

Performing Arts & Artistes in Modern Times

Improve your learning

Q. 1. Correct the false statements:

- a. All dance forms emerged as part of devotion.**
- b. Historically artists were supported by big Zamindars.**
- c. Burrakatha was adopted to mobilize people.**
- d. Today Bharatanatyam is largely taught by nattuvanars.**

Answer : **a.** No, all dance forms did not emerge as part of devotion. Some of them were just part of their leisure in the form of festivals, or a dance form in the moonlight.

b. This statement is correct.

c. This statement is correct.

d. This statement is correct.

Q. 2. Discuss the changes that have come about in the lives of folk artists during the last 50 years.

Answer : The life of folk artists has changed a lot in the last 50 years. After the revival of Bharatanatyam, this dance form has increased to the extent that the infrastructure required to support this art and maintain its standards is far behind. People are now focusing on learning this art rather than growing its audience. This dance form is taught by the nattuvanars.

These nattuvanars are not just teachers but also have the responsibility of educating the next generation. The role of these nattuvanars is taken by dancers or musicians with special training during performances. Many of them are forced to use recorded music in dance performance due to the low budget. Dancers today are unable to earn a good income only by performing.

Bharatanatyam is a second career for people with family support. Although a few dancers devote their entire life to training and developing as dancers, they have to start teaching early in their careers to earn money. With more dancers becoming teachers the integrity of the dance form is lost. There are many innovations in this dance form because it is now being taught by many dancers. Other dance forms such as Kathakali, Yakshagana, Odissi, Manipuri, and Kathak have also faced similar struggles.

Q. 3. Do you think folk arts are declining? What loss do you think it will cause to our culture?

Answer : Yes, folk art is declining. Folk art has always been a source of inspiration and a form of knowledge that has been existing in our culture for many years. Artists have worked really hard to raise the level of folk arts either in the form of music or dance. Earlier the artists had tried to remove the stigma associated with dance and to increase the interest of the public in different art forms. However, it has become increasingly difficult to preserve this tradition over the years and eat it in the hands of the artist community.

Q. 4. Is it possible to orient folk arts to new requirements of modern life and revive them?

Answer : Yes, it is possible to orient folk arts to new requirements of modern life and revive them.

The main aim should be to develop sustainability in the folk arts by supporting the creation. The main aim is to revive the different art forms of folk which is rooted in a particular community or in a particular tradition. To revive such art forms, it is important to train the younger generation and create awareness among the public regarding the same. It will also help them to earn a stable livelihood. The artists can learn from each other for the preservation of the dance forms as well as adding new innovation to it.

Q. 5. What are the major changes that have taken place in Bharatanatyam dance since the days of Sadir?

Answer : Bharatanatyam is simply a term that has originated from Sadir. This term began with the Maratha rulers of South India in the 17th century. It was the presentation of the dance in the courts. Another important form was Dasi Attam, which was the dance of the devadasis. Devadasi means 'servant of divinity,' who was a dedicated artist to the services of the temple. The dance of the devadasi was important to the ritual worship. Devdasi families along with nattuvanars have maintained these traditions from generation to generation supported by the royal patronage.

The dance of Bharatanatyam is based on Natya Shastra as supported by the literary shreds of evidence. However, this dance form has observed a deterioration in North India due to repeated foreign invasions and the mixing of this dance form with others. However, this tradition has survived in its true form in South India. Over the years it has evolved and seen many regional variations in its elements. A major milestone in this evolution was by four brothers known as Thanjavur Quartet. They had greatly refined the music and dance forms.

After the British invasion, this art was interpreted as immoral and crude to the concept of the West. The royal patronage fell, and the Indians started to become isolated from their own traditions. The devadasi system also declined. Most of them had to seek the patronage of the ordinary people and this diminished their reputation as a community. In the late 19th and 20th century, social reformers under the influence of the west 2 the art itself condemning it as a social evil. Century, south India was completely wiped out.

REVIVAL: There are many changes that have come in the life of folk artists during the last 50 years. Only a few families have been able to preserve the knowledge of the folk song and music tradition. It was only the work of the Indian freedom fighters, people interested in the folk artist, etc who had learned Bharatanatyam and other dance forms. Without their efforts, the current era would not have seen this beautiful dance forms. For example, E. Krishna Iyer was an Indian freedom fighter and lawyer who performed Bharatanatyam in a female costume.

He worked hard to remove the stigma associated with the dance and to increase public interest in this art form. The efforts of Rukmani Devi can also not be ignored in this regard. Earlier she had trained herself in ballet, but soon she took the step to reform the existing Bharatanatyam by focusing on its spirituality. Other artists such as Nagaratnamma and Balasaraswati also preserved this tradition over the years and kept it in the hands of the devadasi community.

Q. 6. Who among the following were the supporters of the devadasi system and those who opposed it and those who wanted to reform it:

Balasaraswati, Rukmini Devi, Veeresalingam, Bhagya Reddy Varma, Krishna Iyer, Bangalore Nagaratnamma.

Answer : Devadasi system is a religious practice in parts of southern India, including Andhra Pradesh, whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple.

Balasaraswati, Rukmini Devi, Krishna Iyer, and Nagaratnamma were the supporters of the devadasi system and wanted to reform it.

Veeresalingam and Bhagya Reddy Varma opposed it.

Q. 7. Why has it always been difficult for artists to earn their livelihood by practicing their art? How can artists be supported to stand on their own feet?

Answer : It was very difficult for the artist to earn their livelihood by practicing their art. Some artist travelled to different places to give their performances. Such artists were patronized by the village headman or the landlord and ordinary people. They collected grains from the villagers and were welcomed in the village for the performance that they provided for entertainment.

They were an important part of the temple festival and the annual village festival. People also organized special performances as it was believed that they would help to bring rain and ward off evil. But some of the artists did not prefer traveling to different areas. They supported by kings or zamindars. They spent most of the time learning, teaching for them in quotes and palaces. The art should be patronised, and people should be made aware of it so as to support these artists and make them stand on their own field.

Q. 8. Do you think institutions like Kalakshetra can help to revive folk arts too?

Answer : Kalakshetra is a modern institution that was founded by Rukmini Devi. She had trained many great artists and musicians there. It employed different artists to teach, perform and conduct certificate and degree courses. All the people could learn there irrespective of the fact that whether they belong to a dancer family or not. The experienced dancers were trained as teachers to educate the next generation. Over the years it became difficult for even Kalakshetra to revive the folk art because the students could now learn privately from the individual dancers as well. The role of such Institutions had declined over the years.