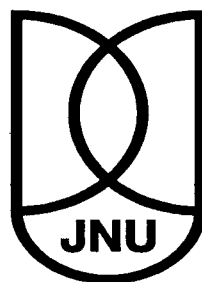


**HEALING THROUGH PERFORMANCE: A
SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DANCE
THERAPY IN KOLKATA**

*Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University for the
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CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**HEALING THROUGH PERFORMANCE: A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DANCE THERAPY IN KOLKATA**” submitted by Nayanee Basu for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, is her original work and has not been submitted previously for the award of any other degree of this or any other University.

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Nayanee Basu

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INTRODUCTION

Shukdeva, the son of Vedavyās, said to Nārada, “O Devarshi, kindly impart such advice that furthers wellbeing in this world (ihalok)”. Nārada said, “In the ancient times, sage Sanatkumār had uttered these words—there are no eyes as knowledge (vidyā), ...nothing surpasses Truth in greatness. True words (satyavākya) are morally desirable (sreya), but utter, more than true, words that generate wellbeing (hitvākya); that which is extremely beneficial for all life is Truth in my view.¹” (Bose 2003: 592).

Culture is that environment which we inhabit as subjects and create through our agency. Culture², as generally understood in the academia, embraces the whole range of practices, customs and representations of a society. My area of interest falls broadly within the realm of culture, and is specifically in dance as a medium

¹ My translation from Bengali.

² Broadly, the classical conception of culture takes it to be the process of developing and ennobling the human faculties, a process facilitated by the assimilation of works of scholarship and art and linked to the progressive character of the modern era.

The descriptive concept of culture developed with the discipline of anthropology. Tylor defines culture as: Culture or civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action (Tylor, in ed. Jain 2001:21). This was embedded in an evolutionary framework. With the waning of the evolutionary ideas emerged the functional view of culture propounded by Malinowski. Both the evolutionary and functional studies shared a descriptive conception of culture which can be summarized as follows: the culture of a group or society is the array of ‘belief, customs, ideas and values, as well as the material artefacts, objects and instruments, which are acquired by individuals as member of the group or society; and the study of culture involves the scientific analysis, classification and comparison of these diverse phenomena (Thompson, in ed. Jain 2001: 22).

The symbolic conception of culture is based on the recognition that the use of symbols is a distinctive feature of human life. Culture is the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs. According to the structural conception of culture put forward by John Thompson, cultural phenomena are to be seen as symbolic forms in structured contexts, and ‘cultural analysis’ is the study of various kinds—in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received (Thompson, in ed. Jain 2001: 26).

of symbolic communication. This research will be an attempt to understand, sociologically, the process of healing occurring through the expressive medium of dance. In this regard the concept of performance assumes importance. It has been taken as the conceptual link between dance, a medium of expression and performing art, and culture as practiced and/or performed in the broader sphere of human social existence.

Elaborating upon the social aspects of dance (or dancing) makes reference to its most general and comprehensive features, because dance is in essence a particular form of social interaction. Even if dance can be artificially separated from its social context and considered solely in its physical features as an independent artistic means of expression,³ the social component is implicit to the dancing person as an individual and as a member of a socio-cultural community (Giurchescu 2001:109). From this perspective dance structure may be considered as a culturally determined 'program' where social, historical and environmental factors interlock with the physical, psychological and mental features of the individual (Giurchescu 1984: 35). Considered as a psychosomatic entity, the dancer is the 'soul and body' of dance.

The use of dance as a healing ritual goes back to earliest human history. This research is concerned with understanding this therapeutic facet of dance. This is attempted in two ways: review of available literature on healing and dance across cultures and a sociological study of how healing through dance is carried out in a modern day metropolis, like Kolkata. In an endeavour to accomplish the latter I have tried to look into both the (creative) dancer's perspective as well as the phenomenon of dance movement therapy. Dance Movement therapy is a relatively new profession. The American Dance Therapy Association, founded in 1966, defines dance therapy as the psychotherapeutic use of movement (Chodorow 1991: 1). Dance therapy is based on the assumption that mind and body are in constant reciprocal interaction (Schoop 1974: 44). It is built on psychological and physiological concepts that emphasize the relationship of body and psyche.

³ Dance has been studied in its choreographic features yielding a necessary theoretical and methodological approach, which helped to disclose rules of grammar define concepts and provide tools for dance structure and form analysis. (Kaepler 1972)

In the first chapter I have tried to understand how different disciplines in social science have regarded the phenomenon of dance and therapy and the spaces where both have come together in human societies. This was done by means of an interdisciplinary literature review. From the second chapter onwards my field study of healing through dance as witnessed in Kolkata is recorded. The second chapter presents narratives from those who began healing through dance in Kolkata. It delineates how it all came about as reflected by the 'pioneers'. Through this the link between individual agency and development of institutions is sought to be represented in context of the phenomenon being researched. The third chapter delves into the deep structure of dance that is being implemented for therapeutic considerations. In the fourth chapter the voices of those 'healed' through dancing have been represented. Their narratives help us to understand what it means to be 'healed' to them and how far dance has 'healed'. Institutional facilitation plays a key role that can induce wellbeing or a lack of it in people's lives. The fact of leadership being provided by a bureaucratic officer beyond the specifications of his official duties, constitutes the social fact that is seen in the context of therapy through dance in Kolkata in the fifth chapter.

Field work was carried out in three sites— the first is SL, a non-governmental organization based in West Bengal, promoting dance movement therapy as a therapeutic tool for the socio-economically vulnerable and underprivileged. The organization works with people from diverse backgrounds including survivors of violence and trafficking, street and platform-dwelling children, at-risk youths living in red-light areas or in slums, children living with HIV and AIDS and people with mental illness. SL uses DMT as an alternative approach to counselling, psychosocial rehabilitation and empowerment. The second site was TcW, a non-profit social organization in West Bengal working with inmates of correctional facilities in West Bengal. Registered in July 2009, it has been conducting workshops since 2007 within the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata. The third site was Ashirvaad, a centre for training and performance of Manipuri dance, and movement therapy specifically for special children in Kolkata.

As is evident, the names of the organizations have been altered for maintaining anonymity. In the pages that follow names of almost all organizations and most

individuals have been changed, with the exception of Alokannanda Roy, B.D.Sharma (A.D.G.P.West Bengal), Usha Ganguli and the beneficiaries of Ashirvaad, except two.

The field work extended over a period of twenty-two and a half months (January 2009 to mid-November 2010). Data was collected through participation, observation as well as through unstructured, in-depth, and probing interviews, all of which were digitally recorded. All respondents spoke in Bengali in the interviews, which have been translated subsequently by me, apart from Alokannanda Roy, Prerna Pal-Mehra. B.D. Sharma and a few of the parents of the children at Ashirvaad. Judgemental sampling characterized the sampling design. A field diary was maintained during the field work months.

Sitting down to analysing the data (especially responses collected through interviews), I realized that there was no way that I could reduce the importance of verbal and tonal thrusts that characterized almost all the recorded responses. In fact, the respondents' 'meaning' seemed to be conveyed mostly through such speech acts. Fortunately, my supervisor attracted my attention to Ricoeur's "The Model of the Text" (1973) and I found methodological shelter in his expositions.

In trying to understand the phenomenon of therapeutic use of dance (in the methods of dance movement therapy and Alokannanda Roy's mode of introducing dance in the erstwhile jails of West Bengal) and its effect on the beneficiaries, the spirit of J.P.S. Uberoi's (1996) structural method has been of influence. The method adopted by him in his study of Sikhism, for a "proper theoretical understanding or explanation" entails the viewing of the "ceremonial custom of rite in question from two interrelated aspects":

We should attempt to determine (a) its theoretical or ideological meaning within a particular cultural or symbolic mode of thought, and (b) its effect or social function within a particular code of conduct and social system of groups and categories in the hope that the two will conjointly explain (c) the articulating principles of personality, culture and social organization (Uberoi 1996: 2).

However narrative forms the core methodological device that has been used to present the data collected in chapters two, four and five.

The kind of problems that dancer-healers come face-to-face with in the contemporary metropolitan world reflect the wider cultural context in which the problematic of this thesis was conceived and researched. Karen Horney's (1936) writings, though regarding the 'developed' cultures of the West in the earlier half of the last century, are amazing in their relevance for the society that I hail from and tried to understand. A recapitulation would serve to introduce the reader to the typical issues that therapists and therapeutic discourses deal with till date. In "Culture and Neuroses" (1936) Horney writes:

We live in a competitive, individualistic culture. Whether the enormous economic and technical achievements of our culture were and are possible only on the basis of the competitive principle is a question for the economist or sociologist to decide. The psychologist, however, can evaluate the personal price we have paid for it.

It must be kept in mid that competition not only is a driving force in economic activities, but that it also pervades our personal life in every respect. The character of all our human relationships is moulded by a more or less outspoken competition. It is effective in the family between siblings, at school, in social relations..., and in love life.

The influence on human relations of this competitiveness lies in the fact that it creates easily aroused envy towards everyone. In consequence of all these potentially hostile tensions, the satisfaction and reassurance which one can get out of human relations are limited and the individual becomes more or less emotionally isolated. It seems that here, too, mutually reinforcing interactions take place, so far as insecurity and dissatisfaction in human relations in turn compel people to seek gratification and security in ambitious strivings, and vice versa.

Another cultural factor relevant to the structure of our neurosis lies in our attitude towards failure and success. We are inclined to attribute success to good personal qualities and capacities, such as competence, courage, enterprise. In religious terms this attitude was expressed by saying that success was due to God's grace. While these qualities may be effective—and in certain periods, such as the pioneer days, may have represented the only conditions necessary—this ideology omits two essential facts: (1) that the possibility for success is strictly limited; even external conditions and personal qualities being equal, only a comparative few can possibly attain success; and (1) that other factors than those mentioned may play the decisive

role, such as, for example, unscrupulousness or fortuitous circumstances. In as much as these factors are overlooked in the general evaluation of success, failures, besides putting the person concerned in a factually disadvantageous position, are bound to reflect on his self-esteem.

The confusion involved in this situation is enhanced by a sport of double moral. Although, in fact, success meets with adoration almost without regard to the means employed in securing it, we are at the same time taught to regard modesty and an undemanding, unselfish attitude as social or religious virtues, and are rewarded for them by praise and affection. The particular difficulties which confront the individual in our culture may be summarized as follows: for the competitive struggle he needs a certain period of available aggressiveness; at the same time, he is required to be modest, unselfish, even self-sacrificing. While the competitive life situation with the hostile tensions involved in it creates an enhanced need of security, the chances of attaining a feeling of safety in human relations—love, friendship, social contacts—are at the same time diminished. The estimation of one's personal value is all too dependent on the degree of success attained, while at the same time the possibilities of success are limited and the success itself is dependent, to a great extent, on fortuitous circumstances or personal qualities of an asocial character (Horney 1936: 227-229).

Visvanathan (2010) in her account of pilgrimage as therapy has discussed the possible alternative that mysticism provides to the problems of our age. It has been an abiding influence on this thesis mainly due to the topic dealt with as also the timing of its publication. However the depth of the material and scholarship is such that anything less than multiple readings across time deprives the reader of its richness.

Finally, it is recognised that the question of healing, art, metaphor, personality, institutions and agency can all be considered at higher levels of abstraction than has been done here, analyses can go deeper down. If this thesis generates doubts and further research-questions, its purpose would have been served.

CHAPTER ONE

HEALING THROUGH DANCE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dance, according to Kashyap (2005) is a unique physical discipline in which emotional, psychological, spiritual, intellectual and creative energies are unified and harmonized. In the language of most dancers our bodies can feel, think, speak, memorize, express and communicate effectively through movement. Dance liberates people's bodies and allows them to move in patterns outside the restrictions of their daily lives. Dances are culture specific and yet universal. Though created within a particular cultural setting, they find relevance across other racial, linguistic and social contexts. They might be understood in a specific way or get reinterpreted according to the experiences of the other cultures. All over the world, thousands of dance forms have evolved through the ages (Kashyap 2005:4). In generic terms these are folk, social and ritualistic dances, popular, classical and martial dances as well as numerous techniques of modern dances. Kashyap's view of dance as a unique physical 'discipline' clearly marks one end of the continuum, stemming from her identity as a trained dancer before being a dance therapist. The other end would be represented by such phenomenon as dance in a 'rave'—a dance party usually all night long, featuring loud 'techno' music, also called electronica, in which participants often reach ecstatic states, occasionally with the help of drugs in western late capitalist societies (Hutson 2000: 35).

Instead of going directly into a discussion of the therapeutic in dance as is the objective of this thesis, a review of scholarship on dance may help in understanding the way dance has been conceptualized by the academic community. The variety of 'ideal types' created in this respect can give an idea of the spread and depth of categories that have emerged in the attempts to represent this reality.

A Brief Review of Scholarship on Dance

Since the mid-1980s, there has been an upsurge of dance studies as scholars from a variety of disciplines have turned their attention to dance. Susan Reed (1998) provides an exhaustive review of the seminal work done in this sphere.

Anthropologists have played a critical role in this new dance scholarship, contributing comparative analysis, critiquing colonial and ethnocentric categories, and situating studies of dance and movement within broader frameworks of embodiment and the politics of culture. This has gained for the anthropology of dance greater legitimacy as a field of enquiry, even as it is being reconfigured within the broader framework of an anthropology of human movement (Reed 1998: 503). This shift to 'movement', motivated by a critique of 'dance' as a universally applicable category of analysis, parallels developments in other fields of expressive cultures such as theatre. The creation of 'performance studies' by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner was, in part, a reaction to the ethnocentrism implicit in the use of the term 'theatre' to refer to non-Western performance forms. (Lewis, in Reed 1998: 504)

Simultaneous with the growing interest in dance and movement within anthropology, 'dance history' has transformed into 'dance studies', an interdisciplinary field focusing on the social, cultural, political and aesthetic aspects of dance. Reed mentions three collections (Desmond; Foster; Morris; in Reed 1998: 503) which chart this emerging field, while the International Encyclopaedia of Dance (Cohen 1998) includes several related entries. This new dance scholarship has made significant contributions to the annals on understandings of culture, movement and the body; the expression and construction of identities; the politics of culture; reception and spectatorship; aesthetics; and ritual practice. Despite this recent enthusiasm the study of dance and other 'structured movement systems' remains on the margins of anthropology even though dance has been the subject of anthropological study since the discipline's inception (Reed 1998: 504). Tylor, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliff-Brown, Malinowski and Boas all addressed aspects of dance in their writings, predictably emphasizing the social functions of dance, with little attention to the specifics of movement. Anthropologists have placed dance within the domain of religious and therapeutic systems.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a small group of scholars-Adrienne Kaeppler, Joann Kealiinohomoku, Anya Peterson Royce, Judith Lynn Hanna, and Drid Williams laid the groundwork for anthropology of dance. They examined dance within theoretical

paradigms inspired by Boas and Herskovits (Kealiinohomoku, Royce), Chomsky and Saussure (Kaepler, Williams), ethnohistory (Kaepler), and communications theory (Hanna). These studies thus stressed the form and function of dances, the deep structures of dance, and dance as nonverbal communication. Cultural models and cognitive patterns of cultural groups could be discovered from the cues contained in the dance of the society (Hanna 1979). Dance anthropologists also critiqued the ethnocentrism implicit in much standard dance scholarship. According to Reed (1998) since the 1980s, the most significant developments in dance anthropology have been in studies of the politics of dance, and the relations between culture, body, and movement. Studies in these areas draw from semiotics, phenomenology, postcolonial, post structural, and feminist theories, reflecting the dramatic changes that occurred in anthropology in the 1980s.

As an expression and practice of relations of power and protest, resistance and complicity, dance has been the subject of a number of historical and ethnographic analyses in recent years. Desmond's (1993) study of how social identities are 'signalled, formed and negotiated' through bodily movement is particularly useful for its detailed attention to the complex ways in which dance and movement styles are transmitted across class, ethnic, and national lines. Desmond makes a powerful case for attending to movement as a primary social text: complex, polysemous, and constantly changing, signalling group affiliation and difference.

In the realm of colonialism and culture dance studies have demonstrated the importance of dance in the 'civilizing process', the control and regulation of 'disorderly' practices, and the profound reconfigurations of both local and European culture. The suppression, prohibition and regulation of indigenous dances under colonial rule are an index of the significance of dance as a site of considerable political and moral anxiety. Colonial administrators often perceived indigenous dance practices as both political and moral threat to colonial regimes. Local dances were often viewed as excessively erotic and colonial agents and missionaries encouraged and sometimes enforced the ban or reform of dance practices. However dance was also a site of desire, and colonial accounts record that male colonists were often fascinated by 'native dancers' (Reed 1998:506). The most sustained, historically and theoretically rich research on dance under colonial

rule has been done on the dances of the *Devadasis* in our country (Kersenboom-Story 1987; Marglin 1985; Srinivasan 1985). The *Devadasis*, female temple dancers of Orissa and South India are well known in anthropology, because their practices of dance and ritual were banned during the Anti-Nautch social reform movement of the 1890s, which was implemented as part of a series of other reforms designed to 'civilize' practices of a section of Indian women. The dance form *bharatanatyam* emerged in the 1930s, and later Odissi, on the secular stage, *sans* the discourse of their 'past' which had by then acquired a certain kind of stigma in the outlook of the puritan colonized middle-classes. Marglin (1985) discusses the emergence of the category of 'Indian Classical Dance' simultaneously with the reform movement gaining ground. She elucidates the impact of the West that fuelled the social reform movements early this century. According to her, the motivation of the Indian social reformers is to be found in the nature of the response on the part of Western observers when confronted with the institution of the *devadasis*. To illustrate her point she quotes at length from Abbé Dubois which brings out the Victorian / Judeo-Christian ethical underpinnings of the Western *gaze* quite clearly. She concludes that the *devadasis* were prime targets for an exotic one-sided imaginative reconstruction. She provides a detail discussion of the 'anti-nautch campaign' carried out by the Indian social reformers.

Meduri's study of the construction of the *devadasi* in the 19th and 20th centuries shows the ways in which identities of indigenous dancers shifted as they became implicated in changing discourses of colonialism, nationalism, and Orientalism (Meduri 1996). While Kersenboom-Story and Srinivasan present comprehensive, detailed accounts of the *devadasi* under precolonial and colonial rule, from which Meduri draws, Meduri's focus is on demonstrating the ways in which the *devadasis* became implicated in larger debates about sexuality, womanhood, and the nation as these developed from the 19th century to the present. She keeps the focus of her research on the perspectives of the *devadasis*, insofar as these are made visible in documents such as ritual texts and protest letters, and in the 'visible body' of the dancer. Meduri traces the trans-figuration of the *devadasi* from her precolonial practice as a temple ritual performer to her naming, in the nineteenth century, as temple 'prostitute' or 'dancing girl' and finally, in the twentieth century, to emblem of

the nation. Allen's (1997) work focuses on the complex processes involved in the re-contextualization of the *devadasi* dance during the late colonial period. Allen discusses the multiple influences on the development of *bharatanatyam* in the 1930s and 1940s, and his work illustrates the complex process by which a ritual dance form was extracted from its original context and then domesticated, reformed, and re-sanctified for middle-class consumption. Illuminating the many transformations that are masked by the term 'revival,' Allen shows how this celebratory and seemingly innocent term obscures several processes, which he tersely interprets as re-population (one community appropriating a practice from another), re-construction (altering elements of repertoire and choreography), re-naming (from nautch and other terms to *bharatanatyam*), re-situation (from temple and court to the stage), and restoration (the join together of performances to invent a seemingly ancient practice) (Allen 1997: 63,64).

The dynamic exchanges that occurred between colony and metropolis are the heart of Erdman's (1987) study of Uday Shankar, the Indian oriental dancer considered a genius, and her critical analysis of the ways in which nationalism has affected the construction of the history of Indian dance (Erdman 1996). Erdman demonstrates that the important place of 'oriental dance' (the dances first developed in Europe and based on oriental themes) has long been overlooked in histories of Indian dance, for political reasons. After Independence, only two genres of Indian dances were recognized by nationalists: the 'classical' dances based on regional styles, and the numerous 'folk' dances derived from regional and local contexts (Erdman 1996:296). Because histories of Indian dance were constructed as nationalist histories---thus erasing the influences of Europeans and Americans, such as Anna Pavlova and Ruth St. Denis (Coorlawala, in Reed 1998), as well as European-influenced Indian dancers like Shankar---Erdman argues that a 'new history of Indian dance' is required, a critical history that questions long-held tenets about the alleged authenticity and antiquity of classical dance.

According to Reed (1998) Erdman's critique of Indian dance histories have many implications for the development of a critical dance scholarship, and in calling for new, politically aware histories of dance. In the Indian case, she argues, they certainly should include the many contemporary developments in the art, the new choreographies of inventive Indian dancers that are both 'Indian and modern'

(Erdman 1996:297). But Erdman even questions whether the categories of 'Indian dance' or 'oriental dance' will necessarily be the most salient ones, emphasizing that regional, caste, or religious identities may be more relevant for understanding the ways in which dance practices are understood by the people themselves (Erdman 1996: 299). Her critique raises serious issues about how colonial categories, including the often naturalized classifications of 'folk' and 'classical' dances, may enact an exclusionary history as well as reify particular politically motivated social identities. Erdman's call, in fact, is an opportunity for dance scholars to intervene in the often-divisive reification of ethnic and national identities, an area in which dance scholarship has sometimes been complicit (Reed 1998:509).

Exoticization takes many forms, and the representation of the exotic Other, especially women, has been an important feature of both dance performances and visual representations of dance since at least the 18th century. Dance also played a critical role in the ethnological exhibitions of the 19th century. Franz Boas, for example, brought Kwakiutl Indians to perform dances at the Chicago's World Columbian Exposition in 1893 (Hinsley 1991), while 'native dancers' featured prominently in Carl Hagenbeck's profit-making ethnological displays in 19th-century Europe. Dances of the colonized were often appropriated and refigured as adjuncts to the civilizing mission, variously reinforcing stereotypes of mystical spirituality and excessive sexuality. In the early twentieth century, European and American dancers, including Maud Allan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Anna Pavlova, appropriated aspects of non-European dance into their performances, creating the exotic in a myriad of ways (Reed 1998: 509). Dance historians of European and American theatre dance have made significant contributions to rethinking issues of appropriation in their representation of the Other in theatrical dance, locating these within discourses of imperialism, racism, Orientalism, masculinity, and nationalism, among others (Desmond 1991; Koritz 1994; Strong 1998).

Since at least the nineteenth century, dance and music have emerged as powerful symbols of identity for ethnic groups and nations worldwide. Studies of dance, ethnicity, and national identity have explored the 'objectification' of dance as national culture (Handler 1988), the politics of the category of 'art' (Hughes-Freeland 1997), the reconstruction of tradition (Kaepler 1993), the reinforcement and contestation of gender, ethnic, and class stereotypes (Daugherty & Pitkow 1991; Mendoza 1998;

Mendoza-Walker 1994; Reed 1998), the role of competitive dance in transforming tradition (Stillman 1996), the multiple resonances of dance and national identity (Taylor 1987), and the practices of dance as complex social commentaries on interethnic relations (Rodriguez 1996; Sweet 1980, 1985).

Dance is a powerful tool in shaping nationalist ideology and in the creation of national subjects, often more so, than are political rhetoric or intellectual debates (Meyer 1995). The role of state institutions in the promotion and reformation of national dances has been documented in a number of studies (Austerlitz; Daniel; Manning; Mohd; Ramsey; Reed; Strauss, in Reed 1998). According to Reed (1998) the appropriation of the cultural practices of the rural peasantry or of the urban lower classes by the state is a pervasive strategy in the development of national cultures throughout the world, whether as indications of the dominance of one ethnic group or as displays of cultural pluralism. In many postcolonial nations, the dancer of the valorised national dance comes to be idealized as an emblem of an authentic precolonial past. Where necessary, dancers come to stand in for the nation at local, regional, national, and international festivals and other occasions. As an embodiment of cultural heritage, the dancer becomes inscribed in nationalist histories and is refigured to conform to those histories, yet ambivalence about the dancers and their practices is often evident because the practices themselves often resist being fully incorporated into nationalist discourses. Indeed, the very aspects that make dances appealing and colourful as representations of the past may be precisely the things that do not easily fit into the self-representation of the nation. Vestiges of folk religion (Reed 1991), eroticism (Meduri 1996), and social critique in the performance of dances may sometimes be a source of discord in the presentation of an idealized national image. Political ideologies play a critical role in the selection of national dances (Reed 1998: 511). Strauss's study examines the ideological reasons for the adoption of ballet during China's Cultural Revolution, emphasizing its narrative possibilities, movement vocabularies that stressed strength and action, and its flexibility in expressing gender equality through movement (Strauss 1977). Daniel's studies of the Cuban rumba represent a particularly striking case in which a national dance form was selected almost exclusively for ideological reasons related to its identity with a particular community—the lower-class, dark-skinned workers of Cuba (Daniel 1991, 1995). Although there were two other legitimate contenders for the

position-the conga, an easier, more participatory form, and the son, the most popular social dance of Cuba-the rumba was selected by the government because it was viewed as most closely supporting the ideals of a socialist, egalitarian state, and because it expressed an identification with African-derived aspects of Cuban culture (Daniel 1995:16). In Cuba, the Ministry of Culture was the key agent in the organization of rumba, directing amateur dances at neighbourhood cultural houses and overseeing three professional folkloric dance companies.

National dances are derived from the practices of specific communities, but the dynamics of the appropriation of these practices and the effects they have on the communities of origin have often been overlooked in the literature on 'invented traditions.' Reed's ethnographic studies of the Kandyan dance of Sri Lanka focus on the central role of traditional ritual dancers in the recontextualization of dance from a specialized ritual practice to popular secular form (Reed 1991, 1995). While acknowledging the critical role of the state in this re-figuration, which has resulted in an almost entirely secular form of the dance, Reed explores the means by which traditional dancers fought to retain some semblance of the dance's ritual meaning, even as it became increasingly simplified and standardized within the structures of state bureaucratic practices. Tracing the development of Kandyan dance since the colonial period, Reed also shows how the cultural politics of Tamil and Sinhala rivalries made dance a focal point for the reification of ethnic identities. In state-sponsored dance seminars and programs and in dance history texts, for example, oppositional categories of Sinhala and Tamil are reinforced, despite the quite obvious family resemblances between the Kandyan dance and its Tamil counterpart, *bharatanatyam* (Reed 1998: 513).

The emotional power of dance as national symbol is evoked in Shapiro's studies of Cambodian court dance in contemporary refugee communities (Shapiro 1994, 1995). Refugee Cambodian dancers are seen as emblems of the Cambodian nation as it existed prior to the Khmer Rouge, and the sustenance of the elaborate and difficult court dance form, with its more than four thousand and five hundred gestures and postures, is experienced by Cambodians as a continuity with a place and a past from which they have been severed. During the brutal repressions of Pol Pot, in which scores of dancers and other artists were killed, dancers had to deny their own identities to survive, and they kept the dance alive by practicing the gestures and

movements in the darkness of night (Shapiro 1995). After the devastations of Cambodian culture by the Khmer Rouge, the court dance traditions came to stand for all that was lost, and the burden of healing the body politic is now in the hands of master dancers.

The study of dance within contemporary global/transnational contexts is an arena ready for sociological investigation. The influences of migration and media, especially electronic media (Appadurai 1996), on the production and reception of dance have only recently received attention from dance and movement analysts.

The role of media and mediating images in the representation and presentation of bodily practices is explored by Zarrilli in his study of the Indian martial art form kalarippayattu (Zarrilli 1998). Zarrilli, who situates kalarippayattu within the contemporary transnational zone of late 20th century 'public culture' (Appadurai & Breckenridge, in Reed 1998), examines how an increasingly diverse group of culture producers and their audiences are using mass media to shape martial practices (Zarrilli 1998:4). Zarrilli's interest is in the dynamic and shifting relationship between body, bodily practices, knowledge, power, agency and the practitioner's 'self or identity, as well as the discourses and images of the body and practice created to represent this shifting relationship (Zarrilli 1998:4). He outlines a model for the study of these various domains as a complex of four interactive arenas: (a) the 'literal' arenas of practice, such as the training ground, competitions, and the public stage; (b) the social arenas of the school, lineage, and formal associations; (c) the arena of 'cultural production' that generates live or mediated presentations or representations such as films; and (d) the arena of experience and self-formation---the individual's experience of embodied practice in the shaping of a self (Zarrilli 1998:9).

If it is accepted axiomatically that gender is not an essential quality or characteristic but one that is largely performative, it is evident that dance studies have much to contribute to research on gender identities (Reed 1998). In comparison to other performance forms such as theatre, dance has been in many societies one of the few sites where women can legitimately perform in public (Thomas 1993:72). While there have been many studies of male and female dances as evidenced in Hanna's cross cultural survey (1988), surprisingly few have engaged with the larger debates in the anthropology of gender and sexuality as they have developed in recent decades. Dance is an important means by which cultural ideologies of gender difference are

reproduced. Through movement vocabulary, costuming, body image, training, and technique, discourses of dance are often rooted in ideas of natural gender difference, as Daly describes for the classical ballet (Daly, in Reed 1998:516). Movement lexicons of males and females often demonstrate the ideals of gendered difference in action. In the Cuban rumba, for example, male dancers use dance as an arena for exhibiting strength, courage, and bravado, while women's dance is generally softer, subtler, more cautious, and graceful (Daniel 1995). However, dance performances are also sites of gender-crossing, mixing, and reversal. There are numerous examples of males performing in the costumes and manners of the stereotypical female, some as parodies of female dancing, and others as homoeroticism or provocations to same-sex erotic encounters (Hanna 1988:57-59). Reed (1998) points out that the meaning of role reversals is highly complex and not at all self-evident. In Africa, where women adopting 'male traits' in collective dances is fairly widespread, Spencer notes the wide-ranging meanings that anthropologists have ascribed to these types of dances, including temporary release from subservience, veiled protest against male domination, competitiveness between women, and fulfilment of traditional roles in rites of passage (Spencer 1985:3). In documenting the real-life experience of ritual performance devoted to the goddess Bhagwati in central and southern Kerala, India, Cauldwell (1996) finds that male co-opting of female suffering in ritual does not seem to help women much. Male performers and spectators identify with female energy to gain more power, not to empower women. The performances and stories of Bhagwati, rather than providing role models of female defiance and independence, serve rather to reinforce cultural ideas about the inherent danger a woman holds for men, which it is her responsibility to contain and control (Cauldwell 1996:218).

Reed (1998) opines that prohibitions on and regulation of dance practices are often accurate indices of prevailing sexual moralities linked to the regulation of women's bodies. In her historical account of American adversaries of dance from the seventeenth century to the present, Wagner argues that opposition to dance, propagated mostly by white, male Protestant clergy and evangelists, and was largely based on a fear of women, the body and the passions (Wagner, in Reed 1998). Over the centuries, the most extensive opposition to dance focused on the alleged or actual sexual immorality of dancing or its environment. Dance opponents cast women as either 'pure or pious' (in need of protection from dance) or 'fallen and sinful', and

therefore either victims or perpetrators of the evils of dance. Opposition to dance was also related to Protestant clerics' emphasis on strict rationality and the devaluation of the body. As a 'merely' physical activity, dancing was dismissed as a waste of time because 'neither mind nor spirit was edified' (Wagner 1997: 395). Dance is often an ambivalent and problematic performance site for women as it demonstrates contradictory and ambivalent attitudes about female sexuality. Cowan discusses how female sexuality is regarded in northern Greece as both pleasurable and threatening. In dancing, women are encouraged to display their beauty, energy, skill, sensuality, and even seductiveness, while they are simultaneously viewed with suspicion for drawing too much attention to themselves or failing to maintain self-control (Cowan, in Reed 1998). Because of the inherent ambiguity of bodily actions, there is often no consensus on what distinguishes "a 'legitimately' sensual and pleasing gesture from one that 'goes too far,'" and thus, for women, the pleasures of dance are often ambiguous (Cowan 1990:190,191). Furthermore, dance performances can exhibit and generate gender/class conflicts regarding the appropriateness of sexually provocative dance movements for women. In urban Senegal, women's dances range from bawdy and explicitly sexual to highly restrained movements (Heath, in Reed 1998). While traditional dancing is considered to be 'women's business', dancing is also considered risky for a woman's reputation, particularly after marriage. Yet their performances are required for public ceremonies, and men's reputations even depend on them. However, upper-class men often try to control the dancers, insisting on restraint, rather than sexual expressivity. Women, however, often resist, testing the limits of appropriateness by sneaking in risqué movements, thus attempting to defy total control by males (Heath, in Reed 1998).

A number of studies illustrate the contradictions and ambiguities of dance for women in Islamic societies (al Faruqi 1978). In the 'Iranian culture sphere', which includes diaspora communities, Shay (1995) argues that the *bazi-ha-ye nameyeshi*, a women's theatrical dance-play performed only for women, is simultaneously a site of bawdy, erotic expression and also a social critique that re-inscribes a patriarchal system in which women are defined primarily through their husbands. Outside the safety of the feminine private sphere are professional female dancers (Reed 1998: 518). Van Nieuwkerk's historical and ethnographic account of professional female belly dancers and singers in Cairo explores the way in which these performers

negotiate their identities within religious and classed discourses of honour and shame, while also showing how Orientalist stereotypes of the dancers still persist in contemporary Egypt (van Nieuwkerk, in Reed 1998). Kapchan's analysis of the many 'bodies' of shikhat, Moroccan female performers who represent the quintessential transgressive female in Moroccan society, highlights the complexity of dancers' identities and both the costs of marginality and its freedoms (Kapchan 1994). As exemplars of the quality of *mathuqat* (free, unlimited and unrestricted) shikhat are admired as 'lively, animated, spirited', embodying features of 'exhilaration and flowing movement' (Kapchan, in Reed 1998:94). At the same time, the 'loose language' of the shikhat, both worldly and linguistic, is seen as inseparable from her shameful moral character. Describing the multiple 'bodies' of the dancers; Kapchan evokes the complex meanings of these performers. The 'competent body' of the dancer denotes her as an artist of the physical, exemplifying her sexual prowess, while the 'nonsense body' is an expression of subversion and the carnivalesque. However, these more pleasurable bodies come at the cost of the 'exiled body'. Shikhat may be independent and fun-loving, but the majority have been rejected by their families and thus uprooted from place, a state which Kapchan describes as "...the greatest hardship possible" in Moroccan society (Kapchan 1994: 97). Critiquing 'resistance' as a limited construct for understanding the role of the shikhat, Kapchan notes how, despite their independence, shikhat also internalize '...the dominant value system that degrades their material and spiritual worth' (Kapchan 1994: 96).

Discussing dance and Feminist theory Reed (1998) points out that the common interests of feminist scholarship and dance studies would suggest a natural alliance, although as yet, few anthropological studies of dance have drawn explicitly on feminist theories. Ann Daly's (1995) study of Isadora Duncan and American culture provides an important model for interpreting the cultural significance of theatrical dance and the importance of audiences. Daly presents a complex and fluid model for understanding the ways in which dancers mirror, contest, and transform gender, ethnic, and class identities. One of Daly's primary points is her definition of the body as a complex, contradictory, and ever changing cultural site of 'discursive intercourse' which is constructed dialogically by the dancer and her audiences (Daly 1995:17). Daly's extensive research into primary sources of Duncan's audience of mostly upper-class white women (from dance reviews, articles, and memoirs) provides the basis for

her analysis. In foregrounding the importance of reception as co-creation, Daly's analysis is highly suggestive for anthropologists who, with few exceptions (Hanna 1983), have tended to focus primarily on performers or the contexts of performance (Reed 1998:519).

While the 'male gaze' (Kaplan 1983; Mulvey 1975) and the gendered reception and reading of dances has been the subject of considerable critical discussion by dance historians and sociologists (Coorlawala 1996; Daly 1992; Manning 1997; O'Shea 1997; Thomas 1996), ethnographic research on dance reception and spectatorship is relatively sparse. Miller's study of same sex female sexual dancing in the Trinidadian carnival underscores the critical importance of exploring gender in the interpretation of dance (Miller 1991). In Trinidad, lower-class women's dance groups perform in a sexually expressive way, often parodying men. Indeed, in the Carnival of the late 1980s, same-sex female dancing had become so conspicuous that the Trinidadian men Miller interviewed deemed it an expression of 'lesbianism gone rife' (Miller, in Reed 1998). This interpretation was considered incomprehensible by Miller's female consultants, who, according to Miller, did not care with whom they danced. Situating his interpretation within the wider contexts of cross-gender relations among the lower classes, Miller argues that this form of sexual dancing, known as 'wining', is not homoerotic, but actually a dance of 'autosexuality', a sexuality not dependent upon men (Miller 1991:333).

In sum, there are about seven recurrent themes emerging from the scholarship on dance in the annals of social anthropology (Spencer 1985). The first views dance as a safety valve that releases unexpressed, repressed emotions, tensions and drives. The second deals with the educational role of dance and transmission of sentiments. Dance has been treated as a cast or die which shapes children into culturally compliant adults. The third theme sees dance as transmitting and sustaining culturally desirable sentiments that lie beneath the orderly existence of society and advance solidarity. The fourth theme treats dance as a cumulative process in which collective passionate sentiments are amplified as dancers lose themselves in the dance becoming absorbed in the unified community and being transported to a state of elation (altered state of consciousness or ASC). They find themselves filled with energy or force unprecedented in regular normal life. The fifth theme emphasises the element of competition in dance. The sixth tells of dance as ritual drama lifting the people out of

their everyday habitual routine into the realm of spiritual beings. The seventh theme considers dancing as a shared activity with non-verbal mode of communication and invites searching of patterns of dance movements to discern concealed meaning.

Social Science and 'Performance'

The social sciences have always been concerned with understanding the way people think, construe meaning and interpret reality. Social thought has passed through the sieves of numerous paradigms from behaviourist to cognitive and from cognitive to post-modernist. In a bid to find a way out of the post-modern impasse emerging scholars are exploring indigenous epistemologies, aesthetic criteria and sensibilities. Notions of the self and personhood are being looked through the lenses of culturally variable experience. The emerging texts can be grouped under three broad categories: first, the psychodynamic which focuses on self-reflective commentaries on experience, emotions and self along with dreams, associations, metaphors, displacements and compulsive behaviour patterns. In these works the concept of person and indigenous discourses about emotions disclose radically distinctive level of cultural experience for any society; second, the realist which draws initial frames of analyses from the public contexts like biographies, aesthetic genres, the dramatic incidents that serve as the data that social scientists correlate to the principles of social structure and cultural meanings. In this the insider's point of view assumes significance. Selected elements can be researched in depth, which simultaneously evoke the whole, parts in a culture being functionally interrelated. They give rise to epistemological issues about representing experiential differences across cultural boundaries. The third category, the modernist, arises centrally from the reciprocity of perspectives between the ethnographer and the informants (Marcuse and Fischer 1986). There is, therefore, no certainty that experience of different people is a coherent set of cultural codes and meanings. Post-modernism loosens the hold over 'grand theory' style in favour of close consideration of contextuality, meaning of social life to those who enact it and explanation of exceptions and indeterminants rather than totalising visions (Mathur 2002: 2).

At this juncture performance studies provides a useful framework since cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances. It is through performance that culture and identity are re-created, stored and transmitted. Performances replay cultural identity and archetypal roles in which people look for behavioural models (Mathur 2002: 2). A delineation of performance studies is fruitful here since the major concept linking culture, dance and therapy is 'performance'.

According to Schechner (Schechner 2002:x-xii), the primary fundamental of performance studies is that there is no fixed canon of works, ideas, practices or anything else that defines or limits the field. Put in another way, performance studies happens at always-changing intersections of particulars, at convergences where every possible X may meet any possible Y. Whatever today's convergences, these cannot be retained once and for all. Performance Studies is *fundamentally* relational, dynamic, and processual.

The second fundamental is that performance studies enthusiastically borrow from other disciplines. There is nothing that inherently 'really belongs to' performance studies. Historically, these other disciplines can be specified. Especially in its present formative stage, performance studies draws on and synthesizes approaches from the social sciences, feminist studies, gender studies, history, psychoanalysis, alternative sexuality theory, semiotics, ethology, cybernetics, area studies, media and popular culture theory and cultural studies. When texts, architecture, visual arts, or anything else are looked at by performance studies, they are studied 'as' performances. That is, they are regarded as practices, events, and behaviours, not as 'objects' or 'things'.

Performance studies take actions, behaviour, and practice very seriously at two levels: it both examines actions and is itself infused with actions. Artistic practice of a particular kind is a necessary part of the performance studies curriculum. The close relationship between studying performance and doing performance is integral to performance studies. Participant observation---a technique adapted from anthropology but put to new uses in performance studies ---is its own kind of practice. In anthropology, for the most part, the 'home culture' is Western; the 'other culture' is

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non-Western. But in Performance studies, the 'other' may be a part of one's own culture (non-Western or Western) or even an aspect of one's own life. The performance studies field-worker is enabled to use criticism, irony, sympathetic engagement and personal commentary. In a meaningful way, one performs one's field work. Performance studies do not aspire to ideological neutrality. A basic theoretical claim of performance studies is that no approach is 'neutral'. The challenge is to become as aware as possible of one's own positions in relation to the position of others—and then to take steps to maintain or change positions.

Performances occur in many different instances and contexts and as many different kinds. *Performance* as an overall category must be construed as 'a broad spectrum' or 'a continuum' of actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts, (theatre, dance, music) and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, to healing (from shamanism to surgery) and to the various representations and construction of actions in the media and the internet. There is no historically fixed limit to what is or not 'performance'. In performance studies, questions of embodiment, action, behaviour, and agency are dealt with inter-culturally. This approach recognizes two things. First, in today's world, cultures are always interacting. Second, the differences among cultures are so profound that no theory of performance is universal. Nor are the playing fields, where cultures interact, level. Schechner identifies seven areas where performance theory and the social sciences coincide:

1. Performance in everyday life, including gatherings of every kind.
2. The structure of sports, ritual, play, and public political behaviours.
3. Analysis of various modes of communication (other than the written word); semiotics.
4. Connections between human and animal behaviour patterns with an emphasis on play and ritualized behaviour.
5. Aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person-to-person interaction, acting out, and body awareness.

6. Ethnography and prehistory----both of exotic and familiar cultures (from Western perspective).

7. Constitution of unified theories of performance, which are, in fact, theories of behaviour.

Schechner saw these nodes connected to each other either as a 'fan' or a 'web'.

Ritual and Performance

An intersection of interest for both performance studies and anthropology is the study of rituals. Performance theorists investigate the ritual process, underlying workshops, rehearsals and performances⁴. The study of ritual dance in social anthropology has informed the discourse of performance studies in an important way. This discursive interdependence has been an important ingredient to my theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of healing through dance. The term ritual can be understood in social sciences in three senses (Jary and Jary 1995 [1991]: 561). 1. Any formal action which is set apart from profane action and which expresses sacred and religious meaning. This usage of the term occurs in both anthropology and sociology of religion.

2. 'Bodily action in relation to symbols' (Bocock 1974).

⁴ Only some of the vast literature on ritual is relevant to performance studies. Schechner has identified seven key themes to explore further:

1. ritual as actions, as performances.
2. similarities/ differences of human and animal rites.
3. rituals as liminal performances taking place "betwixt and between" life stages and social identities.
4. the ritual process.
5. social dramas.
6. the relation between ritual and theatre in terms of the efficacy-entertainment dyad.
7. the "origins" of performance in ritual, or not? (Schechner 2002/2003:49).

3. Any everyday practice which is characterized by its routine nature and by its significance to mundane social interaction.

The term has been used by Goffman (1971) to denote the routine practices of everyday life. Ritual action may therefore be regarded as occurring in both the *sacred and profane* domains of social life. In both cases it is the symbolic quality of the action which is its defining characteristic. Rituals are frequently divided into two main types, the sacred and the secular.

The idea that rituals are performances was proposed by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who theorized that performing rituals created and sustained 'social solidarity'. He insisted that although rituals may communicate or express religious ideas, rituals were not ideas or abstractions, but performances enacting known patterns of behaviour and texts. The relationship between 'ritual action' and 'thought' is complex. Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in his study of the 'rites of passage', proposed a three-phase structure of ritual action: the preliminal, liminal, and postliminal. (Schechner 2002/2003:50).

In the 1960s, Victor Turner developed van Gennep's insight into a theory of ritual that has major significance for performance studies (Schechner 2002/2003:57-63; Deflem 1991:1-25). Turner realized the theoretical importance of 'liminal' which means a period of time when a person is "betwixt and between" social categories or personal identities. During the liminal phase, the actual work of rites of passage takes place. At that time, in specially marked spaces, transitions and transformations occur. The liminal phase fascinated Turner because he recognized in it a possibility for ritual to be creative, to make the way for new situations, identities, and social realities by means of what he called "anti-structure". In Turner's understanding, the liminal phase reduces those undergoing the ritual to a state of vulnerability so that they are open to change, they are in the midst of a journey from one social self to another. For the time-being, they are literally powerless and often identityless. Also during this phase persons are inscribed with their new identities and initiated into their new powers. There are many ways to accomplish the transformation—through oath-taking, performance of special actions, being scarred or circumscribed. There are myriad possibilities, varying from culture to culture. Schechner (2002/2003:58) finds the

workshop-rehearsal phase of performance composition analogous to the liminal phase of ritual process. At the conclusion of the liminal phase of a ritual, actions and objects take on, and radiate, significances in excess of their practical use or value. These actions and objects are symbolic of the transformation taking place. Turner used the term “liminoid” to describe types of symbolic action or leisure activity occurring in contemporary societies (like arts, entertainment, and recreation) that serve a function similar to ritual in pre-modern or traditional societies. Generally speaking “liminoid” activities are voluntary: while liminal activities are required. Recreational activities and the arts are often liminal. Rituals are more than structures and functions; they can also be among the most powerful experiences life has to offer. In this context Turner provides two concepts of importance:

I have used the term “anti-structure” mainly with reference to tribal and agrarian societies, to describe both liminality and what I have called “communitas”. I meant by it ... the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group For me communitas preserves individual distinctiveness ... (Turner 1982:44-48).

Communitas can be defined as a feeling of group solidarity, usually short-lived, generated during ritual. According to Turner, communitas comes in several varieties. Normative communitas is the sometimes dry and unfeeling display of group solidarity. Spontaneous communitas is a sincere outflowing of warmth for others in the group (Schechner 2002/2003:62). Spontaneous communitas abolishes status. The concepts of ritual time / space too are significant. Because rituals take place in special often sequestered places, the very act of entering the “sacred space” has an impact on the participants. To this Schechner draws a parallel in terms of his theatre workshop, where:

No one has a watch, so time is defined by our mutual experience. The session begins with a careful sweeping and mopping of the floor. Once everyone is in the space, there is no more socializing. Daily life is left behind as participants clean the space making it ready for work. Such simple actions ...transport the work-shoppers to a

different place mentally and emotionally. These ritualized procedures help create a feeling of *communitas* even before the exercises begin (Schechner 2002/2003:63).

Dance movement therapy sessions described by Chodorow (1991) are similar in this respect. Transportations and transformations are the characteristics of the liminoid and the liminal respectively. Schechner explains that liminal rituals permanently change people's identities or a major aspect of people's identities. Transformation performances bring together two kinds of performers—those who are being transformed and those who oversee the transformation. Liminoid rituals effect a temporary change—sometimes nothing more than a brief experience of spontaneous *communitas* or a several-hours-long performance role. These are transportations. From a spectator's point of view, one enters into the experience, is 'moved' or 'touched' and is then dropped off about where she or he had entered. For performers, the situation is more complex and long-lived. A person falls into a trance, speaks in tongues, handles snakes etc, experiencing overwhelmingly powerful emotions. Trance possessions in ritual performances are the vehicle through which the transformative function of a ritual is fulfilled. Both the performers and the spectators are transformed in the process. Sarah Cauldwell's (1996) work provides valuable insight into the phenomenon of ritual trance possession. The embodiments that take place in rituals are of central importance, due to their effect. In the rituals analyzed by John (2009) in the study of Periandavar worship, performed by the Kaniyan community and Hook-swinging rituals in Tamil Nadu, the effort to satisfy the gods in order to preserve health and prosperity takes centre stage. The rituals show

...how human "body" and "self" [are] submitted to the divine spirit and get purified by the shaman. The body of the shaman is considered sacred. During his spirit possession, his body is the medium for the divine spirit. The divine status of the body, which serves as a religious vehicle, is depicted in the rituals. (Michaels and Wulf 2009: 12).

Transportations occur in aesthetic performances also. Schechner writes that this is where all kinds of performances converge. Actors, athletes, dancers, shamans, entertainers, classical musicians---all train, practice, and / or rehearse in order to temporarily 'leave themselves' and be fully 'in' whatever they are performing.

Performativity, Every-Day Life and Self

This brings us to the theories of performativity which insist that all social realities are constructed. The construction of gender, race, and identity are but three examples of an all-encompassing theory. Social life in its performative aspect can be understood as a showing of doing—restored behaviour. Poststructuralist theorists of performativity indicate that even these aspects of social life can be best understood ‘as performance’. These theories of the performative inhabit performance art, especially works dealing with gender, race, and the assertion that the personal is political. The linguistic philosophers and post-structuralists begin with language. Even when dealing with behaviour they take a language-centric position. For them, behaviour---indeed all culture—is to be ‘read’ as complex, interacting texts.

Erving Goffman, on the other hand, approaches social life as theatre, interplay of behaviours where players with different motives rehearse their actions, manoeuvre to present themselves advantageously, and often perform at cross purposes with one another. Where the adherents of the two approaches agree is in the assertion that people are performing all the time whether or not they are aware of it (Schechner 2002/2003:174). Performing onstage, performing in special social situations and performing in every-day life are in a continuum. In performance studies as conceived by Schechner, there are no clear boundaries separating everyday life from family and social roles or social roles from job roles, church ritual from trance, acting onstage from acting offstage, and so on. Furthermore a person can ‘jump’ from one category to another—from daily life into trance, from ritual into entertainment, from everyday life role into another. So questions of ‘private’ and/ ‘public’ performances become pertinent. Usually a person knows when she is playing a role and when she is ‘being herself’. As Schechner writes, to ‘be myself’ is to behave in a relaxed, unguarded manner. To ‘perform myself’ means to take on the appearance, voice, and actions of Mother or Friend, Plumber and so on. Some people work hard to enact one of society’s ‘great roles’ such as Judge or Movie Star. Others have a great role thrust on them, such as Survivor of a Catastrophe, member of the Royalty. Most people, most of the time, know the difference between enacting a social role and playing a role onstage. The question of private and public performance is further complicated both by the media and by panoptic surveillance systems. Network, cablé, and satellite

television are joined by the internet and thousands of surveillance cameras are gazing down on people in stores, streets, elevators, almost everywhere. Schechner feels that the always open lens adds a disturbing sense not only of being watched but of requiring us to be always 'on', to play for the cameras knowing that our performances are being studied by people we do not know and whom we have not given permission to look. Then there are actors, athletes, politicians, and clerics—paid performers all seeking attention, adulation, re-election and money. Their performances are not only for local audiences in arenas, stadiums, churches, and public halls but for many millions tuned in across the world. Across this wide spectrum of performing are varying degrees of self-consciousness and consciousness of the others with whom and for whom one plays. The more self-conscious a person is, the more one constructs behaviour for those watching and/or listening, the more such behaviour is 'performing'. However, as an exception trance performance can be mentioned, where the possessed are sometimes unaware of their own performances. Going deeper into the performative, Schechner emphasizes performance magnitude, implying not only size and duration but also extension across cultural boundaries and penetration to the deepest strata of historical, personal, and neurological experience. He suggests seven 'performance magnitudes' whose interconnectedness need to be explored, (which are brain events, microbit, bit, sign, scene, drama, macrodrama) in order to understand how the smaller are elicited, manipulated, and then composed into larger and how the larger deport meanings down to the smaller (Schechner 2004:325,326).

Most dance movement therapy all over the world is based on choreographic techniques. In this regard, Schechner's distinction between scored, codified and improvised performance is relevant. Codified acting is performance based on semiotically constructed gestures, movements, songs, costumes, and the makeup set by tradition and passed down from teacher to student by means of rigorous training. To illustrate the *Natyashastra* of Bharat, the Sanskrit manual of theatre, dance, and music, and costumes express and communicate specific emotions, dramatic situations and character types. Apart from the performing arts most rituals—secular and sacred—employ codified movements. Any performance---even the most naturalistic--can be "scored", all its details set and invariable. But scoring a production does not mean it is codified. Codified acting is present only when there is a semiotic system of

meaning separate from everyday behaviour. One can improvise either with new materials or with codified behaviour. Improvising means working without a set score. The bits a performer uses to build an improvisation can be from everyday behaviour or from codified behaviour (Schechner 2002/2003:158).

Schechner's emphasis on the belief in the role that one is playing is a crucial point of enquiry for therapeutic consideration. Goffman noted that self-belief spans a continuum with the tendency to accept ourselves 'as performed'. Schechner holds that on a quotidian level, a person's sense of self is very much tied to her ability to believe in the roles she plays. In line with the micro social theorists he argues that the roles are not played by a single stable self (Schechner 2002/2003:181). The self is created by the roles even as it plays them. For those requiring therapy usually the site of self and selfhood are problematical and need to be attended to or reworked.

Culture thus becomes unthinkable without performance since performance, as twice-behaved restored behaviour, becomes the vehicle of social action, if not social action itself.⁵ This notion of culture, being enacted through our performance in social roles and performance as restored behaviour, brings to mind questions of therapeutic healing, especially the processual aspect of such therapy.

Ritual Performance, Dance and Healing

Healing practices down the ages and across cultures have assumed myriad forms—each being located within the fabric of the society's cosmology and notions of the healthy social being. The literature on therapeutic healing through movement and creative activities has provided enlightening understanding of the 'body', which significantly challenges Cartesian dualism and thus provide a legitimate space for comparison with the philosophical and aesthetic ideas propounded by codified performance forms, such as the philosophy and aesthetic of the classical Indian arts (Vatsayan 1968), as well as non-modern, tribal aesthetics, cosmology and healing practices.

In the 1990s anthropologists and dance scholars have made significant contributions to cultural analyses of 'bodies in motion', situating their studies in

⁵ This view is not without its critics.

relation to broader issues of social and philosophical theory. Reed mentions anthropologists Lewis (Lewis, in Reed 1998) and Farnell (Farnell, in Reed 1998) who have demonstrated how the legacies of Cartesian mind/body dualism permeate the language and categories of theories of embodiment, providing difficulties for movement analysis. This has resulted in an absence of the person as a moving agent in the Western philosophical tradition. The body as a conceptual object has been the subject of much debate among dance scholars and Cynthia Novack's writings play a critical role in the reconceptualisation. In an article on "the body's endeavours as cultural practices", Novack critiques some dominant conceptualizations of the body as they have been formulated in anthropology, as well as in the field of dance studies (Novack, in Reed 1998:520). She argued that while these categories articulate some aspects of social experience, they do not capture the full experiential significance of the body as a responsive and creative subject (Novack 1995:179-80). In addition Novack also cautions against reifying 'the body' as the primary analytic category in dance studies. In some contexts, she argues, it may be that ideas about sound, movement and social ethics are more culturally relevant for understanding 'bodily endeavors' (Novack 1995:183).

Susan Rasmussen (1994) highlights the complex relation between ritual trance, art, healing, and understanding, representation and mediation of the self in her work on 'Head Dance' of the Tuareg spirit possession. It is a representative research on trance possession, healing and dance and provides a useful perspective on a non-modern, tribal aesthetics, cosmology as well as healing metaphors and practices. A number of themes dealt with here are relevant for and resurface in questions of performance and therapy through dance in a modern, non-tribal, urban context, hence merits discussion in detail.

Rasmussen's paper concerns the Kel Ewey Tuareg of north-eastern Niger. Among them, particularly in noble circles, spirit possession is associated with Sudanic/ servile cultural origins; so, too, are dancing and drumming. The author argues that, in performing a sideways swaying motion of the head and shoulders referred to locally as a dance, women in possession trance transform Sudanic culture. The head dance as flowing, controlled movement, and its central trope of 'swaying like the branch of a tree', encapsulate key culture symbols to make them almost acceptable in traditional

noble Tuareg aesthetic/ symbolic terms. Yet this motion implies that one is 'ill' or 'in solitude or in the wild', in need of exorcism that has to be performed on the fringes of the camp or village, outside the tent, after dark, yet in public with an audience.

Rasmussen uses a synaesthetic approach to show the interconnectedness of symbols. She illustrates the tensions and contradictions of a traditionally stratified society where women now perform a range of semi-servile activities, activities that Moslems, nobles and men generally disapprove of and sometimes oppose. The 'head dance' is an elegant compromise that blurs the line between dance and possession, takes on acceptable images from song and the 'proper' ways of moving, and 'grafts' them on to a particular drum pattern---the whole complex making use of the homonym 'song/ branch' as the core image or metaphor. Symbols work synergistically in this process.

During possession rituals the woman in trance performs a distinctive motion while seated, referred to as *asul*: it features a sideways movement of the head and neck, gradually becoming more vigorous and including the shoulders and torso as drum patterns quicken and become more complex, with their accompanying choral songs. The dance may last from half an hour to four hours, generally very late, going on past midnight into the early pre-dawn hours. Throughout, the audience views the motion as an art form, judging the quality of the performance. Residents invariably refer to it as a dance rather than merely a reflex response or hysterical fit. Onlookers frequently encourage the dancer, and comment on the progress of her cure according to established aesthetic criteria of how well she dances. The goal is to become exhausted and fall to the ground, which implies the music, drumming, singing and audience response have been effective, owing to their harmony and balanced qualities. For the time being, at least, the patient is cured of sprits. But the Kel Ewey say this cure is often temporary and that, in certain individuals, sprits tend to recur. This dance motion is described metaphorically as 'swaying, like the branch of a tree in wind'. 'Branch' is a metaphor for 'song'.

The behaviour of women in trance is interpreted by Rasmussen as dramatising Kel Ewey *Tuareg* interrelations between aesthetic criteria, artistic form, and social expression of power. Residents say certain types of illness and depression are caused

by spirits passed from mother to daughter, primarily causing trance. Susceptible persons come from diverse social strata, but are predominantly women. The possession rites, usually staged in the evening, are called *tende n goumaten*. They are accompanied by choral singing and percussion music on two types of drum, the *tende* and the *asakalobo*. The *tende* player is generally a lower-status man or woman such as a blacksmith or someone of servile origins. The chorus is comprised of young women from diverse social strata who sing songs identified with the possession ritual for the patient, called *gouma*. Also present at the rite is a large, mixed-sex audience, ranging in age from about ten to twenty-five years. Many possessed women are either adolescent engaged to be married or older women whose children are of marriageable age. Audience, chorus, and patient evaluate the rite's effectiveness through jokes, songs and gossip that criticise various singers for transgressions in personal conduct as well as for lack of performing skill. If the songs and drumming are ineffectively performed, and the patient fails to dance properly or fall to the ground, this is believed to delay her cure. Only women learn *goumaten* song texts.

In an attempt to understand why only women do the head dance, Rasmussen observes that earlier studies of possession have explained the association with women in terms of 'female deprivation' or compensation for exclusion from official, male domains. She, however, finds that Tuareg women are not subjugated, but enjoy high status and prestige. Female power does not reside solely in sexuality or childbearing. Women are not jural minors; they have economic independence as owners and inheritors of livestock property, may initiate divorce and eject husbands from their tent, and receive gifts and services from men and other women. Women also have the power to make or break a man's reputation through poetry and song (Rasmussen 1994: 76).

Both within and outside the exorcism setting, there is an interlocking of aesthetic codes with social status and prestige. The dance of the possessed depends on how well the singing and drumming are performed. The singing of women is considered incomplete without the shouts of men; and men's dancing at festivals requires women's singing as praise. She argues that the symbolic associations between possession and women encode concepts of persons including, but not limited to, gender typifications in Tuareg society, and actively provide for the channelling of

social sentiment and political action within and outside the ritual setting. The possession idiom is integrated into the symbolic and political system; Tuareg use art to assert status, prestige, and power. Rasmussen shows how the head dance, the 'swaying branch' image recurring throughout Tuareg aesthetics, is an antidote or counterbalance to the noble cultural value of reserve. This is suggested by evidence from contexts of use: the motif occurs in situations where it fills the need to circumvent structure. She argues that this core image, in visual/kinaesthetic/verbal/aural forms, is a metaphor for flirting and deviating from norms. The aesthetic code which integrates all this in one key image of trance conveys a message about concerns of descent, prestige, and status: art is used to express conflict in relationships not only between men and women but also between the different social segments in Kel Ewey Tuareg society. Women facilitate the expression of these conflicts through head dancing in trance during possession rites.

In anthropological approaches to art, there are two aspects to this problem of aesthetic form and socio-political life: (1) stratification/hegemony/power; (2) style and arbitration of form. Art asserts power in the selection of style. Art and ideology are thus reflected in socio-political differences. Images of possession raise the issue of how far the uses of art affect acceptance of, and participation in, the dominant ideology by those subordinate to it; and how far it is used to manipulate social order (Rasmussen 1994:77). Though the connection between art styles and politics has been recognised (Weber 1958; Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 1978, 1980), the role of this in the transformation, or alternatively, reproduction of ontology is less understood. Rasmussen uses Weber's (1947) term, an 'elective affinity of a style of life' in analysing the Tuareg aesthetic values and behaviour surrounding the core image of balanced swaying. This involves the use of art as decorative display of beauty and style as an end in itself, what Benjamin (1968) terms 'exhibition value,' and the use of art for religious and healing purposes and in rites of passage throughout the life course, 'ritual' or cult value. Mixed codes synaesthetically extend from visual and verbal forms into domains of sound and motion.

Rasmussen's concern here is with the process of meaning construction rather than with unidirectional cause or consequence. She discusses how those involved in the exorcism process, through possession tropes, use art to express resistance and

represent in an oblique way the contradictions and objections they experience in the ruling ideology.

According to her a possessed woman's head dance in some respect inverts the normal pattern of female modesty and male exhibitionism in public dancing. As long as she does the head dance when in a trance, it is said that it is the spirits that dance, not the possessed person. Thus the dancing contains elements of both reinforcement and inversion of norms of gender typification. From her field experience Rasmussen found that some families display ambivalent feelings about kinswomen who frequently dance the *goumaten* ritual; they admit to being a bit ashamed because there is something undignified about the head dance.

She narrows down on her ethnographic data to explain certain points of significance:

What is there, then, about the head dance and its more generalised aesthetic image of 'a branch swaying in the wind' trope that causes these responses of shame, ridicule, and occasional outrage on the part of men, but of noble men and Islamic scholars in particular? And why is this image, the head dance above all, identified with noble class and female gender roles in Tuareg culture? Furthermore, what is the meaning of one feature of its ritual paraphernalia--dance accompanied by the simultaneous wielding of a sword--generally identified with men? These associations have a relation to the performance dimension of the ritual dance, the meaning and function of music, and other local art forms as well, in particular those where the motif recurs, and contexts of use and beliefs about them. These in turn are connected with notions of time and space, and related to gender and class roles among the Kel Ewey (Rasmussen 1994:79).

Regarding their idea of the commencement of the healing process, Rasmussen explains that the white headband or tassel, tied at the back with streamers on the sides, is believed to help balance the possessed as she dances, swaying from side to side faster and faster. Her sword is said to help cut and separate the spirits. Sometimes she places her hand on the *tende* drum in order to pick up the rhythm of the drumming. Throughout these motions she is generally silent, using her hands to accept or reject various songs. These patterns suggest protective measures against potential disruption. In combination with the drum patterns, the singing and dancing are said to induce sleep and dull pain. A number of authors have noted how group support is

often a therapeutic factor which is essential to the effectiveness of many non-Western systems of psychotherapy, and it is widely accepted that possession rituals are often therapeutically effective in the treatment of illness of a psychogenic nature (Rasmussen 1994:79). In the case of the Tuareg the patient receives attention, comfort, and sympathy from members of audience and musician/curers in the course of her head-dancing during only one phase, albeit an important one, of the cure. Among Tuareg, this occurs primarily during exorcism, in the form of praise and encouragement of the aesthetic aspects of her performance/competence during the dancing, rather than following exorcism. For, contrary to what has been reported in a number of other possession settings (Danforth 1989: 149; Messing 1959; Kennedy 1967: 101; Crapanzano 1973: 215), Tuareg patients are not visited by many persons after their ritual; rather, they are treated in isolation, in consultation with a marabout. Seclusion ideally follows public exorcism; the theme of solitude is evident both before possession (with symptoms of spirits, in a depressed state) and after it (in the exorcism cure). Yet there is a counterbalance to this theme: it is through the aesthetics of public possession performance that group support is mobilised in such a way as to re-articulate social relationships.

According to Rasmussen dance relates to the definition of the person and to political power. The possessed dancer becomes a song in the sense of objectifying or 'catching' it. Furthermore, Tuareg say the 'rhythm' as well as the words is important in possession curing. Following this line of reasoning, Rasmussen enquires into what the motif of swaying refers to, not in terms of direct meaning, but rather into what makes the power. This, she opines, resides in an overarching aesthetic: a combination of words, drum patterns, and actions of dance and other motions.

Centrally relevant here are local notions of movement: the role of dances in Tuareg culture. Dance projects inner concepts of self and conflicts surrounding the person. Individual dancers represent a social segment, but also the individual self in mazes of dependence; the latter may entertain goals which may be at odds with the interests of the former. Power is embodied in the dance, as in amulets. The central space of dance, as in exorcism (far from mosques, and often on the outskirts of camp or village), and its timing (usually evening), serve as a stage on which Kel Ewey present themselves to each other. Thus dance and trance are outward, public versions of the person. The

question raised is how these versions fit in with the head dance and its metaphor, and what this implies about the roles of person, art, and power in relation to what Turner (1967, 1978, 1982) has termed 'the obligatory and the desirable' in ritual.

Rasmussen discusses at length the beliefs and symbolism prevalent among the Kel Ewey with regard to possession and its cure. Examining a case of head-dancing in possession and the frequently-sung songs, Rasmussen finds that the core image of the swaying branch, in one of the drum patterns and in numerous songs, connotes resilience. The *tadeine* tree, referred to in many possession songs have branches that are supple, which bend but do not break. This tree remains green and retains its foliage even during wind and drought. Thus the verses allude to a parched, dry land and, by extension, to infertility and the death of humans. There is also the idea of internal strength during outward hardship and duress. A moral theme is expressed by means of aesthetic form, in the parallel between the bending and flexibility and sustained life of the possessed dancer and these qualities in life situations. Local exegesis explains this as encouraging the woman in trance, as she dances, to be like the branches, to be resilient like this branch or tree. A 'song' is also a 'branch' (Kel Ewey say, 'Music is like a tree, a song is one of its branches'); there is the image of this rhythm as wind blowing on branches, a sense of smoothness and balance. Kel Ewey say that the song is like a branch in the wind, and so is the dancer in trance. Juxtaposed to this is reference to unrequited love and unexpressed sentiments. The simile describing this state is a mother camel and mother gazelle which have lost their young, yet they are protected by the shadow of large trees (or great songs, metaphorically). So aesthetics and therapy are fused in the image of wind on branches, a sense of balance, and ideas of resilience and flexibility. Similar images are in other songs: for example, 'young girls, sitting in the shadow of great trees' (songs). Spirits may also inhabit these places.

In the same song verses there is also a reference to the patient's neck ('I promise to sing ... on my neck ... until tomorrow'). The neck is a stem of the swaying branch here, as it plays a central role in the dance. Significantly, the concept of descent group is conveyed by *tawsit*, also denoting a wrist or stem from which the fingers spread out. Thus the image as a symbol condenses individual and descent group concerns. Yet this image also refers to the neck's bearing a burden; spirits are believed to perch

on the patient's neck throughout the ritual. Relevant here is symbolism of the body, in particular the head, which the Tuareg identify with phases of possession and aspects of personhood. The stomach (*tedis*) represents the matriline, also where spirits enter. The liver (*tessa*) is the seat of sentiments, where spirits rest temporarily. Hair is the outer manifestation of intelligence. The head, seat of intelligence is also believed to be the eventual destination of spirits, who affect memory. The mouth is the major source of vulnerability to evil (in gossip and sorcery). The eye, too, is associated with evil causation.

The Tuareg believe that adolescent girls about to marry are particularly vulnerable to such malevolent forces, which see how much parents love and value the young engaged daughter, and become jealous and want her also. One image used to describe spirit possession literally means 'taking-off the head', or disorientation. Thus the head-dance motion is associated with anti social acts, specifically illicit love outside marriage and the bearing of illegitimate children as opposed to children of official descent, and is identified with lack of self control or rebellion against social norms which threaten property interests.

Rasmussen discusses beliefs about the person in local religion and world view. Here the idea of spirits plays a major role. All the possession is by spirits, most exorcism songs explicitly address or speak from or about the human soul. The soul (*iman*) is more personalized than spirits in the Tuareg worldview; it is seen as residing within the living individual, except during sleep, when it may rise and travel about, visiting other souls. A dead soul is sometimes conceptualised as a messenger. However, it is distinct from the non-human spirit which sometimes demands a temporary wedding with its client as a fee for aiding the human host in a pact. Thus the head dance is one manifestation of the human-to-spirit marriage theme recurring throughout Tuareg cosmology. Tuareg beliefs in spirits are both pre-Islamic and Islamic in origin. In addition to Arabic *djinn* (and the *Tamacheq eljenan*), one also hears '*Kel Essuf*', referring specifically to the People of Solitude or the Wild. Spirits are considered evil, but when they attack adults it is generally in the form of mental illness. Curing *goumaten* spirits requires exorcism by the music of the *tende* drum, whereas other types of illness require different means. Most men's spirits are believed to respond to Qur'anic verses; indeed, it is the type of cure rather than the illness or

spirit possession that is identified with gender. Yet Kel Ewey do not personalise spirits individually. Rather, spirits are associated with group identity and are modelled upon human social structure. Sometimes humans are believed to acquire a status between human and superhuman. Humans can protect against or gain control over spirits through protective measures, such as wearing amulets. Some individuals believe in the existence of a guardian angel for the same purpose. Men and women agree on the most important characteristics of the human-spirit relationship: duality, but also overlap, between the human and spirit worlds.

According to Rasmussen, there is the coexistence in possession aesthetics of two contradictory images: attracting humans and repelling spirits. These beliefs mirror social tensions surrounding marriage and inheritance, which are given expression in aesthetics. Women are key agents here; thus the head dance and other media where its metaphor appears are feminine motions, conveying women's power rather than subordination or deprivation. Women inherit jewellery, leather, and ornaments from their mothers, and in addition receive presents of jewellery and other ornaments from mothers and husband on marriage. Kel Ewey say that these gifts express how highly parents and suitors love and value the adolescent engaged girl. Yet there is the belief that this love also endangers the girl, for the act of marrying may cause spirits to be jealous of her and occupy her, attempting to carry her away. This is one explanation of engaged adolescent girls' spirit possession. Yet, points out Rasmussen, only the prosperous own decorative belongings, and although this makes them more desirable in marriage, it also makes them vulnerable to human neighbours' jealousy, believed sometimes to cause destruction of person and property. This belief also encodes conflicts of property transfer surrounding marriage. For example, bride-wealth negotiations are often protracted and Kel Ewey have difficulty finding eligible suitors because socio-economic status and prestigious descent often fail to coincide. Furthermore, mothers have the power, during the early years of uxorilocal residence, to break up a daughter's marriage by postponing the disengagement of her livestock from the family herds and resisting the couple's establishment of an independent household. This frequently occurs if the mother-in-law does not like her daughter's new husband, who must please his parents-in-law with bride-wealth payments and gifts. Sometimes women of the same household are married to husbands of unequal

means who contribute different amounts to their parents-in-law. This produces rivalry within the household and tensions between mothers and sisters.

Thus there is a link between the symbolism of the aesthetic code, sexual symbolism in ornamentation, and socio-economic status. What attracts and repels spirits is the mirror image of what attracts and repels humans, evoking admiration, respect, and prestige but also simultaneously envy, hostility, and spite. This 'love-hate' relationship with status symbols is played out in possession aesthetics, in the head dance and its ritual paraphernalia. Therefore, surmises Rasmussen, possession aesthetics enable individuals to display themselves in terms of a self-concept compatible with traditional norms of respect which might be difficult to uphold in daily life. Possession art enacts a fantasy in which private symbols of personhood are given public expression in a 'safe' context. Women convey messages about the person caught in a maze of contradictions, not because they are excluded, but because they are key players in the drama. The head dance as cure thus has to do with vacillating between expression of self and inhibition of self. This motif throughout Tuareg aesthetics constitutes an antidote or counterbalance to the noble cultural value of reserve or shame; evidence for this is the motif's recurrence in social contexts where it fills a need to circumvent structure.

Therefore, positive emotion and valuing quality of performance through motions described metaphorically by an image of resilience and balance are of central importance to the possession cure. This confirms what was suggested earlier: that there is a link between positive self-concept and aesthetics--music, dance, and visual arts---in Tuareg culture, given positive reinforcement during possession. This effects a new, if temporary, social status and a change in social identity and self-concept. During trance, in its mixed visual, aural, and kinaesthetic codes, individuals are able to enact behaviour which ranges from the reserved to the flamboyant; audience support and encouragement provide social sanction. However, much more is involved in trance than some cathartic safety-valve or a discharge of tension. Tuareg concepts of competence in the head dance and its associated poetry, music, drum patterns, dress styles, and accessories/paraphernalia serve to structure or reconstitute what would ordinarily be regarded as an undignified outburst by most Kel Ewey, particularly nobles. This process is framed in the idiom of local criteria for performance of

possession as art, specifically dancing, in the relationship between the woman in trance, the audience, and the musicians. Tuareg aesthetic codes constitute a set of symbols with which the woman in trance is able to express conflict and transmute its overt symptoms into artistry. These tropes bring coherence to the experience of solitude observes Rasmussen.

It is therefore a positive expression of this aesthetic, as well as of negative tensions associated with conflict between concepts of person, immediate situation, and performance competence. The head dance is both a symptom of spirit possession and a part of its exorcism cure. When the woman in trance is cured, the cure is phrased in the following terms: observers note with satisfaction that she 'has danced well'. While persons in trance also internalise moral and religious ideals associated with the aesthetic image of the swaying branch---resilience, harmony, strength, yet grace under pressure, and suppleness---swaying in the wind nonetheless suggests deviating from the norm, or at least temptation and potential disorder.

The images Kel Ewey frequently use to describe a state of trance are the same as those used to express appreciation of visual art, poetry, song, and dancing at festivals: great value is attached to suppleness. Through art comes release from the confines of noble cultural values of shame and dignity and yet also a reaffirmation of status and prestige (Rasmussen 1994:90).

The Tuareg say the image 'transports us beyond ourselves'. This remark suggests that it also enables individuals to overcome obstacles, extend themselves beyond constraints, and, temporarily, redefine personhood.⁶ The image is appropriate in some contexts, inappropriate in others. It is both strength and a weakness. It is by defining the head dance in terms of its aesthetic beauty and the skill of the performance that the possessed acquires dignity and meaning. There is a sense of relation between the motion of the body and the motion of the soul and mind. For example, when the soul walks in sleep or travel, it is seen as freed from constraints of kinship, social class, and moral concerns. It is considered dangerous to waken a sleeping person, and lethal to touch a possessed individual. Thus, on one level, movements of the body and

⁶ Brings to mind Fisher's model of right and left lobes of the brain and the whole discussion on consciousness mentioned in Schechner's works on performance (Schechner 2002/2003).

aesthetic form show movements of the mind concludes Rasmussen. Clearly it seems to me that the metaphors used in the songs and the dance are efficacious in that zone of continuity and can be considered the vehicles of healing along with the energised movements involved.

The Role of Metaphors in Symbolic Healing

Talking of healing metaphors Daniel E. Moerman provides a challenging theoretical argument and discussion spanning across disciplinary boundaries. In “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing” (1979) Moerman takes the question of healing a step further and argues that the metaphorical structure, the system of meaning, of a healing discipline is decisive in its effectiveness, as important as any other ‘actual’, ‘physical’, ‘pharmacological’ elements. Substantiating his view Moerman writes:

The idea that one person can heal another is widespread, perhaps universal. ...Healers decisively mediate culture and nature; they are enacting *cultural physiology*. The specific content of this action (or acting) is quite variable from culture to culture but hardly random. Manipulation, massage, surgery, splinting, and, in general, “laying on of hands” are very common. Fernandez (1971: 43) has eloquently demonstrated the power of the metaphor, a “strategic predication” which can move us, that is, change our minds, and lead us to performance, that is, change our behaviour. (Moerman 1979: 59)

He mentions Foster (1976) who distinguished ‘personalistic’ systems from ‘naturalistic’ systems which attempt to maintain some form of ‘balance’ in the body. In both the personalistic and naturalistic medical systems, there is a clear symbolic metaphorical component. He doesn’t deny the significant specific medical effects of herbal medicines. Rather he argues that the symbolic component of treatment is significant as well, that it is these healing metaphors which provide the symbolic substance of general medical treatment.

In answer to the question as to how metaphorical concepts or performances can affect human physiology Moerman provides a brief survey of a range of contemporary research in neurophysiology. This offers us a valuable perspective on symbolic communication in its healing form. In general, and in traditional terminology, he is concerned with the relationship between mind and body, between

symbol and substance, the kind of control thoughts might have over physiological processes and is therefore pertinent to my research question. There are several areas in contemporary biomedical research which bear on the problem of the influence of mental, symbolic, or cultural phenomena on physiological state. He puts forward a review of this work under three general headings: psychosomatic illness, biofeedback, and host-pathogen interaction.

According to him psychosomatic research has demonstrated the potentially pathological relationship between mental and physical events. The long tradition of Western psychosomatic medicine has dealt with disorders wherein 'anxiety' produces damage or dysfunction to organs under the control of the automatic and endocrine system (such as asthma, hyperventilation, obesity, blood pressure disorders, etc). At a most basic level, some investigators have characterised childhood 'failure to thrive' as a 'growth failure in the presence of environmental psychosocial disruption... [and] lack of obvious organic causes' (Barbero and Shaheen; Glaser et al., in Moerman 1979:61). Psychosocial interaction can affect physiological functions as decisive as growth.

At another level, investigators of psychosomatic illness have considered the physiological consequences of various sociological phenomena. Burton-Bradley (1974) has described a range of stress-mediated psychosomatic symptoms associated with convulsive social change in New Guinea. Brenner (1976) has described the fluctuation of a series of personal tragedies (including acute cardiovascular-renal disease, suicide, and homicide) with rates of unemployment in several industrial countries. Schwab, Fennel, and Warheit (1974), describing the epidemiology of common psychosomatic illnesses such as indigestion and constipation, have shown dramatic culturally determined variation in their incidence. A wide range of research on the relationship between life events, stress, and illness clearly indicates that illness is more likely following significant life events---marriage, divorce, new job, getting fired (Rabkin and Struening, in Moerman 1979: 61). In summary, a wide range of both psychological and sociological phenomena has been shown to correlate with a variety of physiological symptoms.

The underlying theory of psychosomatic medical treatment is that the therapist can influence this pathological pathway—can, in fact, reverse the signs, the valences, the external forces causing harm, and thereby heal. Many theorists have compared the techniques of the shaman and psychotherapist in this context (Lederer 1959; Frank 1961). Other research in psychosomatic medicine has focused on the pathways of psychopathology and sought specific ways in which external symbolic stimulus can have pathological consequence. Most of these investigators conclude that the decisive ‘pivot’ is the hypothalamus. Moerman points out that all of this research in psychosomatic aetiology and treatment serves to indicate the presence of a substantial interaction between mental events and physical life.

Biofeedback research also illustrates the broad range of physical events that can be controlled by conscious mental activity. It has demonstrated that, with a measurement technique which can make autonomic function visible to a subject, many systems previously understood as being under involuntary control can in fact be controlled. Among other things, subjects can influence heart rate, blood pressure, core body temperature, galvanic skin response, salivation, urine formation, gastric motility, alpha rhythms, and electro-myographic activity such as speech-muscle activity during silent reading, deep relaxation through skeletal-muscle relaxation (Stoyva et al., in Moerman 1979:61).

A related line of research has focused on the ability of several sorts of (typically Eastern) mystics to control basic physiological processes. The most successful efforts in this area have involved blood pressure regulation; ‘mystic’ techniques have been adopted by some physicians as adjuncts to hypertension control (Birk; Patel, in Moerman 1979: 61). Shealy (1976) has described a series of physical and emotional control techniques which have been quite successful in controlling chronic pain, most interestingly, phantom limb pain. Again in this research and clinical experience, Moerman shows that evidence is accumulating to indicate more extensive conscious control of physiological states than had been previously recognized. And again, at the center of the autonomic nervous system is the hypothalamus.

Moerman writes that contemporary research on immunological processes indicates that disease is as much a function of host reactivity as it is a consequence of

invasion or infection. In cases of infectious disease, where the damage done to the host is caused by the viral or bacterial pathogen, the course of illness is clearly a function of the resistance which the host puts up to the infection. Many studies indicate that this immunological resistance is influenced by a wide range of psychological and social factors (Solomon, in Moerman 1979).

The immunological system is implicated in both neoplastic (cancerous) syndromes and chronic inflammatory diseases. Regarding tumors, evidence indicates that carcinogenic cells arise repeatedly but take hold, grow, and metastasize only in response to an inadequate immunological response (Friou 1974). On the other hand chronic inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, ulcerative colitis, multiple sclerosis, and 'Graves' disease (a thyroid disorder) are 'autoimmune diseases' wherein the patient produces antibodies which attack his own tissues. In all of these cases, 'emotional' involvements or associations have been demonstrated: for example,

In comparison with their healthy sisters, female patients with rheumatoid arthritis show more masochism, self-sacrifice, denial of hostility, compliance-subservience, depression and sensitivity to anger and are described as always having been nervous, tense, worried, highly strung, moody individuals (Solomon 1970: 211).

Even more intriguing is the argument, as yet tenuous, that schizophrenia may be an immunological disorder which is the result of some sort of anti-brain antibody (Amkraut et al., in Moerman 1979: 62).

Connecting the data on neoplasia and autoimmunity Friou's (Friou, in Moerman 1979) speculates that some autoimmune disease and autoimmunity may be a result of immunogen exposure resulting from successful rejection of cancer. Hence there seems to be a complex interacting web of factors---pathogen, carcinogen, immunological system, and mental or emotional state—which determines the course of disease. According to Moerman, the hypothalamus is the most likely link between conscious and immune systems.

From the above review Moerman concludes that these researches indicate in a general way that there are substantial pathways which link physiological and cognitive states, that these two realms of human existence, body and mind, are linked,

and moreover, that these pathways are the stage on which metaphoric concepts of performance may (indeed must) 'be effective', influence biological processes. Others have discussed aspects of this relationship, though usually looking at the problem from the other direction, to determine how some biological base effects or restrains culture. This, writes Moerman, is much less the case in Reynolds's (Reynolds, in Moerman 1979:62) recent summary, in which the social context has a much more active role; he quotes Reynolds who suggests that, in the future, biologists will feel free to incorporate the mind and its structure of ideas as a vital part of the system that makes up every human being.

Writes Moerman:

Indeed, such a conclusion is surprising only in a scientific context; it is something "everybody knows". It is only at the level of mechanism that the commonplace becomes problematic. For symbols to have no physiological consequences one would have to postulate no communication between the cerebral cortex and the lower brain. Yet a response as common as a blush demonstrates that there is such a communication.

Why is it that something "everybody knows" can cause such scientific difficulty? Because what we know is simultaneously obvious and incorrect. The observations are real enough, but the conceptualization of the problem, "mind communicates with body" or even "mind over matter", is inadequate to the task. The whole notion of two levels of reality, mind and body, communicating with one another requires *mediation*, the intervention of a "third term" which is inevitably elusive or mystical, at best difficult to define. The translation or induction from one level to the other requires the creation or invention of a "transformer" of some sort, be it "self" or "soul", a kind of neurophysiological trickster. (Moerman 1979:62)

Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 197), for instance, considering the problem of the effectiveness of symbols, speaks of an inductive property by which organic processes, unconscious mind, and rational thought are related to one another.

Moerman points out that this brings one to a confrontation with the complex philosophical and cultural problem of mind-body distinction, which crosscuts Western thought. It is 'intuitively obvious' and, simultaneously, a firm (though hardly universal) position within academic philosophy. An 'ethno-philosophical'

investigation would surely conclude, feels Moerman, that mind-body dualism is the dominant philosophical principle underlying Western medicine as it is practiced. He argues, that to resolve the dilemma it is necessary to restructure our conceptualization of the problem of general medical treatment and of the human organism. To document the dilemma more fully, he proceeds to an analysis of the 'placebo effect', traditionally considered to exist on this mind-body boundary and often used to explain the effectiveness of the shaman's technique.

The *form* of medical treatment can be effective medical treatment claims Moerman. The essential metaphoric quality of Western medical treatment can be described most generally as 'enthusiastic activism', which mobilizes the patient's 'expectant faith'. The consequence of this interaction of forces is generally known to biomedicine as the 'placebo effect'.

The word 'placebo' means, roughly, 'that I shall please', that is, satisfy the demands of a patient for whom there is nothing 'effective' which can be prescribed. Placebos have been prescribed for centuries, often to get the patient off the physician's back. The difficult problem is that such inert medication often 'works', that is, 'heals' the patient. Some scholars like Sebeok (1977) characterise this symbolic act in broad (and flattering) semiotic terms: placebo responsiveness presumes an indexical function in respect of the ability of patients to trust their fellow man as embodied by their physician. The effectiveness of such medical 'activism' appears to vary directly with the enthusiasm---whatever its motive---with which the physician prescribes (Houston et al., in Moerman 1979:62). Estimates of the proportion of overall medical effectiveness due to placebo effects vary. Frank (Frank, in Moerman 1979) concluded that in general a placebo is between 30% to 60% as effective as the active medication with which it is compared, regardless of the power of the medication. Referring to this Moerman maintains:

...if a placebo is 60% as effective as the active medication with which it is compared, then 60% of the effectiveness of a dose of the drug is due *not* to the active ingredients, but to the act of medication itself. Summing up all cases, we conclude that roughly half of the effectiveness of modern internal medicine is due to active medication, or what I have called specific medical treatment. The remaining half is

due to various placebo effects, which we can call general medical treatment (Moerman 1979: 62).

I do not quite agree with his subsequent implicit recommendation of using placebo medication as a regular part of clinical practice because it may lead to encouragement of hypochondriac tendencies among the public. However his claim that one can attribute half of the then contemporary American medicine, which is 'placebo effectiveness', to the substantial success the American system of medical education enjoys in convincing its students of their own power, seems not entirely implausible.

Regarding the 'surgical' metaphor too he concludes that while the surgery works, it does not work for the reasons that it is done. Irrespective of the implications his conclusions may have for biomedicine they are of interest to one who is trying to understand the spread and depth of possibilities in conceptualising the mind-body relationship and questions of the self.

Discussing 'Mind, Self, Soul' Moerman cites an article written by a molecular biologist in *Science* magazine which, he says, demonstrates effectively the impact, depth, and consequence of Cartesian dualism between mind and body in modern thought. According to Stent, the 'self-evident concept' of the self creates a barrier to an ultimate scientific understanding of man. No matter how deeply we probe into the visual pathway [for example], in the end we need to posit an 'inner man' who transforms the visual image into a percept, that is, transforms body into mind (Stent 1975:1057). He argues that 'self' is a transcendental, apriori concept with which we are all born. The same is true, he says, of 'time', 'space', and 'causality'. Following Lorenz, he argues that these concepts exist in our brains, are selected for in a Darwinian manner, because they enhance our survival by allowing us to think correctly. The a priori concepts of [self,] time, space, and causality happen to suit the world because the hereditary determinants of our highest mental functions were selected for their evolutionary fitness as was suckling (Stent 1975:1054). In sum Stent seems to say that evolution was right.

Moerman points out that Stent has no test for these and these concepts may be 'wrong'. Stent, opines Moerman, is clearly stuck with his categories, useful or otherwise. Stent basically, raises two issues: Are 'time', 'space', 'causality', and 'self'

fundamental ideas with which man starts out? If not, can we replace our bounded and limiting notions with others which are simultaneously less limiting and, ultimately, 'intuitive'?

Moerman cites standard anthropological sources, to establish that 'causality', 'time', 'space', and 'self' are not inherent ideas with which man starts out. He cites Lee's (1950) classic account of the Trobriand antipathy to lineality, sequence, and climax and infers that Trobriand concept of causality would be utterly different from our own. Moerman mentions Stanner's (1958) account of 'The Dreaming' from which it seems clear that the Australian Aborigines have a folded sense of time; when an individual can constrain the 'past' which shapes his 'present', one clearly faces a nonlineal, cyclical concept of existence which hardly fits the western notions of either causality or time opines Moerman.

Going back to classical thinkers Moerman reminds us that that time is a cultural consequence of the social order, and not of man, is a notion forcefully articulated in anthropology by Van Gennep (1960 [1909]) and Durkheim (1912/1961) and in classic ethnographic analyses of various African societies by Evans-Pritchard (1940: 94-108), Bohannan (1967: 315-29), and Eickelman (1977).

Regarding space, Moerman mentions Hall's (1966) summary of the Hopi concept. According to him, Hopi do not seem any more willing to imagine an abstract space like 'heaven' than is a molecular biologist likely to be willing to imagine kachina gods. As an experiment Hall consulted the pocket Oxford dictionary and extracted from it all terms referring to space or spatial connotations. A preliminary listing uncovered closed to five thousand terms that could be classified as referring to space. According to Hall:

...This is *20per cent* of the words listed in the pocket Oxford dictionary. Even deep familiarity with my own culture had not prepared me for this discovery. (Moerman 1979:65)

Writes Moerman,

It seems at best imprudent to assume that such a cultural mania is a human universal without proof. (Moerman 1979: 65)

Regarding self, Moerman writes that nothing less than heroic discipline is required to examine the range of human concepts of existence for alternatives to the western notions of self, of 'ego'. In a deep intuitive vein he writes,

The way we Westerners look at, listen to, people is so deeply rooted in our concept of self---the concept which Ryle (1949) so aptly labels "the ghost in the machine" is such a fundamental way of structuring experience---that it will surely be difficult to recognize evidence indicating that other people structure this aspect of their existence differently. (Moerman 1979: 65)

As proof of such work Moerman cites Crocker's (1977) analysis of the Bororo 'self', which is, in effect, multiple, made up of several persons, primarily parents, coresidents of the household, and certain members of the opposite moiety.

The Bororo [multiple] self is created, defined and systematically transformed by other selves: the person does not exist except as it is reflected by these (Crocker 1977: 144).

Moerman opines that ways of structuring alternative concepts can be found if totemism, spirit possession, or classificatory kinship is re-examined. Further, if 'property' is considered to be an intersection of self, space, and time as they are conceptualized, these concepts, far from being a priori, can be considered implications of a political system. He concedes that some tribal peoples categorize 'self' as body/mind as the westerner does. Neo-Melanesian refers to the distinction between 'meat' and 'think-think' (Schwartz 1962: 320) surely a graphic Cartesian dichotomy. However he is certain that close examination will lead to the description of other conceptualizations which build these categories very differently. Thus, he concludes that a substantial variability is indicated in the ways in which causality, time, space, and self are conceptualized by humans. The categories reflect social purpose, not biological evolution. He ends with the question:

Can we transcend our own "intuitive" cultural categories and achieve a "new intuition"? (Moerman 1979:65)

The concluding section of his paper deals with what he calls the physiology of thought and action---his own way of handling the issue. The problem of how shamans heal has, in the past, been phrased in terms of the mind-body dichotomy: how can

symbols affect physiology? Moerman argues that this is an inappropriate conceptualization of the problem. Rather than building on dualism's congenial biological notion, the 'blood-brain barrier', Moerman suggests a better model can be built up from some implications of contemporary research in neuroendocrinology. He admits the difficult nature of the undertaking since neurophysiologists use the same Cartesian logic as does everyone else coupled with an almost-impenetrable jargon. He is also aware of the risk of reductionism. However Moerman makes it clear that his intention is not to reduce explanation to another level of analysis, but to construct a language, a categorisation, which does not differentiate two levels in the first place. He justifies his attempt by citing that many findings in the neurosciences in the twenty-five years preceding the 80s make such an approach reasonable, providing simultaneously a context and a model for a non-Cartesian, holistic approach to the organization of the human organism.

With this end in mind Moerman provides a detail description of the physiology of thought and action. The central nervous system, writes he, is traditionally divided into two parts, the brain and the spinal cord. The brain is in its turn roughly divided into the forebrain, including the cerebral hemispheres, the middle brain, including the pons, medulla oblongata, and cerebellum. Symbolic activity, among other things, appears to be a unique function of the human forebrain; symboling is what the forebrain 'does' (White 1949). The middle brain and hindbrain serve the vegetative and reflex ('unconscious, involuntary') functions of the organism. The hypothalamus is the key to a neurophysiological model for a nonsegmented conceptualization of the human organism, since it operates as both a neural and an endocrine organ, thereby urging one to drop the separation of 'mental' and 'bodily' processes.

As a *neural* center, the hypothalamus regulates body temperature, water content, and food intake and digestion and controls several parameters of the cardiovascular system (influencing heart rate and blood pressure). Like all neurological centers, the hypothalamus controls these processes electrochemically as adjacent neurons 'trigger' electrical activity by producing various neurotransmitters.

As an *endocrine* center, the hypothalamus monitors hormone levels in the blood and manufactures hormones as well. This is in contrast to the classical view which

saw the endocrine system (pineal, thyroid, gonads, adrenal, pancreas etc), as under the control of the pituitary, the 'master gland'. In fact, the pituitary is under direct control of the hypothalamus. The pituitary (also called the hypophysis) has two lobes, the anterior (adenohypophysis) and the posterior (neurohypophysis). The posterior secretes two hormones, but these are not produced by the pituitary; they are synthesized in neurons of the anterior hypothalamus and transported to the pituitary, where they are stored until needed (Guillemin 1974:117). A similar situation exists for the anterior pituitary, which synthesizes and secretes seven hormones when triggered by the release from the hypothalamus of a series of 'hormone-releasing factors' which are, in effect, other hormones. The releasing factors are transported in astonishingly small quantities through a small network of capillaries (called hypothalamic-hypophyseal portal vessels) connecting the hypothalamus with the pituitary. The electro-chemical procedure by which the hypothalamic neurons secrete hormones is well known (Frohman and Stachura 1975). Moerman deduces the essential Cartesianism at play from the fact that these cells are commonly referred to as 'transducer' cells, a usage first proposed by Wurtman (1971) which accommodates these observations to a dualist categorization.

The situation, he writes, is more complex yet. The hypothalamic hormone somatostatin, elucidated in 1973 by Guillemin, inhibits the release of growth hormone from the pituitary. However, at least under experimental conditions where relatively large doses of the synthesized chemical are injected into men or other animals, somatostatin has several other direct effects on plasma glucose levels, insulin secretion, and gastrin release (Reichlin et al., in Moerman 1979). In this case, a hypothalamic hormone is acting in exactly the same way in which ordinary endocrine hormones act; the hypothalamus is acting as an endocrine gland.

Moreover there is evidence, considered highly controversial, which indicates that the pineal gland releases a series of endocrine substances which directly influence neurosecretory activity (Kappers Smith and DeVries, in Moerman 1979). The pineal is innervated by the autonomic nervous system, which has at *its* centre the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus might be able to stimulate *itself* to neurosecretory activity via its neurological control of the autonomic system. The 'neural',

‘endocrine’, and ‘autonomic’ systems would seem to be all *one* system, regulating the internal and adaptive processes of the living being.

From all this Moerman deduces,

There are *not* two systems, mind and body. We need no mediation. There is no little man, no little “self”, sitting there transforming (transducing) thought into action. Thought *is* action. Action, even of the thyroid gland, is a kind of thought. Secretion is the “mind” of the pituitary (Moerman 1979: 66).

The uniquely human symbolic component of this regulatory adaptive system follows from the ‘input’ received from the cerebral cortex (essentially another subsystem), which is connected with the hypothalamus in several direct and indirect ways (Crosby et al. 1962: 314-323). Responding to symbols can as easily and naturally influence physiological process as might responding to a chilly breeze. To quote Moerman,

If, as you are about to get married, you find that your palms are sweaty, you are breathing deeply, your face is flushed, you feel hot, your heart is pumping, and your head is pounding, you are in the midst of a classic sympathetic response, a complete set of “fight or flight” reactions, a whole series of hypothalamically mediated reactions to a purely symbolic situation. Stress arising from participation in a ritual is due to ascribed meanings, not physical danger. Here is a context in which we may ultimately be able to trace specifically the ways in which healing metaphors “move us” and yield soothing repairing process.

Mind and body, man and beast, culture and nature are only different by reason of deeply rooted conventions writes he. Moerman concludes that these conventions inhibit our understanding of healing by shaman and physician, and they should be changed.

A number of phenomena from medicine (modern and other) require mystical explanations if one follows the standard Western Cartesian understanding of the human as a combination of different elements: body and mind. Moerman has tried to describe a unitary conceptualization of the human organism which will provide us with a context for understanding the ‘effectiveness’ of symbolic healing, as well as metaphor itself, the power of meaning, and the significance of symbol, without having

to resort to 'inner selves', 'souls', or other mystical explanations, by showing that there are no fundamental boundaries between the mental and physical. A patient's construction of a symbolic image need not be reconstructed in another order or dimension to effect his physiological, specifically healing, processes. The construction of healing symbols *is* healing. He concludes,

Much further research is needed to build from this perspective a complete understanding of exactly how healing occurs, how ultimately healing is an aspect of social meaning. We need to examine the details of patient responsiveness. This might be approached empirically by monitoring a range of physiological processes while the patient is experiencing the influence of the healer in order to detect different physiological aspects of the symbolic process. Different cultural traditions may have different physiological impacts. Rather than trying to eliminate the placebo effect through double-blind studies, we may learn how to enhance the cultural bias which yields this complex, healing human semiotic interaction. We may be able to modify our propensity to learn about other cultures, and begin to learn from them. (Moerman 1979: 66)

Moerman's efforts to demonstrate the Cartesian dualistic roots of western biomedical discourse and suggesting a route out into unitary thinking by providing categories that significantly expand the dimensions of conceptualization, appears to be a bold step that has generated much criticism and debate. As is generally the case with promising, though controversial work Moerman's thesis on 'symbolic healing' has also inspired extensive research in the area. Dow (1986) has put forward a common structure that can describe and explain the organization of all forms of symbolic healing regardless of the culture in which they occur. The universal structure of symbolic healing proposed by him is as follows:

1. The experiences of healers and healed are generalised with culture-specific symbols in cultural myth.
2. A suffering patient comes to a healer who persuades the patient that the problem can be defined in terms of the myth.
3. The healer attaches the patient's emotions to transactional symbols particularized from the general myth.

4. The healer manipulates the transactional symbols to help the patient transact his or her own emotions.

Variations in the structure are due to the speed at which therapeutic paradox is resolved and to culturally specific symbol imagery. Additionally he argues that this structure exists because of the way evolution has organized control in a hierarchy of living systems in a Parsonian vein.

Both Moerman and Dow's works concern the deep structure of healing. Moerman seems to be ahead of his times in his conceptualizations of the physiology of thought and action. The primacy that he ascribed to the symbolic realm can help explain therapeutic healing through art. In dance movement therapy physical movement is woven into metaphors that represent fundamental emotions, obstacles and difficulties that one faces in life and their solutions. The process of such healing centrally hinges on these metaphors to evoke creative performance and subsequently change of behaviour among clients.

Dance Movement Therapy

From the structure of healing we now move on to the contemporary phenomenon of healing occurring through dance.

That art can heal is well accepted in contemporary psychology. Dance movement and attention to the body experience in depth psychology are not new. Jung's early interest in the affects as bridge between body and psyche led him to observe carefully unconscious motor phenomena. His works with severely regressed patients led him to question and eventually discover the meaning of their symptomatic, expressive actions. In 1916 Jung wrote a paper that suggested expressive body movement is one of numerous ways to give form to the unconscious. In a description of the technique which he called active imagination he wrote that it could be done in any number of ways including dance, painting, drawing, work with clay and every other kind of artistic media. As with so many facets of his work, he was far ahead of his time. The idea of using the arts as part of a psychotherapeutic process was ahead of its time in 1916. The original paper was circulated privately among some of Jung's students and

remained unpublished until 1957 (Chodorow 1991: x). Creative art therapies emerged and were recognized by the mental health community much later.

At its very simplest, dance movement therapy (DMT) is the use of creative movement and dance in a therapeutic relationship. Dance movement therapists work on their own or in departments, on hospital wards or as part of multi-disciplinary teams. They work one-to-one or with groups using various approaches and techniques. Conditions differ according to the setting's aim, theoretical views, philosophical beliefs, client groups, staff, and environment.

A recent definition of DMT which has been adopted by the Standing Committee for Arts Therapies Professions embodies two fundamental principles:

Dance Movement Therapy is the use of expressive movement and dance as a vehicle through which an individual can engage in the process of personal integration and growth. It is founded on the principle that there is a relationship between motion and emotion and that by exploring a more varied vocabulary of movement people experience the possibility of becoming more securely balanced yet increasingly spontaneous and adaptable. Through movement and dance each person's inner world becomes tangible, individuals share much of their personal symbolism and in dancing together relationships become visible. The dance movement therapist creates a holding environment in which such feelings can be safely expressed, acknowledged and communicated (Payne 1992: 4).

Some Common Misconceptions about DMT

There are some common misconceptions about DMT which need identifying before going any further. These include the following ideas: that DMT is only for those clients with physical difficulties such as coordination problems; that only people with a natural talent for rhythm or movement should attend DMT; and that only those inexperienced in creative expression need be referred for DMT. There may be clients with all these characteristics in DMT sessions but the referral criteria are not normally on these bases (Payne 1992: 5). For example, working with a trained dancer in DMT will require a very different approach from working with someone who has had no training at all. The need to abandon technique in favour of spontaneity is sometimes

difficult for dancers and can have the effect of de-skilling, when it is no longer possible to hide behind the body's training.

Another common misunderstanding is that dance movement therapists are simply teachers who work with patients or clients in hospitals or special schools. They may be qualified teachers also but they are trained in other aspects such as self-awareness and skills concerned with reflection on actions within the therapeutic process, for example, transference and counter-transference issues.

Linked to this is the idea that in DMT dance artists give others the opportunities to dance and perform, the 'art for all' idea, particularly appropriate in hospitals, prisons, special schools, and so on. The dance movement therapist may have had a dance training and be experienced as a dance performer but they will also have taken further trainings in DMT and have aims and objectives which rarely include working with clients towards a dance performance in the public arena.

Neither is DMT another form of occupational therapy (O.T.), although it is true that some early pioneers were trained in this field and others first introduced the work within O.T. departments. However, these people had further training in, for example, Laban Movement Analysis plus experience of personal therapy and psychotherapy qualifications. Confusion may have arisen because in health settings DMT has usually come under O.T. for the purposes of administration (Payne 1992: 5).

Finally, DMT is at times confused with physiotherapy. The fact that both use the body is probably the reason for this. Although DMT does incorporate movement / dance exercises, perhaps in a warm-up, the focus is not on the execution of these as it is in physiotherapy.

Dance as 'Movement' for Therapy

Current practice of dance movement therapy has its primary source in the dances of early societies which are still used to bring about healing of mind, body, and spirit. Helen Payne, a practicing dance movement therapist in the U.K. highlights the theoretical issues involved in DMT. Amelie Noack (Payne 1992) gives an interesting synopsis of the mythological roots of dance. Dance has been used to reflect and transcend trends in society and has traditionally been used for personal expression

individually and in groups. The validity of this practice has long been recognized. In DMT its distinct purpose is to engage the person spontaneously in the process of moving, not to produce a dance or to create movements to form a performance. According to Dovel creativity is not the main focus although it has been acknowledged that the creative process in itself can also be therapeutic (Dovell 1999: 43-59). Aesthetic considerations are not of importance in DMT. When DMT is engaged in it is acknowledged that a therapy contract is entered into. There are clear aims and objectives related to overall treatment aims (Payne 1992:8). The presence of the therapist is vital to the process and there are different purposes from dance or movement forms being used for recreation, education, or as a performance art. The person and the process are the crucial elements in therapy and in DMT these elements take priority; together with the use of movement as the form of non-verbal communication, they act as agents for therapeutic change. These elements of the person, process, and non-verbal communication are the common ground shared by the arts therapies. The movement activity in DMT is a concrete medium through which conscious and unconscious expression can become motivated. The most usual aim of therapy is dealing with problems of relationship. By the intentional use of relationship therapy one can aim to bring about durable, positive change with someone whose potential in relating has become problematic. Unformed feelings may become clarified as a result of the process. In DMT it is recognized that feelings derived from the unconscious reach expression in movement (or its creative form, dance) rather than words. This includes images emerging from the movement. Kristina Stanton (Payne 1992) stresses that the group's use of imagery and metaphor is derived from the movement interaction. It thus acts as a vehicle for transformation. Therapy then is not seen to be a consequence of simply engaging in moving creatively; hence it is different from creative dance.

Payne refers to Jung's concept of the self mentioned in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: the self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning. Therein lies its healing function. The essence of DMT has a deep connection with finding a way to facilitate the emergence of opposites, such as movement and stillness contained within the totality of the self. Moving is fundamental to life, and the capacity for it is universal. Payne observes:

The rhythmic beat of the solar system is reflected in our world, in its relationship to our sun and moon, the seasons, night and day, the beating of our hearts, the flow of our breath, the cycle of life and death. (Payne 1999: 8)

According to her, in DMT rhythm can provide a holding factor for some clients where moving in silence is too threatening and can unite a group by communicating through synchronous movement activity.

The ability to communicate is a primary human characteristic. If speech is one means of communication, movement is another, more direct form. The pre-verbal symbols which emerge can clarify a thought or feeling more easily for many clients. For those with a learning difficulty or speech impairment, movement can symbolize their conflicts and give a new meaning to their inner world. (Payne 1992: 9)

That is not to say speech is not used in DMT. The role of verbalization for the therapist is important. Payne opines that verbalization enables a cognitive insight, previously hidden, to become clear. She writes that there may be a cathartic reaction in some clients, where they become absorbed because of the physical and emotional involvement of the work. Powerful emotions may be expressed in this way. It is vital that the experience is resolved and integrated, however. The actual process of moving can engender strong feelings. Concepts such as body armouring and the idea that areas of the body 'hold' memories of early experiences such as birth trauma are crucial. The body memory can begin to recall earlier pleasant or unpleasant experiences through movement sparking off the muscle memory. There is an inherent safety in the DMT approach because movement is there and then gone in a split second, like play in a sense; it is almost impossible to recapture a spontaneous movement exactly a second time. In this way some clients find it more accessible feels Payne (Payne 1992:9).

Jungian thought in DMT constitutes an important theoretical pillar. Jungians define creativity as arising from the unconscious depths, giving form to feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Jung calls this mysterious interface that mediates between body and psyche the psychological level. He describes it as a transformative function in the depths of the unconscious that mediates between the realms of body and psyche, instinct and image. Emotions are the stuff of that interface (Chodorow 1991: xi). An emotion, by definition, is at once somatic and psychic. The somatic aspect is made up

of bodily innervations and expressive physical action. The psychic aspect is made up of images and ideas. In psychopathology, the two realms tend to split. By contrast, a naturally felt emotion involves a union of body and psyche.

The fundamental emotions: joy, excitement, grief, fear, anger, contempt, shame, surprise are innate patterns of expressive behaviour (Chodorow 1991: xi). Chodorow describes them in the context of intense, imaginative movement experience. She points out that dance and choreography are engaged with all of the fundamental emotions. The expressive patterns are at once personal and universal. Whether the emotions are named or not, they motivate and shape the way we move. Sometimes, intense affects erupt spontaneously out of a deeply introverted, self-directed movement process. Other times, the emotions are symbolically enacted (Chodorow 1991: xi). Dance therapy studies and practice led her to see that every emotion has survival value as well as a spiritual dimension. But the same emotions, when repressed and denied, can restrict and distort the body. Chodorow has described the impacted expressions of the fundamental emotions that seemed frozen into the faces and bodies of many of the chronic schizophrenic patients she worked with.

A part of Chodorow's thesis shows how Jung's psychological theory was built on his early studies of the emotionally toned complex. Whereas Freud emphasized the drives as the source of human motivation, Jung held to the primacy of the emotions. Obviously, movement at any moment is not necessarily from a single level of the psyche. Every expressive action reflects the individual mover's attempt to cope dynamically with myriad impulses and images that come from many sources (Chodorow 1991: x-xii). The process of active imagination⁷ in movement is extremely complex. Careful attention is needed for one to be able to see patterns. Movement

⁷ Jung's concept of 'Active imagination' as a psychotherapeutic method has two parts: the first half is *letting the unconscious come up*. The second half consists in *coming to terms with the unconscious* (Jung 1973: 561). Another way of describing it is that one opens to the unconscious and gives free rein to fantasy; at the same time one maintains an alert, attentive, active point of view. In his earlier works Jung speaks of active imagination and dream interpretation as two distinct psychotherapeutic methods. In his later writings he says that his dream interpretation method is based on active imagination (Jung 1947: 205), and he describes active imagination as 'the analytical method of psychotherapy' (Jung 1975: 222). In his final work he relates active imagination to the entire alchemical process, the development of self-knowledge (Know Thyself) and the process of individuation (Jung 1963:494-499, 526-531). Eliade (1963:30) wrote: 'Life cannot be *repaired*, it can only be *recreated*'. Active imagination can be seen as that re-creative process. Dance/movement is one of its forms (Chodorow 1991: 107).

from the personal unconscious⁸ can serve as an embodied link to an individual's past. Movement from the cultural unconscious⁹ is our bridge to mythic images and the development of cultural forms. Movement from the primordial unconscious¹⁰ may, for brief moments, put us in touch with the completely untransformed primal affects.

⁸ In a 1920 paper, Jung offers a richly detailed statement about the nature of the unconscious. The contents of the personal unconscious are acquired. The functions of the unconscious, that is to say the organizing principles of the psyche—are inherited.

According to my view, the unconscious falls into two parts which should be sharply distinguished from one another. One of them is the personal unconscious; it includes all those psychic contents which have been forgotten during the course of the individual's life. Traces of them are still preserved in the unconscious, even if all conscious memory of them has been lost. In addition, it contains all subliminal impressions or perceptions which have too little energy to reach consciousness. To these we must add unconscious combinations of ideas that are still too feeble and too indistinct to cross over the threshold. Finally, the personal unconscious contains all psychic contents that are incompatible with the conscious attitude. This comprises a whole group of contents, chiefly those which appear morally, aesthetically, or intellectually inadmissible and are repressed on account of their incompatibility. A man cannot always think and feel the good, the true, and the beautiful, and in trying to keep up an ideal attitude everything that does not fit in with it is automatically repressed (Jung 1920:310,311).

⁹ The other part of the unconscious is what Jung calls the impersonal or collective unconscious. As the name indicates, its contents are not personal but collective; that is, they do not belong to one individual alone but to a whole group of individuals, and generally to a whole nation, or even to the whole of mankind. These contents are not acquired during the individual's lifetime but are products of innate forms and instincts. Although the child possesses no inborn ideas, it nevertheless has a highly developed brain which functions in a quite definite way. In his view, this brain is inherited from its ancestors; it is the deposit of the psychic functioning of the whole human race. The child therefore brings with it an organ ready to function in the same way as it has functioned throughout human history. In the brain the instincts are performed, and so are the primordial images which have always been the basis of man's thinking—the whole treasure-house of mythological motifs. (Jung 1920:310,311). Jung adds a very important footnote:

By this I do not mean the existing form of the motif but its preconscious, invisible 'ground plan'. This might be compared to the crystal lattice which is performed in the crystalline solution. It should not be confused with the variously structured axial system of the individual crystal. (Jung 1920:311)

¹⁰The primordial unconscious consists of structures and dynamic functions that are not capable of becoming conscious. These form the 'omnipresent, unchanging, and everywhere identical quality or substrate of the psyche per se' (Jung 1951:7). At this deepest level, one finds the innate affects (Ecstasy, Excitement, Anguish, Terror, Rage, Disgust / Humiliation and Startle), instincts and images of the primal Self. Emotional expression at this level can be so intense that there is little awareness of individual history or cultural meaning. Here the individual is engulfed by a primal emotion and may become merged with it (Chodorow 1991:54,130)

Movement from the ego-Self axis¹¹ of identity gives us the experience of being moved by the ordering and centering process of the psyche (Chodorow 1991: 4).

Like Chodorow, other dance therapists also saw similarities between Jung's assertions in this regard and the events in their sessions. Many have written about how their clients improvised and expressed themselves through a natural language already

¹¹ The ego is the conscious aspect of the total personality. It is through the ego (in its relation to the unconscious and the world) that we gain our sense of identity and capacity for self-reflective consciousness. In the Tavistok Lectures (1935) Jung presents a more formal definition of the nature of ego consciousness. Here he emphasizes its development from the perspective of the body and memory:

The important fact about consciousness is that nothing can be conscious without an ego to which it refers. If something is not related to the ego then it is not conscious. Therefore you can define consciousness as a relation of psychic facts to the ego. What is that ego? The ego is a complex datum which is constituted first of all by a general awareness of your body, of your existence, and secondly by your memory data; you have a certain idea of having been, a long series of memories. Those two are the main constituents of what we call the ego. (Jung 1935: 11)

Active imagination is a kind of dialogue between the conscious ego viewpoint and various personifications of the unconscious. The difference between active and passive imagination has to do with ego consciousness. The ego is drawn to interact with the contents of the unconscious. It is equally drawn to full engagement with the external world. The flow of life instinct that draws ego consciousness toward the inner world is called introversion. The outward flowing aspect of this is called extraversion. Together these enable a natural and continual fluctuation that weaves together the experience of our inner and outer worlds. Most of us tend to develop an inclination toward one more than the other. Those who are primarily concerned with inner events are called introverts; those who are primarily concerned with outer events are called extraverts. In addition to recognizing and describing introverted and extraverted attitudes, Jung developed a typology based on four psychological functions that are intrinsic to the nature of ego consciousness. These are: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition (Chodorow 1991: 59, 60).

Jung describes the Self as 'the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning' (Jung 1961: 166). The Self encompasses our psychic totality, conscious and unconscious, from the primal, untransformed depths to the ultimate development of an individual. It functions as the ordering and centering process of the psyche. It is our image of wholeness, the central archetype: 'The self is not only the centre but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is also the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness' (Jung 1936: 41). The Self is symbolically represented by images that express the tension of opposites within totality. Jung describes the development of such images in the paintings of active imagination.

The chaotic assortment of images that at first confronted me reduced itself in the course of the work to certain well-defined themes and formal elements, which repeated themselves in identical or analogous form with the most varied individuals. I mention, as the most salient characteristics, chaotic multiplicity and order; duality; the opposition of light and dark, upper and lower, right and left; the union of opposites in a third; the quaternary (square, cross); rotation (circle, sphere); and finally the centering process and a radial arrangement that usually followed some quaternary system.... The centering process is, in my experience, the never-to-be-surpassed climax of the whole development, and is characterized as such by the fact that it brings with it the greatest possible therapeutic effect. (Jung 1947: 203)

The Self may personify in any number of forms that represent its quality of wholeness (Chodorow 1991: 60, 61).

ingrained in their bodies. They realized that material from the person's unconscious was being manifested in a physical form and their clients could now express suppressed emotions, dreams, fantasies, nightmares and defences more easily. Dance therapists used these experiences to help clients explore and clarify their material further, thus guiding them towards greater self-awareness and understanding (Kashyap 2005).¹²

Early Dance Therapists and their contributions to developing theoretical perspectives on DMT

Marian Chace, during the 1940s and 1950s, pioneered the use of dance as therapy. Through revising, refining, and expanding her original ideas, she gradually evolved principles and methods of practice that are now viewed as the theoretical basis of dance movement therapy. Chace began to explore the therapeutic use of dance while teaching modern dance classes at her own studio. However, the major expansion of her ideas took shape during her work at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. She started working there during the 1940s, prior to the extensive

¹² Apart from Jung, another renowned psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich had a significant influence on many dance therapists. According to Reich the way a person holds the body while moving or in stillness reflects his/her personality. Apart from being interested in the verbal expression of his clients he keenly observed how and what their bodies spoke. He noticed this 'defensive armour'. He felt this could be reduced through specific movements and breathing patterns that would also help people feel more at ease in their body expression. The American psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan too had a major impact on dance therapy. According to his interpersonal theory of personality, it is difficult for human beings to exist in isolation. Continual interaction with others and the environment is necessary for their survival. Personality, he said is developed through the experiences of the self in relation to the external environment. Constant interaction with the environment helps a person develop a self-image—the ability to sense who he or she is. Much work in dance therapy focuses on the interactions between people. Therapists feel that while dancing in groups, people are involved in a two-fold process of interaction, with others as well as with themselves.

Rudolf Laban, a Hungarian pioneer of modern dance theory, movement notation and analysis had an invaluable influence on dance therapy. His work of examining human motion and describing it in detail has been considered decisive. He also observed and examined speech patterns and accompanying movements. Along with his colleagues he scrutinized facial expressions, eye contact and shadow movements, which are subtle almost invisible movements that occur during interpersonal human interactions. He notated through symbols (similar to those used in shorthand) the functional and expressive movements of individuals performing ordinary, everyday actions. He was also able to analyse these movements and decipher the logic and meaning behind them. Dance therapy practitioners have created detailed assessment and evaluation formats to observe their clients, based on Laban's notation and analysis. This further helps them set up client-specific treatment plans, themes and goals for their sessions (Kashyap 2005:15, 16).

use of tranquilizers and other drug therapies. She was able to test her theories with patients who exhibited a wide variety of behaviour, such as violence, catatonic withdrawal, hysteria, and other psycho-social problems¹³.

Chace's major contributions lay in the recognition and specifications of those elements of dance which serve a therapeutic function, and in the development of the interpersonal role of the therapist on a movement level (Chaiklin 1993: 77).

The most basic concept, and the one from which all others are derived, is that dance is communication and thus fulfils a basic human need. According to Chaiklin and Schmais (1993) there are four major classifications that encompass the basic principles that Chace used in therapy. Although they are not categorized as such in her writings, they infer that these are the core concepts of her work, by virtue of their repetition and emphasis. These they call Body Action, Symbolism, Therapeutic Movement Relationship, and Rhythmic Group Activity, which can be said to lay the foundation upon which to build a theory of dance therapy.

Chace believed in the intrinsic value of a graceful, coordinated and healthy body. She viewed distortions in body shape and functions as psychological responses to conflict and pain. For example, some people bind energy, limit their use of space, disconnect body parts or holds their breath, to guard against feelings such as guilt, aggression and sexuality. Others become hyperactive, exploding in time and space in response to real or imagined fears. Chace understood that dance actions could help patients feel both relaxed and stimulated, thus preparing them to express emotions.

¹³ As the Second World War ended in the 1940s, America was faced with major problems of rehabilitating the returning soldiers---veterans as well as youth. In fact, many soldiers were being discharged from the army because of emotional disturbances and mental illness caused by the stress and strain of wartime experiences. During this period, the need to rehabilitate soldiers so that they could function within various social settings became an important issue in different healing disciplines. New approaches like vocational training, activity therapy, art therapy and many kinds of group therapies were being developed to facilitate and accelerate the rehabilitation process. At this time, psychiatrists at St Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC began to consider introducing fresh therapeutic approaches into their treatments. They invited Marian Chace to facilitate sessions with psychiatric patients in the closed wards. She was encouraged to use movement to make contact with these patients because they were not responding to verbal therapy (Kashyap 2005:13, 14).

Since muscular activity expressing emotion is the substratum of dance, and since dance is a means of structuring and organizing such activity, it might be supposed that the dance could be a potent means of communication for the reintegration of the seriously ill mental patient (Chaiklin 1975:71).

Through dance action, the patient gains motility of the skeletal musculature. Recognizing the body parts, breathing patterns or tension levels which block emotional expression provides the therapist with clues to the sequence of physical actions that can develop readiness for emotional responsiveness; but it is not merely learning a movement which leads to change. The change occurs when the patient is ready to allow himself to experience the action in his body. There is a close relationship between the integration of postural changes and the shift of psychic attitudes. By understanding the inherent relationship between mobility, dance, and emotional expression, the therapist helps the patient to move and be moved (Chaiklin 1993:78).

Both the psychotic patient and the dancer make use of symbolic body action to communicate emotions and ideas that challenge everyday use of language though their intention is different. Whereas the dancer may objectively choose bizarre and exaggerated postures to communicate with an audience, the patient is giving expression to his subjective emotions, conveying in a single moment the complexity and depth of feelings that cannot be put into words. Chace found that the universality of these nonverbal symbols can cut across barriers arising from illness, age and culture. Schizophrenics, in particular, seem at home with the symbolic language of movement, whereas they often cannot communicate through words, nor benefit much from verbal interactions. The camouflage of the movement symbol makes it easier for these patients to express needs, feelings and desires. According to Chace symbolism in dance therapy provides a medium by which a patient can recall, re-enact and re-experience. Some problems can be worked through on a purely symbolic level. The dance therapist accepts the symbolic meanings of the patient. Feeling understood leads the patient to continue symbolic statements. The dance therapist not only reacts to the symbolic expressions of the patient but also introduces content. Together they create new symbolic interactions. Since dance and emotional expression share the same neuromuscular pathways, the dance therapist utilizes this linkage by selecting

appropriate dance images. For example, to help a patient who is holding back anger, the therapist may suggest the image of chopping down a tree. The strong, direct movements required by this activity may bring to the surface feelings of anger or hostility. The dance actions can also evoke specific memories. Skipping, hopping may lead patients to suddenly recollect incidents and events from their childhood.

Chaiklin and Schmais (1993) point out that Chace discovered how to establish a therapeutic relationship on a movement level. She accomplished this by visually and kinaesthetically perceiving the patient's movement expressions. Employing her keen sensitivity and skills, she was able to incorporate the emotional content of the patient's behaviour into her own movement responses. She totally expressed "I know how you feel" in movement terms, thus establishing affective, empathic interactions. Chace entered a patient's world by re-enacting the essential constellation of movement characterizing his expression. As she recreated the patient's behaviour in her own body, she would sense what was possible and further the interaction by doing similar, broader or complementary movements. She would at various times reflect, expand or complete a patient's tentative movement, thus letting him know that his behaviour is understood. By reproducing the significant gesture at the right time and for only as long as the patient would accept it, Chace established trust, leading patients to communicate repressed ideas and feelings and to risk new experiences and relationships.

Chace recognized rhythm as organizing individual behaviour and creating a feeling of solidarity and contagion among people.

Rhythm permeates every aspect of human life. The everyday activities of speaking, walking, working and playing would be chaotic without structure in time. The ebb and flow of the breath and the steadiness of the pulse are very personal human rhythms, yet a group moving together seems to have one breath and one pulse (Chaiklin 1993: 80).

For example, a group rhythm can be shared by patients who have difficulty or a reluctance to follow the spatial design of a movement. As feelings are expressed in a shared rhythm, each member draws from the common pool of energy and experience

a heightened sense of strength and security. Chace saw rhythm as a therapeutic tool for communication and body awareness.

Blanche Evan started her career in dance as a dancer, choreographer, and performer. For the last 30 years of her life, she was dedicated to the exploration of the use of dance as therapy. Although she had extensive experience with children, and worked briefly with the retarded as well as with psychotic children at Bellevue in the 1950's, the major thrust of her dance therapy interest from the late 1950's until her death in 1982 was with an adult population which she labelled the "normal, functioning neurotic. One major concern which appeared first in her work with children, and later in her work with the urban adult was with the suppressive adaptive patterns of the urban individual who, surrounded by the hardness of the concrete and the time pressures of a mechanized society, has, she believed, lost contact with his/her body and emotions (Levy 1988: 34).¹⁴

¹⁴ In the 1950's, Evan expressed concern over the fact that dance as therapy was being stressed for the psychotic individual but overlooked for the neurotic individual. Evan on the east coast and Mary Whitehouse on the west coast were the only dance therapists who stressed reaching this population. In addition, Evan and Whitehouse both stressed in-depth improvisation as the major intervening modality. In 1956 Evan began to call her work "creative dance as therapy". In 1958, after studying at the Alfred Adler Institute of Individual Psychology and the New School for Social Research, she began to train professionals and students in her approach. Although Evan gradually moved from a creative, educational emphasis to a psychotherapeutic emphasis, her later approach integrated much of her original teachings. This integration of creative and improvisational dance with the psychologies of Adler, Freud, Rank, and other forms the foundation of her major contributions to the theory and practice of dance therapy. In her later years, as the field of dance therapy began to expand Evan remained firm and clear about her commitment to dance. She did not accept the word "movement" as an accurate substitute for the word "dance". She saw too much of dance therapy as being anti-dance and aspiring either to the verbal therapies, hence losing the therapy as being anti-dance and aspiring either to the verbal therapies, hence losing the inherent power of dance, or to the "mind/body" therapies which too often ignored the individual's emotions and diagnoses. Evan believed that unlike many body/mind techniques which share some characteristics with dance therapy (breathing, posture, and vocalization, for instance), dance therapy works at getting at the causes for the client's distress in the most primal, elementary way—self-directed movement. Evan integrated the verbal and the dance into a full and primary psychotherapy which she eventually called Dance/Movement/Word Therapy (Levy 1988: 33).

Evan stressed dance as the art form which utilizes the most direct and complete connection to the psyche, as differentiated from the visual arts or the use of a musical instrument. The challenge of the creative dance teacher as well as the therapist who utilizes creative dance was to promote mind-body unification through expressive movement while still providing instruction in the basic skills of dance. Evan was conscious that the over-emphasis on teaching dance technique to children is peculiar to the so-called modern Western culture. She cited other cultures in which dance is indigenous to life and is transmitted as part of the whole culture. She commented on the isolation of dance in Western society from everyday life experiences and realities. This is further complicated, she felt, by urban life and the mechanized society which force one to adapt to tempos external to one's own inner rhythms. In addition, she believed that urban children are too often thrown into physical and emotional isolation due to the lack of group related activities, whether in play, religion, or work.

Evan's theory was that the child, after being taught to move and sense his/her body correctly, will be better equipped to organize and explore expressive movement sequences. She stressed:

... children actually do not feel any dichotomy between emotional 'expression' and 'technique' unless such separation is forced upon them (Levy 1988: 35).

She gave the example of a child who is asked to beat a drum; in doing so, the child's entire body intensifies with the dynamic rhythmic qualities the beat creates. Hence, the challenge of integration became the major thrust of her work.

In her work with urban adults, Evan frequently encountered complaints and excuses concerning issues of fatigue. She interpreted these issues as manifestations of inner drives toward repression, fear, and dependency, causing clients to resist using their full physical potential. Evan cautioned the therapist against over-identifying with these repressive drives which, she believed, are in constant struggle with and can be overcome by the opposing drives toward self-expression. Frequently, all the client needs is a push in the direction of feeling and experiencing the self (Levy 1988: 37).

In accordance with Adlerian psychology, Evan believed that repressed aggression and anger are the major maladies of the neurotic. Because the neurotic's anger is repressed, so is his/her assertiveness and commitment to growing up. This is reflected

clearly in the body musculature. With action repressed, the energy is diverted to different kinds of tension: rigidity at one extreme, apathy at the other.

According to Evan, the hands, face, and voice are often the last areas to be released. She spoke of the tendency for the neurotic to try to mask his/her feelings by constricting the facial muscles which otherwise would make his/her emotions visible. Regarding the voice, which she believed was the hardest to release, she observed that self-produced sounds seem to wake up the whole person in an immediate kind of way. Through sound, the emotions are heard as well as seen. Evan pointed out that suppression in childhood is usually in sound more than in movement, that is, children are to be seen but not heard.

Another common problem of the neurotic, as found by Evan, is the exertion wasted in an attempt to maintain self-defeating attitudes. If the body is trained for years in non-expression, the need to express may eventually become lost. In severe cases, the resiliency of the muscles can be totally destroyed.

Body and spirit split and begin to atrophy; ego power shrinks to low esteem with an ineptness for both anger and love (Levy 1988: 37).

Evan's goal was to re-educate individuals to the natural unification and identification with organic bodily responses and needs which she believed, existed prior to the repressive influences of family and society. This does not mean training individuals to be impulsive, but rather to use the expressive and creative aspects of the dance form as a vehicle for dramatic enactments of thoughts and feelings that might otherwise be repressed, destroyed, or turned inward against the self.

Inherent in Evan's work was her stress on the use of the ego function of regression in the service of the ego. Dance was viewed as an ego function, that is, directed and spontaneous use of rhythm, exertion, and form, which can help individuals to experience and express repressed traumas and other forbidden and frightening thoughts and feelings. In short, for Evan, dance was a language very similar to words. But unlike words, dance represented a more direct communication and language of the self.

Finally, Evan worked with the whole person. That is, she emphasized the person in his/her world. She did not believe, as the traditional psychoanalysts did, that insight and the awareness of unconscious material alone constituted the goals of treatment. If an individual, after completion of psychotherapy, was not better equipped to cope with his/her life; both intrapersonally and interpersonally, Evan believed that the treatment was not successful (Levy 1988: 37).

Mary Starks Whitehouse worked with well functioning 'normal neurotics' in a studio with Jane Manning Boulevard in west Los Angeles. She was developing an approach that was based on Jung's active imagination. Sometimes called 'Authentic Movement' or 'Movement-in-Depth,' it involved a process of deep inner listening toward expressive movement that was spontaneous---unplanned.¹⁵ She was the first to link a thorough understanding of dance and movement to the principles of depth psychology. In her paper, 'Reflections on a Metamorphosis,' she described the change in herself:

It was an important day when I discovered that I did not teach Dance, I taught People...It indicated a possibility that my primary interest might have to do with process not results, that it might not be art I was after but another kind of human development. (Whitehouse 1968: 273)

Her theoretical model¹⁶ of dance movement therapy rests on six building blocks: Depth analysis, (by which she means the clinical psychological processes where the client/patient co-operates with the analyst to enter the unconscious), is the first. This is done by using dreams, being particularly sensitive to images and their associations, becoming familiar with what Jung (1961) called 'active imagination', and generally accepting a symbolic understanding of life events, inner or outer. The process itself is one of discovering the living reality of the unconscious. She emphasizes particularly

¹⁵ Mary Whitehouse had studied with Mary Wigman and Martha Graham. She had danced in concert and was a teacher of modern dance. She entered a Jungian analysis with Hilda Kirsch in Los Angeles, then studied at the Jung Institute in Zurich (Chodorow 1991: 24).

¹⁶ To quote Whitehouse on theory:

Whatever theoretical model may be adopted, do not believe it is the whole. The whole can only be the whole person, the one teaching and the one moving in an atmosphere of mutual trust. A theoretical model that does not include this understanding is not complete. (Whitehouse 1999:77)

the relations between the two people in the studio for private sessions, hoping these processes will be more clearly seen in an individual context.

Next is the Jungian difference between the 'Self' and 'self'.¹⁷ According to Whitehouse most people say 'self' using the small letter 's' to mean the ego, the individual, the personality. The world of the self is the world of the 'Me' and all its concerns. Jung's (1959) 'Self' with a capital 'S' signifies also the world of the transpersonal, a world greater than the individual, more powerful than the ego. The Self is the totality of aliveness; it is wholeness, known and unknown, good and evil. Whitehouse opines that if this idea lies at the bottom of dance teaching, then it becomes a primary value leading directly to another—that of self-knowledge. She uses a wonderful quotation from Krishnamurti (1956) who says:

'Self-knowledge is not an ultimate end; it is the only opening wedge to the inexhaustible' (Whitehouse 1999:77).

The third element of her theoretical model is the individuation process. According to Whitehouse once the process of becoming conscious starts, the 'Self' guides and directs the 'self' (Me) --- the reason, writes she, why a theoretical model must not be sided only in that which is reasonable but must also include the irrational, illogical, unknown. Referring to Jung's (1959) statement that the Self will make its experiment with each of us and that the only real choice is whether we will be dragged by the hair or whether we will co-operate, Whitehouse clarifies that co-operation means the long journey towards Individuation—the unique and conscious development of potential in a particular person, the slow unfolding of a wholeness already there. Through self-knowledge, individuation puts the ego in the service of the Self, the whole. The growth of personality is only possible through inter-penetration of consciousness with the unconscious. To quote:

...the personality can be enlarged by understanding that a theoretical model has only rational, abstract or intellectual content. It needs also to be brightened, lifted, differently ordered by the penetration of the irrational and the instinctive—unexpected thoughts, unfamiliar behaviours. If room is left for this second side, you

¹⁷ C.G.Jung (1959:77) distinguished between the many aspects of a human being, without his forgetting for a moment the wholeness of each one.

cannot have a system of beliefs within which you safely function. If that is needed, you can help people only to a certain extent and in a certain way (Whitehouse 1999:79).

The next major concept given by her is that of polarity. Applying the Jungian concepts stated above to a theory of movement or dance meant floating concepts uniting already known versions of dance use with what is unknown. She identifies polarity to be one such primary concept. Polarity is present in the physical body, through the personality, into all the pairs of opposites, including the conscious and the unconscious. Life is never either/or but always the paradox of both /and. She observes that though this statement looks simple but it is not the way individuals live. Individuals live as if things were always a matter of either/or. They have but to choose and the opposite will go away.

If you chose in life, you do not get rid of what you did not choose. There is no such thing as choosing only one end of the scale; the other end simply disappears from your awareness, exerting its heaviness, as in a seesaw, form below your consciousness. Black and white, day and night, masculine and feminine are familiar pairs in our daily experience. In the world of movement a dancer does not stop to think of curved/straight, closed/open, narrow/wide, up/down, heavy/light—there are myriad of pairs. (Whitehouse 1999:79)

Applying physically, she points out, that no action can be accomplished without the operation of two sets of muscles—one contracting and one extending. This is already the presence of polarity inherent in the pattern of movement. Most are not aware of it in this form but it becomes recognizable in the act of walking. Normally, when there is no acquired distortion, the human being takes steps by opposing arms and legs—the right leg balances the left arm, the left leg opposes the right arm. Learning to change from the involuntary opposition of right and left to its conscious use is not at all easy, particularly in starting a forward motion. When the two complete sides of the body are opposed, left and right is learned—different but somehow mysteriously balancing. The opposites can balance but they do not always; sometimes one is more heavily weighted than the other. Left and right have not many connotations, from the opposition of left arm to right leg to left and right sides. It is the left that is hidden, innocent, irrational, naïve—there are many names. In contrast, the right stands for

conscious, familiar, controlled, active. They are physical and psychological opposites. This right/left polarity is a recurring motif for exploration in movement; just as up/down, open/closed seem to be. The exercises and movements engendering polarity transport one from the simple recognition of physical opposites into a larger framework, that of self-knowledge, a sense that the opposites mean more to us, individually, than mere physical conditions with which to work (Whitehouse 1999:81).

Polarity leads into other forms of the same principle. Whitehouse discovered in working that movement, especially in improvisation, acquired of itself words to describe it. When the movement was simple and inevitable, not to be changed no matter how limited or partial, it became what she called 'authentic'—it could be recognized as genuine, belonging to that person. Authentic meant truth—truth of a kind unlearned but there to be seen at moments. The opposite of authentic she called 'invisible'. When helping people develop all the natural functions and capacities of their bodies---and encouraging them to become familiar with themselves—she quickly ran into their lack of awareness in certain areas. According to her, they throw whole parts of themselves away---the invisible parts—no matter how much movement takes place there is a queer effect, it does not show in a genuine way, it is invisible. Not until these areas are brought into conscious belonging can their movement become authentic and the invisibility disappear. Whitehouse found herself faced again with a pair of opposites again—authentic as opposed to invisible:

In the same way, 'I move' and 'I am moved' carry the same implication. Each is an act in itself, but a different act. 'I move' is the clear knowledge that I, personally, am moving, I choose to move, I exert some demand (not effort) on my physical organism to produce movement. The opposite of this is the sudden and astonishing moment when 'I am moved'. Dancers are terribly familiar with 'I move', they are accustomed to think they do it all, that they must exert will power and effort for each thing they want to have happen.

The moment when 'I am moved' happens is astonishing both to dancers and to people who have no intention of becoming dancers. It is a moment when the ego gives up control, stops choosing, stops exerting demands, allowing the self to take

over moving the physical body as it will. It is a moment of unpremeditated surrender that cannot be explained, repeated exactly, sought for or tried out.

Once the mover has had the experience of being moved, he knows it is possible. He knows he does not do it all. At any time without his choosing, a sensation of being moved can happen to him. This is humbling and freeing from the personality that demands perfection, control, conformity---all the ills of our social training. (Whitehouse 1999:82)

The final element in her theoretical model is the process implied by Jung's term 'Active Imagination': a process in which, while consciousness looks on, participating but not directing, co-operating but not choosing, the unconscious is allowed to speak whatever and however it likes. Its language appears in the form of painted or verbal images that may change rapidly, biblical speech, poetry (even doggerel), and sculpture and dance (Jung 1968). The levels they come from are not always personal levels; a universal human connection with something much deeper than the personal ego is represented. Moments of insight, brought into focus by active imagination, have a natural effect on everyday life. They reveal a direction and show a development; acting as support and encouragement for what must be lived through, creating energy for a next step. Whitehouse found the use of active imagination in movement is peculiarly valuable. Every possible way she could devise to involve people in their own fantasies and images, even moving out their dreams, provided raw material for understanding themselves. One reason that the movement form of active imagination is so valuable is that it is extremely difficult to censor. One moves before one knows what is happening. One can stop oneself from writing words and one can prohibit certain pictures in painting more easily than one can stop certain movements that come out of preceding ones.

One cannot pick and choose from spontaneous movement the way one can from drawings and writing. Movement, like dreams, is ephemeral, one cannot will to repeat it exactly. Spontaneous movement, rehearsed and repeated, loses the very thing it shows; that inner processes take physical form and can be seen, their meaning apprehended, their value received by the person out of whose body the movement comes. (Whitehouse 1999:85)

Whitehouse talks about the client's attitude also. The client may begin from a position of assuming that the therapist knows or that she doesn't know. It could be wanting specific answers to specific questions or a feeling of having been sent—even a special sense of having come voluntarily out of curiosity. The important moment is when the client is 'caught'—it is the moment when client and the teacher recognise and accept the former's beginning attitude judging it. The cue is taken from the therapist. The client waits to see the reactions to his initial movements. The dance therapist instead of over-comforting or verbally reassuring the client should preserve interest, sympathy and a waiting silence. Otherwise the mover is apt to change to another attitude that he feels might suit the therapist better, which is undesirable. Genuine involvement is required, only from which the process itself can begin. Earmarks of being caught are various—one is the client's complete self permission for openness to what happens. Usually the first obstacle is 'monkey chatter' in the head preventing the attention from settling into awareness of what is going on. This must be accepted as it is, allowed to proceed with as little attention paid as possible, until it becomes less and less important, disappearing when something has taken its place. Permission without resistance without judgement proves stronger.

Whitehouse also makes a distinction between permission to one's self, allowance of anything that happens and letting go. To her it does not mean what is usually called relaxation, a kind of collapsing, throwing away the energy to become limp, heavy, lethargic. It is rather an active step towards getting to know oneself.

Tripura Kashyap (2005), the first dance movement therapist of India, notes that Indian physical traditions and movement practices offer a large canvas for dance as therapy. Throughout our own subcontinent, myriad dances with special and ritualistic forms already have a healing aspect embedded in their ethos. She reminds one that for centuries, without the label of dance therapy, medicine men and priests across Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and other states, have used dance and movement as part of their healing rituals to cure people of mental and physical ailments. In a trance-like state, they have danced and stirred others around them to go through ritualistic movements and chants. Common folks have gone into a wild frenzy while experiencing an inner catharsis while dancing with freestyle movements.

Healing people in our country through DMT Kashyap noticed that most groups, even those consisting of teachers, special educators or school-going children, preferred imitating structured movements that were taught rather than making up their own. This seemed directly connected to teaching methods in our education system that prompted rote learning rather than a creative approach to academics. Participants therefore had to be coached to be spontaneous and creative with body movements and to use their imaginations. She had to constantly shift my role from that of a teacher who taught dance steps to a facilitator who extracted movement material from people.

Another component not considered part of dance-therapy practice in the West is that of performance. In India, the performance aspect had to be included because dance is predominantly perceived as a performing art. Directors of some educational centres where she worked felt children should perform what they had learnt at the end of the year—in whatever form. Rather than disagreeing completely, she struck a compromise. The first six months were devoted to dance therapy and the last three months were used to develop a performance based on themes and movements that emerged in the therapy session. This is also followed by Kolkata Sanved, the organization with whom I have conducted my field work.

An interesting sociological fact that Kashyap came face to face with was that in a culture that boasts of possessing diverse physical traditions and hundreds of dance forms and styles, most ordinary people seems threatened by the word 'dance'. Almost 90 per cent of the groups she worked with had not experienced any form of dance. The other 10 per cent had learnt classical or popular dance in their childhood or youth, but had given it up in their adulthood.

Describing her experience with the Indian clientele Kashyap observes:

In some instances, although people were encouraged to dance the way they wanted to, they preferred imitating another person's movements. Either they were not willing to appear 'different' or would not stretch their imagination and take creative risks. There also appeared to be some set, stereotypical attitudes toward dancing. Men seemed to prefer movements that were strong, athletic and rhythmic. They felt embarrassed doing movements that were soft, curved and graceful. I was often asked if there was a separate kind of dance for men. (Kashyap 2005: xiv).

In the final analysis from all the above theoretical expositions of healing C.G. Jung's understanding of the therapeutic value of artistic experience seems essential to the theory and practice of dance therapy. All dance therapists converge on Jungian understanding of the phenomenon. His work gave credence to the use of art as a means by which the patient could become an object to himself. He viewed the artistic experience, or what he called 'active imagination,' as having both a diagnostic and therapeutic function. The creative act evokes material that is available for analysis and is at the same time cathartic. By virtue of the nonliteral or apparently nonrational aspects of the creative act, deep feelings that defy words can be symbolically represented (Schmais 1974:9). Jungian thought is approached by Chodorow from the perspective of two themes that I believe are essential to understanding dance/movement as a form of active imagination. These are, 1) the body-psyche relationship, and 2) the affects (i.e. emotions). The first theme leads to the next, because for her it is the affects that function as the bridge between body and psyche. Clearly then we get another model of the body-mind relationship based on Jungian psychotherapy. Chodorow writes that in psychotherapy, it is held that the nature of imagination is such that it tends to take us directly to the emotional core of our complexes. When the body is used to express imagination, the vividness of the sensory-motor experience tends to take us to complexes that were constellated in infancy or early childhood. The second thing to remember about the nature of imagination is that it's a symbolic process. Just as the imagination takes us *to* the emotional core of a complex, it can also lead us *through* it. But at this point, we have to be alert, attentive and interested in what we are imagining. This means developing the ability to bear the emotion that is stirred when a complex is touched and at the same time imagine and explore symbolically the images that are part of it.

To Chodorow emotion and dance is inseparable. Dance is motivated by and expressive of emotion. Emotion is the source out of which one dances, i.e. it energizes us. But dance also has an effect on our emotions. It changes them. Sometimes dance leads to cathartic release; other times, dance seems to develop, refine and completely transform our emotional state.

Dance therapy too, is about the body-psyche relationship and the affects. Whether working with a psychotic child who seems to live in a tiny, intense world of

stylized emotional expression—or with a psychotic or neurotic adult whose body may reflect years of repressed or undeveloped emotional life; the dance therapist utilizes dance/ movement and body experience toward the expression, communication and transformation of emotion (Chodorow 1991:42).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to discuss how dance has been conceptualized and researched upon in social anthropology and other disciplines leading to the foundation of dance studies. Next the theoretical underpinnings of performance studies have been described. Turner and Schechner's analysis of rituals within performance studies can be used as a framework for looking at therapeutic settings of dance movement therapy. The question of transportation and transformation are relevant in evaluating healing and what it involves for the identity of the healed. Moreover Schechner's emphasis on the belief in the role that one is playing is a crucial point of enquiry for therapeutic consideration. Goffman noted that self-belief spans a continuum with the tendency to accept ourselves "as performed". Schechner holds that on a quotidian level, a person's sense of self is very much tied to her ability to believe in the roles she plays. In line with the micro social theorists he argues that the roles are not played by a single stable self (Schechner 2002/2003:181). The self is created by the roles even as it plays them. For those requiring therapy usually the site of self and selfhood are problematical and need to be attended to or reworked. Healing has been approached from different vantage points in Moerman and Rasmussen's writing. Both provide data and theoretical perspectives critical for understanding the phenomenon of healing. Moerman's thesis offers an in-depth examination of healing, providing valuable neurobiological data and interpreting it in a way comprehensible to the student of social science. While Rasmussen clearly brings out the role of the social in the fact of a person's healing, apart from presenting a rich account of tribal aesthetic practices and cosmology that is intricately bound to healing in their society. Dance Movement therapy is a relatively new profession and almost all academic literature on DMT are based on psychoanalytic theoretical categories since the practitioners were mostly trained in Jungian psychoanalysis. However their ideas of what is healthy and what isn't can be read as a certain philosophy of health arising from their social setting and yet aspiring to be relevant across cultures. The way they use dance to

bring about a change in the lives of their clients has at its source this worldview. DMT in that sense is a social fact that merits a closer sociological look. Therefore scholarship from different disciplines has been drawn upon for comprehending the phenomenon of healing through dance.

CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVES OF DANCER-HEALERS

Introduction

The association between healing and charisma is well-known in sociology. Max Weber (1978) has applied the term ‘charisma’ to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he or she is considered extraordinary, and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These powers and qualities are such that they are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a ‘leader’. In pre-modern circumstances this kind of quality is thought of as resting on magical powers, whether of prophets, persons with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, leaders in the hunt, or war heroes (Weber 1978: 241). Drawing a contrast with bureaucracy¹⁸ and patriarchalism¹⁹ in a typically functionalist vein Weber sees all extraordinary needs, that is, those which transcend the sphere of everyday economic routines, being always satisfied on a charismatic basis. He writes:

...that the “natural” leaders in moments of distress—whether psychic, physical or economic, ethical, religious, or political—were neither appointed officeholders nor “professionals” in the present-day sense (i.e. persons performing against compensation a “profession” based on training and special expertise), but rather the bearers of specific gifts of body and mind that were considered “supernatural” (in the sense that not everybody could have access to them) (Weber 1978: 1112).

Healing through dance was begun in Kolkata at three different sites by three women—two well-known classical dancers and a reluctant masters’ student of

¹⁸ Bureaucracy is a permanent structure which, with its system of rational rules, is oriented toward the satisfaction of calculable needs with ordinary, everyday means (Weber 1978: 1111).

¹⁹ Patriarchalism, according to Weber, is rooted in the need to meet ongoing, routine demands, and hence has its first locus in the economy—in those of its branches that are concerned with normal want satisfaction. The patriarch is the natural leader in matters of everyday life (Weber 1978: 1111).

sociology who by her own admission is “passionate” about dance. Their narratives of being ‘natural leaders’ in using dance for the well-being of rehabilitated victims of human trafficking, prisoners and ‘special’ children and adolescents in Kolkata, display their sense of the ‘self charismatic’ and a journey fraught with challenges and obstacles but one also of growth and fulfillment. The narratives were collected as part of a field research in the city through recorded in-depth interviews and a seminar discussion. I have tried, in keeping with cultural theorist Richard Johnson’s assertion that ‘subjectivities are produced, not given, and therefore the objectives of enquiry, not the premises or starting points’ (Johnson 1986:44), to understand the genesis and development of the sites where dance is used to heal through the reflections of those who began the processes.

The possession of artistic sensibility and ability, complemented with the quality of taking constructive ‘leaps’ involving risk mark the three ‘pioneers’. However the perception of each, of their respective backgrounds and self-image, carve out distinct trajectories of entering the field. In trying to analyse their recorded responses I was struck by the frequency of emphasis and level of communication via such tonal thrust which seemed to circumscribe the ‘meaning’ that each dancer healer wanted conveyed. In an attempt to maintain authenticity of the data their illocutionary acts²⁰ have been presented intact, my interpretation following the quoted response.

²⁰ In his seminal essay “The Model of the Text” Paul Ricoeur (1973) problematises the question “what does writing fix?” Regarding this he writes, “Not the event of speaking, but the “said” of speaking where we understand by the *said* that intentional exteriorization constitutive of the aim of discourse thanks to which the *sagen* —the saying—wants to become *Aus-sage*—the enunciated. ... The act of speaking...is constituted by a hierarchy of subordinate acts which are distributed on three levels: (1) the level of the locutionary or propositional act, the act *of* saying; (2) the level of the illocutionary act or force, that which we do *in* saying; and (3) the level of the perlocutionary act, that which we do *by* saying. When I tell you to close the door, for example, “Close the door!” is the act of speaking. But when I tell you this with the force of an order and not of a request, this is the illocutionary act. Finally, I can stir up certain effects, like fear, by the fact that I give you an order. These effects make my discourse act like a stimulus producing certain results. This is the perlocutionary act” (Ricoeur 1973: 93, 94). The implications of these distinctions for the problem of the intentional exteriorization, by which the event surpasses itself in meaning and lends itself to material fixation, is put forth brilliantly, which remain a methodological pillar in social science. He explains, “The locutionary act exteriorizes itself in the sentence. The sentence can be identified and reidentified as being the same sentence. A sentence becomes an enunciation (*Aussage*) and thus is transferred to others as being such and such a sentence with such and such a meaning. But the illocutionary act can also be exteriorized in grammatical paradigms (indicative, imperative, and subjunctive modes, and other procedures expressive of the illocutionary force) which permit its identification and reidentification. Certainly, in

In the Beginning...

That I would do something different with dance was always in my mind, that I would not open a dance school I was sure, focused from the beginning. Many have come to learn dance from me. But I did not teach. I loved to dance, passionately. It was not that I had to perform, stand in the front on the stage and perform. But I am passionate. Then, my subject was sociology—that helped me too. Like, I made all the Muslim girls of my batch at college dance²¹.

Gini Sanyal is the founder-director of SL, a non-governmental organization based in West Bengal, promoting Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) as a therapeutic tool. The organization works with people from diverse backgrounds including survivors of violence and trafficking, street and platform-dwelling children, at-risk youths living in red-light areas or in slums, people living with HIV and AIDS and people with mental illness. 'Changing lives through dance' is the catch-phrase that they use in promoting their work. When Ms Sanyal sat down to talk in her ground-floor flat in south-eastern Kolkata on December 27, 2009, I just managed to put across the question "Tell me how it all began, a cut-copy-paste from an NGO's website will not be accepted at the university" amidst her impatient suggestions of looking up her website (meaning her organization's website) to read her "Borro itihaash" (big / long history). To this her

spoken discourse, the illocutionary force leans upon mimicry and gestural elements and upon the nonarticulated aspects of discourse, what we call prosody. In this sense, the illocutionary force is less completely inscribed in grammar than is the propositional meaning. In every case, its inscription in a syntactic articulation is itself gathered up in specific paradigms which in principle make possible fixation by writing. Without a doubt we must concede that the perlocutionary act is the least inscribable aspect of discourse and that by preference it characterizes spoken language. But the perlocutionary action is precisely what is the least discursive in discourse. It is the discourse as stimulus. It acts, not by my interlocutor's recognition of my intention, but energetically, by direct influence upon the emotions and the affective dispositions. Thus the propositional act, the illocutionary force, and the perlocutionary action are apt, in a decreasing order, for the intentional exteriorization which makes inscription in writing possible.

Therefore it is necessary to understand by the meaning of the speech-act, or by the noema of the saying, not only the sentence, in the narrow sense of the propositional act, but also the illocutionary force and even the perlocutionary action in the measure that these three aspects of the speech-act are codified, gathered into paradigms where, consequently, they can be identified and reidentified as having the same meaning. Therefore I am here giving the word "meaning" a very large acceptation which covers all the aspects and levels of the intentional exteriorization which makes the inscription of discourse possible" (Ricoeur 1973:94).

²¹ The extract is an exact translation from the interview where she spoke in Bengali.

response was to go back to the time when she had, for the *first*²² time, *made* her Muslim female classmates, (the second batch of girls admitted to an erstwhile orthodox college), dance. She added,

I am this type, right from childhood (December 27, 2009).

Even at school, when Tagore songs were the order of the day as far back as 1988, she organized the girls to dance to ‘adhunik gaan’ (modern songs) post-Tagore. In an essentially middle class, vernacular medium school, this created much controversy. In her own words:

Shei nie bheeshon biplab (in literal terms: that caused terrible revolution) (December 27, 2009).

Some teachers supported her while others walked away. *But she did it*. On my observation that this wouldn’t have been possible in a missionary school she retorts:

Who gives you space? I used to *create space* for me. I don’t know about missionary schools because I haven’t studied in one, but I wouldn’t say that I wouldn’t have got space, I think one has to create [space for oneself] (December 27, 2009).

She continues, saying that any form of art *pulls* her. As a child and adolescent she would dance out anything that she felt like—music, songs, Tagore’s poetry (*Sagarika*).

A patient of high degree epilepsy, Gini had gained weight post her matriculation examination and decided to learn dance. As a child, she had been admitted, by her father, to a dance school where they taught kathak. But she had left it saying it was “too stereotypical”. Now she *pulled* her father along to twenty dance performances, in and around her locality, to *choose* her dance teacher. Of these, *she* chose Prafulladitya as she found his dance to be ‘different and brilliant’. She also started learning Bharatnatyam. She realized that she was passionate about it while learning under him and spent entire days there, even at the wake of her higher secondary examination. Clearly stressing the qualities of personal choice and individualism she goes on:

²² Those words or phrases that were stressed considerably by the interviewee have been put in italics to convey the thrust of her narration.

The examination didn't matter much to me, but I passed and had to get admission to a college. My father got me admitted to the Scottish Church College with specialization in history, but I *broke* that ("*sheta bhenge*") and got admission in Maulana Azad College with Sociology. That was also *something* (December 27, 2009).

At that time she used to do lots of shows, almost twenty-five days in a month. She had left Prafulladitya by then, because she felt that she needed to grow. Though Prafulladitya was a *brilliant* dancer she says she wouldn't have received intellectual stimulation from him. When she *first* saw '*Tasher Desh*' a Tagorian dance-drama produced by the acclaimed group 'Nacher Karkhana' headed by Prafulladitya's guru Madhuja Chanda she realized:

Inii amar guru (This is my guru) (December 27, 2009).

And the next day Gini *again pulled her father* to their reputed dance centre in eastern Kolkata to meet the danseuse. Chanda was not present and they met her husband Prof. Chanda who asked her if she was trained in any Classical dance form. Gini's reply was that she would learn under Madhuja Chanda, *whether she knew anything or not*. According to her this impressed Chanda and the next day on phone she asked:

Are you the same girl who said that she would learn dance from me, whether she knew anything or not? I said, yes. Chanda had a huge dog, seeing which I had danced on her sofa. Seeing my antics she thought I have no way but to take her [laughs], she will even get on my sofa to *make me see* her dance. I had told her, before refusing to take me, see me dance (December 27, 2009).

She was asked to join the Dancer's Guild from the next day. *Tasher Desh* opened her eyes to the world of dance; their interpretation of the Tagorean dance drama was a great intellectual stimulation.

Gini clarifies repeatedly that she was never much concerned about her performance as a dancer, but rather, her hunger seems to have been for meaning. For instance *why* should she do a particular movement, what was the theoretical aspect of the movement—these questions drove her. This thirst was quenched at the 'Nacher Karkhana' and she claims to have received a great deal from Madhuja Chanda. She dwells at length on this:

I used to learn classical Bharatnatyam, but I felt that I am *just coming to learn* [‘merely learn’], my *hunger* was satiated by the Nacher Karkhana. I used to have lots of dialogues with her and it felt wonderful. That *has* somewhere taken me to a new growth. That is why I am grateful to Nacher Karkhana and Chanda *for life* (December 27, 2009).

At the recreational festival when in college she met Usha Ganguli, a renowned thespian who had come to perform. Gini was attracted to her “individual” theatre—it was different. She developed a rapport with her on the “spot” through “dialogue”. Gini goes on:

My communication [skills] are good, interpersonal relations also good, through hi-hello talk once Ushadi said, will you act? I have a role for you. I thought, my God, I can’t speak Hindi a bit, *but* I never push away *opportunity* (December 27, 2009).

She got her a role in ‘Khonj’, but Gini felt that she was not comfortable with her role and Hindi accent. But she remained with the Rangakarmi because she wanted to see the ‘process’, so she was associated with Nacher Karkhana and Rangakarmee simultaneously. According to her she used to be much praised for her perseverance, which apparently was hailed as exemplary by the seniors in the group. Ganguly was then involved in the production of *Beti Aye* (A Daughter is Born), focussing on discrimination against the girl child. Gini helped in with the dance training and performed too, because, in her words:

It was an open space, I was giving my *message* from here, and above all it was on women, there was a great sociological aspect to it (December 27, 2009).

The process of being able to witness things as an insider was a learning experience for her. She learnt how to coordinate in an organisation from them. She was with the *Rangakarmee* for four or five years. By then she had graduated and was doing post-graduation in the Department of Sociology in the University of Calcutta.

At the university she met Tunki Dey, who has remained a good friend all along. Even during M.A. she would feel the urge to do something different with dance. Her special paper was criminology. Gini was weak in English,

But I never lagged behind for that, because I always worked out a *process*. Like, Tunki would translate a lot of the material, explain things. I would sit with Tunki at the metro station [underground] and say, Now teach me. I very much had that [capacity]. I never took it as a challenge, but as an opportunity—that I will have to learn this (December 27, 2009).

Reading about shelter homes in criminology she developed an interest. But then she observes:

There is a huge gap between theoretically studying and working at a practical plane (December 27, 2009).

Sanyal narrated the details of her background, as given above, with a readiness that I let continue undisturbed, for I had waited six months for an interview. Her style of narration invokes an identity of one who is endowed with a gamut of personal and professional qualities. Her repeated tonal thrust on specific words and phrases drove home the point that she possessed qualities of leadership, a radical attitude, the ability to take initiative and a fierce sense of individuality that asserts itself against traditional authorities—the father (decision of not joining kathak dance school and later the choice of subject and college at the undergraduate level), the ‘conservative’ school and college authorities (regarding dancing to modern Bengali songs, making her muslim women college classmates dance). Gini is adept at courting controversy; not accepting a ‘no’ from others when bent on a decision; creating space for oneself and those ‘lagging behind’; choosing her own gurus and artistic influences; sticking-on through new experiences to learn ‘process’. In short, being “a type right from childhood”, through the narrative of her background a persona²³ of a leader-rebel-pathfinder-against-all-odds is woven. Traditional classical dance training is spoken of with impatience—the traditional is looked upon as stereotypical. To Sanyal churning out pretty dancers through a dance school or personal performance on stage are frivolous in comparison to the “different” things that she had always thought of doing

²³ Jung (1928) described the persona as ‘a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough, a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and , on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual . In contrast to the concepts of anima and animus, which mediate between individual consciousness (i.e. ego) and the depths of the psyche, the persona mediates between the ego and the external world. The persona tends to be more an ego ideal (Chodorow 1991: 58).

through dance. Spreading a social message through dance is what she finally zeroes-in on from the position of one searching for existential meaning in the 'deep structure' of the art form.

Unlike Sanyal, Alokanda Roy spoke very little about her background in her interview. It came up as an explanation for being able to devote the amount of time she does, with the prisoners in the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata. In impeccable English she says:

I suppose it is easier for me to give so much time—firstly my children are all settled—they have all grown up and settled down. I have fewer family commitments now. Secondly, I am at the twilight of my own career. I have never been ambitious, now all the more—it's not there at all. So I have the time and the will to do this and when you see people change from within for the better—I do not think even my performances have given me so much satisfaction (Interview, May 28,2010).

Roy, a danseuse of international repute, has received training in two classical Indian dance forms—Odissi and Bharatanatyam through the 'guru-shishya' system of imparting dance education. Her performance career spans fifty years beginning at the tender age of four. She has also trained in music—vocal and Rabindrasangeet²⁴, Russian Ballet, apart from being a Trinity college, London, diploma-holder of the pianoforte. She has widely experimented with Dance Drama by bringing together pure classical dance form and technique with contemporary expression and style in choreography, presentation, costume. Recently, she has been involved in the establishment of TcW, a non-profit social organization in West Bengal working with inmates of correctional facilities in the state. Registered in July 2009, it has been conducting workshops since 2007. It is a small group comprising people from various walks of life, united on the common purpose of upliftment of prisoners' lives. Beginning with weekly recreational therapy of music and dance, Roy has expanded this to a major activity wherein the inmates now perform full-length dance dramas and ballets in public. The stated object of this NGO is to create employment opportunities by training inmates and ex-inmates in organized modules to pursue useful activities such as gardening, flower arrangement, cookery, beautician

²⁴ Genre of music and songs created by Rabindranath Tagore.

treatments, institutional housekeeping, condiment making, nursing, tailoring, carpentry, masonry, electrical jobs, products with recycled paper, etc. In generating employability, the organization takes into account the experience and abilities as well as latent potential of the inmates. Further, it has approached the Government of West Bengal and the corporate sector to help with rehabilitation by offering bulk employment opportunities on a probationary basis. Some of the released inmates are today a part of the police workforce. In future, TeW plans to start a nursery for the children of the inmates who are presently living with their mothers, and gradually intends to extend this facility to other correctional homes. Introducing psychological and career counselling, both within and outside of the facilities are also in the pipeline. In collaboration with Mid-Town Lions Trust, it has started a project 'Heartprint' at Narendrapur for various welfare activities. The organization is also in dialogue with reputed charitable institutions to explore possibilities of providing shelter to those released inmates who are old and infirm and have nowhere to go.

Later, as part of a university seminar Roy talks about her background in dance. Apart from being trained in Odissi and Bharatanatyam, she has experience in other dance forms as well. Roy *loves* folk dances, though she clarifies that she did not go too deep into them. Nevertheless for the sake of gaining "knowledge" and just "experiencing" the diverse forms she partook in them. Since as a child she had enjoyed dancing these other forms, Roy says:

...that has made me experience and know that what they were going to enjoy (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Group dance forms an important element of folk dances. From her own experience of folk she knew that the spirit and discipline of doing things together and rhythm would help.

She alludes to her past a third time when asked about the pressure of such work on her life. Here her response is demonstrative of an attitude:

My work, has been dancing for the last 55 years and I have never been ambitious. I have no ambition in life. That's why I have always been happy with whatever I got. I was *never* into the rat race. That's why you have never seen me perform in Delhi, maybe once or twice. I have never gone into the website, I have *never* written to

anybody. In these 55 years, I have never had a brochure of my own. I have a brochure of my organization. But never a brochure of my own, *ever*. I *just* danced for the joy of it and will only do it as long as I enjoy it (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

A stated lack of personal ambition but a penchant for the joy of dancing is conveyed as much through her words as also the intonation of her voice. For a person whose performance career has crossed continental boundaries, spanned more than fifty years and a variety of art forms, a lack of ambition in a general sense is perhaps hard to imagine. And yet, the primacy assigned to joyousness of the activity is typically an artistic assertion of a value hierarchy distinct from the conventional, the mundane.

Roy's mention of her background in the interview as well as the seminar discussion is not elaborate and strictly in the context of the nature of her involvement in the project. She communicates a "settled"ness as far as her family responsibilities are concerned; a consummate career now at its "twilight". In contrast to Sanyal, her account is focused on her present engagement with the dancer-prisoners and the consequent identity-formation. The performer aspect is downplayed.

Perna Pal-Mehra, a leading Manipuri dancer of the 'new generation' is well-known in the realm of classical, choreographic dance performance as well as dance movement therapy in Kolkata. Initiated into the dance form at the age of five, she has been a 'nritya shishya'²⁵ to two eminent classical Manipuri dance-'guru's, and received valuable training under four acknowledged masters, learning its Vaishnavite (Sankirtana and Ras Leela) and pre-Vaishnavite (Lai Haroba and Than-ta) forms in-depth. Moreover, she has formal training in the expressive art therapies and is the founder of Ashirvaad, a centre for training and performance of Manipuri dance, and movement therapy specifically for special children.

Pal-Mehra discussed her therapeutic endeavour and experience. She spoke of her background in response to the question, "When did you start? From where did you get this idea?" Listening to her recorded reply one is struck by the number of times she has left the sentence in mid-air.

²⁵ Dance disciple.

I—you see, I have been trained in a very strict ‘guru-shishya parampara’, in my—I mean by my Guru who followed the ethics of ‘Natyashastra’. In ‘Natyashastra’ you know that if you want to be a dancer you have to be of this height and size and everything has to be *perfect*. So—and he was *so conscious* about that that it kind of put us all into a kind—a lot of—the girls who were dancing with me got *complexes* because he would *say* that you are not *fit* for dance because you are *not* tall and you are *not* short or you are *not* whatever. So you see what happens that—no this *happens* when you are learning [voice quivers], you tend to get—you are not the perfect dancer—*so* what would happen was that you see I said that—a friend of mine said why don’t you come with me to the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. I just went there (Interview, August 11, 2010).

Evidently, she speaks of one guru here, who, it seems, is her primary guru. A comparable narrative can be furnished from Joan Chodorow’s (1991) writings on her first teacher of dance movement therapy, Trudi Schoop, the famous dancer and pantomime artist who worked extensively in psychiatric hospitals in the U.S.A. Writes Chodorow:

Trudy questioned, challenged and supported her students in every way. She urged us to consider carefully the reasons why we wanted to become therapists. She never used the phrase ‘wounded healer’. But in a thousand ways, she emphasized that a therapist must know why she does therapy—that the decision to do this kind of work must come out of self knowledge. Years later, at a ceremony in her honor, Trudi spoke about this issue on a more personal level... . She spoke about her childhood experience of being consumed by unknown terrors. As a girl, her life was gradually taken over by strange compulsive actions, rituals to appease threatening gods. She lost weight. Sanatoriums had little to offer. Then she began to study drama which led to her realization that she wanted to dance. She locked herself in a room after school and composed dances. Dance was her own transformative healing practice (Chodorow 1991: 22-23).

Thus, through ‘composing dance’ Schoop seems to have worked her way out of a complex²⁶ that was hampering her. Pal-Mehra mentions ‘a lot of—the girls who were dancing’ with her developed complexes from the ‘very strict’ ‘guru-shishya’

²⁶ A complex is a collection of various ideas held together by an emotional tone common to all (Jung 1911: 599).

interactions. The 'Guru-shishya' form of imparting dance education is the mainstream Indian classical tradition of spiritual relationship and mentoring in traditional knowledge (spiritual, philosophic, artistic, architectural, musical and almost all other forms of traditional knowledge) where teachings are transmitted from a 'guru' to a 'shishya' by means of a relationship, based on the genuineness of the guru, and the respect, commitment, devotion and obedience of the student. Some social psychologists (Preece 2006) have worked on the psychological, cultural and ethical complexities in this institution as it exists today in the land of its origin as well as in foreign cultures.

Entering the Arena

Prerna continues:

For six months I struggled trying to teach them and I was trying to teach them the way my Guruji taught me and I wouldn't get anywhere. Then finally one day *they* taught me how to teach *them*. I was just sitting and I said that from tomorrow I am not coming. One girl just put on the music and they *all* started moving and that—it just, you know, dawned on me that, you know, that let them move [voice quivers] the way they want to move (Interview, August 11, 2010).

She directly goes into her initial style of teaching dance to children with cerebral palsy²⁷ without alluding to the reasons for her joining the IICP. Where Schoop

²⁷ CP is an umbrella term comprising multiple aetiologies and clinical manifestations. It is not a nosological entity, but 'a useful framework for certain motor-disabled children with special needs'. Cerebral means 'concerning the brain' and palsy means paralysis or the inability to move. CP, therefore, is a kind of paralysis that results from damage to the brain. The usual definition of CP comprises a group of motor disorders caused by a non-progressive lesion of the immature brain. Many aetiologies of the non-progressive lesions are considered to be prenatal (from conception up to the delivery), others are considered to be perinatal (from the start of delivery to the first week of life) or neonatal (from the first week of life up to 27 days after birth). There are few non-progressive brain lesions (e.g. head trauma or infection) after the first month of life and because they are all well monitored the aetiology is rarely unknown (Wichers M.J., Y.T van der Schouw., K.G.M. Moons, H.J. Stam and O. van Nieuwenhuizen 2001: 527).

The modern definition of CP is this: A persistent, but not unchanging disorder of movement and posture due to a non-progressive disorder of the immature brain (that is, under about 2 years of age) (Hinchcliffe 2007: 13) Put in other words, it is generally believed that the damage that has been done to the child's brain cannot be cured, nor will it worsen. It is 'persistent' and non-progressive. A child with CP, like all children, grows and develops. But just making the effort to sit, stand or walk is likely to lead to the appearance of signs of CP such as spasticity or contractures. Good intervention in the early months of a child's life can channelize the child's own efforts and determination and make his

movement and functioning easy thus minimizing the effects of CP. However, in instances of delay with the diagnosis, i.e where diagnosis is not made until the child is already showing spasticity and contractures, valuable time for cure is believed to have been lost, perhaps irretrievably.

It is widely held that a baby with CP may have been damaged early in pregnancy, and may therefore have abnormal movements even before birth. He too wants to learn to balance and reach, push up and move, but can only succeed in abnormal ways. His patterns of movement do not show the great variety of the 'normal' baby's. Because he only experiences moving in abnormal ways, his brain cannot build up a memory store of good movement experiences that allows him to develop rotation, selective movement and fine motor control. Children with CP also experience altered postural tones, unlike their normal counterparts and the postural tone is an essential aspect of a child's development. In a 'normal' baby this tone, or readiness of the muscles to respond to messages from brain, allows her to develop a range of patterns of movement from before birth. The child then learns to use these same patterns for useful activities in the presence of gravity. But the postural tone in a child with CP is altered, and without this basic readiness of the muscles to react it is difficult for the child to develop good functional skills without help (Hinchcliffe 2007).

There are different kinds of cerebral palsy, depending on the parts of the brain that have been damaged, and each kind is recognized by the way in which the child's postural tone is altered. The four major classifications are: Spasticity, Athetosis, Ataxia and Hypotonia. In spasticity, the muscles remain stiff. The child moves in patterns that are not useful and are limited. And as she tries to move, the muscles become stiffer. In such children the movement areas and pathways of the cortex are damaged. In Athetosis, there is movement all the time—unwanted movement or movement that is uncontrolled. The muscles may be stiff one moment and floppy the next. In such children the Basal Ganglia of the brain are damaged. In case of Ataxia, the muscles constantly quiver when the child tries to move. She may stiffen herself to overcome this. In these children the cerebellum is damaged. In children with Hypertonia, the muscles are constantly floppy.

Some children with CP have other associated problems. If the part of the brain that controls posture and movement can be damaged, then so can other parts of the brain. For instance, the intellectual capacity of the child may be damaged, making him slow to learn and understand. His hearing may be affected, in that he has difficulty processing what sounds he hears. In a child whose head keeps moving, it may be difficult for him to locate or attend to sounds. His sight may also be affected, in the sense that, although there may be nothing wrong with his eyes, his brain cannot perceive or understand what his eyes see. Again, perceptual problems can lead to a child becoming fearful of moving around. This is because he has difficulty grasping the ideas of such things as distance, perspective and height and can't make sense of his environment and how his body fits into it. Some children with CP also have difficulty processing sensation from their muscles and joints and for them it is difficult to know where their limbs are in relation to their bodies. They have to compensate by using their eyes. About half the children with CP also have Epilepsy. This can take a very mild form, in which the child experiences temporary loss of awareness, or a severe form where the whole body shakes and the child loses consciousness for minutes at a time. These severe fits are damaging to the brain and it is important for the child to be given drugs that will reduce the number and severity of his fits. Drugs themselves, however, can also be damaging (phenobarbitone for example, can interfere with the workings of the brain). It is helpful if there are a number of different drugs to choose from to find the best one for each (Hinchcliffe 2007: 15,16). Also, research has shown that besides necessary medication, family and the immediate environment where such children grow up are important for regulating the conditions of CP. The disabling effects of CP are thought to be worse in a child who lives in poverty with few opportunities and little access to professional help (Hinchcliffe 2007: 13).

worked her way out of her complex by choreographing alone, behind closed doors, Prerna's students showed her the way out by their initial non-acceptance of a form of dance and style of teaching that was remote as far as they were concerned, and then taking the initiative to indicate what worked for them. Children and young adolescents who spent most of their time on wheelchairs and had to be carried by their parents to the Institute, thanks to their disobedient bodies and brain-functions, found the enforced codified dance steps irrelevant in every respect. Prerna realized:

Let's not restrict yourself to only hands to going here and here, let it go there and there. Let it expand, you can't restrict your movement, you have to *throw* your movement, and the creativity therefore has to be more because you have to *create* to *their* bodies. Your knowledge and your thing of movement has to be expanded and expansive. That's how it started.1990 (Interview, August 11, 2010).

The moment of realization was cathartic and opened a door for Prerna, who's earlier grooming in Manipuri dance was of one who would become a proficient performer on the public stage, rendering each posture and 'mudra' its 'textbook' perfection. Her experience at the IICP unveiled before her the greater potential of dance to contribute to improving the quality of life of people with different needs and abilities. With successful productions, like 'The Story of Ganga', with the children there she was convinced of its therapeutic efficacy leading her to take it up seriously at the next level.

Gini Sanyal recounts the day that she took the 'leap':

I was walking in the Kolkata Book Fair. I was then studying for M.A. By then my friends at the university, who studied Sociology, had already started working in NGOs like CiniAsha etc. Then I saw a poster there. It was the photo of a girl with the lines 'They sell me, my own blood for some gold and some silver, I rinse and rinse my mouth but the treachery remains...' printed underneath. Another ended with the lines: 'I am no more bride to be, I am no more mother to be, I am no more future to be.' That was the stall of Kathaa. Standing there and reading the poem I decided then and there that I will work here and I will try to turn this to 'I am mother to be, I am bride to be, I am future to be'. To take that *No more* to there. But then I am like that, *very* passionate (December 27, 2009).

Sanyal lost her mother to cancer in her teens. Adjustment to the life of being a single girl child to a single parent—an orthodox Marxist disciplinarian father had its highs and lows. Her passion for dance provided the necessary creative channel to strike balance. With a futuristic fervour that still characterizes her speech, Sanyal went into the stall and offered her services as a dance teacher. At the outset 'Kathaa' had made it clear that they would not be able to pay for creative endeavours. But Gini had made up her mind.

I said you don't have to pay me, because I, then, was doing shows with 'Nacher Karkhana', so some money was coming in anyway (December 27, 2009).

Gini's account is an assertion of her identity as an informed, able individual determined to bring a change in the 'way things are' and uplift the lives of victims of trafficking, who is able to get past all the obstacles. It is reminiscent of the typical Weberian charismatic 'leader'. Weber writes,

...charisma knows no formal and regulated appointment or dismissal...no advancement or salary... Charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits. Its bearer seizes the task for which he is destined and demands others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission. ...As a rule charisma is a highly individual quality. This implies that the mission and the power of its bearer is qualitatively delimited from within, not by an external order. Normally the mission is directed to a local, ethnic, social, political, vocational or some other group, and that means it also finds its limits at the edges of these groups (Weber 1978:1112-3).

On the other hand, by then her 'friends at the university studying Sociology' had already begun tenure in non-governmental organizations. Tunki Dey was working in the research wing of Kathaa. So, in retrospect the 'leap', though it did involve risk in being an unpaid appointment, was not totally into the dark.

Alokananda Roy, unlike Gini Sanyal and Prerna, stepped into the domain at a stage when she was already a celebrity dancer nearing the sunset of her artistic career. It was quite by chance.

Actually I didn't have any plans as such. I was invited as a guest for their International Women's Day celebration in the jail. I went as a guest by the invitation

of Mr.B.D.Sharma, the then I.G.²⁸, now he is the A.D.G²⁹. And he just casually asked me if I could do something, think of something with the prisoners, because now it was a correctional home³⁰ and they are using different methods, ideology to help. I said 'of course I can' without thinking anything. I started talking to the women there; they were very excited they were going to dance because they have a very monotonous life—day in and day out the same routine.... And when I was coming out from the women's ward I saw these young boys walking aimlessly without anything to look forward to—aimless, and their bored monotonous life— I just spontaneously asked Sharma, 'Can I also work with the boys?' He said, 'if you want to, if you have the courage'. I said, '*Of course* I have the courage' (Interview, May 28, 2010).

The Presidency Correctional Home is one of the oldest prisons of Kolkata incarcerating a large number of criminals and those under trial for such serious offences as murder, rape, drug-peddling, terrorism against the State, domestic crime. Roy's decision to engage the women and men there in dance required 'courage' from any person having a middle-class upbringing who lacks training in dealing with prisoners. She emphasizes the spontaneous nature of her decision against the backdrop of a monotonous prison-life that renders even the youth bored and aimless. The ease with which a rapport developed between her and the prisoners, she attributes to the essentially un-planned nature of the beginning. Says she:

Believe me when I am asked that how did you feel the first day or in the beginning, I never thought of them as something different, they are all my son's age—most of them, I saw my son in each one of them in the sense that they are also somebody's son, somebody's father, somebody's husband, so that's how I saw them right from the beginning, because actually I didn't go with any plans maybe that's why the feeling was different from if I went with some work in mind. It was a very emotional beginning when I started on the 25th of March 2007—it's still an ongoing thing... (Interview, May 28, 2010).

²⁸ Inspector General.

²⁹ Additional Director General of Correctional Services, West Bengal Police.

³⁰ In 1992 the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly passed the West Bengal Correctional Services Act, which came into force from 14th of April 2000. This Act has made possible the introduction of culture therapy in some of the newly-recognized Correctional Homes in West Bengal. The culture therapy programme includes dance, theatre and painting workshops culminating in exhibitions and public performances.

Roy's lack of so-called training became her strong point in that her perception was free from prejudice as well as 'trained incapacity'³¹. She could thus connect to the human core of the persons whom she inspired to dance. Her perception and acceptance of them as persons having family feelings or the need to belong to a family and the spontaneous, emotional bonding that developed from this was itself healing. The authenticity of emotions play a critical role here as most of the prisoners are hyper-sensitive. She points out:

...it's actually that *true feeling* that matters. *They* can all see through any facade, let me tell you, none of them is a fool. They can see through each and every person because that's the first thing they do, you know they have x-ray eyes. They know exactly what you are (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Her own personality endowed with artistic sensibilities seems clearly indispensable for such a relationship, though she does not mention it herself. In any kind of therapeutic relationship the healer has to possess the ability to hold and sustain an attitude towards the healed which becomes at once an emotional platform for the latter to ground on, as well as a mirror to 'see' him or herself in, till one recovers and needs this no longer from a significant other. The importance of the social 'mirror' is well-explained in the symbolic interactionist contributions to theories of self-formation. Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the 'Looking-Glass Self'³² shows that a conception of the 'social self' arises 'reflectively' as the outcome of the reaction to the opinion of others (Jary 1991: 376). As a field-researcher I witnessed the charisma of Roy's personality connecting equally effortlessly in a one-to-one interview setting, a seminar room full of university students from different regions of India and abroad, to 'connoisseurs' of the arts in packed metropolitan auditoriums. Is this the result of

³¹ Trained incapacity refers to "that state of affairs in which one's abilities function as inadequacies or blind spots. Actions based upon training and skills which have been successfully applied in the past may result in inappropriate responses under changed conditions. An inadequate flexibility in the application of skills will, in a changing milieu, result in more or less serious maladjustments" (Merton 1968:252).

³² Charles H. Cooley recognized that self emerges out of communication with others. As individuals interact with each other, they interpret each other's gestures and thereby see themselves from the viewpoint of others. They imagine how others evaluate them, and they derive images of themselves or self-feelings and attitudes. Cooley termed this process 'the looking-glass self': the gestures of others serve as mirrors in which people see and evaluate themselves, just as they see and evaluate other objects in their social environment (Turner 1999: 311).

intensive training in performing arts rendering one skilled in eliciting *rasa* in the audience? Or is it born of a deep faith in the fundamental goodness of the human soul? The answer need not be mutually exclusive. In fact recent sociological and anthropological studies of interiority and mysticism (Visvanathan 2007; 2010) take a step ahead from the location of ‘legitimacy’ in the social sciences, characterized by traditional ‘scientific’ attitudes of criticality and scepticism, to analyse and understand faith as experienced and lived by people. I concur with Visvanathan’s bold methodological position that:

In analyses of faith, we are not sceptics, we are observers and there is dialectic to our observation, born from our empathy and our suspended disbelief. Therefore we (as analysts) ‘cannot and must not avoid the question of the absolute validity’ of the object of our study. We must believe that they believe (Visvanathan 2010:219).

Incidentally, Roy hails from a family who are devotees of Sri Aurobindo and locates that space of belonging as a significant pillar of her well-being.

The next section considers how, in the pioneers’ eyes, dance has helped in ‘healing’ those afflicted.

Innovation, Spontaneity, Training: Healing through Dance

I didn’t realize that dance is going to make such a difference in their lives. ...the harmony that was lost in them gradually came back, but very unconsciously, they were not doing anything consciously.

Roy observes that the change had come not only in the prisoners’ way of life in the sense that they got out of the drudgery of daily life and were dancing. But it was the presence of music, rhythm, and exercise in their lives. She compares this with sports as a recreational activity.

They have sports, they play cricket, football, kabaddi—these are the three main games that they play, but you know I felt that sports does take care of their physical energy all right, but there is still a competition, there is still a kind of an aggression but dance is something that has to do with music and rhythm and you are using your body, mind and soul, and in the process they are harmonised, so the harmony that was lost in them gradually came back, but very unconsciously, they were not doing

anything consciously, they were just enjoying the joy of dance (Interview, May 28, 2010).

It was not only that she utilized their unused energy. The core of healing, to Roy, lies precisely in the happiness that is felt while dancing. According to her, when one feels good, there is a change in his or her attitude as also perception or the way one looks at things. Thereby some things that are fraught with negativity gradually become positive if one has harmony within, and that's where she points out, dance steps in. Unlike Prerna, Roy is not formally trained in dance movement therapy as practised in the West. Neither can her activities inside the correctional home be called dance movement therapy in any way. However in-depth felt-knowledge of the art form and her life-experience is what she draws from. Empathy constitutes a major ingredient in her therapeutic endeavour. To quote her:

You know I didn't do it consciously. I know how dance has helped me in my life. I have had a lot of ups and downs, lot of downs. I have gone through very difficult times but dance was something that has sustained me and always helped me to bounce back (Interview, May 28, 2010).

Her subjective experience of dancing—yielding an awareness that is necessarily of the interior, is complemented with her strong belief that there are few who do not take to dance. One might not be a dancer, but the joy of moving to rhythm and music is present in every person. Roy's notion of health is related to this. According to her:

You are born with rhythm—you are born with your heart beat so when that heart is going through disharmony you have a heart attack and we have all kinds of physical problems. So we go through a rhythm cycle in life also. That's a very natural phenomenon; when that is lost somehow things go wrong. Well, dance has helped them bring that harmony back (Interview, May 28, 2010).

This is in line with Philip Zarrilli's observation on 'practice' in the context of negotiating and interpreting Kalarippayattu practice, self and personhood:

Today, practice is often understood to affect not just the gross, physical body of the humours and saps, but 'behaviour' as well. 'Good' health is viewed as equally dependent on maintaining equanimity among all aspects of one's life including body, mind and behaviour (Zarrilli 1998: 216).

She emphasizes that any kind of imposition—be that of a specific form of dance or routine activities in a regular ‘class’ would be contrary to the therapeutic purpose. Regarding duration of her dance ‘class’ inside the correctional home she says:

Roy: There are no fixtures. There are days when I don’t teach anything *at all*, nothing is taught. I just talk. Maybe we talk about my experiences, my dance programmes, and you know, it’s just like a story-telling. Maybe those days there is no dance at all.

I: So, it’s flexible.

Roy: *Very* flexible. I also do that with my regular classes most of the times because I don’t want dance to be a thing they *have to do*, they *have to complete*. I have not done it and I don’t think I want my students to go through that monotony, whether it’s outside or inside. That helps. That helps them to enjoy (Interview, June 2, 2010).

Unlike in a regular dance class where students may dance with just the recitation of the ‘taal’ or the syllable, the inmates of the correctional home need movement. Roy explains that they get bored very easily, so musical accompaniment is a must. Without it they cannot relate because none of them have even the remotest idea of how a classical dance is taught. As it is they have a monotonous life and dance has to be introduced in such a way that this monotony is broken. She stresses that it has to be made interesting so that they enjoy. Says she:

And when you enjoy, anybody feels good—that itself works as a therapy—I feel (Interview, June 2, 2010).

When asked whether she followed any specific therapeutic approach Roy opines:

You see, I feel dance itself is a therapy. There are people who go, there are counsellors who go and counsel them. But I don’t think it really works. Either, either [pause] I wouldn’t talk about their competence; maybe they don’t really understand their [the prisoner’s] needs or [pause] see although they are like you and me—normal human beings. But being there it changes your own mindset. As a result they have to be dealt with in a *very* different way. And, nothing works better than love and compassion (Interview, June 2, 2010).

Again her perception of the incarcerated as ‘normal’, her acceptance of them as being like “you and me” is conveyed which lay at the foundation of the way she approaches

healing in this context. Roy finds that prison-life itself gives rise to certain psycho-social and physical conditions that are better eased through dance and music than the limited psychotherapeutic counselling that is currently available. Initially, the male prisoners had reservations about dancing as they felt that dance was something girlish so when they were reassured that they were going to do manly dances their number increased from ten to sixty. None knew anything about dance other than may be a little bit of improvised break dances of the 'parra'(locality). Roy introduced Kalaripayatu (martial art form originating in Kerala) and Thangta (Manipuri martial art form) accompanied by the drum. She says she hardly thought then that they would be performing on stage one day. Movements from African dances and other tribal dances that they could do easily are also included. Folk dances, 'baul'³³, 'Rabindranritya'³⁴, dandiya and bhangra are danced. When doing 'bharatnatyam' steps they feel that they have become classical dancers and that gives them a sense of pride, smiles Roy. The folk form with its catchy tunes and rhythm they thoroughly enjoy. She ascribes the gradual development of a feeling of belonging and solidarity to the folk form, which is danced mostly in groups. Moving together to the rhythm has forged discipline, team spirit and compassion among them. Such participation helps them relax and open-up, which facilitates verbal self-expression and interactions with her and the other music teacher Jayanti Purokayastha, a well-known Rabindrasangeet exponent who has joined recently. While one can view this as a kind of counselling, Roy maintains:

...I listen to each and every one of them individually... I don't use the word 'counselling', I don't counsel—it's just a one to one feeling. I talk to them in a different way because each illness has a separate medicine. ... (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

However she never asks them anything personal in the way of the nature of their crime or other details of their affliction. In an earlier interview she said:

³³ A form of Bengali rural folk music tradition that is essentially oral, and historically sung by wandering mystics, where the singer dances while singing and playing the 'ektara'(single-stringed instrument) (Ray 1988).

³⁴ A dance form created by Tagore through a synthesis of the various forms of classical and folk dances of India.

If they tell me on their own...they never tell. Sometimes, if they want to share, they write. They write to me. Otherwise I wouldn't even know one from another—who's done what. They are all normal human beings to me (Interview, June 2, 2010).

Instead of trying to “mix everything inside” by tagging along psychotherapy she focuses mainly on dance and music. In her experience the nature of interaction and bonding that has developed among the prisoners, teachers and volunteers is nourishing emotionally —

So, even this interaction between the teachers and the other people, this bonding—there is this physical kind of bonding, right? So they [artists-teachers] are their friends, brothers, ‘dada’s, ‘didi’s and I am like their mother (Interview, June 2, 2010).

However none of this is ‘done’ in the sense of pre-planned activity. From the very beginning the whole process unfolded spontaneously. The decisions taken on the spur of the moment were carried out with conviction and genuine feelings. At the seminar in the University she reiterated:

I was always a dancer and I dance thinking that it is the therapy of the soul without trying to apply it. I have never *applied*³⁵ it as a therapy on them. Everything happened. ... My instrument has been dance. I have done it with feelings. It's the feelings that counts, whether it's music, or sports or painting—whatever. I am talking about the art form because that's what I am comfortable with. You can do it in so many ways...actually its *true* feeling that matters (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Clearly, then more than ‘learnt therapeutic techniques’ it is the spontaneous process, unfolding almost unconsciously, in both the artist and those dancing, interacting and bonding together, that constitutes healing praxis to Roy. Therefore her notion of healing praxis would not fall only and totally within the scope of ‘extra-daily practices’. In this context it is fruitful to recapitulate practice as has been conceived by anthropologists of culture. Using Barba’s (1991) distinction between ‘extra-daily’ and daily activities / practices for theatre anthropology, Phillip Zarrilli (1998) defines practices as those modes of embodied doing through which everyday as well as extra-daily experiences, realities and meanings are shaped and negotiated. According to

³⁵ Those words or phrases that were stressed considerably by the interviewee have been put in italics to convey the thrust of her narration.

him, everyday practices included habitualised and routine activities as walking, driving, hygienic practices and the like, while extra-daily practices are those practices such as rituals, dances, theatre performances, the recitation of oral narratives, meditation and/or religious practices, martial arts, etc, which require the practitioner to undergo specialized body training in order to become accomplished in attaining a certain specialized state of consciousness, body, agency, power, and so on (Zarrilli 1998:5). He further writes:

Because practices are not things, but an active, embodied doing, they are intersections where personal, social and cosmological experiences and realities are negotiated. To examine a practice is to examine these multiple sets of relationships and experiences. A practice is not history, but practices always exist within and simultaneously create histories. Likewise a practice is not a discourse, but implicit in any practice are one or more discourses and perhaps paradigms through which the experience of practice might be reflected upon and possibly explained (Zarrilli 1998: 5).

In Roy's 'practice' a certain 'seeing', 'vision' is implicit which, going by her words, is almost intuitive in that the inmates are 'seen' as somebody's son, somebody's father, somebody's husband. She could hold-on-to and follow this 'perception', which was quite against the current of the status quo, and then it gradually seems to have spread among the volunteers and then the prisoners. Their subsequent public performance and appreciation from the art-world and general public only served to strengthen a positive self-image in them. In the correctional home thought-out, pre-meditated, planned 'application' of so-called techniques of dance movement therapy on those 'needing to be healed' are laid aside for acceptance of them as 'one of us'. Being 'one of us' presupposes a structure of needs—psycho-physical and social that is recognised as the same for the artist-volunteers-prisoners in principle, though Roy also points out that incarceration has its distinct load of experiences that have to be negotiated. It also presupposes a relationship where genuine feelings can be communicated and shared and, when the time comes, a hundred per cent is contributed for 'us' by each. Says Roy:

They all learn for the joy of learning to dance, joy of dancing and then when we perform I say because you have a commitment towards your work, there you have to deliver (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

And they deliver, amply. Their performance of 'Valmiki Pratibha'³⁶ has been widely acclaimed by both art critics and the general public all over West Bengal. They have done more than twenty-five shows between November 15, 2008 and now in the best-known auditoriums of Kolkata, at the Visvabharati University in Shantiniketan and elsewhere in the state. Each has received standing ovation of the audience for the sheer brilliance of the performance. Roy says

...this has given them a sense of dignity which they had lost, a self-esteem which they had lost. Now when they perform they are really good (Interview, May 28, 2010).

'Valmiki Pratibha' was not their first performance. Earlier inside the correctional home they had performed 'Brotherhood Beyond Boundaries' based on martial dances, seeing which the Inspector-General thought it good enough to be staged outside. After it was performed at the Uday Shankar Dance Festival, 2007 and much lauded, Roy selected 'Valmiki Pratibha' seeing the gradual change that was setting-in within them. She felt they would be able to identify with the theme.

Roy states categorically that public performance has played a beneficial role for the inmates; it has contributed effectively to building up positive self-esteem and an active interest in things.

... for them to get the appreciation of an artist—it has changed their whole mindset. Now they don't feel small. When you feel small you keep going deeper down. But I think dance has been a medium which has helped them to come out of it. May be it has been used in different ways like it started with dance, then it was the performance within the jail walls. When Mr. B.D. Sharma saw it he said that, "No I think we should perform outside like professionals." They gave everything they had. They danced with dedication, love and all the energy. I think it's been proved successful because they were completely focused, totally focused, they had no other distraction (Interview, May 28, 2010).

Thus, in her view 'labour of love' is what they have given, and in return, have earned respect and appreciation that society keeps in store for artists of calibre. This labour, instead of alienating them, have reinstated in them inner harmony, fellow-feeling and

³⁶ A Tagorean dance-drama, depicting the transformation of the dacoit-chief Ratnakar into sage Valmiki, the creator of the *Ramayana*.

compassion for the fellow dancer-prisoner, skill in an activity that is valued in all strata of society and has help attain catharsis and social prestige. In this context then it seems to me that dancing and performing has, thus, led to what Marx (1974) had yearned for:

Man's self-esteem, his sense of freedom, must be re-awakened in the breast of these people ...only with its aid can society ever again become a community of men that can fulfil their highest need...(Marx 1992: 201)

It has changed their outlook even if for the time-being. In her opinion:

...if I had only focussed on teaching dance movement, I don't think anything like this would have happened. It's always that personal touch and how each one is different from the other. ... It is a question of being one of them; making them feel that you are there for them, not only dance wise, but even otherwise (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Roy lays repeated stress on treating the inmates invoking the true spirit of human rights. Praxis that has healed them, for her, is this mode of interaction that forges community bonding through creative activity. Conceived thus 'healing praxis' would extend into both daily and 'extra-daily practices' because it involves her perception of them as 'normal' human beings, acceptance of them as 'one of us' reflected in action and interaction in everyday settings as well as learning extra-daily practices together and then performing with such brilliance that it is recognized, applauded as being flawless, as good as professionals. So technically speaking 'extra-daily' practices *are* involved in that dancing such forms as kalarippayattu and thangetta *does* have an effect on their body-mind in the way of engendering motion, discipline, team-spirit, freeing them from inertia, and the discourses involved in the way of creative ideas and thought behind the dance-dramas or the folk dances that they do—affect their personality. And the prestige that they enjoy of being artists, the rise in self-esteem on receiving the society's appreciation and adulation for their actions—the sense of achievement—all come via their mastering and performing the extra-daily practices. However, in all this, spontaneity, the quality of being not-pre-planned and a certain 'unconscious' organicity, is conveyed. The daily practices of Roy and volunteers and the inmates—their acceptance of one another and interactions based on this acceptance and cooperation forges a cult-like grouping that has led to the 'creative

effervescence' that Durkheim (1965) wrote about in the conclusion of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Regarding the perceived change in those dancing together inside the correctional home Roy sums up,

... changing in the sense that they are going back to their childhood. They are like children, you know. And nothing can give me more joy. ... It is not just the *action*, it is all from *within*; they feel good. I keep telling them this is freedom of spirit. I may not be able to give you the freedom you are looking for, I would like them to be free as they would be a blessing to the society because they would *not betray* anybody. I can say this with confidence and conviction (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Gini Sanyal joined 'Kathaa' as a dance teacher, with the dream of 'changing the lives' of rescued victims of trafficking, but without pay. Initially, she had to struggle to make the girls understand her point. She faced a lot of aggressiveness and suspicion. Having faced extreme violation of body and mind, their attitude reflected the negativity all around them. Gini says:

The girls were uncomfortable about their body and mind. Many of them were traumatized and depressed. It was apparent that they were going through tremendous pain (December 27, 2009).

Understanding the psychology of prostitutes' offspring, and of the prematurely sexually awakened child, how they develop this aggressive, abrasive outer shell, was crucial to her success in dealing with them.

In the beginning she tried to teach the way she had learned dance at dance schools. However teaching the girls to dance, combining classical and contemporary movements, she found she was unable to communicate her aims. The girls followed the movements rather mechanically and without any emotional involvement. Says Gini:

My movements were not the filmy steps they were used to or enjoyed, and their disdain hurt (December 27, 2009).

She was faced with the wide gulf between theoretical ideas, ideals and their realization on the practical field. Disappointed Sanyal realized that she would have to change her "learning" of the last fourteen years, completely. She started

experimenting on her technique, working with movement, story-telling, story-game and the like.

For example I told a girl, 'Suppose you are a tree. How would you express yourself?' (December 27, 2009).

The change in the participant's body language surprised her. At that time she knew nothing about dance movement therapy, which had been used in hospitals in Western countries, but in her own way she was getting results with her tentative attempts to draw out the girls and encourage them to articulate their inner feelings through movement to music. She had made a deal with the girls.

Hindi film songs were a favourite with them and so my deal was that they would have to listen and dance to 'good' music as well, together with their Bollywood numbers (December 27, 2009).

She would carry her own tape-recorder to the shelter home. Gini claims that by then the authorities at 'Kathaa' too had realized that she had leadership qualities and gave her the freedom and space to do things her own way. She urged the authorities to allow her to take the girls out to performances, shows in the city. They gave permission, and hiring an ambulance she took the girls to theatre performances and other such outings from the shelter home to make them familiar with a world they had little or no idea about. Sanyal reminisces,

The present coordinators of SL³⁷ were all very young then and they would make noise, sitting at the back in Usha Ganguli's and other's shows (December 27, 2009).

However they enjoyed these excursions immensely says Gini.

Now heavily involved, Sanyal joined 'Kathaa's' research department feeling that she needed to 'know more'. Along with her friend Tunki and others she worked on a project on 'Society's Attitude towards Prostitution' in association with the department and also visited red-light areas in Mumbai and elsewhere. This helped increase her understanding of the situation.

³⁷ The NGO of which she is the founder-director.

Soon Gini's colleagues at 'Kathaa' noticed the therapeutic influence of her dance classes on the girls and told her so. This began to seep into her understanding gradually. By then she was taking the girls out and conducting performances to '*Sumaner Gaan*' (a variety of post-modern Bengali songs hailed as *Jeebonmukhi*, meaning pro-life). She could see that all this was being cathartic for them. However she herself wasn't familiar yet with the concepts of catharsis, and healing. Sanyal began staying on at the shelter home, even after the classes were over, to interact further with the girls. She says,

Between 1996 and 2001 I was at the shelter home 80 % of the time, I enjoyed staying and interacting with the girls—thus I got to know them better. Even during load-shedding we would sit together discuss, choreograph. The girls found it great fun even in that closed atmosphere of the shelter hostel. From those rehearsals and interactions I learnt how certain movements engendered freedom, pain, confidence etc. I would directly ask the girls how they felt doing a certain movement—the emotions that the movement evoked or the movement that became the emotion suggested. I had no previous training in therapy (December 27, 2009).

Later, at a choreography festival she met Titiksha Khanna, a trained dance therapist. Their interaction proved fruitful. Hearing of her work Khanna advised her to advocate it as therapy. They developed a rapport. Khanna gave her books on dance movement therapy. Thus Sanyal came across works of American choreographer Martha Graham, Austro-Hungarian dancer Rudolf Laban, and Marian Chace, the pioneer who introduced dance as a therapy in U.S. hospitals first in the 1940s. When she read that dance therapists 'found something healing happened in a student's psyche through improvisation of movements while composing a dance, not from mastering a technique,' she felt she was on the right track.

In a sense it can be said that Gini developed her technique of dance movement therapy from life first, and studied it theoretically only afterwards. Her technique was thus a result of the direct experience of working with the victims of harrowing experiences by someone ready to invest in the liberating potential of creativity, expressive art. She built her initial movement vocabulary through collaborative innovation. In this way she 'discovered' the movements of anguish, pain, irritation, freedom, love.

Instead of elaborating on how she healed the girls through dance in the initial phase Sanyal elaborated SL's approach to dance movement therapy in her interview. Gini points out that it falls within the category of expressive art therapy. She says that even the American Dance Therapy Association views dance movement therapy as a clinical process—conducted within a therapeutic space, individually or with maximum a group of ten. However SL's views on dance therapy are rooted in Indian's rich culture of community-orientation. In her view, dance, as an art form, is fundamental to a fulfilling life, rich in its possibilities as a tool of social change. This is because through dance a qualitative change of an individual's life becomes possible. In the same way it can be used to integrate and uplift the lives of a number of people, opines she. By dancing together they undergo the same physical experiences that stretch our understanding of physicality in general, our bodies in particular, not to mention the mind-body connection so central to spiritual awareness. Community-orientation is at the core of SL's approach to DMT. In their coursework, Sanyal says that they will be teaching Western thought as well as their own methodology. This would include psychology which will be taught by a professional working with Namaskar, the NGO working with the mental hospitals where SL offers its services. The theoretical portion will include patients' perceptions apart from the therapist's perspective. She highlighted the emphasis given on movement vocabulary because different people have different bundles of movement. The trainers are taught to be flexible towards these. On February 19, 2010 SL launched a training-of-trainer course on healing mental patients through dance movement therapy. It is a three months course. Gini grieves the meagre awareness regarding mental illness and the fact that such patients are treated as untouchables in Kolkata. DMT has certain methods like mirroring etc that can establish communication successfully with persons suffering from mental disturbances. It is a certificate course which would include clinical practice hours. The trainees will have to work in the hospitals and their work there will be supervised. This course is designed by her with the help of Bobby Bernstein, ADTA and Prof. Irabati Samaddar, J.N.U.

The SL dance movement therapy approach emphasises on free, spontaneous movement and a community-oriented approach. In every session, she emphasises, they work *with* the participants, sit with them and give them a demonstration of what

DMT is. Gini underscores that they do not take a judgemental attitude but explain everything and leave it to the participants to understand as much as they can, in their own way. The participants are asked what they need and what they like and a session plan is drawn up accordingly.

Regarding the reasons for the easy naturalization of dance movement therapy in West Bengal and other places where SL has worked, Gini's theory is that its novelty struck participants and clients. According to her it is an idea which SL has pioneered in India. Second, their manner of conducting therapy has broken free of the elitist bias prevalent in the therapy sector. SL has worked in villages with the "same success" that it has seen among its metropolitan clientele. Third, the simplicity of the concept is itself an attraction: every human being can move in some way, and if so then she or he can dance as well, it is something so fundamental within us that one just needs to let it flow and use it for therapeutic purposes. The universality of dance, its freedom from the dangers and trepidations involved in verbal therapy are reasons for people taking to it easily and across lines of social stratification. Finally, she says with pride,

We are creating employability (January 31, 2010).

That victims of trafficking who have undergone therapy, can become healers, and employability created in this way, is an important innovation. In her characteristic "revolutionary" enthusiasm she sees this as hitting at the base of the class-structure in some way. Seen from the point of view of rehabilitation methods, the survivors are going beyond stitching, knitting, making jam-jelly, pickle. She says,

I try to break the glass ceiling in this way (January 31, 2010).

The scale of her vision of the victims' skills and life chances mark out her endeavour of using dance movement therapy to bring positive changes in the lives of people. She clarifies,

There is a difference between teaching dance and dance movement therapy—I am not teaching you Bharatanatyam, I am helping you find yourself through the movement that is there *within* you. But it is not easy because the idea of dance evokes inhibition among people as well (January 31, 2010).

She laments the lack of awareness and respect for the arts among certain people in a country like India, the birthplace and rearing ground of many great art forms.

Innovation through collaboration with the victims therefore has been followed up by self-training and later teamwork with professionals of international dance therapy organization in Sanyal's trajectory of healing through dance. Her expressed "passion" for the medium and desire to "change the world" has motivated her carving out a method that has enabled her to engage in both, to some extent. What seems to mark her effort off from the others is that she claims to have been able to create employability through en-skilling erstwhile victims into a cultural skill that has middle-class marketability. The importance of this can be understood better in the context of facts that point to the frequency of trafficking victims going back into prostitution, even after being 'rehabilitated'. Gini attributes this to being unable to cope with the pressures of life without such skills that can contribute positively to their personality-building as per the requirements of a middle-class milieu as well as position them at an advantage in the job market. Dance Movement therapy, it seems, has provided the beneficiaries with a creative space for venting negative emotions accumulated from traumatic life experiences without necessarily involving verbal outpourings. More importantly it offers ways of playing out, in body and mind, that which one *is* minus the reactive affects, and that which one can or wants *to be*, thereby having a certain socialising effect. This has worked well with the girls. Now in almost every batch that SL provides dance therapy to, after their trauma is overcome, some of the girls come forward to learn to be dance therapists.

In the initial years as also in the present, Sanyal took the girls out to perform. These presentations used to be on issues of social relevance—the performance sites ranging from the street to auditoriums. This afforded a space for the girls' interaction with the general public, which has implications for their presentation of self, personality development, confidence-building. Moreover, she asserts that performance is integral to her method of dance therapy—all the beneficiaries are included in them. It is not that some are left behind to make the productions look good. Inclusive participation heals and so the thrust is on taking everyone in such performances.

Unlike Sanyal and Roy, who are self-taught in dance therapy and ‘not-taught’ in DMT, respectively, Prerna has university training in the method of dance movement therapy. After working with the children at Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy she felt the need to gain further knowledge of the therapeutic in dance and dexterity in method. Prerna applied to the Art Institute, Lesley University, Boston. She received the Fulbright Fellowship and went to learn expressive art therapies at Boston. She says:

I didn’t just go as a student but I also went as a lecturer (August 11, 2010).

The course included various forms of therapy and the expressive arts:

... role therapy, drama therapy, art therapy, all the expressive art therapies. I had to lecture a Masters class on how I have used Manipuri dance as therapy (August 11, 2010).

According to her the gentleness of the movements provides a valuable input to working with children whose brain functions are disrupted. Manipuri movement is different from other classical forms; its movements are soft and flowing. Unlike Bharatanatyam or Kathak where movements are mainly angular, it has circular movements. Such movement pattern has helped children with Cerebral Palsy in coordination and control of their body parts. Prerna was the first dancer who worked with children with cerebral palsy in Kolkata.

Evidently, to Prerna learning the technique of not only dance movement therapy but also other forms of expressive art therapies seemed indispensable for the kind of work she wanted to do. Training forms a major part of her ‘practice’. Returning from Boston she, with the support of her mentors in Manipuri dance, established Ashirvaad in December, 1995.

She distinguishes between what performance connotes to the general public and what the special children ‘expresses’.

If you look at performance, it is actually confined to very few, like people like Mamta Shankar who are pure performers—these children are not performers. We are giving them this opportunity to feel that they are part of society because this is such a

mainstream activity that if they think that they can dance and they can *perform* then they are part of the mainstream society (August 11, 2010).

Performing on stage before an audience gives the children a sense of achievement. She views this as functional for development of their personality. Says she:

...the moment they come on stage they get so, you know, charged that they are facing the audience, their posture improve, confidence level comes up, I have had so many children who have suddenly flowered into individual personalities after having given the performance... (August 11, 2010).

However Prerna is quick to point out the contrary as well. According to her this does not work for some who are shy by 'nature' and those whose parents do not want to give permission. She explains:

Because the parents feel that they don't want their children to be on stage. You see what happens when you are disabled and in case of certain disability of the severe kind the parents feel that it's a very private thing. They can come and dance in your classroom but they don't want them to be...you have to be very careful, it can't become a circus. It cannot become—you see the flip side of it, that it cannot become a kind of a gimmick (August 11, 2010).

Among all the three dancer-pioneers only Prerna has to be cautious about this aspect. In order to explain the perspective of parents who were averse to letting their child perform on-stage she narrated the story of 'The Elephant Man', a play written by Bernard Pomerance based on the life of Joseph Merrick, a man born with severe disabilities who was subsequently used as a spectacle in a circus. Prerna has to be careful that the dance performance by special children did not become a spectacle. For her, such performances are not merely shows where the art form is presented. These are sites where the children can participate and display their capacity in spite of the disabilities and thus feel empowered, respected. Hence the parents are consulted and only on their authorisation do the children perform before the public. The question of privacy in the context of special children's parents is one that has to be reckoned with. Again sometimes the child herself (or himself) says "I don't want to be part of it". Pal-Mehra reminds us that

You have to give them that right to choose... (August 11, 2010)

since the therapeutic concern is supreme and not performance. And of course the other side of it is that it works very well with most of the children. The bright side of it, according to her, is that special children can also dance and enjoy themselves. She affirms the healing role that public performance has played for such children, but not all can pull it off. She gives the example of an autistic child who cannot be presented before an audience as she does not have much control over herself and the thing would turn into an exhibition. To avoid such situations where the children are vulnerable to ridicule, Perna lays importance on choosing the appropriate subject for presentation and camouflaging the disability. Once, for a performance with children of the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, who

...are on wheel chairs, I had a scene where the train is moving—I dressed them up whole five wheel chairs as train bogies. So only the face shows through the window and the wheels are the train wheels and they moved across the stage. So the people didn't know they thought that these were people sitting on a train and moving but they were wheel chairs moving (August 11, 2010).

Such 'camouflaging' is meant not to be apologetic but to enhance their positive aspect, their talent and not enhance their disability before the audience.

Perna has integrated public performance in her repertoire of healing praxis. The classes that are held at Ashirvaad with special children commence on lines of regular dance therapy sessions beginning with warm-up exercises, group activity, some Manipuri steps and then relaxation. Music is played all along. Perna is assisted by her student Sharbari who conducts the regular classes with special children for a number of years now. She has been with Ashirvaad from 1997 onwards. With regard to the therapeutic in dance Sharbari says that for the special needs children creativity strengthens one's personal identity—that "I have created this"—this feeling is crucial.

Then collaboration—a number of persons together creating something—that means respecting each other's ideas have to be there. Taking everyone in one's stride—moving together with everyone, they experience all this through dance movement therapy (September 24, 2010).

All three pioneers affirm the healing role of the creative medium. Gini Sanyal puts special emphasis on the process of creating dance—choreographing—for those

reeling under the effect of complexes along with performing publicly. Alokanda Roy finds empathy, community bonding and ensuring the joyousness of dancing to be fundamental for improving the condition of the prison-inmates, while public performance provides the necessary incentive as well as interactions with the wider society. Prerna Pal-Mehra complements Manipuri movement patterns with techniques of expressive art therapies and public performance to help special children realize their agency and feel included in the so-called mainstream society. Each of their 'practice' seems to fall both within what Eugino Barba terms everyday and 'extra-daily' practices. Hence, from their narrations, therapeutic practice for the dancer-healer appears to be much more than just a certain kind of application of the art form. Readiness to innovate, empathy, intelligent application of training, sensitivity to the choices of the beneficiary and those related to them and using public performance not as promotional but empowering activity—the list of qualities cannot really have a finitude. Like life the healer's qualities too have to unfold in keeping with the affliction that urges redress.

Institution Building, Institutional Responses, Institutional Support

Ashirvaad

Ashirvaad, Prerna Pal-Mehra's school has a dual curriculum. It is a school for Manipuri dance and is also a school for Movement Therapy for children suffering from cerebral palsy. Her work with the special children is pioneering in the field of dance therapy in Kolkata. Over the years many students have passed out from her school, being established elsewhere she informs. Ashirvaad also gives awards for excellence to its students for their achievement. With the steady development of Ashirvaad their goodwill spread in this field. Gradually children with mental retardation started applying. This required them to rehash the method of dance therapy conducted till then because for a mentally challenged child grasping a form such as Manipuri or doing structured movements wasn't easy. Subsequently Prerna introduced free-style movement, creative movement; props came to be included more into the session.

Once Ashirvaad was established and started gaining ground, other institutions engaged in rehabilitation of special children and adults came forward to work in

alliance with them. It collaborates with organizations as Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, MENTAID³⁸, Manovikas Kendra³⁹, Kolkata and others on a workshop basis and not on a daily or yearly basis. In the classes at Ashirvaad the traditional pattern of dance therapy is followed, but this is not the case when they work at the collaborating organizations. For instance, in IICP, the form of disability is different from that of the children in Ashirvaad. The pattern differs as per the disability and the need of the children. With the IICP, they share “a special bond” as it was here that Prerna first started working with special children. Presently, the association of Ashirvaad with this organization is limited to workshops and projects. But their impact is “considerable” as such workshops usually are meant to train not only the special children, but also their educators. In the course of the workshops that Ashirvaad conducts in such organizations, the teachers attached with those institutions are incorporated in the therapy process. They thus become trained and get to learn the various ways in which they can work with the children. So, in a way, maintains Prerna, such workshops serve a twofold purpose of training both the student and teacher. Special effort is taken by Ashirvaad to involve the teachers as they are the ones who remain in the organization in the long run. Therefore, it’s believed that if they develop awareness through such workshop and training, they can implement those in their classes in future and help the children. In this way, through institutional collaboration Ashirvaad provides services for the wellbeing of children and adolescents with cerebral palsy. Their dancer-therapist Sharbari has a degree from the Indian Psychiatric Society, West Bengal, along with her qualifications in the field of dance.

Performances have also resulted from collaborating with other institutions. In the year 1999, Ashirvaad performed at ‘Virasat’, a show on the theme of ‘Nishkama Karma’ dedicated to the Indian soldiers and special children. It was organized by SPICMACAY⁴⁰ at Chennai. The next year, i.e. in 2000, Ashirvaad collaborated with

³⁸ MENTAID is a non-profit association for development of the Mentally Handicapped. It is exclusively formed by parents of the mentally handicapped children and adults and is the first organisation of its kind in West Bengal.

³⁹ Manovikas Kendra Rehabilitation and Research Institute for the Handicapped (MRIH), located at Kolkata, offers education, training, rehabilitation, and research facilities for the handicapped.

⁴⁰ Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture among Youth.

IICP to present 'A Quest for Harmony'—an integrated dance program. The aim of the program was to bring the special students on the same platform with the normal and to enhance their individual abilities and skills. The same year saw the students of Ashirvaad perform at 'UMANG 2000', a festival dedicated to the special children trust, at Shilpgram at Udaipur, organized by Western Zonal Cultural Centre, Udaipur. Twelve children accompanied Sharbari to Udaipur. In 2001, gifted special adolescents from Ashirvaad—Suryosekhar Basu and Marina Samuel, accompanied Sharbari to present a Manipuri dance recital at the special award giving ceremony of National Festival of Music and Dance, organized by the National Institute for Mentally Handicapped. The same year saw Suryosekhar Basu and Varnika Arora—two students of Ashirvaad accompanying Prerna in the performance of her choreographic composition 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram', at the Modern High School, Kolkata, thus marking the golden jubilee celebrations of the school. In 2003, Ashirvaad's special students performed in 'World Disabled Day' at Sisir Mancha, Kolkata, organized by the Government of West Bengal on 3rd December. They also performed at the 'Calcutta Festival' on 24th December, 2003, organized by the Calcutta Festival Committee at Kolkata Maidan. A day later on Christmas Day, they gave yet another performance at 'Vidyasagar Mela', at Kolkata Maidan. 2004 saw the special children of Ashirvaad enthralling the audience at Saturday Club as they performed in a cultural program organized by the Lion's Club on January 4, 2004. On November 14, 2010 Ashirvaad, in association with its collaborating organizations, presented 'Sangam', a performance where the so-called normal and special children, volunteers (I joined as a volunteer) and the dance therapist all participated. It was covered as a premium cultural event with the Governor of the State and other well-known artists being part of the audience.

Prerna's organization right from its inception, has received institutional support from other such non-profit organizations as well as from the State. This is mainly because Ashirvaad could live up to the promise of both curricula. Right from the time of its inception Prerna has taken an active part in presenting and promoting Manipuri dance. Her endeavours in this field has been to bring together most of the members of the older generation—Masters and Gurus of the dance form—in performances, apart from innovative choreographic projects which saw the youth of both West Bengal and

Manipur participating. This approach apparently gave her solid institutional footing. The community of Manipuri dancers in the early 90s was just recovering from an ugly controversy where one of its established gurus had been accused of fraudulent reproduction of an allegedly ancient manuscript⁴¹ containing discussions on the deep structure of Manipuri dance form, and many of the then-renowned cultural practitioners had got embroiled in it. Despite being his disciple, Prerna's sustained efforts at furthering the cause of the dance form through performances, research and community-interactions that generated knowledge of this cultural heritage of Eastern India, seems to have helped keep the light of 'creative effervescence' aflame.

Moreover, with her encouragement and support 'Hita' has been launched by Sharbari in 2000. They do not admit clients directly, instead through 'Hita' Sharbari and her assistants provide dance therapy to any organisation that requires it. Schools and organizations working for the benefit of special needs children and mentally retarded children as well as those working with girls from marginalized backgrounds are her clients. They have also held workshops where Titiksha Khanna and other internationally known dance therapists have participated. In this way Prerna's skill as dance therapists and their extensive work in this area have led to institutionalization beyond her own school.

SL

Institutionalisation of what Gini Sanyal was doing through dance came about very differently. Sanyal goes on animatedly:

In 1997/8, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper: it was a call to artists who want to do something different with their art forms. I jumped into it—not thinking whether I would get it or not, I knew I *had* to apply for the project. I made Tinku write out a proposal for that project. [*Gharer upor uthe gelam*⁴²]—"Tinku, you help me to write the proposal. I am saying it to you in Bengali." At that time, I *could not* write proposals at all. I didn't have that strong [command over] English. I knew how to dance, how to motivate people, could take you to hundred from zero—but I lacked certain things—I couldn't write that way at all then! I could write in Bengali, actually

⁴¹ Mystery of a Manuscript in the Telegraph, Calcutta 28.02.92.

⁴² Literally "Got onto her neck" in Bengali.

very well—was very strong. So, I said to her, that I will dictate, you write it down in English. I think in Bengali, sleep in Bengali—so my entire being is that, it is everything. After that, I sat down with her—these two friends occupy a major part of my life. Then Tunki sat down with me—that was the time when I used to perform also. I performed with ‘Nacher Karkhana’, I took part in dramas with Ganguli, I worked with them [the girls]—then I would be working from 6 in the morning to 1 at night—this was my schedule—doing everything simultaneously. Then I and Tunki sat down to write the proposal. The project was named ‘Rangeen Sapney’-- colourful dreams. Then I was supposed to go to Rajasthan for doing a show as that was an avenue of earning for me. Later when I had joined the research wing of ‘Kathaa’, they used to pay me Rs 1200. They had said that you do other work where you will get much well paid. But I wanted to work in dance only. What will I do working in the legal aspects? Therefore I didn’t. Then Tunki thoroughly helped me with that [proposal] and we wrote down ‘Rangeen Sapnay’. Then I asked Shaoni to format it and submit it. And these two friends of mine—they said, yes, yes, it’s nothing, not a problem. I said, “Shaoni, permission is required for this” (for submitting such proposals) since she had very cordial relations with the social welfare department and could manage to acquire that permission for us (December 27, 2009).

Weber has written:

The mere fact of recognizing the personal mission of a charismatic master establishes his power (Weber 1978: 1115).

Her friends seem to have ‘recognised’ her calling. The project, which stitched together techniques such as self-expression through art and dance, group interactions, role play, rights education etc., was written duly and with the help of her other friends who “managed the legal and official side”. Her project was sanctioned and that was the first time she drew her salary from her own project. She acknowledges the role of ‘Kathaa’ in speeding up the process—had they not allowed her to go ahead with it and then let her take over then it would have taken another ten years perhaps for Sanyal to get started says she. This project was implemented in 1999-2000 with support from the government. Over this one year Sanyal began working with one hundred and twenty children covering four red-light areas in Kolkata and two shelter homes belonging to ‘Kathaa’. Children between six and fourteen years participated in these weekly sessions. She involved two-three other artist as well for physical theatre and

mime, because these are movements other than dance which help too. The project was a great success and the participating children from Kathaa's shelter demanded that the project be continued. Gini claims that 'Rangeen Sapney' gave her the opportunity of doing different things.

Then only I could do dance therapy—I could do *a lot* of things through this (project)—I could do events, take the children to summer camps, organize shows. I didn't have to look elsewhere [for the money]—it could be done entirely through this project. *Then*, from that it [a realization] came out that if we could have a platform from which we can speak through dance. From that SL was created in 2000—a platform emerged (December 27, 2009).

SL started in 2000 as a semi-autonomous programme within 'Kathaa', who worked with a group of 25-30 children including HIV+ children, rescued child prostitutes, children who have been trafficked, adolescent mothers. Evidently, this opening which granted her access to interact and work with so many children gave Gini the needed confidence and opportunity to create her own circle of associates who benefitted from her activity. Subsequently it was noticed that many girls⁴³ at the shelter homes, who did not participate in verbal counselling, took part in Sanyal's dance 'classes'. She recounts,

As that platform came up, we had another thought. This question came up from amongst my co-founders, the senior trainers (the ones that you see [at SL]), that why cannot we think of dance as *alternative* therapy. Many girls did not sit for counselling in their respective shelter homes—in the quote-unquote verbal counselling. But they participate in this group [for dance]. That means, they can be healed through this itself. We started this *holistically*. I, with the help of these girls—along with me they started taking classes, inside the homes (December 27, 2009).

By the senior trainers she means the group of girls she had first worked with at the shelter home of 'Kathaa' who subsequently started working with her once their organization was established. All of them are former victims of trafficking who have undergone rehabilitation and intensive dance therapy. On being asked whether the

⁴³ I have limited the use of the word 'victim' consciously since I feel that that tends to project only a part of their 'being' that is an effect of events, not the rest of it which can become 'causative'.

surrounding. Clearly the Weberian delineation, that a charismatic 'hero' derives and retains his authority

... solely by proving his powers in practice. ...Most of all, his divine mission must prove itself by *bringing wellbeing* to his faithful followers...

is seen to play out in the field. For Gini, the 'community orientation' of her work was appreciated by people in the trade and Titiksha Khanna, the first trained dance therapist of India came forward to help her. She introduced her to the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA). A workshop was organized at the American Centre (USIS), Kolkata, where the staff of 'Kathaa' participated along with Titiksha and Gini in a video conference with dance therapists of the ADTA.

Sanyal recalls the uncertainty that marked that period. She was still not very sure of what she was doing, what the outcome of her endeavours would be since a lot of people reacted to her activities as merely teaching dance. They would even go on to say that she was showing dreams to a group of unfortunate people with no guarantee of them being realized. With 'Rangeen Sapney' becoming a platform since she had more responsibility, her conviction increased. She began to let her imagination soar:

We had thought out an alternative psycho-social rehabilitation, second, I had noticed that survivor skills of the victims are never given the importance they deserve—the rehabilitation activities include skills like sewing, block printing etc. which hardly capture the victims' imagination, we never admit the possibility of them becoming an artist or a computer teacher—things can be visualized at this scale too, but it is hardly ever done. I have seen a number of girls to possess artistic skill. My own skill is also in art—I wouldn't be able to become a block printer or computer engineer now (January 31, 2010).

Gini declares that her effort had been to pull at least ten girls out and give them the opportunity to be established in life. She believes that if the girls undergo proper healing, their trauma is overcome and then they would definitely learn and be in a position to visualize their future.

Her 'advanced' ideas of using dance movement therapy at different levels of psycho-social rehabilitation and en-skilling children of sex-workers and victims of child-trafficking got her into disagreement with those upholding the status quo. In an

anecdotal vein Sanyal narrates the incident when she had sent a proposal to an Indian grant-giving organization which replied with the sarcastic question of whether she thought her girls to be Mallika Sarabhai. To this, says Gini,

I wrote back, you can say that you wouldn't commission the grant, but regarding my girls you should speak with restraint and respect. It will be fruitful to remember that you are a mere clerk of the organization that you work for and therefore represent. Despite having learnt dance yourself you too haven't become another Mallika Sarabhai or anything near about. The question is not about becoming a Mallika Sarabhai, it is about the dignity of life. Your response only shows how little you consider that of importance in your scheme of things (December 27, 2009).

While a large number of people responded to her ideas as 'building castles in the air' she received the steady support of her colleague friends, who believed in her vision and were ready to take on any challenge that came in the way of realizing them. They resolved to stick to her ideas completely.

Her friend-colleagues Tunki and Shaoni at this point suggested that she write out and formulate the entire processual aspect of learning that she had envisioned. Sanyal called this curriculum 'Sampoornata' (fulfilment). She declares that the process is so designed that the one going through it would be able to realize her potential as a person, possibilities of her life and visualize her own future, and thus help herself. It includes familiarizing body (knowing your body and mind), developing improvisation skill (through exploring the body-mind co-ordination), group facilitation and therapy (exploring knowledge through movement and discussion), participation (movement, enjoyment, thinking, sensing, feeling), integration (exposure, performance, interaction, networking). 'Sampurnata' has three stages and its activities include training classes, workshops, group facilitation, performance, communication skill, improvisation skill, interactive sessions, theoretical knowledge on art and education, report writing and documentation. Gini reiterates:

My curriculum explores the hidden and suppressed anger and guilt that lie deep within the victims and helps them to come to terms with their bodies. This is the key for the rehabilitation of the victims because many of them abhor their body as they consider it impure after having been repeatedly violated and abused by strange men.

After rehabilitation, when the girls get employed, often they leave half way because trouble there—their body language need to be worked on during the rehabilitation period, before they are exposed to dealing professionally with the outside world. Proper rehabilitation would place the victims on an equal footing, if it succeeds in this then the girls will search out opportunities in life themselves. Simultaneously my curriculum opens up new spaces for the victims to interact with the society at large and presents itself as a career option for them—as performers, lobbyists using cultural form, and as trainers and peer educators (January 31,2010).

Evidently, her ground training in sociology has come in handy.

Gini wrote to fifty organizations for financial support. Institutional support was not forthcoming. The government did not consent to pay. Since this endeavour was of a pioneering nature people did not feel it a safe venture perhaps. Gini observes that people are generally scared and disinclined to experiment. At this time Titiksha Khanna nominated her name for the Ashoka Fellowship. The Ashoka Fellowship, the Virginia-based non-profit society, is an international initiative which awards people with exemplary skills or leadership qualities. Her work process was heard out in detail and her work evaluated for one whole year. The organization saw it fit to mentor her in the way her work should be presented to the general public. At the Fellowship board she sat with a translator, the panel was divided fifty-fifty regarding her case: half supported her getting the fellowship, half did not. She finally received it in 2003. The Fellowship turned the tables for her, people started listening to her ideas and taking them seriously. Her friends wrote articles about her work in the media post the Fellowship. She also received a small grant from the Dayawalka Foundation. In 2003 they also performed at the Asia Social Forum. By this time the girls who were part of SL were asking her to form an independent organization as they wanted to be part of it. On World Dance Day, April 29, 2004, SL was registered.

On receiving the Ashoka Fellowship, the grant from the Dayawalka foundation and their performance activities Gini started giving stipend to the girls as a mark of the dignity of labour. The girls were instructed to spend this money for educational purposes. She opened bank accounts for each and they were encouraged to make savings for themselves. SL, the independent organization for providing dance movement therapy, in this way, began with five girls.

SL worked with two organizations in the beginning, both working against human trafficking. One of them paid her though a meagre sum, while the other did not. To raise money they then decided to perform professionally. The girls were still living in shelter homes. Sanyal began doing consultancy in dance movement therapy. In 2004 Christian Aid invited them to perform at the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, London. At this time, some of the girls left the shelter homes and went back to live with their families. SL's first stable office was at the third-floor store-room of the Dayawalka Foundation's office in South Kolkata. It was a two feet by two feet room where they started work. Before that she would be given a small place to sit in her friends' offices for a while—that support from friends was always there.

Gradually SL's goodwill in the sector developed and word of the usefulness of their skills spread. They were summoned from the All Bengal Women's Union shelter home, which is a unit run by the government of West Bengal. In this way the response of other social institutions gradually changed. They started getting calls to provide their services. Gini wrote about their work to different donor agencies as well and the UNIFEM responded to her. The UNIFEM in 2006 gave a considerable grant which enabled her to employ five of the girls with a salary. She says that the UNIFEM's grant is mainly responsible for the present scale of SL. Till date SL has worked with around forty to forty-five national and international organizations on contractual, workshop and regular basis. Apart from India they provide their services to South Korea, Bangladesh, Nepal. From suburban West Bengal to World Dance Alliance, SL is at present well-connected locally and globally. These collaborations have not only helped SL in resource-building but also Sanyal personally in that dance therapists from international organizations have come forward to teach her as well as her colleagues. According to Gini, international collaborations help in speeding up collaborative processes in the national arena too. Now SL has grown organizationally, they have developed process, evaluation, case study, and in the next five years, hope to develop even more. She says SL has fourteen trainers, and eight under training, currently, from the initial five.

The primary focus group of SL is the trafficking survivor and survivor of violence, the secondary group consists of the mentally challenged and marginalised community, and the third group is the corporate and mainstream people. The classes have a

of intellect and morals, such as that readily engendered by the exercise of the same profession (Durkheim 1984: liii).

In an age of competition and in a sector such as that of the non-governmental organization Titiksha Khanna's guidance reinforces Durkheim's vision. However the 'mutuality' of such assistance was not mentioned in the interview.

Both Sanyal and Roy has come face-to face with the stigma that middle-class morality associates with dance, sex-workers and victims of trafficking and prisoners. Gini alleges that initially people did not want to accept this idea of dance healing people. She encountered stereotypical attitudes towards dance, either as a form of entertainment or a high profile performing art. She has had to hear 'no' from a number of sources. Dance itself involves a negative connotation, a stigma in middle-class, 'conservative' perception. It took some time to get acceptance from the community. From working with two organizations to twenty-eight it has taken time and perseverance.

The aspect of livelihood creation (those that SL heals can become therapists) has invited scepticism from various quarters. It was seen as impossible and as an unrealistic dream. But she stuck to it. She asserts that the girls she worked with in the beginning *have* discovered their potential and have been able to change their life conditions. They began on a small stipend and in the absence of grants the first two years they worked without salary. At this time performances formed a source of income. Being able to provide for themselves through cultural performance during lean years gave the girls self-confidence.

The next challenge is posed by the popular expectation of immediate results. Participants often expect things to change within a month. But that isn't realistic as real change is a gradual process points out Sanyal.

Lack of academic ability on the part of the girls is another challenge. A difficult time is when during the training period they have to study, they find the particular kind of effort new, hard and taxing. Initially there were a lot of drop-outs because of this. So the process was changed and made to suit their abilities, which includes communicative English, literacy through computer and the like. They are provided with a knowledge-bank which includes literature on human-rights, self-awareness,

and knowledge of the subject. The trainers are trained for a whole year. Some even require two years. For the average person going through the normal schooling process, it takes at least ten years to sit for the class ten examination, Gini says,

I can't expect a person from no-literacy background to become a therapist in just one year. We help them develop their sense of self. We have a resource persons team consisting of ten-twelve persons. The girls initially have problem with writing, but the thought of writing a paper on one's own experiences and life excites them. But first we focus on trauma release, healing, developing their sense of self, envisioning their own future. Until they are confident about themselves we do not move ahead (January 31, 2010).

While on the one hand the condition and status of the individual-worker in terms of 'how ready she is' to heal others is evaluated by her, Gini herself undergoes regular treatment for high degree epilepsy. Late nights, intermittent and stress-inducing meal habits and a general restlessness characterised her. Within five months of my completing field work with them she suffered a blackout while travelling and had to be hospitalised. But after gaining consciousness, Gini proudly declares that she signed the risk-bond and left the place. Post the incident her daily routine has been overhauled for a more 'healthy' one. This brings up the question of discipline and she voices her perception:

I am a disciplined person myself. I do not heckle people with small things like sticking to the clock regarding appearing at the office. I don't penalise employees if they are five minutes late. However I do not accept compromise on commitment and insist upon it (January 31, 2010).

For the therapy sessions, punctuality is a must—the therapists are supposed to reach fifteen minutes in advance, they cannot be late there, insists Sanyal.

I insist on their commitment towards the beneficiary. This is a choice that they make and have to live up to; nothing has been thrust on them. The people who have worked in SL have all been satisfactory so far. I delegate a lot of responsibility—encourage employees to go out of station to places like Delhi and participate in conferences. Moreover since this is a creative organization and one is into creativity all the time that takes away much of the pressure and is itself a source of rejuvenation. Problems will always be there. One or two people do not understand or do not want to

understand—they cannot be sent as senior trainers to clients. But we help them develop other facets of their personality. If the person is a good performer and not a therapist, she is employed as a performer and as an office assistant. I look upon these as challenges, which are really opportunities to learn and work better (January 31, 2010).

The creative nature of the work is seen to be a stress-absorbent, and opportunities of exposure in terms of representing the organisation and show-casing the kind of work that it does, is considered significant for developing ‘people skills’.

TcW

Institutionalization of Alokanda Roy’s dance ‘classes’ in the Presidency Correctional Home and the establishment of the NGO TcW, in her account, did not quite follow a rational, well-planned course. Each level unfolded ‘organically’, not following the logic of a bureaucratic structure. The inmates whom Roy encountered were all novices in dance. She explains that had she stuck only to classical movements while introducing dance to the inmates, they might have opted out. According to her, the moment they started enjoying, others got inspired and others also joined and that is how this whole process started. She adds that, maybe now some of them may want to join because they feel that they might be able to go out once in a while to perform, and that is a really big incentive; but when they first started, it was not for that incentive as they didn’t even know that they would be performing.

Elaborating on her experience of working with the male prisoners, Ms Roy flatly points out that beginning from the first day, she has never faced any resistance from the male convicts. They had only expressed some reservation against dancing which they earlier thought was ‘girlish’. After being convinced that they were going to learn manly dances, they had come to dance. Initially ten boys came and that later expanded to sixty. And there are reserve batches of boys from the Midnapore Jail who have formed a little group of ‘chhau’⁴⁵ dancers. She wanted to include as many of them as possible, so there was much of ‘chhau’ in her productions. Roy feels their inclusion

⁴⁵Chhau is a genre of Indian tribal martial dance whose origin is attributed to Mayurbhanj, an erstwhile princely state of Orissa which is popular in the Indian states of Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal. There are three subgenres of the dance, based on its places of origin and development, Seraikella Chhau, Mayurbhanj Chhau and Purulia Chhau (Claus 2003:109).

has given the production an edge since unlike other civilian dancers, these boys who have come from the Midnapore Jail are eager to do rehearsals all the time throughout the day. Two or three months before any programme, they come and stay in Kolkata at a stretch and practice incessantly. This is the reason, she feels, why their productions manage to have such good finish. Those who dance were all moved to the same ward that is now called the 'dancers' ward' and given 'medical diet' which includes egg, bread, milk and fish, as an incentive.

There are mostly men in her 'troupe', and so the first production was based on martial and folk dances. For her performances Roy can take only convicts now, since they come out on parole, give their performances and again return to jail. Most of the women are under-trials and they cannot come out to perform, though they can attend the dance 'classes'. Their performance is naturally not of a high standard. Some learn just for the joy of learning. Regarding the numerical paucity of women participation in her productions, she says that she can take only convicts and not under-trials since the latter have court cases pending against them which means they fall under judicial authority. For the under trials, the court at times gives permission, at times it does not. The situation is more promising for the convicts since they are under the direct authority of the I.G and he cooperates completely. In all there are twelve girls in her troupe and the rest are boys—a fact that necessitates her to think always in lines of male oriented dance dramas, as of now.

I asked the caste and religious background of those who dance. According to her, the participants come from different caste and religious backgrounds. Of them most are Hindus and Muslims while Christians are few. Many are members of the scheduled castes as well. Since they all live together in the prison, she opines that caste does not make much of a difference. There has not been any problem as such on these lines, may be a difference once in a while. She attributes these to confinement:

... being confined in a place one is influenced by some other people as well. But most of these boys and girls who dance have a different kind of mindset now. They have got the taste of stardom having performed outside. This difference between them doesn't hamper the classes. Sometimes they tell me sometimes they don't and sort it out among themselves. Most of the times it has nothing to do with religion (Interview, June 2, 2010).

In 'Valmiki Pratibha', she says, there are 55 participants including her (she plays Devi Saraswati). Out of fifty-five, fifty are prison-inmates, while she has involved four policemen as well. They play the roles of hunter in the production. There is again a little girl who is a daughter of a staff member. Elaborating on these, she tries to emphasize on the fact that it is very much a 'family affair'. She has involved no one from outside and to the inmates she is no longer an outsider. However this was not an easy process, as initially some of the prison staff was quite apprehensive about the merit of dancing and singing inside the jail. This has changed since, and now, she points out, these people also participate and feel proud of the fact that something like this is being done in their prison department.

Emphasizing on the fact that all aspects of these productions are actually created by the convicts, she says that all the stage props of 'Valmiki Pratibha' are made by them in confinement. Even the textiles, with which the costumes are made, are woven by them. There in jail, they weave in machines, do "outstanding" zardosi work, i.e. they put in their labour as tailors. They also make the 'mashals' (light torches); the bows and arrows as also the exquisite paper-flowers (lotuses) used by the 'bonodebi s' (angels of the forest in 'Valmiki Pratibha').

Then there is the peacock, owl and swan—all enacted by the 'chhau' dancers and they are self-made and look real (Interview, May 28, 2010).

Just as Durkheim invokes the example of the family in being "the environment where, for the first time, men have learnt to appreciate the outpouring of feeling" (Durkheim 1984: lii) when discussing the functionality of future 'corporations', Roy too invokes the same institution in a bid to express the kind of communion that exist among the people connected to dance in the correctional home. The common interest in dancing and performing is a thread that binds them now. Before, the labour that they undertook in the jail was monotonous and alienating but now the Prisoners' Fund has been constituted by the authorities at the Correctional Home, where a part of the income from the public performances is deposited, which accrues to the prisoners when they have family obligations to fulfil like in the daughter's wedding and educating the children. After successful performances they are given 'reward parole' of five days to visit their families without police escort. Hence even if participation in Roy's dance 'classes' is viewed as 'labour' in this context, instead of alienating the

producers from themselves, their products of labour, the process of production and their fellow-producers, it has served to forge deeper confraternal ties and sense of self-fulfilment. Right from dancing together, making the props together, staying together and practicing for long hours to giving brilliant performances along side the prison-staff and the I.G. in 'elite' cultural forms depicting themes that are identifiable and earning money that allows them to fulfil their family obligations as well as social respect from the 'cream' of the socio-cultural world as also the general public, it is hard to see such labour as alienating. Roy underscores the change in the attitude of the law-keepers as well as the inmates:

You know, we have been performing in Rabindra Sadan⁴⁶; about ten or twelve times we have been there. Now, officers keep changing, the staff keep changing—the people who have watched us. You know now it's just a formality. They even don't look at that side. Sometimes my boys, if there is a new officer, new staff or guard who's there, they will tell them—"Sir there's the gate there also, so guard it". (Laughs) See that's the kind—they'll never do anything like that! Where will they run away? They say, "Ma, from what? Will we ever be able to survive if we try to escape? We won't. We will still be on the run all the time. But here we are getting so much love and respect" (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

All this came about, she insists, because those participating enjoyed themselves through a worthwhile pursuit and because emotions were genuine on both sides—nothing was imposed from above.

On her experiences as a 'visitor' in jail, Alokanda Roy says that when she went in there the first time, she was unaware of the way things are inside. She says that the prisoners perhaps took her to be from some NGO who has come to make money. This changed when an incident happened. One day it was very hot and one of the boys fell ill. Seeing that, she suggested giving him some water. They gave him water to drink and that didn't have much effect. Then, she took some water and patted it all over his head, his neck, behind the ears, on his face like one should do and she stroked her head, trying to make him feel better. In reaction, the boy just kept on looking at her through his big eyes. Roy felt that he wished to say something but couldn't somehow

⁴⁶ One of the best-known auditoriums of Kolkata.

utter them. Then he expressed his wish to dance, but she didn't allow that and asked him to sit next to her. She says, till then she had no idea that those men and women, girls and boys, inside were treated almost like untouchables by the outside world; that nobody touches them and her gesture was unique. Roy reminisces:

And then the next day he wrote a note to me—it said I don't remember my mother but now when I close my eyes and I think of my mother I see your face—you really love us, don't you? (Interview, May 28, 2010).

She emphasises that all this has been a moving experience for her. If she doesn't go there for a week, they stop eating. Then she talks of a boy who gifted her 'kalmi shaak' (a variety of spinach) and called her to inform that his elder son had passed the madhyamik (tenth standard), his daughter had been admitted to class X, but the youngest son had failed. She believes these people, even when they are acquitted, continue considering her as family.

They all call (phone) me if they are far away—they all come to visit me (Interview, May 28 2010).

Then there is the one who plays 'Valmiki'. He works with her now and, she says, is known and loved by all her students. She points out that he is a very bright boy and has been acquitted.

She speaks at length about the special bond that she shares with these people. I quote her:

I am their ma; they all call me ma. I didn't become ma overnight. They used to all call me ma'am or didi. But gradually I think the bonding developed. I used to go once a week, then it became twice a week and then thrice a week and before each programme I go everyday. ...The bonding that has grown in time and I just cannot ignore this relationship. All their families have become dependent on me emotionally. It's a huge responsibility and a tremendous emotional... (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

As an example of the kind of bonding that has grown Roy mentions a child who keeps calling from Purulia and requests her to send her father back from prison since he is very young and the mother is bedridden with high fever. She tries to console him

saying that she will inform the prison authorities immediately but is not sure whether they will let him go. Then there are also occasions when parents call her to enquire about their sons.

The establishment of TcW is attributed to being an effort of her part to honour her commitment towards the prisoners and their families. It has been established only recently (July 2009) while the prison workshops have been there since 2007. A brick structure has been established in a suburban site of Kolkata. There she is trying to set up a home for the prisoners' children as she observes that they grow up with a lot of stigma and with the knowledge that the society may not accept them as mainstream. There she wishes to give them quality education. Along with those children, that place will also have those women prisoners who are not accepted back by their families. She says,

After their release-they will stay as house mothers. They can take care of the children (Interview, June 2, 2010).

For the men, she is in search of job opportunities. The response of the middle-class is lukewarm. Roy says that she tries to convince people to give them work saying that they would prove to be more trustworthy than normal people, because they have lost the trust once and now they will try everything to preserve it. When TcW was launched she sought to include not only the children of the convicts but other children from 'normal' background as well so that the former do not feel isolated but the committee members objected to the idea saying that the parents of 'normal' children might object. She is trying to admit prisoners' children in some schools. But in most educational establishments arrogance is greeting her instead of opportunities. She sighs that the parents need to be educated first.

Sharbari too harbours similar views regarding the attitude of the wider society towards special needs children. She encounters a lot of people who have very negative ideas about these kids. They don't even realize that mad and mentally challenged are two very different things. The latter is a condition—it can never be cured. One can only improve. One has to accept this. In her experience:

The main problem becomes dealing with parents, because in our society there is a huge expectation from children (September 24, 2010).

The moment such a child is born to the family accepting the truth as early as possible is most important, which most people fail to do. Expectations from the child remain. She says:

So when they come here—some of them expect that from this therapy they will be completely cured, but they are mentally challenged. Had they been ill, even then there could be chances of being cured, like for example the emotionally disturbed, but if the child is mentally retarded then it is a condition, not an illness. So they cannot really be cured like that. But the parents can hardly accept that. Every moment they hope that the child will be fully cured (September 24, 2010).

Therefore, Sharbari feels that a certain clarification and counselling of the parents become crucial. Giving voice to the kind of expectations that she faces sometimes directly and at other times indirectly:

The expectation remains that I have given my child under a qualified dance teacher so there will be some kind of a miracle, she or he will dance beautifully. And even when they know about all the limitations, the parents expect that when they will be on stage, they will “do something”. So we have to make sure that we don’t give them any false hope or promises. This is how good as it would get. This is a great task (September 24, 2010).

She mainly has to deal with mothers. According to her, until the mother reaches equilibrium the child suffers, because the child will be with the mother all the time. Regarding the child their focus is on development. However she is quick to add that since this is a developmental disability they improve in time.

When you are working with special children the process is very slow. It takes time—quite a lot of time. But the parents sometimes can’t give that time. They are most of the time so frustrated—that they think that I am sending him, paying and still there is no improvement---he is just the same. But then definitely I wouldn’t say that everyone takes the same time. Some show improvement early, some take more time. Improvement is definitely there however small, I feel it is important to inform the parents of that improvement, however small. From this they derive certain positivity—giving them a positive feedback is important (September 24, 2010).

Stigma is a burden that ex-prisoners also have to carry all through their life because of their jail term. Roy says in the villages it's perhaps different, but in the cities it's very difficult.

You know they (the urban middle-class) watch, they appreciate, they sympathise but they don't accept them as one of them. But we all know there are so many white-collared offenders, criminals you can call them, who are walking free—outside (Interview, May 28, 2010).

She feels it is money power, connections that allow these people to walk free. Roy advocates strongly for the convicts when she says:

I also know the way these boys have been used by people. Somebody had asked me once, why do you think that we should support them? So many people have suffered because of them etc. I said, we may look at it that way, but there are other ways of looking at it. There are many of them who have been used, and they have been used for their poverty. Now the people who use them are they not criminals? Are they not offenders? But they get away.....I say this because even though they are reformed when I saw the change in them that's when I thought of doing 'Valmiki Pratibha' because they are all my 'Valmikis'—they have been 'Ratnakars' before....I am proud to say that so many boys who have been released they have been replaced by new boys. ...nobody is born a convict. Why do they do what they do I am at least nobody to judge. If I was in their position I don't know what I would have done. So I just look at them as human beings (Interview, May 28, 2010).

Again she underscores her 'perception' of the inmates as human beings and a non-judgemental attitude, which is backed by cutting criticism of the so-called middle-class morality that thrives on 'otherization' and not self-improvement. Both Roy and Sanyal's actions with regard to their beneficiaries have been what Goffman (1986) calls the 'wise'. Goffman considers two sets of individuals from whom the stigmatized person can expect some support: those who share his stigma and the 'wise' that is persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan. Wise persons, according to him, are the marginal men before

whom the individual with a fault need feel no shame nor exert self control knowing that in spite of his failing he will be seen as an ordinary other. He further elaborates:

Before taking the standpoint of those with a particular stigma, the normal person who is becoming wise may have first have to pass through a heart-changing personal experience, of which there are many literary record. And after the sympathetic normal makes himself available to the stigmatized, he often must wait their validation of him as a courtesy member. The self must not only be offered, it must be accepted. Sometimes, of course, the final step does seem to be initiated by the normal (Goffman 1986: 28-29).

Like Sanyal who saw the urgency of rehashing the existent rehabilitation process to include body-language management to face and work in the world outside the shelter home, Roy feels the need for proper rehabilitation processes when the prisoners are released. She says:

I always say that when they come out they need guidance. ... The world outside is different from the life they experience inside the jail. We always say that it is easier to know people when they are inside. But outside in the world, it's a different ballgame altogether. According to Vikram⁴⁷, we all wear a mask and I feel it is true. So it is when they come out of jail, it is then that they actually need the guidance. It may be through dance again, but it is again difficult for them to continue dance as such since they also have to do something for their livelihood. So they tell us that they cannot dance (Interview, June 2, 2010).

Surviving among the so-called normal people with limited sources of income therefore sets in motion another level of struggle for the ex-inmate. Goffman's observations regarding normal- stigmatized interface are not far from what they face. Including himself among the 'normal' in his classic style Goffman writes:

The attitudes we normals have toward a person with a stigma, and the actions we take in regard to him, are well-known, since these responses are what benevolent social action is designed to soften and ameliorate. By definition, course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of

⁴⁷ The person who enacts the role of 'Valmiki' in 'Valmiki Pratibha'. He is an ex-convict who has been acquitted and he is presently pursuing his M.A in Human Rights and assisting Alokanda Roy in TcW.

discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalising an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class. We use specific stigma terms such as cripple, bastard, moron in our daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery, typically without giving thought to the original meaning. We tend to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one, and at the same time to impute some desirable but undesired attributes, often of a supernatural cast, such as “sixth sense”, or “understanding”. ...Further, we may perceive his defensive response to his situation as a direct expression of his defect, and then see both defect and response as just retribution for something he or his parents or his tribe did, and hence a justification of the way we treat him (Goffman 1986: 5-6).

Conclusion

Unapologetic and uncompromising in their stand regarding their beneficiaries Roy and Sanyal insist that the change has been effected *within*. Working together, healing together through a common medium, enjoying together and presenting together have forged “a great spirit of brotherhood”, with commonality of interest increasing the “spiritual kinship”. The gradual strengthening of bonds between the prisoners and Roy which have led them to call her ‘Ma’ is reminiscent of Roman corporations as discussed by Durkheim (1984:xli) where the patron and patroness of the collegiums often assumed the title of father and mother. Roy states that such an intercourse has changed her as well, though she does not ascribe the reason to some definite method. In her view, which she expressed in the university seminar on November 4, 2010:

Everybody is transformed including myself. I never thought I will ever—, I mean, through the gates of the jail I was going to attain my *moksha*. That’s one place I have never dreamt of. See, everything happens at the right time. Maybe if I went in ten years before, who knows, I may have just gone in to teach them dance, this connection might not have happened. There is always a right time when the Lord above makes you do. He feels that you can be his instrument. I feel blessed.

As most creative persons Roy leaves the final cause to Divine Grace. Replication of the process in other states is not considered as she likes to concentrate her efforts on one thing at a time.

In her seminal work *The Children of Nature: the Life and Legacy of Ramana Maharshi* (2010) among other theoretical, methodological and ethnographic interventions revolving around spirituality, pilgrimage, therapy, individual and social experience and organisation, Visvanathan records and analyses the way devotees of Maharshi Ramana relate to and live in Sri Ramanashramam. In her words:

To have given everything to the ashramam is a sign of one's privileged standing. They have left their homes because of being called by Ramana ...or requested to serve by the trustees. To join the Ramanashramam as a devoted server, one must show a predilection for silence, hard work and self-abnegation. Men, who have families, foreground their ashramam duties before conjugal, filial or parental loyalties. Ramana made no distinction between householders and renunciates and the tradition of friendship and solidarity continues. Lay monks may sometimes change orientation and marry, husbands and wives may on the other hand, turn celibate and so on (Visvanathan 2010: 230).

Understanding and performance of duties here become a space of privilege, freedom and contentment. Though the context is quite different in being a secular space of social work and running a non-governmental organization—far cries from membership in religious or mystic cults, yet echoes of transcending typical, mainstream aspirations of social life characterize responses from the 'pioneers'. Roy and Sanyal are each committed to their present way of life. In response to a question from a student at the seminar Roy said with a smile:

My family and my friends have given up on me. They know I am a jailbird now. And (laughs) I have no regrets. I dance and I have danced enough and I have my students. But in my dance school, there are no exams, no assessment—there are no competitions. They all learn for the joy of learning to dance, joy of dancing and then, when we perform I say because you have a commitment towards your work, there you have to deliver. On your own, you can do what you like—learn, don't learn, just come and enjoy, not going to be academics, right! So, I have been like this, a little free spirited. But this has given me the fulfilment of my life. As I said, when I walked through the gates of the jail, I didn't realize what I was walking into—I was walking into my fulfilment. More than them—I don't know what I have given them, they have given me hundred percent more than what I have contributed (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

She claims to be a lifer as far as dancing with the prisoners is concerned. Sanyal too expresses satisfaction with her life. She says that she has worked step by step towards this life and she would not give it up for the world. Her family-establishment is in Dumdum, where she does not live but has hired a house in South Kolkata. Though it has meant a pull on her purse-string she enjoys her independence and lives her dream. Incidentally she has stalled her plans of marriage as she feels it would come in the way of her work. Gini ends the interview on December 27, 2009 saying:

Getting married would mean that commitment for my work would get divided. I would not let that happen. I have non-negotiable values, and if it means that even those close to me leave, I would not have problems with that, but compromise of my chosen life-path is out of the question.

CHAPTER 3

HEALING THROUGH DANCE: EXPERIENCING THE DEEP STRUCTURE

Introduction

The use of dance as a healing ritual goes back to earliest human history. That art can heal is well accepted in contemporary psychology. The social spaces which afford such therapeutic activity are studios of dance movement therapists as well as spaces provided by certain institutions, like prisons, hospitals, shelter homes, rehabilitation centres, offices etc. for the benefit of their members and inmates. For purposes of my research into healing that is being carried out through dance I conducted my field work in Kolkata at three sites—the first is SL, a non-governmental organization based in West Bengal, promoting Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) as a therapeutic tool for the socio-economically vulnerable and underprivileged. The organization works with people from diverse backgrounds including survivors of violence and trafficking, street and platform-dwelling children, at-risk youths living in red-light areas or in slums, children living with HIV and AIDS and people with mental illness. SL uses DMT as an alternative approach to counselling, psychosocial rehabilitation and empowerment. The second site was TcW, a non-profit social organization in West Bengal working with inmates of correctional facilities in West Bengal. Registered in July 2009, it has been conducting workshops since 2007 within the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata. The third site was Ashirvaad, a centre for training and performance of Manipuri dance, and movement therapy specifically for special children in Kolkata. Both SL and Ashirvaad use dance movement therapeutic techniques which they have supplemented with their own methodology that includes relevant movements from some of the Indian classical dances. The kind of ‘healing’ generated by members of TcW in the Correctional Home is different from SL and Ashirvaad—dance therapeutic techniques are not ‘applied’ there in the way the latter follow its methods. Instead the inmates receive ‘cultural therapy’ in the form of an artist’s guild-like atmosphere of dancing together ‘just for feeling good’ and working

together (dancer-teacher, volunteers, inmates, staff, Additional Director-General of Correctional services) for performances. Data was collected through participant observation and unstructured, informal, in-depth recorded interviews.

In this chapter I discuss the 'deep structure' of the dance that has been used to heal people's lives in Kolkata. This includes an explication of the role of the dance movement therapist and dancer-teacher and the techniques used for improving the clients' lives. The meanings attached to the 'methods' by them are put forth which arise from training as well as experience. Indian dance forms that have been drawn from variously for this have been delineated. Facilitating special needs people constitute an important component of dance movement therapy. A separate section has been devoted to recording this. In the Indian context public performance assumes a salience that has been conceded by all therapists as well as dancer-teachers working here, even though it is held mostly to be incongruous with therapeutic concerns in the West. This has been understood contextually.

Dance Movement Therapy, Psychotherapy and the idea of Performance

Dance Movement therapy is a relatively new profession. The American Dance Therapy Association, founded in 1966, defines dance therapy as the psychotherapeutic use of movement (Chodorow 1991: 1). Dance therapy is based on the assumption that mind and body are in constant reciprocal interaction (Schoop 1974: 44). It is built on psychological and physiological concepts that emphasize the relationship of body and psyche. The definition adopted by the Association for Dance Movement Therapy (ADMT), England is more sophisticated:

Dance Movement Therapy is the use of expressive movement and dance as a vehicle, through which an individual can engage in the process of personal integration and growth. It is founded on the principle that there is a relationship between motion and emotion; by exploring a more varied vocabulary of movement, people experience the possibility of becoming more securely balanced yet increasingly spontaneous and adaptable. Through movement and dance, each person's inner world becomes tangible; individuals share much of their personal symbolism and in dancing together relationships become visible. The dance

movement therapist creates a holding environment in which such feelings can be safely expressed, acknowledged and communicated (Payne 1992:3).

Currently Dance Movement therapy in the U.K. has been subsumed within Psychotherapy being considered as the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process to further their emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration. It is founded on the principle that movement reflects an individual's patterns of thinking and feeling. Through acknowledging and supporting clients' movements the therapist encourages development and integration of new adaptive movement patterns together with the emotional experiences that accompany such changes. Dance Movement Psychotherapy is practiced as both individual and group therapy in health, education and social service settings and in private practice. Kashyap (2005) explains:

There are instances of people having danced till they reached a point of exhaustion to overcome their sadness or depression. Many speak about feeling energised after these cathartic experiences. There is a rationale for this—when we dance, the body's most natural urge to move is satisfied, special neurotransmitter substances in the brain called endorphins get increased thus creating a sense of well-being, the blood circulation gets enhanced, the body releases certain toxins as it sweats, stress and tension accumulated in different body parts are relieved and people stop thinking for a while! Most important of all dancing relaxes us and serves as an outlet for suppressed feelings or thoughts and makes the body alive and alert (Kashyap 2005:7).

Kashyap (2005) draws a parallel between psychotherapy and dance therapy. A psychotherapist encourages clients to clarify workings of the mind and express feelings, thoughts or ideas through the verbal medium and resolve specific conflicts. In contrast, a dance therapist uses the medium of body movement to elicit self-expression from participants. Participants interact through the movement teased out from their bodies which are eventually used to interpret individual psychologies and meet certain therapeutic goals. Many people do not feel comfortable expressing themselves verbally. In some cases, children who have undergone emotional or physical trauma find it less threatening to express themselves through movement or music. Moreover, adults who fail to communicate through words have been able to

express themselves through drama or visual art. For example in Ashirvaad dance therapy is used to help children with cerebral palsy and mental retardation, SL provides therapy to victims of trafficking, domestic violence and other marginalized groups, many of whom suffer stigmatized social identities. When people dance together, relationships and bonds are forged almost instantly. After a certain amount of trust grows in groups they are able to open up verbally to share undisclosed feelings or thoughts though that is not central to the healing process. Most movement practitioners note that there are “connections between the workings of our mind and our movements” (Kashyap 2005: 18). This happens both consciously and unconsciously. Therapists work with the premise that certain changes occurring on the movement level could affect the entire being and functioning of individuals. For example, specific slow-paced directional movements of the hands combined with certain breathing patterns calm the mind and bring down stress levels in individuals. As they move to music and learn to coordinate their body parts better, they gain movement precision and enhance their rhythm synchrony. These successes can heighten people’s self-esteem and make them feel more self-assured. Dance therapy is also based on the belief that our body language reveals various facets of our personality. Our bodies are like canvases on which the essence of our history is inscribed.

The theoretical framework which I have used to understand the process of healing occurring through dance is Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration. This is because from my position of the ‘observant participant’ the proceedings within the therapeutic setting and outside best exemplified the “duality of structure”⁴⁸ that the concept of structuration implies. Movement therapy sessions are seen by therapists as a microcosm of real-life situations. Rather than encouraging clients to use dance as an escape valve to drift away from problems, therapists attempt to address these problems and assist in generating plausible solutions. Activities like role playing, trust games, movement tasks using props or working with emotional expression, imagery and story-telling are often used. Changes that take place within these sessions are

⁴⁸ The rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction (Giddens 1984:19).

supposed to influence a person's behaviour and actions in everyday situations as well (Kashyap 2005).

Creative dance promotes a synergetic relationship between therapists and participants. According to Kashyap (2005) using a session like a laboratory, they jointly experiment and play with movements—the less conventional an idea or movement, the richer and more exciting the experience. In her view as people improvise movements, intuition comes into play, the body thinks aloud, producing movements that depict the needs or feelings of the person. No judgments are passed on whether a movement is right or wrong. In fact participants are constantly acknowledged for expressing their creative ideas through their bodies. Kashyap clarifies:

Creative dance therapy provides an introspective and expressive experience in which the therapeutics of dance, rather than a choreographed product, is of primary importance (Kashyap 2005:11).

Evidently in the land of its origin dance-therapy practice does not include performance. This is because, as pointed out by the American dance therapist Bonnie Bernstein whom I met during my field work at SL, the idea of performance implies the existence of an 'audience' who "watch". Such "watching" seemed to signify a lack of feeling at best, and voyeurism at worst—each 'harming' in its own way. Performance also meant a certain 'finished presentability' that should not be expected of one who is "ill". It becomes an added pressure and hence detrimental to the therapeutic cause. Though contemporary practitioner-theorists of performance are taking the concept of 'audience' to a different level in that the past western model of the perceptive but passive audience is being contested for participatory spectatorship (Schechner 1971), "bodily co-presence of actors and spectators" (Fischer-Lichte 2008) I could understand her 'meaning'. Kashyap has dealt with this differently. She cautions therapists against allowing 'outsiders' to observe sessions. In her view:

Being observed makes participants either feel ill at ease or turns them into exhibitionists. For some activities, the group itself could be divided into performers and viewers. One group could perform while the other watches and they could reverse roles (Kashyap 2005:95).

However, she could not dispense with ‘performance’ altogether. In India, Kashyap (2005) explains that the performance aspect had to be included in dance therapy because dance is predominantly perceived as a performing art. Directors of some educational centres where she worked felt children should perform what they had learnt at the end of the year—in whatever form. Rather than disagreeing completely, Kashyap struck a compromise. The first six months were devoted to dance therapy and the last three months were used to develop a performance based on themes and movements that emerged in the therapy session. This is also followed by SL, and Ashirvaad in Kolkata.

The notion of ‘witness’, rather than ‘audience’, fits better in the context of dance therapy. In SL and in Ashirvaad the participants as well as the therapist are taken to be witnesses of one’s strivings towards clarity, expression and fulfilment. This encourages a collaborative atmosphere which is supposed to enhance wellbeing and feelings of integration.

The Dance Therapist

Within the dance therapy session the therapist’s role includes functions of a leader, healer and in certain contexts, teacher, to some extent. She⁴⁹ is supposed to accompany the beneficiary in her journey of being healed— sometimes leading, sometimes facilitating, at other times curing and suggesting or teaching better ways of being. Some theorist-practitioners like Kashyap opine that there is a world of difference between a “leader” and a “teacher” here. She points out that these creative-therapeutic workouts need a catalyst who can work collaboratively with people, suggest options and nurture creative expression. To elicit movements from people words are to be used such that they evoke people’s imagination rather than an intellectual description of the movements (Kashyap 2005: 92-3).

Dance therapists function within individual, clinical contexts as well as group settings. In India mostly group settings are prevalent. A leader’s creativity is of much

⁴⁹ I use the pronoun she, taking it as inclusive of the ‘he’, as well since writing he or she each time becomes cumbersome.

value since this type of work hinges on her inventiveness. In case activities do not work out the way she envisaged, she should be able to innovate alternative activities that help achieve her goal. The therapist has to create an atmosphere for participants to be open and honest while verbally sharing their experience within these sessions. This is enhanced further if the group maintains confidentiality outside the sessions. When facilitating in group situations she has to pay individual attention to each member and yet not treat one with more familiarity than the other. Therapists try to assess the physical, emotional, intellectual level of their clients and encourage them to articulate their needs and issues through informal approaches like movement activities and games. Facilitators try to elicit movements that are considered symbolic of the inner voices of individuals (Kashyap 2005:9). Using creative strategies, therapists encourage individuals to use movements that feel natural and fall easy on their bodies. They use both directive and non-directive approaches to help clients discover their range of motion, movement preferences, physical limits, strengths and creative abilities. The assumption and experience is that as the understanding of their own body movements grows, participants begin to explore their interpersonal skills with other group members. The challenge of the therapists is to promote mind-body unification through expressive movement while still providing instruction in the basic skills of dance (Levy 1988:34). Therapists plan their session carefully and encourage individuals to create a movement vocabulary bank into which they can plunge and choose whatever is suitable. With this vocabulary, a person shapes her own body language to achieve self-expression.

Chodorow (1991) brings up an important dimension of the dance movement therapist's vocation. According to her, when working with the expressive movements of the body in psychotherapy, it is natural at times to become aware of sexual energy and concerns about sexualising the therapeutic relationship. Being trained in dance movement therapy, which includes training in Jungian psychotherapy as well, Chodorow reminds us that these concerns are no different from those experienced in any type of psychotherapy or analysis as delineated by other authors (Rutters 1989). She writes:

Any depth psychological process leads to experiences of the instincts and affects. Naturally, the psychotherapist needs to understand the power of the transference and

hold clear boundaries. A psychotherapeutic relationship, by definition, cannot be a sexual relationship. To permit that is destructive, a betrayal of trust (Chodorow 1991:2, 3)

The craft of the therapist will further come out in the subsequent discussion of the techniques employed in dance movement therapy. Dance therapists work within the structure of certain rules that safeguard the clients' welfare. As an organization SL hands out a 'Code of Ethics' to its therapists⁵⁰. Worded in not so good English, they nonetheless communicate the basic idea to the 'trainers'. I quote:

A Dance/movement therapist:

- Will continue practicing (even upon completion of 100 hours curriculum of SL with clinical practice) and will not misinterpret DMT with dance or performance
- Take responsibility of the session in the therapeutic context
- Will be aware about facilitators do's and don'ts
- Will practice under supervision of professionals
- Engage in practice of dance/movement therapy only after being certified by SL as a Dance/Movement Therapist
- Respects and protects the legal and personal rights of clients
- Represents the profession and the individual roles within the profession honestly
- Plans and conducts dance/movement therapy sessions including overall treatment program within the set-up
- A dance/movement therapist is qualified to engage in assessment of clients for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment planning, and/or research

⁵⁰ In March 2010 SL launched its so-called academic hundred-hour curriculum with 'clinical practice' on dance movement therapy for mental health and recovery. It is designed to train sixteen participants as trainers or therapists who were given certificates after completing the course. The certificates would enable them to practice dance therapy with mental patients in psychiatric hospitals. As part of my field work I attended the training sessions for a month. The 'code of ethics' was handed out to the participants there.

- Will value and respect the diversity of the extended world community served, where differences in culture, gender, sexuality, country of origin, race, language, ethnicity, age, abilities, socio-economic status and religion are present; will seek multicultural competencies to ensure the ability to recognize the dignity and worth of all people; will not engage in behaviour that is harassing or demeaning to others.

This code is designed to be used together with the professionals, community and SL Board.

Sharbari, the therapist at Ashirvaad stresses the importance of proper professional training of the dance therapist. When queried about her views on the future of dance therapy in Kolkata she says⁵¹:

In Kolkata the kind of struggle we are undergoing—the next generation will not face many problems since the field will be prepared. It has and will spread further. But I think that I have reservations about certain organizations that are giving university-level courses—those being trained there—may be one can't question their dancing abilities, but as therapists they don't even have the basic knowledge of what is DMT. So they [the organization] are giving the certificate so they [the 'therapists'] will show that certificate and go on to do a lot of things—those passing out from there. That I think is very harmful as this is a sensitive area. As a therapist you can prescribe a movement like a doctor—this is such a sensitive issue that I feel that—such emotions as “I shall become very famous, I shall get a lot of exposure if I can add therapy to dance”...[pause] I have reservations in this area. If one really wants to do then she should have that dedication. Definitely this has a future, but if one works like this (previously told) that is if training starts without the trainer getting any training—in that case I think it is problematical. First let the university arrange for bringing the right kind of people, building up trainers, and then the trainers will spread them. But I open a course suddenly and invite students to do the course where I don't know a thing—this is absolutely unsupportable. I just want to say that this is not a glamorous job—if one lusts after glamour and exposure—dancers have this issue that the press

⁵¹ The extract is an exact translation from her interview where she spoke in Bengali. In the chapter below all extracts from interviews other than those given by Alokanda Roy, are translations from Bengali.

will come to me, I shall get a lot of publicity, awards. With this kind of a mindset therapy shouldn't be undertaken (September 24, 2010).

She herself has a diploma in psychotherapeutic counselling from the Indian Psychiatric Society, West Bengal apart from being extensively trained in dance (graduation in dance from the 'Savrvabharatiya Sangeet Sanskriti Parishad', preceded by eight years of learning Bharatnatyam, and then Odissi before joining Ashirvaad for learning Manipuri dance and dance movement therapy). Regarding the importance of therapeutic training apart from dance, she further says:

The course was for becoming a psychiatric counsellor. For one, I received knowledge of basic psychology, then counselling. [It was necessary] Because we are always having to talk, especially in this kind of social work. Everything is related, its not that we shall only make them [special needs people] dance and move their limbs—it is not that. So the art of talking had to be learnt, how to deal with different problems and with mental patients—those who are mentally ill, I didn't have much knowledge in that. I have worked with different groups like those socially backward, but particularly one who is mentally ill—the various kinds of mental illness and how to deal with them... And the good thing about the course was that we could be with the doctors and do our practical classes accompanying them. Being with the doctors, talking to mental patients, this gave me greater knowledge. Before I used to get too involved, but the Sirs always were trying to teach us that 'Be compassionate but not personal'. This is a very important thing. So before I used to get so involved that I would go into depression as well, I gained that personal strength from that course. Another thing is that how to listen to the problems of others—very carefully, with patience, this quality I developed from that course. Mainly these were the benefits. And definitely I have gained a certain confidence that now I can work with the doctors in a mental hospital. I know what schizophrenia is, what the different mental illnesses are. It is true that dance therapy is a parallel therapy along with psychotherapy. If one has to work with mental patients definitely one should work under the supervision of doctors. So the course gave me a basic concept. Now the more you work, the more you gain experience the more you will understand. But then knowing the M.R.⁵². more deeply, or autism and other retardations—why these occur, the scientific reason behind this [is important] (September 24, 2010).

⁵² Mentally retarded.

Sharbari has been associated with dance therapy for the past fourteen years, beginning with assisting Prerna Pal-Mehra, the renowned Manipuri dancer who has worked extensively with children with cerebral palsy, at the IICP⁵³ and learning Manipuri dance at Ashirvaad. She rues the lack of proper training courses in dance therapy in India. In her view:

Money is a basic problem in this field. If you want to do a proper course then you will have to go out of India to western countries, which is not possible for all, and I think that if a proper course has to be introduced then that should be done under the right person, proper guidance is needed. Without proper knowledge if I [one] start just like that then I would say that is more harmful. It is better not to have anything then (September 24, 2010).

Among the hazards that dance therapists in Kolkata face she stresses on low monetary value in terms of payment for a regular dance therapist in a city where dance can be learnt at rupees fifty to hundred per month, even now.

For one thing in western countries it is an on-going profession, so there therapists receive a certain standard of payment for their services. But here it is still at the research level. People who are doing it here are mainly doing it on the basis of their experience (September 24, 2010).

Like Kashyap, Sharbari too highlights the difference between a dance therapist and a dance teacher. According to her, in Kolkata the general public lacks awareness of this distinction and hence are vulnerable to being duped. She says:

The problem in this field is that there is a huge difference between a dance teacher and dance therapist. All dancers cannot become therapists, but the problem now is some people are seeing scope for easy publicity through this. Like as a dancer if I can attach myself to social work or if I say that I am doing therapy the Press would come to me easy and quick. The problem with this is that in all this the main concept of therapy is getting lost. A lot of people, who know nothing, has no basic training, are shouting loud and clear that 'we are doing therapy'. I shall not take names but they have even begun giving university level training. They may be famous dancers but they have no training in therapy. When I myself don't know a thing and I give

⁵³ Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy, Kolkata.

'university' level training and even certificates, those passing through this system— what is their future and what will be the future of those taking therapy from them? This is where I have a problem. Another wrong conception is that since I know dance I can do therapy as I teach dance. They are doing it the same way. Like suppose I teach dance and I am teaching and as a further community service I am teaching the same thing to a community or group...(September 24, 2010).

So the figure of the publicity-oriented, untrained therapist, or the teacher doing 'therapy' as social work in the same way as she teaches dance, is not the image of the 'ideal' therapist whose only concern 'should' be en-skilling oneself through proper training and then healing those in her care. Her response was reminiscent, in a certain way, of Zarrilli's account of masters of 'kalarippayattu' cautioning against the master who possesses a 'tamasa'⁵⁴ constitution. In his performance ethnography of kalarippayattu one of the master-respondents of the martial art form had this to say on the matter:

... if one learns kalarippayattu properly, then 'he *should* gain release from unhappiness'; however, ... 'many practitioners have turned out to be wasters, drunks and of bad morals'. ...The ideal kalarippayattu teacher 'has a satvika constitution. If the master has a truthful constitution, it will be a blessing for the student. But, this master asked me [Zarrilli] rhetorically as he spoke from bitter personal experience, 'if some masters do possess a dark constitution, what will not happen? There will be a split (*sthanabramsam*) between student and master. Everything will become confused (*alangolappeduka*)!' (Zarrilli 1998: 217).

Zarrilli sees in the interpretation of 'gunam' a clear ideology at work and by drawing attention to the social structural position of the master vis-a-vis the local rulers and students in subordination to the master, he surmises:

From the master's position within society and the kalari, he is given the power to read a particular student's behaviour as tamasa, and thereby to determine whether the

⁵⁴ Quoting Marvin Davis, McKim Marriott and others Phillip Zarrilli writes:

Among Hindus, all life is ranked unequally according to the relative proportion of the three guman and the corresponding 'behavioural code (*dharmā*) held appropriate to the disposition of those *gun[am]*' (Davis 1976:6). Gunam has been defined as 'property' or 'quality' (Gundert 1982:332); 'radical material substances'; or 'subtle qualities, attributes, or strands' (Marriot 1980:1). The three gunam include goodness (satva), passion (rajas), and darkness (tamasa) (Zarrilli 1998: 217).

student gains access to the potentially deadly powers of practice. What Tacholi and his numerous contemporary counterparts illustrate is how any set of martial techniques and the powers to which practice leads are circumscribed, shaped and actualized by the idiosyncratic temperament of the individual (Zarrilli 1998:221).

These two cases are not totally comparable since the issue here is that of being capable of healing others and not passing on to them the skills of the healer. Those on the other side of the therapist are beneficiaries / clients not students learning the art. A student being deprived of the 'secret weapons' is not the same as a client whose wellbeing is being hampered. The terms of relationship are different. Where wellbeing is the issue Sharbari's anxieties are understandable since she deals with a section of people whose needs are special and so are their vulnerabilities. Sociologically speaking, the therapist's role in the context of this expressive art therapy can be likened to that of a 'charismatic' authority in some ways. Hence the use of the term leader is justified since the therapist is supposed to lead the client / beneficiary into health and wellbeing from a state that is 'not satisfactory'. Here I would like to clarify the sense in which I take the term 'charisma'. Johannes Fabian (1969), in an enlightening essay on charisma and cultural change translates and explicates the Weberian notion of charisma in this way:

In the definition 'charisma' is called the 'quality of a personality' (*Qualität einer Persönlichkeit*). However, it should be noted that Weber speaks of 'personality', referring to an abstract category, not of 'person', the concrete individual. Furthermore, he qualifies his definition by calling charisma a quality 'believed to be extraordinary' (*als ausseralltöglich geltend*). All this indicates that he thought of a 'quality' of relations between persons, rather than a quality of a person (Weber, in Fabian 1969:157).

The 'quality of relation' between the dance movement therapist and the beneficiary, loosely speaking, rests on the ability of the former to effect a change *within* the latter based on the latter's active cooperation such that wellbeing is generated, and the beneficiary is introduced to 'ways of being' that help maintain health too. This the therapist does in part by applying learnt techniques of dance therapy and in part through her intuitive ability, inborn and / or developed through experience in such healing endeavour.

This can be further explicated by a discussion of empathic reflection—a well-known process by which the dance therapist incorporates clients' spontaneous expressions into the ongoing movement experience and responds to those expressions in an empathic way. This is a core technique other than in-depth improvisation that the dance therapist uses in healing. An understanding of this sheds light on the nature of relationship between the beneficiary and the healer in a dance movement therapeutic setting.

Empathic Reflection

Empathic Reflection, in Sandel's (Sandel in Chaiklin, 1993) view, is the dance therapist's mode for developing multiple empathic connections between herself and the clients, and one means by which the therapist structures a nonjudgmental, supportive environment which is conducive to sharing and growth. The therapist utilizes both verbal and non verbal cues from the participants in assessing the prevailing moods, affects, and concerns; this information guides the way in which the therapist develops the flow of movement interaction as it unfolds during the session. Empathic reflection⁵⁵ is both a means of acquiring information and a method of intervening in dance therapy. As such, it requires the therapist's sensitivity and perceptiveness to several co-existing dimensions for the overall movement experience. Given the instantaneous decision-making concerning which people and elements respond to, there are constant demands on the therapist to respond

⁵⁵ Gendlin's (1962) concept of 'experiencing' which stresses the process, or flow of interaction, between the therapist and client is drawn from for a definition of empathy:

The way of being with another person which is termed emphatic has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever that s/he is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgements, sensing meanings of which s/he is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be too threatening. It includes communicating your sensing of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him/her as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his/her experiencing, you help the person to focus on this useful type of referent, to experience the meanings more fully, and to move forward in experiencing. (Gendlin 1962: 4)

spontaneously and intuitively. Therapeutic progress on any level can only occur when an empathic connection has been made between the therapist and the group and among group members; in dance therapy this connection usually occurs kinetically.

Mirroring, which may occur as part of the empathy process, involves participating in another's total movement experience, i.e., patterns, qualities, emotional tone, etc. It implies a quality of selflessness, a sense of entering another's experiencing, in an open manner. Mirroring is often the first step in establishing empathic connections, particularly with patients who are unresponsive to other modes of interpersonal exchange. Empathic reflection, however, is a multidimensional process, including a variety of interactions and reactions, only one of which may be mirroring (Sandel, in Chaiklin 1993: 100).

The dance therapist employs empathic reflection in order to accumulate information about the clients, engage them in contact first with the therapist and then with one another (in a group setting) and develop a sense of mutuality which facilitates the communication and sharing of feelings.

Information gathering

In the beginning of the session, the dance therapist employs empathic reflection to gather information about the individual participant and the group-information about prevailing moods, affects, relationships, issues, etc. Each time the therapist picks upon individual's expression, she chooses, albeit intuitively, whether to respond to some aspect or combination of the movement, imagery, or words and sounds being expressed. Reflecting actual movement variables might include the action patterns, the effort, or, shape of any movement. Images may be verbally identified by the participants or suggested by their movement patterns or qualities. Words and sounds can also provide important clues to the moods or concerns of the group.

Engagement

As the session proceeds, the therapist's task is to engage the participants in relationships with herself and eventually among one another. The therapist's success in engaging the group is dependant upon responding to elements that are relevant for the group as a whole, and that it is willing to accept. As Rogers (1951, 1975) points

out, the empathic process involves constantly checking back with the clients as to the accuracy of one's perceptions, and being guided by their responses. Furthermore it is crucial to the eventual achievement of an empathic relationship with and among the group, that the therapist respond to an individual who is expressing something for the group. If the therapist continually responds to inappropriate or irrelevant cues, the group usually undermines the therapist's leadership. In some groups, such a reaction might occur in the form of outright refusal to participate, overt criticism of the therapist, or of dance therapy, and /or the emergence of another leader from the group to whom the participants will respond.

Another reaction recorded by Sandel (Sandel, in Chaiklin 1993) of passive compliance. The temptation to make something happen in a group of dependant people may cause the therapist to impose activity which has little relation to the group mood or concerns. In such instances there may be an appearance of involvement, but the therapist has not made the empathic connection which could lead to meaningful communication; rather, the participants may be going through the motions simply to avoid conflict or from habitual compliance to authority.

Mutuality

Once engagement has been achieved, empathic reflection may be used to promote sharing among group members. In dance therapy sessions the sharing which precedes cohesiveness may occur in multiple modalities, i.e., movement, images, and symbolic actions and words. This process facilitates empathy. A high degree of tolerance fosters the open expression of feelings and thoughts; people are usually willing to share to the extent that they will not be judged. Reflecting even gross aspects of an individual's expression in the dance therapy session communicates tolerance and appreciation of individuality, variety, and even deviance.

Spirals of interaction characterized by moments of empathic connections evolve during the stages of empathic reflection. The extent and frequency with which such connections actually occur may depend upon the therapist's skill and sensitivity, the longevity and consistency of the group, or external environmental disruptions. These connections contribute to the creation of a tolerant, mutually supportive environment.

Like any method Empathic Reflection has its set of problems and pitfalls. According to Sandel (Sandel, in Chaiklin 1993), sometimes the direct mirroring of one patient's movement by the dance therapist and subsequently, by the group, may be experienced as mimicking, i.e., ridicule, by the patient. Another kind of mirroring which may be experienced as ridicule by the patient sometimes is used by therapists in the service of dealing with resistance. The inadvertent communication might be that the therapist and the group are not taking the person's expression of anger or discomfort seriously. The dance therapist, therefore, must be very careful when employing a mirroring response in such a manner.

The therapist may be tempted to change or develop movements or images rapidly, either when she is flooded with cues from a very active group or she is feeling bored in a low-energy group. In either instance, premature changes may be experienced by group members as a rejection of their offerings (i.e., of them) or a sense that the therapist is pushing them towards some goals of her own. This may be the case if the therapist is over invested in some anticipated outcome, such as insight or increased movement repertoire. This can inspire resistance in the group, which may be expressed by lack of participation or low energy. In a highly dependent group, on the other hand, patients may be gratified by a very active therapist and may simply comply with any suggestions.

Sometimes novice dance therapists, in their nervousness, see the most energetic or charismatic person first and immediately mirror their movements or verbal offerings. According to Sandel:

...when a very energetic patient was standing next to or across from the dance therapist in the circle; the therapist seemed to be unaware of the impact of this person's energy on him/her and was unsuccessfully attempting to get the group to participate at the same level. This invariably results in the depressed patients dropping out, leading to general disintegration of the group structure (Sandel, in Chaiklin 1993:108).

There may be some group members who characteristically avoid dealing with particular kinds of feelings or issues, and who attempt to lead the group away from any expression of them. If the dance therapist is fearful of dealing with some aspect of

the group's existence, she may collude with the flight leader by picking up on that person's efforts to deter the group from working. This does not necessarily mean that the therapist should have initiated a discussion or movement sequence to force the issue, but rather that it was the therapist's task to maintain an atmosphere in which people might feel comfortable expressing their feelings through movements, images, or words. The therapist might have accomplished this task by facilitating movement sequences for the whole group and perhaps picking up on movement images that were indicative of the underlying concerns. By colluding with the flight leader, the therapist makes herself unavailable to the group and relinquishes responsibility for maintaining an environment in which people can freely and safely express their feelings, opines Sandel.

Sandel concludes that the dance therapist's familiarity with the art form enables her to empathically join the patient's self-expressive movements while preventing the therapist from becoming engrossed in her feelings about moving. In line with what Sharbari tried to say, psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists usually recommend that therapists be sufficiently analyzed so that they might be aware of and guard against over identification with patients. In the context of the dance therapy session, this also means that the therapist does not impose her own movements or images on the participants in order to fulfil personal needs or desires. The dance therapist must not only resist the inclination to verbally communicate personal values, but also the impulse towards activity which may be more energetic, than the patients', or symbolic expression which may be invested with the therapist's idiosyncratic meaning (Sandel 1980). Carl Rogers (1975) offers a related viewpoint, expressed in humanistic terms, concerning the maturity and self-knowledge required of the person who is the psychotherapist. With the definite turn of dance therapy towards psychotherapy one sees the relevance of his view:

To be with another in this empathic way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside yourself and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes (Rogers 1975:4).

Together with this, the more comfortable and knowledgeable the dance therapist is with movement, the freer she will be to react spontaneously, pick up on patients' expressions, and participate empathically in their experiencing. Empathic reflection, therefore, involves the dance therapist's spontaneous, intuitive activity modulated by continual self-restraint. Working in this way forces the therapist to straddle a delicate balance between spontaneity and self-control.

Considering this sociologically one is faced with a gamut of interesting material. The above can be seen as a contemporary rational discursive methodology of healing through entering the beneficiaries' 'interior space'. Ways are suggested for non-intrusive 'entering'; witnessing, accompanying, supporting—all this within that zone which is characterised, in the language of social psychology, as the 'unconscious'. In Giddens' theory of Structuration the unconscious dimensions to human agency are recognized. To Giddens (1984) much motivation is unconscious and what propels action lies below consciousness and at best provides very general and diffuse pressures to act. Moreover, much action may not be motivated: an actor simply monitors and responds to the environment. According to him, the basic 'force' behind much action is an unconscious set of processes to gain a 'sense of trust' in interaction with others. Giddens terms this set of processes the 'ontological security system' of an agent. That is, one of the driving forces (though highly diffuse) behind action is the desire to sustain ontological security or the sense of trust that comes from being able to reduce anxiety in social relations. Actors need to have this trust. The way they proceed to reduce anxiety is often unconscious. This is because the mechanisms involved are developed before linguistic skills emerge in the young. There may also be psychodynamics, such as repression, that keep these fundamental feelings and their resolution from becoming conscious. It is in this 'space' that the therapist is supposed to 'enter', 'witness' and help manipulate, resolve, introduce 'rules' and 'resources' (organizational resources ideally begin with organization of self as one knows 'it'). Her intervention has to be such that the beneficiaries' ontological security system is reinforced (since a crisis triggers or is triggered when there is a breach in the 'ontological security system' of a person). Moreover the clients' sense of agency is enhanced, not only within the therapy setting but also outside, in the wider social spaces of which she or he is part. The therapist is trained in the rational discourse of

psychotherapy and/ or dance movement therapy and by virtue of the legitimacy granted within the therapeutic setting, 'facilitates' the clients wellbeing. And yet, as most dance therapist would insist, much of the efficacy of the healer does not arise from following only techniques taught. In fact methods like empathic reflection themselves presuppose an ability to go beyond the taught into 'subjective improvisation' in keeping with the spirit of the methods. 'Charisma' is required of the dance therapist for being able to bring out a change in the clients' agency, from within, towards an improved state of being, that is, to greater ontological security. This change is expected to facilitate his or her functioning and integration in social sectors where he or she is implicated within wider structures of dominance, mostly under traditional or rational-bureaucratic authority systems.

Giddens (1984) conceptualises structure as the "rules⁵⁶" and "resources⁵⁷" that actors use in "interaction contexts" that extend across "space" and over "time". In so using these rules and resources, actors sustain or reproduce structures in space and time. In explicating 'rules' the thrust of Giddens' argument is that rules are part of actors' "knowledgeability". Some may be normative in that actors can articulate and explicitly orient to them, but many other rules are more implicitly understood and used to guide the flow of interaction in ways that are not easily expressed or verbalised. Moreover, actors can transform rules into new combinations as they

⁵⁶ Rules are "generalizable procedures" that actors understand and use in various circumstances. For Giddens, a rule is a methodology or technique that actors know about, often only implicitly, and that provides a relevant formula for action. From a sociological perspective, the most important rules are those which agents use in the reproduction of social relations over significant lengths of time and across space. These rules reveal certain characteristics: they are frequently used in conversations, interaction rituals, and the daily routines of individuals; they are tacitly grasped and understood and are part of the "stock knowledge" of competent actors; they are informal, remaining unwritten and unarticulated; and they are weakly sanctioned through interpersonal techniques (Giddens 1984:21-22).

⁵⁷ Resources are facilities that actors use to get things done. This is because even if there are well-understood methodologies and formulas—that is, rules—to guide action, there must also be the capacity to perform tasks. Such capacity requires resources, or the material equipment and the organizational ability to act in situations. Giddens visualizes resources as that which generates power. Power, in his view is not a resource. Rather, the mobilization of other resources is what gives actors power to get things done. Thus, power is integral to the very existence of structure, for as actors interact, they use resources; and as they use resources, they mobilize power to shape the actions of others (Giddens 1984:33).

confront and deal with each other and the contextual particulars of their interaction. Giddens visualizes rules and resources as “transformational” and as “mediating”. What he means by these terms is that rules and resources can be transformed into many different patterns and profiles. Resources can be mobilized in various ways to perform activities and achieve ends through the exercise of different forms and degrees of power; rules can generate many diverse combinations of methodologies and formulas to guide how people communicate, interact, and adjust to each other. Rules and resources are mediating in that they are what tie social relations together. They are what actors use to create, sustain, or transform relations across time and in space. And because rules and resources are inherently transformational—that is, generative of diverse combinations—they can lace together many different patterns of social relations in time and space. In this way Giddens visualizes institutionalized patterns implicated in the very nature of agency. Using Giddens’ model a dance therapist can be said to help clients in mediating and transforming the patterns, which they consciously or unconsciously employ, in relating to others as well as themselves. Movement and dance is utilized for facilitating expression as well as release of these patterns and resolving old complexes and reworking the ‘ontological security system’. A discussion of activities in a therapeutic session will complete the picture. Kashyap (2005) provides a valuable treatise on dance movement therapy based on her own experiences of being the first trained dance therapist of India. She suggests different ways of dealing with the most common maladies that therapists encounter in clients. During my field work with SL I took part in most of the exercises that are discussed below as a participant of the ‘training of trainer’ course in the curriculum Dance therapy for Mental Health and Recovery. It was a three months course with ‘clinical practice’ under supervision in mental hospitals, in which I attended the dance therapy workshops.

Structure of a Dance Therapy Session

Most dance therapy sessions have a clear-cut structure of activities that are geared towards a holistic approach to the art form as therapy. Sessions at both SL and Ashirvaad followed this pattern:

1. Body preparatory exercises

2. Theme development

3. Cooling down

4. Closure

The content in each of these parts might differ according to the lesson plan and goals set by facilitators which again would reflect the specific needs of the beneficiaries of that session.

Most sessions begin with *body preparatory exercises or warm-ups*. Slow-paced movements are used to prepare participants mentally and physically to receive more complex movements in the course of a session. Though movements begin slowly they could be gradually paced up towards the end. Warm-ups include moving, bending and stretching body parts in isolation as well as moving the whole body as a unit. These can be done lying down, sitting, standing or moving through space. They enhance awareness of the body and its movements, increase range of motion and flexibility in various joints and heighten energy levels in individuals. They also aid individuals in attaining movement persuasion and sensing each other's speed and mood (Kashyap 2005:98). Warm-ups usually last about fifteen to twenty minutes. Two typical warm-up exercises I encountered in one of the shelter-homes where SL was holding a session had the beneficiaries standing in a circle. The leaders (there were two of them) guided the group through a slow-paced warm-up routine in which first each body part was moved in isolation and then the whole body was moved as a unit. The leader herself moved each body part separately, from head to toe. In between, the body could also be moved as a whole—swaying to the sides, rocking front and back or twisting to both sides to look back. Body parts that were moved separately are head, shoulders, elbows, arms wrists, fingers, upper body, waist, hips, knees, legs, ankles and toes. The leader had memorized the sequence of warm-up.

The second exercise had us all lying down in a circle with our eyes closed. As the therapist called out names of various body parts and pauses, the beneficiaries used their creativity to explore movements of those body parts in various ways. For example the arms moved up, down, front, back, were rotated or shaken. In this way other body parts that were moved like head, arms, palms, upper body, torso, legs, feet

etc. In the next part of the exercise, the beneficiaries stood in a circle with eyes open. Then one of the leaders guided them into concentrating on movements that became possible due to the various joints in different parts of their bodies. The pace of this activity was slow.

The director of SL had told me that they follow the dance therapy methods of Blanche Evan, a veteran dance movement therapist who practiced for approximately 25 years both individually and in groups. Evan had definite views about how dance therapy should be. As the field of dance therapy began to expand in her later years, running the gamut from 'movement psychotherapy' to 'psychoanalytically oriented movement therapy', Evan remained firm and clear about her commitment to dance. She did not accept the word "movement" as an accurate substitute for the word "dance". She saw too much of dance therapy as being anti-dance and hence losing the inherent power of dance, or to the "mind/body" therapies which too often ignored the individual's emotions and diagnoses. Evan believed that unlike many body/mind techniques which share some characteristics with dance therapy (breathing, posture, and vocalization, for instance), dance therapy works at getting at the causes for the client's distress in the most primal, elementary way—self-directed movement (Levy 1988:34). Evan integrated the verbal and the dance into a full and primary psychotherapy which she eventually called Dance/Movement/Word Therapy. Her methodology is composed of four major modes of intervention: the warm-up, 'Evan's system of functional technique', improvisation/enactment, and verbalization of thoughts and feelings. The order of these basic intervention styles varied, and they were not all present in each session.

The warm-up is aimed at bringing people into contact with the reality of their psychophysical selves. Evan stressed that with clients using movement for the first time in an expressive manner, the warm-up is especially important. Its function is that of preparing the body both for corrective body work, which is functional technique, and for the expression of thoughts and feelings often evoked later in the session through Evan's thematic improvisational work. It is important to stress that the warm-up was not designed to dissipate emotional conflict and its resulting tension, but to reduce the individual's excess tension which Evan believed served to conceal deeper problems. Early in her career, Evan encouraged a lot of free swinging of the body in

all directions for individuals who were very tense. She believed that the swing was usually the easiest, most accessible movement for everyone, providing a feeling of freedom while at the same time offering security in its rhythmicity. Later this emphasis on the swing moved to a more general emphasis on total joint mobilization through many different kinds of movements, for example, skipping, running, jumping, rotating, and shaking out body parts.(Rifkin-Gainer, in Levy 1988: 38). She often used drum beats which steadily increased in tempo so that individuals would be led into faster and freer motions. She worked for a sense of ease and abandon in the body with the goal of eventually helping the individual to give his/her body to the spontaneous creation of expressive form in improvisation.

Evan's warm-ups were sometimes with music and other times without. Often she let members do their own actions alone to warm-up and loosen the body, and other times, she had the group make a circle and each group member would suggest or begin a warm-up action which the other members then picked up on. From here group members could take turns at leadership.

Before completing the warm-up Evan sometimes asked how the group felt and whether anyone needed more work on a particular part of the body. If someone did, more exercises were done. At times, Evan helped members release difficult tension areas by exaggerating the muscular rigidity and then releasing it. One loosening exercise was the isolation of body segments. To a slow and then increasing drum beat, she might first have clients just release shoulders and then hips. Because her goal was always integration of the whole body, Evan would have clients do integration movements (like large rhythmic total body movements) not only after isolations but before as well, believing that most people were already tense and over-segmented.

There were times when Evan believed a warm-up was contradicted. The warm-up, if used incorrectly or indiscriminately, could serve to prematurely dissipate vital psycho-physical energy which the client needs in order to mobilize him/herself in the direction of working through emotional conflicts and trauma (Levy 1988: 39). An experienced dance therapist can judge when the client arrives whether he/she is ready to move directly into pressing emotional material, or if a warm-up is required first and what kind of warm-up is indicated.

Except for the cases in which the warm-up was contradicted, Evan stressed a thorough warm-up. It was considered an essential part of the process, without which the body might not be able to fully process the unconscious material that frequently surfaced during the improvisational phase of the sessions.

Kashyap (2005) introduces *Theme development* as:

Theme development, the second part, is the central core in which the therapeutics of dance unfolds through a combination of movement experiences done individually, in pairs or in small clusters. Therapists use directive and non-directive approaches to invite themes, impromptu expressions of feelings, and thoughts and ideas of participants (Kashyap 2005:98)

Therefore, clients are constantly urged to be in touch with their feelings and express themselves as authentically as possible. Theme development is also used to achieve the short-and-long-term goals of therapists regarding the clients.

The Evan system of functional technique —corrective exercises designed to retain muscles to move in relation to nature’s design in a rhythmic expansion and contraction would fall within this core section of the session. Spontaneity and resilience are enhanced by the individual’s discovery of his own rhythm and tempo. According to Levy (1988) it is a system that rehabilitates and educates the body in an automatically sound way. Functional technique includes postural work, coordination, placement of body parts, and rhythmicity. This style of work is individualized, that is, it varies, adapting to the individual’s unique anatomical needs. Evan opined that functional technique respects ‘nature’s plan’ of the body in action. Changing the body tonus from destructive tension to resilience is vital.

Evan stressed the strengthening and alignment of the spine as the foundation of all action. Evan’s concern with the spine centred on her belief that the functioning of the spine determines the overall ability to use the body as an ‘Instrument of Dance’ and therefore as an instrument of self-expression. She further believed that limitations in the overall strength and flexibility of the spine lead to insecure and fear.

Functional technique is broadly geared towards rehabilitation of the body; giving the individual permission to take up and use space in a variety of ways that

he/she would not feel *free* to try alone; giving the body the strength and range of motion that it will need for emotional expression; to provide the physical base upon which can build one's own unique expressive movement vocabulary; helping the individual feel more secure about physical self-expression. This is achieved when the individual feels an increase in control over his/her body; bringing the individual into contact with parts of the body that were previously out of his/her conscious awareness; integrating functional contraction with functional release for the purpose of achieving more efficient and meaningful movement expression (Levy 1988:40).

To Evan technique does not need to be treated as an amputated limb of dance. It is rather one of its functional organs. It can be presented so that its pursuit does not become a block to creative spontaneity. The work in creative dance need not negate form. Ideally it should seek a new form that is the result of a union of unmannered technique with the creative use of personal content.

Evan's improvisational work can be classified into three approaches: a) projective techniques; b) sensitization to and mobilization of potential body action; and c) in-depth and/or complex improvisation (Levy 1988:41). The first two categories represent what can be called emotional warm-ups. They prepare the individual, through simple improvisational tasks, for the third category, that is more in-depth and/or complex improvisational work. The latter forms the major content of the dance therapy session, and at times can be likened to the free association process in psychoanalysis, but enacted on a motor level which Levy calls psychomotor association. The use of the projective technique was a cornerstone of Evan's work, brought directly from her background in creative dance. Evan believed that adults could often benefit from being an animal, colour, or texture in movement. Evan used the projective technique both for self-expression and diagnostic purposes. In all the dance therapy sessions, conducted by SL that I participated in, in a mental asylum, shelter-homes, children's day-care centre and the workshops for training participants to be therapists, Evan's techniques were extensively used in theme development activities as well as in cool-down activities.

In utilizing creative themes, she made a choice as to how specific or general to be. This choice was determined by the client's needs. For example, in using themes from nature, she could either suggest categorical themes, such as 'be an animal' or 'be

an inanimate aspect of nature', or she could narrow the field slightly by asking the client to choose a four-legged animal, or a reptile, or a bird. In a workshop for training 'trainers'⁵⁸ of SL, as a participant, I took part in a series of activities where we were asked to imagine ourselves as any animal of our choice and go for a stroll in the jungle. The participants had to do this alone first, and then all together. I chose to be a monkey and had to make sounds by mouth while roaming the large hall. When all did it together, it became an exercise requiring alertness, expression, freedom from inhibition, manipulation of space in a crowd (for there were at least sixteen of us) and non-verbal interaction. Other activities, like 'fly around the hall as if you are a bird' or 'lie on your chest and move like a snake' were also done.

Similarly, she could say, "Choose a tree which most represents how you feel today." This latter example could also be done with water, wind, sky, and so on. For example, if the client was asked to be water in any form, he/she would have many choices: ice, vapour, the ocean, a brook, shower, or storm. In this way, the client would fill in the blank with an image which was inevitably a projection of one part of his/her own feeling state. That is, the client might feel turbulent like a storm, rough like the seas, or gentle like a pond.

While exploring, for example, the turbulence of a storm, the individual might become aware of the feeling of anger which, after a certain amount of unfocused release, might pave the way for a more structured release. That is, the anger might become focused, for example, at a specific person or event in the individual's life. The projective technique in this case might be called an emotional warm-up or barometer in that it attunes the individual to a specific feeling which presses to express itself physically. After some discussion, the insights gained through Evan's observations and the client's self-reflection could be directed into a more complex improvisational structure where the client would focus his/her attention on the surfacing imagery or conflict and explore it in depth through body movement.

Another style of the projective technique used by Evan was eliciting the fantasies of clients and, if not contradicted, helping them to enact these fantasies in

⁵⁸ SL dance therapists generally refer to themselves and are referred to by those of the organization as 'trainers'.

body movement. This could be a fantasy of their ideal self, of a place they would like to be, or if something they would like to do or say to someone. In a session at a shelter-home for adolescent girls vulnerable to trafficking, that I attended, the leader asked us all to lie down on the floor, close our eyes and through gradual guided imagery led us 'away' from the bustle of the south Kolkata street-traffic (the shelter-home was right on one of the busiest crossroads of that part of the city) to a place of natural beauty which we were to imagine according to our preferences (it could be a seaside, hill-station, a field without limits or any place of beauty and serenity in nature's lap). We were asked to roam about to our hearts' content, rest, think of our dear ones whom we would like to bring here. After quite some time when all were feeling relaxed and serene the trainer asked us to memorize the scenery—where a particular tree was, how blue the sky looked and the like and then gradually again 'brought' us back to the sound of traffic around us and then the room of the shelter home. Later the participants were told that whenever they would be in pain inflicted by near-ones or due to events that were outside of their control, instead of living in that pain, to repeat this exercise and keep the mind free of pain. Too much pain for a long time resulted in complexes⁵⁹ that are harmful for one's mental wellbeing.

Finally, Evan used words, phrases, and sentences to facilitate projection through body movement. She might suggest as a warm-up to an in-depth improvisation that her client move spontaneously to the images that arise from several words which Evan would toss out quickly and successively. These would be aimed at freeing the individual from inhibition and over-intellectualization, replacing these with spontaneity of associations and their corresponding movement responses. Evan would also toss out incomplete sentences, encouraging clients to complete them in movement, for example, "My body can _____", "I'm going to _____", "I feel _____", or "I wasn't to be _____".

After such an exercise, discussion might take place on what occurred in the emotional warm-up process. From this, more intense themes may emerge which Evan

⁵⁹ A complex is a collection of various ideas held together by an emotional tone common to all (Jung 1911: 599).

and the client would then structure into more intense and complex movement explorations.

Evan eventually moved away from the technique of offering imagery to her clients, and moved toward utilizing images that emerged spontaneously from the therapeutic process. In the latter part of her career she noted certain risks in providing images to clients; she felt that a therapist could never know that what the client's associations would be to externally prompted imagery (Levy 1988: 42).

Another way to stimulate dynamic movement as well as psychic and somatic projection is through the use of props. Props usually demand action and specific qualities of movement. For example, a flowing scarf, though varied in its possibilities, would generally encourage different movements than a hoop or a ball. Also, scarves can vary greatly in their texture, weight and in the tactile sensations they stimulate, helping to determine the quality of movement for which they are most suited. Kashyap (2005) too notes the utility of props which are often used as aids to energize people, as when using them, their movement repertoire gets enlarged, and there is a distinct change in pace and quality of movement. In almost every group, when participants are given the task of making dances using props they feel excited as well as relieved because initially, dancing with props is less threatening than making a dance with one's body. Props take client's attention away from being conscious of their bodies in movement and they start enjoying the experience of dance. Each prop playfully provokes clients to move in unusual ways. The diversity and contrast in movement becomes obvious when a person uses a pair of rhythm sticks as opposed to dancing with fabrics. The movements alter, rhythm changes; the way the person uses space transforms and his interaction with others varies. These objects could have recreational, symbolic as well as therapeutic values (Kashyap 2005:107). They could be symbolic of something precious or hateful from people's lives. For instance, at the SL workshop trainers asked participants to bring their most precious object to a session. The participants then improvised movements with it based on their relationship with it in the past or present—dolls, apparels, books, caps, cards and a whole lot of other items were danced with. The self-expression that emerges through the use of a particular prop might reveal specific incidents and emotions experienced by the clients in their real-life situations. Certain nostalgic memories evoked by the

prop might surface during the improvisation. The autobiographical material that emerges from participants could become the thematic content of sessions.

Words, especially verbs or adjectives, are also provocative in terms of exploring varieties of movement possibilities. For example, words used in opposition are especially evocative and meaningful⁶⁰; gather/scatter, open/close, strong/soft, round/angular, sunny/rainy, clear/foggy, morning/night, choppy/smooth, and so on. In these examples of verbal facilitation through contrasting movement themes, images have been pulled from several categories, such as time of day, tempo, texture, shape, weather, and so on. Some of these contrasting images describe superficially the type of movement the dance therapist believes the individual needs to develop (like round/angular). When the dance therapist uses or encourages the client to choose physically directive words like round and angular, part of the projective aspect of the exercise is omitted and replaced with a 'prescribed' movement pattern. The individual is directly encouraged to use the muscles the dance therapist believes he/she needs to develop for increased expressivity. On the other hand, words such as morning/night are subject to greater personal interpretation; they leave larger blanks for the individual to fill in with his/her own free (movement) associations. The latter is

⁶⁰ This is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' use of binary oppositions and the idea of dialectics behind it, in revealing the nuances of 'mythical thought'. He tries to capture in the analytical paradigm of opposites, the integration of content with form, meaning with structure, the idea which informs all myths, i.e. metaphor. The analysis of sign being an integral part of structural mythology, every sign subjected to a structural analysis is understood as intermediary to two opposites in the same semantic field. At the same time the given sign belongs to a system of differences that resembles another system of differences. It is on an axis of two systems of differences of Nature and Culture that the various 'mythemes', the recurring metaphorical bundles of relationships are plotted. The system of differences is itself based on concrete classification but the metaphorical resemblance or homology is based on synthetic abstraction. Thus the method of homology serves as the distinguishing norm in the three fundamental modes of human creativity, through its inherent presence in the orders of structure and event. The structural semantic field for the explanation of various phenomena, in the anthropological problematic, concerning the study of man and his symbols, is constituted along the ideologically posed oppositions of two series, i.e. of nature and culture. He derives a homology between myths and western classical music. Art, to Lévi-Strauss, is a synthesis between one or more orders of structures, artificial or natural and one or more orders of events, natural or social. According to him, it offers a union or synthesis of different orders of structures and orders of events, and the aesthetic emotions that accrue to the observer is the possibility of such a union through the work of art. The artist combines within him, the homology of one or more different orders of structures and events, which practically means any object or event in the whole universe (Lévi-Strauss 1969; Cybil 1997). Such an analytical model can be useful in understanding the any form of expressive art therapy since metaphor plays a key role in all of them.

actually a projective technique which has the additional effect of broadening the movement repertoire.

Evan emphasized the importance of knowing why the therapist asks an individual to do a specific movement exploration.

Are you looking (as in the latter example) for associations to the movement so as to provoke emotional content for future complex improvisations? Or, are you trying (as in the former example) to build specific muscular strength, awareness, and flexibility so that the body is ready for the unconscious thoughts and feelings that surface during these explorations? (Levy 1988:43).

In either case, the individual is warming up to a more intense and personal movement work.

Another technique for helping the individual to learn, experience, and employ his/her full movement potential is to use the elements of dance directly, exploring the extremes and gradations of tempo, weight, and space using action words which guide the individual. For example, if an individual is working on a theme in a simple improvisation, Evan might make movement suggestions to help the individual explore more fully certain movement qualities. She might offer movement suggestions such as "Add weight", "Can you move faster?", or "Can you add rhythm to your movement?" This would be more applicable from brief improvisations to full complex improvisations, during which Evan usually just observed the process until the individual brought the improvisation to closure.

To encourage new movement qualities in interaction, Evan would have individuals work in dyads with each taking turns in contrasting roles. This could take place through specific roles, for example, one person becoming a tree while the other is the wind. Again, this would encourage contrasting movement dynamics with room for projection of emotionally meaningful content, therefore acting as a warm-up for future in-depth work.

Finally, concrete images can broaden and expand the movement repertoire. Evan emphasized the importance of concrete and simple directions for beginners who are not accustomed to using their bodies to express feelings and ideas. Giving them a

complicated or abstract direction too soon could encourage an over-intellectualization of the movement for the use of concrete images is practically unlimited. Examples include pushing a wall, kicking a ball, or wringing a towel. Any of these could be used for physical release, expanding the movement repertoire and stimulating projective material.

In summary, projective techniques and sensitization to and mobilization of potential body action at times overlap in function; they simply represent a different emphasis. The former emphasizes the surfacing of unconscious material, while the latter emphasizes broadening the movement repertoire. Since the muscles are the holder of emotions, any qualitative work on broadening the movement repertoire inevitably works to release the concomitant psychic associations, and vice versa: any work which loosens unconscious associations broadens expressive movement. In addition, both approaches facilitate the emotional warm-up through simple improvisational structures. These structures pave the way for the third aspect of Evan's work.

Evan was prepared to structure an in-depth movement problem or theme for complex improvisation⁶¹ out of any part of the dance therapy session. Movement

⁶¹Levy (1988) provides the case study of Pamela to explicate complex or in-depth improvisation as a mode of intervention.

Evan began with the "movement interview", using specific exercises for the joint purpose of getting to know the physical strengths, weaknesses, and potential of the client as well as exploring how Pamela (name changed) felt about and perceived her body.In her initial interviews, Pamela expressed many insecurities and doubts about her physical appearance. Evan decided to explore this further by asking Pamela to shut her eyes and describe her own body. Pamela gave a thorough description but said nothing of her arms and hands. When Evan questioned her about this, she replied that she felt the skin on her hands was like alligator skin. Evan did not pursue this further at this time. In regard to dancing, Pamela stated that she hated lying on the floor when dancing. She described her mother's body and walk...In her early discussion with Pamela, Pamela's preoccupation with her family's judgements of her body emerged. Evan believed that dance therapy could play an especially important role with individuals who have experienced severe family criticism and rejection of the parts of the body. Evan took note of Pamela's verbalizations in regard to family criticism and rejection as well as Pamela's initial omission of her hands and arms in her body description.

After gathering information, Evan asked Pamela to observe herself walking. Evan was surprised at the lack of reflection Pamela had concerning her own walk as compared to her detailed response to her body image. The only thing Pamela was very aware of was that she hated to stroll or walk slowly; and that she would always feel an urgency to pass any slow walkers who were walking ahead of her. Next, Evan asked Pamela to run. Pamela said it was difficult to run without an image of why she was running. She also complained of a general lack of breath and endurance except when she had the image of running after someone, then she was able to run without stopping for an hour. Along these same lines,

Pamela also mentioned her extreme endurance when she was angry. Pamela was an actress and so was aware of these peculiar variations in her patterns and endurance.

Further movement observation of Pamela revealed that when she ran, her feet, upon landing, did not make full impact with the ground. Evan spoke to Pamela about this and Pamela responded that she never put her full foot down because she disliked her feet, believing she was flat-footed and hence had ugly feet. Evan quickly intervened in this on a physical level, providing her with correct placement of her feet on the ground which quickly corrected this problem.

In these early sessions, Evan asked Pamela to do several other exercises. In each she noted Pamela's total use of her body. Some exercises went easily with little need for discussion. For example, Evan asked Pamela to lie down and place a drum on her abdomen to see what Pamela's breath capacity was, and this Pamela did easily. One theme which continually repeated itself in Evan's early observation was Pamela's frustration with people walking slowly in front of her. Because of the repetitiveness of this theme, Evan decided to pursue it. Hence she asked Pamela for her associations to this image. In response, Pamela spoke of her mother who had two tendencies: one was to be very messy and take up a lot of space in the house and the other was to move slowly and in this way make Pamela late for appointments.

Evan, keenly aware of the importance of tempo and its effect on the body and emotional adjustment, explored how slowness affected Pamela in her own behaviour. Pamela was able to recall periods of doing nothing when she had had plans to get things done. Also, when Pamela tried to lose weight she frequently accompanied periods of not eating with not moving. Thus, while Pamela expressed resentment of her mother's patterns of slowness, her unhealthy attachment to her mother was evident in her own struggle with getting things done, her lack of endurance, her periods of doing nothing and coming late to therapy (a rare occurrence). In this case Evan's major goal was that of helping Pamela to separate her own body image and behaviour from that of her mother. The conflict between Pamela and her mother, centring around issues of timing, can be viewed from a non-verbal perspective in relation to Evan's definition of dance as it pertains to dance therapy: "space, time, body movement dynamics and content welded in unity"... Thus, Evan's goal was to un-weld space, time, body movement dynamics, and content for the purpose of unravelling this tight unit of behaviour which controlled Pamela to help in achieving this goal of separation from the destructive relationship Pamela had with her mother.

After collecting pertinent information through exercises and discussion, Evan made her first major intervention. She asked Pamela to choose between two movement themes which Evan posed. The first was to "assume the physical characteristics in movement of anyone who at any time had rejected her on the basis of bodily characteristics"... The second was to "assume the physical characteristics in movement of her mother". Pamela chose the latter, though with initial resistance. In doing this Pamela began by becoming her mother as she perceived her first in the present and then from the past. Evan explained to Pamela that she was "trying to take things out of her mind where they had been brewing and to begin to let them out through the channel of the body"...

In Pamela's enactment of her mother from past memories she spontaneously dramatized three episodes of physical abuse. The enactment was composed of a rush of words, tears, and movements. She suddenly became absorbed in the expressions of grief, anger, desperation, and confusion as she switched in movement back and forth between the role of her mother violently assaulting her and her own frightened, angry, and bewildered reactions, the reactions of a small child.

In the next session Pamela returned saying she felt straighter in her posture and more able to tolerate and enjoy moving slowly. At this time Evan emphasized that her goal was for Pamela to reclaim a positive identification with her own body and establish her own standards for personal evaluation, differentiated from the rejection and admonition of her mother and relatives. Evan took this opportunity to go over exercises they had done so far and to encourage Pamela to do these exercises every day. Evan is unique in her stress on the integration of exercises which she would ask the client to do on his/her own as an integral part of her work and in conjunction with dramatic enactments and improvisation. It appears that Evan made the decision to emphasize rehabilitation of the body at this time when Pamela that Evan made the decision to emphasize rehabilitation of the body at this time when Pamela was feeling

healthy and strong as a way to integrate and reinforce this good feeling in the form of healthy functioning of the body. In this way the good feeling was solidified through its physical concomitant, good form.

Evan frequently integrated assignments outside of the therapy session with work in the session. Because of Pamela's feelings about her hands, Evan had her find pictures in artwork of hands. Her goal was to help Pamela find hands she responded positively to and to help her use these pictures to explore the conflicting feelings she had about her hands. Evan also provided her with exercises for her hands, but Pamela had an ambivalent response to these. When Evan saw that this work brought very disturbing memories back to Pamela about her mother and also about having been pushed into dance classes as a child, Evan decided to temporarily suspend the exercise aspect of her work with Pamela. During this period of intense ambivalence and blocking around the subject of hands, Evan stressed expressive movement activities employing dramatic enactments and other forms of body image work.

The following is an example of Evan's use of dream to encourage exploration and insight through enactment and work on body image. Pamela had spoken of having several nightmares and waking up with partial paralysis. As Pamela described one of these dreams she was very agitated. Several sessions previously, Pamela had verbalized her problems quite persistently. Though Evan allowed this, realizing Pamela's desperate need to talk, Evan knew Pamela needed to return to movement in order to explore the subjective reality of the dream on a muscular level. When Evan saw Pamela becoming more agitated while discussing her dream, she finally interrupted, saying "Stop talking and move" ... Evan felt that with this extra push for the nonverbal expression, Pamela would be much more able to probe her innermost associations, thoughts and feelings. This later became a theme in Evan's training of dance therapists, that is, an emphasis on bringing the expression back to its somatic reality or source in the body as opposed to encouraging verbal exploration. Pamela complied with Evan's instruction and began to dance her dream. The movements ushered on the cathartic release of tears along with more movement as well as verbalization, but this time with deeper commitment and affect. In the dream enactment, Pamela externalized physically and verbally the sensation of women pursuing her aggressively and wanting something from her. In the dream Pamela is very small. She is trying to hide but they come after her. She told Evan she wanted to be under the ground. When Evan threw her a blanket, she crouched under it and expressed ambivalence about touching her own body. When Pamela finished the dream enactment and verbalization, Evan asked her to look at her hands and describe what she saw. She then had her do the same with her face. Her response again indicated a negative and disturbed body image.

Evan then asked her when she remembered first not liking her body and she recalled it was when she was in a crib and ill. She recalled her arms being clamped down and not being able to breathe. Evan then asked Pamela to look at her hands again and in association to this she became aware of a sexual identity conflict, feeling neither male nor female but rather like an "oddy". Through her enactment of the dream along with the body image work (i.e. having Pamela talk about what she sees in different parts of her body) Pamela became aware of seeing her mother and grandmother as masculine and herself as very small in relation to them, as exemplified in her dreams.

The theme of being small, like the theme of moving slowly, returned regularly. Because of the persistence of this theme, Evan decided to explore Pamela's associations to "smallness". Evan approached this by telling Pamela she was going to give her a choice of three movement themes on which Pamela would be asked to focus her movement work. Evan suggested that she begin with the theme "being little", but gave Pamela the option of beginning with one of the other themes instead. Pamela agreed to this one without hearing the others. When she began the movement work she crouched low to the ground. Evan insisted that she crouch even lower down, becoming as little as possible. In doing this Pamela became aware of a memory of falling in the bathroom while being bathed as a very small child and being laughed at by her mother and grandmother. She also recalled that this same feeling of smallness stayed with her in school as a child.

This approach appears to be that of exaggerating and hence externalizing the physical representation of the emotional state of the client for the purpose of helping him/her to experience fully his/her emotions. Through encouraging the physical expression of the regression the individual makes contact with early memories, as Pamela did (the fall in the bathroom). From this point Evan and the

directives evolved out of the physical warm-up, functional technique, the emotional warm-up (i.e., the projective techniques and mobilization of potential body movement), and/or the client's verbalizations. Evan frequently structured movement suggestions around thoughts and feelings the client had about his/her own body, including fears, fantasies, illusions, and/or somatic identifications of oneself with others. This mode of intervention is rooted in Jungian depth-psychological method. In this the therapist takes cues from the previous activities done in the session and travels with the client to the depth of his or her subconscious mind and through improvisation, which is a form of the Jungian 'active imagination', helps to identify and find a way out of the complex through release and movement activities geared towards individuation.

SL Technique of Trauma Release

The SL technique of trauma-release is directly inspired by Evan's in-depth improvisation as described by the two 'senior trainers' of the organization, Padmabati and Sharanya. Padmabati begins by saying that before going in for such a session, the beneficiaries should have some knowledge about which brain is activated because of which the body becomes activated. And they explain brain-functioning to them before-hand. In the trauma release session, she says that they begin with a simple movement through which the client moves spontaneously. After that the trainers guide the client into 'imagination' ('kalpana' in Bengali). As Padmabati explains the process in such a session, I quote her⁶²:

Events cannot be wiped out of memory, the reality of events will be there but we try to remove the associated pain. That pain remains within our body and we ourselves can remove it or bring it up. We first ask them to go back to their old pain; we try to bring forth the pain a bit, in a dark room. It is done privately because those who

client could probe together this new material previously stored in the musculature, and out of the individual's consciousness. In this way Evan sought to take knowledge and insight out of the intellectualized, non-emotional state and into the reality of the individual's innermost emotions. Evan stressed regression (via body movement) in the service of the ego for the more total integration of the self. (Levy 1988: 44-48)

⁶² The extract is an exact translation from her interview where she spoke in Bengali, there were structural incongruity in some of her sentences, which have been kept as such for reasons of authenticity.

participate in trauma release, the rules are that there will be no observation, there would be no documentation, record, no side-talk, photograph, so that total privacy is maintained. And all the participants would know everything about each one of us, so this space is free of fear because if anyone says anything about my trauma then I can do the same to that person. Both are in the same position. Before bringing on the event we use music, not soft music, somewhat disturbing, powerful music, sound, beat—using these we try to move the memory. We darken the room completely and encourage speech. Basically the client is asked to represent in movement and if possible through dance the event and source of his anguish. We ask him or her to express the emotions felt through bodily gestures and movements while speaking out loud and clear. When our memory-file starts to open, automatically those emotions rage in the body, my body gets freed, sometimes it shakes, sometimes it gets goose-bumps, the heart pounds, one becomes breathless—this happens because the brain gets activated with the opening of the memory file, we thus go back to the story and then come back to the present and then relieve it. When someone remembers something there is chest pain, stomach pain, the headaches, hot air comes out of the ear, the spinal chord heats up—different people feel pain in different part of their body at different points of their story. The neck gets jammed. Whenever we see this happening —when he or she has told and gestured the whole event or source of his or her trauma we ask them to close their eyes, sometimes we ask them to sit in cross-legged posture, one who can't sit is asked to lie down in X posture and then tell them to check and identify the pain in the body, observe what's happening in the body. They do that. Once they finish we ask them to raise their hands—we don't let them talk there. Then we ask them to identify those points in the body where they feel secure and painless. The palm of our hands generally remain tension-less, we don't feel heavy or pressure there. The other point is under the foot, below the nose, in the ear, forehead—these are tensionless spots. Whenever they identify it automatically we ask them to take their mind there. Transfer the mind there. Then from there hot air emits, it tingles, itches—that means the 'release' is taking place. We tell them not to be scared because that is normal it just means that you are releasing. You are allowing it to happen so that the pain is released (May 5, 2010)

Sharanya speaks about the role of imagination in the trauma release session. She mentions how at times, many patients fail to identify their trauma as happen to beneficiaries suffering from mental confusion. Observing that the facilitator then asks him to see his palm, forehead, foot and then he is 'taken' to an imaginary world which

is positive. The client is then asked to think of the colour he likes, the person he prefers; he is asked to imagine a beautiful place where he can get peace, can see water and that place is very cool and soothing and it soothes the body. Sharanya says, they then put on a very peaceful music and that helps the process of imagination. They are asked to spend some time in that beautiful spot. She says that then the client is told that they will count from ten to one and he has to respond according to his condition. Ten means he hasn't released his trauma as yet and between three to one means he has released it; while the middle numbers mean that he still needs time and then he is given time by the facilitator. In the end if and when the client feels free of the burdensome emotions—the complex is broken successfully he or she is asked to improvise a few dance steps to play out how he feels now. The nature of the movements indicates whether his or her trauma has released or not. Facilitators often suggest empowering movements dancing out which the client feels complete. In this way through dancing or 'moving'-out the problem and the negative emotions clotted in the complex, going through those emotions and the event again, gaining a perspective and clarity on the issue, expressing and externalising them and then again through the relaxation activities and finally the empowerment dance one seems to be able to regain one's sense of completeness.

Going through the process personally it seemed strenuous initially. Afterwards though, I felt much lighter, freer and as if I had gone back to the time when all this had not happened. The self-feeling had changed.

Cooling down, the third part of a general session, often concludes the movement segment. In this phase movements slow down to include breathing with gentle stretches of the body. Usually relaxation techniques from martial arts, dance or yoga are taken. The movements in this section help to calm down the energy of group members. In both SL and Ashirvaad the following exercise was done as 'cool down'. Beneficiaries lie down a little away from each other with their eyes closed. As the therapist calls out names of certain body parts like fingers or toes, the clients move these parts very slowly. They breathe as they make these movements and are free to make movements of their choice. In the next part of this exercise, as the leader/therapist calls out names of different body parts, the beneficiaries tense those parts and then relax them. The therapist can call out names of isolated body parts

sequentially, from head to the toes. In SL workshops another cool down activity seemed quite novel. Beneficiaries gather on one side of the room and lie down with their hands overhead. They roll very slowly and smoothly to the other side of the room with their eyes open. No music is required for these activities.

Kashyap (2005) writes that the entire group may also go through communal movements by holding hands, which then becomes a 'good bye' dance. For this the beneficiaries gather in a circle. Each individual gives a positive strike through movement to his/her neighbour. It could be a hug, a touch, kiss or whatever else the group members are comfortable with at that moment. Beneficiaries may also get into a circle and hold hands. Without leaving each others' hands, they move slowly taking their hands up, down, in and out of the circle.

Closure makes up the last part of these sessions. The facilitator moderates a verbal sharing process with participants sitting in a circle. He or she invites individual feedback about the session from the beneficiaries—their awkward moments, response to activities, relationship with others in the group, and what they enjoyed and what they found difficult to do (physically or emotionally). The facilitator plays a pivotal role in helping the participants clarify their problems or issues and offers plausible solutions. She makes sure that all the beneficiaries have a chance to express themselves. Depending on how articulate the group members are, the duration and content of a closure varies from group to group.

Blanche Evan's techniques have been discussed in some detail because they give a representative account of a typical dance therapy session that I encountered in the field. Evan and Kashyap are the two writer-practitioners who I found to be most influential among those following the methods of dance movement therapy. The next section deals extensively with the therapeutics of dance. That would help explicate how certain issues are perceived by practicing dance therapists and resolved with the beneficiaries' active cooperation.

Therapeutics of Dance⁶³

According to dance therapists, the act of creating one's own movement is in itself therapeutic. Kashyap (2005) opines that creating and understanding their own movement language and expression gives clients a stronger sense of personal identity. While improvising, individuals also get in touch with suppressed feelings and memories, which they had perhaps not been aware of.

Therapists believe that dance enhances social skills and the ability to relate to others. If participants cannot interact with others and withdraw from a group, activities that require group members to work collectively on a task might be introduced. For instance, group members are given a large stretch of cloth to create a dance with the theme of 'unity'. As the group works together, manipulating the cloth, channels of communication open up and interaction takes place automatically. Naturally, the time span for these interactive processes to unfold differs according to the functioning level of each individual.

Whether a therapist is working with normal or special needs beneficiaries, certain common problems of a physical, mental or emotional nature are bound to arise. The range and degree of these problems might differ with each individual or group. Therefore the first few sessions are used to observe and assess the movement behaviour of individuals followed by designing short-and-long-term goals for sessions. Based on these goals, themes and activities for sessions are created. Therapists keep track of the progress made by participants through movement diagnostic tests (Kashyap 2005:20).

According to Kashyap (2005)

There are certain universal objectives that therapists address while working with almost any group of individuals. The primary concern would be to heighten body awareness. This concern is the focal point of most body-related disciplines and acts as a base on which more complex movement experiences are layered (Kashyap 2005:21).

⁶³ I have taken the sub-heading from Kashyap (2005) where it forms the title of a chapter.

Clients are encouraged to be completely conscious of every movement they make, rather than performing movements, mechanically. In fact, exercises like ‘body scanning’, that is meditating on one’s body and sending a focused awareness to different body parts are done in many sessions to bring people’s attention back to their bodies. To give a description of the exercise:

Participants either lie down on their backs or are comfortable seated. The leader guides clients on a journey through the inner landscape of their bodies. He/she could have a prepared text based on this idea if necessary—the tone of voice is low and pace of words is slow. The participants are lead through the whole body and asked to focus their concentration on parts like the fingertips, lower back, the big toe or the nose. With each body part, the therapist pauses for at least twenty-five to thirty seconds. This helps beneficiaries experience different sensations or tiny movements taking place involuntarily in a particular body part. After the leader takes the group through the entire body, he/she asks the participants what they experienced during this exercise. This can be done with a slight variant of making tiny, deliberate movements of the mentioned body parts like when they get to their cheeks or eyebrows, it could be tightening of a muscle or a small twitch. Pace of activity is slow. These activities are done in silence.

When music is switched on and clients are asked to move spontaneously to it, the leader may observe that certain parts of their bodies are not moved. Perhaps the hips, shoulders, knees or the entire lower part of the body gets left out. This might happen due to several reasons—for instance movement of hips could be considered culturally seductive; there might be a physical handicap or muscular tension that hinders movement; or a psychological problem such as emotional withdrawal that is preventing the easy flow of movement. Therapists therefore devise specific body preparatory exercises to help people become aware of each of their body parts while moving.

Most clients come to dance therapy with a narrow range of habitual postures and movement patterns. Therapists attempt to set their bodies free from these stereotypical patterns and build a new repertoire of movement vocabulary. Clients also learn to use more comfortable, healthier postures while standing, sitting or lying down. The

facilitator might use creative visualization and imagery to get beneficiaries to move in ways they have not moved before. As new movement patterns, rhythms, ways of using space or relating to others are experienced, clients automatically expand their range of motion and feel more at ease in their bodies. For example, Participants may use plain walls in the room for this activity. They all imagine they are creatures that live on walls and for three to four minutes, try different kinds of movements stuck to the wall. For instance, they could roll along the wall or attempt to move away from the wall, but one part of their body is always stuck to the wall. They try out various movements with the wall as support and in their minds begin to give their creatures a name. If there are not enough plain walls in the room, beneficiaries are free to try to exercise in threes or fours while others watch. Finally the participants watching could say what creatures they thought they saw and the performers could say what creatures they imagined themselves to be.

Kashyap (2005) mentions an activity often done at sessions for victims of trafficking and other abused or stigmatized clients. The group is divided into pairs. This exercise is about physically struggling through various kinds of imaginary obstructions before reaching a beautiful space they fantasize about. Each pair discusses these obstacles and the rest of the group watch as each pair begin from one side of the room and work their way through obstructions to the other. Finally, participants give their feedback to the therapist/leader. Music could be used with these activities.

In some activities, an accurate imitation of another person's movement is useful, especially while working with a partner. It helps individuals follow a movement with precision, incorporates new movements into their bodies, builds relationships with each other and increases concentration. To enhance imitation skills, therapists use mirroring techniques that are done in pairs. During these exercises therapists also use verbal instructions, provide movement cues or help people physically achieve certain movement patterns. For instance in one of the workshops at SL participants were asked to act out silently and then talking in gibberish some incident that had caused them pain. Their respective partners were asked to witness the proceedings through mirroring as and when necessary. Then the process would be reversed.

As individuals learn to imitate one person, they may still be unable to mirror movements of the whole group. Group coordination is a basic skill that needs to be built into sessions, since much of dance therapy happens with clusters of people. This requires concentration, eye contact with others, visual acuity and quicker reflexes on the part of each individual. Therefore therapists develop activities in which group members learn to synchronize their own with the group's movements. Kashyap mentions certain activities like:

1. The therapist/leader divides beneficiaries into quartets. Individuals in each quartet stand in a diamond-shaped quadrangle. One person in each quartet is the leader and performs very slow movements facing outside the quadrangle. The others of his group follow hi/her movements. After a few movements, the therapist indicates for a change of leader by turning toward the person who takes on the leadership. Movements never stop flowing at any point—the shift of leadership is done through movement and not verbal signals. This activity ends when the four people in each cluster have lead as well as followed.
2. Participants get into a straight line behind a chosen leader and follow him/her around the room in a line. As the leader changes his movements, so do the group and he gets the line to move in interesting patterns around the hall. He/she can experiment with changing speeds and different movement patterns. The activity ends when everyone in the group has had a chance to play leader. The activity goes from being medium-to-fast-paced (Kashyap 2005:142-3)

Most people have an inborn sense of rhythm that allows them to move their bodies in response to any kind of music. Many others get frustrated trying to synchronize their body movements to a drumbeat or melody. Their bodies either follow the beat or are one beat ahead. At this juncture the therapists need to step in and help to break up a movement and its rhythm into smaller units. Alternatively, therapists might ask clients to create their own rhythms made up of claps or stamping feet. Once they begin to feel at ease with these simple beats, more complex rhythms and body movements are introduced. As beneficiaries gain assurance they learn to enjoy the experience of harmonizing their movements with music. Body rhythms exercises are simple—participants stand in a circle and the therapist makes up a simple pattern of footwork, as moving forward two steps and moving backwards two steps. Everyone repeats this couple of times. Gradually the facilitator encourages the clients to

improvise and add other movements of the feet. The group incorporates everyone's steps and choreographs a medium paced 'feet dance'.

Spatial awareness is another concept that therapists integrate into their sessions. Participants are directed to use specific movements to explore different levels, directions and planes in space. As they reach out into space and increase their range of movement, they are also made aware of personal boundaries that define their individual spaces. This is especially useful while working with children in mixed groups of boys and girls. Mats are placed or circles are drawn around each child to demarcate his or her space from others. Many games have been created to help participants become aware of their space, to guard it in some instances and share it with others at another time. For example, holding hands is a way of sharing personal space and saying 'no' to another person's physical proximity is a way of guarding one's space. These are especially relevant for most clients as lack of boundary-maintenance skills open people to others' intervention in their lives and domination. Most people do not learn boundary-maintenance since their families do not give that kind of space. This becomes relevant for persons vulnerable to trafficking since poverty and lack of proper accommodation conditions often make them withdrawn instead of well-bounded. In rehabilitation too this is crucial since persons with strong boundary-maintenance skills have better survival potential in the outside world. Kashyap mentions a lengthy activity:

In this exercise, the participants standing in scattered positions are each given a roll of coloured crepe paper streamers. They use these streamers to make a circle around them on the floor. The circles can be as small or large as each of them wishes. Next the clients are asked to stand in the middle of these circles and close their eyes. They begin to use different body parts to feel the boundary around them. They move inside this boundary, sitting, standing or lying down and feel the texture, shape, length, breadth and size of their boundary. Movements need to be sustained and exploratory. After a couple of minutes, the therapist asks each individual to describe the kind of personal spaces and boundaries they imagined they were surrounded by. After this, the facilitator asks each of the clients to invite someone from the group with whom they are comfortable with, in their boundaries. Partners move together, around and with each other inside the boundary. After some time the therapist asks the beneficiaries to pick up and hold the streamers in both hands and move with their

partners. Later the whole group moves with each other using streamers. At the end, the facilitator asks beneficiaries what it is like to have a personal space and a boundary. Do they feel comfortable having another person in their personal spaces? The therapist can add more questions that generate discussions around the idea of personal spaces and boundaries (Kashyap 2005:152-3).

Music is required for this activity. There are many other such activities since boundary-maintenance also provides solution to various relationship problems that clients come up with.

The way beneficiaries use space while moving or interacting with others reveals certain characteristic traits. For instance, when participants are asked to move freely using the entire space available to them, some predominantly use the centre of the room. They seem confident of their bodies and in some cases seek attention or are extrovert in nature. Others who are shy and awkward with movement might prefer being in the periphery of the room or try camouflage themselves behind someone. Some might use a lot of space with high energy. Therapists observe people's movements in relation to space and choose activities that help them explore space in the fullest possible manner. Walk and freeze is a most common exercise that is used by both Ashirvaad and SL. The leader uses a drum to hit a steady beat. Participants respond by walking in different directions all around the room. As the drumbeat stops, they freeze into a statue. The leader can help the group to explore various manner of walking each time—normal walk, walking with hands horizontally held to the sides, walking in crouched position, or walking backwards. Each time they freeze, the body shapes can vary too; they can freeze in high-level, mid or low-level shapes, they can freeze facing a partner in different level or get stuck back to back with a partner. They can freeze with different emotions or stick to people wearing similar coloured clothes. These walks and freezes can be tried in different permutations and combinations. This is a fast-paced activity.

For assuring effectiveness of almost all movement activities, a client needs to make eye contact with the therapist and others in the group believes Kashyap (2005). Without eye contact, many of the activities done may fail to have an impact on the beneficiary—he or she may tend to drift away physically and mentally from what is taking place. Specific activities of a playful and non-threatening nature are therefore

introduced to initiate and build eye contact between participants. While maintaining eye contact, it becomes easier for participants to dance with another person, follow their movements or interact with others in the group. Often beneficiaries stand in a circle, moving their heads very slowly either clockwise or anticlockwise direction, making eye contact with every member of their group. Each member shifts the gaze from one person to another after a few seconds. Toward the end of this exercise, each individual would have made eye contact with the rest of the group. This can also be done in dyads. Beneficiaries are divided into pairs. Partners sit comfortable in silence on the floor facing each other. On a signal from the facilitator partners maintain eye contact with each other for two to three minutes. When the therapist claps her hands in slow motion, partners start moving, changing different levels in space, mirroring each others' movements and still sustaining the eye contact. The therapist claps her hands after a few minutes to end the activity.

A common problem that therapists encounter while working with special children or adults is hyperactivity or passivity. Passivity manifests itself in the form of clients being withdrawn from sessions, following others mechanically or being still until physically assisted by someone. On the other hand, hyperactive clients experience low attention spans, are restless, agitated and constantly disrupt sessions. Therapists devise activities to bring about a balance in energies within the group by unfurling experiences that serve both extremes of energies. They use specific movements that increase, maintain or decrease energy levels in individuals. They might initiate movement games like a walking race to stimulate and motivate passive individuals. They might use slow-paced movements to help hyperactive participants channelize, focus and release their energies. Walk and freeze activities can be used for this too. As the therapist beats a drum, beneficiaries walk in different directions creating a maze. The leader calls out numbers from one to five, indicating the speed at which the beneficiaries should walk—one is the slowest while five signified the fastest pace. The participants slow down or increase their pace of walk depending on numbers being called out by the facilitator. The facilitator could also change the volume of drumbeats—low volume for slow and high volume for fast. To extend this activity further, the leader can also call out 'close', 'medium' and 'far'. When she says close, clients move very closely with each other still in the maze formation. On hearing

'far', they move apart, the maze becomes bigger with greater space between the participants.

Consideration and management of affects forms one of the vital concerns of dance movement therapy. According to Kashyap (2005):

There are certain basic emotions like fear, sadness, joy, anger, disgust, love and surprise that are part and parcel of our daily living. In fact our bodies can be likened to containers that store the emotions we experience throughout our lives. Yet there are unwritten laws that govern the way we express these emotions. Since childhood, we are constantly taught not to express feelings like anger, fear, sadness or disgust depending on our genders. Many of us grow up learning to hide feelings, while others explode with anger or sadness, on certain occasions after having bottled up emotions for years. Some cannot express or describe how or what they feel at a given moment.

Dance therapists create safe spaces for people to get in touch with and articulate their feelings through individual, partner and group movement activities (Kashyap 2005:26).

Through the use of props or expressive movements, emotions are channelized and released with guidance from the therapist. As individuals explore and express their emotions, they learn to externalize their feelings in a healthy manner. At an advanced stage, physical expression of these emotions is interspersed with verbal processing. Participants stand in a circle. Each of them is asked to develop four movement actions to reflect any four emotions they have felt in the recent past. Each client shares these actions in silence with the group. The next time round, each mentions the name of the emotion along with the action. Subsequently the therapist asks the group if they would like to substitute certain emotions with new ones as part of their movement sequence. In the end clients perform their changed movement sequences without words. This is a clear example of how the 'rules' and 'resources' are transformed through the mediation of the therapist thus ushering in a change in the clients' actions provided they accept the change in themselves. Another activity serving the same purpose can be cited. The leader brings ten to twenty face masks each of which expresses a different emotion. Each participant chooses a mask to wear and improvises body movements based on the expression of his mask. The leader encourages clients to exaggerate their movements in relation to masks they are wearing. The group is then

divided into two—one group moves while the other watches. In the next sequence, the therapist asks the beneficiaries of the group to portray an emotion opposite to that of the mask they are wearing. For example, if it is a sad mask the body movements could be comic. In one of the trauma workshops at SL participants were asked to make masks as horrible as they could imagine. Then they were asked to wear these masks and stand in a circle holding hands and think of a negative statement that someone had made about each, which they could not protest at that time and ever again but has stayed on in their minds. Each participant was to cry out loud and clear this 'label' thrice in the form of "I am _____". The facilitator would come to each client and as she or he cried out the third time, shout in a louder tone-scale "No. You are NOT ____" and tear the mask away with a sudden gesture. When she did this, many of the participants shook, some broke down, others sobbed. Later at the 'feedback' (closure) each expressed that they felt free and relieved, those who cried said that they felt understood and hence gave vent to the pent up sorrow.

Kashyap (2005) writes that in sessions where emotional sharing takes place, qualms about socializing with others diminish. Relating to others at an emotional and physical plane increases the level of interpersonal functioning. While participating in collective creative acts people learn to follow, lead, compete, empathize and cooperate; a supportive group atmosphere builds up and individual isolation is reduced."

Beneficiaries often come to these sessions with a negative body image. This happens especially in the case of special needs people whose disability is visible either on the face or the body. They are often stared at on the streets and therefore feel ashamed of their bodies. Even able-bodied people maintain distorted image of themselves—they think they are too thin, too tall, too fat or too short. Therapists attempt to explore these issues and resolve them by first helping clients get a clear perception of their bodies. This is done through body image drawings. Clients draw their own bodies on a sheet of paper after which the therapist helps them to talk about these drawings. Through this clients reveal their attitude towards their own bodies—their likes or dislikes of the body parts they want to change, or their preference for a particular ideal body type.

Using these body images as a take-off point, the clients use role-playing to re-enact certain traumatic incidents or situations from their lives. Movements as well as words are used to articulate their experiences. The combination of body image drawings, role-playing and verbal processing aid therapists to get to the root cause of why clients feel the way they do about their bodies. Through intense therapy work, individuals begin to accept the body the way it is rather than measure its value against an ideal body type. As people go through creative body workouts that are fun, challenging and relaxing, they realize their bodies can do a lot more than they thought possible and they begin to perceive themselves with a new gaze. Body-image exercises involve other creative activities along with dance and movement. At the beginning of a session, beneficiaries sit together in scattered positions to draw a self image on a piece of paper. They keep the drawings aside and move. At the end of the movement session, they draw another set of self images, not looking at their old drawings. The group then sits together and discusses the drawings as well as the differences between the first and second image.

Clients are given chart paper and pens. They work together to create a 'body poem' of approximately ten to twelve lines. The poem could articulate how the participants felt about their whole body as well as individual parts. It includes both positive and negative feelings they harboured towards their bodies. Once they write the final version of the poem on the chart paper, they memorize it. Then they choreograph movements to accompany their poems. Finally, they perform the poem, reciting it and dancing with it. In case of a large group of beneficiaries, they can be divided into two groups for this exercise. Each group could come up with their own body poem. One group performs while the other watches. They interchange roles. No music is required for this second movement. This was done at the first workshop session that I attended at SL.

Kashyap points out another aim behind these sessions—to sensitize beneficiaries to movement signals and cues that emerge from their own bodies as well as that of others. Since expression largely takes place through non-verbal means, participants learn to be more aware of what their own bodies are communicating. For example, they may learn to acknowledge signals that indicate that their bodies are feeling tired. They become more compassionate and non-judgmental towards others' non-verbal

expression as well. The beneficiaries learn to empathize with physical or mental limitations in others and take care of each other. The 'ultimate goal' in Kashyap's opinion, is achieved when individuals get involved in the therapeutic processes and resolve their issues and conflicts through movement experiences.

Use of Indian Dance forms for Healing

Though dance movement therapy has originated in the West, its use by people in different parts of the world has seen a synthesis of local, national and international dance movements being used in harmony for the common purpose of enhancing wellbeing of people. India is no exception to this. Dance therapists here draw from folk as well as classical dance forms to further the therapeutic cause. Healing pursuits using dance, in Kolkata, is not limited only to the application of dance movement therapeutic techniques. Dancers like Alokanda Roy and volunteers of TcW, Kolkata are involved in a different kind of endeavour that is generating wellbeing among a group of prisoners and prison staff in the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata. Roy introduced various Indian dance forms, even quite non-orthodox steps (like some oft-repeated Bollywood steps of the eighties) into the dance 'classes' there along with story-telling, informal chatting, and 'normal' interaction with 'normal' people undergoing incarceration.

In some of the sessions that SL held in a shelter-home for children and girls who are vulnerable to being trafficked, in South Kolkata, movements from Indian classical and folk dances were used for purposes of emotional release and fun dance. In one of the sessions the 'trainer' drew 'rasa boxes'⁶⁴ with a chalk on the floor. Each

⁶⁴ Richard Schechner in his essay *Rasaesthetics* discusses the Rasabox exercise as based on the "...assumption that emotions are socially constructed while feelings are individually experienced" (Schechner 2001:39). The key to the working of the Rasaboxes is the spatialization of emotions. As in classical Indian dance so in this exercise, space is used to delineate each 'rasa', and the individual performer is allowed to find her own expression of the emotion contained within it. Schechner discusses how performers are asked to draw nine rectangular boxes on the floor, each of dimensions 6'x 3'. Then they are asked to "define" each 'rasa', as 'raudra' meaning anger, rage etc; *bibhasta* meaning disgust, etc. Then in variously coloured chalk, they are urged to write the names of any one rasa in each rectangle. The participants are asked to write in Roman alphabetized Sanskrit, using chance methods to determine which rasa would be placed in which box. The box in the centre or the ninth box is only to be left empty in this exercise. Then the participants are asked to interpret the rasa in their particular box, by drawing or/and describing, by associating feelings and ideas to it. The descriptions are required to pertain only to the present time and not for "all time". Schechner emphasizes in this article that in moving from one box to another, participants must either "walk the

participant was to write or draw anything that came into her mind the moment she saw the emotion written in the box. For example, seeing the word 'raag' (which means anger in Bengali) one could write the name of an angry relative or something or someone that has caused her anger. It has to be instant — no time is given for thinking. Once all the eight boxes are completed (the ninth box was to be empty or 'shanto' {peaceful in Bengali} written on it) each had to step into one box at a time and dance out the emotion written in it. Everyone began the activity. One girl, about fourteen / fifteen years of age stepped into the box written 'anger' in it, in Bengali. She started doing footwork patterns from Kathak and then in a while the trainers noticed that her steps were becoming more and more vigorous and fast. She was seen to be quickly losing control in that tears had welled up in her eyes, but still she went on and on till one of the trainers went to her and calmed her down. Then she was asked to stand in the ninth box written 'peaceful' ('shanto' in bengali) and slowly dance out peace if she felt like. She could sit or lie down too. After a while the trainer asked her to lie down on the floor and gave her the 'healing touch' as they call it in SL. The trainer touched her forehead, forearms in a soothing manner while asking her to imagine a serene scene. After about ten minutes she sat up and was said that she felt relaxed as after a storm. Evidently, there were tensions at home that she had carried to the shelter-home that day and the exercise helped relieve her of the pent up negativity. She felt free of it all.

line" at the edge of the boxes or step outside the Rasabox area entirely and walk around to the new box. While there is no fixed order of progression from one box to another in this exercise, the participants must be careful not to spoil another's contribution. One a participant is finished, she needs to step outside the Rasabox area. Once everyone is standing at the edge of the Rasabox area, they are given the opportunity to speak about their experiences. Participants walk around the edge of the Rasaboxes. They read to themselves and out loud what is written. They describe what is drawn. But in this exercise they cannot ask questions, nor can anything be explained. After that silence is observed. Minnick, who took part in designing this exercise with Schechner, opines that "... rasaboxes externalize what is often considered an "internal" process, proving that "real emotion does not have to be kept inside, but is actually a physical as well as a psychological process" (Minnick, in Schechner 2001:40). Understood thus, rasaboxes which consist of nine boxes with each of the nine rasa or bhavas written on them are therapeutic as this provides the clients "...with a safe space in which to explore emotions" (Minnick, in Schechner 2001:41). Bharat Muni asserts that "...there is no limit to bhava-s (emotions) and no end to the arts involved [in natya]. It is not possible to have a thorough knowledge of even one of them, leave alone so many of them" (Bharat-muni 1996: 53). Performance theorists consider this to be the foundation of the Rasabox exercise.

Footwork patterns are especially useful in group contexts as well—participants stamp their feet in unison creating various kinds of rhythms. These can be tried out in varying speeds of slow, medium and fast. This idea is also taken from Kathak. Besides being a valuable group co-ordination device, footwork becomes a structured medium through which pent-up aggression and anger are released as was the case at the shelter-home. Variations in the speed and the patterns also help to improve movement sequencing skills and strengthen the bond between body and mind. Kashyap (2005) feels that contact of feet with earth gives a sense of grounding and empowerment. It increases physical stamina and since this exercise demands complete attention, it helps individuals stay in touch with the present reality.

At the Alipore Correctional Home Alokanda Roy, the dancer-activist goes in to take dance ‘classes’ that hardly represent the typical ‘class’ in that she keeps the duration and activity-schedule flexible. The core of healing, to Roy, lies in the happiness that is felt while dancing. According to her, when one feels good, there is a change in his or her attitude as also perception. Thereby some things that are fraught with negativity gradually become positive if one has harmony within, and that’s where she points out, dance steps in. The presence of music, rhythm, and exercise help to reinstate the lost harmony in the lives of the inmates. However it is not only that she utilised their unused energy. Roy is not formally trained in dance movement therapy as practised in the West. Neither can her activities inside the correctional home be called ‘dance movement therapy’ in any way. However in-depth felt-knowledge of the art form and her life-experience is what she draws from. Empathy constitutes a major ingredient in her therapeutic endeavour. Her subjective experience of dancing—yielding an awareness that is necessarily of the interior, is complemented with her strong belief that there are few who do not take to dance. It is something that almost everyone enjoys.

She emphasises that any kind of imposition—be that of a specific form of dance or routine activities in a regular ‘class’ would be contrary to the therapeutic purpose in the Correctional Home. Unlike in a regular dance class where students may dance with just the recitation of the ‘taal’ or the syllable, the inmates of the correctional home need movement. Roy explains that they get bored very easily, so musical accompaniment is a must. Without it those there cannot relate because none of them

have even the remotest idea of how a classical dance is taught. As it is they have a monotonous life and dance has to be introduced in such a way that this monotony is broken. She stresses that it has to be made interesting.

Her perception of the incarcerated as 'normal', her acceptance of them as one of the likes of "you and me" lay at the foundation of the way she approaches healing in this context. Roy finds that prison-life itself gives rise to certain psycho-social and physical conditions that are better eased through dance and music than the limited psychotherapeutic counselling that is currently available. Initially, the male prisoners had reservations about dancing as they felt that dance was something girlish so when they were reassured that they were going to do manly dances their number increased from ten to sixty.

None knew anything about dance other than may be a little bit of improvised break dances in the 'parra'(locality). Roy introduced Kalaripayattu (martial art form originating in Kerala) and Thangta (Manipuri martial art form) accompanied by the drum. Movements from African dances and other tribal dances that they could do easily are also included. Folk dances, 'baul'⁶⁵, 'Rabindranritya'⁶⁶, dandiya and bhangra are danced. The folk form with its catchy tunes and rhythm they thoroughly enjoy. She ascribes the gradual development of a feeling of belonging and solidarity to the folk form, which is danced mostly in groups. Moving together to the rhythm has forged discipline, team spirit and compassion among them. When doing 'bharatnatyam' steps they feel that they have become classical dancers and that gives them a sense of pride, smiles Roy.

Such participation helps them relax and open-up, which facilitates verbal self-expression and interactions with her and the other music teacher Jayati Panda, a well-known Rabindrasangeet exponent who has joined recently. Instead of trying to "mix everything inside" by tagging along psychotherapy she focuses mainly on dance and music. In her experience the nature of interaction and bonding that has developed

⁶⁵ A form of Bengali rural folk music tradition that is essentially oral, and historically sung by wandering mystics, where the singer dances while singing and playing the 'ektara'(single-stringed instrument) (Ray 1988).

⁶⁶ A dance form created by Tagore through a synthesis of the various forms of classical and folk dances of India.

among the prisoners, teachers and volunteers is nourishing emotionally. However none of this is 'done' in the sense of pre-planned activity. From the very beginning the whole process unfolded spontaneously. Clearly, then more than 'learnt therapeutic techniques' it is the spontaneous process, unfolding almost unconsciously, in both the artist and those dancing, interacting and bonding together, that constitutes healing praxis to Roy. Therefore her notion of healing praxis would not fall only and totally within the scope of 'extra-daily practices'⁶⁷. In Roy's 'practice' a certain 'seeing', 'vision' is implicit which, going by her words, is almost intuitive in that the inmates are 'seen' as somebody's son, somebody's father, somebody's husband. She could hold-on-to and follow this 'perception', which was quite against the current of the status quo, and then it gradually seems to have spread among the volunteers and then the prisoners. Their subsequent public performance and appreciation from the art-world and general public only served to strengthen a positive self-image in them. In the correctional home thought-out, pre-meditated, planned 'application' of so-called techniques of dance movement therapy on those 'needing to be healed' are laid aside for acceptance of them as 'one of us'. Being 'one of us' presupposes a structure of needs—psycho-physical and social that is recognised as the same for the artist-volunteers-prisoners in principle, though Roy also points out that incarceration has its distinct load of experiences that have to be negotiated. It also presupposes a relationship where genuine feelings can be communicated and shared and, when the time comes, a hundred per cent is contributed for 'us' by each. And they deliver, amply.

Their performance of 'Valmiki Pratibha'⁶⁸ has been widely acclaimed by both art critics and the general public all over West Bengal. They have done more than

⁶⁷ Using Barba's (1991) distinction between 'extra-daily' and daily activities / practices for theatre anthropology, Phillip Zarrilli (1998) defines practices as those modes of embodied doing through which everyday as well as extra-daily experiences, realities and meanings are shaped and negotiated. According to him, everyday practices included habitualised and routine activities as walking, driving, hygienic practices and the like, while extra-daily practices are those practices such as rituals, dances, theatre performances, the recitation of oral narratives, meditation and/or religious practices, martial arts, etc, which require the practitioner to undergo specialized body training in order to become accomplished in attaining a certain specialized state of consciousness, body, agency, power, and so on (Zarrilli 1998:5)

⁶⁸ A Tagorean dance-drama, depicting the transformation of the dacoit-chief Ratnakar into sage Valmiki, the creator of the *Ramayana*.

twenty-five shows between November 15, 2008 and now in the best-known auditoriums of Kolkata, at the Visvabharati University in Shantiniketan and elsewhere in the state. Each has received standing ovation of the audience for the sheer brilliance of the performance. Roy says

...this has given them a sense of dignity which they had lost, a self-esteem which they had lost. Now when they perform they are really good (Interview, May 28, 2010).

Roy selected 'Valmiki Pratibha' seeing the gradual change that was setting-in within them. She felt they would be able to identify with the theme.

Just as Roy saw the possibilities of folk dances of India and Africa in fostering a sense of solidarity, other dance therapists in India too recognize this. Kashyap (2005) mentions the Karma tribal dance form of Madhya Pradesh where the visually impaired beneficiaries dancing in a line with linked elbows, can execute movements that take them forward, backward and sideways among other geometric designs. Structured dancing gradually gives them the confidence to create their own movement language. It acts as a contact dance and helps them physically feel each other's presence while moving. The dance also enhances their spatial awareness and reduces their fear of the space around them.

Kashyap (2005) writes:

Most folk dances use different rhythms generated by the body, such as clapping hands, stamping feet or snapping fingers. Examples of such dances are the Kummi from Tamil Nadu, Kaikottakali from Kerala and Garba from Gujarat (Kashyap 2005: 37).

Clients move in circles using rhythmic claps that land their swaying bodies in a circular formation. In dance therapy sessions this idea is in two different ways. At first participants clap their hands in different ways maintaining the same speed while moving in circular and line formations. Because these claps punctuate each movement with a definite beat, it helps people synchronize their own movements with others in the group. In another creative exercise, each individual combines the claps with different kinds of vocal sounds to make up rhythmic movement sequences. As group

synchrony and recall of rhythm sequences improve they gain the confidence to deal with their bodies in a more relaxed manner.

Another captivating dance technique—the ‘Chhau’ of West Bengal and Orissa, is based on the idea of balance and focus. A ‘Chhau’ dancer striking balance on a single leg while moving in slow motion using the entire upper body and arms, is as enthralling a sight as the art intricate. Some of the basic walks and movements are open to modification and Kashyap (2005) opines that they can be explored as part of a creative exercise. In her experience:

This is especially useful with hyperactive or restless groups of children—a meditative calmness permeates the dance that influences the group. When they move while balancing on one leg, they automatically become quite and centred. For example, participants could attempt walking in slow motion in pairs. Holding their partners’ hands increases the focus and awareness of their bodies in motion and stillness (Kashyap 2005: 40-1).

Roy has included ‘Chhau’ in her performance of ‘Valmiki Pratibha’ as there is a group of convicts in the Purulia Jail who are proficient in it. Apart from adding a new layer to the ‘Rabindra Nrityanatya’ presentation with the stylized costumes and movements of the folk form she says that greater inclusion becomes possible which is the objective, not merely the production.

Perna Pal-Mehra the founder of Ashirvaad has worked extensively with special needs people in Kolkata, even before Ashirvaad was established. She was a regular at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, in the city where she danced with the children there. Being trained in the expressive art therapies she later established Ashirvaad, a dance school with dual curriculum. It is a school for Manipuri dance and is also a school for Movement Therapy for children suffering from certain kinds of cerebral palsy. At present children with mental retardation are also admitted to Ashirvaad. Her work with the special children is pioneering in the field of dance therapy in Kolkata.

Perna has used Manipuri dance movements in working with special needs children. According to her the gentleness of the movements provides a valuable input to working with children whose brain functions are abrupt. Manipuri movement is different from other classical forms; its movements are soft and flowing. Unlike

Bharatanatyam or Kathak where movements are mainly angular, the Manipuri form has circular movements. Such movement pattern has helped children with Cerebral Palsy in coordination and control of their body parts.

Dance Therapy to Facilitate Special Needs People

Kashyap (2005) has this to say from her experience with special needs persons:

Beneficiaries with special needs are as curious and excited as their normal peers when they experience dance and movement. Joy radiates from their faces as they sway their bodies to music in a circle. In fact, this is how most dance therapy sessions begin. At some point, the therapist might notice that one or two members are moving differently from the rest. Instead of correcting or changing that, the facilitator incorporates their movements into the creative exercise. The rest of the group is encouraged to mirror these movements. Each beneficiary is given the space and time to be leaders and more movements are accumulated as the group challenges itself to go on a new adventure (Kashyap 2005: 45).

In designing dance movement for the special folks, Kashyap has used an assortment of physical disciplines like creative movement ideas from yoga, elements of classical and folk dances, martial arts, theatre exercises, relaxation techniques and mime. These disciplines were used either conjointly with each other or independently to address the bonding between body and mind to build up individual patterns of mobility and diminish muscular tension.

Children with mental challenges generally have difficulties spanning from learning disabilities to behavioural disorders. Many motor abilities like jumping, hopping or skipping which are 'natural' to most children; come in the form of 'skill' to such challenged children. There are certain exercises in which children have to individually do each of these movements while moving across the room. In this, as their condition improves, the therapist may encourage them to repeat the activity with a partner by holding her hand. Through this they improve their own body coordination as also learn to synchronize own movements with that of another child. Many a times, they feel positive by going through each of these movements and may do these in a set. For example, a jump across the floor may be clubbed with hops and a slide. As they experience different loco-motor movements, they may move their whole body as

one entity, effortlessly and with confidence. The facilitator generally tries to take the beneficiaries through developmental movement activities that would help such children explore their own body actions. She may encourage the clients to improvise as many movements as possible with varying pace. When they are through with their movements, the therapist may ask for a feedback from the beneficiaries as to when last did they do such activities and what was their response to the activities just concluded.

Another common activity that the therapists generally try to introduce to improve the motor-coordination of such children is that of encouraging the children to take their body from one point in space to another through various loco-motor movements as walking, running, skipping, sliding and jumping. Sharbari observes that their body is generally very stiff and the children find it difficult to make their bodies move. For instance, when they go out on the street they don't want to walk, even stepping down from the foot-path appears difficult to some children. Also, some have problems with their body balance or they flat footed; they lack proper balance, proper coordination. Through dance, through movement activities they can move without much effort. The main idea is to move them by improving the motor-coordination. Like other movements, these are also encouraged to be done individually as also with a partner. The beneficiaries are also encouraged to combine their movements, create a sequence and show it to the others. For instance, a jump, run, slide and walk may become a sequence. For autistic children, it remains a challenge for the therapists to rein in their dispersed energy and help them channelize it in ways that smoothens out their regular lives. They don't normally respond to such movement sequences of jump, run, slide etc and all autistic children do not suffer from the same problems either. Shrabari observes from her years of experience of doing DMT with autistic children that their main difficulty remains in the fact that they cannot rein in their energy. And she refers to a particular beneficiary from Aashirvaad who is autistic. She says that now he only does ten summersaults on an average in the session, while earlier he couldn't stop before doing at least hundred continuously. In her words:

...they will go doing stereotypical movements—if they are swinging then they will go on swinging, if dancing they will go on dancing but again you will see that they have hyperactivity in them—you will see that they are not standing still even for a

second. So we try to calm him down through dance and music, movement (September 24, 2010).

Sharbari also admits that as a therapist, of all the mentally challenged children, it's more difficult to work with those suffering from autism, since

...it is very difficult to make an autistic child do an activity. But they have a greater need to move (September 24, 2010).

Performance i.e. performing on stage, according to her, is one way to rope in this untamed energy. The acceptance such children receive from performing makes them calmer and confident. However such 'performance' is more of 'expression-on-stage' than a crafted presentation.

Another common feature marking out children with mental challenges is that they refrain from interacting amongst themselves, and to counter this therapeutically, it is necessary that they be brought together to perform group activities. Sharbari maintains that by working in group they learn to communicate with each other and develop a special skill in communication. She believes this is important for the child as also her family. Explaining, Sharbari says that usually in a social gathering the parents of such children feel especially embarrassed and thereby avoid socializing and by doing so they not only isolate the child but also themselves, from which stems depression. In many instances, partnership and group exercises help to break the impasse. Such activities are designed in such a way that they require the children to perform things that they usually resist doing, like maintaining eye contact with group members, holding hands, following a leader chosen from amongst themselves, leading the rest of the group as the leader or choreographing a group dance. Generally all these activities are meant to be done by staying connected with each other, by sharing a single prop such as a huge fabric. As a consequence of such activities done on a regular basis, gender differences fizzle out, and they manage to rise above their reservations on physical contact with each other. A common form of group activity in which such children are initiated into begins with introducing themselves in a group situation, albeit with a rhythm. Beneficiaries stand in a circle and each of them makes a rhythm by clapping or snapping fingers to the syllables of his/her name. For example, Ja-la-ja has three syllables therefore making three beats possible. After

everyone has had their turn in saying names, the group members perform these together in a speeded-up sequence. An advanced form of group interaction with such beneficiaries is with the help of a movement prop, as volleyball. Here as the children stand in a circle, the therapist passes around volleyball and each participant has to say his/her name and think of creative ways of passing the ball—around herself. In the next round, each of the beneficiaries has to call out a person's name in the circle and throws the ball at him/her. This is generally done at a faster pace till everyone in the group become conversant with each others' names. Clients who fail to remember names can perform a short improvised movement sequence in the middle of the circle. Other variants of these activities are when the children call out names of each other and run across the circle to stand next to the person whose name is called. The therapist may encourage clients to increase the speed of this activity and it goes on till everyone is well acquainted with the names of everyone in the group.

Apart from activities like running or jumping, playing and improvisation with props like streamers and dupattas is also thought to help such children in negotiating with their inflexible and edgy bodies. The general objective is to move the streamers in such ways so that various shapes like circles, lines and waves are created with them in space and on the floor. There are movement activities where each of the children stands in the same place making these patterns, and then they move around the hall individually in a way that streamers also travel with them, thus taking various other forms. Such children are also roped in partnership games where one partner moves the streamer and the other has to mirror the changing patterns of the moving streamer with her body. In course of time, the weightless movement of the streamers influences the body movements of the beneficiaries which then become less withdrawn, rigid and more light. Improvisation with props and mirroring their movement in their own bodies is further encouraged in a group situation where the beneficiaries are divided into three smaller clusters, each of them given a prop to work with. Cluster one is given streamers; newspapers are given to the second cluster. While cluster three gets balloons to work with. In each cluster, beneficiaries are expected to explore various movements with their given props and after observing the movement of their props, those are kept aside. Participants then imitate the movement of the props. If necessary,

the facilitator guides each cluster into transporting the movement qualities of the props into their bodies. Each cluster shows the other what they have come up with.

It is evident that as such children gain confidence through such movement activities, their bodies become more elastic and disciplined. Then they experiment on their own to try out movements and steps from the dance sessions. Parents of beneficiaries often point at this capacity building through dance as they observe that their children try to improvise their own dance steps. For instance, the mother of Amaan, a thirteen year old boy suffering from Down's syndrome and learning DMT in Ashirvaad under Sharbari for the past one decade, draws attention to this development in her son. She clearly states how her son automatically tries to emulate the steps shown on MTV and other TV channels and in this class; tries to do the dance steps as shown to him. The mother of Shruti, a fifteen year old girl suffering from the same disease and learning dance with Amaan in Aashirvaad, also voices similar opinion when she says that her daughter too tries to improvise dance steps on her own at home. Such regime of dance movement activities further foster the growth of a natural buddy system as they begin to help each other achieve mastery over more complex movement activities. And parents of such mentally challenged children are genuinely thankful to the therapists for that. Contextually allusions may be made of responses from beneficiaries' parents as Aparna's mother. Aparna is an ace dancer from Aashirvaad, one from the first batch of Prerna Pal-Mehra, who had given many a stage performances in her thirteen or fourteen year old stint with dance. She is a girl of twenty-three/twenty-four with a mind of a girl of twelve. She suffers from mental retardation. Speaking on the necessity of a peer group and of an ambience of acceptance for individuals as her daughter, her mother feels that it's comforting if there is someone somewhere who accepts the child and if she is keen to go to dancing. Elaborating, she says that Aparna just loves speaking to the dance instructor in Aashirvaad and they chat about simple things. So, Aashirvaad to Aparna is also a place where she has friends and she can chat.

Children suffering from cerebral palsy fall among those with physical challenges. They are characteristically those who suffer from immobility; while some of them can walk with assistance, others barely crawl and some can only move in wheelchairs while being seated. In one word, they have to confront basic movement problems on a

regular day-to-day basis which a 'normal' able-bodied person does not have to bat an eyelid before accomplishing. Many are suffering from problems of co-ordination, along with poor movement reflexivity and motor skills. They fail to perform routine actions as how to keep rhythm with their hands, open and close the palms, clutch a prop and move it, catch a ball or throw it etc. For performing any set task, they have a very limited range of movements within which they tend to operate. Such children also have difficulty in maintaining balance while walking and can at best bear to walk for ten minutes at a stretch. The upper part of their body, i.e the torso region is usually very stiff which makes it also difficult for them to throw up their hands and legs fully into space. To free their body parts, therapists usually try to initiate them into certain warm-up exercises which they feel would be beneficial for manipulating their bodies, especially through movement chores like going under, through, over, in front and behind of different shapes and patterns made of fibreglass. These experiences of unique movements help them to stretch and change their imagination of what they think they can possibly make their bodies to do. During such sessions, children normally request for rhythmic music that helps them to move their bodies. Most of them are extrovert and keen on expressing their emotions through non-stop physical activities which at times becomes overwhelming as their enthusiasm often becomes hypertensive. In such cases, as sessions tend to get unorganized, the therapist may try to bring back some semblance of order by providing an external signal, like beating a drum. On hearing it, the children are usually expected to get over their hypertensive mode and freeze their bodies in any action. As they calm down, the therapist can continue with the game and suggest variations throughout the session. Drum beats are generally used in myriad ways to assist the beneficiaries with their movements. For example, there is one activity where the children stand in scattered positions with their eyes closed. As the therapist hits ten beats on a drum with pauses in between, with each beat the participants make a different kind of statue with their bodies. They are free to use different levels in space (high, medium, low) to create these statues. The shapes do not need to be memorized as they are made up spontaneously in response to drumbeats. However, once the children get used to the beat and the activity, it is expected that the next time, the therapist beats the drum, they will respond much quickly in forming statues with their bodies.

Yet another problem in conducting DMT with such physically challenged children is that their notion of space or individual or others' space is not strong. Thus when in an excited mode, they push and pull each other and thus tend to encroach into each other's space. Hence it's necessary in every session to identify and separate spaces with the help of circles drawn on the floor and each of the beneficiaries are expected to occupy one circle as their own. This notion can be conveyed through a game activity called 'my space, your space' in which children need to take the other's permission for sharing his/her circle. When each child selects a dear friend in whose circle she can move in, they need to perform the activity in that demarcated space along with background music. The game usually ends with each beneficiary going back to his or her own original circle to commence another action. Significantly, this activity also fosters a friendly atmosphere that is beneficial for such children.

A common problem with children ailed by physical handicaps is their low self worth. The society in India contributes amply to its formation as here there are various kinds of social stigmas attached to people with handicaps. One of the reasons such children usually suffer from low self-esteem is because in public places as streets, they are constantly stared at thus being treated as a spectacle. To make them functional, it's thus important that they be brought out of this vicious cycle of stigma and negative self perception and DMT therapists usually try to do that, with the assistance of special educators by linking events from the children's' life to the themes developed over the session. Role-playing is a common tool that is applied, enacted verbally as well as through actions and it often wonderfully negotiates the blocks in such a child's relation with her natal family, friends and siblings. In its application, each beneficiary normally has to imagine and act out a scene with four or five characters, depicting a real life incident from their own lives. Such visual imagery is thought to be metaphoric of the clients' lives—depicting what they like, dislike, what frustrates them as well as revealing their coping mechanism which they have developed to deal with their social circumstances. During sessions, each child ventures to present one such 'real' life scene with the aid of his or her friends. After everyone have had their turns in playing out the roles, they discuss and are encouraged to talk about what they saw and how they could have responded to such a situation in different ways.

Like other special children, those suffering from hearing impairment also require their movement to be assessed, so that detailed activities and goals can be planned to address their particular problems. One stated target of such DMT sessions is to reinforce the member's to interact socially thus enabling them to communicate with their hearing and non-hearing friends and family more earnestly. Another agenda remains honing their sense of marginal vision. This remains crucial for the actions they undertake, as then they can follow and lead while moving or dancing without continuously trying to take the cue from the faces of those who are leading. Though they possess the visual capacity essential to learn movements, they fumble to speed up their pace at will and also faces difficulty in switching from one movement to another. In retrospect another of the objective for such children remains creation of hand signals that help them to change from one dance step to another and perform activities in all speed tempos, ranging from slow to fast. Since many hand gestures from Indian classical dances are analogous to their sign language, therapists may find it practical to exchange the skills. She thus teaches them hand gestures or 'mudras' from the Classical Indian dance repertoire, while such children teach her the fundamentals of sign language. Both are then fused to create a syncretic body of expression. It is often found that the children grasp the hand gestures much faster than the therapist as the learning capacity of the former depend entirely on non-verbal language skills with which they are familiar since infancy. Gestures are used for varied purposes, to explain movements of sway, swing, shake or stretch, to chat with each other about regular affairs, to interchange stories, to express a series of movements or to elucidate a movement action. Thus when a camaraderie flowers between the therapist and her clients, the pace of the movement activities visibly quickens.

Further to enhance their awareness of each other during a dance movement and thus to help them perform in a group situation, the facilitator may introduce rhythm in their motions using uncomplicated yet intricate motifs with body claps (done by striking the palms on different parts of the body), footwork and oral sounds. Each of such children is encouraged to create a string of syllables that rhyme together and share it with the other group members in a circle. These activities are important as these require their complete concentration, eye contact and quick reflexes and increase various kinds of coordination such as eye-hand coordination, body parts

coordination, rhythm synchrony and group coordination. Contextually, it might be mentioned that as Sharbari observes, even for children suffering from Down's syndrome or Autism, eye contact, spine-motor co-ordination etc play a major role in their DMT sessions.

For the hearing impaired, it's essential that they learn to express their emotional activities which require them to use their entire body. Thus in the sessions, games are thought out in which movements of the body, hand gestures and expressions of the face are used to express seven basic emotions of joy, sorrow, fear, anger, disgust, surprise and love. Midway through the activity, if it's realized that the children find it difficult to express the emotions facially, then the movements are restructured. They are then encouraged to improvise small movement series that signify two or three of their select emotions. For example, one cluster is given a movement sequence with anger and disgust as they key emotions while another cluster expresses love and surprise. Movement in these activities thus becomes a powerful means to express their pent-up feelings. As they get intensely engrossed in this exercise, they also may produce vocal sounds. And in the course of this activity, sounds of love, surprise, anger and disgust can be heard along with their expression through their bodies. Movement props like cushions can be effectively used to make the children participate in activities. For example, located in a circle, beneficiaries can be made to pass a cushion in a clockwise direction with different emotions. If the facilitator names 'anger' as the chosen emotion, each member passes the cushion to the next person with his own interpretation of that. The cushion can be passed on for a couple of seconds, after which the therapist may change the emotion. Common emotions used in weaving such group activities around hearing impaired children are joy, sorrow, jealousy, anger, fear, disgust, surprise and love. As a variation of this exercise, members may pass the cushion randomly to any person in the group. This time, clients can choose any emotion they want to portray while passing the cushion and make vocal sounds to accompany.

Adults suffering schizophrenia usually need help to remain rooted to the reality and DMT operates with certain specific goals in mind, the basic of them being to restore the functionality of such individuals to as great an extent as possible. The sessions can be designed to help such clients remain linked to their present reality; to

be in contact with their own feelings, thoughts and be able to express them with lucidity and honesty; to discover their creativity and to control their urge to hurt others (physically or emotionally).

In a DMT session they are normally introduced to various art forms like yoga, music, theatre exercises, painting and other group therapies. Such beneficiaries also may be invited to participate in an informal disco setting in which the whole community can dance with free music. While therapists may feel that it might be a challenge for such clients to be completely connected with their current reality as that is characteristically one of their gray areas of their illness, it often turns out during the session, that while dancing, they never drift away into their 'other' world. They are devoted physically, mentally and emotionally to each movement activity that are undertaken and feel at one with the music, rhythm and the surrounding. On the last day of my field work at Ashirvaad one such free-dance 'party' was held instead of the regular class where the children danced for almost seventy-five minutes at a stretch, sometimes alone and then again dancing in pairs or small circles of three when Sharbari reminded them to dance 'with' others. Leadership abilities in some of them clearly stood out when they repeatedly tried to include and coordinate with those more withdrawn and an autistic child who kept running away to a corner every ten minutes.

To clear their mental blocks, movement activities may also be frequently combined with discussions as these help them form a better awareness and understanding about themselves and their associations. For example, introduction of verbal communication in movement related terms through questions like 'What qualities do we need to press our bodies against a wall or a person?' or 'What do we need to do to extricate ourselves from this group knot?' or 'What expertise do you require to lead or follow another person's movement?' may be used by therapists with regard to such clients. Answers to these questions may vary if and when the therapist tries to involve the clients in different physical activities. The group members normally articulate words like strength, flexibility, focus, imagination or surrender and then these may be related by the therapist to the lives of the clients. Through different movement therapies with varying objectives, the facilitators may attempt to make the beneficiaries functional. In one such activity, the group of clients may be

divided into pairs. Partners are to stand opposite each other and place their palms against each other. The right leg may be placed forward and bent at the knee. The left leg is to be stretched back. As the facilitator counts slowly beginning with ten, twenty, thirty, and goes on to hundred, the participants begin at ten by gently touching each other's palms. With increasing counts, they press harder against each other gradually increasing the pressure till they reach hundred. This particular movement therapy can be used to make the participants aware of their own body power as also of the extent to which they can exert it on others. Yet another activity requires clients standing in a circle to hold each others' hands, while one of them lets go of the hands and goes out and comes in of the circle in different ways. The others in line may follow him/her until the group becomes entwined in a tight knot. When the situation becomes such that the group cannot move away any more without letting go of their hands, the clients may loosen the knot and go back to their original places in the circle. Each time, a new leader is chosen from amongst the beneficiaries who lead the rest into a knot. This activity is usually done at a slow pace and the therapist may also experiment with other ways of forming a double knot with the circle. While space management is ensured in this activity, another common form of movement is also practiced in DMT with adults suffering schizophrenia that helps them to co-ordinate in group situations. In this beneficiaries may form a straight line behind a chosen leader and follow her as she moves around the room. As the leader changes movements, so does the group and in this way the leader gets the participants form interesting patterns around the hall. She can experiment with varying speeds and different movement patterns. The activity ends when each has got a chance to play the leader and its pace varies from slow to medium.

A common problem with such clients is the 'trust' problem. This might be the basis of their tendency to unwittingly harm each other. It is seen that they are distrustful of each other and remain detached during dance sessions. Some feel their companions are spreading word about them, 'talking bad' that is behind their backs and others believe they are being left out of 'fun things' that others are involved in. To counter this, therapists formulate activities around the theme of 'trust'. It involves games that entail trusting their own bodies as well as trusting others in the group. For instance, the clients may be put in pairs where they have to bear their partner's

leaning body or carry her to the other side of the room. Each person also may have to lead his or her blindfolded partner around the room by holding his hand. As they learn to trust each other on the physical plane, the bond of affect within the group strengthens. After each segment of these exercises, the members spontaneously appreciate the performances and embrace their partners. A common activity of trust building is where participants are divided in pairs who stand opposite each other and allow their fingertips touch. One of the clients closes her eyes. The other client, with eyes open, gently leads the person around the room. Roles are exchanged. All the pairs move simultaneously at a slow tempo around the room. Alternatively, the partner with eyes open can place his open palm on the back of the other person and lead her around the space. The activity can be done outdoors also and roles are interchanged. A variation of this movement activity involves three persons instead of two. Two of the clients stand opposite to each other, two feet apart, with their right leg forward, bent at the knee. Their palms are held in front of them at the chest level. The third client stands between them, bending back and forth straight as a stick. The participants on either side shove him gently back and forth. Each client may take turn to be in the middle. These activities are normally done without music.

Kashyap (2005) mentions certain rare cases where people do not respond to movement therapy. There are some who dislike moving their bodies and prefer not to participate. Others who are shy watch quite a few sessions before taking the first few steps. In other cases clients susceptible to epileptic fits are requested to attempt movements sitting on chairs. It is recommended that clients just recovering from severe psychological or physical trauma wait for a time before participating in these sessions. In spite of these exceptional cases, movement therapy sessions bring joy. The varied responses from each group or individual are affirmative and consistently inspire movement practitioners to explore the creative-therapeutic values of dance.

Public Performance

Each of the individuals who are in the position of a healer using dance to foster wellbeing in Kolkata (dance therapists, 'trainers', dancer-activist) have confirmed the positive effect that performance on stage has for their respective beneficiaries, with only Prerna Pal-Mehra qualifying her take.

Roy states categorically that public performance has played a beneficial role for the inmates; it has contributed effectively to building up positive self-esteem and an active interest in things. To quote her:

... for them to get the appreciation of an artist—it has changed their whole mindset. Now they don't feel small. When you feel small you keep going deeper down. But I think dance has been a medium which has helped them to come out of it. (Interview, May 28, 2010)

Thus, in her view 'labour of love' is what they have given, and in return, have earned respect and appreciation that society keeps in store for artists of calibre. This labour, instead of alienating them, have reinstated in them inner harmony, fellow-feeling and compassion for the fellow dancer-prisoner, skill in an activity that is valued in all strata of the society and has help attain catharsis and social prestige albeit from the middle-classes.

It has changed their outlook even if for the time-being. In her opinion:

...if I had only focussed on teaching dance movement, I don't think anything like this would have happened (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Roy lays repeated stress on treating the inmates invoking the true spirit of human rights. Praxis that has healed them, for her, is this mode of interaction that forges community bonding through creative activity. Conceived thus 'healing praxis' would extend into both daily and 'extra-daily practices' because it involves her perception of them as 'normal' human beings, acceptance of them as 'one of us' reflected in action and interaction in everyday settings as well as learning extra-daily practices together and then performing with such brilliance that it is recognized, applauded as being flawless, as good as professionals. So technically speaking 'extra-daily' practices *are* involved in that dancing such forms as kalarippayattu and thangeta *does* have an effect on their body-mind in the way of engendering motion, discipline, team-spirit, freeing them from inertia, and the discourses involved in the way of creative ideas and thought behind the dance-dramas or the folk dances that they do—*do* affect their personality. And the prestige that they enjoy of being artists, the rise in self-esteem on receiving the society's appreciation and adulation for their actions—the sense of achievement—all come via their mastering and performing the extra-daily practices.

Though, in all this, spontaneity, the quality of being not-pre-planned and a certain ‘unconscious’ organicity, is also conveyed.

Regarding the perceived change in those dancing together inside the correctional home Roy sums up,

... changing in the sense that they are going back to their childhood. They are like children, you know. And nothing can give me more joy. ... It is not just the *action*, it is all from *within*; they feel good. I keep telling them this is freedom of spirit (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Gini Sanyal too has found public performances to be positive experiences for her beneficiaries. In the initial years of SL as also in the present, Sanyal took the girls out of their shelter-homes and hostels to perform. These presentations used to be on issues of social relevance—the performance sites ranging from the street to auditoriums. This afforded a space for the girls’ interaction with the general public, which according to her, has implications for their presentation of self, personality development, confidence-building. Moreover, she asserts that performance is integral to her method of dance therapy—all the beneficiaries are included in them. It is not that some are left behind to make the productions look good. Inclusive participation heals and so the thrust is on taking everyone in such performances.

To the beneficiaries and their families that Prerna Pal-Mehra of Ashirvaad, works with the ‘meaning’ of public performance is not monolithic. She distinguishes between what performance connotes to the general public and what the special children ‘expresses’.

If you look at performance, it is actually confined to very few, like people like Mamta Shankar who are pure performers—these children are not performers. We are giving them this opportunity to feel that they are part of society because this is such a mainstream activity that if they think that they can dance and they can *perform* then they are part of the mainstream society (August 11, 2010).

Performing on stage before an audience gives the children a sense of achievement. She views this as functional for development of their personality. Says she:

...the moment they come on stage they get so, you know, charged that they are facing the audience, their posture improve, confidence level comes up, I have had so many

children who have suddenly flowered into individual personalities after having given the performance... (August 11, 2010).

However Prerna is quick to point out the contrary as well. According to her this does not work for some who are shy by 'nature' and those whose parents do not want to give permission. She explains:

Because the parents feel that they don't want their children to be on stage. You see what happens when you are disabled and in case of certain disability of the severe kind the parents feel that it's a very private thing. They can come and dance in your classroom but they don't want them to be...you have to be very careful, it can't become a circus. It cannot become—you see the flip side of it, that it cannot become a kind of a gimmick (August 11, 2010).

Among all the three dancer-pioneers only Prerna has to be cautious about this aspect of the reality. In order to explain the perspective of parents who were averse to letting their child perform on-stage she narrated the story of 'The Elephant Man', a play written by Bernard Pomerance based on the life of Joseph Merrick, a man born with sever disabilities who was subsequently used as a spectacle in a circus. Prerna has to be careful that the dance performance by special children did not become a spectacle. For her, such performances are not merely shows where the art form is presented. These are sites where the children can participate and display their capacity in spite of the disabilities and thus feel empowered, respected. Hence the parents are consulted and only on their authorisation do the children perform before the public. The question of privacy in the context of special children's parents is one that has to be reckoned with. Again sometimes the child herself (or himself) says "I don't want to be part of it". Pal-Mehra reminds us that

You have to give them that right to choose... (August 11, 2010).

since the therapeutic concern is supreme. And of course the other side of it is that it works very well with most of the children. The bright side of it, according to her, is that special children can also dance and enjoy themselves. She affirms the healing role that public performance has played for such children, but not all can pull it off. She gives the example of an autistic child who cannot be presented before an audience as she does not have much control over herself and the thing would turn into an

exhibition. To avoid such situations where the children are vulnerable to ridicule Prerna lays importance on choosing the appropriate subject for presentation and camouflaging the disability. Once, for a performance with children of the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, who

...are on wheel chairs, I had a scene where the train is moving—I dressed them up whole five wheel chairs as train bogies. So only the face shows through the window and the wheels are the train wheels and they moved across the stage. So the people didn't know they thought that these were people sitting on a train and moving but they were wheel chairs moving (August 11, 2010).

Such 'camouflaging' is meant not to be apologetic but to enhance their positive aspect, their talent and not enhance their disability before the audience. Sharbari, the dance therapist at Ashirvaad is even more specific:

Performance is important for everyone because performance itself is a part of therapy. When others appreciate your performance then that is something positive and one feels that I am accepted—everyone is accepting me. Confidence goes up, the moment they stand with all others body-consciousness changes (September 24, 2010).

She concedes the controversial status of the idea of performance within the discourse of dance therapy. However in her opinion the sessions facilitate direct therapy while performance on stage is therapeutic indirectly. In fact she feels:

if once a year it can be done ---I feel that the movements activities and the therapeutic activities they are doing in the whole year one can put something together. Through a theme if that can be presented on stage then it is possible and makes sense. Here we can use performance differently (September 24, 2010).

This could be done through a village scene or market scene enactment as was done in the Children's' Day celebrations of Ashirvaad in November 2010. Almost all the children participated in the programme. Some performed dance pieces while others participated in the village and market scene that ended in revelry.

Prerna has thus integrated public performance in her repertoire of healing praxis. The classes that are held at Ashirvaad with special children commence on lines of

regular dance therapy sessions beginning with warm-up exercises, group activity, some Manipuri steps and then relaxation. Music is played all along.

Conclusion

In the structural anthropological model artistic creation is considered as a synthesis of a constructed set of dualities, i.e. object and event (Lévi-Strauss 1969). Healing through dance has its diverse methodologies but is finally a 'praxis' that goes beyond the stipulated techniques and ways to have recourse in the healer's empathy, creativity. The therapeutic setting affords a socially legitimised space for re-creating agency that is supposed to be healing as well as developmental in that it facilitates the beneficiaries' self-understanding and social role performance. Any kind of healing through dance presupposes grounding in the former for the latter to be unhindered. In dance movement therapy use of metaphors form an important aspect of the healing activity. Metaphors are used to activate the beneficiaries' imagination paving the way for freeing the bodily complexes and helping them gain control over themselves. Dance and movement-bits are used to set forth motion thus breaking the inertia that mental complexes produce. Group dances, group activities, choreography and public performance are all participated in as opportunities to celebrate the cult-like atmosphere where each takes active part in creating conditions for his own and others' well-being and enhancement. 'Communitas' arising in therapy setting, workshop and recreational wards and at the end of a public performance in the auditoriums and open-air theatres all contribute to creating memories that compete with the previous memory-files of trauma, stigma and inability. Faith takes root in these memories of empowerment and togetherness. Thus creative cooperative praxis heals and refurbishes agency, and the sociologically 'curious' witnesses yet another instance of life overtaking 'science', creative freedom begetting freedom from the doldrums to create again.

...for faith is before all else an impetus to action, while science, no matter how far it may be pushed. Always remains at a distance from this. Science is fragmentary and incomplete; it advances but slowly and is never finished; but life cannot wait. The theories which are destined to make men live and act are therefore obliged to pass science and complete it prematurely. They are possible only when the practical exigencies and the vital necessities which we feel without distinctly conceiving them

push thought in advance, beyond that which science permits us to affirm (Durkheim 1961[1912]:479).

CHAPTER FOUR

'HEALED' VOICES

Introduction

The dancer choreographer Chandralekha (1998) writes:

I see dance as a visual, tactile and sensual language, structured with a specific vocabulary and idiom, with space-time, with organic bind, principles and most importantly, related to the dynamics of energy and flow with a capacity to recharge human beings. The internal relation between the dance and the dancer and the external relation between dance and society are questions that cannot be taken lightly (Chandralekha, in ed. Carter 1998:73).

Identifying 'the contemporary times and an industrial / urban society' as the time and space where 'a sudden and harsh break occurs,' in the vital link, between body and nature, body and work, body and ritual, which snaps and dance becomes almost totally a spectacle, she asks:

...What role can dance play in such a society? Can it recuperate energies? Can it initiate a living flow between individual and community? Can it integrate human perspectives? Can it infuse people with joy for life, radical optimism, hope, courage and vision to negate all that is ugly, unjust and hurtful? If our life is alienated, can our dances and arts help transcend that alienation? (Chandralekha, in ed. Carter 1998:75)

Similar questions fuel this research endeavour. It is an attempt to explore the therapeutic facet of dance. With this aim I proceeded to understand, sociologically, the process of healing occurring through the expressive medium of dance in Kolkata.

Evidently, it was with optimism in the healing power of creativity and the arts that expressive art therapies came into being at a time when a large part of the world was paying the price for the 'last war to end all wars'⁶⁹. With the return of soldiers

⁶⁹ In fact, many soldiers were discharged from the army because of emotional disturbances and mental illness caused by the stress and strain of wartime experiences. During this period, the need to rehabilitate soldiers so that they could function within various social settings became an important issue in different healing disciplines. New approaches like vocational training, activity therapy, art

from the battle-fields to their respective countries, concerns of rehabilitation became paramount. Dance movement therapy (DMT) emerged in this context. Today, it is an expanding field of research and practice the world over, with a rich theoretical literature that is being informed by dance research; social, performance and medical anthropology; Jungian psychology, and practitioners who work with different social groups (both marginalized and mainstream). In Kolkata Ashirvaad and SL are organizations that provide dance therapy to different sections of people. The former is a school for imparting Manipuri dance training among students as well as Movement Therapy among children with cerebral palsy and mental retardation. The latter is an NGO based in West Bengal, promoting DMT as a therapeutic tool for the socio-economically vulnerable and underprivileged. The organization works with people from diverse backgrounds including survivors of violence and trafficking, street and platform-dwelling children, at-risk youths living in red-light areas or in slums, children living with HIV and AIDS and people with mental illness. SL uses DMT as an alternative approach to counseling, psychosocial rehabilitation and empowerment. Healing through dance is carried out somewhat differently by artists and volunteers of TcW, a non-profit social organization in West Bengal working with inmates of correctional facilities. Registered in July 2009, it has been conducting workshops since 2007 within the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata. The kind of 'healing' generated by members of TcW in the Correctional Home is different from SL and Ashirvaad—dance therapeutic techniques are not 'applied' there in the way the latter follow its methodology. Instead the inmates receive 'cultural therapy' in the form of an artist's guild-like atmosphere of dancing together 'just for feeling good' and working together (dancer-teacher, volunteers, inmates, staff, Additional Director-General of Correctional services) for performances. Data was collected through participant observation and unstructured, informal, in-depth recorded interviews. Respondents were chosen through judgmental sampling.

therapy and many kinds of group therapies were being developed to facilitate and accelerate the rehabilitation process. At this time, psychiatrists at St Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC began to consider introducing fresh therapeutic approaches into their treatments. They invited Marian Chace to facilitate sessions with psychiatric patients in the closed wards. She was encouraged to use movement to make contact with these patients because they were not responding to verbal therapy (Kashyap 2005:13-14).

SL claims to be the first organization in India to have used Dance movement therapy extensively for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking and other marginalised people. In addition they have introduced dance therapy training as skill for those former victims who have undergone the therapy as a way of creating employability. This is seen as an important innovation to the typical rehabilitation skills like sewing, making jam and jelly and block printing. Some of the beneficiaries of this rehabilitation process work in the organization as senior and assistant dance therapy trainers. In response to my queries regarding how dance therapy has affected their lives they gave in-depth interviews despite their busy schedules. Though the questions revolved only around the perceived change (if any) that dance therapy has brought into their lives and the way they got associated with this, each of them talked at length about being beneficiaries of the same expressive art therapy that they now provide to others, which sometimes spilled over to their backgrounds as well. I let them continue without encouragement or interruption. These narratives may help one understand how the far the theoretical claims made by proponents of dance movement therapy actually translate into realities of everyday life. The beneficiaries of Ashirvaad are children and young adults with Down's syndrome, Dyslexia, Autism, and some other forms of cerebral palsy and mental retardation. Though I participated in the classes and rehearsals for a performance and the children knew me as such, eliciting response from them to specific questions was a task in which I failed completely. They were somehow all very shy when asked questions and answered in the same monosyllable—"bhalo lage" (I like it). Therefore, the parents have been chosen as respondents and one of the students Aparna, who was older, talked at length. The only beneficiary of the dance classes at the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata that I had access to was Vikram who now works for TcW and some other NGOs apart from running his own organization that supplies cleaning, pest control and security personnel on demand. His account again has mostly biographical elements apart from a vivid description of life inside the prison and the kind of interaction the classes and workshops generated there.

These narratives have been mostly kept in the form in which they were told. They provide information of the kind of background the respondent-beneficiaries come from, the problems that they faced—most of which reflect wider social issues;

what role certain institutions and functionaries played in their lives, how they struggled and still struggle to effect change in their lives and where dance features in all this, if at all. The questions that were asked were geared to unearthing how far the individuation process has taken root and is being reflected in their actions and decisions. The concept of 'healing' subsumes the notion of a 'change' from one state of being to another. With regard to expressive art therapies, that claim to effect healing through symbolic communication and motor-activity (and not chemical intervention in the body), such change is supposed to mark a new shift in 'thinking-feeling' as well as 'doing'. How far this gets entrenched as a change in 'being' i.e. how far self-feeling is altered, re-worked and maintained in the long run are questions that lead one to the narratives of the beneficiaries. Their 'subjectivities' have been taken as 'objectives of enquiry', in keeping with Richard Johnson's (Johnson 1986:44) views on cultural theory.

Narratives from SL:

Debi is a twenty-three year old 'senior dance therapy trainer' at SL. Plump, petite and graceful she is calm and speaks with confidence. She was born a Muslim but is a Hindu by marriage. Both she and her husband earn, though the latter's income is not fixed as he is continuing to appear in examinations for purpose of employment. Her income from working in SL keeps the household afloat. She has studied till class IX in school and is currently doing a correspondence course, for taking the higher secondary examination, in a college in Kolkata. She lives with her husband, the in-laws live separately.

Debi has been attached to DMT since 1997. From being a beneficiary of the process (as a student of the first or second standard) to becoming a trainer / therapist it has been a thirteen-year journey. Living in a shelter home for victims of human trafficking since the age of nine, Debi had joined the sessions as a twelve year old, thinking them to be regular dance classes. She loves dancing. Gini Sanyal⁷⁰ used to take the dance 'classes' there then.

⁷⁰ The founder-director of SL who began as dance 'teacher' in a care-hostel of Kathaa, and began doing dance therapy with the girls there who were rescued victims of trafficking.

At the time Debi was separated from her parents. About her state of mind prior to joining DMT sessions she says that she used to feel lonely and sad. Though everyone else was there in the hostel, still, at the time of mothers' meeting when everyone's mother would come except her own, she used to feel bad. She used to talk very little with people and stayed within herself, aloof. She would often skip meals and just be silent, she says; lost in herself. She would stay away from her friends when their mothers came—she felt that they will feel constrained since she did not have a mother. Though she says everyone was nice to her and loved her a lot, still she would have that thought. Says she,

I did not know what others thought but my conscience told me this. I used to stay aloof, alone (June 22, 2010).

Her thoughts about her future revolved around studying. She knew that she would not return home ever. Nobody from her family had come to take her back since they surmised that she has become a 'bad girl' from whatever they heard. She does not know what the people who had rescued her told her family. But this was the net result. So she didn't wish to return home. She decided that she would study and earn and support herself financially. However little, it always helped to have own income. Debi recalls that at the time of leaving home, she had only two dresses with her and that was all she had through the hostel years as well. She never wore others' dresses. Later when she started doing 'programmes' (public performances on stage or in street presentations), Gini would give her some money (Rs. 50) which she would treat as her income.

Regarding the sessions Debi says, she liked dancing. Gradually she realized that she was becoming more open, was being able to interact more with people and also the reasons for previously staying aloof were becoming clear to her. It occurred to her that had her mother died, she would not be in such a mental state. But her mother was alive and yet she was here at the shelter home, rejected by her for no fault of hers—these realizations came through the DMT sessions.

To quote from the interview⁷¹:

⁷¹ Translated from Bengali.

Q: So, can one say that the classes had a therapeutic effect on you?

A: I discovered therapy in 2004, when it became known as Dance Movement Therapy. Previous to that, we all considered the classes as dance classes.

Q: In dance classes, you had your therapy, isn't it?

A: Yes. When Gini aunty thought about it, discussed the concept of D.M.T with us, then we also thought and reflected on our state. I thought that there had definitely been many changes after we had started doing these classes. It's just that we did not attach much importance to them. But the changes were there. The painful memories of the past do not come back now, maybe it is there but does not come out and disturb as much. I'll never be able to forget the events of my life. But I could forget the trauma resulting from those events.

Q: Did you have to face any challenge in joining SL when it became a registered body in 2004?

A: No. Actually, I was loved by all and people liked me. So I could get what I wanted and I was much focussed. Whether I did actually get them or not, it's a different question. Also, I used to be very obedient. What happens in shelter homes is that those who are obedient are dear to the authorities. So I did not have to struggle much on that count. The struggle came when SL was set up as an independent body. A tussle was going on at that point of time, between the place I lived in and SL. The shelter home was good but it was not sensitive to our thoughts, our feelings. I used to love them all, but I made a choice then. They thought ill of us-those who chose to join SL; thought that we were betraying them, and thinking only about Ginidi.

Q: But even now trainers from SL go to take sessions in that shelter home!

A: Yes. We hold classes there.

Q: So, now have they understood that you meant no harm and were just following your dreams?

A: No, they have not come round as yet. Some of them want D.M.T classes, but some in the office do not want. Even now, they discriminate against us. They had said if we wished to live there, we would have to pay and live and they had thought we would

return to that home. But we did not. We did not come out with any bad intention. We had just expressed our wish. They have done a lot of things against us, but I do not consider them as obstacles as in life one is bound to face hindrances (June 22, 2010).

This was when Debi and others who had joined SL, took advantage of the employability generation that SL was into, by training the beneficiaries of DMT into the form of therapy.

Q: So when you joined SL, did you undergo special training?

A: Even before I joined SL, we used to attend Gini aunty's class [at the shelter home that she was staying]. She used to encourage us to come and join and conduct the classes all by ourselves and paid us Rs 25 each. There for the first time aunty taught us how to take classes, how to talk. Then she let us take classes. Two of us would conduct one class. So we were learning this even before SL had been registered.

Q: Can you remember, for how many months this continued?

A: It began in 2000 and we continued this for 4 years till 2004. Meanwhile, Gini aunty had studied a lot on DMT and even went out of station to pursue learning. She gave us more responsibilities as senior trainers and then told us that she was thinking of a small office of our own. Those times were different. Since we were all girls, nobody gave us any office space then (June 22, 2010).

Debi's first DMT session as a trainer for SL was at Sthapon⁷², in the suburb off Kolkata. The beneficiaries were platform children aged between five and seven. The main challenge at Sthapon was that the children had to live with malevolent people and were vulnerable to being raped, abducted etc. Their mothers could not stay with them all day as they had to go to work. Debi says that the trainers would talk to them a lot. The children were good in studies and loved to dance. As trainers, they used to remain worried for the children since their class was only for two hours and for the rest of the day the children were on their own and thus vulnerable.

Debi also went to a day care centre of Kathaa⁷³, an NGO where the beneficiaries were youths between the ages of fifteen and eighteen and were both

⁷² Sthapon works with children regarding prevention of trafficking in South 24 Parganas.

⁷³ An NGO that works with victims of trafficking.

boys and girls. They would come to the centre to study. The DMT classes there were conducted as dance classes. They were also trained for performances for Kathaa. They did not have any specific therapeutic need. But the trainers would give them DMT anyway. They used to play during the sessions. There was a Youth Partnership Project group there (YPP) where a youth team was formed with young people from India, Bangladesh and Nepal. They worked on HIV awareness, notifying people about trafficking etc. This would be done through dance program, street plays and dramas.

Kathaa and Sthapon were the first two organizations that Debi went to as a therapist trainer. After SL became a registered body, she went to A2⁷⁴ and two schools-- P.N.B (a reputed co-educational school of Kolkata) and DSS- run by the then headmistress of the primary department of P.N.B. DSS provided educational opportunities to the local underprivileged children.

However her stint with P.N.B was short as others took over. She remembers that there they were asked to give DMT to students of third and fourth standard. The classes were for half an hour each and this continued for one year. The beneficiaries there were reeling under pressures of studies, so they enjoyed the sessions and had lots of fun. Debi recalls that the class also consisted of some mentally retarded children. The main challenge faced there was that the children were restless. As the therapist trainer, Debi and her colleague would talk to the mothers of the 'mentally challenged' children urging them to devote more time to their children. They explained that the mothers should not coax their children to compete with others and allow them to be themselves.

Debi has also taken sessions at the S. Public School, Kolkata- an English medium school for girls. Says she,

Initially they invited us for conducting D.M.T workshops in the school and thought of inducting us into a regular class curriculum. Later they [the authorities] decided that only in case of any program etc, they will take our help. But as such, the children are much disciplined. And since they do not do such movement, they do not like this.

⁷⁴ An NGO working mainly with trafficked women and children, victims of violence and sections vulnerable to trafficking.

Also, they feel that many of us from SL teaching D.M.T cannot speak proper English—so everywhere we face some challenge. For example, when we go to various conferences and meet different individuals, the language problem occurs. We cannot speak like them. But we feel that we express through our body movement. But some of us feel guilty. And we can sense through our body when we are not being liked in an organization. There are some organizations who feel that we are brought up in homes and they question our background and cannot accept us properly (June 22, 2010).

All Bengal Women's Union is one of the oldest government shelter homes in Kolkata. Debi says that All Bengal is actually "her centre". According to her,

Initially the children did not want to do the class. They would call it a 'crazy' class because none of them bothered to even dress up properly for it, did not listen to the trainer. Moreover there were divisions among them. The children, who had the privilege of some education, were given all opportunities-- to dance, to learn karate etc. Others were not given any opportunity. When we gave them D.M.T class and made them do sounds as of animals etc, the children felt they were doing mad persons' class. Earlier nobody used to obey me; obey us. Now, if we do not turn up for a day, they question our absence. I have become indispensable there and they call me. It has taken me three years to reach this stage where if some change happens in their organisation, they notify SL. Earlier they [authorities] did not co-ordinate with us or meet us in meetings. Now, we discuss about the increase in funds for the children. The children want us and they wish that we hold D.M.T for all the children. The children who are doing well, call me 'pal'. Earlier they [authorities] always used to dissuade. But we did not compromise and accept defeat. Now, the class is very good. Two trainers have come out of there. Chandra and Sree are two students of my first batch there. Until recently we were not allowed to conduct sessions with the girls rescued from trafficking. But now the authorities recognize that our classes are beneficial and have given us access to them from June 2010. Those who are doing the class are very good. Now, due to my pregnancy, I cannot take regular classes. Still, I make it a point to visit them once a week. Earlier they wanted to do classes only with me. I have talked to them, discussed openly with them. Ilina (an assistant trainer) handles the class well. And in case they face any problem, they always call me (June 22, 2010).

Regarding terms of employment, Debi says that her salary and other facilities have increased since 2004. Initially there were no holidays since the senior trainers were the ones running SL and day offs could not be afforded. But now, trainers have been divided into groups which allow her to take holidays when her colleagues take over the session.

Debi has gone to Nepal, Bangladesh and London as a DMT trainer. In Bangladesh, they worked on a workshop basis with ACD, Bangladesh—an organization that works in villages. They worked with unmarried girls aged around fifteen/sixteen, living in shelter homes; training them and creating awareness about problems of trafficking etc. Such girls were themselves victims of trafficking. The training sessions were on a monthly or once in two months basis. She helped train five DMT trainers who are now running different centres in Bangladesh. It took almost a year to train them. Debi says that now when those trainers come to Kolkata, they visit SL and discuss their pattern of work with them. In cases of problem, they take SL's suggestion. Thus SL initiated the DMT process in Bangladesh—a model which has now been taken over and replicated by the beneficiaries there.

Debi went to London in 2000. That was before SL had become an organization. Besides her, the entourage accompanying Gini Sanyal in that trip comprised of the remaining four senior trainers as also the staff of the shelter home where Debi had first lived. In London she mostly worked with school children—both with kids and with senior school goers, of the age group between eleven and eighteen. They were all British and “white-skinned”. She claims that she didn't have trouble in explaining to them as they followed the movements shown. Hence according to her, language was not a barrier. Debi along with others took sessions in three schools in London. Each class used to consist of about 500 students. They all sat in the huge green fields of their school and via a mike, the trainers used to instruct them and converse with them with the help of a mike. She observes that people there have much knowledge about children.

Debi was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting DMT sessions in the male ward of the Pavlov Mental Hospital, where she worked for two years. Working in Pavlov was a great challenge. She was a mere girl when she started taking sessions

with the men there—a formidable ordeal initially. Unlike Lumbini Park Mental Hospital (where she had worked earlier) which was clean with very obedient women patients; Pavlov was very dirty and the men would grasp her hands. She used to have trouble freeing herself. Initially she went there alone but was later joined by a male colleague. However Debi claims that she gradually handled the situation. There used to be a man who called her ‘wife’—he would laugh and cry at the same time. Initially she was scared but gradually she started studying the patients’ background and pondered on how to handle them, observed how the asylum authorities dealt with them and with time she learnt. Slowly Debi could identify what made them excited and avoided those words. Even then they would sometimes get excited and she had to handle it very calmly. She recalls that the patients there are as old as 49 and 51 years—they are all from educated Bengali well-off homes and their surnames disclose high caste ascription. Yet no one from their families comes to meet them. Debi feels it an opportunity to be able to be of service to these people. Since DMT has changed her life and personality so she wants to replicate that in their lives too. She says that she has seen most ‘normal’ people when they hear of these institutions express complete ignorance about their existence. She says that God has given her this opportunity to share their grief. Initially the place was infested with lice and other insects. During the sessions, she would fail to eat anything and feel nauseated all the time. Once out of there they would take bath and find lice walking over their bodies. She says,

Now, I am pregnant and am expecting. So it is with my child inside that I have gone to these places as Pavlov or Lumbini and I think that maybe my child would also learn from here, there will be compassion in him. I enjoy this work and my husband also does not want me to leave this. Once, I had gone with Aunty for a visit to Basanta Utsav programme there. That was an unforgettable experience. I received a lot of love from them. We do not have degrees as such, but what we have learnt on a practical plane, is huge. People having degrees, I feel, do not have such knowledge about life (June 22, 2010).

Of all the places where she conducts sessions Debi finds working in shelter home the toughest. Developing trust among the beneficiaries there is a long-drawn process, since their ideas are shaped by the people at the home with whom they have to live. Unlike in schools where the DMT class falls within a routine and the children have no

other option but to come for the class; in shelter homes she has to attract children to attend sessions. If they don't trust her they won't come to the class.

Speaking on trauma and catharsis, Debi says that she has gone through the SL Trauma Release process herself. Regarding that she opines:

When we had taken the class, we had released our trauma by crying, by becoming angry and everything. It was a technique. I believe now this technique has changed quite a lot. The more I am working with it, the more it is changing; we are researching the process further. And I believe this trauma release is necessary. Now, those who have come from All Bengal used to observe us releasing our trauma. On seeing us, they could release some of their trauma. They had expressed their eagerness in doing our class. Now, the All Bengal Staff wants us to take classes among (June 22, 2010).

An important finding from Debi's account is the ambiguous role of verbal counselling with regard to the victims of trafficking. Subsequent interviews also seconded this unexpected finding. Debi says that in verbal counselling, one has to reiterate the same event to all the counsellors. When one counsellor is being replaced by another, the victim has to reiterate the same event from the beginning—a process that requires reliving the pain and Debi feels it can be quite traumatic. But in D.M.T, there is no such thing. Here they have a lesson plan for each day where an outline of whatever is to be done in a certain class is decided. So there is no scope of repetition. Verbal counselling involves a certain trauma where the counsellor asks and the client has to furnish answers from her own life. Usually one solution is suggested by the counsellor. But in their DMT sessions they don't give monolithic solutions—they give options like for instance, six possible roads which one can tread to solve one's problem. She can take any of them depending on her preference and notion of feeling 'safe'. Then there is the associated problem of loss of confidentiality. Debi explains saying that suppose one has shared something private with her counsellor. If those confidential facts come out, that would be a traumatic experience for the one who was being counselled. But in the DMT session, whatever outburst occurs, that is permitted and is resolved in the class itself. It does not go outside. Even if any of the staff knows, she is not asked.

Excerpting from the interview:

While working with platform children, the organisation which acts as via medium, tells us there are certain problems they have and need to be worked upon. We work on them through organising workshops directed at organizing programmes, playing games etc. In shelter homes, we have to take them all the way and there is no one specific area. Like from stages when they are walking, to stages when they are dreaming—we guide them all the way through D.M.T. Our main work there is to bring out their exhaustion, through trauma release (June 22, 2010).

Debi also takes workshops with employees working in offices, who are between eighteen and thirty years of age. They release their daily exhaustion through D.M.T. They dance and unwind. Many organizations ask SL to conduct D.M.T with their staff, on grounds that there is disunity among their office staff and also lack of co-ordination etc. Debi claims that many a times, many people do work only for profit motives which increases stress ten folds. She also takes classes with them.

A victim of child trafficking herself, today Debi is a healer on her own right. I ask her:

Q: You have worked with an entire range of people. Do you wish to say anything about experiences of dealing with people?

A: When I go to do D.M.T, I come across so many people, so much behaviour. Had I remained at home, I would have met only my parents, my boy friend. But with SL, I have seen so many people, so many masks, and so many characters. Many a times I have behaved differently in different places—like being oneself with the kids and while working with the elders in one other self. Had I not worked for SL, I wouldn't have known so many dimensions in myself. Today, I am thinking about this organization from all my selves.

Q: At times when life seems hard, how do you handle yourself?

A: Actually, all of us experience many things from which trauma is created. Some have a lot of trauma, some have little, while some have none. By conquering my trauma, I have reached this stage of life where I have a husband, have a set of in-laws. But when I had married into this family, there was a gap in thinking as I did not have a family. But then I thought that why cannot I adjust? I am not a bad person. But a gap is there. This creates depression in me at times. Then I face trouble. Then I talk to Ginidi, since she knows the woman in me. She knows me for the past 10 yrs. At

times, I share it with my colleagues. Then the solution comes out which I feel was within me. But in the hour of crisis, I don't always remember that the solution is inside. By pouring out and discussing, catharsis happens.

Q: What kind of life do you wish for?

A: I do not plan anything. I am going to give birth and am thinking about him. I want to be a good parent, am aware of my responsibility. My dream of D.M.T will always be there. My organization has taken a backseat for the time being. But I will always do D.M.T (June 22, 2010).

Padmabati is a senior trainer at SL. Tall, elegant and alert Padmabati has been associated with Gini Sanyal's dance 'classes' right from the time she joined Kathaa. She works with the youth in A2—the girls who come from the slums in south Kolkata, and in the day-care centre of the same organization in the dock region, with children from the adjacent red-light areas, whose mothers are into sex-work. These being her chosen groups to work with she also conducts DMT workshops—with all kinds of people—young and old, male and female, elders and children. These are workshops on DMT, on trauma release, on improving failed confidence, training of primary school teachers, so that they can use this technique to keep the children happy and energised. Workshops are also held with older women who have to work hard and are under a lot of stress from the family front. They come from all kinds of economic and social backgrounds—she says that she can deal with any kind of target group. In order to spread the SL process of DMT people from various career and social backgrounds are taken for the training programme that commenced from March to July. The course was called DMT and Mental Health. For example two dancers from Manipur have presently come to SL to learn their process. There are dancers, some hospital nurses, NGO workers doing the course. According to Padmabati she deals with all kinds of people like those with HIV, those who are physically challenged, victims of domestic violence, and workers. Earlier she used to work in A2, dock region, but now the trainers she has trained are going there. Currently she goes to A2, south Kolkata. Of all her beneficiary groups Padmabati chose to discuss the youth in Sthapon⁷⁵, A2 and Don Bosco, Ashalayan⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ An NGO carrying out anti-trafficking work with railway platform children.

Padmabati has spoken mostly about her experiences as a dance therapist trainer instead of being a beneficiary. She is one of the most active senior trainers, other than Debi, on which the organization largely depends.

Before Padmabati other trainers had conducted sessions at the A2 day-care centre in South Kolkata. Initially she faced certain problems. Everyone was inhibited; they didn't want to open up because, she says, all are Muslims (she herself is born Islamic but is Hindu by marriage). A2 works mostly with Muslims who reside in the locality. When she saw them first they were all huddled, inhibited, fearful and shy—they almost couldn't talk. And the 'burqa' they didn't want to shed. But now they have changed a lot.

Another challenge for her was their families. Most of their mothers did not want the daughters to dance, so there used to be absenteeism. Since A2 works with mothers—they form mothers' groups etc. Padmabati had to talk to the mothers only after which the daughters started attending her sessions.

The dupatta posed a problem initially. She says, when during class time she asked them to remove the dupatta it sounded like sacrilege to them—'Muslim women prefer to cover themselves'—from that 'location' (by which she means ontological location) they were quite shocked. Padmabati had to explain the reasons for asking them to remove the dupatta—first, during class times one shouldn't be disturbed by anything; secondly the more one suppresses and hides this space the more people will notice. Padmabati also told them that they were not only women but human beings first, why should they remain so closed? Initially she says they would do the class with dupatta. Padmabati never forced them into anything. The only rule in their DMT class is that they don't force anyone to do anything. She⁷⁷ told them:

...when you feel like opening up only then express, when you feel that you are able to understand yourself, know yourself then you ask yourself and then you will see you will open up (May 6, 2010).

⁷⁶ An NGO working with street children.

⁷⁷ Translated from Bengali.

It took a long time—many months for them to shed their inhibition. It became a challenge for her to train them, break this obstruction, the parents had to be explained that dance is not bad. That dancing shouldn't evoke raised eyebrows—this was not a dance 'like that'. Padmabati stood her ground and now she has been able to train five girls from there who are working in SL—some are video volunteers.

When she would ask for volunteers for performance, permission from home became a problem—because most of them said that they wouldn't get permission from home to dance. The costumes became a problem because some had dupattas some hadn't. Padmabati told them to invite the mothers to see the performance and judge the activity themselves. The parents and family members were invited in their first performance. The trainers also participated in the performance. She says,

We wanted them to see that both teachers and students are dancing the same dance (May 6, 2010).

Their parents' feedback was that it was beyond their imagination. This was a different incarnation of dance this they had never experienced.

Another issue was "how can the daughter of a Muslim dance?" Padmabati says how much they had to fight against this she couldn't even begin to explain. Just as she fought for this so did her students. Unless they came forward she couldn't have done it on her own is her clear statement.

Shyness and lack of articulation were problems. To them, she explains, talking to boys or any unknown person was a disgraceful act. Padmabati worked on this with them through story-telling, individual presentation activities of talking.

Padmabati says that there are processes in DMT to deal with all kinds of personality problems. First the trainers trained themselves to deal with their emotions. She says:

Every human being has emotions—across lines of religion and community. Until the trainers learn to open up and be free, overcome shyness, develop talking skills they can't help others. So, all members of SL have gone through this process (May 6, 2010).

Padmabati has been associated with Sanyal for the past 10 years right from the beginning. Her first DMT session was with Sthapon in a slum, where people live in 'chawls'. There were both girls and boys. The challenges there were that the space was quite small—one small room, the organization didn't have much funds, helping hands were less. The girls and children used to get angry and were given to emotional blackmail ('abhiman' in bengali) a lot. Some of them were beggars, some were addicts. Padmabati said that since they live right on the platform even at that small age they knew about conjugality. She hurries to say that it isn't their fault because they are presenting that which they are seeing. The place where DMT sessions were conducted was right next to the station—so people would be staring at her when she came out or during the session. She would be teased too. It took a long time and repeated sessions to bring change in the beneficiaries' attitude. They had very little confidence and were full of inhibition and aggressiveness. Among them some trained well—SL has done a number of performances with them in their annual day programme and also on the 15th of August. Independence Day is celebrated in a big scale by Sthapon—competitions are held. Padmabati says that the beneficiaries have reached a certain success but since SL had worked with them from the first day so after a time they decided that they now need to wind up the work there and work with new people.

Padmabati has worked with young boys of Don Bosco Ashalayan. The beneficiaries are platform boys, some of them were past eighteen years, and others were fourteen or fifteen years old. She says that girls came too, but they couldn't stick around for long. The boys were young; and so was Padmabati as a teacher. Bringing them into discipline was highly challenging and it took her many months. According to her the beneficiaries didn't know what discipline was. They spent the nights at night centres, loitering on the platform all day long. At Ashalayan they would just come to sleep at night. In morning they would go out for their respective work—some were sweepers, some filled water in bottles, some begged.

Addiction was rampant among them. Padmabati talks of a client, around sixteen years of age, who never talked. He would just huddle silently in one corner and wouldn't even make eye-contact with anybody. She let him be and never probed. She says that he would just keep watching the session. Then one day he was given pastels

and a sheet of chart paper, and the next day a streamer, ball, balloons. In this way Padmabati slowly began to move him. He was heavily into addiction—always drowsy. All boys there used to be drowsy. One day Padmabati did drama therapy with them. They performed a skit on what happens when one takes substances of addiction and when one doesn't—where one goes from being an addict. She says that they clearly know everything but even then they do it the main reason being that there is no one to guide them and they are totally vulnerable to sexual harassment by practically any and every person in a position superior to them—policemen, local goons, etc. This has locked up their personalities. They themselves told all this when during DMT activities they had to give feedback. Padmabati says that is itself a success. She could train them up to an extent then the sessions had to be winded up. According to her sexual abuse is a serious problem—whenever this abuse occurs people's memory file opens up and emotions rage in. This then straight attacks the body. The moment that happens the victims take to substance abuse, violence and other deviant activities. Their mindset becomes like “either I shall have this, or beat this person up, or run away”. Therefore release is indispensable for them.

Regarding the effectiveness of DMT, Padmabati says that there has been success—for example in A2 new girls have joined. They are doing the class enthusiastically; trainers are being chosen from among them. About the children of the red-light areas, whose mothers are into prostitution—like those in Prothom Alo⁷⁸—Padmabati informs that they have a lot of obstinacy because of being separated from the mother at a young age. Whenever the deprivation strikes them that there isn't anyone to personally guide them, attend to their needs, they begin to question discipline—“Then why should I do this? Why should I work? Then why should I learn this?” There are two groups of beneficiaries---the first consists of children between 3 to 6 years of age and the second is of older girls. At Prothom Alo they have the opportunity for lots of training, they are taught computer, dance classes outside the home premises, boxing, swimming, they receive English medium education—their scope she says is good. The home building is new and has facilities like there is fridge, washing machine. But even then they have personality issues because they are cut-off from family. As the DMT trainer her task is to build that aspect—that

⁷⁸ A shelter home for children of sex-workers.

awareness: “ok we are disconnected from family but why is that?” Padmabati says that the trainer helps them understand the ‘why’. Drama therapy is used there, along with story-telling. Movement, theme development, expressions are used to release emotions. According to her the children are very creative but a challenge of working there is lack of space. Among the elder children, she mentions a girl named Shefali and another named Juthika. Padmabati is definite that if given opportunity, they will shine.

Regarding challenges that she faces as a trainer Padmabati says that she accepts all challenges that come her way. To quote her:

The kind of things I have faced!

The first day at Don Bosco Ashalayan after session a guy just grasped my hand and said, “You stay for the night with us here.”

I just said, “Leave my hand.” Then I asked him, “Who am I?”

He replied, “Teacher”, then I said, “Then how would you behave with a teacher? The Fathers here are teaching you some things. In the same way I have come to teach you from somewhere else. There is a boundary between your and my location. Please remember this boundary.”

I have this thing in me—whether you call it good or bad I can talk straight. Because I have to explain this to him—he doesn’t understand. I said, “We will talk, play, do activity and everything, but somewhere there has to be a boundary. So, from the next time onwards don’t do this with me. If you feel like talking, then talk with me—say that Ma’am I want to talk to you.” Don Bosco was my second class. This was when our small office was in Rakhohori in South Kolkata. I was then around twenty or twenty one years old.

Q: Were you trained for dealing with such situations?

A: I wasn’t told, but I knew how to deal with it. Because when Aunty was teaching us I saw and learnt how she dealt with us and learnt how these things are dealt with. In A2, last Friday a girl after class had gone out and there was a storm. A glass piece from the next house struck her and her head was injured. Lots of blood spilled over. What could I do? Can I just come away? No, I have to deal with it. My husband was there. The staff called the hospital and we took her there, waited till the stitches were

made, talked to her parents. The staff wanted me to visit her house but I had work elsewhere, so I shall go another day. I can deal with such situations. I can talk clearly.

In my first show which was in Delhi an incident occurred. I used to live in the shelter home hostel then. It was my first show outside, the show was very good, and we were much praised. All the news channels had come, one media person said to me, "I would like to interview you, would you consent?" I looked at Aunty, since I had gone as part of an organization I should take permission from her first. They said yeah go ahead. Everyone was there when I was being interviewed. Since I lived in a survivor home and was rescued from red-light area they made a big issue of it and moreover my mother was not yet rescued from there (she had no other recourse since after my father's death at an early age the rest of his family left us in the lurch and I was too small to help), I had come up from such a background and performed. After one or two questions he asked me, "if this doesn't work out for you and you are forced to go into prostitution again then what will you do?" This was on camera. I turned to him and asked "do you have a daughter?" He said "yes, I have a daughter", I replied, "then go and ask your daughter the same question that you asked me. Her reply would be my reply". He fell silent. The Press doesn't have any other work. At that time I was between 12-13 years old. I had just been rescued. I have struggled and fought. There was a time I was totally broken, I didn't know how to get out of there. I was trapped. That I have been able to come out and succeed, this is really a gift from God. From all this I learnt to deal with crisis. Now I have been able to bring mother out of that area, she lives in a good environment, maybe she will take more time to adjust to the environment but I have started the process (May 6, 2010).

Sharanya, at twenty three, is a senior DMT trainer who has been associated with dance for the past thirteen years. After learning dance from Sanyal for seven-eight years, beginning during the latter's teaching stint at the shelter home hostel; Sharanya joined SL as a trainer. She has been with SL from the beginning. She conducts DMT sessions with mental patients in Lumbini Park Mental Asylum and shelter home inmates of 'Kathaa'. Sharanya also offers her services in 'Nibedan' where the beneficiaries are HIV+ kids.

In course of the interview Sharanya says that in the beginning she had other dreams and did not think of embracing dance as a career option or becoming a therapist. In the initial years of her life, as a student, her thoughts were attuned to

building a career in school teaching. Fashion designing (a variant of tailoring for her) was also a probable option since she was skilled in embroidery. Dance on the other hand, was just meant to be an extra skill. She stresses that she began toying with the idea of a career in dance only from her ninth-tenth standard in school.

This was because I wanted freedom, independence. In our DMT sessions at the shelter home hostel we were taught to be independent. Today I teach the same to my students. I myself have first taken Dance movement therapy. It has taken some time for me to understand this and only after that I have become a therapist. I realized the importance of freedom much later. I had always wanted to live on my own terms. It was not that I was averse to being taught or corrected or wanted to flout authority. But I believed that even when working under some guidance, my own opinion should play an active part in shaping my life; I should be able to express myself. After class ten I joined the working girls' hostel and took the decision that whatever I do I shall do on my own. And from then on my other qualities like 'fashion designing' etc went into the background. I gradually began entering steadily into D.M.T.

As we grew up we began facing a lot of obstacles, a financial angle emerged and with that we realized that we wouldn't be able to continue in the same way for much longer. We realized that we will now need to stand on our own feet and do something on our own. I have to build my own skill. I used to learn everything that was taught but I kept one full day of the week for dance; I gave maximum time to dance. When we devote time for a particular thing, then that attains a solid grounding. I had also realised that through this I would be able to express myself and gain recognition fast and easily. Through this one can project oneself, express oneself and present oneself well to the world. That's why I chose this (May 13, 2010).

Sharanya feels that had she not been given DMT as an economic option, and had Sanyal asked them to do this without pay, even then perhaps she would have been part of it, but may be not been able to give it as much time as she does now. Receiving the stipend has helped a lot at that time---it sufficed for her pocket money. Right after she was admitted to the shelter home her grandmother died and her parents never came to visit, so that money helped. With the stipend money she could buy something that she wanted. Apart from this she received some money from doing embroidery works.

When she had joined SL, the value of five-hundred rupees---her first salary---was a lot. The hostel used to pay for her food and that money meant that she could be

comfortable for the month. It really felt good; she felt independent. When the interview was taken, Sharanya had already left the working woman's hostel around two years back and was living in Gini Sanyal's house in Dumdum with three-four other girls.⁷⁹ Today she is economically independent and Sharanya articulates this in her own terms:

As long as I was at the hostel I never felt that I am free, but now having come out of there I can do what I want to, and this confidence has increased as I have worked hard. I have mixed with people, have seen children, handled them, have seen their lives and compared it with mine, and felt that compared to them my own sorrow is nothing. When we sit with our own sorrow we feel that the world is sorrowful, but when we mix with other people I have found that they lead far sadder lives (May 13, 2010).

To the question whether DMT can reach all categories of people in the society she replies that as a trainer from SL she works with all categories of people. The process is gradual and they try to take DMT to everyone through performance, through session, through activity. She has worked with children and the aged and all categories in-between; with people from different socio-economic background (pavement-dwellers' children, the mentally ill, HIV + children, hostellers and mixed groups) across national boundaries.

Regarding the challenges of working with street children, Sharanya says that serious obstacles come from the family front and from the community. She had worked with a group of young girls living in a Muslim area, aged between ten to nineteen years. In their socio-cultural milieu, dance was seen as something bad. And as therapists their task is more uphill, if the beneficiaries hail from families of Moulabis. Coming from such orthodox backgrounds, the girls seldom get the opportunity to receive DMT. She had two such participants who were talented. But their grandfather being a Moulabi,⁸⁰ the girls were debarred from dancing. Thus in her work, lack of support from the family of the beneficiaries is a pressing issue.. Sharanya shares that she had tried to free the lives of the two girls who were part of a

⁷⁹ Sharanya has recently married and shifted with her husband.

⁸⁰ He chants the namaz in the mosque.

group of nine girls. But the organization that SL was collaborating with for working in that area, for some reason, became passive. And they had to wind up their work from there and the girls were not allowed to contact the trainers from SL. Sharanya rues the fact as she recalls that the girls were 'really' eager and had genuine talent. So the main obstacle, she reiterates, is family, as also the environment where such girls live. She mentions that she had structured an activity plan for those nine girls of that area where they were to receive dance therapy. Had that become successful, then they would have been prepared for a local performance. The latter would have spread awareness on child care and HIV AIDS, against women trafficking, and other related concerns. The organization that they were collaborating with works on spreading awareness through organizing small camps. They were to train the girls who came forward in the camps---that was to be their role. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out to be as expected.

Sharanya has also conducted DMT sessions in villages nearby Kolkata. She points out that the persistent problem there was that of poverty. The participants came from extremely poor families. Such families had low awareness about health and wellbeing and the moment the daughters turned thirteen/fourteen years they were married off. The parents refused to recognize what their daughters wanted to do in life---if they had a dream or aspiration---they were much too poor and ignorant to afford that.

Sharanya voices her belief that in those areas poverty was the pulling back factor. She recalls how the girls used to pluck chillies in the morning from the field, perhaps go to school in the afternoon and then come to the centre to study in the evening. Many a times someone would come and ask them to harvest his crop in the early afternoon. Then they would not be able to attend the centre for days and work for the wage. It was therefore hard for the trainer to get them to practice dance. Sharanya states that there were even occasions when to reach out to those beneficiaries, they had to hold sessions even on the field. The beneficiaries were very interested and she had said that they would allow them to do what interests them most. Of them, five or six girls were training well. But distance was a problem for most of them as they had to travel quite a distance to reach the centre and that involved some expense. Therefore in her experience as a trainer, she has perceived poverty, lack of awareness and geographical distance to be the principal obstacles for conducting sessions in those village areas.

Her expertise however is not confined only with street children or such villages. In SL, among the senior trainers, Sharanya is mainly responsible for providing DMT to mental patients at the Lumbini Park Mental Hospital.

Excerpts from the interview prove useful in understanding the kind of work that she has done there:

Q: When did you first start working with mental patients doing DMT with them?

Sharanya: From 2005. We went to Lumbini, as a team of two—Debi and me. Since we have worked with them from the beginning, SL sends us specifically. On certain days when I can't go then someone else accompanies Debi.

Q: How did you feel on the first day of session at Lumbini, what was their state?

Sharanya: We have been trained by Aunty (Gini Sanyal) herself. When I was first sent there I had no training of working in a mental hospital. I have no degree in psychology or anything related to medicine. But I have been working for the past four years there and that has given me much experience.

When I first went there it took some four to six sessions to prepare my mental state. The society shapes our mentality towards mentally ill people in makes us imagine as if they are totally different, they will jump on someone, bite someone, strangle someone, or behave in many other weird ways. I entered the premises with that kind of a outlook.

On the first day I found a strange situation—the male ward is safer than the female! There are two wards in Lumbini—female and male ward. The female ward is more what you may call 'dangerous' because the patients move freely whereas the men are kept inside their cells with a gate. I used to feel really scared thinking that if someone pulls me, or catches hold of my hands! I used to go with Aunty. But now I am no more scared. Now when they see me they greet me saying "Didi", and do 'namashkar'. A good environment has been created. Now they know why I go there. I really like doing the session with them because it's not as bad as it looks from outside. Just as we can take most things normally so can they, up to an extent, but they take time. Just as we get up in the morning, eat, move about—they do the same. But they stay in a closed place, are mentally disturbed for which they are under medication. The dosages of the medicines are high. That makes them weak while our session keeps them happy.

They enjoy the sessions because there is a scope for communication where we are coming from outside and they are getting an opportunity to interact. We ask them about their likes and dislikes ---- they can share all that with us which they do a lot of times. That gets them to express what's in their mind. In a mental asylum they are treated quite badly, even beaten up, punished. But if we just take them out of there for a while they behave absolutely normally. Initially taking a session was tough because they weren't in a position to attend the session. I had to talk to them first, understand what their need was. When we go to shelter homes the girls there have depression but with them we can be physically involved, we can make them do hard exercises. Maybe we make them do more movements, and relaxations of different types, we can work with trauma. But while working with mental patients we have to work within certain limitations because they take medicines. We can't give them high activities involving jump etc. And their age is also a factor. Some have hip pain, some have pain in the legs, and some are in a drowsy state. So our whole session plan is geared to how we can infuse energy in a person who is drowsy; how I can pull him out of it.

Another fact is that they are not relaxed. While taking the session we clearly understand that they are disturbed mentally all the time. People are staying there for the last fourteen years; no one comes from their house. Normally who would want to live there? And everything there follows a routine —food is also taken following this monotonous routine. The authorities probably put medicines in their food as well and the inmates long for some variation in their meals. They have said this number of times but it is in the hands of the government, and we are not in a position to do anything about this. We convey the objections and opinions they share with us, with the authorities in- charge. They share it with the super who sometimes looks into it.

We have been asked by 'Namaskar'⁸¹, our coordinating organization, to conduct the trauma session in such a way that violence should never erupt because each patient is prone to it. Even if that happens it has to be kept under control.

An aspect of working there is that the chance of relapse in a patient is high. I am working for three years and all is well, but one stray incident can lead to a set back within two days (May 13, 2010).

There was once such an incident. Sharanya explains that some participants attending her sessions now go to work outside and one of them lives in Siliguri and works there.

⁸¹ An NGO working with mental patients in various mental hospitals.

He had come down once for a compulsory monthly check-up conducted by 'Namaskar'. His medical state is such that if he doesn't take medicines then he might suffer a relapse. He is an old patient, many know him. In one occasion, he came, talked to other patients, and worked freely taking responsibilities. He was in such good condition that Sharanya felt that she can give him the responsibility of helping in one session. In the meantime another person came to him and urged him to join in some work that they were doing then. Sharanya says that in the hospital a procedure needs to be followed where the super has to give permission for these sorts of things. At that time, that patient was not allowed, for some reasons, to join the other in work. This made him suffer a relapse and he just regressed to his old state. Sharanya recounts with remorse that the mentality that was developed through twelve/thirteen years of treatment petered out with a single adverse incident. He remained disturbed for three months; she says he has joined only last week.

Sharanya describes a regular DMT session at the hospital:

Q: Describe a regular DMT session.

Sharanya: First we do a prayer so that they feel that they have come to a place which is their own. A visitor at SL had sung a song—which we have adopted as our prayer song.

Then we sit together and ask each of them (the beneficiaries) how they have been, what all they like and do not. Next, we do exercises and activities that move all part of the body, because one objective of ours is therapy while the other is performance. We track our progress in the places that we are working. Though we work with mentally challenged people we think that each of them has high potential which we should help to bring out. We find that some sing very well, some write poetry some of which are beautiful. We have to identify these and fashion the session accordingly. Through the initial exercises movement is generated, that evokes enthusiasm. If someone says "I don't feel like doing", I sit with him separately. I have two partners one of whom handles the class. The other also helps. We ask him the reason for not wanting to do the class; we don't force anything on them and leave the entire class to what they want to do. We sometimes chat a little with him, may be his mood changes and he joins.

We try to create images in the class. Some images seep in easily, like the natural world of trees, birds, stones through which one can connect to life. They can enter that world very easily. Suppose I tell them to make a house they can do it with ease, but if I tell them to arrange books one after the other it would be difficult for them. But they can show a house by joining hands with another person. We try to provide them with opportunities of emotional outlet---release of trauma, anger, sorrow which is causing all of this inside them. First we try to understand and then we proceed in small steps. Whenever we see that they are getting disturbed and are not being able to take it we make them sit and relax, ask them to lie in X-position, close their eyes, try to cool down, and think of something that they like. They really like to dance, they like rhythmic music and free dance. I have noticed that in the hospital the patients love the song 'Ami shunechhi tomra' from Moushumi Bhowmik⁸² and connect to it. In every session when we play the song the atmosphere becomes calm.

Q: I have heard that it's a very emotional song; does not that trigger pain in them?

Sharanya: No. Rather they give good feedback on it. They say things like when I was in college I used to go out a lot with friends---I just remembered the day when I had gone out; that seaside I can see even though I can't go there now. But they have an immense treasure of mental strength with which they move forward in life. I have felt this, because without that (strength) after everything they wouldn't have been able to live. A number of them work now, there is an organization called 'Manobik'---which recruits mental patients and gives them work---one of the patients works with 'Manobik', some of the girls can look after children, dress them up, they are working well. That they are going out and summoning the mental strength to work, that itself is a lot (May 13, 2010).

Sharanya also works with children suffering from HIV+ at 'Nibedan', an NGO. They are between five to fifteen years of age and understand Bengali. Some of them are Muslims, while the majority are Hindus. She has thirty participants for her sessions---all patients of the HIV+, the youngest being four years old and the oldest perhaps around sixteen.

Initially, they reportedly had inhibition and their bodies were inflexible. But in the last one year that inhibition has almost disappeared. Now, they work with a lot of energy

⁸² A well known singer of Bengali folk and songs of similar genre, of Bangladeshi origin.

and dance with a lot of happiness. Sharanya mentions that a therapist needs to give them happiness because being HIV+ patients they have this perception that their days in this world are counted. Keeping their specific needs in view, 'Nibedan' invites trainers from SL to work with them and Sharanya is one of them. Regarding her work she says, they are progressing really fast.

Sharanya notes that the condition of the children is serious. They have a chart of the daily medicines, but some of them are too ill and are given only ARC (the standard medicine for their disease that is given in the last stage). Sharanya has heard from the children themselves that once ARC is given it can't be stopped as otherwise, their condition would become critical. According to her, most of the children are aware that they have HIV+.

The challenge for the trainer there, says Sharanya, is that the children in Nibedan always fight amongst themselves. Initially she used to wonder why the children fight. She had gone with a preconceived notion that they would be weak. But she was surprised to find that though being of a tender age, they are bundles of energy. Each of them studies in a formal school and lead normal lives. This is what 'Nibedan' offers them. Most of them have been admitted there by their parents, some have been given by the hospitals; some have been brought by the NGO itself. Sharanya remembers that most of the times they fought without any reason. However after going through DMT for one year they have become somewhat patient. And Sharanya points out that now they do the activities with more focus. The good thing is the children love to dance and are absolutely passionate about it. They love music too, especially energetic music. In a bid to resolve their affinity for fighting, Sharanya had talked to them repeatedly and in detail and tried to know how they feel when they fight, what come to their mind etc. Sometimes she has made the older group sit together with the children and discussed with them the possible reasons of fighting. She has encountered several 'plausible' excuses for fighting: Some have said, "Didi they called me names that's why (I fight)". Some have said "there isn't any reason – we just fight" or, "You know Didi they complain against each other so I hit them both"; some say "I wasn't taken into the play so I hit". To resolve this, Sharanya did an activity with them. She asked them to imagine that each of them is covered by a net---which is a great obstacle for them, from which they can never free themselves.

However they are to make an effort. She observed how they were getting out of the net and was impressed since they did it extraordinarily well—the act of extricating themselves from a closure. After this she explained to them the reason for their fighting amongst themselves. She told them:

Only if I am bound in a net then only I will feel the anger, sorrow, pain. Do you feel that “I am bound; nothing else is going to happen to me?” Is that why you fight?
(May 13, 2010).

The other activity that she did with them was a walk in the jungle. The entire thing was a story-telling activity. She asked them to imagine a jungle in which each of them is walking alone. Various fears are coming to seize them, and again they are getting lost, can't find their location. Sharanya told the children that they would have to do this activity through movements and finally they would find their own land where they can live securely. After doing it the children told her that they had learnt how to live, move forward in life from this.

Children cannot express themselves as clearly or cogently as adults. It has been Sharanya's experience that may be they would cry a little, remain silent for a while. From these small signals the trainer is to understand that they are feeling sad. In each child's life they have felt the emotion of getting lost. She got very good result from these two activities in the sense that she succeeded in addressing and resolving the fear, helplessness and sadness in a child. Another observation Sharanya makes is that initially when they were made to do activities for building concentration, they invariably opened their eyes. However after one year now if she asks them to sit with eyes closed for twenty minutes they can do that.

Sometimes the trainers give them the 'healing touch'—the children are asked to lie in a relaxed posture with eyes closed while the therapist touches the head and hands in a caring, soothing manner. She finds that they can feel and appreciate it because every child pines for love and since they live without their parents (even though they are looked after by the staff at 'Nibedan') they really like the trainers from SL. Sharanya says:

We go, dance and spend time with them; we behave like kids with them, so that they don't feel that we have gone there to 'teach' them. May be that is also a reason why they have opened up. I have got very good response from this class (May 13, 2010).

The staffs at 'Nibedan' are supposed to look after them. According to her, they take good care of the children. Sharanya says that earlier there was possibly a counselling facility in place for the children in the NGO. Currently however it has been discontinued. This was the prime reason that made her think hard on how to resolve their chronic in-fighting. Sharanya feels that compared to other shelter homes where she gives DMT, the response from the children at 'Nibedan' has been really good, so much so that the NGO has asked her to go on another extra day in the week.

Another beneficiary organisation is Kathaa. There the girls are between seventeen and twenty-four/twenty-five years of age. They are HIV+ patients, but mainly survivors of trafficking being rescued from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bombay. They know Hindi and none of them stay for more than a year at this organisation. They receive counselling and legal procedures are in place to decide what would be their next destination, when the court has to be attended. In Kathaa, Sharanya has ten regular participants for her class. Their families do not play much role because some don't have family, some do not want to go home, and some wish to stand on their own feet.

Their basic problem is depression. She says they are hesitant to open up, are secretive, physically taut and simply resist freeing their minds. They also have a great reluctance to talk. Here dance as non-verbal communication helps. They open up a bit only through dance and do not wish to say anything in counselling sessions.

Secondly, Sharanya shares that she had tried to do two trauma release activities with the girls of which three have had outbursts during the sessions. On witnessing that, the rest were too shocked and started crying even without releasing. Explains Sharanya:

Normally when we witness a trauma release our bodies resonate with it too, that happened with two or three of them and they got scared. The next time they refused to do the class. We talked to them and got to know this. They directly said, "We do not want everything that is inside us to come out." We told them that once released

you will feel lighter, but they refused. But what we do is we don't use the term 'trauma release', we work with props and make them do powerful movements. That leads to release. Then we explain a bit how it happened. We work in such small steps with them.

Q: Do they understand that they are in pain without a release of their trauma?

A: They know that they are in pain but still they do not want to release. They had the same problem of not opening up to their counsellors. In fact they were not in a position to take counselling, but now they have come up to the state of being counselled. However they do not wish to go deep when we want to take them there.

Q: Do they know of your own personal struggle?

A: I used to live there; I have made the whole journey from there up to her. I even say that "You see me, one day I was where exactly as you are now". Only if I tell them my complete story they will tell me theirs, they will get the confidence, and they will feel that she is like me. But since they are of my age they do not want to tell.

Q: Have they asked you about your life presently? Now how you are, I mean they may get some hope from your story?

A: They know how I have done it all and where I stand today. These days the change is happening slowly, after much talking. I have been working with them for the past two and half years. In the last six months the group that has been formed is somewhat more scared. The groups before would reach somewhere in one year. Some groups take more time. The current group will take this time and I am giving them the time, because I do not want to pressurize them. I have a girl in my class called Uma who wouldn't attend any class, she would probably be there for ten days, and then she would lose interest. But now Uma is doing the class continuously for one whole year-- she has been making such a consistent effort—she really wants to do it. In future she wants to be like us—this is her wish.

Q: How would you compare working with mental patients and working with these girls—which is easier?

A: I find working easier with the girls because I can explain and motivate them up to quite an extent. But with mental patients it's like suppose I teach them something today, tomorrow they will forget and I have to repeat it many times for them to be able to retain it. If I say 1 today, then tomorrow I will have to go and make them say

2, the day after I will have to make them say 3, on the fourth day I will have to revise it all. May be when I revise with them they may say 2 first then 3 and then again when I go on the fifth day, may be they would say till 3. As regards the mental patients, it is important for me to help them remember till 3. I can't expect that they will be able to say till 10. Then it will be my mistake. I have to function within my own capacity to give and their capacity to take. If that means only a single movement then I will do that with them. If I pressurize them with two movements neither will they be able to take it properly nor will I be able to teach them. But if I somehow manage to free them of their depression and motivate them and make them do till 5 they will progress till 5 and won't forget. First I have to see whether rigidity is there—those who suffer from depression have rigid bodies, once that is overcome, depression slowly gets released. I shall focus on how to overcome rigidity of their bodies. That will give me the key. And then gradually the lock will open. Since I first make them do hard exercises---they don't want to open up; we try to free their entire body. Once the body opens up they will accept any activity easily, once they accept they will understand what they are doing. Now if they have depression, I take them through activities like—imagine you are walking through a crowded street. That increases their alertness. If I tell them to jump to another place and do exercises they would not. But if I tell them to walk like in a crowded street without bumping into anyone then that will increase their movement as well as alertness. Now I start motivating them from there. I then ask them to move their hands, and to sit. Once the rigidity is overcome I go into activities, like activities of barriers—in which they are asked to imagine many big stones are strewn all over, they will have to move removing them, or the push activity-- this ensures their total involvement. Even if they come to the class with some worry their mind will gradually go into the activity (May 13, 2010).

Chandra, an assistant DMT trainer, is seventeen years old. She grew up with the idea that she is a Christian. Less than a year ago however she got to know that her father was a Hindu Bengali and her mother was Christian. She is quick to add that it was an arranged marriage. Her father had passed away when she was three years old and her mother followed six months later. Hence she knew very little about them. She says she became conscious of herself only when she was nine years old. She considers

Christianity an important part of her identity. She lived in All Bengal Women's' Union⁸³. Chandra says,

I never knew that somewhere I am a Bengali (by which she means Hindu) ---but then all jatis are finally human beings though being a Christian is important to me. It is because Jesus was a common man like you and I and I truly believe that, and that's why I give it(Christianity) more importance. I have not heard the stories of Hindu gods and even when I have, I feel they are like earthen dolls (June 7, 2010).

To the question who earns in her family her reply was atypical:

Well one can talk about a number of families. Even though family is there it is almost like not being there. Maximum I can say two persons. I now live with Dida and Mashi (maternal grand mom and maternal aunt respectively). Mashi is married; she comes once in a while. She works as a domestic worker. She has a one-year old child. Dida also works as a domestic worker. Mama works as a rickshaw puller but is alcoholic and doesn't contribute financially to the family. Mashi also doesn't contribute regularly. Dida earns something around Rs. 1000. I don't know in detail, I don't want to know also (June 7, 2010).

As salary, she receives around two thousand rupees. But her 'family' hasn't been informed of the exact amount as their conduct is hardly geared to her welfare. Her food is provided by her grandmother, for which she is grateful to her. She has an elder sister who has married on her own and they aren't in much contact. Chandra has studied till class IX. After that she received this work as a DMT trainer.

Chandra used to love studying. Girls at the home would tease her as 'scientist'. She says that she had never thought that she would be a 'scientist' or do such interesting work that she did now, even though her dreams had revolved round science. Her idea of her own future was to work in people's house (domestic work). She is emphatic about giving me an idea of how deviant a girl she was, then. Chandra stresses that she was "that kind of a *phaltu* (worthless / lowly) girl", who never would give respect to others. She says that she realizes now that she never hoped much to happen in her life—couldn't see beyond domestic work. Evidently she had very low self-esteem. But somehow, says she, discrepant it may seem but along with this she had this dream

⁸³Shelter home by the government of West Bengal.

surrounding science. Her love for the discipline was so deep that even when washing clothes she would wonder about the chemical components of the surf and fantasize about discovering something new, and thus helping people. However she was poor in mathematics and remembers that her counsellor once asked her sarcastically that with such poor base in mathematics, how she would study science? Chandra says that her words shattered something in her. She would feel listless and liked people even less then. At that time she had a challenge---of being promoted to the ninth standard. This was because her sister, who she claims, was even better than her in studies, had got distracted at this juncture due to falling in love, and was not admitted to class IX. Chandra says that her sister was a quiet person and would always be studying. She was the naughty one---quarrelsome and even at times violent. After her sister failed in the eighth standard she told Chandra that she wanted to study further. Chandra was by then the most notorious girl of the home. She was a bully and a problem child. But she requested the authorities a lot so that her sister could study. But they didn't allow. This was a jolt and Chandra became quieter slowly. She says,

A person's life changes once she becomes quiet, I have found that change harms a person because I have changed now---though it is strange but I have seen that people say "Change and it will be better for you"---but it was better for me previously, as I was strong and would get all that I wanted. I never felt much pain, nor did I care---but now people get too much opportunity to talk---if something goes wrong then others get a chance to say things differently. When I am alone I think when people ask us to change then why do they force to take us back there? In the middle I had become reactionary, but then I left it (the attitude). My sister had asked me to try to get permission for her to study but they didn't allow her to study, and she was also hurt. But she is soft-hearted; if you talk indulgently she will be fooled. Actually both me and my sister have never been loved really, we have not received love and so we become weak when we receive it from someone (June 7, 2010).

Her sister had eloped to get married to her fiancé. Chandra was the first one her sister called to inform of her marriage. The blame strangely fell on her as Chandra's family accused her saying that it was because of her that her sister had eloped. There was a lot of mud-slinging on her and that May her family 'disowned' her. It came as a shock to her---at first she thought that they are speaking out of anger, but they stopped

coming to visit her at the hostel. When they disowned her she says she was completely broken.

I was feeling that I wasn't being able to breathe. I was into DMT then. Still since I was totally broken from inside... I tried to commit suicide. [Pause] I have been doing DMT from 2006, the family probably disowned me in 2008. I had never imagined it could happen thus. Afterwards I also thought why should I become so unstable? If they can live well so will I. Then I thought whatever people call me –beggar or anything I wouldn't care, I used to be treated so badly! I talked to the Mashimas (Matrons) in All Bengal---I said I shall never ever go back home again—I don't have a home (June 7, 2010).

Almost after one and a half year the family members turned up. They said, “We were wrong, there isn't a better girl than you”; Commenting on their volte-face, Chandra says it was because her Didi was not paying attention to them anymore. Then the home also persuaded her to return. She was confused but later thought that she might need them later. Her grandmother who was also her main caretaker in the absence of her parents is an abusive adult given to burning all the things she may need. However Chandra is currently living with her again as an experiment.

In August 2008 she was employed in SL. Says she,

There will be a time when I shall leave the family—I know this, but now it is ok. I have decided that I will change. In the interview here they (SL) have told me all the paths that I can take, so I thought I like studying as well as this—thus thinking of the ‘scientist’ angle and the thought that I would help people. They had said that you can study together with doing this. I thought this is such a great opportunity—I did not know how far I will be able to do it. I just thought let me try---this is a matter of fate. I used to skip school twice a week---I did not like that (June 7, 2010).

There were problems too. At the shelter home she had to give letters repeatedly because the head was prone to forgetfulness, and many other problems were there. Chandra was the first to get a job in the Children's home at her age. She also thought that in the absence of a family she would need the money. Once she started working it was fun, it was a different kind of happiness. Initially she used to bring the class IX text books and sit and read in the SL office, the science book especially. Gradually

she had to study about DMT too—and she tried to balance both. She had wanted to give the tenth standard board examinations but her mathematics is poor.

With a naivety characteristic of her age and genuineness rare in ‘normal’ middle-class upbringing she says:

Now see, if you pay for my M.E.(Madhyamik Examinations) and I get a ‘back’(i.e fail to qualify) I shall feel like dying. I don’t want to die. But I know myself—if I get help and then fail I won’t be able to take it. The studies that I am engaged in on DMT are good for me (June 7, 2010).

At that time Gini Sanyal accompanied by a senior trainer used to come for the sessions in her hostel. Chandra explains that when they were in the Children’s Home, it was the expectation of doing Bollywood dance that made her join the DMT session initially. The songs being played there were new and she had liked the class, thinking that she would learn that kind of dance. She never liked Rabindra Sangeet (Tagore’s songs) and so whenever felt like ‘being naughty’, danced with that music and made haphazard hand movements. But, she says that she took a liking to the dance taught in the DMT class from day one. Gradually she started learning about it in detail as the seniors explained to her. And there were various processes through which they became acquainted with this new form of dance. She remembers the funniest of them to be the ‘room-cleaning dance’. And I quote her here:

The hall where the DMT class is held is a huge hall. That was very dirty. When Gini aunty went to take the class she said, “Let’s do a dance. Can we dance while brooming the room with music?” We had much fun and with the same music that we dance –Kandisa⁸⁴ etc and other rhythmic music. We never used to broom properly and clean the corners (June 10, 2010).

But Chandra recalls that day they broomed it spic-and-span because the longer they worked, the longer they would get to hear the music!

We used to have such fun. It was so different! (June 10, 2010).

Chandra says, after they had finished brooming, Gini aunty had said:

⁸⁴ It’s a popular song from a recognized Delhi based music band ‘Indian Ocean’.

“Can we bring buckets, water, cleaning cloth?” We brought it, then we were asked to make two groups—each standing at one end of the room. Now with music one person would glide the cloth in a straight line and move to the other side while the next person on that side would do the same. In this way the hall was totally cleaned and that too properly (June 10, 2010).

Chandra remembers that it never felt like they were doing some derogatory work like servants by cleaning the hall unlike before when they avoided such work mainly because of the apparent demeaning value attached to it. She says they were often addressed as servants, maids etc and therefore refrained from doing such chores. It was however different after the DMT session. She remembers,

At that time we would say that we want to clean it every time (June 10, 2010).

However till then she was not much taken in by DMT or Gini and maintained that they won't dance except with Bollywood songs thus remaining 'naughty'.

Chandra recalls that before she began taking the DMT sessions, she was a different person altogether. She was wild, hurled abuses at people even without knowing the meaning of those slangs, used to throw plates if she was refused a second serving of food in a way that would hurt people etc. She says, remaining in All Bengal right from childhood, she has picked up both good and bad things from there. Chandra further speaks of her distrust of the counselling process and of counsellors. And I quote her:

They tried to counsel me—I hurled abuses at them also. Then I also told them how much more do you want to know people's mind? I used to hear from friends that counselling harms people...The friends (even as big as eighteen years old) used to tell the counsellors openly. But those people went and reported them (June 11, 2010).

Chandra admits that DMT has helped her make friends as earlier no one wished to befriend her. She fought with everyone, in the Home and in her family, since she says, she could feel no love. Two or three people cared for her in the Home. But at that time she didn't care even for them as she never felt love.

Chandra explains that's she always thought counselling was bad to her. Of its effects on others at the Home, she says:

May be it has helped them to some extent, but in each there is some trauma in counselling as well. That's why I used to get angrier. I would only think in counselling class I would either use slang or just play (June 11, 2010).

Remembering that, she speaks of the difference in the approach of DMT. She claims to have forgotten the activities they did in early sessions, but can recall that the DMT trainers, unlike the counsellors, never asked so many questions and even if they did their style was different. Chandra elaborates:

They would say like—look at this and what do you think of it? My reply would make them realize things about me. Now I do the same also, and so I can understand better (June 11, 2010).

She further talks about an experience with a particular counsellor Shova. She had heard good reviews about her from a friend, when she was all of thirteen or fourteen years old. On visiting her, Chandra had told her everything truthfully and Shova had helped her, generally as also with her maths and science. But later she came to know that Shova had harmed someone by breaching her confidentiality and reporting against that person, and therefore Shova has had to leave. That upset Chandra and she stopped going to her anymore. Fortunately, by then she had got the job as assistant trainer in SL and DMT was slowly healing her. She admits that she was a violent person before these sessions, able to “make people bleed by a single blow.” DMT has changed her profoundly. Chandra feels:

Now in fact it is just the opposite—now when people ask for help I don't see my *shubidha-oshubidha* (convenience/inconvenience)—I feel had I been in her shoes how would I have felt in being refused. May be, if I give you the money you are asking for I shall be harmed but I will still be giving. DMT has helped me much (June 11, 2010).

Chandra says that the all consuming aim in her life is to become a teacher, a DMT trainer who can help somebody who is perhaps in a more difficult state than she was, and thus effectively change her life. She rues that she dreams too much. But as of now, her entire identity is entwined with DMT. She seems happy as she has recently started a new session with old people in the All Bengal Old Age Home. Challenges come her way, but she wants to face those. Chandra explains her approach:

...I want to face the challenge, if not then I do not understand how far challenging it is. Going home was also a challenge, but I thought over and only then decided (June 11, 2010).

Regarding her training in DMT, Chandra says that she was initiated into it in 2006 and it continued in 2007. In August 2008, she was interviewed twice or thrice and then offered the job of an assistant trainer in SL. Reflecting on her interview she says that “the technique of DMT is so good that I hadn’t even realized that they were testing me.” She was quick to apply her training as within two to three days of her joining, SL sent her to ‘Prothom Alo’, A2 and ‘Nibedan’.

In A2, the children were between six and ten years and also between fifteen and sixteen. When she went to work there for the first time in 2008, she found it a problem to work with the children. Now Chandra feels it was perhaps she fell short of explaining the activities to the children that they couldn’t retain those movements in the next class. Senior colleagues told her to rectify this as her duty is explain why they are doing some activity and Chandra says, she realizes now that her responsibility is to give those children happiness because “the little time that they are doing this that is a lot.” This she says was her only challenge.

About ‘Nibedan’, Chandra says that there are about thirty beneficiaries there split into a younger group (aged between four to five years) and a senior group (aged around fourteen to fifteen years). The children are merely babies and SL doesn’t do DMT with them. Instead Chandra splits up the thirty beneficiaries into two halves and takes sessions. She remarks that children are good, but a bit restless-- some are moody, laugh a lot, and twist the activities that are done with them. The authority in ‘Nibedan’ at times forget about the sessions, otherwise she feels it is a nice place to visit where her tasks are to give those HIV+ children happiness. Chandra feels that since they are children, they are yet to realize the significance of their state and once they realize that, they will perhaps stagnate. So, as trainer, she tries to keep them happy and help them to think of life from a fresh perspective. But her observation is that they are yet to realize reality as their world is confined within the four walls of their Home and they don’t know many common-place things as cow or how to be a tree etc. She also needs to work on the concentration of the children there.

About 'Prothom Alo', Chandra finds many problems with the infrastructure. The tape recorder is dysfunctional, the phone in their office goes unanswered and the teachers there are very moody. Doing DMT there is fraught with challenges as the girls (aged between six to seven years and fifteen to sixteen years) have a trust problem—they cannot trust themselves or anyone else. Chandra recalls earlier they used to remain moody, angry and inhibited. Working with DMT is necessary there to give them happiness, for reducing their anger, helping them to overcome their inhibition and making them think new things. Chandra talks about the high ambitions and dreams that these girls nurture—one wants to become a pilot. A number of them want to be a teacher, one or two people want to pursue DMT or simply be a dance teacher. She feels that it's not justified that only because these girls are doing DMT, they have to take it up as a career in future. Instead they should be encouraged to choose a dream and fulfil it. She narrates:

Sometimes they tell me Didi we are doing DMT but we do not want to make it a career. I say that is fine but you will have to be good in something else then (June 10, 2010).

Considering age differences which entail a difference in maturity, Chandra has divided the class on age lines. The older girls now go to a school which ends late and they return only at 4/4.30 in the evening. Then too they wish to do the DMT class. But the Head has ordered them to do one thing at a time and they cannot come to the class for the fear of being reported. Chandra says that it is important for a trainer to have communication with the beneficiaries and therefore she makes it a point to talk to those three-four girls after her class. She shares her views with them and they also share their personal details with her. She has asked them to do the class even if for a day so that they can learn and had assured them that she would reorder the class if she realizes that they want the class to be done differently. But for that they should attend the class. Chandra feels that like one of her seniors who is now married in Murshidabad, her class also has become popular with the girls there. Chandra feels that the girls are very open with her, share their problems and even romantic interests with her and miss her and Medha when they fail to visit. Chandra says she also indulges them to say anything in front of her, even use slang but dissuades them from hurting others. She admits that she likes taking sessions there.

On her recent assignment with old people in All Bengal (most of them are above eighty years, with very few above sixty years), Chandra feels that she knows the place as she herself has lived there. And she hopes that one day she will go there to take sessions, instead of going only on assignments which she believes will be her challenge. In this particular Home, those who are completely immobile live on the top floor of the building and those who can move around live on the floor below where she was given a room to take class. Her first day with the old people, Chandra feels went off smoothly as all of them cooperated and the miss who looks after them, was very polite and this has increased her hope. She says:

I have talked to them clearly that this is DMT—I have made it clear. They said you are so good, you are explaining to us clearly. I said, if you have problems doing it then you can sit on your bed and do. The place is limited. Sit on a chair. One who can stand and do will do it that way. Try to do it standing. Then I told them just because I have asked you to sit and do, all of you are sitting. But I shall be able to make out who can do it by standing and who cannot. And I shall feel hurt (June 10, 2010).

They took it nicely and appreciated my straightforwardness. Chandra says in her usual nonchalant way that she had clearly told them that if she realizes that someone does not want to do the movement, she will point it out to him/her. She remembers the following interaction:

They said, “Yes tell us directly like that”. I told them you are like my friends and grandparents and I am like your granddaughter (June 10, 2010).

Then Chandra talks about her interaction with one particularly old man who was finding it difficult to sit down. She took it up as a challenge and did not feel discouraged when the caretaker ma'm sitting on one side said that he cannot sit. Chandra requested her not to talk in-between sessions and was surprised to find that she was not offended by what she said. Chandra remembers urging the caretaker madams who were sitting on the sideline, to participate and she insisted on having a transparent communication before moving on with the session. Elaborating on this experience, she states:

The rule of DMT is that no one can just sit quietly and observe. You can observe but also do participate. Otherwise, more than I the participants will have problem.

They said yes. I told them that you will feel different. I told them that today you might feel that we are fine and healthy and we do not need to do this. But this is for happiness (June 10, 2010).

Chandra says that in the session, she played songs and never thought that the old men and women would appreciate them so much. Then all of a sudden, she had played the music of happiness. Chandra admits that initially she was a bit apprehensive thinking whether they would take to the rhythmic music or not. But she was pleasantly surprised to see that they liked rhythm better and could concentrate.

After narrating her first day's experience at the Old Age Home, Chandra voices her realization that working there would be a challenge for her as she has to teach and learn at the same time. She has requested SL office to show her some compact discs on work with old people but did not find time to see the videos or read much before her first class. Chandra was requested to start with the classes earlier this month, but she could not. And she has clearly communicated to the authorities that if she is not sufficiently ready to take the sessions then that would do no good either to her or the beneficiaries.

About the importance of SL in her life, Chandra says that she cannot term it as fate. But at the same time, conceded that without SL's presence, she could not have made it where she is now, so early in life. She sums up saying:

I have got a new life, I have seen new dreams, I can think new things, and I have got a lot— limitless. I can not specify like that (June 11, 2010).

Medha is a nineteen year old Bengali Sunni Muslim girl, an assistant DMT trainer. Her father is a Hindu and her Ammi, a Muslim who fell in love with each other and married, says she, happily. Consequently her father converted to Islam. Medha is conversant in Bengali language since her father talks with her in that language. Simultaneously she is equally conversant in Hindi as well since most people in her locality are Muslims who speak in Hindi. Medha has an elder sister and a brother. The sister is married and the brother is older than her. She had to discontinue her studies after the eighth standard when her mother fell ill. In that

uncertain period, Medha says she used to work, sew or make shoe laces. In those days, Medha came to know of A2. A friend told her it was an organization where among many other things embroidery was taught. Intending to learn sewing, she accompanied her friend there. But once in A2, Medha ended up learning not only sewing but also computer and even got an opportunity to resume her school. She recalls that each Friday Padmabati used to take their DMT class in A2. Medha admits that since childhood she has had a great fascination for dance and used to watch dance on television. But before coming in touch with DMT, she never harboured the remotest idea that dance can change a person for good. However, she says, that as she began coming for those DMT sessions, she began viewing dance in a new light. Thus through dance she became reacquainted with her own body and mind. Medha remembers that earlier there used to be a lot of anger pent up in her—she used to get angry easily, remain upset, not answer others, not make eye contact with anyone while talking etc. She also used to find it difficult to make new friends or blend with people and preferred to remain alone and detached. But as she began attending the classes, through a host of activities which they had to do in that class, like painting, eye-contact etc, she could feel a change seeping in.

Through the activities of DMT my anger, my eye-contact, my style of speaking all of these changed (May 7, 2010).

And now, Medha believes that she is able to make a friend wherever she goes, bring people close to herself and form a group. Reflecting on these changes, she has revised her earlier aim of becoming a Hindi teacher. Now, Medha wants to become a DMT teacher. She says,

...if this could change me then I shall work with this. The way I have changed-- in the same way I would like to bring change in others' lives as well (May 7, 2010).

She began attending DMT sessions at the age of sixteen. Earlier people used to request her to dance in weddings in their slums. So, when she sought permission from her mother to attend DMT classes in A2, the parent thought it would be something like Hindi film dance. With that notion in mind, she refused to give permission saying that Muslims do not dance and as a daughter of a Muslim, Medha cannot work with dance. Medha says that did not demoralise her as she was confident that somehow she

would be able to win her mother's confidence. Challenge faced from the outside was however more scathing. Medha recounts how, with her decision to join DMT, the neighbours used to taunt her Ammi. They advised the mother to deregister Medha from the DMT classes, confine her at home arguing that what would a daughter do going out in the outside world when she is meant to remain indoors! Medha however stood firm on her grounds and she told herself that even if she had to take the beatings, she would do but would not leave dancing. She recalls her first 'victory' of sorts:

In my first show in Max Mueller Bhavan, I brought my mother to see for herself what I do. As long as a person does not see with one's own eyes she cannot understand or believe. When my mother saw this is not the commercial--hip-swinging dance then she realized that this is a dance that can change people. Then Ammi started supporting me. She said, "whatever you do I am behind you" (May 8, 2010).

Medha remembers how earlier while walking the lanes of their slum, she would always face verbal abuse. The men then used to tease her, calling her by the name of 'nachnewali' (dance-girl in a derogatory sense), implying that she is returning after 'dancing', that she earns from 'dancing' etc. Medha learnt not to pay any attention to or cringe from such insolent remarks.

Gradually as she went more deep into the classes, and started taking training on DMT, Gini Sanyal selected her from A2 and asked her to come to SL to learn DMT in-depth. Gini recognised that Medha had learnt well, but suggested that she needed to see more classes to find out how the facilitators conduct the sessions. Henceforth she started visiting both A2 and SL. Each Friday and Saturday she used to take training and in those days she used to be sent as a trainee to different classes to see how Didi was taking them, how the children were being handled etc. Eventually one day Medha wished to take a class and sought permission. She was allowed to take a class with the children. Medha says in that class she gave her 100% and showed

... all that was inside me. Gini Ma'm saw me taking the class, approved and recommended me henceforth to take classes on a regular basis (May 7, 2010).

From then on, Medha stopped going to A2 and works in SL alone.

Speaking about her beneficiaries of DMT, Medha states that she has worked with platform children; in a shelter home named All Bengal Women's Union; in Kathaa (where HIV+ patients and girls stay); and in A2 where the children and girls from the surrounding slum, having fear and inhibition as their main problem, come to dance. At present she is taking classes in 'Prothom Alo'. Except in Prothom Alo, in the rest of the three places, Medha had been sent before she was approved to take classes. Regarding her first stint in conducting sessions, she recalls facing difficulties in tackling the children. Observing her inability to deal with the children, the senior DMT trainers as Padmabati, Sudeshna, Debi, Sharanya and also Gini used to encourage her to express her abilities and think herself as a teacher. They used to tell her that a teacher should always know how to present herself, how to talk in the class etc. Gini Aunty used to take her class every Saturday where she set homework of movement and choreography. This Saturday class continued for six months. Medha says that she remembers how in the period after she completed her training, therapists from abroad used to come to conduct workshop with them in SL. She cites the example of Bobby Aunty (Bonny Bernstein) who had come from America, and Aditya whose workshop was on dance therapy. These workshops, Medha notes, initiated a palpable change in her. Gradually she could overcome her fear regarding taking the class and was able to build up a confidence that helped her in conducting a class on her own.

From those days as a beginner, Medha has however come a long way. As a trainer, her field is not limited to taking classes in Kolkata. She has also taken classes in an organization called Shahid Bandana Mohila Abaash, in Baburhat, Cooch Bihar.⁸⁵ Many of the beneficiaries there have cases pending against them and she explains that sessions with them need to be conducted in isolation behind closed doors, as they remain in much pain. Such precautions are taken as when these girls release their trauma, others may hear their cries and get scared and think twice before releasing their own trauma. That is why, Medha explains, when she takes sessions with these girls, nobody is generally allowed to come in. However with smaller and older children sessions are taken in rooms with open doors. The children there, she

⁸⁵ It houses orphaned children as well as girls who are under trials—they have court cases pending against them, mainly lodged by parents and other people for marrying by elopement.

says, generally lead an orphaned existence—some not knowing the whereabouts of their parents, while the rest do not have an idea from where they came from. In that organisation, the older group of children goes to school and the maximum age of the inmates there is below twenty years. Talking about the days when she used to take classes in Coochbehar, Medha remembers that Padmabati used to go with her in the initial phases. But after her marriage, only three trainers from SL, including Medha go there to conduct DMT. She remembers that the classes were usually held on weekends and twice a month for two days and they used to fix the dates beforehand. Medha is aware that the people in the slums still feel curious about where she goes to teach dance etc, but cannot muster up the courage to say much as they sense the strong approval of her mother behind all her actions. Thus she happily mentions instances where her mother sees her off in the station when she goes out of Kolkata for conducting DMT.

In the personal sphere too, Medha feels her intervention as a DMT trainer has improved a person's life. She talks of a friend, a sixteen year old girl who used to have a lot of pent up anger within her. Medha used to explain to her that she needs to rein in her anger and therefore whenever that girl came to her place; Medha would show her friend some activities which she thought would help in reducing her anger to some extent. Now, she proudly claims that friend is a completely changed person and one can never imagine that she used to have such a frightful temper. Medha thinks this is the effect of DMT. Also, that friend has got interested in dance and requested her to take to the organisation where she had learnt DMT. So Medha has got her admitted to A2 where she learns dance and also regularly narrates to Medha whatever she learns.

As a trainer, Medha has gone out of India, to Nepal where Gini di had conducted a big workshop. She recalls a few Bangladeshi DMT practitioners who had participated in that workshop. Besides this there were other SL workshops elsewhere, conducted by Gini Aunty. Medha talks about a particular workshop where they had gone to teach women who had children. Two girl trainers had gone there from Bangladesh and from Nepal respectively. And from SL, Medha remembers, six of them had gone to teach in that organization. She also talks about other places in Nepal where they went to teach DMT where the beneficiaries were normal people.

Emphasizing the ties between SL and the countries of Nepal and Bangladesh, she says that SL's workshops are always attended by trainers from those two countries.

Speaking about her experience with the children in A2, she remembers that when she had first met the slum children who came from the locality of that red-light area to attend classes, they had appeared much inhibited and rigid. So, in their classes, they had aimed to counter this fear and inhibition. The task was not smooth and easy as she faced much resistance from the children who didn't want to participate in any activity. Medha identifies this as a difficult hurdle that they as DMT trainers had to tackle.

This was our challenge. We used to think that this month we will work with 'fear', if we are successful then next month we shall take up some other challenge. We worked with a different purpose each month (May 8, 2010).

The results also were for all to see. In A2, where initially the children had avoided coming to the open-air classes, gradually registered a marked increase in attendance level. Noticing the change, Medha says they informed the teachers there of the new development and were given a bigger room to take class. Minor problems like a faulty compact disc player still disturb classes there but she sounds resolute to continue.

At present Medha and Chandra are in charge of 'Prothom Alo'. For the past two months she has been visiting that NGO. She says that there her main challenge in the beginning was the children who were very restless and indisciplined. They used to go to the restroom, or have water, or go out of the class without taking the trainer's permission. Some were good, but for two or three unruly children the class would regularly get disturbed. Medha observes that indiscipline was the thing that needed attention there and not fear as the children of 'Prothom Alo' accepted any activity that was taught to them quite readily. She could realize that they were disturbed and did not have much group feelings as quarrels were common. To resolve such complaints against one another and to put a stop to their ensuing quarrels, Medha remembers they would divide the children in groups. This was done to connect them and build up some sort of a bond within themselves. This was another goal besides restoring discipline.

Regarding the activities done, Medha says that the children initially did whatever they felt like in the class. To contain and channelize this they were gradually being involved in certain activities. For example, small pieces of paper with different activities like ‘move like an elephant’, ‘move like a wooden doll’ etc written on them were strewn on the ground. The children were supposed to pick up each of the chits randomly and do the activity that is written on their piece of paper. Medha says that these children were very talkative. So to dissuade them from talking, they were asked to do that activity without opening their mouths—i.e only through body movements and expression. This did rein in their restlessness to an extent. The children reportedly did this activity very well. If at times one or two words slipped from their mouth by mistake, then they were made to repeat the activity in the same sequence. Medha says with satisfaction that the children did these well and though they are still naughty, they comply when they are shouted at. Earlier, they never used to comply with anything.

On whether discussion with seniors helps her to work more efficiently, she answers in the affirmative. Before going for a class, Medha usually makes a session plan. But on certain days, if there are disturbances in the class or the children are not in a mood to do the activities that she has planned for them to do, she adopts a spontaneous plan. She gives them fun activities that change the mood of the children for the better.

Medha dreams that in future, she sees herself furthering the cause of DMT—for herself as also for her beneficiaries. She wants DMT to reach out to people and places not touched as yet.

DMT has touched her life profoundly, says Medha.

If DMT hadn't been there—that I am working and realizing my dream, that I am helping my family—the place that I have earned in my parents' hearts, the change of perception regarding dance that has occurred in my locality because of all this, that would not have been, and I would have had to live in a closed room. All the time I would have to hear-- don't wear this; girls will take dupatta, girls don't have the right to go out, do only household chores etc (May 8, 2010).

Medha says that unlike now when she is allowed to go outside with her friends, earlier they used to be escorted by some elder whenever they went out. She feels that without DMT, she could never have had access to the education, the knowledge, the self-knowledge that when one gets angry or feels sad; how to deal with people etc. She says,

I have developed a confidence. I have opened up (May 8, 2010).

Contrasting her own present situation with other girls of her locality, Medha refers to a girl named Shabnam who is very interested in dance, but due to her mother's pressure cannot express herself. Neither can she wear clothes of her choice nor go out alone. All the time she is 'forced' to wear long, heavy clothes and take dupattas, and they can converse only when Medha visits Shabnam at her home. Still Medha tries to introduce some change in her life. Whenever she visits Shabnam at her place, she insists on putting on the radio and dance. She also explains a lot of things to that girl and those seem to have an effect as Shabnam has expressed a wish to her mother—to wear jeans. When her mother said no to that, she wanted to wear slacks and short 'Kurtas' which girls of this generation wear. Medha says that one day she said certain things to the girl in the presence of her mother to which maybe the mother had taken an exception but she did not express it. To make the girl's mother feel the need to understand her daughter's wishes, Medha had said,

A mother who can't even understand her own daughter, how will she help her in the long run? And how will the daughter help the mother? (May 7, 2010).

In the conversation with Shabnam, she had cited the example of her own mother who is so supportive of her and gives her all freedom to the extent that Medha is free to come home and even share with her mother if and when she likes somebody. Medha made a vital point when she said to Shabnam's mother:

The mother who doesn't support her daughter is of no good, because being a girl herself she does not understand another girl. So she is not a full person. To most people being a girl means she has to stay in a closed cage—but that is not how it should be, do we restrict boys—no; ask the girl what her dream is?(May 7, 2010).

Medha talks at length of the necessity of understanding dreams. She says, earlier she never understood her mother's dream. But when she had asked her about it, she came

to know that her mother had a great wish to become a singer. Family pressures did not allow that to materialize. But Medha says that she feels very proud of her mother and till date she sings extremely well. She further notes that had A2 not stood behind her in her trying times, she could not have joined SL and been where she is now.

Speaking of the procedures adopted to tackle children who are inattentive in the class, Medha narrates some novel improvisations. She explains that when they note that some child is not paying attention and is disturbing others, he is asked not to participate in the activities that day and instead is asked to take the class! He is asked to tell the class to do activities or whatever he wanted to do himself. Then Medha talks of a healing touch that is given to each child during relaxation and concentration. That day, the child who was disturbing the class, is asked to give the rest of the children, the healing touch. Medha says that this serves a double purpose. It helps them learn as also the healing activity reduces their inner restlessness because they know that this touch needs to be given very slowly. One cannot hurry with it. Medha further goes on to discuss incidents when some children do not come to class wearing long pants, even after they are being asked to as trousers facilitates all sorts of movements. When they do not abide, they are not given punishment. Instead they are made to do such movements that require them to open their legs, stretch and they feel uncomfortable and shy in doing them. Then they quickly return home and return wearing long pants. She says that now all the children wear it.

Medha is quick to add that such methods were however improvisations and not part of their own training. But they have picked up many new ideas from the various workshops that they have attended. She talks of a particular workshop where they had to work with themes. For example, they had a group of four trainers and they were told to handle a theme where one was a mental patient and one an HIV+ patient. The other two members of the team were asked to handle them. Medha was made a trainer there. She recollects that Sujatadi had become the mental patient who went on drawing in black colour and she was asked to handle her. Medha remembers she had thought hard and could understand the exact thought of a mental patient. In her own words,

When I did, it was absolutely right (May 8, 2010).

Such exercises were common in Gini aunty and Bobby auntie's workshops, and it was the former's workshops which admittedly helped them open up more because they were closer to her.

She cites example of yet another theme situation she was given to handle in the class.

Another role played and to be tackled was that of people who don't move at all—they just sit in one place. He can see and hear but won't talk. I have to go near him, understand what he wants, whether he wants to do it or not (May 8, 2010).

Talking about the responsibilities of a DMT trainer, she says that they first have to understand the need of the clients and help him to do it through mirroring. Then that would motivate him. For example, if he is snapping his fingers, then Medha says as trainer she has to do the same.

The mental closeness opens up in this way. This was our own improvisation—we had to use our head (May 8, 2010).

Sometimes if there is a problem at home or elsewhere that's disturbing the client and he is not in a mood to talk, then Medha does not pester him with regular activities. Instead he is given something to draw—that helps release the anger inside. That person then should never be asked to talk but do something—"not sit idle." Medha says that once Bobby Aunty had given them a book about her teacher. According to her, they can understand English, though fail to speak it. So to bring home the meaning of the book, Gini has translated it for them and based on that had armed them with a chart on how to deal with the clients and take the class. Henceforth she says, they were asked to read it before coming to the workshop, so that it remains at the back of their minds and can be included in any activity.

On a parting note, Medha says:

I want to spread DMT everywhere, so that the Muslim girl who is not being able to come out—even she can come out. If there is no such restriction in Hindu religion why should the Muslim girl suffer? She should also move ahead in life—she too has the right to live (May 8, 2010).

Sumati is a nineteen year old Muslim girl, none of whose parents earn. She has got five siblings, of whom the brother earns and keeps the household afloat. She has studied till the eighth standard, after which her studies were discontinued.

When asked about her first brush with DMT, Sumati says that though she has been a regular to A2 from 2007, in the beginning she was not interested in the DMT classes. Then she used to remain preoccupied with other thoughts. That changed in the past two years when she started doing DMT classes and became attached to A2 in professional capacity. Sumati feels that gradually as she began to understand the classes and they saw her involvement and saw that “I can take it all”; she was given permission to work along with her course work. Padmabati used to go to A2 to impart training and it was from her that Sumati learnt that she has got the job of a trainer in the centre. She explains that while initially there used to be only the Friday classes, later those selected as trainers by SL were given separate training on Saturdays. It was a TOT class that lasted for six months and she received training for one full year.

Sumati emphasizes that she always nurtured a dream for herself—that she would be able to do something in life and life per se would have some meaning. But the situation that she was in made her fall in despair and believe that nothing is going to come out of anything. She almost started believing that she would always have to sit at home as she had to struggle with the prevalent orthodox ideas that women are not supposed to work. This was till DMT came in her life.

Doing DMT, I learnt that I have certain rights, I can fight for myself. That gave me strength and I could nurture a dream. Yes, I can dream of earning my own bread (June 14, 2010).

She expresses her gratitude to the senior trainers and Gini aunty who took a two weeks training at Joka. It was there that she learnt to understand and appreciate the meaning of making a life of one’s own. Sumati says that in that training program, Gini demonstrated it through an activity where one has to demonstrate where she is now and how she has moved forward. That particular activity, focussed on obstacle, helped her to understand her identity. In it, certain obstructions were put in front of her which she had to bypass in order to reach somewhere and she was required to

remove them by using her whole body. Sumati felt this activity to be very relevant and liked doing it.

It gave me the feeling that when I have been able to overcome this then I can overcome a lot (June 14, 2010).

Before she joined DMT, Sumati points out that she led almost a passive existence. Whatever anybody used to say as correct, she accepted that, even if it was wrong. She used to take a lot of pressure at home. If she was asked to do any work or cook late at night, she never objected even if she did not feel like. On doing DMT, she came out of this inertia. Stressing the transformation, Sumati says that now she refuses to comply with whatever her family members ask her do at home. She turns a deaf ear to all such requests. Unlike earlier times, she doesn't tolerate whatever is said to her and these realizations have come in, she feels, due to DMT.

Elaborating on her 'Training of Trainer (TOT) classes, Sumati talks about the multiple activities they were given to do. They were given many pictures and asked to think about their own life conditions. That opened up many memory files for her. Again, when they were asked to write, she found it difficult to express many things within her and a lot of unexpressed emotions came out in the process, making her realize where she stands.

Then I understood where I was standing—where I had kept myself. I received a lot of things which I should have received from my parents, from DMT here. I feel this (June 14, 2010).

Reflecting on the changes that came in her after learning DMT, she points out several. To begin with, Sumati says, earlier she never had the confidence to talk to anybody in the manner as she does now as she lacked the necessary confidence and courage. Earlier she kept herself confined within traditional constrictions as girls should not talk before elders or raise their eyes etc. She says the very fact that she is talking to me or is being able to; that she can go out on her own unlike yester years when someone would always escort her—instil a lot of confidence in her. Sumati says that initially when Shaonidi⁸⁶ of A2 used to explain things to them, they fell in deaf

⁸⁶ In-charge of the day-care centre.

years and didn't mean a thing. Gradually however their meaning began to dawn on her. While Shaonidi wanted all of them to do something on their own, Sumati recalls, it clashed with what her mother told her then. She rues that her mother was not supportive of her endeavours as when she wished to stand on her own, her mother pressurised her to study. Sumati however was firm in her convictions. And she says, her first performance was liked by her sister's husband and after the performance, he encouraged her to do what she felt right for herself. She recalls how her brother-in-law had pointed out that participating in such performances was synonymous with visiting many places for 'free'—places which perhaps one cannot have access to even with money. He was speaking of the opportunities DMT held and Sumati says till date, her sister's husband comes to see all of her programmes. Her father also has seen her performing. Being a man of the world he has understood, while her mother remaining confined in her own rigid cultural world; refuses to see merit in what Sumati does. Sumati emphasizes that it was because of her sister's positive feedback that she could join as a DMT trainer.

However the process was not smooth. She emphatically says that she had to overcome a lot of challenges before she could be herself. Earlier, she remembers being very shy, inhibited and stopping short of doing things. In those days, Sumati often used to ask herself that why she wasn't able to do things which she normally should. She says that earlier she used to be angry with herself, and remain very quiet. She could never understand the reasons for such internal upheavals. Later through DMT, Sumati could identify them and those were seconded by Gini Aunty. Sumati says she could release a lot of trauma in the Trauma Release Session conducted by Gini Aunty at IPER, Kolkata. Her experience there was remarkably beneficial for her and I quote her:

Even if you don't want to say anything it will somehow come out even if through the body. This is an amazing thing. The body feels light then (June 15, 2010).

Sumati was most eloquent about the visions she holds for her future. She had always dreamt of becoming a teacher and doing higher studies. Financial problems didn't allow her to continue her studies, but she is happy that she has become a DMT teacher. She also dreams of her own home, where she would be able to live comfortably as she says:

I have lived uncomfortably for long (June 15, 2010).

Also as a responsible family member, Sumati dreams of doing a good job, rising high up in her position and being able to take her parents to such a location where they can live without pain and suffering. She further articulates her worries about one of her brothers who is unemployed and has become an addict. He stays at home but remains awake till 1/1.30 in the night. His late sleeping hour delays the bedtime of the rest of the family members as she says, they do not go to sleep before him. Sumati adds unhappily that it is a problem because he needs to be dealt with always.

She harbours high ambitions as a DMT trainer and recalls her first brush with SL:

When SL interviewed me they asked me why do you want to do this? I had said that this place has given me a dream, so I am doing this. Until a person starts to dream he cannot change his life. When I started dreaming about something for myself, that is when it all started to gain momentum (June 14, 2010).

Her dreams are of an uncomplicated, comfortable future where she can earn her own bread and support herself and her parents.

Sumati says that from senior trainers of SL, she has learnt how to take sessions, what all to do in a session, how to behave with people, to keep ties with the aunties in a class, what to wear, what to say where the situation seem awkward etc. She especially mentions Sharanya who she claims, told her things that helped her immensely in overcoming her inhibition.

Sharanya had told me one thing—See, you will have to present yourself. If you don't present yourself then no one is going to do it for you. If you keep everything inside you then you will just fall behind (June 14, 2010).

These words made Sumati think and wonder that if these people could learn, why cannot she? To begin with, she decided to observe how they were taking the sessions. That yielded result as, according to Sharanya⁸⁷, Sumati is now able to take classes anywhere. She remembers that she learnt to assert herself as a trainer in the class when Sharanya had told her that like her, Sumati is also a teacher, should present herself like one and not like anybody's junior. From these gradually she gained the

⁸⁷ Sharanya is a senior trainer with SL, belonging to its first batch and has trained Sumati.

courage to come out of her shell and assume personhood. About Sharanya, she says gratefully:

She gave me strength and courage—if she isn't there like in the Murshidabad class then I will have to do it all on my own (June 14, 2010).

About her own coming of age as a trainer, she says with reference to the Murshidabad classes,

I didn't know whom to call etc, when Aunty said no you will do it yourself, no one else will do. I did it all then. It was tough but I learnt (June 15, 2010).

At this point Sumati fondly remarks that her father is supportive. She mentions this especially with regard to one instance when she was given the responsibility to handle the session at Murshidabad alone.

My father said won't you have to learn. I said yes I shall have to learn (smile) .Things are moving too fast. But he said no you learn. Now I just think how I was and where I am today. And, where I shall be (in future) (June 15, 2010).

As a DMT trainer, Sumati has taken classes in a number of organisations like All Bengal Women's' Union, Kathaa, A2. In near future, in the absence of Sharanya, she is going to take up Nibedan⁸⁸. She says that she had gone to Nepal with SL and had a learning experience. She mentions other DMT trainers that she had met there. One of them was a girl named Nipa. Sumati along with others of SL went to her organization and took classes, saw how she conducts DMT sessions and felt very content to be with the children there. It is an organisation that houses kids and under SL, Sumati and other girls took training there. On completion they were given certificates and requested to make activity plan. Among other beneficiaries, she mentions Shilayan in Murshidabad, but cannot recall the name of the home there. That home has seniors and children's' group as beneficiaries. The senior group consists of individuals who have married by elopement and have cases pending against them, filed by their own parents. They are, Sumati recalls, young girls (some below age, and some just above) whose husbands are in jails. The children there are aged between five to fifteen years. Some of them have been left there by their parents while some had got lost and have

⁸⁸ An organization working with children and adults living with HIV+.

been rescued and kept there. The senior group is between ten to fifteen or sixteen years. “safe custody” people are between eighteen to twenty years. Both the groups attend schools.

About the challenges faced, Sumati points out that they face a lot of problem with the “safe custody” people.

The main problem with the ‘S.C’ people⁸⁹ is that they don’t want to talk. We take their class first. They don’t want to talk, they don’t want to move. We therefore have to talk to them a lot---we do some activities, but mainly we talk, we explain. They always keep themselves withdrawn. Each time we meet new faces—one or two old girls remain but each time we find new girls. We have to deal with them. That’s why we have to plan the session differently (June 14, 2010).

Regarding the activities they are made to do, Sumati cites some examples:

Like we kept a dhol⁹⁰ in the middle—now we call out each girl one at a time and ask them to play the dhol. That way movement is done and also listening and concentration is practised...I can call the same person twice or thrice—she will have to be alert and listen, if she misses then she is out (June 14, 2010).

Yet another common movement Sumai says, she remembers doing is that of touching the body with balloons. The balloons are given to the girls and they are asked to play with the balloon using different parts of the body. She mentions that during the activities, the trainers cannot talk much. All these have a cumulative effect on the participants as sometimes some girls cry and tell their stories. Different movements are devised for the children who do running and jumping and they jump when 1 is mentioned and run when 2 is mentioned. Playing with the ‘dhol’ and balloon is common in this group as also with the seniors. They have hardly new entrants, most being permanent residents of this Home. Sumati mentions that most of the students—both children and senior are Muslims. Among the ‘S.C.’, there are one or two Muslims, while the rest are Hindus. All three groups in this Home are of the feminine gender. While elaborating on their caste and religious composition, Sumati admits

⁸⁹ Sumati continues to call those in ‘safe custody’ as “S.C people” throughout the interview and I have maintained it.

⁹⁰ Indian percussion; in the genre of a drum.

that working with the senior group is wrought with the challenge of how to help them move their bodies, release their trauma, make them happy and relaxed. She says their sole responsibility is to motivate those people.

Then Sumati talks extensively about A2 where the beneficiaries are all girls, aged between twelve to eighteen years. She had worked there for a year when she used to go with Debi. As trainers, Sumati explains, it is their duty to give them happiness and teach them activities which are practically useful to them and from which they can learn something. Speaking on these girls, she says they love to dance and are generally quite obedient. One of the batches is no more as they have left for a Home of Ramakrishna Mission. Sumati remembers them as children who were eager to do the DMT class and used to come running to them. As far as sessions with the older girls are concerned, the trainers, she points out, need to work on their concentration, the issue of presenting oneself and their speech and discipline in general.

Next she goes over to speak on her stint with Kathaa which is also her first class. Sumati says that the beneficiaries there are girls between sixteen and twenty years and they are victims of trafficking. As DMT trainers, their main task is to help these girls in releasing their trauma, overcoming inhibition, withdrawal, fear and help them think about themselves which they generally try to avoid. Sumati says that their main target with these girls is to enable them to think that they are also able to do something in life. Recollecting some of her experiences, she notes that initially some of the girls were so withdrawn that they did not do anything; neither could they study. It was after the DMT sessions, Sumati points out, that these girls have gradually resumed studying and one of them is due to appear for the Madhyamik (class X board examination in West Bengal). About that particular girl, she says, she just loves the DMT sessions but for the time being has been asked to discontinue the classes and study for her boards.

Among her other beneficiaries, Sumati mentions Murshidabad where she had been going for the past six months. She also went to Nibedan to train them in dance as they have a programme on the coming 11th of July (i.e on 11th of July, 2010), but doesn't know whether she will continue there or not in future and seems resigned to

do as SL office assigns her. Regarding Nibedan, she affectionately talks about the children there who are very small, stay very happy and like to dance. They hardly appear as patients of HIV+. Sumati says that they keep on thinking how to make those little ones happy as it is so hard to believe that they are so ill.

In All Bengal Women's Union, Sumati has been offering her services for almost a year, though not on a regular basis. The beneficiaries there are children between eight and eighteen years. She faced many challenges when she first went there as a trainer.

We faced much trouble initially, because they were so indisciplined; they would come and go. We had to change many activities. But our challenge was to give them happiness. There are small children many of whom don't have parents, they are depressed and feel isolated, lonely. That's why we focus on happiness. We started giving responsibilities to them and then we realized the main thing is that we have to give them love—that is main. If we love them they will do all of it. We talked with love to them. We would initially be irritated—they would not do any activity, whatever we said they would do just the opposite; they did not listen to us. We had even thought that we would give it up. That way we took it as a challenge (June 15, 2010).

Sumati says that as DMT trainers in All Bengal, they realized that they needed to motivate the children in order to make them cooperate. Gradually their behaviour changed and they became favourably disposed towards the trainers. They began to come forward, got re-introduced to Sumati and the rest. Sumati says there has been a positive improvement as new girls have joined the class and all attend the class now. Unlike before, when the children used to do classes only with Debi, now they do class with any trainer from SL. According to Sumati, they also prefer Kakoli and Shinjini and remember all the other trainers including Sumati. In a candid retrospection, Sumati states:

Before we were faulted, then we went through training and realised if we are having problems so are they, so now we can handle them (June 15, 2010).

So, arguably it was the recognition of their own problems that made them sensitive to the sufferings of the children there as Sumati realized that the children “mainly need love”.

Now, besides taking sessions, Sumati also performs and she has performed at different places in Kolkata as also in Diamond Harbour near Kolkata. She says she will perform wherever Gini Aunty thinks it suitable. But she doesn't perform much. She feels that in the absence of many good trainers, SL needs her during sessions. She says,

I am specifically for the sessions (June 14, 2010).

Sumati believes that with the increase in salary she is more in command of her situation. She can now support herself as also help her family. Earlier the salary was meagre and she was barely able to do anything in it, leave alone helping the family. That constriction used to irritate her and she had even contemplated leaving the work. Money is needed for her family as none of her parents earn at present. Her father used to pull rickshaw. But due to an operation in his legs, he had to quit the job. Sumati says that her mother does some odd work, but gets very minimally paid--around two hundred or three hundred rupees a month for working round the clock. And that is insufficient for the family as at least one thousand rupees is needed to run their family. Sumati says that the elder brother knows how to drive auto rickshaw and at times he drives for a week. But he is inconsistent and stops driving and if enquired about the reasons, he reacts and stops taking food. Her younger brother has left home and she does not know where he is presently. Another of her brother is an addict. Sumati says that if ever Ma asks him about contributing to the family whenever he earns something, he does not respond.

Evidently in the given situation, her increased salary is a big boost and Sumati feels that DMT has helped her to move forward. She believes it is the positive feedback of her senior colleagues that has led to a hike in her salary.

Ilina says she has been learning DMT from 2002. She had been living in a shelter home then and Gini Sanyal used to go there to take DMT classes, and it was from her that she received her training. Various activities like batiq, block-printing, karate etc were being taught in the home that she lived in. From the beginning Ilina was

circumspect about the quality of the things taught in her then shelter home which she says “was like remixing of something originally very good” and she used to avoid them until Gini came to their shelter home to take DMT classes. Then she used to take those classes twice a week, on Tuesdays and Sundays. She expressed a desire to do her classes and Gini also consented. But she had to follow a procedure and make a lot of effort before she could actually do her classes and finally join SL. The procedure at her Home was that she would have to take prior permission from the Home mother and then if she consented, then only she could do Gini’s class. Ilina was able to build up a definite set of likes and dislikes and went by that. She recalls that once she realized that she could dance, she decided to give up on block printing, considering dance to be superior of the two. She began avoiding the other activity classes and when there were programmes, she chose to attend them in order to avoid the classes. Her desire to do dance classes however received a shock when Gini Aunty’s dance class stopped. Appealing for resuming it, she remembers, she wrote a letter to the Baro Aunty (Head aunty) of the Home. Ilina recalls the contents of the letter and I quote her:

I had been doing DMT for the past three and a half years and Aunty had trained me completely. Before that I didn’t know what dance was. She had trained me totally, my body. Earlier I would have done what others would have said. But now that wasn’t possible anymore. I now know which movement will look good on me and which won’t. She had created that taste in me (May 21, 2010).

She says that she repeatedly put in letters as also personally tried to convince Baro uncle and Baro aunty(the heads of the Home) that she had learnt dance from Gini Aunty and wished to work with her if she was offered a job. They however were not convinced and tried to make Ilina stay back at the Home by bringing in a new dance teacher. Ilina says she was a renowned dancer named Ranjini who joined once Gini Aunty left. Under her tutelage, she performed well in a show, but could realize that Ranjini’s technique, movement, style of teaching dance was very different and didn’t suit her. So she avoided attending her class. Later she got replaced by yet another teacher of dance, named Rumela who dabbled in both theatre and dance. Ilina reminisces that Rumela used to say that dance and theatre communication are the same and to her dance was a form of drama. Ilina says that she tried hard to make her

join her troupe and also said that she would talk to Baro Aunty about it. Narrates Iliina:

I was just planning to get out of there somehow, so I would just say, O.K, I shall think about it, I shall see etc (May 21, 2010).

The process continued more or less in the same manner with another bharatnatyam dance teacher, named Suranjana replacing Rumela. The authorities at the Home told her that if she learns dance from Suranjana for a period of two years, then good earning opportunities will come her way since she was a good dancer. But Iliina was adamant that she wanted to learn and work only with Gini. She however points out that under Suranjana she learnt the basics of Bharatnatyam because she wanted to train her body in dance. The Home authorities also tried to assuage her saying that she would be given a good job elsewhere. Iliina said, she refused the lure of money and continued to write letters stating that she was of this age and wished to work with Gini. Finally, after much tussle, they had to relent and decided to let Iliina go on a condition that she can work with Gini Sanyal only if she was willing to take her. But if Gini refuses to take her, then she cannot join SL. Iliina remembers pondering over it for a while quietly. But her struggle did pay off as finally, she could join Gini on the 1st of July 2009.

Iliina remembers that in her early days in SL, she used to accompany the seniors and help them in their sessions. All of this was part of her training which ended in November and she began as an assistant trainer. She remembers that when she had left the Home for SL, the Head uncle had called her and said that finally she had her way as she did not listen to anyone. Reflecting on it, Iliina says:

I have learnt this from Aunty. Before I could never imagine...in various sessions Aunty would say try to see the goal of your life. If you can visualize it then you will be able to overcome the obstacles of life easily. This always works in my head. When I make a mistake, I still think about it. This still works for me. This has pulled me here. She would repeatedly say there is pain, sorrow, everything in life—try to overcome them. Just move ahead (May 22, 2010).

Iliina remembers that yet another effort was made to make her stay back in the Home. There was a group in the home which gave her the option of teaching dance in return

of a fat remuneration. She refused that offer thinking that she did not have full training in dance and need to train herself first. Gini also supported her on this. Ilina feels that she has experienced three dance teachers and all of them wished to train someone who is already a trained dancer and they expected her to do movements that they showed her. They did not let her create her own movements.

The classical dancers used to make me do the same movements over and over—I used to feel irritated. I never understood why they movements. Whereas Gini Aunty used to tell us to move in our own ways—find out our own movements and then arrange it, organize it (May 22, 2010).

She points out that her experience in Suranjana's class was markedly different. There they were asked to tie the dupatta (round their waist), sit in a square posture and repeat the same dance postures again and again. Ilina jokingly quips:

By then my taste had change—it was like hot chilli (May 22, 2010).

When asked about her training in SL, Ilina mentions that she was not trained by a single trainer. Instead she used to accompany different senior trainers to different centres where they went as facilitators. Gini had asked her to observe how they took class, how they handled the beneficiaries, what activities were taught etc. Ilina remembers she had first been to Lumbini Mental Hospital with Sharanya and Sumati. Then one day, Gini Aunty had told Sharanya to leave the session to her and asked her to make session plan. It was fine, if the first time she could take class only for fifteen mins. Ilina remembers that whenever she faltered in her session, Sharanya came to her help.

Speaking of her seniors in SL, she mentions Padmabati who has helped her much with dance and still does. And whenever she has any problem in any session, she approaches Sharanya. Ilina mentions gratefully that they have positive contribution to her dance and DMT along with Gini Aunty. They ask her to think of new movements and scold her as well.

Speaking of her training, Ilina especially talks about the Course on Mental Health and DMT, which she is undergoing at present. She elucidates:

After tomorrow we have a one-month internship. Yesterday I had gone to Pavlov as the orientation for internship. The patients are dangerous. In the ground floor the patients were kept as if in the jail lock-up. Some of them were even without clothes. Lumbini is now ready because the trainers have worked there for the last four years, but Pavlov is virgin ground. That is a big challenge for the group, and our grades will depend on this. We all want to do well (May 22, 2010).

When asked about her assignments, Ilina begins with 'Joy', an organization where she first went with Shyama and Padmabati. There were about thirty children there and they had gone for need assessment. She remembers that on reaching there, they had made the children do a lot of activities in which everyone participated, except four children. Of these four, Ilina talks about Mithu who was also the youngest of the group. She used to stand in a corner. When Padmabati and Ilina had tried to include her in the class, Mithu used to cry out loudly. Also if ever she saw an unknown face in the class, she would keep on crying. Ilina recalls that this was a common reaction pattern for Mithu as once there was a visitor who had accompanied them to Joy. The moment Mithu saw the visitor, she began crying and rocking. She says, they didn't scold her, but merely asked her to keep quiet. Henceforth, Ilina says that they stopped giving her attention because she found that increased her fear and made her cry more. So they just let her be and carried on the activities of the class. In the class, Ilina remembers they used to use rhythm music and build rhythm in the class. Gradually all of these started having a positive effect and Mithu started observing the class from one corner. Ilina narrates how after sometime she came and stood in the class and began doing activities. There has been a change in her, as earlier if ever Mithu was asked how she was, she used to turn her face and walk away. Now, Ilina remarks, she smiles and says that she is fine; i.e she responds when she is spoken to. That makes it easier for the trainers to handle her.

Ilina talks of a second interaction with yet another 'difficult' child of Joy. She says that he used to come to the class, but stand in one corner and never participate. If he was asked to do the activities, he used to be very grave and never spoke. He was an introvert and Ilina says that initially they thought that he had a language problem. Then they heard him speaking in Bengali and the Aunty there also said that he understands Bengali. To deal with him, they thought of adopting a strategy, same as

that adopted in the case of Mithu. Ilina says they didn't pay him extra attention and continued with the normal class activities. Gradually he began involving himself in the class. He recited poems, started doing all the activities from the first prayer standing in a circle to the last activity and has come out of his aloofness. Ilina remarks that though he is still very shy and only smiles when he is greeted, and cannot dance much; still he moves his body even if he cannot do more in any activity.

Yet another girl was Mandira. Ilina remembers that when she had first come for the class she was too hyper active and it is evident in her body language, style of talking etc. Ilina says that like in the above instances, with regard to Mandira too they never applied force and made her attend the class. She is free to attend whenever she feels like and she does come at times. Ilina has noticed that she is a creative sort and make rhythms or answer in rhythm and do movements on her own very fast and really well. But her thoughts are of a different nature. Ilina holds the unsuitable environment in which she stays and her young impressionable mind, responsible for such erratic behaviour. She says that at times Mandira greets them from outside the class but does not enter it. They also do not force her and just let her be, because Ilina knows if she is forced she would stop coming altogether.

In contrast to the challenges faced in Joy, Ilina talks about a child whom they consider the cleverest of them all. In her own words:

The children are each given a number; some 1 and the rest 2. Now when we call out 1 the number 1s are supposed to stand up. If they get it wrong, then they are out. Now what he does is when the other number is called he stands up—the others watching him stand up and then he suddenly sits down and so the others are disqualified from the game! He is very sharp (May 21, 2010).

Ilina feels that he is good dancer who can learn and absorb a lot. When he dances there is a strange happiness in his dance—even if one is irritated, he will smile seeing him dance.

Apart from nitpicking two or three examples, about the general challenges faced in Joy, Ilina feels they had to strive hard to bring discipline in the class. Earlier, she remembers, the children used to complain a lot and over trifle issues as someone's hand touching the others' innocuously. It used to be disturbing. This, Ilina points out,

makes them think of the necessity of building mutual trust among the children as unless they are united and trust each other, they would never stop complaining. In a bid to do that, Ilina and the other trainers asked the children to do some activities. And I quote her here:

Among the activities, when we would say 2 then they will have to stand in a group of two people quickly. If there are more than two then they will be disqualified. That increased their responsibility. If I say 2 and even if he doesn't like you he has to take you in his group. These activities decreased the complaints. Now it is almost nil (May 21, 2010).

Ilina says with pride that that this has become a strong point of this class as they have been able to train the children well. She feels that these methods of dealing with difficult personal interactions in Joy were learnt from her own training classes. Ilina says:

Had Aunty forced and pressurized me I would not have come. I would have felt irritated and gone elsewhere. But she has given me that space; so I am here today. This has influenced us. Since were handled in this way, we probably do the same to our clients. I cannot teach another by burdening him or her. Our objective is to train them properly (May 21, 2010).

Regarding training the children of Joy for a performance, Ilina talks of the imminent backdrop. Just next to Joy, there is another day-care centre for children where they are taught dance, painting, theatre. They are of the same age as the children of Joy. Seeing them do so many things, the children of Joy also felt like performing. When Gini Aunty came to know about this, she asked the trainers to teach them dance for a program on the occasion of Rabindra Jayanti (Tagore's birthday). That marked off a series of rehearsals where the children were taught to dance with Tagore songs.

Ilina talks about another interesting observation she has made with regard to the children in Joy. She says that if a simpler movement, like matching a hand movement with a foot movement is taught to them, they find it hard to remember. But, in case of harder movements, they grasp much quickly. And they danced very well in the programme.

Ilina points out that now, they have reoriented the class.

Now I say to them, after the prayer we each of us will do all that we have done before-one at a time. You will volunteer. They do that. Sometimes we tell them that you can suggest new things too. Now in our warm-up we do movements involving the body parts from head to toe. Now they can give movements (May 22, 2010).

She mentions that all the DMT trainers have to submit a monthly report of their progress where they note changes in each child, the activities done and why they thought of introducing them in the class and things like that.

Ilina believes that whatever she is today, wherever she stands, it is entirely due to DMT. In her own words,

I can measure it like rice—that 1 kg is the improvement, 2kg etc (May 22, 2010).

She sounds like a believer in destiny when she says that had she met those three teachers appointed by the Home to teach dance, before she had met Gini aunty, her taste might have been shaped by that. But that didn't happen and Gini aunty went first and Ilina considers herself lucky on that count. Elaborating upon this she says:

Sometimes I feel, I used to see this local *parra* (locality) programmes and I used to wish that I could dance like this and people could see me. This was a dream as a child. I never expected that it would really happen (May 22, 2010).

Ilina contemplatively says that when she is in pain or frustration certain things help her.

Those words help me a lot—'goal' and 'I shall have to overcome the obstacles'. This is my truth. When I am sad or when I am in a 'different' state I think this (May 22, 2010).

Patterns of Change brought about by DMT in the lives of special children of Ashirvaad

All the beneficiaries in Ashirvaad hail from a middle class and upper middle class background. They are either single children, or one of two children of their parents. Though I participated in the classes and rehearsals for a public performance and the children knew me as such, eliciting response from them to specific questions was a task in which I failed completely. They were somehow all very shy when asked

questions and answered in the same monosyllable—“bhalo lage” (I like it). Therefore, the parents have been chosen as respondents and one of the students Aparna, who was older, talked at length. None of them rely on DMT alone to get back to ‘normal’, ‘routinized’ life. They have the support of vocational education or special schools where they are taught elementary reading and writing apart from being given a platform to dance, do yoga, handwork, singing and other creative exercises. These are supposed to facilitate their day-to-day activities. Such schools are different from the ‘normal’ ones in that they do not thrive on competition but believe in letting the individual be. Role of such schools or training, claims the parents of the beneficiaries, remains significant in their life for keeping them hinged to reality. However what comes across from their responses is the fact that dance or dance movement therapy classes in Ashirvaad is the ‘necessary’ factor that ensures an improved performance of the special children at school, better integration within the family as also a more informed parenting.

Inculcating, increasing or recognizing leadership skills in the child:

Mother of Shruti, a fifteen year old girl suffering from Down’s syndrome⁹¹ feels that the most prominent change in her daughter is the flowering of leadership qualities. She says that if the “instructor” of the dance school (Sharbari) be asked, then she would surely testify how Shruti guides little children to dance, holds their

⁹¹ Down’s syndrome is the most common, the most easily recognized and probably the most researched single condition causing learning disability. It was first identified by John Langdon Down in 1866, though almost certainly it had existed long before that, possibly as far back as the seventh century. Down (1866) expounded his theory that many of the patients he saw, both in the Asylums and as out-patients, could be identified as belonging to one or other of the ethnic groups: Caucasian, Ethiopian, Malayan, from the South Sea Islands and from the American continent. He drew particular attention to ‘the great Mongolian family’ and gave a detailed description of them:

The face is flat and broad, and destitute of prominence. The cheeks are roundish, and extended laterally. The eyes are obliquely placed... [and] the palpebral fissure is very narrow..The lips are large and thick...the tongue is long, thick and much roughened. The nose is small...they are always congenital idiots...They have considerable powers of imitation, even bordering on being mimics. They are humorous, and a lively sense of the ridiculous often colours their mimicry. They are usually able to speak; the speech is thick and indistinct, but may be improved greatly by a well-directed scheme of tongue gymnastics. The coordinating faculty is abnormal, but not so defective that it cannot be greatly strengthened. By systematic training, considerable manipulative power may be obtained...The improvement which training effects in them is greatly in excess of what would be predicated if one did not know the characteristics of the type. The life expectancy, however, is far below the average (Carr 1995: 1, 2).

hands and helps them with dancing. She emphasizes that this is not limited only to the arena of Ashirvaad as even in school, Shruti now leads. Excerpts from her interview⁹²:

Q: Can she lead in situations, even when she doesn't know anybody?

A: Yes, in all situations. She can lead small children—children who are younger to her and not older. She is caring towards them and leads. In school, many children are older to her and she leads them because she knows them. She doesn't know all the children in this dance school. But she tries to do all these as per her own mental capacity... (September 24, 2010).

Mother of Amaan⁹³, a vivacious thirteen year old Downs' boy, learning dance in Ashirvaad also echoes similar sentiments while speaking on her son, in the course of an interview conducted on September 23, 2010.

She has observed that her son now leads in games and in domestic situations too, wishes to volunteer. For instance when everyone asks his elder brother to do this, and that, then Amaan questions this and tells his brother to just keep sitting (“Tu baiithh” in Hindi) and volunteers to do the work.

Mother of yet another beneficiary, Shreya⁹⁴ who's a fourteen year old girl suffering from Down's syndrome and is an “accomplished dancer” in her mother's words, however attempts to view the relation between dance and leadership qualities in a wider context. She firmly says that as far as her daughter is concerned, she believes Shreya has “an inborn leadership quality”. Like Shruti's mother, she too believes that Sharbari, the dance therapist in Ashirvaad would testify to this. And Shreya can lead in school situations as well with the same confidence as she does while dancing.

⁹² Shruti's mother is a non-Bengali and she preferred to answer in both Hindi and Bengali. The translations are mine.

⁹³ Coming from a non-Bengali Muslim family and married to a Muslim family of the same faith, she felt comfortable in answering mostly in Hindi with certain spattering of Bengali and English in-between.

⁹⁴ She answered mostly in Bengali. The translations are mine.

Aparna, a girl in her early twenties and suffering from some sort of Dyslexia⁹⁵ and a regular in the programmes of Ashirvaad, says nonchalantly how in the functions in her special school, she always leads the children. She cites the example of the upcoming dance-drama⁹⁶ 'Tasher Desh' at school, where she is the one who is entrusted to lead the entire group of dancers.

Her mother's views⁹⁷ on this are even more profound. She says that as far as her school is concerned, Aparna's leadership qualities are commendable and they are especially manifest with regard to children. She emphatically points out that Aparna is excellent in her terms with children as she guides and teaches them. Her mother notes with some pride that her daughter is in fact so good that teachers in her school have asked her to demonstrate to the class how to make coffee, how to make *jhalmuris* etc. Her leadership qualities get manifested in these small acts in the school.

Building Concentration:

Parents of all the beneficiaries speak with much conviction when they say that the dance sessions have been of immense help in improving the concentration of their wards. This perhaps comes out most strongly in the response of Mallar's mother⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ A classical definition of dyslexia was proposed after long and intense negotiations by the World Federation of Neurology in 1968. This organisation defined Dyslexia broadly as a disturbance expressed in difficulties in learning to read despite ordinary education, normal intelligence and adequate socio-cultural conditions. The dyslexic conditions were thought to be caused by basic cognitive deficits most often with a constitutional background. However recent research has questioned the efficacy of this definition as the vagueness and lack of distinctive inclusionary criteria limits the practical usefulness of the definition when it is a matter of preventives or taking remedial action. Practitioners and academicians in recent years have veered more towards accepting the definition of Dyslexia as proposed by the International Dyslexia Society in 1994 (earlier known as Orton Dyslexia Society). Adopted by the National Institute of Health, it defines Dyslexia as "...a specific, language based disturbance with a constitutional background characterized by difficulties in decoding single words often reflecting insufficient phonological processing ability" (Lundberg et al. 1999:10).

⁹⁶ This interview was conducted in October and she is referring to the dance drama that was supposed to take place in December 2010.

⁹⁷ Being an English teacher, she chose to answer mostly in English, occasionally breaking off into Bengali.

⁹⁸ She chose to answer mostly in Bengali. The translations are mine.

Mallar is a ten year old autistic⁹⁹ boy who has been coming to Ashirvaad as also to Little Champs¹⁰⁰ for the past five years. His mother says that there has been a marked change in his level of concentration as now he can sit still on his own.

Shruti's mother puts things even more simply and I quote her:

Dance is concentration to them. Concentration means how one will move his hands according to the instructions given...Like in group dances, dancing with others. Concentration has become much better through dancing (September 25, 2010).

Addressing individual lacunae:

Beneficiaries at Ashirvaad are all special children sharing certain commonalities born off the handicaps they suffer from. Dance helps them to rise above those. On an individual plane, dance has been instrumental to counter certain lacunae. Mother of Amaan points out that due to the dance sessions, her son's speech is becoming clearer as he tries to sing along with the songs, be that in Ashirvaad or by watching program on television.

⁹⁹ "Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction and communication as well as repetitive behaviours and restricted interests. The consequences of this disorder for everyday life adaptation are extremely variable...The clinical picture of autism varies in severity and is modified by many factors, including education, ability and temperament. Furthermore, the clinical picture changes over the course of development within one and the same individual. In addition, autism is frequently associated with other disorders such as attention deficit disorder, motor in coordination and psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety and depression...In line with the clinical recognition of the variability, there is now general agreement that there is a spectrum of autistic disorders, which includes individuals at all levels of intelligence and language ability and spanning all degrees of severity. This widening of the criteria has inevitably led to a dramatic increase in identified cases. Autism is no longer a rare disorder...The chief criteria for autistic disorder, as set out in the diagnostic handbooks, such as ICD-10(World Health Organization 1992) and DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association 1994), are abnormalities of social interaction, impairments in verbal and non-verbal communication and a restricted repertoire of interests and activities, all present from early childhood" (Hill and Frith 2003:281). Childhood autism is widely understood as a breakdown in the normal development process so that the child fails to learn language at the normal rate and fails to develop a normal interest in other people. Autistic children often develop 'self-stimulatory' behaviour, such as rocking, wiggling their fingers in front of their eyes, or obsessively lining up objects such as books or small toys, which they engage in for hours if uninterrupted. And research has identified differences between brains of normal children and those with autism, in the area of the cerebellum, brainstem and amygdala (Hirstein, Iversen, Ramachandran 2001: 1883).

¹⁰⁰ A school for special children located in Kolkata.

Mallar's mother finds her son to be much calmer now. Earlier he used to be very hyper, restless; always running hither and thither. He could not sit still in one place. After taking to dance, gradually he has become less edgy. Secondly, years of dancing have taught this autistic child to handle himself alone on stage while performing—a development his mother terms as 'radical'. Earlier, he had to be accompanied by a normal individual to help him on stage since Mallar used to refuse to understand that he needed to leave the stage to the next participant and insisted on going on performing. This is a unique characteristic of a child suffering from autism as they tend to go on doing the same task until some external intervention stops them from repeating (Sigman and Ruskin 1999).

In Mallar's case an intervention has been made and there has been a transformation. His mother tries to formulate this in words:

This has been a huge change. It has been a radical change. Facing a large audience is also *something*¹⁰¹. Even *we* feel stage shy. But he goes up on stage to perform without any problem. Earlier it used to be a problem to manage him as he used to be very restless. Now he sits when he is asked to (September 22, 2010).

Also unlike in earlier instances, Mallar can understand that he has to leave the stage and come down after his performance is over. This understanding is new and his mother believes it is due to dance.

A different perspective is given by Shanto's father¹⁰². Shanto¹⁰³ is a thirty year old adult suffering from mental retardation, belonging to the first batch of Prerna Pal Mehra's students and is one of the brightest students of Ashirvaad. His father, after pondering long, says that he feels that apart from other things, dance has helped in improving the time sense of his son. According to him, a timing sense is needed for one to co-ordinate the body movements with others while dancing, as also to arrive in

¹⁰¹ I have chosen to italicize the phrases or words where the interviewee has put stress, to reflect the points of emphasis in her response.

¹⁰² Shanto's father chose to answer only in Bengali. The translations are mine.

¹⁰³ An attempt has been made to interview Shanto. But being very shy, like other beneficiaries of Ashirvaad, he had only "*bhalo*" or 'nice' to say as his response.

time for the dance classes. These things have grown in Shanto through years of dancing.

Shruti's mother holds that her daughter now has an improved eye-contact. She feels that children suffering from Down's syndrome have an issue with making eye-contact. Yet it is a vital part of communication and movement. She elaborates:

...Like for example, if the child doesn't eye the movement that is shown to her, then how will she learn the dance step? (September 24, 2010)

Her mother says that eye contact is very important as without it the child cannot learn anything, and follow the teacher's command.

Q: How was it when she had just joined dancing here?

A: This eye contact was not there. There used to be much problem then (She pauses for a while). There has however been much improvement on that front over the past three/four years (September 24, 2010).

Ensuring co-ordination:

Special children in most of the cases experience difficulty in movement or expression due to a lack in motor co-ordination of their body. This is especially acute in Down syndrome and Autism and is therefore a common handicap shared by the beneficiaries of Ashirvaad. The parents in their responses mostly state that through dance the children have been able to attain this co-ordination in a much better way.

Shreya's mother being a special educator, is professionally trained to assess the needs of such children as her daughter and is thereby more precise in pointing out what exact change she observes in Shreya. She says that earlier her daughter used to greatly suffer from co-ordination problems. That problem has been greatly reduced over the years of dancing. She dwells at length on this aspect:

Q: By 'co-ordination', you mean to say that Shreya had problems in working in group situations?

A: No. Not exactly in group situations. Generally, such children with Down syndrome have a different motor functioning. Now through dance, that hypertonic state has got reduced, even if to a small extent.

Q: You mean to say, she has become more flexible now?

A: No. Such children are naturally very flexible, since their muscle tone is less. Shreya has become less flexible, i.e less hypertonic now (October 1, 2010).

Shreya's mother believes that for dance, co-ordination is very important.

One cannot afford to do a wrong hand with the left feet movement. Or, to do an alternate hand and feet movement, or some specific hand gesture with the feet—co-ordination is very important. To do such co-ordination for Down's children, who are not simply special children, but mentally retarded, is very challenging. My daughter can do such co-ordinations now, much better than before (October 2, 2010).

Amaan's mother expresses similar sentiments in her interview on September 26, 2010, though she chooses to speak in more general terms about this 'co-ordination' problem. She says that earlier her son used to do some twists and turns at home. But in this dance class, he has come to know how to move his hands and legs and does them as the therapist guides. He can now do the steps of the leg systematically following one-two and three as also hand movements. His mother recalls that previously when command used to be given to look up, her son failed to respond and couldn't do it. Then a balloon used to be blown and put up so that he would look up at it. Now, she takes pride in saying that her son can look up when normally told to do so. This implies an improvement in the cognitive abilities of Amaan as he has now successfully discovered "...unique patterns of associations between nonverbal communication and language skills" (Mundy et al. 1988). This is characteristic of Down's children as they tend to display a unique pattern of associating the nonverbal and the verbal world. In his case, there has been an increase in his receptive language skills as now he understands what he is asked to do. Now, the non-verbal communication with the help of balloons being blown and put up do not seem necessary for enabling him to listen to instructions.

Building up some sort of body awareness:

Of all the respondents Aparna's and Shreya's mother have been most articulate about this significant aspect of their daughters' development. Aparna's mother being an English teacher speaks at length about how she perceives that her daughter has slowly begun to be aware of her body through years of dancing. Body awareness per

se has not come to her daughter as yet, but she feels there has been some improvement in this quarter. And she explains through an anecdote. She refers to one instance when Aparna was making her first stage performance for Global Eduway¹⁰⁴. In that occasion she had to wear a sari and was dressed up by a dresser who had forgotten to put a safety pin on the *pallu*¹⁰⁵. As an obvious consequence, while dancing, the *pallu* had fallen off thus exposing the front portion of the blouse. Aparna didn't think of putting back the *pallu* in place as she had no clue that it is supposed to be pulled back and was busy dancing. Her mother says that at that time, it didn't register to Aparna that her *pallu* has fallen off and she was totally unaware of her body.

But now after years of dancing and after so many performances where I have also told her many a times to check whether the *pallu* is in proper place before you enter the stage, she now enquires whether it has been pinned or not. These are the things that she has become aware of now. This has come through experience (September 30, 2010).

Her mother attributes this to dance and repeated public performances.

Shreya's mother wishes to equate 'body awareness' with the ability of having a sense of direction and co-ordination. Her experience is that such children suffer from a lack of confidence if they are asked suddenly to go to the right, left, back or to the front. They cannot do these with confidence. Some excerpts from her response:

Q: Can you please elaborate on this 'body awareness' phenomena as you see in your ward?

A: They don't know that this part of my body is right, this part is left, this part is front etc. My daughter has had this awareness through dance.

Q: So, earlier she didn't have body awareness per se?

A: Well, earlier, maybe she could *understand*. But she used to get confused [meaning in the execution]. Even now while doing any work, if she is asked all of a sudden to

¹⁰⁴ The special school that Aparna attends in Kolkata.

¹⁰⁵ The hanging end of the sari, which is supposed to cover the front portion of the blouse, when worn in a traditional Indian way.

go left, or right etc, that creates confusion. But, if these instructions are given while dancing, they are more confident (October 1, 2010).

On this Amaan's mother also agrees wholeheartedly. In the interview conducted on September 23, 2010, she goes on to say that in dance, body awareness is very important.

Fighting obesity and laziness:

Depression and mental sloth are the two key challenges that mentally retarded individuals have to encounter in their lives and the children at Ashirvaad are no exception to this. From mental and physical lethargy, springs obesity and it is in this sphere that dance steps in with some positive contribution. And this role of dance or movement therapy has been acknowledged gratefully by all the parents of the beneficiaries.

Amaan's mother holds that characteristically children affected with Down's syndrome are very lazy and seldom wish to move around. Dance therefore, shares his mother, "makes her son more active" (September 26, 2010).

Shanto's father feels that his son has also overcome his lethargic state to some extent through dancing. He is now more active and conscious of time. For instance, the father says that Shanto is now aware that he has to reach some place within a given time.

Aparna's mother also put in her bit in the discussion as she seconds the views of Amaan's mother and Shanto's father. Explaining she says that if Aparna doesn't dance for some days, she tends to put on weight as the rate of metabolism is usually very slow in mentally retarded children. In fact, Aparna's mother laughingly narrates how at times Aparna comes back from dance class and urges her to do some dance steps as "it's good for health". So, by dancing regularly, Aparna manages to stay "slim, fit, and active". Her mother feels it's the "best thing" to have happened to her daughter. Aparna's opinion also seems to converge with her mother on this count. Being a "little obese from her father's side", she values dance in her life as a regular form of exercise.

While the above parents choose to view dance as a form of movement that help their children fight obesity and sluggishness, Shruti's mother understands the role of dance in this context quite differently. She views dance as fulfilling an artistic need of the children's mind; as being a form of 'creative exercise'.

The mind of the children is always at work. Their mind is never idle and if they are sitting idle, that means that they are up to some mischief. Dance doesn't allow them to sit idle...Some creative exercise is always going on within their minds (September 25, 2010).

Improved sense of discipline:

In the course of the interview, the parents share that in their children, a stronger sense of discipline—of mind and body, follow automatically once co-ordination of their body and concentration of their minds are reached. And this helps them much. Their perception of this new found discipline in their wards is however not monolithic as each narrate different anecdotes and experiences to illustrate the change.

Amaan's mother's said on September 23, 2010 that Amaan is much disciplined and he never goes out anywhere without her permission. She agrees that dance has brought in a positive turn in that regard. Thus now she feels no qualms to let Amaan go on his own (without the parents that is) to kid's parties and dance freely. Though his 'ayah' is always present, he enjoys his independence. The boy's mother stresses that even when alone in such parties, he never takes more than one glass of cold drink. Thus even when alone, he moves within the boundaries of discipline prescribed by his mother as she points out that she has requested Amaan not to have more cold drinks. In such parties, Amaan also participates in many games. For a Down's child, moving around on his own and having the conviction to do so is something remarkable. It can perhaps be attributed to a disciplined body and mind that have been shaped through dance.

For an autistic child too, dance somehow reins in the untamed energy and a case in pointer is that of Mallar. His mother testifies to a much better sense of discipline in her son. She recounts that earlier she had to repeat the same thing twice or thrice before Mallar could follow, and her son being autistic was prone to get irritated quickly. But now, she feels things have changed. Now, his mother shares that she

needs to tell something to her son once and Mallar obeys. The situation has improved so much that now he just looks at his mother's face (or the therapist's face) and can understand that she or Sharbari is angry or irritated (when they are that is), when he does something that is not to be done. Mallar's mother says:

This perception has come to him now (September 22, 2010).

Such an experience of Mallar's mother draws attention to a vital aspect in the social responsiveness of autistic children. While unlike a Down's child or other developmentally delayed children, an autistic boy or girl seem less 'attentive' to the reaction of the significant others; research has shown that of all the emotions it is the particular emotion of 'anger' that propels them to react. This was one of the many significant findings of a longitudinal study conducted by Marian Sigman and Ellen Ruskin (1999) on autistic children, down's children and those with other developmental delays in their pre-school and school stages.¹⁰⁶

Negotiation of their social selves, integration in the family and society:

The responses of the beneficiaries would have been ideal in this aspect. But they chose to respond only in monosyllables of 'bhalo' or 'nice', without going into the nuances of their experiences with dance. However, given that these children operate in a family atmosphere; the testimony of their parents to the question that whether dance movements classes in Ashirvaad has been able to make their wards more social or not, is equally valuable. While some chose to explain only how through regular exposure to dance their daughters and sons have learnt to open up and interact 'normally', some believe their wards have been social since childhood and dance only provided an edge to that aspect of their person. There were also parents as Aparna's mother or Shreya's mother who chose to situate the importance of being socially 'normal' within the wider issue of the 'otherizing' attitude of the society. The beneficiaries being children who study in special schools, the discussion naturally veered towards 'normal' schools in Kolkata.

¹⁰⁶ "The children with autism were not as attentive to the experimenter's face as the other children in either the neutral or angry condition but they differentiated between the two emotions in terms of their behavioural responses. Anger seemed to be particularly potent for the children with autism in that it drew their attention more than neutral facial expressions..." (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:99).

All the parents are unanimous in their perception that through their exposure to dance over the years, the children have become more social and better-knit with their family and background. Social competence is critically important for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders as Down syndrome or autism, in that "...a rewarding social life can substitute for the professional achievements often foreclosed to the developmentally disabled" (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:1).

Mother of the fifteen year old Shruti explains that unlike before when she used to be shy and non-interactive, now she can normally socialize in a public situation. She says that many children create a problem when they have to interact socially, but not Shruti.

Nowadays, when we go out with her, there is no behaviour problem on her front. She normally socializes now. One cannot say from outside that's she is problem child. Shruti is also taken in family get together (September 24, 2010).

Shruti's mother also admits that due to this, interaction with her daughter has become much easier now. The following excerpt reflects her views:

Q: Do you feel that you can interact with her with less difficulty than earlier?

A: With much less difficulty. Now there is almost no difficulty in interacting with her. She follows the instructions. Earlier she had to given a single instruction ten times to make her follow. Now, ten instructions can be given to her at one go and she can follow them one by one (September 25, 2010).

Put simply, the social competence of Shruti has increased.¹⁰⁷

Amaan's mother shared on September 26, 2010 that how she believes that from childhood, her son has been very social. Brought up in a joint family and interacting with different people since infancy, Amaan never had any problems in communication. So, she does not acknowledge any special role of dance in this sphere for her son. Yet she recognizes that dealing with his son has become a less arduous process than before when he didn't use to dance. Now, she admits, he doesn't become

¹⁰⁷ The markers of social competence are the communicative abilities of such special children, their pro-social behaviour and interactions with the peers (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:100).

hyper anymore and has learnt to understand the intricacies of situations. For instance, she notes that when his elder brother goes out with his friends, Amaan doesn't insist on doing the same. Instead he goes in his room, switches on the music and dances.

Mother of the autistic boy, Mallar however attributes the change in her son in the public sphere principally to dance. And I quote her:

Q: Do you feel that dance has made him more social?

A: Yes. Dance has definitely made him more social. Now Mallar mixes with everybody (September 21, 2010).

She says that even outside, he behaves himself. For instance now it's possible for the parents to take Mallar to restaurants where he sits and takes his food calmly and then they can return without hassles. She says that now almost nobody can make out that her son is a special child:

Q: How was it earlier?

A: Earlier, he had to be given many incentives before he agreed to go out. Then we couldn't take Mallar to any crowded place as he used to get disturbed and cry. He used to express his irritation by fidgeting with things.

Q: Did the change seep in after he began dancing here?

A: The role of the school has always been there and definitely dance has made a difference (September 22, 2010).

Research on autistic children (Sigman and Ruskin 199) has hinted at links between their cognitive and language abilities, social responsiveness and peer engagement. Thus advancement in one sphere can inspire a positive change in the related fields of skill development. In case of Mallar, his association with the children at Little Champs and in Ashirvaad and the honing of his non-verbal communication skills through dance and performance at both the places with the help of the therapist Sharbari, have definitely made him more pro-social. His mother affirms the change in her son.

Mother of Shreya is also quick to recognize the social self in her daughter that has flowered after she began coming to Ashirvaad and performing on stage. She tries to

establish her point by contrasting the atmosphere in Ashirvaad with the school that Shreya attends. Her mother argues that the school that Shreya goes for studying is only for special children. So there it won't matter much if she doesn't communicate too much with the rest. But in this dance class, she has to dance with other normal children and she needs to understand their needs and co-operate with them. Shreya's mother says that her daughter has done that though it was much more challenging than in school. And she has even performed in group programmes in well-known auditoriums of Kolkata. So dance has indeed made her more social. She seems to think it has brought her more close to her family. And I quote her:

Q: Is her change palpable in the wider family circle or to people other than you?

A: Yes, everyone in the family is aware of the changes in Shreya. They can perceive the improvement in her (October 1, 2010).

Her mother says that only dance is not responsible for the change in her. There are other factors too, but dance has definitely played a big role as far as Shreya's development is concerned. Her experience is such children have a "fixation" with their mother, i.e they do not wish to go anywhere without their mother. But Shreya grew out of this habit when she was small as the mother couldn't accompany her everywhere and she used to go on her own. The best thing was she managed and didn't have many problems. Shreya's mother says that her teachers are also very co-operative which help her.

Shanto's father also agrees with the rest of the parents in acknowledging that dance has effectively helped his son to mingle with people in the locality. As a single parent he also tries to do his bit by taking Shanto along in all social gatherings of family and friends. And he can recall no socially embarrassing situations triggered by his son's behaviour.

Aparna's mother on her part views the issue broadly with its wider ramifications. According to her, Aparna was always very social and dance per se has not made much of an intervention in this sector. But the dance classes have opened up a new world to her daughter. The girl's mother feels that it's very significant for a different or special child to have friends. And to her "it's amazing", for Aparna to find a group of people with whom she loves to speak, chat and visit and from a mother's vantage point, it's

“a great relief”. She says that she knew some people to whose places she can possibly take Aparna for a visit. But that is not possible on a regular scale; nor could it have been possible for her to keep on inviting people so that Aparna can interact with them. Here the dance classes at Ashirvaad have been a lifeline. Her mother elaborates that this is a space for Aparna where she can definitely learn dance. But alongside she can also interact with the friends she has made on her own and talk about trivial things of life like what dresses she has made for the pujas, which movie she is going to see etc. It would have been never possible for her to interact with normal children as despite being around twenty four years, she speaks and acts like a pre-teen girl. This ‘social’ gap has been filled up by dance. This aspect of making friends (in Aparna’s instance through her association with co-dancers), appears to be of consequence as both medical practitioners and social scientists (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:96) have noted the direct link between involvement with peers and enhancement of the cognitive and language skills in children with disability. In the absence of sufficient interaction with a peer group, there are chances of a socially incompetent child to further lag behind in areas of social comprehension. Fortunately, Aparna, like many of the beneficiaries of Ashirvaad has been able to carve out their own spaces and worlds with friends and associates.

Even after dance has opened up a window in these children’s’ lives and actively contributed to their integration in the society, the latter is not favourably disposed towards them. In fact, the responses of the parents of the beneficiaries is characterised by an agony and hurt, born off the neglect and stigmatisation of their wards by the ‘normal’ society. Shreya’s mother speaking from the standpoint of a special educator feels that society till now, is not very accepting towards ‘special’ children; the reason being its high expectation, which such children cannot meet. Aparna’s mother speaks more strongly on this when she begins to talk about the ‘insensitivity’ of ‘normal’ schools to children with such special needs as her daughter and touches upon the more serious problem of a definite mindset of people in India that dithers to value anything but achievement. And she spells out her perception:

...these schools are not geared; do not cater to children with special needs. The psychological or social background of India is not that we will accept another child

who has limitations and feel pity. Ours is that we have to achieve in life. If we do not achieve, we are nowhere in life (September 30, 2010).

Contextualizing, Aparna's mother says that given this mindset, if one has a child who is always coming last in class, then other parents will automatically tell their respective children not to mix with her, or make friends. Being brutally truthful, she explains:

Why other parents? I would have said the same to my son. I would have said that it's okay that he can maybe invite him to his birthday party, but don't become his best friend! In that case you also lag behind! You have to achieve. So the problem is there (September 30, 2010).

Aparna's mother indeed doesn't stand alone in her experience of betrayal and agony vis-à-vis the society and social institutions like a 'normal' school. Her voice finds parallel in the accounts of parents of children who are 'special' and differently-able. Memoirs of such parents have depicted their helplessness at the way they and their children have been stigmatized in the society and by schools. Mention may be made of a peculiar recorded instance when a child with Down's syndrome was refused admission in school on the grounds that she scored too high for the special education programme that she needed. Yet another case was that of a school refusing to admit a haemophilic child.¹⁰⁸

The performance aspect:

Aparna is the only mentally retarded beneficiary of Ashirvaad (of those I attempted to interview during my field visit) who can coherently formulate her thoughts, wishes and aspirations of life in response to the questions asked. It is a matter of great significance that most of her answers centre round her upcoming or ongoing

¹⁰⁸ Both the cases are from real life, depicted by the parents of the Down's child and Hemophilic respectively. June B. Mullins in her article based on sixty books written by parents with disabled children, discusses these two cases among many others. He notes how one of the parents raises a question which seems representative of the pain and pathos of all parents in similar shoes. I quote him.

Who is the more seriously handicapped—the child trying to lead a normal life despite his defects or the physically healthy person who is unable to accept him? In a world whose moral disabilities are far greater than its physical imperfections, the question destroys thought (Mullins 1987:31).

performance, thus pointing at the crucial role stage performance per se plays in shaping her self-worth. In her own words, she does an “abridged version of Manipuri” where the actual steps of the classical dance form are taught in a simplified form. She is aware that being a special child, she is unable to perform the ‘actual’ Manipuri dance. But she speaks of it quite nonchalantly. When I met her for interview in October, she was excited about playing the role of princess *Hortoni* in one of the celebrated Tagore dance drama—*Tasher Desh* for her school—a role where she had three ‘solo songs’ to dance with. And it was also the time when she had been simultaneously rehearsing for Ashirvaad’s *Ganga-Sangam*. The conversation took the following course:

Q: Which part are you playing in *Tasher Desh*?

A: I am the princess-Hortoni and I have got three solo songs to dance with.

Q: When is it due to be staged?

A: There is time left for it as it is to be staged in December. I am very happy that the production with Ashirvaad is happening now and not colliding with *Tasher Desh*. It would have been a problem if I had to perform in both the programmes at the same time... it would have meant excess pressure. I wouldn’t have managed. It’s so much ...becomes *too much* sometimes.

Q: Do you de-stress also by dancing?

A: Yes. I like it when I dance but feel a bit tired after performances. See, suppose on this 14th the programme will be roughly from 5.30pm. It will continue up to 8.30 at least. It will be at least 9pm when we can leave for home and around 10 we will reach home. So the next day the, I will be feeling tired and won’t be feeling like going to school. Then my mother will say, “Fine, you bunk school.” So, you see, I feel tired after dance performances (October 3, 2010).

These words echo an artist’s reality where performances are a part and parcel of one’s existence. The centrality of performance in her life also comes forth when she insists that after thirteen/fourteen years of dancing on stage, she doesn’t feel the jitters any more.

One finds resonance of similar sentiments in the response of Shreya's mother. Her daughter, though all of fourteen years, has been performing dance on stage for several years now, even in prestigious auditoriums of Kolkata. In fact, in one or two occasions, Shreya has given individual performances. She has even done inaugural dances and that too not in small gatherings, but in large stage shows. She believes her daughter loves performance and doesn't suffer from any stage fright and she connects it with the social nature of Down's children. The following responses are recorded as Shreya's mother enthusiastically chooses to elaborate:

Q: Does she ever suffer from stage fright?

A: No, that doesn't happen. Unlike 'normal' children who are shy and scared and resistant to doing any performance etc, special children do not have such feelings. Maybe, I feel, they cannot identify who is a stranger and thus feel shy or frightened accordingly. This sense is not *that* developed among them. Especially children with Downs' syndrome are very social. They communicate very quickly with everyone and therein lies an important difference between a Downs' child and an autistic child. More or less, children at a manageable stage of Downs' can communicate with others easily...maybe because of this, such children do not have any stage fright. So they can perform as soon as they are on the stage. They do not get bothered by whether they are doing it wrongly, or someone is watching them perform etc (October 2, 2010).

Her thoughts can be substantiated through findings in the longitudinal study carried out by Sigman and Ruskin(1999). The fact that a Down's child is immediately taken in by a dance performance or music is corroborated by facts as the study shows that such children are more likely to participate in a social behaviour as singing, doing hand motions with an experimenter (the therapist in this context); are more focused in a social situation and look more frequently at the experimenter and less frequently away during social interaction as compared to typically developing children. All these facts bear out the sociable nature of such children and Shreya, Amaan or Shruti play out this positive aspect, through dance.

Viewing from the position of someone who has always been a keen observer of her daughter's progress, mother of Aparna also completely acknowledges that dance has

been an anchor in her daughter's life. And 'dance' to her is somewhere equivalent to dance performances which have given Aparna a separate identity. She explains:

It's like this. Everyone says, "Oh, tomorrow I have got an exam, next day I have got an exam." For her, it's like tomorrow I have got a program, next day I have got a function. Something for her to say to her friends—she is talking like the others! She is accepted, she is part of the society, and she is also doing something. And each program that she does is like an exam she has passed! And one can say, the pinnacle of her success was when from Ashirvaad, she went to Delhi. They were flown there by the Indian Army Wives Welfare Association and there they performed in front of the Prime Minister's wife, Gurcharan Kaur (October 3, 2010).

She exclaims that it was something amazing.

Aparna loves watching dance programmes and the mother feels that her identity is with Prerna Pal-Mehra's dance troupe. So whenever she is performing somewhere in the city, Aparna wishes to watch it live and requests her mother. Her mother says that fortunately she has a friend who can arrange for tickets in such occasions. So, when Aparna goes and watches she feels that she is also part of that world.

As she goes on to dwell at length on her daughter's love for performances, she reflects on the following:

Q: So, can you say that an artist's psyche or performer's psyche has come into her?

A: Yes, definitely (September 30, 2010).

Her mother exclaims with a lot of pride that now whenever or wherever her daughter goes with other special children group, there are people who know her through her dances and there are also people who she knows as it is with them she is interacting and she is performing. So an entire gamut of social network and relations has come into existence for Aparna, thanks to her dance performances.

That's also an achievement for her! In some places I go, I am known as Aparna's mother. So that's a very good feeling! A feel good factor has come into play for both her and me.

Q: Suppose in Ashirvaad they only taught dance or body movement and there was no scope for performance. Had that happened, do you feel your daughter would have missed out anything?

A: No, then she would be upset. If they only taught dance without putting up a performance, then I would have definitely sent her there at least once a week because she enjoys the company of those people and she is comfortable there and she needs to get out of her house at least once a week. She also feels comfortable with the dance teacher Sharbari and the rest and likes the fact that once in while she gets to meet Perna Pal-Mehra who is also very kind to her. So, I would have never stopped her from going to the class. But without the performance, it's difficult (September 30, 2010).

Aparna's mother says that the fact that she has put her daughter into four/five places for dance is precisely for this reason as these places are bound to have at least one annual function each year which Aparna looks forward to as she gets to perform. And she cites the example of a philanthropic unit run by Camelia Goodrick Company where she performs annually. Before the pujas this year, they requested Aparna to perform in their function. She performed a solo dance there, with a song from Tagore—*Himer o rate*.

Her mother emphasizes on the need to perform:

If you don't perform *at all*¹⁰⁹ then that is again a lack of self-confidence. It means a lot to get up on the stage and get the clap! Glamour is a *big* attraction, it's like an addiction. So, if she doesn't get a chance to get up on the stage and receive the adulation, then it's very sad for her. Now, she has got used to it and she *wants* it—the dressing up, applying the make-up, getting up and receiving the clap. So the performance on stage is as important as learning dance per se...It's a universal truth. All artists, whether it's a painter or a singer or a writer, all thrive on adulation. Nobody will dig a hole and bury his own poem! (October 3, 2010).

The lady clarifies that by 'stage' she doesn't always mean a performance in front of the Prime Minister but at least in a function with an audience where people watch and clap. Audience and appreciation are important as the mother holds that performances

¹⁰⁹ The phrases or expressions where the speaker has put in her emphasis have been italicized.

are like tests for these children and every time they perform it's like passing one test or exam.

She also adds that nowadays Aparna has gained so much in confidence that if she forgets some steps on stage, then she can instantly make it up with another. Only her dance teacher who had taught her the steps and the mother can make that out since she has been a witness to the rehearsals, but not the audience. She recounts how Aparna has danced very well with another of Tagore's immortal song—*Eki labanye purna prano*, for a small function of a school on the occasion of Tagore's one fiftieth Birth Anniversary. Therefore, her mother tries to bring home the point that unless Aparna is given an opportunity to perform, half of the efficacy of learning dance will be gone for her.

Performance, she feels fulfils yet another considerable function in her daughter. It plays a substitutive role in her grown-up daughter's psyche, apparently filling a void created by the absence of marriage and procreation. She says:

Another thing is that after a certain age, the desire for marriage also comes into children. I don't know about boys but I know about girls because of my daughter. Awareness comes and the counsellor also tells us that they should do more physical exercise so that the other desire is not there. God puts it into you, nah! The desire to procreate that is. It is there in every human being. This dancing and exercise, what these do is that they make a change in the mind and divert in into another direction. Then they do not only think of someone else getting married etc. And dance helps in this immensely. I'll tell you how. For them, and they think like children—the idea of marriage is that when you are getting married you dress up a lot, you look beautiful, you get lots of gifts, lots of jewellery, everybody says good things to you etc. So every time she is getting up on stage and performing, she is getting that! She is looking pretty, she is putting on a lot of jewellery, and she is applying makeup.... Marriage, sex, procreation—these needs are covered by dance (October 3, 2010).

Therefore when Aparna returns home after any performance, she never takes off her dress or make up (unless of course she had to give the dress back to the dresser) and shows her father and grandmother and changes only when they have appreciated her. And since, Aparna is “a girl”, her mother feels that she “naturally wants to dress up and look nice”. That requirement is also being met through dance.

Shanto's father, despite being less articulate when compared to the other parents speaks extensively in accounting for the role of performance in his son's life. He feels that Shanto absolutely loves to perform on stage. In the annual concerts of Mentaid¹¹⁰ as also in the shows of Ashirvaad, he is a regular performer. His father says that Shanto performs in group as well as solo. For instance, in March 2010, Shanto had gone to Secundrabad to perform dance in a cultural program organised by the medical unit of a school meant for mentally challenged people. He has been awarded there and has danced well. In fact, the father takes pride in pointing out that the audience had liked his performance so much that he had to repeat one dance number on special request. The Director of the school had missed the particular dance piece. For him, Shanto performed it again and was amply applauded and praised. His father also mentions 'Karna' a dance drama staged by Ashirvaad where his son had danced¹¹¹ for which he accompanied the dance troupe to Delhi. Shanto has also reportedly participated in many dance programmes on television. These are no mean achievements for individuals who, among other things, find it difficult to do co-ordinated body actions. And therefore 'performance' was something on which the usually reticent father eagerly speaks on at length:

Q: Does your ward love to perform?

A: Yes. He becomes very happy whenever he gets any opportunity to dance on stage (September 27, 2010).

His father feels that the performance aspect of the dance movement therapy in Ashirvaad is very important for the wellbeing of his son. He says that had Ashirvaad not given his son opportunities to perform, then Shanto would have lost the chance to present himself in the public sphere. Even if he had danced here on his own, the father feels that stage performance remains necessary. Such performances help him in building up his individuality, bolstering his confidence. He however claims that he can vouch for these effects only for his son. He explains with an example. Shanto's father says that these stage performances of Ashirvaad and Mentaid require him to travel on his own to places where he performs with others who are "handicapped" yet

¹¹⁰ A special school for special children, situated in Kolkata.

¹¹¹ It's based on the life of *Karna* in Mahabharata.

performing so well. He feels that acquaintance with such people has increased Shanto's awareness.

All these factors together contribute to a more developed self feeling and a shaping of a more confident self in the beneficiaries. Dance, as taught in the movement therapy sessions of Ashirvaad actively contribute to a healthier individual, thus securing their overall well-being. As their confidence increases from better motor-coordination, eye-contact, increased levels of concentration, performances and disciplined bodies and minds--their performance in their respective schools also improve. Most of the parents notice that after joining dance class in Aashirvaad, they have begun to perform better in school and that has caught the eye of the teachers and been duly appreciated.

Another common theme that cuts across the response of the interviewees is that of the interaction of the special children with 'normal' peers. This is one sensitive issue that underlines the responses of the parents of the beneficiaries when they venture to speak on the performance of their wards. None of the children dance only with special children of their specific disorders and have interactions with their 'normal' counterparts regularly. Down's children are generally much more sociable than other developmentally delayed children and most are seen to have a best friend. However there is no homogenous pattern and it appears to be largely subjective. Autistic children are generally not found to make many friends as they lack the necessary social capacities. They are normally seen to remain on their own, though instances are not uncommon when they participate in social situations. But they cannot initiate conversations or activities with others. While this may be read as a lack in social competence on the part of the child, possibilities as other normally developed children shunning the company of an autistic child also cannot be ruled out (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:67). Mallar has made marked advancements in this quarter as he is found to coax his mother to bring back his cousin sister (mother's sister's daughter) with whom he loves to interact, after she left for home after attending his birthday party.

Mother of Aparna says that her daughter has performed with normal people, but she cannot do it very well. She cannot dance and move so fast like the rest. If the group

has one or two normal people, then that's fine. But if except her all the others are normal, then the mother feels, Aparna encounters problems in dancing.

Shanto's father has an interesting take on this. He says that as yet, Shanto hasn't had the opportunity to perform with participants who are 'normal'. However a silent conviction comes across when he states that he is confident that if his son be given such an opportunity, he would rise up to the occasion and do it properly. "I feel this", he says (September 26, 2010). However the father doesn't generalize about other mentally retarded individuals and is quick to add that he cannot say the same about other special children, but is sure about Shanto.

On the other hand, Shreya's exposure and experience on this count has been refreshingly different. Her mother thinks that her daughter flourishes in situations where she has to perform with 'normal' children and through this in a way, turns the social perception or marginalization on its head. She states that whenever Shreya has danced successfully with other normal children, the parents of the latter, initially harbouring several prejudices against mentally challenged people have been gradually forced to accept her simply as another dancer, and not as a 'special' child. In fact, now in most places where she goes to perform, she gets treated mostly as one who is learning dance rather than as a 'special' child. Expounding on the relation between Shreya and her 'normal' peers, her mother notes that the latter have accepted Shreya completely as they co-operate with her by helping her to catch up with the steps and Shreya also feels comfortable in communicating with them and doing the performance.

This is however not the regular case, but an exception, since unlike their 'normal' co-performers, they suffer from co-ordination problem which makes it difficult for them to synchronize dance steps with their 'normal' group members and thus present a dance piece together.

Yet another theme that keeps on surfacing in the correspondences of the parents is their personal notion on parenting. All of them share in the belief that for the well-being of such mentally retarded children, parenting plays a pivotal role. The parents, in their perception, need to be patient and sensitive towards their wards to help them

do *anything*.¹¹² Dance has helped them in this aspect hugely and they acknowledge the change. Of them, some parents like Aparna's mother take this as a point of departure to discuss at length her views on the markers of 'good' parenting for such children. She believes in hiding nothing from such individuals about their own shortcomings and yet situating that in a perspective so that she is not overcome with guilt or depression and learns to negotiate with the handicap in a healthy manner from an early age. She remembers that when Aparna was a child, she was told that she has learning disability¹¹³ or dyslexia. And her mother had her reasons for doing so.

...suppose someone has got some problem, say big ears. If the people around him say—"don't talk about it since he will feel very bad"—that is very stupid because sooner or later people will talk about it! And he will find out (September 30, 2010).

The lady mentions that she chose to tell her daughter all the more because she was repeating classes. Like, when she was six years old, she was in nursery. Or when she was a grown up girl, then when people used to express their astonishment at such a big girl studying in lower classes, Aparna naturally used to feel upset. Her mother then used to tell her,

...people don't know anything. Don't listen to them, Ma¹¹⁴, you have got learning disability. I said that I am petrified of flying, your grandmother is frightened of thunder and storm. Similarly you are not good in studies. It is a simple thing...every human being has some problem and you have got this problem. So she knew from her childhood that she has this problem...you have to tell your child (September 30, 2010).

¹¹² Linda Flechsig was born with cerebral palsy and managed to complete her graduate studies from University of Montana, Missoula in 1978. In an important article, she writes about her experiences of living a life with cerebral palsy and renders useful suggestions to parents of children with similar disabilities. She notes that such parents should know one essential rule—"Let your child do what he can" (Flechsig 1978:1213). Explaining, she notes how her parents continued to cut her meat during meals, even when she was almost in high school, because she was simply unable to do the task herself.

¹¹³ Learning disabled(LD) individuals demonstrate a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension and mathematic calculation and reasoning (Sabornie, Kauffman 1986). All or one of these areas might be affected in such individuals, and it is a form of dyslexia.

¹¹⁴ In vernacular Bengali, it is a term of endearment and affection, often used by parents to address their daughters, though literally the term means 'mother'.

The entire gamut of conversations touches upon the perception of dance by the parents of the beneficiaries. And through their personal anecdotes, views, notions and observations they affirm that dance heals.

Healing effects of dance:

The interviews conducted reveal various anecdotes and opinions that lead to the conclusion that dance “uplifts” and dance heals. By shaping a creative identity of the special children who are bereft of many routine privileges that their ‘normal’ counterparts enjoy, this form of art acts as a therapy and a salvation. The attachment of the children to the weekly class in Aashirvaad also lends support to the theory since unless they could enjoy and feel at ease while dancing, the children would not have insisted in coming. This attachment is argueably not only with the class per se but also with Sharbari with whom most of the beneficiaries are extremely close and the parents are thankful for the bonding. The parents account for how their wards resent the long holidays when classes are not held, become depressed at home or simply try to dance on their own. Most of them wait patiently for the clock to strike 4.30 p.m that is the time scheduled for the Monday class and the parents share, how the children keep on urging them to get ready to take them to the dance class. I wish to know their reaction on days when the mother or the father is not well or is preoccupied elsewhere and it’s difficult for the child to come to Ashirvaad. To this their reply is that the children become very depressed and try to convince the parent to somehow ‘send’ them to the class. Shreya’s mother says that in such occasions, her daughter even urges her to send her alone with the car, though the mother refrains from it. This anecdote shared by the mother indicates advancement in the cognitive and social capacities of Shreya¹¹⁵, since studies have argued that children with Down syndrome are less likely to request objects or assistance with objects than normal children of the same developmental level. Shreya rises above the limitation arguably by stating her wish.

¹¹⁵ It has been argued by Sigman and Ruskin that, for an individual with a neurodevelopmental disorder as autism or Down syndrome, life settings are determined to a certain extent by their cognitive abilities. The level of social skills that can be acquired by such individuals is seen to be partly a function of cognitive abilities so that persons with much compromised intellects necessarily have limitations in their social abilities (Sigman and Ruskin 1999:11, 29).

Through such conversations on the children's' love for the dance class (as also for the dance therapist Sharbari with whom all the beneficiaries felt very comfortable), the discussion turns towards the happiness such dance classes generates. In other words, the question put to each of the six parents was whether their children found a happiness quotient in dance in Ashirvaad. The following excerpts are thought to be most representative.

The autistic child's mother appears convinced that her son manages to forget about his personal sorrows once he goes through the experience of dance. To corroborate her perception, she refers to a recent incident. On the occasion of Mallar's Birthday in November, there was a large gathering in their house, consisting of people whom he loved as the daughter and son of his aunt (mother's elder sister). They had stayed the birthday night which happened to be a Sunday and then had to leave the next morning as the daughter had her college. Mallar felt very sad and upset and cried and kept on asking his mother to go and bring them back ("*oder phiriye ano*"). That was not possible as each had their own preoccupations. Incidentally it was a Monday and he had his dance class. So Mallar came for the class. Once he came out after dancing, he had forgotten all about his sadness.

Talking about the strong impact of dance in her daughter's life, Aparna's mother too recognizes the therapeutic effects of dance. On asked what made her think so, she says that dance helps in such children's' "mental upbringing, psychological co-ordination, confidence" etc. And she feels that dance is very important for the family. From the family point view, when the child is dancing then they feel that their daughter is doing something worthwhile and not just whiling away time by sitting idle at home. She ventures to explain by citing examples of old days when in middle class homes, it was nothing less than a stigma if someone's daughter didn't get married. However, she feels times have changed as nowadays many girls stay single out of choice. And it is the performance aspect that gives Aparna as well as her family a real sense of achievement. Every function, every performance adds on to the self-confidence of the child and the family takes pride in the daughter's achievement. All these things matter to the family and the mother holds that Aparna is aware of this fact and it duly informs her self-confidence as well. As a parent, she feels having Aparna in her family has made her a more understanding parent. She remembers that when

her son (Aparna's elder brother) was small she used to lose patience on him quit easily. But Aparna's dyslexic condition has made her repeat one instruction innumerable times and slowly she has got the better of her temper. This admission falls in line with that of other parents with similar children. June B. Mullins notes how most parents have noted in their memoirs that they are better people because of their struggle and that they have been given more than they gave (Mullins 1987).

Shanto's father too is forthright in his view that dance has indeed come as a healing aid to his son. He holds that people perform dance or music on stage for the appreciation they get for it; for giving people happiness. He feels that when persons with special need as his son Shanto receive appreciation through dance and feel that their performance have made people joyous; it is a great thing for them. Then they feel that, "we are also able". The father acknowledges the therapeutic role of dance.

However, while the parents understand and spoke on the role of dance in their children's lives in exalted terms, they do not harbour any illusion regarding the future dance holds for them as a vocation. While other children are too young and not in a stage yet to think of a livelihood option, Aparna and Shanto, belonging to the first batch of Perna-Pal Mehra are young adults. The view of their parents in this regard, is grounded in reality. They do not believe that on their own, without the active support of any 'normal' individual, such mentally retarded individuals can support themselves. In a bid to explain, the mother of Aparna differentiates between physically challenged individuals and those like her daughter. She holds that in the former, the body becomes disabled, but the head functions properly and it is therefore still possible for them to sustain themselves. But in children with mental retardation, it's just the opposite and that makes the world of difference. She elaborates with a host of anecdotes concerning her daughter like Aparna can sew well, but fails to count the stitches and has to rely on her mother for that; can perhaps bake a cake but cannot ascertain the proportion etc. She feels that such children can work for somebody but cannot have their own enterprise. A similar strain of argument can be found in the correspondence of Shanto's father. He doesn't feel either that dance has a potential to be an independent line of profession for the likes as his son. He holds that the infrastructure that is needed for Shanto to stand on his own in future; cannot be provided by the parents. Moreover, he believes that students come to learn dance from

Shanto¹¹⁶ through Aashirvaad and they do not come to him personally like in a private tuition. If such an organization is not behind Shanto, then to survive in the profession of dance, he would have to scout for students which the father thinks would be difficult.

Narrative of Vikram from TcW

The only beneficiary of the dance classes at the Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore, Kolkata that I had access to was Vikram who now works for TcW and some other NGOs apart from running his own organization that supplies cleaning, pest control and security personnel on demand. A thirty-year old, his account again has mostly biographical elements apart from a vivid description of life inside the prison and the kind of ambience the classes and workshops generate there. This is put together from the recorded responses of in-depth interviews and the questions and answer session of a seminar in a National University outside West Bengal.

Vikram was never a dancer but a student who did his graduation from St Xavier's College. From the age of sixteen, he fell into "bad company", though now, he doesn't want to label them as 'bad company' because he 'knows' that even if one sits among smokers, one can still stay a non-smoker. He now says that it was his own "fault" that he went astray. From that age of sixteen, he began mixing with other youngsters, doing work for them and shortly formed a gang which practised extortion. He informs that he used to accept contracts for killing people and doing other illegal activities, without the slightest "awareness" that these were wrong. I ask him:

Q: What was such work for you then? Was it just work or ability or achievement, what?

Vikram: In a way, you know what, greed is a very bad thing, so the thing is that at that age if I used to get that amount of money—luxury and greed for that money made me do all that. But at that age the main thing is that I never knew that I was doing wrong, like you have read about the pygmies, they live in the jungle and don't wear clothes, but when they come out of the jungles and they hide and see civilians wearing clothes and living differently they feel that they (civilians) are abnormal.

¹¹⁶ Shanto has been performing with excellence for many years now and has been absorbed by Mentaidd as a special educator. He has also joined Aashirvaad and assists Sharbari.

And in the same way we feel that those pygmies are abnormal. So at that time when you live in a jungle you eat raw meat, in the same way I was feeling that what I was doing was right, in a way I felt like God, I felt that I have power, but I never felt even a bit that I was wrong and from my childhood I was an atheist, I never used to believe in God. My mother used to drag me to church and then in the church there were two divisions—one for the males on the top floor and the ground floor for the females—the hall was one but divided into two divisions. What I used to do is I used to jump from the balcony and run away; I was such a big atheist. At the age of twenty one I got arrested, and then went into jail with 18 cases pending against me (Interview, May 31, 2010).

On seventeen of those charges, witnesses backed out and he could not be convicted. He explains that in Kolkata, as elsewhere, if a case is pending against someone and the trial is in process, then if the witness backs out, then that person cannot be convicted. However Vikram faced conviction on the eighteenth case which was a kidnapping murder case. In that he got booked under double conviction. Both under section 364 kidnapping section and in the murder section, he got life sentence. Once imprisoned, he was treated as a hardcore criminal. In the jail¹¹⁷, he was kept in a twenty-four hour solitary confinement in a room that was six by eight or six by ten. There was a toilet inside and it was a cage from which he was not allowed to come out. Even when imprisoned, he recalls, his mind used to be full of “bad”, idle thoughts and he also indulged in chain smoking, drinking and even gambling. Against some money, he could have access to them inside the jail.

Explaining that there are two kinds of imprisonments—simple and rigorous, he mentions that he was given rigorous imprisonment. He says:

¹¹⁷ In 1992 the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly passed the West Bengal Correctional Services Act, which came into force from 14th of April 2000. This Act has made possible the introduction of culture therapy in some of the newly-recognized Correctional Homes in West Bengal. The culture therapy programme includes dance, theatre and painting workshops culminating in exhibitions and public performances. However during the interview Vikram used the words ‘jail’ and ‘prison’ instead of each time saying ‘correctional home’. Since this narrative is drawn from the interview I have kept these words for the sake of authenticity of the rendering. All along he spoke in English. Since it was more of a semi-formal conversation his English syntax was not always of textual perfection.

When you get rigorous imprisonment you are supposed to do a labour, any type of hard labour. So I went to the jailor and said, 'Give me labour', and when I was in the cell I was kept locked twenty-four hours. Very rarely they used to take me out because I had cases of hitting the cops; inside the jail also I hit policemen, I was very violent. So for the next three months they kept me in police custody and for those ninety days they beat me like anything (Interview, May 31, 2010).

Showing his fingers and hands he said:

All my fingers were broken, my legs were broken; they broke everything, but not even a drop of tear fell. And neither did they get anything, it didn't affect me (Interview, May 31, 2010).

Even after the conviction, the prison authorities had refused to give him any labour. The jailor had asked him to just keep his room clean. He mentions about yet another facet of his jail experience when some thirty-six Burmese terrorists had been transferred to that jail and he discovered that unlike the jail authorities, he could communicate with their broken English. Such proximity with the new prisoners brought him under the scanner once again and his cell was shifted. Then he was finally given a labour. The mechanical department of the prison had a big gate. He had to sit next to the gate and was supposed to open or close the gate if anybody came in or went out. At that time, Vikram mentions he was a rugby player who had played till the South East Asia level and was very energetic. He was also a graduate, who couldn't forget that he had to open gates for people who might not even have cleared their class X! And he used to feel disappointed from inside.

Amidst all these, his life took a dramatic turn when one day the superintendent of the prison called him to notify that they needed people from the prison to learn dance. Vikram remembers he was so taken aback that he had thought the superintendent had lost his mind and said that how could he think of making "goondas" dance! But the latter had insisted suggesting that it was some martial dance, kalarippayattu. He was not acquainted with Kalarippayattu, but the lure of learning martial dance drew him to the class where he found Alokanda Roy teaching dance with her troupe. He recalls that he never wished to dance and always used to stand behind and observe them dance. He even tried to make Roy remove him from the dance class. And I quote him:

One day I went up to her, the devil was disturbing me from inside. If you go to do some good job, the devil disturbs. So I went up to her and told her see you are like my mother, you are as old as my mother, do me a favour. I lie on your feet, remove me from this dance; don't keep me in the list of dancers. Then she said that if you don't want to dance there is no problem. You stand behind and watch (Interview, June 3, 2010).

Vikram says that he tried to do the same thing with the I.G. To him he had said that he was having many problems and couldn't dance.

I told him that I don't want to stay in that dancer's ward; you keep me in the convict ward, where the counting was about two hundred and fifty to three hundred. He said OK you go and stay in that ward. What else? I need medical diet. He said OK I shall give you medical diet. I told him other problems as well, he solved all my problems (Interview, June 3, 2010).

While the I.G listened to all of his problems and suggested solutions, his only demand was that Vikram has to dance and the latter had no way out, but to join the class. Initially, he didn't participate and maintained his old routine of standing at the back and observing the dance. This went on for some time, till a certain Monday when they decided to do a programme in jail. Vikram mentions that he had performed in that programme and also read out a speech that he had written on that occasion. He remembers that while speaking publicly for the first time, he was shivering.

Success of the dance production in jail prompted the authorities to take a huge leap and he learnt that a programme would be held outside in the Uday Shankar Nritya Utsav. Every other convict was allowed to go out and perform except him. The police reasoned that they couldn't take a risk with Vikram as he had tried to escape once and they were ever vigilant. This news made him upset and he approached Roy. In his own words:

I went up to Alokanda Roy. I call her Ma. I told her Ma I didn't want to dance but all of you forced and I did. And now I do it from the heart. You have taken me out of the dustbin, do not throw me back. I just told her this, nothing else. She said that don't worry I will do my level best. Then she talked with them. There were fifty-five prisoners who were going for the performance. The I.G. told her that fifty-four prisoners are my risk, and that one guy is your risk. If you take this risk I will allow

him to dance. And then everybody had to sign a paper in which it was said that we are going under her guidance. The whole risk factor was her. So I went and before the programme started you go for the stage rehearsal, for marking the stage etc. Behind me there were four guards and I went and stood in the middle of the stage and all the seats were empty, I just looked around and suddenly I felt in my heart that do I deserve this? And two drops of water fell from my eyes. That was the first time I cried in my life. The cops broke my bones I never cried, throughout my life many things happened but I have never cried. That's the first time I cried, and then again I wiped my tears and looked around to see if anybody else was watching. From that moment my life itself has changed (Interview, June 3, 2010).

Vikram emphasizes that one moment changed his philosophy life. He had been an atheist all along but when somebody said that praying to God doesn't make a difference, as neither does He come nor does He betray; that stayed with him. And Vikram says that there was a time when except the time when he was working or doing anything else, he was praying for the rest of the time. Life, he feels, has been a long journey for him.

Speaking on his first brush with dance and his gradual involvement with the art form, Vikram feels though externally he was dancing from before, but he embraced "from within" it about one month before the show inside the jail. Initially it felt girlish, but as he tried doing the dance steps, it was extremely difficult because till then he had never danced before. The first rehearsal was for the programme known as 'Brotherhood beyond Boundaries.'

'Valmiki Pratibha' holds a special place in his heart as he can completely identify with the central character 'Valmiki'. He remembers that even before the rehearsals had started, Alokanda Roy had told him that he would play 'Valmiki'. It was one rainy day when she read out the verses from Rabindranath Tagore's dance drama, and it had totally disarmed him. Vikram says, hearing 'Valmiki's' story, he could identify. He felt he has no friends; all have left him and he felt like crying and went out and got drenched in the rain so that his tears do not show. Now, he mentions that tears begin to flow even when is watching a film. And such has been the change, that from within he cannot even think of committing any small crime. He has been

acquitted eleven months back. Lack of proper evidence made the verdict go in his favour.

His time in the jail did not go idle. He had been pursuing post-graduation in Human Rights from the Indian Institute of Human Rights and has cleared his Part I from his prison cell. At present, he is doing his Part II and working with the NGO, TcW. He has been helping this organization to reform and rehabilitate prisoners. As part of his work there, Vikram visits schools and colleges, from class VIII onwards; shows the DVD of “The Jail” and answers all the questions that come his way. The aim of TcW behind such interaction is to prevent the rise of any more Vikram. In his own words:

I know I slipped when I was in that age-in class VIII/IX and I wish to stop another of that age from slipping (Interview, May 31, 2010).

Apart from TcW, he is in touch with other organizations which aim at understanding and uplifting vulnerable sections of the society. One of them is the Sukriti Foundation with whom he works in different projects. One of them is ‘Beyond Belief’, where “handicapped” boys go on an expedition. There are four teams with four boys in each. Four of them are hearing impaired and speech impaired; four are handicapped in their lower limb while four have problem in their upper limb. The rest four are visually challenged. He mentions that with this organization, the last project was Eastern Country Rifles, where they went through the same training as the commandos. A documentary is being made on that and he is part of that. At the same time, he is working on a project called ‘Gold Underground’ which works with slum children living in “below-poverty areas”. They are trained in music and arts. Music is being trained by Rupam Islam and the arts section is supervised by other renowned personalities. Their education is also getting financial support from varied quarters. After the training they plan to have an exhibition.

Question naturally arises as to the attitude of ‘society’ about his past and how that affects his life-chances now. Vikram says:

The first thing is that it fears that they will do this, and do that—all the wrong things. The biggest thing I’ll tell you is my own mother who lives in my house—there was a dacoity in a lane near my house. She never used to go through that lane because she

was scared. That happens. Now the society has seen the bad part. They cannot imagine who can get everything so easily, be so harmful—can also do something good. So it is not that they are wrong. Maybe today they are not accepting, as time pass, days pass...I always say that I want to see my god in my deed. So maybe after ten years, after five years, after two years, maybe they will accept. I will not give up hope.

Like I went to a guest house to give in my staff and they said you know there are cameras everywhere. If anybody steals we would come to know. I said if they steal or do anything wrong, the first thing is you are taking a person from my organisation, so I'll be blamed first. I have to face the consequences. So if you show trust, they will never let you down. Secondly, if you feel and you are not comfortable at all, please do not give me the opportunity. If not today, after 5 years, you have the confidence, you call me back, and I'll come (Interview, May 31, 2010).

Regarding his own expertise with dance and music, he has been trained in Kalaripayattu, Baul, Bhangra, Dandiya, and a Sufi dance piece with the popular composition 'Allah Ke bande'.

Speaking on improvisations in dance, he says he has done a few. When Roy was choreographing and teaching them the dance with 'Allah ke bande', he had come up with a suggestion. He had said that there is one step which he can do well from childhood—falling on the knees and moving on his knees. Roy has integrated that movement in the dance composition and that had been one instance of his improvisation. Coming to 'Valmiki Pratibha', he says everything happened spontaneously; everything just flowed from within. He recalls people coming up to him after the performance and saying, 'Had Rabindranath been present he would have been so happy!' But Vikram believes in this production, he doesn't do anything. And I quote him:

I cannot explain this in words to people but as soon as I step on the stage the rest happens. It is not like I remember a step or something. It flows through. Once it starts how it progresses and finishes I don't know. When it ends, I wonder how it ended so fast! (Interview, June 3, 2010).

With the dance classes and rehearsals for performance, especially after the initial success of 'Valmiki Pratibha' life inside the correctional home has changed.

I will tell you about the dance team. The boys who were into this programme...and in the jail you know what, everybody is different, everybody lives their own life. But this whole team of fifty to fifty-five people, we live in a particular ward, we eat together; we sleep together—it's like a family, you understand. Somebody is hurt, okay two or three people are, you know, massaging his leg and all that. They are not thinking that okay...the whole team lives like a family in the jail and that itself is...like that boy was telling...where I sit, ten people come and sit with me; they talk. Their life here has changed. [a short pause] Life for them has also changed (Interview, June 3, 2010).

He compares the present situation with as it was before all this gained momentum.

The role of the jail is...the jail is very corrupt. You get everything in jail if you pay money. And at the same time they behave very rudely with the hard core criminals, like they did with me. But at the same time, the jail is now trying to reform. It has got all correctional activities like painting, dance, drama etc.

For all work they do, they want money (in the jail). You want one packet of cigarette; you have to give fifty rupees. You want marijuana; you have to pay hundred rupees. You want half a bottle of liquor, you have to pay three hundred and fifty rupees—so everything is available with money and they search for chances to earn money. Like after everybody gelled up together and started working and all that, started performing together—they [the police staff] bring food from outside, good food and share with all of them, it's like a family—they eat together. Suppose a prop is being made, they come and help. Suppose there is a problem with anybody they run about, not all of them, but around 40% of the staff have been reformed also. They were the first people to organize. With the I.G coming in all the time—he didn't use to come in so many times before and they thought we will not be able to do all the corrupt work. But after one and one and half years, as they saw the beauty...you know one of the staff, before he used to take things [from the prisoners]. Now he keeps on singing and keeps on roaming around.

When their [prisoners] term is over, or they get bail and are released, they go up to her and say 'ma, we won't go out now. Let us perform. As long there is performance, let us stay inside and perform.' After their release, people are desperate to go out of their cage. But here there are people who want to stay back and be involved with all these. They found so much peace in it.

You know the greatest thing, the soul is free. The body might be caged, but the soul is free, through this dance and whatever (Interview, May 31, 2010).

Moving over his own performance and personal experience, Vikram speaks at length on the need of proper guidance in life—in school or college for instance, one often develops a liking for mathematics, biology or other subjects because he likes the way the teacher teaches. And whenever that particular teacher takes a class, he feels the urge to attend. Proper people are needed to show the right path. He says:

I have one more thing to say...the thing I feel is that you cannot force transformation; or force reformation. It cannot be forced. Today you have moments like... Okay, suppose, maybe you won't get drugs inside, you won't get alcohol inside, maybe you won't be able to smoke inside and everything is inspected. There is tight security, tight vigil on everything. You know the person will stop as long as he doesn't get it. The moment he gets it, he will just pounce on it again. So I feel that for stopping all the type of corruption, a little bit of corruption should be there. And people should be tried to reform in that through the way you know, the teachers teach— people show the way, the guidance you can give to them. Many people don't understand. I never understood that I am wrong. I thought that I had the power and there's nothing in that. When I was small I wanted to become an army officer. So, like when fifty people would listen to me, I thought I am no less than an army officer. But the moment I realized how wrong I was, that was the moment that made the difference (Interview, June 3, 2010).

From guidance, arises the issue of NGO s coming in to help, and he sounds sceptical. He cites an example, among many incidents, when a particular NGO had come and taken pictures of giving big bags to small children and once the pictures had been taken with their banner, they just removed the banner and gave them small bags. He recalls that he was equally suspicious of the motives of Roy when she had first come; assuming that like other NGO persons, she had also come to do business. But he says he was proved wrong as he saw that the way she felt for each of them in prison, it was as if they were her own children. He explains by giving the example of doctors. Vikram says that on becoming sick, people go to see a doctor and doctors are of different kinds. There are many who gives a big prescription and he feels one takes a long time to heal. Then there are many other doctors who just hold one's pulse and say it's nothing, come on, you are just mentally sick; suggests that one has no fever

and with more fever people are playing around etc. He sees Roy as belonging to the latter sort. Therefore he is convinced that healing depends a lot on the person who guides. Citing his own case as a pointer, he says that now he is not into any form of intoxication. If ever he goes to parties and talks to people who are drinking, he doesn't feel like having a drink himself. Right guidance has enabled him to come out of his shell, speak normally to people and deliver public speeches as also being open to any questions in any gathering. He feels now he has the strength to tackle any questions, because he is confident that he won't feel hurt since he is right. I quote him:

I have built this confidence. I know internally that I am not doing anything wrong, my past is wrong. Now I know that I am confident that I am not going to do anything wrong. I am not scared of anybody because my conscience is clear (Interview, June 3, 2010).

After being released and with the encouragement of his mentor he read some of the "scriptures" like the Geeta and the Quran. But he felt:

What I got from those books is that mostly all of them are related to each other. And the biggest thing is it's all written by man. God didn't throw it up from heaven and say that you take this book and listen, follow it, OK. So basically after coming out of all that I don't read any scriptures, I don't read any books, but Nature is God, there's a supernatural force that guides you, when you do anything you feel like 'Am I doing the right thing or the wrong thing'. The two things that come within you is the devil and the God. The moment your soul captures your brain you do all good things. And when your brain is much heavier and you think only competitively, like monetarily, then you always want to the bad things, many people do. Many businessmen, many other people—I know many such people. So what I came across is...I don't read all that, I meditate. I put some incense, some good smell a candle and I just meditate with nature and I put on some music, may be the sound of water, may be Om in different tones, in different chords, so I listen to it and after about half an hour of those meditation I come to a point when I don't listen to it anymore, I just listen to the chirping of the birds, and the trees and may be you know the noise beyond that. And after that I speak, I don't know whom I am speaking to but I say anything that I felt bad, anything that has disturbed me or anything like what I should do, anything feel like, like I talk to a friend, God cannot be a father Ok you cannot tell everything to

your father, God cannot be your brother but I think He can be your friend, where you can tell Him everything openly and then I feel light and whole day I feel that everything I do I should find my God in that (Interview, May 31, 2010).

At the seminar in the University he was asked about his attitude towards women by one the students. His response was:

I used to appreciate good women, then I had some girlfriend whom I was attached to, and at the same time I used to drink, I used to smoke, I used to do everything, but I left everything but I didn't have any problem, I read in a scripture that those who believe in God doesn't need any external support, like when you smoke you have a lot of tension that your smoking, ok , you feel that you are filling the vacuum, but like you drink to come out of the depression but if you believe in God , if you can leave *all* to the Almighty, if you can let go, then I don't think you need any of these external substances. It is just mental; it is just what your brain makes you think (Seminar, November 4, 2010).

Speaking more on the value of right guidance, he differentiates between the other music teachers who come to teach only because they are being paid and Roy, who offers her service to them voluntarily. She doesn't get anything back in terms of money and has to loosen her own purse strings. While the former types of teachers sit in the register's office and chat, she has to wait for an hour before anybody comes and inmates don't want to come. But when Roy comes, she is like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, who is then followed by all of them. He opines that one can be a good artist but not necessarily a good teacher. About Roy, he says that earlier he had changed only physically but she has helped transformed his soul.

Speaking reverently of his 'ma' or 'guru', Vikram says that now thanks to her, his energy is being concentrated and devoted in the right place. In his own words:

I am dancing I am putting my energy in the right place. Seven hours I am practising or three hours I am practising—you know my whole concentration is there in the right thing. So the guru matters, she is the main (Interview, June 3, 2010).

He feels he can perform in 'Valmiki Pratibha' because before going in, he takes Roy's blessings and that gives him confidence.

Vikram feels that today he is a changed man because of her blessings and he is happy the way his life is shaping up. He says:

The guru shows the way. Once it touches your soul the world itself changes. Today it doesn't matter to me that I am alone, I don't make any friends, and I roam alone. I love it. It's better than mixing with people who aren't good. Today when I meet 'bad' people I advise them that to get out of it so that life becomes much better. I am always engaged in some kind of work... (June 3, 2010).

Conclusion

The narratives from SL and TcW have been more or less presented 'as has been said' because they help bring out the perception of the beneficiaries regarding the role of dance and dance therapy in their lives. These accounts also reflect the process of change that accompanied dance in each case. The scale of the change brought about and its nature can only be understood when seen in the context of each of the beneficiaries' life-conditions. Their style of speaking was sometimes descriptive and sometimes explanatory; both valuable for fathoming how dancing has affected their personality and life-chances, what it is that affected them as per their own perception. As a student of sociology I do not feel the need to re-explicate their reality as that would only lead to unnecessary translation, for what I write would be water in comparison to the cream that has already been presented. The respondents from Ashirvaad, being mostly the parents of those who dance (with the exception of Aparna, the twenty-four years old with a maturity-level of twelve), their responses have been analysed and the emergent patterns discussed. In all, dance and D.M.T. seem to provide a certain wholeness and relatedness in the beneficiaries themselves that gets translated into their interactions with the world. Thereby the sense of deprivation that their physical, mental challenges as well as social location and life-events of the past tend to generate, is countered, handled, lessened and resolved in some cases through dancing for being healed. Once well-being is generated, the need to share that with, and declare that to, the society at large is felt strongly. Public performances provide that space to 'connect' to the world and 'do' that which one feels empowered while doing. In this way awareness and acceptance of the interior, creativity, performance follows organically from being 'healed' through the praxis of another fellow-human being, who becomes the representative of the 'social' at some

level since her actions re-introduce the self to the healed when the latter's' own system is worn-out. The desire to give back to or *be* complete again before the society is how public performance features in the symbolic world of those that I interacted with on the field. I am tempted to agree with Chandralekha (1998):

I have experienced dance as a sensual language of beauty and of essential freedom; a language of coordination as against alienation; a movement towards the human essence, the sap, the vitality, the *rasa*. ... Any human mode with a capacity to touch, to energise, to transform is potent. Otherwise art is primarily to be lived. It is nothing but the quality of all that is made (Chandralekha, in ed. Carter 1998:75).

CHAPTER FIVE

INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITATION

Introduction

To classical dancer-choreographer Chandralekha (1998) change in society reflects change in the attitude of people to dance:

...It is when we come to contemporary times and an industrial / urban society that a sudden and harsh break occurs. The vital link, between body and nature, body and work, body and ritual, snaps. Dance becomes, almost totally, a spectacle.

A reversal, too, takes place. While traditional thought conceptualises the human body as a unique centre, a centre of the universe, expanding outwards into the cosmos, industrial society converts the human body into the prime target of attack: as citizen, attacked by the political system; as consumer, attacked by the economic system; as individual, bombarded by the media, denied contact with nature, incapable of self-renewal, suffocated by poisons in air and water, isolated and deprived of directions for change.

The question then arises: What role can dance play in such a society? Can it recuperate energies? Can it initiate a living flow between individual and community? Can it integrate human perspectives? Can it infuse people with joy for life, radical optimism, hope, courage and vision to negate all that is ugly, unjust and hurtful? If our life is alienated, can our dances and arts help transcend that alienation? (Chandralekha, in ed. Carter 1998:75)

Embodied creative praxis of individual artists, in the service of fellow-human beings in affliction lie at the core of any healing activity that embrace art as its medium. While dance therapy as part of the expressive art therapies has its definite but not monolithic methodology, being variously practiced by different dancer-therapists as per the needs of their client/ beneficiaries (with Jungian depth-psychology being its backbone), all artistic endeavours have a healing, developmental dimension that affect agency in some way or the other. However the trajectory of the creative is not easily traced, nor does its 'functionality' for the artist submit itself to any universally understandable and acceptable schema. For instance one can point out a Van Gogh

shooting himself instead of the crows while painting his last oil on canvas. Marina Abramović's¹¹⁸ presentation of her performance *Lips of Thomas* which involved definite body-harm pushed even some of her audiences into depression. Where is the healing dimension in all this? And yet one knows that the challenge posed by radical art is social commentary at some level. And for one whose paintings hardly sold in his lifetime and yet he 'needed' to paint hundreds of crows ravaging the harvest, questions of well-being functioned at a different level altogether.

¹¹⁸Fischer-Lichte (2008) writing on the transformative power of performance describes a radical presentation to substantiate her arguments. On October 24, 1975, at the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck, the Yugoslavian artist Marina Abramović presented her performance *Lips of Thomas*. The artist began her performance by shedding all her clothes. She went to the back wall of the gallery, pinned up a photograph of a man with long hair who resembled the artist, and framed it by drawing a five-pointed star around it. She turned to a table with a white table-cloth close to the wall, on which there was a bottle of red wine, a jar containing two pounds of honey, a crystal glass, a silver spoon, and a whip. She settled into the chair and reached for the jar of honey and the silver spoon. Slowly she ate the honey until she had emptied the jar. She poured red wine into the crystal glass and drank it in long draughts. She continued until bottle and glass were empty. Then she broke the glass with her right hand, which then began to bleed. Abramović got up and walked over to the wall where the photograph was fastened. Standing at the wall and facing the audience, she cut a five-pointed star into the skin of her abdomen with a razor blade. Blood welled out of the cuts. Then she took the whip, kneeled down beneath the photograph with her back to the audience, and began to flagellate her back severely, raising blood welts. Afterwards, she lay down on a cross made of blocks of ice, her arms spread out to her sides. An electric radiator hung from the ceiling, facing her stomach. Its heat triggered further bleeding from the star-shaped cuts. Abramović lay motionless on the ice—she obviously intended to endure her self-torture until radiator had melted all the ice. After she had held out for 30 minutes without any sign of abandoning the torture, some members of the audience could no longer bear the ordeal. They hastened to the blocks of ice, took hold of the artists, and covered her with coats. Then they removed her from the cross and carried her away. Thus, they put an end to the performance.

The performance had taken two hours. In the course of these two hours, the artist and the spectators created an event that was neither envisioned nor legitimized by the traditions and standards of the visual or performing arts. The artist was not producing an artifact through her actions; she was not creating a fixed and transferable work of art that could exist independently of her. Yet her actions were also not representational. She was not performing as an actress, playing the part of a dramatic character that eats too much honey, drinks wine excessively, and inflicts a variety of injuries on her own body. Rather, Abramović was actually harming herself, abusing her body with a determined disregard for its limits. She fed it substances which, though certainly nutritious in small doses, would doubtlessly cause nausea and discomfort in such excess. Moreover, the audience had to infer a strong physical pain from the heavy external injuries that she inflicted on herself. Yet, the artist betrayed no sign of distress—she did not moan, scream, or grimace. She generally avoided any physical sign that would express discomfort or pain. The artist restricted herself to performing actions that changed her body perceptibly—feeding it honey and wine and inflicting visible damage on it—without producing external signs for the inner states induced by these actions (Fischer-Lichte 2008:11,12).

Radicalism aside, the therapeutic in art is often searched out by leaders or authority figures in institutions when developmental concerns of their followers and subordinates become crucial to the former's legitimacy of domination (Weber 1978). My endeavour to understand sociologically how healing is being carried out through dance in Kolkata led me to the Presidency Correctional Home where Alokanda Roy and others contribute to the cultural therapy programme undertaken by the prison authorities in recent years. While Roy conducts dance 'classes' with the prisoners and some prison staff as well, it is B.D.Sharma, the Additional DGP and IG Correctional Services, West Bengal, the chief bureaucratic architect who has made cultural therapy a reality in the prison-cells of various Correctional Homes in West Bengal. In his responses to a probing interview Sharma expressed his philosophy and narrated the genesis of culture therapy in erstwhile jails.

The Act That Made Action Possible

In 1992 the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly passed the West Bengal Correctional Services Act. However it came into force from 14th of April 2000. Sharma joined the department in 2005, just after the new Act came into force; the rules had not yet been made. Says he:

It was an ideal situation where the law had been passed but the rules had not been passed—the nitty-gritty, the various little ways in which it could be made effective really at the grass-roots, cutting edge level. So that was an opportunity of sorts for me. I have taken full advantage of that and I have now drafted the rules and the rules are now being sent to the State Assembly for approval and ratification (November 16, 2010).

This Act made possible the introduction of culture therapy in some of the newly-recognized Correctional Homes in West Bengal. The culture therapy programme includes dance, theatre and painting workshops culminating in exhibitions and public performances.

To quote him:

Anything which can help you restore your confidence in your own self, self-belief, and gives you a sense of dignity, and a sense of self-respect is or can be a tool of change. Now dance has a lot of potential in this respect, but more than dance the core

of culture therapy is imparting that sense of dignity or sense of self-respect to them through public performance. So dance alone may not be as effective, you can dance in a closed room—you will feel nice, there is rhythm in it, music in it, that's one side but the ultimate sense of self-respect and dignity which is being imparted to the prisoners is through the performances outside. When a prisoner is sent to the jail and given life-conviction, they more or less give up all hope, they think that there is nothing left in their life and there is a sense of despair and hopelessness with life. When such dejected, hopeless people suddenly get an opportunity of coming out of the jail and performing before jam-packed audience and when they receive standing ovation for their feat ... there is so much love and admiration for the presentation being received—standing ovation at the end of each performance (November 16, 2010).

Sharma explains that the crux of the cultural therapy program as practiced in correctional homes under his jurisdiction lies in taking them out and allowing them tete-a-tete with the society around. They may have made a mistake, he says, there is no denying that but the whole idea is to work for and protect some of their rights, if not all, as citizens of this country, which are granted to them by the Constitution of India and the Indian democracy. Public performance is accorded primacy in his view of the therapeutic process.

Structural Facilitation, Jail Code, Issues Regarding Participation

I point out that for this to take-off structural facilitation becomes crucial. Agreeing with me he says:

Yes, it is happening first time ever in the entire world and that would not have been possible but for our willingness to really experiment with this idea. It's good to conceive of an idea but to implement it creates lots of problems. I had lots of problems. There was opposition, there was resistance, there was unwillingness on the part of the staff—the officers, on the part of even the inmates. Now the inmates were not very keen. When I floated the idea for the first time—can we have a good program, a good theatre by the inmates? But the inmates wouldn't believe me—they thought it was a joke and they will not at all agree with the idea and they said no this we will not do. We can't perform. There was a complete lack of self-belief, self-confidence, on the part of the inmates and they thought that probably it's a joke on my part by giving them this offer. But then gradually when things started happening,

slowly and gradually they felt more and more emboldened. Meanwhile we roped in some members of the staff—that was very important because there was a lot of resistance on the part of the staff. This was on various points. For example the Jail Code¹¹⁹, which is the bible says that women have to be kept in their female enclosure, they are not supposed to come out of their enclosure and mix up or intermingle with male prisoners. Obviously there are certain risks involved. When I started Tasher Desh¹²⁰ for the first time ever in Baharampur Central Correctional Home (BCCH) the staff said that no, we are not supposed to allow male and female prisoners to intermingle. It is violation of the rules and there are all kinds of risk involved and we are not prepared to take those risks. I had to really prevail upon them—I had to talk to them, cajole them into reasoning, in today's era you cannot really discriminate between men and women on the basis of this age-old archaic stipulation in the Jail Code. It applied to the situation hundred years back but in today's era you can't discriminate between men and women on the grounds of sex. Just because they happen to be women not allowing them to participate in culture therapy programme will be a very serious violation of their human rights and democratic rights. I had to issue a fresh order saying that men and women have to be allowed to intermingle and participate in the programmes and all the rehearsals together—I had to issue a fresh order for that. After the initial resistance which was overcome in the course of time—there was then no problem about that—all we do now—when the female performers are taken out of the female enclosure the female guarding staff escort them [to the rehearsal hall or stage] and they are escorted back to the enclosure and there are no incidents there (November 17, 2010).

He explains that by security problems is meant certain men have been attracted towards certain women and vice-versa. His reactions towards these are:

I mean those things are very natural human feelings, but there are no scandals as such and some of them are now getting prepared to get married, which is so positive,

¹¹⁹ The West Bengal Jail Code, the most important compilation of rules pertaining to jails, had become so outdated that a revision was absolutely necessary. Especially after the West Bengal Correctional Services Act of 1992 was passed. The new Act contains radical changes both in philosophy and procedure, which do not correspond with provisions of the age-old Jail Code. The State Government therefore appointed S. Ramakrishnan, Officer on Special Duty in April 2008 to carry out this task of the revision. The new document is called the Code for correctional Services and has been submitted to the State Government for necessary approval (Sharma 2008: 8).

¹²⁰ Literally the Land of Cards, a Tagorean dance-drama revolving around the theme of breaking free of mechanical, limiting rules to embrace life in its unpredictability and freedom.

where is the problem with that? It is a nice thing to be happening. Two of the male inmates in BCCH have made applications to me for permission to get married. There is no harm in that—that's a welcome thing to happen. So let's see. There may be problems because this has never happened before but I am very positive—there is no problem if a man feels attracted to some women both of whom have all the democratic rights to get married—there are no legal hassles (November 17, 2010).

The political and bureaucratic corridors were not obliging initially .Taking the prisoners out for public performance would have never happened but for one person's intervention. Sharma says:

I am so grateful to him i.e. Buddhadev Bhattacharyya. My minister said no not possible, you are mad, crazy, home secretary etc., nobody was for it. But somehow I accessed the chief minister. He was thrilled—he said this is a great idea—are there no legal complications—can you do that? I said yes, I have been given powers of parole. My idea is if the parole can be used for going home why not for an activity like this? I would take them out on parole they will perform and go back. There is nothing legally complicated about it (November 17, 2010).

Valmiki's Awakening

The performance of Valmiki Pratibha has created history in the cultural arena of upper-middle and middle class Kolkata. In his own words:

The phenomenal success of 'Brotherhood Beyond Boundaries', the dance recital by prisoners performed at Kolkata's Rabindra Sadan as part of the Uday Shankar Dance Festival, 2007, under the auspices of renowned Odissi exponent Alokanda Roy encouraged us to come up with another dance recital by the prisoners of Presidency, Midnapore and Alipore Women's Correctional Home. While scouting for a theme for this programme, we thought it proper to choose something that would in some way aptly reflect the journey from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge.

It occurred to us then that perhaps no other work of literature more appropriately reflected this journey than Tagore's musical drama Valmiki Pratibha, which traces the transformation of Ratnakar from a dreaded dacoit to a holy sage, Valmiki, the creator of Ramayana. The story of Valmiki symbolizes the propensity for both good and evil in the human psyche and the tremendous ability of the human will to crush the demonic self with penitence.

That, in a nutshell is what 'correction' in the correctional homes is really about. The workshop on Valmiki Pratibha began about six months earlier. It was decided that we would start first with the training in singing, which was a very important part of the dance drama. We requested Krishnendu Sengupta to teach Rabindrasangeet to the inmates and also the staff, who we decided would also take part in this production. ...Many staff members and even family members of the staff, for example Sushmita Das, daughter of Chief Hd. Warder Paresh Ch. Das of Presidency Correctional Home took part in the singing. Then the vigorous training for the dance drama started. For the men the workshop was held at Presidency Correctional Home and for the women at the Alipore Women's Correctional Home (November 16, 2010).

Since The 'Brotherhood Beyond Boundaries' programme had taken place earlier, the level of scepticism was much less this time around. Only Vikram, who was designated to play the part of the protagonist, expressed some doubts about being able to pull off a performance of the stature of Tagore's Valmiki. Sharma reminisces:

Six months later on November 15 at 6.30 p.m. at the packed Science City Auditorium and on December 15 at the same time in Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata, it was the moment of truth. Two nights of performance! There was much excitement for the forty-five men and thirteen women inmates, who being accorded the treatment of performing artists, were visibly overwhelmed with the experience. At that moment, in the anticipation and excitement of performing before a live audience they seemed to have, at least for that moment transcended their sense of being prisoners. As they scurried around putting on make-up and costumes in the green room, they were like any other performing artist, just concentrated on the moment and the performance ahead of them (November 16, 2010).

As has been mentioned before I witnessed two performances of *Valmiki Pratibha* at Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata. The quality of performance as well as the audiences' reaction (mine included) in each concur completely with Sharma's account below:

What ensued in the next two hours was something to witness. The audience was spellbound; first, by the sheer brilliance of the production. Everything from the song and dance sequences, the dialogues and action to the sets, props and costumes, seemed to be the work of professionals. It was hard to imagine that the performers were amateurs and first time performers, that too inmates who were lodged in jails. Second, the audience was witnessing history. For the first time perhaps in the history

of prisons in the world, jail staff were performing along with prisoners in the same play. The Deputy Jailor Mandira Panja and four staff namely Ranjit Chowdhury, Gopal Sarkar, Shibu Majumdar and Prabir Halder from the correctional homes participated in the dance drama. And it must be noted that Roy herself took part in the production, as none other than the Goddess Saraswati, who gifts wisdom and knowledge to Ratnakar in his divine journey. This was indeed symbolic because it was after all Roy who by teaching dance to the inmates was also playing a part in the journey of transformation from ignorance to light. There were other symbolic movements. For instance, there were some interesting role reversals with prison staff, normally the custodians of law inside the prisons, playing the parts of the dissenting dacoits. For the prisoners, who were performing, it was truly a journey from darkness to light. To say that they were overwhelmed with the sense of freedom and dignity they experienced would be to make an understatement. Many of them had tears in their eyes. I could see in their eyes that obvious changes. The 'demonic' which had committed various crimes were no longer reflected in them (November 16, 2010).

There have been twenty-five such performances so far. He opines that every single performance that was given by the prisoners under Ms Roy's direction have contributed to 'change the society'. Such a lot of love and affection they have got—people have never thought of such a thing happening in their life, so the crux lies in taking prisoners out of the four walls and making them or allowing them to perform before the general public. Apart from *Valmiki Pratibha*, he said, they have had a couple of other programs by Ms Roy and some theatre and music program. The finesse of the performance is due to the training and the time dedicated by Ms Roy. Sharma acknowledges Roy's contribution thus:

She has been working so hard on the project—she visits the correctional homes thrice-a-week, spends two to three hours every day she visits. She has become in the process a mother to the inmates, so that is something which has brought about a change in their personality (November 17, 2010).

Valmiki Pratibha is being done by the inmates of Presidency Correctional Home, Alipore Women's Correctional Home and Midnapore Central Correctional Home. In the Central Correctional Home in Murshidabad district, called Baharampur Central Correctional Home, the inmates are staging theatres one after another. The first play that they did was *Tasher Desh* as mentioned earlier followed by *Tota Kahini*. They

have also given about ten public performances of these two plays, including three performances in Delhi—all this was way back in November 2007 when he took them from Baharampur to Delhi and there were three shows of *Tasher Desh* at the Siri Fort auditorium, at Pragati Maidan, and at the National School of Drama.

To give this endeavour solid institutional footing Sharma explains:

It was very important for me to get the judicial sanction, to do one of the shows for the chief justice of India and therefore when I went to Delhi the performance of *Tasher Desh* at Siri Fort auditorium we arranged on such a day so that the Chief Justice of India can come to see. He also appreciated the idea—and he said that this is a great idea (November 16, 2010).

At the All India Prison Duty Meet in Bhubaneswar, Feb 2010

After this judicial validation, he states:

Of course I have almost turned an activist now in the sense that wherever I go I talk of culture therapy. In fact we had this All India Prison Duty meet at Bhubaneswar in Feb 2010. I thought this was a good opportunity so I proposed to the Orissa government that I want to bring *Valmiki Pratibha* to Orissa so that the delegates of this Prison Duty meet, who would be coming from all over India, can watch with their own eyes what they have done. You see, hearing or reading about something is one thing but to see it with your own eyes is different so I thought that was a huge opportunity for me to take this experiment to all parts of the country. At the Meet delegates including the senior most, the middle level to the junior most staff all come to participate from all states. So we had a huge show in Kalinga stadium, Bhubaneswar. Beginning from the DGs and IGs in different states to DIG to superintendents to the grassroots level staff like constables and others, they all saw it. It was a huge thing and now I have plans of taking it to Bombay and other places. Let's see. We have plans of taking it to Delhi also—that is one of our ambitions. May be to JNU—you can have an outdoor, open-air performance (November 16, 2010).

Grounds of resistance from the staff, Bureaucratic constraints

Regarding the response of the prison staff Sharma reveals that they were opposed to entry of outsiders into the Correctional Homes. He explains:

The reason is simple. What I have been doing is I have thrown open the gates of Correctional Homes to the outside world. The staff is threatened because so far they have had an absolute control over the affairs inside the four walls. Nobody could question their authority and they were like the law inside the jail and this has been so for a long, long time. The tyranny, if I can use the word, has so far gone unchecked and unquestioned. Now because of the entry of outsiders naturally things are changing definitely but slowly (November 17, 2010).

Access has been granted to NGOs, celebrities, judges and magistrates, so points out Sharma, there is that little bit of fear that things cannot be done absolutely, without any control. Societal control on the happenings within the four walls is gradually seeping in. The staff did not like this; they didn't want their authority to be challenged by anyone. So they opposed the entry of the NGOs on the grounds of security. They said that they wouldn't take responsibility for the security hassles arising because of the entry of activists and leaders of the civil society. Sharma speaks openly about the corruption and malpractices that have gone on for more than a century inside the jail, which indicates staff involvement in such matters. With the leaders and activist of the civil society walking in, the activities of the staff would come under scrutiny.

Further, Sharma points to the well-known 'perpetuation of the status quo' principle in a government department. Being a part of the bureaucracy nobody wants it to change; nobody wants to take the risk. Sharma emphasises,

Taking the prisoners out of the prison was unheard of. Who would take the risk? So when I floated the idea that I would take them out on parole, first I was asked, how would you take them out? It has never happened before. I said I have the powers to give them parole. I told the minister and the government—look I can do this. They said no, this is a hugely risky thing. Why should you take the risk? If they escape who will take all the blames? So I had to take it on myself. I had to tell the minister that I think there is no risk involved, if at all there is a risk involved I may be held responsible for whatever comes because of this adventure (November 17, 2010).

He confirms the status-quoist nature of the West Bengal police bureaucracy as anywhere else. He has faced criticism and ridicule. Even after overwhelming response from the civil society a section of police officers are still not convinced about the culture therapy concept. They find it weird. He laments that along with the

bureaucracy the police structure is particularly opposed to change. However, according to him, the policemen at the grassroots level are more sensitive than the senior officers. The senior officers tend to be more opposed to any attempted change. He is disappointed at the attitude of most of his colleagues. Though there are some who are very positive in their approach but he finds the large majority of police officers at the senior level to be very insensitive and negative in their approach. However people in the Indian Administrative Services have shown interest and acceptance of these ideas. He says that they have been more sensitive and appreciative than those in the senior level police services. Sharma frequently chats with the junior level staff who escort the prisoners to the auditoriums and back. Their responses are enthusiastic and positive and they often take pride in what is happening.

In Delhi too people have been shocked. He smiles that when the Delhi police was told that a troupe of prisoners was coming from West Bengal to perform they could not believe their ears. Says he:

Every time I took them out for the performance there would be huge deployment of policemen –about forty or so. So it was that kind of a reaction initially, but when they saw the performance then of course their perception changed (November 16, 2010).

Labour Time: Practice Time

At this point one wonders about the labour-time that has been taken up by dance practice, what kind of work has been substituted by this? What is the implication of that? Sharma hits at the base of our image of the prisoners cutting stone in the hill as depicted in many a Bollywood movie. He says that when prisoners are sentenced to rigorous imprisonment they are given “labour” in the offices, kitchen, in the hospital, responsibility of various wards, in the school, in the library etc. They generally would be doing some such sundry job. So it does not pose a problem if for two hours they do not do that job because they can compensate in the extra hours. Secondly he points out that they also can rehearse at night. The performers have been lodged into one ward, called the dancers’ ward, so even when they are in lock-up in the evening they go on rehearsing. Apart from this being a structural innovation albeit of a small scale, it has generated a certain atmosphere of camaraderie and creative understanding. He

says they are living together all the time, rehearsing at late hours, or early morning—whenever they feel like it.

Educational Opportunities

Apart from such relatively inconsequential jobs a number of them study, appear in examinations like the secondary, higher secondary, graduation, post-graduation. For example the protagonist in *Valmiki Pratibha* appeared for his final year graduation and post-graduation level examination from the prison. In the coming year more than a hundred prisoners from this state are going to appear in Madhyamik and Uchyamadhyamik (state educational board's secondary and higher secondary examination). About twenty to twenty-five of them are to appear for graduation-PG level again. He says,

Some of them are doing MCA, MBA—we encourage that (November 16, 2010).

West Bengal Prisoners' Welfare Fund, Self-help

Sharma has been instrumental in founding the West Bengal Prisoners' Welfare Fund. The money raised from the cultural shows is used for education of prisoners, for stipend or scholarships to their children and also for some financial support in the case of their daughters' wedding. At the time of the daughter's marriage they are given the nominal support of Rs 5000 per wedding. According to Sharma this is a beautiful example of self-help. The funds are raised through their performance and are being spent for helping their family-members, for their children, for their own education. Hence this becomes self-help that gives them an additional sense of dignity.

Handling Deviance: The Question of Honour and Freedom

Despite its introduction of therapeutic programmes the prison is ultimately an incarcerative institution. I ask him how they handle deviance in this case. Sharma reveals that they have their own informal ways of 'keeping an eye' on the activities of the inmates. He admits that one cannot be totally carefree about them.

You see one of them does some disgraceful thing or there is something which can bring bad name to the entire concept then I would be horrified, I cannot take that. So we keep an eye on their activity—there are various methods—through themselves.

They take—we have inculcated that sense of pride in them about the entire thing. So now they are very sensitive about it themselves. They know that if anything goes wrong all of them are going to get a bad name. I also give them incentives—they are after all human (November 17, 2010).

As an incentive the prisoners are given five days parole after each public performance. They are thus allowed to go home on their own without any police-escort. Previously when they went on parole they would have to bear with a policeman as escort who would have to be fed and then bribed. Now all of the dancer-inmates are allowed to go home for five days without it.

I have reposed so much of trust in them, I was advised by my officers not to allow them to go home without police escort but I said nothing doing I will. They can spend some time with their families. And they come back on time. Because you know we have reposed so much of faith in them—they also have given us back more than what we gave them. So in the case of *Valmiki Pratibha* I have allowed them reward parole—like all of them get reward parole for four to five days each, twice. I have full trust in them. I showed my trust in them and they have given me more back (November 16, 2010).

They are also given them cash reward because he says there is so much fund. B.D Sharma points out that the public performances are generating funds and it is only fair to give them their share. In a recent event a famous actor-poet Soumitra Chatterjee and actor-dancer Deboshree Roy ceremonially gave them their reward of rupees three thousand each. As prisoners, they each get only about rupees seven fifty per month if they put in labour. Three thousand means four months' wage to them. Sharma handles deviance through informal information channels and incentives that heighten the inmates' dignity.

I gave them the money and said now go home with the reward parole. They would go home, take some gift for their children and wife, and spend it on their family. Freedom is the most precious thing to any prisoner. This is my way of dealing with them. I give them lot of incentives, lot of love, at the same time keeping an eye on them. That is very important, as a policeman I have to do that. If somebody does one mischief then the entire [sentence left off] so far, touch wood, so far nothing has

happened. More than three years of cultural therapy; fifty shows- and not a thing untoward (November 16, 2010).

Dignity

I interject at this point with my own interpretation of his way of providing leadership and handling authority.

Q: I think what you are doing is basically creating a space where they can be 'right'; otherwise their life has been such that whatever they do is generally 'wrong'.

A: You see, prisoners going to college, university, school and performing—that itself is a huge message that we are giving them the dignity and that itself is changing—somebody like V who was a lifer—who had been convicted to life-imprisonment—a young boy who goes to jail talks to you all [at your university]¹²¹(November 17, 2010).

The Rich Cultural Soil of Bengal¹²²

About the novelty of the concept Sharma says:

Somehow thought that this should be tried out; it would be a beautiful thing to happen. Also I thought probably Bengal was the right place or right state to commence with this therapy—we have such rich culture in West Bengal—Tagore culture, so much of music, so much of literature, so much of dance, theatre, so much of jatra, so much of painting, so much of culture—so there is so much here. So I thought probably this is the right place to start the concept (November 17, 2010).

Travelling Without Police Protection

On his travels with the inmates without elaborate police-protection and the public response Sharma comments:

¹²¹ At my university in November 2010 a seminar was organized where Roy and Vikram came to speak on the cultural therapy programme and its impact in the correctional home. It was an open forum and Vikram was asked questions even about his personal sphere by the students. The response of the students was positive.

¹²² Sharma kept calling the state by its former colonial name 'Bengal' instead of 'West Bengal'. So I have kept the form intact.

These are things which are unfamiliar. When I took them to Delhi no police was there, when I took them to Bhubaneswar no police again. These are things unbelievable. When I take them to north Bengal again there will be no police. They are going to Cooch Bihar on the 24th (Nov) they will be going without police. I don't take my police. It's just my staff in plain clothes—not in uniform. They have become a team. They go without any police guard. When I took them to Delhi I allowed them—organised a coach for them and they went around Dilli Darshan. When I took them to Bhubaneswar I took them to Puri and Konark— like tourists, no police. They were ...they took photographs, they got themselves photographed. People were horrified to know that these 'tourist's were really prisoners. But the public supported it—they did not believe that they are rapists and murderers. I had taken them to Balurghat, North Bengal by road. All the way we had taken a bus so they stopped at a place, they had tea. When the stall owner heard about it he said I shall not charge any money. He said "what I have seen is enough!"(November 17, 2010).

He is accompanied by some policemen in plain clothes though but their number is meagre compared to the forty-fifty dancer-inmates.

Conclusion

In Max Weber's typology of legitimate domination¹²³ members of the bureaucracy would fall within the ambit of legal authority whose basis of being

¹²³ According to Weber (1978) domination is the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons. It thus does not include every mode of exercising 'power' or 'influence' over other persons. Domination ('authority') in this sense may be based on the most diverse motives of compliance: all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage. Hence every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an *interest* (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience. But custom, personal advantage, purely affectual or ideal motives of solidarity, do not form a sufficiently reliable basis for a given domination. In addition there is normally a further element, the belief in legitimacy. There are three pure type of legitimate domination. The validity of the claims to legitimacy may be based on:

1. Rational grounds—resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).
2. Traditional grounds—resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority); or finally,
3. Charismatic grounds—resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority)

In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and

obeyed lay in their holding of office in the rational-legal structure of the bureaucracy and the formal legality of their commands within its scope. B.D Sharma, being the Additional Director-General and Inspector General of Police, West Bengal, is part of the police bureaucracy and his authority is subject to rational-legal rules of office, not popularity among his subordinates. Yet his efforts towards popularising the cultural therapy programme within the Correctional Homes and the impetus given to public performance by the prisoners, creation of the Prisoners' welfare Fund, incentives for taking active part in the cultural therapy programmes and vociferous optimism bordering on activism remind the student of sociology of the gap between the 'pure' type and the empirical reality of the field. Sharma's active infrastructural facilitation is the key to the West Bengal Correctional Services Act, 1992 being implemented as per the spirit of its inception. The changes in the age-old practices within the jail among the staff, handling corruption, updating the Jail Code—all these have been steps that were hardly in keeping with the status-quoism that bureaucracy is known for. However these have been done within the constitutional framework through constitutional means. He has thus wielded his legal authority of office to enhance the well-being of his subordinates apart from fulfilling the administrative function for which he holds office. In the process he has gained the trust of the inmates to this extent that they return on time after their paroles without police surveillance. Hence one cannot say that charisma has no role here. Even if the entire effort on the part of the D.D.G. has social prestige and governmental awards as incentives the fact cannot be denied that well-being among the prisoners have been generated, the atmosphere within the Correctional Homes changed.

The concept of labour within incarcerative institutions can also be reconsidered in this context. The Marxian notion of alienating labour is perhaps not explanatory in case of the long hours of dance rehearsal for performance or general practice because through this no surplus is being extracted, rather, this has earned respect and

only within the scope of authority of the office. In the case of traditional authority, obedience is owed to the *person* of the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is (within its sphere) bound by tradition. But here the obligation of obedience is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma (Weber 1978:212, 215,216).

appreciation that society keeps in store for artists of calibre as also reward parole and money as performers. This labour, instead of alienating them, have reinstated in them inner harmony, fellow-feeling and compassion for the fellow dancer-prisoner, skill in an activity that is valued in all strata of society and has helped attain catharsis and social prestige. The options of labour within the prison are limited and monotonous. Dance as a form of activity is considered healthier than washing dishes or cleaning floors. An artists' guild-like atmosphere has been generated due to the public performances where the prison staff rehearse, perform along with the prisoners, make props and costumes and share the applause that they receive as dancers from the general public.

However not all prisoners can participate in the public performance, under-trials can only take part in activities within the prison-walls because the court has final authority over them and not the A.D.G.P. Sharma in his interview mentions only incentives and informal channels of information regarding containment of deviance without mentioning any definite example.

Institutional interventions and infrastructural facilitation, in this way, have played a major role in creating legitimate social 'space' for healing practices to take place in Kolkata.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have tried to understand sociologically the phenomenon of healing through dance. Review of literature across disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences have been undertaken to ascertain the scope and complexities involved in the subject of study. Reality on the field has been delved into through the field-based study undertaken at three sites of healing in Kolkata where dance is used for the purpose.

Individuals endowed with artistic abilities and sensibilities and pioneering attitudes along with institutional interventions and infrastructural facilitation have played a major role in creating legitimate social 'space' for healing practices to take place in Kolkata. The artists and therapists proceed with their healing activities within this 'space' of well-being that their agency and those of the beneficiaries' give rise to apart from support and specifications from already-existing institutions related to this. In this context Lévi-Strauss' observations regarding magical healing are comparable. According to him, magic, requires for its realization, a structure that "must be elaborated and continually modified through the interaction of group tradition and individual invention. This structure is a system of opposition and correlations, integrating all the elements of a total situation, in which sorcerer patient and audience, as well as representations and procedures, all play their parts. The magician is seen as a "professional abreactor". Abreaction is the decisive moment in the treatment when the patient intensively relives the initial situation from which his disturbance stems, before he ultimately overcomes it (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 181,182). He underscores that the abreaction is not just restricted to the magician, the public and the patient also participate in it. This is what explains the phenomenon of healing through magic. Within the therapeutic 'space' interaction between the beneficiaries and the healer assume definite forms which cut across societal stratificatory realities as also standards of using time and space to give rise to a zone that is 'in-between'. In a way it can be compared to the ritual spaces which were 'liminal' to use Victor Turner's (Schechner 2002/2003) term, because of the transformative function that healing is supposed to herald. The therapy or workshop setting sets into motion interaction that

is based on certain specific liberties and constraints. For example, in D.M.T session competitiveness is discouraged, 'competition on appointment' being the motto. A certain self-orientedness is promoted that is understood as 'inwardness', 'looking inside in order to know the self', in the dance classes of the cultural therapy programme within the correctional home the prisoners are treated by Roy as 'one of us'—the hierarchical relations are not played out and the police staff cannot dominate them explicitly there. Instead that 'space' necessitates the police staff to work in cooperation with the inmates, harmony being the stated motto.

In the final analysis, the site of healing is a space earmarked for renewal of agency of the beneficiary through therapeutic praxis undertaken by him and the healer. Where art is used as a medium of healing freedom and creativity are as important as cooperating with the healer—'obeying' her authority within the therapeutic setting. One implies the other. Agency is a constant in any social reality. Whatever 'isms' one 'sees' it through, our 'seeing' is also action and hence we are implicated in this great 'movement', this quality of somebody's doing that subsides into something 'happening'. Facilitation at any level, as a therapist or bureaucratic head, involves praxis that is geared to enhancing others' praxis. Through public performance the flow of action is maintained in that the beneficiaries' praxis as performers and the wider society's praxis as audience keep the circulation or exchange principle intact.

In conclusion it can be said that the term 'performance' being used by dancers, therapists and even beneficiaries have been found to connote somewhat differently than the common everyday usage of the word. To those associated with healing through dance performance is not simply an activity on-stage or elsewhere for being viewed by an audience. It can be compared to 'presentation' in that the core of performance is practice as 'active embodied doing', while the core of presentation is to show, exhibit, and demonstrate. I think more than 'performance' the concept of 'presentation' has the external observer (the bodily other) built into it. The notion of internal observer (of the interior, linked to the 'unconscious'¹²⁴) as the inner eye, is

¹²⁴ In a 1920 paper, Jung offers a richly detailed statement about the nature of the unconscious. The contents of the personal unconscious are acquired. The functions of the unconscious, that is to say the organizing principles of the psyche—are inherited.

implicated within 'performance', practice being led, expanded, restrained by it. If this is accepted then to *be* healthy, actively maintain health—is praxis as much as healing others is. This would also allow the sociological observer-participant to admit her identity as a performer within the field as also the academia to which she owes her thesis and her 'shifting identity' can be put to rest.

According to my view, the unconscious falls into two parts which should be sharply distinguished from one another. One of them is the personal unconscious; it includes all those psychic contents which have been forgotten during the course of the individual's life. Traces of them are still preserved in the unconscious, even if all conscious memory of them has been lost. In addition, it contains all subliminal impressions or perceptions which have too little energy to reach consciousness. To these we must add unconscious combinations of ideas that are still too feeble and too indistinct to cross over the threshold. Finally, the personal unconscious contains all psychic contents that are incompatible with the conscious attitude. This comprises a whole group of contents, chiefly those which appear morally, aesthetically, or intellectually inadmissible and are repressed on account of their incompatibility. A man cannot always think and feel the good, the true, and the beautiful, and in trying to keep up an ideal attitude everything that does not fit in with it is automatically repressed (Jung 1920:310,311).

The other part of the unconscious is what Jung calls the impersonal or collective unconscious. As the name indicates, its contents are not personal but collective; that is, they do not belong to one individual alone but to a whole group of individuals, and generally to a whole nation, or even to the whole of mankind. These contents are not acquired during the individual's lifetime but are products of innate forms and instincts. Although the child possesses no inborn ideas, it nevertheless has a highly developed brain which functions in a quite definite way. In his view, this brain is inherited from its ancestors; it is the deposit of the psychic functioning of the whole human race. The child therefore brings with it an organ ready to function in the same way as it has functioned throughout human history. In the brain the instincts are performed, and so are the primordial images which have always been the basis of man's thinking—the whole treasure-house of mythological motifs. (Jung 1920: 310,311). Jung adds a very important footnote:

By this I do not mean the existing form of the motif but its preconscious, invisible 'ground plan'. This might be compared to the crystal lattice which is performed in the crystalline solution. It should not be confused with the variously structured axial system of the individual crystal. (Jung 1920:311)

The primordial unconscious consists of structures and dynamic functions that are not capable of becoming conscious. These form the 'omnipresent, unchanging, and everywhere identical quality or substrate of the psyche per se' (Jung 1951:7). At this deepest level, one finds the innate affects (Ecstasy, Excitement, Anguish, Terror, Rage, Disgust / Humiliation and Startle), instincts and images of the primal Self. Emotional expression at this level can be so intense that there is little awareness of individual history or cultural meaning. Here the individual is engulfed by a primal emotion and may become merged with it (Chodorow 1991:54,130)

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