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“Who Is Your *Guru*?” Traditional Knowledge Transmission and Changing Institutional Setting in *Kathak* Dance Education*

„Kas yra tavo mokytojas?“ Tradicinė žinių perdava ir kintanti *Kathak* šokio edukacijos sistema

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Abstract

Like in many other fields of theoretical and applied knowledge in the context of South Asia, the knowledge of the performing arts most commonly was transmitted through the *guru-śiṣya parampara*—a traditional teaching model that passed knowledge from teacher to student. *Kathak*, one of the dance styles that developed from the performative traditions of northern central India, currently recognized as “classical”¹ and practiced in India and beyond, is no exception.

In the last few centuries there have been many changes in the economic, political, cultural, and social environment of India, which brought major influences in the current scenario of *Kathak*. Along with important changes in the system of patronage, performing spaces, audiences, dance vocabulary, and literary content, traditional practices of nurturing, preserving, and transmitting knowledge (*riyāz*², *gharānā*³, *guru-śiṣya parampara*⁴) went through number of transformations.

This analysis is based on postcolonial discourse, Michel Foucault’s critical theory of knowledge and power, and practical tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

Keywords: *guru-śiṣya parampara*, *Kathak* dance knowledge transmission, teacher, disciple, intellectual property, transaction, tradition, authority.

Anotacija

Kaip ir daugelyje kitų teorinių ir taikomųjų žinių sistemų Pietų Azijoje, performatyvių menų įgūdžiai iš kartos į kartą buvo ir yra perduodami tradiciniu *guru-śiṣya parampara* mokymo būdu: tiesiogiai iš mokytojo mokiniui / pameistriui. Straipsnio objektas – *Kathak*, vienas iš šiuo metu pripažintų Indijos klasikinių šokio stilių, nėra išimtis.

Kathak šokio žinių perdavos sistema straipsnyje apžvelgiama istoriškai ir detalai analizuojama šiuolaikiniame kontekste. Analizei pasitelkiamos pokolonijinio diskurso ir kritinės teorijos priegios, naudojamos tokių autorių kaip Michelio Foucault ir Pierre’o Bourdieu įžvalgos. Išskiriami esminiai šio žinių perdavos metodo pasikeitimai institucionalizuotame mokymo modelyje, pabrėžiami ir teigiami, ir neigiami tradicinės praktikos transformacijų padariniai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *guru-śiṣya parampara*, šokio *Kathak* žinių perdavimas, mokytojas, mokinys, intelektinė nuosavybė, sandoris, tradicija, mokytojo autoritetas.

Introduction

It’s the usual morning class at *Kathak* Kendra—one of the biggest state-supported *Kathak* institutes in India.⁵ Many students of different ages are gathered here; some of them are taking their first steps into the long and thorny path of *Kathak* dance⁶ practice, while others are already advanced, almost independent dancers. Although the class has already started and the atmosphere is charged with eagerness and anticipation, the teacher is still not present. For the teacher, being at least 15 minutes late is considered to be a gesture of importance and greatness. Finally, when the

guru appears, all the students hurry to greet him by touching his feet. After blessing all the students one by one, the teacher slowly proceeds to the far corner of the classroom, where the altar for the gods is placed. Multiple portraits of late senior *gurus* are also here. A short prayer is sung, blessings of great masters are received and students follow the teacher in prayer. After this small ritual, all students return to their places. The teacher settles down near the musicians. One of his senior disciples hands him a bowl of sprouted chickpeas for reinforcement. It is his honorable daily duty and a gesture of dedication to the *guru*. The teacher goes on by blessing each student’s ankle-bells—the *ghuṅgharū*.

* This article was written during my internship at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in November 2019–January 2020, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Urmimala Sarkar Muni.

The same thing is done by the musicians, while students approach and touch the instruments. After this "brief" welcome, the actual lesson begins. Not all the students get to dance immediately. The practice is done in stages according to the level of the dancers, while the guru demonstrates, observes, and sometimes comments. The rest of the students also watch the ones dancing and some, the most junior, get only to observe and do only very basics in between.

While the musicians start playing a rhythmic cycle (the most commonly used 16-beat cycle is *tintāl*, and the rhythm, initially slow, gradually accelerates), I think over and reflect on the beginning of the class that I just observed. I have many questions. The initial part of the lesson was not like a regular lecture or a practice session in the dance educational environment, which I am familiar with. It was more like a ritualized act, transferring the participants into some ritualistic reality, a mytho-religious space. The teacher looked more like an elder family member or friend and was very respected, almost having divine status. Was the way this lesson began typical, and is the behavior of the teacher and students a necessary legacy of the traditional system of knowledge transmission—*guru-śiṣya parampara*? Has the role and status of the teacher and the place of the disciple transformed in the changed social, economic, cultural, and most importantly, educational environment?

There was another incident during my fieldwork in New Delhi in 2018 that raised these questions even more forcefully. The two-day *Kathak* dance festival, called the Duet *Kathak* Dance Festival, was organized in Triveni Auditorium. With the confidence that I know what "duet" means in dance, I attended the event and was surprised to discover the demonstration of a totally different understanding of the duet form. Five of the six performances that evening did not present anything I would consider to be duet, except a few minutes of dancing together here and there. Instead, these performing couples were bound together by a teacher–disciple—the *guru-śiṣya*—relationship and performed their compositions holding on to strict hierarchy of "who is who." It was interesting to observe how cultural characteristics implicitly emerge in unexpected situations.

Throughout the time of my own *Kathak* dance studies and practice in India, I always felt that unbreakable connection with my *guru*, being asked the same question again and again: Who is your *guru*? As Stacey Prickett rightly puts it in her article:

Yet the answer to the inevitable question of "Who is your *guru*?" continues to shape dancer's identity, their genealogical heritage locating them in relation to dominant power structures of the stylistic schools, the *gharanas* (*Kathak*) or *bani*s (*Bharatanatyam*). (Prickett 2007: 25)

The same is stated by Daniel M. Neuman in his very detailed study on the North Indian musical tradition:

Whether a musician is considered great, good, or even mediocre, he will (in the absence of anyone else) establish—so to speak—his credentials as a musician on the basis of whom he has studied with and whom he is related to. (Neuman 1990: 44)

The mentioned situations and learning experience prove the importance of phenomenon in the cultural entirety of the region and provoke to look deeper into the *guru-śiṣya* tradition in general as well as into the recent situation of the performing arts (*Kathak*) knowledge transmission. The paper thus raises such questions as:

- How does the traditional *guru-śiṣya parampara* fit into the institutionalized model of teaching, be it state-supported institutions or individual enterprises?
- How does it build on, use, or misuse the hierarchical relationship of mentor and student? What are the power dynamics implied in these relations?
- How does this tradition adapt to the global market and consumer culture?

The article is grounded in the discourse of critical theories and historiography. The concepts developed by Michael Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu⁷ in their writings serve as the theoretical background and methodological tools to delve into the subject. Postcolonial theory is also important here, as it sheds light on some historiographical details, scrutinizes the concepts of "tradition" and "authenticity" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and explains some particularities of the modern and global world (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995). The importance of the historiographical recasting of the frames of reference such as tradition, transition, transmission, and transfer of knowledge is acknowledged in the accession and analysis of the material that was gathered through interviews and cross-referencing of the existing secondary material. The constant challenge of the established hierarchy of the *guru/śiṣya* relationship in objectively trying to understand any teaching/learning symbiosis within this given framework in the particular cultural context has remained an important method for possible cultural research as well as requirements for academic research.

To answer these questions, I will:

1. delve into the concept of *guru-śiṣya parampara* in the past feudal and community-/caste-based social environment, with its multiple roots lying in a religious-devotional setting, economic justification, as well as identity shaping and stating purposes;
2. acknowledge the shifts in the historical context with its influences on the social, cultural, and economic spheres;
3. trace the journey of this tradition in contemporary times, emphasizing the field of performative practices;
4. highlight the notions/(mis)usages of authority, power dynamics, and identity politics implicit in *guru-śiṣya parampara*.

Guru-śiṣya parampara: from past to present

According to available oral and written sources as well as the observed ethnographic reality, theoretical and applied knowledge in South Asia in general and in India in particular has been transmitted through the *guru-śiṣya parampara*, the traditional one-to-one teaching model. The tradition is important in the present too, though sometimes in a much-modified way. In one extreme, it is capable of preserving some of the region's vanishing practices or crafts. However, in the other extreme, we may observe clear caricature/parody of the *guru-śiṣya* pattern. Most explicitly, it occurs in "new age" spiritual movements in the form of such phenomena as "guruism", where the guru acts more like a sales manager or broker for the divine. The "modern *guru*" thus works on the outer image instead of inner perfection, lives in luxury instead of being *sādhu*,⁸ and preaches to the masses instead of being in close a relationship with one or few disciples. So, traditionally, "the weighty one, dispeller of darkness", the "entity that takes away the darkness from one's mind"⁹ (Dallapiccola's and Ghosh's quotations cited in Prickett 2007: 26), today is adapted to the laws of global economy and sells the promise of removing the darkness with a good market price. Nevertheless, these modern forms of the traditional practice can occur and exist in this changed environment and are only supported by the long history and importance of the phenomenon.

The notion of *guru-śiṣya parampara* can be found in a variety of primary and secondary texts. Primary textual sources, such as the *veda*,¹⁰ *upaniṣad*¹¹ or *purāṇa*¹² mostly speak about the *guru-śiṣya parampara* as the main model of imparting of spiritual knowledge and sustaining different *sampradāya*¹³ or lineages. From these texts we can understand the general importance of the phenomenon and place it among other cultural and social features such as the prevalence of the oral tradition, the structure of the family, the four stages of human life,¹⁴ and the system of different professional communities. However, the language of these primary sources is highly metaphorical and the explanations must rely on wider historical and cultural contexts. The transposition or translation of the concepts introduced in the texts into modern times can become speculative. Some medieval sources linked to the performing arts give us few relevant hints; however, any detailed description or particularities of knowledge transmission are absent. The late medieval period is richer in historiographical evidence. Courtly patronage brings many changes to the organization of performing communities. Specifically, in the northern regions of India, with the establishment of Moghul rule we can trace the process of the professionalization of performers. Knowledge becomes the commodity and it is kept in the rather small and closed circles of stylistic schools. The knowledge transmission institution obtains "guild-like qualities" and the knowledge authority

rests on a person rather than on written text or tradition (Neuman 1985: 104). In other words, the *guru* or *ustād*¹⁵ personally embodies the tradition. Colonial historiographic writings or travelogues also comment on the existence and importance of the role of the traditional mode of knowledge transmission. In the context of performing arts, the concept of *guru-śiṣya parampara* gains importance in writings from the beginning and middle of twentieth century along with the processes of structuration, nationalization, and Sanskritization of performing traditions in India.

The observations of the article are based mostly on secondary sources and the "ethnographic reality" of dance and music knowledge transmission in recent times: collected data from conversations and interviews with teachers and students of performing arts and my own learning experience. To give an overview of the traditional mode of knowledge transmission, I rely on Munpreet Kaur Raina's article and the book *The Indian Teaching Tradition* by Jacques Vigne. The works of Phillip Zarrilli, Stacey Prickett, Daniel M. Neuman and Huib Schippers are also important as they speak about the *guru-śiṣya parampara* in different performing traditions of India.

According to Raina (Raina 2002: 168–169), from Vedic times onwards we can trace the prevalence of *guru-śiṣya parampara* as the main educational institution. However, some shifts in the tradition and role of the *guru* or *śiṣya* appeared in different periods, influenced by cultural, social, and economic circumstances or dependency on the religious setting. In this way, all throughout the Vedic period¹⁶ the *guru* was the main means for the rituals to be successful. As stated by Raina in her article:

[...] when man's encounter with the sacred mysteries took place through ritual, the *guru* was more a guide to their correct performance and an instructor in religious duties. A teacher deserving respect and a measure of obedience, he was not yet a mysterious figure of awe and venerated incarnation of divinity. (Raina 2002: 170)

Later, with the growth of the importance of the *upaniṣad*, "the *guru* starts to replace Vedic ritual as the path to spiritual liberation. He now changes from a known and dweller in Brahman to being the only conduct to Brahman" (ibid.). The demand from the student is also different: if in the context of the *vedic* ritual the student had to be accurate, submissive, and obedient, later it was the reflection, contemplation, and reasoning of the student that was crucial for the relationship. Education related to Buddhism and Jainism was also *guru* oriented. With the spread of *bhakti*¹⁷ cult, the role of the *guru* became even more important. Here the *guru* is praised, as he is the direct link with the divine; he shows the way and makes it possible to reach God. To quote Raina again, the spiritual discipline (which extends to performing traditions too) or *sadhna* can only be "carried out under

the supervision and guidance of a qualified and a realized mentor", so "in the religious cults, esoteric truths can only be transmitted by one divinely appointed to receive them in the first instance" (ibid.). In different cults of *tantra*¹⁸ too, the importance of the *guru* is at its peak. The *guru* is absolute power himself, a god, capable of making a devoted, surrendered disciple realize their own essence/nature and become one with the *guru*—a god. In this context, the *guru* also adopted the role of "preacher" or the "founder or inventor of a sect or creed" (Raina 2002: 176). In the *sūfi*—a mystic tradition of Islam—as well as in Sikhism, we can observe the same tendencies as in *bhakti* cults, as these movements are interrelated. In the Islamic tradition the phenomenon comes under the names of *shaiikh-murid* (in Sufism) and in performing traditions carried by Muslim communities, it is called *ustād-shāgird*.

In colonial times and the period of reforms leading to India's independence, main religious and socio-cultural concepts were highly influenced by the intellectual interaction between East and West, processes of knowledge translation, and the individual vision of some thinkers/translators, such as Swami Vivekananda or Ananda Coomaraswamy. It is worth mentioning here that Coomaraswamy's writing in the field of art philosophy and aesthetics, especially his commentaries on Abhinavagupta's most important work in the philosophy of art, *Abhinavabhāratī* (a complex commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Bharata Muni), made a huge impact on early dance scholarship, coinciding with the reinvention of the so-called classical dance styles. A romanticized and mystified approach was used to rewrite dance history and aesthetics in accordance with a nationalist agenda. This resulted in highlighting certain concepts, such as the connection to temple ritual and the spirituality, authenticity, and ancient origins of dance. *Guru-śiṣya parampara* also found importance as an assurance of the "unbroken continuity of the system of oral transmission which was systematized with mathematical precision" (Vatsyayan 1982: 2).

Along with the other concepts, the phenomenon of traditional knowledge transmission was fitted into a certain ideologically defined framework without considering problematic issues and the contemporary situation. The lack of evidence and the gaps in the discourse were filled with speculative and abstract presumptions, thus creating a history of *guru-śiṣya parampara* on the fringes of mythology.

***Guru-śiṣya parampara* in the performing arts: the Kathak dance situation**

Guru-śiṣya parampara is still very alive as a knowledge transmission model in the performing arts, where the relationship between teacher and student is intimate. *Gurus* are important, unquestioned, and respected, and striving

students are dedicated and initiated (often from the same extended family or community). In her article, Raina cites an excerpt from The National Policy on Culture (NPC) tabled in the Indian Parliament in 1992:

Guru-shishya parampara has been a cardinal factor in transference of vision and technique in the field of performing arts. This system is facing many new challenges and needs to be carefully and imaginatively strengthened keeping in view the changed ethos. Besides recognizing this system throughout the country, efforts would be made to involve state governments, its various agencies, corporate sector, public sector undertakings, etc. to provide local support and sustenance of literary skill to Gurus in various forms and styles in schools of music, dance, theatre, etc. Special attention will be paid to such styles, instruments, and forms that might be threatened with extinction. (NPC draft document, p. 25, 3.31; cited in Raina 2002: 195)

Thus, it is reasonable to introduce the main concepts of the *guru-śiṣya* phenomenon through a look at the performing arts tradition, particularly *Kathak*.

In his study about *hindustānī* music teaching at the Rotterdam Conservatoire in the Netherlands, Huib Schippers lists the main concepts related to and frequently emerging from the context of *guru-śiṣya parampara*: tradition, authenticity, context, orality, holistic learning, and intangible aspects of Indian music¹⁹ (Schippers 2007: 3). The mode of all kinds of knowledge transmission "from music to medicine and from philosophy to actual judicial processes" (Raina 2002: 173) was and is mainly oral. Today in *Kathak* classes or in direct personal interaction with the teacher, even if the possibility of writing down the material or audio/video recording it exists, memorizing the sequences by reciting them is considered of foremost importance. Traditionally, the rhythmic syllables, *bol/parhant*, are memorized before they are taught as movement sequences. And the role of the *guru* is crucial here, as the *guru* remembers the sequences of the particular school or lineage (*gharanā*) and, being competent in the rhythmical system and advanced in movements, can create new ones. The orality of knowledge leads to contextual and holistic modes of transmission. The "in-body transmission" (Zarrilli, 1984: 192) is readily incorporated in the teaching/learning process and leads to the embodied corporeal consciousness of the practitioner. We can clearly observe three stages of the process. *Shravana*, literally the "act of hearing," refers to learning by means of watching the teacher and senior disciples practicing, hearing the rhythmical and musical patterns, and observing the context of teaching and performing. Observing slowly grows into the more advanced stage—mimicking and practicing or *manana*. Usually, these two stages take years of rigorous practice and dedication. Throughout this period, actual dance or music knowledge is transmitted to the student along with the context of the

performative tradition. Regarding the musical tradition in north India, Daniel M. Neuman writes:

The *guru* enculturates the shishya into musical life. He transmits two elements, neither of which is available through any other medium of instruction: a body of knowledge which is both secret and esoteric, and the way a musician must lead his life. (Neuman 1990: 50)

After the stages of *sramana* and *manana*, the time for realization, mediation, and transformation of knowledge—*nididhyasana* (Chatterjea 1996: 72)—comes, when the technique is finally embodied by the practitioner and tradition and culture are inscribed in their body and consciousness. The disciple becomes part of the “socio-artistic organisation” (Neuman 1990) and is ready to use the “performance knowledge” or learned “codified strips of behaviour” in “either structured or improvised performance” (Zarrilli 1984: 191).

The necessary conditions of such holistic knowledge transmission are the long period of time dedicated to learning and the personal bond between teacher and student. Traditionally, the student would stay in a *gurukul* or *ashram*²⁰ for a certain period of time. As mentioned before, according to the division of a human life into four stages, the first one—*brahmacharya*—would serve the purpose of immersed learning. In the case of absence of a structured institution such as a *gurukul*, the student would simply stay with the *guru* in their family. Usually the student would be close or more distant relative, of the same *biradari*²¹—the extended family. Sometimes non-hereditary students would also stay with teacher and their family. However, the more common way in such cases would be for the student to drop into the *guru*'s place for long practice sessions a few times per day. In all cases, the teacher and disciple develop an intimate and caring relationship, from one side supported by ultimate acceptance and dedication and from the other side total trust and readiness to share the knowledge without holding back. In conversations with both teachers and students about their learning or teaching experience, this deep connection is always highlighted as a major condition for knowledge transmission. While depicting a positive experience, interviewees often used such phrases: “The *guru* was/is like my father and mother together,” “I really love my teacher,” “Every time I come to my home town, in the first instance I visit my *guru*,” “Even when the *guru* would shout at me, I felt that it was done with unconditional motherly affection.” When I myself was a student of dance in India, far from my home and family, the relationship with my teachers would replace the absent emotional atmosphere of my family. On the contrary, if the bond from both sides is not evolving, the *guru* refuses to teach or the student looks for another teacher. A few of my respondents told me such stories of misunderstanding and mistrust in the

teacher–student relations, often leading to a change in *guru*. This proves that the connection required for knowledge dissemination has a very personal human factor.

Traditionally, the consolidation of the *guru–śiṣya* relationship in society happens through the ritual *gandābandhan*.²² This ritual is an initiation ceremony for the disciple and formal recognition of the particular hierarchical pattern in the given system. Using again Neuman's term, the disciple becomes part of “socio-artistic organization,” represented by the teacher. From this moment onwards, the personal relationship becomes socially active and the performing life of the student becomes interrelated with that of the teachers.

Another important concept implicit in *guru–śiṣya parampara* is *guru dakṣiṇā*.²³ Simply put, it is what the disciple can offer in exchange for the knowledge obtained from his teacher. This concept is pictured in quite a few episodes in literature and mythology, such as the story of *Ekalavya*²⁴ depicted in the epic *Mahābhārata*.²⁵ Traditionally it is symbolic concept and can be performed in a variety of modes. One of the most common acts of the *guru dakṣiṇā* is service to the teacher. While staying in the *gurukul/ashram* or with the teacher as a member of the family, the student would do everyday household work just like everybody else in the family. In the case when the student is visiting the teacher's home for instruction and in a more professional setting, the *guru dakṣiṇā* can be performed by giving presents or providing necessities for the teacher or monetary support. For the hereditary performers whose livelihood depends on acquired knowledge and professional skills, usually in the context of a single family lineage, the secure future of the *guru*, provided by subsequent performing generation in the *biradari* and the fame/name of the *guru*, related to the performance of his disciples, can also serve as an example of *guru dakṣiṇā*. It is, overall, an investment in the traditional occupation of the family.

I would again like to mention the important concept of the “socio-artistic organization” of performing communities, explained in detail by Neuman. *Guru–śiṣya parampara*, along with the factors of practice and stylistic variation, form the basis of this organization, directly influencing the image and performance of its members. Through the vigorous dedicated practice and commitment to the authority of the *guru*, who is actually the embodiment of certain stylistic school, the notions of continuity, lineage, tradition, authenticity, and preservation of intangible aspects of culture are highlighted. Thus, the identity of performer is established. It correlates with a particular community and is expressed explicitly in patterns of hierarchy, social status, and performative aspects. The construction of this certain identity is achieved through mind and body discipline.

As observed by Pallavi Chakravorty in *Kathak* field:

[...] dances were based on a model of durable and reproducible practise (inculcated through terms such as guru, riyaz, parampara), that created a sense of place or a habitus. (Chakravorty 2010: 169–170)

The concept of "habitus" used in this citation is developed by Pierre Bourdieu and can shed some light on the importance of knowledge transmission in the performer's identity construction and its place in the social system. "Habitus" is a very fluid term, depicting the web of "dispositions," which acts as the "organising action" and "designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" (from *Outline of Theory of Practise*; cited in Grenfell 2008: 51). Habitus is both a structured and structuring system: structured by a person's upbringing and educational experiences and the structuring of such factors as practices, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings. It always acts in a relationship with the "field" and "capital." Used in the field of performing practices in India, particularly with respect to traditional knowledge transmission, the tools developed by Bourdieu depict the following picture. Particular practice, stated identity, or "way of being" results from performers' dispositions acquired through the *guru-śiṣya parampara* (habitus) and performers' position in the performing field (capital, both economic and cultural) in the current state of the socio-artistic organization or context of performing community (field). Or in other words, through conditioning (the field structures the habitus) and cognitive construction or knowledge (habitus constitutes meaning to the field), there is an ongoing relationship between structures, the "active process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making" (Grenfell 2008: 52). In this way, the habitus here stands for ways of performance, feeling, thinking, and being in particular ways in the spaces of the everyday practice, stage performances, and social activities of the performer. It also captures the way the performer carries the history or lineage/tradition into the present circumstances and makes certain choices.

The concepts developed by Bourdieu serve as tools to understand how the *guru-śiṣya parampara* with its notion of authority and authenticity actively influences the performance practices and shapes the relationship between the performer's identity and the socio-artistic organization. This further leads us to ground the traditional knowledge transmission practices in the realm of theoretical discourse, developed by another influential thinker—Michel Foucault. One of Foucault's most important ideas is the relationship between knowledge and power. *Guru-śiṣya parampara*—an educational institution—through the authority of the *guru* and notions of tradition and authenticity, constantly exercises power. For Foucault, the main arena of power is the body. Dance and other performative traditions are

inseparable from the body as the main medium of performance, so the connection between knowledge and power revealed through the body becomes very explicit in the dance knowledge transmission scenario. The discipline of the body and, through the body, the discipline of the mind, becomes a method of control. It keeps the performer vulnerable and entangled in a web of anxiety and responsibility. It draws the borders of aesthetic, social, and bodily norms and places the subject in a particular position in the hierarchical system or socio-artistic organization of the performative community.

We must also acknowledge the concept of discipline as an idea that exists at the base of the teaching/learning process, whereby the automatic subjugation of the learner is ensured through a process of unseen and unquestioned submission and submission to the abstract idea of knowledge is established as something the *guru* personifies.

After understanding theoretical implications, it is also important to ground the phenomenon historically. Both Bourdieu and Foucault noted the fluid nature of the concepts they developed when applied to different situations. Relationships and connections in their theories are not universal or stagnant; rather, they are ever transforming in accordance to the contexts. Speaking about the *guru-śiṣya parampara*, its place in the social system, a complex web of hierarchical relationships, we must pay attention to changes in society and its cultural and political life that directly influence the traditional mode of knowledge transmission in a particular historical moment.

Before the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the socio-artistic organization of performing communities served as a management system of performative knowledge and property. As Masakazu Tamori accurately illustrates in his article "The Transformation of Sarod Gharānā: Transmitting Musical Property in Hindustani Music," musical knowledge was maintained and transmitted within the borders of particular *gharānās* (stylistic schools) "through the combination of marriage relationships and master-disciple relationships" (Tamori 2008: 170). In this way, *guru-śiṣya parampara* was an important factor in handing over the exclusive musical property of a particular lineage, which was usually secret or unavailable or only partly available for non-family disciples, traditionally given only in gift exchange form after marriage (which in the case of the Muslim performing communities was practiced between close relatives, thus keeping this property in the family). In today's terms, we would call this phenomenon intellectual property, protected by copyright laws. Such system very closely resembles the medieval European crafts guild system. Here too we can notice similar notions of knowledge transmission that feature a close relationship between master and apprentice, the latter who acquires the special, usually secret skills of crafts through service to guild and master, which were the intellectual property of a

particular guild. Later, the guild system developed the base for educational institutions and, some scholars say, served as precursors for modern trade unions.

Regarding the social system of performing communities, it is important to mention the dependence of performative traditions on patronage. In the ancient and medieval periods, performative traditions were supported by religious institutions and sponsored by Hindu and later Muslim, especially Mughal (in North India), rulers. The arts flourished in the courts as well as in traditional and religious settings. Major developments in all performative traditions, be it in the field of aesthetics or technical elaborations, systematic organization or identity shifts, took place under the influence of the relationship between the patron/court/temple and the performer/community/performative tradition. In this way, the migration of performers, the process of urbanization and professionalization of communities, and the development of stylistic differences happened in the meeting point of requirements of the temple/courts from one side and the artistic ambition or need for financial stability from performers from the other side. Such atmosphere also offered a strong basis for the existence of an authoritative and confidential knowledge transmission system, as it was sustained by a patron. Usually the patron or somebody else from the family environment would become the disciple of personalized lineage. As explained by Masakazu Tamori in his article, only patrons or close relatives of a particular musical (and dance) lineage could become a *khās*²⁶ disciple and acquire almost all knowledge, excluding the part which was reserved only for *khāsul-khās*²⁷ disciples or the sons of the teacher. The third category of students, the *gandābandh*—the regular students from outside of the lineage—would get even more basic *talīm*,²⁸ and it was quite challenging to get accepted as such a student too (Tamori 2008: 172). This type of patronage system was yet another warrant for holding onto the musical and dance property rights of particular communities in particular historical periods.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, a wave of important historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural changes came to India, which led to important transformations in the performing arts environment. Throughout the Mughal rule in the northern and central regions of India, *Kathak* in the courts was mainly performed by hereditary women dancers but accompanied and taught by male *gurus/ustāds*. The musical profession was mainly occupied by Muslim hereditary performers. In British Raj, dance was degraded almost to the point of vanishing under the influence of Victorian anti-nautch²⁹ policies, when *devadāsī*³⁰ in the south and *tawāif*³¹ in the north were deprived of their tradition performative occupation, marginalized and treated as simple prostitutes. The British ideas and policies were picked up and continued by reformists and freedom fighters. Along with the freedom

movement, and later while building a new independent nation, *Kathak* and other performative traditions became an important field for searching for national identity, authenticity, and a great lost, ancient culture (Walker 2014; Chakravorty 2008; Bakhle 2005). Under these ideological influences, some important gender, caste, and religious community shifts happened in the field of the performing arts. Dance and music traditions thus were revived, institutionalized, and nationalized. They were taken through the process of “sanskritization.”³² I would like to cite Urmimala Sarkar Munsī at length:

There are a number of examples of SANSKRITIZATION of dance forms before and after Indian independence, in an effort to ‘save’ dance forms from disrepute, or extinction, to move them from their small world of ‘little tradition’ to the urban ‘great tradition’, and to give a new legitimacy for survival by identifying and projecting their links with the historical past by linking the movement patterns to the temple sculptures. [...] Sanskritization in the context of dance also means establishing a strong link with the predominantly Hindu historical past. (Munsi 2010: 204–205)

Sanskritization went hand in hand with purification, which as observed by Munsī:

[...] has been sanctioned and backed by the cultural bureaucracy and brought into practise by the urban high caste/class elite practitioners, whose principle agenda was to create and establish forms which projected an ‘acceptable’ image of clean, aesthetically appealing body, which needed its distance in history and in actual projection from the impure nautch or the dance for private patrons that it came to be associated with in the nineteenth century. (Munsi 2010: 205)

The best tool for these processes to act smoothly was the revisited *guru-śiṣya parampara*. With state and private initiatives and support, a number of educational institutions were established, of course, using the Western model of education (Sangeet Natak Academy, Kathak Kendra New Delhi, Gandharva Mahavidyalaya New Delhi, Bhatkhande Music Institute Deemed University, Lucknow, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, etc.). The spaces of newly built music and dance institutional bodies were filled with predominantly male *gurus/ustāds* and upper or middle class-educated *śiṣyas* (predominantly women), motivated reformers/reinventors, and dance visionaries. It is in these institutions, where concepts of tradition and authenticity along with the “upholding of codes of conduct (both gender specific and otherwise)” were and are carried forwards through the authority of the teacher/master, who is the embodiment of *parampara* and the “unquestioned submission” to the *guru* from generation to generation (Munsi 2010: 173).

These processes also resulted in a strange composite phenomenon that continues to survive—the “institution

within the institution,"³³ a double layered structure, where along with the "modern" faculty role and curriculum programs, scheduled exams, and various subjects, the traditional teacher-student model, with the notion of the *guru* and the accompanying values and behavior were incorporated. The morning class I observed during my fieldwork and presented in the introduction is a very clear example of this phenomenon. In Western education institutions we can speak about the removal of personal influence and adjustment of power relations into the system over the time. In the case of Indian institutional education, especially in the arts, the *guru-śiṣya parampara*, with the unquestionable cult of the *guru*, was incorporated as a strong ideological tool and method of control. In terms of concepts developed by Bourdieu, we can call such processes "hysteresis"—"disruption between *habitus* and the *field* and the consequences of this over time"—when "habitus must respond to abrupt, sometimes catastrophic, field changes" and is not always able to do it smoothly and in a timely manner (Grenfell 2008: 132). As a response to a changed environment, the establishment of such institutions was an undisputed requirement of time; however, as the changes and conditions were quite forceful and the ideological pressure strong, so this composite phenomenon took place. The scholarship of that time in the field of arts with its notions of authenticity and tradition also impacted the rigidity of the educational system and the hegemony of some traditions. It also paved the way for late developments and helped to shape the knowledge transmission system into the form that exists today.

Current knowledge transmission in the *Kathak* scenario

In a contemporary global, market-driven society, with its fast development track, spread of consumerist culture, and mass media dissemination (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995), the dance field also becomes more global and available for all sections of society.

Even if the performing arts still sticks to an elitist attitude and the concepts of "tradition," "authenticity," and "purity," the overall situation of dance and other arts becomes business oriented and competition driven. In this atmosphere, the mode of dance transmission seems to be even more complicated and confused, as it faces challenges accommodating the authority and power dynamics from one side and the democratization of teaching processes from the other. Alongside the usually state-supported institutions established around the time of independence like Kathak Kendra, there are plenty of private enterprises. In all bigger cities, in every neighborhood, around every corner, it's possible to encounter a *Kathak* dance teaching academy or institute, promising a renowned *guru* of one of

the leading *gharanās* or their senior disciples to pass on "authentic" knowledge at affordable fees. All these institutions borrow some features of the traditional knowledge transmission system while neglecting the rest under the pressure of modern circumstances. Thus, often "empty" ritualization supporting the hierarchy and system of subordination, the authority of the *guru*, tradition, and the unquestionability and demand of total submission of the *śiṣyas*, rigidity and canonization prevail in this new institutional setting. The other aspects, such as the holistic, contextual notion of teaching and the intimate relationship between teacher and student, based on "devotion of the disciple to his *guru* and the love of the *guru* for his disciple" in its "ideal form and essential nature" (Neuman 1990: 45) and the inherent creativity and flexibility of the process are usually missing from the teaching scenario. These aspects are the most important and capable of transmitting the deepest and most essential levels of embodied dance knowledge, but they are also the most difficult to sustain as they require certain responsibilities/commitments from both teacher and student as well as certain a socio-cultural and economical context that is difficult to meet today. Speaking of the *guru*, as Schippers accurately puts it:

[...] many gurus may act like demi-gods, but in fact they have changing moods, weaknesses, and oversights. They are in effect human, in addition to being sometimes sublime musicians. They expect complete surrender, but they may take on students without clear plans regarding fitting them into their busy schedules or by appointing capable substitute teachers. (Schippers 2007: 2–3)

He also cites (from his own oral communication) one musician, who boldly states that:

[...] many gurus live in the twenty-first century, jet-setting around with their electronic toys, but they expect their students to live in the nineteenth century. (Schippers 2007: 3)

According to Raina, the role and features of the teacher stand in contrast with reality:

For testing the guru long lists enumerating the qualifications of an ideal guru are found in the scriptures: he should provide education and training for the fullest possible blooming of the disciple's personality and possibilities; he should love a disciple like his own child; he should teach him attentively without asking anything from him; he should not use the student for his own purpose to the detriment of the disciple's education. He should be a creative personality, who is able to discover the talent and encourage its growth and create individual teaching according to the capacity of each student. (Raina 2002: 181)

The mismatch between reality and the claims made about the *guru* and the system that exists to the present was illustrated by conversations with different people from the dance field. For example, one of interviewed dance students

understood the importance of the *guru* concept in general; however, she noted that she cannot call her dance teacher a true *guru* after seeing the teacher's behavior with and attitude towards the students from less privileged social backgrounds. She sadly pointed out that seeing this broke her belief in and respect for the teacher, even if the teacher is very good at explaining and passing on their knowledge of dance. Another student of dance, a foreigner, shared in her conversation that she was clearly looked down upon by her teacher. Even if the teacher was good at explaining the movements of the body, she was not willing to share theoretical information about dance or impart a more thorough understanding. She proved to be unhelpful in a few situations; however, she required students to call her "*guru*" and to respect her as one. Such situations stand in sharp contrast to some statements made about the system. Vatsyayan, in her article about *guru-śiṣya parampara*, writes that it is a "human bond of communication, which transcends all other considerations of caste, class, religion and sect" (Vatsyayan 1982: 3). Is it really true, or do we simply accept myth for reality?

Following the thoughts of Jacques Vigne expressed in his detailed psychological study on *guru-śiṣya parampara*, it is interesting to note how the notion of the ideal, egoless *guru*—the *sadguru*³⁴—which comes from the spiritual realm, is applied in a wider context in the social realm, especially in arts knowledge transmission without any adjustment or adaptation. As mentioned by Vigne, "in the arts the *guru* is often not egoless" and in this situation "the risk of exploitation faced by students" appears (Vigne 1997: 63). Furthermore, the hereditary authority of the *guru* combined with egoistic motives, such as a better financial position or social recognition, usually fosters a conflict of influences and power games, where the students, often unwillingly, become part of the battles. Another danger in this scenario mentioned by Vigne is sexual exploitation in the relationship between the *guru* and *śiṣya*. As noticed from ethnographic observation of reality and from the conversations both with teachers and students, it is a phenomenon that everybody is familiar with but that nobody speaks about unless in the form of rumor and gossip. Being a very sensitive and situational/personal subject, it is, of course, a very private matter and can be taken by the *guru* and students very differently. Even if the basis for such exploitation usually comes from the system of unquestionable authority, power, and control which follows *guru* everywhere, sometimes exploitation can be provoked by the selfish motives of students in the overall atmosphere of power games and politics among the students.

From the other side, the student can hardly dedicate the required time to learn the art as in a traditional setting with feudal/royal, religious, or social patronage and an extended period of staying at the *gurukul*. The fast pace and

pressure of everyday life, the necessity of having a well-paid job, competitiveness, and the prevailing socio-cultural or behavioral attitudes and expectations as well as society's demand for people with degrees and diplomas require easily available and instantly acquired knowledge that is offered by mushrooming private dance teaching schools and state-supported institutions or workshops. The private institutions and the recent "workshop culture" very often adopt the mode of the transactional relationship between teacher and student—some kind of one-time transaction. Such situation is logical and justified, as state or private financial support is not available for them. However, tools for marketing, chosen by these private institutions are questionable, as they operate on already mentioned concepts of "tradition," "lineage," "authenticity," and use (or rather, misuse) the "empty" rituals and patterns of traditional education that drive transmission of dance knowledge deeper into the cage of "dominant narratives" (Chakravorty 2008) and negative socio-cultural stereotypes and further from positive transformations.

So, for both teachers and students, the process of teaching and learning clearly becomes, rather than an eternal and authentic knowledge dissemination system, a simple transaction. As pointed out by some of my interviewees, most students are only collecting material, not really trying to understand the essence of a particular tradition. This phenomenon was specifically called "*guru shopping*" by my dance teacher Shovana Narayan. The teachers, even in the changed social conditions of today (with the no-longer-extant feudal patronage system and socio-artistic organization of professional performative communities, the emergence of new technical possibilities, and the spread of media), try to maintain knowledge as their property, as a means of financial survival, even understanding that the particular performative tradition cannot simply become the property of one *guru* or his family or the object of copyright. In this changed environment, the total organization of performing arts must be reanalyzed and transformed, as the changes are happening faster than the adaptation processes, creating again the possibilities for the phenomenon of hysteresis to appear.

It must be said that some efforts were and are made to recreate and implement *guru-śiṣya parampara* in its traditional *gurukul* setting, like at the *Odissi* dance village Nrityagram, founded by Protima Bedi in Karnataka, or some *kalaris* (traditional training spaces) in Kerala for practicing *kalaripayattu* martial arts. However, without external support, such endeavors face challenges, usually due to financial problems, but also because of the lack of dedicated teachers and students ready to live completely in such setting for a long period of time.

Even in the most successful and ideal examples, most teaching institutions concentrate on practical dance

education. The critical research, dance pedagogy, and creative education is at the initial stages in India, represented only by a few departments in bigger universities. This directly influences the capacity for students and researchers to ask relevant questions regarding dance historiography, the development of dance education, the ideology of the cultural heritage, body and gender politics, authority and power dynamics in dance, carried through the traditional teaching model. Such setting does not provide enough tools for the understanding, analysis, and improvement of the knowledge transmission system, which is the priority today.

A few brief accounts must be made on the dance teaching situation of the Indian diaspora and some adaptations of this model by practitioners and educators in the West. With the growing number of Indians living in such places as Europe, America, and Canada, socio-cultural practices take up significant space in the life of Indian communities abroad. Notions of national sentiment, identity shaping, tradition, purity, and authenticity, interwoven into the tissue of performing arts from the time of independence, become crucially important for the diasporic community in their attempts to connect to their Indianness. This influences the existence of a great number of dance teaching institutions in the diaspora. Some of them are established by diplomatic missions of India, but more are private initiatives. And all of them incorporate *guru-śiṣya parampara* as the main model of teaching with the complete set of the abovementioned features and patterns, emphasizing rituals, hierarchy, and authority even more, dedicated to the "preservation" and "promotion" of Indian culture, as stated before. Through dance training, the dancers become enculturated in a certain way and their bodies become inscribed with socio-cultural codes and behavioral patterns which suit the demands of the community. However, teachers cannot stay completely encapsulated in their own cultural practices and become influenced by the dance educational environment, new trends in pedagogy, and creative communication with other bodily disciplines as well as other dance forms, whether classical, traditional or contemporary. This unquestionably makes it possible to extend the perspectives of Indian dance knowledge transmission in the diaspora, like, for example, the Pt. Chitresh Das Institute in Canada (of course, it is necessary to mention the existence of the same tendencies in India, explicit in the dance creations and pedagogy of such *Kathak* dancers as Shovana Narayan, Kumudini Lakhya, Aditi Mangaldas). From the other side, cultural interactions give fertile ground for the birth of initiatives in the West, influenced by *guru-śiṣya parampara*. Theater directors and educators Phillip Zarrilli and Jerzy Grotowski, to name a couple, borrowed many features and techniques from traditional Indian education and incorporated them into the actors' and dancers' training process. A lot of research has been done in the field of dance and music education,

and there are many attempts to apply holistic, oral, and contextual notions of the *guru-śiṣya* relationship into education from the school level to university, academy, or conservatoire (see: Sarrazin and Morelli 2016; Schippers 2007; Dalidowicz 2015).

Conclusion

My own experience of learning dance in India was and is very positive. I have been very lucky to meet and become acquainted with very dedicated and knowledgeable teachers, sharing, caring, and loving with motivation and vision. However, even without formal training in dance in a Western academic setting that I could compare or juxtapose my experience with, it was quite challenging, especially at the beginning of the learning process, to understand and submit myself to a tradition requiring so much dedication and commitment. And I am sure that many dancers meet the same challenges but also get significant benefits while being involved in this traditional educational model. So, it definitely has and should have a prominent place in dance training, to keep it holistic, contextual, oral, and intuitive, to be able to reach the deepest layers of traditional performance knowledge, and to pass it to generations to come. If not cherished and preserved, it may vanish and take with it some essential and unique features of embodied practices. Nevertheless, without reflection and in its corrupted form, the system may expose questionable values created by hidden hierarchical structures and power relations, identity and body politics, religious and socio-cultural dogmas and economic factors. All these factors construct a cage of hegemony and the stagnation of tradition, unquestionability, and authority that many dancers in India find themselves locked in, unable to be flexible, to be able to reflect and question, to create their own language of expression. So, certainly, there is a danger in holding on to empty terminologies, sham and fictive rituals, and damaging relationships that increase "otherness," exoticify, and separate, instead of taking dance forward on a path of positive transformation and development.

Endnotes

- ¹ The term *classical* is controversial in the context of Indian dance traditions. In the treatise on performing arts *Nāṭyaśāstra* (fifth century BCE to fifth century CE), we can find the terms *desi* and *mārgī*, which can be considered to mean, approximately, the same as *folk* and *classical*. In addition, the term *śāstrīy* can be used, meaning "related to valid treatises on performing arts."
- ² From Urdu—"practice."
- ³ The word *gharānā* comes from Hindi *ghar*, meaning home, lit. "of the house," and depicts "lineage" or "stylistic school."

- ⁴ *Guru*—“teacher,” “guide,” “spiritual preceptor,” *śiṣya*—“student,” *paramparā*—“lineage” in Sanskrit.
- ⁵ Originally the department of Shree Ram Bhārtya Kalā Kendra, taken by the government in 1964. SBKK was founded as Jhankar Music Circle in 1947 by Mrs. Sumitra Charat Ram and acquired its recent name in 1976. A very important institution, which directly influenced the revival of *Kathak* dance and *Hindustani* music.
- ⁶ Derived from Sanskrit word *kathā*, meaning—“story” or “narrative.”
- ⁷ More see: Rabinow 1984 and Grenfell 2008.
- ⁸ A religious ascetic, mendicant (monk), or any holy person in Hinduism and Jainism who has renounced worldly life.
- ⁹ The word has a few etymological explanations. It can be traced to the Sanskrit root *gri*—“to invoke,” “to praise.” In the Vedic canon it is used as an adjective and means heavy or weighty, most probably meaning “heavy with knowledge, authoritative.” However, the most popular explanation in India is from *Advayataraka Upaniṣad*: the Sanskrit root *gu* means “darkness” and *rhi*—“to take away,” “to dispel.” This explanation is considered “folk” or “occult” by some scholars.
- ¹⁰ *Veda*—a large body of religious texts, composed in Vedic Sanskrit and constituting the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.
- ¹¹ Later commentary part of the Vedic canon. An ancient Sanskrit text that contains some of the central philosophical concepts and ideas of Hinduism, some of which are shared with religious traditions like Buddhism and Jainism.
- ¹² A vast body of literature of different genres (myths, legends, etc.) composed between the third and tenth centuries CE. It covers a wide range of topics (cosmogony, cosmology, genealogies of gods, goddesses, kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, folk tales, pilgrimages, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar, mineralogy, humor, and love stories, as well as theology and philosophy) and belongs to the *smṛiti* (lit. “which is remembered”) tradition.
- ¹³ The word can be translated as “tradition,” “spiritual lineage,” or a “religious system,” related to one of the successions of masters and disciples.
- ¹⁴ The four alternative ways of life or age-based stages (*aśrama*) discussed in ancient and medieval text are *brahmacharya* (learning), *grihastha* (household), *vanaprastha* (retirement), and *sannyasa* (renunciation) and are related to the *dharma* (duty) concept in Hinduism.
- ¹⁵ Used in Urdu language to denote “teacher” or “master,” from Persian, meaning “skilled,” “craftsman,” “master,” or “tutor.”
- ¹⁶ C. 1500–c. 500 BCE. The period got its name from *veda*—a large body of religious texts composed in Vedic Sanskrit and constituting the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.
- ¹⁷ The *bhakti* movement originated in South India during the seventh to eighth century CE, spread northwards from Tamil Nadu through Karnataka and gained wide acceptance in fifteenth-century Bengal and northern India. It influenced the rise of literature in regional languages, particularly in the form of devotional poems, music and other arts.
- ¹⁸ From Sanskrit—“loom,” “weave,” “system.” It depicts the entirety of traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Metaphorically, a systematic approach/teaching, interwoven with texts, techniques, or practices, “esoteric” as transmitted with the help of the *guru* only.
- ¹⁹ The performers in North India: musicians and dancers are very much interrelated, usually originating from the same families/communities. However, a strict hierarchy between them exists that is based on the caste system (like in the case of vocalists and *sarangi* or *tabla* players).
- ²⁰ A professional guild like an educational environment or residential school, when the student would live near or with the teacher at his home or a particular place for learning (*kul*—“family”).
- ²¹ The word in Hindi and Urdu languages, “brotherhood”; from Persian *baradar*—“brother”; denotes professional group, extended family, or caste.
- ²² Literally means the “tying of the sacred thread.”
- ²³ Means any donation, fee, or honorarium given to a cause, monastery, temple, spiritual guide, or after a ritual. Also, an honorarium given to a *guru* for education, training, or guidance.
- ²⁴ *Ekalavya* was asked to cut his own right thumb as a *guru dakṣiṇā* by the authoritative *Droṇāchārya*.
- ²⁵ One of the two major Sanskrit epics. Along with the second epic, *Rāmāyaṇa*, it forms the *Itihāsa* or mythology.
- ²⁶ In Hindi and Urdu languages meaning “special.”
- ²⁷ In Urdu language meaning “very special.”
- ²⁸ In Urdu language meaning “teaching,” “education,” and “instruction.”
- ²⁹ *Nautch* literary means “dance” or “dancing.” During the British Raj anti-nautch policies against dancing girls were initiated.
- ³⁰ Community of hereditary female performer of South India who used to perform in temple and court settings.
- ³¹ Hereditary community of North Indian female dancers—courtesans, usually related to the Mughal court.
- ³² The term was introduced by the Indian sociologist Mysore Narasimhachar Shrinivas in the 1950s. In the sphere of the performing arts it was accurately and purposefully used by Coorlawala and others in their writings (Coorlawala 2004).
- ³³ From the paper presented by Hanna Manila at the 25th EASAS conference in July 2018.
- ³⁴ *Sadguru* or *satguru*—“true *guru*” in Sanskrit.

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Santrauka

Teorinės ir taikomosios žinios Pietų Azijoje tradiciškai buvo ir yra perduodamos *guru-šišya parampara* metodu. Tai – tradicinis mokymo modelis, kai žinios perduodamos tiesiogiai iš mokytojo mokiniui. Iki šių dienų šis žinių perdavos būdas yra itin gajus performatyvių menų kontekste. Straipsnio tyrimo objektas – *Kathak* šokis, vienas iš stilių, išsivysčiusių iš performatyvių šiaurės ir centrinės Indijos tradicijų ir šiuo metu priskiriamų prie „klasikinių“ Indijos šokių, nėra išimtis.

Per pastaruosius kelis šimtmečius Indijos ekonominė, politinė, kultūrinė ir socialinė aplinka stipriai kito. Šie pokyčiai, savo ruožtu, darė įtaką vizualiųjų ir scenos menų, tarp jų ir *Kathak* šokio, raidai. Keitėsi šokio, muzikos ir teatro rėmimo struktūros, pasirodymų erdvės, vertintojų ir žiūrovų kontingentas, raiškos formos ir turinys. Kartu nemažai transformacijų patyrė ir tradicinė žinių puoselėjimo, išsaugojimo ir perdavimo praktika (*riyāz*, *gharānā*, *guru-šišya parampara*).

Straipsnio tikslas – aptarti dabartinę *Kathak* šokio žinių perdavos situaciją. Tikslui pasiekti keliami tokie klausimai:

- Kaip tradicinis žinių perdavos (*guru-šišya parampara*) būdas egzistuoja pakitusioje Indijos aplinkoje ir kokių būdu jis derinamas su valstybiniu ar privačiu institucionalizuotu edukacijos modeliu (pasiskolintu iš Vakarų)?

- Kokių būdų ši žinių perdavos sistema pakitusioje mokymo aplinkoje sukuria hierarchinius mentoriaus ir studento santykius?

- Kokia galios dinamika vyrauja mokytojo ir mokinio santykiuose ir kaip ji susijusi su XX a. pradžios meno ideologija Indijoje?

- Kokios problemos slypi dabartiniame integruotame, tačiau ne visai demokratizuotame modelyje?

Analizuojant *guru-šišya parampara* fenomeną istoriniu aspektu ir dabartiniame kontekste, straipsnyje pasitelkiamos pokolonijinio diskurso ir Michelio Foucault išplėtos kritinės žinojimo ir galios santykio teorijos prieigos. Sociologo Pierre'o Bourdieu įžvalgos ir antropologiniuose tyrimuose jo naudotos praktinės priemonės taip pat buvo naudingos tiriant žinių perdavos sistemos įtaką kasdienio ir performatyvaus elgesio konstravimui.

Darbe remiamasi autorės asmenine patirtimi, studijuojant nuo 2003 m. analizuojamą šokio stilių, bei medžiaga, surinkta 2017–2018 m. gruodį–vasarį ir 2020 m. sausį–vasarį atliktuose lauko tyrimuose Indijoje.

Delivered / Straipsnis įteiktas 2020 05 19