

DANCING WITHOUT BODIES: PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMANCE IN DIGITAL SPACES

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*PRASTHĀVANĀ*¹: ABSTRACT

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The practice of teaching in an online composition class eliminates the visibility and immediacy the teacher and interpersonal interactivity in a classroom community. This may be problematic for effective online learning. The problem that online instructors might face is one that some traditional Odissi dance teachers also experience. In order to explore the conflict between tradition and mediations with technology, this study focuses on Odissi, an Indian classical dance and examines how digital technologies of teaching, like CDs, DVD, online videos, and synchronous videos are transforming the practice and teaching of this traditional dance. Surveys, interviews, and qualitative research of the field of Odissi dance revealed that technologizing the dance might be unavoidable; but to some practitioners it may be disrupting Odissi's traditional values. In my own composition pedagogy, I find that simulating the traditional learning experiences in an online classroom can be helpful in enhancing the learning and teaching experience in an online composition classroom. My research reasserts the position of the teacher in an online pedagogic space and argues that the presence or simulated presence of bodies might be vital in learning and composing collaboratively. These findings have implications for composition pedagogy and computers and composition because it demonstrates the complicated relationship between traditional and online teaching, revealing the impact of mediation on these pedagogic practices.

¹ Gist of the play is articulated by the narrator in the beginning of Sanskrit drama.

Aangikam Bhuvanam Yasya

“Your Body is the Universe”

(from Natyashastra)

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² Sanskrit word for “gratitude”.

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***KUSHILAV SUCHI*³: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Abhinaya: This means expression. This is a part of the Odissi repertoire, which is expressional.

Movements of the body, gestures and emotions depict a story. In Indian classical dance, these stories come from Hindu mythologies. However, dancers also choreograph on non-religious themes.

Angika: In Sanskrit language, this translates to “belonging to the body.” According to

Natyashastra, or the treatise of Indian dramatics, Angika refers to the meaning-making gestures that the dancers perform, using their bodies in order to tell a story. Dancers use their eyes, hands, legs, head, chest, feet, etc. to tell a story.

Avatar: In Sanskrit, the meaning of this word corresponds to the words “to descent.” In the

Hindu mythology, the deity Vishnu took various forms, or avatars, and descended on the earth at various points of time. The shapes, which Vishnu took, were that of the fish, the turtle, the boar, the half-man and half-lion, the dwarf, the bearer of an axe, a virtuous king, a warrior bearing a plough and the Enlightened Man (the Buddha). The last avatar will be Kalki and according to this myth, he will come on a horse.

³ This means “a list of characters in classical Sanskrit drama (Natyashastra). This is a list of Sanskrit, Hindi and Oriya words, which I will use in the dissertation. Readers can use this list for quick reference. Since these concepts are participants in the “drama” that the dissertation presents, I decided to use this metaphor. This glossary does not aim to present a complete explanation of the terms. I simply define them according to their specific use in context of this dissertation.

Bandha: This is an acrobatic form of dance practiced in Eastern India by the gotipuas. Guru Maguni Das, a gotipua Guru, revived this style of dance. Several Gotipuas perform this group dance by forming different structures with their bodies. Ancient temple walls of Orissa bear sculptures that denote bodies forming pyramidal shapes. This dance style derives from the concept found in these sculptures.

Bhava: These are emotions aroused in the dancer when he/she performs an expressional dance.

Geeta Govinda: A 12th Century poet from Orissa (India), Jayadeva, wrote these verses on the love play of the Hindu deities Radha and Krishna. The Maharis of temples used to perform dance while singing these verses from this Sanskrit text.

Gotipua: In Odissi, male dancers perform a version of dance called “Gotipua” dance. “Goti” means one, and “pua” means boy in Oriya language. In this tradition, the boys dance dressed as girls.

Guru: Guru is the Master. He/she is an important figure in the pedagogic culture of the Indian subcontinent. Traditionally, the Guru shares a sacred relationship with the student.

Guru-Shishya Tradition: This is the ancient master-student tradition.

Hindu (also Hinduism): It is the religion followed by a majority of people in the Indian subcontinent.

Jagannath: Odissi dancers primarily worship Jagannath during a dance performance. This Hindu deity is represented by a stump of wood with two more wood pieces (representing hands) jutting out from the two sides. The round eyes are the most characteristic features of this deity. Maharis danced in the temple of Jagannath in the coastal town of Puri in eastern India.

Jayadeva: A 12th Century poet from Orissa (India), Jayadeva, wrote Geeta Govinda, These are lyrical verses on the love play of the Hindu deities Radha and Krishna. The Maharis of temples used to perform dance while singing these verses from this Sanskrit text.

Krishna: This is the Hindu deity. He has blue-hued skin, holds a flute, and often accompanies his beloved Radha.

Labanotation: There is a method of depicting dance through a series of images. These images are symbols that try to record each move. This is somewhat like the way musicians use symbols to preserve the notes of a song. This is the Labanotation method. Dance scholar Laban developed it.

Mahari: Maharis or female temple dancers originally practiced Odissi dance as an offering to God. Maharis were married to the deity of the temple where they served. The etymological origin of the word “Mahari” is debatable. Practitioners of the dance believed it to have come from “mahat nari”. This means “a great woman”. Shashimani Devi is the last living Mahari of Orissa.

Mardala: This is another name for the musical instrument Pakhawaj. These are drums with two opposite ends, and they are the primary musical instruments used in Odissi dance. Mardalas keep the rhythm during the performance.

Mudra: Meaningful hand gestures are Mudras. Dancers use these gestures to tell a story. Sometimes these are used only for aesthetic purposes during the dance and do not depict any meaning. Ancient religious rituals used Mudras to invoke different powers of nature. Yogic practices use Mudras to invoke positive vibes in the body.

Natyashastra: At around 400 B.C., Bharatmuni wrote *Natyashastra*. It is a book on theories of dramatics and artistic performances. Indian classical theatre and classical dances adhere to the theories of movement, expression and performance described in this book.

Odissi: Odissi is a dance belonging to the eastern Indian state of Orissa. It is an ancient dance that declined in the British colonial era but revived in the postcolonial era to become one of the most widely practiced Indian classical dances.

Orissa: This is a state in the eastern part of India.

Oriya or Orissan: This refers to the language and customs of the people living in Orissa, an eastern state of India.

Pakhawaj: These are drums with two opposite ends, and they are the primary musical instruments used in Odissi dance. Mardalas keep the rhythm during the performance.

Radha: Radha is the companion of the Hindu deity Krishna. Geeta Govinda portrays her as the heroine of the verses.

Rasa: An artist inspires *rasa* in audience that witnesses her emotional state of being. Rasa is the emotion that the audience shares with the artist in the course of a performance.

Sanskrit: Sanskrit is an old Indo-Aryan language. Most Indian languages originate in this language.

Shishya: This is the Sanskrit word for disciple.

Shiva: He is the Hindu God of Destruction. According to the *Natyashastra*, Shiva is the originator of Dance. He is a part of the divine trinity of the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer.

Vishnu: Vishnu is the Hindu deity of Preservation. According to the Hindu mythology, he adopts shapes (or *avatars*) to descent upon the earth at various points in time. He is a part of the divine trinity of the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer.

Chapter 1: *MANGALĀCHARAN*

INRODUCTION: PREVIEW AND SCOPE

1.1 Introduction and Scope

Within the last three decades, advances in computing have impacted pedagogies related to the teaching of traditional arts. Composition scholars have explored the problems of online teaching and have sought solutions that can remove the problems caused by the physical absence of the teacher and students in mediated pedagogies. When teaching happens through online courses or training videos, the teacher and students are no longer directly interacting with one another. In online classrooms, participants forge new relationships within the pedagogic “space.” In a classroom where there is no direct physical contact between teachers and the students, some of the positive outcomes of face-to-face pedagogies might be lost. These problems can include fostering immediate and personal involvement with the students and creating a collaborative learning environment.

I have attempted to respond to the problems of online learning and teaching by reflecting on the pedagogic values of a traditional practice that is a part of my cultural identity. In my own online teaching practices, I value the relationship between the instructors and students and the space of learning. Mine is not a new story. My story is not newly written. It is a contemporary story of a new and old interfaces that can help us investigate a contemporary question: how are traditional arts, such as Odissi dance and writing, preserved, practiced, and taught across various media? And with what consequences?

The presence of computers in pedagogical spaces still has not completely replaced the importance of the immediate presence of the teacher and the “sacred”-ness of ritualistic space where composition pedagogy and practice is performed. This dissertation shows how digitally mediated pedagogies of Odissi dance can shed light on conversations concerning digitally mediated pedagogies. It asserts that the instructor’s presence may be pivotal in creating engaging collaborative learning spaces for students. To demonstrate this, I detail the ways in which digital technologies have transformed the teaching and performance of traditional dance when remediated in videos, the blogosphere, and in virtual performative and pedagogical spaces such as Second Life⁴ (SL) and online dance teaching websites. These mediations have a controversial though important influence on the survival of traditional dance performance and teaching. The digital mediation of traditional pedagogies may be potentially harmful to underlying values of sacredness that most Indian classical dancers often associate with this practice. In traditional pedagogy, such as Odissi dance, the teacher and the student are engaged in direct interpersonal interactions in a close classroom space. The moments of collaboration between students are also immediate. I found in my qualitative research study, that in the act of teaching and learning dance, most practitioners value the immediacy of the bodies in an exclusive “sacred” space.

These findings speak to current conversations in computers and composition. Although the learning goals and outcomes of dance and composition classrooms are not the same, my

⁴ Second Life is a virtual world where users represent themselves as Avatars and engage in activities such as building houses, socializing, dancing and so on. Classical dancing practices in Second Life simulate real life classical dance, though material body is absent in the practice. Digitalized dance involves the mediation of moving human bodies into digital ones.

cultural experience with the traditional and mediated practices of Indian classical dance shaped my approach towards online teaching. In spite of the differences in the values, contexts, and cultural situations, the problems faced by teachers in these contexts are similar, such as the lack of interpersonal engagement and community building with students. Understanding traditional pedagogic values in non-traditional classrooms can be helpful in addressing some of the problems of online teaching.

In the remainder of the chapter, I make a case that the practice of teaching in an online composition class eliminates the visibility and immediacy of the teacher and interpersonal interactivity in a classroom community. This may be problematic for effective online learning. The problem that online instructors might face is one that traditional Odissi dance teachers often experience, too. The dissertation seeks to understand this transformation of pedagogy in the context of traditional dance and in doing so provides insights into composition pedagogy and practices. Surfacing the tensions between traditional and mediated performances in Odissi dance helped me understand how I can overcome these problems in my online instructional practices.

Mediated performance and dancing in virtual spaces are non-traditional practices that open up problems and possibilities for the performative and pedagogic practice of the art. This project opens up space for critical conversations on digitally mediated pedagogies. I found in my field study that several practitioners understand the mediation of the ancient art of Odissi dance through technological tools as contradictory to the traditional practice, where the interpersonal presence and immediacy of the bodies are central to learning. The use of media technologies has created tension and suspicion among the practitioners of traditional pedagogy. The decentralization of the instructor's position in an online classroom can result in the loss of interpersonal interactivity and impact the teacher-student relationships. I argue that the

instructor's role in an online classroom is vital as a facilitator of activities that simulate the human interactivity that characterizes traditional teaching. Instructors can begin to address the problem of their own invisibility by videos and images, and holding synchronous sessions with students, but these remedies may not be enough to reclaim the important relationships between students and teachers.

In the next section, I present the theoretical overview of this project to construe the forms of remediation of traditional learning by exploring the positions of some of the scholars in the field of computers and composition concerning the role of the instructor's presence in online pedagogy. This will pave the way for understanding the problems of mediation and tradition in Odissi dance, and problems of mediation in online composition pedagogy. In order to understand traditional and mediated Odissi dance pedagogic and performative practices, I interacted with several practitioners of Odissi dance. In this chapter, I will describe my methodology and methods of participant observation, survey, and interview of practitioners of the field. The chapter ends with an overview of the remainder of the dissertation.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Like Odissi dance practitioners who have experienced the impact of new technologies on teaching, scholars of computers and composition have explored the tension between traditional, face-to-face, and digitally mediated pedagogies. Like Odissi dancers, these scholars have urged instructors and other scholars to examine the impact of mediated pedagogy on learning and teacher-student relationships. Over the past few decades, compositionists have explored and debated the problems of the marginalization of the teacher, the lack of interpersonal relationships, and the disengagement of students in computer classrooms and in online pedagogies.

Using mediational tools in writing instruction can open up exciting possibilities such as collaboration, distance education, and accessibility of education. Nevertheless, digital mediation of composition pedagogies to include technological tools in online and hybrid composition pedagogy has brought forth its own set of problems. For instance, Michael Palmquist, Kate Kiefer, James Hartvigsen, and Barbara Goodlew, in "Contrasts: Teaching and Learning about Writing in Traditional and Computer Classrooms," carry out an empirical study to show the possibilities of a mediated classroom. The study highlights the pedagogical benefits of a transformation and decentralization of a mediated classroom, but does not explore the students' learning experience in an online classroom. On the other hand, some compositionists seem to resist the use of technology in class by highlighting the disadvantages of mediated composition pedagogy. In "Online Education Horror Stories Worthy of Halloween: A Short List of Problems and Solutions in Online Instruction," David Hailey, Keith Grant-Davie, and Christine Hult create a list of things that can go wrong in an online teaching. For instance, the facelessness anonymity in an online classroom can lead to uncivil interactions amongst students or flare-ups with teachers indicated by harsh language and all caps. They suggest that at every point, a teacher needs to translate the face-to-face teaching experience in order to survive the act of teaching online. The authors propose direct personal intervention as the most effect method of dousing frustrations in an online classroom. They write, "Remember that the telephone is both an online tool and an excellent fire extinguisher" (395). A conversation on the telephone or Skype assures the student of the presence of an instructor and takes away the "coldness" that s/he might associate with online learning. They provide a list of situations where they recommend direct interpersonal interaction with the student in order to process of teaching. This article can be deliberately scary for someone looking for tips and support for online teaching, and at the same

time is indicative of a tension in the transforming academic culture and pedagogies in virtual space.

The lack of direct “human” connections in class collaborations and the absence of an exclusive pedagogic space might be problematic in the process of learning. The presence of computers in classrooms has compromised the importance of the immediate presence of the teacher and the ritualistic space where composition pedagogy and practice is performed. In what follows, I give an overview of the literature of computers and composition to demonstrate the impact of digital mediation on the immediate presence of the teacher and the composition classroom space.

Transforming Classrooms: Role of the Instructor

The impact of technology on composition, student-writing, and power-positions within the classroom is not new. Two decades ago, Hawisher and Selfe were one of the pioneers who urged the discipline to recognize that the use of technology in classroom can problematize the position of the instructor in the class. In “The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class,” they stated the possibility that technology might be psychologically detrimental to students by disrupting the values of a traditional classroom and problematizing subject positioning. They argued that including computers in composition classrooms requires “scrutiny and careful planning” (55). The continuous transformation of technology and the assimilation of newer tools of learning, research, and teaching in writing classrooms still intrigue scholars in the field. The rapidly changing nature of technology has problematized the power positions within a classroom, to which compositionists have responded in various ways.

Most scholars agree that the position of the instructor is pivotal as a coordinator in a computer-mediated classroom. However, the lack of visibility can be problematic to the

traditional perception of the teacher's role in a class. Laura Brady highlights the transformed perception of the teacher's role in a mediated classroom in "Fault Lines in the Terrain of Distance Education." She inspects the end-of-semester survey results to evaluate the role of the teacher from the perspective of the student in an online class. The students selected the "not applicable" option for several questions that sought feedback on the teacher's performance in class. She writes, "Without face-to-face interaction, the teacher disappears or becomes not applicable" (351). She adds, "The *not applicable* responses suggest that students (and perhaps some administrators) perceive technology itself, not the instructor–student interaction, as holding the promise of education" (351). Mediated, networked, and collaborative learning environments can sometimes lead to non-hierarchical decentralized structures in online composition classes. The invisibility of the teacher decentralizes the class and can potentially make the instructor less relevant and important in the position of the coordinator. Scholars in composition, education and other fields debate the impact of decentralization on learning.

In recent decades, the rise of online writing classes that move the entire learning experience online has been a point of concern for scholars in computers and composition. Blair and Monske urge the discipline to stop and consider the effect of the transforming pedagogy to actual student learning in an online class (Blair and Monske 442). In "Cui bono?: Revisiting the promises and perils of online learning." Kristine Blair and Elizabeth Monske also examine the ways in which the discipline has responded to online composition pedagogy, the loss of the centralized instructor-presence, and the absence of interpersonal relationships within the class. The authors address the need to create a functional online learning environment, by questioning the extent to which current rhetorics of distance education (stressing access, convenience, and immediacy) empowers the students and "potentially disenfranchise(s)" instructors (449). Here,

they comment on the loss of power of the teacher in online distance education classes. Blair and Monske express urgency for the discipline to re-examine the position of an instructor in an online classes. They “ask cui bono?, or who benefits, from the rush to technologize teaching and learning?” (442). The potential disenfranchisement and loss of power of the teacher in virtual classes might not necessarily have a good impact on teaching on students. As Robin Goodfellow adds, students’ “marginalization, isolation, and ‘dissensus and conflict’ (Blair & Monske, 2003, p. 449) can undermine the goals of collaborative learning” (483) in online writing environments. The writing-centeredness of a technology-rich class sometimes undermines the critical role of interpersonal communication as integral to learning. In "Academic Literacies and e-Learning: A Critical Approach to Writing in the Online University," Goodfellow supports the need for interpersonal interactivity and the creation of a space where student can engage in critical discourse “to consider more explicitly how to present themselves” (484). These authors urge composition instructors to step back and reflect upon the transformation of learning outcomes in an online, wholly digitally mediated writing class. They indicate the need to explore the impact of the disrupted power positions and changing interpersonal relationships on teacher-student relationships.

An online classroom has the scope for using a variety of open source tools to perform several pedagogic functions. Kathleen Blake Yancey explores how digital technology has radically transformed writing, especially the position of the author and the instructor in a classroom in “Writing in the 21st Century.” She calls for the need for new models of composing and writing, and enacting the digitally mediated composition classroom (8). However, for her, the new model does not break away, but re-interprets the values of the traditional pedagogical relationships. As she sees it, all interactions in an online classroom have the potential to become

public. The classroom space/interactions are no longer limited to the four walls when teachers use platforms such as weblogs and wikis. A new online pedagogy is shaped according to the changing power relationships in a class where the teacher no longer is in the central position coordinating interactions. This early research sounded the alarm about computers entering the composition classroom. Online writing instruction has shuffled the power positions within a classroom and Yancey called for a new model in online classes that negotiated with the changing power relations. As a response to this, in "The Digital Imperative: Making the Case for a 21st-Century Pedagogy," composition instructor Elizabeth Clark urges of the scholars in the discipline to re-think the design of mediated composition classes by providing her approach and methods of digital pedagogy. She emphasizes on the importance of helping students engage in interactivity, collaborative tools and platforms like on line games, Second Life, and blogs that disrupt the traditional notion of text. Her teaching practices "re-create the contemporary worlds of writing that our students encounter everyday" (29). Her pedagogy is an extension of the values and activities of students who are often avid users of the mediated composing space on web 2.0. However, she noted, "Far from embracing digital rhetoric, many students reject it in favor of a more comfortable essayistic literacy" (32). The resistance from students shows the discomfort of students from disrupting the norm of a traditional classroom. This confusion can challenge the traditional way in which the student learns writing. However, it can be helpful in generating critical discussions in class.

Digitally mediated pedagogic environments can provide a space to engage students in meditating on the concepts of power, ethics, intellectual property, and community. In an article on using Second Life in composition classroom, Vie and Winter argue that the discomfort of students in a mediated environment can be exploited to help them critically reflect upon their

subject position in a composing space. Ali Jafari, Patricia McGee, and Colleen Carmean carry out a qualitative examination of these tools to see how the transformation of online composition pedagogy influences learning. In "Managing Courses, Defining Learning: What Faculty, Students, and Administrators Want," they describe the various tools of interactive technology that are used in composition classes. They found usability becomes an issue in online classes. Instructing the students to use those tools can be a difficult task for the instructor in an online environment. There was no room for immediate troubleshooting and the students were often frustrated. Despite these technologies, and acquaintance of the general student population with web 2.0 networking platforms, students often find it difficult and uncomfortable to associate college learning with social networking tools. The authors declare that physical immediacy is important for the smooth assimilation of new technologies in the course activities. They argue that it is important for the teacher to be present, despite the use of technological tools. It is easy for students to become disengaged and confused about the learning outcomes of the assignment when they are unable to implement the tools created in these online spaces. In case, the teacher is not physically *there*, they could find a way of making their presence felt by responding to and corresponding with students.

The lack of immediate interaction and feedback from the teachers can make students less involved in class activities. Haythornthwaite, Kazmer and Robins emphasize that building a learning community where the presence is crucial is often a struggle for both students and teachers. In an article on community building in computer-mediated communication, the authors describe the stages of the community building process, where students overcome the problems of a learning environment characterized by "text without voice, voice without body language, [and] class attendance without seating arrangements" (47). The visibility of the teacher's body can help

in facilitating personal and intellectual interactions. The authors quote students who illustrate how the non-verbal gestures of instructors in a traditional class can be valuable pedagogic moments that help provide immediate feedback (negative or positive) to the performance of students. This illustrates the how the absence of the body in online composition classes delays the interaction between the student and the teacher, creating a lack of engagement and interest in class activities. Since online pedagogy disrupts traditional teaching, Nicholas Burbules questions the nature of feedback appropriate for in the transformed learning environment. He dismisses the use of traditional perceptions of assessing the failure or success of a mediated teaching and learning. With the disrupted power positions of an online classroom, he questions the very basis of student success by asking some basic questions: “Successful for whom? Successful in relation to what purpose? Successful in relation to short-run payoffs, or in the longer run?” (4). Mediated pedagogy in the transformed space calls for new models of instruction as well as assessment.

The transformed power position in class has been addressed not only from the learning, but also the instructional perspective. In "From Place to Space: Perceptual and Administrative Issues in the Online Writing Center," Dave Healy examines the issue of shifting power positions from the point of view of the instructor. He explores how mediation impacts the instructor's performance or motivation. He argues that decentralization of the authoritative presence of an instructor in an online writing center can be detrimental to the professional interpersonal relationship and development of trust between the students and the instructor. For Healy, when teaching is mediated into the online space, it is easier for teachers to be constantly monitored. The interaction between the student and the instructor can be affected by the potential electronic supervision. Informal interactions are often avoided by instructors because everything is on

record. However, his doubt about online writing instructions did not stop it from being widely practiced over the next decade.

Interdisciplinary approaches to understanding mediation can provide helpful answers to understanding the problems of transforming instructor-student relationship in a classroom. In “Strange Bedfellows: Human-Computer Interaction, Interface Design, and Composition Pedagogy,” Paula Rosinski and Megan Squire suggest an interdisciplinary approach to help instructors negotiate with the transforming power relationships in the composition process of the mediated classroom. While they propose that we could approach writing pedagogy from the perspective of Human Computer Interaction, Clark Aldrich proposes a pedagogical approach based on self-paced e-learning methods. The challenges and successes of asynchronous self-modules in online instruction system can be helpful in providing an interdisciplinary context to online instruction. Simulated e-learning disrupts and decentralizes the role of the instructor despite the effort to make the instructor “visible” as a simulated avatar in an online learning space.

The decentralized position of the teacher has been regarded as problematic in the discipline. Decentralization can have positive impact on composition pedagogy by transferring ownership and agency to the student-author of the mediated text. On the other hand, the physical absence of the teacher can be detrimental to engagement and to the efforts of exploiting the collaborative potential of a mediated classroom.

Transforming Classrooms: Interpersonal Relationships

Physical absence of teachers and students in class can facilitate or hinder in-class collaborations in online spaces. In an early study described in “Patterns of Social Interaction and

Learning to Write,” Karen Hartman, Christine M. Neuwirth, Sara Kiesler, Lee Sproull, Cynthia Cochran, Michael Palmquist, and David Zubrow evaluated the effect of networking technologies on interpersonal interactions amongst the members of a class (instructors and students). Results of this comparative study with traditional and mediated classrooms indicate that mediation resulted in more communication from the instructor to the students. However, the results do not show significant boost of communication amongst students than interactive situations in a traditional classroom. In another study, Patricia Webb Boyd analyzes of the impact of mediated pedagogy in student learning, focusing on several aspects, including community building. In an article based on this study, "Analyzing Students' Perceptions of Their Learning in Online and Hybrid First-Year Composition Courses," Boyd concludes that online composition promotes collaborative composition, thereby creating an immediate audience for students. In this way, an important learning goal can be achieved. However, she indicates a problem here is that might be detrimental to the collaborative process. It is easy for online discussions to lose focus. It is important for the teacher to be able to facilitate the discussions. She also studies student-teacher interaction. Students stated, “There were too few opportunities to interact with their instructors” (231). Boyd’s study indicated that there were several opportunities and instances of communication between the student and the teacher. However, the student’s perceptions of these interactions were different from what the perception might have been in a face-to-face interaction. The students seemed to be dissatisfied with the nature of interaction that they had with the teacher. The pedagogy is based on moments of textual interaction and dialogues.

Composition instructors deem communication as vital to online learning. Boyd in the same article referred above, “When ... dialogue is missing and an online class requires students to operate more in isolation, students perceive the class to be much less effective and beneficial”

(226). The process of creating successful online collaboration can be complex; the instructors play an important role in coordinating these collaboration. Beth Hewett and Christa Powers explore the importance of community building. Their article, "How Do You Ground Your Training? Sharing the Principles and Processes of Preparing Educators for Online Writing Instruction," directs our attention to the training and preparation for instructors wanting to teach an online class. Applying the principles of collaboration and information sharing can be useful in teaching. A sense of "shared social context" in an online instructional setting can occur through both one-to-one and group interaction whether via instant messaging, synchronous group chats, or email and listservs (Hewett and Powers). Ko and Rossen argue, "collaboration doesn't just happen" (115). In an online pedagogic environment, many students have no idea how to collaborate on a task in a course. The authors show through case studies that might be possible to develop the interpersonal relationships in mediated spaces. However, online collaborations in a composition classroom might not develop as spontaneously or naturally as we might find in a face-to-face classroom. Laurie Olson-Horswill suggests that once the trust is established between the participants, interactive mediated spaces can be more active and personal than in a traditional classroom. Olson-Horswill also agrees that facilitating such an ambience requires careful planning and strategizing by the instructor.

Classrooms are complex conglomerations of several variables like personalities, motivation, and skill levels. In "Complexity, Class Dynamics, and Distance Learning," Kate Kiefer explores these personal complexities of a classroom to show ways in which online instructors can develop their understanding of students in both physical and virtual classes. They can use this understanding to facilitate dynamic interpersonal collaborations in class. Despite the positive impact of mediated classrooms in collaborative learning, scholars have questioned the

actually success rate of online collaborations in online classrooms. Several scholars have also attempted to explore the problem in order to address it. For instance, in "Comparing Grades in Online and Face-to-Face Writing Courses: Interpersonal Accountability and Institutional Commitment," David Sapp and James Simon identify the lack of interpersonal accountability between teachers and students to be the result of the high number percentage of in online writing courses failing or not completing. The absence of the body and the disembodied nature of the mediated composition space can be a reason for this problem. Joanna Wolfe explores the performative aspects of communication in a writing space. In "Gesture and Collaborative Planning: A Case Study of a Student Writing Group," she shows how gestures are used to create a conversational interaction space. As non-verbal indicators of intention, gender, opinion and so on, gestures are a crucial aspect of collaborative communication. This is lost in a computer-mediated space where the collaborating happens asynchronously, without the gestural indicators. In "Affordances of Persistent Conversation: Promoting Communities that Work," Caroline Haythornthwaite and Alvan Bregman examine the nature of online community formation based on visibility, co-presence and other factors. To them, these are important factors of online learning. In "Juggling Multiple Social Worlds: Distance Students Online and Offline," Kazmer and Haythornthwaite also challenge the idea that online learning is non-human and lonely. They illustrate the collaborative aspects of online classrooms and their impact on learning.

As the result of the lack of real physical presence in the classroom, the relationships that develop in the online classrooms are often too impersonal. Loss of inter-personal engagement between students and teachers in online pedagogies is a concern for Beth Hewett in her empirical study of student-instructor instruction in a white-board-based online writing instructional space. This article analyses the conversations between students and teachers through a range of

synchronous and non-synchronous platforms. She writes, “nearly half of the talk was oriented toward achieving interpersonal connections, facilitating the interaction, and communicating about the whiteboard's workspace” (Hewett). However, the nature of the interactions seems to lack genuine concern beyond academic questions. “There was a sense of simply meeting online because it was expected: the student asked a question in a perfunctory manner, the instructor responded to it, and the student chose not to pursue more information or respond to further questions” (Hewett). To her, the conversations were mostly superficial. She fails to see any personal engagement in the conversations. Hewett does not state whether synchronous interaction has a negative or positive impact on the overall learning. In addition, the level of interaction amongst students varies from class to class in traditional classrooms. Though Hewett attempts to demonstrate a lack of personal touch in an online class, she agrees that more research can help one understand the relationship between the nature of human-interactivity in online and traditional settings and its influence on learning.

Scholars have explored the use of mediational tools and platforms to engage students in fruitful and critical dialogic moments with their peers to boost collaborative composing. Social networking tools shows potential in creating interpersonal engagement in mediated classrooms. Envisioning Social networking websites as pedagogic tools and integrating them in class can be difficult, despite its vast potential of collaborative composition. Gina Maranto and Matt Barton discusses the implication of using MySpace and Facebook in online writing courses in “Paradox and Promise: MySpace, Facebook, and the Sociopolitics of Social Networking in the Writing Classroom.” However, the public nature of the profiles can complicate and hinder a traditional learning and collaborative goals. Some uses of social networking can potentially open up the classroom space too much. Robert Lundin suggests similar problems in “Teaching with Wikis:

Toward a Networked Pedagogy,” where the open collaborative nature of a wiki has immense collaborative potentials. However, the absence of direct face-to-face interaction can result in “online flaming” and uncivil interactions in the public sphere (442). This is the result of the shifting nature of authorship and authority in the wiki space (443). In a wiki-based pedagogy, the interactions in a wiki space can complicate the relationships between the instructor and student, and among the student, since each member of the de-centralized classroom has equal capability of building and editing texts. Compositionists continue to explore, apply, and critique ways to use technological tools to create successful collaborations in class. While absence of the bodies can be disrupting to the traditional collaborative composition pedagogy in a mediated classroom, the lack of an enclosed classroom space can be a major problem, as indicated by the last two authors.

Transforming Classrooms: Mediated Classroom Space

The lack of an enclosed “safe” learning space can be problematic in mediated classrooms, where networking technologies can make composing spaces open and public. Enclosed course management platforms can recreate the enclosed space to some extent. Some scholars argue that the mediated spaces need to be carefully constructed to help students feel safe. These spaces need to be furnished with tools to promote successful dialogic processes. "Why Teach Digital Writing?" is a manifesto by the Writing in Digital Environments (WIDE) Research Center Collective calls for the need for composition instructors to accommodate digital tools in mediated writing spaces. “Computers are not ‘just tools’ for writing. Networked computers create a new kind of writing space that changes the writing process and the basic rhetorical dynamic between writers and readers” (WIDE). The mediated space is dynamic, collaborative,

creative, and contested. To demonstrate this, in an article in *Role Play: Distance Education and the Teaching of English* titled “Performing the Personal in On-Line Writing Classes,” Robert Cummings, Christy Desmet, Alexis Hart, and William Findlay critically approach the issue of building a functional and creative collaborative fellowship amongst students and instructors in distance learning. While online teaching mostly brings to mind colossal and interconnected networked spaces, scholars like Evan Davis and Hardy Sarah, in “Teaching Writing in the Space of Blackboard,” describe the architecture of a confined course space. After explaining the technical, functional and usability aspects of blackboard, they go on to describe a user’s interaction with this exclusive space that represents a classroom using real life metaphors. Most Course Management Systems use these metaphors to design the course space in the nomenclature of the functions: dropbox, forum, files, white board, etc. Instructors and course designers aim to create usable spaces that simulate a real learning environment so that the students do not feel confused and alienated. The problems caused by the lack to physical presences of instructors and co-learners can be tackled by creating a close space that facilitates in-class face-to-face activities easily in an online space.

Unfamiliarity with the technology can result in discomfort for students in the newly mediated classroom space. Jerome Bump describes the impacts of mediating his classroom in the virtual gaming space in “Teaching English in Second Life.” Bump’s pedagogy seemed to focus more on the design than the composition process, leading to a discouraging result indicated by 24% student agreeing that “writing skills have improved because of SL” in his first semester and 0% agreeing in his second semester. He concludes that “advocates of online literacy may well have to rescue and re-integrate aspects of print literacy” (Bump). On the other hand, Tim Lindgren takes a more critical (and less design-oriented) approach to exploit the transformed Internet

“space” to help students get involved in place-based composition practices. In “Blogging Places: Locating Pedagogy in the Whereness of Weblogs,” he describes his use of “place blogs in the classroom ... to foster a deeper sense of place while at the same time encouraging students to question the technologies that mediate that sense of place in increasingly complex ways” (Lindgren). His method of integrating the real space experiences in the mediated space seems to have resulted in a closer associating of students to traditional composing practices, thereby enhancing learning. He reports having a successful experience using this tool in his class.

Using technology can be tricky and scholars have explored ways to address the problems of mediating the composition pedagogic space. David Fisher evaluated the mediated spaces in “CMS-based simulations in the writing classroom: Evoking genre through game play.” The construction of a multitude of professional and social spaces within the course management system simulates the real experience for students. He recommends simulation in promoting and enhancing an online environment for students. In “Decentered, Disconnected, and Digitized: The Importance of Shared Space,” Beth Brunk-Chavez and Shawn J. Miller critically evaluate the implementations of collaboration in digitized learning environments. They examine the use of mediated pedagogy in disrupting the traditional notion of trusting the instructor and distrusting the peer, by helping students critically engage in using the tools. However, the effect of this disruption of the pedagogic relations on learning writing remains unanswered in both of the article.

Taken together, scholars interested in digitally mediated pedagogies have found that a major problem of online pedagogy seems due in large part to the lack of physical presence, close spaces, and relationships between students and professors. While some online classrooms are student-centered and self-paced (to varying degrees), a major problem of online pedagogy is the

marginalization and loss of power of the instructor. While distance learning can be asynchronous and universally accessible, a major problem is in building learning communities. The digital mediation of pedagogy disrupts the traditional practice of face-to-face teaching composition classes. However, these problems are not new. They point to a longstanding tension present at the borders where new technologies and traditional face-to-face pedagogies meet (Getto, Cushman, Ghosh; Cushman and Ghosh). I examine this technology-tradition tension as it emerges in Odissi dance pedagogies in ways that shed light on these problems in the field of computers and composition. This examination has implications for our understandings of the absences of the bodies in digitally mediated pedagogies and may help us shape online pedagogies in ways that negotiate these problems.

To explain how this is so, I need to define two terms key to this study: *mediation* and *tradition*. The practice of Odissi dance has evolved over the past two thousand years from being an esoteric dance practiced only in the temple, to being a dying art form, to being one of the most popular classical dances that is widely practiced by both Indians and non-Indians. Over generations, the memory of the dance passed (mediated) from one generation to the next through direct contact with the teacher. The style of the dance altered at every stage, problematizing the concept of “authentic” and “traditional.” In the remediated form of dance, visual and aural semiotic artifacts that perform the function of maintaining the memory of the dance replace the presence of the body. The foundational aspects of this cultural performative memory remain in the remediations, theoretically at least. For those practicing traditional dance, however, the evolutionary path these remediations have taken over the centuries— from oral transmission, to being templated in stone sculptures, to videos, to digital avatars— has distanced the necessary body and pedagogical relationships in negative ways. Bolter and Grusin explain that "The very

act of remediation [. . .] ensures that the older medium cannot be entirely effaced; the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledged and unacknowledged ways" (47).

This distancing and its impact raise a few questions critical to discussions unfolding at the intersection of new technologies and traditional pedagogies: Why is it important to explore the impact of mediation in changing the tradition of teaching a classical dance? What are the ways in which mediation of this practice is taking place in a way that can be unacceptable to the previous generation of practitioners of the practice? How does the mediation transform the practice and pedagogy of cultural dance practices?

To answer these questions, a definition of mediation must account for the social practices involved in the process of representation. In "The Mediation of Cultural Memory: Digital Preservation in the Cases of Classical Indian Dance and the Cherokee Stomp Dance," Cushman and Ghosh explain that mediation unfolds in the social practices of individuals as they navigate between micro and macro social formations; this understanding of everyday practice as a type of social mediation has also long been studied: Bourdieu calls it a *habitus*; Foucault a *statement*; Scott *infrapolitics*; and De Landa an *assemblage*—whatever its name, the location is roughly the same in the logic of everyday activity: it's the place where people act within structures, where these actors' dispositions both follow and lay the tracks of organized behavior, where their discursive practices become solidified as knowledge structures, where their daily struggles push at and reproduce larger systems of regulated behavior, and where micro material realities and practices meet the macro of stabilized behaviors. Mediation—central and necessary to the practices that unfold in these spaces of stabilized behavior— can be understood as both sign technology use and enactment of stabilized behavior at once (5). The tradition of Odissi dance has imbibed innovation during these processes of mediation of the memory of the dance, while

holding on to the underlying values that tradition has inculcated. My research reveals that the practitioners acknowledge these values as central. Traditional practitioners (seniors of the field) resist innovation and remediation if these compromise the essential spirituality, sacredness of the body and social position of the Guru.

Recent innovations in remediating performances allow dancers to perform, collaborate, teach, learn, and forge new inter-body relationships that substitute the traditional Guru-Shishya or master-disciple relationship. This relationship is a central value in this practice. The divide between technologized and traditional practices in dance creates a productive space that can help scholars understand how digital and networked technologies are transforming embodied cultural memory. Tradition-technology encounters and formations of a deviant discourse challenge the dominant (traditional) norms of embodied cultural memory. We cannot ignore the mediation of dance, since it can potentially transform some of the core values that are essential to this dance. To understand how this is so, I work from an understanding of tradition that draws upon Bourdieu's notion of the habitus.

The habitus of the Odissi dance performer determines dispositions of the dancer and the traditional value system conveyed in each gesture, pose, and performance. For Bourdieu, the habitus flexibly determines the subject's worldview: "Habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in the order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions" (85). Practitioners of Odissi dance constructed traditional values associated with this art to give the dance a regional and national identity. The collective memories attempt to reproduce and continue traditional practices "more or less" completely, thereby allowing scope for flexibility, subjective interpretation, and

innovation. Bourdieu defines class habitus as “a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception” (86). The system is subjective and therefore interpretive, while recognizing that the subjective always works from the “internalized structures” of understandings and frameworks governing perception. Generated not by an individual, but a group, the habitus shapes the patterns of an understanding that are common to the members of that group. This system influences how the subject interprets the systems around him/her.

Most Odissi dancers inhabit/perform tradition by adhering to socially patterned structures that innate cultural systems flexibly structure. The practitioner of this dance is automatically a part of this value system. To me, understanding this system from the perspective of the survey responders and interviewees was important for my research’s underlying theory. These stories are important because they come from “a conscious, intentional and rational” (36) participants who are retrospectively rationalizing their practices. Since experiences are heterogeneous, the individual dancers display differently nuanced attitudes towards remediation of the dance according to the value system that the habitus inculcates. To Bourdieu, “each individual system of dispositions may be seen as a structural variant of all the other group or class habitus, expressing difference between trajectories and positions inside and outside of class” (86). The individual artistic practices constructed from the habitus, and these constructions determine the value system that underlies the artistic practices of the dancers.

With a notion of the habitus, it is possible to understand ‘tradition’ in several ways. In terms of Odissi dance, tradition involves practices that were apparently part of the temple rituals. These orally transmitted practices are spiritual in nature, adding to the underlying value system

based on this dance. The practice of Odissi dance and its social manifestations are rooted in the process of learning and performing, more *traditions*. Importantly, though, in the case of Odissi dance, traditions transmitted across generations are regulatory, but not hegemonic articulations of a community or a set of coercive regulations on how to practice the art. Performers can and do creatively adapt these dance practices through their interpretations and remediations of them. Classical traditions and cultural memories are the creations of the collective unconscious across generations. Tension emerges when these are memories are remediated in a way that is not approved by the senior dancers or if the senior dancers believe that the form or method of remediation can potentially harm the central values of the dance (decrement the value of the body or relationship with the teacher). Practitioners can become uncomfortable and wary of these potentially counter-hegemonic attempts by the mediated dance practices. The traditional artistic practices of eastern cultures are strongly rooted in the hierarchical pattern of the master-disciple relationship. The present generation of dancers attempts to maintain the purity of the dance as they pass down the memory of the dance to Indian and non-Indian students. While, most practitioners support innovations, if any form of innovation can potentially hurt the dance's perceived authenticity, it is discouraged.

In her research on oral artistic histories, social anthropologist and ethnographer, Ruth Finnegan complicates the concept of tradition further. In order to help a western audience on this research understand where I am going this non-western area of study, I chose to refer to Finnegan. Finnegan defines tradition as “any established way of doing things whether or not any antiquity; the process of handing down practices, ideas or values” (7). To her, traditions are “ideas of a) unwritten or oral transmission (but what exactly *this* implies is, likewise, not always agreed upon); b) something handed down and *old* (but how old and in what sense varies); and c)

valued—or occasionally disvalued—beliefs and practices (but whose values count and why seems to vary)" (1991, 106). As she defines the idea of traditional practices, Finnegan includes the scope and limit of this definition. The limitations of this definition allow flexibility of interpretation and practice within the restrictions and constraints of tradition. Dancers sometimes consider memories transmitted orally as "old", and "original". Therefore, many practitioners consider it important to retain the aspects they consider as "original" in the contemporary practice. According to Finnegan, tradition brings with it the concept of "our" and "us." According to her, Western researchers never fully understand what traditions mean. They outline inaccurate "Notions about the nature and applicability of tradition" (110) to define and identify eastern cultures. Western imperial powers thus facilitated projects to use these "our" and "us" concepts of tradition for anthropological categorization within colonized countries. Their association of traditional is to the "primitive"(106) and "old" (110). In general, practitioners of Indian classical dances take "traditional" as "pure", "authentic", and "original" (their terms).

The use and impact of meaning making technologies must be assessed and weighed when considering how cultural memories are mediated. If the medium is the message (McLuhan), then we must search the medium for what it indexes about the knowledge, culture, and identity of its users and audiences. "In whichever theoretical instance we choose," cultural studies theorist Ileana Rodriguez finds, "it is clear that tradition cannot be discussed separately from the subject that bears it; from the technologies that inform the logic of its production; from the mediations or spaces where hegemony refunctionalizes everything to actualize or modernize it" (57-8). Rodriguez would have us understand how the medium of cultural preservation, in itself, indicates the logic of its production. When respecting the rights of those representing themselves, scholars, art historians, and museum curators are involved in serving multiple communities by mediating

those practices that enact and embody cultural memories. When we help tribal and cultural representatives digitally persevere in ways that honor their understandings of mediation, then we do much to respect their embodied cultural memories (Cushman and Ghosh).

Brief Introduction to Odissi Dance

Before going into the details of the study, I will give a brief introduction to Odissi dance and my association with the dance. Chapter 2 will be devoted to a more detailed exploration of the history of this tradition shaped its value-system. Odissi originated in temples of Orissa, a coastal state in eastern India, as a temple dance. It is one of the nine recognized classical dances of India. The others are Kathak, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Gauriya, and Sattriya. Odissi originates from two distinctive styles of dance. One is the spiritual dance style of the female temple dancers, or Maharis, and the other is the more acrobatic postures of the male dancers, or Gotipuas⁵. Artistic activities, especially dance, are intrinsic to the art of persuasion in Indian society. Dance as a rhetorical devise has been integral to spirituality, which in-turn has fashioned the social and political patterns in Indian history. These rhetoric of performance, transmitted histories and myths help explore the construct of value systems of this culture. While I will conduct some exploration on the value system in chapter two, I will keep aside the complications of Indian indigenusness, coloniality, and nationalism for a future research project in Cultural Rhetorics. For this research, I am only looking at my

⁵ A version of Odissi dance that male dancers or “Gotipuas” perform is Gotipua dance. “Goti” means one, and “pua” means boy in Oriya language. The young boys dress as girls during the performance. The movements of this style of dance are different from the female- Odissi or the temple dance styles.

online dance pedagogic practices and those of my contemporary dance practitioners and hoping to understand how this has shaped my online composition pedagogy.

I am an Odissi dancer with over twenty-five years of experience as a student, teacher, and performer. I learnt Odissi the traditional way⁶ since the age of four from Guru Aloka Kanungo in Calcutta. I encountered Indian classical Odissi dance at a very tender age. For some practitioners like me Indian classical dance is not only an artistic expression, but also a way of living. Odissi shaped my perception of the world and the way in which I communicate. The shaping became more evident when I joined the academic program in the United States of America, and developed a new language (rhetoric) to communicate with the academic world. I realized that my dancer-self deeply influences my pedagogic stance and attitude towards learning and research. This has also shaped the theoretical and methodological stance I have taken in this dissertation. I will situate my dissertation focus in this juxtaposition of these personal experiences with representing my body as a dancer and as an academic.

Despite my traditional learning, I use technological tools like CDs (for music to accompany dance), DVDs and online videos (to learn and teach dance). In traditional performances, musicians play the accompanying music live on-stage when the dancer is performing a dance piece. My Guru's training has inculcated in me a deep respect for the music

⁶ My Guru would sit in front of the class and sing the *bols* (or the counts) chant on the time cycle and sometimes play on the Mardala or the drums. She would demonstrate one piece a number of times and ask us to repeat the same. Guru teaches a small piece in every session, and we would repeat the piece closely more than fifty times. Eventually, students are able to perform the entire piece automatically without having to remember the pieces one after the other (practice session in progress: <http://bit.ly/oGwTE5>).

and the musicians who help the dancer by providing rhythm and tune as a backdrop for the dance. Since it is expensive to have live music for each performance, I use recorded music. In order to teach and learn dance, teachers can record a dance piece on a DVD or upload it on YouTube. There are several educational videos for Indian classical dance available for free or at a cost online. My students have often used videos to record a piece of dance that I taught in class so that they do not forget it next time they come to class. I have performed and collaborated with dancers across Skype and in Second Life virtual world. I will go into the details of these experiences in a later stage of this project. As an academic, I have also taught college composition in fully online and hybrid (partially virtual and partially traditional) classroom spaces. In addition, I have experimented with representing myself through virtualized bodies in Second Life dance spaces and as a Consultant in the Second Life Writing Center at Michigan State University. As a dancer, composition and rhetoric scholar, and a teacher, I am in the crux of this tension between tradition and technology. In the next section of this chapter, I will explain how the tension unfolds in the field of Classical Dance and Composition.

This unique position allows me to raise questions regarding the performance of cultural memory through several forms of remediation, which are foundational to the structure of this dissertation. In this study, I explore why it is important to investigate the impact of technological mediation on traditional practices. Coming from a tradition that values story, orality has played an important part of the trans-generational passage of wisdom. Mediation of the memory of Odissi dance happens through this transmission of knowledge by practitioners of Odissi (choreographers, learners, teachers, musical accompanists, and performers). I have bolstered my own experiences as an Odissi student/teacher/performer by extensive reading in the field, field observations, interviews, surveys, and interactions with veteran Gurus (masters), as well as

contemporary proponents and users of digital technologies. These practitioners are instrumental in construction and mediation of the values of this art.

Traditionally, Gurus (masters) teach Odissi dance. Odissi is a demanding art and learning Odissi takes years of training. The dance focuses on precise and meaningful movements. In this dance, the presence of the body and the sacredness associated with the Guru are central to performance and learning. The esoteric tradition of Odissi has survived for generations through the *Guru-Shishya parampara* or master-student tradition. Practice of dance using tools of digital technologies is changing the pattern of traditional pedagogies and practices of dance. The mediated performance of cultural dances, where digital representations of the body or avatars replace the body, forge new relationships between this sacred art, its pedagogy, and its performance.

Temple sculptures bear the memory of this ancient tradition. Later, in the twentieth century, we some practitioners of the dance started etching them in virtual spaces. The memory transmits itself from the physical body (the original keeper of memory of this oral artistic tradition) to the sculptures that represent the body. These sculptures were instrumental in the survival of the art form for several centuries. When sculptors sculpted the movement of the temple dancers on the temple walls, the memory of this artistic ritual got detached from the body of the temple dancers and mediated to other means that preserve/perform the memory. These bearers of memory also served as supplementary tools for teaching. For instance, Gurus use temple sculptures to understand and teach postures of the dance. Oral transmission of knowledge remains the primary pedagogical tool. In chapter two, will explore the role of the Guru and temple sculptures on transmission of memory across generations in more detail.

The meanings conveyed by the movements in Odissi are loaded with culturally specific

connotations. Here are some of the concepts about the embodiment of the memory of Odissi as taught to me by my Guru. The performer's body mediates deep cultural meanings in the poses, revealing a story with each piece of movement in a dance. In Odissi, the body internalizes the knowledge/memory received from the Guru and then expresses the meaning through movements that adhere to the grammar of this dance. The rhetoric of classical dance is laden with these sacred meanings. When one learns this art, she/he immediately becomes the bearer of an ancient cultural memory that she/he can pass down to the next generation of dancers, orally and practically. The learning technologies of Odissi have served as keepers of memory over the centuries, and not necessarily as a tool for students to experiment with in the production of the art. Historically, the memory transmitted from the body to scriptures to written texts, and then to videos. Although I started practicing the art with my Guru's lessons in my mind, my own practice and personal attitude towards the practice of this art has undergone several changes with time. Over the past decade, teachers and performers of Odissi have used online pedagogic tools to transmit the memory of the dance. These different stages and forms of mediation help us understand the evolution and perseverance of this cultural memory.

With new digital technologies, it is possible to record, replay, edit, and remix performances; virtual worlds allow dancers to turn into avatars and transform their physical shapes and perform gravity defying feats; and networked technologies allow for the instant transmission and retransmission of movements. The influence of these on teaching, on practices of traditional dance, and on how we understand performative cultural memory creates interesting conversations within the community of artists, and raises provocative questions about the remediation of tradition. The dancing body mediates a meaning through a set of hand gestures or significations through facial expressions. The transmission in videos, tapes, or avatars is

remediation of the dance, where the message is mediated again with digital tools. Online spaces virtualize the body, thus complicating the potential of the body to hold information and transmit it to the next generation. These new technologies have created a divide in the dance community. On the one hand, Gurus and some traditional practitioners of the art find that the new technologies have the potential to hurt both the transmission and performance of traditional dance. On the other hand, the new generation embraces the remediation of the dance with new technologies, and sees it as an important way to preserve, promote, and secure the survival of the art form. Insofar as they are concerned with the tensions between new technologies and traditional pedagogies, the conversations gurus are having are quite similar to those unfolding currently in computers and composition.

1.3 Exploring Complexities: Methodology and Methods

In order to explore the tension between tradition and remediations of traditional memory, I framed three research questions. (a) Why is it important to investigate and understand the influence of the integration of technology in teaching, learning and performing dance? (b) What are the tools and methods adopted in this process of remediating the act of dance learning and teaching? (c) How do the practice and pedagogy of cultural dance practices evolve when hypermediated in online spaces? In order to understand and present the voices from the field about these conflicts, it is important for me as a researcher to present an insider's perspective of the conflict. My association with the history of this traditional art shapes the analytical framework developed for this study. I responded to question (a) in the beginning of this chapter. This project is a qualitative study of the points of view presented by the practitioners of Odissi dance (teachers, students, and critics). Additionally, data also comes from my participant observation notes and archived interactions with dancers in virtual as well as traditional spaces.

The data has helped me respond to question (b). While presentation on my own pedagogic practices has helped me answer question (c), I acknowledge the possibility of engaging in future research on mediated composition teaching at a post-doctoral stage.

Engaging in a self-reflexive, critical discourse, I extend the definition of culturally safe and relevant research and mentorship to introduce the “Guru-Shishya” interaction as a potential methodology for this study. When I was conducting the interviews with the veteran Gurus, my role as an interviewer seemed to shift from being a researcher into being a student of the interviewees. The shift happened during the course of the interview. In this case, I hold the roles of a competent learner and practitioner interested in tapping into the social process of keeping cultural memories.

Interviews became pedagogical moments, and at the same time, they gave me the opportunity to introduce an inquiry-based methodology of the Guru-Shishya interface. In this design, it might be apparent that the participant (Guru) takes control of the session. My experience indicates that creating that kind of an ambience for inquiry creates a bond between the researcher and the participant that leads to the formation of a very generative intellectual space. As a Shishya, I am keen to learn. As a researcher, I steer the conversations towards the topics on which I need to collect data. Through this process, the interviewee transmits the knowledge that he has received from his Guru and interpreted from experience.

Odissi pedagogy might seem teacher-centered by contemporary scholars. The Guru (on the *giving* end) is transmitting the knowledge to the disciple (on the *receiving* end). The students seemingly hold a position of passive recipients of the knowledge. However, this is not completely true. Owing to the culture in which the dance is learned, the agency of the student is not visible at the learning stage. Instead, students exercise agency in the form of dance when they

perform the dance. While keeping true to the basic grammar of the dance, the dancers are free to innovate. The teacher-centered space, to me, is not necessarily didactic or one-sided. It is against my cultural convention, as I understand it, to doubt or question the authority of my Guru.

However, when it comes to applying the knowledge in my own choreography, I can make the decisions regarding the relevance, accuracy, and appropriateness of the knowledge I received from my Guru. For this dissertation, in the Guru-Shishya style of research inquiry, I tactically controlled the topics of discussion. I will represent only the parts that are relevant and important to this dissertation. This is a student-centered way of learning, where, as a researcher-student, I can exercise control over my content both in dance and in writing.

Every generation of artist transmits the knowledge of Odissi dance to the next generation. Each generation understands, interprets, and performs the knowledge a little differently. My research holds value for the orally transmitted knowledge; every generation ‘contemporarizes’ this knowledge and transmits it, thus making it eternally relevant. Orally transmitted tradition is like a palimpsest on which every generation writes the same story a little differently, having understood and interpreted the story that was handed down to them by the previous generation. The palimpsestic nature of oral tradition makes it valued, sacred, relevant, and contemporary to each generation of practitioners. The Guru-Shishya methodology I have adopted in this research contributes to the on-going scholarship of using orally transited information as a valuable resource. In *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, Ruth Finnegan assesses the conflicting opinion in the disciplines regarding oral resources. She writes that historians consider oral narratives biased, distorted, and therefore unfit as evidence. However, “the opposed perspective sees these forms not essentially as *sources*, but worthy of study in their own right” (45). In the case of

Odissi dance, performers and teachers re-interpret the dance at every stage, and handed down across generations, while being more or less within the constraints of traditional norms.

This study involves procuring knowledge about a traditional practice when practitioners of the dance transmit knowledge to the next generation. Finnegan offers a guide to conducting studies on performative traditions, especially verbal arts in the context of oral narratives in indigenous traditions (Finnegan 1992). With this, she succeeds in the demystification of what “tradition” is in an oral culture. Finnegan’s argument against the Western disregard for the discursive value of oral traditions helps me frame my methodology. To me, it is not only the oral tradition, but also the performed tradition that is important in this research. I draw my methods from the traditional practices in this art. In my research and practical fieldwork, I took guidance from Finnegan’s methods for formulating strategic questions for interviewees, and keeping records of and analyzing verbal data. Though the book focuses on oral research, the methodological choices offered are relevant to qualitative research in an online environment, too. In my study of virtual and traditional performance, exploring oral traditions became an important way to gather perspectives on the importance of Odissi.

Stages in the data collecting process

There were four major phases to my project during the data collection process, each of which I describe in detail below:

a. Phase one: Interacting with SL dance performers/interviewing: I procured field notes of the conversations as data.

b. Phase two: Interviewing Odissi Gurus: I recorded notes and several videos from interviews of 6 gurus, 4 of which I had to translate from Oriya, a dialect of Hindi.

c. Phase three: Survey of 34 performers of Indian classical dances, and 9 others associated with Odissi (dance critics, cultural promoters, and musicians). I procured extracts from discussions in the “Odissi Dance” group on Facebook and the Yahoo Odissi dance group as forms of data.

d. Phase four: Follow-up correspondences with survey responders: I procured scripts from emails and conversations in “chat” spaces as data.

Dancing and exploring Dance in Second Life opened my eyes to the mediation of classical art in digital spaces. I could see classical dance happening and evolving in virtual space. In order to access the dance spaces of the SL dancer and talk to other dancers, I had to become a member of the SL dance community. I spent about two hours daily over three months dancing in SL. I was in the avatar of a hyper-real composition teacher when I was researching online composition pedagogies. These experiences shaped my understanding of my data and the context of that data. Remaining culturally self-conscious, I traveled across SL islands and participated in duet and solo performances. I took part in a few dances, but mostly I decided to remain in the fringes, watching dances and interacting informally with dancers if they were willing to talk.

I have engaged myself in moving as an avatar in the dance halls of Second Life, observing people and keeping track of their interactivity and community building projects. As my avatar, I spent time interacting with other SL dancers, sharing scripts and participating in synchronous choreographies. Studying and following blogs was also an important resource for understanding the SL dance, because blogs are spaces where SL residents share information and updates on dance scripts. I initially spent about seven hours every week in various SL islands with dance halls and clubs. Searching for ethnic dance islands revealed several blogs, which lead me to islands where SL residents performed African dance, Indian classical dance, Japanese

traditional dance, Chinese sleeve dance, and other dances. Visiting the island gave me an idea of the ambience, the level of formality and the frequency of the formal performances. Blog posts helped me understand how many people were actively taking part in the dances. The number of active dancers in SL has varied over the three years of my research. Some of the dance clubs had an average of fifty people dancing at a time, some of whom I suspect might be bots (non-human, pre-scripted avatars created by the island owners to populate the dance floors). Most ethnic dance islands are vacant most of the time, other than the times for performance or rehearsals. I tried to interact with some of the performers directly to learn about their experiences, and I succeeded in getting responses from four SL dancers, one of whom is an owner of a reputed ballet dance community in SL, Inara Saarinen. My interactions with them were mainly through private chats on SL, which I have been able to record.

I eventually came back to SL as a Writing Center consultant. Of course, I adopted the same name I previously had, and made my avatar look the way I had looked in my last life as an SL avatar. I was consulting at the SL Writing Center of Michigan State University. Here I spent a great deal of time exploring dance spaces. Two years since I had left SL, much had changed. The SL dance scene was now bigger and more culturally diverse: there are Japanese traditional dances and Indian classical dances amongst other culturally specific artistic options in SL. This was a very pleasant surprise; this new and improved version of SL had fewer “freebies” than the older one. Scripts for traditional dances are expensive compared to Western dance moves since they cater to a very specialized audience. One advertisement read, “Static Poses developed from a motion capture of an authentic *Indian dance* performed thru Carnegie Mellon Graphics lab with an actual *dancer*.”

I closely observed the nature of inter-avatar interactivity, determined by avatars' *physical* proximity and use of the artifacts of that world, which include both private and public owned spaces and objects. Because the number of "real" people-avatars was dwindling, I felt a sense of urgency to talk to many people engaged in dance in order to gain a complete understanding of why people choose to dance in Second Life. After a while, I discontinued my Second Life research and concentrated on interacting with dance practitioners and critics across the world. By then I had gathered enough data to form an understanding of construction of virtual identities. Now I had to look at the traditional practices and the virtual practices other than SL.

My most important data came from my 50-hours of participant observations in real and online communities of Odissi dance performers. Before setting off to meet the Odissi Gurus in Raghurajpur, I prepared a set of questions (See Appendix A). I planned structured, inquiry-based interviews, which helped me gather the points of view of some highly regarded veteran Gurus of Odissi. I could not get in touch with many of these Gurus over email because they did not use one. This made it necessary for me to travel to India in order to meet five of them. The participants of my interviews came from different levels of seniority in the field. Late Guru Maguni Das is one of the senior-most Gurus of a style of gotipua performance known as Bandha⁷. I also interacted with artists and critics of the younger generation who are active in digital social networks. I began the interviews by introducing the respondents briefly to my research and the kinds of queries I had. As the interviews progressed, they turned out to be very different from

⁷ This is an acrobatic performance by a group of Gotipuas. The examples of such acrobatic formations depicted in the ancient temple walls, thereby suggesting that it is one of the original rituals of the temples performed by both men and women.

what I had expected. In three of the five occasions, the sessions were in a Guru-Shishya style. Responders often chose not to answer just my specific question, but provide very detailed background information, demonstration, and illustration, often encouraging my direct participation.

I sent out surveys in the Yahoo group of Odissi dancers and got encouraging responses from my colleagues, and several seasoned and established artistes regarding my academic attempt. Most of the major dancers of Odissi are members of this group. These questions⁸ on mediated and non-mediated dance performance and pedagogic practices solicited responses from people across the field of Indian classical dance who engage in performance, critique, choreography, and teaching. Thirty people took the survey. Initially this disappointed me since the yahoo group has over 660 members. I also sent out the survey link through Facebook, which generated more responses. However, I got more enthusiastic responses by emailing the artistes and connoisseurs directly with questions or calling them and having a semi-formal chat. The total number of respondents on the online survey is forty-three. I directly corresponded with seven of them through emails. Telephone interviews were helpful in getting responses from two artists who did not respond to the survey, but expressed interest in being a part of the study. I spoke through Skype with two respondents. Only one of the Skype interviewees had taken the survey. Survey-takers were mostly non-Indians or artistes based out-side India, and I followed up the surveys with more email interaction. The survey data and interview data led me to an understanding that the attitude of the participants towards technological mediation of the art is relatable to their age and location.

⁸ Please refer to Appendix B for interview questions.

The dataset does not represent a very large number of dancers who use online spaces or digital tools for teaching dance. My methods were heavily dependent on technological tools and online surveys. Most people I interacted with were using technology as part of their artistic pursuit. They also used digital media to interact with other dancers. This is why my data does not completely reflect the views of people who were not using the Internet. In order to procure responses from practitioners who are not active Internet users, I interviewed them in person and sometimes via telephone. My interviews with artists in Raghurajpur and Kolkata represent the viewpoints of some of the most respected senior teachers of the dance community.

I conducted unstructured interviews for my query on traditional dance pedagogy and preservation. I asked artists and Gurus questions regarding their reaction towards new media and performance. In my e-mail and face-to-face correspondences, I inquired about their awareness regarding possibilities of dance in digital spaces, if they are involved in them in any way and if they have opinions of how technology is affecting the art. The questions attempted to solicit information or opinions regarding some overarching themes that I am exploring in the study. I showed my interviewees several forms of mediated performance. This included videos of classical ballet dance performance in SL and Odissi learning DVDs that replace the physical presence of the Guru; these videos included Labanotations of performance records and CGI/body morphed performance videos. Labanotations is a method of depicting dance through a series of images and texts. My discussions with the Gurus revolve around the current trend of mediated performance and use of technology in dance. These discussions took place virtually over a series of emails with several dancers who use technology in dance in certain ways or have interesting perspectives regarding technology in dance.

After completing the interviews or surveys, I followed up with some of the interviewees to clarify certain points since I wanted to represent them well. I also needed to make sure that I had translated their words accurately. I also interacted through email and Skyped with several of my survey respondents to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives, and again, to make sure that I was able to satisfactorily represent their perspective in this dissertation. In “The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change,” Cushman’s process of involving the participants in the generation of knowledge provided useful strategies: “Rather than trying to write myself out of the unavoidable hierarchy of discourse in any ethnography, I strove to compose a piece that community residents authorized through their dialog and reciprocity” (Cushman 21-23). This collaborative approach to research is helpful in reducing detachment between researchers and participants. It also helped me as a researcher to interpret and describe the data and locate moments in the research process where the data made valuable contributions to my project. This attempt to collaborate with my participants was successful to some extent. By employing these methodologies in my research, my attempt was to generate responsible, reciprocal, and balanced scholarship within the artistic and the academic communities.

Documenting and analyzing conversations is a powerful and informative process for my inquiry. In “Contestations: Constructing a Historical Narrative for Odissi,” dance scholar Ananya Chatterjee bases her study on a similar interview and conversations, acknowledging Odissi Gurus and scholars such as Kelucharan Mahapatra, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Raghunath Panigrahi, Kapila Vatsyana, Bhagirathi Das (an Odissi dress maker) and “other dancers and students of Odissi” (154). To me, the historical accuracy of these stories as constructed by the imperial

colonial powers is less important in this context than the traditional memory that shapes the value system of the present generation of artists.

Annotation and Analysis

My first job was to translate the interview scripts from Oriya and Hindi to English. I analyzed the responses keeping in mind the innate significances of the responses. As a practitioner of the dance myself, I understood that the responses displayed aesthetic and emotional facets which were inculcated by the ideological traditions. Within the responses of the participants, it is not only the voice of the participant that is significant, but also the voices that represent multiple mediation of its meaning. In “Oral Traditions and Verbal Arts,” Finnegan describes how the meaning sometimes needs to be “gleaned” from the responses. I transcribed and coded the interactions with my research participants, and arranged the responses in a vertical (column-based) format with several categories related to my research inquiry. I also annotated parts of the responses in order to interpret them and tie them to my theoretical framework. A column-based method of analysis gave a clearer understanding of the patterns in responses. For instance, when a participant says, “Guru is crucial in learning Odissi,” the response is a result of mediated concepts of the significance of the master in learning the art. References to authenticity, purity, sacredness of the memory, practice of the dance and the body of the dancer indicated the attitude towards values of traditional dance. As a researcher, I had to glean those subtexts. Because of the web-based nature of data collection process, I missed certain non-verbal elements during the course of research. Many of the Indian dancers I interviewed responded through gestures, facial expressions, and physical demonstrations. I am however, keen follow up the email correspondences with my respondents with face-to-face interviews to augment the valuable data that I collected.

Coding Scheme and Framework for Interpreting data

To study the value systems and attitudes of the participants towards mediation of dance performance, I coded the individual case data collected from the interviews, emails and surveys under three categories: Why, What and How. I highlighted data that might help me explain these questions: (c) why is it important to ask the question of authenticity and purity in mediated dance, (b) what specific tools of performance pedagogy and practice he/she uses, and (a) how the participants perform virtually.

In chapter 3, I will present extracts from the data to demonstrate how I categorized them in order to the above question. The patterns in the data concerned with the digital pedagogic tools will be located and represented in a table. I believe this scheme will segue into a cultural interpretation, an indication of the value system and an understanding the attitudes concerning the issue of dance and technology. To study the transformation of the value systems in remediations of cultural memories, I coded the data from interviews, emails, surveys, and blog analyses under three categories:

- a. Instances when the participants are associating the practice of Odissi with sacredness
- b. Instances when participants are expressing negative, positive or other concerns regarding virtual pedagogy in tradition dance
- c. Instances when responses indicate conflict between technology and traditional in terms of the core values of the dance.

Interacting with people across the field of Indian classical dance performance allowed me to generate hypotheses for my project and then perform the data collection intended to support or contest those hypotheses. This approach has helped me identify categories within the inter-

relatable datasets and then locate in them the core concepts that describe these relationships. In the next section, I will present the arrangement and overview of the dissertation.

1.4 Overview of the chapters

I have chosen to use the arrangement structure of a typical Odissi dance repertoire to shape my dissertation arrangement. These five main pieces of Odissi are *Mangalacharan* (invocation), *Batu* (conditioning), *Pallavi* (complication), *Abhinaya* (dramatization), and *Moksha* (liberation). Each of them can be approximately ten to twenty minutes long, and dancers spend years learning Odissi in this order.

Mangalacharan is the traditional invocatory piece of Indian classical Odissi dance, and dancers perform it at the beginning of a rendition. My first chapter is an invocation of the personal experiences that occur in artistic and academic fields. The exploration of the conversations in the field on the impact of technology on traditional practices of dance and composition studies helped me respond to my first central question: Why is it important to study the transformation of tradition through technology. I argued the inclusion and use of technology is creating tensions in both fields. It is pointless to judge whether we should or should not use technology. It is important to understand the impact of technology on traditional values in order to use it most effectively to reach the pedagogic goals in a way that is most satisfactory to the student and the teacher.

This chapter helps set the tone for research topic because it puts forth the central argument and the central questions. I also describe the dance and the methodology in order to invoke the conversations in the field to assert and ascertain the position and scope of the current research. I chose to adopt a methodological framework based on the Guru-Shishya tradition derived from the oral pedagogy of the Indian artistic tradition. In Sanskrit language, Guru means

“master” and Shishya means “student.” Guru-Shishya refers to the sacred bond between the master and student in the process of learning. I describe a methodological stance that evolved during my research in the artistic village of Raghurajpur in coastal Orissa (east India). As I was interviewing the venerable Gurus about my study, it automatically turned into a pedagogic moment, owing to the nature and conventions of the culture.

Batu is the second piece that a dancer can learn or choose to perform. It has a highly structured, traditional choreography that conditions the dancer’s body to perform Odissi. The *chowka* and the *tribhangi* are the two main postures of Odissi. *Chowka* means “square.” In this posture, the body represents a square. *Tribhangi* means “three bends.” In this posture, the body bends in three places: the neck, the torso, and the knee. At this stage of the dissertation, I evince the context of the current research and set up the historical and mythical concepts, thereby conditioning the reader to interact with this culturally specific study. I trace the inscriptions on the bodies that hold the sacred memory of the dance. Since many of my readers may not be familiar with Odissi and its ancient traditions, I also give a detailed explanation of how practitioners of Odissi traditionally teach the dance.

Pallavi is a pure dance, or *nritta*⁹, and it is the third stage of my research. A *pallavi*, which is a Sanskrit word for “blossoming,” starts at a slow speed and slow movements. The

⁹ In the theory of classical Indian dramaturgy, performance on stage can be of three types: *Nritta*, *Natya* and *Nritya*. Of these, *Nritta* and *Nritya* are relevant to dance, whereas *Natya* is pure dramatic acting that does not involve dance. *Nritya*, the expressional dance, is a combination of drama and dance. *Nritta* is technical or pure dance and does not have any story-telling element. Instead, the dancer maintains a pleasant and smiling disposition throughout the dance.

dance does not say any particular story. The music and the accompanying movements become progressively more complex. This piece of the dance demonstrates the scope of collaboration between the musician and the dancer, challenging one another to coordinate rhythm and movement. Music and movement work together harmoniously to create a meaningful aesthetic narrative. The essence of pallavi is to trace multiple harmonized patterns in the music and the dance. This is the heartbeat of the dissertation where I will locate the subversiveness and tensions in contested spaces.

In this third chapter, I will report my data and trace patterns in the data to show that to most dancers associate a sense of “sacredness” in interpersonal relationships in a pedagogic space is vital in transmission of knowledge. Traditional Odissi dancers use several technological tools. These tools are transforming the way in which Odissi teaching happened in the Guru-Shishya or Master-Discipline system. Presentation of the data helps we respond to the second central question: What are the ways in which mediation of this traditional practice is taking place? What are the tools that dancers are using to teach, learn and perform? Responding to this question will lead to understanding the implication of the use of technology on the performance of the dance. I find that some senior practitioners are apprehensive that mediation through digital tools of pedagogy can potentially spoil the sacred relationship of the dancer with her/his body, teacher, and the space where he/she is performing. The chapter will also reveal some of the recommendation for best practice in a virtually mediated dance pedagogy suggested by some of the senior responders. To some senior dancers, if dance is mediated at all, that needs to be done “properly.” I reveal the tools and technologies that teachers and learners use in a dance performance. Here I will use the data to argue that digital remediation might not be harmful to the practice of Odissi dance if it is responsibly practiced without negotiating the core values of

the dance as much as possible. If there are instances of distancing from the core values, the practitioner should make an effort to simulate the real value systems in the non-traditional practice. I will use the interview data to show the ways in which the seniors are recommending that such simulations can be accomplished successfully.

Abhinaya is the representation of the *nritya*, or the expressional element of Odissi. The fourth chapter brings out the dramatic element of my research by locating the subversiveness and tensions in contested spaces. I take cases where traditional practice and pedagogy of Odissi artists and teachers undergoes mediation. I explore the construction of the virtualized and mediated dancing self that performs, collaborates, teaches, learns, and forges new inter-body relationships that substitute the traditional Guru-Shishya or master-disciple relationship. Here, I address my third vital research questions: How does mediation of the memory, pedagogy, and practice of the dance negotiate with the underlying value system of the dance? Technology is impacting and transforming traditional practices. However, being aware of the roots of a tradition can be helpful in enhancing the experience of the traditional performance. In this chapter, I also ask how remediation is conflicting with traditional practices and in the process transforming tradition. I argue that the divide between mediated and traditional practices in dance creates a productive space that can help scholar understand how digital and networked technologies are transforming embodied cultural memory.

A traditional dance routine ends with the performance of *Moksha*. This dance represents a spiritual culmination for the dancer who soars into the realm of pure aesthetic delight. This is the ultimate aspiration or goal of the dancer who aims to unify with the benign Power through dance.

*Moksha*¹⁰ implies liberation, which is Hindu philosophy is the ultimate goal and significance of life. In the last chapter, I present the significance of online performative experience on my composition pedagogy.

I began this research by saying that mediated pedagogy diminishes the core values of Odissi dance that I learnt. The values included that importance of interpersonal relationships and sacredness of the performance space. In a mediated pedagogic space of a composition classroom, there is no direct physical contact in the collaborative activities between teachers and the students. Simulating the traditional pedagogic values in my non-traditional classroom helped me promote collaborative learning and interpersonal engagement, thereby enhancing the learning and teaching experience in my online and hybrid courses. In the last section of this study, I will present these implications of the research on my own pedagogy.

In the next chapter, I will explore the concepts of the Guru, the body and spirituality, which are profoundly valued in this dance. Mediation can potentially affect these three core values, and so it is important to understand how these have evolved over several hundred years. While mediation modifies the form of the art, my research data reveals an importance given to three essential elements: (a) an association of the art with sacredness, (b) importance of the immediate presence of the corporeal body as a bearer of the memory, and (c) the presence of the

¹⁰ In Hindu philosophy, *Moksha* is the liberation of the soul from the body, after which the soul soars to assimilate with the Supreme Soul. The unification of soul (*atma*) with Vedic Concept of *Aham Brahma Asmi*, which means I am Brahma or Supreme Soul (from *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*). In this concept, each soul is a part of the Supreme Power in itself. *Moksha* is the concept of merging with the Supreme Soul.

Guru. I will demonstrate in my next chapter how these values might have evolved from the origin of this practice. I argue that practitioners of dance expressed divided opinion when asked if technologies like DVD, video and stagecraft are potentially spoiling the traditional method of teaching and performing. The memory has transferred from one mode to another¹¹. The values of underlying the dance practice and pedagogy have remained essential of the dance. In the next chapter, I present the history of this dance in detail to clarify how the traditions developed.

¹¹ The dance on learning DVDs appear as remediated gestural meanings conveyed by the body of the teacher in the video. The visual effects of stage convey meanings that are traditionally conveyable through dance gestures.

Chapter 2: *BATU*

MYTH OF THE DANCING SCULPTURES

2.1 History of Odissi dance

In the previous chapter, I overviewed the theoretical and methodological design of this research. While introducing Odissi dance in the previous chapter, I provided a very brief historical background of the origin of the dance. In this chapter, I will explain the characteristics of this art and the history that shaped the underlying value system. This dissertation examines the value system of traditional Odissi pedagogy and its metamorphosis in virtual pedagogical practices. Online pedagogy has compromised the importance of the immediate presence of the teacher and the ritualistic space where the teaching and performance of dance takes place. The core value system of traditional Odissi involves sacred associations between the dance space, the dancing body, and an immediate presence of the master. New digital technologies have had a profound impact on these values in relation to the teaching and practice of traditional dance as well as how we understand performative cultural memory. It is understandable that new technologies have created a divide in the dance community. To some, technology is an important tool for innovation. To others, it has the potential to spoil the authenticity of the art. Odissi has been constantly remediated across several generations, and the authenticity of the dance has been constantly remediated, too. In this chapter, I will explain the characteristics of this art and the history that shaped the underlying value system. Much of these are passed down by the past generation practitioners through the traditional Guru-Shishya or Master-Discipline tradition of

Indian arts. In the next chapter, I will present my data from my interviews and surveys to see the attitudes of the present generation to these core values of Odissi.

The spiritual, social, and political fabric of ancient Indian society practice shaped the practice of Odissi. Oral and performative practices of Odissi represent one part of ancient Indian rhetoric. Spirituality is foundational to the practices and performances of Odissi with the oral and performed practices functioning as a tool to embody and enact spirituality. While the spiritual implications of performance are important to the dance itself, in this dissertation, I will concentrate on performance as a communicative process and explore the socio-historical and artistic context of making meaning through gestures of the body.

Odissi was learned through a process called *śruti* or “what is heard”. The students memorized the movements that masters showed. The movements were also composed as descriptive verses in Sanskrit, which students memorized. The process of memorization as a way of learning is the same as the practice of chanting and remembering the ancient texts of the Vedas. The Vedas are the most ancient example of rhetorical practices of the Indian subcontinent. Indologist Michio Yano writes, “the Vedas were not written compositions but they were 'what is heard' (*śruti*) by the inspired sages and they were transmitted exclusively by oral method in the first millennium after its formation. Even after the written method of recording was introduced from the west sometime around the fourth century B.C. oral method was preferred to written methods” (1). The Vedas consist of four books written in ancient Sanskrit (also known as Vedic Sanskrit). Of these, the first book contains several religious chants, the second book contains the scheme of intonation for reading the first book, and the third book contains performative rituals involving the body and the space. Performance of the rituals involves chanting as well as gestures with the fingers and body, and choreographing of the space.

Vedic Aryan performed these rituals as a persuasive communicative methods directed towards ethereal powers of the universe. This performativeness has shaped traditional practices like dance and drama. Physical performance as a rhetorical devise is integral to the understanding of this rhetorical tradition of India. In the next few sections of this chapter, I will attempt to present brief explanations of the innate spirituality associated with space, pedagogy and the body in Indian culture with specific focus on the performance of Odissi dance.

2.2 Mediated Memories of Odissi

Dance is an instrument of the unique cultural identity and ethos of a group. In India, dance is also an integral part of folk lives, and we have dances for every occasion. The birth of a child, sowing of seeds, harvest, marriage, mating, finding a mate, death, evoking the rain, missing one's lover, curing of an illness and numerous other occasions in different parts of India are celebrated with their unique dance ceremonies. Several of these traditional dances that communities practice and that require no formal training, are "folk dances". *Karakam*, practiced in South India, is one of the most ancient surviving folk dances. The dancer dances with a pot on his head in acrobatic movements in front of the Goddess to ward of epidemic. Other dances such as the *Bhangra*, or the Northeastern war dances, are both integral to culture and simply a part of the ritual of everyday life. Folk dances are spontaneous expressions of love, joy, reverence, sadness and so on. Folk dances are oral traditions transmitted across generations, and performances are not set to any grammar or structure. Though varied in styles and forms, dance is the cultural identity of India and plays an important role in the social fabric.

Some of the folk dance forms of southern, eastern, and northeastern¹² India evolved into a more formal, esoteric temple dance tradition. These were the “classical dances”. In south and east India, special clans of women began to perform spiritual dances in the temples in the south and east of India. Like several other rituals of the temples, these dances were set to specific grammars. There are some mythical beliefs regarding the codification of the dance. At around 400 B.C., Bharatmuni wrote *Natyashastra*, apparently under the guidance of the mythical dancers and Hindu deity, Lord Shiva (Vatsyayan 2). The idea of writing under the guidance of mythical Gods and demi-gods might mean that Bharatmuni was invoking them as he wrote this text. *Natyashastra* textualized the oral knowledge of dance. The classical dances are those dances that adhere to the theories of movement, expression, and performance, as prescribed by Bharatmuni. According to the *Sangeet Natak Academy* (Academy of Performing Arts of the Government of India), the Indian classical dances include Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Mohiniattam from the southern peninsular part of India, Odissi from the eastern coast, Manipuri from the Himalayan northeast and Kathak from the Gangetic plains of North India.

Odissi was born in the temples of Orissa. Odissi derives its name from this state. It is arguably the oldest of the classical dances. Stone carvings on the cave-walls of Udaygiri and Khandagiri reveal some practices of the dance by women as early as 200 BCE. Odissi survived through these depictions of innumerable poses of dancing women. These dance poses are alongside several other spiritual, erotic, and martial performative practices. The inscriptions on the natural caverns of Udaygiri depict the form of women playing the flute, drums and cymbals

¹² Under the Mughal (Islamic/Central-Asian/Persian) influence of colonization, northern Indian classical dance, Kathak, does not share the similar temple-dance origin.

(Patnaik 7). The postures depicted here, the bended knees and slightly tilted heads, bear resemblance with Odissi.

The temple dancers or “Deva Dasis” were the slaves of God. These female dancers are “maharis”¹³. *Maharis* originally practiced the dance as an offering to God. Maharis were married to the deity of the temple where they served and often hailed from respectable, even royal, families. Often, poor families sold off their daughters to serve the temples in return of a wish fulfilled. The *Puranas* have references to the age-old traditions of this practice, including performances by dancing girls in various ritualistic ceremonies. *Puranas* are Hindu texts dealing with mythologies of the Hindu deities, demi-Gods, and human kings. In his book on the history of Odissi, Dhiren Patnaik quotes the temple inscriptions that give semi-erotic physical descriptions of the girls that are dedicated to the deity of the temple. These are verses from the 10th century temple of Brahmeshwari. Kolavati Devi, mother of the Udyot Keshari of the Keshari dynasty is the author of this prose:

“By her were dedicated to God Shiva some beautiful women,
whose limbs were adorned with ornaments set in gems and thus
appearing as the everlasting but playful lightnings, and who were
restless with the weight of loins and breasts, and whose eyes were fickle
and extended up to the ears and who looked lovely like the pupils of the
eyes of men” (30).

¹³ The etymological origin of the word Mahari is debatable. It is commonly believed to have come from *mahat nari* meaning, “great woman”. Shashimani Devi is the last living Mahari of Orissa.

These wives of the temple deity had the sole right (other than the priests) to enter the inner rooms of the temples. Along with the temple, the maharis, too, received financial support from the Hindu rulers of Orissa, and it is a popular belief that the King and the high priests could have sexual relationships with the maharis.

The temples of Orissa typically have three buildings. The outermost structure is the Nat Mandir (hall of performance), where the maharis danced. The Bhog Mandir (hall of offerings) in the middle is slightly taller than this. Here, temple priests offer cooked rice and fruits to the deity. The tallest structure of the temple, or the Garbha Mandir (meaning the “womb of the temple”), contained an idol of the deity. In the Jagannath Temple of Puri in Orissa, non-Hindus can still not enter beyond the gate. Barring on non-Hindus could be a way of protecting the temple from potential destruction that was common during several waves of non-Hindu colonization across India. Of the esoteric rituals of the temples, the mahari dance was very important in the daily activities. Maharis performed “abhinayas” or expressional dances depicting stories from the *Purana* and the Sanskrit verses of 12th century Oriya poet, Jayadeva. Maharis trained within the art of dancing and *Aharya* (or decorating their bodies with flowers, ornaments and sandalwood paste). At the time of the dance, the maharis could not look at any audience members that might be present. They had to abide by the *Natyashastra* and express bhavas (emotions) that were purely spiritual. Their dance required them to narrate mythological stories.

The Muslim and British colonization was a major setback for the maharis. The culturally unaware colonizers misunderstood the maharis as prostitutes or entertainers like the court dancers of Northern India. The patrons of Orissan temple dances, the Hindu kings, lost their power, and their support dwindled. This was an extension of a general artistic decline of the

Indian states during this time. In terms of fine arts, there was a sharp “shift in consumer tastes by both the new British patronage and existing Indian upper-class patrons” (Mills, Sen 123). This influenced people’s taste for dance as well; the function of dance as an entertainment dominated its function as an internalized expression of worship and its attempt to establish a connection with the spiritual self.

A very important misrepresentation/misunderstanding of the art of Odissi might have lead to its decline during the British era. Here I am specifically referring to the apparent inability of the colonizers to comprehend the spiritual nature of these sacred-sensuous dancers. A major part of the dance tradition of India is comprised of the records of court dances, or *nauch* that took place in the courts for the purpose of entertainment. Courtroom dancing was a practice since the Mughal era (sixteenth century). British missionaries did not understand the east and south Indian pre-colonial tradition of temple dancing and its difference from prostitution. Maharis received money from the donations given to the temple by wealthy patrons and rulers. Maharis were undeniably providing sexual services to the patrons, but sex was not the primary function of the mahari tradition. Maharis were integral to the ritual of worship in the temple. The deva dasi tradition of south India was parallel to the mahari tradition of east India. Deva dasi in Sanskrit means “servant of God.”

The Muslim colonizers introduced the *purdah* system (the practice of covering the face and head) for women and Maharis stopped the usual ritualistic dancing in the temple premises. The Islamic colonial powers (in 16th century) brought with them the *purdah* system, which bound women behind veils. The rigid laws about women displaying their bodies affected temple dance. Later British-reformist movements such as “anti-nautch” of the 19th century lead to the banning/discontinuing of dancing as part of prostitution. Active practice of mahari and deva dasi

traditions, which were by now same as prostitution, also stopped. Here, I do not present an argument whether maharis were indeed engaging in prostitution. The focus for me in this issue is the artistic tradition of the maharis. Coloniality silenced the narrative of ulterior spirituality of the temple dance practices and resulted in the discontinuation of an artistic tradition.

Discontinuation of mahari dance exemplifies the results of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of a cultural performance. The colonizers judged this artistic tradition according to the ethical and moral standards based on Christian and Islamic principles. The co-existence of spirituality/sacredness and sexuality seen in the depictions on temple walls (for instance, the depiction of the Kamasutra on Konarak temple of Orissa) as well as in the practice was not permissible by the Christian moral standards.

In order to keep the memory of the dance alive, the practitioners of the temple dance in Orissan temples began to teach the dance to young boys, many of whom were sons of the maharis. These boys were called gotipuas (“goti” means one, and “pua” means boy). Bandha¹⁴ is the acrobatic dance of the gotipuas. Apart from Odissi dance, gotipuas also learnt martial arts and served as protectors of the temple premises in case of any invasion. During the performance, these young boy-dancers performed dressed as girls. Maharis performed the dance only within the temple walls; gotipuas danced for the entertainment of the public. Maharis’ dance was lyrical and spiritual. Gotipua dancers retained some of the spirituality and lyricism. However, the dance

¹⁴ This is an acrobatic performance by a group of Gotipuas. Acrobatic formations depicted on the ancient temple walls suggest that it is one of the original rituals of the temples performed by both men and women.

transformed when the male bodies adopted it. It became acrobatic and stronger, and it lost the lilting feminine charm that was characteristic to the spiritual temple dance.

Present day gotipua dance remains an acrobatic folk dance. The mediation of the sensuous Odissi dance into the male body problematized the sexuality inscribed in the dance. According to Peggy Phelan, a Western visual perception of the body performing gotipua is the erotic substitute of the female form. In her description of gotipua dance, Phelan writes, “Surface femininity reminds the spectator of the absence of the female (the lack) rather than her presence” (156). She goes on to refer to the Freudian concept of fetishes, where the “movement (of the male dancer) works not to bring the female into the spectacle of exchange between spectator and performer but to leave her emphatically outside.” Dance scholar Avanthi Meduri (1996) critiques Phelan’s argument and accuses Phelan of violating the integrity and sacredness of the dance (158). The bodies that performed the dance were associated with the temple in the spiritual sense, and hence sacred. For scholars like Meduri and several Indians associated with the dance, the value system underlying this sense of spirituality in gotipua dance lets viewers see beyond the body as a gendered, sexual corporeal form.

After decades of near-extinction, in the mid-twentieth century at the dawn of post-British Independent India, a group of locally bred theatre practitioners, dancers trained as gotipuas and maharis, and percussionists initiated the revival and reconstruction of Odissi. By this time, the Odissi dance practice had shifted much from its original temple form. This group of performers called themselves *Jayantika*. The group consisted of Guru Pankaj Charan Das, Guru Deba Prasad Das, and Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. Based on the on-going practices of gotipua and mahari styles, these performers constructed and standardized the classical Odissi dance form. This was a post-independence nationalist agenda to fit westernized model of nationalistic symbol of culture.

The practitioners of the dance positioned as exotic and traditional, and deemed authenticity based on the concepts of traditional performance that the previous generation of dancers had transmitted to them. The revivalists of Odissi had their own interpretation of the dance and definition of authenticity. This led to the creation of several schools of Odissi dance in Orissa. Which school is more “authentic” is a controversial question¹⁵ within the dance community.

India’s cultural intelligentsia granted Odissi the status of a classical dance.

Bharatanatyam, another classical dance of India, came from the deva dasi system of temple dancing. In a study on the deva dasi system Janet O’Shea writes that the colonial documents never completely understood or represented the demarcation of a common prostitute and a temple dancer (4, 7, 189). O’Shea’s study is in the context of Bharatanatyam dance history and the struggle of legitimacy of this South Indian spiritual dance tradition¹⁶. Bharatanatyam faced a

¹⁵ While this debate served a nationalistic function, it indicates the hegemonic narrative of the dance practice by the senior practitioners. In my conversations with the current generation of eminent senior practitioners, most of whom are direct descendants of the *Jayantika* group, I attempted to understand the extent of their hegemonic voice on how the dance should be properly practiced. I will re-visit this question at a late stage of this chapter, when I discuss the concept of Guru.

¹⁶ In her essay “Some Limits Of Orientalism: The Discourse of Heritage in Classical Indian Dance”, dance historian Pallabi Chakravorty (2006) traces the invention of the artistic traditional as an anti-colonial nationalistic agenda by scholars like Kapila Vatsayana and A.K. Coomaraswamy. Dance scholar Avanti Meduri (2005) argues on the significant role of eminent classical dance revivalist Rukmini Devi Arundale in this effort of establish Indian classical dance

similar decline during the colonial period and revived during after India's independence.

Bharatanatyam, the dance from the south is stylistically and grammatically different from Odissi. Though both dances rely on the *Natyashastra* for grammar of performance, the interpretations are different. However, they share the similar value systems of sacredness of body, space, and Guru-Shishya tradition. O'Shea's point on the distinction between temple dance and prostitution in south Indian dance is therefore relevant to the study of Odissi dance.

The history and revival of the eastern Indian classical Odissi dance is more complex than that of the south Indian Bharatanatyam. This is because of the transgendered mediation of memory of the Gotipuas. Most of the male practitioners of the dance at that time were former gotipuas themselves. Some received training from maharis. There is a complex gender-power relationship in the transmission of the memory of the dance, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I plan to re-visit these issues as well my briefly laid out discussion on nationalism and transgendered mediation in the practice of Odissi in a future project. Like temple sculptures, gotipuas embodied a cultural memory as a way of keeping the memory of the dance alive. The gotipua tradition is an important stage of mediation of this art's memory from a female to a male body, and it brought about major alterations to the form of the dance. It lost much of the feminine grace characteristic of Odissi. However, it adhered strictly to the master-disciple tradition, which remained intrinsic to this practice across the centuries. In the next section, we will discuss the concept of this tradition in more detail.

heritage. The effort was to purge the dance from the association of temple-prostitution and re-associate it with the ancient Indian classical age, thereby constructing a golden heritage.

2.3 Role and position of the Guru

The Guru hands down the knowledge of the art of Odissi dance from generation to generation. “Guru” comes from the Sanskrit root [gṛ], which means, “to praise or invoke.” In the word *Guru*, *gu* signifies “darkness”, and *ru* signifies “the one who destroys”. There is an elaborate belief system surrounding the Guru. Sanskrit verses as well as some traditional pedagogic conventions reflect this belief system. My traditional learning of the Odissi dance has instilled the knowledge of this system in me. According to this system, Guru does not necessarily instill new knowledge; Guru destroys darkness and provides the student with light to unfold truth, knowledge, and wisdom. Guru is the human form of abstract divinity that helps in illuminating one’s knowledge. An ideal Guru needs to have several qualities him/herself. He must be adept in the art that he is teaching and he must be spiritually enlightened. Odissi dance has survived through the generations of the *Guru-Shishya parampara* or master-student tradition. Learning in the Guru-Shishya method involves complete surrendering to the Guru and absorbing the knowledge of the Guru in one’s self.

In most Indian artistic and spiritual traditions, the Guru plays the role of a mediator and s/he is responsible for the preservation of the purity of an art. This sense of protectiveness can be due to the hegemonic-nationalistic origin of modern Odissi classical dance. Every art form evolves over time as practitioners innovate. The postures in classical Odissi are measured, defined, and strict. However, in this artistic community, neglecting the geometrical purity associated with the art is the same as disrespecting the art. Expressions and gestures are spontaneous expressions of a dancer’s emotional state. Although I just wrote “spontaneous”, dancers perform the nuances of expressions according to the documented theory of expressions in the *Natyashastra*.

The traditional teaching of Odissi involves the Guru demonstrating the dance and the disciple imitating it and repeating it several times until he/she has memorized it completely. Like most classical arts of India, studying this art requires constant feedback from the Guru in order to achieve perfect movement of the limbs and coordination of movement and facial expression. Teaching, learning and practicing Odissi in traditional settings dwells on the constant interaction of the dancer with the teacher and the dancer with his/her own body.

Like all other Indian classical dances, the Guru transmitted the knowledge of the dance orally and practically to the disciple. The form of the dance underwent vast transformation from the temple dance practices to the gotipua-style practice to its current state. Over all this time, oral transmission of knowledge has been the main method of teaching and learning. Thus, the immediate presence of the Guru has remained crucial. Mediation of the sacred knowledge into written texts probably came much later. The third century Indian performance scholar Nandikeswar wrote *Abhinaya Darpana* a book on the grammar of dance. Odissi practitioners still use the grammatical and theoretical concepts from this book in the teaching and practice of Odissi dance.

Adhering to a grammar is important to preserve the pristine nature of a classical dance. Gurus orally transmit the Sanskrit verses of *Abhinaya Darpana* and *Natyashastra*. When I was learning Odissi grammar, my Guru demonstrated the verses while chanting, and students imitated her. I do not have all of the verses of *Natyashastra* in my memory, but possess a copy of the book with notes taken during lessons with my Guru. I trust the Guru's interpretation of the texts, the mythologies portrayed in dance and the stories on the origin of Odissi, because her Guru, who in turn learnt it from his Guru, handed these down to her. I did not ever feel the necessity to cross-examine the information imparted on me since the Sanskrit verses

encapsulated the memories surrounding the dance in a way that was convincing and worthy of trust. “Authenticity” of the dance undergoes mediation in Sanskrit verses in this text.

Gotipuas learned the dance in residential schools called akhdas. The village of Raghurajpur (birthplace of the gotipua dance) has prominent akhdas, which are still engaged in training gotipuas. There are residential schools for teaching classical dances as well. Some prominent residential school of Odissi is Nrityagram near Bangalore (in the state of Karnataka in south India), Srjan in Bhubaneswar (in the state of Orissa) and Konark Natya Mandap (in the state of Orissa) in Konark, near Puri. In some of these schools, students lead a life of austerity and extreme devotion to the art. This lifestyle is *brahmacharya*¹⁷. The students do their own work, and help the Guru and his/her family members in the household chores. Nrityagram, or dance village, near Bangalore (in southern India) is one such institution that includes this condition in the description of their training program: “The program also requires involvement in gardening, cleaning and working in the kitchen” (Nrityagram website). The relationship between the master and the disciple is traditionally not mercenary. While receiving knowledge and training, the student shows humility and gratitude towards the Guru.

¹⁷ In Hindu philosophy, the hundred-year span of an ideal human life contains into four episodes, each spanning twenty-five years. The first part is *brahmacharya*, when person stays with the Guru and procures knowledge of arts and scriptures. The second part is *garhastha*, when he will engage in maintaining his family. Third part is *vanaprastha* when he gradually attempts to sever emotional ties with the people in his/her family, allowing them to lead their own lives. The fourth part is *Sanyas* or hermitage, when he renounces the worldly pleasures and goes off in the wilderness to meditate as an ascetic.

These verses evince the position of high respect that Gurus command in this tradition – “*Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara. Guru Sakshat Parabrahma, Tasmai shri Gurave namah.*”¹⁸ These verses in Sanskrit give the Guru the position of the Divine Trinity of Hindu spirituality. They are the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer/ Regenerator. The verses then say that the Guru is the Divine Creator himself. It ends with a *namaskaram* or homage to the Guru. In Indian culture, as in several far eastern cultural spiritual practices of martial arts, the position of the Guru or master is immediately after one’s God. The academic classrooms in Indian subcontinent value this notion of the Guru or the teacher. The dancer has a sacred relationship with the teacher. The dancer also has a sacred relationship with his/her body. The next section will take a traditional perspective of the body as a meaning-making vehicle.

¹⁸ It is likely that sage Shankaracharya composed these verses in the 9th century. I learned it through oral transmission from my mother and Guru.

2.4 “Sacred” Body of the Odissi dancer

The body of an Odissi dancer bears histories of transgender-ness, nationalistic functions of its resurrection as well as the oppressive nature of the folk/classical and sexual/spiritual binaries. The body embodies the abstractions of tradition. The consequences of technologization can be “seen” on the body. It is helpful to theorize traditional rhetoric and technological culture in terms of the body. In order to do that, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of the body of the traditional dancer. Layers of colonial history make the performance of this body extremely significant. The body of the Odissi dancer enacts the sexual and the sacred simultaneously.

The dancing maharis remain etched on the walls of hundreds of temples in Orissa like Konark, Puri Jagannath, Rajarani, Khajuraho, and Bhubaneswar. The poses often depict ritualistic offerings of flowers and playing of musical instruments. There are poses of the dancer engaged in Aharya or decorating herself by looking at a mirror. These temples also illustrate ritualistic sexual poses depicted in the Kamasutra, figures engaged in martial arts, several totemic animals, and some deities. The body of maharis and the depiction of them on the temple facade is an interesting juxtaposition of sexuality and spirituality. The sculptures represent an idealized woman’s body, perfectly poised, with a voluptuous figure and exaggeratedly exposed breasts and thighs. These temple sculptures bear the memory of this traditional dance.

In Indian classical dance, the male and female bodies have specific styles of performance. The feminine style of dance is *lasya*, and the masculine style of dance is *tandava*. Lasya in Odissi is lilting and graceful while tandava is bold. In the gotipua style of dance, Odissi lost some of the feminine grace that characterized the performance of a female dancer. However, the

gotipua tradition adhered strictly to the intrinsic master-disciple tradition. *Akhadas* or schools of Gotipua dance still exist in the village of Raghurajpur in the eastern part of India.

The presence of the hypersexualized female figures on the temple walls blurs the distinction between the sacred and the sexual in Hindu practices. Art Historian Dehejia tries to explain the blurring of the sacred and the profane in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temple sculpture by linking physical beauty with morality of character in the eastern psyche. She refers to the Buddhist text *Lakkhana-suttanta* (meaning “text on perfections” in Pali language) where the perfection of the body indicates a measure for the greatness of the soul, and the perfection of the body is the result of moral action or *kamma* (65). In another theory, she interprets the 1077 AD Orissan text *Shilpa-prakash* (Light on Art), that the auspicious presence of the woman’s body performs a protective function. In their account of the colonized and postcolonial body in the context of South Asia, Mills and Sen opine that the depictions of nudity and sexual engagement employ cryptic indications that might not be comprehensible without the appropriate socio-cultural reference (Mills, Sen 5). Some of these functions art historian Devangana Desai suggested might include “magical defense, the concealment of a yantra¹⁹, giving delight to people... embodying yogic concepts” (5). To Desai, the female sexuality represents a power that protects the temple while also giving visual pleasure to the onlookers. Sexuality was a part of the religious and cultural ritual. Sex and the body that performed it were both sacred in a way that might be difficult for someone from a different culture to understand and appreciate.

Traditional Odissi dancers often consider the body as sacred because the dancer uses it to communicate with the spiritual self. In a traditional repertoire, the dancer begins a recital with *bhoomi pranam*, asking forgiveness from *bhoomi* or Earth on which the dancer will perform.

¹⁹ Yantras are spiritual magical symbols.

Isthadeva Vandana follows this. In this, the dancer offers obeisance to a deity for an auspicious beginning. It concludes with a trikhandi pranam in which the dancer offers salutations to God, the Guru and the audience. The dancer pays homage to the guardians of the ten directions of the Ranga Mancha. They are the demi-gods Kuber (Wealth), Indra (Lightning/War/Heaven), Agni (Fire), Yama (Death), Rakshasa (Demon), Varun (Water), Vayu (Wind), Ishan (Dawn), Ananta (Space), and also Brahma (the Creator). The interaction of the body with the world beyond helps in this process of making meanings through movements, a seminal feature of the rhetoric of performance from the perspective of the eastern spiritual psyche.

From my experience as a dancer, I understand that dancers have a dual purpose when they perform a dance: (a) to communicate meanings with expressive gestures and (b) to internalize the meaning in order to achieve a state of spiritual purity and embody the “purity” of the nation-state. My study demands a balanced and multi-perspectival study of the virtualized body. In their study of bodies in the context of colonial and post-colonial South Asia, James Mills and Satadru Sen point out how the body is central to critical discourse in South Asian societies, particularly in the context of mythologies and as modern economical and political discourse. Functions of the body, its cleanliness, purity, untouchability, and artistic representation are complex and important concepts in the understanding of Indian culture (Mills, Sen 4).

The multiple identities of the performing body are present in the context of Indian Classical dance as well. Odissi serves a dual purpose by being a mode of entertainment as well as a mode of worship. The practice of temple dancers (maharis) had a spiritual function. The maharis danced only for the deity and inside the temple, and gotipuas performed outside for entertainment. The motivation for mahari dance was spiritual. It also served as an attraction for

the Hindu ruler on the area to donate generously to the temple as a patron of the maharis and the temple rituals. Gotipua dance primarily performed to entertain people outside the temple. The hidden agenda of the dance was to train the boys in acrobatic arts to make them capable of defending the temple in case of attack by the colonizers.

The administrative officials of the temple governed the role and functions of the bodies involved in the ritualistic performances. The maharis performed the devotional dances and led a ritualistically pure life. However, rules permitted sexual contact with the high priests and the patron kings. The tension between the sexual and the sacred is visible in the nature of the performance of modern Odissi. The dance is coquettishly feminine, yet spiritual. This brings us to the question of how Indian classical dance conceptualizes the corporeal body. The next section attempts to present descriptions of the body as I learnt them from my Guru, and *Natyashastra* (section 2.3) depicts the specific meaning-making faculties of the body when performing Odissi.

2.5 Angika: Visible Rhetoric of the Body

Angika is the Sanskrit equivalent of “bodily” which refers to the meaning-making gestures demonstrated by the body. Very particular conventions and descriptions of the performing body are an important part of the performance of the cultural tradition of Odissi, grammars, if you will, that suggest the rhetorical potential of the performing body clearly and accurately. Therefore, I will go over some of the sections in *Natyashastra* that focus on the function, representation, and desired movement of the body. I provide a brief description of the dancers: *Nayaka Lakshana* and *Nayika Lakshna* in *Natyashastra*. The *nayika-lakshkhan* (signs of a female-protagonist) and *nayak-lakshkhan* (signs of a male protagonist) determine whether a person can or cannot perform in a temple. The corporeal body and rhetorical body function as one entity in Odissi. *Natyashastra* defines the body and the meanings that the body depicts.

In Abhinaya Darpana, a 10th century Sanskrit theoretical text on the aesthetics of performance, Nandikeshwar described that the ideal *Nayika*, or heroine, should have the following physical characteristics: youthful, slender, beautiful, large-eyed, large bosomed, self-confident, witty, pleasing, adept in keeping and following rhythm, elaborately dressed and with a happy disposition. This is in accordance with *Natyashastra* recommendations of *Nayika Lakshana* in (chapter XXVII.97-98). The text lays down ten blemishes that will make a woman unfit to be a dancer: white specks on the pupils, scanty hair, thick lips, sagging breasts, too fat, too thin, too tall, too short, hunch-backed and hoarse or voiceless.

According to this book, the Hindu deity Shiva is the mythical creator of dance. The book provides physical descriptions of Shiva. These descriptions have both spiritual and rhetorical significance. These verses describe the body of Shiva: He holds the drum (the sound of which awakens creation) in his right hand and fire (which represents destruction of the old order) in his left hand. Shiva engages in the dance of Tandava, which is forceful and masculine. His counterpart is Parvati. She is feminine and graceful, and engages in the feminine dance of *lasya*. These counteracting forces of masculine and feminine set forth a balance in the creation. The bodies of the Shiva and Parvati engaged in the dance of *Lasya-Tandava*, thereby setting forth the entire creation. The verses go, *Angikam bhuvanam yasya*, which means, Shiva's body is the representation of the Universe. The *Natyashastra* says, "*Khantaanyat Lambayat Geetam, Hastana Artha Pradakshayat, Chakshubhyam Darshayat Bhavom, Padabhyam Tala Acherait*" (quoted from memory). This means, "keep uttering the song, let your hands reveal the meanings expressed during the dance, use your eyes to communicate expressively, while your feet maintain the rhythm." Dance represents the balance of masculine and feminine, sacred and sexual, spirituality and physicality, and externalization and internalization. According to Odissi

teaching, this balance creates the universe, which indicates that the balance of these dualities create meanings that we can perceive and experience.

The movement of the hands is integral to in the meaning-making process of dance: “*Yato Hasta Stato Drushti, Yato Drushti Stato Manaha, Yato Manaha Stato Bhavom, Yato Bhavom Stato Rasaha*” (quoted from memory). This means, “where the hand goes, there the eyes should follow; where the eyes are, the mind should follow; where the mind goes, there the expression should be revealed; where the expression are inspired, there the *Rasa* will be experienced by the onlooker.”

A characteristic feature of Indian classical dance is the meaningful application of gestures to communicate expressions. These expressions are *abhinaya*. In dance, gestural rhetoric for storytelling can be of four types:

- Angika Abhinaya: movements of the body convey the meaning. *Natyashastra* provides a list of body parts that storytellers use.
- Vachika Abhinaya: Words (songs, dialogues, chants) create meaning.
- Aharya Abhinaya: The attire is an important part of storytelling, as it signifies the mood of the plot or the representation of the character. This abhinaya heightens the aesthetic appeal of the dance
- Satvika Abhinaya: This is the purest form of communication in the meaning-making process. The body reacts through involuntary stimuli. For e.g., Instances of Satvika Abhinaya occur when the dancer portrays sadness and tears appear during the performance, or when the dancer portrays that he/she is scared and gets spontaneous goose bumps or starts to shiver. This kind of response during a performance requires a high level of understanding of the art.

Spirituality is the core of Indian classical dance. However, this does not mean that the physical movement is any less important. The *Natyashastra* outlines the techniques of moving the various body parts. These are *Anga Lakshana* (signs depicted by the body):

- Eye Movements or *drishti bheda*
- Neck movements or *greeva bheda*
- Hand gestures or *hasta mudras*
- Head movements or *shiro bheda*
- Body postures specific to the kind of dance or *mandi*
- Foot Positions or *paada bheda*
- Walking Styles or *gati bheda*
- Dance patterns or *karanas*

In the rhetoric of Indian classical arts, the eyes can look in eight ways. These are

- *Sama*, where the eyes are still;
- *Alokita*, where eyes are rolled in a circular way;
- *Sachi* where the eyes move in a sidelong glance;
- *Pralokita* where the eyes move from side to side;
- *Nimilita*, where eyelids are half closed while looking down;
- *Ullokita*, where the eyes look upwards;
- *Anuvritta*, where the eyes look up and down rapidly;
- *Avalokita*, where the eyes look down.

Likewise, these are four kinds of neck movements or *griva bheda*, and nine kinds of head movements or *shiro bheda*. Each of these movements has specific functions and conveys specific meanings. Additionally, there are several single hand and double hand gestures, each signifying

several different objects or expressions. There are 108 *karanas* or combined movements of the hands and feet to show a piece of the dance, establishing its uniqueness as a classical dance.

The styles of movement of the feet are important in portraying the uniqueness of a dance or its drama. The legs can perform four categories of motion, (a) stay in a static postures, (b) leap, (c) spin, and (d) move from one place to another. Each of the categories of movements and stasis has several subdivisions or “kinds” under them. Again, there are several kinds of leaps, movements, and spins.

These are the basic elements of the dance involving grammatical structures. An interesting rhetorical function of *Natyashastra* is the delineation of gender specifications in a dance performance. The heroine or *nayika* (female characters that dancers represent), of a story being told through dance falls into one of the eight divisions called *Ashtanayika bhavas*, based on her emotional status and reactions as portrayed in the story.

- Abhisarika – She steals out of her home to meet her lover.
- Kalahantarika – She repents for quarrelling with her lover
- Khandita – She is angry with her lover.
- Proshitapathika – She is missing her lover who is away.
- Swadheenapathika – She is confident of herself and for her lover’s loyalty.
- Vasakasajjika – She is preparing for the arrival of her beloved.
- Virahotkantita – She is separated from her lover and yearning to be with him.
- Vipralabda – She is disappointed that her lover has not come to her as promised.

Just like the heroines, heroes (male characters that dancers represent) are of four types.

The main divisions are

- Dheerodatta: He is majestic, forgiving, tranquil, and unwavering.
- Dheeroddhata: He is short-tempered and arrogant.
- Dheeralalita: He is light-hearted, carefree and appreciative of arts
- Dheerashanta: He is quite calm or solemn

Interactions and relationships with their lovers determine the categorization of the heroines, whereas characteristic traits determine the categorization of the heroes.

The grammar of *Natyashastra* follows the conventions of how a body should act in a specific rhetorical situation in order to convey a meaning. Using light or sound effects on stage is not a part of a traditional repertoire. Gestures can convey several meanings. For example, the hand gesture *kartarimukha* (See Figure 2.1)



Figure 2.1: Hand gesture *Kartarimukha*

can denote the number two; the eye, a dishonest person; the mountain peak, lightening; separation from one's beloved, elephant, cow, bull and coiled hair. This gesture combined with other gestures signifies several other concepts and objects. The grammatical structure of the dance is a way of imposing meaning onto the movements. There are thousands of meaningful gestures noted in the *Abhinaya Darpana* and the *Natyashastra*. Gurus interpret them and transmit them to the next generation.

We have come to the end of this chapter, in which our stage is set: we involved the histories transmitted over generations of Odissi dancers. The spiritual and mythological nature of dance and its historicity are central to any understanding its nature. However, the dancing halls

of the temples no longer limit the scope of this dance. Globalization of the art has brought about several extra-cultural influences. Remediation through technological tools is a contribution of globalization of Odissi and cross-cultural influences. This chapter gives a brief glimpse of the histories inscribed on the body of an Indian classical dancer and the rhetorical functions of the body. The discussion attempted to condition the readers to understand some of the relevant cultural concepts of Indian classical. We see in this chapter that spirituality, and the interpersonal relationship of the master and the body is important in the traditional pedagogy and performance of the dance. These are compromised when the dance is mediate in online spaces in the process of online teaching. In the next chapter, I will trace this phenomenon of remediation of Odissi dance in online spaces to examine the ways in which the body negotiates with virtualization and departs from as it attempts to enact this tradition. I will present excerpts from my qualitative research of the practitioners of the dance to see how mediation of the dance is happening, what tools are being used and the attitude of the practitioners of the dance towards the acts of mediation that can potentially transform the traditional value system of the dance.

Chapter 3: *PALLAVI*

COMPLICATING REAL AND VIRTUAL IN ODISSI

3.1 Introduction

In my last chapter, I gave a historical and mythical background of Odissi dance practice. I highlighted the spiritual background of the dance, the importance of the master in the practice and teaching of the dance, and the sacredness associated with the body of the dancer. That survey and interview responses from the practitioners of Odissi helped me understand the value system of the dance that puts importance on the physical immediacy and sacredness. These values have helped me locate the problems of online writing pedagogy and shaped my pedagogic practices in online composition classes.

Remediations of Odissi dance have had a profound impact on the pedagogy and practice of Odissi dance. Several practitioners of dance expressed concern about technology potentially spoiling the traditional method of teaching and performance. I argue that most dancers use digital technological tools for teaching, learning and performing the traditional dance. Since these tools were not a part of the original temple dance repertoire, it de-stabilizes the concept of “authenticity” of the art that a group of practitioners carefully constructed in mid-nineteenth century for a nationalistic agenda of newly independent India. In this chapter, I will address the second vital research question of what are the ways in which Odissi dance is mediated. What are the technological tools that the current generation of dancers using to on stage and in classes?

While older generations of dancers/masters are moderately resistant to mediation of dance through technology, several younger generation dancers are engaged in mediation of practice and teaching using technological tools. They use technological tools to practice dance, teach dance and socialize with dancers around the world. Many dancers acknowledge the importance of the teacher, the sacredness associated with the dance space, and immediacy of the bodies engaged in teaching and learning dance. Most dancers of the younger generation use videos, social networking websites, and synchronous chats to teach, practice and socialize. They acknowledge that using these tools can potentially alter the nature of the dance, but do not agree that it can spoil the art. To them, students and teachers should not ignore the underlying values of immediacy of the body and sacredness of space. The underlying core value system of the dance shapes and constructs the practice of the dance as a performance that emphasizes the presence of the body, the presence of the Guru and the sacredness of space, in terms of where the dancers are presenting the dance. The data generated through my inquiry richly demonstrates the conflict that unfolds when new technologies remediate the traditional cultural practice. The patterns in the data reveal that resistances towards technology often coincide with the technology potentially contradicting the values system. The potential loss of the importance of the teacher and lack of physical presence (personal interconnectivity), and the non-exclusivity of space are problems that often challenge teachers in an online classroom. In this chapter, I delved deeper into the responses of the Odissi practitioners that revealed these values of Odissi dance in order to understand the problems of my own composition pedagogy.

I framed the data from my interviews around the association of the value system in order to respond to the research question: What are the ways in which mediation of this practice is taking place in a way that can be unacceptable to the previous generation of practitioners of the

practice? In the next section, I will present excerpts from the data that reveal the values of the practitioners and discuss the excerpts from the perspective of the respondents. Although most respondents expressed concern about remediations of this traditional dance, the practices such as SL dancing and teaching through videos are still not widespread. Learning this traditional dance with a guru is still the most popular teaching method. In spite of that, we cannot ignore the impact of remediations of this dance since more and more practitioners of Odissi are using digital tools like SL dancing, chat-spaces, and videos.

3.2 Locating Patterns in Research Findings

The sacredness of the dance in overall

In relating the story of the origin of the dance to me, Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, an eminent Odissi Guru, reiterated the spiritual aspects of the dance sculpted on the walls of the temples of Orissa. Pradhan said, “Gurus saw the sculptures on the temple walls, researched on them and perfected the poses. The best dance poses are on the walls of Konarak, Rajarani, Mukteshwar, and Lingaraj. These also show that dance was happening in those temples.” The importance that he placed on the questions about the Guru and the purity of classical dance leads one to associate sacredness with this idea of the dance. I understood from the conversation with him that he associated sacredness with the art. For instance, traditionally, the presence of the musical instruments was vital and sacred and the dancer would begin the performance with acknowledgement of the instruments by offering obeisance to them. Now that dancers mostly use pre-recorded music in performance, the tradition of touching the instrument and then touching one’s forehead in an act of offering respect has discontinued. There was a sense of urgency when Pradhan mentioned, “Gurus, artists, need to be ‘awake’ ... they need to transmit the tradition to one generation to the next and to the next. They need to advise, teach to remember what is

traditional.” He went on to express disapproval for dancers who are “slipping” from the classical tradition by attempting to change the dance style. To him, if a dancer changes the form, context, and costume of Odissi and if they do not perform according to the grammar of classical Odissi dance, they should not call it “Odissi”. They should simply call it “Creative Dance.” To him, the dance of a classical Odissi artiste needs to align with the approved performative grammar that the community recognizes. Most people in the artistic community consider the sacredness of the dance as valuable to its practice. When I was learning dance, my Guru asked me to associate the dance with a form of worship. In this sub-section, I will summarize the results from my interviews with Gurus conducted in Orissa and the responses to my survey administered online. Respondents acknowledge their awareness of the sacredness of this dance as an essential value in several ways. To many dancers, purity lies in the “authenticity” of the dance. Like me, several dancers derive their concept of “authenticity” from the orally transmitted information of their teachers. The definition of authenticity has evolved across generation in this practice. However, tracing the origin of the pedagogy and practice of Odissi indicates that the practice retained its association with spirituality.

To veteran Bandha guru Maguni Das, “Music in Sanskrit is “Sangeet”... “Sang” means union. Sangeet is the union between the body of the dancer and the music accompanying the dance. It is important for the people to get together and perform.” He stresses the importance of the physical presence of the Guru, the musician and the musicians playing on the mardala (drums), veena (string instrument), flute, and violin. To him, this communion creates an ambience of sacredness and purity.

Dr. Rohini Dandavate, a US-based dance teacher, opined, “The onus is on the dancers and the Gurus to maintain the pristine form in practice and performance of the dance style.”

Again, the usage of the word “pristine” and the importance emphasized with it indicates the value associated with the authenticity of the dance. To her, the learner and the teacher are both responsible for maintaining the authenticity of the dance. Experimenting with the form and the style of the dance is encouraged to some extent by the community. When a dancer wears the traditional costume of the dance, the dance community expects her/him to present the pure unadulterated form of Odissi dance.

Ratikanta Mohapatra, an eminent Odissi teacher and choreographer, expressed support for creativity and innovation as a departure from the strictly traditional, as long as the innovations are culturally relevant. He reacted strongly to a YouTube video where an Odissi dancer starts performing to a hip-hop song in a middle of a traditional item. He discussed this video in an Odissi community blog on FaceBook. He wrote, “This disastrous performance and this mindless attempt at foolish innovation’ is a lesson to all gurus who allow their wild students who run amok, more like a bull in a china shop than a dancer who has any sense of respect or dedication to the traditional art form - or any regard for her guru’s dignity.” According to him, Odissi dancers and dance teachers expect to preserve spirituality in the dance. Mohapatra considers blending hip-hop dance and Odissi, or dancing hip-hop in Odissi costumes as obscene, offending, and sacrilegious towards this sacred art. Several members of the community responded to it. One dancer responded, “Really this is an insult to a sacred art form.” The association of sacredness comes from the cultural attitude of the dancers. The Odissi practitioners rejected the hip-hop – Odissi performance mainly because the rendition potentially hurt the authenticity of the dance by infusion by a style that came from a different culture. Mohapatra said, “If those are at all used, they should be relevant, both thematically and

culturally.” It makes sense to Mohapatra to experiment with more subtle and “relevant” collaborations across cultures and media.

To Odissi practitioners, the concept of Guru is sacred. However, to Mohapatra, to communicate the concept of sacredness to a non-Indian dancer, teachers need to translate it in a way non-Indians will understand. To Mohapatra, non-Indians might find it difficult to understand the concept of “Guru” as God, since it is a culturally specific concept. People from other cultures will understand that “Guru” is someone with whom a student interacts with the highest degree of formality and respect. Most cultures understand basic etiquette and courtesy. To Mohapatra, these values are counterpart to the concept of Guru. To him, student from a different culture might not understand sacredness in context of the dance teacher. However, they can understand the importance of being extremely courteous to the teacher.

The importance of the body

Each gesture and movement conveys a specific message. When the dance video or Skype transmits dance, the meaning of the body undergoes remediation in the online or digital space further. The meaning disassociates from the audience in this remediation. The survey question related to teaching with technological tools like DVDs and videos generated comments from the learners and teachers of Odissi related to the collaborations conducted virtually (through chat or Skype). Email correspondences further clarified the concerns about body expressed by the practitioners. Technological tools like video and Skype is however, quite extensively used in teaching, learning and performing, especially by diasporic and non-Indian practitioners.

Ratikanta Mohapatra is resistant to the over-dependence of technology in the performance and pedagogy of dance. To him, the presence of technology discredits the meaning-making potentials of the body. “There are several effects that the body can show; we do not need

technology so much.” He meant that Indian classical dance contains a gamut of postures, gestures, and expressions to represent a visual on stage. If there is a storm scene, it is possible to portray that through the movements of the body and music. Stage effects can also enhance the effects, but it takes away from the possibility of recreating the same through movement alone. Mohapatra challenges dancers to explore the full potential of the body and not to replace the body’s ability mediate the meanings on stage with “special effects” made possible through stage technologies.

An Odissi dancer from the Middle East wrote, “The technology is used in several ways: 1) remembering the poses and sequence, 2) criticizing later and improving the movement... Technologies of dance are serving as a memory keeper and as a pedagogical tool for this dancer. A video played repeatedly ingrains the steps in the memory of the dancer. Since the learner is able to watch her/his performance through videos, they get the scope of locate and improve imperfections in their rendition. Here, the survey respondent seems to project more extensive use of technological tools for teaching of the dance in future.

A non-Indian dance student wrote, “We use DVD players for rehearsals, we record our new compositions and video record it during choreography so that we can improvise if need be. At times, to give a different feel I use pre recorded audio track even for teaching basics to my students.” In traditional teaching, the teacher would usually chant a set of sounds at different paces and the students dance with the rhythm of those chants. This respondent replaced the chants with pre-recorded music and student dance to the rhythm of the pre-recorded music. The “different feel” indicates of an emotional response of the performers to the performance of the dance. The same respondent reflected upon the experience of using technology in dance. She wrote that using technological tools “strongly affects” traditional dance. “It alters the form and

soul of the dance completely.” This dancer used a number of learning tools and believes that the dance transforms when mediated. “Soul” indicates spiritual response of the audience to the dance performed. To this respondent, the dance is deeply associated with tradition. The meanings mediated by the dancing body evoke different emotional and spiritual responses in the dancer and the audience when remediated through technological tools. The meaning mediated through the body is direct. When the body appears on screen, the meanings in the dance are distant from audience. This dancer uses technological tools in teaching and performing dance, she is resistant to the possibility of technology altering the form and the soul of the dance

A dancer of non-Indian origin writes in a response, “Dance can be preserved, performed, and taught authentically” even if teachers use technology. Here, she defends her practices of learning with technology by demonstrating her awareness of the association of Odissi dance with authenticity and sacredness. Mediation brings Odissi in online videos closer to non-Indian audiences. The videos substitute the body of the Guru. However, teaching tools like DVDs and online videos bring Odissi closer to the learners all across the globe.

Several dancers actively use remediating tools such as videos and DVDs for learning dance and often replace the body of the teacher by employing dance videos to learn. A non-Indian student wrote this in an email correspondence: “I can view the video and remember the sequence and incorporate the rasa if the video is clear enough.” She opined, this tool “does not affect the form of the dance. Dance can be preserved, performed, and taught authentically.” Using technological tools like music CDs for background music and videos for teaching dance might not be traditional, but the respondent does not think that this innovative approach to teaching the ancient art could transform the style of the dance.

The importance of the guru

The survey asked if dance-learning technologies such as DVDs and videos comprise the position of the Guru. They responded variously. None of the respondents undermined the importance of the Guru under any circumstance. To them, learning the basic nuances of this dance through personal interactions with an expert is not only the right way to perform, but also for gaining the knowledge of the underlying values of the art. Ratikanta Mohapatra said, “You can learn recipes from the Internet, not dance.” His response was almost sarcastic. In his response, he tried to highlight the exclusiveness of this dance and the value of the process of transmission of the knowledge of this dance.

Gangadhar Pradhan said technologizing is unavoidable, but dancers should use technology “in the right way.” The inner values of the dance should be unspoiled when dancers use technologies in dance. He acknowledged the requirement and unavoidability of digital practices. To Pradhan, books on dance show postures or describe the postures. He said, “Working with the Guru is required to understand the nuances of the dance... for instance, the hand gestures *alapadma* symbolizes the lotus and *hamsasya* demonstrates the face as pretty as a lotus. The bees sitting on the lotus symbolizes the kiss put on a beautiful face. Even in the video, the teacher needs to demonstrate meanings clearly.” Pradhan demonstrated this piece of dance during the interview. He showed how a teacher would demonstrate a piece in the process of teaching. The metaphor of the bee sitting on a flower for an attractive face was appropriate because of the complexity of the portrayal of this within a story. The metaphor alludes to both spiritual and sexual imagery and those images are relevant in developing the character of the heroine portrayed in this dance. The teacher communicating and illustrating these layers of meaning is important in the learning of this piece of dance. If a video replaces the Guru’s body, it

must show the dance clearly and explain the meaning of each nuance clearly. Pradhan emphasized that a Guru needs to demonstrate what is *chowka*, *tribhanga arasa*, and *mandala*²⁰. Then you can have the idea and you can emulate that correctly.

Pradhan “There is no choice sometimes. Pressure of education has increased. Students are busy; they need to learn fast in a short period. CDs will be required.” By CDs, Pradhan refers to the dance DVDs that teachers use to teach dance. He adds at the end that whatever tools one uses, they have to go to the Guru (meaning having the Guru physically present in front) and learn from the Guru. The Guru is essential in the learning of the art of Odissi. Gangadhar Pradhan did not resist the idea of using a video to teach. In the globalized artistic arena, it is unavoidable and even important for the propagation of the art. Nevertheless, at the same time expressed concern about the quality of video. “Videos need to be taken properly and clearly. The gestures need to be visible clearly,” If the moves are unclear, the meaning will not be clear to the student fully. Here, Pradhan demonstrates an understanding that students *will* use technologies and thereby replace the body. He notes that teachers should ensure that they maintain the quality of teaching even if they are teaching with technology.

An non-Indian dancer based in USA wrote the following in a forum post within a thread on finding CDs for basic Odissi steps: “as a student of Odissi with a real live teacher (I know I’m super lucky), I find the tape and the *Odissi Pathfinder* book to be very good practice aids.” She went on: “The book and video together should be far more useful than either alone, but there is no substitute for a live teacher.” Another post in the same blog reflected a similar opinion: “... it

²⁰ the postures of Odissi and the individual dance pieces of the dance that comprises the entire section

still doesn't take the place of having someone there in person to fall in synch with and help you refine, especially with such an intricate form." To these dancers, the presence of a Guru is not the same as using a substitute. One of them called books and videos "good practice" aids. If the means of recording a piece of dance is available, it made sense to this respondent to use the recording to memorize the steps or refer to it in case she forgot something later.

One Indian dancer based abroad wrote, "I am using video recordings to help students practice dance in between classes. It helps a lot they say." In this case, mediated dance and digital tools are supplementary to traditional teaching methods. "The video is not replacing the body of the teacher, but is being used as a supplement in case of the absence of the teacher." Here, the dancer approves of videos used only to memorize a piece that the student has already learned from a Guru through direct interaction. After a lesson, when the Guru is no longer present to instruct, the dancer can still perfect her steps by looking at the recordings of that piece.

To New York-based dance scholar Uttara Coorlawala explained her experience with dance videos with these words: "it subtracts the presence of the whole body and adds to the presence of close up faces... It gets both revelatory and tricky." Learning dance with technology presents an interesting juxtaposition of opposites: Learning videos replace or conceal the Guru. The Guru is, however, present in the form of a remediated image in the video. The close-ups of the face can reveal the expressions during the dance. The close ups of the hand gestures and feet can also give an understanding of the grammatical aspects of the dance, helping students to hone their own dance postures. She went on to say that the practice of performing with technological tools is still developing and the effects not known yet.

To Coorlawala, "Technology can be helpful in documentation, propagation, teaching, learning, and choreography. It is just an aid for dancers and dance teachers. The Guru (must)

maintain the pristine form in practice and performance of the dance style.” Coorlawala reflects the viewpoint of most dancers I corresponded, that technology has a very important role in dance practice. Technology can be a supplement for teaching and for promotion, networking and memorizing. However, the Guru requires being present in order to help the student perform the dance and embody the memory of the dance with geometrically perfect postures and gestures. The feedback helps students get immediate responses to the performance and adjust the movement before the memory of the dance is imprinted on their bodies.

An Indian dancer based abroad also agrees that there is no substitute of Guru's personal presence in learning. She pointed out, “There are many places in the world where my dance form (i.e. Odissi) doesn't have good teachers/ performers... My stay abroad has convinced me that there are many students who are not able to learn the dance form just because they do not have a teacher in their city /town. .” Being in the presence of the Guru can be rare and expensive in case of non-Indian dancers. Indian classical dance teachers are less in number outside India, so a student might need to travel for a long distance to learn from the Guru. A person interested in learning Indian classical dance might find it more convenient to dance with a video than travel for 2 hours to get to a dance teacher.

My research revealed problems with using training DVDs, despite their popularity. In a forum on DVDs for basic Odissi training, one non-Indian Odissi learner stated a comparison between two available DVDs: “X’s DVD offers a brief breakdown (upper body and lower body) before each Chouka stepping which is something that Y’s video lacks.²¹” Using a DVD as a

²¹ This blog was comparing the videos of two dance teachers. I am refraining from disclosing their names here, and therefore altering the quotation.

pedagogical tool breaks down the body into an upper and lower half for the practical reason of clarity and access. This is, however, in contradiction to the nature of traditional pedagogy.

According to this learner, videos might not be able to give a clear understanding of the movement of the whole body. If the videos show the whole body engaged in a performance, then the figure on the screen will be too small and the steps will be unclear. If the steps and hand gestures appear separately, it is difficult to understand the coordination between the hands, the eyes, the feet, the eyebrows, the neck. She goes on to say that videos can be useful in remembering a piece of dance that the student has just learnt. However learning the dance from a video alone can be a problem.

In a similar forum on Odissi videos, a blogger writes about her experience of trying to learn a dance piece by looking at a video:

“It would be a great practice-along drill set IF you already had learned all the forms and vocab(ulary) from a live teacher, but with nothing but a two-inch tall fuzzy little dancer to go by it was rather discouraging. I've danced all my life and was terribly humbled by it. I had a handful of other professional dancers over one day for a rehearsal and turned the vid(eo)s on for everyone to try. We all laughed as we flailed around hopelessly trying to keep up. We stomped most of the books off my shelves in the process! Then I spent a week playing thru it and rewinding in order to write down what was happening in each 4 counts, in western dance terminology, so that I could teach myself from the notes and eventually work up to doing it along with the videos, and that worked pretty well, but I wouldn't say I ever mastered it.”

She begins by using DVDs to dance can be a way of learning if someone has already had some basic training from a live teacher. Alternatively, if someone has already learned a piece,

she/he can use the DVD for revisions. This dancer and a handful of other professional dancers failed at picking up steps from the video. Though the quote does not tell us about the level of experience in Odissi that the dancers have, but since they were professional dancers, they did have some background in some form of dance. When the attempt to pick up steps from the DVD did not work, this performer stopped the tape at places and translated the dance into textual notes. She was writing down a description of the steps for each 4-count beat interval. That made it possible for her to understand what was going on in the dance video. This is an interesting example of a failure to learn from the DVD without the Guru, and a case of re-remediation (a remediated dance in the DVD being translated into text) making it possible for the dancer to learn the steps. Working directly with a Guru, especially for non-Indian learners, can also give her/him a complete contextual and cultural understanding about this art form. This might be possible through constant interaction and dialog with the teacher.

One veteran non-Indian Odissi dancer, who received training during her visits to India, wrote that the traditional mode of teaching in the presence of the teacher was important to her: “It was important for me to live in India to fully understand and appreciate the culture and imbibe in the subtle nuances. During my time, I could not have done it in any other way. I would not even be able to communicate with my family in a different country for months. I steeped into this culture in a very pure form.” To her, “it is still possible to learn authentic Odissi” despite the mediation of the art. This is because the Internet has brought cultures closer together, especially for foreign and diasporic learners of the dance, who might be depending on technological tools to learn. They try to imbibe the intrinsic Indian-ness of this dance through their exposure to the digital media. This dance is reflective of a cultural memory, as well as the nuances body language of an Indian woman or man. To this Odissi exponent, her direct exposure to Indian

culture was important for her in order to emulate the Indian-ness in her dance movement by steeping into the Indian life-style.

To Gangadhar Pradhan, after learning a dance, one might record it on video. He said, “Gurus should take care to explain the meanings and demonstrate clearly. Teachers will use DVDs for teaching. There is no way or reason to stop that. That does not mean the Guru's name is “deleted” and that you can learn straight from the DVD without a Guru. He said, “That is not right.” DVDs give the information, but as a Guru, I need to demonstrate what are *choka*, *tribhanga arasa*, and *mandala*.²²” To Pradhan, the DVD can show the dance as a series of remediated images on screen. The student is able to understand the movement. However, the Guru can explain the significances of the movement and the meanings conducted by each of them. Every dancer needs to be working under a Guru and learning is not complete without the Guru's presence. According to Pradhan, the Guru is also able to inspire the spirituality of the dance the learner with this interaction. The student might be able to get the “information” on the poses of a dance from a video and replicate them, but she/he needs a Guru to help the learner realize the spiritual significance of the dance. The name of the Guru is therefore undeletable in the experience and process of learning.

²² These are the basic postures of Odissi. Students begin learning by conditioning the body to the basics. *Chowka* is the square stance where the knees bend outward and hands are bent to form a square. *Tribhanga* means “three bends”. In this, the body bends in three places: the neck, the torso and the knee. *Arasa* is a pose for indolence. *Mardala* means a two-sided drum, and dancers enact this with the posture of playing on the drums.

Others comment on the importance of context and space in the performance of dance. One practitioner wrote, “When one learns just the art from videos without complete understanding of the cultural context, the art is only half-learned. They often might do something or perform somewhere, which might be an insult to the art form. Performing an art form in dinner party is not proper. Classical dance is a very formal thing, it is important for students to understand that. For this, the Guru needs to help students understand the importance of tradition that determines what is proper and what is not.” The responder refers to the improper ways in which the artiste can performed Odissi. For instance, it might be improper to perform Odissi in a party where non-vegetarian food and alcohol is present. It requires a cultural understanding of dance in order to make these decisions. There is no written law regarding the “proper” and improper places for a performance of Odissi. That might be a reason for this respondent’s recommendation that the Guru must help students understand these culture specific concepts.

Basanta Pradhan, a former student of Guru Maguni Das and now a teacher himself, said, “In the acrobatic gotipua dance the young performers need to be given regular massages in a particular way. You can watch a DVD for entertainment, but if you try learning from it, it might not be a good idea.” He goes on to describe the way in which the bodies of the gotipuas are prepared and conditioned with regular massages and exercises in order to make them appropriately conditioned for the extremely strenuous dance. Most of the people indicated that classical arts in general need regular conditioning (of the body in case of dance, the voice in case of music and so on) in order to achieve perfection and to avoid injuries. Basanta Pradhan points out the importance of the Guru in providing constant and immediate feedback to the student. In learning dance, the learner repeats a step a number of times in order to perfect it. If the Guru is not present during the learning process to point out the errors, it can lead to an imperfection of

style ingraining in the practice. If the body constantly performs the imperfection, it is difficult to make the body unlearn it. Training the body imperfectly can also lead to physical injuries.

The responses show that practitioners of the field use several teaching tools like DVDs and online interactive spaces. However, they agree that videos cannot completely replace the body in a pedagogical and performative space, although videos can be useful in preserving the memory of the dance while the student is learning. Most practitioners approve of making these tools supplementary to teaching or performance for enhancement and not as a replacement of the body of the dancer or the Guru.

The sacredness of the space of learning and performing

Some practitioners see the Internet as a liberatory space, which helps in popularizing the dance and facilitating interactions among dancers across the globe. To them, the Internet gives power, knowledge, and visibility, which might not necessarily be a good thing since it creates tension amongst the artists who seek to persevere in traditional ways. Several survey respondents noted how social networking websites and mailing lists have helped them communicate with fellow-artists about events among other things.

One interviewee said, “Virtual networking spaces make it easier for one to understand what people are doing where. It has become easier to build a community within the dancers. It is now easier to promote events.” On the other hand, another interviewee stated, “Social networking is not helping the dance-form at all. It is harming.” When I wanted to know the reason for this comment, he opined that some people use technology to gain visibility and prominence within the community, though they are not good dancers. He furthermore expressed dissatisfaction about the way websites represent concepts on Odissi inaccurately and often provide wrong information: “There are a hundred versions of the history of Odissi... which are

not accurate.” He recommended, “Use judgment and ask the Gurus if you need to know what is the correct history and origin of the dance. Read books that are by authors that did proper research” and not depend on what websites say. Social networking websites have created conversations within the field of dance, thereby creating learning and discursive communities. The problem for these respondents is that, social networking websites is taking away the exclusivity of the information on the dance and dancers through unregulated practices of self-promotion and propagation of information that the seniors of the field have not sanctioned as true. The dancers seem to value an exclusive sacred space where seniors (Gurus) protect and pass on the knowledge in the classroom space. There is also excitement and experimentation with the tremendous potential of popularizing Odissi by letting the knowledge propagate in online spaces in a rhizomatic fashion.

Remediating technologies have strongly influenced Odissi over the recent past, and the effects are still visible. All survey respondents use technology in some way or form, but still maintain some connections to the traditional aspects of the performance. Many respondents demonstrated knowledge of the affordances of particular technologies over others. In these moments, the traditional values surface. However, to what extent might these remediations of Odissi affect the dance’s perceived “authenticity”? The respondents expressed a variety of viewpoints on this topic.

3.3 Digital Learning Tools and Traditional Values

Respondent use the tools of technology in the dance for several reasons. Some digital tools completely replaced traditional space and body, while some are supplementary to teaching or performing. When I studied the data carefully, I understood that most of the respondents who

were using or not using the tool were deeply conscious of an underlying value system, that (from my own experience) I associate with values in the ancient art of Odissi. I read across the data to understand how dancers and dance teachers demonstrated this acknowledgement and most importantly if this demonstration can indeed inform my theoretical foundation of value system in context with dance and technology. I asked the following questions as I interpreted the question of “how the dancers used the digital tools”. (a) Do the tools facilitate or require the presence of the body? (b) Is there possibility of immediate feedback? (c) Are the responses synchronous? (d) Do the tools succeed in producing good quality product, which can be helpful performance, teaching, and learning? (e) Is it possible for the relationship between the master and teacher to go beyond mercenary interaction for teaching dance? Can the teacher develop a more personal relationship with the student (as a friend, guide, or mentor) beyond the immediate scope of the dance? (f) Can the lesson have the convenience of being self-paced?

The responses related to this represented in Table 3.1 aims at highlighting the preferences and use of tools and values associated with it. The table contains an evaluation of digital tools used in virtual pedagogies and performances by Odissi teachers and teachers. The left column of the table contains the most-used digital and technological tools that survey respondents mentioned. The top row is an assimilation of the positive features of all the tools as revealed by the respondents when asked why they use a certain tool for learning, teaching, or performing. This table attempts to make a comparative study of the tools and assess them against each other against the qualities that each demonstrate.

Table 3.1: Comparative study of features of Technological tools used in dance.

Characteristics →	Presence of the Body	Immediacy of Feedback	Synchronicity	Quality	Personal Interaction other than teaching	Convenience
Tools ↓						
Books	The author of the books on learning dance like “Odissi dance pathfinder” is physically absent. They impart information without being present.	There is no scope for feedback unless the learner writes to the author.	Not synchronous.	Depends on the author and the publisher.	There is no scope for personal connection.	Self paced. Repository of knowledge. Guru validates knowledge

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

Instructional Videos	Body is present in virtual form.	There is no scope for feedback unless the learner writes to the person in the video.	The learning process is not synchronous.	Depends on the artist that is demonstrating the dance in the video.	Not usually if it is a commercial instructional video. There can be some personal connection if the video is being made for a particular student, keeping in mind their specific needs and focusing on that in the video demonstration.	It is also possible to rewind and replay if some parts of the dance if not understood well.
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Table 3.1 (cont'd)

YouTube Videos	Body is present in virtual form.	There is scope for feedback in the comments section. It is also possible to upload response videos for immediate feedback of performance in the case of learning.	The learning process is not synchronous.	Depends on the artist that is demonstrating the dance in the video.	There can be some personal connection in the process of responding to comments.	It is also possible to rewind and replay if some parts of the dance if not understood well.
Skype	Body is present in virtual form.	There can be immediate feedback.	The learning process is synchronous.	Depends on Internet connectivity and the person that is teaching.	It is possible to have personal connection.	It is not self paced. During a most of teaching or collaborative performance over Skype, the time is controlled by the teacher or the collaborator. Also, the dancer can get immediate feedback from the teacher even from across a long distance.

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

SL dance	Movement of the body is mediated into the shape of an avatar.	If the avatar is present and the learner is learning by watching the avatar, it might be possible to provide immediate feedback. If the dance moves are being taught by one avatar to another, then feedback is possible immediately.	The learning and collaborative processes is synchronous.	Depends on the programmer. If codes are used with strict adherence to the basic grammar of Odissi. Odissi dance has different schools of styles, and it is difficult to say which style is the best. However, if an avatar is programmed to adhere to a good style, it might be possible to create consistently high quality teaching systems.	Personal connection between two avatars possible in case of teaching or collaboration.	
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The table above shows that performers, teachers, and learners use these technologies across the world, and the users justify the choices they make. The pedagogic choice of the respondents indicated what they valued most in the teaching/learning technology. These are (a) presence of the body, (b) immediacy of feedback, (c) quality of the learning/teaching tool, (d) personalized interaction with the tool, (e) convenience of using the tool. The responses also indicate that the respondents were evaluating some of the tools by comparing them to the experience of having a Guru present. For respondents, the most important of these values is the immediate physical presence of the Guru. Most of the values described above are present in the pedagogy of real space involving the Guru and the Shishya. Remediations of the dance might compromise these values. This table, then, confirms some of the findings in the interview data, particularly focusing on the ways in which the bodies of the performer, the guru relationship, and the importance of context have importance for dancers who are using these popular remediations as instructional tools.

Taken together, the interpretation of the value system described at the beginning of this chapter reverberates in most of the responses received in my interactions within the dance community. Studying tradition in this way confirms some of the core values of the dance that I learnt as a student. My data also revealed several perspectives on tradition, the body of the dancer, and the importance of the Guru from several people involved in this artistic practice. Though values of the Odissi dance community have evolved across generation, I learnt that it is important to be aware and respectful of certain primary values of this dance that define its nature. The findings from the study reinstate the learning that I received as a dance student.

Understanding the traditional value system has been helpful in unraveling the profound significances of some of the nodes of tension and the drama surrounding them. Though these

patterns of valuation of the body of the dance, the role of guru, and the context for performance are key aspects of this tradition, it would be mistaken to assume that these patterns are tidy representations of this cultural practice. In fact, these perspectives often contradict each other, instigating conversations in the field of Odissi dance practitioners and the formation of an alternative value system that may not be in agreement with the core value system of this dance.

Classical Indian dance has moved from one phase of mediation to another and one context to another, from folk to classical and then to digital. Indian Dance has journeyed from immediacy to codification to the floating signifiers of digital media that deviate from the ritualized, codified two-thousand-year-old cultural practice. Mediation of the dance in online spaces and in teaching videos has led to destabilization, confusion and some resistance from the veteran practitioners of the art, who welcome changes, but think that the central authoritative figure of the Guru cannot be disregarded for the ultimate survival of this cultural art form, for its continued performance and preservation (Cushman, Ghosh). In this regard the concerns of the dance practitioners are similar to the teachers of another traditional art, writing, who have seen their practice profoundly influenced by digital mediation. In spite of the immense collaborative and creative possibilities of learning in an online writing instruction space, keeping the students engaged in a collaborative and fruitful learning space can be a problem. Mediated pedagogy eliminates the immediacy of the teacher and participants forge new relationships within the online or hybrid classroom “space”. Absence of interpersonal relationship and lack of visibility of the instructor transforms the learning environment and challenges teachers to negotiate with their traditional pedagogic methods.

As a composition teacher, I too see these major problems in online writing pedagogy. Firstly, the loss of importance and centrality of the teacher in an online pedagogy is can be

problematic in facilitating classroom activities in an online space. Secondly, the lack of physical presence of the students results in the lack of interpersonal interactivity. Thirdly, online pedagogy can sometimes be too networked and colossal for students to imagine a closed exclusive performative space for the pedagogic ritual. The problems posed by physical absence and exclusivity of the Internet are comparable to the problems gurus experience in the remediation of Odissi pedagogy. In the next chapter, I will talk about the ways in which performers negotiate with and re-interpret the values of Odissi dance while they mediate the art using the tools of technology. These artistic practices are examples of the transformation of the tradition in the new age of Internet.

Chapter 4: *ABHINAYA*

DRAMA OF THE MEDIATION AND TRADITIONAL VALUES

4.1 Introduction

The practice of Odissi dance has evolved over the past two thousand years from being an esoteric dance practiced only in the temple, to being a dying art form, to being one of the most popular classical dances that is widely practiced by both Indians and non-Indians. In the previous chapters, I presented conversations with the Odissi practitioners to establish that the core value system of that the traditional dance involves three essential elements: (a) an association of the art with sacredness, (b) importance of the immediate presence of the corporeal body as a bearer of the memory, and (c) the presence of the Guru. In the rest of the chapter, I will study some pedagogic and performative moments where artists used technology in their dance in a way that traditional performers before them had never used before.

- a. Use of recorded music in dance
- b. Use of Skype in synchronous distance collaboration,
- c. Use of technology on stage
- d. Use of Video in teaching and dancing in Second Life

In each case, the artists' use of online tools helped in enhancing the creative possibilities of art through technology. In each case, there is also the possibility of compromise of the value systems of the dance. In the first example, I will demonstrate how using recorded music can

potentially spoil the importance of bodies in a state of inter-personal collaboration in dance performance. In the second set of examples, I will then show how online synchronous collaboration replaces the “sacred” exclusive online space where two dancers interact, with the open web space. In the third set of examples, will then show how teaching with online videos can potentially spoil the exclusivity of pedagogic space as well as potentially decrement the position of the guru in the center of the learning process. I argue that attempts of some artists of traditional Odissi dance by using technological tools is a process of extending the borders of the dance without actively challenging the value system of the art. Three of the four practitioners in the examples are survey respondents. Their responses indicate their association of sacredness with the space of performance, acknowledgement of the importance of the visibility of the performer’s body, and acknowledgement of the importance of the teacher. I do not attempt to judge the legitimacy of the attempts demonstrated here or make a critical assessment of the compromise with the core values of the dance in the attempt for innovation. These are attempts made by performers to negotiate with the problems of online performance and pedagogy.

In my research, I found that current Odissi artists mainly used three forms of technological tools: a) CDs function as for musical accompaniment; b) synchronous communication with Internet can facilitate collaborations and teaching practices, and c) Videos help in learning and teaching the dance. The data in the previous chapter revealed various forms of mediation of pedagogy and practice of Odissi dance. Most practitioners of Odissi dance expressed concern about the use of technology as a medium of practice and a tool for teaching can potential spoil the cultural memory of the dance.

My overall purpose in this chapter is to further analyze and clarify these conflicts within my findings, and organize the evidence to respond to the issue of ways in which remediation of

Odissi dance may not spoil the existing notion of purity and authenticity, as understood by the practitioners. I concluded from my conversations with the seniors that the core value system of Odissi dance does not represent a hegemonic, coercive tradition that restrains it and hinders its evolution and growth over centuries. The dance has evolved and innovation has been encouraged by the community. However, if mediated dance compromises values associated with the dance, like its sacredness, the importance of the body, and the importance of the Guru, it can potentially subvert traditional practice. Technologies have led to some major changes in performance of the dance. Dancers from across the world acknowledge this transformation in dance due to mediation of its teaching and learning. The main points of conflict between traditional dance and technologically mediated practices indicate moments of compromise in the traditional values.

My close interaction with the data and the artists who expressed concerns about using technologies that replace the body and the presence of the Guru lead to this argue that resistance to mediation is not staunch. There is no indication of coerciveness that coordinated or governed the practices and perceptions about these practices of the Odissi dancers. Most senior gurus added a note of cautions about not going too far away from the original way that temple dancers performed Odissi. Some seniors offered suggestions of best practices for performers who intend to stretch the borders of tradition to some extent to allow room for innovation and influences of cultures. None of the respondents of my research demonstrated firm denial of change. While being supportive to change, all respondents were either supportive or neutral about the importance of the values associated with traditional Odissi. None of the respondents denied the importance of the core values of the dance.

This mediation body performs, collaborates, teaches, learns, and forges new inter-body relationships that substitute the traditional Guru-Shishya or master-disciple relationship. The

divide between technologized and traditional practices in dance creates a productive space that can help scholar understand how digital and networked technologies are transforming embodied memory. Tradition-technology encounters and formations of a deviant discourse challenge the dominant (traditional) constructs of cultural memory. We cannot ignore mediation of dance, since it can potentially transform some of the core values that are essential to this dance. While the findings conversations and surveys with Odissi practitioners of the field revealed value systems underlying the practice, in the next section I will illustrate the presence of these values in the artistic culture of India.

4.2 Odissi dance and legitimate remediations

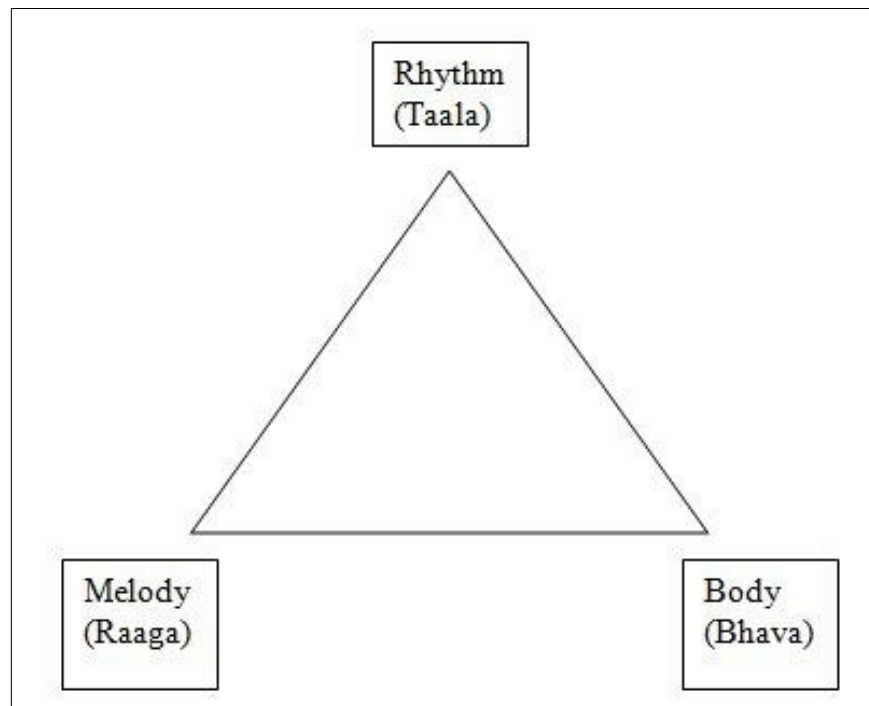
There is a tension between Odissi dance and the mediation of the dance. The interesting question is how far will the dancer extend the borders of tradition for innovation or digital mediation? My field study reveals that, on the one hand, traditional practitioners of the art find the new technologies have the potential to hurt both the transmission and performance of traditional dance; on the other hand, the new generation embraces the technology, and uses it for teaching, performance, and collaboration.

Practice and pedagogy of cultural dance evolve when mediated in virtual spaces. Mediation of Indian classical dance can be potentially subversive to the traditional dance practices and pedagogies because it can disrupt the values that surround the dance. This counter-public practice can account for connections, mediations, and transgressions between virtual and geophysical spaces. The practice of remediating the body of the dancer, the musical accompaniments and the space in general were deeply rooted in that value system mostly accepted by the seniors of the dance community as legitimate new practices that can provide an innovative extension of the existing practice. Although there is not much vehement disapproval

of technologies for remediation from either the veteran or the pro-technology practitioners of the dance, there are moments of apprehensiveness and resistance.

The value system underlying these attitudes towards mediation and classical dance is understandable in context of the Bhava-Raga-Taala triangle of Indian classical musical arts. The theory of the triangle demonstrates the values of the Indian arts in general, and thereby is applicable to this classical dance. Music is an integral part of a repertoire that as the triangle illustrates. The

relationship between the three components illustrates that the presence of the body and the immediate and synchronous



communication/connection amongst the three components is necessary for a successful repertoire. The performance and interpretation of

music is a blend of three sensibilities²³. The melody or raga (in Sanskrit), rhythm or tale and emotion or bhava that is enacted or exteriorized by the body. In the experience of the dance and

²³ Incidentally, some say that three syllables "bhā", "ra" and "ta" make up the word "Bhārata" which is the Sanskrit name for the Indian subcontinent. However, this might not be etymologically correct, since there are several other historical significances of the "Bhārata".

music, the three elements are in constant reciprocation with one another. In an ideal performative situation, the three elements are unmediated, immediate, present at one given time, and follow each other. Ideally, none of the elements should be taking a leading role in this communicative situation. The dancer follows the beats of played by the drums, the drums follow the feet of the dancer, music follows the time kept by the drums and the narrative enacted by the dancer. During a performance, the breakdown of any one of the three parts makes up for the other parts. In the following section, I will describe cases of remediation in the performance and practice of the dance. The case studies explore creative spaces during moments of mediation in technology-tradition encounters and unravel that might be compromising the core values of the dance.

4.3 Forms of Mediations

Mediated Musical Accompaniment

Senior Odissi dancer Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi, Hejmadi talks about the practical and aesthetic value of having a live musician rather than a digitally mediated recorded music playing along with the dance. During a live performance in front of the erstwhile Prime Minister of India, the *pakhawaj* player Banabehari Moharana got so vigorous that the drums rolled out of his hand towards Hejmadi. Hejmadi, he continued to chant the *ukuta* (sound made by the drums and chanted by the drum player) and continued the dance movement. There can be a breakdown of complete harmony in a situation when collaborators who are immediately present and able to interact in real space carry out the collaboration. However, the physical presence makes it easier to make-up for such a breakdown.

When Odissi had just come out of its hiatus during the pre-1947 British colonial period, revivalists used the same instruments that were a part of the mahari and gotipua traditions and the ones depicted on the temple walls. One of the earliest performers of modern Odissi during

the time of its revival, Hejmadi discussed the problem of using any form of recorded music. She refers to the experience of playing a tape in the background of a dance as “disappointing” (62). The instruments that accompanied a dancer at that time were the harmonium, pakhawaj, flute, violin, and sitar. Other than the harmonium, the instruments used reflect the ancient sculptures on the Orissan temple walls. These technologies of performance are a part of the traditional cultural practice. The presence of the bodies in a performative process is true not only for the eastern value system, but also for Western view of “body” in the context of artistic pursuits.²⁴ Live performances and concerts generate more excitement amongst an audience than recorded performance by an artiste.

²⁴ A similar view toward recorded music accompanying dance is evident in the work of Hejmadi. Hejmadi, however, did not give a clear explanation to this preference, and Maguni Das simply stated that recorded music, “is never the same...” as live music. Auslander provocatively articulated that “liveness” is always preferable over mediating music because the audience responds in an entirely differently way than they do to recorded music. Auslander’s research on the role of technology in performance situated on rock culture and live performance of bands. He writes, “technology cannot take the place of human presence at the heart of performance ... it is best used to extend the capabilities of human performers, to express humanistic themes more fully, and to allow performance to explore or evoke responses from realms of human physical and psychological experience not directly accessible otherwise” (299). To him, recorded music cannot be the same as a live performance, and this is the thought reflected at several points in my interviews with veteran Gurus in the field of Odissi dance.

Using digital technology to replace any of the elements (of melody, rhythm, and body) might result in an absence of the live communicative process, which is central to a dance performance. Digitization of music and rhythms in a CD makes the musical accompaniment portable and convenient. Nevertheless, these devices might not be most reliable and might spoil a recital. Recall, for instance, veteran Bandha Maguni Das, who recognizes the convenience of recorded music. However, he says, “Music in Sanskrit is “Sangeet”... “Sang” means union. Sangeet is the union between body of the dance, music, and sound. It is important for the people to get together and perform.” He adds that the effect of live music creates an entirely different experience for the audience who are able to witness the three elements of melody, rhythm, and enactment of emotion through the body. Since music can be edited and modified during the recording and interspersed with sound effects generated in a live studio, it is may be difficult to produce the same quality of music in live music. However, presence of the musicians on the same stage communicating with the dancer during the performance can be a more cherished experience for the performers as well as the audience.

When dancers perform with recorded music, the relationship between the elements of the triangle of music may get lost. The rhythms and music do not follow the dance anymore, but bind the performance within a set time. There is also no opportunity for conversation and collaboration between the musicians and dancer during the performance, thereby destabilizing the way that dance traditionally performed by the originators of the dance in the temples. The transformation of the role of “body” in dance is gradual. “Body” however has remained sacred to a dancer. The replacement of the body is a drastic transformation that the field is still struggle to grasp and negotiate.

Though the use of technology as a replacement for live music has resulted in a breakdown of the immediate connections between the dancer's body and the musical support, technology has resulted in the creation of a networked community of practitioners. Hundreds of practitioners of Odissi dance use online social networking tools to connect, stay in touch, promote themselves, or express opinion on issues and problems related to dance.

Remediated Bodies in Collaboration

Mediation of bodies happens when people are not physically present, but their likeness is digitally present and interacting with others. I experimented with the virtualization of the body in the performance of Odissi dance in Second Life as well as in synchronous online collaboration projects. I carried out one such project with Rahul Acharya, a young Odissi dancer based in Bhubaneswar in Orissa, India. He agreed to work on a project with me for the Computers & Writing Conference (themes "Writing in Motion") held in the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in May 2011 in collaboration with Jill Morrison. Acharya and I planned a synchronous live performance through Skype. He would perform from India, and I would project him and perform synchronously in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

We originally designed this to be a regular presentation panel to portray the rhetoric of performative bodies in motion and engaged in aesthetic story telling. Nevertheless, the conference planners set this as an evening performance. The integration of a performative presentation was probably not "academic" enough and we had to carry it out as a post-dinner intellectual 'entertainment' with a bunch of other extremely smart performances. However, this spiked our attention towards the choreography and technical explorations of this piece, now that we were dancing in front of an actual audience who came to see dance as a post-dinner entertainment in the University Of Michigan Museum Of Arts Auditorium instead of a

conference classroom. By presenting the dance in a space of academic discussions, our intent was to illustrate and perform the virtual-real interaction. Our performance intended to replace an academic paper through a demonstration of the possibilities of rhetorical performance. The dance performance, however, did not succeed in transgressing its role as an “entertainment” rather than an academic discourse.

Acharya and I had a primary plan and a back-up plan in this act of virtualizing our bodies in this collaborative dance, keeping in mind the limitations and possibilities of technology. We thought it would be gripping to do a piece involving fast-paced rhythmic beats where we would match each other’s moves and steps in a virtual *yugalbandi* (a duet comprised of artists performing alternatively). However, we could not find the technological support or idea that would help us overcome the un-uniform, fraction-of-a-second time lapse between us. We solved this by choosing an expressional piece that involved storytelling without any rhythmic footwork that required coordination. The movement of the bodies, reactions to the expressions and flow of the narrative needed coordination, but we needed to rehearse that. The dance moves mediated through Internet were not perfectly synchronous. There were gaps of a few fractions of a second. However, this difference is a lot when it comes to maintaining a rhythm and time in dance.

We felt apprehensive about the possibility of failing Internet on both sides of the world. It actually failed once during one of our rehearsals, thus escalating our anxiety. As a backup plan,



Figure 4.2: Virtual Collaboration rehearsal (East Lansing, July 2011)

Acharya videotaped the entire dance sequence with the recorded music in his full Odissi costume in the same backdrop where he would be performing on the day of the show. In case the Internet failed for either of us, I arranged a technician to swap the Skype screen immediately for the video that would be playing simultaneously with my dance. That continuity would not be lost. Fortunately, no such technical hitch happened on the day of the show.

The third problem concerned the relative dimensions of the body (See Figure 4.3). On



Figure 4.3: Virtual Collaborative performance by Shreelina Ghosh and Rahul Acharya (University of Michigan Museum of Arts Auditorium, Ann Arbor, MI, July 20, 2011)

one of the days during a rehearsal in a classroom at Michigan State University, I was able to adjust the projection so that the feet of the virtual dancer were closest to the ground, simulating an un-mediated performance. At the conference, video projections were different with different projectors and screens. The projection needed to be full screen. We could not put Acharya's webcam too far away, because then the expressions of his face were not prominent. We did not find a way of adjusting the size to make my co-dancer of appropriately sized for the duet. This was a major

setback in the show. The projection of my co-dancer behind me was huge, and I was quiet dwarfed. I tried to help the situation by moving to the front stage for the illusion of coordinated heights. However, the choreography required me to move up and down the stage. In addition, the front stage had brighter light, and if I danced in that light, it dimmed the screen projection as a

result. Acknowledging the failure to simulate a real-stage situation, we decided to focus on the storytelling in the sequence to make up for the visual setbacks.

The fourth and the most important challenge of our performance involved coordinating our expressions and reactions to each other. Our positions on the stage also needed careful choreography. This was important because in order to simulate a synchronous emotional reaction to the each other's character we needed to simulate looking at each other. We also needed to be on the alternative sides of the stage so that Rahul's reflection did not merge with my shadow on the screen. We were enacting an *ashtapadi* or a lyrical poem containing eight lines. 12th century poet Jayadeva wrote a series of these poems on the story of Radha and Krishna. Traditionally, the maharis of the Orissan temples danced to these poems. These are significant characters in the Hindu mythology. Krishna was the blue-skinned God who played on the flute, and Radha was his beloved.

The story enacted by us depicted Krishna promising to meet Radha at night but not showing up. When he does come to her at dawn, his body bears telltale marks of his faithlessness. Radha notices that his lips had a streak of kohl from a woman's eyes; his body has scratch-marks and other signs that showed he was cheating on her. He denies the accusation that he is unfaithful, and says that he has eaten a black fruit. That is why his lips have the black smear. He scratched himself by the spines of a flower tree while he was trying to pluck a flower for Radha. In spite of the excuses he makes, Radha does not forgive him, and he offers to lay his head on her foot asking. Several eastern cultures consider the feet impure. Laying one's head on another person's foot is the ultimate expression of asking for forgiveness or surrender. The stories of Radha and Krishna have deeper significance, beyond the mundane sexual connotations between a man and a woman. Radha symbolized "*Aradhika*" which means, the one who

worships. Krishna is the divine consciousness with whom the worshipper eternally tries to unite in Hindu philosophy. The union of the body and the Divine consciousness denoted by the images are of sexual union between Radha and Krishna. My guru explained to me that the story represents Radha's failure to understand the Omni-presence and omnipotence of God, and that He cannot be limited to one form.

In order to illustrate the tensions within the complex layers of this piece, beyond just the literal story, dancers are required to perform a complex scheme of facial and hand gestures. The accusations of Radha and excuses of Krishna call for perfectly timed reactions between the two dancers. For the flow of the narrative to make sense, the subtle and inter-twined expressions needed clear portrayal, both onscreen and onstage, without the dancers having to compete for the attention of the audience. To solve this problem, we choreographed the sequences according to music so that we did not have to rely on reacting to each other's movements or expressions. Throughout the performance, we were trying our best to make the piece look as spontaneous and un-choreographed as possible, despite the pre-ascertained choreography of movements on the stage.

Dancing without bodies was a fascinating experiment for both Acharya and me. I was dancing with my own body, but in the absence of the other person's body. It helped us to understand the role of the body in this dance. Our virtualized bodies enacted a traditional memory. The virtual bodies were bearers and performers of this artistic memory. However, collaborating with each other and with the audience without direct and immediate interactivity is challenging. We were looking at the reactions of each other on the screen and negotiating with time lapses, but we were not able to get into a state of real performed communication that a traditional duet performance could have facilitated.

Denial or absolute resistance of mediation of dance might not be very useful. The students of dance from the digital era *will* use these tools in the learning of this dance. The current generation's audience constantly interacts with digital technologies in several forms of entertainment. It is likely that they will be more attracted to a performance involving stage technologies than a plain dance performance. In other words, performing a simple dance on a stage might no longer be sufficient to gain interest in the audience. Patnaik uses stage technologies for creating background images, musical effects and so on.

In a production on the Hindu epic '*Mahabharata*,' Devraj Patnaik²⁵ made creative use of stage lighting and animation (Figure 4.4).

Odissi dance seldom uses such large-scale forms of digital technologies on stage. The description of this production states:

“Devraj Patnaik's creation differs from every other traditional East Indian Dance ever staged. From the intensity and passion of the choreography, to the complexity of the stage set, and the unique integration of special-effects lighting



Figure 4.4: Stage production of Devraj Patnaik's dance company. The dancers on stage react to the image of a fire-spitting demon in the stage production of the ancient Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* (Photo credit: Chitrlekha Odissi Dance Creations)

technology that is designed to convey the timeless spiritual significance behind the story” (taken

²⁵ Devraj Patnaik is a Canada-based Odissi dancer, teacher, and choreographer. He and his sister Ellora teach Odissi and present original Odissi choreographies that involve innovative use of music, movements, and stage-technologies.

from Patnaik's website). In this production, the stage had a screen in the background where mythical characters like the *rakshasa*, or demon, appeared and performed in coordination with the dancers on stage. The projection of the recorded footage on the screen was in sync with the stories enacted on stage. Digital images served as backdrops of a dance sequence. However, only few traditional Odissi choreographies involve the characters in the projections interacting with the dancers on a stage. This is a rare instance of interaction between real and virtual bodies. To some, these efforts are innovative and intelligent. To some, they are unnecessary.

In Odissi, the practice of the dance in virtual spaces results in the absence of the physically communicative connection between the dancer, the audience, and the co-dancers. In this art form, communication depends on forming inter-subjective experiences that create the impression of accessing the consciousness of the other person. With the physical connection is lost in a virtual collaborative performance, be it in through Skype or SL dancing, the process of accessing consciousness and reacting to the layered meanings in a complicated story-telling performance of Odissi is challenging. Through the rhetoric of performance, the body conveys the meanings needed to perceive the world.

In the case of a virtual body performing a visible rhetoric and collaborating with the audience and a fellow performer who is physically distant, the communication takes place through both the visible and the invisible expressions of the collaborator's body, creating an impression of identification and harmony of consciousnesses between the real bodies, and digitally represented bodies²⁶.

²⁶ Japanese computer engineers Nakazawa, Nakaoka, Kudoh and Ikeuchi developed a method to "digitize, analyze and present human motion" (1). This is a highly technical article on

Learning a dance in such virtual performative and online social-networking spaces is a new practice. The tools of teaching in dance can be vital in propagating the dance, thereby keeping the memory of the dance alive. However, the ramifications of digital pedagogy might lead to a too much openness of this dance, which started as an esoteric practice of temple dance. It can also lead to a subversive resistance to the tradition of Guru-Shishya teaching method.

computer programming, but I was interested in reading about the reason behind the attempts to recreate human movement. “To keep the robot standing during all dance sequences, its ZMP (Zero Moment Point), which indicates a balanced force point existed between the robot and ground, must be within a support area enclosed by its sole areas.” (7) The coordination of the artificially reproduced earth and body involves a gamut of calculations. This technical article indicated the complex process involved in the virtualization of the body and the limitations that body cannot overcome. Though the imagined possibilities of the virtualization of the body are immense, the realization is extremely complicated. Kozaburo Hachimura, a Japanese researcher in the field of media technology, writes about an application he uses for preserving a digital archive of dance movements with an optical-type motion capture system for Japanese historical Noh plays. The system he uses is effective for archiving tangible artifacts. Hachimura’s illustrations show that it is possible to recreate appropriate backgrounds that recreate ambiance. However, recording movement is complex and problematic. He recognizes the potential of technology in archiving dance, but acknowledges its inadequacy in capturing the *Kansei*, or the Japanese expression for sensibility. In Indian aesthetic terminology, the closest word is *rasa* (described in chapters one and four).

Mediated Pedagogies

The traditional teaching of Odissi involves the Guru demonstrating the dance and the disciple imitating and repeating it several times. Eventually, the bodies of the students perform the moves automatically. Like most classical arts of India, studying this art requires constant feedback from the Guru in order to achieve perfect movement of the limbs, coordination of movement, and facial expression. Teaching, learning and practicing Odissi in a traditional setting dwells on the direct interaction of the dancer with the teacher and the dancer with his/her own body. To senior Odissi master Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, using videos is fine as long as the presence and value of the Guru is not completely negated. He recommends using the video to remember the dance that one Guru has taught but not using it to learn the foundations of the dance.

The anti-digitization bias is strongest with regard to the concept of the Guru in Indian classical dance. Senior master Guru Maguni Das and prominent teachers like Sujata Mohapatra and Ratikanta Mohapatra opposed the credibility of teaching dance online. To them, videos can provide a back-up in case someone forgets a piece. However, the only way of learning good Odissi is through repetition. The dancer watched the dance piece, imitates the teacher, and then repeats the piece several times until the body imbibes the movement so deeply that it automatically responds to the music accompanying the movement. A traditional Odissi training class characterizes a semi-formal relationship between the teacher and the student. Generally, training sessions begin and end with the student touching the teacher's feet as an expression of respect. Imparting training though, online videos can create a very different relationship between

the teacher (demonstrating or instructing in the video) and the student (replicating the movements in the video).

Odissi training videos are available online and sold online. The primary target audience for these videos is non-Indians interested in learning the basics of the dance. YouTube is free and accessible digital tools with great pedagogic potential. It is easy for dancers with some years of experience to shoot training videos. One example of an online video is that of US-based performer Mala Desai. On YouTube, Owners of the video have some control over the comments posted by viewers. However, in an Odissi dance training video in the “Expert Village” channel of YouTube²⁷, the control over content and user feedback is limited. In a YouTube video by New York- based Odissi teacher Mala Desai on Expert Village, the comments on the video were extremely vulgar, demeaning, sexist, and racist. The focus of the users’ response shifted completely from understanding what the dance is, to her race, attire and so on. The attempt to popularize an art by utilizing the immense possibility of Web 2.0 technologies where information is freely accessible, democratic, and user-generated, can have such severe repercussions.

Second Life dancers perform the dance without the presence of a guru-figure. There is a mercenary relationship between the person that mediates the dance into the “body” of the avatar (code-writers) and the user (avatar is the representation of this user). SL attracted me as an alternative and supplementary act to real-life dancing because of the amazing possibilities it offers a traditional dancer like me. Second Life offers a space where its citizens can learn, share, and practice the dance collaboratively. The spaces created for social dance practices are often hyper-sexualized; however, SL citizens can practice traditional classical dances in several islands

²⁷ Expert Village is a portal of several how to videos. It contains user-generated content and the channel does not give the owners of the video any control over the comments. The Privacy policy of channels such as these include statements such as “

in SL. SL residents practice several other forms of dance, including African dance, European Ballet and traditional Japanese dance. Recently, Carnegie Mellon Graphics Lab created Indian classical dance poses. Figure 4.7 shows the advertisement of these poses in the Second Life Market place. There are a few ways in which dance can be learned, taught, and performed in SL. One of them involves buying the scripts for the dance with Linden dollars (SL currency) and animating one's avatar with those scripts. Another way of performing is by sharing scripts with a partner for a collaborative dance.

For a traditional, formal dance setting, it is also possible to create dance moves with software, which requires some level of expertise. Buying scripts and learning how to animate the avatar with them does not essentially require the presence of the person who has written the script, designed the poses or choreographed the sequence. The Second Life creator of the script transmits the knowledge of the mediated movement to the body of the avatar. The relationship between the scriptwriter and the SL citizen (whose avatar embodies the dance script) is mercenary. The transfer of knowledge in this dance is not spiritual. The SL avatar can digitally embody a perfect pose of traditional Indian classical dance, and the perfection of its form and expressions has been improving over time. Avatars have become more life-like and capable of a wider range of facial emotions. However, the 'required' and 'important' presence of the Guru is not a condition that is central to the practice or learning of the dance.

4.4 Discussion

Mediated literacy practices superimposed on the performative culture of Indian classical dance can modify the relationship between the body and the knowledge of the art. Digital mediation actually displaces a necessary facet of the social roles of mediation—it takes out of the equation the important variables of the learning relationship, the audience-dancer relationships,

and ethical exigencies of performing the moves with reverence. Learners who use digital media productions like these might learn the instrumentality of the moves, but these may remain merely ‘mechanical’ performances, stripped of the spirituality and lacking an attainment of divine perfection only possible through the Guru/Shishya and audience and dancer relationships. An influx of such digital mediations has led to destabilization of the custom, confusion, and wrath from the veteran practitioners of the art, who, though they welcome change, think that the central authoritative figure of the Guru is essential for the ultimate survival of this cultural art form, for its continued performance with proper reverence. The international appeal of learning classical Indian dance that draws heavily upon digital compositions decontextualizes the dance from the conventions of practice important to these communities. In fact, students of classical Indian dance at this international stage have had difficulty learning with their communities and producing digital compositions that honor the high value placed upon the guru/shishya relationship and the divine nature of this dance (Getto, Cushman, and Ghosh *forthcoming*).

Digital media extends the boundaries of the artistic bodies on Indian classical dancers in ways that might challenge the spiritual rhetoric inscribed on those bodies. To Merce Cunningham, a legendary choreographer, “With the computer one can make the figure do things the human body couldn't do” (Kent De Spain 8). However, he immediately adds, “That doesn't basically interest me because I'm really concerned about people dancing” (8). Many dancers acknowledge enhancement of performance with technology across the world; however, dismissal and suspicions are two emotions that dominated some of the conversations I had with some legendary dancers and choreographers of Odissi. Most teachers dismiss the ability to use technology effectively and they are suspicious that technology might replace the values that important to the artists. I argue that proper use of technology, as noted by Guru Gangadhar

Pradhan during my interview with him, can potentially enhance the teaching and learning experience without compromising the quality of the dance.

In the first example and second set of examples, the replacement of the embodied relationship between the dancer and the musician facilitates happens due to one of the first instances of assimilation of modern day technologies in this ancient art. Recorded music made it easy for dancers to travel and perform with ease without having to bring along a repertory of performers for every program. Replacement of the physical presence of the musicians calls for good quality recording of the sound that simulates the effects of the live music

The second set of examples extended the definition of sacred space in dance by using virtual representations of the body through Skype and in projector images on stage. Instructors can enhance the effectiveness of learning in a pedagogic space when there is a sense of exclusivity in the ritual of performance of learning/teaching. Online writing instructions can recreate the exclusivity of space by creating online meeting spaces, in chat rooms or in Second Life that replicate the formal interactions of real classroom spaces. This can facilitate the students' personal connectivity with the teacher and with each other and give them a sense of security and belonging in their class. This can be especially important for students who may become frustrated with the open-ness and lack of a specific pedagogic space of an online class. The third set of examples show the problems of mediation of the body of the Guru in an online forum. In online writing pedagogy, the presence of the teacher needs to be carefully represented and maintained. The students need to be aware of the body of the teacher through visual and textual cues, frequent interaction with the teacher and in some cases, telephonic conversations.

In the concluding section, I will describe the pedagogical and research implications of theory of value system of traditional and technology I have revealed in this research. I have

argued in this study that an underlying system of values governs Odissi teachers' attitudes towards traditional artistic practices. Digital mediation of the teacher's body, the memory of the art and pedagogy of the art is subversive to traditional practice if mediate dance practices compromise the values. I will take examples from my own experience as a first-year composition teacher and a writing center consultant to explain how the values shape my pedagogical practices in ways that begin to address these problems. I believe online writing pedagogy can create moments of fruitful collaboration by simulating the effect of real presences in distance learning contexts. This can be done through impeccable planning and providing clear instructional in conversational style and representing facets of face-to-face classrooms in an online environment, like creating videos that look like in-class instruction.

4.5 Implications for Online Composition Pedagogies

In the previous section, my data revealed that the traditional artistic pedagogies and performances of the Odissi are somewhat resistant to mediation. In the art of Odissi, the presence of the body and the presence of the master in the process of learning are important. I found that the dance has a strong value system that bestows importance to the immediate presence of the body of the dancer and the teacher and the sacredness of their relationship. I understood from my interviews that the objections of the Odissi Gurus towards remediations of the dance are not coercive, as long as mediation of the dance does not spoil the underlying values of the dance. The value system I derived from my dance learning, teaching, performance, and research is foundational to my composition pedagogy. Associating the values of Odissi pedagogy and performance with my course design and online performance as a teacher helped me negotiate the challenges of teaching an online class: such as, the loss of interpersonal relationships and interactions amongst students, the potential loss of an "unseen" instructor" on the course

dynamics, and the loss of security of a student in an open asynchronous classroom space. This dissertation does not propose that online composition pedagogy and Odissi dance share the same pedagogic values, and does not claim that the rules for one apply to the other. Rather, the study locates problems of online education caused by the lack of interpersonal communication and collaboration, the pivotal positioning and importance of the teacher, and the ubiquitous immensity of the Internet. This dissertation emphasizes the importance of the presence of the bodies of the teacher and students in pedagogic spaces and argues that these presences need to be simulated to provide the experience of traditional face-to-face experience for a student as much as possible in the online classroom space.

While I acknowledge the dissimilarity in the learning goals and outcomes of dance and composition, my cultural experience with Indian classical dance and its transformation when new technologies, particularly digital technologies are introduced, contributes to conversations in computers and composition. In this chapter, I will first elaborate on the implications of this study to my composition pedagogical practices. Next, I will address the ways in which the findings of this dissertation can be relevant to the field of rhetoric and composition, and computers and composition. Lastly, I will articulate on questions that this dissertation helped me unravel. I will attempt to explore the various ways in which I can apply the findings in my future academic pursuits.

As a student of Odissi dance, I valued interpersonal relationship between the student and the teacher, presence of the body and the sacredness of the space of performance. My experience as a dancer has continually informed by my avatar as teacher of composition. Teaching in online and hybrid spaces meant choreographing with a virtualized body with relationship with space.

My study shows how that most students of the art who used videos and Skype to learn Odissi agreed that these technological tools could not replace the importance of the real presence of the body. To them, the real presence promotes a better understanding of the technical process of the dance, as well as the expressional aspect, which they can see and feel more closely. I am also able to provide immediate and constant feedback to the dancers. The research on the transformation of Odissi dance has helped me locate the implication of traditional values of teaching and mediated pedagogies to my own teaching in a composition classroom.

To begin with, let me briefly illustrate these similarities by describing my understanding and approach to online teaching processes of writing and composition, and describe specific activities that I do in an attempt to negotiate with some of the problems of online teaching identified in Chapter 1. I will do so with two examples: my first year composition course design and my performance as a Second Life writing center consultant. When I was teaching in an online or hybrid context, it became very important for me to simulate these absences and reassert my “presence” in the space as much as possible. Collaborative work activities in the blogosphere extended the classroom “space”. However, I strive to give my course a sense of ritualistic pedagogic space in order to ensure optimum learning. For instance, I encourage the small groups to create private interactive spaces in social networking websites, course management systems, and blogs. This gives them a sense of privacy, ownership, and personal responsibility towards the activities of the group. Groups also come up with their own names to give them a sense of a close-knit learning community. I use my virtual office time for online interactions during office time. The interactions during office hours involve white boards, Skype conversations and occasionally phone interactions. I encourage students to maintain the etiquettes of a real office interaction during online interactions. Simulating real teaching strategies in web-based and

mediated teaching environments can be effective in creating interactive and fertile teaching spaces. As the instructor, I carefully negotiate the absences and presences of my body and the bodies of the students in the process of teaching and learning writing.

In my first online class, I was uncomfortable with the concept of a complete absence of the body of a teacher in the process of learning. I put my photograph on the front page of the course website, a strategy that at least allows students to see an open, accessible face at the “door” as they enter. In another online class, I regularly uploaded videos of me explaining class activities, responding to emails and individual feedback. I encouraged my students to respond to these in videos as well. Few of the students posted videos. Students also post videos in lieu of essays as assignment reflections. For me, the intension was not clarity, because I had already articulated all these instructions in details in my written assignment descriptions and I was in regular email correspondence with the students. My intension was to simulate my in-class presence and create a personal interactive moment with each student. To me, the physical presence is important in reaching the shared-learning goals in a composition class, and providing the ambience that replicates this situation is both critical and crucial. For, as Kristie Fleckenstein finds in “Faceless Students, Virtual Places: Emergence and Communal Accountability in Online Classrooms,” interactivity between students and the professor and each other in class is more effective in online pedagogy than loads of activity to keep students busy. Instructors can reach the learning goals of online teaching by promoting and simulating real existence of student bodies that interact.

Creating online interactions involving the visibility of the bodies enhances the sense of community. In my classroom practices, students write and collaborate in interactive platforms that are similar to real teaching spaces. They use several Web 2.0 platforms in the stages of

invention, composition, and revision. I urge my students not to hide behind the words, but show up in the videos or add one another on Facebook to enhance their social interactions. My pedagogic position provides an alternative for Patrick Sullivan's argument that teaching online can be more effective because of the ways in which they are different from traditional pedagogies. She writes that online learning can be preferable to students who are shy, non-verbal, and reticent, communicating and participating in class-discussion might be a problem. Distancing the social experience of online class because of anonymity is more preferable for such students (398). However, to me, the creation of small exclusive spaces for the students to interact is indicative of a face-to-face classroom activity of small group discussions. Inclusion of a shy student by creating a comfortable space is a pedagogic value than is derived from traditional teaching practices.

I would further argue that the level of interaction in an online teaching could be more than in a traditional class. For an optimum learning environment, teachers some times need to demonstrate values of a traditional classroom, like interpersonal interaction, more actively than a face-to-face classroom. Active responses to student emails on queries regarding assignments simulate the immediate presence of the teacher. In an online class, the responses to the queries of the students should be more immediate in order to enhance learning. Cavanaugh, a professor of Economics, in "Teaching Online - A Time Comparison," presents statistics-based arguments on experiences of teachers and students in online and traditional classes. Cavanaugh's empirical study illustrates that instructors find teaching online courses more difficult than traditional courses due to their unique requirements, including more individual interaction with students, complicated grading systems and so on (Cavanaugh 3). This is applicable to an online

composition classroom as well, where teachers need to put forth extra effort in an attempt to compensate for this absence.

Mediated composition-teaching spaces (in context of online classes and virtual world writing centers), is colossal, interconnected, chaotic, and integrated. These spaces can also be nonhierarchical coordination and collaborative. The presence of the body in a classroom community can be central to effective collaborative learning. Although most online classes I have taught have been asynchronous, I created some assignments that demanded synchronous sessions, in order to simulate the “presence” of students and activate direct interactivity between the students. I give my students off-line shared-learning through interactive activities like small group discussions, presentations, peer reviewing, and collaborative projects and so on. Replicating interpersonal connections by coordinating interactive assignments are a way of simulating interactions with “real bodies”.

In traditional Odissi learning method, the teacher shares an immediate ritualistic space. The classrooms are normally teacher-centered with the teacher sitting at the head of the class with a short stick to beat it against the floor to indicate the cycle of time. In a virtual classroom, the physical body of the teacher is replaced by the set of instructions and assignment descriptions generated by the teacher that provides the information for the students to follow in order to accomplish the assignment. A teacher facilitates this process of learning; the presence is not an immediate requirement in the instructive moment. To me, the classroom space is a ritualistic “sacred” space. The sacred space is also the space of interaction between the teacher and students, and amongst students. In online classrooms, the course management systems provide this closed secured space where learning happens through interactions. Instructors often regulate

composing for audience beyond the classroom space (in online forums or blogs) within the lesson plan, in order to help students understand the implication of transcended the sacred space.

Presentation of the body of the instructor in a virtual environment such as Second Life requires simulating the traditional pedagogic space in a more literary way, since the virtual world metaphorically represents the real pedagogic space. As a Writing Center (WC) consultant in the Michigan State University Writing Center, I carried a bag, wore shoes and a pair of jeans, and wore the green consultant's uniform. To me, the appearance of my avatar was an important part of my function as a writing center consultant. My choice to adhere to of simulating real appearance of a consultant governed by the academic value system, show how a teacher or a consultant should represent her/his body. My other colleagues variously presented body of the WC consultant. For most of the consultants, the avatars closely resembled their own selves in real life, barring one consultant, who presented himself as a Penguin! When asked about his choice, he said that among other things, this look is a good icebreaker in a virtual interactive situation. On the other hand, I had SL clients who were dressed in gothic attire and SL clients with a saber in his hand.

In my composition practices, my interactivity was extended to my interpersonal relationships that I tried to regulate with my students in order to help them build a comfortable pedagogic space in order to simulate exclusivity. To me, this adheres of one of the values of pedagogy that dance has helped me understand my own composition pedagogy In the light of my findings, these are my ideas about online teaching:

1. Instructor and students should be visible. Virtual pedagogy has eliminated the presence of bodies in class. However, it is possible to recreate (in Second Life), represent (as avatars in Course Management Systems and weblogs), or broadcast (in

synchronous chat. Visibility of the bodies of instructors and teachers promotes a personal interactive moments and eliminates the coldness associated with online learning.

2. Instructor control can be crucial. It is important to remember that the instructor conducts activities and interactive assignments in order to keep students engaged and interested in a pedagogic space that lacks interpersonal ties in an online classroom. I am not advocating a teacher-centered pedagogy, but indicating that it is important for teachers to be in control so that students are not disengaged or overwhelmed with information or confused with too little information when they are not interacting actively with the teacher.
3. The main concern for this is the absence of a classroom and their inability to “see” the instructor or students. It is necessary to create a virtual “space” that is exclusive, which represents and simulates the real classroom space. This can be done through creation of small group chat spaces, private blogs and through an accessible nomenclature (Instructor’s Office or Suggestion/Question box and so on) of the folders in the course management systems that help students identify with their real experiences in the face-to-face space. In *How to Be a Great Online Teacher*, Kay Lehmann provides a set of best practices of online teachers. One of his major pieces of advice to the teacher is to create an environment where the students feel safe and settled within the online writing space because here, the students do not even have a spiral binder as “security blanket” (56). This calls for a balance between the endless possibilities of Web 2.0 and the need to create a fertile learning environment where students can express freely.

The Gurus collective understanding of traditional pedagogies originated, formulated, and standardized it through ages. Performing virtually as avatars or teaching through videos has transformed the inter-personal pedagogic relationship between the teacher and the student. Through my own online pedagogy and performance, I am able to understand my final vital research question of how mediation has transformed my traditional teaching practice. Answering this question has helped me shape my practices in accordance with my pedagogic values, instead of simply using fancy technological tools without critical insight on how those can contribute towards the learning goals effectively. In doing so, I am not making any claims about how the sacred space of dance is like all composition courses. These pedagogical interventions are my initial response to the changing values of composition teaching that the academic field has recognized and is exploring since the inclusion of technological tools in teaching and hybridization and virtualization of composition classes. I am keen to expand this project into a book-length publication where I will include additional empirical research based on studies made in online composition classroom. I would like to examine the feasibility of creating interpersonal relationships in the mediated pedagogic space in order to replicate the pedagogic values of a traditional composing space, while eliminating some of the problems caused by absence of bodies.

4.6 Concluding the Study

The relationship between technology and Odissi dance is critical in the current performance and teaching of the art, and for the future of this art. Some resistance shown by the masters (held with much regard by the dance practitioners) led me to conduct systematic inquiry and study of this artistic traditional. My research and association with this art showed that the

memory of the art underwent mediation several times and in several forms across generations. The mediation happened orally, verbally and performatively. Classical dances re-mediated into temple figurines, solidifying the gestures and the perfect geometry of the dance forever. While dancers adhered themselves to the codes, the art of the dance mediated into the stone sculptures. This also marked the emergence of semantic signifiers in the dance coded in *Natyashastra*. These practices preserved cultural memory because they continued to embody the practice of dance and to rest upon the Guru-shishya relationship, even though conventionalized forms mediated through writing and stone sculpture guided these practices.

Newly developed mediations impact the pedagogic relationships between composition teacher and the student in a way that is similar to the impact new mediation technologies have had in dance pedagogies. I have shown in this dissertation that mediation shaped my approach towards online teaching where I attempt to negotiate with some of the problems of online teaching by simulating real experience of pedagogical spaces. In order to enhance the learning experience of a student, there is a strong requirement of designing methods and approaches in an online composition curriculum that promotes interpersonal-relationship-building and creation of a closed pedagogic space. These activities can promote collaborations, interactions and engagement, which are valued in face-to-face classrooms, while retaining the positive aspects of online classes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

1. What art form do you practice? How are you associated with Odissi? For how many years?
2. How did you come to learn Odissi?
3. What did your Guru tell you about the origin of this dance? What was your Guru's teaching method?
4. Do you follow a similar method of teaching?
5. How in opinion has the dance changed over the last ten years (with the digital revolution)?
6. How is the use of technology in dance affecting the following aspects of dance:
 - a. Perfection of gestures
 - b. Movements
 - c. Teaching
 - d. Learning
 - e. Memory
 - f. Demonstration
 - g. Choreography
 - h. On-Stage production
7. What technologies do you use in your own practice?
8. Making dance digital is also a way of preserving it; do you think it is a good thing for dance? Do you have any problem with technologies being used in Odissi dance?
9. Music used to be always performed live on stage with the dance ten years ago. Now those are all recorded and played on CDs. What is good and bad about it?
10. Many people are video taping dances and selling them/buying them. Is that good for the dance?
11. In the dance is being learnt from the Guru then there is no longer necessity of a Guru. Do you agree?
12. As a veteran in this field what would you advice to people who are digitizing dance, morphing bodies to recreate embodied performances?

13. Several non-Indians are learning Odissi and then performing it in their own countries.
How do you think that is influencing Odissi? Are there any problems when the spiritual dance of Odissi is being embodied (practiced) by non-Indians?
14. What should we be careful about in the process of Internationalizing Odissi dance?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY PROTOCOL

Survey Title: Performing bodies and digital technology

Name (optional):

No. of years of association with Odissi

Country of origin

Age group ☐14-19, ☐20-39, ☐40-59, ☐60 and above

1. Your association with Odissi dance is as:

- ☐ Performer
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Choreographer
- ☐ Critic
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Musical accompanist
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. Options for Questions (a) through (h):

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Comment

- a. Being able to archive old performances with technological tools is good:
- b. Some Asian classical dances have survived for thousands of years in texts and sculptures. However, modern technological and digital tools have more potential in preserving the dance over time:
- c. Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is learnt:
- d. Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is taught:
- e. Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is choreographed:
- f. Use of technological tools should be encouraged in ancient classical arts:
- g. Authenticity of all aspects of ancient classical arts can be fully maintained if technological tools are used in their preservation, practices, teaching, choreography and so on:

- h. Mr. X, is a classical dance performer. He makes records dances on a DVD and sells it to Mr. Y, who learns it by looking at the video, but has never met Mr. X personally. This still forges a Guru-Shishya (Mentor-Disciple) relationship between them:

3. What technological tools do you use in your associations with dance?

Options for Questions (a) through (n):

- ☐ You use it yourself
 - ☐ If yes, what tools do you use?
 - ☐ Assign someone else to do it for you
 - ☐ Do not use it
 - ☐ Never heard of it
 - ☐ Will want to use it in future
-
- a. Video recorder
 - b. Sound recorder
 - c. Sound mixer
 - d. CD/DVD player
 - e. Video softwares (like MovieMake, iMovie, Final Cut Studio; Final Cut Pro; SoundTrack Pro; Motion; DVD Studio Pro 4 etc.)
 - f. Graphic softwares (like Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, etc.)
 - g. Sound softwares (Finale, Audacity, Garageband, Soundtrack, etc.)
 - h. Document softwares (Microsoft Word, Word processor, etc.)
 - i. For Kinesiology: Bodyworks
 - j. For Web Design: (Dreamweaver etc.)
 - k. Lighting Design: (MacLux Pro, VectorWorks 10 etc.)
 - l. Stage technologies
 - m. Webcam
 - n. Other tools

Additional comments on the use of technology in the preservation, praxis and pedagogy of performative arts.

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APPENDIX C

CODING AND ANALYSIS SCHEME

This appendix provides examples of how the scheme of methodical coding of the transcripts and survey/email responses were employed by me. They demonstrate the manner of analysis performed and serve as potential models for similar research. As I mentioned in my methodology section, I designed the interviews, emails and surveys in order to inform three primary categories and secondary categories.

Primary Category:-

1. “How are digital tools used?”
 - a. Association with **memory** : Dull yellow
 - b. **teaching**: Florescent yellow
 - c. **performance** : Red
2. “What are used?” Mention of digital or other **tools of technology**: Green.
3. “Why are digital tools used?” To study the transformation of the value systems in the process of technologization, this is subdivided into **three categories**
 - a. associating the practice of Odissi with **sacredness** : Orange
 - b. Statement on the **role of the body** and physical presence: Blue.
 - c. Instances when participants are expressing **conflicts or negative, positive, or** other concerns displayed regarding virtual pedagogy in tradition dance: Pink.

I am including a scanned document below to illustrate how the coding was done. **(For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation).**

7/9/11

memory
→ data → pm
→ critical. e
←

- ① - (Interviews: July 23, 2008)
- GANGADHAR PRADHAN (passed away on Oct 11, 2010)
- Guru, artists, need to be "awake"... they need to transmit the tradition to one generation to the next and to the next. They need to advice, teach to remember what is traditional.
- When dance started it had no connection with statues. The Guru was connected with the student and that is the connection that helped the memory to stay alive across hundreds of years. It was only for the last 50 years that Gurus saw the sculptures on the temple walls, researched on them and perfected the poses. Konark, Rajarani, Mukteshwar, Lingaraj... dance was happening in those temples. Gotipua dance was not learned through research. Patachitra was expressing dance poses but there was no conscious research involved.
- If you want you can use several other tools to teach the dance. Dance can be composed and put on Internet. But it requires "sense" of the dance by the dancers to understand the nuances of the dance.
- <Pradhan demonstrates> if you listen to the notes and poses on the Internet videos and understand the grammatical system, you can follow the system. It can be easy and fast for you to do that.
- <On software> I do not might. Still, Guru is important and required in the learning of the dance.
- It all depends on how dedicated you are and how much you have practiced.
- Nowadays Odissi is seeing changes. Dancers are doing more creative than traditional. They are "slipping" from classical.
- CD: There is no choice sometimes. Pressure of education has increased. Students are busy, they need to be taught fast in a short period of time. So CDs will be required. So you need to demonstrate the dance in the video very clearly and explain clearly the meanings of the dance. Like alapadma symbolizes the lotus and hamsasya demonstrates the face as pretty as a lotus. The bees sitting on the lotus symbolizes the kiss put on a beautiful face. Even in the video, the meanings need to be demonstrated clearly.
- That will happen. Does not mean, the Guru;s name deltes... That is not right. CDs information, but I need to demonstrate what is choka, trbhanga arasa, mardala, then you can have the idea and then record it nicely .. put that on video, see it and practice.
- Whatever you do oyu need to go to Guru. Practical, Guru is required.
- Books on dance showing postures, Videos will give only the information. Still working with the Guru is required understand the nuances of the dance.
- ② - MAGUNI CHARAN DAS (passed away 4th December, 2008)
- Theatre, Drama, Learned it all... I learnt only Gotipua dance.

Excerpt from Transcript of Interview (For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation)

important for students to understand that. For this, the Guru needs to help students understand not only the dance, but also the rich tradition that comes with it that determines what is proper and what is not.

- (18) India-based dancer of US-origin
- It was important for me to live in India to fully understand and appreciate the culture and imbibe in the subtle nuances. During my time I could not have done it in any other way. I would not even be able to communicate with my family in a different country for months. I steeped into this culture in a very pure form.
- <on whether a tech-rich surrounding can affect this understanding> Artists of this generation have more exposure to different cultures. That certainly affects the way they understand Indian-ness and the art. It is still possible to learn authentic Odissi.
- The dance is changing because of how the audience is evolving.

Survey

- (19) UTTARA COORLAWALA, Indian-origin, based in NY
- Neutral is Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is taught, learnt or practiced.
- Interested in trying out technological tools in dance.
- "Utube transforms my dance history classes. It enables us to see the history happening and as access to the uploaded videos we become part of another kind of history of looking at dance and actively making its history for ourselves. The speed at which images, choreographic motifs and ideas circulate is so speeded up, that originality might ultimately be ascribed to the ability to post first, rather than to the originator of a performance idea or technique. Power still controls the technology, its access, even as access multiplies."
- Not saying it is only great, because already it has made possible such exposures and fads as dorky dance. So its effect on the aesthetics of performing classical Indian forms is not yet known. Worse than video for showing depth of space, it subtracts the presence of the whole body and adds to the presence of close up faces...
- It gets both revelatory and tricky... depending on how well you search, how much you already know from other sources, and you are able to read against the text (as image, word, sound, medium) "
- (20) SWAPNAKOLPA, Indian dancer trained in India currently living in UK
- Strongly agrees that Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is taught, learnt or practiced.
- "I have always been worried about playing my music for a performance ...What if my cd gets stuck dreams !! But after coming to London I have played my music from laptops connected to the audio system directly and haven't had any problems as yet.
- " There is no substitute of Guru's personal presence in learning but there are many

Excerpt from Transcript of Interview (For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation)

Analysis of Qualitative Data (Sample)

Here are extracts from interview and survey data where the responses were highlighted in blue.

As coding scheme suggests, the respondents made statements that addressed the issue regarding the role of the body and physical presence.

Extract 1

Question: Many people are video taping dances and selling them/buying them. Is that good for the dance?

Answer: ... you need to demonstrate the dance in the video very clearly and explain clearly the meanings of the dance. Like *alapadma* symbolizes the lotus and *bhramara* demonstrates a bee getting attracted to the flower and sitting on it. The face is pretty as flower and the bees sitting on it. This symbolizes the kiss put on a beautiful face. Even in the video, the meanings need to be demonstrated clearly... Whatever you do, you need to go to Guru. Practical (training), Guru is required.

Extract 2

Question: Technological tools has strongly influenced and altered the way dance is taught. Do you agree?

Answer: its effect on the aesthetics of performing classical Indian forms is not yet known. Worse than video for showing depth of space, it subtracts the presence of the whole body and adds to the presence of close up faces...

In the first extract, the respondent actually demonstrated a piece of dance during the interview. He showed how a teacher would demonstrate a piece in the process of teaching. The respondent chose to demonstrate this appropriately. The metaphor of the bee sitting on a flower for an attractive face indicates the complicity of this concept. The metaphor alludes to both aesthetic and sexual imagery (flower and the bee) imagery. This is relevant in developing the character of the heroine being portrayed in this dance. The teacher communicating and illustrating these layers of meaning is important in the learning of this piece of dance. If a video is used to replace the body, it must show the dance clearly and also explain the meaning of each

nuance clearly. He did not resist the idea of a video being used, but at the same time expressed concern about the quality of video. If the moves are unclear, the meaning will not be communicated to the student fully. He adds at the end that whatever tools one uses, they have to go to the Guru (meaning having the Guru physically present in front) and learn from the Guru. The Guru is essential in the learning of the art of Odissi.

In the second extract, the respondent is asked if the influence of technology on dance is significant, especially in the way that it is taught. This is from an email correspondence following the survey feedback from the respondent. She explains that the effect of technology on dance is still developing and therefore it is difficult to see the consequences clearly. She criticizes videos as tools for teaching because videos cannot give a clear understanding of the movement of the whole body at a time. If the whole body is shown, then the figure on the screen will be too small and the steps will be unclear. If the steps and hand gestures are shown separately, the coordination between the hands, the eyes, the feet, the eyebrows, the neck and so on are not shown clearly. She goes on to say that videos can be useful in remembering a piece of dance that the student has learnt. However learning the dance from a video only can be a problem.

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Namaste! As you know, dance in India bears the tradition of being represented in Temple sculptures and scriptures in order to be preserved. Digital media is giving us a new way of preservation of the cultural heritage. The goal of this work is to explore influence of technology on Indian classical and folk dance and how cultural expressions are transformed by digital hyper-mediation, which indeed is an effort of preservation. Below, you have many choices for ways to share. Please indicate your willingness to share by checking signing your name under all that apply. Everything you offer will be photocopied or digitally copied and these copies will be excerpted in print or online, or will be reproduced in whole. If you're asked, a formal interview will take no more than twenty minutes, will be done at a place of your convenience, and will be taped with digital video.

You will not be identified by name in the write up of the project. No risk from participation is anticipated. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all, may refuse to participate in certain procedures or answer certain questions, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Shreelina Ghosh either by writing to 235 Bessey Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824, or by e-mail at ghoshsh2@msu.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Confidentiality

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. You can choose the way that you would like to be identified in this work or a fake name will be given to you. Where you live will always be deleted from video or the name changed in writing. You will be given drafts of any of the writing that comes from this or will be shown rough cuts of any videos made.

Refer to me in this work as: _____

Photograph Consent

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to be photographed or share family photographs for this work:

Signature

Date

Video Tape Consent

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to share your stories, memories, opinions and thoughts on videotape and to allow for excerpts of that videotape to be distributed online or CD.

Signature

Date

General Consent

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to share your stories, memories, opinions and thoughts verbally or in writing.

Signature

Date

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