

"Everyone Calls Me The Jane Fonda Of India"

By [Hilary Walke](#) | May 15, 2009



Sarina Jain, the original creator of the Indian folk dance called Masala Bhangra, says that after an outstanding stretch of 10 years in the fitness instructing industry, her students call her the Jane Fonda of India.

"Jane Fonda was huge in 90's," said Jain. "All of us in the fitness industry were like 'Wow, we wish we could be like her.'" And now, apparently, Jain's gotten her wish.

Jain has taken the [Masala Bhangra](#) dance ("Masala," the Hindi word for spicy, and "Bhangra," a traditional Indian folk dance) and turned it into a fun workout class; helping people lose weight and get in shape. Jain is America's first cross-cultural fitness star and an energetic and enthusiastic instructor, choreographer, and international

television/radio personality.

"I've always wanted to come up with my own product and my own workout," said Jain when I asked her what gave her the idea to start an Americanized Indian folk dance workout. "I lost my dad to a massive cardiac arrest, and because of that I wanted to create a workout that would help people live a longer life."

As the [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Extension School](#) recently "spiced" things up by adding Jain's Masala Bhangra dance class, I decided to try it out myself. While I was expecting to have a good time in this class, I did not realize how much of a real workout it was going to be, and how much fun I was going to have. What with the *Slumdog Millionaire* and Bollywood (Hindi film) craze these days, I knew I was in for a treat.

[I also attended Ailey's African dance class, which was a blast. Check it out here >>](#)

With everyone in the class dressed colorfully and a smile plastered across their faces, my spirits were lifted just by walking into the room. As soon as the music started, I found myself dancing to the funky Indian music before any choreography was taught. "Celebrate! Baleh baleh!" yelled Jain as she jumped up and down lifting her knees, and she started to teach us the "turning the light bulbs" as well as other traditional Bhangra moves.

"It's one universal dance form that everyone brings to their celebratory parties in India," Jain explained. "If you go to an Indian party and there's no Bhangra dancing, it's



considered a very boring party. If you're marrying a Punjabi [a certain Indian culture], it's always 'Oh my god, that's going to be one hell of a wedding!'"

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The choreography and the dance moves kept piling on as my sweat continued to pile off. My feet never stopped moving the entire class, as Jain constantly told us to "keep moving," even in between songs. Our arms never left the sky, and our booties swayed from side to side. The choreography was sexy, jazzy, sassy, and girly—even though Bhangra is a dance traditionally done by the men.

[Find out about Jain's favorite play list of Indian songs she uses in her classes >>](#)

"Bhangra is based around a celebration," Jain said. "There are no rules or particular customs to it, everyone has their own style. It's the beat of the drum that you cannot get enough of."

And I definitely could not get enough of that music. It was inspiring and uplifting; always asking for more passion and intensity with every beat.



Typically, the Bhangra workout effects the entire body. Depending on which moves are stressed, the dance gets your legs, calves, quads and abs working for the most part. In order to move in the various directions the choreography calls for, you have to suck your abs to create a strong and sturdy core. Jain described Bhangra as the "total opposite" of belly dancing or salsa, since those dances tend to focus on just one area of the body.

In order to have fun working out, Jain has some key suggestions.

"Once you walk in the doors take yourself to another world. Just forget about all of your stresses for the hour. Since there's nothing you can do about it, you might as well sweat out whatever tensions you may have and take yourself to another world. It'll relax you, you'll walk out saying that was awesome, lets go conquer the world." she said.

She explained that when a typical Indian goes to see a Bollywood film, they are taken to another world, which is what she tries to accomplish with her Bhangra workout class.

If you'd like to do The Masala Bhangra Workout at home, Jain has some great [DVDs available](#), as well.

[Check out some other great Masala Bhangra workout DVDs here >>](#)