



Cultural Transition: Indian Youth's Predilection for Western Dance Over Indian Classical Dance in the context of Kathak



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Abstract

Traditional values and contemporary global ideas collide at a cultural crossroads for Indian adolescents in an era off as globalization and internet impact. The shifting tastes of Indian youngsters toward different Western dance genres and away from the traditional Kathak dance form are reexamined in this study. The spiritual, narrative, and rhythmic depth of Indian tradition is embodied in Kathak, although many young people believe that Western dance is more expressive, up to date, and compatible with current lifestyles. This cultural drift is greatly influenced by a number of factors, including urbanization, social media exposure, the entertainment industry, and the dearth of easily accessible classical dance education. This study examines how identity, social relevance, and aesthetic appeal influence dance preferences through quantitative surveys and cultural studies. The results show both a capacity for innovation and reinvention within established creative forms as well as a growing disconnection from them. In order to bridge the cultural divide, the paper promotes a revived interest in Kathak through youth-driven storylines, digital outreach, and updated teaching techniques. This study attempts to provide solutions for conserving cultural heritage while embracing the dynamics of a changing world by comprehending the reasons behind the youth's decisions.

Key Words : Cultural Drift, Cultural Globalization, Dance Preference, Indian Youth, Kathak, Media Exposure.

Research Paper

Introduction

As a medium for human expression, dance has always reflected the artistic, social, and cultural ideals of its era. With centuries of history, discipline, and spiritual resonance, traditional dance styles like Kathak have long been used in India as a narrative tool as well as an artistic endeavor. With its elaborate footwork, elegant spins, and narrative abhinaya, Kathak is more than just entertainment; it is a living art form that embodies India's rich cultural legacy, which is intricately entwined with courtly, religious, and mythical customs. However, a changing environment is revealed by the 21st-century cultural tastes of Indian youth. In the modern, digitalized, and globalized world, India's cultural fabric is changing dramatically. The once-celebrated and beloved Indian classical dance genres, especially Kathak, are currently losing their appeal among young people. Hip-hop, contemporary, and jazz are examples of Western dance styles that are growing and catching

young performers and spectators' attention more and more, as a result of more exposure to other cultures and entertainment. The causes, effects, and potential remedies of this change are examined in this research. The survey-based study emphasizes how urbanization, school systems, peer pressure, and the media all play a significant role in this phenomenon. By making classic art forms more approachable and appealing to the younger generation, the project hopes to produce insights that might aid in their revitalization.

Review of Literature

The preference for Western dance among Indian youth has been widely discussed in the context of globalization, cultural exchange, and evolving youth identity. Scholars argue that Western dance forms such as hip-hop, jazz, and contemporary appeal to younger generations because they are associated with modernity, self-expression, and global trends (Sen 112–130). Exposure

through television shows, international competitions, and especially social media platforms has accelerated this cultural shift, creating an aspirational image around Western dance (Roy 45-59). In contrast, Indian classical dance forms like Kathak have historically been tied to cultural heritage, spiritual expression, and traditional storytelling (Vatsyayan 34). Kathak, originating from the northern regions of India, is renowned for its intricate footwork, graceful spins, and expressive gestures. However, despite its aesthetic depth, Kathak is often perceived by youth as "formal, time consuming to master, and less aligned with contemporary lifestyles" (Chakravorty 45). This generational preference gap can be understood through the lens of cultural capital (Bourdieu 241-258), where participation in certain art forms is influenced by social trends, media influence, and peer validation. Western dance benefits from high cultural visibility in youth spaces, while Kathak's reach is largely confined to specialized cultural venues and academic institutions. Nevertheless, scholars note that fusion blending classical forms with modern elements, offers a promising pathway to revival. (Srinivasan 99–114), emphasizes that adaptation is not cultural dilution but a necessary evolution for survival in changing cultural landscapes. The existing literature thus points to a nuanced reality: the dominance of Western dance among youth is not necessarily a rejection of Indian classical traditions, but a reflection of accessibility, relevance, and representation in modern media ecosystems. The challenge for practitioners and cultural policy makers lies in recontextualizing Kathak so it resonates with 21st-century youth while preserving its cultural essence.

Research Problem

Young Indians' cultural preferences have changed significantly in recent decades as a result of media exposure, modernity, and globalization. The alteration in dancing tastes stands out among these modifications. One of the most well-known Indian classical dance styles, Kathak, which has centuries-old roots in narrative, spirituality, and tradition, is losing favor with younger audiences. Youth, on the other hand, are rapidly adopting Western dance styles including ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and contemporary as representations of entertainment, modernity, and global interaction. This preference for Western dance presents a significant scholarly and cultural issue: why do young Indians find Western dance more appealing than Kathak, their own historic artform? Seen through the lens of cultural sustainability, this issue becomes even more urgent. Embracing

mythology, history, and aesthetic philosophy, Kathak is more than just a kind of entertainment; it is a conduit for India's intangible cultural legacy. Yet, in contrast to the energy, accessibility, and versatility of Western styles, its image among young people is sometimes seen as stiff, archaic, or out of date. Peer pressure, worldwide media consumption, shifting lifestyle goals, a dearth of interesting classical arts education, and the underrepresentation of Kathak in popular media might all be contributing factors to this trend. In order to understand the implications of this cultural shift for the future of Indian classical dance traditions, the primary research problem is to investigate and analyze the socio-cultural, psychological, and educational factors that influence Indian youth's predilection for Western dance over Kathak. If this tendency is not rigorously analyzed, Kathak may become marginalized, endangering its survival and significance in a fast changing cultural environment.

Objectives of the Study

The Primary Purpose of this research to examine the factors influencing Indian youth's predilection towards Western dance forms over the classical dance form Kathak.

1. To analyze the role of media, social platforms, and globalization in shaping dance preferences among Indian youth.
2. To explore the accessibility, affordability, and learning structures of Kathak versus Western dance training.
3. To investigate whether Western dance styles are perceived as more socially relevant or aspirational by Indian youth.
4. Suggest improvements in the teaching and promotion of Kathak to make it more appealing to today's youth.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant preference among Indian youth for Western dance forms over Kathak.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): Indian youth significantly prefer Western dance forms over Kathak.

Relevance of the Study

Both intellectually and socially, this study is relevant. By examining how young people's cultural choices are changing in the era of globalization, it advances the



academic fields of dance, cultural studies, and Indian classical arts. For educators, scholars, and legislators concerned in preserving traditional art forms, it offers insightful information. The study tackles the urgent problem of dwindling young interest in Kathak, an essential component of India's cultural legacy, making it extremely important from a societal stand point. Understanding the causes of young people's preference for Western dancing styles may aid society in creating plans to maintain Kathak, guarantee cultural continuity, and find a balance between embracing contemporary influences and defending traditional identities.

Research Methodology

The data collected through Google Forms were exported to Google sheets. This survey distributed among youth respondents. The total sample size was 28 participants, belonging to different age groups and genders. Basic statistical analysis was conducted including percentage and graphs for questions. The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions covering aspects such as dance preference, media exposure, affordability, personality alignment, and suggestions for improving Kathak education. Due to simplicity of the statistical needs for the research, SPSS was not used. Instead, Google sheets was sufficient for conducting the necessary descriptive analysis. The complete survey responses are available at the link mentioned in the bibliography.

Discussion

Results and Findings

1. Dance Preference

20 respondents (71.4%) preferred Western dance, while only 8 respondents (28.6%) preferred Kathak. This indicates a significant tilt towards Western styles among Indian youth.

2. Media Influence

22 respondents (78.6%) watched Western dance videos on social media, compared to only 6 (21.4%) who watched Kathak content. This shows that digital platforms amplify Western dance exposure.

3. Dance and Personality Alignment

20 participants (71.4%) felt Western dance matches their personality, while only 8 (28.6%) felt aligned with Kathak. Youth associate Western dance with energy, modern lifestyle, and self-expression.

4. Affordability and Convenience

21 respondents (75%) found Western dance more affordable and convenient, where as 7 (25%) chose Kathak. This suggests accessibility and cost are major factors in shaping preferences.

5. Reasons for Choosing Western Dance

Common responses included: "energetic," "modern," "relatable to body language," and "easily available in workshops."

6. Suggestions for Kathak

Recommendations included: integrating modern teaching methods, shorter course duration, creative fusion with modern music, and using social media promotion to engage youth.

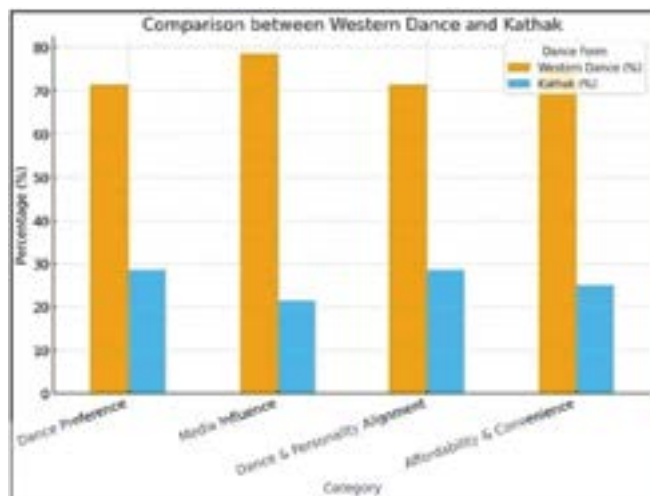


Table of Results category western dance(%)kathak (%)

Dance Preference-71.4%, 28.6%

Media Influence-78.6%, 21.4%

Dance & Personality Alignment-71.4%, 28.6%

Affordability & Convenience-75.0%, 25.0%

The bar chart visually compares western dance vs. Kathak across all categories, showing western dance as dominant in preference, media influence, personality alignment, and affordability. The findings highlight a cultural drift among Indian youth from classical traditions to modern globalized art forms. The dominance of Western dance preferences can be attributed to media exposure, relatability, affordability, and societal trends. Conversely, Kathak is often perceived as time-consuming, rigid, and less accessible to younger learners. This shift is not just about art but reflects larger socio-cultural transformations where modernity and globalization are redefining youth identities. The results



under score the need for reviving classical traditions with innovative pedagogical methods so that forms like Kathak remain relevant in contemporary society.

Conclusion

The study finds that, as a result of cultural relatability, media impact, cost, and ease of use, Indian young overwhelmingly favor Western dance over Kathak. Western dance represents modernity and international exposure, but Kathak has challenges related to accessibility and traditional rigidity. There is room for revival, nevertheless. Without losing its traditional character, Kathak may draw in younger audiences by modernizing teaching methodologies, using digital platforms, and encouraging fusion approaches. In India's cultural environment, the results therefore highlight the challenge and opportunity of striking a balance between traditional and modernity.

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