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## THERAPEUTIC HEALING THROUGH DANCE

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Dr. Vijayapal Pathloth, a doctorate in Dance is an internationally acclaimed and leading exponent of Dance from South India. A versatile performer and scholar, he is perhaps the only artist from the tribal background who is expertise in both Academics and Dance performances. He is recognized for his scholarly, yet enthralling portrayal of the arts. An exceptional artiste of today's generation, Dr Vijayapal is an accomplished, prolific and promising professional and scholar, who aspire to reach the higher standards of perfection in the field of Dance, both academically and professionally. With Masters, MPhil and PhD in Dance, he pursued MBA and MPhil Tourism Management too. Besides being an Academician, he is a Dance performer, Art educator, Author, Scholar, Choreographer and a Dance Therapist who endeavors to make an impact on the social and cultural lives by sharing his expertise in the field of art. He has authored two books and published various research papers in National and International Journals and books and has also conducted seminars and workshops on dance and allied disciplines at various places furthering his academic pursuit. He is a recipient of various awards and titles besides a JRF and a gold medal for his research work.

**ABSTRACT:**

*The purpose of the paper is to emphasize Dance as a mode of healing. Since ages, Dance has been helpful to us in various capacities. Since ancient times it is used as a medium of communication, entertainment, spirituality – as an offering to Gods and so on. Dance, since its origin has undergone many developments and today, its knowledge is imparted in academics at various levels ranging from Certificate programmees to PhD programmees. Individuals are opting and practicing Dance either as profession or as a hobby and various other options. Today, in the contemporary era, Dance is viewed and treated differently as it has various other benefits. One among them is the healing capabilities. With the ingenious thoughts of Marian Chace – The grand Dame of Dance Therapy, Dance is witnessed as a medium of Therapy besides communication and entertainment. Me, being an Indian origin, and practicing Dance since more than 3 decades, would like to correlate the origin of Dance in general to the origin of Dance Therapy in particular, according to Indian mythology. According to Hindu mythology, Dance has been created by Lord Brahma to heal the illness (bad deeds, misery, jealousy, exploitation etc) of the humans on the earth and bring them back to a systematic life. Hence, I feel the reason for the origin of Dance itself is with a therapeutic motive. It clearly justifies that practicing and implementing Dance has various other benefits besides entertainment. Dance has always been as a means of communication and entertainment till nineteenth century. Subsequently, Dance is being perceived and viewed into various other means and approaches to spread its wings and branches. Dance is analysed, substantiated and proved into various disciplines and forms to manifest its efficiency besides entertainment. In this context, Dance is witnessed as a mode of Therapy from 1920 onwards by Marian Chace, the lady behind the concept of Dance Therapy. The present paper is a modest attempt to highlight the importance of Dance; and to bring in and establish the concept of Dance Therapy, its origin and evolution, while enlightening its significance.*

**Keywords:** Benefits, Dance, Dance movements, Dance Therapy, Health, Healing, Therapy.

**INTRODUCTION:**

*Bhaarat (India), the land of art and culture, a land of devotion, and a land of proud heritage and rich legacy has always been known for its rich heritage and culture. This wonderful land has presented a wide range of performing arts. Dance is the most interesting form of performing arts that has been encouraged from centuries in India. The sacred texts like the Vedas, Puranas and other spiritual texts explains the close association of divinity with dance and thereby humans and God. Dance has always been part of the cultural heritage since ages and it has always been encouraged and promoted. It is treated as divine and has always been part of various religious and cultural celebrations. Dance,*

besides being spiritual in nature and a means of communication and entertainment, it has various hidden treasures that have to be explored and studied.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

As Dance Therapy is relatively a new domain in the field of Dance, with specific reference to Indian context, the literature is sparse and rare. Besides presenting the analytical views, few books, journals, articles and websites related to Dance and Dance Therapy are referred which have been listed in the References.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

Keeping in view of the abstract, the following are the objectives of the study.

- To give a brief overview of Dance in terms of its origin and evolution in Indian context.
- To analyse the benefits of Dance unification justified in various disciplines.
- To enlighten the concept of Dance Therapy and its developments since its origin.
- To establish and highlight the various therapeutic benefits of Dance with reference to Indian context.
- To ascertain, prove and emphasize the therapeutic benefits of *Hasta Mudras* of Indian Classical Dance (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityam*) explored and analysed with various allied disciplines to substantiate the study.
- To encourage Dance as a mode of Therapy and explore various therapeutic modes.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This is a theoretical study with qualitative approach. The study uses analytical and descriptive methods to analyze the ideas, opinions and theories presented in relation to the origin, evolution and developments of Dance and its features. General views are presented after exploring into the origin, history, evolution and development of Dance in its various practices with specific reference to the therapeutic benefits. The study is based on the analytical approach of the function, features and tools

of Dance as a mode of Therapy, which are evidenced in the substantial study. The analytical views and opinions are drafted through the descriptive method.

## DISCUSSION:

Dance is one of the most important cultural practices in most of the societies and Indian classical dance forms (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityams*) are highly acclaimed. According to *Hinduism*, dance is originated by the Gods. It is said by sage *Bharata* in the sacred text *Natya Sastra* that Lord *Brahma*, the creator of living beings created Dance and named it as '*Natya Vedam*'. According to *Bharata's Natya Sastra*, Dance is treated as the fifth *Veda* which is gifted by Lord *Brahma* and most of the dance performances are in praise of Gods. In Indian context, Dance is treated as divine and Lord *Shiva* is regarded as the 'Dancing Lord'. Dance is offered as one of the offerings to the deity in the temples since ancient times while the priest utters the line "*Nrutyam Darshayaami*" however it is not performed practically today. Dancing is the first art and the earliest impulse that takes an outward embodiment in human being.

Dance represents the miniature world and you can witness it in our routine. Dancing is evident in life; it is an indigenous part of human existence, which is a universal phenomenon. A bird sitting on a tree branch at sunrise, greets the sun out of joy by the graceful movement of its head; the child shouts and jumps in upwelling joy, the nature herself dances in joy at springtime. The early man expressed his ideas and feelings only through the body movements as a mode of communication, before language was created. This is the pre-verbal beginning of communication before speech. A new born baby starts waving the hands and legs before he could speak, he laughs when the mother comes closer and cries when the mother goes away adding different movements with hands and limbs. Hence the beginning of expression in human life starts from a new born baby. The nature herself dances in joy at spring time; a bird sitting on a tree branch at sunrise greets the sun out of joy by the graceful movement of its head; the child shouts and jumps in upwelling joy. Dance can be observed in the swaying trees, the moving clouds, the water flowing, the ocean waves, the fire heaps, the rain drops, the peacock's joy, deer leaps etc. Similarly dance has begun with such expressive movements and manipulation of the body through the emotions, feelings and opinions.

It is an amazing feeling to experience movement spontaneously being created within one's body, it is awe inspiring and fulfilling. It is one of the art forms which involve both physical and mental being of a human being to an equal extent. A dancer, through his deep involvement, attains the pinnacle point of divinity, which makes us feel the presence of that eternal being. But on the other side of the coin, it is the physical exercise that makes us fit physically. Just as physical exercises, the postures in Indian Classical Dance have been designed and developed in such a manner that they make a dancer energetic and healthy. Practicing dance everyday is better than the regular physical exercises. The 108 *Karanas* which can be seen sculptured on the walls of *Chidambaram* temple are the perfect examples that show the greatness of Indian Classical Dance (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityam*) that leads to a better health.

Dance is often referred to as a “unified art”, the most complete of all the Arts. This can be justified because dance can utilize intelligence, spirituality, creativity and spontaneity while the body acts as a means in producing art. Dance is an excellent art which has imbibed almost everything necessary to maintain a perfect lifestyle. Dance is widespread and represents many disciplines. It incorporates almost everything in it. Dance involves all the fine arts, science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, mythology, fitness, therapy, culture, tradition, management, language, grammar and what not! It improves knowledge, communication skills, memory, discipline etc. Hence, Dance can be said to be a “Unified art form” which imbibes almost everything in it. All the above mentioned disciplines can be easily traced in dance. To substantiate the above statement; Dance is performed to music and it has literature, drama element, sculpted risqué postures which are all related to fine arts. The movements in dance are straight, horizontal, circular, crisscross and in different angles. Certain steps are added, subtracted, multiplied or divided to choreograph a group of effective movements that suits the lyrics and theme. The ‘*Taala* system’ used in dance is a pure Mathematics. Dance has different speeds *Vilamba*(Slow), *Madyama*(Medium) and *Dhruta*(Fast); it covers a particular distance and an amount of force is utilized while performing dance; which is nothing but Physics. Similarly dance incorporates the other disciplines. Above all, Dance has therapeutic effects too which can also be used as a mode of healing. Dance is a Therapy. Therapy is a treatment for problems relating to health without medication and the therapeutic process applied on an individual through dance is “Dance Therapy”.

Dance helps to develop physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. The physical benefits of dance are widely accepted, but the emotional, social and cognitive attributes have only recently being appreciated. Dance is a fitness health, it is a good exercise. Regular practice of dance is more than a regular workout in a gym and yoga. A regular practice of dance keeps an individual fit, active, enthusiastic and in good form. Dance practice can give good health. We can maintain a fit body, which refreshes the mind and keeps the body fresh and active. Practicing dance every day keeps the body in a perfect shape and fitness. It keeps an individual fit, active, enthusiastic and in good form.

Dance therapy is a vehicle that helps people deal with and overcome their emotional and physical ailments. It is therapeutic and offers a journey of self discovery and appreciation. Therapy or treatment is the attempted remediation of a health problem, usually following a diagnosis. In the medical field, it is synonymous with the word “treatment”. Dance therapy or Dance movement therapy has always been proved efficient, effective and supports an individual to overcome both physical and mental illness. It is a tool to understand the body as a whole.

Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving direct expression through the body. Thus, it is an intimate and powerful medium for therapy. Research study on individuals attitudes over learning says that an individual generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they hear and see, 70% of what they say and write and 80% of what they do<sup>1</sup>. So retention is best done when the learner is involved, because what we hear - we forget; what we see - we remember and what we do - we understand. Based on this dance is one of the best ways to practice as it also acts as the best medium of therapy.

The word “therapy” comes from the Greek word “therapeia” meaning “a service, an attendance” which, in turn, is related to the Greek verb “therapeuo” meaning “I wait upon”. Therapy was (and is) a service done to the sick<sup>2</sup>.

“Dance therapy, or dance movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance for emotional, cognitive, social, behavioral and physical conditions”. “I believe that Dance therapy is that combination where Science meets Art. Dance therapy is amalgamation of science blending with art which results in that powerful medicine which heals psychological and physical impairments. It is

<sup>1</sup> Chi, M.T.H., Bassok, M., Lewis, M.W., Reimann, P., & Glaser, R. (1989), Self-explanation: How students study and use examples in learning to solve problems. *Cognitive Science*, 13, 145-182.

<sup>2</sup> Article by Dr. Will Thalheimer, May 01, 2006.

that form of healing diseases with human touch”. It is the process of healing ailments through a predefined procedure with dance as the medium.

Dance is recognized as having potential therapeutic effect and is considered as an alternative therapy for many physical and psychological ailments. The therapeutic process applied on an individual through dance is “Dance Therapy”. Dance has long been fundamental to man’s existence as an expression of life itself, and has been used unknowingly as a means of healing. Dance as a therapy is relatively new profession and it is based on the assumption that the body and mind are interrelated and in constant reciprocal interaction.

Dance therapy is a vehicle that helps people deal with and overcome their emotional and physical ailments. It is therapeutic and offers a journey of self discovery and appreciation. Therapy or treatment is the attempted remediation of a health problem, usually following a diagnosis. In the medical field, it is synonymous with the word ‘treatment’. The graceful movements of the dance are employed to heal because of their therapeutic effects, which are known as Dance Movement Therapy. Various dance forms are being employed to heal anxiety, and certain other ailments. Dance is a great device to enhance and increase concentration levels and more.

Dance Therapy is a form of Behavioural Therapy where the treatment is given through the art form Dance. In this Therapy the clients behaviour is changed, especially the mood of the client is diverted from the present difficulties and soothe their troubled mind.

The concept of Dance therapy is well established and is highly accepted in USA, UK, Australia and European countries. The origin and evolution of Dance Therapy took place in the 1940s in America by Marian Chace (1896-1970), who is often referred to as the “Grand Dame” of Dance Therapy, who came to the field from the world of dance<sup>3</sup>. Originally Dance Therapy has its roots in modern dance from 1920 onwards. Dance as a mode of Therapy came into existence with the amalgamation of modern dance and psychiatry.

Marian Chace is seen as the founder of Dance Therapy. In 1942, through her work, Dance was first introduced to western medicine. In 1966 Chace became the first president of the American Dance Therapy Association, an organization which she and several other Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) pioneers founded. The efforts of the modern dancers gave the basic foundation for expressive Dance

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<sup>3</sup> Payne. Helen, *Dance Movement Therapy: Theory, Research and Practice* (2nd edn). Tavistock / Routledge Publications, 2006.

Therapy and the pioneers include Isadora Duncan<sup>4</sup>, Martha Graham<sup>5</sup>, Doris Humphrey<sup>6</sup>, Ruth St. Dennis<sup>7</sup>, Ted Shawn<sup>8</sup>, Mary Wigman<sup>9</sup>, Rudolf Laban<sup>10</sup>, Sigmund Freud<sup>11</sup> and his followers, Alfred Adler<sup>12</sup>, Carl Jung<sup>13</sup>, Wilhelm Reich<sup>14</sup>, Alexander Lowen<sup>15</sup> and so on. Their work gave the foundation for expressive dance where spontaneity, creativity and individuality were allowed. In addition, the work of Rudolf Laban was prominent in the area of movement analysis and movement expression for both the artist and everyday worker in industrial settings, respectively. Laban worked specifically with artists, enabling them to understand how their body worked to express the inner state. He likewise worked with industrial workers during the war to enhance work capacity and efficiency. During this time (around World War II), the work of pioneers in psychoanalytic philosophy and thinking was also popular - in particular, Sigmund Freud and his followers, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung

<sup>4</sup> Isadora Duncan (1878 - 1927, U.S.A. - France) Modern dance history describes Isadora as an emblematic figure of freedom. This is not only because she refuses to follow academic dance education but because she has the courage to break dance traditions and social codes with her aesthetic propositions. She constructs her thought by studying other artistic languages or ideological fields (like poetry, sculpture, music and philosophy).

<sup>5</sup> Martha Graham (1894 - 1991, U.S.A.) Graham entered the Denishawn school and company in 1916 and became the most famous and monumental pupil of this seedbed. In 1923 she moved to New York. She develops her own training technique; she creates an original choreographic vocabulary focused on the movement of the pelvis for the expression of the feminine libido. Her company was exclusively for women until 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Doris Humphrey (1895 - 1958, U.S.A.) Doris Humphrey joins the Denishawn in 1917, being already a dance teacher in her native province. She works for Saint Denis as a teacher and dancer, participating in the company tours around America and Asia till 1926. Humphrey develops an original dancing technique by observing the relationship between gravity and the human body. She establishes a main physical principle for dance: Fall and Recovery.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Saint Denis (1879 - 1968) was a modern dance pioneer, introducing eastern ideas into the art. She was the co-founder of the American Denishawn School of Dance and the teacher of several notable performers. Her dance technique and the costumes are closer to Hinduism and especially Indian.

<sup>8</sup> Ted Shawn (1891 - 1972), originally Edwin Myers Shawn, was one of the first notable male pioneers of American modern dance. Along with creating Denishawn with former wife Ruth St. Denis he is also responsible for the creation of the well known all-male company Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers. With his innovative ideas of masculine movement, he is one of the most influential choreographers and dancers of his day. Even he had Indian shades in his dance technique and costumes.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Wigman (1886 - 1973) was a German dancer, choreographer, notable as the pioneer of expressionist dance, Dance Therapy and movement training without pointed shoes. She is considered one of the most important figures in the history of modern dance.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolph Laban (1879 - 1958, Hungary - U.K.). Rudolph Laban is considered by modern dance history as one of the most productive of them. As a choreographer, dancer, teacher and researcher, he achieves to spread his name and ideas widely: first through Europe, then to the United States and nowadays around the whole world.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) was an Austrian neurologist and the father of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred W. Adler (1870 - 1937) was an Austrian medical doctor, psychotherapist and founder of the school of "Individual Psychology". His emphasis was on the importance of feelings of inferiority - the inferiority complex.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Gustav Jung (1875 - 1961), often referred to as C. G. Jung, was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who founded analytical psychology. His work has been influential not only in psychiatry but also in philosophy, anthropology, archaeology, literature and religious studies.

<sup>14</sup> Wilhelm Reich (1897 - 1957) was an Austrian psychoanalyst. Author of several influential books - most notably Character Analysis (1933), The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1933) and The Sexual Revolution (1936) - Reich became known as one of the most radical practitioners of psychiatry. Reich's idea of "muscular armour" - the expression of the personality in the way the body moves - influenced innovations such as body psychotherapy, Gestalt Therapy, bioenergetic analysis and primal Therapy.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Lowen (1910 - 2008) was an American physician and psychotherapist. A student of Wilhelm Reich in the 1940s and early 1950s in New York, he developed bioenergetic analysis, a form of mind-body psychotherapy, with his then-colleague, John Pierrakos (1921 - 2001). Lowen was the founder and former executive director of the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis in New York City.



and Wilhelm Reich. Their work had a major influence on the understanding of the mind and emotions, and the different levels of consciousness in which these exist.

This has been extensively studied by the therapists' world wide as an important topic of research in many universities. The field of Dance Therapy has since developed in its theories, models and approaches, and is practiced all over the world. The community at large is becoming aware of alternative means towards good health and wellbeing, and Dance Therapy makes a valuable contribution to people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures. Dance has a place in everyone's life, and for it to be utilised as a promotion for good health is indeed a worthwhile venture. A career in Dance Therapy is gratifying to the therapist, as they watch with expectation of a positive change in the people who are receiving it. A dancer's career does not have to end at 25 or 30 years of age. The knowledge one has gained through dance training, dance performance and dance teaching all contribute to a wealthy foundation towards the pursuit of an even more challenging and rewarding career in Dance Therapy. So let us all learn, practice and utilise "Dance" for a better and healthy living.

Therapists started experimenting with the psychotherapeutic applications of dance and movement which was categorized as psychotherapy and today it is evolved as 'Dance Movement Therapy' or 'Dance Therapy'. Almost half-a-century ago Dance Movement Therapy as a recognized form of alternative therapies have been evolved from United States in 1940<sup>16</sup>. Few scientific studies have been done to evaluate the effects of Dance Therapy on health, prevention, and recovery from illness. Clinical reports suggest Dance Therapy may be effective in improving self-esteem and reducing stress. As a form of exercise, Dance Therapy can be useful for both physical and emotional aspects of quality of life.

The history of Dance Therapy gives an overview of developments in the United States and Europe. Dance as ritual and healing continues today in America, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa. The history of Dance Therapy is not as properly documented in Britain as in the United States. As Dance Therapy advanced, dance / movement therapists extended their work to all kinds of population and worked with both individuals and groups. Although dance has been a method of expression for centuries, it wasn't until recently that it was characterized as a form of Therapy.

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<sup>16</sup> Tripura Kashyap, *My Body, My Wisdom a handbook of creative Dance Therapy*, Penguin Publications, 2005, p.15.

Nowadays, going beyond these aesthetic and transcendental purposes, exploration of its therapeutic significance is gaining momentum. Even though the merit of cathartic vent dance provides is acknowledged right from earlier stages of its evolution, the historians recapitulate dance largely as a socio-aesthetic phenomena. While few initiatives in understanding the therapeutic value of dance were noticed in the later decades of twentieth century, an active exploration in this arena began only at the dawn of 21st century. Thus, comprehending the therapeutic purposes of dance can be assumed as the contemporary phenomena in its evolution, which is steadily heading towards establishing dance as an alternative therapy.

Practicing dance or implementing Dance Therapy has resulted in many benefits according to the recorded sources. It has been established that Dance Therapy does not have any adverse effects (side effects) and is always beneficial to the individuals rather than creating problems and increasing their illness further. However, it might be time consuming. Dance Therapy is effective with all age groups and can be administered to a wide range of physical and mental ailments.

Dance Therapy is suitable even for a non-dancer or a budding dancer. The emphasis in Dance Therapy is on free movement (not restrictive steps), and expressing one's true emotions. Dance Therapy can be implemented on individuals and also in groups. The individual Therapy helps in expressing the emotions, whereas the group therapy provides emotional support, enhanced communication skills, and appropriate physical boundaries. Therapy can address and resolve a large number of specific concerns, issues, and symptoms.

Therapy is known to us from many years, but it is still not widely being used by people in some parts of the world. In this regard, Music Therapy is a step ahead of Dance Therapy in India. Thanks to *Padmabhushan Dr. Mangalampalli Bala Murali Krishna*, who is one among the latest persons to work on Music Therapy.

*Bhaarat* (India), the birth place of *Ayurveda*, has many healing methodologies. Dance and Music have always been a medium of medication for certain disorders from time immemorial in *Bhaarat* (India). We have roots for this explanation in our *Puranas* and *Vedas*. The effective usage of our age old cultural art forms has been increasing day by day. *Bhaarat* (India) is a land that developed into many disciplines that tackle with the physical and mental states of a human being and keeps everyone fit. One among them is 'Yoga'. *Yoga*, the age old tradition of Indian discipline, has its relationship with the Indian Classical Dance form (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityams*). Many researchers have extensively studied the interrelationship of Indian classical dance (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityam*)

with *Yoga*. Another discipline is Acupuncture, which proves that pressure points are the main concepts in healing any sort of ailments. Likewise in Indian Classical Dance (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityam*) we have “*Paada Bhedas*” [especially when we stamp the foot] which helps us to pressurize some of the points in the body which heals certain ailments. In this context, the *Hastha Mudras* (wrist, palm and fingers), *Greeva Bhedas* (neck), *Siro Bhedas* (head and neck), *Karanas* (different points in the body) may also help in pressurizing certain points in the body which helps in healing ailments like spastic and cerebral palsy. Thus, Therapy through dance is not new to India nor is a concept which has to be invented, but the major need of research is to pinpoint at the process through which these therapies, especially dance can bring in a effective change in a person with particular ailments and scientifically prove it.

Dance Therapy has very recently been introduced in *Bhaarat* (India) and substantial works are yet to be undertaken. Though the concept of Dance Therapy is a new topic to the Indian sub-continent, but it is as old as the birth and evolution of dance. According to *Hindu* mythology, dance has been created by Lord *Brahma* to protect the humans from awful activities and to remove the evil spirits in the common man. This is the beginning of dance which has probably been used as therapy on humans to protect them from illness (evil spirits). Therapy, in the broadest sense, is a term that can be applied to any form of treatment for any illness or disorder. The origin of dance explains that dance has been evolved for therapeutic cause as a remedy to cure the illness (greed, desire, jealousy, anger and pain) of the people. Hence, it can be considered that the main purpose for origin of ‘Dance’ is ‘Therapy’. Thus, the origin of Dance Therapy can be dated back to the origin of Dance (*Natyotpatti*).

Dance Therapy has always been a challenging topic in terms of selecting it as a career apart from performance for dance practitioners. Though the topic of Dance Therapy is not new to Indians, it took quite a long time with respect to its implementation. The prominent dance practitioners who are working on dance therapy and who have converted Dance Therapy as their career include Ambika Kameshwar, Tripura Kashyap, Sohini Chakravarthy and A.V Satyanarayana. They have used movement and expression as the healing components and have been working on it since the last 2 decades. Besides dance movements and expressions there are various other components which have healing effects. Prominent among them are *Hasta Mudras*, *Paada Bhedas*.

The *Hasta Mudras* used in a classical dance (*Sastreeya Nrityam*) are holistic and every *Hasta Mudra* has its specific meaning and usage. The *Hasta Mudras* in dance can also be related to the *Hasta Mudras* used in *Yoga* and in the religious practices of *Hinduism*, *Jainism* and *Buddhism*, which have

their specific characteristics and benefits. The *Hasta Mudras* of dance are used not only to express or communicate a particular meaning, but it is also therapeutic in nature. Research has been undertaken by me to study the therapeutic effect of the *Hasta Mudras*. The *Hasta Mudras* of dance have been correlated to the *Hasta Mudras* of *Yoga, Hinduism, Jainism* and *Buddhism* practices, besides the acupuncture points. A detailed study of the physiology (skeletal, muscular and nervous system) of hand is also undertaken apart from studying the pharmacokinetics. After a structured critical analysis, certain effective *Hasta Mudras* are selected keeping in view the ailments. The *Hasta Mudras* are experimented by implementing them on the individuals with ailments and the effects are recorded. The *Hasta Mudras* are proved to be therapeutic and hence they also act as a mode of healing. It cures certain ailments and keeps the body in perfect fitness.

## CONCLUSION:

Dance is one of the substantial domains which have various advantages concealed in it. It is treated as divine and spiritual in nature and hence, it has been part of various cultural rituals and other social celebrations. It has always been encouraged since ages keeping in view of its various recompenses. Besides communication and entertainment, it has various other benefits that have been explored and studied. Dance can be a mode of Therapy that has various attributes which have to be considered and investigated. Dance Therapy is being accepted now across the globe and is included in the education curriculums starting from Certificate to PhD programs in various universities in USA, UK, Europe and Australia. However, Dance as a mode of Therapy in India (*Bhaarat*) is yet challenging and has to be encouraged in various means and domains as it has various therapeutic benefits. Dance Therapy with its various traits can be an alternative remedy for various ailments, which is its actual purpose of its origin according to sacred text *Natya Sastra*.

The concept of Dance Therapy is yet to be educated to dance professionals, educational and other institutions, individuals etc. Further exploration on Dance Therapy can be done either individually or combining with other attributes like movement, expressions of emotions, music, colour etc. Similarly, there is a need to pursue further research on Dance movement therapy in Indian context and *Rasaabhinaya* Therapy which is the soul of Indian classical dance (*Bhaarateeya Sastreeya Nrityam*). Research can also be conducted with regards to the footwork in dance, as it is observed in the study, that the nerves in the palm and foot play a major role in therapeutic stimulation.

While medication is considered as a quick remedy to most of the ailments, it has its own side effects in many cases. Alternative therapies especially 'Dance Therapy' can be more effective, less expensive and relatively safer method of cure. Thus 'Dance Therapy' can be further researched upon and promoted as an effective alternative therapy.

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