

Moving in the Infinite

by *Carola Stieber*



Paramjyoti (Carola Stieber), photo by Waroonrat Potpanlert

The desire for truth in the guise of dance

A portrait of my life with dance and my artistic work called Infinite.dance

Dance has become my spiritual practice, the food for my soul, the instrument, with which I can communicate on all levels, the tool to open my awareness beyond the ordinary perception. Enabling me to see and hear, connect and become one with that which moves through all of life.

It is a dance which has little to do with my personal self yet the personal self has its play in it.

As I stand listening deeply to what lies before every note and every movement dance emerges. This is where the musician and the dancer's inspiration unite. It is where "the other" merges together with the vanishing "I" into pure consciousness.

What does the practice look like?

The main tool in my approach to sacred dance is to connect the breath with each movement, which itself is connected to whatever arises in the mind, including all thoughts and feelings. In free movement, tuned to the heart, the dance unfolds to each practitioner accurately according to where they are, always providing the appropriate next step.

Gradually as issues of bodily sensations, emotions, ideas, stories and concepts become washed away into the *dance of the heart*, the mind loses its grip on them, gets more quiet and gives way to mere presence. What remains is one hundred percent life potential available to be moved by the great spirit.



Paramjyoti Carola Stieber, Photo by Beatrice Williams

Being close to the 20th anniversary of my work with sacred dance, allow me to offer a review of what has been unfolding.

My first dance teacher Karin Hermes Sunke coached me for a professional career when I was still in school. Right after graduating, she sent me off to New York City, in order to jump right into the professional dance arena. The professional dance studies I embraced were in the Dance Academy AHK Amsterdam. In the second year I had an injury. This incident put me on track to make me understand and research even deeper, along with my abilities, talents and true interest, what dance meant and held for me.

After graduation I engaged in studies of spiritual practices of different traditions. A deep yearning made me search for my own expression of dance and finally, *Devadasi – Dance of the Heart*, my practice of sacred dance was invented in February 2002.

From an inner desperate call for guidance, one of the first projects emerged, *Dance in the houses of God*. It took about four years from conception until I actually found myself dancing within Christian church services and eventually also in holy celebrations of other religions. My journey with sacred dance at that time was called ***Dance of the Heart***. My approach was to engage in an intimate and honest inner dialogue between my personal self and a broader sense of self, while opening up to a third party, the audience. Very similar to my approach as a pujaree (Priestess in Hindu tradition).

Years later I understood that by dancing in places which are consecrated to the sacred, its ceremonies and communities, I brought back a feminine element both to me as well as to the worship: the female prayer, with and in body, heart and soul. I added the name *Devadasi* to my work, which is one of the original names for *temple dance* and its dancer in India. In history, it had by misconception and misuse become a synonym for temple prostitution. In contrary to this misperception ***Devadasi – Dance of the Heart*** and the film ***Moving into the Infinite***, which I actually produced years later, display what the original inspiration of temple dance is and offer a contemporary healthy example.

Moving into the Infinite narrates about the life of a contemporary temple dancer who follows the mysterious and unusual inner calling to “dance for God”. What this calling actually contains, is a life long, endless discovery and an invitation to get in touch with the unknown.

A highlight within my own tradition of sacred dance to me is the *Dance Ritual*. It was born, when once again, I faced an inner conflict as a performer. I was tired of the struggle to give it my all. Either people liked it or they did not. I felt it was too much one sided. The answer of what can be done came as I sat in Satsang with a spiritual master in India. Its form was born once I understood, that only when the individuals within an audience are encouraged to take a step forth, out of the crowd, all people in the audience get mutually involved into the *fire of truth* and something much more vivid and greater than a monologue can take place.

I asked the audience sit in a circle. Stepping into its center, being the dancer without any choreography, and exposed to all kinds of thoughts and feelings from the people around me, was like stepping into the arena of my greatest fears. What a teacher! What fruits of consciousness this practice offered to me, especially standing empty in front of individuals for whom I was about to dedicate an individual dance. Allowing whatever energy wants to rise, made me experience over and over again, that some greater force and knowingness was moving my limbs and body. It was like experiencing *darshan* (sanskrit meaning: seeing god) from within. In those individual dances, which serve as mirror reflections to the people who receive them, I discovered the lie of “*you and I*” and discovered that consciousness is all there is.



The form of the dance ritual is one of five pillars in the in my film's concept. The documentary called ***Moving into the Infinite*** became the culmination and summary of my life's research as a contemporary temple dancer. (www.infinite.dance/film) The film displays what the sacred means to me and reaches a broader audience bringing precious images of my travels to people with very different ways of life in far away countries who might otherwise not be able to catch those glimpses and insights.

Ninety events throughout the arena of the German art house cinema throughout the first half of 2019 culminated with the nomination of my film in *Cosmic Cine Film Festival* and the DVD production in 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic its international distribution could not take place with accompanying celebration of live events and a tour. Yet from a silent and honest heartfelt word of mouth it keeps on traveling from individuals to groups and communities, from one land to another, by DVD and VOD so far. How lovely it would be if it were to find international distribution on a broader scale soon.

Rounding off the film production and giving birth to my new website, a new name and an inner *next step* was given, that serves as an umbrella, comprising my offer as a dancer, dance facilitator and film director/producer/distributor: **Infinite.dance**

Infinite.dance is an artistic and spiritual practice in music and dance for individuals, groups and the collective. Emphasis is on connecting with your own heart, from heart to heart and one culture and religion to another.

I am yearning to engage even deeper into the research and practice of sacred dance by myself, with individuals and in groups and to celebrate the continuously fresh discovery of the unchanging.

In my experience, dance can open endless doors for us.

Where I am and my outlook for the future:

It is my continuous joy and honour to offer the gifts I have been given to others. Workshops for groups, coaching for individuals and building community currently takes place mostly virtually. Dance labs and gatherings with sacred music and dance shall take place again also physically, lasting for several days each. My vision is eventually to be able to offer a physical Sanctuary; a place for those who want to dive deep into the studies, research and practice of **Devadasi – Dance of the Heart** and **Infinite.dance**.

Anybody who feels drawn to contribute to or join *Infinite.dance* in any way, by dancing with us, arranging a workshop, organising an event, holding a cinema screening, supporting the films international distribution, finding our sanctuary for us, support us by sponsoring or any back stage aid is welcome. Let's see what this unfolding adventure holds for us!

Please mark in your calendar: 2nd of February 2022. The 20th anniversary of **Devadasi – Dance of the Heart** and **Infinite.dance**

We plan to have a physical as well as virtual event, making sure that friends from all around the globe will have a chance to join us!

Paramjyoti Carola Stieber
Dancer and Director – Paramjyoti Carola Stieber;



She graduated from the Academy of Theatre and Art at the Art University in Amsterdam with a diploma in modern stage dance. In 2002 she founded her own school for movement, dance and awareness: Devadasi – dance of the heart. Since founding her school 15 years ago, she has taught and danced in 20 countries. During this period she organized charitable and, above all, community-oriented events in which she brought people from different cultures and spiritual traditions together with music, dance and celebrations. She devoted the last four years of her life to the creation of her film, Im Spiegel Deines Dass, (Moving into the Infinite) the culmination of her dedication to dance, meditation, peace work, community building and spiritual practice.

“The ground of unknowingness where the rose always blooms”
Rumi

Website: <https://infinite.dance>
Boutique: <https://infinite.dance/film/boutique/>
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/infinitedance>
Facebook Artist: <https://web.facebook.com/paramjyoti.stieber/>
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