

## **Ardhanarishvara Magnified in *The Secret of the Nagas***

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**Ardhanarishvara** is a composite androgynous form of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati (also known as Devi, Shakti and Uma). Ardhanarishvara is depicted as half male and half female, split down the middle. The right half is usually the male Shiva. Ardhanarishvara represents the synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe (Purusha and Prakriti) and illustrates how Shakti, the female principle of God, is inseparable from Shiva, the male principle of God. The union of these principles is exalted as the root and womb of all creation. The seventh couplet of *Ardhanarishvarastotram* by Adi Shankara, explains the essence of the existence of Shiva and Shakti as:

प्रपञ्चसृष्टुन्मुखलास्यकायै समस्तसंहारकताण्डवाय ।  
जगज्जनन्यै जगदेकपित्रे नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय

She dances in delight with captivating beauty at face of creation, which springs forth from them. His dance of destruction is in fury and the cosmos subsides back in them. She is the mother of this world and He is the Father. Such is the wonderful nature of Ardhanarishvara, I bow to shri Shivai and Lord Shiva.

In the whole creation, an existence is but the combination of the two. Even an Atom (a particle too small to be subdivided) exists due to electron and protons. The charge of electron is negative and the charge of proton is positive: “The combination of electron and proton forming stable atomic structures result in different kinds of elementary substances having specific characteristics”(Grob, 18). And In this universe

of atomic constitution everything visible or invisible exists only because of the presence of two forces opposite in nature. Abhedanand rightly says:

The forces of Nature operate neither for profit nor for loss but for a perfect balance and harmony . If there be a flow of waters here, there must be an ebb somewhere. If there be tremendous heat in one place extreme cold will be found in another place. If it day here night in America. . . . In this manner, we can show that polarity exists in every departments of nature and bring in the end a perfect balance, equilibrium, harmony and justice (Abhedanand, 23-24).

Amish's *The Secret of the Nagas* effectively magnifies the concept of Ardhanarishvara. Amish as a staunch devotee of lord Shiva never in any of the part of *Shiva Trilogy* introduces the term Ardhanarishwar openly, yet this concept flows undercurrent. As the novel opens Amish introduces his thesis as:

*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*

*Shiva is truth, Shiva is beauty*

*Shiva is masculine, Shiva is feminine*

*Shiva is Suryavanshi, Shiva is Chandravanshi.*

The first novel *The Immortals of Meluha* brings us close to the distinctions between Suryavanhi and Chandravanshi civilizations. In addition, the discussion moves on from macro to micro levels when he elaborates feminine and masculine traits in human beings in relation to civilizations in *The Secret of the Nagas*. Both the ways of life are unique (as far as their attributes are concerned) and inseparable from each other. While focusing on the dual nature of cosmos Amish holds:

There are many hundred ways of life in this world. But if you actually distil the ways people live, there are only two ways: The Masculine and the Feminine (Nagas, 48).

The masculine way of life as Amish holds is “life by laws”. Moreover, “The feminine way of life is life by probability”. A great leader, perhaps a Vishnu like Lord Ram; or laws that come down from a religious tradition, could make the laws in masculine civilization. Meluhan civilization is the Suryavanshi/Masculine one. It follows the rules and principles of ‘*Ram Rajya*’. In addition, they live by the motto of ‘Satya Dharma, Maan’: Truth, Duty, Honour, etched at the entry of city gates of Devgiri with the symbol of the Suryavanshis (a bright red circular sun with its ray blazing out in all directions). While adding grace more to the masculine way of life Amish says that the masculine way is very clear. Laws are unchangeable and they must be followed rigidly. There is no room for ambiguity. Life is predictable because in such away of life as the populace always do what has been ordained. Meluha is a perfect example of such a way of life. It is obvious, therefore, why the people of this way of life live by the code of Truth, Duty and Honour. Since that is what they need to be successful in this system. While clarifying the nature of Chandravanshis in *The Immortals of Meluha* Nandi informs Shiva:

Think of them as very antithesis of us, my Lord. They are the followers of the kings who are the descendants of the moon and they follow the lunar calendar. They are a crooked, untrustworthy and lazy people with no rules, morals or honour. They are coward and never attack like a principled Kshatriyas. Even their kings are corrupt and selfish. The Chandravanshis are a blot on humanity (Meluha, 57).

Bringing out the distinctions apparent between the masculine and feminine civilizations Amish observes that in the feminine way, there are no absolutes, no black or white. The people do not act as per some preordained law, but based on probabilities of different outcomes perceived at the point of time. For example, they follow a king who they think has a higher probability of remaining in power. The moment the probabilities change, their loyalties do as well. There are laws in such a society which are malleable:

The same law can be interpreted differently at different points of time. Change is the only constant in feminine

civilization(Nagas,49)... 'change is difficult for masculine'. They will cling even more rigidly to their laws, even though those law may be unsuitable for new age (Nagas,50).

Masculine civilizations enforce order, which is welcome when they are strong, but is suffocating when they decline. The Asuras, who were followers of masculine way, had faced similar problems when their power started waning. Therefore, when fanaticism causes rebellions born of frustrations, the openness of the feminine brings a breath of fresh air. Feminine civilizations, like Swadweep, are comfortable with contradictions. And the code for success in such a system follow unmistakably, 'Passion, Beauty and Freedom'. The feminine way has an extraordinary quality of incorporating all the differences. People of varying faiths and belief can co exist in peace. Nobody tries to enforce their own version of truth. There is celebration of diversity and freedom, which brings forth renewed creativity and vigour causing tremendous benefits to society. Amish remarks:

The Devas who were the followers of the feminine way, brought in all this when they defeated Asuras. But as it happens with too much freedom, the feminine civilizations overreach into decadence, corruption and debauchery. Then the people once again welcome the order of the masculine (Nagas,50).

A masculine civilization at its height is honourable, consistent, reliable and spectacularly successful in an age suitable for its particular set of laws. There is order and society moves coherently in a preordained direction. However, when masculine civilizations decline, they cause horrible turmoil, becoming fanatical and rigid. They attack those who are different, try to "convert" them to their truth, which will lead to violence and chaos. This especially happens when age changes. Masculine and feminine exist really not only at the level of civilizations but also at the level of "every man and

woman”. And everyone have “a little bit of the Suryavanshi and a bit of the Chandravanshi within themselves”. Their relative influence within the individual changing, depending upon the situation he faces. But most of the people have a dominant trait. Either the masculine or the feminine. And as far as comparison of both the ways is concerned, no one way of life is better as: “Both types of civilizations must exist. Because they balance each other (Nagas,49). Therefore, the rise and fall of both the civilization takes place in a very dramatic way. One civilization takes over on the other and the play of civilizations growth, youth and decay follows cyclically.

Thus, Amish proves his thesis on the existence of Ardhanarishwara and its expanse right from a human being to a civilization. And we find that existence in cosmos in any form respects the Law of Ardhanarishwara. There is nothing good or evil in the natures of Suryavanshi and Chandravanshi civilization or the masculine and the feminine way, yet, it is only the matter of qualities of the forces due to which the world appears and operates.

## References

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