

Impact on Technically Teaching Bharatanatyam (Indian Classical Dance) Through Natyakrama among Hearing Impaired Children

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Abstract: *The present study was an attempt to implement and teach bharatantayam technically through use of natyakrama for hearing impaired children. During this study the participants were taught bharatantayam dance movements concentrating on their sensory motor skills, gross and fine motor skills, cognitive, social and perceptual skills. The participants were made to perform and practice predominantly those bharatantayam movements, gestures, postures and positions which aided the participant to improve the specified abilities and skills. After therapeutic session the result reported a significant difference. The psychological boosting was maximum in the present study. An attempt was made to develop a tool to analyse the improvement statically which would boost the participant and the researcher.*

Keywords: *Bharatanatyam, body awareness, cognitive skills, natyakrama, hearing impaired children, social skills, perceptual skills.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a significant role in the process of healing the mind, body and spirit. Few studies have indicated that cultural traditions, such as religious rituals, prayer, meditation, movements as well as dance, have therapeutic aspects that positively affect one's mental, physical, spiritual self (Parker, 2006; Lopez, 2007; Rea, 2004; Wernic, 2009). Kashyap (2005), one of the pioneers of DMT in India, wrote that these cultural dance forms are ways people express themselves and communicate with others. According to her, the Indian classical dances consist of "9 Rasa, or emotions, that are extensively used for emotional expression, namely love, laughter, compassion, courage, fear, sorrow, disgust, surprise, and calm" (Kashyap, 2005, p. 41) and spiritual self (Parker, 2006; Lopez, 2007; Rea, 2004; Wernic, 2009).

Hearing is critical to speech and language development, communication and learning. There are four major ways in which hearing loss affects children. It causes delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills (speech and language), reduced academic achievement, social isolation and poor self-concept.

For children hearing is key to learning spoken language, performing academically, and engaging socially. The gap in academic achievement between children with normal hearing and those with hearing loss usually widens as they progress through school. Hearing loss poses a barrier to education and social integration. It may also have an impact on slow vocabulary development and on vocational choices. As such children with hearing loss can benefit greatly from being identified early in life and offered appropriate interventions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 60% of childhood hearing loss could be avoided through prevention measures. When unavoidable, interventions are needed to ensure that children reach their full potential through rehabilitation, education and empowerment.

Early identification of hearing loss in children when followed by timely and appropriate interventions can minimize developmental delays and facilitate communication, education and social development. The social problems appear to be more frequent in children with hearing loss.

Recent research indicates that Indian classical dance (bharatantayam) can be used as a therapeutic tool and as played a great role improving the overall development of participants specially in their coordination, concentration and expression. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to analyse a case of effective bharatantayam dance instruction for the hearing-impaired individuals. Using dance techniques (natyakrama), the aim was to help hearing impaired individuals overcome their obstacles. The objective of the study was to identify the avenues by which those children who are impaired of hearing can be trained in bharatantayam and help them to learn to communicate by means of expression and also increase the understanding and development of movement for intent, content or expressivity. At the same time this study aimed to empower the disabled with the confidence needed to tackle day to day life.

II. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to analyse a case of effective teaching of bharatanatyam for hearing impaired individuals. The study was conducted with hearing impaired children who attended regular school, were willing to learn bharatanatyam and could spare time and energy.

A total of 12 female hearing impaired children (moderate sensorineural hearing loss) were enrolled. They were all in the age group of 7-10 yrs. Permission was taken from the school and parents to participate in this study. The total tenure of the study was 9 months and in a week 3 days were allotted for the study. Each day 1 hour was spent with the children.

The participants were not aware of bharatanatyam. The first session participant was asked to observe the steps which were performed. The first lesson NAMASKAR kriya was shown to them and were asked to imitate the same. They were taught the hand movement first without mudras then with mudras and leg movement and then the coordinated movement. It was challenging to make the session more interesting for the participants' theoretical explanation for namaskar kriya was explained to them.

For the hearing impaired children, vision is a primary method of learning and performing dance. During the session sign language, visual cues were used as the spoken word to help them understand rhythm of dance movements. Tactility was also utilised as a teaching aid. Initially practice started with simple dance movements and hand gestures. Surprisingly the participants were attracted to the beauty created through gestures and body movements gradually the level was increased where the fast movements were used where speed changes from slow to fast, gaits of animals, use of foot in various rhythmic patterns, expressions such as anger, fear, cry etc were also included to make the session interesting.

Each day before the dance sessions the participant started with a simple body warm up sessions involving body movements which included some simple yoga postures. Fine motor exercises were taught to make their finger and wrists flexible so that it's easier to articulate.

In order to get body awareness and control of the movement thatadavu was demonstrated. The participant was asked to observe the movement and imitate it. It was demonstrated in slow speed then speed was increased gradually.

In naatadavu, the entire adavu was demonstrated with complete body coordination in slow speed then upper limb movements without mudras, with mudras, lower limb movements without stance followed by with stance. From basic naatadavus to advance adavus (natyakrama) were demonstrated as the session progressed.

In advance activities Abhinaya (visual grasping) of various emotions such as laugh, anger, fear, cry all the nava rasas; things such as tree, water, air, fire, flower; gaits of various animals like tiger, horse, snake, deer, elephant, peacock were taught to understand the changes taking place in facial expression or body language.

III. RESULTS

The objective of the study was to identify the avenues by which those children who are impaired of hearing can be trained in bharatanatyam and help them to learn to communicate by means of expression and also increase the understanding and development of movement for intent, content or expressivity. They were totally 12 hearing impaired girls, the group social interaction skills were strengthened, the imitation skills improved as session progressed. They could relate the hand gestures with their sign language. Statically there was significant difference in positive direction between the pre and post sessions of the focussed group in the gross fine motor skills, sensory motor skills, perceptual motor skills, cognitive skills, conceptual skills, visual grasping, memory skills.

There was remarkable development in the behavioural pattern of children. The children enjoyed the dance sessions.

IV. DISCUSSION

All the senses are engaged when people dance. People stimulate kinaesthetic senses as they diagnose the body placement and motions they are making. The visual sense reacts to the image they see, while the auditory is stimulated as they respond to the sounds they make or hear, as well as to music. The tactile sense is stimulated in touching one another. Such multi-sensory experiences are necessary in leading people to act in natural way.

In present study, it was proved that bharatanatyam therapy has helped in improving the overall development of students specially the coordination, concentration and expression has been enhanced. It becomes easier to work if group is homogeneous, consisting of same age group children, same level of functioning and same disability. Constant encouragement and positive feedback to participant throughout the session is necessary to help the group respond better. The breaking down of movements into smaller movements was necessary for the children to understand the movements.

This study was conducted for 9 months, there was significant changes noticed in each participant .They could express their feeling comfortably with others. Parents and teacher’s observation reported a good social and cognition skills.

Benefits

Bharatanatyam has a great deal of therapeutic value, especially for the Deaf or hard of hearing. It’s not only a way to express emotions, but also a technique to release stress. It creates a healthy environment in which to express fears, explore, feelings and question beliefs -- activities that have been shown as beneficial to people regardless of hearing ability. It also expands their social connections, contributing to overall mental, physical and emotional health. It is a spiritual practice of self-discovery illuminating the essence of life on and off the dance floor.

Integration within the mind-body opens a gateway for the spirit to expand. Dancing is a catalyst into an embodied presence where spiritual awakening occurs. Deep experiences in soulful states provide insights into identity and purpose. Dancing helps people experience the bigger picture by returning to and connecting with their truest essence.

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