

#### (4) God as a Dancer

The Guru describes God as an eternal dancer, keeping the "dance of life" in motion.

*"You Yourself sing, and You Yourself dance. You Yourself blow the bugle."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1252)

#### (5) Control of the Dancing Mind

The Guru describes the human mind as something which dances to the 5 thieves including lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride.

*"The love of Maya makes this mind dance, and the deceit within makes people suffer in pain."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.122)

The dance of the mind is something we should aim to control through devotional worship and meditation.

*"Channel your dancing mind in devotional worship"* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.121)

*"Make me the slave of the Lord's slaves, so that my mind might dance in Your Love."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.169)

#### (6) Dancing as a Path to God

Finally, the Guru teaches humanity that when our minds are attuned to God through devotion then anything and everything we do is blessed and considered a form of worship.

*"The Gurmukh laughs, and the Gurmukh cries. Whatever the Gurmukh does, is devotional worship. Whoever becomes Gurmukh contemplates the Lord. The Gurmukh, O Nanak, crosses over to the other shore."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1422)

*"The Gurmukhs sing, the Gurmukhs dance, and focus their consciousness on the Lord."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.124)

*"O people, O victims of this Maya, abandon your doubts and dance out in the open. What sort of a hero is one who is afraid to face the battle?"* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.338)

*"Your humble servant dances and sings Your Glorious Praises."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.381)

*"Your veil shall be true only if you skip, dance and sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.484)

*"I dance, and make this mind dance as well. By Guru's Grace, I eliminate my self-conceit. One who keeps his consciousness focused on the Lord is liberated; he obtains the fruits of his desires."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.506)

#### SUMMARY OF WHY DANCE?

Dancing has formed an integral part of human history and evolution and in modern times forms a crucial element in spirituality, social interactions and is a great way to become fit, reduce stress and have fun.

# Why Dance?

## INTRODUCTION TO WHY DANCE?

The history of dancing goes back to the dawn of humankind and has been used in celebrations, entertainment, story telling, rituals, sexual attraction, war and spirituality to name but a few of its applications.

There are many contemporary dance forms which can be traced back to historical, traditional, ceremonial, and ethnic dances such as the salsa with its emphasis on sensual moves to the various traditional Indian styles including Bhangra, Gidda, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri with their emphasis on fun, celebration and technical mastery.

In modern times dancing is a medium mainly used for having fun, creating attraction, stress busting as well as a spiritual tool for expressing love for the divine.

## DANCING IN THE SUFI TRADITION

Before we explore the teachings of the Sikh tradition with regards to dancing it is useful to have an understanding of the precursors to Sikhi which include both the Sufi tradition and the Bhakti movement of Hindu dharma.

The mystical Sufi tradition is famous for its turning meditation which is still practiced by the Dervishes of the Mevlevi order. The purpose of the dance is to create a state of being in which the dervish becomes a lover of all humankind.

Mevlâna Jalâluddîn [Rumi](#) says, "All loves are a bridge to Divine love. Yet, those who have not had a taste of it do not know!"

## DANCING IN THE BHAKTI TRADITION

Similar to Sufism, a new manner of 'praying' swept across India in the 15th century A.D. For the first time, ordinary men and women expressed their 'devotion' to god, through simple

lyrics, group singing and dance. This was a big change from the ritualistic practices of earlier times.

Devotion to the legend of Radha-Krishna spread like a fire across the length and breath of the land and Kathak was the main style of dance used for the dance element in the prayer.

## DANCING IN THE SIKH TRADITION

The Sikh tradition is the culmination of the Bhakti (devotion) movement in India which included both the Sufi tradition from Islam and the Bhakti tradition of Hindu dharma.

In the Punjabi Sikh community it is unusual to find dance incorporated into worship in a formal environment such as a Gurdwara and is instead used mainly within celebrations and festivities. In contrast you will find dance as an integral part of worship in the Sindhi community who also follow the teachings of Guru Nanak.

Modern trends in the Sikh tradition have included the use of bhangra and bollywood music in dance classes aimed at physical fitness and at the end of kundalini yoga classes to help redistribute kundalini energy throughout the body.

The Sikh holy scripture, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji refers to dance and dancing in six different contexts which we explore below.

### (1) Metaphor for the Game of Life

Our living in the world is sometimes referred to as the dance of life and when we do not follow truth, our dance in life only results in pain and suffering.

*"For the sake of Maya, they set the stage and dance, but they are in love with duality, and*

*they obtain only sorrow."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.122)

However when we develop a relationship with God our dance with reincarnation, mortality and sorrow comes to an end.

*"Says Nanak, one who meets with the True Guru, does not have to dance the dance of reincarnation again."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.884)

### (2) Loving Devotion is Key

Sikh philosophy teaches that dancing on its own will not create a divine union with God. However any form of prayer or meditation incorporating devotion of the heart will yield the Naam i.e. a joining with the universe.

*"For the Gurmukh, loving devotional worship is the way to the True Lord. But the dances and the worship of the Hypocrites bring only pain."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.364)

When we are devoid of loving worship then anything we do including eating, creating wealth, drinking, laughing etc all create negative karma for us.

*"Eating, drinking, playing, laughing and showing off -what use are the ostentatious displays of the dead?"* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.188)

### (3) Heavenly Beings Dance

Sikh philosophy teaches that there are many angelic beings and demi-gods which dance at the door of the eternal being.

*"The angels, the Siddhas, the beings of spiritual perfection, the heavenly heralds and celestial singers meditate on You. The Yakhsha demons, the guards of the divine treasures, and the Kin-nars, the dancers of the god of wealth chant Your Glorious Praises."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.455)