



## DANCE OF SIVA - UNFOLDING PERCEPTIONS

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[www.knowingourroots.com](http://www.knowingourroots.com)

ஆதி நடு அந்தமிலா அளவில் சோதி  
அருள் ஞான மூர்த்தியாய் அகிலம் ஈன்ற,  
மாதினையும் ஒரு பாகத்து அடக்கி வானோர்  
மகுட சூளாமணியாய் வையம் போற்றப்,  
பாதி மதி யணி பவளச் சடைகள் தாழ்ப்  
படரொளி அம்பலத்தாடும் பரனார் பாதத்,  
தாதுமலி தாமரைகள் சிரத்தே வைத்துத்  
தளராத பேரன்பு வளரா நிற்பாம்.

ātiṇaṭu antamilā aḷavil cōti aruḷñāṇa mūrttiyāy akilam īṇra  
mātiṇaiyum orupākat taṭakki vāṇōr makuṭacū ḷāmaṇiyāy vaiyam pōrṛap  
pātimati yaṇipavaḷac caṭaikaḷ tāḷap paṭaroḷiam palattāṭum paraṇār pātat  
tātumali tāmaraikaḷ cirattē vaittut taḷarāta pēraṇpu vaḷarā niṛpām

The One who has no beginning, middle, and end. The Infinite Light, Personification of Grace and Intelligence, the consort of the Mother of the cosmic clusters, the precious crown gem for the celestials, dances in the arena of spreading light within the souls (**cit-ākāsh**) with the hanging coral braids adorned with the half-moon, praised by the world. His pollen-breaded lotus feet, I will keep on my crown. Let our relentless love grow towards Him.

- **Siva-Jnāna-Siddhiyār**

The secret of the incessant dance of the Supreme can be perceived at three levels by the seekers as follows:

### 1. PERCEPTION OF THE GROSS DANCE:

*One is at the cosmic plane, which is called gross dance. This can be perceived in the movement of the cosmic flux. The same dance is also there in every atom as the movement of particles.*

*தோற்றம் துடியதனில் தோயும் திதிஅமைப்பில்  
சாற்றியிடும் அங்கியிலே சங்காரம் – ஊற்றமா  
ஊன்று மலர்ப்பதத்தில் உற்ற திரோதம்முத்தி  
நான்ற மலப்பதத்தே நாடு.*

*tōrram tuṭiyataṇil tōyum titiamaippil  
cārriyiṭum aṅkiyilē caṅkāram – ūrramā  
ūṅru malarppatattil urra tirōtammutti  
nāṅra malappatattē nātu*

*The fivefold act of Siva  
The hand that wields the drum evolves;  
The hand of hope that sustains;  
The fire on His hand destroys;  
The Obscuration is by the flowery foot that presses down;  
Gracious deliverance ensues from the flowery foot held aloft.*

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், திருவதிகை மனவாசகம் கடந்தார் அருளிய  
உண்மை விளக்கம் – பாடல் 36
- MeikaNda Sāththiram, UNmai viLakkam by Saint Thiruvathikai  
Manavāsagam kadanthār – song 36  
(Translation: T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor -2003;  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

*அரன்துடி தோற்றம் அமைத்தல் திதிஆம்  
அரன்அங்கி தன்னில் அறையின் சங் காரம்  
அரன்ஊற் றணைப்பில் அமருந்திரோ தாயி  
அரன்அடி என்றும் அனுக்கிரகம் என்னே*

*araṇtuṭi tōrram amaittal titiām  
araṇaṅki taṇṇil araiyiṅ caṅ kāram  
araṇūr raṇaippil amaruntirō tāyi  
araṇaṭi eṅrum aṇukkirakam eṅṅē*

Symbolism of Siva Dance:

*Hara`s drum is creation;  
Hara`s hand gesturing protection is preservation;*

*Hara`s fire is dissolution;  
Hara`s foot planted down is Obfuscation (Tirodhayi)  
Hara`s foot, raised in dance, is Grace (Redemption) abiding.*

- திருமூலர் அருளிய திருமந்திரம், 10ம் திருமுறை, பாடல் 2799  
Thiru manthiram, the 10th Thirumurai by Saint Thiru Mūlar – song 2799  
(Translation: B. Natarajan (2000); Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org))

*damarō srushti jājatē apayam sthithi rutyatē  
agnow prōktam samhāra drōthānanja kunchitham  
anugragō ūrtva pada: krutyam pancha sabapatē*

*The drum in his hand ensues creation;  
The hand gesture of hope ensues sustenance;  
The fire on His hand ensues annihilation;  
The foot pressed down ensues obscuration;  
The raised foot ensues Gracious deliverance;  
Thus the Lord Sabapathi ensues five cosmic functions.*

- வாதுள ஆகமம் / VātuLa Āgama

*Fritjof Capra: This grandeur conception of gross dance of Siva at the inert base of cosmos and atoms is the synthesis of science, religion and art. This is universally acknowledged by scientists as such we can see the ten feet tall statue of Lord nādarāj at the Centre for Nuclear Research in Europe (CERN) in Switzerland. This is the dance which was perceived, visualized and expressed by physicist Fritjof Capra in his book of “Tao of physics” in 1975. This is the reason for intelligence, there by an order of the inert. Let us see about this dance in his own words.*

*“I had a beautiful experience which set on a road that has led to the writing of this book. I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sands, rocks, water and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the earth’s atmosphere was continually bombarded by showers of particles of cosmic rays of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from my research in high energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams and mathematical*

*theories. As I sat on that beach my former experience came to my life. I saw cascades of energy coming from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed, in rhythmic pulses. I saw the atoms and the elements and those in my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy. I felt this rhythm and I heard its sound and I knew at that moment that this was the **Dance of Siva**, the Lord of dancers, worshiped by the Hindus”*

**- Tao of Physics -1975, An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism, by Fritjof Capra (1939 - )**  
American Physicist, Founding Director of the Centre for Ecoliteracy (CEL)  
ஃபிரிஜொஃப் கப்ரா எழுதிய இயற்பியலின் தாவோ (1975)



*In his further writings **Fritjof Capra** explained that “Modern physics has shown that the rhythm of creation and destruction is not only manifest in the turn of the seasons and in the birth and death of all living creatures, but is also the very essence of inorganic matter,” and that “For the modern physicists, then, Shiva’s dance is the dance of subatomic matter.” It is indeed as Capra concluded: “Hundreds of years ago, Indian artists created visual images of dancing Shivas in a beautiful series of bronzes. In our time, physicists have used the most advanced technology to portray the patterns of the cosmic dance. The metaphor of the cosmic dance thus unifies ancient mythology, religious art and modern physics.”*

*Carl Sagan ( 1934- 1996):The Hindu Religion is the only one of the world's great faiths dedicated to the idea that the cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only religion in which the Time Scales correspond, no doubt by accident, to those of modern scientific Cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long, longer than the age of Earth or the Sun. And there are more longer times scales still.*

- Carl Sagan (1934 – 1996), Astrophysicist/ Astrobiologist/ Cosmologist
  - o Recipient of NASA medal for exceptional scientific achievement
  - o Former director of the laboratory for planetary studies of Cornwall University
  - o Former chairman of division for planetary sciences of the American Astronomical Society
  - o Former chairman of the astronomy section of the American Association of the advancement of science.
  - o Former president of the planetology section of the American Geophysical Union
  - o Former editor in chief of “Icarus”, the leading professional journal devoted to planetary research

*Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877 – 1947), seeing beyond the unsurpassed rhythm, beauty, power and grace of the Nataraja, wrote in his book of **The Dance of Siva** in 1918 as “It is the clearest image of the activity of God which any art or religion can boast of.”*

- The Dance of Siva – 1918, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877 – 1947)  
கலாயோகி ஆனந்த குமாரசாமி எழுதிய சிவ நடனம் (1918)

## 2. PERCEPTION OF THE SUBTLE DANCE OF SIVA

*The subtle dance of the Supreme happens in the Supreme itself. This dance is His intelligence, this dance is His actions, this dance is His flow which actuates and animates everything. It is the subtle dance hard to perceive, realize or understand. Our Lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in their turn. His dance is the dance of Supreme Intelligence – **jnāna nadana**; the dance of nature – **ūna nadana** is the dance of **KāLi**, the dark obscuring energy – **drodhāna sakthi** of the Lord. This dance of nature by **KāLi** is not possible unless the Lord wills it and dances Himself.*

### 3. PERCEPTION OF THE SUBTLEST DANCE OF SIVA

*The plane for the third and most subtle dance of the Supreme is in our soul. This Supreme Intelligence dances in every soul for the purpose of removing our fetters. This is the reason for the perception and intelligence of every sentient being. This is the most subtle dance of all three to comprehend or understand. This can be realized within the self (heart/spirit). This is the dance that ultimately smashes our fetters.*

*மாயை தனைஉதறி வல்வினையைச் சுட்டுமலம்  
சாய அமுக்கிஅருள் தானெடுத்து – நேயத்தால்  
ஆனந்த வாரிதியில் ஆன்மாவைத் தானமுத்தல்  
தானெந்தை யார்பாதம் தான்.*

*māyai taṇaiutaṛi valviṇaiyaic cuṭṭumalam  
cāya amukkiaruḷ tāṇeṭuttu – nēyattāl  
āṇanta vāritiyil āṇmāvait tāṇaḷuttal  
tāṇentai yārpātam tāṇ*

*Throwing Maya away, gutting with fire cruel Karma,  
Crushing irretrievably āNava, manifesting Grace,  
Impelled by love, immersing the soul in the sea of Bliss:  
This indeed is the Dance enacted by our Father-Lord.*

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், திருவதிகை மனவாசகம் கடந்தார் அருளிய  
உண்மை விளக்கம் – பாடல் 37  
MeikaNda Sāththiram, UNmai viLakkam by Saint Thiruvathikai  
Manavāsagam kadhāṅ – song 37  
(Translation: T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor -2003  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

*எட்டும் இரண்டும் உருவான லிங்கத்தே  
நட்டம் புதல்வா நவிலக்கேள் – சிட்டன்  
சிவாயநம வென்னூந் திருவெழுத்தஞ் சாலே  
அவாயமற நின்றாடு வான்.*

*eṭṭum iraṇṭum uruvāṇa liṅkattē  
naṭṭam putalvā navilakkēḷ – ciṭṭaṇ  
civāyanama veṇṇūn tiruveḷuttaṅ cālē  
avāyamara niṅṛāṭu vāṇ*



*O Son! Listen to the exposition of the dance that is  
Enacted in the soul the emblem of which is the letter -Ya  
Representing the number ten made up of eight and two.  
The Lord with His body si va ya na ma  
Dances, that all lives may gain deliverance.*

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், திருவதிகை மனவாசகம் கடந்தார் அருளிய  
உண்மை விளக்கம் – பாடல் 32
- MeikaNda Sāththiram, UNmai viLakkam by Saint Thiruvathikai  
Manavāsagam kadanthār – song 32  
(Translation: T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor -2003  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

#### 4. PERCEPTION OF THE DANCE OF SIVA FURTHER AT FIVE LEVELS:

This Supreme Dance can also be perceived at five levels by the advanced seekers as follows:

*ஆமேபொன் னம்பலம் அற்புதம் ஆனந்தம்  
ஆமே திருக்கூத் தனவரத தாண்டவம்  
ஆமே பிரளயம் ஆகும்அத் தாண்டவம்  
ஆமேசங் காரத் தருந்தாண்ட வங்களே.*

*āmēpon nambalam arputam ānandam  
āmē tirukkūttu anavarata tāṇḍavam  
āmē praḷayam ākum at tāṇḍavam  
āmē saṅkārattu aruntāṇḍa vaṅkaḷē*

*In the golden hall, our Lord Śiva is performing five kinds of dance – arputha tāṇḍavam, āṇḍa tāṇḍavam, aṇavarata tāṇḍavam, praḷaya tāṇḍavam and samhāra tāṇḍavam.*

**1. praḷaya tāṇḍava** is the dance performed for dissolving the created worlds and tattvas into their respective causal sources and dissolving even the causal sources into Śakti. This is performed in the **rāja sabhā** identified with **annamaya kośa**, our gross body. This dance signifies the creation anew (**punar urbhavam**). **praḷaya tāṇḍava** denotes not only the total dissolution but also the successive new creation.

2. **sambhāra tāṇḍava** is the dance performed for the destruction of hostile forces which impede the efforts undertaken by the aspirant to disentangle himself/ herself from the triple bondage – **āṇava**, **karma** and **māyā** and his/ her spiritual progress. This **tāṇḍava** is performed in the **dēva sabha** identified with **prāṇamaya kōśa** – our vital body.

3. **aṇavarata tāṇḍava** is performed constantly for the sake of betterment of the three kinds of souls – **sakalās** (the souls with all three fetters – **āṇava**, **karma** and **māyā**), **praḷayākālas** ( the souls with only two fetters – **āṇava** and **karma**) and **viḷṅṅakālas** (the souls with the single fetter **āṇava**), for the sake of liberated souls and for the sake of those perfect souls with whom the cosmic deeds related to the next creation are entrusted. Since this is performed even during the cosmic night of the absolutely dissolved state, this is called '**aṇavarata tāṇḍava**' – incessant dance. This is performed in the **niruttha sabha** identified with **maṇōmaya kōśa** – our psychic body.

4. **arputa tāṇḍava** is performed for the sake of manifestation of different forms of Śiva necessitated by the worldly events, both good and bad. '**arputam**' means that which is not seen before or that which has occurred anew. This is performed in the **kanaka sabha** identified with **viḷṅṅamaya kōśa** – our intellectual body.

5. **āṇanda tāṇḍava** is the dance Bliss for the bestowal of grace in the form of eternal bliss and for the liberation of the souls. This is performed in the **cit sabha** identified with **āṇandamaya kōśa** -our causal body.

Just as the bestowal of grace(**aṇugraha**) is the basis for all other four cosmic functions (creation, sustenance, dissolution and obscuration)performed by the Lord, even so **āṇanda tāṇḍava** is the basis for all other four **tāṇḍavas**.

- திருமூலர் அருளிய திருமந்திரம், 10ம் திருமுறை, பாடல் 887  
Thiru manthiram, the 10th Thirumurai by Saint Thiru Mūlar – song 887  
(Translation: Dr. S.P. Sabharatham Sivacharyar, Mylapoor 2018)

மோனந்த மாமுனிவர் மும்மலத்தை மோசித்துத்  
தானந்த மானிடத்தே தங்கியிடும் – ஆனந்தம்  
மொண்டருந்தி நின்றாடல் காணும்அருள் மூர்த்தியாக்  
கொண்டதிரு அம்பலத்தான் கூத்து.

**mōṇanta māmuṇivar mummalattai mōcittut**  
**tāṇanta māṇiṭattē taṅkiyiṭum – āṇantam**



*moṅṭarunti niṅṟāṭal kāṇumaruḷ mūrttiyāk  
koṅṭatiru ampalattāṅ kūttu*

*The great sages are poised in the Bliss of Silence, having quelled  
The triple fetters; they are fixed themselves in the Self;  
They quaff Bliss witnessing the Divine Dance; this is what  
The dance of the gracious Lord of the Ambalam performs for them.*

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், திருவதிகை மனவாசகம் கடந்தார் அருளிய  
உண்மை விளக்கம் – பாடல் 37
- MeikaNda Sāththiram, UNmai viLakkam by Saint Thiruvathikai  
Manavāsagam kadanthār – song 37  
(Translation: T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor -2003  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

#### 5. FURTHER SUBTLE DIMENSIONS OF THE DANCE:

There are even more and more subtle dimensions of the Supreme Dance revealed by the seers which are beyond the grasp of our words and deeds.

*கற்பனை கடந்த சோதி கருணையே யுருவ மாகி  
அற்புதக் கோல நீடி யருமறைச் சிரத்தின் மேலாஞ்  
சிற்பர வியோம மாகுந் திருச்சிற்றம் பலத்துள் நின்று  
பொற்புடன் நடஞ்செய் கின்ற பூங்கழல் போற்றி போற்றி*

*karpaṇai kaṭanta cōti karuṇaiyē yuruva māki  
arputak kōla nīṭi yarumaṛaic cirattiṅ mēlāñ  
cirpara viyōma mākun tiruccirram palattuḷ niṅṟu  
porpuṭaṅ natañcey kiṅṟa pūṅkaḷal pōrri pōrri*

*It is beyond the ken of our imagination  
(symbolizes the cosmic gross dance);  
Its from poised in wondrous Beauty is Grace personified  
(symbolizes the subtle dance);  
It abides above and beyond the peak of vedic scriptures,  
At the mystic gnostic ether of conscious - Tiru-citr-ambalam,  
(symbolizes the subtlest dance in each and every soul);  
This is the Grand Dance enacted by the,  
Ankleted and flowery feet of the Supreme! Praise be!*

- சேக்கிழார் அருளிய பெரிய புராணம், 12ம் திருமுறை, பாடல் 351  
Periya Purāṇam, the 12<sup>th</sup> Thirumurai by Saint Sēkkizār, song 351

(Adapted from the Translation by T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

உலகெ லாம்உணர்ந் தோதற் கரியவன்  
நிலவு லாவிய நீர்மலி வேணியன்  
அலகில் சோதியன் அம்பலத் தாடுவான்  
மலர்சி லம்படி வாழ்த்தி வணங்குவாம் .

*ulake lāmuṇarn tōtar kariyaṇ  
nilavu lāviya nīrmali vēṇiyaṇ  
alakil cōtiyaṇ ampalat tāṭuvāṇ  
malarci lampāṭi vāṭṭi vaṇaṅkuvām*

*OMneity is He; Who is hard to be comprehended and expressed  
By all sentient beings in all the cosmic worlds;  
(symbolizes the cosmic gross dance);  
In His crest rest the crescent moon and the water of Ganga; personified  
(symbolizes the subtle dance);  
Limitless is His effulgence; He dances in the Ambalam;  
(symbolizes the subtlest dance in each and every soul);  
We hail and adore His ankleted flower-feet  
Which is the source of all the cosmic flux.*

- சேக்கிழார் அருளிய பெரிய புராணம், 12ம் திருமுறை, பாடல் 01  
Periya Purāṇam, the 12<sup>th</sup> Thirumuṇai by Saint Sēkkizār, song 01  
(Adapted from the Translation by T. N. Ramachandran, Thanjaavoor  
Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

Jnanis, the realized persons only can envision and experience all forms and planes  
of this dance of Siva everywhere.

எங்கும் திருமேனி எங்கும் சிவசுத்தி  
எங்கும் சிதம்பரம் எங்கும் திருநட்டம்  
எங்கும் சிவமாய் இருத்தலால் எங்கெங்கும்  
தங்கும் சிவன்அருள் தன்விளை யாட்டதே .

*eṅkum tirumēṇi eṅkum civacatti  
eṅkum citamparam eṅkum tirunaṭṭam  
eṅkum civamāy iruttalāl eṅkeṅkum  
taṅkum civaṇaruḷ taṅviḷai yāṭṭatē*

*His Holy form is Everywhere;  
All-pervading His Siva-Sakti;  
Chidambaram is Everywhere;  
Everywhere His Dance,  
As Siva is all and Omnipresent,  
Everywhere is Siva`s Gracious dance, temporal, timeless, incessant is  
All, all, His Sport Divine.*

- திருமூலர் அருளிய திருமந்திரம், 10ம் திருமுறை, பாடல் 2722  
Thiru manthiram, the 10th Thirumurai by Saint Thiru Mular – song 2722  
(Translation: B. Natarajan, 2000; Courtesy: [www.thevaaram.org](http://www.thevaaram.org).)

*For further details of the dance of Siva refer to **Thirumanthiram** songs 2722 to 2803.*