

Have you processed the thought that dance is for everyone, regardless of experience, abilities, gender, and age? “Do you need in-born talent for driving a bike or a car? No, right? If you learn to drive you can drive, it’s the same way with dance,” says Natraj, dancer, choreographer, teacher, and artistic director of Dance Extreme, Chennai. With the International Dance Day that’s coming up soon, here’s a fresh expert view on an age-old art form. There is consensus that dance is not for everyone, dancing skills need to be innate, or that it is not culturally appropriate to learn to dance, especially if you’re a woman. But lo and behold, it is quite the contrary! The information that we have been fed all these years are being proved wrong over and over by science and mere personal experiences of growing number of students. Dance as an art form is an epitome of expression. It is a beautiful culmination of physicality, spirituality, musicality, and freedom.

“Dance is the ultimate stress-buster”, says Natraj passionately. He has taught dance in almost all the top international schools in Chennai and still continues teaching in one. He has taught roughly more than one lakh students between ages 3 and 65 years in the span of 15 years. He strongly opines that it is only the question of finding a dance form that speaks to you and the right teacher to learn how to consume dance. It is the teacher’s responsibility to analyze a student’s comfort and ability to dance and gradually ease them into musicality, choreographies, and techniques. It is a skill to teach the way in which they would perceive it all. Some may take longer than the others to dance, and it is okay to persevere through it since dancing improves muscle co-ordination, flexibility, and the overall psyche of a person over the course of time.

At Dance Extreme, some of the students who have never danced before in their entire life are taught to dance. The environment is non-judgmental and positive and thus, very conducive to learning. Natraj helps embrace oneself unapologetically nurturing self-love, and he also focuses on the mental well-being of the individuals. The ambiance and the classes are serene, electric, and fun. Some of his students have personally raved about how dance has helped them get over some traumatic events they have been through in

Everyone is a dancer! Dance on!



their life. It is scientifically proven that psychology and dance a.k.a. movement therapy are intricately related. Dance helps in overcoming poor self-esteem, physical and mental health issues, and in fighting and curbing metabolic disorders. The release of endorphins while dancing elevates the level of contentment and cheer in a person. Choreographic process is perceived to be in parallel with psychological process in the words of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. Natraj’s vision is to pass on the benefits he reaps as a dancer on to everyone around him.

In order to normalize dancing in our society, Natraj has started doing several projects in Chennai and in the other cities of Tamil Nadu. He has conducted dance workshops for juvenile adolescents and for children that are at high risk for abuse in tie up with Government Observation Home (GOH) in Chennai and Villupuram. He also does a workshop every second month since late 2020 for the youth at Life Project 4 Youth in Chennai. LP4Y is an NGO that empowers economically downtrodden youth and women of Kannagi Nagar in Chennai with skills that would help them carve out a career. He teaches dance to bring out their self-confidence and to manage stress and oppression. He recently conducted a Women’s Day dance workshop at Kannagi Nagar and also gave a short presentation on how dance helps erasing prejudice, encourages equality and respect. He is also the lead dance mentor at JC Lifeskills academy. The projects in pipeline for 2022 are dance workshops for seniors: visually challenged, hearing impaired, the mute; and transgenders. The intent behind such philanthropic projects is to show people life outside of their banality and humdrum. Dance Extreme is LGBTQ friendly, so Natraj is awaiting an opportunity



to choreograph and teach the first dance for a LGBTQ wedding. Being

one of the top Sangeet/wedding dance choreographers in South India, he also derives immense pleasure in teaching couples their first dance for the wedding. He says, “It is beautiful to witness how dance enhances the love shared by a couple and also the memories it creates in the wedding are unparalleled.” Natraj wishes to execute his ideas all around the world.

“What does Dance mean to you?” “Dance means everything to me,” replies Natraj instantly. “I was a nobody before I recognized my passion for dance. Everyone around me believed that I would amount to nothing in life and made me believe it, too. With the grace of almighty, Dance gave me an identity, self-confidence, people skills, grooming skills, language skills, it opened my mind and gave me exposure. For example, I was under the impression that women could not dance as good as men before I ventured into this industry, but the world of dance

made me realize my doltishness and respect everyone without any prejudice. And furthermore, I could not say more than, “my name is Natraj” in English when I came into this industry, but today I have taught and still teach people from different countries. It has filled me with enough confidence to learn Spanish from a Costa Rican to better understand Latin music and to facilitate teaching dance in Spanish speaking countries. Technically, Dance is a way of expression. Example, I see dance even in a child’s ecstasy when it sees its parent or when a person says, “I do” during a proposal. A dancer creates a visual representation of music through emotions and body language. But there are choreographies in Modern Dance that has minimal music as well” He raves. Dance is his nationality and music his language! Natraj can be contacted at, Phone: +91999 486 7933
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