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Drawing life lessons from Bharatanatyam for stress-free living

**Bharatanatyam
dancer
turned-author
finds different
meanings in the
dance form**

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The chances of lay audience understanding Bharatanatyam or any classical dance recital in its entirety are slim. They may enjoy the visual experience, but are likely to not get the theme conveyed through a performance.

This has always bothered Vidya Bhavani Suresh, a Bharatanatyam exponent and an author, who gave up her career as a company secretary to create awareness on the dance form and elicit public interest in various classical, folk and traditional performing art forms of the country.

The audience can truly appreciate and derive greater pleasure from a performance when they understand all the aspects of a classical dance form. There are many out there who are not aware of this, but are eager to know more. "I realised this through my interactions with the audience during the course of my performances. That's when the idea was born 20 years ago to demystify the classical, traditional dance forms of India and create an awareness through writing. And my first book was *Appreciating Bharatanatyam*," Vidya Bhavani told *The Hindu*. Encouraged by her



Vidya Bhavani Suresh has published 40 books with the latest being *What is Bharatanatyam*. ■ BY ARRANGEMENT

husband Suresh, an advocate and an aficionado of fine arts, the couple started Skanda Publications and in the last 20 years, they have published 40 books. The latest one is *What is Bharatanatyam*.

"The trigger for my latest book that covers the splendour of Bharatanatyam with photographs and life lessons through Bharatanatyam is my realisation that various concepts of the classical dance can be applied and utilised to make our lives more meaningful and stress-free. Be it a busy corporate professional, a multi-tasking parent or even a highly-pressurised student, it applies to all," she explained.

The regular practice of dance is akin to any exercise to keep one fit and agile. The *Mudras* (hand symbols) teach one the art of perception. "In life, it is

perception that makes one see a difficult situation as an opportunity and the outcomes turn out differently, depending on how we perceive them," said Vidya Bhavani.

The concept of *Bhava*, *Abhinaya* and *Rasa* teach one what to do with the emotions, and the dedication that comes with it is bound to be noticed at the workplace, business or family relationships. Getting ready for a performance and keeping the costume and jewellery in order helps one to be disciplined and organised in day-to-day life. "The harmonious mix of *Nrittya* and *Abhinaya* teaches one the work-life balance as indulging in one excessively would lead to monotony. The dance form teaches the art of enjoying the process too, rather than being fixated on the goals. Then where is the room for stress or depression?" she signs off.