

## The Dream of the Silk Worm.

From the tiny spiral orbit of a silk worm comes the dreams of silk, dreams of the garments worn by Emperors, the carpets of Persia, the weddings of generations and now the dancers of the new Middle Eastern movement in the West whose dance with the veil is becoming an art form in itself as dancers discover their own creative orbit with silk veils.

Not long ago the veil was seen as a mere embellishment to the performance and dancers would usually twirl a few times with the veil then discard it but more and more dancers are discovering the veil to be an instrument in itself capable of an infinite number of subtle and sophisticated motions, that create a magical illusion of worlds opening into worlds.

The veil in history has been a double-edged symbol of rapture and ecstasy, provocative sensuality and the femme fatale and seen through the masculine perspective a symbol for the sacrifice of control so that one may experience ecstasy. There is a story of Moses having to cover his face with a veil after he had talked with God since his face was so illumined that he feared it would scare his people. There are the myths of Innana and Ishtar, of Babylon and Sumeria, whose descent into the underworld, after their lover, requires them vanquish a layer of cloth at each one of the seven gates. Oscar Wilde made famous Salome whose dance of the seven veils brought her the head of John the Baptist. This crossing into different worlds, ecstasy and the sacrifice of reason has made the veil a beautiful evocation of our inherent need for experience and connection beyond the ordinary.

In the dance with the veil, the fusion of color, light, the air, the breath, the music one goes beyond the ordinary world to a place where emotion and imagination weave a dance. The way the veil catches the air in its lightness and responds to our every move, it as if the invisible realm enters the veil to become our dance partner. This sense that the veil is alive and responsive quickly pulls away our attention from anything else and gradually we are so involved in the dance that people who dance with the veil often don't want to stop. The beauty is the veil gives birth to freedom of expression.

Apart from the techniques of Middle Eastern dancers whose work with the veil has developed a beautiful art of conjuring the mystery of dance I have seen people all over the West, dancers and non dancers, whose dance has been freed from self-consciousness, from shyness and allowed to blossom into a very joyous experience of movement and sound. The veil can take you beyond technique into a moment by moment feast of new sensation and movement.

In dance classes, schools, hospitals and theaters across the West the silk veil is becoming a way for people to dance without technique, to use dance that promotes healing and creativity. I have heard of physical therapists teaching veil with 80 year old veterans, of teachers doing veil with children and they tell me of how much the veil has brought their students positive changes.

Sufi Master Adnan Sarhan uses the veil as a moving meditation in his workshops. As a compliment to deep spiritual work the veil marries play and spirit into dynamic movement allowing the veil to be a joyous playful dance and a deeply meditative connection with the

moment. Traveling with him I have seen so many people in his workshops discover a joyous and creatively fertile relationship with dancing with the veil.

Rarely have I seen so many different people so energized and happy from working with the veils in his workshops.

When I began to dance my body would freeze with self-consciousness. Imagining that people were looking at me and judging me was suffocating the movement and the joy of moving. With the veil an opportunity to be free of this was given and the focus to keep the veil afloat and moving opened and continues to open an expanding relationship with movement, timing, space, color, emotion, concentration and music. Every time with the veil is an adventure. So much of our culture is trained to relate to everything material and to give reason, intellect, pre-devised movement all attention.

The silk veil is like a dream. It becomes the dream that awakens our relation to space, time, grace, feeling, and breath. Like the dream of the silk worm whose small whirling motions weave a silky substance, the dreams of the silk veil begin to unwind the cocoons of consciousness that veil us from the experience of being butterflies in the garden of our existence.

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