

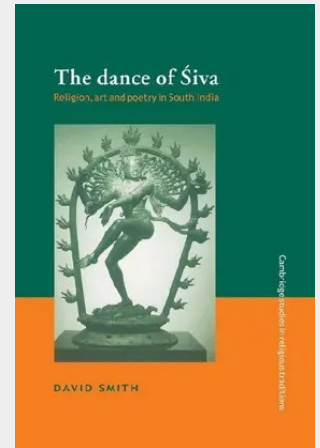
Smith

The Dance of Siva

Religion, Art and Poetry in South India

This is a full account of Siva's Dance of Bliss, which has become a popular symbol in the West for Hinduism and Eastern Mysticism. Siva is one of the two main gods of Hinduism, and his worshippers comprise half of all Hindus. Siva's Dance of Bliss is based on a remarkable Sanskrit poem written by Umapati Sivacarya, Saiva theologian and temple priest in Cidambaram, South India, in the fourteenth century. Starting with the bronze image of Nataraja, King of Dancers, thereafter the Cidambaram temple, its myth and its priests are viewed in the light of the poem. Umapati's Saiva theology is discussed in relation to his life and also in relation to Vedanta and yoga. The iconography and mythology of the Goddess and of other forms of Siva provide necessary perspective. Art from Cidambaram and neighbouring sites illuminates the text.

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