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**Title: A Sociological Study of Indian Classical Dance: The Case of Bharatanatyam**

### **ABSTRACT**

This research is a study of contemporary choreographies in the Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam, with ethnographic descriptions of works developed by dancer/ choreographer Geeta Chandran and her institution, Natya Vriksha based in New Delhi. Understanding performance as constitutive of culture, this study outlines the social framework of these dance works with the help of the core concepts of ritual and theatre, secularisation and democratisation, constraints and creativity and text and action.

This research has attempted to develop a methodology to understand the process of the making of a performance and to analyse the various socio-cultural influences that contribute in the shaping of not only the performance, but also the course the making of it takes.

The choreographic works included in this research are collaborations between classical Bharatanatyam and other genres of performing arts like puppetry, martial arts, modern dance and theatre. These have created new vocabularies to address themes, which according to the artist are relevant in contemporary society. The journey of Bharatanatyam has witnessed a series of conceptual shifts in its practice

and perception and an analysis of these shifts demonstrates the ways in which a performing art makes itself available to its practitioners, responding to the changing aesthetic and cognitive needs of a society.