How did Rukmini Devi liberate classical dance?
Or
Why is Rukmini Devi considered as a liberator of classical dance? (July 2007)
Or
Why did Rukmini Devi rename ‘sadir’, Bharathanatyam?

Rukmini Devi learnt ‘sadir’, the art of devadasis from the hereditary Guru, Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai for two secretive years. This is surprising as she hailed from a respectable family of Sanskrit scholars. The orthodox India was shocked when she gave a public performance of her wonderful accomplishment under the great banyan tree in 1935. ‘Sadir’ was introduced as a spiritual art. Her performance was full of innovative changes. The musicians were seated on one side of the stage and Rukmini Devi’s costume and jewelry reflected her good taste. Moreover, she renamed ‘sadir’, Bharathanatyam. This struck a deep dual chord: It means the dance of the sage Bharatha, the author of the Natyashstra, an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts. It also connotes that dance of Bhaaratha, of India, the land of the hero Bharatha. Moreover, it stands for Bhava, (emotion), Raga (melody) and Tala (rhythm) the three components of dance. This brought recognition to the art which, hither to, received contempt from the society.

02. Rukmini Devi was a fearless crusader for social change. Explain.
Or
Write a note on Rukmini Devi’s contribution to social change.
Or
Rukmini Devi was India’s cultural queen as well as a fearless crusader for social change. Explain. (March 2008)
Or
Explain how Rukmini Devi is not only a liberator of classical dance but also a crusader for social change. (March 2009)
Or
What are the contributions of Rukmini Devi to art and culture of India?

Undoubtedly, Rukmini Devi was a fearless crusader for social change, though she was born in an orthodox family. She learnt ‘sadir’, the art of the devadasis and gave a public performance. This shocked orthodox India. She brought respect to the art by renaming it as Bharathanatyam. She founded Kalakshetra to promote dance, music and fine arts. Gurukula style of teaching was followed and the best teachers of those times like Papnasam Siva and Vasudeva Acharya were appointed. She was a purist and never compromised on the quality of classical arts. She showed no less courage in marrying George Arundale, an English man. She started many schools in the name of Annie Besant and her husband Arundale. In addition, she helped pass the bill for ‘The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals’ in the Rajya Sabha in 1960. She spread the message Indian culture and heritage across the country and abroad as well.
03. Explain Rukmini Devi’s encounter with Anna Pavlova. (March 2007)

Rukmini Devi had glimpses of dance in her childhood. Later when she watched Anna Pavlova’s dance at Covent Gardens in 1924, she was enraptured. She was more impressed by Pavlova’s magic. That was her first glimpse of the fair world of ballet. Later, she met Anna Pavlova in Bombay and again she felt the magic. Anna Pavlova was impressed by Rukmini Devi’s sari and her figure commented that it was lovely to see her. On another occasion, Rukmini Devi expressed her wish that she could dance like her and humbly said that she knew that she could never so. With great generosity, Pavlova encouraged her saying that her gait itself was like dance and people would throng to see her walk across the stage. Thus, Pavlova acted as the force that shaped Rukmini Devi’s future at this time.

04. How does Yamini Krishnamurthy present Rukmini Devi as a multifaceted personality in
“Rukmini Devi Arundale”? (July 2006 – asked for 4 mark)
Or
“Rukmini Devi had a multifaceted personality.” Substantiate the statement. (July 2009)
Or
“Rukmini Devi’s life was a many sided-splendor.” Explain (March 2010)

Rukmini Devi’s life is a many-sided splendor. She was a great Bharathanatyam dancer. She was the cultural queen of India and a fearless crusader for social change. She was a great teacher, an earnest educationist, a legislator, and a committed social reformer.

Rukmini Devi learnt ‘sadir’, the art of devadasis secretively for two years. She gave a public performance of her marvelous accomplishment in 1935 and the orthodox India was shocked. She renamed ‘sadir’, Bharathanatyam and brought respectability to the art. Rukmini Devi liberated classical dance and brought about innovative changes in its presentation.

Rukmini Devi established Kalakshetra, an International Center for Arts to promote arts. Dance was the core activity over there with other activities like music, painting and textile crafts. Gurukula style of teaching was incorporated and classes were held in the open. It was like the Shantiniketan of Gurudev Tagore. Rukmini Devi was a purist and she never compromised on the quality of classical dance. Best teachers like Papnasm sivan, and Tiger Varadachari were on the staff of Kalakshetra.

Rukmini Devi was a great educationist and founded many schools in the name of Annie Besant and Arundale. She brought Maria Montessori to India and started the first Montessori kinder Garden in India. She got The Bill for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals passed in the Rajya Sabha in 1960. Rukmini Devi married George Arundale, an English man and this was really a
bold act in those times. Theosophy, animal welfare and vegetarianism were lifelong interests. Thus, Rukmini Devi has left an indelible imprint on the cultural canvas of India.