SUPARNA Banerjee, an eminent Bharatnatyam danseuse and the assistant professor at The Foundation of Liberal and Management Education (FLAME), believes that students’ knowledge of dance should not be confined to specific parameters. A liberal outlook towards dance is what she persistently professes, for even if a student does not pursue dance as a career, he/she should come across as a dance appreciator. Banerjee is a visiting faculty at Iowa State University and Penn State University, USA, whilst she has also delivered lecture-demonstrations in various other universities abroad. She recently attended the 22nd World Congress on Dance Research in Athens, Greece, where she presented a paper on the making of Tap Natyam, an inimitable blend of Bharatnatyam and tap dance.

She tells us about Tap Natyam, “It came as a part of my dance pedagogical teaching methodology. I was asked to teach Bharatnatyam to a group of 20 multi-cultural students, who were learning tap dance at that time. These students were off-track, and could not grasp anything because they were oblivious of Bharatnatyam. As a result, I modified my lecture to help them travel from recognised vocabulary to the unfamiliar realm of dance. We combined Bharatnatyam with tap dancing, thereby creating a single choreography.” She further reveals that the synthesis was primarily the objectification of one’s visual, aural and kinetic senses, even while it was a visual coalition. She elucidates, “Tap Natyam basically refers to merging diverse, distinct and disparate elements into a unified whole, and synchronising them metrical beats of tap-shoes and bare feet simultaneously, in order to accentuate the metrical phonomes.”

As is evident, Banerjee reveres all forms of dance, and isn’t averse to fusion in the least. “We must respect each form of dance. This is the idea that was promoted at the Congress too. We try to portray a similar vision at FLAME, for all dance forms are equal and thus, we cannot look down upon any form of dance. It is about human emotions, human movements and human aesthetics,” she says. She states that the World Congress on Dance Research also aimed at acknowledging the importance of dance research. “At the institute too, we are trying to develop the concept of research. If one is interested in physics, one is told to explore the laws of motion which one uses in dance. We try to groom the research capabilities in our students,” divulges Banerjee, who has also fused American Modern dance with Bharatnatyam, while the latter with classical ballet.

According to her, sculptures are arrested movements, which are the epitome of perfection. “Once you study a sculpture, you tend to attain its perfect pose. It is complimentary, for if one wants to be a good dancer, one should study sculptures. Dance cannot stand alone and has myriad interdisciplinary aspects,” she says.

Originally from Kolkata, Banerjee has been in Pune since the last nine years. She is a scholar of unfathomable knowledge, whose creative research has fascinated the best of intellectuals. “Dance research is something that I have always wanted to do. I was mesmerised by the challenge, for one can reduce 3-dimensional human movements into words, which isn’t an easy task,” she concludes.