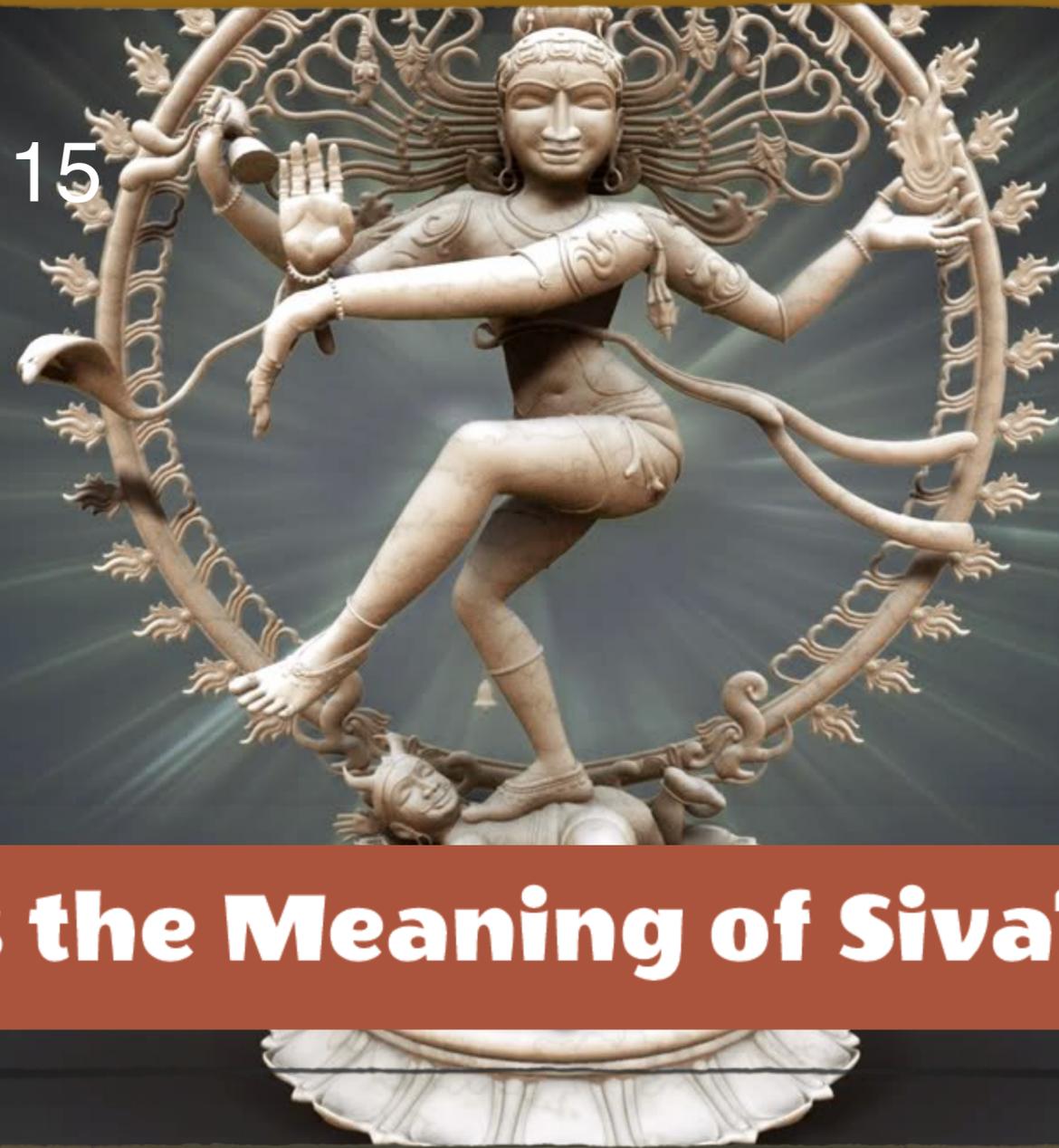


Path to Siva

A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Lesson 15



What Is the Meaning of Siva's Dance?

Lord Nataraja - God Siva in action

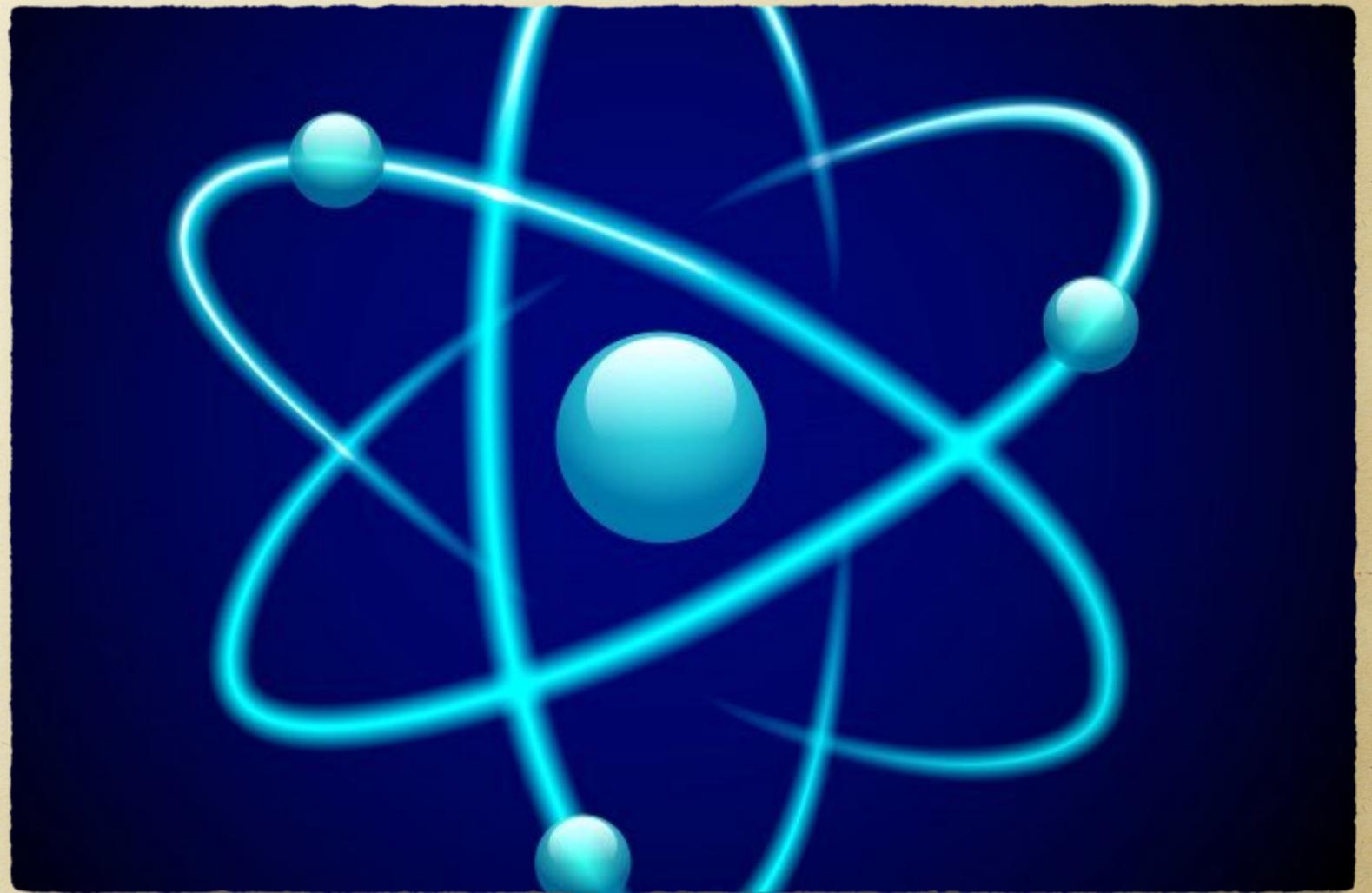


HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

Lord Nataraja is an inspired portrayal of Siva in action as the Divine Dancer in His Tandava dance.

Siva's dance of creation, preservation and dissolution

This is His dance of creation,
preservation and dissolution, a
performance constantly taking place
within each of us and within every atom
of the universe at every moment in time.



The Nataraja form has dozens of meaningful symbols.

The most important represent His five powers.

Creation (*shrishti*) is symbolized by His back right hand.

It holds the small rattle drum, *damaru*, whose sound signals the start of creation.



Preservation (*sthiti*)

Preservation (*sthiti*) is symbolized by His front right hand, held in the gesture *abhaya*, “fear not.”



Dissolution

His back left hand holds a blazing flame.

This is the Fire God, Agni, symbol of dissolution (*samhara*).



Concealing grace

His right foot rests on a small person representing the ego and known as Apasmara, “forgetful” or “heedless.”

This represents concealing grace (*tirodhana*), the power by which the soul sees itself separate from God.



Revealing grace

Siva's front left hand is held in "elephant trunk pose," pointing toward His raised left foot, symbol of revealing grace (*anugraha*), the power by which the soul comes to know its oneness with God.



On His forehead is the third eye

On His forehead is the third eye, which sees everything, past, present and future.

While the dance is incredibly powerful, indicated by the strands of hair ailing out in all directions, Siva remains poised and peaceful.



The ring of flames and Siva's earrings

The ring of flames, *tiruvasi*, symbolizes universal consciousness, the "hall" in which Siva dances.

Siva's left earring is feminine; the right earring is masculine.

These remind us that God embraces both male and female.



Mahakala and Kundalini

At the top of the tiruvasi is Mahakala, "Great Time," another form of God Siva, who creates, transcends and devours time.

The snake adorning Siva's body symbolizes kundalini, the spiritual force within the spine.



Gurudeva describes the Cosmic Dance

The Cosmic Dance describes the Hindu view of existence, from the first thunder of the drum in His right hand announcing the Beginning, to the final all-consuming flames in His left hand pronouncing the End, which but heralds a new Beginning.



QUESTIONS for Lesson 15



15.1 Tandava

(Check the correct answer)

- A. Describes Siva's dance of creation, preservation and dissolution.
- B. Is the name of a song
- C. Is a drum

15.2 Enter the letter from below of A - F that describes that limb of Nataraja.

- ___ Back right hand
- ___ Front right hand
- ___ Back left hand
- ___ Right foot
- ___ Front left hand
- ___ Left foot
- (A) Holds a blazing flame
- (B) Is raised
- (C) Held in the gesture of "fear not"
- (D) Holds a drum
- (E) Rests on a small person
- (F) Held in "elephant trunk pose"

15.3 Enter the letter from below of A - E that names the power symbolized by that limb of Nataraja.

- ___ Back right hand
- ___ Front right hand
- ___ Back left hand
- ___ Right foot
- ___ Left foot and front left hand
- (A) Preservation
- (B) Concealing grace
- (C) Creation
- (D) Revealing grace
- (E) Dissolution

15.4 Siva:

(Check the correct answer)

- A. Has no earrings
- B. Left earring is masculine and right earring is feminine
- C. Left earring is feminine and right earring is masculine

15.5 Enter the letter from below of A - C that gives the symbolic meaning for each of these three features of Nataraja.

- ___ Ring of flames
- ___ Mahakala (face at the top)
- ___ The snake

- (A) Spiritual force within the spine
- (B) Universal consciousness
- (C) Great time