

# *Ten Keys to Dancing*

by Wali Ali Meyer

1. Listen. Do not simply recite the sacred phrase. Listen to the other voices. Listen to the person directing the Dance. When you begin to listen, your voice will automatically begin to harmonize. Find the center of the sound.
2. Feel. The Dances are designed to take us more and more into the universe of feeling. Stay with your feeling. If you go off into the world of thoughts, don't judge yourself; simply bring your concentration back to feeling. The heart center, found in the middle of the chest, is the natural place to begin.
3. Concentrate on the sacred phrase. The sacred phrase centers the Dance. We say this together. The grace of Allah can operate through the sacred phrase if we are willing to receive it, to let it be. With each repetition feel the phrase touching your being in a deeper and deeper way.
4. Simple, rhythmic music can be a great aid. Guitar and drum are especially helpful. Musicians should emphatically resist going off on their own. The sacred phrase must be uppermost in their concentration. The music should accentuate the natural rhythm of the sacred phrase. Drummers need to bear this in mind. The simpler the better. Don't dominate the space. The sacred phrase should by far be the loudest sound. If you play your instrument correctly, no one will even notice you. Isn't that wonderful!
5. Move together. Restrain the exuberant impulse to make an individual expression. You will be amazed how much higher and deeper the Dances are when you use that same energy to harmonize with the others in the circle. Feel your body fully. Then gradually or suddenly become the whole circle.
6. Watch your breath. Breath is life. Breath is movement. Voice is breath. Let breath breathe. Return to awareness of breath in silence between Dances. Notice the subtle changes in breath brought about by each Dance.
7. These Dances can lead to states of ecstasy. Joyously invigorating! In Dances where you are brought to the center of the circle, especially soar. But soar with your whole being. Taste all planes at the same time. If your feet are grounded on the earth then your head can be in the heavens.
8. Devotion. This is a grace. To willingly submit ourselves to Allah/God in whom we live and move and have our being. Hypocrisy may be the only sin. How wonderful it is when we actually feel like bowing in humility before the eternal truth. These Dances can be worship: the celebration of the Divine Presence. The Sufis call this Akhlak Allah-acting as if in the presence of Allah; and knowing that even if you don't see Allah, verily Allah sees you.
9. Amin. This means "so be it." We say this at the conclusion of many Dances. (Other phrases such as the Sanskrit "Svaha" are also used.) The important thing is not to say it, but to mean it, to affirm with one's whole being.
10. Silence. As the sound and music of the Dance stop, enter the silence. This is your opportunity to hear what has been created. In this silence one can absorb the qualities evoked during the Dance. This is the most important part of the Dance. It becomes all encompassing.