



Culturally Contextualized Dance Movement Therapy at Kolkata Sanved, India



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KOLKATA, INDIA

Kolkata also known as Calcutta (official name until 2001) is the capital and largest city of the Indian state of West Bengal in the east. It lies on the eastern bank of the Hooghly River

- Financial center of eastern and northeastern India.
- Seventh-most populous city in India, with a population of 4.5 million residents
- Historically and culturally significant city
- Second largest Bengali-speaking city in the world.



Global Independent Study

My project

Training in the use of dance movement therapy (DMT) at Kolkata Sanved, an NGO based in Kolkata, India, working to heal and empower individuals from marginalized communities, including survivors of human trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence.

Kolkata Sanved

Sanved uses their specially created in-house Sampurnata model of DMT that has been mindfully culturally contextualized to the Indian setting. The fundamental principle of the Sampurnata model is that survivors can become healers. The DMT participants are thus given the opportunity to evolve into DMT practitioners, becoming agents of community change, and creating a cycle of transformation in society.

Outcomes

- Direct experiential learnings from participatory DMT sessions
- Learned how to conduct DMT sessions with survivors of trauma
- With a greater understanding of marginalization, gendered violence and trauma, I created a dance performance piece that is at the intersection of art and social justice.

Skills Developed

During my independent study at Kolkata Sanved, I learned:

1. How to recognize and evaluate the markers of deep impact of trauma on the body, and the mind-body connection
2. Formal healing methods that are body-based, such as the use of a culturally contextualized DMT skills model
3. How specific DMT and somatic techniques can be used in both micro and mezzo/community levels

Class Connections

This project was directly connected with the SW789 elective class I took in Winter 2023. The concepts of critical consciousness, internalized oppression and the role of the arts in healing were very relevant to the DMT work for trauma survivors and the community.

Lessons Learned

1. Survivors of trauma are heroes: it is not only possible to heal personally but they also become agents of healing for the community
2. It is my calling in social work to work as an ally and work to support the healing from trauma for trauma survivors
3. It is a difficult process, but we need to persevere to heal



Career Connections

As a social worker, I plan to work at the micro/clinical as well as mezzo levels, as an individual psychotherapist as well as in the community, in creating awareness and healing from trauma. My independent study project gives me understanding and tools to support trauma survivors.

Advice

1. Global social work requires cultural humility and a commitment to be open and unlearn some previously held beliefs and learn new ideas
2. Continue to be culturally responsive in social work, even after the project ends

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