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**24.03.2021**  
WEDNESDAY

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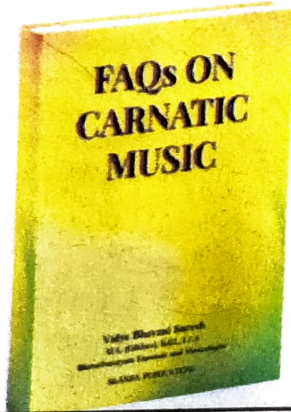
# INITIATING CARNATIC CONVERSATIONS

ROSHNE BALASUBRAMANIAN

When Bharatanatyam exponent and musicologist Vidya Bhavani Suresh was hardly seven years old, she started accompanying her mother to Bharatanatyam recitals and Carnatic *kutcheris*. “One stark difference, besides the type of art form that took the centre stage, was how before every Bharatanatyam performance, the name of the song, composer’s name, *talam* and *ragam* is usually announced, making the viewer aware of its nuances; unlike a *kutcheri*, where artistes perform one song after the other without providing a vista for the viewer about the technicalities of the performance. This, in many ways, took the art form (Carnatic music) away from a larger population, who were interested

in attending concerts but were not presented with the information needed to understand it,” says the author. It was out of this need to bridge the gap between the audience and the performance that the author began presenting talks and writing books on the multi-layered approaches to art and culture, especially Carnatic music, and emphasising the need for sensible announcing. “The idea was to make it more understandable, edible and accessible for all. I wanted to create a new generation of informed viewers,” she details.

In her ongoing attempt to achieve this Himalayan task, Vidya recently launched her latest offering – *FAQs on Carnatic Music*, a handbook addressing several basic yet much-needed questions on the traditional art form. The 170-



As a parallel pursuit, I have also been working on a voluminous book on the 72 *melakarthas* and will be releasing it in two parts in 2022

odd page book, part of Skanda Publication’s *Demystifying Fine Arts* series, hopes to further the process of making the Carnatic music circuit more open and welcoming. “Over the years, my attempts have seen fruition in small ways, wherein some artistes have begun announcing *ragams* albeit the ones those are difficult. But, that is a good start. The viewer must not feel like a fish out of water and should want to enter a Carnatic music concert without being intimidated,” she tells.

Through the book, Vidya addresses the layers that encompass concerts, compositions and the process of creating music. “The most memorable part of putting this book together was my collaboration with my 18-year-old daughter Harshitha Suresh. Apart from the 25 questions that the book answers, the book features *Harshi’s Carnatic Nook*, a set of four essays on specific aspects of the art form. When this idea to weave in

Harshitha’s insights popped, I was quite excited as a mother. However, after reading the essays, I was impressed as a teacher. The perspectives were refreshing and it enabled me to look at Carnatic music from a different standpoint,” she details.

“Why are there *ragas* in Carnatic music?”, “Do *gamakas* make a raga more beautiful?”, “Can a taste in Carnatic music be acquired or is it inborn?”, “What is our *thala* system?”, “Is it really possible for every *raga* to be distinct?”... are some of the questions that the book answers in a crisp, question and answer format. “If we get rid of this communication gap between the viewer and the performer, the halls will draw more people. It will make them not just sit, but will engage and make them appreciate the art. Music will be loved more,” she shares.

The book is priced at ₹999 and is available at [www.skandapublications.in](http://www.skandapublications.in)