



TACTILE PERCEPTION METHOD FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN BHARATANATYAM

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on the intervention done on visually impaired and blind children using the Tactile Perception method predominantly, in teaching Bharatanatyam. It is more about adapting the educational environment so that the system is more supportive and responsive to the diverse group of learners. The present study delves into the nuances and intricacies of Bharatanatyam pedagogy and its different frames for the visually impaired. Traditionally dance work is taught primarily through demonstration. In this work with the visually impaired, the intelligence of the body is revalue, and different ways of communicating directly on a physical plane are looked out for. The core of the work lies in the kinaesthetic senses, which are body's own senses of its interior tissues, processes and movements. Primary importance here is given to the sensation of touch. Skin, is the main sense organ worked with. Teaching is often through touch, and learning is largely through the body. This is a solo investigation where the learner is challenged to notice, remember and then recall the precise, translate it into recalled movement, and organize those recollections into a movement phrase. Therefore dance must be made more accessible and immersive for learners as the demand for multi-sensory experiences in dance is ever-increasing what has been discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Dance, bharatnatyam, adavus, nrittahastas

INTRODUCTION

The training in Bharatanatyam begins with the beginners stage where the learners are introduced to the Nritta aspect of dance within the Three fold divisions of Natya. Nritta is often referred to as "pure dance" or abstract dance. It describes the movements of the body. Patterns of movements are created in space and time, which do not convey any emotion, except for joy in executing the movements. The body awareness of the learners are first taught, therefore, with the tactile perception method they are taught the SthanakaBedas(leg

resting positions), Mandala Bedas (leg movements), ShiroBedas (head movements), Hasta Prachar (Palm positions). Further mobility of the fingers are taught where the learners are introduced to AsamyutaHastas (single hand gestures), SamyutaHastas (Double hand gestures) and NrittaHastas (movements of hands in gestures). The training of Adavus (the basic unit of dance) is also a part of the beginners teaching, where they are introduced to leg, hand and body movements, which gradually introduces them to spatial awareness. The perspective that touches is the fundamental median for knowing. Tactile perception, the ability to sense and modulate touch, is fundamental to creating a relationship with a teacher. There are more nerve endings from the hands to the brain than from any other part of the body. What the hands know is a kind of knowledge that does not translate easily into words. The complex intersection of sensing helps in understanding body awareness, spatial orientation and mobility and flexibility of the body. In addition to this the learners also introduced the improve their skills on finger dexterity and also two hands, two legs, hand and legs, and entire body coordination.

In an era where children are engaged in actively engaging in the learning process, the pedagogy and classroom practices need to go beyond what is learnt. Caring for children is the cornerstone of human progress. Dance is the basic component of personal and societal development, and no child should be left without the opportunity to learn and practice dance. Access to the art is a right for every child and person in particular.

The children intervened here are Visually Impaired and Blind children from rural areas of Karnataka, who are alien to the concept of Bharatanatyam. The importance of dance education is provided to them, helping them understand the benefits they will experience resulting in a better quality of life.

This study is based on the intervention done on visually impaired and blind children using the Tactile Perception method predominantly. Since this is the first pedagogy intervention offered to them, the study focuses on how well they perceive the information given to them. In India the dance structure is the tradition, shape and style of the movements. The essential framework has always been sustained.

BHARATANATYAM

Bharatanatyam is a classical art form of the southern state of India. The prototype of this art form is ancient, as written about it in the NatyaShastra. It began as a temple dance, evolved as a court dance and at present a covert art form. Bharatanatyam is an extraction of the essence of the interpretative art of Indian Dance. (Dr. Raghavan). The program of Bharatanatyam as presented now is just about 200 years old, though the form is ancient. From the beginning of time nearly 5000 years in historical terms in India, the dance has been evolving, changing and exploring. Bharatanatyam is a very symmetrical style of dance and is logically structured. The ability to consciously listen and respond with body movements is increased by underlying rhythmic component (tala), sound exemplified by the mnemonic dance syllables (adavusollukattu), drumming (mrudangasollukattu), and the musical compositions of the text. All the inherent sensory perceptions of the dancer comes to play.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The teaching methodology must address diversity in learning styles. It must concentrate on the sensory path ways that students use to learn. The teaching is divided into three stage : Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced training. Through Tactile Perception method the learners are introduced to body awareness, spatial awareness and better mobility of the limbs of the body. In this method, the two bodies are in constant contact with each other. It is a part of the method of remedial teaching in dance. To correct the bodily positions, postures and movements, touch of the teacher is a necessary factor.

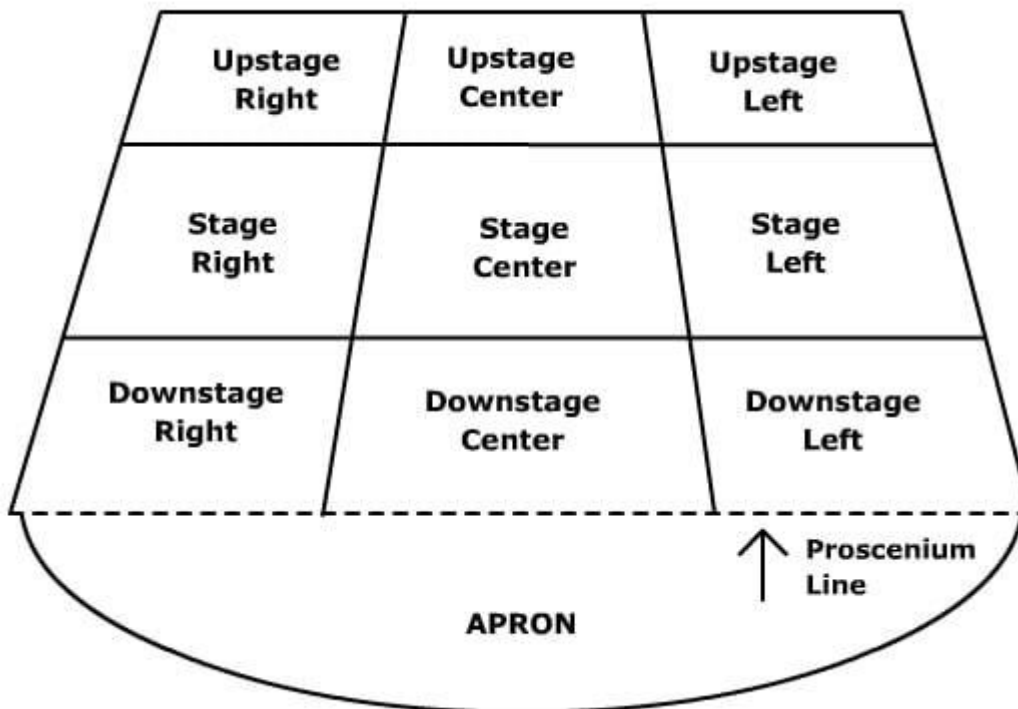
TactileModelling : The dynamic movements are taught to the learners in this method. This method is hand under hand instruction where the teacher places their hands under the hands of the learner, and also hand over hand, where the teacher places their hand over the learners hands guiding them to execute the movement.

PeerBuddysystem: Here the students are paired with familiar students who work with each other and get a better understanding of the movements. The buddies are learning the movements of dance at the same pace and are allowed to teach, correct and learn from each other.

Tactile guide ropes : Ropes are taped to the ground marking the performance space, and also dividing it in length and breadth. The length, breadth and the centre are marked with different textures so that the learners can differentiate between them and locate their position precisely.

Tapper : Provide a tap on the learners shoulder while closing into the boundaries.Keep different number of taps on the shoulder for change in movements to a particular direction..

Tactile Cues : Create different surfaces on the floor to mark the classroom environment, where they tend to learn tactual discrimination.The 9 areas of the proscenium stage are marked with different tactile cues tapped to the floor.



KinaestheticInstruction: After requesting permission to touch the learners body, move the learners body to correct positions helping them learn the correct way. Explain how each movement is taught by the sensation of touch.

ContactImprovisation : the teachers here may help the learner to put their hands on another dancers waist or shoulder to feel the kinaesthetic concept of the movement, therefore both the teacher and learner move and execute the movement together.

BEGINNERSLEVEL

Bharatanatyam is a dance form which is filled with intricacies of objective technique and subjective aesthetics. Exponents have thought about this in the last century and have devised a methodical pedagogy for this purpose. The doyen of modern Bharatanatyam, Kalakshetra's Rukmini Arundale gave a framework to the present day teaching- learning style. It is just like how letters come together to form words, which in turn make meaningful sentences and eventually lead up to prose that communicate even complex thoughts and ideas.

A dancer starts his/ her routine with exercises to warm up her body and make it flexible, namaskāra (prayer to the almighty, mother Earth, teacher and the esteemed and learned audience)

According to the mirror of gesture (Coomaraswamy and Duggirala 18), the movements of head are nine in number. The Gurus who are skilled in the knowledge of dancing have named the nine gestures as Sama, Udvahita, Adhomukha, Alolita, Dhuta, Kampita, Paravrtta, Utksipta, Parivahita. The names of each ShiroBhedam's practices and the usages have been mentioned in the below table.

1.	Sama(level)	Not moving, not bent, nor raised.Same level
2.	Udvahita	Raising the head up and keeping it still.
3.	Adhomukha	The head is bent down.
4.	Alolita	The head is moved in a circle.
5.	Dhuta	The head is turned to and fro from right to left and left to right
6.	Kampita	The head is shaken up and down
7.	Paravrtta	The head is turned sideways
8.	Utksipta	The head is turned to sidewise and upwards.
9.	Parivahita	The head is relocated sidewise like a fan.

Different positions of the feet with different movements are described in accordance to the old tradition. The basic positions and movements are four in number. They are, Mandala (posture), Uthplavan (leaping movement or jumping), Bhramari (flight movement), and Paadhacharee (cari and gait) (Ghosh 67). Mandala (standing postures) is subdivided to

Mandalas and Sthanakas or sixteen modes of standing and resting. A standing posture has ten varieties. The resting posture has six varieties.

Varieties of standing postures (Mandala)

1.	Sthanaka	Standing with Samapada position in the same line. Ardha-chandra hands are placed on the hip.
2.	Ayata	Place the left foot before the right one at a distance of one cubit and a half, make Sikhara with the left hand and Katakamukha with the right one.
3.	Alidha	Place the left foot before the right one at a distance of one cubit and a half, make Sikhara with the left hand and Katakamukha with the right one.
4.	Pratyalidha	If hands and feet are interchanged in the Alidha posture
5.	Prankhana	Putting one foot by the side of another heel and having Kurma hands
6.	Prerita	Putting one foot violently (on the earth) at a distance of one cubit and a half from another and standing with knees bent and one of them put across another and holding the Sikhara hand in the breast and showing the Pataka hand stretched out.
7.	Svastika	The right foot should be put across the left foot, and the right hand should be put across the left hand.
8.	Motita	Rest on the earth with the forepart (toes) of the feet and touch the earth with each knee alternately and make Tripataka with both the hands.
9.	Samasuci	A posture in which the earth is touched with toes and knees
10.	Parsvasuci	A posture in which the earth is touched with toes and by one knee on one side.

Varieties of Resting Postures (Sthanaka)

1.	Samapada	Standing with two feet alike.
2.	Ekapada	Standing with one foot and laying the other across the knee of that foot.
3.	Nagabandha	Standing like a serpent intertwining two feet and two hands together.
4.	Aindra	Standing with one leg bent and the other leg and knee raised and hands hanging naturally.
5.	Garuda	In the Alldha posture one knee is put on the ground and the two hands jointly show the gesture.
6.	Brahma	Sitting with one foot on one knee and another foot on another knee.

According to Bharatanatyam, Angika, the expression through the body, the face and movements are of the most essential aspect. Mudra or hand gestures of Bharatanatyam are classified as AsamyuthaHastha (single hand gestures) and SamyuthaHastha (double hand gestures). There are twenty-eight AsamyuthaHasthas and twenty-four SamyuthaHasthas. Each Hastha has a defined usage called Viniyoga that are Sanskrit Shlokas codified in the Natyashastra.

According to the dance textbook “The mirror of getsture”, there are the twentyeight of AsamyuthaHastha. They are Pataka, Tripataka, Ardha-pataka, Kartari-mukha, Mayura, Ardha-candra, Arala, Sukatundaka, Musti, Sikhara, Kapittha, Kataka-mukha, Suci, Candra-kala, (Padma-) Kosa, Sarpa-sirsa, Mrga-sirsa, Simhamukha, Langula, Sola-padma, Catura, Bhramara, Hamsasya, Hamsa-paksa, Samdamsa, Mukula, Tamracuda, Trisula.

And there are twenty-four SamyuthaHasthas. They are Anjali, Kapota, Karkata, Svastika, Dola, Puspaputa, Utsanga, Siva-linga, Kataka-varadhana, Kartarisvastika, Shakata, Shankha, Chakra, Samputa, Pasha, Kilaka, Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Garuda, Naga-bandha, Khatva, Bherunda, and Avahittha

Adavus :Adavu is the first step that Bharatanatyam which the students of Bharatanatyam a practice compulsorily and understand the position of feet thoroughly. It is a basic necessity to form a strong foundation. Generally, Adavus are classified into several groups having sub divisions with variations and different permutations. The important rule to be observed is that all the Adavu are to be performed by right foot first followed by the left in all three degrees of speed. They must be performed in such a position that an outward bending of the thigh and the knees are very important. The postures to be used in Bharatanatyam consist of three varieties namely Sama, Aramandi and Muzhumandi.

Performance of Adavu “The units which emerge as a coordinated pattern of movement of the feet, thighs, torso, arms, hands, neck, head and the eyes is known as Adavu” (Kapila 24).

Adavus are usually performed in three speeds. There is a slow tempo or VilambithaLaya, a medium tempo or Madhya Laya and fast tempo or DurithaLaya. There are many varieties and different names of Adavu.

1. **Thattadavu** : This is the first set of Adavus in Bharatanatyam. “Tattu” means “to strike.” This Adavu is performed by striking the floor flatly with the base of the sole, one after the other. The weight of the body is equally distributed. ThattAdavu is performed by Aramandaliposture (Ara-half) and it is maintained throughout. There are eight variations in this group. The hands hold Pataka by the back of the hand placing on the waists.

2. **Nattadavu** : This is the second of the group. “Nattu” means “to stretch or place.” Stretching can be either in front, sideways or at an angle. The knees are stretched with the right foot stretched to the right with the heel touching the floor which is known as “Ancita.” Left foot is held on the floor in half bent posture (Aramandi). Katakamukha, Tripataka, and Alapadma are mostly used in this Adavu.

3. **PakkaAdavus** : This Adavu has a combination of foot movements which include the striking of the foot on the ground as well as the placing of a toe on the ground. This set is one of the main Adavus which highlights the aspect of space utilization. For most of these Adavus provide scope for movement to the front, to the back and to the sides of the stage. The mudras used are Katakamukha, Pataka, Tripataka, Dolaa and Alapadma.

4. **KudhittuMettadavu** : This set of Adavu gets its name from the foot movement. In Tamil, ‘kudittu’ means to jump and “mettu” means “to stamp.” That is, in these Adavus, the dancer jumps on both toes simultaneously and then stamps down with both heels. This is performed in Mandala posture only.

5. **SarikkalAdavu** This set of Adavus is mainly done in the SamaSthana position. “Sarika” is to move foot without lifting it from the ground. One of the feet moves either on the side, front, or back while the other is dragged near the former without being lifted up. After the pause, the last beat is accidentally by the “Tadita” feet variation (a small jump wherein the entire body which is first lifted on the heels is fractionally raised off the ground)

6. **Kudhittutattuadavu** : The main foot movements in this Adavu is striking with the entire foot on the ground (Tattu), jumping on the toes (Kutthu or Kuditthu) and finally the lowering of the heel. It involves a slight jump and is done in Mandala sthana.

7. **KorvaiAdavu** : This set of Adavus is also known by the name of KorvaiAdavu. The name “Korvai” suggests that these Adavus essentially combine a variety of movements of the feet, the body and the hands. Different variations are woven together. The prominent movements involved in these Adavus include Mandi posture, Alidha and Pratyalidha stances, and also the striking of the foot (Tattu) and jumping on the toes (Kuditthu). Simple swirls which resemble Bhramari movements also form a part of these Adavus. The NirttaHastasmay used are Sikhara, Katakamukha, Pataka, Tripataka and Alapadma. In addition, Mushti and Suchi are used secondarily.

8. **SarukkalAdavu** :The word “Sarukkal” in Tamil means “to slide.” This Adavu is the movement which allows the foot to slip. Letting one-foot slip or Samaskhalitham wherein both feet are allowed to slip freely. The weight of the body is transferred completely on to one foot which is in front of the other. Hasthas used in this Adavu are Sikhara, Katakamukha, Pataka, and Alapadma.

9. **KarthariAdavu** :ThisAdavu is made up of leaping and jumping. Hasthas used in this set of Adavus are Katakamukha, Alapadma, and Kartharimukha.

10. **MandiAdavu** : In Tamil, “Mandi” means “to sit” and “Muzhu” means “full.” The Adavu is executed in Muzhumandi (fully sitting position), sitting on raised heels. This set of Adavus

makes extensive use of knees, and importance is given to the body resting on its toes. Hasthas used in these Adavus are Sikhara, Katakamukha, Tripataka and Alapadma.

11. **TeermanamAdavu** :This is usually used at the end of a Korvai, the final of any part of the concert number. Since they are presented at the end, they are sometimes called as MukutaAdavus or crowning Adavu which come after or at the end of an elaborate Adavu pattern. Usually, they are done thrice to enhance their effectiveness.

Samples

This study was conducted on Visually Impaired learners who were of adolescent age, from the residential special schools of Bangalore, but are originally from the rural parts of Karnataka. This included only visually impaired learners who had no other disability, partially and completely blind were included, learners who were born visually impaired as well as those who acquired this disability were included. And mainly those who were keen on learning the art form were included in the class.

CONCLUSION

The visually impaired with the practice of Tactile Perception method were able to learn and practice the beginner level training of Bharatanatyam at ease. Through the sensation of touch they have been able to grasp all the systematic codified movements of the art form. Repeated number of sessions were conducted to work on their muscle memory and help them retain what they have learnt. Therefore, creating a niche for the visually impaired in the field of Bharatanatyam.

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