

PREJUDICE AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN KATHAK DANCERS IN GOA

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**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Women's Studies**

Women's Studies Programme

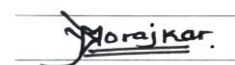
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DECLARATION

I, Dixita Morajkar, hereby declare that the dissertation titled ‘Prejudice and Challenges faced by Women Kathak Dancers in Goa’ is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Nishtha Desai, Assistant Professor, Department of Women’s Studies, Goa University. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this institute or of any other Institute or University; I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this dissertation.



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CERTIFICATE

This to certify that the dissertation titled 'Prejudice and Challenges faced by Women Kathak Dancers in Goa' is the record of the original work by Miss Dixita Morajkar under my guidance and to the best of my knowledge. The results of the research presented in this dissertation have not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this Institute or any other Institute.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Dance is the hidden language of the soul

- Martha Graham

India is known for its different traditions, and performing arts is definitely one of them. Records of the pre-history of India mention the existence of Dance since the earliest civilization (Vatsyayan, 2015). Any classical art form we see has been inspired by 'natyasastra' written by Bharata muni. This text explains the concept of style and movements. The dance is divided into Natya and Nritya, and also divided into Tandava and Lasya. In India dance has two major dance forms, classical and folk dance (Vatsyayan, 2015). Folk dance represents the local traditions of the state. In India temples without dance and music were hardly seen. The dancers were devadasis or maidens who were working in the service of God. It is mentioned that the teachers of these devadasis were a class of Brahmins, who were expert Musicians and dancers attached to the temples. They were very good at reciting stories and interpreted incidents from Ramayana and Mahabharata. (Banerji, 1990)

Kathak dance is obtained from the community of Kathaks. It is a North Indian classical dance form and one of the 8 classical dance forms of India. It has a unique history and is the only dance form with a substantial Muslim and Hindu cultural background. The word Kathak comes from word 'katha' which means story. There was a community of Kathaks who were storytellers who told mythological stories through music and dance. Kathak has been linked to many mythological stories. Kathak dance form has an interesting history. (Bajpai, 1992) . It was considered to be a male dominated Dance form. Kathak came into existence from ancient times and continued as a tradition through the centuries. During Mughal rule Kathak gained its popularity and developed, and this was the time Kathak lost its religious background. During the Muslim period community of kathaks started facing financial instability, and started receiving help from Nawabs and Hindu rajas . (Banerji, 1990)

. Some of them who didn't agree to perform in front of nobles were forced to showcase their talent in the Durbars. During Mughal rule kathak shifted from temples to courts. Under Mughal influence Kathak flourished in North India as a favourite royal pastime. During the British period, kathak faced reduction of status, British considered it to be an unattractive form of entertainment. They associated tawaifs as a part of prostitution. During that time Kathak acquired a damaging image. . (Chaturvedi, 2007)

Importance of Gender in Kathak

Kathak has a very interesting history. It has developed and evolved through a lot of stages but this dance form was also considered to be a male dominated dance form. If we look back at history all the patrons and the founders of all the Gharanas were male. Kathak brahmins were called 'maharajas' meaning great kings. They were not only considered as great kathak performers but had high respect in the society. It appears as though there was no such respect for women kathak artists.

Dance has an exceptional place in my heart, and hence I was attracted towards studying Kathak. I wanted to know more about this dance form and about the lives of women pursuing this dance form. As a child

I was fascinated by dance and got myself enrolled for Dance classes organized in my school. I completed my first two basic Kathak exams. I was more curious about this art so I asked my mother to continue it further. It was at this time that my mother said to me ‘girls from respectable houses doesn’t learn Kathak’. As a kid it didn’t affect me and I always wanted to know about why this dance form was discriminated against like this. Today Kathak is seen as a respected dance form. This got me more curious to know about the life of women kathak artists in Goa to understand the facts about this art form

Objectives

- To learn about the prejudice and stigma related to this dance form
- To understand what were the struggles faced by women kathak artists in Goa
- To study about family support provided to these women dancers
- To highlight any problems they face due to prejudice against this art form

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Kathak

Nirupama Chaturvedi in her study about Kathak in “Encyclopaedia of Indian Dancers” says that Kathak tells a story in a dance form. The book also speaks about its earliest mention which was in the Mahabharata, it also speaks about its evolution, the influence of Mughals, the traditions of Kathak, the music involved in Kathak. This book gives detailed information about techniques of various steps, and about the music used to perform this art form. It guides us about important elements of kathak dance. (Chaturvedi, 2007)

Projesh Banerji in his book “Kathak Dance Through Ages” says that Kathak is a very ancient Indian dance form. The book highlights many of the mythological stories related to Kathak, it also showcases Muslim as well as British influences on this dance form. The book also explains the influence of *Thumri* and North Indian music on Kathak. The book discusses the various *gharanas* in India. It also speaks about the contribution of Raja Chakradhar Singh in this field. This book has highlighted about contribution of Raja Chakradhar Singh to promote Lucknow Gharana and Jaipur Gharana; how his love for music and art helped growing of this art form. This book has referred to Raja Chakradhar Singh as a ‘patron saint’ of kathak. The author has also highlighted that after all the contributions of Raja Chakradhar Singh and has also mentioned that Raja has learnt kathak himself. (Banerji, 1990)

Mohan Khokar in his book “Tradition of Indian Classical Dance” writes about Kathak Dance and its origins, along with the different stages of evolution. This book also speaks about the influence of Mughal rule, and the different types of Gharanas. It also highlights about the changes that occurred in the performance under the influence of different patrons. It also speaks about different male artists and their contribution in the field of Kathak. The book also mentions different instruments and costumes used in earlier times. (Khokar, 1986)

Types of Gharanas

Kathak has been passed on from one generation to another, and formed different Gharanas. Some of them are Lucknow Gharana, Jaipur Gharana, and Banaras Gharana. Each Gharana has different styles and techniques. Projesh Banerji in his book “Art of Indian Dancing” describes about different types of Indian classical dances. In his book he talks about the Kathak schools. These schools are founded by different Kathak artists. In this book he speaks about the speciality of the different *gharanas* located in India. (Banerji and Dhamija, 1986)

Lucknow Gharana is very famous for its Nazakat and Khoobsurti. It flourished in the courts of Nawab of Awadh. Expression plays a very important role in this style. . (Chaturvedi, 2007)

Jaipur Gharana is very well known for its strong, rhythmic elements. This style range over different Talas and provides a vibrant and forceful form. It flourished in the courts of the Kachwaha kings of Jaipur. . (Chaturvedi, 2007)

Banaras Gharana gives importance to rhythmic patterns, which plays a very important role. There is difference between thaat and tatkaar, and chakkars are kept at a minimum. This style was developed by Janakiprasad. (Chaturvedi, 2007) Along with these three. There was one more Gharana which did not gain much importance. This gharana arose because of the efforts and experiments of Raja Chakradhar Singh. . (Chaturvedi, 2007)

Rashmi Vajpayee in her book “Kathak Prasanga” writes about the history of Kathak Dance in her book. She has also written about different techniques of this art form in her book. She has also has written about techniques of performance and acting. In her book she has written about different types of Gharanas. She has highlighted about different male Kathak artists; their speciality and techniques. (Bajpai, 1992)

Monica Dalidowicz in the journal “Crafting Fidelity: Pedagogical Creativity in Kathak Dance” (2015) speaks about kathak dance in different diasporas. She has also mentioned about Pandit Das and his Chhandam School of Kathak; there is brief information about his school. She has also described methods of teaching footwork, balance and perception for *Chakkars*. She has tried to explain all the techniques about this dance in her journal.

Siddhi Goel in her article “Kathak: Aesthetics, History and Influence” (2018) has tried to look at the history of Kathak from the Gupta period. She has also written about patrons and the audience. She has tried to say that any art form needs patrons to survive, as well as an audience to dance for. She has also mentioned about different types of music used in this dance form. She has also worked on three main Gharanas of kathak which is Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow. This author also speaks about changes in kathak in today’s time, such as techniques and styles that have evolved during recent times. She speaks about various changes Gharanas have made in their styles, and how Kathak is not only limited to Gharanas but also have tried to adapt to changes in their style.

The Status of Women in Kathak

Pallabi Chakravorty in the journal “Dancing into Modernity: Multiple Narratives of India’s Kathak Dance” (2006) speaks about pre-colonial context and post-colonial context. She has also highlighted about conditions of women dancers. The author has criticized many other writers for always conveying the historical aspect of this art form and not trying to look into the matter of sufferings of women dancers. Women dancers who performed in the courts of North India and East India were denoted as nautch dancers. These dancers were termed as tawaifs from North India and *baijis* or nautch dancers from Bengal. She has tried to put light on how these words were misleading, she has also written about how women who were given respect in northern courts were considered as prostitutes. She has also mentioned about how British rule made musicians and dancers migrate, from royal courts to the rooms of Bengali zamindars. This resulted in lowering the status of classical dance and ‘spoiling’ the women’s character.

She also has written about anti-nautch movement and effects of this movement on dancers. She has said that anti-nautch movement was against the devadasi system. She has said that it disassociated religious aspects and considered the performers to be prostitutes. She has also tried to write about male brahmanical dominance in this dance form. She has also focused on improvements made in kathak dance and how national dominance and state patronage have contributed to this art. She has said that after independence the government of India had taken initiative to improve conditions of artists by establishing national cultural academies. She has also written about influence of state television and the

globalization of media. Also she has looked upon the dispersion of this art form in different regions of the world and tries to see changes that occurred over the years.

David Courtney in his article “The tawaif, the anti-nautch movement, the development of North Indian classical music” speaks about various aspects of kathak dance and terms related to women. He has written about the meaning of word *Tawaif* and different classes of tawaif. Tawaifs excelled in music and musical instruments as well as dance. Female dancers were called tawaif and linked to prostitution. They were considered to be less respected. The author states that not every tawaif was a prostitute. The article also speaks about Anti-Nautch movement by Britishers to end the career of the tawaifs in the name of social purity. In his article the writer has tried to put light on many of the aspects of women dancers; the meaning of word kotha, and why artists lived in kotha. He has also mentioned about few tawaifs and has given information about them. He has also spoken about conditions in India owing to the Anti-nautch movement. The author has highlighted the relationship between the tawaifs and British. British officers used to hire tawaifs for their entertainment purpose. In the later part of 19th century Britishers gave more importance to ball dancing and Indian dance started vanishing. During the beginning of anti nautch movement Christian missionary and various groups started to emerge against Indian dancing and musical culture. There was a ban on ‘nautch parties’ and there was an emergence of social purity movement from Britain, and they spread out in India very quickly. Anti nautch movement affected devadasis from the south and tawaifs from the north. This time women dancers were forced to survive in very bad conditions. The author also says that during this time the only survival for tawaifs was prostitution. That is the reason they have been stigmatised.

Rimil Bhattacharya in her article “What Kathak Means to Me and My Struggle Against Misogyny” (2018) writes about the problems she faced in her life. She had to pause her practice of kathak because her husband didn’t like it. She writes about how her husband had different perceptions about dancers. That made her stop her dancing. She broke her marriage and couldn’t take his patriarchal behaviour. She started dancing again. She writes in her article that kathak has been male dominated dance form, and now has been changed over the years. She in her article has mentioned about “Navarasa” which are nine different emotions used in kathak.

From my literature review I found that kathak as a classical dance was respected only when men were involved, and when man was performing it, but when it came to women artists it was considered and linked with prostitution. They were stigmatised and less respected and considered as women with low character. In my interviews I could see that, women who were older around 50 to 60 age group faced same problems their character was judged upon their choice of career. It seemed to me that people had already made judgments regarding their character.

I interviewed 10 women kathak artists from Goa. I understood that everyone faced problems in their own different ways. By taking interviews I understood that women from the age group of 50-60 faced more problems as discussed by Rimil Bhattacharya. They faced name calling, ogling and character judgement. One of the respondents shared that while she was performing people used to throw things at them. She mentioned that she started performing at very young age and during that time in Goa not much development had happened. People related kathak as a ‘low standard art’ and it was considered that tawaifs only performed this art form.

Another respondent faced problems from her family itself. She said that she belonged to the brahmin caste and her family members tried to restrict her from learn this art. She was told that, “Girls who belong to respectable families do not learn kathak or perform in front of the people”. She said that there were many people who used to name-call her and judge her character. She even faced problems after marriage

as her in laws restricted her from performing this art and she was not allowed to perform on stages like she used to do before marriage. Out of 10 almost everyone had faced character judgement by people.

Author Pallabi Chakravorty has mentioned in her writings that during 1985 government of India had come up with the department of culture in the ministry of Human resource and development. To protect the legacy of art from getting extinct. They also took help from state television to educate and entertained people from culture. This initiative from Government helped a lot of women artist to continue their art. This effective step from government helped women till now women I had interviewed 4 women have their own personal coaching classes and almost 6 of them work under government through Department of art and culture. This provisions for women artists have helped them a lot, by giving them opportunity to continue their art.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

In my dissertation I have chosen to study the problems faced by women Kathak artists in Goa. There are many women artists who have struggled to follow their passion and turn it into their profession. There are very few women in Goa who are actually earning through their passion, and I chose to study about women in the field of Kathak Dance in Goa and tried to understand and analyse the problems they faced. Women who followed their love for this art are very few and their struggles and problems should not go unnoticed.

Study sample

I decided to work with 10 Kathak women artists from Goa, who are earning through their art. I tried to keep it limited to Goa because in Goa there are women artists who are performing kathak as a full time career. I wanted to study the kinds of problems they faced while learning Kathak, how did they start learning Kathak, also about whether they received support from family members when they chose this art form as their career. What are the different kinds of problems they faced from their family members? Was there any stigma that is related to the Kathak dance form. I decided to work with age groups ranging from 20 to 60 years. As I feel each of them will have their own problems and hurdles while pursuing their art forms.

Study tools

I have used qualitative research method as it would help to understand the challenges and problems better. My research included in depth interviews to examine and understand the subject in a better way. Women Kathak artists who have chosen Kathak as a full time career are a handful. I chose this method, because I believe that it was better to gather the information required from artists who have faced challenges themselves and to understand their present position. I also referred to secondary sources to understand the history of kathak and the situation of women kathak dancers.

Challenges faced

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult to physically interview the women Kathak artists. In spite of this I interviewed 10 women. I interviewed 7 women in person and I conducted 3 interviews telephonically.

I had to make two visits to interview a few of them, but I couldn't conduct the number of interviews I wanted to. Many of the women refused to give interviews as everyone had fear of covid-19.

All the women I have interviewed were working and couldn't manage to agree for a meeting. I had problems convincing them for interviews as aside from Covid-related fears they had back to back online classes. A lot of times they promised to meet but didn't show up. Some of them rejected directly. That is when I tried snowball sampling. Initially I contacted 3 women. They gave me contact of 7 other women.

Chapter 4

INTERVIEWS OF WOMEN KATHAK DANCERS IN GOA

Interviews conducted

Interviews were conducted from various age groups to look into the prejudices and problems faced by women taking Kathak as a career.

I have interviewed 10 women who are residents of Goa and working in the field of Kathak. I chose to interview 10 women from different age groups in order to understand the difficulties faced by them. All 10 women are working in this field. some of them are self-employed and some of them are teaching through Goa Government Department of Art and Culture in the schools as Kathak dance teachers. I have tried to interview women from the age group of 20 to 60 years.

Sr.no	Name	Age	Place of residence
1.	Prerna Palekar	25	Taleigao, Goa
2.	Arpita Shirodkar	25	Aldona, Goa
3.	Vardha Bedekar	36	Panjim, Goa
4.	Rekha Madkaikar	41	Madkai, Goa
5.	Manisha Mehta	47	Madkai, Goa
6.	Utkarsha Chari	48	Usgao , Goa
7.	Rashmi Fondekar	50	Marcel, Goa
8.	Smita Chari	51	Madgao, Goa
9.	Seema Shikerkar	51	Panaji, Goa
10.	Neha Kankonkar	61	Porvorim, Goa

1. Prerna Palekar



Name – Prerna Sudhakar Palekar

Age – 25 years

Residence – Taleigao, Goa

Qualification – Kathak dancer [first kathak dancer from Goa to complete her degree as Masters in Performing Arts]

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I have studied Kathak at Kala Academy Goa for nine years, and later I have completed my Masters in Performing Arts at the department of Lalit Kala Kendra at Pune university.

Dancing was a liking and passion since childhood.

2. How was the support from family members?

Because the dance was a passion since childhood, there was support from family, and there were no restrictions. They admitted me for classes, and whenever there was any performance, they used to come along. Even when I decided to go to Pune for further Master's Degree because no one had pursued this Degree earlier, they were worried. The situation was not in my favour financially, and I thought I will not be able to do it, but there was help provided by the government of Goa and support of family members which was there in my hard times. I am not married and I am currently living with my parents.

3. How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?

I was good in academics, so I felt I should do what people are not doing in their youth. I thought it is my responsibility to do what is not given preference and show that there can be a lot of things which can be done in the field of Arts. I got inspired by my Guru who is not a resident of Goa and who comes from another state to work hard on this dance form here in Goa. I have studied Kathak, and I am passionate

about it. If after all this if I am not doing anything to take this dance form to another level, then it is not correct from my viewpoint. If people from other states are coming to Goa and working on this dance form to make it better and teach it to different people, then being from Goa why shouldn't I work on it. I also know that I am good in this art. I felt more people are doing the same thing. Hence, I should do something which significantly fewer people are doing. If we from Goa are not doing it even after we have been given a chance to explore it, then it won't reach a higher platform; that is why I decided to go for further studies out of Goa and study about it and educate interested people in Goa. I believed if I went for further studies then I can make a community of Kathak Dancers in Goa. I also felt art is helping me grow, so I should do it.

4. What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

When I told them, they were worried because they asked questions like, will you only dance? How will it work? There was still typical thinking that there should be a government job. Then the teachers tried to convince my parents and told them that she is good at her art and she should do it. So, they got confidence and agreed about it

5. Will you continue this profession in the future?

Whatever happens, I will do it. I know that I am on the right path, and I want to take this path further; maybe I will get less money, and I have not gained too much fame, but I will have satisfaction. I aim to set up a community of Kathak dancers and make Goa proud on a higher level, and my aim is not money; I do not get so much money, but if I wanted, I could have done other things, but I aimed to take this field further from zero position to a better position.

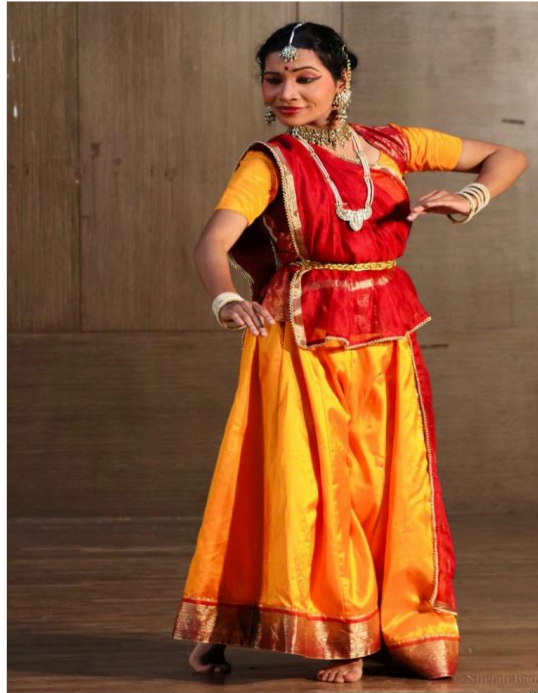
6. How many students are you teaching right now?

I have started my classes in 2019, and I have around 40 to 50 students distributed in two batches, but during the lockdown, there were no classes taken in person for about a year, and there were online classes.

7. Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?

There is no stability in this profession, but some government job opportunities are available in Goa. Still, if you are taking private classes, you have to manage many things. But because of the pandemic, I couldn't take classes, and it made me think now what is next? Luckily, I had the option of taking online classes, and because there are not many people in Goa in this field, I got a good response. If there were many more in this field, then I wouldn't have got a good response.

2. Arpita Shirodkar



Name – Arpita Shirodkar

Age – 25 years

A resident of – Aldona, Goa

Qualification- kathak dancer, engineer

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I started learning dance from 7 years of age. In the beginning, I had studied Bharatanatyam and then I shifted to Kathak which I was interested in. I have completed masters in Kathak from Bharti Vidyapeeth, University of Pune, and Bachelor's in Engineering. While I was working in Pune, I completed my Master's Degree in Kathak.

I thought of taking admission to Kala Academy. I had an option between Bharatanatyam and Kathak, so I choose Kathak, and I liked it so much that I never used to miss my classes, even during my 10th standard, 12th standard and even for bachelors. I am the first person in Kala Academy to complete the Parangat degree; it's a course of 12 years. I always had a liking and my Guru Shama Taie, who used to come for the workshop, and I was always interested in attending them, and I always wanted to learn more.

2. How was the support from the family?

I had support from my family right from the beginning, but I was told that, I will have to focus on academics. I am not married and currently living with my parents.

3. How and when did you decide to go for a career in Kathak?

As I said, Kathak is something I liked, and I used to manage to attend all the classes. Still, then I always wanted to go to Pune and learn from my Guru Shama Tai, but I couldn't give up my engineering career,

so luckily, I got placement in Pune, and there was no looking back when I reached Pune, I knew I have to do it.

4. What was the reaction of family members after telling them about pursuing Kathak as a career?

The family has been supportive, but they also told me that you can't give up on your career in engineering. I was told that "If you are not giving up on that, then we will give you our full support"

5. Will you continue this profession for life?

Yes, I am currently preparing for the NET exam to teach this as a profession. It was something I liked, and there is a lot of hard work behind it. And I am also doing performances; hence I will continue this.

6. Any problem according to you faced during this journey of learning this art form?

It was challenging for me to manage my engineering career and my passion, but I couldn't leave any of them. I had to do good in my academics, and this time management was challenging. Also, if you are learning any art form, you need to choose a good teacher because I feel in any art form Guru plays most important role. For some reason I had bad experience with the Guru who had come to teach me for few days and that bad experience made me think of quitting my passion. But suddenly that Guru had to leave, and I continued my studies further. I must admit that there was hardly any support from family to pursue my passion as a career, but they had conditioned me to complete my engineering and then focus on my passion.

3. Vardha Bedekar



Name – Vardha Bedekar

Age – 34

A Resident of – Panaji

Qualification – Kathak Dancer

1- *How did you start learning Kathak?*

I started learning Kathak from 7 years of Age in Ratnagiri. After my 12th in Arts, I went to Pune, and completed my Bachelors in Classical Music, and Masters in Performing Arts [specialisation in Kathak]. I have learnt Kathak for 15 years, I still go to Pune to learn more from my Guru Manisha Sathe.

As a child I was very fascinated by classical songs. And I used to watch programs on Doordarshan like *Chayageet*, *Chitrahaar* – these were music related serials. I used to Dance on songs like “chanak chanak payal baje”,

“Madhuban mein Radhika naache”

These songs used to attract me, so my parents decided to admit me for Kathak classes, so Kathak became my hobby.

2- *How was the support from the family?*

There was a lot of support from the family. Fortunately, I am very lucky! I had no restrictions from my parents. Also after getting married I had no restrictions. My husband is also a Tabla Artist. After

my marriage I have received a lot of encouragement. My husband is an Artist and we love Music. There were no restrictions from either side of my family.

3- How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of kathak?

When I was in 10th standard I was thinking of taking science or commerce, but my parents saw my future in Dance. They knew that I will have a career in this field. When I was in doubt about continuing in this field, my parents supported me saying take Arts and take Dance as full time career. I already knew since beginning that I will take this as career, but when I went to Pune for my Masters, I was still learning from my Guru. While I was learning myself, I got opportunity to teach in the same class but to different students. From there I started teaching; earning and learning started together. Not only my Art but I also learnt how to teach – we say ‘Taalim’ In our language I could learn this from my Guru. Little by little I also started doing performances on stage all over India. Sometimes group choreographies, sometimes if I got a chance I used to perform solo, sometimes duet performances with my ‘Guru, Bagini’. After my Masters I had the opportunity to go to foreign and teach. It was by Indian Embassy and Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR]. Through this I got opportunity to go to Bangkok for two years. This was the turning point in my life. After that I went back to Pune. I got suggestions from my other Guru about advertisements for placement in Goa. But I had no idea that I will get a permanent job in Goa.

4- What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

Like I said before, they were my biggest motivation. My parents already had seen talent in me since, I was very young. They themselves had supported me to pursue my talent as a career. Also my husband also knew from the beginning that I love my art. He was also as supportive as my parents.

5- Will you continue this profession in the future?

Yes, I will continue my art till my last breath. I have been learning and performing since my childhood, that is something I will never want to give up.

6- How many students are you teaching right now?

I have taught more than 100 students till now in my career. I am a lecturer in Kathak. Every year I get to teach many new students.

7- Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?

I feel I am very lucky that personally I have not faced any problems. But I would like to say that there are problems which are faced by many people irrespective of being male/female.

Especially girls face more problems I would say. Because our society has a different perspective towards dance. First question is why you have to learn Dance? What will you do after learning Dance? It is not good for girls’ character. Second one is there is no income in the field of Dance. If you go to remote areas they have such kinds of problems. Many people prefer any other basic course then Dance. Like nursing, stitching, computer. But if a girl wants to learn Dance then the first question on parents’ mind is who will marry my daughter?

There has been a lot of improvement in the field of Dance I would like to say. These kind of questions arise because of lack of knowledge about the career options in this field, not many people know that there can be a lot of things done in the field of Dance. I have also noticed there has been a lot of improvement in Goa in the field of Dance, hardly one or two of my students will face problems

regarding learning this art form, or only people who don't know much will have different opinions about this art but as I have grown up in this field I have seen much more improvement and growth of this art.

4. Rekha Madkaikar



Name – Rekha Madkaikar

Age – 41

A resident of – Madkai, Goa

Qualification – Bachelor of Arts, madhyama purna.

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I was interested in sports when I was child. Later I started learning Kathak as a body exercise at the age of 20. After some time I realized that I have started loving this art form so I went ahead in this field, and took all my lessons by Gurukul way of studying.

2. How was support from family members?

I had done my nursing diploma and I was working at that time. Side by side I was learning Kathak. My family members were not happy with that, but I was learning Kathak as a hobby in the beginning. After getting married I got very good support from my husband.

3. How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?

I started learning Kathak. After that I started teaching small kids. During that time I was working in the Hospital as a head assistant. I wasn't able to pay full attention towards my work and working in hospital is a huge responsibility. I felt I am not doing justice with my work. That time I decided to quit my nursing job and to start working as a full time Kathak teacher.

4. What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

I was married by the time I decided to take up Kathak as my full time career. My husband is a Tabla artist. He never had any problem with me taking up Kathak as a career. My in-laws are also into Drama. So taking this up was never a problem.

5. Will you continue this profession in the future?

Yes, definitely. In 2010 I opened my own academy, Pranav Foundation Academy of Dance and Music. It was based in Mumbai before and then we started it in Goa after some time. I teach in both places, Mumbai and Goa. I have taken Kathak as my life long profession and I am not going to stop it. I have received compliments as a best performer from Pandit Birju Maharaj. It always motivates me to never give up on my love for Kathak.

6. *How many students are you teaching right now?*

I had started from Mumbai that time I had 350 students learning under me, but when we opened classes in Goa the number of students from Mumbai decreased to 80 and in Goa genuine students who really wants to learn this art form is 20.

7. *Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?*

As an artist I started learning Kathak at the age of 20, after 18 you are capable of taking your own decisions. My father had problem with my decision. But when he saw my growth they were okay with it later. I feel as an artist people only support you when they see your growth. Or else everyone just gives you fake concern. That is what I have learnt.

5. MANISHA MEHTA



Name – Manisha Mehta

Age – 47

A resident of – Madkai, Goa

Qualification – Bachelors in Arts, Madhyama Purna in Kathak

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I started learning when I was 14 years old. My Hindi sir who was our neighbour, had arranged a Kathak teacher for us students. While learning kathak under her guidance I also learnt folk dance and Bharatanatyam for one year. While learning all these different art forms I started to develop interest in this art and thought of learning more about it.

2. How was the support from the family members?

I had freedom from my parents to take up any kind of education I wanted, there were no restrictions for me. My Hindi sir had brought a private Kathak teacher for us. There were many students taking up education from her from my neighbourhood. We had no restrictions for gaining education. Any kind of knowledge was welcomed by me. I used to attend any kind of organized classes. I had also tried to learn tabla as my Uncle was Tabla artist. I had encouragement from my family.

3. *How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?*

I had never decided that I will take up career in the field of Kathak. I am a steno typist as well so I had decided to stick to it. Kathak was just a hobby until I got the opportunity to learn kathak in Kala Academy as a Kathak dance teacher right after my Bachelor's degree. I had developed so much interest that even if my hand was fractured I still continued to go to my classes. I was good in studies and other activities also. I have performed at a lot of places with the help of teacher. I decided on taking it up as a career after my marriage.

4. *What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?*

My parents were always supportive and proud of me. I also used to handle my father's business. In my school, I also used to take part in different curricular activities. Starting to work in the field of kathak as a teacher I decided much later after my marriage.

5. *Will you continue this profession in the future?*

I have not decided about it yet, but I don't think I will do it. I will work only till my service lasts.

6. *How many students are you teaching right now?*

I have passed on this art form to around 300 students till now. And I currently work as Kathak Dance teacher through Art and culture in three different schools.

7. *Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?*

I have a lot of health problems; this art form needs a lot of physical strength. After getting married, I had to take break for many years. From my husband's side they did not have any artists in the family. My husband didn't like me performing kathak, nor did he like the fact that I was working. Even from his family side they didn't like dancing. I was at home for many years. After my son was born I joined back my classes and started to learn from the beginning. After that I got opportunity to work under the Department of Art and Culture and that was the time the family agreed to let me work. I feel if you have strong will power to achieve something no one can stop you. And I feel good that I have done something for myself.

6. Utkarsha Chari



Name – Utkarsha Chari

Age – 48

A resident of – Usgao, Tisk

Qualification – *Visharad* in Kathak, *Madhyama Purna* in vocal, and currently pursuing *Alankaar* in Kathak, professional in folk dance

1. *How did you start learning Kathak?*

I started learning Kathak when I was 16 years old. In the beginning I never paid attention to dance. I used to go for singing classes, and I also used to take part in singing competitions. While singing I used to take part in folk dance competitions. I liked dancing but because of family problems I couldn't take admission for classes. Everyone used to send me for singing. While completing singing, I lost my mother. It was at this time that I left singing as well, because of all the responsibilities at home. I was the eldest one in the family, so I had to take care of everything. But I still used to take part in folk dance. Then I got an opportunity to work in Bal Bhavan and then I started learning Kathak.

2. *How was the support from the family members?*

I had support from family as my house is filled with artists. My sister also is a Dancer, but because of responsibilities I was restricting myself. There were family members who used to tell me to continue, but I couldn't start early in my life. I was asked to sing more often than dance.

3. *How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?*

I was learning vocal at the age of 14, but for some personal reasons I left vocals as it was very difficult for me to manage time, and do what I like. Later I started going to Bal Bhavan for folk dance. I was trained in folk dance. I started liking dance. I was fat that is why everyone used to tell me to go for singing. Slowly I started performing on records, then I started doing ticket shows. And later there was

interview in Bal Bhavan, so I started learning Kathak. Little by little I completed my exams and went ahead in this field. I was working as steno a typist and I was happy with my work. I had liking towards this art form but I didn't want to go ahead in this field, but I had a lot of love for kids. When I went ahead I started spending time with kids and eventually I decided that I will go head in this field.

4. What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

I would like to say this that whatever I have achieved today in my life till today, my husband has been a big support in that. In my family I had no restrictions as well as after my marriage my in-laws also gave me support. My husband is an actor and dancer. He always supported me. My in-laws were happy that I am independent and talented and they appreciated that.

5. Will you continue this profession in the future?

Yes, definitely! Because of my love for art I started my own cultural agency called *Om Satyam Sanskrit Kala Sanstha*. I am running this agency from 14 years. Through this agency I work for women and children. I organize classes for women and children. If there are any competitions I take children through this agency. With women who don't know how to read and write I took the initiative to teach them and if they are interested I train them in Drama. There were no activities in my village, but after my marriage I started Drama, Dance, folk dance competitions in the village. I like to teach children and I will teach them any art form they like in my future life.

6. How many students are you teaching right now?

Currently I am a Dance teacher at Bal Bhavan and it's been 25 years since I am teaching in Bal Bhavan. I take personal classes as well. I have taught around 1000 students.

7. Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?

The problem I faced is I feel, there were many people who said they support me, saying you go ahead we will help you. They never really supported me. I had financial problems after the death of my mother. I wanted to start early in my life but I was under a lot of responsibilities and people in the beginning used to believe that Dancing is not a good profession to take up. People from the village did not knew what a classical dance form is. Some people used to say in mocking tone that she is a Dancer and she goes to teach Dance, which they meant in a different way. People used to think Bal Bhavan means Balwadi. But then after some time when I taught students then they came to know about dance. I feel we ignore these small things but it affects one a lot. Sometimes people doesn't realise what they say, but I have proved them wrong by working hard.

7. Rashmi Fondekar



Name – Rashmi Fondekar

Age – 50 years

A resident of – Marcel, Goa

Qualification – *Parangat* Degree in Kathak Dance and Bachelors in Arts

1. *How did you start learning Kathak?*

I was very much interested in learning Dance. I started too early, I started when I was 6 years old. Me and a few of my friends who were my classmates started learning Kathak from our science teacher. As days passed by a few of them left the classes, but I was still dedicated to continue my classes. Day by day everyone left the classes and teacher couldn't afford to take classes for single student, so she also stopped taking classes. After that I couldn't attend any classes, there was gap for around 3-4 years. Again I started my classes when I joined 5th standard. I took admission in Junta House. The rest of my lessons I completed from my Guru Shubhalaxmi Mandrekar.

2. *How was the support from the family members?*

We were five siblings but none of them were attracted towards any art form. I was the one who wanted to learn Kathak. My family was financially not stable, and my parents couldn't afford to pay fees. During those days fees were 10 rupees a month, but we couldn't afford to pay. But my mother saw my love for Dance. She has been my biggest supporter, and she used to save money for my fees, so that I could continue my classes. My mother used to like plays and Drama, but she never could do that, so she used to let me fulfil my wishes. My husband also never had any problem about me continuing my Art form. In fact I got married at a very young age because of which I couldn't complete my studies. I completed my Bachelor's degree with the help of my husband. My Kathak Bachelor's degree also I completed after getting married. I had a lot of support from my in-laws and my parents.

3. *How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?*

I always used to tell my parents that I will become Dance Bai and teach Dance to small kids. We as kids used to call our teachers Bai. Now everyone calls their teachers 'teacher' but we used to say Bai. I always used to tell this to my parents. I always wanted to do this but never thought that I will get a secure job for it. At first when I was 16 years old I started working in Bal Bhavan as a Dance teacher. I worked there for 11 years after that I started taking classes in Vidya Prabodhini pre-primary school.

4. *What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?*

I had already made up my mind that I am going to teach Kathak. My parents never stopped me, because at very young age I was working. And also I got married at the age of 18. I got a very supportive husband who helped me finish my education without expecting any money in return. He supported me in finishing my *Visharad*. I feel very blessed that none of my family members stopped me from doing what I liked.

5. *Will you continue this profession in the future?*

Yes, definitely. I am still planning to finish my Masters in Kathak. I had taken admission in Belgaum Institute, but because of bad health I couldn't complete it. I am going to follow my Art till I have energy in my body.

6. *How many students are you teaching right now?*

I have taught many students so far, but right now due to covid I cannot take classes. But I try to teach online. And currently I am teaching above 50 students.

7. *Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this Art form?*

I feel for me I had only one problem that is my financial condition. I have faced a lot of problems to continue my Kathak classes. It was very difficult for me to take part in competitions, and my Guru also didn't help me much. In fact there was one man who used to take our forms for competition. He used to pay 5 rupees for my competition and I used to participate. I still remember I didn't have any ornaments or any fancy dresses. Parents of my batch-mates used to dress me up after the performance of their kids. My both children have learnt Kathak; my son as well as daughter. My daughter loved to Dance, but there is no surety of jobs and one has to struggle a lot for secure jobs that is why she never wanted to come in this field. I have also noticed a positive change in parents. Many of the parents say that they want to educate their children in the field they like. Many of the earlier generations couldn't study Kathak because their parents used to think Dancing is not respected in society, but educated parents want to let their children learn new things and don't support unwanted thoughts of earlier generations.

8. SMITA CHARI



Name – Smita Chari

Age – 51 years

A resident of – Varca, Margao

Qualification – *Visharad* in Kathak, Masters in Economics

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I had started learning Kathak as hobby, but after some time I realized that this is something I love to do. I have completed my *Visharad* under the guidance of my Guru Shubhalaxmi Mandrekar. I have completed it in Goa. And I have also done my Masters in Economics

I started my journey of Kathak from very young age. I was 11 years old. My Guru was Shubhalaxmi Manjrekar. My Guru and her husband used to visit my house quite often as my family was into Classical music. My grandmother did our admission in Junta House, Panaji. We had a joint family, so our grandmother admitted us, me, including my other siblings and cousins for different classes.

2. How was the support from family members?

My grandmother was very open minded, during that time people did not allow girls to learn such things. My family also had a liking towards Classical Music, so I always had support. There was a group formed by Junta House, named ‘Swaranjali’. This group used to visit villages and organize programmes I used to perform through that group. I have done a lot of performances through that group. I had support from my family.

3. How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?

When I started my 11th I got an opportunity to work in ‘Bal Bhavan’ as a part time dance instructor in Bal Bhavan. I started working there part time and continued my studies. I worked in Bal Bhavan for 9

years. Side by side I also continued learning Kathak and completed *Visharad* degree. I was also in need of work that time, so I started working. After I graduated, I got job in Mustifund High School for some time. Then I got married. After marriage my husband and mother in law supported me, I had to move to Margao, so I had to leave my job from Panaji. Soon I started teaching as a subject teacher in Margao. After that in the year 2000 I got the opportunity through the Department of Art and Culture to teach as a Kathak Dance teacher. I teach in two schools on alternate days.

4. *What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?*

My family was already into classical music. My uncle was good *Tabla Wadak*, he used to perform and do stage shows. I also used to perform in a lot of stage shows. No one objected to Art in our family. After my marriage my husband supported me, even my mother-in-law. I was teaching in Mustifund High School that time. But when I had the opportunity to work as a Kathak Dance teacher they supported me.

5. *Will you continue this profession in the future?*

Yes! This is what my passion is. I have loved doing it since my childhood, Dance makes me forget all my worries. I will continue it till I can.

6. *How many students are you teaching right now?*

I am teaching students from 5th to 10th standard and around 200 students so far.

7. *Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this Art form?*

At some point in my life I couldn't go ahead with Kathak and I had to leave. I had some personal problems, so there was gap for some years. I always wanted to be Kathak teacher, but not always do you get the chance to take it up as a full-time career. None of my batch mates have taken up Kathak as career. I am the only one from our batch to teach as a Kathak teacher. Not always does everyone get encouragement to go ahead in this field.

Many of my friends used to ask me, "Why do you want to teach Dance? You are well educated and you could get a job in well-known companies", but I know how much peace I get to stand on stage and perform. Not everyone has the guts to perform on stage. There are many engineers, doctors and teachers. It takes a lot of courage to do something that not everyone is doing. Before in last few years there was not much scope in this field, but now there are so many opportunities that are given by government. I have not really faced any problems from my families. But people in the society are not accepting dance as a normal career I feel.

9. Seema Shikerkar



Name – Seema Shikerkar

Age – 51

A resident of – Panaji

Qualification – 10th

1. How did you start learning Kathak?

I started learning Kathak at the age of 7 years. People around me noticed that at this young age I have got some extra dancing skills then the rest of the kids of my age. Everyone insisted to my parents to do my admission for dance classes. I started learning Kathak at Junta House, Panaji under the guidance of Shubhlaxmi Manjrekar. I had started it as a “time pass”. Because in Goa those days there was no such thing as Dance. And there were people who used to think that Dance, Drama these art forms were there just for “time pass” and nothing more. I belonged to a brahmin family. One day Rohini Bhate had come to Goa for programme. I went to see her performance. While performing she stepped on a nail and her foot was wounded. It was full of blood, but still she didn’t stop and continued one-hour long performance. I was so impressed by that incident. I felt that there is something in this art form that I should learn. This affected my education. I stopped concentrating on my studies. I failed my 8th standard because it was stuck in head that I should also become a Dancer like Rohini Bhate. My father found out that Rohini Bhate was teaching in Pune, so I decided to go there, but my age was the problem yet she agreed to teach me. She taught me the meaning of Dance. She taught me everything about Dance. I did my dance classes as well as 10th standard in Pune. After that I returned back to Goa for some time. But here in Goa there was no education level like Pune, so I returned back to Pune on a scholarship. I spent 5 more years learning from Rohini Bhate. With her I started to perform on stage.

2. How was the support from family members?

My mother was scared about me because dancing in Brahmin families was not considered as a good thing. I was so much into kathak that I didn't want to leave it. My father was not concerned much because he thought that I will leave it after some time. And my father was also an artist. There were problems from other family members also. One of my co-dancers belonged to the devadasi caste, and decided to get married. Staying in Pune for 7 years I never believed in caste system nor did I see anyone practicing it around me. When I returned back to Goa the situation was not the same for me. I decided to attend his wedding, and there was a lot of things said by my other family members for attending their wedding. People and some of my family members expected me to behave in a certain manner, just like how other girls from Goa had to behave. Even after getting married my life changed. In spite of that, my husband has been my big support. He is the only person who stood strongly behind me. After getting married, I was restricted from stage performances. My Dance was only limited to work. I could perform only if there was any function at my work.

3. How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of kathak?

I saw my Guru Rohini Bhate performing on stage, even though she was badly injured. I was impressed by the way she was performing. I was so mesmerized by that, I wanted to know more about this art form. I lost my concentration from studies. I failed my 8th standard. Then my parents sent me to Pune to learn Kathak from her. I went there, my age was younger than required but Rohini Bhate still decided to teach me. I started my classes and completed my 10th side by side in Pune. After that I came back to Goa because my family insisted. There was one of Rohini Bhate's student who used to teach in Kala Academy. My father asked me to continue my rest of education in Goa. When I came back to Goa I realized that no one can teach me like my Guru. No one in Goa was working with all their heart for this art form. After that I decided to go back to Pune for my further classes from my Guru. I was so attracted that I wanted to become a performer like Rohini Bhate. I wanted to experience something different from everyone else. I came first in my class 4 times, but I didn't feel anything great happened with me, but when I started learning and performing, I was getting more satisfied and I wanted to do it more. That is when I realized I will do this for rest of my life.

4. What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

My mother was more worried about me learning Kathak. Some where she knew I will go deep into this art. On the other hand, my father was quiet because he thought that I will lose interest in this and move ahead in my life, yet they didn't stop me. But the rest of the family didn't like me learning Kathak because it was not considered to be done by Brahmins. Even after getting married I was restricted by my in-laws and I was not allowed to perform except if I had to perform for Kala Academy, that is where I worked. Before getting married I performed wherever I could. I loved my art form so much that Dancing is something I used to do all day and night. But still I had support from my Husband but I lived in a joint family and I stopped performing. They allowed me to work but not to perform.

5. Will you continue this profession in the future?

I cannot say that I will definitely do it. But I have thought about continuing my love for this art form. I might take classes after I get retired from my job. Right now I am not doing it because I cannot divert

my attention to two different types of work, and I don't have time also to do it. But I am thinking about continuing it further in my life.

6. *How many students are you teaching right now?*

I have chosen to teach small students. I teach in Kala Academy as a dance teacher.

7. *Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?*

The problem I faced is when I was learning Kathak, dancing in Goa was considered to be a "time pass" and there was no importance given to it. That time Goa was way too far from other cities. I had to face problems I was assumed to be characterless because I was performing on stage. Not only people, but even people from my own house told me not to wear *ghoongrus* because it was not accepted by Brahmin families. I was told, "Girls from brahmin caste should not learn Dance". I had spent 7 years in Pune. I never believed in caste system nor was I taught about it in Pune. In Goa people had a lot of issues about caste system. The first ever fight I had in my family was because I had gone to my fellow partner's wedding who belonged to devadasi caste. After getting married my life changed upside down. I loved performing, I loved when people complimented me for performing well. I was restricted by my in-laws not to perform on stage and I was made to wear a toe ring before one month of my wedding, so that my feet would not tap loudly. There was a belief that daughter in law's feet shouldn't make loud tapping noise. I was a dancer and my feet used to make a loud tapping noise. I was living in a joint family and not only this but there were a lot of other restrictions I had to follow. There was a rule that if you are menstruating then you cannot have a bath for 4 days in a row, and I had to stay separately for 4 days, as a part of work I sometimes had to do a performance and it used to be very difficult. I cut my hair short in anger because I was not allowed to perform on stage. I think as a Brahmin I had a lot of challenges to face and it was very difficult for me to listen to all the things I was told to do.

10. Neha Kankonkar



Name – Neha Kankonkar

Age – 61

A resident of – Porvorim

Qualification – *Visharad* in Kathak

1. *How did you start learning Kathak?*

50 years ago my father Pandit Rajaram Bua Mandrekar came to Goa from Mumbai. He used to work as chorus dancer. Because of some health issues he had to come to Goa. He opened the first ever Kathak class in Margao city. He named his institution as Lalit Kala Sangeet. In Goa people did not know about Kathak as well as Classical Dance. I was very small at that time. He continued it for 3 years and then again he had to come back to Panaji city. When he shifted to Panaji I started going with him, and I told him that I want to learn Kathak. I was 6 years old when I started learning Kathak from my father. Little by little I learnt everything about Kathak I cleared my *Praveshika* after that and started performing wherever my father asked me to.

2. *How was the support from the family members?*

My father and mother were artists and were working as Kathak teachers and that is the reason they were clear about my vision and had no problem with me taking up Kathak as a career. They never even doubted my choice.

3. *How and when did you decide to go for a career in the field of Kathak?*

We had really bad financial conditions. There was food available only one time for 9 of us. I have 6 siblings. My parents took a lot of trouble to teach us. After I grew up to the age of 15 years I started working in Drama along with my sister Maya Mandrekar. I worked in around 50 drama performances.

At the age of 19 I left working in Drama. After that I decided that I have learnt Kathak and I will make use of it. I started my first ever class in Margao city. And I continued it for 6 years. After all the struggle I got a call from Bal Bhavan Panaji regarding work and later I started working as Kathak Dance teacher in Bal Bhavan.

4. What was the reaction of family members about pursuing Kathak as a career?

My parents never had any problem. They appreciated me for taking their legacy ahead. Even after getting married my husband and in-laws were very supportive. They never had problem with me working and performing as an artist.

5. Will you continue this profession in the future?

I have already retired and now I have started my own teaching classes. I have plans for teaching at more places. I have even got calls for extension of service. But due to covid I have not joined. I am proud of my art and I feel that artists should always be working because I feel we are blessed with in-born talent from god which no one can take away from us. And I will always work till my body supports me.

6. How many students are you teaching right now?

After my retirement I am teaching 20 students currently, but before that I have taught many students. Some of them have even started their own classes.

7. Any problems that you faced in this journey of pursuing this art form?

Problems that I have faced are way too many. I feel financial conditions will be one of them. I had started working at very young age, and stage performance was something very common for me. There were people who used to mock me for working in drama and I was a stage performer. There were people who used to appreciate me for my talent while some of them insulted me and even commented on my body parts. During that time some of them threw things on us while we were performing. I feel it was also because during that time people were not aware about classical dance and were not educated enough to understand the difference. They used to link Kathak to bad things and there was a lot of mocking that I have faced.

Chapter 5

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The 21st century has opened various avenues for the development of humankind. Evolution and adaptation is a part of our lives. All the fields are growing and trying to develop in their own way, but there are many fields where women are not given equal opportunities and are dependent upon their families to take decisions for them. This has been the harsh reality of women in our society.

In this dissertation I have tried to find out about the problems and prejudices that women Kathak artists have faced while taking up Kathak as their profession.

Learning Kathak

Out of 10 women I interviewed many of them started to learn kathak as a hobby which later turned into passion. Eight out of 10 women started to learn kathak at young age of 7 years. Some started it because they liked dancing and it was a pastime, which later turned into a passion. Two out of 10 started much later as respondents had family problems and one of the respondent had focussed on her nursing career in the beginning. But all 10 of them had a liking towards Kathak. Many of them in their interviews said that since their childhood they used to try dancing on their own. According to them they had inborn talent.

Family support/ artist in the family

Through the interviews I understood that 5 out of 10 women dancers had support from family members. Their family members allowed them to choose their career in the field of kathak. They had support before marriage and even after getting married as well. I noticed that women who had support from both the natal and marital families have one thing in common, and that is they belong to families of artists. They said that they had a father or a husband who were from the artist community, and they had no problem supporting them in the field of Kathak. Many of them in their interviews said that it was easier for them to continue their love for art because family members understood the meaning of art. Kathak for them was nothing less than another art form. I have also noticed that many women who are married to men who are Tabla Teachers. They have received support from both sides of their families and they have said that they were lucky to have that support.

Conditional support

5 out of 10 women did not have full support from their family members. Two of them were married and two were unmarried. Two of them didn't have any artists in their family and their family members were not happy when the women told them that they wanted to make a career in the field of Kathak. Their family members weren't aware about careers in the field of Kathak, they wanted them to do regular jobs like everyone else. One of them was studying engineering and her parents wanted her to work as an engineer and not as a Kathak artist. Her family members believed that there is not much scope in this field and prioritized engineering over Kathak. She was even told that only if you have free time then you can think about doing further studies in kathak one of the respondent didn't have any artist in the family. When she told her family members they were not ready for it. She took help from her teachers to convince her family members and to inform them about career opportunities in this field. One of the respondent belonged to Brahmin caste. Her parents allowed her to learn kathak and perform it as a career, but her in laws and husband didn't allow her to perform and had a stereotypical mentality that kathak and dancing is not a good profession to follow. She stopped performing after getting married.

Respondent was working as nurse and also had the wish to learn Kathak. When she got herself enrolled for classes she started developing more interest in dancing. Her brother had a problem when she told him that she wants to go in the field of Kathak. She started her career after getting married with the support of her husband. Her family members were not really happy about her choosing this as a profession.

Financial problems/government job

While interviewing women I noticed that many of them had financial problems. Three amongst 10 respondents run their own private classes. The remaining 7 are working under Art and Culture Department under the Government of Goa. Many of the respondents confessed that they had financial problems in their life. Some of them had problems while learning Kathak. Many respondents also said that they continued this profession because of the government jobs they had got.

Pallabi Chakravorty in her writing had mentioned that after independence the government had taken initiative to promote art and culture. It had also established departments to help the artists. In Goa also many artists are working under facilities provided to them. Because of that financial stability given by the Government they continued this profession in their life. From this I understood that because of stable jobs given by the government women enjoyed more freedom to continue their career. I feel the government has played a very important role by offering jobs to these artists. This helps to ensure that an art form does not lose its identity and the legacy of these dances continues for the years to come.

Recognition and fulfilment

While interviewing respondent I understood that more than half of the respondents liked the name and fame they received from society. The rest of them didn't care about the name and fame. But many of them liked the attention by people. They were not happy to be the 'normal' women they were in their earlier life. According to them Kathak gave them recognition. They said that if they were not into this field people wouldn't even know they exist in this big world, no one would even know who they are, but Kathak was the reason that people knew about them, and their art form helped them in that. One of the respondent also mentioned that dance always gave her peace and it was something she always wanted to do. She was proud that she was doing something she liked and she was blessed to receive something extraordinary, not enjoyed by the rest of the people.

Social-Stigma Dancers Face

Based on my interaction with women I found that Kathak dancers from Goa faced social stigma. There were various problems faced by women in this field; some of them faced name-calling, and verbal harassment. I also learnt from my respondents that women between the age group of 50 to 60 have experienced this more compared to the younger age groups. According to respondents of 50 to 60 years of age, during the time they were learning Kathak people were not aware about what is art. According to people dancing was just a hobby and not an appropriate career choice for women. It was a belief that girls from respected families and who belong to high caste do not perform on stage. The women who were labelled as "Tawaif" and "bai" used to perform on stages. Some of respondents were also called by names as "nachre" and their character was judged by people from society. The word "nachre" was considered as characterless. I also came across people in Goa who were not really aware about many art forms. Any girl dancing in the family was told that dancing is not something respected by the society. Regular jobs were much more appreciated.

One of the respondents also mentioned that while she was performing on stage people started throwing things at her. There was no specific reason for this but she said that it was very common during those days. Respondents also said that ogling was very common when they performed on stages.

Other age groups did not face a lot of problems as by the time they entered this field, people from their surroundings had become aware about art forms and people had started accepting the dance forms.

My experience

Working on this project was very interesting as well as very challenging. while studying about this topic I had realised that kathak art form was gender biased as in the past it was a male dominated art form. But in recent time we see there are more women artists then men. While conducting interviews there was a lot of challenges I faced. Because there are very limited women in the field of Kathak in Goa it was difficult to find women Kathak dancers. Due to covid there were a lot of restrictions I had to follow.

Knowing the journey of these women through my interviews with them I tried to understand the struggles that women face in their lives. It was a whole new experience of knowing more about this art form and also about people involved in it. I tried to read more about the Kathak Dance form to gain more information. Through which I realised there is not much documentation available in Goa about the social impact of this dance form. There were limited books available in Central Library and also there were only 3 books available in the Library of Goa University. That is why I used secondary sources from the internet – articles and journals. In Goa there are many women artists in different fields. I didn't come across any proper documentation on women Kathak artists from Goa.

While interacting with women Kathak artists I understood that Goa is becoming aware and accepting of different art forms. But there are a few people from rural areas who aren't ready to change their stereotypical thinking about certain things. In the interviews that have been conducted most of the women are from rural areas. They said that when they were performing after marriage, or also when they tried to interact with people about this art form, people did not readily accept this art. Some of them agreed on face but made fun behind their back. People tend to think that 'This art form doesn't belong to Goa and comes from North India'. Some of the respondents said that people were more ready to accept the art and that educated people had much respect for this art form.

I also observed that not every woman had faced the same problems, each of them had faced different problems while taking up Kathak as their career.

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GLOSSARY

Visharad – Bachelor's degree

Parangat/ Madhyama Purna – Diploma

Natya - dramatic representation or drama with speech music and dancing

Nritta - pure dance steps performed rhythmically

Nazakat - elegance

Khoobsurti - beauty

Gharana - specialist school of classical Dance/ Music

Alankar part 1 - Master's level- part 1

Alankar part 2 - Master's level- part 2