Roof/Room Pieces: An Ethnography of Lockdown Lives, and Digital Performances of Rabindranritya

Debanjali Biswas

Abstract

This essay is an exploration of precarity and sociality within performing arts in India. It analyses dances made digitally for audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-21) and engages with scholarly literature and movement system with reference to Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and forms of dance identified as rabindranritya. Interpreted through interdisciplinary research methods of digital ethnography, questionnaires, content analysis and dance studies, the essay aims to understand why some of us continued to dance through the global pandemic. I focus on YouTube as a site of research as we realize that technology's relationship with human and arts have now evolved and 'liveness' could be optional. I question various forms of precarity in arts industries through respondents' answers and observe what notions of sociality are exchanged between the performer and their audience. I bring to light the mundane and vibrant of the quotidian lockdown lives of performers who remained cloistered at home, but with cameras on them, how they seized the pandemic precarity and continued dancing with a sense of immediacy and new kinds of intimacy, communicating their imaginations and emotions and bridging social-temporal-spatial distances.[5]

Key Words

dance studies; digital ethnography; YouTube; COVID-19; rabindranritya

Introduction

In April of 2020, dance writer Brian Seibert wrote about *Room/Roof Piece*—a performance made remotely by the dancers of Trisha Brown Dance Company. They revisit Trisha Brown's gritty, urban choreography *Roof Piece* (1971) that premiered on the roofs and terraces of lower Manhattan buildings and became a part of the company's repertory. In Roof Piece, dancers executed a series of movements which the dancer on the next roof tried to imitate. Trisha Brown's dancers received and transmitted movements making improvisations if they could not follow. A film and photographs by Babette Mangolte captured the assorted movements on rooftops as a codified whole.[1] The *Roof Piece* was a metaphor for communication across distance, and the same metaphor carried over to the virtual staging of choreography in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Company dancers Amanda Kmett'Pendry and Jamie Scott conceived the piece anew, and other dancers created movements in the confines of their residences spanning New South Wales to Brooklyn. Dances were performed on the videoconferencing platform Zoom, and subsequently edited for a virtual audience. The dancers write, if "*Roof Piece* uses distance to transcend the boundaries of a room, a stage, and the eye of a single viewer, […] in order to hold the integrity of the original work, dancers in *Room/Roof Piece* are limited to seeing one dancer on the screen" using remote technology to transcend distance.[2] The dancers repurposed Brown's ideas on how dance is communicated across a distance, which included imitation, improvisation, and "decomposition" of the original movements. Although the pandemic kept dancers apart, it allowed them to adapt a site-specific choreography as a round-the-world message. Through dancing in their own rooms, dancers explored ways of communicating across distance. Seibert quotes Scott ("Home Version") saying, they expressed "a nod of solidarity to people who are also confined." Viewing the recreation of Brown's avant-garde choreography alerted me to a defining cultural moment in the dance world that has already been taking place in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[3] Inspired by *Room/Roof Piece*, I borrow Brown's symbolic frames of communication across distance and sites, as well as the ethos of dancing in rooms and on roofs to explore a century-old dance legacy from India—a contemporaneous cultural movement transforming everyday domestic spaces and born-digital media.

In 2020–21, the closure of institutions and arts venues to contain the spread of the infectious virus SARS-CoV-2 or Coronavirus, affected the sector of creative and performing arts globally. In India, from March 24, 2020, all civilians were subjected to mandatory lockdowns, which included intense restriction to movement and choice, drastic adjustments to social and professional environments, and in the case of COVID-19 infection—a quarantine. Performers and technical and administrative workers of arts and creative industries lost work and income during the pandemic. This deepened a sense of precarity that in turn intensified the ever-precarious state of the creative arts. The restrictions and containment measures posed fundamental challenges to those who dance, being deemed "non-essential" professionals. They faced an absence of live programming, and were disallowed to dance in proximity, or engage socially. Disjointed and plural voices chimed on social media expressing concerns for self and householders, lost performance opportunities, and prolonged bouts of isolation. Despite "all in this together", pandemic loss became an everyday reality set against asymmetrical and informal infrastructures within which creative arts industries operate in India.

A different kind of critical reflexivity within the public discourse of arts is perhaps needed to debate why society needs dance and dancers. What I will bring to this essay is how cloistered at home, with cameras on them, dancers seized the pandemic precarity and continued dancing with a sense of immediacy and new kind of intimacy, communicating across distance.

Methodology: Digital Ethnography, 'You' Tube Choreography

With this paper, I offer a peek at experiences of creating dance in India during the COVID-19 pandemic. I do so through an ethnographic account of *rabindranritya* in the digital medium across performers as varied as amateurs, experts, cultural workers, and hobbyists. This empirical research on dance is derived from a particular set of texts focusing on interconnected questions I raise while doing digital ethnography, specifically i) YouTube as a site of research, ii) precarity in arts industries during COVID-19, and iii) dance studies with reference to Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore and rabindranritya.

Web-based ethnography can broadly be identified as internet ethnography (Miller and Slater), cyber-ethnography (Teli et al.), digital ethnography (Kaur-Gill and Dutta; Murthy), netnography (Kozinets), and ethnography of the virtual worlds (Taylor et al.). Often these terms are used as synonyms, sometimes rightly so. These scholarly studies emphasize that the technological and human relationship has been evolving; the pervasiveness of the internet in people's everyday lives has unlocked the potential to conduct ethnographic research on online practices, as well as expanded the range of public worlds and culture (Horst and Miller). Digital ethnography is media-based form of research that focuses on people's everyday lives and use of technology. The research studies the digital in relation to "material, sensory, and social worlds" (Pink et al. 7). Being a socio-anthropological method, digital ethnography does not confine itself to one medium, but encapsulates the uses users make of digital environments and their functions, and observes social formations, cultures, and shared identities that naturally emerge from such use practices (Wesch). Moreover, some elements of our everyday existence and lived experiences are distinctly digital which makes expressions of accomplishment, creativity, and sociality via the digital into compelling sites for contemporary ethnographic practices.

Central to my methodology has been 16 months of participant-observation, observing dance made for YouTube, the largest online video repository and a digital platform that I argue is a catalyst of sociality and inclusion in the field of creative arts. Founded in 2005, YouTube gained prominence as a field of study after the digital turn[4] (Taylor et al.; Strangelove; Wesch). It continues to serve as a platform that entails media transfer and archiving with an interface that prioritizes interactive engagement.[5] Unlike many social media sites, YouTube does not require individuals to register to view videos on the site, unless they want to comment on those posted by others.[6] YouTube allows for easy availability of viewing and sharing without creating an account, or what anthropologist Michael Wesch observes "connection without constraint" (27). YouTube displays videos as a playlist or an algorithm that is based on user behavior. For example, if I watch excerpts of *Cymbeline or Coriolanus*, the next few suggestions are then the most-viewed videos of Shakespearean plays.[7] Utilizing user behavior—or in other words, audience preference— YouTube personalizes viewing experience through a smorgasbord of videos. YouTube's democratic, participatory nature plays a significant part

---

1 See Mangolte's filming process: https://babettemangolte.org/maps.html. Accessed 22 June 2021
2 See video and note: https://trishabrowncompany.org/news/?pg=3 Accessed 22 August 2023
3 In a similar vein, Rebecca Weber discusses *Project Trans(m)it* as a 'social (distance) dancing project' (2021) that was originally conceived as a long-distance digital dance improvisation between international collaborators resulting into a multi-screen immersive screendance installation. Mitchel Rose's film *Glob Trot* (2014) and *And So Say All Of Us* (2019) too feature multiple performers across several countries imaginatively explore public and domestic spaces through movements.

4 The growing importance of digital media technologies in contemporary sociocultural, political and economic processes signalling a paradigm shift in the anthropological study of media (Udupa et al. 1- 2)
5 YouTube is a Web 2.0 domain owned by Google Inc. where data, i.e., content, is user-generated and dynamic. Besides enabling a wide viewership that is democratic and participatory in nature, YouTube is a technology in which media is stored, referenced, and shared or as Robert Gehl (44) and Henry Jenkins (116-117) note, content is archived, annotated, and re-circulated.
6 Some channels may limit the communication by 'switching off' the feature to be commented upon, hence managing audience response to spread negativity or sensitive content.
7 The number of viewers is recorded; however, the view counts are imprecise measures of knowing one's audience (Strangelove 21), therefore popularity can be artificially inflated.

in my discourse of dancing and viewing.

What could have prompted performers to publish themselves dancing? YouTube's early motto had been "broadcast yourself" (2005–2012); i.e., its primary function was to motivate YouTube users to share their lives on the web. Thereafter, new regulations for online culture were introduced by the platform through a mission statement—"to give everyone a voice and show them the world"[8]—to inspire diverse users to contribute to the platform and to reflect on the shifting roles of agency and identity. This act of creating and broadcasting on video-sharing sites, one Wesch calls "YouTubing" oneself, has become a ubiquitous method of expressing oneself. The transnational growth of social networking sites and video sharing technology, especially recording, digitizing, and 'uploading' of experiences of the self has become practice of everyday life. YouTube can be seen as an epitome of digital culture—"by allowing 'you' to post a video which might incidentally change the course of history" (Snickars and Vonderau 11).

Burgess and Green note that beyond the technological, commercial, and aesthetic principles behind the meteoric growth of YouTube, is a cultural ecosystem, an "accidental cultural archive" (90). A decade since their study, the archive has grown daily as YouTube makes a creator out of every user, thus providing possibilities for new creative forms and new socialities. A thriving community has emerged in around such videos where an artist performs in what Wesch notes to be "the most public space on the planet" (21). For performing artists, these uploads cultivate a new audience and connect with those who have witnessed their practice before. To quote Alexandra Harlig, "dance is having a prolonged moment in the public imaginary" across all media forms including online (8). Noting YouTube and other social media's flexible qualities in teaching and learning various components of dance, Nell Haynes draws attention to an unfolding of knowledge production and circulation, and the connection of digital sociality in creating one vast, communal experience (149). Even engendering of a collective national identity through repeating viewing of performances on YouTube, as found by Nadia Younan, suggests how dance attains a sense of transnationality when shared through the digital medium (55). In "finding new forms of embodied sociality in the unpredictable travels of digital tracks" Jesse Shipley also notes the popularity and transnational craze of Azonto dance is due to the possibilities introduced by new technologies (365). In these scholarly works, , YouTube is viewed as a means through which archived performance videos are shared anew, current choreographies and processes

8 www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks, 2017.

are readily published.

Due to the COVID-19 disruptions, a rapid and radical reconfiguration of processes, practices, interactions, and relations was experienced by performers. The pandemic has magnified the embeddedness of digital mediation into performers' lives. For example, during the pandemic, dance communities communicated via screens using social media and sharing sites that created spaces to convene and reimagine the sites where we dance. Performers took to technologies in creating dance-for-camera, mediating interpersonal relationships, making and indulging in communicative ecologies, establishing digital rhythms while popularizing screendance and home videos, or as Bench and Harlig succinctly put it: "This is where we dance now" (1–12). Virtual domains like YouTube that had been transforming the viewing experiences of performances, became a site for the staging of performances. The pandemic was a time of proliferation of dance in the digital format.

Cultural workers and creative artists were not regarded essential in the global health crisis, but, as we have seen, they brought vitality and a value of a different kind towards "alleviating negative effects of social distancing and enhancing public well-being" (Tsioulakis and Fitzgibbon). While many modes of work transitioned online, artists too found enthusiasm for creative solutions to pandemic restrictions there. Retreating indoors, some considered lockdowns as opportunities, while others used art to calibrate anxiety, fear, and grief. Most artists were not waiting for something special to come their way before they created. A movement practice offers a way of coming to oneself when worry and uncertainty cause stress and tension, and movement fostered a sense of togetherness by cheering up creators and their communities.

I locate this study in the interdisciplinary research of social anthropology and dance studies. I juxtapose two seemingly disparate components—1) multimodal approaches to exploring the creation, re-creation, and circulation of vernacular dance cultures and 2) artistic practices in the digital medium. One reflects the evolution of rabindranritya, a genre which took form from the creations of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941); the second component explores how plurality and precarity of lockdown lives during COVID-19 pandemic can be analyzed through the same practice as digital dances . The entangling of these components, I demonstrate, indicates a "radical universal humanism" as outlined in Tagorean thought, amidst a sea of individual expression of creativity (Chakravorty "Intercultural Synthesis").

This study revisits the genre of rabindranritya as performed in video blogs or vlogs, amateur films, home videos, and dance films. The videos I discuss are choreographed creative experiments, not spontaneous expressions of an artist's everyday life. The digital ethnography has been conducted on videos published between March 2020–June 2021, bracketed by the first and the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in India.[9] The analysis is based on over 70 hours observation of user-generated publicly available digital video material on YouTube, where individual videos average at five minutes each.[10] I engage in purposeful random sampling. In order to manage the prolific amount of sharing, and to find a way to work around YouTube algorithm, I conducted my observation daily at the same time; each time I refreshed and reordered the uploads 'by date-newest first' with keywords such as 'rabindranritya' and/or 'rabindrasangeet dance.'[11] This analysis is coupled with a more targeted peer study of ten early-to-mid-career dancers who, during the pandemic, had regularly created dance videos and published on YouTube. These dancers completed a questionnaire and communicated through emails and phones. All are of Bengali ethnicity, and all except two reside in Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal, India. In both approaches, I consciously eliminated minors from the ethnography for ethical reasons.

The scope of the essay also ponders upon digital divide and access to technology to stage dance in virtual platforms. Although recording with phones and cameras (which my respondents possessed), are deemed cost-effective and universal, a digital divide was present in India before the pandemic, and did not diminish during it (Jamil, 2021).[12] The volume of dances on YouTube suggest that a significant number of performers can afford to have their dances documented and published. Moreover, the freedom to create and publish at will has also penetrated the hegemony of elite artists or institutions who control visibility and other platforms of dance, physical, or virtual. Many dancers who belong to rural, peri-urban areas or to lesser-known dance schools, and those who are talented hobbyists or YouTubers, exercise their agency in creating and promoting their dances on multiple platforms.[13]

The COVID-19 pandemic exerted a major impact on our agency as artists. Dance became a collage of expressions of selves, for crafting affinities and alliances, challenging pandemic-related isolation and rules, and to seek opportunities for 'creating content,' 'staying relevant,' and 'finding gainful creative employment.' At first blush, it may seem the pandemic had levelled the dancing field on the account that everyone was at home and filming their dances from within their households. However, the possession of a space to practice, dance, or film; equipment such as camera, tripod, or editing software; the connectivity to participate in or upload performances; and even a clutter-free background to record in front of are all resources required to produce shareable dance content. The need for these resources speaks volumes about privilege, access, and precarity that performers must negotiate.

As mentioned earlier, performers whose videos I analyse are as varied as amateurs, experts, creative workers, and hobbyists. All of my respondents perform rabindranritya and or Indian classical dance. It emerged that they wanted to dance to disassociate the lockdown from mundaneness and inertia while making a contribution to contemporary cultural life. By publishing themselves, they contributed directly to the confluence of dance and the digital and simultaneously to an evolving vernacular practice, during a historic moment of global crises. In the absence of the security of time, personhood, health, and other opportunities, dance delivered a sense of stability, a rhythm. In this manner, the dancers had continued to set a discourse of the self that keeps in line with Tagorean thought of sustaining the self even against the forces of nature.

What also emerges from the digital ethnography and independent responses is that Tagore's compositions—poetry, verses, texts—remain significant, familiar, comforting, and contemporary. The access to Rabindranath Tagore's body of works is near egalitarian: almost all dancers in the region of Bengal are acquainted with it. Through the crucial months of pandemic inquietude, Tagore's words seem to fittingly describe transformative experiences, which echo in the writings of Robert Desjarlais as "moments of despair and scenes of resiliency; creative making and renewal; exhaustion, weariness, separation, isolation; new arrangements of space and time; new connections and forms of communication, virtual or viral" (368).

9 The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and Disaster Management Act, 2005 was invoked in mid-March 2020 with the first wave and the first nationwide 'total lock-down' before March ended. The country began a phased lifting of restrictions or 'unlocks' till November 2020. The second – a more virulent wave of the pandemic began to rear its head from February 2021; in some ways that wave abated in June, with a drop in infection and mortality observed since July 2021.
10 Videos are also shared as 'private' and 'unlisted' which do not surface in advanced search.

11 I agree with Harmony Bench who observes, "My IP addresses, my online search histories, my interpersonal connections, my social positions, and my aesthetic inclinations have all acted as content filters prior to my curating examples for inclusion" (11)
12 The dependence on internet-based services in India during lockdown is one with which we are too familiar (De, Pandey and Pal 1 - 5)
13 Although the essay considers the dancer or the dance video as a metric of popularity, due to the paucity of scope, this essay discounts the practices of audience-hood and spectatorship, interactive viewing, impact and consumption of popular culture.

In terms of reflexivity and positionality, I am trained in dance studies and anthropology, and I am a practitioner of Manipuri. I bring to this research a personal history that resonates with the sociocultural and phenomenological questions this essay entails: they explore what my dancer's body knows, having trained in Manipuri, a dance form within which rabindranritya was historically and gesturally grounded, and the precarity of well-being and economy that I experienced in the pandemic. I also draw from my own engagement with rabindranritya in which I have participated individually and collectively, across West Bengal, India and elsewhere, for corporeal, digital, and diaspora publics.

Rabindranritya: History and Practice

While interpreting Rabindranath Tagore's *Religion of Man* (1931), Martha Nussbaum recalls, "the significance of creativity is inseparable from the freedom of the individual to discard all traditions, all group norms, in favor of a profoundly personal vision" (88). Tagore emphasized recognizing compassion, individual self-expression, and self-love as qualities towards artistic freedom. His was the religion with "a view of culture and society based upon the capacities in each human being" that in turn could be "sources of poetic creation: passionate experiences of wonder and beauty, love of both nature and other particular people, and the desire to make something whole and meaningful out of the isolated fragments of one person's perceptual experience" (91). In his quest for consciousness, knowledge, and self-realization, to appease his creative impulses, Pallabi Chakravorty notes, he set out to experiment with dance idioms ("Intercultural Synthesis").

Within the geopolitical space of the Indian subcontinent, Tagore remains a pivotal figure in the national, cultural renaissance and pre-independent networks of globalization. He was instrumental in shaping the course of indigenous literature, crafts, and arts, and he also expanded the town his father founded—Santiniketan in West Bengal—and founded Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan. In the last decades of his life, dance had become an ingenuous way of expressing his words and the world. At present, a substantive body of scholarship focusses on and around Tagore's influence on dance in Bengal (see Banerjee; Bhattacharya; Bose; Chakravorty; Chakraborty; Ghose; Mukherjee; Purkayastha). Those writings present a layered history of public performance,

theatricality and innovation, femininity and masculinity, modernity, and other contemporary themes. Moreover, writings by witnesses of his choreographic experiments, such as Pratima Devi, Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Amita Sen, Shantidev Ghose, Sreemati Hutheesing Tagore, Sukriti Chakravorty, Rama Chakravorty, Sahana Devi, Jyostna Banerjee, Madam Levy, Alain Danielou, Krishna Kripalani and Gurusaday Dutt I.C.S.,[14] are rich sources to mine for personal and anecdotal experiences on dance at Santiniketan under the guidance of Tagore.

Tagore's was a period that saw monumental shifts in the presentation and reception of dance itself. Many of the aforementioned scholars unequivocally conclude that dance in Santiniketan has been a great signifier in the creation of the modern Indian woman and the creation of new publics including a new audience for performance. Alongside Tagore's aesthetic project of incorporating movements to his music, he orchestrated a broader project of delimiting women's presence in performance and public spaces. These projects commenced at a time when in the Indian subcontinent, a set of mechanisms of conformity and policing of women, their artistry, and their bodies in the interest of maintaining a social order were afoot. Historiographical scholarship speaks to and about larger sociocultural processes of hierarchy and control that marked the atmosphere of dance-making in India in the early twentieth century.[15]

While Tagore built dance into the curriculum of Visva Bharati, his daughter-in-law Pratima Devi (1893–1969) and research-scholar and practitioner Shantidev Ghose (1901–1999) assisted him in the incorporation of movements to his song compositions, collectively recognized as rabindrasangeet.[16] The dance that is performed with these songs can be broadly defined as rabindranritya. Movements were added to the "lyrical exposition of Tagore's own poetry and *abhinaya* they evoked" (Bhattacharya 254). They did not follow a stylized code, and did not claim genealogy from any one source. It is known that he preferred abstract movements over mimetic or gestural dance with his song compositions. When it came to dance, Tagore was a bricoleur, one who was able to envision and assemble movements, create meaning with the resources he became familiar with.[17] In the beginning rabindranritya was a synthesis of Manipuri and Kathakali styles. The abstract expressivity and languid flow of one movement to the other is a defining characteristic of the Manipuri style, whereas every word can be enacted through a combination of

hand-facial and/or bodily gestures in Kathakali. Pratima Devi noted that *mudras* from classical dance styles were toned down (32–33),[18] and simplicity of facial expressions were recommended so that larger public may be able to follow. Furthermore, Tagore's dance texts or dramas (*nritya-natya*) inscribed new meanings on representation, gender, and sexuality while his musical compositions were based on an array of themes such as eroticism, patriotism, humor, seasons observed in nature, and spiritual universalism. Tagore was also fond of Javanese, Balinese, and Kandyan dance. Ghose writes how he brought back new dance idioms to Santiniketan having learnt various kinds of dances from Kerala, Java, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (26–31). In Tagore's institution, the process of incorporation of various styles of dance and music from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe led to an active perusal of creative experiments. During Tagore's lifetime, Shantidev Ghose and later dancer-choreographer Uday Shankar (1900 – 1977) enthusiastically pursued these styles; Ghose deepened his study of rabindranritya through research, while Shankar's creative experiments led to the birth of a new style.[19]

In the formative stage, Ghose recalls that dance-making with Tagore was a process of absorption and imaginative expansion, drawing from local-regional, Indian, and foreign practices. In other words, dance was made through processes of cross-fertilization, and the results of these processes emanated out into choreography, dramaturgy, performance, and thereafter, their legacies. Ghose's involvement with dance-making was eclectic and formal, individual and collaborative, consciously and unconsciously adopting learnt styles while fashioning new movements. Tagore's envisioning of dance may be "located in a multivalent philosophy of movement that privileged individual and collective *gati* (rhythm) in tandem with beauty in the everyday" (Bhattacharya 101). In Tagore's approach to the bricolage of dance-making, we see the emergence of a pan-Indian diversity, and with a hidden set of trajectories such as passion, intent, quest.

Following the seminal writings of Pratima Devi and Shantidev Ghose, numerous authors have produced scholarly work on dance legacy, discourse, and the practice of rabindranritya that is relevant to the study at hand (Bhattacharya; Bose; Chakravorty; Chakraborty; Purkayastha). Rabindranritya has always been a popular medium of expressive practice in Bengal and Bengali diaspora, though it was not always received with enthusiasm in the Indian dance world. Writing about rabindrasangeet, auteur Satyajit Ray noted that

Tagore's song compositions (and thereby their derivatives) were "overwhelmingly individual musical presentation of a specific class of Bengaliness" in which Tagore's "tastes, his beliefs, his environment, education, artistic appreciation, literary appreciation—that is his whole character is reflected in his songs" (52). The same can be said about rabindranritya; from the 1920s, Tagore's pedagogic method of holistic education introduced at Visva Bharati included learning dance and movements. Through his literature and musical compositions, he contributed to the coming-of-age of modern Bengali identity, inspiring the public to create alternative spaces to nurture arts and education during the tumultuous years of British rule. This left an enormous cultural footprint upon Bengal's intellectual, social, and creative history. The music and dance genres he engendered later became components of the foundation for middle-class Bengali identity, youth, and public culture.

Although Tagore propelled a dance movement that was, in the words of Pallabi Chakravorty, not "bounded by an unbending grammar of school (*gharana*), a hierarchical ideology of tradition (*parampara*)" (251), in modern times, practitioners and audience find two primary genres of rabindranritya in practice. One of the genres is the direct bequest of Tagorean institutions, like the Sangit Bhavan (Department of Rabindra Sangeet, Dance and Drama) of Visva Bharati, and the Department of Dance at Rabindra Bharati, Kolkata which adhere to specificity of form and grammar. The other genre of rabindranritya could be all that is danced to rabindrasangeet; in this genre, each dance challenges the institutional style of rabindranritya, thus making each choreographer a bricoleur, assembling their dances from a sea of familiar yet heterogeneous styles and influences. Such styles demonstrate rabindranritya is not a static genre.

Till 2001, the copyright on Tagore's works was strictly controlled by the institution founded by him, Visva Bharati. Through a ritualized practice of performing Tagore's creations, Visva Bharati had, on the one hand, attempted to create an ideal template for reproducing, recording, and staging them. On the other, it had imposed censorship on performances deviating from that template. This attempt at control had a prolonged bearing on how plays, songs, and dances written by Tagore were performed and received. Singer Debabrata Biswas (1911–1980) had wielded an unconventional performative power in recognizing individuality and experience in expression Tagore's sung verses. He spent a lifetime singing rabindrasangeet and tussling with critics on use of musical accompaniments

which is "defined only by its potential use or putting this another way and in the language of the bricoleur himself" (17-18)

14 Dutt led a movement for popularising folk dances of Bengal and India around the same time.
15 See Srinivasan "Sweating Sarees"; Kersenboom-Story "Nityasumangali"; Meduri "Nation, Women".
16 Tagore composed his songs as songs, language, and music conceived together (Banerjee 113)
17 Lévi-Strauss explains the creation of a bricolage is achieved with a "set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous"

18 Pratima Devi had no training in dance, yet she was Tagore's dance collaborator, a dance-maker and a pedagogue (See Purkayastha "Choreographing gender in Colonial Bengal")

19 Sarkar Munsi traces Shankar's evolution in *Engendering Performance and Dance: Transcending Borders*.

and changes in tempo of Tagore's songs amongst other matters. Biswas and the Visva Bharati Music Board were bound in disagreement over his rendition of many songs; he was often rebuked by letters for songs to be "re-recorded after eliminating defects" before they were released by record companies (Biswas 87). In a few of his exchanges Biswas emphasizes the freedom of expression and interpretation (130–131) and intellect and emotion (119) while criticizing the self-assured hubris he tolerated from his detractors ultimately writing to them: "I have seen persons possessing a creative mind engaged in new experiments in their respective sphere of activity who did not like the idea of repeating the existing art-patterns like birds and insects. Their examples were a source of inspiration […]" (91). He claimed to be inspired to sing experimentally. While taking on a relatively centralized system that allowed re-production of Tagore's creations, Biswas paid dearly with interruptions in his singing career. However, he believed in subjective interpretations and nuanced experiments, which he often found in Tagore's own assimilation of values, aesthetics, and fluid thinking in creative activities such.

Another experiment towards contemporizing Tagore's vision that gave precedence to freedom of expression and interpretation, to intellect, and to emotion, was Navanritya as expounded by Manjusri Chaki-Sircar (1934–2000) and Ranjabati Sircar (1963–1999) of Dancers' Guild, Kolkata. Navanritya was born during the postcolonial and phase of Indian dance, furnishing what Aishika Chakraborty recognizes as "a new body politics, stressing its social, historical, and ideological constructions" ("The Daring Within" 185). While charting the history of modern dance in Bengal, Chakraborty recounts her dance-mentor Chaki-Sircar's description of her dance lineage: "the legacy of Tagore was one obvious springboard for creations" (193). In Renaissance Bengal, "Tagore facilitated a responsiveness to dance as a legitimate social activity" (191) although the Tagorean dance style was rejected as "amateurish and marginal" ("Calcutta Choreographs" 302). As Chakraborty and other scholars have noted, selected elements or stylistic characteristics from other movement traditions were pastiched and reconstructed as a vocabulary for a dynamic Tagorean dance style. These processes of dance-making were as erratic as intuitive, loyal to Indian dances and but moving towards a dynamic hybrid "through constant absorption of transcultural body languages" (Chakraborty "Calcutta Choreographs" 298). Chaki-Sircar critically analyzed and freely synthesized movements to mark the genre of Navanritya, thus embodying the Tagorean ideal of "chemical synthesis"

(*rashayonik shongmishron*) in bodily representation of Tagore's creations. Chaki-Sircar's own research on ritual and performances of Manipur may have played a role in resisting what Bhattacharya calls a "wholesale importation of regional performance traditions (such as the *ras lila* in Manipur)" (99). But her creative rethinking of Tagorean dance drew ire from many guardians of Tagore's legacies. She aspired to engender a new purpose for a contemporary artist delving into Tagore's creations, to integrate within "vibrant creativity" and make a "breakthrough in the modernization of the Indian dance scene" (Chaki-Sircar 32).

In the nineties when I grew up, I observed that dance was an acceptable hobby, perhaps a desirable accomplishment for women in Bengali middle-class homes. Dancing to rabindrasangeet at school, social clubs, dance groups, and even at unmemorable events was extremely common, even lauded. Ananya Chatterjea even notes women dancing rabindranritya offered "rich material to deconstruct and rearticulate in the creation of a contemporary feminist aesthetic" (122). However, Urmimala Sarkar Munsi mentions, dance was "a sought-after hobby" till she wanted "to become a full-scale professional dancer" especially in the classical arts ("A Century of Negotiations" 299). In comparison, rabindranritya was and continues to be a fail-safe option to explore by professionals and amateurs alike. It is a genre that was not bound to royal courts, domestic spaces, public culture, temples, or hereditary traditions and yet was indirectly bound to all. But it is important to remember that rabindranritya "remained experimental and ad hoc" in practice, since "it was never codified," and teachers "never created a rigorous regimen for training dancers" even though it was fully integrated within the educational curriculum at Santiniketan (Chakravorty "Intercultural Synthesis" 257). Perhaps a lacuna in the training system and indeterminate pedagogy discouraged budding performers from taking on rabindranritya as a specialized style. Perhaps the classical dances offered greater creative, conceptual, socioreligious, and pedagogic clarity and consistency, by comparison. Perhaps in an atmosphere where, for most parents of dancers and many students, dance is not a dependable career and is known to be poorly renumerated as much of it is embedded in an informal, unregulated creative industry, rabindranritya remains only part of elementary and extracurricular education. Or perhaps it is a mode of artistic expression connected to leisure and cultural capital, evoking memories of natal culture and "Bengaliness," and nothing more.

Or perhaps what is now needed is to observe that the

horizon of rabindranritya is shifting, expanding. In observing how Tagore's works are popular texts for dance in the digital medium, it shows that rabindranritya has been moving out of concerts, classrooms, and ensemble productions, towards more personal, individual, artistic expressions. Modern non-classical dance forms of India have evolved too. Interactions with movement styles from across the world through workshops and collaborations, and through dance reality shows and dance videos, has brought about a change in the process of creating new movements to rabindrasangeet. Dances that are brought to digital platforms are viewed with frequency, and reviewed, critiqued, and praised both within and devoid of a sociocultural context. They stand alone as choreographies.

In the following segment, I explore the current trend of choreographic experiments by etching out the complex interlacing of social and cultural domain—that of rabindranritya created for the digital medium and emplaced in quarantined isolation.

Rabindranritya in Lockdown: Observing Plurality in Form and Choreography

The peeling paint of the balustrade has been covered with fabrics, pots with lush foliage have been turned to face the camera. The space is to simulate a stage. From the terrace of the neighbor's building, breezy garments on a washing line festoon the immediate space. Within the frame is the figure of a dancer in a sari draped simply, with colorful fabric tied around waist and shoulders, few flowers tucked in the hair—a common visual trope motif of a performer dancing to rabindrasangeet.[20]

Another dancer. Now in a room. The ceiling-fan keeps blowing off the carefully arranged fabric to giving a peek of a pile of books. Other signs make the domestic visible: a forgotten water jug, patterned floral curtains, children's toys. Before beginning a dance to rabindrasangeet, a prayer is chanted for the good of humankind in front of a small idol and a framed photograph of Tagore. Dressed in fineries unfitting for a summer day, the movements follow the tempo of the song. The handheld camera continues to shake till the very end.

Do these descriptions seem familiar? The first video is of a dancer representing an institution, in the second a hobbyist

who dances recreationally. What unites them are their commitment to dance, and dance videos set to Tagore's music compositions made for digital public. What further connected the performers during the COVID-19 lockdowns, or *dushamay*, the worst of times, was probably a desire to move out of their claustrophobic interior dwellings, towards dancing as an expression of much-needed *ananda*, joy and *kalpana*, imagination.

As Tagore preferred for the performer and the audience to have an out-of-door experience, the dances in these videos frequently emulate the original mise-en-scène—open skies, trees, or plants surrounding the dancers, garments such as saris or *uttariya* decorating the backdrop. The domestic, as much a discursive as a physical space, is transformed into a cultural space, a stage, a site to dance. Not many of these dance videos fit the definition of site-specific dance,[21] yet in a Lefebvrian sense, they create sites to dance within their existing spaces, even if for a temporary period. The dancers approach domestic spaces—room, terrace, garden, corridors—with boundless possibilities, and dance is made part of everyday private life.[22] The lockdowns during the pandemic also meant limited contact with public spaces. Although the first nationwide lockdown began in India on March 24, 2020, eventually each of the federal states had their own "unlocks." Towards the end of the second more virulent wave of COVID-19 ending in June 2021, we see fewer dance choreographies in the confines of four walls. By then, dance had become a part of the urban environment with dance videos being filmed in the commons and outwardly public spaces such as streets, parks, ruins, woodlands.[23] This is a conscious attempt by an individual or an ensemble to enliven public space for filming dance videos. At this historical moment of a global crises, these videos with various incarnations of dance on Tagore's compositions, were accepted as means of creativity, skills, and entertainment and had paved a trend in digital cultures. In this segment, I track divergences in the genre of rabindranritya in the post-copyright years of creative adaptations of Tagore's oeuvre, i.e., creating dance for digital public.[24]

A key transformation in dance cultures has occurred due to transitions in rabindrasangeet. Much of Tagore's 2,200 songs were set to music during his lifetime. These included non-narrative songs and songs within dance-dramas.

---

20 Simplicity in costumes and adorning the hair with flowers became a mark of 'Santiniketani' sensibility (Bhattacharya 96). A key decorative element of costume has been the *uttariya* (a long scarf), usually tied around the head or waist or worn around the neck.
21 Site-specific dance is performed and created in response to a particular site or location, it encompasses engagements with urban, rural and virtual environments and incorporates a range of themes from the sociopolitical to the romantic, historical, ecological and factual.
22 Sukanya Chakrabarti probes the state endorsed performances by celebrity and public during the pandemic and calls them "choreographed joy" (893).
23 Unless mentioned, I limit the scope of the essay to the home as the main site of lived and danced experiences through isolation and lockdown.
24 The immense richness of Tagore's corpus in digital world can now be mined as 'big data', as observes literary studies scholar Sukanta Chaudhuri in the variorum named Bichitra containing Tagore's works in Bengali and English (2020; 2021). Although the archive is entirely textual, it ushers the readers towards a self-annotating archive within the hypertext i.e., the Internet. The Bichitra archive contains (almost) every version of Tagore's every work thus allowing an em-

Since the copyright on Tagore's works expired in 2001, the Bengali music industry began to adapt his songs while experimenting with instruments, harmony, tempo and other parameters to keep up with changes in music performance styles and to excite new listening publics.[25] In contemporary times, rabindrasangeet is used in musicians' independent albums, in cinema as well as web-based series. I have found a phenomenon of dancing for the camera known as "cover dance" or "dance cover" become popular ways of moving to new renditions of rabindrasangeet. Globally, for a "dance cover", performers emulate the choreography from an original music video or choreography by well-known dance artists to the same music. Dancers also move freely and perform their own renditions showing off their virtuosity.[26] But in this context, the recurring mention of "dance cover" in the description or video titles of rabindranritya indicates that dancers view the new musical arrangements of rabindrasangeet as "trending" music, which in turn offers myriad possibilities for creating original choreographies of rabindranritya without emulating anyone. Furthermore, since almost all the music and dance are archived on YouTube, it substantiates what Harmony Bench notes "how digital cultures reimagine who gets to be a dance performer or choreographer" (10). While the finer nuances of kinesthetic style and movement impulse of rabindranritya on YouTube cannot be compared with other styles of rabindranritya (such as the Santiniketani style), it cannot be dismissed that pre-recorded, trending, rabindrasangeet used by YouTube performers forms a basis to dramatize and visualize their choreography for camera, often showcasing a bricolage of movements.

Besides music, we look at the body of the dancer as the site of research and discovery, of revisiting rabindranritya. Almost a century after Tagore introduced dance as "a language of the body in motion that spoke of emotional experience" and "as the perfect articulation of his songs and poetry" (Bose 1086), this could be a moment to ask what kinds of processes and practices does rabindranritya presently engender? To arrive at the stylings of the body with a critical eye, I see that performers do not blithely borrow from Indian classical dances, though they have received extensive training in them. In the past, Bose notes, classical dance idioms have attested "to the potential of rabindranritya in

advancing the modern spirit in Indian dance but they cannot be "equated with Tagore's own style" (1090).[27] Presently dancers build on a combination of various movement languages and rely on their freedom of expression. They too indulge in a "chemical synthesis," a new dance language, and an intercultural dance aesthetic propagated by Tagore, Shantidev Ghose, and Pratima Devi in the early years of rabindranritya. Even if the dance adheres to three of the laws Bose collates, that it "must be set to Tagore's songs, that it must represent the meaning of the songs through body movements, and the movements are fluid and rhythmic" (1092), the boundaries of the uncodified, undefined territory of rabindranritya, appear to be dislimned.

Independently, choreography in many of these dance videos demonstrate a dis/harmonious blend of the physical, textual, aural, and gestural elements. The experience of the dancer(s) comes through. The digital is not a unidirectional arena, interactive engagement between the performers and their audience is alive; they motivate them, praise, and criticize them. The performers highlight their commitment and emotional attachment involved in creating dance by inserting customized messages, behind-the-scenes vlogs, by maintaining an aura of the personal. The cultural currency of the video is not only in the dance, or the 'authentic' Santiniketani, Navanritya, classical, or hybrid styles, but how the dance speaks to the new media publics. As was seen amongst the first dancers in Tagore's institution, "the professionalizing of arts brings with it the promise of self-sustenance and the much-desired freedom of the artist" followed with "a continuous search for new patrons" (Bhattacharya 13–14). The same resonates with artists even while leading precarious pandemic lives. For many of the dancers and choreographers I came across while conducting the YouTube ethnography, the virtual space had already become the new social arena to express themselves with their desire to participate in a wider, global sphere of performance cultures. The COVID-19 pandemic further cultivated audience who welcomed their dances in the wake of isolation, distancing, and lockdown measures. Performers and audience pursued professionalization and a transformative potential through the arts.

In the digitally mediated world, filmed and watched

through handheld devices, dance covers of popular rabindrasangeet circulate well among the audience. Tagore himself classified his song compositions into *parjay-upaparjay* or segments such as songs of piety, patriotism, love, seasons, ceremonies, and miscellaneous. Songs describing the beauty of Bengal's nature and cycle of seasons (*prakriti parjay*) have always been popular amongst dancers and remain so. When usurped by the pandemic, dancers attempted to bring harmony and balance to everyday life by interpreting Tagore's poetry and rhythms of nature. I revisit three videos by performers who use the classical dance vocabulary for presenting Tagore's work for a digital audience, to assert that choreography atypical to conventional rabindranritya lend multidimensionality to the song text and his philosophy. Filmed for camera, sites around dancers shape particular resonances, and dance-making to rabindrasangeet can be unique to the individual's training.

Noted Odissi performer Jhelum Paranjape introduces her video interpreting rabindrasangeet song *Jeebon jokhon shukaye jaye karunadharay esho* (YouTube.com 2020a). She explains *karunadhara* or "shower of mercy" is art itself that brought back color to a listless pandemic life. Art has helped break open the cocoon of pandemic loss; online classes and virtual performances are a source of work for artists which replenish them financially and existentially. Filmed in front of a thrashing sea at monsoon in Mumbai, with a choreography based on Odissi movements and improvisation, Paranjape looks at Tagore's words to find within oneself the strength for embracing the unpredictability of lockdown lives.

In another video Bharatnatyam dancer Sukanya Kumar dances *Momo chitte niti nritye* in an open green space (YouTube.com 2020b). She employs the lyrics *ta ta thoi thoi* (words describing percussive beats) as a rhythm for beating heart, blooming of a bud, steps of a dance, the coursing of time through the planet. She uses her ankle bells to bring out the tempo of the song. Without compromising bharata natyam vocabulary, Kumar interprets Tagore's philosophy of cycle of rejuvenation and chaos as he intended. This song is frequently used for dance (on YouTube); the depth of Tagore's philosophy, often concealed behind the song's alliterative words in others' rendition, comes alive in Kumar's dance.

Staying with the theme of cycle of seasons and respite from a second summer of lockdown, Anjan dances Kathak Esho

shyamala sundar on a roof as it rains (YouTube.com 2021a). The background music of the vocals in sarod, santoor, and tabla creates an apt soundscape for the movements of kathak in which Anjan is trained. He does not, however use feet movements and spins to demonstrate his dexterity; he embodies being caught in the rain with abhinaya. For these three dancers, their significant departures from rabindranritya conventions give a glimpse into the potential song texts possess.

The possibilities of departure from Santiniketani style have also led performers to raise questions amongst themselves. Organized by Kalapi titled "Rabindranritya: a Myth or Truth?" suggests an unrestricted approach towards dancing Tagore, in which speaker Soma Dutta brings up few of the nuances I discuss in this essay (YouTube.com 2021b). She mentions ridding the term 'rabindranritya' altogether, which idealises preinscribed movement and sartorial guidelines, denoting its restrictiveness which in turn urges duplication or repetition of movements. As Tagore often spoke of freeing the body as well as imagination, institutional guidelines such as those outlined through the Santiniketani style by Visva-Bharati and Rabindra Bharati University, are un-Tagorean.[28] For Tagore, creativity was an ongoing search for perfection that would create empathy and free the human soul (Chakravorty "Intercultural Synthesis" 250). This is also seen in several of Kalapi's dance videos that have been made through lockdowns. For example, in *Nobo anonde jago*, a rabindrasangeet rendition fused with Hindustani music, the dancers draw from movements of rabindranritya, Uday Shankar style, and the eight Indian classical dance styles (YouTube.com 2020c). Several dancers are accommodated on the screen beside each other even when they are filming from multiple sites. Choreography and techniques are impacted by spatial limitations. Their steps and garments are synchronised and edited to appear in unison and the outcome is a musical, danced, and visual bricolage, signaling a metaphorical coming together despite the multi-sidedness.[29] Made for International World Dance Day (April 29, 2020), they note that times are critical: "as the sun rises after the night, likewise our planet will also emerge as victorious." Many of Kalapi's videos are filmed with multiple dancers from the rooms and roofs of their houses and are edited to appear in unison. They explore with movements as well as different genres of music for making dance videos for YouTube.

It appears fluidity and multidisciplinarity or cross-genre work

placement of the human in the digital. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php Accessed 22 April 2023.
25 Sengupta quotes praises and criticisms from YouTube videos on new renditions of rabindrasangeet to further the debate on artistic independence and authenticity of Tagore's compositions. Sengupta, Ipsita. "'Originality', 'Authenticity' and 'Experimentation': Understanding Tagore's Music on You-Tube', *The Centre for Internet and Society*, 2015. https://cis-india.org/raw/blog_understanding-tagores-music-on-youtube Accessed 22 April 2023.
26 Performers or YouTubers in the Indian context interpret "dance cover" to set their own choreographies to popular or film music, and although faithful replicas
of sequenced movements from Bollywood songs are common, dances can be widely open to reconfiguration, especially the choreographic elements.
27 Also, "In Devi's words, Shantiniketan's dance aesthetics was less concerned with pure forms and more interested in developing a new dance lan-guage that could express the new content of Tagore's writing" (In Purkayastha "Choreographing gender in Colonial Bengal", 80)

28 Dutta also warns against bringing classicism from Indian dance forms as they are rooted in religious traditions, which counters Tagore's vision of art and life that was iconoclastic. The divine resides within the human. Moreover, to understand rabindrasangeet and interpret to dance requires an artist to understand the social and the cultural history of Bengal, and Tagore's role in seeking what Chakravorty writes as an "organic relationship between knowledge and humanity" ("Intercultural Synthesis" 246)
29 While discussing the process of making videos, dancers mention their mentor Susmita Nandi Sethia presented the idea as a 'dance challenge' to exercise their creativity and inculcate a positive spirit; team members inspired each other to dance together and overcome the confinement of space by imagining beyond the site by using camera. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD6KDrV-3So Accessed 22 April 2023.

is not out of the ordinary for those who make dance videos for YouTube. Besides discussions, dancers show their proficiency in diverse forms to retain audience attention while working on original choreography. Tagore too features in their repertoire. For Bangladeshi artist Ridy Sheikh, Tagore's birth anniversary was a moment to pay tribute to him (YouTube.com 2020d). Collaborating with dancer S. I. Evan from two separate sites (two terraces), their dance *Majhe majhe tobo dekha pai* incorporates movements that were never part of the rabindranritya canon. They distil the canon with dance languages they have picked up while learning and choreographing other forms, yet the new abstract language flows with song text. At one point, they both dance with facemasks to underpin that 'the video was in fact filmed during a historic crisis. On another note, Tagore is an iconic figure outside Bengal and Bengali diaspora, but amongst the performance cultures of Bengal and Bangladesh, he occupies a place of immense significance that is deeply emotional. Every year, his birth and death anniversaries see a deluge of tributes, offerings to him by performing his oeuvre, and since the digital turn, the archive of tributes has been expanding.

During the pandemic, many dance groups took to staging Tagore's dance-dramas from the confines of their own homes. Designed for an ensemble, often around protagonists undergoing deep internal conflict, dance-dramas are musicals with dialogues. From an assorted milieu, I found dances to songs of *Chitrangada* appear frequently in my search, especially two. One song describes Chitrangada's inner emotions as they encounter a warrior for whom they fall deeply, the second is when assured of their own sense of self, they deliver a soliloquy. I take here two such instances to demonstrate how independent of the narrative, songs could also be individually performed as an expression of each character's identity and angst.[30] *Amar onge onge* is a song about bodily transformation, here danced by a cross-dressed man Biswajit H. (YouTube.com 2020e). Ordinarily the song describes the changes Chitrangada finds within them having received divine boons to alter appearance to seduce the warrior. The dancer choreographs the movements in rabindranritya and Bharatnatyam styles. It appears in his attempt to embody gender and body fluidity he challenges notions of manly masculinity and womanly femininity that Tagore initially ascribed to the characters in the drama. Towards the end of the drama, in the soliloquy Chitrangada states they are more than their gender. *Ami Chitrangada* has always been choreographed

as a depiction of strength, grace and virtue of the protagonist; one common interpretation of the song text veers towards women claiming their identity overcoming inner dilemmas (Purkayastha "Warrior, Untouchable, Courtesan") with a powerful subtext of being accepted as an imperfect individual. In Sulagna R.B.'s dance video of *Ami Chitrangada* filmed in an interior space lined with furniture and bookshelves, what comes across is an everyday woman, whose creative expression has found one's place in the wider world (YouTube.com 2020f). Her movements are in Odissi. This is one of the many dances that was performed when the socio-familial space of the home came to be denoted as confines but also refuge. Physically adapting to dwellings and journeying within them not only becomes an important tool for dancers at home, but they learn to amplify the physical and evocative qualities of these sites as well.

As I mentioned before, as artists along with others settled into the pandemic everyday, sites beyond the four walls offered more possibilities for filming dances. In between the first and the second wave when morbidity and mortality had declined, extraordinary control measures came briefly undone. The pressure to re-emerge financially and reconstitute creative and social lives gave artists courage to explore beyond their immediate spaces. Persisting by the Tagorean aesthetics of seeking "festive in the everyday" (Bhattacharya 14), this was a time to transform one's art in relation to people, nature, and seasons, and within that context, I discuss two dance videos by the ensemble Subhangik.

The ensemble of Subhangik led by Subhajit K. Das employs in the video's creative process camerawork and choreography, thereby striking a balance between the human-nonhuman site elements. In many ways, this has been the next stage of making dance films—combining choreography, site-specificity, camerawork along with music and song text giving rise to vibrant encounters. The creative assemblage to Tagore's compositions here wears a cinematic quality, breaking free from the frontal gaze of the camera. One video narrativizes the devotee seeking the divine to *Gahan kusuma kunjo majhe*, penned by Tagore while imitating medieval Vaishnavite Bhakti poets.[31] The ensemble performs in the courtyard of a building in ruins. The arches and pillars act like backdrop of a proscenium (YouTube.com 2021c). The site itself imposes a form of grandeur The ensemble dances as devotees and consorts, from which one—a male—ardently seeks

Krishna, the fountainhead of Vaishnav spirituality. A small portion of Tagore's rabindrasangeet directly addressed Hindu divinities, within which the somewhat erotically charged Krishna songs are extremely popular. Here, dancing bodies create a movement aesthetic within an interstitial zone of multiple classical vocabularies. In contrast, staged under a tree draped with saffron fabric, Subhajit pays a solo homage to dancer-choreographer Uday Shankar through the celebrated movement idiom created by him. In *Maharajo e ki shaje* the dancer takes a more personalized approach to movement exploration, including placing his body at a site to produce particular affects to show an organic connection between song, nature, Bengaliness (YouTube.com 2021d). Dance practitioners and dance writers note Tagore's unfailing influence on Shankar, and here I quote the former's views on interculturalism that stood for unfettered creativity and embracing newness in dance:

"There are no bounds to the depth or to the expansion of any art which, like dancing is the expression of life's urge. We must never shut it within the bounds of a stagnant ideal, nor define it as either Indian or oriental or occidental, for such finality only robs it of life's privilege which is freedom".

—Tagore, Letter to Uday Shankar, 1933 (Bhattacharya 346)

Exponentially, we see more dancers preferring to explore movements to rabindrasangeet on their own perhaps as an embodiment to what Tagore envisioned. We see an openness to hybridity, porous bodies through which newness enters the dance lexicon.

While conducting the digital ethnography, two channels stood out for its consistent approaches of dancing rabindranritya in Santiniketani style. Sundar: Rabindranritya and Rabindranritya Riya joined YouTube in March-April 2020. The first channel is managed by an ensemble of artists connected with Visva Bharati, the second is by a solo artist who has graduated from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata. These experienced dancers scrupulously adhere to rabindranritya style as taught by their institution, which means, there is an absolute, uncorrupted way Tagore's composition are danced. The stylistic movements are based on amalgamation of Manipuri and Kathakali, but veer on abstract expressivity and non-realistic representations. Manipuri movements are preferred for songs with a gentler cadence, while for songs with a pronounced percussive rhythm, vigorous Kathakali steps are molded to suit the text. The range of movement possibilities are from within the 'traditional' vocabulary of rabindranritya, they may appear limitless as well as limited. Both Sundar and Rabindranritya Riya use rabindrasangeet sung with traditional accompaniments; the team at Sundar dance to

music sung by their peers. Although they dance within a small space, allowing for a proximal kind of viewing, they film the videos in single shots, with full bodies in view at all times.

In Sundar's dance videos, I see spontaneity in spirit and symmetrical presentation, with an indication of shared participation in the dance-making process. Inflected through their performances, is a coherent harmony of movements, song texts, and Tagore's core sentiment of dance as a celebration of infallible human spirit, the nature and its resplendent colors. They derive their sensibility and resources from a group of scholars and performers who have been initiated at Santiniketan in creative arts. Their YouTube channel is not only a space to "maintain the legacy of rabindranritya in Santiniketan style" (YouTube.com 2020g), but all the processes and lines of enquiry that had made rabindranritya happen. They draw a continuity in traditional representation of dance and allied arts. For example, in a discussion, Tagore scholars Amarnath Mukhopadhyay and Sudhi Ranjan Mukhopadhyay speak about the role crafts and scenography play in enhancing the essence of dance-dramas (YouTube.com 2021e). They distinguish presentation and application (*proyog o byabohar*) of material objects in ornamentation of characters and scenes for Tagore's dance-dramas and plays. Alongside dance videos filmed exclusively for a digital audience in houses and gardens, they also share choreographies performed in studios and concerts. Sundar continues to seek newness of dance language simultaneously expanding rabindranritya's referential lexicon.

Like artists of Sundar, Riya C. of Rabindranritya Riya does not tamper with the sartorial, embodied, and movement aesthetics of old Santiniketani style. In this way, she acknowledges receiving a shared, inherited repertoire that was hierarchically transmitted to her in her institution of learning. She recasts it for her digital audience producing a template for aspirational traditional rabindranritya soloists. As dancers today cultivate individual distinction, Riya C.'s dance videos provide a structure for creative elaboration while simultaneously incorporating traditional and new, Manipuri and Kathakali movements. She has often filmed her dance on a terrace of a house surrounded by greenery or brick walls. This gives the appearance of an atemporal style of rabindranritya, the simplicity of which makes her videos popular. Since the beginning of the pandemic, she has published rabindranritya videos at least once or twice every month. In her words, she wants to spread the "Tagore tradition" (YouTube.com 2020h) and to entertain YouTube audiences having learnt for 14 years and earned her degree in rabindranritya.[32] The plurality that I find in my viewing of rabindranritya in the digital medium, can also be summated

---

30 See Purkayastha's "Warrior, Untouchable, Courtesan" for a discussion on marginalised women occupying central positions in Tagore's dance-dramas.

31 Imagining himself as a medieval poet Bhanusingha, Tagore simulated the Maithili dialect to write songs which collectively came to be known as *Bhanusingher Padabali*. Most songs imagine scenes of union and separation between Krishna and Radha.

in the words of Martin Kämpchen who anticipated the possibilities of bringing performances of Tagore forward in future:

"Why not experiment more and more with the conventions of performing his plays and dance dramas? Why not add European or Japanese styles of acting, novel dance idioms, pantomime, if you want even video installations. Have a dance performance while reciting Rabindranath's poems, enact some of his ballads, allow different instruments to play his tunes, add modern experimental music to his dance dramas—and so on.

The results may, in many cases, become unconvincing, they may end up a failure and not be Rabindranath anymore. But in some successful productions, the mind and art of the Indian poet will reveal a surprising sparkle and impact that is capable of shaking and moving us more deeply than perhaps the original play did which we have watched a dozen times since childhood. Let us remind ourselves that tradition—including the traditions around Rabindranath—can be kept alive and relevant only when it is confronted by new ideas and styles. If these confrontations are being renounced, we soon will confront a museum, rather than a living tradition."[33]

In the years 2020–2021, dance videos on Tagore's compositions peaked in the period between Bengali New Year (mid-April), International World Dance Day (April 29) and Tagore's birth anniversary (May 8/9). Using Tagore's song texts, the dancers earnestly express their artistry towards emotional, physical even spiritual freedom. The digital ethnography made apparent that performers need to constantly attune with new modes of performance to remain relevant in the larger public domain. The digital had become ubiquitously infused with all parts of pandemic lives, but a valid vehicle of cultural expression. To practice art, was for some soulful and sobering, offering sanctuary from the unpredictability of pandemic and sudden feelings of being unmoored from daily life. For the rest it came to be an act of replenishing the praxis of art and everyday life, where artists learnt how to work with the digital medium. A performance for the digital suggests larger and presumably heterogenous audience. Although rabindrasangeet could be viewed as a representative of a region's collective personhood, Tagore's compositions rouse deep emotions beyond the Bengali-speaking peoples.

Dances to rabindrasangeet bridges the generational and other hierarchies, including professionals, amateurs, and hobbyists, and Santiniketani and new styles, giving a contemporary outlook to a nostalgic, vernacular aesthetic. Rabindrasangeet continues to challenge the imagination of contemporary choreographers, upcoming and established dancers which they rose to accept even during the pandemic. As described before, dancers attempted to embrace the quotidian aspects of dancing in domestic spaces. In the following segment, I cue into the pandemic lives when dance as a digitally native content evolved with everyday life.

Rabindranritya and Sociality in Times of Precarity

"As I finish my practice and trace the arch of the terrace, I felt sad and proud. I have come to appreciate the warmth of my room, the possibilities of choreography the roof offers. But, at what loss?"

amar a ghore aponar kore grihodipkhani jwalo he
shob dukhoshok sharthok hok lobhiya tomari alo he"
(S35, 2021)

(I light a lamp in my own way to illuminate my home
 Let sorrow and grief triumph while they seek Your light. Tagore [1901], *Geetabitan* 106; Translation mine)

In the remainder of the essay, I discuss my research with responses from ten dancers. All have danced through the pandemic, and even after a decade-long training, some have embraced dance as a recreation and not as métier. Previously I analyzed tenacity and creativity of dancers; two other relevant registers emerge - they are precarity and sociality. By precarity I refer to forms of threats (often extreme) to a livable life (Butler 146), in this case how the pandemic enforced loss of work or how people came to inhabit their worlds. By sociality I mean forms of social interrelatedness which involve shared activities and a sense of togetherness.[34] What unfolds in the words of my research participants is that the pandemic had reconfigured the embeddedness of digital mediation because dancers found themselves in different states of precarity and sought to further their art and meet their social needs online. Commenting on how dance and making dance videos have helped them in the pandemic, one of the performers affirm:

"Even though I was choreographing and teaching, my own learning had stopped as my teacher stopped taking classes. I don't prefer (learning in) online dance classes either. Economically I didn't suffer as

32 Riya C. has a second channel where she publishes dance covers on music other than rabindrasangeet.

33 Kämpchen, Martin. "After Rabindranath Tagore 150—Where to go from here?", 2012 http://www.martin-kaempchen.de/?page_id=226. Accessed 22 April 2023.

34 See Long and Moore (38) grasp various definitions of sociality, especially acknowledging the distinctive of human sociality, collective behaviour and belonging, as well as processes underlying socialities online.

much. But dance did help my mental and emotional health. It helped me to connect with audiences far and wide and motivated me to start my own YouTube channel. Unknown people praising my work was a great boost for me." (N33, 2021)

Recognizing the threatening and eventually transformative potential of precarious living as a dancer during the pandemic, through my interlocutors' words I could unite few of the underlying contentions of this essay—creativity and sociality in times of precarity. They acknowledge the loss of their training with their teacher who preferred in-person teaching. They mention financial and psychological health—both in miserable state but admit satisfaction at building a new audience and connecting with them. The creative experiments and shared cultural experiences are emplaced within digital sociality, the predominant form of maintaining social interconnectedness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The newly significant space for informal community gathering and cultural participation had existed before the pandemic. In the digital ethnography on regional Mexican music conducted by Margolies and Strub (1–14), it was concurred that audience watched related videos not only for familiarity but a continued sense of community and identity. Likewise, the formation of a thriving community to dance with during the pandemic aided Parkinson's patients (Kelly and Leventhal 64S–69S), students and teachers in higher education (Schmid and McGreevy-Nichols 135–142), ballet in domestic spaces (Ferrer-Best 30–49) or as I deliberate—by making dance videos of rabindranritya and sharing them with digital public. One dancer who was "socially and culturally deprived" and would dance infrequently, found watching dance videos shared by "likeminded people" helped "bridge distances" caused by social isolation (C42, 2021). They also felt creating the "right" digital audience is "difficult without promoting" videos which leads creators to be techno-social or hyper-social—traits that they personally did not possess (C42, 2021). But they enjoyed the challenge of creating for an audience made of known but largely unknown peoples. Pre-pandemic it would have been "unthinkable to dance without a physical audience", but once the newness settled in, it was "unthinkable not to dance" for the audience that was already willing and available (M33, 2021). That also prompted them to directly interact with their YouTube viewers and "keep their requests on mind" while choreographing dances (M33, 2021).

Sociality, in all its light, shade and complexity underwent a change in micro-contexts of everyday life. If interaction over the digital emerged as norm, some interactions within households and residences changed during lockdowns too.

Since they lived in a high-rise urban housing with neighbors living downstairs, one dancer mentions "I could not stamp my feet, so I opted for sit-down choreography," i.e., to not move lower limbs at all (B36, 2021). Some spent "quality time" with their daughter by making "duet choreography in this period" (U40, 2021), taught their father "how to hold the phone and film in landscape mode" (B36, 2021), sought suggestions from "mother-in-law about costumes and songs as she knows more about Bengali culture" (S35, 2021). "Other dancer-friends" kept them motivated though for the first five months of the pandemic they felt extremely "vulnerable having not met their parents" even if they lived not far away, and "dance was a way to connect with them over distance" (M33, 2021). The field of socialities was marked with a vortex of different emotions that came from staying far away from family and friends; their words speak of "disconnect, isolation, rage, hopelessness" all of which led them through profoundly affective experience making them unable to dance (D38, 2021). Of grief, they say, although they lost no one to death, the collective grief of many people felt like an encumbrance. To dance during the pandemic was to be at a privileged place. It meant their health, preparedness, materials, affects, sentiments, hardships could be largely adjusted to the social, economic and medical crises. They responded that they each of them have experienced either of three forms of precariousness—health risks, loss of kin and unstable employment. Precarity is an existential vulnerability or conditions of intense uncertainty resulting into a different mode of being.[35] The "absolute lack of control over own present and future" continued and convinced to them to "join a local volunteer organization to raise funds for household helps"; as gratitude, they made a private dance video for the donors (S35, 2021). Voluntarism and reciprocity aside, dance videos were primarily made as expressions of creativity. Except two, all dancers informed that their dance videos for YouTube were neither monetized, nor were they financially compensated for making them. Five of them held other jobs and danced recreationally, other five are dancers by profession out of which three experienced economic challenges due to the loss of performance and teaching opportunities. This demonstrates the manifold ways in which pandemic precarity engulfed individuals from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The pandemic made them reflect "over livelihood and existence" realizing there is no economic safety net; "making videos did not generate income" but it got them noticed by viewers leading to enquiries and new students, leaving them realizing "there is future in teaching online" (M33, 2021).

Although precarity offers tenuous opportunities to create lasting forms, these artists have found a dependable vehicle of expression in filming themselves dance. It can

35 For economic, and other precarious state in India during COVID-19 pandemic, see Arora & Majumdar (307-320), Chakraborty (330- 339) and Pandhi.

be as a genuine response to reconstruct artistic skills during lockdown i.e., teaching oneself techniques of filming, editing audio-visual materials, or a process to mitigate the aching awareness of dissonance. There is an earnest effort towards beating social confinement, emotional exhaustion, even spiritual freedom—this is where they find Tagore's compositions soothing. Amidst the rigidity of confinement, rabindrasangeet inspired "to appreciate the minute and the particular" of everyday life (B36, 2021), the verses describe "many layers of human emotions" (U40, 2021), and continued to help them "understand life" (C42, 2021). Deeply motivated by Upanishadic philosophy, Tagore wrote about everyday life and human emotions with profound sensitivity. His words are alleviating, apotropaic even "during any moment of human crisis or loss" (K39, 2021). Choreographing Tagore's compositions implies their messages are reflected within his words, through which "a global audience, a larger group of people can cope with distress – this is "is a responsibility and a goal as a performing artist" (K39, 2021).

Through a "synthesis of verses, movements, music and visuality", Tagore's compositions "can educate and entertain the digital audience" (B36, 2021); the verses speak of "continuous re-creation and spontaneity" as instilled his "philosophy of creativity and freedom" (Chakravorty "Intercultural Synthesis" 250). We see the dancers engage with and speak of embodying the Tagorean thought of sustaining the self even against the forces of nature. They might "not engage with the larger civic, social, cultural or political sides of the worlds at all times", but in the lockdowns they considered making dance videos as "a service to people, to give a little of me through art" (S35, 2021). Through dance they sought to find their place in the warp and woof of creativity and sociality, while learning to articulate their inner world. By interpreting Tagore in movements, they make an effort to embrace a radiant vitality – filling the basic biological struggle for survival with something more numinous, as in *Gitanjali*, for instance,

Conclusion

In revisiting dancers in everyday spaces—off the stage and out of the studio—and while studying new relationships between artist and audience, choreographer, and site, we see dances created during the pandemic that facilitate an understanding of connectedness and solidarity, as well as touch upon new findings on telepresence and video-making by individuals for a global, digital audience. At the time of lockdowns, many were creatively exploring their rooms and roofs, i.e., domestic spaces out of curiosity, gratitude, even boredom, thereby bringing private spaces more into the public especially virtual domain. Moreover governments, citizens, artists, cultural workers reacted to the unprecedented disruptions to their lives by embracing some amount creative activity, suggesting that for few, dance did extend a sense of togetherness despite isolation. I focus on a small fragment of this tapestry: the vernacular and contemporary culture of Bengal, which shows that Rabindranath Tagore's compositional legacy possesses an ability to be interpreted innovatively. This essay is the first scholarly examination of rabindranrrtya in the digital medium, and role of creativity and sociality in the co-constitution of experiencing dance emplaced within this site.

With digital ethnography as one of the methodological tools to research culture and society in the digital space, I examined dance at multiple sites regulated by pandemic restrictions. However, this research does not fully embrace the potential of the pandemic moment. Firstly, the drawback of digital ethnography and conscious sampling is that I cannot connect with those who are at the convergence of digital inequality and many other forms of precarity. It connects with those who have appreciated the care and sense of safety their homes provide, but not knowing if art has impacted the lives of the refugee, the migrant, the vagrant, residents of care homes, or in palliative care. Nor do the peer-research include dancers from other intersections of caste, class, gender. Secondly, while I focused on creativity, sociality, and visibility on YouTube—though I reflect on precarity—the responses I have are inadequate in knowing the breadth of economic and social differences that sharply rose amongst performers without stable social or financial support systems, thereby raising the complexities of creating art. Precarity is strongly associated with the field of performing arts or work associated with creative and cultural industries. Some performers have more stable and better-paid work than others, but precarity is more acutely experienced by those who are already battling other disadvantages and vulnerabilities. This research is largely based on individuals who were not forced to find other means of earning a living, nor faced exploitation as artists by digital platforms. They created, collaborated, and curated a communal experience with or without their peers. From this perspective, the essay is insular in scope. It does not offer comments on distribution of precariousness, intermittent work, or the loss of work dancers faced during the pandemic. What it does, is to make visible creative labor of unnoticed performances that peppered our screens in our lockdown lives.

Works Cited

Arora, Shubhda and Mrinmoy Majumadar. "Where is my home? Gendered precarity and the experience of COVID-19 among women migrant workers from Delhi and National Capital Region, India" in *Gender, Work and Organisation* vol.28, no.52, 2021, pp. 307-320. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12700 [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Banerjee, Utpal K. *Tagore's Mystique of Dance*, New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2011.

Basch, Charles E., Corey H. Basch, Grace C. Hillyer, and Christie Jaime. "The role of YouTube and the entertainment industry in saving lives by educating and mobilizing the public to adopt behaviors for community mitigation of COVID-19: successive sampling design study." *JMIR public health and surveillance*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020, pp. p.e19145.doi: 10.2196/19145 [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Bench, Harmony, & Harlig, Alexandra. "This Is Where We Dance Now." *The International Journal of Screendance*, 12. 2021.

Bench, Harmony. *Perpetual motion: dance, digital cultures, and the common*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

Bennett, Andy & Brady Robards eds. *Mediated Youth Cultures: The Internet, Belonging and New Cultural Configurations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Bhattacharya, Rinli. *The Dancing Poet: Rabindranath Tagore and Choreographies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Biswas, Debabrata. *Bratyajoner Ruddhasangeet* (The Outcast's Suppressed Music) Calcutta: Karuna Prokashoni, 1978.

Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce & T. L. Taylor. Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A handbook of method. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Bose, Mandakranta. "Indian Modernity and Tagore's Dance". *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol.77, vol.4, 2008, pp. 1085–94.

Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.

Chaki- Sircar, Manjusri. "Tagore and Modernization of Dance." in *New Directions in Indian Dance*, Sunil Kothari ed. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2003, pp. 32-43.

Chakrabarti, Sukanya. Simulating the "city of joy": state choreography and the re-appropriation of public spaces in Kolkata, Urban Geography, vol. 43, no. 6, 2022, pp. 886-894

Chakraborty, Aishika. "Calcutta Choreographs: At Streets, Stages and Night Clubs", in Anuradha Roy and Melitta Waligora eds., Kolkata in Space, Time and Imagination: Rethinking of Heritage Vol II. New Delhi: Primus Books, 2020.

—— "Dancing against the nation? Revisiting Tagore's politics of performance." In K.L. Tuteja and Kaustav Chakraborty eds. Tagore and Nationalism, New Delhi: Springer, 2017, pp. 359-379.

—— "The Daring Within: Speaking Gender Through Navanritya". In Pallabi Chakravorty and Nilanjana Gupta eds. Dance Matters, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 185–204.

Chakraborty, Debadrita. 'The "living dead" within "death-worlds": Gender crisis and COVID-19 in India" in Gender, Work and Organisation vol.28, no. 52, 2020, pp. 330- 339. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12585 [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Chakravorty, Pallabi. "Cosmopolitan Then and Cosmopolitan Now: Rabindranrtiya Meets Dance Reality Shows" in Pallabi Chakravorty and Nilanjana Gupta, eds. Dance Matters Too: Markets, Memories, and Identities. New Delhi: Routledge, 2018, pp.78-92.

— — "Intercultural Synthesis, Radical Humanism and Rabindranritya: Re-evaluation of Tagore's Dance Legacy." South Asia Research, vol.3, no.3, 2013, pp. 245–260

Chatterjea, Ananya. "Red-stained feet: Probing the ground on which women dance in contemporary Bengal" in Susan L. Foster ed. Worlding Dance, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 119-143.

Chattopadhyay, Swati. "Roofscapes: A Speculative History of Terraces in Calcutta," in Anuradha Roy and Melitta Waligora, eds., Kolkata in Space, Time and Imagination: Rethinking Heritage Vol. I. New Delhi: Primus Books, 2019, pp. 56-93.

De, Rahul, Neena Pandey, & Abhipsa Pal. "Impact of digital surge during Covid-19 pandemic: A viewpoint on research and practice". International Journal of Information Management. vol. 55, no:102171, 2020, 1-5

Desjarlais, Robert. "The Years of Living Transformatively", Ethos, vol.49, no.3, 2021, pp. 368-376

Desmond, Jane C. "Zones of Production in Possible Worlds: Dance's Precarious Placement, an Afterword", Dance Research Journal vol. 51, no.1, 2019, pp. 96-101.

Devi, P. (1965 [1949]) Nritya. Santiniketan: Viswabharati.

Ferrer-Best, Francesca. "The Virtual Ballet Studio: A Phenomenological Enquiry into the Domestic as Dance-Space During Lockdown" in The International Journal of Screendance vol. 12, 2021, pp. 30-49

FitzGibbon, Ali & I. Tsioulakis "Performing artists in the age of COVID-19: A moment of urgent action and potential change." QPol (Queen's Policy Engagement online publication, Queen's University Belfast), 2020. http://qpol.qub.ac.uk/performing-artists-in-the-age-of-covid-19/ [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Gehl, Robert. "YouTube as archive: Who will curate this digital Wunderkammer?" International Journal of Cultural Studies, vol.12, no.1, 2009, pp. 43 – 60

Ghose, Shantidev. Gurudeva Rabindranath o Adhunika Bharatiya Nritya (Gurudeva Rabindranath and Modern Indian Dance). Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1983.

— — Nrityakala O Rabinradranath (Dance-Art and Rabindranath). Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1999.

Graham, Amanda J. "Out of site: Trisha brown's roof piece". Dance Chronicle vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp.59-76.

Haynes, Nell. Social Media in Northern Chile: Posting the Extraordinarily Ordinary. London: UCL Press, 2016.

Horst, Heather A. and Daniel Miller eds. Digital Anthropology. London, New York: Berg, 2012.

Ilić M., Dance Mobility in Times of Fracture: Experiencing the Framework of Fragility. EDN, September 2021, www.ednetwork.eu [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Jenkins, Henry. Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide, New York: New York University Press, 2006.

— — "What happened before YouTube." in Jean Burgess and Joshua Green. YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018. pp. 109-125.

Kaur-Gill, Satveer and Mohan J. Dutta. "Digital Ethnography." The International Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods, 2017, pp. 1-10

Kelly, Maria P., and David Leventhal. "Dance as lifeline: Transforming means for engagement and connection in times of social isolation." Health Promotion Practice vol.22, no.1_suppl, 2021, S4S-69S.

Kersenboom-Story, Saskia. Devadasi Tradition in South India. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987

Kozinets, Robert V. Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online. Los Angeles, London: Sage, 2010.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Long, Nicholas J. and Henrietta L. Moore. Sociality: New Directions. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013.

Margolies, Daniel S. and Strub, J.A. Music. "Community, Improvisation, and Social Technologies in COVID-Era Música Huasteca", Frontiers in Psychology, vol.12, p.648010, 2021, pp. 1- 14. Doi: fpsyg-12-648010.pdf [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Marres, Norrtje. Digital Sociology: The Reinvention of Social Research, Cambridge: Polity, 2017.

Meduri, Avanthi. Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadasi and Her Dance. Ph.D dissertation, New York University, 1996.

Miller, Daniel and Don Slater. The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach. London: Berg, 2001.

Mukherjee, Nilanjana. "From Nautch to Nritya: Dance and Subversion in Tagore's Dance Drama". Economic & Political Weekly. vol. 52, no. 3, 2017, pp.85-92

Murthy, Dhiraj. "Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research". Sociology vol.42, no. 5, 2008, pp. 837-55.

Nussbaum, Martha. Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Pandhi, Nikhil. "COVID-19 and India's New Viral Necropolitics", 2021 Doi: https://thewire.in/rights/covid-19-india-necropolitics-caste [Accessed on 22 April 2023]

Pink, Sarah. Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research. 4th ed. London. Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2020.

—— "Digital Visual Anthropology: Potentials and Challenges." in M. Banks and J.Ruby eds. Made to be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011, pp.209-233.

—— Heather A. Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, and Jo Tacchi. (2016). Digital ethnography: Principles and practice. Thousand Oaks, LA: Sage

Purkayastha, Prarthana. "Choreographing gender in Colonial Bengal: The dance work of Rabindranath Tagore and Pratima Devi." Clio. Women, Gender, History. vol.46, no.2, 2017, pp. 65-86

—— "Rabindranath Tagore and Eclecticism in Twentieth-Century Indian Dance" in Indian Modern Dance, Feminism and Transnationalism, Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp-21-49.

—— "Warrior, Untouchable, Courtesan: Fringe Women in Tagore's Dance Dramas". South Asia Research, vol. 29, no.3, 2009, pp. 255–73.

Ray, Satyajit. "Thoughts on Rabindrasangit" in Bimal Mukherjee and Sunil Kothari (ed.) Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last Twenty-five Years, Vol:1, Calcutta: Anamika Kala Sangam Research and Publications, 1995, pp.51-58.

Sarkar Munsi, Urmimala. "A Century of Negotiations: The Changing Sphere of the Woman Dancer in India" in Subrata Bagchi ed. Beyond the Private World: Indian Women in Public Sphere. New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014, pp.293 -312.

—— "Boundaries and Beyond: Problems of Nomenclature in Indian Dance." In Urmimala Sarkar Munsi ed. Dance: Transcending Borders. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2008, pp. 78-98.

Schmid, Dale W., and Susan McGreevy-Nichols. "Building the dance community virtually during COVID-19." Arts Education Policy Review vol.123, no. 3, 2022, pp.135-142.

Seibert, Brian. ""A Home Version of Trisha Brown's 'Roof Piece,' No Roof Required." The New York Times, 7 Apr. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/arts/dance/trisha-brown-roof-piece.html.

Shipley, Jesse W. "Transnational circulation and digital fatigue in Ghana's Azonto dance Craze" American Ethnologist, vol. 40, no. 2, 2013, pp. 362–381

Snickars, Pelle and Patrick Vonderau. The YouTube Reader. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009.

Strangelove, Michael. Watching YouTube: extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press

Srinivasan, Amrit. "Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance", Economic and Political Weekly vol.22, no.51, 1985, pp. 2225-2228

Tagore, Rabindranath, Gitanjali = Song Offerings, London: Macmillan and Co., 1913.

Taylor, T. L., Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi & Celia Pearce. Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A handbook of method. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Teli, Maurizio, Francesco Pisanu and David Hakken. "The Internet as a Library-of-People: For a Cyberethnography of Online Groups", Forum: Qualitative Social Research, vol. 8, no. (3/33), 2007, pp. 1-24

Udupa, Sahana, Elisabetta Costa, and Philipp Budka. "The Digital Turn: New Directions in Media Anthropology."

E-Seminar on the EASA Media Anthropology Network Panel "The Digital Turn.", 2018.

Wesch, Michael. "YouTube and You: Experiences of Self-awareness in the Context Collapse of the Recording Webcam." Explorations in Media Ecology, vol.8, no.2, 2009, pp.19-34.

Younan, Nadia. "Stateless Rhythms, Transnational Steps: Embodying the Assyrian National through Sheikhani Song and Dance", Revue europeenne des migrations internationales vol.35, no.3, 2019, pp. 41-62

Videos:
YouTube.com 2020a: Paranjape, Jhelum, "Jeebon Jokhon Shukaye Jaay | Beating Lockdown Blues | Jhelum Paranjape | Tagore" YouTube, uploaded by J. Paranjape, 20 November, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-wfG232ktE

YouTube.com 2020b: Sukanya Kumar, "Mamo Chitte Niti Nritye | Rabindra Sangeet | Bharatanatyam by Sukanya Kumar | Rabindranath Tagore" YouTube, uploaded by S. Kumar, 5 May 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fo0XzOoDAo

YouTube.com 2020c: Kalapi, "Nobo Anande Jago||Ray Of Hope||World Dance Day||Dance Choreography|| Kalapi|| Hariharan" YouTube, uploaded by Kalapi, 29 April 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wmyf_B-XD_Q

YouTube.com 2020d: Ridy Sheikh, "Rabindra Jayanti Special | Majhe Majhe Tobo Dekha Pai | Ridy Sheikh | S.I. Evan | Dance cover, YouTube, uploaded by R. Sheikh, 8 May 2020,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLwQ-eBA2sc
YouTube.com 2020e: Nritya Kunja, "Amar onge onge ke rabindro nrity chitrangada nrita natto" YouTube, uploaded Nritya Kunja, 20 October 2020,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhmCpuAL6bs

YouTube.com 2020f: Sulagna Ray Bhattacharjee, "Ami Chitrangada by Sulagna Ray Bhattacharjee" YouTube, uploaded by S.Bhattacharjee, 5 June 2020,
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeWyMWYbKqQ

YouTube.com 2020g: Sundar: Rabindranritya, YouTube,
 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG1OqHpVyRA0MSXQcRWhcHQ/featured
YouTube.com 2020h: Rabindranritya Riya, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/c/RabindranrityaRiya
YouTube.com 2021a: Anjan Kathak, "Esho Shyamolo Sundoro,Rabindra Sangeet || Welcoming the monsoon, Kathak dance by Anjan" YouTube, uploaded by Anjan Kathak, 18 June 2021,   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9ckq0Ln8LA

YouTube.com2021b:Kalapi,"RabindraNrityaAMythorTruth|WATCHTOKNOWTHETRUTHOF#RABINDRANRITYA", YouTube, uploaded by Kalapi, 7 August 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laKCqNUXboo

YouTube.com 2021c: Subhajit Khush Das "Gahana Kusuma Kunja Majhe - Sounak Chottopadhay | Dance Cover| Rabibaran |Episode 1|", YouTube, uploaded by S. K. Das, 29 April 2021,   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crGwlHruS08

YouTube.com 2021d: Subhajit Khush Das, "Maharajo Eki Saaje - Sahana Bajpaie | Dance cover | Rabindra jayanti | Rabibaran | Episode 2", YouTube, uploaded by S. K. Das, 8 May 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcReWnux_WU

YouTube.com 2021e: Sundar: Rabindranritya, "Decorative Art Of Santiniketan | A Dialogue with Sudhiranjan Mukhopadhyay", YouTube, uploaded by Sundar: Rabindranritya, 10 December 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgQIQXhKcbs