

Fifth Edition

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# Dancing with Śiva

Hinduism's  
Contemporary Catechism

शिवेन सह नर्तनम्  
सनातनधर्मप्रश्नोत्तरम्

சிவனோடு ஆடுதல்  
இந்து சமயத்தின்  
தற்கால வினா விடை

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**neutron star:** A star which has collapsed in on itself and is extremely dense.

A neutron star the size of an orange would weigh more than the entire earth.

**new age:** According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*: "Of or pertaining to a cultural movement popular in the 1980s [and 90s] characterized by a concern with spiritual consciousness, and variously combining belief in reincarnation and astrology with such practices as meditation, vegetarianism and holistic medicine."

**New Year:** The majority of Hindus in India celebrate the New Year according to traditional, pre-colonial calendars, several of which are still in use. There are, therefore, various New Year's days in different states of India, the two major ones being Dīpāvalī in October-November, observed in North India, and the day when the sun enters Mesha (Aries) in April, celebrated in Tamil Nadu, Bengal and Nepal.

**Nimbārka:** निम्बार्क Mystic, philosopher and founder of the Minandi Vaishṇava school of Vedānta (ca 1150). He acclaimed the *guru's* grace as the only true means to salvation. See: *Vedānta*.

**Nirguṇa Brahman:** निर्गुणब्रह्मन् "God without qualities." See: *Brahman*.

**Nirukta Vedāṅga:** निरुक्तवेदाङ्ग "Etymology *Veda*-limb." Auxiliary Vedic texts which discuss the origin and development of words; among the four linguistic skills taught for mastery of the *Vedas* and the rites of *yajña*. Nirukta relies upon ancient lexicons, *nighaṇṭu*, as well as detailed hymn indices, *anukramaṇi*. Five *nighaṇṭus* existed at the time of Yāska (320 BCE), whose treatise is regarded a standard work on Vedic etymology. See: *Vedāṅga*.

**nirvahaṇa:** निर्वहण "End; completion." Conclusion.

**nirvāṇi and upadeśi:** निर्वानी उपदेशी *Nirvāṇi* means "extinguished one," and *upadeśi* means "teacher." In general, *nirvāṇi* refers to a liberated soul, or to a certain class of monk. *Upadeśi* refers to a teacher, generally a renunciate. In *Dancing with Śiva*, these two terms have special meaning, similar to the Buddhist *arhat* and *bodhisattva*, naming the two earthly modes of the realized, liberated soul. After full illumination, the *jīvanmukta* has the choice to return to the world to help others along the path. This is the way of the *upadeśi* (akin to *bodhisattva*), exemplified by the benevolent *satguru* who leads seekers to the goal of God Realization. He may found and direct institutions and monastic lineages. The *nirvāṇi* (akin to *arhat*) abides at the pinnacle of consciousness, shunning all worldly involvement. He is typified by the silent ascetic, the reclusive sage. See: *satguru*, *viśvagrāsa*.

**nirvikalpa samādhi:** निर्विकल्पसमाधि "Enstasy (*samādhi*) without form or seed." The realization of the Self, Paraśiva, a state of oneness beyond all change or diversity; beyond time, form and space. *Vi* means "to change, make different." *Kalpa* means "order, arrangement; a period of time." Thus *vikalpa* means "diversity, thought; difference of perception, distinction."

*Nir* means "without." See: *enstasy*, *kalpa*, *rāja yoga*, *samādhi*.

**niśchitārtha:** निश्चितार्थ "Engagement (to be married); resolution of aim."

Synonym for *vāgdāna*. See: *marriage covenant*, *saṁskāras of adulthood*.

**Nityānanda:** नित्यानन्द The reclusive sage (?—1961) known as Bhagavan, "the exalted one," who lived an extraordinary mystic life near Mumbai, India, and initiated a number of disciples, including Swāmī Muktaṇanda.

**nivedana:** निवेदन "Announcement, presentation, making known."

**niyama:** नियम "Restraint." See: *yama-niyama*.

**niyati:** नियति "Necessity, restriction; the fixed order of things, destiny." A synonym for *karma*, *niyati* is the eighth *tattva*. It is part of the soul's five-fold "sheath," *pañcha kañchuka* (or *viññānamaya kośa*), along with *kāla* (time), *kalā* (creativity), *vidyā* (knowing) and *rāga* (attachment, desire). The soul thus encased is called *puruṣa*. See: *karma*, *tattva*.

**nondual (nondualism):** See: *dvaita-advaita*, *monistic theism*, *Vedānta*.

**nonhuman birth:** The phenomenon of the soul being born as nonhuman life forms, explained in various scriptures. For example, Saint Manikkavasagar's famous hymn (*Tiruvasagam* 8.14): "I became grass and herbs, worm and tree. I became many beasts, bird and snake. I became stone and man, goblins and sundry celestials. I became mighty demons, silent sages and the Gods. Taken form in life, moveable and immovable, born in all, I am weary of birth, my Great Lord." The *Upanishads*, too, describe the soul's course after death and later taking a higher or lower birth according to its merit or demerit of the last life (*Kaush. U.* 1.2, *Chand. U.* 5.3–5.10, *Bṛihad. U.* 6.2).

These statements are sometimes misunderstood to mean that each soul must slowly, in sequential order incarnate as successively higher beings, beginning with the lowest organism, to finally obtain a human birth. In fact, as the *Upanishads* explain, after death the soul, reaching the inner worlds, reaps the harvest of its deeds, is tested and then takes on the appropriate incarnation—be it human or nonhuman—according to its merit or demerit. Souls destined for human evolution are human-like from the moment of their creation in the Sivaloka. This is given outer expression in the Antarloka and Bhūloka, on earth or other similar planets, as the appropriate sheaths are developed. However, not all souls are human souls. There are many kinds of souls, such as genies, elementals and certain Gods, who evolve toward God through different patterns of evolution than do humans.

One cause of unclarity is to confuse the previously mentioned scriptural passages with the theory of biological evolution developed by Charles Darwin (1809–1882), which states that plant and animal species develop or evolve from earlier forms due to hereditary transmission of variations that enhance the organism's adaptability and chances of survival. These principles are now considered the kernel of biology. Modern scientists thus argue that the human form is a development from earlier primates, including apes and monkeys. The Darwinian theory is reasonable but incomplete as it is based in a materialistic conception of reality that does not encompass the existence of the soul. While the Upanishadic evolutionary vision speaks of the soul's

development and progress through reincarnation, the Darwinian theory focuses on evolution of the biological organism, with no relation to a soul or individual being. See: *evolution of the soul*, *kośa*, *reincarnation*, *soul*.

**noninjurious:** Which does not cause harm or injury. —**noninjuriousness:** A translation of *ahimsā*, the principle of not causing harm or injury to living beings, whether by thought, word or deed. See: *ahimsā*.

**nonperseverance:** The act, practice or attitude of not persisting, giving up too easily. See: *yama-niyama*.

**nonviolence:** See: *ahimsā*.

**Northern Śaivism:** A name for Kāshmir Śaivism. See: *Kāshmir Śaivism*.

**notable:** Worthy of being noted. Remarkable.

**novelty:** Newness. The constant changes and enchantments of life.

**novitiate:** Same as *novice*. A newcomer to a monastic or religious community, on probation, before taking final vows.

**nucleus of the soul:** See: *ātman*, *impersonal being*, *soul*.

**nunk:** A contemporary word coined by Catholic theologian Raimundo Panikkar to describe women contemplatives or female monks, in contrast to the word *nun* which commonly describes a religious teacher or service-oriented woman under vows. A nunk is a celibate woman following strict, perhaps austere and usually solitary, spiritual disciplines and lifestyle. By balancing the masculine and feminine energies within herself through *sādhana* and *yoga*, she is a complete being, detached from the thoughts and feelings of others, free to follow the contemplative and mystical life in pursuit of the Self within. To accomplish this, she works to permanently conquer her feminine instincts and the emotional tendencies of a woman's body. She strives to transmute her sexuality into the Divine, giving up her womanliness so thoroughly that she is indistinguishable from a monk. In Hinduism, nunks may be *sannyāsinīs*, *yoginīs* or *sādhikās*. See: *monastic*, *sannyāsin*, *monk*.

**nurturance:** Same as nurture, to nourish. The act or process or furnishing the essentials to growth, development or education.

**Nyāya:** न्याय "System; rule; logic." See: *Gautama*, *śaḍ darśana*.



**objective:** 1) Quality of thinking or perception relating to the object as it truly is. Not biased or colored by one's personal point of view or prejudices, which then would be subjective thinking. 2) A target, goal or anything sought for or aimed at. Cf: *subjective*.

**oblation:** An offering or sacrifice ceremoniously given to a God or guru. See: *sacrifice*, *yajña*.

**obscuration:** Same as obscuring grace. See: *grace*, *Naṭarāja*.

**obscuring grace:** See: *grace*, *Naṭarāja*.

**obstacle:** See: *upasarga*.

**obstinate (obstinacy):** Overly determined to have one's own way. Stubborn.

**occult:** Hidden, or kept secret; revealed only after initiation. See: *mysticism*.

**odic:** Magnetic—of or pertaining to consciousness within *aśuddha māya*, the realm of the physical and lower astral planes. Odic force in its rarified form is *prakṛiti*, the primary gross energy of nature, manifesting in the three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is the force of attraction and repulsion between people, people and their things, and manifests as masculine (aggressive) and feminine (passive), arising from the *pingalā* and *idā* currents. These two currents (*nāḍī*) are found within spine of the subtle body. Odic force is a magnetic, sticky, binding substance that people seek to develop when they want to bind themselves together, such as in partnerships, marriage, *guru-śiṣya* relationships and friendships. Odic energy is the combined emanation of the *prāṇamāya* and *annamāya kośas*. The term *odhic* is the adjective form of *od* (pronounced like *mode*), defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a hypothetical force held by Baron von Reichenbach (1788–1869) to pervade all nature, manifesting itself in certain persons of sensitive temperament (streaming from their fingertips), and exhibited especially by magnets, crystals, heat, light and chemical action; it has been held to explain the phenomena of mesmerism and animal magnetism." See: *actinic*, *actinodic*, *guṇa*, *kośa*, *odic*, *subtle body*, *tattva*.

**offset:** Made up for, compensated for, counterbalanced by.

**offspring:** The young of animals. Children. Sanskrit: *apatya*.

**olai:** ஒலை "Leaf." An ancient form of Indian books used in South India, made of strips of fronds from the palmyra (*trīṇḍruma*) and talipot (*tālapatṛa*, "fan-leaf") palms. Prepared birch bark (*bhūrja patṛa*) was the medium in the North. The pages were loosely tied, with cord passed between one or two holes and usually bound between wooden covers. Ink, made from lampblack or charcoal, was applied with a reed pen. Or, more commonly in the South, the letters were scribed with a stylus, then rubbed with powdered lampblack. These books are small in size, averaging about 2 inches high and 8 inches wide and up to 11 or 12 inches thick, wound with strips and generally protected in colored cloth. See: *grantha*.

**old soul:** One who has reincarnated many times, experienced much and therefore further along the path. Old souls may be recognized by their qualities of compassion, self-effacement and wisdom. See: *evolution of the soul*.

**Om:** ओम् "Yes, verily." The most sacred *mantra* of Hinduism. An alternate transliteration of *Aum* (the sounds A and U blend to become O). See: *Aum*.

**ominous:** Foreboding; frightening, sinister.

**omnipotent:** All-powerful. Able to do anything.

**omnipresent:** Present everywhere and in all things.

**omniscient:** Having infinite knowledge, all-knowing.

**oneness:** Quality or state of being one. Unity, identity, especially in spite

scripture was conveyed by Lord Śiva to sage Ruru (hence the name). Its extensive *kriyā pāda* section details the structure of the Śiva temple and its annexes.

**Rāvaṇa:** रावण Villain of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic. A legendary king of Sri Lanka, adversary of Rāma, eventually defeated by Rāma and his armies.

**reabsorption (reabsorb):** Taking in again, as water is squeezed from and then drawn back into a sponge. See: *cosmic cycle, mahāpralaya, pralaya*.

**reaction:** A response to an action.

**reaffirmation:** A new affirming or a declaration about a thing as being true or still pertinent. See: *affirmation*.

**reality:** See: *Absolute Reality, relative*.

**realm:** A kingdom, region or area. See: *loka*.

**reap:** To cut for harvest. To gain as a result of actions or effort.

**rebellious:** Resisting authority or any form of control.

**rebound:** To bounce back.

**recluse:** A person who retreats from the world and lives in seclusion.

**reconcile (reconciliation):** To settle or resolve, as a dispute. To make consistent or compatible, e.g., two conflicting ideas.

**redeem:** To recover, to set free from penalty or deliver from sin. —**redemption:** Act of redeeming. See: *absolution, penance*.

**reembody:** To come into a body again. To reincarnate.

**reincarnation:** “Re-entering the flesh.” *Punarjanma*; metempsychosis. The process wherein souls take on a physical body through the birth process. Reincarnation is one of the fundamental principles of Hindu spiritual insight, shared by the mystical schools of nearly all religions, including Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism (and even by Christianity until it was cast out by the Nicene Council in 787). It is against the backdrop of this principle of the soul’s enjoying many lives that other aspects of Hinduism can be understood. It is a repetitive cycle, known as *punarjanma*, which originates in the subtle plane (Antarloka), the realm in which souls live between births and return to after death. Here they are assisted in readjusting to the “in-between” world and eventually prepared for yet another birth. The quality and nature of the birth depends on the merit or demerit of their past actions (*karma*) and on the needs of their unique pattern of development and experience (*dharma*). The mother, the father and the soul together create a new body for the soul. At the moment of conception, the soul connects with and is irrevocably bound to the embryo. As soon as the egg is fertilized, the process of human life begins. It is during the mid-term of pregnancy that the full humanness of the fetus is achieved and the soul fully inhabits the new body, a stage which is acknowledged when the child begins to move and kick within the mother’s womb. (*Tirumantiram*, 460: “There in the pregnant womb, the soul lay in primordial quiescence [*turiya*] state. From that state, Māyā [or Prakṛiti] and Her tribe aroused it and conferred

consciousness and *māyā*’s evolutes eight—desires and the rest. Thus say scriptures holy and true.”) Finally, at birth the soul emerges into earth consciousness, veiled of all memory of past lives and the inner worlds. The cycle of reincarnation ends when *karma* has been resolved and the Self God (Paraśiva) has been realized. This condition of release is called *moksha*. Then the soul continues to evolve and mature, but without the need to return to physical existence. How many earthly births must one have to attain the unattainable? Many thousands to be sure, hastened by righteous living, *tapas*, austerities on all levels, penance and good deeds in abundance. See: *evolution of the soul, karma, moksha, nonhuman birth, saṁsāra, soul*.

**relative:** Quality or object which is meaningful only in relation to something else. Not absolute. —**relative reality:** *Māyā*. That which is ever changing and changeable. Describes the nature of manifest existence, indicating that it is not an illusion but is also not Absolute Reality, which is eternal and unchanging. See: *Absolute Reality, māyā*.

**religion:** From Latin *religare*, “to bind back.” Any system which advocates the belief in and worship of a Supreme Being or Power. Religion is a structured vehicle for soul advancement which often includes theology, scripture, spiritual and moral practices, priesthood and liturgy. See: *Hinduism*.

**relinquish:** To give up, let go of or abandon. See: *sacrifice, tyāga*.

**remorse:** Deep, painful regret or guilt over a wrong one has done. Moral anguish. See: *absolution, hṛī, penance*.

**remote:** Distant, secluded; hidden away or difficult to reach.

**renaissance:** “Rebirth or new birth.” A renewal, revival or reawakening.

**render:** To cause to be or to become.

**renowned:** Famous.

**renunciation:** See: *sannyāsa, tyāga, vairāgya*.

**Renukāchārya:** रेणुकाचार्य A Vira Śaiva philosopher and saint.

**replenish:** To fill up or cause to be full again.

**repose:** To rest peacefully. —**to repose in one’s realization:** To cease outward activity and enjoy communion with the Divine.

**repudiation:** The act of publicly rejecting a thing, habit or way of being.

**rescind:** To cancel or revoke.

**resemble:** To look like, or have similar traits and qualities.

**resent (resentment):** A feeling of ill-will, indignation or hostility from a sense of having been wronged.

**residue:** Remainder. That which is left over after a process.

**resplendence:** Radiance; brilliance.

**restive:** Nervous, unruly, eager to go forward; hard to control.

**restraints:** See: *yama-niyama*.

**retaliation:** Paying back an injury, returning like for like, hurt for hurt. Getting even; vengeance.

**revealing grace:** See: *anugraha śakti, grace*.