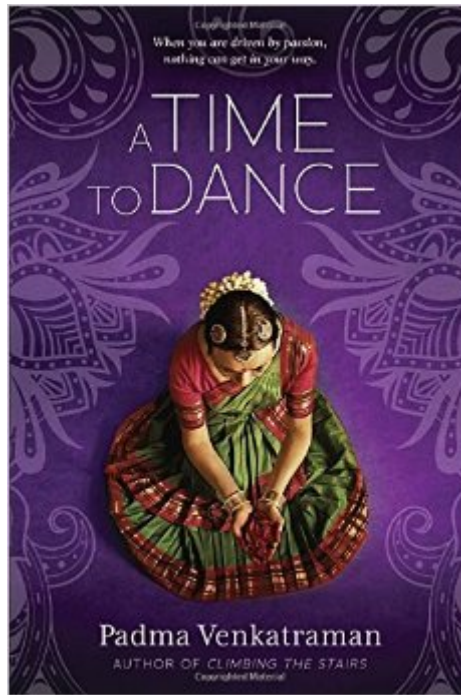


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A Time To Dance



Synopsis

Padma Venkatraman's inspiring story of a young girl's struggle to regain her passion and find a new peace is told lyrically through verse that captures the beauty and mystery of India and the ancient bharatanatyam dance form. This is a stunning novel about spiritual awakening, the power of art, and above all, the courage and resilience of the human spirit. Veda, a classical dance prodigy in India, lives and breathes dance—so when an accident leaves her a below-knee amputee, her dreams are shattered. For a girl who's grown used to receiving applause for her dance prowess and flexibility, adjusting to a prosthetic leg is painful and humbling. But Veda refuses to let her disability rob her of her dreams, and she starts all over again, taking beginner classes with the youngest dancers. Then Veda meets Govinda, a young man who approaches dance as a spiritual pursuit. As their relationship deepens, Veda reconnects with the world around her, and begins to discover who she is and what dance truly means to her.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews (28 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #24,867 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Dance #20 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia #25 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts > Dance

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

In *A Time to Dance*, Padma Venkatraman introduces readers to the dynamics of three generations of a contemporary Indian family. Even though the story is told through the perspective of the granddaughter, the reader is able to understand how the mother and grandmother's choices

affected their respective lives. Each character reveals a different layer of personal strength and sacrifice as they respond to the expectations of Indian culture. At a young age, the main character, Veda, develops a passion for dance and is willing to endure whatever is necessary to pursue her dream. Early on Veda shares her sentiments, "Pain is proof of my hard work, proof of my love for dance." (18) This career objective puts her in direct conflict with her mother. She prefers that Veda excel in science or mathematics and eventually become an engineer. Despite her mother's objections, Veda continues to study dance. After the emotional high of winning a Bharatanatyam dance competition, Veda's aspirations are unexpectedly curtailed. A van accident causes the death of the driver and amputation of Veda's right leg below the knee. Suddenly, her world that was previously filled with music is now silent. She candidly admits, "I don't know who I am anymore." (45) Using first person verse, Padma showcases the physical and emotional challenges that Veda faces as she copes with her disability in Chennai, India. The author's conscious word choice and simple structure promote a quick read that leaves a lasting impression. For consolation, Veda turns to her family members, friends, medical personnel, Hindu beliefs, and eventually dance. Veda's special relationship with her grandmother, Paati, is highlighted. Her grandmother was widowhood at a young age.

From the very first scene of the book, it is obvious that dance is not just something that Veda does, it is her passion. When she dances, she is fully alive and she feels beautiful. Her accident threatens to bring all of her dreams crashing down, but Veda finds the determination to start again. She has a doctor and family that believes in her and it helps that she is stubborn too. Not long ago, I saw a comment on Twitter about how not many young adult novels deal with religion. In *A Time to Dance*, religion and spirituality play a very big role. By the second page, the connection between God and dance has been made. Veda and her family visit a temple with sculptures of dancers on the walls. When she climbs up to see them, a priest explains, "You don't have to climb ladders to reach God. He dances within all He creates." In the aftermath of her accident and other issues she faces throughout the book, Veda questions her belief though. She questions the value of prayer and wonders what God is. Veda has a physical journey as she relearns how to walk and dance, but she also has a spiritual journey as she begins to see dance as more than just a skill to learn. As she had been competing and performing, she was working for the applause and awards, but she begins to learn that there is more to dance than she had imagined. I really appreciated the family relationships in the story. Her grandmother is very influential in her life. She models a spiritual life and she nurtures Veda daily with snacks, massages, hugs, listening and much more. Their relationship is

beautiful. Her grandmother is also the person who suggests a new dance teacher for Veda â “ one who is focused on the emotional expression and devotion in dance and not on competition.

All her life, Veda has trained in classical Bharatanatyam dance. Though her mother wishes she would study engineering or another practical field, Veda knows she can succeed as a dancer, and finds support in her father, grandmother and dance teacher. Her dreams begin to come true when she wins an important dance competition, the first of her teacherâ™s students to do so --- but on the way home, her bus crashes, and her right leg is crushed in the wreckage. When she wakes up, her leg has been amputated below the knee. Unable to even walk, Veda believes her dreams of dancing are over. She doesnâ™t know how she can go on when she feels most herself while dancing. She begins to take heart when her handsome American doctor understands her need to dance, and commits to making a prosthesis that will allow Veda to dance again. As she begins the long process of recovery, her family and friends rally around her, even as her schoolmates mock her disability and her beloved dance teacher draws away. In the process of recovery, Veda finds a new teacher and a new friend who help her see the spiritual side of Bharatanatyam dance again --- but can she really recover from such a devastating injury, when even the best prosthesis can never replace her true leg? A novel in verse, A TIME TO DANCE is short and deceptively simple: a new amputee learns to live her life again. The most impressive aspect of the novel, though, is how the spare writing adds so many layers of complexity and meaning with so few words. Throughout this verse novel, the voice is perfectly honest: the story never shies away from the most challenging or humiliating moments of Vedaâ™s recovery, but it shows Vedaâ™s darkest moments without losing its optimistic core.

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