

On Learning Methodologies for Art

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Abstract

This report presents an analysis of learning methodologies for art, with focus on the art forms from India. It talks about the different paradigms of knowledge, art and learning styles, and of the eight methods of acquisition of knowledge. The formal, informal and non-formal methods of learning are compared on the parameters of individuality, commercial value of art, inclusiveness and the effect of learning method on evolution of the form, along with examples from the literary art forms, fine arts, and performing arts from across India.

1. The Three Trichotomies

1.1. *Knowledges*

Of all discourses on art, aesthetics and criticism, the one that often remains a concern limited only to the practitioners is of the method of acquisition of art. If we look at art as an intentional process to evoke human emotion through creation of spatial objects or temporal phenomenon, learning art becomes a cognitive discourse that deserves its own dialogue. One must first make a distinction between:

1. Propositional Knowledge
2. Procedural Knowledge
3. Knowledge by Acquaintance

Propositional knowledge is the type of knowledge that is, by its very nature, expressed in declarative sentences or indicative propositions. It may be gained by participation, reason and logic, experience, observation, or dialogical enquiry. For instance, the propositional knowledge of a painting concerns the materials of canvas and paint, the colors and strokes used, and

information about the style, theme and subject of the artwork. The one who bears propositional knowledge about an object is (usually) able to recognize the object and distinguish it from non-objects, and the process of inference or acquisition of knowledge plays a significant role. On other hand, procedural knowledge is the knowledge exercised in form of performance of some task, and deals with the idea of knowing how to do a particular thing. An individual possessing detailed information (propositional knowledge) about a painting may not be able to paint, and similarly, a painter who bears the procedural knowledge about painting may not be aware of all the information concerning the subject. The idea of knowledge by acquaintance is not that easy to put forward. We shall say that we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. As the name suggests, being acquainted with an object leads to having a particular kind of knowledge, however, it is not equal to knowing the the properties which make the object.

This report concerns with the methods for acquisition of procedural knowledge for performing/creating art. Such knowledge is drastically different from propositional knowledge of art which a critique or art-historian may possess. This is the kind of knowledge that concerns the artist.

1.2. Art, Craft and Skill

The English word ‘art’ is too loaded. It can connote a sense of trained ability or mastery of a medium. It can also refer to the developed and efficient use of a form to convey meaning with immediacy and depth. In order to avoid ambiguity, a demarcation between these meanings is necessary. For this report, the following are as defined:

1. Art: an intentional attempt to evoke human emotion through creation of an object or a performance
2. Craft: creation of an artifact or process with an aesthetic character
3. Skill: transformation of intentions into an object or a performance

As the definitions suggest, the three are interrelated and the distinction cannot be discretized. Instead, any object that we may consider of artistic nature in the general context bears properties of all the three in different measures. This report does focus on art, but also discusses craft and skill to some extent. Unless specified otherwise, art shall mean as defined above.

1.3. Learning Methods

By the virtue of being a learning method, no learning method can be entirely formal or entirely informal. Which is to say that absolute institutionalization and formalization leads to making the learning method ineffective in the same way as the absolute lack of it does. In that context, learning methods form a continuum with formal institutional learning on one pole and organic learning on the other. Indeed some theorists propose that there are three poles to this continuum:

1. Formal Learning
2. Non-formal learning
3. Informal Learning

A formal learning is one delivered by trained instructors in a systematic intentional way within an institute, an usually has a formal curriculum and assessment system. Informal learning deals with learning without set objectives in terms of learning outcomes. It is a pervasive ongoing phenomenon where knowledge is acquired by participation. In contrast to the two, non-formal learning is a loosely defined term covering structured learning situations that may take place within institutes but need not have a fixed formal curriculum or accreditation as is associated with formal learning.

Instances of the same would be in the field of music. The method of learning adopted in a university programs for music, say Bachelor of Music degree program (in some countries such as Canada and United Kingdom), would come very close to purely formal learning method. Although these institutes have understood the value and importance of individuality in art, the method, intention and approach of such programs reflect formality. Informal learning of music may be observed in temples in India where invariably the devotees will learn to sing *bhajans* (prayer songs). Similarly, most domestic and folk songs are learned by people due to exposure to an environment where they are prominent. Non-formal learning can be associated with Hindustani Classical Music. The *gharana* tradition and the *guru-shishya parampara* do give the learning method some structure. It takes place in an institute and does have set objectives in mind. The curriculum is loosely decided and the assessment system is not formal.

2. Acquisition of Knowledge

It is essential to define and describe what it means to learn. In this report, we limit the scope of learning to acquisition of procedural knowledge for performing (or creating) art. The classical theory of knowledge talks of eight methods of acquisition of knowledge.

2.1. *Emotion*

Emotion is the first of the methods of learning. The source of emotion is mysterious and not very well understood, nor do we know much about their primal, ancillary and durational effects. Emotion plays a central role to art as the very purpose of art is to evoke human emotion - for which the artist must be able to feel, and to some level, understand the emotion that he or she wills to evoke. It plays a central role in art forms, however, in the process of learning art, it is often underlying. However, in theater and dance, a lot of stress is put on learning and understanding emotions. The *Natyashastra* characterizes emotions and moods by eight parameters - *Shringara* (love and beauty), *Hasya* (laughter), *Karuna* (empathy and compassion), *Raudra* (anger), *Veera* (valor and courage), *Bhaya* (horror, terror and fear), *Bibhatsya* (disgust) and *Adbutha* (marvel and wonder). Classical dancers learn to understand these emotions by attempting to experience them.

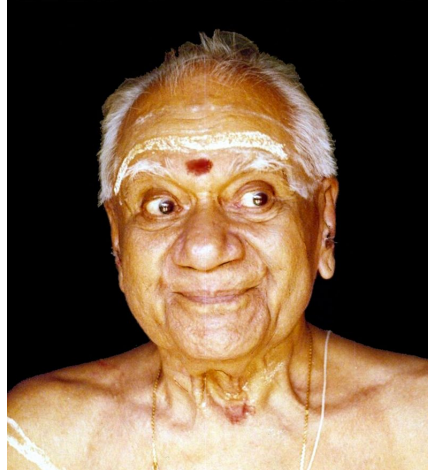


Figure 1: Koddiyattam maestro Mani Madhava Chakyar demonstrating Shringara Rasa

2.2. Faith

Faith is an unconventional and debatable method of acquisition of knowledge. The knowledge obtained by faith does not classify under declarative knowledge, and can be intervened with belief and ignorance. It is important to remark that faith does not necessarily have to involve religion and can just indicate a close affiliation or trust in someone, some organization, or some movement. There are two reasons why faith is relevant to this discourse on Indian art.

Firstly, the *Bhakti movement* played a significant role in framing the music and literary traditions of the country. The idea of Bhakti movement relies entirely on faith, and a number of singers and poets have acknowledged the fact that faith has been a guiding stone in their artistic journey. It is usually their spiritual guru who provides the devoted artist with meaning and purpose. The identity and intentionality of Bhakti movement poets cannot be imagined devoid of their faith. It is impossible to think of Shayama Shastri as an atheist - and so would be the case for Narsinh Mehta, Sant Tukaram, or Tulsidas. Similarly, one finds the role of faith significant in the *Baul Tradition* and the *Sufi Tradition*. A particular instance of the same is that the composer A. R. Rahman claims his devotion to Islam as the source of his song 'Khwaja Mere Khwaja.'

Secondly, it is the faith in socialism that motivated the tradition of *Taraqqi Pasand Adab* (Progressive Literature) in Urdu Poetry during the late nineteenth century. Just like in the case of Bhakti movement, writers of the Progressive Era such as Allama Iqbal cannot be divorced from their social and political philosophy, and their faith in their respective ideologies. They credit their devotion to freedom struggle, politics and social welfare as the source of knowledge and inspiration for learning the progressive aesthetic.

2.3. Imagination

Imagination permeates all areas of knowledge, and goes hand-in-glove with art and aesthetic. Imagination can be understood as the faculty or action of forming new ideas, images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses. Imagination is the key to all art, and needs only little elaboration.

Learning to imagine is a key feature of any learning process. An artist first imagines the object of art in his or her mind, and then attempts to translate that imagination into a tangible form by employing skill. There is

no way to teach imagination by instruction; it takes indulgence and practice to learn to imagine.

2.4. Intuition

Intuition is similar to emotion in the sense that it guides on towards knowledge without conscious reasoning, but unlike emotion, it does not involve entering another psychological state. It involves immediate awareness of objects and surroundings without realizing the source of this awareness. Alike faith, it is often challenged for not being a valid way of knowing as the procured knowledge cannot be declarative.

In context of India, intuition is a highly respected method of knowledge. A number of art forms require the students to first learn meditation in order to gain intuition. Intuition also plays a key role in taking decisions which are of ethical nature, hence connecting it to the idea of innate knowledge. As intuition is innate, one cannot learn it. It can only be developed by exposure to various scenarios, constant practice and meditation

2.5. Communication

Communication, either oral or written, is the most standard method of learning, and is the idea on which the entire educational system relies. India has had a long oral tradition of passing knowledge, even for the arts. One can use the term ‘instructive education’ for the learning process that takes through the medium of communication.

One must realize that communication is a limited medium, and total reliance on it leads to partial knowledge. It does not provide with procedural knowledge - only declarative, which makes an individual informed about art, but not an artist. Hence, communication ends up playing a secondary role.

2.6. Memory

Generally, memory is understood as the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information. However, when one talks about the theory of knowledge, the role and meaning of memory is a bit more nuanced. Firstly, unlike communication or imagination, memory is not a primary method of acquisition of knowledge. This means that one needs other ways of knowing to provide with initial knowledge, and only afterwards can memory be employed to modify and enhance that knowledge. Secondly, memory is not reliable: how one person remembers something will be radically different

from how another person recalls it, meaning that it must be treated with care in order to build up objective knowledge about a thing.

To understand memory, consider the canon of partition literature from India. Although most of the partition authors have lived during the partition of India and Pakistan, not all of them wrote during the time of partition. For those who wrote later (and even those who wrote at the time), relied largely on their memory of the partition and the impact it had on their minds. Facts and experiences would have certainly been the primary sources of knowledge, however, their memory sets the mood and motion of their work. One must note that memory is shaped with one's personal paradigms, and hence we have a number of contradicting renditions of that period.

2.7. Reason

In subjects such as mathematics and philosophy, reason plays a central role. Even in art, the ability to explain causes and effects, or justify actions drives art. This is because reason is inseparable from decision making. Reason also shares an intimate and complex relation with emotion, and with intuition.

Regardless of the geographical location, reason plays a central role in renaissance art and literature. The ideas that emerged during the Bengali renaissance period (1780 - 1940) were driven by questions on the nature and structure of the human society, which are reflected in the works of the Bengali stalwarts - from Ram Mohan Roy to Tagore. In the particular domain of art, the Bengali renaissance period witnessed revolution in poetry and in fine arts. Social evils and practices were questioned through the means of poetry and a sense of nationalism, unity and pride was induced. The Indian Society of Oriental Art established by Abanindranath Tagore played a pivotal role in leading the fine arts movement. Abanindranath was a major exponent of *swadeshi* values in Indian art, thereby founding the Bengal school of art. He sought to modernize Mughal and Rajput miniature art styles to counter the influence of the Western models of art as taught in Art Schools during the British Raj.

The same is the case of the Tamil renaissance period (1840 - 1960). A major question raised in this movement was of seeking the Tamil identity. The reformists of this era attempted to revive the glory of the Sangam era that was lost due to the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, then the Marathas, Nayaks and later the British. In the field of art, the renaissance was marked by the domination of Tamil language in poetry, literature and Carnatic music



Figure 2: An artist's rendering of Subramania Bharati

lyrics. In art, the Madras Art Movement took form, which has been discussed in detail in the notes.

A special mention in the case of the Tamil renaissance would be of Mahakavi Subramania Bharati who used reason as a yardstick to measure and mark the behavior of the society. His works and approach can only be credited to reasoning and rationale, which allowed him to create people's literature that encompassed the ideas of reformation, nationalism, devotion and progressivism.

2.8. Sensory Perception

Our senses are our primary way of interacting with the world. Long before Man learned to use language to communicate or reason to decide, he or she was able to use the senses to gain awareness of the surroundings. As art is perceived through the senses, it becomes essential to learn how to perceive in order to translate intentionality into an object that can be perceived by the

audience. The idea of gaining knowledge by sensory perception is essential to all artists.

A particular case is of Chandralekha Prabhudas Patel, commonly known as Chandralekha, who was an exponent of Bharatanatyam and Kalarippayattu, and worked with postmodern fusion forms. She disregarded the archaic stories of Rama and Krishna as the content for dance, and tried to inculcate themes which were relevant to her time, one such being the Emergency of 1975. According to the people close to Chandralekha, these ideas were driven by her observations of the surroundings. She spent hours marveling the motion of ants carrying flour, the breaking of the sea waves, and the emptiness of the sky. It is this sensory perception that allowed her to reflect upon what was relevant to her time.

3. Comparative Study

We may now compare the formal, the non-formal and the informal approaches to learning art. The formal method is characterized by the extensive use of communication and reason as the method of acquisition of knowledge. Emotion, faith, and intuition have little or no place in this method. It is associated with instructive and institutionalized education. Informal learning practices rely almost completely on perception. Any and all forms of acquiring knowledge can be used as a learning tool, including emotion, faith, and intuition. It is not an absolute antonym of the formal method as communication also plays a central role in the informal learning method. Non-formal learning, unlike the informal approach allows the use of any method of acquisition of knowledge, but stresses on imagination, intuition and perception. It attempts to capture the best of both worlds.

One can compare the three methods based on the parameters of individualization, commercial value, inclusiveness of art and evolution of the form.

4. Individualization

A major challenge associated with formal method of education is standardization. In some sense, it attempts to teach and assess each individual in the same manner, which often leads to ignorance of certain aspects of the learner. This is a standard criticism of the formal method of education - regardless of the subject. In art, however, the role of individual identity and approach play a very significant role. This difference is observed in all the three aspects - art, skill as well as craft.



Figure 3: Gouache painting from 1814 in the Thanjavur style depicting the deity Yama.

4.1. Thanjavur Painting

Consider the case of *Thanjavur* miniature painting from Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. This vibrant tradition of painting portraits on wooden panels, often accompanied by use of gold and silver foils, saw a period of British patronage during the Company rule in India.

The method of instruction for Thanjavur painting was formalized, and later institutionalized in order to ensure mass production. This led to increased development of skill and craft. However, as an art, it died in the sense that the artists were now only skilled craftsmen who translated the intentionality and design of their predecessors to products for the markets in Britain and its colonies. It is only post 1930 that revival of the style became a matter of concern and discussion. Today, exhibitions, workshops and training camps on Thanjavur paintings are being held regularly by pri-

vate and (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) state government organizations.

In its 'revived' form, a wide range of popular and modern subjects and themes are being depicted in Thanjavur paintings. This is possible only because artists are allowed and encouraged to express their individuality - giving rise to a modern aesthetic. C. Kondiah Raju is a name closely associated to the revived Thanjavur style. He and his student followers are examples of the continued influence of Thanjavur paintings in modern, popular and academic art. Today, the old art form is also used to create mixed media arts.

4.2. *Madhubani Painting*

When it comes to organic learning, one can talk about the tribal arts of India. These art forms are far from extinction, and have been practiced and improvised for generations. Here we can look at the examples of *Madhubani* painting from Mithila region (India and Nepal). Madhubani is done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens, and matchsticks, using natural dyes and pigments, and is characterized by eye-catching geometrical patterns and is often associated with occasions such as birth or marriage, and festivals, such as *Holi*, *Surya Shasti*, *Kali Puja*, *Upanayanam*, *Durga Puja*. It is predominantly prepared by women on freshly plastered mud walls and floors of huts. There is no formal or non-formal education mechanism and it has been passed down from generation to generation - from mother to daughter. By its very nature, every individual finds a platform for expression. This has allowed for two things. Firstly, the inclusiveness and informality has allowed Madhubani to have many distinctive styles of its own, the popular ones being *Bharni*, *Katchni*, *Tantrik*, *Godna* and *Kohbar*. It is only the constant evolution of Madhubani, which keeps it live. Secondly, the art form never saw a period of downfall or a need of revival as it was closely associated with the culture and tradition of the communities that practiced it. This association was possible only because of organic learning and freedom for individualization.

However, Madhubani painting received official recognition very late, only after Sita Devi received State award by Government of Bihar in 1969. As the form was restricted to the household, it did not find place in Indian or European markets, nor did its aesthetic appeal to the colonizers. After 1970s, a number of efforts were made to popularize and recognize the tribal art forms of India - Madhubani being the center of attraction. Artists such as Sita Devi, Jagdamba Devi, Ganga Devi and Mahasundari Devi were awarded



Figure 4: Madhubani painting depicting Krishna and Radha by Sita Devi.

civilian and art awards in recognition of their contribution to the aesthetic tradition. Only then did Madhubani evolve to mediums such as canvas, paper and cloth.

4.3. *Pattachitra Painting*

From the two examples, one can conclude that it is only the middle ground that enjoys a fair share of commercial success and longevity. We see this trait in *Pattachitra* tradition of Odisha which had a non-formal learning practice. *Pattachitra* is a style of painting on cloth, usually depicting scenes with multiple characters. Traditionally, it takes the entire family of the painter to prepare the art work. Usually, a male member - mostly, the head of the family is the master hand who draws the initial line and gives the final finishing. The female members prepare the glue, colors and canvas and give the lacquer coating. The painting may be divided into parts based on the expertise of the members. It is here where the children of the family play a part. In each



Figure 5: A Pattachitra inspired by Jagannath culture from Odisha.

phase of preparation, the children are involved and assigned easy tasks to gain an introduction to the tradition. Later, they are also allowed to paint parts and prepare materials for the work under the guidance of the more experienced family members. There is no formal education system, however, there is a certain unspoken syllabi associated with the art form that the experienced artists pass on to the younger generation. In the process, they may also put the learners to test. This associates structure to the learning method while retaining informality.

Since the 13th century, Pattachitra has drawn much attention and is currently one of the most sold style of traditional art from the Indian subcontinent. It did not see a phase of downfall or loss of artists. The individuality allowed it to evolve. Various distinctive forms of Pattachitra have evolved such as *Ragachitras*, *Bandhachitra*, *Yamapati* and *Yatripatas*. It was also used in preparation of Ganjapa/Ganjifa playing cards during the Mughal and post-Mughal era. A variant called Tala Pattachitra also developed, which was drawn on palm leaves sewed together to form foldable panels.

In art, individualization is essential and formalization and institutionalization becomes the greatest threat to it. The idea of an institute is usually based on training and skill development, which is duly satisfies, however, it fails to talk about creativity, design and developing intentionality. These concepts are too abstract to be a part of a general structured curriculum adopted to train hundreds or thousands of individuals. It is meditation, reflection, practice and engagement that allow for learning of these concepts, which are realized in informal and non-formal methods of learning.

5. Production and Commercial Value

An important parameter that goes unnoticed in a discourse on aesthetics is the economic value of an art work. In a lot of cases, the livelihood of the artisans and artists is dependent on the art form, which calls for a dialogue on how the market treats the art form. The learning methods play an important role for the economic value of the produced artwork. This becomes further involved if the produced artwork is an object utility and not just aesthetic.

5.1. *Kancheepuram Silk*

If the production of a textile is associated with more than twenty five yards and about sixty dyeing units, one need not talk about how institutionalized the product is. However, must make a distinction here between art and craft. The Silk sarees of Kancheepuram as not works of art, but objects of aesthetic beauty. They are designed so as to evoke the emotion of grand cultural heritage, splendor and affluence in every mind, making them art. The mentioned yards and units work with producing these sarees, not designing them, making them institutions of production not of learning art. Due to the high demand and market value of these silk sarees, the artistic process was replaced by a formal, structured and institutionalized manufacturing process. One can draw parallels between Kancheepuram Silk and Thanjavur paintings (mentioned in the previous section).

The artistic process was hence limited to replication. Certainly, designers do come up with new patterns, styles and trends in this field as well, but these are all driven by the market and its need. If at all some artist experiments with the material beyond its commercial value, Kancheepuram Silk ends up being only a canvas for the artist and not the art work itself.

The strong correlation between the commercial value and learning method can be explained based on the fact that the institutionalized method ensures the following:

1. Uniform and Standardized Production
2. Reduced Need for Skilled Labor
3. Division of Labor
4. Reduced Cost Per Unit Produce

One may be reminded of the merits of Ford's Assembly Line or of Cartwright's Power Loom when reading the pointers above. This is because the institutionalized method bases its philosophy on the same ideology as the Assembly

Line and Power Loom. Indeed it was these two that have made Kancheepuram's yards and units work in the way they do today.

A remark should be made for the second advantage - 'Reduced need for Skilled Labor.' Prior to the Industrial revolution, all objects were hand-crafted, and the tradition continued in Kancheepuram till the Company Rule broke the thumbs of the weavers and cut apart their wrists as a measure against the competition of their machine-loomed fabrics. The 'reduction in the necessity for skilled labor' is just a euphemism for loss of job for skilled craftsmen and weavers, marking an end of their artistic careers and the commencement of their labor.

The learning process also has to change accordingly. In order to ensure uniform and standardized production of Silk at a reduced cost price, learning silk weaving was replaced by learning loom operation which broke the ribs of the textile art. One must note that it is not entirely due to the market that the learning method became so, nor is it that the change in learning methods casted the commercial value of the produce. They are correlated and can cause each other to a partial extent.

5.2. *Kachchhi Textiles*

Weaver, shepherd and cotton-cultivator communities in the *Rann of Kachchh* (Kutch) come together to contribute to an art form which is now called Kachchhi weaving. Till 1950, the textiles from Kutch were famous only in Gujarat and Rajasthan, however, today they attract art and fashion enthusiasts from across the globe. Before 1950, the art form was practiced mainly by the women of the weaver communities, and the clients were limited to the Ahir, Rajput and Rabari communities of Kutch, and to some extent Western Gujarat. There was a small market, and the object of art (textiles) did not receive much attention. The art form was passed down from one generation to the other by informal instruction and engagement in the process. The traits that characterized the process of Kachchhi weaving were the exact antonyms of the reasons mentioned above.

1. Erratic Production Quality and Quantity
2. Need of Skilled Artists and Weavers
3. High Cost of Production

These characteristics turned into demerits when cheap mill made cloth was flooded in the markets in the 1960s. A group of four enterprising weavers



Figure 6: A weaver from Kutch sewing a colored fabric

created the Bhujodi Weavers Cooperative which brought together all of the weavers in Bhujodi village. Unlike in the case of Kancheepuram Silks, where the artists lost the jobs, here the artists got jobs and their deserving earning. This allowed for slow, but steady growth. The learning method adopted by the Bhujodi weavers come close to that of the Pattachitra artists where there is no formal education system, however, young learners need to practice under the guidance of expert craftsmen before working independently. Later, Kachchh Weavers' Association was founded. The association has attempted to retain the traditional learning practices and encourage experimentation.

The intentionality of Kachchhi textile work is still associated only with the rural identity of Kutch and Gujarat. It is not an icon of affluence or grandeur like the Banarasi or Kancheepuram Silk, and perhaps will never be. This is not only because of the people who practice it, and the story of

its origin, but also because the learning method has attempted to keep the tradition as inclusive as possible, and neither stresses on formal detailing, nor associates an elitist image with itself. This difference between the folk and the classical art forms remain invariant of time and space and form the demarcating characteristics of the two classes.

6. Inclusiveness of Art

The learning method also has an impact on how exclusive or inclusive the art form is, and in turn, it is the exclusivity or inclusiveness of the art form that impacts the learning process. A strong correlation can be observed between classical art forms, exclusivity and formal methods of learning, and similarly we can observe the connections between folk art forms, inclusiveness and informal methods.

6.1. Carnatic Music

Carnatic Music follows the *Guru-Shishya Parampara* of learning. Students of Carnatic music spend years with their guru, and often undertake tuition with multiple gurus in order to gain expertise over different styles and elements of the form. Due to the emerging trend of music schools, learners often start by enrolling to such an institution, however, once they have formal introduction to the subject, they move towards the guidance of a learned guru.

The learning method is not institutionalized, in the sense that the learning is not confined to a particular institute, however, it bears all the other elements of formal learning. There is an unwritten syllabus that comprises of theory of Carnatic music - *ragams*, *talams*, and *sahityam*. It comes closer to the non-formal system as this syllabus is altered by every guru according to his or her discretion. Based on the instrument (or vocal music), particular elements are added. There is also a formal termination of the instructive learning process in Carnatic music - when the student leaves the guru.

The strict guru-shishya parampara makes Carnatic music exclusive. We can observe that the tradition is focused primarily at the Tamil Brahmin community in Tamil Nadu. There may have been a caste based bias previously, but today gurus do not mind working with students of different castes and communities. However still, we observe the music system almost synonymous with the Tamil Brahmins. Also, it is only recently that women



Figure 7: Two Baul singers performing a Lalon Phakir song

have attained acceptance and respect in the tradition. There are still multiple cases of gender inequality and caste based discrimination in the Carnatic tradition, which can be associated with the formal learning system.

6.2. *Baul Music*

The same is far from true when it comes to Baul Music. The organic learning ideology of Baul Music allows anyone to join in regardless of caste, creed or gender. Traditionally, Baul musicians are either Muslims or Hindus, heavily influenced by the Sufi and Vaishnavite practices. They abandon the ideology of strict religions and talk of oneness of God and *Moner Manush* (the man in the mind). There is also no gender bias when it comes to the Baul tradition. In order to learn Baul music, one does not need to take formal training; one can simply join a Baul group who are usually traveling mystics in Bengal and Bangladesh and learn the art form by getting involved with the practitioners. The organic learning method allows for increased inclusiveness and attempts to bridge the gaps in the society.

7. Evolution of and Contribution to the Form

The learning method also heavily impacts the way an art form evolves. There is an upward mobility of art associated with formal and institutionalized form, often making them ‘classical art.’

7.1. *Bharatanatyam*

We see this in the case of Bharatanatyam. Bharatanatyam evolved from the Devadasi dance tradition called Sadhir. The learning method in Sadhir was quite straightforward. Young girls were trained in cleaning and maintenance of temple, prayer preparations and worship, music and dance by informal instruction. This instruction was provided in the temple complex by experienced dancers, and the knowledge passed down from one generation to another.

As a part of the formalization, institutionalization and sanitization of the art form, Rukmini Devi Arundale established Kalakshetra. She realized this art form by using a combination of all eight methods of learning. She obtained instructive learning from ‘Mylapore Gowri Amma’, and ‘Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai’. The element of emotion was derived from the theories in Natyashastra; the element of Faith was inspired by her strong belief in and association with the Theosophical Society; the element of imagination was used by her to recreate scenes that would evoke the emotion of ancientness and grandeur; the element of memory sprung up from her past that consisted of her Brahmin upbringing, and interactions with scholars and philosophers from across the world including maestros like Annie Besant, Maria Montessori, James Cousins and Anna Pavlova. She attempted to derive the postures and gestures of the Bharatanatyam tradition by keenly observing the statues in the temples of South India, inculcating the element of perception. Reason guided her, and intuition backed it up where reason failed. It is this wholesome learning method that she adopted which let Bharatanatyam become the dance form synonymous to the cultural identity of the nation.

However, this is not how Bharatanatyam is taught today. Today the focus is on instruction as the process of creation has already taken place. It is much like the Carnatic Music tradition, and institutionalization has allowed it upward mobility. One can draw parallels here with the paintings of Thanjavur, silk of Kancheepuram, Carnatic Music and Bharatanatyam. In each of them, the art form has become associated with the socially and



Figure 8: Rukmini Devi Arundale

economically prevailed class of the society. A lot of it can be attributed to the learning method, as it is only during the process of transition from one artist to another that an art form undergoes major evolutionary changes.

However, due to the relatively rigid and strict system, the evolution process is slow and unidirectional. One must make a distinction between evolution and experimentation. Experimentation is common to all forms, regardless of evolution.

7.2. *Garba*

On the contrast, there is Garba, which is a folk dance form which can be learned in about a week. A lot of individuals who do not know Garba, learn it during the nine day festival of Navaratri, and by the time the festival ends, they become as good as someone who has been involved in it since years. Certainly there are steps and elements that take a lot of training and practice, however, the form in general is easier to learn. This allows for inclusiveness, a proof of which is that Garba is practiced by people of all castes and communities, and in the modern day, by even individuals of different faiths. The organic learning method allows for great scope for evolution, transforming the dance form every year. Over the years, Garba has absorbed the trends of Bollywood film music, and popular music in general, and today, people use not just religious Gujarati songs, but songs of all types - from Punjabi Rap to English Rock.

This would have not been possible in a dance form that adopted a formal and institutionalized learning process. Also, the evolution is not unilateral, in the sense that Garba has evolved in order to suffice various needs. There are three particular trends. Educational and cultural institute make a conscious effort to maintain the cultural elements of the Garba, though ironically kill it in the process. They transform Garba into a semi-classical Indian dance form that adopts costumes and songs from rural Gujarat. The second line of evolution is observed in urban Garba performances where popular elements from film music are adopted so that the form remains relevant to the time and performing age group. One can easily spot iconic steps from some film dances in these performances. This practice has also led to the notion of Disco Dandiya. The third evolutionary trend is observed in rural settings where individuals would not evoke Bollywood or popular music or dance trends, but attempt to make the form relevant to their lives by modifying themes accordingly. A popular form emerged due to this is Sanedo.

Today, Garba has evolved as a melting pot of dance practices - from Dandiya Raas of Vrindavan to film music, and valorous Talwaar Raas of Western Gujarat to the semi-classical Indian dance form. It is chiefly due to the informal learning and simplicity of the form that it is so inclusive and evolving.

8. Conclusion

Art imitates life, and life imitates art, but one can claim the same about the learning processes and its consequences. On basis of four parameters - individualization, commercial value, inclusiveness and evolution, we have compared and contrasted the formal and organic learning methods for arts. One can conclude that both the learning methods have their merits and demerits, and it is these merits and demerits that make the art form what it is. There are multiple issues associated with the institutional method, but its effectiveness and implementability are unchallenged. On the other hand, the organic method which sounds perfect in theory fails in practice.

It is only the non-formal method which tries to bring the best of both worlds together when it comes to learning art, as one may realize from the multiple examples presented in the previous section. The non-formal method attempts to make use of all eight methods of acquisition of knowledge in order to attain the primary goal of learning the procedure of an art form. This has been realized by all, classical as well as folk artists, and hence today, we see the middle way as being the preferred way.

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