

# SensingFeelingDancing the Chakra Dance movement exploration

**Maria Sangiorgi**



*Maria: dmt and esoteric healing certs., Egyptian dancer and teacher began her training in Egyptian Dance (Raqs Sharqi) in 1989. Her classes are called Embodied Bellydance, with a focus on body awareness, and workshops called SensingFeelingDancing the Chakras, the Dance of the Sensual Soul and Trance Dance. She is using Egyptian Dance within a dance movement therapy model when working with disability groups and women in prison. She is also a visual and performing artist and member of the Middle Eastern music and dance group, Yalla! and The Sanctuary Ensemble, a Sufi inspired group. She is passionate about facilitating the dance journey for all those who attend her sessions. (See [www.dancingisis.com](http://www.dancingisis.com))*

I began to facilitate SensingFeelingDancing the Chakras in weekly workshops towards the end of 2003. My inspiration first came from my many years of study and practice of Traditional Egyptian dance and other Middle Eastern Dance forms. The deeper I went into this dance the more I felt a deep connection to what I believe to be the primary source of movement that is intrinsic to all indigenous dance styles across the globe: the shapes that are common to all of nature and to the movements of the universe and our DNA. I also felt that the movement of this dance: the flow through the pelvis the vibrating of the legs and hips, the celebration of life; where physical expressions of the path of the Kundalini and the Energy centres or Chakras supported me; that flow of energy had a healing affect on me. I have

felt a deep spiritual connection to dance and movement that is intuited and often have a sense of being part of something very ancient and sacred.

During those years I was also a part of a dance and movement research group. This group began in 1986 when the dance group that I was a part of then, called The Snake Sisters, decided that we wanted to deepen our relationship to movement. We found Jane Refshauge; she introduced us primarily to Alexander Technique, Body Mind Centering, and Idiokinesis. As we deepened our connection to movement and studied how all of these modalities enriched our formal dance practices, we felt the need to work with other movers. We changed the focus to a research group and invited others to join us. We then shared the facilitating and explored Feldenkrais and Authentic Movement, Egyptian dance, Ritual dance, and the work of Rudolph Laban, to name a few.

Originally I called SensingFeelingDancing the Chakras, Raqs Chakra. Raqs means "Dance" in Arabic. In Egypt their dance is commonly called Raqs Baladi. Baladi means "of the people". The name reflects how important dance is to people's lives. This is not just a dance for women, as is commonly thought by Westerners, it is a dance for all. In saying this it is the women who are the primary performers of this dance as entertainment. An Egyptian will say that you hear the music through the movement of the dancer. A good dancer will be able to connect to every instrument, every feeling and every nuance in her dance.

Spatially, Raqs Baladi is made up of circles, waves and spirals that move through an axis. These mimic the double helix of DNA, the spiraling structure of our bones and muscles, the spiraling nature of the universe and the weaving and spinning of the Energy Centre or Chakric centres of our bodies. As I deepened my knowledge of Egyptian dance I was led to explore the possible connections between the spiraling patterns of Raqs Baladi and the Energy flow of the Chakric System. This is how I began to develop my relationship between the Raqs and the Chakras.

Raqs Baladi and the Chakric system both move energy up and down the spine. I believe that the movements of Raqs Baladi physically express the Chakric system. There is a central axis which supports a weaving from where energy moves from the left to the right, the same as the weaving of the Left and the Right Channels which represent the masculine and feminine. Raqs also moves forward and back. In each centre there are wheels of energy that spin or spiral, and these centres drive the curves, circles and spirals that are Raqs Baladi. The deeper I go into these two modalities and bring them together the deeper I feel that a force greater than myself propels me. I come away feeling uplifted, I come away enquiring, and I come away with a variety of strong emotions, sad, happy, ecstatic. Whatever it is I am always affected.

Through the exploration of Body Mind Centering and Navel Radiation I developed a way of teaching Egyptian dance that begins with the navel as the primary source of movement. Every movement either moves through or is driven by the navel. I call the navel the driver but it is not the external front navel: it is what I call the "Spine-navel". This is a point behind the navel and in front of the spine. This point is moved by the expansion and contraction of the abdominal muscles aided by deep diaphragmatic breathing. From this place the wave of energy undulates through the spine and pushes up and down the spine. All movements in Egyptian dance are supported by this energy pattern.

The Chakras are energy centres located in various parts of the body. The seven main centres are located along the spine beginning at the tailbone and ending at the top of the head. These seven Chakras also relate to the endocrine system. I will now offer you a brief description of the function of each Chakra that is by no means complete or the sum total of what each energy centre governs or expresses.

The Base Chakra, known as the Muladhara Chakra, is governed by adrenal glands located at the base of the kidney. Adrenalin is what drives us to move forward; to take action; our fight or flight instinct. It also rules the skeletal system, primarily the spine. We make a commitment to stand and be present on the earth. To do this we need to be grounded; we need to have a strong sense of security and of self. The will to be here, the will to live, the will to be born. The Base Chakra's element is earth and its colour is red. This is the seat of the Kundalini which over time and a deep commitment to meditation and self awareness and a clearing of all the centres rises to

a state of enlightenment. To do so prematurely is dangerous. "The Base Chakra houses the Kundalini 'fire', which rises up the spine after all the Chakras have become activated and vitalised. It can be raised prematurely by unwise meditation practices, such as concentrating for long periods on the lower Chakras or through the use of hallucinogenic drugs: if this happens serious health problems can result" (Judy Jacka, p. 58, *Synthesis in Healing*, 2003).

Then we move up to the second Chakra, the Svadhisthana or Sacral centre. The ovaries in women and testes in men govern it. We meet the need to unite with another to create relationship. This is also the centre of joyful innocence and playfulness of a small child, the seat of pleasure, which can be sexual, or the pleasure of eating. It is also abundance and the wise use of money. Its element is water and colour is orange.

Above the Sacral centre is the Solar Plexus centre; the pancreas governs the Manipura. We are looking for the sweetness in our lives. This is the seat of our emotions and feelings. How we digest what is given to us in life. It also rules our desires, wants and needs. This is the 'I' centre. This is the last of the Physical chakras. Its element is fire and colour yellow. On a global level the evolution of the human race is at this level. We are challenged by greed and selfishness and we are on the brink of great change to either evolve to the Heart consciousness or to destroy the earth, as we know it.

Next is the heart centre; the Anahata. This is governed by the thymus gland. It is the seat of unconditional, and transpersonal love. We open ourselves without judgment of others or ourselves; we have left the physical realm and are moving into the higher plane of the spiritual realm. We are now also beginning to balance the lower three Chakras with the higher ones. The Heart is balanced by the Solar Plexus and manifests as Wisdom and Love. Its colour is green and element is air.

The Throat centre, called the Visuddha Chakra, is governed by the thyroid and para thyroid glands. This is the seat of communication, both inner and outer, and forgiveness; the words that we speak but also the voice of silence, the expression of ideas and making creative contributions to our life. It also governs the senses, touch, smell, taste etc. The Throat is paired with the Sacral centre and manifests as creative intelligence. Its colour is blue and element is ether.

Next is the Third Eye, called the Ajna centre and governed by the pituitary gland. It is the conductor of all energy centres. It helps to integrate the personality by gathering energy from all the spinal centres and focusing them in the head area to synthesise them into a whole. It rules our inner and outer vision. It provides access to the mediative state and transcendental experiences, and is the door to inner peace. Its colour is indigo and element is light.

And finally the thousand-petal lotus; the Crown Centre called the Sahasrara. This is governed by the pineal gland. Here we have reached our spiritual home having travelled the road from the earthly connection of the base Chakra through all the personalities of each to the seat of enlightenment. We are at one with God or the Universe. The Crown Centre is balanced with the Base Chakra to create Spiritual Will. The colour is violet to white light and the element is thought.

I presented at the conference a very condensed version of the Solar Plexus Chakra dance. So little time was challenging, but it was well received and there was enough time to experience the essence of what it was about.

I chose this Chakra because it feels to me to be the beginning. Before we are bones (Base Chakra), before we touch the earth, stand on our feet, we are navel/belly; we are attached to our mother in utero via our umbilical cord and everything forms around it. It is the instinctual place, our gut feeling the “I am” of which the breath plays an intrinsic role.

I asked the participants to lie down and to connect to their breath. As they did this I asked them to feel the support of the floor, to validate their bones and soften and release them. I proceeded with a guided visualisation to connect each Chakra to the Solar Plexus. I then asked them to connect to their navel and breath so that as they breathed in the navel rose, and as they breathed out, it fell.

I began the movement process by using various images such as being a balloon full of water that was being rolled by another, feeling the water tipping from one side to another, or one end to another. I find this to be a very effective way to engage the whole physical and mental body very quickly. I then asked them to come back to the breath and navel.

The process deepened into creating a connection to expanding and contracting, with the belly/navel as the centre or the motor that drives the

movement. From here I asked them to include their limbs, head and tail. I used Didgeridoo music for this, as it is deep and earthy. The circular breathy drone that the Didgeridoo makes seems to help the connection to gravity, and to focus and not to rush. I began to call out phrases, beginning with “What do I want, what do I need?” Then as I began to give different themes for movement, I began to change the music. The predominant theme was expanding and contracting, opening and closing to feel the support of the Solar Plexus. As the music became more rhythmic and trance like, and got faster and faster, so did the dance. Another phrase I used was “I can feel it in my gut”.

I ended the process with time for the movers to consolidate by drawing and writing, finishing in a feedback circle where I asked each person to share their process using three words.

I was delighted and privileged to have a room of movers who were completely engaged in what they were doing. If only all dance movement sessions could be like this, where the participants are so responsive, causing me to become much more intuitive in the moment.

In conclusion, I feel that everyone went away with something - they moved in a different way and were touched by the experience.



**Maria's Chakra Image**

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**We thank all the presenters who put so much time and thought into their conference presentations as well as the papers above (Eds).**

