CHAPTER VI
SACRED LANGUAGE

We have already seen that the ancient artists have presented the female, the real symbol of beauty, in a very open form. Normally, she has full developed breasts and heavy hips. They represented her in a sexual form also, but they did not mean to show her as sexy. They did so, because of their thirst for beauty. Even then, they knew that sexual love was also very necessary, because only sexual love could produce new generations. Therefore, they have represented woman in her symbolic form of Yoni.

This Yoni is the representation of Saktism which originated from the cult of Mother Goddess. The underlying principle of Saktism is sexual dualism, which has been described as "duality in Unity". In this development of the primitive mother worship, the goddess was transformed into the personification of female energy Sakti and this female energy united with the eternal male principle and became the Creator and Mother of the Universe. She became even the mother of gods including Siva himself, and was called Mahadevi.

This sexual representation of Mahadevi is non-Aryan. At Mohenjodaro and Harappa, there are three
classes of evidence. In the first are the Liṅga and the Yoni. They vary in size from half an inch to a foot and are made of lime-stone. In the Yoni, we find a small hole in its upper part, as if it had been attached to a base of some sort.

In the second we find variation of sizes. Some of the large specimens being as high as two to three feet. The third type, constitutes the ring stones. They are definitely regarded as Yoni (Female symbol of generation). This class is found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Their size varies in diameter from half inch to nearly four feet.

At Harappa were found about 600 circular and pyramidal terracotta cones which were held on the under side and bore polychrome paint all over the body. They are one inch high in size and have painted bottoms. It seems as if they are for decoration.

Thus, we see that the people of the Indus age were very well acquainted with the Liṅga worship.

In the Stone age also, we find evidence of the Liṅga and Yoni worship.

Among the interesting neolithic finds on the Shevaroy hills is a phallus, a small object of pale gneiss diminishing biconically and truncated with flat ends.
According to evidence, we believe that this Linga worship was not practised by the people of the Vedic age. We believe this to be the worship of non-Aryan origin. The Vedas speak of it with horror: "May the glorious Indra triumph over hostile beings", says the Rig Veda. "Let not those whose god is the Sisna (Phallus) approach our sacred ceremony".

By the Mahabharata time, the worship of the Linga and the Yoni was recognized. It is said in the Mahabharata that all women produced from the nature of Devi as their cause, are marked with the female organ, and all males are marked with the Linga of Mara.

Without the relation of sexes, nowhere and in no way can there be creation. The basic field of creation is the womb and the seed is the Linga.

In Puranas, we find many myths explaining how the Linga-worship originated. The cult of the Yoni is said to have originated from the Sati episode. Daksha Prajapati, father of Sati, the first wife of Siva, had performed Vajna and insulted Siva when he reached there uninvited. Sati could not bear the insult of her husband and threw herself in the sacrificial fire. Siva was infuriated, beheaded Daksha Prajapati and retrieved the body of Sati from the fire which disintegrated. Every place where a part of her body fell became sacred and
a temple was built in honour of the relic. The Yoni is said to have fallen in Assam, from where the worship spread all over India.

The Yonias maintain that the feminine principle is anteri and superior to the male.

A clay seal is found from Basarh on which there appear the symbol of Liṅga and Yoni. This is perhaps the oldest representation of the phallic emblem which has been found in India.

There are many miniatures of Liṅga and Yoni discovered from the area north of the Dhamak stūpa at Sarnath. They also belong to the same date as that of Basarh specimen.

In the outer gallery of the Śiva temple at Ellora, we find Śiva and Pārvatī holding the hallowed symbols in their hands. Here, the Yoni is forming the base of the Liṅga. The divine couple is represented in full charm and grandeur.

Another example of their union in the sexual form is found in the Elephanta belonging to the eighth century. There is a quadrangular sanctuary carved out of the living rock. This little shrine is guarded by eight door-keepers, a pair at each side and contains the chief symbolic object of worship. It is a stone block upon a square base, representing the Liṅga and the Yoni.
we find more objects symbolising Yoni in Bhir
Mound at Taxila, one from inside the structures uncovered near the foot of Mathial (Taxila) and the other at Kosam. The first one is of polished sand stone 3" in diameter, adorned on the upper surface with concentric bands of cross and cable patterns and with four nude female figures alternating with honey-suckle designs engraved in relief around the central hole.

At Rajghat near Varanasi, we find another such symbolic representation. This has a hole through the centre, around which two nude figures are carved. This is quite small and used, perhaps an exvoto offerings.

One more ring stone from Rajghat now in Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi, show three Mother Goddesses alternating with three Linga symbols flanked by two cobras and an outer band of trapezoid design.

Another fragment of a ring stone from Kosam shows outer and inner bands of rosette flowers. It is in the Allahabad Museum now.

We find several ring stones from Mathura. Two of them are in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

There is one ring stone of 3.5 diameter in the Mathura Museum. In the centre of the ring there is a full blown lotus flower without spreading tendrils.
The first band consists of four animals viz. a lion, an antelope, a bull and a stag. In the second band four flowery motifs have been shown. Four females in four directions are shown in third band. One female is holding a bowl in the left hand and sheaf of arrows in the right. The second one is standing with her right hand holding a bowl and the left placed on the hip. The third figure is with a trident in the right hand and a double sided vastra in the left hand. The fourth figure is mutilated beyond the recognition. Unfortunately, other figures are also mutilated.

A. Some more fragments of ring stone were found at Hajghat. One is showing on the inside head and bust of the Mother Goddess with the upper portion of a palm tree. It, too, is in the Bharat Kala Bhawan.

B. Another showing two Mother Goddesses on the inside and in the outer band are two sprawling human figures floating in the air with a lizard in between them. This is also in the Bharat Kala Bhawan.

C. There is one more ring stone from an unidentified place showing in the inner band four Mother Goddesses alternating with palm trees, three of whom are seen. In the outer band are a series of lizards or crocodiles of which there were originally eight, five being, still preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhawan.
D. The last ring stone from Hajghat, now in the Lucknow Museum, shows on the inside five Śrīvatsa symbols alternating with five Muchukundas or honey-suckle motifs. The outer band is crowded with a number of figures showing three palm trees and three Mother Goddesses: 

(a) with hare on the right and the moon symbol below and a deer on left with a taurine symbol in front of him. b) with a palm tree and a bird on the right and an animal on the left with clear symbol of the moon and the sun. c) with a Sarasa-like bird on the right. The figure on left is effaced.

Thus, the nude figures engraved on ring stones appear to represent Goddess of Fertility, perhaps the Earth Goddess and they point to the disc having served as votive offerings.

Two ring stones were found at Taxila. The first of these is perfectly preserved inside its central hole. There are three nude figures of the Goddess of Fertility, wearing a prominent hood-like headgear alternating with three other figures showing flames of ḍhūṁ enkindled in an altar flanked by two cobras. Round the innermost band are two outer bands of Trapezoid figure.

The second fragmentary disc from Taxila shows ḍhūṁ and flanking serpents designed in a much clearer form and the two encircling bands are treated with a
series of juxtaposed Damarci Motifs with a vertical slit in between each pair resembling the female Yoni.

There is a ring stone disc from Sakhisa with three Mother Goddesses, three fan-palms and three taurines. Its diameter is 2 inches.

A ring stone from Patna City found in sewer excavations shows a fifteen-petalled lotus flower in the centre encircled by a beautiful garland of 18 taurines in smaller size. Some letters are engraved on the back.

Another ring stone from sewer excavations shows three concentric bands first of which has 21 lotus petals, the second 12 ani ais and birds including a horse, a lion, an elephant, a rhinoceros moving in a file and the third a design like pencils of light.

Three more ring stones are in the Allahabad Museum, one of which shows two bands of crosses and cables with a Mother Goddess flanked by a Pan Palm inside. The second is chocolate-coloured and shows in the outer band a row of makara figures and a row of lions inside. The third is of grey stone and shows honey suckle or Muchukunda flowers alternating with pairs of birds perched on the two sides of the branch of a tree.

Another ring stone from Vaishali has a honey suckle motif, pipal trees, winged lions and two attractive
female figures carved on it. They are Mother Goddesses.

**Outerside of the left pillar of the Northern Gateway of Sānci Stupa**

In the treasure houses of the royal palaces and rich men's houses, such golden pillars for the storage of costly necklaces were used as visible symbols of Goddess Śrī Lakṣmī.

In Śrī Sukta of the Ṛg Veda we find the Goddess Śrī is described as Vasūṃ Sv. rṇāmheśāmājānām Lakṣmīm.

Golden Lakṣmī, resplendent as the sun, takes the form of a golden pillar loaded with golden necklaces. It appears that in the second stage the idea was connected with the symbolism of the Uttarakuru country and such a post was taken to represent a cross section of the wealth of the Uttarakuru land in which strings of golden amulets, especially, formed part. Here, two of these strings of necklaces are shown. The left one has eleven and the right one thirteen auspicious amulet beads as follows:

Left - 1. sun, 2. wheel, 3. lotus pond, 4. Goad (aṅkuśa), 5. Indra's triangle-headed bonnet, 6. Lotus fish, 7. a pair of fish, 8. Śrīvatsa, 9. mirror, 10. Lotus night:

10. Flower garland, 11, 12 and 13. wheel and two other symbols.
A possession of these divine necklaces was considered auspicious and seems to have formed part of the Cult of Goddess, Śrī Lakṣmī later on, it was linked to the Uttarakuru conception. In the third stage, it became associated with the physical statue of the Buddha showing him in a visible form like other symbols and, therefore, labelled as Bhagavato Pāmānalath (Height measuring staff of the Blessed One).

One of these amulets was considered sacred. In the next stage, the number of auspicious signs became fixed at eight and were known as ashta māṅgalakamāla which included list Mīna Mithuna, Nava Vīmāna Grha, Śrīvatsa, Vṛdhamāna Tiratna, Pushpadama, Indravashti or Vāgasyaḥī and Pūrṇāghaṭa.

Padma, the lotus, the most important Indian Symbol

It is the flower opening its petals to the rising sun. Sun is the symbol of Brahma, and the lotus is the flower of life blossoming on earth. It is the visible sign of consciousness (Prāna) in matter (Aṇḍa). It symbolises the principle of growth, rising from the immortal navel of Viṣṇu or the cosmic deity whose awakening throws up the lotus as the seat of Brahma. The lotus-leaf typifies the womb of creation.

Yonirvai Pūṣkara Parṇa—Lotus is also the cosmic mind and the centre of energy in the individual.
A detailed metaphysical doctrine of the Bhāgavatam explains the birth of the cosmos from the lotus (Padmabhāṣṭi) in distinction to the other belief of the world creation from the Golden egg. The womb of the individual and the universal mother giving birth to the child is symbolised as the lotus growing in water.

The Sanskrit words Kamala and Padma (Lotus) when provided with the long 'a' of the feminine ending, denote the Goddess who dwells in the lotus (Kamala Padma) identical to Śrī Lakṣmī, Goddess of Luck and prosperity. Lotus is the floral symbol of the Goddess Śrī Lakṣmī.

At Sāncī stupa number one there is a medallion just above the plaque between the lower and middle architraves. Here, we see lotuses pouring out of a jar of water, a vessel symbolizing abundance.

In the śrutisukta of the Roveda, she is called the one possessed of the lotus (Padmāni), the one standing on the lotus (Padmāsthita), the lotus coloured (Padmāvarna). She is lotus eyed (Padmāksī). Her thighs are lotus like (Padmṛtyu). She has lotus-like face (Padmānāna). She dwells in the lotus.

Furthermore, the lotus is represented as a direct source of wealth, as is the case with the Padmanīghi of Kubera and the ratana mañjarikās of Bharhut and Sāncī. These meanings and values do not at all exclude those
of the implication of birth in the waters conspicuous in the case of Śrī Lakṣmī who is the earliest divinity to be constantly represented with padmapītha or padmāśana, though in the case of the other deities not so directly born from the waters, the idea of support seems to be indicated rather than that of the 'Divine birth' which has hitherto been the usual interpretation. On the other hand, the more edifying symbolism of purity, drawn from the fact that the lotus leaf does not get wet by water it rests on, nor is the flower spoiled by the mud from which it springs, belongs to a later cycle of ideas and only comes in with the sectarian Buddhist and devotional development. Thus, as the sātapatna brāhmaṇa shows, primarily the lotus was understood to represent the waters. Secondly, in as much as the flower and still more obviously its leaves rest on the waters, it represented the earth for, the earth is conceived of as resting on the back of the waters and supported by the waters which extend on either side of it. But later on, it was the indication of the presentation of Lakṣmī. We find many lotus figures in Sanchi and Bharhut which symbolise Goddess Lakṣmī.

A circular seal was found at Uhita which contains a vase, Bhadragnāta on a pedestal. Below it is written in northern characters of the Gupta period Sarasvatī. Thus, the Goddess of Learning is represented here by means
of the ghātra emblem. A female figure appears on sculpture which calls for special mention. Under Gautama’s horse, the upper part of a woman’s body, much destroyed, is seen rising out of the earth. This, probably, is the representation of the Goddess of the Earth. In Jatakas also we find that after the description of the repulse of Mara, when Gautama desired once more to look back upon the city, the great earth turned round like a potter’s wheel, as if to say: “Thou needest not to turn round in order to look, and so let him see the town once more.”

On the relief, the feet (now broken off) of the horse Kaśyapaka, evidently, stood on the forearm of the Mahāprithivi. Thus, we find the representation of Earth Goddess in the Buddhist art also.

The Ardhanārīśvara - Form of Śiva — It represented two fundamentally opposite cosmic forces named Prakṛti and Purushe, which are constantly drawn together to embrace and fuse with each other, but are separated by an intervening axis. The composite aspect of Umā and Maheśa, possessing all the iconographic features of Śiva in the right half and those of his consort Pārvatī in the left one, has well been glorified in ancient Indian literature, epigraphs and sculpture.
It is stated in the Śiva Purāṇa that Brahma first begot a number of male beings, the Prajāpatīs and commanded them to create various other beings. They were found later on to be unfit for the task for which they were intended and Brahma, feeling uneasy at the slow progress of creation, contemplated on Mahēśvara. The latter appeared before him in the composite male-female form and asked him to cease feeling distressed. Thithereto, it did not occur to Brahma to create a female also and at the sight of this composite form of Mahēśvara, he realised his error. Then he prayed to the female half of Mahēśvara to give him a female to proceed with the act of creation. Brahma's request was complied with and the creation went on afterwards very well. This story accounts for the ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva.

There is one more account of the appearance of Śiva in the ardhanārīśvara form. Once Śiva was seated with his consort Pārvatī on the top of the Kailasa Mountain. The devas and rṣīs went there to pay their homage to him. All of them except the rṣi Bhringī went round both of them in their cirrums ambulation and also bowed to both Bhringī had a vow of worshipping only one being, that is Śiva and in conformity with his vow, he neglected to go round or bow down to Pārvatī. On this, Pārvatī became angry and desired that all his flesh and blood should
disappear from his body. He was, thus, reduced to a skeleton covered over with only the skin. Seeing his pitiable condition, Śiva gave him a third leg so as to enable him to attain equilibrium. Thus, Śhṛṅgī became pleased with his Lord. This caused great annoyance to Pārvatī who returned to do penance for obtaining a boon from Śiva. At the end of the penance, Śiva was pleased with his consort and granted her wish of being united with his own body. This was the ardhanārīśvara form assumed by Śiva.

The description of the image of ardhanārīśvara is given in the Amśumadahūḍāgama, the Kamikāgamas, the Suprabhāṣadāgama, the Śilparatna, the Kāranāgama and a few other works. As the name indicates, the form of the image should be half man and half woman. The right half is male, that is Śiva, and the left half is female, that is Pārvatī. The male half should have a Jatāmukuta with the crescent moon. In the right ear there should be the Nakrakundala, Serpakundala or ordinary Kundala. The right half of the forehead should have one half of an eye sculptured on it. If the image had four hands, the right ones should be held in varadā pose and the others should carry a śūla. And if the image has only two hands the right one should be held in the varadā pose or there may be trisūla also. There must be a
Vaišnava on the right side. On the right side, the garment should cover the body below the loins only up to the knee. The whole of the right side should be covered with ashes.

The left half is of Pārvatī and should be topped with Karanda-Makuta or a fine knot of hair well combed and divided or both. On the forehead should be a tilaka mark. The left eye should be painted with collyrium. In the left ear should be a kundale known as Valika. If the image has four arms, the left should be bent and rested upon the head of the bull of Śiva and other kept in the katakā pose, holding a nīlōtpala in it, or the latter may be let down hanging below. If the image has only two arms, the left one may keep in it either a flower or a mirror. This should be adorned with kānkana and other ornaments. On the left side should be one bosom of woman with a round well developed breast. This part of the body should be adorned with beautiful ornaments. The female half should be covered from the waist down to the ankles. On the left ankle should be an anklet.

The second stanza of the inscription of V.S. 547 (480 A.D.) from Chhoti Sadadi, Udaipur, Rajasthan, and now preserved in the Udaipur museum, invokes the Goddess Pārvatī as the spouse of Śiva and refers to the ardhanārīsāvāra aspect.
One more fragmentary inscription of V.S. 701 (= 694 A.D.) praises this aspect and even records the construction of a temple dedicated to ṛḍhanārīśvara at Khāṇḍeta itself.

The earliest known depiction of this theme in the plastic art of the country is to be found in the Kuṣāṇa reliefs from Mathura and now preserved in the local museum. Śiva is shown as two handed only and the male portion presents him in the Ṛduḥvaretas pose.

There is one more sculpture in the rock-cut temple at Badami. Here ṛḍhanārīśvara has four arms. One of the right hands holds a Parasu and the same arm has a sarpavālaya round it. The other right and one of the left ones hold a vīṇā and play upon it. On the upper right arm is a snake ornament. There is a sarpa-kūṇḍala in the right ear. On the right half is a Ādamukutā bearing on it the crescent moon, the skull and other ornaments. There is also the Yāñnapāvīṭa on the chest. This side is draped from the loins down to the knees with the deer's skin. The right leg is bent and is resting upon an ornamented platform. The female half has a karanda-makutā, a knot of hair with bands of jewelled ornaments running across it, a large number of kekapās on each fore-arm and a well executed kevūra. There are girdles keeping in position the garment which descends
down to the ankles. In the foreleg is an anklet. The other left hand holds a *Nilotsuala* flower. The whole of the head is surrounded with a *Prabhāmāṇḍala*. To the left of the figure is a female attendant standing with right arm hanging down and the left bent and carrying in it a vessel. She is also adorned with beautiful ornaments and draped in fine cloth. Her hair is tied up in a knot. To the right of the Central Image is the Bull *Nandi*. Behind the bull is a human figure whose hands are held in the *āṅgala* pose. It may be representing *ṛṣhi Brṛṅgī*. On the right and the left of the main figure, there are the representations of *Devas* with their consorts flying in the air and praising *Śiva*. Below are some small figures of *ganas*, some are dancing, while others are playing different musical ornaments. This panel belongs to the post-Gupta period.

There are beautiful *Ardhaṇārīśvara* images in *Elīlora*, *Aurangabad* and *Elephant* caves Pl XX. At *Elephants* the image is much mutilated. Here, the main figure of *Ardhaṇārīśvara* is standing and the panel is filled with different gods with their consorts. Similarly, in the *Kailasa* temple at *Elīlora*, there is a very beautiful sculpture of *Ardhaṇārīśvara*.

Thus, the goddess and her god, together, represent
the cosmic female and male whose eternal embrace
procreates the universe and their creatures, keep
the life processes of the world in operation.

Small ring stones suggest that the worship of
Yoni, the female symbol of generation, was very much
prevalent. Besides these ring stones, we have also
illustrations of some more symbolic representations
of Goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.