

# Early Tamil Cinema And The Making Of Modern Bharatanatyam

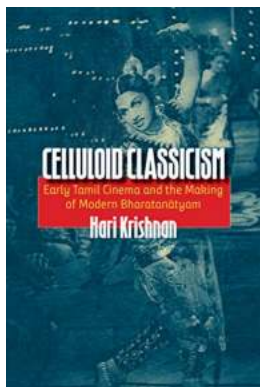


Indian cinema, particularly Tamil cinema, has played a significant role in shaping and popularizing various art forms throughout the country. One such art form is Bharatanatyam, a classical dance form originated in Tamil Nadu. This article

explores the intertwined history of early Tamil cinema and the making of modern Bharatanatyam.

## The Birth of Tamil Cinema

Tamil cinema traces its origins back to the early 20th century when silent films began captivating audiences in the region. The first silent film produced in Tamil, "Keechaka Vadham," was released in 1916. These films relied heavily on visual storytelling since they lacked synchronized sound. At this time, Bharatanatyam was already an established dance form, predominantly performed in temples and royal courts.



## Celluloid Classicism: Early Tamil Cinema and the Making of Modern Bharatanatyam

by The Secret Libraries (Kindle Edition)

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As cinema gained popularity, it soon became a powerful medium to disseminate cultural practices and revive traditional art forms. Renowned dancers such as Rukmini Devi Arundale and E.K. Janaki emerged, incorporating Bharatanatyam into Tamil films, enhancing their narrative and aesthetic appeal.

## The Synthesis of Art Forms

The integration of Bharatanatyam with early Tamil cinema brought a new dimension to both art forms. Firstly, it allowed Bharatanatyam, which was primarily performed in elite settings, to reach a wider audience. The visual medium of cinema provided an opportunity to showcase the intricate dance form to the masses, breaking barriers of caste and class.

On the other hand, Tamil cinema benefited from the inclusion of Bharatanatyam by adding depth and cultural richness to its storytelling. Dance sequences became an integral part of Tamil films, contributing to the plot progression and emotional expression. The engaging performances by renowned Bharatanatyam dancers mesmerized the audience and left a lasting impact on the perception of Tamil cinema.

## **Evolution of Bharatanatyam in Cinema**

With the advent of sound in films, the influence of Bharatanatyam on Tamil cinema intensified. Not only were the dances now accompanied by music and lyrics, but the choreography itself became more intricate and nuanced. This led to the popularization of dance-oriented films, with iconic actresses like Padmini, Vyjayanthimala, and Hema Malini showcasing their Bharatanatyam prowess on the silver screen.

As Tamil cinema continued to evolve, so did Bharatanatyam in the context of films. Traditional dance numbers began to incorporate elements of storytelling, merging classical movements with cinematic techniques. Filmmakers experimented with incorporating Bharatanatyam into song sequences and even creating films centered around the lives of dancers and the challenges they faced.

## **The Impact on Modern Bharatanatyam**

The influence of early Tamil cinema on Bharatanatyam has been profound. It not only helped in preserving and popularizing the art form but also contributed to its transformation into a more contemporary style. The fusion of classical movements with cinematic elements in Tamil films opened doors to experiments, leading to the development of what is now known as the modern Bharatanatyam.

Modern Bharatanatyam incorporates elements from various dance styles and forms, breaking away from the strict traditional boundaries. It embraces a more dynamic and expressive approach without compromising the essence of the classical form. This evolution has made Bharatanatyam more accessible to a wider audience while still retaining its cultural significance.

## **The Legacy Continues**

Today, the impact of early Tamil cinema can still be witnessed in modern Bharatanatyam performances. Dancers continue to draw inspiration from the dance sequences of classic Tamil films, adapting and incorporating them into their own renditions. The influence of cinema also extends to costume design, makeup, and stage production, enhancing the visual appeal of Bharatanatyam performances.

In , early Tamil cinema played a pivotal role in shaping and popularizing Bharatanatyam. It brought the classical dance form to the masses, revolutionizing its presentation and creating the foundation for modern Bharatanatyam. The influence of cinema on this art form cannot be disregarded, as it continues to impact and inspire dancers and audiences alike.

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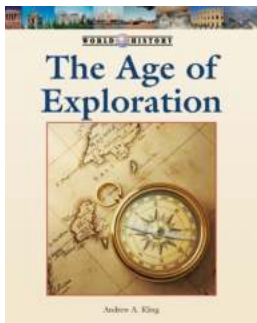


Celluloid Classicism provides a rich and detailed history of two important modern South Indian cultural forms: Tamil Cinema and Bharatanatyam dance. It addresses representations of dance in the cinema from an interdisciplinary, critical-historical perspective. The intertwined and symbiotic histories of these forms have never received serious scholarly attention. For the most part, historians of South Indian cinema have noted the presence of song and dance sequences in films, but have not historicized them with reference to the simultaneous revival of dance culture among the middle-class in this region. In a parallel manner, historians of dance have excluded deliberations on the influence of cinema in the making of the "classical" forms of modern India. Although the book primarily focuses on the period between the late 1920s and 1950s, it also addresses the persistence of these mid-twentieth century cultural developments into the present. The book rethinks the history of Bharatanatyam in the twentieth century from an interdisciplinary, transmedia standpoint and features 130 archival images.



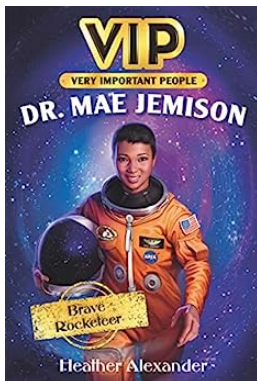
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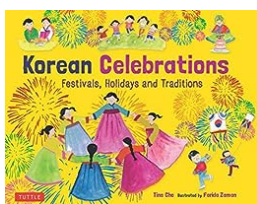
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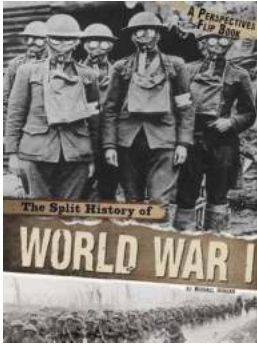
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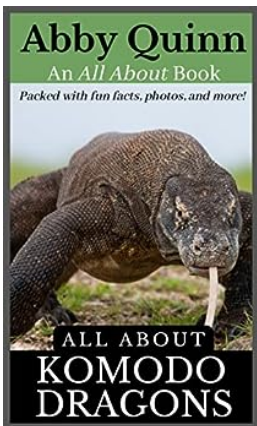
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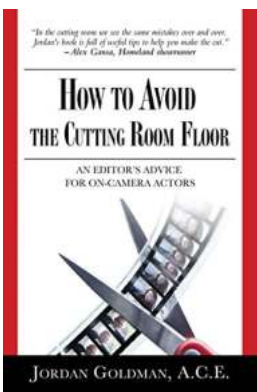
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