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World Theatre - India



Introduction

India's theatrical heritage dates back over 5000 years and has its roots deeply rooted in Vedic ritualism and socio-cultural anthropology, which delineated the development of various dramatic forms of Indian theatre. Over time, it became a lot more structured and contemporary and now the forms of Indian theatre, therefore, can fall into three different genres: Classical Theatre, Folk Theatre, Modern Indian Theatre.

Classical Theatre

Classical *Sanskrit* theatre flourished during the first nine centuries CE. There are three structural types of classical theatre: oblong, square, and triangular, each further divided into large, medium, and small sizes. The playhouse was "like a mountain cave" with two floors at



different levels, small windows so that outside noise and wind would not interfere with the acoustics, and backstage for actors to do makeup, costumes, and offstage noise effects. *Bharata* disapproved of a large playhouse and recommended the medium-size structure meant for court productions. The ancient *Hindus* insisted on a small playhouse because dramas were acted in a highly stylized gesture language with subtle movements of eyes and hands. In classical theatre, with a natural presentation of human behavior and properties catering to the popular taste, or stylized drama, which, using gesture language and symbols, was considered more artistic.

Folk Theatre

After the decline of *Sanskrit* drama, folk theatre developed in various regional languages from the 14th through the 19th century. Folk theatre gradually emerged as a regional form of drama based on the attributes of local religion, legends, art, vernacular, history, and mythology.

Some conventions and stock characters of classical drama (stage preliminaries, the opening prayer song, the *sutra-dhara*, and the *vidushaka*) were adopted into folk theatre, which lavishly employs music, dance, drumming, exaggerated makeup, masks, and a singing chorus.

Thematically, it deals with mythological heroes, medieval romances, and social and political events, and it is a rich store of customs, beliefs, legends, and rituals. Folk theatre is performed in the open on a variety of arena stages; round, square, rectangular, multiple-set. The *bhavai*, enacted on a ground-level circle, and the *jatra*, on a



16-foot (5-meter) square platform, have gangways that run through the surrounding audience and connect the stage to the dressing room. Actors enter and exit through these gangways.

Modern Indian Theatre

Modern Indian theatre first developed in Bengal at the end of the 18th century as a result of Western influence. With the ensuing change in the socio and political landscape, Indian theatre and drama became more realistic. Historical plays,



mythological characters, virtues, and vices became less important and thus, the new form of Indian theatre, the “Modern Indian Theatre” was born. The emergent modern Indian theater,



which is also referred to as Native theater, features a theatrical approach that has been viewed as an intersection of Indian social space with Western theater formats and conventions. The resulting theatrical space is described to be existing at the material, symbolic, and discursive levels.

Tradition in Modern

The best example to describe India’s tradition in modern is Bollywood. Even while traditional theatre receded, performance traditions thrived in Bollywood through dancers, musicians, singers, and storytellers. The highlight of



Bollywood movies is elaborate dance sequences and original soundtracks. Over the years Bollywood movies have developed their own signature style of song and dance, which combines the rich texture of India’s many classical and folk dances, fused with elements of Jazz, Hip Hop,



Arabic, and Latin Forms. Bollywood has always paid homage to traditional dances of India, like *kathak* or *bharatnatyam*. Many such dance numbers have been featured in old films as well as new ones, and the dancers always look extremely elegant wearing them. *Mujrah* or the dance of the courtesan, has been long popular in Bollywood movies, and famous actors like Rekha have portrayed roles in movies like *Umrao Jaan*, making certain dance moves immortal. Bollywood dance costumes made in the style of such are definitely

a treat. With the success of the Bollywood, more people can see the tradition through the movies, and get to know this culture around the world.



Conclusion

Indian's theatre has a long history. With historical events and the evolution of the times, Indian's theatre has become more and more diversified, but it also retains its own tradition in the modern. The best thing to understand Indian's theatre is I found out that not only their theatre has a huge change through before to now, but also the social ethos and values have be improved.

Theatre is not only an art we enjoy or appreciate, but also educate the audiences the values and cultures of their country.

Resources:

<http://www.rhythm-india.com/bollywood-dance.html>

<https://www.britannica.com/art/South-Asian-arts/Dance-and-theatre>

<https://www.theatrepeople.com.au/a-brief-history-of-theatre-in-india/>

<https://asiasociety.org/contemporary-indian-theatre-overview>

