Geographies of Indian Dance: Mid-Twentieth Century Kathak on Stage and on Screen

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Statement

This thesis presents original research undertaken by the author. The work has been conducted in accordance with the University of Nottingham's Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics and in accordance with the School of Geography's risk assessment procedures.

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Abstract

This thesis engages debates around non-representational theory, subalternity and cultural hybridity in its exploration of the internationalist construction of India's classical dance, *kathak.* Embedded within the political context of late colonial India, *kathak* along with other cultural art forms (re)emerged in the twentieth century out of nationalist claims to sovereignty, having been supressed during British purifying and civilising campaigns. Inspired by my personal interactions with *kathak* as part of the Indian diaspora in the UK, this thesis traces the lives and performances of Leila Sokhey and Uday Shankar, whose western dance tours exemplified a hybridity that emerged through their own identities and, significantly, was manifest in their dance forms. Located in the digital archives – necessary due to coronavirus restrictions – Sokhey and Shankar embody the gendered and postcolonial aspects of Indian classical dance. The critical engagement with representations, developed analyses of more-than-textual sources and the exploration of new methodologies offered by digital research enable this thesis to study mobility at the body-scale and at the global scale where *kathak*'s internationalist construction is realised.

Introduction

ta thei tat – aa thei tat – aa thei tat – aa thei tat

Kathak is a dance. It is produced by particular bodily movements in a particular sequence to the specific beats of the *tabla* (drums). It has emerged as a cultural symbol for India which now resonates globally amongst diaspora communities. The above is the *tatkaar,* a rhythmic sequence used to signal the footwork for an introductory choreography for *kathak* students. The *tatkaar* was a sound that I recall from sitting on the auditorium steps in Wembley, Greater London, whilst my sisters were taught what I was told was an ancient Hindu dance tradition. It's the sound to which I clumsily stamped my feet when I, myself, very briefly took an interest in the dance before deciding dance was "not for boys". This thesis considers the geographies of this dance and traces its historical developments. In locating and focusing on historical performances of Indian dance in the West, I contribute to an understanding of the mobilities and identities of Indian bodies in the (post)colonial context. These, in turn, represent the identity and politics of a late and post-colonial India that was constructed globally despite its nationalist claims.

The word *kathak* can historically be traced to itinerant communities that practiced the art of story-telling (Walker 2009). Etymologically, *kathak* is derived from the Sanskrit "katha", storytelling, with "Kathakas", storytellers, being mentioned in significant Hindu texts such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* (Kothari 1989). The emergence of *kathak* as a distinguishable dance form, however, did not occur until the twentieth century as part of a wider cultural revival movement in India driven by anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments. The (re)emergence of *kathak* occurring within the late-colonial nationalist movement appears to be to the single commonality in an otherwise disputed history. The popular narrative traces the dance's origins from Hindu mythology and devotional dance in temples – the *Natyashastra* in particular. Whilst some histories recognise dances in the Mughal period (1526-1857) as a formative part of *kathak's* history

(Trivedi 2012), others lambast it as a period in which the dance, through the fault of its Mughal patrons, became a degenerate art form (Srivastava 2008).

The increasingly reformist ethos of the British in nineteenth century Indian instigated 'anti-nautch' campaigns – 'nautch' being an Anglicised interpretation of the Hindi word for dance, *naach*. These campaigns saw the homogenisation and consequent suppression of many Indian dance forms due to the assumed association with prostitution (Morcom 2013). Popular histories thus credit the Indian dance revival with the *gharanas* that continued to perform the 'authentic' styles of *kathak* in Mughal courts and protected it throughout British rule. A *gharana* is a 'house' that holds ownership of a specific art form, often contained within families and passed on through each generation; in *kathak*, the Lucknow and Jaipur *gharanas* are the most prominent (Kothari 1989). Shielded from the colonial gaze of the British, it is the male *gharanedars* that were able to continue practicing the dance form in private whilst their female counterparts were disgraced in public (Walker 2014b). Therefore, during the revival the authority on *kathak* fell almost exclusive on male gurus.

Recent dance scholarship, in following the critical histories of the Indian classical dances, *bharatanatyam* and *odissi*, has contributed to the reinsertion of hereditary female performers' contributions to *kathak* before the twentieth century (Walker 2014b) and the role of women in its twentieth century revival (Chakravorty 2008; Walker 2014a). Such contributions and their challenges to the 'sanskritised' histories, has been a vital inspiration for this research project. In developing the critical histories that challenges the patriarchal narrative of Indian dance history, the geographical focus of this thesis locates the international influences on *kathak,* thereby asserting its global, rather than entirely national, construction. The international has re-emerged as a scale at which governance, politics and resistance can operate (Hodder et al. 2015). The inter-war period was crucial to the making of India as a sovereign state and relied on internationalist process of governance and place-making (Legg 2019). I argue, therefore, that the construction of *kathak* as a distinct dance form in the early twentieth century was

emmeshed with the international political contexts and networks as well as the national colonial contests. Importantly, it is at the international scale that I locate inspirations for the institutionalisation of *kathak,* and the popularisation of the dance that legitimised its authority as a representation of national culture; this, though, necessitated a dialogical process of cultural negotiation and exchange, establishing *kathak* as an international, hybrid form.

Chapter 1 introduces Leila Sokhey, who adopted the stage name Madame Menaka during her dancing career from 1929-1947. Sokhey's hybrid identity – simplistically a consequence of her mixed-race parentage but rather constructed through her early education in England despite being born and otherwise living in India – was intertwined with the hybridity in her dance performances. Being strict in her use of *kathak* technique legitimised through her association and inclusion of male *gharanedars* in her dance troupe, Sokhey's performances in Europe were met with widespread acclaim, most notably winning first prize at Berlin Dance Olympiad in 1936. Her contributions to the revival of Indian dance represent a shift in authority away from the patriarchal *gharana* tradition to upper-caste, elite women, echoing wider nationalist movements that positioned women as bearers of a national culture (Chatterjee 1989).

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on Uday Shankar's international and national championing of Indian dance from 1922-1948. Shankar's hybridity emerges from the beginnings of his dance career occurring in distinctly western settings. Having spent over a decade exploring and performing 'Indian dance' before taking formal training in it, the tours in England that I study through digital newspaper archives occurred at a time when Shankar was mediating his desire to promote genuine Indian culture and his knowledge of western sensitivities. The result was a dance form that, unlike Sokhey's, made no claims to an individual classical dance form but rather was a synthesis and interpretation of Indian classical dance in general. The two chapters on Shankar are used to question the limitations of using historical representations of subaltern subjects and the ways in which non-representational theory can inform innovative and interpretative methods of research that better

locate the agency of otherwise marginalised bodies. Chapter 3, in particular, considers non-textual sources and their value in reading the moving body.

Leila Sokhey and Uday Shankar, in their own ways, embody the hybridity that proved a crucial tenet in the revival of *kathak.* Their practice, performances and their lives demonstrate the constructiveness of identity and a challenge against authenticity or cultural purity (Jazeel 2019). A recognition of the historical international processes involved in the revival of Indian dance serves to also reinforce its continued internationalism. Among the diaspora, *kathak* is used to embody and associate 'authentic' Indian culture and heritage. Therefore, whilst this is, of course, historical research, it speaks to themes of mobility and hybridity that prominently feature in the lives of the diaspora today, and in my personal memories of kathak's *taatkar*.

Setting the stage: concepts, contests and contexts

This thesis investigates the Indian moving body in late colonialism. Moving, in this context, is investigated across scales with a concern for the global mobility of subaltern bodies and the micro-mobilities of their bodily movements. The geographies of both, however, rely on the co-production of meaning through the act of motion and the active gaze of its spectators. To analyse this dialectic, I engage a range of complex theoretical lenses on mobility and postcolonialism. Significantly, it is across scales of academic thought, so to speak, that my research operates, applying broad geographical debates to the under-researched subject of the historical global movements of Indian dancers.

Concept: Cultural geographies of mobility

Movements in geographical thought

In this section, I outline the developments of cultural geography that gave rise to the body of research that made mobility its principal concern. Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson's (1987) conference paper, *New Directions in Cultural Geography*, marked a departure from the landscape theme of the Berkeley School that had otherwise dominated cultural geography during the twentieth century (Duncan 2000). Cosgrove and Jackson argued for geography to attend to culture's political contestations and plurality. Considering culture as the "constituted amalgam of human activity" and following Cosgrove and Jacksons' 'new directions', cultural geography developed into a concern with the "intersections of context and culture" (Anderson 2010: p.3). With this postmodernist influence emphasising plurality, cultural geographies have explored postcolonial, feminist and historical contexts with a focus on the appropriation and (mis)representations of culture(s) (Mitchell 2000). Jackson (2016), in reviewing his earlier interventions, has argued that 'new directions in cultural geography' have continued first through consumption geographies in the 1990s and more recently has purchase in actor-networks and socio-cultural assemblages – it is in the latter that I find an intersection with mobility within which I position my research.

In 2006 sociologists Mimi Sheller and John Urry published an essay titled 'The New Mobilities Paradigm'. This essay was the stimulus to a significant multi-disciplinary concern for movement, networks and flows (Shaw & Hesse 2010). Reflecting on the scholarly impacts of this new paradigm, Sheller (2017) identifies the 'mobility turn' as a development from the 'spatial turn' in the social sciences which began in France in 1974 Henri Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space' (Lefebvre 1991) but took flight with Doreen Massey's early attention to space (1984) and John Urry's collaboration with Derek Gregory (1985). To Kwan and Schwanen, mobility has now been elevated to "a class of core geographic concepts to which space, place, network, scale, and territory also belong" (2016: p.243). Crucially, in Tim Cresswell's (2006a) conceptualisation, mobility involves a fragile entanglement of physical movement, representations, and practices. It is not simply about the movement of bodies, but the politics of that movement which arises from mobility being an embodied practice with which meanings and representations are entangled (Cresswell 2010). This conceptualisation has been aptly deployed in various geographical investigations that contemplate how mobility constructs space (Cidell & Prytherch 2015); the ways a body practices mobility constructs its identity (Green et al. 2012); how mobility is individualised and self-transforming though embodied repeated enactments (Bissell 2014); but also differentiated through a body's status and identity (Legg 2020b).

Whilst culture had been well established as a central subject in geography and beyond in the 1990s, the turn of the century saw scholars critique these 'new directions' for "further reifying an essentially empty concept" (Mitchell 2000: p.74). Although it had been asserted that through a materialist cultural geography, culture should be understood as the (re)production of social relations embedded in the politics of place (Jackson 1989), it did little to explain *how* those processes work (Barnett 2004). The 'mobility turn', therefore, in its focus on movement should not be read as simply a call against fixed, located conceptions of place but how movement can elucidate a process of *becoming* (Adey 2006). It is in this investigation of the process of becoming that mobilities operating at a smaller scale require attention.

It is from Butler that geography found a renewed interest in the performative and, crucially, with the body as a scale of investigation (Thrift & Dewsbury 2000). Butler's notion of performativity has proven influential in many arenas of the social sciences, first in how gender identity is constructed through a series of repeated practices of which there is no objective origin for these categories (1990) and second, how these are reinforced in society through Foucauldian subjectivation and normalisation (1993). The performative, importantly, is not simply a lens to establish the socially constructed nature of the subject, but is equally concerned with the performances that (re)inscribe meaning onto the body (McNay 1999). However, it is by Butler's own admission that her work struggles with a "narrow version of textualism" (Bell 1999: p.169). The emphasis on discourse – predictably entangled with power (Foucault 1978) – presents a negative sense of agency (McNay 1999) that in some ways ignores that positive creativity of practice (Thrift 2000), and their spatiality (Brown 2000).

Non-representational theories and dance

It is in response to both a concern for the limits of static representations in cultural geography and to a recognition of the potential transgression of performance that a greater consideration of the role of bodily movements has seen increasing attention. Also referred to as a theory of practices, non-representational theory attempts to mediate the limitations of a mind/body dualism which grants an epistemological privilege to representations (McCormack 2003). Non-representational theory is "resolutely anti-biographical and pre-individual" (Thrift 2008: p.7) and focusses on external, "in which basic terms and objects are forged in manifold of actions and interactions" (Thrift 1996: p.6). This "background" of on-going activity produces human reflections, thoughts and intentions that may not be consciously noticed (Anderson & Harrison 2010).

Nigel Thrift underlines dance as a "concentrated example of the expressive nature of embodiment" (1997; p.125). Non-representational theory privileges 'play' which is understood "as a perpetual human activity with immense affective significance" (2008: p.7) and "all those responsive activities which are usually

involved in 'setting up' situations" (2008: p.147). Dance is an expression of this 'play' as it is a demonstration of un-reflected practical action (Revill 2004). Therefore, the playfulness of dance and how it centres the body as a site for experiences, emotions and senses that cannot be theorised objectively entails performance as more than just an arrangements of movement (Dewsbury 2009a). For Nash (2000), the 'play' in dance is why performance has until recently been an overlooked arena for investigation in the humanities and social sciences, but is simultaneously the reason behind the ability of dance to elude power.

Yet dance is arguably not a 'background' activity, with the movements being purposeful and intentional. Embodiment itself involves considering the body as flesh, the body as *involved* in a relation with the world and with other object, and, importantly, the body as *expressive* (Thrift 1997). It is in this expressiveness and creativeness of dance that an alternative sense of agency is presented (Thrift & Dewsbury 2000). In this reading, dance is an intentional process of *becoming* for the self. This is clear in Charlotte Veal's work where she enlists the dancing body as the instrument of research to highlight the centrality of sensuous and embodied accounts. In her example, the choreographic notebook acted as an object through which the dancing body is re-presented and re-appears (2016). Crucially the notebook served as a trace of performativity, much like my use of press reviews. In deploying the same logic to the contexts of the governance of health and wellbeing (2017) and embodying disabilities (2018), Veal explored how, through dance, new ontologies of being are constituted, and exclusionary norms and hierarchies of moving bodies are subverted.

However, in cautioning against an overly optimistic reading of dance as a site for agency, a consideration of the pedagogy and regulation historically involved in dance practice, the attachment of meanings onto *other* bodies is unveiled. Richard Schechner's (2003) idea of performance as 'restored' or 'twice-behaved' behaviour has been influential in both how the teacher scribes normative behaviour onto the student (Ghosh 2013), and how performances can be read as a vernacular practice that solidifies performatively-constituted behaviours in the everyday (Rogers

2018). Moreover, Tim Cresswell's (2006b) work on ballroom dance in the 1920s highlights how representations of dance can be discursively appropriated to regulate the bodily micro-mobilities of the dancers. In modern Western dance and ballet, Jill Green (2002) argues, the type of pedagogy in classes can be considered an example of Foucault's 'technologies of the self' in which repressive control has shifted a system of surveillance and correction (see Foucault 1977). Equally, Sally Gardner (2011) has considered how the choreographer is able to discipline and control other bodies, scribing their own meanings and norms in the process.

The complexities of the non-representational nature of dance position it as an embodied practice which is neither distinctly a site of affective play, agential resistance nor of pedagogical regulation. Dance is a form of mobility capable of genuine struggle (Veal 2018). It therefore requires a consideration of an assemblage of understandings and feelings enmeshed within each other (McCormack 2002). Mobility at the body-scale, thus extends the scope of the subject by consider both the mind and the body. In reading dance as "part of the play of representational power" (Cresswell 2006b: p.74), Hayden Lorimer's (2005) more-than-representational theory can be seen as a method to go beyond the representations corrupted by power into an affective sphere of mobility and practice. The intersections of power and representation with dance provides particularly persuasive tenets when put to work in postcolonial and subaltern geographies.

Contest: Postcolonial Geographies

Postcolonial scholarship emerged as recognition that the legacies of colonialism continue to invade knowledges and practices of our world. The is to say the 'postcolonial' refers to the critical engagement with the ongoing impacts of the colonial encounter(s) and is distinguished from this historical period often marked as the 'post-colonial' (Sharp 2009). Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978), highlighted the imaginative geography that discursively produced the 'Orient' as different to the 'Occident'. It was an engagement with Said's contribution that gave

rise to a geographical arena that pushes his conceptualisations of the 'Other', imaginative geographies and production of knowledges.

However, it is in the overlap of (post)colonial spaces, culture and identities that my research is better deployed. Tariq Jazeel (2019) traces a theory of cultural hybridity as a central concern for a second wave of postcolonial theory. Through an engagement with the work of Homi Bhabha (2012), Stuart Hall (1996) and Paul Gilroy (1993), Jazeel traces the ways in which the creation of post-colonial identities, in particular of those in diasporic communities, originate from a hybridisation of cultures. However, such identities remain situated within postcolonial politics of representation where migrants remain torn between their 'roots' and their 'routes' (Gilroy 1993). Diasporic identities, as geographical research has shown, are thus hybridised through "the contested interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement" (Blunt 2003: p.282).

I emphasise that the cross-cultural interaction is not unique to the post-colonial diaspora. The recently concluded 'Conferencing the International' project highlights the role of internationalism in world-making in the inter-war period (Hodder et al. 2015; Legg 2019). Specifically in the Indian context there is a growing recognition of how nationalism was rooted in global intellectual and political movements (Sinha 2006; Manjapra 2010).

Therefore, hybridity emerges across the national and individual scales. It is conceived both 'organically' and 'intentionally' (Young 1995). However, the crux of Jazeel's review of the scholarship that theorises cultural hybridity is that identity is a construction. In tracing the emergence and influences on so-called hybrid identities, postcolonial geographies must take caution against simply establishing a new 'authenticity' which operates to privilege certain voices and excludes others. It is with this notion that my research puts hybridity to work as a term that recognises a synthesis of practice and identities emerging from disparate antecedents and global interactions; crucially it is used in recognition of the

historical global entanglements in the production of Indian dance performance and discourse.

Subaltern studies emerged out of a recognition that Indian historiography omitted contributions made by ordinary people (Jazeel & Legg 2019). Prominent scholars in this field include Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak whose seminal work has instigated a wider field on the politics of representation in the context of colonial domination in the global South (McEwan 2009). The concept of a lack of dialogical interaction between subaltern groups and the elite which operates to marginalise the subaltern in historical production of knowledge informs how subalternity may be embodied in non-linguistic expressions. It is, therefore, in using subalternity as an interpretive lens that subaltern bodes, identities and knowledges can be located in the archive (Das 1989). Ultimately, locating my work within postcolonial and subaltern scholarship is not simply a recognition of its global South context, but of how the historical interactions and contestations informed the construction of identities and representations of knowledges of racialised, mobile bodies.

Context I: Cultural and Political History of India

In this section I summarise the political backdrop within which my research is situated. The twentieth century was one of political reorganisation as Indian governance transitioned from a colonial dual governmental system (of British and Princely India) to an effective one-party, independent democracy with strong federal powers, to a system where power lies mainly with central government often run through coalitions between national and regional parties (Chatterjee 1997). This ongoing political reorganisation occurred concurrently with changing cultural ideologies and trends within Indian society. It is within this relationship between state and society that Indian dance is framed as an expression of both national and cultural ideologies.

From 1920 to India's formal independence in 1947 – what Hardgrave and Kochanek (2000) term the Gandhian era – three prominent figures emerged within India's dominant political party, the Indian National Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru,

who would go on to be Prime Minister, represented the left wing of the party with his socialist and secular vision whilst Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who would go on to become Deputy Prime Minister, represented the right wing with its capitalist and Hindu traditionalist aspirations. However, it was the *swaraj* (self-rule) movement which found its spiritual leader in Mohandas K. Gandhi that dominated the political discourse. For Gandhi, achieving *swaraj* was bound to his vision of a "peasant society, self-governing and self-sufficient" which would be achieved though *satyagraha,* or non-violent protest (Hardgrave & Kochanek 2000: p.47). Gandhi's *khadi* (cloth) campaigns focussed on the manufacturing of hand-woven cloth, centring crafts as a political tool that built on 'constructivist' ideas of India's material and spiritual superiority (Trivedi 2007). He argued that the process of spinning cloth was a process of self-making that would reinforce the superior spiritual essence of Indian society in contrast to the West (McGowan 2016).

The early years of independent India's governance was characterised by strong regional powers (Chatterjee 1997). The result was a federal system that seemed to replicate the structure of the central government, with the Chief Minister and Governor carrying out functions much like the Prime Minister and President respectively (Bose & Jalal 2018). For Nehru, Indian identity was to remain a heterogenous concept and thus the two decades after 1947 was characterised by an improvised construction of Indianness that tried to hold together divergent considerations and interests (Khilnani 2017). The developmental state which was outward looking and secular was central to Nehruvian politics (Chatterjee 1997). The interaction between culture and politics was, I argue, manifested in clothing. Originating in the nineteenth century but gaining popularity throughout the twentieth, the Nivi sari emerged as an embodiment of a unified, global and modern India (Sharma 2019). It was framed to be representative of the new social order that was constructed in "contradistinction" to Western society yet also distinct to the tradition that legitimised the older patriarchal order (Kawlra 2014). Whilst the sari had already been established as a nationalist symbol during the inter-war period, the Nivi sari gained its popularity amongst elite and middle-class women through film, media and beauty pageants (Sharma 2019). Its symbolism as Indian

femininity and respectability was solidified as it gained popularity not only domestically, but internationally through the diaspora. Developments in the cultural objects of cloth and clothing thus exemplify how and women where positioned as representations of Indian spirituality and the household located as the place through which nationalist sovereignty was founded (Chatterjee 1989). Female dance, therefore, emerged out of an interesting extension of this, although the public nature of their performances made it a controversial ground for nationalist identity.

Context II: Historical Geographies of Kathak

Under British colonial rule, dance was of interest as part of a wider purifying and civilising campaign. Specifically, the 'anti-nautch' movement refers to the marginalisation of female performers by the British which occurred through the homogenisation and categorisation of them as prostitutes (Walker 2014b). This was done through colonial ethnographies and censuses, which classified what had previously been groups that were flexible and mobile, into a rigid category within the class and caste system. In fact according to Sachdeva (2008), female public performers, or *tawa'ifs,* in the European ethnographers' confusion, became listed as a caste group which by 1891 had become one of 216 sub-castes listed in Awadh. Whilst there had previously been distinction between higher status performers and lower ranking prostitutes, this recognition of the complexity within these groups had disappeared by the twentieth century. The categorisation of female performers as prostitutes was further solidified in the Contagious Diseases Act – passed in England in 1864 and India in 1868 (Levine 2003) – and the Cantonment Regulations which listed *tawa'ifs* as a category of prostitutes (Morcom 2013).

As such, dance in India has a long but often disputed history and in its classical tradition, eight different forms are now recognised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi (Dutt & Munshi 2010). The earlier section emphasised how "geography's performative turn offers an innovative approach to thinking about micro-bodily mobilities as they are embodied, performed and practised" (Veal 2018: p.306). In

this section, then, I further this work by exploring how Indian dance has historically either expressed or transgressed established normative ideals. Dance, the way it is performed and the way it is perceived has changed throughout centuries, largely influenced by the changes in rule over India. These changes often reflect changes in attitudes to gender, sexuality and national identity, making *kathak* and other classical dance not just representations of Indian performing arts, but of society.

Since the 1980s, there has been increasing efforts to reinstate the female *tawa'ifs* and courtesans of the preforming artists that had been referred to as 'nautch girls' by the British colonisers (Walker 2014b). In dominant narratives of *kathak*, the courtesan tradition is often relegated to a time where a degenerate version of the dance was performed, with female performers being constructed as lower class performers in comparison to male gurus (Sachdeva 2008). For Sunil Kothari, the *tawa'ifs* represented the institution of the courtesans that practiced *kathak* in a "degenerative form" that was "vulgar" and emphasised "seductive movements" (1989: p.15).

Prior to their marginalisation by the British 'anti-nautch' campaigns, female courtesans' place in society was complicated. Their role as courtesans was to entertain in Mughal courts, through dancing and singing, but they were also considered sexually available to the men in audience. Their position was, therefore, still firmly placed within hierarchies of caste and patriarchy yet, their role was transgressive when reiterating their place as influential female elites. Veena Oldenburg (1990) has uncovered the matrilineal structure of the courtesan communities, called *kothas,* in which status and power was provided to women based on their wealth and knowledge. This hierarchy and ordering of the courtesan community demonstrates the agency and power of female courtesans, whose role, contrary to colonial perceptions of 'nautch girls' extended beyond submission and sexual services.

Devadasis, like courtesans, were marginalised in society although were not considered a polluting class. Their role was to be devoted to the deity of their

temple, which granted them considerable prestige as they were deemed to be 'married' to the temple deities, therefore, unable to be widowed and thus, 'eternally auspicious' (Parker 1998). This categorisation allowed them to perform in front of men and even engage in sexual relationships without compromising their morality or purity (Srinivasan 1985). Much like the courtesans, the *devadasis* were still placed within patriarchal and caste/class systems. Sexual relations were often conducted under the temple's authority and permission, limiting a sexual partner to one of a Brahmin status who could also act as a patron of the temple.

Whilst the *devadasi* tradition is mostly researched in South India, drawing connections primarily to *bharatanatyam* (Sturman 2016), the 'traditional' histories of *kathak* outline a linear progression from temple to court to urban stage (Walker 2011). The *devadasi* history can, therefore, not be ignored when considering the narratives of and attitudes towards *kathak* today. Furthermore, the courtesans and *devadasis* were homogenised in the 'anti-nautch' movement with temple dancing considered a way to promote prostitution under the guise of religion (Parker 1998).

In the context of the nationalist movement, *kathak* was appropriated by upper class women, who would go on to promote a sanitised – or what the likes of Sunil Kothari, Ranjana Srivastava and others might describe as the original – version of the dance . It was the influence of visitors from abroad that 'orientalised' Indian dance and music, constructing a narrative of its ancient Vedic origins as part of the imagined 'Hindoo Golden Age' past (Kothari 1989). In the nineteenth century, in British debates over best governance, some argued for the need to 'orientalise' the British, with others arguing for 'anglicising' the subjects. With the implementation of English language in policy and education in 1830, this debate was essentially over (Walker 2014a). This was arguably what allowed the Indian educated elite to take the same Orientalist construction of Indian music and dance as part of their resistance to colonial rule.

Therefore, the 'anti-nautch' campaigns, although targeted towards the regulation and behaviour of women, can be more effectively seen as a remaking of national

identity and patriarchy. These narratives continued through the revival movements and persist in contemporary India. Morcom (2013; 2017) considers the controversial banning of dancing girls in 'beer bars' in Mumbai in 2005 as a second 'anti-nautch' campaign. In her analysis, she draws comparisons between the suggested dangers of men being corrupted by *tawa'ifs* in Mughal courts, to wealth businessmen being corrupted by the dancers in the bars. This example demonstrates that the approaches and attitudes towards dance that were created during the 'anti-nautch' and solidified by the revival continue today, and therefore, *kathak* and other classical dance is held to the same scrutiny – but paradoxically held as a bearer of national identity – as it was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mid-Twentieth Century Kathak on Stage and on Screen

Introducing this thesis I referred to a small body of scholarship that produced critical histories of *kathak* (Chakravorty 2008; Walker 2014a; Morcom 2013). I also drew on my personal memories which resonate with an even smaller scholarship on the diasporic connections through *kathak* (Gupta 2015; Ghosh 2013; Skiba 2016). My research bridges a significant gap between them as when read together these two bodies of literature present a history of *kathak* where global movements of the subaltern dancing body occur only through migrations in the later decades of the twentieth century. This is not a suggestion that this thesis in anyway completes a critical history of *kathak* – though I hope this work informs further research into it. Rather, in tracing the movements of two influential figures in *kathak* performance and practice, I trace the international constitution of an Indian dance whilst advancing non-representational geographies of mobility through the intersects between internationalism and subalternity.

Methodological Reflections: Doing historical geography digitally

Recent geographical scholarship has noted the lack of methodological reflection in historical geography, likely due to its assumed straightforwardness (Lorimer 2010). This assumption is a wild departure from my experience in identifying and tracing hybrid, Indian moving bodies across transnational sources situated within digital spaces. Here, I summarise the processes and challenges of doing historical geography digitally - informed by the shared experiences of geographers in the archive. Crucially, I emphasise how the entanglement between theoretical processes and experiential practice necessitates a consistent critical reflection on methodology that features throughout this thesis. In this case, informed by non-representational theories, I make crucial methodological reflections in later chapters that are concerned with the intersections of subalternity in historical records and locating the affective register in dance performances in the past. I emphasise, therefore, that the methodological reflections of my research are not confined to this section alone, but necessarily feature throughout. Rather this section operates – crucially before any empirical findings are presented – to situate methods as a critical concern for historical geographers rather than a backdrop to research findings.

In historical research, the archive is often the space in which geographers attempt to trace and reconstruct former lives (Moore 2010). For Alan Baker, this is necessitated by his declaration that "the dead don't answer questionnaires" (1997: p.231). Baker, in assessing the value of geographers researching the past, argued that "while the intangibility of the past imposes limitations upon historical enquiry, the inevitable distancing of the historical geographer from the object of study theoretically permits a greater degree of impartiality than might otherwise be the case" (1997: p.232). However, Hayden Lorimer (2010) in reaffirming the need for historical geographers to reflect on methodology in the archives also demonstrated the need for historical research to situate its findings within the context and politics of the archive itself, therefore challenging the limits of Baker's vision of impartiality. This situated approach can be achieved by recognising the

archive as a construction, locating its absences and appreciating the archive as a space that influences the research process; decisively, these apply to digital spaces as much as the physical.

Recognising the archive as a social and political construction rather than a value-free process of preservation uncovers how existing power dynamics influence which voices are privileged and marginalised (Kurtz 2001). In postcolonial research, a recognition of the archive as a tool of power that maintains an uneven historical record has urged geographers to consider the possibilities of recovering muted voices through different sources (Duncan 1999). For example, Alice Feldman (2018) uses an archive-assemblage of art making and research practices to locate diaspora encounters that have otherwise remained invisible in historical records. It is through an "affective, generative and interventionist praxis" that Feldman (2018: p.175) utilises a *de*colonial interrogation of the archive. It is this interrogation that informs my research. In particular, in locating the historical performances of hybrid, Indian bodies in Europe within their affective register, I similarly decolonise their records by unsettling their European epistemological framing. The methodological process and reflection in doing so is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. It is through this critical engagement with the records available that I also attempt to highlight the subaltern agency of Leila Sokhey and Uday Shankar; the challenges I face in doing so, however, reaffirms the now much reported problematics of archival research in historical geography outlined in this section.

Biographies have been identified as a possible source to relocate marginalised voices. For Sarah Mills (2013), biographies work to re-animate past lives as well as engaging with individual's own geographies. Whilst in this thesis biographies have proved vital in filling the gaps in the archive, Jake Hodder (2017) notes how biographies still produce a limited historical record of an individual and even a near complete record fails to constitute a subject's sense of selfhood in a unified way. Moreover, whilst Hodder makes the case for biographies offering a means to manage an abundance in the archives, the many biographies of Uday Shankar and

the limited equivalents for Leila Sokhey demonstrate that biographies, like the archive, uphold and perpetuate power dynamics encoded in gendered and racial hierarchies. Moreover, like the archive, biographies order and emphasise certain aspects of an individual's history and identity. Therefore, in this thesis, my engagement with biographies maintains a critical approach that recognises them as representations distorted by power and pre-existing knowledges.

In locating the colonial subject, in particular, Ruth Craggs (2008) has highlighted how the imperial archive reproduces imaginative geographies. The material manifestation of the empire within the archive not only serves as a lasting display of its size, but also preserves imperial coding and classification through the ordering of its objects. Gillian Rose (2000) reflects on how the archive space itself disciplines the researcher, highlighting their corporeality by demanding practices that mitigate the body's threat to the historical objects. Hodder et al. (2021) note how the transnational locations of historical material that together constitutes an international archive unveil the political struggles of twentieth-century internationalism. Together, this scholarship establishes the need to investigate the geographies in and of archives and how they influence the knowledges they preserve and produce.

The digital turn in geography has mostly referred to the research opportunities created by developments in GIS technology (Nicholson 2013). However, there has been an increasing recognition of the digital as both a method of producing new geographical knowledge and as a method of preserving existing knowledges (Ash et al. 2016). Reshaped by the closure of the physical archives in London and Leicester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, my research operates primarily in the digital spaces of the Menaka-Archive and the British Newspaper Archive. The Menaka-Archive traces the performance of Leila Sokhey in Europe from 1936 to 1938. It acts chiefly as a repository of documents related to Sokhey's European tours as well as an open source for articles and blog posts by the digital archives creators: Markus Schlaffke of Bauhaus University, Weimar; Dr Isabella Schwaderer of the University of Erfurt; and Parveen Kanhai of Rotterdam Museum. The

Menaka-Archive, therefore, demonstrates the opportunities granted by technology for collaborative, open-sourced research that encourages interdisciplinary and transnational scholarship.

The British Newspaper Archive (BNA), a partnership between the British Library and findmypast, digitises the British Library's collection of historical newspapers. Although behind a paywall, the BNA represents how the digital improves access to historical records by removing the physical barriers associated with visits to the British Library itself. Moreover, the BNA's search tool "allows marginalised individuals… to be picked out from the printed crowd where pre-digital methodologies were unable to find them" (Bressey 2020: p.3). The ability to search keywords not only reveals marginalised bodies but contributes to our historical understandings of their constructions. Although beyond the scope of this project, keyword searches uncovered the changing discourse of Indian dance in the UK. For example, a keyword search for "kathak" returned few results in the correct context in newspapers before 1950, but many from the second half of the century. In contrast "Indian Ballet" returns thousands of results, mostly from sources dated between 1850-1949. Through simple keyword searches, the digital archive illustrates the changing framing of Indian dance, a capability not easily offered by pre-digital techniques.

The Internet Archive was a third digital space I used to locate sources from India. Across these digital archives, then, sources have been obtained from across Europe and India. The digital turn thus enables international research without time-consuming and environmentally damaging travel. Digitisation enables radical new ways of locating and analysing historical texts (Bressey 2020). Of course, as with all archives, these are still vulnerable to the reproduction of hierarchies and injustices through the ordering and absences of its contents. However, I point to the Menaka-Archive and BNA's text correction function, in particular, as a demonstration of potential futures in historical research that encourages collaboration, transparency and shared global knowledges. The continued improvement in optical character recognition systems, the increasing availability

of digital sources and the wider access granted by digital spaces demonstrates the increasing value of the digital turn in historical geography, and the opportunities for new *bodies* of research it provides.

Chapter I

Dancing between modernity and tradition: Leila Sokhey in the international reclamation of India's Kathak dance

> *It is true that dance even more than other arts in our country is in a state of decay and neglect but there is no doubt that it had reached a very high state of artistic development and refinement. You have only to look up the ancient texts to see that the essential elements of laid down centuries ago have not been surpassed anywhere even today for their high standards. Though the art of the dance is decadent and the public appreciation is quite uncritical, all is not lost. There are still to be found very capable exponents of the traditional technique and if we must have a dance revival, we must learn the traditional technique from these masters and not be misled by self-styled authorities on Indian dance. This point cannot be over-stressed in an era of intense inferiority complex from which we are suffering.*
>
> Menaka (1933)

Leila Sokhey here explains her life ambition to reclaim India from its "state of decay and neglect" making reference to how the anti-nautch campaigns erased Indian dance and performance from public life, redefining them as immoral and indecent practices in the process. In what is likely the only surviving direct written expression of Leila Sokhey, writing under her stage name Madame Menaka, she highlights the need to take inspiration from the ancient texts in order to maintain the traditional technique throughout the ongoing dance revival. Crucially, to Sokhey, it is the traditional dance technique that made it an Indian dance technique. The association between tradition, culture and nation emerged in anti-colonial discourse and was particularly popular among the Bengali elite (Trivedi 2007). In her *Sound & Shadow* article she continues with a statement against Westerners who seek to undertake Indian dance, arguing their "physical build is totally unsuited" to do justice to the dance form (Menaka 1933: p.54). It is clear,

then, that Sokhey was not only hoping to popularise and revive Indian dance, but to reclaim it from those who were appropriating it as 'Oriental Dance' on the global stage. In doing so, though, Sokhey was also erasing her own Western identity. Born in East Bengal in 1899 to her Indian father and British mother, Sokhey was educated at St Paul's Girl School, London. At a young age she had taken an interest in the violin but her father, a lawyer and high-caste Brahmin, objected to her public performances (Walker 2014a). After her marriage, her husband Sahib Singh Sokhey supported her ambitions to become a dancer. Though, it was in an encounter with Anna Pavlova in London, that Leila Sokhey was encouraged to return to India to discover the traditional methods in dance (Fisher 2012).

As a mixed-race woman Sokhey's dance is intertwined with her life. It was in taking *kathak* to the global stage, earning international plaudits and, crucially, legitimising and solidifying her claim as a practitioner of traditional dance forms, that Sokhey's lasting legacy in the institutionalisation and pedagogy of *kathak* was enabled (Joshi 1989; Walker 2014a). This chapter, thus, builds on existing accounts of Sokhey's contribution to the revival of Indian dance (Banerji 1982a; Kothari 1989), particularly her role in reclaiming it as a performance practice for women (Chakravorty 2008; Walker 2014a), by highlighting how paradoxical performances and erasures of her own hybridity enabled her to purport a sense of nation discernible across the geographies of her productions; or, as Janet O'Shea terms a sense of "neo-Hindu nationalism" (2008: p.173).

Menaka in England, 1929-31

In this chapter, I consider Leila Sokhey's performances in England and during a tour in Europe. These performances, though, were not an introduction of Indian dance to western audiences, as the turn of the twentieth century saw an increasing interest from western performances into the dances of the 'East'. Western dancers such as American-born Ruth St. Denis and Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova were notable performers who took an interest in Indian dance and attempted to perform their interpretations of it. As early as 1905, Ruth St. Dennis performed her

choreography, *Radha* (Shelton 1981), and 18 years later, Pavlova performed her attempt to incorporate Indian themes in her dance with *Radha Krishna* (Erdman 1987). Pavlova's dance partner was Uday Shankar, the subject of chapters 2 and 3 in this thesis. However, Shankar at that time was untrained in Indian dance forms.

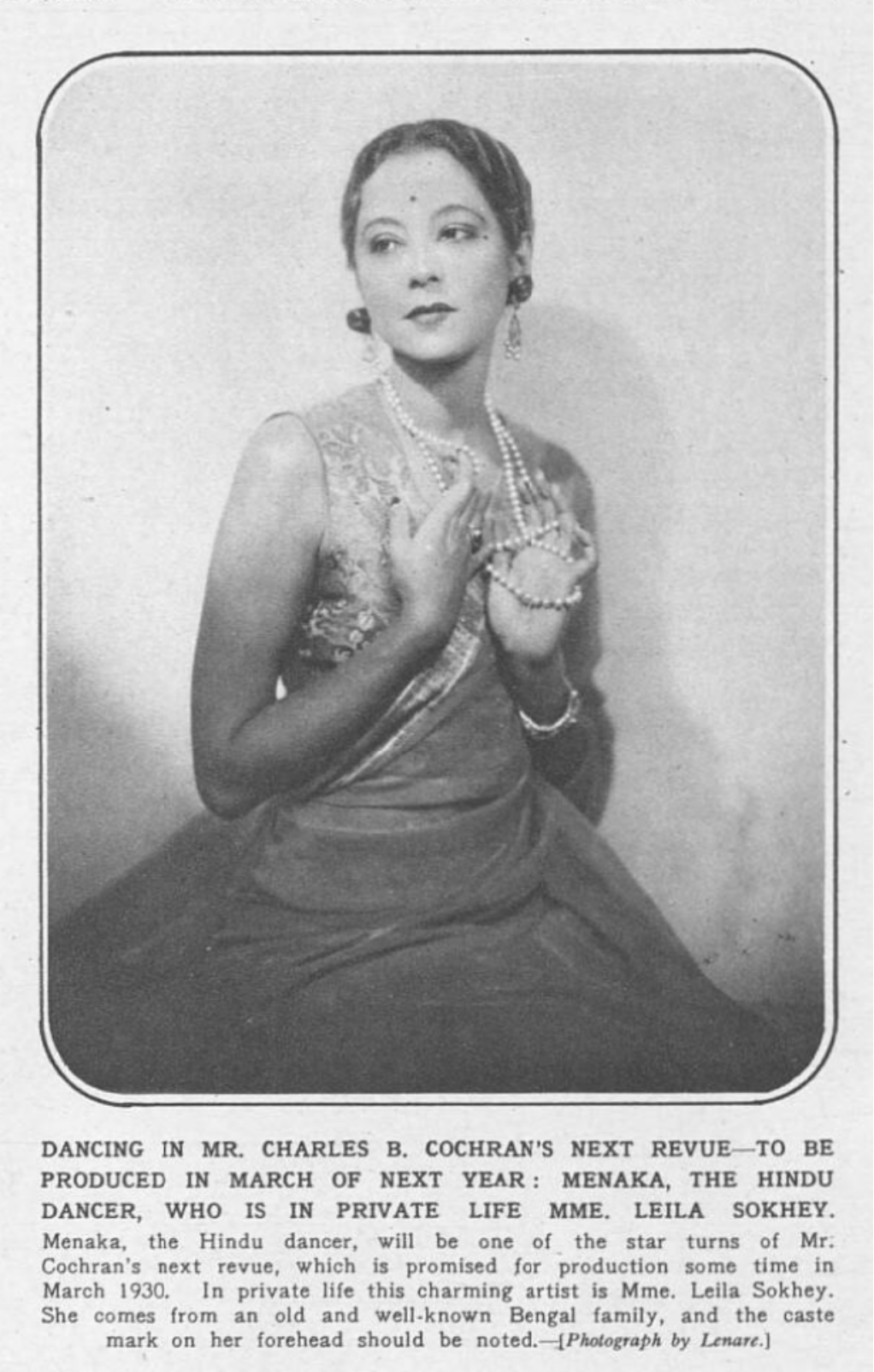
Menaka's first guru was Pandit Sitaram Prasad of the Lucknow *gharana* (Joshi 1989). Their teaching arrangements involved Pandit Sitaram Prasad travelling from Calcutta to Sokhey in Bombay; this was a reversal of *guru-shishya* norms. The *guru-shishya parampara* (teacher-student tradition) in kathak calls for an "unquestionable faith and submission to the teacher," which "not only strengthens the adherence of the performer to the strictures and aesthetics of the dance form but also towards the teacher who imparts the training" (Ghosh 2013: p.3). The guru acts an ideal of who the student should aspire to, infusing cultural meaning onto the student's identity through a body-to-body mimetic condition (Kaktikar 2014; Dalidowicz 2015). It was, as Gupta (2015) argues, a patriarchal tradition in which women were denied control over the production of *kathak*. This reversal, therefore, was significant as it demonstrated one of the many ways Sokhey used the *gharanedars* to grant her dance legitimacy whilst subverting the *gharanas* patriarchal traditions to alter the position of women in *kathak*. Sokhey was also briefly trained by Acchan Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj and Pandit Ramdutt Misra, all respected gurus of the Lucknow *gharana.* Her association and training within the *gharana* tradition was demonstrative of her own assertion that the traditional techniques needed to be studied in Indian dance (Menaka 1933).

The earliest mention of Menaka in the British press accompanies the picture below. *The Sketch*, and later *The Bystander*, indicate Sokhey's involvement in Mr Cochran's Revue, produced in March 1930.[1] Interestingly, an earlier article in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* explains how Charles B. Cochran – who had established his annual revues as a theatrical highlight throughout the 1920s (V&A no date) –

[1] Grein J. T., 'Criticisms in Cameo, *The Sketch,* (18 December 1929); 'if gossip we must', *The Bystander*, (1 January 1930).

was searching for "old-fashioned figures" as opposed to the "drainpipe girls" that he had originally cast in his 1929 revue.[2] According to *The Tatler*, Cochran discovered Sokhey whilst she was an "unofficial lady-in-waiting to the Maharani of Cooch Behar" and immediately engaged her after seeing some of her Indian dances.[3] *The Tatler* also makes references to Sokhey dancing in Paris in the interim between Cochran's engagement and the production of the revue. However, it is Sokhey's appearance as entertainment at the Indian Round Table Conference in 1931, that speaks most to what she and her dance represented.

[2] 'Tired of "Drainpipe" Girls', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, (17 January 1929).
[3] 'The Letters of Eve', *The Tatler*, (19 February 1930).



DANCING IN MR. CHARLES B. COCHRAN'S NEXT REVUE—TO BE PRODUCED IN MARCH OF NEXT YEAR: MENAKA, THE HINDU DANCER, WHO IS IN PRIVATE LIFE MME. LEILA SOKHEY.

Menaka, the Hindu dancer, will be one of the star turns of Mr. Cochran's next revue, which is promised for production some time in March 1930. In private life this charming artist is Mme. Leila Sokhey. She comes from an old and well-known Bengal family, and the caste mark on her forehead should be noted.—[*Photograph by Lenare.*]

Figure 1. a photograph of Leila Sokhey with accompanying text in The Sketch (18 December 1929).

The Roundtable Conferences of 1930-32 involved three rounds of talks that brought more than seventy delegates from India to discuss the constitutional future of British India (Legg 2020a). The Roundtable Conferences was a reaction to the first Government of India Act 1919. The Act imposed the rule of 'dyarchy' in India which devolved powers to British Indian provinces and introduced Indian ministers into government (Ghosh 2019). However, operating at different scales, dyarchy created tensions between the national scale which operated along imperial imaginings of Indian sovereignty constructed in relation to its international status, and the provincial scale which granted only limited rule to Indian ministers (Legg 2016). The Round Table Conferences, crucially, represent a "space of internationalism" (Legg 2019: p.10) Sokhey's involvement in the second sitting of the Round Table Conferences speaks to both the role of identity politics and the performative dimensions around internationalism (Hodder et al. 2015).

Leila Sokhey's performance at the Dorchester Hotel for the Round Table Conference delegates is significant not only for the reclamation of the *kathak* dance form, but for Leila Sokhey herself.[4] Firstly, her performance reinserts *kathak* into mainstream political consciousness, both for the Indian delegates to whom Sokhey's "essentially national" performance appealed strongly, and the British attendees who likely interpreted Sokhey's performance as a display of Indian dance.[5] The western media, described Sokhey as the '*Brown* Dresden Dancer'[6] or exclusively as an Indian woman.[7] Therefore, through performing an Indian dance, Sokhey's identity was performatively inscribed as Indian, ignoring any mention of her mixed-race parentage. One Indian observer was Sarojini Naidu, a poet and national figure who accompanied Gandhi to the conference as a representative of Indian women. She remarked in a letter that whilst she could not comment on whether the dance was correct according to strict canons, Sokhey's performances

[4]''Leila Sokhey', *The Bystander,* (25 November 1931).
[5] 'The "Brown Dresden" Dancer: "Menaka" (Leila Sokhey)' *The Sketch,* (25 November 1931).
[6] Ibid, emphasis added.
[7] 'A Dramatic Offer: Minorities Deadlock in India', *Edinburgh Evening News*, (14 November 1931); Harding S., 'Gesture: The Language of the Gods', *The Sphere*, (27 October 1934).

were “full of rhythmic beauty… her footwork so exquisite, her movements and gestures so supple and filled with grace” (Sarojini Naidu in Paranjape 1996: p.255). Sokhey’s performance during the Round Table Conference therefore demonstrates her successful positioning as producer of the Indian classical dance form whilst also exemplifying the role *kathak* had as a performance of Indian cultural nationalism to an international gathering of Indian nationalists.

Menaka's European Tour, 1936-37

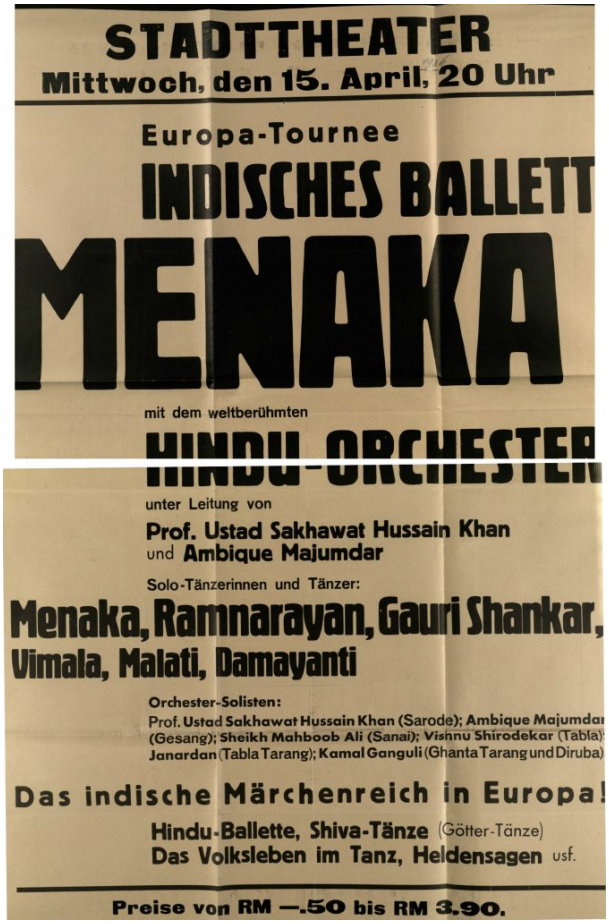


Figure 2. a poster advertising a performance at the Regensburg Theatre, Germany (15 April 1936).

Leila Sokhey returned to Europe in January 1936 to begin a nearly two-year tour. Her first visit to Europe in 1930-31 featured only herself, her dance partner Nilkanta. and singer Bina Addy. During performances in Paris, Amsterdam and The Hague, Sokhey was generally well received although some reviews were relentless in their critique, particularly these from Paris and Geneva:

> *The Oriental Mirages Dance Mlle Menaka's dances are imbued with an amateurism which lacks neither kindness nor taste; presented out of the blue in some painter's studio or in a living room, they could have been a pleasant interlude for the guests.*[8]

> *This dancer is beautiful and graceful and her talent is pleasant, but at no time did she rise to high art.*[9]

For the second tour, Menaka formed a troupe consisting of five other dancers and six musicians. Most notably in her troupe were future recipients of the coveted Sangeet Natak Akademi award, Gauri Shankar Devilal and Damyanti Joshi. However, more senior amongst the troupe was, of course, Leila Sokhey herself, and Ramnarayan Mishra. The hierarchy amongst the performers was clear in both the programmes and reviews (see figure 3) with Leila Sokhey taking the solo or lead female roles and receiving the most attention from the media. Both Ramnarayan Mishra and Gauri Shankar had solo performances but, crucially, it was Mishra who partnered Menaka and performed the lead roles in the concluding ballets of 'Krishna Leela' and, later in the tour, 'Deva Vijaya Nritya'. Despite the wide acclaim for and accolades of the other dancers, for the audience and reviewers, this was Madame Menaka's performance:

> *Then came the Menaka herself, in a colourful robe, from which her bronze-toned body stands out like a finely modelled work of art. We got to know a dancer of indescribable grace and strong expressiveness. This impression intensified over the course of the evening, even though the dance performances of the other participants, such as the graceful dainty Malati and the magnificently built slender fellows, Ramnarayan and Gauri Shankar, deserve full recognition and were met with widespread applause from the audience, everything*

[8] Levinson A., 'La Danse Mirages d'Orient'. *Candide,* (13 November 1930).
[9] A.P., 'Théâtre. A la Comédie', *Journal de Genève,* (20 September 1931).

> *crystallized around the bearer of the name, which has become a household name for modern Indian dance art.*[10]

The significance of this particular dance troupe was its role in reinforcing the diffusion of power and authority in *kathak* away from the hereditary *gharanas* (Walker 2014a). The two male performers in the troupe had traditional backgrounds. Ramnarayan Mishra was the son of Ramdutt Mishra, maternal uncle of Achhan and Lachu Maharaj of the Lucknow *gharana*; Leila Sokhey carried out her own *kathak* training by working with these three hereditary *gurus* (Walker 2014a) and is likely how Ramnarayan's involvement in the dance troupe came to be. Gauri Shankar, was the son of Devilal Shankar of the Jaipur *gharana* (Kothari 1989). However, the younger female dancers, Damyanti Joshi, Malati and Vimala were products of Leila Sokhey's own school, which at the time was based in her house in Mumbai, and had no connections to the traditional hereditary performers (Walker 2014a). Therefore, the performances of the tour were not only the choreographies of Leila Sokhey's, but so too were the performers a product of her training. This tour, then, was in many ways a realisation of Leila Sokhey's vision.

[10] 'Indische Tanzkunst im Gelsenkirchener Stadttheater', *National Zeitung,* (12 March 1936).

EUROPA-TOURNÉE 1936-1937

Gastspiel

MENAKA

mit ihrer Tanzgruppe und indischem Orchester

Programm:

1. **PRELUDE** (Orchester) . . . . . Raga Mand Bihag.
2. **KREEDA NRITYA** (Tanz junger Mädchen) . . . . . Raga Piloo
   Zwei Dorfmädchen kommen nach Ja nuna, Wasser zu holen. Ihre tägliche Arbeit wird ihnen langweilig und sie bitten ihre Liebhaber, Abwechslung zu bringen in die Eintönigkeit ihres Lebens.
   VIMALA und MALATI.
3. **MANIPURI TANZ** (Tanz in einem Dorf in Manipuri) arrangiert von **MENAKA.** Sjt. Naba Kumar.
4. **SANHAR NRITYA** (Tanz des Shiva)
   (Tandava Tanz in „Kathak": klassische Technik von Vorder-Indien).
   Nachdem er von Narada hörte, dass Sati Abstand nahm von ihrem Leben — als Opfer für Daksha — erscheint Gott Shiva, rasend in wildem Schmerz. Er vernichtet den heiligen Altar, hebt den Körper Satis und nimmt ihn auf seine „Trisula". (Neptungabel) Er denkt an viele gemeinsame Erlebnisse. Ehe er zur Meditation geht, tanzt er den Tanz der Verwüstung.
   RAMNARAYAN (aus dem Hause des Maharaj Kalka und Beenda zu Lucknow).
5. **PATANG** (Drachentanz).
   Drachen aufsteigen lassen ist ein volkstümlicher Zeitvertreib in den Dörfern Vorderindiens. „Patang" ist ein traditioneller Tanz, der das Anfertigen eines Drachen, das in Ordnung bringen der Schnüre und das Aufsteigen lassen dieses Spielzeuges durch zwei Dorfkinder schildert.
   MALATI und GAURI SHANKAR.
6. **USHA** (Tanz der Aurora) . . . . . Raga Lalit.
   („Lasya" Tanz in „Kathak": klassische Technik von Vorder-Indien).
   Die Erde erwacht. Die Bäume wiegen sich im leisen Winde. Die Lotosblume öffnet sich den schwebenden Bienen. Der Pfau macht seinem Weibchen den Hof. Das Mädchen tanzt in höchster Begeisterung dem erwachenden Morgen zum Gruss.
   MENAKA.
7. **PAVAN NRITYA** (Tanz des Vayu, des Sturmgottes)
   Indra, der Hauptgott der Hindu-Mythologie, berief sich in seiner Wut gegen Krishna, welcher herrschte über den Berg Govardhan über Brindaban, die Einwohner gegen Verwüstung zu schützen — auf die Hilfe des Vayu. Dieser Tanz schildert die Wut des Sturmwindes, entfesselt von Vayu zur Hilfe des Indra.
   GAURI SHANKAR.
8. **VIRAHA-MILAP** (Aussöhnung des Gottes Krishna mit der Göttin Radhika)
   Radhika sitzt einsam und verlassen in ihrem Blumengarten. In äusserstem Schmerz streift sie alle ihre Juwelen ab, weil ihr göttlicher Liebhaber Krishna sie verlassen hat. Ihre junge Freundin kommt sie zu trösten, als Krishna plötzlich erscheint, ihr einen Brief für Radhika gibt und wieder verschwindet. Radhika ist hocherfreut über die hoffnungsvolle Botschaft und schmückt sich erneut, um das Idol ihres Herzens wieder zu empfangen. Glückerfüllt tanzen die beiden Mädchen. Radhika erwartet Krishna, welcher zurückkehrt und sich wieder mit ihr versöhnt.
   (Eine Episode aus dem grossen Liebesgedicht von Vidyapati)
   Tanz in klassischem Nord-Indischen Stil.
   MENAKA, DAMAYANTI, RAMNARAYAN
9. **RAGA MALAKOUNS** (Ein Indischer Abend in der Regenzeit)
   In der Dämmerung eines indischen Abends... Ein Priester singt die Gebete. Die Nagaswaram wird auf der Höhe des Palasttorens gespielt. Die Frauen des Dorfes plaudern am Ufer des Flusses. Jungfrauen kommen zum Tempel, um ihre Abendgebete (Arati) zu verrichten, an ihren Füssen schwingen rhythmisch die Glöckchen — alles ist still und ruhig — plötzlich hört man aus der Ferne das Grollen des Donners und bald fällt ein heftiger Regenguss vom Himmel herab.

10. **HARAO-MEHRI** . . . . . Raga Mand.
Versöhnung eines erzürnten Ehemannes mit seinen zwei Frauen.
MENAKA, DAMAYANTI und RAMNARAYAN.

PAUSE.

11. **DEVA VIJAYA NRITYA.**
Ballett in drei Episoden. Nach der Hindu-Mythologie, bearbeitet und arrangiert von RAMNARAYAN und MENAKA (klassische Technik von Vorder-Indien).

SHIVA (Hindu Gott der Verwüstung)	Ramnarayan
VISHNU (Hindu Gott der Schöpfung)	Gauri Shankar
KAMA DEO (Hindu Gott der Liebe)	Gauri Shankar
LAKSHMI	Malati
APSARAS (himmlische Tänzer)	Damayanti und Vimala
MOHINI ROOPA und PARVATI	Menaka

(Talas-Rhythmus oder Tempo)

INHALT.

Episode I. Vishnu's Himmelspalast. Man sieht Vishnu und Laksmi, seine Gattin, und zwei Apsaras, die den rituellen Fliegenbesen hin und her schwingen. Sie sind erfreut über die Befreiung Amrits (der Nectar) von den bösen Geistern. Shiva erscheint. Die Götter begrüssen einander. Vishnu erklärt sich bereit, alles zu tun um seinem göttlichen Gaste zu behagen. Shiva fragt Vishnu die Gestalt Mohinis (der Schönsten) anzunehmen, in welcher er kurz vorher die bösen Geister besiegt und Amrit den Deva (Himmelsbewohnern) zurückgebracht hatte. Vishnu warnt Shiva, dass alle Wesen dem überwältigenden Reiz des Mohini Roop unterliegen werden. Shiva aber sagt prahlerisch, dass er nicht unter den Einfluss Mohini Roops kommen wird, weil er Herr seiner Sinne ist. Shiva wiederholt seine Bitte und Vishnu ist damit einverstanden, die Gestalt des bezaubernden Mohini Roop anzunehmen.
(Getanzt in Kerva-Tal und Dadra-Tal.)

Episode II. Dasselbe Bild. Mohini Roopa. Alle sind ausser sich vor Erstaunen. Lakshmi wendet sich ab von der unglaublich veränderten Gestalt, die Apsaras sind voll Ehrfurcht und vergessen ihre Pflicht. Shiva versucht mit grösster Anstrengung sich dem Reiz zu entziehen. Mohini wiegt sicht in ihrer bezaubernden Schönheit hin und her, verführerisch lächelnd, während ihre Augen voller Extase glänzen. Shiva erliegt. Kama Deva kommt, rachevoll lächelnd. Er sieht Shivas Zweikampf und wirft seinen Pfeil nach dem Gott. Shiva ist besiegt und von Leidenschaft berauscht, stürzt er sich auf Mohini. Kama Deva sieht mit bösartiger Schadenfreude zu. Mohini flüchtet von Shiva verfolgt. Sie verhindert Shiva sich ihr zu nähern, indem sie tanzt. Shiva beginnt auch zu tanzen und sie sprechen durch ihre Bewegungen. Mohini beschwört Shiva, sich zu beherrschen und warnt ihn, da sein Wahnsinn die Welten vernichten wird. Wahnsinnig vor Leidenschaft weigert sich Shiva, zu hören. Mohini beginnt wieder zu tanzen, damit auch Shiva tantzt und dadurch schwächer wird. Shiva wird sich allmählich seines Wahnsinns bewusst und beherrscht sich. Ruhe kommt über Shiva und er überlässt sich seinen Gedanken.
(Getanzt in Dhamar-Tal, einem der schwierigsten Hindu-Rythmen.)

VORHANG.

Episode III. Kailasa (Shivas Himmelshaus). Man sieht Shiva und Parvati. Parvati ist darüber erstaunt, dass Mohini Roop sogar Shiva bezaubern konnte; sie bittet ihn, ihr die Reize der schönen Gestalt zu erklären und die Tänze auszuführen, die die Schöpfung gefesselt hatten. Sie tanzen zusammen den Anand Tandav und alle Götter und Göttinen folgen ihrem Beispiel, als sie die unwiderstehliche Schönheit des Tanzes sehen.
(Getanzt in Tri-Tal.)

ENDE.

Menaka ist Sjt. Kanaiyalal Vakil dankbar, für seinen künstlerischen Rat, auch was Tanzthemen betrifft von Bhakti Bhava, Usha, Panghat Nritya und Gramaya Goshthi.
Die Musik ist bearbeitet von Ambique Majumdar.
Ballettarrangement und Choreographie von Menaka.
Ballettkostüme nach Entwürfen von Sjt. Maneshi Dey.
Arrangement der Solotänze von Menaka.

Aenderung des Programmes vorbehalten.

Figure 3. programme from Stuttgart, Germany (15 November 1937). Includes a lengthy narrative of the concluding ballet, 'Deva Vijya Nritya'.

Yet, crucially, this vision of Indian classical dance had various international influences. Aside from her own Western education and upbringing as well as the previously mentioned interaction with Western dance practitioners interested in Indian dance, German-born Ernst Krauss' role as tour manager is of significance. Krauss had organised Sokhey's first tour. In addition, his interests in dance performances started with a series of collaborations with Anna Pavlova, someone who themselves has many connections to Indian dance through the likes of Ram Gopal, Uday Shankar and Leila Sokhey.[11] Krauss was, therefore, another of the western influences on Sokhey's career. His responsibilities in marketing and promoting the group meant the audiences were introduced to Sokhey's performances through his framing.

The performances proved to be extremely popular. Correspondence between Ernst Krauss to theatre directors indicate that the Tour's success, particularly in the aftermath of its Berlin Dance Olympics awards, warranted a return to Germany in 1937:

> *Due to the great success of the Indian Ballet Menaka, which had theatres sold out almost everywhere during the November tour through Germany, so many requests for repetition were received in January / February that the Indian Ballet, which is currently guest in Switzerland, will return to Germany in January.*[12]

The press reviews themselves suggest the performances were well received by the audiences, often closing their reviews with accounts of the warm applause given to the dancers and musicians. The reviews also suggest that whilst the opening solo and smaller performances were enjoyed, it was the final ballets that the audiences found particularly captivating:

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[11] Kothari S., 'Pavlova and the Revival of Indian Dance', The Times of India (18 April 1965).
[12] Letter from Ernst Krauss (unknown recipient) dated 17 December 1936.

> *While the first part of the program offered smaller, sometimes quite attractive solo pieces for one or two, sometimes even three dancers, in the second there was a larger ballet from the Indian mythology of gods, which is probably the most memorable, the deepest in the reasons that seem to us labyrinthine was the leading performance of the Indian spirit.*[13]

The performance being referred to is the three-episode ballet titled 'Deva Vijaya Nritya', which received the highest award in the 'Art Dance Groups' at the 1936 Dance Olympiad in Berlin along with Leila Sokhey, Ramnarayan Mishra and Gauri Shankar receiving individual awards[14]. Sunil Kothari (1989) shows that whilst the performance itself was advertised and titled as a ballet, it was really a dance-drama; this is consistent with *kathak*'s historical connections to Wajid Ali Shah's *rahas* and etymological association with groups of storytellers.

Although most reviewers were only positive, there was an awareness of their limited ability to comprehend or properly interpret the dance. Whilst most of the reviewers were keen instead to compliment the visual and audible artistic display created by the music, costumes and dance movements, some explicitly referred to this limitation[15]:

> *The consequence of this is that - let me be frank about this - we simply cannot find access to this mysterious world. The dances that represent simple processes, such as the water-fetching girl or the dragon dance, may still work. But then we are completely in the dark, from which the pointer in the program cannot redeem us, you can only be understood by those who know Hindu mythology as we know the Bible. The most striking proof of this is that at the end of the three-episode ballet, the whole house, including the director, remained seated because no one had noticed that the dance had ended.*

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[13] 'Indische Tanz', *Münsterischer Anzeiger,* (09 March 1936).,
[14] 'Oberammergau und Umgebung', *Ammergauer Zeitung*, (18 August 1936).
[15] 'Indische Ballet Menaka', *Braunschweiger Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, (11 May 1936).

Beyond the concluding 'ballet' some reviewers were left wanting for more information to be included in the programmes:

> *Already when studying the program you had to say honestly, with most of the names you didn't know what they meant: whether it was names of places, dances or dancers or anything else, that was hard to guess. One would therefore have preferred a special introduction.*[16]

The lengthy description of the choreography, 'Deva Vijaya Nritya' in figure 3 along with evidence of the audiences not being able to fully capture the meanings behind the performances conveys the disconnect between the detail of the dance itself and the audiences' ability to follow the story. A lot of reviews reflect on this, citing the causes as either the inherent differences in dance technique between what was on display and 'Western' dance forms, or a lack knowledge of Hindu mythology:

> *The biggest mistake that German viewers and listeners from other Indian countries can make is that we apply the standards we use. Rather, one has to strive to forget as well as possible what we are used to looking for in art performance.*
>
> *Of course, none of those present will have been able to avoid the impression that these performances are something that does not correspond to our own thinking, feeling and feeling.*[17]

Nonetheless, the religious aspect of the performances was highlighted in the reviews, frequently being part of the intrigue for the audiences. These accounts were often also accompanied with the suggestion that the performance was a display of an ancient tradition that dates from "before the Bronze age" or from "millennia ago".[18] One review even suggested that the dance troupe "came from

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[16] 'Menaka – Indische Tanzkunst: Zu dem Gatspeil im Stadttheater Gelsenkirchen', *Gelsenkirchener Allgemeine Zeitung*, (12 March 1936).
[17] 'Indische Tänzer und Musiker gastieren im Deutchen Westen', *National Zeitung,* (12 March 1936).
'Gastspiel des Menaka Balletts', *General Anzeiger,* (12 March 1936).
[18] 'Menaka, *Aachener Leben Kurzeitung,* (2 February 1936); 'Indiens mystisches Lächeln Menaka', *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* (7 March 1936).

the holy banks of the Ganges"[19]. Whilst this 'Orientalisation' of the performances was not uncharacteristic of its time, especially in a time where Germany was heavily interested in folk culture, this emphasis on *kathak's* temple origins is consistent with traditional narratives of its history that place its origins with the *Natyashastra* (Thobani 2017). However, the recently emerging alternative histories would instead argue this was merely a part of the twentieth century process of 'sanskrit-ising' the dance (Walker 2009). In fact, one of the aims for Leila Sokhey was to "express the life and emotions of our nation and not be mere ethnographic posturing" (Menaka 1933).

This desire to perform as much to inform as entertain is apparent in the European Tour. In addition to the 'ballets', the smaller choreographies also have strong religious elements which clearly resonated with audience. Therefore, the exoticisation and Orientalisation of the performances that is apparent in the reviews is, at times, a product of the wider context of 'Western' perceptions of non-Western society:

> *With the aesthetic talent of the primitive, the dance of the Indians is trained to the highest art, and while many other arts are still at lower development levels, the art of rhythmic movement is practiced with an extremely strong emotional sympathy.*[20]

Importantly, though, it is at other times the result of an effective promotion of a narrative that presents Leila Sokhey as not just a performer/ choreographer, but a custodian for a lost and tarnished Indian art of which her dance troupe is reviving by reconnecting it with its sacred origins:

> *In an essay added to the program, it says that the dancer Menaka, who belongs to a high Brahmin caste, renews the Indian dance art that has become an ancient curiosity, restores the classic simplicity of the rich*

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[19] 'Indische Tänze: Gastspiel der Tanzgruppe Menaka im Stadttheater', *Westfälische Zeitung,* (7 Match 1936).
[20] Ibid.

variety of movement, pose and rhythm and long forgotten topics from Indian mythology.[21]

Of course, the specific combination of National Socialist ideological interest in folk culture and Aryan racial purity (Kamenetsky 1972) is likely to be a contributor to the resultant emphasis on the religious and ancient origins of the dance in the press reviews. However, I would suggest this was used more as a marketing ploy to attract audiences, as evidenced most plainly by Ernst Krauss' closing a letter to a prospective theatre, *"Ausserdem: Völkische Kunst!"* ("Also: folk art!") and, therefore, it should not distract from the clear motivation of Leila Sokhey to promote her Sanskrit-ised version of the dance.

A subaltern biography: Damyanti Joshi's Madame Menaka

The only biography of Leila Sokhey, which is titled 'Madame Menaka' is written by her student Damyanti Joshi. Joshi, as has been mentioned, was one of the original members of the dance troupe that toured Europe, who then in her own career found success which resulted in her own recognition by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. The short book details Joshi's first-hand experiences of Sokhey and is a key source of information in documenting her life including sections that detail the dance, music and décor of her performances; her early influences; her tours abroad; and her dance training centre, Nrityalayam. Crucially, though, it is in the biography that Sokhey's own written expression is preserved. Sokhey's article titled 'Dance in India' was originally published in *Sound & Shadow* but its inclusion and, ultimately, preservation as an appendix makes Joshi's biography a more complete account of Sokhey's contribution to the revival of Indian classical dance.

This chapter opened with a citation from Sokhey's article. In doing so, the chapter was framed through Sokhey's vision for the revival of Indian classical dance. However, in the European press reviews, Sokhey's voice is hidden. The reviewers comment on 'Menaka', her performance and, sometimes, her role in popularising

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[21] 'Indiens mystisches Lächeln', *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten,* (7 March 1936).

Indian dance. However, these are their interpretations and, thus, there is a challenge in locating Sokhey's own agency through the reviews. This, I argue, speaks to Sokhey and her troupe's, subaltern status. In responding to Ranajit Guha's (1988) call for a writing of 'history from below' I use Joshi's biography as means to read the archive with an interpretative lens to locate the otherwise absent and silenced subaltern agency.

Damyanti Joshi's biography, and the included autobiographical article by Sokhey, is therefore a rare direct account of subaltern voice. As a source of knowledge, the autobiography serves as a valuable insight into the specific movements of Sokhey for her performances in India and abroad. Whilst I do not wish to understate the difficulty of locating the voice of a subaltern woman, something which has long proved a challenge within subaltern scholarship (Spivak 1985; Parashar 2016), in following Tariq Jazeel's (2014) call for a critical dialogue between subaltern studies and geography, I instead highlight how despite such an explicit direct expression, Leila Sokhey's subalternity pervades both spatially in the West, and temporally in the archive. In the analysis of the European Tour, sources have exclusively been media coverage in newspaper reviews or the letters in masculine voice of Ernst Krauss. It is therefore in gendered and racialised politics of archiving (Moore 2010; Hodder et al. 2021) that Leila Sokhey's voice emerges only through the writings of another subaltern woman.

An *inter*nationalist resolution? Reframing gender in dance and nation

Here, I consider how Sokhey's performances abroad reflect and transgress existing conceptions of womanhood in during and after colonisation of India. First I pay close attention to Partha Chatterjee's influential essay titled, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' (1989). Writing in response to Ghulam Murshid's argument that Indian nationalism effectively halted the modernising of women's roles in society, Chatterjee draws on Sarkar by instead positing that modernisation continued but within the nationalist's framework. Whilst Murshid

considered the nationalist pursuit of preserving traditional roles as being essentially anti-modernisation, for Chatterjee it was a matter of developing within a framework where the spiritual and the material are distinct. The binaries of home/world, *ghar*/*bahir,* spiritual/material and ultimately, male/female thus became the framework of the nationalist vision of India. Nationalist resistance was thus built around the idea that the spirituality of the East was superior to that of the West and therefore, it was "necessary to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture" (p.121) It was the inner, that constructed a 'true self' whilst the outer was something within the material domain that can be adapted to. As a result, the home emerged as the principal site for expressing the spiritual qualities of the national culture. It was, therefore, the woman's role to protect and nurture this spirituality whilst men had to face the 'burden' of adapting within a westernising material world. As Chatterjee notes that the nationalist framework for "the women's question" was definitively middle class. This was most demonstrated by shifting attitude to the domestic space that occurred with the growth of the middle class in major cities such as Bombay and Ahmedabad (McGowan 2016). Whilst there was a desire to maintain the traditional elements of India society, the nationalist movement adopted a 'new patriarchy' in which a new 'respectable woman' emerged. This *bhadramahila* was constructed against the 'common' woman and the woman of the old indigenous patriarchy.

The anti-nautch movement instigated by the British Raj throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century supressed female solo performances, homogenising them with prostitutes. Particularly, it was the courtesan tradition that drew the ire of colonial officers. These performers were often part of lower caste wandering tribes and women who had 'fallen' from mainstream society through failed marriages or had been widowed, something considered inauspicious at the time (Morcom 2013). Their role as courtesans was to entertain in Mughal courts, through dancing and singing, but they were also considered sexually available to the men in audience (Walker 2014b). However, the courtesan tradition involved a hierarchal structure that granted significant agency and power to some women (Oldenburg

1990). The courtesan communities were matrilineal, with household establishments called *kothas* (Morcom 2013; Oldenburg 1990). These *kothas* were headed by an older woman, the *chaundhrayan*, who when younger would have been "a famous, beautiful and talented courtesan who, having garnered enough wealth had her own apartments in her old age" (Sachdeva 2008: p.17). The *chaundhrayan,* using her accumulated wealth and with the support of patrons (wealthy men of the court, including the king) would house and train her daughters and other women.

Damyanti Joshi, student and member of the European troupe, argues that despite the laurels the Menaka Indian Ballet received, Sokhey's significance is mostly "to be seen in the steps she took towards institutional teaching of dance and music" (Joshi 1989: p.7). Furthermore, in Margaret Walker's *India's Kathak Dance in Historical Perspective*, Leila Sokhey is the primary subject of the chapter titled, 'Classicization and Curriculum'. However, this tour was not just the precursor to Sokhey's later efforts to formalise *kathak* teaching but also represented the ongoing flux in women's roles in the transition between colonial and independent India to the replacement of women in the performances and teachings of kathak. This was achieved not only through her own role as lead performer and choreographer, but also through how the troupe was structured. Whilst the male performers were established through the *gharanas* they were associated with, the supporting female dancers were exclusively Sokhey's own students.

Crucially, then, Leila Sokhey demonstrates and intersect between the *bhadramilla* of the new patriarchy and the *chaundrayan* who acted as a guru to the younger women in her troupe. As a woman, Sokhey's involvement in the movement that positioned classical dance as a tool in the "nationalist conception of 'essential cultural difference' in the struggle against British colonialism" was controversial at least (Chatterjee 1993; p.26). Sokhey as an educated, Brahmin woman successfully presented herself as an authority figure in *kathak* discourse and practice (Walker 2014a). During her tours, despite the similarities in the hierarchy of female performers to the courtesan tradition, *kathak*'s association with what

had been labelled its degenerate past was entirely eradicated. As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, her European audiences instead placed emphasis on the supposed ancient and spiritual origins of the dance Sokhey had promoted. Significantly, the acclaims she received during her European tour granted herself and her troupe legitimacy and recognition as practitioners of Indian classical dance. I argue, therefore, that by performing in Europe Sokhey was both geographical and societally distant from the courtesan tradition. It was in the spaces of the European tour that was able to maintain that her dance was traditional whilst simultaneously erasing parts of its history. Consequently, Sokhey's success in popularising *kathak* confirms these international spaces as spaces in which the *kathak* we see today was constructed.

Hybrid dance forms: revival, reinvention and reclamation in Leila Sokhey

This chapter, through the dance and life of Leila Sokhey has emphasised the role of the 'global stage' in the revival and popularisation of North India's *kathak*. In many ways, the geographical lens used in this chapter contributes to the alternative narratives of the historiographies of *kathak* presented by Pallabi Chakravorty and Margaret Walker who have reinserted the role of women in production of *kathak* and also highlighted how the dance form emerged as a category in the context of anti-colonial resistance. In highlighting the global mobility of Leila Sokhey – a key figure in the reclamation of dance for women as well its revival after the 'anti-nautch' campaigns – I challenge the notion that *kathak* re-emerged in the classical dance revival as a distinctly Indian art form. This is not to say, the specific dance technique itself is not derived from Indian dance and practice, but the revival itself depended on the likes of Sokhey to legitimise it through tours in the West.

Leila Sokhey's own identity, then, was crucial to her role in the reclamation and revival. The departure from solo performance to dance-dramas and the renaming of these dance-dramas as ballets was reflected in her own hybridity through not

necessarily her mixed-race parentage but her western education that exposed her to the western theatrical and performance traditions. Equally, it was her status as an upper-caste, wealthy and educated woman that allowed her to transgress the gendered boundaries imposed on women by the colonial anti-nautch campaign. As evidenced by the lack of her own agency within the archive, emerging only through the published work of her student, Sokhey's contributions to the revival of *kathak* remain heavily gendered.

Chapter II

Representing an-'Other': textual representations of Uday Shankar in England

> *Shankar was not Western in ideas, principles and in method of presentation. He was absolutely an artiste dedicated to the fundamental oriental ideals; but a devoted dynamist. He endeavoured to execute the rhythm of the movements of daily life, the life's eternal motive force, through dance, in a progressive process adhering to the established artistic canons*

(Banerji 1982b: p.5)

Uday Shankar, it can be argued, was someone who lived between two worlds. Discussions of the revival of *kathak* rarely omit the contributions of Uday Shankar to the revival of Indian classical dance more broadly (Banerji 1982a; Kothari 1989). Shankar's dance style cannot be placed distinctly within any of the formally recognised classical styles. Instead Shankar developed a unique style that drew inspiration from across the canons of Indian classical dance. Nonetheless, his part in the revival cannot be understated insofar as taking Indian culture on to the global stage.

The first section of this chapter, relying on biographical texts and contemporary scholarly work about Uday Shankar, positions his own identity as a hypermobile body whose life is characterised by travels, spiritually and physically, between the 'West' and the 'East'. Shankar's first professional exploits in dance occurred in England. Over a decade, he performed in and explored Europe and the United States before returning to India. It was with this homecoming that Shankar began his life work to present and promote Indian culture as he envisioned it around the world. The second section uses press reviews from Shankar's performances at the Comedy Theatre in London and at Dartington Hall in Devon in 1934. These sources, taken from the online British Newspaper Archives, are useful to a small extent in

interpreting what the performances staged by Uday Shankar were and, to a much greater extent, how they were received by the western audiences.

My contribution to an already substantial collection of work on Uday Shankar lies in my interpretation of these press reviews available from the digital archives. As David Spurr notes about the nature of cross-cultural journalism, "interpretation [has] real consequences for living people who [have] little control over how they [are] represented to more powerful nations and cultures" (1993: p.8). Whilst Spurr's focus is on literary journalism, some of the press reviews included in this chapter are stylistically similar in how their imaginative geographies of the 'Orient' appear to be the framing within which their analyses of Shankar's performances are applied (Said 1978). First, such an analysis of these press reviews conveys the pervasiveness of colonial discourse in western accounts of non-western cultural products and performances. Second, given that embodiment is relational, interactional and expressive, reading Shankar through the lens of the 'body-subject' requires a knowledge of his 'affect' on those who he performed to.

The second is an important juncture as it establishes Uday Shankar's agency as a central concern in my own analysis. To do so I expand non-representational theory by creatively applying it to the textual representations it is so often used to critique. By taking a non-representational approach, textual representations can be analysed with the same focus on emotion and affect, rather than simply its supposed "truths" (Fendler & Smeyers 2015). Whilst aware of the limitations of historical representations, I remain determined to locate Shankar's agency within them. Moreover, the significant result of not simply rejecting representations but, in fact, decentring the subject of the text in order to go beyond them, uncovers a form of subalternity experienced by Shankar.

Ultimately, this chapter positions Uday Shankar as a self-appointed ambassador for Indian culture in the West. His dance was the medium through which he expressed his vision of Indian modernity in contrast to the rigidity of the unchanging classical canons whilst maintaining his claim to authenticity. Furthermore, in taking a non-representational approach, this chapter serves to

imagine how geographers might seek to study the bodily-mobilities of dance whilst constrained by the intrinsic textuality of scholarly work.

Early life and tours: biographing a moving body

Uday Shankar was born on 8th December 1900 to a Brahmin family in Udaipur. His father, Shyam Shankar was a teacher initially but through a meeting with the Maharaja of Kashmir, Pratap Singh, and his brother, Amar Singh in 1896, Shyam Shankar began his professional relationship with Indian state government (Erdman 1987). At the time, the subcontinent of India was divided into British India, under the imperial control of the British Empire, and the Princely States, regions unconquered at the time of the Government of India Act 1858 which had a 'quasi-sovereignty' (Legg 2014). Eventually Shyam Shankar ended up in the employ of the Maharaj of Jhalawar, progressing through various roles until he eventually was appointed as foreign minister, necessitating a temporary move to London in 1911. This move was soon made permanent after Shyam decided to instead pursue a career in law and as a writer. After qualifying as a barrister at Middle Temple, lecturing on Indian affairs and even publishing his first book in 1914, *Buddha and His Sayings*, Shyam Shankar joined many of his compatriots in attempting to find ways to raise money for the Indian troops conscripted into the British Army in the First World War, specifically for soldiers returning to India with lasting injuries and the families of those who were killed (Abrahams 2007).

Shyam Shankar began his involvement in theatre, staging short performances to the Anglo-Indian community in London. After the war, he continued balancing his professional life as a lawyer and political commentator, frequently networking with both British and Indian elites, and a theatrical life staging musical productions. It was in 1920 that Uday Shankar joined his father in London to be admitted at the Royal College of Art to develop his painting skills. In the same year, Uday Shankar appears in press reviews for his performances on the *Dilruba*

(bowed Indian instrument).[22] In 1922, in his father's own production, *Glorious East in the West,* Uday Shankar made his debut as a dancer before Western audiences (Abrahams 2007).

Meanwhile, the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova was on her own campaign to bring 'Oriental' dances to the West. After a long tour that included a 1922 visit to India, Pavlova was inspired to create performances based on cave paintings in Ajanta. For her performance, *Ajanta's Frescoes,* entirely new music was composed along with elaborate scenic paintings and motif.[23] The *misè-en-scene* of the performance achieved high praise although the new dance itself received mixed reviews.[24] However, its limitation as being a non-Western dance performed by Western dancers – Pavlova and her established dancer partner, Novikoff – was not lost on the reviewers:

> *But the* ***inability of the ballet to render the spiritual significance of its theme*** *does not detract from the charm of its setting the rhythmic effectiveness.*[25]

Pavlova had failed to witness any dances other than street *nautch* performances during her visit to India but also refused to use dancers directly from India in her ballets (Money 1982). Therefore, when through a series of aristocratic introductions Pavlova became acquainted with Comalata Bannerjee who in turn introduced her to Uday Shankar, Pavlova was eager to include the young painter in her troupe. Whilst Uday was keen to join, Shyam Shankar and Uday's art mentor from the Royal College of Art, William Rothenstein, required convincing. Pavlova was determined to have Uday Shankar, who offered the appearance of an authentic Indian dancer whilst being familiar to Western styles of performance, choreograph

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[22] 'Indian Music: Novel Features at London Concert', *Pall Mall Gazette,* (30 September 1920).
[23] 'Across the Tea-table', *Westminster Gazette,* (7 July 1923).
[24] 'Madame Pavlova as a Fairy Doll: Delicious Dancing at Covent Garden', *Westminster Gazette,* (11 September 1923); 'Pavlova's Huge Audience: Dancing as Wonderful as Ever', *Daily Herald,* (11 September 1923), 'Pavlova Season: From Triumph to Triumph', *Westminster Gazette,* (17 September 1923).
[25] 'The Return of Pavlova', *Truth,* (19 September 1923), emphasis added.

and perform in the Indian themes in her composition, *Oriental Impressions*, and in a letter to Shyam Shankar made the claim that:

> *"[Uday Shankar] is a born dancer. He must dance. Oh, he must dance! He must not only be permitted, but should be encouraged by all possible means to dance. It is for him to show the whole world how artistic, how beautiful, how charming, how majestic, and how soulful is the message of Hindu dance!*
>
> (cited in Abrahams 2007: p.377)

Despite him having no formal dance training nor being familiar with ballet or Western concert dance, Pavlova entrusted Shankar with choreographing and performing in two dances. Shankar thus choreographed *Radha Krishna* and *A Hindu Wedding.* Shankar claimed that the choreography for *A Hindu Wedding* was formed through his memories of weddings in Rajasthan he attended in his childhood. In addition, Pavlova's motivation to include *A Hindu Wedding* as part of *Oriental Impressions* was inspired by her own experiences of dance in India (Erdman 1987). However, Ruth Abrahams (1984) has suggested that the inspiration for the choreographies were, in fact, taken from the pencil sketches Shankar made of paintings in the British Museum. It is likely that Shankar made such pencil sketches whilst at The Royal College of Art. William Rothenstein was a teacher at the art school whilst Shankar was a student and having formed a relationship with Indian poet and anti-colonial nationalist, Rabindranath Tagore, Rothenstein was an enthusiastic admirer of Indian art and culture (Lago 2004). Having taken an interest in Shankar's development as an artist, Rothenstein was heavily critical of Shankar's initial exploration of European painting techniques and instructed him to take a month's leave to explore the Indian art collections at the British Museum (Bhattacharjya 2011). Rothenstein's ambition for Shankar was for him to recapture the soul of India in his art (Khokar 1983).

In both William Rothenstein and Anna Pavlova, then, Shankar had Western mentors whose own fascination with Indian culture not only led him towards a search for authenticity, but in fact introduced him to Indian culture through an

Oriental lens. The miniature paintings that Rothenstein urged him to use as inspiration were, after all, part of a western construction of Indian culture; museums implicate a curatorial practice that often fails to critically engage with questions around representation and appropriation (Geoghegan 2010). When he choreographed his two dances for *Oriental Impressions,* Uday Shankar lacked formal training in Indian dance, had been mentored by people without direct links to Indian dance and gained inspiration from paintings and objects curated by British colonial powers. The authenticity of Shankar's contributions to Pavlova's production was not gained through the dance style and technique – after all, Anna Pavlova who also lacked Indian dance training partnered him in *Radha Krishna* – but from his iconicity as Indian in physique and movement as well as the music composed by Comalata Bannerjee (Erdman 1987; Bhattacharjya 2011). Pavlova's desire to maintain this version of authenticity led her to prohibit him from contributing to other parts of her production or take part in company classes in fear of the ballet technique disrupting his 'oriental style' (Abrahams 2007). These restrictions contributed to Shankar's eventual departure from the company a year and a half after joining.

Shankar had been aware of his inexperience and ignorance of Indian dance, so what followed his departure from Pavlova's company was years of touring Europe in order to develop his own style. In 1923, art historian A. M. Coomaraswamy gave Shankar a copy of his book, *The Mirror of Gesture* within which Shankar was drawn to photographs of *Nataraja* – Lord Shiva in his divine dancing form (Bhattacharjya 2011). Taking inspiration from these depictions, Shankar found a new source of cultural authority in his choreographies. There are limited records of his activity between 1924 and his first return to India in 1930, but this appears to be the period in which Shankar realised his objective of constructing himself as 'modern Indian artist' (Randall 2003). Therefore, in his search for Indian dance technique, Shankar was also realising own hybrid identity. The Orientalism that was impressed on him by his earlier mentors stayed with Shankar even in his later tours with an all-Indian dance troupe; arguably it was key to his success in the West as his performances aligned with the audience's expectations and were still

palatable to their tastes (Purkayashta 2012). Uday Shankar's interpretation of 'authenticity' was key to his development as a leading figure in the revival of Indian classical dance, not just in the way he choreographed his 'Indian Ballets' but his opinions on the future of an independent India.

'Uday Shankar and his Company of Hindu Dancers and Musicians' in England, 1934

Figure 4. The Sketch (25 April 1934).

In 1930, when Shankar returned to India, as well as discovering and taking inspiration from indigenous dance forms, he successfully assembled his own all-Indian dance troupe who would form the first ever all-Indian dance company which debuted at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and was advertised as *Danses et Musiques Hindoues par Uday Shank-kar et sa troupe* (Hindu Dances and Music by Uday Shankar and his troupe). The exception in the troupe was Simone Barbiere, better known as Simkie. During his tours of Europe after leaving Pavlova's company, Shankar met Paris-born Simkie, whose dance teacher

suggested she attended the classes Shankar was holding. Eventually, Simkie became familiar enough with Shankar's repertoire to take her place as his dance partner. To the audiences, though, Simkie was considered one of the "Hindoo" dancers despite being a Frenchwoman (Erdman 1987).[26] In total, Shankar's company had 11 members: his three younger brothers, Rajendra, Debendra, and Robindra (who would later achieve international fame as Indian musician, Ravi Shankar); one female cousin, Kanak Lata; two male cousins, Kedar Chowdhury and Bechu; a friend, Brijo Bihari; classically trained musician Timar Baran Battacharya; Vishnu Das Shirali, a young Indian musician from London; and Simkie with Shankar as the lead dancers. According to Shankar, all members danced but nine were primarily musicians.[27] Apart from himself and Simkie, none had previously performed in public and were taught by Shankar and Simkie in classes, with Simkie taking the lead on choreographic instruction.

[26] 'Hindoo Dancers: At the Comedy', *The Era,* (24 April 1934).
[27] 'Language of the Dance: Movements Which Speak', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail,* (09 May 1934).

Uday Shan-Kar and girl members of his company of Hindu dancers and musicians, who opened a season at the Comedy Theatre last night.

Figure 5. Daily Mirror (20 April 1934).

Shankar in between India and the West

As explained, Shankar's development into a company leader and star performer occurred on the stages of Europe and America with Anna Pavlova's company, and his ideas on the interchange of culture between India and Britain was influenced by Pavlova and his art mentor, William Rothenstein. Thus, by the time he opened at the Comedy Theatre on Thursday 19th April 1934, Shankar had experience and knowledge of what Western audiences enjoyed and, crucially, expected from Indian performers.[28] But, through his introduction to Indian dance technique during his tour of India and the added legitimacy granted by his 'all-Indian' troupe, this time Shankar had a real opportunity to present a genuine Indian cultural art form to the West. Shankar was aware that the audience was unlikely to appreciate the meaning behind his newly learned dance movements; a limitation that the audience could certainly be aware of:

> *Their dancing and colours are beautiful. But, watching them, one had the feeling that appreciation merely of that was not enough;* ***and that one was looking at something with meaning one did not even begin to understand.***[29]

Joan Erdman (1987) has reflected on this balance that Shankar negotiated through a theory of translation. Erdman argues that in his performances, Shankar considered both the Indian narrative and the interpretation of such narratives by western audiences. In order to be successful, then, "the narrative sense must reflect the conventions of both the source culture and the culture of translation – the work must be 'from' and yet be 'at home' on a foreign stage. Thus, the balance between a western performance with an Indian theme or veneer (an interpretation) and eastern performance accessible to western audiences (a

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[28] 'A Brahmin Performer', *Nottingham Journal,* (20 April 1934); a photo captioned: "Uday Shan-Kar and girl members of his company of Hindu dancers and musicians, who opened a season at the Comedy Theatre last night" in *Daily Mirror,* (20 April 1934).
[29] 'Dancers from India', *Yorkshire Evening Post,* (24 April 1934), emphasis added.

translation) must be calculated and strategically determined" (Erdman 1987: p.68).

The near decade spent travelling and developing his technique demonstrates that Shankar was not merely transitioning from the Oriental ballet dancer in Pavlova's company to a fully trained Indian classical dancer. Rather Shankar was looking to find the balance between, in Erdman's words, an interpretation and translation of Indian dance. This is most clear not in his admirers' accounts but in his critics':

> *Uday Shankar's dance considered as some kind of dance, was tolerable. But considered as Indian dance... it was absolutely unconvincing except for the costumes, décor, and the music.*
>
> - K. Sheshagiri in *Sound and Shadow,* no date (quoted in Khokar 1983; p.79)

> *In a matter like this, appreciation from [the] West is not everything, for the public there knows little about the genius and scope of our art forms. Uday Shankar is ambitious and complete success in the dances he attempts is possible only if he equips himself with thorough knowledge of the art.*
>
> -Ganadasa in *Triveni-Journal of Indian Renaissance, July-August 1933 issue* (quoted in Khokar 1983; p.79)

These Indian reviews of Shankar's dance style speaks directly to his authenticity, criticising Shankar's reliance on spectacle rather than choreography to present Indian culture. Yet, his western audiences seemed to appreciate Shankar's efforts to not simply replicate choreographies of Indian dancers:

> *The offering is quite unique. Hindu art, in its absolutely natural form, is somewhat incomprehensible to an Occidental audience. Mr. Shan-Kar* ***has translated the traditional into a form of his own making*** *which any audience could understand and enjoy.*[30]

[30] 'Translated from Hindu: Mr. Uday Shan-Kar and Company at the Comedy Theatre', *Hendon & Finchley Times,* (27 April 1934), emphasis added.

Therefore, despite failing to be endorsed by his Indian critics, it is clear that the disagreement was based not on Shankar's execution due to a lack of training, but on his vision for bringing Indian culture to western audiences. Shankar's rise in the 1930s was at a time of revival and reinvention for Indian classical dance that emerged out of the anticolonial and nationalist agenda. Therefore, it was important to at least retain, if not strengthen, the spirituality of Indian culture as produced in art, dance and crafts (Chatterjee 1989). It is, therefore, unsurprising that when, for many, the re-association with Hindu and ancient tradition was pivotal for the revival of classical dance, Shankar faced criticism when his choreographies interpreted rather than replicated such dance techniques.

It is worth noting that Shankar and his company's reception both in England and India was not unanimous. Rabindranath Tagore praised Shankar's creativity and efforts to revive Indian classical dance. In a letter he wrote to Shankar, Tagore encouraged him to continue his creativity and resist imitations of the past (Purkayashta 2012). Meanwhile, some reviewers considered at least some, if not all of Shankar's company's performance monotonous.[31] Nonetheless, Shankar's company continued to excite western audiences with himself often being singled out very favourably. Uday Shankar had ultimately developed his own style of dance that took inspiration from recognised classical dances (Banerji 1982b). This approach of blending the traditional with modernity reflected his view that Indian culture was not static but continually changing; innovation was, therefore, permissible without compromising authenticity.

The geographies in and of performance

It is not clear how some reviewers identified the adaptations Shankar had made for Western audiences whilst others did not. For many, the dances presented to them were entirely foreign. Interestingly, it is these reviews that take the greatest

[31] 'A Brahmin Performer', *Nottingham Journal,* (20 April 1934); 'Hindu Dancers', *The Scotsman,* (20 April 1934); 'Hindu Dancers at Dartington Hall', *Western Morning News'*, (28 May 1934).

effort in trying to expansively describe the dances to their readers. Take for example, these two reviews, the first of the Company's performance at the Comedy Theatre in London:

> *With the unfamiliar Indian scale, the queer rhythm, and the gentle rise and fall of the tiny volume of sound, it was all curious and puzzling in the extreme; but the audience showed unmistakably that it is perfectly possible to enjoy an art one does not understand. So also with the dancing – all was intensely Oriental – as far from the art of a Pavlova or a Nijinski as Benares is far from Bow Street. Yet here again one could admire and enjoy the lithe grace of the leading artist, Uday Shan-Kar, a young man of handsome shape, whose movements were extraordinarily expressive... It was all very strange, but it all seemed beautifully sincere. We felt that behind it all lay an ancient religion and an almost immemorial culture; and we came away feeling that, in a very fascinating and unforgettable way, we had come under the spell of the mysterious East.*[32]

And the second, the only review of Shankar's company at Dartington Hall in Devon:

> *The stillness of the night, a half-naked body, dark and lithe as a panther, poised ecstatically in the warm illumination of flares. Above, the moon, suspended like a ball of molten silver behind giant firs. And to all the soft, rhythmic beat of a native drum, the uncanny beating of a Hindu gong.*
>
> *The celestial dancer of the Court of Indra salaamed—and a burst of applause from nearly a thousand followers of the "higher arts" brought one back to a world of reality.*
>
> *The scheme was one the most fantastic ever witnessed in the picturesque grounds of Dartington Hall (writes a Western Morning News representative). It was the farewell performance of Uday Shan-*

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[32] 'The Comedy: Hindu Music and Dance', *The Stage,* (26 April 1934), emphasis added.

> *Kar and his Hindu dancers after the completion of their world tour, and it is doubtful whether a more effective setting could have been found than the open-air stage the hall grounds, with its environs of age-old elms, firs, and magnificent terraces to form a natural bowl.*[33]

When the reviewer of *The Stage* records they had "come under the spell of the mysterious East", they essentialised non-western culture by taking Shankar's Indian dance to be representative of a heterogenous so-called "East". More significantly, though, this sentence gives an impression of the affective power of Uday Shankar's performance. The reviewer already describes Shankar as "extraordinarily expressive" but the notion that this is to the extent that the dance casts a spell on the audience is suggestive of the performance's ability to go beyond visual pleasure and speak to the emotions and feelings of those who view it. It is this embodiment of meaning, in this instance an embodiment of "an ancient religion and almost immemorial culture", that the reviewer registers in their analysis of the dance, demonstrating that through his movements Shankar has successfully conveyed a sense of Indian culture and tradition.

Moreover, this concluding sentence respatialises the performance in suggesting the dance is able to transcend the scalar geographies that are embedded in a performance of Indian dance in England. The language of "coming under" implies that either Shankar's performances transported them to the "East" or that the dancers have brought the "East" to them. This phrasing suggests that Shankar's performance has, for them, reified the "East" as an experience rather than an abstraction of a geographically distant space. It suggests the dance has created micro-geography of India within performance spaces of England. Pat Noxolo's (2015) work on Caribbean dance suggests that subaltern dance forms can be read as embodied mapping. In defining cartography through its function rather than its imagery, dancers map meaning into their performances thus allowing their bodies to be located and given presence. In a similar way, the reviewer has read Shankar's

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[33] 'Hindu Dancers at Dartington Hall', *Western Morning News*, (28 May 1934).

performance as mapping Indian culture and identity into the stage of the Comedy Theatre, and hence an Indian *place* has been constructed.

This is significant when considering how the geographies *of* the performance interact with the geographies *in* the performance. The *Western Morning News* reviews a performance in Dartington Hall in Devon. Dartington Hall, described as a "Salon in the Countryside" by George Bernard Shaw, was an educational centre founded by the wealthy Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. Both had earlier life influences that placed dance as a significant area of interest. It was Leonard's friendship and fondness for Rabindranath Tagore that inspired the founding of Dartington Hall in 1925 as a place "which prioritised embodied and purposeful experience rather than intellectual abstraction" (Vertinsky & Ramachandran 2018: p.292) modelled after Tagore's cultural school, Shantiniketen. Dartington Hall, with its focus on embodied learning, fascination with dance and internationalist perspective on culture was thus an apt location for Uday Shankar and his company to include in their tour.

The *Western Morning News* review describes the grounds in which Shankar and his company performed in as "the open-air stage the hall grounds, with its environs of age-old elms, firs, and magnificent terraces to form a natural bowl". The setting of the performance, the geography *of* it, is of note to the reviewer – in particular, the "natural bowl" formed by the trees create the ideal setting. This material reflection of Dartington Hall is significant given cultural geography's recognition of the representational qualities of landscape (Duncan 1995). The reviewer's suggestion that the natural setting of the grounds of Dartington Hall are suited to Shankar's Indian dance is emblematic how nature was conceptually used in colonial discourse as an antithesis of civilization (Spurr 1993). The creation of difference based on an imagined distinction between nature and civilization is conducive to the 'Other'-ing of non-Western spaces and subjects (Said 1978). Whilst the lucid description of the performance landscape is useful to readers' conception of the atmospheres of the performance, it is more so an example of the Orientalisation of Uday Shankar in the West.

(Re)presentations of dance

These descriptive accounts of these performance are useful in taking an alternative approach to Shankar's contributions to the revival of Indian classical dance and its popularisation in the West. The archives and oral histories have been useful in studying the claimed "truths" about Uday Shankar and his company, these being his global movements, members of his troupe, styles of dance amongst others. However, in cultural geography, attention has been shifting away from what is written and spoken towards what is practiced and experienced (Thrift 1997). Non-representational theory attempts to manage the limitations of privileging language and text (representations) in knowledge production by considering the role of practices and embodied experiences (Anderson & Harrison 2010). Using non-representational theory, Uday Shankar is decentred from our understandings of his dance as the audiences are not simply passive viewers of the movements he makes, but their emotive and subjective response to them inform us of the performances' affect. If the "aim of non-representational research is not to establish truth, but to present a record of experience" (Fendler & Smeyers 2015: p.694), then this chapter does just that. By building on the existing knowledges of Uday Shankar using newspapers reviews from the digital archives, I focus directly on what Shankar's performances meant to his audiences. The strength of such an analysis lies in it being more intimately connected to human life than the 'objective' histories that have been analytically processed and methodologically packaged.

Whilst these reviews are textual themselves, they are a direct expression of the reviewers' experiences. The existing literature cites a lack of notation or recordings, particularly in the accompanying music, as being a challenge for historians (Abrahams 2007). A non-representational approach, though, places the experiences of the audience on the same "plane of immanence" as these so-called "truths" (Anderson & Harrison 2010). It is of additional interest, then, that Shankar's Indian critics adopt a more scientific approach in analysing the dancer's specific movements, whilst the English reviews have a greater focus on the overall impression of the programme. Projesh Banerji (1982b) makes this same

distinction, stating that the judgement of the Indian critics were more towards scrutinising the correct application of 'Mudras' or which parts of his dance fell into the respective categories of classical schools of dance. In contrast, "a western critic would always adhere to the *spirit* of the Indian dancing" (1982b: p.28, my emphasis). In fact, Banerji notes that Shankar would sometimes say that his western critics went beyond the conception of his Indian critics in matters of judgement.

Using the reviews presented thus far in this chapter, interpretations of what the choreographies meant to the audiences can be made, and is, therefore, a means to extract knowledge about Shankar's role in the popularisation of Indian classical dance. As has been discussed, hybridity was a means to maintain an identity as an Indian artist whilst meeting the expectations of the Western audiences. The lengthier reviews characterise Shankar and his dances as innately Indian in both the geographies of and in his performances albeit through an Orientalised lens. The reviews that do recognise the adaptations Shankar makes for his western audience also do not question his authenticity and rather appear to praise his innovations. The differences in the reviews, especially with his critics in India and his praise in the West, demonstrate that the concept of hybridity is not a harmonious integration across cultures (Rogers 2018). Furthermore, the coming together of disparate dance techniques "entails a process of encounter and negotiation" (Veal 2016: p.233). The reviews enable an analysis that delves beneath the performance on an aesthetic level and examines the dancing body as existing after the moment of its creation albeit in a textual format distorted by subjectivities and experience of the authors. These, though, are just as valuable as other forms of representation due to non-representational theory's epistemological equality.

Crucially it is from these reviews, that we reflect on how Uday Shankar negotiated this hybridity in his dances. Moreover, the tensions in choreography that Shankar likely faced, namely in striking a balance between maintaining a reputation as an Indian classical dancer whilst utilising his existing knowledge of Western audiences and their expectations of Indianness. Whilst the lengthier and more

descriptive reviews in many ways expose how these expectations were essentialised, they inform us of how power is reproduced in performances within social and historical framings.

Dance as Language? Subalternity uncovered through a non-representational approach

Thus far, I have considered how Uday Shankar, the Indian dancer from Udaipur, whose desire to present Indian culture to the West depended on the use of hybrid dance techniques and identity, was received by the western audiences he sought to entertain. Shankar was successful in his endeavour; this is evident in the newspaper reviews. What is difficult to ascertain, though, is the dance itself. Whilst the reviewers speak often of the certain dance movements, in particular the use of hands and feet to express meaning, as a researcher it is limiting in our ability to understand what Shankar's performances actually *were* rather than knowing only how they were *received.*

Uday Shankar was a dancer; his identity was centred around himself as a moving body. On a larger scale, the hypermobility of Shankar cannot be understated. He is seemingly continually travelling within Europe and the US, and often travelling within India so much so that his movements are lost in the pages that attempt to document his life. The geographies of Uday Shankar and his dance are what has thus far been the focus of this chapter; the ways in which his movement, physically and spiritually, between Europe and India formed his identity onstage as an 'Oriental dancer', whose understanding of his audiences made his performances palatable to the Western senses. Contextualising these movements speak to Shankar in many ways as a representation of Indian national identity, in some ways as a symbol of postcolonial modernity, and as key figure in the revival of Indian classical dance. Yet, there is a geography *in* Shankar's dance; the non-representational geographies of his subalternity.

Shankar's subalternity is complex. If subalternity refers to the non-elites specifically within a postcolonial context, Shankar, I would argue, was not

subaltern as evidenced in his inclusion within Pavlova's company as a dance partner, a celebrity status granting him an invitation to dinner at the Plaza Hotel[34], and his introductions to Indian political elites such as Rabrinanth Tagore and Sir Firoz Noon, London's first "Indian" High Commissioner of India.[35] Further, his collaboration with the Dartington Hall Trust confirms his position amongst the elite and his own significant influence. Yet, within the reviews and literature, there is an apparent temptation to equate Shankar's dance, his movements, as a form of language.

> *"Oh, yes, I can speak in dancing," said Uday, to a Press Association reporter to-day, "I can tell you by my movements that there is a beautiful girl next door wearing a costume of gold and having lovely raven hair, that she is waiting for so-and-so. and that they are in love. Or I can dance you anything else."*
>
> *"How can you dance, for example, the colour of her eyes?"*
>
> *"There is a movement—a dance gesture of the hand—that denotes every shade of colour." said Uday, "if I lift my hand—so—that means a man. I change it slightly to indicate a woman. Again I move the fingers to indicate I am portraying a child."*
>
> *"But how are we in England to know the meaning of this mysterious language of the dance?"*
>
> *Uday, whose eyes can dance as magically as his feet, laughed merrily.*
>
> *"That does not matter a bit," he said.*
>
> *"The spirit of the dance speaks to the soul of human beings, no matter what land they live in or what language they talk. Dancing, like music, knows no frontiers and needs no translator."*

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[34] Henderson A., 'Season Draws to A Closer: Round the Shows', *The Era,* (8 April 1937).
[35] 'Cecil Sharpe of India', *Arbroath Herald and Advertiser for the Montrose Burghs,* (19 March 1937).

- interview with Uday Shankar by a Press Association reporter[36]

This interview was printed in full in the *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* and slightly shortened in the *Gloucester Citizen.* The articles, published on the same day, were titled, 'Language of the Dance: Movements Which Speak' and 'Indian Dancer's Language'. The interview in full also covered the dance training, troupe members and music in the company, yet both newspapers highlight dance as language in their titles. Consider, then, the following, taken from Projesh Banerjee's 'Uday Shankar and his Art', published in 1982 after Shankar's death but written in 1959:

> *He said that it was wrong to say that man must speak, then sing, then dance. The speaking was the brain, the thinking man. The singing was the emotion. The Dancing was the Dionysian ecstasy which carried away all. In Dancing there is a harmonious mixture of all the three.*

For Shankar, dancing is Dionysian; it is sensual, spontaneous, and emotional. It is affective. Geographers have been increasingly considering the role of affective power, a development which has occurred as a result of the emergence of non-representational theory.

Whilst Shankar offered his western audiences some examples of particular movements having a codified meaning (see following chapter), it is quite obvious that he was rather more interested in presenting the spirit of Indian culture by 'speaking' to the spirit of the audience:

> *Culture, once manifest, cannot be choked. One may annihilate a civilisation, but culture, the true spiritual treasure, is imperishable. Everyone inheriting it must be contained contact with it during his life, with the variety of experience known as art, ...the offspring of passions, feelings and understanding.*

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[36] 'Language of the Dance: Movements Which Speak', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail,* (9 May 1934); 'Indian Dancer's Language', *Gloucester Citizen,* (9 May 1934).

- Uday Shankar in an interview with Projesh Banerjee, October 1949 (quoted in Banerji 1982b: p.69)

Furthermore, whilst reflecting on his dancing career in 1976, just one year before his death, Shankar explained that even 'Mudras' were too disruptive in his choreographies and instead he was more interested in expressing emotion through his whole body:

> *I have not adopted mudras in my in my dance or dance dramas unless it is very necessary. Let me tell you: when a dance or dance drama is going perhaps vigorously and with much feeling and the dancer suddenly stops and starts 'talking' with mudras, it breaks, I tell you, it breaks for me the continuity. Somehow this doesn't go with me. I like to show what I want to show with the body, with the body in emotion.*

- Uday Shankar in an interview with Mohan Khokar, 1976 (quoted in Khokar 1983: p.167)

In what I would say are consistent and impassioned assertations, Uday Shankar is encouraging his audiences to think non-representationally about his dance. I argue, then, that when the reviewers referred to his dance as a language, or as a translation from "Hindu"[37], they were applying a Cartesian subject-object dualism to their *representation* of not just his performances, but of his own identity. When his Western audiences and dance scholars persistently attempt to relate Shankar's dance to a form of language with Shankar being some sort of translator, there is disparity between Shankar's expressions and the audiences' and scholars' interpretation. To them, dance is language whereas to Shankar, dance transcends language. The non-representational approach I outlined earlier engages more with what the "spirit" and "emotion" that Shankar was trying to express, thereby exposing a discord between Shankar's aims to present spirit and emotion, and the

[37] 'Translated from Hindu: Mr. Uday Shan-Kar and Company at the Comedy Theatre', *Hendon & Finchley Times,* (27 April 1934).

reviewers continual attempts to apply a logical interpretation of his dances by equating it as a form of language.

Applying non-representational theory's epistemological equality should not be limited to sources of knowledge but should also be applied to geographical theories. Therefore, from Gayatri Spivak's (1985) question, "can the subaltern speak?", I question whether the subaltern can dance. When Spivak concluded that the subaltern, in fact, cannot speak, this was not to say that they were silent, that they could not form words, but instead that they "cannot achieve a dialogical level of utterance" (McEwan 2009; p.64). As discussed, Shankar held some elite status. And yet, Shankar's performances lacked a dialogical utterance with its audience. If subalternity can be determined by one's ability to dialogically communicate with others through speech, then applying non-representational theory's epistemological equality means subalternity can be determined by one's ability to dialogically express themselves through dance. In this way, Uday Shankar, the dancing body that exists beyond its moment of creation, is subaltern. This demonstrates that subalternity is not merely a category or a group, it is embodied through practices, interactions and movement. Reading Shankar as a body-subject – "as decentred, affective, but embodied, relational, expressive and involved with others and objects in a world continually in process" (Nash 2000; p.655) – suggests that subalternity can be in flux. Representations of Shankar, specifically of those in text, present him as relatively elite in his education, relationship and status, but in his actions, specifically in his dance, he is not.

Crucially, the representation of Shankar's life and performance that peddle the conceit that dance is a form of language are, in fact, *mis*representations. It is, thus, in going beyond such representation that his subalternity is uncovered. This does not mean to say that representations should be overlooked. After all, it is through texts that Shankar's own voice has survived and, therefore, non-representational theory is used beyond the more common sense of looking to study non-textual objects (Lorimer 2005). In this instance, a non-representational approach is used to decentre the subject of the text, Uday Shankar, and instead gauge the perception

of the audience. It is then from Shankar's own voice that it becomes clear that these interpretations from both scholars and reviewers were wrong in maintaining that that dance is language, thus uncovering Shankar's subalternity. Moreover, it demonstrates the limitations of using representations, specifically text, to produce knowledge. As both Gayatri Spivak (2010) and Tariq Jazeel (2014) point out there is an irreducible textuality of the world and that intellectual work should take representation seriously. This is a crucial intervention as by recognising that text is the medium through which intellectual work operates, it explains the need to continue to engage critically with representations. In fact, this is the same postulation that the reviewers and scholars of Uday Shankar must encounter insofar as one can begin to sympathise with their reach towards language in their analyses. Shankar's work is undoubtedly original in both presentation and technique and in struggling to understand it, it could be that the reviewers and scholars applied their own ontological perspective that privileges language and speech. Although in doing so, their *mis*representations of Shankar's dance denied the dialogical experience based around emotion and spirit that Shankar sought after; their representations made Shankar subaltern.

Pushing representations: hybridity, mobility and subalternity in Uday Shankar

In this chapter, I have introduced Uday Shankar, the so-called "originator and father of Modern Indian Ballet" (Banerji 1983: p.159). Born in Udaipur, Shankar began his artistic career as a painter under the tutelage of William Rothenstein at the Royal College of Art before being selected by Anna Pavlova to claim authenticity to the Indian section in *Oriental Impressions*. It was through this introduction to the performing arts that Shankar's identity was shaped by Orientalised articulations of Indian culture. It was through his western mentors that Shankar developed an ability to package and present Indian culture as a spectacle suitable for western audiences. Similar to Leila Sokhey, then, hybridity in his own identity was a crucial factor in Shankar's success in popularising Indian

dance. Hybridity was also manifest in the dance itself; shortened choreographies, de-emphasising *mudras* and innovation in musical accompaniments were methods used by Shankar to ensure his audiences were entertained whilst also satisfying their expectations of Indian dance. For most of his audiences, Uday Shankar and his Company of Hindu Dancers and Musicians was the first 'all-Indian' dance troupe they had witnessed. At a time where Indian nationalism was emphasising its cultural art forms as a claim to self-determination, Shankar's ability to transgress the geographical and cultural boundaries constructed himself as a genuine representation of Indian culture.

Shankar's informal ambassadorial role was a prominent theme in the press reviews. It is apparent that his audiences did not just see dance in his performance, but often interpreted them to be a demonstration of India more generally. As highlighted in the lengthier reviews, such interpretations are demonstrative of an Orientalisation of Shankar but also speaks to the affective power of dance. Shankar's apparent ability to captivate his audiences in such regards prompts us to think beyond textual, "truth-telling" analyses of dance. Instead, a non-representational approach uncovers how micro-mobilities of dance and its affect unsettle traditional understandings of place-making and identity formation. Considering the geographies of and in dance, aided by non-representational thinking, challenges methods of extracting and interpreting meanings that might otherwise be unidentified in standard representational analysis.

Most significantly, in Uday Shankar I have located a body in the mid-twentieth century that passionately and consistently urged his audiences to interpret his performances through what we would now call non-representational theory. And yet, this has thus far, to play on Joan Erdman's postulation, been lost in translation. A brown man who appears to have easily inserted himself amongst the inner circles in western theatres. A dancer whose performances are commended yet misrepresented. It is in this complexity that the need to broaden geographical concepts such as subalternity and non-representational theory is demonstrated (see Das 1989; Lorimer 2005). Through Uday Shankar, his geographical mobility

and consequent hybridity in his dance form, this chapter ultimately proves how in critically engaging with them and attempting to push beyond the limits of their textuality, representations can be a useful source for geographical and historical scholarship. Although, such complexities might in some ways be resolved with an engagement with more-than-textual sources.

Chapter III

Representing self: the visuality and materiality of Uday Shankar

Uday Shankar opened my eyes to new horizons of magic and colour.

- Godfrey Winn, columnist for the *Daily Mirror*, 21 July 1937[38]

The quote above demonstrates an ocularcentrism that pervades contemporary western life (Jay 1988). Uday Shankar was a spectacle whose magical and colourful dance evoked such a response from this member of the audience. Crucially, it was through his eyes, in seeing Shankar's presence on the stage, that Winn was moved to write emotively about the 'affect' of Shankar. It is such commentary that signals an impact of dance upon its spectators that cannot be fully captured in textual representations. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how a critical engagement with representations – guided by the ideas that emerge from non-representational modes of thinking – can help in many ways engage with dance in the affective register, but it does not allow us to experience it. Moreover, having located a body such as Shankar who so clearly operated in more-than-textual forms of knowledge production, in this chapter I engage with more-than-textual sources, though often framed by texts, in order to find Uday Shankar's own voice within the archives.

Mike Crang (2003) comments on the use of visuality in the production of geographical knowledge. He notes how images are most commonly taken as fact, often used not as another object for interpretation but in place of interpretation. The increased consideration of the role of the visual in the production of knowledge can be traced to 'visual turn' that emerged alongside a 'material turn' in cultural geography. Furthermore, Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly (2012) argue that materiality and visuality are co-constituted and, therefore should be analysed together. This chapter, then, analyses both the visual and material culture

[38] 'Curiosity', *Daily Mirror,* (21 July 1937).

that Uday Shankar created. The visuality of Uday Shankar is first considered in the images that feature in the newspaper archives. In this thesis I have chosen to present images mostly sourced from the British Newspaper Archive and stills from *Kalpana*, a movie Shankar directed, producer and starred in; what you see of Uday Shankar in this thesis are the visions of him in circulation in the mid-twentieth century. In doing so, I expose the ways in which images, like text, are not innocent representations but rather need to be approached in a way that accounts for the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which they are embedded.

The second section considers Shankar's cultural centre which was open from 1940 until 1945. The centre, I argue, is a material expression of Shankar's historical geography, albeit distorted by his own political motivations. Shankar constructed his cultural centre along nationalist ideological lines that made the centre more than a school for the next generation of Indian dancers. My analysis considers the geographies of the cultural centre, the meanings that can be located within these geographies and the ways in which the materiality of the centre can be interpreted as a representation of Uday Shankar's own identity and history. The centre allows us to shift from interpretations of Shankar's dance to Shankar's attempt to interpret and institutionalise his own form of dance.

The third section turns to arguably Shankar's most explicit expression of how he positioned his own career and dance form within the Indian pollical context of the time. *Kalpana,* which translates to imagination, is Shankar's first and only film production. It follows the journey of its protagonist, Udayan, as he forges a career as a dancer and builds a cultural education centre. In what appears to be a very thinly veiled autobiography, Shankar uses his creative license to effectively replace his own history in order to appeal to nationalist sentiments.

This chapter, therefore, consolidates the knowledges about Uday Shankar, his dance and his life from the previous chapter but also reflects on how Shankar positioned and constructed his own identity through his material and visual expressions. In addition, I reflect on what it means to do non-representational

geography with regards to the implications of being able to see the subject of interest, Shankar's dance. This requires a different approach to textual representations, as visual sources operate and generate meaning through a different affective register. It is with this in mind that, in places, I use a more personal and situated approach in order to articulate first, my own experience of being a spectator of Shankar's dance who was exposed to its affect, and second, a suggestion of how we might do academic work differently in order to capture the assemblage of the textual, visual and material sources.

'Still' images in historical representations

In 1937, Uday Shankar and his Company's second European tour began at the Savoy Theatre[39] and ended at the Gaiety Theatre[40] in London, with Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Switzerland Italy, Hungary and France in between (Craske 2020). Since its earlier 1934 tour, the dance troupe had undergone some changes, with the addition of Zohra and Uzra Mumtaz and a young male dancer named Madhavan (Abrahams 2007). Timar Baran Bhattacharya had left the troupe, promoting the tabla player, Vishnudas Shirali, to musical director. The inclusion of Zohra Mumtaz, later Zohra Sehgal, was significant due to her Muslim heritage. Zohra went on to replace Simkie as Shankar's dance partner after the conclusion of the European tour, before becoming a dance teacher at the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre. Her status within the company given her family's faith is largely demonstrative of the non-communalism that Shankar aligned himself to as he became politically attentive.

Geography is a visual subject with a complex relationship with visual culture (Tolia-Kelly 2012). It is in this section that, in *doing* non-representational geography, I use images to interpret meaning from the presentations and framings of Shankar, noting how "the production, circulation and consumption of

[39] 'Indian Dances at the Savoy', *The Stage*, (25 February 1937).
[40] 'Uday Shan-Kar Returns to London', *The Bystander*, (7 July 1937).

photographs produce and reproduce the imagined geographies of the social group or institution for which they were made" (Rose 2000: p.555). Moreover, and crucially, in doing justice to Shankar's own encouragement for his audiences to think non-representationally about his performances, I consider the affect of the way Shankar poses and presents himself for the camera.

Photography became an integral element of newspapers and magazines in the first half of the twentieth century. The ability to capture moments and present them to audiences that would never have otherwise seen them coincided with a time where there was trust in photographs presenting the truth (Newton 2009). In John-David Dewsbury's (2009b) rather philosophical essay on the phenomenon of the 'still', he reflects on how an emphasis of practice, materiality and the performative may have overlooked the central point of what 'being-there' means. For the readers of these newspapers and magazines establish Uday Shankar as 'being-there'. Through the images, there is an undeniable corporeal presence of Shankar. The perception of truth that arises from this speaks to their capability to legitimise the knowledge presented by the authors of the accompanying text but also to present knowledge through the vision of Shankar himself.

Gillian Rose (2001) makes an important distinction between vision as what you can physiologically see, and visuality as how this vision is constructed in certain ways. In other words, a separation can be drawn between what a photograph *is* and what it *means.* Whilst in the specific field of photojournalism, photographs obtain their meanings most through their contexts (Becker 1995), non-representational theory informs us of the meanings that can be interpreted from non-textual objects. In figures 6 and 7, Shankar is presented in Indian dress performing a dance move. It is not clear whether this photograph was taken whilst Shankar was in motion or was a presenting a specific pose for the camera. Either way, the photographs attempt to convey the dancing body in motion, and present Shankar as performer rather than personality. These presentations contrast with the cover image of the programme for the season at the Gaiety Theatre (figure 8). The contrast between a portrait of Shankar, emphasising him as the leading person

rather than just dancer, and the newspaper photographs suggest the media in some ways depersonalised Uday Shankar in their coverage of his performances.

Figure 6. Daily Mirror (21 July 1937).

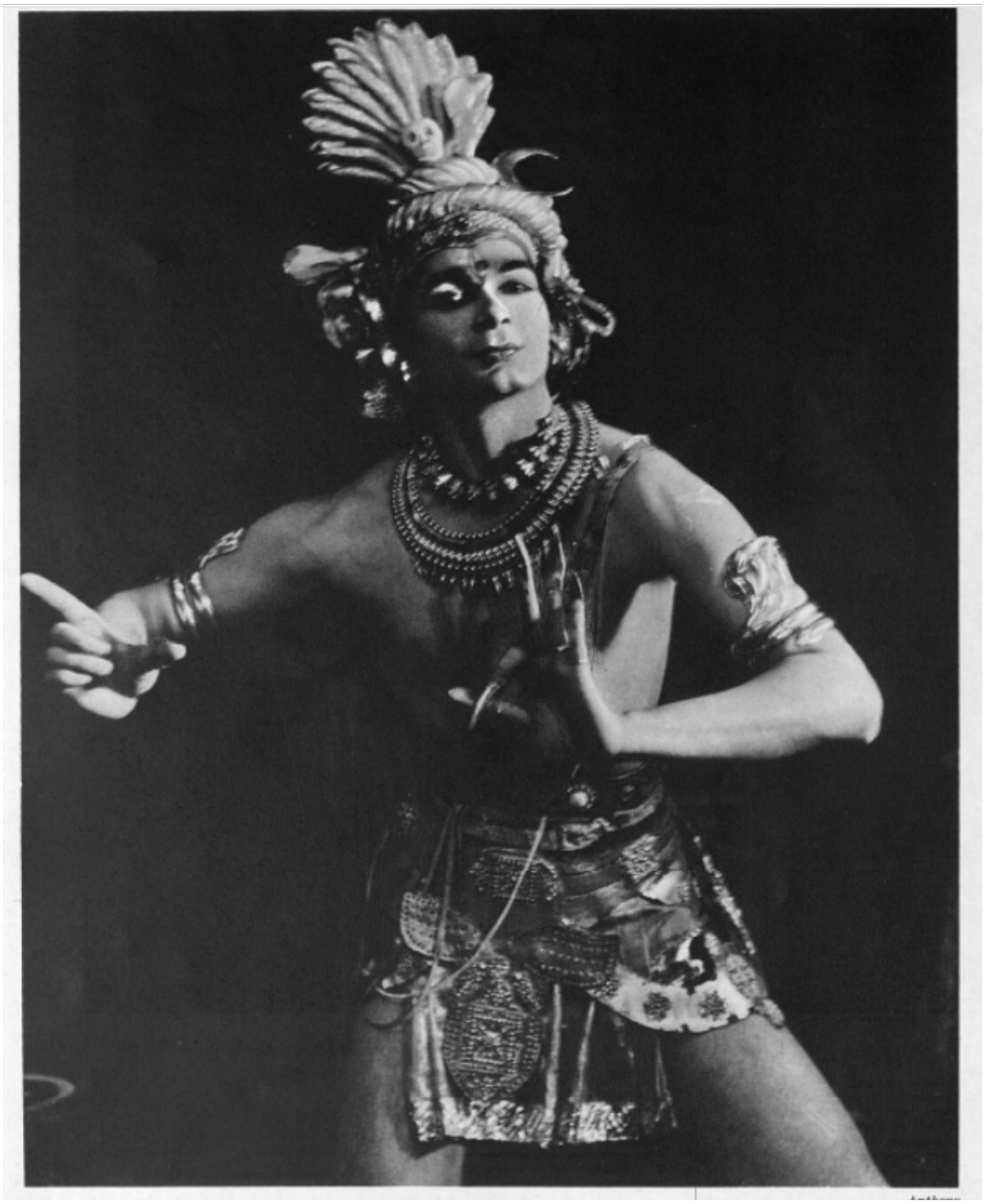

Figure 7. The Bystander (7 July 1937).

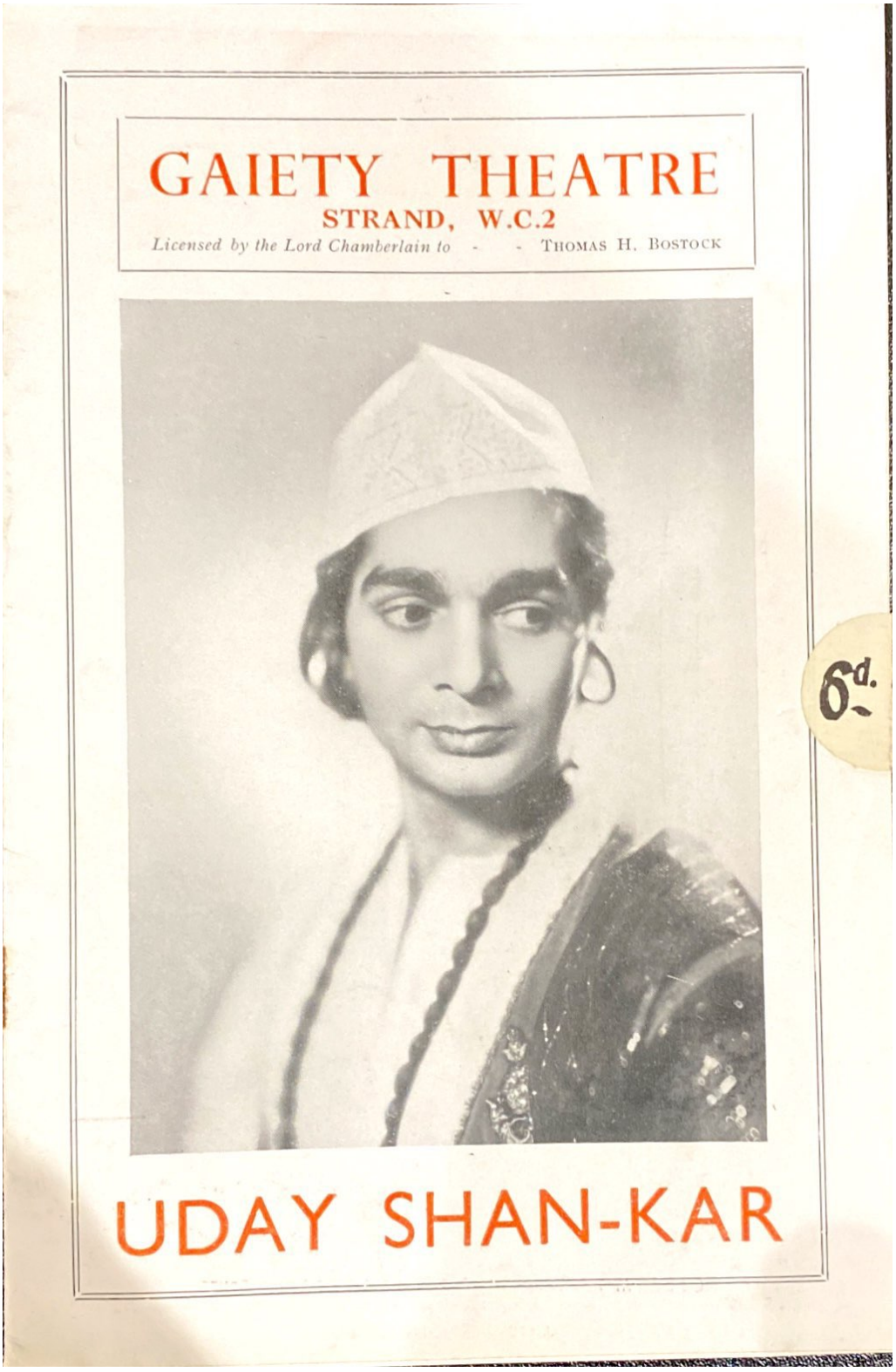

Figure 8. programme cover from the Gaeity Theatre, London (22nd-24th July 1937).

The previous chapter outlined the ways in which the press reviews exoticized Uday Shankar and his performances. The accompanying photographs, then, support such a process insofar as presenting Shankar exclusively as the "lithesome, virile figure, disporting in the cloaks of gods, heroes, and lovers" that his critics describe him as.[41] It is, therefore, not just in the language of the reviews that Uday Shankar is orientalised, essentialised and even sexualised, but in the photographs as well. However, the vision of Shankar as presented in this way serves to legitimise the text of not just that in the same newspaper or magazine, but of all documentation of Uday Shankar and his Company's performances in London. These images, then, reinforce the notions in the newspaper coverage that present Shankar as primitive, Oriental and god-like.

One aim of this thesis is to reflect on how we can record, analyse and interpret historical mobilities. Photographs are materially still and yet they are appropriately and effectively used to supplement our understanding of an inherently mobile practise. Therefore, I contend that there is no such binary that exists between mobility and immobility. For Debbie Lisle (2009) the mobility in a photograph is never entirely eradicated but continues to hold potential mobilities and thus subverts its assumed stillness. And it is in these potential mobilities that the photograph holds physical intensities that generate more than percept; it generates affect. It is through affect the photograph find its significance in the production of knowledge. The photograph draws the attention of the reader; it demands an emotive response.

The text accompanying figure 6 in the Daily Mirror concluded with:

> *I went out of curiosity; I stayed in admiration.*[42]

This describes not only the emotional process of the author's experience of Shankar's on-stage performance, but also what his performance for the camera invites for those who view the photograph. Arguably, the clothing, facial

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[41] 'The Gaeity Hindu Dances', *The Stage,* (8 July 1937).
[42] 'Curiosity', *Daily Mirror,* (21 July 1937).

expression, stance and even his exposed physique makes for a presence on the page that invites curiosity from the reader. It then encourages the viewer to admire the strength and balance of Shankar's imposing presence in figure 6, or the grace and delicacy in which Shankar performs what appears to be versions of the *Chandrakala* and *Hamsasyam mudras* of *kathak* in figure 7.

And to viewers, it is a performance. Photographs can lend significant agency to their subjects. Or rather, they are presented in a way that suggests the subject has agency over their own portrayal. Here, it is the return gaze of Shankar that conveys intent. It is from the suggestion of this agency coupled with the material presence of Shankar 'being-there', visible to the viewer, that grants the photograph its legitimacy and impression of truth. The viewer sees an Oriental, primitive and mystical body because the text tells them so, but it is through an affective register that photographs create a very real and relational presence of Uday Shankar. The image constructs him as 'being-there', granting both legitimacy to what the accompanying text has to say about him and also through the potential mobilities it carries, some of the affective experience of his dance.

July 7, 1937 The Sketch 33

DANCES WHICH DEPEND ON THE HANDS AS MUCH AS THE FEET.

Uday Shan-Kar and his company of native Hindu dancers and musicians opened their two-weeks' season at the Gaiety on Monday, July 5. ZOHRA, UZRA, and SIMKIE are shown in "Seasons" as three young girls who have come out to pluck flowers and bathe in the river, and are alarmed by the noise of approaching footsteps.

SIMKIE, the prima ballerina of the Uday Shan-Kar troupe, in "Mariwari," one of her numbers. The beautiful movements of her arms should be noted.

UDAY SHAN-KAR in the Dance of Indra.

A wonderful pose by UDAY SHAN-KAR.

The sinuous grace of UDAY SHAN-KAR'S hands.

UDAY SHAN-KAR with members of his company, and, in the background, the Hindu musicians with their traditional instruments, some of superb ancient workmanship.

The MOVEMENTS OF THE HANDS are as important as those of the feet in these dances, which re-create age-old Hindu stories of folk-lore. The poses of the dancers recall the statues in Indian art.

Figure 9. The Sketch (7 July 1937).

A SOURCE OF UDAY SHAN-KAR'S DANCES: KATHAKALI, THE SILENT DRAMA.

(See Article on Page 482)

INTERPRETING A DRAMA IN KATHAKALI BY MANUAL GESTURES (MUDRAS) AND APPROPRIATE POSTURES: TRIPATAKA—SIGNIFYING BEGGING.

CONVEYING AN EMOTION BY THE PLACING OF THE HANDS AND BY FACIAL EXPRESSION: THE ACTOR IN A PATHETIC MOOD (KARUNA).

WITH THE PALMS OF THE HANDS PRESSED TOGETHER IN A SUPPLICATING MANNER: THE ACTOR DISPLAYS THE SENTIMENT OF WONDER (ADBHUTA).

ONE OF NEARLY A THOUSAND GESTURES USED IN KATHAKALI: COMEDY—SHOWN BY AN OUTFLUNG ARM AND A SOMEWHAT IMPUDENT EXPRESSION.

CAPABLE OF MANY INTERPRETATIONS, ACCORDING TO THE STRETCH, LEVEL, AND POSTURE OF THE HAND: A MUDRA MEANING FEAR OR EXTREME TERROR.

EXPRESSING VIOLENT EMOTION WITHOUT UTTERING A WORD—A MUDRA PERFECTLY COMPREHENDED BY AN AUDIENCE: A POSTURE SIGNIFYING FURY.

THE ACTOR SHOWS HIS AUDIENCE THAT HE HAS BEEN HANDCUFFED OR TAKEN PRISONER: THE BRACELET (KATAKA) MUDRA.

DISPLAYING THE LOTUS SYMBOL WITH THE HANDS: THE ACTOR SIGNIFIES EROTIC SENTIMENT (SRINGARA) BY THIS GESTURE AND BY HIS FACIAL EXPRESSION.

REPRESENTING AN ANIMAL BY EXPRESSING ITS MOST CHARACTERISTIC TRAIT: A MUDRA INDICATING A JACKAL, WHOSE CUNNING IS EVIDENT IN THE ACTOR'S FACE.

The recent appearances of Uday Shan-Kar and his Hindu ballet dancers and musicians at the Savoy Theatre were of exceptional interest to students of dancing and dramatic art. The graceful gestures of the dancers as they unfolded the story of some Indian legend, and the fascinating native music, delighted an appreciative Western audience. Uday Shan-Kar has studied the ancient art of Kathakali and his ballets undoubtedly owe much to this form of dramatic art, in which gestures with the hands and posturing play such a large part. Following an American tour in 1938, Uday Shan-Kar will open an All-India Centre for Dance and Music in Benares, where research in music, costume, and mythology will offer a unique opportunity for the encouragement and development of the cultural art in India. In Kathakali the text of a drama is interpreted without words by the actors, who rely on manual gestures (mudras) accompanied by

[Continued opposite.

MARCH 20, 1937 THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS 481

GOOD AND EVIL PORTRAYED WITH PAINT: VIVID KATHAKALI MAKE-UPS.

PHOTOGRAPHS REPRODUCED BY COURTESY OF THE KERALA KALA MANDALAM. (SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 482)

REPRESENTING HANUMAN, THE MONKEY-GOD: A KATHAKALI ACTOR IN COSTUME AND MAKE-UP.

MADE UP WITH GREEN PAINT, SYMBOLIC OF GOODNESS: AN ACTOR AS A DIVINE PERSONAGE.

BHEEMA, THE INDIAN HERCULES, STRANGLES PRINCE KEECHAKA (THE VILLAIN OF THE STORY): KUNJUKURUP, ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPONENTS OF THE KATHAKALI ART, IN ELABORATE MAKE-UP AS THE PRINCE.

CHUKANNA THADI (RED MAKE-UP) REPRESENTS EVIL AND FEROCIOUS PERSONS: AN ACTOR AS DUSSASANA.

KARI (BLACK MAKE-UP) INDICATES A SPIRIT OR AS ABORIGINAL: A FOREST MAN IN AN INDIAN LEGEND.

BHEEMA TAUNTING THE DEMON, BAKA, BY CALMLY EATING THE RICE HE HAS BROUGHT FOR HIM, IN SPITE OF HIS THREATS: AN EPISODE IN THE STORY OF BHEEMA, THE MAHABHARATHA HERO.

EXPRESSING SRINGARA (THE SENTIMENT OF LOVE) IN LOOKS AND POSTURE: THE FIRST MEETING OF KRISHNA (A REINCARNATION OF VISHNU) AND RUKMANI—SHOWING THE SYMBOLIC COSTUMES USED IN KATHAKALI.

(Continued.)

appropriate postures. The number of the gestures now in use, each with its special significance, closely borders on a thousand. Each mudra is capable of expressing many meanings, according to the stretch, level, and posture of the hand. Thus, the drama is essentially a spectacle, or visual poem, as the action of the story is translated into sentiments (rasas). There are nine principal rasas, each with its sub-divisions; and the trained actor is extremely clever in expressing different degrees of emotion. The characters in the drama are distinguished by their make-ups; green paint being used for good or divine persons, red for evil, and black for spirits. The costumes and head-dresses help still further to differentiate between the various types and to make the story intelligible to an audience which is already familiar with the legend enacted. Women do not perform in Kathakali, but female characters are impersonated by men in traditional make-up.

Figure 10. double page spread from Illustrated London News (20 March 1937).

In figures 9 and 10, photo essays are used to present and interpret Shankar's dance. It is in this style of presentation – which, originating from German illustrated magazines, became popularised in Europe and United States media in the 1920s and 1930s (Rudd 2017) – that the photographs are firmly centred as the source of information. It is in the format of the photo essay that images, with their brief explanatory text, produce a visual narrative. Unlike the individual still photographs analysed earlier where movement is implied through how Shankar's body is captured by the camera, these photo essays explicitly convey movement through a series of stills. In figure 9, editors of *The Sketch* have positioned three stills adjacent to each in order to imply a sequence of motion. Even the circular frames of the photographs overlap one another which suggests a continuity and connection between them. It is, therefore, not only through the affective register of the vision within stills that photograph can evoke motion, but in their framing, the visuality.

It is, thus, in these photo essays that there is a demonstration of journalists in western media attempting to manage the challenge of representing the non-representational. Figure 10, appearing side-by-side on a double page spread in the *Illustrated London News*, signify an attempt to interpret the specific micro-bodily movements in Shankar's dance by drawing visual comparisons to photographs of *kathakali* performers. The captions below the images of Shankar demonstrate an interpretation of meaning through Shankar's movements. Crucially, it once again through the photographs that grant the accompanying text, and what they say about Shankar's dance form, that capture Shankar's corporeal presence long after the act of his movement.

Materiality in the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre, Almora

After his tours of Dartington Hall, the Elmhirsts offered significant funding to the sum of £20,000 towards Shankar's own cultural education centre in India. Upon the conclusion of his second European tour at the Gaiety Theatre in July 1937, the newspaper reviews often mentioned his plans to establish a cultural centre.[43]On March 3 1940, Shankar opened his cultural centre (Abrahams 2007). Officially named the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre, it was based in the Simtola reserve in Almora, a hill station 250 miles north-west of Delhi in the Kumaon Himalayas. The cultural centre – hereafter referred to as Almora – was for Shankar in many ways a culmination of his journey studying, presenting and experimenting with Indian classical dance. It was somewhere he could institutionalise and formalise his own unique dance style. and pass on his skills and knowledge; in doing so, he could style himself as a guru thereby solidifying his role as practitioner of India dance. Moreover, Shankar saw Almora as more than a school of dance technique and considered it a medium to instil his own philosophy in the next generation of Indian dancers. These were reflected in the five stated goals of the centre: to train talented dancers in the Uday Shankar method; to train students in the traditional and folk dance forms in India; to provide an understanding of basic techniques in established forms, emphasising the importance of the interdisciplinary nature of dance; encouragement of individual creative and artistic expression; and the promotion of the centre to the international community through publicity and the touring company.

Almora was thus a reflection of Uday Shankar's values, with his own identity bound to the cultural centre. In teaching both his own method and the techniques of traditional and folk dance forms, Shankar reasserted his belief that dance tradition should be respected, although not replicated, as it "would not be able to bear the

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[43] 'Uday Shan-Kar Returns to London', *The Bystander*, (7 July 1937); 'Off to Paris', *Daily Herald,* (03 March 1937); 'Cecil Sharpe of India', *Arbroath Herald and Advertiser for the Montrose Burghs*, (19 March 1937).

strong wind of modernism" (Banerji 1982b: p.68). Inviting recognised and respected patrons and gurus of the classical dance forms such as *kathakali*'s Shankaran Namboodiri, *bharatanatyam*'s Kandappan Pillai and *manipuri*'s Amobi Singh demonstrates the respect Uday Shankar maintained for the traditional dance forms. However, the stated goals clearly articulate that the primary teaching would be in Uday Shankar's method – referring to his own style as method, much like some of how western contemporaries, is itself a demonstration of the international influences on how Shankar comprehended, as well as performed, dance. The emphasis on the interdisciplinary and creative approaches to Indian dance furthermore reflect Shankar's own approach to his choreographies that featured in his tours in the West. It is also of note that the final stated aim for the students was to promote the centre to the *international* community, once again reflecting the same internationalism that featured in Shankar's own performing career.

The political implications of Shankar's company touring the West was often overlooked in the press reviews in England, save this astute insight in the *Truth*:

> *These dancers and musicians may be regarded as one of the manifestations of that rising spirit in Indian nationalism which the British government has lately recognised in the Government of India Act.*[44]

Interpreting Shankar as "one of the manifestations of that rising spirit in Indian nationalism" is justifiable given the emphasis on the 'Indianness' of Almora in his proposals for the centre:

> *Although I have already received a large number of applications for admission to the proposed centre from Western students, it is my intention not to take any new students except Indians for probably five years, so that we may establish the centre on a firm Indian basis,*

[44] 'Uday Shan-kar', *Truth,* (14 July 1937).

before widening the scope of our activities. One of the features of the centre will be its all-India character.

(cited in Purkayashta 2012)

This articulation from Shankar, emphasising the "all-India character" of Almora, came at a time of political significance for India's independence movement. The Government of India Act referred to in the *Truth* was that of 1935, an enactment of the recommendations of the Simon Commission and the Round Table Conferences of 1930-32 which ultimately lay the groundwork for a federal and constitutionally independent India (Chatterjee 1993). It is likely no coincidence, then, that in Shankar's proposals his emphases align with the vision of India's main political party, Congress, for an independent India. National unity and non-communalism were key aspirations of Congress leader, Jawaharlal Nehru (Hardgrave & Kochanek 2000). Shankar's promotion of the same indicated his own conception of Almora as a site as a national significance. Therefore, the extent to which the centre's curriculum serves as a representation of Uday Shankar's cultural philosophy situated within a nationalist agenda is clear. However, in my geographical analysis of the cultural centre, I pay attention to the overlooked significance of Almora as a site of memory, of knowledge production and where significant meaning is attached.

The concept of the 'geo-graphing' – hyphenated to emphasise its etymology to mean earth writing – has been applied to geopolitics and territorialisation of nation states and the postcolonial imaginative geographies in the production of South Asia (Sparke 2000; Ashutosh 2020). These works recognise that geography is not a passive reading of the world but an active writing of it. Adopting the same non-representational approach that I outlined in the previous chapter enables a reading of Almora as more-than-textual representation. Significantly, there is the added consideration of how geography situates the subject in terms of the material-relatedness of bodies, and how these processes shape them "through their manifestations in and through social spaces and the meanings they come to hold" (Simpson 2017: p.4). Therefore, in building Almora, I argue that Shankar was

'geo-graphing' his own history. Feminist perspectives in the production of knowledges have urged us to situate such knowledges as being a "view from somewhere" (Haraway 1988). For Uday Shankar, Almora seeks to situate that somewhere as being Indian, nationalist and rural.

Due to his mobility, Shankar as a historical figure proves a challenge to locate. It should be remembered that Shankar's first interaction with performance in a professional setting occurred in London, and his dancing career began under the mentorship of Anna Pavlova, a Russia-born ballerina. Furthermore, it was in Europe and the USA that Shankar received critical acclaim more so than in India, not to mention the several years after departing Pavlova's company that he toured and lived in Europe. Whilst not necessarily surprising given the construction of his identity, Shankar's choice to return to India for the establishment of his cultural centre is significant. Moreover, excluding non-Indian students "for at least five years", and promoting its all-India character despite its Western financial backing gives a distorted image of Shankar's history. The point being that the establishment of a cultural centre in India for Indians positioned Shankar as a representative of the nation with his art form being Indian in origin. Thus, its emphasis on having an "all-India" character would serve to reaffirm Shankar as an Indian dancer. Locating Almora in India exemplifies how Shankar in his later years 'geo-graphed' his history in ways which stressed his Indian identity whilst downplaying his earlier western influences.

Whilst arguably diminishing the cultural hybridity in his dance form and identity across the international scale, Almora worked to highlight how Shankar's dance transgressed cultural boundaries within India. At this time of political sensitivity, Shankar's choice to not establish his cultural centre in the sites of the recognised classical dances can equally be read as a rejection of the existing categories of Indian dance. The geographies of Indian classical dance are inherently regional. Almora hosted classes in *Bharatanatyam* from the Southern state of Tamil Nadu; *Kathakali* from the South Western region of Kerala; and *Manipuri* from Manipur at the North Eastern border. Despite this, Almora, in the Northern state of

Uttarakhand, does not align itself with any of main classical dances and the geographies of the centre thus reflect this.

Finally, the location of the centre being in a rural setting speaks to Shankar's perception of how culture interacts with nature. Shankar elsewhere expressed the relationship, at least to him, between dance and nature:

> *Nature has evoked strong responses in me. Many things in my life came to me through dance, and dance came to me through many things. That includes Nature.*

- Uday Shankar in an interview with Mohan Khokar, 1976 (quote in Khokar 1983: p.170)

The association with culture and nature is a common theme in nationalistic politics in late-colonial India. Nationalist resistance was built around the idea that the spirituality of the East was superior to that of the West, and therefore it was "necessary to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture" (Chatterjee 1989: p.121). Shankar's proclamation for nature as a source of his inspiration indicates that he associated nature with the same concept of Indian spirit that guided his dance. The remote location of Almora was settled on by Shankar after rejecting Benares and Bombay (Craske 2020). Whilst the reasons for rejecting these two locations have been cited as them being too hot in the summer, I note that these were also a rejection of cities.

Almora, therefore, serve as a material representation of how Shankar constructed his dance form. In creating, in effect, the 'home' of his art in the rural location of Almora, away from the existing sites of classical dance, and in India, Shankar attached meaning to his culture centres through its geographies. Significantly then, Almora is not simply a background to the pedagogy and performance that occurred within its walls, but entailed a very active and very deliberate process of construction. Moreover, it is a node of interpretation and analysis which contributes to the assemblages of Uday Shankar, his dance and his history.

Moving images in *Kalpana* (1948)

> *I request you all to be very alert while you watch this unusual picture— a Fantasy.*
>
> *Some of the events depicted here will reel off at great speed and if you miss any piece you will really be missing a vital aspect of our country's life in its Religion, Politics, Education, Society, Art and Culture, Agriculture and Industry.*
>
> *I do not deliberately aim my criticism at any particular group of people or institutions, but if it appears so, it just happens to be so, that is all.*
>
> *It is my duty as an Artist to be fully alive to all conditions of life and thought relating to our country and present it truthfully with all the faults and merits, through the medium of my Art.*
>
> *And I hope that you will be with me in our final purpose to rectify our own shortcomings and become worthy of our cultural heritage and make our motherland once again the greatest in the world.*
>
> *Uday Shankar*

- The opening message in Kalpana (1948)

In 1945, due a lack of funding, Almora was closed. However, it has also been reported that Almora's closure was in part due to Shankar's new ambition to create a film distracting him from effectively managing the centre (Khokar 1983). In part a manifesto for the centring of art and culture in the identity of a post-colonial India, in part a publicity drive for himself, Shankar began work on the film in 1945 with the financial support of Baronet Chunubhai of Ahmedabad.

Its opening message makes clear that this film is unashamedly political, and its audiences are urged to take inspiration and reclaim the greatness of India through Art. *Kalpana* means imagination in Bengali, the native language of Shankar's wife, Amala. The film, however, was shot in Hindi in order to appeal to a wider audience base (Purkayashta 2012). Importantly, Hindi was also the language supported by

political leaders, such as the Congress party, as an alternative official language to English (Khilnani 2017). Implicit references to the nationalist movement feature frequently, with Shankar using his film as a medium to express his opinions on the state of Indian society, education and, crucially, a so-called 'awakening of Mother India'.

A vision in film

The film is a thinly disguised autobiography of Uday Shankar's life. It tells the story of a young boy, named Udayan, and his journey towards the construction of a cultural centre that is driven by his imagination, his *Kalpana*. One of the major dance sequences, titled *Labor and Machinery* occurs at the beginning of the second act of the film. Although, like many others in the film, the performance occurs in a dream state, it is significant to the plot as it is after this point that the narrative almost entirely shifts onto the development of Udayan's institute, *Kalakendra*, the fictional equivalent of Almora. According to Projesh Banerji (1982b) the choreography of *Labor and Machinery* is a significant departure from the popular stage equivalent, demonstrating that the choreographies in the film were made specifically for the camera.

Figure 11. a series of stills from Labor & Machinery, Kalpana (1948).

Before the dance, Udayan reluctantly attends a party hosted by a wealthy millowner. Up until this point, the film setting has been simple, taking place in villages and barely furnished homes. It even told of a time of poverty in Udayan's life where his childhood friend, Noor, dies of starvation. The party, during which the guests engaged in a conversation concerning the ongoing starvation and fears of drought in India whilst enjoying the endless flow of alcohol and supply of food, acts not only as a juxtaposition to Udayan's earlier experience but as a statement against inequality in the nation. The following dance sequence, though, takes a stand against the modern methods of machinery where labourers are encouraged to "work like a machine" but maintains the theme of greed and exploitation with the portrayal of the millowner. The choreography tells a short story of a factory worker, portrayed by Uday Shankar, leading a worker's rebellion against the factory owner. Opening with the hunched figures of the workers' staccato but simultaneous movements, a fatigued worker is beaten by a senior. After this, Shankar questions another worker, "mutthee bhar chaaval ke lie apanee jaan kho bee?" ("will you lay down your life for a handful rice?") and then begins to gather the other workers. The series of stills below convey the long and complex choreography that Shankar has created to tell the story of a struggle against the strict, disciplinarian and dehumanizing factory owner.

As Purkayashta (2012) notes, *Labor and Machinery,* is a significant moment in the narrative of *Kalpana*. It is after this point in the film, that Udayan's focus turns almost exclusively towards realising his dream of opening *Kalakendra.* The final moment of the choreography where Shankar is freed from the chains of his oppressive employer is, therefore, crucial to the audiences' depiction of Udayan and the other guests at the party. As Udayan returns to the party from the dream sequence of *Labor and Machinery*, Kamini, a friend and dancer who accompanied him to the party, begins her plea to the party guests to sponsor or donate towards *Kalakendra*. Instead of promoting his vision for *Kalakendra*, Udayan, seemingly moved by his own dream, begins lambasting the other guests for their drunkenness and indecency. Udayan's condemnation centres around their roles in exploiting the poorer members of society for their own gain. His reproach of their

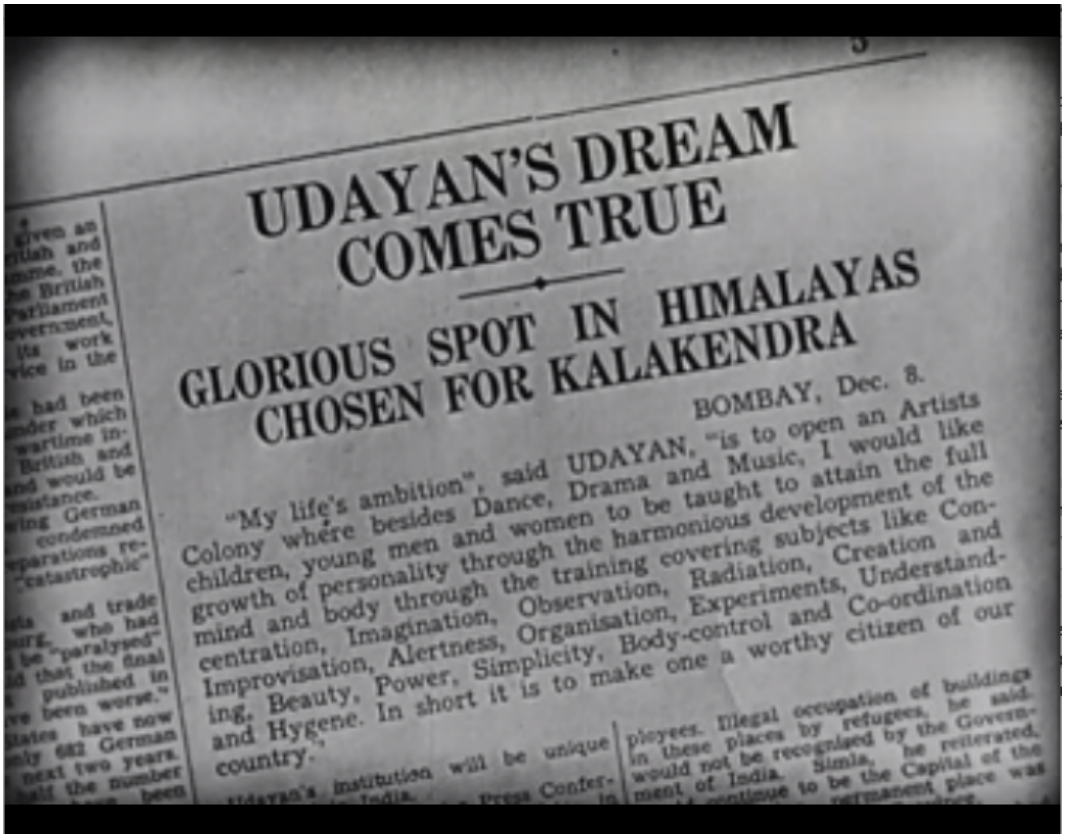
immoral actions and, in his words, “fake culture” sets Udayan’s character as someone whose role in society is to defend a true form of Indian culture and must therefore build his centre without corrupt financial backing. It is during this part in the film that Udayan’s ambition to create a cultural centre is suggested to be more than a personal desire to spread his dance, but of national importance to remedy the degenerate forms of culture as practiced by the wealthy and the elite.

The dance itself, given it is unclassical in style with few traces of established Indian dance forms, is an interesting statement contrasted to the modernity of the factory. It might have been expected that such a stance would have been taken as an opportunity to promote classical dance as a direct opposition to the uniformity of the modern manufacturing economy. However, Shankar viewed tradition as something that should be respected but not necessarily put to work. Instead, a true artist’s role was to develop their art form to remain relevant and evolve with society:

> *To make a thing beautiful a modern artist has to make the modern mind, the mind of his audience. The great tree of national culture is nourished by limitless knowledge, by enlightened labour and incessant creativeness*

- Uday Shankar in an interview with Projesh Banerjee, October 1949 (quoted in Banerji 1982b: p.69)

In *Labor and Machinery*, then, Shankar’s non-classical performance is not anti-modern insofar as seeking to preserve a traditional way of life. Instead, it can be read as part of his manifesto that sought to centre the cultural arts as part of national education, culture and identity. Udayan did, in the end, secure funding to open *Kalakendra.* The movie marks the beginning of its final act, which is set entirely in the Himalayan-based cultural centre, with an image of a fictional newspaper article.



UDAYAN'S DREAM COMES TRUE

GLORIOUS SPOT IN HIMALAYAS CHOSEN FOR KALAKENDRA

BOMBAY, Dec. 8.

"My life's ambition", said UDAYAN, "is to open an Artists Colony where besides Dance, Drama and Music, I would like children, young men and women to be taught to attain the full growth of personality through the harmonious development of the mind and body through the training covering subjects like Concentration, Imagination, Observation, Radiation, Creation and Improvisation, Alertness, Organisation, Experiments, Understanding, Beauty, Power, Simplicity, Body-control and Co-ordination and Hygene. In short it is to make one a worthy citizen of our country".

Figure 12. a fictional newspaper article, Kalpana (1948).

Udayan's – and, therefore, Uday Shankar's – ambition is quite neatly summarised in this article. In teaching the cultural centre's students "to attain the full growth of personality through the harmonious development of the mind and body… to make one a worthy citizen of our country". *Kalakendra* is quite clearly positioned as more than just a dance school. Instead, it is a place where the ideal Indian citizen is made. When read against *Labor and Machinery* and the context in which it was presented, this ideal citizen is constructed against the indecent, immoral and overindulgent wealthy class.

Framing the subject

And yet, it is from the actual choreography of *Labor and Machinery* that audience gains a conception of Shankar's identity as more than the founder of an education centre, but as dancer, where his identity truly lies. Shankar uses the rigidity of the other dancers against his character's fluid and graceful movement to present himself as a rebellious visionary. He also, at one point, uses the supporting dancers as the components of the machinery which his character is forced to operate; again,

their mechanised movements render themselves dehumanised whilst Shankar's character continued to move freely. At the climax of the choreography, Shankar's revolt is thwarted by the factory owner's offer of more money to the workers. His character is then restrained by a police officer who hands his chains to the factory owner. At the choreography's conclusion, Shankar's character breaks free from the imagined chains before the dream ends and Udayan returns to the decadence of the party.

In figure 13, I have presented a small segment of the choreography in which Shankar positions himself to be in the centre of the camera, his body emphasised by the lights above him. In presenting Shankar in this manner, I demonstrate two things. First, it can clearly be seen how Shankar distinguishes himself from the other dancers in this still. The arm movements are precisely an example of Shankar's fluidity and grace placed against the other dancers. The lighting and the camera angle are of importance here when considering the visuality of the choreography.

Here, I adopt the same mode of analysis as with the photographs in the earlier by making the distinction between vision, what you can physiologically see, and visuality, the construction of vision (Rose 2001). In this mode of analysis, then, there is significance in the ways Shankar frames himself and the meaning he hopes to attach to that. The combination of Shankar's bodily movements and their framing through the lighting and camerawork sets Shankar, in this choreography, as a visionary standing against the oppression of the industrialised society that has lost touch with Indian culture and spirituality. It is of note that the ambiguity of the performer's identity during the dream sequences ensure these choreographies act as a direct interaction between Uday Shankar and the audience, without the distortion of the fictionalised character, Udayan. Therefore, when the performer is constructed as a visionary, Shankar is constructing himself as such. Thus, the movie, through its framing visuality, not only serves to present Shankar's vision of an independent India but also of his own role in that future.

Second, the presentation of Shankar in this manner illustrates how scholars might attempt to convey movement. The series of stills, though not frame-by-frame quite clearly show the undulating arm movements for which Shankar was famed (Erdman 1987). Here, I explore how we might represent the non-representational. The stills I have presented exemplify a similar approach to that of the author in *The Sketch* (figure 9) in that I have positioned the stills in a manner that suggests a sequence of motion. My initial approach had been to take a snapshot of each frame; however, it was soon apparent that to do so what require an unreasonable number of stills to convey just one cycle of motion. It is, therefore, in relying on the "potential mobilities" (Lisle 2009) that I believe I have successfully conveyed the fluidity of Shankar's mobility in this instance. My experience of selecting and presenting the stills stands as a reversal of the process of interpreting movement from the historical images in the first section of the chapter. It was then, too, that my analysis was enabled through an understanding of the affect and mobility that a still image can hold. Therefore, applying the same epistemology of the 'still' to rationalise how I produce visual representations emphasises how critical scholarly engagement with both moving and still images hinges on a denial of an im/mobility binary.

Figure 13. a series of stills presenting Shankar's motion in Labor & Machinery, Kalpana (1948).

An imagined past

Like Almora, *Kalpana* was a means for Shankar to write his own history, emphasising the 'Indianness' of his identity. There has been little effort by Shankar to disguise *Kalpana* as anything other than a dramatised biography. This makes the inconsistencies with Shankar's real life even more notable. Significantly, there is a complete ommission of the western influences on Shankar's art, instead replacing these influences with carefully selected Indian bodies and places. This 'brownwashing' occurs early in the film where Udayan is instructed by his mentor to travel beyond Rajasthan in order to stimulate his imagination. When Udayan asks where he should travel to, his mentor suggest Benares, the holy city thought to be favoured by Lord Shiva, whose dancing form, *Nataraja,* inspired Shankar's pursuit to incorporate Indian technique in his dance repretoire during his solo travels in Europe (Banerji 1985). It is, therefore, no coincidence that Shankar opted to instead have Udayan's early career take place in the spiritually significant Benares. This respatialisation of his early career would have appealled to nationalist sentiments by locating his inspiration within India but also reaffirming his dance as being a representation of India's spirituality with notions of an ancient religion.

It was not just the spatiality of Shankar's history but also the people in his life who were replaced. As in reality, Udayan found his skill first in painting. However, his Indian mentor in the film is a replacement of Uday Shankar's real-life art teacher William Rothenstein from the Royal College of Art in London. Arguably more significant, though, is the replacement of the Elmhirsts in the financing of the fictionalised version of the cultural centre, named *Kalakendra* in the film. Shankar was reportedly very grateful for the support of the Elmhirsts and was particularly appreciative that his western benefactors were willing to fund a cultural centre in India (Banerji 1982b). The absence of such influential figures along with the re-spatialisation of Shankar's early tours that included tours around Europe and the USA with Udayan's tours of Calcutta, Lucknow, Delhi, Karachi, Lahore, Agra,

Madras, Bombay demonstrates how Shankar chose to construct his feature film along nationalist sentiments.

Does the movie move?

In his open message to the audience Shankar is explicit in his aim to associate his art with Indian cultural heritage. Thus far I have considered how Shankar has positioned himself as the beholder of Indian culture through both his dance and the narrative of his own life that he presents in the film. However, in following what Sarah Whatmore refers to as an attentiveness to the "livingness of the world" that has emerged from the material turn in cultural geography, I shift my analysis of *Kalpana* away from its meanings onto the a viewer's experience of it (2006: p.603). I take particular note of how Shankar exploits the affective register of dance in his film. In doing so, I make personal reflections on how watching Shankar and his creative expressions on screen evoked an emotive response from myself that played on my own previous experiences, beliefs and knowledges. Much like Shankar aims to declare his dance as a representation of culture, the Indian diaspora has used classical dance as a means to maintain a sense of attachment to Indian culture and heritage (Thobani 2017). As part of this diaspora, I grew up with my sisters' learning and performing kathak. *Kalpana*'s final scenes are about a showcase of Indian classical and folk-dance forms performed as a fundraising event at *Kalakendra*. Not only does this reassert Udayan, and therefore, Uday Shankar as a patron of all Indian dance, it broadens the audience with which the film emotively resonates with.

Figure 14. a kathak performance, Kalpana (1948).

For me, in seeing a solo *kathak* performance featured in the programme within the movie, signalled that this movie concerns itself with the parts of Indian culture that I relate to. In fact, although he did not perform this choreography himself, had I not done the academic research into his background and life, in seeing *kathak* being included in his film, in the movements and *mudras* that I can vaguely recognise, in *kathak* 'being-there' on the screen, I would have assumed Shankar was himself a patron of *kathak*. It is in this ability, through affect, to 'move' its audience that the film encourages them to sympathise with its overarching message. Shankar's use of dance in his film, then, is not just a narrative tool but a means to capture its affective power to express his vision to a wider audience base.

Furthermore, the film's ability to move spatially and temporally makes it a significant historical object. Shankar has effectively packaged his dance, his life and his political commentary in a format that has its own mobility. Whilst the film was

not a commercial success, it was critically acclaimed, with copies acquired by thirty-two countries for their film archives (Khokar 1983). *Kalpana* crucially provides an opportunity to see Shankar in motion, unlike any of the other representations analysed across the two chapter about him in this thesis.

It is in its ability to move, emotionally and geographically, that *Kalpana* can be viewed as the most prominent and most personal of Shankar's expressions. However, viewed alone, it presents an incomplete story of Shankar's career and contributions to the popularisation of Indian classical dance. Alone, it eradicates the hybridity in Shankar's approach to Indian dance that was arguably key to popularity in the west which then propelled him into recognition, not always favourably, by the beholders of Indian culture. Instead, through Udayan, Uday Shankar is constructed as a practitioner of Indian classical dance who rejects Western influences and ideals in the name of preserving the spiritual essence of national culture. In the film, when Udayan proclaims, "all the filth of Europe and America has been dumped here and what is shameful is that we are proud of our ignorance", Shankar is making an outright statement against his own professional development. In what could be read as a strategic move in a now independent India, Shankar is emphasising his Indianness in order to legitimise the political commentary of the film. *Kalpana*, then, is an explicit expression of Shankar's vision for Indian national identity.

Beyond representations: identity, nation and assemblages in Uday Shankar

The concurrent erasure of hybridity that occurs in both *Kalpana* and Almora presents a markedly different narrative to the findings in the previous chapter. It is, thus, in the assemblage of historical sources, in the textual, material and the visual, that the complexity of Uday Shankar's identity is uncovered. I argue that the clearest manifestation of Shankar's hybridity was in his ability to productively reconstruct and represent himself and his dance for his audiences. In the West, Shankar leaned into the Orientalised expectations of him as some mystical dancer

from the East, whilst using his training and experience under his Western mentors to ensure his choreographies would still entertain. In India, Shankar erased the Western origins of his interest in dance, and even his Western supporters that enable much of material and visual expression in Almora and *Kalpana*.

The consistency, though, is that his identity has largely been recognised as Indian. It is here that the need to analyse an assemblage of sources rather than be restricted to representations. Arguably, the "truth-telling" of representational research inform us of Shankar's hybridity (Anderson & Harrison 2010). Whilst this hybridity cannot be overlooked in how crucial it was to the *global* popularisation of Indian dance at the time, it is through the non-representational research of this chapter that speaks more accurately to the popular collective memory of Uday Shankar's dance and his legacy.

Shankar died in 1977, reportedly alone, bitter about his failed efforts to sustain a cultural centre and left wanting of more recognition for his role in representing India's culture on the global stage (Khokar 1983). However, in what is the most explicit demonstration of his formal recognition as a truly Indian dancer, Shankar was awarded a Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1962. In 1971, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Vibhushan, its second highest civilian award. In 1978, one year after his death, to commemorate his contribution to Indian dance, a postage stamp featuring the dancing body of Shankar was issued. Presenting Shankar in his dancing form, the stamp marked his commemoration as a national icon.

Figure 15. a stamp issued on 26th September 1978 (India Postage Stamps [online], http://postagestamps.gov.in/Stamps_List.aspx)

Whilst he never aligned himself with an individual classical dance form, he is now celebrated for his contributions to it. In many ways, it was his productions in the affective register of his dance, the materiality of his cultural centre and the visuality of his film that has generated his historical impact. As academics, we can use our specialism in navigating the archives in order to locate "the truth" behind his dance, but this chapter makes it very clear that the non-representational registers must equally be researched in recognition of how history, in the case of Shankar at least, has privileged the non-representational narrative. It is thus in the

non-representational that Shankar impact on Indian dance and even nationalism is clearest, almost unsurprisingly, because he told us that.

Conclusion

Leila Sokhey and Uday Shankar's European tours in the 1930s demonstrate the presence of Indian dance on the global stage. These occurred before classical canons of Indian dance, including *kathak,* were formalised through the Sangeet Natak Akademi, established in 1953 by the Government of India. With the contributions of Sokhey and Shankar to the so-called 'revival' of Indian classical dance now widely recognised, I argue that it was in fact their tours abroad, where their identities and dances were mostly celebrated as entirely Indian, that legitimised their claims to authority on Indian classical dance. This, in turn, legitimatised India's subsequent claim of dance representing a national culture.

Sokhey's and Shankar's dances, in distinctive ways, embodied their subalternity. In western press reviews, dialogue with their audiences was thought to be made impossible by an unbridgeable ontological difference, a fundamental departure in belief of what exists in the world, that distorted their affective expressions. Their tours abroad equally demonstrate a layered Orientialisation of their performances. The reviewers would often essentialise their dance as being of "the East", "mystical", "ancient" and "strange", thus made to represent all Indian culture rather than an example of one of its regionalised art forms. However, aligned with a politicised cultural revival movement driven by Indian elites as a resistance to colonial power, Sokhey and Shankar upheld the narrative of *kathak* and its counterparts being an ancient, Vedic dance tradition themselves. Their introduction to Indian dance occurred through the Orientalised lens of Western dance practitioners, most notably Anna Pavlova who had encouraged both their pursuits for 'authenticity'. Thus, the diverse influences in their lives ultimately enabled them to embody the necessary hybridity in their dance to find validation both in India and Europe.

The imbalance in this thesis between the two subjects is not just a reflection of Shankar's longer career (Sokhey was just 48 when she passed away in 1947) but

is rather a demonstration of the differing extents to which their subaltern identity impacted their lives and dance. Chapter 2 discussed the complexity of Shankar's subalternity, particularly in the misrepresentations of his dance. However, in the more-than-textual sources of Chapter 3, it is clear that if Shankar was subaltern, he was a subaltern that went to great lengths to be heard. Leila Sokhey, as a woman leading not just a revival movement, but a reclamation that granted women authority in an otherwise patriarchal *gharana* system, remained constrained by the lasting stigmatisation of female public performers from the colonial anti-nautch campaigns. Her emergence as an authoritative figure in *kathak* practice, aided by her elevated status being upper-caste and educated, is therefore a vital transgression of not just the gendered *gharanas* but of the broader confinement of the ideal Indian woman to domestic spaces. However, having to negotiate these gendered systems prevented Sokhey beginning a performing career as young as Shankar, and restricted her creative license to innovate in Indian dance outside of *gharana* techniques as Shankar unashamedly did.

Compared to Shankar, Sokhey leaves a minor archival trace. Whilst Shankar has been much written about, the only attempt to document Sokhey's life was from the pen of another subaltern woman, Damyanti Joshi. It is through this questioning of how academia can sufficiently locate subaltern bodies that this thesis makes further contributions. Specifically, I hope my work informs future research into how we might read historical mobility, both globally and at the body-scale. Whilst Shankar's masculinity has granted him greater attention in archives and biographies, his significant encouragement for what might now be termed non-representational thought demonstrates that his voice remained subaltern. Informed by a non-representational approach, I uncovered this problematic of textuality, specifically in the unwanted linking of his dance and language. Chapter 3, therefore, responds to this problematic of postcolonial representation, identifying how Shankar utilised more-than-textual expressions to assert his longed-for-legacy as an Indian classical dancer. Non-representational theory emerged as one of the most controversial and significant movements in twenty-

first century geography with studies of dance at its heart; it is, again, through dance that I push its application in postcolonial settings.

I am taken back to the *tatkaar*, the sounds used to rhythmically instruct the *kathak* dancers' footwork. I am taken back to *kathak* performances I have witnessed at cultural variety shows, in Trafalgar Square as part of Diwali celebrations, and at Wembley Stadium in 2015 when India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited the UK. At the time, there was no question that these performances, often depicting stories from Hindu mythology, were demonstrations of Indian culture. In fact, there is still no question of that; *kathak* has become a distinct Indian dance. Instead, the careful scholarship in this thesis reads that recognition as part of the twentieth-century configuration of Indian national identity as a whole. Through its construction in the political context of late colonialism, its response to modernity, and its global movements and influences, *kathak* therefore demonstrates the internationalist, postcolonial nation-building of the sovereign state of India.

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