

# Shall We Dance?

Dance for love, dance to forget. Dance to change, dance to stay the same. Dance to keep fit, dance to heal. This weekend, let your feet tap, let your hips sway, let your soul dance...

"It's magic!" says Sneha Sharma. "I loved dancing and imagine my joy when my parents got me enrolled for a salsa class." Walk into a salsa class and you are greeted by graceful hip movements and romantic Spanish songs, making you want to mambo that very moment. "However," says Sneha, "it's not as easy as it looks. It requires discipline, agility and a very fit body." When Sneha joined she was 10 kg overweight, today she's "just perfect".

"I used to judge people and get angry at the drop of the hat. I was unhappy. Three years of

“Dancing is about coordinating your body movement according to music, which is ultimately about concentration.

— Ranjana Gauhar  
Odissi dancer

dancing and all that has changed," says a happy Sneha. "I honestly did not even realise when and how I changed, until people around me noticed a difference and commented."

So wonderful has Sneha's experience been that she has encouraged her friends and family to join too. Sneha drew inspiration from a 48-year-old woman who would dance for the joy of dancing, without getting conscious. "She seemed so happy, so comfortable with herself. I thought to myself if she could do it, so could I." For Sneha, there is no downside to dancing. "There are so many forms. If one doesn't work for you, there are always others. If going to a class isn't your thing, all you need to do is switch on your music system and let your feet lead you!"

College student Zainab Sikander agrees.

“Dance is emotionally very fulfilling. Because, when you are dancing, you are expressing yourself, getting in touch with your inner self. It is very calming.

— Navtej Johar  
Bharatnatyam dancer

"Dancing isn't a miracle. You enjoy it so much that you end up de-stressing." Every time Zainab dances she feels refreshed, all her tensions escaping her. Ditto for 19-year-old Aradhana Khanna. "I started dancing six years ago," says she. "But I wasn't regular. I would dance on and off. It was only after my Class X Board examination that I really got into it." Since then, there has been no looking back for Aradhana. Like others her age, she goes to college and helps out with household chores, but

there is a difference—her maturity, her poise, her grace. "People say I'm too mature for my age. I usually laugh it off," says she. "We often think of dance as simple movements, without realising that its impact is much deeper," philosophises Aradhana.

Her reason to dance? "It brings a smile to my face, and when you smile you are happy. Happy people don't get stressed out!" Today Aradhana is the cultural head of her college, is doing well at academics and also works with an event management company. "Once I enter the studio, all worries get left behind. I know I don't need to think. I can depend on dancing. I know whenever I am upset or feeling low, all I have to do is dance." What's more, dance has brought Aradhana closer to her friends. "I love going out dancing with my friends—that's something that binds us."

For Rajat Vohra, 27, dancing has brought more than a smile to his face. "It has brought me joy, it has brought me my life." Rajat met his wife through dance. "If it weren't for dance, I guess I'd never have met her and life wouldn't have been the same." The reason why Rajat joined dancing was something else. "At that time, I was pursuing a career as a model. You need to be very fit to model. Dancing was my way of keeping fit." Dancing gave Rajat the opportunity to enjoy the workout. "One gets tired and bored of lifting weights, going for a jog, but you can never get bored of dancing." In Rajat's opinion, jazz dancing is similar to yoga. "In both, you stretch, maintain poses..." He adds, "Dance is a healer. If you dance, you don't need meditation, you don't need painkillers. Dancing releases endorphins, which work



like a magic wand. They de-stress you without any effort." The best part? "It's never boring!" Rajat believes that a dance class twice a week is all you need. "You actually start feeling fresh within 10 minutes of dancing. It really is my way to get over a hangover too!"

Dancer and choreographer Ashley Lobo agrees. "Dance is about internalisation, about connecting with yourself. Otherwise it is meaningless movement." Over the years Ashley has noticed a lot of change in his students. "The first sign is that they become positive. Then they start to live life to the fullest. There is a gradual progression." In his opinion, the discipline of dance helps a person discover himself; it is like a journey where you find your true self. "There are very few people who are unhealthy and happy. Dance, by making you fitter and healthier, instils a positive outlook to life."

“Dance helps a lot in shedding inhibitions. It helps in improving your body language, the way you talk, the way you walk.

— Nanda Kundu, salsa instructor

Dancing helps you be at peace with yourself. "Most important, it gives you the ability to pursue anything in the material world with ease, grace and certainty."

So what is dance? "Dance is about movement from within. Dance is really about removing blockages, about losing inhibitions," explains Ashley. So who is dance for? "Dance is for everyone. We all are born to dance. We are all born with dancing shoes." So, this weekend you know which shoes to put on!

## DANCE AS THERAPY

The theory underlying dance as therapy is that body movement reflects the inner state of the human. By moving the body in a guided therapeutic setting, a healing process begins. Dance therapy is the use of choreographed or improvised movements to treat social, emotional, cognitive and physical problems. Down the ages, across cultures, people have used dance to express powerful emotions, tell stories, treat illnesses, celebrate events and maintain communal bonds. Dance therapy harnesses the power of movement to promote personal growth, health and well-being.