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2018

### Cosmopolitan Then And Cosmopolitan Now: Rabindranrtiya Meets Dance Reality Shows

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#### Recommended Citation

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## COSMOPOLITAN THEN AND COSMOPOLITAN NOW

Rabindranritya meets dance reality shows

*Pallabi Chakravorty*

Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the book *Personality* (which is a compilation of lectures delivered in America [Tagore, 1917: 142]), “we may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. . . . But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed.”

Tagore turned to dance later in his life because he found it to be the appropriate artistic form for expressing *bhav* or sympathy. For him *bhav* was the deepest human emotion that could release the mind and body into a metaphysical space of aesthetic delight and freedom. The world of aesthetic delight that Tagore referred to has been profoundly altered by technological innovation, mediation and globalization in the present time. Although dance as a field of study continues to struggle to enter school or university curricula in India, it has exploded in euphoric abundance in the form of *remix* on commercial television and other electronic media. This chapter examines two historical moments in the exploration of *bhav* as cosmopolitan Indian identity. Both test the boundaries of Indianness, reaching beyond the essentialistic cultural and geographical associations of their time. Although they may appear disparate, I propose that inherent in both quests for new forms of dance are new modes of being Indian. The concept of *bhav* (sympathy/affect) that was associated with cosmopolitanism and hybrid culture in the past has undergone a paradigmatic transformation in contemporary times. I will juxtapose Rabindranritya (the dance form Tagore founded and institutionalized in Santiniketan) with dance reality shows on Indian TV to highlight a particular kind of unrestrained cosmopolitan fusion through dance. In

the process, I will examine how the concept of humanistic subjectivity that Tagore searched for in the arts has changed into a commodity-oriented subjectivity. The first part of the chapter is an exploration of *bhav* that Tagore embraced to find a new vocabulary of dance, cosmopolitanism and modernism in India. This is followed by an examination of the reconfiguration of *bhav* into *remix* within the discourses of cosmopolitanism and modernism in contemporary popular culture such as dance reality TV. I will conclude by offering an alternative, inclusive and dynamic understanding of Indian culture and heritage to what has come to be associated with the discourses of neo-classical dances.

### ***Bhav* in Rabindranitya**

Dance entered Shantiniketan through enactments of dramas, poetry and musical renditions. From its inception, this involvement was not bounded by rules and regulations. Much like his paintings (which Tagore began in the 1920s), his dance was not methodical or technical and Tagore himself performed frequently. As early as 1915, Tagore performed the blind, free-spirited, dancing Baul in his play *Phalguni*, an event that was captured on canvas by the painters Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose. Ghose (1999: 6), the veteran Rabindrik (Tagorean) dancer and singer who spent his entire career in Shantiniketan, described it as a dance of pure joy and freedom. It was replete with *bhav* or aesthetic delight that Tagore strived to embody and express through dance. The radical approach to dance that Tagore introduced did not, however, follow the revivalist movement associated with classical Indian dance, which began with the cultural renaissance in India in the early part of the twentieth century. This movement in dance had claimed a revival of India's ancient tradition in its 'purest' form for establishing a modern national identity and history (Chakravorty, 1998, 2008; Meduri, 1996; Coorlawala, 2004; Walker, 2014). But Tagore did not want to restrict his involvement with dance to a narrow and singular vision of tradition. He did not reject tradition, but believed that a deeper and an open engagement with it allowed for the incorporation of other cultures into one's own. In his own words, in "Letters to a Friend" (quoted in Tagore, 2008: 1078):

[W]hatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly become ours, wherever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity, when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own.

Tagore was influenced by the classical Indian philosophy of the Upanishads, Buddhist thought, Hindu-Muslim syncretism, and the free-spirited folk traditions of the Bauls of Bengal. He was also, as we know, greatly inspired by Western liberal humanism and the individual expressions of creativity. He thought that dance, like poetry, should embrace non-realistic representations, and he was moved by the abstract expressivity of American modern dance. Tagore saw the potential of dance to express deep emotional experience without the restrictions of text or formulaic vocabulary. It was an art that could uncover and express the innermost unifying rhythm of a fragmented universe. His thoughts are echoed in his verse: “*Mama chitte niti nrtitey keje nache tata thei thei*” (my translation: Inside my heart/mind who is it that dances daily/*tata thei thei*). Bose (2008: 1086) points out that this sense of unity and freedom that arose from the depth of his body was expressed in the kinaesthetic rhythms *tata thei thei*. This bodily experience was Tagore’s primary impulse to set his songs and poetry to movement. Expressive dance (*nritya-abhinaya*) set to his songs and poetry became the perfect articulation for his *bhav*. Tagore himself explained: “Poetry may not have one bounded meaning, it has a flexible seat that can accommodate people according to various shapes” (Ghose, 1994). His vision of dance certainly did not exclude music or poetry. The Sanskrit term *nritya* includes both music and dance in classical Indian dance repertoire and Tagore called his dance style Rabindranritya. To explore a variety of emotions/*bhav* through his musical compositions, Tagore mixed Kir-tan, Tappa, Dhamar and Baul elements with Western music (Chakravorty, 2010). This experimental and interdisciplinary approach to music and dance were exemplified by Srimati Thakur when she performed modern dance in Shantiniketan on the occasion of Holi, set to his poetry “*Ami paraner sathe khelibo ajike morno khela*” (my translation: A game of death I shall play with my soul today). Using classical Indian and Kandyan dances (Ghose, 1983), Santideb Ghose performed this same poetry on another occasion (Ghose, 1983).

Tagore crystallized his vision of dance through his Nrityanatya or dance dramas such as *Valmiki Pratibha*, *Kalmrigaya*, *Mayar Khela*, *Chitrangada*, *Shyama* and *Chandalika*. His experiments with dance movements in Shantiniketan included songs, dialogue, dance, music, stage sets and costumes. The primary style in which students were trained was Manipuri dance. Ghose (1983: 26–31) writes about the signal contribution of Nabakumar Singh, the primary Manipuri teacher in Shantiniketan. The classical dance style of Kathakali was also incorporated in the dance repertoire as the primary expression of male dance. Ghose (1983) writes about his travels to learn various dance forms from all over Asia, including visits to Kerala to learn Kathakali. Details about his travels were published in the

yearly journal of Shantiniketan: “Santimoy Ghose visited several parts of South India to study indigenous forms of dancing during the year, and was thus greatly helpful in teaching dancing to students” (quoted in Ghose, 1983: 50).

Although Rabindranritya was/is a synthesis of Manipuri and Kathakali, it often incorporated other classical styles such as Bharatnatyam and Kathak. These styles were used to portray specific characters for his dramas, which from his earlier musical dramas came to be known as dance dramas or Rabindra Nrityanaty. For instance, in the staging of *Shyama* in 1938, Asha Ojha, trained in Kathak, performed the character of Uttiya, and Mrinalini Sarabhai played the character of Vajrasena using Bharatnatyam (Bose, 2008: 1089). However, Tagore was not as enthusiastic about Kathak and Bharatnatyam as he was about the Manipuri, Balinese and Javanese styles. He was particularly impressed with Javanese dance and the Balinese gamelan, and wrote during his visit to Java (ICCR, 2011):

The life of man with its joys and sorrows, its trials and triumphs, courses along waves of form and colour and sound. If we reduce the whole of it to sound, it becomes rich music: similarly, if we leave out everything else except its motion, it becomes pure dance – it became clear that their dance, also, is not intended to display the beauty of motion, but it is their language, the language of their history and their annals. Their gamelan also is but a tonal dance, now soft now loud, now swift, it is also not intended to express musical beauty, but only a song for their dance.

Thus, for Tagore dance and music were much more than beautiful motion and sound; they encapsulated the annals of human activity and culture. Not surprisingly, Tagore’s notions of modern dance as an amalgam of various styles had many critics, as expressed in the following lines by an unknown commentator, quoted in Ghose (1983: 84):

For me, however, they seem to be artificially pushed in, disturbing the atmosphere of Tagore’s play. Imagine the dance of the guards jumping and dancing all over stage . . . to me Tagore’s dramas and characters – the whole atmosphere of his plays – cannot form a platform for exhibition of the various techniques.

Tagore, in his dance dramas, was drawing inspiration from Western theatre, the folk theatre tradition in Bengal, Sanskrit theatre, and classical dance forms in India and Southeast Asia. His aim was to use various theatrical, musical and dance traditions to articulate freedom of expression for

character development. Through them, he wanted to explore different life experiences and plot situations, which would reveal complex human emotions, whether it was in *Chandalika*, *Shyama* or *Natir Puja*. He called his dance a chemical synthesis of music and movements. Through his artistic explorations in dance, music and theatre, he was interested in crossing boundaries of not only aesthetic forms but also cultures and nations. His experimentations were catalysts for ushering in new ideas of pan-Asianism and inter-Asian cultural exchange during a time when patriotic nationalism was the dominant motif (see Bharucha, 2006). According to Visva-Bharati reports, he visited Java and Bali for two reasons. The first was to study the remains of Indian civilization in what is modern Indonesia, and the second was to bring close cultural cooperation between these regions and India through appreciation of arts and culture (ICCR, 2011).

Tagore ultimately did not see his dance as something that would or could be codified to render the same movement vocabulary everywhere it was performed. That is why we learn from Ghose's (1983) detailed description of Tagore's dance dramas how the same song was danced on different occasions using different vocabularies. The idea of continuous recreation and spontaneity was instilled deeply in Tagore's philosophy of creativity and freedom. Although Tagore believed that true freedom is found in our creative juices or emotion (*bhav*) and is not bounded by detached reasoning, he thought that man, with his intelligence, is the originator of rules, rhythms and creative unity in the world. This creative consciousness in man according to him is *atmashakti*, the highest consciousness and a true discovery of selfhood (Roy, 2005: 4). Tagore wrote that man is connected to the rest of the world through sympathy/empathy or emotion. By enjoying the world's emotive juices, numerous relationships are developed by man. The world of appearance that is the external world is gradually transformed into the intimate world of sentiments. He further explained that when we appreciate aesthetic emotion (*ras/rasa*), it is not only a feeling about the object of our appreciation but also a feeling about ourselves. Through distilling our raw feeling states or *bhav*, our consciousness becomes more pronounced and we are able to express ourselves aesthetically (Roy, 2005).

### Embracing hybridity and cosmopolitanism

Tagore's complicated stance against nationalism is well known. It came during a time when anti-colonial nationalism and the Swadeshi movement were sweeping across India. It can be difficult to understand Tagore's version of humanism and cosmopolitanism against such a political backdrop. While he greatly admired Gandhi (Sen, 2005: 92), he rejected the Swadeshi

movement and never joined the non-cooperation movement. He also had strong words against nationalism (Tagore, 2008: 1080):

The logic of nation will never heed the voice of truth and goodness. It will go on its ring-dance of moral corruption, linking steel into steel, and machine unto machine; trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and living ideals of man.

To grasp this position of anti-nationalism through the lens of Rabindranitya might seem incongruous, but it is necessary here to understand his vision of cosmopolitanism. Dance and Indian nationalism have an inter-linked history. The modernization of India went hand in hand with the cultural renaissance in which the arts were central. The revival of India's ancient art forms including dance became important for establishing a civilizational lineage of a classical golden past. In the early part of the twentieth century, Rukmini Devi refashioned Bharatnatyam from Sadir, poet Vallathol rediscovered Kathakali, and Madame Menaka reinvented Kathak as a classical dance form with an ancient past. The textual source of the classical styles was traced back to the *Natyashastra*, often referred to as the fifth Veda, written sometime between the second century BC and the second century AD. The postcolonial construction of classicism and the historiography of Indian dance have been an important subject for contemporary scholars of dance (see Allen, 1997; Chakravorty, 1998; Soneji, 2012). However, Tagore, and later Uday Shankar (Erdman, 1987) went against this national trend of dance revivalism from an ancient heritage to search for a modern consciousness for dance in India. Tagore did not see the hegemonic national narrative of dance as reflective of India's past. He wanted to go beyond the strict codification of classicism, bounded aesthetics, and fixed identities, which were largely Brahminical and patriarchal, to usher in freedom of creative expression. Both the song style (Rabindrasangeet) and the dance style (Rabindranitya) that he invented were eclectic mixtures of a variety of styles, which were woven together solely to express *bhav*. He imagined his dance as the conduit for expressing the nine aesthetic emotions (*navaras*) which he thought were at the core of human transcendence and aesthetic delight.

Tagore thought that nationalism, like classicism, was preoccupied with establishing cultural authenticity, when he himself embraced cultural borrowing and exchange as an inevitable part of humanity. Tagore constantly experimented with different dance styles to create an open-ended dance vocabulary. Not a trained dancer himself, Tagore depended on his disciples to learn new styles. Ghose (1983) wrote in detail about his own travels to Kerala, Burma (Myanmar), Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Java to learn and bring

back new dance idioms to Shantiniketan. He analyzed in these writings how Rabindranritya became an eclectic synthesis of words, images, tunes, movement and emotion. Tagore's daughter-in-law, Pratima Devi, and the wife of his nephew, Shrimati Tagore, created new choreographies under Tagore's guidance to render his visions of motion and emotion (Bose, 2008: 1091). Tagore's dance dramas such as *Tasher Desh* (*Nation of Cards*, a social satire) portrayed the free-spirited individualism of the young, who broke from country, lineage and social norms to embrace newness. This rediscovery of self in *Tasher Desh* captured the creative self of man. Tagore's version of cosmopolitanism could be understood, then, not as the sheer rejection of tradition, but through immersion in one's own tradition, an assimilation of others. In this perspective, one's own tradition could be an anchor to reach out and interpret other traditions. The conduit for such intercultural understanding and connections, according to him, was the phenomenon of aesthetic delight or enjoyment, which the Upanishadic tradition called *bhav/ras* or *bhava/rasa*. Saranindranath Tagore (2008: 1079) writes that the hermeneutic conception of reason that attempts to harmonize rather than flatten difference is to service a conception of unity that Tagore ultimately derives from his distinctive reading of the Upanishads. Tagore's ideal humanity, metaphysical in orientation, was thus not an abstract concept arrived at by reason (as in Kantian philosophy), nor a narrative of postmodern fragmentation of human rationality, but as Saranindranath Tagore (2008: 1080) eloquently puts it: "Rather humanity (in Tagore), the mark of the cosmopolitan vision, is the locus of intersecting traditions and histories captured in the lives." Tagore himself wrote: "[L]et us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of the common illumination of our house" (quoted in Tagore, 2008: 1080).

Despite Tagore's brilliant interjection into the history of dance in India, Rabindranritya never reached a broader audience outside Shantiniketan. However, the seed of Tagore's thoughts and creations found resonance among the new educated Bengali middle class that came to inhabit the new public sphere of modern India. He propelled middle-class women (*bhadramahila*) to dance on stage as early as the 1930s, when Indian dance was associated with backwardness and degenerate culture. He made dance a respectable practice in India and created the foundation of modern Indian dance.

In the next section, I move on to explore the new discursive and controversial world of dance reality shows to shed light on another version of cosmopolitanism in dance situated at the opposite end of the spectrum from Rabindranritya. But it is also connected to modernism and the aesthetic of delight, expressed through remix rather than *bhav*, and commodification rather than humanism.



### Hybridity of dance reality shows

A far cry from the aesthetics and the philosophical underpinnings of Rabindranritya, dance reality shows on television form a burgeoning genre of dance practice in contemporary India. They fuse Bollywood freestyle with Western forms and traditional Indian dances such as classical and folk. A new aesthetics of continuous remix (which cross-cuts classical and folk, Bollywood dance, and other hybrid forms that exist in between) has replaced the past codes and affective experiences of Indian dances usually associated with *bhakti* (devotion), *bhav/bhava* (sympathy or affect) and *ras/rasa* (aesthetic emotion) (Chakravorty, 2016). These shifts, in turn, have changed the notions of Indianness and Indian national identity.

*Remix* is an aspect of technological innovation. The remix genre is also associated with dance forms like break and hip-hop that embraces notions of play, innovation and mixing as they travel globally and morph into different forms (Halifu, 2002). The expression of remix is now integral to Bollywood and other emerging genres of dance in India such as dance reality shows. The cultural significance of the remix aesthetics is embodied by the deejay (DJ) and is represented in the hit film *Rang De Basanti* (Sundar, 2014). Sundar writes that “the deejay has historically operated at the interstices of at least four media industries in India: music, radio, film, and television.” By focusing on *Rang De Basanti*, she argues that Indian history is incomplete without films, sound, song and music in India. She reconceptualizes the notion of history through the framework of ‘aurality’ liberated from the linearity of historical text. In her words: “casting itihasa as a remix unmoors the concept from its Indian and Hindu foundations. Itihasa is not just the realm of gods and ancient princes anymore, but that of Bhangra, Rai, and Bollywood” (Sundar, 2014: xx).

The remix aesthetic is now forging new dancing bodies that are no longer contained by geographical boundaries or boundaries between high and low culture. In this form and practice of dance, high and low, classical and folk, Indian and other cultural forms combine and recombine to produce hybridity. It draws on a variety of movements from a variety of cultures. That is, remix is the quintessential postmodern experience and embodiment of pastiche in which the lines between culture and commodity are blurred (Jameson, 1991, 1998; Harvey, 1989).

The embodiment of Indian dance is now deeply engaged in the explosion of a global visual culture driven by new media and new consumers. According to Daya Kishan Thussu (2008: 97):

The combination of national and transnational factors, including deregulation of the media and communication sectors, the

availability of new delivery and distribution mechanisms, as well as growing corporatization of the film industry, have contributed to [the] global visibility of popular Indian cinema.

The spread of Bollywood as a culture industry has influenced all aspects of culture, including dance. This cultural domination has been facilitated by the dramatic expansion of television since the early 2000s, along with the emergence of cable networks such as Zee, Sony and Star. These networks have been the publicity engines for the rhizomatic circulation of Bollywood films, especially the song and dance sequences (Thussu, 2008). In fact, the song and dance sequences (renamed ‘item numbers’ in the 1990s) are central aspects of Bollywood’s culture industry today, featuring the ubiquitous dancing girl known as the ‘item girl.’ The interdependent relationships between Bollywood song and dance sequences, the music videos and television programmes like reality shows have converged with consumerism and the market. The popularity of the remix music videos which integrate dancing, music, sets, camera angles and picturization (like MTV) is summarized in the following lines: “The popularity of the remixes showed that the ‘item number’ was going to be the engine of Bollywood films in the 21st century. The ‘item boy’ also followed” (2011).

The song and dance sequences in Bollywood films or the item number have morphed into music videos that are detached from the films. They are now released months before the film is released via many electronic outlets, including YouTube and iTunes. They appear on television programmes and circulate on video, cable and DVD. They are also ‘remediated’ in dance reality shows, enhancing the processes of reinvention and circulation. David Novack explains remediation as the repurposing of media from one context to another: “A transfer of content from one format to another, thereby making media new, and making new media” (Novack, 2012: 41). He further writes that he wants to connect this process of remediation to the making of modern cosmopolitan subjects. Dance reality shows use the song and dance sequences or item numbers in a new format, which are re-choreographed and packaged to make them a televisual product to be consumed across various boundaries (local, national and international). Thus, remixing and remediation, I propose, are both aspects of the production of hybrid and modern cosmopolitan subjects. Dance reality shows and the item numbers are engines for the spread of Bollywood culture industry resulting in remediation and the general Bollywoodization of Indian culture (Rajadhyaksha, 2008; Novack, 2012). In short, the dance reality shows are platforms to present the Bollywood item numbers. It is also part of a process that brings the Bollywood industry even closer to the common audience, not just as passive audience members and consumers but as active

partakers in the making of a transnational celebrity culture. One can argue that the Bollywood-inspired remixed global dances of the reality shows have redefined the past nationalism-driven narrative of Indian dance into a new brand of cosmopolitan culture.

Geeta Kapoor, a reality show judge and Bollywood choreographer, says that “dancers now have specific looks, [and] glamour; they are professionals. We know that dancing is all about having a good frame of mind and creating a good look” (Personal interview, 2006). The “good look” that Geeta Kapoor references is associated with a certain kind of packaging of urbanism, professionalism and cosmopolitanism. Pathak identifies these new bodily dispositions, looks and practices as ‘presentability.’ Not unlike the aesthetic of remix, presentability embodies a form of aspiration and consumption. She writes “Presentability – the expression of this global Indian identity at the site of the body – is rooted in the social position of the middle classes, specifically urban middle-class professionals, although it is consumed as an ideal by a wide range of Indians” (Pathak, 2014: 322). Presentability means to be groomed in a particular way encoded in the changing conception of an Indian body, its adaptability to wearing Western clothes, makeup, hairstyle, and to a consumption-oriented lifestyle.

I argue that we now inhabit a world dominated by the aesthetics and bodily dispositions of remix where the structures of feeling once associated with *bhav-ras* appear on item numbers as fleeting emotions of a bygone era. They produce what Appadurai has eloquently called “nostalgia without memory” (Appadurai, 1997: 30). The dancing bodies are instruments on which movements are crafted using cut and paste techniques. Therefore, various movements are uprooted from specific contexts and remixed to produce an item number (Chakravorty, 2011, 2016). They reflect the commodity-oriented consumption practices of an urban Indian postmodernity. I will analyze this particular kind of mediated-embodiment that is antithetical to Tagore’s humanistic notion of *bhav*, yet it celebrates hybridity not unlike Rabindranitya. I will use a segment from the reality show *Just Dance* to elaborate my point.

### Remix and the cyborg

*Just Dance* aired on the television channel Star Plus during the summer of 2011. It ran every Saturday and Sunday from 9 p.m., a prime viewing time. It arrived with much hype, as it featured Hrithik Roshan, a Bollywood megastar, who is also known for his outstanding dancing talent. Along with choreographers Vaibhavi Merchant and Farah Khan, Roshan was one of the celebrity judges on the show. They provided the brand identity for *Just Dance*. Hrithik Roshan was making his television debut with the show

and he was going to be paid the highest ever for any such television appearance until that year: a whopping INR 17.5 million per episode. The show won the award for the best reality show at the Indian Television Academy Awards. International corporations like Maruti Suzuki India and Cadbury India sponsored the show. The winner of *Just Dance* was going to receive a Maruti Suzuki Swift car plus a cash prize of INR 10 million. The show held auditions in cities in India and in the US and UK such as London, New York, Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, as well as in small towns in India. There were fifty-two dancers recruited after auditioning some forty thousand dancers across the US, UK and India. A plethora of dance styles was presented, with all kinds of fusion and idiosyncratic innovations adding to its eclecticism. Ultimately there were thirteen dancers who were invited to Mumbai to participate in the run-up to the grand finale. The stakes were high. The competition was fierce.

In the final round of *Just Dance*, the winner of the show, Ankan Sen, performed a memorable robotic dance where his body wrapped in silver foil moved like a machine to electronic music while performing breaking and popping from the hip-hop style. He moved like a man-machine (cyborg) across the television screen with blue and green lighting arches and beams in the backdrop offering a stunning visual feat. This was the televisual rendering of the mechanized body in global culture. The human-machine hybrid or the cyborg dance (a hybrid of dance and televisual technology) has been discussed in connection to screen dances by dance scholars such as Sheril Dodds (2005). Ankan's exhilarating robotic dance, which used a mix of dance styles from hip-hop to contemporary styles, exemplified this complex sensory experience. The dominance of technological mediation subsuming all other experiences in the contemporary global culture has been a subject of media theorists. Mules uses the concept of "phantasmagoria" to describe the dominant form of technological mediation we experience in the global culture where the human body is immersed in synthetic experiences through an overproduction of visual and tactile images (Mules, 2007). Mules calls cyberspace and department stores such phantasmagorias, where the outside world is bracketed out and experience is controlled and predetermined. Here he echoes Adorno's view of the mass commodity world, which dominates every sphere of our lives today. However, Mules further argues that these technological mediations have enabled the magic of Benjamin's authentic 'aura' to return in a new incarnation through innovative manipulations. The advent of new technology in late capitalism has enabled us to produce ourselves as products that can be manufactured, manipulated and controlled. He writes:

We see this phenomenon everywhere in today's "control societies" in which individuals are encouraged to see themselves as

self-directed and self motivated: free-wheeling consumers and entrepreneurs in a dematerialized world of images and codes. The body is reduced to a techno-organic substance affected directly by manipulating techniques. Aura is reinvested in the body as an immediate experience of “being connected” where the outside world seemingly dissolves in the presence of a far more enticing virtual world, full of new possibilities for interconnection.

(Mules, 2007: n.p.)

He also adds that the material world persists alongside the virtual world, and following his train of thought, I argue that the dancing bodies in reality shows emerge as the ultimate techno-real (objective-subjective) experiences of contemporary bodily habituations. The complex sensorium of perceptions experienced as a spectator and a participant of a dance reality show is a new way of being in the world – a world of constant remixing and remediation created through a heightened mode of living expressed through new kinds of affect/emotion and aspiration/competition aligned with the commodity.

New desires and aspirations moulded through these dance performances on television reality shows produce new disembodied subjectivities in contemporary India. On a more fundamental level, this kind of disembodied subjectivities is connected to “a crisis of the quotidian” (Wolputte, 2004: 260). Accordingly, the habituations and daily routines that gave structure, routine and continuity to experience are constantly interrupted through travel, information overload, media or multitasking. Postmodernists call it the ‘crisis of memory.’ A new kind of fleeting and marketed reality dominates the sensory world of the audience and the performers today with the captivating auras of success and celebrity. Dance reality shows are at the heart of these emotional dramas that are simultaneously contrived and real, and in which the pleasures of dancing are transformed into various strategies of winning and losing guided by the promise of transformation. Thus, the dancing produces a range of transitory and competing aesthetics that do not yet have a discursive configuration. As production value takes centre stage in the global circulation of dance, dance reality shows present to us the entanglement of affect, desire and eloquent bodies that sway precariously between corporeality and technology (Chakravorty, 2010). Tagore’s creativity and freedom embodied in *bhav* or a metaphysical experience of aesthetic delight that transcended cultural boundaries have been transformed into a new kind of euphoria aligned with technology and commodity. Remix produces a techno-physical experience of aesthetic delight where corporeality itself is no longer bounded by flesh and is interpenetrated by commodity and technology.

## Conclusion

The search for aesthetic modernity in India is integral to the history of dance and its embodiment. This chapter uses the vantage point of *bhav* (affect or sympathy) to address questions of humanism, cosmopolitanism and identity as they relate to Indian dance. It uses Rabindranritya and dance reality shows to elicit a dynamic and inclusive narrative of dance in India. Although, seemingly antithetical to each other, these two categories or styles of dance are windows into two historical moments where eclecticism, westernization and cultural borrowing gave rise to new ways of being Indian through the expression of dance.

## Acknowledgements

Some sections of this chapter on Rabindranritya were published previously in “Intercultural Synthesis, Radical Humanism, and Rabindranritya: A Reevaluation of Tagore’s Dance Legacy,” *South Asia Research* (November 2013) 33: 245–60. I would like to thank Pika Ghosh for her comments on this chapter.

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