneeling hamstring)
10. Hamstring and thoracic rotation
11. Baby pose with reaches
12. Pigeon pose with circles

13. IT Band stretch
14. Walking and quad stretch
15. Chest stretch
16. Half sit and full sit three speeds

Agility + Stamina : - 10 minutes

1. Sprint running
2. Fall and run
3. Plyometric box jump drills
4. Jumps – Traditional - Kūchipūdi
5. Running
6. Free Jumping

Strength+ Alignment+Balance: - 20-30 minutes

1. Basic Mat Pilates

Muscle Endurance: 15 minutes

1. Plank
2. Lunges
3. Squats
4. Half sit
5. Full sit
6. Sit-ups – Gunjeelu
7. Traditional side squats
8. Torso rounds

Data Analysis

History of the dancers:

Before discussing the results, it is important to discuss the background of the dancers first. Three of the subjects were trained in Kerala Kalamandalam in more than one art form before they joined post-graduation at the University of Hyderabad. All of them, since childhood, were trained in Yoga, *Kathakali* exercises, Mohiniattam, and Kūchipūdi. Their diet in their formative years included Kanji, boiled rice, steamed vegetables, coconut oil. These three can be considered as the strongest subjects in the group. Out of these three, one subject (Subject 3) stopped pursuing from Kalamandalam at the age of 17 and joined another Kūchipūdi class, where she was also taught Yoga. Subject 3 and Subject 4 went to the same dance class, and they showed effortless jumping skills and cardiovascular endurance than the rest of them, while subject one and subject two from Kalamandalam showed better strength and balance than the rest of the class. Surprisingly, these two subjects were not good at their agility and jumping skills compared to subject three and subject four. Subject five, although learned only Kūchipūdi since her childhood, was exposed to several forms like modern, fitness training in the gym, etc. She suffered from cervical spondylitis due to the wrong execution of a headstand (during her childhood) and also was also observed as having lumbar lordosis. Her hip flexors were tight, which resulted in extra pressure on the lower back while turning out and pressure on knees while sitting in *muramandi* and getting up. But this subject was very flexible. Subject six also learned only Kūchipūdi, and has never practiced any warm-up or strengthening exercises. This subject has the least fitness in the group. Technique and alignment of the subject are very good, but she lacked core

strength and muscle strength. Subject seven also learned only Kūchipūdi. She never had any warm-up routine. She lacked core strength, muscle strength, and stamina. This basic analysis of dancers' background itself proves that dancers with training in more than one movement form are fitter than dancers who have been exposed to just one form. Analyzing the dancers' ability in aesthetics and their performance according to the specificity of their primary form is a different research altogether and is not considered in this study.

Analysis of self-reported questionnaires

Based on self-reported questionnaires²²⁶, 88.9% of the participants could feel an increase in their stamina while everyone (100%) could feel the increase in their strength and flexibility. Nobody was injured while training except subject five who already had an injury history. 33.3% of the participants felt worse while dancing on the days without cross-training, while the rest of them couldn't find any difference. While one of the subjects liked cardio, which included sprints and burpees, rest of them liked the entire regime. All of them felt that their mood got better after six weeks, and 88.9% of them are willing to continue cross-training.

Results

Functional Performance Results

Four tests (Developmental Sequence, 10-second balance error scoring, airplane test single-leg sauté test) were conducted to evaluate the functional performance of the students.

²²⁶ Responses attached to the appendix

Developmental Sequence

All the subjects passed this test before and after the experiment. But an improvement in the quality of performing this test was observed after the experiment. Few participants who were shaky and unstable on Week 1 became significantly stable after Week 6.

Comments noted down in the report:

Subject 6: Quality of the exercise improved after the experiment.

Subject 7: On Week 1, performance with the right leg was unstable. On Week 6, performance with both the legs was stable.

Subject 3: Extremely balanced in Week 6.

Subject 2: Excellent and effortless in Week 6.

10-second balance error scoring

Three subjects failed this test before the experiment, while all the subjects passed the test after the experiment.

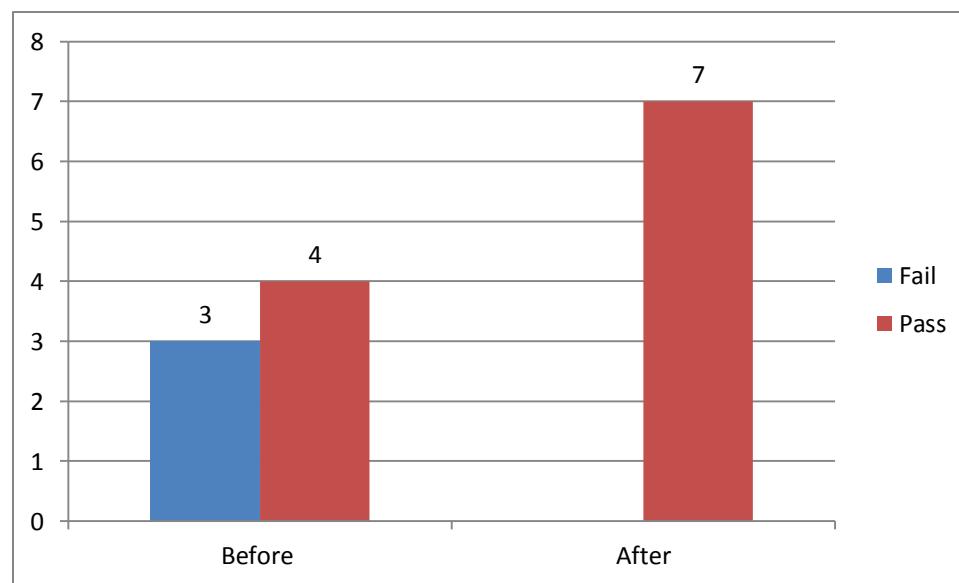


Figure 5.21. 10-second balance error scoring test results – Bar graph

Airplane Test

Participants felt that this test is the toughest of all the functional tests performed. While three subjects failed this test before the experiment, all the subjects passed the test after the experiment. Those participants who passed the test on Week 1 showed improvement in Week 6.

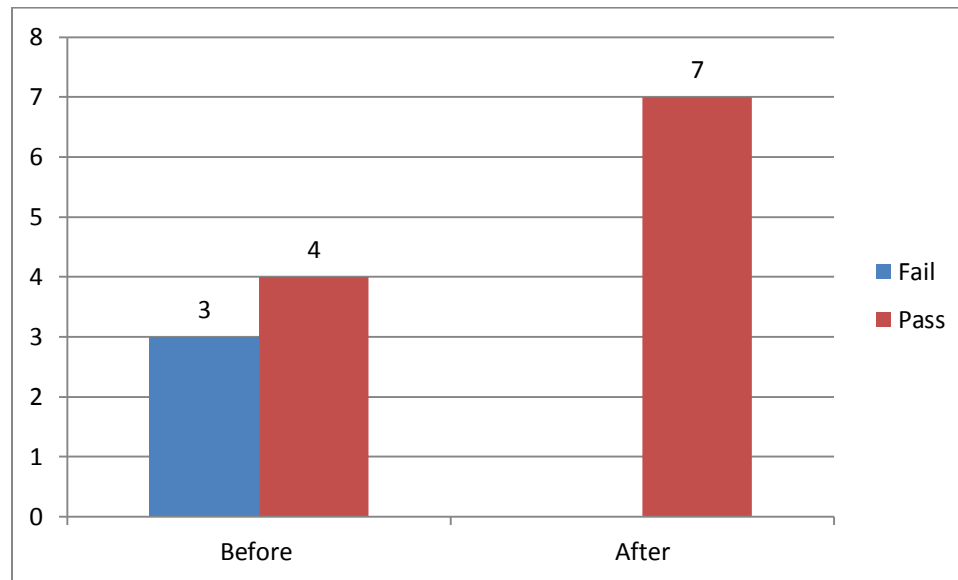


Figure 5.22. Air plane test results – Bar graph

Single-leg *Sauté* Test

One participant failed the test on week one while all the participants passed the test on week

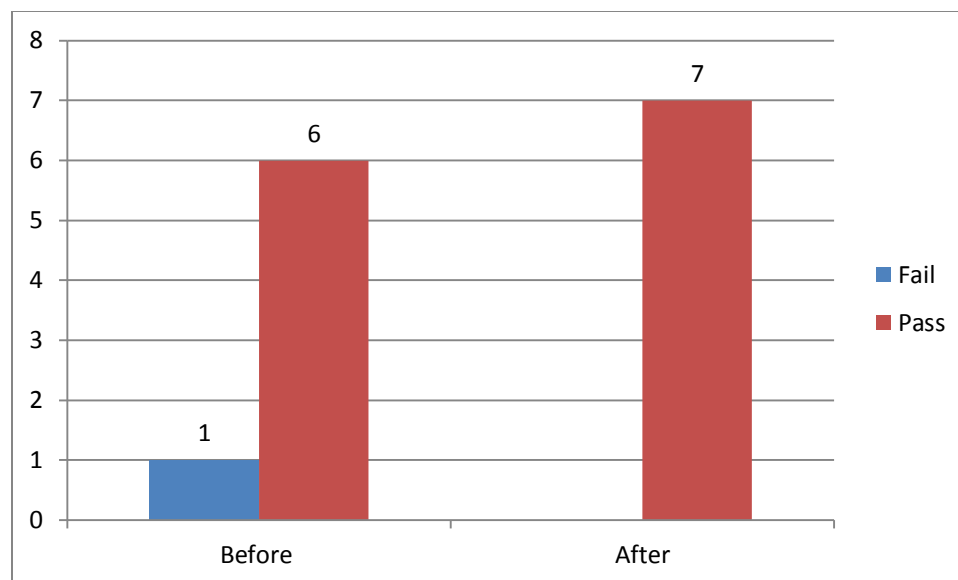


Figure 5.23. Single leg sauté test results – Bar graph

Physiological Performance Results

YMCA 3-minute step test

This test analyzes the cardio-vascular endurance of the participants. All the participants improved their cardio-vascular capacity after Week 6 of training. While the average minimum heart rate before the step test on Week 1 was 85.57, after the step test, it was 120. On Week 6, 89.85 was the average minimum heart rate before the step test, while 114 was the average heart rate after the step test. The difference in mean maximum heart rates on Week 1 and Week 6 was reduced, which is the desired outcome of a step test. Along with an overall improvement among the participants, the individual results were also significantly improved. Subject 6, having recorded the highest heart rate of all (before: 101, after: 150) on Week 1, improved significantly recorded a heart rate of 84 before the test and 134 after the test on Week 6.

YMCA 3-minute step test: Heart Rate

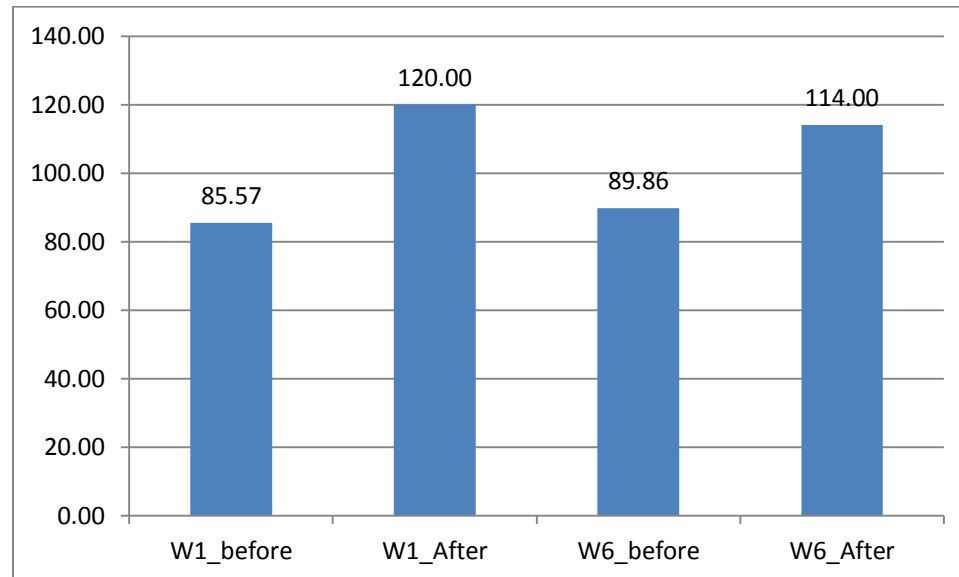


Figure 5.24. YMCA 3-minute step test results – Bar graph

When we analyze the data in a graphical representation, we clearly see an optimistic difference in the heart rates which prove that the experiment improved the cardiovascular endurance of the participants. However, statistically speaking, the results are not significant.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Before_Week1	7	85.5714	13.45185	70.00	102.00
Before_Week6	7	89.8571	19.81101	62.00	119.00

Table 5.10. Mean and Standard Deviation of the heart rates before step test for Week1 and Week 6

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Before_Week6 -	Negative Ranks	4 ^a	3.25	13.00
Before_Week1	Positive Ranks	3 ^b	5.00	15.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	7		

a. Before_Week6 < Before_Week1

b. Before_Week6 > Before_Week1

c. Before_Week6 = Before_Week1

Table 5.11. Wilcoxon Test Results for YMCA Step Test for Week 1 and Week 6 (for heart rates before the test)

Test Statistics ^b	
	Before_Week6 - Before_Week1
Z	-.169 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.866

a. Based on negative ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table 5.12. Table determining the p-value for YMCA Step test comparing heart rates before the step test for Week 1 and Week 6

There is no significant difference in the heart rate before the step test from Week 1 to Week 6.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
After_Week1	7	120.0000	29.07462	75.00	150.00
After_Week6	7	114.0000	24.02082	69.00	138.00

Table 5.13. Mean and Standard Deviation of the heart rates after step test for Week1 and Week 6

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
After_Week6 - After_Week1	Negative Ranks	5 ^a	3.40	17.00
	Positive Ranks	2 ^b	5.50	11.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	7		

a. After_Week6 < After_Week1

b. After_Week6 > After_Week1

c. After_Week6 = After_Week1

Table 5.14. Wilcoxon Test Results for YMCA Step Test for Week 1 and Week 6 (for heart rates after the test)

Test Statistics ^b	
	After_Week6 - After_Week1
Z	-.507 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.612

a. Based on positive ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table 5.15. Table determining the p-value for YMCA Step test comparing heart rates after the step test for Week 1 and Week 6

The result $p=0.612 > 0.05$ shows that the result is not statistically significant.

Sit and Reach Test

Sit and reach test was conducted to assess the flexibility of the participants. The participants did not show any significant difference in this test before and after the

experiment. Two or three subjects only improved by 1 or 2 centimeters which is not significant.

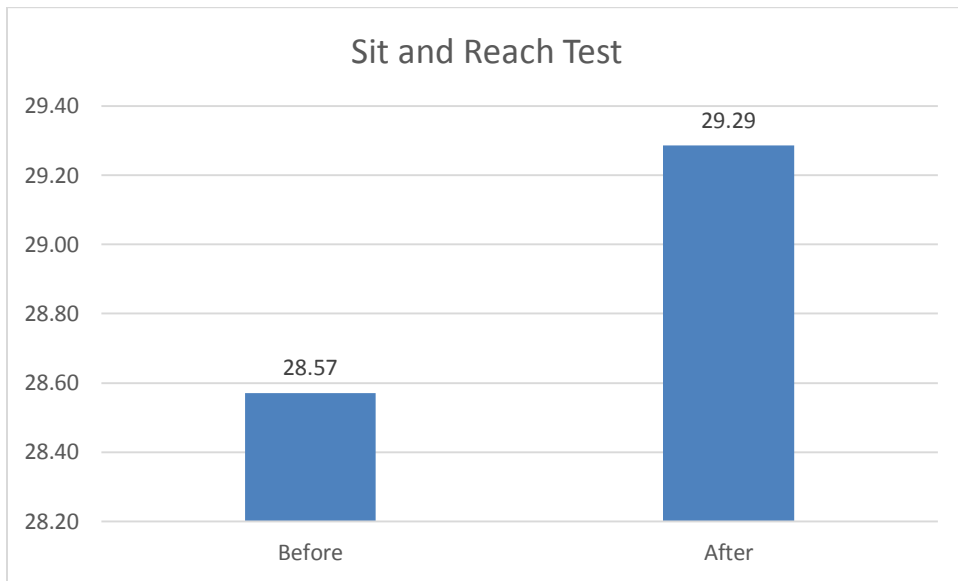


Figure 5.25. Sit and Reach test results – Bar graph

Standing Broad Jump Test

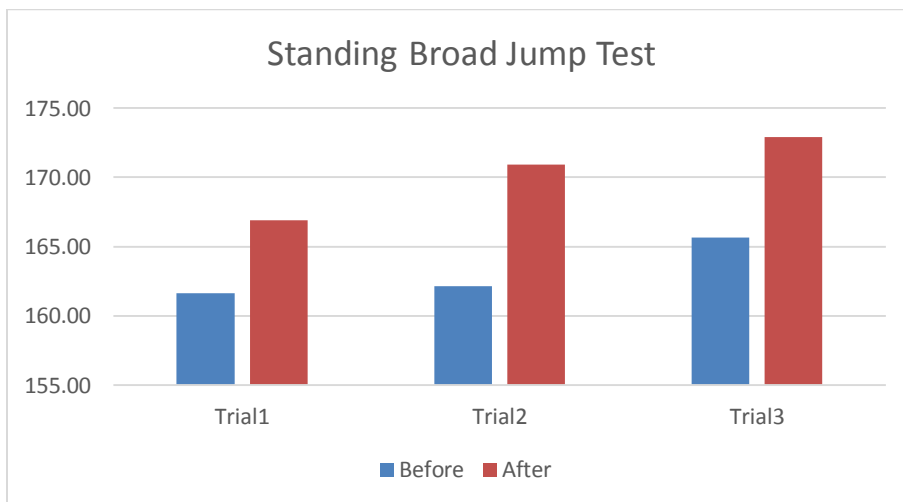


Figure 5.26. Standing Broad Jump Test Results – Bar Graph

Average of Three Trail :-Standing Broad Jump Test

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Before	7	163.1371	22.25589	133.67	189.23
After	7	170.2371	21.40505	138.84	200.66

Table 5.16. Mean and Standard Deviation of the averages of the trial results of Standing Broad Jump Test

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
After - Before	Negative Ranks	2 ^a	2.50	5.00
	Positive Ranks	5 ^b	4.60	23.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	7		

a. After < Before

b. After > Before

c. After = Before

Table 5.17. Wilcoxon Test for Standing Broad Jump Test

Test Statistics ^b	
	After - Before
Z	-1.521 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.128

a. Based on negative ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table 5.18. Table with p-value for Standing Broad Jump Test

Result: Although the graph shows a significant difference, due to low sample size, the test just fell short of significant according to statistics as $p=0.12 > 0.05$.

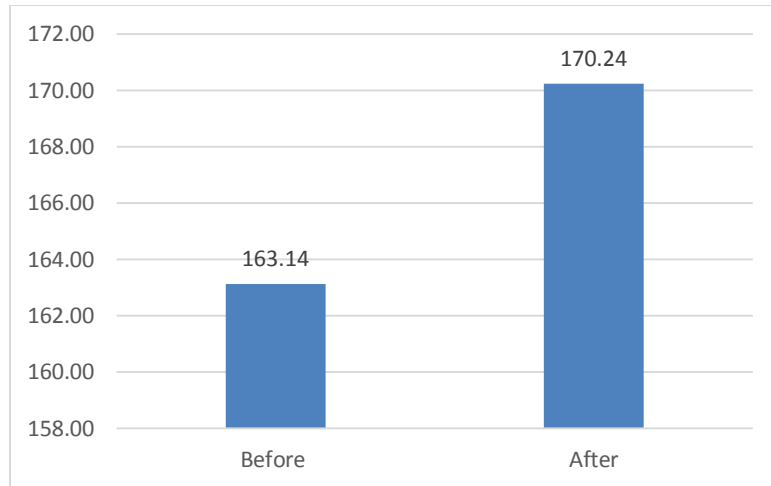


Figure 5.27. Graph showcasing the average of the trails for Standing Broad Jump Test for Week 1 and Week 6.

T-Test

T-test signifies the agility of the participants. All the participants improved in the performance of agility before and after the experiment. While the mean averages of the participants for trial 1, trial 2, trial 3 are 14.44, 15.14, 14.11 (in seconds) on Week 1, the averages are 12.59, 12.55, 12.77 (in seconds). A decrease in the time taken by the participants to finish the T-test signifies the improvement in the agility and speed of the participants.

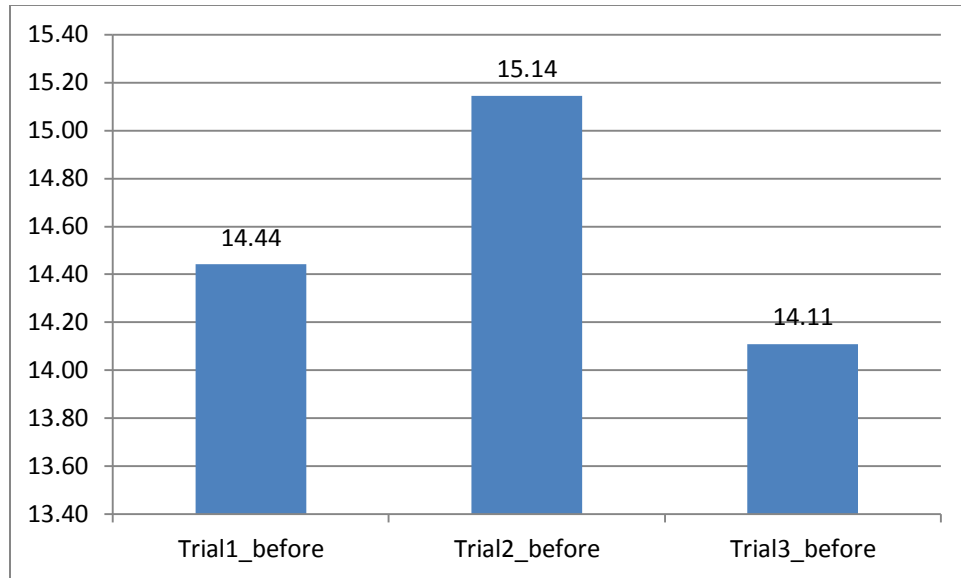


Figure 5.28. T-test results-1

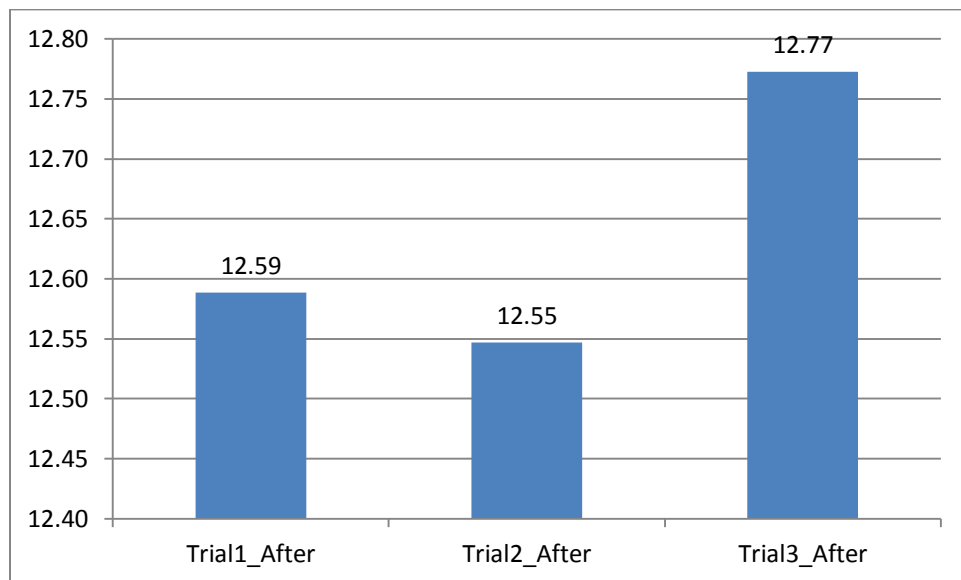


Figure 5.29. T-test results -2

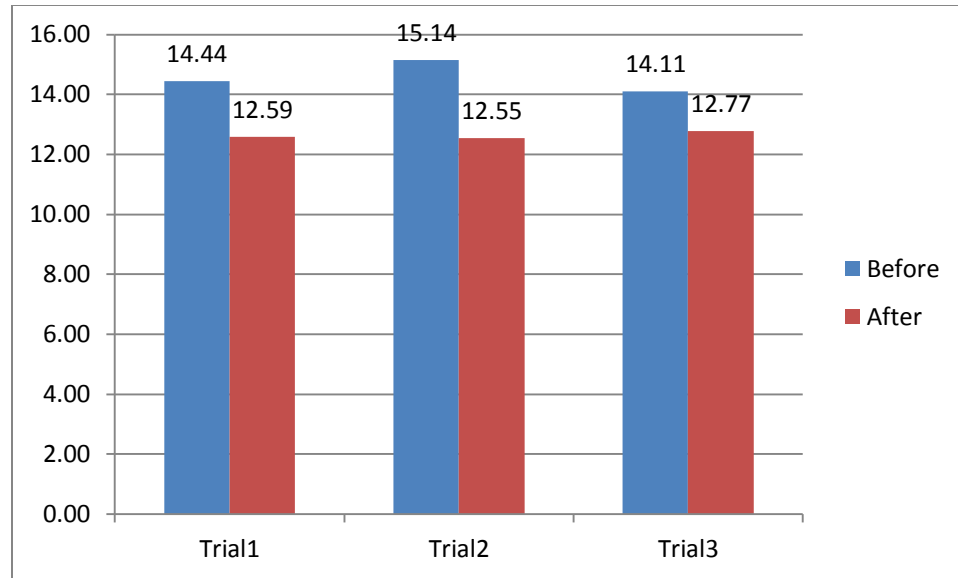


Figure 5.30. T-test results -3

Limitations and Future Scope

- The sample size of this experiment is only 10 out of which only 7 participants could sustain until the end of the experiment. Although, improvement is visible through graphs, given the size of the sample, we could not draw substantial generalized conclusions out of the results as the statistical data is not significant.
- This is a single group single time experiment where only one group was selected, tested, trained, and tested again after the experiment. Due to several constraints, a control group that could have substantiated the results was not selected in this experiment.
- Consideration of the parameters for measuring the changes in the aesthetics of the specific dance form (here, Kūchipūdi) of the participants was not the scope of this study. Analysis of how the dance of the participants changed before, during, and after the experiment adds strength to the study.

- Hence, a study with a big sample size, with two groups, i.e., control group and experiment group and with more specific parameters to analyze, would bring better results, which would be the future scope of this study.

Conclusion

Cross-training has become an integral part of training dancers in every dance form. Although this trend started in Indian classical dance forms recently, additional training in dancers in terms of alignment, flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular endurance greatly benefits the dancers and avoids unwanted injuries.

6. Conclusion

SCHECHNER: Has anything ever come out that surprised you and that you used?

S. PANIGRAHI: Not any movement. But at the ISTA in Bonn [1980] Engenio talked about the tension and the spine. I started training with Guruji when I was only four years old. At that age I couldn't have asked him, "Should the spine be this way? Should the tension be this way?" What Guruji did, I imitated. In our tradition, we do without asking. But after the ISTA at Bonn, I tried to realize in each posture where the correct tension should be and what the correct position was. All that became clearer to me. (Schechner, Zarilli and Panigrahi 132)

. The above quote is an excerpt from the interview of Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kelucharan Mahapatro with Schechner and Zarilli. Despite learning from a stalwart like Kelucharan Mahapatra and despite being a star performer herself, Sanjukta had new revelations when she met and collaborated with artists from another culture. Kelucharan in this interview also accepted that it is important to incorporate new elements [inspired from other cultures] within the technical framework of our own cultural traditions (Schechner, Zarilli and Panigrahi). Cross-cultural training "at the right moment from the right person with the right culture and to the right²²⁷ amount" is the important and aspect of it. Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy, in one of his lectures, explains it as "common sense." Richard D. Lewis explains about the term common sense in his book *When Cultures Collide* as

²²⁷ Here 'right' refers to only that which suits the best to the dancer's context. There is neither right time/right culture nor wrong time/wrong culture.

“The very term common sense has to be treated carefully, for it is not as common as it seems. British dictionary define it as “judgement gained from experience rather than study”; the American lexicon describes it as “judgement that is sound but unsophisticated.”

(...) Common sense although basic and unsophisticated, cannot be neutral. It is derived from experience, experience is culture-bound” (Lewis 6).

Hence, it depends on the understanding and depth of the dancer/teacher about the choice of movement form for the dancer to cross-train, the elements that ought to be taken from other cultures.

To summarize, this study is about finding the possibility of incorporating cross-cultural training in the practice and pedagogy of Kūchipūdi dance. The primary literature review gave me an idea about the history of Indian classical dance and the cross-cultural influences on our thought process. The in-depth study of definitions of the term ‘cross-cultural’ and its related terms like ‘intercultural,’ ‘multicultural,’ and ‘cross-training’, across the disciplines helped me in formulating my own definition. This acted as a prelude for me to move forward to understand and analyze the pedagogy and practice of Kūchipūdi dance form through personal interviews, video archival analysis and through an ethnographic experience as a performer-researcher. The key concepts and theories that I learnt as a researcher gave me a chance to analyze myself and other dancers in my form objectively. After a detailed analysis, it was evident that there is a dissonance in the learning contexts and cultures of Kūchipūdi as discussed in chapter 3. After complete understanding of the socio-political history, technique, training and the social psychology of Kūchipūdi, positioning myself as a participant observant in other forms gave me a

multi-dimensional view to the purpose of practice and training in dance. Such ethnographic experience along with challenging my body as a participant challenged my mind and my belief systems. As Homi Bhabha says, I got introduced to a new space called the ‘third space’²²⁸ where I got a chance to create or think about something which is neither old nor new. Such positioning in ‘third space’ although creates a conflict sometimes, gives liberation for the artist to explore the ‘uncertain’ new with the help of the ‘certain’ old knowledge. Conflict in the mind and the body is inevitable whether or not we are introduced to new cultures. Hence, such conflict with constant learning is better than being stuck and stagnant at a place in the journey of our artistic progress. If such individualized artistic progress becomes the progress of an entire community of a particular art form, it elevates the standards of that art form. It is this very ‘seminal space’ that is helping the Indian Diaspora in the US and elsewhere to thrive better than the Indians themselves, which could be taken as a separate area of research altogether. With such introduction to new ways of dancing, teaching, learning and researching, I have used my new knowledge to conduct a cross-training experiment to analyze the physiological performance of dancers with cross-training. The one-time experiment gave a quantitative backing to the qualitative findings in the study that cross-cultural training improves the physical performance of the dancers.

If taken in a superficial perspective of cross-cultural training to mere physical training, the purpose and meaning of this study would be lost. Cross-cultural training is not a regime or a method to follow; rather it is the way we look at things. It is a perspective. Hence, this perspective gives an understanding about the dancing body and the dance forms at different levels like: bodily level, psychological level, historical level,

²²⁸ Check chapter 1 for definition

psychosomatic level and gives insights at academic level too. This perspective and orientation gives us a chance to look at ourselves (our form) in multiple perspectives and through multiple lenses. It also gives us a chance to identify where we stand in the world of dance and how can we find our place.

Findings

As discussed in the previous section, this study gave insights into dance at different levels.

i. Physical level

The one-time experiment and analysis of the intervention of Pilates, Ballet showed an impact on the physical body. An enhancement of the physical performance in terms of cardio-vascular endurance, strength, flexibility and muscle endurance was clearly shown.

ii. Psychological Level – New Avenues of Knowledge

The process of training in new cultures gives several insights into the cognitive enhancement of the body. This makes the dancer explore the body in different ways. The various factors of correlation like: movement – energy consumption, movement- anatomical awareness and the like are broadened. All such correlations lead to the experiencing the movement at a deeper level. This gives the dancer new vocabulary to express how a movement is executed or how a movement is felt. Dance, which could be only experienced at a moment through the body (unlike other plastic arts which are available to analyze for later) needs as many tools as possible to learn, perform, to teach and to understand. Hence, the second level of impact of cross-cultural training

which is not as obvious as physical level is psychological level. We store all the cross-cultural experiences in our mind and use them appropriately when required.

iii. Pedagogical Level

The impact of cross-cultural training at physical and psychological levels demonstrates the 'practice' part of a system. Apart from influencing the practice, cross-cultural training provides the dancers with many a tool at pedagogical level. While training in subjects like ballet and Biomechanics equips the dancer with anatomical understanding of the bodies, training in forms like modern dance broadens the horizons of the dancer to create novel and creative exercises to students.

iv. Academic Level

The translation and transliteration of dance from practice to theory and vice versa itself is a multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural process. Alongside being at such crossroad, research on the impact of cross-cultural training on Kūchipūdi involved the training of me as an academician on reading, writing, applying several theories to understand dance and use cross-disciplinary tools to analyze the physical performance. For instance, usage of biomechanical or anatomical terms to describe a traditional movement or a pose in Kūchipūdi is a cross-cultural exercise as it is not prevalent in the pedagogy of Indian dance. Using tests which are widely used for sports science medicine and physical therapy to measure the performance of dancers is a cross-disciplinary approach. Academia cannot function without a cross-cultural approach for the

reason that we heavily draw theories from world over which suit our research design. Hence, this research also opened up to new avenues of knowledge beyond the conventional ways of researching a traditional dance form.

Through this study, I would like to emphasize the fact that the cross cultural training will facilitate an opening for a three-dimensional training system i.e., physical, psychological and academic; thus serving as a perfect model to do the same. However, the choice of the forms and approaches used heavily depends on the level of expertise of both the teachers and students.

Significance of the Study

Contribution of the current study to the epistemology of dance is unique and paved a new path to cross-disciplinary research in Kūchipūdi dance. The detailed analysis of the technique and the training system of Kūchipūdi from a practitioner-performer-researcher point of view gave a deeper understanding of multiple learning contexts and their impact on the dance form (Kūchipūdi) as a whole. The ethnographic participant observation on the impact of cross-cultural training with multiple case study examples acts as a prelude for further experiments of Kūchipūdi dancers with cross-cultural training both in theory and practice. As there are no pilot studies or one-time experiments exclusively studying the impact of cross-training on Kūchipūdi dancers till date, the results yielded from the onetime experiment and the online survey in this study act fundamental to the literature review to conduct similar experiments in future. As a whole this study plays a significant role in investigating traditional dance forms like Kūchipūdi from a multidimensional approach rather than a conventional linear approach thereby

opening doors to new avenues of research which helps in the progress of the dance form both in theory and practice.

Limitations

The current study yielded results proving the hypothesis. However it has limitations that can be addressed by researchers in future especially by dancers who can place themselves at the cross-road of research, performance, and practice.

- **Specificity**

Cross-cultural training improves the overall performance of the dancer but this study did not address the specificities completely. A detailed analysis was given on how each of these forms had brought a three-dimensional (physical, psychological and academic) impact on me as a participant observant. This includes a detailed breakdown of exercises and their benefits. However there is ample space for future research on how a dancer needs to choose a particular form to choose his/ her needs rather than trying all the forms in trial and error basis. Such research can give more specific results and insights.

- **Tools to measure the improvement in form specific aesthetics**

The one-time experiment in chapter 5 could measure the improvement in the physiological performance of the dancers like cardiovascular endurance, muscle strength, and flexibility. An improvement in physiological performance need not necessarily make the person a better dancer. Due to the limitations in availability of time and resources, the current study couldn't formulate or use tools to measure the change/improvement in the form specific aesthetics in the dancer after cross-cultural training. Hence, a future study which could also incorporate qualitative tools to

measure the form specific aesthetics with the help of an expert would give more substantial results.

- Bigger Sample Size and More Pilot Study Experiments with Control Group

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the sample size of one time experiment was small to produce significant pi value. As my study is not entirely about the experiments, I could only do a onetime experiment with the available students in the department of dance. Future studies with a control group and bigger sample size give scope for sturdy results.

Key Ideas for Future Research

- Biomechanical/Anatomical analysis of the movements of Kūchipūdi dance.
- Formulation of Kūchipūdi specific conditioning program.
- Impact of social psychology of a community on the practice and pedagogy of its dance form (Kūchipūdi here).
- Pilot study experiments to analyze the impact of cross-cultural on Kūchipūdi dancers.

From having transformed from a *Kalāpa* tradition to *Yakshagāna* tradition and then to a solo tradition, Kūchipūdi as a dance form re-scribed itself and witnessed many highs and lows in its journey of survival. A dance form with such strong ‘common sense’ and ‘coping mechanisms’ today is once again facing a crisis, this time a different one. This time, it is not about ‘changing’ but rather it is more about finding ways to tackle the already happened ‘change’. As discussed in chapter 3, the ingrained colonial mentality that we are lesser to the hegemonic dance forms is one of the reasons. Constant comparison of the dance form to the sister forms from external sources, in a way,

solidified the colonial mentality in us which led the form to constantly seek approval by imitating the model of the hegemonic dance form. This along with creating insecurities among ourselves led to lack of empathy and conviction towards our own history of struggle and change. Such lack of empathy led to the disowning of the facts sabotaging the history which created an entire generation unaware of their own history and struggle. Like how Flamenco dancers own their history, like how the modern dancers address the flaws in the history and like how ballet dancers take pride in their history, we, as Kūchipūdi dancers should be fully aware of our history, should own it and be empathetic towards it despite the existing gaps. Technique of the form that we see today is fully grown both aesthetically and scientifically. With the appropriate changes in its training system and the way the form perceives itself, the form can thrive on par with other forms. Cross-cultural training of Kūchipūdi dancers acts as a tool in making them as dynamic performers of great potential. It also helps in extending the longevity of their performance careers.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Kuchipudi Dancers

This questionnaire would be used as a survey to collect data regarding the challenges that Kuchipudi dancers face in day to day practice and performance. This questionnaire asks basic questions for which you have to answer based on your experience and training. Please feel free to answer as honestly as possible as your feedback would be extremely valuable for my topic cross-cultural training in dance (with special reference to Kuchipudi). Thank you very much.

*** Required**

1. Email address *

2. Name *

3. Age *

4. How long have you been learning Kuchipudi? *

5. Guru/ Gurus *

6. What is your profession? *

7. How often do you practice in a week? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ 0-5 hrs

☐ 5-10hrs

☐ more than 10 hrs

☐ Other: _____

8. Do you have a warm up and cool down routine before and after your practice? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sometimes

9. If yes for the above question, is the routine prescribed by your teacher or you do it by yourself? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Teacher

☐ Myself

☐ Mixed

☐ Other: _____

10. Do you practice any of the following fitness routines? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Running
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Weight Training
- ☐ Yoga
- ☐ Pilates
- ☐ Swimming

Other: ☐ _____

11. How many hours you practice fitness routines other than dancing? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0-5hrs
- ☐ more than 5 hours
- ☐ never do other fitness routines

12. did you train in other dance forms ? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. In which of the following issues you think you can be better in your daily practice? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Stamina Issues
- ☐ Flexibility
- ☐ Agility
- ☐ Endurance or strength
- ☐ Technique

Other: ☐ _____

14. Have you ever been injured while dancing? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. If yes, was it major or minor?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Major

☐ Minor

16. Over a period of dancing, which parts of the body do you think you feel uncomfortable while dancing/ or you got injured? *

Check all that apply.

☐ Ankle

☐ Lower Back

☐ Knees

☐ Shoulder

☐ Hip flexors

Other: ☐ _____

17. Did you ever cross-train to overcome these injuries or discomforts? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. If yes, did you benefit out of it? Please explain your experience if any.

19. Diet restrictions *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Vegetarian
- ☐ Eggetarian
- ☐ Non-Vegetarian
- ☐ Vegan
- ☐ Other: _____

20. Do you take any diet supplements? If yes mention the names. *

21. Please explain your current practice situation and what areas you think should focused on in Kuchipudi training system to improve dancer's strength and injury-free dancing? *

22. Other comments (if any)

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Google Forms

Appendix 2

PILOT PROOF OF CONCEPT – EFFECTS OF CROSS-TRAINING ON KUCHIPUDI DANCERS

DEPARTMENT OF DANCE, SAROJINI NAIDU SCHOOL OF ARTS AND COMMUNICATION



UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Height: _____ in. Weight: _____ Kg. Age: _____

SNO	Questions	YES	NO
1.	Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only perform physical activity recommended by a doctor?		
2.	Do you feel pain in your chest when you perform physical activity?		
3.	In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not performing any physical activity?		
4.	Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?		
5.	Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?		
6.	Is your doctor currently prescribing any medication for your blood pressure or for a heart condition?		
7.	Do you have Diabetes Mellitus or any other metabolic disease?		
8.	Do you have high or low blood pressure?		
9.	Do you have any other reason why you should not be participating in the physical activity? (If yes, comment below)		
10.	Have you ever had any pain or injuries (ankle, knee, hip, back, shoulder, etc.)? (If yes, please explain)		
11.	Have you ever had any surgeries? (If yes, please explain.)		

12.	Do you currently take any medication? (If yes, please list).		
13.	Do you know of any other reason why you should not engage in physical activity?		

If you answered YES to one or more questions: If you have not recently done so, consult with your doctor by telephone or in person before increasing your physical activity and/or taking a fitness appraisal. Tell your doctor what questions you answered 'yes' to on PAR-Q or present your PAR-Q copy. After medical evaluation, seek advice from your doctor as to your suitability for:

- I. Unrestricted physical activity starting off easily and progressing gradually, and***
- II. Restricted or supervised activity to meet your specific needs, at least on an initial basis.***

Please turn over, complete the form and sign

If you answered NO to all questions: If you answered PAR-Q accurately, you have reasonable assurance of your present suitability for:

- I. A graduated exercise programme
- II. A fitness appraisal

Assumption of Risk

I hereby state that I have read, understood and answered honestly the questions above. I also state that I wish to participate in activities, which may include aerobic exercise, resistance exercise and stretching. I realise that my participation in these activities involves the risk of injury. Furthermore, I hereby confirm that I am voluntarily engaging in an acceptable level of exercise, which has been recommended to me.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3

Name:

Functional Performance

SNO	TEST	PASS/FAIL	COMMENTS
1.	Developmental Sequence		
2.	10-second Balance Error Scoring		
3.	Airplane Test		
4.	Single Leg Saute Test		

Physical Performance

THOMAS	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	ANGLE	COMMENTS
TEST			
RESULT			

DOUBLE LEG LOWER	SCORE	COMMENTS
RESULT		

HIP ABDUCTION STRENGTH	SCORE	COMMENTS
RESULT		

Physiological Performance

YMCA 3-minute step test

Heart Rate (Before)	Heart Rate (After)	Completion Quality	Comments

Sit and Reach Test

Inches Reached		

T Test

Results (Three Trials)

Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3

Appendix 4

Get deeper analysis with crosstabs, SPSS & XLS exports, and stat testing. [See plans and features »](#)

Post Experiment Survey - Effects of Cross-Training on Kuchipudi Dancers



SUMMARY → DESIGN SURVEY → PREVIEW & SCORE → COLLECT RESPONSES → **ANALYZE RESULTS** → PRESENT RESULTS NEW!

CURRENT VIEW

+ FILTER+ COMPARE+ SHOW

No rules applied

SAVED VIEWS (1)

EXPORTS

PAID FEATURE

UPGRADE

SHARED DATA

RESPONDENTS: 5 of 5

QUESTION SUMMARIESDATA TRENDSPRESENT RESULTS

Page 1: Activity Feedback

Q1

This Week, how many hours did you participate in organized dance activity?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (5)WORD CLOUDTAGS (0)

Showing 5 responses

5 to 6

11/7/2018 6:23 PM

View respondent's answers

Add

7

11/5/2018 9:38 PM

View respondent's answers

Add

10 hours

11/3/2018 12:29 PM

View respondent's answers

Add

3

11/3/2018 12:22 PM

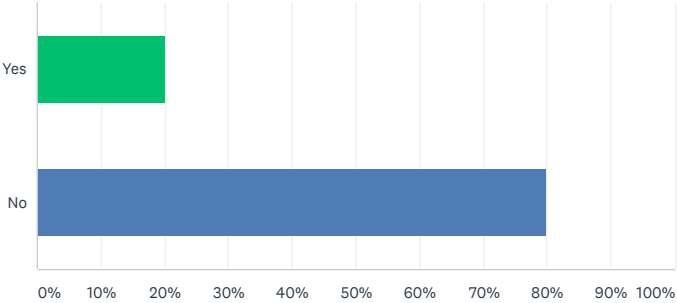
View respondent's answers

Add

Q2

This week, did you participate in any physical activity other than dar

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



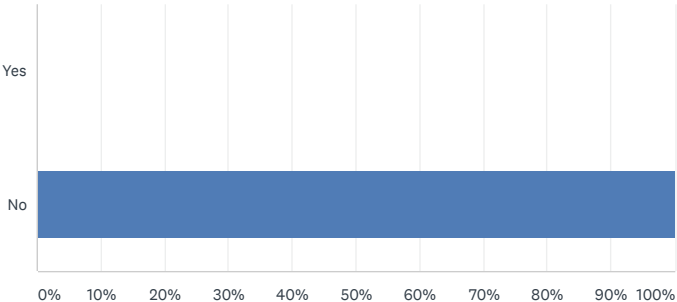
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	20.00%
No	80.00%
TOTAL	

Q3

Customize

This week, did you have any NEW dance related musculoskeletal injury or complaints?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	0.00%
No	100.00%
TOTAL	

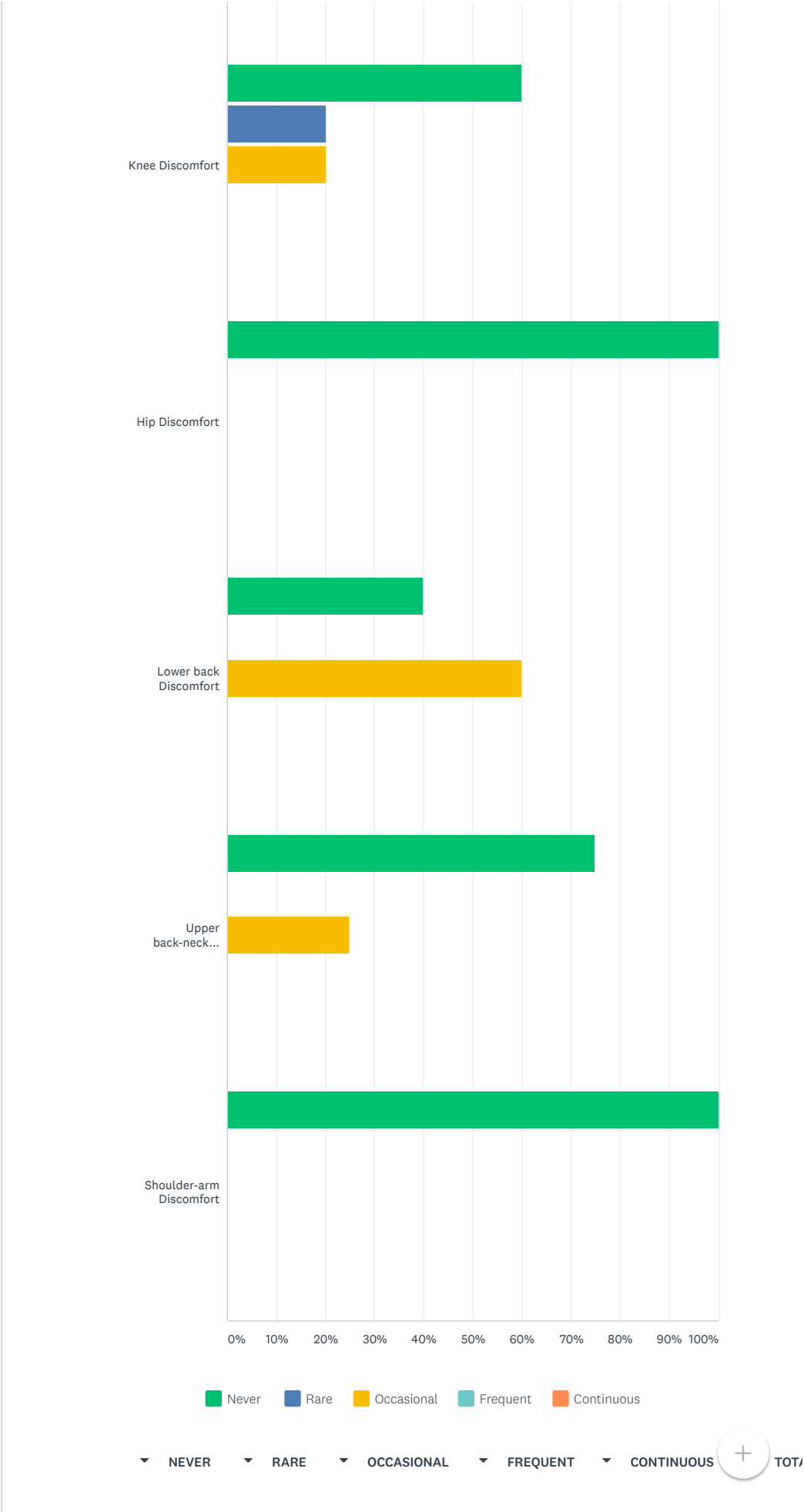
Q4

Customize

Discomfort rating scale: You may experience a variety of discomforts within your body on any given day. Please note the frequency of your discomforts

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0





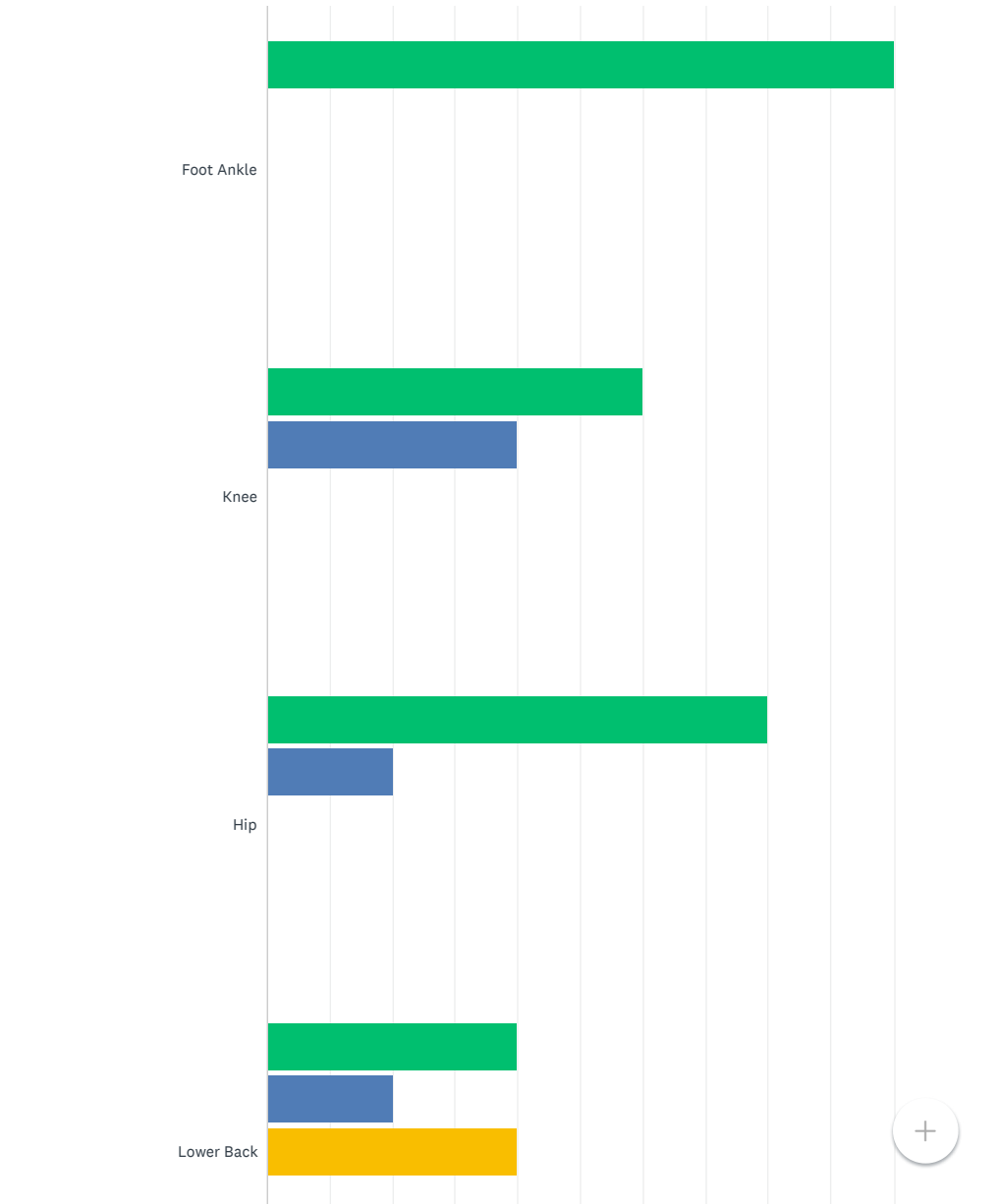
	NEVER	RARE	OCCASIONAL	FREQUENT	CONTINUOUS	TOTAL
▼ Foot Ankle Discomfort	100.00% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	
▼ Knee Discomfort	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	
▼ Hip Discomfort	100.00% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	
▼ Lower back Discomfort	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	
▼ Upper back-neck Discomfort	75.00% 3	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	
▼ Shoulder-arm Discomfort	100.00% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	

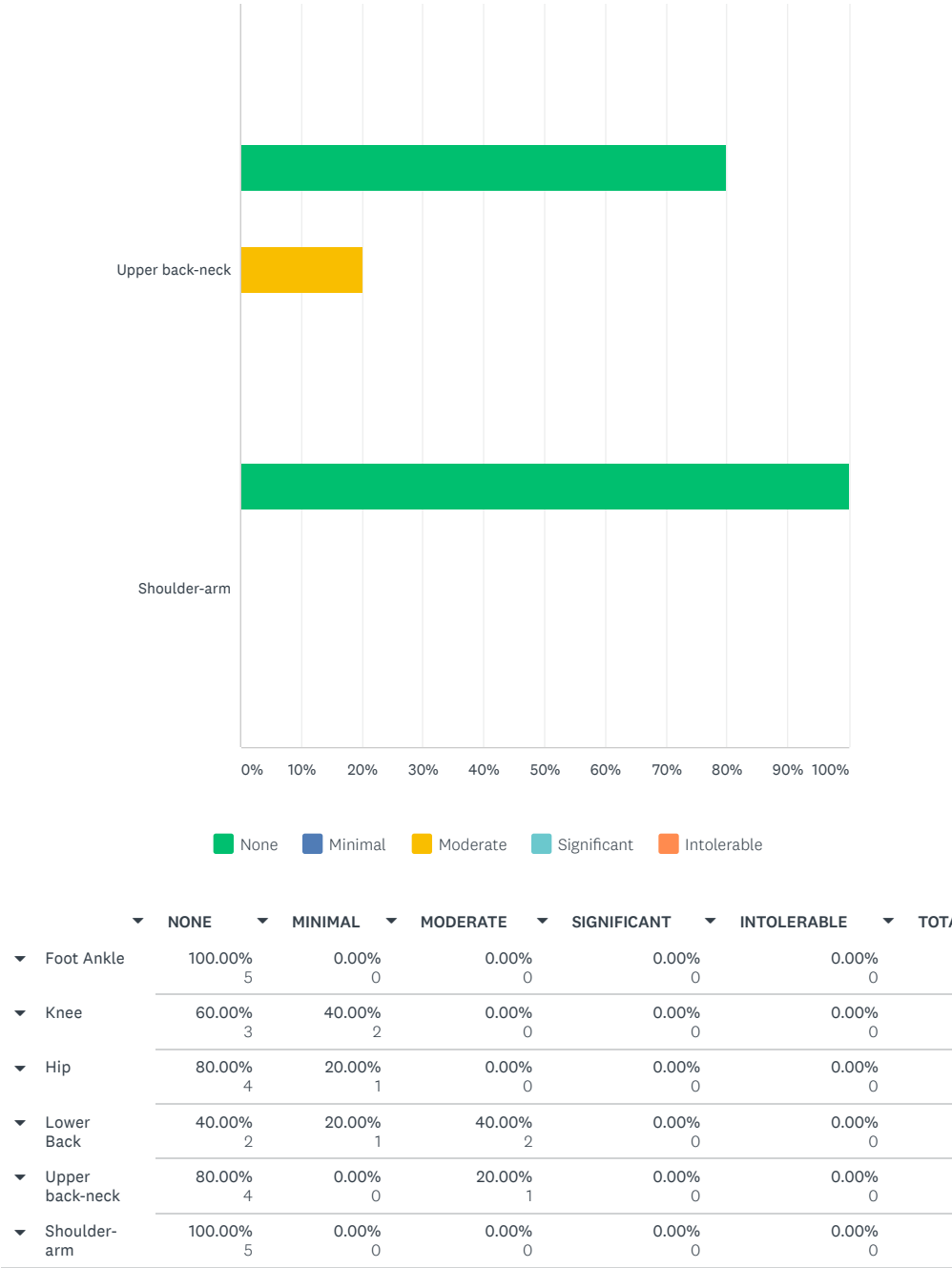
Q5

Customize

Please note the severity of the discomfort level for the following bod parts.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0





Q6

Customize

Please tell us about your mood THIS WEEK. Please make sure that y have answered all the questions.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



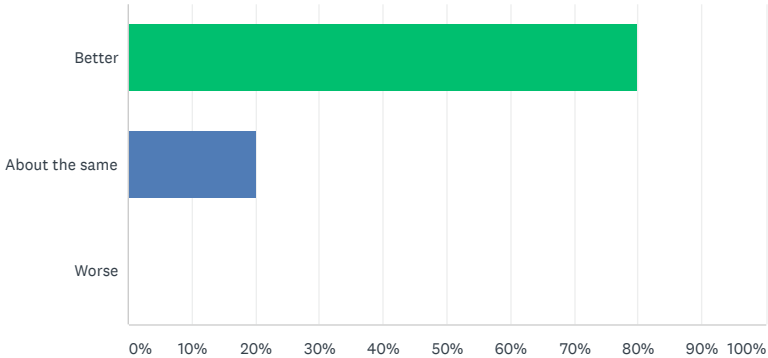


Q7

Customize

Compared to last week, do you feel your mood is

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Better

80.00%

About the same

20.00%

Worse

0.00%

TOTAL

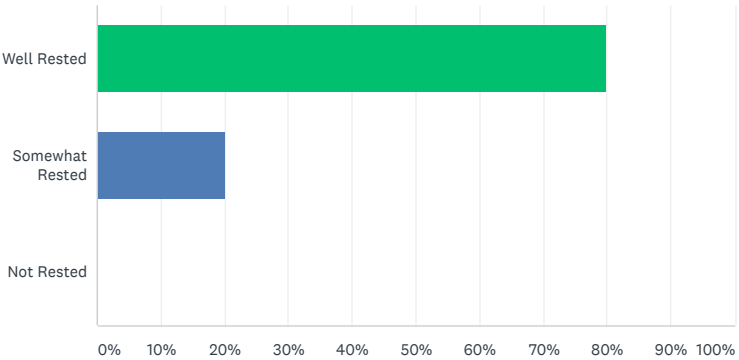


Q8

Customize ⌵

This week, for your sleeping, do you feel that you were:

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Well Rested	80.00%
Somewhat Rested	20.00%
Not Rested	0.00%
TOTAL	



ENGLISH ⌵



"
CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING AND ITS IMPACT
ON THE PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE OF KUCHIPUDI
DANCE !!

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The Impact of Cross-Cultural Training on the Practice and the Pedagogy of Kuchipudi Dance

by Lalitha Sindhuri Yarasuri

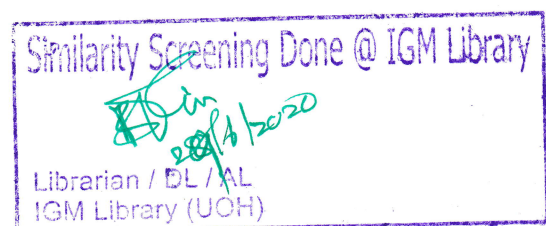
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