

# FEEL THE RHYTHM

by Dujanah Descartes



It is known by many names – North African Dance, Dance of the East and Turkish Dance, to name several. To most Americans it is known as the Belly Dance, but for women who have made it a notable part of their lives, it's known as much more than a dance; it is a serious art form and an exhilarating experience. It is a source of power and healing.

Those who advocate this dance for its mental and physical health benefits categorize it as the epitome of feminine rhythm – the one dance that brings women in touch with their core being, their womanly identity and their earth energy.

This is the rhythm that fosters self-awareness and a positive self-image for women. "Belly dancing is a dance form in which femininity and spirituality become one," writes Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi in her book, *Grandmother's Secrets – The Ancient Rituals and Healing Power of Belly Dancing*. It is a dance enjoyed by Muslim women across the world, especially in North Africa and the Middle East. Dr. Amina McCloud of DePaul University points out that in Sahih Muslim *abadith* it is related that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, allowed dancing during celebrations and took his wife, Ayesha, to see the dance and sports of the Abyssinians.

**Khalidah Kali** has visited over 30 countries, performed Hajj twice and is passionate about the benefits of North African Dance. She also works as a licensed court reporter for the state of Illinois and volunteers as a feeder for chronically ill newborns at Chicago's LaRabida Children's Hospital.

# Circulation Stimulation Assimilation



It's the ultimate in feminine fitness," she declares.

With its low impact movements, women don't risk injury to their body or female organs. Furthermore, each movement has a health benefit associated with it as body parts are moved in isolation with great control. Some moves are particularly designed to cleanse and caress the womb. With tiny quivering in the chest, dancers stimulate circulation to their breasts and send blood and energy to their lungs and the cells of the chest. Hip contractions and the quivering motions of the pelvis help to cleanse the birth canal.

Heralded as the cure for other ailments including stiff joints, bad posture, low energy, stress, fibroids, cramps and Pre-Menstrual Syndrome, this dance focuses on five divisions of the body: the head, breast, belly, pelvis and back. Specific dance moves stimulate organs connected to these five body centers and restores their health and energy. For example, make a circle or figure eight with your abdomen and you stimulate your stomach, intestine, spleen, kidneys, gallbladder, liver and more. This is stimulation you don't get with regular exercises.

"I tell my students, stimulation, circulation, assimilation – mind, body, soul," lists Khalidah. "Free your body in order to clear your mind." She relates how drumming and dancing were used in ancient days to cleanse the body, mind and spirit of blocked energy and stagnant emotions. This dance promotes relaxation and the elimination of toxins and stress and so it is good for the brain and body, as well as, for the spiritual part of us.

## DANCE MOVEMENT

Head, Shoulder, and Pelvic Movements

Head Circles, Head Swings

Shoulder shimmy, Ribcage Lifts

Arm Waves and Movements

Belly Rolls, Hip Figure 8's, Hip Double Circles

Fluttering Diaphragm Movements

Torso waves

Hip swings and variations

Hip Circle

## BODY PART STRENGTHENED

Brain, Brainstem

The Back

Breast, Thoracic cavity

Lungs, Heart

Pancreas, Stomach, Kidney, Liver

Peritoneum, Gallbladder, Spleen, Small and Large Intestines, Abdominal Cavity, Solar Plexus

Spine, Nervous System

Bladder, Female Organs, Sigmoid Colon

Rectum

*Note: The pelvis actually supports the whole body. Each movement is therefore dependent on the flexibility of the pelvic joints.*

*(Two columns above from excerpt from "Grandmothers Secret" book.)*

