The Aseemkala Initiative: Exploring Healing for Women of Color Through Stories in Traditional Dances

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Why traditional dance for women’s healthcare?
For centuries, traditional communities around the world have used dance to heal themselves, their homes, and their lands. Medicine, however, focuses on the disease and patient as the center of the treatment model, relegating other factors to the periphery. This pathology-based focus forms the basis of many arts-based therapies used in medical settings, such as Dance Movement Therapy.

Traditional dances involve local traditions and religion, offering a strong framework to address social issues through performance. However, traditional dance limits itself in the stories narrated and remains understudied in public health and dance medicine fields. Connecting traditional dance structure to DMT’s freedom to self-express to heal can improve health outcomes for women globally.

Access to quality healthcare is a basic human right denied to many women around the world. Barriers to care include inequities in resources, instability due to ongoing conflict, and disempowerment of indigenous cultures. When medicine creates solutions to address the lack of care, they often neglect to consider the voices of the women they aim to help. To find true health equity, we at Aseemkala believe we need to start at the source—listening to the women as they tell their stories with their music, language, and movement.

The Aseemkala Initiative Model for Traditional Dance-Based Empowerment for Women

Danced Based Medical Narratives Exploring Health Equity

Our bodies tell stories in sickness and in health. Too often, these stories go unheard. At Aseemkala, we believe the catalyst for change is sharing these global stories through traditional dances. For many women around the world, traditional dance remains a space where their knowledge and roles are celebrated—even as their circumstances and society complicate their access to care. Our mission is to reframe disempowering medical narratives in the context of traditional arts to remind women about their inherent potential as healthcare changemakers.

Our work focuses on three areas.
- Choreography and performance, creating a laboratory for innovative dances that mix narrative medicine and cultural mythology to explore social injustice.
- Preserving knowledge on traditional arts through research and expert interviews.
- Connecting medical professionals to transformative performance-based medical storytelling in a traditional arts medium by way of workshops and lectures.

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