

Spiritual Dancing

The earth, with the rocks that form the petrosphere, has practically no breath in the usual sense, although there is the faculty of occlusion. That is, the faculty by which a solid absorbs or adsorbs or “dissolves” quantities of gas for a limited period. Vegetation however, breathes. No doubt, in the daytime plants consume far more carbon dioxide as food than they give out in respiratory processes. Yet many people regard it unhealthy to have plants in their bedroom. For at night, the plant breathes as we do, and its presence then increases the quantity of noxious substance in the atmosphere.

From this point of view, it may be possible to study the relationship between the evolution of the nervous system, the respiration, and the faculties of animals, and even of plants. The ants, these seemingly most intelligent insects, have a complex and well developed breathing apparatus. This consists of a network of trachea or tubing extending through their bodies. By increasing the internal pressure, the animal can carry a weight beyond its own mass. This is really a type of physical yoga, and ants do possess yoga-like qualities. If man, the sluggard, went to the ant, he might learn from him how to carry greater weights. But he was not meant to be a super-ant or super-robot or even a super-moron. The Kingdom of Heaven is not to be gained by violence.

It is possible to enhance pneumatic breathing and draw in more air. And every change in the quality and quantity of respiration affects the psychic faculties and the mind. If we could increase inhalation, it would become easier to rise from the ground. Nijinsky was an adept in it, he became a psychical “glider,” almost a human balloon, but he lacked understanding. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, could walk on the water. The Holy Spirit, the Divine Breath, was a reality to him which he had learned to absorb. May it not be that the most refined breath, that of the Holy Spirit, which conveys the rarest vibrations of the cosmos, penetrates all things and connects us with all things and beings?

Here the dancing student would recognize increased facility through right breathing. But we are not to become ants; we are to walk in the light of Christ. The flesh does not have to be frail or weak. Divine vibrations with all their blessings are before us here and now. So the mystics teach that there is cosmic energy in the breath, and by right breathing one can increase in power (or Yang) and in refinement (or Yin). **He may even gain in both directions simultaneously.**

Through concentration and attunement, the breath may be directed to any part of the body, or mind. Agility with the fingers, grace of form and figure, skill in movement, strength to hold a pose, perseverance in effort, and unconscious memory of each phase of the dance can be gained through the right combination of meditation and refined, rhythmical breathing.

The understanding of rhythm and attunement will enable the dancer to discover the essence or “soul” of her art and her theme. By understanding is meant not something strictly mental, to be learned in an intellectual sense, but rather something to be comprehended practically, which is not apart from experience, or life. Little children learn by observing birds and animals. Then they cultivate the rhythms needed to portray suitable dances. If they are poor in observation, concentration will help them, yet good observation also helps the latter. And here we must bear in mind that each will execute his theme according to his nature. Just as artists, copying the same model, do not reproduce with exactitude.

When dancers, especially teachers, become interested in the deeper phases of breathing, both they and their art will prosper. They should not be afraid of the spiritual philosophy. Its teachers are not clergymen or philosophers. Besides, one cannot circumscribe the highways to Godliness. The

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Psalmist sang: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." We can recognize the divinity within and without. We can illustrate it in art and music. The sincere dancer is one of the best workers for universal harmony, and so, for universal peace.

Chapter 9 Heart Aspects

When the word “heart” is mentioned one may think of love, but, as has been explained in the section on the metaphysics of the dance, heart has other aspects or faculties which have been called feeling, intuition, and will. The cultivation of each of these may seem separate. Nevertheless, all will arise in the stout heart when the inner sun of life pours its rays upon the personality. As the physical sun has its rays, so the spiritual sun pours forth its rays, too. The physical sun offers us energy which we translate as light, heat, electromagnetism, etc. The radiations of the spiritual sun are endowed with life and living qualities.

When man attains to soul-realization or cosmic consciousness (see Paul Brunton’s works for details), or has the experience of the beatific vision, he discovers that life and love are one and identical. It is life from the standpoint of the receptive ego, and it is love from the standpoint of the radiating ego. That is to say, life through the “Mask” becomes love, and love without the “Mask” is life itself. This substance is **su generis** and is not affected by man’s logic concerning it.

Only the heart understands the heart, only the heart can heal the heart, only the heart can cure the heart. In spiritual concentration, the whole consciousness is focused upon heart that it may be awakened and its living qualities flood the personality. Love and pain, whether these be two or one, also effect the same end. The sun of love and life radiates from the heart, even in this abode of flesh. Its aura extends outward far beyond that aura seen by psychics. What they witness is more or less electro-magnetic and mental. The spiritual auras of Jesus Christ, Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, Gautama Buddha, and Mohammed, if we are to believe the records, were quite visible. The light from them poured forth with tremendous power and vitality.

The bodies of great sages and saints seem to become condensers for spiritual light in much the same way as material condensers act for electricity. Spiritual light emanates from the very Logos or spiritual sun, which is within us, though we know it not. It can supply such light that our very skins may reflect it. But this is the result of vast heart development. Those interested in occult phenomena can easily be deluded or delude others without attaining to real knowledge. The more cosmic the sphere of activity, the greater the reverence and devotion needed.

This radiant life-light-electricity is extended to every part of the body by the bloodstream which is the ocean of life turned inward and included in the physical vehicle of man. It is possible to activate this universal force until the covering of flesh becomes transmuted and is thereafter known as a **nirmanakaya**, or body not subjected to control by a personal mind.

Although we read about the **nirmanakaya** mainly in Buddhist literature, the knowledge of it helps to explain resurrection and illumination. Apparent miracles surrounding the lives of Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ, Kabir, and others fall into definite categories. What is supernatural is neither unnatural nor impossible. But the intellectual part of man, seeking to explain everything from its limited outlook, too often falls back upon a faith, more or less blind, or else seeks refuge in a skepticism still more blinding.

In the quadrupeds, the blood surges back and forth in the horizontal line of activity. But in man, **aner**, the upright one, the vital energy moves up and down a vertical plane. Mystically, man may be pictured as a creature standing between earth and heaven. In the book of Exodus he is first

a slave in Egypt, the land of darkened heart, or ego, where he is slave to his passions. Later, he is delivered and so can enter the land of Promise. He becomes a son of Israel, meaning the man who sees God. The whole Passover saga deals with the liberation of mankind, individually and collectively. And both the Hebrew and Christian teachings of spiritual deliverance at least vaguely indicate it is connected in some manner with the blood.

Those who have practiced heart-concentration have discovered that there is a greater absorption of vital energy within the body. Health and vigor may be enhanced. This energy is carried by the bloodstream to the centers, such as the brain and ductless glands, and there the faculties of the "soul" make their appearance. These organs seem to select those vibrations and qualities for which each was fashioned, until they become as living candles within the flesh. Together, they form the symbolic candlestick of the Scriptures. Then, phrases such as "fountain of living waters," etc., take on new meanings. There is brilliance to the eye, radiance to the skin. And then man proves the statement of Jesus Christ, "If thine eye be single (or simple) then thy body shall be full of light."

Devotion and meditation remove the covers over this light. But the devotion of the dancer need not be separate from her action. Here, every theme and performance can become sacrifices to the Supreme Deity. She need not repeat any special number called "sacred dance." Wherever there is love, wherever there is harmony, wherever there is beauty, there is Divinity. Love may come from the heart, harmony from the music, beauty from the movements. All life can be sacred, and to divide the spiritual from the non-spiritual may void both terms.

Love emphasizes "I am not" upon whatever plane we examine it. An artist-lover reveals that in his creations. A dancer should be deeply interested in her art. Commercialism has often overstressed monetary returns and so produced inner conflicts which force the artistic soul into a sort of "Egyptian" bondage. The introduction of propaganda into art has had even worse effects. For propaganda, no matter how worthy, is mental and emotional and contributes nothing to the aesthetic and spiritual. Every dance, every movement, "has a meaning of its own," but only the heart understands the communication of heart. We cannot truly translate heart-language into meaningful words any more than we can properly describe the sun by an examination of its rays or by a study of the color yellow.

The greater the interest of the dancer, the stronger her efforts, the more life automatically will rise in her heart, flow through her arteries, and manifest in her movements. The very space will seem to contain the pattern she must follow. Memory will no longer be a burden but will become a guiding light. The identity of dancer and dance is the surest sign of spirituality.

The teacher may instruct, may correct, may tell—the pupil must do. The teacher must be patient and regard pupils as tender flowers which will mature in due time. The dancer ought to be mentally receptive to her teacher, and yet feel her heart as if it was in command of all her movements. **This of itself is one of the paths to spiritual liberation.** We do not have to attach or exclude any philosophy or religion. We seek the life and life ever more abundant.

There is another aspect of heart and love. In it one has deep love for another, or for many persons, or a burning passion to please an audience. Then the divine spirit dances through man, whether it produces ecstasy or not. This association with God is superior to ecstasy, although few attain to it without the other experience, for we are too deeply buried in our ego-molds. When love is shared, life is shared. This is the true communion. Therefore, every effort to please or elevate others is spiritual, even though vanity be attached. Verily, saith the wise Solomon, all is vanity.

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If love seems to be the negative side of the spiritual sun (it is not, really), life is the positive side. Love removes the excrescences of ego. When these go, divinity manifests. Then come the blessings of longevity, health, and skill. Every breath will absorb blessings from the sphere. Life is movement, stillness is death. The dancer moves, for she is a living, throbbing, breathing being. Her perfection in her art is one fulfillment of the purpose of her life.

Let it be remembered that Miriam led her maidens in dance when Israel was delivered. Orpheus and Bacchus offered the religion of interior development through the dance. Coomaraswamy has written *The Dance of Siva*, which presents the Hindu viewpoint in this regard. And the Sufis, especially, have looked with favor upon the dance as a highway toward God, and that every movement in it can be endowed with holiness.

It might be that the heart is blessed with immortality or eternity. At least it can become a constant, pulsating source of life. Yogis avail themselves of this when they suspend animation and continue in their strange state. Is it life or death-in-life? We desire life-in-life, we seek the life abundant, we are willing to go to the threshold of ecstasy and to share its blessings.

How afraid we have become of this word "ecstasy"! It is associated more with phobias than with blessings. There seems to be a veritable storm of propaganda against it. The one who seeks it is selfish. He desires a private paradise, a personal nirvana! How puerile! Most of those who so contend have never tasted true joy. We ought to know our subject before we discourse upon it.

Yes, there is always a danger of making any temporary goal the aim of life. Yes, there is some confusion between recognition of the path to God and union with Him. Yes, there is an intoxication which, especially if one be weak, affords an escape mechanism for man. But look at the multitudes bound by their egos, by their personal limitations! For every person who has the least inkling about ecstasy, there may be a million, even many millions, who know nothing of it. What we first must learn is to stand outside of the limited self. Far more good has been accomplished by radio contests which require the entrants to forego the use of "I," "my," "we," and "our" than by the well meaning who warn us of the perils of something still in the far beyond.

Aye, to seek ecstasy for its own sake may be a selfish urge. Not to seek it is still more selfish when it means a turning back upon life and a continued attachment to our lower nature. "Happiness," said the mystic Whitman, "is an efflux of the soul." Millions of us were genuinely thrilled by Shangri-La in Hilton's *Lost Horizons*. We may have laughed at it, we may have cried, we may have sneered, we may have sighed—but we did react. We are still seekers after "The Blue Bird."

The kingdom of heaven is not far away; the kingdom is at hand. What is needed are practical methods by which it may be attained. The dance which delimits personality and encompasses space enables one to draw into the consciousness the fine qualities of the sun of the soul. The quivering, throbbing heart-center bursts into flame, and the whole being becomes illuminated. Then one is; his deity dominates his movements. His inner being dances, his outer being responds, and he becomes the servant, if not the very self, of the **Lord of the Dance**.

The Olympic Greeks said, "Many are the thyrsos-bearers, but few the Bacchoi." Christ said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." That was, and is, and ever may be true. But have not great poets told of that intoxication which is so deep, so enlivening, so masterful and all-compelling, that once drawn into it we can neither escape nor do we desire to? The experience of bliss can only

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awaken us and deepen our sensitivities and sensibilities. It should make us see far beyond our present vision in every sense of the word. It should lead us into channels of wisdom, compassion, and understanding.

We do not seek joy, we seek God. But by recognizing God as Perfect Beauty, it is natural that light, color, fine scenery and springtime freshness enter into our lives more and more. We want this to be a better world for ourselves and all. We do not want to escape anything; we would be better equipped to solve the problems that have been befuddling us. Rival intellectual schools sooner or later reach an **impasse**. The soul can pass beyond that.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

There was a Door to which I found no Key:
There was a Veil past which I could not see:
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There seemed—and then no more of Thee and Me.
—Omar Khayyam