

Learning Personally: An exploration of remembering and reframing arts therapy education in multicultural India

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As UK trained creative arts therapists, we have always understood the pedagogy of education in arts therapies to be sacred, and now, as we have set up various training programmes in India, we award our pedagogy the same stature. However, over the past few years, the conversation around trusting 'western' ideas has turned and our syllabi have had to evolve to be inclusive of cultural memory. This shift has meant that we move from set pedagogies to evolve a programme that allows people to connect to the collective unconscious and draw from there to connect with subject matter personally. As a result, we have increasingly had students who have developed research work around the connection between dance movement therapy and Buddhist psychology, chakra systems, yoga, tantra, tarot and other practices which are not inherently thought of when we think of DMT. We attribute this to a syllabus that is able to inculcate reflexivity and is open ended while structured, so that each practitioner may take what is relevant and useful while not having to abandon or betray their cultural memory. In this workshop, we propose to take the participants through some experientials which will help them connect their cultural memory to their present moment and their choices in practice. Through that we want to be able to discuss how education in arts therapies can be inclusive of intersectional identities, cultural agency and memory without compromising on the integrity and sanctity of pedagogy. Could it be possible to reframe the past not as a fixed narrative but as a multiplicity of voices from diverse points of view in education? What would such an education system look like? How do we standardise ethics in such practice? These are some of the questions we hope to discuss after having connected to the personal and collective unconscious through the experiential in the workshop.

Biography

Anshuma Kshetrapal is a practising drama and movement psychotherapist, registered with BADth (British Association of Dramatherapists). She has a Masters in Psychosocial Clinical Studies and in Drama and Movement Therapy (Sesame). She is a Founding Board Member and Vice President of the Indian Association of Dance Movement Therapy as well as the Member-in-Charge of the Ethics Committee. She is also the Certificate Course Director, Supervisor and Faculty member for CMTAI as well as a past Honorary Advisory Board Member for them. She teaches dramatherapy at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and is course director for the PG Diploma DMT by St. Mira's College, Artsphere, Pune and TATC. Passionate about ethical work, she is on the Ethics Committee for Moolchand Medcity, Delhi and on Apollo Spectra Hospital, Delhi's panel as a consultant psychotherapist. Enthusiastic about advocacy and education in Creative Arts Therapies, she founded The Color of Grey Cells and co-founded The Arts Therapists Co-Lab to conduct workshops and masterclasses for students, therapists and clients across India.

Preetha Ramasubramanian is a dance movement psychotherapist (DMP) practising in India. She also has an M.Sc. in Psychology from the University of Madras and a PG Dip in Special Education. Preetha is a PhD student enrolled with the University of Hertfordshire, UK. Preetha is the Founder and President of the Indian Association of Dance Movement Therapy (IADMT) and is a past Honorary Advisory Board Member for the Creative Movement Therapy Association of India. Preetha co-Founded The Arts Therapists Co-Lab (TATC) that works to promote wellbeing, by conducting workshops and masterclasses for students, therapists and clients across India. She is also called in as a consultant to conduct group / individual sessions and workshops in various institutions. Preetha teaches and supervises in PG Diploma courses and certification courses in India and also is invited as a guest lecturer in various universities.

Recent publications and conference presentations

2020: Presentation: BADth conference. Topic: The Tiny Wand Collective: Coming Together for Drama as Therapy in India, from Within and Without. UK

2019: Presentation: BADth conference. Topic: Facilitating the Feminine: Unveiling the Resilience Embedded in Indian Mythological Heroines. UK

2019: Presentation: CMTAI conference. Topic: Deconstructing Gendered Narratives through Drama: Examining the Collective Unconscious through Stories and Myths.

2019: Presentation: Expressive Arts Therapy Conference – WCC. Topic: Moving Stories: Working with metaphors in Drama and Movement Therapy. Chennai, India.