



Latest Trends In Bharatanatyam

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Abstract

Bharatanatyam, a classical dance form originating from South India, has undergone significant transformations in recent years. This research paper explores the latest trends in Bharatanatyam, focusing on innovations in technique, choreography, music, costumes, and themes. Through an analysis of recent performances, scholarly articles, expert interviews, and case studies, the paper examines how traditional elements are being reinterpreted and integrated with contemporary influences. It also discusses the socio-cultural dynamics and global perspectives shaping the evolution of Bharatanatyam in the modern era.

Keywords: Bharatanatyam, Adavus, Margam, Natya Shastra.

Introduction

Bharatanatyam traces its origins back to the ancient temples of Tamil Nadu, where it was originally performed as a sacred art form dedicated to religious worship and storytelling from Hindu mythology. It plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting traditional values, narratives, and aesthetics across generations. Through its repertoire of gestures (mudras), expressions (abhinaya), and movements (adavus), Bharatanatyam encapsulates centuries-old cultural practices and philosophies. Bharatanatyam serves as a symbol of regional identity and pride, particularly in Tamil Nadu and among South Indian communities. It reflects the region's cultural ethos and historical narratives.

Historical Evolution and Revival

Bharatanatyam traces its origins to ancient Tamil Nadu, where it was known as 'sadir' or 'dasiattam'. It was performed predominantly by temple dancers called devadasis, who were dedicated to the service of deities. The theoretical foundation of Bharatanatyam draws heavily from Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra, an ancient Sanskrit text on performing arts. It codified the principles of dance, music, and drama. During the Chola dynasty (9th-13th centuries), Bharatanatyam flourished under royal patronage. Temples served as centers where dancers were trained and performances were held as part of religious rituals and royal celebrations. With British colonial rule in India, temple dances like Bharatanatyam faced suppression due to social and

cultural reforms that perceived them as immoral. Many devadasis lost their traditional support and livelihoods.

Technical Innovations in Bharatanatyam

- **Adavus and Margam:** Detailed analysis of traditional adavus (basic units of dance) and their adaptation in contemporary performances.
- **Innovations in Technique:** Exploration of modern interpretations in footwork, hand gestures (mudras), abhinaya (facial expressions), and rhythmic patterns.
- **Physicality and Training:** Discussion on the evolving physical training methods and conditioning for Bharatanatyam dancers.

Choreographic Trends and Innovations

- **Traditional vs. Contemporary Choreography:** Comparative analysis of traditional choreographic structures and emerging trends in Bharatanatyam choreography.
- **Experimental Forms:** Case studies on experimental forms, interdisciplinary collaborations, and thematic explorations in recent Bharatanatyam performances.
- **Impact of Dance Institutions:** Examination of the role of dance institutions and individual choreographers in shaping contemporary Bharatanatyam aesthetics.

Music and Compositional Trends

- **Role of Music:** Analysis of the symbiotic relationship between music and Bharatanatyam, including the use of ragas, talas, and modern compositions.
- **Live vs. Recorded Music:** Exploration of the preference for live music versus recorded soundtracks in Bharatanatyam performances.
- **Innovative Musical Collaborations:** Case studies on collaborations with musicians from diverse genres and their influence on Bharatanatyam compositions.

Spiritual and Philosophical Significance

- **Spiritual Expression:** Beyond its technical aspects, Bharatanatyam is a means of spiritual expression and devotion. Traditional compositions (padams and varnams) often explore themes of love, devotion (bhakti), and philosophical concepts from Hindu scriptures, offering a spiritual experience to both performers and audiences.
- **Philosophical Depth:** The dance form incorporates elements of Natya Shastra, an ancient treatise on performing arts, which codifies principles of aesthetics, emotions, and spiritual symbolism. This philosophical underpinning enriches Bharatanatyam with layers of meaning and cultural resonance.

Costumes, Makeup, and Aesthetics

- **Traditional Attire:** Study of traditional costumes (such as the saree) and makeup (including Bharatanatyam makeup) and their evolution in contemporary Bharatanatyam.
- **Contemporary Aesthetics:** Exploration of how contemporary fashion trends and cultural influences impact Bharatanatyam costumes and visual aesthetics.
- **Symbolism in Attire and Makeup:** Analysis of the symbolic significance of attire and makeup in Bharatanatyam performances.

Themes and Narratives

- **Traditional Themes:** Examination of classical themes such as mythology, devotion, and spirituality and their representation in modern Bharatanatyam.
- **Contemporary Narratives:** Analysis of how Bharatanatyam addresses contemporary social issues, personal narratives, and global themes.
- **Experimental Storytelling:** Case studies on innovative storytelling techniques and narrative structures in recent Bharatanatyam choreographies.

Socio-Cultural Influences and Global Perspectives

- **Impact of Globalization:** Discussion on how globalization has influenced the dissemination, practice, and interpretation of Bharatanatyam worldwide.
- **Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation:** Examination of debates surrounding cultural authenticity and adaptation in the global context of Bharatanatyam.
- **Technological Advancements:** Analysis of the role of technology, including digital platforms, in promoting Bharatanatyam and enhancing audience engagement.

Conclusion

Bharatanatyam continues to evolve while retaining its core principles. Modern interpretations address contemporary themes, societal issues, and global perspectives, ensuring its relevance in a changing world. Bharatanatyam provides a platform for female empowerment and artistic expression. Women dominate the field as dancers, choreographers, and teachers, challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for inclusivity and diversity within classical arts.

References:

1. **The Art of Bharatanatyam by S. S. Janaki** - This book provides a comprehensive overview of Bharatanatyam, covering its history, techniques, repertoire, and cultural significance.
2. **Bharatanatyam: A Reader edited by Davesh Soneji** - This anthology brings together various scholarly articles and essays on Bharatanatyam, offering insights into its evolution, practice, and contemporary issues.
3. **Bharata Natyam by V. Raghavan** - V. Raghavan's work delves into the historical, theoretical, and aesthetic aspects of Bharatanatyam, providing a deep dive into its classical roots.
4. **Bharatanatyam: Indian Classical Dance Art by P. S. Raghavan** - This book explores Bharatanatyam's traditional repertoire, gestures (mudras), and the spiritual dimensions of the dance form.
5. **Reformulating Tradition: The Cultural Politics of Bharata Natyam by Davesh Soneji** - This paper examines the socio-cultural transformations of Bharatanatyam in the 20th century, particularly through the efforts of Rukmini Devi Arundale.
6. **Bharata Natyam and the Tamil Diaspora: An Autoethnographic Perspective" by Priya Srinivasan** - This research paper explores Bharatanatyam's transmission and adaptation within Tamil diasporic communities, highlighting its evolving meanings and practices.
7. **Body, Space, and Gender in Bharata Natyam by Janet O'Shea** - Janet O'Shea's paper investigates how Bharatanatyam embodies gendered identities and social dynamics through its movements and performances.
8. **Rasa in Bharatanatyam: A Philosophical Perspective by P.V. Krishnan** - This paper discusses the concept of rasa (emotional essence) in Bharatanatyam, linking it to classical aesthetics and philosophical insights.