

The Divine Dance:

A Call to Live in Harmony with the Values of Love, Justice, Peace, and Compassion

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Introduction of the book 'Dance with God for a Sustainable World', written by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu and Dr. Anne Susan Koshy, which will be released by the end of October 2024.

Classical dance, in many cultural and spiritual traditions, is often seen as more than just an art form; it is a physical manifestation of the rhythm of life and the divine. In this sense, classical dance can be viewed as aligning with God's will. The precise movements, disciplined practice, and deep connection to music in classical dance, can be viewed as a form of meditation—a way to embody the harmony and order inherent in creation. When approached with reverence, classical dance becomes a sacred act, reflecting the cosmic dance that invites us to live in alignment with the divine values such as love, justice, peace, and compassion. Through the dance, one can experience and express the deeper spiritual rhythms that resonate with God's will and the universe's natural order.

During my studies at Annamalai University, I visited the Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, where I witnessed the deity of Shiva as depicted in the dance form known as Nataraja. According to Hindu mythology, Nataraja dances at the centre of the Universe, with all of the creation moving in harmony with him. In 'The Tao of Physics', Fritjof Capra, relates the dance of Nataraja to the cosmic dance, highlighting its profound connection to the rhythms of the universe. Fritjof Capra's 'The Tao of Physics' draws fascinating parallels between quantum mechanics and the holistic worldview of Eastern philosophies. Capra's work reveals the deep interconnectedness of the universe, where everything—from atoms and molecules to stars and galaxies—participates in a cosmic dance. This dance is a symbolic, rhythmic, dynamic expression of the universe, moving in a delicate balance. When this rhythm is in harmony, everything moves in order; when disrupted, chaos ensues.

In writing this book, I seek to relate the "dance of nature," where every element in the universe moves in harmony with a divine rhythm—a theme that profoundly resonates with Jesus' teachings. There is a profound acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of all life. Jesus spoke of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, emphasising how they are nurtured by the same divine force that governs the entire universe.



Jesus's teachings emphasised that for a successful life, one must follow the rhythm of nature. Living in harmony with creation, humanity can find true peace and fulfilment, which is a true reflection of the divine order established by God.

The dance, a rhythmic, dynamic expression of the universe itself, is beautiful. Jesus observed and understood the natural rhythms of life, such as the changing seasons, the cycles of day and night, and the growth of seeds. These rhythms reflect a more profound, cosmic order that governs all life, instilling a sense of structure and balance. The concept of the "dance of nature," where every element in the universe—stars, planets, plants, animals, and even humans—moves in harmony with this cosmic rhythm, is truly inspiring. This dance is not random but follows a divine order, which Jesus recognised and taught through his parables.

Our religious imagination sees God as a grave old man with long hair and beard. Our favourite image of Jesus is hanging on the Cross. Fr. M. Amaladoss SJ, in his essay on JESUS THE DANCER, suggests that the image of Jesus, in an Asian context, could be that of a dancer. Jyoti Sahi is a renowned Indian Christian artist, theologian, and writer known for his work that bridges Christian themes with Indian cultural and spiritual traditions. Sahi has made significant contributions to the world of sacred art, focusing on integrating Indian aesthetics and Christian iconography. Jyoti Sahi has painted and sculpted many images of the Risen Christ, such as dancing. He explains that dancing is celebrating the body and discovering a new kind of freedom that is spirit-filled. The spirits can chain the body, making it a prison. But the spirit of life can liberate the body and convert it into an instrument of joy. The healed person leaps for joy, and this leap into the future is the essence of dance.

Sara Grant (1922–2002) was a prominent British Roman Catholic nun and theologian known for her work in interfaith dialogue, particularly between Christianity and Hinduism. She was a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSCM). She spent much of her life in India, engaging intensely with Indian philosophy and spirituality. Grant was also known for her involvement in the ashram movement in India, which sought to create spaces



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where Christian and Hindu practices could be integrated, fostering a shared spiritual life. She lived in the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Pune, where she practised a life of contemplation, simplicity, and dialogue with local Hindu scholars and practitioners. The term 'Lord of the Dance' used by Sara Grant refers to Nataraja – dancing Shiva. But she interprets it as a name for Jesus, the word incarnate.

If Jesus is a dancer, God is also a dancer. Regarding us, God's dance starts with creation. All through the process of creation, God is playing. In the Christian context, mainly through the teachings of Jesus, this idea can be explored as an invitation to align with the divine rhythm that permeates all of creation. Through his forty days of life in the wilderness, Jesus came to deeply understand the rhythm of nature, which mirrored God's rhythm. He often spoke of this understanding during his ministry, teaching others to observe and learn from the natural world. "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow, is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?" Jesus's teachings emphasised that for a successful life, one must

follow the rhythm of nature. Living in harmony with creation, humanity can find true peace and fulfilment, which is a true reflection of the divine order established by God.

The Bible contains several references to dance, often associated with joy, celebration, worship, or even expressing deep emotions. Here are some key verses where the word "dance" is mentioned: "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.'" (Exodus 15:20-21). "David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might." (2 Samuel 6:14). "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." (Psalm 30:11). "Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp." (Psalm 149:3). "Praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe." (Psalm 150:4). "I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again, you will take up your timbrels and dance with the joyful." (Jeremiah 31:4). "A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." (Ecclesiastes 3:4). "When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of timbrels! She was an only child. Except for her, he had neither son nor daughter." (Judges 11:34). These verses highlight how dance is used in the Bible as an expression of worship, joy, and celebration. The New Testament does not mention dance as frequently as the Old Testament. However, there is one notable reference. "When Jesus played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." (Matthew 11:17, Luke 7:32). This verse is part of a more significant passage in which Jesus describes the people's reactions to John the Baptist and Himself, pointing out that they neither rejoiced with the good news nor mourned with the call to repentance. The reference to dancing here is symbolic, illustrating a lack of response to

joyful and solemn occasions.

Jesus' parables often called his listeners to a way of life that resonates with the kingdom of God—a realm where divine harmony and balance reign. This can be understood as an invitation to participate in the cosmic dance, where nature's rhythm and the divine's movement are intimately connected.

The Kingdom of God as the Divine Dance:

As Jesus described, the kingdom of God is not a static place but a dynamic reality where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. It is a realm where justice, peace, and love prevail—a reflection of the divine harmony that underlies all creation. This kingdom can be seen as the ultimate expression of the cosmic dance, where all creation moves in sync with the divine will.

Jesus' parables often invite listeners to enter this kingdom by aligning their lives with its values. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) teaches the importance of compassion and love, which are essential aspects of participating in the divine dance. By living according to these principles, one joins in the rhythm of the kingdom, contributing to the harmony and balance it represents.

The spiritual dimension of the cosmic dance invites individuals to recognise the divine rhythm that underlies all of creation and to align their lives with it. Jesus' parables and teachings often point toward this divine dance, encouraging his followers to live in harmony with the kingdom of God. By participating in the rhythms of nature and embracing the spiritual practices that attune us to the divine, we can join in this cosmic dance, experiencing the fullness of life that comes from being in sync with the Creator.

Jesus' invitation to enter the kingdom of God is an invitation to join the divine dance—a call to live in alignment with the values of love, justice, peace, and compassion. This kingdom is not a distant reality but a present possibility, accessible to those who choose to live in harmony with God's will. By observing and participating in the natural rhythms around us, we can draw closer to this kingdom. Whether through acts of kindness, caring for the earth, or simply being present in the moment, these small actions are steps in the dance of life, bringing us closer to communion with the divine.

Embrace the invitation to join the dance and discover the profound peace and joy of living in rhythm with the universe. ●

Fritjof Capra's work reveals the deep interconnectedness of the universe, where everything—from atoms and molecules to stars and galaxies—participates in a cosmic dance. This dance is a symbolic, rhythmic, dynamic expression of the universe, moving in a delicate balance. When this rhythm is in harmony, everything moves in order; when disrupted, chaos ensues.