THE FEMALE BODY IN PERFORMANCE-IDENTITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Thesis Submitted to the University of Calicut
for the Award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre Arts

By

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CERTIFICATE

I, **Dr. Shibu S Kottaram** ,do hereby certify that this thesis entitled "**THE FEMALE BODY IN PERFORMANCE- IDENTITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT**" is a record of bonafide study and research carried out by **Ms. Greeshma Krishna** under my supervision and guidance. No part of this report has been previously submitted for any other degree or diploma.

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I, **Greeshma Krishna** do hereby declare that this thesis entitled "**THE FEMALE BODY IN PERFORMANCE- IDENTITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT**" has been submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of doctor of philosophy under the supervision and guidance of **Dr. Shibu S Kottaram** _Assistant Professor, School of Drama, John Mathai Centre, Calicut University, Thrissur, I also declare that this thesis is genuine work and it has not been submitted by me for the award of any degree of diploma, Title, or Recognition before, either in this university or other universities.

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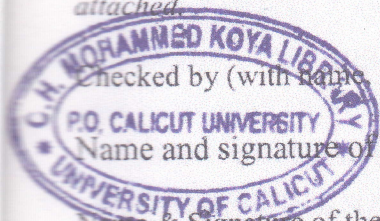
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INTRODUCTION

The examination of the intersectionality of gender, performance, and identity is a multifaceted and ever-evolving domain, particularly when focused on a culturally rich and heterogeneous nation such as India. The representation of the female body in performance, across diverse artistic and media forms, holds significant sociocultural connotations that mirror and occasionally contest the complex dimensions of Indian society. The representation of the female form in art, literature, and media has been the subject of extensive scholarly discourse spanning several decades, involving the participation of artists, philosophers, and scientists. The concept of female body performance in India has undergone a transformation, as women have surpassed traditional norms and fearlessly explored the realms of cinema and performing arts, such as theatre. The present study aims to investigate the performance of female body in India by evaluating the multifarious representations of women and their interrogation of societal norms.

The representation of the female form has been a significant aspect of Indian culture for several millennia. This complex issue has garnered attention from diverse fields such as visual arts, film, literature, and performance art. The representation of women varies from sacred feminine icons depicted in historical temple carvings to ordinary females portrayed in contemporary mass communication. The significant impact of cultural, social, and religious perspectives on these depictions is noteworthy. The enduring motif of shringara rasa in Indian art exalts beauty, love, and sensuality, profoundly influencing the representation of the female form. The representations mentioned herein are subject to a nuanced equilibrium between the admiration of beauty, cultural norms, and the innate selfhood of the person.

The representation of the female physique in Indian cinema frequently elicits censure from diverse sources. According to critics, the representation of women in cinema frequently involves the objectification and sexualization of their bodies, which reinforces patriarchal beliefs and reinforces gender-based preconceptions. It is noteworthy that there have been deliberate endeavors to scrutinize and contest these stereotypes. Indian cinema has recently witnessed the emergence of more nuanced depictions of women, which offer a broader spectrum of female identities that defy conventional norms and expectations. The investigation of the female physique in theatrical representation serves as a perspective from which to observe the dynamic terrain of female identification within the Indian milieu.

POINT OF RESEARCH

In India, the subject of female body performance has long been up for debate. In Indian civilization, where the female body has been exposed to several types of oppression, exploitation, and violence, the female body has been a contentious terrain as a site of cultural meaning and expression. The bodies of female performers have often been objectified and made into fetishes by the masculine gaze. This study attempts to investigate the identities of female body performers in India and the difficulties they encounter.

Dance is an essential component of India's cultural identity, and the country has a rich and varied cultural history. Throughout the course of many centuries, Indian classical dance styles including Bharatanatyam, Kathak,Odissi Kuchipudi, and Mohiniyattam have developed and been influenced by religious, social, and cultural factors. Some dance genres have greater cultural and spiritual importance than just enjoyment. These dance genres have been developed and preserved in large part because to the important role that female dancers have played.

Female dancers in Indian classical dance play a crucial role, but they also confront substantial obstacles. The patriarchal mindset that permeates Indian culture and sees the female body as a source of shame and disgrace is one of the key obstacles. Female dancers must manage their status as performers while navigating this mentality. The topic of attire is especially delicate since traditional garb may be provocative and exposing. Female dancers must continuously balance the requirements of tradition with the needs of contemporary audiences.

The problem of body image is one more difficulty that female dancers have. Female dancers are often evaluated by the rigid criteria of beauty and body size that are prevalent in Indian culture. This may result in body shaming, which may negatively affect a dancer's confidence and sense of self. Also, both within and beyond the dance community, female dancers often face harsh scrutiny and criticism. This can cause them to feel uneasy and anxious, which might affect how well they perform.

Also, there are issues with professional possibilities and pay for female dancers. Although having a significant part in Indian traditional dance, female dancers are sometimes underappreciated and underpaid. On the other side, male dancers are paid more and given more possibilities. The patriarchal views that are pervasive in Indian culture and which undervalue the contribution of women are reflected in this gender imbalance.

The identity of female body performance in India is, thus, a contentious and complicated matter. Female dancers confront a variety of difficulties, such as patriarchal views, problems with their bodies, job options, and pay. In spite of these difficulties, female dancers have made enormous contributions to the growth and preservation of Indian classical dance. We must acknowledge and cherish the contributions made by female dancers and fight to build a society that is more egalitarian and inclusive.

The current thesis point of research is identifying the identity dilemma faced by female performers in theatre in India in terms of their identity as female body performers.

India has a vibrant cultural history, and its performing arts are well-liked all around the globe. Nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook the difficulties and identity crises that female actors in Indian theater are now experiencing. Concern has been raised about the objectification of the female body in Indian theater and film for a number of years. The purpose of this study is to identify and investigate the numerous difficulties that Indian theater's female actors encounter.

The gender prejudice that is pervasive in the profession is one of the main issues that Indian female artists must deal with. Sexual harassment, exploitation, and objectification of female performers are commonplace in the profession, which impedes their development and advancement. Female performers have less possibilities due to the industry's male predominance, and they often struggle to get parts that fully use their abilities.

Stereotypes about the female body in theater provide another difficulty for female performers in India. Female performers are often sexualized in media representations, and their abilities and aptitude are frequently eclipsed by their outward looks. Female performers are often subjected to the industry's high aesthetic standards, which may be harmful to their physical and emotional health.

The study intends to investigate how Indian society's expectations and cultural norms affect female artists. The female body is often used as a commodity and objectified in India's patriarchal culture for the amusement of male viewers. Since they must adhere to society conventions and expectations, female performers' creative expression and inventiveness may be constrained. The purpose of the study is to determine how female

actors overcome these obstacles and push the bounds of conventional gender roles in Indian theater.

The study also intends to investigate how the government and other stakeholders may help female performers in India overcome their difficulties. Gender prejudice and stereotypes continue because there are no laws or rules protecting female artists or promoting gender equality in the profession. The purpose of the study is to determine how government laws and regulations affect the advancement of female actors in Indian theater.

The study will look into the viewpoints and experiences of Indian female entertainers. The research aims to identify the difficulties that female performers face on a daily basis, the effects of these difficulties on their mental and physical health, and their opinions on how the industry can be improved to promote gender equality and inclusivity. Data will be collected through interviews and surveys.

AREA OF RESEARCH

The position of female actors in Indian theater has changed drastically through time. Theater is a type of art that reflects society and culture. The theater has experienced a tremendous transformation in terms of content, presentation, and form as a result of the advent of new ideas, modernism, and globalization. The difficulties experienced by female actors in the theatre with regard to their identification as female body performers, however, continue to be a serious issue. The goal of this study is to pinpoint the identity dilemma that Indian theatre actors who are female body performers are going through.

The cornerstone of a female body performer's performance, her gender, is often tied to her identity in the theater. In terms of appearance, conduct, and roles, female performers are expected to adhere to societal standards. Their brilliance and potential may be overlooked as a result of the frequent objectification, stereotyping, and reduction to sexual objects that they experience. The positions that are often only available for female actors in supporting parts, as love interests, or as simply eye candy demonstrate this objectification.

Also, female performers are often the targets of body shaming and are under pressure to maintain certain body standards. They are anticipated to have a certain physique, weigh a certain amount, and look a certain way. Female performers are under a lot of pressure because of this, and they sometimes take drastic steps like starving themselves or getting cosmetic surgery to live up to these irrational expectations.

Beyond merely the choices of roles or physical appearance, female performers encounter problems related to their identities as female body performers. Male producers, authors, and directors often predominate in Indian theaters, and their patriarchal attitudes are reflected in their productions. As a consequence, female characters are often portrayed in a demeaning and outdated way. Gender stereotypes are reinforced by the frequent portrayal of female performers as weak, obedient, and reliant on male characters.

The absence of opportunity for growth and development is a key issue that female performers must deal with. India's theaters sometimes follow a hierarchical structure, favoring experienced male performers over female ones. This limits female performers' possibilities to advance and become the best at what they do by creating a "glass ceiling" for them.

Many actions have been done to address these issues and build a more diverse and gender-sensitive theater. An important step forward has been the creation of feminist theater organizations that emphasize empowering female performers and showing their skills. These organizations produce material that defies gender norms and gives female

actors more complex and nuanced parts. The development of digital platforms has given female artists additional opportunities to share their skills and engage with a larger audience.

It is important to discuss the difficult problem of female body performers in Indian theater. The difficulties that female performers have experienced in terms of their gender, looks, positions, and opportunities have persisted, but the advent of fresh concepts, programs, and platforms offers promise for a theater that is more welcoming and gender sensitive. In order to challenge gender stereotypes and develop a more inclusive theater business, it is critical to keep developing venues that support female artists and highlight their skill.

RESEARCH PROBLEM - THE FEMALE BODY IN PERFORMANCE-IDENTITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

A thorough investigation is necessary to fully understand the complexity of the identity of the female body in Indian performance. In India, especially in the performing arts, female artists have historically experienced different sorts of prejudice and marginalization. When it comes to female body performers in theater, who often face particular difficulties and biases, the problem of identification becomes even more obvious.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the stereotypes and biases faced by female performers in Indian theatre?
2. How does gender identity impact the roles and opportunities available to female performers in Indian theatre?
3. What are the challenges female performers face in terms of physical appearance and body image in Indian theatre?
4. How do cultural norms and expectations impact the way female performers are perceived and treated in Indian theatre?
5. What are the career prospects for female performers in Indian theatre?
6. How do female performers negotiate their identity and agency in Indian theatre?
7. What role do directors, producers, and other decision-makers play in shaping the identity of female performers in Indian theatre?
8. How can the theatre industry in India promote gender equity and inclusivity?
9. What is the impact of social media on the identity of female performers in Indian theatre?
10. How do female performers navigate issues of identity and representation in different regions and cultural contexts within India?

HYPOTHESIS

Cultural conventions and patriarchal structures that perceive women's bodies as objects for male consumption, which results in the objectification and sexualization of female performers, female performers in Indian theater experience an identity crisis. This dynamic supports male dominance in theatre and gender inequality, limiting chances for female artists to demonstrate their aptitude and talents. Additionally, the perception that theatre is a male-dominated business is maintained by the lack of representation and appreciation of female performers, which aggravates the identity crisis of female performers.

Promoting gender diversity and inclusiveness in theater is essential to addressing this problem, as is challenging patriarchal practices that support gender inequity. This may be

done by giving female performers the same chances and respect as male performers, by making settings safe for women to express themselves without fear, and by fostering a more inclusive and varied theatrical culture that values and honors the contributions of female performers. In the end, this will result in a theatrical business for all actors that is more egalitarian and powerful.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH

Primary sources of research could include:

1. Interviews with female performers in theatre and dance in India
2. Observations and fieldwork at rehearsals and performances of female performers
3. Analysis of scripts and choreography of performances featuring female performers
4. Analysis of reviews and critiques of performances featuring female performers
5. Surveys and questionnaires of audiences and stakeholders in theatre and dance in India
6. Video and audio recordings of performances featuring female performers.
7. Archival materials related to the history of female performers in theatre and dance in India.
8. Personal diaries, letters, and memoirs of female performers in India
9. Government reports and policies related to the representation of women in the performing arts in India.
10. Social media and online platforms featuring female performers in India.
11. Book source referred.

Secondary sources of research includes:-

1. Numerous scholarly journals and articles explore the domains of performing arts, gender studies, and cultural studies.The aforementioned academic sources offer perceptive evaluations and dialogues concerning subjects pertaining to the performing arts, gender relations, and cultural occurrences. The journals offer readers an opportunity to delve into a wide array of research and critical viewpoints, enabling them to acquire a more profound comprehension of the complex interconnections among performance, gender, and culture.

2. The utilisation of documentary films and videos pertaining to Indian performing arts and gender has been instrumental in illuminating the extensive cultural legacy of India and examining the interconnection between gender and these artistic expressions.Online resources such as archives of performance reviews, interviews with performers and scholars, and online forums and communities that discuss the intersections of gender, performance, and culture in India.

3. Research reports and studies conducted by academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and government bodies that focus on gender equity, cultural representation, and performing arts in India.

PROCESS IN RESEARCH

Finding the research problem: Finding the precise issue that needs to be investigated is the first step in the research process. In this instance, the issue would be the identity crisis female body actors in Indian theatre are currently experiencing.

Reviewing previous research: The following stage would be to perform a thorough evaluation of the prior research. Reading books, articles, and other pertinent materials

that offer insights into the difficulties experienced by female performers in India would be required to do this.

Creating research questions: Based on the literature study, research questions can be created to aid with the problem that has been discovered. The investigation would be guided by these research questions.

Choosing research methods: The following stage would be to choose the best research techniques that would aid in addressing the research issues. Surveys, interviews, case studies, and other techniques might be used in this.

Data collection: After the study methodology has been decided upon, data can be gathered from a variety of sources. Surveys, interviews, observations, and other sources may be included in this. As part of the thesis project, the author performed numerous stylized stage performances, resulting in a valuable collection of images capturing these artistic expressions.

Conclusions: Based on the data analysis, conclusions can be drawn that will aid in resolving the research issues. These findings would be put to use in creating suggestions for handling the identified issue.

Final step: The research's findings will be presented to the appropriate parties through a variety of channels, including publications, presentations, and reports. This would aid in spreading knowledge of the issue and the solutions created to deal with it.

EARLIER STUDIES

There have been several studies on female body performers in various fields, including dance, theatre, and film. Some of these studies include:

1. "The Dancing Girl of Lahore" by A.K. Coomaraswamy (1916), is a study of the courtesans of Lahore, who were highly skilled dancers and musicians. Coomaraswamy argues that the courtesans were not prostitutes, but rather highly respected members of society who were skilled in the arts.

2. ""The Nautch" Reclaimed: Women's Performance Practice in Nineteenth-Century North India" by M.E. Walker (2006).A scholarly study that examines women's performance practices in nineteenth-century North India, particularly those connected to the "nautch" tradition.

3. "The Dancer's Voice: Performance and Womanhood in Transnational India" by Rumya Sree Putcha (2016).This piece investigates the relationship between dance, gender, and culture in a global Indian environment. The book discusses how dance as a performance art is utilized to express and negotiate conceptions of gender and identity, both within India and in the worldwide diaspora

4. "Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904 - 1986): A Visionary Architect of Indian Culture and the Performing Arts" by Dr. Avanthi Meduri This is a biographical or scholarly work concerning Rukmini Devi Arundale, a prominent personality in the realm of Bharatanatyam, an Indian classical dance form, and a significant contributor to the Indian cultural revival during the initial decades of the 20th century.

5. "Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times, Mulvey (2019) This book is a seminal work that critically analyses the portrayal of women in cinema. Mulvey posits that the female gender is frequently objectified in the realm of cinema, with their physical forms being utilised to stimulate and excite the male perspective.

6. "Acting Up: Gender and Theatre in India, 1979 Onwards" by A. Mangai The literature explores the diverse elements that influence these intersections, encompassing feminist and class ideologies, caste, ethnicity, religion, and patriotism. The study posits an alternative aesthetic framework by scrutinising the real-life production conditions of theatrical work, which frequently entail collaborative endeavours without a singular authoritative figure. The literary work delves into the oeuvre of distinguished theatre practitioners and collectives in India, and the writer, A. Mangai, who is a feminist theatre practitioner herself, provides significant viewpoints and observations derived from her personal involvement in the domain.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The research on this subject would examine the numerous problems that female actors in theater encounter with regard to their identities as female body performers. The study will concentrate on the difficulties and experiences that Indian female performer experienced, such as discrimination, objectification, and gender bias.

The study will also investigate how cultural norms and social expectations affect how people view female body performers in Indian theater. The study would look at how these elements affect how women are portrayed and represented on stage as well as how they affect the feeling of self in female performers.

Also, the study will attempt to draw attention to the need for greater diversity and inclusivity in Indian theater, particularly in terms of female representation. The study would look at methods and tactics that may be used to advance gender equality and develop an environment that is more receptive to and welcoming of female actors in Indian theater.

Ultimately, the goal of the study is to shed light on the experiences and difficulties faced by female actors in Indian theater and to offer suggestions that could assist in resolving the problems found. By doing this, the study hopes to advance greater knowledge and comprehension of the difficulties faced by female artists in India as well as to contribute to a larger dialogue on gender equality and inclusivity in the performing arts.

SCHEME OF CHAPTERS

1. Introduction: This chapter will provide an overview of the research topic, the research questions, the objectives, and the significance of the study.

2. Chapter 1- This chapter delves into the representation of female bodily performance within the context of India. It scrutinises diverse portrayals of women and their confrontations with established societal conventions. This study investigates the progression of the portrayal of the female physique across various mediums, including visual arts, film, literature, and performance art. The historical significance of the female body in Indian art is acknowledged in light of its cultural, social, and religious influences.

3. Chapter 2- Throughout history, the chapter analyses Indian women body performers have faced limited opportunities for achievement and acknowledgement, leading to a diminished position within society. The marginalisation of individuals has been attributed to factors such as wealth distribution, solitude, and lack of ownership. The lives of women have been impacted by socioeconomic disparities, religious regulations, cultural norms, and limited employment and financial prospects. Throughout various historical and geographical contexts, the ruling class has exerted an impact on the social status

of women. Women have maintained their identities across various geographical locations. The social status of women has been enhanced by education, acquisition of knowledge, economic responsibilities and limitations, and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality.

4. Chapter 3-The depiction of the human anatomy in artistic and media contexts is subject to the sway of social, cultural, and historical forces, wherein gender assumes a pivotal position. The present chapter delves into the influence of gender on the physical alignment of male and female dancers and performers within the domain of the performing arts.

5. Chapter 4-Transgender persons have a significant cultural presence in India, as evidenced by their mention in historical records and ancient texts. Nonetheless, individuals in the entertainment industry encounter a multitude of obstacles, such as discriminatory practises, inadequate representation, restricted opportunities for education and training, physical impediments, safety hazards, physical dysphoria, and cultural hindrances. The presence of these hindrances poses a challenge to their prospects of securing employment and pursuing a career in the performing arts. Despite legal progress towards achieving equality, there remains a need for enhanced societal acceptance and support for the transgender community in India.

6. Chapter 5-The present chapter investigates the impact of gaze, expressions, discourse, and gestures on the performances of female body artists. It emphasises the crucial role of eye contact in communicating intentions and establishing a connection with the audience. The study of gaze offers valuable insights into the emotional states of dancers, the responses of audiences, and the impact of media portrayals on body image and gender norms. It is crucial to adopt a mindful approach towards gaze investigations, taking into account the possibility of inherent prejudices and the employment of detrimental terminology. The study of gaze has far-reaching implications for various academic disciplines such as media studies, psychology, and sociology. It presents opportunities to gain insights into cultural beauty norms, encourage positive body image, and promote media literacy as a means to counteract objectification.

7. Chapter 6-The challenges faced by body performers, particularly women, in the field of performance art are significant and multifaceted. This chapter explores the historical and ongoing societal pressure for female performers to conform to unrealistic physical standards and the objectification they endure within the industry.

8. Work Cited: This chapter will include a list of all the sources consulted in the study, including primary and secondary sources, books, articles, reports, and websites

CHAPTER 1

REDEFINING FEMININITY: AN ANALYSIS ON INDIAN BODY PERFORMERS

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Artists, philosophers, and scientists have studied the female body in various ways. Decades of discussion have surrounded the depiction of the female body in art, literature, and media. Throughout the years, the identity of female body performance in India has developed, with women overcoming conventional preconceptions and embracing the sectors of movies, and performance art including theater. This chapter aims to investigate the identity of female body performance in India by analyzing the many ways in which women have been depicted and how they have questioned social conventions.

The identity of the female body performance in India is a complicated and multifaceted issue that has been addressed via visual arts, film, literature, and performance art. The depiction of the female body has been an essential component of Indian art and culture for millennia, and it has experienced several changes throughout time.

The female body has been shown in many ways in visual art, ranging from deities to ordinary people. Cultural, social, and religious views, among others, have influenced the depiction of the female body in Indian art. The representation of the female body in Indian art, for instance, has been impacted by the concept of shringara rasa, a prevalent motif in Indian art that glorifies beauty, love, and sexuality.

"The dance is a poem of which each movement is a word," she whispered to herself. "I will tell them a story tonight, a story of love and loss and redemption.".(Moran, 118.) The aforementioned statement is attributed to Mata Hari, who uttered it prior to her dance presentation in Paris. The woman is performing a dance routine for a gathering of affluent and influential gentlemen, utilizing her movements to entice and establish a rapport with them. While engaging in the act of dancing, the individual contemplates a particular quote and its relevance to their personal experiences. The individual acknowledges that dance has consistently served as a means of self-expression and has facilitated her resilience in a society that frequently exhibits hostility towards females

Several critics argue that the female body is often objectified and sexualized in cinematic depictions. The representation of women in Indian films has been criticized for promoting patriarchal beliefs and supporting gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, significant attempts have been made to challenge these stereotypes and portray more varied and nuanced depictions of women in Indian theater.

1.2   HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE BODY IN INDIA

The portrayal of the female body in Indian art and literature ranges from deities to sexual characters and has a lengthy history. In ancient India, women were often regarded as celestial creatures, and their bodies were cherished and praised in sculptures and paintings. However, with the advent of colonialism, women's bodies were shown differently, as western standards of beauty and modesty were enforced. The British established the notion of the "noble savage," which depicted Indian women as primitive and barbaric, decreasing the celebration of the female body. Representations of the female body are abundant in the centuries-old art of India. Goddesses and feminine deities are often represented in a highly stylized style throughout Hindu mythology.

However, these depictions are only sometimes designed to be realistic; instead, they are symbolic and intended to communicate spiritual or philosophical principles.

The representation of the female body as a vessel is a recurring subject in traditional Indian painting. In Hinduism, the female body is often connected with reproduction, and women are considered life-bearers. The female body is often shown in traditional Indian art as a vehicle for creation, nutrition, and wealth. This is seen in images of goddesses such as Lakshmi, who is often shown holding a lotus blossom or a jug of gold, symbols of wealth and plenty.

Representing the female body as a source of divine power is a recurring motif in traditional Indian art. This is seen in images of goddesses like Durga and Kali, often shown in warrior-like stances. These images are intended to portray the notion that women can protect themselves and their communities.

The portrayal of the female body in India has been the topic of significant controversy and investigation in literature, film, visual arts, and performance art, among other creative forms. Although the depiction of the female body in Indian art has been influenced by cultural and societal views, it has also been a place of contestation, with artists and performers challenging prevailing narratives and stereotypes pertaining to gender, sexuality, and identity.

The sculptures of the Indus Valley Civilization, dating back to about 2600 and 1900 BCE, are one of the oldest depictions of the female form in Indian art. Mothers, dancers, and priestesses are shown in the statues. The beautiful, elegant, and sensuous depiction of the female figure in these sculptures reflects the predominating ideas of beauty and love in Indian art.

The female figure is also glorified in Hindu mythology, with goddesses such as Lakshmi, Saraswathi, and Durga symbolizing many characteristics and virtues. The varied depiction of the female body in Indian mythology reflects the many roles and identities that women have in Indian culture.

Yet, patriarchal ideals and cultural conventions have also affected the depiction of the female body in Indian art, leading to the objectification and sexualization of women. The representation of women in film, for instance, has been criticized for maintaining gender stereotypes and promoting patriarchal norms. Women are often shown as docile and subservient in Indian film, and their bodies are objectified and sexualized.

1.2.1 ANCIENT ART AND SCULPTURE

The portrayal of women in sculpture and art in ancient India was significant. The patriarchal structure of ancient Indian culture was also represented in the art and sculpture that honored the strength and beauty of women. As social and cultural influences changed throughout time, so did how women were portrayed in ancient Indian sculpture and art.

Women's representation in ancient Indian sculpture and art dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished between 2600 and 1900 BC. The Indus Valley Civilization was a highly developed urban society that inhabited what is now western India and Pakistan along the Indus River. Women were often shown in the stylized human forms that typified the art and jewelry, hairdos, and attire that implied they belonged to the affluent class. Women were often portrayed as goddesses and other deities throughout the Mauryan Empire, which flourished from 322 BC to 185 BC. The Yakshi sculptures in the Bharhut Stupa, which date to the second century BC, are the most well-known illustration of this. These sculptures honor the divine feminine force by showing ladies in a variety of stances that accentuate their curves and attractiveness.

The depiction of women in art and sculpture advanced under the Gupta Empire, which ruled from 320 to 550 AD. With the production of exquisite bronze and stone sculptures that emphasized the beauty of the human form, the Gupta era is sometimes regarded as the pinnacle of Indian art and sculpture. Women were often shown as deities, queens, and courtesans in paintings and sculptures, along with jewelry, clothing, and hairdos that indicated their social standing.

A notable example of how women were portrayed in ancient Indian art and sculpture are the temples of Khajuraho, which date to the 10th century. The temples are renowned for their sensual sculptures, which show the female body in a variety of shapes while emphasizing her curves and attractiveness. These statues were constructed to honor the divine feminine spirit and to encourage conception.

The representation of women as weak and subordinate to male gods, however, betrayed the society's underlying misogyny despite the devotion shown to women in these sculptures. Women were often portrayed as objects of male desire, adored for their beauty and sensuality but overlooked for their agency and power.

The caste system was also mirrored in how women were portrayed in ancient Indian sculpture and art, with women from lower castes being shown as less attractive and strong than those from upper castes. Women from upper castes were often portrayed as queens and courtesans, but women from lower castes were frequently portrayed as manual workers.

Although male artists produced the majority of the sculpture and art in ancient India, there were a few renowned female painters. The oldest known female artist in India was the Buddhist-themed painter Rangasri, who lived around the first century BC. Some renowned women artists from ancient India include the poet and painter Mahadeviyakka from the sixth century, the Bikaner Princess Hada from the sixteenth century, and the Princess Tarabai of Tanjore from the seventeenth century.

These ladies were able to significantly contribute to the art and culture of their day despite the little chances afforded to women artists in ancient India. These works both reflected and questioned the social and cultural standards of the day, paving the way for later generations of female artists.

1.2.2 VOICES UNHEARD: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

The notion of the "ideal lady," who was supposed to be humble, submissive, and dedicated to her husband, emerged during the Mughal era. This ideal was replicated in literature, where female characters were often presented as meek and deferential to their male counterparts' demands and ambitions. For instance, women are often depicted in the writings of the poet Mirza Ghalib as objects of male desire, with their beauty and elegance being the only things that give them value.

It's crucial to remember, however, that not all depictions of women at this time were derogatory or objectifiying. By depicting women as powerful and autonomous individuals, certain authors and artists, such as the poet Kabir and the painter Abanindranath Tagore, aimed to question prevalent ideas about gender and identity. In contrast to Tagore's paintings, which often portrayed women in positions that were historically male-dominated, such as that of the warrior or the leader, Kabir's poetry frequently highlighted the strength and agency of women.

It is obvious that women had considerable limits and restrictions throughout the medieval era notwithstanding these flattering portrayals. Women had very little access to school, for example, and the majority were not given the chance to study reading or writing.

Women had limited opportunity to question the gender roles and expectations that were placed upon them due to their lack of education and the existing societal conventions.

In addition, since child marriage and purdah, which forbids women from participating in public life, are so common, many women are restricted to the home realm and have limited contact to the outside world. Despite the fact that these customs were not exclusive to India at the period and were common in many other civilizations, they had a profound influence on the lives and possibilities of women and restricted their capacity to fully engage in social and economic life.

Despite these difficulties, women in the medieval era did not simply accept male domination. Several women used acts of resistance, subversion, and inventiveness to express their agency and defy gender conventions. Like the poetess Mahadevi Akka, who rejected the customary position of the wife and instead chose a life of devotion and spirituality, there are many instances of women in literature and history who opposed the prevalent standards of their period.

Overall, women's portrayal in art and literature in medieval India underwent major shifts, becoming more objectified and subject to constricting gender norms. It's crucial to keep in mind, however, that women in this era were active agents who sought out methods to express their agency and question social conventions, not passive victims of patriarchy.

1.2.3 COLONIAL PERIOD IN INDIA AND WOMEN

The portrayal of women's bodies underwent a dramatic alteration in India throughout the colonial era, which was inspired by Western conceptions of beauty and style. Around this time, Victorian-era conservatism, which promoted modesty and the veiling of the female body, rose to prominence. As a result, women's attire changed, with saris being replaced with more covert outfits like the salwar kameez.

The covering of the female body did not, however, always result in the empowerment of women. Women were still seen as things that needed to be safeguarded and subjugated by males, and anybody who dared to question these conventions was often derided as immoral and obscene. This resulted in further limitations on their liberties, such as limitations on their ability to travel about, get an education, and find work.

A good illustration of how colonialism affected women's life is the textile industry. Women made up the majority of the workforce in this sector, where they were compensated little and had challenging working circumstances. Mechanization, which the British Raj brought to the sector and further disenfranchised women labor. As a result, female employees began to demonstrate, calling for better pay and working conditions. These rallies were crucial to the Indian independence struggle.

Notwithstanding the difficulties women had throughout the colonial era, there were also instances of women who resisted societal expectations of gender roles and made important achievements. Ladies like Sarojini Naidu, a poet and political activist, and Cornelia Sorabji, the first Indian woman to study law and practice in British courts, were trailblazers who opened the way for later generations of Indian women.

During the colonial era, women's education was also a significant topic since it was seen to be a way to empower women and raise their social and economic position. By establishing schools and colleges for females, missionaries had a significant impact on the education of women. Unfortunately, only a tiny portion of society benefited from these initiatives, while the majority of women continued to be illiterate and oppressed.

Feminist groups in India rose to prominence during the colonial era in an effort to oppose patriarchal standards and promote women's rights. Many of the educated, middle-class women who spearheaded these organizations were influenced by Western feminism. One

such group, the All India Women's Conference, was established in 1927 and fought for women's rights, such as the ability to vote and equal pay for equal labor.

When Western conceptions of beauty and fashion permeated Indian culture throughout the colonial era, there were notable changes in how women's bodies were portrayed in India. Women were still seen as objects to be safeguarded and subjugated by males, therefore these developments did not always result in their emancipation. At this time, women had a variety of difficulties, such as restricted possibilities for education and work, and they were ostracized in many facets of society. Notwithstanding these obstacles, there were other instances of women who defied societal expectations of gender roles and made important achievements. Future generations of Indian women were able to fight for their rights and question patriarchal conventions because to the growth of feminism at this time.

1.2.4 MODERN INDIA AND WOMEN

The depiction of women's bodies in contemporary India's media has expanded in variety and complexity. Women are shown in a range of occupations, from the conventional housewife to contemporary professionals who are focused on their careers. The way women are portrayed in movies, advertisements, and popular culture indicates how society, culture, and politics are developing in the nation.

The film business in India is a significant illustration of the evolving depiction of women in society. Bollywood movies were formerly notorious for their clichéd representations of women as helpless damsels in distress, but in recent years, there has been a move toward more complex and assertive portrayals. Bollywood movies include more and more autonomous, aggressive, and confident female characters. The number of female protagonists has increased, and they are more portrayed challenging gender stereotypes and defending their rights.

Nonetheless, there are times when women are not accurately portrayed in popular culture. Certain depictions of women still sexualize and objectify the female form. Women are often shown in hypersexualized positions while being utilized as props in advertisements. In addition to supporting problematic gender stereotypes, this objectification of women's bodies also encourages unattainable beauty standards that may be detrimental to women's mental and emotional well-being.

The #MeToo movement, which had its start in the US, had a huge influence on how women were portrayed in India as well. The movement made women's sexual exploitation and harassment commonplace in a number of fields, including politics, journalism, and the film and media industries. A plea for more responsible and respectful coverage of women in the media resulted from the campaign. There have been requests for more gender-sensitive programming as a result of the Indian cinema industry's own practices of exploitation and harassment of women.

Another critical element of India's shifting social environment is the representation of women in politics and public life. Women currently occupy important ministerial posts in the government, and the number of women in Indian politics has been gradually rising in recent years. Women are still disproportionately underrepresented in politics, and many still experience violence and prejudice based on their gender.

The representation of women in the arts is also changing dramatically. With more female artists receiving credit for their work, modern Indian art is becoming more inclusive and varied. The "Women Only" exhibition, which included female artists' work in a variety of media and highlighted the expanding impact of women in the arts, was recently held at the National Museum of Modern Art in Delhi.

Women's bodies are represented in a variety of complicated ways in contemporary India, reflecting the nation's shifting social, cultural, and political environment. A number of depictions continue to objectify and sexualize the female body, while others highlight the autonomy and empowerment of women. The widespread sexual harassment and exploitation of women in many professions has come to light thanks to the #MeToo movement, prompting calls for more responsible and respectful depiction of women. While there has been a modest increase in the number of women in politics and public life, more effort has to be done to promote gender equality in all facets of Indian society.

1.3   PERFORMANCE ART AND WOMEN

In recent years, performance art in India has acquired substantial popularity, with female artists utilizing it to express themselves and raise awareness of societal concerns. In a patriarchal country such as India, where gender roles and expectations are rigorously defined, performance art has become a way for women to reject these expectations and reclaim their bodies.

Anamika Haksar is one of the most prominent female performance artists in India, and her work explores the nexus of gender, sexuality, and identity. Her performances often question binary conceptions of gender, portraying it as a fluid and ever-changing idea. In her performance work she challenges the heteronormative depiction of relationships by examining the nuances of love and sexuality.

Maya Krishna Rao is another artist who has used performance art to highlight gender inequalities. Her art is concerned with patriarchy, sexual assault, and prejudice. Her performance "Loose Woman" is a powerful indictment of the objectification and commodification of women in society. Rao offers a place for women to reclaim their bodies and oppose patriarchal oppression via her performances.

Nikhil Chopra is another artist whose performances investigate the nexus of gender and identity. His art often includes cross-dressing and the subversion of conventional ideals of masculinity. In his performance "Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing VIII," he depicts a fictitious persona who is a combination of male and female identities, hence rejecting the society-assigned binary gender norms.

Women are also using performance art to confront concerns of harassment and abuse. In the aftermath of the #MeToo movement, many female artists in India have utilized their bodies to produce performances that throw attention on sexual harassment.

Overall, performance art in India has become a vital arena for women to discover and express their identities and to reject patriarchal oppression. It has enabled female artists to depart from established patterns of representation and generate a discussion about significant societal concerns. By using their bodies as a tool of resistance and liberation, female artists in India have significantly changed the identity of female body performance.

1.3.1 EARLY CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN TO PERFORMANCE ART

Other female artists made important contributions to performance art in its early years, in addition to Schneemann, Ono, and Mendieta. These artists used the medium to examine topics like identity, gender, and sexuality and to criticize the time's predominating patriarchal viewpoints.

One such artist was the Austrian performance artist Valie Export, who exploited her body to criticize the objectification of women and the male gaze. She wore a box around her waist for her project Tapp und Tastkino (Tap and Touch Cinema), with a hole cut out

allowing spectators to put their hands through and touch her genitalia. The piece was a potent critique of how often males reduce women's bodies to objects of sexual desire.

Marina Abramovi, whose work examined the limitations of the body and the interaction between performance and audience, was another prominent artist. Abramovi asked audience members to use different things on her body, such as a knife and a rifle, in her performance work Rhythm 0. The piece was a potent satire on the politics of power and how often actors are at the whim of their audiences.

Other notable female performance artists of the era include Joan Jonas, Adrian Piper, and Hannah Wilke, who used performance to investigate the connection between the body and the environment. Adrian Piper's work frequently dealt with issues of race and identity. Joan Wilke used her own body as a canvas to explore themes like sexuality and femininity.

The art industry remained overwhelmingly controlled by males despite the efforts of these female artists, and female artists often fought to be acknowledged and respected for their work. Several female performers were criticized for being only provocateurs or for being overly preoccupied with their own bodies.

Female performance artists did not start to get greater acclaim and appreciation for their work until the 1980s and 1990s. The efforts of feminist art historians and curators, who sought to highlight the achievements of female artists and to confront the prevalent patriarchal views in the art world, were partly responsible for this.

Female performance artists are still making significant contributions to the field today by pushing the frontiers of performance and addressing topics like race, gender, and identity. Although the art industry may still be mostly controlled by males, female performance artists have been instrumental in defining the genre and upending the established power structures.

1.3.2 THE RISE OF FEMINIST PERFORMANCE ART

Feminist performance art became a potent vehicle for communicating feminist views in the 1970s and 1980s. Women's voices were marginalized and gender norms were contested by female artists using this media. Marina Abramovi, Judy Chicago, and Laurie Anderson are a few of the well-known female performance artists of this time.

The daring performances that probe the boundaries of the body and psyche are trademarks of Marina Abramovi. In her piece she provided a range of tools, such as a rifle, a knife, and a rose, for the audience to engage with her in whatever manner they choose. The performance served as a statement on the power relationships between performers and spectators, as well as how often women are mistreated and objectified.

The Dinner Party by Judy Chicago is a key piece in the development of feminist performance art. A large triangular table with place settings for 39 real and legendary ladies was part of the piece. The piece criticized the male-dominated canon of art history while celebrating the accomplishments of women throughout history.

Multimedia is a staple of Laurie Anderson's performances. Her work investigates the relationship between the human body and technology. She employed a violin and other instruments in her performance United States to create a soundscape that captured the political and social environment of the country in the 1980s.

1.3.3 CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE ART AND WOMEN

Cuban artist Tania Bruguera is interested in exploring the relationship between political transformation and concerns of power and control. She regularly invites the audience to participate in her performances, which attempt to bring about social and political change. The Weight of Guilt (1997), one of her best-known pieces, featured Bruguera standing nude with a lamb corpse around her neck while inviting viewers to draw on her body with markers. The show served as a reflection on Cuba's social and political upheaval.

Canadian artist Rebecca Belmore, who is of Anishinaabe origin, creates pieces that deal with colonialism, Indigenous rights, and environmental problems. Throughout her performances, she often uses her body to convey social and political concerns. For instance, in her 2005 piece Fountain, Belmore poured buckets of water over her head while she recited a poem while standing in front of a large fountain. The act served as a remark on the value of water and its significance to Indigenous cultures.

Yoko Ono is still a well-known name in modern performance art. Her performances often feature audience engagement and her work continues to question gender norms and objectification. For instance, her 1964 piece Cut Piece has been performed multiple times, most recently in 2019 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As a remark on the power relations between men and women and the commodification of women's bodies, audience members are encouraged to cut off bits of Ono's clothes throughout the performance.

Marina Abramovi, whose performances often require endurance and physical discomfort, and Laurie Anderson, whose performances use technology and multi-media to give audiences immersive experiences, are two other modern female performance artists. Together with many others, these artists keep pushing the limits of performance art and use the genre to communicate their political and cultural viewpoints.

Female performance artists are supported and promoted by collectives and groups in addition to by individual performers. The Women's Performance Art Collective (WPAC), for instance, was established in Los Angeles in 2011 with the goal of promoting the work of female performance artists via exhibits, performances, and workshops. Similar to this, the Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter collective was established in 2016 with the goal of amplifying the voices of Black women artists and providing a platform for them to discuss political and cultural issues.

Women still confront obstacles in the art industry despite the contributions they have made to the performance art genre. In museum exhibits and collections, women are often underrepresented, and there is a gender wage gap in the arts. Also, compared to their male colleagues, female artists may be subject to greater scrutiny and criticism of their work.

Women have contributed significantly to the growth of performance art throughout its history. Female artists have challenged gender stereotypes, addressed problems of power and control, and ex3ressed their political and cultural opinions via the media. There are several well-known female performance artists working today, and groups and organizations have been formed to help them and their work. Women continue to make major and vital contributions to performance art despite the obstacles they confront in the art industry.

1.4 FRAMEWORKS, SOURCES AND IDENTITIES OF PAST AND PRESENT

Various dance research methodologies, such as ethnography and historical analysis, provide distinct viewpoints on the realm of female bodily performances. Typically, dance ethnographers direct their attention towards the observation and depiction of bodily movements and facial expressions exhibited by contemporary dancers, frequently within particular ethnic or cultural communities. Conversely, scholars in the field of dance history tend to scrutinize archival materials and relics pertaining to individual dancers or dance troupes, in order to detect indications of pioneering and atypical practices.

The demarcation between these methodologies is no longer deemed valid in contemporary times, as this literary work underscores the fact that such divisions were never entirely relevant in the realm of dance research. Several schools of ethnography in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia have focused on the preservation of traditional ways of life, including the documentation of historical dances. Scholars specializing in dance history, who were influenced by the oral history traditions of Western Europe and North America, have also unearthed archival materials pertaining to dances that have become obsolete and are no longer performed by contemporary practitioners.

Acknowledging the prospective advantages of synchronic and diachronic perspectives is crucial in the realm of dance research. The study of dance can benefit from the interconnection of theoretical and methodological frameworks of ethnography and history, which can draw from various disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, social and cultural history, performance studies, ethnomusicology, and folklore studies. Disciplinary domains that incorporate multiple fields of study, such as dance anthropology, dance ethnology, and ethno choreology, have a specific emphasis on the study of dance.

In the field of dance studies, which is still in its early stages, researchers often depend on established disciplinary frameworks that possess distinct characteristics that may not be readily discernible to those studying dance. The utilization of ethnography and history in the realm of dance research is subject to variation based on intellectual traditions and geographical considerations. The comprehensive range of disciplinary heritages, variances, and associations in relation to the execution of female bodily performances surpasses the boundaries of this preliminary section.

This literary work offers an overview of the historical customs of dance ethnography and dance history, as well as a comprehension of the former and present origins and characteristics of dance. This study delves into the ways in which these methodologies enhance our comprehension of female bodily performances and the intricate nature of their artistic manifestations across various historical periods.

1.5 DANCING TRADITIONS OF KERALA: OPPANA AND MARGAMKALI

The performing art form known as Oppana has its origins in the southern Indian state of Kerala. The cultural heritage of the Muslim community in the region, specifically the Mapilla community, is deemed to be incomplete without it. Oppana is a traditional dance form that is commonly observed during nuptial ceremonies and other festive events. Its main purpose is to provide a source of jubilant and celebratory entertainment for the attendees.

The term "Oppana" is etymologically rooted in the Malayalam language, specifically derived from the word "Oppanai," denoting the act of applying make-up or concealing. The ceremony entails a collective of female performers, typically comprising

acquaintances or family members of the bride, who assemble in a circular formation and engage in vocal and kinesthetic expressions characterised by rhythmic cadences. The ceremony involves the participants donning vibrant customary garments and arranging themselves in a circular formation around the bride. They then proceed to engage in a series of alternating vocal and physical performances, accompanied by rhythmic hand clapping and exuberant facial expressions.

The Oppana dance form conventionally commences with a gradual and tuneful prelude, commonly referred to as the "Mukhavaranam," that establishes the ambience for the presentation. As the tempo of the music accelerates, the performers commence synchronised dancing, exhibiting elegant gestures and rhythmic foot manoeuvres.

Oppana is a customary art form that offers an avenue for the active participation and expression of the female physique in performance. The activity in question exalts the aesthetic qualities and elegance of the female gender by means of their engagement in synchronized motions, choreography, and vocal performance.

Oppana is a traditional dance form in which the female body is prominently featured as the central element of the performance. Oppana is a traditional dance form in which women demonstrate their proficiency, aptitude, and ingenuity by means of their synchronised choreography, emotive postures, and harmonious vocalisation. The physical forms of the performers serve as a visual manifestation of the cultural principles and artistic preferences that hold significance within the Mapilla society.

The Oppana performance underscores the significance of the female physique in effectively communicating sentiments, narrating anecdotes, and preserving customary practises. The female performers demonstrate the embodiment of celebration, love, and joy commonly associated with weddings and festive occasions through their synchronised dance movements and poetic improvisation. The audience is entranced by the fluidity and grace of the performers' movements, which contribute to a lively atmosphere.

Oppana offers a platform for female artists to question and transform established cultural conventions. Through the demonstration of their artistic aptitude and communicative prowess, the female participants of Oppana effectively challenge and transcend the confines of traditional gender norms and societal expectations. The female body is showcased as a potent and autonomous instrument for creative manifestation, thereby subverting conventional perceptions of womanhood.

Moreover, Oppana provides a feeling of empowerment to the female participants. The performers establish a cohesive and welcoming atmosphere as they congregate in a circular formation, engaging in harmonious vocalisation and rhythmic movement. The act of collectively expressing femininity and camaraderie serves to reinforce social bonds and cultivate a shared sense of unity among women. Oppana serves as a platform for female performers to assert their cultural heritage, creativity, and identity.

Oppana has undergone modifications and adjustments to suit the present-day circumstances. Despite its traditional roots, this performance art has integrated contemporary features such as inventive choreography and music, in order to cater to a wide range of viewers. The amalgamation of customary and modern elements in Oppana broadens the scope of female corporeal presentation, facilitating novel construals and manifestations of womanhood.

Oppana offers a distinctive platform for the representation of the female physique in the context of performance art among the Mapilla society. The celebration of women's beauty, grace, and talent through this medium empowers them to challenge prevailing societal norms and assert their artistic agency. Oppana serves as a demonstration of the

potency of the female physique as a conduit for cultural manifestation, revelry, and self-determination.

Margamkali, also referred to as Margamkali, is a customary folk dance genre that originates from the southern region of India, specifically the state of Kerala. Margamkali is a traditional performance that is closely tied to the cultural heritage of the Syrian Christian community, specifically the Saint Thomas Christians. It is typically showcased during festive occasions, serving as a lively and colourful addition to the festivities.

The term "Margamkali" has been interpreted as either "path of dance" or "the way of dance." The performance in question is a choreographed dance executed by a collective of female individuals arranged in a circular configuration. The dance is accompanied by synchronised clapping and harmonious vocalisation. The dance form is distinguished by its dynamic and vivacious choreography, rhythmically complex musical patterns, and resplendent attire that embodies the quintessence of Kerala's customary dress.

The performance incorporates a narrative component in which the dancers portray tales from the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ through their elegant choreography. The performance features songs that are predominantly in the Malayalam language and are intricately connected to the religious and cultural customs of the Saint Thomas Christian community.

In Margamkali, the performers assume a circular formation wherein they execute intricate footwork and gestures in synchronization with the accompanying music, taking turns to do so. The movements frequently exhibit vivacity and elation, mirroring the festive essence of the event. The dancers exhibit a coordinated tempo, producing a captivating optical display that enthrals the spectators.

Margamkali is a dance form that not only functions as a mode of artistic expression but also serves as a means of safeguarding the opulent legacy of the Saint Thomas Christians. The dancers utilise their artistic expressions to communicate religious narratives and impart meaningful teachings, thereby cultivating a shared sense of solidarity and devotion among the community members. The dance genre additionally functions as a means for communal bonding and group festivity, as female individuals congregate to exhibit their skills and partake in the elation of the presentation.

Margamkali has undergone a process of evolution and adaptation to suit modern contexts, while still preserving its traditional essence. Presently, the practise of performing arts in Kerala has expanded beyond religious ceremonies and has become a prominent feature in cultural festivals, serving as a platform to exhibit the region's rich and varied artistic expressions. The cultural significance and legacy of the dance form persist as it is cherished and transmitted across generations.

Margamkali is a dynamic traditional dance genre originating from Kerala, which carries significant cultural and religious significance among the Syrian Christian population. The performance art incorporates elegant gestures, synchronised hand clapping, and harmonious vocalisation to portray narratives derived from the Christian scriptures and the biographical accounts of Jesus of Nazareth. Margamkali is a cultural manifestation that facilitates social cohesion and revelry, while also exhibiting the artistic aptitude of women and safeguarding the Saint Thomas Christians' cultural legacy.

Margamkali is a traditional folk dance genre that underscores the importance of female bodily performance in the Syrian Christian community of Kerala. The performance of Margamkali involves the active use of women's bodies as a means of artistic expression, storytelling, and cultural preservation, thereby assigning them a central role in the said performance.

Margamkali highlights the significance of the female body as it serves as the primary medium for the expression of the dance. The dancers utilise their movements, footwork, and gestures to communicate the narratives derived from the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ. The synchronised dance movements necessitate exactitude, synchronisation, and elegance, thereby exhibiting the proficiency and aptitude of the female performers. The dexterity and flexibility of their physical forms serve as a means of incarnating the religious narratives and animating them.

Margamkali is a form of artistic expression that involves women utilizing their bodies to convey a diverse array of emotions and themes. The dance genre provides a platform for women to exhibit their physical dexterity, artistic aptitude, and ingenuity in a collaborative and festive fashion. The circular arrangement observed in Margamkali engenders a perception of solidarity and cohesion among the female dancers, accentuating the collective nature of the dance and the mutual involvement in the narrative.

Both Oppaana and Margamkali are highly cherished traditional performing arts events deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Christian and Muslim communities. These events are typically organized as private gatherings, often held within the confines of community centers or private homes.

Fig-1, Fab,The Malabar wedding diaries, 2013,http://shocksandshoes.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-malabar-wedding-diaries-part-iv.html

Fig-2,Kerala Tourism Kerala 365,Margamkali: #CatchTheRhythm: Kerala 365: Kerala Tourism,www.keralatourism.org/campaigns/kerala365/margamkali-art

1.6 CONCLUSION

Many elements, including cultural standards, social expectations, and historical settings, have influenced the identity of female body performance in India. The a platform for self-expression and the discussion of identity, sexuality, and empowerment.

Throughout the years, the depiction of the female body in Indian film has developed, with women shedding the conventional preconceptions of being a simple object of desire or a passive victim. Women are being shown as powerful, independent, and outspoken in Indian movies, opposing patriarchal standards. In terms of offering equal chances and representation for women behind the camera, the industry has a long way to go.

Performance art has evolved as a potent means for female artists to express themselves and confront gender, identity, and sexuality-related concerns. The works of artists such as Nikhil Chopra, Anamika Haksar, and Maya Krishna Rao have questioned conventional norms and expectations and given women a platform from which to reject and assert their independence.

Many elements, like as cultural standards, social expectations, and historical settings, determine the identity of the female body performance in India. The portrayal of women in many areas has changed throughout time, with women questioning established preconceptions and patriarchal standards. Yet, there is still a long way to go in terms of establishing gender equality and fostering an inclusive atmosphere with equal opportunities. The convergence of gender and performance art in India has offered a venue for women to express themselves and confront themes of identity, sexuality, and empowerment, making it a potent tool for social change.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING THE LAYERS OF SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The situation of women in all regions of India throughout history has never been prosperous and laudable. Owing to their disproportionate wealth, reclusive lifestyle, and inability to demonstrate individual ownership, they have a low social standing. The economic disparities, religious laws, conventional social behaviors, employment and income opportunities and potentials determine their position and situations." Over the years, women's position in society was not consistent everywhere. It connected to the dominant class's ideology. Nonetheless, they preserve their identities uniformly in all locations. Knowledge, education, financial obligations and constraints, and gender differences are the general characteristics that contribute to women's improved social standing.To determine the female identity as a body performer it is very important to understand how women was perceived in history

2.2   PRIMITIVE WOMEN

In prehistoric communities, women were not just a symbol of generations, but also the real creators of life, and the life-giving mother was the major figure of society and religion. The value of a civilization may be determined by the status of women in its culture. The respect shown to women is one of the many aspects of India's ancient culture that contribute to its glory. The western impact on Indian society precipitated a significant decline in the position of women. Invasion partitioned society into women and males, resulting in gender-based inequality.

Early marriage and high fertility are indicative of the nutrition and health of women. The patriarchal dominance hinders their individual value. Variable direct and indirect factors impact their work involvement. The general management of women by male members has its own repercussions and effects on women. The exploitation of women's labor and their poor earnings have an effect on their economic position. Temporary laborers and domestic workers are subject to poor working conditions and low pay.

In primitive civilization, the father's function was unclear. As the male had little or no role in feeding or caring, the young man in ancient times solely knew his mother. Together with rites and sacrifices, the Paleolithic people venerated the earth as their mother goddess. Primitive man recognizes women's capacity for childbearing and nursing parenthood with ease. On both human and cosmic levels, the primordial mind naturally came to revere and dread motherhood as a force in its own right. The depictions of goddesses suggest that the first conceptions of divinity were primarily associated with the figure of a mother who created and nourished the universe. Still on a different level, preliminary feminist notions in terms of the diverse nature of mother's behavior were further analyzed through psychological evolution, such as the producing mother, the nourishing mother, the benevolent mother, the punishing mother, the terrible mother, the killing mother, the ruling mother, the great mother, etc. Primitive man thought mother goddess protected them from all ills; this concept ultimately led to women attaining positions of prominence in society.

The oldest occurrence of mother goddess worship in prehistoric India provides insight into matriarchal culture. India's religious rituals have unmistakable traces of their primordial beginnings, since the ancient way of life is still evident in many regions of the country. The primitive male considers women to be warriors. She can only safeguard our

life. According to O K Johny, the ancient Ambukuthimala tribe Mullukurumar worshiped Bhagavathy as their guardian god to protect them from tigers. In subsequent years, her standing declined. To promote patriarchal society, cultural processes are intriguing. Persistent are the interrelationships between economic and political circumstances, the ruling class, power, and popular awareness. Philosophy and other intellectual concepts must be positioned in reference to the interests of the ruling class. Hence, the power of reasoning was less appropriate than the logic of power in explaining the rise and collapse of ideologies.

There are hints that women's roles in production and reproduction were valued in ancient societies. In a recent examination of the cave paintings at Bhimbetka (approximately 5000 B.C.), it was concluded that women participated in harvesting fruit and other natural products, as well as hunting small wildlife using baskets and tiny nets. During the hunting-and-gathering phase of human history, women coupled their function as mothers with actions as gatherers. Evidence from cave paintings in central India shows that there was no fixed gender division of labor during the hunting-gathering period, with males hunting and women gathering. During the Mesolithic era in central India, it is possible that women engaged in the hunt in addition to the essential work of collecting, which was the primary food supply in tropical conditions. The relative standing of men and women among these individuals is, at best, "separate but equal."

2.3 HARAPPAN WOMEN

In the civilization of the Indus valley, women had a respected standing in society. Many artifacts are discovered at the Indus sites. According to paolo Biagi, "the hairstyles, decorations, and clothing plainly reflect the primacy accorded to women at that period in a society that seemed practically equitable." Harappan civilization artifacts reveal the establishment of social stratification, with one class residing in the city's higher districts and another in the coolie alleys. Many mother goddess symbols and a bronze figure of a dancing girl demonstrated the significance of women in that civilization. It might be understood as the enduring significance of the unique link between women and reproduction.

Ladies riding two Brahman bulls, a stunning Harappan sculpture, reveals the position of women in the second millennium BCE. It is a rare artifact of the early bronze culture of the civilization. During excavations in Kausambi, near Prayagaraj, Uttarpradesh, archaeologists uncovered a sculpture dating from 2000 to 1750 B.C. This piece of art emphasized the significance of women in Indus society. Throughout the Indus valley civilization, women were revered as Prakriti, the mother goddess, which was the greatest status in society. They revered the goddess as the creator, keeper, and destroyer of the cosmos, who saw them as inferior. Women were the family's leading power. In Harappa culture, it is thought that women have a higher social rank. The artifacts demonstrate that both men and women participated equally in economic life.

2.4 VEDIC WOMEN

Under Aryans, a new social order emerged in the 15th century BCE; this civilization is known as Vedic culture. All old beliefs were altered by the entrance of Aryans, who introduced new ideals into society. In the later Vedic era, a new social structure known as the Patriarchal system emerged. Males are the heads of their households. Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda provided a comprehensive analysis of societal social structures. Domestic women were given respect and opportunity for advancement during this time period. In Vedic civilization, women accompanied their husbands to religious rites. According to Romila Thapar, the wife's position was respected and women's status was honored, particularly during religious rites. Without

her, men are unable to do Yajna. It was thought that the Rig Veda gods would not accept offerings from bachelors. It does not state that women held the highest rank; throughout their lives, they were dependent on their male kin

Rig-Veda illuminates the culture and civilisation of India's first conquerors. They generally lived as nomads. There was no evidence of gender discrimination in the family unit. Women and men may engage in all aspects of life, including the economic, political, and religious arenas. It is thought that the Vedic era was a golden age for women since they enjoyed complete freedom and access to education and religious activities. Religious concerns dominated the public sphere. Vedic scriptures Brahmanas and Upanishads outlined the restrictions on the social, political, and religious liberties of women, and they were expected to live according to the religious norms of the books.

Many female philosophers, statesmen, teachers, administrators, and saints are referenced in the Vedas, Upanishads, and other sacred texts. The Rig Veda states, "The woman and husband, being equal halves of a single substance, are equal in every way; thus, they should participate equally in both religious and secular endeavors."

Throughout the Rig Vedic era, females and boys enjoyed equal access to education. They were known as Brahmavadinis and were the result of Brahmacharya's educational regimen. They were entitled to learn Vedic religion and philosophy till their marriage. According to the Yajur Veda, the scholarly lady cleanses our life with her knowledge. She cleanses our acts by her activities. By her knowledge and actions, she promotes morality and effective societal management." The Yajurveda further specifies that a girl who has finished bramhacharya should marry a similarly educated man.

The Rig Veda recognizes a number of erudite female rishis, such as Maitreyi and Gargi, who produced a number of Vedic hymns. In the Ramayana, the conversation between Gargi and Yajnavalkya is well-known. Lopamudra, the wife of the rishi Agastya, Vishwawara, and Sikta exemplified the level of knowledge among women. In ancient times, women were regarded as prophets, with whom several songs are associated. It is evident that prominent women like Ghosa, Apala, and Visvavara are on par with their male counterparts.

Both married and unmarried women were regarded as authority on Vedic knowledge. During the Vedic Era, women had substantial freedom. There are allusions to women attending public feasts, dancing, and other celebrations in the Vedic writings. Yajnopavitini, a lady whose top garment was positioned similarly to a holy thread, was also worn by women. Rig Vedic civilization was patriarchal and predicated on monogamy. Monogamy is acceptance of women's high social standing. It was permitted for widows to remarry. She might marry her late husband's sibling. Unmarried daughters were entitled to a portion of their parents' property, while married daughters were excluded.

In Rig Vedic culture, there was no concept of dowry, although people were used to giving presents. Hindus also thought that only sons could aid their parents attain salvation and conduct their dying rituals. Atharva-Veda did not support the birth of daughters, although some matrilineal features are evident in this time as well, since rulers practiced Rajsuya-Yaga with their spouses. At the earliest era of Aryan history, the Sati system was practiced. Atharva Veda indicates that Sati was a habit for women. The marriage of minors was not compelled.

With the passage of time and the change from matriarchal to patriarchal social order, the status of women increasingly worsened as the Vedic ideals of unity and equality started to fall away. At this time period, societal stratification occurred. In the Late Vedic era, women lost the privilege to participate in political assemblies. Child marriages also become prevalent. Throughout the Later-Vedic Period and Epics Age, women had

respectable roles as mothers, wives, and friends to males. Disrespecting them signifies disrespect for Goddess Lakshmi. During the later Vedic time, widows either voluntarily jumped into their husbands' funeral pyres or were compelled to do so so that they would not be spoiled by others thereafter. Protecting the tribe's purity gradually evolved into an accepted habit.

The deterioration of women's lives and the emergence of the Manu Smriti characterize the later Vedic era. Manusmrithi is a legal text from antiquity. The phrase "Na Sthree Swathanthra marhathy" from Manu indicates that women had no right to liberty. Throughout her childhood, a lady was subservient to her father. Following marriage, the lady devoted her life to her spouse. In ancient times, a mother was her son's doll. They felt that without males, women could not survive. Due to the fact that they were men's slaves, it is claimed that they only enjoyed life with the assistance of men.

Prior to the arrival of the invading invaders, the Hindu ideology guided the Indian populace. The patriarchal fall of society generated gender discrimination in the economic, political, and social lives of India's traditional societies. During the Vedic time, women were free to pursue an education, however in later eras, education for females was strictly prohibited. Not just in society, but also inside the home, the role of women increasingly declined. The termination of Upanayana, the lack of education, and the lowering of the marriage age were detrimental to the position and status of women.

In all fields, the standing of women changed throughout the later Vedic era. From the Later Vedic period, the position of women in India declined gradually. Caste system and ritualism became deeply entrenched in the life of the ordinary man. Child marriage and Sati gained prominence. Many caste groups in India were identified and classified using anthropological criteria such as body complexion, color, nasal index, and cephalic index, among others. Indian civilization was structured by a rigorous caste system that segregated individuals based on their ancestors' occupations and backgrounds. Caste often dictated a person's privileges and duties in society.

2.5   ROTATION OF CAST

After the transition to an agrarian economy and the second urbanization (800-600 BC), class and caste distinctions emerged. The Brahmana was a formidable power, and patrilineal succession was well-established within the greater framework of a separate family system. The caste system and endogamy-maintained control over women's labor and sexuality. It was necessary to make a separation between motherhood and female sexuality, with the latter channeled only into legitimate motherhood within a strictly regulated reproduction framework that protected caste purity.

Caste controls not only the social but also the sexual division of labor. To ensure patriarchal succession, the concept of caste purity among women justified the subjection of women. The ritual of the holy thread was forbidden for both Shudra and women. Uma Chakravarthy argues that the emergence of private property and the demand for caste purity necessitated the subjection of women and the stringent regulation of their sexuality and movement. To maintain patrilineal succession, female sexuality was channeled into legitimate maternity within a regulated apparatus of reproduction.

According to her, the control mechanism functioned on three distinct levels. The first mechanism was when patriarchy was created as an ideology and women internalized, through Stridharma or Pativratadharma, the Brahmanical patriarchy-constructed ideal of femininity. The second instrument was the rules, practices, and rituals mandated by the Brahmanical social code, which bolstered women's ideological domination. Chastity and faithfulness to one's spouse are seen as the highest obligations of women under patriarchy. The link between women's virginity and caste purity was crucial to

Brahmanical patriarchy, and women were strictly guarded, with women of lower castes prohibited from having sexual contact with women of higher rank. Thirdly, the state itself reinforced patriarchal control over women, allowing patriarchy to be firmly entrenched not as a theory but as a fact.

Exclusion (laws controlling marriage and interaction that perpetuate caste disparities); Hierarchy (the notion of order and position); and Interdependence are the three core aspects of caste (the division of labour which is closely tied to hierarchy and separation)

These three qualities are expressed via kinship groupings, notably the family and the home. The majority of women's lives are spent within familial parameters, and their roles are determined by kinship norms.

Caste had a significant impact on the lives of women. Women in Maurya and Gupta India were often restricted to the responsibilities of spouses and mothers. Women's legal and property rights were limited, although many women retained certain rights to possess property, such as gifts from their spouses given as wedding presents. Due to the fact that they were required to labor outside the house to support their families, women of lower castes frequently had more mobility than those of the aristocracy. During this time period, many of these women contributed to the household and imperial economies by working in the textile business. Their labor supported their families financially, and they sold their excess commodities at market. Many export commodities of both empires were created by the labor of these female textile workers.

The contribution of women's labor to the occupational continuation of a caste group. The link between traditional jobs in Indian culture and the caste system has changed, but it has not gone. Although while agriculture is now available to all castes, it nevertheless provides a unique identity to a substantial number of traditional farmer castes. Similarly, some jobs continue to be reserved for distinct castes. A Brahmin continues to fulfill priestly duties. A few members of the artisan castes of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters, and weavers still earn a livelihood from the ancient skill.

Endogamy is seen as a strategy for the expression and preservation of caste and gender subordination in marital rituals. Caste identity can only be preserved if it is separate from other caste groups, and this distinction can only be maintained via endogamy. In India, arranged marriages are the norm and serve as the foundation for the reproduction of the caste system. The norms of marriage are inextricably intertwined with the fundamental foundations of caste-based Indian culture. Hence, marriage is tied to faith and ritual, and the purity of its customs is what sustains its hierarchy.

When Buddhism flourished across India under Ashoka's reign, several women joined the Buddhist Sangham. Buddhists attempted to escape the caste system by preaching how enlightenment might be used to transcend desire and attain personal redemption. These ideas were enticing to many women living under the constraints of the caste system in India.

2.6   PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy is a social structure in which the male gender role as the major authority figure is important to social organization and in which fathers have power over their daughters, children, and property. It involves female subjugation and implies the institutions of male control and privilege. In addition to being subservient to males, women are susceptible to discrimination, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, domination, and violence. Women face discrimination and uneven treatment with regards to their fundamental rights to food, healthcare, education, work, and control over productive resources, decision-making, and means of subsistence.

The precise definition of patriarchy is the dominance of the father in a male-dominated household. "theorising Patriarchy" by Sylvia Walby describes patriarchy as "a system of social structures and behaviors in which males rule, oppress, and exploit women." Patriarchy is a system of hierarchical and unequal power relations in which males dominate the production, reproduction, and sexuality of women. According to class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and sociocultural customs, the degree of women's subjugation differs across civilizations. Brahmanical patriarchy and tribal patriarchy are distinct within the framework of India.

The patriarchal culture promotes "motherhood," which restricts women's mobilization and increases their household obligations. As a consequence, the public realm was designated for males, while the domestic sphere was kept for women in the homemaking role. Feminists have contested and rejected conceptions of male superiority, arguing that although biological differences may lead to certain differences in their responsibilities, they should not serve as the foundation for a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. In her 1986 article "The Origins of Patriarchy," Gerda Lerner argued against single-cause explanations and the search for a single historical event when patriarchy was founded.

The dominance over women began decades before. Women are morally, mentally, and physically inferior to males, according to Aristotle's teachings; women are the property of men; women's duty in society is to reproduce and serve men in the home; and male dominance of women is natural and noble. There are no opportunities for women to engage in public affairs.

2.6.1 GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA

India has a serious issue with gender-based discrimination, which is caused by the patriarchal nature of Indian culture. Due to the cultural custom of dowry, which calls for the bride's family to provide money or presents to the groom's family before marriage, girls are sometimes seen as a financial burden by their families. Due to the assumption that males are more important to the family, this practice has resulted in female infanticide, in which female newborns are either aborted or murdered after birth.

Due to the notion that girls' major responsibility is to get married and take care of their family, education for women is often disregarded. Girls often experience discrimination and harassment from male classmates and instructors, even when they are permitted to attend school. Low literacy rates and little economic prospects for women are caused by this lack of knowledge and opportunity.

Just 14% of parliamentarians are women, which further limits the role of women in politics. As a result of the patriarchal society and the prevalence of gender-based violence, women are often dissuaded from joining politics. When women do join politics, they often experience sexism and harassment, which deters other women from running for political office.

2.6.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

India has a serious issue with gender-based violence. Violence against women, including rape, domestic abuse, and honor murders, often takes the forms of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. This violence is often committed by family members, such as dads and spouses.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, both of which were approved by the Indian government in 2005 and 2013, respectively, aim to safeguard women from abuse. Unfortunately, these rules are

often not upheld, and women who disclose abuse frequently face victimization and prejudice.

The pervasive victim-blaming culture in India only makes gender-based violence more common. The victimhood of women who are raped or attacked is often placed on them, with some people implying that they must have done something to warrant the abuse. Women find it challenging to come out and report assault because they may be afraid of being held accountable or shunned by their communities.

Indian society and culture need to shift significantly if patriarchal institutions are to be broken. With an emphasis on empowering women and girls, this shift must begin with education and awareness. In addition to being safeguarded against prejudice and abuse, girls must be encouraged to embrace possibilities for education and employment outside the house.

Men must also be informed about the negative consequences of patriarchy and inspired to embrace gender equality. In the struggle against patriarchy, men can be strong allies, and their backing is crucial to bringing about long-lasting change.

Also, gender equality must be actively promoted by the Indian government. This entails implementing laws that safeguard women from abuse, encouraging women to run for office, and addressing the underlying reasons of discrimination based on gender, such as dowries.

Ultimately, a cultural transformation in views toward women is necessary to end patriarchal institutions in India. Influential members of society, such as religious leaders, celebrities, and politicians, must be at the forefront of this change. These individuals may contribute to the development of a more equitable and fair society for women in India by advocating for gender equality and combating patriarchal views.

2.6.3 INDIA'S PATRIARCHY-BREAKING INITIATIVES

Many initiatives have been made to end patriarchy in India. The women's movement, which seeks to advance women's rights and gender equality, is among the most prominent. The movement has aided in increasing public awareness of problems including gender discrimination, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment.

Also, the government has made efforts to combat gender disparity. With the purpose of addressing problems pertaining to women and children, the Ministry of Women and Child Development was founded in 1985. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 is one example of a legislation the government has passed to safeguard women.

Another important element in eradicating patriarchy in India is education. Education can empower girls and women and advance gender equality. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) program is one example of the government's initiatives to support girls' education.

Several more actions have been done to end patriarchy in India in addition to those already listed. These are a few instances:

1. Self-Help Groups for Women (SHGs):
   Self Help Groups (SHGs) are associations of women who meet regularly to assist one another socially and financially. SHGs provide women the chance to create small companies, obtain financing, and save money. These clubs also provide women a forum to talk about and resolve problems that have an impact on their life. SHGs have made a substantial contribution to the empowerment of women and the eradication of patriarchal mindsets in India.

2. Reservation for Women: The Indian government has implemented a number of policies to boost the participation of women in politics. The reserving of seats for women in local government organizations like Panchayats and Municipalities has been one of the most important milestones. Women are now more involved in politics and have a role in decision-making because to this reservation.

3. Women in the Workforce: The elimination of patriarchy in India depends on the involvement of women in the workforce. Nonetheless, it may be very difficult for women in India to get official job. Women have low employment rates and are often limited to low-skilled, low-paying occupations. The National Rural Livelihood Mission and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are two government-sponsored programs that aim to increase women's employment (NRLM).

4. Campaigns for Public Awareness: Public awareness campaigns are essential for eradicating patriarchal beliefs and advancing gender equality. To address problems including female foeticide, child marriage, and gender-based violence, the government has started a number of awareness projects. These initiatives seek to alter societal expectations and perceptions of women and girls.

5. The media's influence on public opinion and attitudes toward women is significant. The media may be an effective weapon for advancing gender equality and dismantling patriarchal mindsets. However, the Indian media has often come under fire for normalizing gender norms and objectifying females. The government has put in place procedures to control the media and encourage reporting that is gender sensitive.

6. Males have a crucial part to play in India's effort to end patriarchy. Males may speak out against gender stereotypes and support women's rights. The government has started initiatives like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and "HeForShe" to encourage males to support gender equality.

7. Legal System: India has a strong legal system that supports gender equality and women's rights. Equal rights for men and women are guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Also, the government has passed a number of legislations to combat problems including gender-based discrimination, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment.

In Indian culture, patriarchy is deeply ingrained, and changing it would need persistent work at many different levels. To advance gender equality and women's rights, individuals, civil society groups, and the government must collaborate. While the aforementioned programs are positive milestones, much more must be done to address the underlying roots of patriarchy in India. The ultimate objective should be to establish a society where men and women are treated equally and have access to the same possibilities.

2.7 WOMEN OF MEDIEVAL TIMES

In medieval times, women's status declined. Women's social lives are limited. They thought that women are the exclusive property of males, and that women only enjoyed life with their spouse. Women's social lives are constrained by all conventions. Many societal ills emerged during this time, including: Sati Dolour Domestic violence Child wedlock Not allowed to marry No right to remarry for widows System of Slavery Prostitution/Devdasi Pardah murder of female children Leaving the home without the husband's consent Polyandry Staying and traveling with a stranger is prohibited.These socioeconomic ills altered the perspective of society. They felt that women were the state's second-class citizens. Hence, the state did not provide them any rights.

Fig 3-Swarnamalya Ganesh,www.thenewsminute.com/article/how-art-devadasis-was-appropriated-create-world-bharatanatyam-38808,2016.

2.7.1 MEDIEVAL SCHOOLING

Throughout the Middle Ages, women's education was limited to aristocratic and regal Mughal emperor, Daughter of Rajput chief, Bengali, and other Zamindar households. While Emperor Akbar had a little formal education, he was greatly interested in the educational process and established a chamber for education. In the male-dominated culture of the Middle Ages, female education was not valued, was not promoted, and was restricted to the royal women. In the majority of instances, women's education was restricted to the elementary level. Several societal conditions, such as the Purdah system, Child marriage, and the generally poor status of women, had a significant part in the low level of education among women during Mughal rule.

In light of the adage "Shyness is a woman's beauty, and knowledge is her jewels," Mughal kings deemed it imperative to educate their wives and children without distinction. Women's education was provided at Maktabs, Khanquahs, and Madrassas, among others, to fulfill the needs of the female population. Under the curriculum devised by the Mughal Emperor, the older female pupils were isolated from their male counterparts. Madrasas were the center of higher education, and they were often connected to mosques and mausoleums. In Muslim societies, the Purdah system never permitted girls and boys to freely associate at this period. Obviously, female education was halted. During this time, females were prohibited from attending school alongside boys. There is no indication that distinct Khanqas and Madrasa existed throughout the Mughal period.

2.7.2 MEDIEVAL DOWRY SYSTEM

Dowry system was prevalent, and it was provided by the bride's father and family at the time of marriage as presents, jewelry, etc. Throughout the Middle Ages, however, the tradition shifted significantly, and the bride, along with gifts and money, began to be presented to the husband. Throughout the Middle Ages, this became obligatory under the guise of dowry. This obligation gave birth to the practice of female infanticide since it became a financial hardship for poor households. Due to the caste system, widows, particularly Hindu widows, lived an extremely difficult and wretched existence, devoid of freedom and social ties. There were restrictions on the remarriage of widows. Their situation was quite pitiful. Society does not have a clear understanding of the Hindu lady who seeks a second marriage. This terrible treatment of widows was one of the primary reasons so many ladies committed Sati. Muslim widows were permitted to remarry following the death of their spouse. The caste system was prevalent during the time.

Jauhar pratha was used by women of the higher castes, particularly the Rajputs, to preserve their pride and honor from their foes. Rani Padmavati exemplifies this pratha, which is noted for placing a great value on honor in order to maintain the sanctity of women and the whole clan. Sati pratha was also an example of the injustices women experienced during that time period.

2.8   SATI

As the situation of widows in Hindu culture, Sati was deemed preferable than widowhood. The loss of her husband was the biggest tragedy of a Hindu woman's life. In contrast to the Muslim widow, remarriage was not allowed among Hindus throughout the Mughal Empire, with the exception of the lowest ranks. The Brahmins resisted this system across India. Those widows who were unable to commit suicide with their husbands were judged cruelly by society. They were not permitted to have long hair or use accessories. These sad widows were forced to live with their parents, whose sons treated them no better than common servants. Because of their fear of Sati, they were ostracized and reviled within their family. Sati does not seem to have been as prevalent in India throughout the fifteenth century. According to the experiences, each sati was under the age of 20 due to child marriage.

2.8.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The act of a widow immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre is referred to as the Sati ritual. For decades, this custom persisted in India and was seen as a significant rite for women of certain castes and groups. The history of Sati is not well known, and historians have different opinions on the subject.

According to some academics, widows who believed it was a means to respect their spouses and acquire spiritual virtue performed Sati voluntarily. One hypothesis holds that the practice was first restricted to royal families and elites during the Vedic era, which began approximately 1000 BCE. It is unclear whether allusions to women immolating themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres in the Rig Veda, a Hindu literature written about this period, are related to Sati or some other kind of rite.

Some historians contend that Sati served as a tool for sustaining the caste system and stifling women's sexuality. In accordance with this theory, women were forced to practice Sati by a society that was mostly male in order to keep them from getting remarried and perhaps tainting the caste bloodline. The fact that Sati was more common in certain castes and groups than others and that women who didn't conduct Sati were shunned and shamed lends credence to this notion.

As Hinduism was experiencing a renaissance in the middle ages, the practice of Sati rose to popularity. At this period, Sati was exalted in literature and seen as the pinnacle of a wife's love to her husband. The Bhakti movement, a religious movement that placed an emphasis on individual devotion to God, had an impact on the popularization of Sati. The Bhakti poets often presented Sati as a valiant act of love and devotion, which increased its attractiveness to the general public.

Yet when British colonialism expanded its influence in India, Sati became a subject of debate. The Brits started a campaign against Sati because they thought it was a cruel and inhumane ritual. The British Indian government ultimately outlawed Sati in 1861 after enacting the first legal restrictions against it in 1829.

An important step toward the independence of women in India was the outlawing of Sati. It signaled a turning moment in the fight against women's subordination and gender injustice. Nonetheless, Sati's legacy endures today, and there are still cases when women

are coerced into setting themselves on fire on their husband's funeral pyre. These situations often arise as a consequence of societal and economic constraints and highlight how women continue to be marginalized in certain areas of India.

2.8.2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ROOTS

The caste system in India is a hierarchical social structure that determines an individual's social status and position in society based on their birth. The system divides society into different social classes, with the highest class being the Brahmins or priests, followed by the Kshatriyas or warriors, Vaishyas or merchants, and the Shudras or laborers. The Dalits, who are also known as the "untouchables," are outside the caste system and are subjected to discrimination and oppression.

The caste system also shapes gender roles and expectations in Indian society, with women being relegated to a subordinate position. Women are expected to be obedient and submissive to men, and their primary role is to bear children and maintain the honor of the family. This gender hierarchy is reflected in various aspects of Indian culture, including religion, literature, and customs such as Sati.

In Hinduism, the dominant religion in India, women are often portrayed as dependent on men and are expected to be devoted wives and mothers. The idea of Sati, where a woman is expected to sacrifice her life for her husband, is seen as the ultimate act of devotion and is glorified in Hindu literature and mythology. The practice is mentioned in various Hindu texts, including the Mahabharata, where the character of Arjuna is told that a woman who immolates herself with her husband's body attains a celestial abode.

Sati was also seen as a means of preserving the honor of the family, and the widow who refused to immolate herself was dishonoring her husband and her family. In a society where a woman's worth is measured by her ability to bear children and maintain the honor of the family, the act of Sati was seen to ensure that the widow did not remarry and that the sanctity of the husband-wife relationship was preserved.

The caste system also played a significant role in the practice of Sati. Brahmins, who were at the top of the caste hierarchy, were the custodians of Hindu culture and tradition. The practice of Sati was seen as a way for Brahmins to assert their authority and maintain their status in society. The act of Sati was often performed by Brahmin widows, and their sacrifice was seen as a way of ensuring that their family's honor was preserved.

The lower castes also participated in the practice of Sati, although to a lesser extent. For women from lower castes, Sati was a way to elevate their status in society and gain recognition for their sacrifice. The act of Sati was also used as a means of social control, where women were expected to conform to the norms of the patriarchal society or face ostracism.

In conclusion, Sati was a product of a patriarchal and hierarchical social system that placed women in a subordinate position. The practice was deeply ingrained in Indian society and reflected the gender hierarchy and caste system prevalent in the country. While the practice of Sati has been banned in India for over 200 years, its legacy continues to shape the lives of women in the country, who still face discrimination and oppression based on their gender and caste.

2.9   DEVADASI

In medieval Indian history, a woman was regarded as God's wife according to the Devdasi tradition. In reality, this was an instance of women being sexually exploited in the name of faith. Early on, Devadasi gained significant influence in society. In later

times, however, devadasi were also brides of the priest caste. Devadasi's prominence was so diminished. Devadasis regarded as prostitute. The moral ideals of society declined.

In subsequent times, the Bhakthi movement thrived. They were opposed to medieval society's social ills. With the guidance of a few female poet-saints, the Bhakti movement in medieval India opened the door to women's liberation. They assisted the women in being acceptable in a culture dominated by males. Important female poet saints included Akkamahadevi, also known as Akka or Mahadevi, a follower of Shiva in the 12th century CE, and Mirabai, or Mira, a devotee of Lord Krishna. In general, however, women's position in society did not improve throughout this time period, and they endured several social ills. It is claimed that the bhakti movement assisted women in attaining religious understanding, but only in the higher class.

Hence, those who participated in the wicked practices of purdah, Balya vivaha, prostitution/devadasi, female enslavement, and sati lost their place, rank, and honor in politics, administration, religion, and social activities. Women were restricted to the confines of the home. A daughter's home was seen as a source of anguish and suffering. It became a male-dominated culture. There were no laws in place to safeguard women. They were under the authority of her father, spouse, or son. She was unable to hold any role in society.

2.9.1 BACKGROUND OF THE DEVADASI SYSTEM

Dedication of young girls to the temples was a sacred ritual that dates back to ancient India and is the origin of the Devadasi system. The girls weren't expected to indulge in any sexual activity; instead, they were expected to serve the deity and the temple. But as time went on, the system was tainted, and the girls were forced into prostitution in order to pay the temple's bills.They viewed the Devadasi system as savage and immoral, the British colonial authorities banned it. Yet, the practice persisted in several areas of the nation after independence, particularly in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

2.9.2 THE DEVADASI SYSTEM'S APPLICATION:

Young girls, frequently from lower castes or poor homes, are dedicated to the temple or deity in the Devadasi system. Next, as part of the religious rites, they are expected to perform music, dancing, and other traditional arts at the temple. Yet, the priests and other senior temple officials are also expected to receive sexual services from the females.

For years, the girls have been taken advantage of as part of the Devadasi system, which helps the temple make money. Kids frequently experience physical and sexual abuse and are denied the most fundamental human rights. The practice is perceived as a way to take advantage of teenage girls from low-income families who have no other way to survive.

The Devadasi Prevention Act, passed by the Indian government in 1988, outlawed the practice of kidnapping young girls and forcing them into prostitution. The law also included provisions for the rehabilitative care of the females who had been coerced into the institution.

The Devadasi system still exists in some regions of the nation, and young girls are still being pushed into prostitution, despite the government involvement. The system has survived in part due to a lack of application and enforcement of the law. Many temples continue to run unchecked, which makes it simple for the system to prosper.

2.10 WOMEN IN BRITISH PERIOD

Following the advent of Europeans, women's lives undergo several structural alterations. The introduction of western education and culture significantly improved their standing. Throughout the 19th century, several sociocultural movements began. Several societal disparities against women were observed. It was aided by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathy, Swami Vivekananda, etc. These social reformers take several precautions to prevent prejudice. Because of this, the government pays attention to gender discrimination against women. In response, the government has enacted several regulations to protect women from these societal ills.

The English East India Company first traveled to India for commercial reasons, but eventually established a colony there. Once the Buxar War Company took control of Bengal, they had little interest in its governance. Subsequently, the British government issued charter legislation and pit's India act to regulate the English East India Company. Following the 1813 charter act, the English East India Company initiated social reform legislation. This was a result of the sociopolitical shifts in Britain, similar to the impact of missionaries in India (Basel Evangelical Mission).

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, a number of legislation were passed with the aid of the social reform movement. The East India Company imposed the following socially unjust laws on women: Female infanticide

The British government first recognized this problem and instituted legislation. In Rajput communities in Benaras, Gujarath, Jaipur, and Jodhpur, the practice of killing female children is prevalent. The dowry system and the decline in the number of male children result in the murder of female children. Jonathan Dunkan, a citizen of Benaras, was the first to speak out against this barbaric practice. He visited local authorities and encouraged them to avoid this behavior. He said that it was against religious scriptures and cruel. He introduced a subsidy for economically disadvantaged female families. Under regulation VI of the Act of 1802, female infanticide was officially controlled. 1804 and 1870 saw amendments to this statute.

2.11 ELIMINATION OF THE SATI SYSTEM

Before the British, many monarchs opposed sati, but the Brits formally outlawed it. The sati system was opposed by Akbar, Jahamgir, Auramgazeb, Peswas, Jaisingh, Ahalya bhai, the King of Tanjore, and the Portuguese in Goa. H T Kallbrook wrote in 1795, "The practice of sati was against the Vedas." In 1829, on December 4, the governor-general lord William enacted a law prohibiting Sati (Regulation Number XVII) child marriage.

It was an additional social ill in society. This technique was vehemently condemned by Keshav Chandra sen. After the passage of the Age of Consent Act in 1891, the age of consent increased to 12 years. The Sharda Act of 1930 increased the minimum age to 140 years. In 1978, after independence, the age restriction was lifted to 18 years.

Widow Re-Marriage Act 1856 The British government approved a statute allowing Hindu widows to remarry.

2.12 WOMEN RIGHTS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The rights of women may be divided into two categories:

• Constitutional protections

The constitutional rights are those guaranteed by the different constitutional clauses.

• Legal privileges

The legal rights, on the other hand, are those outlined in the numerous statutes (acts) enacted by the Parliament and the State Legislatures.

2.12.1 WOMEN'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The Indian Constitution grants women equal rights.

- Article 14 incorporates the broad principles of equality before the law and equal protection under the law.
- Article 15(1): The state must not discriminate on the basis of gender against any Indian citizen.
- Article 15(3) empowers the state to provide particular provisions for women. In other words, this law allows the government to engage in affirmative action in favor of women.
- Article 16(2): No citizen shall be subject to discrimination or ineligibility for public employment or office on the basis of sex.
- Article 23(1): Human trafficking and forced labor are forbidden.
- Article 39(a): The state must ensure that men and women have equal access to sufficient means of subsistence.
- Article 39(d): The state must ensure that Indian men and women get equal remuneration for equal effort.
- Article 39(e): The state must guarantee that the health and strength of women workers are not exploited and that they are not coerced by economic necessity to engage in occupations inappropriate to their strength.
- Article 42: The state should provide reasonable and humane working conditions as well as maternity leave.
- Article 51-A(e): Every citizen of India is required to repudiate acts detrimental to the dignity of women.
- One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in each Panchayath should be reserved for women, under Article 243-D (3).
- Article 243-D(4): A third of the total number of Panchayat chairmanships at each level should be designated for women.
- Article 243-T(3): One-third of the total number of direct-election seats to be filled in each Municipality should be reserved for women.
- Article 243-T (4): The posts of municipal chairpersons must be reserved for women in a manner determined by the State Assembly.

2.12.2 LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR WOMEN

- Act for the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (2005)
- It is a comprehensive law that protects Indian women from all types of domestic abuse. It also applies to women who have been or are in a relationship with the abuser and have been subjected to physical, sexual, mental, verbal, or emotional violence.
- Unlawful Trafficking (Prevention) Act (1956)
- It is the prime statute for preventing sexual exploitation for commercial purposes. In other words, it inhibits the organized trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of prostitution.
- The Prohibition of Indecent Representation of Women Act (1986)
- It forbids the obscene portrayal of women in commercials, publications, writings, paintings, figures, and any other medium.
- The Prevention of Sati Commission Act (1987)

- It allows for the more effective avoidance of sati and its glorification against women.
- Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) it forbids the giving or receiving of dowry from women before or after marriage.
- Act on Maternity Benefits (1961)
- It governs the employment of women in particular enterprises for a certain time before to and after childbirth, and it offers maternity benefit and other advantages.
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971) It allows certified medical practitioners to terminate some pregnancies on humanitarian and medical grounds.
- Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Sex Selection Ban) Act (1994)
- It forbids sex selection before to or after conception and restricts the abuse of prenatal diagnostic tools for sex determination, which might lead to female feticide.
- Equal Remuneration Act (1976) It mandates the provision of equal salary to male and female employees doing the same or equivalent labor. It also prohibits sex-based discrimination against women in recruiting and service conditions.
- It allows a Muslim woman to seek dissolution of her marriage.
- Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act (1986) It safeguards the rights of Muslim women whose husbands have divorced them or from whom they have received a divorce.
- Family Courts Act (1984) It establishes Family Courts for the expeditious resolution of family issues.
- Indian Criminal Code (1860) It protects Indian women against dowry murder, rape, abduction, cruelty, and other crimes.
- The Criminal Procedure Code (1973)
- It provides specific protections for women, such as the responsibility of a man to support his wife and the arrest of women by female police officers, among others.
- In accordance with the Indian Christian Marriage Laws (1872)
- It includes provisions for marriage and divorce in the Christian society.
- Act on Legal Services Authorities (1987)
- It offers Indian women with free legal assistance.
- Act on Hindu Marriage (1955)
- It established monogamy and permitted divorce on specific reasons. It granted Indian men and women equal rights regarding marriage and divorce.
- Act on Hindu Succession (1956)
- It respects the equal right of women and men to inherit parental property.
- Minimum Wages Act (1948)
- It prohibits discrimination against male and female employees as well as varying minimum pay for them.
- Mines Act (1952) and Factories Act (1948) It forbids the employment of women in mines and factories between the hours of 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. and ensures their safety and wellbeing.

2.13 OTHER STATUTES

1. The Workers' State Insurance Act (1948), the Plantation Labour Act (1951), the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1976), and the Law Practitioners (Women) Act (1923)
2. Act on Indian Succession (1925)
3. Act on Divorce in India (1869)
4. Foreign Marriage Act Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (1936) Special Marriage Act (1954) (1969)
5. Act on Indian Evidence (1872)
6. Hindu Adoptions and Support Act (1956).

7. National Commission on the Status of Women Act (1990)
8. It stipulated the formation of a National Commission for Women to investigate and oversee all issues pertaining to the constitutional and legal rights and protections of women.
9. Act for the Prevention, Prohibition, and Redress of Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace (2013)

   It protects women against sexual harassment in the private and public sectors, whether organized or not.

2.14 WOMEN IN INDIA AND THEATRE

The interest in studying the history of women began in the 1970s as a consequence of the expansion of the feminist movement and the emergence of western social history. The transition from political to social history in history cleared the door for women's narratives. Before this time, women were mostly absent from history since the majority of historians focused on the political history of great leaders. Women's history is credited for introducing the private realm of human existence. As individuals and within their societies, women tended to assume a conservative role. Due to their roles as spouses and mothers, women have always enjoyed a unique place in society, and they have also shown competence in other areas. Important in this context were studies of the emergence of female body performance art forms.

The cultural pattern of the culture influences the development of dance forms. Indian theater's history is one of change. From the ancient civilization of the Indus valley until the British reign, art forms have their unique history. The creation and demise of major empires, the invasion of foreign rulers who eventually became indigenous, the convergence of cultures and styles, etc., are all represented in the development of female body performance art forms.

Goddesses provide one of the most difficult challenges in interpreting early Indian art styles. There are a number of iconographic and literary indications of the goddesses' popularity. There are several theories on the existence of goddesses, these focusing on their sexual duties and relationships. The goddess embodies a vision of gender relations as opposed to a literal depiction of reality; hence, the female body mirrors goddess imagery.

Many goddesses are associated with the term prakrithi, which signified nature or physical reality. In ancient dance styles, certain goddesses expressed and explored the essence of devotion and divine human love. In addition, geographical features imply that the female characters are situated between holy space and spiritual liberty. Each society's art forms reflect its culture. According to Hindu mythology, Brahma originated dancing.

2.15 HARAPPAN WOMEN IN DANCE FORMS

During the period of Harappa, there is no written evidence on the comprehension of Harappan art. Nonetheless, the artifacts recovered at each Harappan site provide crucial evidence of Harappa's dancing culture. Bronze Dancing Maiden of Harappan Civilization demonstrates the significance of dancing as a form of social amusement. The dancing girl statue dates back around 4,500 years. It was founded in Mohenjodaro in 1926 and is a remarkable and unique masterpiece.

The statue of the dancing girl is a cultural artifact that represents the aesthetic conception of the female form during the Harappan era. The statue features wide eyes, a broad forehead, a flat nose, healthy cheeks, and curly hair. It is a sensuously modeled four-inch figure with long legs and arms, a high neck, and a modest stomach. It portrays a nude

female wearing only jewels, including four bangles (two at the wrist and two above the elbow) on the left arm and an amulet and twenty-five bracelets on the right arm. She is wearing a necklace with three substantial pendants. With her right hand, she carries a little bawl. She assumes a "Tribhaga" dance stance with her right hand on her hip. As said by Takur Prasad Verma "The bronze figure of a dancing girl discovered at Mohenjodaro is an image of the Hindu goddess Parvathy, and the scent bawl in her left hand depicts akshayapatra of annapoorna."

This dancing female figurine illustrates sex, sexual orientation, and other facets of social identity. It signifies that the female body was emphasized more in a certain dance genre. The dancing girl had no dress on. Dress was less important than accessories.

2.16 NATYASASTRA PERIOD

Sage Bharat muni's Natyasasthra, a Sanskrit text on the performing arts, has the earliest official mention of dance. The earliest comprehensive collection is from 200 BC to 200 AD. Natyasasthra is known as the natya veda or fifth Veda. Natya is a combination of dance, theater, and music, including patya (words) from the Rigveda, Abhinaya (gestures) from the Yajurveda, Geet (music) from the Samveda, and Rasa (emotions) from the Atharva Veda. Natyasastha explores many facets of theater coupled with observations on the sexual conduct of male and female characters.

"Dance is the language of the soul. It is the way we express our deepest emotions without words."(Divakaruni,12)

Bharatamuni describes male and female character traits and their interactions. He divides classical dancing into two distinct categories: Lasya: it symbolizes elegance, Bhava, Rasa and Abhinaya. It represents the feminine characteristics of dance as an art form. Tandava represents the masculine characteristics of dance and places more focus on rhythm and movement.

It demonstrates that dancing has variations. Women behave depending on their physical performance.

According to Natyasastra, the primary purpose of a performance is to satisfy the audience's emotions. The focus is on Nayaka (the hero) and Nayika (the heroine). Four types of Nayakas: Dhiralalit (will likely be king) Dhiraprashant (will be Brahmin) Dhirodatta (Kshatriya, this is the hero of the 1st rupaka-Nataka) Dhiroddhata (mostly will be Kshatriya)

Based on their age and type, these four categories of Nayakas are subdivided into other categories.

There are three types of Nayikas: Swakiya (the wife), Parkiya (the beloved's or another's wife), and Samanya (the prostitute).

These 3 types of Nayikas are further subdivided as follows: Mugdha (very young) Madhya (youth) Pragalbha (older) Dhira (patient) Adhira (not patient) Dhira-adhira (without patience) (having patience and losing it some of the times).

In Natyasasthra, 144 species of Nayaka and 384 species of Nayikas have been discovered. Manusmriti and Kamasutra argue whether a woman's sex is accessible solely to one man, to several men, or to everyone. As Kumkum Roy specifies in her work "Kamsutra par Nai Roshani," there are three subtypes of female characters: o Swakiya is a wife; (available for one)

- Parkiya is someone's cherished wife (can be available for more than one)
- Samanya is a prostitute (available for the one who can pay)

In the 24th chapter of Natyasastra, eight types of women are described depending on their status in romantic relationships. In the 25th chapter of Natyasastra, women are classified into three distinct categories: Uttama, Madhyama, and Adhama.

Natyasastra depicts women's relationships with males as "eight types of Nayikas"

- Wasaka-Sajja
- Virhotkanthita
- Kalahantarika
- Swadhinbhartrika
- Khandita
- Vipralabdha
- Proshitbhartrika
- Abhisarika

One of the qualities of these kinds is Khandita, which meaning broken. Women are mentioned since the protagonist's spouse is involved with other women and she is searching for him, but her aspirations for sexual intimacy are not fulfilled. Hence, according to Bharatamuni, a virtuous woman must be with her husband.

Another kind of characteristics was the autonomous Swadhinbhartrika. She is a lady whose husband lives with her due to sexual desire and never looks at any other woman, making her utterly dedicated. Clearly, Natyasastra, an independent woman, has a spouse, while a broken woman does not. Here, women have no unique identity apart from males. According to Natyasastra, everything of a woman's actions, concerns, and labors are directed on acquiring a male and achieving sexual satisfaction. A woman who desires a male as a sex partner, is skilled in physical dialogue with men, and displays jealously against her adversaries (her husband's other wives or mistress). Natyasastra defines Adhama (degenerate) women as those who get enraged for no apparent cause, have a nasty character, and are haughty and fickle. Similar to the descriptions of 'Patni Dharm' (wife's duty) in Manusmriti, Natyasastra describes the virtues of a virtuous woman via a list of specified criteria.

Bharatamuni recommends that if a guy shows evidence of having a relationship with another woman, the heroine might damage him with her words; she can say, "Go, go to your other woman; why did you come here?" and can use harsh language to a certain extent. She should talk with tears, but if Nayaka holds her with physical force or prepares to return, she should retrieve her. According to Natyasastra, an actress is a "young woman with physical beauty, good qualities like, according to patriarchy-obedient, never opposing or questioning man, generosity, feminine charm, patience and sweetness, who possess a soft and charming voice, varying notes in their throat, who are skilled in playing musical instruments, have knowledge of notes, Tala and Yati, association with master of dramatic arts, clever, skilled in acting, capable of using facial expressions."

Natyasastra characterizes women in terms of their feminine attributes, and in this definition, the sexual body emerges as a prerequisite for acting. The picture of a woman portrayed to the public is one whose sexuality is minimized, who is nice and counseled to endure man's every action, even violence, and whose main concern is to make man happy. In natyasastra, actresses are chosen based only on their physical beauty. This is the Natyasastra heroine. The heroine reflects Brahminical patriarchy's ideal culture.

Legal codes such as Arthsastra and Manusmriti were developed in India during the Sanskrit period to sustain and continue the control of women's sexuality. By cultural adaption, the principles of patriarchal sexuality endure. In Natyashasthra, the characteristics of a heroine are beauty and obedience. As a consequence, dance performances mirrored this.

2.17 MEDIEVAL DANCE FORMS

Many foreign invasions influenced the evolution of dance in medieval India. The Devadasi system was founded in the 10th century, and it places more emphasis on dance styles. A devadasi has a prestigious status, second only to the priest. As a result, the women had more influence as devadasi. At this period, ladies may choose their own dance attire. In later ages, however, the local rulers asked these temple dancers to perform in their own courts. That marked the beginning of Devadasi's power fall. Later, the Devadasi system evolved into a society of prostitutes, in which they were considered not only the wife of god, but also the wife of priests and monarchs.

In the early sultanate chronicles, dance and music were mostly seen as performances by imprisoned females. At that precise point in time, only women dancers performed at the court. The festivities and events required these ladies to perform. For capturing another region, the monarch employed these ladies as dancers.

With the arrival of the Mughals, the prominence of the Kathak dance genre increased. Kathak is a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim traditions. In this art form, rhythmic movement aids in the telling of a reverent tale. There is no discrimination based on gender. Each character chooses their actions. Yet, in southern India, art styles remained unchanged. They proceeded to perform an old kind of dance.

2.18 AFTER ADVENT OF EUROPEANS

Throughout the contemporary era, art styles have evolved. There is no gender discrimination. Many art genres arrived in India. This was a mix of Indian and Western dancing styles. There is no relationship between genders. Yet, foreign culture was introduced to the hero and heroine's attire. In each act, the attire was tailored to the sentiments of the audience. The eroticism of women was well portrayed in new dance styles.

Following gaining independence, a number of schools offering dance courses as a way of furthering education, training, and socialization, or as a means of exercise and health, have established. Many schools in modern Indian cities today teach classical, folk, tribal, and contemporary dance traditions. In modern India, a broad range of dance styles are performed. It comprised choreography for Indian movies as well as a synthesis of tribal and classical dances. With Bollywood, the diversity of Indian dance has been introduced to a worldwide audience. So many dance genres emphasized the sexiness of women.

Briefly, this chapter discusses the influence of social rank on Indian art forms. The status of women is decreasing daily, and the dance was primarily for displaying female bodies. Following Natyasastha, women were exclusively utilized for the pleasure of art. The commercialization of the female body was a recent development in Indian dance genres. It destroys both the personal and public attitudes of women.

2.19 CONCLUSION

Mapping the layers of women's social status in India exposes a complicated network of obstacles and possibilities that have many effects on women's lives. Despite progress in areas like as education and work, women continue to endure numerous types of discrimination and abuse. In spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution mandates gender equality, there remains a significant difference between the ideal and the actual.

In India, the cultural and social conventions that govern the lives of women are deeply rooted and difficult to alter. Nonetheless, campaigners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and women's groups are making headway in empowering women and

promoting gender equality. The government has also introduced a number of projects and programs targeted at enhancing women's access to education, healthcare, and employment.

To accomplish significant change, it is necessary to address the underlying reasons of gender inequality, such as patriarchal social structure, lack of political representation, and deeply ingrained cultural values. To combat stereotypes and promote gender sensitivity, education and awareness-raising efforts are necessary. Encourage and promote women's involvement in decision-making processes at all levels, from the home to the government.

Mapping the tiers of women's social standing in India demonstrates that progress has been achieved, but there is still a long way to go. It is essential to continue the struggle for gender equality and provide women with the means to realize their full potential. Only then can India become a society that really recognizes and respects the contributions of every person, regardless of gender

CHAPTER 3

ORIENTATION OF THE BODIES OF MALE AND FEMALE PERFORMERS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The intricacy of the human body has fascinated artists, philosophers, and scientists throughout history. The perception and portrayal of the body in art and media are shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors, which are in turn impacted by power dynamics and societal norms. Gender is one factor that significantly affects the orientation and depiction of the human body. The representation of gender in several genres of art and media has attracted great attention in recent years. This has prompted questions concerning the effect of gender on the perception and depiction of the body in the performing arts, particularly in relation to the orientation of male and female performers.

This chapter examines how gender influences the body orientation of male and female dancers and performers in the performing arts. The presentation will focus on three major points:

1. We will investigate the relationship between body image, sexual orientation, and gender identity, as well as the influence of these factors on how the body is portrayed in art and media.
2. We will examine the cultural and historical context of dance and dramatic arts in India, as well as the influence of religious and traditional rites on the depiction of the body.
3. We will discuss the roles of male and female performers in the contemporary performing arts industry, as well as the implications of gender on their depiction and creative expression choices.

Body image refers to a person's perceptions and feelings about their physical characteristics. It is influenced by several factors, including cultural norms, society expectations, and individual experiences. The way a person perceives their physique may have a substantial effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

The relationship between body image, sexual orientation, and gender identity has been established by researchers. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ are often subjected to stigma and discrimination based on their gender and sexual orientation, which may negatively affect their body image and self-esteem. In addition, societal expectations of how men and women should seem and act may establish unrealistic and destructive beauty standards that are tough for everyone to meet, but especially devastating for those who do not conform to normal gender norms.

These factors have a significant effect on the depiction of the human form in art and media. The depiction of bodies may contribute to a culture of body shaming and discrimination by reinforcing unfavorable stereotypes. It is crucial, while evaluating the orientation of male and female artists in the performing arts, to evaluate the influence of gender and sexuality on body image and depiction.

3.2. CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DANCE AND THEATRE ARTS IN INDIA

Dance and theater have a long and distinguished tradition in India. Because to these art forms' tight links to cultural and religious rites, men and women have historically

performed them in separate venues. The representation of the body in various art forms is affected by cultural and religious standards, and conventional gender roles dictate the roles of male and female performers. For example, the representation of the female body in traditional Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Odissi is heavily inspired by the Devadasi tradition, in which women of high social standing conducted temple ceremonies. With their traditional costumes, cosmetics, and movements, these dance forms reveal the religious and cultural importance of the female body in Indian civilization.

Yet, the portrayal of the male body in Indian dance and theater arts has gotten less attention, and conventional gender norms have restricted the prospects for male performers in some circumstances. This highlights the importance of considering how gender effects the orientation of male and female performers.

3.3. EVOLVING PORTRAYAL OF THE MALE AND FEMALE BODY INPERFORMANCE:

The performing arts sector has seen substantial changes in recent years. Modern artists are challenging and redefining the traditional gender roles and assumptions that were formerly prevalent in theater, dance, and other kinds of live entertainment. The depiction of the male and female bodies in performance is one area in which this transition is especially visible.

Male and female performers have always been required to adhere to strict physical and behavioral standards. Males are often expected to be powerful, authoritative, and dominating, while women are supposed to be caring, submissive, and gentle. This includes how performers should position their bodies on stage. Males may be expected to occupy more space, move more aggressively, and project power and strength via their body. On the other hand, it may be expected of women to move with grace and elegance and to utilize their bodies to portray sensitivity and delicacy.

In recent years, however, some contemporary artists have rejected these established gender norms and are experimenting with new methods to depict the body on stage. This has resulted in an increase in performances that question established gender stereotypes and advocate a more flexible and inclusive perspective on gender and sexuality.

This tendency is shown by the growth of drag performance. Typically, drag performers are guys who don feminine attire and makeup to portray a female image on stage. These performances often employ comedy and satire to criticize society conventions and challenge conventional views of gender by blurring the distinctions between male and female.

In addition to drag performance, many other artists are experimenting with other methods of body portrayal on stage. Some artists, for instance, use movement and dance to portray gender and sexuality in novel ways. Men and women may dance together in these performances, or dancers of various genders may flip roles and adopt typically masculine or feminine moves.

Fig-4 Ganesham, Radha Madhav performance, 2018

As a means of challenging established gender norms and prejudices, some artists are investigating the use of nudity on stage. Instead than utilizing nakedness to objectify or sexualize actors, these performances employ nakedness to portray vulnerability, strength, and other emotions. By removing boundaries between artist and audience, these performances establish a more personal and genuine connection between the two parties.

However, not all performances that question established gender norms are enthusiastically received. Some audiences can find these performances strange or unsettling, or they might be averse to the concept of gender fluidity or non-binary identities. It is essential to remember, however, that the performing arts have always been a venue for experimentation and invention, and that artists have the right to explore new ideas and push limits.

The shifting depiction of the male and female body in performance ultimately reflects a societal transition toward a more inclusive and welcoming understanding of gender and sexuality. We should anticipate even more unique and thought-provoking performances in the coming years as artists continue to question established gender roles and prejudices.

3.4. MALE AND FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION IN DANCING; AN OVERVIEW

In many areas, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology, the orientation of male and female bodies has garnered interest. It has been discovered that the postures and body language of men and women vary, which may lead to divergent judgments. The depiction of women in visual media is indicative of male dominance. Male imagination is sometimes the only source of female representation, indicating a chauvinistic reality. The frequent marginalization of women's perspectives stops people from understanding their perspective and how they interpret the world.

In contrast, dance has historically been seen as the first form of great art, before all others. Individuals are able to communicate their ideas, feelings, and emotions via dancing, which functions as a worldwide language of movements and signals. In India, dance has long been an intrinsic component of all performing arts and the foundation of cultural events.

 It is believed that the Devadasis, or temple dancers, who have a high position and perform temple rites, were the precursors of Bharatanatyam and Odissi. There is other more dance types with a strong cultural link in India. The Kathakali, Kuchipudi,

Manipuri, and Yakshagana dance and theater traditions are all extremely ancient and firmly rooted in Indian culture.

These dancing styles exhibit both masculine and female body orientation. Kathakali, for instance, is a dance-drama in which male performers portray both male and female characters. To impersonate feminine roles, the male performers utilize exaggerated facial expressions and body motions. In contrast, female dancers in Kuchipudi employ beautiful movements and facial expressions to communicate emotions and tell tales. Manipuri is a traditional dance in which male and female dancers employ fluid and beautiful movements to represent legendary tales.

In conclusion, the orientation of the male and female bodies is observable in several domains, including dancing. Dance gives a forum for both male and female artists to express themselves and communicate tales via their body movements and expressions, but the media sector is skewed toward male viewpoints.

3.4.1 BHARATANATYAM DANCE FORM AN ANALYSIS ON MALE AND FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION

Natya, Nritya, and Nritta are all components of Bharatanatyam, a classical Indian dance form. This art form's female performers have a strong relationship to the historically dominant Devadasi system, and the gender dynamics it entails are unusual. Further investigation proves the relationship between female body performers and Bharatanatyam.

Common in the sixth century, the Devadasi system featured the marriage of young girls to the goddess and their commitment to the temple. They were responsible for maintaining the temple, which included praising the deity with dances and singing. This system limited their capacity to express themselves, which negatively affected female body performers in India. Even though the Devadasi system was abolished in the 1940s, it continues to influence Bharatanatyam and its female musicians.

Bharatanatyam was never meant to be a venue for generating money or for innovation and experimentation. In the past, it was supposed to portray traditional Indian culture and practices; however, this has altered in recent years. Bharatanatyam has been incorporated in Bollywood and Hollywood songs, although these performances were usually sexualized to emphasize the feminine parts of the artists. Yet, this does not represent the essence of Bharatanatyam. It takes years of work, passion, and discipline to perfect this dance technique. Female Bharatanatyam dancers are famous for their grace, nimbleness, and poise, and their bodies reflect this training.

Female Bharatanatyam dancers were found to have a considerably lower thoracic kyphosis angle than non-dancers, suggesting improved spinal alignment and posture. It was also discovered that their body mass index was lower than that of non-dancers, suggesting a healthy lifestyle. Nevertheless, the research also discovered that dancers had a greater prevalence of ankle and foot discomfort, suggesting that their training might be physically taxing.

Female Bharatanatyam dancers have a specific set of problems, such as the pressure to maintain a certain body type, the danger of accidents owing to the needed intensive training, and the restricted options for creativity and progress within the dance discipline. The focus on a certain body type may lead to body image difficulties, eating disorders, and other health concerns. A lack of development and innovation prospects might result in stagnation and a feeling of detachment from current culture.

From its origin, the female body has been the focal point of Bharatanatyam performances. The clothes used by the dancers enhance the curves and lines of the

feminine body, which are emphasized by the dance style. The outfits often consist of a shirt with a snug fit, a long skirt, and a dupatta (a scarf-like garment). The outfits are intended to accentuate the dancer's elegance and flow.

Bharatanatyam's most essential element is Abhinaya, the rhythmic representation of moods, emotions, and stories using mudras, bhanga, hand gestures, face expressions, and body postures. The exquisite attire used by the dancers is another defining aspect of this traditional dance style. While the current stitched pleated uniform dates back to the 1930s, outfits have evolved throughout time. A fan with knife pleats connects the two legs of the pajamas, which consist of spacious trousers with knee and thigh pleats to promote mobility. With its flawless geometry, this garment facilitates the execution of the traditional Bharatanatyam "aria mandi" position.

Bharatanatyam is a physically difficult dancing style that demands a high degree of fitness and flexibility. Often, female dancers endure strenuous training to improve their strength, endurance, and flexibility. This training may occasionally result in the development of curvy and toned bodies in dancers. It is essential to emphasize, however, that the emphasis of Bharatanatyam is not on attaining a certain body type or shape, but rather on refining the dance form's skill and expression.

Male performers in Bharatanatyam were previously uncommon, although male interest in the art form has increased in recent years. Male Bharatanatyam performers encounter distinct obstacles while executing a dance usually associated with the feminine form. They must discover methods to adapt the dance's motions to their bodies while retaining the elegance and fluidity that distinguish Bharatanatyam.

Male Bharatanatyam dancers have made major contributions to the art form despite these obstacles. They have added fresh ideas and interpretations to Bharatanatyam, so broadening its expressive spectrum and attracting new audiences. Male performers have also contributed to challenging conventional gender norms and assumptions connected with Bharatanatyam, therefore making it a more inclusive and varied art form.

In recent years, interest in the connection between Bharatanatyam and gender has increased. The focus on the female body in Bharatanatyam, according to some researchers, fosters gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. Others have highlighted how Bharatanatyam may be used to promote femininity and empower women.

Bharatanatyam is a popular dance style in India and throughout the globe despite these obstacles. Female dancers continue to practice intensively and develop their abilities, and some have even discovered ways to innovate within the dance genre while preserving its traditional origins. A recent Bharatanatyam performance, for instance, praised women and questioned conventional gender norms, demonstrating that the dance form can serve as a forum.

From its origin, the female body has been the focal point of Bharatanatyam performances. The clothes used by the dancers enhance the curves and lines of the feminine body, which are emphasized by the dance style. The outfits often consist of a shirt with a snug fit, a long skirt, and a dupatta (a scarf-like garment). The outfits are intended to accentuate the dancer's elegance and flow.

3.4.2 KATHAK DANCE FORM AN ANALYSIS ON MALE AND FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION

Kathak is a classical dance style that originated in Northern India, and its earliest known variations date back to the fifth century BCE. The Kathak professional storytellers who performed songs, dances, and recitations of old stories and epics gave rise to the dance

style. Kathak has evolved into a popular dance style that is performed both on the concert stage and in private meetings of dance enthusiasts.

Kathak is distinguished by its emphasis on quick, dexterous, and rhythmic footwork. Kathak is an iconographic portrayal of Hindu cultural institutions, especially gender roles in society. Kathak was substantially influenced by the bhakti movement, which gained popularity in the early Middle Ages and was eventually embraced by the Mughal courts. As a consequence, Kathak has evolved into a dance style that symbolizes the Hindu conception of gender and how it influences societal roles and expectations.

Men and women are often allocated distinct roles and obligations within the cultural institutions of Hinduism. These characters are depicted ichnographically in the traditional Kathak dance form. In traditional Kathak performances, female dancers are often restricted to their bodies, with their reproductive role considered inextricable from their femininity. This is evident in the historical treatment of female Kathak dancers, whose abilities were dismissed and who were seen as objects to be manipulated.

Male Kathak dancers, on the other hand, were acknowledged for their skill and provided help as they sought careers in dance. This distinction between men and women is not unique to Kathak and persists in several facets of Indian culture. Men are taught to be forceful, authoritative, and in charge, while women are meant to be submissive, humble, and chaste.

Notwithstanding traditional hurdles, several women have succeeded as Kathak artists. Yet, girls continue to confront obstacles that their male colleagues do not. For instance, female performers are often evaluated based on their appearance and lifestyle, and they are expected to comply to conventional norms about how women should act. This has caused some female performers to feel constrained in their artistic expression and not entirely in control of their craft.

There have been initiatives in recent years to remedy the gender disparity in Kathak and other classical dance styles. For instance, women now have greater opportunity to obtain professional Kathak instruction and perform on concert stages. In addition, a greater focus has been placed on breaking established gender stereotypes and allowing women to take ownership of their work.

Notwithstanding these attempts, gender disparity in Kathak and Indian society as a whole still has a long way to go. It is crucial to acknowledge how cultural institutions impact our perception of gender roles and expectations and to strive towards establishing societies that are more inclusive and egalitarian.

3.4.3 KUCHIPUDI DANCE FORM AN ANALYSIS ON MALE AND FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION

From its beginnings in Andhra Pradesh in the seventh century A.D., Kuchipudi, a genre of traditional dance, theater, and music, has been a vital component of Indian classical dance. Initially, only males were involved. But the great scholar and artist Siddhendra Yogi modified Kuchipudi so that female performers could participate.

In Kuchipudi dance performances, both male and female dancers play a vital part. The vivacity and seductiveness of the dance necessitate a harmony of movements and facial expressions that indicate the desire to govern space and time. Males and females, mythical and historical people, and even animals are portrayed by artists of both sexes.

Both male and female dancers wear wonderfully crafted silk outfits adorned with complex designs and stitching. Complementing the clothing and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the dance, rustic gold jewelry is also an essential element of the outfit.

Male and female performers need cosmetics and hair accessories to improve their look and boost the dramatic impact of their performances. Male and female performers often use bindis, facial powder, kajal/eyeliner, eye shadow, bobby pins, and face or body glitter.

Nonetheless, gender norms continue to play a key influence in how Kuchipudi is represented. Female performers continue to be subject to limits and preconceptions relating to their bodies and reproductive functions. Although if progress has been made in recent years, female artists must continue manage social expectations surrounding their behavior, appearance, and lives. In addition, men dancers are often acknowledged for their abilities and get greater aid in pursuing their professions than their female colleagues.

Kuchipudi dance is an integral part of Indian culture and continues to change, absorbing new aspects while retaining its ancient origins. The contributions of both male and female dancers are crucial to the aesthetic attractiveness of the dance form. However, gender norms and preconceptions continue to persist and impact the image of Kuchipudi, especially with regards to female performers.

3.5. MOTION PICTURE ARTISTS AND FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

Cinema is a type of art with varying significance for many persons. Some consider it as the ultimate form of entertainment, while others see it as a means of exchanging moving visuals. Cinema, at its foundation, is a mirror of society that depicts reality, emotions, and the ever-changing cultural scene appropriately. It molds and affects the culture it symbolizes, hence having an evident effect on society.

3.6. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON SCREEN

Representation of women on screen is one of the most important influences of film on society. In films, women are often shown in conventional ways, donning exposing clothing and doing song and dance. Despite the fact that this depiction has developed through time, women continue to be shown in ways that appeal to the male gaze, reflecting patriarchal undercurrents in society.

Bollywood is an excellent illustration of how film reflects and impacts society. It illustrates the evolving views of Indian culture regarding women. Throughout time, Bollywood has abandoned depictions of women as objects of desire in favor of nuanced depictions of women. In India, however, gender inequality, domestic violence, and sexual harassment still continue despite the advances achieved in Bollywood.

Bollywood has been impacted by Western culture and globalization, from the subject matter of films to the locations where they are filmed. Bollywood has maintained its own Indian character while embracing western culture despite this impact. The evolution of Bollywood's depiction of women, who are now shown as strong, independent people who make their own choices, has had a beneficial effect on Indian culture.Filmmakers and female body performers have a long artistic tradition of pushing limits and exploring the depths of the human experience via their work.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of body art as a means of challenging society conventions and expectations around the human body.Notable female body artists include Carolee Schneemann, whose performance art examined feminist issues and the female body, and Ana Mendieta, whose body-centered works investigated themes of violence, trauma, and the natural environment. Another prominent artist is Marina

Abramovi, whose performances often include endurance and physicality and invite audience participation.

Female artists have also made major contributions to the film industry. Ava DuVernay is noted for her exploration of race and identity in her films, while Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win the Academy Award for Best Director in 2010 for "The Hurt Locker."

Female actresses such as Meryl Streep, Viola Davis, and Cate Blanchett have created waves in the film business, gaining critical praise for their performances. These artists have utilized their talents to combat prejudices and lobby for greater diversity representation in the entertainment industry.

In recent years, the #MeToo movement has pushed sexual harassment and abuse in the entertainment business to the forefront, spurring crucial dialogues about how Hollywood treats women. Using their voices and platforms to fight for change and hold those in authority responsible, female artists and entertainers have been at the forefront of this movement.

Overall, the contributions of female artists and performers have been essential to the growth and evolution of the arts, challenging cultural standards and pushing limits to produce thought-provoking and profound works.

The depiction of male and female bodies in films is a complicated topic influenced by society standards, gender expectations, and cultural traditions, among others. In recent years, there has been an increase in the criticism of how movies represent men and women, as well as the effect this has on moviegoers.

The underrepresentation of women in leading parts in films is a problem that has been emphasized. According to a research conducted by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Cinema in 2021, there were more males than women starring in the top 100 highest-grossing films of 2021. This pattern has lasted for many years and has been linked to a number of causes, including the lack of perceived box office appeal for female-led films and the presence of gender stereotypes in Hollywood.

When portraying women in films, a different set of rules is often used than to male characters. For instance, female characters are routinely objectified and sexualized, with their bodies frequently acting as story devices or audience stimulants. This is represented by the idea of the "man gaze," which refers to the way that movies are often designed around the needs of an imagined male spectator.

In contrast, masculine characters are often presented as strong and domineering, with their bodies functioning as emblems of masculinity and strength. This may result in male characters having more agency and power than their female counterparts, with women being consigned to supporting roles or employed just as love interests.

A noteworthy trend in film is the depiction of males dressed as women. Male actors portraying female roles in order to infuse comedy or challenge gender stereotypes has a long history in film. Men assuming the identities of women for their own enjoyment or fun is a type of appropriation.

The depiction of relationships between men and women is a second trend in the film industry. There are a handful of films that examine the complexity of love relationships between male and female characters in more depth. These films examine topics such as power relations, communication, and emotional vulnerability, often challenging established gender norms and expectations.

"Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is an example of a film that examines these subjects. The male and female protagonists of this film share a rocky relationship and

finally resolve to delete their memories of one other. The film addresses issues of memory, identity, and emotional connection, and provides a realistic depiction of the complexity of male-female interactions.

In general, the depiction of male and female bodies in film is a complicated topic influenced by a number of elements. Although there are films that question established gender norms and expectations, there is still a long way to go in reaching gender balance and encouraging varied portrayals of men and women in film.

3.7. CHAKYAR KOOTHU MALE AND FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

Beginning in the 10th century, Chakyar Koothu has a long and illustrious history. It was initially done as part of religious rites in the temples of Kerala and was subsequently adopted by royal courts and aristocratic homes. The art form was transmitted from generation to generation via oral tradition and apprenticeship and has persisted to the current day as a result of the commitment and enthusiasm of its practitioners.

Themes and Methods

The use of comedy, satire, and social criticism distinguishes Chakyar Koothu. Performers employ humor and improvisational abilities to remark on modern events and criticise cultural norms and customs. Hindu mythology and the Puranas are ancient Indian scriptures that explain the origin and development of the cosmos as well as the activities of the gods and goddesses.

A lone performer tells the tale in Chakyar Koothu, bringing the characters to life with exaggerated gestures, facial emotions, and vocal intonations. A musical group including the mizhavu, a big drum, and the elathalam, a pair of miniature cymbals, accompanies the performance. The musicians create a unified and harmonic performance by following the lead of the artist.

Chakyar Koothu has been an integral part of Kerala's cultural and social life for generations. It has acted as a source of amusement, education, and social criticism, and has contributed to the preservation and transmission of the region's rich cultural legacy. Female performers, known as Nangyars, have always taken a key part in the performances, making this art form notable for its role in promoting gender equality.

Chakyar Koothu is a distinctive and lively art style that has mesmerized audiences for generations. Its use of comedy, satire, and social criticism, together with its emphasis on mythical themes, have made it a treasured part of Kerala's cultural history. In an ever-changing world, its existence and continuous appeal are a monument to the devotion and passion of its performers, as well as to the lasting power of traditional arts.

3.8. THEATERS AND FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

The dominance of male-centric narratives in Indian theater before to the 1970s led to the rise of feminist theater. The Wedding Tangle (1904) by Swarnakumari Devi, which investigated the cultural implications of widow remarriage, was one of the few plays created by women for other women. In the 1970s, feminist theater started to demand center stage and advance from the periphery.For example, Safdar Hashmi's Aurat (1979) was a powerful street drama that courageously brought important issues like as sati and dowry to the fore. In the 1980s, Sai Paranjpye penned Jaswandi, illustrating the misery of a hapless upper-class housewife trapped in a stifling, loveless marriage. She is lonely until her driver seduces her, at which point her heart breaks. Later, in 1981, Vijay Tendulkar wrote Mitrachi Goshta, one of the nation's first plays to study and embrace the

issue of female homosexuality. Many plays are still written with the masculine gaze in mind.

3.9.   INVESTIGATING GENDERED SPACES AND RESISTANCE IN THEATERS WITH FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

In many countries, theatrical performances are an integral part of cultural expression. These performances give a venue for artists to display their abilities and communicate with audiences. Yet, theaters have historically been controlled by males, and women have had to battle for the opportunity to act on stage. In recent years, there has been an increase in the popularity of female body performers in the theater, defying established gender norms and stereotypes. This essay examines the experiences of female body performers in theaters and their resistance to gendered contexts.

Theatrical settings have historically been areas of male dominance, with men assuming the majority of on- and off-stage responsibilities. This practice continues until the current day, with women underrepresented in theatrical shows and getting lesser pay than males. Even accessible roles for women sometimes maintain old gender stereotypes, such as the damsel in distress or the sex object. Despite these obstacles, women have participated in theater since antiquity, often using their bodies as a kind of resistance against gendered environments.

In theatrical performances, the female body has long been a source of debate. Women's bodies have often been reduced to simple objects of desire or vehicles for masculine fantasies due to male gaze and examination. In reaction, female performers have used their bodies to defy these unjust depictions and regain control of the stage. They have used their bodies to communicate messages and challenge established gender norms.

This kind of performance is shown by Chhau, a traditional dance genre from eastern India. This genre of dance banned women from appearing on stage historically. In recent years, however, women have actively participated in Chhau performances, challenging gender conventions and patriarchal hierarchies with their bodies. They have infused feminist sentiments and ideas of female empowerment into traditional Chhau performances.

Fig-5, ExpoCentre Dubai,Krishna Geetha Govindham,2018

3.10. FEMALE PERFORMERS AND GENDER IDENTITY

In the theater, female actors have also utilized their performances to explore and challenge gender identities. In recent years, drag performances have grown in popularity, with women embracing drag to explore gender identity and challenge established gender norms. Performers often assume exaggerated feminine or masculine personalities during drag performances, blurring the limits between gender binary and questioning society standards.

Female artists have explored gender identification via bodily alteration in addition to drag acts. In the performance "Hijra," for instance, actors modify their bodies to portray the identities of hijras, South Asian persons who do not correspond to established gender boundaries. By representing the realities of hijras, entertainers question gender and sexuality conventions in society.

The history of theater is a history of venues segregated by gender. In ancient Greece, only males presented the first documented theatrical acts. Women were prohibited from performing on stage, and their roles were restricted to that of wives and mothers. In India, women have performed on stage for centuries, but it wasn't until the 20th century that they started to do so in public theaters. The first female body performers were sometimes stigmatized and limited to tiny theaters or rural places.

Like to many other public venues, the theater perpetuates established gender norms and prejudices. Male actors are often placed in major parts, while female actresses are restricted to supporting or romantic roles. In the theater, female body performers encounter obstacles since their bodies are often objectified and sexualized. Women's bodies are often seen as objects of want and pleasure by male audiences, and female performers must negotiate this area in order to establish their creative vision.

Theatrical performances allow artists to artistically express themselves and communicate with audiences. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in female body performers, despite the fact that theaters have historically been male-dominated settings. Female performers in the theater have used their performances as a method of exploring and questioning gender identities and gender norms. Particularly, drag performances have grown in popularity, with women adopting drag to explore gender identity and challenge society.

The theater has always been dominated by males, both as performers and directors. Often, women were limited to supporting parts or barred from acting. In certain societies, women were not permitted to attend or participate in theatrical performances. Throughout the 20th century, this gendered zone was challenged as women gained increasing opportunity to play and direct in theater. Yet, women in the theater continue to face obstacles, including as salary inequities and restricted possibilities for female directors and writers.

In recent years, drag performances have grown in popularity, with women utilizing drag to investigate gender identity and question established gender norms. Performers often assume exaggerated feminine or masculine personalities during drag performances, blurring the limits between gender binary and questioning society standards. In India, drag shows have become a way for women to resist patriarchal conventions and affirm their identities. In India, drag performers known as "queens" have established a subculture that challenges conventional ideals of femininity and masculinity.

In addition to drag acts, female artists have also experimented with gender identification through bodily alteration. In the performance "Hijra," for instance, actors modify their bodies to portray the identities of hijras, South Asian persons who do not correspond to established gender boundaries. Hijras have always been shunned in Indian culture, but

via performances like "Hijra," female artists are questioning gender and sexuality conventions in Indian society. By representing the experiences of hijras, performers may draw attention to prejudice and violence against non-binary people.

Challenging Gendered Spaces and Resisting Oppression: By their performances, female actors in the theater are not only contesting gender conventions, but also combating injustice. By demanding their right to perform on stage and contesting gendered settings, female artists challenge patriarchal conventions and proclaim their independence. Female performers in Iran, for instance, have been subject to censorship and persecution, yet they continue to resist and fight for their freedom to perform. Women in the theatre are also addressing social and political concerns, such as domestic abuse and gender inequality, via their performances.

With their performances, female actors in the theatre are questioning gendered settings and cultural conventions. Drag performances and physical changes enable female artists to explore and question gender identity while also blurring gender boundaries. By fighting against discrimination and claiming their independence, female actors pave the path for future generations of women in the performing arts. Although there are still obstacles for women in theater, such as salary inequities and restricted chances for female directors and writers, the increased interest in female body performers is a step in the right direction for gender equality in the performing arts.

Resistance Female body performers have found ways to resist gendered spaces in the theatre. They have challenged traditional gender roles by performing as lead actors or by portraying characters that defy gender norms. Female performers have also reclaimed their bodies and sexuality through their performances, challenging the objectification of women's bodies on stage. Some female performers have created their own theatre companies and spaces to showcase their work and provide a supportive environment for other female artists.

Fig-6, Ganesham,Radha Madhavam,2018

Theatres and female body performers are both evolving spaces, where traditional gender roles and stereotypes are being challenged. Female performers are carving out a space for themselves in the theatre, and are challenging the objectification of women's bodies on stage. They are reclaiming their bodies and sexuality through their performances and are creating a supportive environment for other female artists. The theatre is a reflection of society, and as female performers continue to push boundaries and resist gendered spaces, they are helping to create a more equitable and just society for all.

3.11. FEMALE PERFORMERS AND BODY ORIENTATION IN THEATERS

Throughout antiquity, artists have used theater to express themselves, engage with the audience, and deliver messages. Nonetheless, the venue has historically been controlled by males, and women have had to struggle for the opportunity to perform on stage. In recent years, there has been an increase in the popularity of female body performers in the theater, defying established gender norms and stereotypes. This essay examines the connection between female theater artists and their body orientation.

Body orientation is the perceived physical and emotional interaction a person has with their body. It may include body image, self-esteem, and body language. Body orientation has a vital impact on female actors' performances, especially in terms of gender identity.

Gender identity is a person's perception of being male, female, both, or none on the inside. It is a strongly felt personal experience that may be affected by social, cultural, and biological variables. Using their bodies as a means of expression, female artists often investigate and question gender identity via their performances.

Cross-gender casting is a theatrical strategy that dates back millennia. It entails casting actors in roles often associated with the opposite gender. Cross-gender casting may be utilized as a kind of alienation in which the spectator is prompted to question cultural standards.

In recent years, the practice of casting female actors in traditionally masculine roles has grown more common. This has empowered female performers to investigate and question gender norms, assumptions, and expectations. By portraying masculine personas, female artists are able to question established assumptions of masculinity and femininity and demonstrate alternate ways of being and acting.

Cross-gender casting may be tricky, though. It may reinforce gender stereotypes, especially when comic effect is achieved by casting men in typically feminine roles. Male actors are often placed in main parts, leaving female performers with little opportunity to demonstrate their ability.

Body language is the nonverbal expression of ideas, feelings, and attitudes via physical movements and gestures. In performances, female performers often employ body language to communicate emotion, significance, and story. Moreover, body language may be used to investigate and question gender norms and expectations.

In "Venus," for instance, Suzan-Lori Parks utilizes her body to symbolize the experiences of Saartjie Baartman, a South African woman who was a freak show attraction in the nineteenth century. Parks utilizes her body language to question the objectification and exploitation of Baartman's body, calling attention to how historically women's bodies have been commodified and controlled.

Eve Ensler used body language to examine and celebrate female sexuality in her play "The Vagina Monologues." The play consists of a sequence of monologues that explore many facets of the female experience, such as sexual pleasure, aggression, and

empowerment. Ensler conveys the emotions and experiences of each speech via her body language, producing a dramatic and compelling performance.

Theatrical female actors have been exposed to sexual objectification and harassment for decades. Traditionally, female entertainers were often considered as sexual objects, and their acts were geared at male audiences. Female performers were often exposed to unwelcome approaches, violence, and abuse as a result.

In recent years, female artists have, via their acts, reclaimed their bodies and sexuality. They have opposed the objectification of women's bodies on stage by promoting agency, empowerment, and consent via their performances.

3.12. KATHAKALI MALE AND FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

Kathakali is an Indian classical dance style that began in the state of Kerala in the south. Kathakali is a kind of storytelling characterized by complicated hand movements, face emotions, and ornate costumes. It covers many mythical and historical events. The fact that male performers play both male and female figures, including deities and heroines, is a distinctive feature of Kathakali. In recent years, there has been a rising interest in the role of female Kathakali performers and the gender dynamics inherent in the representation of male and female roles.

Kathakali has always been a male-dominated art style, with males playing both male and female parts. This is partly because Kathakali has significant roots to traditional Hinduism, which puts males in positions of leadership and control. Nonetheless, a tiny handful of female performers have bucked this convention and carved out a place for themselves in Kathakali throughout the years.

One such artist is Kalamandalam Usha, who is regarded as one of the women's Kathakali's pioneers. Usha started her career in the 1970s, a period when female Kathakali performers were unusual. She persevered through resistance and criticism to become one of the most revered and famous artists in her business. Many additional women's Kathakali troupes exist in Kerala today, each with its own distinct style and approach.

The structure of Kathakali is one of the obstacles experienced by female Kathakali dancers. Kathakali is hierarchical, with men performers taking the top ranks and female performers filling the lower ones. As a result, female actors are sometimes limited to supporting parts or given less complicated characters to depict. In addition, it is believed that male actors are better able to portray the essential emotions and physicality for particular roles, such as warriors and monarchs.

Yet, female performers have discovered methods to combat these restrictions and express themselves as equal participants in the art form. One strategy has been to build a distinct Kathakali style that highlights the talents and qualities of female performers. Certain women's troupes, for instance, have specialized in presenting strong female figures, such as the goddess Kali or the warrior princess Draupadi. They are therefore challenging established gender stereotypes and highlighting the possibility for women to be strong and dynamic performers.

Another tactic adopted by female artists has been imaginative collaboration with male performers. Some women's troupes, for instance, have created hybrid versions of Kathakali that integrate aspects of other dance styles, such as Bharatanatyam and modern dance. By doing so, they generate new creative expression options and question the notion that Kathakali must adhere to a set of rigorous norms and customs.

Notwithstanding the advances achieved by female Kathakali artists, there are still numerous obstacles to overcome. The absence of options for women artists to acquire

official training and recognition is one of the most critical problems. There are a small number of schools and institutes that provide Kathakali instruction for women, but they often lack the funding and support required to build a robust program. In addition, female artists continue to experience opposition and criticism from members of the Kathakali community who see their involvement as a challenge to conventional gender roles and cultural standards.

The position of female Kathakali artists is nuanced and multidimensional. Although they have made substantial progress in breaking gender conventions and expressing their presence in the art form, women continue to encounter hurdles and limits. It is crucial to continue to promote and campaign for the inclusion of women artists moving ahead.

At the prestigious Seva Sadan auditorium, Ettumanoor P Kannan recently performed a distinctive adaptation of Shakespeare's well-known play "Macbeth" titled "Macbeth Cholliyaattam." The International Centre for Performing Arts' engaging presentation expertly illustrated the tremendous impact of emotional responses within the context of Kathakali.The potrayel embraced a more simplified version of Kathakali bringing inclussivness to the act.The costumes were changed to a very simple attire and a simplified version of the art form emerged, resulting in a stylized form.Cholliyaattam, a miniature version of Kathakali.

Fig-7, ICPA Bangalore -Seva Sadan Macbeth by Dr Kannan 2014,https://www.flickr.com/photos/icpabangalore/12222289186

3.13. GENDER DIVERSITY IN KATHAKALI

Kathakali is a traditional Indian dance that originated in Kerala, a state in southern India. It is thought that the dance form emerged from diverse art forms such as Krishnanattam, Koodiyattam, and Ramanattam. Kathakali is renowned for its intricate makeup, clothing, and facial expressions, which play a vital part in conveying the emotions and personalities of the tale being presented.

Kathakali dancers are mostly males, since women are usually not permitted to perform the dance. In recent years, however, there has been a steady trend toward gender equality in the art form, with women increasingly participating in Kathakali.

Kathakali, like many other dance styles, has long been linked with a tight gender binary, with males portraying masculine roles and women acting feminine roles. In recent years,

there has been a rising movement in Kathakali to break down these gender restrictions. Women are also being educated to play traditionally masculine positions, while males are likewise experimenting with playing feminine parts.

Understanding how the body is positioned in Kathakali requires an awareness of the significance of gender performance. Gender performance encompasses both the physical and behavioral components of gender identification. In Kathakali, gender performance is manifest in the makeup, clothing, and movements used to depict the many roles.

In Kathakali, the male body orientation adheres strictly to conventional masculine standards. Performers must be physically robust, nimble, and able to execute intricate motions with ease. Male characters in Kathakali are often presented as imposing and dominant on stage.

Male Kathakali performers are also required to follow to stringent grooming requirements, such as growing out their hair and applying heavy makeup. Each character in Kathakali has a distinct set of facial expressions that are utilized to portray their feelings via the makeup.

The garment worn by male Kathakali artists is also an important component of their body orientation. In Kathakali, male characters wear a traditional garment called as a mundu, which is a long skirt-like fabric wrapped around the waist and knotted in a knot. The mundu is often constructed from cotton or silk and adorned with gold or silver thread. A colorful scarf called an uduthukettu is wrapped around the performers' waists to show their physical power and masculinity.

3.14. FEMALE ORIENTATION OF THE BODY IN KATHAKALI

Women have not always been permitted to participate in Kathakali. In recent years, however, there has been an increasing movement in the art form towards gender inclusion. There has been a rise in the number of all-female Kathakali troupes, and women are increasingly being taught to play traditionally masculine parts.

In Kathakali, the female body orientation deviates from conventional feminine norms. Similar to their male counterparts, female Kathakali artists must be physically robust and nimble. In addition, they are encouraged to embrace typically male characteristics such as aggressiveness and strength.

Fig-8, ISC Abu Dhabi, Kalasham Gaja nada, ,2016

The makeup and clothing used by female Kathakali performers are likewise distinct from those worn by male dancers. In Kathakali, female characters wear the traditional garment known as a sari, which consists of a long piece of cloth draped over the shoulders. Often constructed of silk or cotton and adorned with complex motifs and patterns, a sari is typically composed of these materials.

3.15. KOODIYATAM MALE AND FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

Kerala, India is the birthplace of Koodiyattam, also known as Kutiyattam, a kind of Sanskrit theater. UNESCO has classified it as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. It is one of the oldest forms of theater in the world. Koodiyattam is distinguished by its highly stylized motions, lavish clothes, and complex makeup. The performers, who are generally male, utilize their bodies to express a variety of emotions and to recite Hindu mythological tales.

In Koodiyattam, the male body orientation is highly stylized and symbolic. The actors' movements are intended to portray various emotions and concepts. For instance, the manner in which a performer holds his hands might indicate the character's disposition, while the location of the feet can convey a feeling of urgency or significance. The performers utilize their bodies to create a variety of roles, including gods, goddesses, devils, and animals.

Traditional Koodiyattam performances had men performers portraying female roles. In recent years, however, there has been an effort to include female performers into the art form. Kapila Venu, the first female Koodiyattam performer, made her debut in 1990. Since then, gender boundaries in this old art form have been broken down by the increased participation of women.

Changes to the performance of Koodiyattam have resulted with the presence of female artists. Female performers contribute a unique viewpoint to the art form, and their body language and gestures are often distinct from those of male performers. This has resulted in a more diversified and nuanced perception of the tales being presented, as well as a wider variety of characters and emotions.

In Koodiyattam, the male and female body orientations are crucial to the narrative. The performers utilize their body to communicate a variety of emotions, ranging from happiness and love to rage and terror. For instance, the location of the hands and fingers may represent grace and elegance in female characters, whilst the usage of the feet can convey strength and authority in masculine figures.

In Koodiyattam, clothing and cosmetics play a major part in addition to body language. The actors' silk and gold outfits are meant to mirror the personas they depict. Also, the makeup is highly stylized and utilized to generate various faces and emotions for the characters.

Koodiyattam is a highly stylized type of Indian theater that has been handed down through generations in Kerala. The male and female body orientation plays a crucial part in communicating the emotions and personalities of the characters in the story being recounted. With the addition of female performers, Koodiyattam has grown more varied and nuanced, breaking down gender boundaries and introducing fresh viewpoints to this old art form.

Like many classical Indian performing arts, Koodiyattam has historically been dominated by male artists. In recent years, however, the contributions of women to the art form as performers and researchers have been more acknowledged. This has led to a reevaluation

of established gender roles in Koodiyattam, particularly how male and female performers utilize their bodies to communicate meaning and emotion onstage.

Important to Koodiyattam's body orientation is the use of mudras, or symbolic hand gestures, to communicate meaning. Mudras are an integral part of Indian classical dance and theater, and they are utilized to depict a vast variety of objects, feelings, and concepts. Mudras are often utilized to portray communication between characters in Koodiyattam, and they may express complicated thoughts and feelings without the need for words.

In Koodiyattam, male and female performers utilize mudras differently, with male performers often using broader, more expansive motions and feminine performers employing more delicate, subtle movements. This is due in part to the traditional gender roles allocated to men and women in Indian culture, which stress distinct attributes and traits. Males are often seen as strong, authoritative, and powerful, while women are viewed as delicate, caring, and refined. These characteristics are mirrored in the manner in which male and female artists utilize their bodies on stage, with male performers using more flamboyant, dramatic motions and feminine performers employing more subtle, delicate movements.

On the other hand, there is a rising awareness that these old gender roles are restrictive and that women can be just as forceful and authoritative on stage as males. This has prompted a reevaluation of conventional body orientations in Koodiyattam, with female performers being urged to employ bigger, more expansive movements and communicate a broader variety of emotions and ideas.

Important to Koodiyattam's body orientation is the use of facial expressions to communicate message and emotion. In Koodiyattam, facial expressions are often combined with mudras to produce a rich, nuanced performance that expresses intricate emotions and concepts. Male and female performers utilize facial expressions differently, with male performers often using more exaggerated emotions and feminine performers utilizing more delicate, subtle expressions. Again, this is partially attributable to conventional gender roles that stress distinct attributes and traits for men and women.

On the other hand, there is a rising awareness that these old gender roles are restrictive and that women can be just as expressive and complex on stage as males. This has prompted a reevaluation of conventional body orientations in Koodiyattam, with female performers being urged to utilize more exaggerated face expressions and portray a broader variety of emotions and ideas.

In addition to mudras and facial emotions, body posture and movement are essential components of Koodiyattam body orientation. Male and female performers utilize posture and movement differently, with male performers often using more forceful, dynamic motions and feminine performers employing more elegant, flowing movements. Again, this is partially attributable to conventional gender roles that stress distinct attributes and traits for men and women.

Along with mudras and facial gestures, however, there is a growing realization that these conventional gender roles are restricting and that women can be just as dynamic and powerful on stage as males. This has resulted in a reevaluation of conventional body orientations in Koodiyattam, with female performers being urged to employ more dynamic, strong movements and communicate a broader variety of emotions and ideas.

In general, the conventional body orientations of male and female Koodiyattam performers represent the traditional gender norms and expectations of Indian culture.

3.16. THE EVOLUTION OF KATHAK IN THE MUGHAL ERA: INFLUENCES ON BODY ORIENTATION AND EXPRESSION

Kathak is a traditional dance style of India that has its roots in the ancient northern region of the country. Over time, it has undergone significant changes, particularly during the Bhakti movement, where it assimilated tales from Hindu mythology, with a particular emphasis on those concerning Lord Krishna. During the Mughal period, Kathak underwent notable transformations and was bestowed with patronage from the Muslim aristocracy and rulers. The aforementioned shift caused a transformation from the temple courtyards to the palace durbar, leading to the emergence of a more refined and cultured mode of amusement.

During the period of Muslim governance, Kathak gained significant recognition and was acknowledged as a form of refined amusement for the aristocracy. The dance style amalgamated features of Persian and Central Asian dance, including the spinning technique of Sufi dance, and also featured costumes that drew inspiration from the clothing worn by Harem dancers during the medieval period. The Mughal court performances were a confluence of the classical Indian customs and the Central Asian-Persian dance style, tailored to suit the preferences of the aristocratic spectators.

The Kathak dance form, which was initially centered around the art of storytelling through dance, music, and songs, underwent a transformation with the advent of the Mughal era. The incorporation of Urdu Ghazals and Persian musical components into the performance repertoire is a testament to this influence. The incorporation of Persian components renders Kathak distinct from other classical dance styles in India. Kathak, a traditional dance form, was actively promoted by the Mughal emperors in their royal courts, thereby augmenting its stature and widespread appeal.

It is noteworthy that during the Mughal period, Kathak performers, who were predominantly Hindus, had to exercise prudence in openly manifesting their religious convictions. The Mughal court's audience consisted mainly of individuals adhering to the Islamic faith, which may have rendered overt depictions of religious themes as less than ideal. Consequently, the Kathak performances during that era encompassed more conceptualized movements, elaborate footwork known as tatkar, and understated allusions to Radha and Krishna, thereby serving as a prompt for the dancers to remain cognizant of their fundamental motivations for performing. This enabled them to effectively mislead their sophisticated Moghul court audiences.

Understanding the evolution of Kathak requires significant consideration of its historical interaction with Islam. The refinement and integration of Persian and Central Asian elements into Kathak can be attributed to the appreciation of Muslim rulers for this sophisticated art form. It is imperative to acknowledge that Kathak has its origins in the Hindu tradition, and its association with Islam is primarily linked to the historical epoch of Mughal governance and the ensuing cultural interchange.

Presently, Kathak endures as a performing art and has preserved its unique styles, referred to as "gharanas." The Jaipur gharana places emphasis on intricate footwork, whereas the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas prioritize graceful hand movements and facial expressions. The Kathak dance form is renowned for its cultural significance, which is attributed to the fusion of Hindu and Islamic cultures. This amalgamation is considered a reflection of India's diverse artistic traditions and cultural exchange that has persisted throughout history.

The Kathak dancers' bodily orientation underwent modifications during the Muslim era, in response to the cultural influences and preferences of the Mughal courts. The Kathak dance form, in its traditional manifestation, was characterized by an upright and straight

posture. However, the introduction of Mughal influence brought about modifications to the body orientation of the dancers.

A notable modification observed in Kathak performances was the incorporation of the "salaami" or salutation. The act of salaami is a customary display of honor and veneration that is frequently linked with the courtly protocol of Persian and Central Asian societies. The act entails flexing the torso forward from the waist, frequently accompanied by the placement of the right hand on either the forehead or the heart region. The Kathak repertoire was enriched with a unique bowing movement and a slight forward tilt of the upper body through the incorporation of the salaami gesture.

Furthermore, the impact of the Mughal era resulted in a heightened focus on the emotive elements of Kathak, encompassing the elegant and alluring facets of dance commonly referred to as "nritya" and "bhavag." The change in emphasis resulted in more intricate bodily gestures and positions that accentuated the affective and communicative aspects of the choreography. Dancers have integrated supple movements of the trunk, tilts of the cranium, and delicate alterations in body mass distribution to express diverse affective states and narrative components.

Additionally, the body orientation of Kathak dancers was influenced by the attire worn during the Mughal period. The conventional clothing, exemplified by saris, was replaced by outfits that exposed the midriff and incorporated a see-through veil, evocative of the garments donned by Harem dancers during the medieval period. The attire worn during the performance required specific modifications in posture and motion to accentuate the visual allure and eroticism commonly associated with the art of dance.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the alterations made during the Muslim era had an impact on the bodily disposition of Kathak performers; however, the essential techniques and lexicon of the dance genre remained intact. The Kathak dance form retained its fundamental components of footwork, hand gestures, facial expressions, and storytelling elements despite undergoing modifications to suit the cultural milieu of the Mughal courts.

3.17. OPPANA: CELEBRATING BEAUTY AND GRACE THROUGH FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION

The Oppana, a traditional art form of the Muslim community in Kerala, India, places significant emphasis on the orientation of the female body during the performance. The Oppana dance form is primarily executed by female performers and is frequently linked with nuptial festivities. The central figure of the performance is the bride, who is embellished with elaborate henna designs on her hands and feet, and is seated at the center of a group of dancers.

In the course of the performance, the female dancers execute deliberate, measured undulations in tandem with the musical cadence. As the music advances, the pace of their steps accelerates, and they demonstrate their artistic aptitude through elegant motions and captivating gestures. The customary attire for the dancers typically comprises of a kachia mundu and a lengthy blouse.

The positioning of the female physique in Oppana holds significance, as it accentuates the aesthetic appeal and luminosity of the bride. The aesthetic appeal of the performance is enhanced by the movements of the dancers, which encompass body swaying, swift foot movements adorned with anklets, clapping of hands, and playful eye movements and facial expressions. The amalgamation of these physical gestures and the corresponding auditory stimuli engenders a lively and elated ambiance.

The Oppana dance form has undergone a transformation over the years, and present-day renditions may encompass contemporary features such as stage props, elaborate stage designs, and avant-garde attire. The dance genre has garnered widespread recognition beyond its customary confines, as evidenced by the prevalence of contests hosted in academic institutions and the affluent Muslim community's orchestration of events. The wider community of Kerala has also adopted it, irrespective of their religious associations, thereby exemplifying the multicultural and all-encompassing character of the locality.

In its entirety, the Oppana dance form showcases the female body's orientation as a means of commemorating aesthetics, elegance, and artistic creativity. The incorporation of visual elements enhances the overall aesthetic and sensory impact of the performance, resulting in a captivating and enduring ambiance for the audience.

3.18. FEMALE BODY ORIENTATION IN MARGAMKALI - A TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN DANCE FORM OF KERALA

The participation of women in Margamkali holds considerable importance as it enhances the overall visual appeal and ambiance of the performance. They participate in stage preparation, donning customary clothing, and embellishing themselves with particular accessories. The inclusion of female performers contributes to the aesthetic appeal and imbues the performance with an element of elegance.

The traditional attire worn by women in Margamkali is referred to as kachamuri, which is a truncated variant of the mundu, a garment typically worn around the waist by men. The kachamuri garment measures 3.5 meters in length and features a fan-like arrangement of 24 pleats at the back. In addition, they adorn a chatta, which is a customary garment donned by women of the Christian faith in the region of Kerala. The chatta garment is designed to drape over the waistline, while the sleeves provide coverage for the elbows and extend beyond the joint to cover a portion of the forearm. Females have the propensity to affix lace to the peripheries of the mundu and chatta, thereby augmenting the overall aesthetic appeal.

In terms of adornments, females adorn themselves with golden bangles on their upper limbs and silver taḷas (anklets) featuring circular protrusions on their lower limbs. In addition, it is customary for them to adorn themselves with mekkamothiram, a type of ring that is typically worn on the upper ear, as well as earrings that feature silver stones. The utilization of these embellishments confers a sense of refinement upon the artists and enhances their wardrobe.

3.19. CONCLUSION
"In the rhythm of the dance, she found liberation, expressing her desires and dreams with every fluid movement. She was no longer the shy, awkward girl who had been afraid to speak up in class or to stand up for herself. She was a dancer, and in the dance, she was free."(Divakaruni,148.)

In conclusion, gender has a big impact on how the human body is portrayed and perceived in the performing arts. It is crucial to comprehend how the representation of the body in art and media is affected by the relationship between body image, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The representation of the body can also be influenced by the cultural and historical context of theatre and dance in various countries, as well as by traditional and religious practices. Recognizing the impact of gender and sexuality on body image and representation is essential because how the body is portrayed can feed damaging prejudices and a discriminatory culture. We can encourage a more inclusive and respectful portrayal of the human body in the performing arts by being aware of these influences.

CHAPTER 4

THE BODY AND THE GAZE, TRANSGENDER DANCERS IN PERFORMANCE.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Transgenders can be identified as those people who express themselves differently from the sex to which they were born. The term transgender was coined to refer to both transmales and transwomen. The identities of earlier transgender women can be seen in our ancient religious scriptures and other literary works hence we could say that the concept of transgender identity is not new to our society.

The transgender community in India despite having a strong religious and cultural heritage of its own is often subject to the male gaze and often faces identity issues. There are being reported cases of homophobic attitudes in the broader population. The transgender community has had a tremendous influence on ancient Indian culture for millennials. Both Mahabharat and Ramayana well known Hindu sacred works had references to the transgender community in them. Transgenders were given prominent placements in the royal courtyards of the Mughal rulers. Only with the establishment of British rule in the eighteenth century where they banned and treated as criminal elements of society. The Indian Supreme Court stated in a landmark judgment only in 2014 that transgendered people must have access to equal chances in society.

Transgender body performers in India faces significant issues including.

1. Discrimination: Transgender performers may face discrimination from colleagues, employers, and audiences, which can make it difficult to find work and earn a living wage.

2. Lack of Representation: Transgender performers may not see themselves represented in the performance art industry, which can lead to feelings of isolation and marginalization.

3. Access to Training and Education: Transgenders may face barriers to training and education due to a lack of resources, discrimination, or a lack of support.

4. Physical Difficulties: Transgender may face physical difficulties as a result of their transition, such as the need to adjust their training and technique as their body changes.

5. Safety concerns: Transgender may face some risk concerns as a result of their gender identity and expression, particularly in public spaces and venues.

6. Body Dysphoria: Transgender may suffer from body dysphoria, a condition in which a person experiences distress or discomfort as a result of a mismatch between their gender identity and physical body. This can make fully engaging in dance training and performance difficult.

7. Cultural Barriers: Transgender people face more significant challenges in some cultural contexts due to social norms and traditional values. This has the potential to limit their opportunities and create additional barriers to acceptance and success in the dance industry.

4.2. CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSGENDER BODY PERFORMERS

Gender dysphoria is a component of the transgender experience that is especially significant to performance. Gender dysphoria is the anguish and discomfort a person may experience due to a mismatch between their gender identity and the sex assigned to them at birth. This mismatch may cause anxiety, despair, and isolation in a number of transgender individuals. In certain circumstances, gender dysphoria may emerge as physical pain or a desire to alter one's body to conform to one's gender identity.

Gender dysphoria may pose a variety of difficulties for transgender performers. This may include issues with body image and confidence, as well as the need to alter training and technique as their bodies change. Moreover, some transgender performers may face discrimination or prejudice from coworkers, employers, or spectators, which may exacerbate the difficulties associated with gender dysphoria.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, India's transgender performers are making tremendous advances in performance art. Several artists are challenging preconceptions and encouraging better knowledge and acceptance of transgender people via their work. The dance ensemble Aravani Art Project, created in 2014 by transgender artist Kalki Subramaniam, is one example of this. The group explores problems pertaining to gender identity, sexuality, and social justice via dance and other forms of performance art. They attempt to increase the exposure and acceptance of the transgender population in India via their efforts.

Prerna Sthal, a transgender actor and theater director who has been a part of the Indian theatrical scene for over a decade, is another prominent player in the realm of transgender performance. Sthal has been an outspoken supporter for the rights of transgender people, using her art to question gender conventions and encourage a deeper understanding of transgender realities.

In addition to these individual artists, a number of organizations and projects are attempting to increase transgender persons' visibility and acceptance in the performing arts. The Indian Transgender Talent (ITT) program was started in 2016 with the intention of offering training and performing opportunities for transgender people in India.

With initiatives like ITT as well as the efforts of individual artists and groups, transgender performers in India are making modest but steady progress towards more recognition and acceptance. Yet, there is still a great deal of work to be done in addressing the difficulties transgender persons encounter in the performing arts and in society as a whole.

In the sphere of policy and legal safeguards, significant work is required. Although transgender persons have achieved legal recognition in India in recent years, they continue to endure substantial prejudice and marginalization in many sectors of society. To encourage more equality and inclusion, it will be vital for legislators to strive toward developing more complete legal safeguards for transgender persons, as well as fostering broader knowledge of transgender concerns.

Education and training are a second major area for development. Due to a lack of finances, prejudice, or support, transgender performers may have difficulty gaining access to school and training. To encourage greater access and inclusion, it will be crucial for educators and training programs to address these obstacles and ensure that transgender performers have access to the tools and support they need to succeed.

Education is one area in which transgender performers encounter major obstacles. Due to peer and teacher bullying, harassment, and prejudice, many students have dropped out of

school. Due to their lack of formal schooling, they may also have difficulty getting job. This lack of access to school and career possibilities may imprison transgender performers in a cycle of poverty, aggravating their marginalization.

Transgender artists encounter severe barriers to healthcare access. Many healthcare professionals lack awareness and comprehension of transgender health concerns and may offer poor or incorrect treatment as a result. This might result in a lack of access to critical medical care, such as hormone therapy, which can have severe physical and mental health effects.

In addition, transgender performers may struggle to locate safe and affordable accommodation. They are susceptible to homelessness and exploitation because landlords may discriminate against or refuse to rent to them.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, transgender artists have achieved great progress in recent years, mostly because to the hard efforts of activists and campaigners who battled for their rights. The popularity of the yearly Koovagam Festival, held in Tamil Nadu, India, is one example. The event is an old custom that has been celebrated for generations, but transgender people have just been permitted to participate openly in the last few decades. The festival has become a significant venue for transgender performers to exhibit their abilities and network with the local community.

Some transgender artists have broken boundaries and achieved success in cinema, music, and dance, contributing to the advancement of the transgender community in the entertainment business. In 2018, the transgender actress Shalini Sahuta made her Bollywood debut in the film "Pagalpanti." She has subsequently appeared in a number of further films and television series.

In the world of dance, transgender dancer Narthaki Nataraj has attained international notoriety, gaining critical praise for performances that combine traditional Indian dance with modern techniques. She has earned various prizes and distinctions, including India's highest civilian honor, the Padma Shri.

Notwithstanding these achievements, there is still a great deal of work to be done to guarantee that transgender performers are able to reach their full potential and live satisfying lives free from prejudice and harassment. This needs not just legislative safeguards, but also social transformation, including increased knowledge and education about transgender problems and the elimination of cultural and religious beliefs that perpetuate prejudice and stigma.

Eventually, the success of transgender performers in India will rely on a number of elements, such as societal views, legal safeguards, and availability to resources and support. We can establish a more inclusive and equitable society for everyone, regardless of their gender identity or expression, if we work together to solve these difficulties.

Despite gaining legal recognition, transgender community in India today is often compelled to live outside of the society. So how does a class of gender outcasted by society thrive to achieve their dreams in a stage performance? What is their history? How are they have been treated? Through this chapter, we will dive deep into the identity and the gaze dealt by transgender dancers in body performance.

4.3. JUDICIAL DECISION AND ITS IMPACT ON TRANSGENDER PERFORMERS

The importance of judicial judgments in defining the legal environment and deciding the rights of persons and communities cannot be overstated. Judicial judgements have had a profound influence on the rights, visibility, and portrayal of transgender artists in society.

This article reviews several significant legal rulings affecting transgender performers in India and the United States and considers their ramifications.

India has a long history of recognizing transgender people as a third gender, but cultural prejudice and legal restrictions have severely curtailed their rights. In 2014, the Indian Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in the case National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, recognizing the rights of transgender individuals and ordering the government to provide them with legal recognition, social welfare benefits, and access to education and employment opportunities. The decision also acknowledged the right of transgender individuals to self-identify their gender and barred discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression.

This decision had a tremendous influence on transgender artists who, owing to prejudice and stigma, had been denied jobs and opportunities in the performing arts. The ruling allowed transgender artists to emerge from the shadows and claim their identity and rights. Since then, transgender artists in India, such as Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi, have become notable champions for transgender rights and visibility.

Nonetheless, implementation of the ruling has been sluggish, and transgender individuals continue to experience considerable obstacles in obtaining their rights and benefits. In India, transgender people, especially entertainers, continue to face discrimination and violence, and the legal system is insufficient to accommodate their needs.

In the United States, transgender artists have experienced severe legal obstacles, notably in terms of healthcare access and employment. In June of 2020, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Bostock v. Clayton County that discrimination against transgender people based on their gender identity or expression is banned under federal law. The ruling was a huge win for transgender artists, who had been refused employment and benefits due to prejudice and discrimination.

The Bostock decision also has consequences for transgender performers' access to healthcare, since it confirmed that federal law prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in healthcare settings. But, conservative organizations and legislators opposed the ruling and moved to limit the rights of transgender people in numerous ways. Tennessee enacted a measure in February 2023 restricting drag shows and other performances using gender non-conforming or transgender performers, citing public safety and morals concerns.

This development illustrates the continued difficulties transgender artists have in defending their rights and gaining social prominence. Despite the fact that legal judgments have afforded transgender performers some protection and acknowledgment, they continue to face severe societal stigma and prejudice, especially in conservative and religious situations.

Court rulings have shaped the legal environment and determined the rights of transgender artists in India and the United States. Despite the fact that these judgements have afforded some protection and recognition to transgender performers, they continue to face substantial obstacles and hurdles in exercising their rights and entitlements. It is imperative that politicians and legislators address the systematic prejudice and violence faced by transgender performers and guarantee that they may fully engage as equal members of society.

The legal and social status of transgender persons in India has long been a source of contention. Around two million transgender persons are thought to exist in the United States, yet they have traditionally endured substantial discrimination and social isolation. In 2014, the Indian Supreme Court acknowledged transgender persons as a third gender, hence creating additional legal protection and social recognition opportunities for the

group. Despite legal recognition, transgender people in India continue to encounter considerable barriers to obtaining school, work, healthcare, and other fundamental rights.

Education discrimination is one of the most serious difficulties experienced by transgender folks in India. The impacts of discrimination in schools and colleges may be severe and long-lasting. This may result in poverty and social marginalization. In addition, transgender people may suffer bullying, harassment, and assault at educational institutions, making it difficult for them to receive education and feel supported while doing so. The government and educational institutions must combat prejudice and offer equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of gender identification.

Transgender folks in India encounter substantial barriers to healthcare access. In many instances, healthcare personnel may lack training in transgender healthcare or lack an understanding of the particular healthcare requirements of transgender persons. This may result in discrimination, incorrect diagnosis, and insufficient treatment. In addition, many transgender persons may forgo healthcare completely out of fear of prejudice or physical harm. Government officials and healthcare professionals must collaborate to guarantee that transgender people have equitable access to high-quality healthcare treatments.

Job discrimination is another important obstacle transgender people in India encounter. Fearing societal reaction or poor public impression, many firms may be unwilling to accept transgender persons. Also, transgender persons may experience job discrimination, such as harassment and unfair compensation. This might make it challenging for them to get meaningful job and a decent income. The government and companies must guarantee that transgender persons have equal job opportunities and are protected from workplace discrimination.

In India, transgender people confront obstacles in gaining access to legal services. Many legal practitioners may lack training in transgender law or be unfamiliar with the special legal problems encountered by transgender people. This may result in discrimination and uneven legal treatment. Obtaining legal papers, such as identification cards and passports, may be challenging for transgender people, making it difficult for them to access basic services and engage in society. Government officials and legal experts must guarantee that transgender people have equal access to legal services and are protected by the law.

In India, transgender people encounter tremendous obstacles in gaining access to secure homes and public venues. While accessing public venues, such as public toilets or transportation, transgender persons may suffer prejudice and violence. Moreover, prejudice and uneven treatment by landlords and property owners may make it difficult for them to locate safe, affordable homes. The government and civic society must guarantee transgender people have equal access to secure homes and public areas.

In recent years, the Indian government has made some efforts to defend the rights of transgender persons. In addition to recognizing transgender people as a third gender, the government has enacted a number of laws and regulations designed to protect transgender people from discrimination and violence. The Transgender People (Protection of Rights) Bill was proposed to the Indian parliament in 2016, with the intention of providing legal protection and equal opportunity for transgender persons. However, activists and community members have criticized the bill for failing to address the unique challenges faced by transgender people and for perpetuating discrimination in certain areas, including healthcare and employment, healthcare, employment, legal services, safe housing, and public spaces. Discrimination and social marginalization continue to be significant challenges for transgender people in India, and greater work is required to address these problems.

The Indian government and public society must take real measures to enable equitable access to fundamental rights and services for transgender persons. This includes developing and implementing policies that address discrimination and violence against transgender individuals, providing training and education for healthcare providers and legal professionals on transgender issues, ensuring that transgender individuals have equal access to education and employment opportunities, and working to create safe, inclusive public spaces for all individuals.

It is also crucial to identify the particular obstacles experienced by various transgender community segments, such as transgender women, transgender men, and gender non-conforming persons. Each group's individual needs must be addressed, and their views must be heard throughout policy debates and decision-making processes.

Lastly, it is crucial to strive towards altering attitudes and views about transgender persons throughout society. This includes educating the general public on transgender problems and encouraging transgender acceptance and inclusion in all parts of society. This may be accomplished via media campaigns, awareness-raising activities, and other advocacy and outreach techniques.

India has made considerable progress in recognizing and safeguarding the rights of transgender people, but much more must be done to overcome the systematic prejudice and marginalization the group faces. We can only expect to develop a society that is really inclusive and fair for all persons, regardless of gender identity, via the coordinated efforts of the government, civic society, and the general public.

4.4. GENDER DYNAMICS IN CLASSICAL DANCE

Gender dynamics in classical dance have evolved over time, and it is critical to address the unique experiences of transgenders in this art form. The history and tradition of Indian classical dance are rooted in religious and cultural contexts. Gender dynamics have played an important role in shaping the art form, with male and female dancers assigned traditional roles and expectations. Due to this gender identification and traditionally assigning different roles transgenders face unique challenges in the context of classical dance, which can lead to discrimination, exclusion, and a lack of representation.

Despite the increased exposure and acceptance of transgender persons in all sectors of society, transgender body performers in India continue to confront several obstacles in the traditional dance field. The rigorous gender conventions that have traditionally regulated classical dance in India, where male and female roles are clearly defined, and where dancers are required to adhere to established gender binaries, is one of the key obstacles.This gendered approach in classical dancing has resulted in a dearth of possibilities for transgender persons to demonstrate their skill, since they do not cleanly fit into the binary categories of male or female.

In addition, many traditional dance institutes in India are regulated by orthodox and patriarchal traditions, which often approach transgender persons with distrust and prejudice. As a result, it has been challenging for transgender dancers to get access to training, mentoring, and performance opportunities, since many institutions still adhere to outmoded gender and sexuality norms.

Also, transgender body performers encounter a variety of societal and economic obstacles that restrict their access to classical dance. Many transgender persons originate from economically disadvantaged households and lack the means and support structures necessary to pursue a career in classical dance. In addition, the stigma and prejudice suffered by the transgender population sometimes result in their isolation from mainstream society, therefore restricting their access to opportunities and resources.

Transgender body performers also confront safety and security concerns, especially when performing in public areas. In India, the transgender population is often vulnerable to violence and discrimination, and this danger increases when they are obviously different and perform in public settings.

The social construct across genders plays a crucial role in Indian classical dance since it is always associated with a person's identity. The acceptance and recognition of more than one gender across the world have bought a complex network of genders. The study of gender and the experiences of those who transgress social norms and how society gazes upon them have gained more attention due to this transition.

Despite the studies and acceptance, there are still regulations on these individuals by the community such as through the male gaze, or the ways in which women are depicted as objects for men to enjoy. This is especially true of embedded societal institutions and individuals that promote systemic heteronormative and misogynistic norms. These people and groups regularly exert pressure on transgender people to act and seem in a certain manner in order to be accepted by society and avert discrimination.

A few of the numerous acronyms used to represent various gender identities and sexualities are Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (+ implies questioning, pansexual, intersex, asexual, and more). The most popular acronym is LGBTQ, which has now been changed to LGBTQ+. The use of acronyms is mostly determined by the individual's desire and the prevailing cultural context for the 2SLGBTQ+ group.

As classical dance has traditionally assigned specific gender roles to male and female dancers, with different movements, expressions, and costumes for each gender. This binary approach to gender can create challenges for transgender individuals who do not identify as strictly male or female. India has a long history and tradition one excluding transgenders often referred to as "Hijras", who are considered a third gender in Indian society. While the Hijra community has traditionally been excluded from mainstream society, their distinct dance and performance styles have had a significant impact on Indian classical dance.

Many theories attempt to comprehend gender and explain how it develops. The term "gender" is intricate. Gender is a phrase used to describe a person's internal gender, as opposed to sex, which is decided at birth based on certain traits (e.g., genitalia, chromosomes). As a result, a person who identifies as transgender has a gender identity that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth, as opposed to a person who identifies as cisgender, whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned. In stage performance, the identity of a person has often associated with gender hence gender plays a strong role. Sometimes transgender persons will claim to have been allocated or classified as either male (AMAB/DMAB) or female (AFAB/DFAB) at birth.

It is observed that to make Indian classical dance more inclusive of transgender people, training programs should consider trans dancers' unique needs and experiences. Creating gender-neutral training environments, providing resources for trans-specific issues, and adapting techniques to accommodate the physical needs of trans dancers are all examples of this. Creating more opportunities for trans dancers to showcase their work and providing platforms for their voices can help to address this issue.

Traditional gender norms and expectations in Indian classical dance have the potential to be challenged. They can help to push the boundaries of what is possible and create new and exciting forms of expression by bringing their unique perspectives and experiences to the dance.

4.5. INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

The transgender population in India has a cultural tradition that reaches back to antiquity. Once upon a time, transgender persons enjoyed prominent roles as dancers, singers, and courtesans and were regarded as respectable members of society. With the introduction of colonialism and the establishment of conservative societal standards, however, transgender persons have been more stigmatized and forced to the margins of society.

Nowadays, transgender people in India confront several obstacles, including discrimination in school and job, lack of access to healthcare, and societal stigma. Many transgender people are denied access to school and work prospects owing to discrimination and prejudice, which often results in poverty and isolation.

In addition to schooling and employment, transgender persons encounter major barriers when attempting to get healthcare. Lack of understanding and sensitivity among healthcare professionals sometimes results in transphobic behavior and substandard treatment. The health and well-being of many transgender people are jeopardized by their reluctance to seek medical assistance out of fear of prejudice.

The transgender population in India is likewise subject to considerable societal shame and prejudice. Many people perceive transsexual persons as misfits, and they are often harassed and victimized. The stigma associated with transgender people is firmly rooted in Indian culture, and it often leads to isolation and marginalization. Many transgender people struggle to find acceptance and a feeling of belonging, which may significantly damage their mental health and well-being.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the transgender population in India has achieved considerable strides over the last several years. The Supreme Court's recognition of transgender people as a third gender was a landmark in the battle for transgender rights. With a variety of projects and programs, the government has also made measures to combat prejudice and encourage inclusion.

Transgender folks in India are also becoming more prominent in a variety of contexts. Several transgender activists, artists, and performers are questioning societal conventions and breaking down boundaries in the domains of art, music, dance, and literature.

Transgender individuals in India face a range of social and legal challenges that impact their lives in significant ways. One of the key issues faced by transgender people in India is discrimination and stigmatization, which can take many forms. This can include being denied access to healthcare, housing, and education, as well as facing harassment and violence in public spaces. In addition, transgender people often struggle to find employment, and those who do find work are often relegated to low-paying jobs with few opportunities for advancement.

Another major challenge faced by transgender people in India is the lack of legal recognition and protection. While the Indian government recognized transgender people as a third gender in a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court in 2014, many aspects of their lives remain unregulated. For example, there is no specific legislation that guarantees transgender people protection from discrimination or violence, and they are often not able to access legal services or government programs that are designed to support marginalized communities.

Transgender individuals in India also face significant challenges when it comes to accessing healthcare. Many healthcare providers lack the knowledge and training necessary to provide appropriate care to transgender patients, and there is a lack of transgender-friendly healthcare facilities in the country. This can lead to delays in treatment, misdiagnosis, and inadequate care.

In addition to these challenges, transgender people in India also face significant barriers when it comes to accessing education. Many transgender individuals are forced to drop out of school due to discrimination and harassment, and there are few educational opportunities available to those who do manage to complete their studies. This can have long-term implications for their economic prospects and social mobility.

Despite these challenges, there are also many examples of resilience and strength within the transgender community in India. Transgender activists have been instrumental in raising awareness about their rights and advocating for greater legal protections. They have also been successful in pushing for more inclusive policies in areas such as education and healthcare.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the important contributions that transgender people make to Indian society, and efforts are being made to promote greater acceptance and inclusion. For example, transgender individuals are increasingly being featured in mainstream media and entertainment, and there are a growing number of support groups and advocacy organizations that are working to empower the transgender community.

The absence of legal recognition and protection for transgender persons in India is an additional significant obstacle they encounter. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India issued a major judgement recognizing transgender individuals as a third gender, yet many elements of their life remain uncontrolled. For instance, there is no explicit law that protects transgender persons from discrimination or violence, and they are often denied access to legal services and government programs intended to assist neglected populations.

When it comes to receiving healthcare, transgender folks in India encounter tremendous obstacles. There is a paucity of transgender-friendly healthcare facilities in the nation, and many healthcare practitioners lack the information and training required to offer adequate treatment to transgender patients. This may result in treatment delays, incorrect diagnoses, and poor care.

In addition to these obstacles, access to education for transgender individuals in India is impeded by considerable restrictions. Due to prejudice and harassment, many transgender students are compelled to drop out of school, and there are limited educational options for those who do finish their studies. This may have lasting effects on their economic outlook and social mobility.

In India's transgender population, despite these obstacles, there are several instances of persistence and fortitude. Transgender activists have played a crucial role in increasing awareness of transgender rights and lobbying for stronger legal safeguards. In addition, they have successfully advocated for more inclusive policies in sectors like education and healthcare.

In recent years, transgender people's contributions to Indian society have been more acknowledged, and attempts are being made to encourage greater acceptance and inclusion. Transgender people are increasingly featured in mainstream media and entertainment, and the number of support groups and advocacy organizations seeking to empower the transgender community is expanding.

The Vedas, which date from around 1500 to 500 BC, divide humans into three different categories based on their nature, or prakrti. These are also referred to as Tritiya-prakrti and pumsprakrtistri-prakrti (female nature), among other names, in Kama Sutra (about 4th century AD) (third nature).

The nine planets are ascribed to one of three genders in Vedic astrology; the third gender, tritiya-prakrti, is connected with Mercury, Saturn, and (especially) Ketu. There are

additional allusions in the Puranas to three types of devas of music and dance: apsaras (female), Gandharvas (male), and kinnars (neuter). You can find many more such descriptions in Indian texts.

There are several such examples, such as Mahadeva becoming a woman to deliver his devotee's kid and Chudala becoming a man to enlighten her husband.A clear study of all of these cases demonstrates that society at the time was advanced enough to recognize the sensitivity of gender differences and to make attempts to tolerate them.

The position of the transgender people in the medieval era was the same as it was in the ancient. During the Mughal Empire, the position of transgender people was respected and valued. Transgender people were referred to as khwajasara" (a eunuch)their duties included tasks of herum, or royal pleasure palaces, guarding and safeguarding royal ladies, and even keeping a Mansab for a few.

According to Ain-i-Akbari, a eunuch named Khwajakhas Malik was granted the title Ikhlas Khan and a rank of 1000.Another Itbar khan was a loyal khwajasara of Mughal king Jahangir, who appointed him governor of the then-capital of Agra. These incidents demonstrate the equitable treatment of khwajasaras throughout the Mughal Empire.

Beginning in the 1800s, the British established a stronghold in the Indian homeland, bringing with them several statutes and charters that allowed them to dominate the Indian people and even punish or reprimand them unfairly. The British felt that their civilization was the most evolved, and that it was their responsibility to develop and raise other societies as well. They traveled to India with this thing. They brought new laws with them that undermined the whole social order. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 was the one that targeted transsexual people.

The circumstances of these individuals did not improve in the post-independence period. In terms of the social dimensions, society did not embrace them completely. They continue to confront several major issues, including being abandoned by their family. The society's ruthless treatment has kept the whole group out of the mainstream and prevented them from contributing to society. Communities like Hijra, in particular, have been maintained at the same socioeconomic level as beggars, stifling their progress. Transgender people have generally been treated with disdain and malice by society.

4.6. CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN INDIA

Kerala, India's southernmost state, contains traditions or beliefs about transgender community. Kerala's transgender community celebrates the 'chamayavilakku' festival at Kottankulangara Devi Temple in Chavara, Kollam with great enthusiasm. As we can see, the number of transgender people is growing year after year. This ceremonial festival represents a watershed moment in temple history. On the tenth and eleventh days of the Malayalam month Meenam, males who truly want to be 'purushanganas' dress up as ladies and take 'chamayavilakku' in front of Devi with hymns and prayers in order to realize their aspirations. The so-called 'kottan' is a delicacy made from or derived from coconut that is offered to Devis, also known as Vana Durga.

Transgender references and presences may also be found in epic poetries such as The Mahabharata and The Ramayana. The majority of them are already well-known to the general population. Shikandi (a mixed-nature figure) in Mahabharata received greater attention than Shikandi in Ramayana. Shikandi is the rebirth or reincarnation of Amba, the king of Kashi's daughter. Shikandi lived with the intention of assassinating Bhishmar, the person who offended Shikandi in the first incarnation. Shikandi fought on the Pandava side during the Kurukshetra battle and was one of the elements that contributed to the Pandavas' victory.

In India, transgender individuals are often associated with religious and spiritual traditions, with many believed to have a special connection to the divine. Transgender people, for example, have been associated with the Hindu god Shiva and are often thought to possess mystical powers.

Transgender individuals have traditionally been associated with certain occupations in India, such as dancing, singing, and performing at weddings and other events. These occupations have frequently provided a source of income and social status for trans people while also contributing to the country's cultural fabric. As transgenders are assigned to the role of body performers it is necessary to understand how they are seen by the general public

4.7. TRANSGENDER PERFORMERS IN INDIA AND HOW THEY ARE SEEN

Despite substantial government and media involvement, the transgender community remains an outsider in our culture. They are still limited by the absurd barriers of obsolete ideas and perspectives. They frequently lack the fundamental right to be regarded as human beings as a result of the terrible encroachment in our ostensibly civilized society.

Discrimination is one of the most pressing issues confronting transgender body performers. Trans performers may face discrimination from coworkers, employers, and audiences, making it difficult to find work and advance in the industry. Harassment, exclusion, and bias are all examples of discrimination. Trans performers, for example, may be denied opportunities because of their gender identity, or they may face ridicule and taunts from colleagues or audiences.

Trans performers may struggle to find steady work and earn a living wage due to discrimination and a lack of representation in the industry. This financial insecurity can make it difficult for trans performers to maintain a career in the performing arts and can cause a great deal of stress and anxiety.

Transgender Visibility Day is observed on the final day of March. Despite significant obstacles, there are some who overcome them through sheer determination, ambition, and tenacity. Here are various descriptions of classical dance's bright beginnings. Transgender women are the pinnacle of diversity, boldness, and inspiration. They are the true apotheosis who enriches life with beauty and have a deep belief in dancing.

Narthaki Nataraj, the first transgender Bharatanatyam superstar, has never been like other people. Nataraj, who was born in the temple city of Madurai in 1964, had an early interest in the arts and fell in love with dance while seeing local theater companies. He knew he was born in the incorrect body when he was ten years old. He left home two years later, pushed by social insensitivity.

As he walked down the street, he was confronted with rejection and contempt. Nataraj's solitary companion, Shakti Bhaskar, performed odd jobs to pay for food, but Nataraj's enthusiasm for dance drew him back to celebrations and festivals. Nataraj eventually found a teacher who would embrace him in Thanjavur Kittappa Pillai in 1984. Narthaki had to be accepted by the dancing community.

Despite the fact that many conservatives laughed at her, Sabha secretaries criticized her, and the Bharatanatyam establishment ignored her, she matured slowly into a fantastic performer. In Chennai and Madurai, she even opened her own dancing school, Velliyambalam Nadana Kalaikoodam. The Tamil Nadu government bestowed the Kalaimamani award on her in 2007. Four years later, she received the renowned Sangeet Natak Akademi award from India's President, a first for any transgender person.

Varsha Vardhana, who was born in Muai Johobaru, is a well-known Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and Odissi performer who began training in the dance disciplines at the age of five. Dr. Chandra Banu in Melbourne, Australia, and Mrs. Indra in Malaysia trained her. Varsha has performed in Singapore, India, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Indonesia, among other places. The Hindu Sangham of Malaysia has bestowed upon her the Natya Per Oli award, which translates as "bright youth star."

Maalika Panicker is a well-known Bharatanatyam and Mohiniattam performer who was born in Pallakad, Kerala and began dancing at the age of seven. She received her education at the Kalashetra school in Chennai.Maalika has performed throughout Asia, U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand among other places. She currently resides in Singapore as a citizen and has been teaching at the Bharatanatyamschool there since 1996.

Lakshya is an established Bharatanatyam artist who was born in Cochin and began practicing the dance form at the age of 10. She began training under Guru Kalamandalam Sumathi from Kerala and continued her training at the Kalakshetra School in Chennai.Lakshya has performed professionally in Kolkata, Guwahati, Delhi, and internationally in Germany, UAE, Malaysia, and Belgium among other places. She was awarded the T S Parthasarathy Award for excellence in performance in 2002. Currently, she is a dance teacher at IIT Madras and the costume designer of head accessories for dance productions in Chennai.

Ponni is the family's youngest member. She has been fascinated by dance since she was a youngster. She was first refused instruction, but her ardent enthusiasm for dancing did not keep her from surreptitiously witnessing the dance sessions. When she was in eighth grade, she enrolled in a dance class for a year, but due to scholastic pressures, she was unable to continue her training during high school. Academics have always been quite important in her life, thus she pursued a B.Sc in Mathematics. But dancing commanded her thoughts, and she had an insatiable yearning for it. As a result, she pursued a Diploma in Bharatanatyam and finally an M.A. in Dance. She, on the other hand, never ceased dreaming.

Opening a dancing academy was once a long-awaited goal. As a result, when an NGO invited her to teach as a dance trainer in Theni District, she moved a giant step closer to realizing her ambition. She taught 20 pupils there. Her fear of social rejection was dispelled when she received enormous respect from her students. This prompted her to open her own dancing studio. As a consequence, Ponni founded Abhinaya Nrityalaya in Vyasarpadi, Chennai, in 2006, with a government loan of Rs 1 lakh.

In the film Sadhak, a transgender character titled 'Maharani,' a eunuch was seen as the major adversary for the first time in Hindi movie history. The actor received a Filmfare Award for his performance, although the part did not improve significantly.

The significant quantity of screen time devoted to transgender characters led to the repeated reinforcement of negative stereotypes connected with the trans community, which ultimately formed in mainstream Indian society. While Indian film has attempted to grapple with homosexual topics in its own unique way, the portrayal of the connection remains a farce on a serious matter even now, many years later.

Following the Indian High Court's regulations on providing lawful recognition to the Third Gender, as well as for perception and rapidity. How we may interpret Third Gender will be a word that will depict a separate subset of people whose orientation character differs from that which they were allocated upon entering the world. The strong classes of masculine and ladylike are not powerful classes that never interact with one another. These classes are always being expanded as a result of how individuals operate or

conduct their orientation. Orientation is not, in general, a strong condition or a firm categorization, but rather a class that grows and matures and merges with other classes.

Transgender body performers face a range of challenges related to discrimination, representation, physical difficulties, safety, financial instability, legal and social recognition, health and wellbeing, and personal safety. These challenges can make it difficult for trans performers to succeed in the performing arts industry and create significant stress and anxiety in their personal lives. However, by raising awareness of these issues and working to create more inclusive and welcoming environments, we can help to support the continued growth and success of transgender body performers in the performing arts industry. It is essential to recognize the unique experiences and challenges faced by trans performers and to work towards creating a more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming industry for all.

4.8. UNVEILING THE TRANSGENDER GAZE: RESHAPING IDENTITY IN A MALE-CENTRIC WORLD

The male gaze and objectification may pose significant challenges for transgender female body performers. Trans performers may face discrimination as a result of the hyper sexualization of transgender bodies in popular media exploring such an issue is necessary to understand the struggle of transgender individual relating to their body identity.

In recent years, the idea of masculine gaze and its relationship to transgender identity has been a focus of debate. Male gaze is a concept used to explain how media and society are formed via the heterosexual male perspective. This viewpoint emphasizes the objectification and sexualization of women, portraying them as objects for male enjoyment. In this setting, transgender women may feel pushed to adhere to cultural notions of femininity and to show themselves in a manner that is aesthetically attractive to the masculine gaze.

The male gaze is often represented in popular media via sexualized pictures of women with an emphasis on their bodies and physical attractiveness. This gaze fosters the notion that women are essentially objects of desire, as opposed to multidimensional humans with their own ideas, emotions, and agency. In order to be recognized and acknowledged as women, transgender women may feel the need to comply to these cultural ideals of femininity.

When transgender women manage the complexity of their gender identification in a world that often reduces them to their physical appearance, this pressure may cause uncertainty and anxiety. The male gaze may also induce feelings of rivalry and insecurity among cisgender women, who may feel compelled to comply to social beauty standards in order to be respected and accepted.

It is crucial to note that the male gaze is about more than simply the objectification of women; it is also about the reinforcing of gender roles and the repression of non-normative displays of gender identity. Transgender individuals, particularly transgender women, are often seen as a danger to the binary gender system and the cultural norms that support it. Hence, they may face discrimination, harassment, and violence.

For many years, transgender individuals have challenged the masculine gaze and its influence on their lives and identities. This involves establishing their own media and cultural representations that reflect their experiences and points of view and lobbying for greater representation and acceptance in mainstream media and culture.

There is still a long way to go in removing the patriarchal mechanisms that support the male gaze and the ways in which it promotes gender norms and stereotypes, despite the progress achieved in recent years. This involves questioning the assumption that

femininity is intrinsically linked to physical attractiveness and acknowledging that individuals of all genders should be allowed to express themselves in whatever manner seems true to them, regardless of cultural expectations.

The masculine gaze has a substantial effect on the experiences and identities of transgender persons, especially transgender women. We can build a more inclusive and welcoming society for everyone by identifying and addressing the ways in which it perpetuates gender norms and stereotypes. This involves generating media and cultural representations that reflect the variety of human experience and expression and pushing for increased awareness and acceptance of transgender persons and their identities.

The idea of the masculine gaze and its effects on transgender persons are nuanced and complicated. Women and transgender persons are often objectified and fetishized as a result of the masculine gaze. Those who do not comply to established gender norms and expectations may experience estrangement, invisibility, and self-doubt as a result.

One of the most significant ways in which the masculine gaze impacts transgender persons is via the media portrayal of these individuals. Often, transgender characters are reduced to caricatures or fetish objects, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and eliminating the richness of their lives. This is evident in films like as The Crying Game and Dressed to Kill, in which trans people are presented as either deceivers or sexual objects. These images foster the notion that transgender persons are not to be taken seriously and that their identities are only a source of amusement.

In addition, the masculine gaze might influence how transgender people view themselves and their bodies. For example, trans women may feel compelled to adhere to conventional beauty standards in order to be considered attractive or acceptable. This may lead to feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt, as individuals may believe their bodies are not sufficiently feminine or do not meet cultural standards. Trans guys, on the other side, may feel pressure to acquire a more masculine look in order to be seen as "genuine" males. This may result in feelings of alienation and separation from their bodies, as they may see themselves to be only playing a part rather than expressing their identity.

Also, the masculine gaze might influence how transgender people are regarded in public areas. Transgender women may encounter harassment or violence while using public toilets, since they are often seen as a danger to the safety of cisgender women. This is despite the fact that transgender persons are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence. The male gaze promotes the notion that trans women are untrustworthy, and their presence is necessarily harmful.

Prioritizing the perspectives and experiences of transgender persons themselves is one possible solution to the issue of the masculine gaze and its effect on transgender people. By highlighting trans views and narratives, we may begin to dismantle damaging stereotypes and develop a broader understanding of what it means to be trans. This may be accomplished via efforts such as trans-led media projects, which provide trans persons a platform to share their own story in their own terms.

Another possible answer is to question established beauty standards and gender roles and to create more tolerant settings for all persons, regardless of their gender identification. This may be accomplished via efforts such as body positivity campaigns, which encourage self-acceptance by celebrating varied body types. It may also be accomplished via educational and awareness-raising programs that aim to dispel negative preconceptions and foster understanding and compassion for all persons.

The issue of the masculine gaze and its influence on transgender persons is ultimately complicated and demands a varied solution. By promoting trans voices and experiences, questioning established gender norms and beauty standards, and providing more tolerant

settings, we may begin to dismantle damaging stereotypes and build a more fair society for everyone.

Laura Mulvey, a feminist cinema scholar, coined the term "male gaze" in 1975. The male gaze refers to phenomena in which women are portrayed as subordinate objects for men's viewing pleasures, particularly "masculine," heterosexual, cisgender men. As a cinema theory, it concerns men from three points of view:

(a) behind the 8 cameras,
(b) characters in the film, and
(c) The audience.

As a result, the ladies in the films serve two functions:

(a) as sexual objects for the characters, and
(b) as erotic objects for the spectators/audience.

These points of view are strongly linked to misogyny and patriarch. The masculine gaze has subsequently spread beyond movies and into other fields. Acknowledged as a phenomenon that occurs in everyday life. The male gaze can include verbal abuse, objectification, and general pressure to look and act a specific way (Clark, 2017). It can be perpetuated by males, society as a whole through structural and institutional structures, women, and the individual through internalization and self-monitoring.

The male gaze can also have an impact on other men, especially when males do not comply with standard gender norms. Specifically, when males exhibit non-masculine or more "feminine" characteristics such as tenderness, and emotionality. They may experience tremendous blowback for their fragility and nonviolence. Identifying as a feminist or being identified with femininity in some manner, for example, may increase men's chances of suffering sexual harassment in the workplace study, sexual harassment comprised of sexual coercion (using job-related threats or incentives to create a sexual connection), unwelcome sexual attention, and gender harassment (hostile behaviors, verbal harassment, and humiliation).

There is a need for more education and awareness about trans performers' experiences. This can include educating choreographers, directors, and other industry professionals about the unique challenges that trans performers face, as well as providing resources and support to trans performers. By working to make the industry more inclusive and welcoming, we can help to reduce the negative effects of the male gaze and other forms of discrimination and bias.

Visibility and the male gaze are also linked to sexualization, fetishization, and objectification. Each entails perceiving people, particularly women, as things to be used by others, which may lead to males treating transgender women any way they see fit. Being shunned and ostracized from society because of one's identity may be a very potent danger and kind of trauma; this was a safety and worry for several participants. visibility. The transgender community faces a lack of acceptance and understanding discriminated against and ostracized because of their identity.

Transgender body hyper sexualization and objectification can reinforce harmful stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination and violence against transgender people. Furthermore, the male gaze can influence how transgender performers are perceived and valued in the industry. Trans performers may be judged primarily on the basis of their physical appearance rather than their talent or skill as performers, making it difficult for them to succeed and advance in their careers. Ultimately, by acknowledging and addressing the impact of the male gaze on transgender female body performers, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive industry that values and

celebrates the unique talents and skills of all performers, regardless of their gender identity

4.9. HOW DID THEY MAKING SIGNIFICANT STRIDES IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Notwithstanding the hurdles they experience owing to prejudice and societal stigma, transgender artists in India have made major advancements in the entertainment business and beyond. These performers have created a platform for themselves and their community via their art, exhibiting their ability and raising awareness about transgender concerns.

The Dancing Queens, one of India's most successful transgender dance troupes, was founded in Mumbai in 2014. The ensemble consists of transgender people who utilize dance as a form of expression and empowerment. The Dancing Queens have performed at several occasions and garnered accolades for their skill, including the 2016 National Award for Empowerment of People with Disabilities.

Yash Raj Films' 2016 formation of the 6-Pack Band, India's first transgender band, is another group creating waves in the business. The band is comprised of six transgender persons who use music to dispel prejudices and bring attention to transgender problems. The 6-Pack Band has worked with several Bollywood celebs and recorded a number of music videos.

These success tales are not without obstacles. In India, transgender persons face severe discrimination, including assault, harassment, and social marginalization. Transgender people often struggle to obtain job, housing, and healthcare, and they confront obstacles while attempting to enter school.

Many transgender persons in India are motivated to overcome these difficulties and make a difference despite these obstacles. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi has been a transgender rights activist for more than two decades and was essential in the passage of the Transgender People (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which intended to safeguard the rights of transgender persons in India. Nonetheless, transgender advocates have criticized the measure, arguing that it does not adequately guarantee their rights.

Transgender folks in India have also strived for greater educational inclusion. The Karnataka State Open University is claimed to have been the first institution in India to offer a programme in transgender studies in 2014. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) established recommendations for the integration of transgender pupils in schools in 2017, including the provision of separate restrooms and changing facilities, in 2017.

Transgender performers in India face significant challenges, including stigma, discrimination, and lack of legal protection.

1. Despite the passage of the Transgender People (Protection of Rights) Act in 2019, transgender persons in India continue to endure prejudice and violence. Activists have criticized the bill for failing to adequately safeguard the community and forcing persons to undergo medical treatments in order to officially identify as transgender. This absence of legal protection makes it difficult for transgender artists to find safe and supportive locations to develop their work.

2. Stigma and Discrimination: Transgender people in India endure stigma and prejudice in all facets of their existence, including work, education, and healthcare. This makes it difficult for individuals to pursue jobs in the arts, since audiences and

industry professionals may not accept them. In addition, they may suffer hostility or harassment while performing in public places.

3. Notwithstanding these obstacles, many transgender performers in India have found community and support via their art. The Dancing Queens, a Mumbai-based transgender dance ensemble, was created by a group of transgender women who wanted to create a place for themselves to express their creativity and display their abilities. After gaining national acclaim, the band has played at events around India.

4. Visibility and Representation: As more transgender performers acquire exposure in India, they contribute to the debunking of preconceptions and the expansion of the community's artistic representation. For instance, the transgender band 6 Pack Band has received considerable notice and been featured in music videos and ads. Similarly, transgender actress Shabnam Mausi has performed in many Bollywood films, which has increased the community's prominence in mainstream media.

5. With their art, transgender performers in India are also defying conventional gender standards. In the ancient dance genre of Bharatanatyam, for instance, transgender dancer Narthaki Nataraj has integrated male and female motions into her choreography, defying the gender binary and broadening the artistic possibilities.

6. Advocacy & Activism: Several transgender artists in India are also utilizing their platform to advocate for the community's rights and to bring attention to the obstacles they confront. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, a transgender rights activist and performer, has been an outspoken champion for the community and has fought to raise awareness about prejudice and violence, among other concerns.

In India, there is still considerable work to be done to create a more inclusive society for transgender persons, despite the progress that has been accomplished. Greater compassion and understanding is required to counteract the prejudice and stigma they encounter. Transgender artists in India are paving the path for a more inclusive and accepting society by continuing to display their talents and speak out about their experiences.

4.10. INTERSECTING REALITIES: EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF GENDER AND THEATRE

The intersection of gender and theatre is a multifaceted phenomenon that poses challenges in both theoretical and practical domains. This field of study encompasses interdisciplinary discussions that center around the delineation of disciplinary boundaries, areas of overlap, and unique analytical approaches, while recognizing the challenges inherent in achieving a consensus. The relationship between gender and theatre is closely linked to experiential practices, recognizing the significance of the experiences that influence both gender identity and theatrical performance. Nonetheless, this experiential knowledge cannot exist in isolation and necessitates an analytical framework for impartial comprehension.

The concept of gender has undergone a transformation from being a realm of political engagement to being an object of scholarly inquiry. The proliferation of specialized centers, schools, and departments throughout the nation has elicited both positive and negative evaluations. There is a debate among scholars regarding the impact of institutionalization on the development of feminist studies and politics. While some contend that it has impeded their growth, others emphasize the valuable research and interdisciplinary contributions that have resulted from this process. Scholars have noted the persistent dependence on Western canonical texts and theories, and have advocated for a more comprehensive integration of conceptual frameworks from an Indian

perspective to effectively address feminist issues. Additionally, certain individuals prioritize the significance of hands-on experience as opposed to theoretical discussions and participate in community initiatives such as creating childcare facilities and providing guidance services.

Theatre is commonly associated with practical applications, with theoretical aspects often being overlooked. The transitory quality of theatrical events presents difficulties in formulating lasting theoretical assertions, for both performers and viewers. The perceived disparity between theoretical concepts and practical application within the realm of theatre may be viewed as a fertile ground for innovative reconsideration. Theoretical rigor can be observed in practical applications within theatrical performances. However, the constraints of the performance and the transient interpretations that arise therein serve to underscore the constraints of theory itself.

4.11. INTERROGATING IDENTITY IN THE REALM OF THEATRE AND POLITICS

The concept of "identity" is prevalent in current social discourse and functions as a structure through which various assertions are posited within political and cultural settings. The concept of identity politics presents intricate inquiries regarding genuineness, authority, and individual perspective, thereby instigating an examination of the reasons behind the acceptance of particular identities while others are perceived as disconcerting. The inquiry into these matters has become particularly prominent in present-day Indian society, with an emphasis on ethnic and religious groups that are geographically localized. Numerous methodologies have been employed in the field of theatrical performance to tackle the complex issue of identity, particularly in relation to geographic location and religious affiliation.

Theatre professionals have demonstrated a heightened awareness of the need to address the representation of minority groups and their connection to India, resulting in nuanced reactions. An approach that can be employed involves the representation of prominent Muslim cultural and historical figures on theatrical platforms, incorporating conspicuous Islamic narratives and motifs. Illustrative instances comprise of Girish Karnad's theatrical productions, such as "Tughlaq," which presents a critical analysis of Nehruvian socialism, and "Dreams of Tipu Sultan," which offers a contemporary reinterpretation of the historical narrative of the warrior-king. The literary work "Umrao" authored by Anuradha Kapur is a vivid portrayal of the life of Umrao Jan, thereby honoring the cultural and artistic heritage of North India that is centered around courtesans. Furthermore, the literary work "Azizun Nisa" authored by Tripurari Sharma rekindles the narrative of the renowned courtesan of Kanpur, who held a momentous position in the uprising of 1857. The aforementioned theatrical pursuits have delved into the examination of religious identities within their respective historical frameworks.

An important theatrical approach involves prioritizing communal harmony, a prevalent theme in Indian street theatre for numerous years. Furthermore, following the Babri Masjid dispute and the consequent communal unrest, the theatre industry has been confronted with the significant repercussions of these incidents on marginalized communities. The inquiry into the gendered aspects of communal violence and its intersections with nation, religion, and caste has been explored by both male and female theatre practitioners.

The cultural significance of regional identity, which is frequently associated with language, has been profound in India. The examination of the dichotomy between "national" theatre and regional flavors has been subject to critical scrutiny by theatre practitioners, with a particular focus on the perspectives of women. Despite the considerable linguistic, performative, and ethnic heterogeneity that characterizes India,

Hindi and English remain the predominant national languages, relegating other regional theaters to the status of "regional flavor." The practice of women in theatre has provided valuable insights into the discourse surrounding the dichotomy of nation and region. Significant contributions have been made by theatre originating from the northeast region, specifically Manipur, where identity concerns are intertwined with violence and the existence of armed militant factions. The complexities have been brought to the forefront by female actors such as Sabitri Kanhailal.

The present research investigates the reactions of female theatre practitioners towards the identities that are molded by their religious and regional affiliations, while taking into account the contextual factors that impact their artistic presentations. In addition to analyzing the theatrical content, this inquiry delves into the political circumstances that surround these productions, elucidating their influence not only on the artistic elements but also on the entirety of the theatrical procedure, encompassing actor instruction and workshop methodologies. The objective of this study is to examine the complex interplay between identity, theatre, and politics through an exploration of transgender performance. The research seeks to provide a more profound comprehension of the transgender community's capacity for transformation through the medium of performance.

4.12. CONCLUSION

"Through the language of movement, dance whispers the untold stories of the heart, painting emotions upon the canvas of time"(Seth, 25)

India is a developing country; progressive legislation is required in which all people are treated as similarly as possible and given equal opportunity to contribute to the nation's future growth and development. The nation is required. India has finally repealed one of the most discriminating laws enacted during the Victorian period. However, same-sex marriage is still prohibited.

These discussions about representation, as well as the attendant calls for more compassion and subtlety in depictions of gender-diverse characters, are vital and crucial. Tran's persons have the same right as everyone else to have themselves portrayed in mainstream media. Tran's characters in popular films and television also have a significant burden since negative depictions may fuel the fires of real-world transphobia. Despite the fact that harmful on-screen stereotypes exclusively impact transgender individuals.

To successfully eradicate this stigma from society, it is proposed that awareness programs concerning this segment of society be done to encourage inclusion. Transgender people are accepted in mainstream culture. Such camps should be held in schools, communities, and colleges, among other places. It is also advised that the issue of transgender people and their rights be incorporated in the school curriculum. Young pupils must comprehend the situation of transgender people and the discrimination they experience through no fault of their own. This will sensitize kids to all aspects of society from the start of their lives.

Here are some solutions to help transgender body performers.

1. Promote Inclusion and Diversity: Dance companies and organizations can promote inclusion and diversity by actively seeking out transgender performers and creating safe and supportive environments for them to work in.

2. Educate and Sensitize: Providing education and sensitivity training for dance professionals, audiences, and other stakeholders can help to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and stigma towards transgender performers.

3. Support Networks: Building support networks for transgender performers can help to create a sense of community and support, as well as provide access to resources and information to help them navigate the challenges they may face.

4. Address the Male Gaze: Dance companies and choreographers can take steps to address the issue of the male gaze by developing more diverse and inclusive representations of gender in dance. This can include creating new works that challenge traditional gender norms and exploring new approaches to movement and performance.

5. Access to Healthcare: Transgender performers may require specialized healthcare, including access to hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries. Providing access to affordable and appropriate healthcare can help to support the physical and emotional well-being of transgender performers.

6. Legal Protections: Advocating for legal protections for transgender performers can help to ensure their rights are protected and they are not discriminated against in the workplace.

7. Gender-Affirming Policies: Dance companies and organizations can develop gender-affirming policies to ensure that transgender performers are treated with dignity and respect. This can include policies around dress codes, bathroom access, and pronoun usage.

8. Mental Health Support: Transgender performers may experience mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Providing access to mental health support can help to ensure their emotional well-being is supported.

CHAPTER 5

GAZE ANALYSIS RELATING TO FEMALE BODY PERFORMERS

5.1. OVERVIEW OF THIS CHAPTER

The study of gaze, or the direction of a person's visual attention, has been an important area of research in a number of academic fields, including psychology, sociology, and media studies. There has been a growing preoccupation with the viewer's gaze in recent years, particularly in relation to female body performers.

One branch of study investigates the gaze behavior of women while appraising female bodies. According to study, women tend to focus on several aspects of a female body, such as the apparel worn by the performer, body size, personal body composition, and bodily pleasure. Women who are dissatisfied with their own bodies, for example, tend to focus more on the body size and shape of the body performer, while women who are happy with their own bodies prefer to concentrate more on the clothing worn by the performer. These findings suggest that women's staring behavior is influenced by their view of their own bodies and beauty standards.

The effect of objectifying gaze on the cognitive performance of women is another subject of research. Objectifying gaze refers to the way in which a person's gaze might reduce a woman to her physical appearance, as opposed to her other qualities. Exposure to objectifying gaze has been shown to result in negative outcomes, such as decreased cognitive performance, increased body shame, and decreased self-esteem. The internalization of beauty ideals and the pressure to comply to unachievable beauty standards are responsible for these effects.

In recent years, the concept of the female gaze has grown, challenging the traditional notion of the male gaze in media and the visual arts. The male gaze describes how media and visual arts are created from a male perspective, sexualizing and objectifying women. The female gaze emphasizes the autonomy and subjectivity of female characters and performers.

Overall, the study on gaze in relation to female body performers highlights the need of understanding how visual attention and perception are influenced by a variety of factors, including as body image, beauty standards, and gender norms. In order to challenge existing gender norms and prejudices, it also highlights the need for more diverse and inclusive portrayals of women in the media and visual arts.

This chapter explores the complex social dynamics involved in the performances of female body artists, where a range of social signals, including gaze, facial expressions, dialogue, and gestures, are significant. The chapter emphasizes the need of keeping eye contact between the performer and the audience for effectively expressing the artist's intentions. Female body performers must interact well with their audiences in order to get the desired effect. This chapter highlights the dual significance of eye contact in establishing rapport with an audience.

An essential aspect of comprehending dancer feelings and audience perceptions during performances is the investigation of gaze. Existentialist and phenomenological researchers have made significant contributions to the concept of gaze by defining and investigating its social repercussions. Being and Nothingness, a notable essay by Jean-Paul Sartre, presents a detailed account of the gaze, informally known as "the stare." Similarly, Discipline and Punish: The Origins of the Prison by Michel Foucault examines

the "panopticon" gaze in institutional settings. This study aims to examine the application of the gaze concept within the setting of dance performance.

According to the Collins Dictionary, a stare is the act of staring intensely, with wonder or astonishment, and it may also apply to the item being watched. Gazing is a gender-neutral habit that both sexes may perform. There are two separate sorts of sight, according to Jeremy Hawthorn: literal and metaphysical. Typically, the conventional concept of "point of view" refers to narrative tactics, providing a visual representation of the levels of consciousness presented in a literary work.

Women's bodies have been exposed to the male gaze in art, film, and other forms of media for centuries. The authors discuss how women have used their gaze to assert their autonomy and combat objectification. In addition, they examine the function of the gaze in relation to issues of power, racism, and representation. This dissertation concludes by emphasizing the significance of closely evaluating the role of the gaze in shaping our impressions of the female body.

The study of gaze has ramifications for several fields, including media portrayal, body image, and gender roles. For instance, media portrayals of women have been condemned for maintaining unattainable beauty standards and objectifying women via the male gaze. The study of gaze behavior may help us comprehend how media portrayals influence how we see and judge the bodies of women.

In addition, the study of gaze behavior might help us comprehend the social and cultural influences on our perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. Studies have shown, for instance, that individuals from various cultures have varying attractiveness standards, which might impact their gaze behavior. In certain cultures, a greater body size is considered more beautiful, whilst in others, a smaller body size is favored. These cultural variations in beauty standards might influence how individuals judge and view female body performance.

In addition, the research of gaze might inform treatments designed to promote body positivity and reduce the negative consequences of objectifying gaze. Some studies have demonstrated, for instance, that treatments that encourage women to concentrate on their talents and accomplishments rather than their beauty might mitigate the detrimental impacts of objectifying gaze. Other treatments, such as media literacy training, may assist people in recognizing and resisting objectifying media messages.

Yet, the study of gazing has its limits and difficulties. The difficulties of assessing gaze behavior in a natural context is a hurdle. Conventional techniques for assessing gaze activity, such as eye-tracking technologies, are sometimes costly and need a controlled laboratory environment. In addition, it might be difficult to account for individual variations in gaze behavior and perception.

The potential for gaze research to propagate negative preconceptions and prejudices is a further drawback. Several studies, for example, have focused on the gaze behavior of males while assessing female bodies, which might promote the assumption that women's bodies are objects for men to examine. In addition, several studies have used language and terminology that objectifies and dehumanizes female body performers, which may reinforce damaging stereotypes and contribute to a culture of objectification.

In conclusion, the study of gaze behavior in connection to female body performers is a significant area of research with ramifications for a number of disciplines, including media studies, psychology, and sociology. The study of gaze may enrich our knowledge of the social and cultural elements that influence our perceptions of beauty and attractiveness, as well as treatments targeted at promoting body positivity and minimizing the negative consequences of objectifying gaze. Yet, it is essential to

approach the study of gaze with compassion and an understanding of the potential for damage and prejudice.

5.2. GAZE STUDY

Gaze is a potent kind of communication that may express emotions, intentions, and social clues. In the context of female body performers, gaze has been used to investigate the power, control, and objectification dynamics that might occur during live performances. Our gaze, a fundamental component of social cognition, influences the way we see and interact with others. It has been widely studied in the context of social knowledge, but its role in the context of female body performers is less understood. This thesis investigates the literature on gaze studies as they pertain to female body performers, emphasizing current limits and future research potential.

Many fields, including psychology, sociology, and media studies, are interested in the study of gaze behavior. Gaze is the direction and concentration of an individual's eyes, while gaze behavior relates to eye movements and fixation patterns. Many domains are affected by the research of gaze behavior, including social interaction, perception, and concentration. Regarding female body performers, extensive study has been undertaken on gaze behavior.

The study of gaze behavior in relation to female body performers has enormous implications for understanding the social and cultural factors that impact our views of attractiveness and beauty. According to research, while evaluating female body performances, persons tend to focus on certain body parts, such as the breasts and buttocks. In addition, research reveals that people tend to evaluate female body performers based mostly on their appearance as opposed to their talents or achievements.

The objectification of female body performers by the male gaze has been condemned for upholding unreachable beauty standards and contributing to body dissatisfaction and a negative body image. The male gaze refers to how the camera or viewer positions itself as a male observer of female bodies, perpetuating the idea that women's bodies are objects for men to evaluate. The study of gaze behavior might help us understand how objectifying gaze affects female body performers and how to reduce its negative effects.

The objectifying gaze of male viewers severely influenced the cognitive function of women, according to one study. Cognitive performance of female subjects exposed to the objectifying gaze of male viewers was worse than cognitive performance of female participants not exposed to the objectifying gaze. In addition, women who internalized beauty standards and were more likely to compare themselves to ideal female body performances were more susceptible to the negative effects of objectifying gaze.

According to another study, the female participants' staring habit was affected by their own body composition and physical pleasure. Female participants who were happier with their own bodies were less likely to focus on the breasts and buttocks of female body performers and more likely to focus on the face and hands. Furthermore, larger female participants tended to focus less on the breasts and buttocks of female body performers, indicating that their own body size influenced their gaze behavior.

The study of the gaze behavior of female body performers entails limitations and challenges. An obstacle is the difficulty of analyzing gaze behavior in a natural setting. Traditional methods for evaluating gaze activity, such as eye-tracking devices, may be expensive and need a controlled laboratory setting. Moreover, it may be challenging to account for individual differences in gaze behavior and perception.

The potential for gaze studies to perpetuate unfavorable stereotypes and biases is an additional disadvantage. Numerous studies, for instance, have examined the gaze

behavior of men when evaluating female bodies, which may contribute to the notion that women's bodies are objects for men to inspect. In addition, a number of studies have used language and terminology that objectifies and dehumanizes female body performers, which may lead to detrimental stereotypes and a culture of objectification.

The study of gaze behavior in relation to female body performers is an important topic of research having implications for a variety of fields, including media studies, psychology, and sociology. The study of gaze may increase our understanding of the social and cultural factors that impact our views of beauty and attractiveness, as well as interventions aimed at encouraging body positivity and mitigating the negative effects of objectifying gaze. Yet, it is necessary to approach the study of gaze with compassion and an awareness of the potential for harm and bias.

Much research on the use of gaze in live performances, notably dance and theater, have been undertaken. Several thinkers have employed eye-tracking technology to study the gaze behavior of contemporary dance audiences. They hypothesized that the performance's movement, emotion, and spatial dynamics affected the audience's gaze patterns. In the research, it was discovered that the spectators' gaze patterns were related to their degree of involvement, emotional arousal, and cognitive processing of the performance.

Gaze has been deployed to study the power dynamics that might occur in live performances involving female body performers in the setting of the gaze. The audience's gaze behavior when seeing a burlesque performance. According to the results, the majority of the audience's attention was focused on the portions of the artists' bodies that were highlighted by the costumes and dancing. The research also revealed that the performers used gaze to command the audience's attention and develop their own authority.

Notwithstanding the rich insights presented by these studies, the current research on gaze study in female body performers confronts a number of challenges and limitations. A lack of diversity among artists and listeners is one of the most serious problems. Most research have focused on cisgender female performers and heterosexual male audiences, limiting the generalizability of the results. There is also the potential for objectification and sexualization of the performers, which may be unethical. Eye-tracking technology has several technical limitations, including the difficulty of detecting rapid eye movements and the likelihood of calibration mistakes.

Future studies on gaze study in female body performers should aim to include a wider range of performers and audiences in order to overcome the limitations of the current research. This may include artists that are non-binary, trans, or queer, as well as audiences from diverse cultural, ethnic, and sexual backgrounds. In addition, future study should investigate the ethical implications of assessing gaze in live performances, as well as the agency and permission of the artists. Combining methods such as self-report surveys, interviews, and qualitative research may give a more comprehensive understanding of gaze dynamics during live performances.

Beyond standard ways of assessing eye movements and fixation, the study of gaze behavior in regard to female body performers has extended. Researchers are now able to examine gaze behavior in a more realistic manner, for as by simulating real-world surroundings using virtual reality technologies. Researchers may regulate the stimuli provided to participants and analyze their gaze behavior in a more ecologically relevant environment thanks to virtual reality technology.

In addition, the research of gaze behavior has broadened to include other types of gaze, such as the gaze of female viewers judging female body performers. The concept of the female gaze challenges the premise that only men can objectify female body

performances and perpetuate unattainable beauty standards. The female gaze refers to how female viewers may also objectify and judge female body performers depending on their attractiveness.

Female participants displayed objectifying gaze behavior while judging female body performers, although this behavior was modulated by their own body pleasure, according to one research. Female participants who were more happy with their own bodies focused less on the breasts and buttocks of female body performers and more on their face and hands. This shows that body satisfaction may impact how women perceive the bodies of other women.

In addition, the study of gaze behavior has grown beyond the conventional dichotomy of male and female viewers. Many research have investigated the gaze behavior of non-binary and gender non-conforming persons while assessing female body performers. Non-binary and gender non-conforming persons demonstrate a different gaze behavior than binary male and female viewers, according to these research.

One research indicated that non-binary individuals were less likely than male and female participants to fixate on the breasts and buttocks of female body performers. Yet, non-binary individuals were also more inclined to concentrate on the abdomen and legs. This shows that non-binary persons may evaluate female body performers with a different gaze behavior than binary male and female viewers.

The research of gaze behavior in connection to female body performers has grown to include sports and dancers, among other female body performers. According to studies, gaze behavior varies according on the sort of female body performer and the situation in which she is performing. Male participants demonstrated greater objectifying gaze behavior while judging female dancers than female athletes, according to one research.

Additionally, the effect of cultural influences on gaze behavior has been included into the research of gaze behavior. While analyzing female body performers, a number of studies have analyzed the gaze behavior of participants from various cultures. According to these research, gaze behavior varies based on cultural variables, such as the degree of gender equality in a community and the value put on physical attractiveness.

One research indicated that male participants from nations with more gender equality had less objectifying gaze behavior while judging female body performers than male participants from settings with less gender equality. This shows that cultural characteristics may affect how people judge female body performers, and that treatments targeted at decreasing objectifying gaze may need to take cultural variations into account.

In conclusion, the study of gaze behavior in female body performers is a complex and multidimensional field of study that has evolved beyond standard ways of detecting eye movements and fixation. The study of gaze behavior has consequences for comprehending the social and cultural elements that impact our sense of beauty and attractiveness, as well as for informing treatments designed to promote body positivity and reduce the negative effects of objectifying gaze.

Yet, it is essential to approach the research of gaze behavior with compassion and an understanding of the potential for damage and prejudice. The objectification of female body performers by males has been condemned for propagating damaging stereotypes and leading to body dissatisfaction and poor body image. The study of gaze behavior may assist us in comprehending how objectifying gaze impacts female body performers and how to mitigate its negative consequences.

5.3. MALE GAZE

From its introduction by cinema theorist Laura Mulvey in her 1975 work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the male gaze has been an important topic in media studies and feminist theory. The male gaze refers to the way in which media depictions of women are constructed from the perspective of a heterosexual male viewer, sustaining patriarchal power relations and objectifying women's bodies.

In advertising, film, and television, the male gaze is often associated with the objectification of women's bodies. This objectification is characterized by reducing women to their physical appearance and using their bodies for masculine enjoyment. In film and television, the camera often takes the perspective of a heterosexual male observer, objectifying female characters and encouraging male viewers to identify with the male protagonist who gazes at them.

The male gaze has been accused of establishing unreachable beauty standards and contributing to women's unhappiness with their bodies and negative body image. The presentation of women's bodies as objects for male consumption results in a culture in which women are valued primarily on the basis of their physical appearance, as opposed to their abilities, intelligence, or personality. This may lead to a range of negative outcomes, including eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression.

In addition, the male gaze has been blamed for perpetuating harmful stereotypes about women, such as the belief that women are weak and submissive and exist only for men's pleasure. The media's depiction of women as objects of desire for male consumption results in a culture in which women are seen as inferior to men and their experiences and perspectives are ignored or discarded.

While the male gaze is often associated with media depictions of women's bodies, it may also be applied to other cultural and social factors. For instance, the male gaze may be seen in the way women are expected to perform femininity in their everyday lives, in accordance with male-constructed norms of beauty and behaviour. In male-dominated professions such as politics and business, the male gaze is also visible in the stifling of women's voices.

Also, the male gaze may be seen in the manner in which guys are constructed as objects of the gaze in media and popular culture. The objectification of male bodies in the media, such as the use of shirtless male models in advertising and the depiction of male bodies as objects of desire in popular culture, may also perpetuate harmful stereotypes and result in body dissatisfaction and poor body image among men.

The critique of the male gaze has prompted a range of countermeasures and efforts to promote more favorable depictions of women and men in media and popular culture. One intervention is using feminist media criticism to assess media portrayals of women and criticize how they are constructed from a male perspective. This method seeks to raise awareness of how media images contribute to harmful gender stereotypes and to promote more positive and empowering depictions of women.

Another approach is the use of alternative media and representation, such as the development of feminist media and the use of social media to promote more diverse and inclusive images of women and men. These projects aim to challenge the hegemony of traditional media and provide alternative platforms for the dissemination of diverse perspectives and experiences.

Finally, interventions meant to enhance media literacy and critical thinking may help individuals recognize and counteract the negative effects of the male gaze in media and popular culture. These interventions may promote more positive and empowering views

of women and men in media and popular culture by educating individuals to evaluate media portrayals critically and recognize the ways in which they perpetuate negative gender stereotypes.

In her 1975 work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," cinema historian and feminist Laura Mulvey introduced the concept of masculine gaze for the first time. The male gaze refers to the widespread adoption of a male perspective by the camera and the objectification of the female body, which puts women as objects of desire for male viewers. This principle applies to a variety of mediums, including as film, advertising, and photography. Despite widespread criticism of the male gaze for propagating damaging stereotypes and objectifying women, there is a growing interest in different perspectives, such as the female gaze.

The concept describes how media depictions of women are often formed from a male viewpoint, objectifying women and highlighting their physical attractiveness. Since then, the concept of male gaze has been expanded to include a broader spectrum of media, such as advertising, music videos, and video games, and it has been used to condemn the objectification and commercialization of women in media.

In academic circles, the male gaze has been widely debated, and several studies have been conducted, including research on the male gaze's impact on the female body. Examining the link between male gaze and perception of female body images may reveal that exposure to objectified or sexualized media portrayals of women might result in negative body image, eating disorders, and other mental health problems. Males who saw sexualized images of women were more likely to objectify them and see them as sexual objects, as opposed to thinking, feeling, and autonomous persons. The study also revealed that males who were exposed to non-sexualized images of women were more inclined to regard women as autonomous individuals and had fewer objectifying attitudes about women. Recent feminist analyses of visual material have centered on the concept of "the male gaze," which typically includes themes such as voyeurism, objectification, fetishization, the enjoyment of looking, the representation of women as objects of male pleasure, and the notion that women are perceived as lacking something that men have.

The male gaze persists in media depictions of women despite their harmful repercussions. In films rated G, PG, andPG-13, male characters appeared about twice as often as female characters, while female characters were more likely to be sexualized and objectified. The poll also found that female characters were more likely than male ones to be shown with sexualized clothing and mannerisms.

In response to the detrimental impacts of the male gaze, there is a growing media movement to promote more positive depictions of women. Feminist activists, scholars, and artists who advocate for more diverse and inclusive media portrayals of women have advanced this movement.

negative repercussions for women and men Its effects may be seen in the media's representation of women's bodies as objects for male consumption, the perpetuation of unrealistic beauty standards and harmful stereotypes, and the silencing of women's voices in professions dominated by males.

Feminist media criticism, the production of feminist media, the use of social media for a more diverse and inclusive portrayal, and the promotion of media literacy and critical thinking skills are key interventions for overcoming the negative effects of the male gaze. These programs promote more positive and influential portrayals of women and men in the media and popular culture, so contributing to the creation of a more equitable society.

To resist the male gaze, feminist media criticism is an essential tactic. It is a method to media analysis that tries to raise awareness of how media portrayals reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and encourage more positive and empowering views of women.

Feminist media criticism may be used to a range of media genres, including film, television, advertising, and music videos, and can help individuals acquire a critical understanding of how media shapes our perceptions of gender.

The notion of the male gaze is one of the most important breakthroughs of feminist media criticism. Laura Mulvey's work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" created the concept of the male gaze as a method of understanding how cinema develops the female character as an object for male consumption through the male gaze. Since then, the word has been used to other media types and has become a central notion in feminist media criticism.

The creation of feminist media is a critical extra step for rejecting the patriarchal gaze. The goal of feminist media is to generate more positive and empowering images of women and to challenge the dominance of traditional media by creating alternative platforms for the expression of diverse views and experiences. Independent films, blogs, zines, and social media accounts are all examples of feminist media.

In addition, feminist media may serve as a venue for marginalized voices and ideas that are often omitted from mainstream media. For example, feminist media may provide a platform for women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities to express their experiences and perspectives. By creating more diverse and inclusive depictions, feminist media may counteract the harmful consequences of the male gaze and contribute to a more equitable and fair society.

In addition, social media has emerged as an important tool for combating the macho gaze and promoting more varied and inclusive portrayals. Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have allowed users to convey their own experiences and perspectives, as well as counteract harmful gender stereotypes and media representations of women and men.

Social media enables individuals to organize and mobilize around gender and representation issues, as well as hold media producers and marketers accountable for perpetuating harmful stereotypes. The #MeToo movement, which began as a social media hashtag, drew attention to the pervasive problem of sexual harassment and assault in male-dominated sectors, such as the media and entertainment industries.

Promoting media literacy and critical thinking is an important tactic for fighting the patriarchal gaze. Media literacy is the ability to analyze and grasp media messages critically, as well as to understand how media impacts our worldviews. Media literacy may aid individuals in detecting the negative effects of the male gaze in media and popular culture and in confronting harmful gender stereotypes and depictions.

Interventions in media literacy may include media literacy instruction in schools, seminars and training programs for media producers and marketers, and the development of media literacy tools for individuals and communities. Through promoting media literacy and critical thought, individuals may become more empowered and more equipped to counteract the negative effects of the male gaze in media and popular culture.

The male gaze is pervasive and detrimental in media and popular culture.

5.4.   ABHIGYAN SHAKUNTALAM AND MALE GAZE

The ancient Sanskrit drama Abhigyan Shakuntalam by Kalidasa is one of the best examples of Indian literature. The narrative centers on King Dushyanta's emotions for Shakuntala, a beautiful forest dweller he encounters. Despite its antiquity, the play addresses several contemporary concerns, such as the position of women and the masculine gaze. We will explore how the male gaze fosters gender stereotypes and inequalities in Abhigyan Shakuntalam.

In feminist theory, the masculine gaze is a concept that has gotten a great deal of attention. It refers to how women are objectified and sexualized via the gaze of male viewers in art and media. The male gaze may be present not just in visual media, but also in written works such as Abhigyan Shakuntalam. When King Dushyanta first sees Shakuntala, the masculine gaze is evident throughout the play.

When Dushyanta first meets Shakuntala in the jungle, he is captivated by her beauty and falls in love with her. This initial encounter between Dushyanta and Shakuntala is meant to emphasize Dushyanta's perspective and appearance. The play says how Dushyanta "gazed at her" and was "seized with affection for her," highlighting Shakuntala's objectification and reduction to a target of the male gaze.

Shakuntala's presentation in the first act is one of the most stunning instances of the masculine gaze in the play. The king Dushyanta encounters Shakuntala while hunting in the wilderness. He is instantly captivated by her attractiveness and overcome with desire for her. He asks, "Who is this nymph, so fair, so sweet, and so beautiful, as if fashioned by the creative force of love itself?" Thus, Shakuntala is reduced to a mere object of desire, with her worth based only on her physical looks.

Shakuntala is susceptible to the masculine gaze of the other male characters throughout the play. Kanva, the recluse, calls her a "radiant beauty," while Dushyanta calls her a "heavenly nymph" and a "jewel among women." These descriptions emphasize the notion that Shakuntala's most valued attribute is her beauty, and that her main role is to be the object of male desire.

In addition, Shakuntala fosters gender stereotypes and discrimination. Shakuntala is portrayed as a beautiful, chaste woman who is entirely devoted to her husband. She lacks autonomy and is subject to the whims and wishes of the male characters in the drama. Shakuntala's job is to be beautiful and submissive, and her value is based only on her appearance to men.

The masculine gaze is also clear in the drama's description of Shakuntala. Her physical attractiveness is the focal point of the majority of the play, and she is often described as gorgeous and alluring. This fosters the assumption that women's value is based on their physical appearance and ability to attract men. Thus, the male gaze in Abhigyan Shakuntalam reinforces gender stereotypes and inequalities, as well as the assumption that women are objects to be seen and desired by men. Abhijnanasakuntalam is a captivating examination of the gender relations of ancient Indian culture. Shakuntala is presented in the play as an object of desire and allure, whose beauty and allure are often complimented by male characters. Shakuntala's representation in the play offers a unique lens for examining the idea of the masculine gaze.

Male gaze and Abhigyan Shakuntalam share a complicated connection. Although the play highlights Shakuntala's spiritual beauty and connection to nature, it also promotes conventional gender roles and expectations.

Examining the several adaptations and interpretations of the play reveals that the male gaze is often evident in Shakuntala's visual representation, with artists and directors opting to emphasize her physical beauty and sensuality. Nonetheless, there have also been efforts to defy the patriarchal gaze and portray Shakuntala as a multifaceted and assertive heroine.

It is essential to analyze the effect of the male gaze on the depiction of female characters in literature and the arts, since it may perpetuate damaging stereotypes and objectification. By identifying and resisting the male gaze, we may encourage media depictions of women that are more varied and complex.

Abhigyan Shakuntalam ultimately provides a fascinating investigation of topics relating to environment, spirituality, and gender roles, and its ongoing popularity and relevance today indicate its lasting effect on Indian literature and culture.

In conclusion, the link between Abhigyan Shakuntalam and the idea of masculine gaze is complicated. Although the play highlights Shakuntala's spiritual beauty and connection to nature, it also promotes conventional gender roles and expectations.

The drama by Kalidasa narrates the tale of Shakuntala, a young lady reared by hermit sages in the jungle. She falls in love with King Dushyanta, who is hunting in the forest, and they marry in secret before he has return to his realm. Shakuntala conceives and gives birth to their son, but when she attempts to show herself to the monarch, he does not recognize her and rejects her. After a series of hardships, he remembers their love and reunites with Shakuntala and their child.

There are instances of the masculine gaze throughout the play, notably in how Shakuntala is shown visually. In the classic paintings of Shakuntala by Raja Ravi Varma, for instance, she is often represented in exposing clothes and placed in a manner that emphasizes her physical attractiveness and sensuality. This form of portrayal perpetuates the notion that a woman's worth is entirely based on her physical beauty and looks.

Nonetheless, there have also been efforts to defy the patriarchal gaze and portray Shakuntala as a multifaceted and assertive heroine. Shakuntala is presented as a strong-willed, independent woman who opposes established gender norms and expectations in several contemporary renditions of the play. In a recent gay rendition of the play, for instance, Shakuntala is presented as a lesbian who falls for a woman.

Consider the influence of the masculine gaze on the depiction of female characters in literature and the arts. The male gaze refers to how media is often produced and consumed from the viewpoint of heterosexual males, which may result in damaging stereotypes and objectification of women. When female characters are shown largely as objects of male desire, this perpetuates the notion that women exist exclusively for the enjoyment of men, as opposed to as complicated persons with their own ideas and wants.

In Abhigyan Shakuntalam, the masculine gaze is evident not just in the visual representation of Shakuntala, but also in the power relations between Shakuntala and Dushyanta. Shakuntala is shown as the fragile lady who must prove herself to Dushyanta, who is portrayed as the strong monarch with the ability to reject her. This perpetuates conventional gender norms and expectations, in which males are supposed to be strong and dominating and women to be subservient and dependent.

Nonetheless, the drama also highlights Shakuntala's spiritual beauty and her relationship to nature. The hermit sages who nurture her in the forest admire her spiritual talents, and she is shown as having a close relationship with the natural world. This illustrates a new form of beauty that is not based on physical attractiveness or masculine desire, but rather on an individual's inner traits and connectedness to the environment.

It is crucial to detect and resist the male gaze in media because it perpetuates damaging stereotypes and objectification of women. By encouraging more varied and nuanced depictions of women in literature and the arts, we can combat these detrimental conventions and create a more equal and just society.

In addition, it is essential to realize the significance of intersectionality while examining the masculine gaze. Women who are members of disadvantaged groups, such as women of color or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender women, may see the male gaze differently from white, cisgender women. Women of color may be subject to different beauty standards or stereotypes than white women, which may influence how they are depicted in the media.

Overall, Abhigyan Shakuntalam provides a captivating account.

5.5. INDIAN FILM AND THE EYE

Bollywood, or Indian film, has been criticized for the way it portrays women and perpetuates the male gaze. The male gaze refers to how films and other media are made from the perspective of a heterosexual man, sexualizing and objectifying women as objects of male desire. This is not an issue exclusive to Indian film, but it has developed as an industry-wide worry.

Traditionally, several Indian films portrayed women as objects to be desired and owned by men, rather than as complex creatures with their own desires. Women are thus objectified, sexualized, and reduced to their physical appearance. In addition, the male gaze has led to a dearth of women in positions of control and influence within the industry.

In recent years, Indian film has been more mindful of the detrimental effects of the male gaze on women. Several directors have attempted to counteract this tendency by creating films with strong, independent female protagonists who are not defined by their relationships with men. These films typically highlight gender inequality, sexual harassment, and patriarchal processes that sustain the masculine gaze.

Alankrita Shrivastava's "Lipstick Under My Burkha" is one of the most notable instances of an Indian film that addresses the male gaze. The film follows four women of diverse backgrounds as they struggle to live in a world that opposes female empowerment. The video challenges established gender norms and stereotypes, demonstrating how women are usually compelled to adhere to societal ideals of what it means to be a "nice woman."

Sujoy Ghosh's "Kahaani" is another film that confronts the patriarchal perspective in Indian cinema. The film follows pregnant Vidya Bagchi as she searches Kolkata for her absent husband. The film disrupts the conventional gender roles of male protector and female victim by depicting Vidya as a strong and resourceful heroine who is capable of defending herself from the dangers she meets.

In conclusion, the male gaze has always been an issue in Indian film, continuing the objectification and sexualization of women on screen. Although films starring strong, assertive female characters have made gains in challenging the male gaze, there is still a great deal of work to be done to create a more equitable and inclusive industry. We may strive toward a future in which the male gaze is no longer dominant in Indian film by emphasizing the perspectives and experiences of women and establishing a more diverse and representative industry.

5.6. MOVIE DANCE SCENE AND GAZE

In spite of this, the depiction of women and their bodies in Indian film has been the subject of much discussion and criticism. The objectification of women in Indian film has been an issue for quite some time. Male gaze refers to the camera's and the director's mostly male viewpoint on the subject, and it depicts women from a masculine standpoint.

While various songs in the early and mid-1990s fit the definition of an item number, the term became popularized when Shilpa Shetty danced to "Main Aai Hoon UP Bihar Lootne" in the film Shool. This may be the first time the media has referred to Shetty as a "item girl" and the scene as a "item number."

Item songs are among the most prominent instances of male gaze in Indian film. The majority of Indian films have item songs, which are commonly used to advertise the film. The purpose of item songs, which often include a woman dancing seductively in

exposing apparel, is to build buzz and attract listeners. These songs are not essential to the storyline and serve as a diversion. The ladies in these songs are usually portrayed as sexual objects, with the camera regularly zooming in on their waists, hips, and breasts.

From a feminist perspective, item songs maintain patriarchal standards and promote stereotypes. In these songs, women are typically portrayed as submissive and docile, while males are portrayed as strong and domineering. The camera's focus on the women's bodies and apparel lends credence to the idea that a woman's value is contingent on her physical appearance. The male gaze has been a significant issue in Indian film, particularly in the depiction of women in item songs. Yet, as feminism has grown in favor, the portrayal of item songs in Indian film has changed. Filmmakers are pushing conventional norms by crafting songs that empower women, enabling them to express themselves and claim control over their bodies. Maintaining this trend and promoting good female representation in Indian film is crucial.

5.7. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

Businesses utilize advertising as a potent promotional tool for their goods and services. It has become a fundamental component of contemporary civilization, and its influence on our everyday lives cannot be overstated. From billboards and posters to TV advertisements and social media, advertising is everywhere. The depiction of women is one of the most prevalent motifs in advertising. For decades, women have been employed in advertising, and their portrayal has evolved throughout time. This article will examine the depiction of women in advertising, including the prevalence of stereotypes and their effect on society.

For decades, the representation of women in advertising has been a contentious topic. Women have been used in numerous ways to advertise items, ranging from sexual attractiveness to maternal nurture. The most prevalent female stereotypes in advertising are the hapless victim, the sexual object, and the domestic goddess. The helpless victim is a stereotype that depicts women as weak and defenseless, often requiring a man's rescue. This stereotype is often used in advertisements for cleaning goods, in which the lady is represented as incapable of cleaning the home without the aid of the promoted product. The sex object stereotype is another popular depiction of women in advertising, in which women are utilized to promote things unrelated to their sexuality. This stereotype is often seen in advertisements for automobiles and beer, when scantily dressed women are exploited to lure male buyers. Lastly, the domestic goddess stereotype depicts women as ideal housewives who are always prepared to cook and clean for their families. This stereotype is often used in advertisements for kitchen equipment and cleaning supplies.

These prejudices have a substantial influence on society. They spread negative beliefs about women and support conventional gender norms. For instance, the helpless victim stereotype implies that women are incapable of caring for themselves. This might result in a loss of confidence and a feeling of powerlessness among women. The sex object stereotype fosters the notion that women are something that men seek. This may contribute to a lack of respect for women and sexual harassment or assault. The domestic goddess stereotype perpetuates the notion that women should be responsible for all housework and childrearing. This may contribute to the devaluation of women in the workplace and a lack of work-life balance.

Notwithstanding the detrimental consequences of these stereotypes, they are nevertheless used in advertising today. Nonetheless, contemporary advertising trends have shifted toward more powerful depictions of women. Several businesses see the need to abandon outdated gender stereotypes and employ women in more varied and powerful capacities. Ads showing female athletes or women in leadership roles, for instance, are becoming

increasingly prevalent. These depictions assist in challenging established gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality.

The influence of advertising on society cannot be denied. It influences our attitudes, beliefs, and actions. The image of women in advertising has a substantial influence on society, and it is crucial that we remain aware of the prejudices that are being reinforced. We must combat these preconceptions and encourage commercial depictions of women that are more varied and inspiring. This may assist in dismantling conventional gender norms and advancing gender equality.

The representation of women in advertising has been a contentious subject for decades. The most prevalent stereotypes are the hapless victim, the sex object, and the domestic goddess. These preconceptions have a deleterious effect on society, spreading damaging assumptions about women and conventional gender roles. Nonetheless, contemporary advertising trends have shifted toward more powerful depictions of women. It is crucial that we confront these preconceptions and encourage commercial depictions of women that are more varied and powerful. This may assist in dismantling conventional gender norms and advancing gender equality.

The representation of women in advertising is not restricted to stereotyped images of their physical appearance or gender roles; it also takes into account their worth as customers. In several adverts, women are portrayed as passive customers who are readily influenced by marketing strategies and targeted for items that promote gender stereotypes. This is evident in marketing for cleaning products, cosmetics, and other domestic goods that promote the conventional gender roles of women as homemakers and caregivers.

This is shown by the "Damsel in Distress" stereotype, which depicts women as weak and in need of male rescue. This cliche has been used in advertising for things as diverse as automobiles, beer, and video games. By employing this cliche, marketers perpetuate damaging gender stereotypes that women are weak and need the assistance of males.

In recent years, there has been a movement for advertising to be more diverse and inclusive. This covers the portrayal of women of various ethnicities, physical kinds, and skills. Nonetheless, despite these attempts, negative representations of women continue to exist in commercials. For instance, the use of sexualized pictures of women to market items may propagate detrimental gender stereotypes and objectify women.

The representation of women in advertising has been found to have detrimental impacts on women's self-esteem and body image. For instance, a research published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology indicated that exposure to advertising depicting slender and beautiful women decreased women's body satisfaction and increased their internalization of beauty ideals. Similarly, a research published in the journal Psychology of Women Quarterly indicated that women's cognitive function reduced after exposure to objectifying commercials.

Nonetheless, there have also been campaigns to empower women and challenge established gender norms via advertising. This is shown by Always's "Like a Girl" campaign, which intended to reinterpret the word "like a girl" as a positive affirmation of power and competence. The campaign's optimistic message and attempts to overcome gender stereotypes garnered worldwide notice and acclaim.

In conclusion, the depiction of women in advertising has been a difficult and persistent concern. Despite attempts to increase representation and combat negative gender stereotypes, poor images of women in ads continue to exist. It is crucial for marketers to be aware of the effect their messages may have on women's self-esteem and body image, and to utilize their platform to promote diversity and empower women.

The sexualization and objectification of women's bodies in advertising is another problem with the representation of women in advertising. Numerous commercials depict women in provocative positions, sometimes while wearing exposing attire, and as sexual objects rather as autonomous humans with inherent worth. This fosters negative cultural beliefs that consider women as objects for the consumption and enjoyment of males, as opposed to fully developed human beings.

Both women and men are negatively affected by this form of sexual objectification in advertising, according to studies. Exposure to objectifying commercials might result in poor self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders among women. Males exposed to such commercials may be more inclined to regard women as objects and participate in sexual harassment and assault.

The impact of sexual objectification in advertising may be especially severe for young girls, who are continually assaulted with unattainable and damaging ideals of sexuality and beauty. This may result in a multitude of undesirable results, such as early sexualization, body shame, and the development of eating disorders.

There has been a rising movement in recent years to combat the sexualization and objectification of women in advertising. Several corporations have started to design advertising that are more inclusive and varied, portraying women as whole, multifaceted beings rather than sexual objects. There has also been a drive for more regulation of advertising material to avoid the dissemination of damaging messages.

This is shown by the "Truth in Advertising" campaign, which aims to address the detrimental effects of advertising on body image and self-esteem. This movement has campaigned for more openness in advertising and stricter rules to prohibit the promotion of unattainable and destructive images of sexuality and beauty.

The "Unstereotype Alliance" is another example of a worldwide campaign sponsored by the United Nations to remove damaging stereotypes in advertising and other kinds of media. The project unites a coalition of businesses, organizations, and people dedicated to fostering a more inclusive and fair media ecosystem.

In conclusion, the depiction of women in advertising has a major effect on our culture, impacting how we see women, their bodies, and their positions in society. Although there have been some encouraging changes in recent years, there is still a great deal of work to be done to eliminate the damaging stereotypes and objectification of women in advertising. We can strive towards a more equal and just society for everyone by supporting more varied and inclusive depictions of women and stricter restrictions to avoid damaging messaging.

5.8. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER

"She was tired of being seen through the lens of the male gaze, her worth reduced to a mere object of desire."(Atwood, 101)

The study of gaze has been a crucial component of comprehending visual culture, power relations, and the depiction of diverse media types. It represents the values, attitudes, and beliefs of society. Individuals and organizations, especially women, people of color, and oppressed communities, may be objectified, commodified, and stereotyped through the gaze. But, it may also be used to undermine dominant narratives, challenge stereotypical assumptions, and empower people and communities.

The widespread effect of the male gaze is shown through the study of gaze in relation to female body performers. Women are often objectified and reduced to their physical appearance, resulting in negative outcomes such as low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and cognitive impairment. Using technology like eye-tracking equipment, researchers

have been able to study gaze patterns and identify problematic regions in advertising and media that promote objectification and reinforce detrimental gender stereotypes.

Nonetheless, it is essential to understand that women equally internalize and reinforce the male gaze, underlining the necessity for an united effort to fight and eradicate detrimental cultural norms. In order to create a more equal and empowered society, efforts to promote body positivity, diversity, and inclusion through advertising and the media may go a long way.

However, the study of gaze has consequences that extend beyond the media image of women. It may also be used to other domains, such as education, where the gaze of professors and peers can affect academic achievement and future chances for students, especially those from underprivileged groups. Also, the study of gaze may give information on the power dynamics between people and their influence on social interactions and relationships.

In addition, the study of gaze in connection to female body performers is an important field of research that shows the need for increased awareness and action in promoting gender equality and removing detrimental social norms. By identifying and resisting the masculine gaze, we may build a society that is more egalitarian and empowering for everyone.

In addition, gaze research has investigated the impact of the objectifying gaze on the cognitive performance of women. A research by Gervais, Vescio, and Allen(2011) indicated that women who internalized conventional beauty standards performed lower on a mathematics exam when they were the object of an objectifying gaze. The research indicates that the objectifying gaze might impair women's cognitive ability, especially if they have absorbed society's limited beauty standards.

In addition, the study indicates that a performer's attire might affect how the audience perceives them. Mulvey(1999) discovered that a performer's attire might alter how the audience views her and contribute to the objectification of women. In contrast, Moriarty and Kenny (2018) discovered that female performers may also utilize clothes as a strategy for empowerment and self-expression.

In conclusion, gaze studies studying the interaction between the female body performer and the audience have highlighted how cultural norms, gender roles, and power dynamics influence the objectification and sexualization of women in a variety of performance circumstances. By understanding the role of the gaze in these circumstances, it is feasible to create more fair and respectful conditions for women in the performing arts. The study has significant consequences for performers, producers, and viewers alike, and highlights the need for continual debate and critical reflection on how women's bodies are portrayed and seen in our culture. By actively influencing our collective vision, we may ultimately aspire to build a more fair and equal society for everyone.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND SELF ANALYSIS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Performance art has developed into a potent vehicle for creative expression and social norm challenging. Yet body performers—particularly female performers—face a particular set of difficulties. These difficulties vary from the physical and emotional demands of their performances to cultural expectations of women's bodies. This essay will look at the difficulties body performers confront and how they deal with them. The connection of gender and performance art will also be covered, along with how it influences female performers.

Female performers have long faced significant difficulties as a result of societal expectations about the feminine physique. Women are sometimes pressured to adhere to unreasonable and unrealistic physical ideals. For female performers, who are expected to have a certain appearance and body, this pressure is considerably greater. Female performers who experience this pressure often develop eating problems and body dysmorphia. Female performers must accept their bodies and understand that they are a tool for their work if they are to overcome this obstacle.

Especially for body performers, performances may be physically and emotionally taxing. These artists often have to put up with hours of physical anguish and suffering. Also, these performances need a lot of emotional energy since the performers must engage the audience and use their skills to communicate a message. Performers need a strong support system, both physically and emotionally, to overcome these obstacles. This might include getting enough rest, food, and recuperation.

The confluence of gender and performance art presents female performers with a particular set of obstacles. Women have always been sexualized and objectified in society, and performance art is no different. Often, female performers must contend with sexism, harassment, and objectification. They are often evaluated solely on their looks rather than their ability. This may discourage female performers and reduce their possibilities. To overcome this difficulty, female artists must advocate for equal chances and respect. It is also essential to have more women in the arts and entertainment industries.

Body performers encounter a unique set of obstacles, but many have discovered methods to overcome them. Female performers have begun to build their own platforms and chances to display their ability. In addition, they have begun to question conventional conventions and expectations around the female form. Body performers have also begun to collaborate to develop a mutual support system. This has resulted in a more welcoming and encouraging community of performers.

Body performers, particularly female body performers, confront a unique set of obstacles. These obstacles include cultural expectations of the feminine physique and the physical and emotional demands of their performances. The interplay of gender and performance art presents female performers with additional obstacles. But, with tenacity, support, and dedication, many artists have discovered solutions to overcome these obstacles. The arts and entertainment business must continue to encourage and elevate body performers, particularly female performers.

6.2. IDENTITY OF BODY PERFORMERS IN THEATRE

For many years, body performers have played a key role in theater. They express themselves via their body, often going beyond what is permissible on stage. Body actors in theater confront particular difficulties since they must balance the emotional and physical demands of their performances while also upholding societal and audience expectations.

The possibility of damage is one of the difficulties body actors in theater encounter. Acrobatics, aerial work, and physical contortion are common in performances and may result in mishaps and injury. In order to lower the chance of damage, body performers must be physically fit and have the necessary training, although mishaps may still occur.

The strain on one's emotions while performing is another difficulty. In order to generate powerful performances, body performers often need to dive deeply into their emotions. Performers must take care of their mental health to prevent burnout since this may be extremely taxing. However, some performances have the potential to be upsetting, especially if they touch on delicate subjects like abuse or trauma.

There are greater difficulties that all body performers encounter in addition to the difficulties experienced by body performers in theatre. Society's expectations of the feminine form are one of these difficulties. Female body performers are not an exception to the general trend of women being scrutinized for their bodies. They are pressured to conform to unattainable and harmful aesthetic standards and fit into certain body types.

The objectification of the body is another issue. Body performers often have their skills and technique overlooked in favour of their outward beauty. This objectification may result in a lack of appreciation and regard for their efforts. The objectification of the body might be made worse by the nudity or sexual undertones that certain performances may include.

Despite the difficulties they encounter, many body performers are able to overcome them and produce influential work. Pushing the limits of what is deemed acceptable is one method they do this. Body performers may open the door for more varied and inclusive depictions of the body in art by questioning society conventions and expectations.

By creating a solid group, body performers may overcome obstacles in another manner. They may get encouragement and inspiration by interacting with other artists and exchanging their experiences. In addition, this network may serve as a forum for advocacy and activism, assisting in addressing problems like objectification and body shaming.

Lastly, by taking care of themselves, body performers may overcome obstacles. This covers both physical and psychological self-care, such as getting adequate sleep, asking for help when necessary, and placing a priority on their well-being. Body performers may continue to do meaningful work while also preserving their health and happiness if they take care of themselves.

The physical demands of their performances and cultural expectations of the female body provide special difficulties for body performers in theater and other performance art forms. But, by pushing limits, creating a community, and putting their own wellbeing first, many people are able to overcome these difficulties. It is critical to acknowledge and encourage the contributions of body performers, who use their bodies as a method of expression and resistance as performance art develops.

6.3. IDENTITY OF BODY PERFORMERS IN MOVIE

With the debut of Raja Harishchandra, the first feature film in Indian cinema, in 1913, the industry has a long and illustrious history. Since then, Indian cinema has advanced significantly thanks to the rise of Bollywood, the biggest film business in the world, and the inclusion of more women in a variety of roles. Yet there has always been controversy around how women are portrayed in Indian film, with claims that they are objectified and stereotyped, and that their roles are relegated to supporting ones. The path of women in Indian film is examined in this article, along with their portrayal.

Women were not permitted to perform in films during the early years of Indian filmmaking, therefore males played the feminine parts instead. Durgabai Kamat was the first Indian actress to appear in a motion picture in 1914, and she was followed by other trailblazing ladies like Sulochana (Ruby Myers), Devika Rani, and Brave Nadia. The entry of other actresses into the film business was made possible by these ladies.

Although though there are more women in Indian movies than ever before, they are often objectified and stereotyped in a variety of positions. Women have historically been represented as the conventional mother, the seductress, the victim, and the obedient wife. In Indian film, it is common to see women portrayed as objects of desire with a focus on their physical characteristics. The representation of women in Indian film has changed recently, however, and they are being given parts that are more nuanced and complicated.

The portrayal of women in Indian film has seen a substantial change in the twenty-first century. By playing strong, independent heroines, actresses like Vidya Balan, Kangana Ranaut, Deepika Padukone, and Priyanka Chopra have questioned the status quo and busted stereotypes. These actresses have taken on parts that have deviated from the typical representation of women in Indian film, and critics have praised them for their work.

The number of women working behind-the-scenes in the Indian film business has increased in addition to the presence of women on screen. Formerly held by males, women are increasingly filling positions such as directors, producers, writers, and cinematographers. Some renowned women have played similar characters, including Alankrita Shrivastava, Gauri Shinde, Meghna Gulzar, and Zoya Akhtar.

In conclusion, there has been significant progress in how women are depicted in Indian film, from males portraying them to women defying preconceptions and upending the current quo. Yet until women are fully represented both on and off the screen, there is still a long way to go. It is critical to continue the discussion about how women are portrayed in Indian cinema and to take action to alleviate the problems they confront. By doing this, Indian film may mirror the society it depicts in a way that is more inclusive, varied, and representative.

6.4. IDENTITY OF BODY PERFORMERS IN DANCE

Throughout ancient times, dance has played a major role in human history, with each society showing its own distinctive techniques and customs. Despite this variation, one thing never changes: a body performer's identity is inextricably related to the dance genre they engage in. This article examines how culture, gender, and physicality connect with dance and how the identity of the body performer is shaped by these elements.

Dance forms emerge in large part as a result of culture. Each dance style, from classical ballet to modern folk dance, reflects the beliefs, values, and customs of the community from which it emerged. For instance, Hindu mythology is ingrained in traditional Indian dance styles like Bharatanatyam and Kathakali, with the movements and gestures narrating tales from antiquated Indian literature. Parallel to this, the gypsy culture of

Spain is strongly associated with the flamenco dance style, in which the dancers convey their feelings via complex footwork and hand gestures.

Also, the culture that surrounds dance influences the standards and expectations of the body performer. Dance is a type of entertainment that is available to everyone in certain cultures, while in others dancing is a religious ritual reserved for particular people. These expectations have an effect on how performers see themselves and their place in society, which helps to shape their identity.

In the development of the body performer's identity in dance, gender is a key factor. Many dancing styles have traditionally been related to certain genders. Hip hop is often linked with masculinity, while ballet is frequently connected with femininity. These gendered connotations have an influence on how performers evaluate their skills and self. For example, male hip hop dancers are supposed to be muscular and forceful, while female ballet dancers are meant to be elegant and delicate.

Moreover, physicality is a key component of the identity of the body performer in dance. Each dancing style has its own demands that call for certain physical prowess and traits. Hip hop dancers need strength and agility, but ballet dancers need a slim and flexible physique. These physical demands influence how performers see their bodies and help to create their sense of self.

Despite the wide variety of dance styles and the distinctive personalities of body performers, there are still many difficulties they must overcome. The pressure to live up to social standards and expectations is one of the biggest obstacles. Body performers often come under fire and scrutiny for breaking from these ideals, which causes them to feel inadequate and self-conscious.

Also, body performers especially female dancers are often objectified and sexualized. This objectification may have an effect on how performers see their bodies and may help foster a poor body image.

Dancer identity is a complicated and nuanced construct that is influenced by a variety of elements, such as culture, gender, and physiology. Dance provides a platform for self-expression and creativity, but artists must also navigate society conventions and expectations. So, it is crucial to provide an accepting and welcoming atmosphere that recognizes the distinctive identities of all body performers in dance.

6.5. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN AS A BODY PERFORMER

Body performance is a type of art that calls for tremendous mental, emotional, and physical fortitude. Women who work as body performers, such as dancers, gymnasts, and acrobats, encounter a variety of difficulties specific to their gender. These difficulties are often caused by cultural norms and gender preconceptions that restrict the options available to women in the field. The following are some difficulties experienced by women who compete as bodybuilders:

Women in the body performance sector are usually seen as objects of desire, and their bodies are regularly sexualized and objectified. This may result in problems including exploitation, harassment, and body shaming. Women could experience pressure to live up to unreasonable beauty standards and experience bias against their abilities and talents because of how they look.

Gender preconceptions: The body performance sector still has several gender prejudices that prevent women from advancing. Men are often expected to execute more physically demanding and violent routines, whilst women are frequently required to perform certain

forms of dance or acrobatic routines that are deemed more feminine. This may result in women being passed over for certain positions or opportunities.

Salary discrepancies: As compared to their male colleagues, women in the body performance business often experience salary inequalities. This is particularly true for sports like gymnastics, where men and women compete independently yet win significantly different awards. In negotiating equitable salary and working conditions, women may also encounter difficulties.

Motherhood and pregnancy: Many women in the body performance business struggle to balance their professions with parenting and pregnancy. A performer's career may temporarily come to an end due to pregnancy, and moms may have difficulty finding employment that works with their obligations to their families.

Ageism: Since the body performance business puts a high value on youth, women who are older may experience age discrimination. As they become older, this may impede their ability to perform, teach, or choreograph.

As a result, women in the field of body performance encounter a variety of issues that are exclusive to their gender. These difficulties are often caused by cultural norms and gender prejudices that deny women of certain chances. It is critical to bring these concerns to the public's attention and endeavour to build an industry that is more fair and welcoming to all body performers.

6.6. STEREOTYPES AND BIASES FACED BY FEMALE PERFORMERS

Gender biases and stereotypes have been observed in Indian theatre, as in several other professional domains. These reflections are commonly indicative of the prevailing societal expectations and stereotypes that endure within the broader social context. Female performers in Indian theatre encounter certain biases and stereotypes, such as:

In the context of acting, the term "typecasting" pertains to the habitual casting of an actor in a particular type of role, which is determined by their physical appearance, previous acting performances, or perceived aptitude for embodying specific traits. Typecasting can serve as a means for actors to secure steady employment and cultivate a professional trajectory. However, it can also impose constraints on an actor's versatility and capacity to undertake varied roles.

In the realm of Indian theatre, specifically with regards to female actors, the phenomenon of typecasting frequently arises as a consequence of societal preconceptions and norms. Female actors are often typecast because of there of body for example into narrow roles such as the "suffering wife", the "doting mother", or the "temptress". This can restrict the range of characters they are able to portray, ultimately hindering their capacity to showcase the entirety of their artistic abilities.

The "type" of an actor refers to the specific character that they can convincingly embody, taking into account their physical attributes, behavior, and individual mannerisms. The archetypes of female characters in media may encompass a diverse spectrum, including but not limited to the relatable and approachable "girl next door," the heroic and dynamic "action hero," the captivating and prominent "leading lady," and the antagonistic and malevolent "villain." Comprehending one's actor type is of paramount importance as it facilitates the identification of roles that can be effectively portrayed.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to bear in mind that actors have the ability to violate these categories. Numerous artists derive pleasure and exhibit proficiency in performing roles that deviate from their usual character, thereby showcasing their breadth and adaptability. Actors may experience a great sense of satisfaction when they undertake the portrayal of

a character that deviates significantly from the types of roles they are commonly linked with.Various approaches can be employed to prevent oneself from being typecast in a particular role or character.

It is advisable to pursue a variety of roles across various platforms and genres in order to diversify one's portfolio. It is advisable to contemplate the prospect of participating in auditions for roles in independent films, web series, short films, and theatrical productions that present a diverse range of character archetypes. The concept entails pushing oneself beyond the comfort zone and exhibiting a diverse set of abilities.

It is advisable to diversify one's creative portfolio by exploring multiple genres. For instance, individuals who have primarily engaged in dramatic works may benefit from experimenting with comedic pieces, and conversely, those who have predominantly focused on comedy may find it beneficial to explore dramatic genres. Possessing the ability to perform proficiently across various genres enhances an actor's worth and mitigates the risk of being typecast into a particular role.

Conducting experiments with headshots can be a crucial step in the process of making a favorable first impression on casting directors, as the headshot is typically the initial point of contact. In the event that all of your headshot photographs exhibit a consistent portrayal, it may be advantageous to capture an alternative form of headshot that effectively communicates a distinct facet of your personality. This can facilitate others in conceptualizing you as suitable for a wider spectrum of positions.

Produce a Varied Compilation: Your exhibition reel ought to demonstrate the range of your acting proficiencies. It is advisable to contemplate incorporating scenes that depict oneself in roles or circumstances that have not been previously assigned.

Enhancing one's skills is the most effective approach to combat typecasting, as it enables an actor to become proficient and adaptable in their craft. Continuously refine your skills and perpetually pursue knowledge. Demonstrating a wider range of skills and abilities reduces the likelihood of being stereotyped or pigeonholed.

It is crucial to comprehend and recognize the assigned roles, but it is imperative not to allow them to constrain one's potential. Utilize these as initial reference points, however, consistently seek out prospects to broaden and vary your portfolio. Each actor possesses a distinct set of qualities, and by delving into and exhibiting one's versatility, it is possible to transcend the limitations of being pigeonholed into a particular type of role and open up new avenues for professional growth.

The Indian theatre industry presents a range of challenges for female performers, including but not limited to age-based discrimination, pay disparities, limited opportunities, sexual objectification, safety concerns, underrepresentation of female perspectives, and adherence to traditional gender norms. These issues collectively contribute to a larger context of the commodification and mistreatment of the female body within the realm of performance.

The phenomenon of age discrimination is frequently observed to have a gendered dimension, particularly with respect to the female body. Societal norms and expectations that prioritize youthfulness and physical attractiveness often lead to stereotyping and constraining the female body. The perception exists that older women may be less suitable for roles that necessitate physical attractiveness or vitality, qualities that are frequently associated with younger individuals. This illustrates a deficiency in recognizing the aesthetic and communicative qualities of anatomies across various age groups.

The issue of pay inequality in relation to female performers may be indicative of a depreciation of their work and abilities, encompassing the physical exertion and aptitude

necessary for acting. This suggests a devaluation of the female physique and its potential in the realm of athletic achievement.

The concept of opportunity gap pertains to the tendency to favor male bodies in prominent positions, thereby reinforcing patriarchal norms that prioritize men's narratives and encounters. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to the female body. This phenomenon results in a reduced number of occasions for the manifestation and commemoration of the female physique in a variety of empowering and diverse capacities.

The phenomenon of sexualization and its impact on the female body is a subject of concern as it engenders the objectification of women's bodies. The societal expectation for women to present themselves in a sexualized manner is a contributing factor to this issue. The practice in question diminishes the female performers to their physical attributes and desirability, rather than their aptitude, expertise, or the complexity of the roles they embody.

The matter of safety pertaining to the female body is a transgression of the fundamental principles of regard and self-governance that ought to be granted to all individuals and their physical forms, particularly those in the performing arts. The physical and psychological wellbeing of female performers is compromised by this infringement.

The dearth of female representation in playwriting, directing, and producing has resulted in the portrayal of the female body from a predominantly male perspective. This phenomenon may lead to the creation of narratives and characterizations that inadequately represent the experiences and perspectives of women.

The imposition of traditional gender roles can constrain the repertoire of expressions, movements, and roles that female bodies are able to assume on stage. This limitation constrains the potential representations of the female physique in various atypical and inclusive roles.

Despite the considerable challenges posed by stereotypes and biases, a considerable number of theatre professionals are actively engaged in efforts to tackle them. Through the promotion of gender equality, the challenging of stereotypes, and the establishment of safe and respectful environments, the theatre industry can effectively celebrate the diverse and complex nature of the female body. This entails paying respect to bodies across all age groups, departing from limited conceptions of attractiveness, and portraying the multifaceted and profound experiences of women.

6.7. GENDER IDENTITY AND IMPACT OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO FEMALE PERFORMERS IN INDIAN THEATRE

The influence of gender identity on the professional prospects of female performers in Indian theatre is noteworthy, as it is in numerous other occupational domains across the globe. It is imperative to acknowledge that the influence of gender identity is complex, as it intersects with various societal elements, including but not limited to, caste, religion, socioeconomic status, and regional identity. The following are several manners in which gender identity may impact opportunities within the realm of Indian theatre:

Gendered power dynamics have been observed in the Indian theatre industry, where men have traditionally held positions of authority as directors, producers, and playwrights. This trend is consistent with similar patterns observed in other industries. The aforementioned can exert an impact on the range of opportunities that female performers can access, encompassing the characters that are specifically crafted for them, the choices made in casting, and the general professional milieu. The impact of gender bias may

extend to the narratives that are conveyed, leading to a dearth of stories that accurately represent the multifaceted experiences and viewpoints of women.

Individuals who do not conform to conventional gender identities, such as transgender or non-binary performers, may encounter supplementary obstacles due to discrimination based on gender identity. Individuals belonging to certain groups may face discriminatory attitudes, limited comprehension, or a dearth of opportunities that align with their self-identities. The domain of inclusive representation in Indian theatre is yet to witness significant advancements.

Female performers frequently encounter apprehensions regarding safety and the potential for sexual harassment, which may serve as substantial impediments to their involvement. The resolution of these concerns is of utmost importance in fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity within the field.

Gender Disparities in Professional Opportunities: It is possible that there exists a gender asymmetry in the opportunities presented for professional growth, networking, and progression. It is possible that male performers may have a higher likelihood of being invited to participate in prominent productions or receiving mentorship opportunities.

Advancements are being observed in the realm of Indian theatre, as a growing number of endeavors are being undertaken to foster gender parity. These initiatives encompass endeavors to stimulate greater participation of women in the fields of playwriting, directing, and producing; to advance storylines that depict a broad spectrum of female encounters; to contest gender-based preconceptions; and to confront concerns regarding safety and harassment. Furthermore, there is an increasing movement towards acknowledging and facilitating avenues for individuals who identify as transgender or non-binary to showcase their talents. Notwithstanding the obstacles, a significant number of individuals within the Indian theatre fraternity exhibit a resolute dedication to persistently advocate for transformation and enhanced inclusiveness.

6.8. CULTURAL NORMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FEMALE PERFORMERS IN INDIAN THEATRE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

The perception and treatment of female performers in Indian theatre are significantly influenced by cultural norms and expectations. The formation of these norms is influenced by the historical, societal, and cultural milieu, and they are instrumental in perpetuating the prejudices and preconceived notions that female performers frequently encounter. The following outlines the potential effects on the experience of female performers.

India, akin to numerous societies, has a historical background of patriarchal structures that confer advantages to male voices and viewpoints. This phenomenon has the potential to impact the perception and treatment of women within the theatre industry. Women may encounter limited prospects for assuming leadership positions, experience wage disparities, or encounter pressure to conform to gender-based performance expectations.

Cultural norms have the potential to result in the typecasting of female performers, wherein they are assigned roles that perpetuate conventional gender roles. These roles may include that of the caring mother, the submissive spouse, or the subject of amorous interest. The aforementioned roles may not comprehensively embody the intricacy of female experiences or provide avenues for performers to exhibit their diverse skill sets and aptitudes.

The sexualization and objectification of female performers can be attributed to cultural norms surrounding femininity and beauty. Females are susceptible to being evaluated

primarily based on their physical attributes as opposed to their skills and abilities, and may encounter societal expectations to adhere to specific aesthetic norms.

Female performers may face greater moral scrutiny than their male counterparts as a result of prevailing societal norms with regards to moral expectations. The personal lives and off-stage conduct of individuals may be subject to close scrutiny, with any divergence from societal norms resulting in moral scrutiny that could have an impact on their professional reputation and career prospects.

Safety concerns arise due to cultural norms that either condone or overlook gender-based violence, which can lead to safety issues for female performers both during and outside their performances. The spectrum of mistreatment can encompass instances of harassment as well as more egregious forms of abuse.

The underrepresentation of women in the theatre industry can result in a restricted portrayal and comprehension of women's narratives, leading to the perpetuation of stereotypical depictions and constraining the opportunities accessible to female performers. It is imperative to acknowledge that these cultural norms and expectations are not fixed. Social movements, activism, and shifts in societal attitudes are known to cause changes over time. Numerous theatre practitioners and collectives in India are presently engaged in efforts to contest established conventions, generate a wider range of multifaceted female characters, and advance parity within the field.

6.9. EXPLORING CAREER PROSPECTS FOR FEMALE PERFORMERS IN INDIAN THEATRE

The potential professional opportunities for women in Indian theatre are diverse and extensive, albeit subject to the aforementioned prejudices, preconceptions, and systemic impediments. Notwithstanding these challenges, the theatre industry presents a variety of prospects for women. Here are several potential options:

The stage performer career path involves working in a variety of productions and assuming diverse roles across a range of genres, representing a conventional approach to the performing arts. The Indian theatre exhibits a broad spectrum of diversity, ranging from indigenous folk customs to contemporary metropolitan performances, thereby presenting a plethora of prospects.

The realm of film and television presents a viable avenue for numerous theatre actors to expand their career prospects, owing to the possibility of reaching a wider audience and potentially securing greater financial remuneration. The competencies developed through theatrical performance can be highly advantageous in these various forms of media.

The field of voice acting is expanding with the increasing popularity of radio dramas, audiobooks, and dubbed films, providing a range of prospects for individuals interested in pursuing this profession.Women are also capable of pursuing careers in directing, where they can oversee and guide the artistic and dramatic elements of a production. Although historically male-dominated, an increasing number of women are assuming the position of director, thereby contributing distinctive narratives and perspectives to the field.

The craft of playwriting, which involves creating written works for the purpose of theatrical performance, represents a viable professional trajectory. Women playwrights have the potential to make a substantial contribution to the variety of narratives presented on stage, by creating storylines that are reflective of their unique experiences and viewpoints.

The dissemination of knowledge and skills by performers is often achieved through the pedagogical practices of teaching or coaching, which may take place in formal educational settings or in private workshops and classes. The field of theatre encompasses a diverse range of career opportunities beyond the performance realm, including theatre management and production roles. The theatre industry relies heavily on key roles such as production management, stage management, and theatre administration to ensure smooth operations. The utilization of theatre as a means for social change is a common practice among performers, who engage in community theatre initiatives or employ performance as a medium to tackle social concerns and foster discourse.

Drama and theatre have been employed in therapeutic settings, including drama therapy and psychodrama, as a form of theatre therapy. The aforementioned is a nascent domain wherein artists can leverage their expertise to foster individual development and advance psychological well-being.

The trajectory of a female artist in Indian theatre is contingent upon her individual proclivities, aptitudes, and professional aspirations. Despite facing gender bias and societal expectations, numerous individuals and organizations are actively striving towards advancing gender equity within the theatre industry, thereby generating increased prospects for women.

6.10. IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION: NAVIGATING CULTURAL CONTEXTS FOR FEMALE PERFORMERS IN INDIAN THEATRE

Female performers in various regions and cultural contexts within India encounter intricate challenges when it comes to negotiating matters of identity and representation. India is a country characterized by its diversity, encompassing a multitude of languages, cultures, and traditions. It is noteworthy that each region within India may exhibit unique norms and expectations. The present study outlines several strategies employed by female performers to overcome the aforementioned obstacles.

The female performers frequently encounter the conflict between conforming to customary cultural standards and the aspiration to defy prevalent societal conventions, thereby striking a balance between tradition and modernity. Individuals may encounter the need to engage in negotiations pertaining to cultural practices, dress codes, and conservative attitudes as they strive to pursue artistic self-expression.

India's diverse regions are characterized by distinctive theatrical traditions and art forms. Women artists have the option to specialize in particular regional genres, such as Kathakali in Kerala, Yakshagana in Karnataka, or Bhangra in Punjab. This enables individuals to commemorate their local cultural identity while actively participating in the safeguarding and progression of these artistic expressions.

The linguistic diversity in India poses challenges and opportunities for female performers with multilingual skills. Acquiring proficiency in multiple languages can broaden one's skill set and enhance their prospects for employment in diverse geographical locations. The ability to communicate proficiently in multiple languages enables individuals to establish connections with heterogeneous audiences and narrate tales that strike a chord with particular cultural settings.

Female performers from various regions frequently challenge stereotypes by deliberately pursuing roles that subvert conventional gender norms. Collaboration with progressive playwrights, directors, and production teams may be undertaken by individuals in order to develop narratives that challenge societal norms and offer more intricate depictions of women.

The formation of regional networks among female performers is a common practice aimed at fostering mutual support, experience sharing, and project collaboration within their respective localities. These networks facilitate a platform for discourse, guidance, and the interchange of concepts, cultivating a perception of solidarity and authorization.

Female performers across various regions utilize their platforms to tackle social issues that are unique to their respective communities. The performers may utilize indigenous narratives, past occurrences, and customary rituals to produce artistic expressions that generate consciousness and facilitate discourse on issues such as gender disparity, caste-based prejudice, or ecological apprehensions.

When operating within diverse cultural environments, it is imperative for female performers to exhibit sensitivity towards local norms and sensibilities. In order to effectively engage with audiences and demonstrate cultural sensitivity, performers may be required to make modifications to their performances, costumes, or mannerisms that align with the cultural nuances of the region.

Female performers may engage in active pursuit of collaborations and exchanges with artists from diverse cultural contexts and regions. The aforementioned phenomenon facilitates the exchange and blending of concepts, techniques, and storylines, resulting in the emergence of unparalleled and multifarious theatrical productions.

By employing these tactics, female artists adeptly navigate the intricacies of identity and representation across diverse regions and cultural milieus throughout India. Indian theatre is enriched by their contributions, as they challenge stereotypes, foster inclusivity, and celebrate the diverse range of experiences and perspectives found throughout the nation.

6.11. BODY IMAGE AND DANCER IDENTITY IN INDIAN DANCE

In India, dancers heavily rely on their physical bodies as a means of artistic expression, whereby the appearance and strength of their bodies are fundamental components that significantly contribute to their performances. The existing literature on body image among Indian dancers is scarce, and the results are inconclusive with regards to the impact of dance on body image, as some studies suggest a positive influence while others indicate a negative one.

Within the Indian cultural milieu, diverse dance styles, including Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, and a range of regional folk dances, possess distinct cultural import, technical features, and aesthetic conventions. Historically, specific genres of dance have exhibited a preference for slender and elegant physiques, thereby shaping the dominant standards of bodily beauty within those particular dance forms. As an illustration, it is common for ballet dancers in India to be required to maintain a slender physique in order to fulfill the requirements of the dance style.

The prioritization of physical appearance and bodily aesthetics in specific dance genres may result in dancers developing negative body image perceptions and adopting unhealthy weight reduction techniques. The imperative to adhere to a particular physique can potentially result in unfavorable body image, elevated degrees of self-objectification, and a pursuit of leanness within the ballet community.

Nonetheless, there exists a dearth of research on the subject of body image pertaining to non-balletic dance forms in India. Dance styles that are more oriented towards athleticism, such as contemporary, modern, and select folk dances, may espouse distinct corporeal standards and foster a more favorable perception of one's physical appearance. The dance forms frequently emphasize physical power, agility, and creative

interpretation over rigid aesthetic standards, potentially fostering enhanced body esteem and inclusivity within the dance community.

The consideration of dancer identity is crucial in comprehending the body image of Indian dancers. The act of engaging deeply with the dance community and developing a robust sense of identity as a dancer has the potential to impact one's perceptions of their own body image. Increased participation in dance and a robust sense of self-identification as a dancer may be linked to the dominant standards and anticipations within the dance community, which encompass adverse body image, self-objectification, and a pursuit of thinness.

Additional investigation is required to examine the body image encounters of dancers across various dance genres and cultural settings within India. Comprehending the multifaceted spectrum of body image encounters and the impact of cultural elements can facilitate the creation of interventions and support structures aimed at fostering favorable body image and overall well-being among Indian individuals engaged in bodily performances. The creation of a dance milieu that places significance on and commemorates a range of bodily shapes and sizes, while also encouraging a wholesome and comprehensive attitude towards body image and self-assertion, is of utmost importance.

6.12. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to investigate how choreography and performance contribute to the formation of cultural depictions of gender identities in the Indian context. The domain of dance practice and its associated critical discourse has undergone significant transformations in recent times, marked by an increasing awareness of feminist perspectives. The scholarly attention has been directed towards a meticulous scrutiny of the evidence presented in the works, resulting in a more refined comprehension of the gender norms and depictions in Indian dance.

This study has shown how complicated and diverse female characters and their participation in Indian dance are. It has disproved simple ideas about female characters being submissive or strange.Putting dance images into their historical, social, and political settings has been crucial to understanding their many meanings and effects. Indian dancers' gender identities have been shaped by a number of things, such as their income and sexual situations, changing social rules, and artistic practices.

The present study is the first step toward a deeper understanding of how Indian dance shows gender roles in a complicated way. This study opens the door for more research into the historical, cultural, and social-political aspects of dance and performance in India, especially as they relate to gender.

This study makes a useful addition to the ongoing conversation about gender representation, both in the field of dance and in larger social and cultural settings. It does this by expanding the feminist analysis of dance history and questioning essentialist views. The goal of this study is to encourage and promote more research and critical conversation that leads to a better understanding of gender identities in Indian dance and other connected fields.

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