

DIVINE BALANCE: STUDY OF SACRED MEANINGS ACROSS RELIGIONS

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Abstract:

This article explores the concept of androgyny and its representation in various religions and belief systems. The idea of energy balance between male and female is depicted in numerous religious symbols, such as Shivling, the Yin Yang symbol in Taoism, and the Hexagram in multiple religions. The article delves into the beliefs of different religions, including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and how they emphasize the importance of balance between masculine and feminine energies. Ultimately, the article highlights the importance of divine balance of energy which is important to bring balance and harmony.

Keywords —Shivling, Energy Balance, Shiva, Shakti, Shri Yantra, Ardhnareshwari, Ying Yang, Quran, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Divine balance, Hexagram, Spirituality, Androgyny.

I. INTRODUCTION

Men & Women possess both male and female characteristics, like in male you can find the female characteristics and in female you will find some male characteristics, In psychology, androgyny refers to individuals with strong personality traits associated with both sexes[1], combining toughness and gentleness, In Hinduism particularly it is believed when male and female come together, they complete the creation, Kama is a sacred duty of male and female living[1], Radha & Krishna represent that union between God and the Devotee.

These hidden meanings can be found in different religions which represents the same meanings in direct or indirect approaches, Hinduism, Taoism & Islam represents the idea of balance with a direct approach which is represented in article[2]–[4], on the other hand Buddhism, Jainism the approach

towards the idea is indirect, however the This article explains that how these sacred symbols represent idea of universe balance.

II. METHODOLOGY – DESCRIPTION OF UNIVERSE BALANCE HINDUISM

In Hinduism there are many representations where the idea of energy balance between Male and Female is depicted, one of the main figures is Shivling[4] or Shiva Linga, is a widespread Indian Phallic figure, which is made of two parts a Feminine base Womb (Yoni) and a rising Masculine portion the Phallus [1]. It is traced from the Indus Valley Civilization, However the Linga in Sanskrit have several meanings, such as: Womb, Organ of Generation, Gender, sign, reason, proof, landmark etc.

In the most temple of India Shivling is prayed as a presence of lord, it is very rare to see the figure of

lord shiva as human, what made Shivling so important is the combination of Masculine & Feminine energy.

Another form of the Shiva (Masculine) and Shakti (Feminine) can be found is Ardhareshwari figure of the Lord Shiva with his Consort Parvati, represent Lord Shiva in the form of half men and half women, which represents the Shivling, the joint combination of Male & Female.

Ardhareshwari is a composite androgynous deity that is worshipped in Hinduism, particularly in Shaivism. The name Ardhareshwari is derived from two Sanskrit words - "Ardha" meaning "half," "Nari" meaning "woman," and "Ishvara" meaning "lord" or "god," which together mean "the lord who is half-woman." Ardhareshwari is depicted as a fusion of Lord Shiva, the supreme male deity, and his consort Parvati, the paramount female deity or Shakti. The deity is usually portrayed as having the right half of the body as Shiva and the left half as Parvati. The male half is adorned with matted hair, the third eye, a serpent around the neck, and a crescent moon on the forehead, while the female half is adorned with ornaments, a breast, and a lotus flower in the hand. Sometimes, the female half is also depicted with a third eye and a trident. The iconography of Ardhareshwari represents the unity and balance of masculine and feminine energies and symbolizes the idea that Shiva and Shakti are not separate but are one and the same. The deity is seen as the embodiment of the ultimate reality or Brahman, and its worship is believed to bring about spiritual balance and harmony in one's life. Ardhareshwari is often depicted in Hindu art and is worshipped in various Hindu temples across India. The deity is also associated with various Hindu mythological stories and is believed to have played an important role in the creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe.

Similarly, the Shri Yantra the star symbol made by a priest during puja is called a "shatkona" or "Shri Yantra." [3] The Shri Yantra is a sacred symbol that represents the union of divine masculine and feminine energies and is believed to be a powerful tool for manifesting abundance and prosperity. The

Shri Yantra is a geometric pattern consisting of nine interlocking triangles, with the four upward-pointing triangles representing the divine masculine energy (Shiva) and the five downward-pointing triangles representing the divine feminine energy (Shakti). The intersection of these triangles creates 43 smaller triangles, which are said to represent the various aspects of the cosmos. The star symbol made during puja is typically drawn using sandalwood paste or turmeric powder and is considered to be a sacred and auspicious symbol. It is often used as a focal point for meditation and prayer and is believed to bring blessings and positive energy into the space where it is placed. The Shri Yantra is also used in various Hindu rituals and ceremonies, including the consecration of new temples and the installation of new deities.

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान् गुणान् ।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥ 1

This shloka (1) from the Bhagwat Gita Chapter 13 Verse 22 – translates as "Know that I am the Purusha (masculine) and also the Prakriti (feminine), O Arjuna, the Supreme Lord of all.

In every aspect of creation, I am equally present, sustaining all things in their balanced state."

This shloka suggests that the Purusha (masculine) and Prakriti (feminine) energies are present in everything and are equally important. The Supreme Lord sustains all things in a balanced state, suggesting that the balance of these energies is crucial for the harmony of the universe. This philosophy of Purusha & Prakirti also represents Samkhya philosophy.

The other deities in Hinduism which are prayed together indirectly emphasizes the idea of Divine Balance like Radha & Krishna represent that union between God and the Devotee, Ram & Sita represents balance of justice governance, Vishnu [5] and Laxmi represents the ideal combination of

power and wealth, maintaining a balance between spiritual and material aspects of life, which directly emphasizes the idea of balance in the world, energy balance in the universe.

TAOISM

Taoism[6] is an ancient Chinese philosophy and religion that instructs believers on how to exist in harmony with the universe. Taoism holds that humans and animals should live in balance with the Tao, or the universe. One of the main ideas of Taoism is the belief in balancing forces, or yin and yang. These ideas represent matching pairs, such as light and dark, hot and cold, action and inaction, which work together toward a universal whole. At the source of the practice, Taoism is gender-neutral religion, emphasizing the dualism and importance of both masculinity and femininity as necessary, complementary forces that cannot exist without each other.

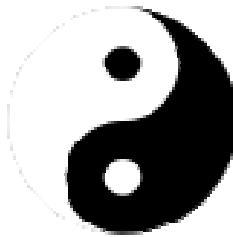


Fig 1 : Yin-Yang Symbol

The yin yang philosophy[7] is rooted in the belief that everything in the universe consists of two forces that are opposing but complementary. According to Ying Yang philosophy, the duality of energy in the universe provides balance and harmony. The Taoist belief system is based on the concept of yin and yang, which represents the dualistic forces in the universe. Yin is often associated with the feminine, passive, and receptive aspects of the universe, while yang is associated with the masculine, active, and assertive aspects of the universe. In Taoism, the goal is to find balance

and harmony between these two opposing forces. This means that masculine and feminine energies are seen as equally important and necessary for the proper functioning of the universe.

Taoist teachings emphasize the need to cultivate both yin and yang energies within oneself in order to achieve balance and harmony. Yin yang energy is apparent the world around you, appearing as opposites like night and day, hot and cold, summer and winter.

Sachiko Murata, the cosmos also has feminine and masculine elements. Yin represents feminine which is Passive, Intuitive, Creative, Moon, Dark, Cold, Downward movement, Night, Soft, Stillness, still water. Yang represents masculine, which is Active, Active water, Enlightenment, Bright, Sun, Light, Upward movement, Strong, Hot, Hard.

Overall, the concept of balancing masculine and feminine energies is an important aspect of Taoist philosophy and practice. By cultivating both yin and yang energies within oneself and in one's environment, Taoists believe that they can achieve greater harmony and balance in all areas of life.

ISLAM

This research[2] discusses the concepts of feminine and masculine characters, as well as their presence in both men and women. According to the research, the feminine character is related to the consideration of the heart and the nature of beauty (jamāliyah/yin), while the masculine character is related to the considerations of ratio/logic and the nature of majesty (jalāliyah/ yang). These traits are reflected in the names of Allah, with feminine traits such as al-rahmān and al-rahīm and masculine traits such as al-Azīz and al-Malik.

Furthermore, the research[2] explains that feminine traits include meekness, patience, sensitivity, and passivity, while masculine traits include strength, dominance, and assertiveness. These traits are not limited to biological sex but are also related to gender roles and societal definitions of masculinity

and femininity. For example, the research cites Jan E. Stets and Peter J Burk's explanation that masculinity is the social definition that society gives to men, which leads men to behave, look, and behave in ways that are considered "masculine."

The research[2] also discusses the historical evolution of the understanding of feminine and masculine characters, noting that from 1920-1970, the concepts were understood as separate and unrelated. However, from 1970-2000, attention arose to the androgynous phenomenon, with Sandra L. Bem's view that individuals could have both feminine and masculine characters simultaneously.

In addition, the research highlights the presence of feminine and masculine characters in creation, as referenced in Islamic theology. The creation of these creatures by God is in pairwise form. The concept of pairing can be referenced in Q.S. al-Dzariyat (51):49.

تذكرون ومنكشيء خلقنا زوجين لعلكم

Likewise, in Q.S. al-Nisa' (4):32 which states that all things were created in pairs in order to remember God.

The concept of feminine and masculine in addition to being the duality of qualities that work together behind the sunnatullah journey of the universe, can also be traced in the names of the Noble Allah or Al-Asma Al-Husna which is a reflection of Allah saw towards his being. Al-Asma Al-Husna Allah, when categorized as feminine and masculine will be seen in Al-Asma Al-Husna Allah contains a feminine and masculine character.

So, men and women are equally covered in the meaning of insan. This is as found in Q.S. al-Nisa(4): :28.

ضعيف يريد الله ان يخفف عنكم وخلق الانسان

Finally, the research[8] concludes that feminine and masculine characters are equally present in men and women, with levels varying due to internal and external factors. This view is supported by the Quran, with Q.S. al-Nisa (4):28 stating that "God will give you leniency, and man is made weak." Therefore, while men and women may exhibit different levels of feminine and masculine traits, both are present in all humans.

JUDAISM

In Judaism, the concept of masculine and feminine balance is a central aspect of the tradition. Jewish teachings emphasize the importance of balance and harmony between masculine and feminine energies in all aspects of life. [9]

בראשית ב'י"ח-כ"ד

(יח) וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הָיִית הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לּוֹ עֹזֵר
 כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: (כא) וַיִּפֶּל יי אֱלֹהִים | תַּרְדֵּמָה עַל-הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח
 אֶחַת מִצְלָעָתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: (כב) וַיִּבֶן יי אֱלֹהִים |
 אֶת-הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר-לָקַח מִן-הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבָאָהּ אֵלָיו: (כד)
 עַל-כֵּן יַעֲזֹב-אִישׁ אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר
 אֶחָד:

Fig 2: Hebrew writings Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 2:18-24

(18) And the LORD God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.' (21) And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh instead thereof. (22) And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from the man, made a woman, and brought her unto the man. (24) Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and **they shall be one flesh.**

This concept emphasizes that the unbalance of masculine power is not good, and created a feminine so that man and women could be one, that this contraction is a feminine quality that balances out the masculine quality of expansion, the writings indirectly approach to the theory of creating a balance in the universe.

According to Jewish mysticism,[10] the differences between the sun and the moon go beyond their physical attributes and extend to their spiritual qualities. This polarity is not limited to gender and is present in everyone.

Masculine energy is characterized as proactive and top-down, while feminine energy is receptive and bottom-up. Both energies are equally important and necessary, but it is crucial to know when to use each of them. True freedom comes from achieving a balance and harmony between these cosmic forces of masculine and feminine energies on a personal and global level.

In summary, we all possess both masculine and feminine energies, the tradition recognizes the complementary nature of masculine and feminine energies and emphasizes the importance of balance between them in life, and achieving a balance between them is crucial for personal growth and global harmony which indirectly says bringing balance or divine balance.

CHRISTIANITY

The Bible does not say directly about the concept of balance between masculine and feminine energies, it does emphasize the equal value and worth of men and women in God's eyes. [11]

Genesis 1:27, which says, " So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This verse emphasizes that both men and women are created in the image of God and are therefore equally valuable and important.

BUDDHISM

Androgyny is an important concept in Vajrayana Buddhism; indeed, it is represented as a highly advanced and ideal state. "It is important to separate the roles that men and women play from the energies of masculine and feminine we have within."

In the myth of the Buddha's enlightenment, Buddha is assailed with many temptations by the demon Mara. Her final temptation to the Buddha was that of doubt. Mara asked the Buddha who he thought he was to sit on the earth and become enlightened. In response, the Buddha placed his hand on the ground and called on the goddess of the earth. In return for the Buddha's work and virtue, the goddess let loose a flood that swept away the armies of Mara, allowing the Buddha to sit and become enlightened.

This story speaks to us that this final struggle to reach realization did not come through his effort alone. Finally, the Buddha had to stop all struggle and shift from his masculine mode to the ground of the feminine.

A very important motif in Vajrayana Buddhism[8] is the way in which experience is divided into complementary dualities associated with feminine and masculine principles.

Both females and males are often pictured alone, without a mate, and when they appear singly, the females and males are identical in the strength, energy, and attraction with which they are portrayed, Karma Kagyu teachers emphasize that the practices are identical for both women and men and strive to develop "feminine" and "masculine" energy in both. The Dalai Lama also made a similar statement in an issue of this Journal (Komito, 1984).

JAINISM

This quote from (Maheśvarasūri, *Nānapancamīkahā* 3.17, 10th century) "As a result of manifesting deception a man in this world becomes a woman. As for a woman, if her heart is

pure, she becomes a man in this world." suggests that Man completes itself becoming a woman & Woman completes itself by becoming a man in this world.[12]

Jain teachings also emphasize the importance of balance in relationships between men and women. Jainism teaches that men and women are equal in spiritual potential and encourages men and women to work together in harmony.

Jain teaching does not speak directly about divine balance of the universe, however practices in Jainism emphasizes about balance between materialistic and spiritual pursuits. Balance between masculine qualities like action, and feminine qualities like emotion compassion and attachment is essential for achieving spiritual liberation, which indirectly explains the balance of energy.

SIKHISM

The Sikh gurus were male leaders who showed their love for the divine through the female gender. They did not limit themselves to one gender and instead focused on balancing the masculine and feminine energies within themselves. [13] They identified with the female persona and recognized the transcendent as both father and mother, male and female. Throughout the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, the female body celebrated , her actions, and her emotions, and encouraged women to forge a deep connection with the divine. In both praxis and poetry, the Sikh gurūs created an opening through which women could achieve liberty, equality, and sorority. [14]

HEXAGRAM

A symbol used in many religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

As discussed earlier in in Hinduism it represents Shiv (Masculine) & Shakti (Feminine), which is used in Hindu Yantra and Prayer as representation of union of male and female.

In Judaism it represents symbol of Jewish identity, which is called, Star of David.

In Christianity it is called the Star of Creation, which also symbolizes the union of heaven and earth, it can be seen as a symbol of the balance between the spiritual and physical realms, balance between faith and reason or intellect. which indirectly represents the idea of balance.

In Islam, this symbol is known in Arabic as *Khātem Sulaymān*, *In Quran it is written (27:15)* (On the other hand), We granted knowledge to David and Solomon and they said: "All praise be to Allah Who has exalted us above many of His believing servants!", David and King Solomon were prophets and kings and are figures revered by Muslim. *Khātem Sulaymān* is a symbol that represents harmony, unity, and the interconnectedness of all things, which are important aspects of the concept of balance.

III. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

In many of the major religions of the world, the concept of masculine and feminine balance is seen as a key aspect of achieving spiritual growth and bringing balance to the universe. There are some direct approaches and some indirect approach which emphasize the idea of the balance universe. In Hinduism, Taoism, Islam the concept is lucid, in Hinduism Shivaling, Shri Yantra, Ardhnareshwari, and In Taoism - Ying Yang a symbol in an ancient Chinese philosophy and religion that instructs believers on how to exist in harmony with the universe, In Islam Quran suggests the creation of these creatures by God is in pairwise for, which directly emphasizes the balance of masculine and feminine energy, Judaism concept emphasizes that the unbalance of masculine power is not good, so god created female and asked them to be one, Christianity bible suggests man & women equally valuable and important., Buddhism speaks about both women and men and strive to develop "feminine" and "masculine" energy in both. Jainism teaches that men and women are equal in spiritual potential and encourages men and women to work

together in harmony. Similarly, Sikhism explains the idea of divine balance by praying celebrating female. Hexagram a symbol represents the same idea in many religions, which is used in various religious activities from time to time.

The concept or main argument of this paper is to bring understanding of balance of masculine and feminine energy within us. The concept, on a miniature level, also suggests that there should be a balance of energy in the world, including relationships and other aspects of life.

NOTE: This article is a philosophical discussion based on observation and research. It is important to clarify that the purpose of this article is to present an academic perspective and not to offend any individuals, communities, or religions. The views expressed in this article are solely for academic and intellectual purposes and do not reflect any personal biases or prejudices. It is crucial to approach philosophical discussions with an open mind and respect for diverse perspectives and beliefs. By doing so, we can engage in meaningful discourse that expands our understanding and appreciation for different worldviews.

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